

Readers Group Guide

Rest Your Dreams On a Little Twig

Poetry by Joyce Rupp & Art by Barbara Loomis

Joyce Rupp's first book of poetry is a winner! ***Rest Your Dreams on a Little Twig*** is a collection of 65 profound yet simple poetic sketches that Rupp says "sort of wrote themselves."

"In the early 90's, over a period of about three years," Rupp says on her web site (<http://www.joycerupp.com>), "I deliberately and regularly focused on some aspect of nature, trying to simply be present to it, to see what message I might receive from what I observed. As I did so, these simple, yet profound, connections with life kept arising. As I wrote them down they just naturally moved into a poetic form."

This book is prime Rupp, with themes of the heart and dreams for growth, inner freedom, and peace.

Barbara Loomis illustrated the book with what Rupp calls "mandala-type" drawings. A mandala, which originated in eastern religions, is a geometric design that's symbolic of the universe, and is used as a help in meditation.

Loomis and Rupp are both members of the Servite Community.

Before You Start: the Drawings

Study Barbara Loomis's drawings as you read the book.

**Which drawing best illustrates a particular poem?
Which drawing is your favorite drawing, and why?**

Little Twig

Fledgling ideas and dreams don't have a wait for a secure branch to hold them, Joyce Rupp says. "If I never let these dreams land, they will not gain strength for the long flight into fullness." (See page 15.)

Describe a great dream that you'd like to set on a little twig.

Make a list of dreams you have this year for yourself, your family, community, country, and the tempest-tossed world.

How can you help grow those dreams?

Listening Gaze

"The loveliness of a single person with a listening gaze can sing my heavy heart back into life," says Rupp. (See page 23.)

Some people approach others with a running mouth rather than a listening gaze. Describe your interpretation of a listening gaze, and its importance.

Then recount how a person with a listening gaze helped you in a time of need.

How can we teach children that a listening gaze should be part of everyone's way of dealing with others?

Froggy Days

Make a mental list of your favorite fictional frogs. Maybe you'll list Froggy the Gremlin, or Twain's Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, or the Muppets' Kermit. Then add the adorable and determined leaping frog of Joyce Rupp and Barbara Loomis.

Rupp says that it takes a while for a tadpole to grow into a frog. She notes that she still looks for easy growth and instant change, "when all the while frog legs and happy croaks are gestating within me." For Rupp, the frog reminds her to be patient. (See page 29.)

What have you learned from a frog, either virtual or real?

What animal or detail of nature has impressed you with an admirable trait?

Write a 60-word poem about a transcendental nugget of nature and share the poem with others.

A Fear Undefined

"Will I live my life always in fear that some distant enemy might invade my space and cause me pain?" Rupp asked of herself. "Or will I choose instead to celebrate what I now have, with its quiet beauty and unfettered joy?" (See page 67.)

Describe ways in which we use fear of the unknown as a roadblock for success.

Describe an instance in which you were able to turn fear into celebration.

Is there any group that you work with that would benefit from a celebratory spirit? How could you inculcate such a spirit?

Renegades of beauty

Simple wildflowers, "renegades of beauty," pay "no heed to the proper place, or the acceptable way to rise up in glory," according to Rupp. She says they have "no fenced boundaries, no limits on their joy," and sing in the breeze, content and free. (See page 73.)

Describe unnecessary restrictions in your life, fences that could be torn down to make happiness run free.

Describe any silly rules in your community that you and friends and associates should work to eliminate.

Winter Birds

Winter birds observed by Rupp have their ways of surviving. "They fluff out their feathers, fend off the freeze, find food in secret sources." (See page 127.)

What spiritual tools or techniques can we use to strengthen ourselves in a winter of discontent?

Name a public or historic figure that demonstrated winter bird traits, and name one who lacks those traits.

Roots

Joyce Rupp longs to live near the source, near the depths, and near the roots, where there's "a home close to the heart of deepest belief." (See page 143.)

What are your favorite resources, either on the Internet or in other media, that help carry you back to your spiritual roots when you need a regrounding?

After You Read the Book

In Joyce Rupp's experiences with nature, a small encounter with nature spawns a moment when the bigger truths of life are revealed.

Describe such a moment in your life.

If you haven't had such a moment, take out your calendar and schedule some viewing of nature during the next year. Schedule at least one cornucopic viewing of creation a month.