

Hello, Tree Explorations

Staretta Taylor-Cooper, Hazel Park Preparatory Academy, Saint Paul, MN, USA

Abstract

This literacy article presents a comprehensive unit curriculum designed for early childhood and primary educators inspired by Ana Crespo's picturebook *Hello, Tree*. The curriculum leverages the book's colorful illustrations and poetic narrative to foster environmental awareness, sensory exploration, and creative expression among young learners. Through interdisciplinary activities integrating literacy, science, and art, the unit encourages students to observe and connect with nature, develop descriptive language skills, and cultivate mindfulness. Educators are provided with practical strategies for using *Hello, Tree* to support social-emotional learning, promote curiosity about the natural world, and inspire stewardship. This curriculum aims to enrich classroom experiences by turning a simple story into a dynamic learning journey that nurtures both cognitive and emotional growth.

Keywords

Interconnectedness, Wildfire, Ecological Awareness, Symbiotic Relationship, Forest, Sapling Tree, Animals

Overview

This literacy unit was created for grades preschool to first. The literacy curriculum unit is centered on Ana Crespo's *Hello, Tree*, is designed to engage young learners in exploring nature through language, observation, and creative expression. The unit integrates reading, writing, science, art, and social-emotional learning across multiple lessons. Students develop key literacy skills—such as vocabulary building, descriptive writing, story sequencing, and comprehension—while cultivating a deeper appreciation for trees and their environment. Activities encourage sensory exploration, visual literacy through illustration analysis, and personal connection with nature. The curriculum also incorporates environmental stewardship, fostering responsibility and mindfulness. Through these interdisciplinary experiences, educators can inspire student curiosity, creativity, and meaningful engagement with both literature and the natural world.

Narrative Framing

This ten lesson unit begins with the creation of an anchor chart where young learners share their responses to key unit terms such as interconnectedness, wildfire, ecological awareness, symbiotic relationship, forest, sapling tree, animals, tree, and climate. These terms are revisited throughout the unit to build vocabulary and support oral language development as students explore and explain concepts through various activities. Young learners are able to share their responses through a drawing and telling activity, a writing prompt, or brainstorming as they learn key unit terms such as: sapling tree, animals, wildfires, environment, etc.

The first three lessons (lessons 1-3) focus on critical thinking and inquiry, prompting students to consider questions like: What is a tree? What is a wildfire? What does it mean to plant a tree? During this phase, students are also introduced to Ana Crespo's *Hello, Tree*.

Lessons four and five (lessons 4-5) engage students in hands-on learning by planting a seedling pine tree in a milk carton, followed by planting a sapling tree in the school community, including the playground and surrounding areas. Each planting activity spans a week, allowing students to develop a deeper awareness of plant growth and the care required for young trees. These experiences are reinforced through oral explanations and group discussions.

The final five lessons (lessons 6-10) emphasize oral language development through mini hands-on activities that encourage students to compare humans with trees, and animals

with trees/forests. Throughout the unit, environmental stewardship is a key theme, gently guiding students toward responsible attitudes and behaviors toward nature.

By situating literacy within the broader context of ecological mindfulness and creativity, this curriculum transforms *Hello, Tree* from a story into a meaningful pathway for nurturing curiosity, empathy, and lifelong learning in young learners.

At a Glance

Title	Hello, Tree Explorations
Unit Time	8 – 10 weeks
Grade Level(s)	Preschool – First
Core Text	<i>Hello, Tree</i> by Ana Crespo Illustrated by Dow Phumiruk
Supporting Texts	Links to other reviews, author interviews/talks, related books, lesson plans, or other resources: Hello, Tree by Ana Crespo to author interviews, lesson plans, and other resources.
Objectives	• Students will understand and explain why trees are important. • Students will understand the basic idea of planting trees to help nature. • Students will connect wildfires to the story <i>Hello, Tree</i> by Ana Crespo and the importance of caring for trees. • Students will collaboratively create an anchor chart to reinforce learning. • Students will develop an awareness of care and plant growth through planting a sapling tree and pre-mature trees. • Students will engage in a group discussion and activity to reinforce learning.
Materials and Resources	Slides * Climate Lit Entry * Resources * Curriculum Unit

Going Forward

Cross-Disciplinary Integration: *Hello, Tree* by Ana Crespo can serve as a bridge between literacy, science, art, and social-emotional learning. Ongoing projects like journaling tree observations, environmental stewardship initiatives, or creative storytelling inspired by the book help sustain engagement.

Skill Development: Introduce another genre of books that requires repeated readings to develop that comparison of two stories; however, you can research other children's literature to deepen the knowledge of young students. This provides opportunities to practice comprehension strategies, oral language development, and vocabulary expansion, adapting activities to students' growing literacy levels.

Community and Environment Connection: The book can inspire long-term community-based projects such as tree planting, nature walks, or environmental care programs that keep learning grounded in real-world experiences.

Reflective and Creative Expression: Throughout the year, students can revisit the book's themes through creative writing, art, and discussions, reflecting their evolving perspectives and deepening ecological empathy.

References

- Crespo, A. (2021). *Hello, Tree*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.
- TeachingBooks.net. (n.d.). *Hello, Tree*. Retrieved Wednesday, October 20, 2025, from <https://school.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi?tid=80623>