



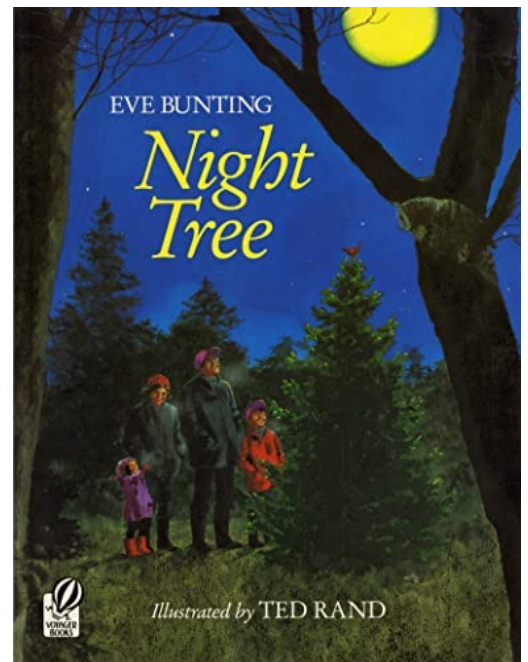
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**December 2022**  
**Night Tree**  
**By Eve Bunting**  
**Grade Levels: K-5**

**Book Summary**

Night Tree is a heartwarming Christmas story about a family that takes an annual journey to a place called Luke's Forest to find a Christmas tree on Christmas Eve. They do not cut the tree down but instead bring supplies to decorate the tree for the animals of the forest. The supplies they use to decorate are not the typical ornaments and tinsel you might find on your tree. The family decorates the tree with fruits and nuts so that the forest animals can have a Christmas snack.





Scan for digital plans.



Scan for ready to use slides.

### Did you know?

- South Carolina's forest industry contributes \$23.2 billion to the state's economy and it is ranked #1 in jobs, #2 in labor income and #3 in direct economic output. To support the industry, the Resource Development Division maintains a directory of all primary and secondary forest product mills in the state. These mill data are available in either a spreadsheet format or as an interactive map on Google Earth. Approximately 89 primary and 800 secondary forest product mills in South Carolina are included in the directories <sup>1</sup>
- South Carolina is 66.4% forested <sup>2</sup>
  - 87% of SC forests are privately owned
  - 60% of private forests are family-owned
- The state's forests produce timber & jobs while providing a backdrop for a desirable quality of life. In addition to beautiful landscapes, forests provide clean water & air, wildlife habitat, recreation, carbon storage, and soil protection. <sup>3</sup>

### Discussion Questions

- How does the family feel, knowing they have given the animals a special gift?
- Are there any ways that you can "give back" this year? How?
- Why is it important to spread kindness?
- Why did the author write this story?

### Activities

#### 1. Forest Biome Project

- a. Google Slides - Have students create a poster or scrapbook page that resembles a forest biome. Challenge students to include 15 components of a forest biome and write a few sentences to describe their creation. Students can grab images off of Google Images or draw their own, snap a picture and upload it into their slide deck.
  - i. Materials needed: Computer, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/five-major-types-biomes>, <http://kids.nceas.ucsb.edu/biomes/temperateforest.html> (optional - sites about biomes/forests for ideas)
- b. Poster or drawing on paper (If your students do not have access to a computer/laptop) - Have students create a poster or drawing that resembles a forest biome. Challenge students to include 15 components of a forest biome and write a few sentences to describe their creation.
- c. Activity Extension Idea: Have students write about what they made using ecosystem/biome vocabulary.

2. **Biosphere in a Jar** - [CLICK HERE](#) to access this activity.

3. **Before, During, After Discussion Questions**<sup>8</sup>

1. Call students to the reading area, or a central area in the classroom. Discuss: a. What types of family traditions do you have around the holidays? b. If your family decorates a tree at Christmas time, do you use an artificial tree or a real one?  
c. Have you ever chopped down a tree before?
2. Tell the students that today they will be reading a story about one boy's family Christmas tree tradition.
3. Show your students the cover of *Night Tree*, and read the title and the authors; names.
4. Ask:
  - a. What do you think this story is going to be about?
  - b. What information does the cover of a book give us?
5. Begin reading the story. Pause after the family sees the deer. Discuss: a. What do you think they are going to do?  
b. Have you ever gone walking in a forest at night?  
c. What other types of animals might they see in the forest?
6. Finish reading the story.
7. Conclude with a summary discussion:
  - a. Why did the family hang those types of decorations on the tree?
  - b. Were you surprised by what the family did with the tree?
  - c. What do you think the author of this book is trying to tell us?
  - d. What are some other ways we can help wild animals?
  - e. Did you enjoy this book? Why?

4. **Reading Questions Organizer**<sup>9</sup>

Make a large class questioning chart on chart paper or the board. This will serve as an advanced organizer. Below is an example chart. Some sections are filled in to help guide the teacher for prompting the class, but only the section header should be provided to the students. The class completes the chart as a group after previewing the illustrations and reading the story. Complete the final column **What We Learned** after reading *Night Tree*.

Things to Consider	What We Noticed	Questions We Have	What We Learned
Setting: • When • Where	There are Christmas decorations on the house and in the town. It's night time?	Is it Christmas Day? Is it Christmas Eve?	
Characters: • Who	It looks like a mom and a dad and 2 kids. They look happy. There are also lots of animals.	Do they all get along very well? Do these animals know this family?	
Events: • What	The family is going into the woods at night. They are having a picnic. They decorate a tree and then leave the forest. There are lots of animals on the last page.	Why is the family going into the woods? What kind of picnic are they having and are they singing? Why would they decorate a tree in the middle of the forest? What are the animals doing at the end?	
Big Idea Author's Message: • Why	It seems like it's about Christmas.	What is the story mostly about? Why did the author write the story?	

## 5. What is a forest?<sup>10</sup>

### 1. Discuss:

- a. What is a forest?
- b. Who has visited a forest?
- c. What did you see there? What did you do?

2. If no one has visited a forest, ask students to describe a forest they have heard or read about. If students have visited a forest, ask them to share specific information about those they have visited. Encourage them to talk about all facets of a forest, not just the trees. Students may mention other plants, animals, or non-living forest elements, as well as spontaneous or planned activities they witnessed or participated in. (For example, A forest is...a place with a lot of trees; a habitat for many animals; somewhere you can go to get away from the city.)

3. As a class discuss these typical qualities of forests. Together, create a class definition of a forest. This discussion will be a great springboard for exploring the concept of urban forests later in the lesson, as well.

4. Allow students to explore the [US Forest Service website](#) to discover National Forests in South Carolina and across the United States. In what regions are these forests located?

5. Next share some forests from this list that may not look as students expect:
- a. The saguaros of the Colorado National Forest

- b. The temperate rainforest of Olympic National Forest
- c. The sand pine scrub forest of Ocala National Forest
- d. Petrified Forest National Park

6. **Extended Discussion.** Encourage students to think more broadly about forests, either as part of a class discussion or individually through journaling. 7.

Ask:

- a. What does a forest look like?
- b. What different forms can a forest take? (Examples: rainforest, mountain top, national forest, urban forest, local forest, your own backyard)
- c. What or who lives in forests?
- d. How do different parts of the forest work together?
- e. How do forests help our planet and us?
- f. What may harm forests?
- g. Who takes care of forests, and why is it important to do so?

6. **Where are forests?**<sup>10</sup>

1. Share a map of your town or county, or have students create their own using the [Discover The Forest tool](#). Ask them to locate your school and as many nearby forests as possible.
2. Have students bring a journal outside to the schoolyard (or nearest area with one or more trees). Ask students to point in the direction of the nearest forest, using what they have learned from the map(s).
3. Explain to students that they are actually standing in a forest—an urban forest. An urban forest may not seem like a traditional forest because most parts of an urban forest do not have dense tree growth.
  - a. An urban forest is the ecosystem in any settled area—urban, suburban, or rural. It encompasses all of the green space, including street trees, parks, landscaped boulevards, public gardens, greenways, and more! Eighty percent of the nation’s population resides in urban areas, so urban forests may sometimes be the only forests that people experience.
  - b. Urban forests enrich our lives by providing us with clean air and water, storm-water control, energy conservation, reduction of pollution and noise, and an increase in outdoor opportunities and economic development, not to mention tranquility and beauty
4. Explain to students that they will be environmental journalists, using their journal to record their research and writing a non-fiction story about their urban forest.

7. **“Forest Freeze” Game**<sup>10</sup>

- a. Have students walk around the schoolyard/urban forest and write or draw what they experience in their Forest Journals. Remind them to use their senses of sight, touch, hearing, and smell. Then, call “Freeze.”
- b. Students should stop, look and closely observe the small area immediately around them, recording (words or pictures) what they discover. Call “Unfreeze” and they will return to a larger area of exploration until you call “Freeze” again.
- c. Return to the classroom and have students discuss their urban forest and share their journals with each other.

Lastly, revisit and revise the classroom definition of a forest based on these experiences. Have students write a new definition in their journals. Students could also create a Venn diagram comparing a “traditional” forest and an urban forest.

**Extension Activity:** Students can choose forests in three different forms (examples: urban forest, rainforest, scrub forest) and research/write a paper exploring these forests’ similarities and differences.

#### 8. **Collecting and entering data for the *National Tree Benefits Calculator***<sup>10</sup>

1. Go to [www.treebenefits.com](http://www.treebenefits.com)
2. Enter your zip code.
3. Record the tree species you have identified from your community, school, yard, etc.
4. To find the diameter of the tree, first find the circumference by wrapping a length of string round the trunk, approximately 4.5 feet up from the ground. Mark the string where both pieces meet, and measure the length (the length is the circumference). Calculate the diameter of the tree (diameter = circumference/ $\pi$  [pi, or 3.14]).
5. Choose your land-use type for the tree, and click Calculate.
6. Students can complete a survey of the trees around their home and neighborhood.

## 9. Making edible tree decorations<sup>11</sup>

### 1. Peanut Butter Pine Cones

- Collect pine cones. Any shape or size will do, just make sure they're open.
- Cut 12" string or wire and tie to the end of the pine cone.
- Spread peanut butter over the pine cone, covering completely.
- Roll the pine cone in a bowl full of birdseed.
- Tie to tree branches.



### 2. Birdseed Orange Feeders

- Mix two envelopes of Knox Gelatin (approximately 4 tablespoons) to 1 cup of water. Simmer on the stovetop, over low heat, until the gelatin has completely dissolved. Then stir in 2 cups of birdseed.
- Prepare the citrus (any citrus) by cutting one end—just enough so you are able to get in and scrape the rind is clean.
- Poke a small hole through the rind and thread a piece of string on each side for hanging. A large sewing needle can be used or even the end of a metal skewer.
- Pack the rind with the birdseed mixture and place in the fridge for 2 hours.
- Once the birdseed mixture sets it will be hard to the

touch and ready to hang.

#### 10. Tessellation Christmas Trees <sup>14</sup>

- Use the template provided to create the tessellations. It is easier to color the tree first and then cut it out. [CLICK HERE](#)
- You can do this many ways: (depends on how big you want the tessellation to be)
  - Have each student only color one tree
  - Have students color three trees each
  - Have students color 6 trees each
- Once students cut them out you can either tape or glue them to a poster board, window or wall.

#### Companion Lessons and Activities

- <https://biologicperformance.com/sealed-bottle-terrarium-garden-watered-once-53-years/>
- <https://www.woojr.com/biomes-worksheets-learning-unit-exploring-our-natural-world/>
- [Biomes of the World | Types of Biomes | Video for Kids](#)
- <https://www.scfc.gov/state-forests/>
- A Walk in the Deciduous Forest, 2nd Edition by Rebecca Johnson
- Let's Visit the Deciduous Forest Jennifer Bothroyd
- Forest Biomes Book by Louise Spilsbury, Richard (EPIC)
- Forest Biome Book by Grace Hansen (EPIC)

#### Sources:

1. <https://www.scfc.gov/development/economic-development/>
2. <https://www.scfc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SCForests.pdf>
3. <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/scifacts.pdf>
4. [https://cdn5-ss18.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_96721/File/Activities/Book%20of%20the%20Month/Night\\_Tree\\_12.10.pdf](https://cdn5-ss18.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_96721/File/Activities/Book%20of%20the%20Month/Night_Tree_12.10.pdf)
5. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/five-major-types-biomes>
6. <http://kids.nceas.ucsb.edu/biomes/temperateforest.html>
7. <https://kidzeum.org/learning/step-by-step/biosphere-in-a-jar>
8. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-night-tree-lesson-plan.html>
9. [https://can.gcisd.net/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_96721/File/Activities/Book%20of%20the%20Month/Night\\_Tree\\_12.10.pdf](https://can.gcisd.net/UserFiles/Servers/Server_96721/File/Activities/Book%20of%20the%20Month/Night_Tree_12.10.pdf)
10. [https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5201734.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb5201734.pdf)
11. <https://wilderchild.com/decorating-outdoor-edible-tree-for-the-animals/>
12. North Carolina Agriculture in the Classroom “Book of the Month” Lesson Plan
13. <https://kidzeum.org/learning/step-by-step/biosphere-in-a-jar>
14. <https://frugalfun4boys.com/christmas-tree-tessellations/>

#### K-5 South Carolina College and Career Ready Standards

- ELA K-5



- Standard 5: Determine meaning and develop logical interpretations by making predictions, inferring, drawing conclusions, analyzing, synthesizing, providing evidence, and investigating multiple interpretations.
- Standard 8: Analyze characters, settings, events, and ideas as they develop and interact within a particular context.
- Standard 11: Analyze and provide evidence of how the author's choice of point of view, perspective, or purpose shapes content, meaning, and style.
- Math
  - K.ATO.6 Describe simple repeating patterns using AB, AAB, ABB, and ABC type patterns.
  - 1.ATO.9 Create, extend and explain using pictures and words for: a. repeating patterns (e.g., AB, AAB, ABB, and ABC type patterns); b. growing patterns (between 2 and 4 terms/figures).
  - 2.G.3 Partition squares, rectangles and circles into two or four equal parts, and describe the parts using the words halves, fourths, a half of, and a fourth of. Understand that when partitioning a square, rectangle or circle into two or four equal parts, the parts become smaller as the number of parts increases.
  - 3.G.2 Partition two-dimensional shapes into 2, 3, 4, 6, or 8 parts with equal areas and express the area of each part using the same unit fraction. Recognize that equal parts of identical wholes need not have the same shape.
  - 4.G.4 Recognize a line of symmetry for a two-dimensional figure as a line across the figure such that the figure can be folded along the line into matching parts. Identify line symmetric figures and draw lines of symmetry.
  - 5.G.4 Classify two-dimensional figures in a hierarchy based on their attributes.
- Science
  - Standard K.L.2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of organisms found in the environment and how these organisms depend on the environment to meet those needs.
  - Standard 1.E.4: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the properties and uses of Earth's natural resources.
  - Standard 1.L.5: The student will demonstrate an understanding of how the structures of plants help them survive and grow in their environments.
  - Standard 2.L.5: The student will demonstrate an understanding of how the structures of animals help them survive and grow in their environments.
  - Standard 3.L.5: The student will demonstrate an understanding of how the characteristics and changes in environments and habitats affect the diversity of organisms.
  - Standard 4.L.5: The student will demonstrate an understanding of how the structural characteristics and traits of plants and animals allow them to survive, grow, and reproduce.
  - Standard 5.E.3: The student will demonstrate an understanding of how natural processes and human activities affect the features of Earth's landforms and oceans.
- Social Studies

- K.G.3 Describe and compare the cultural and natural environment around one's home and school by constructing a visual representation.
- 1.G.3 Identify and differentiate between rural, suburban, and urban areas within South Carolina.
- 2.G.2 Describe and compare various landforms over time within the U.S. through the use of primary and secondary sources.
- 3.1.3.PR Identify the spatial hierarchy of political and physical geographic features.
- Standard 2: Demonstrate an understanding of Earth's physical features and ecosystems that affect human activities.