

# The Little Forester

by G. A. Skrebitski



1 Once in the wintertime I took a walk in  
the forest. It was very quiet, as it always  
is in winter. There was just an old tree  
creaking somewhere.

2 I walked along slowly, looking around.

3 Suddenly I saw a heap of pine cones  
on the snow. They had been opened,  
and they looked chewed up and tattered.  
Somebody had worked hard over them.

4 I looked up at the tree. But it was not a  
pine. It was an aspen! Pine cones don't  
grow on aspen trees. It looked as if  
someone had dragged the cones there.

5 I looked the tree over from all sides.  
On the trunk, not far above my head,  
there was a little crack. And in this  
crack a pine cone was stuck. It, too, was  
chewed and tattered, just like those on  
the snow.

6 I walked over to a tree stump and sat  
down. In a few minutes I saw a bird  
flying to the tree. The bird was black and  
white. He looked as if he were wearing a  
black cap with a red band on it. He was  
a woodpecker.

7 He flew to the aspen and settled on it.  
He landed on the trunk of the tree like a  
fly on a wall. With his sharp claws he  
hooked on to the bark. Then he propped  
himself up with his strong tail feathers.

8 He poked a fresh cone into the crack.  
Next he pulled the old one out and threw  
it away. Then he made himself as  
comfortable as possible. He propped

himself up on his spread-out tail and  
began to work on the cone. Soon he  
was pecking out the seeds of the cone  
with all his might.

9 He made short work of that one and  
flew away for another.

10 So that was why there were so many  
pine cones under the aspen!

11 The woodpecker liked the aspen with  
the crack in its trunk. He had picked it  
out as the place where he could work  
on his pine cones.

12 As I watched the bird pecking the  
cones with his beak, I thought how well  
it works out. The bird gets his fill, and  
the forest is helped too. Not all the  
seeds will land in his mouth. He will drop  
many. The seeds will fall on the ground.  
Some will die. But in the spring some  
will sprout.

13 I began to look around me. How many  
baby pines were sticking up through the  
snow? Who planted them—the  
woodpecker, other birds, squirrels?  
Or did the wind bring the seeds?

14 The tiny trees barely peeped out.  
They were hardly thicker than a blade  
of grass. But thirty or forty years would  
pass. And on this same spot a young  
pine forest would rise.

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## COMPREHENSION

**A** Choose the best ending for each sentence. Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 Another good name for this story is
  - a** The Trunk of the Aspen.
  - b** The Crack on the Baby Pines.
  - c** The Woodpecker and the Pine Cone.
- 2 The woodpecker used pine cones for
  - a** food in the winter.
  - b** nests for baby birds.
  - c** seeds to start forests.
- 3 The author knew the pine cones under the tree had been brought there because
  - a** he had read about it in a book.

**b** the tree was an aspen and not a pine.

**c** there were many baby trees sprouting.

- 4 Seeds become trees like
  - a** nights become days.
  - b** houses become homes.
  - c** eggs become chicks.
- 5 The woodpecker was called "the little forester" because
  - a** a forester uses cracks in aspens.
  - b** a forester plants and cares for trees.
  - c** a forester puts pine cones in piles.

## LEARN ABOUT WORDS

**B** Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 still; silent (1)
- 2 making a squeaking sound (1)
- 3 pile (3)
- 4 torn; ragged (3)
- 5 pulled; moved or drawn along (4)
- 6 held; supported (7)
- 7 thrust into (8)
- 8 start to grow (12)

**C** A word may have more than one meaning. Its meaning will depend on how it is used.

The *fly* buzzed around the room.  
The bird will *fly* to its nest.

Look at each word in **bold type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look back at the paragraph. Which meaning does the word have there? Write *a* or *b*.

- 9 **band** (6)
  - a** group of musicians
  - b** stripe; long, narrow mask
- 10 **trunk** (7)
  - a** main stem of a tree
  - b** case for carrying things

## THINK ABOUT IT

- D** untied = **un** + tied  
retied = **re** + tied

The letters *un-* and *re-* are called prefixes. A prefix is added to the beginning of a word. It changes the word's meaning. The prefix *un-* means "not." The word *untied* means "not tied." The prefix *re-* means "again." The word *retied* means "tied again."

Read each set of sentences.  
Choose the word in parentheses ( ) that makes sense. Write the word.

- 1 One pine cone was not opened.  
It was (reopened, unopened).
- 2 People study birds over and over again. Birds are (restudied, unstudied).
- 3 The woodpecker worked again on some of the cones. He (unworked, reworked) them.
- 4 In the spring the ground is not frozen. It is (refrozen, unfrozen).
- 5 I have not planted my baby pine tree. It is still (unplanted, replanted).

- E** Suppose you are going to write a report called "What Do Different Birds Eat?" Read each item. If it fits your main topic, write *Yes*. If it does not, write *No*.

- 6 Birds that live on insects
- 7 Birds that eat fish
- 8 Birds that are used for food
- 9 Birds that feed on fruits
- 10 Birds that live in forests