

The Last Light

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The first morning of the new year was so still and clear that you could hear a pinecone drop all the way across Sunny Square, *tup*. The sky was pale gold. The snow was pink where the sun touched it. And the air smelled like woodsmoke and pine.

Everybody gathered at the little green pine by the Moose home's door, under the big gold star at the very top. All around the star hung the little stars, gold and red and white, with their painted sides turned to the trunk.

"It's time," said Mama Moose. "Find the gold ones with your own face on them."

Daddy Moose found his. On the front, he was carrying a log on each shoulder. He turned it over, and there he was again, going out into the storm, first, before anybody else had to. He read it for a long time. Then his ears turned pink, all the way to the tips.

"Daddy," said Mr. Moose. "Your ears are pink."

"It's cold," said Daddy Moose. But it wasn't that cold.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose, and Daddy Moose's ears went even pinker.

Mama Monkey found hers. On the back were three long nights, and a mama monkey singing, with very, very big ears. She held it up next to her own head.

"Do my ears really look like THAT?" she asked.

"Only when you're listening," said Mr. Monkey. "Hee hee heel!"

And Bruno found a red star with his own big face on it. When he turned it over and saw two big paws holding back the brambles, he held it so gently, with just two claws, that it hardly moved.

Then everybody went to the fire in Sunny Square. On the flat stone, the four candles were burning in a row. Next to them stood a fifth one, the last one, waiting.

Mama Monkey held out the twig. "The first light was for the light we got, given away," she said. "The second was for the light that keeps us walking. The third was for the light that holds steady. The fourth was for the light at the end of the wait." She smiled. "And this one is for the light that overflows."

Mr. Moose took the twig and touched it to the fourth candle, and Mr. Monkey helped him carry the little flame over. Together they lit the fifth candle.

Five lights, in a row. It was the brightest the flat stone had ever been, so bright that the snow all around it glowed.

But Mr. Monkey looked past the candles, past the trees, toward the far edge of the woods. And he felt it, all at once.

"Mr. Moose," he said. "Granny Mabel's home is still dark. It's the only one. It's the last one."

Mr. Moose looked at the fifth candle. Granny Mabel couldn't come to the light. Her leg didn't work well enough to walk that far. So the light would have to go to her. But last time, their lantern had bounced off the sled and gone out. They needed a way that wouldn't let the light go out, all the way through the woods and the brambles.

He looked at all the friends standing around the fire. Bruno and Hazel and Dottie. Benji and Shiloh and Ricky and Percy. All the mamas and daddies. The old crow and his son and the three grandchicks. Tessie. Orion, blinking, who had stayed up past his bedtime to come. Everybody.

"What if everybody carries one?" said Mr. Moose slowly. "And everybody lights theirs from the one before. Then if one goes out, there's always another one right there."

Everybody got a candle. Mr. Moose lit his from the fifth candle. Mr. Monkey lit his from Mr. Moose's. Benji lit his from Mr. Monkey's. Shiloh lit his from Benji's. And on and on, candle to candle, friend to friend, until everybody in Sunny Square was holding a little light.

Then Bruno sneezed. *HAAA... HAAA... HAAA-SHNOOOOF!* And his candle went out, *pfft*.

Bruno looked at his candle. "Oops."

Hazel held hers out, and Bruno lit his again from it.

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno. "That's why everybody has one!"

Then, with Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey at the front, the whole woods walked out of Sunny Square in one long line. Past the Wishing Tree. Across the meadow. Through the deep snow. One little light after another, all in a row, like a string of stars that somebody had laid down across the woods.

Sammy zipped up and down the whole line, over and over, because the line was so long and Sammy was so fast.

Every time she zipped past, every little flame in the line leaned over after her, *whoosh*, one after another, as if they were all trying to see where she went.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "The candles are waving at Sammy!"

The line was so long that when Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey reached the meadow, Tessie, at the very back, was still leaving Sunny Square. Benji ran all the way back to walk with her, and then all the way to the front to tell Mr. Monkey she was coming, and then all the way back again, and by the end of it, Benji had walked the whole line three times.

"Hee hee," went Benji, all out of breath. "Tessie says... she's coming... slowly."

They came to the bramble patch. The path Bruno had made was still there, and Hazel's stamped-down snow. And one by one, the whole woods walked through it, in a long line of lights.

Granny Mabel's home was dark, just like before. Mr. Monkey knocked on the tiny door. *Tap, tap, tap*.

The door opened, and Granny Mabel looked out. And there, in front of her, stretching all the way back through the brambles and across the snow and as far as she could see, was the whole woods, every single one of them, holding a little light.

Granny Mabel put her tiny paw over her mouth. She didn't say anything at all. She tried to count the lights, and she lost count at a hundred and three.

Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey held out their two candles, and Granny Mabel held out a tiny old candle stub of her own. She had kept it a long, long time, with no way to light it. They touched their flames to it together.

It caught. And Granny Mabel carried it inside, slowly, leaning on her little stick, and set it in her tiny window.

For the first time in a long, long time, Granny Mabel's home glowed.

"It's the last one," whispered Mr. Monkey. "Every home in the whole woods is lit now."

Granny Mabel looked at all of them through her tiny window. And her face, in the candlelight, was the happiest face in the woods.

Everest Eagle came gliding down from his cliff and landed on the log right over her roof. He looked at the little light in the window. He looked at the long line of lights in the snow. And slowly, he tipped one great wing toward her, the way an eagle bows.

That night, from the top of the hill, you could see the whole of Wonderful Woods, and every home in it was glowing. Not one dark home was left. The whole woods glowed.

"What a day!" said Mr. Moose, walking home with Mr. Monkey in the long line of lights. "We read the gold stars, and Daddy's ears turned pink. Mama Monkey asked if her ears were really that big. We lit the fifth candle. Then everybody lit a candle from somebody else's. Bruno sneezed his out, so he lit it again from Hazel's. The candles waved at Sammy. And we lit Granny Mabel's candle, and now every home in the woods is lit."

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

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

And far past the bramble patch, in the smallest home in Wonderful Woods, a tiny candle burned in a tiny window, the last light of all, glowing out into the snow.

Let's Talk

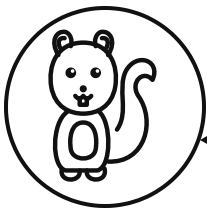
- 1 How did the light get all the way to Granny Mabel's home without going out?
- 2 Happy New Year! Today we light the last candle. Who could we bring a light to this year?

Your Turn

Draw the long line of lights going to Granny Mabel's home. Put yourself in it!

This year I want to bring light to _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE



What did the candle say to the match?

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



CLUE



You light up my _____!

Hidden Pictures

Find each hidden thing in the picture. Color it, then color its circle!



CAN YOU FIND THESE?



Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

A Line of Lamps

 lit his lamp.  lit his lamp from .

 lit his from . And on and on!

 huffs. Puff! His lamp is not lit.

 lit it. Ha!

It is a long line of lamps, up to Gran's hut.

Gran's lamp is lit! It is the last lamp, and it is lit.

PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Moose  Mr. Monkey  Benji  Bruno  Hazel



Color a star each time you read it.

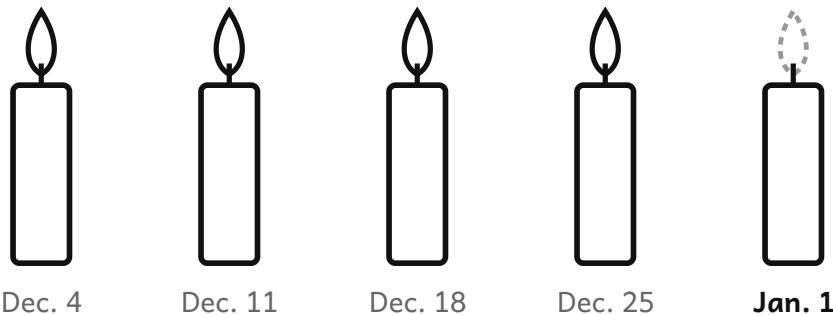
♥ My Thank-You

Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. Write their name on the line, or draw a tiny face. Read it to them!

Thank you.
for doing a hard thing for me.

🕯 Today's Candle

Today the fifth and last candle gets its light from the fourth one. All five are shining!



Dec. 4

Dec. 11

Dec. 18

Dec. 25

Jan. 1

Trace the flame on candle 5! Candles 1, 2, 3 and 4 are already lit.

THE CANDLE WORDS: A GROWN-UP SAYS EACH LINE, AND YOU SAY IT BACK

Grace comes in.

(cup your hands)

Gratitude sees it.

(point to your eyes)

And graciousness passes it on.

(open your hands to the candle)

Then the grown-up says: "Love from our house, love from our friends, love from beyond us." You say: **Three As, one star!**

One light. Passed along.

Grown-up: "What do we pass on?" You: **Generosity, hope, peace, joy, and agape!** (Your family may say "love.")

DRAW YOUR FAMILY WITH YOUR CANDLES

★ New Year's Day

Happy New Year! Today your family celebrates in three parts:

1

Remember: The Star of Agape

2

Rejoice: The last Opening

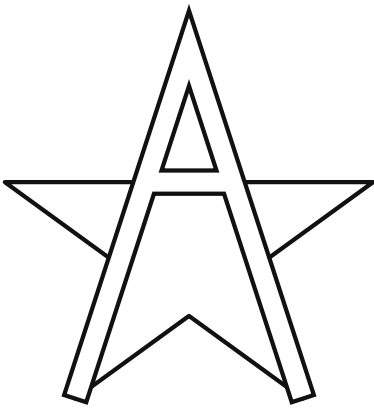
3

Ready: Plan the giving

★ Remember: The Star of Agape

Today all five candles shine together! **Agape** (ah-GAH-pay) is a very old Greek word for love that does something hard to help someone else. The Star of Agape on top of your tree is made from three As, laid one over another.

A grown-up says, "Love from our house, love from our friends, love from beyond us." Point up at the star and say, "Three As, one star!"



Here is a star with one big A on it, for agape. Color the star gold. Color the A green.

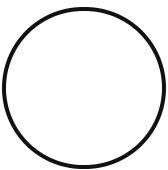
★ Rejoice: The Last Opening

Gather under the Star of Agape. Find the gold stars with **your** name on the front, and read them. A grown-up can read them with you.

I found gold stars with my name!

Write the number, or draw a dot for each one.

My favorite one is from:
(Draw their face or write their name.)



WHAT DID IT SAY? DRAW OR WRITE IT.

Ready: Plan the Giving

The last three days are an Agape Adventure: doing something hard to help someone else. Plan them with your family. Draw or write your ideas in the boxes.



JAN. 2

Your time

What job that nobody wants could you do for someone?



JAN. 3

Your things

Who could get your best, not your leftovers?



JAN. 4

Your words

Who will get a Love Letter from you?

EXTRA, IF YOUR FAMILY DOES IT

The Name Draw

Write everyone's name on a slip of paper. Fold the slips and put them in a bowl. Everyone draws one and keeps it secret. (If you get your own name, put it back and draw again.) From January 2 to 4, show that person love in secret. At dinner on January 4, everyone guesses who had them. (Keep your book hidden!)

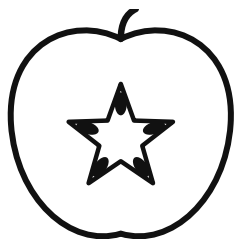
I picked _____

I will show them love by _____

I think my name was drawn by _____

EXTRA, JUST FOR FUN

The Hidden Star



Ask a grown-up to cut an apple across its middle, not from the stem down. Look! A star was hiding inside. Count its points: five, just like your five candles!