

## Art Ideas for Your Adopted Tree

**Developed by:** Willie Reid

**Suggested Grade Level(s):** 3-6 and with adaptations, older or younger grades

**Suggested Length of Class Time:** a possible year long project

**Subject Areas:** science, social studies, art, language arts

### **Rationale:**

Trees inspire music, poetry, art, and dance. Trees come alive in fairy tales. Trees provide blossoms, shelter, food, clothing, fuel, homes for animals and ground cover. Trees keep our world alive. And trees are now vulnerable in our world's crumbling eco-systems. Students will search their neighbourhoods or schoolyards and find a tree that inspires them. They will observe and follow its life and growth through the seasons. They will keep notes, sketches, photographs, and rubbings and honour their trees in artwork created through a variety of techniques.

### **Logistics:**

*Classroom setup* – individual work areas, an area for sharing and discussion. You may wish to assign students in small groups for the selection of a tree.

*Materials* – sketchbooks (can be made using recycled paper), pencils, various art making materials depending on the technique used

*Suggested resources* – Search “Trees in Art” online to find thousands of images and reproductions; art images on postcards, old calendars, etc of examples of tree art

*\* See the extensive list of children's books provided.*

### **Suggested Outcomes:** Students will

Engage in a research project and record information

Explore and manipulate a range of art materials

Explore the science and art of the world of trees

Observe and discuss a variety of images in different artistic styles

Draw from direct observation in nature

### **Introduction:**

Ask students to search for images of trees both in the natural world (photographs) and through artistic interpretations in magazines, through classroom resources or in on-line images. Observe and talk about the many differences noted in the images. Lead a discussion on what trees mean to us as world citizens.

### **Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:**

1. Guide with questions such as the following:

Do you have a favorite kind of tree?

Why is it important to study trees?

Why must we be careful to preserve our trees/forests?

What do trees give us?

What differences do you see between live trees, those in photographs, and art images of trees?

Where might we find unusual trees?

2. Distribute or have students create their own sketchbooks using plain white paper for the inside pages and thicker card or tag board for the covers. (Check on line for various methods by which simple books can be made). These can be used for notes, drawings, photographs, observations and additional art works.

3. Assign each student the task of finding a tree either on the school ground or in their neighbourhood, a tree that will be “theirs” to observe, study and capture in art throughout the school year (and, hopefully into the summer months). The tree can be large or small, coniferous, deciduous. Younger students should travel with an adult to visit and study their trees. Visits can be limited to one per season or as many as are possible over the course of the year.

4. On the initial visit, students can do a quick sketch, adding more details on subsequent visits. They might collect a leaf (or needles or seeds) to bring back to the classroom. They may want to do a bark rubbing directly in the sketchbook. They may wish to take note of any animals, insects, etc., that live in, on or near the tree. If a camera is available, a photograph will be useful for further projects as well.

5. As students return to the classroom, invite them to choose from a number of projects: An illustrated diary, an account of several of the tree’s days from its own perspective and in its own words.

Create a group tissue art rainforest in the style of Eric Carle. Painting strips of brightly coloured tissue paper on a background using a paintbrush and very thin mixture of white glue and water filling all the space by overlapping.

Sculpt wire trees and cover with pellets of plasticine to represent the trunk, branches and leaves of the tree. Create a stand up class forest.

Create a short poem based on the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feel of your tree and its parts. Using leaf prints, make a special border to frame your poem.

Simple printmaking: carving and making prints of an image of the tree itself or the tree's skeleton, or a leaf. (See appendix for instructions) Frame the print using construction paper or create greeting cards with the tree print images.

**Extension of ideas:**

Mount your own tree art exhibition for your school or in your community.

Check out the site <http://www.realtrees4kids.org/> for many ideas on tree studies.

Look up "Walk in the Woods" online (Video clips, nature notes, links and resources for studies about the environment.) then create a board game about a walk in the forest.

Look up "Wonderful World of Trees" online: Biodiversity, forest protection, tree ID. Includes lessons, puzzles and experiments. [www.domtar.com/arbre/english](http://www.domtar.com/arbre/english)

**Suggestions for Assessment:**

Keep notes, checklists and observations on the motivation, depth, and completion of the work and allow students to share the highlights of their projects.

**Appendix:**

Simple Printmaking, you will need:

Enough small Styrofoam squares for each student

Old newspaper to cover the tables

Varied colours of construction paper (or white paper) on which to make the prints

Scissors and glue to “frame” the prints on contrasting coloured papers

Something with a clear surface on which to roll the ink (Plexiglas, clear plastic)

Brayers (rollers), printing ink

**Step 1**

Distribute a small (10x10cm) Styrofoam square to each student. (Trays for cutting squares can be obtained in the deli or meat counter of your local grocery store, usually sold very cheaply.)

**Step 2**

Invite students to carve a special design on their square using a pencil, craft stick or some found tool that makes an interesting pattern. Make sure to carve the design fairly deeply, without cutting through the square as this provides the “relief” surface. They might wish to create a special shape out of their Styrofoam rather than using the whole square.

**Step 3**

Once designs are ready, use a knife or craft stick to place a grape sized blob of printing ink from the jar onto the flat plastic surface. Roll a clean brayer over the ink making sure the whole roller is covered with ink. You’ll hear a sticky “chewing gum” sound when the brayer is ready.

**Step 4**

Roll the inked brayer over the design on the square until the image is completely covered.

**Step 5**

Place the inked image where you would like it to appear on a piece of clean plain or coloured paper and, using the heel of your hand, press over the square completely to make sure all the ink is distributed. Be careful not to let it slide as the image will be smeared. (Try to keep fingers clean using small corners of scrap paper to handle the carved piece.)

### **Step 6**

Holding the paper steady with one hand, carefully peel the Styrofoam back from the paper to reveal the print. If not satisfied, (the ink may be applied too thickly or not covering the image completely, or the lines may not be carved deeply enough), wash the block and start the inking process again or try carving on a new piece. Apply different ink colours to get different effects. Encourage patience and remind students that artists sometimes make hundreds of prints before they get just the right effect!

### **Step 7**

After you have made several prints with the same design, number them as an artist would using the 1/3, 2/3, 3/3 patterns according to the sequence in which you have produced them. Initial and frame the prints with construction paper.

The ink takes about 12 hours to dry completely. You can also encourage the students to frame their prints by trimming around them with scissors and backing on different coloured construction paper to experiment with contrast and overall effect

### **Books about Trees for Kids:**

*Tell Me, Tree: All About Trees for Kids* by Gail Gibbons

*Trees, Leaves & Bark (Take-Along Guide)* by Diane L. Burns

*A Tree Is Nice* by Janice May Udry and Marc Simont

*The Life Cycle of a Tree* by Bobbie Kalman and Kathryn Smithyman

*A Field Guide to Eastern Trees (Peterson Field Guides)* by George A. Petrides, Roger Tory Peterson, and Janet Wehr

*Our Tree Named Steve* by Alan Zweibel and David Catrow

*Sky Tree: Seeing Science Through Art* by Thomas Locker and Candace Christiansen

*The Big Tree* by Bruce Hiscock

*First Guide to Trees (Peterson Field Guides)* by George A. Petrides, Roger Tory Peterson, Janet Wehr, and Olivia Petrides

*The Giving Tree 40th Anniversary Edition Book with CD* by Shel Silverstein

*The Gift of the Tree* by Alvin R. Tresselt and Henri Sorensen

*Magic Tree House Series* by Mary Pope Osborne and Sal Murdocca

*The Halloween Tree* by Ray Bradbury and Joseph Mugnaini

*We Planted a Tree* by Diane Muldrow and Bob Staake

*The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree* by Gail Gibbons

*The Apple Pie Tree* by Zoe Hall and Shari Halpern

*The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry (Mar 13, 2000)

*The Tale of Three Trees: A Traditional Folktale* by Angela Elwell Hunt and Tim Jonke (Illustrator) (Mar 25, 2004)

*The Treasure Tree: Helping Kids Understand Their Personality* by Dr. John Trent (Mar 17, 1998)

*Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa* by Jeanette Winter (Sep 21, 2008)

*Mr. Willowby's Christmas Tree* by Robert E. Barry (Oct 17, 2000)

*The Alphabet Tree* (Dragonfly Books) by Leo Lionni (Oct 24, 1990)

*The Bee Tree* by Patricia Polacco (May 4, 1998)

*Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai* (Frances Foster Books) by Claire A. Nivola (Apr 1, 2008)

*The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree: An Appalachian Story* by Gloria Houston and Barbara Cooney (Oct 1, 1996)

*The Jesse Tree* by Geraldine McCaughrean and Bee Willey (Sep 15, 2005)

*Miss Twiggley's Tree* by Dorothea Warren Fox (Nov 2002)

*The Year Money Grew on Trees* by Aaron R. Hawkins (Sep 6, 2010)

*Tree for All Seasons* by Robin Bernard (Sep 1, 2001)

*Night Tree* by Eve Bunting and Ted Rand (Oct 31, 1994)

*A Wish to Be A Christmas Tree* by Colleen Monroe and Michael G. Monroe (Oct 6, 2005)

*Our Family Tree: An Evolution Story* by Lisa Westberg Peters and Lauren Stringer (Apr 1, 2003)

*Song of the Trees* by Mildred D. Taylor (May 26, 2003)

*I Will Plant You a Lilac Tree: A Memoir of a Schindler's List Survivor* by Laura Hillman (Feb 19, 2008)

*The Magic Orange Tree: and Other Haitian Folktales* by Diane Wolkstein (Jan 21, 1997)

*The Little Fir Tree* by Margaret Wise Brown and Jim Lamarche (Sep 22, 2009)

*Little Tree* (Dragonfly Books) by E. E. Cummings and Deborah Kogan Ray (Oct 12, 2010)

*The Tree That Time Built: A Celebration of Nature, Science, and Imagination* by Mary Ann Hoberman, Linda Winston, and Barbara Fortin (Oct 12, 2009)

*The Tree of Life: Charles Darwin* (New York Times Best Illustrated Books (Awards)) by Peter Sis (Oct 1, 2003)

*A Tree Is a Plant* (Let's-Read-and-Find... Science) by Clyde Robert Bulla and Stacey Schuett (Sep 4, 2001)

*Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a Tree* by Lauren Tarshis (May 15, 2008)

*A Grand Old Tree* by Mary Newell DePalma (Aug 2005)

*The Tree Book for Kids and Their Grown Ups* by Gina Ingolia (Oct 7, 2008)

*The Singing Tree* (Newbery Library, Puffin) by Kate Seredy (Oct 1, 1990)

*A Tree for Peter* by Kate Seredy (Nov 1, 2004)

*Take a Tree Walk* (Take a Walk series) by Jane Kirkland (Jun 2002)

*The Tree in the Ancient Forest* by Carol Reed-Jones and Christopher Canyon (Apr 1995)

*The Wish Giver: Three Tales of Coven Tree* by Bill Brittain and Andrew Glass (Apr 18, 1986)

*Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley* (Great Episodes) by Ann Rinaldi (Mar 1, 2005)

*Up in the Tree* by Margaret Atwood (Nov 1, 2010)

*The Trees of the Dancing Goats* (Aladdin Picture Books) by Patricia Polacco (Oct 1, 2000)

*Aani and the Tree Huggers* by Jeannine Atkins and Venantius J. Pinto (Jan 2000)

*The Grandpa Tree* by Mike Donahue (Aug 25, 2007)

*Under the Cherry Blossom Tree: An Old Japanese Tale* by Allen Say (May 31, 2005)

*Tree of Life: The Incredible Biodiversity of Life on Earth* (CitizenKid) by Rochelle Strauss and Margot Thompson (Aug 1, 2004)

*The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan (Aug 5, 2010)

*Merro Tree* (Del Rey Discovery) by Katie Waitman (Aug 30, 1997)

*Old Elm Speaks: Tree Poems* by Kristine O'Connell George and Kate Kiesler (Mar 12, 2007)

*Gas Trees and Car Turds: Kids' Guide to the Roots of Global Warming* by Kirk R. Johnson and Mary Ann Bonnell (Aug 23, 2007)

*I Have an Olive Tree* by Eve Bunting and Karen Barbour (Apr 7, 1999)

*This Is the Tree* by Miriam Moss (Mar 30, 2005)

*The Wishing Tree* by Ruth Chew (Jan 1981)

*My Favorite Tree: Terrific Trees of North America* (Sharing Nature With Children Book) by Diane Iverson (Apr 1999)

*Trees* (Usborne Beginners) by Lisa Jane Gillespie and Patrizia Donaera (Jan 2009)

*Under the Banyan Tree* by Toni De Palma (May 15, 2007)

*The Cuckoo Tree* by Joan Aiken (Sep 25, 2000)

*The Minstrel Tree* by Alan Shayne and Norman Sunshine (Sep 15, 2001)

*Up the Learning Tree* by Marcia K. Vaughan and Derek Blanks (Sep 1, 2009)

*Every Time I Climb a Tree* by David McCord and Marc Simont (Sep 1, 1999)

*Another Tree in the Yard* by Lucia Sera and John Iorio (Sep 2004)