

The Museum of EVERYTHING

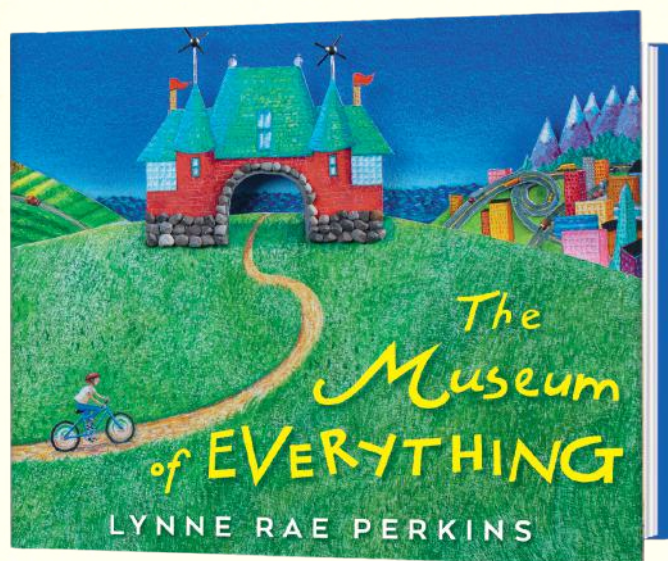
LYNNE RAE PERKINS

EDUCATORS' GUIDE

ABOUT THE BOOK

“When the world gets too big and too loud and too busy, I like to look at little pieces of it, one at a time.”

A young girl looks within to explore the world around her, the questions she wonders about, and the things she has observed or imagined. This brilliantly conjured collection of ideas, wrapped in Perkins’s luminous illustrations, will spark imagination and curiosity, as an exploration of quiet thoughtfulness.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

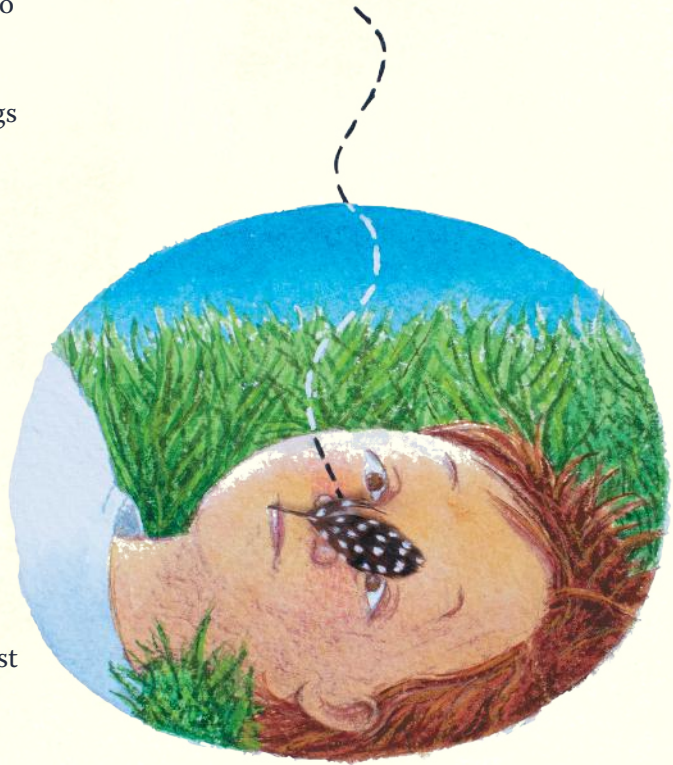
Lynne Rae Perkins is the creator of many acclaimed children’s books. She was awarded the Newbery Medal for her novel *Criss Cross*, and its companion, *All Alone in the Universe*, was named an ALA Notable Book and an ALA Booklist Editors’ Choice, among other honors. Her recent novels include *Secret Sisters of the Salty Sea* and *Nuts to You*. She has written and illustrated nine picture books, including *Snow Music* and *Home Lovely*, both Boston Globe–Horn Book Honor Books, as well as *Frank and Lucky Get Schooled*, *The Cardboard Piano*, *Pictures from Our Vacation*, *The Broken Cat*, *Clouds for Dinner*, and *Wintercake*. She is also the illustrator of *Seed by Seed*, a picture book biography of Johnny Appleseed, by Esmé Raji Codell. Lynne Rae Perkins lives with her family in Suttons Bay, Michigan.



Author photo by Frank Perkins
Art © 2021 by Lynne Rae Perkins

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you ever feel that the world is “too big and too loud and too busy”? Where do you go? What do you do? How do you keep the sounds out, or slow things down?
2. This is a story about someone who thinks, who imagines, and who collects things. Do you like to collect things? If you do, what do you do with them? Where do you keep them? Would you tell us about one of them? What else would you like to collect?
3. What would you put into your “Museum of Things I Wonder About”? Why?
4. Let’s look at the shadow pages again. What other kinds of shadows can you think of, besides the ones in the book? How can you make a shadow bigger, or smaller? (Hint: experiment with a flashlight.) Does everything have a shadow?
5. Have you visited a museum? What kinds of things did it contain? What did you like best? Why?
6. Divide into small groups or pairs and plan a new museum for your town or city. Will it be about just one kind of thing, or about many things? What will you put in it? Will it contain real things, or imaginary ones? Report to the class. Your teacher will list each group’s answers on a board or chart. Talk about all of them. If you could build just one of the museums, which would you choose?
7. Think about your favorite place to hide. Could you make a museum of hiding places? What about a museum of hiding places for dogs? Or birds? Or mice? Or elephants?
8. Take a careful look at the pictures in this book. How do you think the artist made these pictures? How many different art styles can you count? What surprises you about them?
9. Do you like to make things? What kinds of things have you made? What do you wish you could make, and what kinds of tools or materials would you need? What would you do with it when it was finished?
10. Imagine that Lynne Rae Perkins has just walked into your classroom (or your house). What would you like to ask her? What would you show her?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

INTO THE BUSHES. Look at the page about bushes. Which ones are wild? Tame? Science fiction-type? Draw an “experimental, science fiction-type” bush. Add pictures of the place where you might find it. Tell us about it.

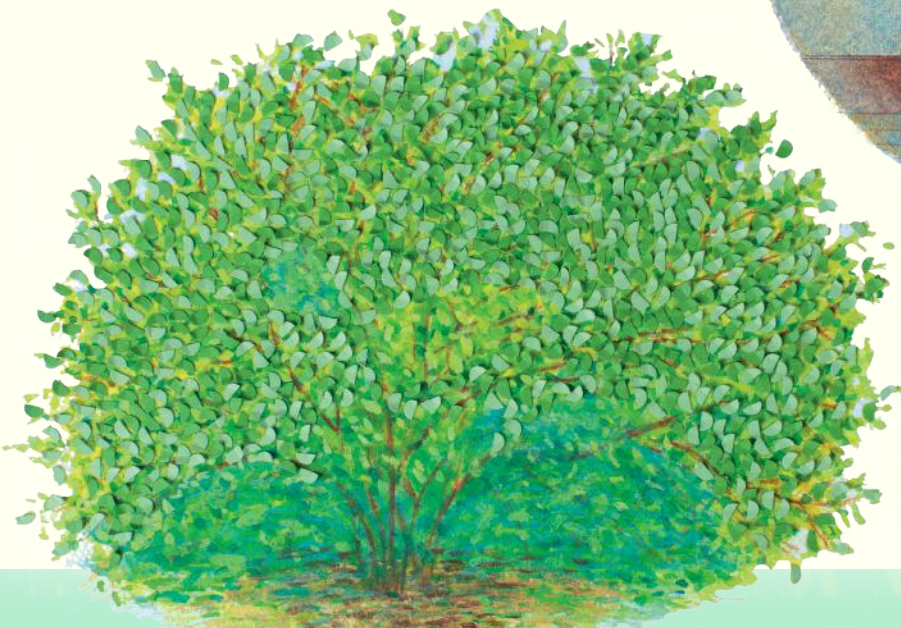
CAN'T FIND ME. Look at the page about the “Museum of Hiding Places.” What “hiding” things can you find? Draw your own page of things with one object that’s hard to find, or with hidden pictures, then see if the others in your group can find it. What will you call your page?

TAKE NOTE. For the next week, keep a notebook about things you wonder about. (Make notebooks in class by gathering and stapling or tying sheets of paper together; make a cover and give it a name.) When you wonder about something, write it down on a new page. If you have more ideas about it, add those to the same page. Start a new page for each new thing you wonder about. Draw pictures to illustrate it if you like.

THROWING SHADOWS. Have you ever tried to make shadow puppets, like the one on the shadow page? Try to make one. Divide into small groups and experiment. For older children, show pictures of Indonesian shadow puppets. Have them draw their own figures, cut them out, and create a shadow play.

YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT. Hiding can be fun, if it’s for play. But what if you were hiding because you were afraid? What’s the safest hiding place you can think of? If you had to hide for a week, could you stay still and quiet? How would you keep your mind busy, but quiet? Follow up by reading *Henry’s Freedom Box*, by Ellen Levin and Kadir Nelson; *Follow the Drinking Gourd*, by Jeanette Winter; or for older children, *Pink and Say*, by Patricia Polacco.

MY FAVORITE THINGS. Play the song “My Favorite Things,” from *The Sound of Music*. Show the items in “The Museum of Small Things” at the end of Perkins’s story. Ask the children about their favorite things, and what kind of museum they would belong in.



TIPS FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

1. This is a book to read slowly and thoughtfully. When you finish each page, stop and look at the pictures. Ask questions:

 - a. What do you see?
 - b. What do you hear?
 - c. What does that make you think of?

Give the children time to think and to answer. Then, when the book is over, suggest, “Let’s take another look.” Go back and read it again, slowly, without stopping.
2. Talk about being alone, thinking, and wondering. *All Alone*, by Kevin Henkes, is another story about a child who sometimes chooses to be by himself. Talk with your children about times when it’s good to be alone, and when it’s good to be with others, or about the difference between being busy doing something, and quietly observing or thinking. What are some activities that require being quiet and thoughtful, or observant (e.g., birdwatching, beachcombing, fishing, reading, looking at pictures in a museum)? Another quiet story to read and discuss is *The Listening Walk*, by Paul Showers.
3. Talk about being with others. *The Relatives Came*, by Cynthia Rylant, follows a big family that travels to visit their relatives in Virginia. On the trip, they look at the scenery as it changes, and at unfamiliar things and places, but when they arrive, everyone crowds together, hugging and eating and sharing. Talk with the children about the times when they enjoy being with others, and times when they enjoy being alone. If you notice that your children show signs of discomfort with either one, this may be an opportunity to explore the reasons why. For example, Miriam Cohen’s *Will I Have a Friend?* explores the uncertainty a boy feels about whether he will fit in as he starts school.
4. Ask the children, “What are some things you wonder about?” *The Museum of Everything* touches on weather, seasons, and darkness—all things that change. Explore other stories about these subjects, such as Robert McCloskey’s *Time of Wonder*, about a late-summer storm on an island in Maine; *The Little Island*, by Margaret Wise Brown; or Kevin Henkes and Laura Dronzek’s series, *Summer Song*, *In the Middle of Fall*, *Winter Is Here*, and *When Spring Comes*.
5. Reread the last page: “I see the little pieces of the world all fitting together, like the biggest puzzle ever. Like the notes in a song. Like the Museum of Everything.” Take your children for a walk to identify “little pieces of the world all fitting together.” When you get back, write down what they would like to put into a “Museum of Everything.”
6. At the library, look for *The Trek*, by Ann Jonas; *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*, by Charles Shaw; or *Outside In*, by Deborah Underwood. Talk about how they are like, or different from, *The Museum of Everything*.
7. Children who have lived through a year (or more) of COVID-19 may have strong feelings about being alone or being “outside, where it’s busy, and big, and sometimes kind of noisy.” Encourage them to talk about what they enjoy about each situation, what they dislike most, and why.

Guide created by Dudley Carlson, former Head of Youth Services at the Princeton (NJ) Public Library. She collects rocks, books, and stories, among other things.