

width of the tree each month. Give the records to the teachers of the next grades so the same group of students can continue observing and measuring. Arrange for young trees to be watered during the summer, if necessary, and mulch them to retain water.

**Science: Migration and germination; anatomy and function of a leaf; identifying other trees.**

- In the fall, find white oak acorns or walnuts and try to germinate them in flower pots. (They will be more likely to germinate if you leave them out in the cold for a few weeks.) Talk about how squirrels might move nuts to new places and how other tree seeds move. For example, maple and tulip poplar seeds spin on the wind; dogwood and persimmon fruits get eaten by animals and carried to new places.

- Have students hold a leaf up to a light or window to see the veins and draw the pattern. Explain that the skeleton is made of veins that take water and minerals to all parts of the leaf. The leaf makes sugar and sends it back along the veins to other parts of the plant. How are the leaf skeletons of maples different from the other deciduous trees in the book?

- Have your students find trees on the school grounds or in a nearby park that are not included in this book. Identify each tree using a field guide, and find pictures and examples of the tree's flowers and fruits. Use the glossary ("Getting to Know...") in MY MOTHER TALKS TO TREES to describe the tree: deciduous or evergreen, simple or compound leaves, and so on.

**Language Arts: Writing stories about additional trees.**

- Building on the exercise above to identify trees that are different from those in the book, ask students to suggest what Mom and Laura might say to a new tree and to each other. Then have students write and illustrate a page about the tree that fits into the story, and insert it in the book. Later, read the book to the class again with the inserted page(s).

**Geography: Range maps; map making.**

- Use the range maps in a tree guide and a large classroom map of the U.S. or the world to show where a given tree naturally grows. Explain the difference between native and transplanted trees.

- Ask students to draw a tree map of part of the schoolyard. Help them identify the trees on their map.

**Mathematics: Measuring and averaging.**

- In the fall, measure the length and width of ten leaves. Write the measurements on the board and compute an average. Which kinds of leaves are the shortest, longest, widest, narrowest? Usually saplings have larger leaves than mature trees of the same species. Measure leaves of young and old trees on the school grounds and compare.

**Art: Leaf rubbings; splatter prints.**

- For leaf rubbings, place a pressed leaf between two pieces of paper taped together (a leaf sandwich). Several leaves can be arranged on the paper. Rub with soft pencil, charcoal, or crayon. Colored pencils can be blended in the rubbing. Leaves will show a better vein pattern if placed bottom-side-up.

- Splatter prints are lots of fun but, as their name implies, are messy, so lay out plenty of newspapers. Mount a screen 4-6 inches above the newspaper on bricks or wooden blocks and secure it so it won't move around. (The screen top of an aquarium will work, or nail screen or hardware cloth onto a frame.) Lay the pressed leaf on a piece of colored construction paper and then place the construction paper and leaf on the newspaper underneath the screen. With a large watercolor brush, splatter the paint onto the leaf and paper by brushing across the screen. The print shows a silhouette of the leaves and works best with pines, spruces, and groupings of leaves. Colored construction paper works well because it soaks up the splattered paint, and different colors of paints can be used successively.

**Tree identification: Scavenger hunt.**

- Before class, tape numbers on schoolyard trees. Then give each student (or group) a paper with leaf shapes on it, and send them off to find the trees. Have them write the tree's name and number beside each leaf.

**Notes**

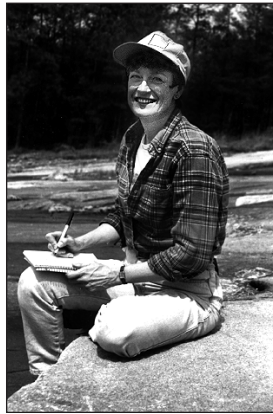


### About the Author

Doris Gove's three children's books (*ONE RAINY NIGHT*, *RED-SPOTTED NEWT*, and *A WATER SNAKE'S YEAR*) have been highly praised for their narrative as well as for their wealth of useful information. She has also written *HIKES IN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS* and *MIRACLE AT EGG ROCK*.

Gove received a B.A. from Barnard College and an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee. She teaches environmental studies to elementary school students and has also been a technical writer and editor.

She lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, with her husband and daughter.



### About the Illustrator

Marilynn H. Mallory has illustrated articles and conducted workshops for elementary school children and teachers in naturalist paintings and field journals. She has been the artist in residence for numerous programs, most notably at the Isle Royale National Park in Michigan. Her work has appeared in several

solo and invitational exhibitions and in many juried competitions nationwide. This is her first book.

Mallory received a B.A. in cultural anthropology from Tulane University and an M.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction in Art from Florida Atlantic University.

She lives in Decatur, Georgia.

**Peachtree Pointers** for **MY MOTHER TALKS TO TREES** was prepared by Doris Gove

### PEACHTREE PUBLISHERS

1700 Chattahoochee Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30318-2112

*phone* (404) 876-8761 / (800) 241-0113 *sales phone*

*fax* (404) 875-2578 / (800) 875-2578 *sales fax*

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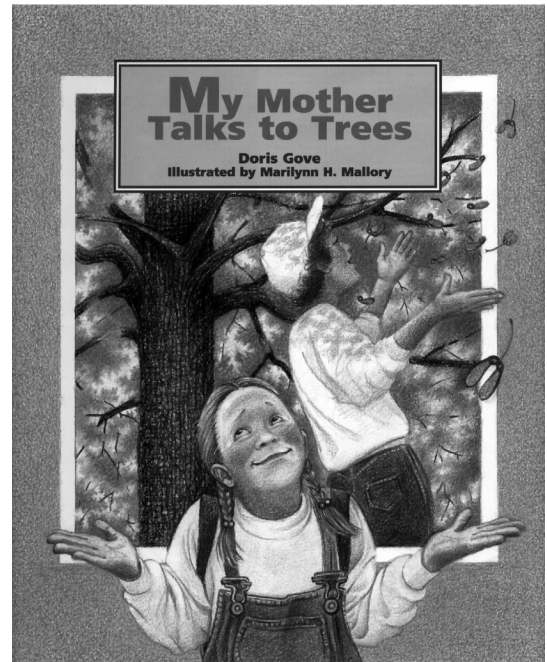
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## My Mother Talks to Trees

Written by **Doris Gove**  
Illustrated by **Marilynn Mallory**

ISBN: 1-56145-166-5 / Hardcover / \$15.95  
8 1/2 x 10 / 32 pages / Full color throughout /  
Children's, ages 4-8 / Spring 1999



### About the Book

Walking Laura home from school one day, Laura's mother talks to trees. She greets each tree, gives it some words of encouragement, and comments on its characteristics. At first, Laura is embarrassed and hopes no one notices, but after several trees, she begins to get interested. She adds some observations of her own. By the time they get home, they have greeted and identified eleven trees.

The trees in this book are common in many neighborhoods. Illustrations include leaves, flowers, fruits, bark, and tree shapes. A map on the endpapers and a detailed, illustrated glossary encourage children to observe and learn to identify the trees and landmarks in their neighborhoods.

### Themes

- Trees and identification
- Mother-child relationship
- Seasonal changes, plant reproduction
- Shapes and textures
- Observation of familiar objects

### Praise for MY MOTHER TALKS TO TREES

"Fun and informative. Readers get to know the characteristics of a wide variety of trees."

—Associated Press

"A fascinating lesson in natural science and tree identification."

—Carolina Parent

### Awards

- 2003-2004 Volunteer State (Tennessee) Master Reading List

## Before You Read

- A few days before reading this book in class, collect leaves of some of the trees described here and press them between pages of a newspaper. Weigh them down with heavy books. When they are flat and dry, insert them in the appropriate pages of the book. Also collect acorns, tree flowers, lichens, or other available items that appear in the book.

- Collect other books about trees from the library and line them up on the blackboard chalk tray or some other prominent place.

- Bring fresh leaves from schoolyard trees, including some that can be seen from classroom windows. Ask students: What kind of tree is this from? Where do you see this tree or know of one like this? Do you have this kind of tree at home? Can you describe what kind of fruit or flowers go with this leaf? What does this tree look like in winter?

- Ask the students to draw or trace a leaf shape.
- Show students the cover illustration. Ask them what the girl is feeling.

## As You Read

- Show your students the map inside the cover. Ask them how they get home from school and what special things they see on the way.

- For each page, as you read it, attach the leaf (or whatever else you have collected) to a poster board or bulletin board. Print labels or have students write the names of trees on cards for the display.

## After You Read

- Ask the students which of the items on the board they can recognize. Ask them what other things they saw in the illustrations (butterflies, squirrels, Mom's magnifying glass). Flip through the book and find each item. Then ask them to name the trees in the story, using the items on the board as reminders.

- Introduce the glossary terms: *flowering tree*, *conifer*, *deciduous*, *evergreen*, *simple*, *compound*, *catkin*, *pollen*, and whatever examples you have. To reinforce those words, find examples of them in the book and talk about which trees the terms apply to.

- Show students the cover illustration and ask again what Laura is feeling. Ask why Laura's feelings change during the story.

- Visit a nature center or park for a tree identification walk. Many nature centers can design a tree program to coordinate with your activities, and some may have an outreach program, or a "trunk," of tree materials to use in your classroom.

## Interdisciplinary Connections

These activities incorporate art, science, writing, and language arts. Measuring, counting, and keeping records of tree growth can be used in math exercises. Use words from this book on spelling lists. Activities with trees can be done all year long and can involve skills and games.

**Outdoor Activities: Field trip for general identification; bark rubbings; observation journal; plant a tree and record its growth.**

- If some of the trees in this book grow on the school grounds or in a nearby park, take a field trip around the grounds. In the fall, collect leaves and press them. In the spring, explain that the trees need leaves to make food in the sunlight and that you will take just one leaf for class display. Look for flowers, fruits, lichens, and cones. Explain that lichens don't hurt trees.

- With masking tape, attach a piece of paper to the bark of different trees and rub with a soft pencil, charcoal, or crayon. Ask the students if they can identify the tree from the bark. (Dogwood is good because its bark looks like little blocks.)

- Choose a tree (or let your students choose one) to visit once a month. Have the students keep a journal for each visit about the appearance of the tree, any changes since the last visit, size and color of leaves, and any other plants or animals associated with the tree. Use journal entries and illustrations in a classroom display.

- If there is room on the school grounds or nearby public lands, plant a tree in the late fall. (*Note:* You will need to obtain permission first from the school or the parks department.) Many of the trees mentioned in this book are available at nurseries.

Measure the tree after you've planted it (height, diameter of trunk at its widest part). Take photos of students planting the tree and then caring for it through the school year. The next spring, record when the first leaves come out, and measure the height and