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Painting Our Treescapes: A Visual

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Painting Our Treescapes: A Visual

Gretel Olson and Ingrid Olson

These two short pieces were created by Gretel and Ingrid (ages 6 and 9) after going for a wintry walk in Camrose, a city in central Alberta, Canada. Inspired by an afternoon spent in their urban treescape, this article represents their experience in-and-of these real and/or imagined spaces. Included are photographs taken on the walk, paintings that the children did after returning home, and narratives that the children told to one of their parents. The words, artwork, and photo selections are entirely those of the children, although their parents provided technical support.

MY IMAGINARY FOREST BY GRETEL (AGE 6)

Today I walked with my family around the lake in the city where we live. Sometimes in the summer we walk around the lake to get ice cream, but today the ice cream store was closed because it's the middle of the winter. Too cold for ice cream! When I was younger, my parents would carry me on our walks, but now that I am six-and-a-half, I can walk the whole way around the lake by myself.



Figure 1



Figure 2

I painted this picture (Figure 3) after we went for our walk today. This is a painting of an imaginary forest. It's the first snow of the year, so that's why there's no snow on the ground. There's snow falling from the sky. The leaves are still on the trees because in my imaginary forest it's not quite winter yet. It kind of looks like some of the snow is falling sideways. My mom thinks the snow in the sky looks like stars. I said that couldn't be because the sky isn't really dark. What if it was never night in the imaginary forest?



Figure 3

The trees in the forest must be about 20 years old because they are really tall and really thick. Probably some owls live in them. But I guess that would be a problem, because if it was never nighttime, then those owls would sleep all the time!

I really like my painting. I'm going to hang it on my bedroom wall so that I can always remember my imaginary forest.



Figure 4



Figure 5

OUR BIG, KNOTTY TREE BY INGRID (AGE 9)

Do you see that big, knotty tree? Second from the right. In real life, that tree is in my yard. I moved into this house with the tree when I was 7 and I have lived here for two years. Now I am 9. This tree is way older than me – it's over 100 years old. In the painting it's in a forest. I spend a lot of time in that tree, especially in the summertime. When I'm up there, I hear a lot of different kinds of music. Sometimes it's with my headphones and iPod, and sometimes it's music made by the birds and insects. Sometimes, I hear people talking as they walk by. I listen to their conversations without them even knowing that I'm there. Today when I climbed the tree, because it's the middle of winter, it was more difficult than in the summertime. It was tricky because the bumps I usually use to climb up were covered in snow.



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

I know I share that tree with a lot of living things. I'm not quite sure what made all those marks, but can you try to guess? Sometimes in the summer when I have a snack up there, the wasps come and try to share it with me. Yikes! I wish they'd leave my food to me!

I like to go on walks where there are trees, even if I can't climb them. I live in the middle of a city, but there are still lots of trees to enjoy. Today I went on a walk and saw a lot of beautiful trees, but none of them inspired me like my own tree. That's why I painted the big, knotty tree.



Figure 9

I spent a lot of time on the painting, and I tried to make it realistic. Do you think my painting looks like the real thing? I hope every kid, everywhere, can find a special tree to share. And I hope my tree will be around for at least another hundred years for a lot more kids to enjoy.



Figure 10

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Gretel Olson (she/her) lives in Camrose, Alberta (Canada). She likes reading, playing LEGOs with her sister, going for walks around the lake to get ice cream, and making funny faces. Her favorite food is spaghetti. Gretel is 7 years old and is in grade 2.



Ingrid Olson (she/her) lives in Camrose, Alberta (Canada). She loves to read, especially in her tree, and her favorite authors are Jim Benton, Raina Telgemeier, and Dan Gutman. She loves to play LEGOs, ride her bike, and bounce on her pogo stick. Her record is ~450 bounces. Ingrid is 9 years old and is in grade 4.