EDUCATORS' GUIDE

WISH IN A TREE

Written by
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Illustrated by
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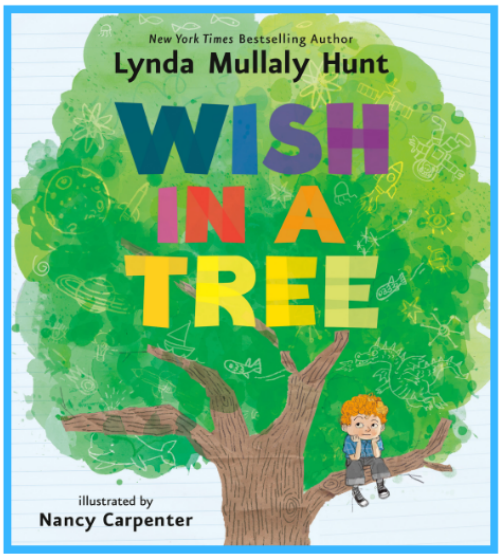


ABOUT THE BOOK

Oliver's brain is a volcano of ideas—always bubbling with questions. This makes it hard to focus at school, and sometimes he worries he won't ever fit in there. It's a good thing he has a friend who reminds him that great minds don't think alike, and that a brain that blazes with curiosity and imagination is a glorious thing.

Featuring artwork showcasing all the wonderful things going on in Oliver's astonishing brain, this uplifting book celebrates out-of-the-box thinking, the power of creativity, and the importance of being proud of the things that set us apart.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynda Mullaly Hunt is a bestselling, award-winning author and former educator who taught third-grade and sixth-grade students. The character of Oliver in her middle-grade novel *Fish in a Tree* inspired her to write this picture book. Among many other awards, *Fish in a Tree* received the American Library Association Schneider Family Book Award for excellence in portraying the disability experience. Lynda also is the author of the award-winning middle-grade novels *One for the Murphys* and *Shouting at the Rain.* Lynda Mullaly Hunt lives in New England and likes to paint with watercolors and juggle.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Nancy Carpenter is the celebrated illustrator of more than forty books for children. Her unique multimedia approach to illustration has received numerous honors, including two Christopher awards and the Jane Addams Children's Book Award. Nancy Carpenter lives in Brooklyn, New York, with her family and dog.

LYNDA MULLALY HUNT SAYS:

"As a teacher, I always loved kids like Oliver who couldn't sit still or stay in their seat. They thought out-of-the-box, but they felt a lot of shame. I am a firm believer in that we should never be defined by a single label. Kids sometimes feel like they defined by those labels, but I hope they will learn to view themselves as people with a myriad of gifts."

Nancy Paulsen Books
PENGUIN

Published by Nancy Paulsen Books
Age: 4-8 | ISBN 9781524739683
Reading Level: AD540L, Fountas & Pinnell N
Interest Level: Preschool - 5th

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

In this educators' guide, teachers will find resources and lesson ideas related to literacy, social-emotional growth, science, history, art, and mathematics for students in kindergarten through grade 5 to be used with the picture book *Wish in a Tree.* These activities are meant to be adapted by educators to their students' needs and abilities.

BEFORE READING

Create an anchor chart for understanding similes and metaphors.
Wish in a Tree uses similes and metaphors to show readerswhat Oliver is like and how he is feeling. Model using a simile (*Examples: As hungry as a lion; as busy as a bee; like a diamond in the sky)* and ask students to discuss the difference between a simple sentence and one that uses a simile *(Example: I am hungry, and I am hungry as a lion).*

Then model a metaphor *(Examples: heart of gold, it's raining cats and dogs)*. Ask students to come up with their own similes and metaphors. Record them on the chart. During reading, add the book's similes and metaphors to the chart.

Use cover clues for making inferences and predictions.

1. Show the book cover. Tell students that every part of a picture book is created with care and intent, including the book cover.
2. Ask students what they notice. Who might be the main character? What is the main character doing? How might the main character be feeling?
3. Ask them to look closely at the illustrations in the tree. What might they indicate? Do they have anything in common with each other? If so, why do they think that?
4. Ask students about the title. What might "wish in a tree" mean? How might the title and illustrations relate to each other? Notice the colors of the words. Why might the illustrator have chosen those colors?
5. Open the book. Ask students to notice the color of the first endpaper. Then flip to the back and notice the color of the back endpaper. Why might the book designer have chosen those colors? Show the cover of the book again.
6. Turn to the title page. What connections can students make between the cover illustrations and the illustrations on the title page? How might they connect to the character shown on the cover? Can they make predictions about what this character might be like? Where might this story take place?

DURING READING

Read the first page aloud. Ask: Who might be speaking? What can we learn about the character from this first sentence? How might this character be feeling? Why might this character feel like a fish in a tree? What might be happening in school to make this character feel this way?

Ask students to identify similes and metaphors as you read. Record them on the chart.
How does using simile and metaphor show how Oliver feels?

AFTER READING

Discuss: How does Oliver grow and change in the book? When does he start to change? How does that happen? When does Oliver realize he has the power to change? Do any other characters grow and change? How does he feel about being a fish in a tree at the beginning? At the end? Why do his feelings change?

Discuss: What characters say to themselves and others is important in this book. Oliver hears Shay's mean words, but his negative self-talk is more painful. Later, Albert tells Oliver that he is astonishing. When Oliver says, "I feel his words," what does he mean? What has changed?

Discuss: By the end of the book, Oliver is proud of who he is and says it's good to have a little fire inside. What might he mean? Ask students to share how they might have a little fire inside.

VOCABULARY

Active Bystander: someone who acts when they see hurtful behavior
Astonishing: something that is very surprising
Beluga Whale: a small white whale that lives in herds with other beluga whales
Bolas spider: a spider that captures its prey by swinging a silk line with a sticky blob on the end
Chlorophyll: a green pigment in plants that absorbs sunlight to achieve photosynthesis
Colony: a community of people or animals that live close together
Endpapers: sheets of paper pasted inside the front and back covers of a book
Fidget: a small movement that might indicate nervousness or impatience
Metaphor: a word or phrase that compares two unlike things without using "like" or "as"
Negative self-talk: when our inner voices make critical comments about ourselves
Plummet: to quickly drop straight down
Positive self-talk: when our inner voices make encouraging comments about ourselves
Relish: to enjoy very much
Remarkable: something that is unusual or extra-special
Simile: a word that compares two unlike things using the word "like" or "as"

ACTIVITIES: Literacy

Compare/Contrast. Use evidence from the story to create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts how Shay and Albert act toward Oliver.

Inside/Outside: Shay thinks Oliver is lazy when she sees his blank paper. She doesn't understand that he is not able to write down his thoughts and ideas. She does not know how he feels inside. Write about a time when you have misunderstood someone based on their outside actions or words. How did you feel when you learned about what they were thinking or feeling inside? What did you do? Or, write about a time you were misunderstood.

Character Traits: Make a chart or drawing for one of the characters in this book showing their outside and inside traits. Then make one with your outside/inside traits.

Small Moments: What does Oliver do when he forgets to bring in something for show-and-tell? Write about how he handled that problem, or about a time when you were able to solve a problem at school.

Persuasive Writing: Oliver makes a wish in a tree. Why does he make the wish he does? Does he get his wish? Write whether Oliver should or should not have gotten his wish and why.

Negative/Positive Self Talk: Oliver says that his negative self-talk is even more painful than Shay's words. How does self-talk affect how you feel and act? How is Oliver able to turn his self-talk into something positive? Write down ways you can turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk.

Similes and Metaphor: Oliver's mind blazes with ideas—like a "dragon in a paper house." He wishes he could be like the other kids. Choose some similes or metaphors to express how you felt when you have felt a strong emotion.

Active Bystander: An active bystander helps when they see hurtful behavior. How did Albert act when Shay made fun of Oliver? Write what you would say or do to help Oliver. Write about a time when you were been an active bystander, or about a time when you wish you had been one.

True Friend: By the end of the book, Oliver has found his true friends, who like him just the way he is. If you have a true friend, write or draw how that person makes you feel. If you know someone who needs a true friend, write or draw how can you support them.

Writing: Oliver says his brain is a volcano of ideas. He uses a metaphor to show us what it feels like to such an active brain. Choose a metaphor to describe how your astonishing brain works. Write down your amazing ideas or the things you want to know more about.

ACTIVITIES: Science, History, Mathematics

Nature's Colors: Albert tells Oliver that leaves are more beautiful when their colors are not the same. What did Albert mean when he said that? Investigate how and why leaves change color. Make a chart showing different kinds of trees and the different colors their leaves can be.

I**nventions:** Albert asks Oliver to imagine our world without inventions. List some inventions you see in the illustration. Then, write what you think it would it be like without them. Or, write or draw your own ideas for inventions.

Invention History: Research some of these inventions and their inventors. What obstacles did these inventors face? Why did they not give up?

Invention Timeline: Create a timeline for the inventions depicted in the book. Identify the oldest invention and the newest. Calculate the number of years between the two inventions.

What makes you you? Create a pie chart showing different things you like to do. Use bigger slices for things you love to do and smaller slices for ones you might be trying out or not like as much. Label each slice.

Amazing Abilities: Oliver knows a lot about creatures like spiders, whales, and ants. Research the behaviors and habitats of some of the animal and insect species mentioned in the book, or ones you are interested in. What special abilities do these creatures have? What special abilities do you have? Write or draw about what you learn.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Common Core ELA Literature

- **Kindergarten:**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.7
- **Grade 1**: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.7, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.9
- **Grade 2**: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.2.7
- **Grade 3:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.7
- **Grade 4**: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.4
- **Grade 5:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.6

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT NEURODIVERSITY

Neurodiversity is a term for differences in how people experience the world. Not all brains work the same. Some brains, like Oliver's, work differently than others. People who are neurodiverse might learn differently and form friends in different ways than others. Some might communicate in different ways or, like Oliver, have challenges with reading and writing. Some people become overwhelmed by lots of sensory stimulation, such as sound, touch, taste, smell, or light. Respecting all people for who they are and recognizing that there is no right way to be is important and validating.

TEXT SET SUGGESTIONS TO ACCOMPANY WISH IN A TREE:

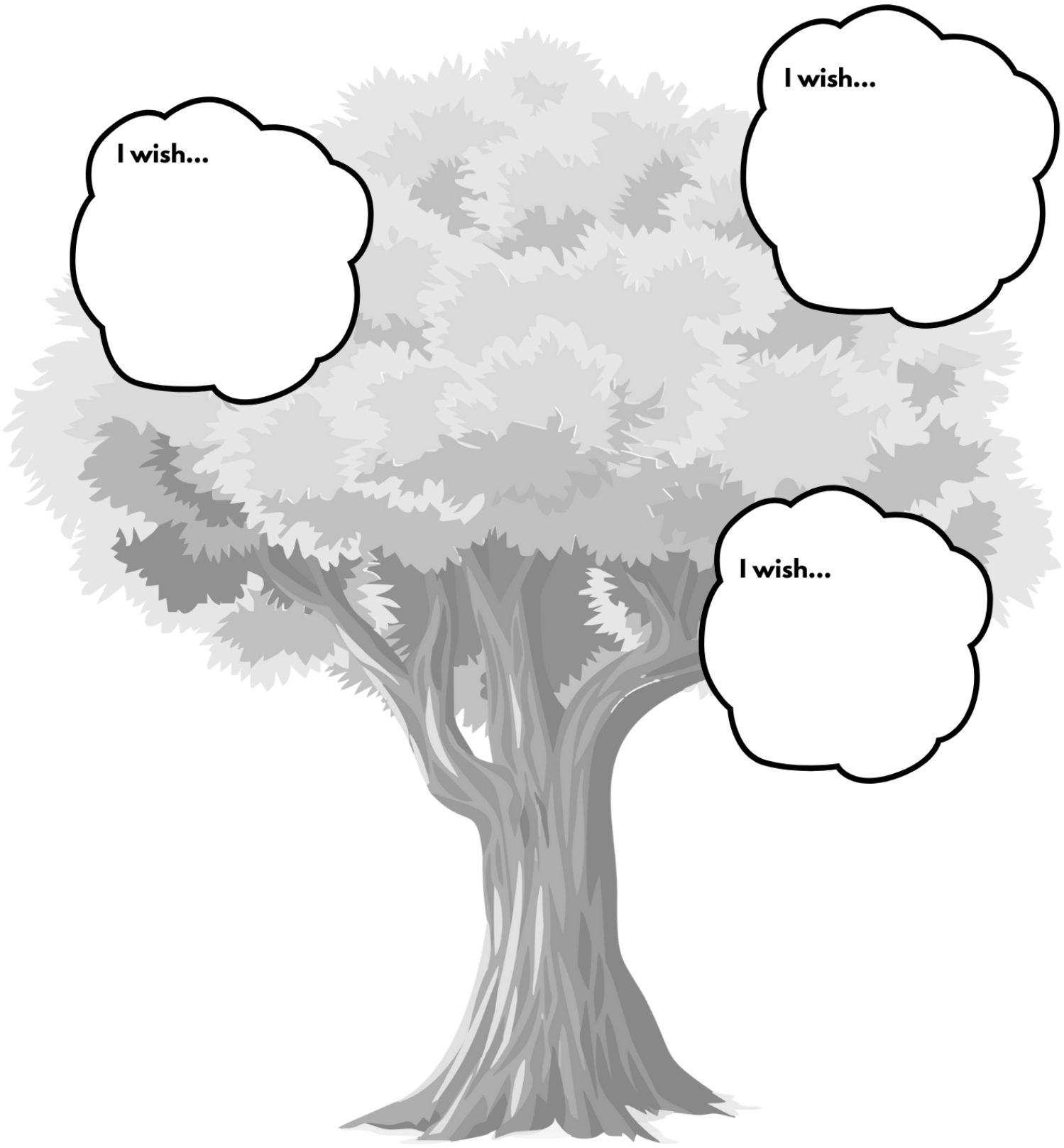
- *Don't Hug Doug (He Doesn't Like It)* by Carrie Finison, illustrated by Daniel Wiseman. G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2021.
- *Gertie Is Not All Dogs* by Siski Kalla. Clavis Publishing, 2024.
- *How to Train Your Pet Brain* by Nelly Buchet, illustrated by Amy Jindra. Beaming Books, 2022.
- *My Brain is Magic: A Sensory-Seeking Celebration* by Prasha Sooful, illustrated by Geeta Ladi. Soaring Kite Books, 2023.
- *Too Much: An Overwhelming Day* by Jolene Gutiérrez, illustrated by Angel Chang. Harry N. Abrams, 2023.
- *Wonderfully Wired Brains: An Introduction to the World of Neurodiversity* by Louise Gooding, illustrated by Ruth Burrows. DK Children, 2023.

This guide was created by Lisa Rogers, a children's author and school librarian with more than twenty years of experience teaching elementary students in the library. She holds a B.A. and M.A. in English Literature and a master's in library science.

Name: _____

MAKE YOUR OWN WISH!

Write your own wishes and add your own colors to this tree to celebrate your unique self!



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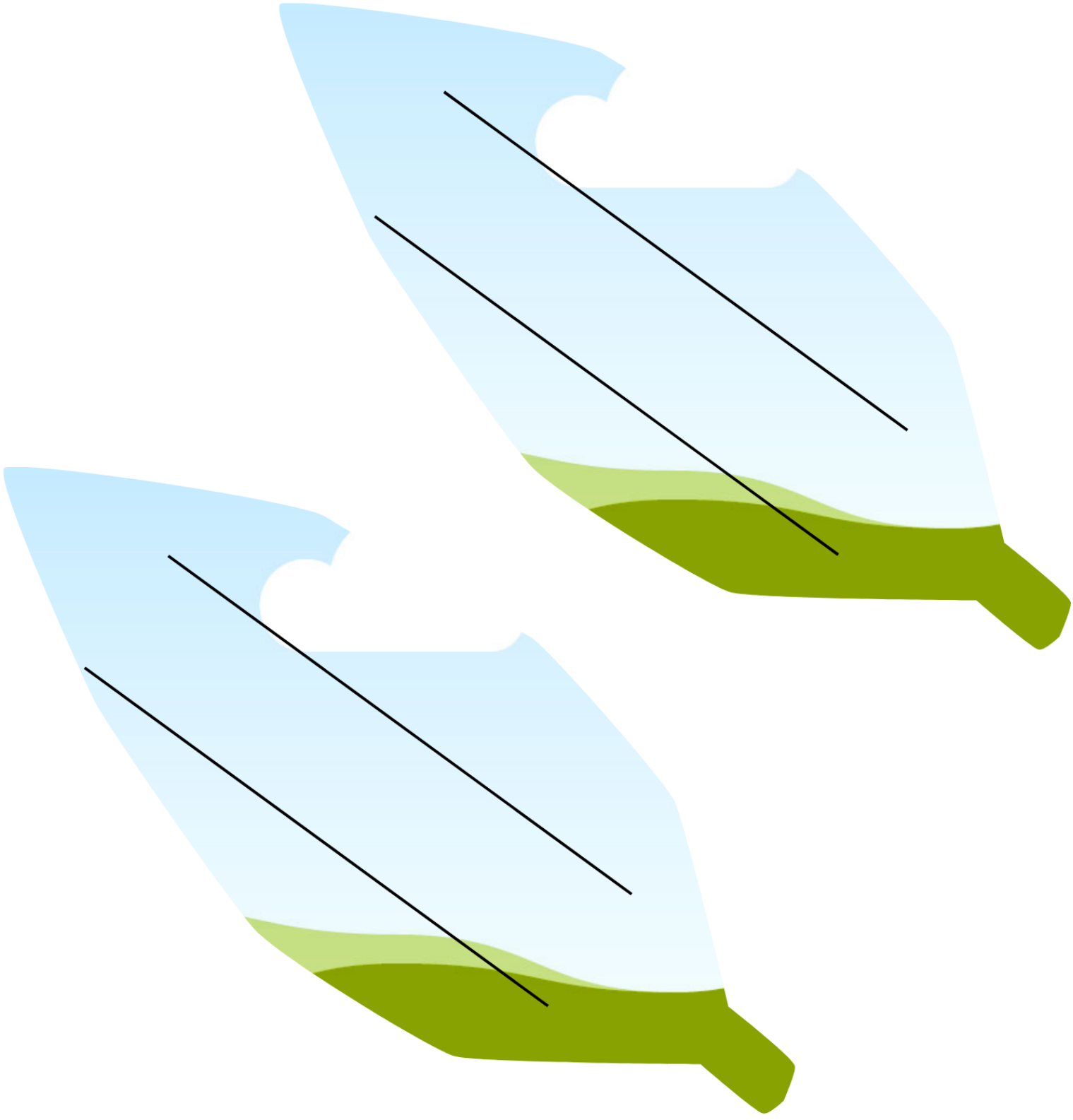
A TREE FULL OF WISHES

Write your wishes for yourself on these leaves.
Cut them out and add them to a classroom bulletin board.



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