

Dear REACH Friends,

Sbooky season is finally upon us! If your young readers are anything like mine, they've been ready to go trick-or-treating since July. But October isn't just about candy and costumes; it's also a celebration of connection—and what better way to connect than through reading together? Did you know that October is National Reading Group Month?

In 2007, the Women's National Book Association established National Reading Group Month to encourage building relationships through the power of books—a mission the REACH initiative proudly stands behind. This month, let's strengthen our community by bring this mission into fruition!

And though fall doesn't exactly change much here in Florida—unless you count setting the AC a little cooler—this month's featured book, *Autumn in the Forest*, takes us on a colorful journey through the Northeast, where the leaves actually *do* change. This delightful story will help young readers appreciate how animals and plants prepare for winter, even if the only "fall prep" I will do is digging out last year's decorations and hoping for a breeze under 85 degrees!

You'll find a few more on my blog, but here are a few fun activities for National Reading Group Month and beyond:

- 1.) FaceTime your reading buddy: This is a REACH staple. You can't go wrong with one-on-one connection! Read a book together, chat about it, and log the experience on our website.
- 2.) Host a book swap: Exchanging books is a fun, sustainable way to try something new! Wrap the covers for an extra exciting surprise.
- 3.) Participate in a reading marathon: Pick a list of books and race your buddy to the last chapter. After each book, discuss your favorite parts—whether in person or virtually.

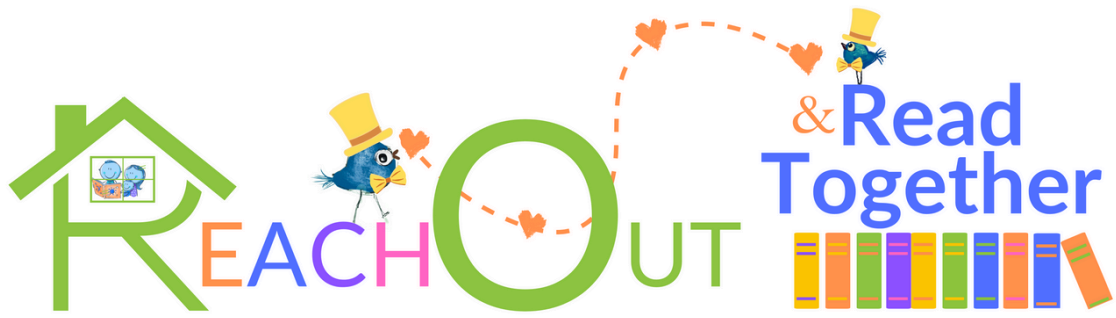
I'd love to hear how you and your little readers are celebrating National Reading Group Month! Feel free to REACH out and tag us on social media with your reading adventures.

Happy Reading & Enjoy the *Sbooky* Season,

See you next month!
Donna B.

REACH Editor & Concierge of Children's Book Fun

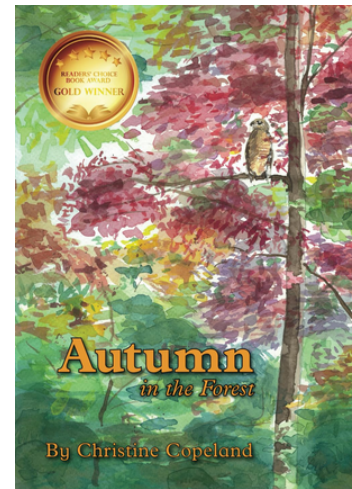




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This Month's Featured Book: Autumn in the Forest by Christine Copeland

"Autumn in the Forest" is one in a series of picture books for pre-K, K and early elementary kids about the natural world, in particular the deciduous forest of the American Northeast. This book depicts the windy changes in Autumn and preparations that plants and animals make in anticipation of winter. The language of our books is lyrical, the images are entrancing and sometimes humorous but always realistic - think field guides for 3 to 8 year-olds. There is a seed collecting activity in back for young readers. Children will learn the names and habits of forest animals and plants so that they can recognize them in natural settings. These books engage children's innate curiosity and connection to the living world so that they can learn complex principles in simple, age- appropriate language.



Suggested for ages 0-8



An Interview with Author Christine Copeland

Imagine this: a crisp breeze gently rustles the colorful leaves, and Christine Copeland and I are sitting in the heart of the forest, wrapped in cozy scarves, sipping on fall-flavored beverages—she with a pumpkin spice latte, and me, of course, with hot chocolate and ghost-shaped marshmallows. It's the perfect autumn day... at least in my imagination! While we're not actually in the forest, Christine's picture book *Autumn in the Forest* has such a magical way of transporting readers to this very setting.



Me: Christine, thank you for joining me—What inspired you to create the "Seasons in the Forest" series and focus on the natural world, particularly the deciduous forest of the American northeast?

Christine: My family lives on forested land in Northfield, Massachusetts that we conserved "forever wild" with the help of Mount Grace Land Trust. I walk in the forest every day. The life all around me in this forest is my inspiration. I or someone in my family has seen all these creatures in the books! I also have a Masters in Elementary Education and I have children of my own to whom I read from the time they were infants. So being able to return to fine arts after a career in communications and then writing these children's books, (during Covid), was actually an opportunity and gift for which I am very grateful. During Covid I also read virtually to my little great-nieces stuck at home!

Me: Oh, what a beautiful way to make the best out of hard times. So, you were already in the spirit of Reaching Out and Reading Together in 2020! How fitting you should be my first REACH author interview. Can you share a little about your creative process?

Christine: The language and the art for the books go hand in hand. I remember the day I was walking in the snow, saw deer tracks and said (aloud), "Footprints tell of a passing doe." I then had to go back and paint the picture. The images and the words for the Seasons books actually went very much hand in hand. I didn't do one and then the other. I have training in fine arts and I paint. My paintings inform my illustrations. I still take reference photos, I don't paint from my imagination. And the book illustrations are loose but they are representational, nonetheless.

Me: What was the most challenging part of illustrating this book?

An Interview with Author Christine Copeland (cont.)

Christine: Knowing when the images were finished. For the first book, I asked my sister, "Do any of these need a little more work?" She was quiet for a bit and then said, "All of them." I did not especially like hearing that but in the end it was great advice because I could see how much better they were once I had added more depth and color.

Me: That's something we have in common! I have a hard time knowing when my stories are finished too. Did you discover any new details about the forest or its animals while creating your artwork?

Christine: My family teases me about this, but I'm convinced that when I'm really focused on an animal, they tend to show up! I was painting a lot of pileated woodpecker sketches, and lo and behold, a family of woodpeckers established a nest in a snag right outside our dining room window. If you spend time in the forest very quiet and listening, you hear and see a lot.

Me: Wow, you can make animals appear just by thinking about them? That's a cool superpower! How do you hope young readers will connect with the animals and plants featured in *Autumn in the Forest*?

Christine: My hope is that all young children have an experience of enchantment with the natural world, be it with a tiny orange newt or with a soaring eagle or with a magical place. My husband, as a child, was enchanted by the southern swamps. Even in the city, squirrels, chipmunks and birds can be very funny and definitely look you in the eye and relate in some way, if only to say, "Hey, can you share that, please?"

Me: What do you hope they take away from this book?

Christine: If children are allowed to follow their natural inclination to explore and discover, they will feel connected with the natural world. You protect something you know and love.

Me: So, you are arming a generation with the power to protect our natural world with your books. Brilliant! Do you have any tips for parents or grandparents on how to use your book to spark a child's curiosity about nature, even if they don't live near a forest?

Christine: Nature is everywhere. An inner city park or a backyard or even a plant box on a stoop has a natural environment. In the parks there are birds, insects, even little amphibians and mammals that can be observed. Clouds and sunsets can be watched, the wind felt. Of course, any opportunity to walk in a more natural landscape, be it a forest or a beach or a desert, is good for the soul. Especially if you are lucky enough to encounter a fellow creature. And especially if you get to hold your grandparent's hand along the way.

Me: Where can readers buy your book?

Christine: 1. My books are available wherever children's books are sold. If your favorite bookstore doesn't have them, they can order them for you. Or you can order online from your favorite online book retailers. You can order them from me, too, of course, at www.christinecopelandbooks.com

REACH Ideas

From Christine Copeland

After you've read through *Autumn in the Forest* once, read it again teaching the children the sounds of the animals: honk, honk for the geese, ribbitt ribbitt for the frog then SLAP for the tail of the beaver, the high keening of a hawk, the chirp-chirping of a chipmunk or squirrel, the snoring of a sleeping bear and finally, the SILENCE of the weasel, (nice way to end.) Be sure to use your silence gesture after each sound. I use a palm down sliding gesture. (In *Autumn* I make the sound every other page for each animal.) (The kids will love watching you as the "conductor" and will probably do a lot of honk-honking outside later.) Practice first.



Counting can be play too. Gather acorns, put them in a jar, and ask your partner to guess how many there are. (The child does this with grandparents as well.) Teach skip counting, starting with 2's, 5's, and 10's. If they enjoy it, they'll see how quickly they can count a pile. The best math for little people is to just count.

Gracie gathered little pine cones for me. We counted them. She was very proud...

Gather leaves and show them to each other. You can ask, "What is your name? What is my name, (Momma's name etc?) What is the name of the tree that this leaf came from? Maple. Do you have a maple leaf in your pile? Do you have a maple tree in your yard...neighborhood...park?"



Children are always delighted with the work of Andy Goldsworthy:
<https://www.ecodisciple.com/blog/leaf-on-leaf-stone-on-stone/>
Why not have fun doing something similar? As you work, name the different colors. What colors do green leaves turn in the fall? (Note for caregivers: what's really happening is that photosynthesis is stopping and chlorophyll production ends, uncovering the yellows and reds that are in the leaf.)



Autumn In the Forest Discussion Questions for REACH Partners



1. How does the forest change from one season to the next?
2. How do the different animals in the story prepare for winter?
3. What role does wind play in the story, and how does it affect the forest?
4. Discuss how natural elements like wind change the landscape and affect plant and animal life.
5. What are some things humans do to prepare for winter?

Discussion Questions for Classroom Teachers & Librarians

1. What signs of autumn did you notice in the story?
2. Why do animals prepare for winter?
3. What colors do you see in autumn?
4. What do you think happens to the seeds that fall in autumn?
5. Which animals fly away and which ones stay?



Let's Sing Together!

Sing to the tune of The Wheels on the Bus

"Autumn in the Forest"



The leaves on the trees turn red and gold,
Red and gold, red and gold,
The leaves on the trees turn red and gold,
All through the fall.

The squirrels in the trees gather up nuts,
Gather up nuts, gather up nuts,
The squirrels in the trees gather up nuts,
All through the fall.



The birds in the sky fly far away,
Far away, far away,
The birds in the sky fly far away,
All through the fall.

The bears in the woods snuggle in their dens,
In their dens, in their dens,
The bears in the woods snuggle in their dens,
All through the fall.



The wind in the air blows whoosh, whoosh, whoosh,
Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh,
The wind in the air blows whoosh, whoosh, whoosh,
All through the fall.





Leaf Animals

Materials:

- Real or Paper Leaves
- Glue
- Markers
- Googly Eyes (Optional)
- Construction Paper

Instructions:

Gather Leaves:

- Outdoor Option: Go on a nature walk with your child to collect real leaves. Look for a variety of shapes and colors to add interest to your creations.
- Indoor Option: If outdoor leaves aren't available, cut leaf shapes from colored construction paper or cardstock. You can use templates or trace around actual leaves to get the shapes you want.

Create the Animal:

- Take your construction paper and lay it flat on the table.
- Begin arranging the leaves on the construction paper to create your chosen animal. Play around with different placements until you're happy with the design.
- Once you have a layout you like, use glue to secure the leaves to the construction paper. Be generous with the glue to ensure they stick well.
- Add Features:
 - Use markers to add details to your animals. For example, draw a face, whiskers, or patterns on the leaves.
 - If you have googly eyes, glue them onto the leaves to give your animal a fun, friendly look. You can also create eyes using markers or draw them directly on the leaves.
- Virtual Twist: Partners can show each other their leaf creations and guess which animal they made!

Let's play Animal Charades

In the classroom:

1. Prepare animal cards: Teachers create cards with different forest animals, including those from Autumn in the Forest and other animals found in the forest (see the list below). Write the name of each animal and, optionally, add a picture.
2. Choose an animal: One child draws a card without showing anyone and secretly picks the animal on the card to act out.
3. Act it out: The child acts out the animal without making any sounds. They can pretend to gather nuts like a squirrel, fly like a bird, or sleep like a bear.
4. Guess the animal: The other children take turns guessing the animal. The first child to guess correctly gets to choose the next card and act out the next animal!

Suggested Animals for the Cards:

- Squirrel
- Bear
- Bird
- Fox
- Deer
- Rabbit
- Raccoon
- Owl
- Chipmunk
- Skunk
- Turtle
- Snake
- Beaver
- Frog
- Hedgehog
- Porcupine
- Coyote
- Woodpecker
- Bobcat
- Weasel
- Bald Eagle
- Wild Turkey
- Opossum
- Salamander



Across the miles:

1. Prepare animal cards: Before the call, each partner prepares a set of animal cards. You can use the animals from Autumn in the Forest and other forest creatures from the list provided. Write the names and, if possible, include a picture of each animal.
2. Choose an actor: One partner takes a turn and secretly selects an animal card from their set.
3. Act it out: The actor mutes their microphone and acts out the animal using gestures and movements—no sounds allowed! They can flap their arms like a bird or pretend to gather nuts like a squirrel.
4. Guess the animal: The other partner watches carefully and tries to guess the animal being acted out. They can take turns guessing until they get it right.
5. Switch roles: After a correct guess, switch roles so the guesser becomes the next actor.

Helpful Tips for Playing Over Video Call:

- Be patient with guessing, since it may take longer through video calls.
- If it's too hard, give hints like "This animal climbs trees!" or "This animal sleeps through winter!"

An Update on the Rescue Readers Project: A Joyful First Event!

Last month, I introduced you to the Rescue Readers project, an initiative aimed at encouraging daily reading by letting children "adopt" a rescued stuffed animal that depends on them for storytime. I am overjoyed to share that our very first Rescue Readers event was a tremendous success!

On a warm October morning at the North Port Community Yard Sale, we launched Rescue Readers with open hearts and lots of excitement. From the moment families approached our booth, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Children's eyes lit up when they learned they'd be adopting a "rescued" stuffed friend. They eagerly picked out their new reading companions—some choosing soft, cuddly bears, while others gravitated toward adventurous-looking foxes or bunnies. Each stuffed animal went home with a book, ready to begin their journey of shared storytime.

**Loved by Kids, Parents,
and Advocates Alike**



It wasn't just the kids who were enthusiastic about Rescue Readers. Parents were thrilled to see their children excited about reading, and many expressed how this unique approach helped inspire a daily reading habit. A few literacy advocates who happened to stop by were impressed by how the project ties empathy, responsibility, and the love of reading together in such an approachable way. One advocate said, "This is exactly the kind of creative, heart-centered initiative we need to make reading accessible and fun for all children."

I even had the pleasure of hosting a spontaneous storytime right at the event! Watching the kids cuddle their stuffed animals while listening to the story felt magical, and it reinforced the connection that Rescue Readers is all about—reading together, building bonds, and fostering a love for books.

Looking Ahead

This is just the beginning for Rescue Readers. With such wonderful feedback from both children and adults, I'm already planning future events and exploring ways to expand the project. Whether through more local markets, online adoption options, or classroom "rescue missions," I'm excited to see how this initiative continues to grow.

Looking Ahead (cont.)

I want to hear from you! How do you think Rescue Readers can help with your advocacy goals? Email me your thoughts, ideas and questions. Let's work together to spread the love of reading, one rescued animal—and reader—at a time.

If you missed our first event, here's a second chance!

I'll be at the North Port Community Yard Sale located at City Hall, 4970 City Hall BLVD, North Port, FL, 34286 on:

- Saturday, November 02, 2024 | 08:00 AM - 12:00 PM



As we continue to explore the joy of reading together through our REACH Out & Read guides, I would love to hear from you! I'm looking for your favorite children's books to feature in our upcoming issues. Whether it's a classic favorite, a hidden gem, or a recent release that you and your little readers adore, your suggestions will help us create a rich tapestry of stories to share.

Please email me at donna@donnaboock.com with the titles and authors of the books you think would resonate with our community. Feel free to include a brief note about why you love these books and how they've impacted your reading journey!

Invite friend 👤+

If you know someone who loves books or is passionate about encouraging kids to read, please invite them to join our REACH family at www.donnaboock.com. Reading is even more fun when shared, and together we can inspire more children to connect with stories and their caregivers.

Thank you for being a vital part of our mission. Let's grow our community and spread the love of reading and connecting with one another!