

Too Busy to Swing

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The sun came out bright and cold over Sunny Square, and the frost on the grass melted into a million tiny drops that sparkled like spilled sugar. From under the Wishing Tree came a sound: *crinkle-crinkle-twist. Crinkle-crinkle-twist.*

It was Ricky. He was sitting in the middle of an enormous pile of presents. There were presents wrapped in maple leaves, presents wrapped in birch bark, presents wrapped in big floppy cabbage leaves from Munching Meadow. Some were round. Some were lumpy. One was wiggling a little, which turned out to be a beetle who had wandered in and couldn't find the way out.

"Ricky!" called Mr. Monkey, swinging down. "Want to come swing on the river vine? Your vine? The one with your knot?"

"Can't," said Ricky, not looking up. *Crinkle-crinkle-twist.* "Have to make extras. Rule four. Nobody gets left out."

"How many extras?"

Ricky counted with one paw while he wrapped with the other. "This is number eleven. I need twelve. One for anybody who forgets theirs."

"After twelve can you swing?"

Ricky yawned so big his whiskers stretched. "After twelve I have to check them all again."

Mr. Monkey went to the river vine alone. He swung out once. *Wheeee.* It wasn't as fun without Ricky. He came back.

Ricky was still wrapping. His eyes were droopy. He had wrapping on his ears. He had a leaf stuck to his tail. He had been wrapping since before the sun came up, and he had missed breakfast, and now he was missing the best swinging day of the whole fall.

Mr. Monkey felt it, the same tight feeling he had at the Slow Supper. Ricky was spending his whole day on everybody else. His whole Saturday. And nobody had even noticed but Mr. Monkey.

"Mr. Moose," said Mr. Monkey. "Ricky's spending his whole day."

Mr. Moose looked at Ricky, who was trying to tie a vine around a present and had accidentally tied it around his own paw.

"Then maybe we can't stop him," said Mr. Moose slowly. "He's doing it so nobody gets left out. But maybe we can make it go faster. If we all help, he finishes sooner. Then he gets the rest of his day back."

"A wrapping party!" said Mr. Monkey.

So Mr. Monkey called everybody. Bruno came. Dottie came. Hazel came. Sammy zipped in and zipped out and zipped back in. And they all sat down around Ricky's pile to help wrap the last present, number twelve, which was a fat, round pinecone that Ricky had painted red with berry juice.

"Okay!" said Ricky. "I need leaves. I need vines. And I need a ribbon."

Dottie's ears shot straight up. "A RIBBIT?"

"A ribbon," said Ricky.

But Dottie was already gone, bounding down to the river. A minute later she came trotting back, very proud, with a little green frog sitting on top of her head.

"RIBBIT," said the frog.

"I found one," said Dottie. "Where should he go?"

Everybody looked at the frog. The frog looked at everybody.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Dottie got a ribbit!"

"Ha! Ha!" Dottie laughed too, and the frog bounced up and down on her head. "Is it the right kind?"

"It's a good ribbit," said Mr. Moose, laughing. "Froggy Doggy."

The frog hopped off and sat on the present like a king on a throne. Ricky started wrapping, and he very nearly wrapped the frog too, but it hopped off just in time. *Ribbit*.

Then it was Bruno's turn to help. He picked up a big maple leaf in his big paws, very carefully, and wrapped it around a present. Then another leaf. Then another. He wrapped and wrapped, going around and around, until he looked up and realized he wasn't wrapping the present anymore. He had wrapped his own arm, all the way up to the elbow.

Bruno held up his leafy arm. "Is this a present?"

"Rule fifteen," said Ricky, without even thinking. "No presents that are Bruno."

"Haw haw haw!" Bruno laughed, and the leaves fluttered off his arm.

Sammy zipped through, grabbed a leaf, and wrapped it around herself like a cape. "Hey! What did the wrapping paper say to the present?" She zipped away. She zipped back. "I've got you COVERED!" And she was gone again, leaf cape and all.

Hazel helped by holding the vine with her teeth while Mr. Monkey tied it. Mr. Moose helped by holding the present very still between his front hooves. And Ricky did the knot, his best one, the one that never slips.

And then, at last, number twelve was done.

Ricky sat back and looked at the pile. Twelve presents. He looked around for the next thing to do. But there wasn't a next thing. It was only the middle of the afternoon, and the sun was still high and warm.

"I'm done," said Ricky. He sounded surprised.

"Now you can swing," said Mr. Monkey.

"But I have to check them all again," said Ricky, reaching for his list. "Twelve times."

"We'll check them," said Mr. Moose. "You go."

"I'll count," said Bruno proudly. He pointed at the presents one at a time. "One. Two. Three. Lots. Lots and lots. A WHOLE BUNCH." He looked up. "There are a whole bunch."

Ricky's mouth twitched. Then his whiskers twitched. "*Hi-hi-hi-hi!*" That's exactly right," he said. "A whole

bunch."

He looked at the river vine. He looked at his pile. He looked at the vine again. Then he stood up, stretched his whole body out long, and ran.

He grabbed the vine, his vine, the one with the knot he tied, and swung out over Rainbow River. Out and back. Out and back. Higher and higher. And at the very top, he let go and splashed into the cold water. *KER-SPLOOSH*.

He came up spluttering. "COLD!" he shouted. "It's SO COLD!" And then he was laughing, a raccoon giggle, *hi-hi-hi-hi*, and he swam back and did it again.

Mr. Monkey swung right after him. Then Bruno, who didn't swing so much as slide down the bank holding the vine, *shhhhhloop*, into the water. Then even Mr. Moose took a turn. This time he held on with his teeth, swung out very low, and dipped his whole nose in the river on the way past. He came back with a mouthful of water and a surprised fish on his chin, which slid off, *plip*, and swam away.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose. "Hello, fish."

Later, back at the Wishing Tree, they all sat in the sun to dry. It was time to paint the leaves for friends.

Mr. Monkey painted Ricky's face on the front, with his little mask and his clever paws. On the back, he painted Ricky in the middle of a giant pile of presents, with a leaf stuck on his tail. "Instead of swinging," Mr. Monkey said quietly as he painted, "you made presents for everybody, so nobody gets left out."

Shiloh painted one for Ricky too. Tessie painted one for Bruno, for the ride on his head. Benji painted one for Hazel, who always waited for him at the end of the meadow.

Mr. Moose painted one for Daddy Monkey, for fixing Dottie's den roof in the rain. And they tied them all to the Wishing Tree, faces out, secrets in.

Ricky found his own face on the trunk. He didn't try to peek. He just looked at it.

"Somebody made one for me," he said.

"Two somebodies," said Shiloh, very softly.

"What a day!" said Ricky, before anybody else could say it. "I made twelve presents. Dottie brought a frog instead of a ribbon. Bruno wrapped his own arm. Sammy told a wrapping joke and ran away with a cape. And I got to swing on my vine, and it was so cold!"

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

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

And down at the river bend, Ricky's swinging vine swung slowly back and forth over the water, all by itself, still dripping.

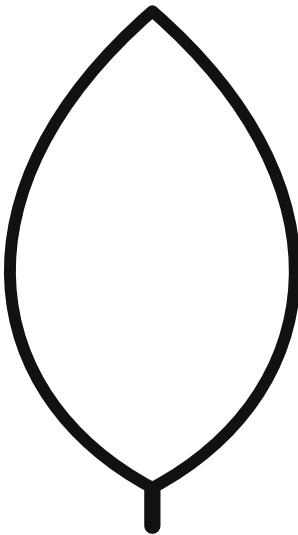
☁ Let's Talk

- 1 Ricky spent his whole Saturday wrapping. How did his friends give him some of it back?
- 2 Who outside our house gave up time for you?

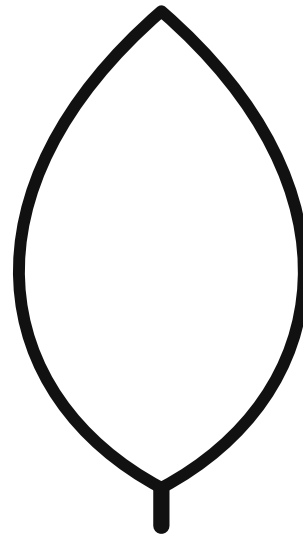
✎ Your Turn

Plan a leaf for someone outside your house. Front: their name. Back: draw what they gave up.

FRONT: THE NAME

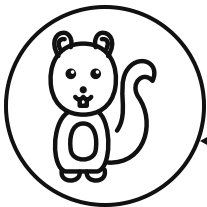


BACK: THE THANK-YOU



Make a real one: with a grown-up, hold plain paper over this page against a sunny window and trace both leaves. Cut them out, glue them back to back, and save it for your family's Thanks Giving Tree.

SAMMY'S JOKE



What do frogs do with paper?

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

_____ ! Rip it!

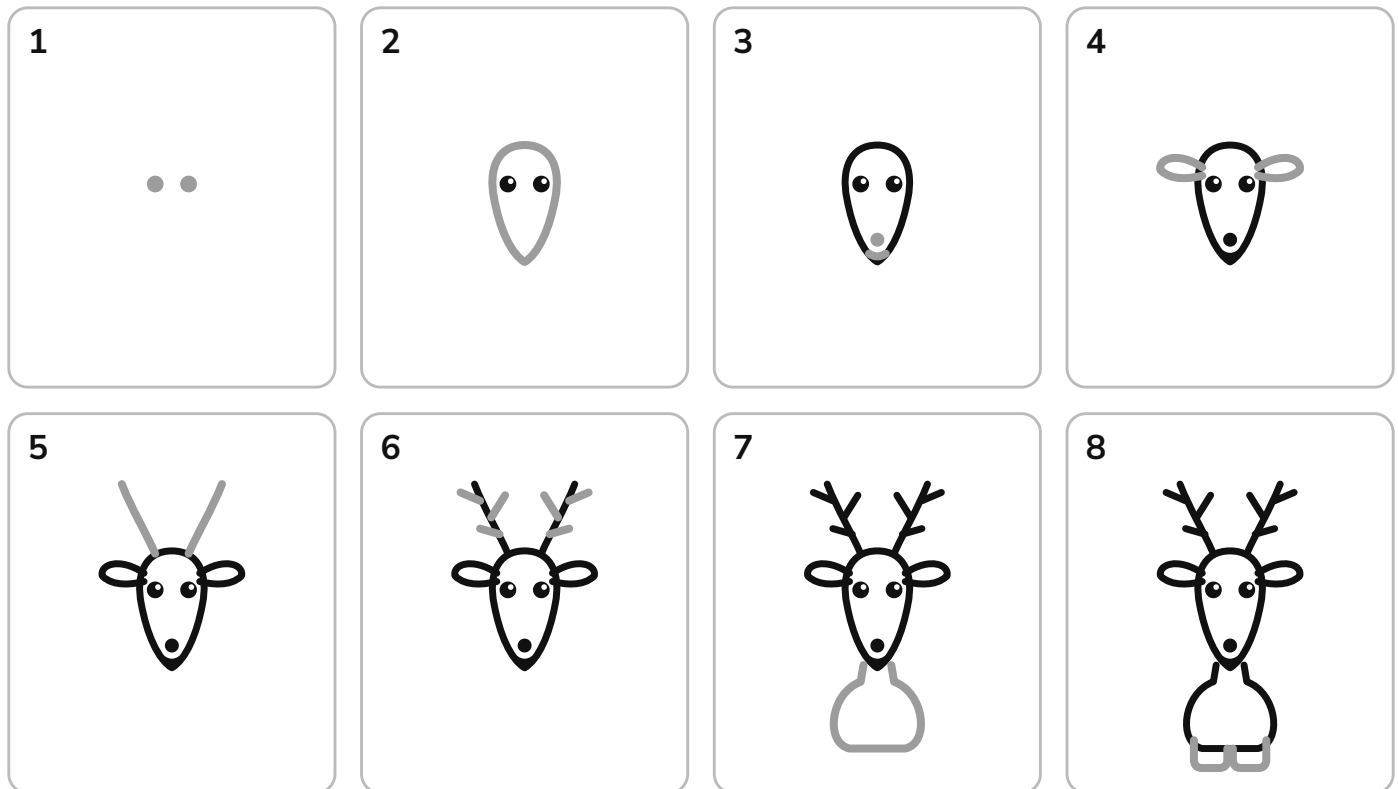


KEY



 Draw the Silent Stag!

The gray parts are new. Draw them in!



MY SILENT STAG

Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Ten Gifts

 sits in a pit of gifts.

“Is it fun?” said .

“It is not fun,” said . “I must do gifts and gifts and gifts!”

 sits. Gift, gift, gift...

Gifts, gifts, gifts!

 and  skip and dip in!

PICTURE WORDS  Ricky  Mr. Monkey

For grown-ups: New words to learn by heart: of.



Color a star each time you read it.

♥ My Thank-You

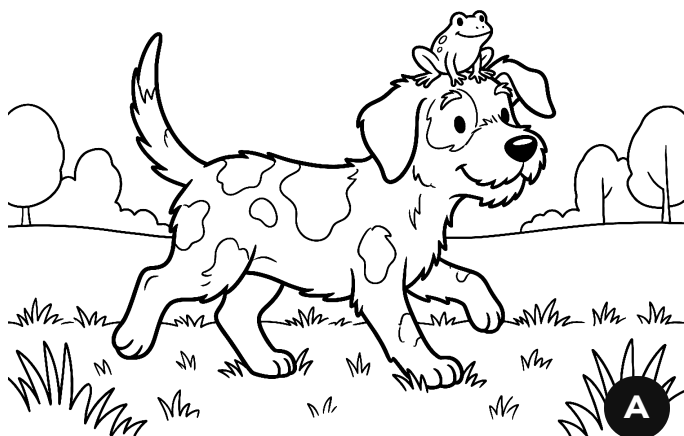
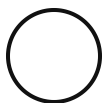
Trace the dotted words. Write their name on the line, or draw a tiny face. Read it to them!

Thank you.

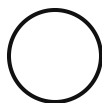
for making me feel valued.

📋 What Happened First?

Write 1, 2, 3, 4 in the circles to put the story in order.



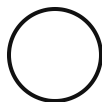
A



B



C



D