

PETER WOHLLEBEN

Peter and the Tree Children



A COMPANION GUIDE
FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS



Title: *Peter and the Tree Children*

Author: Peter Wohlleben, illustrated by Cale Atkinson

Genre: Picture book

Themes: Nature, trees, friendship, ecosystems, biodiversity, STEM

Suitable for: Ages 4–8, Kindergarten–Grade 3

Guided Reading Level: N

Common Core Standards:

RL.3.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10

W.3.1,2,3,4,7,8,10

SL.3.1,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6

RF.3.3,3b,3c,3d,4,4a,4c

L.3.3,4,4a,4c,4c,5,5a,5b,5c,6

Next Generation Science Standards:

3-LS1-From Molecules to Organisms: Structures and Processes

3-LS2-Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics

3-LS4-Biological Evolution: Unity and Diversity

3-ESS3-Earth and Human Activity

SUMMARY

Piet the squirrel has no family and feels all alone in the forest. Luckily, Peter the forester has a perfect plan to cheer him up: a search for tree children in the forest that surrounds Peter's home.

As they wander deeper into the forest, Peter shares amazing facts about trees, such as how they communicate and care for each other, and the struggles they endure. They find a logging machine which makes the ground too muddy for Piet and packs down the soil too hard for tree children. Then they meet forestry worker Dana and her draft horse, Wotan, as they pull a fallen log. Wotan doesn't disturb the forest floor as much as the logging machine does, but Piet and Peter don't find any tree children nearby, so they continue on. In a clearing, they see tree planters. Piet notices the seedlings smell like oranges, but Peter explains that means the trees don't feel well.

In an old beech forest, Piet discovers "butterflies," which are really beech seedlings—the tree children they've been searching for. Piet is delighted when he remembers that he planted beechnuts in that spot in the fall. He's helped the tree children to grow. When they return to Peter's forest lodge, Piet is still sad. He's finally cheered when Peter asks him to stay. Piet has a family at last.



At the end of the book is a page of information about trees, with answers to questions like “Did you know that trees can talk?” and “Did you know that a tree is as important to the forest after it is dead as when it is alive?”

Peter and the Tree Children is a perfect introduction for young children to the secrets of the forest by Peter Wohlleben, the acclaimed author of *The Hidden Life of Trees*. For older readers, or for young readers seeking more information, we recommend *Can You Hear the Trees Talking?*, also by Peter Wohlleben.



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

These discussion questions and activities are designed to support the goal of helping students explore *Peter and the Tree Children*, the science presented in the book, and their own creativity.

BEFORE READING

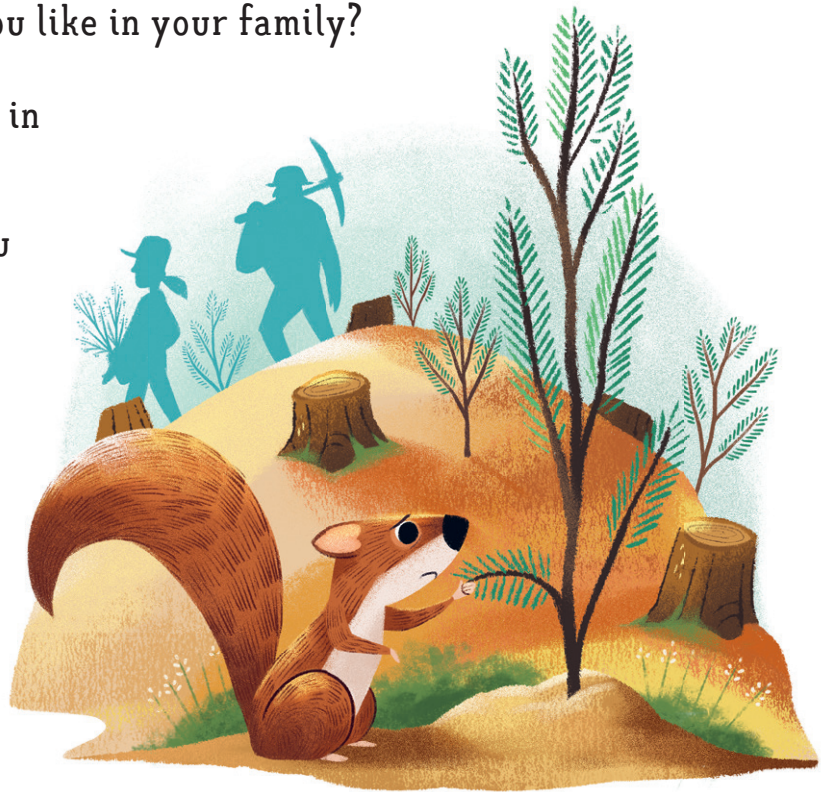
The following questions and activities build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

1. Before reading *Peter and the Tree Children*, look at the cover. Discuss with the class what you think the book will be about.
2. Share with the class something you know about trees, or what trees mean to you.



QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION

1. At the beginning of the book is Peter Wohlleben's note to readers. Read this aloud to the class. Ask the class whether they have ever had an animal friend. If so, do they talk to their animal friend?
2. In the author's note, Peter Wohlleben mentions trees and their children. How do you think tree parents care for their children?
3. We cut down trees to make a lot of different things (including the paper in *Peter and the Tree Children*!). What two different ways of cutting down trees are mentioned in the story? Discuss.
4. Peter and Piet meet some tree planters and seedlings, but Peter explains that the seedlings are unhappy. How does he know this? Can you think of a way to make the seedlings happier?
5. Why do animals like Piet need families?
6. What kind of animal would you like in your family?
7. If you could be any character in *Peter and the Tree Children* (even a tree!), who would you be? What would you do?



DURING READING

If you are interested in more in-depth information about forests, or if students have access to an outdoor classroom (trees on school grounds, a nearby park, or a wilderness area), you will find a wide range of hands-on activities in the “Try This!” sections of *Can You Hear the Trees Talking?*. You can also access some sample activities in that book’s teacher’s guide. Just go to the Greystone Kids website (greystonebooks.com), search for *Can You Hear the Trees Talking?*, and download the guide from the link in the book’s description.



AFTER READING

These discussion questions inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further conversations.

1. After you have finished reading the story, discuss with the class something new that you learned about trees.
2. Will you think about trees any differently now, or treat them differently? Share your reflections with a partner.