

This is an extract from *Peter and the Tree Children* by Peter Wohlleben, published by Piccolo Nero. <https://www.blackincbooks.com.au/books/peter-and-tree-children>

A NOTE FOR YOU BEFORE WE STEP INTO THE FOREST

I live in a forest in Germany, where I often tell stories to children about the animals and the trees.

Piet the squirrel is a real squirrel. Every day he scampers about in the tops of the trees growing around my forest lodge or in the meadow nearby. In winter, I put food out for him under an old pine tree, and in summer he plays with the other squirrels in the treetops.

The ancient beech trees with their children aren't far away, either. Behind my lodge, there is a preserve where the beeches can grow undisturbed. In this protected spot, no one is allowed to cut down any trees and it is always beautifully shady and cool.

I needed a special story for this book and I immediately thought of Piet. In this story, Piet is curious about families, since he doesn't have one of his own. He can't believe that even trees have families. He asks me to show him, and so we set out on our search for the tree children.

Are you ready to make the journey with Piet to find the tree children? Yes? Then I will begin the story.

We are lucky that Cale has painted absolutely wonderful pictures so you can see all the places we're going to visit. I hope you enjoy our adventure!

MORE ABOUT TREES AND THEIR FAMILIES

1. **DID YOU KNOW THAT TREES CAN TALK?** They use the "wood wide web" to send messages through a network of fungal threads that crisscross the forest floor. They also chat by "scent mail," releasing chemicals into the air to warn other trees to defend themselves by making their leaves bitter so caterpillars won't want to eat them, or by making themselves sticky so beetles can't get inside their bark.
2. **DID YOU KNOW THAT SOME TREES STICK CLOSE TO HOME, WHILE OTHERS LIKE TO SET OFF ON THEIR OWN?** Beech children grow slowly, deep in the shade of the forest protected by their mothers. Other trees, like alders, grow up fast and alone in open spaces, preparing the land for forest trees that might want to follow.
3. **DID YOU KNOW THAT LITTLE BEECH TREES HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL A STORM TOPPLES AN ANCIENT TREE BEFORE THEY CAN GROW TALL?** When the sun shines in through the open space, the little trees grow to fill the gap.
4. **DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO CUT DOWN TREES?** Before the invention of chain saws, two lumberjacks would stand at either end of a long saw and cut trees down by hand. Then horses would drag them out of the forest. Today, machines with long arms reach into the trees to cut them down and pile the trunks up so logging trucks can drive them away. But some people still prefer logging with horses because it is more in tune with the environment.
5. **DID YOU KNOW THAT A TREE IS AS IMPORTANT TO THE FOREST AFTER IT IS DEAD AS WHEN IT IS ALIVE?** As the wood rots away, all the nutrients it contains are returned to the forest to be used by the next generation of trees so they, too, can grow tall and strong.

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