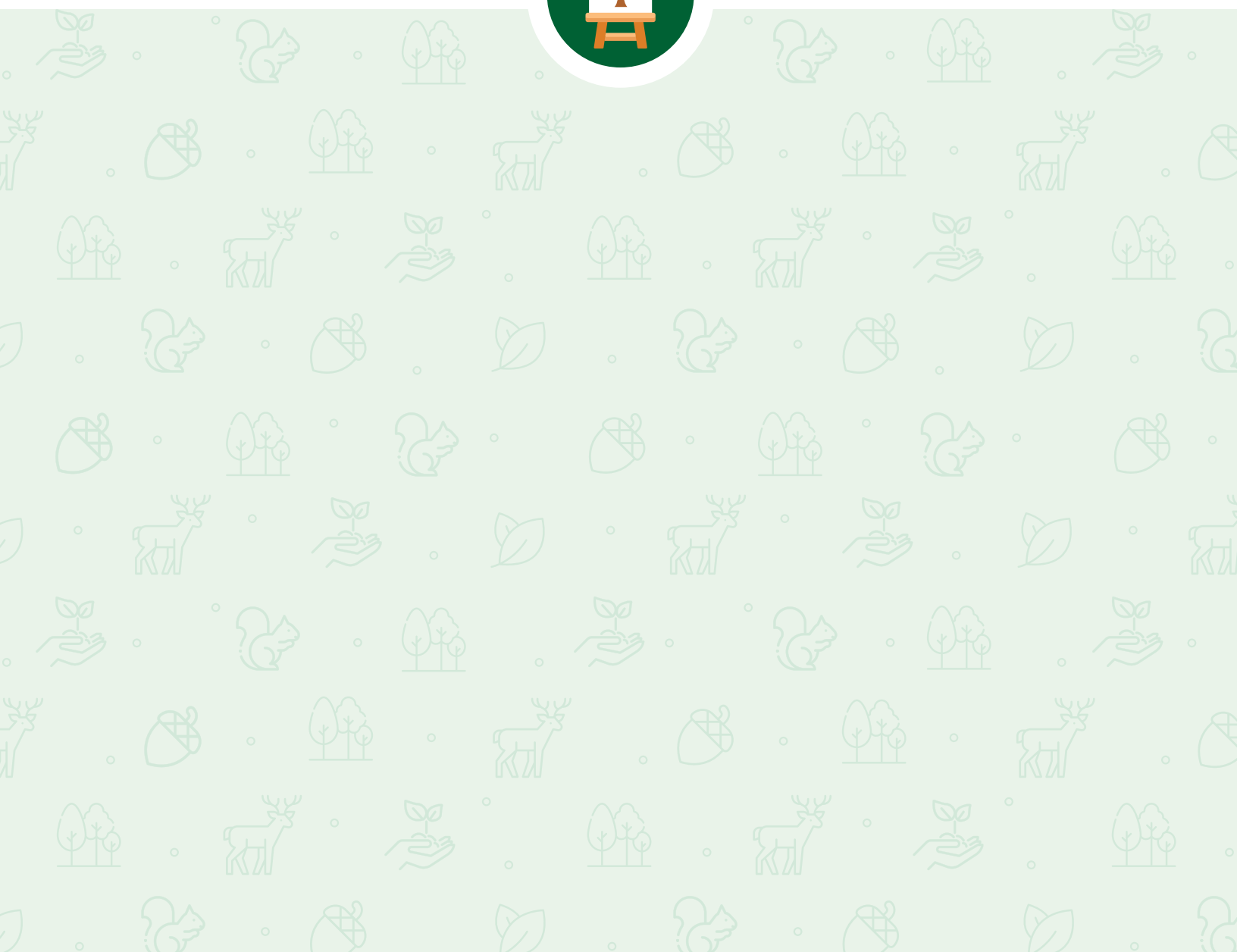


# Creative Roots: Connecting Trees to Art and History





# Creative Roots: Connecting Trees to Art and History

## Introduction

Trees provide us with fresh air, food, and materials to make things. They also help protect our environment from erosion, heat, and wind, and are home to many animals, plants, and insects. But that's not all. Trees are important members of our communities and can inspire people to create art. Whether it's showing a tree's beauty, strength, or role in a community, art can capture the personalities of trees. Trees are a common subject of **poetry**, paintings, drawings, and photography. They've even inspired sculpture and music.

Some trees that inspire are very old, and have been present for important historical events. Others have been planted to remember or celebrate special events. Artists, musicians, architects, engineers, inventors, and authors from around the world have been inspired by trees.

People all over the world make art about trees. Kids can use the things they've learned about trees, or the questions they still have about them, to make art too.

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## Questions to guide explorations and experiments

 How can trees bring people together?

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 What is inspiring or interesting about trees?

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 How can a tree be famous?


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 Why do people create art?

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 How do songs, poems, books, or works of art that feature trees make you feel about trees?

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 How do you think trees should be represented in art?

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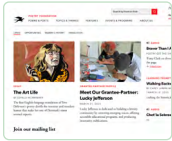


### Helpful “tree-sources” for this topic



#### Poetry4Kids

Includes descriptions of different forms of poetry  
[poetry4kids.com](http://poetry4kids.com)



#### The Poetry Foundation

Includes a digital archive of poems and a dictionary of poetry terms  
[poetryfoundation.org](http://poetryfoundation.org)



#### Andy Goldsworthy - Earth Artist and his Process

Learn about sculptor Andy Goldsworthy who creates sculptures and land art situated in natural or urban settings  
[youtu.be/sngXz55b4bc](https://youtu.be/sngXz55b4bc)

### Children's Books

#### FICTION

- *All Kinds of Special*  
by Tammi Sauer (ages 4-8)
- *I Hear You, Forest*  
by Kallie George (ages 3-7)
- *Maple and Rosemary*  
by Alison James (ages 4-8)
- *My Towering Tree*  
by Janna Matthies (ages 5-9)
- *Not a Stick*  
by Antoinette Portis (ages 2-6)
- *The Paper-Flower Tree*  
by Jacqueline Ayer (ages 4-8)
- *Picture a Tree*  
by Barbara Reid (ages 4-8)
- *Poetree*  
by Shauna LaVoy Reynolds (ages 4-8)
- *The Tree in the Courtyard:  
Looking Through Anne Frank's Window*  
by Jeff Gottesfeld (ages 8-12)
- *The Tree Told Me*  
by Sophie Lescaut (ages 5-7)



## Creative Roots: Connecting Trees to Art and History

### POETRY

- *Poetree* by Caroline Pignat (ages 7-10)
- *Poetrees* by Douglas Florian (ages 6-10)
- *Poetry for Kids: Robert Frost* edited by Jay Parini (ages 8-12)
- *Tree Whispers* by Mandy Ross (ages 4-8)
- *Trees* by Verlie Hutchens (ages 4-8)
- *Trees: Haiku from Roots to Leaves* by Sally M. Walker (ages 7-9)

### NONFICTION

- *111 Trees: How One Village Celebrates the Birth of Every Girl* by Rina Singh (ages 5-8)
- *Be Thankful for Trees* by Harriet Ziefert (ages 4-8)
- *Celebritrees: Historic and Famous Trees of the World* by Margi Preus (ages 6-10)
- *Cool Green: Amazing, Remarkable Trees* by Lulu Delacre (ages 7-10)
- *The Gravity Tree: The True Story of a Tree That Inspired the World* by Anna Crowley Redding (ages 5-9)
- *Incredible Stars of the Plant World* by Benjamin Flouw (ages 5-10)
- *Johnny Appleseed* by Steven Kellogg (ages 4-8)
- *The Magic and Mystery of Trees* by Jen Green (ages 5-10)
- *Paul Bunyon* by Steven Kellogg (ages 3-9)
- *The Secret Life of Trees (DK Super Readers Level 2)* by DK (ages 7-9)
- *The Tree of Life: How a Holocaust Sapling Inspired the World* by Elisa Boxer (ages 5-9)
- *This Very Tree* by Sean Rubin (ages 5-8)
- *Under the Freedom Tree* by Susan VanHecke (ages 6-9)
- *The Witness Trees: Historic Moments and the Trees Who Watched Them Happen* by Ryan G. Van Cleave (ages 7-10)



# Poetree: Tree-Inspired Writing

## Introduction

Because trees are beautiful and full of life, people are often inspired to write **poetry** about them. Trees give us shade, clean air, and are home to animals, but they can also tell stories—some trees have been around for many, many years, and they’ve seen lots of things happen. As symbols of life, growth, resilience, and interconnectedness, the topic of trees lends itself to many poetic forms.

In reading poems about trees and learning about different types of poetry, kids can express their own ideas and feelings about trees in poems they write and display on a Poetree.

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## Supplies

- Tree Trekker Journals (or notebooks)
- Writing and drawing materials
- Scissors
- Poetic Leaf handout (pages 57-58)
- Hole punch
- String or stapler
- Clear packing tape
- A tree (real or artificial) or bulletin board

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## Get kids thinking

**Ask kids:** How do trees inspire you or make you feel? If you wanted to share something you like about trees but didn’t want to talk about it, how could you express yourself? Would you write a poem or a story? Make a drawing or sculpture? How could you use different kinds of art to share your ideas or feelings about a tree?



### Let's get started!

**Start with a book!** Share a book such as *Be Thankful for Trees* by Harriet Ziefert and discuss how trees can help us make art and music. Then share another book such as *Poetrees* by Douglass Florian or *Tree Whispers* by Mandy Ross. Talk about the different poems in the book (most are **odes** or **concrete poems**) and what they think Florian's illustrations for each one add. Florian uses **visual poetry**, where the position, size, and shape of words and lines in his poems also add meaning.

*Poetree* by Caroline Pignat explores trees through the seasons with **acrostic** poems, and *Trees: Haiku from Roots to Leaves* by Sally M. Walker explores trees with **haiku**, a Japanese poetry form that often uses nature as its subject.

Talk about why people write poetry—to express their feelings, ideas, or tell stories in a creative way! Poetry can be fun because it uses words in a special way—sometimes with rhymes, rhythm, or interesting descriptions. It helps people share things they care about or imagine. Some people write poetry to make others think or laugh, while others do it to share something personal. It's like making a picture with words and there are lots of different ways to write poetry.

#### Some forms of poetry that would work well with trees as a topic:

- **Haiku:** A Japanese poetry form with three unrhyming lines of five, seven, and five syllables
- **Concrete:** A poem written in the shape of its subject, such as a tree or leaf
- **Acrostic:** A poem where the first letter of each line spells out a word, name, or phrase when read vertically
- **Ode:** A poem expressing praise for or celebrating something
- **Diamante:** A diamond-shaped poem that compares and contrasts two different things such as tree roots and crown

Explore some famous tree poems before inviting kids to brainstorm about types of poems they'd like to try and things about trees or forests they'd like to write poems about. Have them write their ideas in their Tree Trekker Journals. Encourage them to draw any ideas they have, too.

- "Birches" by Robert Frost  
[poetryfoundation.org/poems/44260/birches](http://poetryfoundation.org/poems/44260/birches)
- "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost  
[poetryfoundation.org/poems/42891/stopping-by-woods-on-a-snowy-evening](http://poetryfoundation.org/poems/42891/stopping-by-woods-on-a-snowy-evening)
- "Loveliest of Trees" by A.E. Houseman  
[poetryfoundation.org/poems/44411/a-shropshire-lad-2-loveliest-of-trees-the-cherry-now](http://poetryfoundation.org/poems/44411/a-shropshire-lad-2-loveliest-of-trees-the-cherry-now)
- "The Poet Tree" by Shel Silverstein  
[shelsilverstein.com/goodies/the-poet-tree](http://shelsilverstein.com/goodies/the-poet-tree)



## Poetree: Tree-Inspired Writing



Next, invite kids to choose a tree or something about a tree to be the topic of a poem. Have them use the same topic to try two or more of the poetry forms you've discussed. Ask them to write their poems in their Tree Trekker Journals then share their poems with the group if they want to.

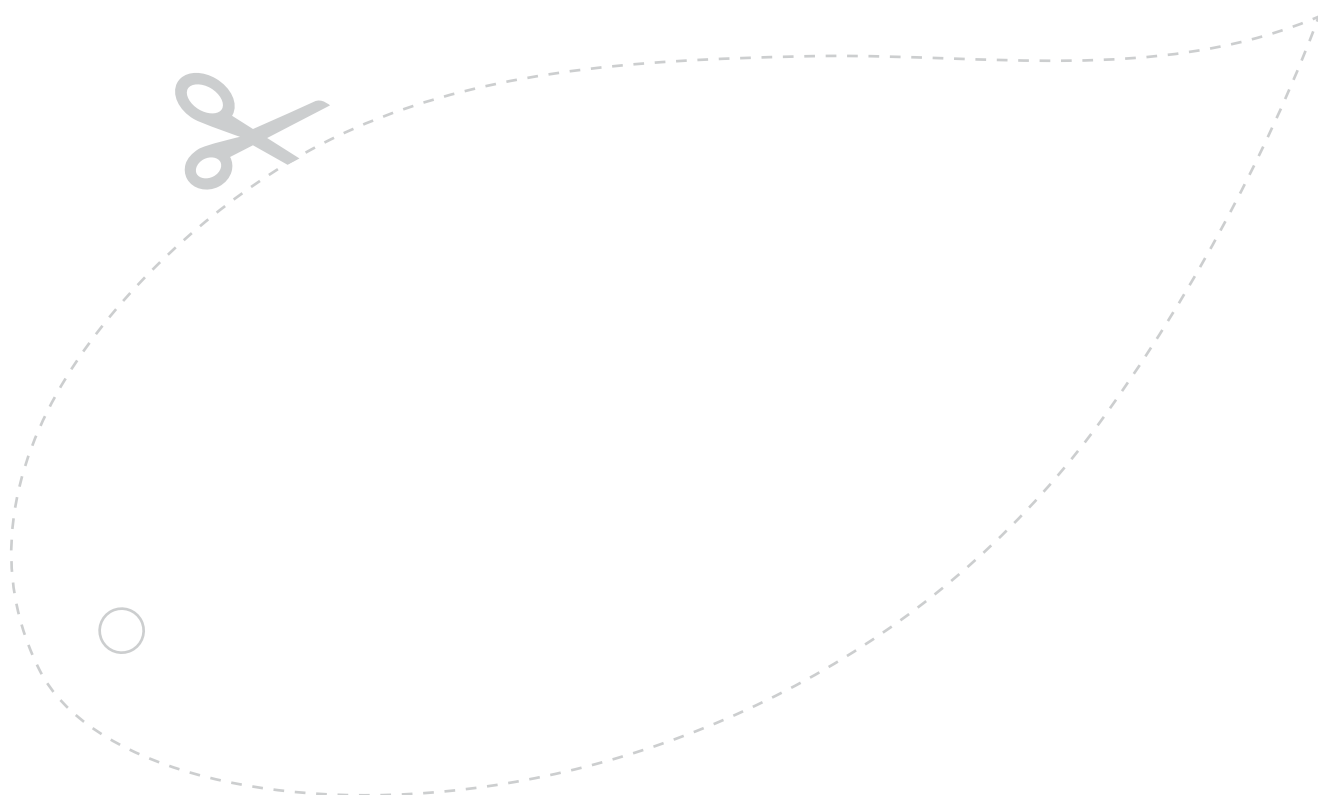
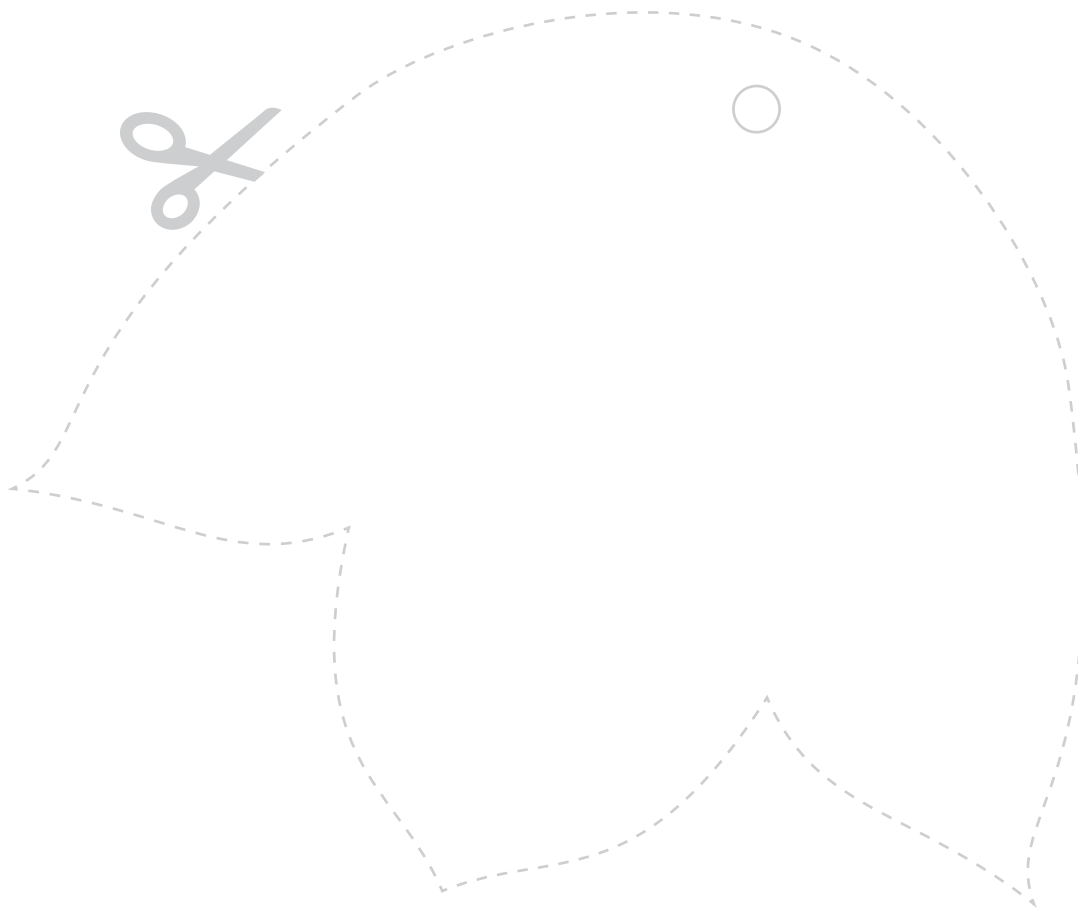
Provide the Poetic Leaf handout on pages 57-58 and have kids write their poems on the leaf templates and cut them out. Cover each Poetic Leaf with clear packing tape to protect it. Punch a hole, make a loop with string for hanging the leaves.



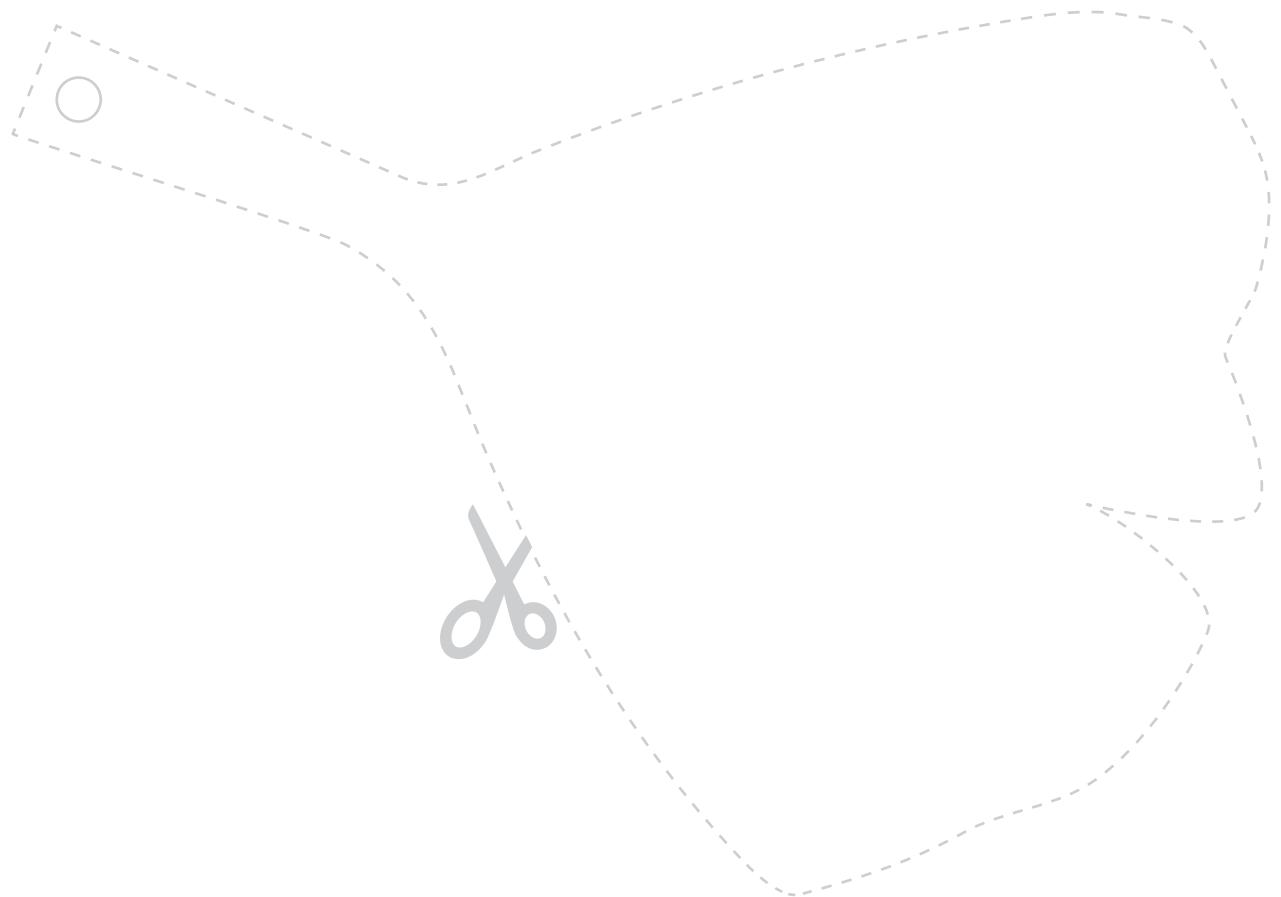
### BRANCH OUT!

**Branch Out!** to scout for a small accessible tree with low branches. That's perfect for a Poetree! If you don't have a "just right" tree nearby, find out about adopting a tree in your neighborhood or park. Hang the Poetic Leaves on the tree branch so that people can see and read them. You might also want to have a large paper leaf or sign that talks about the Poetree and your Tree Trekker poets. Stage a poetry reading at your Poetree and invite other kids or friends and family to attend.

If you can't access an outdoor tree to create a place for hanging poems, bring a fallen branch inside, use an artificial tree, or create a tree trunk and branches on a bulletin board.









# Artis-tree: Celebrating Community Trees

## Introduction

Trees are important members of our communities. We use them to help us build homes, furniture, and other useful items. They provide us with food, fresh air, and shade. They protect us from the wind. They should be valued and celebrated!

Some people celebrate the kinds of trees that grow near them. There are festivals or special days for trees that produce cherry blossoms, maple syrup, apples, and peaches. Arbor Day is a day to celebrate all trees, plant new ones, and recognize the importance of trees to our environment.

Other trees that get celebrated are Witness Trees—trees that have been alive for a long time and witnessed important events in history or have become landmarks.

As kids explore the ways trees bring people together, they can uncover the stories and histories of trees in their community and commemorate them with a work of art.

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## Supplies

- Materials for sculpture: paper bags, cardboard, wire, rocks, colored paper, cloth, other decorative items, gloves, wire cutters, and pliers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Tree Trekker Journal (or notebooks)
- Writing and drawing materials

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## Get kids thinking

**Ask kids:** What kinds of trees grow in our community? Do you know of any special days or events that celebrate trees or their products like fruits, nuts, or things made of wood? Do you know of any old trees that might have been present at an important event, like when someone was born or during a big storm? Do you know of any special trees in our community?



## Artis-tree: Celebrating Community Trees

### Let's get started!

**Start with a book!** Share a book such as *Celebritrees: Historic and Famous Trees of the World* by Margi Preus, *The Witness Trees: Historic Moments and the Trees Who Watched Them Happen* by Ryan G. Van Cleave, *The Tree in the Courtyard: Looking Through Anne Frank's Window* by Jeff Gottesfeld, or *A Family Tree* by Staci Lola Drouillard. Talk about how some trees were present for important historical events, like wars or peace celebrations, or meeting or hiding places for important or famous people.

Other trees are special to communities because they are very old, very tall, have survived destructive storms, were central meeting places, or were planted to mark a special occasion. *All Kinds of Special* by Tammi Sauer explores how a mango tree helps a little girl and her mom get to know their new neighbors.

Encourage your Tree Trekkers to imagine what a tree in their schoolyard, local park, or backyard might have witnessed over the years and write about it in their journals. Next, have kids research trees from their community or even from around the world that have been around for significant events or activities. Have them choose one tree to focus on and find out the type of tree, its age, and the historical events it may have witnessed—whether it's a notable date in history, a local parade or festival, or even the birthday of someone special. They should take detailed notes about the tree, the event it was part of, and how people feel about the tree.



Then invite kids to create a tree sculpture of their tree for a Witness Tree Museum. Start by leading a discussion about how sculpture is a three-dimensional form. So are trees! They are sculptures made by nature.

People make sculptures out of trees, living and dead. **Bonsai trees** and **topiary** are examples of people cutting and shaping living trees to change their appearance in an artistic way. People use wood and dead trees to make sculptures, too. Talk with kids about sculptures they have seen and what about them helps show people the importance of a person, object, or event.



## Artis-tree: Celebrating Community Trees

Your Tree Trekkers can create their own tree sculpture out of available materials. Some materials may be better for creating sculptures of certain species of trees than others. Have them come up with their own designs or offer some examples and instructions:



### Kids Art Workshop: Wire Tree Sculpture

[youtu.be/s8FwqjqrFXc](https://youtu.be/s8FwqjqrFXc)



### Make Colorful Cardboard Sculptures

[artfulparent.com/how-to-make-colorful-cardboard-sculptures](https://artfulparent.com/how-to-make-colorful-cardboard-sculptures)



### How to Make a Paper Bag Tree

[youtu.be/O\\_a3RBPjIY0](https://youtu.be/O_a3RBPjIY0)



### Adapt holiday tree crafts to do a project about coniferous trees

[artycraftykids.com/art/tree-art-and-craft-ideas-for-kids](https://artycraftykids.com/art/tree-art-and-craft-ideas-for-kids)

Before they start, kids may want to sketch their sculpture and talk through their plan for creating. Offer help cutting materials as needed.

After Tree Trekkers have completed their sculptures, have them write a placard for their historic or community tree with the name of the tree and its location, species, and age if known. It should also include a short description of why the tree is special—what has it witnessed, what it commemorates, or how the community uses the tree.



### BRANCH OUT!

Display all the sculptures in a Witness Tree, Communi-tree, or Celebri-tree Exhibit. Invite friends and family to come learn about important trees. Your Tree Trekkers can **Branch Out!** into the community to share their works of art at nature centers, community centers, or retirement homes. You can also **Branch Out!** to look for tree-inspired art in your neighborhood!