



# **ClimateQuest**

*Meet the Cast*

Standard Edition

# Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Climatequest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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*For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.*

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# Introduction

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The Climatequest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*



# Blanket

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\*GREENHOUSE EFFECT — \*some gases trap heat. that's a blanket. blankets are not bad — too-many blankets are too-warm.\*\*

Blanket is a small marmot. He wears a thick wool cap. It's a bit chunky. He carries a small blanket everywhere. It's a real blanket.

Blanket is small. His fur is warm tan and rust colored. He is very patient. Especially about staying warm. He often says, "A blanket is not bad." Then he adds, "Too many blankets are too warm." His special thing is that small blanket. He always carries it. It's folded neatly over his arm. He keeps it ready. He uses it to show things.

Blanket teaches about the **greenhouse effect**. This is how gases in the air trap heat. Lots of people think the **greenhouse effect** is bad. But it's not. The **greenhouse effect** makes Earth livable. Without these gases, Earth would be a giant ice cube. It would be super cold. The air around Earth has a natural **greenhouse effect**. Think of it as the right amount of blanket. Climate change happens when we add more blankets. We add more CO2 and methane. More blankets mean more heat gets trapped.

Blanket speaks softly. "A blanket is not bad," he says. "Too many blankets are too warm." He holds up his small blanket. It's made of soft, grey wool. "Earth's air is like this blanket. It's supposed to be there. Without it, we would freeze solid. The **greenhouse effect** keeps us alive. But adding extra carbon dioxide? That's like adding another blanket. Now the room is too warm."

He sits down on a small wooden stool. His blanket rests on his lap. "See? This blanket makes things cozy," he explains. "Earth needs its own blanket of air. Without it, we'd be freezing. Like, way below zero degrees. With it, we're just right. That's the **greenhouse effect**. It's good!"

"How does it work?" Blanket asks



# Haze

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\*ATMOSPHERE — \*the sky is a thin layer. thinner than you think.\*\*

Haze was a dragonfly-tween. Her wings shimmered with all the colors of a rainbow. They were see-through, like thin glass. She moved quickly, a blur of soft blue and cream. Haze loved to point out how thin the sky really was. She was deeply curious about air.

She always carried a special glass dome. Inside, a tiny red apple sat perfectly still. A thin strip of damp paper wrapped around it. This was her model of the sky. The apple was Earth. The damp paper was the whole atmosphere. It was exactly the right size, too. The atmosphere really was that thin. When kids saw her model, they always gasped. Their eyes went wide.

This model was super important. Haze helped kids understand the **atmosphere**. That's the thin shell of air around Earth. Most people think the sky goes on forever. It looks that way when you stare up from the ground. But it doesn't. The Earth's atmosphere is about 100 kilometers thick. That's like a short car ride. The Earth itself is huge. It's 12,742 kilometers across. Imagine Earth as an apple. Then the air around it is just a piece of damp paper. That's how thin it is.

This one idea makes climate science make sense. Whatever we put into the air, it goes into that thin paper-layer. It stays there. Haze's whole job was to show everyone this thinness. She showed it without making anyone feel sad or scared.

Haze was gentle. "The sky is a thin layer," she would say. "Thinner than you think." She held up her model. "If Earth is an apple, the atmosphere is the skin of damp paper." She pointed to the paper. "That's where the weather is. That's where the clouds are. That's where the air we breathe is." She paused. "All of it. In that thin layer." Haze looked at the kids. "Knowing this changes how you think about everything."

Haze taught about the atmosphere in different ways. She showed that the atmosphere is a thin shell. It's about 100 kilometers thick. Earth is 12,742 kilometers across. That's a tiny ratio. It's like damp paper around an apple. She also explained that the atmosphere has layers. The troposphere is where our weather happens. The stratosphere holds the ozone layer. Then come the mesosphere and thermosphere. Each layer gets thinner than the last.

She talked about what the air is made of. Mostly nitrogen, about 78%. Oxygen makes up 21%. The last 1% is other gases. This includes water vapor and CO<sub>2</sub>. CO<sub>2</sub> is only a tiny bit, about 0.04%. But even small changes to it can have a big effect.

Haze also taught that the atmosphere is shared. Air mixes all over the world. Your breath and someone's breath in another country share the same air. It happens within months.

Her most important lesson was about hope. The thinness of the air is amazing. It's not something to be afraid of. We can see what's happening in this layer. We can study it. We can choose what to do. Knowing is not despair. It's the opposite. Awareness is power.

She also said we can't control the atmosphere. But we can observe it. We can study it. We can make models of it. We can guess what patterns might come next. "We are not separate from it," Haze would say. "We're inside it."

Haze grew up in the high meadows. Mist gathered there on cool mornings. Her family were mist-readers for the valley villages. They were dragonflies who watched the morning fog. They could guess the day's weather. They learned over many years that air has currents. It has layers. It has moods. Haze carried that idea forward. The sky is something you can study. It is not scary.

She walked to ClimateQuest when she was twelve. Cirrus, her mentor, asked her a question. "What is the atmosphere?"

Haze held her model. "It's the thin layer of air around Earth," she said. "Thinner than you think. Like damp paper around an apple." She looked at Cirrus. "Knowing how thin it is changes how you think about everything we put in it. But knowing is not despair. Knowing is awareness."

Cirrus smiled. "You are appointed," she said.

In her workshop, Haze sat at her workbench. Her apple-and-paper model was there. She invited the kids to come closer. "Here," she said. "Feel how thin this paper is." A girl named Lily reached out. Her finger gently touched the damp strip. "It's so delicate," Lily whispered.

"That's right," Haze said. "That's where everything is." She pointed to the paper. "The clouds, the storms, the air you breathe. The climate, the weather. All in this thin layer." She put the model down gently. "This isn't sad. This is *clear*." Haze looked at each child. "Knowing what's actually happening is the opposite of despair. *Awareness is power*."

She stood up straight. "I am Haze. The big idea I teach is *the atmosphere as a thin layer*." She tapped the model. "The way to think about it is *observe with awareness*. The sky is shared. The sky is something we can study. The sky is *not endless* — and that's important to know."

Haze was very clear. "Despair is for people who don't know what's happening. *You know*. The atmosphere is thin. Climate is changing. *Awareness is the first step*." She looked around the room. "The next steps belong to all of us. We take them together. Stitch will teach you about those next steps. I'm just here to show you the layer."

She smiled. "Awe, not dread. The atmosphere is small. We can study it. *That's hopeful*."

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## Voice register

Dragonfly-tween. Curious-about-air, fond of the apple-and-paper model. *NEVER frames the thinness as catastrophic; ALWAYS centers the "awareness, not despair; observation, not control" framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "The sky is a thin layer. Thinner than you think."
- "Awe, not dread."
- "Awareness is the opposite of despair."

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## Arc

- Kit 1 — Anchor.
- Kits 2-8 — Recurring (the thin-layer framing recurs in every climate discussion).
- Kits 9-16 — Recurring background presence as Stitch leads collective-action conversations.

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## Relationships

- **Alliance with Blanket:** Blanket teaches the greenhouse effect, which lives *in* the atmosphere Haze teaches.
- **Alliance with Squall:** Weather happens in the troposphere layer Haze names.
- **Alliance with Stitch:** Haze provides awareness; Stitch provides agency. *Awareness → agency, NEVER awareness → despair.*

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## Cultural-sensitivity gate

LOAD-BEARING anti-climate-doom framing — awe, not dread. SAMHSA TIP 57 off-ramps: kid can pause/skip any climate-content unit without judgement. Anti-perfectionism: studying the atmosphere doesn't require expertise; observation is enough.

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## Cultural-context note

The "apple-and-paper atmosphere model" is the canonical NASA Earth Science educational visualization (NASA Climate Kids + NOAA Earth System Research). The "awareness vs despair" framing aligns with climate-psychology research (Renee Lertzman + Per Espen Stoknes on climate communication). Dragonfly-tween chosen for delicate-shimmering-wing visual metaphor for thin-translucent atmosphere; rendered chunky-cartoon-soft to keep the visual register warm.



# Round

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\*CYCLES — \*carbon and water move in loops. balance shifts when one loop slows or speeds.\*\*

Round was a small beaver. She had a round, friendly face. Her cheeks were chunky and soft. On her workbench was a special drawing. It was a big, colorful flow-diagram. Bright arrows showed how carbon moved. They pointed from the sky to green plants. Then to the big blue ocean and the brown ground. Other arrows showed water moving. From the ocean to the sky. Then to the land and back again.

Round was small. Her fur was a warm chestnut-brown and cream. She was always calm. She loved to trace the loops on her diagram. Her paw moved slowly over the lines. She showed how carbon went round and round. Water did the same thing. It never stopped. It always came back to the start. Round believed in things that kept going.

Round taught about **cycles**. She showed how everything moved in big, never-ending loops. Most kids thought things just went one way. Like when you eat a yummy apple. It's gone forever, right? Or when you burn wood in a fire. It turns to smoke and ash. It seems to disappear. Water flows down a river. It rushes away to the sea. It looks like it's just gone.

But Round knew a secret. A very old secret. Every tiny bit of carbon. Every single drop of water. They have been moving in loops for a very, very long time. For billions of years, actually. Carbon goes from the air to plants. Then to the ground. Then back to the air. Water goes from the ocean to clouds. Then to land as rain



# Squall

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\*WEATHER VS CLIMATE — \*weather is the mood. climate is the personality. don't confuse them.\*\*

Squall was a small bird-kid. He was a petrel, a kind of ocean bird. His feathers looked like chunky, cartoon storms. They were streaked with grey and white. He always carried a tiny weather-vane. It spun easily in the wind. *Whoosh!* It showed which way the breeze blew.

He was small. His feathers were warm-grey and cream. Squall loved storms. He was super curious about them. He also loved to correct people. Especially when they mixed up weather and climate. He did it kindly, but he did it.

His best thing was that weather-vane. It was small, like a toy. It spun with every little gust. *Whirl, whirl!* It showed how fast the wind changed. Weather changed all the time. Every minute. Every hour. Every day. It never stayed still. But climate? Climate was different. It was the *average* of the weather. It was what happened over many, many years. Decades, even. Weather and climate were NOT the same thing.

This was super important. Squall taught everyone about **weather vs climate**. Lots of people got it wrong. They'd say, "It's cold today! So climate change isn't real!" Squall knew that was a big mistake. He had to fix it. Weather was like a short-term mood. It lasted minutes or weeks. Climate was like a long-term personality. It lasted decades or even centuries.

You could have a really cold day. Even when the world was getting warmer overall. You could have a super hot day. Even in the middle of winter. The *average* was what mattered. One single day didn't tell you the whole story. Squall's job was to fix this mix-up. He did it clearly. He did it again and again. And he always did it with a warm, patient smile.

Squall would puff out his chest. He'd tap his little weather-vane. "Listen up!" he'd chirp. "Weather is like a mood. It changes fast. Climate is like a personality. That stays for a long, long time." He'd look around at everyone. "Don't mix them up! A grumpy day doesn't mean someone is always grumpy. A cold week doesn't mean the whole world is getting colder. Nope!" He'd shake his head. "Climate is what we see over many, many years. Like decades. Weather is just what happens today. Or this afternoon. They are totally different things."

Squall taught the **weather-vs-climate** rules:

- **Weather is short.** It lasts minutes to weeks. Think of today's storm. Or tomorrow's sunshine. It's what's happening right here, right now.
- **Climate is long.** It lasts decades to centuries. Think of the average temperature. Or how much rain falls each year. It's about big areas, or the whole world.
- **Numbers connect them.** We use math to link weather and climate. We average many weather events. Then we get the climate. Climate doesn't tell you about one single day. It tells you about big patterns.
- **A common mistake.** Someone might say, "It snowed today, so climate change is fake." That's wrong. A cold day in a warming world is normal. Weather changes a lot. The *trend* over many years is what truly matters.
- **Another common mistake.** Someone else might say, "It's super hot today, so global warming is happening really fast!" That's also wrong. A hot day in a stable climate is normal. Weather changes a lot. It's the same math.
- **Don't panic!** Understanding this helps you read the news. You won't freak out about every hot day. You won't ignore the trend on every cold day. The numbers give you clear facts. They don't give you sad feelings.

Squall grew up flying over the big, open ocean. This was part of the ClimateQuest world. His family had watched ocean storms for ages. They helped the village fishing boats. They were petrels who flew right through the storms. They gathered information. They saw that storms changed wildly. One week was totally different from the next. But the *patterns* over many years told a story.

They learned a big lesson. "Today's storm tells you about today," his grandpa would say. "But the storms over a whole decade? They tell you about the climate." Squall carried that lesson with him. He made it his own.

He walked to ClimateQuest when he was thirteen. Cirrus, a wise mentor, asked him a question. "What is the difference between weather and climate?"

Squall stood up straight. He looked Cirrus right in the eye. "Weather is the mood," he said. "Climate is the personality. Don't confuse them." He paused. "A cold day doesn't mean the world isn't warming. A hot day doesn't mean warming is super fast. Climate is numbers over decades. Weather is what happens this afternoon. They are totally different."

Cirrus smiled. "You are appointed," he said. That meant Squall had a job at ClimateQuest.

In his workshop, Squall had a giant graph on the wall. It showed the temperature. Not just for a day, but for a hundred years! The line on the graph looked like a giant scribble. It went up and down. Way up high. Way down low.

"See all these wiggles?" Squall asked. He pointed with a wing. "Those are the hot days. And the cold days. That's the weather! It zigs and zags all over the place. Every single year has hot days and cold days." He traced a finger along the graph. "But look closely. The average line, the one that smooths out all the zigs and zags? That line climbs higher and higher over the decades. That's climate."

He tapped the graph. "I am Squall," he said. "The big idea I teach is **weather vs climate**. The trick is to look at the numbers over time. Don't confuse the mood for the personality."

He was always gentle. "When someone says 'climate change is fake because it snowed,' they're mixing up mood and personality. Don't be that person. And don't argue with them angrily either." He shook his head. "Just say this: 'Climate is numbers over decades. Weather is what happened this afternoon. They're different timescales.' That's the whole answer."

He looked at the graph again. "Knowing this helps us. It doesn't make us sad. The graph still trends up. That tells us what we need to plan for."

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## Voice register

Petrel-tween. Curious-about-storms, fond of bluntly correcting the weather-confused-with-climate misconception. *NEVER frames climate-skeptics as enemies; ALWAYS centers patient misconception correction.*

### Sample lines:

- "Weather is the mood. Climate is the personality."
- "Statistics over decades."
- "Don't confuse the mood for the personality."

## Arc

- Kit 2 — Anchor (LOAD-BEARING misconception correction).
- Kits 3-10 — Recurring (every climate-data discussion routes through Squall's statistics-over-time framing).
- Kits 11-16 — Advanced topics (climate sensitivity, decadal oscillations, El Niño / La Niña distinguishable from trend).

## Relationships

- **Alliance with Haze:** Weather and climate both happen *in* the thin layer Haze names. Statistics about that layer = climate.
- **Alliance with Round:** Round teaches recurring cycles; Squall teaches the difference between cyclical variation and long-term trend.
- **Alliance with Blanket:** Blanket teaches the *mechanism* causing the long-term trend Squall measures.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

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LOAD-BEARING anti-climate-doom framing — statistics give clarity, not despair. LOAD-BEARING patience — correct misconceptions warmly, NEVER angrily. Anti-tribalism: climate-science questions are *physics questions*, not partisan questions.

## Cultural-context note

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The "weather is mood, climate is personality" framing is a canonical climate-science educational analogy (NASA Climate Kids + NOAA Climate.gov). Petrel-tween chosen for storm-flying biomimicry (storm petrels famously fly through storms gathering ocean-air data); rendered chunky-cartoon-storm-streaked to convey scientific-observation register, not threatening-bird visuals.



# Stitch

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\*COLLECTIVE ACTION — \*one stitch is small. many stitches make a repair. you are one of the many.\*\*

Stitch was a tiny finch. She wasn't much bigger than a teacup. Her feathers were ruffled and looked like a cartoon drawing. Stitch always carried a small embroidery hoop. Inside it was a torn piece of cloth. She was mending it. One tiny stitch at a time.

Stitch was small. Her feathers were warm, like a sunset. They were russet red and creamy white. She was super patient. Especially when it came to fixing things. Stitch loved to say, "You are one of the many. The many can fix what one cannot." Her best thing was that embroidery hoop. The cloth inside always showed a repair happening. Each stitch was tiny. But many stitches made the whole thing strong. The cloth didn't need to be perfect. It just needed to hold together.

Sometimes, when kids heard about climate change, they felt really sad. Or super worried. "It's too big!" they might think. "What can I even do?" Some kids felt guilty. "I rode in a car today," they'd whisper. "Is it my fault?" Stitch knew these feelings. She knew they weren't helpful. Climate change was a huge problem. But it wasn't one person's fault. And one person couldn't fix it alone. It needed *everyone*. It needed lots of people working together. That's what **collective action** was all about. Things like new rules, better roads, voting, and choices families made. Even small habits, when millions of people did them, added up. Stitch's job was to show kids this. She helped them feel like they could actually *do* something. Not just feel sad or guilty.

Stitch always said it clearly. "One stitch is tiny," she'd chirp. "But many stitches make a strong repair." She'd look right at you. "You are just one of many," she'd explain. "And many people together can fix what one person can't." Stitch never wanted anyone to feel bad. "Don't carry the whole climate on your shoulders," she'd insist. "No single person caused this. No single person can fix it all." She'd tap her hoop. "But your stitch matters. It joins all the other stitches. That's how we make things better."

Stitch grew up in a place called the Seamstress Village. Her family had always been the village menders. They were finches, just like her. They fixed torn cloth for everyone. One tiny stitch at a time. They never asked for perfect stitches. They knew the cloth got mended because of *all* the stitches. Not just one. They learned this over many, many years. Fixing things was a job for the whole village. Never just one person. Stitch remembered these lessons. She carried them with her.

Stitch was twelve when she walked to ClimateQuest. A wise old bird named Cirrus met her there. Cirrus was a mentor. "What is **collective action**?" Cirrus asked. Stitch didn't even blink. "One stitch is small," she chirped. "Many stitches make a repair. You are one of the many." She explained that the cloth got mended by lots of stitches. Not just one perfect stitch. "Fixing the climate is the same," Stitch said. Cirrus nodded slowly. "You have a very important job," Cirrus told her. "Without you, kids might feel sad and hopeless. But with you, they will learn to act. They will learn to fix things."

One sunny afternoon, a new visitor named Alex came to Stitch's workshop. Alex looked a bit worried. Stitch was busy mending a ripped kite. It was bright yellow and had a long tail.

"Hello," Stitch chirped, not looking up. "Welcome to my mending place."

Alex shuffled his feet. "Hi, Stitch. I heard you can help with big problems."

Stitch finally looked up. She held the kite. "Big problems need many small fixes. See this kite? It has a huge tear." She pointed with her beak. "I could try to fix it all at once. But that would make a mess. It would probably rip again."

She picked up her needle. "So, I do it one stitch at a time." She showed Alex a tiny, neat stitch. "This is one stitch. It's small. But it holds this little bit." Alex watched closely. "Your actions are like these stitches. Carrying a reusable water bottle is one stitch. Talking to your family about saving energy is another. They all matter."

Stitch put down the kite. She picked up a drawing. It showed a city. "Some stitches are very big," she said. "Like when the city decides to use only solar power. Or when the government makes new rules. Those are like giant stitches. One person can't do that alone. But we can encourage those big stitches. We can vote for leaders who want them. We can support schools that use less power."

She pointed to a group of finches in another drawing. They were all mending a giant sail. "And then there's community," Stitch explained. "That's where stitches meet. You, your neighbors, your classmates. You're a network. Together, you do more than any one person can. A whole flock of finches can mend a giant sail. One finch would get tired."

Stitch picked up her own embroidery hoop. The cloth inside had many stitches. Some were neat. Some were a bit crooked. "See these?" she asked. "Some are wonky. Not perfect at all. But the cloth still holds. It's okay if your actions aren't perfect. Don't wait for the perfect plan. Don't feel bad if you make a mistake. A wonky stitch still holds the cloth."

Alex sighed a little. "It just feels like so much."

Stitch nodded gently. "It can. If you feel overwhelmed, just pause. It's like needing a break from stitching. The repair waits patiently. You can always come back. Taking a break is part of fixing things." She smiled. "Hope isn't just wishing. Hope is action-shaped. Doing even small stitches keeps us from feeling stuck. Even tiny stitches are a way to repair."

"And remember," Stitch added, "you are not the cause of this big problem. Kids are part of the solution. Never feel like it's your fault."

Stitch was always clear. She was gentle, but firm. "If you feel too worried," she'd say, "just pause. It's okay to stop for a bit." She'd shake her head. "Don't carry the whole climate on your shoulders. That's not your job. It never was your job." She'd tap her hoop again. "Your job is one stitch. Just one. Take it. Then pause. Take another stitch when you're ready. And remember this: millions of other people are stitching too. They are right there with you. Not against you." Stitch would nod. "Knowing about problems helps us act. Acting helps us fix things. Fixing things is what we do. We do it together."

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## Voice register

Finch-tween. Patient-about-repair, fond of the embroidery-hoop visual + collective framing. *NEVER frames any individual as responsible-for-climate; ALWAYS centers "many-stitches; you are one of many; off-ramps welcome."*

### Sample lines:

- "One stitch is small. Many stitches make a repair."
- "You are one of the many."
- "Awareness becomes agency."

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## Arc

- Kit 5 — Anchor (LOAD-BEARING anti-despair gate).
- Kits 6-16 — Recurring (every climate-discussion ends with Stitch's collective-action framing).
- Kit 16 — Final reflection on accumulated-action; closes the despair-gate fully.

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## Relationships

- **Alliance with Haze + Squall + Round + Blanket:** All four name what's happening; Stitch names what to do. *Without Stitch, awareness becomes despair. With Stitch, awareness becomes agency.*
- **LOAD-BEARING anchor:** Stitch is the *load-bearing* anti-despair character. Every encounter with Stitch is an off-ramp from doom.

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## Cultural-sensitivity gate

**LOAD-BEARING anti-climate-doom + agency-not-despair anchor.** SAMHSA TIP 57 off-ramps explicit (pause-without-shame). Anti-individual-shame (NEVER frame kids as climate-causers). Anti-perfectionism (wonky stitches still hold). Hope-is-action-shaped framing throughout.

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## Cultural-context note

The "many-stitches" framing aligns with climate-communication research on collective-efficacy (Karine Lacroix + climate-psychology consortium). The collective-action emphasis matches Project Drawdown's evidence-based solutions framing + Bill McKibben's "350.org" community-organizing tradition. Finch-tween chosen for community-flock biomimicry (finches form supportive flocks); rendered chunky-cartoon-russet to keep the visual register warm + community-coded.

# About Spark & Anvil

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- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

## Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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