

2017 Class Project Ronda Zaragoza
Book Report and Evaluation by the Grand Children

Purpose

My reason for doing this project is because the original project I was going to do with the veterans from the Veteran Farming Project (VFP) about the different kinds of composting available. However, all of our veterans moved on to their farms throughout the state, so the VFP is just me until our next batch of veterans comes for training. I thought what do we have for our children. I looked on our website and didn't see much if anything that we could read to them to explain what exactly composting is on their level. Since I have seven grandsons, I used this project as a way to get them more involved in the composting methods and reasons for it and our environment. I ordered the books from Amazon. Compost Stew An A to Z Recipe for the Earth by Mary McKenna Siddals was \$ 7.99; the other book is Composting Nature's Recyclers by Robin Koontz was \$ 8.99.

Background

I read both books to all seven boys then asked them various questions about what they learned from the books. Isaiah, 10 years old and going into 5th grade he has helped me on the farm for the last four years; Avery is 7 years old and going into the 2nd grade has also helped on the farm for 4 years; Miles is 5 years old going into kindergarten who has worked on the farm since he was 1 year old; JR is 4 years old who has not gone to any school and has worked with me on the farm for 3 years; Skylar is 3 years old and only worked on the farm for two years; Finally the twins age 2 have not gone to any school yet and have only worked with me on the farm for about a year now.

Evaluation for Composting Nature's Recyclers

1 Miles liked the idea the fact on page five stating, "some birds lay their eggs in piles of leaves...to keep them warm." He wanted to test it out so we did take one of our eggs from the chicken coop to see if it would work. Sadly after 30 days, it did not hatch he was very disappointed since he checked on it every day.

2 JR loved the fact that trees can also be used for compost but it takes longer depending on the tree rings it had on it. We took two different tree stumps to see if they would decay in a 30-day period. JR practiced his counting of the rings with both of them and then buried them in the backyard with some water. After 30-days he helped me unbury them and was shocked they had not decayed. He had to be reminded that bigger pieces take much longer to become compost. We put the dirt back on them and will check again in six months to see how they are decomposing.

3 Skylar wanted to do the fun fact on page 11 which stated, "farmers put a dead fish in the soil next to the seed they were planting." The dead fish we used was a gold fish that had died the day before and was still floating in the aquarium. We put in in one of the raised beds along with a few squash seed. After 30-days the seed had sprouted, and the only remains of the fish were the bones; he was excited the fish helped the seed grow.

All of the boys helped with the chicken coop gifts from the chickens by placing them in the compost bin to help make a better compost along with the straw and what few remains of left-over food given to them over the past week. The twins sat and listened to the story but enjoyed climbing in the compost bin trying to find those worms they had seen in the book. They liked the fact that bugs were going to be in the bin to play with while they were in class learning.

One suggestion from the boys was I invest in a microscope so they could look for the bacteria like they showed on page 19 of the book. This is something to be done next time we read the book and work on the understanding of exactly what they are supposed to be learning.

Isaiah loved all of the fun facts pointed out in the book; he also was the one to go into my office and shred all of the paper I had set up for him then put it into the compost bin. He then showed the boys how to water it down along with them since it was 90 degrees outside and it turned into a mud war with all of them.

Compost in a bag was done with all of them since it was listed on page 22; they all helped with the squeezing of the bag once a day to make compost. They want to do it again in the winter to see if it will work when it is cold outside. We will do it again in November or December so they can compare things.

Overall, I think this is an excellent book to be used by school-age children up to teenagers since all of mine liked different parts of the book based on their knowledge of what composting is and what our goals were for the project.

Evaluation for Compost Stew An A to Z Recipe for the Earth

This book they all loved since we were able to make it into a song for them to sing along as we were making the compost stew. Of course starting with the letter A was apple cores; we had plenty of these to throw in, so the song started off well. B was bruised bananas then came along coffee grounds with the filter with dirt clods to be added as well. Since I have chickens, their egg shells were the next thing to be added to the fruit pulp from some leftover peaches.

However, the G for grass clippings was a little harder since I do not have grass, so we walked the neighborhood looking for grass singing our song. We finally did find a house with grass clippings and asked if we could take some for our compost stew. The lady laughed as the boys put some shavings in their little bags singing their song. Hair clippings was also a little chore to be done since we had to drive to a hair salon to ask if we could grab a few off the floor since they were going to go into the garbage anyway. The employees just watched as the boys sang their song sweeping the floor.

Insects are never a problem here in New Mexico since we always have some around so the boys decided they would come anyway we would not go on a search for them. J for jack-o-lanterns will be added once they grow up on the farm. Kitchen scraps were abundant for them as I have never seen a cleaner refrigerator. Then it was off to the races to see who could get to the laundry lint first. Mulch removed from the garden beds was done by all even if it was just a handful by the twins. Nutshells were added by all of them after they ate some peanuts in the shells so they could make their compost stew. Oatmeal is usually not a left over for breakfast

When they stay over, however, they all had some left for their compost stew. I didn't give them a hard time about not finishing their breakfast since they were learning how to make compost stew.

4 "Paper Shreds" was used by all since Isaiah had already shredded every piece of paper in the office from reading the other book. Q is for quarry dust which was much harder since I could not find one nearby so what the boys did for a few hours was to knock rocks together to get a little dust. Rye bread crumbs are always available since this is the food of choice. Weed strands was tough to find, so we made a salad and put in it without any dressing since all

we had was ranch. Teabags were used as the T item since all I drink it iced tea anyway. U was supposed to be underbrush cuttings, but we made an upside-down pineapple cake and sacrificed a piece for the compost stew.

Vegetable trimmings was bountiful since they all help on the farm they each chose a different plant to put in the bin. Worms were used from the farm since they could be dug up for free and to see if they would stay in the compost since they were not red wigglers. X was the Xmas tree needles we all gathered up along the fence line at the farm since the land is surrounded by them. Y was Yellow pine shavings from the twins hamster cage with Z finishing up with the Zinnia flower heads from the farm. Reading this book was fun for all involved got them to look at the environment to see what we could use for the composting bin and have a good time together.

Overall both books are an excellent way to get the children involved in more than just reading a book but making compost happen with the meaning of the story.