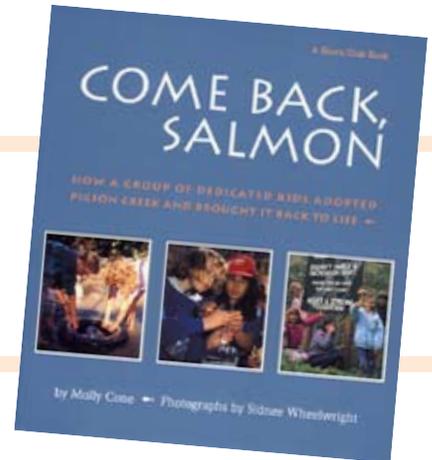


## Come Back, Salmon

by Molly Cone

### Introduce *Come Back, Salmon*

A group of dedicated students from the Jackson Elementary School in Everett, Washington, clean and restock a local stream to bring back the salmon that once spawned there.



Get kids curious about *Come Back, Salmon*. If you have an aquarium, use it to explore what fish need to survive (*clean water, air [oxygen], food*). Or, bring in a fish bowl with small fish, like goldfish. Teach the children to care for the fish.

### Discuss *Come Back, Salmon*

*Come Back, Salmon* is a fascinating and remarkable story that will captivate kids. It takes approximately 10 minutes to read two chapters, so the book can be read in three book club meetings. However, you may find that your kids are eager to hear more. If so, read the book in two club meetings with about 15–20 minutes of reading each. During the course of reading *Come Back, Salmon*, kids will have time to learn and practice taking care of fish (see above) and to learn about nature in their community. Ask *Are there areas near us that need cleaning or some other type of care? Were those areas once different? What happened?*

After reading *Come Back, Salmon* aloud, help kids understand the plot and connect with the characters by asking:

1. Why did the kids have a hard time believing Mr. King when he told them Pigeon Creek was once a clear, clean stream? Look at the picture of the rubbish that was in the stream. What do you see?
2. Why did some local people think the kids would not be able to bring back the salmon? Have you ever done something that people did not think you could do? What was it?
3. Pigeon Creek changed dramatically in the time it took Mr. King to grow from boyhood to adulthood. Can you think of some things that have changed from when your parents were young? For instance, how did your parents, grandparents, or older friends listen to music, write papers, or visit far away places? How were their clothes different from those worn today? Do they remember stores, parks, or streets that are no longer there?
4. Explore some of the vocabulary from the story, such as *spawn, silt, watershed, environment, pollution*. (*spawn*—fish producing young by laying eggs; *silt*—deposits of sand, tiny rocks, and other sediments; *watershed*—areas that drain into a body of water, such as a river)

### Chapters 3 & 4

1. Look at the pictures of the salmon (Coho) eggs as they develop. Can you see the eyes? What changes in each of the pictures? When do the developing salmon start to look like fish?
2. How do you think the kids felt when they released the fish? (Elicit a range of responses—sad, hopeful, happy). Why do you think they felt that way?
3. Now that the kids have put the small fry in Pigeon Creek, do you think the fry will grow, swim to the ocean, and come back to Pigeon Creek? Why?

## Chapters 5 & 6

1. Salmon's sense of smell is so good they can recognize the stream where they were spawned. How good is your sense of smell? What smells can you recognize with your eyes closed?
2. For two years, the students at Jackson Elementary raised salmon from eggs to fry without knowing if Operation Pigeon Creek would be successful. The kids had to work hard to take care of the fish and keep the creek clean. What projects have you worked on for a long time? What kept you interested?
3. Have you ever learned something new, worked with a group on a project, or overcome a challenge? How did you feel about it?

## Activities

Doing a hands-on activity that connects to the story makes the experience more personal and memorable for kids. Choose one (or more) of the activities below, or make up one of your own.

1. **Make fish art.** Have kids make fish art similar to the one the kids from Jackson Elementary made in the book. Assemble the fish art into a mobile.
2. **Learn about animals in your area.** When people clear land to build malls, parking lots, houses, apartment buildings, and roads, animal habitats are destroyed. Have kids find out (at their local library or online) what animals are native to your area. Ask if the kids still see these animals. Are any of them on the endangered species list? Choose one or more animals for each kid to draw a picture of and gather some basic facts about. The facts could include what type of terrain the animal lives in (mountains, forest, plains), where it lives (a cave, hole in the ground, nest in trees), what it eats, and so on.
3. **Create a conservation flyer.** Have kids create a flyer or poster (with catchy slogans) to inform the community about conservation topics in their neighborhood.

### Get Involved

**Build a Habitat.** The kids at Jackson Elementary cleaned the creek and restocked it with salmon. They restored a habitat. Your kids can also turn a space in your community into a habitat for wildlife. Contact local wildlife organizations for information and support. You can also use the following Web sites to start your project:

#### [nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats](http://nwf.org/schoolyardhabitats)

National Wildlife Federation Schoolyard Habitats

Provides information and resources to help you set up a habitat.

#### [wildflower.org?nd=grd\\_articles](http://wildflower.org?nd=grd_articles)

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Provides articles to help you create a butterfly garden, plant wildflower seed, and select plants for your habitat.

#### [www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/WildHab.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard/WildHab.html)

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Provides tips for creating a backyard habitat.



## Web Explorations

Visit one or more of these sites to further explore the themes and topics from the book.

[pbskidsgo.org/eeoworld/](http://pbskidsgo.org/eeoworld/)

**EekoWorld** helps kids learn how to make a difference with the environment. Kids can create their own unique land-, air- or water-dwelling EekoCreature and help the creature overcome environmental issues. They can also explore their own EekoHouse, a simulation of their real home life that shows how decisions they make affect the environment. The site includes videos on a range of environmental topics, such as water, plants and animals, garbage and recycling, desert, grasslands, and tundra.

[pbskidsgo.org/backyardjungle/](http://pbskidsgo.org/backyardjungle/)

“What’s out there?” **Backyard Jungle** challenges kids to investigate nature in their communities. Kids create their own Backyard homepages to load photos, drawings, and descriptions of their “discoveries.” They take on challenges, such as finding 10 animals in their community, drawing or taking pictures of them, and posting their discoveries in their Backyard. Kids can also submit challenges, vote on other kids’ discoveries, view other kids’ home pages, and send messages to each other.

[pbskidsgo.org/dragonflytv/show/salmonrun.html](http://pbskidsgo.org/dragonflytv/show/salmonrun.html)

Watch the video **Salmon Run by Andy, Mason, and Marshall**. The boys devise a way to test the health of salmon in two rivers, looking at the number of salmon, salmon size, and river health.

[pbskidsgo.org/dragonflytv/games/game\\_balance.html](http://pbskidsgo.org/dragonflytv/games/game_balance.html)

Feed the Weebies, small creatures that live on plants, and help them multiply at **Weebit World**.

## More Suggested Books

*Aani and the Tree Huggers* by Jeannine Atkins

*City Green* by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

*The Streets Are Free/La calle es libre* by Kurusa

*She’s Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head!* by Kathryn Lasky