

## ATHENSPLUS - 6/2/2009

How do you get a serious message across without being preachy? "Oiko-peripeties" (Eco-Adventures), a new series of picture books from Papadopoulos, avoids the trap of over-earnestness by enlisting humor and a practical approach. Instead of making young readers feel guilty about the state of the planet, the book gets them to understand where things have gone wrong and suggest simple ways that they can make a difference.

And the series looks good: Illustrator Iris Samartzi is particularly good at conveying the telling details in the big picture, whether it be marine pollution or the discarded objects in a landfill that could have been saved for compost.

The first book is about trash. Author Eleni Svoronou-Sokialidi introduces the Dimitriou family at home engaged in activities that look innocent enough, but that produce a lot of unnecessary waste. Readers match the trash to the person, then decide who will collect it and how. Meanwhile, the family's garbage escapes from the bin bags, which leads to facts about how various materials are manufactured, what they can be made into if recycled and what damage they can do to land and sea if disposed of thoughtlessly.

Each book ends with a fact page. The one in the volume on trash gives statistics of how much garbage is produced in Greece, basic dos and don'ts for recycling and a list of organizations and websites for further information.

The other books- on forest and energy, and biodiversity- follow the same pattern, with an everyday experience for the Dimitriou family raising another environmental issue.

Fairy-tale characters join the family in "Forests", which demonstrates the interconnection between plant and animal life, the danger of wildfires and the global importance of tropical forest. In "Electrical Stories", a power outage gets the family thinking about how much energy they use and the effects of climate change and they learn about alternative and renewable energy sources.

The volume of biodiversity has a group of animals showing the Dimitriou children how human behavior threatens flora and fauna by destroying wetlands and other natural habitats.

The series is to be commended for making big issues easy to understand and empowering children by giving them something to do.