

The Maple Leaves

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The wind had blown hard all night, and in the morning the whole of Sunny Square was covered in leaves. Red ones, yellow ones, brown crunchy ones, piled against every rock and every root, deeper than Mr. Monkey's knees.

Mr. Monkey stood under the Wishing Tree and looked up.

The big maple had been bare for weeks. But this morning, with leaves piled up all around his feet, Mr. Monkey really looked at it for the first time. All that was left on its branches were the wishes on their vines and the painted thank-you leaves, tied tight with two knots each.

"Mr. Moose," said Mr. Monkey. "The maple leaves."

Bruno was walking by with a honeycomb. He stopped. "The maple LEAVES?" He looked at the maple. "Where is it going?"

"No," said Mr. Monkey. "The maple's leaves are gone."

"It's GONE?" Bruno spun around. The maple was still right there. Bruno looked at it very hard. "When is it leaving?"

Mr. Monkey started to explain. Then he looked up at the bare maple again and forgot what he was going to say, because he was feeling sad.

"It gave away everything," he said. "Every single leaf. Now it doesn't have any."

Bruno patted the maple's trunk gently. "Bye, maple," he said. "Have a good trip."

"Hee hee," went Benji, peeking out from behind a root.

But Mr. Monkey didn't laugh. He looked at the maple, standing there all bare and cold in the wind, and it made his chest feel tight. The maple was the Wishing Tree. It held everybody's wishes and everybody's thank-you leaves. It held the low branch where he learned to hang by his tail. And now it didn't have a single leaf of its own.

"I'm going to give them back," said Mr. Monkey.

"Give what back?" asked Mr. Moose.

"Its leaves!" said Mr. Monkey. "They're right here. On the ground. I'll put them back on."

So he scooped up an armful of leaves and climbed into the maple. He put a leaf on a branch. It fell off. *Fwip*. He put another one on. It fell off too. *Fwip-fwip*. He tried pressing them on harder. He tried holding three leaves on with his feet, two with his hands, and one with his tail. Then the wind blew, and all six of them flew off at once and stuck to his face.

"Mmmf," said Mr. Monkey.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose. "You're wearing the maple."

"I need something sticky," said Mr. Monkey, peeling the leaves off his nose.

Bruno held up his honeycomb. “Sticky?”

“Bruno! Yes!”

So Bruno dipped each leaf in honey, and Mr. Monkey stuck them back on the branches. And it worked. Sort of. The honey leaves stayed on. And so did Mr. Monkey. When he tried to climb down, his hands stuck to one branch, and his feet stuck to another, and his tail stuck to a third.

“Mr. Moose,” he said. “I think I’m a leaf now too.”

A bee buzzed up, looked at all the honey, and landed right on the end of Mr. Monkey’s nose. Mr. Monkey went very cross-eyed.

“Hello,” he whispered to the bee.

“Haw haw haw!” boomed Bruno from below. The bee flew off. Mr. Moose reached up very gently, pulled Mr. Monkey loose, one hand and one foot at a time, and set him down in a pile of leaves, where he got a lot more leaves stuck all over him.

Mr. Monkey sat in the leaf pile, sticky and leafy, and looked up at the maple. It still had only a few honey leaves. And they were already sliding off.

“It’s not working,” he said quietly. “The maple gave everything away, and I can’t give it back.”

Mr. Moose sat down next to him and thought about it. Why did the maple drop its leaves? It did it every fall. It did it last year. It did it the year before that. Nobody made it. It just did. And every spring...

Mr. Moose looked around at all the leaves on the ground. Where did they go? They didn’t just sit there. He thought about the little oak, standing all alone in its ring of stones, with nothing but its five small leaves to keep it warm.

“Mr. Monkey,” said Mr. Moose slowly. “I don’t think the maple’s leaves are lost. I think they’re just going somewhere new.”

“Where?”

“Down here,” said Mr. Moose. He stuck his nose deep into the leaf pile. “Feel how warm it is under the leaves?”

Mr. Monkey put his hand down into the pile. Deep down, under all the crunchy top leaves, it was soft and warm and a little damp, like a blanket.

Benji hopped over. “My burrow is under a pile of maple leaves,” he said shyly. “It’s the warmest place in the whole woods in winter.”

Mr. Moose looked over at the little oak in its ring of stones. Its five green leaves were shivering in the wind. And all around it, the ground was bare.

“The maple’s leaves are a blanket,” said Mr. Moose. “Maybe the maple is giving them to everybody else.”

Mr. Monkey jumped up so fast that two leaves fell off his head. “Then let’s give some to the oak!”

Mr. Moose pushed big soft piles of maple leaves along the ground with his nose, like a plow. Mr. Monkey carried armfuls, and Bruno carried really big armfuls, and Benji showed them exactly how to tuck the leaves around the bottom of the little oak, nice and thick, but not on top of its own five leaves.

When they were done, the tiny oak stood in its ring of stones with a cozy brown blanket of maple leaves all around its roots.

Benji put his paw on the leaves. “Warm,” he said.

Late in the afternoon, Orion woke up at Pilgrim Point and looked down. “Hoo,” he said. “The maple has given away every leaf it had. Last year too. And the year before that.”

“Does it ever get anything back?” asked Mr. Monkey.

Orion fluffed his feathers. “What do you think comes back in the spring?”

Then he tucked his face into his wing, and Mr. Monkey and Mr. Moose looked at each other.

“Leaves?” said Mr. Monkey.

“New ones,” said Mr. Moose. “Every year.”

Mr. Monkey looked up at the bare maple, with its wishes and its thank-yous hanging on the branches. He wasn’t sad anymore. He picked up one big red maple leaf from the ground, a perfect one, and put it in the basket. Then he tied a twig to it.

“This one’s for the maple,” he said. “For giving away every leaf, every year.”

“And the twig?”

“The twig is the whole cold winter,” said Mr. Monkey. “With no leaves.”

Mr. Moose looked at the maple, the same maple his family lived under, the one with all his growing lines on it. He had never once thought about it being cold.

As they walked home, Bruno stopped under the maple and looked up at it one more time.

“Bye, maple,” he said, waving. “See you in the spring.”

The maple didn’t go anywhere. It just stood there.

“Haw haw haw,” said Bruno, to himself, because he still thought it was leaving.

“What a day!” said Mr. Monkey. “The maple leaves, and Bruno thought it was going on a trip. I tried to put its leaves back with honey, and I got stuck, and a bee sat on my nose. Then we gave the leaves to the little oak, so it has a blanket for winter.”

Mr. Monkey whistled, and Mr. Moose hummed, and together they sang:

*We are better together,
Moose and Monkey forever.*

And in Sunny Square, the bare maple stood tall in the cold moonlight, while all around its roots and all around the little oak, its leaves kept everybody warm.

Let's Talk

- 1 The maple gave away every leaf. Where did the leaves go?
- 2 What is something in the world you didn't make and couldn't make, that you're glad is there?

Your Turn

The maple gives its leaves every year, and no person makes that happen! There could have been nothing there, but instead there is a tree. Draw one good thing you're glad is here, like the rain, the sun or the river.



Instead of nothing, there was _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE



What do you call a bee that can't make up its mind?

Crack Sammy's code! Find each picture in the key and write its letter on the line.

A _____ !

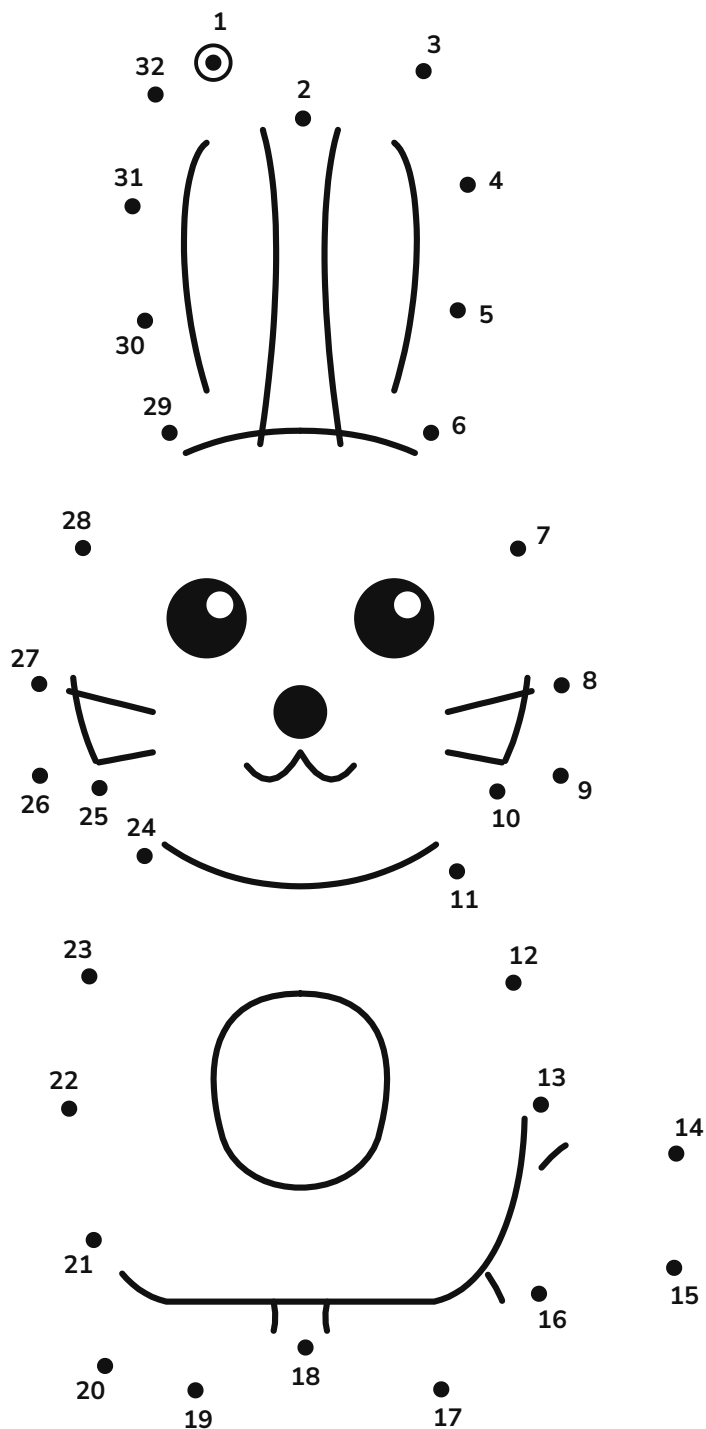


KEY



Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find a friend who loves a warm leaf pile. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 32. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Dab, Dab, Dab

 got a pot.

Up, up, up! Dab, dab, dab!

 sat in it. Can  sit up?  can not!

A bug is on .

 and  get .

PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Monkey  Mr. Moose  Bruno



Color a star each time you read it.

♥ My Thank-You

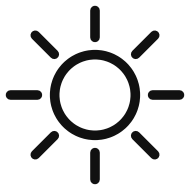
Trace the dotted words. On the line, write or draw a good gift that nobody made. Then read it out loud!

Instead of nothing

there was

👁 Instead of Nothing

Find these good things nobody in your house made. Check each one!



light coming in
a window

☐

water

☐

something that
grows

☐

the sky

☐

a sound from
outside

☐

food that grew

☐