

Let's Talk About TREES!



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juggernaut





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Disclaimer: The maps in the book are not to scale and do not depict the political boundaries accurately.

This book was created under the "Project Mission Million Trees" supported by Capgemini, to generate awareness among children about the ecological importance of planting native trees and improving green cover.



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SubhAshita

छायां अन्यस्य कुर्वन्ति तिष्ठन्ति स्वयं आतपे ।
फलन्त्यपि परार्थाय वृक्षाः सत्पुरुषा इव ॥

chhAyAm anyasya kurvanti tishThanti svayam Atape ।
phalAntyapi parArthAya vrukshAh satpurushA iva ॥

They give shade while themselves standing in the heat of the sun—
And even bear fruit for others to enjoy—such noble beings are trees!





‘Greening the earth is my sword to fight
for a better life—make it yours.’

—**Saalumarada Thimmakka,**

Indian environmentalist and Padma Shri awardee
famous for single-handedly planting and nurturing 387
banyan trees on a 4-km stretch of highway in Karnataka,
speaking to schoolchildren at the age of 107

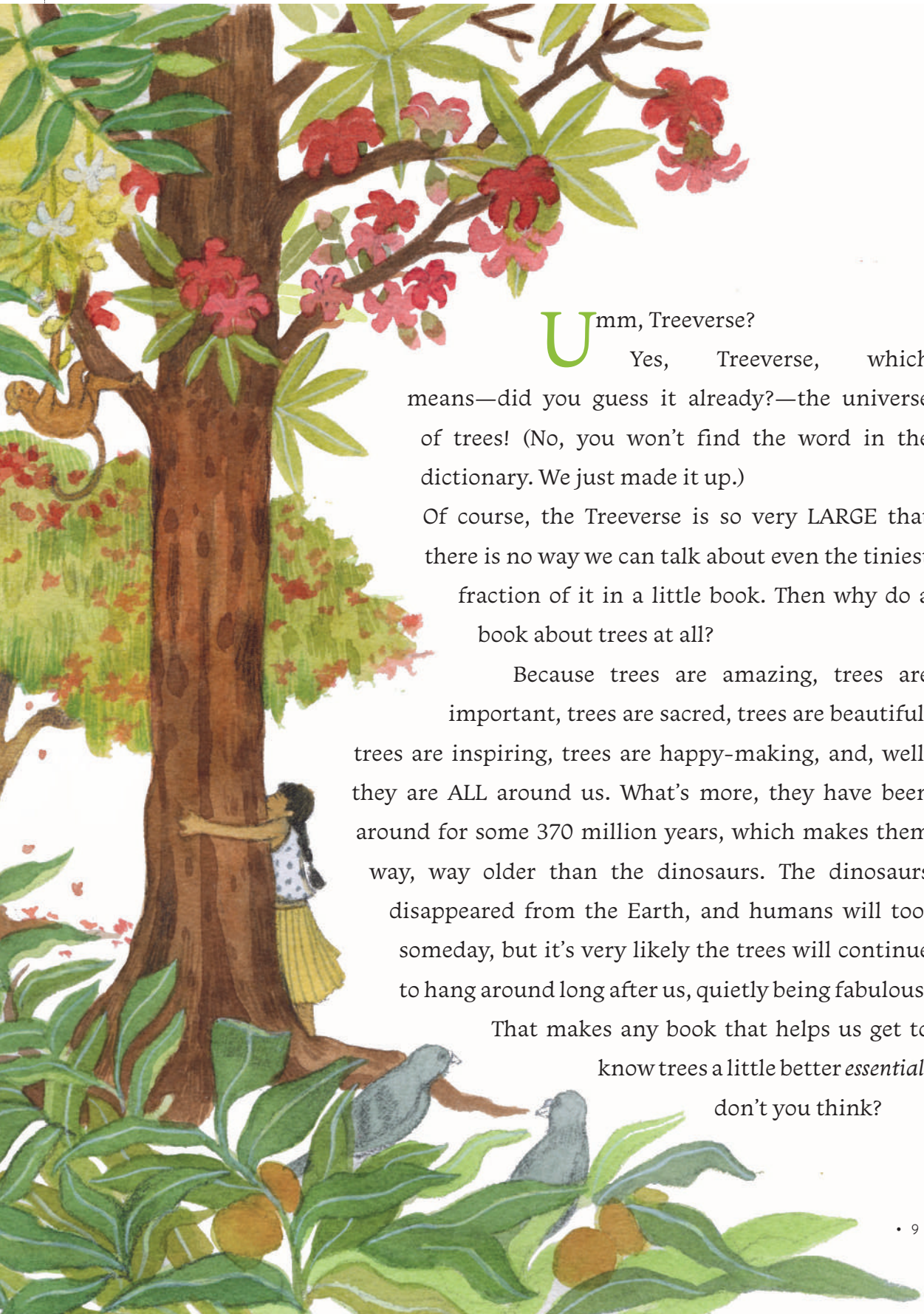






Hello, hello, hello!
Welcome to the
amazing,
extraordinary,
mind-blowing
TREEVERSE!





Umm, Treeverse?

Yes, Treeverse, which means—did you guess it already?—the universe of trees! (No, you won't find the word in the dictionary. We just made it up.)

Of course, the Treeverse is so very LARGE that there is no way we can talk about even the tiniest fraction of it in a little book. Then why do a book about trees at all?

Because trees are amazing, trees are important, trees are sacred, trees are beautiful, trees are inspiring, trees are happy-making, and, well, they are ALL around us. What's more, they have been around for some 370 million years, which makes them way, way older than the dinosaurs. The dinosaurs disappeared from the Earth, and humans will too, someday, but it's very likely the trees will continue to hang around long after us, quietly being fabulous.

That makes any book that helps us get to know trees a little better *essential*, don't you think?

You see, it's only when you KNOW something that you can begin to LOVE it.

When you LOVE a tree, it will stop being something that simply exists and become something that LIVES, not only outside of you but inside you. Once

you love one tree and make it your

friend, you will begin to look at

ALL trees differently, noticing

quirky little details about

each that you had never

done before. You will feel

deeply for every tree and

want to celebrate each one's

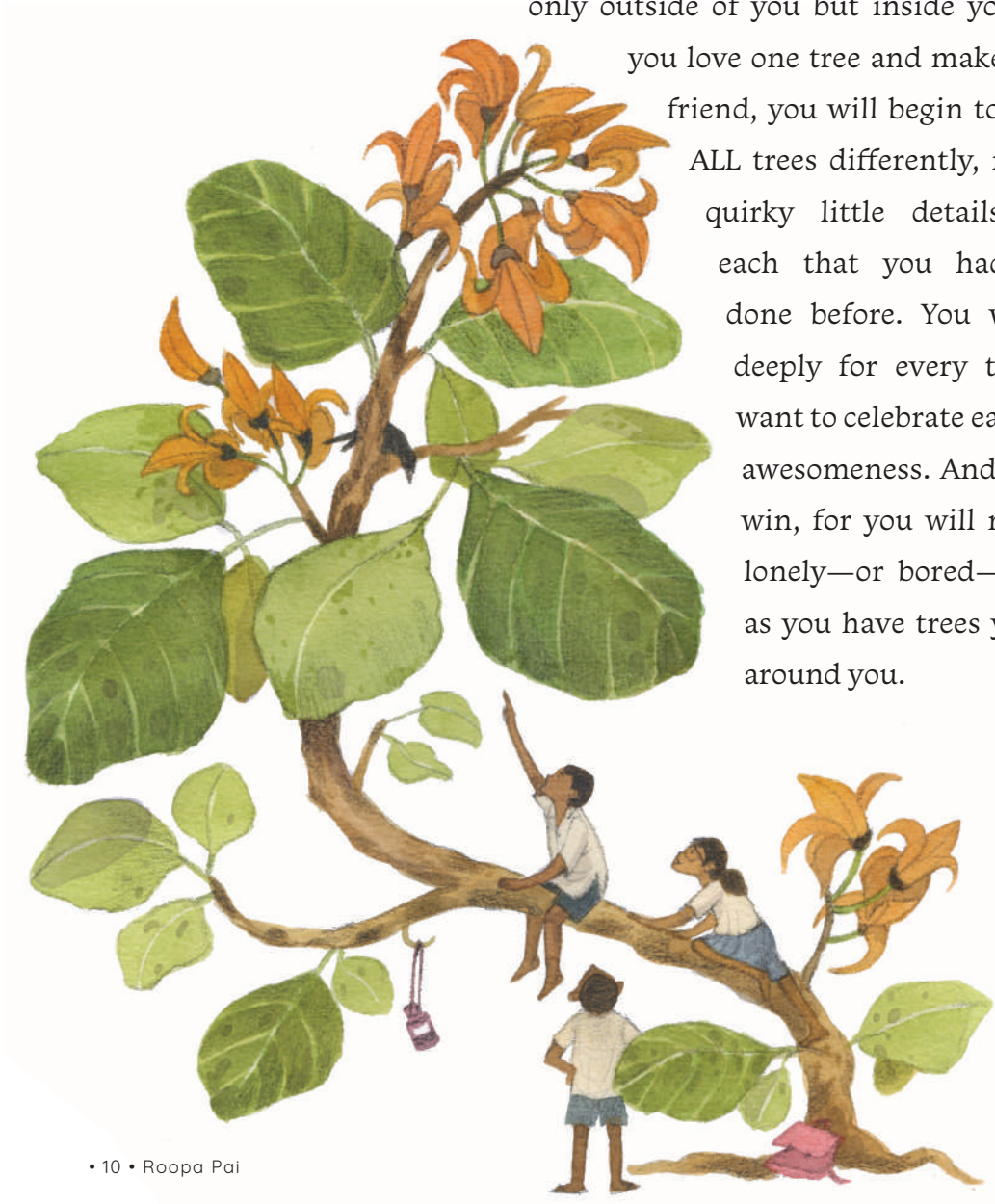
awesomeness. And that's a

win, for you will never be

lonely—or bored—as long

as you have trees you love

around you.



Look!

Listen!

LOVE!



Ready to plunge into
the Treeverse now?
Let's go! Before we begin,
a quick question:
Have you looked
at a tree recently?

Don't make that 'Eh what? Are you sure you are quite all right?' face. It isn't *such* a weird question. The thing is, there is a great difference between looking at something and seeing something—when you 'look' at something, you observe it closely, noting the BIG and not-so-big and teeny-tiny details about it; when you 'see' something, you merely register its presence.

If you have really *looked* at a tree, any tree, you would have noticed many things about it. Things like its:



Trunk

🌿 Straight or twisty?
Stout or slender? Single or
multiple (yes, many trees
do have multiple trunks!)?



The buttressed gulmohar



The many-trunked crepe myrtle

🌿 Large bottomed, because of
the ‘buttress’ roots supporting the
trunk (usually because the tree is
not deeply rooted and will fall if not
supported)? Or slim around the base
(because the tree’s roots go deep into
the earth and can hold it strong and
steady in a storm all by themselves?)

Bark

Smooth or rough? Dark or light? Flaky and peeling, or even and unbroken? Sleek and glossy, or cracked and matt-finished?



The 'crocodile bark' of the matti



The peeling bark of the guava

- Shiny with sticky sap or dry and 'clean'? Prickly with thorns (ouch!) or velvety with moss? Creased and furrowed, or smooth and unwrinkled?
- Red or brown or white or black?

Branches

Does the trunk start branching close to the ground or wayyyyy higher up?



The low-branching mango



The 'let's-branch-sideways' baobab

Do the branches reach for the sky or grow out sideways?

How thick are the branches?
How do the branches
'branch out' further?

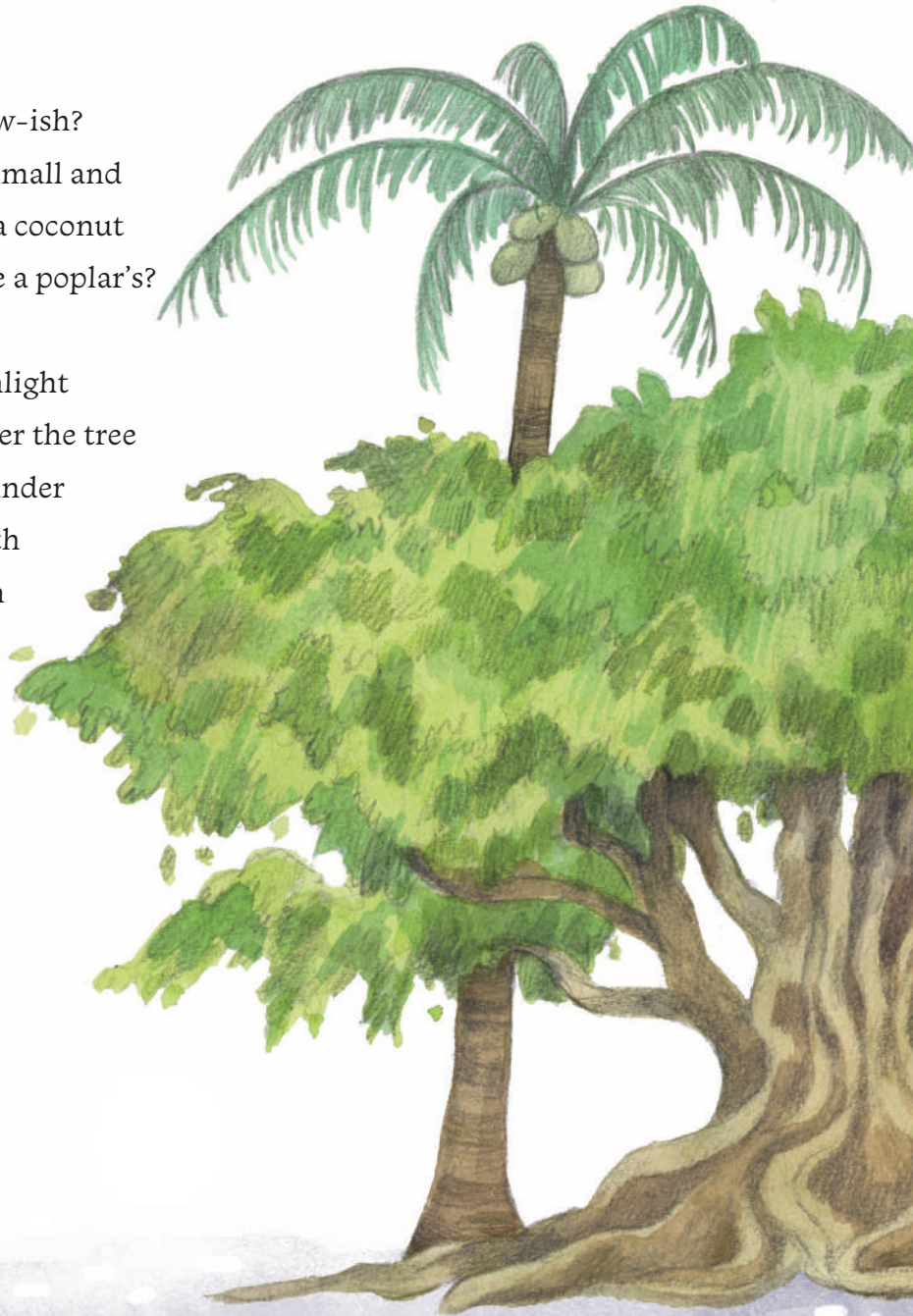
Canopy (or the leafy 'crown' of the tree)

The floppy-crowned coconut

🌿 Highhhhhh up or low-ish?
Vast and sprawling, or small and
contained? Floppy like a coconut
tree's or upstanding like a poplar's?

🌿 So dense that no sunlight
reaches the ground under the tree
and nothing can grow under
it? Or light and airy, with
spaces that sunlight can
peek through, so that
the tree casts a lovely
dappled shade on the
grass below?

And so on.



Plus, what are the leaves like—shape, colour, size? What colour are the fresh new leaves (they aren't always green, by the way) and what colour the old, dying ones?

Are there flowers? What kind? Do they smell nice?

Are there fruits or berries? Can you see seed pods? What do *they* smell like?

Can you spot birds' nests? Beehives?

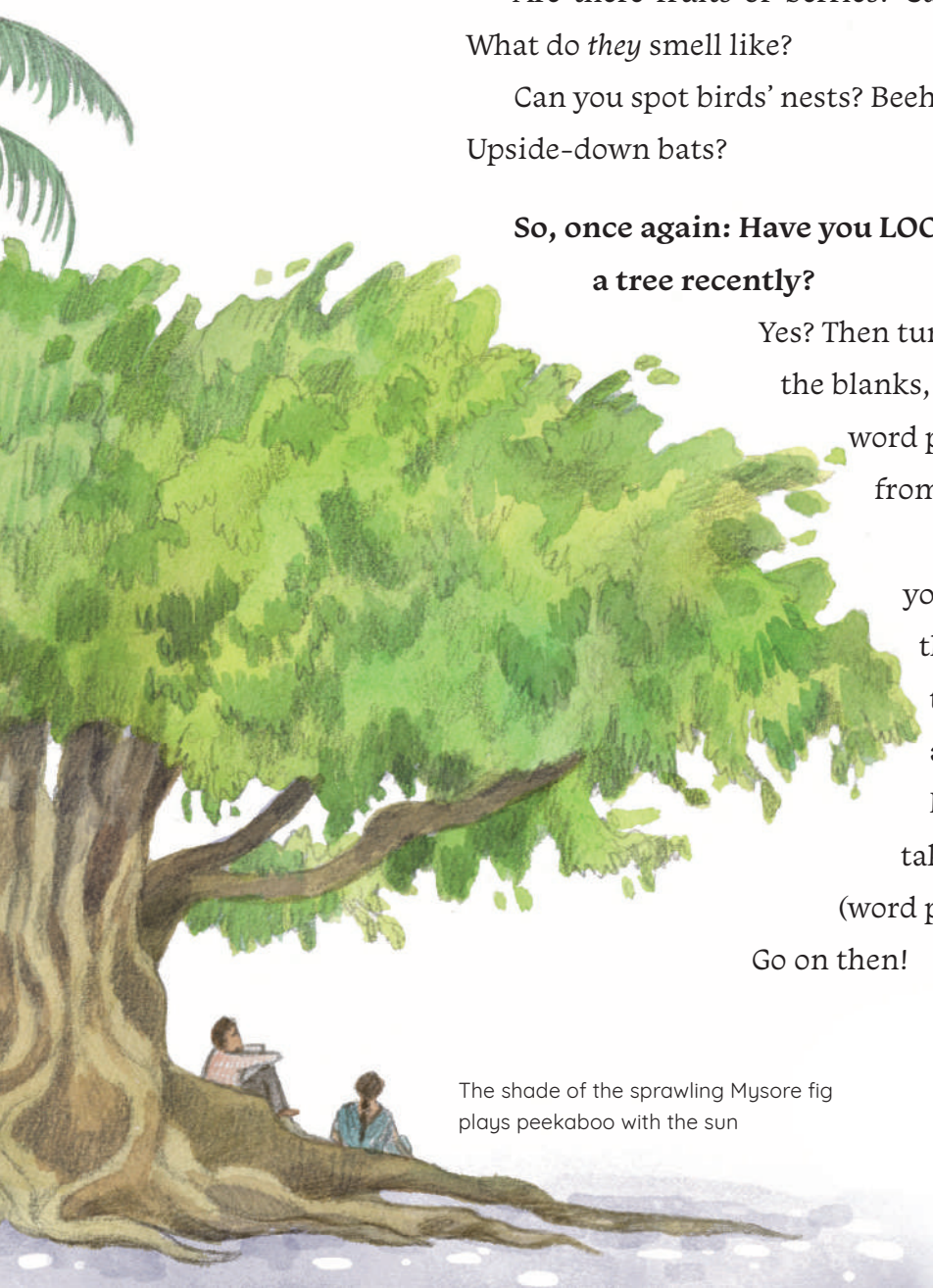
Upside-down bats?

**So, once again: Have you LOOKED at
a tree recently?**

Yes? Then turn to page 21, fill in the blanks, and create a vivid word portrait of your tree, from memory.

No? Then go out into your garden, the street, the park, anywhere that you can find a tree, and LOOK at it. NOW. Don't forget to take this book with you (word portrait, remember?).

Go on then!



The shade of the sprawling Mysore fig
plays peekaboo with the sun

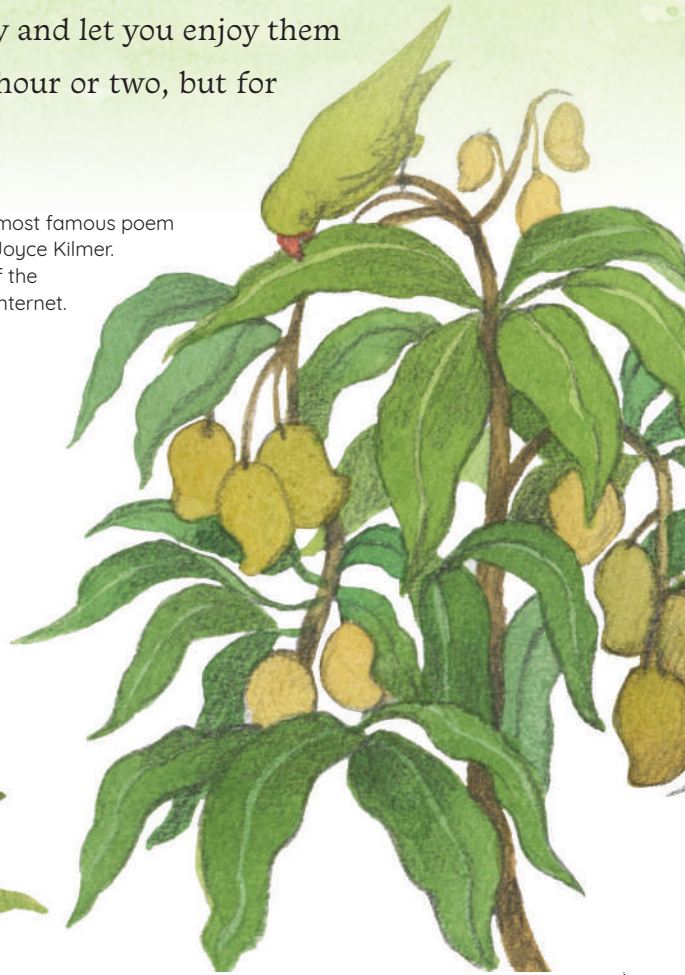
I think I shall never see. A poem lovely as a tree.*

Pick a tree, any tree, close to where you live. Sit down comfortably, at some distance from the tree, and observe it. (Turn the page to see what details you need to look for.) Spend at least 5 to 10 minutes simply sitting in silence and taking it in, from the very top to the very bottom. You may even want to walk around the tree, observing it from different angles.

The nicest part about observing trees, as compared to birds, animals, or insects, is that it's so easy to do! Trees do not fidget, scurry away, bite, or snarl at you. They stand around patiently and let you enjoy them to your heart's content—not just for an hour or two, but for years and years.

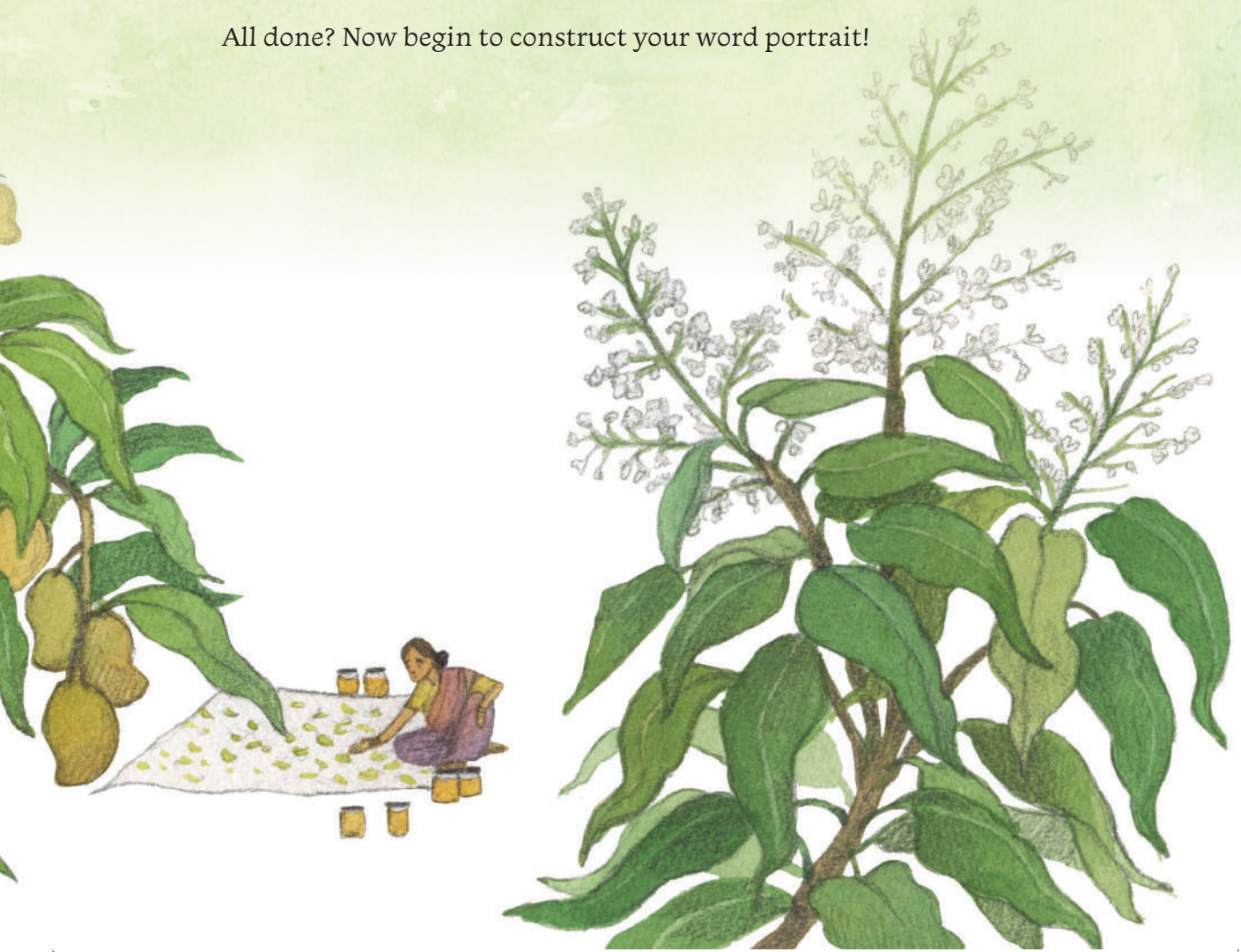
* These are the opening lines of what is probably the world's most famous poem in English about trees. It was written in 1913 by American poet Joyce Kilmer.

Look for the rest of the poem on the Internet.



Right. Now, walk up to the tree and take a closer look. Use all your senses to know your tree—**see** it (the shape it makes, the form of its boughs), **observe** all the little organisms on it (ants, beetles, lichens, fungi), **feel** it (bark, leaf, flower, seed—they all have different textures), **smell** it (crush a freshly fallen leaf, sniff a flower—oh, but be careful if you have a pollen allergy!), **hear** it (leaves rustling, birds calling, wind whispering), **taste** it (uhhh, maybe skip this one). Don't forget to look below for fallen flowers and fruits and seeds and seed pods—trees are usually so tall that you can't really take a close look at these when they are still on the branches. Sketch or take pictures of fallen tree souvenirs for a scrapbook or display.

All done? Now begin to construct your word portrait!



Look at the form on the facing page. The first entry, 'Date and season', is really important. Trees look different in different seasons—they burst into flower in a certain month (if they are flowering trees), drop their leaves in a different month, and come into fruit in some other month. Observe your tree through the year (this is why it is important to pick a tree growing close by) and record the changes you see.* Taking a photograph (or making a drawing), every time you see a significant change, will help you do this better.

Oh, one last thing. Think of a name for your tree.

A name? But don't trees already have names—tamarind, neem, peepal? Sure, but you may not always know your tree's 'official' name. And guess what? It doesn't matter! Eventually, you can ask someone what it is called or look it up on the Internet. But until then, as long as you're getting to know your tree and making friends with it, you can give it ANY name that you think is appropriate, based on the look and feel of its trunk (crocodile skin tree, maybe?), the shape of its flowers (white trumpet tree, perhaps?), or its attitude (too-cool-for-school tree, why not?).

Don't stop at one tree. Do this look-observe-make-a-word-portrait exercise with two more trees, or five, until you have an entire cohort of tree-friends that are *yours*. If you like to sketch, make illustrations of your tree-friends to accompany their word portraits.

Off you go now, to make your first tree-friend!

* There's a way to do this officially! You get to not only track your tree's progress through the seasons but also share that information with other people, including serious scientists, who are also interested in trees. Just register yourself (and your tree) with Nature Conservation Foundation's (NCF) SeasonWatch and upload your findings there each week. This is an all-India program that tracks climate change by how and when different species of trees are flowering, fruiting, coming into leaf, and all the rest of it, so your inputs are very valuable.

My Tree Friend

A Word Portrait

- Date and season:
- My name(s) for my tree-friend:
- My tree-friend's official name:

Use three to five adjectives to describe each tree 'part' below.

- Trunk:
- Bark:
- Branching:
- Leaves:
- Flowers (if any):
- Fruits (if any):
- Seeds and seed pods (if any):
- Living things that my tree supports:
- What makes my tree special:

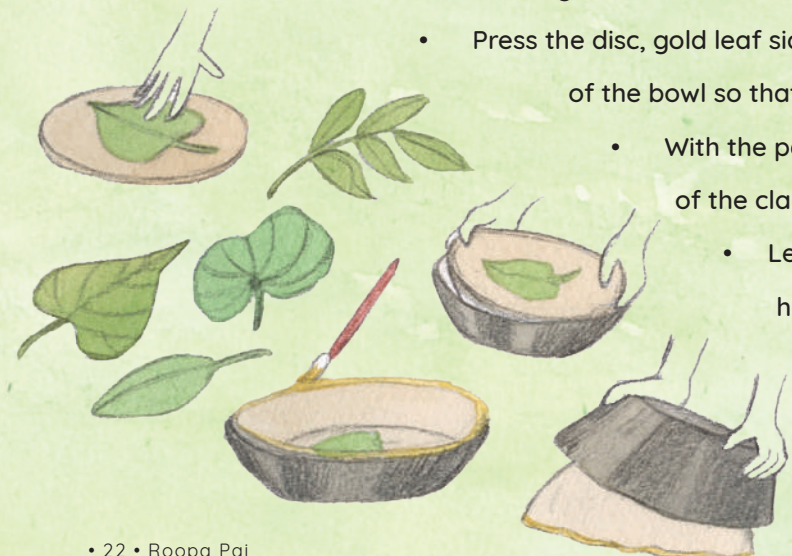
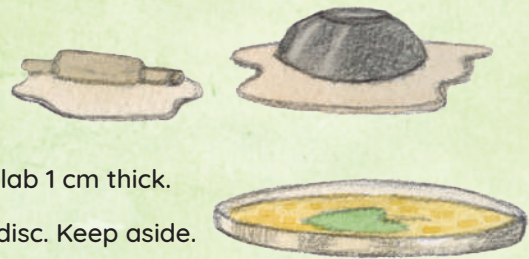
Make a Clay Leaf Bowl!

You need:

- A pack or two of air-drying clay (available in craft shops and online)
- Leaves of different shapes and sizes (don't pluck them, pick them off the ground)
- Rolling pin
- Bowl
- Small plate with a rim
- Gold paint and paintbrush

Make it!

- With the rolling pin, roll out your clay to a slab 1 cm thick.
- Press the upturned bowl on it to cut out a disc. Keep aside.
- Pour some gold paint into your rimmed plate.
- Pick a leaf from your collection and press it face down into the gold paint.
 - Press the leaf, gold side down, into your clay disc.
 - Press the disc, gold leaf side up, into the bottom of the bowl so that it gets a bowl shape.
 - With the paintbrush, paint the rim of the clay bowl gold.
 - Leave aside to dry for 24 hours before tipping the clay bowl out.



Ta-daa!