



Title: The Tree Lady

Author: H. Joseph Hopkins

Illustrator: Jill McElmurry

Themes: Nature, Trees, Development of San Diego

Vocabulary: Soil, Microscope, Gardener, Magnificent

Hear the book read aloud here: [The Tree Lady](#)

Volunteer readers should review the Author's Note at the end of the story for relevant background information beforehand.

★ 2nd Grade Common Core Reading Standard ★

Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

I. INTRODUCTION (PREP QUESTIONS)

- Ask students if they have ever been to Balboa Park and if so, what they did or saw. Tell them that this is a true story about Kate Sessions, a lady who is known as the Mother of Balboa Park. Ask students to speculate as to the connection between the title, the illustration, and Kate's honorary title.
- Read the title page to the students. Ask them to guess what city she changed and what she could have done.

II. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

DURING READING: [Volunteers will note that almost every page of text ends with a variation of the statement, "But Kate did."]

- Pp. 1-2: Read; help students understand how long ago Kate lived and the types of things women were expected to do. Help them understand the phrase, "Girls weren't supposed to get their hands dirty." What do we learn about Kate as a young girl? (grew up in the woods, collected leaves, pine needles, and flowers, made them into jewelry)
- Pp. 3-4: Read; identify the subjects Kate loved most in school. It says that *Most girls were discouraged from studying science*. What do you think **discouraged** means? Why? Is there a part of the word that you recognize? (**courage**) Discuss with students how we are starting to learn that Kate is not afraid to face challenges, regardless of the social norms of her time.

Have students make observations/comparisons about the clothing then and now.

- Pp. 5-6: Read; ask students if they have ever heard of a **metaphor** or **simile**. Explain that these are examples of figurative language which are special tools writers and speakers can use to make stories more interesting. Tell students that both a **metaphor** and a **simile** are ways of comparing two things. The only difference is that a **metaphor** says that something **is** something else while a **simile** compares two things using the word **like** or

as. (Example/**metaphor**: Our *substitute is a dragon*; example/**simile**: My brother runs **like** a cheetah, that pillow is soft **as** a cloud.

Metaphor: “Kate felt the *trees* were her *friends*.” Ask students what two things are being compared (they may be confused since are/was/were are other forms of **is**).

Simile: “*Trees* seemed to Kate like giant *umbrellas*...” Again, ask students what two things are being compared.

- Pp. 7-8: Read; discuss how here choice of college study matched her early interests and her distinctive accomplishment as the first women to ever graduate in science from any University of California. How are those times different from today? Why?
- Pp. 9-10: Read; discuss why Kate traveled by boat (no airplanes) and what her shock is (few trees). Students may be surprised that San Diego is considered a desert.
- Pp. 11-12: Read; ask what was difficult for Kate (missed science). Have students again note differences in the clothing of the time. Tell them that this school (Russ School at the time) is still here today (name changed to San Diego High School).
- Pp. 13-14: Read; ask students why San Diegans would think trees could never grow there and what character trait we continue to observe about Kate (never lets things stop her). Why would Kate think she could get trees to grow? (she studied trees and plants as a science student in college)
- Pp 15-16: Read; ask students to discuss Kate’s reason for leaving teaching and how it matches what we have learned about her.
- Pp. 17-18: Read; point out countries noted on the envelopes; ask students why she would have chosen those countries. (hot, dry, similar weather)
- Pp. 19-20: Read; have students define **sustain** using context clues. Ask students how Kate knew that trees could grow in a desert town? (all the seeds had come from countries with hot, dry weather similar to that of San Diego)
- Pp. 21-22: Read; discuss significance; have students identify the two reasons Kate wanted more trees. (for beauty and to provide shade for visitors)
- Pp. 23-24: Read; point out the clothing women wore while planting trees.
- Pp. 25-26: Read; ask students to discuss significance of last sentence.
- Pp. 27-29: Read; discuss the significance of the last sentence.
- Refer to page 14. How does San Diego look different today than what it looked like in 1880?

III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

POST READING:

- What do you think was the author’s message to the reader? What did he want us to think about?
- Why do you think Kate is called the *mother* of Balboa Park? What does that mean?