

EPISODE 012

Why Do Trees Outlive Empires?

Published February 19, 2026 · Runtime 58:00 · Grades 7-12

Some California oaks were seedlings before the state had a name. We look at the biology behind that longevity, then ask what it does to the way you plan a life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Listen first, then work through these together. There are no answer keys.

- 01 A tree in your neighborhood was planted before anyone you know was born. Who does it belong to: the property owner, the neighborhood, or nobody?
- 02 Trees grow modularly, adding new parts instead of replacing old ones. Where in your own life do you build on what is already there versus start over?
- 03 Stewardship means caring for something you do not own. Name one thing you steward right now.
- 04 The people who plant trees rarely sit in their shade. What is something worth doing that you will not personally benefit from?
- 05 If you had to design something meant to last 300 years, what would you change about how you work on it today?

SHORT READING LIST

The Hidden Life of Trees <i>Peter Wohlleben</i> Accessible entry point on how trees communicate and share resources. Great for junior high readers.	Oaks of California <i>Bruce M. Pavlik and others</i> Field-guide style look at the oak woodlands that define much of the state's landscape.
Fire in California's Ecosystems <i>Edited by van Wagtendonk, Sugihara and others</i> Denser and more technical. Good for high schoolers digging into fire ecology.	The Overstory <i>Richard Powers</i> A novel, not a textbook. Fiction that raises the ethical questions we keep circling back to. Mature themes.

Where arboriculture meets faith, science, and the stewardship of California's living landscapes.