

Once, in the Macnuts

By Emma Demorest

Illustrated by Steve Gavenas

Curriculum developed by Léna Garcia



OVERVIEW

Quick-Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade-Level Appropriateness	* 11+/6th+
Genre/s	* Creative nonfiction * Flash memoir * Vignette
Length	* 534 words (two-minute read)
Content Advisories	* None

One-Sentence Summary	A child recalls the legend of a mysterious rock and a family's new year's tradition in this story rooted in place.
Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nature * Family * Childhood * Storytelling * Spirituality * Outer space <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Passage of time * New Year traditions * Indigenous Hawaiian religion * Mystery in the natural world * Agricultural economy of Hawaii * Learning from previous generations
Historic Events/Time Period for Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 1970s Hawaiian culture * Second Hawaiian Renaissance
Complementary Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Song: "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" by Frank Loesser, performed by Ella Fitzgerald: https://bit.ly/1w2rzs2 * Article: "How Big Is an Acre, Anyway?" by Michael Kolomatsky: https://nyti.ms/2SgLqBL * Webpage: "Statewide Agricultural Baseline Project" by Hawaii's Department of Agriculture: http://hdoa.hawaii.gov/salub/ * Webpage: "Kinds of Sentences and Their Punctuation" by Towson University: https://bit.ly/2PdEHtd
Author & Artist Information	<p>Emma Demorest is a writer and a student at UC Santa Barbara. Steve Gavenas is an artist and a teacher based in South Pasadena.</p>

<p>Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)</p>	<p>Grade 6 Common Core Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4.C CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.6</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.D CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.7 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.8</p> <p>* Note: Questions recommended for assessment are marked with two asterisks.</p>
---	--

Author Biography

Emma Demorest is a second year at UC Santa Barbara who is double majoring in film and the College of Creative Studies’ Writing & Literature Major. A long-time admirer of sketch comedy and humor writing, she is the assistant editor of the humor column of UCSB’s *Daily Nexus*. Emma considers short fiction too serious most of the time, but if everyone else is going to do it, she’ll get on board.

Artist Biography

Steve Gavenas is an artist, illustrator, comics creator, business consultant, and teacher based in South Pasadena. He grew up in Miami but has spent his life working and traveling throughout the world. In his creative work, he finds throughways and connections between his education, work, family, and journeys, which inspire him to create art that is meaningful to him and maybe to other people. See for yourself at www.stevegavenas.com.

SYNOPSIS

A child recalls the legend of a mysterious rock and a family’s new year tradition in this flash memoir set in rural Hawaii. Uncle Sho drives his family’s youngest generation to his home on a macadamia nut orchard, where our narrator makes sense of how “the big rock” came to exist. This two-minute read offers a window into contemporary indigenous Hawaiian culture, deeply rooted in a human connection with nature.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic

Using reliable sources, research the indigenous Hawaiian religion. What did ancient Hawaiians believe? How has the religion survived, despite missionary efforts to convert the Hawaiians to Christianity?

Write a three-page history of the Hawaiian religion. Remember to cite at least two reputable sources and to follow MLA format. Share your draft online with your teacher for feedback.

Optional: Create an illustrated timeline including at least five important moments in the history of the Hawaiian religion.

Main Ideas

Journaling:

Option One:

In a 10-minute journal entry, respond to the following questions: Is it important for humans to feel a connection with the natural world? Why or why not? Cite your own experiences and previous knowledge.

Option Two:

How is Hawaii spelled in the indigenous Hawaiian language? How is its indigenous spelling different than its spelling in English? What is an okina? Using reliable sources, find the answers to these questions.

In a 10-minute journal entry, respond to the following questions: Why do you think Hawaii is often spelled without its okina? Do you think it is important to preserve the indigenous spelling of Hawai'i? Why or why not?

Passage-Specific Themes

Small-Group and Class Discussion:

Read the following passage from "Once, in the Macnuts." Discuss the questions below in small groups, then share your ideas with the class:

They said one night in the 70's auntie Em woke up in a hair net to rumblings. Uncle Sho went out looking, and the boys went to. They said where it sat was where it landed- square center of the biggest macnut orchard on the property. They said they could hear it hiss, like the inside of a teapot, and that the earth all around was pulsing with heat, you could see it, yellow and orange in the dirt. Eventually they went back inside, and I guess no one bothered with it after that.

Question One: Who are "they"? How do you know?

Question Two: What do you think "it" is? Point to the words in the text that act as clues.

Universal Themes

Journaling:

In a 10-minute journal entry, explore what the New Year means to you. Have you participated in or heard of any New Year traditions? Describe them in your journal. (Please note that the New Year need not fall on January 1.)

Optional: In pairs or individually, research a culture’s New Year tradition. You are encouraged to pick a tradition you haven’t participated in but which interests you. How do people celebrate the New Year in the culture you selected? Be sure to reference reliable sources.

Prepare a mini-presentation (using Google Slides or creating a visual aspect) to share your findings with the class. Paraphrase and include direct quotations. Remember to cite all your sources, including ones you didn’t quote, in a bibliography.

Key Vocabulary

Definitions are context-dependent. Make sure any definitions you look up or work from are the ones that most correctly fit in the context of the story.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
macnut	boisterous	hutch
rumbling	mildew	frankenstein
pulsing	slab	murky
guava	rum cake	asteroid
bed (of a truck)	sweet bread (Hawaiian)	Pele (deity)
	gully	

Vocabulary Activity Options

1. What is a macnut? Why is it important in the contemporary Hawaiian economy? Explore this report created for the State of Hawaii’s Department of Agriculture: <http://hdoa.hawaii.gov/salub/>

Select a Hawaiian island, and create a map representing the total acreage of macadamia nuts on that island. How much land is used to farm macadamia nuts compared to other crops? Write a paragraph describing your findings.

Note on putting acres into perspective: Per this *New York Times* article, a football field minus the end zones is 1.1 acres: <https://nyti.ms/2SqLqBL>

2. In the indigenous Hawaiian religion, who is Pele? Using reputable internet sources, find and read a traditional legend about her. Create an illustration representing the legend.
3. Research the etymology (origin) of the noun “frankenstein.” Where and when did the word originate, and what does it mean? Write your own compound sentence using the word.

Note on teaching compound sentences: Check out this helpful resource from Towson University: <https://bit.ly/2PdEHtd>

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Who do you think is narrating this piece? What do we know and not know about them?

2. What has the narrator learned, both literally and figuratively, from Auntie Em and Uncle Sho? Does storytelling matter to today's young people? Will it matter to tomorrow's? Why or why not?
3. Do you think children are more willing to believe stories than are adults? Why or why not? When we grow up, are we taught to differentiate between reality and fantasy? If so, how? Discuss.
4. In the years to come, do you think the narrator will continue their family's New Year's tradition? Do you think "the big rock" will remain important 100 years from now? Why or why not?

** Text-Dependent Question Options

1. To whom or for what do you think Auntie Em prays? Justify your answer with textual evidence
2. In the story, our narrator hopes to someday learn Auntie Em's prayer. When the narrator is an adult, do you think they will celebrate the New Year the way Auntie Em and Uncle Sho do? Why or why not? Refer to the text.
3. Like film editors use special effects to create a specific feeling in a movie, writers use literary devices to do the same in their writing. In "Once, in the Macnuts," Demorest uses colloquialisms, or informal language and slang.

Find an example of colloquialism in the story. Why do you think Demorest includes slang? What do you think she is trying to achieve, and is it successful? Cite the text.

Note: Remember, writers make stylistic decisions for a reason.

4. Look at the story's artwork. What parts of the story do you see represented in the art? Imagine you were tasked with creating artwork for Demorest's story. What moments in the story would you choose to illustrate? Why?

Writing Exercises

Narrative

Memoir is a nonfiction genre in which a writer shares important moments of their life with the reader. A flash memoir is like a brief snapshot from a writer's life.

What is your life like? If someone made a movie of your life, what scenes would you want them to include? When you are an adult, how do you want to remember your pre-teen or teenage years?

Select a meaningful moment from your own life and write a first draft of a 500-word flash memoir piece, like "Once, in the Macnuts." Use telling details and figurative language. Do not worry about being perfect.

Optional: In her story, Demorest chooses not to write with traditional English grammar. What effect does this have upon the reader? In your 500-word flash memoir piece, experiment by writing the way you talk, whether or not this conforms to the rules of English grammar.

Descriptive

"Nothing here is made of just one piece, the roof collects itself in rusty tin slabs, the chicken hutch is a frankenstein of wooden extras," says our narrator as they describe Uncle Sho and Auntie Em's home.

Think about a place you have visited. It can be old or new, but the most important thing is that you can remember what the place looked like and how it made you feel. If it's helpful, refer to your own photos or photos you find online.

On one side of a flashcard, write as many adjectives (describing words) and phrases as you can to describe the place.

Flip the flashcard. Using the words you remember writing, as well as any others, write a poem describing the place. Share with a partner.

**** Analysis**

A literary analysis essay asks us to think critically about how and why an author wrote a piece of writing. Remember, stories are written for a reason, and authors make important stylistic decisions as they write.

In literature, imagery is visually descriptive language or language that uses figures of speech (like metaphors, similes, personification, or hyperbole).

In "Once, in the Macnuts," how and why does Demorest use imagery? Write a one- to two-page literary analysis.

Complementary Text Option

Read the lyrics to songwriter Frank Loesser's 1947 song "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" Listen to jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald's 1960 version of the song.

What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?

Written by Frank Loesser (1947)

Performed by Ella Fitzgerald (1960)

When the bells all ring and the horns all blow
And the couples we know are fondly kissing
Will I be with you or will I be among the missing?

Maybe it's much too early in the game
Ah, but I thought I'd ask you just the same
What are you doing New Year's, New Year's Eve?

Wonder whose arms will hold you good and tight
When it's exactly twelve o'clock that night
Welcoming in the New Year, New Year's Eve?

Maybe I'm crazy to suppose
I'd ever be the one you chose
Out of the thousand invitations you received

Ah, but in case I stand one little chance
Here comes the jackpot question in advance
What are you doing New Year's, New Year's Eve?

Ah, but in case I stand one little chance
Here comes the jackpot question in advance
What are you doing New Year's, New Year's Eve?

Oh, what are you doing New Year's, New Year's Eve?

Writing Exercise

10-Minute Journaling Exercise:

Both “Once, in the Macnuts” and “What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?” speak to New Year traditions. What is similar and different about the traditions described in the memoir and the song? Cite the texts.

Is it important for people to have New Year traditions? Why or why not? You may wish to refer to Universal Themes.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

In small groups, select and research a natural geographic feature from anywhere in the world. Assign one or more group members the following roles:

- Creative Writer (the storyteller who articulates the team's ideas into words)
- Designer (the artist who determines how to visually represent the team's ideas)
- Copy Editor (the editor who polishes the writing and fact checks the scientific paragraph)

Part One: First, using reliable scientific sources, determine how the feature came to exist. Using precise language, write a paragraph answering this question.

Part Two: Next, create an alternate myth for how the geographic feature came to exist. Your myth does not need to be rooted in reality.

Part Three: Finally, find a way to visually represent the team's myth. You can use technology or simply draw with pencil on paper. Present to the class.

Five-Minute Quickwrite: In your journal, reflect on the experience of working in a group. How did you help your team? How were you helped by your other team members? What was challenging about your role, and what came easily to you? Why?

Classroom Activity Two

Collaborative Storytelling:

In pairs or small groups, ask students to work together to write a cohesive, one-page short story. Start by asking one student to write the first line of the story. Each subsequent student will continue the story by adding another sentence.

Follow-up Discussion: How did your team work together to write a short story? What was challenging about the process of collaborative storytelling? What was rewarding?

Home Activity

“They said one night in the 70's auntie Em woke up in a hair net to rumblings.”

Interview a family member or a friend who lived through the 1970s. What has changed, and what has stayed the same? You may also wish to ask how Los Angeles has changed or stayed the same since your interviewee arrived in the city.

Take notes during the interview. Turn in these notes to your teacher.

Guest Speaker

Option One: Invite the author, Emma Demorest, to speak to the class about her story and her experience studying creative writing at the College of Creative Studies, UC Santa Barbara's honors college.

Option Two: Ask the artist, Steve Gavenas, to speak to the class about his inspiration for creating the story's art, as well as his experiences teaching in South Pasadena. Invite him to lead an art workshop.

Note: *Literature for Life* helps coordinate and facilitate author and artist visits.

Field Trip

Visit USC's Pacific Asia Museum, which features over 4,000 years of Asian and Pacific Islander art and history (46 N. Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena).

Onsite Writing Activity:

Select one artwork that inspires you, either for its appearance or for its story. Who made the piece? What do you think their daily life was like?

In your journal, write a diary entry from the perspective of the artist. You may wish to sketch the artwork to accompany your writing.

Note: The museum is free for people 17 years old or younger. Contact the museum for information on student discounts.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

This story and its exercises are appropriate for 6-12th grade. Sixth-grade standards are cited.

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.8: Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4.A: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4.A: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5.A: Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.4.C: Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6: Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3: Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5.A: Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.5.A: Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification) in context.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Complementary Reading Text (Comparative Writing Exercise)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9: Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.7: Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.B: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.D: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.B: Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5: Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.