

UP IN THE LEAVES



This discussion guide is designed to help parents, teachers, librarians, and booksellers explore the story's ideas, themes, and meaning with young readers. Prepared by the author, Shira Boss.

THEMES FOR DISCUSSION: *Fitting In, Connection With Nature, Persistence, Imagination*

Bob is a little boy growing up in the big city—but he doesn't quite fit in. The city is loud and crowded; even school feels cramped. He seeks refuge in the park, and discovers a marvelous world of his own up in trees. He builds treehouses one after another in New York's Central Park, until as a young adult he is finally caught. Instead of being punished, he is given an opportunity that changes his life—and allows him to be happy in the city *and* in the trees.

These questions align with the Common Core State Standards for Language Arts, Grades K-2.

BEFORE READING

Look at the front and back covers. What do you think this story is about? From looking at the cover illustration, do you think this story takes place in the city, or the country? (What are the clues?)

THEME: FITTING IN

1. Bob lives in a big city. How does the author describe the city? What doesn't Bob like about living in the city?
2. How is the park different from the city streets?
3. Toward the end of the story, Bob's mother tells him he should come out of the trees and go to work. Why doesn't Bob want to work in the city? What does he do instead?
4. What is the name of Bob's occupation? (See the epilogue.)

THEME: CONNECTION WITH NATURE

1. Bob finds refuge in the park. What does Bob love about being up in the trees?
2. Compare the sounds of the city to the sounds Bob hears up in the trees. What other sounds can you think of that are in the city? What other sounds do you hear in nature?
3. At the end of the story, Bob promises not to build more treehouses in the park. In what ways does he stay connected to trees and to the night sky?



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THEME: PERSISTENCE

1. Bob's first treehouse is taken down. How does he feel when this happens? How does he respond to losing his secret spot?
2. Each treehouse Bob builds is different—how do they change?
3. What happens each year that leads to Bob's treehouses being discovered? Can you think of any way he might have hidden his treehouses without leaves on the trees?
4. Think of something special you've made that was lost or destroyed. How did you respond?

THEME: IMAGINATION

1. Bob's treehouses are not just hideaways, they launch him into imaginary worlds. What does Bob pretend to be when it rains? What does he pretend to be after dark, when he stargazes?
2. What might you pretend to be in a treehouse?
3. When you build a fort or hideaway or go to another special spot, what different worlds do you imagine?

ACTIVITIES

1. Design a fort, hideaway, or secret spot of your own. Where will it be and what can it be made out of? Either build it or draw a picture of it. Describe what you love about it.
2. List some of your favorite things to do. Think of ways you might do something on that list for work when you're grown up. You can ask an adult for help, or interview people who have jobs doing something you think would be fun or exciting.
3. When Bob was growing up, he had never heard of an arborist. Find a local arborist who can visit your class or meet with you individually. Ask how he or she became an arborist and about his or her work with trees.

