

International Big History Association

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IBHA Members Newsletter

May 2011

And Then There Was You . . .

a Big History Children's Book
by
Erika Gronek

And Then There Was You . . . is a story about everything. It was written and illustrated for my son about 6 months after he was born. One sleep-deprived night I nursed him in a rocking chair while pondering the design of his room. I had decorated the top half of the room with Maxfield Parrish-styled clouds and a layout of the summer constellations set in glow-in-the

dark paint on the ceiling. I wanted this design to say: "the future is wide open" and "there is nowhere else to go but up." The border of the room had wall paper that was a replica of a Victorian time-chart of all of human history. It started with Adam and Eve and was up-dated with the on-goings of the present day. Staring into my son's eyes, I pondered all of the events that had to take place for all of his atoms to be aligned into his tiny form. That is when I decided to write and illustrate a children's book that accidentally hit upon all of the major themes contained in "Big History."



I wanted my son to have a firm grounding in understanding where he came from. My quandary was where to start. There was always something that came before. I had no choice but to start at the utmost beginning—the Big Bang. Out of blackness, came something. It was binary. On or off. Either something existed or it didn't. I was about to shove the deepest arguments that some of the world's best philosophers, thinkers and theologians could come up with into a children's book.

In 17 pages I tried to condense history and pre-history into its most skeletal, outline form. I covered the Big Bang, the creation of the Solar System and life on Earth, all the way through the complex

chain of events that were required to align for one individual to be born. The text guides the reader, but the images do most of the storytelling.

This IBHA Members Newsletter highlights the work being done on pre-school Big History education by Erika Gronek, pictured above with her son.

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The images illustrate multiple concepts about Big History and on many levels for adults and children. I want the child reader to ask their parents where they came from and I want the parent to start the dialogue that fills in that epic story. The story is complex. Nature is complex. Life is complex. Evolution is complex. It is like a beautiful picture of a fractal. When you look closer you see that there is more detail filling what you thought were spaces or gaps. As

children learn more about the world around them, they can embellish the framework that they have of all of history with more information and knowledge. That is part of learning and growing.

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Erika K.H. Gronek's children's book is available on both Blurb.com and Lulu.com. Mrs. Gronek received bachelor degrees from

Arizona State University in Political Science and Anthropology. She has a Master's degree from The George Washington University in Educational Technology Leadership. She is currently concluding her studies in film editing as well as her gig as a stay-at-home mother. She lives in Phoenix, Arizona with her husband and son. Her book is available at: <http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/1235501> and at <http://www.lulu.com/product/paperback/and-then-there-was-you/6403537>



IBHA members are engaged in a variety of projects that are part of Big History. Please let us know about what you are doing that is related to Big History, the books you are reading and the reflections you have.

Please plan to participate in the IBHA conference, August 3 - 5, 2012 at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. More information is at <http://ibhanet.org/>



## Call for Papers

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*"Teaching and Researching Big History:  
Exploring a New Scholarly Field"*  
IBHA Conference, August 3 - 5, 2012  
Grand Valley State University

Please provide the following information for  
an individual paper below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

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Street Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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Paper title \_\_\_\_\_

Abstract \_\_\_\_\_  
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The IBHA will be hosting the first ever international big history conference on August 3 - 5, 2012 at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The conference, whose title is "Teaching and Researching Big History: Exploring a New Scholarly Field," will be the largest gathering of big historians ever assembled. Participants will be housed in the August 2012 International Big History Conference Meijer Honors College on campus, and will participate in a range of panels, roundtables, lectures, pedagogical workshops, and other collegiate activities. At its conference and its other activities, the IBHA seeks not only to discover and create new knowledge, but to shape a future in which humanity understands its common origins and its common destiny.



To submit your paper proposal or a panel proposal online, please click on the "Conference" link on <http://ibhanet.org>.

Or please mail your proposal to:  
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