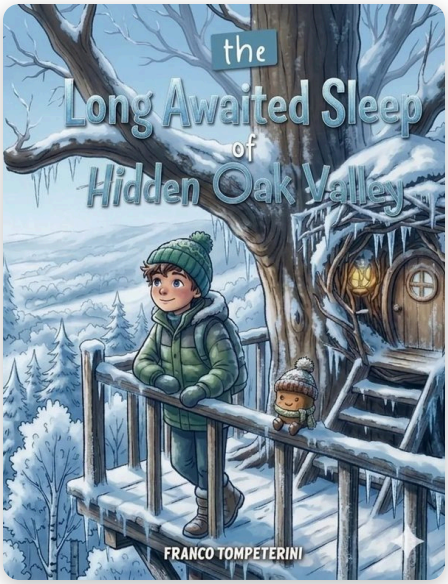


HIDDEN OAK VALLEY · BOOK 2 · WINTER

The Long-Awaited Sleep of Hidden Oak Valley

Teacher & Homeschool Guide

One crisp October morning, Hickory notices that everything is changing: the leaves are turning, his porch flowers are drooping, and the air feels different. With a question circled in his notebook, he sets out to learn how the trees, plants, animals, and insects of Hidden Oak Valley get ready for winter.

Best for: ages 9–12 (younger children can follow along as a read-aloud).
Plan: one week, about 30–45 minutes a day.
Free to print and copy for your classroom, library, or homeschool.

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Who's who in the valley

- **Hickory**: the curious nine-year-old who wants to know what happens to plants and animals in winter.
- **Mrs. Robin**: explains why leaves change color and how birds migrate.
- **Mr. Bear**: Hickory's newest friend, who explains hibernation.
- **Mrs. Mouse**: tells the story of the monarch butterflies, helps Hickory save his flower bulbs, and explains how trees survive winter.
- **Mr. Rabbit**: explains the water cycle and how snow helps the valley.

Discussion questions, chapter by chapter

Chapter 1: Something Is Different

1. What changes does Hickory notice when he steps onto his porch?
2. What question has Hickory written and circled in his notebook?
3. Why do the leaves change color in autumn? Where were the red, orange, and yellow colors all along?

Chapter 2: Getting Ready to Fly

1. What is migration? Why does Mrs. Robin fly south?
2. What two words does Hickory write after saying goodbye to Mrs. Robin? Why does he choose them?

Chapter 3: The Bear in the Cave

1. How does Mr. Bear explain hibernation?
2. What happens to a bear's heartbeat and breathing during hibernation?
3. What do many insects, like Hickory's ladybugs, do in winter?

Chapter 4: The Great Migration of the Monarch Butterflies

1. Why are the monarchs that fly south called a "super generation"?
2. How do monarchs find their way without getting lost?
3. Why do baby caterpillars need milkweed? Name the three ways we can help monarchs.

Chapter 5: What Happens Underground

1. Why aren't Hickory's flowers really dying?
2. Why do the bulbs in pots need Hickory's help, when bulbs in the ground do not?
3. What does Mrs. Mouse mean by "the promise the bulb makes"?

Chapter 6: The Water Cycle

1. Explain evaporation and condensation in your own words.
2. Why is snow a good "blanket" for plants and animals underground?
3. How does melting snow help the valley in spring?

Chapter 7: How Trees Survive Winter

1. What does a tree's bark do? What is the cambium?
2. How can tree rings tell a tree's age?
3. How do evergreen trees stay green through winter? Why does Hickory call them "the guards of the valley"?

Chapter 8: Getting Ready Together

1. Why does Mrs. Mouse say a little "messy" garden helps animals in winter?
2. How do Hickory and his friends help the birds that stay through winter?
3. Read Hickory's list of "Things I know about winter." Which one did you learn too?

Chapter 9: The Long Sleep and the Promise of Spring

1. How does the valley change on the night of the first frost?
2. What new question does Hickory have at the end of the book? What do you predict?

Big-picture questions

1. Hickory writes, "Everything in nature has a way of making it through the hard times." How can that idea help people too?

2. Which way of getting ready for winter (migrating, hibernating, storing, or staying green) would you choose if you were an animal or plant? Why?
3. Hickory answers his question by asking friends and writing in his notebook. How could you find an answer to a question you have?

Vocabulary

Word	What it means in the story
Photosynthesis	How green leaves use sunlight to make food for a plant.
Chlorophyll	The green color in leaves. When it fades in autumn, hidden colors show through.
Migration	When animals, often birds, travel long distances as the seasons change.
Hibernation	A very deep sleep through winter that saves energy until spring.
Dormant	Resting and slowed down, like insects under bark or trees in winter.
Generation	One family group of butterflies. It takes three generations to finish the monarchs' trip north.
Milkweed	The plant baby monarch caterpillars eat. It is their only food.
Nectar	The sweet liquid in flowers that adult butterflies drink.
Bulb	An underground package that stores a plant's life until spring.
Evaporation	When water turns into invisible vapor and rises into the air.
Condensation	When vapor cools and clumps around tiny bits of dust to form clouds.
Precipitation	Water falling back down as rain or snow.
Insulator	Something that keeps warmth in, the way snow covers the ground like a blanket.
Cambium	A thin layer under the bark where a tree grows every year.
Tree rings	Rings inside a trunk you can count to find a tree's age.
Evergreen	Trees like pine, spruce, and fir that keep their needles and stay green all winter.

Tip: have students keep a word list in a notebook, just like Hickory keeps his.

A simple one-week plan

Day	Read	Do
Day 1	Chapters 1–2	Take a nature walk and list everything that is changing. Collect fallen leaves and sort them by color. Start a notebook with one question about winter, like Hickory.
Day 2	Chapters 3–4	Make a chart: animals that migrate, hibernate, or go dormant. Trace the monarchs' route to Mexico and California on a map. Try the Cozy Hollow Hibernation Craft.
Day 3	Chapters 5–6	Look at a real bulb, or draw one, and label what it stores. Do the Ice Magic Water Cycle jar experiment and draw the three steps.

Day 4	Chapter 7	Count the rings on a tree stump or log slice (or a photo). Compare a deciduous twig and an evergreen sprig. Write: "Deciduous = ___. Evergreen = ___."
Day 5	Chapters 8–9	Make Hickory's Winter Feast pinecone feeders. Start the Winter Bird Count Chart. Write your own "Things I know about winter" list and one question about spring.

Nature-learning tie-ins

- **Bird watching:** use the book's Winter Bird Count Chart (cardinal, junco, chickadee, titmouse, blue jay, downy woodpecker, mourning dove, robin) over several weeks.
- **Help pollinators:** follow Mrs. Mouse's three steps: plant milkweed, grow colorful flowers, and avoid bug sprays that hurt friendly insects.
- **Leave it a little wild:** leave some seed heads and leaf piles in a garden corner and watch which birds and insects use them.
- **Weather and water:** track rain, frost, and snow on a class calendar and connect each day to the water cycle.
- **Bulbs:** dig up, dry, label, and store bulbs from potted flowers like Hickory, then replant them in spring.
- **Trees in winter:** compare a bare deciduous tree with an evergreen on the same walk.

Activities in the back of the book

- Winter Bird Count Chart
- Special Winter Edition Activity 1: Ice Magic Water Cycle Guide (an adult pours the hot water)
- Special Winter Edition Activity 2: Cozy Hollow Hibernation Craft
- Hickory's Winter Feast pinecone bird feeder (sunflower seed butter works for nut-free households)

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