

Teachers Guide for

# The Little Acorn

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*Note to teachers: The following guide is written to assist you in teaching science based concepts for your early childhood classroom. The narrative is provided for each corresponding page(s) of the book to help you discuss the storyline and illustrations. Depending upon the age of your students, the following comments may be over or under their comprehension level. Adjust as needed.*

Cover	Both the title and the illustration of the acorn falling from the oak tree suggest the mystery of nature. What are acorns? How do trees make acorns? What will happen to the little acorn now that it has separated from the tree? These questions serve to spark the interest of students regarding the primary character – The Little Acorn.
Inside Title Page	Students get the first glance at the second character in the book– a squirrel. Animals and plants are connected in nature. Certainly, one can affect the other.
Page 2	As the text indicates The Little Acorn “longed to become a beautiful oak tree”. This is possible because new oak trees grow from acorns (seeds). Throughout most of the book, a small picture of an acorn accompanies various text and illustrations. This repetition serves to remind students of the link between the acorns and young seedlings, or acorns and larger trees.
Page 3	Seeds usually have a period where they are inactive (dormant) and need certain conditions to reawaken or sprout (germinate). Seeds need oxygen, water, and favorable temperatures to begin growing. By planting the acorn in soil, the squirrel provides both oxygen and water. Also, we can infer from the green grass that spring or summer seasons are providing warm temperatures.
Page 4-5	Soils collect rainfall and release moisture to plants over time. If the Little Acorn was placed on top of a rock or sidewalk instead of the soil it would dry out and not receive enough water to live. When conditions are favorable, the Little Acorn sprouts and begins sending roots into the soil for nutrients and water, and leaves to the air to catch energy from the sun (for photosynthesis). It is important to point out that plants have parts that are both above and below the soil surface.
Page 6-7	The squirrel has a vested interest in the growth of the tree. The soil, stream, and tree serve as the location or environment (habitat) of where the squirrel lives. Each interacts in a defined ecosystem.
Page 8 -9	As the leaves age and fall to the ground, they are still beneficial. Nature finds a use for all materials. Some animals may use them for shelter or to build homes. Others, like bugs who live in the stream, may eat some of the leaves that blow into the stream. Everything in the ecosystem interacts and

	is important, even aged leaves.
Page 10-11	Even in the winter time, the trees are still alive. Snow is a solid form of water.
Pages 12 - 13	When it gets warmer, the snow changes from a solid form of water to a liquid. The soil receives this water and supplies the roots of the tree for new growth of branches and leaves. With time, this tree grows larger and larger.
Pages 14-15	The squirrel continues to interact with the tree. It now uses the tree to climb upon and to see other animals at a greater distance. This was not possible when the tree was a small acorn.
Pages 16-17	The taller tree which was once The Little Acorn now is large enough to provide shade from the hot sun to the living things in the stream. As the text indicates, "all living things needed water, just like the tree".
Page 18	All living things need water. When water is not readily available, plants and animals adapt certain survival techniques. Animals like the squirrel can walk or run to a different area to find water but plants can not move to another environment. Large oak trees have large root systems which can search large areas in the soil for water. The "Getting Bigger Tree" was lucky that the squirrel planted him by the stream where water was available.
Page 19	When water from the stream flows it can be very strong and full of energy. The roots that have now grown where the soil and stream meet (river bank) help protect the soil. The process of wind and water moving soil to other locations is called erosion. Although erosion is a natural event, too much erosion would take the soil away from the roots of the tree. Keeping the soil in its place also keeps the water cleaner.
Page 20	As living things grow larger they need to have more water and food to maintain growth. Besides providing a safe place for squirrels to rest, large branches have many smaller branches that have many, many leaves. All of these leaves are excellent at collecting the sunshine and the many roots in the soil are excellent at gathering nutrients and water. A very large oak tree can now provide shade and shelter to many animals.
Page 22	With time, the oak tree that was once a small acorn is a fine place for the squirrel to bring his family descendants to live. Even though oak trees can live for over 200 years they can not live forever. To continue the cycle, the very big oak makes many Little Acorns so that other oak trees can live on the land.

This teacher guide was prepared as a supplement to The Little Acorn by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in Missouri. January 2009. The USDA-NRCS helps people help the land.

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