

Agatha's Feather Bed

Not Just Another Wild Goose Story

Written by Carmen Agra Deedy and
illustrated by Laura L. Seeley

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Ages 4–8 | Science & Nature | Nonfiction

Book Level Scores

Accelerated Reader | Quiz #: 19963 | Level: 3.5
Reading Counts | Level: 3.1 | Points: 2
Fountas & Pinnell | Level: O | Grade: 3-4

About The Book

Agatha owns a weaving shop in Manhattan and likes to answer the questions of children who want to know the source of her beautiful fabrics. She always recites a little verse to them:

*Everything comes from something,
Nothing comes from nothing.
Just like paper comes from trees,
And glass comes from sand,
An answer comes from a question.
All you have to do is ask.*

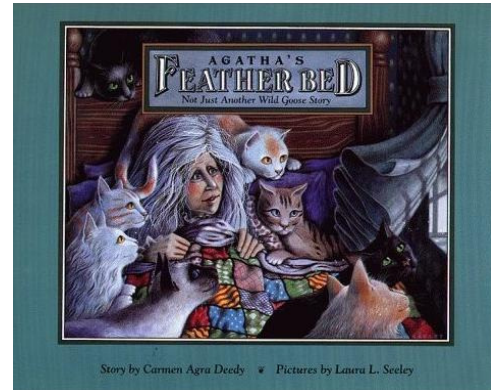
Perhaps Agatha forgets her own advice, for one night her pleasant sleep is disrupted by six cranky, cold, naked geese. They want to discuss the source of the feathers keeping her so warm in her brand new feather bed. In a delightful O. Henry-inspired ending, Agatha arrives at a solution that benefits them all, teaching readers to understand the delicate balance between our resources and responsibilities.

Themes

- Endangered Animals
- Conservation/
Environment
- Natural Resources
- Sharing
- Responsibility
- Interdependence of
living things

Skills Reinforced

- Compare and
contrast
- Cause and effect



Praise for the Book

“This finely crafted collection abounds with information and whimsy. It also teems with puns and wordplay...A ducky book.” — **Publishers Weekly**

“Offbeat, provocative, well crafted.” — **Kirkus Reviews**

National Education Standards

LANGUAGE ARTS (K–12)

[Language Arts Standards provided by the NCTE.]

NL-ENG.K-12.1 READING FOR PERSPECTIVE

Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

NL-ENG.K-12.3 EVALUATION STRATEGIES

Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

SCIENCE (K–4)

[National Science Education Standards provided by the National Academies of Science.]

NS.K-4.3 LIFE SCIENCE

Students should develop an understanding of the characteristics and life cycles of organisms and organisms [in relation to] their environments.

MATH (preK–12)

[National Mathematics Standards provided by the NCTM.]

NM-PROB.PK-12.3 PROBLEM SOLVING

Apply and adapt a variety of appropriate strategies to solve problems.

TECHNOLOGY (K–12)

[National Technology Standards provided by the International Society for Technology in Education.]

NT.K-12.5 TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH TOOLS

Use technology to locate, evaluate and collect information from a variety of sources. Use technology tools to process data and report results. Evaluate and select new information resources and technological innovations based on the appropriateness for specific tasks.

Before You Read

Grades K-2

- Read the title and have students look at the cover. Ask the following questions:
 1. Which one is Agatha?
 2. What might the story be about?
 3. What are they looking at? Who's outside the window?
 4. Do they look scared, curious, surprised?
- Bring in a big down comforter for the children to sit on while you read the story. Tell them to feel it and squeeze it. Ask them what they think is inside. What makes it so soft and warm? Talk to the children specifically about what "down" is and where it comes from. Explain briefly about geese and how their feathers are sometimes used to fill comforters and pillows. Tell students that after the reading you will make a list of products and their origins. Encourage them to think of other products to add to the list as they listen to the story. Make sure there are plenty of books in the reading area on the topics of how things are made (glass, paper, etc.), where things come from (dairy products and other food items), and familiar natural resources. Also, tell the children to listen for silly plays on words in the story and see if they can hear them without you pointing them out.

Grades 3-5

- Explain to students that anything that comes from nature is a "natural resource." Discuss various types of natural resources with them, such as forests, minerals, or wildlife. Encourage them to think about where particular items come from (for example, milk – cows; water – oceans, rivers, lakes; apples – apple trees). Have students listen for all the natural resources mentioned in the story and think about how humans use these resources.
- Ask students to listen for the ways the characters in the story work together to solve their problems and help each other.
- Ask them to listen for ways the author uses various words and phrases related to ducks and geese.

As You Read

- Read the story straight through to create and hold the students' interest and to promote love of reading. Then read the book a second time, stopping to allow students to point out parts of the story that interested them and to discuss questions and word usage.
- Point out the smaller pictures in the margins of some pages. For example, one page shows a silkworm cocoon used to make silk and an aloe plant used to make lotion.
- Point out some of the author's puns if your students could not find them on their own. Work together to decipher their meanings.

After You Read

- Discuss the questions mentioned in the Before You Read section.
- Tell students that over the next several days they will be doing several activities related to this story. Prepare them for learning about conservation, natural resources, sharing, responsibility, endangered animals, and the ways humans affect the environment.
- Define the term "endangered animal."
Animals found in the wild whose numbers are shrinking for different reasons such as pollution, habitat destruction, poaching or illegal hunting, slow rate of reproduction, etc.
Once you have read the book, compile a list of other products and their origins. Encourage students to offer ideas for the list. Write the words on a big sheet of paper and post it for them to peruse. Continue to add to the list for the duration of the unit.
- Talk about the geese in the story and how they may have felt when their feathers were taken from them. Ask students to think of ways to save resources that we use everyday so we don't run out.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Note: See helpful websites at the end of this teachers' guide for further information on these and other activities.

Math

- Show children how to make paper “quilts” with polka dots, shapes, flowers, and other patterns and designs. Use the quilt pieces for counting and matching activities.
- Have students research geese migration and how many miles geese can travel in a single flight. Create a graph representing a typical migration for six months to a year.

Science

Make matching cards for an “everything comes from something” memory game. The object of the game is to match each item with its source. For instance, match a sheep with wool or a cow with cheese and milk.

Social Studies

- Take a field trip to a farm to observe various kinds of animals that supply us with products we use every day. For example: sheep, pigs, cows, etc.
- Direct children to study maps and reference books to learn where certain products come from around the world.

Music

Make a song out of Agatha’s saying:
*Everything comes from something,
Nothing comes from nothing.
Just like paper comes from trees,
And glass comes from sand,
An answer comes from a question.
All you have to do is ask.*

(If you repeat the first two lines at the end, you can fit the words to the tune of “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad.”)

Using the list you compiled as a class, ask the children to make up their own simple songs to help them remember where things come from.

Art

Collect scrap paper and show kids how to make new paper. You can come up with beautiful colors and interesting textures. If you don’t feel comfortable doing it yourself, ask a parent or another teacher to help. Use

your handmade paper for writing and drawing or gifts for special occasions!

Physical Education

Lead your students on a walk outside and ask them to identify items that are made from (or are used to make) other things. For example, tires are made from rubber and rubber comes from a rubber tree, trees are used to make paper, and flowers are used to make perfume.

Technology

Ask each child to come up with a question pertaining to conservation and where things come from. Help your students navigate the web in order to find the answer to their questions. This is a great opportunity to introduce search engines such as MetaCrawler and Google.

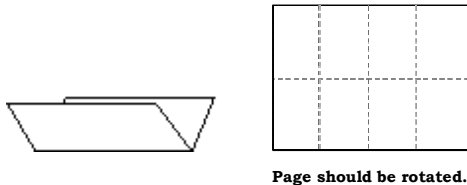
Language Arts

Vocabulary Words:

skyscrapers	fossil
Manhattan	swirls
wares	reptiles
fabric	flax
catalog	gander
gaggle	coal
fleece	magnificent

- These words can be used for the week’s new vocabulary or for bonus spelling words. Give each student a blank sheet of copy paper. Have them fold the sheet in half along the long side. Next, fold again along the short side. Last, fold the paper in half one more time along the short side. When the page is unfolded, there should be eight equal rectangles like the page shown below. Have students choose eight

vocabulary words and write the word and its definition in each rectangle. On the back of that rectangle space, have them draw a picture of the word.



Word and definition (front side), Picture (on back)

- Research Papers on Endangered Animals: Discuss with students how this story might help them understand the problem of endangered animals. Agatha’s hair and the geese’s feathers can grow back in a short amount of time. However, it would be much harder and it would take a much longer time to restore living creatures in the wild. Have students recall reasons why animals become endangered. Have them research different endangered animals on the internet and ask them to write a one-page paper on the animal of their choice.

The paper should include the following information:

1. A description of the animal’s physical characteristics.
2. Its habitat/environment (location and physical description)
3. The number of young it produces at one time.
4. Interesting facts about the animals.
5. Why this animal is endangered and ways to help save it.
6. A colorful picture of the animal, either printed out or drawn by the student.

Once all papers and pictures are received, compile them to create a class book called *Endangered Animals Around the World*. For the book’s cover use clip art, stickers, or another form of art to show all animals mentioned in the book and their names.

- Work with students to create a KNOW-WANT-LEARN (KWL) chart for endangered animals on chart paper. Begin by asking students what they KNOW about endangered animals. Write their responses on the board. Next, ask students what they WANT to learn about endangered animals. As you learn new information, record this under the LEARN section of the chart.
- Discuss with students the difference between natural resources and man-made

items. Point out that a man-made item is not naturally found in that form in nature, but is created from natural resources. On the board, create two lists of items that are found in nature (natural resources), and items that are man-made (products created by humans). Provide old magazines so the students can find and cut out several pictures from each category. Have students fold a sheet of construction paper in half and label one side as “Natural Resources” and the other side “Man-Made Items.” (Make sure they are clear on the definition of these terms.) Instruct them to paste the pictures under the appropriate columns. On the back or on a sheet of notebook paper, have them write four complete sentences about the items on their poster describing why the item is either a natural resource or is man-made.

Extended Activities

- Set up a fabric shop like Agatha’s in your house area. Have parents donate yarn, old fabric, and used clothing and let the children pretend to make and sell them. Add a math element by adding a cash register and play money.
- Since the author of Agatha is a professional storyteller, invite a storyteller from your area into your classroom to share their talents. Explore different ways of presenting stories and encourage your students to write and present original works.
- Set aside a day to eat foods that come from different sources. Discuss what you know about these sources.
- If possible, arrange to visit a sheep farm or a historical center where the children can watch the processes of shearing the sheep, gathering the wool, and spinning the wool into yarn
- Brainstorm field trip places in your area that will help students understand where things come from.
- After they are familiar with the book, ask the children if they would like to perform it as a play. Offer your assistance with anything they might need as far as casting, props, set design, etc.

RELATED READING

Martina the Beautiful Cockroach, The Yellow Star, The Last Dance, The Library Dragon, and other books by Carmen Agra Deedy
The Lorax by Dr. Seuss
Where Does the Garbage Go? by Paul Showers
Pumpkins by Mary Lyn Ray
Miss Lady Bird's Wildflowers: How a First Lady Changed America by Kathi Appelt
Conservation by Christine Peterson
Great Kapok tree by Lynne Cherry
Our Big Home: An Earth Poem by Linda Glasser

HELPFUL WEBSITES

<http://www.worldwildlife.org/>
<http://www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/map.html>
<http://www.endangeredspecie.com/>
<http://www.worldwildlife.org/>
<http://www.kidsplanet.org/factsheets/map.html>
<http://www.endangeredspecie.com/>

Paper Folding (Humpback Whale)

<http://www.tammyyee.com/origamidolphin.html>
<http://www.tammyyee.com/printwhale.html>

Geese Migration Game

http://www.tolweb.org/treehouses/?treehouse_id=3533

Bird Migration Information

<http://www.backyardnature.net/birdmgrt.htm>

Migration Concentration Game and additional information about geese migration.

http://spaceplace.nasa.gov/en/kids/poes_tracking/#

About the Author



Carmen Agra Deedy is a *New York Times* bestselling author and professional storyteller, with many award-winning titles including 14 Cows for America; Martina, The Beautiful

Cockroach (available in English and Spanish versions); The Library Dragon; The Secret of Old Zeb; The Last Dance; TreeMan; The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark, and The Cheshire Cheese Cat, A Dickens of a Tale (to be released Fall 2011). Born in Havana, Cuba, Deedy emigrated to the USA with her family during the Cuban Revolution. She grew up in Decatur, Georgia, and recounts some of her experiences in her audio collection Growing Up Cuban in Decatur, Georgia, winner of a Parents' Choice Gold Award. Deedy is a popular featured speaker and performer around the country, presenting at schools, conferences and various events such as the National Book Festival's presidential gala at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Her school presentations

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include Scare Me Silly: A Collection of Spinechilling Tales; Fairy and Folk Tales, Myths, and Legends; and Heroic and Outrageous Women. Deedy lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Visit her website at www.carmendeedy.com.

(Intended audience: Grades K-Adult) E, M, H

About the Illustrator



Laura Seeley is a New York Times bestselling author and illustrator with many award-winning titles including The Book of Shadowboxes: A Story of the ABC's, The Magical Moonballs, Cats Vanish Slowly;

McSpot's Hidden Spots: A Puppyhood Secret and others. Seeley was named Georgia Author of the Year for Juvenile Literature three times and holds a degree in fine arts from the Rochester Institute of Technology. Her interactive school and library programs stress the importance of rough drafts for both writing and illustrating. Roughs and finished art images are shown simultaneously on overhead projectors and the program concludes with students drawing their own pictures with the illustrator. Seeley's acrylic paintings of cats are featured in galleries around the country. She lives in San Francisco, California. Visit her website at www.lauraseeley.com.

(Intended audience: Grades K-5) E

Teacher's Guide for *Agatha's Featherbed* was prepared by Kenya Kilpatrick and Britt Kline.

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