Glossary for NIGHT BECOMES DAY: CHANGES IN NATURE

by Cynthia Argentine, book © Millbrook Press / Lerner Publishing Group, 2021

airborne – floating in or carried by air

ancient – very old

asteroid – a large rock flying through space and orbiting the Sun

atom – the smallest unit of matter in a chemical element; atoms make up everything in the universe

biology – the science of living things

botany – a branch of biology that focuses on plants

cavern – a cave or large room within a cave

century – a period of one hundred years

chemistry – the science of what things are made of and how they interact; chemistry involves the tiniest building blocks of all things, including atoms and molecules

chrysalis – a butterfly or moth in the stage of life between a caterpillar and adult; it lives inside an outer case during this period

condense – to bring together more tightly; in chemistry and physics, this means for molecules to connect so that a substance changes from a gas into a liquid or solid

crystallize – to make tight and focused; in chemistry and physics, this means having molecules or atoms connect in a precise pattern so that a substance becomes a crystal

decay – to rot or break down; in biology, microbes usually assist with this process

decomposed – rotted; broken down by decay

dissolve – to disappear in a liquid, such as when salt is stirred into water; the salt is still present, it has just changed form and been incorporated into something new called a solution

dormant – resting or sleeping; inactive

drab – plain or dull; not colorful

eons – very long periods of time

erode – to wear away; often it means to be carried or washed away by wind or water

evaporate – to disappear by changing into a gas; when a puddle dries up, the water still exists, but it has changed from a liquid into a gas in the air

fragile – delicate or easily broken

fungi – a category of living things that reproduce by spores; includes mushrooms and molds (plural of fungus)

gems – stones that are considered beautiful and especially valuable

geology – the science of rocks, minerals, and landforms and how they change over time

glacier – a large area of ice (from packed snow) on the ground; it has the power to carve the surface of Earth as it moves over time

graphite – a soft, dark gray mineral made of carbon; used in pencils

gravity – the force that pulls objects downward to Earth

hibernate – to sleep during the whole winter

humus – dark soil made from decaying leaves and other organic matter

lair – a den or resting place for a wild creature

landforms – natural features of the land's surface; examples are mountains and plains

lava – hot, melted rock that erupts from a volcano

loam – rich, crumbly soil

magma – melted rock within the Earth

matter – stuff that can be touched or observed, as opposed to things like ideas; in chemistry and physics, matter refers to substances that have physical properties

mature – fully grown; adult

microbes – tiny living creatures that can only be seen with a microscope; these include bacteria and some algae and fungi

mineral – a natural component or building block of a rock, which has specific properties like color and hardness; quartz crystals are an example

molecule – the smallest unit of a chemical compound; for example, one molecule of table salt is made of one atom of sodium and one atom of chlorine attached together

physics – the science of energy, matter, and forces; this includes observable forces such as gravity and invisible ones that occur within atoms

recrystallize – to return to the form of a crystal

sapling – a young tree

spire – a slender structure with a pointed end

tendril – a thin, curling part of a plant

transforming – changing from one form or thing into another, often dramatically

volcano – a mountain that has erupted or has the potential to blast molten rock from inside the Earth; these may be on ground or under water, and they often form where tectonic plates (sheets of land) spread or collide