

***The Giving Tree* In-class Exercise (and Potentially Homework)**
ENGL 3820, Literature for the Young Child
Spring 2012

Over the last four decades, literary critics, teachers, parents, and children have debated the meanings inherent in Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*. As I mentioned in my lecture on children's poetry, Silverstein was part of a group of poets who called into question formal poetic conventions and didacticism in children's poetry. However, *The Giving Tree* is often cited as a highly didactic text.

Your job today is to try to come up with as many interpretations of the story as possible. Given that readers hold differing opinions about the text, your interpretations may end up contradicting each other. The key is that each interpretation you develop *must be supported with evidence from the text*.

For the purposes of today's assignment, I am going to suggest that you follow a template. Many of you may be quite familiar with writing literary interpretation, but even those experienced students usually benefit from the use of a template.

Here is the template that I would like you to use as you record your interpretations. I have provided space for you to develop two different interpretations of the text:

Interpretation One

Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* is a story about:

The evidence that we draw from the text to support this reading includes:

An argument against this interpretation might be:

Interpretation Two

Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* is a story about:

The evidence that we draw from the text to support this reading includes:

An argument against this interpretation might be: