

The Gathering Tree

Teacher Notes

Suggested age range: 4–8 years | Suggested school levels: Early Years / Lower Primary

Overview

The Gathering Tree is a warm, lively, and humorous picture book about community, belonging, and learning to live together despite differences. Set among the branches of a busy tree filled with colourful animal personalities — including Crackers, the funny and slightly wacky cockatoo, and Old Wrinkles, the sleepy koala — the story explores friendship, disagreement, cooperation, and the importance of making room for others. Through its mix of humour, character, and gentle insight, the book encourages children to think about how communities work best when differences are accepted and kindness helps hold everyone together.

These teacher notes are designed to support discussion, reflection, and simple classroom activities around relationships, behaviour, humour, and community life.

Key Themes

- Friendship
- Community
- Belonging
- Cooperation
- Respect for others
- Humour
- Individuality
- Appreciating differences

Learning Opportunities

This book supports learning in the following areas:

- speaking and listening
- personal and social development
- understanding relationships
- classroom discussion
- creative response activities

Before Reading

Before sharing the story, invite children to think about what it means to live and get along with others.

- What makes a place feel welcoming?
- Why do groups sometimes argue or disagree?

- Do all people in a group have the same personality?
- How can differences make a group more interesting?
- What can help a community live happily together?

During Reading

As you read, encourage children to notice:

- the different animal personalities in the tree
- the humorous moments in the story
- how the characters behave toward one another
- moments of disagreement or tension
- what helps the group function as a community

You may like to pause and ask:

- How is this character feeling?
- Why might this character act differently from the others?
- What makes Crackers funny?
- How is Old Wrinkles different from the more energetic characters?
- What could help everyone get along better?

After Reading Discussion Questions

- What happened in the story?
- Who are some of the different characters in the tree?
- Which character did you enjoy most, and why?
- What makes Crackers such a memorable character?
- How does Old Wrinkles add something different to the tree?
- Did all the characters get along straight away?
- Why do groups sometimes have problems?
- What does this story teach us about sharing space with others?
- How can different personalities make a community stronger?
- What can we learn from the animals in the tree?

Key Message

Communities are made up of many different kinds of individuals. Some are lively, some are quiet, some are funny, and some are calm. When people learn to accept differences, show patience, and live kindly with one another, the whole community becomes stronger.

Classroom Activities

1. Our Classroom Tree

Create a large classroom tree display. Each child can add a leaf, branch, or animal and write or draw one way to help the class become a happy and welcoming community.

2. Character Match

Talk about the characters and their different personalities. Children can match characters to words such as funny, sleepy, lively, proud, kind, or bossy, and explain their choices.

3. Draw Your Own Gathering Tree

Invite children to draw their own gathering tree filled with animal or imaginary characters. Encourage them to include different personalities in their tree community.

4. Getting Along Chart

Make a class chart titled: How We Help Our Classroom Grow. Invite children to suggest behaviours that help people live and work together peacefully.

Cross-Curricular Links

English

- retelling the story
- discussing characters and events
- identifying problems and solutions

Personal and Social Learning

- friendship
- cooperation
- empathy
- belonging and respect

Art

- tree and animal drawings
- class mural or display
- character response art

Extension Ideas

- Create a class book about a tree full of different animal personalities.
- Write simple sentences about how to be a good friend in a group.
- Role-play common disagreements and practise peaceful solutions.
- Make a classroom poster celebrating the idea that everyone brings something different.

Home Connection

Encourage children to talk at home about the different personalities in their own family and how families learn to live happily together.