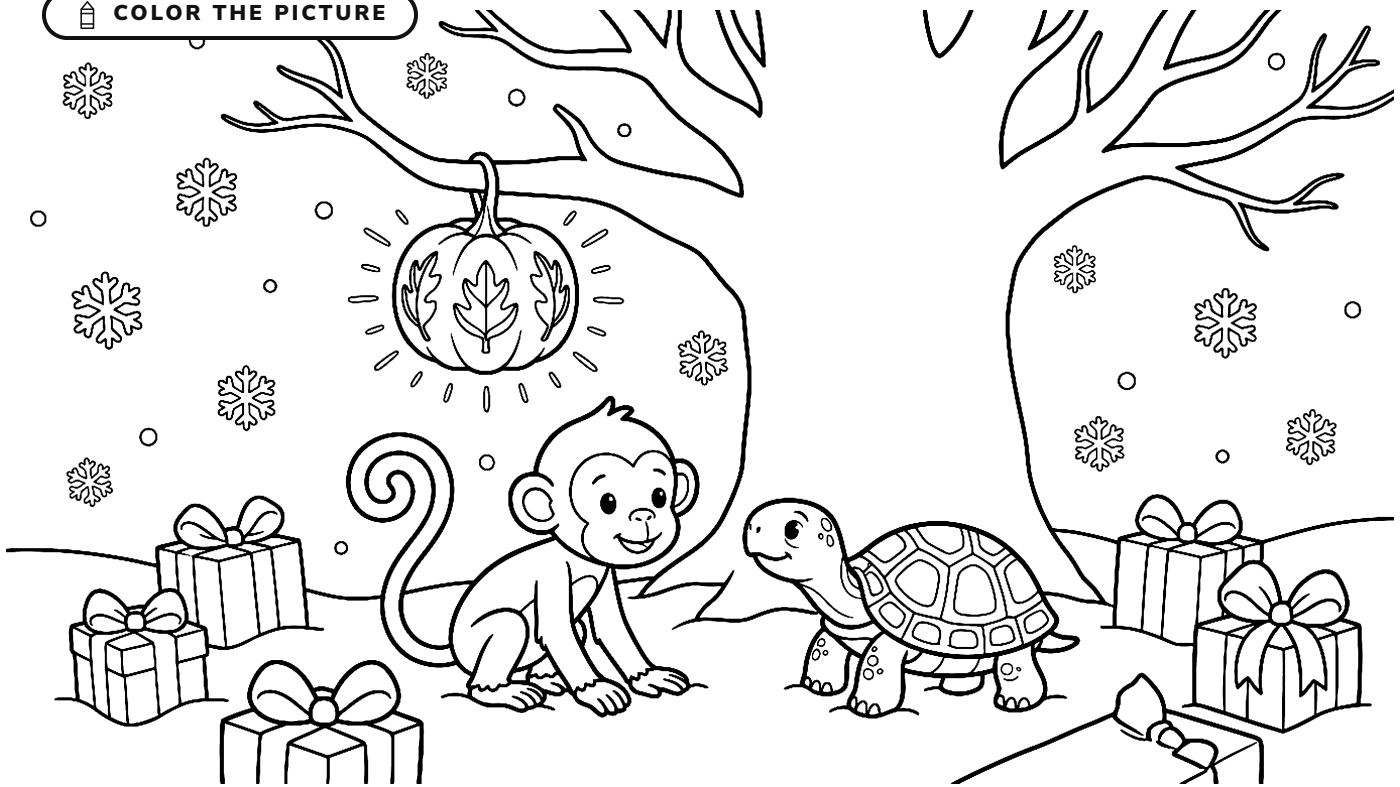


The Slowest Thank-You

COLOR THE PICTURE



It was a soft, snowy Sunday in Wonderful Woods. Big lazy flakes drifted down over Sunny Square, landing on the Wishing Tree, on the squash lantern glowing on its branch, and on all the presents still scattered around in the snow.

Tessie was still there.

"Tessie," said Mr. Monkey, "when are you going home?"

Tessie thought about it for a long time. "Oh," she said. "I'll start... soon. Maybe... by spring."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey.

But Tessie wasn't sitting by the fire this morning. She was sitting at the foot of Pilgrim Point, the giant old pine, with her head tipped all the way back, looking up at the high branch where Orion slept.

"Tessie?" said Mr. Moose. "What are you looking at?"

Tessie was quiet. Then she said, very slowly, "A thank-you... I never said."

Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey sat down in the snow beside her.

"When I was very small," said Tessie, "smaller than an acorn... I slipped off a rock into Whispering Water Way. The water was fast. It rolled me over and over... and carried me away." She closed her eyes. "Then something swooped down out of the sky. A young owl. He scooped me right out of the water... and set me down on a big, flat, warm rock."

"Your rock!" said Mr. Monkey. "Your sunning rock!"

"My rock," said Tessie. "I've sat on it... ever since."

She looked up at Orion's branch again.

"I never said thank you. First, I was too little. Then, I was too shy. And then..." She was quiet for a long time. "And then it had been so long... it felt too late."

"How long?" whispered Mr. Monkey.

"A long... long... time."

Mr. Monkey felt it in his chest, big and warm and hurting all at once. Tessie had been carrying her thank-you around for longer than almost anybody in the whole woods had been alive. Longer than his mama. Longer than the big maple, maybe.

"It's not too late!" he said. "It's NOT. You have to tell him!"

"He's... up there," said Tessie. "And I'm... down here."

Tessie decided to try climbing. She put one front foot on the trunk of Pilgrim Point. Then she thought about the next foot. She thought about it for a long time.

Mr. Monkey went and helped Mama Moose shovel snow. He came back.

"How far did you get?"

Tessie looked up at the trunk. "One... step."

"Heh... heh... heh," she laughed, very slowly, at herself.

Bruno came over to help. He picked Tessie up very gently in his two big paws and held her up over his head, as high as he could reach, standing on his tiptoes.

"Higher," said Tessie.

Bruno climbed up on a stump and held her up again, wobbling.

"Higher... please."

Bruno looked up at Orion's branch, way, way up in the top of the pine. Then he looked at Tessie. "I'm not tall enough," he said. "I'm only one Bruno."

Mr. Moose was thinking. He remembered the leaf with no name, and how they had sent it all the way to the top of the Wishing Tree. A long vine. Over a high branch. And somebody pulling, slow and steady, at the bottom.

"Mr. Monkey," he said slowly. "What if Tessie goes up the way the sunrise leaf did?"

Mr. Monkey's eyes went wide. "In a BASKET!"

Mr. Monkey climbed up Pilgrim Point with a long vine, all the way up to the branch right next to Orion's, and threw it over and down. Daddy Monkey brought his biggest basket. Ricky tied the vine to the handle with his best knot, the one that never slips. Tessie climbed in, very slowly. And Mr. Moose took the other end of the vine in his teeth, with Bruno right behind him, holding on gently, and they walked backward across the snow, one slow step at a time.

The basket rose. Up past the bottom branches. Up past the snow on the needles. And as it went, it began to turn, slowly, around and around.

"Wheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee," said Tessie.

It was the slowest wheee anybody had ever heard. It lasted all the way past the middle of the tree.

"Hee hee hee... SNORT!" went Hazel, watching from below.

Mr. Monkey was climbing up beside the basket to make sure Tessie was okay, when the vine caught his tail. It wrapped right around it, and up he went too, hanging upside down underneath the basket, spinning slowly around with Tessie.

"Mr. Moose," he called down, upside down. "I'm going too!"

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose, through the vine in his teeth, and he kept on pulling, slow and steady.

Then the basket stopped. It hung in the air, gently swaying, right in front of Orion's branch, with Tessie in it and Mr. Monkey dangling underneath.

The afternoon was getting late, and the snow had stopped. Orion opened one golden eye. Then the other. There, right in front of his branch, was a turtle in a basket. "Hoo?" said Orion.

Tessie looked at him. She took a long, slow breath.

"Thank you," she said. "For pulling me out... of Whispering Water Way. When I was very small."

Orion didn't say anything. He didn't move at all. He looked at Tessie for so long that a snowflake landed on his head and he didn't even notice.

"That little turtle," he said at last. "That was you?"

"It was me."

Orion's feathers fluffed up, slowly, all over. "All these years," he said softly, "I've wondered whether that little turtle was all right."

"I was," said Tessie. "I am."

And two of the oldest friends in Wonderful Woods looked at each other across the cold air, and neither of them said anything else for a long, long time. They didn't need to.

Mr. Monkey, hanging underneath, felt something warm all the way down to his tail. It wasn't too late. Not even a little bit.

Mr. Moose let the basket down slowly, slowly, until Tessie and Mr. Monkey were back in the snow. Then Orion looked down from his branch at Sunny Square, at all the presents lying scattered around the Wishing Tree.

Ricky was over there, gathering them up into one neat pile. Beside the pile lay a brand-new piece of bark, with nothing written on it yet.

"Orion," called Mr. Monkey. "Ricky wants to give all the presents away. The other way. Not a swap. Just giving. But we don't know who they're for."

Orion blinked his round golden eyes. "Hoo," he said. "Who do you suppose they're for?"

Then he spread his wings and glided off into the evening, to find his supper.

Everybody looked at the pile. Mr. Monkey looked at it. Ricky looked at it. Shiloh, who had wished that nobody would be left out, looked at it longest of all.

"Somebody who needs them," said Shiloh softly.

"Somebody who didn't get anything," said Ricky. He picked up the new bark. At the very top, in big letters, he wrote: WHO NEEDS THEM?

"Then we find them," said Mr. Moose. "And we give them the presents."

"And we don't even tell them it's us!" said Mr. Monkey. Then he looked over at the squash lantern, glowing on its branch. "And we take the lantern."

"Somewhere that needs it," said Mr. Moose.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey. "Tessie climbed one step. Bruno held her up, but he's only one Bruno. Then Tessie rode up Pilgrim Point in a basket, going wheeeee, the slowest wheee ever, and I went up too, by my tail. Tessie said thank you to Orion after a long, long time. And now we're going to give the presents away."

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

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

And beside the neat pile of presents in Sunny Square, the little lantern glowed on, waiting to go somewhere new.

Let's Talk

- 1 Tessie waited a long, long time to say thank you to Orion. Was it too late?
- 2 Who should get a thank-you letter from you?

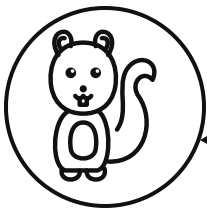
Your Turn

Write or draw a thank-you letter. A grown-up can help you write.

Dear _____ ,

Love, _____

SAMMY'S JOKE

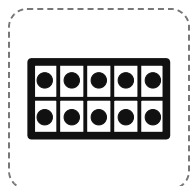


How do you make an octopus laugh?

Unscramble the letters to finish the joke. The picture is a clue!



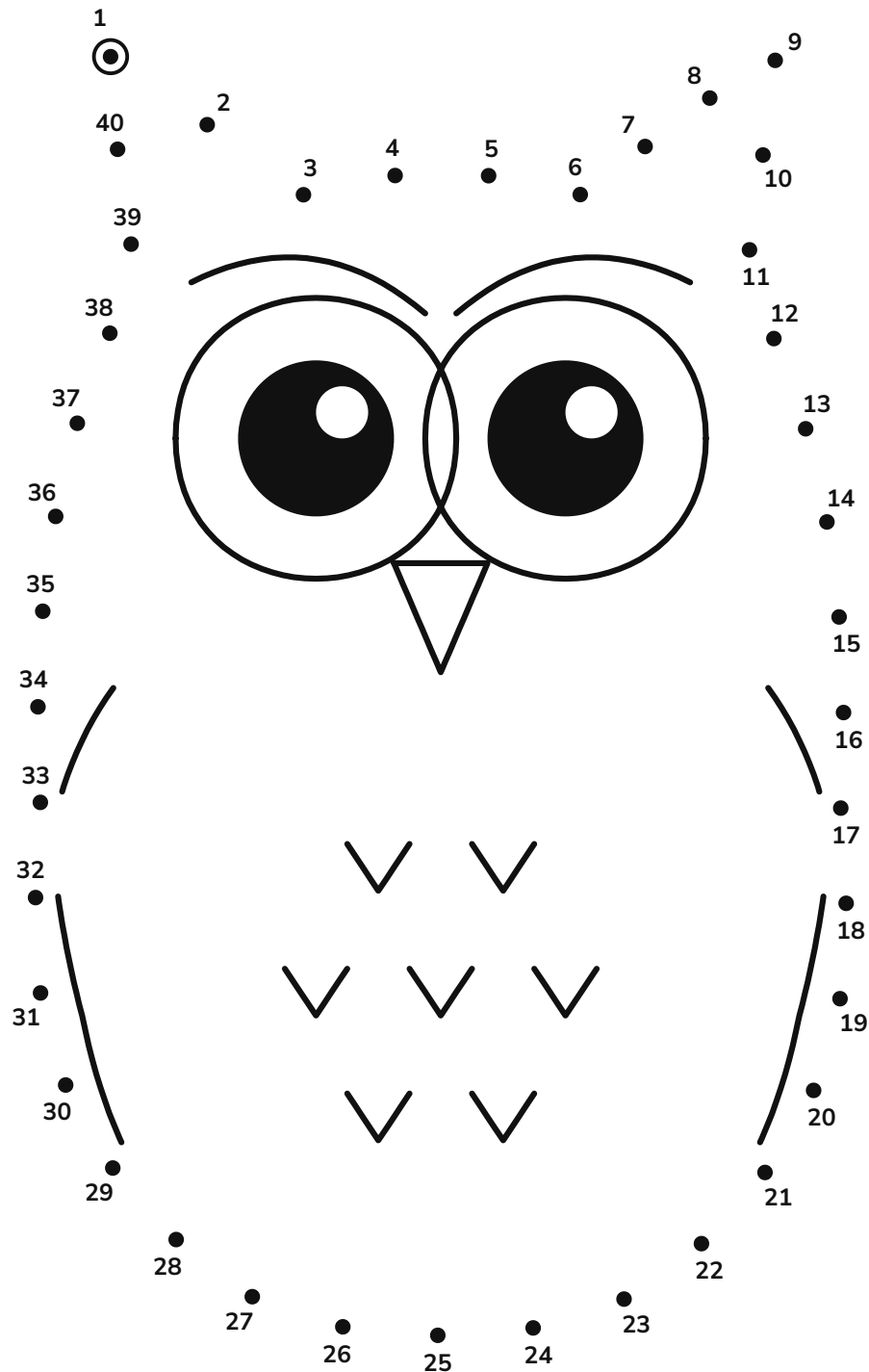
CLUE



With _____-tickles!

Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to find the friend Tessie thanked. Start at 1 (the circled dot) and count up to 40. Then join the last dot back to 1, and color it!



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

At Last! must get up to .

Step, step... flop!

 sits up on top. and  tug and tug. Up, up, up!At the top,  said it at last. felt glad.**PICTURE WORDS**  Tessie  Orion  Mr. Monkey  Mr. Moose  Bruno

Color a star each time you read it.

♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dark word, then the light words. On the line, write the name of someone you never thanked (or draw a tiny face). Then go tell them!

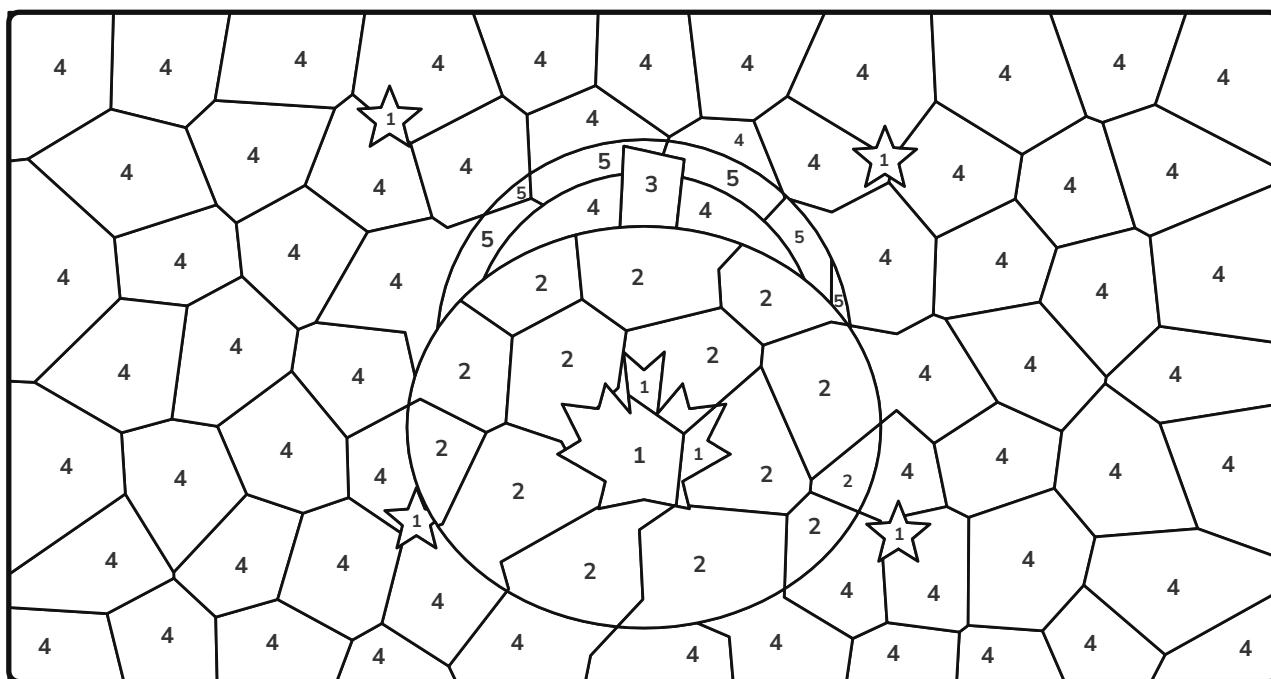
It is not too late!

Thank you.

🏠 Mystery Picture

Color each space by its number to find the hidden picture.

① yellow ② orange ③ green ④ dark blue ⑤ brown



WEEK DONE!



Turn back to this week's map.
Color any stones you missed.



Ladybugs I found in this week's storybook pictures: _____