

Ecosystems Matter

Jessica Jane Robinson

Resilience Birthright Productions

(140pp)

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Ecosystems Matter is an edifying novel about the science of ecology and the importance of friendship.

An orphaned girl from another galaxy is raised by her human grandmother in Jessica Jane Robinson's gentle but didactic novel *Ecosystems Matter*, about ecological protection and environmental stewardship.

In her grandmother's secret garden, Jessica, a girl "born with gifts that made her sensitive and aware of all life around her," befriends Bumbles, a bee; Mr. and Mrs. Wiggles, who are worms; Terry, an apple tree; and Anna Mycelium. Among her human friends, she nurtures her innate passion for ecology too. For instance—with the help of her teacher, Ms. Olive—she and her friends Ram and Joelle start a green team at school. They pick up litter, brainstorm methods of sustainability, and propose a school-wide composting and recycling program.

Though it is most concerned with showcasing how people impact nature, the book also proffers lessons related to bullying, the value of friendship, and handling personal isolation. For instance, Jessica, a nervous public speaker, gains confidence across the course of the book, until she feels ready to present an important proposal to her schoolmates. Still, the book's questions about environmental stewardship reign. Jessica is curious about how individuals might make a difference in the face of overwhelming pollution, from the Pacific Garbage Patch to everyday litter, and potential action items are proffered through her tale, which is flush with lessons about plastic and other waste. Narrated in the present tense and complemented by sparse black-and-white illustrations, the text is an accessible entry point into discussions of human threats to the biosphere.

Still, the book's education elements outweigh its story in the end. The early detail that Jessica is "not an earthling but from another planet thirteen galaxies away" is dismissed as "another story for another day"; eschewing that unique background, the book instead stresses points like the benefits of composting, the detrimental consequences of littering, and the power of reducing, reusing, and recycling. Particular terms are set apart in bold and are defined in context, further reinforcing this instructiveness.

In the book's tidy conclusion, Jessica brings her new friends to meet her old ones, serving as an intermediary between the human and nonhuman worlds. Further adventures are hinted at, though this volume's focus on the power of young people to enact positive change in their communities is clear on its own.

Ecosystems Matter is an edifying novel in which a curious girl, supported by a few select peers and adults, learns about the science of ecology and the importance of friendship.

CAITLIN CACCIATORE (April 26, 2026)

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