

Who Will Save My Planet?

By Maria Christina Urrutia. 2012. Tundra Books, 75 Sherbourne Street, Toronto, Ontario M5A 2P9 Canada. 32 pages. 10.95 USD. Hardcover.

First published in Spanish in 2007 by Ediciones Tecolote, this is a short picture book of 28 pages, aimed at illustrating human impacts on the environment. Juxtaposing colour photos depict human impacts on one page and pristine conditions on the opposing page. This theme is not consistent throughout the book, however, as the last four pages of the book show negative human impacts.

The book's small format and lack of text is suggestive of a children's book, but don't be fooled by the packaging; this is a book requiring mature comprehension of the role humans have played on the earth. Some of the photos are quite disturbing, such as a heap of dead sea turtles on a beach, and a sea lion sitting on a rock with deep flesh wounds to the neck from

what appears to be ghost fishing gear. Another photo showed the surreal stare of a snarling jaguar – a stuffed mount on a pile of jaguar skins. The high shock value of these photos could easily cause readers to turn off rather than engage in the book's message.

In contrast to the previously described shocking images, one of the photos of human impacts was not convincing enough for me. It depicted a mature tree that had been cut down. Upon closer inspection, one could see that the setting was a city park, that the tree showed plenty of rot, and the upturned roots tipped up suggested that perhaps the tree had fallen over for reasons other than human foible.

The last four images in the book left me feeling quite deflated. I had anticipated a message of hope for the

future – perhaps a depiction of humans redeeming themselves through land stewardship or preservation. Rather, the depiction of polluted, human-dominated landscapes was suggestive of no hope for the future. The photo of a person planting a tree that occurred early in the book would have been a better choice for the parting shot. With a wiser selection of photos and a

final message of hope, the intended conservation message would have been better delivered to readers. As is, this is not a book I would recommend – certainly not for children.

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