



EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

Title: The Secret of Sapling Green

Author: Penelope Pratley

Illustrator: Penelope Pratley

Publisher: EK Books

Price: ANZ \$24.99 | USA \$18.99 | CA \$24.99 | UK £10.99

ISBN: 9781925820980

Publication date: Feb 2022

Audience age: 4-8 years

Key Curriculum Areas: English, Science, Health and Physical Education, Visual Arts



SYNOPSIS:

Sapling Green is a gentle, quiet girl with a secret she is scared to show the world. Wynn Farthing is funny and noisy, and the best at climbing high into the branches of the old schoolyard tree. One terrible day, after a storm, the gardener says the tree has to come down. Can Sapling use her secret to save the day?

Sapling has always kept her hands in her pockets at school to hide her big secret – her green thumbs. But at home she flourishes, growing all kinds of brilliant flowers, shrubs and bushes. When the schoolyard tree is in danger, she has to show her special gift to her classmates in order to save it. To her surprise, they are delighted, particularly Wynn! It turns out Sapling's differences are her strengths and through sharing them, she finds friendship and acceptance.

The Secret Of Sapling Green is a story for quiet children who are unsure of their place in their peer group, and the boisterous kids who rule the playground. Its whimsical watercolour illustrations will captivate young readers, and its story will inspire them to be brave and accept themselves – and each other – for who they are. Sapling's green thumbs are a subtle and relatable metaphor for conditions which may make children feel like they are different, such as Autism. Her bravery despite her difference is a reminder that we should never feel like we have to hide who we are.

THEMES:

Developing Trust. Friendship. Bravery. Self-Awareness. Accepting Yourself and Others.

SELLING POINTS:

- A beautiful story with an important message that will resonate with any young person who has felt like something about them made them 'different'.
- Inspired by the author's personal experience of having a son with Autism, the story has been written with personal knowledge, love, and hope.
- Appeals to both quiet, shy children and their more boisterous peers due to its diverse cast of characters.



ILLUSTRATION STYLE:

Traditional pencil outline with watercolour and ink.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

"I wrote *The Secret Of Sapling Green* after my son was diagnosed with Autism. I wished to portray a character who isn't neurotypical. A character who learns to accept themselves and be accepted by others simply for being who they are." - Penelope Pratley

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Penelope Pratley has been mucking about with paint for as long as she can remember. With a BFA and Bachelor of Teaching she has taught from preschool to year 12. Penelope loves to illustrate books that inspire children to find their place in the world. When she's not illustrating or munching chocolate freckles, you can find her in a cosy nook with her nose in a book.

INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

What is the inspiration for this story?

The inspiration for this story was to recognise that not all children feel they can be themselves and feel accepted for who they are.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Finishing it! The most rewarding part of this project is seeing the personal growth of my writing and illustration during its development and completion. I am so proud to have written and illustrated a story that will hopefully help children to accept themselves and each other.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

Finishing it! I really struggled with how I was going to pull everything together. I found it really difficult to illustrate a story I've written. Probably because I was trying too hard. Once I relaxed, spent some time experimenting, sorted out my characters, and settled on an illustration style things became much easier.

ILLUSTRATOR

What media do you use to create your illustrations? Briefly describe your process.

I work on hot press watercolour paper using lead pencil and watercolour paint. First I draw the outline in pencil then I carefully build up layers of colour and tone using watercolour. For 'The Secret Of Sapling Green' I also added a little shading at the end using lead pencil and for the 'magic colour' I used inks.



TEACHER NOTES: The Secret of Sapling Green

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Completing the whole project and hoping this story will help children to accept one another and themselves.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

There were so many challenges. Firstly trying to work out what the characters would look like, what colours to use and the style of illustration. Not to mention trying to figure out how to represent wind effectively or the 'magic' pages where the tree opens and reveals it's underground heart.



TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

Discussion Notes and Activities:

N.B. These questions and activities can be adapted to suit the experience and ability of students.

Before Reading

- Look the cover of 'The Secret of Sapling Green'. What do you see? What do you notice about the girl and the way she is standing? What do you think her secret might be?
- Do you think her secret might be one that she wants to keep, or one she wants to share?
- What might you do if you had a secret but were not brave enough to share it?
- What do you notice about the setting around the girl on the cover? What does the word 'sapling' mean? Does this give you a clue about the character's personality or interests, or perhaps her secret?
- What does her full name 'Sapling Green' tell you about her, or make you wonder about?
- Can you explain what it means to be a 'green thumb'? Do you like gardening?

During Reading

- What can you tell about Sapling's personality? What about Wynn's? How are they different?
- Why do you think Sapling spends a lot of time on her own when she is around other children? What makes her happy?
- How has Wynn's mood changed now that he can't climb The Big Tree? What has changed about Sapling?
- What is happening to the tree and how has Sapling given it, and herself, a new life?

After Reading

- What was the story about? What are the main ideas or themes in story? How does the title relate to the themes in the story?
- What do you think was stopping Sapling Green from playing with the other children?
- What did we find out about her? What made her 'different'? Do you think her secret was holding her back? What was she afraid of? How did she overcome her fear?
- What did you learn about Wynn, and how did his feelings and awareness change throughout the story?
- In what ways did the two main characters, Sapling and Wynn, grow and learn from each other?
- How did Sapling's special 'magical' gift give her power?
- What is a metaphor? How are Sapling's 'green thumbs' a metaphor for representing 'difference'? What other ways might you, or others, feel different? Have you ever felt like you didn't 'fit in'? How does this make you feel?
- How can you be more aware of others' needs? In what ways can you show that you can be a good friend?
- Can you think of some ways Sapling could have made friends and explained her special gift? How is 'trust' important in friend-making? Write 5 important factors in a good friendship, including trust, on an outline of your hand.
- What does it mean, '...higher than anyone, Sapling Green blossoms'? Why has the author used this particular wording?
- Have a close look at the illustrations. What medium has the illustrator used to represent this story? What do you think of the colours used in different parts of the story? What do you notice about the characters' facial expressions and body language to show what they are feeling?

ACTIVITIES:

ENGLISH

Vocabulary

(ACELA1437) (ACELA1454) (ACELA1470) (ACELY1650) (ACELA1460) (ACELY1660)

“Green thumbs can grow anything.”

- Discuss the meaning of the term ‘**green thumb**’. How has the author used this term literally and figuratively? Trace your own hand and colour the thumb green.
- Inside the hand, write the definition of ‘green thumb’. Use it in a sentence. Illustrate yourself or Sapling Green as a green thumb.

Sorting Verbs

(ACELA1462) (ACELA1452) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1578) (ACELT1584) (ACELT1591) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Write a list of verbs from the book, ‘*The Secret of Sapling Green*’, and sort them according to the actions of Sapling Green and Wynn Farthing. See **BLM 1**.
For example –
Verbs for Sapling: tucks, wishes, watches, waits, grow, whispers.
Verbs for Wynn: playing, climbing, swinging, leaps, laughing, shouting.
- Write a sentence using some verbs from the list. Draw a picture to match.

Comprehension

(ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1578) (ACELY1646) (ACELY1650) (ACELA1787) (ACELT1587) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1591) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Through writing and discussion, answer comprehension questions relating to the story, such as:
 - *Knowledge:* Who was in the story? What was the problem? Where does most of the story take place? What day did Mr Coltsfoot say that no one can climb The Big Tree? When did Sapling use her special gift?
 - *Comprehension:* Retell the story in your own words. What was the main idea? What are the differences between Sapling and Wynn? What are the similarities between Sapling and The Big Tree?
 - *Application:* How does Sapling’s green thumbs make her ‘different’? Why are accepting yourself and your strengths important? Why didn’t the teacher allow the children to climb the tree, and why was it going to be cut down? How are the items found around Sapling’s home significant to her being a ‘green thumb’ and to her ‘growth’?
 - *Analysis:* What are the features of The Big Tree? Draw a diagram showing the full schoolyard tree. How does the way Sapling interacted with other children compare from before she shared her secret to after she used her special gift?
 - *Synthesis:* Predict how Sapling might interact with others, and use her gift, in the future. What ideas can you think of for looking after nature, or growing your own garden? How would you design your own ‘imaginative’ treehouse, or garden patch?
 - *Evaluation:* Do you agree that Sapling Green should be treated differently to the other children? Why or why not? How? What is the most important thing the story is teaching us? What do you think about the way Wynn reacted to the tree being out of use, and to discovering Sapling’s secret? How do you think Wynn has become more aware of other people?



TEACHER NOTES: The Secret of Sapling Green

Comprehension – Cloze and Retell

(ACELA1435) (ACELA1434) (ACELA1451) (ACELT1578) (ACELT1584) (ACELT1580) (ACELT1586) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Match the days of the week with the events that happened in the story, and complete the sentences. Retell and illustrate the events in order.

Monday – ‘The Big Tree is out of bounds. No _____ (climbing)!’

Tuesday – Wynn doesn’t _____ (climb).

Wednesday – Wynn doesn’t _____ (laugh) or _____ (shout).

Thursday – The schoolyard tree must be _____ (cut down).

Friday – The schoolyard tree is _____ (full).

Creative Writing: Innovation on Text

(ACELA1435) (ACELA1451) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1831) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1832) (ACELT1833)

- Ask students to brainstorm ideas for their own special ‘green thumb’ gift. Students write a sentence beginning with ‘Green thumbs can...’ What would you do with your green thumbs? Illustrate.

Narrative Writing

(ACELT1580) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1652) (ACELT1832) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1672) (ACELY1674)

- Idea 1:* Expand the sentence from the above ‘innovation on text’ task and write a narrative story. Will it be about an imaginative tree, or creating a garden space, or making friends in nature? Who are the characters? What do they like to do? What kinds of events or problems happen? How will they be resolved? What are the themes (friendship, accepting differences, caring for nature, bravery)? Begin your narrative with a sizzling start, such as dialogue, onomatopoeia, action or scene setting. Set it out with a beginning, middle and end.
- Idea 2:* Think about what it might be like to have a secret you couldn’t, or were too afraid to share. What is the secret? Why is it important to the character? What is stopping the character from sharing it? How will they overcome the problem? What powers does the secret have that ultimately changes the characters’ world?

Information Report / Procedural Text

(ACELA1430) (ACELA1786) (ACELA1447) (ACELA1450) (ACELA1453) (ACELA1463) (ACELY1648) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1658) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1668) (ACELY1671). *Science Links:* (ACSSU002) (ACSSU017) (ACSSU030) (AC SIS233) (AC SIS027) (AC SIS040)

- Students can create a poster or digital presentation with the collation of facts about a particular plant / tree, or a ‘How to care for plants’ procedural text. Be sure to include a title, interesting facts, diagrams or pictures, and captions for the information report. Include an introduction / goal, materials needed, step-by-step instructions and conclusion, plus any diagrams, for a procedure.

Recount / Reflective Writing

(ACELA1437) (ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELY1651) (ACELA1787) (ACELT1582)

- Encourage students to think about a time when they felt like they didn’t fit in, or an experience with a creative thinking/problem solving task, like Sapling Green and her green thumbs.* Students should include how they felt, how they managed the situation, the challenges and outcomes.

*Perhaps this task (for example, students solve how to fix a broken tree branch with household materials) can be conducted beforehand.



Thinking Tools / Graphic Organisers

(ACELA1429) (ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1583) (ACELT1589) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- **Y-Chart:** Students can imagine themselves as Sapling or Wynn, in one of the scenarios in the book, such as Sapling alone and watching others play, or using her gift to make the tree grow, or Wynn swinging and laughing. Complete the graphic organiser with the headings: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like. See **BLM 2**.
- **Venn Diagram:** Complete a Venn Diagram to compare the similarities and differences between Sapling Green and Wynn Farthing. Think about their appearances, personality traits, interests, growth / changes, etc. Alternatively, compare Sapling Green with The Big Tree, or compare Sapling at home and at school. See **BLM 3**.
- **De Bono's Six Thinking Hats:** Think about the impact of Sapling's fears about being different on her ability to make friends and accept herself, with the use of the six hats: Red (fears, feelings, intuition), White (information, facts), Yellow (Benefits, positive thinking), Blue (big picture, focus, learnings), Green (creative thinking, alternatives), Black (risks, problems, obstacles).

SCIENCE

Learning about Plant Growth

(ACSSU002) (ACSSU017) (ACSSU021) (ACSSU030) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE021) (ACSHE034) (ACSI014) (ACSI024) (ACSI011) (ACSI025) (ACSI039) (ACSI233) (ACSI012) (ACSI027) (ACSI041) (ACSI029)

'Green thumbs can grow anything.'

- Experiment with growing plants in different conditions to learn about growth, observing what happens in varying light and the amount of water given to each plant. Students will need to write their goal (what they want to find out), their hypothesis or prediction, the step-by-step procedure, and the results. They will need three containers with seeds and soil: 1. Water and Sun, 2. Water and NO Sun, 3. Sun and NO Water. Keep a journal and record growth over time for each container. What can students conclude after several weeks?

Force and Motion

(ACSSU005) (ACSSU033) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE021) (ACSI014) (ACSI024) (ACSI011) (ACSI025) (ACSI039) (ACSI233) (ACSI012) (ACSI027) (ACSI041) (ACSI029)

Wynn likes to play and climb in the schoolyard tree. He is the best at swinging through branches.

- Explore the physics of swinging forces in the playground, or construct your own 'pendulum' with a weight at the end of a piece of string. For students to understand the science behind 'swinging', they will need to identify how kinetic energy (the push) propels the person or object higher and higher. Meanwhile, gravity (the pull to Earth) draws the person or object downward. As students conduct the experiment, they need to observe the two highest peaks of the motion, and the lowest point. Draw a diagram of the motion.
- Extension: try measuring the time it takes from point to the other, and introduce some variables, such as the starting point height or length of the string. Discuss the findings.



HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Healthy Mind / Healthy Body Ideas:

(ACPPS003) (ACPPS004) (ACPPS005) (ACPPS006) (ACPPS017) (ACPPS018) (ACPPS020) (ACPPS021) (ACPMP008) (ACPMP012) (ACPMP025) (ACPMP028)

- Grow seeds and plants with friends and family
- Maintain a community, home or school garden
- Make your own pots with recycled materials
- Climb and swing in your favourite tree
- Visit the library - read books!
- Discover nature around your school, at the park or in your garden
- Hug a tree!
- Write an imaginative story about a tree
- Build a treehouse
- Share a secret with a friend
- Pretend to possess a magical gift and create a role play.

VISUAL ARTS

Leaf or Flower Art

(ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108)

- Draw a large leaf or flower shape on paper, including the veins and patterns. Using a selection of media, including pencils and watercolours, design each section of the leaf or flower with textures, patterns and multiple colours. Examples of leaf art can be found at:
<https://thecraftyclassroom.com/crafts/fall-leaf-art-projects-for-kids>

Real Life Drawing / Painting

(ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108) (ACAVAR109)

- Choose a plant, tree, piece of tree fruit, or single leaf or flower to study and draw. Look closely at its lines, shape, textures and colours. Use a fine pencil, charcoal or paint for your medium. How realistic does it look?

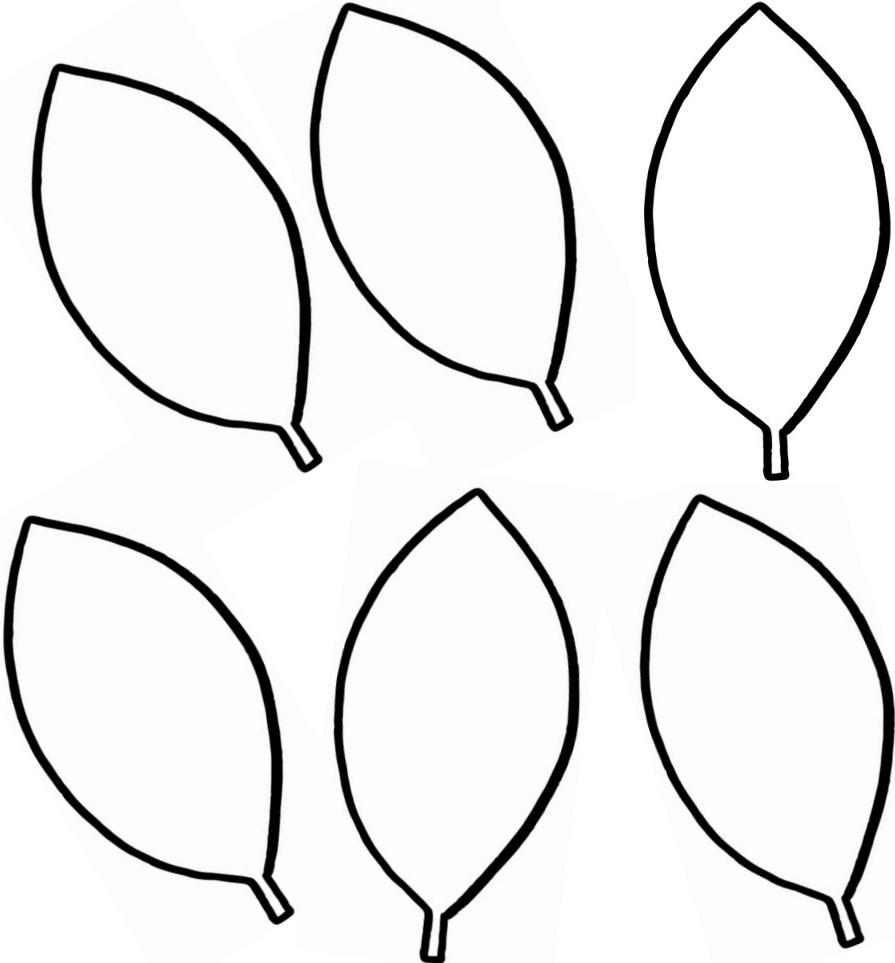
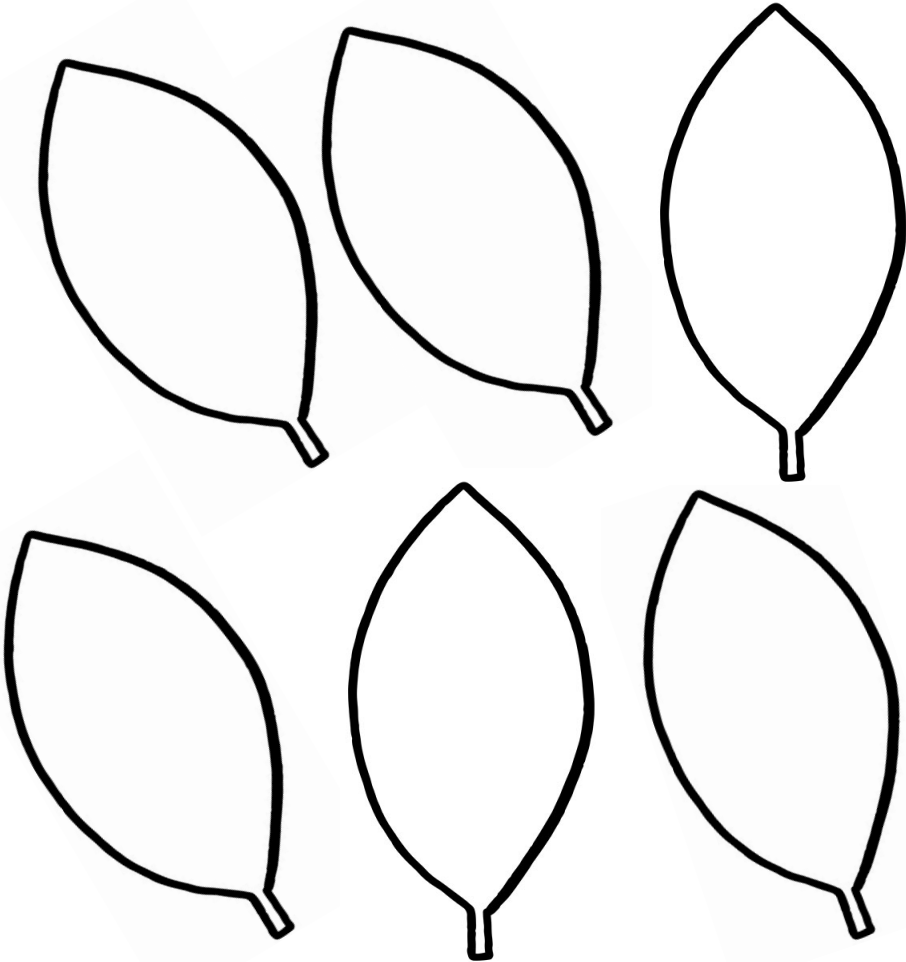
DIY Plant Pots

(ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108)

- Paint and decorate your own pot, either from a recycled bottle or container, or a handmade air-drying clay pot. Make sure the media used will be durable and permanent. Ensure the pot includes a drainage hole at the bottom. Your design could represent your favourite activity, special talent or character, or your favourite part of the book, *The Secret of Sapling Green*.

NAME _____

DATE _____

Sapling Green	Wynn Farthing
	

NAME _____

DATE _____

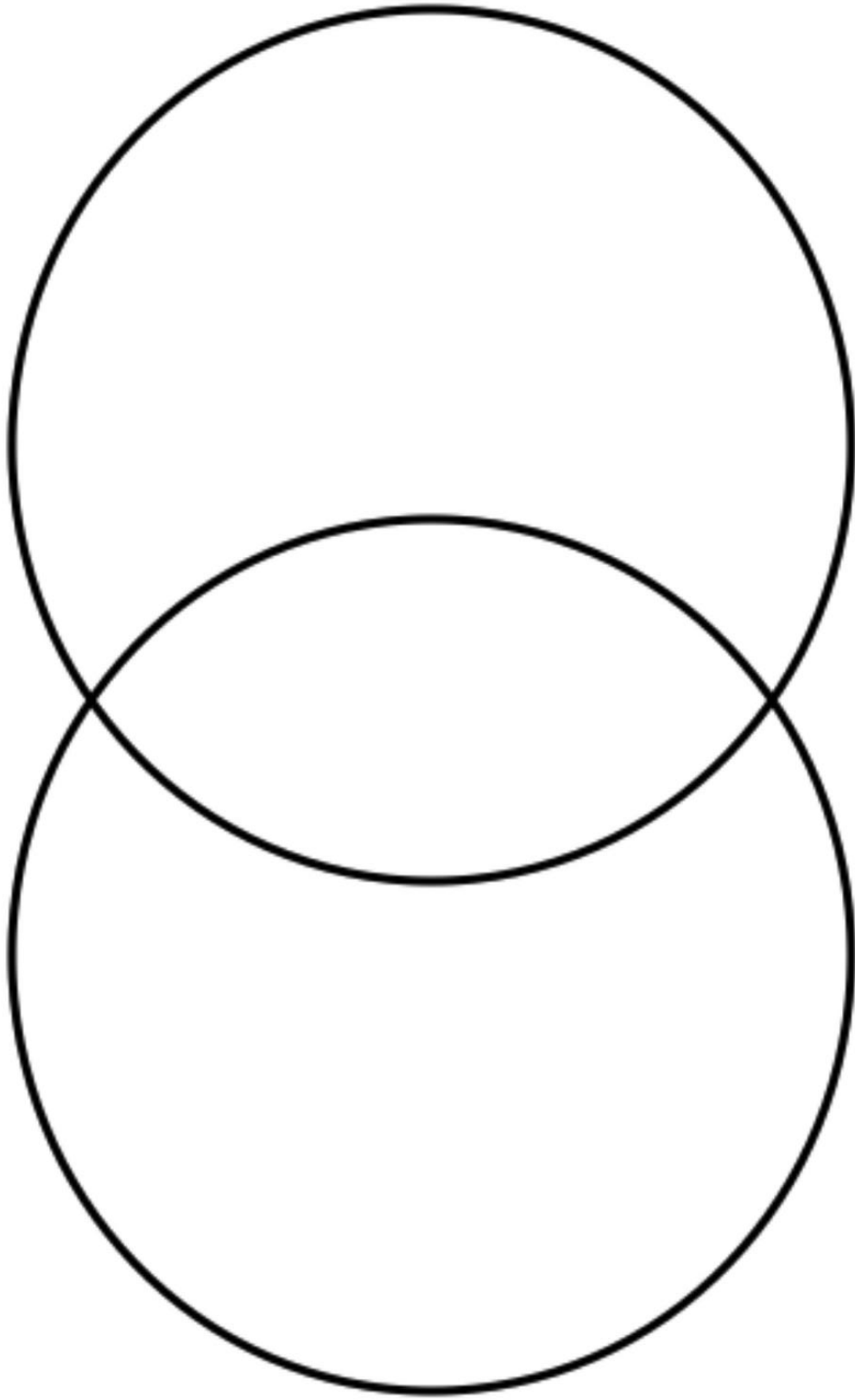
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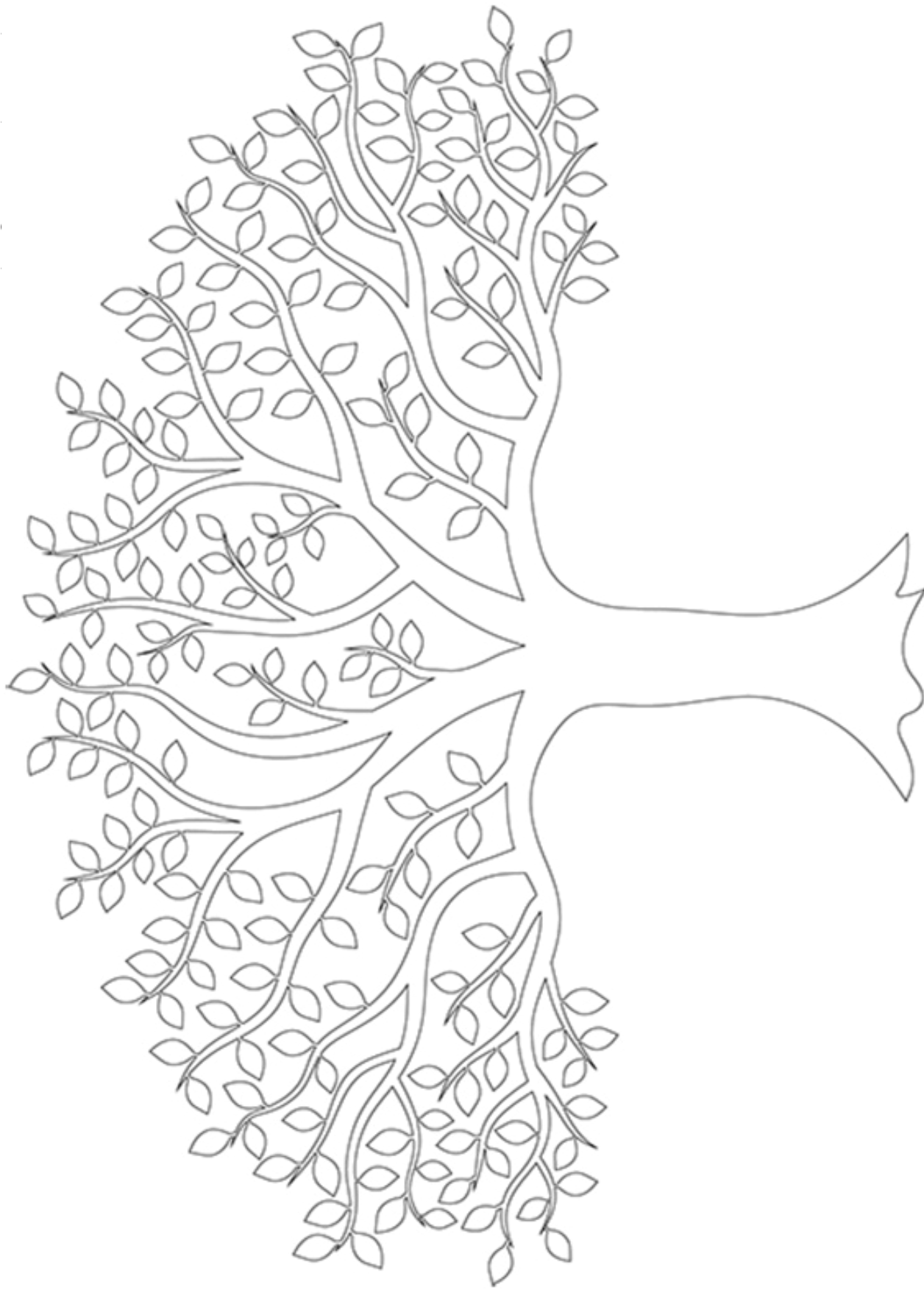
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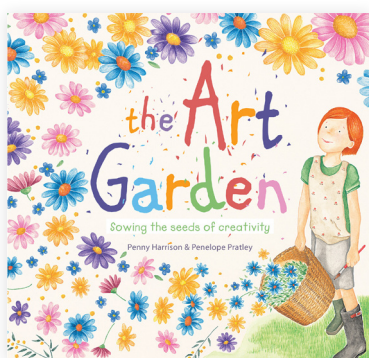


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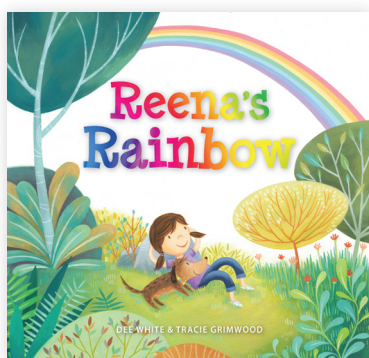


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