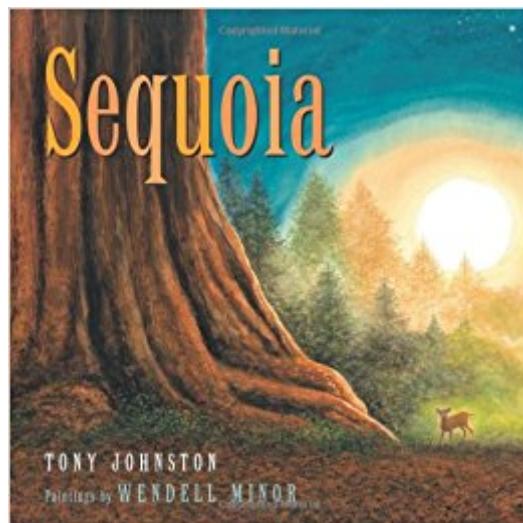


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# Sequoia



## Synopsis

Standing tall above the tree line, Sequoia stretches his ancient arms and gathers clouds to him. He watches as days, seasons, years pass by. His branches are home to owls and choirs of frogs. Beneath his broad canopy, a world grows. This is his story. Through controlled verse and luscious illustration, Tony Johnston and Wendell Minor do justice to the enormous figure of the sequoia tree. A Neal Porter Book

## Book Information

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Best Sellers Rank: #546,014 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #141 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Nature > Forests & Trees #2153 in Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry #7100 in Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

K-Gr 3  
In quiet, lyrical text, Johnston personifies a giant sequoia tree and brings it to life. Readers follow the tree through the seasons: "Summers, from his post above lower trees, he sniffs the breeze. Sometimes he feels the very heat, shimmering everywhere." Autumn, among shifting drifts of leaves, he feels a chill entering his bones." Minor's luminous gouache paintings successfully capture the grandeur of these trees with dramatic shifts in perspective, from standing at the base of the tree gazing up to perching near the canopy, looking over the forest. Numerous animals that make their homes among the sequoias are shown in the illustrations, but not all are mentioned in the text. Though this is more of a poetic introduction than a research source, a one-page note at the end explains the difference between sequoias and their coastal cousins the redwoods, identifies threats to the trees, and includes a helpful range map. VERDICT Teachers may

want to use this title to demonstrate the use of figurative language or pair it with Jason Chin's Redwoods (Roaring Brook, 2009) for a unit on California giants.â• Jackie Partch, Multnomah County Library, Portland, OR

â•“In quiet, lyrical text, Johnston personifies a giant sequoia tree and brings it to life.â•“A giant sequoia experiences the world around "him" in Johnston's romantic, image-laden, anthropomorphic rendering of the life experiences of the largest tree on the planet.â•“ Kirkus Reviews

This gorgeous picture book is on my Christmas shopping list as a gift for kids and adults. It's inspiring and beautiful. The paintings by Wendell Minor are luminous and evocative in a way that reminds me of the actual feeling of being close to these amazing trees. They have an energy and life all their own, and Wendell has captured that. This is the kind of book you want to pick up over and over.

I was really looking forward to seeing this book having spent a lot of time wandering through the giant sequoia groves in Yosemite National Park, Sequoia-Kings Canyon NP, and elsewhere in California. But I am so disappointed after having it in hand that I hardly know where to start. First and foremost, there is the significant factual error. The text describes and the art shows the presence of a wolf. Other than a recent visit by a collared wolf in the far northern part of the state where there are no giant sequoia groves, wolves have been absent from California (the only place giant sequoias exist in the U.S.) for many decades. Sadly children reading this book will falsely assume that wolves can be found in sequoia groves. I read a fair amount of nonfiction for children and to this reader, the anthropomorphic use of "He" throughout the book is jarring ("she" would have been just as bad...why not just "Sequoia"?). Six (!) uses of the phrase "his ancient arms" at various points in the text distracts from the flow when many other terms could have been used (twisted limbs, gnarled branches, etc.). The descriptions of the giant sequoia tree and the natural world in their groves could have been more poetical and imaginative in my opinion. Then there's the art. I've always admired Wendell Minor's art, but he missed the mark in this book by a wide margin. For one thing the perspective appears off in some illustrations, as an older giant sequoia tree is typically not much more than 30 feet in diameter. The two page sideways spread of the tree with a bear in front of it and the end papers at the back with two kids in front of a tree both make the tree appear far larger, relative to the animal or human, than it really is. Another illustration issue is that the trees are

conically shaped, like an upside down ice cream cone, only when they are young. The older tree depicted in this story should have a very gnarled look with limbs at different heights, of different sizes and shapes, plus much more rounded or irregular at the top. Over thousands of years, snow, lightning, and other factors damage the upper portion of these giants. Picky maybe but children who read this book, and the adults who buy it, expect to get a realistic view of the sequoia tree since these are not intended to be abstract paintings. It is so unfortunate that a well-respected author, illustrator, and publisher all had the opportunity to get a great book into the marketplace to fill an informational void. Yet not only did they come up short, they have produced some serious misinformation for our young readers. In the back matter they credit scientists and botanists who seem almost solely focused on coast redwoods (the tallest trees). I wonder why they didn't seek out a giant sequoia expert in one of California's national or state parks where most of our groves are located and protected.

Amazingly beautiful book! The poetry is beautiful and the illustrations stand out in every way. I admit that I'm a huge fan of the glowing, almost dreamy like illustration style of Wendell Minor. I've loved every book by him that I've ever seen so when I heard about this book I knew I had to get it. Minor shows the reader many different perspectives on this most magnificent of trees. He shows the canopy, individual branches, views of the trunk and the animals that live there. He even has a picture where the reader appears to be looking up at the tree from its base. The back end paper is especially powerful as it shows two children standing at the base of a sequoia, it provides the reader with a glimpse of just how huge these trees really are. The poem is beautiful too as it takes the reader through each of the four seasons through the experiences of one sequoia tree. The imagery is vivid and inspiring.

You can almost scent damp earth and pine resin in this delightful aggregation of the storytelling talents of Tony Johnston with the sumptuous illustrations of Wendell Minor. Between them they capture the sense of awe experienced by anyone who's seen these forest giants first hand. Insects, birds and bigger animals parade through the pages to make the point that huge as the sequoias are, they are merely part of a far bigger ecosystem, one that is imperiled, and damage to which risks consequences beyond the loss of a few ancient trees. There's a poetic quality to the text which is tinged with melancholy. Much has been witnessed, much has been endured, and yet it all may all be coming to an end. Minor's painting of fire raging through the forest has a savage intensity and his final spread of a sequoia reaching into a star-filled sky evokes feelings of wonder and fearfulness at

the fragility of life on earth. As a picture book for young children, or as an eco-tale for an older age group, it's a perfect present.

This homage to the giant sequoias of California invites young readers to imagine what it would be like to stand with one of these magnificent trees through the seasons. A stirring tribute to our state tree, with luminous illustrations and evocative poetry.

With painterly illustrations and poetic text, this rich picture book brings the mighty sequoia to the page. Children, ages 4-7, will want to look, listen and learn.

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