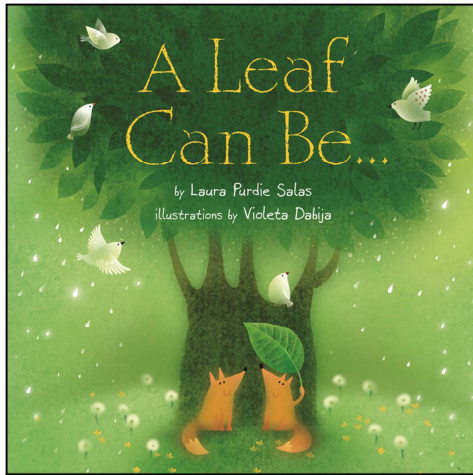


# A Leaf Can Be...

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**Story Summary:** A leaf can play so many roles! A leaf can be a ... shade spiller ... mouth filler ... tree topper ... rain stopper ... and more. Find out what leaves can be in this poetic exploration of leaves throughout the year.

**Laura Purdie Salas** is a poet and children's writer who has made all sorts of things out of leaves, like Barbie clothes, love notes, and necklaces. She lives and writes in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and she loves leaves in every season. Laura has written more than 100 books, including *Stampede!*

*Poems to Celebrate the Wild Side of School* and *BookSpeak! Poems About Books*. Learn more at [laurasalas.com](http://laurasalas.com).

**Violeta Dabija** lives in Moldova, a small Eastern European country. She has illustrated about 25 children's books and she enjoys creating magic pictures and unique environments for her characters. Learn more at [violetadabija.com](http://violetadabija.com).

**Pre-Reading:** If possible, go on a walk and look at leaves. Where do you see them? What are they doing? How are people or animals using them? Ask the class to brainstorm different things leaves can do or be used for. Start a brainstorming list on the board.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever seen an animal drinking water from a leaf? If you go outside in the early morning when there is dew on the leaves, you might see insects or other small animals sipping up the dew. Can you think of other ways animals might get water from leaves?
2. What kind of plants might give you welts on your skin? Poison ivy has a liquid inside its leaves that gives most people a rash. Some plants, like nettles and thistles, have sharp, stinging leaves. Have you ever gotten a rash or cut from a plant?

*Teaching guide for A Leaf Can Be...* (Millbrook Press), by Laura Purdie Salas.  
This guide can be found online at <http://tinyurl.com/7bqnb2u>.

3. Leaves are food for many animals, including humans. What's your favorite edible leaf: Romaine lettuce? Spinach? Kale? Did you know that some kinds of dandelion leaves are edible? Note: Never eat a leaf without checking with your parents first!



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4. Growing plants is one way to help planet Earth, since plants filter tiny bits of pollution out of the air. Have you ever grown a plant? What are the three things every plant needs to grow? (Soil, sun, water.)

5. Leaves are definitely useful, but they are beautiful, too. When do you think leaves are the prettiest? Have you ever picked a leaf up off the ground just because it looked neat?

### Response to Story:

**Language Arts: Be the Leaf!** Imagine that you are a leaf on a plant or tree. Pick one job that leaves do. Then, write about your job in a poem or a story. Write as if you ARE the leaf. For instance, if you want to write about your role as a “water ladle,” you might write a poem like this:

#### *Waiting Water*

I cup my edges,  
catch May rain  
and wait

wait

wait

until

a lizard  
steps on me  
flickers its tongue  
and gobbles  
my drops

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**Math: Measure Up** Have students measure the length of 10 leaves in inches and in centimeters. On a bulletin board or piece of paper, create a simple bar graph to represent the lengths of the leaves. Have students order them in 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> place, with the longest leaf being 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Science: The Leaf Cycle** Learn about the life cycle of a tree (for one example, see my book, *From Seed to Maple Tree*). Create a display of how trees grow (or do not grow!) during different seasons. Let kids write facts and draw pictures to represent each season.



**Reader's Theater: Put On a Show!** Assign each “leaf job” to a different student (there are 22 jobs total, like “soft cradle” and “water ladle”). Read the book through in order, with the whole class reading the three “A leaf is a leaf...” sections and each student reading and acting out an individual leaf. © Violeta Dabija, 2012

**Art: Classroom Tree** On a bulletin board, draw a tree with a trunk and branches, but no leaves. Create simple leaf templates on cardstock. Give each student construction paper to trace a leaf template on (or draw a freehand leaf). Kids write their name on the leaf and then decorate it. Encourage them to use any materials they like: buttons, feathers, tree bark, crayons, markers, aluminum foil, string—whatever inspires them. Staple all the leaves onto the tree to create a colorful and personalized classroom tree.

**Creative Thinking: List It Up!** Use the format of *A Leaf Can Be...* with other common objects. What can a box be? What can a puddle be? Do creative brainstorming and also factual research to complete your list.

#### **More Materials:**

**Book Trailer:** Watch the video at [http://www.laurasalas.com/nonfiction/nfbks/leaf\\_more.html](http://www.laurasalas.com/nonfiction/nfbks/leaf_more.html) (or <http://tinyurl.com/6qr8kcy>).

**Extras:** Find out how this book began, print out bookmarks, or read reviews of this book at <http://www.laurasalas.com/nonfiction/nfbks/leaf.html> (or <http://tinyurl.com/6od4bcu>).

**Projects/Lesson Plans:** There are tons of great leaf-related craft projects and experiments in books and online. Some of my favorites are at *Family Fun's* website (<http://familyfun.go.com>). Scholastic has great free lesson plans available in its Teachers area (<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers>).

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