



## TEACHER'S RESOURCE BOX

# Are You The Forest King?

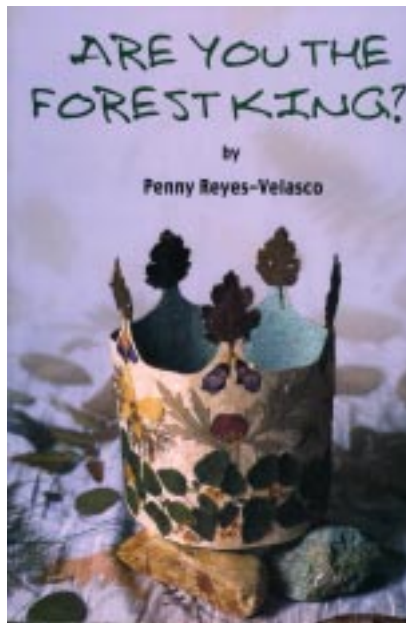
The recent flooding that devastated Quezon province—caused by heavy deforestation—is a painful reminder of how crucial trees are in our lives. Use this book and the following teacher's guide to help kids develop an appreciation for the environment. **BY VICKY S. MENDOZA**

**B**efore the Spanish came, the Philippines was 100 percent forested. Until the year 1900, only a third of the forest area was cleared for agriculture and living space, leaving 70 percent untouched. But by 1999, less than 20 percent of our country was forested! What happened? This accelerated disappearance of our forest cover in such a short period of time is what inspired Penny Reyes-Velasco to write this book to help readers understand what forests mean to human beings.

### THE FOREST IS ALIVE

Forests support eco-systems—networks of living things that are in complete harmony with the environment. In the Philippines, there are still areas called primary-growth rainforests—areas with heavy annual rainfall, and more importantly, trees that have never been cut down by man. Rainforests like these can support a wide variety of life forms, both plants and animals. Just how wide? As a comparison, there are more plant species in Mt. Makiling than in the continental United States!

Some of our forest dwellers are the beloved tarsier, the cloud rat, and the Philippine eagle. Because their “habitat” (or dwelling place) is fast disappearing due to logging or the cutting down of trees, these animals are threatened with extinction. This means that an entire species can die out because the world has become an unfriendly place for them. One report, for example, states that there are only 30 breeding pairs of Philippine eagles left in the entire world because the forests where they used to thrive have been cut down.



#### BOOK INFORMATION

**Author:** Penny Reyes-Velasco  
**Filipino translation:**  
*Kayo Ba Ang Hari Ng Kagubatan?*  
**Translated by:**  
 Fr. Rene Javellana, S.J.  
**Publisher:** Pangaea Publishing

### FOREST TREASURES

Forests don't just support animal life. They also supply man with over 5,000 different products that are used in everyday life! Here are some examples:

- Paper, toilet seats, cellophane, and even nail polish contain an ingredient called cellulose, tiny fibers that are found in wood. Cellulose is also found in toothbrushes, electrical outlets, and rayon fabric.
- Asphalt, paint, chewing gum, and detergents are made from byproducts of the process that releases cellulose from wood.

- Baby food, cereal, baked goods and pet food are often made with torula yeast, which is produced from wood sugars.

- Bulletin boards, coasters, and wine bottle stoppers are made of cork, which comes from the bark of trees. Cork is even used to make flooring, wall tiles, the soles of shoes and musical instruments.

- Some medicinal drugs come from rainforest plants. Examples are quinine, used to cure malaria; Madagascar's rosy periwinkle, which prevents the growth of tumors; and novacaine, a local anesthetic commonly used by dentists.

### SAVE OUR FORESTS

As we have learned from the recent back-to-back calamities that destroyed Aurora, Quezon and Nueva Ecija, trees also prevent floods by drinking in rainwater and keeping it from flowing down to villages and towns. But the massive deforestation of our last great forest, the Sierra Madre, caused the flash floods that killed over a thousand and left thousands homeless.

*Because of the Philippine Cockatoo's ability to copy human sounds, it makes an ideal "talking" pet. Unfortunately, it is now critically endangered, making it illegal to keep them at home. The author with a cockatoo at an animal sanctuary.*





At the end of the book, the author points to man as the Forest King, the one who can save the forests. Why? Because one gives life to the other. If we conserve our forests, the forests will sustain us; if we destroy them, we are destroyed as well. The Native Americans, who are famous for their sensitivity to nature, have a saying: man is merely a strand in the grand web of life; if one link is lost, all else will feel it.

### The Web of Life

*How can you buy and sell the sky,  
the warmth of the land?  
The idea is strange to us  
Every part of this earth is sacred  
to my people. Every pine needle,  
every sandy shore, every mist in  
the dark woods, every clearing  
and humming insect is holy ...  
The sap, which courses through  
the trees, carries the memories of  
the red man...*

*The shining water that moves in  
the streams and rivers is not just  
water but the blood of our  
ancestors...The rivers are our  
brothers, they quench our thirst.  
The rivers carry our canoes and  
feed our children. If we sell you  
our land, you must remember;  
teach your children, that the  
rivers are our brothers, and yours,  
and you must henceforth give the  
rivers the kindness you would give  
any brother.*

*All things are connected... This  
we know. The earth does not  
belong to man; man belongs to  
earth. This we know. All things are  
connected like the blood which  
unites one family. All things are  
connected.*

*Whatever befalls the earth befalls  
the sons of the earth. Man did not  
weave the web of life; he is merely  
a strand in it. Whatever he does to  
the web, he does to himself.*

-Excerpt from the 1854 speech of Native American Chief Seattle, addressed to "the white man" in Washington, where he eloquently expressed the relationship between humans and their environment.

## ENDANGERED!

Many animals native to the Philippines are considered "endangered species," or at risk of becoming extinct. Here are the ones we should be concerned about:

**1 Vulnerable** - A species is vulnerable when it faces a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future. This means a possible decline of 20 percent in their population within three generations. Examples are:

- a. Giant Bushy-tailed Cloud Rat
- b. Mindanao Shrew

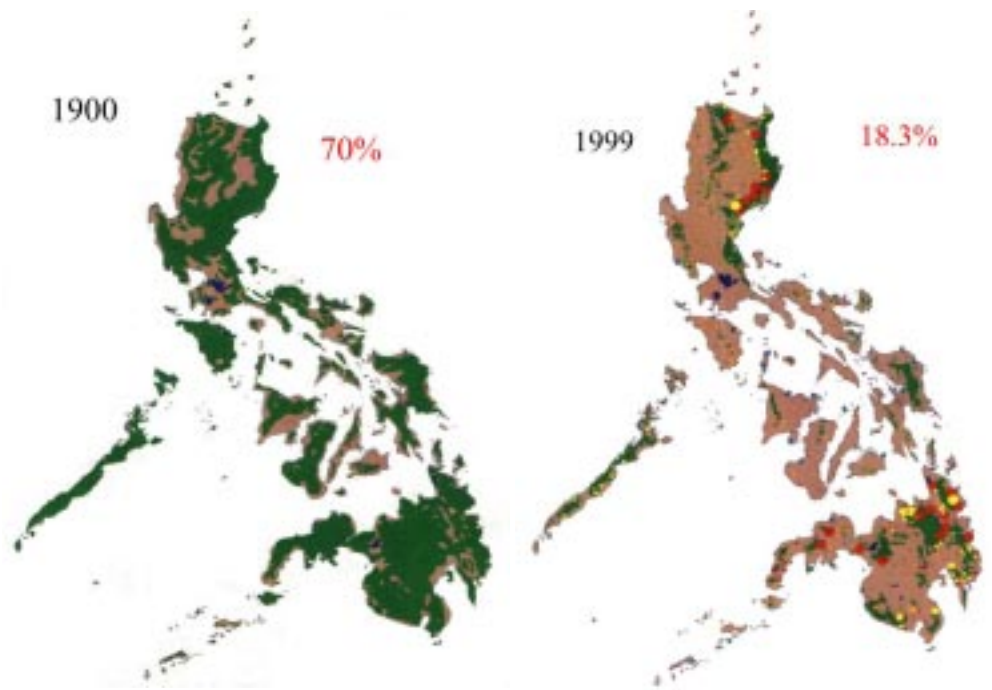
**2 Endangered** - A species is endangered when it faces a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future; this means a decline or possible decline of 50 percent in their population within three generations. Examples are:

- a. Visayan Spotted Deer
- b. Golden-capped Fruit Bat
- c. Northern Palawan Tree Squirrel
- d. Panay Cloud Runner (Cloud Rat)

**3 Critically Endangered** - A species is critically endangered when it is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future; this means a decline or possible decline of 80% in their population within three generations. Examples are:

- a. Philippine Eagle
- b. Negros Bleeding Heart Pigeon
- c. Philippine Cockatoo
- d. Tamaraw

## COLOR ME A FOREST



Show your students the first map, showing the forested areas in the Philippines in 1900. Ask your students to guess the amount of remaining forest cover (you can even give them blank maps and ask them to color the areas they think are still forested). Then show them what the map actually looks like now. Did they guess that so much forest area would be gone?



## How can you be more involved?

The Center for Environmental Awareness and Education (CEAE) is a non-government organization dedicated to training teachers on environmental education. Through award-winning programs like Project Water Education for Teachers (WET) and Project Learning Tree (PLT), CEAE has trained over a thousand teachers all over the country on this interdisciplinary, interactive and fun program. PLT and WET include over 90 classroom ready activities each on various topics and for different age levels.

In the last four years, CEAE has forged partnerships with seven institutions all over the country:

- Cebu Uniting for Sustainable Waters in Cebu City
- Palawan State University in Puerto Princesa
- Leyte State University in Visca, Baybay, Leyte
- University of Eastern Philippines in Catarman, Samar
- Ipha Angelicum Academy in Biñan, Laguna
- Aurora State College of Technology in Baler, Aurora
- St Mary's University in Nueva Vizcaya

You and your co-teachers can request training in any of these centers or inquire about training and required fees by calling (02) 721-7360 or emailing [training@ceae.org](mailto:training@ceae.org). Look for Gel.

### ABOUT THE WRITER

Vicky Mendoza is the Director for Training of the Center for Environmental Awareness and Education, and a contributing writer for the Living Asia Channel's "Ekolohiya" segment. Her passion is nature, and her mission is to bring people back to nature through her writing and training.

## LANGUAGE BOOSTER

# Appropriately, please!

BY MA. LUZ C. VILCHES

I once had a student who texted me to say:

"Ma'am, I've just emailed you my research paper outline. Please send me your comment before the end of the day."

"How dare!" I thought to myself.

I wasn't reacting to the student's earnestness to get feedback but to the way he articulated his message (without meaning to, of course). This anecdote brings up the issue of politeness in English. Is it enough to say "please?" or does politeness go beyond simply using polite words?

There is no one answer to these questions because while it is important to learn polite expressions, it is equally important to know the context of formality or informality

of the situations in which these are used. In practical terms, this means becoming aware of the "role relationships" between those involved in the communication process (for example, staff and supervisor), and of the occasion in which the communication is taking place. This will help you to know what expressions may be appropriately used and how these can be articulated well.

Using the earlier anecdote as an example, we notice that the word "please"—meant as a request—has lost its property of politeness in a sentence that expresses a demand from a student to a teacher, pretty much what a supervisor is likely to say to his/her office clerk.

### How can such awkward situations be avoided?

Let's look at the functions of *borrowing* or *lending* in English and how these can be expressed politely given different degrees of formality.

ROLE RELATIONSHIPS	POLITE EXPRESSION	DEGREE OF FORMALITY
Subordinate to superior (e.g. student to teacher)	May I (please) borrow your book?	Informal but not familiar
	May I borrow your book (please)?	
	Please/Kindly lend me your book.	Moderately formal
Between people who don't really know each other (e.g. new acquaintances)	Could I (please) borrow your book?	Moderately formal
	Could I borrow your book (please)?	
	I was wondering if I could (please) borrow your book.	Quite polite and formal
People of equal status (e.g. student to student or teacher to teacher)	I would be grateful if you could (please) lend me your book.	Very formal
	I hope you don't mind my asking, but could I borrow your notes (please)?	Very formal
	Can I (please) borrow your book?	Informal and casual
	Can I borrow your book (please)?	
	May I (please) borrow your book?	Informal but not familiar
	May I borrow your book (please)?	
	Could I (please) borrow your book?	Moderately formal
	Could I borrow your book (please)?	
	Could you (please) lend me your book?	Moderately formal
	Could you lend me your book (please)?	

We notice in this list of polite expressions that they are mostly in the form of a question. Although interrogatives, they are actually meant to be requests. The word "please" does not normally figure in these polite requests, but it can actually be inserted appropriately in the sentence, as I indicated above. This helps make the request even more polite and appealing.

### ABOUT THE WRITER

Ma. Luz C. Vilches holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from Lancaster University, UK. She is the Chair of the English Department at Ateneo de Manila University. Before this, she was Executive Director of the Ateneo Center for English Language Teaching.