

I Heard the Willow Weep

Toni Albert

Margaret Brandt, Illustrator

Trickle Creek Books (Apr 22, 2000)

Unknown \$10.95 (32pp)

978-1-929432-00-4

I Heard the Willow Weep is one of few educational resources published for children that awakens the conscientiousness of human kind to the past and current damage that has been levied against the planet earth and its wildlife.

Albert successfully incorporates what is traditionally a rather difficult subject into a well thought-out and practical picture book for children. I Heard the Willow Weep is divided into two segments: What Have We Done? and What Can We Do? It is in part one where the reader encounters Albert's childlike, yet intensely thought provoking poem that repeatedly asks, "how long will we sleep, before garbage is knee-deep?" The firm and direct language used within the poem, combined with the not so subtle illustrations of Margaret Brandt make an effective team. Through Brandt's illustrations, readers are able to make a visual manifestation of Albert's poetic prose.

In part two, Albert provides readers with useful facts, figures, definitions of common ecological language and practical suggestions that can be done as efforts toward conserving endangered wildlife and wildlands. For example, Albert argues that what humankind does on land, eventually has an effect on aquatic life. Hence, as a "backdoor" effort to conserving the integrity of ocean life, Albert instructs children to "never throw trash into the sea or on the beach; plastics and [soda can carrying rings] are especially dangerous, because animals get tangled up in them." In addition, part two provides educators and parents with wonderful craft activities that they can make with their children to further develop an environmental understanding.

Albert is nationally recognized for her many literary contributions that serve to enlighten and educate children and adults alike regarding environmental concerns. This book continues her strong and tireless campaign to teach children how to care for the earth and its inhabitants.

I Heard the Willow Weep is a good resource to assist educators and parents in teaching their children about how to become more effective consumers and to take better care of the earth.

VERONICA L. C. STEVENSON-MOUDAMANE (May / June 2000)

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