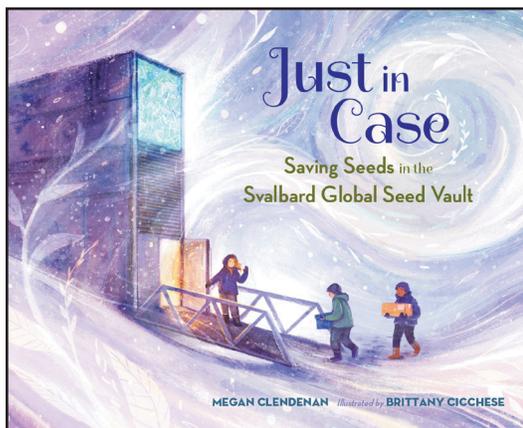


Just in Case

ACTIVITY KIT

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978-1-62354-480-5 HC
by Megan Clendenan
illustrated by Brittany Cicchese

About the Book

On the Arctic island of Spitsbergen in Norway, polar bears roam and there are no gardens, forests, or fields. But buried deep underground, the Svalbard Seed Vault protects more than 580 million seeds with plenty of room for more.

How and why was the vault built? What's it like inside? How does the vault protect the seeds? Learn all about how we safeguard the greatest treasure on earth—seeds for our food.

About the Author

Megan Clendenan has worked for nonprofit organizations focused on environmental law, women's empowerment, and urban food security. She is the author of a number of books, including *Fresh Air*, *Clean Water: Our Right to a Healthy Environment* and *Cities: How Humans Live Together*. She lives near Vancouver, British Columbia, where she enjoys growing vegetables in her yard as well as spending time with her family in the forest near her home.

About the Illustrator

Brittany Cicchese enjoys capturing emotion above all else, from expressive portraits to moody illustrations. She is the illustrator of *The Kitten Story: A Mostly True Tale* and *No More Señora Mimí*. When Brittany isn't sketching or writing, you can find her working at the library, reading a good fantasy or sci-fi book, or hiking around the beautiful Rocky Mountains. Brittany lives in Denver, Colorado.

★ **"This tale has an unusual ecological theme that makes seed preservation not only an essential task, but sacred one. A must-have story for all libraries."**

—*School Library Journal*, starred review



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Discussion Questions

Use these conversation starters to get kids thinking and learning.

Pre-reading

1. Ask students to look at the front cover. What do they see? What do they think the book is about? Have students write down their predictions. (Use Printable #1: Predictions and Surprises.)
2. Have students look at the endpapers on the inside cover and end of the book. What do they think these visuals have to do with the story?

Post-reading

1. Discuss the predictions that students wrote prior to reading the story. Were their predictions correct? What surprised them about the story?
2. What challenges did the Svalbard Global Seed Vault team face when building their seed vault in the mountain?
3. Ask students what they think is a 'priceless treasure'? Are seeds treasure? Why or why not?
4. Why is it important to save seeds?
5. Have students ever grown something from a seed? Would they like to? What would they grow?

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Connection Activities

Extension activities to connect *Just in Case* with your English language arts, science, and social studies curricula!

English Language Arts

Writing Activity: Describe a Scene from the Book

Ask students to choose a favorite page from *Just in Case* and write their own description of the scene. What animals do they see? What colors and plants? How does the scene make them feel?

- Use Printable #2: Describe a Scene.

Poetry Activity: Plant a Shape Poem

Our words can grow into something beautiful! A shape poem (also called a concrete poem) has words that are arranged on the page in the shape of the poem's subject. Students can brainstorm words or use words from the list provided to create their own shape poems. Students can choose to shape their poem like the seed vault, a mountain, a garden, or something else from the book that interests them. They can use their words more than once as they construct their shape poem.

- Use Printable #3: Plant a Shape Poem!

Social Studies

Compare and Contrast

Just in Case features scenes from a wide range of climates, geographies, and landscapes, from the Arctic to apple orchards to cornfields. Introduce a compare-and-contrast activity for students. For example, discuss what the climate, geography, and landscape look like near the seed vault on the Arctic island of Spitsbergen. How does that compare and contrast with the farming scenes in other locations? What animals are found in different locations?

As a class, with partners or groups, or independently, have students brainstorm ideas and write them down. For younger students, this could be a facilitated whole-class activity or encourage students to draw instead of write.

- Use Printable #5: Compare and Contrast.

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Connection Activities

Extension activities to connect *Just in Case* with your English language arts, science, and social studies curricula!

Science

Plant a Seed!

Materials:

- A small container, pot, or plastic cup for each student
- Seeds (i.e. radishes, peas, marigolds, etc.)
- Soil
- Containers for watering
- Printable #4: Seed Observation Journal

Steps:

- Plant: Have each student plant one seed in a cup of soil.
- Sunlight: Place plants near a sunny window.
- Water: Gently water the soil daily.
- Predict: Ask students how long they think the seeds will take to sprout. Have them record this in their journals.
- Observe and Record: Students observe their plant each day. They can record what they see in their journal, noting size, changes, etc.

Discussion:

- What do students notice happens? How do sunlight and water help their seeds? What do they think will happen if they don't water their seeds? Did all the seeds sprout?

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Further Reading

Enrich the reading experience and extend learning by pairing *Just in Case* with these other resources!

Gardening and Agriculture

- Archer, Joe, and Caroline Craig. *Plant, Cook, Eat! A Children's Cookbook*. Charlesbridge, 2018.
- Arnold, Caroline. *Planting a Garden in Room 6*. Charlesbridge, 2022.
- Castaldo, Nancy, and Ginnie Hsu. *The World That Feeds Us*. Quarto Group USA, 2023.
- Mullen, Diane, and Oriol Vidal. *One Little Lot: The 1-2-3s of an Urban Garden*. Charlesbridge, 2020.
- Piñeyro-Nelson, Alma, Daniela Sosa-Peredo, Emmanuel González-Ortega, and Elena R. Álvarez-Buylla. "There Is More to Corn than Popcorn and Corn on the Cob!" *Frontiers for Young Minds*, December 13, 2017. <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2017.00064>.
- Portis, Antoinette. *A Seed Grows*. Holiday House, 2022.
- Rattini, Kristin Baird. *Seed to Plant*. National Geographic Kids, 2014.

Social-Emotional Topics

- Lin, Grace. *The Ugly Vegetables*. Charlesbridge, 2001. *A girl learns to see value in the "ugly vegetables" her mother grows in their yard.*
- Michalak, Jamie, and Jenna Nahyun Chung. *The Sunshine Garden: Being a Team Player*. Charlesbridge, 2024. *Mia and friends learn patience and teamwork as they help a neighbor with his garden.*
- Reul, Sarah Lynne. *Beansprout*. Charlesbridge, 2025. *A kid copes with deep disappointment when his seed doesn't sprout.*

Web Resources

- Svalbard Global Seed Vault
www.seedvault.no
- Crop Trust
www.croptrust.org
- Seed Savers
www.seedsavers.org
- The Edible Schoolyard Project, "Edible Education Curricula." <https://edibleschoolyard.org/edible-education-curricula>.
- The New York Botanical Garden, "School Gardening 101." <https://www.nybg.org/education/childrens-education/schools-teachers/resources/school-gardening-101>.
- USDA Curricula and Learning Resources
<https://www.usda.gov/farming-and-ranching/agricultural-education-and-outreach/resources-educators-and-community-leaders/curricula-and-learning-resources>

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Printable #1

Predictions and Surprises

Name: _____

Date: _____

Before reading or listening to the book, look at the cover of *Just in Case*. Write down your prediction of what you think the story will be about.

After reading or listening to the book, what surprised you about the story? Were your predictions correct?

My Prediction

What Surprised Me

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Printable #2

Describe a Scene

Name: _____

Date: _____

Choose a favorite page from *Just in Case*. Draw and write your own description of the scene. What animals do you see? What colors and plants? People? How does the scene make you feel?



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Printable #3

Plant a Shape Poem!

Name: _____

Date: _____

A shape poem has words that are arranged on the page in the shape of the poem's subject. Choose words from the word bank below or use your own words from *Just in Case*. Make a shape poem out of your chosen words. Your shape could be a flower, a garden, a mountain, a seed vault, or something else from the book that you like. *Hint: You can use words more than once to make your shape!*

SEED

FARMER

SAVING

VAULT

TREASURE

ARCTIC

ICE

PLANT

MOUNTAIN

GARDEN

FOOD

FUTURE

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Printable #4

Seed Observation Journal

Name: _____

Date: _____

Use this log to track the progress of your seeds!

How long do you think the seeds will take to sprout? Write down your guess.

My Prediction

Date:

I observe:

Date:

I observe:

Date:

I observe:

Date:

I observe:

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Printable #5

Compare and Contrast

Name: _____

Date: _____

Choose a spread from *Just in Case* that shows Spitsbergen: What do you see? What animals? What is the weather and geography?

The Arctic Island of Spitsbergen

Choose a farming page from *Just in Case*: What do you see? What animals? What is the weather and geography?

A Farm or Field



WHEN DO I SAVE MY SEEDS?



Learn more about seed saving at the Seed Savers Exchange
<https://seedsavers.org>

Many plants do not have mature seeds that are ready to save until they're well past being good to eat. Look up info about your plant to make sure you're harvesting seeds at the right time!

Beans & Peas: Harvest when pods are brown, dry, and brittle. Seeds should be extremely hard.

Corn: Harvest when husks are brown, dry, and brittle, and the silks are dark and dry. Seeds should be extremely hard.

Cucumbers: Harvest when fruit is turning yellow and the skin toughens. Seeds should be plump and firm.

Eggplant: Harvest when fruit is turning yellow and the skin toughens. Seeds should be plump and crunchy.

Squash: Harvest when the skin has become extremely hard and store up to two months in a cool place before collecting seeds. Seeds should be plump and firm.

Tomatoes: Harvest when the fruit is ready to eat.

Melons: Harvest when fruit is ready to eat or wait until it softens slightly on the vine. Seeds should be plump and firm.

Peppers: Harvest when the fruit is ready to eat.

Lettuce: Harvest two to three weeks after the flowers have opened.



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Printable #7

MY SEED TREASURE GARDEN

*Seeds are valuable treasures for our future. They can be saved anywhere by anyone—even you!
Write down what seeds you want to save for your garden
and use the dot grid to plan where you will plant them.*



My Seeds to Save

My Treasure Garden

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