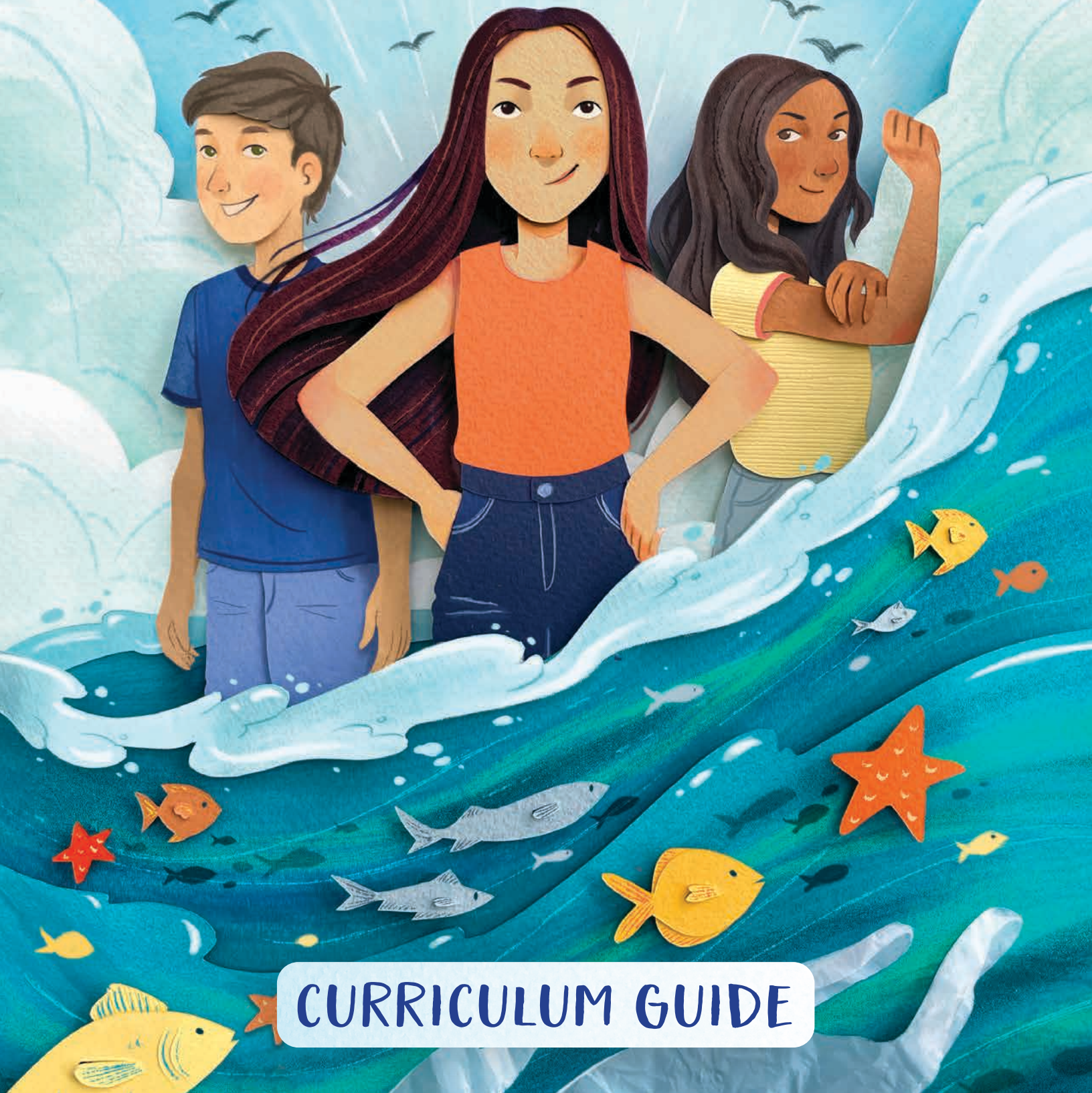


TURN *the* TIDE

Elaine Dimopoulos



CURRICULUM GUIDE

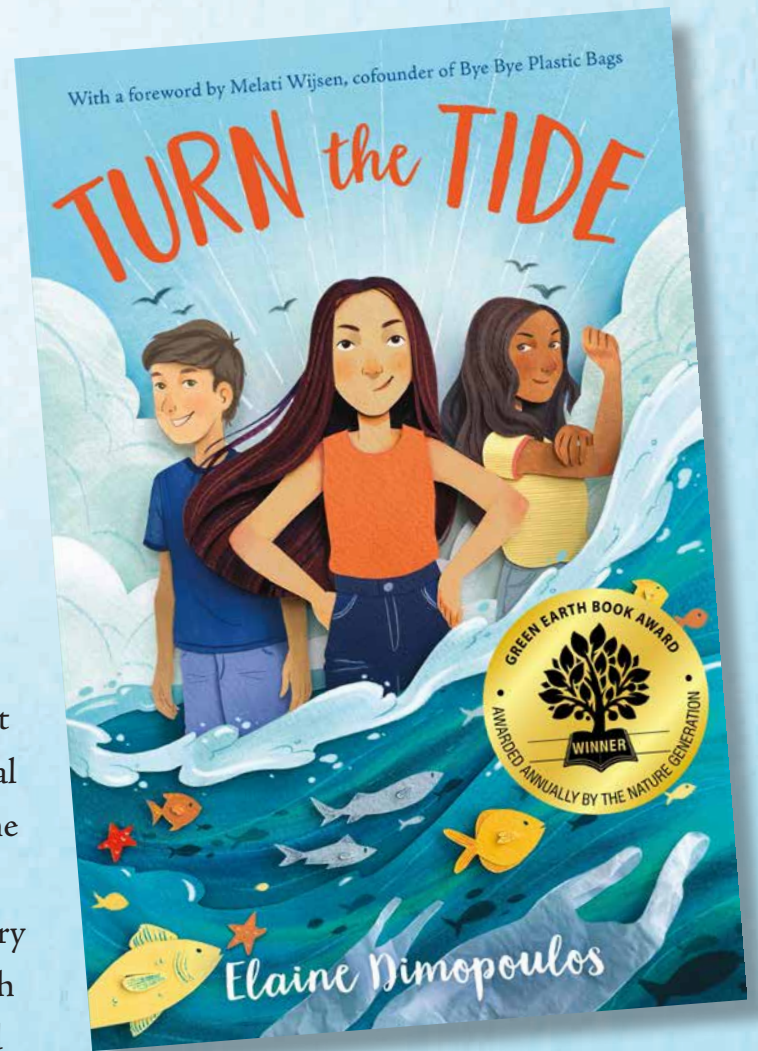
ABOUT THE BOOK

Meet Mimi Laskaris. She is about to experience life-changing events when her family moves from Massachusetts to Wilford Island, Florida. Not only will the climate be very different, but she will attend a new school, leave behind her best friend, and face a huge environmental challenge that at first leaves her confused and upset. It's a lot to deal with! That is, until she makes important discoveries about how to include help from other people.

Written in engaging free verse poetry, this book details Mimi's growing understanding of what it takes to successfully promote a campaign to rid Wilford Island of single-use plastic bags that are damaging the environment and harming animal life. As she soon learns, this is not an easy task. The lessons Mimi learns are essential ones for anyone who wants to make a difference. This uplifting story shows how strong determination and working with the community can make change happen. Inspired in part on the successful work of Melati and Isabel

Wijsen, two sisters who founded an organization called Bye Bye Plastic Bags with the purpose of eliminating the use of plastic bags on the island of Bali, this book offers a behind-the-scenes view of the efforts of young activists.

This book also provides extensive back matter that extends readers' understanding of the impact of plastic pollution. An author's note explains the how poetry connects readers to the topic, while additional factual information is provided in a timeline, a listing of ways to get involved, and a selected bibliography including books, websites, and podcasts. Together, these features enable readers to share Mimi's experiences, while also learning about environmental activism.



READING AND RESPONDING

Use the questions below to share your thoughts and opinions about the four Movements in the book. The last question in each section is an activity that will help you share your personal response to what you read.

FIRST MOVEMENT (PAGES 1-86)

In the first movement you will learn how Mimi deals with her family's move to Wilford Island and how an excellent science teacher, Ms. Miller, sparks Mimi's interest in banning single-use plastic bags on the island.

1. The book begins with a family move. Think about how this move affects Mimi and her parents. Why did the family move from Massachusetts to Wilford Island, Florida? In what ways did Mimi find the two places different? How does she feel about the move? What does she miss? What does she like about Wilford Island? What are her parents' thoughts about the move?
2. Discuss Mimi's first days at Wilford School. Here are some items and events to discuss:
 - How the Wilford School is different from Mimi's school in Massachusetts
 - Mimi's host student
 - The teacher calling Mimi by her real name, Demetra
 - Ms. Miller's science class
 - How asking to get a drink from the *bubbler* seems to the other students to be a strange request

Do you think Mimi will be happy at this school? Why?

3. What does Mimi learn from the film Ms. Miller showed the class about Melati and Isabel forming a campaign called Bye Bye Plastic Bags? Could a similar campaign work in your neighborhood? What are the challenging parts of creating an environmental campaign? Is it a compliment or a criticism when the girls at lunch call Melati and Isabel "crazy obsessed" with their campaign to get rid of single-use plastic bags on the island of Bali?
4. When Mimi investigates, what does she learn about how plastic bags are used in the stores and at the beaches of Wilford Island? What does she learn from Victor Vescovo's photo of the Mariana Trench? How does this new information make her feel? How does it make you feel?
5. Reread "Stealing from Melati and Isabel's playbook" on pages 70 and 71. "Stealing from someone's playbook" is also referred to as "taking a page from someone else's playbook." What does it mean? Was Mimi's idea to steal from Melati and Isabel's playbook a good idea? Would you consider doing something like this? Why?
6. Is Carmen Alvarez-Hill a good partner for Mimi



to work with on a campaign to eliminate single-use plastic bags on Wilford Island? Does she show genuine interest and willingness to help? Why is Mimi interested in working with her? Why is Carmen interested in working with Mimi? Do you think their partnership will succeed? Why?

7. **Open Mind Portrait:** What if you could read someone's mind? This activity gives you the chance to speculate about Mimi and Carmen's thoughts. Draw an outline of two heads—one for Mimi and one for Carmen. Using words and illustrations, draw and write about each character's thoughts and feelings. Share your open mind portraits with a small group to see what other readers think.

SECOND MOVEMENT (PAGES 87-159)

In the second movement, the effort to promote *Say No to Single-Use Plastic Bags* on Wilford Island is launched. Not everything goes smoothly.

8. When Mimi visits the Dusty Jacket bookstore what does she learn about the owners, Anne and Henry Lowell? Why is Mimi happy to meet them? How could the Lowells, Mimi, and Carmen support each other's projects to help the environment?
9. As the campaign develops, Mimi finds that there are moments of stress. For example, Mimi is upset when Carmen takes over her computer to rebrand the flyer for their project. Is Mimi right

to feel annoyed? Or, is Carmen right to feel that she was only being helpful by using her knowledge of branding? Should they work together on everything like a team or work separately to use their strengths? How should this be handled?

10. What does Mimi learn from her experience speaking to kindergarteners and children in grades 1-7? What does she learn by watching Carmen speak? If you could give Mimi advice about speaking to an audience, what would you tell her?
11. What happens when Mimi is interviewed by Ethan Hoffman on the podcast *The Scaled Fish*? How does she feel? What does Carmen think about the interview? Is Mimi right to worry about what the girls at school think about her? Why?
12. Do you think Mimi is being insincere or hypocritical when she decides not to confront every shopper or small business owner who uses plastic bags? Is it possible to eliminate plastic bags? Did it work on Bali?
13. **Sketch-to-Stretch:** Make a sketch that shows Mimi, Carmen, or the residents of Wilford Island confronting the problem of plastic pollution in their own way. Write a title and a caption to explain your sketch. Then, in a small group, share your sketches and explain your thoughts. Which approach to plastic pollution is the best? Why?



THIRD MOVEMENT (PAGES 161-234)

In the third movement, things become even more complicated and problematic as Mimi tries to meet the challenges moving ahead with her efforts to halt the use of plastic bags, while still keeping up with her other responsibilities and commitments.

14. When Carmen posts tweets on Twitter, what items does she include? How do readers respond to them? When Mimi and Carmen discuss the tweets, what does Carmen tell her? Is Carmen's decision to abandon the project a good one? Is it fair?

15. Mimi's relationships with other people are becoming more and more problematic and difficult. Discuss what is happening to Mimi's relationship with each of the people below:

- Lee
- Carmen
- Ethan
- Kyle

How could she improve these relationships?

16. How does Mimi feel about working on her own as a "solo solicitor"? Should she find other people to help her? How is her work on the project affecting her schoolwork and her piano practicing? If you gave Mimi some advice, what would it be?

17. Describe the grand opening of the Trident Restaurant. What does the family do to make the opening a success? What does Mimi mean when she says that at the after-party her parents looked at each other "as if they each performed the best piano piece of their life at Carnegie Hall?" Describe a time when you felt like this.

18. Mimi realizes that she needs to make some changes in her life because she is doing too many activities and not doing them well. As she says it, "I'm afraid of my pieces." What advice would you give her about using her time?

19. **Save the Last Word for Me:** Find two different poems in this section of the book that you find interesting and would like to think more about. Write down a quote from each poem on one side of an index card or piece of paper. Since this book is written in poetry, you might have several lines from each of your selected poems. Then turn the paper over and write down your thoughts about the quote. Meet with a small group, take turns sharing your quotes. First, summarize what the poem is about. Then read one of your quotes and have the others respond to it. When everyone has responded, then share your thoughts. You have the last word! Continue sharing until all quotes are shared.



FOURTH MOVEMENT (PAGES 236-329)

In the fourth movement, Mimi learns how to put the various pieces of herself together in a manageable way so that she can put effort into the things she cares about—school, piano, *and* the movement to stop the use of plastic bags on Wilford Island.

20. Describe Mimi's relationship with Anne and Henry. When Mimi visits them in the hospital, what does she tell them about her progress on her petition? How do they help her see that she has friends on Wilford Island, and that she cannot work on the movement by herself?
21. In what ways are Mimi and Carmen acting like earth goddesses? What qualities do they have that make them powerful? Why are these qualities important?
22. How does Mimi repair and strengthen her relationships with Ethan and Carmen? What skills is she developing that help her work successfully with other people? What evidence is there that she is changing her approach?
23. What makes Ms. Miller such a successful teacher? Would you like to be in her class? Why?
24. What happens when the students walk out of Wilford School and head to the Dusty Jacket? How are they greeted by the parents, islanders, wildlife refuge volunteers, teachers, and news media? When Mimi speaks, what are her three demands? Are they reasonable? What surprising thing happens when Carmen gets her father on the phone during this walkout? Is the walkout a success? How do you know?
25. What happens when the students attend the town council? In what ways is their presentation a success? In what ways is the ending a satisfying one? How do Mimi and her friends benefit from their experience?
26. What is a preemption law? What does Mimi mean when she says, "Preemption law big" (pp. 329)? See pages 40-41 to review how Ms. Miller explains the term to her class.
27. **Multigenre Writing:** Change one or more of the poems in this section to another genre or form of writing such as a play, a newspaper article, an interview, a letter, a speech, or a song. Share your writing in a small group. Did the new form change the meaning of the poem? Share your thoughts.



CODA (PAGES 331-333)

The ending of the story emphasizes two important ideas.

28. The first idea in the Coda is that the new movement Mimi is talking about needs to “go big.” It needs to involve many people. The second idea is that the movement needs to lobby against the preemption laws. See pages 40-43 and 332-333 for more information about preemption laws. Do you support with these ideas? Why?
29. After reading this book, what is your opinion of the following:
- Single-use plastic bags
 - Students actively supporting change by speaking up, protesting, and working to find solutions to environmental problems
 - Going big to solve environmental problems
 - Learning from Melati and Isabel and their organization Bye Bye Plastic Bags

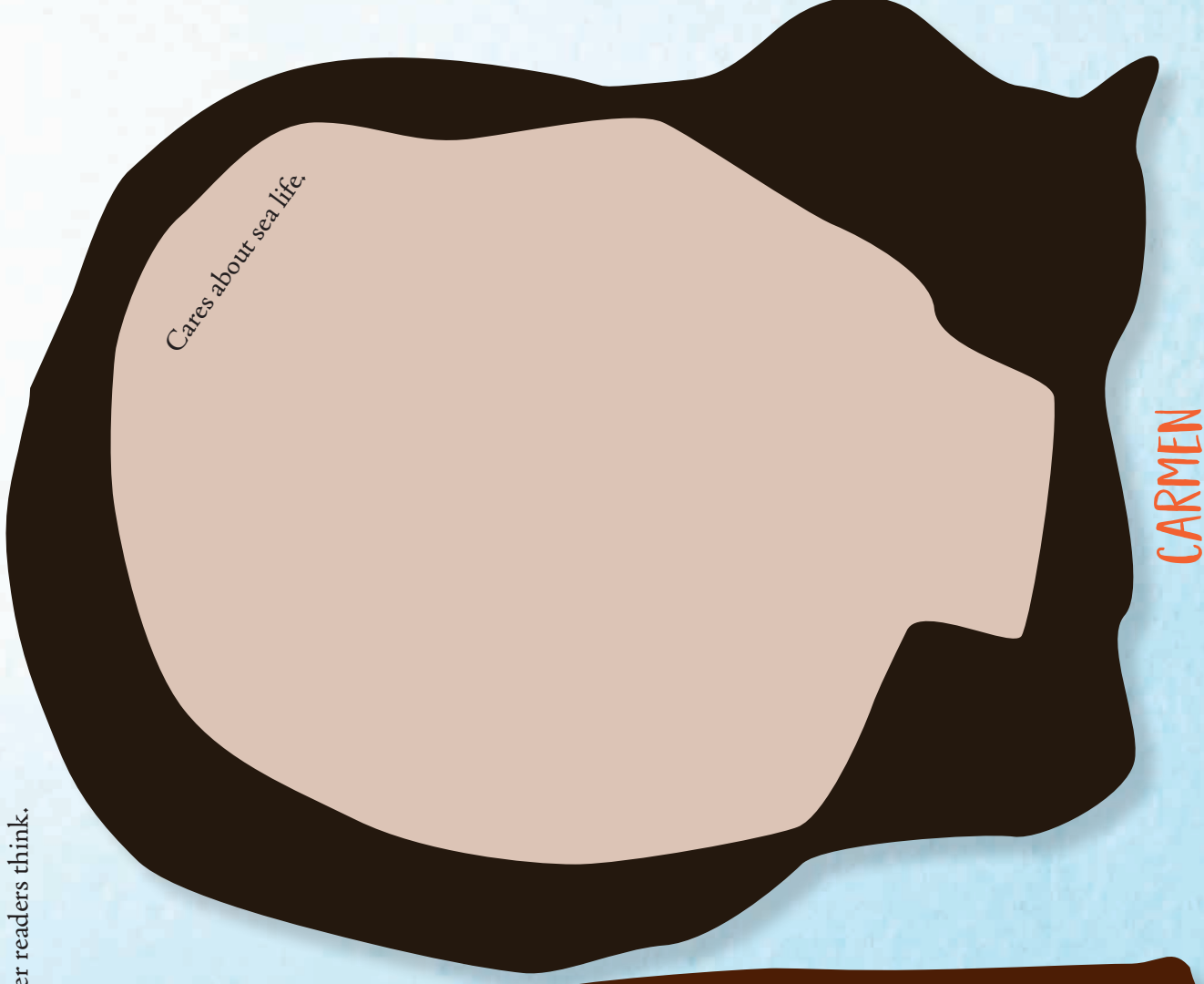
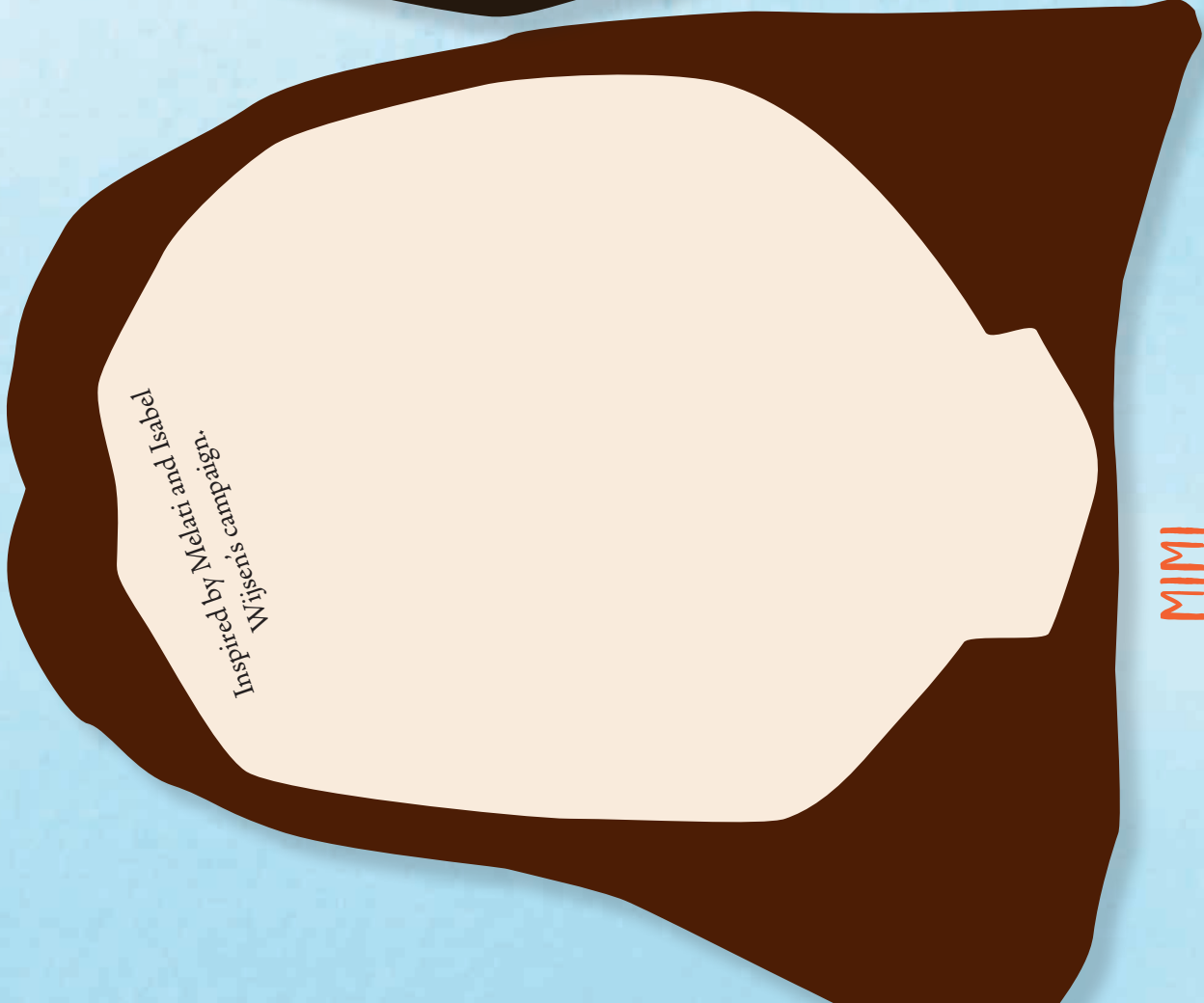
30. **Interview Mimi and other characters in the book.** To begin, one student should pretend to be Mimi and respond to the questions, while the rest of the class asks her questions. After questioning Mimi, consider interviewing these characters:

- Ms. Miller
- Carmen
- Ms. Alvarez, Carmen’s mother
- Mr. Hill, Carmen’s father
- Mimi’s mother and father
- Ethan
- Anne and Henry Lowell
- Councilmember Vaughan



OPEN MIND PORTRAIT

What if you could read someone's mind? This activity gives you the chance to speculate about Mimi and Carmen's thoughts. Using words and illustrations, draw and write about each character's thoughts and feelings. Share your open mind portraits with a small group to see what other readers think.



EXAMINING THE AUTHOR'S CRAFT

USING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: SIMILES

Similes are comparisons between two different things using the word “like” or “as.” In this book, the author uses similes to help the reader understand the content of the book. In the examples below, identify the two things being compared and then explain what the sentence means.

- a) Farther up, near the grasses,
torn pieces of white plastic
snarl around the branches of a short, prickly tree.
They flutter in the shore breezes
like Halloween ghosts. (p. 15)

_____ is being compared to _____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____.

- b) My mom used to say
That my dad believed
if he wasn't at our old restaurant
every minute it was open,
it would sputter and stall and sink
like a motorboat
that ran out of fuel

in the middle of the ocean. (p. 25)

_____ is being compared to _____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____.

- c) When the class ends,
She gusts toward me like a gulf wind. (p. 98)

_____ is being compared to _____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____.

- d) The easy, articulate interviewer
writes with the grace
of an oily-winged
seabird
trying to fly. (p. 130)

_____ is being compared to _____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____.



e) I don't want to disturb the way
they're looking at each other right now—
triumphantly,
as if they each performed
the best piano piece of their life
onstage at Carnegie Hall. (p. 193)

_____ is being compared to
_____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____
_____.

f) I need to get back to canvassing.

I roll an idea around
like a pearl. (p. 203)

_____ is being compared to
_____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____
_____.

g) Harper's mouth opens a little.

before,
that expression
would have twisted and tangled my convictions

like seaweed around a lure. (p. 259)

_____ is being compared to
_____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____
_____.

h) I'm a pianist.

My singing voice sounds
a lot like a hoarse goat,
I've always thought.

But that doesn't stop me
From leading the first chant
From the front of the line. (p. 274)

_____ is being compared to
_____.

In my words, the sentence means: _____
_____.



EXPANDING THE POSSIBILITIES OF FREE VERSE BY USING DIALOGUE

Free verse is free from some of the rules of writing other types of poetry. It doesn't have to rhyme or follow a prescribed meter. Instead, it can sound a lot like ordinary conversation.

To examine the author's use of dialogue in free verse poems, read the poems *Fight Scene* on pages 222-223 and *Avoidance II* on pages 230-232.

Then, use the questions below to discuss each poem:

- a) How does the title of the poem capture the essence of what is to follow?
- b) How are the speakers identified?
- c) What strong views does each speaker express?
- d) What happens at the end? What isn't resolved?
- e) What is the effect of including dialogue in a free verse poem?

INCLUDING REFERENCES TO MUSIC THROUGHOUT THE BOOK

The book is divided into four movements, just like a symphony. Each movement has its own pace and its own content. Look over the four movements in the book and discuss the following:

- After looking at the subtitles in each movement, what do you think is the big idea of that movement?
- Many symphonies move in this order: fast, slow, fast. Is that true of the movements in this book? Share your thoughts and explain your ideas.



WRITING AND RESPONDING TO THE BOOK

WRITING FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.

This book is mostly told from Mimi's perspective. What do the other characters think? Consider writing a free verse poem from the perspective of one or more of the characters listed below:

- Mimi's mother
- Mimi's Father
- Ms. Miller
- Carmen
- Carmen's mother
- Carmen's Father
- Lee
- Anne Lowell
- Henry Lowell
- Ethan
- Kyle
- Councilmember Vaughan

SIGNIFICANT LUNCH DREAM

Reread the poem "Significant Lunch: A Daydream" on pages 82-84. Then write your own lunch dream poem. Imaging what would happen if you invited 2 or more characters from the book to have lunch together with you.

Consider the following:

- How would you prepare for the lunch?
- Who would you invite and why?
- What would the conversation be about?
- Why was the lunch significant?

PRECISE LANGUAGE:

Reread the poem "Precise Language" on pages 196-197. The poem discusses the difference between jealousy and envy. Try writing your own poem describing the difference between one of the pairs of words below *or* think of your own pair of words that are close in meaning, but different in some ways:

- Crazy obsessed and inspired
- Environmental activist and rebel
- Walkout and march



EXAMINING THE WAYS TO LEARN ABOUT AND GET INVOLVED IN ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

The back matter in the book contains many suggestions of materials you can investigate to learn more about environmental activism. Choose one or more of the materials to investigate and create a poster that will help you share what you learned with your classmates.

Here are some possible investigations that you can do:

1. Read the Author's Note on pages 334-335 and then share some of the information the author provides about the following topics:
 - Melati and Isabel Wijsen
 - The use of fiction in the book
 - The work of eco-poets and eco-justice poets
 - Why the author decided to write about environmental activism using free verse poetry
2. Use some of the suggestions in the sections titled Get Involved on pages 341-343 to find out more about how to get involved in global activism. Check out one or more suggested websites and share your findings.
3. Use the selected bibliography to learn more about plastics and plastic pollution. Share your knowledge with others in your school and community.
4. Use your new knowledge to write about what you learned in one of these formats:
 - An illustrated picture book
 - A comic
 - A poem
 - A letter
 - An editorial



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elaine Dimopoulos is the author of several novels for children, including the critically acclaimed Milkweed Meadow series and the young adult fast-fashion dystopia, *Material Girls*. Elaine served as the Associates of the Boston Public Library Writer-in-Residence and has taught writing at Simmons University and GrubStreet. She lives in Massachusetts. www.elainedimopoulos.com

READ OTHER BOOKS BY ELAINE DIMOPOULOS

The Remarkable Rescue at Milkweed Meadow

The Perilous Performance at Milkweed Meadow

Material Girls

This guide was written by Myra Zarnowski, Professor Emerita, Queens College, CUNY
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