

# Ideas for Homeschoolers

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March 2008

It's SPRING!

Living in Victoria, BC, as I do, spring is in full fledge. My crocuses are at their peak, some have already finished blooming. The daffodils are beginning to open and the tulips are growing bigger and bigger leaves. The Garry oak trees' buds around my house are getting bigger and bigger. And on many streets in Victoria, the flowering cherry plum trees are in bloom.

Every year I tell myself to pay close attention to see just when the buds of trees burst into tiny green leaves. And every year, I do notice the first few and then all of sudden it seems that all the trees are green. I particularly notice how quickly horse chestnut leaves grow to become their full size.



“Spring, Spring, Spring!” sang the frog.  
“Spring!” said the groundhog.

When my children were little, one of the books I read throughout the months of March and April was a little golden book by Margaret Wise Brown called [Home For A Bunny](#). Illustrated by Garth Williams, it delighted us all. Although I found the rhythm and rhyme in the story a bit wobbly at times, I still enjoyed reading it frequently in springtime. I particularly loved the illustrations and enjoyed looking at the detailed drawings of forget-me-nots and other flowers. The baby robins always made me smile. It's still available as a Big Little Golden Book. You may also be able to find it second hand in the smaller format.

Other picture books that come to mind when I think about spring are the Bramble Hedge stories by Jill Barklem. They are filled with very detailed illustrations of little mice who live in various trees, hedgerows, and stumps. My daughter in particular loved these stories. There's a Bramble Hedge website at [www.bramblyhedge.co.uk](http://www.bramblyhedge.co.uk).

If you have children who enjoy longer picture book stories with many characters and looking at detailed drawings, try a Bramble Hedge book: [Summer Story](#), [Poppy's Babies](#), and [Sea Story](#). *Spring Story* has been combined with *The High Hills* into [Outings for the Mice of Bramble Hedge](#)



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Whenever I think of Brambley Hedge, I think of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons Concerto*. We have audiocassettes that go with the Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter Brambley Hedge stories. Each story's narration starts with the music from the appropriate part of *The Four Seasons Concerto*.

If you enjoy musical humour, you might enjoy Raffi's *Berry Nice News* cut on his recording [Raffi Radio](#). The cut offers a weather type report about the seasons and, I'll bet you guessed, Vivaldi's *Spring* from *The Four Seasons* provides the theme music. If you're not familiar with this music, watch and listen to Nigel Kennedy on YouTube [www.youtube.com/watch?v=St9wYu\\_WeAM&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=St9wYu_WeAM&feature=related)



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### Spring Poems

I really like Aileen Fisher's poetry. Here are some of her poems that I thought you might enjoy.

**Spring's the Word** by Aileen Fisher  
Spring up, seedlings, weedlings, clover!  
Spring out, leaves, now winter's over.  
    Spring up, green things!  
    There's a reason  
*Spring's* the name to fit the season.



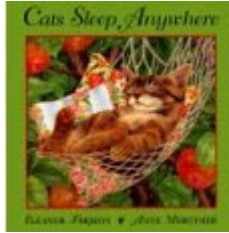
**Pussy Willows** by Aileen Fisher  
Close your eyes and do not peek  
And I'll rub Spring across your cheek-  
    Smooth as satin, Soft and sleek-  
Close your eyes and do not peek.

**Baby Chick** by Aileen Fisher  
Peck, peck, peck  
On the warm, brown egg.  
Out comes a neck  
Out comes a leg.  
  
How does a chick,  
Who's not been about,  
Discover the trick  
Of how to get out?

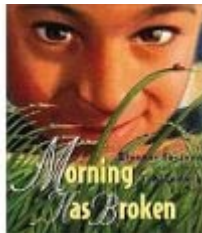


From [Hedgie's Surprise](#) by Jan Brett

Aileen Fisher died at the age of 96. She was a prolific poet and published many collections of her poetry. [I Heard a Bluebird Sing](#) (Boyd's Mills Press, 2003) is still available. It's divided into five sections, and contains 41 of her poems selected by children. Each section is prefaced with comments by the poet. [Sing of the Earth and Sky: Poems About Our Planet and the Wonders Beyond](#) (Boyd's Mills Press, 2001) is also available. Thirty-seven poems are divided into four sections – "Earth," "Moon," "Sun" and "Stars."



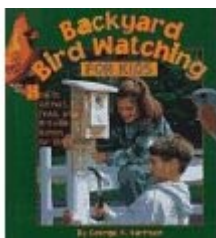
And since I'm talking about poetry, another favourite poem of mine is [Cats Sleep Anywhere](#) by Eleanor Farjeon, available as an illustrated picture book. She lived from 1881 to 1965 and wrote poetry and many stories. We enjoyed [The Little Book Room](#), a collection of many short stories about a lot of different things.



You may know her for her poem *Morning Has Broken* recorded by Cat Stevens. The poem was written as a hymn for children based on Psalm 118:24 and sung to an old Gaelic tune. This poem/song is also available in [picture book](#) form.

A short story of hers, [Elsie Piddock Skips in Her Sleep](#), has been published as picture book. A delightful story to read aloud for 4-8 year olds about a little girl, a born skipper, who is given a magic skipping rope by the fairies. When her town becomes threatened by development, she comes back as an elderly woman of 109. Using her magic skipping rope, she skips to save the village.

Springtime is a great time to skip, fly kites, and go outside and explore – your own backyard, a neighboring park, the vacant lot in your neighborhood ... Give children magnifying lenses, little magnifying boxes and help them gently collect bugs and worms to look at. Bring some things to sit on outside and draw what you see.



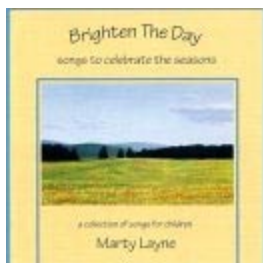
Watching birds, identifying them, keeping a record of birds seen is something that people of all ages do. [Backyard Bird Watching for Kids: How to Attract, Feed, and Provide Homes for Birds](#) is a book that you may find helpful. Even if you don't have a backyard and live in an apartment or condo, you can still enjoy birds by hanging up bird feeders from windows or balconies.

Here's a site that has simple instructions for getting started bird watching with a child [http://www.birdwatching.com/tips/kids\\_birding.html](http://www.birdwatching.com/tips/kids_birding.html). There are many bird identifying guides around. You can find many online. When you're outside bird watching, I think it's important to have actual guides with you so you can look up the bird you've seen, right then and there. I found the [Peterson Field Guide Series](#) and the old Golden Guides helpful.

I read [Who Really Killed Cock Robin?](#) by Jean Craighead George to my children years and years ago when they were between the ages of 8-12. It's been reissued in paperback form as part of the ECO mystery series. It's a fascinating story about a boy who searches to find the answer about why a robin died. We all enjoyed it. It made me much more aware of robins, their songs, and their mating habits. I've never heard a robin's song in the same way after reading this book to my children.

If you have budding naturalists in your household, you may find it fun to put together a naturalist's backpack or carry bag. Fill the backpack or carry bag with a few pencils and erasers, a small sketch book, a field guide with lots of pictures, a magnifying glass on a loop that can go around the neck, a whistle that can fit in a pocket, and containers for collecting like empty film canisters, bug boxes, yogurt containers with holes punched in the top, and a small net. Explain basic safety rules and start exploring with your child. Anthony Fredericks has a whole series of Sharing Nature with Children picture books, [Under One Rock](#) describes what a boy finds under a rock he turns over.

Just like the birds, children often burst into song in the spring. Singing has been found to have many benefits. Michel Odent, obstetrician from France, found that pregnant mothers benefited more from singing than from prenatal breathing training.



My CD, [Brighten the Day – songs to celebrate the seasons](#), has 21 songs related to each season. The 12 page booklet has all the words to the songs. Families of all ages from babies to teens tell me how much they enjoy the music.

“I've had your CD on all morning; I just set the player on repeat and haven't tired of hearing those delightful songs - and my kids FINALLY asked, after about the third cycle through: ‘Who's that singing, Mom? Those are really nice songs!’ This from two teenagers who generally prefer rap, reggae, blues or jazz!” Helen Hegener, [Home Education Magazine](#)

### Benefits of Singing

Singing is a gymnasium for the body and soul. Singing works deeply into our physiology: deepening breath and heart rate, altering brain wave patterns and strengthening the immune system. It also releases endorphins, the body's pleasure hormones, into the brain and body. Singing also exercises all the muscles in the head and neck. Singing can also help to build a person's confidence and self-esteem, and can increase their capacity for self expression.

Recent research also indicates that a wide range of music experiences have a powerful effect on influencing language development, as well as increasing concentration, memory, visual and listening skills, spatial orientation and physical coordination. From *Singing Children, Healthier Children!* by Mary Thienes-Schunemann [www.waldorfhomeschoolers.com/singing.htm](http://www.waldorfhomeschoolers.com/singing.htm)

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