

TREE SONG

by by Tiffany Stone • illustrated by Holly Hatam

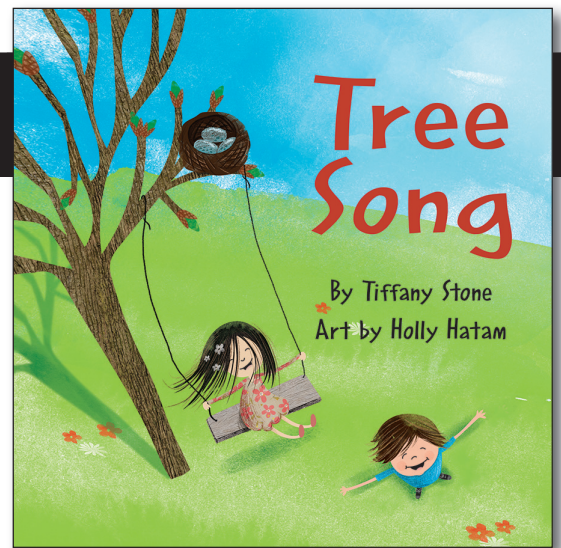
Genre: Picture book

Themes: nature; environment; seasons; habitats

Suitable for: Grades PreK–2

Guided Reading Level: N

Common Core standards : W.3.2,2a,2b,2c,2d,4,7,8,10
SL.3.1,1c,1d,1d,2,3,6
RF.3.3,3c,4,4a,4b,4b
RL.3.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10
L.3.3,3a,3b,4,4a,5,5a,5b,5b,6



TREE SONG

This joyful book follows the life cycle of a tree as it grows from seedling to mature tree, and finally gives way to a new sapling. At every stage of the tree's life, children are seen playing under its branches. Each season brings with it new sounds, whether it's the chirping of birds in the spring or the flutter flutter of leaves in the fall. As well as a home for animals, the tree provides a canopy for a summer picnic and a perfect place to hang a swing. Most important of all, when old age fells the tree, it provides an acorn from which a new tree will grow.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

These discussion questions and activities are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the book—and their own creativity. Tap into the story with language arts, science, and visual arts education connections.

THEMES

This book is ideal for introducing young children to the life cycle of a tree, seasonal changes, and poetry. Sound words, alliteration, and rhyme work together to tell the story. As the seed grows into a tree and the seasons pass, students see the many challenges the tree faces. A gentle message of respecting and caring for nature is woven into the tale, not only when a woodcutter rethinks chopping down the tree, but also in how a diverse group of children enjoys and rejoices in the forest.

GETTING READY

Ask your listeners if there are any special trees or forests in their lives. Have they gone for walks in parks or forests? What have they noticed about the trees? Do trees or forests make sounds? What kinds of sounds? Have the students demonstrate.

Ask your listeners what they know about trees in different seasons. Do these things happen to all trees? How are trees different from us? Are there ways they are the same?

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION

- Why does the seed stay silent and still for a while on the ground? What are some of the dangers it is trying to avoid and some of the things it is waiting for? Have you ever had to wait before starting something? What was it? How did it feel to wait?
- Why do you think the man stops before cutting down the tree? Can the tree really speak to the man? How do you think the man understands the tree?
- There are lots of sound words in this story. For example: “hushhhhhhhhhhhhh,” “twitter,” and “flitter flutter.” What other sound words can you find? Which is your favorite? Why?
- Why do you think that the tree has to end its song? What does that mean? Do you think the ending of the story is sad or hopeful? Why?
- *Tree-tra-la* is the tree’s special song. Do you have a special word or phrase that is like your own “song”? If so, share with the class.

ACTIVITIES

CREATE A POETREE

Attach a brown paper tree trunk and branches to a wall, door, or bulletin board. (The trunk and branches can be made with whole pages of brown construction paper taped or stapled together, or you can get as fancy as you like.) Have each student trace and cut out a handprint from green construction paper, then write a pair of rhyming words on the handprint “leaf” (e.g. bold/cold). Use the book for reference or put students’ rhyming skills to the test. Students can tape their “leaves” to the branches to make a poeTree! Use yellow, orange, and red construction paper instead of green to make a poeTree dressed in fall colors.

I AM A TREE

This book is about an oak tree, but there are many different types of trees. Have students research some other types—especially any that are local—either individually or in groups. Students can then pick one type of tree and write an “I Am” poem about it, beginning with “I am a [type of tree],” followed by three to five facts about that type of tree. They can illustrate the poem with a picture of the tree’s leaf and its seeds.

Example poems:

I am a maple tree.
Delicious syrup is made from my sap.
I have seeds that spin like helicopters.
My leaf is on the Canadian flag.

I am a pine tree.
Christmas trees are pine trees.
My seeds are in pine cones.
Squirrels and birds eat my seeds.
I have leaves shaped like needles.
I do not lose my leaves in the fall.

COLLAGE TREE

Ask students to look closely at the illustrations. The illustrator didn’t draw everything. Sometimes she used a technique called collage. For example, she used photographs of bark to make the trunks and branches of many of the trees. Students can make their own collage trees by cutting a trunk and branches out of an old magazine, construction paper, or maybe a brown paper bag. They can even use craft sticks or pipe cleaners—anything that looks like a tree trunk and branches to them! Have the students glue their tree trunk tree and branches to a sturdy piece of paper then draw on the leaves. What season is it? Does this tree grow fruit? What might be in the branches? A bird’s nest? A squirrel? Or maybe this is a special magical tree, and it doesn’t grow leaves but something else . . .

ABOVE AND BELOW

Some of the spreads in this book show what’s happening above and below ground, including the animals and roots that are nestled in the dirt. Have students create a two-part picture, where they show what’s happening ABOVE ground and BELOW ground.

SONG OF SUNSHINE/ SONG OF RAIN

There are two songs, other than the tree’s song, mentioned in the story: the “song of sunshine” and the “song of rain.” Have students, either individually or in groups, come up with these songs. Make sure to include actions! Perform.

FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

What is a nurse log? What amazing things can a nurse log do and grow? Have students draw or construct their own nurse logs.