

CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR

# WHEN *the* SKY GLOWS

Nell Cross Beckerman

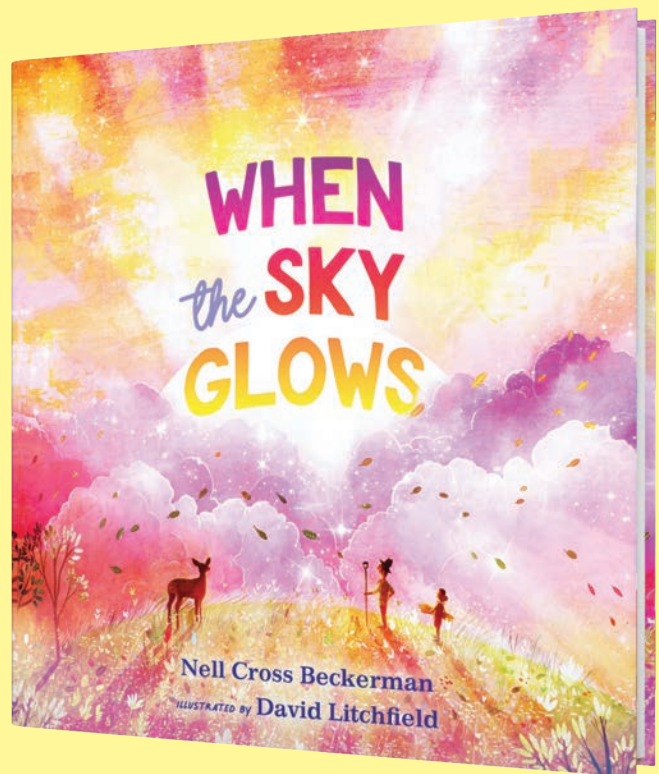
ILLUSTRATED BY David Litchfield



## About the Book

Around the world, at different times of day and in different places, the sky glows. Why? What causes it to glow? *When the Sky Glows* answers this question with vivid descriptions and illustrations of skies seen during the morning, afternoon, evening, and night in places as varied as a lake by the equator, a tropical island, and at a watering hole on a delta. Colorful illustrations reveal the beauty and wonder of these glowing skies.

Author Nell Cross Beckerman's writing is both descriptive and informative. Sometimes she uses descriptive phrases like *when shadows grow* that help us imagine the setting she is describing. Other times she uses informative phrases like *colors with short wavelengths* to explain the science behind what is causing the sky to glow. Illustrations by David Litchfield capture the colors of each



glowing sky and add visual details that help us picture the setting. Together, words and illustrations bring to life eleven different glowing skies.

## Discussing and Writing about the Glowing Sky

1. Glowing skies do not always look the same. Using the words and illustrations, discuss what a glowing sky looks like in each of the times and places listed below:

- Sunrise around the world (pages 2-4)
- On Lake Maracaibo near the equator (pages 5-6)
- On a tropical misty morning on Hawaii when the rain stops (pages 7-8)
- In the zone of totality when the moon blocks the sun (pages 9-10)

2. **Word Splash.** Create four or more sentences about glowing skies. In each of your sentences use two of the words or phrases below. Write down and illustrate your sentences. Share these sentences with your classmates.

morning

sunrise

yellows, oranges, and reds

equator

Lake Maracaibo

lightning

tropical misty island

many rainbows

raindrops

especially colorful

electrical storm

Rainbow State

zone of totality

moon blocks the sun

solar eclipse

Here is a sample sentence: *On Lake Maracaibo, the sky's colorful glow comes from flashes of lightning.*

## Discussing and Writing about Watching a Glowing Sky (pages 11–16)

3. The author shares two types of details that help you understand glowing skies. Descriptive details help you imagine the setting. Informative details help you learn the science that explains what is

happening. For each of the settings below, list examples of these details. An example of each type of detail is shown below.

<b>Setting</b> (Where is it?)	<b>Descriptive Details</b> (What can you see?)	<b>Informative Details</b> (What did you learn?)
A Watering Hole at Sunset	the golden light at sunset	midday sun can cause very bright and very dark spots
A Volcanic Eruption in Iceland		
A Wooded Path		

4. Imagine that you are in *one* of these settings with another person. Write the conversation you are having. Try out one of these ideas:

- Imagine you are with a photographer at a watering hole on a delta. Write down what she tells you about taking pictures at sunset rather than midday. What do you think about what you are seeing?
- Imagine you are watching a volcanic eruption with a scientist in Iceland. What are you learning? What questions do you ask the scientist? What does the scientist tell you?
- Imagine you are walking along a steamy wooded path at dusk with a park ranger. What does he tell you about fireflies? What amazing sights do you see? What thoughts do you share?

5. Watching Videos and Discussing Information about Meteor Showers

As you watch the videos below, write down new information you have learned.

### Videos about Meteor Showers:

- Watch *What Is a Meteor? Are Meteors the Same as Shooting Stars?* at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBFfBz0n\\_SE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBFfBz0n_SE)
- Also watch *Meteor Showers 101* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwCyN3ZYxKc>
- Write down, illustrate, and share new facts that you learned.



**6. Watching Videos and Discussing**  
Information about Auroras

As you watch the videos below, write down new information you have learned.

**Videos about Auroras:**

- Watch *3 Cool Facts about the Northern Lights* at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyOGpGsxDIs>
- Also watch *What Causes the Northern Lights?* At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1apyBNhsTbI>
- Write down, illustrate, and share new facts that you learned.

**7. Examining How the Book Begins and Ends.** Read the first page and the last page. Then discuss the following questions:

- What is the first sentence of the book? How does it introduce the topic of the glowing sky? Look at the illustrations. What do they show you?

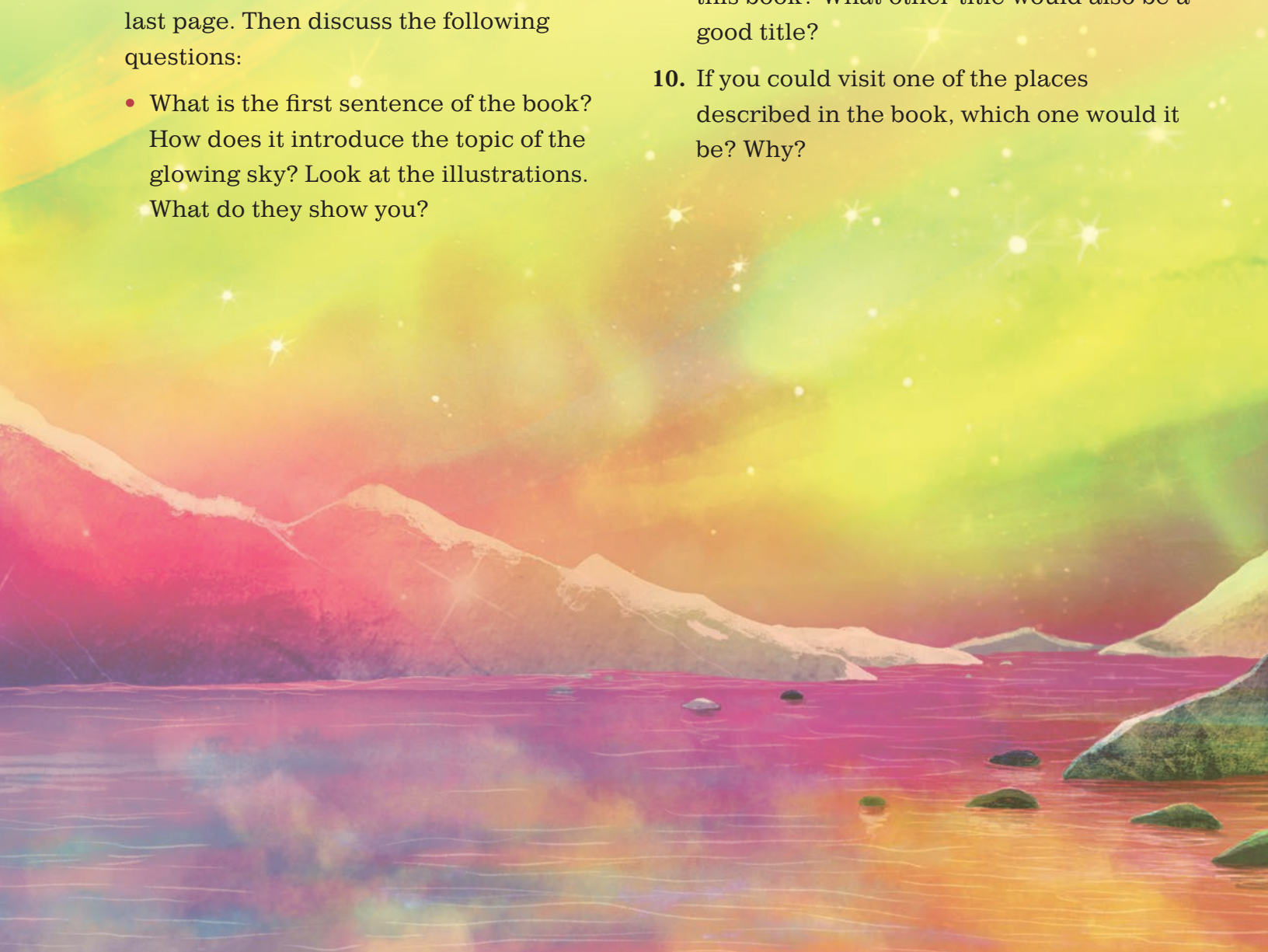
- What is the last sentence of the book? How does it show that glowing skies happen every day?
- How are the words and illustrations on the last two pages of the book similar to and different from the first two pages?

**8. Looking at Back Matter.** At the end of the book, the author provides more information. Discuss the information provided about the following items:

- Light pollution
- Other books and articles you can read
- Who the author and illustrator thanked

**9. Why is *When the Sky Glows* a good title for this book? What other title would also be a good title?**

**10. If you could visit one of the places described in the book, which one would it be? Why?**



## Examining the Craft of the Author and the Illustrator

### 1. Examining the Author's Craft

The author introduces several of the glowing skies in the book with a one-sentence description that helps readers imagine the beauty of these skies. Then she switches to writing an information-filled paragraph. That paragraph explains the science of why the sky glows. In this way, descriptive writing and informational writing work together to explain a glowing sky.

Examine the two examples below. Then answer the following questions for each example:

- What words in the first sentence help you imagine and admire the beauty of the glowing sky?
- What words or sentences in the paragraph explain why the sky glows?
- How do the two types of writing—descriptive and informative—work together?



On a lake by the equator,  
when clouds crack ...



Far from city lights,  
when the air feels fresh  
and frosty ...





## 2. Examining the Illustrator's Craft

The illustrator adds color and detail to the book. He helps you appreciate and understand the glowing skies. Carefully examine the illustrations above. Then answer these questions about the illustrations in Example 1 and Example 2:

1. What is happening in the artwork?
2. Describe the colors in the artwork.

3. Which area of the artwork is most important? Why?

4. How does the artwork help you appreciate and understand the glowing sky?

5. How do the words and the artwork work together?

## Extending the Experience of Reading the Book

1. Draw and illustrate the glowing sky in your neighborhood. Examine the morning sky or the night sky where you live. Draw what you see. What colors do you see? What activities are happening? Write down what you notice about the glowing sky in your neighborhood.

2. Read other books written by Nell Cross Beckerman:

- *Down Under the Pier*
- *Caves*

3. Read other books illustrated by David Litchfield:

- *Our Planet! There's No Place Like Earth*
- *Ocean! Waves for All*
- *Rain Before Rainbows*
- *The Bear and the Piano*

4. Visit the author's website at <https://www.nellcrossbeckerman.com/sky.html>  
Here you can find a video from the author and illustrator about creating *When the Sky Glows*!

5. Visit the illustrator's website at <https://www.davidlitchfieldillustration.com/picture-books/>  
Here you can see illustrations from his many picture books.

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