

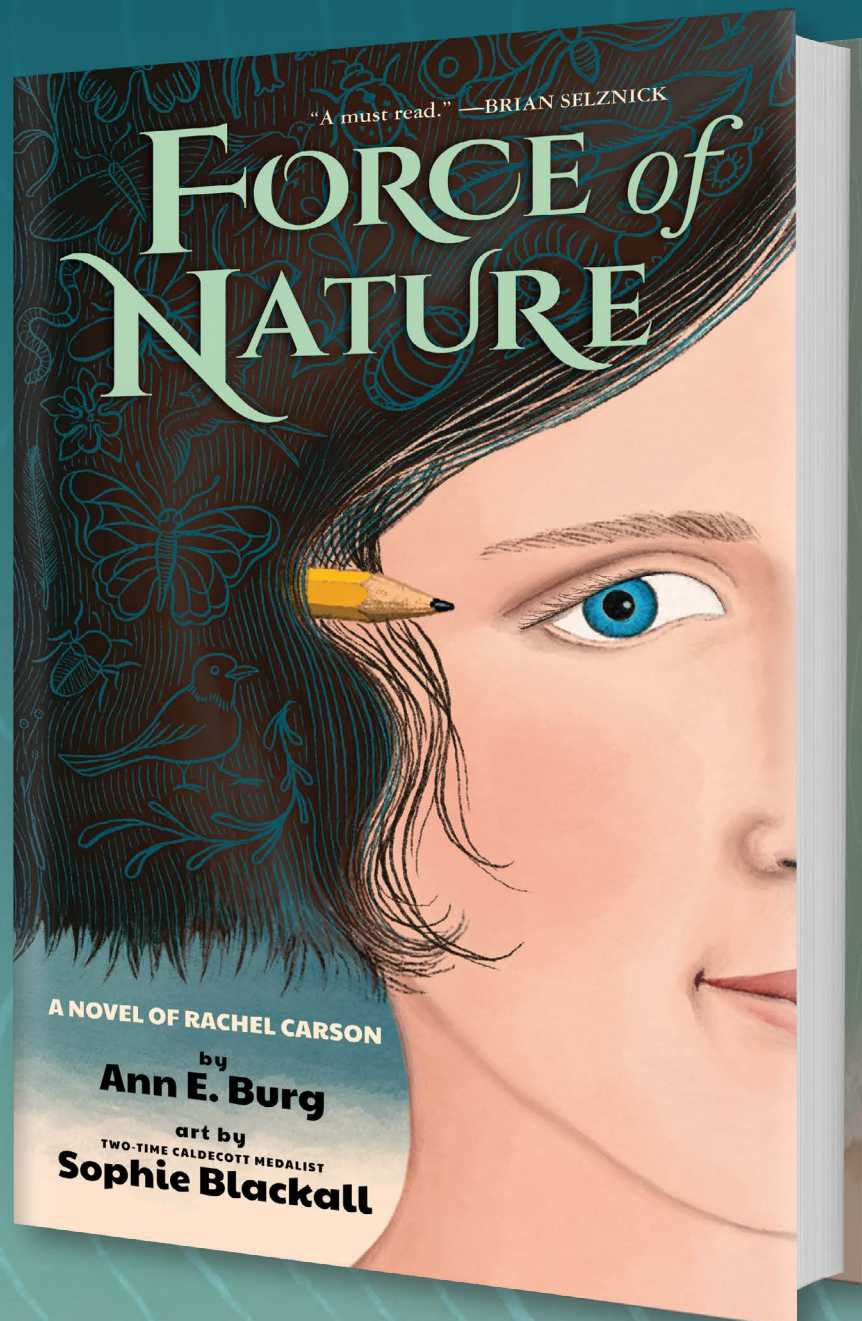
DISCUSSION GUIDE

FORCE *of* NATURE

A NOVEL OF RACHEL CARSON

By Ann E. Burg — **Art by Sophie Blackall**

AGES
8-12
GRADES
3-7



 **SCHOLASTIC**

ABOUT THE BOOK



Force of Nature: A Novel of Rachel Carson

HC: 9781338883381 • \$19.99
Also available in ebook and audio
Ages 8–12 • Grades 3–7

Rachel Carson was a quiet child who felt most at home among the creatures of the natural world. But she went on to become a marine biologist in a field reserved for men and a visionary writer whose groundbreaking book *Silent Spring* launched the global environmental movement. In this stunning novel of her life, readers are introduced to the shy, nature-loving child who overcame economic adversity, family struggles, and gender discrimination to become a courageous force of nature and one of the most prominent writers and thinkers of the twentieth century. Rachel's deep love and respect for nature compelled her to use her voice to make change and will inspire young readers to do the same.

Beautifully packaged with interior drawings by two-time Caldecott Medalist Sophie Blackall, *Force of Nature* is a must-read for nature lovers and STEM / STEAM enthusiasts, as well as young activists, feminists, and writers. It is sure to motivate the next generation to stewardship and action.

“A beautiful introduction to the world-changing life of Rachel Carson. With clear, simple drawings of the natural world by the brilliant Sophie Blackall, [this] is a must read for anyone interested in nature, perseverance, art, and science.”

—Brian Selznick, Caldecott Medalist and *New York Times* bestselling creator of *Big Tree*

“An essential book and an inspiring portrait of a life that must continue to empower and galvanize young people all over the world.”

—C.C. Harrington, author of the Schneider Family Book Award winner *Wildoak*

“Like Rachel Carson’s own books before it, *Force of Nature* is informative, poetic, and beautiful.”

—Alan Gratz, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Two Degrees*

“A moving, deeply researched story of Rachel Carson’s life that goes beyond the well-known facts and reveals her empathetic, loving spirit.”

—Robert K. Musil, President & CEO, Rachel Carson council

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

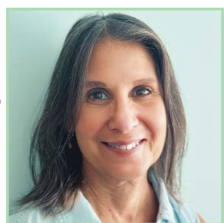


Photo © Ann E. Burg

ANN E. BURG's debut novel, *All the Broken Pieces*, was named an ALA Best Book for Young Adults, a Cardinal (née Jefferson) Cup Award winner, and an IRA Notable Book for a Global Society, among its many honors. All of her subsequent novels in verse have garnered multiple awards and starred reviews. *Serafina's Promise* was named an ALA Notable, a Parents' Choice Gold Award winner, and an NAACP Image Award finalist. *Unbound* was the winner of the New-York Historical Society Children's History Book Prize, the Christopher Award, and an Arnold Adoff Poetry Honor. *Flooded* was a Bank Street College Claudia Lewis Award winner, a Bank Street College Best Children's Book (with outstanding merit), and a Junior Library Guild selection. Burg worked as an English teacher for ten years before becoming a full-time writer. She lives in Rhinebeck, New York, with her family. Visit her online at annburg.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



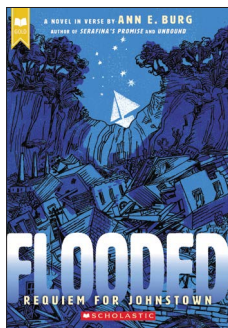
Photo © Matt Carr

SOPHIE BLACKALL found inspiration for her drawings in Rachel Carson's writing and in her deep love for the natural world. “The ripples of Rachel's work affect us still, encircling us, reminding us more than ever that we are all connected.” Sophie has illustrated over fifty books for children, including the *New York Times* bestselling Ivy and Bean series by Annie Barrows and the Caldecott Medal winners *Finding Winnie* by Lindsay Mattick and her own *Hello Lighthouse*. Her artwork has also appeared in murals as part of the New York City MTA's “Arts for Transit” program. Originally from Australia, Sophie now splits her time between Brooklyn, New York, and the Catskill Mountains. Learn more at sophieblackall.com.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Rachel Carson's family members shape her life in several significant ways, especially her mother, her siblings, and her nieces and their children. How did they encourage her success or hold her back from it?
2. How did Rachel Carson's career as a writer begin? What influences shaped her writing?
3. What advice to writers does the book's author, Ann E. Burg, share as Rachel writes stories, articles, pamphlets, letters, reports, and books?
4. The author includes several pages of "Field Notes" interspersed throughout the narrative. What role do these pages play in advancing the story or building the character of Rachel?
5. Why do you think Ann E. Burg chose to write Rachel's story in verse? How does the format of the text shape your response to the story? Share a word, line, or poem from the book that you find particularly meaningful.
6. Caldecott medalist Sophie Blackall created the cover and interior art for *Force of Nature*. How do these internal images (known as "spot art") shape your reading experience?
7. What causes Rachel Carson to shift her career interests and goals from writing literature to studying science?
8. What setbacks does Rachel Carson experience in her aspiration to become a scientist?
9. Who were some of the most positive influences in Rachel's life and work?
10. How do Rachel's childhood experiences affect her professional pursuits as an adult? What do the interests and experiences of your own childhood suggest about what might influence your future career choices and goals?
11. Discrimination against women during this time period is an issue threaded through the story. What are some examples of how the girls and women in this book experienced challenges that men did not face?
12. Rachel Carson's landmark book, *Silent Spring*, was the culmination of many years of scientific inquiry, study, and writing. What are three things that happened in Rachel's life that made it possible for her to write and publish that book?
13. Through the narrative voice of Rachel Carson, the author raises many questions that encourage readers to think critically. Consider and discuss the examples listed below, or find other questions in the book to reflect upon.
 - ☞ "Why must the progress of man / interfere with the beauty of nature?" (p. 51)
 - ☞ "How has your childhood influenced / your taste in literature?" (p. 81)
 - ☞ "What and how long will it take / for women to be taken seriously?" (p. 186)
 - ☞ "Why is science considered / the realm of men? / Are we not all people?" (p. 204)
 - ☞ "Why did it never occur to anyone / that my pen and my microscope / could find new purpose together?" (p. 215)
 - ☞ "When will man realize that he / is a *part* of nature, not its master?" (p. 241)
 - ☞ "Why must the truth be twisted?" (p. 267)
14. Throughout her lifetime, from childhood to adulthood, Rachel enjoyed being out in nature noticing the plants, birds, and animals in her surroundings. What do you observe when you are outside at school, at home, or in your community? What plants, birds, and animals do you notice?
15. Several of the author's novels in verse are set in the past, including *Flooded*, *Unbound*, *All the Broken Pieces*, and *Force of Nature*. How does she bring the past to life in each novel? What details does she provide that signal the stories are set in the past? How does each historical setting affect the main character(s)? What parallels or themes can you see across all these historical novels in verse?

SELECTED PRAISE FOR ANN E. BURG



Bank Street College Children's Book Committee—Best Children's Books of the Year (Outstanding Merit)

Bank Street Claudia Lewis Award Winner

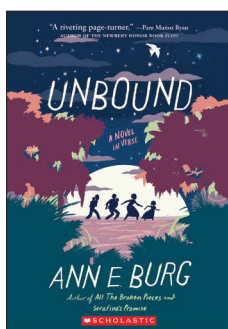
Junior Library Guild Selection

Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Award Nominee

★ “Stunning, significant and sorrowful, Ann E. Burg’s requiem melts history into prose . . . Highly recommended.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

“Chillingly effective.” —*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*

Flooded: Requiem for Johnstown ✓ PB: 9781338540994 • \$7.99 ✓ Also available in ebook and audio ✓ Ages 9–14 • Grades 4–8



New-York Historical Society Children's History Book Prize Winner

Christopher Award, Books for Young People

Kirkus Prize Nominee

NYPL Best Books of the Year

★ “A combination of historical precision, honesty, and adventure . . . Beautifully done.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “An ideal selection for classrooms and libraries . . . across a wide grade range.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

Unbound: A Novel in Verse ✓ PB: 9781338282085 • \$8.99 ✓ Also available in ebook and audio ✓ Ages 8–12 • Grades 3–7



ALA Notable Book

Américas Award, Commended Title

Kirkus Best Book of the Year

School Library Journal Best Books of the Year

Parents' Choice Gold Award Winner

NAACP Image Awards Outstanding Literary Work—Youth/Teens nominee

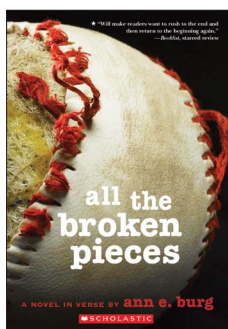
Bank Street College Children's Book Committee—Best Children's Books of the Year

William Allen White Award

★ “Lilting, lyrical, and full of hope.”
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Powerful and uplifting.”
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

Serafina's Promise ✓ PB: 9780545535670 • \$8.99 ✓ Also available in ebook and audio ✓ Ages 8–12 • Grades 3–7



ALA Best Books for Young Adults

IRA Notable Book for a Global Society

Cardinal (née Jefferson) Cup Award Winner

Booklist Editors' Choice

★ “Using spare free verse, first-time novelist Burg beautifully evokes the emotions of a Vietnamese adoptee as he struggles to come to terms with his past.”
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

★ “Will make readers want to rush to the end and then return to the beginning again to make connections between past, present, friends and enemies.”
—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “The verse form carries highly charged emotions and heavy content with elegiac simplicity.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

All the Broken Pieces ✓ PB: 9780545080934 • \$8.99 ✓ Also available in ebook and audio ✓ Ages 11–14 • Grades 6–9



Scholastic.com