



About the Book

While playing on the beach in her coastal town, a young girl comes across a sea turtle ensnared by a wire. Her town is home to a factory that has provided jobs for many of her neighbors, including her mother, but it has also been dumping garbage from a pipe into the waters, threatening the creatures that live in them. Children are used to being asked what they'll do and be when they grow up, but the girl knows there is so much she can do today to help. Unable to forget the sight of the struggling turtle, with a fantastic act she inspires the townspeople to compel the factory to change its destructive ways.

Written in spare and evocative poetry, *I Am Today* is an empowering story for children who want to be the change the world needs.



Excerpt

Grown-ups say I am the Future. But I'd rather be the Now. Why wait to make a change for good? I'm strong. And I know how! I've learned from those before me what's truthful. Decent. Fair. They've taught me how to be polite. They've shown me how to share. If I see something isn't right, I need to take a stand!

Reading Group Guide

Discussion Questions

1. What are some ways you can give back to the environment and your community? This could be in your neighborhood, in school, your house, or even your own room.
2. How do you think the town changed after this story? How do you think the ocean changed after the beach was cleaned up?
3. I Am Today focuses on the impact we can have on nature, but the lessons of not waiting to make a change can be applied to many things in our lives. What are some ways we can help others and lend a hand to those who need it?
4. Working hard can be tiring. How can you continually motivate yourself and keep up your enthusiasm when you are hard at work on a task? Why is it important to take breaks when you need them?
5. How can you make your voice be heard in different environments and settings? How can you learn from those around you?

Extension Activities

1. Have students use paper that would have been thrown away, and follow the origami instructions in the back of I Am Today to make an origami turtle. Use this activity to illustrate the way materials that seem to not have any more purpose can be recycled and turned into a new experience.
2. Prepare and serve an ocean themed snack for the class that includes packaging that has different recycling numbers. Utilize this time to teach the class about proper ways of disposing of their trash and how to identify recycle numbers. For example, have small cans of soda that are held by plastic rings and instruct them on how to cut and dispose of the plastic or explain how Goldfish boxes are not recyclable due to the inner foil lining.

Author Info

Before he found his calling as a children's author, Matt Forrest Esenwine spent a good part of his life writing poetry, which was published in various national journals and anthologies including the Donald Hall tribute, Except for Love (Encircle, 2019). Then his debut picture book, Flashlight Night (Boyds Mills & Kane, 2017), received a Kirkus starred review and was selected by the New York Public Library as one of the Best Books for Kids 2017 – and he



never slowed down! Matt has 10 other books to his credit, and his children's poetry can be found in anthologies like *The National Geographic Book of Nature Poetry* (National Geographic Children's Books, 2015) and *Night Wishes* (Eerdmans, 2020), as well as "Highlights for Children" magazine.

Illustrator Info

Patricia Pessoa grew up in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where as a child she began her illustration career by making free drawings for friends in school. Years later she graduated from The Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro with a degree in Fine Arts, focusing on what she enjoyed the most, children's book illustrations. Currently Patricia lives in England, and her hobbies include embroidery, ceramics, video games and annoying her cat.

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Help guide our hero through the story, using events of the book to help you!

