



**Title:** Too Many Acorns

**Author and Illustrator:** Susannah Crispe

**ISBN:** 9781922539748 | **Publication date:** Oct 2024

**Audience age:** 3-8 years

**Key Curriculum Areas:** English, Visual Literacy, Mathematics, Science / STEAM, Health and Physical Education, Visual Arts

## SYNOPSIS:

When Patrick suffers a huge loss, he finds comfort in holding an acorn that drops at his feet. The more acorns he collects, the less empty he feels...but as the house fills with acorns, events quickly overtake him. Can Patrick and Dad find a way to move past the acorn chaos and cope with their grief together? An uplifting story about resilience, connection, and growth, perfect for sharing with little ones who are experiencing the loss of a loved one, or any other emotional upheaval.

## THEMES:

- Loss / Grief
- Finding comfort
- Family / parent-child relationships
- Resilience
- Emotions

## SELLING POINTS:

- Centred on universal themes of love, loss and familial bonds, which will resonate with children and parents/carers everywhere.
- Uses the metaphor of a growing tide of acorns to explore overwhelming emotions such as grief in a way that young readers can visualise and understand.
- A heart-warming portrayal of a parent-child relationship, perfect for parents and carers to share with little ones.

## AUTHOR MOTIVATION:

This was a story that demanded to be written. I put pen to paper to write an entirely different story, but instead, *Too Many Acorns* wrote itself. Loss appears in one form or another in everybody's life.

## AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR BACKGROUND:

**Susannah Crispe** is an Australian children's author and illustrator, with a passion for animals, art and adventure. Susannah writes and illustrates her books from a light-filled studio in Canberra, drawing inspiration from her adventurous son, cluttered bookshelves and the world beyond her windows. As an illustrator, she works in watercolour and digital collage to produce beautiful scenes brimming with detail.

## INTERVIEW

**What is the inspiration for this story?** - I live on a beautiful, oak lined street, and every autumn, it rains acorns. They appear everywhere, bouncing and rolling through the front door before you can close it, making their way into bags and shoes. My son does wonderful things like filling his pockets (and failing to empty them before they go into the washing machine) and depositing them around the house on bookshelves and in drawers. At its core, *Too Many Acorns* came from finding comfort and joy in small things. I wrote it at a time when there was a lot of change going on in my family, and I found my son's ability to extract happiness from the little things in life eye-opening and inspiring.

**What was the most rewarding part of this project?** - I created the illustrations using a combination of traditional and digital media. I painted the characters and backgrounds using watercolour paints and colour pencils, then scanned them into my computer. Using a special computer program called Photoshop, I created digital collages. I cut out all the objects and characters with a digital cutting tool – the same way you could do with scissors and a piece of paper – then layered them on top of one another to create each picture. I painted hundreds of individual acorns, and using this digital collage technique, I was able to multiply them to create scenes with many thousands of acorns.

**What was the most challenging part of this project?** - The most challenging part was wanting to create a book about grief without ever mentioning or showing grief. Everybody experiences loss of one kind or another, and I wanted to create a sensitive resource for starting conversations about loss and resilience with young readers. With the sensitive subject matter, it was important to me that the reader's own experience could become a part of the narrative. To that end, I felt it was important to keep the words pared back and the wordcount low, letting the illustrations tell the story. At the same time, it is a book about a child who loves collecting acorns, pure and simple. I felt it was essential for the book to be able to be enjoyed from that whimsical point of view as well as on that deeper level.

## TEACHER ACTIVITIES/NOTES:

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

### DISCUSSION: BEFORE READING

- Show students an acorn and have them pass it around. Ask, where do acorns come from? What does it feel like? How big is it? How do you feel about it? What can you do with it?
- Ask, if students were to collect these, or something else small, where would they keep them? How many would they collect? How many is too many?
- Look at the cover of 'Too Many Acorns'. Explain to students that the acorns are used as a 'metaphor' for something else. This means, the boy in the story has too many acorns because of a big feeling that is hard to control. Can they guess what it might be about? How might his problem be resolved?
- How does the cover make you feel?
- Do you think this book will be helpful? How?

### DISCUSSION: DURING READING

- From the beginning, who can you see is in Patrick's family?
- Can you tell how Dad might be feeling on this 'quiet day'?
- Why do you think Patrick is so interested in the acorns? What is it that makes him feel like something inside him is growing?
- In the pictures on the walls, what can you see or tell about Patrick's family, and why might he have been swept up with all the acorns?
- Do you think Dad and the pets like the growing collection of acorns?
- Do you agree that Patrick has too many acorns?
- What might happen next?

### DISCUSSION: AFTER READING

- What is the story about? What is the main idea? How did it make you feel? Do you have a part that you relate to or enjoyed the most?
- What did you learn about Patrick and his family?
- At the end of the story, it says that Patrick's heart remembered how to smile. What does this mean? Did his heart forget how to smile? Why?
- What were the clues in the story that tell us about how Patrick and his Dad are feeling?
- What is the 'metaphor' of the acorns about? Why did Patrick feel that by collecting acorns he might feel better? Can you think of another metaphor for the way Patrick is feeling?
- How does Patrick's growing collection of acorns affect the house and his Dad? What words can you use to describe Patrick (and Dad's) feelings in different parts throughout the story? (eg. grief, sadness, lost, empty, overwhelm, frustration, despair, joy, relief, light-hearted, etc)
- What are the things that made Patrick actually feel better, or less overwhelmed by sadness? How did Dad's laughter and growing an acorn help?
- Can you relate to this story in some way? What are some positive strategies you could use if you lost someone close to you? Turn and talk to a friend about it.
- How can you describe the language used by the author? How does the author describe both the growing pile of acorns and Patrick's growing feelings of grief at the same time? What is the intention of the story? How does the author use humour in a sad situation to make the story engaging?
- What do you like about the illustrations? What kinds of colours, shapes, textures, perspectives, facial expressions and body language has the illustrator used to express the different emotions, actions and focal points of the story? Look at each page and discuss the visual cues that show us how the 'unspoken' message comes through the pictures.
- What did you find most surprising / interesting / impactful / enjoyable about this story?

## ACTIVITIES:

### ENGLISH

#### Vocabulary: Spelling – Aa for acorn

(AC9EFLY10) (AC9EFLY12) (AC9EFLY13) (AC9EFLY14) (AC9E1LY11) (AC9E1LY13) (AC9E1LY14) (AC9E2LY09) (AC9E2LY10) (AC9E2LY11)

- Identify phonemes and practise spelling 'acorn' and other words beginning with 'a', in varying techniques and formats. Write a list of common 'a' words, recognising the different sounds the initial 'a' makes. For example, compare the 'a' sounds in 'acorn' and 'apple'.
- Students can:
  - Say the words out loud.
  - Clap the syllables in each word.
  - Write the words broken up by syllables. Eg. a/c/or/n.
  - Write some words in alphabetical or length order.
  - Write the words with different media (pencils, crayons, letter stamps, textas, glitter pens, etc) or make them with natural materials, such as acorns or leaves.

#### Vocabulary: Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives

(AC9EFLA08) (AC9E1LA07) (AC9E2LA07) (AC9EFLY13)

- Locate in the book the nouns, verbs and adjectives relating to Patrick's feelings and the actions / descriptions of the acorns. Students could use **BLM 2** to sort the words into the columns.

**Nouns:** Patrick, acorn, feet, hand, heart, house, avalanche, chin, Dad, world, etc.

**Verbs:** dropped, grow, built, swept, smile, groan, cascading, collecting, quivered, scowled, laughed, hugged, tendered, waited, remembered, etc.

**Adjectives:** warm, smooth, small, bigger, enormous, brighter, etc.

- Students could add to these lists and create sentences including some of these terms. Illustrate sentences with pictures of Patrick or themselves during a time they felt either overwhelmed with sadness or light with happiness.

#### Comprehension: Cloze

(AC9E2LE02) (AC9EFL05) (AC9E1LE05) (AC9E2LE05) (AC9EFLY05) (AC9E1LY05) (AC9E2LY05)

- Students can write the following sentences, filling in the gaps with words or phrases that make the most sense.

'One \_\_\_\_\_ day, an \_\_\_\_\_ dropped at Patrick's \_\_\_\_\_.'

'The acorn was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in his hand.'

'Patrick could not seem to say \_\_\_\_\_ . On it went with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.'

'Patrick was beginning to think he had \_\_\_\_\_ .'

'Dad \_\_\_\_\_ and Patrick \_\_\_\_\_ and the world seemed a little \_\_\_\_\_.'

'They found a place to \_\_\_\_\_ Patrick's acorn.'

'Patrick's \_\_\_\_\_ remembered how to \_\_\_\_\_.'

- Students can illustrate a sentence of their choice.

#### Recount / Reflective Writing

(AC9EFL02) (AC9E1LE02) (AC9E1LY01) (AC9E2LY01) (AC9EFLY06) (AC9E1LY06) (AC9E2LY06)

- Encourage students to think about a time when they felt overwhelmed by grief or sadness, or when a collection of items got out of control. Students should include what happened, how they felt, how they managed the situation, the challenges and outcomes.

## Comprehension

(AC9EFLE01) (AC9EFLE02) (AC9E1LE02) (AC9E2LE02) (AC9EFLE05) (AC9E1LE05) (AC9E2LE05) (AC9EFLY05) (AC9E1LY05) (AC9E2LY05)

- Through writing and discussion, answer comprehension questions relating to the story, such as:

**Knowledge:** Who was in the story? What happened on the quiet day? What did Patrick do with the acorns? What was the main idea / focus? Where do the events take place? How did Patrick feel at the end?

**Comprehension:** Retell the story in your own words. What were the main messages? What are the emotional changes that occurred throughout the story? What does Patrick and Dad realise about each other?

**Application:** What helpful strategies are explored in feeling lighter about Patrick's overwhelming situation? Why is it important for your heart to smile? Why does the author want readers to know this? Is it okay to feel 'light' after you've lost someone special? Why is this important?

**Analysis:** What are some of the features of an acorn, oak tree, or a house? Draw / write a labelled diagram of an oak tree, for example, including labelling the acorns. Create a slideshow showing the sequence of events in the life cycle of an oak tree. Compare the differences between an oak tree and another 'nut' tree/bush.

**Synthesis:** "Patrick's heart remembered how to smile." Discuss this phrase and predict any possible future events or changes to how Patrick might feel, and how he might manage his feelings. What is something about Patrick's family that will never change? What is something about your life that will never change, and how can this be a positive thing? Why is it important to feel and experience grief in different ways to someone else? What ideas can you think of for collecting lots of things in manageable ways?

**Evaluation:** Do you agree that change can be a good thing? Do you agree that Patrick and Dad's communication to make a plan was effective in helping with their feelings? Why or why not? What are the positive and the difficult emotions portrayed in the story? Do you think any of these should be different? What is the most important thing the story is teaching us? How has this book given you a different perspective on experiencing overwhelming grief or sadness?

## Creative Writing: Descriptive Language – Innovation on Text

(AC9EFLE01) (AC9EFLE05) (AC9E1LE05) (AC9E2LE05) (AC9EFLY06) (AC9E1LY06) (AC9E2LY06)

- Students can write short stories, poems or lists about the following line with their own innovative descriptions about what happens next. Include interesting or funny words or phrases to add humour / emotion and 'SHOW not TELL' strategies.
- Students write an innovative piece using the line, *'First, an acorn dropped at Patrick's feet.'*
- Illustrate.

## Narrative Writing

(AC9EFLE01) (AC9EFLE02) (AC9E1LE02) (AC9E2LE02) (AC9E1LY01) (AC9E2LY01) (AC9EFLY06) (AC9E1LY06) (AC9E2LY06)

- Students can write a narrative story based around the above 'Creative Writing' concept, or a character with 'too many' of something else. This could be heartfelt or funny.
- Ask students to think about who their characters are, and what might be the conflict or problem to solve. What events or situations might be experienced (real or imagined)? What is the tone of the story? What personal emotional or physical challenges might need to be overcome? How will they be resolved?
- Begin your narrative with a sizzling start, such as dialogue, onomatopoeia, action or scene setting. Think about using interesting figurative and emotive language. Set it out with a beginning, middle and end.

## Procedural Text

(AC9E1LA03) (AC9E2LA03) (AC9E1LA09) (AC9E1LE02) (AC9EFLY01) (AC9E1LY01) (AC9E2LY01) (AC9EFLY03) (AC9E1LY03) (AC9E2LY03) (AC9EFLY07) (AC9E1LY06) (AC9E1LY07) (AC9E2LY06) (AC9E2LY07)

Science links: Biological sciences - (AC9SFU01) (AC9S1U01) (AC9SFH01) (AC9S1H01) (AC9S2H01) (AC9SFI01) (AC9S1I01) (AC9S2I01) (AC9SFI02) (AC9S1I02) (AC9SFI03) (AC9S1I04) (AC9S2I04) (AC9SFI04) (AC9S1I05) (AC9S2I05) (AC9SFI05) (AC9S1I06) (AC9S2I06)

- Patrick and his Dad planted the acorn and waited for a seedling to grow. Students can write and share a procedural text on how to care for a seed/plant. For example, the steps to growing an acorn include:
  - Collect your acorns from the tree, free of worm holes, and easily removed from the cap.
  - Test if the acorns float – discard the ones that float.
  - Refrigerate the acorns for a month (optional).
  - Plant the acorns in pots with potting mix, and water.
  - Keep the soil moist and in a sunny location.
  - Transfer the seedling to a suitable location for permanent growth.

Further instructions can be found at: [How to plant acorns - Mom with Plants](#)

- Students need to understand the structure and format of procedural texts including an introductory paragraph about the text, paragraphs or points describing each step in the process, and a summary / conclusion with additional tips. See **BLM 3**.

## Thinking Tools / Graphic Organisers

(AC9EFLE01) (AC9EFLE02) (AC9E1LE02)

- Venn Diagram:** Use the Venn Diagram to compare the similarities and differences between an oak tree and another tree. See **BLM 4**.
- De Bono's Six Thinking Hats:** Think about how you would feel in Patrick's situation. Use the six hats to consider your feelings and the information available. Red (fears, feelings, intuition), White (information, facts), Yellow (Benefits, positive thinking), Blue (big picture, focus, learnings), Green (creative thinking, alternatives), Black (risks, problems, obstacles). See **BLM 6**.
- Y-Chart:** Students can imagine themselves in one of the situations in the book, or one from their own life. For example, collecting acorns, the acorn avalanche, planting a seed, etc. Complete the graphic organiser with the headings: Looks Like, Sounds Like, Feels Like. See **BLM 5**.
- Acorn Positivity Wheel:** In each segment, write a positive strategy to 'make your heart smile', and an illustration. Optional: Students could decorate another circle (or paper plate) for the front and insert a split pin. See **BLM 7** and **8**.

## Visual Literacy

English links: (AC9E2LA08) (AC9EFLE01) (AC9E2LE02) | Visual Arts: (AC9AVA2D01) (AC9AVA2D01) (AC9AVAF01) (AC9AVA2C01) (AC9AVAFP01) (AC9AVA2P01)

Through the illustrations, we can learn more about Patrick's (and Dad's) emotions and personalities by their facial expressions and body language. There are also other visual clues that tell us more than the text alone, including the pictures on the walls and other details around the house.

- What words would students use to describe the emotions of Patrick and Dad? What is happening in the pictures when Patrick and Dad are feeling sad / growth / frustrated / regretful / relief / content, etc? How do the colours, textures and perspectives drawn by the illustrator reflect the feelings and nature of the story (eg. watercolours, pencils, Autumn tones, close ups and various perspectives)?
- With understanding the visual literacy represented in the book, students can create their own comic book showing a sequence of the growing collection of acorns. Students might like to add some onomatopoeia for effect, such as 'PLOP!', 'CLUNK', 'WHOOSH', 'ARGH!', 'CLATTER', 'GROAN!', 'GIGGLE', etc.
- Assess students' ability to express and sequence a narrative, express emotion, be concise, and include illustrations and layouts that focus on effective composition and arrangement.

## SCIENCE / STEAM

### Oak Tree Life Cycle / Planting

Science links: Biological sciences - (AC9SFU01) (AC9S1U01) (AC9SFH01) (AC9S1H01) (AC9S2H01) (AC9SFI01) (AC9S1I01) (AC9S2I01) (AC9SFI02) (AC9S1I02) (AC9SFI03) (AC9S1I04) (AC9S2I04) (AC9SFI04) (AC9S1I05) (AC9S2I05) (AC9SFI05) (AC9S1I06) (AC9S2I06)

- Students research and write / draw about the life cycle of the oak tree – from seed to seedling to sapling to fully grown and growing acorns. Find out about acorn formation and its characteristics. Students can:
  - Learn about the meanings of each stage of the oak tree life cycle.
  - Write simple sentences about what seeds and plants need to grow.
  - Complete a life cycle diagram to show the evolution of the tree. See **BLM 7, 8 and 9**.
  - Plant an acorn as a group for future generations (and wildlife) to enjoy. (Refer to the Procedural Text task for writing about the process of planting acorns.)
  - Measure and record the tree's growth over time using a record table / diary and photos or drawings.
  - Compare the outcomes of different acorns planted in different areas.

Information about Oak Trees can be found here:

[How To Grow And Care For An Oak Tree - Bunnings Australia](#)

Seasons: Watch this video to see an oak tree change through the seasons:

[A year in the life of an oak tree | Woodland Trust \(youtube.com\)](#)

### Acorn Science: Sink or Float?

Science – Physical sciences: (AC9SFU02) (AC9S1U03) (AC9SFH01) (AC9S1H01) (AC9S2H01) (AC9SFI01) (AC9S1I01) (AC9S2I01) (AC9SFI02) (AC9S1I02) (AC9SFI03) (AC9S1I04) (AC9S2I04) (AC9SFI04) (AC9S1I05) (AC9S2I05) (AC9SFI05) (AC9S1I06) (AC9S2I06)

- Students collect acorns on a nature walk (or have acorns readily available). They will need to make predictions about whether they sink or float. Ask, will some sink and some float? What are the characteristics of the acorns that will sink/float?
- Observe the results by placing the acorns in a container of water. What do the students notice? Why do some acorns act differently to others? (Acorns with holes will float, and they may have worms in them, too!).
- Record and discuss the results.
- **Extension:** Try other nuts, seeds and fruits, such as chestnuts, pumpkin seeds, cranberries, pinecones, etc to see which ones float and which ones sink.

**Science involved:** Acorns with holes float because there is air trapped inside, which makes them buoyant. The acorns without holes have a denser composition and will therefore sink.

More details can be found at: [Acorn Sink or Float Experiment in Preschool - Pre-K Pages](#)

### Acorn Building: STEAM Challenge

Science – Physical sciences: (AC9SFU02) (AC9S1U03)

Design and Technologies: (AC9TDEFP01) (AC9TDE2K01) (AC9TDE2K02) (AC9TDE2K03) (AC9TDE2P01) (AC9TDE2P02) (AC9TDE2P03) (AC9TDE2P04)

- Students, in groups, draw a design and construct a 'building' using acorns (or a similar item) as the basis of their structure. Their designs could be a house, a tower, a bridge or another abstract building. Students can choose the type of material to hold it together, which may include glue, bluetack, clay, etc.
- Evaluate its effectiveness and adjust as necessary.
- Communicate the results and share.

## MATHEMATICS

### Counting Acorns

Number: ([AC9MFN01](#)) ([AC9MFN03](#)) ([AC9MFN05](#)) ([AC9MFN06](#)) ([AC9M1N01](#)) ([AC9M1N03](#)) ([AC9M1N04](#)) ([AC9M1N05](#)) ([AC9M2N01](#)) ([AC9M2N04](#)) ([AC9M2N05](#))  
 Measurement – Capacity: ([AC9MFM01](#)) ([AC9M1M01](#)) ([AC9M2M01](#))

- Students can use acorns, or another counting material (gumnuts, stones, etc) to predict how many is too many for a particular size jar or container. Students write down their predictions for each container and then fill them, counting as they go. What is the maximum number of acorns that can fit in each container? Discuss and compare the results. Sort and order containers by capacity.
- Students can write their own number sentences with addition and subtraction scenarios.
- **Extension:** Use repeated addition, equal grouping and arrays as mathematical strategies for larger numbers. For example,

*One acorn plus another three acorns fell from the tree. How many acorns fell from the tree?*

*There were eighty acorns in Patrick's house, but he swept up twenty. How many were left to sweep up?*

## HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### Healthy Mind / Healthy Body Ideas:

([AC9HPFP01](#)) ([AC9HP2P01](#)) ([AC9HPFP02](#)) ([AC9HPFP03](#)) ([AC9HPFP04](#)) ([AC9HP2P02](#)) ([AC9HP2P03](#)) ([AC9HP2P04](#)) ([AC9HPFP05](#)) ([AC9HP2P05](#)) ([AC9HPFM01](#)) ([AC9HPFM02](#)) ([AC9HP2M01](#)) ([AC9HP2M02](#)) ([AC9HPFM03](#)) ([AC9HP2M03](#)) ([AC9HPFM04](#)) ([AC9HP2M04](#)) ([AC9HP2M05](#))

Mindfulness and physical activity are ideal for mental, emotional and physical health, as well as building safe and healthy relationships with family and friends.

- Go for a walk around your neighbourhood.
- Observe trees, plants and their special features.
- Collect acorns or interesting natural materials (but not too many!).
- Study and feel the acorn (and other items) – what do you notice?
- Draw the acorn (or other items) with as much detail as possible.
- Build or make a structure with your collected items.
- Draw pictures of your family (and/or a special member you have lost). Hang them and photos on your wall or in a frame as a memory.
- Ask a friend or family member to help create a treasure hunt with the items you have collected.
- Count your collection/s.
- Help your parent/s with the washing and cleaning up.
- Play with and look after your pets.
- Use and play with your sporting equipment (tennis racket, bicycle, skateboard, scooter, basketball, soccer ball, etc)
- Make shapes with your body in piles of acorns, leaves, sand, snow, etc.
- Communicate with a trusted adult about your feelings, plan some strategies that can help, hug and laugh!
- Plant an acorn, or another seed, tend to it and watch the plant grow.
- Celebrate fond memories and remember how to make your heart smile!

## VISUAL ARTS

### Acorn Art

(AC9AVA2E01) (AC9AVAFD01) (AC9AVA2D01) (AC9AVAFD01) (AC9AVA2C01) (AC9AVAFP01) (AC9AVA2P01)

Students can create art on acorns, with different patterns, colours and media. Media could include textas, permanent markers, paint, glitter glue, joggle eyes, other nature items, etc to create an abstract piece or little acorn people. Can their acorns represent (in memory of) or be given to someone special?

Ideas can be found at:



Fall Specimen Art:  
[Glittered Acorns - Happiness is Homemade](#)



Joyful Puttering:  
[Collecting Creating Connecting: Colorful Acorns!](#)



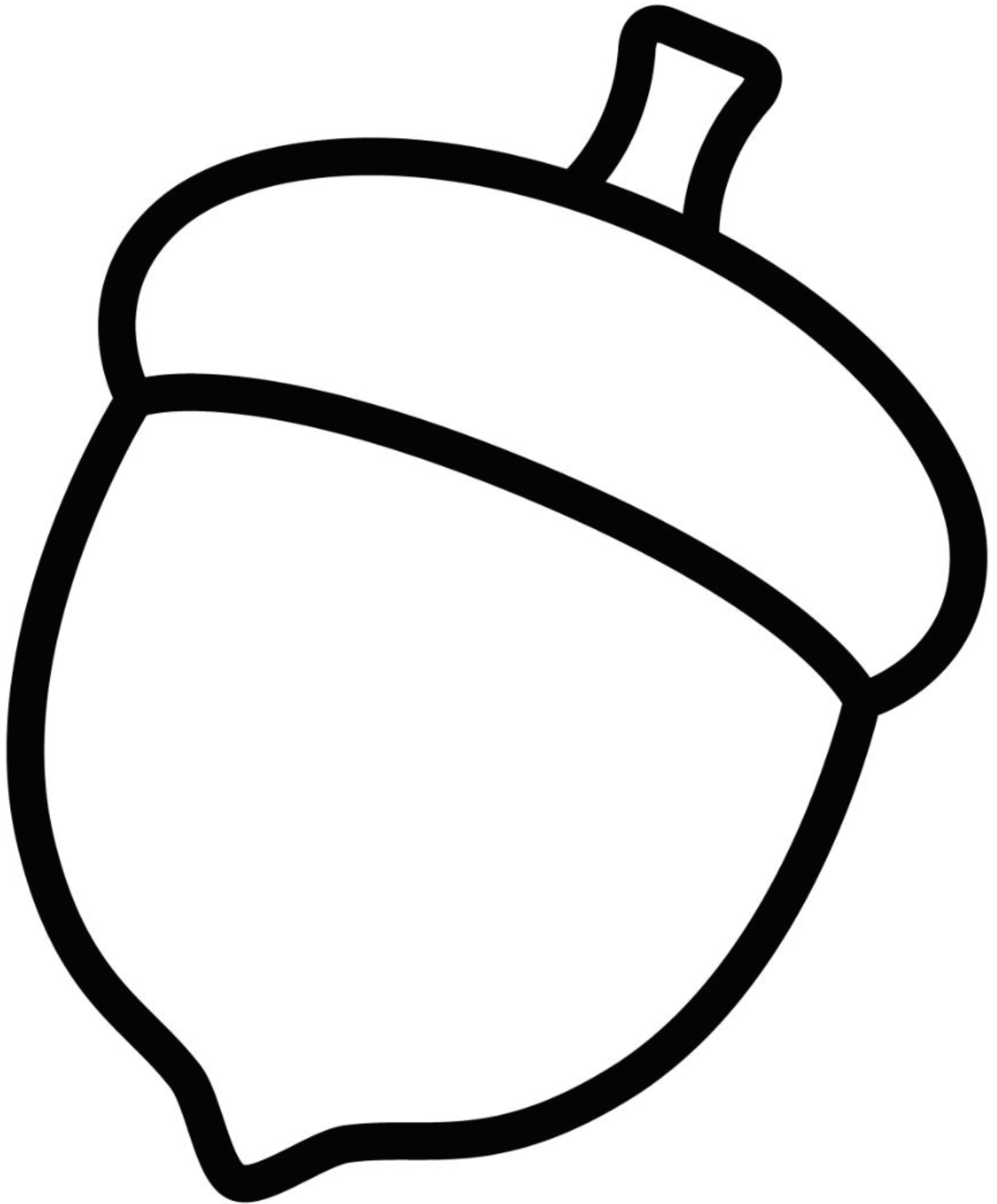
[Adorable Acorn People | Be A Fun Mum](#)

More acorn arts and crafts can be found at:  
[60+ Acorn Crafts for Kids | Fun Family Crafts](#)



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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## How-To \_\_\_\_\_

Introduction:

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First, \_\_\_\_\_

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Next, \_\_\_\_\_

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Last, \_\_\_\_\_

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Conclusion:

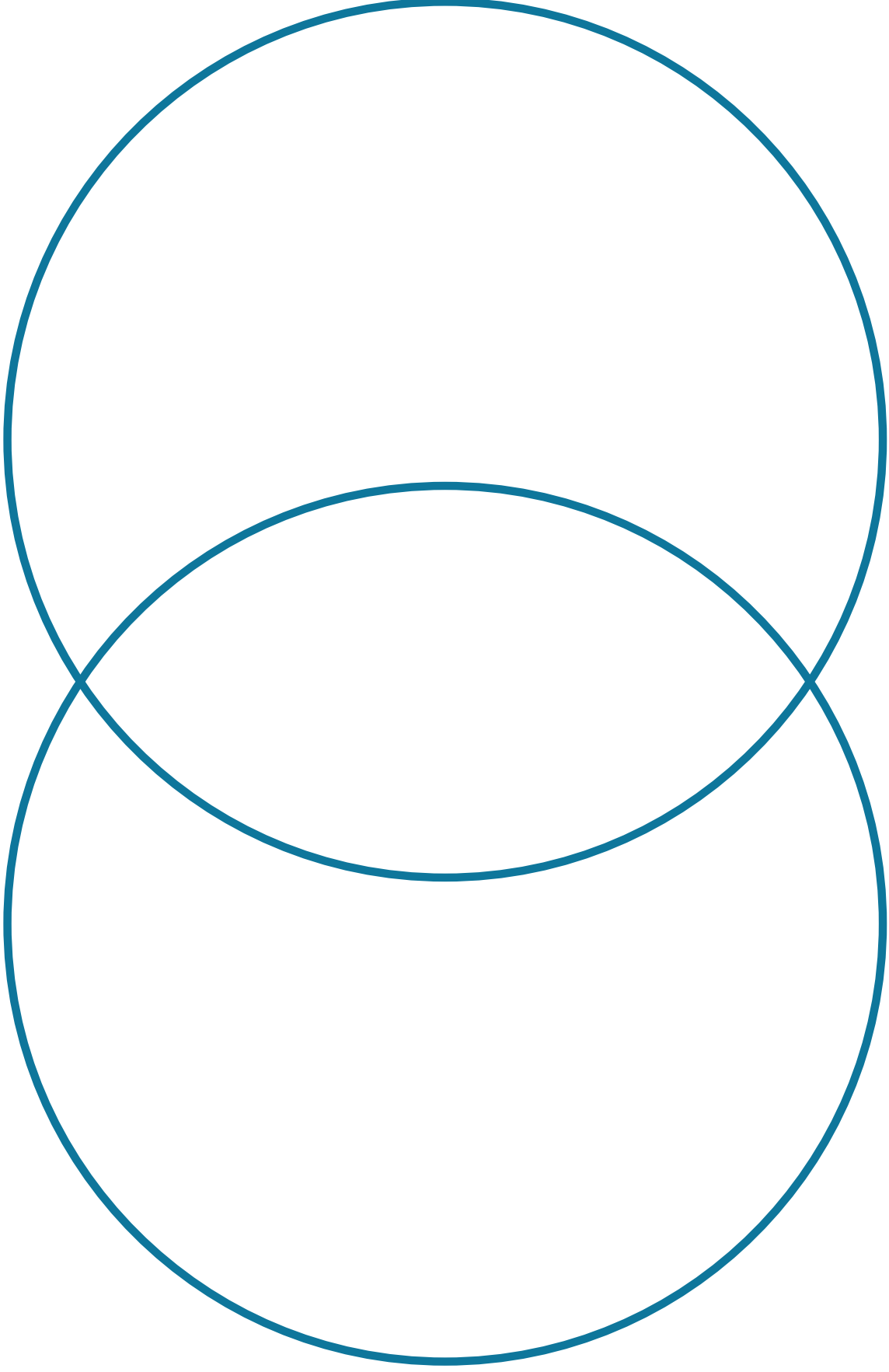
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# Venn Diagram

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

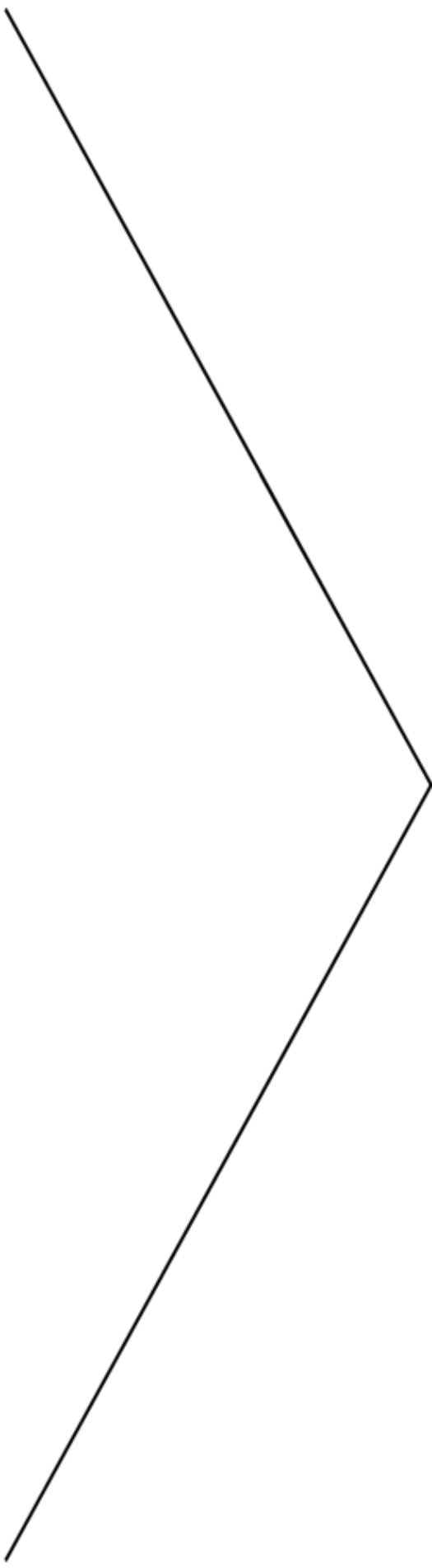
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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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Looks like

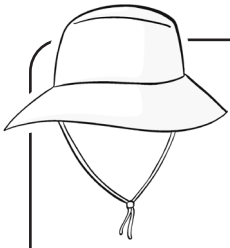


Feels like

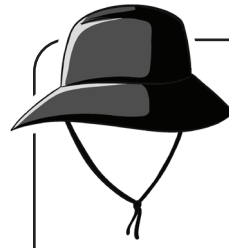
Sounds like

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_



**facts and details**



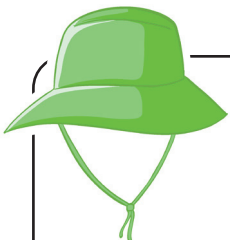
**examines the negative**



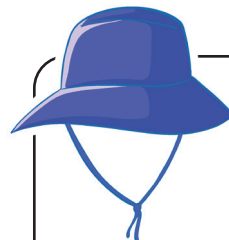
**focuses on the positive**



**emotions & feelings**



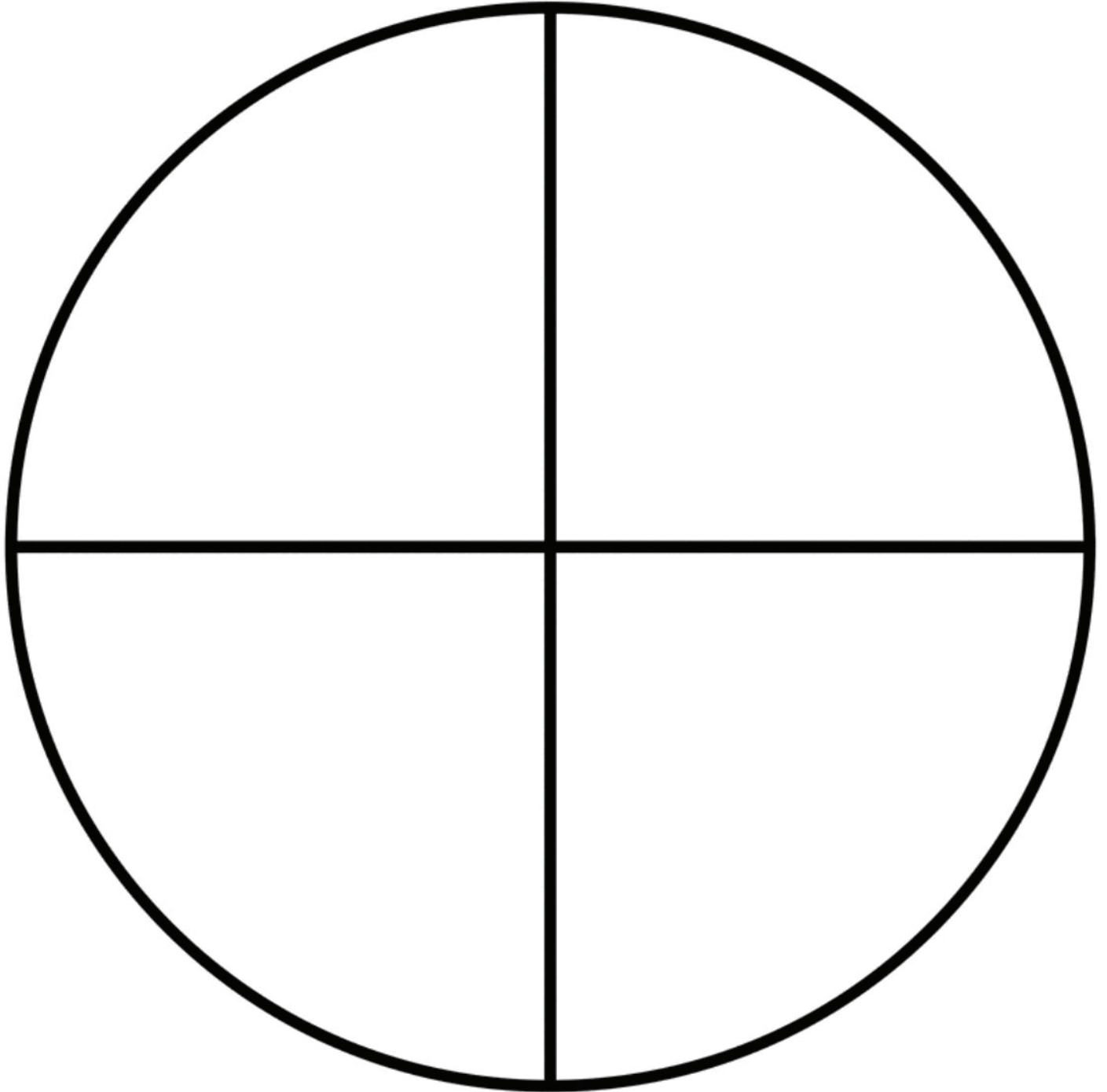
**requires imagination**



**focuses on reflection**

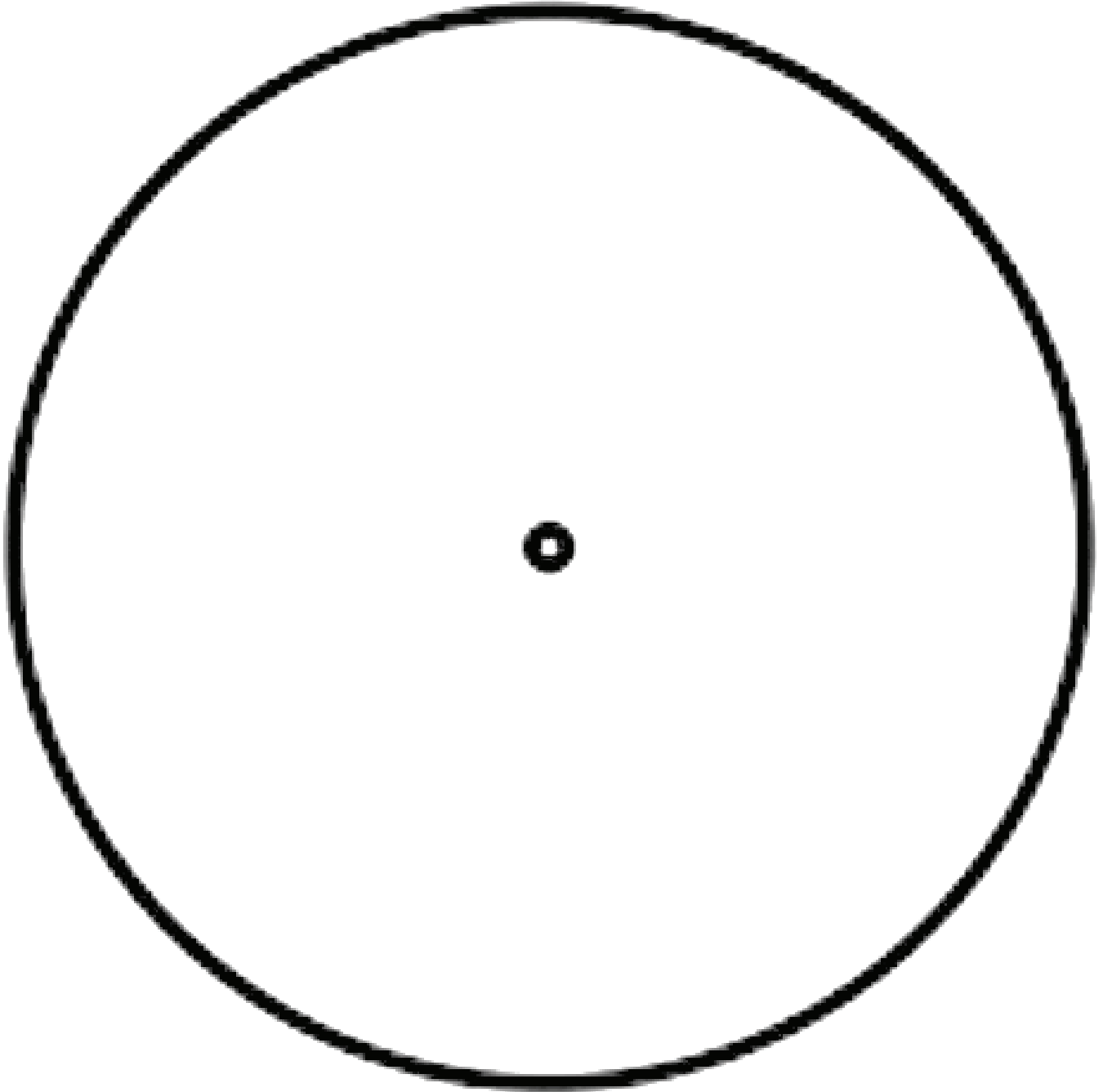
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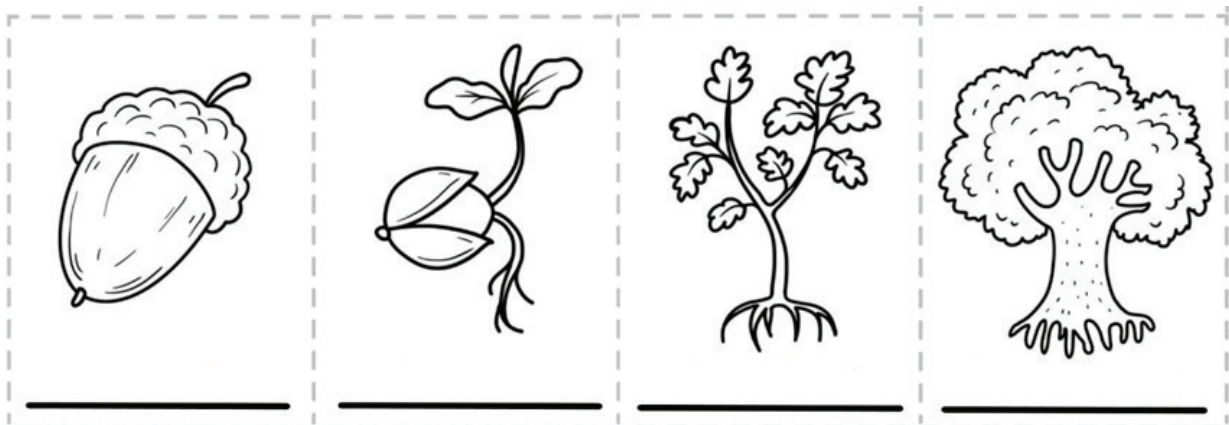
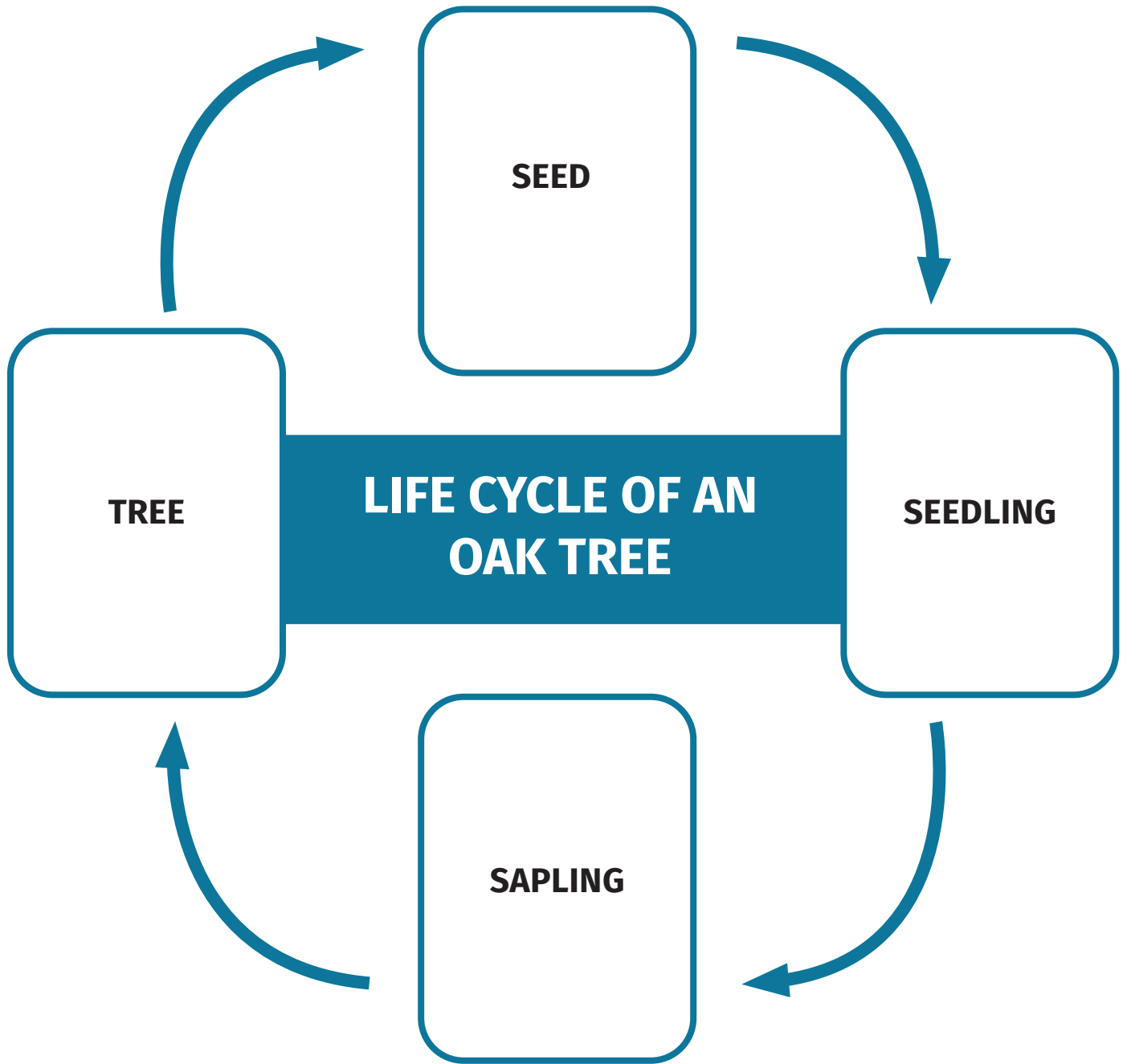




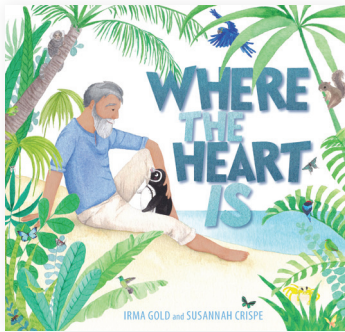
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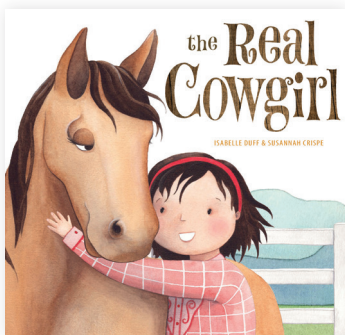
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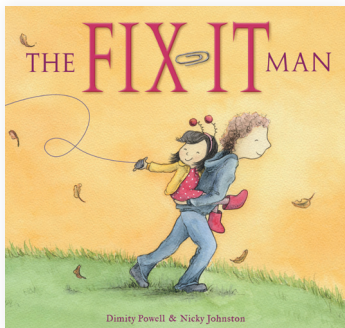
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