Eco-consciousness and Eco-activism in Children's Literature: An Eco-Pedagogical Reading of Ben Okri's *Every Leaf A Hallelujah*

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Abstract

Over the years, man has engaged in different socio-economic activities that destroys the environment and threatens his own existence. This has brought about a widespread concern across different disciplines of what the future ecology will be like. The representation of the environment, as well as the promotion of environmental sustainability has gained prominence in literary discourse, leading to the emergence children ecological literature which is hinged on the 'catch them young mantra.' This study attempts to underscore the role of literature in raising ecological consciousness in children and encouraging them to be actors in safeguarding the environment. Through a critical reading of Ben Okri's *Every Leaf a Hallelujah,* the paper examines the author's effort in advancing this goal. It investigates the novel's exposition of major environmental harms such as deforestation, pollution, and transgression against plants. Using ecopedagogy as its theoretical framework, the study interrogates the use of tales, fantasy, illustration, and pictures as instructional tools for raising ecological awareness in the text. It further examines the engagement of activism through proactive and reactive behaviours as ways to eradicate environmental despoliation. The study concludes that through children's environmental literature, child readers are spurred to actions of environmental preservation through empathy and imitation of heroic child characters.

Keywords: ecological consciousness, eco-pedagogy, fantasy, illustration, design, eco-activism.

Introduction

Environmental degradation has become one of the defining crises of the twenty-first century. Across the globe, issues such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, desertification, and the extinction of species continue to threaten both human existence and the natural ecosystem. In many African societies, the effects of environmental destruction are visible in the contamination of rivers, loss of forests, erosion of biodiversity, and increasing ecological instability. These realities have generated urgent conversations among scholars, activists, governments, and artists concerning the need to cultivate ecological awareness and sustainable relationships with nature. Literature has emerged as one of the most influential cultural tools for promoting this awareness because, it possesses the ability to shape values, emotions, and social consciousness. Through stories, symbols, and imaginative representations, literary texts can educate readers about the consequences of environmental exploitation and despoilation while inspiring ethical responsibility toward the natural world.

Within literary studies, the rise of ecocriticism has further expanded scholarly attention to the relationship between literature and the environment. Ecocriticism examines how literary texts represent nature, ecological crises, and the interconnectedness between humans and the nonhuman world (Nahdhiyah, Abas and Pattu 2). It challenges anthropocentric attitudes that place human interests above environmental wellbeing and instead advocates for ecological balance and environmental justice. Children's literature occupies a unique position in this discourse. As a formative genre, it shapes the values, perception and behaviours of young readers. Yet, scholarship on African children's literature within ecocritical and eco pedagogical frameworks remain limited. Much of the existing works on African ecocriticism centers on adult novels and poetry by writers such as Helon Habila, Tanure Ojaide, Kaine Agary, and so on. This oversight is problematic because childhood is a formative age for developing ecological awareness and pro-environmental behaviour. Children's literature often introduces readers to moral lessons, social values, and imaginative possibilities that contribute to the development of responsible citizenship (Abdulgawad 12). Consequently, literary narratives directed at children, have become important sites for cultivating eco-consciousness and inspiring eco-activism.

Eco-consciousness and eco-activism are two key variables in this study title which point to internal and external shifts. Eco-consciousness refers to a deep awareness of the environment and an understanding of humanity's ethical responsibility toward nature. It involves recognizing the interconnectedness of all living things and adopting attitudes that support ecological preservation. Ecoactivism, on the other hand, extends beyond awareness to intentional active engagement in protecting the environment through advocacy, resistance, education, or conservation practices. It is eco-consciousness being externalized. In contemporary society, children are increasingly recognized as important participants in environmental discourse and activism. Around the world, young people have become vocal advocates for climate action and ecological justice. As a result, literary works that encourage environmental awareness among children have gained significant scholarly and cultural importance.

One literary text that strongly engages these concerns is Ben Okri's *Every Leaf a Hallelujah*. The novella presents a compelling narrative that combines folklore, spirituality, fantasy, and ecological consciousness to communicate the sacredness of nature and the dangers of environmental destruction. Through the experiences of the child protagonist, Mangoshi, Okri explores the intimate relationship between humans and the natural world while exposing the devastating consequences of greed-driven exploitation of forests and wildlife. The text foregrounds the forest not merely as a physical setting, but as a living spiritual entity deserving respect, protection, and preservation. By centering a child protagonist within this ecological struggle, Okri demonstrates how children can become agents of environmental awareness and defenders of nature.

This study therefore, examines how Ben Okri's *Every Leaf A Hallelujah* cultivates eco-consciousness and eco activism in child readers through the lens of eco pedagogy. It argues that the author's narrative style enacts an ecological pedagogy that encourages children to see themselves as part of, rather than apart from nature; as active ecological agents with the capacity to perceive, relate to and act upon the natural environment through engaging in small but meaningful acts of environmental care rather than as passive, non-challant beings.

Eco-pedagogy: Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Eco-pedagogy as its theoretical anchor. Eco-pedagogy, which

emerges as a branch of ecocriticism and critical pedagogy is concerned with the relationship between people, education, environmental awareness, and social transformation (Monem). It emphasizes the need to cultivate ecological literacy and ethical responsibility toward nature, through cultural and educational practices and strategies. As an interdisciplinary theory, eco-pedagogy combines insights from ecology, environmental studies, pedagogy, and literary criticism in order to challenge exploitative attitudes toward the natural environment and encourage sustainable ways of living.

The term ecopedagogy was popularized in the 1990s as a result of critical discussions stemming from the Second Earth Summit held in Brazil. The concept is largely influenced by the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire, particularly his idea of critical pedagogy. Freire argues that education should not merely involve the passive transfer of knowledge, but should awaken critical consciousness in learners so that they can question oppressive systems and work toward social change (Korsant 373). Norat, Herrería and Modríguez note that Eco-pedagogy imbues citizens of the earth with a sense to develop a culture of sustainability, thus allowing them to develop/place value on a fraternal relationship between humans and other non human species that make up planetary life. The authors further posit that eco-pedagogy is not formal education, but a learning process that happens throughout a life course (180). Eco-pedagogy extends the principle outlined by Korsant and Norat et al to environmental issues by advocating an educational process that encourages individuals to become critically aware of ecological crises and actively participate in environmental protection. Thus, Eco-pedagogy opposes anthropocentric ideologies that prioritize human domination over nature and instead, promotes ecological balance, environmental justice, and coexistence between humans and the nonhuman world.

Given the current culture of hegemonic planetary destruction rooted in industrial globalization, postmodernism and consumerism, and the urgent need for revolutionary ecological transformation, education has become one of the best means to ensure environmental justice. Beyond the creation of knowledge and power structure, Kishor Dash avers that education should provide environmental knowledge capable of facilitating a sustainable and inclusive society in the future, as well as developing environmental agency among growing citizens of tomorrow, such that they feel

moral obligation towards our planet and understand the nature of socio-environmental oppressions in their immediate society (179). Thus, eco-pedagogy is characterized by critical, dialectical, systemic, transformative and action-oriented theoretical traits (Zhu, Tianyi and Keyuan 732). Under the framework of eco-pedagogy, students develop an understanding of how human impact on the environment transcends boundaries. It promotes global, shared responsibility for protecting the earth (Dunkley, 2023).

Furthermore, eco-pedagogy encourages students to think about how they currently see the world, and how they envision it in the future. Within this purview, students develop a critical understanding of the causes and effects of local and world problems. Lal Utkarsh identified Case-Based approach, Nature De-distancing, Community action and Citizenship practice and Indigenous Knowledge as key characteristics central to eco-pedagogical theory (6). Misiaszek (2015, 2020) proposed that eco-pedagogy is one way to connect environmental issues with social education. By fostering social-environmental awareness, eco-pedagogy empowers students to become stewards of the earth and active agents of change who contribute to a more sustainable future. It also informs students that by virtue of being inhabitants of the earth, they are planetary citizens. This position involves recognizing that their citizenship moves beyond their nationality or local context; that all humans inhabit the same planet that needs to be valued, and cared for. In other words, it nurtures a sense of stewardship for the planet and the future generations. It builds an ethical consciousness by posing knowledge not as an apparatus to the state or the business, but to the earth.

Eco-pedagogy and Children's Environmental Literature: A Review

Sen defines children's literature as "a type of literature created by adults for children based on their interests, needs, developmental characteristics and expectation". They are meant to be a digestible medium for bigger messages; some educational and others, philosophical (2029). With the exponential rise in environmental crisis and concerted effort to save the future, it has become pertinent to raise awareness in children who are part of the future we seek to preserve, of the current ecological issues and environmental status, and to build a positive attitude in them toward nature using books. Makwanya and Dick point that children's

literature endorses environmental consciousness, appreciation, knowledge and stewardship of the children (10). Unlike teaching in a structured formal situation, stories have a way of breaking complex subjects into something simple, relatable and emotionally meaningful for young readers. When children read from well-written stories about harms being done to plants and animals, they develop empathy for such living things as well as an awareness of its impact on humans (Abdullahi and qizi 66). Thus, children environmental literature can inspire children to become changemakers, empowering them to believe that even as little as they are, their action can make a great difference.

Greta Gaard arguing on the impact of children environmental literature avers that they are used to educate, sensitize and propel children to action. He adds that reading is a form of learning, learning the very core of education and education, consequently impacts a sense of responsibility and critical action thus: children's literature prepares children all over the world to resist…culturally, economically, and environmentally destructive developments." (334). Hence, if children read literary texts on natural devastations happening all around the world, and the urgent need to bring about a change, they are positioned to better understand the state of the environment where they exist in and are exposed to the responses of other fictional children of their age. Similarly, Abdulmalikova and qizi opine that children environmental literature can be a bridge between knowledge and action. Stories built around nature; its purpose and value help young readers to respect their natural environment as well as understand their role in protecting it (68). Kamala Platt argues that the nexus between children environmental literature and eco-pedagogy lie in its rhetoric, its capacity to mobilize child readers to take appropriate responsibility and action towards their environment (186).

Harju and Rouse argue that literature encourages child readers to reconnect with an increasingly imperiled natural environment. They are armed with information they lack and better positioned for aenvironmental actions. Gitau noted that children like adults can be objects of environmental destruction especially as their bodies and brains are highly sensitive and vulnerable to environmental harms (305). Hence, Elnady asserts that children's literature is the most fertile soil of ecological awareness in young hearts and minds because it can redirect the

attention of child readers toward a reciprocal relationship between human and nature.

Numerous African and Western literary children texts have explored major ecological themes such as ecological damages, the consequences of environmental malpractices, ecophilos, environmental sustainability and so on. This is corroborated by Abdel-Tawab Yousef and Hyy Ibn Yakdhan in the opening statement of his book "My Father, an Egyptian Teacher" thus: " Morals, like fruits, are the gift of nature. It is immoral to pick an immature fruit as this will be an abomination against nature and it is man's chief responsibility to redress this corruption" (8-9). Consequently, significant number of literary critics have engaged in critical reviews and discourses to examine the representations, constructions and imaginings of the relationship between the human and non human worlds in literary works.

Guanio-Uluru (2021) examined the representation of plant in children's literature using the Phyto-Analysis Map. The study noted that plants are used as characters in the writing of children's literary texts through features such as analogous visual metaphors and landscape description which are significant to the story world. Ismail, H.M. using Dr. Seuss' novel, *The Lorax* examined the role of children literature in building a robust background for children and young adults, and to inform their attitudes towards the environment for the benefit of mankind and a more sustainable society. The study investigates the author's effort to challenge anthropocentrisms, consumerisms and advocate for biocentrism. It highlights how the author employed vivid illustrations, and play rhymes to captivate and educate young readers, thus inspiring them to be environmental advocates.

Elnady investigated the extent to which the children fictions of Abdel-Tawab Yousesef, an Egyptian writer has espoused important ecological concerns and influenced the attitude of child readers towards the environment. Elnady posits that Youssef, through the use of poetic language proposed the return to nature while educating and empowering children to be eco-conscious entities (38). The study concluded that the author harnessed common traits of children such as innocence, compassion, generosity, kindheartedness and love for adventure to achieve his aim (44). Similarly, Laliena and Sala) undertook an eco-critical analysis of twenty five (25) picture books as children literature according to their aesthetic dimension. The researchers subjected the

texts to key elements analysis such as paratextuality, illustration and design, character development and focalization and the findings revealed that these elements are fundamental to the costruction of ecocritical meanings by child readers.

Environmental Crisis as a Thematic Concern in Ben Okri's *Every Leaf a Hallelujah*

The present age of technological advancement and its accompanying contemporary lifestyle constrain children's instinct and prevent them from exploring nature. Children are denied the joy of communing with nature through playing with sand, roaming through green fields, sowing seeds and learning how to tend a garden, visiting local streams, swimming in them or catching tiny fishes, tending domestic animals and breathing fresh air. This has been replaced with artificial joys such as toys, video games and cartoons creating a distance between nature and children and restricting them from forming a holistic picture of nature. Books on the environment aim to solve these problems. They expose children to different components of the natural world, allowing them to experience nature in ways they may never experience physically.

Bhalla posits that there is a two-fold relationship between children and nature. First, children are believed to be innocent just like nature. Second, children are presumed to be devoid of content. A child has no connection, experience or understanding of nature. The onus lies on the adults to make them aware of their environment. It is against this background that Okri wrote this novella, with the aim to capture the attention of children towards nature and educate them of their duty toward the environment.

Mangoshi in the beginning of the novella is presented as an innocent child oblivious of the significance of her natural environment. Her entry into the forest was simply in obedience to her parents' instruction to pluck a special flower for the treatment of her mother's ailment. However, she was puzzled by the strange sounds and sights she encountered, diverting her attention to the natural environment. Mangoshi, in her second journey to forest, becomes saddled with the responsibility of protecting her environment, promoting environmental awareness and advocacy. Her tour around the forest and the discussion that ensued between her and the different trees, bore the message of the text. Each of the trees that spoke to her are not mere representation of the fantastic, but are instructors who the author employed

to achieve his pedagogical aim. They inform Mangoshi about the current state of the forest, recalled the past state of the environment, as well as forewarned her of the impending danger that the environment would suffer if urgent action is not taken.

Tales, Fantasy and Illustrations as Eco-pedagogical Tools in *Every Leaf a Hallelujah*

Through a fantastic transportation by the baobab tree into another world in the time past, the author reveals how the magnificent forest has been changed by humans. He offers a vivid description of tree cutters armed with chainsaws and other big machinery to fell more trees in the forest. This plight of the forest and nature were vehemently lamented by the trees portrayed as folk narrators and characters with human qualities and abilities. The baobab tree is akin to traditional griots acting as a storyteller, historian and advisor to help mediate between man and the environment. The fusion of the folktale, magic, supernatural forces and the unreal world where Mangoshi was transported to help to foreground the eco-pedagogical impulse of the author. This presents the text as a compact instructional material for a specific social group; children.

Mangoshi's father had earlier informed her that the flower she returns to seek would be difficult to find given that the world has changed. He points that by this environmental change all humans are in trouble. A trouble which Mangoshi's village faces. It was plagued by pestilence and the narrator points that, "The harvest grew poorer and they had less to eat. Strange animals appeared in the village. It became very hot in the daytime. Then people began falling ill and no one knew where the illness came from" (Okri 28). The view of the of the forest this time shows that the land was burnt, trees were fell and there were no bushes for long distances all around (38). Mangoshi was particularly surprised at the sight she beheld. The extensive destruction of the forest marked by the "dryness, the ash of vines the broken earth" (28). Most of the earlier existing trees had been uprooted and many had been cut down and their trunks broken. This sight deeply troubled Mangoshi. She further observes that the forest which was normally noisy with the chirping of birds, the grunts of animals and the fizzing of insects was now quiet because, most of the animals that made it bustling have been consumed by man. These despoliation of the forest left the fallen trees murmuring and crying.

The conversation between Mangoshi and the baobab tree; the oldest tree in the forest, further reveals the level of destruction inflicted upon the natural environment. The author, through the voice of the baobab points out other environmental issues such as depletion of the Amazon Rainforest which provides two-third of the oxygen man needs to survive on earth. Sadly, the Amazon has now become “the most prominent tree graveyard in the world” in contrast, "many years ago this place had forest so vast that they filled a continent. They helped the earth to survive but they have been burning and cutting down the trees at such a terrible rate that there is almost no life forest left” (60). As the conversation continues the baobab clearly outlines the percussion of the environmental degradation on man, explicitly emphasizing ecological justice.

> What will happen to the world?” “The trees give the world the air that we breathe. The more people destroy them the less air there will be for the world. Do you know what will
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> happen if there are no trees in the world?” “What will happen?” “There will be no human
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> beings.” “Really?” “Yes, human beings need trees. When they cut down forests they are
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> cutting down your future.” “It’s terrible! Do people not know?” “They can’t know,” said
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> the eldest tree, “or they would not be doing what they are doing.” Mangoshi looked at the
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> expanse of tree stumps. It was really the saddest thing she had ever seen. She could hear the trees weeping. “Take me away from this place,” she said. “This is too sad.” “I just wanted you to see with your own eyes what people are doing. (61)

Okri highlights that human consumerism can be attributed to humans’ negative attitude toward nature and the environment. The Iroko tree explains this to Mangoshi thus: “I am fallen because human beings came and cut me down to sell me and make money" (45).

Rahul emphasizes the importance of eco-pedagogy for children stating that when aware of the threat to the given world and its creatures, children can be its most passionate and committed advocates (165). Okri in this novel, instructs his readers on the need to

respect and value trees. He counters the general perception that trees are just for decoration and posits that trees are living beings like humans that should be treated with love and respect. Plants and nature generally are personified in the novel to respond to love and attention. They glow and are happy when valued and treated with care. Conversely, they cry when destroyed. The baobab tree informs Mangoshi that thinking good thoughts about trees, saying nice things about them, touching the trees and greeting it are marks of respect for plants which makes them happy.

While the major function of the novel is to instruct on the importance of trees, this was achieved through the infusion of folkloric elements. Didactics generally has its origin in oral traditions in which fables, myths, storytelling and parables are used to educate children as well as entertain them. This early form of traditional education permeates the novel. The author embraces the whole content of children's imaginative world to educate his readers on the values of trees and the importance of protecting them. Through the fantastic, Mangoshi is transported to different worlds on the back of the baobab tree and in the process, deeply schooled about trees and the natural environment at large. The Baobab asserts, “We are not just trees, we hold the Earth together. We are the link between heaven and earth. We give the earth the air that humans breathe, we made the environment stable. We have great healing powers. We are older than the human race” (54). This was a great and enlightening lesson for Mangoshi who confessed that she didn't know that trees were so amazing. The author further enlightens the reader on the wholesome benefits and usefulness of trees and the immense contribution they bring to other life forms on Earth. The Baobab says:

> Take me for example, every part of me is useful. My leaves and bark produce healing medicine. My fruits are nutritious. My roots cure many known and unknown diseases. My shade gives peace and repels evil. A tree is just like a human you know, we are each very different. (55)

In carrying out the eco-pedagogical aim of the novel, Okri employs plant agency. Plants characters represented by an amalgam of phytomorphic and anthropomorphic characteristics speak up against the human harm they suffer. Similar to the position of Guaino-Uluru that illustration of plants with phyto-realistic body such as added arms, legs and a face embodies them (150), the author embodies most of the plants in the novel with

human characteristics such as a body as we have in the baobab tree which is able to carry Mangoshi on its back; a voice through which it educates and through which the destroyed trees lament their despoliation and sometimes laugh in admiration of their beauty. This feature is a pedological style aimed at making the child reader learn to recognize and identify with the plants and their characteristics. Alexa Weik von Mossner termed this “strategic anthropomorphism" noting that plants which are naturally characterized by a sessile or stationary lifestyle are made to leave their roots to another location (Mossner 7).

Complimented by the use of illustrations, designs and pictures, Okri covers a vast portion of children’s world. From the cover page to the final page, the novella is littered with diverse colourful pictures that makes the book irresistible. Laliena and Sala note that illustrations in children’s literature brings about the aesthetic experience of nature, as well as invite child readers to establish links with the natural world (4). The featuring of different plants and trees painted in varying bright colours, competing for attention, sets the mood for the readers, building up fascination, excitement and anticipation. Mitchel argues that such bright colours has the book begging to be read. The illustrations in the novella performed some functions that words could not do. The words could only describe the dwarf trees, tree stomps, felled trees and the transportation of Mangoshi on the back of the Baobab, but the illustrations could show them. They could also make the readers feel them. Within the pages of the text is also an interdependence between text and image. The images transcend the aesthetic into the semantic. They convey a concrete understanding of the physical and natural environment projected by the author. The visual discourse due to its artistic nature has the potential of eliciting emotional response in the reader. The entire visual elements, from colouring to composition create a palpable atmosphere that delights the reader’s notion of nature through a sense of wonder and curiosity. The visual clues further enable non-readers and beginner readers to enjoy the book themselves. It supports their inability to read by acting as a guide, as they try to formulate their own meanings from the text.

Mangoshi as Environmental Advocate and Activist

Having educated Mangoshi about plant life and created awareness on the need to protect them, the trees charge her with a responsibility toward them as they say,

"Wherever you go, remember us. There's nothing we can do by ourselves" (65).

The process of plant sensitization and environmental awareness Mangoshi underwent results in a re-orientation and conscientization toward ecocentrism. She resolved thus, "I will never look at trees the same way again" (63). The novel portrays the older generation as ecological degraders who through industrial and technological revolution and human activities cause plants and animals to suffer loss. They refused to acknowledge the vitality of the environment as well as neglect the call to fight for the sustenance of the natural environment. The response of the Iroko tree to the Conifer's statement that Mangoshi is too small to help save the plants and the environment bears witness to this: "The ones who are big are the ones who are destroying us" (49). This contradiction is the author's effort to foreground the importance of sensitizing children and preparing them as hopeful vanguards for the restoration of the environment. The old generation mentioned by the Iroko is represented by Mangoshi's mother and the other men who attempted to fell the trees. Mangoshi's mother acknowledges her failure to help the dying forest when it beckoned on her in a sincere confession to her daughter: "When I was your age something called me and asked for my help, however I did not go. I did not help" (35).

Mangoshi on the other hand, symbolizes a new generation that has been conscientized and ready to save the environment. She takes up the mantle to rescue her people who have failed to treat their environment with care. First, by going to the forest to get the magical flower and secondly, by challenging the men who wanted to destroy the forest life. Mangoshi undergoes a major character change. She metamorphoses from the little girl who was afraid of the forest, to a bold ecological rebel and activist refusing to allow the men destroy the forest. She boldly confronts the men thus, "I understand that you want to kill this tree for no good reason, and I won't let you," With so much defiance she retorts, "You will have to cut me down first before you touch this tree," (69). This act of defiance is further amplified by an accompanying illustration in which Mangoshi stands with legs and arms outstretched positioned in front of the trees, enacting her refusal to allow the tress to be felled. In further assertion of agency, Mangoshi's scream and the doubling of her body size frightens the tree cutters into dropping her and running away, demonstrating that magical power is

deployed in the text as a tool of environmental protection.

> The first man who touched her was so deafened by her screams that he dropped her and ran away. When she screamed, she seemed twice as big. The tree cutters did not know what to do with this strange child who seemed to have doubled in size and screamed at them so piercingly if they got close." (70)

Mangoshi's fearlessness and duty toward the environment is also portrayed through her rejection of the bribe offered her by the men to allow them plunder the trees. She ignored the threats to call the police on her and to bring guard dogs, instead, she kept watch over the trees for days, sometimes in the company of other children and other times, alone. This heroic display positions Mangoshi as model for child readers who may begin to desire to carry out such enviable exploit. Interestingly, Mangoshi projects her new role as a vanguard and agent of change by educating the men on the benefits of trees. Her protective and reactive behaviour attracted men of the press who publicized her act, drawing many into her awareness campaign. Ultimately, Mangoshi receives the magical flower she seeks as a reward for effort, as well as the seeds she found. Through this, Okri advocates for tree planting as a way of preserving the environment, and the people protesting about the forest reveals that saving the ecology is a collective effort.

Conclusion

A writer's thematic concerns are the motives that prod them into creating their art. The entire narration of *Every Leaf a Hallelujah* is tied to environmental degradation, weather/climate change, and the preservation of plant life. The novel which is targeted toward children, tells the story of Mangoshi who lives in a village near the forest and her journey into the forest to find a special flower which grows on the oldest trees and possess healing powers, particularly to help heal her sick mother. In the course of her journey, she witnesses the horrifying destruction of the forest and its effect on the ecosystem. Through colorful and immersive illustration done by Diana Ejiata, Okri tells a story that celebrates a deep love for trees, educate the readers of the different kinds of trees in the forest and their social and economic importance.

Ultimately, *Every Leaf a Hallelujah* functions as eco-consciousness, eco-pedagogy and eco-activism for young readers. The vivid illustrations do not merely

decorate the text, but educate; naming trees and making visible the devasting effects of environmental degradation on the ecosystem. By centering a child-protagonist who bears witness to the destruction and acts to preserve it, Okri demonstrates that environmental ethics must begin early. True to the title of the text, every leaf, indeed, is a hallelujah-a call to reverence, responsibility and resistance.

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