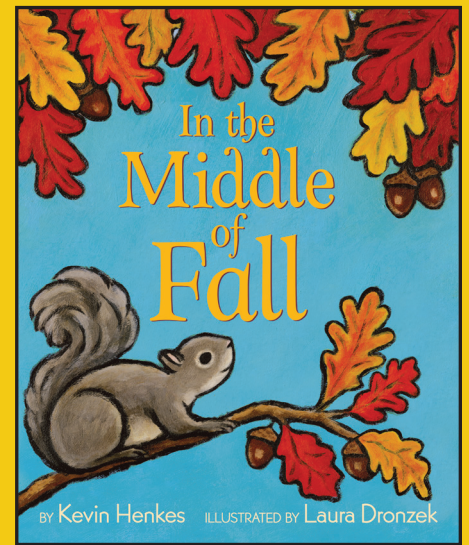




## ABOUT THE BOOK

Leaves turn, apples hang like ornaments, and the sky grows gray as children and animals alike enjoy the wonders of fall. Henkes uses striking imagery, repetition, and alliteration to teach basic concepts of language and the season, while Dronzek's gorgeous paintings illuminate the changing world. A beautiful companion to the best-selling *When Spring Comes*.



Interest Level: PreK-2  
Guided Reading Level: H  
Themes: Autumn, Seasons

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**KEVIN HENKES** is the author and illustrator of more than fifty critically acclaimed and award-winning picture books, beginning readers, and novels. He received the Caldecott Medal for *Kitten's First Full Moon* in 2005, and *Waiting* won a Caldecott Honor and Geisel Honor in 2016. Kevin Henkes is also the creator of a number of picture books featuring his mouse characters, including the #1 *New York Times* bestsellers *Lilly's Big Day* and *Wemberly Worried*, the Caldecott Honor

Book *Owen*, and the beloved *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. His most recent mouse character, Penny, was introduced in *Penny and Her Song*; her story continued in *Penny and Her Doll* and *Penny and Her Marble* (a Geisel Honor Book). Bruce Handy, in a *New York Times* Book Review piece about *A Good Day*, wrote, "It should be said: Kevin Henkes is a genius." Kevin Henkes received two Newbery Honors for novels—one for his newest novel for young readers, *The Year of Billy Miller*, and the other for *Olive's Ocean*. Also among his fiction for older readers are the novels *Junonia*, *Bird Lake Moon*, *The Birthday Room*, and *Sun & Spoon*. Kevin Henkes has been published by Greenwillow Books since the release of his first book, *All Alone*, in 1981. He lives with his family in Madison, Wisconsin.



Photo by Michelle Corpora

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**LAURA DRONZEK** is a painter whose work has been exhibited nationally. Her picture books include the acclaimed *Birds*, by Kevin Henkes; *Oh!*, by Kevin Henkes; *White Is for Blueberry*, by George Shannon; *Tippy-Toe Chick, Go!*, by George Shannon; *Moonlight*, by Helen V. Griffith; *It Is Night*, by Phyllis Rowand; and, most recently, *When Spring Comes*, by Kevin Henkes. She lives with her family in Madison, Wisconsin.



Photo by Kevin Henkes



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read the first page of the book. Ask the children, “When does this story take place?” “How do you know?”
2. Read the next page, which says “and the air is chilly.” Ask if the children know why the weather is becoming cooler.
3. Pause again after the page that says, “and the gardens are brown.” Ask what flowers are shown on that page, and what the mouse and the bird are doing.
4. Read the pages with “and the pumpkins are ready” and “the apples are like ornaments.” Discuss the life cycles of pumpkin plants and apple trees.
5. On the apples page, ask what the author means by “the apples are like ornaments.”
6. Have the children close their eyes and imagine they are outside as you read the pages: “it takes just one big gust of wind and all at once— / everything is yellow and red and orange / all over all around / right in the middle of Fall.” Ask the children to describe how this would feel, what it would look like, and what they would hear.
7. Read the pages: “But remember it because soon . . .” and ask the children to predict what comes next.
8. Ask the children what the author means by “very soon the sky will be white and empty.” Discuss what the squirrel is doing in the illustration.
9. Show the children the endpapers placed at the beginning and end of the book. Ask the children why they are different.



## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

**FALL FUN.** Discuss why the season of fall is a special time of year. Ask: “What activities can you do only in the fall?” Divide the class into small groups. Have each group make a “Fall Fun Activity Guide” to share with the rest of the class. You can provide them with a brochure template, or they can make their own. Have them write about and illustrate activities such as making leaf piles, jumping in leaves, picking apples, and carving pumpkins.

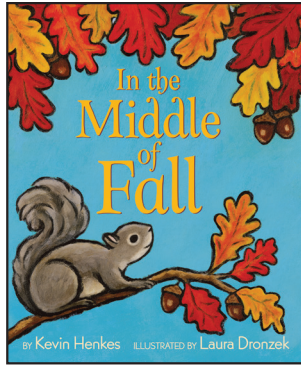
**WHAT’S MISSING?** Show the children a fall-related sentence that omits a word. Ask the children to determine the missing word. Some examples are: “I help my parents \_\_\_\_ leaves,” and “I \_\_\_\_ apples from the tree.” Children will use context clues to fill in the missing word. For younger children, you can do this activity together aloud, while older children can read the sentences and work independently.

**PRESENTING FALL.** Have the children use PowerPoint, Google Slides, or another presentation application to create a digital slideshow about fall. For example, children can write an autumn poem, digitally draw a fall picture, or use clip art to showcase the best things about fall. Children can work individually or in pairs. When the children finish, merge their slides to create a Fall Presentation to be shared with their parents or other classes.

**AWESOME AUTUMN.** Create a class word web about fall. Write the word “Autumn” or “Fall” in the middle of a chart. Then develop different categories with the children and connect them to the central word. Categories might include “Fall Colors,” “Fall Activities,” “Fall Weather,” and “Fall Holidays.” Under each category, children should suggest supporting words. Then, use a word cloud website such as Wordle or Tagxedo to input the fall words and create a word cloud. Print it out and have the children add a fall illustration to match the fall word cloud.

**PICK ME!** Henkes writes about apples and pumpkins in his story. Discuss foods that can be made with apples and pumpkins. Then have the children write about a time they went pumpkin picking or apple picking with their family or friends, or when they did something special with apples or pumpkins (e.g., carving pumpkins, baking apple pie, or cooking pumpkin seeds). If possible, plan a field trip to a local orchard.





## COMPANION BOOK ACTIVITIES

The following activities can be used to teach *When Spring Comes* as a companion book to *In the Middle of Fall*.

**WITH FLYING COLORS.** Henkes writes that “everything is yellow and red and orange” in the middle of fall. Discuss the unique colors that also dominate the other seasons. Children might suggest that winter is white and gray, while spring is green with colorful flowers, and summer is sunny orange and yellow, with blue and turquoise swimming pools and ocean waves. Give children a large piece of paper and have them create four boxes. They should label each box with the name of a season and draw a picture using the colors they think represent that season.

**IT'S THE BEST!** Ask the children to compare the four seasons. Older children can create a T-chart for each season, listing the pros and the cons, while younger children can do this as a class while you record their ideas. Then, have children select a season (older children should choose the one possessing the most pros on their list). Group the children by seasons they have selected. Have two teams debate which season is the best, while the other two teams observe. The debating teams should try to convince the observers that their season is the best. At the end of the debate, have the audience vote to see which team won. Then switch, so that the observing teams now have a debate while the other two teams are audience observers.

**ADOPT A TREE.** Choose a tree for the class to “adopt” and to observe throughout the year. Have the children keep a seasonal journal, starting at the beginning of the school year (summer). On each journal entry, they should record the date, the season, a description of what the tree looks like, and draw an illustration to match. Repeat this activity in the fall, winter, and spring. Discuss how the tree changes from season to season.

**IT'S ABOUT TIME.** Create a timeline of the months of the year. Directly beneath this timeline, create another timeline of the four seasons. Ask the children questions about each of the two timelines, and discuss when each season starts and ends. Point out that the summer season continues into September, and help students recognize which months each season spans.