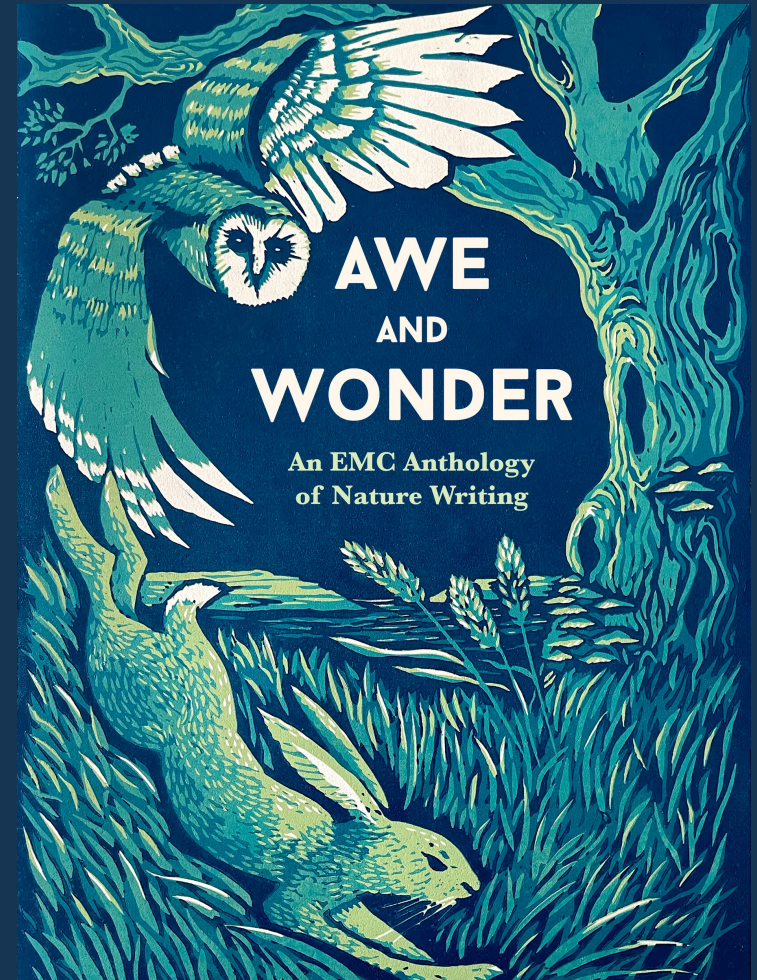


# Working with Awe and Wonder: an EMC anthology of nature writing

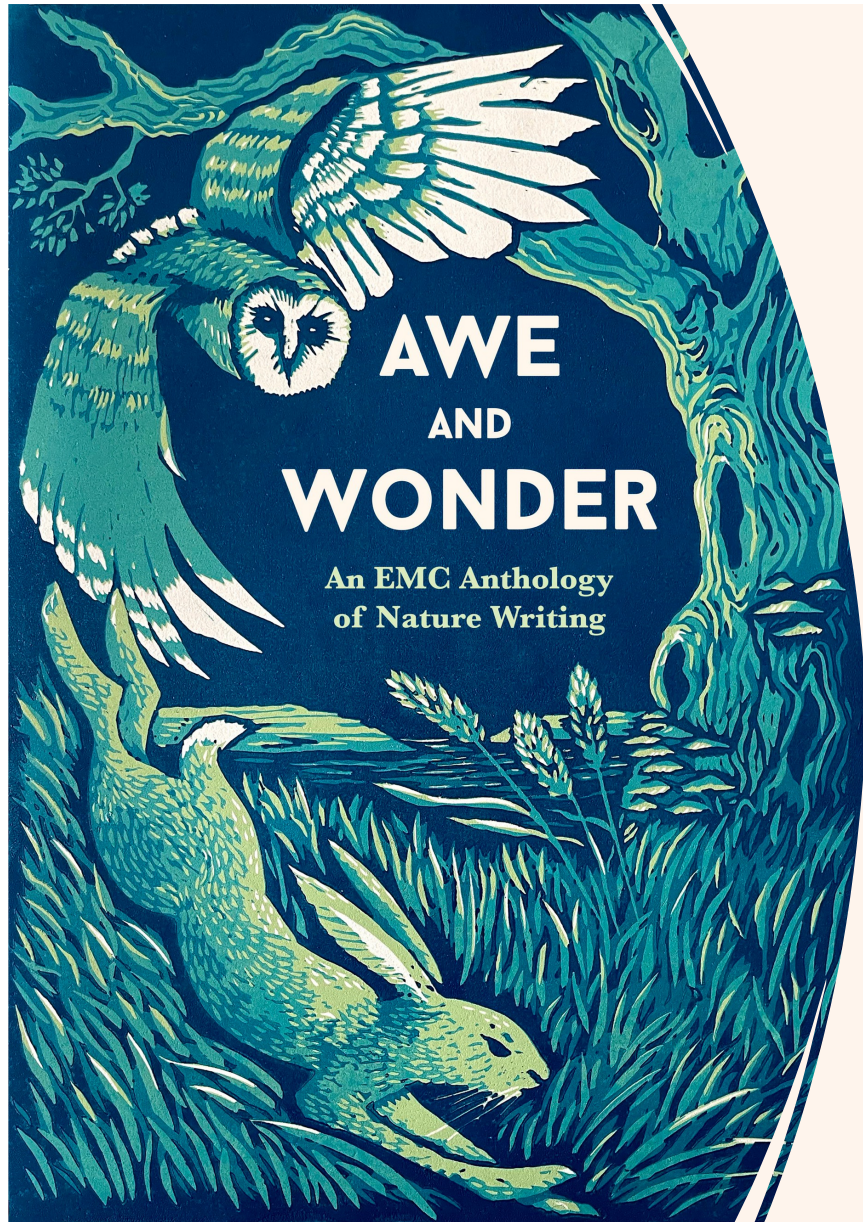
---

# Awe

The Eagle,  
by Kathleen Jamie  
Ynys Enlli,  
by Robert Macfarlane  
Owl Sense,  
by Miriam Darlington







## What does 'awe' mean to you?

- On your own, jot down any thoughts, feelings or images that come to mind when you hear the word 'awe' and words containing 'awe' such as:
  - Awestruck
  - Awesome
  - Awe-inspiring
- What fills you with awe? Or makes you awestruck? What do you find awesome? Spend a few minutes exploring your ideas in writing.
- Share some of your ideas in class discussion.





## Into the mouth of the cave

You are going to write a short descriptive piece about the experience of swimming from a boat into a sea cave. The current is quite strong, but not too dangerous for a strong swimmer like you – just strong enough to make things interesting!

- To help you prepare, you could watch this clip of cave swimmers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mclerCykC7k>
- As you watch, jot down words and images that capture the experience, for example the cold, the dark, the noises, the feel of the cave walls and so on.
- Now write your piece, focusing on the following:
  - Creating a sense of tension
  - Close attention to detail
  - Vocabulary that brings the writing to life
  - Surprising the reader with an unusual detail or a twist of some kind.



## DISCUSSION WORK

- In small groups, remind yourselves of the three pieces you have read: 'The Eagle'; 'Ynys Enlli'; and 'Owl Sense'.
- Discuss the following questions:
  - Which piece of writing did you like best and why?
  - Which aspect of the natural world would most like to see for yourself and why?
  - Which piece of writing did you think created the greatest sense of awe?
- Share your discussions around the class.

## INDIVIDUAL WORK

- Imagine the three pieces are the finalists for a competition: 'Most awesome nature writing of the year'.
- Write the the head of judges' speech for the award ceremony. The speech should explain which piece of writing is the winner and why, as well as praising the two runners-up.

### Awesome writing of your own

- Choose something that fills you with awe and write about it in any way you want.



---

## Finding Solace in Nature 1

Solace is a word for the comfort that people find in the face of hardship, suffering or uncertainty. Lots of people find solace in nature.

- In small groups, discuss:
  - How and why the aspects of the natural world in these images might provide solace.
  - Your own experience - have you ever found solace in nature, either in-person or watching on screen?
- Feed back some of your ideas to the rest of the class.





# A Brief History of Insects, by Dave Goulson

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER



## Silent Earth

AVERTING THE INSECT APOCALYPSE

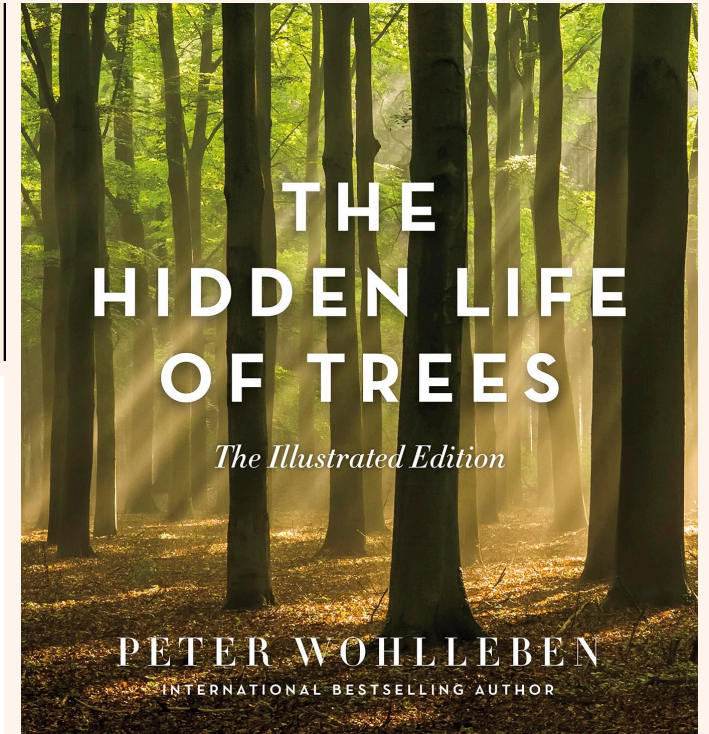
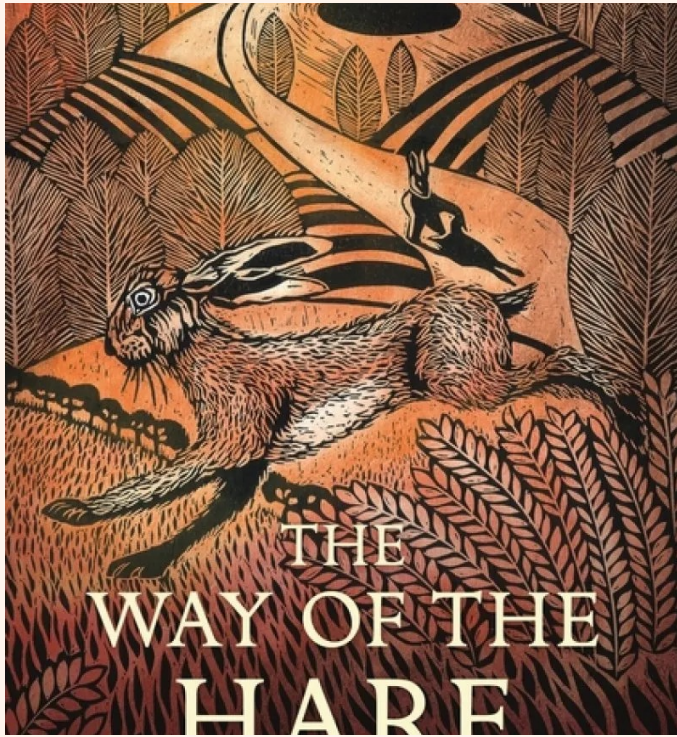
DAVE GOULSON

# A style both readable and scientific

- Read the first paragraph of 'A Brief History of Insects' on pages 64-65.
- As you are reading, keep an eye out for examples of the following:
  1. Writing that you think is particularly scientific
  2. Writing that you think is particularly creative or interesting.
- Identify at least one good example of each and share these around the class.
- As a whole class discuss what you think about Goulson's writing style so far. You might like to use some of the statements below to steer your conversation:
  - The balance of scientific and creative makes this thrilling to read.
  - I like the way the writing is focused on making the subject matter interesting for readers.
  - I enjoyed the way he uses numbers to make you think about the enormity of his topic.
  - The writing is a little too complicated for my liking.







Looking closely – bringing it all together

---

# How does writing help you to look closely at nature?

You have read five different pieces of writing that look closely at an aspect of nature:

- A Brief History of Insects, by Dave Goulson
- Flinders Field, by John Lewis-Stempel
- Urban Trees, by Fred Pearce
- The Hidden Life of Trees, by Peter Wohlleben
- The Lives of Hares, by Marianne Taylor

You are now going to look closely at two of these pieces and judge which of the two most effectively looks closely at nature. Working in a small group, you should:

- Select the two texts you think most effectively look closely at nature.
- Discuss how well you think each of your two selected texts meet the criteria on the right. If you like, you can mark the texts out of 10 for each criteria. You should also find examples in each text to back up your thinking.
- Agree on which of your two chosen texts most effectively looks closely at nature. Prepare a presentation on this text, explaining why you think it is so effective. Draw on your 'judging criteria' notes.
- Listen to the presentations around the class.

## Judging criteria

1. A good mixture of facts and anecdotes
2. Expert but accessible tone of voice
3. Language brings the subject to life
4. Clear explanations
5. Makes the subject memorable
6. Material presented in clear, logical sequence



# Reading about star-gazing

- You are now going to read 'Star-Gazing', by Jini Reddy.
- As you are reading, think about the following:
  - How does the writer describe Lindisfarne and how does she write about what she sees in the sky?
  - How does the writer try to create a sense of awe and wonder in the reader?
- Spend a few minutes writing down your thoughts in response to the two bullet points above.
- Share examples of your writing as a whole class.





# Oak, by Isabella Tree

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....





# Making predictions about 'Oak'

- On the next slide you will find the opening sentences to every paragraph found in 'Oak'.
- In a pair, read the sentences and make some predictions about:
  - What aspects of oak trees will be explored
  - How the text will be structured (how will it change from beginning to end?).
- Share your ideas around the class.
- Now read the full text of 'Oak' (pages 116-122 of [\*EMC Awe and Wonder\*](#)). When you have finished, discuss as a class how the text met with your expectations.



Working with  
'The Secret Life  
of Cows', by  
Rosamund Young





# Exploring your thoughts

- Read 'The Secret Life of Cows' as a whole class, then discuss each of the statements on the right in small groups. You should talk about how each statement applies to the text.
- When you have discussed each statement, choose one that you can all explore further.
- On your own, write a few sentences about the statement in relation to the text.
- When you have each finished, share what you have written around the group. Discuss the similarities and differences in what you have written.
- Discuss as a whole class what was similar and different about the responses in your group.



1. 'The Secret Life of Cows' is silly and unrealistic – cows don't really have emotions and feelings.
2. If you eat meat, 'The Secret Life of Cows' makes for an uncomfortable read.
3. 'The Secret Life of Cows' offers a sensitive insight into the very real emotional lives of cows.
4. 'The Secret Life of Cows' doesn't pretend to understand the emotional lives of cows, but does make it clear that, as humans, we have a duty of care towards animals.

# Learning from 'The Council of Pecans'

'The Council of Pecans' contains a lot of information about a lot of things, which is one of the reasons that it is a difficult text to place into a simple category.

- In small groups, discuss the following questions:
  - What did you learn about the writer's family history?
  - What did you learn about American history?
  - What did you learn about Native American history and culture?
  - What did you learn about pecan trees and other 'masking fruit' trees?
  - What did you learn about mycorrhizae and fungal strands?
- Share your ideas around the class, then in your groups write a few sentences in response to this question:

**In what ways does the writer use the idea of mycorrhizae and fungal strands to reflect on community in her Native American heritage (in her specific case, the Potawatomi Nation)?**
- Listen to a selection of responses around the class.



### **Creative writing**

- Script a conversation between Robin Wall Kimmerer and her grandfather, in which she talks to him about the day that he went out fishing and came home with his trousers full of pecan nuts.

### **Creative-critical writing**

- Write a blog in which you are in conversation with Robin Wall Kimmerer. You ask her questions about 'The Council of Pecans' and she responds in writing.

### **Critical writing**

- Look at the Bloom Principles cards at the back of *Awe and Wonder* and select three or four to apply to 'The Council of Pecans'. Discuss each of these cards in small groups, then select one to focus on. On your own, write a response to 'The Council of Pecans' in relation to the card, then share what you have written in small groups.



‘Crowd  
Intelligence’,  
by Peter  
Wohlleben



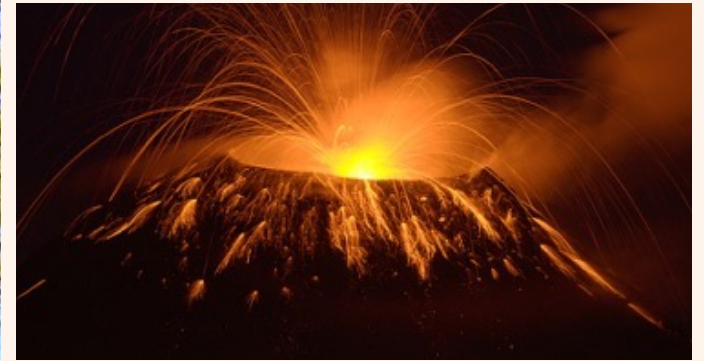


# Reading 'Crowd Intelligence'

- As a class, read 'Crowd Intelligence', by Peter Wohlleben (pages 132-135).
- As you are reading, look out for anything interesting about the way the text has been written. This might be something about the text as a whole, patterns in the text, or a particular phrase or sentence.
- Go round the class hearing one interesting thing from each student about how the text was written.







Images for wonder-rating

---





Eagle Crag, by Jim Crumley



IMRAN SHAH (2018)

## Reading 'Eagle Crag'

- As a class decide on five words that describe how the golden eagle was represented on the YouTube clip that you watched, for example 'fearsome'. Your teacher will write these on the board.
- As a whole class, read 'Eagle Crag' on pages 156-158, thinking about how the representation of the golden eagle is similar or different compared to the film clip.
- Working in small groups, decide which of the five words on the board apply to the representation of the golden eagle in the written text. If you think these words do apply, then you need to be able to justify how. If you think they don't apply, then you need to think of a replacement word or words.
- Groups should present to the class the words they have kept and any replacement words, with justifications.