



## The Alphabet Tree

*Leo Lionni*

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When a fierce wind threatens to blow all the little letters out of the alphabet tree, they must band together in words—and then sentences—to create a message that's even stronger than the wind: peace on earth. With their newfound knowledge, there's nothing the letters *can't* do in this gentle parable about the power of the written word.

## The Alphabet Tree Details

Date : Published November 18th 1968 by Knopf Books for Young Readers (first published 1968)

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Author : Leo Lionni

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## From Reader Review The Alphabet Tree for online ebook

### **Madison Jones says**

In the story The Alphabet Tree a group of letters are clung to the leaves of tree. The letters are all by themselves and some get blown away during a windstorm. The remaining letters are frightened and huddle together forming a large group. All of a sudden a word bug stops by and tells the letter they would be stronger as words instead of by themselves. They would be able to withstand any of the strongest winds. Once they were words, a caterpillar came and said they had no meaning alone as words, that they needed to form sentences, that would make them mean something, something important.

As a young reader building words from letters and sentences from words can be difficult. In this story it is portrayed as if you put letters and words together can only make them stronger. The large white spaces on the pages make a sense of emptiness felt during the large storms and as the letters become words and words, sentences the bug adding assistance grows to a larger image. I feel as though this book portrays an important message that no matter your message be it big or small, it is strong and it is your statement for all to hear.

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### **Brittanie Rieu says**

This book was an interesting approach to teaching sentence structures and words. I'm not too fond of it, although it may be a helpful tool in teaching sentences to smaller children. For me though, I don't necessarily think I really would use it as a main tool in my class. I would definitely love to have it for students to brush up on their sentences or learn how to make new words. And I do agree with some other reviewers, the end was pretty random. Not a terrible book, but not a favorite,

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### **Mama Bibliosoph says**

This is a perfect book for explaining what letters are for. The letters on the leaves of the alphabet tree are terrified after a strong wind scatters them, but then the word-bug teaches them how to combine to make words so when the wind returns they are stronger and can hold on. Then along comes a caterpillar who suggests that they combine into sentences and "mean something," and so they try that. They make sentences like "the wind is bad" and "the bug is small." Finally the caterpillar admonishes them to "say something important" and they spell out a message about peace on earth, climb on the caterpillar's back, and journey to take their message to the President.

Some people find The Alphabet Tree hokey, but I think it's exquisite—and (sadly) timely.

For a child obsessed with the alphabet, I like how The Alphabet Tree focuses on the function of letters (and words and sentences). It's useful for some kids to see individual letters out of order. Children who script are often very rigid about their scripts and this could be a concern with the alphabet. It's good to gain practice seeing individual letters all mixed up and represented as a flexible set of tools.

There is something very subtle and deliberate on Lionni's part in the description of the letters being afraid when they scatter in the wind. I think this emotional component may speak to some children's fears

experiencing new academic challenges and it may perhaps connect with a child who is anxious about experiencing the alphabet in a non-ordered way.

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I review books for children from the perspective of a parent of kids with autism. The review above is from a longer blog post about great books for kids with autism who REALLY love the alphabet:  
<http://www.lineupthebooks.com/obsesse...>

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### **Allison says**

The Alphabet Tree was about a bunch of letters that were on leaves of a tree. They had helper friends like a "word bee" who told them they could combine to make words and the eventually sentences. Then they created a sentence about peace. Their caterpillar friend carried the finalized sentence off the tree and told them he would go tell the president about their new sentence. This book was really creative because it was not only entertaining but helpful to teach kids that they could use letters to build upon themselves to eventually create sentences. Towards the end the story got a little weird and random because all of a sudden they were talking about peace and telling the president which had nothing to do with the rest of the story.

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### **Suzanne says**

Um, I know it's Leo Lionni but it was kinda weird.

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### **Malika Arman says**

This is a wonderful book for children to use for alphabet recognition. The images are bright and clear for children to see each alphabet. This book keeps the children on edge in the end, they will be able to come up with their own ending.

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### **Luisa says**

The alphabet tree by Leo Lionni  
Review by Luisa Daniel

The alphabet tree is a story about letters on a tree. The top leaves of the tree is the favorite hang out spot for each letter and the pick their own favorite leave to stay on all day. Until one day a big gust of wind blew most of the leaves off including some letters. After that windy day all the letters from the top went toward the bottom of the tree because they were afraid that they would have been blown away to. A word-bug found them hiding and advised them that they can make words and by being words it would make them stronger against the wind. With the help and advice of the word-bug they letters formed words and went to the top of the tree where they once were. Another day the wind came back, but with the letters forming words they were able to hold onto the tree during the wind. Then one summer a weird caterpillar approached the words and told them why are they just words? They can form sentences that have a meaning, the caterpillar walked

them through on how to form sentences, they formed sentences about random things they did not like or liked, but the caterpillar wanted something different. Use the words for something important said the caterpillar. They came up with something meaningful and the caterpillar wants to show it off, The sentence gets on the back of the caterpillar and go to their destination.

This book by Leo Lionni showed that letters can become words and words can form sentences to express your feelings or say something important. The use of color throughout the book is simple until an animal comes along to show them what to do. The leaves look like a stamp the is used by many different greens, and the trunk of the tree looks like colored pencils.

The illustrations of this book where simple, the reader knew what was going on and did not need a huge explanation to the photo.

Goodreads Rating: stars

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### **Mort says**

Illustrations in the book very color friendly. Advanced vocabulary.

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### **Becky B says**

The letters hiding in the alphabet tree are taught by various creatures how to organize themselves into words, then sentences, and then something very meaningful. Illustrated in Lionni's typical style. A creative way to teach kids about the organization of language.

I had mixed feelings about the political comment at the very end of the book. The letters eventually form themselves into a "very important" message, "Peace on earth, good will to men," and a caterpillar at the end invites the letters to crawl on his back so he can take the message to the President. Yes, I think we definitely should encourage kids to work for peace. Yes, we want to encourage our leaders to also work for peace and goodwill. However, we're also trying to teach kids to respect authority, and the ending seemed a little like a slam against the President.

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### **Nada says**

The Alphabet Tree by Leo Lionni is about letters becoming stronger by forming words, then separate sentences, and then one sentence with an important message. The book seems as though it was meant to be for younger children with the intent to teach them the power in meaning a sentence can have.

What caught my eye was the beauty of simplicity in the illustrations and colors so that all our attention could be dedicated to the letters, words, and sentences on the tree. The way the author/illustrator made the pictures and words on the tree bigger than the words telling the story shows his intent in wanting us as the readers to understand the importance of the overall message.

The final page of this book was a little unexpected and left me taken aback. However the message of peace is one that all people, children and adult, will appreciate.

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### **f says**

pacifist claptrap!

well, now that that's out of my system, it's a very sweet book, with the usual wonderful paintings by lionni. i just didn't like the ending which has a heartfelt message of humanist solidarity being delivered to a government head whose very existence likely depends on overseeing a system of mass terror and violence directed against the majority of citizens.

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### **Savannah Montalvo says**

The Alphabet Tree by Leo Lionni is a book that conveys a positive message to its audience. This book teaches you the importance of forming words and sentences. In the beginning, the Word-Bug explains to the scared little letters that if they bonded to one another, they would be strong enough to withstand the winds. Later, the purple Caterpillar taught the words to create sentences with meaning. Personally, I thought the book showed a creative way to share a great message.

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### **Leila says**

Alphabet tree teaches children how letters form words then sentences. Colorful illustration. It also allows teachers to talk about kindness and caring.

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### **Abby says**

I couldn't believe the ending of this book and how perfect its message was.

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### **Ben Clark says**

"The Alphabet Tree" tells the story of a group of letters who live on the leaves of a tree and bask in the sun. One day a gale engulfs the tree, sweeping away several of the letters and causing the rest to huddle together in fear. Thereafter, a "word-bug" and a caterpillar show up to show the letters how to cluster together to make words, and then link up to one another to form sentences. The caterpillar teaches them that sentences alone do not give them the staying power to remain on the tree, but important sentences. The letters decide on the most important sentence of all: "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men."

This book illustrates the theme that the power of literacy is not just in knowledge of letters or words, but the

ability to put them together to convey powerful ideas. The collage-style illustrations are beautiful in their simplicity, and each of the characters in the book (the letters, the word-bug, and the caterpillar) embody kindness and caring.

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