



*The wind blows and the falling leaves
rustle past your feet, twisting
around your legs.*



Fall

Leaf

It is a cool and breezy day. The leaves dance on the ground, playing with the wind. You want to play too. You kick up the leaves as you walk. What a loud rustling they make as you swish and stomp through. They whirl, whirl around your feet. The piles invite you. You bend down to scoop up a bunch. So bright, so yellow. *Fly up, leaves!* They rain down on you, and you twirl with them. More, more scooping . . . and fly up . . . and twirl. You jump, you stomp, you scoop, you toss, playing with the leaves. And then you fall in a big heap. What a soft pillow for your whole body. You rest, looking up at the sky. How blue it is. And how yellow the leaves are, slowly falling down. You watch as one leaf twists and turns, falling and falling, and then lands right near your heart. Hold the leaf in your hand and admire the color, the lines, the shape. This is a gift for you.

Squirrel Party

It is a warm and sunny day. You are watching a squirrel. It is sitting on top of a pumpkin, sharp-clawed paws holding a piece and nibbling, tail curled and twitching. The squirrel finishes the last bite, looks around, and goes bounding for a tree, up, up. There is another squirrel going down, down. They begin to chase each other, around and around the tree. Then a leap and they go their separate ways. Several squirrels scurry around on the ground and in the trees. They are busy! Burying nuts, darting, dodging, so quick . . . leaping, chasing, looking, finding . . . then sitting for a moment. Break open a nut and eat the delicious meat inside. All the squirrels are doing this. It is a squirrel party. And you like to party too.

Puppy

It is a cool and sunny day. You are going for a walk before dinner. It is almost sunset. You keep walking. The path is easy—a forest floor, dirt mostly. The trees stretch above you, tall ferns to the side tickle your legs sometimes as you go. It is still. You keep walking. After a while you reach the forest edge. There is a steep slope leading down to a river. You look way down, and across. You notice the difference of this open space compared to the closed forest pathway behind you. *Oh! A puppy!* It jumps on your leg. You bend down to pet it and it licks your hand. A child is following the puppy. You both say hi and introduce yourselves. Then the child asks you if you would like to play at their family campsite. *Fun.* So you go with the child and puppy just around the bend. You sit by the fire, watching it flicker, orange and yellow. You hear this family talk and laugh. You have a joke to tell too. You stay for a bit, but then say your goodbyes and head back down the forest path. As you arrive at your own forest home, your family greets you. Dinner is just being set on the picnic table. You sit down and see next to you that the puppy has followed you. You sneak a treat and feed it to the puppy. The puppy turns and heads back home, tail wagging.

Sunflower

It is a chilly and sunny day. What a commotion! You hear birds chirping like it is a bird music festival. You peek outside your window to see. Brown birds, yellow birds, blue birds, black birds . . . they are all flying, looping, and landing on the sunflowers. It is a field of sunflowers right in your own backyard. The birds are having a harvest party! They know when the seeds are ready to eat . . . they smell them, they see them, and they know. They eat them! The seeds are oh so yummy and delicious as they snap open the shell and the rich and tender seed bursts with flavor. The birds sing, they eat, and they dance with each other, over and over, so happy for the fall feast. You watch, and you want some sunflower seeds too, but you stay your distance. You honor their place as first. You will have your sunflower seeds, perhaps tomorrow, when it is your turn, and if there are any left! You watch the dancing, chatting, eating birds a bit longer. And then you turn and walk to go back inside, the warmth of the sun on your back.

Spooky

It is a cool and windy day. You are walking home. The shadows from the setting sun are getting longer. The sky is orange behind the dark, blackened trees. The wind blows and the falling leaves rustle past your feet, twisting around your legs. Someone screams, then laughs. They are playing somewhere far off. A cat seems to be following you. You hear footsteps and someone runs past you. The squirrels hurry from tree to tree. It is getting darker. You begin to walk more quickly. You have just a bit farther to go. Then you see your home. It is dark. Is no one home? You stop to search for your key in your bag. Where is it? You feel a tickling on your hand. A spider! You jump. The spider releases its silk, dangling to the ground until it is free from you. You've dropped your bag. Is there another spider in my bag, you wonder? You stare at it. The bag seems to stare back. Deep breath. You quickly open the flap. Nothing. You look inside. Nothing. You carefully search for your keys again. There, you've got them. You grab your bag and head to your door. It is still dark inside. You slowly open the door with a creak . . . BOOOOOO! The lights turn on and your family giggles. They scared you good!

Bird Message

It is a cool and breezy day. You are wearing a hat. Your hands are in your pockets. You are walking along a path. The leaves crunch under your feet. You look up. The tree branches are bare and seem dark against the pale sky. You keep walking and walking. Notice the sounds all around you: the breeze whispers past; your footsteps softly thud on the ground; there is a tiny sound of an animal scurrying; the trees creak gently. And then, the wind gusts like a message. You stop. A pile of leaves swirl, and underneath, lying on the ground, is a small red bird. You go to it and it blinks at you. It is scared of you and tries to move its wings, but it is tangled in something wiry. You sing a lullaby to the bird. You begin to gently peel away the tangles. Once it is free, the bird lies there for a moment, looking at you. Then it begins to sing to you. It hops and stops to ruffle a bit, then uses its beak to smooth its feathers. It looks at you once more, then flies way up up up to a tree . . . then swoops down and away out of sight. You touch your heart with your hand and wave goodbye. You continue walking, whistling softly to the forest, telling all that you are a friend.

FALL ACTIVITY



*A finale of such bounty,
and with an explosion of intense beauty,
we surrender to the end.
It is fall. The sun shines less brightly,
and we hurry to enjoy the abundance.*

The activity for fall is to notice our blessings. We receive so much; it is necessary to be grateful. All we are is because of what came before us. Listen to the voices of your ancestors and acknowledge these special gifts. Consider your immediate past as well as your deep past. See all your family around you, those related by blood and those related by the heart.

I am in awe of the bounty of blessings given to me both today and from extending time past. Like my grandmother's laughter running through my blood, my

DNA. Her gifts are part of me . . . her laugh, her swift card playing, her applesauce, her cookie perfection, her grapevines, her organizational finesse, her practical quilt stitch, and so much more. We all have these memories, this special bounty, this supreme support. Our ancestors offer us a never-ending river of gifts.

Ancestral Tree

Consider the stories of an ancient tree. We often use the branches of a tree to represent how the individuals in a family are related. The tree grows as our families grow. The root system is as vast as our ancestral history.

1. Draw a tree including the roots.
2. Who came before you? These are the roots.
3. Who is your family now? This is the trunk.
4. What gifts have they bestowed? These are the branches.
5. How do you use/honor these gifts? These are the leaves?
6. How do you give thanks? This is the air and soil.