

FLETCHER AND THE FALLING LEAVES

FLETCHER AND THE FALLING LEAVES

by Julia Rawlinson, illustrated by Tiphanie Beeke
Themes: Nature, Seasons, Feelings, Change, Compassion
Grade Level: PreK-2; Ages: 3-7
Running Time: 10 minutes

SUMMARY

It is Fletcher's first autumn and he is alarmed when the leaves on his favorite tree start to turn brown and fall off. His mother is unconcerned, telling him, "Don't worry, it's only autumn." Fletcher isn't so sure. He tries valiantly day after day to save the leaves that the tree is losing to the wind. To his chagrin, the other animals don't seem to care. They are busy gathering the leaves for themselves. When the tree has no leaves left, Fletcher goes to bed in despair. However, after a cold night, Fletcher wakes up to see his tree sparkling as he has never seen it before.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will make and verify predictions based on background knowledge.
- Students will identify the four seasons and their characteristics.
- Students will draw the cycle of a tree through the four seasons.
- Students will observe and record information about the changes in nature during autumn.

BEFORE VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Review the four seasons with students. Use a 4-column chart to record the students' ideas. Draw pictures to express students' ideas when possible. Guiding questions:

- What are the names of the four seasons?
- What is the weather like in fall (autumn)/winter/spring/summer?
- What happens to plants in fall (autumn)/winter/spring/summer?
- What do animals do in fall (autumn)/winter/spring/summer?

Tell students that they are going to watch a movie about a young fox who has never seen the autumn before. Using the seasons chart completed in the previous activity, ask:

- What do you think the fox will see as the autumn begins?
- How do you think that the fox will feel about these changes?
- Why do you think he'll feel that way?

Encourage students to watch and listen to see if their predictions about the fox are correct.

AFTER VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Remind students of the predictions that they made before viewing the movie. Ask:

- Were we correct about what we thought Fletcher would see when autumn began?
- Did he see or feel anything that we didn't predict?
- What do you think Fletcher will see when winter ends and spring begins?
- How do you think he will feel in the spring? Why do you think he'll feel that way?

Using children's ideas, extend the story into the spring. Start with a sentence, written on large chart paper, and read aloud: *The snow melted and the weather got warmer. One day Fletcher visited his tree and he saw... He felt...* Have students contribute ideas that you add to the story. When you are finished, read the whole story aloud to the students. Then, copy it onto blank paper, photocopy, and give to students to illustrate. Read the big story aloud daily as students follow in their individual books to encourage whole language development.

Fold a paper into four equal parts. Draw the outline of a bare tree in each part. Label each section: winter, spring, summer, fall/autumn. Photocopy enough for all of the students. Provide students with crayons, markers, or paint. Instruct them to color leaves on the tree that represent how the tree would look in each different season. Encourage them to put icicles on the trees in winter, as in *Fletcher and the Falling Leaves*.

Create a monthly "Season Watch" observation chart. Choose a day each week that the class will go out and observe and record information about the weather, temperature, and changes in plants and animals. Provide students with crayons and a sketch of the playground, including any trees in the area. Give them time to look around and observe their surroundings. Then, have them color what the trees look like, the sky, the grass, and any other observable changes in nature, such as flowers, clouds, bright sun, precipitation, etc. Once inside, discuss their observations and complete the class chart. Continue this through autumn so that students can experience and record the change of the season. (If you live in an area where the season doesn't change drastically, use pictures from magazines and newspapers to show students how the seasons change in more northern areas.)

OTHER STORIES ABOUT SEASONS AND NATURE FROM WESTON WOODS:

Antarctic Antics, by Judy Sierra, ill. by Jose Aruego & Ariane Dewey
Bear Snores On, by Karma Wilson, ill. by Jane Chapman
Bear Wants More, by Karma Wilson, ill. by Jane Chapman
Brave Irene, by William Steig
First the Egg, by Laura Vaccaro Seeger
In the Small, Small Pond, by Denise Fleming
Owl Moon, by Jane Yolen, ill. by John Schoenherr
Pumpkin Circle, by George Levenson
The Snowy Day, by Ezra Jack Keats
What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?, by Robin Page and Steve Jenkins