

Our Tree

by David Harmer

Pre-reading Task

1. Have you observed a tree grow? Does it grow quickly or take long to grow?
2. List the things we get from trees.
3. Why do we cut trees?
4. Is it good to cut trees?

Now read the following poem.

It takes so long for a tree to grow
So many years of pushing the sky

Long branches stretch the arms
Reach out with their wooden fingers

Years drift by, fall like leaves
From green to yellow then back to green

Since my grandad was a boy
And then before his father's father

There's been an **elm** outside our
school
Its shadow long across our playground

Today three men ripped it down
Chopped it up. It took ten minutes.



elm: a tall tree with broad leaves

I Understanding the Poem

A. Complete the summary of the poem by filling in the blanks with appropriate words:

A tree takes a long time to grow. For many years, the trunk of the tree _____ the sky to grow higher and higher. The branches grow long as if they were _____ their arms and _____ fingers. With every year, the seasons change and the tree leaves also change from green to yellow and then from yellow to green. Since the time of the speaker's grandfather's father, there had been an _____ outside his school whose _____ could be seen across the playground. The speaker felt sad when this tree was _____ off by some men within ten minutes.

B. Answer the following questions in brief:

1. What do 'the arms' in line 3 refer to?
2. What do 'wooden fingers' in line 4 refer to?
3. Bring out the contrast between the beginning and the ending of the poem.

C. The poet has used some imaginative metaphors and beautiful similes in the poem. In the table given below are some extracts from the poem. Mention whether the extract is a simile or a metaphor.

Extracts	Simile or Metaphor
So many years of pushing the sky	
Long branches stretch the arms	
Reach out with their wooden fingers	
Years drift by, fall like leaves	

II HOTS

- A. What does the poet want to convey by saying, 'It took ten minutes'. Discuss with your partner.
- B. The poet has mentioned many phrases and words in the poem telling that it takes long for a tree to grow. Discuss.

III Life Skills

Imagine that you adopted a plant in your school or near your house. Write five things you would do to help it grow into a strong big tree.

IV Values

You have observed that vast stretches of grassland that were the lungs of your town have been converted into concrete jungles. Discuss with your partner the possible consequences of this cruel activity.

V Writing Skills

On the occasion of 'Van Mahotsava', prepare a speech to be delivered in the morning assembly on the topic 'Save Trees, Save Life'.

About the Author

David Harmer is an American poet keenly interested in the conservation of nature. He feels pained at the mindless felling of trees that is now posing a serious threat to human existence itself. 'Our Tree' is one of his most celebrated poems.

