

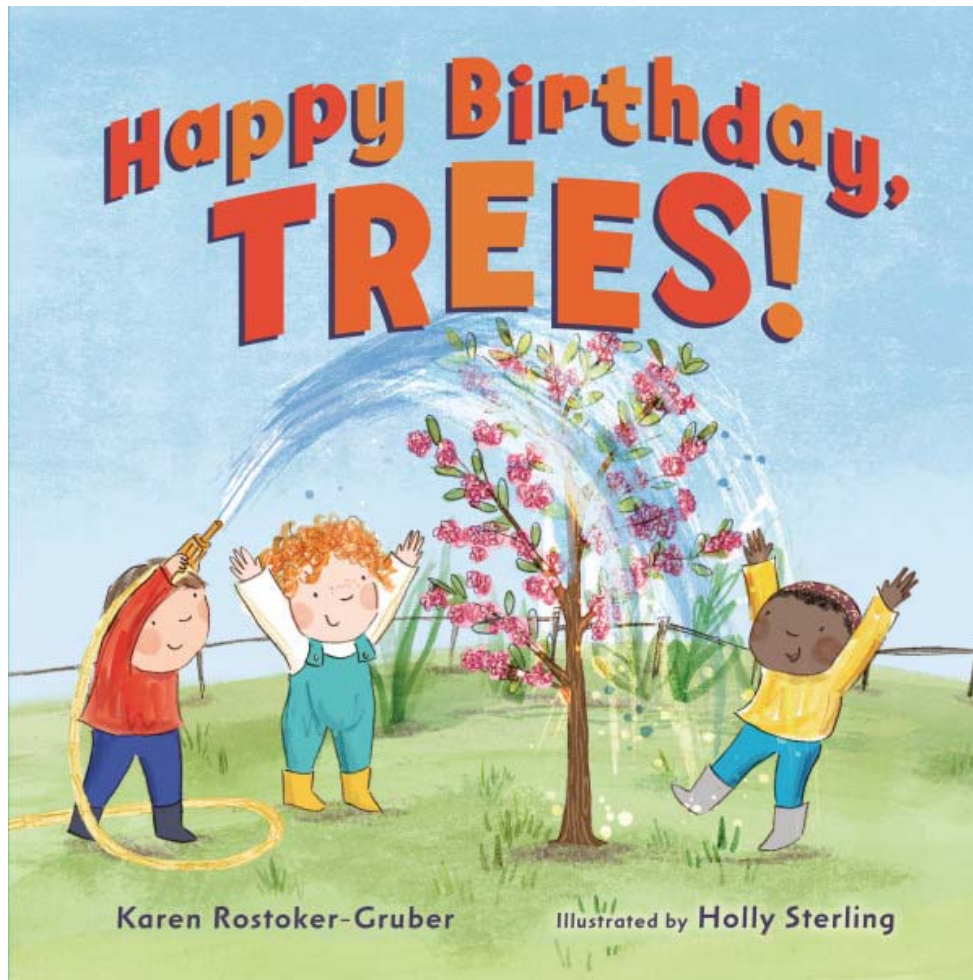
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Teacher guide for Happy Birthday, Trees



About the author

Karen Rostoker-Gruber has written several picture books, including *Farmer Kobi's Hanukkah Match*, a National Jewish Book Award Finalist. Karen lives in Branchburg, New Jersey.



About the illustrator

Holly Sterling is a freelance children's author and illustrator. She loves to work by hand using a variety of different media including watercolor, pencil and different printing processes. She lives in England.

About the Holiday

Tu B'Shevat is known as the birthday of trees, or Jewish Arbor Day. While it is winter in much of the world, in Israel the almond trees are beginning to bloom, announcing the start of spring. The holiday is celebrated by planting new trees but in places where it is too cold to plant, families celebrate by eating fruits that grow in Israel such as almonds, oranges, figs, dates and carob.

Jewish concepts:

"Trees and the environment have particular importance in Jewish thought. From the very beginning of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) we are taught to respect all things that grow, as Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden to "keep it and watch over it." (Genesis 2:15) The value of *bal tashchit*, which translates from the Hebrew as "do not destroy," has become the Jewish ecology mantra. Put into action, this concept means we are all partners in preserving the beauty and sustainability of our world."

"Traditionally, Jews eat the fruit of a tree only after it is three years old. The 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat, called Tu B'Shevat, became the trees' birthday to help people determine when to first harvest their fruit. This holiday is gaining significance today as the Jewish Earth Day."

Questions to consider when reading:

"What are the various ways you can make a tree happy on its birthday?"

"How would you celebrate a tree's birthday?"

Using this book:

This book shows you how to plant a tree. Can you plant a small tree?

“Early in the Torah we read that every plant with seeds is ours for eating. The next time your family eats fruits or vegetables, set aside the seeds to examine. With your little ones’ participation, make a comparison chart of the foods you eat and their seeds or pits. Try sprouting some of these seeds—who knows what you might grow!”