

### **Grade 3: Unit 4, Week 3** Protecting Our Natural Resources

#### Read Aloud: **The Gardener and the Apple Tree**

A Fable by Aesop retold by Caroline Juneau-Pierre

Wonderful Words: *rotten, dismal, mercy, plea, pompous*

#### **The Gardener and the Apple Tree**

Long ago in a dense forest a gardener happened upon an old tree. The tree appeared hollow and rotten, surrounded by other trees of lush green leaves and fruit-bearing branches, reaching high into the sky. In the thicket of the forest, mushroom clusters and purple and yellow violet flower patches covered the ground. The landscape is plush and thriving, thought the gardener as he admired the scenery, but this awful tree was distracting its beauty. “Such a dismal sight! This old tree sticks out sorely,” said the gardener. “Why should such a tree stand amid such beauty,” he said in disgust. “It bears no fruit not even one leaf.”

Approaching the old tree, he pondered deep in thought, rubbing his hand against his beard. Leaning his axe against the tree he extended his arm outward, resting it against the tree. Startled, he jumped in bewilderment at the quick flight of a sparrow shooting from a withered limb. Meanwhile, prancing grasshoppers crossed his feet as dried leaves tumbled from above.

The gardener continued to examine the deteriorating tree. “Such a useless tree,” he said. “What good could this tree be to anyone? I must chop it down immediately!” Without a second thought to the matter, the gardener reached for his axe and raised it to the side.

“Please stop!” said a little brown rabbit, poking its head from a hole at the base of the tree.

“Halt!” yelled a squirrel rushing out of a dark branch hole above. “You mustn’t chop down our tree!”

“It is shelter for us from the other animals that seek to hunt us,” said the rabbit. “We must continue to live here.” The helpless animals begged for mercy.

“If you chop down this tree, the sparrows, the grasshoppers, the rabbit and I will have no place to live,” said the squirrel.

“You can certainly find shelter someplace else. This tree serves no good purpose!” exclaimed the gardener.

The young animals tried to bargain with the gardener by offering to be bait for him so that he might entrap larger animals if he would only spare their home.

The gardener denied their request. “Today, this useless tree, which serves no purpose, must be chopped down!”

After the animals’ plea to save their homes, they realized that there was nothing more they could do. The gardener raised his axe and thrust it with all his might into the tree’s side. The forceful strike of the axe against the tree caused such a thunderous vibration that the animals sped quickly from the tree. A gash lay within the side of the tree as rotten bark fell all around. Mournfully the animals wept at what they thought was the loss of their home. The gardener stood proud and pompous. He knew he had done the right thing. But when he took a second look at the gash he had just made, he saw a golden liquid flowing from it. Throwing his axe aside, he thought to himself, “What could this possibly mean?” He reached down, tasted the substance and found that it was sweet.

Squatting down to look deep into the hole at the base of the tree he saw a hive of bees swarming its honeycomb, busily at work making honey.

“This is a live tree, a home for bees that are making honey—sweet to the taste,” shouted the gardener. “I will not chop down this tree,” he said. “This tree must remain and the bees must continue to make honey for me.”

Now whenever a gardener knows that a bee hive occupies a tree he takes extra care to pamper the tree because he knows it will bring him a great reward.

### **rotten**

**Define:** **Rotten** means that something has gone bad; it has decayed.

**Example:** My dad said my teeth will become **rotten** if I don't brush them after eating candy.

**Ask:** Why would you not want to eat a **rotten** apple?

### **dismal**

**Define:** If something is **dismal**, it is gloomy or it causes sadness.

**Example:** The paint was peeling off the walls in the **dismal** old house.

**Ask:** How would you describe **dismal** weather?

### **mercy**

**Define:** **Mercy** is kindness or forgiveness.

**Example:** The woman showed **mercy** for the stray cat by taking it in and feeding it.

**Ask:** Why would a thief ask a judge for **mercy**?

### **plea**

**Define:** A **plea** is a sincere request.

**Example:** Carlos loved the circus and made a **plea** to his parents to be allowed to go with his friend.

**Ask:** Would you make a **plea** to go to the dentist or to go to your favorite park? Why?

### **pompous**

**Define:** When people are **pompous**, they think of themselves as overly important.

**Example:** The **pompous** dog owner proceeded to tell others how to train their dogs.

**Ask:** Why might it be annoying to have a **pompous** teammate?