

We Are Branches

by Joyce Sidman



Reader's Guide

for use at home or in a group

We Are Branches is a book about a pattern (branching) that is found over and over in nature. As you read, encourage young readers to find branching patterns on each page and identify where they occur.

About the Author

Newbery Honor-winner Joyce Sidman is one of today's foremost nature poets for children. Accolades for her books include a Sibert Award and two Caldecott Honors. For her celebrated body of work, she won the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. Joyce lives in Minnesota, where she walks the woods every day. Visit joycesidman.com.

About the Illustrator

Caldecott Award-winner Beth Krommes has illustrated three other books of Joyce's: *Swirl by Swirl*, *Butterfly Eyes*, and *Before Morning*. She works in scratchboard for her award-winning book illustrations, but also paints and carves wood engravings. She holds an AAS degree in Textile/Surface Design and creates designs for fabric, wallpaper, and more. Visit bethkrommes.com

PREDICTIONS

Questions to ask before reading

1. What is a branch? Where would you find one?
2. Hold up your hand in a "peace sign"—can you see the branching from your arm to your hand? Now open all five fingers. Why do our hands have branching fingers?
3. Can you find branches on the front or back cover of this book?
4. What else do you see on the cover?

Check in after Reading:

1. What different kinds of branching did we find in this book?
2. On the page with the bats, try to locate the bat's shoulder, elbow, wrist, and fingers. How do bat fingers work differently from ours?
3. Look at other pages and try to figure out the role branching plays in each scene.
4. The author characterizes branches as "strong" and "brave." What other words would you use to describe them?

ACTIVITIES

"I Spy Branches"

Look at the endpapers (inside front & back cover) and find the following:

- 1 peacock feather
- 1 butterfly
- 1 gecko
- 1 fern frond
- 1 oak leaf
- 1 head broccoli
- 1 lettuce leaf
- 2 starfish
- 2 pine trees
- 3 bees
- 3 corals
- 12 snowflakes
- 2 antlers
- 9 wings
- 16 toes

Branching Notebook: *Science, Art, Writing*

1. Head outside with a notebook, pencil, and eraser.
2. Try to find at least four examples of branching (tree branch, leaf, sidewalk cracks, etc.).
3. Make a simple sketch of each example.
4. Choose one or two words that describe each one (zigzag, crinkled, soft, etc.).
5. Once inside, color your sketches. Identify them if you can.

Fractals: *Math, Art*

1. Using a template such as the one below, create a branching fractal pattern.
2. With colored pencils, turn your “branch” into a tree, a leaf, a flower, a butterfly wing, a bolt of lightning, a river, a coral branch, or . . . ? Create a whole scene around it!

