

Grow Grow Grow

Barbara Riley

Jaenet Guggenheim, Illustrator

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Little seed / sound asleep. / Wake up, calls the rain. / Wake up, calls the sky.

While a sunflower seed sleeps beneath the surface of the nutrient-rich soil, the sky above calls out for life to begin. Long, thin earthworms move in and out and all around, aerating and fertilizing, preparing the earth for the sunflower's growth. Rain moistens the earth, and a tender root pushes its way downward in search of nourishment. "Who's calling me?" asks the seed. Firmly grounded, a strong, green shoot bursts forth in search of the one who calls. "I'm listening," it shouts. "Are you calling me?"

Riley, a poet who lives and works in the great Southwest, recounts the remarkable journey of a single seed buried in the earth as it grows into a gigantic, Russian Mammoth sunflower, towering high in the simmering sky. Through the birds-eye view of a burgeoning flower, this captivating story-poem propels the reader through every enlightened step of the flourishing cycle of life. Each clear, direct question attracts the listener's attention as the author demonstrates the flower's unwavering determination to survive in the wild. An acutely-disciplined poet, Riley draws upon the five senses through these same engaging questions and the accompanying lines of fearless, self-confident pronouncements. By book's end, the poem comes full circle as the matured sunflower drops its dormant seeds to the ground for another prosperous growing season.

Every page bursts with kaleidoscopic intensity as the artist playfully illustrates the marvels of nature lurking beneath and beyond the poetic lines. Guggenheim, author and illustrator of *Herman and Poppy Go Singing in the Hills*, boldly illustrates from an assortment of exotic art papers exquisitely designed by artists from across the globe. Out of gratitude for their matchless talent, Guggenheim pledges to contribute half of her royalties to various children's charities in the native countries of these paper designers via UNICEF.

Grow Grow Grow articulates the music of life. The paper-collage artwork features countless details from the plant and animal kingdoms, as well as the indispensable world of insects, and Riley's freestyle poetry inspires creativity, exploration, and even movement through stretches, exercises, and free-spirited dance. *Grow Grow Grow* is ideal for the baby/preschool age group and would significantly enhance a science program in the early elementary classroom.

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