



## **Faraway Fox**

*Jolene Thompson, Justin K. Thompson (Illustrator)*

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As Fox wanders through a strange landscape, he cannot help but be reminded—at every corner—of the streams, the trees, and the family he once knew. Fox would like nothing more than to return to his home, but it seems the cityscape has built up around him.

Follow Fox as he looks for a way back home to the wild green land where every fox belongs. Back matter shows readers the creative ways humans are helping to mitigate habitat encroachment in our towns and cities.

## **Faraway Fox Details**

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## From Reader Review Faraway Fox for online ebook

### Julia says

Although I am a sucker for books that can pull on the heart strings, especially those based on animal protagonists, this one didn't touch me the way that I thought it should. Instead the book is sad but at the same time quite confusing to me for it left a story that needed more explanation and understanding that what was given such as why was he left in town away from his family, how did he get stuck in the human world since it doesn't sound like he was born there and how did he survive since it sounded like he was too young to have been separated from his family. Although the answers aren't necessary to the story I would have loved to have these answers.

Instead the story is presented as a beautifully presented yet sad nostalgic look from a young fox who is trying to survive the urban world. The things that he passes by remind him of home and his family life while the reader is given a feeling that there is some deeper tragedy that is going on but we never learn that personal element in the book.

The illustrations are bright and beautiful when it focuses on the natural world versus the slightly duller colors of human civilization. With its portrayal of the world from the two viewpoints - that of a fox and the reader's own one gets a sense of just how different things can be seen.

This book can truly be a treasure to read to younger audiences who may not question the original missing as it shows them just what we can do to help the world around us and to see that animals can be just like us. And just maybe for a hardworking adult whether parent or teacher there may be a wonderful idea that can come up with the resources in the back to allow children to learn more about the phenomena of natural wildlife highways that can be found closer to home.

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### KC says

Fox and family are separated. City life, construction, and parking lots can be dangerous but fox seems to remember all the tools and skills that were taught by mother, sister, and father. But do not fear, fox finds a "wildlife tunnel" to get back home unharmed. Similar bridges and tunnels are often built by busy highways and roads for wildlife to travel to and from in search of food, shelter, and safety.

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### Alexandria says

I cried while reading this book. It puts the damage done by human sprawl into terms that children can understand, and then follows it up with ways that humans can live more gently on the earth. The illustrations are subdued by beautiful and the story, told from the point of view of the fox, encourages readers to exercise empathy for the poor thing who has been driven from its home and separated from its family by forces it simply does not understand. I loved this book and will certainly be buying a copy for my son.

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## **Terry Pierce says**

A story that grabs your heart, about a fox who has been separated from its family by a freeway. Just at the emotional peak of the story, hope appears in the form of a construction crew building a wildlife tunnel below the freeway, for animals to cross safely. Spoiler alert ;-), the Fox is reunited with its family. Such a satisfying ending, along with back matter that discusses the need for wildlife crossings.

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## **Jess says**

I want to frame some of the illustrations in this book and hang them on my study wall. They are gorgeous and emotive and atmospheric and I love them.

In "Faraway Fox" we follow fox as he searches for his home, which the city seems to have swallowed. This is a pretty darned good storybook for teaching kids about ecosystems and environmentalism in a not-preachy way. The ending is happy!

The author and illustrator team were inspired to do this book when their son asked why they kept seeing so many wild animals in the city, and it touches on wild life bridges over freeways and wild life habitats and what cities do to combat human encroachment.

Did I mention how gorgeous the illustrations are? Oog. The one where the fox is curled underneath a parked car and it is raining and his reflection / the city's reflections are wavering on the wet pavement is particularly fine.

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## **Erin says**

### **WILDLIFE BRIDGES and TUNNELS over highways.**

Short and spare text makes a good readaloud. The illustrations evoke the loneliness and confusion of the fox who is separated from his family and doing his best to survive in a world in which humans are encroaching. Happy ending. But the best thing is that this book will raise awareness about wildlife tunnels and wildlife bridges/overpasses! US DOT Federal Highway Administration [www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/wildlife...](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/wildlife...) Also look on youtube! Canada and Europe have a lot of these tunnels. They're very doable. Saw one near Glacier Park. Conservation

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## **Mrs Heidrich says**

This is a great picture story to be able to discuss issues of urban sprawl and the effects that we humans have on animals. The book discusses some of the efforts made like habitat preserves and animal crossings (with pictures of real ones at the back of the book), so these can be beginnings of conversations about our impact, what we are doing and if it's enough.

Faraway Fox could also be used as a book to connect with social emotional learning by talking about how the fox feels and why, discussing how his family might feel and how he faces/deals with those emotions.

This could be seen as a story of strength and perseverance that ends happily. Could use it as a story to discuss problem solving too - like what to do if you're lost. Another great story to build empathy as well.

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### **Vanessa says**

Gorgeous illustrations. If I were rating on the illustrations & purpose of the book alone, I'd give it 5 stars, but unfortunately the writing isn't great. If I were rating on the writing alone, I'd only give it 2 stars. Very pretty book with an important point, but I really wish the author had made the story more compelling.

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### **Gary Anderson says**

Seeing wildlife in our Chicago suburb isn't unusual--raccoons, opossum, deer, foxes, coyotes, skunks, giraffes, and grizzly bears. Just kidding about those last two, but when wild animals show up in densely populated areas, it's a little uncomfortable for all concerned. *Faraway Fox* gives us a young fox separated from its family and trapped by urban sprawl. Author Jolene Thompson provides a believable perspective for the fox, as well as an environmentally-friendly solution. *Faraway Fox* will appeal to thoughtful animal lovers of all ages.

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### **Lynn says**

Although this book certainly makes a strong statement about human encroachment into wildlife areas, I think it misses its mark of the purpose of human-created animal crossings.

This book makes it seem that the underpass was created just for that one fox to escape the city - but my understanding is that the crossings allow movement both ways. However, this book may serve as a starting point to study the issue, especially with the photographs and list of organizations given on the last page.. Color illustrations show soft shapes for nature, and hard lines for humans and human-made objects (vehicles, houses, etc.).

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### **Peacegal says**

This book was wonderful. Absolutely stunning and thought-provoking. The illustrations were gorgeous. Readers hear the story of a fox who has been separated from his natural habitat by encroaching development, and how he is trying to get by in this unfamiliar, human-built world.

The story has a happy ending by reminding readers that just as humans can harm wild animals, they can also help them, and how a little compassion and ingenuity can be the difference between life and death for a living being.

Best of all, the book succeeds in provoking thought, reflection and empathy. Don't miss it!

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### **Anna says**

Gorgeous pictures. The story feels a little too real in terms of just how bad humanity continues to be for animals (but there's some hope, and that's real, too).

My husband called this "An emotional rollercoaster. Mostly downhill."

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### **Christine says**

I really enjoyed this lovely picture book, written by Jolene Thompson, and illustrated by Justin K. Thompson. The saturated colors of the illustrations initially caught my eye, as well as the fox-as-main-character. In the story, a young fox narrates in first "person" how he was separated from his family. It is saddening to see how human projects have caused this situation, especially the habitat destruction. The pictures show a "fox-eye-view" of his surroundings, as he tries to survive without the needed support of a family group. Children will have an emotional response to this fox's plight. (I know I did!)

As this review is most likely to be read by adults, pre-reading before sharing the story with children, I see no problem with mentioning the story's end. Eventually, there is a happy outcome when the fox finds his way back to his family... surprisingly, through the intervention of human ingenuity.

The author's note on the last page includes interesting text and photographs, showing how humans in the Netherlands and Canada are taking steps to minimize human impact on the environment, through the use of wildlife bridges and tunnels. I've seen a tv documentary about something similar in Australia, for koalas: great ideas! The author's note also lists the websites for ten wildlife organizations.

When I taught, I would have happily added this book as a tie-in to our second grade animal science units, which included learning about endangered animals. Animals that are often seen in zoos (elephants, tigers, polar bears) were most often used in our endangered animals curricula. Children do like big, extravagant creatures! However, it's also important to remember the smaller endangered animals that are struggling right here, closer to home, with habitat destruction. They are all important parts of the ecosystem. I think that if children recognize that there are animals in need of help, close to their own homes, they can be inspired to contribute to environmentalism.

An unplanned thing that I did as a teacher: one year, (2003) after a class field trip to the zoo (Baltimore has an award-winning children's zoo area, at the Maryland Zoo!), my class was wishing that they could "bring home" animals from the zoo. We decided to "adopt" one voted-upon animal as a class mascot, and parents helped kiddos raid their piggy banks. Each child brought in \$4 (a big deal in a Title I lower socio-economic area school), and with the combined total we adopted an arctic fox: the winner of the class vote (voting: citizenship tie-in!). They learned how their money would go toward her feeding and veterinary care (math tie-in! jobs/career learning experience!). We hung her 8x10 photo in the classroom, and I made wallet-size copies for each student. They drew their own pictures of her, in an accurate habitat, after researching where arctic foxes live in the wild (art skills! library skills!) We used camera links (live feed) through the zoo website to check up on her sometimes via classroom computers (technology extension!). We practiced letter-writing skills by writing to the zoo keepers to ask about her changes each season (brown coat-to-white as winter approached). It was a huge success, and it was initially all the students' idea. I just followed their

inclination to get an animal, and ran with it.

It can be so easy, and rewarding, for adults to move beyond just reading a story to a child, into noticing and encouraging children's interests. This story would be a perfect opportunity to see if your child is interested in environmentalism, animal conservation, and habitat conservation. It opens the door to great parent-child conversations, and potential projects.

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### **Amy! says**

Wow, that was depressing. The illustrations are beautiful though, and it ends on a hopeful note.

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### **Kiffie says**

I really like the idea behind this picture book -- the idea of building tunnels and crossways to protect wildlife. The actual story here is okay, but it didn't really knock my socks off, and the illustrations didn't really grab me either. The fox is a sympathetic character, but he's a bit too anthropomorphic, IMHO.

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