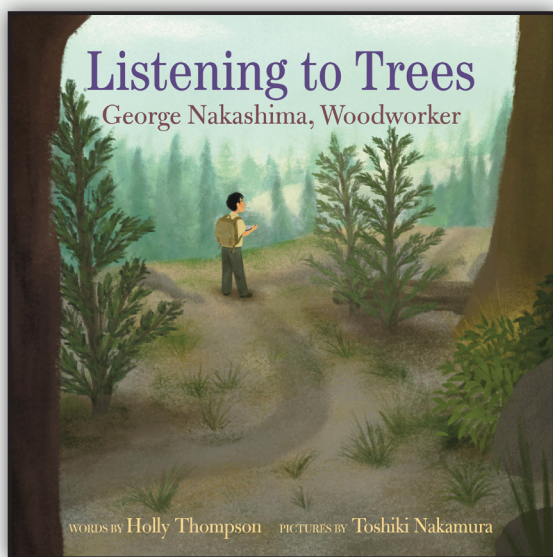


HOLIDAY HOUSE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



Neal Porter Books
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Listening to Trees George Nakashima, Woodworker

by Holly Thompson
illustrated by Toshiki Nakamura

ABOUT THE BOOK

A poetic and moving picture book biography celebrating the life and work of the visionary Japanese-American woodworker George Nakashima.

Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, George Nakashima began a love story with trees that grew throughout his remarkable life as an architect, designer, and woodworker. During World War II, George, with his wife, Marion, and their baby daughter, endured incarceration in Minidoka

prison camp, where he drew comfort from the discipline of woodworking. Once free, George dedicated the rest of his life to crafting furniture from fallen or discarded trees, giving fresh purpose and dignity to each tree, and promoting a more peaceful world.

Author Holly Thompson narrates Nakashima's life using haibun, a combination of haiku and prose, which twines smoothly through Toshiki Nakamura's earthy illustrations. A foreword by Nakashima's daughter Mira and robust back matter will deepen young readers' understanding of woodworking and poetry and offer added insights to the work of a master artisan.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Study the first double-page spread. Point out the timberline. Explain why George Nakashima is so at home in the woods. How does his love for the woods lead him toward the study of forestry? Nakashima also studied architecture. How did he use his study of forestry and architecture in his woodworking business?
- George Nakashima goes to Japan to work with an American architect in Tokyo. Note the photographs of his furniture at the end of the book. Discuss how his work in Japan influences his furniture designs.
- Describe the simple life that George Nakashima lives while in India. How does this simple life suit him? Explain why he is forced to return to the United States.



- How do George and his family endure racism, especially during World War II? Describe the prison camp where the Nakashimas were sent. How does George’s love for woodworking help him endure the camp? Discuss the new skills he learns from other men at the camp. Explain how the Nakashima family wind up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.
- Point out the home they built for themselves. What part of the design resembles Japanese architecture? How is his love of wood revealed in the book? What does “Listening to Trees” mean? Explain his belief in “giving noble trees new life.” How have his children carried on his love of wood and furniture making?

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.



ABOUT THE CREATORS



Holly Thompson is the author of two picture books in verse: *Twilight Chant*, an NCTE Notable Poetry Book, and *One Wave at a Time*, a story about grief and healing. Her picture book *The Wakame Gatherers* was an NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Book for Young People and featured in NCT Asia programs. *Listening to Trees: George Nakashima, Woodworker* is her first picture book with Holiday House. A graduate of the NYU Creative Writing Program, she writes poetry, fiction, and nonfiction for children, teens, and adults, and teaches creative writing in Japan, the U.S., and places in between. Learn more at HatBooks.com.



Toshiki Nakamura is an animator and children’s book illustrator. Born and raised in Japan, he moved to San Francisco right after earning a B.A. in politics. He graduated from Academy of Art University, where he studied concept art and visual development. He is the illustrator of *Listening to Trees: George Nakashima, Woodworker* by Holly Thompson. He lives in Kanagawa, Japan. Learn more at ArtofToshi.com.



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