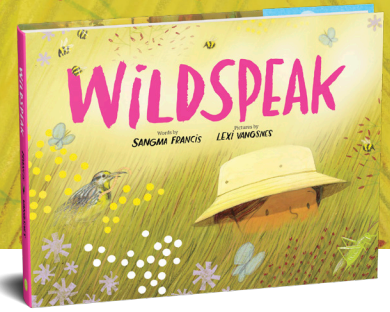


An Educator's Guide for

# WILDSPEAK

Words by  
**SANGMA FRANCIS**

Pictures by  
**LEXI VANGSNES**



## Wildspeak

Words by Sangma Francis | Pictures by Lexi Vangsnnes

*Wildspeak* invites children to listen closely to the living world and invent words to capture what they see, hear, and feel. As Ada and Cora explore rivers, meadows, mountains, beaches, and forests, they discover nature holds both real words and imaginary ones waiting to be spoken. Along the way, they encounter shimmering water, buzzing insects, whispering leaves, and mysterious places. This adventure gives the girls plenty of opportunities to name something new.

This story encourages curiosity, creativity, and wonder as children see how language grows from paying attention to the world around them.

### Note to Educators

Perfect for ages 4–9, *Wildspeak* celebrates young children's natural instinct to experiment with new words as they are introduced to new things.

This book gives young children the opportunity to:

- Observe nature closely
- Play with sound and language
- Develop descriptive vocabulary
- Connect their imagination with science

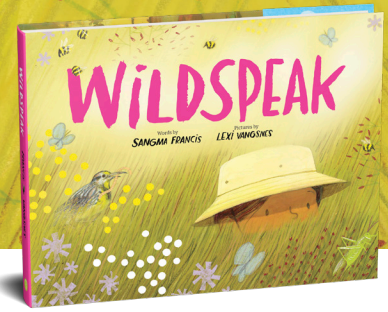
The activities in this guide support early literacy, creativity, and environmental awareness. They invite children to see themselves as explorers, poets, and scientists of the natural world.



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## Literacy Skills Activities

### Pre-Literacy Skills Activities (For early learners ages 4–6)

Before children begin reading independently, they learn about language through listening, speaking, noticing patterns, and making meaning from pictures and sounds. The following activities support oral language development, phonological awareness, vocabulary building, and visual interpretation.

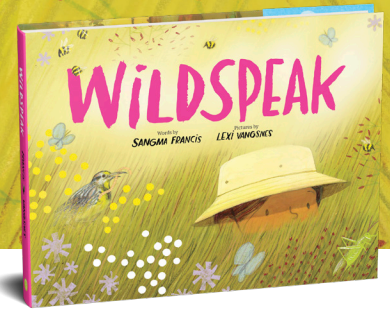
Sound Listening	Picture Noticing
<p>Read selected passages aloud slowly and invite children to listen for interesting sounds.</p> <p>Ask children to repeat playful sound words together, such as: <i>HOU HOOOU</i>, <i>PFFISHH</i>, <i>SWIIISH</i>,</p> <p>Encourage children to invent their own nature sounds.</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What sound might wind make in the trees?</li> <li>• What sound might water make over rocks?</li> </ul>	<p>Young learners often understand stories through illustrations before they understand the written words.</p> <p>After studying the illustrations, ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What animals do you see?</li> <li>• What colors do you notice in the sky, water, or plants?</li> <li>• What do you think the characters are discovering?</li> </ul>
Movement and Meaning	Word Stretching
<p>Ask young children to act out words from the book.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• flutter like insects in the meadow</li> <li>• sway like grass in the wind</li> <li>• sparkle like light on water</li> </ul> <p>Movement will help your young learners connect language with physical experience.</p>	<p>Choose one invented word from the book, such as <i>STONELIGHT</i> or <i>AIRDANCERS</i>.</p> <p>Slowly stretch the word aloud. For example: <i>STOOONE—LIIGHT</i></p> <p>Ask young children to repeat the stretched sounds.</p> <p>Then ask them to clap the parts of the word.</p>

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## Emergent Literacy Skills (For developing readers ages 6–9)

*Wildspeak* is a powerful text for exploring word formation, descriptive language, and imaginative vocabulary. The following activities support word recognition, vocabulary development, creative writing, and comprehension.

Compound Word Discovery	Build A Wild Word												
<p>Many of the book's wild words combine two ideas to create new meaning.</p> <p>Examples: <i>BOTTOMSHIMMER</i>, <i>ROCKGLISTEN</i>, <i>PETALGLOW</i></p> <p>Ask students to break these words into parts. For example: ROCK + GLISTEN</p> <p>Ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What does each part mean?</li><li>• How do the parts work together?</li></ul> <p>Students will then create their own compound words inspired by nature.</p>	<p>Provide students with two lists.</p> <table border="0"><tr><td><b>List A</b></td><td><b>List B</b></td></tr><tr><td>sun</td><td>spark</td></tr><tr><td>leaf</td><td>whisper</td></tr><tr><td>rock</td><td>glow</td></tr><tr><td>wind</td><td>dance</td></tr><tr><td>water</td><td>drift</td></tr></table> <p>Students will combine one word from each list to invent new words.</p> <p>Examples: SUNSPARK, LEAFWHISPER, WATERDRIFT</p> <p>Students will then write a sentence describing what their word means.</p>	<b>List A</b>	<b>List B</b>	sun	spark	leaf	whisper	rock	glow	wind	dance	water	drift
<b>List A</b>	<b>List B</b>												
sun	spark												
leaf	whisper												
rock	glow												
wind	dance												
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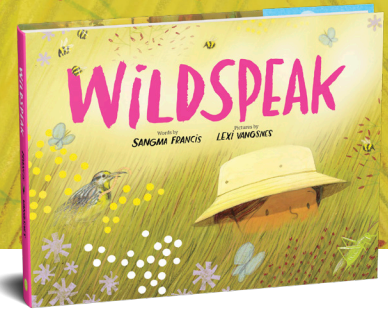


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Word Detective	Wildspeak Writing
<p>As a second paired reading, students will work in pairs to find real scientific words hidden in the story, such as: <i>scree</i>, <i>ridge</i>, or <i>saddle</i>.</p> <p>Student pairs will work together to determine what these words mean and where they might appear in nature.</p>	<p>Students will write a short poem inspired by nature.</p> <p>Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>I see...</b></li><li><b>I hear...</b></li><li><b>I imagine...</b></li></ul> <p>Students should include one or two invented words in their poem.</p> <p>Poem example:</p> <p>I see the river shining I hear the frogs singing The water becomes MOONSHIMMER.</p>

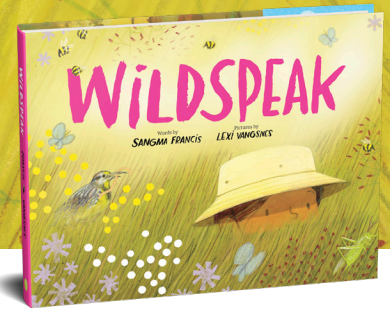


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## Before, During, and After Discussion Questions

### Before Reading: Activating Curiosity and Prior Knowledge

1. Look at the book's cover and title. What do you think the word *Wildspeak* might mean?
2. When you spend time outside, what kinds of things do you notice first?  
What sounds, colors, or movements do you see in nature?
3. Sometimes we do not have the perfect word to describe what we see or feel.  
What might you do if you needed a new word?
4. The children in this story explore many outdoor places such as streams, meadows, beaches, and mountains. Which place would you most like to explore and why?

### During Reading: Noticing Language, Imagination, and Observation

1. The children create new words such as *STONELIGHT* and *BOTTOMSHIMMER*. What two ideas do you think these words combine? What picture do they create in your mind?
2. The characters pause often to observe small details around them. What tiny things do they notice that others might overlook?
3. Why do you think the characters invent words when they explore nature?  
What might those words help them express?
4. The children move through different environments such as streams, meadows, mountains, and forests. How does each place feel different?

### After Reading: Reflection, Interpretation, and Connection

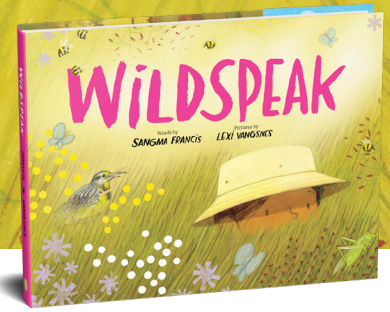
1. Near the end of the story, the wild seems to respond to the children's words and attention. Why might the natural world feel more alive when we slow down and observe it carefully?
2. What is one small detail in nature that you notice now that you might not have noticed before reading this book?
3. If you could invent your own wild word to describe something in nature, what would it be and what would it mean?
4. How might paying attention to the natural world help us care for it and protect it?

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## Cross Curriculum Learning Connections

### Science: Nature Investigators: A Tiny Things Study

In the story, the meadow is described as a place full of many small living things. For this activity, students will explore nature and search for tiny organisms.

#### Children may observe:

- insects
- grasses
- moss
- small flowers
- stones

*\*If possible, provide magnifying glasses for this exploration.*

#### During their investigation, students will describe what they notice:

- How does it move?
- What colors do you see?
- Where is it living?

Students can record their discoveries with drawings or notes on the Nature Investigator's log.

### Science: Landform Explorers

*Wildspeak* introduces children to natural land features such as ridges, saddles, and scattered stones on mountainsides.

Review images of landforms with students. Using the chart, students will connect the landform image to places they may have visited or seen before.

Students can then create their own mini landscape model using clay, sand, or building blocks.

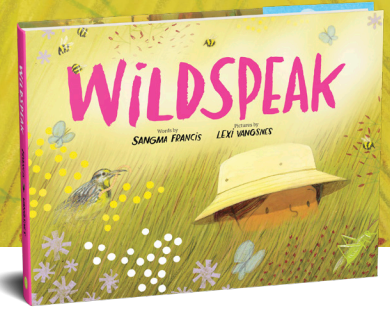


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## Landform & Connection Chart

### Landform

### My Connection



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists\\_of\\_hills](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_hills)



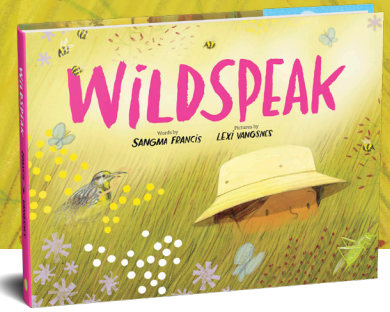
<https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valley>

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<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mountain>



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River>

## Art: Imagining the Wild with Wild Word Illustrations

Students will choose one invented word from the story or one they created themselves, and draw what they imagine the word looks like.

Encourage students to think about:

- color
- texture
- light
- movement



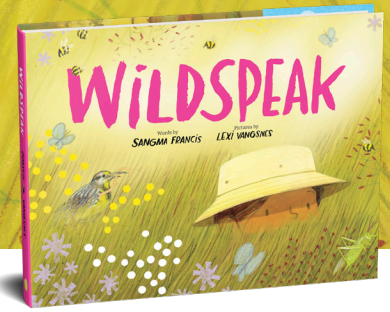
Display the drawings together as a Wild Word Gallery.

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## Music: Nature's Sound Orchestra

At the end of the story, the wild seems to speak back through sound.

Ask students to recreate sounds from nature using their voices or simple instruments.

Share the following examples with students:

- Wind through trees
- Buzzing insects
- Flowing water
- Rustling leaves



Students can experiment with sound effects such as:

- Whoosh
- Buzz
- Swish
- Tap

Together, the class can perform a Sounds of the Wild Orchestra, layering different sounds to create a natural soundscape

## Environmental Learning: Caring for the Wild

Discuss with students how the characters in the story observe the world carefully and respectfully.

Ask students:

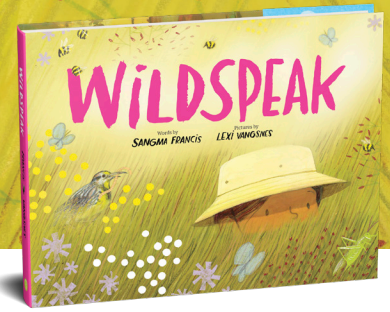
- What helps plants and animals stay healthy?
- What causes harm?
- How can people protect natural places?

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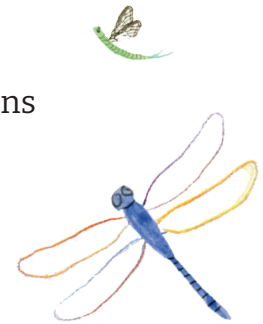
Students can brainstorm actions like:

- picking up litter
- staying on nature trails
- respecting plants and animals

Working in small groups, students will propose environmental care solutions and create a digital campaign for one of their most promising solutions.

Examples:

- Social media campaign reminding others to protect plants
- Create a flyer organizing a small cleanup
- Designing a “protect our wild space” poster
- Create a video teaching people about why they should plant native flowers or use native seeds



## Resources

National Geographic: Landforms and Landscapes

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/resource-library-landforms-and-landscapes/>

BBC: Bring the Noise

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/bring-the-noise>

Leave No Trace: 7 Principles of Environmental Protection

[https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=23544491427&gbraid=0AAAAADFOyop7-w6TZPuert-f8\\_eN9rdsy&gclid=Cj0KCQjwgr\\_NBhDFARIsAHiUWr4-xys1vzBJAGMXvP9o0o8XCxG3svlZvL5kHBdKHKBWolnJsbCLzcaAnYiEALw\\_wcB](https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23544491427&gbraid=0AAAAADFOyop7-w6TZPuert-f8_eN9rdsy&gclid=Cj0KCQjwgr_NBhDFARIsAHiUWr4-xys1vzBJAGMXvP9o0o8XCxG3svlZvL5kHBdKHKBWolnJsbCLzcaAnYiEALw_wcB)

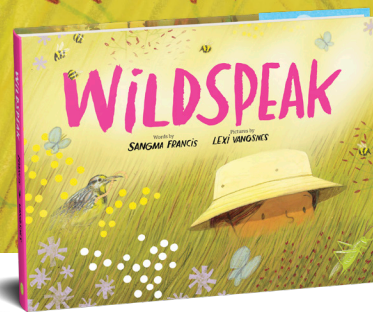
NatGeoKids: Inside the Enchanted Forest

<https://youtu.be/cUHUJKdkAzc?si=dCXBfjRmWfH7LJtm>

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## Nature Investigator's Log

Name:

Date:

Location (schoolyard, park, backyard):

1.

### My Discovery

*What tiny things did you find?*



2.

### What Does it Look Like?

*Circle or write what you notice.*

Color      Size      Texture

Shape      Movement

Notes:

3.

### Where Did You Find it?

*Circle or write what you notice.*

Under a rock      In the grass

On a leaf      Near water

In the dirt

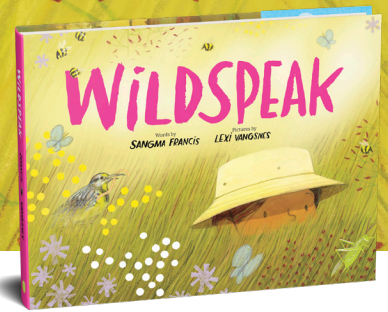
Other:

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## Nature Investigator's Log

4.

### My Drawings

*Draw your discoveries as carefully as you can.*

5.

### My Wild Words

*Create new words inspired by what you saw.*

*For example, LEAFGLIMMER, BIGSCURRY, VELVETMOSS.*

*Your words:*


*What do they mean?*

6.

### Investigator Reflection

*Scientists and explorers often ask questions about what they observe.*

*What do you wonder about your discoveries?*



# My Wildspeak Journal

**Wildspeak is everywhere.  
It's waiting for you.**

**Take a walk outside and scribble down  
the things you see. Wildspeak is not  
just words. It is a feeling. It is a taste.  
It is a shape. It is a color. It is a sound.**

**There are two simple rules:**

- 1. Look closely**
- 2. Be inventive**

# TREE TRUNKS

## Instructions:

Look closely at the trunk of a tree. Is it jagged and crunchy?  
Does it feel smooth? Write and draw your observations below.

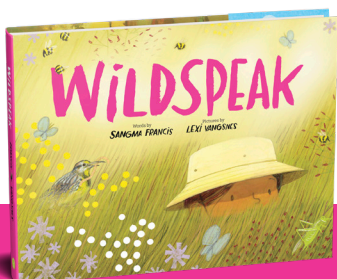
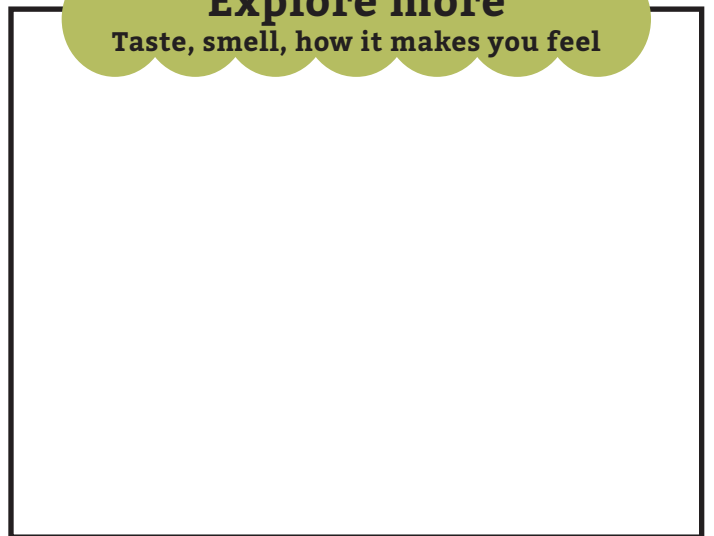
Draw it here



Write it here  
Any word or sound



Explore more  
Taste, smell, how it makes you feel



# SUNLIGHT

## Instructions:

Light changes every day. It changes through the seasons. It changes the things you see.  
Scribble how you see sunlight. Is it caramel hot? Is it shadow dancing?

**Draw it here**

**Write it here**  
Any word or sound

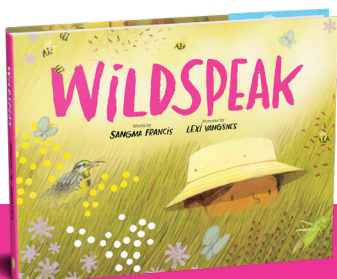
**Explore more**  
Taste, smell, how it makes you feel

**Time**

Example: winter, after school

**Place**

Example: bedroom window



# BIRDS

## Instructions:

Birds are constantly on the move. Try to find a few and jot down your thoughts and perceptions of them below.

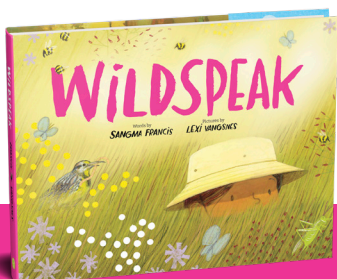
Draw it here



Write it here  
Any word or sound



Explore more  
Beak shape, feather color



# LEAF SHAPES

## Instructions:

Leaves change with every season. What do they look like where you are now?  
What season are you in? Write your thoughts below.

Draw it here



Write it here  
Any word or sound



Explore more  
Taste, smell, how it makes you feel

