
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ecological Consciousness in the Children's Literatures: One Small Hop, The Leaf Detective, and One Plastic Bag

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ABSTRACT

Humans and nature are two things that cannot be separated. Humans take natural resources to fulfill their needs. In this modern era, the motive of humans to exploit nature is no longer just to fulfill their needs but also to gain profit for themselves. The fact that destruction of nature and the depletion of natural resources will threaten the lives of future generations. Therefore, efforts are needed to educate people, especially the next generation, about protecting and preserving nature. This research will examine ecological consciousness in three children's literature books: One Small Hop, The Leaf Detective, and One Plastic Bag. One Small Hop. There are two objectives in this study. The first objective is to describe the ecological consciousness portrayed in One Small Hop, The Leaf Detective, and One Plastic Bag. The second objective is to identify the ways ecological consciousness is portrayed in One Small Hop, The Leaf Detective, and One Plastic Bag. The researcher uses the library method to help the analysis of this research. The primary source of this study is three children's literature entitled One Small Hop by Madelyn Rosenberg (2021), The Leaf Detective by Heather Lang (2021), and One Plastic Bag by Miranda Paul (2015). The secondary sources are taken from Ecocriticism books, children's literature books, as well as various journals and articles related to eco-consciousness through children's literature. The ecocriticism approach is used in this study to connect literature and the physical environment. To find out the ecological consciousness, the researcher uses the ecological consciousness theory proposed by Bannan-Watts (2009) and Chang (2002). This study concludes that ecological consciousness depicted in those three children's literature is understanding the essence of nature, showing concern for the condition of nature, understanding the interdependence between living beings and nature, and knowing the ways nature speaks. Ecological consciousness can be depicted through the character's actions, speech, and the author's comments. Children's literature can be used as a tool to encourage young readers to build their relational proximity to nature, raise their awareness of climate change issues, and invite them to engage in environmental activities. This is done through the aforementioned kinds and depiction strategies of ecological consciousness.

KEYWORDS

Children's literature, ecocriticism, ecological consciousness

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1. Introduction

Humans and nature are two things that cannot be separated. Humans have been dependent on nature since ancient times. Humans take natural resources to fulfill their needs. In this modern era, the motive of humans to exploit nature is no longer just to fulfill their needs but also to gain profit for themselves. Chang, in his journal, said that humans exploit nature because the resources of nature will run out and be destroyed (2022:92). The fact that the destruction of nature and the depletion of natural resources will threaten the lives of our future generations. Therefore, efforts are needed to educate people, especially the next generation, about protecting and preserving nature.

Humans need to use natural resources wisely. Human perspective needs to be changed. They should learn to respect nature and prevent it from destruction. However, of course, the effort to change the human perspective and habit is not easy. Literature offers a strategy by raising ecological consciousness in literary works, one of them being through children's literature. Children and their closeness to nature are considered to be an effective strategy to raise ecological consciousness. Children's literature books equipped with illustrations will certainly make it easier for children to understand the concepts of go-green, reforestation, not throwing plastic waste in rivers, not littering, and using environmentally friendly transportation. Children's literature will be a fun vehicle for children because they will learn about nature through stories. Stories are considered effective enough to inspire and raise human awareness.

Children are the right agents to have ecological consciousness. Firstly, children are the future generation that will be responsible and maintain a sustainable way of life (Budiharto, 2016: 352). Secondly, raising ecological consciousness in children is considered easier than in adults. Children are in the stage of getting to know everything around them. They are also in the stage of forming habits and learning what is good to do and what is not. Therefore, children's literature will give them new knowledge to protect and preserve nature. Children are as important as adults since they are the ones who will take care of the earth in the future. This research will examine ecological consciousness in three children's literature books: *One Small Hop*, *The Leaf Detective*, and *One Plastic Bag*. *One Small Hop*. For children, the issue of climate change is not easily understood, but this story has a unique way to introduce children to this issue. The author uses the story of frogs to raise the empathy and awareness of the children. The second object of the research is *The Leaf Detective*. *The Leaf Detective* is an interesting children's literature about how to preserve the rainforest. The story is about Meg Lowman, a scientist who is interested in studying the rainforest. She encountered challenges in her research of the rainforest tree canopies since people were logging and clearing the forest. The researcher will analyze Lowman's effort in creating the future of the rainforest. The issue of rainforest preservation is important for children to know to keep the balance of nature.

Another environmental issue is depicted in the *One Plastic Bag* story. *One Plastic Bag* is a story about Isatou Ceesay, a woman from Gambia, Africa, who started a movement to recycle plastic bags. Plastic bags that were thrown by people accumulated alongside the roads of Gambia and brought mosquitos and disease. In this story, children will learn about the importance of changing the habit of throwing plastic bags everywhere. The illustration will help the children to understand the negative impact of throwing plastic bags. Children, as agents of change, need to learn about these three environmental issues, climate change, rainforests, and plastic bags, so that they can create a better tomorrow for the earth and its people. Those three children's literature books have a readership age range between 5-12 years. At this age, children already have an awareness of the surrounding environment; they also start doing activities in nature and have a special interest in nature. It is expected that it will be easier to raise ecological consciousness in them. This research will dig deeper into how ecological consciousness is presented in children's literature. This research is expected to enrich our knowledge and concern for nature.

2. Literature Review

Ecocriticism is a study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. (Glotfelty, 1996: xvii). This study focuses on the relation of the characters in the literary texts with their environment. In the interaction between humans and nature, there will be impacts and consequences. The interconnectedness between humans and nature is reflected through human culture, which reflects human ways of life. Therefore, ecocriticism studies the relationship between human culture and the physical world where these two affect one another, especially in the cultural artifacts of literature and language (Glotfelty, 1996: xix-xx). Ecocriticism investigates and helps make possible the connections among self, society, nature, and text.

The researcher uses the ecological consciousness theory proposed by Bannan-Watts (2009) and Chang (2002). Ecological consciousness is a basic understanding of the importance of good and service from nature for life on Earth. At this point, people understand that soil, water, vegetation, forests, animals, and even the Earth are important for all creatures' lives to support their life necessities. She also adds that ecological consciousness is "a sense of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all species on the Earth, with an appreciation of the multitude of ecosystems that support all life on the planet". (Bannan-Watts, 2009). Ecological consciousness will make humans voluntarily take action to preserve the environment. Human action will contribute to preventing environmental crises in the future.

There are two attitudes toward nature: human-centeredness and ecocentrism. Chang (2002: 3). Exploiting natural resources without a natural preservation plan is an example of human-centeredness. In this case, humans just gain profit from nature for themselves. They do not realize that the resources of nature will be run out and destroyed. Humans need to have a new perspective, ecocentrism. In ecocentrism, humans believe that nature is equal to them. By having this perspective, humans will treat nature respectfully. They will consider every action that can impact nature. The ecocentric view eliminates humans' superiority. The human with the ecocentric view will have better sensitivity to pay attention more and be concerned about their surroundings.

In understanding ecological problems and ecological consciousness in children's literature, the researcher needs to analyze the literary elements of children's books. The issue in children's literature will be revealed by reading the character, experiencing the plot, searching for the theme or identifying the focalizer or the point of view (Nodelman & Reiner, 2003).

3. Methodology

The primary data of this research are three children's literature entitled *One Small Hop* by Madelyn Rosenberg (2021), *The Leaf Detective* by Heather Lang (2021), and *One Plastic Bag* by Miranda Paul (2015). These three stories were chosen since they are considered recent children's literature with a range of ages between 5-12 years old. In this range of age, children are already aware of their surroundings. They also started to learn about nature: trees, flowers, animals, seasons, pastures, etc. It will be very effective in introducing eco-consciousness to them. Secondary data consist of Ecocriticism books, children's literature books, as well as various journals and articles related to eco-consciousness through children's literature. This research is qualitative descriptive research using the literature study method. The data in the form of phrases, clauses, and sentences will be identified and interpreted by the researchers using ecocriticism theory and ecological consciousness.

4. Results and Discussion

The researchers examine the findings from the data related to the two objectives. The first is the kinds of ecological consciousness depicted in *One Small Hop*, *The Leaf Detective*, and *One Plastic Bag*. The second is the ways ecological consciousness is portrayed in *One Small Hop*, *The Leaf Detective*, and *One Plastic Bag*. In this section, the researchers present the findings as well as the discussion of the findings.

4.1 *One Plastic Bag*

In *One Plastic Bag*, written by Miranda Paul, a girl named Isatou Ceesay, who lived in Njau Gambia, shows her manifestation of ecological consciousness by knowing how nature speaks, showing concern for the condition of nature, understanding the essence of nature, and understanding the interdependence between living beings and nature. Ecological consciousness is portrayed through its literary elements, such as character, setting, point of view, and theme.

On the way to her grandmother's house, Isatou's bag is torn, and the fruit inside her bag tumbled. She feds up with it. Then, nature introduces her to the plastic bag by flapping it in the wind. Isatou discovers that it can be used to carry things. It is the first time Isatou knows about plastic bags and their function. Her grandmother then said, "There's more in the city". Isatou starts showing concern about plastic bags by observing their usage in her surroundings.

Day after day, Isatou watches neighbors tote their things in bright blue or black plastic bags.
Children slurp water and wanjo from tiny holes poked in clear bags.
Market trays fill with minties wrapped in rainbows of plastic. (Paul, 2015)

One day, the same thing happens again. Isatou shakes sand off her papers, and another plastic bag floats by. She throws the torn bag and uses the other plastic bag. Nature speaks to Isatou by floating by the plastic bag again and again. It shows that the amount of plastic bags in her environment has been increasing, like what her grandmother said: "There's more in the city". Nature speaks in many ways, one of which is by showing the sign repeatedly. The plastic bags that flap in the wind are a sign that the environment needs help. The young Isatou then realizes that the plastic bag she just threw away has not disappeared and is still there.

Day after day, the bag she dropped is still there.
One plastic bag becomes two.
Then ten
Then a hundred.
Plastic isn't beautiful anymore. (Paul, 2015)

When she knows plastic bags for the first time, she thinks it is useful, but then the number of plastic bags increases, and it changes her mind; and she thinks that it is not beautiful anymore. As the year passed, her consciousness about the environment increased. She realizes that the condition of her surroundings becomes worse day by day.

Years pass, and Isatou grows into a woman.
She barely notices the ugliness growing around her...
until the ugliness finds its way to her. (Paul, 2015)

Isatou starts showing concern for the condition of nature when she hears a goat crying. Then, she finds out that many goats have been eating plastic bags. It makes many goats in the village die. This condition evokes her awareness to take action. It cannot be ignored anymore, so her first action is to pluck a plastic bag that will be eaten by the goat. She plucks one plastic bag, then two,

then ten, then a hundred. She saves the goats by keeping the plastic bags away. Through her actions, Isatou shows her ecological consciousness. The life of the goats depends on nature. They forage through the trash for food. If nature is polluted by plastic bags, it can threaten the life of goats. By understanding the interdependence between living beings and nature, Isatou decides to take action. She cannot let more goats die due to plastic bags.

Isatou and many women then collect the plastic bags, wash them, cut them into strips, and roll them into spools of plastic thread. They crochet the thread into purses. At first, they work secretly since they are afraid that people will laugh at them and call them dirty. But their ecological consciousness convinces them that what they are doing is good. They sell recycled purses, and many women respond to it positively by buying the purses. Their happiness does not lie in the money that they get but in the pile of rubbish that becomes smaller now. Isatou believes that the plastic bags will be gone and her home will be beautiful one day.

4.2 One Small Hop

One Small Hop by Madelyn Rosenberg follows the story of Jonathan "Ahab" Goldstein and his middle school friends, who are trying to save the potentially last species of American bullfrog in the United States. The kinds of ecological consciousness in this book include acknowledging the severe consequences of climate change in the future, showing concern for the condition of nature, understanding the essence of nature, involving nature in one's worldview, performing curiosity, optimism, and persistence toward saving the environment, performing methodical carefulness in treating nature, admiration toward nature, and knowing the way nature speaks. They are mainly portrayed through the settings, characters, and symbolism.

Jonathan lives in the future, Blue Harbor, United States. The impact of climate change is worse than it has ever been. The setting shows the severe condition of nature as a consequence of the ignorance of the current generation to save the environment. The heat from the sun has become highly dangerous. People are encouraged to avoid the sun in daylight activities. Even the courtyard of Blue Harbor Middle School is completely covered with a painted ceiling to protect students from the heat. The sea level has risen so drastically that the residents had to move to where the Main Street of Blue Harbor used to be. Jonathan, as the narrator of the story, expresses his concern about his living environment.

You'd have to be blind, deaf, and anosmic to think that this—the code reds and an ocean that the media had nicknamed the New Dead Sea—was the way the world was supposed to be (Rosenberg, 2021).

Jonathan is often called "Ahab" by his family and friends. This is because of his similarity with Captain Ahab in Charles Dickens' *Moby Dick*. The symbolism of the name "Ahab" implies their similar obsession and broad-mindedness of the environment. Captain Ahab has an obsession with the white whale, Moby Dick, while Jonathan has a high curiosity and interest in the condition of nature, especially endangered species. Throughout the story, this is shown through how Jonathan involves nature as a part of his worldview. He uses failed experiments, like "biosphere", as swear words. He also often uses metaphors related to the environment, such as "intellect of a fungus".

One day, one of Jonathan's friends, Leroy, finds a lobster alive near the harbor. Leroy tried to save the lobster by himself and failed. This brings the readers to one of the main ecological issues that the characters have to face. Many "normal" species in the readers' current time, including lobsters, fishes, swans, cows, mosquitos, and frogs, have become "fragile species" or, worse, extinct due to the detrimental consequence of climate change. To handle this and other crucial environmental issues, the government built many new restrictions and an official agency named the Environmental Police Force (EPF). They, however, are portrayed as unreliable by Jonathan and his friends.

Derek's father worked for the EPF, which officially stood for Environmental Police Force. Unofficially, it stood for Police Farce. And sometimes Police Farts. They were a government agency, sort of new and already corrupt, set up to satisfy a group of scientists who were still worried about climate change (Rosenberg, 2021).

Jonathan and his friends are highly skeptical about the EPF. He comments that the term "fragile species" used by the EPF to refer to the endangered species makes it sound like it was the animals' fault for dying. The complicated restrictions that they implement make it ironically harder to save the environment. When Leroy is caught by the EPF officers for trying to save the species by himself, they do not give him any appreciation for his intention and effort. Instead, they give him a warning based on "environmental code RE 248," which says that a fragile or near-fragile species must only be handled by a fully trained EPF specialist.

The logic behind the regulation is to make sure that fragile species are handled with methodical carefulness and professional procedures. The fragile species are meant to be transported to the Center for Species Rehabilitation in New Arcadia. However, even the condition of the rehabilitation center is inadequate to effectively revive the species. This further excludes children from the active effort of saving the environment as the responsibility is believed to only be owned by adult EPF officers and scientists.

Responding to the issue, Jonathan shows his persistence, curiosity, and optimism toward nature. He wants to find out if there are still other fragile species, like the lobster Leroy found, that he and his friends can save in the wild.

I wanted to know for the same reason the government wanted to know: Because this was life. Something was out there, something that wasn't floating belly up. And, okay, maybe it was dead now. But maybe there was another one that wasn't. Maybe we could find it and revive it, unlike the EPF, which couldn't keep a cockroach alive. Or wouldn't (Rosenberg, 2021).

Not long after the lobster incident, Jonathan, Leroy, Delphinium, and Davy sneaked into the harbor using a dugout canoe that Leroy built for his history class. They explore the island where Leroy had previously found the lobster. In between their conversations, Davy occasionally uses Latin language to express his thoughts. This possibly implies another symbolism that reveals a deeper significance related to ecological consciousness.

"I think islands have to be bigger to have names," Davy said. "This is probably something like Island Number Three. *Insula tertia*, if they're using Latin."

"Which they wouldn't be," Leroy said. "Cough. Dead language. Cough." (Rosenberg, 2021).

Similar to the Latin language, many people in the story and in real life consider the severe impact of climate change on the environment as irreversible. It can no longer be saved or "revived" to how it was in the past. They give up and stop caring about the environment. Davy, nevertheless, shows how he is able to revive the language by simply acknowledging, caring, and using the language in his daily expressions. This symbol implies that the environment can be similarly saved even though only one or a small number of people are persistent enough to care about the environment and take significant actions to save it. The small number might be just the start, but slowly, the awareness might be able to spread to other people around them.

Once Ahab and his friends arrive on the island, they find other living lobsters and a natural view that they had never seen before. They are struck with the beauty of the lobster. Here, ecological consciousness is shown through their admiration of the species. Ahab is curious, so he tries to take a closer look at the lobster, and he moves to the edge of the canoe. He puts one of his feet into the shallow part of the lake. Suddenly, they hear a loud noise from the woods "ERRRRRRRR". It shocks everyone, including Ahab, that he falls into the water and is soaked wet.

I could almost taste salt, but I tried not to lick my lips because Delphinium was right; I knew what was in the water. Garbage, chemicals, toxic algae blooms. Oil. Dye. Bleach. Paint thinner. The under-the-sink, please-dispose-of-properly containers from houses that had been swallowed by the ocean. And there were bacteria, including the flesh-eating kind that Davy had mentioned and the brain-eating kind that he hadn't (Rosenberg, 2021).

Water pollution is another severe environmental issue depicted through the setting of One Small Hop. The water is highly contaminated with toxic chemicals and waste. Aside from becoming uninhabitable for the water species, the level of water toxicity becomes equally dangerous to the human skin. Water sports and activities even lost their popularity. Jonathan and his friends eventually decide to go back to Blue Harbor first so Ahab can clean up first.

Unfortunately, water scarcity also becomes an issue. It becomes harder to find usable water in the future. Since Ahab's family does not own the expensive water recycler called Carbon Clean, they have to comply with the two-minute shower quota that has been allotted by the government. Having his shower quota used for the day, Ahab makes a deal with his sister, Juliette Goldstein, to take her shower quota for a day in exchange for Ahab's shower quota on the next Monday and Tuesday.

Shortly after the shower, Ahab feels that his skin is itchy, and red spots start to emerge. He asks his One, the future and a more advanced version of a smartphone, to scan his body and identify the possible cause of the itch. Ahab's close relationship with the environment can be seen through the way he set his One with the voice of the environmentalist Andrea Ko.

"Seabather's eruption," my One said. I'd set it to use the voice of Andrea Ko, an environmental activist who sounded calm yet inspirational, sort of like a superhero who does a lot of yoga. (Rosenberg, 2021).

Despite the unpleasant experience, Jonathan is determined to find the source of the "ERRRRRR" sound that they heard on the island. He cannot wait to go back to the island, but Delphinium insists that Jonathan focuses on healing first. To fill the days of waiting, Delph and Ahab visit Utopia, a commercial imitation of nature built in giant warehouses called Rec Boxes™ to preserve the experience of enjoying nature. This setting reveals ecological consciousness in which the severe condition of the environment takes away the opportunity for future generations, including the characters, to interact with real nature.

The new lake, Utopia, was in one of the giant warehouses on the south side of town. Places like these were called Rec Boxes™ and were known for “bringing the outside in!” Their other slogan, “It’s a beautiful day to be inside,” had been around so long I wasn’t even sure my mother knew she was quoting a commercial. They were nice enough, but you could hear the currents of the air vents. They tried to cover it up with nature sounds. And there were places where the dirt and sand had worn away, and you could see cement flooring underneath (Rosenberg, 2021).

It can be seen that no matter how much humans are trying to imitate the environment, there can never be one that is adequate to replace real nature. Ahab and his friends realize this as they often compare the real environment that they visit during the exploration and the imitated environment provided in town.

The next day, Ahab and the team go back to the island to find the mysterious species. They bring scientific tools such as gloves, tongs, test tubes, tweezers, an eyedropper, a net, a rope, and hip waders. They also implement the research methodically. In contrast to the EPF’s concern, the characters have proven that children are also able to take part in saving the environment with careful approach and procedure as long as they are taught how to and given the opportunity to practice what they have learned. Eventually, the source of the mysterious sound is found. It is an American bullfrog.

Among his friends, Ahab is the most environmentally knowledgeable character. He often performs ecological consciousness through his understanding of the essence of nature. To explain, Ahab is the first one who identifies the frog’s specific species type, sex, and cold-blooded behavior. Accordingly, Ahab’s character is a role model of how much young readers should have knowledge about the environment around them.

I started giving orders.

“Delph: Go get the aquarium. Leroy: Get some rocks and stuff and make a habitat. Wear gloves. Davy: Hold the net.”

I pulled out my One and started snapping photos: Close. Far away. The habitat. Leroy standing in the background and holding up the peace sign. The frog, close-up again. I switched to X-ray mode to take a shot of its internal organs. I switched modes again. The next time it talked, I searched for an exact identification (Rosenberg, 2021).

They examine the bullfrog carefully as it is possibly the last species of American bullfrog on earth. In the setting of the story, Bullfrog is a near-fragile species. Even anatomical research and experiments at Blue Harbor High School no longer use frogs to be dissected. Since frogs are too rare to be found, they are considered unworthy to learn about. When Ahab’s dad was still in high school, they used virtual frogs. Now, they use virtual worms instead.

Ahab names the bullfrog that they found “Alph”, which is short for “Alpha”. When Davy points out the paradox, Ahab explains the symbolism behind it. Even though this is possibly the last bullfrog on earth, he wants it to be the beginning of the species’ population revival.

Ahab and the team go back home empty-handed. They leave Alph on the island and carefully set a chip on his feet so that they can track him and find him instantly on the next visit. A few days later, Davy finds an online friend on the Othernet with the code name “Mole Rat”. He says that he has a female bullfrog. The idea to meet Alph up with the female bullfrog excites them. Unfortunately, there is one big issue. Mole Rat lives in Canada while they live in the US.

If they want to go across the border between both countries, there will be EPF officers making sure that they do not bring any fragile species or harmful belongings that are supposed to be handled by the government. The political sentiment between the US and Canada is not helping either. Ahab later finds out from his dad’s old journal that the conflict was caused by the US unwillingness to attend the World Environmental Summit in Canada.

Saturday, July 21

189 countries are headed to Canada for the World Environmental Summit, and the US isn’t going. China’s going. YEMEN is going. But we’re not going because President Tidwell says we can no longer sacrifice for the rest of the world. He says it’s time for everyone else to catch up with us, and even though blah blah we agree in principal blah blah, science is inexact blah blah, so we’re staying home (Rosenberg, 2021).

Ecological consciousness here is shown through the setting of the story, which depicts the real-life political issue that emerges in saving the environment. Some parties might feel too tired of spending “too much” effort to save the environment when it does not show any significant results. However, the truth is that the effort has not been adequate enough to gain the expected amount of visible results in the environment.

Ecological consciousness is once again shown through Ahab's persistence to save the bullfrog population. Despite the immense risk, Ahab works so hard to convince his parents to let him take a three-day bike trip with his friends to Canada. He does not tell them about saving the bullfrog population and the Alph part because he knows they would not allow him to go. His parents forbid him to go at first, but as Juliette volunteers to chaperone the kids, his parents finally give him permission.

I looked up Wodiska Falls on my One. It wasn't in the Yukon, at least. I had to figure out a way to get to Canada.
And then I did.
"We can travel," I said (Rosenberg, 2021).

Along the journey to Canada, Ahab and the team face several challenges. To begin with, they have to take a long ride under the extreme heat of the sun. They also have to make sure that Alph is in good condition and not making too much noise so that they do not get caught. When Alph makes a noise, Leroy would cover it up by saying that it is his indigestion problem. Moreover, Ahab and the team have to build a strategy to cross the border without getting arrested by EPF officers. The characters perform ecological consciousness through the amount of effort that they are willing to go through for Alph.

Another challenge is that they eventually have to tell Juliette about Alph and their actual intention of going to Canada. Juliette is extremely mad when she finds out that they are going to illegally cross to Canada with a frog and the risk of going to jail. As a teenager, Juliette is pulled into two different perspectives. She will be the chaperone responsible if the trip goes wrong, but she is also a sister who wants the best for Ahab and a part of the young generation who wants to be involved in saving the environment. Juliette almost cancels the whole mission by riding back in Blue Harbor's direction. Fortunately, Ahab and the team successfully convince her to continue the journey.

Once the team successfully arrives in Canada, they meet Mole Rat and find out that he is actually also a child with the real name of Simon, whose age is similar to theirs. Together, they introduce Alph to the female bullfrog, Elvira, by still paying attention to the methodical procedure. They first make sure that Alph can adapt first with the water temperature of Simon's self-made indoor ecosystem before he can have a "date" with Elvira.

Ahab and the team have a conversation with Simon about the long adventure that they went through, school, Juliette's future college, the EPB (Canada's version of the EPF), and Leroy's lobster incident while they wait for the two frogs to mate. Simon and Davy also exchange their positive comments on their various efforts to save the environment. Here, ecological consciousness is shown through the symbolism of the Galapagos island.

"You made a boat," Simon said. "You found your own island. Like the Galapagos."
"Like this room," Davy said. "This room is an island." (Rosenberg, 2021).

In history, scientist Charles Darwin discovered various remarkable species when he visited the Galapagos Islands. His discoveries are profoundly impactful to today's scientific knowledge of evolution theories. By mentioning Galapagos Island, Simon shows his ecological consciousness as he acknowledges that their effort to preserve the environment can be as impactful as Darwin's discoveries. This action debunks the false belief of the EPF officers and adults in the story, as well as in real life that children are incapable of making significant environmental changes. In addition, this sets an example to young readers of how curiosity, optimism, and persistence are necessary to face the environmental crisis.

After two days, Alph and Elvira finally make their frog spawns. The team has agreed to divide the spawns equally so that some of them can live in Simon's ecosystem in Canada, while some others can live in the US with Ahab and the team's supervision. They carefully put the frog spawn in the Ahab's thermos to make sure that the water temperature stays the same until they arrive back in the US. Before they leave, Simon gives Ahab the choice of leaving Alph behind in Canada in exchange for fifty thousand dollars. This puts Ahab in a difficult situation as he has grown an attachment to Alph, but he also wants Alph to be safe and happy with his romantic frog partner, Elvira. Ahab asks his friends and Juliette's opinion, and the majority finally votes to still bring Alph home. Then, Ahab's ecological consciousness emerges when he begins to lift Alph to the small compartment. He notices the way nature speaks.

Silence again, except for the waterfall, where Elvira sat alone. I kept hearing words in the rush of the water—don't-do-it over and over and over.
"Oh, ALL RIGHT." I pulled the aquarium out of the satchel. "Keep him," I told Simon (Rosenberg, 2021).

By listening to nature and leaving Alph behind, Ahab sets an example to young readers that the role of taking care of the environment has its limits. Preserving the environment is not equal to possessing it. Ahab shows that there will be a moment when readers should acknowledge this and let nature pick its own way of survival. There will be a moment when readers should let go

of their control and sense of attachment in order to truly save it. In other words, Ahab shows his true love for Alph as a part of the environment by giving him the freedom to live with Elvira in Simon's safer ecosystem.

The ride back home to the US is harder. Ecological consciousness is very strongly depicted through what Ahab and the team are willing to sacrifice to protect the frog spawn on their way home. When they are going to cross the border, apparently, the EPF officers check people's belongings in a very detailed manner. They even check all liquids that they bring and pour them into the ground wastefully despite the existing issue of water scarcity. As a result, Ahab and the team have to find a way to keep the spawn.

"We need to find somewhere else to put the spawn," I said.
"Somewhere that they won't dry out."
"My armpit?" Leroy asked.
"Your mouth," Davy said in English, not Latin.
"That could work," I said. "A mouth is wet, and it isn't chlorinated."
"That was a joke," Davy said.
"It was a joke," said Delph. "Now it's a solution. Well. A possible solution." (Rosenberg, 2021).

Their sacrifice does not stop there. After going through the border safely with the spawn, they put the spawn back into the thermos and filled it up with their saliva. When they arrive at the campsite, a thunderstorm suddenly comes. Leroy quickly set up a tent to protect them from the storm. They eventually go into the tent, but the thunder is exploding in the direction of the tent. At that moment, Ahab realizes that the thermos with the frog spawn is still outside, on the bicycle. In spite of how dangerous it is, Ahab goes out of the tent with careful calculation of the time in between the thunder and tries to take the thermos.

I unzipped the tent. Juliette opened her mouth, but she must have realized right away what I wanted to get. She knew she wasn't going to stop me.
BOOM.
I waited until the next lightning flash, then bolted toward the bikes. I opened the satchel and grabbed my thermos.
"Two one thousand." I was ready for the thunder when it came.
Then lightning split the sky. I heard a crack, and then the rain, the hail, all of it disappeared.
I opened my eyes, but I didn't remember closing them. I saw the blue of the tent smelled the smell of dirty feet. I didn't remember running back there. (Rosenberg, 2021).

This shows how Ahab is willing to sacrifice his own life to save the frog spawn from the thunder. In addition, Juliette also lets Ahab go out of the tent when she knows what he is trying to do. She prioritizes their collective intention of saving the environment over her role as a chaperone. This extreme change of character, along with Juliette's first use of the environmental pun "I hope I can frog-et it", projects ecological consciousness and the encouragement for teenage readers to believe in their capacity to face the severe impact of climate change.

At the end of the story, Ahab and Juliette's dad pick the team up by using a car. They successfully get back home with the frog spawn even after getting held back by Derek's dad and other EPF officers. Ecological consciousness in *One Small Hop* is lastly depicted through Ahab's reflection on the journey that he went through.

That's when it hit me: part. Maybe we didn't have to save the whole world; maybe we just had to try to save a part of it. Even my dad had done that: He'd saved us, plus he'd kept Davy's mother from having a nervous breakdown. We'd saved Alph from being lonely, and maybe Simon, too. It remained to be seen whether or not we'd saved the bullfrogs. We were trying, and that counted for something (Rosenberg, 2021).

In *One Small Hop*, Rosenberg reminds the young readers that they can save the world by saving a part of it. If each person does their part, then each effort will hopefully complement each other and result in a significant movement.

4.3 The Leaf Detective

The Leaf Detective by Leather Hang is a biographical children's book telling the adventure of Meg Lowman, an impactful forest canopy ecologist in America. Ecological consciousness in the book takes the form of curiosity and admiration toward nature, persistence in preserving the environment, understanding the essence of nature, showing concern for the condition of nature, and understanding the interdependence between nature and living beings. They are depicted through the literary elements of character and setting, illustrations, and side facts related to the rainforest. Since Meg was a young girl, she has been highly interested in nature. She admires the beauty of leaves and how they have various shapes, colors, and textures. In school, Meg rarely speaks. She

is timid but diligent. She finds comfort in making friends with plants. Ecological consciousness is shown through her closeness with the environment, encouraging young readers to also experiment with the nature around them.

She built tree forts and
collected twigs, leaves,
and wildflowers
to study and identify,
to press and label,
swamp thistle,
devil's paintbrush,
forget-me-nots (Lang, 2021).

Occasionally, on the pages of *The Leaf Detective*, the author slips side facts about the rainforest so that young readers may develop their ecological consciousness through the knowledge that Meg finds in her research. One of the facts presented highlights how scientists had only studied the rainforest from the ground. They had never seen the ecosystem living on the treetops.

Before 1979, most of the scientists studied rainforest treetops through binoculars. Some also cut trees down or sprayed them with chemicals and collected the dead leaves and insects that fell to the ground (Lang, 2021).

Responding to this, Meg manifests her ecological consciousness in deep curiosity. She is committed to discovering the new world on the treetops. Thus, she decided to study more science at Sydney University.

No young woman had ever led a research of the rainforest there. The class is dominated by men. One professor even refuses to let her into class because she is a woman. To many people in Australia, Meg is weird. They do not know what resides in the rainforest, so they associate it with dark and dangerous animals that will harm them. They prefer to have it all cut down.

Meg additionally has to face her own fear. One time, when she climbs the 60 to 150-foot tall trees, she almost falls. She flails upside down and right-side up. She also does not know what is waiting for her at the treetops and whether the branch and the rope that carries her body weight will hold up. Regardless, Meg projects her ecological consciousness through her resilience.

Meg ignored them.
Rainforest mysteries
called her
to climb and discover (Lang, 2021).

Meg continues finding a way to get to the treetops by herself. Eventually, when she arrives at the canopy, she is able to see the beauty of a new, mysterious frontier of the rainforest. Meg invites the young readers to understand the essence of nature by introducing them to what she describes as a secret world filled with lovely leaves and interesting animals, such as the black weevil, sweet bees, brilliant parrots, and sleepy koalas. She also discovers how trees are essential for the animals living in the rainforest.

To insects, a tree is not just a tree,
it is a "salad bar."
and all-you-can-eat leaves.

To birds and mammals, a tree is a buffet-
juicy fruits and plump beetles,
salamanders, and frogs (Lang, 2021).

Meg studies on the treetops alone for hours and days. She monitors, traces, and records the leaves on different branches and at different heights. She finds the experience to be very strengthening, and it enhances her confidence. Meg's discovery in the book as the form of ecological consciousness is portrayed in the setting of the rainforest, as well as captivating illustrations in the book. This allows the young readers to feel the similar admiration that Meg experienced in the rainforest.

After a long while of studying the rainforest, Meg realizes how dangerous it is to rely on a rope to study leaves on the treetops, especially at night when there are poisonous snakes, spiders, and ants. In 1988, Meg helped invent the world's first canopy walkway so that scientists could conduct their research at any time in any weather condition.

In Cameroon, Africa, Meg joins a team of scientists to climb to the raft on the treetops in its rainforest, where they launch a hot-air balloon. Meg is very excited to enjoy the view and study more. Once she makes it to the top, she is struck with the breathtaking setting of the rainforest as well as her suddenly emerging concern about the threat of deforestation.

Spread out before her as far as she could see;
trees, trees, beautiful trees,
millions of years in the making,
filled with life,
giving life.

But it struck her;
What good is my research
for the trees,
for the animals,
for people,
when the chainsaws are coming? (Lang, 2021)

Meg further acts on her concern for the environment. She educates the villagers in Cameroon about the benefits that their rainforests can offer. She teaches them the knowledge that she has gained during her long-life research so they can sell crops and plants, such as chocolate, cinnamon, and pineapples, instead of cutting down the trees.

Moreover, Meg decides to make a tremendous impact internationally. She travels to Western Samoa and Northern Ethiopia to convince people to preserve the trees. Ecological consciousness is lastly presented in Meg's understanding of the interdependence between living beings and nature.

because to Meg, a tree is not just a tree.

It's a shelter for animals and people,
a recycler and provider of water,
a creator of food and oxygen,
an inventor of medicine,
a soldier against climate change.

It is essential for life on earth (Lang, 2021).

Through her years of research, Meg inspires people and uses her voice to save the environment. Her ecological consciousness is proven as she becomes a remarkable environmental role model for young readers. She not only encourages them to save the rainforest but also reminds them to save themselves as a part of the ecosystem.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the researcher concludes two following points regarding the different forms of ecological consciousness and their depiction in children's literature: *One Plastic Bag*, *One Small Hop*, and *The Leaf Detective*.

Firstly, the researcher finds eight kinds of ecological consciousness depicted in the three children's books. Among them, the five that dominantly appear in all of the books are showing concern for the condition of nature, understanding the essence of nature, understanding the interdependence between living beings and the environment, knowing how nature speaks, as well as performing curiosity, optimism, and persistence toward saving the environment. In addition, the books also independently include the characters' admiration toward nature, acknowledgment of the severe consequences of climate change in the future, the involvement of nature in one's worldview, and methodical carefulness in treating the environment. Secondly, ecological consciousness in *One Plastic Bag*, *One Small Hop*, and *The Leaf Detective* is depicted through the literary elements of character, setting, point of view, theme, plot, symbolism, and the additional elements of illustrations and side facts related to the environment.

Based on the discussed portrayal of ecological consciousness, it can be said that the main objective of these children's books is to encourage readers to become "friends" with the environment from a very young age. They develop children's understanding of how nature works, such as how *The Leaf Detectives* introduces Meg Lowman's discovery of the rainforest ecosystem. The additional components of illustrations and side facts related to the rainforest in this book help the readers to visualize the point of view that the main character projects and build their curiosity as well as admiration toward the environment. Further, these books raise children's awareness of the current climate change issues and the severe consequences that they can possibly bring in the future,

mainly through the settings of the story. *One Plastic Bag*, for example, accomplishes this by portraying the dirty living conditions that both animals and humans in Isatou Ceesay's neighborhood have to bear due to the uncontrollable amount of plastic waste. Accordingly, this leads the readers to acknowledge that nature and living beings are interconnected.

Moreover, these issues "speak" to the characters, calling them to save the environment out of their concern. Regardless of the complicated challenges that they face along the way, the characters act as the reader's role models and persist in maintaining their belief that the environment can be saved. This is strongly depicted through the storyline of the books and how the characters involve nature in their worldview, which is implicitly depicted through symbolism in *One Small Hop*. In addition, *One Small Hop* introduces methodical carefulness in treating nature to further educate children and convince the older generations that positive environmental changes can also be conducted by children, debunking the previous mindset that it could only be done by experienced experts and adults. All of these elements build the overall theme of inviting young readers to engage in environmental activities and issues, building their relational proximity to nature, and raising their sense of ecological consciousness. However, there are still some limitations: the other aspects besides the character's actions, speech, and the author's comments are still not fully explored. For future research, the contribution of adults in helping children to understand the implications of preserving nature is needed to be explored. The later researchers may analyze the contribution of adults in shaping ecological consciousness for children.

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