

1 Overview

A Tree is Nice is a simple book that helps us remember and appreciate a natural gift that is easily taken for granted. The book refreshes our gratitude for all the wonderful reasons a tree is so nice. This book received a Caldecott Medal for its illustrations and has been in print for over 50 years. The simplicity and beauty of this book is not lost on modern times. It is an enduring classic that is a perfect, gentle read-aloud for the young student.

2 Author & Illustrator

Janice May Udry was born in 1928 in Illinois. She developed her love for writing for children while working in a Chicago nursery. *A Tree is Nice* was her first book. Other books to her credit are *The Moon Jumpers* and *Let's Be Enemies*.

Marc Simont was born in Paris, France. While a child, he spent a lot of time in France, Spain, and the U.S. Since his father was an illustrator for a French magazine, he credits him as his most influential art teacher. His artwork is characterized by loose outlines saturated with water color. He received Caldecott Medals for *A Tree is Nice* in 1957, and in 2002 for *The Stray Dog*.

3 Before You Read

- Talk about what kinds of trees fill the sky: tall trees, full of leaves, like oak trees or evergreens.
- What kind of trees live: by rivers, on hills (like the willow in the picture)?
- Can you imagine a world without trees?
- Have you ever been to the desert or a big city without trees and green space – how does that feel?
- The book reminds us that not only is the tree itself nice but the parts of the tree are nice, like leaves that whisper and fall and produce bonfires, or trunks and limbs that serve as seats, swings, and playthings.
- Discuss the many benefits of the tree. A tree can:
 1. give fruits and flowers
 2. serve as homes and safe getaways for animals
 3. offer toys (sticks)
 4. shade and resting spots
 5. protect people and homes from heat and wind
 6. produce oxygen

It takes patience to grow a tree, but the book reinforces that the results are well worth it.

4 Vocabulary

- bonfire** — large outdoor fire
- hoe** — tool used for weeding and gardening
- buggy** — a stroller in which the baby can lay down

5 Picture Review & Comprehension

NOTE: When you see a * you should turn the page, when you see two ** you should turn two pages.

- This book rotates between watercolor pictures and black-and-white sketches. Notice the boy in the first picture. What do you think he likes about the trees?*
- The picture of the boy fishing shows weeping willows. How is a tree nice when fishing? (shade, stick for a pole)
- Why do you think it is called a **weeping willow**?**
- Why is even just one tree nice?* (it has leaves, the leaves whisper in the breeze all summer long)
- In the fall, what can you do with the leaves?* (play, walk, and roll in the leaves; build playhouses, make a bonfire)
- How is a tree fun for children?* (climb and see over all the yards, play pirate ship)
- What are all the activities the kids are doing in and around the tree? (climbing, playing pretend, sleeping, picking apples, etc.)
- What kind of fun do you have with a tree?*
- How are fruit trees nice? (pick the fruit)
- What kinds of fruit grow on trees?* (apples, pears, oranges, bananas)
- How do animals benefit from trees?* (build their homes, hide from predators, shade)
- In the swing picture, how are the children using the tree?* (to hang a swing, to hang flowers, to lean his hoe, to relax in the shade)
- Why do the cows like trees?* (for the protection from sun)
- The family members on the picnic are all enjoying the restful shade of the tree. Would the picnic be as restful if there were no tree? Why?* (No. It would be hot, they would not be able to lean against it to rest, and it would not be as pretty.)
- Why would you want a tree near your house? (The tree shades the house to keep it cool and protects the house from wind.)
- Do you have trees near your house?*
- How does a tree protect the house?* (It holds off the wind, keeps the wind from blowing off the roof.)
- Talk about the steps it takes to plant a tree. (see Language Lesson)
- Will the tree be big next year?* (Talk about how some trees grow very quickly and some very slowly.)

6 After You Read

- See if the students can remember all the wonderful gifts of the tree. Make a list of all the ways a tree is nice! (fill up the sky, very beautiful; provide shade, sticks, leaves that whisper in the breeze; in the fall you can play, walk, roll in the leaves, build playhouses, and have a bonfire; fun to climb, good to lean against to rest; hang swings, ropes, and flowers; make apples, pears, oranges, and bananas; cats can get away from dogs, birds build nests to live there, cows can rest in the shade; keeps your house cool, protects it from the wind)
- What would you add to the list? (Christmas trees, tree houses, bird nests, blooming trees)

7 Language Lesson

Towards the end of the book, a good example of sequencing is given. The author explains how to plant a tree. Each step is given in order.

- Ask the children if this section would make sense out of order.
- List the steps. Write these together in complete sentences. Stress the importance of sequence in a story.

WEEK 1: PART 2

HISTORY & CULTURE

- Look at a city map. Find streets with which you are familiar.
- Introduce the idea of landmarks (i.e., church, school, library, fire department, hospital, grocery store, etc.).
- Draw a simple map of your neighborhood. Use your map when you go on your science walk.

SCIENCE

- Take a neighborhood walk. Identify trees indigenous to your area, including your yard. Notice the shape, leaves, and bark of the trees. Review these often and throughout the seasons. (Use the Nature Study Guidelines to discuss.)
- Use watercolors or tempera to paint a favorite tree or one that you can observe while painting. Discuss the lines in the tree trunk, branches and limbs. Discuss shape while painting the leaves, making sure to emphasize that the trees are not always “fluffy” at the top as we usually draw them. Do a painting in each season.
- Resources:**
I Can Name 50 Trees Today! (The Cat in the Hat Learning Library)
A Tree Is a Plant (Let’s Read and Find Out)

ART

Birch Forest, 1903, by Gustav Klimt (Art Nouveau), Oil on canvas, private collection

Gustav Klimt was born in Austria-Hungary. Though he was born into a poor family, as one of seven children, he was able to go to school to learn art.

Klimt painted many murals and received a special award from the Emperor of Austria, Franz Josef I.

Difficult times later in his life led to a change in his painting style. This new style was very different from what many people of his time were painting. Some of those who liked his new style joined Klimt in a group dedicated to helping other new young artists.

By the end of his career, he worked in the relaxed setting of his home, living the simple life, devoted to his art and family.

MUSIC

Symphony No. 6 in F Major, op. 68, “Pastoral”: I. Allegro ma non troppo by Ludwig van Beethoven

- Music Enrichment Guide: Kindergarten, Week 1* (Links for Kindergarten music can be found here: memoriapress.com/music-kindergarten)

POETRY

“I’m Glad” (*A Child’s Book of Poems*, p. 110)

“I’m Glad” is a sweet tribute to God for making the world as it is. The sing-song meter of this poem makes it easy for memorization.

- “*I’m glad the sky is painted blue*” Who painted the sky?
- “*And the earth is painted green*” Why did the artist choose the color green to represent the earth?
- “*With such a lot of nice fresh air*” What else is between the earth and sky?
- “*All sandwiched in between*” Compare the sky, earth, and air to a sandwich.
- Which words rhyme?

1 Overview

Another area of our country, besides the desert areas, with distinct characteristics are cities along the seashore. Where we may have some foggy days, for them it is a common occurrence. This book takes a look at one such town during a foggy period.

2 Author & Illustrator

Alvin Tresselt (September 30, 1916 - July 24, 2000) was born in New Jersey. He was an editor for *Humpty Dumpty* magazine and an executive editor for Parent's Magazine Press before becoming an instructor, then Dean of Faculty for Institute of Children's Literature in Connecticut. He wrote over 30 children's books, selling over a million copies. *White Snow, Bright Snow* won the Caldecott Medal in 1948. Other notable works were *The Mitten* and *The Dead Tree*. Tresselt was a pioneer in children's writing in that he believed creating the setting for a story was as important as the plot.

Roger Duvoisin (August 28, 1904 - June 1980) was born in Geneva, Switzerland. He moved to New York City in 1927. He worked on various media before beginning his prolific career as an illustrator for children's books. His wife, children's author Louis Fatio, was a collaborator on some of his books. He won the Caldecott Medal for *White Snow, Bright Snow*, but was best known for his book *Petunia*.

3 Before You Read

- Talk about what it is like to go on vacation to the beach. What would you want the weather to be for a trip to the beach? What would you pack? What would you do there? Who would you go with? Where would you stay?

4 Vocabulary

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> lobsterman — a man whose job is catching lobsters from the sea | <input type="checkbox"/> scurry — to move very quickly while avoiding obstacles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fog — a cloud-like mass very low to the ground, full of water vapor | <input type="checkbox"/> trudge — to walk slowly in a very heavy-footed way |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lobster pot — a trap for catching lobsters | <input type="checkbox"/> cottage — a small vacation house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shore — the point where the ocean meets the land | <input type="checkbox"/> wharf — a landing place where ships tie up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sailboat — a boat specifically made to be moved by catching wind in large cloths called sails | <input type="checkbox"/> bobble — a quick, jerky up and down movement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bay — a body of water mostly enclosed by land but with an opening to the sea | <input type="checkbox"/> driftwood — wood floating in or washed up by water |
| <input type="checkbox"/> seagulls — coastal birds with long wings and webbed feet | <input type="checkbox"/> buoy — a float |
| <input type="checkbox"/> terns — coastal birds, smaller than gulls with forked tails | <input type="checkbox"/> mournful — sad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> roost — a place where birds perch to rest or stay the night | <input type="checkbox"/> foghorn — a loud horn used to warn ships of danger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> craggy — steep and rocky | <input type="checkbox"/> spoddled — frolicked |
| <input type="checkbox"/> vanished — disappeared | <input type="checkbox"/> scowl — to wrinkle your brow as in anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bank (of fog) — piled up mass | <input type="checkbox"/> slanted — not up and down |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> clambake — a picnic on the beach where clams, corn, and other foods are cooked on hot stones and covered |

5 Picture Review & Comprehension

- The fog in the first pictures is just rolling in. On the left you see the water and sky are indistinguishable and gray. On the right, the sun-sparkle can still be seen on the water. Did the lobsterman know what was happening? (Yes)

- Besides seeing the fog, how does it feel? (damp)
- What happened to the sailboats? (the wind left and they had to creep home)
- Why do you think the seagulls and terns had to fly in a straight line?
- Why did they fly home? (they knew the fog was coming too)
- What happened when the fog reached land? (the sand was cold and sticky)
- How did it affect the sun? (turned to a pale daytime moon and vanished)
- Can you tell from the illustration where fog begins?
- How did the fog affect the families out at the beach?
(The kids had to get out of the water; they had to pick up their blankets and picnic baskets and leave the beach.)
- How can you tell the children swimming were cold? (They came out of the water shivering and with blue lips.)
- Do you think the people were nervous about the fog or used to it? (They seem used to it.)
- What did the workers do when the fog came?
(They delivered the lobsters to the fishing wharf and hurried home; on the first day they painted buoys and mended lobster pots.)
- The page where the lobsterman is working on his pots says he could hear the foghorns across the empty bay. Why would the bay be empty?
- Initially, what did the people on vacation do? (The fathers read books, took naps, and then took the mothers to town so they could shop.)
- How do you think the artist was able to “paint” the fog without covering the people in the city scene?
- Who enjoyed the fog? (only the children)
- What things did they do? (they played hide-and-seek)
- How bad was the fog according to the lobsterman? (The worst fog in 20 years)
- Since it was several days of fog, how did each person pass the time? Fathers? (scowled and complained) Mothers?
(tried to cheer everyone up by putting on bright clothes) Children? (The mothers helped the children make scrapbooks by the fire.)
- When the sun began to break through the fog, notice the artist’s depiction of slanted Sundays.
- What helped to “roll back the fog”? (a breeze)
- Where did it go? (back to the wide and empty ocean)
- What things happened after the fog left? (The water sparkled, the lobsterman checked on his boat, and the sailors made plans for a sailboat race the next day.)
- Compare the family beach scene without fog on the last page of the book to the previous family beach scene with fog.
- Why do you think the book was titled *Hide and Seek Fog*? (because the children liked to play hide-and-seek in the fog)

6 After You Read

- Make a watercolor picture of your house in fog. Begin by painting your house first and allowing it to dry completely. Then swirl the gray paint lightly over the entire space. You can even glue some cotton balls stretched out over some places.

7 Language Lesson

Authors sometimes put together words that aren’t normally used together in a phrase to make the story more interesting.

- Sights:
 1. gray-wrapped rocks
 2. lazy lapping waves
- Sounds:
 1. rusty scraping of beach grass
 2. chattering talk of low tide waves
 3. charging islands, in the bay, in gold
- These terms will need to be explained so the children will understand the beauty of the language usage.
 1. edge of the world - Is there an “edge” of the world? No, it is round, but the horizon looks like an edge.
 2. bank of fog - Does fog have money? No, it is really a piled up mass of fog.
 3. voices of the foghorns - Does it really talk? No, it is just the noise it makes that sounds like voices.
 4. the fog tiptoed past the windows - Does fog have toes? No, the author just means it moved quickly.

HISTORY & CULTURE

- Talk about the things that are unique to New England towns as shown in your read-aloud.
- | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. lighthouses | 4. lobster boats | 7. foghorns |
| 2. sailboats | 5. cottages | |
| 3. wharfs | 6. clambakes | |
- What geographical attributes enable or encourage these special characteristics?
1. Atlantic Ocean
 2. climate
- What is unique about the area in which you live? How is it different from the town in *Hide and Seek Fog*?
- Resource:** *Surrounded by Sea* by Gail Gibbons

SCIENCE

- Study fog. What causes fog? (water droplets suspended in the air at or near the Earth's surface; usually caused by moisture from a nearby body of water) How often is your town foggy?

ART

Wanderer Above the Sea Fog, 1818, by Caspar David Friedrich (Romanticism)
Oil on canvas, Hamburger Kunsthalle – Hamburg, Germany

Caspar David Friedrich was born in Sweden, the sixth of ten children, to a very religious family. After studying art, he was invited to attend the prestigious academy of Copenhagen, where he learned mood was paramount to art.

He settled in Dresden, where his style of painting natural landscapes with India ink and watercolor developed. At 34, he painted an altarpiece which was his first major painting, an oil on canvas. It was entitled *The Cross in the Mountains*.

When two of his paintings were purchased by the Prussian Crown Prince, Friedrich was elected to join several art academics. Many of his works were purchased by Russian royalty. Casper married and had three children. Unfortunately, his artwork became less popular and by the end of his life, he was living in poverty.

Wanderer Above the Sea Fog portrays a hiker who is looking out across the mountains to the distance. It is said the “mood” in the painting mirrored the artist’s uncertainty of the future.

MUSIC

“Prelude in C-sharp Minor,” op. 3, No. 2 by Sergei Rachmaninoff

- Music Enrichment Guide: Kindergarten, Week 25* (Links for Kindergarten music can be found here: memoriapress.com/music-kindergarten)

POETRY

“Sailing” (*A Child’s Book of Poems*, p. 36)

- Enjoy the repetitive nature of the poem. Think of other aspects of a boat or what a boat does (i.e., fishing, cruising, bobbing on waves, etc.). Have the children try to come up with another verse for the poem.

