



# A POCKETFUL OF WONDER

*50 Hands-On Adventures for  
Kids to Discover God's Creation*

A FRIENDLY FIELD GUIDE

AMANDA DYKES

*... stop and consider the wondrous works of God.*

*Job 37:14 ESV*



## **Nonfiction Books by Amanda Dykes**

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*A Pocketful of Wonder:  
50 Hands-On Adventures for Kids to Discover God's Creation*

## **Fiction Books by Amanda Dykes**

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*Whose Waves These Are  
Set the Stars Alight  
Yours Is the Night  
All the Lost Places  
Born of Gilded Mountains*

## **NOVELLAS**

*Up from the Sea from Love at Last:  
Three Historical Romance Novellas of Love in Days Gone By*

*From Roots to Sky from The Kissing Tree:  
Four Novellas Rooted in Timeless Love*



A  
POCKETFUL  
OF  
WONDER

*50 Hands-On Adventures for  
Kids to Discover God's Creation*

AMANDA DYKES



BETHANYHOUSE

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*For Bella, Isaiah, Jack, and Liam.*

*You are my greatest adventure.*

*May wonder strengthen your hearts for the years to come,  
and draw you always to the heart of  
the One who created it all . . .  
and who created you.*

*I love you forever.*

# CONTENTS

*Introduction for Caregivers* 8

*How to Use This Book* 10

The Adventure Begins 14

## SKY 17

---

Sun 18

Wind 21

Clouds 24

Thunder 27

Lightning 30

## WATER 33

---

Water 34

Tide 36

Puddle 39

Rain 41

## EARTH 45

---

Footprints 46

Beaches 48

Rocks 50

Mud 53

Twig Tumble 56

## WILD THINGS 59

---

Spider's Web 60

Ant 63

Creature Tracks 66

Finding a Feather 69

Nest 72

## GROWING THINGS 75

---

Dandelion 76

When Light Dances through  
Trees 79

Roots 81

Life in a Crack in a Sidewalk 84  
Grass 87

## ALONG THE WAY 91

---

- When an Obstacle Is Ahead 92  
When Joy Is Shared 95  
When a Passerby Frowns 98  
When Plans Are Interrupted 101
- When You Hear a Snatch of Music 104  
When Fear Comes to Visit 106  
When You're Waiting 109

## SEASONS 113

---

Four Seasons Tree Buds 114

### SPRING

- First Green 119  
Spring Machines (An Ode to Tractors) 121

### SUMMER

- Full Bloom 124  
Campfire 126

### FALL

- Fall of Leaves 129  
Migration 132

### WINTER

- Puff of Breath in Cold Air 135  
Frost 137  
Snow 140  
Ice 142

## DAY 145

---

- Morning 146  
Shadow 148
- Sunset 151

## NIGHT 153

---

- Nighttime 154  
By the Light of the Moon 156
- Stargazing 159

## JOURNEY'S END 163

---

- Coming Home 164

*Further Resources* 167

*Field Notes* 173

# INTRODUCTION FOR CAREGIVERS

*In a land full of storybook wonder . . .*

Oceans take to the sky in the form of clouds. Miraculous mid-air mountains, weighing tons and yet sheltering, not crushing us.

A molten star launches rays, sending each one off for a 93-million-mile journey, zinging past meteors, grazing stardust and frigid straits . . . then landing only minutes later in the warmth of a child's hand in a sunbeam.

And then there is the silver ruler of night. Conducting shadows, outshining distant stars, yet containing no light of its own, and pulling entire oceans in rising tides.

Flying oceans . . . zinging starlight . . . silver-pulled waves . . . this world's beauty is preposterous. Extravagant. Lavish, breathtaking, even occasionally fantastical. Yet the most astonishing thing about this world is that it is the living canvas of a Most High God who is every day painting His love for us in sweeping sunsets, in the kiss of a breeze, in a snatch of laughter, or in the dance of a tiny umbrella flung from a dandelion. These creations sing a constant song of their Creator. One who is mighty. Loving. Kind. Creative. Brilliant. Present. More faithful than the sunrise, more constant than the tide.

As we invite the children in our care to interact with God's handiwork, they will come to know Him and His love for them

better and more truly while building a wonder-spotting habit that fortifies and shapes their hearts for a lifetime.

Creation is a love letter to every one of us. It “pours forth speech” (Psalm 19:2 NRSV), infusing our hearts with the courage, comfort, and hope that comes from taking the time to be filled with this thought:

*If God can do this . . . He can do anything!*

# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each page contains five elements. This simplicity is on purpose—to offer a peaceful place for you to take in wonder with the children in your care. Though geared toward adventurers ages 3–7, the engaging rhyme will interest souls even younger, and the activities and ponderings are inviting to older children too.

Flip through the pages or skim the table of contents to become acquainted with the topics. Then, when an opportune moment arises on an outing or in your day-to-day lives, return to the relevant entry and dive in. That's it! Truly.

The purpose of each entry is to broaden the moment, not crowd it. To recognize the true gift is in the moment itself, and in the turning of our hearts onto our Creator.

## THE FIVE P'S: PAUSE, PONDER, PRAY, PLAY, PAIR

### *Pause*

A poem to wrap the moment in delight-filled language, putting words to something you and your little ones see or hope to see, whether from your window or out in the park, trail, yard, or neighborhood.

***Ponder***

A few simple lines to foster thought and invite your child to witness the everyday miracle taking place—and then to leave plenty of room for their own observing, chattering, and noticing.

***Pray***

A prayer for the lasting effects of this moment to run deep.

***Play***

A no-prep or low-prep hands-on activity to engage your child's heart, imagination, body, and spirit.

***Pair***

A suggested musical piece to play as background to your activity for multisensory delight. Each piece has been selected for the way its tone echoes the theme.

*Tip:* Because the music and poems often have differing cadences, avoid playing the song during the poem-reading, saving it instead to enjoy afterward. A prepared playlist can be found at [WonderWoodAdventures.com](http://WonderWoodAdventures.com).

Each entry closes with a related scripture to anchor the moment in the most beautiful truth of all.


**TREASURE HUNT INSIDE THE BOOK**

Tucked within the full-page illustrations throughout the book are familiar friends for your child to have fun spotting: a squirrel (sometimes a few) and three dragonflies. The final illustration, *Journey's End*, contains one hidden element from each of the nine previous illustrations. Happy searching!



## PERSONALIZING FOR ACCESSIBILITY, DEVELOPMENTAL SEASONS, SCHEDULES, AND MORE

Think of each entry as a *delight* list, rather than a *to-do* list. Use only what works best for you.

If part of the entry doesn't suit your needs, omit those lines and use the rest of the entry. For example, on a day that doesn't have margin for a bit of extra mess, skip the invitation to splash in a puddle.

In consideration for differing comfort levels with sensory experiences, some entries that involve more "rustic" elements (such as touching a bird's feather) offer a hands-on activity as well as a no-touch alternative.

Wonder takes many forms, and the activities offered try to remain accessible to people of all abilities. In some cases, alternate wording is provided in hopes of embracing children who are navigating life without sight, sound, or with differing physical abilities. No one knows your child better than you, and further modifications to meet their beautifully unique needs are wholeheartedly encouraged.

## ADVENTURE KIT

While many activities use only the materials available on the spot (no prep required!), having the following supplies on hand in a grab-and-go adventure kit will widen your possibilities.

- Crayons
- Spiral-bound notebook of unlined paper for each child's nature journal
- Basic twine or skein of yarn
- Kid-friendly scissors inside a hard-sided container
- A roll of masking tape
- A glue stick

- Sidewalk chalk
- A set of watercolor paints and paintbrushes
- A lidded container that you can fill with water for watercolor painting
- A small spray bottle for water
- A magnifying glass
- Binoculars
- Sculpting dough
- Hand-cleaning wipes or sanitizer
- Picnic blanket for on-the-go seating

Back at home, create a place to keep treasures collected on your walks. Options include:

- **Wonder Garland:** A length of twine strung across a wall, mantel, window, or elsewhere, along with small clothespins for pinning up pressed or dried leaves or flowers, twigs, etc.
- **Wonder Jar:** similar to the wonder garland, but simply place your gathered treasures into an oversized jar. It becomes a centerpiece or fun conversation piece. We keep ours on a bookshelf near the children's books so that they can see and remember their outings often.
- **Flower/leaf press** (or wax paper and heavy books)
- A **portfolio** (binder, accordion file, or memory bin) to collect keepsake wonder-art.

*Tip:* Start your adventure kit with just a few basics. Then, as you're seeking out gifts for upcoming holidays, choose some of the bigger-ticket items to build out that adventure kit over time and help it become something that's very special. Building it like this can help your child more deeply enjoy and explore each item, as opposed to giving them the whole treasure trove at once.

# THE ADVENTURE BEGINS



## PAUSE.....

*A journey is waiting to lend  
marvels, ideas, as friends.  
Where sky is the ceiling  
and you'll get the feeling  
adventure is just 'round the bend.*

*We'll see many joys today,  
treasures to help light the way.  
These sights and this story,  
these glimpses of glory  
show miracles every day.*

*As you step foot outside of your door,  
keep watch for surprises and more.  
A bug or a cloud,  
sounds quiet or loud,  
and thoughts that can make our hearts soar!*

## PONDER.....

Did you know that God knew just where you would be today? He knows what we're about to explore, and there are so many wonders to discover . . . things that when He created them, He knew you would be looking at them one day! God's Word promises He will be with us wherever we go. He'll be with us every step of the way on our adventure today!

**PRAY** .....

Thank you, Lord, for making this world for us to explore. Today, as we begin our adventure, please give us safety, and help us notice the things you have created: birds that fly, insects that crawl, weather in the sky, people passing by . . . you made them all, and you made us too. Thank you for your good creations, and for loving us!

**PLAY** .....*Favorite Things*

To help foster a sense of expectancy and anticipation, here are some questions to ask as you begin your journey:

- 1) “What do you hope you’ll see/hear/experience today?”  
Talk back and forth about their hopes and wishes, having fun with the conversation.
- 2) Tell kids to be on the lookout for a *favorite* thing they see, hear, feel, or learn. Say, “When we come back, we’ll share our favorite things!” This invites adventurers to dream and hope, but also to be on the lookout for surprise experiences that they wouldn’t have even known to dream of.
- 3) On your journey back, say, “Favorite things time!” Talk together about what they each remember and why. Ask follow-up questions, and teach them to do the same. For example, if a child says, “I liked the feather,” you might follow up with a simple “That was such a fun thing to see, wasn’t it? Can you tell me what you liked about it?” See more examples of Curiosity Questions in Further Resources at the end of this book.

PAIR.....

Sonata No. 48 in C Major,  
Hob. XVI:35: I. Allegro con brio

Joseph Haydn



*For you shall go out in joy  
and be led forth in peace . . .*

ISAIAH 55:12 ESV

*This poem can be used at the start of your very first  
adventure, or at the start of several (or all). Repeti-  
tion can offer a sense of familiarity, belonging, and  
tradition.*





# SUN



## PAUSE.....

*The sunrays fill the sky so bright  
They fill it up with warmth and light  
I close my eyes and lift my face  
and catch their falling, dashing race*

*A starlight blanket no one sees  
It covers me in galaxies  
It zinged through space and zoomed through time  
to wrap me up in light sublime*

*It lands on earth and makes things grow  
It melts the ice, sets dark aglow  
It warms the air, the wind it stirs  
Makes oceans dance in waves and whirrs.*

## PONDER.....

The sunlight you feel on your skin right now left the surface of the sun only a few minutes ago! It really was zooming through outer space, past meteors, planets, and stardust, before landing on you right now. Isn't it a wonder? If you're ever feeling down, find a patch of sunlight to sit in and think to yourself, *If God can zoom light from a star all the way here—all the way to me, right in this moment—to keep me warm and give me light . . . then He can do anything!*

## PRAY.....

Lord, when you created the world, the very first words you spoke were “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3 NIV). Light is important to

you, and you gave it to us to do wonderful things with. When we do things in the light, we pray they will help others and give you honor. Show us how you would like us to use the light today . . . and thank you, Lord, for the gift of light!

## PLAY .....

### *Sunlight Welcome Party*

To help kids grasp both the closeness and the distance of the source of our light, create an impromptu “welcome party” for those sunrays. Bring out pots and pans and wooden spoons, kazoos, or any other fun noisemakers. Set the timer for eight minutes and twenty seconds. Tell kids that’s how long it takes for rays of light to travel from the sun, all the way to us. Talk together about some of the things between us and the sun—places so cold they near absolute zero, where all motion stops. Meteors, planets, darkness—the rays of light are passing right through all of it.

Start the timer together and do something related to fill the time—perhaps coloring a “Welcome, Sunrays!” sign, or cutting up bits of confetti from construction paper. When the timer goes off, kids erupt into cheers, banging pots and pans, tossing confetti, holding up their signs. You can talk about how the sunlight isn’t alive and can’t understand what we’re doing, but we can still be excited to welcome a creation of God, which He made to miraculously travel those outer-space wilds, just to get to us and light up our lives, along with giving us warmth, helping plants grow, and nourishing our bodies (vitamin D). We can give Him thanks for providing for us in such a mighty, miraculous way. Let kids play, jumping up in sun spots, reveling in the fact that something that moments ago was grazing meteors and stardust is now landing right on them.

PAIR.....

“Polka Italienne”  
Sergei Rachmaninoff



*[Give thanks] to him who made the great lights,  
for his steadfast love endures forever;  
the sun to rule over the day . . .*

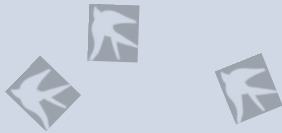
PSALM 136:7–8 ESV

*This poem is written in **iambic tetrameter**.*

*To try this fun meter in a poem of your own,  
use this rhythm and length for each line:*

**ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM ba-DUM**





# WIND

## PAUSE.....

Here it comes  
Drumming drums  
On the walls of every building  
Like the crash-and-splash-and-thrash  
Of ocean waves (*whoosh, whoosh*)

It's the wind!  
Mighty gust  
Somersaulting over mountains  
With a flurry-scurry-hurry  
Churning land (*swoosh, swoosh*)

Twirling and swirling,  
Furling, unfurling  
Going-blowing-slowing  
Then it rests  
(*shhh . . .*)

Now it's up!  
It comes back!  
Like a roundabout riddle  
It's a prance-a-dance-a-chance  
For things to fly (*oh my . . .*)

Here's a howl  
Does it scowl?  
It's a blast-a-blow-a-beast  
Or perhaps a laughing feast—  
Confetti toss (*look out!*)

Whistling and rustling,  
Bristling and bustling

Building-growing-stowing  
 Then it sighs  
 (*ah . . .*)

Now a breeze  
 Moves with ease  
 With a gallop and a skip  
 And a clip-a-dip-a-trip  
 Still far to go (*tallyho . . .*)

Then it taps  
 Blows in gaps  
 Tosses diamonds through the sky  
 With a huff-a-puff-a-scuff  
 Unwrapping cold (*brrr . . .*)

And the wind  
 That wild creature  
 Settles down, a quiet feature  
 When it **whispers-** whispers- whispers  
 Gentle things (*hush, hush . . .*)

## PONDER.....

It's fun to imagine that the wind rippling through your hair has also swooped its way over rooftops, mountains, treetops and more— and is going other places now too. The wind can feel so mighty! But just by standing there, being you, standing firm, you change the course of the wind. God uses you to make a mighty difference, even in the swirl of mighty things!

## PRAY.....

God, even though the wind is invisible, it changes the earth in all sorts of ways. Thank you that you are like this too: You can move

mountains, even though we don't see you. Please help our faith and trust in you to grow . . . and thank you for the wind!

## PLAY

### *Fly a Kite*

Bring a kite to an open-sky area and have some fun with wind-play! Help your kids feel personally connected to the activity by

- Inviting them to help assemble the kite. Coach them through age-appropriate steps.
- Giving them permanent markers to draw a picture of themselves, and/or write their name on the kite. For younger children, trace the outline of their hand on the kite. Tell them, “This means your name [or picture] will be in the air soon, way up there! How high do you think ‘you’ will go?”
- Helping them fly the kite. Depending on the wind conditions and how hard it is to get the kite up, you can get it airborne and then hand it off to them, standing by to help tug and guide the kite as needed.

## PAIR

*Maskarad (Masquerade): I. Waltz*

Aram Khachaturian



*For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind . . .  
and treads on the heights of the earth—  
the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!*

AMOS 4:13 ESV

# CLOUDS



## PAUSE.....

*Brontosaurus billowing  
Pigs and piglets pillowing  
Cloud parade—  
Cloud charade!  
Floating treetops willowing  
Fluffy stepping stones up there  
Journey through the sky  
Sunbeams playing leapfrog  
Giants passing by!*

*Rounding rises bounding  
Misty mountains mounding  
Lovelies loft,  
Wind-scapes waft,  
Cats in capes confounding*

*Shifting shadows weave up there  
into tucks of light  
Shuffling with the sunset  
Painting all things bright*

*Oceans rearranging  
Colors so engaging  
Sky's a stage  
For any age—  
Canvas ever-changing*

**PONDER**.....

Clouds are made of tiny little bits of water, like the steam that comes out of a tea kettle, floating up into the air. Even though that tea kettle was heavy when you filled it up in the sink, some of that same heavy water is now flying, as if were as light as air!

We can think of clouds as flying water too. There's so much water up there, you might even call it a flying ocean. Even though all that water is heavy, when it's up there in those little bits that make up clouds, we are safe. In fact, sometimes those clouds—those flying oceans—even help protect us from things like sunburn.

Have you ever seen how light bounces and slides along the surface of a creek as the water moves? Look at those clouds and just think: those clouds are made of water too. Can you imagine everything that sunlight is doing up there on top of those clouds right now? Sliding this way and that, bouncing off of it and reflecting onto hills and trees and mountains, creating shadows way down here. It must be fun to imagine being a sunbeam on a cloud!

**PRAY**.....

God, help us to notice the miracles of clouds. Remind us to see the way they show us you are mighty and good, creative and kind.

**PLAY**.....

Lay on some soft grass or your picnic blanket and watch the clouds for a while. Point out things you see, how things move, and marvel that the scene playing out before you is an interplay of wind, light, and flying sea . . . and it's a once-in-a-lifetime show! No one will ever see this exact display again.

### Cloud Games

- **Scavenger Hunt:** Say, “Let’s see who can spot a cloud or patch of blue sky that looks like an animal!” or “Can anyone see a cloud that’s near a tree? How about a cloud that’s moving?”
- **Charades:** Invite children to pick a creature, perhaps one they’ve spotted in the clouds, and to act it out, letting you guess what it is.

### PAIR.....

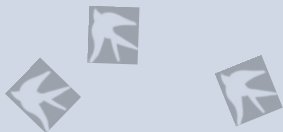
*Paquita*: Variation 5. Allegro non troppo (by Cherepnin)

Léon Fyodorovich Minkus



*He wraps up the waters in his clouds,  
yet the clouds do not burst under their weight.*

JOB 26:8 NIV



# THUNDER

## PAUSE.....

*If a noise could tumble,  
Pick you up and make you fly  
It would be the thunder  
Rolling through the sky*

*It would vault you over mountains  
It would loft you over streams  
It would bounce you in its ripples  
Like the clouds could give you wings*

*Then you'd ride that rumble,  
And slide down its rising song  
You might feel its mighty tremble  
Humming stormily along*

*You could look down at the treetops,  
You could leap on mountaintops  
You could land upon the rooftops  
Flying up to play hopscotch*

*So as you hear that thunder  
In the safety of your home  
Close your eyes and imagine  
An adventure of your own.*

## PONDER.....

When we're safe and warm inside during a thunderstorm, it's fun to imagine what it would be like to ride that rumbling sound. Don't worry; thunder doesn't *really* pick us up and carry us away. But it

is pretty amazing that something from way up in the sky could rumble through the air, sometimes so loud that we can feel it! It comes after a bolt of lightning makes the bits of air around it so very hot that those air particles dance around like crazy, bumping into each other and making all that noise. It's the sky's way of singing a song as a result of bright light!

### PRAY .....

God, the thunder feels so mighty . . . but you are mightier still! Your Word tells us that you are “mightier than the thunder of the great waters”—and that includes the bits of water and ice in the clouds, moving around and making all that noise. Thank you that thunder can remind us of how powerful you are, and how that power is always carried in your love.

### PLAY .....

#### *Thunder Hopscotch*

Using masking tape that can be easily peeled up later, create a hopscotch course on a floor inside. When the thunder starts, kids hop and see how far they can get before the thunder stops, leaving a marker on the farthest square they reached. They can try to beat that on the next go-round.

#### *Thunder Paint*

Using watercolors, invite kids to paint what they hear or see. For an extra dose of whimsical fun, put a cup outside to catch rainwater, and then let them use the rainwater to paint their scene. Marvel together in the wonder of using water that minutes ago was held above you in clouds miles up in the air! Talk together about

how the raindrops could have passed right through the source of the thunder . . . and now they're holding that water in their hands, creating something beautiful.

**PAIR**.....

For something intense to match the thunder:

*Palladio*: I. Allegretto

Karl Jenkins

For something to temper the thunder with comfort:

Cello Sonata No. 3 in A major, Op. 69:

III. Adagio cantabile

Ludwig Van Beethoven



*Mightier than the thunder of the great waters,  
mightier than the breakers of the sea—  
the LORD on high is mighty.*

PSALM 93:4 NIV

# LIGHTNING



## PAUSE.....

*Zap...*

*Zing!*

*Split-the-sky—*

***Fling!***

*Bright...*

*Slash!*

*Blink-your-eyes—*

***Flash!***

*Quick...*

*Bolt!*

*Map-the-clouds—*

***Jolt!***

## PONDER.....

Did you know that lightning is so powerful, it heats up the air around it to be five times hotter than the surface of the sun? That means that for a flash of a moment, parts of the earth are hotter than the star that heats us. How amazing! Lightning can be startling, but it also helps the earth by putting something called nitrogen into the soil that can help things grow, like the fruit we eat!

In the same way, sometimes we might feel startled by things that happen to us, but challenges can help us grow strong too.

## PRAY .....

Lord, you have created this world so that it's full of miracles. A flash of light falling to earth in the middle of the storm helps things grow . . . which helps us grow too? That's a miracle! Thank you for the way you provide good things for us. Help us to be courageous when things are scary or hard, to remember that you use those things to help us grow too . . . and that you are always, always with us! You are the light of the world, and you shine inside us even brighter than lightning.

## PLAY .....

### *Lightning Race*

On the floor, let kids arrange some yarn, spare sheets, or blankets in the shape of lightning. Then they can run alongside their creations to “map” the lightning with their feet. For deeper interaction with the storm, anyone can shout out, “Lightning!” when they see a flash of lightning outside, and kids can jump as high as they can, hands in the air, and then continue their race.

### *Lightning Sculpt*

For a quieter activity, bring out the sculpting dough and invite kids to sculpt clouds, lightning bolts, and raindrops, laying them out on the surface in a storm design. Or, they could squish/roll their dough into a flat “canvas” and carve a storm scene into it using a plastic knife or other tool.

**PAIR**.....

For something striking to match the lightning:

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67: I. Allegro con brio

Ludwig Van Beethoven

For something less ominous but still jaunty and “zig-zaggy,”  
for those who could use something lighter in the middle of a storm:

“Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen”

Edvard Grieg



*He causes the clouds to rise over the whole earth.*

*He sends the lightning with the rain  
and releases the wind from his storehouses.*

PSALM 135:7 NLT

*Some lightning flashes within its own cloud,  
Some goes from cloud to earth,  
and some jumps from cloud to cloud!*

