



The Great Kapok Tree

Lynne Cherry

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The author and artist Lynne Cherry journeyed deep into the rain forests of Brazil to write and illustrate her gorgeous picture book *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* (1990). One day, a man exhausts himself trying to chop down a giant kapok tree. While he sleeps, the forest's residents, including a child from the Yanomamo tribe, whisper in his ear about the importance of trees and how "all living things depend on one another" . . . and it works. Cherry's lovingly rendered colored pencil and watercolor drawings of all the "wondrous and rare animals" evoke the lush rain forests, as well as stunning world maps bordered by tree porcupines, emerald tree boas, and dozens more fascinating creatures.

Awards: IRA Teacher's Choice (1991), ABA's Pick of the Lists, Reading Rainbow Review Book, NSTA-CBC Outstanding Trade Book for Children

The Great Kapok Tree Details

Date : Published March 6th 2000 by HMH Books for Young Readers (first published March 15th 1990)

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Author : Lynne Cherry

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From Reader Review The Great Kapok Tree for online ebook

Bethe says

re reading this classic ecology tale for the umpteenth time - fabulously detailed illustrations overcome the sometimes didactic text.

Tatiana Giraldo says

This is a book about a man that is going to cut an old tree in the rainforest. The animals that depend on the tree appear to the man on his dreams and tell him why he shouldn't cut it down. It is a great story about ecology, compassion and how everything is connected.

Jennifer says

This is a great science and social studies related book for my preschool students. We discover what a kapok tree is (they had never heard of it), where it grows (rainforest), where the rainforests are (social studies), and the animals/insects in the rainforest (science).

Alexandra says

i remember reading this in third grade with my teacher and our whole class. we did a whole unit on the rainforest and it fascinated me and also made me sad to learn that so much of it was in danger of being cut down and destroyed.

i'm even sadder reading it today, knowing now that of course it's not as easy as it was in the book to convince people not to destroy it for their own monetary gain.

but still i think it's important that kids continue to read the great kapok tree and books like it today because it makes them think about the wrongs that humans inflict on nature. maybe they will make conscious choices to do their part, however small, to make things better or at least not any worse.

this book is filled with beautiful illustrations of animals in the canopy of a great kapok tree. the author lynne cherry actually traveled to the amazon rainforest to do research on the illustrations in this book:)

Krista says

The Great Kapok Tree has absolutely gorgeous illustrations and a beautiful message about wildlife

preservation. This book tells the tale of a man who is about to chop down an enormous tree in the Amazon rain forest, but gets too tired and falls asleep. While he is asleep, all of the animals who would be affected by the tree's absence speak to him and try to convince him not to chop it down. I loved the message of respecting nature and thinking of the bigger picture instead of just one's immediate needs.

Kathryn says

Okay, first let me say that this is a lovely book--the writing style is simple but touching, the artwork is great--realistic yet still "artsy" (I love the inside-cover spread with the map of the world, showing the rain forest areas, and then a border of rain forest fauna). Also, I am all for the message of conservation--this one wasn't too heavy-handed, but still will help raise children's awareness that it is important to preserve nature.

This book still rather annoyed me, though, following a bit too close to one of the lines that I find extremely frustrating in much of the conservation literature, etc. Namely, that the "Bad Guy" is the one who cuts down the trees (or hunts the wildlife, or...)and--that's it! rather than going the extra distance to show that, well, WHY is he cutting down the trees!? It's not just for fun. Is it that he is greedy? Well, perhaps. Or perhaps he is simply trying to provide for his family who might otherwise starve as native ways of life fade and industrialism creeps into all corners of the globe. And, further, would he be cutting down the trees if there was not a market for the wood or land--perhaps we should look deeper, to someone else down the line, all the way down the line, to the end-consumer??? These books do not reach far enough!!! Now, I'm not saying that I don't buy new things--I'm certainly not as "green" as I want to be--but I do try to be aware of how much I'm buying, from where, and what the impact may be if I'm not sometimes buying used or buying from sustainable sources. I think that environmental-message books for kids do a disservice to them if they simply stop at showing a South American man (dressed in "Western" clothes) attempting to chop down a Kapok tree... Make the children aware of their place in all this (or, at least, their parents' place) and this will give them also a greater sense of empowerment. I mean, as a kid I always thought, well, gosh, OF COURSE I want to save the whales, of course I wouldn't cut down trees, of course I wouldn't hunt elephants! But, I didn't really realize how I could do anything about it until I started to talk it over with my parents.

Sorry for the tangent, but I just hope there are more environmental-message books out there that will involve children!!! If any of you have suggestions, let me know.

Lisa Vegan says

The author/illustrator traveled to the Amazon rain forest to research the illustrations for this book. The illustrations are gorgeous, very colorful and educational as well. The story is a plea to leave the rainforest trees alone. Inside the front and back covers an illustrated map is included which shows the earth's original and remaining rain forest areas.

It made me want to look at actual photos of the Amazon rainforest and to visit there, even though I loathe heat and humidity. And now I'd like to read, and especially look at the art work in, all the books by this author.

Robert Leabo says

The Great Kapok Tree, by Lynne Cherry. Published by Sandpiper in 1990. Guided reading: R; Lexile 670L. This could be used to study 2nd – 5th grade. 40 pages.

It's a fictional story (based on realistic themes) in which a man enters the rainforest with the intent of chopping down the Great Kapok Tree, which is home to many of the animals who live there. Tired, he takes a nap, and many of the native creates – including a boy from the Yanomamo tribe, talk to him in his sleep about the importance of the tree and attempt to persuade him to stop. He wakes up and has a change of heart.

It's a simple, but powerful read and I love this book! I would use it as part of a rainforest, environmentalism or author's purpose – persuasion thematic unit. It really is versatile and could be used for various reasons. We could use it to study geography and culture (related to South America,) as well as animal's habitats and biomes. This could lead to further research on additional plants and animals as well. We'd also explore topics such as recycling and going "green" in an attempt to help save the planet and talk about the importance of the rainforest and flora and fauna around us. It would culminate in writing a persuasive piece, as the students attempt to argue a point using evidence. It's also good for discussing point of view as we can identify Cherry's POV on the environment and what strategies/ techniques she uses to display her voice. We could study additional texts, including nonfiction, as well to round out the unit. The book could be turned into a play if time allowed.

3.RL.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

3.RL.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story

3.W.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons

Susan Huddleston says

Text to Teach

This is a great text to teach book. There are so many activities that could be used with this. The students would be divided into groups of four. Each group will be required to build a model of the rainforest including the four layers. The members of each group will divide up with each member being responsible for one layer. They will each research their chosen layer and then the group will construct a model of the rainforest. Only 15% of the material can be man made (which would wisely be used to represent the animals). The other 85% must be natural resources. For example: moss, grass, small tree limbs, and such. This would be an extended lesson plan to span a minimum of one week.

Sarah Sammis says

Stories with a strong environmental message lend themselves to children's picture books. The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry is in this tradition being a book with gorgeous illustrations of rainforest animals and plants with a message about protecting the Amazon.

This one embraces magical realism bringing an outsider face to face with the creatures who rely on the

kapok tree for their livelihood. When the lumberjack comes to the Great Kapok tree he is overcome with fatigue and falls asleep at its base. There he is visited by the creatures of the forest.

He is visited by reptiles, insects, birds, cats and finally the natives of the forest. For this lumberjack the experience is enough to convince him to leave the tree standing. Realistically, that's often not the case. Cherry's take home message though is that if enough people learn about the diversity of the forest, maybe it can be saved.

Unique says

Text-to-World Connection: How does a theme or content presented in the book connect to something happening in the world?

Text-to-Teaching Connection: What is a response activity that you can do in a classroom with Children in response to the book?

"THE GREAT KAPOK TREE" is easily related to the existing deforestation and the importance and of the human impacts dealing with the loss of animals and their homes. Most of my children have never been out of Georgia, therefore I would feel the need to do a dual connection to help my students to achieve and retain the information provided in this literature. I would stretch activities throughout the Month on the topic of the Rain Forest, because the book is very descriptive with various animals and organisms we can learn about. Students could learn about the seven continents and the location of rain forest. Study the different kinds of animals and their homes in the rain forest. We would study the effects of humans and animals. Then look at our similarities. Students can create different models of the Rain Forest within groups. They could explore mapping and graphing, integrating math concepts. We could ask the parents to help create an area in the classroom as an Rain Forest and show how humans come in and remove and destroy the Rain Forest. We can then share solutions of how we can avoid more destruction and how to save the animals.

midnightfaerie says

My 5 yr old and I really enjoyed this book. It was recommended reading for his lesson on South America and it's all about saving the rain forests. The beautiful illustrations really make you feel for the animals and the habitat and it opened my son's eyes to how we're all living things are dependent on each other. We also learned a lot of new animals, and we loved looking at the world map, a map he's become intimately familiar with. A wonderful book and great addition to any children's library.

Claire says

Little kids saw me holding this book today. I found it bright and colourful - bringing back pleasant memories of an Amazon Trail game I'd play all the time when I was yea high.

I suppose I was in the right place at the right time.

Andee says

The book has been around a while, but I'm now reading it with 2nd and 3rd graders in preparation for Earth Day. They can relate to each animal talking about it's habitat and process how humans are taking these living spaces away. I'm hoping this encourages them to make smart decisions everyday. If I can get them to buy fair trade chocolate - well, I'll take that as a small win!

Chris says

It was a really enjoyable, really fast-paced and really well-written children's picture book. It had really beautiful illustrations, great characters, great message and a really good story. It's one my favorite children's pictures books I've ever read in my whole life. I highly recommend this book for children and adults of all ages.
