

The Giving Tree

- *Shel Silverstein*

Once there was a tree....
and she loved a little boy.
And every day the boy would come
and he would gather her leaves
and make them into crowns
and play king of the forest.
He would climb up her trunk
and swing from her branches
and eat apples.
And they would play hide-and-go-seek.
And when he was tired,
he would sleep in her shade.
And the boy loved the tree....
very much.
And the tree was happy.

But time went by.
And the boy grew older.
And the tree was often alone.
Then one day the boy came to the tree
and the tree said, "Come, Boy, come and
climb up my trunk and swing from my
branches and eat apples and play in my
shade and be happy."
"I am too big to climb and play" said the boy.
"I want to buy things and have fun.
Can you give me some money?"
"I'm sorry," said the tree, "but I
have no money."
I have only leaves and apples.
Take my apples, Boy, and sell them in
the city. Then you will have money and
you will be happy."
And so the boy climbed up the
tree and gathered her apples
and carried them away.
And the tree was happy.

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But the boy stayed away for a long time....
and the tree was sad.
And then one day the boy came back
and the tree shook with joy
and she said, "Come, Boy, climb up my trunk
and swing from my branches and be happy."
"I am too busy to climb trees," said the boy.
"I want a house to keep me warm," he said.
"I want a wife and I want children,
and so I need a house.
Can you give me a house?"
"I have no house," said the tree.
"The forest is my house,
but you may cut off
my branches and build a
house. Then you will be happy."

And so the boy cut off her branches
and carried them away
to build his house.
And the tree was happy.
But the boy stayed away for a long time.
And when he came back,
the tree was so happy
she could hardly speak.
"Come, Boy," she whispered, "come and play."
"I am too old and sad to play,"
said the boy.
"I want a boat that will
take me far away from here.
Can you give me a boat?"
"Cut down my trunk
and make a boat," said the tree.
"Then you can sail away...
and be happy."
And so the boy cut down her trunk
and made a boat and sailed away.
And the tree was happy
... but not really.



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And after a long time
the boy came back again.
“I am sorry, Boy,”
said the tree,” but I have nothing
left to give you -
My apples are gone.”
“My teeth are too weak
for apples,” said the boy.
“My branches are gone,”
said the tree. “You
cannot swing on them –”
“I am too old to swing
on branches,” said the boy.
“My trunk is gone,” said the tree.
“You cannot climb –”
“I am too tired to climb” said the boy.
“I am sorry,” sighed the tree.
“I wish that I could give you something....
but I have nothing left.
I am just an old stump.
I am sorry....”
“I don't need very much now,” said the boy.
“Just a quiet place to sit and rest.
I am very tired.”
“Well,” said the tree, straightening
herself up as much as she could,
“Well, an old stump is good for sitting and resting
Come, Boy, sit down. Sit down and rest.”
And the boy did.
And the tree was happy.

GLOSSARY:

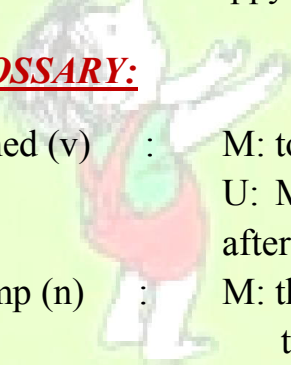
- Sighed (v) : M: took a long, deep breath
U: My mother *sighed* with relief when my brother came home
after the war.
- Stump (n) : M: the part of a tree trunk left protruding from the ground after the
tree has fallen.
U: When the tree was cut down, all that remained was the *stump*.

Note: M-Meaning;

U-Usage;

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ABOUT THE POET:



Shel Silverstein (1930-1999) was an American poet. Besides writing poetry, he was also a cartoonist, composer, lyricist and singer. His writings have been popular with both children and adults. He is well-known as a writer of children's fiction and comedy. His notable works are *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (1974), *The Giving Tree* (1964), *A Light in the Attic* (1981), and *Falling up* (1996).

ABOUT THE POEM:

The poem '*The Giving Tree*', as the name suggests, narrates the story of a tree which is an unconditional provider of all benefits to a boy. The tree does not expect anything in return from the boy. The poem thus emphasises the virtue of giving.

The poem narrates how the apple tree was able to fulfill the wishes of the boy at every stage of his life. As a young boy, the tree gave him apples to eat and its shade to lie down in, when he was tired after playing. As the boy grew older, he wanted money and the tree helped him by allowing him to sell the apples she bore. The boy became older and, as a man, yearned for a family and a house. The tree permitted him to cut her branches and construct a house. Later, tired of staying at one place, the man wished to travel to far off places. The tree complied with this wish too. She allowed him to cut her trunk and make a boat. Finally, after his long sojourn, the man returned to the tree. The tree had nothing left to offer him except her stump for the man to rest on. The man was happy to do that. The tree, which was unhappy whenever the boy had left her, is now filled with joy to have him back forever.

On the surface, the poem is a simple account of the love and sacrifice of a tree for a boy and the boy's exploitation of the tree. The poem however has deeper allusions to the unconditional love of a mother for her child and also of Mother Earth for mankind.