

## LET'S DISCUSS . . .

STERLING  
CHILDREN'S  
BOOKS

# UP IN THE LEAVES

*This discussion guide is designed to help parents, teachers, librarians, and booksellers explore the story's ideas, themes, and meaning with young readers. Prepared by the author, Shira Boss.*

*These questions align with the Common Core State Standards for Language Arts, Grades K-2.*



**ABOUT THE STORY:** Bob is a little boy growing up in the big city—but he doesn't quite fit in. The city is loud and crowded; even school feels cramped. He seeks refuge in the park, and discovers a marvelous world of his own up in trees. He builds treehouses one after another in New York's Central Park, until as a young adult he is finally caught. Instead of being punished, he is given an opportunity that changes his life—and allows him to be happy in the city *and* in the trees.

**FOR DISCUSSION:** When reading *Up in the Leaves* with children, use these questions to help them notice details, understand the story more deeply and relate Bob's adventures to their own lives and experiences.

**BEFORE READING:** Look at the front and back covers. What do you think this story is about? From looking at the cover illustration, do you think this story takes place in the city, or the country? (What are the clues?)

### **THEME:** *Fitting In*

1. Bob lives in a big city. How does the author describe the city? What doesn't Bob like about living in the city?
2. How is the park different from the city streets?
3. Toward the end of the story, Bob's mother tells him he should come out of the trees and go to work. Why doesn't Bob want to work in the city? What does he do instead?
4. What is the name of Bob's occupation? (See the epilogue.)

### **THEME:** *Connection with Nature*

1. Bob finds refuge in the park. What does Bob love about being up in the trees?
2. Compare the sounds of the city to the sounds Bob hears up in the trees. What other sounds can you think of that are in the city? What other sounds do you hear in nature?
3. At the end of the story, Bob promises not to build more treehouses in the park. In what ways does he stay connected to trees and to the night sky?



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### THEME: *Persistence*

1. Bob's first treehouse is taken down. How does he feel when this happens? How does he respond to losing his secret spot?
2. Each treehouse Bob builds is different—how do they change?
3. What happens each year that leads to Bob's treehouses being discovered? Can you think of any way he might have hidden his treehouses without leaves on the trees?
4. Think of something special you've made that was lost or destroyed. How did you respond?

### THEME: *Imagination*

1. Bob's treehouses are not just hideaways, they launch him into imaginary worlds. What does Bob pretend to be when it rains? What does he pretend to be after dark, when he stargazes?
2. What might you pretend to be in a treehouse?
3. When you build a fort or hideaway or go to another special spot, what different worlds do you imagine?

### ACTIVITIES

1. Design a fort, hideaway, or secret spot of your own. Where will it be and what can it be made out of? Either build it or draw a picture of it. Describe what you love about it.
2. List some of your favorite things to do. Think of ways you might do something on that list for work when you're grown up. You can ask an adult for help, or interview people who have jobs doing something you think would be fun or exciting.
3. When Bob was growing up, he had never heard of an arborist. Find a local arborist who can visit your class or meet with you individually. Ask how he or she became an arborist and about his or her work with trees.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Shira Boss is a writer who lives on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, three blocks from Central Park. *Up in the Leaves* is her second book. She earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Columbia University, including a master's in journalism. When her Japanese maple tree needed pruning, several people suggested she call arborist Bob Redman. He said it was the smallest tree he had ever worked on (about four feet high, in a pot). Now they have two sons, two whippets—and many more trees. Connect with them at [shiraboss.com](http://shiraboss.com).



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## EXTRA: WHAT'S IN A BOOK?

Let children know there's more to a book than the story and the pictures! Help children connect more deeply with books and appreciate them even more by exploring these “extra” parts of a book.



### ENDPAPERS

When you open the front or back cover of a book, the very first pages are the endpapers. The endpapers are like the welcome mat of a book. They often have a color or design that matches the book's story or mood.

1. What's on the endpapers for *Up in the Leaves*?
2. How does that match the title of the book and the story about Bob?
3. What other ideas can you come up with for what could be on the endpapers for *Up in the Leaves*?

### DEDICATIONS

At the very front (or sometimes the very back) of a book is a message from the author and illustrator saying that their work on the book is dedicated “For” or “To” someone special. It can be fun to guess who is named in the dedication—sometimes it's a group of people, or even something else (*A House in the Woods* is dedicated to beavers)!

1. To whom did the author dedicate *Up in the Leaves*?
2. Who do you think Dane Anders and Rainer Lane might be? (There is a hint in the author's bio.)
3. To whom did the illustrator dedicate *Up in the Leaves*?
4. To whom would you like to dedicate the next story you write or picture that you create? (Why?)

### EPILOGUE

*Up in the Leaves* has an epilogue. The story has ended—but there's more to tell.

1. What information do you find out in the epilogue to *Up in the Leaves*?
2. Is there anything else you wish the author had included here?

Look at other books—often there is a little more information about the story or the subject at the end. The extra might be an Epilogue, an Author's Note, a Glossary, an Afterword, or another special section for you to learn more about the story or its subject.





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## AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHIES

What is the person called who writes the story in a book? What is the person called who creates the pictures? (Sometimes one person is both the author and the illustrator.) Their names are on the cover of the book and on the title page. To find out a little bit about the lives of the author and illustrator, look for their biographies at the back of the book.



1. Where does the author of *Up in the Leaves* live?
2. How did she meet Bob Redman?
3. Where does the illustrator of *Up in the Leaves* live?
4. With whom does the illustrator live?

## HIDDEN FUN

Sometimes an illustrator includes fun things to find in the pictures when you look carefully. In *Up in the Leaves*, Bob often has a little friend with him in the trees.

1. Who is the friend?
2. Can you find the friend in several pictures?
3. Look at the spine of the book—see anyone familiar?

