



Tales of our forests



Tales of our forests



Living in harmony with our forests

Forests have always nourished people's imagination, legends, mythologies and cultures. We find the symbolic connection between the life of a tree and the life of a human being in all European cultures. This anthology offers a fresh perspective on that connection, through poetry and prose from all European Union Member States. The texts are illustrated with children's drawings that give unique, colourful and very perceptive insights into how they see forests, and what they expect from us.

More than 9 000 children from 22 Member States sent us drawings in a competition entitled: 'What is the forest for me?', organised by the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development. We are very grateful to all of them for having helped the European Commission to understand how European children perceive and live with their forests, and to raise awareness of how important those forests are.

There are many types of natural forest types, forest cover, and forest ownership structures across the EU. Forests are among Europe's most important renewable resources and one of Europe's main sources of biodiversity. They help to regulate the climate, provide raw materials for us, food for wildlife, and offer tranquil places for us to go to escape from our urban lives. In other words, they provide and protect a huge range of ecosystem services for everyone. Forests are a key resource for improving the quality of life and creating jobs, especially in rural areas.

For a sustainable future, Europe needs its forests, and the forests need the support of the EU, especially its young people and children. Living in harmony with our trees and forests is an important part of our daily lives, and we need you to help shape how we use and treat this amazing, valuable resource for generations to come.



Hernán G., age 7.

The EU Forest Strategy identifies the key principles needed to strengthen sustainable forest management and improve competitiveness and job creation, especially in rural areas, while ensuring forest protection and delivery of ecosystem services. Sustainable forest management means using forests and forest land in a way and at a rate that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, without causing damage to other ecosystems.

The following texts have been selected with the support of the ministries responsible for forestry in EU Member States.



For more information on EU forests and the EU Forest Strategy, see
<http://www.ec.europa.eu/agriculture/forest>



Damian T., age 7.

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Belgium

'A tree, a life ...'

The tree was, for her, a source of harmony.
 During her walks, she admired this landscape ...
 Hundreds of trees all different from each other
 Were living there side by side,
 Forming a wonderful whole.
 This scene made her meditate on life ...
 The forest and the world resemble one another
 For their diversity makes them unique and magnificent.

She was there, in front of this tree,
 Among so many others,
 But it was that one which she had chosen.
 It was Her tree,
 And she had promised herself that nobody
 would cause it any harm.
 She saw more and more men
 Destroy this superb forest threatened by
 Stupidity, egoism and ignorance.

Everyone could reflect on that,
 And sit down under a tree, under her tree,
 Meditate and reflect in the light which pierced
 its branches,
 In its music of birdsong and wind ...
 This tree was her friend.
 ...
 This tree was very like her,
 They both overcame life and its trials.
 She had seen it with all its veins, its colours,
 its beauties.
 Whether in summer, in spring, in winter, in autumn,
 She admired it and each season made it more attractive.
 ...
 A tree, it's sacred!
 A tree, it's our roots!
 A tree, it's our future!
 A tree, it's our oxygen!

*Adapted from Julie Degée's 2005 poem
 'A tree, a life ...'.*

With the kind permission of the
 Athénée Royal d'Esneux.



Botond S., age 9.



Arianna G., age 9.

Bulgaria

The dream of a forest

Shh! Listen! She is crying bitter tears, weeping and sobbing quietly.
She tries to hide, shrouded in mist, gathering thousands of shadows inside.
Veiled in mystery by the spring wind, she sways her millions of hands.
She embraces the whole of Bulgaria. And her tears, purer than a child's
dream, mix with the melting February snow.

Shh! Listen to the silent weeping of the forest! Her coldness quickly vanishes.
She becomes kind, light, the good lady of the house.
In spring her dream comes true — to be a mother again.
In March under her branches snowdrops, crocuses, cornflowers are born.
She gently covers and protects them. The forest loves all her children,
the wolf, fox, wildcat, deer, hare and all those who live in her gentle embrace.

She cannot be a step-mother to any of them. She can only be a mother.
What could the dreams of a mother be? What could she wish for?
The only thing she strives for is to protect her children.
That is the dream of the forest. She wants to protect every beetle, every bird,
every child of hers. The forest is a source of freshness, life, tranquillity.
She has extraordinary powers. She protects the water we drink, purifies
the air we breathe, holds back erosion and landslides.

We should learn to lend an ear to the quiet weeping of the forest.
Maybe she is crying because of us.



Natalia V., age 9.



Eva G., age 8.

Czech Republic

The Green Man from the forest

The forest is reminiscent of the sea. It is vast, amorphous, the crowns of its trees undulating like water in the wind. The landscape of our country, which is far from the sea, has always been naturally wooded and people had to take land away from nature in order to grow crops and build places to live. They took this land from the forest. In former times, people were surrounded by forest to an extent that we can no longer comprehend; they feared it, exploited it and colonised it with various creatures. From time immemorial, therefore, it has been depicted by a symbol — on Gothic buildings we find a stone sculpture symbolising the forest, namely the demon-like figure of the Green Man. Of the forest as a whole, we see only one half since the other half is below ground.

The forest changes every day. Don't just go walking there, but look around and take in — I don't know how to express this — the breath, soul, language of the forest. Then all of a sudden you will feel that the forest has embraced you, that you belong together, that you understand one another, that there is absolutely no need to say anything to one another, that you can remain silent together and that you and the forest know what you are being silent about.



Emilija P., age 8.



Mariana C., age 7.

Denmark

The forest is so fresh and green

The forest is so fresh and green
Cuckoo!
With strawberries growing, and anemones
Cuckoo!
Notches carved in the bark of the tree,
Where, by moonlight, someone kissed me,
Cuckoo! Tra-la-la! Cuckoo!
Pleasant strolls in the moonlight,
Cuckoo!
And sunny strolls in the forest too,
Cuckoo!
The cuckoo's call tells me,
How many kisses and how many years,
Cuckoo! Tra-la-la! Cuckoo!
Don't let life get you down,
Cuckoo!
Remember, you're only young once
Cuckoo!
Anemones grow and strawberries grow,
And the cuckoo knows when and where.
Cuckoo! Tra-la-la! Cuckoo!



Aleksas S., age 9.



Ūla I., age 10.

Germany

The forest in German history: three insights

1713 — A book from Saxony changes the world

'*Sylvicultura oeconomica*' is the name of the thick volume in which Hans Carl von Carlowitz summarises for the first time the knowledge of his time about forests. Since many more trees are felled than can regrow, the idea occurs to him that only if nature is treated carefully can it be conserved for future generations. To this day, that is the principle of sustainability.

1812 — Mythically German — The forest in our soul

The Grimm brothers publish the first volume of their 'Children's and Household Tales'. In total they gather together more than 200 fairy tales. The forest is their most important arena. Without it our fairy tales and fables would be homeless.

1949 — The oak-planting woman: a memorial for 50 pfennigs

Gerda Werner poses as a model in the studio of her husband, a sculptor. A competition is being held to find a motif for the 50-pfennig coin which embodies the reconstruction of Germany. Werner designs an image of a young woman kneeling down and planting a small oak tree which wins the competition. The coin with the oak-planting woman remains in circulation for more than 50 years and reminds us of those women who helped with the reforestation of the plundered forests.



Gusté R., age 7.



Rusné M., age 7.

Estonia

The Estonian Forest

The forest is our home
The safest place of all
The forest is our shelter
Where no danger can befall

Underneath the seaside pine trees
We pitch our trusty tent
A smile on our faces as we slumber
In the stunning pine-tree scent

The quiet we hear in the forest
Is quieter than quiet can be
We play hide-and-seek in the forest
And build huts from the wood of the tree

The beautiful trails of the forest
Are forever in our memories engraved
How delightful it is to ski through
The forest with snow-fall paved

To recharge our weary cells
No place the forest can match
We pan-fry forest mushrooms
Our hearty forest catch

The steam of the sauna awaits us
After our bracing forest tour
And how do we heat up the sauna?
With wood from the forest floor

We pick blueberries in the forest
And delicious jams we make
We collect the forest's healing herbs
For every future pain and ache

The growing trees of the forest
We use our homes to build
We need the forest, and even afar
Our minds with the forest are filled.



Maria S., age 8.



Viktória P., age 8.

Ireland

Oh, how we miss the shade and shelter of the trees!

Long ago, Ireland was completely covered by trees and woods. And it is certain that the people of the land knew a lot about trees. One of the things that indicate this knowledge, and the kinship of spirit they felt with trees, is the fact that the ogham letters were named after trees (ogham was the writing system used by the Irish before the arrival of the Roman alphabet):

A (ailm) pine, B (beith) birch, C (coll) hazel, D (dair) oak,
E (eabhadh) aspen, F (fearn) alder, G (gort) ivy, I (iodha) yew,
L (luis) rowan, M (muin) thorn, N (nion) ash,
O (oir) gorse, P (peith) dwarf elder, R (ruis) elder,
S (sail) willow, T (teithne) furze, U (ur) heath.

The people had great affection for trees, and indeed many saints took the woods under their protection. Maybe it is thanks to Saint Kevin that Glendalough is still in its original state (it is a beautiful wooded sanctuary today), for Kevin forbade the people to fell or destroy trees:

'Kevin promised a short life, followed by eternity in Hell, to any one who burned green timber or decayed wood from that particular wood.'

However, as the years went by, the trees were felled. From the seventeenth century onwards the felling of the trees advanced rapidly. The poem Cill Chais is thought to have been written at the beginning of the nineteenth century:

*Now what will we do without timber?
The last of the woods have been felled ...*

Though the woods have been felled and Ireland's landscape is bare today, the placenames bear witness to their existence and thus they live on in our memory. Here are some examples from the four provinces:

'Thinned-Out Wood' (An Chreatalach), 'Plain of the Sacred Tree' (Magh Bhile), 'Hill of the Mountain Ash' (Cabhán an Chaorthainn), 'Oak Grove' (Doire), 'Yew at the Head of the Strand' (Iúr Chinn Trá), 'Ford of the Ash' (Áth na Fuinseoige), 'Holly Plain' (Maigh Cuilinn), 'Cattle Woods' (Coillte Mach), 'Town of the Ford of the Elder Tree' (Baile Átha Troim), 'Church of the Sloes' (Cill Airne), 'Road of the Little Oak Wood' (Bealach an Doirín), 'Land of the Yew Tree' (Tír an Iúir), 'Frontier of the Elder Tree' (Meathas Troim), 'Place Covered in Ivy' (Eidhneach), 'Mouth of the Ford of the Birch' (Béal Átha Beithe), 'Hillock of the Strawberry Tree' (Ard na Caithne), 'High Wood' (Fiodh Ard), 'River of the Black Oak' (Abhainn na Daraí Duibhe), 'Beech Mountain' (Sliabh Feá), 'Church of the Oak' (Cill Dara), 'Meadow of the Willow Tree' (Cluain Saileach), 'Ridge of the Mountain Ash' (Droim Caorthainn).



Ilham T., age 10.



José F., age 8.

Greece

The Myth of Erysichthon

Erysichthon, King of Thessaly, was notorious for his irreverence, pride, arrogance and greed. Desiring to build a magnificent Palace, he decided to chop wood from a nearby forest. He therefore set about recklessly chopping down the trees in the forest. Seeing the devastation he was causing on account of his greed, his subjects tried to persuade him that in pointlessly cutting down so many trees, he risked provoking the wrath of Demeter, the Goddess of Agriculture.

Erysichthon ignored their warnings, cursing both the trees and the Goddess Demeter. This made the Goddess so incensed that she decided to punish him by asking Limos, the Goddess of Famine, to make him constantly hungry, no matter what he did. Erysichthon started to suffer as he was unable to satisfy his hunger in any way, however much he ate. He soon started selling off his possessions to get money to buy food. In the end he was forced to sell his palace, his slaves and his beautiful only daughter. Finally, starving to death, Erysichthon devoured his own flesh and perished, **without ever satisfying his hunger.**

The moral of the tale:

This myth symbolises greed and the reckless exploitation of natural resources; it is a parable on how we live today, recklessly consuming far more than we actually need, and in so doing, robbing our children of their future and paving the way to our own destruction.



Francesca M., grade 4.



Natalia F., age 6.

Spain

'To a dry elm'

On the old elm, cleft by lightning
and half rotten,
with the April showers and May sun
a few green leaves have sprouted.

The hundred-year elm on the hill
lapped by the Duero! Yellowish moss
stains the bleached bark
of its decayed and dusty trunk.
It will not, unlike the singing poplars
that guard the road and riverside,
be home to tawny nightingales.
An army of ants in military file
climbs over it and, in its entrails,
spiders weave their grey webs.
Before you are torn down, Duero elm,
by the woodman's axe and before the carpenter
fashions you into a beam to hang a bell,
a cart shaft or a wagon yoke;
before you, tomorrow, burn red
in the hearth of some wretched
roadside hovel;
before you are uprooted by a whirlwind
and felled by the cold breath of the white mountains,
before the river drives you to the sea
down valleys and gullies,
elm, let me capture in my notebook
the touch of grace that is your verdant branch.
My heart, too, is waiting,
yearning towards light and life,
for another miracle of spring.



Fina E., age 9.



Rui V., age 7.

France

Sentimental education

'The light, in places lighting up the edge of the wood, leaving the depths in the shade; or rather, softened in the foreground by a kind of twilight, it spread out into the distance violet vapours, a white brightness. In the middle of the day, the sun, beating straight down on broad expanses of green, dazzled them, suspended silvery drops at the tips of the branches, lined the grass with streaks of emeralds, cast patches of gold onto the layers of dead leaves; by tilting your head back, you could see the sky between the treetops.

This mass of thick vertical lines half opened. Then, huge green waves rolled out in uneven bumps to the surface of the valleys where the tops of other hills advanced, dominating light plains, which were eventually lost in an indistinct paleness.

Upright, one next to the other, on some hill of the terrain, they felt, while breathing in the wind, them entering the soul like the pride of a freer life, with an overabundance of strength, a joy without cause.'



Violet B., age 8.



Maciej S., grade 3.

Croatia

The Forester

The forester
His forest knows,
It's where he works,
Where he calls home.
The forester
Is green of thread,
And green of thought.
A whistle through his fingers
Sends the owls
Flying high.
Tirelessly trailing
The forest's endless tracks
He checks: are the tree trunks all in line?
And the birds all in place?
And the deer, all alright?
Come winter and the forester's
The only green in sight.



Jacob C., age 10.



Liliana N., age 10.

Italy

New tales of Ancient Rome

The seven hills on which ancient Rome was founded could be differentiated by the trees growing on them, after which they were sometimes named.

A forest of laurels had grown up on the Aventine, the memory of which endured to the end of the Roman Empire in the streets named '*Lauretum Maius*' and '*Lauretum Minus*', respectively. The valley between the Aventine and the Palatine is said to have derived the name of *Murtia* from the myrtle that flourished around the altar of Venus Murtea. The Caelian, likewise, was called *Querquetulanus* on account of its oak forest (*Quercus* in Latin), and the Oppian, *Fagutalis* for its beech forest (*Fagus sylvatica* in Latin) ...

Given the woodland nature of the land on which Rome was built, it is no wonder that one of the first gods to be worshipped was Faun, whose prophetic warnings and mysterious voice the Ancient Romans imagined they heard from the depths of the forests.

There was also a tradition of worshipping the Bona Dea (*Good Goddess*), Faun's mythic bride, who was called Fauna.

However, the special protector of trees and forests, especially of pines and cypresses, was Silvanus; hence his epithet of *Silvanus dendrophorus*, the 'tree bearer'.



Ágnes F., age 10.



Elena G., age 8.

Cyprus

The Good of Trees

Would you like to see a place of beauty, where every step enriches you?
Go out into the fields, into the mountains and stop to gaze.
And wherever you see trees, go close to them
and see and comprehend the beauty of the earth.

And if you long for fresh, fragrant air,
Do not go to the seaside, rather go down there,
into the woods, to see the saplings,
and find fresh air perfumed by the trees.

And if ever the day comes that you fall ill, for your own good,
do not ask for a doctor to attend to you.
Rather than risking death at his hands,
better go into the woods for one week to get well.

How much good do they do us and how much do they give?
Green, shady and fragrant when in flower,
we benefit from their wood and more still from their fruit. Which is the lesser
good? Their lofty peaks, or their branches, which
we cut to tress our victor's wreath?
It even seems as if they bring us rain, wherever that comes from.

Blessed is he who has trees planted on his land,
like a parent whose children have turned out well,
he who put trees on his land and continues to plant them
finds comfort, lives and is provided for.

Kyriakos Karneras (1900 – 1986)
From the collection
'Complete Poetic Works'



Ugnė M., age 6.



Amanda M., age 10.

Latvia

On hot coals (excerpt from the book 'Our little hike')

I really love picking mushrooms, and have since I was a child. Picking mushrooms in the woods, I mean. Don't get me wrong, I'm keen on gathering them in the forest, too, but when I do that, I always go with somebody else, because I get lost straight away among any greater number of trees.

When I was a boy, I used to go on large collective mushroom-hunting expeditions. We headed out to hunt for them in two horse-drawn carts. Just about everybody in the Rimerji household sat in those carts together. Everyone took their baskets with them, of all different sizes. I can't remember whether it was Mum or Dad who suggested when the time was ripe to head for the woods, but we always managed to strike it lucky. Afterwards, we had all sorts of mushrooms that we could salt or dry. It was on these trips that I learned how to tell the difference between the mushrooms you could eat and those you couldn't.

Not far from the farm buildings was a little hill which was known as the 'Potato Hill' or 'Penny Bun Hill'; 'Potato Hill' because that was where we stored our potato crop, buried in the sandy soil, and 'Penny Bun Hill' because it was there, among little stands of trees, that from the beginning of summer until late in the autumn every now and again you could find penny bun mushrooms. Mum often used to nudge me, saying 'Why don't you pop along and get us some mushrooms, there's a good boy!'

So I popped over to the hill, took out the little pocket-knife I'd been given as a present and sliced off some penny buns, both large and small.

When the stove was burning, Mum put the mushrooms on a special grill with a long metallic holder. The grill had to be moved about while on the coals. When the mushrooms were nearly ready, any charred bits were scraped off. Then the mushrooms were put on a plate. Finally the little treats were smeared with cream and sprinkled with a little salt. Oh, what a feast that was!



Dominika P., age 9.



Ilona W., age 7.

Lithuania

‘To the Forest’

Let the forest rustle, murmur,

My green sister!

Let people

Offer her

A helping hand,

Let both young

And old

Be a friend to the woods.

The woods will stir,

The yellow wax of the blossom will be fragrant.

Love the forest!

That is all. No more need be said.



Hanien W., age 6.



Maria M., age 7.

Luxembourg

Fitbull

Beeches, oaks, little red men shine beside hedges. *Just shout into the forest. What should I shout then? You should shout your name. Steve. Shout louder! Steeeeee! Up and down and up and down. Can't you hear? No. Further. That's the echo. Further, further. What's an echo, Dad? Tracks, paths, green light, green shade: the fitness track is well signed. Go, go, go! I'm tired. What? Already? But you're only twelve. Keep fit, one, two, one, two, around the tree. You wanted to come with me. I'm thirsty, Dad! Breathe in deeply, break a little sweat, quite incidentally. I'd like a Coke, Dad! Train your belly, tighten your hips ... don't stand still! Now go! Run, as if drunk with sleep, let it all hang out ... Boy that's good! I'm hungry, Dad! Further, keep going further! And my feet hurt. Stop moaning! I can't keep going any longer, Dad! Suddenly: what's that damn pitbull doing on the jogging track? Why's it looking at us? Its small, piercing eyes aren't moving. Nor are we. Someone whistles: Are you coming? Like lightning. The great lump is gone. Onward now, slowly, very carefully. Much more slowly. You see, Dad. So you did have a break after all.*



Eszter M., age 9.



Dimas S., age 7.

Hungary

Dear Forest

I love the rustle of every tree
in your shadowy world of mystery.
When trouble or doubts torment me,
you guard my secrets loyally.
The secrets, the wishes of my heart
no grass lets slip, no tree gives out.
Be compassionate, kind forest,
Harbour the cheerless, give them rest.

I love the shade of each dark tree,
when the sun, it blazes glaringly.
When ill intentions injure me,
the forest offers recovery.
The struggle, the din of the many
is silenced by solitude's symphony;
in stillness, my eyes see nothing
but gentle blue skies looming.

Your arms that sway upon the breeze, they
enfold me when I want to be alone.
The trees are mischievous, they play
and jest with visitors who moan.
Whose mood their frolics do not lift
is dead while alive, as good as buried.
Who does not love you, dear forest,
has not yet rejoiced, not yet suffered.



Ana G., grade 2.



Levente S., age 6.

Malta

The Wood

The wood has turned my head ...
its song has slipped inside me
as the summer breeze slips between the trees.
Were I to cut a vein, it would be no surprise
if the drops of blood were green.



Martina P., age 8.



Goda D., age 8.

Netherlands

Reconnect with the forest

Can you still remember what it was like to be in a forest for the first time? I can't, but I do have something like an earliest memory of a forest. Before that I must have already played there hundreds of times without noticing. There is a moment when the childhood film of endless adventures in the forest just stopped and I felt like I was inseparable from the life around me, from the forest. I was the forest. And after that things simply carried on again: building huts, seizing the other side's flag, building dams in the stream ...

It is amazing how you can forget that. You go off to study and work, (at last) you have a salary which enables you to visit the forests of Asia. But while your eyes are directed at such faraway places, you know that you don't have to travel at all to experience the wonders of nature. You just have to be open-minded and Dutch forests (again) become an adventure. The American nature conservationist John Muir said: 'When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.' That's it!

I am in any case absolutely delighted to go walking again in the same forests where I used to play. In the early spring, for example. After all, what is more beautiful than a hill full of wood anemones in bloom?



Aida S., age 7.



Natalka D., age 7.

Austria

The tree

I drop down as new seed,
I don't yet have a name that's mine.
Then I will germinate, maybe into a spruce.
Do you too love poems that rhyme?

Soon I will be recognised as a small plant,
and called spruce, oak or fir.
Form needles, cones or leaves.
Out in the open in all weathers.

I grow into a tree.
That is the truth and not a dream.
Have a great influence on the climate.
Isn't that really great?

When I'm older I provide wood.
I'm extremely proud of that!
Become a table, armchair or bed.
Isn't that positively fine?

The shade of the leafy branches
Offers relaxation and peace for the guests.
I'm the animals' living room,
Many trees are their areas.

To also be of use to people
I want to protect them from mudflows and avalanches.
Regardless of the season
I'm always ready to serve you!

In short — woodland is a pleasure
And that's all!



Veronika P., age 9.



Natalia K., age 6.

Poland

Music of the virgin forest

Pianissimo

The first rays of the sun shine faintly
Through leaves shivering in the cold morning
They tickle grass hung with glittering dew drops
As it emerges slowly out of the shadows
A stag beetle perches on some rough bark
A snail pops its sleepy head out in search of food

Piano

An awaking bird chirps and flaps its wings
Somewhere high up in the canopy of trees
A frightened squirrel lets a nut fall from his grip
He snorts in anger, peeved at the loss of his treat
A tousled-headed pine quivers
Its cone casting ripe seeds out into the world
A hare's heart trembles, snapping a dry twig

Mezzoforte

Then an oriole sang melodiously
And a symphony sprang from the throats of birds big and small
An eagle owl cried 'hoot hoot' then promptly fell asleep
A cuckoo remained on the look-out

Forte

A woodpecker struck quickly and decisively
With the precision of a good surgeon
Its beak a snare drum
Hammering out time for the birds' morning chorus
The wind played a long *glissando*
Whistling and dancing in the branches
A bison brushed nobly against a tree trunk
and shook his head threateningly

Fortissimo

a bass voice rumbled like thunder far away
The rumble rose into the sky
Boomed out
And returned in echo to the forest
So that the whole sky trembled

And then, astonishingly, all grew quiet again

Maciej Henryk Modzelewski

Featured in the Seventh National Polish
Literary Competition
'The forest — my love'

Third Prize for a set of two poems in the
category children and young people 12–15
years of age.



Jan Z., age 9.



Wiktorja J., age 6.

Portugal

Over there, deep in the forest

Over there, deep in the forest,
a sound of sounds goes rippling through,
as if of faery revelry, a sound
that quickly fades away ...

It is unclear and yet distinct.
It seems, amid the grove of trees,
that when its ring has died away
a second sound is secretly born.

Illusion or reality?
Or nothing? What it shows, what there is
in a sound, is only distance
or what will never come to be.



Márta S., age 7.



Lóránt P., age 8.

Romania

Revisitation

— Forest, forest,
Tell me, how long has it been?
Between us stand countless years
And the footsteps flown from beneath my feet.

— Ah, as for me, I was here
Listening as the blizzards of winter
Tore branches, dammed streams,
Till my walks lay deep under snow
And no bird sang from my trees;
Unchanging I stood
As summer laments were disgorged
In my wellsprings, from the lips of the women
As the water washed into their pails.

— Forest, forest,
Suffused by still streams —
Time has passed outside it seems
And only you are younger.

— Ah, time is nothing
When my darkened ponds are lit with stars,
And in days of blooming as of withering
The wind's breath and the leaves' song
Are all about me,
And uncounted hours ebb and flow
As the Danube's tides wash into me.
So it is said: change comes only to man
Lost on dismal paths criss-crossing the earth
While we hold firm to this place
Now as before:
The sea with its rivers
The world and its wilderness
The moon and the sun
The forest and its wellsprings.

Mihai Eminescu (1850 – 1889)

„Convorbiri Literare”
[Literary conversations] —
1 October 1879



Fanni V., age 8.



Mila M., age 6

Slovenia

The forest

Fresh, lush and green,
Green and budding.
This is my home.
I walk down the path, trees showing the way,
Starting to sense paradise at play.

Fragrant flowers,
Babbling brooks,
Here I'm at home.
Underfoot stardust, the wind through my hair,
Eyes full of freedom, inspiration at hand.

The birds welcome me,
The bluebells announce:
'Yes, here's the place,'
It's the place I've always longed for,
A place that nature's given to us.



Skaistė D., age 6.



Julija J., age 6.

Slovakia

In my infirmity

Forests broad and forests gloomy
crowding the banks of the Váh,
now your capricious colours are
all covered in crystal snow!

Fires no longer spark and flash
over the wide hillsides there,
no grazing horses on your flanks –
just brooding forest alone.

But spring will come to you again,
May's soft arms will embrace you,
you will shed your snowy mass,
the grove will sigh with fragrance.

Then, only then, if I should live
I will come to you for rest.
I will unleash all my desires
and break into a sweet song!



Cintia S., age 9.



Richardas P., age 6.

Finland

The sowing of the forest

Then arose old Wainamoinen,
With his feet upon the island,
On the island washed by ocean,
Broad expanse devoid of verdure;
There remained he many summers,
There he lived as many winters,
On the island vast and vacant,
Well considered, long reflected,
Who for him should sow the island,
Who for him the seeds should scatter;
Thought at last of Pellerwoinen,
First-born of the plains and prairies,
When a slender boy, called Sampsa,
Who should sow the vacant island,
Who the forest seeds should scatter.
Pellerwoinen, thus consenting,
Sows with diligence the island,
Seeds upon the lands he scatters,
Seeds in every swamp and lowland,
Forest seeds upon the loose earth,
On the firm soil sows the acorns,
Fir-trees sows he on the mountains,

Pine-trees also on the hill-tops,
Many shrubs in every valley,
Birches sows he in the marshes,
In the loose soil sows the alders,
In the lowlands sows the lindens,
In the moist earth sows the willow,
Mountain-ash in virgin places,
On the banks of streams the hawthorn,
Junipers in hilly regions;
This the work of Pellerwoinen,
Slender Sampsa, in his childhood.
Soon the fertile seeds were sprouting,
Soon the forest trees were growing,
Soon appeared the tops of fir-trees,
And the pines were far outspreading;
Birches rose from all the marshes,
In the loose soil grew the alders,
In the mellow soil the lindens;
Junipers were also growing,
Junipers with clustered berries,
Berries on the hawthorn branches.

Extract from the *Kalevala*
Translated by John Martin Crawford
in 1888



Ana S., age 10.



Rasa O., age 7.

Sweden

High society and the forest

Turbulent world! You torment me.
Where is there stillness? There I'll wander.
Not everything the heart can wonder,
Can be answered by you, or by others.

I'd rather ramble in the woods
While the evening wind whispers through the leaves.
With my thoughts quiet, then I could
Still hear, through the sound of the murmuring trees.



Gabrielé D., age 10.



Astijus P., age 9.

United Kingdom

Heart of Midlothian

Jock o'Dumbiedykes gets advice frae his faither ...
'Jock, when ye hae naething else to do,
ye may be aye sticking in a tree;
it will be growing, Jock, when ye're sleeping.'

Extract from 'Heart of Midlothian',
one of the 'Waverley Novels' (1818)

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832)



Daniel T., age 9.



Sandra C., age 9.



Karolina D., age 6.

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Mía I. G., age 7.

EU Forests — Statistics

The European Union's forests and other wooded land cover around 180 million hectares, which is more than 40 % of our land area. On average, over recent decades, only roughly two thirds of the annual growth has been cut, so the amount of wood in the forest has been rising significantly.

The European Union currently contains 5 % of the world's forests, and our forests have been continuously expanding for over 60 years. This is in contrast to the global situation where the forest area continues to decline, which is having a negative impact on global climate and biodiversity. Countries in the European Union with the largest proportions of wooded area are Finland and Sweden, where approximately three quarters of the land area is covered with forests or other wooded land. Relatively high areas of wooded land per capita are recorded in Estonia and Latvia. Our least densely wooded countries are Malta, the Netherlands, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

For more information and statistics, see: <http://www.ec.europa.eu/agriculture/forest/statistics>

We find the symbolic connection between the life of a tree and the life of a human being in all European cultures. This anthology offers a fresh perspective on that connection, through poetry and prose from all European Union Member States. The texts are illustrated with children's drawings that give unique, colourful and very perceptive insights into how they see forests, and what they expect from us.



Franciska M., grade 1.