

**Book Stretching**  
Created by Carol Ann Bloom/skydog

**Reading books is one of the best ways to open your mind and learn.  
After you read the book, try some Book Stretching.  
It's a fun way to put what you learn into immediate action and maybe discover something new too!**

Instead of only reading and thinking about what you have read, reading and doing, or **stretching** what you have read into your everyday life, can make any book more meaningful.

Most any book can be **stretched** into nearly every area of daily life and learning in some way: art, writing, language, science, numbers, games, geography, history, health, and even cooking.

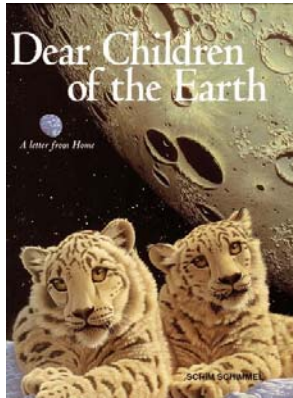
**Book Stretching** adds interest, enrichment, and fun to any reading experience and makes any book you read have more impact and be more memorable.

Here are 3 books from our Environmental Books for Children with related activities to **stretch** the book into your everyday life.

Try them.

Then try some **book stretching** of your own with some of your favorite books. You'll find the only limit is your own imagination!

You don't have to read the book at all to try, enjoy, and learn from the activities here. **But after being "stretched" you might find you want to read the book too!**



## **Dear Children of the Earth: A Letter from Home**

**Author – Schim Schimmel  
Created by Carol Ann Bloom/skydog**

**“Dear Children of the Earth”, begins a letter from Mother Earth to children everywhere. In this letter Mother Earth tells children of her love for them and asks for their love and care in return. Mother Earth expresses her concern for all Earth’s creatures referring to them as our “sister and brother animals”. She asks that children appreciate the Earth and all its life forms, treat her with respect, and give her their protection in this letter from Mother to child. Mother Earth asks her children two questions:**

**“What do you think is the biggest, most important thing you can do to help me?”  
“What do I need more than anything else in the world?”**

After reading **Dear Children of the Earth: A Letter from Home** stretch the book with some letter writing and mail recycling activities.

**1 – Write your own letter to Mother Earth.** Tell Mother Earth a little about yourself and your family. Thank Mother Earth for some of your favorite things such as your favorite animal, flower, tree, insect, season of the year, or natural resource. End your letter with your promise to care for the Earth and some of the ways you will show your respect and appreciation for all Mother Earth gives to you. Tuck your letter to Mother Earth in a favorite book about our Earth or keep it in a scrapbook with your favorite outdoor photograph.

**2 – Write a letter to an environmental organization.** Use your letter to ask for more information about the organization, ask how you can help, or share some of your ideas and Earth care habits. You can find addresses for environmental organizations on this site, in many of the books on the Environmental Book List on this site, and in children’s magazines. An adult can also help you find addresses on the internet.

**3 – Write a letter to the author of Dear Children of the Earth: A Letter from Home or to the author of one of your favorite books about the Earth or the environment.** Use your letter to tell the author which of their books you have read and what you like about the book. Write about what you have learned from the book and how it may have influenced your Earth care habits. You can contact most authors through the company

publishing their book. Find the publishing company on the first few pages of the book, often on the reverse side of the title page. Usually the address of the publishing company is there also. Address your letter to the author, c/o (care of) the name of the publishing company, and the address, including the city, state and zip code.

**4 – Write a letter to any company you feel has done something positive for the environment through their packaging, product, or advertising.** Or write a letter to any company you feel could do a better job with an environmental concern and include your own suggestions. You can usually find the company address and other information on the package or ask an adult to find it for you on the internet.

**5 – Write a letter to me, the author of these Book Stretching activities.** You can email it to me c/o [webmaster@birkenstudios.com](mailto:webmaster@birkenstudios.com) and write ‘Book Stretching email’ on the subject line. Let us know if you enjoy the Book Stretching activities, which ones you have tried, which are your favorites, and how the activities help you learn more from the book. Is there a particular book about our Earth or the environment you would like to see “stretched” with some fun activities? Let us know and you might see your favorite book in this section in the future.

Make sure every letter you send includes the date, your address, a greeting, and your signature. Always be courteous and polite.

Write your address and the address of the person, company or organization on the envelope. And....don’t forget the postage stamp!

\*Adults or older sisters or brothers can help younger children write and send their letters.

Speaking of letters.....does your family receive a lot of unwanted mail? Mail like this is sometimes called “junk mail” because it is almost always thrown away with the rest of the trash or “junk”. Ask your parents to set aside the junk mail they receive for you to reuse. Remember the **Three R’s**: reuse, recycle and reduce.

**Try some of these fun ideas to reuse or recycle junk mail. You will be reducing the amount of trash you and your family throw away too.**

### **1 – Art Projects**

Save any pictures you find in junk mail to use when you make collages, scrapbooks, and other art projects.

### **2 – Drawing Paper**

Check out the reverse side of all junk mail. If it is blank, reuse it for drawing paper.

### **3 – Scrap Paper**

Another way to reuse the blank side of junk paper is to cut your own scrap paper. Fold the paper in fourths and cut on the creases.

If you choose cut once more to make smaller pieces of scrap paper.  
Recycle a box lid to use as a holder for the scrap paper you cut.

#### **4 – Junk Paper Journal**

Collect a pile of junk mail with one blank side. Place the paper in a pile with the blank sides facing up. Fasten the pile of paper together on the left side with staples, brass fasteners, or string.

Use your Junk Mail Journal for writing, drawing, or anything else you choose.

#### **5 – Junk Mail Jewelry**

Use glossy pictures and catalogs received in junk mail for this project.

Cut a triangle with a 1” base and two 3” sides from cardboard.

Use the cardboard triangle as a pattern to trace and cut triangles from glossy pictures found in junk mail and mail order catalogs.

Place glue on the back of the triangle. Attach the 1” side to a plastic drinking straw and continue wrapping the paper around the straw until you reach the pointed end.

Cut the straw at the both ends of the paper to make a bead.

Make as many beads as you choose.

Place string or yarn through the openings in the straws to make necklaces and bracelets with the beads. If you choose, you can add a few bells or charms before tying the ends of the string together.

Wear your Junk Mail Jewelry proudly. You made it by recycling.

### **Don’t forget the envelopes when reusing and recycling junk mail!**

#### **1 – Reuse Envelopes**

If you open them carefully, envelopes can be reused to hold many things such as coins, postage stamps, photos, postcards, notes, and other small items.

Some junk mail contains an unsealed reply envelope. Use these envelopes to make new envelopes. Carefully take the envelopes apart and refold them with the plain side facing out. Glue the edges closed again to make an envelope you can use.

Or, reuse the envelope as it is by making your own address labels to glue over the addresses already printed on the envelopes. Use your junk mail scrap paper to make the address labels.

#### **2 – Shark Envelope Puppet**

Use an unsealed reply envelope to make this fun puppet. Seal the envelope.

Cut one short side of the envelope to a point by cutting off both corners.

After cutting off the corners, the side will be shaped like an open triangle.

Cut off the other short side (the side opposite the mouth) to make an opening in the envelope.

Cut two pieces of gray paper the same size as the envelope you have cut.

Cut a triangle from gray paper.

Glue one piece of gray paper on the front of the envelope and one piece on the back. Tape the gray triangle on top of the envelope as a fin. Glue a wiggle eye on either side of the envelope, above the “mouth”.

Put your hand in the open end of the envelope to make the shark’s mouth open and close. Move your arm to make the shark swim.

**The postage stamps on junk mail and any other kind of mail are treasures just waiting to be reused and recycled!**

Cut stamps from envelopes and use them in many ways.

**1 – Stamp Collection**

One of the easiest and most fun ideas is to begin a stamp collection.

Place your stamps on the pages of any notebook, make a blank book for stamps, keep them in a small box, or place them in an envelope.

You might like to decorate the cover of the book, lid of the box, or front of the envelope with a stamp collage.

There are so many different kinds of stamps. If you use glue to attach the stamps in a book, make a page for each different kind such as states in the US, countries of the world, flags, animals, flowers and plants, and famous people.

**2- Art Projects**

Reuse stamps on your artwork such as collages and drawings.

**3 – Stationery and Note Cards**

Make your own stationery or writing paper and note cards using postage stamps as a decoration. Glue a single stamp in the corner of the paper, a stamp in each corner, or a row of stamps across the top or bottom of the writing paper or note card.