

If I Were a Tree

written by Andrea Zimmerman
illustrated by Jing Jing Tsong

About the Book

Genre: Realistic Fiction/Poetry

ISBN: 9781620148013

Reading Level: Grade 2

Interest Level: Grades PreK-5

Guided Reading Level: M

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
NP

Lexile™ Measure: NP

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Biracial/Multiracial Interest, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Dreams & Aspirations, Environment/Nature, Exploring Ecosystems, Families, Five Senses / Body Parts, Human Impact On Environment/Environmental Sustainability, Identity/Self Esteem/Confidence, Imagination, Nature/Science, Optimism/Enthusiasm, Poetry, Siblings, Similarities and Differences

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/if-i-were-a-tree

SYNOPSIS

*If I were a tree, I know how I'd be.
My trunk strong and wide, my limbs side to side,
I'd stand towering tall, high above all,
My leaves growing big, and buds on each twig.
If I were a tree, that's how I'd be.*

The sister has camped in the forest many times before. The brother is nervous for his first overnight trip. As the illustrations in this multifaceted picture book show the siblings discovering the woods, the text celebrates the strength and grace of the trees that surround them, through evocative verse that speaks to all five senses:

*If I were a tree, I know what I'd smell.
Sweet honey and bees, and skunk on the breeze.
I'd smell smoke in the air, the breath of a bear,
Old fungus decay, and rain on the way.
If I were a tree, that's what I'd smell.*

And with this new knowledge, the siblings are able to overcome their greatest challenge yet. Together, Andrea Zimmerman's wise poem and Jing Jing Tsong's kaleidoscopic art show how connections with the natural world can inspire us to live fully in the present and look hopefully to the future.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

"Exploring Trees" from the Backmatter

Exploring Trees

There are more than a trillion trees on Earth! You can use your five senses to get to know the ones that live near you.

Seeing

Look at the overall shape of each tree. Is it tall and lanky? Or short and bushy? Look at the leaves. Are they broad or needle-like?

Touching

What does the bark feel like? Is it rough? Or smooth? Do the leaves feel fuzzy? Or prickly? Are there roots or seeds you can touch?

Smelling

Some trees have fragrant flowers or zesty sap that you can smell. If you hug a tree, how does the bark smell? If you wrinkle a leaf, what scent does it have?

Tasting

You probably can't taste any of the trees that live in your neighborhood. But there are many trees that we do taste. We eat delicious fruits and nuts and spices from trees. Even chocolate comes from trees!

Hearing

On blustery days, you can hear the wind whistling through the leaves of a tree. You may also hear the birds and bugs that make their homes in the branches of trees. There are more than 60,000 different kinds of trees on Earth! You can learn more about the trees in your area using books like *The Tree Book for Kids and Their Grown-Ups* by Gina Ingoglia or a field guide for your state.

Additional Information About Trees

The National Environmental Education Foundation has additional lessons and resources about trees, "Tree Toolkit: Lessons and Educator Resources for Teaching about Trees" (<https://www.neefusa.org/nature/land/tree-toolkit>). Consult Project Learning Tree for ideas and ways that trees are utilized in the world around us (<https://www.plt.org/educator-tips/activities-explore-uses-trees/>). The Environmental Science Institute at the University of Texas has a lesson plan, book suggestions, and helpful language for educators about trees and the future of sustainability (<https://www.esi.utexas.edu/files/079-Lesson-Plan-Trees-Our-Past-and-Sustainable-Future.pdf>).

For extensive resources and lesson plans about how to incorporate trees into your units, such as learning about leaves, parts of trees, maple syrup, recycling, and more, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences has a variety of lesson plans and activities for students and educators to learn more about trees (<https://ecosystems.psu.edu/outreach/youth/sftrc/lesson-plans/forestry/k-5>).

The National Park Service also has a lesson plan about tree parts (https://www.google.com/search?q=trees+lesson+plan+for+students&sxsrf=ALeKk03Jwx66uWrGPaKaioJiRIYCJ20mg:1626287045994&ei=xSvvYlaWPL-z5NoPs8aK2AE&start=10&sa=N&ved=2ahUKEwjGjLetl-PxAhW_GVkfHTOjAhsQ8tMDegQIARA3&biw=1366&bih=588). TreesCharlotte, an organization dedicated to promoting awareness about trees, has an entire Elementary School Curriculum with lesson plans, resources and additional activities to use in any tree unit (<https://treescharlotte.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/TreesGreenville-Michelin-Curriculum-ES-Final.pdf>).

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Encourage students to think about their imaginations. How do you express creativity and show your imagination? What does it mean to be imaginative? How do students use their imaginations in their everyday lives? Why is it important to be imaginative and creative?
- Ask students to share how they feel about nature. What do they like to do outside? How does being outside make them feel? What do they appreciate about nature and being able to go outside?
- Have students ever been camping? What was it like to camp? If students haven't been camping, have they ever spent a lot of time outside, like a day at the park? What kinds of things did they see, smell, taste, and hear? What did they like about camping or being outside at the park?
- What do students know about the five senses? What do they think about when they think of the five senses? What sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches do they think of? Why?
- What do students know about trees? What do they think of when they think of trees? Do they know about any specific trees? Are there particular trees that they like to look at in their neighborhood or local communities? How do trees make them feel? Why are trees important to our environment and world?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *If I Were a Tree*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

- Read Andrea Zimmerman's Biography: Read about author Andrea Zimmerman on the jacket back flap. How do you think Andrea Zimmerman came up with the idea to write this book? What do you think inspired her to write *If I Were a Tree*?
- Read Jing Jing Tsong's Biography: Read about illustrator Jing Jing Tsong. How does she get inspiration from the text while she creates the art from the story?
- Encourage students to stop and jot down notes in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write their feelings in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote down those feelings and have them write journal entries about them.
- Ask students to make a prediction: Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What clues are given that help you know whether this book will be fiction or nonfiction?

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- how nature is powerful and inspirational
- why imagination and observation of the world around you are important
- how to use your imagination in the world around you
- the beauty of exploration and what we can find in nature
- how we can use our five senses in nature
- how trees are powerful and beautiful
- the joy of enjoying nature

Encourage students to consider why the author, Andrea Zimmerman, would want to share with young people this book about the wonder of nature and trees around us.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

buds, bark, soil, minerals, fungus, mole, blossoms, pine

Academic

decay, growl, hoot, misty, draped, dawn, spells, renew, humming

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How does the story start? What do you see the family doing on the first spread?
2. Where does the family go? What do the siblings start to do?
3. What do the siblings think they would feel if they were a tree? What do they describe from the nature that they see around them?
4. What do they think they would taste if they were a tree? What kinds of animals do the siblings see on this spread?
5. What do they think they would smell if they were a tree?
6. While the siblings are exploring, how are their grown-ups preparing the campsite?
7. What do they think they would hear if they were a tree? What time is it during this time of the day in the book? What is the family preparing to do?
8. What do they think they would see if they were a tree? What do the siblings see on the tree in this spread?
9. What do they think they would love if they were a tree?
10. What do they think they would know if they were a tree? How does the story end?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What does the title *If I Were a Tree* mean to you after reading? Why do you think the author chose this particular title?

2. How does nature play a role in *If I Were a Tree*? How do the children in the story observe nature and the world around them? What do they notice about trees and during their explorations in the woods? What other animals and objects do they see and wonder about?
3. Why is it important to use your imagination? What are the ways that you use your imagination in your daily life? How does it make you feel? How do the siblings in the story use their imaginations while they're exploring in the woods?
4. What kinds of themes do you see throughout *If I Were a Tree*? What do you think this story helps readers think about? Why?
5. What do you think Andrea Zimmerman means when she writes, "I'd know branches can bend, and cold spells will end, that spring will renew, and life carries through. *If I Were a Tree*, that's what I'd know." Why do you think she decided to end the story in this way? How do you relate to these statements? How do you think this applies to life in general?
6. How can you use the illustrations to help you make sense of the author's message in the story? How do the illustrations convey the feelings and emotions from the siblings?
7. Why do you think the author uses figurative language in the story? What figurative language do you see throughout *If I Were a Tree*? How do you think the figurative language helps you to envision the siblings' world, the trees, and their environment? What would it be like to read the story without figurative language?
8. Why is it important to explore nature and the outdoors? How does nature and your local environment inspire you? What do you like to do in nature? What do you like to see and observe? Why?
9. How does reading *If I Were a Tree* make you think differently or help you to appreciate nature? What can the book inspire you to do the next time you go outside or go for a walk in the park or the woods? What are some different ways that you can enjoy nature in your own life?
10. How does *If I Were a Tree* teach about the importance of observing the world around you? What makes you think that?
11. How does the author, Andrea Zimmerman, convey the beauty of nature to readers? How does she describe the different things that the siblings see in nature?
12. Do you think humans and trees are similar? Why or why not? What can trees teach us about our own lives? What does this story teach us about the cycle of life, seasons, and how things change? What did you learn from Andrea Zimmerman's message?
13. There are three spreads in the story that don't incorporate one of the senses and how the siblings would be if they were trees. The first spread starts with, "*If I Were a Tree*, I know what I'd be." The last two spreads start with, "*If I Were a Tree*, I know what I'd love," and "*If I Were a Tree*, I know what I'd know." Why do you think the author chose to do that? What do these lines mean to you? How do they apply to your own life?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about your own relationship to nature, trees, and the environment. What is your takeaway from this book? What would you tell a friend about this book?
2. What do you think Andrea Zimmerman's message is to the reader? Think about possible motivations behind Andrea Zimmerman's intentions to write this book about two siblings observing the world and beauty of nature around them and what kind of connections they make throughout the story.
3. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make between *If I Were a Tree* and your own life? What did you relate to and how did *If I Were a Tree* make you think of your own childhood or growing up experiences?
4. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while reading *If I Were a Tree*? Why did you make those connections?
5. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make between the book and what you have seen happening in the world, such as on television, in a newspaper, or online? What in this book made you think of that?
6. What does nature mean to students after reading? After reading *If I Were a Tree*, do you think differently about nature? Why or why not?

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to tell what they learned about one of the poems. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about how they would be a tree, modeled after Andrea Zimmerman's writing style in the story.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose

English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. How do you think being outside helps with your feelings and emotions? Why do you think being outside in nature is important for your mind and body? Students can conduct additional research about how being outside and enjoying nature is important for your health. Additional resources are from Harvard Health Publishing (<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/6-reasons-children-need-to-play-outside-2018052213880>), Child Mind Institute (<https://childmind.org/article/why-kids-need-to-spend-time-in-nature/>), and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (<https://www.chop.edu/news/health-tip/benefits-outdoor-play-why-it-matters>).
2. What do you think author Andrea Zimmerman means when she writes on the last spread, "If I were a tree, I'd know what I'd know. That days come and go, and green leaves will grow. I'd know branches can bend, and cold spells will end. That spring will renew, and life carries through." What did you think of when you read this? How does this apply to what we experience in life? How does this relate to changes, the seasons, and how we develop as a person? Students can write a reaction essay.
3. Which illustration in *If I Were a Tree* do you think best shows an emotion? Explain which emotion you think it is. How do you think the author and illustrator portray that emotion in the story?
4. Choose an emotion such as happiness, hope, sadness, and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *If I Were a Tree*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Review the middle rhyme, or internal rhyme, scheme that author Andrea Zimmerman uses throughout *If I Were a Tree*** (<https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/internal-rhyme>) (<https://literarydevices.net/internal-rhyme/>). Have students go back through the text and identify the words that rhyme on each spread and where they're located. ReadWriteThink.org has a lesson plan, "Generating Rhymes" that has resources and instructions on how to teach students about the rhythm and structure of rhymes (<https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/generating-rhymes-developing-phonemic>). Afterwards, have students experiment with middle rhyme by starting with simple lines and progressing to full poems. MasterClass has more tips and resources on writing and identifying different types of rhyme (<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-write-in-rhyme#6-types-of-rhymes>).
- **Create a graphic organizer for the different senses that the siblings use to describe how they would be a tree. Label each column, "Feel/Touch," "Taste," "Smell," "Hear," and "See."** Underneath the columns, students can generate examples from the text about the different ways that they describe the senses and how they would be trees. For example, underneath the column, "Feel," students can write, "warmth of the sun." After students complete the chart, have them write a poem for each of the senses about things that they enjoy in nature and their environment.
- **Ask each student to select a poem from a spread from *If I Were a Tree* and write their reactions to that spread.** Why did the student pick that specific spread? What stood out to them? What did they relate to? What did the student identify with or what they learn from that passage in the text? How did reading it make the student feel? What kind of figurative language did they identify? Students can share their reactions with a partner or small group.
- **Encourage students to write a poem in the style of Andrea Zimmerman in *If I Were a Tree*.** Students can start with, "*If I Were a Tree...*" and complete the poem based on their own feelings and experiences in nature. What do they want to share and why did they pick that idea or object from nature to write about? Students can share their work with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. Consider creating a class book with illustrations and have the book available to students in the classroom library.

- **Conduct a figurative language study with students.** Have students go on a figurative language scavenger hunt in *If I Were a Tree*. Refer to Read Write Think's "Figurative Language Resource Page" as a tool for students to use during their search (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson79/figresource.pdf). Create a chart with different rows for figurative language terms (i.e. simile, metaphor) and students can fill it in with specific examples from *If I Were a Tree*. Afterwards, students can experiment using figurative language in their own poetry inspired by the book.
- **Have students learn about different poetic forms.** *If I Were a Tree* uses middle rhyme throughout the story. Display different books of poetry for students. Ask each student to select a poem, find out what kind of poem it is, and then write a poem in the same form. What are the different features of the poem chosen? Use the resource from ReadWriteThink to refer to different types of poems. After students examine the poems in more detail, ask each student to write a poem in a style of their choosing about a childhood memory, their community, anything related to their identity, or something that inspired them in nature and the outdoors (http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson417/poetry-forms2.pdf).
- **The five senses are used frequently throughout *If I Were a Tree*.** Have students write a poem using each of their senses (sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste). If possible, provide students with props that pertain to each of the senses in your classroom (for example, provide a leaf for sight and a feather for touch; play classical music for hearing; spray a scent in the classroom for smell; offer orange segments for taste). Students can write a poem for each object using that specific sense. Throughout the lesson, encourage students to think about how the siblings used their senses to describe particular things using descriptive words that related to that specific sense.
- **Conduct an Andrea Zimmerman author study** (<https://www.andreaanddavid.com>). Make connections among the texts. What themes do Andrea Zimmerman's books have in common? How are the topics similar? How are they different? What do you think Andrea Zimmerman's message is to her readers across all her books? Consider reaching out to Andrea Zimmerman for a virtual author visit.
- **Conduct a literary nature unit with *If I Were a Tree* and *Call Me Tree/Llámame Árbol*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/call-me-tree-llamame-arbol>). How do these authors write about nature and trees using figurative language and poetry? How do they think creatively about the world, particularly trees, around them? How do you think nature inspires these authors? How are the books similar? What themes are evident across the books? How are these books different from informational and nonfiction texts about the subjects presented in the books? Students can write their responses in an essay and use a graphic organizer to compare *If I Were a Tree* and *Call Me Tree/Llámame Árbol*.

Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **If possible, have students take a walk around their communities near their school and observe the different trees that they see.** Using inspiration from *If I Were a Tree*, have students pay close attention to the different elements of the trees during their observations. What do they see when they look at the tree? What does the bark look like? What about the leaves? How tall are the trees? Pick a few places to stop along the neighborhood walk and have students write down their observations in their notebooks. Afterwards, students can look up what trees are indigenous to their area and conduct a research study about the trees in their local communities. Students can share their findings in a visual presentation format of their choosing. The Arbor Day Foundation has resources about how to identify trees based on geographic location (<https://www.arborday.org/trees/whattree/easterntrees.cfm>). The Nature Conservancy also lists trees that are typically found throughout the United States (<https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/united-states/common-tree-species/>). Students can use the information from the Backmatter about how to engage with trees using your senses to guide their trip.

Science/STEM

(K-LS1-1 Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive).

- **Conduct a research study on trees, culminating in a local tree planting project.** TreesGreenville Companion Curriculum has a wealth of resources and activities on different lesson plans about trees (<https://treescharlotte.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/TreesGreenville-Michelin-Curriculum-ES-Final.pdf>). Begin with the history of trees, and have students collect information that they find online and in books and create a visual presentation, with photographs and other documentation from their findings. Students can think about the following questions while they're researching trees: Where did trees originate? Why are trees important? Where can you find trees? How can we preserve and maintain trees? How do we grow trees? How are trees helpful to our overall environment? Students can work independently or with a group. To conclude the trees unit, have students plant trees in their local school garden or community (<https://www.plt.org/story/tree-planting-gardening-nurture-learning/>). Students can reflect on what it was like to plant trees in their neighborhood, how it made them feel, and what they learned about trees during this unit.

Art & Media

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, and Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Encourage each student to create an illustration to accompany one of the senses poems that they created in the activities from the English & Language Arts section of this guide.** Students can study and mimic Jing Jing Tsong's style from *If I Were a Tree* or create a piece in their own style. Afterward, students may share their artwork with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. What did students learn about themselves during this process? Why did they choose a particular artistic style and items to include in their artwork? What do their images mean to them?
- **Have students conduct an illustrator study on Jing Jing Tsong** (<https://www.jingjingsong.com/>). What kind of style does she use in her artwork? What do you think her process is for creating the illustrations for a children's book? Consider reaching out to Jing Jing for a virtual illustrator visit. Students can investigate other works by Jing Jing and see how her other works compare to the artwork in *If I Were a Tree*.

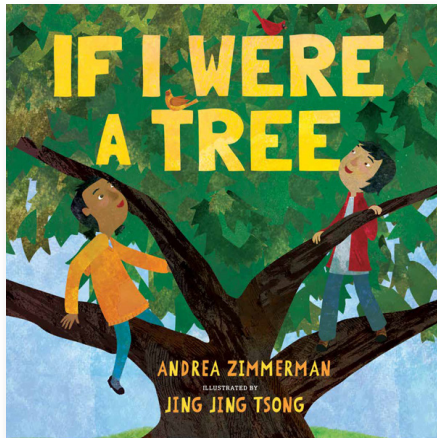
School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Encourage students to interview family members about what they like about being outside in nature.** How does it make them feel? Why do they like to be outside? What are their favorite parts of being in nature? If possible, students can share a copy with *If I Were a Tree* with their families to connect their own experiences to the family in the book.
- **Students and families can write a poem together about how they would feel if they were a tree.** If possible, have students teach grown-ups and family members at home about middle rhyme, the rhyme scheme that author Andrea Zimmerman uses in *If I Were a Tree*. Have students and families have fun and experiment with poetry together.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea Zimmerman is the author of thirteen picture books, including *Train Man*, *Fire Engine Man*, *Digger Man*, *Trashy Town*, and *Dig!*. Her books have been named Children's Book-of-the-Month Club and ALA Notable books, and have received multiple starred reviews. Married to artist David Clemesha, who illustrates many of her titles, she lives in San Diego, California. You can visit her website at andreaanddavid.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jing Jing Tsong's debut picture book, *A Bucket of Blessings*, written by Kabir and Surishtha Sehgal, was a *New York Times* bestseller. She is well-known for her multilayered, textured illustrations in books like *Trees*, *Before We Met*, and *Feathers and Hair*, *What Animals Wear*. A musician and surfer as well as an artist, she lives on an island in Washington State. Find her on the web at jingjingsong.com.

Ordering Information

General Order Information:

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By Fax: 212-683-1894

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Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
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REVIEWS

"Young readers will want to experience this book over and over again." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"With enchanting visuals, this contemplative picture book demonstrates not only what nature can offer but also the reward of new perspectives." —*Booklist*

"Tsong's colorfully layered, stamped landscapes, created using traditional printmaking techniques and digital collage, enhance the appeal of this tree-focused venture that will encourage young readers to meditate upon nature." —*Publishers Weekly*

"Lush, lively greens pop off the page. An appended spread provides tips about using "your five senses" to "get to know" trees." —*The Horn Book*

ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

LEE & LOW BOOKS is the largest children's book publisher specializing in diversity and multiculturalism. Our motto, "about everyone, for everyone," is as urgent today as it was when we started in 1991. It is the company's goal to meet the need for stories that children of color can identify with and that all children can enjoy. The right book can foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, prompt discussion about race and ethnicity, and inspire children to imagine not only a world that includes them, but also a world where they are the heroes of their own stories. Discover more at leeandlow.com.