

BOOK REVIEW

Exploring Soils: A Hidden World Underground

Author: Samantha Grover

Illustrator: Camille Heisler

Publisher: CSIRO Publishing

ISBN: 978-1-486-30500-1

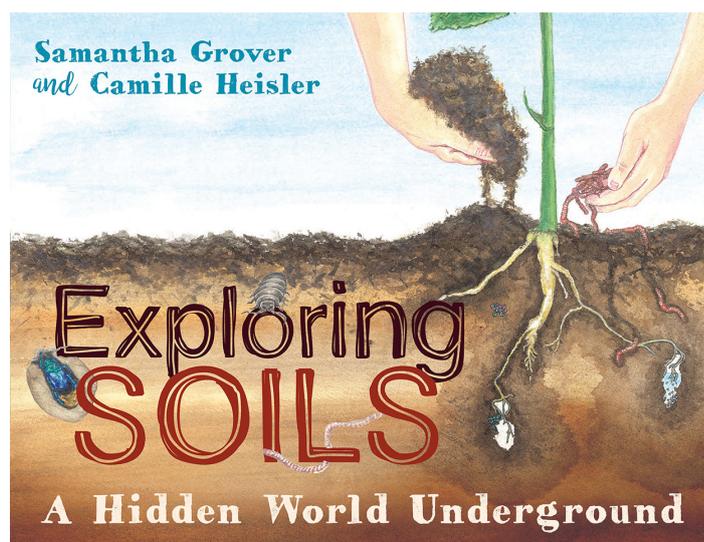
Reviewed by David Keystone, Science Educator Leader, Balnarring Primary School, Victoria.

"I work on soil. I like to dig. So does Rosey." These are the opening sentences of the picture storybook, *Exploring Soils: A Hidden World Underground*. From the initial pages of this book, the author invites children and teachers to investigate soils and discover what lies beneath their feet. Samantha Grover has written a story that narrates the discoveries that James makes when digging and delving into soil. The story both informs students and engages their imaginations.

The appealing narrative moves smoothly from the story of James, his grandmother, his sister Lily, his teacher and his neighbour, Mr Georgios, to lucid scientific interpretation and explanations about the composition and uses of different soils. Miss Kerr, James' teacher, advises: "Soil is everywhere. Just look around you when you're out and about."

The importance of gaining knowledge about earth science is revealed through the text and is supported by the attractive, effective illustrations by Camille Heisler. Invertebrates that live in the soil that most children will find in their backyard or schoolground are identified and clearly depicted. The process of decomposition is succinctly described, as is its role in producing compost and nutrients for plants. The factors involved in the creation of soils (CLORPT) and the suitability of a given soil for a particular purpose are illustrated using real-life examples. Examination of the book's glossary shows that a range of terms used in the narrative are clearly and succinctly defined.

Reading six pages at a time, I read this book as a 'serial' over four sessions to my science classes of six- and seven-year-old students. This way of reading to a class



of early childhood students provided them with the opportunity to think about, discuss and raise questions over an extended period of time. The text and illustrations proved to be very appealing and elicited a lot of useful comment from them. The target audience for this book could include students ranging in age from six to ten years old. Having observed students investigating earth science topics confirms my belief that this age group is particularly fascinated by the natural world and what they can freely discover and learn about it through practical activity.

The content has clear links to the biological, chemical, and earth and space sciences content of the Australian Curriculum for these age groups. It provides good support for students to better understand the science of soils.

There is much to recommend in this book as a welcome addition to a school library or a child's personal book collection. *Exploring Soils: A Hidden World Underground* certainly captured the interest and imagination of the students in my early years classes. Resourceful teachers who read this book to their students will see the range of possibilities for engaging them in purposeful and engaging outdoor earth science pursuits.