

In *A Tree For Me*, repeated words and phrases, rhyming words, and punctuation guide us as we read aloud. But sometimes it's hard to find the rhythm of a poem. Rhythms in our language are made by accenting the alternating syllables of words within a phrase. When Mary Poppins says Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, we can remember the word (and learn how to repeat it) by hearing the accented and soft syllables.

Su per cal i frag i lis tic ex pi al i do cious

You can clap your hands, tap your foot, or even sing along with the rhythm the syllables make. Look at the emphasized words in this excerpt from *A Tree for Me*, and try tapping your foot as you read aloud.

I **look**, look, **look** for a **tree** for **me**.
Big one, **small** one, **skinny** one, **tall** one,
old one, **fat** one, I choose **that** one.

Up I **go** to the **tippy** **tiptop**.
Uh-oh!
Oh, **no**!
Wait a minute. **STOP!**

I'm **mistaken**.
This one's **taken**.

Nearly every phrase in *A Tree For Me* is repeated. Once you've established a rhythm as you read aloud, it is easy to maintain because you don't have to learn a rhythm for new phrases. Just don't let the unrepeated phrases interrupt the rhythm! It might help you to think of the unique lines as if they were prose, not poetry. As you read, allow the unique lines of the poem to flow smoothly, giving a pause at punctuation, like a comma or a dash, or when you come to a rhyming word. Use the rhyming word or the pause to "restart" the momentum of the rhythm. For example:

By the pond, butterflies flit and flee
as I **look**, look, **look** for a **tree** for **me**.
Big one, **small** one, **skinny** one, **tall** one,
old one, **fat** one, I choose **that** one.

Or

One owl nesting,
golly gee!
No room for **me**
in **this** ol' **tree**.

Your final clue for finding the poem's rhythm is to look for rhyming and repeated words. In the above examples the red and blue words rhyme within each stanza. When you read aloud, the rhymes will guide you to emphasize the accented syllables that produce the poem's rhythm. Repeated words are often de-emphasized, acting as the "backbeat" of the poem.

Words in red and blue rhyme within each stanza. Words in purple are repeated words. Bold words indicate a good place to pause, and often come immediately before a comma.

All around the **hill** where the brook runs **free**,
I look, look, look for a **tree** for **me**.
Big **one**, small **one**, skinny **one**, tall **one**,
old **one**, **fat one**, I choose **that one**!

Up I go to the tippy **tiptop**.
Uh-oh!
Oh, **no**!
Wait a minute. **STOP!**

I'm **mistaken**.
This one's **taken**.

One owl nesting,
golly **gee**!
No room for **me**
in this ol' **tree**.

All along the **brook**, frogs peep, "Chip-**chee**!"
as I look, look, look for a **tree** for **me**.
Big **one**, small **one**, skinny **one**, tall **one**,
old **one**, **fat one**, I choose **that one**.

Up I go to the tippy **tiptop**.
Uh-oh!
Oh, **no**!
Wait a minute. **STOP!**

I'm **mistaken**.
This one's **taken**.

Two possums dangling,
golly **gee**!
No room for **me**
in this ol' **tree**.

In the **weeds**, grasshoppers fiddle diddle **dee**
as I look, look, look for a **tree** for **me**.
Big **one**, small **one**, skinny **one**, tall **one**,
old **one**, **fat one**, I choose **that one**!

Up I go to the tippy **tiptop**.
Uh-oh!
Oh, **no**!
Wait a minute. **STOP!**

I'm **mistaken**.
This one's **taken**.

Three worms crawling
golly **gee**!
No room for **me**
in this ol' **tree**.

By the **pond**, butterflies flit and **flee**
as I look, look, look for a **tree** for **me**.
Big **one**, small **one**, skinny **one**, tall **one**,
old **one**, **fat one**, I choose **that one**.

Up I go to the tippy **tiptop**.
Uh-oh!
Oh, **no**!
Wait a minute. **STOP!**

I'm **mistaken**.
This one's **taken**.

Four squirrels quarreling,
golly **gee**!
No room for **me**
in this ol' **tree**.

On moss-covered **rocks**, crickets chirp, "Chir**ree**!"
as I look, look, look for a **tree** for **me**.
Big **one**, small **one**, skinny **one**, tall **one**,
old **one**, **fat one**, I choose **that one**.

Up I go to the tippy **tiptop**.
Uh-oh!
Oh, **no**!
Wait a minute. **STOP!**

I'm **mistaken**.
This one's **taken**.

Five spiders spinning,
golly **gee**!
No room for **me**
in this ol' **tree**.

Deep in the **woods**, I hear a chicka**dee**
as I look, look, look for a **tree** for **me**.
Big **one**, small **one**, skinny **one**, tall **one**,
Old **one**, **fat one**, I choose **that one**!

Up I got to the tippy **tiptop**.
I **climb** and **climb** and do not **stop**.

No owl **nest**, no possums **rest**,
no inchworms **crawl**,
no squirrels at all,
no spiders **creep**-
-just me, **asleep**.

Chip-**chee**, chir**ree**,
fiddle **dee**,
Zeeeeeeee.