

The Golden Treasure

 COLOR THE PICTURE



Rainbow River was busy this morning. All along its banks, the trees were dropping yellow leaves, and the leaves were floating on the water, turning slow circles as they drifted by.

Mr. Moose and Mr. Monkey were waiting for Ricky at the river bend when Sammy Squirrel came zipping down a tree.

"Did you hear? Did you hear? There's a golden treasure up the river! It only comes once a year! Right at the end of the day! Tessie told me!"

And she zipped away again.

Ricky came running up just in time to hear the last part. His eyes went as big as acorns. "A **GOLDEN** treasure? That would be the best Swap present in the whole history of presents!"

"It has to be pinecone-size," said Mr. Moose. "Rule two."

"I'll bring a pinecone-size piece," said Ricky. "Come on! We can sign everybody up on the way."

So off they went, upriver.

In Munching Meadow, they found Hazel Horse galloping circles through the last of the tall grass.

"Hazel!" called Ricky. "What do you wish for? For the Great Big Present Swap?"

Hazel skidded to a stop. "The great big present **WHAT?**"

"Swap," said Ricky.

"**SWAMP?**" Hazel's ears shot up. "A Great Big Present **SWAMP?** I LOVE swamps! I'll go find one!"

And before anybody could say a word, she was galloping off toward the far side of the meadow, her tail streaming

behind her.

Ricky looked at his list. Very slowly, he wrote: *Hazel. Wish: unknown. Gone to find a swamp.*

By the clover patch, a pair of long ears poked out of a burrow. It was Benji Bunny. When Ricky asked for his wish, Benji's nose twitched. He hopped up close to Mr. Moose and whispered something into his big, soft ear.

"Benji wishes," said Mr. Moose gently, "for somebody to sit next to at the Thankful Feast."

"ME!" said Mr. Monkey. "I'll sit next to you!"

Benji's ears turned a little pink. "Hee hee," he said, very quietly.

At the edge of the woods, Shiloh Sheep was nibbling grass. He thought for a long time about his wish. "I wish," he said at last, "that nobody gets left out."

"That's rule four!" said Ricky. He hugged Shiloh. "You're my favorite."

Then the river began to get louder. The water hurried over smooth stones, splashing and singing, *rush-a-rush, plish-a-plish*. They had come to Whispering Water Way.

"Treasure time," said Ricky.

He looked under rocks. He looked behind logs. He looked in the reeds. And then he gasped. Down in the shallow water, a little pebble was shining gold. And there was another one. And another!

"**GOLD!**" Ricky scooped them into his basket, pawful after pawful. "I found it! I found the golden treasure!"

He held up the basket. The sun was warm. The water

dripped out. And as the pebbles dried, the gold went away. One by one, they turned plain and grayish-brown, the same as every other pebble.

Ricky stared into the basket. "Hey."

He dipped the basket back into the river. Gold again! He lifted it out. Brown again. He dipped it. Gold. He lifted it. Brown.

"I know," said Ricky. "I'll carry it home in the water."

So Ricky walked up the river holding his basket under the water, bent over, wading deeper and deeper so the pebbles would stay gold. The water came up to his tummy. Then his chest. Then his chin.

"Ricky," said Mr. Moose. "Your ears are getting wet."

"Glub," said Ricky.

"Hee hee hee!" went Mr. Monkey.

"Ha-ha-ha!" went Mr. Moose. He waded in and lifted Ricky out by the scruff, dripping, basket and all.

Just then, here came Hazel, trotting back along the bank. She was covered in mud from her hooves all the way up to her knees, and there was a lily pad on her head.

"I found a swamp!" she said proudly. "Where do the presents go?"

Ricky opened his mouth. Then he closed it.

Hazel looked down at her muddy legs, and at the lily pad flopping over one eye. "Hee hee hee... *SNORT!*"

Past the noisy water, the river went quiet again. And there, on her warm, flat sunning rock, sat Tessie Turtle.

"Tessie!" Ricky ran up, still dripping. "Sammy said you know about the golden treasure! Where is it?"

Tessie turned her head, slowly. "Oh," she said. "It's here."

Everybody looked around. There was the river, full of floating yellow leaves. There were the trees. There was Tessie's rock. There was no treasure anywhere.

"Where?" asked Ricky.

"Here," said Tessie.

Ricky decided to ask an easier question. "What do you wish for? For the Present Swap?"

Tessie looked out at the water for a long time. "I wish," she said, "for this."

Ricky wrote down *THIS*?

Then Tessie asked a question of her own, very slowly, the way she said everything. "Ricky... what... is a present... for?"

Ricky opened his mouth to answer. Then he closed it. He looked at Mr. Moose. Mr. Moose didn't know either. Nobody knew. The river went *plish-a-plish* while they all thought about it.

The sun was getting lower. Ricky sat down on the end of Tessie's rock, wet and droopy. "I wanted to find the golden treasure," he said. "I wanted to bring the best present of all. And there isn't any treasure. Just leaves and wet pebbles."

Mr. Monkey felt it in his tummy, the sinking feeling of looking all day for something and not finding it. He sat down right next to Ricky, close, so their shoulders touched.

Mr. Moose was thinking. Sammy had said *at the end of the day*. And Tessie said *it's here*. Not over there. Not under a rock. Here.

"Ricky," said Mr. Moose slowly. "What if the treasure isn't somewhere else? What if it just isn't time yet?"

"The end of the day," said Mr. Monkey.

"So we wait," said Mr. Moose. "Right here. Together."

Waiting was hard for Mr. Monkey. He wiggled. He counted his toes. He counted Mr. Moose's toes. Benji and Shiloh came up the bank to see what everybody was doing, and they sat down too. Hazel lay down in the grass with her muddy legs out straight. And they all waited, at Tessie speed.

Then the sun sank down until it was shining straight up the river, low and orange, right between the trees.

Benji's ears stood up. "Look," he whispered.

The light hit the water. Every yellow leaf floating on Rainbow River lit up at once, glowing gold, hundreds and hundreds of them, from one bank all the way to the other. The whole river turned into a shining, sparkling, slowly moving road of gold. Even the mist over the water glowed. Even Hazel's muddy legs shone gold.

"I'm a golden horse," Hazel whispered.

Nobody else said anything at all.

Then Ricky jumped up. "The treasure!" He grabbed his basket and scooped a big basketful of shining gold right off the river. He held it up high over his head. Water ran out of the bottom. *Splortch*. A pile of soggy wet leaves slid out and landed right on top of his head.

Ricky stood there with leaves hanging over his ears. "It's just leaves," he said.

"Heh... heh... heh," laughed Tessie, very slowly.

"You can't carry it home," said Tessie when she was done. "You can only look at it."

So they looked. They looked until the sun slipped behind the hill and the gold faded back into the river.

"Most years," said Tessie, "everybody walks right through it."

Mr. Monkey looked down at his legs. They were wet up to his knees from wading upriver all day. Wading through yellow leaves.

"Mr. Moose," he said. "We walked through it ALL DAY!"

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

They headed home in the blue evening, Hazel carrying Benji and Shiloh on her back, Ricky carrying an empty basket and wearing a leaf hat.

"What a day!" said Mr. Monkey. "Hazel went looking for a swamp and found one. Ricky carried his treasure under the river and got wet ears. Tessie said the treasure was here, and it WAS here. The whole river turned gold, and we can't even take it with us."

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

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

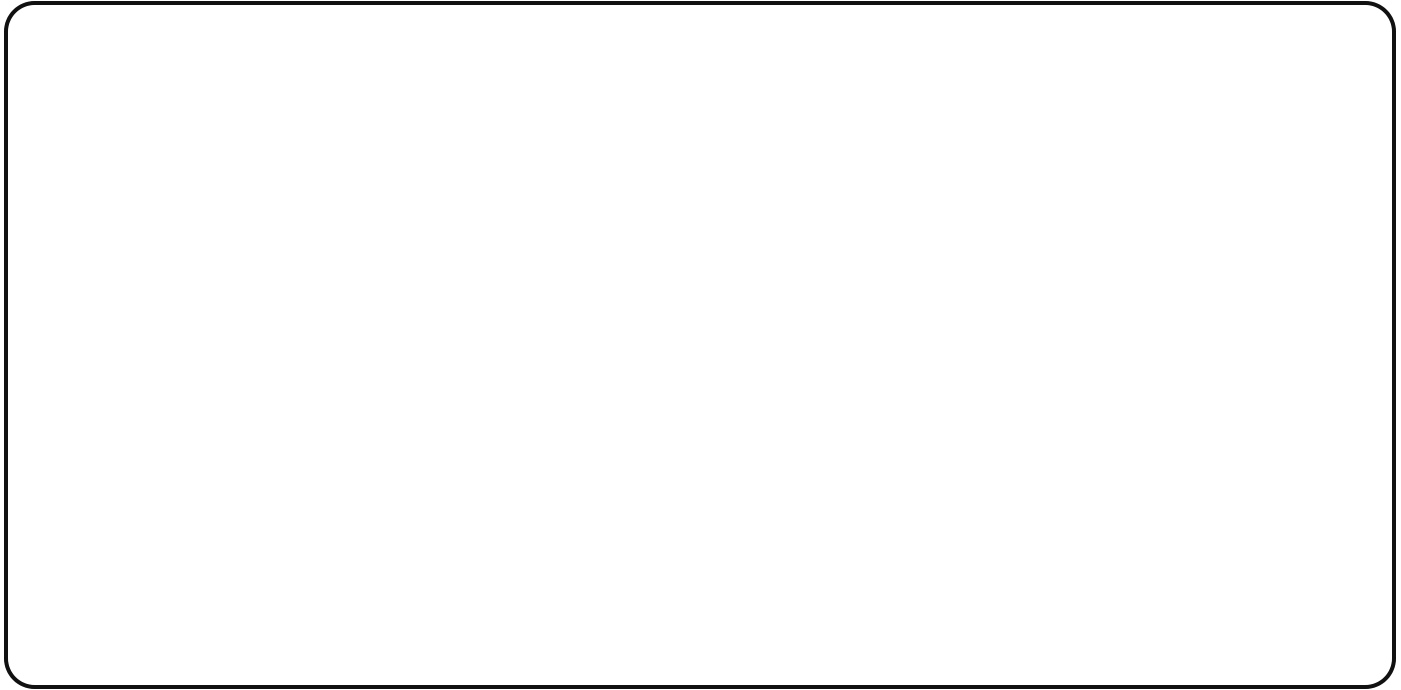
And behind them, Rainbow River kept on carrying its yellow leaves home through the dark, waiting for tomorrow's sun.

Let's Talk

- 1 Tessie said the golden treasure was “here.” Where was it?
- 2 What good thing is right here in our home that is easy to walk right past?

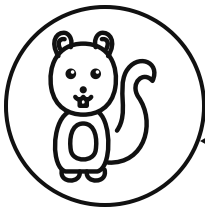
Your Turn

Draw a treasure that is right here in your home.



My treasure is _____.

SAMMY'S JOKE



Why do fish live in salt water?

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

Because _____ makes them sneeze!

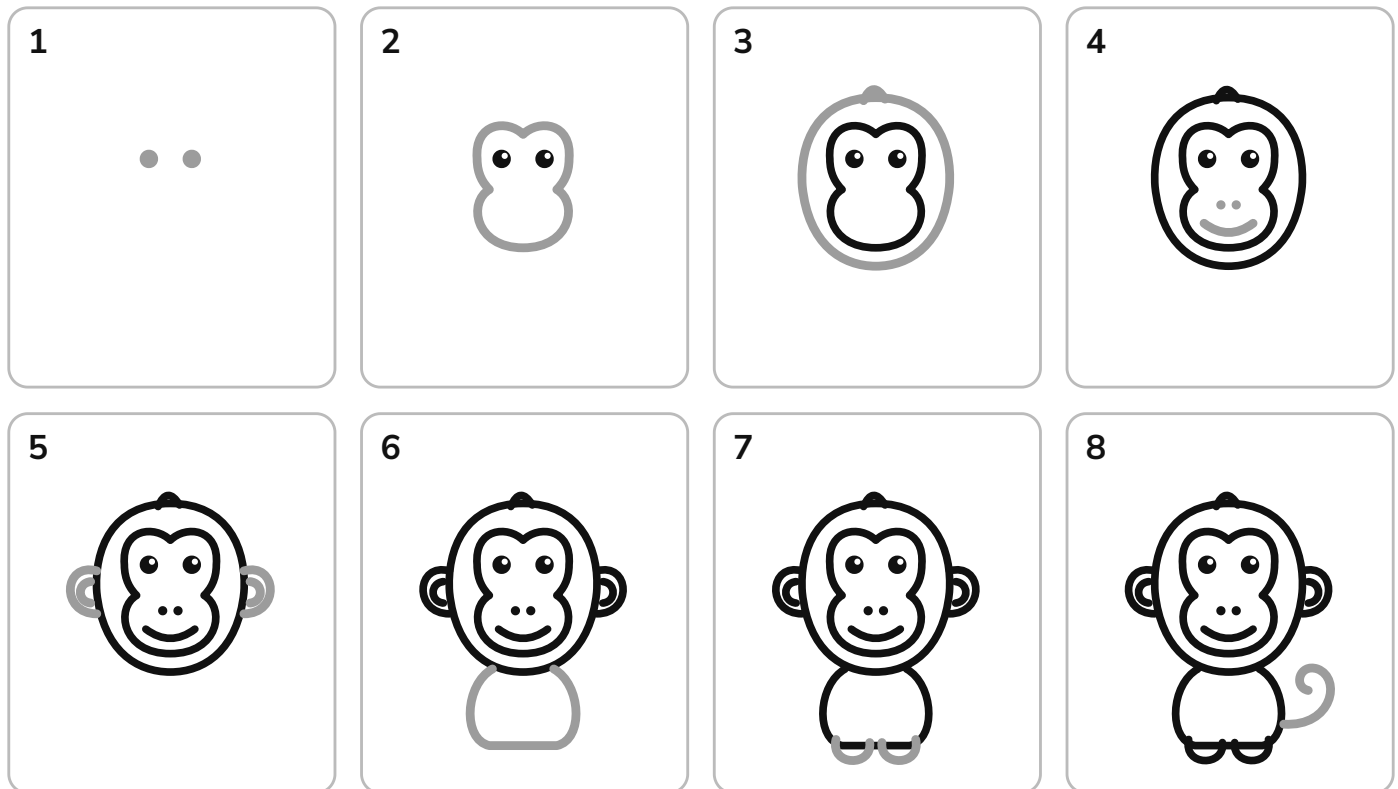


KEY



Draw Mr. Monkey!

The gray parts are new. Draw them in!



MY MR. MONKEY

Read With Me

DRAW THE STORY

Is It a Pin?

 sat.

 sat and sat.

Is it a pin?

Is it a tin?

It is a  !

PICTURE WORDS  Ricky  leaf

For grown-ups: New words to learn by heart: a, and.



Color a star each time you read it.

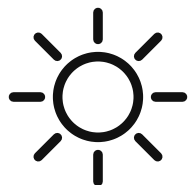
♥ My Thank-You

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

Thank you.

👁 Treasures Right Here

Hunt around your home. Check each treasure you find!



something
yellow or gold

☐

something that
shines

☐

a leaf

☐

something soft

☐

something that
makes you
smile

☐

something
someone made
for you

☐