

Juta jumps in to teach young readers about environmental issues

By [Juta and Company \(Pty\) Ltd](#), issued by [Juta and Company](#)

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It's great to see that publishing giants such as Juta are producing story books about environmental awareness for the very young. I read *Facto and the Flixies (FF)* by Danie Schreuder, one of a series of little books for children in Grade 4 (and up), and found it charming.

In an accompanying catalogue fact sheet, Juta says, "The *Flixies* stories have been written to address two critical crises: a literacy crisis and an environmental crisis." Of the former, says Juta, "We have a generation who do not want to, or cannot read." Of the latter, "Our planet is in trouble and young readers must be made aware of biodiversity and our responsibility to provide for the quality of life on earth."

As you will learn from the summary on the back cover of *FF*, Facto, the central character, encounters "[a] colourful, singing group of weird, tiny creatures who live beneath the ground...[these] Flixies can communicate with small animals and can "listen in" when millions of plant roots talk to one another." Through the Flixies, Facto learns all sorts of things. My favourite part of the book is when Facto muses that Earth is like a spaceship on a journey. Schreuder has done something clever here – teaching children two simultaneous facts: that every ounce of earth and droplet of water on our planet counts, and that our planet is really just a speck in a vast galaxy. Says Schreuder through Facto: Just enough water and air and soil have been packed in Spaceship Earth so that people and animals and plants can use it to survive while they are travelling. He has also found out that these resources on Spaceship Earth are all that we will ever have. We will not be able to turn back to fetch any more. This is a timely reminder to younger custodians that "people and animals and plants [must] work together to keep the natural resources healthy so that every living thing can keep on living."

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