

## **Rachel Carson: No Peace in Keeping Silent**

From The Kids' Book of Awesome Stuff by Charlene Brotman

And Rachel Carson: Signs from the Sea (1907-1964) From Girls Who Looked Under Rocks by Jeannine Atkins

Adapted by Nita Penfold, further adaptation by Dawn Star Sarahs-Borchelt

**Materials needed** small girl figure, dog figure, fossil images, photo of Rachel in ocean, photo of Rachel with microscope, robin figure, Silent Spring cover on small book, eagle figure, photo of Rachel with Dorothy, photo of Rachel with dates and picture of Earth from space.

**Note:** Rachel Carson was not a UU, but we celebrate her ideas that support our belief in the interdependent web of life.

### **Presentation:**

Now watch where I go to get today's story, so that you will know where to find it if you wish to make it your work later.

*Place basket on floor next to you after showing the Heroes and Heroines symbol around the circle.*

Unitarian Universalists have many people who they admire for their ideas and the way they lived their lives. We call them our Heroes and Heroines. Our story today is not about someone who was a Unitarian Universalist. Her name was Rachel Carson and she is remembered for her courage in protecting the Earth.

*Unroll underlay in front of you. Place figure of Rachel Carson as a girl on the underlay at the top right closest to you after showing around the circle.*

Rachel Carson was a shy little girl, who played mostly by herself. No other children lived near the farm in Pennsylvania where she grew up. TV and computers hadn't been invented when she was born in 1907, but Rachel was never bored.

*Place dog figure on underlay to left of Rachel after showing around circle.*

She loved wandering with her dog through the woods and streams on the farm, discovering snakes and birds, insects, and wild animals. Rachel's mother had

been a teacher who liked to explore the outdoors with her daughter. At night, Rachel and her mother hunted for spiders working on webs or moths that ventured out while birds slept. They listened for the soft sounds of night crawlers dragging leaves through their burrows.

*Show fossil around circle then place to left of dog figure on underlay.*

Sometimes Rachel found fossils of fish and sea shells in the cliffs behind the farm. A fossil is the remains of an animal or plant preserved from long ago inside of a rock. (This fossil has been polished.) Rachel had never seen the ocean, but these fossils suggested that the ocean had once covered the Pennsylvania hills and she tried to imagine that.

*Show photo of Rachel in water around circle then place to left of fossil on underlay.*

Reading and writing were her favorite subjects in school. When Rachel grew up, she was determined to go to college, even though most women at that time did not do that. Her parents were poor, but they sold some farm land so that she could go. When she graduated, Rachel took a test to work as a marine biologist and writer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington D.C. They had never hired a woman before. She scored higher than any of the men taking the test, and got the job.

*Show photo of Rachel with microscope around circle then place to left of last card.*

She was so good at writing about fish for her job that she was encouraged to write books. In her books she wrote about plants and animals so small that they could only be seen with a microscope and she wrote about the great forces of the water that covers two thirds of the earth. She wrote how everything in the oceans and on Earth is connected to everything else. It was a new way to think about the world. Each question led to other questions for Rachel.

*Show photo of Rachel and Dorothy around circle then place to left of last card.*

When she moved to Maine later, she met Dorothy Freeman, who waded with her in tide pools at dawn and watched the stars at night. They talked almost nonstop when they were together, and wrote long letters when they were apart. Alone or with her friend, Rachel explored the Atlantic Coast.

*Show robin around circle, then place to below Rachel to start second row on underlay.*

In 1957 Rachel got a letter from a friend. Many robins had died, her friend said, after the land near her house was sprayed to kill mosquitoes. The chemicals that killed the insects also killed birds that ate the insects or drank water that had been contaminated by the sprays. People sprayed them on lawns, gardens, farms, forests, school yards, parks, and golf courses. They didn't realize that the poisons were polluting the soil, seeping into the drinking water, running off the land into oceans, and killing fish and wildlife. How could Rachel enjoy the shores when she knew they were in danger? She knew she had to write, even though her warnings might make some people turn against her.

*Show small book with Silent Spring on cover around circle then place to left of robin in second row.*

Five years later in 1962, Rachel Carson's book, Silent Spring, was published. Rachel showed how pesticides killed useful insects along with harmful ones, leaving the land without bees to pollinate orchards, without spiders and dragonflies to eat mosquitoes. Traces of chemicals left on fruits and vegetables could make people sick.

*Show eagle around circle, then place to left of book in second row on underlay.*

As Rachel had predicted, the people who made money selling chemicals were angry. They spent thousands of dollars trying to discredit Rachel by claiming that she didn't really know what she was talking about. But President John F. Kennedy read Silent Spring. He called for a special committee of top scientists to study the facts and they decided that everything Rachel had written was true. Congress passed new laws to protect the environment. Banning DDT saved the eagles from extinction. People began to think about taking care of the Earth.

*Show Rachel Carson with earth card around circle, then place to left of last card.*

Rachel was awarded many medals, but she was too sick to go to all the places that wanted to honor her and she died in 1964. Even though she was not a Unitarian Universalist, Rachel Carson will always be remembered by us for her courage in protecting the Earth, and for showing us how we are part of a

wonderful web of life. Her words urge us to look around, to listen closely, and most of all, to wonder.

### **Wondering Questions:**

I wonder if you have ever heard of Rachel Carson before?

I wonder which part of this story is the most important?

I wonder which part you like the best?

I wonder where you might be in this story?

I wonder how it feels to be shy?

I wonder if you have a pet you love?

I wonder if you are curious about animals, and plants, and insects?

I wonder if you have ever been told that you can't do something because you are a boy or a girl?

I wonder how it feels to have courage?

I wonder if you have ever stood up for something you believed?

I wonder which of our Unitarian Universalist Promises this story reminds you of?

I wonder where the Spirit of Love and Mystery might be in this story?