



**Classroom Guide for**  
**PARROTS OVER PUERTO RICO**  
Written by **Susan L. Roth** and **Cindy Trumbore**  
Illustrated by **Susan L. Roth**

### Reading Level

\*Reading Level: Grades 3–4  
Interest Level: Grades 1–6  
Guided Reading Level: Q  
Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.7/5  
Lexile™ Level: 960L

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

### Themes

Endangered Species (Puerto Rican parrot), Wildlife Rescue and Recovery, Environment, Puerto Rican History, Life Cycle and Animal Adaptations, Overcoming Obstacles, Perseverance, Responsibility, Latino/Latin American Interest

### Synopsis

For centuries beautiful, raucous Puerto Rican parrots and the settlers on the island of Puerto Rico hunted for food, survived hurricanes, raised their young, and protected their homes. But then things began to change, and in time the trees in which the parrots nested were destroyed. Puerto Rican parrots, once abundant, came perilously close to extinction in the 1960s due to centuries of foreign exploration and occupation, development, and habitat destruction. By 1967, only twenty-four Puerto Rican parrots were left in the wild. Humans had nearly caused their extinction. Could humans now save the parrots?

With striking collage illustrations, a unique format, and engaging storytelling, authors Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore tell two intriguing stories: the fascinating history of Puerto Rico and the intertwined story of the rare parrots that live in the island's treetops. The authors recount the efforts of the scientists of the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program to save the parrots and ensure their future. Readers are invited to witness the amazing recovery efforts that have enabled Puerto Rican parrots to fly over their island once again.

This book presents a compelling portrait of the dedicated work performed by scientists to protect, manage, and ensure the survival of an endangered species. The scientists' work shows how challenging obstacles can be faced and overcome with ingenuity and

commitment. Readers will learn how people and animals are connected in a cycle of life, and how changes in one part of the cycle affect the other parts.

This is the first children's book specifically focusing on the Puerto Rican parrot, an indigenous bird once plentiful in Puerto Rico and nearby Caribbean islands. Illustrator Susan L. Roth's signature textural collages vibrantly capture the animals, people, and landscape of Puerto Rico; the amazing three-dimensional quality of the images immediately draws readers into the book.

## BACKGROUND

*From the Afterword:* Scientists estimate the population of Puerto Rican parrots was between one hundred thousand and one million birds on the main island of Puerto Rico and the nearby islands of Culebra, Vieques, and Mona in the late fifteenth century, when Christopher Columbus arrived in Puerto Rico in 1493. The history of the parrots is closely linked to the history of Puerto Rico. The parrots' numbers began to shrink in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as their nesting trees were cut down for logging and farming. Puerto Rican parrots have been described as one of the ten most endangered birds in the world.

The Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program (PRPRP) is dedicated to conserving, protecting, and managing both wild and captive populations of the parrot so that its status will be changed from endangered to threatened. Begun in 1968, the PRPRP is a cooperative effort between the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, and the US Geological Survey.

Survival rates of the parrots grow with each release. As of 2012, there were about 150 birds in each of the two aviaries and between 60 and 95 birds in the wild in El Yunque and Río Abajo Forest combined. The 2013 breeding season produced a record of approximately 100 fledglings in the wild and the two aviaries.

*Deforestation:* The clearing of trees is most often the result of farmers or ranchers cutting down trees to make room for growing crops or raising livestock. Logging and urban sprawl are also causes of deforestation. According to the *National Geographic*, [millions of animal species](#) have lost habitat to deforestation. The solution to stopping deforestation has been difficult to establish and enforce because of the competing socio-economic interests of communities and developing countries where the forests are located.<sup>1</sup> In addition to loss of habitat for plant and animal species, deforestation contributes to carbon emissions, soil erosion, and disrupted water cycles ([LiveScience](#)).<sup>2</sup> For vivid photography and in-depth information on deforestation as a threat to animals, explore the [World Wildlife Fund](#) website.<sup>3</sup>

*Geography of Puerto Rico:* The island of Puerto Rico is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, east of the Dominican Republic. Puerto Rico is slightly less than three times the size of the state of Rhode Island ([CIA Factbook](#)).<sup>4</sup> In a critical shipping lane to the Panama Canal, Puerto Rico has been a key port for many settlers and governments over the centuries. The climate is tropical and the island is vulnerable to seasonal hurricanes. The majority of the island is mountainous. El Yunque National Forest's 28,000 acres are one of the few remaining testaments to the rich rain

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<sup>1</sup> <http://environment.nationalgeographic.com/environment/global-warming/deforestation-overview/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.livescience.com/27692-deforestation.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://worldwildlife.org/threats/deforestation>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rq.html>

forest that once dominated the island. The Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program is located in the El Yunque National Forest and according to the US [Forest Service](#), the El Yunque National Forest is the only tropical rain forest in the United States National Forest System. The parrots have struggled at the recovery program's location in the El Yunque Forest because of the wet climate and predators.<sup>5</sup>

*Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program (PRPRP)*: A staff of eleven coordinate management and research/recovery efforts for the Puerto Rican parrot, considered [one of the ten most endangered birds in the world](#).<sup>6</sup> Established in 1968, the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program is a multiagency effort to restore and manage the endangered Puerto Rican parrot. The United States Fish & Wildlife Service, United States Forest Service, the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, and the United States Geological Survey have partnered in the recovery efforts of the United States' only remaining native parrot species. Learn more about this partnership and the recovery program at the [United States Fish & Wildlife Service](#).<sup>7</sup> Additionally, [Forest Magazine offers an in-depth timeline](#) of the early stages of the recovery program in its "Out There" column.<sup>8</sup> *Audubon Magazine* offers a comprehensive interview with a United States Fish & Wildlife biologist at the program's headquarters, which includes [what it is like to train the parrots for survival](#).<sup>9</sup> The scientists are currently working toward protecting the parrots from further habitat loss, hunting, pet-taking, loss of potential nesting holes, hurricanes, and drought, as detailed in [Bird Life International](#).<sup>10</sup>

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues do the author and illustrator give to help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?
2. What do you know about texts that are informational nonfiction? What are the typical features of informational nonfiction texts? What are some things that will not happen in informational nonfiction texts? Why do authors write informational nonfiction texts? How do you think their reasons differ from authors who write fiction?
3. What is a scientist? What does a scientist do? What subjects might a scientist study? Why are scientists important? Why do we learn science in school? Share an experience you have had of a science lesson/project or of a scientist helping you in some way.
4. What do you know about Puerto Rico? Where is it located? What is the climate and environment like? What kinds of animals and plants live there? What are some of the challenges animals living in Puerto Rico may face? Why might Puerto Rico be such a good environment for animals and plants to live and thrive?
5. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

## Exploring the Book

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/elyunque/about-forest>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/pubs/facts/rioescn.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/prparrot/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.fsee.org/index.php/forest-magazine/archives/200452>

<sup>9</sup> <http://archive.audubonmagazine.org/endangeredspecies/endangeredspecies0909.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=1666#FurtherInfo>

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Because there is no title on the front cover of the book, tell students that the book is called *Parrots Over Puerto Rico*. Talk about the title. Ask students what they think the title means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What places might be talked about in the text? What animals might be talked about? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? What makes you think that?

Have students observe the vertical orientation of the book, with the text and illustrations positioned so that the book is be read by flipping up the pages instead of turning the pages horizontally right to left. Ask students why they think the authors decided to structure the book this way.

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, dedications, title page, illustrations, afterword, timeline, authors' sources, and acknowledgments.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- the characteristics of a Puerto Rican parrot
- what the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program is
- how Puerto Rico has changed over time for both people and the parrots
- about the human impact (positive and negative) on the parrots and the Puerto Rican environment overall

Encourage students to consider why the authors would want to share this story with children.

### VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

#### CONTENT SPECIFIC

Caribbean Sea	Atlantic Ocean	orchids	ferns
hurricanes	sugarcane	harbor	Christopher Columbus
merchant ships	warships	colonies	commonwealth
charcoal	El Yunque	aviary	incubator
reforested	gene pool	fledglings	pearly-eyed thrashers
kapok tree	generators		

#### ACADEMIC

vanished	delicate	mates	toil	launched
invaded	declared war	settlers	territory	citizenship
rural	jabbing	elected	governor	independent
flock	extinct	scientist	captivity	captive-bred
inspected	discarded	rescued	damaged	wrecked

humid	aggressive	gentler	frightened	newcomers
rare	protective	survived	distinctive	competitors
decline	endangered species	dedicated	threatened	self-sufficient
cooperative effort	vigilance	exclusively	artificial	tribute

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 3)

1. What is the climate and environment like in Puerto Rico? What words or phrases describe the setting?
2. Who were the first group of people to arrive on the island? What was the relationship between the Tainos and other early groups of people with the parrots? How did the early groups of people interact with the parrots?
3. How does a Puerto Rican parrot find a mate?
4. What are the competitors and predators of Puerto Rican parrots? How do red-tailed hawks, pearly-eyed thrashers, black rats, and honeybees affect Puerto Rican parrots?
5. How have humans affected Puerto Rican parrots?
6. Which countries fought each other for control of Puerto Rico?
7. Before scientists started work to save the Puerto Rican parrots, where was the only place the birds could be found by 1967?
8. What caused the forests to disappear? What was the impact of reduced forest lands on the parrots?
9. What is the function of an aviary?
10. Why do the scientists collect parrot eggs from the wild? Why do scientists leave at least one egg or chick in each nest?
11. Why did the scientists open the aviary in El Yunque?
12. What role do Hispaniolan parrots play in the recovery efforts for the Puerto Rican parrots? How do these parrots help Puerto Rican parrots survive?
13. What did the scientists do to stop the pearly-eyed thrashers from stealing the parrots' nests? How does this technique help the parrots?
14. What did the scientists do when one of the chicks had damaged wings?
15. How did Hurricane Hugo in 1989 affect the parrots and the aviary?
16. What is an incubator? How does it help the parrots?
17. What strategies do the scientists teach the parrots about avoiding predators such as the red-tailed hawks?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 6)

1. Why do you think Puerto Rican parrots have green feathers? Does this adaptation help them survive in their environment? Would this be an example of a physical or behavioral adaptation?
2. Describe several physical and behavioral adaptations of Puerto Rican parrots. What do they need to have or be able to do to survive in their environment?
3. What does a hurricane and Christopher Columbus plus Spanish settlers have in common? Why would the authors connect hurricanes with the Spanish settlers on

- the same page of the book? What impact did hurricanes and the coming of the Spanish have on Puerto Rico and on the parrots?
4. Why do you think the authors chose the title *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* for the book, instead of something like *The History of Puerto Rico*? What does this choice demonstrate about the authors' perspective?
  5. Why did both Spain and the United States want to control Puerto Rico?
  6. Why do you think the governments of the United States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico worked together to create the Puerto Rican Parrot Recovery Program? Why was it important to save an animal species?
  7. How did the scientists demonstrate persistence and creativity?
  8. Why do you think the scientists are not named in the main part of the book? They are real people, and yet they are not identified. Why might the authors do this? What does this choice demonstrate about the authors' perspective?
  9. What character traits do the scientists have? How would you describe their actions? Think about what they have done and continue to do with the parrots. Do you think the authors want you to aspire to be like these scientists? What makes you think so?
  10. Why do the scientists separate the aggressive parrots from the gentler parrots? How does this help more parrots survive? Is this an example of a physical or a behavioral adaptation?
  11. Why do the scientists cage younger parrots with adult parrots? How does this help more parrots survive? Is this an example of a physical or behavioral adaptation?
  12. How are the aviaries similar to and different from zoos?
  13. Why do you think the scientists want to release captive-bred parrots into the wild, rather than just keeping them in the aviaries? What are the risks of releasing captive born and raised parrots into the wild? How might those parrots have additional challenges compared to wild-born parrots?
  14. If you were in charge of one of the aviaries, would you release the captive-born parrots into the wild or would you keep them in captivity? Why? What are the benefits and challenges of releasing? What are the benefits and challenges of keeping animals in captivity?
  15. What do you think the authors want you to learn from this book about the history of the Puerto Rican parrot? What is the main idea of the book? What are supporting details that confirm the main idea?
  16. What does this book teach about sustainability and the impact of humans on sustainability practices and efforts?
  17. Do you think it is important for communities and governments to save endangered species? Why do you think so? What might happen if we didn't promote children's education programs or create safe places for wildlife?
  18. How might the Puerto Rican parrot be a symbol for the people of Puerto Rico?
  19. The main text and the afterword both give facts about the Puerto Rican parrot and the recovery efforts. How are those sections different from each other? How are they similar? How are both texts examples of informational nonfiction?

### Literature Circles

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

If you use literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to the ones in the Discussion Questions section of this guide.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for lines or sentences in the story that describe physical and behavioral adaptations of the parrots.

- The **Illustrator** might create a food web for the Puerto Rican parrot. The diagram should include the parrot's competitors, predators, and food. The illustrator should explain where he or she found the illustrated details in the text.
- The **Connector** might find other books written about endangered birds, such as the California condor or the American bald eagle, and the recovery efforts that have been undertaken. How did the other species become endangered? What conservation processes have been used?
- The **Summarizer** might provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- The **Investigator** might look for information about deforestation, its causes, other animals affected by it, and what conservation groups and governments are doing to solve deforestation problems.

\*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Three such books you may wish to refer to are: GETTING STARTED WITH LITERATURE CIRCLES by Katherine L. Schlick Noe and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 1999), LITERATURE CIRCLES: VOICE AND CHOICE IN BOOK CLUBS AND READING GROUPS by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 2002), and LITERATURE CIRCLES RESOURCE GUIDE by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)  
(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and make personal connections to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Imagine you are one of the first scientists to realize how endangered the Puerto Rican parrots are and you need to enlist help from the United States and Puerto Rican governments. Write a letter, from the point of view of a scientist, asking for help. How will you persuade the United States and Puerto Rican governments to set up an aviary for the parrots? What will you do to help the parrots? What will happen if you don't help the parrots as soon as possible?
2. If you were a journalist on a Puerto Rican news show, what could you say to the citizens of the island to get them to stop cutting down the forests for farmland? What can people do to make a living instead? What can you say to get citizens to help the birds and their habitats? How could helping the birds also help the people?
3. How would you define the word *respectful*? Who do you think is respectful in your life and why? Do you think the scientists working for the PRPRP are respectful? Why or why not? Do you think humans should be respectful to nature? Why or why not? What can humans do to show respect toward nature?
4. Which parts of the book did you connect to the most? Which parts of the book did you connect to the least? Why? What memory can you share of a science project in class or of a scientist helping you in some way?
5. Describe a time you or someone you know took care of the environment. What was causing harm and how did you or the other person solve that problem? What advice would you give to improve how your school affects the environment? What can people do at home to help take care of the environment?
6. If you were offered a job as a scientist at one of the Puerto Rican parrot aviaries, would you take it? Why or why not? What skills would you need to be successful there?
7. Earth Day is celebrated each year on April 22. It is a day on which events are held worldwide to demonstrate support for environmental protection. What parts of *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* make this book a leading example for an Earth Day read aloud?

8. Would you recommend this book to a friend? Why or why not? Describe what makes this an interesting book or what you would do to improve it.

### ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the book with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the text. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the book or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about the scientists in the book.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Student who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These may also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

#### Science

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

1. Encourage students to research a bird species that is endangered or threatened in your state or area of the country. What does this species eat? What are its predators? How does this species care for its young? What is its natural habitat like? What impact have humans had on this species? What is being done, if anything, to help restore the population?
2. Read [Puffling Patrol](#) to learn about another bird species and the challenges it faces.<sup>11</sup> [Compare and contrast](#) the physical and behavioral adaptations of Puerto Rican parrots and puffins.<sup>12</sup> Where does each species live? What does each eat? What predators does each have? What role have humans played in helping or

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.leeandlow.com/books/437/hc/puffling\\_patrol](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/437/hc/puffling_patrol)

<sup>12</sup> <http://blog.leeandlow.com/2014/02/03/how-to-compare-and-contrast-with-the-common-core-in-fourth-grade/>

- hurting the survival of both species? Create charts showing the life cycles of the puffin and Puerto Rican parrot.
3. Encourage students to read *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* to find examples of the parrots' adaptations. What are the physical adaptations of the parrots? What are the behavioral adaptations? What ways are the scientists helping the parrots with behavioral adaptations? How do the birds' colors help the species survive in the environment? How does staying still or hiding when a red hawk is nearby help the parrots survive? Is that an example of a physical or behavioral adaptation?
  4. Have students research the causes of deforestation. Where does deforestation occur in the world? What is lost when deforestation occurs? Why has it been so challenging to stop and prevent? What animal species have already become extinct because of deforestation? What animal and plant species are currently at risk of extinction due to deforestation?
  5. Build a bird feeder for the school or for students to take home. There many ways to make easy, healthy, animal-friendly bird feeders with common materials. Check out the [Audubon Society's "Backyard Bird Feeders"](#) for step-by-step instructions.<sup>13</sup>
  6. Ask students to research the basic ecology and function of a rain forest. What are the two types of rain forests in the United States? Where are they located? What are the differences between the Pacific Northwest's temperate rain forests and Puerto Rico's tropical rain forests? What value do rain forests provide? What challenges do rain forests face due to human impact? Who manages the rain forests and what does that involve? For lesson plans, webinars, and educational resources on temperate and tropical rain forests, check out [FSNatureLive](#)<sup>14</sup> and [America's Rain Forests: A Distance Learning Adventure](#).<sup>15</sup>
  7. Have students compare and contrast their community's biome with the Puerto Rican parrots' biome. Allow students to explore the [Missouri Botanical Garden's "What's It Like Where You Live?"](#) to learn about the biomes of the world.<sup>16</sup> Students should investigate the species of their biome, what the climate is like, where in the world their biome is found, and how it compares to where the Puerto Rican parrots live.

## Writing

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4)

1. Many countries around the world use animals as symbols. Picking the right animal to represent a country or other geographical area can be tricky. Animals as symbols need to make people feel proud. The United States of America's national animal is the bald eagle. Suppose the Puerto Rican government was deciding whether or not to choose the Puerto Rican parrot as the island's animal symbol. Write a letter to the government to try and convince them this is a good choice. What characteristics of the Puerto Rican parrot would you describe to show that the bird is a good choice?
2. Have students read [Lee & Low Books' interview with both authors](#) of *Parrots Over Puerto Rico*.<sup>17</sup> Ask students to write down additional questions they have for the authors. Questions may be about the parrots, Puerto Rico, how to write and illustrate a book, and so on.

## Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–8)

1. Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States. Have students research what it means to be a commonwealth. What rights and privileges do the people have? What

<sup>13</sup> <http://education.audubon.org/activities/backyard-bird-feeders>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.fsnaturelive.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <http://rainforests.pwnet.org/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.mbgnet.net/>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.leeandlow.com/p/poppr\\_bt.mhtml](http://www.leeandlow.com/p/poppr_bt.mhtml)

is the government like? Prepare a chart comparing the people and government of Puerto Rico to a state in the United States.

2. Have students research the geography of Puerto Rico. Where in the world is the island located? What is the climate like? What physical features does the island have? What kinds of plants and animals live there? What makes Puerto Rico unique from nearby islands? What are Puerto Rico's resources and most popular exports? How might the island's geography make it attractive to other countries and people who want to settle there?
3. Ask students to explore the various groups of people and countries that tried to control and settle Puerto Rico. Which countries fought over Puerto Rico? Which countries settled Puerto Rico, and when? What unique features or resources did Puerto Rico have that attracted foreign governments to want to control the island? What languages are spoken in Puerto Rico?

### Art

1. The illustrator, Susan L. Roth, chose to use the highly visual and technical art form of collage to illustrate the book. How does this technique help tell the histories of the parrots and Puerto Rico? Have students study the art in *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* and the art in [The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families](#).<sup>18</sup> What materials does the illustrator use to make her collages? Invite students to make their own collages using construction paper, newspapers, magazines, cloth, and other recycled materials. Have students reflect on the materials, time involved, and process of creating a collage.
2. Let students create parrot masks by decorating paper plates, paper bags, or cardboard from cereal boxes. Encourage students to add feathers that match the colors of Puerto Rican parrots. You can find ready-made feathers in arts and crafts stores, or challenge students to study the artwork in the book and then cut feathers from construction paper. Make sure to cut out spaces for the eyes and add a paper beak. The masks can be completed with either string, so they can be tied around students' heads, or with a popsicle stick glued to the bottom, so students can hold up their masks in front of their faces.

### Home-School Connection

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

1. Encourage students and their families to participate in [Wildlife Watch](#), the National Wildlife Federation's national nature-watching program created for people of all ages.<sup>19</sup> Students and families share the details of the wildlife they see in their communities to help National Wildlife Federation track the health and behavior of species worldwide.
2. Puerto Rico parrots are unique to the Caribbean, but students can learn to identify other bird behaviors through observation. [The National Wildlife Federation's "Bird Behavior Walk" activity](#) teaches students about bird behaviors, including hiding, flocking, bathing, flying, preening, singing, foraging, and feeding.<sup>20</sup> Encourage students to think about where birds flock in their community. Then have them photograph or sketch the behaviors they observe.
3. The biologists working with the Puerto Rican parrots demonstrate a lot of persistence and commitment. Invite students to interview their parents, grandparents, or guardians about a time they faced a significant obstacle. How did they overcome it? What made them persist in reaching for their goal? What advice do they have for

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.leeandlow.com/books/417/hc/the\\_mangrove\\_tree\\_planting\\_trees\\_to\\_feed\\_families](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/417/hc/the_mangrove_tree_planting_trees_to_feed_families)

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Conservation/Citizen-Science/Wildlife-Watch.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.nwf.org/activity-finder/outdoor-activities/bird-behavior-walk.aspx>

someone who must tackle a challenge? Why is persistence important?

4. Encourage students to interview their parents, grandparents, or guardians about responsibility, service, or giving back. For what or whom were they responsible? How did they feel when they had to complete a task or look after the well being of another person or animal? What challenges did they experience? How were they successful? What character traits did they need to be successful?

### ABOUT THE CO-AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

**Susan L. Roth's** unique mixed-media collage illustrations have appeared in numerous award-winning children's books, many of which she also wrote. When asked by her friend, Cindy Trumbore, to collaborate on a book that jointly told the story of the people of Puerto Rico and their beautiful parrots, Roth was thrilled by the opportunity to create hundreds of tiny green parrots, but never imagined how many feathers she would have to make. Roth and Trumbore also collaborated on *The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families*. Roth lives in New York. Her website is [www.susanlroth.com](http://www.susanlroth.com).

### ABOUT THE CO-AUTHOR

**Cindy Trumbore** has been involved with young people's literature for most of her career. A former editor in children's book publishing, she now writes children's books, edits books for classrooms, and teaches writing. Trumbore was inspired to tell the story of the Puerto Rican parrots by a quarter in the US Mint's America the Beautiful Quarters program that featured El Yunque National Forest and an image of a Puerto Rican parrot. As a follow-up, "an article about this quarter in my local paper made me want to learn more about Puerto Rican parrots," says Trumbore. She considers the moment when she and Susan Roth saw three Puerto Rican parrots flying over Rio Abajo Aviary as one of the high points of her career as a writer. She lives in New Jersey. You can find her online at [www.cindykane.net](http://www.cindykane.net).

Awards and honors *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* has received include:

- Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal 2014, American Library Association
- Teacher's Choices Reading List, International Reading Association
- Riverby Award, John Burroughs Association
- Américas Book Award, Consortium of Latin American Studies Program
- Original Art 2013, Society of Illustrators

### Book Information

\$19.95, HARDCOVER

978-1-62014-004-8

48 pages, 10-1/4 x 9

\*Reading Level: Grades 3–4

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: Q

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 5.7/5

Lexile™ Level: 960L

Themes: Endangered Species (Puerto Rican parrot), Wildlife Rescue and Recovery, Environment, Puerto Rican History, Life Cycle and Animal Adaptations, Overcoming Obstacles, Perseverance, Responsibility, Latino/Latin American Interest

### RESOURCES ON THE WEB

Learn more about *Parrots Over Puerto Rico* at:

[http://www.leeandlow.com/books/509/hc/parrots\\_over\\_puerto\\_rico](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/509/hc/parrots_over_puerto_rico)

**Order Information****On the Web:**

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