



EK BOOKS TEACHER NOTES & RESOURCES

Title: Cookie

Author: Isabelle Duff

Illustrator: Susannah Crispe

Publisher: EK Books

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

ISBN: 9781925820959

Publication date: Oct 2021

Audience age: 4-8 years

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



SYNOPSIS:

Cookie the Border Collie loves lots of things, like smelling smelly smells, chewing chewy things, going for adventures and making friends. But most of all, Cookie loves Girl. Join this inseparable pair as they play together and learn how to make each other happy, even on the days when Cookie is the only one who can make Girl smile.

Cookie is a heart-warming story about the love between a pet and their person. It is also a sensitive exploration of childhood depression and anxiety, and the importance of empathy. With beautiful words and playful illustrations, it provides a gentle starting point for big conversations.

19-year-old author Isabelle Duff was inspired to write Cookie by her personal experiences with acute depressive disorder and anxiety, and by her wonderful dog, Saffy, who has been an invaluable support to her. The result is a valuable resource for reducing stigmatism around mental illness, and a tribute to the loved ones who are able to get you out of bed when nothing else can.

Anyone who picks up Cookie will find themselves learning something from this mischievous pup and his Girl. It is for children who have experienced depression and anxiety just like Girl. It is for kids who don't understand why someone close to them is so sad. It is for child psychologists who need to talk to young people about mental illness. And, of course, it is for dog-lovers everywhere.

THEMES:

Childhood Depression and Anxiety. Empathy. Friendship with Pets. Adventure.

SELLING POINTS:

- Based on the author's personal experiences with depression, anxiety and anorexia, and the relationship with her dog, Saffy, that has been a huge support to her.
- A playful, positive and sensitive resource for starting conversations about depression with young readers.
- The first book by an extremely promising young author, written when she was just 18 years old.
- An important contribution to the movement to de-stigmatise discussions around mental illness.

AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

My motivation for writing *Cookie* was Saffy and the incredible impact he has had on my life. At its core, *Cookie* is a love story of a girl and a puppy, one I wanted to tell for all the dogs that have met their person, for all those true love friendships.

WRITING STYLE:

I wrote *Cookie* from the puppy's perspective because it really was Saffy's story. I wanted to combine the deeper message surrounding mental health with the lightness and joy a puppy brings to the world. I wrote *Cookie* with Saffy beside me, with every quirk drawn straight from watching him. I think one of the most important aspects of this story is its authenticity, in how it shows both *Cookie* and *Girl*, and their love for each other.

ILLUSTRATION STYLE:

The illustrations in *Cookie* revolve around *Girl* and *Cookie*, with settings and other characters more on the periphery, allowing their loving relationship to visually blossom across the pages. My use of watercolour paints allows me to paint characters with due sensitivity while also allowing a bit of whimsy. I strive to find a balance between detail and simplicity and find the use of white space an important element in my visual communication.

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

Isabelle Duff is a farmer, author, and student at the UNSW, where she studies Advanced Science / Commerce. *Cookie* is her first book, written when she was just 18 years old. She is passionate about reducing stigmatism surrounding mental illness.

Susannah Crispe is a Canberra-based illustrator inspired by a background in zoology and art history. She has been illustrating professionally for four years, producing a large selection of greeting cards, logo designs and wildlife artworks. *Cookie* is her second children's picture book.



INTERVIEW:

AUTHOR

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses are experienced by one in 7 people in Australia. So, statistically, almost everyone will have someone in their life who struggles with their mental health. The most important part of getting through this for me was having a lovely family who could support me. I hope that Cookie can help create a culture of empathy around mental illness, and educate children about what their loved ones might be going through. At the very least, I hope kids can enjoy this story, and find joy in the wonder of animals as I have.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

Recovering from depression was easily the most challenging, humbling experience of my life. That period in my life is intensely personal and emotional, and putting it on paper, even in the most joyous way, made me feel very vulnerable. Having this story, so wound up in my identity, be received so generously by the EK Books team was incredible.

What is the inspiration for this story?

My gorgeous dog, and my best friend, Saffy. In year 12 I struggled with depression, anxiety and anorexia, and wasn't able to go to school for most of the year. When my parents gave me Saffy for my 18th, everything started getting better; he could make me smile when nothing else could and was beside me for every step.

ILLUSTRATOR

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

I create my illustrations in layers, using watercolours to paint the different elements on each page. The background, foreground, characters, plants and wildlife are all painted separately, then scanned into my computer. Using Photoshop I then digitally edit and layer the elements to create the scene. This process gives me great flexibility when it comes to editing illustrations. For example, I may make a mistake when painting the face on a character or change my mind about their facial expression. Using this technique of layering, I only need to repaint or digitally alter that one aspect of the illustration, inserting a new face over the top of the old in photoshop rather than having to repaint the entire scene.

What was the most rewarding part of this project?

Apart from the joy of being able to illustrate a gorgeous puppy, the themes behind Isabelle's story had great significance to me personally. Having confronted mental illness in several people very close to me, I think the ability to talk about it and share the experience is so important for everyone involved. Cookie has found a gentle way to discuss mental illness and I'm both humbled and proud to be part of this project.

What was the most challenging part of this project?

With the simplicity of the words and dialogue, I really wanted the relationship between Girl and Cookie to be the primary focus of all my illustrations so as not to distract from the importance of the text. Developing an engaging and driven storyboard took some effort, and it wasn't until several of the pages were finished that I knew the scenes would work together.



TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

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

Before Reading

- Look at the cover of Cookie. What do you see?
- How do you think the characters are feeling? How do you know?
- Who do you think 'Cookie' is? Why might Cookie be important to the girl?
- Do you have a pet of your own? How do you feel when you spend time with your pet?
- Are there times that your pet has cheered you up?

During Reading

- Why • Who is the narrator, or voice, of the story?
- Where do you think Cookie has come from?
- Why do you think the 'Boy' and 'Girl' call each other funny names like 'Stopit', 'Shoosh' and 'You're-not-the-boss-of-me'?
- Why might Girl be sad? Do you think Cookie understands her feelings? Do you think Cookie's actions are helping Girl feel better? Why or why not?
- Do you think Cookie might give up, or will Cookie keep trying to make Girl's sad go away?

After Reading

- What was the story about? What was the main idea?
- When we say dogs are loyal, what does this mean? Was Cookie loyal to Girl? How?
- Can you think of different ways in which pets can help us?
- When is Girl happiest?
- In which pages can you see Girl looking sad? How has the illustrator shown how she is feeling?
- What do you notice about the way the illustrator has painted the pictures? Why do you think she has chosen to use watercolour paints and soft colours?
- How did Girl's sadness affect the rest of her family? Do you think this is the reason they chose to adopt a puppy? Was this choice a good one? Why?
- What kinds of activities and adventures did Cookie enjoy? How is it helpful to both Girl and Cookie to do things that the puppy likes to do? How did looking after the puppy benefit Girl?
- Do you think there was a time when Cookie might have been sad, too? What do you think it might feel like for a puppy to move away from their mother? What were the things in the story that made both Girl and Cookie feel safe and comfortable?
- How did Girl change from the beginning to the end of the story? How did Cookie change?
- If you have a pet, share some things about them that make you laugh.

ENGLISH

Comprehension: Synthesise

(ACELT1783) (ACELT1578) (ACELT1581) (ACELT1584) (ACELT1586) (ACELT1591) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Using the dog template, write down and draw as many things as you can think of that Cookie enjoys the most. For example, *ball, cuddles, cheese, licking, sleeping, smelling bugs, sticks*, etc. See BLM 2.



Synonyms and Antonyms

(ACELA1434) (ACELA1437) (ACELA1464) (ACELA1470)

'Girl was sad. She didn't want to play.'

- Make a list of synonyms (words with similar meanings) for this feeling of sadness. For example, *unhappiness, sorrow, depression, miserable*, and so on.
- Make a list of antonyms (words with opposing meanings). For example, *happy, cheerful, content, joyful, lucky, merry*, and so on.
- A 'cookie' template to write the lists of synonyms and antonyms has been provided. See BLM 1.

Comprehension: True or False

(ACELT1578) (ACELT1580) (ACELT1586) (ACELT1589) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1670)

- Describe which statements are true and which are false. Write and draw a picture for each true statement. For example:
 - o 'Cookie licked Girl's sad' or 'Cookie licked Girl's ball'.
 - o 'Cookie smelt smelly smells' or 'Cookie smelt smelly cheese'.
 - o 'Girl and Cookie liked to cuddle' or 'Girl and Cookie liked to cook'.
 - o 'Everyone is happy when Girl is sleeping' or 'Everyone is happy when Girl is happy'.

Comprehension: Text-to-Self, Text-to-Text, Text-to-World

(ACELT1575) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1584) (ACELT1589) (ACELT1590) (ACELY1650) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1665) (ACELY1670)

- Think about the text and how it connects to what you know. Answer the following questions...
 - o *Text-to-Self*: What are some aspects in Cookie that you can relate to in your own life? When was a time that you felt sad?
 - o *Text-to-Text*: Compare aspects of the story to those in another similar text, such as a different story about a pet or childhood depression/mental health.
 - o *Text-to-World*: What can you find out about the benefits of owning dogs or other pets? How can this story help other children across the world?

Narrative Writing

(ACELT1581) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1586) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1662) (ACELY1671) (ACELY1672)

- Imagine you brought home a new pet. What kind of pet would it be? What adventures would you go on together? How would it make you feel? Will there be any trouble or problem you need to face? How will the problem/s be resolved?
- Begin your narrative with a sizzling start, such as dialogue, onomatopoeia, action or scene setting. Set it out with a beginning, middle and end.

Recount / Reflective Writing

(ACELA1430) (ACELA1447) (ACELA1454) (ACELA1463) (ACELA1470) (ACELT1575) (ACELT1582) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1671) (ACELY1672)

- Write about a time when you experienced sadness or a change (like a new family member) in your life. What happened? How did it make you feel? How did you manage the situation? What was the outcome? Did you learn anything about yourself?

Brainstorming

(ACELA1437) (ACELT1783) (ACELT1578) (ACELY1651) (ACELT1582) (ACELT1832) (ACELT1832) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1674)

- Draw a picture of yourself on a page. Surround the portrait with several shapes. Brainstorm and write down things that make you happy in the shapes, such as pets, family, ice cream, playing outside, reading, etc. See BLM 3.

Information Report

(ACELA1430) (ACELA1786) (ACELA1447) (ACELA1450) (ACELA1453) (ACELA1463) (ACELY1648) (ACELY1651) (ACELY1658) (ACELY1660) (ACELY1661) (ACELY1668) (ACELY1671) / Science (ACSSU002) (ACSSU017) (ACSSU030)

- Create a poster or digital presentation with a collation of facts about dogs (or another pet). Be sure to include a title, interesting facts, labelled diagrams or pictures, and captions.

Thinking Tools / Graphic Organisers

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

- *X-Chart*: Imagine yourself, or Girl or Cookie, in one of the scenarios in the book, such as Cookie licking Girl when she's sad, or Girl eating ice cream in the park with Cookie. Complete the graphic organiser with the headings: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like, Smells/Tastes Like. See BLM 4.
- *De Bono's Six Thinking Hats*: Think about the impact of Girl's sadness on her mental health and how she can improve her thinking 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).
- *Mind Map*: Brainstorm and map out different topics, including:
 - o Pet Ownership (food, sleeping arrangements, activities, teaching tricks, vet bills, etc).
 - o Benefits of Pets (how they help with mental, social and physical health, how they help with jobs/work, how they help people with difficulties, disabilities, etc).
 - o Dog Breeds (giant e.g. Great Dane, large e.g. Dalmatian, medium e.g. Border Collie, small e.g. Pug, tiny e.g. Chihuahua, etc).

SCIENCE

Exploring the 5 senses

(ACSSU003) (ACSSU032) (ACSHE013) (ACSHE021) (ACSHE034) (ACSHE022) (ACSHE035) (AC SIS011) (AC SIS012) (AC SIS024) (AC SIS025) (AC SIS027) (AC SIS038) (AC SIS040) (AC SIS042)

- Exploring sight: *'I got so big I could take Girl on adventures.'*
 - o Collect a range of foods and flowers from around the house and outdoors. Identify what you see on each item. What colours, patterns, shapes and details can you identify? Record with labelled drawings.
- Exploring smell: *'We went for lots of walks ... and smelt lots of smelly smells ...'*
 - o Make scented yoghurt or ice cream (optional – add food colouring to each scent) for children to smell, paint and identify the scents. Alternatively, try smelling different flowers and fauna from the garden.
- Exploring taste: *'But mostly we did lots of chewing.'*
 - o Blindfold the child so they can't see each food type. On a spoon or fork, offer different foods, including the yoghurt/ice cream, fruits and vegetables, etc. with a mix of sweet, savoury, sour, bitter and salty tastes. Sort into taste categories.
- Exploring touch:
 - o Feel and identify a range of surfaces (smooth, patterned, rough), temperatures (warm and cold), and consistency (wet, dry, sticky). Record your findings.
- Exploring sound:
 - o With an adult, take your pet or go for a walk out in nature and listen for all the sounds you can hear. What animals, flora, road noises, gardening or other people can be identified? Make a checklist for a partner to check.

HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Healthy Mind / Healthy Body Ideas:

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

- Mindfulness and physical activity are ideal for mental and physical health, as well as building relationships with friends and pets.
- Identify feelings in your mind and body
- Write down feelings or keep a thought journal/worry box
- Cuddle and play with a pet or teddy
- Take your pet for a walk
- Share your favourite food with your pet (if it's safe for them to eat!)
- Throw and catch a ball with a pet
- Spend time outdoors and in nature
- Go bird watching and bug spotting
- Read your favourite stories and books about pets and/or mental health
- Create a 'happiness' plan with your family
- Bake cookies!

VISUAL ARTS

Watercolour Painting

(ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108)

- Look closely at the illustrations in the book, *Cookie*. What media has the illustrator used? Why did she choose this style for this kind of story? What is your favourite scene?
- Recreate a scene from the book or one of your own, showing a special friendship between a child and a pet. Media you could use includes watercolour paints and coloured pencils.

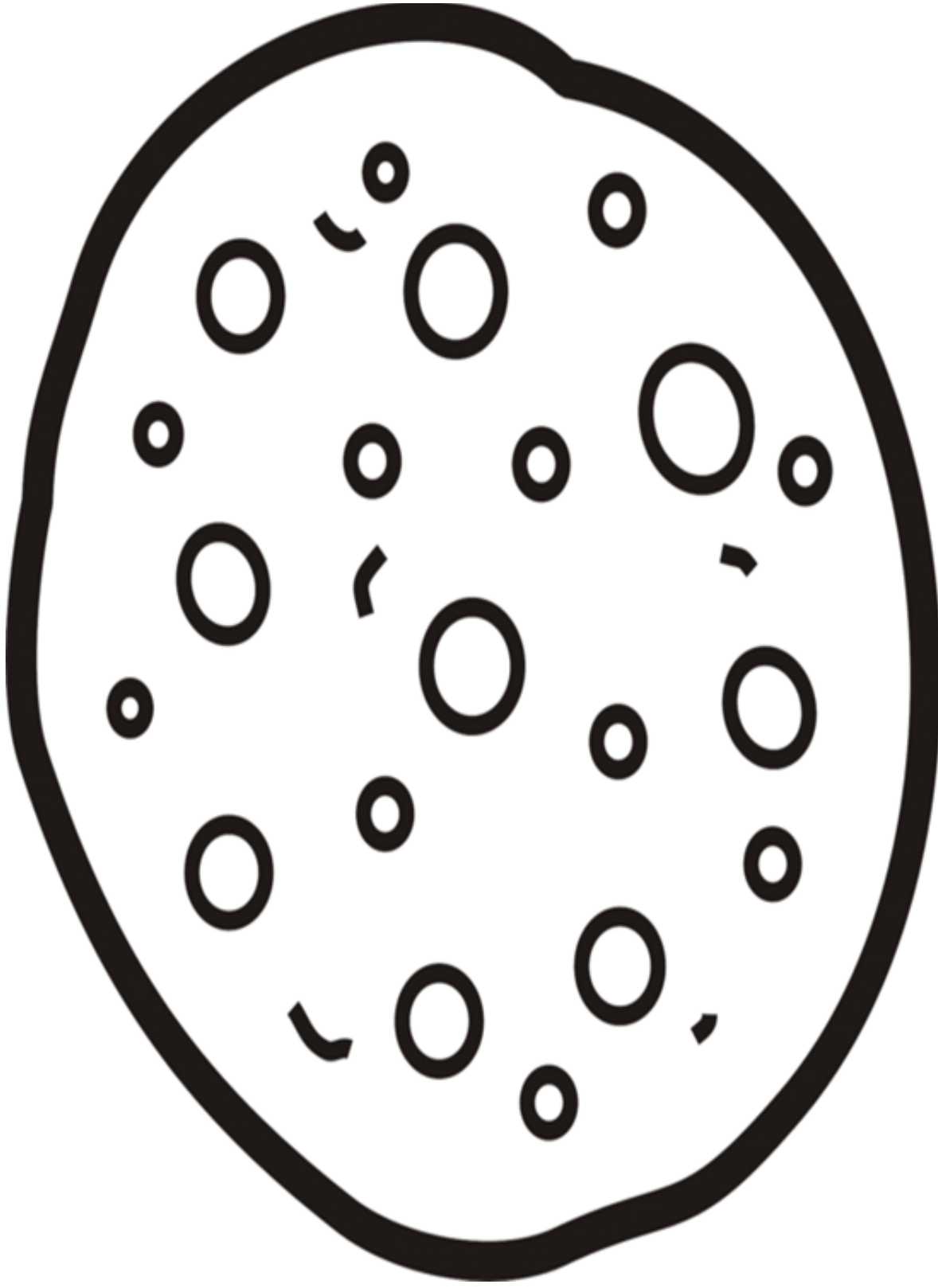
Dog Crafts

(ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM108)

- *Dog Leaf Portraits*: Collect leaves of different shapes and sizes, and sticks, and arrange them to create a dog face and body. Glue down to paper and use black marker for details.
- *3D Paper Craft Dogs*: Create a 3D dog with paper rolls or cardboard tubes, coloured paper and markers to use as puppets. In addition, make a girl (or boy) to retell the story or role play your own narrative.
- *Origami Dog*: Find instructions to fold your own easy origami dog at: <https://www.redtedart.com/easy-origami-dog-puppy>

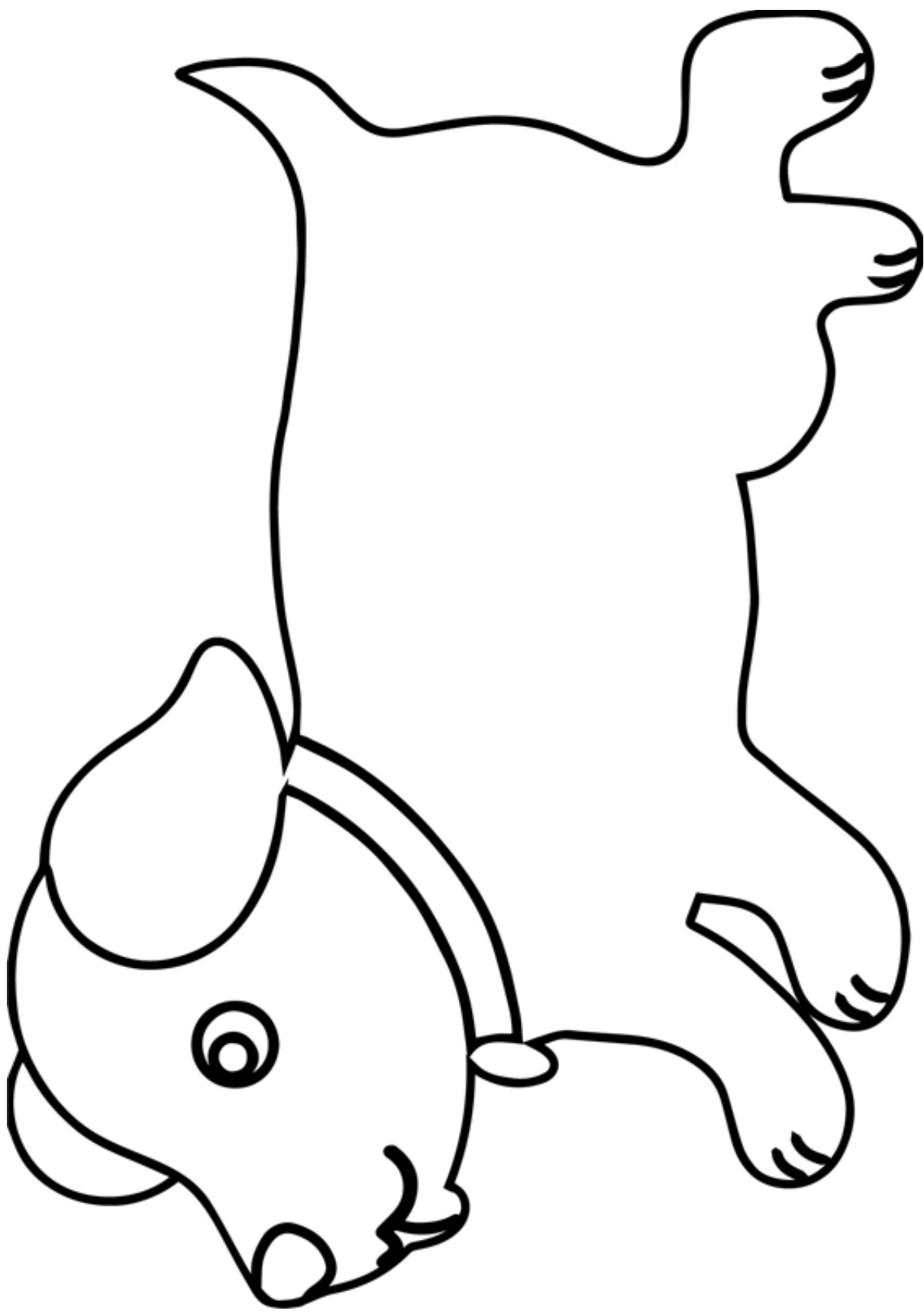
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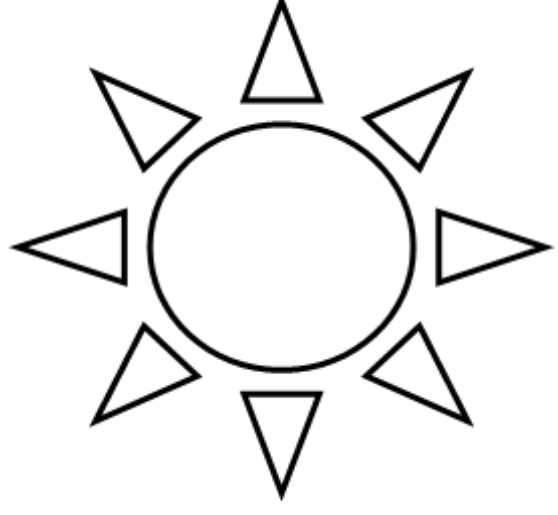
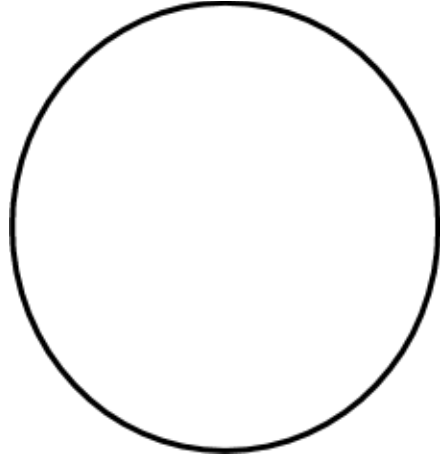
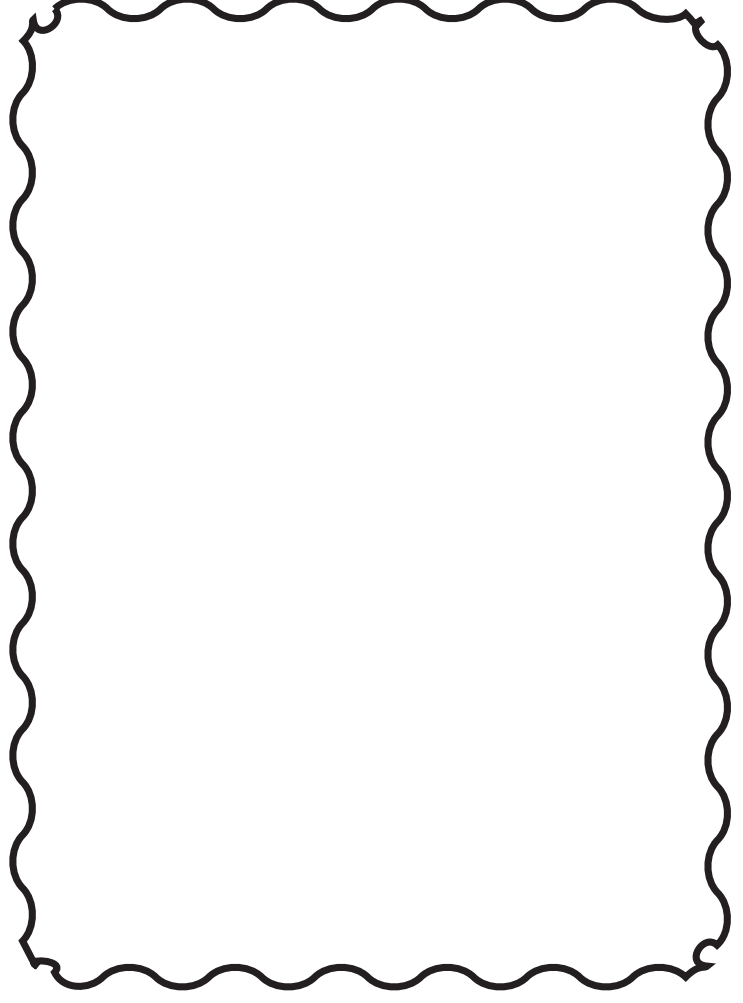
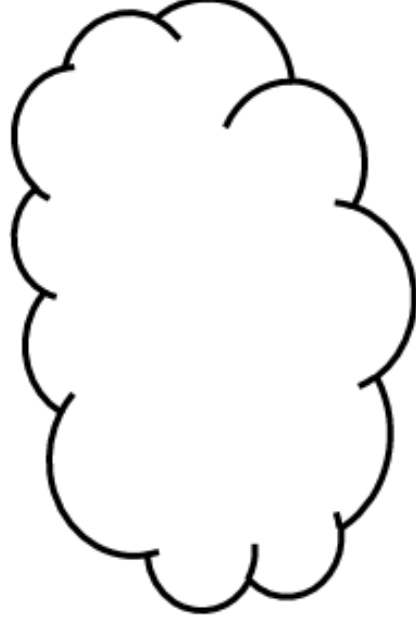
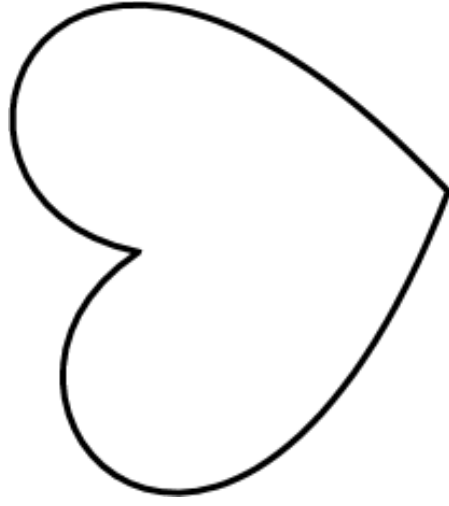
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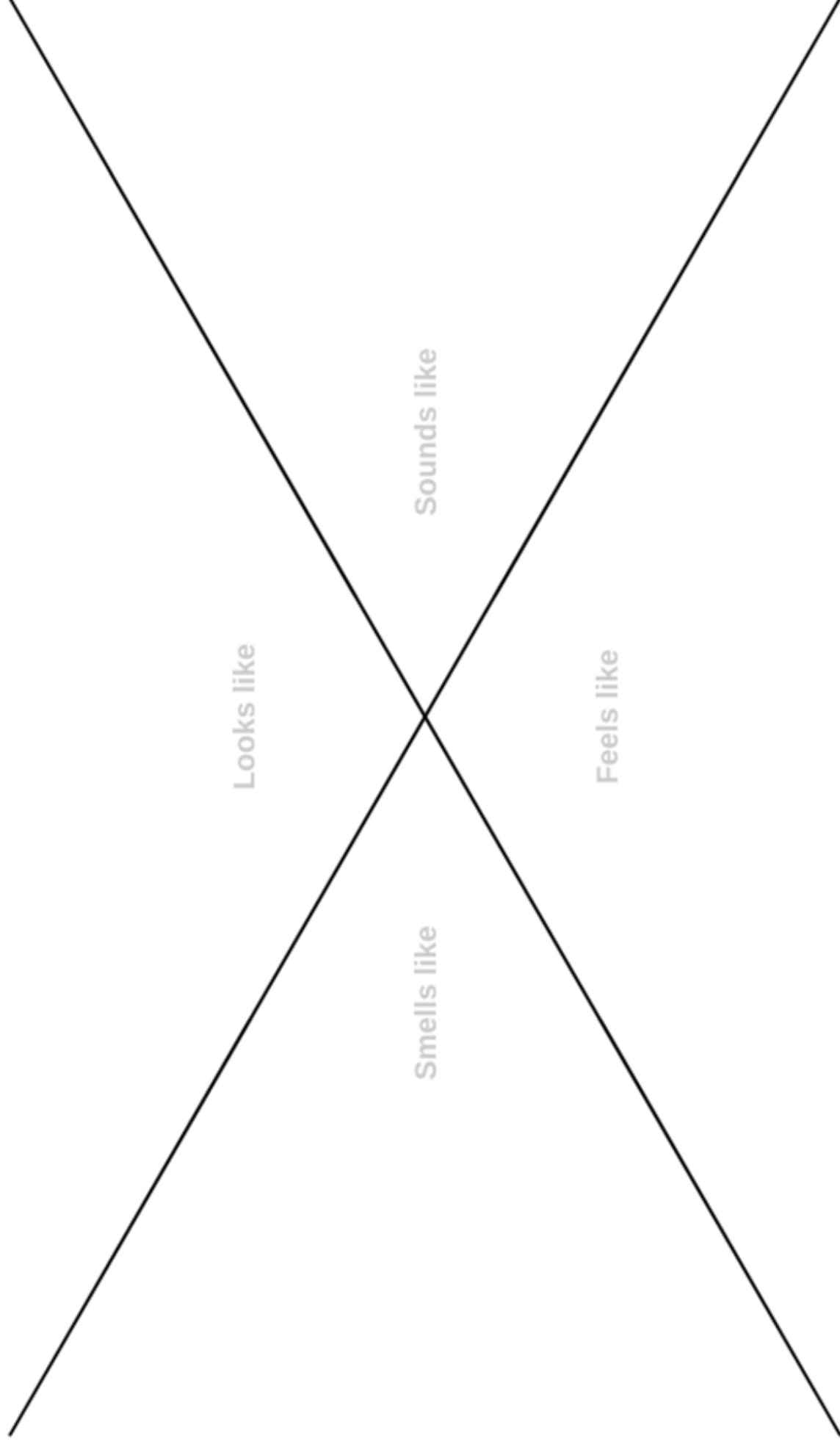
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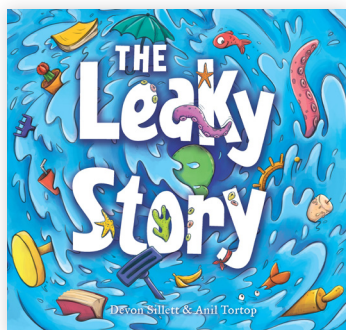


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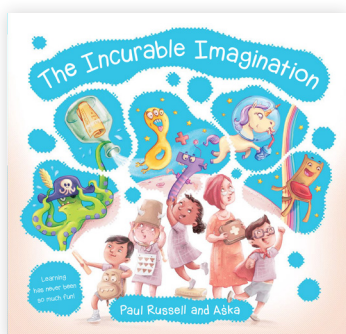


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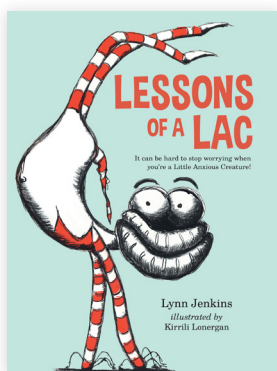


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