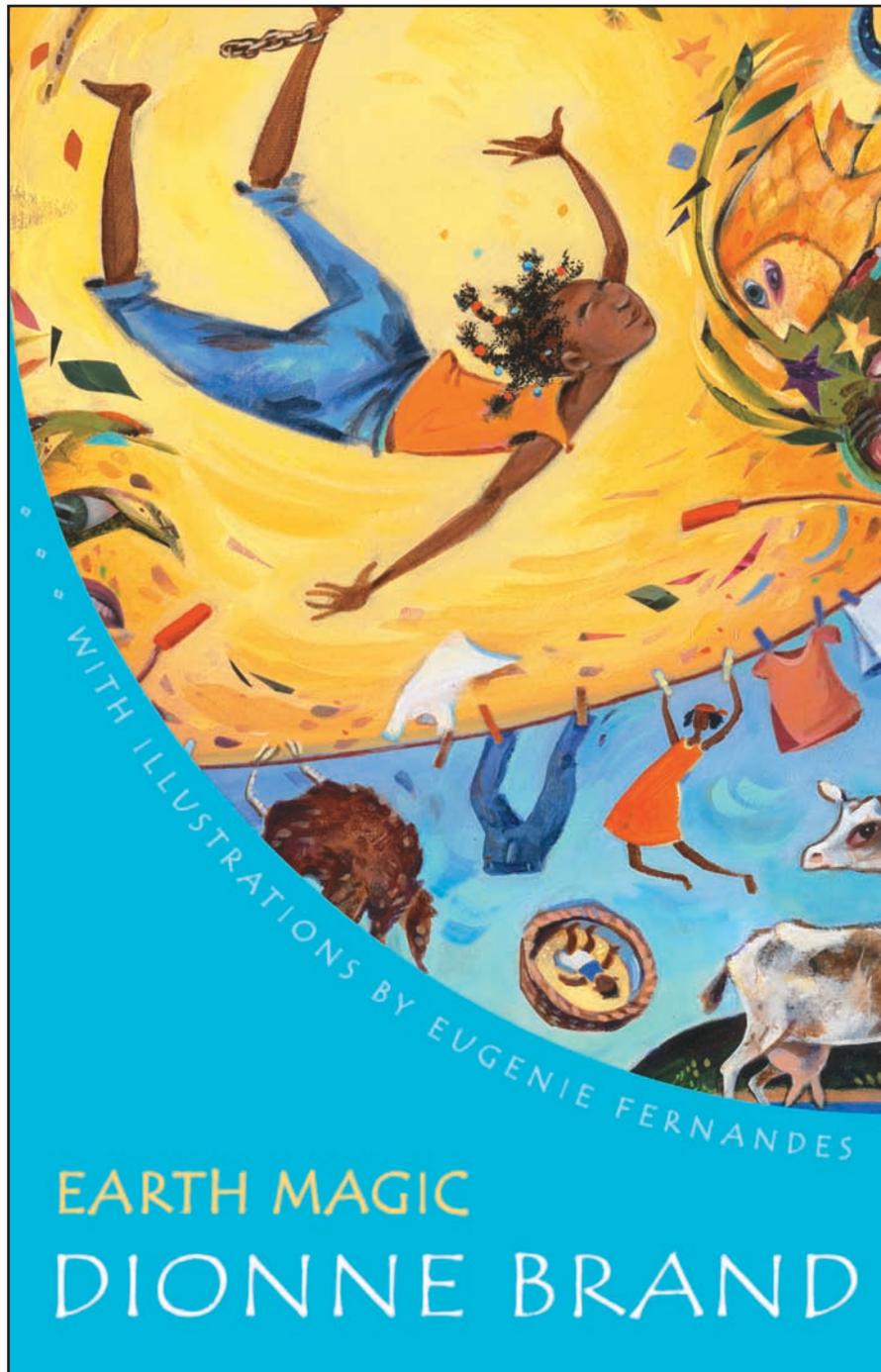


LEARNING RESOURCE MATERIAL



About *Earth Magic*

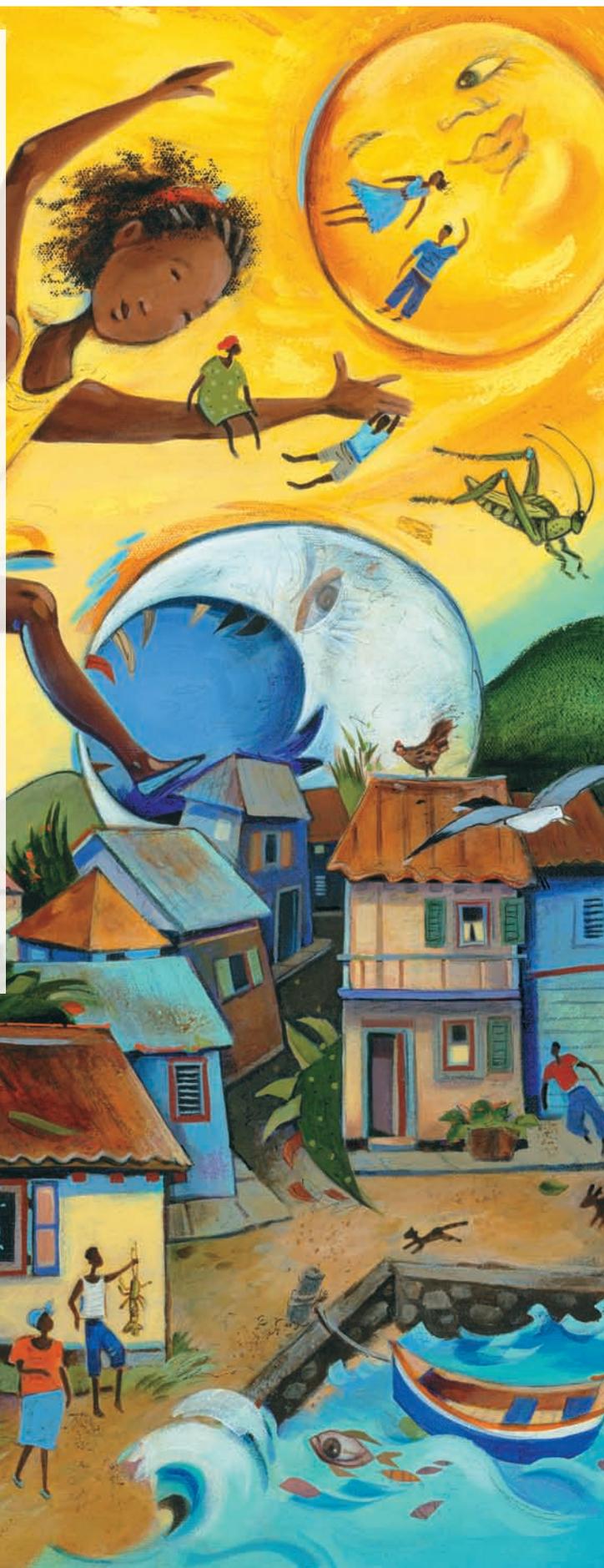
Dionne Brand's *Earth Magic* is a collection of poems that conjures up the world of the Caribbean. The striking illustrations by Eugenie Fernandes brilliantly capture the poems' often mystical imagery and wide range of emotions. This book reveals the Caribbean as a place of both beauty and hardship where life moves in harmony with the elements. The twenty poems are an eloquent and unsparing tribute to the lives of the region's women and a celebration of Caribbean people's bond with the land and the sea.

About the Author

Dionne Brand was born in Trinidad and moved to Canada in the early 1970s. Her work has won both the Governor General's Award for Poetry and the Trillium Award for Literature. Her most recent novel is the highly acclaimed *What We All Long For*. Originally published in 1979, *Earth Magic* is her first book of poetry for children

About the Illustrator

Eugenie Fernandes is an award-winning picture book author and illustrator. Her many works include *A Difficult Day*, *Sleepy Little Mouse* and *Busy Little Mouse*. She lives in southern Ontario.



Discussion Topics and Activities

The following discussion topics and activities are suitable for classes in language and literature, media and visual arts.

Please note that some of the activities in this learning resource require students to visit their local library or use the Internet for research.

1. Dionne Brand is a well-known contemporary Canadian author who has written both poetry and fiction. As part of an individual writing assignment, ask students to research and write an author biography for Dionne Brand. Students should conduct their research either at their local library or on the Internet using their favorite search engine. Explain to students that before starting their research they should develop 10-15 questions that they would like to answer about Dionne Brand. Possible questions can include the following: Where did Dionne Brand grow up and where does she live now? What did she study in school? What other types of poetry and books has she published? Who are her influences?

Once students have completed their research, ask them to use the information to write a feature article on Dionne Brand for a mock magazine or newspaper. Have students hand in their work once they are done.

2. While developing the poems for *Earth Magic*, Dionne Brand was inspired by memories of her childhood in her hometown of Guayaguayare, Trinidad. As an individual writing assignment, ask students to write a one-page poem about something or someone that has inspired them in their lives, past or present. Students can choose an inspiring moment, event or person(s). Ask students to include a paragraph that explains what their inspiration was while writing the poem and an illustration that depicts their favorite verse or stanza in the poem. Have students present their poems and artwork to the class once they are done.



3. As the illustrator of *Earth Magic*, Eugenie Fernandes offers her own artistic interpretation for each of Dionne Brand's poems. Divide students into groups of four or five and assign each group two or three poems from the book. Ask each group to reread the poems and pay close attention first to the text on its own and then to both the text and the illustrations.



Explain to students that they should explore the major theme(s) in each poem and pick out literal and illustrative symbols in the text and the illustrations.

Based on their observations, ask each group to answer the following questions: What do you think Dionne Brand was trying to express in each poem? Do you feel that the illustrator's artwork captures what Dionne Brand was trying to express? Why or why not? Do the illustrations reveal a different interpretation of the poem? If so, please explain. Have each group present their responses to the class.

4. As part of an individual in-class assignment, ask students to choose a poem from the compilation to re-interpret and re-illustrate. Students should include a paragraph that explains why they chose the poem and a paragraph that explains their interpretation of the poem. Once they are done, have students share their artwork and responses with the class.

5. Many of the poems and illustrations in *Earth Magic* reveal the history and culture of the Caribbean, specifically Trinidad. Ask students to choose partners. Each pair will then choose a poem and discuss what they think the poem and the illustrations reveal about the Caribbean. They might choose to discuss the landscape, people, culture or livelihood. Then ask students to research information about the Caribbean, either at their local library or on the Internet using their favorite search engine. Based on their research, ask each pair to write a one-page essay explaining whether the illustrations and poems are accurate depictions of the Caribbean. Students should also use examples from the poem as part of their research. Ask each group to present their work to the class.

6. The following poem titled “Dry Season, Rainy-Season” was not included in this edition of *Earth Magic*.

As part of an individual assignment, ask students to read the poem and choose one stanza to illustrate based on their own interpretation of it. Students should take into consideration symbolism and language.

Ask students to write a one-page essay describing what they think the poem means, which stanza they chose to illustrate and why, and what their illustration reveals about the poem. Have students hand in their work once they are done.

“Dry Season, Rainy-Season”

I
lizard
slithers
'neath sand 'n stones
sun-baked
belly
lazy
yellow.

II
conch
cleverly
clamber
up a rock
plop!
into a cleverer pool.

III
iguana
green-brown
creature,
eater
of figs
and flies.



IV
Cane,
tall
joyful
running
girl.



V
praying mantis
so poised,
perpetual,
pious,
insect or stick?

VI
candle flies
otherwise dull
at night
emanate
green light,
such ingenuity!

VII
Thunder!
ancestors in discontent,
throw clay pots
at the earth.



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