



Picture Books

Mammals Who Morph: The Universe Tells Our Evolution Story

Jennifer Morgan

Dana Lynne Andersen, illustrator

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Thirteen billion years ago in a galaxy not far away, the infant Universe was a swirling cloud of hydrogen. Then a star exploded, and life has never been the same.

The Universe narrates this story about Earth's creation and evolution. She describes early animal life, such as dinosaurs, rabbit-sized camels, and elephants with teeth on their trunks. When a meteor strikes Earth and kills the dinosaurs, the other mammals survive and "morph" or evolve) into forms adaptable to the new planet. The book discusses Earth DNA; rain forest proliferation; and how hominids discovered fire and developed language, tools, and intelligence.

The illustrations beautifully set the mood and tone. Early atmosphere scenes depict yellow-and-orange swirls of gaseous clouds, with scattered fragments of animal life drawn in dark hues of brown and gray. A deep blue-and-purple backdrop represents the darkness; when the sun appears, the backdrop changes to red and yellow, highlighting budding green rainforest plants and new animals.

The award-winning author holds a degree in theology. This is the third and final volume in her series about the universe; the first won *Learning Magazine's* Teacher's Choice Award, and received the highest possible review ratings from the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The illustrator is a multimedia artist and teacher whose paintings represent the energy forces that underlie life matter. With a philosophy degree, she founded the Awakening Arts Institute for artists who use art to uplift the human spirit.

Here, the first-person, Mother-Universe narration makes a great story vehicle: "When I was an infant universe, 13 billion years ago, there were no eyes to see," she says. "Your Earth is one of my most creative planets." There is a dense supply of educational content, for example, a

timeline—in million-year increments—is displayed across the top of each page. At the bottom, key concepts like molecular-versus-fossil research, symbolic thought, and the rise of classical religions are noted, with references to the appendix. A glossary with photographs and a book and media list are included. An interesting addition is a letter from the author addressing the question, “Where’s God in the story?”

Readers young and old will be intrigued and informed by this science-based tale from Mother Universe.

Angela Black