

Tree

AUTHOR

CLAIRE SAXBY

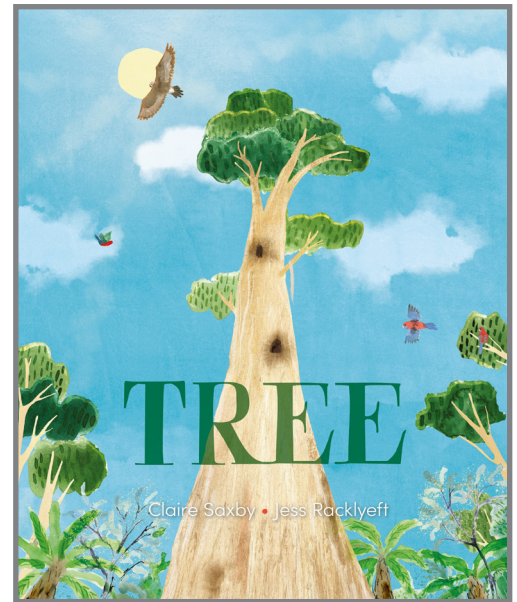
ILLUSTRATOR

JESS RACKLYEFT

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower to Mid Primary



SYNOPSIS

Can you see the forest on this misty-morning mountain? Can you see where the tree stands? It is the tallest in this forest of tall trees. This tree is older than those who find it, younger than the land it grows from. Between sapwood and heartwood, water rises and energy flows. Listen to the leaves bustle. Smell the forest air. This is the world of the tree.

In the vein of *Iceberg*—marrying deep scientific research, lyrical language and stunning illustrations—multi-award-winning and highly acclaimed creators Claire Saxby and Jess Racklyeft return with a change in environment, from ocean to land. Their new collaboration follows a mighty tree, from the bottom of its roots up to the tips of its upper branches.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Saxby was born in Melbourne, moved to Newcastle as a toddler and to Bougainville Island in PNG when she was ten. She attended many schools around Australia before studying in Melbourne to become a podiatrist. For several years, Claire worked in community health while simultaneously writing for children. Her books fall into three main categories: our wonderful world, history and humour. Claire's work has won several awards including CBCA Picture Book of the Year, CBCA Honour Book, a NSW Premier's Literary Award, a SCBWI Crystal Kite Award, an Environment Award for Children's Literature, an Educational Publishing Award and the Whitley Award multiple times. She is widely curious about just about everything and passionate about encouraging curiosity and wonder.

Find out more about Claire at www.claresaxby.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jess Racklyeft creates a variety of illustrated things—picture books, paintings, prints, pins and cards—mainly in watercolours. She works from her Melbourne home studio with her cat and dog at her feet, and occasionally one of her kids joins in too. Her art often combines collage—either on paper or digitally assembled—experimentation and lots of watercolour. Jess worked in publishing sales for almost a decade before making the leap to full-time illustration, and since then has won several illustration accolades including CBCA Picture Book of the Year for *Iceberg* (written by Claire Saxby). Her work can now be found in bookshops and libraries across Australia, and her days are happily spent in a messy studio or on school visits.

Find out more about Jess at www.jessesmess.com.

STUDY NOTES

- Before opening *Tree*, look at the title and cover design and ask questions such as:
 - What is a tree?
 - How do trees differ from plants?
 - Where might you expect to find trees growing?
 - What part of a tree finds water underground?
 - What animals might you find living in a tree?
 - What dangers do trees face in Australia?
- Read the book through once and discuss how it made the students feel. What did they like about the words? What did they like about the images?

AFTER READING

Language

- The author, Claire Saxby, has put a lot of thought into choosing the right words, phrases and sentences in *Tree* to create atmosphere and evoke an emotional response from us so that we remember it long after we have put the book down. Just as a painter uses different tools and techniques when painting, an author does the same when writing a book. Some of the tools and techniques Claire Saxby uses in *Tree* include alliteration, rhythm and personification.
 - Alliteration—the process of putting words that start with the same letter (or sound) together for rhythm or to create a specific sound. Read the first sentence in *Tree*, ‘Can you see the forest on this misty-morning mountain?’.
 - Rhythm—explain that changing the number of words in a sentence or on a page changes the flow of a text and helps keep readers engaged. Point out the page featuring the sentence, ‘A rainstorm begins. Ends. Drops pool where fronds unfurl in a tree fern crown.’ and discuss its effect.
 - Personification—giving human characteristics to things that are not human can make them more powerful and relatable to the reader. An example can be found in, ‘A breeze stumbles about and a silver wattle shivers.’
 - Ask students to identify which words make the breeze seem more human.
- Ask students to find other examples of alliteration, rhythm and personification in the text.

Visual Literacy

- The book’s illustrator uses visual techniques to convey the passage of time over a day, as well as the altogether awesomeness of a 300-year-old tree towering over the landscape. These techniques are very subtle but, once you know what to look for, are easy to spot. They include changes in colour and perspective. Look closely at each of the following techniques and discuss.
 - Colour—encourage students to think about the power of colour to communicate. In a quick classroom discussion, ask what colours they think of when they think of early morning, midday, late afternoon and evening? Now encourage students to look at each double-page spread and observe the colours used and how they change as the day shifts from daybreak to evening.
 - Perspective—ask students if they have noticed that things look bigger when they are closer and smaller when they are far away? Explain that this is called perspective in visual arts and that the illustrator, Jess Racklyeft, uses it really well to emphasise the awesomeness of trees in the book. A great example of this is on the page featuring the sentence, ‘In the layered litter, a scaly thrush flicks.’
 - Ask students to find other examples where she is using perspective. Broaden the conversation by talking about how looking down from very high or looking up from very low changes how we see the world. Find examples where this is used effectively in *Tree*.

Sustainability

- Read through the book once slowly, and ask students to point out each of the creatures as you come to them in the story. Write a list of the creatures on your whiteboard. After finishing reading, ask students to research one creature from the list and explain how it relies on the tree to live and what would happen if they didn’t have access to trees.

Science

- ‘This tree breathes in the air we breathe out, breathes out the air we breathe in.’

Ask students if they can explain the significance of this sentence and why it is repeated throughout the book?

- Write the term PHOTOSYNTHESIS on your whiteboard and in a whole class discussion, talk about the process of turning sunlight, water and carbon dioxide into oxygen and energy in the form of sugars.
- Turn to the last page of *Tree* and read the final sentence, 'To protect this tree—and others like it—is an investment in the health of our world.' Discuss with students what dangers trees might face in the world today and what their disappearance might mean for the 'health of our world'.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
CAROLYN WALSH