Squelch spring fever by educating your students about the importance of nature. Share this assortment of stories and songs about the life cycle and seasons of a tree. They’ll be budding for more!

**Picture Book**: *A Tree is Nice* by Janice May Urdy. Harper and Row, 1956.

This Caldecott winner changes the mood of each spread by mixing black and white illustrations with full color ones. Its classic text will delight your students with a stream of consciousness style that mimics the voice of a child. Whether you’re in, below, or beside a tree, the tree has a purpose. Use this story to ask your students what they think a tree is for.


Share this funky rock song from the debut children’s album of the popular ‘90s alternative band. The musicians discuss all the lovely things about a tree.


An in-depth look at the many things that trees give us: cribs, bats, chairs, newspapers, musical instruments, money, paper to share ideas, thoughts and dreams, and more. Ask your students to choose their favorite item that trees give them.


Visit Arnold’s secret place that keeps him busy throughout the year. The story begins in the spring where he hangs a swing from his apple tree’s limb. In the summer, Arnold builds a tree house in the tree’s shady limbs that keeps him cool from the hot sun. Autumn brings a blanket of colorful leaves to Arnold’s tree house, and in the winter, Arnold builds a snowman to keep his tree friend company until the spring returns once more. The story is sprinkled with elements of non-fiction and instructs the reader how to bake an apple pie, and how a cider press works.


Shake apples out of a tree and eat them for lunch. Use this tune for snack and lunch transitions throughout your nature unit.

**Picture Book**: *This is the Tree* by Miriam Moss. Kane/Miller Books, 2000.

Bring your class to Africa where the Baobab tree is king. The Baobab is the central character that exotic animals such as elephants, impala, buffalo, zebras, turaco birds, and jaguar visit. Create your own classroom book in which each student illustrates an animal native to your area. Would your tree be a palm tree or a maple? Would it have chipmunks and cardinals or flamingo visiting it?

Follow along as Mr. Sun and Moon hide behind the trees!


Use this lengthier story to teach your students the importance of one great tree. A sleeping tree chopper is approached by all the rainforest animals, informing him of the importance of that single tree. If the Kapok were cut down it would leave many rainforest animals homeless, leave the world with less oxygen and beauty, and would start a trend of cutting more down. The lumberjack awakens enlightened, and leaves the single tree alone.

Musical Activity: “Green Grass Grew All Around.”

There are different versions of this song, depending on how you want to use it. Dr. Jean’s version, “In the Woods There Was a Tree” from her Just For Fun! (Melody House, 2007) album, is slow. Use it when you first teach your kids the fingerplay. Pick up the pace with Greg & Steve’s “Green Grass Grew All Around” from Rockin’ Down the Road (Young Heart Music, 2002). And, if you’re feeling really frisky, use The Learning Station’s “Green Grass Grows” from Seasonal Songs in Motion (Hug-a-Chug Records, 2001). Their country tune is fast and will challenge your students to keep up!


This story is adapted from an Iroquois address. Children in their culture are taught to greet the morning by giving thanks to all living things. Trees serve as a background for the blue waters, green grasses, waxing moon and twinkling stars. Don’t save this story for Thanksgiving—use it now! It will get lost among the turkey books in the fall.


Count to five and shake different fruits out of the tree. From plums and pears to peaches and limes, your students will learn what kinds of fruits grow from trees without being hit over the head with it.


Trees serve as the backdrop to this concise story in which four friends turn a bad day into a good day. This book, with a whopping ten sentences, is a great way to show your students the element of plot. The story introduces four characters, each with a problem. The conflict is solved for each friend in a mere two sentences.


Berkner’s soothing voice asks you to feel the wind against your face and cool grass between your toes in this peaceful song. Have your students rest their heads against their desks as they come in from recess or gym class, and listen.


Enjoy this silly song about popcorn popping on a cherry tree. Use a parachute and have your students ball up pieces of scrap paper. Pop the paper “popcorn” in the parachute along with the song as it gets faster and faster.
Additional Books: Consider adding these stories into your classroom collection. Students can browse at their leisure and learn more.

- *The Earth is Good: A Chant in Praise of Nature* by Michael DeMunn. Scholastic, 1999. Use this short story to fill in if needed. The simple sentence structure will enchant your class as the narrator names all the things in nature that are good.
- *Leaves* by David Ezra Stein. G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2007. Read this brief story about a bear who tries to catch the tree’s leaves and put them back on.
- *The Little Yellow Leaf* by Carin Berger. Greenwillow Books, 2008. The mixed media illustrations will capture your students’ imaginations and may inspire them to create a collage.
- *Mary Margaret’s Tree* by Blair Drawson. Scholastic, 1996. Mary Margaret plants a tree and then climbs up into a surreal world.
- *Our Tree Named Steve* by Alan Zweibel. G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 2005. Read the about the life (and death) of a tree named Steve. The illustrations are fresh and will appeal to your reluctant readers.
- *Someday a Tree* by Eve Bunting. Clarion, 1993. This is a lengthier picture book that discusses environmentalism. Great for the second grade audience.
- *When the Wind Stops* by Charlotte Zolotow. Harper Collins, 1995. A tree serves as the setting for this story. Watch the tree dance in the wind, hide the moon, shed its coat and hug icicles when the wind stops blowing.

Additional Music: Save some of these songs for the fall if you live in a leaf changing environment.

- “Autumn Leaves” on *Piggyback Songs*, 2000. Join hands and circle around to the “Mulberry Bush” tune in which summer leaves hang, then turn colors.
- “Leaves” on *Piggyback Songs*. Kimbo Educational, 2000. Use a parachute and construction paper leaves in different autumn colors. Have your students toss and catch the leaves as you circle around to the “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” medley.

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