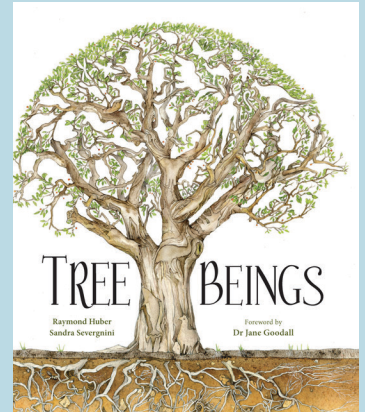




# EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

**Title:** Tree Beings  
**Author:** Raymond Huber  
**Illustrator:** Sandra Severgnini  
**Publisher:** EK Books  
**Price:** ANZ \$34.99 | USA \$24.99 | CA \$31.99 | UK £14.99  
**ISBN:** 9781925820539  
**Publication date:** Oct 2020  
**Audience age:** 7-14 years  
**Key Curriculum Areas:** Science, Environment, History



## SYNOPSIS:

Readers get to know trees as beings through the inspiring true stories of people who love trees. *Tree Beings* shows how trees enrich the whole planet. Trees are the oldest living things; they create rainfall, soil, and animal habitats; and they clean up pollution.

## THEMES:

Trees have a presence that can move people. *Tree Beings* has stories of people who spent time living and working with trees and came to regard them as individuals. It outlines recent science, suggest ways to get to know trees, and includes tree folk tales. It has four 'big ideas': trees give life, they have their own intelligence, trees can help us, and we must protect them.

## SELLING POINTS:

- Tree Beings takes a positive approach, focusing on the wonders of trees and people's connection to them.
- Trees are our best living allies in the effort to slow down climate change.
- An engaging style of fact and feeling for young readers – dramatic stories reveal science and tree wisdom.
- Includes a foreword from world-renowned conservationist Jane Goodall, who endorses the book's message: "I hope that many children all over the world will read Tree Beings and understand the importance of trees."

## WRITING STYLE:

The science is conveyed largely through narrative: the inspiring, dramatic stories of 'tree beings' and the people who love trees: the scientists, planters, and activists. The writing captures feelings as well as facts by imagining what it was like to be present at key events in people's lives. "Imagine you are there" scenes are dramatized in the present tense to give the action immediacy.



### ILLUSTRATION STYLE:

Realistic but with character.

### AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

I learned how trees can fight climate change and about the new science of how they communicate with each other. I wanted to share these wonders in a book, but I didn't want to write a science textbook. I realised that the best way to reveal the science was by telling emotionally-engaging stories – as Rachel Carson said, “It is not half so important to know as to feel when introducing a young child to the natural world.” Only when we fall in love with Nature will we want to protect it.

### AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

**Raymond Huber** is a children's author, teacher, and editor. He's written two picture books, *Flight of the Honey Bee* and *Gecko*, which were published internationally; while his junior novels, *Sting and Wings* are science-fiction about bees; and *Peace Warriors* is about non-violence. Raymond has also written many educational books. He lives in New Zealand.

Website: [raymond@raymondhuber.co.nz](mailto:raymond@raymondhuber.co.nz)

**Sandra Severgnini's** fascination for the amazing world around us brings sensitivity and humour to her illustrations. Her illustrated books include *In the Shadow of an Elephant* - Little Pink Dog Books (International Book Awards Finalist, Shortlisted Speech Pathology Book of the Year 2020), *Where's Lucky* - Little Pink Dog Books (Shortlisted Speech Pathology Book of the Year 2019), and *The Christmas Garden* (Little Pink Dog Books). Her illustrations have appeared in The Government House Florilegium and on the Blue Island Press ranges of cards.

Website: [www.severgnini.com.au](http://www.severgnini.com.au)



## INTERVIEW:

### AUTHOR

#### What is the inspiration for this story?

I was reading Peter Wohlleben's great book *The Hidden Life of Trees* and was astonished at their complex and beautiful lives. I realised I'd taken trees for granted and began to write about them.

#### What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Researching people's lives was very rewarding. Dr Jane Goodall has been one of the most inspiring people in my life, especially her love for Nature and her sense of hope (that's so important for young people). I was excited to include her story in *Tree Beings*.

#### What was the most challenging part of this project?

My initial challenge in the writing was to get young readers interested in trees (which can seem inert at first glance). I decided to approach trees through the human connection and tell stories of those who have devoted their lives to getting to know trees.

Another challenge was to give the book a positive focus. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by bad environmental news but I wanted this to be a hopeful book.

### ILLUSTRATOR

#### What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

Well-loved grey lead (and a worn-down eraser), watercolour, coloured pencils & Photoshop. I still enjoy the tactile feel of the pencil on the paper, so I usually start by sketching out the illustration and then bring colour to it either with watercolour, highlighted with coloured pencil, or by scanning it and fully colouring it in Photoshop. Atmospheric conditions i.e.: night-time or lighting are highlighted in Photoshop.

In *Tree Beings* I used different illustration styles throughout the book so as to give each story a visual variation and I also incorporated puzzles into some of the illustrations, just for fun.

#### What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Expressing such an important issue through my illustrations.

#### What was the most challenging part of this project?

Realizing I had come to the end of the project!

## TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

### TREE SCIENCE

#### 1. What do trees do for the planet? (Pages 18-21)

- Jane Goodall said that “It was from the forest that I learned how everything is interconnected.” (page 10). What connections did she see in the jungle?
- Brainstorm all the ways that trees are connected to the environment – use these 7 headings: Sunlight, Air, Climate, Water, Soil, Wildlife, Humans.
- Create a diagram that shows the links between a tree and its surroundings.
- Imagine we cut down all the trees in the world. Write a 7-line poem describing the changes you’d see in the environment.

#### 2. Tree food webs

Note: Trees make food that supports a vast web of living things.

- Draw a food web showing how the following are connected: tree, squirrel, hawk, caterpillar, moth, warbler, fox.
- When creatures die and decompose, they provide more food. Add the following to your food web: soil-fungi, beetles, fly-maggots, earthworms, soil bacteria.

#### 3. Parts of a Tree

- Seeds: collect seeds from different trees (some are inside fruit and nuts). Display them according to size and shape. How will each seed travel away from the tree?
- Leaves: Collect and press leaves of different colours and shapes. Group them into the following tree types:
  1. Conifers: needle-shaped leaves
  2. Broadleaf: flat and wide leaves
  3. Palm: long and feathery leaves
- Bark: Use paper and crayon to make rubbings of bark with different textures. Create an artwork by cutting the rubbings into shapes.
- Wood (page 81): make a model showing layers of wood in a tree trunk (e.g. using coloured modelling clay).

#### 4. Scientists

##### Suzanne Simard (Pages 58-61)

- Watch the TED Talk titled ‘The Secret Language of Trees’.
- Find the wood-wide-web in a forest. Scoop a handful of rotted leaves from the forest floor and look for white threads of fungi on the leaves.
- Read about Suzanne’s Mother Tree Project ([mothertreeproject.org](http://mothertreeproject.org)). Paint a picture of a mother tree surrounded by her ‘family’.

## Nalini Nadkarni (Pages 64-67)

- Design your dream treehouse.
- What can you find growing on the bark of trees? E.g. epiphyte plants, moss, lichen, ferns. Sketch what you see.

## 5. Climate Change (Pages 20 & 45)

Note: CO<sub>2</sub> gas traps heat in the Earth's atmosphere causing climate extremes.

- Draw or model how trees take carbon dioxide from the air and store the carbon. Use real leaves and wood in your creation.
- What is a 'carbon footprint'? How can you reduce your carbon footprint? Draw the outline of a foot and write your ideas inside.

## TREES AND HUMANS

### 1. Disappearing Trees

- Why are forests cut down? Brainstorm the likely reasons, then vote on which one you think is the main reason.
  - Note: The main reasons for deforestation, in order of significance:
    1. Expanding farms for crops and meat
    2. Planting palms for oil
    3. Harvesting wood for building and paper
    4. Making way for cities and roads
    5. Digging up oil, coal, and gas.)
- What products can we use or eat that reduce deforestation?
- How might farmers protect trees on their land?

### 2. Trees Planters

Note: Humans remove about 15 billion trees a year but only plant 5 billion new trees.

#### Felix Finkbeiner (Pages 44-47)

- What made Felix feel that he had to take action? What does Felix's story tell us about 'people power'?
- Join a local tree-planting group.

#### Richard St Barbe Baker (Pages 38-41)

- Create your own Dance of the Trees. Think about the way trees move, the flow of water, air and light in trees, and how they support other life.

#### Wangari Maathai (Pages 32-35)

- Wangari was inspired by the old fig tree in her village. Make a poster about the world's fig trees.

## 3. Saving Forests

Note: Older forests must be protected because they store the most carbon and are home to the most wildlife.

### John Seed (Pages 74-77)

- Read about the latest project to save rainforests ([www.rainforestinformationcentre.org](http://www.rainforestinformationcentre.org)).
- Write a story from the point of view of an animal in an ancient rainforest that is under attack from humans.

### Dean Baigent Mercer (Pages 82-85)

- Write a letter to a friend to tell them some amazing things you've learned about trees.

## 4. Gifts from Trees

Note: Humans use trees for thousands of different products.

- Walk around your house or classroom and count how many things come from trees.
- List tree products under these headings:
  1. Food (e.g. fruits, nuts, spices, oils, drinks, syrup)
  2. Wood products (e.g. buildings, furniture, firewood, musical instruments, paper)
  3. Natural products (e.g. medicines, oils, glues, resins, cork, rubber).
- What does the 'sustainable' use of forests mean?

## 5. World Records (Pages 28-29)

- Age: Draw a timeline showing the age of some of the world's oldest trees (including the aspen 'Pando'). Add major world events to your timeline.
- Height: Draw a pictorial chart to compare the redwood tree Hyperion to tall buildings in your city or country.
- Width: Pace out the width of the Kolkata fig tree in an open space.
- Girth: How many people (holding hands) can you fit around a tree trunk? Find out the world record for trunk girth.
- Research more tree records, such as tree-sitting, climbing, and planting.

## 6. Befriend a Tree

- Get to know a tree using the ideas on pages 62 and 63.
- Read some tree myths from different cultures. Make up a myth about your tree.

## REFERENCES

*Can You Hear the Trees Talking?* by Peter Wohlleben

*Under the Canopy: Trees Around the World* by Cynthia Alonso

*The Book of Trees* by Piotr Socha