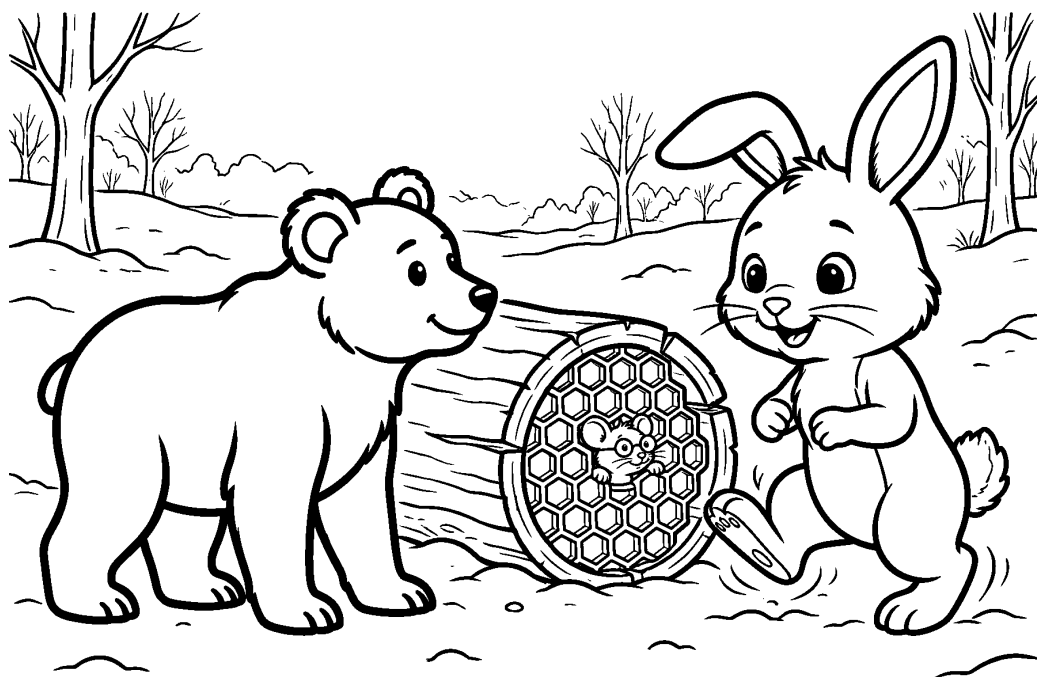


The Best Things

 COLOR THE PICTURE



The morning was cold again, and everything that had melted yesterday had frozen back up in the night. The puddles were ice. The mud was hard. And every twig had a tiny clear icicle hanging from it, like the whole woods had put on its jewelry.

The friends had decided to bring Granny Mabel presents. Not spare things. Not leftovers. Everybody's very best thing. So everybody went home to find it, and they all met back in Sunny Square.

Mr. Monkey came with his yellow hat. It was the warmest, softest hat he had ever had. Mama Monkey had made it for him, and he wore it every single day. His ears felt cold already, just thinking about giving it away.

Mr. Moose came with his tall candle, the one Mama Moose had made for him, the best one, which he had been saving all winter for something special.

Hazel brought her very best ribbon, the shiniest blue one. Dottie brought her favorite ball. Ricky brought his very first jar, the one he found before any of the others. Shiloh brought a soft new piece of wool from his very best curl. Percy brought the little round mirror, his old friend.

And Bruno came carrying something enormous. It was his honeycomb. Not a piece. The whole thing. The

biggest, goldest, drippiest honeycomb in the woods. He had been saving it since summer.

Ricky stared at it.

"Bruno," said Ricky. "That's your **BEST** honeycomb. That's your **WHOLE** honeycomb. Granny Mabel is tiny. She can't eat all that. You should keep most of it. Giving her all of it is a waste!"

Bruno looked at his honeycomb. Then he looked at Ricky.

"It's my best," said Bruno. "That's why."

Hazel looked down at her shiny blue ribbon. It was the one Percy gave back to her, the one she loved most of all. She held it in her teeth for a long time. Then she trotted over and laid it right on top of Bruno's honeycomb, very carefully, so it wouldn't get sticky.

It got sticky anyway.

"Hee hee hee... *SNORT!*" went Hazel. "Now it's a honey ribbon!"

Dottie squeezed her favorite ball one last time, *squeak, squeak*, just to say goodbye. Then she dropped it on the pile and sat on her own paws, so they couldn't sneak it back.

They took everything through the brambles to Granny Mabel's on the sled. Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey pulled it in the harness. *Step. Step. Step.*

Granny Mabel opened her tiny door.

Mr. Monkey gave her his yellow hat. Granny Mabel was so small that when she put it on, it covered her completely, all the way down to her toes. Only her tail stuck out the bottom.

"Oh my," said Granny Mabel, from somewhere inside the hat. "It's very warm in here."

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Granny Mabel, it's not a hat for you! It's a whole sleeping bag!"

Granny Mabel wiggled out of the bottom of it, her spectacles all crooked. "Then I'll sleep in it," she said. "Every night. Eek-eek-eek."

Mr. Moose gave her his tall candle. It was taller than Granny Mabel. She stood it in her window, next to her little one.

Then Bruno tried to give her the honeycomb. He pushed it toward her tiny door. It didn't fit. He turned it sideways. It still didn't fit. He pushed a little harder, and it got stuck, right in the doorway, so the whole door was filled with honeycomb. Granny Mabel peeked out at them through one of the little honeycomb holes.

"Hello," she said, from inside the honeycomb.

"Haw haw haw! Granny Mabel has a honey door!" went Bruno.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Mr. Moose.

And Granny Mabel, behind the honeycomb, put her tiny paw out and touched it, and her eyes went soft. "Oh, Bruno," she said. "That's beautiful. That's the most beautiful thing anybody has ever brought me."

Then everybody gave their best things, one by one. Percy gave her his little round mirror. "He was my friend when I didn't have any," said Percy. "Now you can have him." Granny Mabel looked into it and said, "Oh! Hello, dear," to herself, very politely.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Granny Mabel, that's YOU!"

Sammy zipped up to the door with her best acorn and dropped it on the pile. "Why do bees have sticky hair?" she asked. "Because they use HONEYCOMBS!" And she was gone.

"Haw haw haw!" went Bruno, looking at his honeycomb.

And Granny Mabel held each gift and said thank you, softly, every time.

But Benji was standing at the back. He had his paws behind his back. And his ears were drooping all the way down.

Mr. Monkey went over. "Benji, what's wrong?"

"I don't have a best thing," whispered Benji. "My family's burrow is small. We don't have a lot.

Everything I had, I already gave away this winter." His nose twitched. "I don't have anything to give her."

Mr. Monkey looked at him, and his chest hurt. Benji wanted to give so much. And he didn't have anything to give.

Mr. Moose was thinking. What did Benji have? Benji had sharp ears. Benji was fast. And Benji had the best thumping foot in the whole woods. On the longest night, when everybody called across the river, Benji's thump had been the loudest thing there.

"Benji," said Mr. Moose. "You have your thump."

Benji looked down at his foot.

Then he stepped up to Granny Mabel's door, right in front of the honeycomb. He took a deep breath. And he started to thump.

Thump. Thump. Thump-a-thump. Thump. Thump. Thump-a-thump-a-thump.

It was a song. A drum song, played on the frozen ground with one small bunny foot, the very best he could. It went fast and then slow and then fast again. Bruno started patting his big round tummy along with it, *bom, bom, bom-bom*, like a big bass drum. Hazel's hooves started tapping along. Dottie howled along, "Arooo!", right on the beat. Even Granny Mabel tapped her little stick on the floor, *tik-tik, tik-tik*, behind the honeycomb.

And when Benji finished with one last great big *THUMP*, Granny Mabel, behind the honeycomb, was smiling the biggest smile her little face could hold.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey. "Benji Boom-Boom!"

"Benji Boom-Boom!" shouted everybody.

"Hee hee," went Benji, with his ears all the way up. He had given his best thing after all.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey, walking home with no hat on, and his ears a little bit cold. "Everybody brought their very best thing. My hat was Granny Mabel's sleeping bag. Bruno's honeycomb got stuck in the door, and Granny Mabel talked through the holes. Ricky said it was a waste, but Bruno said that's why. And Benji didn't have anything, so he played his foot, and he's Benji Boom-Boom."

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

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

And in the smallest home in Wonderful Woods, a tiny old mouse curled up that night inside a big yellow monkey hat, in the glow of a tall candle, with the sweet smell of honey drifting through the whole house.

Let's Talk

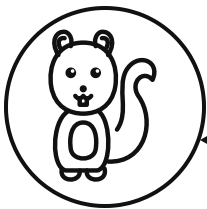
- 1 Ricky said giving the whole honeycomb was a waste. What did Bruno say?
- 2 What is your best thing? Who could you give it to?

Your Turn

Draw your best thing, and who you could give it to.

I will give it to _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE

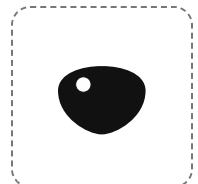


What runs but has no legs?

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



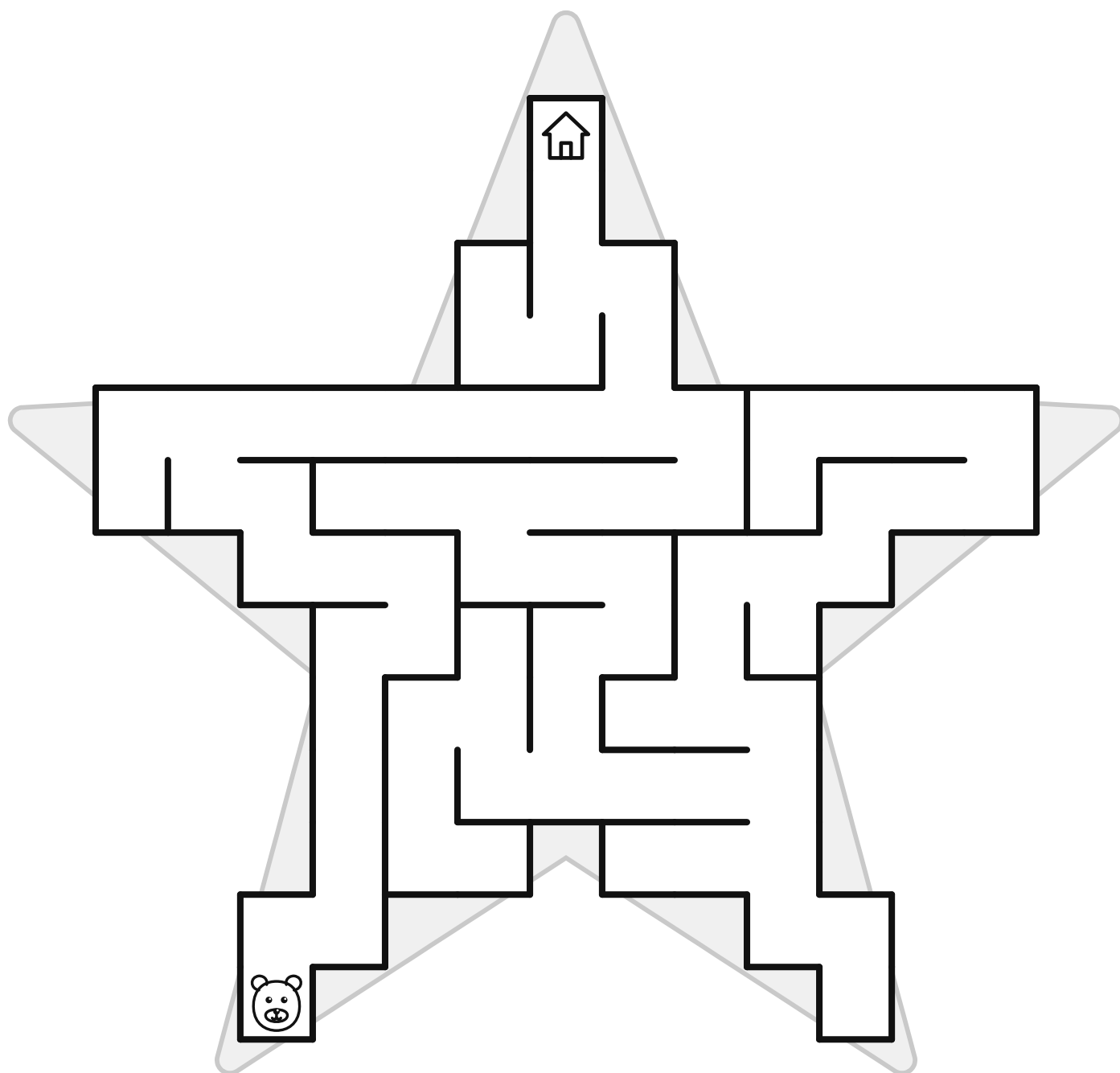
CLUE



Your _____!

☆ The Honey Door

Help Bruno carry his whole honeycomb to Granny Mabel. Start at Bruno Bear.



 Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

The Best Gifts

The pals bring gifts to Gran. Not junk. The best!

 hands Gran his hat. It is so big, Gran is in it!

 has his big hive. It is stuck in the gap!

“That is a lot!” says . “It is my best,” says .

 has no gift. Then he thumps.

Thump, thump, thump-a-thump!

It is a song! It is the best gift of all.

PICTURE WORDS  Mr. Monkey  Bruno  Ricky  Benji

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



Color a star each time you read it.

My Gift

Trace the dark word. Then trace or write the light words. What did you give, and who got it? Fill in both spaces.

I gave

to

Song Day: Mystery Picture

Today's song is "The Little Drummer Boy." Sing or listen while you color each space by its number.

① yellow ② red ③ brown ④ green ⑤ light blue

