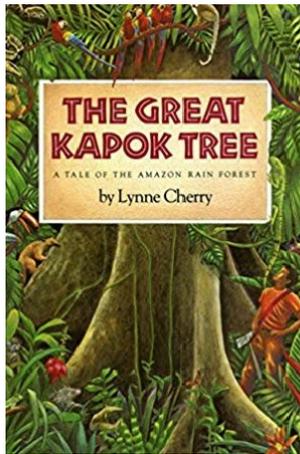


The Great Kapok Tree

By Lynne Cherry



Blurb:

One day, a man exhausts himself trying to chop down a giant kapok tree. While he sleeps, the forest's residents, including a child from the Yanomamo tribe, whisper in his ear about the importance of trees and how "all living things depend on one another".

Cherry's lovingly rendered coloured pencil and watercolour drawings of all the "wondrous and rare animals" evoke the lush rain forests, as well as stunning world maps bordered by tree porcupines, emerald tree boas, and dozens more fascinating creatures.

Key Information:

Plot: Two woodcutters go to the Amazon rainforest. They stop beside a fine Ceiba tree and the larger man points to the tree and leaves. Lulled by "the heat and hum of the forest" the other woodcutter falls asleep beneath the Great Kapok Tree. While he sleeps, the many species of animals that live in the tree (including frogs, snakes, sloths, birds, anteaters and monkeys) come down to speak to him. They explain not only their dependence on the tree, but also the importance of the tree to the world. The man wakes up and sees the beauty of the rainforest. He picks up his axe and the word of the Rainfor-

Setting: Picture book Rain Forest.

Themes: A modern fable with an urgent message for young environmentalists.

Key Characters:

Woodmen	Two men who fell trees in the Rain Forest
Animals	Various from Rain Forest
Kapok Tree	Can grow to over 73 m (240 ft) in height and up to 5.8 m (19 ft) in diameter

Author Voice:

Lynne Cherry has devoted her life to sharing her concern about environmental issues with others. Her important children's books also include The Armadillo from Amarillo and two tales from the Amazon rain forest: The Great Kapok Tree and The Shaman's Apprentice.

The book is dedicated to Chico Mendes, a Brazilian environmental activist who was murdered in 1988

Key Vocabulary:

biome	A biome is a community of plants and animals
canopy	The canopy layer blocks out a lot of the sunlight
climate	Condition of weather in a given area found of many years
emergent layer	Tops of trees poking up above the canopy
forest floor	Dark and damp with a layer of decomposing leaves etc
understory	Trees and plants growing under the canopy
topographical	Specific description of geographical area features

Key Quotes:

Cherry told a reporter, "When kids grow up, in another 20 years, they'll be the people making the decisions. If they're raised with these ideas ingrained in them, it will affect national policy. We will have raised a whole generation of environmentalists"

Discussion Points:

- What will the woodmen do?
- How can we help to save natural resources in the World today?