

Laurie Lawlor

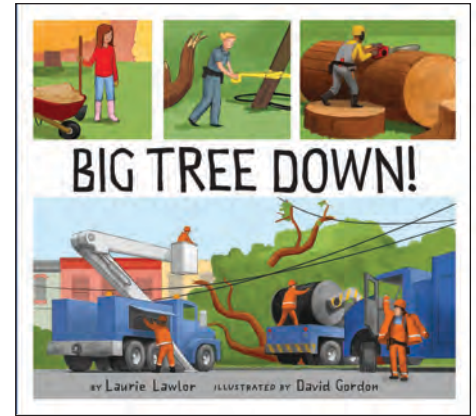
author ✕ educator ✕ often found in nature

Big Tree Down!

an activity and discussion guide

Big Tree is the neighborhood's biggest landmark. It presides over street games, barbeques, and water fights. But crack! Oh, no! Big Tree has been split by lightning!

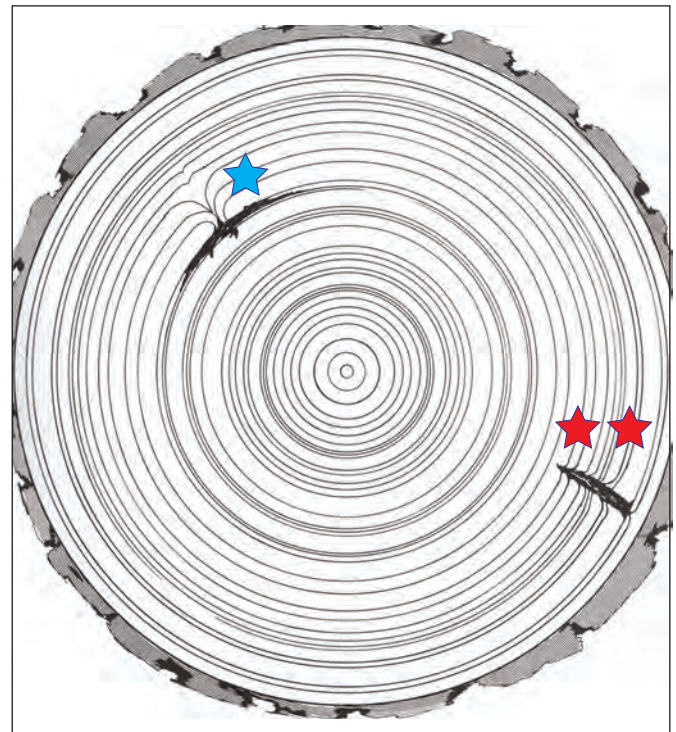
In this book, people from all parts of the community — neighbors, city workers, and children — come together to clean up and remember Big Tree, and to plant Little Tree in its stead. This story of neighborly cooperation and community engagement will introduce kids to the joys of being involved in the world immediately around them.



How can you tell the age of trees?

What are tree rings and what can you tell from them? As trees grow, every year they make a line under their bark when they go dormant for the winter. When a branch or trunk are cut and viewed in cross-section, these annual growth lines look like rings, so they are called tree rings. You can tell how old the tree is or was. If there is not much rain, the rings are narrow. If there is a fire, there can be a black scar.

- ☐ Look at this tree rings sample. How old was the tree? Count each ring. **34 years old.**
- ☐ The upper left black mark (★) is a fire scar. How old was the tree when the fire burned the tree? **20 years.**
- ☐ The long line in the lower left (★★) is where a small branch died and fell off. How long did it take the tree to grow over that scar? **10 years old.**



Ranger Rick's Nature Scope: Trees are Terrific, 1989. Permission to copy for student use.

Videos to watch:

- ☐ A log loader in action: <https://bit.ly/3hzfCjv>
- ☐ A big log loader in New Zealand: <https://bit.ly/34sWtCi>
- ☐ Bucket truck song! <https://bit.ly/3r7KPXf>

Use technology to search for these:

- ☐ the oldest living tree **Methuselah, Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, California**
- ☐ the largest tree **General Sherman, Sequoia National Park, California**
- ☐ the tallest tree **Hyperion, Redwood National Park, California**

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Match the machine with its name

When taking down an urban tree, a number of machines are needed. Do you know what the names of these machines and what they do? Draw to connect the name (or point) to the photograph.

- ☐ "Cherry picker" bucket truck
- ☐ Log loader
- ☐ Chipper
- ☐ Dump truck
- ☐ Chain saw
- ☐ Stump grinder



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When the power is out:

What can you do, and *not* do, without power? Put an X across the things that *cannot* be done without electricity.



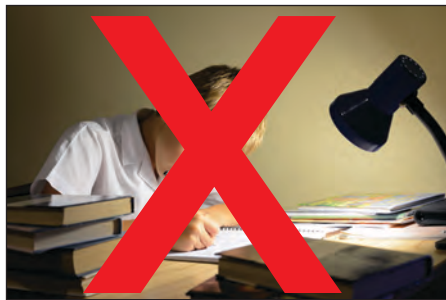
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Resources:

Arbor Day Foundation has lots of information on the benefits of trees, how to identify tree species, and how to plant and care for them, arborday.org

American Forests promotes reforestation in parks, forests, and urban areas. They also have the Register of Champion Trees, americanforests.org

Spirit of Trees has folktales, poetry, essays, curriculum, and other resources, spiritoftrees.org

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Discussion questions

- ☐ Who were the helpers in this story? What did they do?
- ☐ Who are the helpers in your neighborhood? How do they help?
- ☐ How can YOU be a neighborhood helper?
- ☐ Which is the biggest and the tallest tree in your neighborhood?
- ☐ Do you have a favorite tree in your life?

How can YOU help trees?

- ☐ If you have trees where you live, be sure they get enough water if it doesn't rain frequently.
- ☐ Don't hurt their bark with corded trimmers (weed whackers).
- ☐ If the trees are young, wrap the low trunk with tree wrap so that rabbits and voles don't chew the bark under the snow.
- ☐ Recycle paper so fewer trees are cut down to make new paper.
- ☐ Ask your city or school to plant more trees on their property.

About the author and illustrator

Laurie Lawlor is the author of more than 40 works of award-winning fiction and nonfiction for children and young adults. Lawlor's books have appeared on many ALA and NCSS notable lists. Among these, her picture book biography *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* won a Green Earth Book Award Honor and a John Burroughs Association Riverby Award. Lawlor lives in Evanston, Illinois. She has a degree in journalism and has taught writing at several universities and given many elementary school workshops throughout the Midwest. She is committed to environmental activism. **Visit laurielawlor.com.**



David Gordon has written and illustrated many children's books. He is one of the authors of the acclaimed graphic novels *Out of Picture I* and *Out of Picture II*, and one of three illustrators of Jon Scieszka's 52-book series, *Trucktown*. His newest book is *Extremely Cute Animals Operating Heavy Machinery*. He has art directed and/or worked on visual development, layout, and character design for numerous production companies from Lucasfilm to Pixar, including such movies as *Toy Story*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *A Bug's Life*, and *Cars*. He was trained at Parsons and the New York Academy of Art. **Visit davidgordonbooks.com.**

