

The Bee Tree

BY PATRICIA POLACCO



MATERIALS & RESOURCES:

- [Read Aloud Link](#)
- [Free PDF of The Bee Tree](#)
- [The Bee Tree Timeline Printable](#)
- [King Arthur Baking Powder Biscuits Recipe](#)
- Ingredients for biscuits
- Honey for biscuits
- Decaffeinated tea
- [Bee Hunting: Finding a Wild Colony of Honey Bees](#) - video for students

SUMMARY AND DETAILS

Do you ever get bored when reading? Mary Ellen does! Grampa knows just what she needs, a trip to the bee tree. With half the town following the chase, Mary Ellen and Grampa go off on an adventure that leads Mary Ellen to make a sweet discovery of her own.

Lexile Level: AD68OL

Guided Reading Level: M

Genre: Fiction

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- Do you ever get bored when you are reading or doing your homework?
- If yes, what do you do when that happens?
- Looking at the front cover of this book, who do you think the story will be about?
- What do you think the author wants you to know about this book just by looking at the front cover and reading the title?
- While reading this book listen to find out if one of the characters is telling the story or if it is being told by a narrator.

POST-READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Who are the main characters in this book? What evidence do you have to support that?
- What is the setting for this book? What details does the author give you in the illustrations to help you understand?
- When Grampa and Mary Ellen run past Mrs. Gavlock who is walking Baby Sylvester, she says "I haven't done that

(finding a bee tree) since I was a girl! May I come too?,” what do you think Mrs. Gavlock is thinking and feeling?

- The author says the wheels on Einer Tundevold’s bike went tweddle-tweddle-squeeeeeeeek as he peddled faster. Why do you think she chose to add these sound words, also called onomatopoeias, to the story?
- Can you find some other onomatopoeias in this story?
- On pages 15 and 16, the three traveling musicians see the group running towards them. At first, they do not understand what is happening, but Grampa says, “We’re after that bee.” How does the author use the illustrations on this page to show the direction that the crowd is headed? Who seems to be enjoying the chase the most in this illustration?
- Using the illustration on page 15 and 16, what is the mood or feeling of this story?
- On page 19, why does Grampa hand the jar to Mary Ellen to let the last bee out?
- What kind of person do you think Grampa is? What are some of his character traits?
- What lesson does Mary Ellen learn in this book? What is your evidence that she has learned this lesson?
- Can you tell who is telling the story? Is it one of the main characters or a narrator? What is your evidence?

POST-READING DISCUSSION ANSWERS

- Mary Ellen and Grampa are the main characters, they are on every page in the book and the story revolves around their lives and actions.
- The setting is a small town, specifically in the countryside. The author uses outdoor scenes including houses, barns, farm animals, and lots of outdoor drawings to show that they are in the country.
- She is thinking about being a young girl and how much fun it was to chase the bees to find the honey. She is feeling nostalgic, which means a good feeling you have when you think about a time in your life that you enjoyed.
- Authors use onomatopoeia to add humor to stories. Rather than explaining that the bike may be older and a bit rusty, she used a sound to explain what she wanted you to be able to visualize in your mind.
- Other onomatopoeias: slap, bump, bleat, honk, tweddle-tweddle-squeak fump.
- On pages 15 and 16, the author has drawn a line from Grampa’s pointing finger to the bee

that they are following. She is using his finger and the flight of the smallest creature on the page, the bee, to show the direction that the characters are headed in. While they seem a bit chaotic, the group is all running in a similar direction. Baby Sylvester is enjoying the chase the most by the cheerful look on his face and his raised hands.

- The mood of this story is humorous, whimsical, and chaotic. The people and animals are running all about, smiles are on some faces, while expressions of surprise and excitement are on other faces. Even the line of direction that the bee is flying in seems whimsical with a twist in the middle of its path. The faces of the animals seem to be more chaotic as they do not know why all of the people are running but have gotten caught up in the chase.
- On page 19, Grampa hands the jar to Mary Ellen to let the last bee out because he wants her to be involved in the process of finding the bee tree. By letting her take a turn at letting the bee out, Grampa is helping create a memory for Mary Ellen, like Mrs. Gavlock's memory of being a girl and searching for the bee tree.
- Grampa is loving towards Mary Ellen. He is wise because he knows how to carefully capture the bees and follow them to the tree. He cares about Mary Ellen because he wants her to learn that reading is valuable. Grampa is slightly silly for going on this adventure. He is brave for getting the honey out of the tree and generous to share with the villagers. He loves his family, and you can tell because he says that his father and his father's father all showed their children that what is in books is as sweet as honey.
- Mary Ellen learns that adventure, knowledge, and wisdom are all things that can be found in the stories in books. Grampa helps her understand that you have to pursue or find excitement in books. If you don't read them, you won't find the sweetness. The story tells us that Mary Ellen never again complained about reading and she found books as exciting as chasing the bees.
- The story is told by a narrator. The author uses quotes to let the reader know who is talking. Throughout the text, there is no use of the words "me" or "I" that would let you know that the story is being told by one of the characters.

ASSESSMENT

The Bee Tree Timeline Printable -- The teacher should explain to the students that they are going to make their own timeline of events from the story. They should use The Bee Tree Timeline Printable to write, illustrate, and explain the beginning of the story, what happens next, and so on to the conclusion of the story. The students should be able to explain the beginning, middle, and end of the story. If the students are working remotely, the teacher can share read aloud and send the printable via the Learning Management System. The students can share their finished products through video conferencing.

ACTIVITY: HOST A TEA AND BAKING POWDER BISCUIT WITH HONEY PARTY

The villagers in the book celebrate together with tea and biscuits with their honey. With some careful planning, the students can also celebrate together. If the educator has access to a kitchen area with an oven, the students can take turns mixing and baking the biscuits. If that is not possible, the educator should ask a parent to volunteer to make the biscuits at home and bring for the class. If the students are remote, the teacher can share the recipe with the families as a homework activity.

The [King Arthur Baking Powder Biscuits Recipe](#) is an easy, 40 minutes from start to finish, recipe. The baking powder biscuit has been a classic staple in America since the 1800s. Pairing this biscuit with honey and decaf brewed tea can be a culminating event for a class that has completed any pollinator educational lessons. Also could be used around Thanksgiving as a way to tie in celebrations and foods of early American lifestyles.



JOURNAL PROMPTS

- Have you been on an adventure as crazy as this? Write or draw to tell about what you did, why you did it, and what happened in the end. Give details about who was involved, was it fun, did you learn anything along the way.
- Do you have someone in your life that is like Grampa? Someone who wants you to learn that sometimes the things you might not want to do at first are actually things that turn out to be good for you or your brain. Describe who this person is and what they want you to be able to do for yourself. Give details about how it makes you feel and if this person in your life has characteristics like Grampa.
- Did you like this book? Why or why not? What do you think would have made it better? What was your favorite part of the book? Does this book remind you of another that you have read before? Would you recommend this book to a friend?

EXTENSION OF THE LESSON

- If the students want to know more about Bee Hunting, this video will provide factual information about how to locate beehives in the wild. Professor Tom Seely details each step in capturing and following honey bees to find the hives in the wild.

[Bee Hunting: Finding a Wild Colony of Honey Bees](#) -- 24.23 minutes

The Honeycombers Book Club - The Bee Tree lesson standards

ELA COMMON CORE

WRITING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE / INFORMATIONAL TEXT

1st Grade: RL.1.1, RL.1.2, RL.1.3, RL.1.4, RL.1.6, RL.1.7, W.1.1, W.1.5, W.1.8

2nd Grade: RL.2.1, RL.2.3, RL.2.5, RL.2.7, W.2.1, W.2.3, W.2.8

3rd Grade: RL.3.1, RL.3.3, RL.3.4, RL.3.7, W.3.1, W.3.8



Name: _____

THE BEE TREE TIMELINE

First:

Next:

Then:

Last: