

Reviewed by **Kate Webster**

Swirl by Swirl – Spirals in Nature

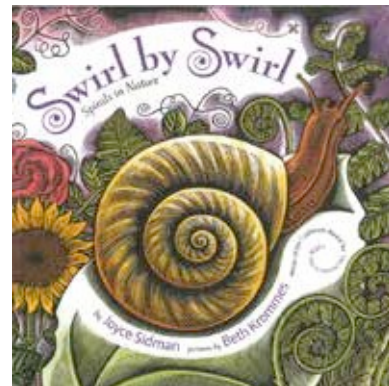
Written By Joyce Sidman/Illustrated By Beth Krommes
New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2011

“A spiral is a snuggling shape.” That opening sentence set the tone for this delicious “read,” and caused me to want to curl up into a cozy spiral while further exploring the book. I’ve always loved nature, but for children who have not yet developed that affinity, author Joyce Sidman and illustrator Beth Krommes breathe life into nature’s colors and patterns by presenting them in a whole new light. *Swirl by Swirl – Spirals in Nature* takes readers on an exploration of the spiral patterns abundant everywhere in the out-of-doors.

Sidman uses short sentences replete with imagery and colorful narrative. She gives a brief description of the spiral shape, then expands upon it and relates it to its occurrence in nature. The author motivates the reader to discover a myriad of spirals by posing a partial thought or introductory statement. On the following page, the reader will find the conclusion or explanation revealed in the text and richly vibrant drawings.

Beth Krommes’ colorful illustrations animate the dynamic and inviting imagery of *Swirl by Swirl*. Examples of the spiral in nature swirl across the cover. Here the spiral snail shell is the focal point of Krommes’ art, surrounded by detailed drawings of sunflowers, ferns, and even the spiraling flight path of an insect, tempting the reader to open the book and journey within.

The story begins underground, with detailed descriptions of spirals in small places. Various animals are shown curled tightly in their cozy spaces beneath the earth, “waiting for a chance to expand.” Sidman and Krommes tempt the reader to explore further by continuing the journey above ground, where they showcase plants and animals and identify them with labels. Throughout the book, they examine and portray several diverse environments. As the exploration continues, the reader discovers that spirals exist not only on land, but also in the sea, jungle, garden, weather, and space, and even in the weather.



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Swirl by Swirl holds numerous possibilities for developing music concepts and movement exploration. The story brims with words such as “small,” “graceful,” and “strong,” which lend themselves to non-locomotor movement in the music classroom.

Spirals are depicted in “spinning” and “twists through the air,” allowing students the opportunity to create locomotor movement. The diverse iterations of the spiral featured throughout the story can easily act as a springboard to a lesson based on theme and variations. The book also facilitates science cross-curricular connections such as plant and animal identification. In addition, there is a section at the end of the book where the author provides information about the purpose behind the spirals present in the plants and animals that share our environment and surround us in nature.

Joyce Sidman brings the story full circle by taking the reader back to the beginning of the

journey by repeating the opening sentence and setting a pattern in the words themselves: “A spiral is a snuggling shape.” I invite you to share *Swirl by Swirl – Spirals in Nature* with your students and delight in the ideas that “swirl” out of their imaginations. ■

KATE WEBSTER is a K-6 music specialist in Stillwater, MN. Kate presents at both state and national conferences and is involved on the board of her local AOSA chapter. She teaches movement levels courses at the University of Missouri—St. Louis and North Dakota State University.