

Seasons of Stories

SUMMER





Summer days are warmer and longer, the sun rises early and sets late. Nature flourishes, rich in colour and fragrance, full of nature's song. Have you ever woken early to witness a breath-taking sunrise, or sat out on a summer's eve listening to the sounds of dusk? Summer offers a bounty of experiences to discover.

Summer can also stir varied emotions, thoughts and wishes in people. To reflect these differences in this book, people were invited to share what summer means to them personally. The replies were enlightening, truthful and evocative. They were instrumental in creating the content on these pages, and can be found interwoven throughout.

Enjoy journeying through the chapters of summer told through story, poetry, traditions and imagery, and savour the memories, reflections and conversations it evokes.



I like to rise when the sun she rises, early in the morning....

Sing oak and ash and thorn
All on a midsummer's morn
Surely we sing of no little thing
In oak and ash and thorn!

A Tree Song by Rudyard Kipling

All together now!

DAWN CHORUS

Robins and redstarts,
sparrows and finches,
song drush* and dunnocks,
sweet blackbirds and cutties.*

(*drush for thrush and cutty for wren in traditional Dorset dialect)

Have you ever walked at dawn in early summer?

The Song Thrush

There was once a wealthy businessman who enjoyed listening to the dawn chorus each morning in the large, leafy park near his house. In particular, he loved the sweet sounds of a passionate song thrush. Eventually, desiring to capture the song for himself, he hired men to catch the bird then kept it inside his house, locked in a gilded cage. The poor song thrush was miserable in confinement and soon fell silent. He greatly resented the lack of song but one evening, to his great surprise, the man heard the bird speaking to him. It told him to go to the next town where another song thrush lived, and to tell that bird that he was safe, but kept in captivity.

The following week, the man visited the neighbouring town on business, where sure enough he discovered another song thrush singing high in the branches of a tree. On hearing the man's news about the caged bird, she promptly fell to the ground, lifeless. When the businessman returned home he relayed what had happened and immediately the song thrush fell to the bottom of the cage. Assuming that the bird had died from grief, the merchant opened the cage to remove the body. But in that moment the song thrush flew out of his hands - alive and well - and singing a song of freedom...



Serenades

A natural accompaniment to May,
high-pitched, dim-lit from song posts,
the daily business of songbirds before
traffic or breakfast, a force outside us.

Day begins full chorus; breeding seasons,
bright starts, territory-claims, motifs
and song-makers communing together.
For the music of the world, listen to birds.

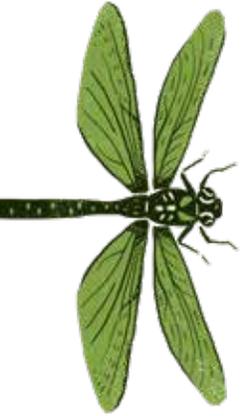
“Our blackbird, sitting atop
a tree singing his heart out,
makes my heart swell.”



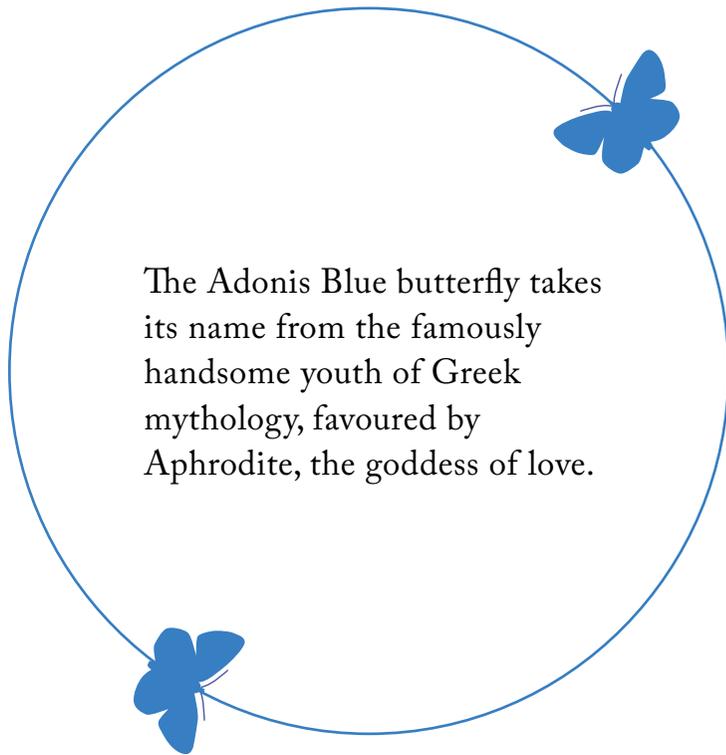
Butterflies and Dragonflies



Dragonflies, hovering around lakes and ponds, herald the arrival of high summer.



In folklore, dragonflies are omens of good fortune and prosperity. A dragonfly alighting on a fisherman's rod is sure to bring a successful catch and if one lands on your finger you can make a wish.



The Adonis Blue butterfly takes its name from the famously handsome youth of Greek mythology, favoured by Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

Summer Butterflies

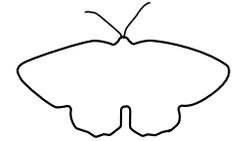
(known traditionally as 'fitter wings' in Dorset)



Clouded Yellow



Holly Blue



Marbled White



Orange Tip



Meadow Brown



Purple Hairstreak



Red Admiral



Small Copper



Speckled Wood



Plight of the Pollinators

A good year for bees
A good year for honey
A thanks YES! for hives
A promise of pollen

Insert your own feelings
in the brackets about how
nature is faring this summer.



A () stamens

A () crops

A () hoverflies

A () hopes

A () sap rise

A () moths

A () honeycomb

A () yolks

MEADOW FLOWERS

They say it's truly summer...when you cover
twelve daisy flowers on your lawn with one foot!

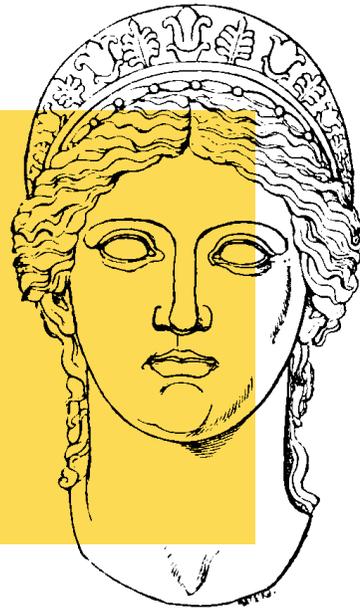




The fresh-faced flowers of Oxeye Daisies are often seen smiling sweetly in summer meadows... They are commonly known as Midsummer Daisies and also Thunder Daisies - relating to storms brought on by sultry weather at this time of year.

May is named after Maia, the ancient Greek goddess of growth and abundance.

June is named after Juno, the Roman goddess of love and marriage. Both deities are associated with summer flowers.



“When it’s warm enough to walk barefoot on the grass.”

■ What are the scents of summer?



Lazy Tom

Once there was a young farmer's son called Tom who was cheerful and charming, but very shy when it came to work – known by everyone as Lazy Tom.

It was a warm, sunny day in the middle of July. Instead of helping his father mow the meadows, Lazy Tom was lying on his back amongst the flowers listening to the dreamy droning of bees and hoverflies. Suddenly, he heard a sharp tapping noise. Crawling on his hands and knees through the long grass, he made his way towards the sound. There was a little Leprechaun, dressed in green, fixing the sole of his shoe with a silver hammer. Despite his idle inclination, Lazy Tom leapt forward like a cat and caught the Leprechaun in his hands.

Needless to say, the little man was most indignant at being caught. He kicked and cursed, then begged to be let go. But Lazy Tom knew enough about the fairy folk to capitalise on his good fortune at catching one.

“I’ll let you go, soon enough,” he said. “When you’ve told me where your fairy gold is hidden.” At first, the Leprechaun refused, but Lazy Tom was in no hurry, so in the end the Leprechaun reluctantly agreed. Lazy Tom slowly opened his hands and the Leprechaun pointed to a golden flower - a buttercup - in the middle of the meadow. There were lots of identical buttercups growing in the meadow and Lazy Tom wanted to be sure that he could find the one again. “I’ll tie my green scarf around the stem,” said the Leprechaun.

But when he returned, spade in hand, he discovered instead that every buttercup in the field had an identical green scarf around its stem! I suppose he could have dug up every one, but that was too much like hard work for Lazy Tom. And to this day if you look at a buttercup flower in summer, you’ll notice each has a green leafy fringe around the stem – just like a Leprechaun’s scarf!





CELEBRATIONS



■ Time for...fetes, fairs, feasts and festivals

With Neighbours

When you say 'street party'

I'm not sure if it's a photograph
I once saw Kodak-fade.

Small kids in navy shorts

bunches and elastic belts
mothers laying trestle tables.

Running races, egg and spoon.

Someone up a ladder, all flags and banners

and instead of cars - sponge cake, jelly
and all this in the middle of a road.



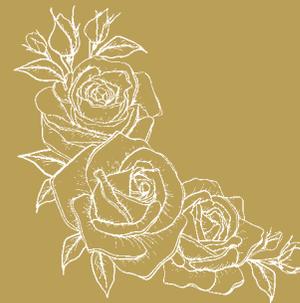
Summer Solstice is when the sun reaches its highest point in the sky and seems to stand still on the longest day of the year. Midsummer has long been a time for feasting, fun and festivities to celebrate the strength of the sun at the height of summer.



Riddle

Sweetly scented
to delight the nose.

Guarded by daggers
wherever it grows



Midsummer bonfires are lit as a centrepiece for celebrations into the night and traditionally leaping the flames would indicate the height of the crops that year...



■ What shall we bring for the picnic?



HEAT

Make hay whilst the sun shines...

North Bay, Swanage.



“Summer is tinged with sorrow, always on the outside, watching families and wishing I was part of one.”

The water sparkles here, splashes the seawall,
flags and boats ring like bells.

I saw small blue butterflies on the hill above the town. I rode the steam train yesterday, read in cafes and people-watch afternoons from the prom without getting sand in my shoes. I walk the pier like the woman in the film, pause at its end.

I'm avoiding fossils, so many gathering dust on the shelf at home. I know you would love the pier, so safe and high. It's like looking back to everyday things from a distance, bright sea dancing below my feet.

Wish you were here! xxx



■ Where did you go on holiday?



The Brave Kingfisher

There once was wild woodland, with tall trees and lush undergrowth, providing habitats and homes for many different animals. The forest flourished for many years until, suddenly, the climate changed. The summers were hot and dry and the woodland began to wither in the heat. One year, a spark ignited a fire amongst the dried twigs and dead leaves of the forest floor. Fanned by the breeze, it quickly became a wildfire, roaring through the trees and burning everything in its path.

All the woodland creatures had to flee for their lives: running or flying, crawling or slithering according to their kind. They gathered on the far side of the forest beside a large lake. Suddenly, the animals saw a blur of movement and flash of colour. It was Kingfisher - dipping down his beak into the water then flying back to the forest to release a drop of water onto the flames. The other animals scoffed at his actions...

“What good will a little drop of water do against a huge, hot fire?”

Kingfisher paused in mid-air for a moment as she replied: “I’m doing what I can!”

The power of those words had an immediate effect - all the other creatures began to help. Badger soaked his fur in the lake then shook out a shower onto the fire; Squirrel filled acorn cups with water and flung them into the flames; Adder flicked droplets from his forked tongue into the fire. Everyone was doing what they could. But still it hardly made any difference against the raging inferno.

However, where the water hit the fire, steam rose up into the air and began to condense into a small cloud. Soon that little cloud was joined by others, all squeezing together. Then, with a clap of thunder, rain began to fall from the sky, quickly becoming a heavy downpour which extinguished the sizzling flames.

The image features a repeating pattern of blue scallop shells on a white background. The shells are rendered in a monochromatic blue color and are scattered across the frame in various orientations and sizes. The word "SEASIDE" is printed in a blue, serif font, centered horizontally and positioned in the upper-middle section of the image. The shells have a distinct radial ribbing pattern, and the overall composition is clean and minimalist.

SEASIDE

Seagull

That one is bruiser, one-legged
on the crow's nest telephone pole,
after tides & cold air passings –
his blue miles scaled down.
Oh, but now he rules the garden,
a mighty overlord.

This one has yellow ice-glance
his feathers smart and strong,
but with a belly full of plastic –
his soaring is almost done.
Oh, but now he dreams of fishes,
a salt water flight.



“The first sea swim
of the year is filled
with promise.”



Raven Brings the Tide

In the beginning, there was no tide. Without any fall and rise in the level of the sea, the birds who lived along the shore couldn't see the sumptuous seafood that lay hidden beneath the waves. But one brainy bird knew it was there: Raven.

He calculated that if he could shift the ocean, just a little, there'd be rich and plentiful pickings for all the birds...

So, Raven flew far and wide, along the whole Jurassic coast, looking for a way to move the sea. Eventually, he came to a huge stack of white rock, rising out of the water. As he got closer, he saw it was a great

giant, squatting down in the sea. In a flash of creative inspiration, Raven the Trickster knew exactly what to do. He soared high into the sky and then plummeted down, beak first, jabbing the giant's exposed rump. The giant immediately stood up and roared in anger, as Raven quickly flew home. There, now that the hulking figure was standing up, the sea-level receded, leaving a seashore littered with tasty treasures for all the birds. So from that day on, twice a day, Raven returns to jab the bottom of the Man Who Sits on the Tide.

And so the tide rises and falls...

...from tiny acorns mighty oak trees grow

TREES AND SHADE





Tree to Sea

Elm tree standing full height
Chanted songs into wind-rushed night,
Elm tree forested deep among his clan,
Wooded boatbuilders at the edge of the land.

CHORUS

*Take me out of the forest,
Carry me down to the shore,
Lathe me long-grained, planks braced,
Shape me floating with six oars.*

Elm tree healthy, strong amongst his peers,
Ambitiously longed for the promise of his years,
Elm tree impatient to fulfil possibility,
Feared rot and disease, far less than invisibility.

(CHORUS)

Elm tree watching his brothers felled and free
Yearned to be oiled and gliding out to sea,
Elm tree daydreaming hereditary grace,
Stretched up in the canopy, taller in his space.

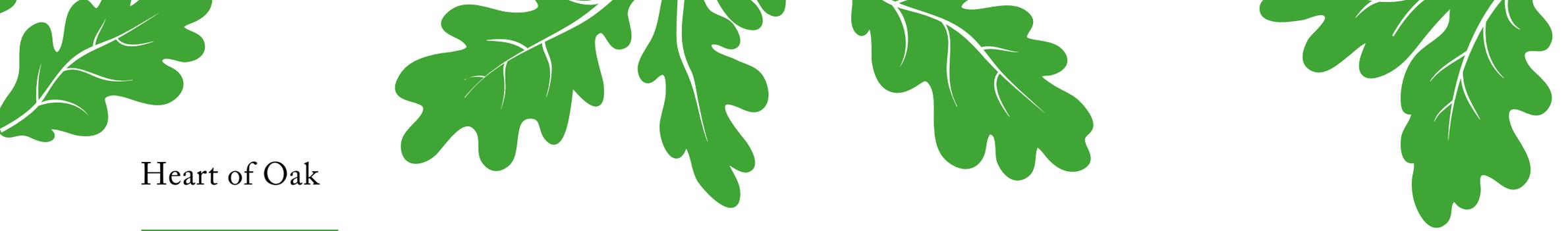
(CHORUS)

Elm tree preening, learning diligently,
Sings of being adored and cherished by the sea,
Elm tree held his crown so high and proud,
Eventually a boatbuilder pointed him out of the crowd.

(CHORUS)

Elm tree paid the price to prove his worth,
Offering his all generously, transformed on this earth,
Elm tree caressed by craftsmen skilled,
Grew forever into pilot gig, his longevity fulfilled.





Heart of Oak

Once there was a woman who loved to walk through the woods in summer, savouring the cool shade of the trees in full leaf. One day, she came across a magnificent old oak tree, with a wide crown of dark green leaves. Resting by its roots, she gazed up into the vaulted canopy of the tree. Feeling utterly at peace, she whispered aloud: “Thank-you.”

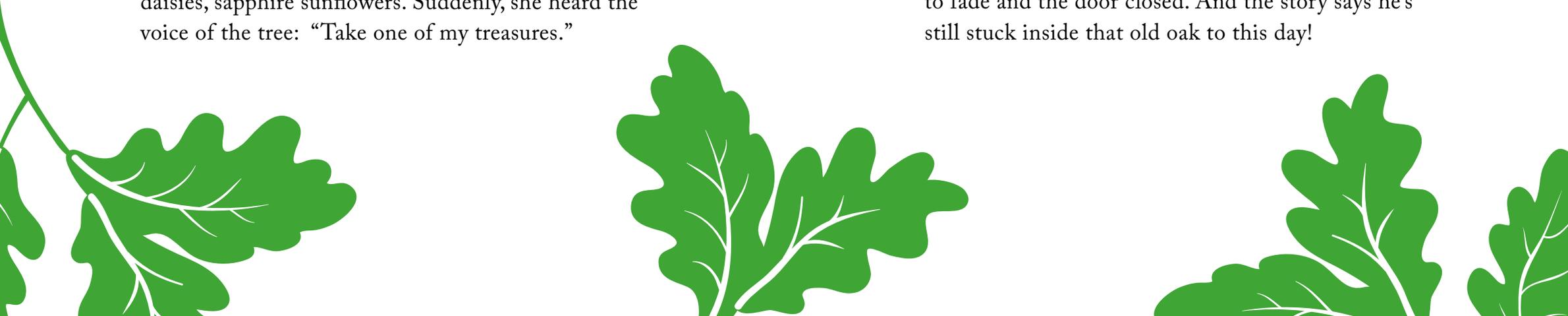
Immediately, she felt the bark behind her begin to tremble. Standing up, she saw a crack in the tree’s trunk, widening until it revealed a green door...

Through the door, the woman found a whole new world; glowing with emerald light and filled with strange sights. All around were colourful flowers, each with a shining jewel: ruby roses, diamond daisies, sapphire sunflowers. Suddenly, she heard the voice of the tree: “Take one of my treasures.”

She carefully picked a single rose, then left the heart of the oak.

Walking home, sunlight glinted brightly on the ruby-rose until it caught the eye of her neighbour. He was a mean and miserly man, and demanded to know where she’d found the shining treasure. She told him of the great oak and its secret doorway. At once, he went running into the woods, grinning with greed. When he found the oak, he began to strike its trunk with a stick, until the tree trembled and the green door appeared...

Inside the tree-world, the man picked as many of the jewelled flowers as he could, stuffing them into his pockets. He was so busy being greedy and grabbing he didn’t notice as the green light began to fade and the door closed. And the story says he’s still stuck inside that old oak to this day!



Red sky at night, shepherds delight...

SUNSET

It's considered highly auspicious to see the sun on the longest day of the year, when the solar cycle reaches its zenith.

Many prehistoric stone circles such as Stonehenge, are aligned with the rising and setting sun at summer and winter solstices.

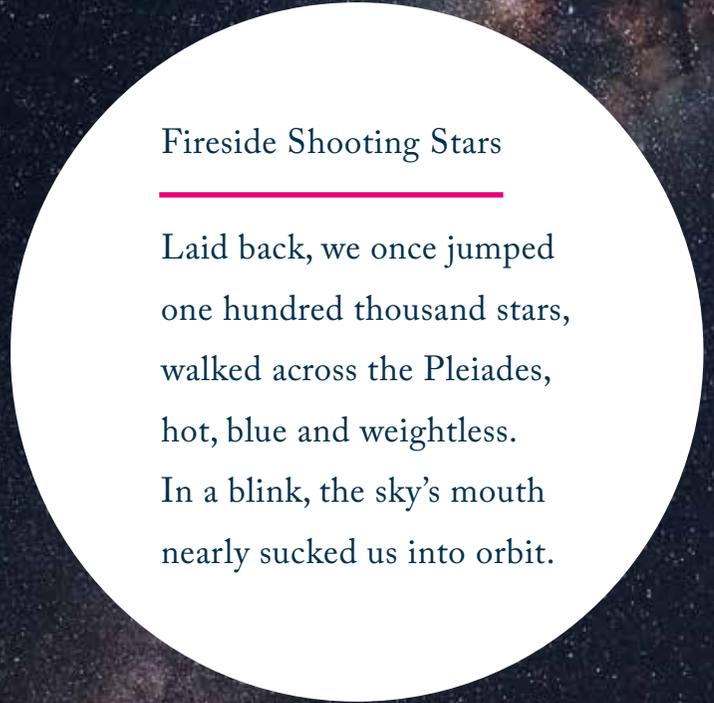
In legends and superstitions, the Standing Stones walk and go down to the river to drink on Midsummer's Eve.

Stanton Drew, Kingston Russel,

Nine Stones, Rollwright Stones



What are the sounds of a
summer evening outdoors?



Fireside Shooting Stars

Laid back, we once jumped
one hundred thousand stars,
walked across the Pleiades,
hot, blue and weightless.
In a blink, the sky's mouth
nearly sucked us into orbit.



For your Summer notes

A Blessing

A summer's light
to keep you awake

A summer's breeze
to keep you warm

A summer's sky
to keep you open

A summer's land
to keep you blooming

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, alternating in color between light blue, light green, and light pink.



Some helpful information
about this book and the
Stepping into Nature project.

www.stepin2nature.org

We decided against a 'how to' use this book. It is a book like any other, for individuals and groups of all ages. We want to celebrate summer and share our favourite stories and themes. Our intention is to offer conversation starters and to stimulate thoughts, songs, stories...plus ideas, memories and joy.

Feel free to write your own seasonal reflections in the blank pages here.

Martin and Sarah have worked with the Stepping into Nature team and wider community to co-create the themes in this book and shape them. If you are using this book as a group facilitator or with a family member, you may develop your own personal question prompts inspired by summer.

Fair winds and blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah and Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Some summer poems for you to discover and enjoy:

Shall I Compare Thee To A Summer's Day? (*Sonnet 18*)
by William Shakespeare

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,
On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour.
July 13, 1798
by William Wordsworth

The Lake Isle of Innisfree
by William Butler Yeats

Blackberry-Picking
by Seamus Heaney

Sea-Fever
by John Masefield

Fireflies in the Garden
by Robert Frost

Seagull
by Brian McCabe

Daisy
by Alice Oswald

About Martin

Martin Maudsley is a professional storyteller with a growing repertoire of traditional tales that reflect his love of the natural world and local landscapes. He also leads creative workshops and events (often outdoors) helping people to discover the magic of storytelling for themselves. His new book, *Telling the Seasons – a storytelling journey around the wheel of the year*, is published in 2022.

Martin also is actively involved in many seasonal celebrations and folk festivals around West Dorset, where he lives with his family. *Seasons of Stories Summer* covers the brightest quarter of the year, from the beginning of May through to August, with lots of opportunities for sunny outdoor festivities.

After the sun sets on Midsummer's Eve, Martin can be found sleeping out under the stars amongst the churring of nightjars at the stone circle on Blackdown Hill, recently constructed by Dorset AONB.



About Sarah

Sarah Acton is a landscape poet and performer, oral history and community theatre writer who makes and delivers arts programmes for social engagement and connection to nature and place. Sarah's writing explores personal and collective relationship to landscape, earth history, myth, folklore and sense of belonging to and of place, drawing on a passion for poetics and orality (the living voice, rhythms and dialect).

Being outdoors in nature plays an active part in Sarah's well-being and creative practice. Sarah's summer days start with a swim in the sea, with long walks to listen to soundtracks of afternoon cliff paths, mid-summer skylarks and hazy evening lanes and hedgerows.

Recent projects include the Talking Tent story-sharing project about relationship to landscape for Dorset AONB, alongside ongoing commissions for *Stepping into Nature* including *Your Seasons of Story*. Sarah's oral history book about seine fishing along the Chesil Beach is published in 2022. The Heart of Stone community theatre project on Portland continues in 2022.



About Stepping into Nature

Being close to nature can help boost your health, mood and build self-esteem. In short, it can make you feel better and put a smile on your face too!

Stepping into Nature works with local organisations to provide inclusive activities that help older people, people living with long-term health conditions including dementia, and their care partners to enjoy the benefits of nature.

Through the activities people can discover new places, learn new skills and meet others. The project also funds communities and organisations to help create more inclusive, accessible and enjoyable green spaces, and train staff and volunteers to become dementia friendly.

For more information visit

www.stepin2nature.org

