

TREE LOOKING FOR SCHOOL



MOS
duurzame
scholen
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Exactly in the middle of the forest lives a proud old tree. One day, Tree's branches hang low and loose. His leaves look like old rags. If you put your ear against Tree's trunk and if you listen veeerrry closely, you can hear him crying softly.

Possible key questions: some suggestions

- Which one of you has already felt sad? Why were you sad?
- Did you also cry?
- Where do our tears come from?
➔ Allow the children to use their imagination freely.





And here's Blackbird! He folds his wings and sits down in Tree's crown. "Hello Tree... Hey Tree!"

Tree does not speak.

"Hey Tree, did you see that? There's a squirrel nibbling your trunk! And look at that beautiful butterfly sitting on your branch. Hello! Tree-ee!"

But Tree does not move.

"Oh, Blackbird, nobody can help me."

Possible key questions: some suggestions

- What's the matter with Tree?
 - ➔ Allow the children to use their imagination freely.





Blackbird, who doesn't understand what's going on, gives Tree a look of inquiry. Tree says plaintively: "Dear bird, I am old. I have sent so many seeds into the world. Now I have but one tiny little seed left. One single little seed that can grow into a handsome tree, just like me."

"Wow! A little seed, how nice!" whistles Blackbird. "Let's sow it!"

"But my dear Blackbird, that's the problem. I don't know WHERE to sow it. I want Little Tree to grow up in the best – no, the very best place one can think of."

Possible key questions: some suggestions

- Once Tree produced a great many seeds. Why is there only one little seed remaining?
- Encourage the children to talk and think about growing old. When suitable, also discuss death (the death of plants, trees, pets/a grandpa or grandma passing away,...)





Blackbird scratches his head with his paw. “The very best place! That’s a tall order. Why don’t you simply sow the little seed near your feet, here in the woods?”

“No no no,” replies Tree. He sighs. “Little Tree needs to be surrounded by children, by children who really love him. He needs children who hug him, who smell his scent, who enjoy his shadow. In autumn, there should be children playing with his leaves. That’s what I want.”

“Crikey, this is not going to be simple,” thinks Blackbird.

But immediately he whistles his most beautiful song.

Possible key questions: some suggestions

- Engage the children in a discussion about the meaning and importance of trees. (Shadow, nature, air quality, children’s games, king of the woods, wood production,...)
- Which one of you can whistle? Could we all whistle like a blackbird? Shall we all try?
- This exercise can be combined with the suggestion about the singing of birds (see next image).





Soon the other birds of the forest arrive. Here's Pigeon. Here's Magpie. And look, here's Sparrow.

Blue Tit too comes flying, warned by Blackbird's song.

Possible key questions: some suggestions

- Which one of you has already seen a blackbird/pigeon/magpie/sparrow/blue tit? Can you describe them (colour, size,...)?
- Could we find these birds (or other birds) in our school?
- If so, where do we find them? Or if they are absent: why are they absent?

Possible subjects for lesson activities regarding the singing of birds

- Preparing the exercise, gather photographs of all the bird species mentioned in the tale. Photographs of other bird species might come in useful too. Ask the children to point to the right bird. Discuss various characteristics.
- A more difficult exercise, for the older children: gather photographs of both male and female birds. Ask the children to show you the male/female of the species. Ask them why they think that and why they think there could or should be a difference?
- Play the song of the blackbird. (google it) Compare that song to the song of the other birds mentioned in the tale. Repeat the various segments, several times. Are the children capable of recognizing the songs?





They have all gathered together in Tree's crown. My oh my, how many they are ! And how heavy ! But Tree is comforted by the thought that so many birds are willing to help him.

"My friends," begins Blackbird, "Tree has a problem. He is sad because he doesn't know what to do with his last little seed."

Possible key questions: some suggestions

- The birds are trying to help Tree. How do you feel about that? Why?
- Did you ever help someone? On what occasion?
- How did that make you feel?
- Have you ever been helped by somebody else, when you had a problem? How did that make you feel?





The birds are chattering all at the same time, like chickens. Blackbird covers his ears with his feathers and shouts: “ENOUGH !”

As if by magic, the noise stops. Everybody listens intently while Blackbird speaks.

“I propose that we all spread our wings, in order to search for that very best spot of all.”

They all think it’s a splendid idea.

A flash of movement, a rustling of wings, and the birds are gone.

Possible key questions: some suggestions

What would be a good spot for Tree’s little seed? Why do you think so ?





Hours later, Blackbird and his friends return.

“Well, that was difficult!” squawks Magpie.

“You don’t have to tell me !” coos Pigeon. “I’ve flown for seven miles! I’m so tired!”

One after the other, they tell Tree about their suggestion for the best spot. Pigeon for instance points out that Little Tree would be very happy growing up in the big avenue. Magpie talks about the park. These fine discoveries make Tree glow with pleasure, but he is still not entirely satisfied. For his last little seed he wants something special: the very best place of all.





Tiny Sparrow is the last one to chirp about the spot she has found. By now Tree and the other birds have grown very curious indeed. Could Sparrow provide the solution?

“A bit further on, there is a school with lots of nice children. The playground is grey and sad. Little Tree can provide shade for the warm days. And he can become a house for all the animals who long for a nest. Then everything will become jolly and green.”

Possible key questions: some suggestions

- What do you think about our playground? Do you like/dislike it? Why?
- Could Little Tree be given a little place on our playground? Where?
- What will the birds and the other animals think, if Little Tree is given a place on our playground? Why?





Suddenly Tree's branches reach up to the sky.

"What a good idea!" Tree and the birds shout, all at the same time. "That way, the children can take care of him and spoil him while he grows up."

"And as soon as Little Tree is tall enough, children can include him in their games!" Tree yells with delight. "And you, dear birds, will be able to live in his crown! And you won't be the only ones. Bee, Beetle, Ladybird, Spider and Ant, everybody is welcome!"





Today is the big day. Sparrow leaves, with Tree's little seed clenched in her beak. The other birds follow her, save for Blackbird, who remains with Tree. Tree is so happy! With loving care, the children plant the seed for Little Tree in the very best spot you can find in the whole school. They cherish and protect him, so that he can grow into a great big Tree. In the future, other children will succeed them – and for many long years they too will enjoy their Tree, dancing around his trunk and singing their most beautiful songs...

Possible subjects for lesson activities regarding the planting of a tree in school

- Yippee, we're going for a tree in our school! An indigenous tree is best.
- Why not choose a fruit tree, which is going to bear us tasty fruits? If you're choosing a fruit tree, go for the standard shape.
- "Problems? Doubts? Go and look up the websites of your local horticultural and ecological societies. In many countries, there are organisations dedicated to helping the public with questions regarding the planting of trees, including trees meant for playgrounds."
- All of this needs careful preparation. After finishing your research, decide upon the three most suitable candidates where the species is concerned. For each of the three species, print out photographs of the tree, the blossom and the fruit. Turn the photographs into posters. It is now up to the children, parents, teams,... to choose the tree they want to plant.
- Turn the planting of the tree into a festive ceremony. Be sure to involve the parents, too.

GOLDEN TIP Time for some experiments! Try and grow actual trees, starting with fruits and seeds of trees such as apple, walnut, oak, birch,... Prepare a suitable spot with lots of compost.





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