



Share

How did you read the tree's history?



Process

What do trees tell us about nature and the way it works?



Generalize

What other things around you have memory storage devices like trees?



Apply

How can "talking trees" be helpful to us?

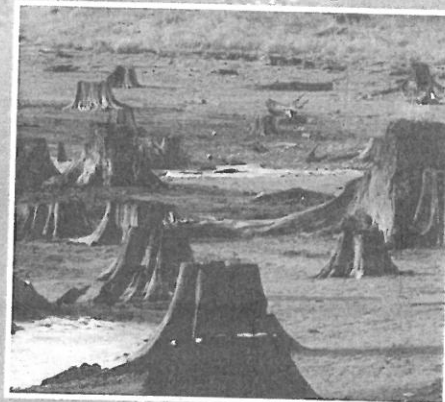


If counting rings on cinnamon rolls worked, how old would the average cinnamon roll be?

Rings of a Tree

Trees talk!! For each year of a tree's life, one ring forms in its trunk section. This ring has two parts. One part of the ring comes in the spring (the lighter colored part) called **spring wood** and one later in the growing season, **summer wood** (the darker colored part). These two parts together form a growth ring, which is laid down just under the bark each year. The width of each year's ring varies depending on weather and environmental factors. Drought causes slow growth and narrow rings. Abundant rainfall increases growth and results in wider rings.

Droughts do not typically last for more than several years, so many narrow rings together are likely the result of crowding from nearby trees. Forest fires, floods and insects also leave their mark on tree rings.



Dendrochronology means the study of tree rings. (Dendro means tree and chronology means system of measuring time). Reading tree rings can provide valuable historical information about local growing conditions over many years. To read a tree's rings, start from the middle (the oldest part of a tree) and count outward toward the bark.

Branching Out

1. Find a story on the Internet or in a newspaper about how a tree helped solve a mystery.
2. Practice reading tree rings on other trees and cross sections. Some are easier to read than others.
3. As a group project, dissect a dying or recently cut tree in your area and "read" its history.