

READ★PRAY★WONDER★PLAY

A GUIDE TO SHARING STORIES WITH CHILDREN

Apple and Magnolia

By Laura Gehl & Patricia Metola

With simply drawn illustrations and a timeless message on the power of connection, this book offers both an imaginative story about the wonders of nature as well as an opportunity for conversation about family and friendship. As you read this book together with your child, notice if your natural inclination in responding to the book is one of wonder and curiosity or one of skepticism. Both reactions are reflected in the story through the different characters, and as humans, we often bring these different perspectives to situations that we encounter in our lives. The author's note at the very beginning of the book provides context that could be both affirming to children with a curious mindset and also useful as a launching point for a skeptical reader to seek out more scientific information.



★ ★ WONDER TOGETHER ★ ★

- In the story, Britta was sure that her two favorite trees were friends, even though Dad and Bronwyn didn't think trees could be friends. What do you think?
- Nana said, "Unusual friendships can be the most powerful of all." What is the most unusual friendship that you have had?
- There are four human characters in the story: Britta, Bronwyn, Dad, and Nana. Which of the four did you relate to the most? Why?
- When Britta noticed that Magnolia was sick, she did many things to try to help, including connecting Magnolia to a friend, providing the warmth of a scarf, and hanging lights. What are some things that you do (or that others do for you) to help when someone is sick?

★ ★ EXPLORE THE STORY ★ ★

- *Apple and Magnolia* explores the relationship between Britta and the natural world around her. Think of something in nature that is special to you and create a picture of it. Can you match the style of the illustrations of the book?
- Apple trees bring forth fruit in the fall, and Magnolia trees flower in the spring. Depending on the season, see if you can find either of these trees in bloom near you, or look for pictures online or in a book.
- After noticing that Magnolia was sick, both Dad and Bronwyn told Britta (gently and not so gently) that Magnolia might not survive winter. Nana, however, asked if Britta had a plan to help. Talk about ways to help those in need.

PRAY

Eternal God, your world is bigger and more connected than we can even imagine. Help us to notice the wonders of your creation, and to care for all the growing things that you have entrusted to our care. Amen.



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Science undergirds much of this story. While the idea of trees being friends and growing physically closer as one gets sick may seem far-fetched, in fact (as the author's note points out) there is evidence to show the many ways that trees help one another. And, based on the research, we may have just scratched the surface in what we know about the interconnectedness of trees. Some ways to explore this and other scientific ideas in the book include:

- Do an internet search to learn more about the different ways that trees 'talk to each other.' There are a number of children's books on this topic including *Can You Hear the Trees Talking? Discovering the Hidden Life of the Forest* by Peter Wohlleben.
- Make a tin can phone (similar to what Britta made for Apple and Magnolia to communicate). You'll need two large paper cups, a push pin or needle, and a long piece of string. Poke a hole in the bottom of each cup and thread the string through, anchoring it with a knot or piece of tape. With one person holding each cup, stretch apart until the string is tight. Have one person speak into the cup while the other holds the cup to their ear. If your child is interested, research the science behind how sound travels via the vibrations of the string.

Connect the theme of the power of unusual friendships with Bible stories. Some examples to explore include:

- Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1)
- Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 20)
- Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- Saul/Paul and Ananias (Acts 9:1-20).

Pick one or more of these examples and read the story from a children's Bible, noticing how God can bring together even the most unlikely pairs.

MORE TO READ & DO

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO LEARN MORE

ADDITIONAL DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCE FOR *APPLE AND MAGNOLIA*

- Download the [Discussion & Activity Guide](#)

ADDITIONAL BOOKS ON SCIENCE, NATURE, & THE ENVIRONMENT

- [I Love You, Blue](#), by Barroux
- [The Good for Nothing Tree](#), by Amy-Jill Levine, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Annie Bowler
- [The Marvelous Mustard Seed](#), by Amy-Jill Levine, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Margaux Meganck
- [El maravilloso grano de mostaza](#), by Amy-Jill Levine, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Margaux Meganck
- [The Marvelous Mustard Seed](#) (Korean), by Amy-Jill Levine, Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, and Margaux Meganck
- [Babbit and Joan, a Rabbit and a Phone](#), by Denise Turu

ADDITIONAL BOOKS BY LAURA GEHL

- [Saving Delicia](#), by Laura Gehl & Patricia Metola
- [Grandpa's Window](#), by Laura Gehl and Udayana Lugo

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