

# San Francisco

# Book Review

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## Leaf & the Sky of Fire: Twig Stories, Vol. 2

By Jo Marshall

CreateSpace, \$12.95, 320 pages



Jo Marshall has created an innovative story around a group of creatures called Twigs. The Twigs are very small, stick-like beings that live in knotholes of trees, existing off the bounty that the forest provides. Being so close to, and dependent on, nature, the Twigs are sensitive to changes in the seasons outside of the normal. So when a strange Twig from another forest arrives, riding a starling, Leaf and his family find themselves on an adventure saving Twigs from an invasion of Barkbiters. Barkbiters, or bark beetles, are sensitive to cold and are usually controlled by winter, which thins their ranks. However with abnormally warm winters, due to global warming, they continue to breed and invade more trees, attacking and displacing the local Twigs and killing the trees they live on.

*Leaf and the Sky of Fire* approaches the issue of global warming and the changes that occur from it on a very readable basis for tween and YA readers. While the story is fantasy, the problems are very real world. The Rocky Mountain Bark Beetle is considered at epidemic levels throughout the Western United States, affecting almost 4 million acres of forests. Using the Twigs as major characters for the story, Marshall allows for an entertaining way to educate children on how changes in one aspect of the planet (shorter and warmer winters) can have unforeseen consequences that lead to new and potentially hazardous problems.

An excellent book for middle-grade readers.

