



**Wishtree**  
**By Katherine Applegate**

# Read Together Guide

For Families, Friends, and Classrooms

# About the Author and the Story

## Book Summary

Red is an oak tree who is many rings old. He is also the neighborhood "wishtree"—people write their wishes on pieces of cloth and tie them to Red's branches. Along with her crow friend Bongo and other animals who seek refuge in Red's hollows, this "wishtree" watches over the neighborhood.

You might say Red has seen it all. Until a new family moves in. Not everyone is welcoming, and Red's experiences as a wishtree are more important than ever.

Funny, deep, warm, and nuanced, this is Katherine Applegate at her very best—writing from the heart, and from a completely unexpected point of view.

Visit <http://wishtreebook.com/> for more details.

## About the Author

Katherine Applegate is the author of *The One and Only Ivan*, winner of the Newbery Medal and a #1 *New York Times* bestseller.

Her other books include *Wishtree*, *Crenshaw*, *Home of the Brave*, and the Roscoe Riley Rules series.

She lives in California with her family. Visit Amazon or <http://katherineapplegate.com/> to learn more about Ms. Applegate's other books.

## About Read Together Guides

**Read Together Guides** are meant to help young readers find ways to enjoy and appreciate literature. They are written not to address standards but to encourage readers to connect to a story's characters, understand the major themes, and think about how what they are reading relates to their own lives.

Embedded in these guides are activities that ask readers to share their opinions but also evaluate the actions of the characters they are reading about. Many of the questions that are posed in these guides are meant to be shared and discussed with family members, friends, book clubs, or classmates.

These guides are perfect to share with a young reader during summer vacation or as a supplement during the school year. They also work well to guide Book Clubs or Library Reading Groups. Teachers may find them useful as well.

Visit [www.readtogetherguides.com](http://www.readtogetherguides.com) to find more guides and learn more about how to use these guides.



# Before You Read

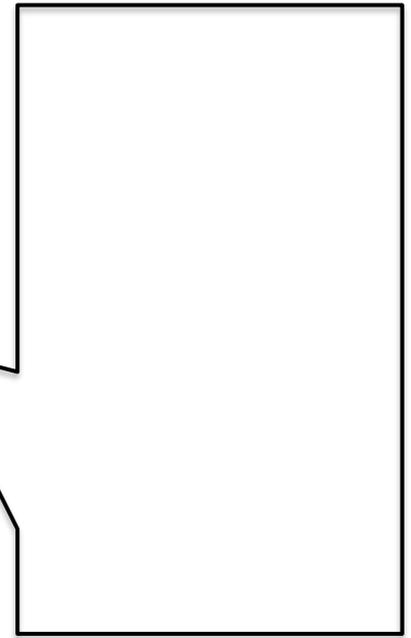
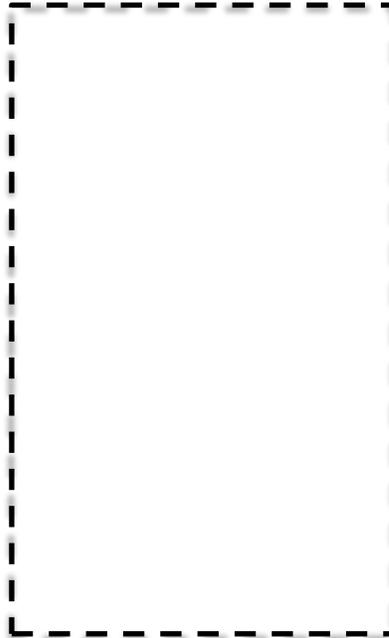
## Sketch a Tree

The story, *WISHTREE*, is told through the eyes of Red, an older oak tree that is beloved by her community.

Find a tree in your yard, near your house, or in a picture. In the space provided, sketch what it looks like.

Now, imagine what it sees everyday. What might it hear? What might it like and dislike?

In the speech bubble, write a statement from the point of view of the tree that describes your world. Your statement should start with the pronoun "I."



## What's in a Name?

The many animals in this book all choose names for themselves. If you were the animal listed below and had to choose your name based on the reason given, what would you choose?

**Crows** often choose their names from a sound they like. For example: Windchime or SchoolBell.

**Your Crow Name**



**Skunks** choose their names from a smell they like. For example: ApplePie or Tulip.

**Your Skunk Name**



**Opossums** often choose their names from something they fear. For example: HairySpiders or FastCars.

**Your Opossum Name**



**Frogs** often choose their names from a bug they eat. For example: Fly or Grasshopper.

**Your Frog Name**





# Before You Read

## Welcome to the Group

One theme, or message, of this story is about including others.

In the LEFT box, draw a person who feels included by others. What expression would they have? Then, shade around your sketch using a color that shows how your person feels to be part of a group.

In the RIGHT box, draw a person who feels excluded from a group. What expression would they have? Then, shade around your sketch using a color that shows how your person feels to be left out of a group.

Included

Excluded

Which of these might be good ways to include someone who feels left out? (Check as many as you want!)

- invite him to join an activity
- ask her what she likes to do
- laugh at them for being different
- see if she wants to sit with you at lunch
- introduce him to your friends
- tell her she can only play with you if she does what you say

Have a conversation with an adult or a friend about why your choices would be good ones.

## Word Trees

The next three pages show trees with some chosen words from this story. On each page, color ONLY each tree that has the correct definition of the trunk word in its branches. Use the page number from the book to help you.

If you have correctly colored each page, the shaded-in trees will reveal a letter that answers the riddles below.

*Word Tree #1: Which letter of the alphabet has the most water in it?*

*Word Tree #2: What letter adds a lot of value to a pear?*

*Word Tree #3: What is the missing letter: J F M A M J J A S \_ N D?*

{Answers: #1 = C because seas are full of water; #2 = L because it makes a pear a pearl; #3 = O because the letters are all of the months in order}

**Chapters 1-3**

The narrator introduces herself as a tree who can talk and tell stories. She describes herself as a northern red oak with “the best fall color on the street.” She also explains that she is a “wishtree” upon whose branches people in the neighborhood tie strips of material or paper with their wishes written on them on the first day of May each year.

**Chapters 4-6**

Red shares that her best friend is a crow names Bongo whose pessimism sometimes annoys Red. Red also explains how crows get their names. Red says that she is “monoecious” which means that she grows both male and female flowers. She also reveals that she, like most things in nature, can talk.

**Chapters 7-9**

Red is home to many animals. She also has a human visitor: a young girl named Samar who lives in one of the two houses that Red shelters with her branches. Samar often sneaks out at night to sit quietly under Red. One night, Samar visits Red in tears. She ties a wish to Red’s branches that says, “I wish for a friend.”

**Chapters 10-13**

Samar’s tearful wish bothers Red. When Red watches Samar leave for school the next day, she observes that Stephen, the boy who lives in the house next to Samar, leave at the same moment, yet they don’t speak to each other. A minute later, an older boy arrives and carves something into Red’s bark. A mother and daughter passing by read aloud what he’s carved: “Leave.”

**Chapters 14-16**

Police officers arrive to investigate the vandalism on Red’s trunk. The woman who lives across the street (and who owns the land that Red sits) on ponders if it is time to cut Red down since her roots are causing problems with underground pipes. All of the animals who reside in Red’s hollows worry and fret about losing Red.

**Chapters 17-20**

A reporter asks Samar about the word “Leave” in Red’s trunk. The police return to question both Samar’s and Stephen’s families. Samar visits Red late that night and all of the animals come out to comfort her. Later, Bongo and Red have a long discussion about friendship.

**Chapters 21-24**

The animals who live in and near Red begin to discuss where they will live if Red is cut down. Bongo and Red plot about how they can make Samar’s wish come true. Plan Number One has Bongo stealing Stephen’s English homework and giving it to Samar. Samar, however,—instead of returning it to Stephen—gives it to Stephen’s friend instead. Red then comes up with Plan Number Two which requires one of the baby possums to play dead in Samar’s yard so that Stephen and Samar find him when they come home from school.

**Chapters 25-26**

The animals put Plan Number Two in motion. One of the baby possums pretends to be dead in the yard so that Stephen and Samar will work together to help him. But Stephen calls his mom to help instead.

**Chapters 27-28**

Bongo works to untie Samar's wish from Red's branch. That night, when Samar comes to visit Red, Bongo taps on Stephen's window to wake him. He gives Samar's wish to Stephen.

**Chapters 29-30**

Stephen comes down to meet Samar who is sitting under Red surrounded by all of the animals. Samar shows Stephen a key that Bongo gave her. She also tells him that her family might move away. Red breaks her rule of silence to tell them both, "Stay." Stephen and Samar are both very surprised to hear a tree talk.

**Chapters 31-32**

Red tells Stephen and Samar the story of an immigrant named Maeve who came to live in Red's neighborhood many years ago. Maeve was the very first person to tie a wish to Red's limbs. It said, "I wish for someone to love with all my heart. "

**Chapters 33-35**

Red continues to tell the story of Maeve and the growing popularity of tying wishes to her branches. One day, however, someone leaves more than a wish—they leave a tiny baby in her hollow.

**Chapters 36-38**

Maeve finds the hidden baby and raises it as her daughter, even though the people in the neighborhood disapprove of a single mom raising a baby. Still, Maeve and her daughter, Amadora, win them over with their kindness, and eventually Amadora gives birth to her own daughter, Francesca, the woman who now wants to chop Red down.

**Chapters 39-40**

Stephen and Samar are still open-mouthed in surprise at hearing Red tell her story when Stephen is called inside by his father. Red has second thoughts about speaking to the children, but Bongo reassures her that she did the right thing.

**Chapter 41**

Someone throws eggs at Samar's house. Stephen and Samar discuss hearing Red speak and agree to keep it a secret.

**Chapters 41-42**

People start to tie wishes to Red's branches even though Wishing Day is still one day away. Francesca announces that she will be cutting Red down at the end of Wishing Day. The tree cutters come to look at Red. Francesca assures them that all the animals that live in Red always leave on Wishing Day so it's the best day to cut the tree down.

**Chapter 44**

Stephen and Samar try to convince Francesca not to cut down Red. Francesca recognizes the key that Bongo gave to Samar and tells the two children that the key opens Maeve's old family journal that is probably somewhere in the shed behind their houses. Stephen and Samar tell Francesca that Red told them a story about a baby—Francesca's mother—that was left in the hollow. Francesca doesn't believe that a tree can talk. Samar reveals that the kids at her school were acting oddly around her all day and she doesn't know why.



**Chapters 45-46**

Red tries to enjoy her last night before being cut down. The next day is Wishing Day and reporters come to see Red and all the wishes being tied to her. The animals all leave for the day. Many people come to tie wishes to Red's branches, including a lot of kids from Stephen and Samar's school. Each of them also ties an index card to Red that says, "Stay."

**Chapter 47**

Samar learns that Stephen planned to have all of her classmates write "Stay" on Red's branches. The wood cutters show up to cut Red down. After finding Maeve's journal in the shed, Samar and Stephen give it to Francesca to read.

**Chapters 48-49**

While the tree cutters set up, Francesca reads the journal that tells the story of her childhood. Bongo refuses to leave Red. The animals all return to Red's hollows and branches so that the tree cutters can't start cutting Red down. Francesca decides that Red needs to stay and asks Samar to stay in the neighborhood, too.

**Chapters 50-51**

After Wishing Day, Samar and Stephen become good friends, though their families still don't talk to each other. Red's animals move back in, though they still bicker sometimes. And Francesca leaves Red where she is, even though her roots still cause damage to the underground water pipes

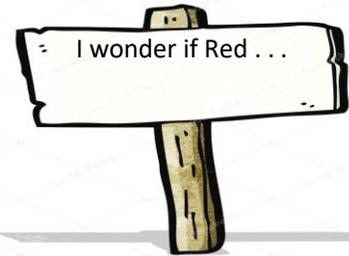
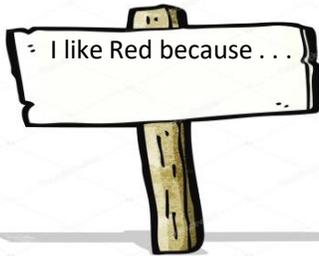


# As You Read

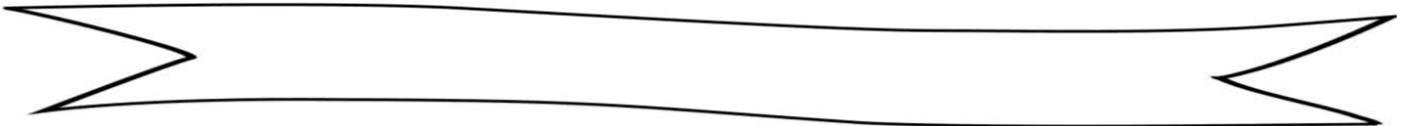
**CHAPTER 1:** The narrator of this story is a tree.

- In the leaves and branches, write one or two ways that having a tree tell a story could be interesting or different.

**CHAPTER 2:** On the signs near the tree below, write one thing you LIKE about Red and one thing you want to know more about Red.



**CHAPTER 3:** In this story, people tie wishes to Red and hope they come true. On the ribbon below, write one wish you have that you would like to tie onto Red on Wishing Day.



Share your wish with an adult or friend.

**CHAPTER 4:** If you could choose between having a crow or a tree for a friend, which would you choose? Circle your choice and find something that character said or did in the book that helped you make this decision.



Example from the book:

**CHAPTER 5:** With a parent or an adult's permission, look up this phrase on the internet: MONOECIOUS EXAMPLES. In the box below, draw a monoecious plant or tree. Then, explain WHY that plant or tree is monoecious.

Your Drawing:	Explanation:

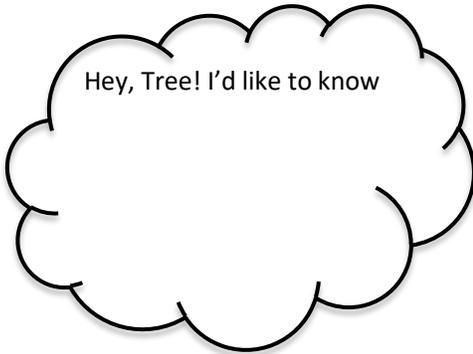


# As You Read

**CHAPTER 6:** If you could talk to a tree and have it talk back to you, what would you ask it?



Hey, Tree! I'd like to know

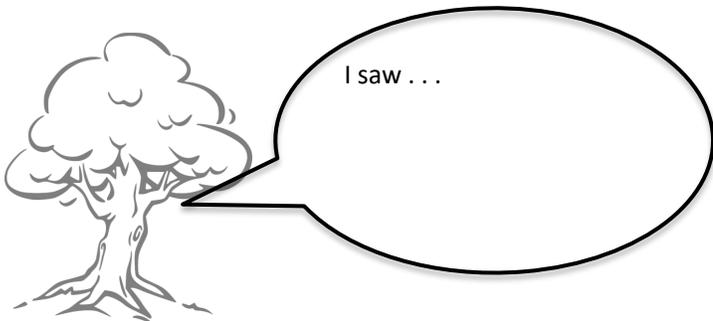


What do you think makes someone "good"?

**CHAPTER 8:** Why do you think all the animals trust Samar? Next to the drawing of her below, list at least one thing that you've learned about her from the book that would make animals like her.



**CHAPTER 10:** In the last sentence of this chapter, Red says that something happened that made her "wonder if I'd finally witnessed too much." What do you think she's witnessed?

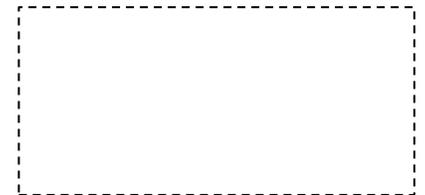


I saw . . .

**CHAPTER 7:** "Making others safe is a good way to spend a day." How much do you agree with this statement? Mark your answer on the spectrum below.



What is another good way to spend a day? Draw your thoughts here.



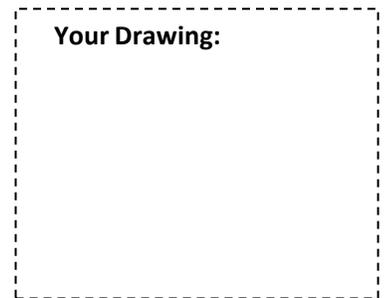
**CHAPTER 9:** What does Samar's wish tell us about her?



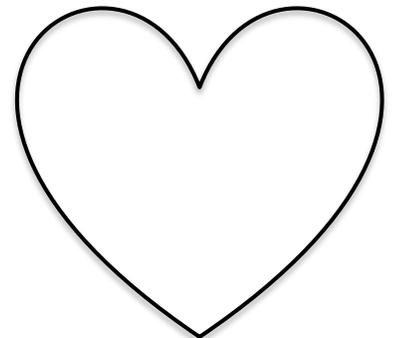
Have you ever felt like Samar?

**CHAPTER 11:** Draw a CORVID. (For help, look at the definition on page 39.)

Your Drawing:



The last sentence of this chapter reads: *It is a great gift indeed to love who you are.* In the heart below, write or draw something you LOVE about yourself.





# As You Read

**CHAPTERS 12 and 13:** Red describes Bongo as **pessimistic**, which means she expects the worst to happen. Red says she is **optimistic**, which means she is hopeful about the future.

**CHAPTER 14:** Using the descriptions on page 53, draw the two houses as Red sees them.

House 1

House 2

Using the examples on page 50, write how each character sees the future.

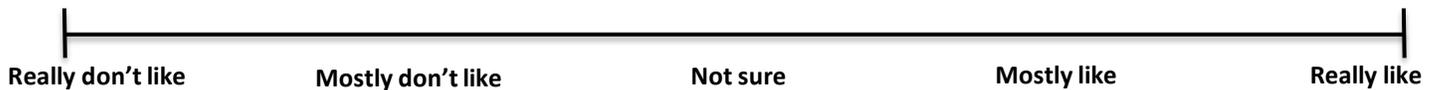
Optimistic

Pessimistic



Are you more pessimistic or optimistic? Discuss with a friend or adult.

**CHAPTER 15:** Mark on the spectrum below how much you like or dislike Francesca?



Do you think it's fair that Francesca is blaming Red for the problems she sees the tree causing?

Francesca says the word, "LEAVE" is a threat? Do you agree with her?

**CHAPTER 16:** Finish this statement: Crepuscular creatures are ones that \_\_\_\_\_.

**CHAPTER 17:** Who or what do you think the word "LEAVE" is meant for?

With an adult's permission, use the internet to research a crepuscular creature not listed on page 66. Draw it here.

Your Drawing:



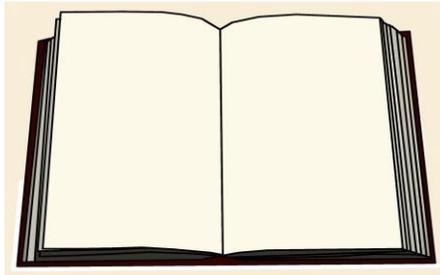
What might be some good things about having a large tree like Red in your yard? What might be some challenges or bad things? Share your thoughts with a friend or adult.



# As You Read

**CHAPTER 18:** If you could imagine this chapter as a color, what color would you choose?

Shade in the left page of the book that color. Then on the right page, write a short reason why you chose this color.



The word “compassionate” means showing great concern for others.  
Is there someone in your life you might describe as compassionate? Share your thoughts with a friend or adult.



Red says, “My life had been so . . . safe.” What does it mean to be safe? Is living a “safe” life good or bad? Share your thoughts with a friend or adult.

**CHAPTER 20:** The word “restlessness” means unable to sit still. It also can describe someone who is unhappy with the way things are and wants to change them.  
Mark the box on the graphic to the right to show if you think the word “restlessness” is a positive or negative word.



Why did you mark the graphic where you did??

Why do certain people become friends and others don't? Think of a friend you have. Why are you friends?



Why are people cruel to each other?

**CHAPTER 21:** Why do you think the animals are so worried in this chapter?

## PREDICT

Will Francesca cut Red down?



# As You Read

**CHAPTERS 22 and 23:** Bongo and Red have decided to grant Samar's wish to have a friend. Rate how much you agree with this plan by coloring in the stars below.



Horrible idea!

Awesome idea!

Fill in the empty box with what you think will happen next.

Bongo steals Stephen's homework. 



Can you make two people become friends? How would you do it?

**CHAPTER 26:** A collective noun is a group of the same item. In this chapter, Bongo lists several groups of collective nouns. Can you match each animal with its collective noun by drawing a line between them?

- |        |              |
|--------|--------------|
| Charm  | Crows        |
| Grove  | Trees        |
| Gaze   | Raccoons     |
| Murder | Hummingbirds |

**CHAPTER 27:** Next to Bongo below, write or draw one thing a crow can do that you didn't know about.



**CHAPTERS 24 and 25:** Red thinks that Plan Number Two will work. Bongo thinks it will fail. Circle the character you think is right.



The animals who live in and around Red have always seemed to get along even if they are supposed to be enemies. What do you think kept them all friendly?

Why are they fighting with each other right now?

Now, in the box below, draw a favorite animal of yours. With an adult's help, research what the collective noun would be if you had a group of them.

Your Drawing:

Collective Noun:

**CHAPTER 28:** Do you think Red's plan will work this time?



Nope. No way!

Absolutely!



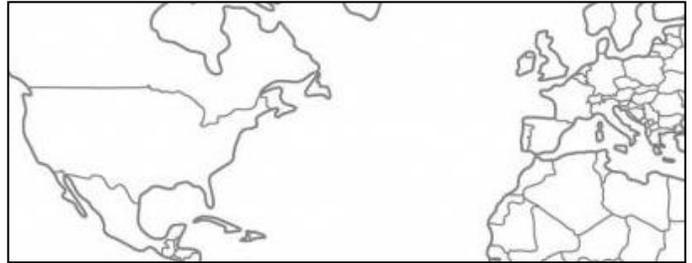
# As You Read

**CHAPTERS 29 and 30:** Who is more afraid of things: adults or children?

Write or draw something that you are afraid of and something that an adult you know is afraid of.

I'm Afraid Of	An Adult Is Afraid Of
---------------	-----------------------

**CHAPTER 31:** Color in both Ireland and the United States on the map below. (You may have to use the Internet or an atlas to help you.)



With an adult, research the following:

- How many miles is it from Dublin, Ireland, to New York City, New York?
- How long would it take to travel by boat from Ireland to New York?



Why might there be “no safe place” for Samar and her family?

**CHAPTERS 32 and 33:** If loneliness was a color, what color do you think it would be. Color the word below.

Lonely

Why did you choose this color?

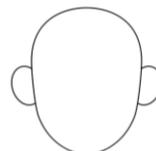


Do you live in a neighborhood like Maeve’s where families come from different countries and have different cultures? Talk with a friend or an adult what living in a place like that might be like.

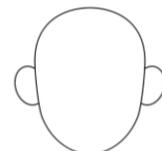
**CHAPTER 34:** Draw or write what you think is in the bundle, or wrapped package, that the woman placed in Red’s hollow.

Your Drawing:

**CHAPTERS 35 and 36:** Why might someone leave a baby in a tree?



Maeve



Amadora

Use the details on page 146 to draw and then color in eyes and hair on the faces below. Why might some children not look like their parents?



# As You Read

**CHAPTER 37:** Why would people get angry at Maeve for keeping the baby?

Red calls the neighborhood “a messy garden.” Draw what you think she means in the box below:

**A Messy Garden Neighborhood**

**CHAPTER 38:** Red says, “Everyone needs to have hope.” What do you think hope looks like?

**Hope**

**?** Why is hope such an important thing for every person to have? What does hope give us? Talk this over with an adult or a friend.

**CHAPTERS 39 and 40:** Why do you think Red chose to tell Samar and Stephen this story when she could have told them so many things that night?

Did Red do the “right thing” by breaking the rule to speak to humans?

## PREDICT

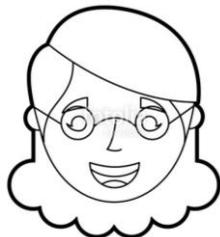


Will this event change things for Samar and Stephen?

**?** Is it ever okay to break a rule? Talk this over with an adult or a friend.

**CHAPTERS 41, 42 and 43:** In the speech bubbles below, write one reason that Francesca SHOULD cut down Red and one reason she shouldn't.

I should cut down Red because



I shouldn't cut down Red because



Is there ever a time when two people should NOT be friends? Talk this over with an adult or a friend.

## PREDICT



What will Francesca do?



# As You Read

**CHAPTER 44:** Do you agree with Red's decision to not talk to Francesca? Mark your answer on the spectrum below.



Are Stephen and Samar friends now? What makes you think this?

**CHAPTER 46:** All of the cards have the word, "STAY" on them. Who is this word meant for?

How did reading this chapter make you feel?

**CHAPTERS 47, 48 and 49:** Why does Francesca change her mind?

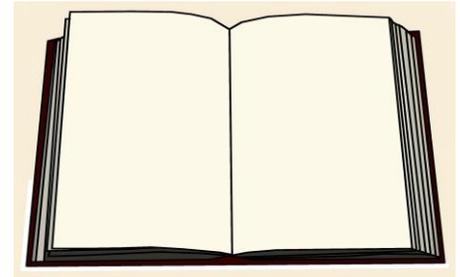
What do you think the author is trying to tell the reader in these chapters?

**CHAPTERS 50-51:** After the Wishing Day, what changed? In the garden below, write all the GOOD changes on the flowers. Write anything that hasn't changed on the weeds.



**CHAPTER 45:** If you could imagine this chapter as a color, what color would you choose?

Color in the left page of the book that color. Then on the right page, write a short reason why you chose this color.





# After You Read

## Appreciate a Tree

Find a tree in your neighborhood. Try to find one that has been there a while.

Sketch the tree on a blank piece of paper. Then, write all the ways this tree makes life better for you and your neighbors.

## Plan a Wishing Day

Consider starting a Wishing Day at your house, in your neighborhood, or at your school. With the help of friends and adults, do the following:

- Set a date. In the book, Wishing Day was May 1, but you may decide on a different day for your Wishing Day.
- Pick a tree to hang your wishes on. Make sure it has low branches that people can reach and is both sturdy and old enough to support having wishes hung on it.
- Advertise your Wishing Day to the people you hope participate. Create a flyer that explains what you are doing and gives the date. Consider gathering a supply of markers, ribbons, index cards, or strips of fabric on hand for people who want to participate.
- Hold your Wishing Tree Event. Have a table nearby with your writing supplies and wish slips. And make sure to enjoy the beauty of the tree you've chosen.

## Where is your Family From?

One of the themes of this story is accepting people who are from cultures and places different than us. The term for someone who leaves their home to settle in a new place is "immigrant." With a friend to an adult, talk about these questions:

- What could be one exciting thing about being an immigrant in a new country?
- What could be one challenge to being an immigrant in a new country?
- Many families in the United States have had relatives that immigrated here from somewhere else. Talk with someone in your family to see where your family originally came from and what challenges they may have faced.

## Traditions

Maeve brought a tradition from her homeland to her new neighborhood.

Do you have a tradition like Maeve's in your family? Write or draw your tradition below.

Then, find out, if you can, how that tradition got started.