

CHAPTER 1
THE LORAX WITHIN:
CHILDREN’S LITERATURE OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY

*“But now,” says the Once-ler,
 “Now that you’re here,
 The word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear.
 UNLESS someone like you
 Cares a whole awful lot,
 Nothing is going to get better.
 It’s not.”*

- Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*

The dynamic Chesapeake Bay comes vibrantly alive in children’s books, which introduce children to marine animals, the landscape of the estuary, and the lives of watermen. Indeed, these works demonstrate that the Bay is a fundamentally “teachable” medium—a dynamic world that is replete with ecological, biological, and aesthetic wonders. Authors of many of the children’s books I discuss in this chapter utilize the richness of the Bay’s aquatic and shoreline landscape to share environmental lessons with their young readers. The children’s literature that I have encountered varies in its degree of didacticism. Some works, such as Mick Blackistone’s *The Day They Left The Bay*, Jennifer Keats Curtis’ *Oshus and Shelly Save the Bay*, and Priscilla Cummings’ *Chadwick and the Garplegrungen* are extremely didactic—aiming an explicit environmental education agenda at their young readers by directly encouraging, or even shaming, their readers into taking action to protect the endangered Bay. Another category of works I have encountered, such as Priscilla Cummings’ *Chadwick the Crab*, Elaine Ann Allen’s *Olly The Oyster Cleans The Bay*, and Kristina Henry’s *Sam: The Tale of a Chesapeake Bay Rockfish*, choose to anthropomorphize Chesapeake life in order to develop a personal identification and connection with their young readers, instead of presenting an explicitly environmental lesson to their audience. While garnering sympathy for the creatures’ plight in

their books, these children's authors more subtly encourage their young readers to take action to protect newly understood Bay creatures from environmental degradation. A third category of Bay children's literature includes works that provide direct instruction to children about the threats to the Bay and present concrete ways that children can aid the Bay conservation movement. Such books include Susan Walker's *Life in an Estuary* and David Owen Bell's *Awesome Chesapeake: A Kid's Guide to the Bay*. In addition to these factual books¹, several of the more narrative-based children's stories also provide explicit information for readers on how to get involved in conservation as an afterword to their work, such as at the closing of Jennifer Keats Curtis' *Osprey Adventure*. Forming a fourth group of Bay children's literature are the works chiefly concerned with introducing and familiarizing children with the varied resources that the Bay offers and with generating awe through the medium of story. I will refer to these works as exhibiting place-based environmentalism, for whether through whimsical narrative, such as in Lynne Lockhart's *Rambling Raft* and Jeffrey Holland's *Chessie, The Sea Monster That Ate Annapolis!* or through basic introductions to Bay creatures, habitats, and landscapes, such as in Priscilla Cummings' *Beddy Bye in the Bay* and *Chesapeake Rainbow*, these works aim to develop a wonder for the Bay in children and to encourage young people to value and enjoy this invaluable resource. Regardless of the degree of didacticism or the method of teaching, all Bay children's literature arguably has some aspect of an environmental agenda—to influence the next generation of Bay citizens to value and care for the endangered estuary.

A powerful touchstone text for understanding didactic environmental children's literature is Dr. Seuss's famous work *The Lorax*, published in 1971 at the beginning of the Bay's environmental movement (Henderson, Kennedy, and Chamberlin 129). Though not focused on the Bay's environmental crisis, *The Lorax*, set in a typical Seuss fantastical setting, has a more

¹ I am grateful to Leah Nagel for her editorial help with this chapter.

universal conservationist message. Seuss's masterpiece has wide-sweeping appeal with a young audience; indeed, as Jennifer Zicht explains in the EPA Journal, "for many young children, *The Lorax* may be a first introduction to environmental education" (Henderson et al. 130). Seuss's tale tells the story of the Once-ler, a creature who ends up destroying his natural surroundings due to his Thneed industry, which depletes the area's supply of Truffula trees, sends native animals into permanent exile, and poisons the air and the waters of the fantasy world. The tale of the Once-ler and his conflict with the Lorax, a mysterious creature who "speak[s] for the trees," exists within a frame narrative of the elderly Once-ler telling this woeful tale to a young boy² (Seuss 23). Dr. Seuss's narrative consequently explores the issue of generational conflict and responsibility: is the Once-ler the one who should clean up his own environmental mess, or can he simply pass the torch of this responsibility to the next generation?

As the Once-ler chops down his first Truffula tree, the Lorax appears from the tree trunk and begins to lecture the Once-ler for his carelessness, speaking "...with a voice / that was sharpish and bossy" (Seuss 21). From the very beginning of the narrative, the idea of environmental didacticism is apparent—a "sharpish and bossy" voice warning young readers that carelessly using natural resources is a poor moral choice. The Lorax's self-proclaimed identity—"I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees. / I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues"—suggests that environmentalism is a vocal process, of literally giving a voice to helpless nature which cannot save itself from human evil (Seuss 23).

Despite the Lorax's impassioned warnings, the Once-ler continues to "bigger" his Thneed-making industry, swiftly mechanizing and expanding his business to include a "Super-Axe-Hacker" to chop down several trees at once, all in the name of producing Thneeds, "...a

² Due to the lack of published page numbers in Seuss's *The Lorax*, I self-paginated for the sake of citation.

Fine-Something-That-All-People-Need!” (Seuss 33, 24) Here, Seuss provides subtle commentary on our increasingly commercialized society, and the crucial distinction between what we “need” and what we “want” (Henderson et al. 133). As the Once-ler’s business continues to grow, and more Truffula trees are cut down to support the Thneed industry, the animals that inhabit the area begin to suffer, and soon the Lorax is back to speak for the Brown Bar-ba-loots, the Humming-Fish, and the Swomee-Swans. However, the Once-ler is irrepressible, as he proclaims, despite reports of illness among the animals, “BUT... / business is business! / And business must grow / regardless of crummies in tummies, you know” (Seuss 37). As air and water pollution worsen from the Thneed factory, the disgusted Lorax at last departs, leaving only the haunting word “UNLESS” behind, spelled out in rocks (Seuss 56).

At the end of *The Lorax*, Seuss returns his readers to the frame narrative, involving the Once-ler sharing his tale with the child. Famously, the Once-ler exclaims:

“But *now*,” says the Once-ler,
 “Now that *you’re* here,
 the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear.
 UNLESS someone like you
 cares a whole awful lot,
 nothing is going to get better.
 It’s not.” (Seuss 58)

The future of the planet’s health, as demonstrated by the Once-ler’s haunting words, hinges upon the interest and efforts of the younger generation. The word “UNLESS” seems both precarious and hopeful—precarious, as it makes a return to health seem fundamentally conditional, and hopeful, as it displays great faith in the strength of young people to “care a whole awful lot”

(Seuss 58). Seuss pointedly depicts the Once-ler physically passing the last Truffula seed, the seed of environmental awareness and action, to the young boy, declaring, “You’re in charge of the last Truffula Seeds. / And the Truffula Trees are what everyone needs. Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care. / Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air” (Seuss 61). Henderson et al. debate whether the Once-ler is inspiring the next generation, or simply “abdicating responsibility” of environmental preservation to young people (138). These scholars seem discouraged by this closing scene of *The Lorax*, and question: “Wouldn’t it be grand if the Once-ler emerged...returned the boy’s payment for the story, and joined the boy in planting the last Truffula seed to ensure the Truffula forest’s regeneration?” (Henderson et al.142). Henderson et al. believe that such a revised ending would promote “intergenerational action”, a more effective response to environmental degradation than a resigned passing of the conservationist seed to the next generation (142). Seuss’s *The Lorax*, besides forming a foundational work in children’s environmental writing, also provides a useful frame of reference to apply to the Chesapeake Bay-oriented children’s works I will address in this chapter. *The Lorax* is an extremely didactic children’s book, figuratively passing down the torch of environmental action to children through the fantastical world of Seuss, and inspiring children to take responsibility to clean up their environments. Seuss’s depiction of pollutants pouring into the atmosphere and the indiscriminate removal of the Truffula trees mirrors the issues of runoff, pollution, and overfishing that currently plague the Bay.

Although the didacticism within *The Lorax* certainly applies to the conservationist theme of much of modern Bay children’s literature, the Bay first appeared in literature geared towards children in the late 19th century magazine for children, entitled *St. Nicholas: A Magazine for Young Folks* (Adkins 31). According to scholar Kaye Adkins, Mary Mapes Dodge, the editor of

the magazine, wished to introduce her young readers to the complexities and wonders of the world “accurately...without distortions or heavy-handed moralizing” (32). Nature and natural history took prominence in many of the *St. Nicholas* articles, largely because of Mary Mapes Dodge’s personal curiosities about these subjects (Adkins 34). Naturalists often wrote articles for the magazine, providing accurate information about the natural world to children, and “..explain[ing] how children can become naturalists themselves” (Adkins 35). Indeed, the famous naturalist Rachel Carson first published her stories through the *St. Nicholas Magazine* League contest at the age of eleven (Lear 18-19). True to her mission to promote children’s “active curiosity and experimentation” with their surroundings, Mary Mapes Dodge established a column in her magazine that allowed children to pose questions about nature and receive published responses from scientists and other scholars, who volunteered to provide these answers (Adkins 35).

St. Nicholas Magazine, which facilitated children’s active engagement with and deeper understanding of the natural world, promoted a type of early environmentalism. Adkins explains Dodge’s purpose in creating the magazine—the hope that the articles she published would “introduce readers to other ways in which nature is valuable, reflecting the thinking of preservationists. This interest in all of nature is accompanied by calls for an ethical relationship with the natural world” (Adkins 42). Dodge’s promotion of this “ethical relationship” renders her an early Lorax figure. Thus, nearly a century before the beginnings of the environmental movement on the Chesapeake Bay, authors were writing with the explicit purpose of educating children about their natural surroundings and developing an “ethical relationship” between young people and their environments.

Besides heralding a tradition of didactic environmental children's writing, a few *St. Nicholas* articles directly address the Chesapeake Bay, though not in great detail. For instance, D. C. Gilman's article entitled "Baltimore," appearing in the August 1893 edition of the magazine, explains the vitality of the shipping industry and oyster harvesting—both of which sustained the area. In addition, Gilman provides a short overview of Bay creatures to the magazine's readers, explaining that "the terrapin, the soft-shelled crab, and the canvas-back duck are at home here" (Gilman 732). The Chesapeake Bay blue crab also appears in a September 1886 article by C. F. Holder entitled "Spiders of the Sea," which also introduces young readers to crabs from all over the world (Holder 840). In "The Seals of our Shores," an article by W. T. Hornaday appearing in the January 1896 edition of *St. Nicholas*, the author provides a thorough description of many seals, pointing out that the Hooded Seal "has been known to wander even as far north as the Chesapeake Bay" (44). Though these *St. Nicholas* articles that mention the Bay do not directly promote an "ethical relationship" between their audience and the Chesapeake, their introductions to the Bay economy and its creatures may foster a sense of curiosity and respect in their readers for the complexities of the estuary.

In modern Bay children's literature, the work that most closely mirrors the strident tone of the Lorax to promote an "ethical relationship" between readers and the Chesapeake is Mick Blackistone's *The Day They Left The Bay*, published in 1988³. The very jacket of the book declares that the title is the "Winner: E.P.A. Environmental Education Achievement Award." Blackistone begins his lengthy picture book with a short introduction to the Chesapeake Bay's history, geography, and food chain. Highlighting his implication of man as the root of the Bay's sufferings, Blackistone closes his introduction by stating: "At the top of the [food] chain is man"

³ Due to the lack of published page numbers in Blackistone's *The Day They Left The Bay*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

(1). In the opening of his book, Blackistone introduces us to Old Seagull, the protagonist of the story, who watches over the Bay from a perch at the top of the lighthouse (3). Old Seagull seems to be a nearly God-like figure, or at least a caretaker of the Bay's well-being; as Blackistone writes, "He [Old Seagull] watched as he always had for years" (3). Through the eyes of Old Seagull, young readers see that the Bay's health has been degraded. For instance, Old Seagull notices: "Osprey and Eagle were often gone much longer on their hunting trips...often coming back without food. Days would go by before Old Seagull saw a school a fish, and when he did see one, it was a small group" (Blackistone 4). At last, Old Seagull has seen enough degradation: "One day in the middle of the summer, he sensed there really was a great sadness in all the creatures above and below his lighthouse tower perch. And it was time, after all these years, to do something he had never done before. It was time for action" (Blackistone 6). Through the example of this anthropomorphized seagull, empathetically displaying environmental awareness and initiative, Blackistone encourages children to feel this same fundamental need to take action to rectify the Bay's current situation. As he invites other Bay creatures, from both the shoreline and the waters, to discuss what steps to take, the creatures refer to him as "Grandfather of the Bay," placing the seagull even more securely in a deified position. Indeed, as Osprey interacts with Old Seagull, the narrator indicates that "He knew...he must always place himself below Old Seagull and that he should never speak unless Old Seagull spoke to him" (Blackistone 10-11). Old Seagull holds a position of unquestioned authority figure for the Bay creatures of Blackistone's tale.

As Old Seagull asks the Bay creatures what can be done to save the Bay, the Osprey angrily responds that people have to amend their destructive ways in order to make the Chesapeake healthy once again (Blackistone 14). Through a list of harmful human activities,

including littering, fertilizer seepage, and runoff, young readers may identify activities in their own communities that negatively affect the Bay (Blackistone 14). Mirroring the generational aspects of *The Lorax*, the Eagle explains that Bay citizens “...must learn that by doing these things Osprey talked about, they are not only hurting our children, but their children, too. If human children learned these things now, they would grow to be kind to our children” (Blackistone 14). Regardless of the mistakes of the older generation, young readers who encounter Blackistone’s tale are immediately held responsible for the Bay’s health. *The Day They Left The Bay* displays the importance of educating children for a better future by encouraging young people to be curious and take action in the present.

Given the dire situation of the Bay, Old Seagull proposes drastic action, that all the creatures will leave the Bay “until the lessons are learned [by humans]” (Blackistone 14). The Bay creatures seem to be punishing the Chesapeake human citizens for their carelessness—presenting their own “ultimatum” to their human counterparts. As Old Seagull declares that “I will lead you [the Bay creatures]” in their exile, Blackistone continues his development of Old Seagull’s deification. As the creatures leave the Bay, humans soon discover the absence of Chesapeake life. Mirroring the passing of environmental responsibility from the older generation to the younger generation in *The Lorax*, in *The Day They Left The Bay* an old man tells a dejected boy, frustrated by his lack of fishing success, to go talk to “newspapers and magazines and town leaders” about what the people must do to save the Bay and bring the creatures home (Blackistone 27). In a prophetic statement, the old man instructs the boy to “Tell everyone that people can’t take from the Bay more than the Bay can give to them” (27). Blackistone posits the Bay and humans as mutually dependent—when the balance of support is upset, one side cannot support the other.

Though the boy protests, “They won’t believe me! I’m only a kid!”, the man insists he take on the challenge. The boy’s concerns echo a theme in Bay children’s and young adult literature—the younger generation’s fear of being ignored due to their age, even as they value environmental responsibility (Blackistone 27). The young characters who populate these books must prove their competence on and caring for the Bay to be believed. Mirroring the Once-ler’s departure from environmental rehabilitation, the old man leaves the boy to carry out the difficult job by himself, despite the boy’s protest: “Hey, where are you going? Aren’t you staying to help me?” (Blackistone 28). Just like the passing of the Truffula seed from the Once-ler to the boy, the man says, “No...it’s in your hands now. You must tell them what must be done” (Blackistone 28).

Through the boy’s efforts, the word spreads about why the creatures have left the Bay. His first target is the town newspaper, and he successfully sways the editor to admit, “we must convince people to stop talking and start cleaning up the Bay” (Blackistone 30). Gradually, the awareness spreads to all people in the Bay area—watermen, politicians, writers, scientists, and educators alike—and of all ages (31). As the people take responsibility for their own mistakes and clean up the Bay, they are “shocked” by the state of the ecosystem, especially the “great numbers of old tires, televisions, refrigerators, and car parts that had been thrown in the creeks and the Bay for years (Blackistone 33). The months and months of work discourage some, who “grumbled” about the required effort, but encouragingly “...more and more children forgot about their sadness and began to work very hard to make the Bay better” (Blackistone 32). Although the responsibility and efforts include people of all ages, the originator of the action is a child, and the backbone of the movement seems to be dominated by children. The boy proudly carries the torch of environmental accountability, passed to him by the old man. With more careful

regulation of factory waste, fertilizer use, sewage treatment plants, and building regulations, the collective action of the people becomes wider in scope (Blackistone 33). In a rather idealistic image of what Bay conservation looks like, Blackistone writes that “Everyone in the Bay area helped a little every day. As the weeks and months went by, many changes took place. The boy felt very glad and was very proud of all the people” (Blackistone 33). The boy’s activism generates collective—and effective—action to clean the estuary. The conspicuously unnamed boy seems to be curiously placed in the position of Old Seagull among humans: he is the leader and the source of this movement, and he watches over its development with pride. Mirroring the end of *The Lorax*, when the Once-ler claims that if the boy plants more Truffula trees, “Then the Lorax / and all his friends / may come back”, the Bay citizens have successfully re-created an environment hospitable to the Bay creatures. (Seuss 61).

At last, the humans have done their part, and Old Seagull and his companions return, causing the people to be “...overcome with joy because all their hard work had finally brought back the creatures to the Bay” (Blackistone 35). What might young people take away from this extremely didactic response to the Bay’s declining health? The back cover of Blackistone’s book describes the tale as “a charming and enlightening modern fable for children”—a fable with a clear lesson in the importance of environmentally responsible citizenship. Young readers might simply absorb the lesson in environmental stewardship instead of the strident didacticism of the writing style. *The Day They Left The Bay* describes the specifics of environmental degradation in understandable terms, identifying many of the human errors that so significantly damage the Bay ecosystem. Most importantly, Blackistone’s work places the burden of cleaning up the Bay squarely in the hands of youth. Through the example of the once-hesitant and strikingly nameless “boy” in the book, any child can identify with this role of environmental herald.

Just as Mick Blackistone anthropomorphizes Old Seagull in *The Day They Left The Bay* to more effectively transmit his environmental message to his readers, Jennifer Keats Curtis personifies two brother-and-sister oysters in *Oshus and Shelly Save the Bay* in order to make the plight of the Bay's creatures accessible to young people. Unlike Blackistone, Curtis utilizes a playful narrative to transmit her environmental message to readers. For instance, Oshus and Shelly discover the depth of the Bay's environmental degradation while playing a game, in which "...Oshus nearly hit his sister with the empty snail shell...because he could not see her...and the reason Oshus could not see Shelly was because the Bay had become very dirty" (Curtis 4). While Curtis' use of the oysters themselves to discover the scope of the environmental degradation is imaginative, it does not mask its serious impact for these creatures: "When Oshus finally found Shelly, he told her the reason the water was so brown and dirty was because it was polluted. The thought that their beloved Bay was polluted made the oysters very sad" (Curtis 7). By identifying with these personified human children, in the form of Chesapeake Bay oysters, young readers may gain their own sense of sadness about the current state of the ecosystem.

Oshus and Shelly provide an example of taking action to rectify the current state of the Bay, instead of simply bemoaning the fate of the Chesapeake. For instance, while Oshus and Shelly consider how they can save the Bay, Shelly asks the question, "We're so small and the Bay is so big...How can we help?" (7). Shelly's question mirrors the problem that many children may have when considering how to help the Bay—they are small, and the Bay and its problems are so big—so what can they singularly do to make a difference? The oyster siblings eventually ask Captain Caleb about how they can save the Bay, just as a child asks a knowledgeable adult for information before taking individual action. However, the initiative comes from the "child" figure in *Oshus and Shelly Save The Bay*, unlike the initiative being

passed down to the child by an adult figure, as in *The Day They Left The Bay*. Through the knowledgeable adult figure of Captain Caleb, the oyster siblings learn that once there were huge oyster bars in the bay, so massive that sailboats had a difficult time navigating safely up the channels (Curtis 22). Captain Caleb explains to Oshus and Shelly, “At that time, the bay was very clean because millions and millions of oysters worked day in and day out to keep it that way” (Curtis 22). This children’s book explains the scope of environmental degradation in kid-friendly terms, through the playful eyes of Oshus and Shelly.

The oyster siblings demonstrate an eagerness to help save the Bay that may serve as an inspiration for young readers. Measuring their own abilities against the vastness of the ecosystem, Oshus asks, “But even if we filter all of the time, how can just the two of us clean the whole Bay?” (Curtis 25). When Captain Caleb explains the idea of an “oyster farm”, or a cage where a colony of oysters lives and filters the Bay, and given better water circulation are able to grow more quickly, Oshus and Shelly are beside themselves—they finally have a way they can take action (28). As the oyster siblings excitedly proclaim, “So we CAN save the Bay! Let’s start a farm!!” they immediately begin recruiting other oysters to join the farm and expand their own efforts (29). The example of Oshus and Shelly, from which rippling environmental effects alter the entire Bay, serves as a model for young readers to share the news of degradation and encourage others to take action as well. At the close of the story, Curtis writes: “Oshus and Shelly are the happiest oysters of all because they helped to save their beloved Bay” (37). The personification of the oysters encourages children to seek their own sense of pride and happiness by doing what they can for the estuary.

Curtis’ seemingly simplistic children’s book actually offers a three-pronged lesson in environmentalism to young readers. Firstly, by providing information about the filtering power

of the oyster and its vital role in Bay health, Curtis educates her young readers about a lesser-known piece in the puzzle of environmental degradation. Secondly, by personifying two of these tiny creatures, Curtis helps children relate on an emotional level to the important job of oysters and their tireless work to filter “the bad stuff” out of the Bay waters (Curtis 24). Thirdly, Curtis demonstrates that alone, even the most dedicated citizens cannot save the Bay. Instead, an individual’s initiative and conviction can inspire others to join in, do their part, and make larger positive changes in the Bay’s ecosystem.

Priscilla Cummings’ *Chadwick and the Garplegrungen* also personifies Bay creatures to encourage individual initiative and collective action. Chadwick, the blue crab hero of Cummings’ *Chadwick the Crab* series, has been vacationing in the Baltimore Aquarium, but upon hearing that his good friend Matilda the egret is very sick, he quickly swims home to Shady Creek (Cummings 5). When he arrives, he discovers that pollution, called the “garplegrungen,” is the cause of Matilda’s illness. Described as “...green and purple bubbles that come ashore with each gentle lapping of the waves,” the garplegrungen has a sinister appearance at Shady Creek (Cummings 8). Like Curtis, Cummings utilizes a measure of humor to the topic of environmental degradation. For instance, Chadwick’s friend Toulouse the Canadian Goose bemoans the closure of his French cooking school due to failed and contaminated recipes: “The popovers—they wouldn’t pop over. And all the French pastry turned out green and purple” (Cummings 12). However, the creatures are very concerned, and so they go to their knowledgeable elder, much like Old Seagull in *The Day They Left The Bay* and Captain Caleb in *Oshus and Shelly Save the Bay*, for advice. This elder is Baron von Heron, an intelligent old blue heron who speaks only in rhyme (Cummings 13). When the creatures ask where the nasty garplegrungen comes from, the Baron responds:

“I tell you this, with some distaste:
 The garplegrungen comes from people waste.
 It’s fertilizer from their lands,
 And trash they’ve thrown out with their hands.
 It’s junk from factories, gunk from farms.
 People don’t realize how many things it harms.
 They think these green and purple bubbles
 Are someone else’s ugly troubles.” (Cummings 14)

Once again, the creatures are shown to be victims of human carelessness, just as in *The Day They Left The Bay*. The readers themselves are implicated by the Baron’s strident verse, which mirrors the Lorax’s curious rhymes in Seuss’s book. When the creatures press the Baron to tell them what to do about the pollution, he answers: “The solution to pollution / is to stop its distribution” (Cummings 14). Emboldened by this suggestion, Chadwick and his friends attempt to bottle up the garplegrungen, and block the drainage pipes that spill the pollution into the Bay. However, they are quickly discouraged by the futility of their efforts, as the garplegrungen keeps flowing (Cummings 17).

Frustrated, Chadwick suddenly has an idea that also answers the Baron’s riddle: “...we’ll have to ask the people to stop putting the garplegrungen into the water!” (Cummings 18). In order to have their voices heard, the creatures send a letter to the State House, in the hopes that a law will be passed to prevent the spread of garplegrungen into their waters (Cummings 19-22). Matilda, the sickened egret, delivers the letter to the State House, in order to show the legislators her poor condition due to the garplegrungen’s effects (Cummings 22-23). With the persuasive letter, Matilda’s appearance, and the arrival of thousands of raucous Bay birds at the State

House, the legislators pass a law to prevent garplegrungen from being put in the Bay (Cummings 29). However, Cummings makes clear that the law is not a simple fix to the issue at hand, “It would take many months—and perhaps years—before the garplegrungen went away completely, but it wasn’t long before most of the green and purple bubbles started to disappear” (29). The example of the Bay creatures going through the system of law in order to protect the estuary serves as an impetus for young readers to write letters to their own legislators about environmental issues. However, Cummings helps readers arrive at these conclusions with a playful narrative, unlike the more serious and strident *The Day They Left The Bay*.

When I interviewed Priscilla Cummings this past summer, I asked her about her purpose in writing *Chadwick and the Garplegrungen*, and how she made this book about a serious issue like Bay degradation so accessible to young readers. Cummings explained how she came up with the idea of calling the pollution “garplegrungen”:

The most important issue out on the Bay is pollution. But I didn’t want to write *Chadwick and the Chesapeake Bay Pollution*. Who is going to want to read that? I mean, that’s no fun! And so I tried to think of a word that the animals would use for pollution...and I made up the word “Garplegrungen.” It sounds yucky. I actually tried it out on some second graders in a school in Davidsonville...a lot of them went, “Eww.” They didn’t know what it was, but it had a yucky effect on them. (Cummings Personal Interview 27 August 2010)

Cummings is self-aware in her narrative playfulness. She knows her audience well, and she understands what will create an impact on children. With humor and neologisms, Cummings tailors her didactic environmental message to the age and interests of her intended audience. Unlike the strident and serious tone of *The Day They Left The Bay*, Cummings achieves a similar

conservationist message and more subtly suggests how children can get involved in protecting the Bay through the legal system. *Chadwick and the Garplegrungen* occupies a similar didactic space to *Oshus and Shelly Save the Bay*, for both works rely on the personification of Bay creatures and a generous measure of narrative humor and playfulness to more gently share their environmental message with their young readers.

A second tier of children's literature about the Chesapeake Bay seeks to generate an environmental awareness among children through anthropomorphism of Bay creatures, but does not as stridently promote an explicit environmental "call to action" typical of the previous three books discussed. However, this second group of books remains didactic—they seek to teach children about the Bay environment and help children identify with Bay animals, thus generating compassion for these creatures. By demonstrating the plight of Bay creatures in terms that children can grasp, these books may indirectly encourage children to protect the endangered estuary.

Priscilla Cummings' picture book for very young readers, *Beddy Bye in the Bay*, fully occupies this second tier of children's literature⁴. The picture book describes how different animals go to sleep in the Bay environment, and how this may be similar to or different from how human children go to sleep on the shore. Personifying the Bay creatures, Cummings generates a direct child-creature understanding. For instance, Cummings relates how herons feel upon going to bed high in a tree and what a human reaction to this habitat might look like: "You would think that a nest tippy-top would be frightful, / But the herons all say that the height is delightful" (3). By helping young readers actively consider what it might be like to sleep at the top of trees, Cummings places child and animal on an equal level, which promotes understanding

⁴ Due to the lack of published page numbers in *Beddy Bye in the Bay*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

and compassion. Cummings takes this idea of child-creature understanding a step further. For instance, as Cummings explains how ducks and geese go to bed at night, she explains how they tuck their heads back into their wings to sleep. Actively involving kids in this creature-child identification, Cummings instructs her readers: “Just for fun you should try it. First, take off your shoes. / On one leg...turn your head...shut your eyes...and then snooze!” (13). There is no overt environmental message in this particular work. However, by physically involving her readers with the realities of how Bay creatures sleep, Cummings promotes childhood compassion for Bay life. Drawing comparisons between the routines of Bay creatures and the lives of children helps the latter feel a connection to the wildlife.

Occupying a middle ground between the strong environmental didacticism of her *Chadwick and the Garplegrungen* and the less overt environmentalism of her *Beddy Bye in the Bay* is Cummings’ *Sid and Sal’s Famous Channel Marker Diner*. The tale of an osprey couple named Sid and Sal, the story opens with a scene of urban sprawl and the consequences of senseless human development for the animal world. One summer, upon returning home to the Chesapeake Bay from their long migration, Sid and Sal are unpleasantly surprised by the state of the cove they call home:

Coming home was always a joyous time—until the year they arrived to see a yellow bulldozer plowing a path through their woods. Perched in a sycamore tree across the cove, Sid and Sal watched in horror as people stomped over the ground shouting and pointing. Chain saws buzzed. In a matter of minutes, their old pine tree was knocked down, cut up, and carted away. (Cummings 5)

This passage allows young readers to experience the visceral effects that human development along the Bay wreaks upon its natural inhabitants—the experience of watching one’s home being

destroyed. Indeed, the ironic name of the new development, “Cozy Cove Condos,” provides commentary on the most stereotypical aspect of urban sprawl—the ever-present condo development, which even young readers can see is not “cozy” at all to the Bay creatures who lost their habitats due to its construction (Cummings 5). Cummings’ work aims to appeal to the emotions of her young readers.

Cummings once again employs narrative playfulness to promote further identification between her readers and the osprey couple. In search of a new home, the ospreys decide to open “The Channel Marker Diner” to start a new chapter of their lives (Cummings 8). As they struggle to attract customers, children are drawn into the charming world of their osprey counterparts (Cummings 17-18). Human carelessness is not absent from the story following the opening vignette of Sid and Sal’s home being bulldozed. Later, a reckless powerboater smashes into the Channel Marker Diner and destroys the ospreys’ home (24). Cummings demonstrates how a human attitude of entitlement towards the Bay’s resources affects animal life deeply, yet she accomplishes this lesson through the unconventional medium of entrepreneurial ospreys and their Channel Marker Diner. This lighthearted book serves as a metaphor for other types of environmental degradation that humans carelessly inflict upon the Bay.

Four other titles by Priscilla Cummings anthropomorphize Bay life in order to generate identification between young readers and the creatures that inhabit the Bay; however, these works are less strident than those previously discussed. *Chadwick the Crab*, *Chadwick’s Wedding*, *Toulouse: The Story of a Canada Goose*, *Meet Chadwick and His Chesapeake Bay Friends*, and *Chadwick Forever* provide an overview of the Bay environment by introducing their young readers to speaking Bay creatures who usher them into a rich world of creativity beneath the Bay’s waters and on its shores. The most didactic of this group of books is *Chadwick*

Forever, which tells the tale of Hester, a Delmarva Fox Squirrel who leaves her home because there are none of her kind left. As she bemoans her fate, Hester rails against the impact of humans on the Bay environment: “What’s important is that it’s about us poor creatures who may disappear forever—all because of something *man* has done” (Cummings 9). However, humans are not as roundly implicated in this fate as they are in *The Day They Left The Bay* and *Chadwick and the Garplegrungen*.

Other children’s authors besides Priscilla Cummings provide a more gentle commentary of human harm to the Bay. For instance, Kristina Henry’s *Sam: The Tale of a Chesapeake Bay Rockfish* demonstrates the extent of human impact on the Bay—from morsels of food thrown in the river to a bottle carelessly tossed in the Bay, in which Sam eventually gets stuck⁵. By personifying the rockfish, Henry helps readers sympathize with the fate of the helpless creature: “What worried him [Sam] was that he could spend the rest of his life in this green capsule, only allowed to watch everything around him, and no longer participating in this community beneath the surface” (12). Though Sam is eventually freed by a kindly fisherman, Henry’s message for children is clear—don’t litter, for your trash might end up in the Bay and damage the well-being of rockfish or other Bay creatures. Yet Henry’s book is not a direct call for environmental action.

Several other children’s titles occupy this second-tier of children’s Bay literature—providing an environmental introduction to the Chesapeake, without generating a strident call to action. For instance, in Elaine Allen’s *Olly The Oyster Cleans The Bay*, she introduces us to Olly, a young oyster who wants to “Settle down...[and] do something important”⁶ (1). Specifically, Olly wants to help clean the Bay, and asks a blue crab, a sea cucumber, a barnacle,

⁵ Due to the lack of published page numbers in *Sam, The Tale of a Chesapeake Bay Rockfish*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

⁶ Due to the lack of published page numbers in *Olly the Oyster Cleans The Bay*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

and a sea urchin how to accomplish this goal. These other aquatic creatures claim that Olly cannot help, for he lacks the physical features they have developed to help purify the brackish Chesapeake waters. However, once he finds his kind, Olly blurts out his passion: “I want to help clean the bay like the blue crab and the barnacle and the sea cucumber and the sea urchin” (Allen 22). When an older oyster at last explains to Olly that each time he breathes, he actually cleans Bay water, our protagonist is content and settles down to do his part to save the Bay. Like many of the other Bay children’s authors I have encountered, Allen chooses to anthropomorphize Bay creatures in order to render them as relatable Bay ambassadors, instead of distant “others” far removed from a child’s experiences. Surprisingly, in Allen’s work animals are not portrayed as passive victims of the Bay’s environmental degradation; instead, the Chesapeake creatures are cognizant of the estuary’s environmental status and actively pursue means of helping clean it. Indeed, when Olly believes he lacks a method of helping, he is distraught: “Olly was very sad. He felt like he would never find a place to settle and do something important” (Allen 19). Perhaps Allen intends her oyster protagonist to inspire environmental initiative in her readers—to accept nothing less in themselves than to “settle” for deliberate action to save the Bay.

Judy Brunk, a crab shedder-turned author, adopts a slightly different narrative method of engaging readers to live more mindfully with the Bay in *Catch Me If You Can*. Instead of personifying a fictional Bay creature, she tells the fictionalized story of Pinky, a particular blue crab whom she met while picking one day and released back into the water. In the imagined adventures Brunk creates for Pinky in the pages of her children’s book, the remarkable crab repeatedly escapes both bay citizens’ and watermen’s attempts to catch him. For instance, chapter 2 of Brunk’s book is entitled “Pinky Escapes the Crab Trap.” Indeed, Brunk glorifies Pinky’s many scrapes with destruction. In one instance, Pinky is caught by a waterman and kept,

even though he is too small to pass regulations. However, the marine police search the boat and save the undersize Pinky (Brunk 12). The crab's salvation offers a subtle commentary upon watermen illegally harvesting undersize crabs.

Indeed, Brunk's curious implications of watermen continue as the narrative progresses. For instance, she explains that "Watermen pursue them [the crabs] nearly all year with all kinds of contraptions" (Brunk 27). The word "contraptions" seems to peg watermen as crafty jailors—devising evil ways to trick their prey. Overfishing certainly has a negative environmental impact on the Bay, but Brunk is doing more than providing commentary on that particular issue. I believe her odd criticisms of watermen relate to her stated purpose in the Afterword: "The story of Pinky is based on an actual crab, and the part of the story leading to his release is true. Hopefully what Judy imagines to be his trials and tribulations will encourage all who read it to have more compassion and respect for all living things. We're all just trying to survive" (Brunk 31). Here, Brunk's didactic narrative purpose becomes overwhelmingly clear. Her criticisms of watermen's tactics relate to a larger goal of inspiring compassion for Bay creatures in her young readers. I find the statement "We're all just trying to survive" to be one of the clearest examples of environmental didacticism that I have encountered in my research. Here, Brunk places humans and Bay creatures on an equal level, relating our own efforts to survive to the bay creatures' daily struggles to avoid capture. This unifying statement provides an opposite didactic effect to the anthropomorphism she utilizes in the rest of her work; in addition to bringing the blue crab to a human level by personifying "Pinky", she brings both humans and Bay creatures to the *same* level through this statement. Her "doubled" method of didacticism is unique in the works I have encountered, and I believe it solidifies her narrative purpose of promoting compassion and stewardship for Bay creatures.

The note to readers at the close of Jennifer Keats Curtis's *Osprey Adventure* similarly highlights the didacticism of the work as a whole. In this narrative, a boy's biologist father helps him clean dangerous fishing line out of an osprey's nest, which has become entangled around a nestling⁷ (Curtis 18-19). Besides providing commentary on the dangers of littering, Curtis' book provides an example to young readers of a child's curiosities about the Bay being satisfied by an expert who takes practical action. The author's note I mentioned previously provides concrete tips to children about what they can do to help Bay creatures and avoid endangering birds like the ospreys in the book. These lessons are direct. Curtis declares, "YOU can help keep these birds safe in four ways" (24). The emphasis on "YOU" suggests the author's intention that her work inspire individual responsibility and initiative in her readers. With Curtis' practical tips, including picking up trash and never throwing out fishing line outside of closed lid trashcans, young readers can make simple changes in their lifestyles to impact the health of Bay creatures. These simple steps are conceptually available to children, allowing them to feel that they can make an impact on the Bay, which exhibits environmental challenges that are overwhelmingly staggering in scope.

A few other children's books provide a more textbook introduction to the Bay's geography, history, creatures, and environmental challenges. For instance, in the scientific book for older children, *Life in an Estuary*, the author explains to readers that "If any part of the ecosystem falters or is destroyed, the repercussions may be observed throughout the whole ecosystem" (Walker 46). The author posits humans and all elements of the Bay's estuary as existing in a precarious balance—dependent upon each other for survival. Walker's book explains the origins of harmful algae blooms, the damaging lack of submerged aquatic vegetation

⁷ Due to the lack of published page numbers in *Osprey Adventure*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

(SAV), and the impact of declining bird numbers (47, 49-50). In a section entitled “People and the Chesapeake Bay Estuary”, Walker provides a direct “What You Can Do” section to help young readers understand concretely what actions they can take improve the Bay’s health (64-65). She stresses the use of Bay resources in this section and promotes the individual’s role in effecting change: “To protect the Chesapeake Bay and the many other estuaries along our coastline, we must make wise and informed choices about the role we will play in their future use. What can you do to protect estuary ecosystems? Here are some suggestions” (64). Walker provides a list of simple lifestyle-changing behaviors to help the Bay, including not pouring chemicals down the drain, cleaning up litter, leaving shoreline and marsh plants undisturbed, conserving water, gardening without harmful fertilizer, and preventing runoff in one’s yard (54-65). Above all, Walker directs children to take a political and activist role in the Bay’s future. She encourages her readers to “Join a community organization that takes an active role in estuary preservation and conservation” (Walker 15). Walker suggests that her readers can have a large impact on the Bay, especially through advocacy work like writing to senators and representatives about conservation issues, and learning more about the Bay’s resources and challenges (65-66). Walker provides an ample and accessible scientific background on the Bay’s history and environmental challenges and outlines practical steps for children to adopt to become better stewards of the estuary. Her engaging factual introduction to the Chesapeake effectively reaches readers even without the creative narrative that many of the other fiction writers utilize.

Providing a similar introduction to the Bay for younger readers is David Owen Bell’s *Awesome Chesapeake: A Kid’s Guide to the Bay*. Providing a history of the Bay and an engaging introduction to Bay creatures and plants, Bell’s work creates an informed young citizenry out of his audience. One of the most curiously didactic sections of Bell’s book is a two-page pictorial

spread, which depicts creatures populating a shallow region of the Bay, car exhaust, runoff from a waterfront road, and factory smoke leaking into the water (12-13). This drawing contains no labels or titles, but it does appear at the end of the “Web of Life” section, and just before the “People and the Chesapeake Bay” part of the book. Without captions, I feel that this spread may be an indirect lesson to children to view how their very homes and neighborhoods affect the Bay’s health. In the following section, entitled “People and the Chesapeake Bay,” Bell explains how pesticides, fertilizer runoff, sewage treatment plants, and erosion all negatively affect the Bay’s health—mirroring Walker’s list of shoreline threats for older readers. Within this larger section is a subsection entitled “Everyone Can Help,” which informs kids how to carry out all sorts of conservation activities, from planting trees to preventing soil erosion to recycling, all under the label “Here’s how to be a good citizen of the Chesapeake Bay” (Bell 17). Bell’s book helps children familiarize themselves with the dynamic ecosystem, provides an accessible guide to the wonders of the Bay, and encourages young readers to see the Bay as “a great place to explore, learn, and have fun” (19). By familiarizing children with the intricacies of the Bay’s resources, and by directly giving them ways to practice responsible Bay citizenship, Bell’s didactic work encourages lifelong enjoyment and stewardship of the Chesapeake.

In addition to this large body of didactic works, another body of Bay writing qualifies as place-based environmental literature. For instance, Kelly Bennett’s *Read About Geography: Chesapeake Bay* explains the history of the Bay for a very young audience, from the meteor that hit 35,000 years ago to form the Bay crater to the makeup of the estuary’s brackish waters (3, 7). With this simple book of facts, Bennett encourages even the youngest readers to be informed about their surroundings, which may encourage them to take environmental action later in life. Several other fictional narratives, including *Counting On The Bay* by Brenda Siwak, and

Chesapeake Rainbow, *Chesapeake 1,2,3*, and *Chesapeake A,B,C* by Priscilla Cummings also encourage their readers to embrace the vitality and diversity of the Bay's resources, and to respect the creatures and plants that populate the estuary. I find the title of Siwak's book to be particularly provocative. The idea of "counting" different aspects of the Bay to learn numbering is coupled by a more subtle layer of meaning—of humans "counting on" the Bay's resources for our enjoyment, sustainability, and even health.

David Owen Bell's work for younger children, *Chesapeake Bay Walk*, mirrors the structure of his *Awesome Chesapeake: A Kid's Guide to the Bay*⁸. Bell encourages young readers to explore their Bay landscape, instructing his young audience to "Try to find a shell with algae or a barnacle on it. How many different kinds of shells can you find?" (6). By asking questions and directly showing readers what to look for in their environments, Bell encourages a familiarity between children and the Bay itself. Bell's work also helps children visualize the impact various creatures have on Bay health. For instance, he explains that Chesapeake Bay oysters "...pump up to fifty gallons through their bodies every day. (A gallon is the size of a milk carton. Can you imagine fifty of them?)" (Bell 8). Bell places Bay creatures at children's level, relating Bay inhabitants to children's own lives in order to promote a deeper understanding, and by relation, a more genuine stewardship. Imaginatively, he calls comb jellies "drifting night lights" and describes how clams eat and drink: "they come with their own straw" (20, 14). Bell encourages genuine curiosity and exploration of the Bay in his young readers, even providing a "Chesapeake checklist" at the close of his book, which asks readers, "How many of these things have you found on your Chesapeake Bay walks?" (27). Through an informed understanding and love of the Bay's dynamic environment, children are more likely to make Bay

⁸ Due to the lack of published page numbers in *Chesapeake Bay Walk*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

conservation a priority as they grow older. However, Bell's book for younger children does not provide direct methods of "saving the Bay" as does *Awesome Chesapeake*.

Priscilla Cummings' collection of picture books for younger readers also creates a sense of place in the Bay environment, promoting familiarity and love of the Chesapeake. For instance, in *Chesapeake Rainbow*, Cummings displays the vibrancy of Bay creatures and geography, as she asks readers: "How many colors / Has the Chesapeake Bay? / More than a rainbow / Everyday!" (25)⁹. Although the text of *Chesapeake Rainbow* is not explicitly didactic, her dedication is curiously environmental in scope. She writes, "May the colors of the Bay / Be here to stay / For baby Sophie, small and new / For our future children, too" (Cummings Dedication). Cummings wrote this book with the fear that the Bay's beauty will not be around for future generations. In addition to *Chesapeake Rainbow*, Cummings' *Chesapeake ABC* and *Chesapeake 123* show that Bay familiarity can be encouraged in children even at the earliest stages of learning.

Several other Chesapeake Bay children's titles promote a sense of unique place. Such works utilize the Bay as a powerful backdrop rather than the prime focus of the story. These books either accomplish this goal whimsically, as in *Rambling Raft*, *Chessie*, *The Sea Monster That Ate Annapolis!* and *Santa and the Skipjack*, or more realistically, as in *Chesapeake Bay Goose Music*, *Broken Wings Will Fly*, and *On An Island In The Bay*. Lynn L. Lochkhart's whimsical *Rambling Raft* tells the story of the raft a waterman buys for his son's birthday, which flies off his truck on the way home and becomes the locus of many Bay adventures for Chesapeake creatures. This book lacks an explicit environmental message besides engaging young readers in the Bay environment and educating them about the diversity of creatures that

⁹ Due to the lack of published page numbers in *Chesapeake Rainbow*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

populate the ecosystem. Closely mirroring this purpose is Jeffrey Holland's fanciful *Chessie: The Sea Monster That Ate Annapolis!* which familiarizes children with Bay life, watermen's needs, and the legends of the Bay, most especially the Chessie the Sea Monster folklore of the area. In *Santa and the Skipjack*, author Janie Meneely imagines Santa's sled being stuck in mud, and a watermen's skipjack completing the last few deliveries of Christmas Eve. This imaginative Bay-centered version of the classic Santa story connects children to the Bay as a place of magical opportunity. These whimsical works, though lacking environmental lessons, nonetheless draw children to the Bay ecosystem with lighthearted humor and playful narratives.

The more realistic *Chesapeake Bay Goose Music* by Roger Ethier tells the tale of a boy growing up on a farm on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and his mother's actions to befriend and help rehabilitate a permanently injured migrating Canada Goose. This book provides a meditation on the importance of place for humans and for Bay animals alike—of returning to a home environment when either respite from city life or a resting point on a long migration journey is needed. Just as the father returns to his childhood home to visit his mother, so the Canada geese born on this farm return to the same ground every year without fail (Ethier 7)¹⁰. Mick Blackistone's *Broken Wings Will Fly* tells the tale of Sally, a teenage girl who loses use of her legs following a terrible car accident, and is thus relegated to watching her friends prepare for the big summer's end sailing races. The injured and hurting Sally helps nurse an injured duck back to life—but when he eventually gets better and flies away, she feels even more trapped by her wheelchair and handicapped status. However, aided by a handicapped Vietnam War veteran who takes her sailing in a specially outfitted boat, Sally can re-engage with her favorite pastime

¹⁰ Due to the lack of published page numbers in *Chesapeake Bay Goose Music*, I self paginated for the sake of citation.

and even enter the big race. Here, the Bay is a place of rejuvenation, re-growth, and a resurgence of freedom—both for Sally and for the bird whose life mirrors her own.

Patricia Mills' book of photographs of the Bay environment, coupled with sparse text, creates a sense of "Bay place" for her readers. In her Author's Note, Mills discusses environmentalism, especially her belief that the first step towards conservationist action is simply being with nature:

For decades, environmentalists have been concerned about the effects of development, pollution, and overharvesting on this treasured estuary. Believing that the first spark of passion for protecting the environment arises from experiencing the joy of nature's glory, I created this book to encourage children to celebrate the splendor of this threatened environment and the dwindling traditional life on the islands in the bay. (Mills, Author's Note)

Mill's beautiful photos of island Bay communities depict the lives of watermen, creatures living on the Bay, and estuary plants. This pictorial imagery of the Bay's beauty encourages her readers to feel a sense of wonder about the Bay. Wonder quickly translates into awe and respect, and then to care, passion, and eventually, environmental action.

All of the titles I have discussed in this chapter are didactic—they *teach* about the Bay environment, utilizing various narrative methodologies to reach young readers. But what does it mean to teach about the Bay through writing? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "didactic" originates in the Greek for "apt at teaching" (*OED Online*). As a noun "didactic" means "characterized by giving instruction" and as an adjective, "the science or art of teaching" (*OED Online*). Certainly, these works instruct their young readers about the Bay and environmental issues, but they also do so in a manner that reflects the second definition of

“didactic”—teaching as a “science” or “art”. Utilizing whimsical and personified Bay creatures, humorous storylines, and playful narratives that share ecological information, these Bay children’s authors certainly make their instructive writing an art—but an art with the “science” of encouraging Bay stewardship informing every detail. Is this didactic quality a conscious effort on the part of the authors? When I asked Priscilla Cummings about the role of the Bay in her children’s books, she clarified many of these questions for me:

I see this wonderful opportunity through writing books for young people to get them to love it too...make them see it through my eyes and make them love it so that when they grow up and they are caretakers of that Bay, they are going to do the right thing for it. [This is]...in the back of my mind when I do anything that is Bay related. [I want to] remind them what a beautiful treasure they have here, and it’s going to be hard work to keep it...to clean it up. It’s really quite a mess right now. A lot of work needs to be done out there...Whenever I write about the Bay...that’s going to be my message. (Cummings Personal Interview 27 August 2010)

Cummings feels that writing books for children gives her a unique medium for sharing her own love of the Bay, in the hopes that her own passion will inspire environmental stewardship in her readers. Whether simply displaying the Bay as a valuable place or specifically instructing readers on how they can best make lifestyle changes to positively affect the Chesapeake, all of the authors paint the Bay as a “beautiful treasure” that cannot be lost. These authors are the Loraxes for their particular young audiences. Some, like Mick Blackistone in *The Day They Left The Bay*, are indeed as “sharpish and bossy” as the Lorax himself (Seuss 21). Other authors are more gentle Loraxes, encouraging their young readers to look around themselves, explore their Bay

environments, and value what they find there. An appreciation and love of the Bay is the basis for all environmental action.

These child-g geared narratives also raise the question of generational aspects of environmental responsibility. Which generation is responsible for cleaning up the Bay? Is it the older generation who is culpable for the current degraded state of the ecosystem? Or is the younger generation responsible, as they inherit the mess? Do the children's authors I have discussed in this chapter simply pass the *Truffula* seeds to the next generation, giving responsibility away, and hanging their heads in defeat? I feel that these authors are more responsible versions of Dr. Seuss's "Once-ler." The authors are certainly encouraging young people to act responsibly towards the Bay and even consider becoming involved in advocacy work, yet they are also giving children the crucial tools and facts with which to contextualize these actions. Many of these books familiarize children with Bay creatures, teaching them the intricacies of their lifestyles and their impact on the Bay. A few provide direct step-by-step suggestions for becoming more responsible Bay citizens. I believe the authors promote a collective responsibility for stewardship of the Chesapeake, raising a spark with the youngest generation. Indeed, unless youth care "a whole awful lot" about the Bay, a generation of people will grow up without thought for how their everyday actions impact the estuary (Seuss 58). Without impetus from the younger generation, positive change will not occur. These children's books inform and shape this generation, from the stage of learning how to count to the age at which children can begin their own conservation projects—and all have the aim of creating lifelong stewards, active caretakers, and vocal and uncompromising advocates for the Chesapeake Bay.