

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet historian, educator, and award-winning Ohio author Shelley Pearsall.

Select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Things Seen from Above*.

Discover fiction and nonfiction books, websites, and other resources to explore topics and themes in depth.

Things Seen from Above

By Shelley Pearsall



About the Book

A shift in perspective can change everything.

This thought-provoking novel from the author of *The Seventh Most Important Thing* celebrates kids who see the world a little differently.

April is looking for an escape from the sixth-grade lunch hour, which has become a social-scene nightmare, so she signs up to be a “buddy bench monitor” for the fourth graders’ recess.

Joey Byrd is a boy on the fringes, who wanders the playground alone, dragging his foot through the dirt. But over time, April realizes that Joey isn’t just making random circles. When you look at his designs from above, a story emerges... Joey’s “bird’s eye” drawings reveal what he observes and thinks about every day.

Told in alternating viewpoints—April’s in text and Joey’s mostly in art—the story gives the “whole picture” of what happens as these two outsiders find their rightful places.



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Book Details

Things Seen from Above by Shelley Pearsall.
Yearling, 2021. ISBN 9781524717421. 288 pages. Ages 8-12.
Leveled Reading: AR Points 8.0. ATOS Book Level 5.2. 750 Lexile.
www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/550410

Available as an ebook and digital audiobook through the Ohio Digital Library:
ohiodigitallibrary.com

Available as a downloadable talking book from the Ohio Library for the Blind and Print Disabled:
olbpd.klas.com



Biographical information
courtesy Shelley Pearsall.
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“But it was also impossible to tell the difference between enemies and friends. Joey had learned this lesson the hard way. He’d learned that if you wanted to protect yourself – or be left alone – the best thing to do was lie down. From above this made you look much larger – and most people, except teachers, would go away.”

About the Author

Shelley Pearsall is the author of seven acclaimed books for middle grade and teen readers. Her inspiring and thought-provoking novels are used in classrooms nationwide, and her author visits have reached a quarter-million students.

Before becoming a full-time author, Shelley was a classroom teacher. She has also worked in the education departments of several parks and history museums where she created museum theater events and public programs. She has a bachelor’s degree from The College of Wooster and master of education from John Carroll University.

Shelley’s first book, ***Trouble Don’t Last***, was published in 2002, received the prestigious Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction, and was an inaugural Choose to Read Ohio selection. ***All of the Above*** and ***The Seventh Most Important Thing*** were named American Library Association Notable Books. ***The Seventh Most Important Thing*** was a 2017 & 2018 Choose to Read Ohio selection. Shelley’s books have appeared on numerous state reading award lists and received other honors.

As an author, Shelley is committed to bringing history to life for readers in engaging and compelling ways. Since childhood, she has written stories with diverse characters and voices because she believes in the possibilities of books to build bridges and start conversations. Her novels frequently feature themes of personal courage and overcoming adversity.

Shelley lives in Ohio’s beautiful Cuyahoga Valley National Park with her British husband, Mike, and their two shelter cats named Charlie and Lola. When Shelley isn’t writing or visiting schools, she loves to travel the world with Mike in search of new stories and adventures.

Author Resources

Shelley Pearsall’s official website
www.shelleypearsall.com

Author page on Penguin Random House website
www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/23480/shelley-pearsall/

Shelley Pearsall introduces *Things Seen from Above* at the Buckeye Book Fair (video)
youtu.be/bai_qvBnygs

Interview: Shelley Pearsall (video)
youtu.be/9PIs01LAVGA
Children’s Librarian Becca Berezin at the Rodgers Memorial Library (NH) interviews Shelley about ***Things Seen from Above***.

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:
Visit www.shelleypearsall.com/contact or email shelleyvisits@yahoo.com.

Talk About It!

Topics to share when discussing **Things Seen from Above** with young readers.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards such as Social and Emotional Learning Standards: Social Awareness may also apply. Discussion questions and educational activities for **Things Seen from Above** align with Learning Standards for Grades 3-6.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Learning in Ohio."

Spoiler warning! Some discussion questions refer to key elements in the book. Do not read if you do not want to find out what happens.

- **Things Seen from Above** is a story about perspective and different points of view. Who is looked up to? Who is looked down on? Who is an insider? Who is an outsider? Who sees the small details? Who sees the big picture?
- What have you done in the past to make a new student feel welcome? Have you ever been a new student yourself? If so, how did you feel?
- Do you agree or disagree with Joey's art and abilities being made public? Explain why.
- How did your impressions of Joey and April change as you read more of the story?
- Talk about the character you most related to and discuss why.
- Is there an adult like Mr. Ulysses at your school or in your life? Share a story about the adult you know who is most like Mr. Ulysses.
- How did you feel about Joey leaving Marshallville at the end of the book? Did he have to leave? What might have happened next if he didn't leave? Predict where he might be now.

Go Further!

Ideas for extending the experience of **Things Seen from Above**.

Take an inventory walk around your classroom and school building or your public library, and take note of anything that would make a new student feel welcome. For the inventory, give each student a clipboard and piece of paper and allow 10 minutes to walk around the room or building and record as many observations and ideas as they can. Then have the students come together and discuss what they found.

Next, take another inventory walk and note anything that would make a new student feel not welcome. Gather notes from both walks and make plans for additions or changes that you would recommend to your school or library.

Research crop circles using online resources available to students through INFOhio (infohio.org) and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library (ohioweblibrary.org). Then do a "turn and talk" discussion with your classmates at your table (or with others at your library program or book discussion group). Are they real? Are they a hoax? What evidence supports your claim?

Some discussion questions courtesy of Shelley Pearsall from the **Things Seen from Above** Reading Guide. Used with permission. Find more discussion questions and extension activities in this guide for students, teachers, librarians, and program leaders: www.shelleypearsall.com/files/ugd/e541b1_2e58dddb4db548c6988f0ea9c7585bc7.pdf

Explore More!

Additional ideas and resources to use with **Things Seen from Above**.

Artist Stephen Wiltshire

<https://www.stephenwiltshire.co.uk/>

Stephen Wiltshire is a UK artist who creates huge cityscapes. He was diagnosed with autism at a young age and developed a love of art. Today he is a renowned artist and was named Member of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth. You can see his incredible work on his website.

One Man's Walk in the Snow Creates a Giant Masterpiece

<youtu.be/dDMuN6YOWFs>

UK artist Simon Beck has been called "the world's first snow artist." He creates gigantic patterns in the snow using his footprints. View this short film (6:03) from National Geographic to see Simon Beck at work in Stryn, Norway.

Lines and Geoglyphs of Nasca and Palpa, Peru

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/700/>

This is the UNESCO World Heritage site for the Nasca and Palpa Lines, scratched on the surface of the earth hundreds of years ago. The only way to see these incredible, mysterious drawings is from above.

A Bird's-Eye View Lesson Plan

<https://learn.ncartmuseum.org/lesson-plans/a-birds-eye-view/>

From the North Carolina Museum of Art, this lesson plan invites third graders to explore landscapes and bodies of water from a bird's-eye view and to engage in creative activities using dance, English language arts, science, theatre arts, visual arts, and poetry.

Illustrations by Jin Xingye

www.crossconnectmag.com/post/159536029355

Chinese artist Jin Xingye created the illustrations for **Things Seen from Above**. This post from *Cross Connect Magazine* showcases several illustrations by Jin Xingye that depict humans communing with nature.

Check It Out!

Recommended for readers of **Things Seen from Above**.

Wonder by R. J. Palacio

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

Forget Me Not by Ellie Terry

Hello, Universe by Erin Entrada Kelly

Real Friends by Shannon Hale

Melissa by Alex Gino

Wolf Hollow by Lauren Wolk

The Boys in the Back Row by Mike Jung

The Many Meanings of Meilan by Andrea Wang (a Choose to Read Ohio selection)

Zoe in Wonderland by Brenda Woods (a Choose to Read Ohio selection)

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits: library.ohio.gov/ctro.

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