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Champion: The Comeback Tale of the American Chestnut Tree

Maryn Wheeler

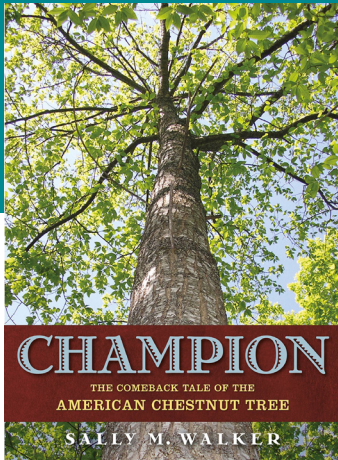
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Book Review

Champion: The Comeback Tale of the American Chestnut Tree

Author

Sally M. Walker

Illustrator

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Reviewer

Maryn Wheeler

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

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Pages

136

Year

2018

Publisher

Henry Holt and
Company

ISBN

9781250125231

The American chestnut tree is a giant among North America's eastern trees, in size and as a resource. It is useful for lumber, food, and tannin, used in tanning leather. In 1904, Hermann Merkel, a chief forester of the New York Zoological Park, discovered a blight or disease which almost wiped these trees out within fifty years. Through the efforts of scientists and volunteers, three methods, including backcross breeding, using a virus to combat the deadly fungus, and growing transgenic American chestnut trees, have been employed to help save this American icon.

This delightful book is jam-packed full of information. Sally Walker masterfully explains the importance of the American chestnut tree and the devastation of its endangerment. The efforts and methods to revive the species were described simply yet thoroughly for those with no scientific background. Along with the comeback tale, Walker teaches about tree anatomy, genetics, classification, and much more. Included in the back are appendixes, a glossary, a bibliography, an index, and source notes for each chapter. There are black-and-white photographs and captions throughout the book to help explain the processes, issues, side stories, and beauty of this tree. The middle also includes seven full-color pages with helpful photographs and captions. The American chestnut tree teaches us that comebacks are achievable and worth the fight.