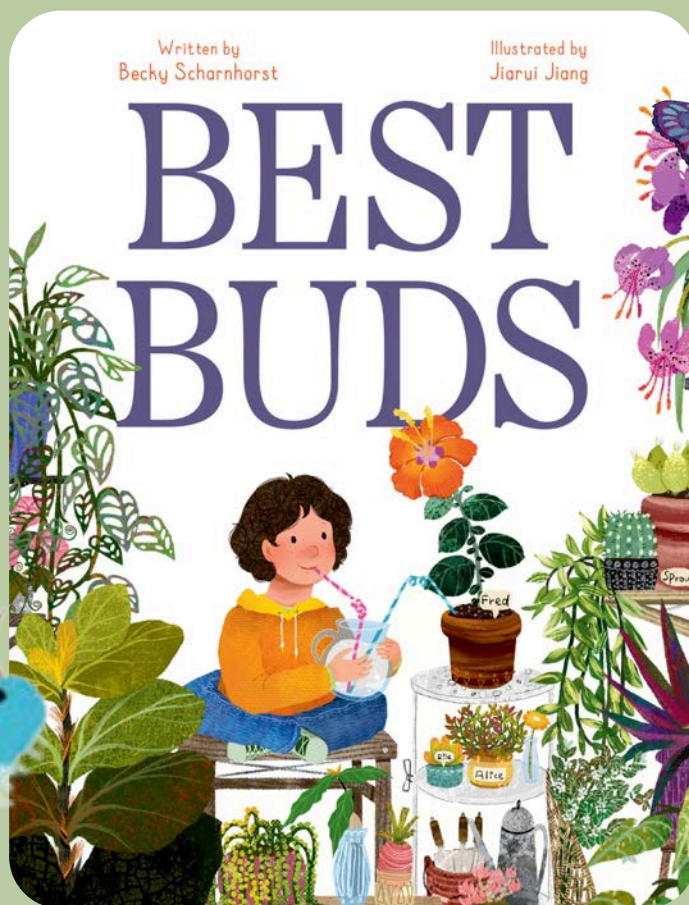
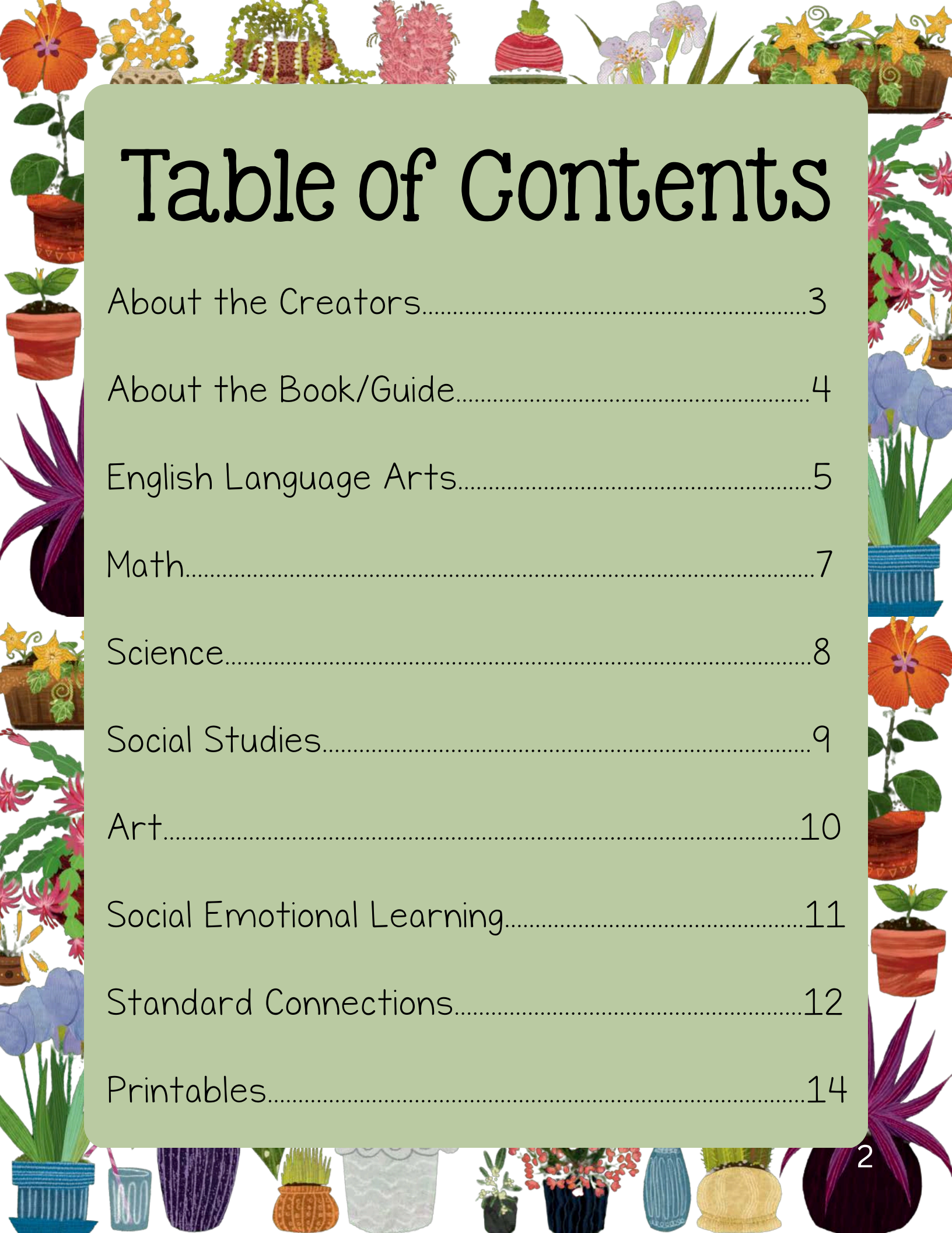


# Educator Guide

A teacher's guide created by Caitlin Stigall based on the picture book written by Becky Scharnhorst and illustrated by Jiarui Jiang.







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# About the Creators

## Author: Becky Scharnhorst

...grew up in Northeast Wisconsin and spent most of her childhood playing in lakes and reading books. Now Becky spends her days writing children's books and working at her local library. She is the author of *My School Stinks* (2021), *This Field Trip Stinks* (2022), *How to Get Your Octopus to School* (2023), and *Best Buds* (2025). When she's not reading or writing, Becky can be found hiking through the woods or baking something sweet. She currently lives in central Wisconsin with her husband and two children.


## Illustrator: Jiarui Jiang

...is an illustrator and storyteller based in China. She graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art with an MA in Illustration, and her work revolves around themes of nature, food, and more recently, beautiful insects. She loves to create children's books based on the world as she remembers it from her childhood perspective, also creating characters with a performance aspect. Recently she has been exploring the creation of books with materials other than paper, such as a book with a cover made of clay.

## Educator Guide Creator: Caitlin Stigall

...is a 6th grade math teacher with a B.A. in Elementary Education. Before teaching 6th grade, she taught 4th grade. One of her favorite aspects about teaching is creating and sharing resources with others!



A decorative border surrounds the central text area, featuring a variety of colorful plants and flowers in pots. On the left, there are orange hibiscus, yellow daisies, and purple lilies. On the right, there are pink chrysanthemums, blue hydrangeas, and orange hibiscus. At the bottom, there are purple lilies, a blue hydrangea, and a yellow daisy. The plants are arranged in a way that they appear to be growing around the central text area.

# About the Book



## Best Buds

Age Range: 4 – 7 years      Grades: PK – 2nd

Publisher: Margaret K. McElderry Books

Published: July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

ISBN13: 9781665960939

When Spencer moves to a new town, his mom is worried he may have a hard time making friends. But it's easy! First, Spencer meets Fred, who is an excellent listener. Then there's Dottie, who's a bit wild, and Eugene, who's a jokester. The only thing is, Fred, Dottie, and Eugene are all... plants. While the adults in Spencer's life question whether he might want friends he doesn't have to water, Spencer knows that friendship can blossom in the most unexpected places.

# About the Guide

This educator guide was designed for teachers and parents of students in kindergarten through 2nd grade. It includes discussion questions, activities, and resources to integrate BEST BUDS into the English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science curricula, as well as support Social Emotional Learning. Common Core and NGSS connections are included, but are not limited to the list provided. All activities can and should be modified to best fit student needs and abilities.

A decorative border surrounds the central text area, featuring a variety of potted plants and flowers. On the left, there are orange hibiscus, yellow daisies, and purple star-shaped flowers. On the right, there are pink chrysanthemums, blue irises, and orange hibiscus. At the top, there are yellow daisies, pink chrysanthemums, a red and white striped pot with a green plant, and purple star-shaped flowers. At the bottom, there are blue and white striped pots, a yellow pot with a green plant, and a purple star-shaped flower.

# English Language Arts

## Discussion Questions

### Before Reading

- Look at the front cover. What do you notice? What predictions can you make?
- What does it mean to be a “best bud”?
- Have you ever made a new friend? How did it feel?

### While Reading

- Who is Fred? Why do you think Spencer likes being friends with him?
- What kinds of new friends does Spencer make? How are they alike or different?
- How do Spencer and his mom see friendship differently?
- How does Spencer take care of his friends?
- What happens when Spencer meets Daisy and her friend Raymond?

### After Reading

- Why do you think Spencer enjoys having so many different kinds of friends?
- What does the story teach us about friendship and patience?
- What can we learn from the way Spencer cares for his friends?
- How are plants and friendships the same? How are they different?
- Who are your friends, and how do you care for them?





# English Language Arts

## Parts of Speech (See printable)

### Introduce Vocabulary

- Nouns are people, places, or things.
- Verbs are action words.
- Adjectives describe nouns.

### Discussion / Introduction to Sorting Activity

- Ask students to recall any nouns, verbs, or adjectives they remember from the book.
  - What people, places, or things (nouns) are in the book? (e.g., Spencer, plant, park)
  - What action words (verbs) are used to show what these people, places or things do? (e.g., grow, wait, talk)
  - What words are used to describe these people, places, and things? (e.g., shy, wild, patient)
- Read the following line: "Spencer stood still as an oak tree."
  - Ask students to identify the nouns (Spencer, tree), verb (stood), and adjective (still) in the sentence.

### Parts of Speech Sorting Activity

- Students will sort words from the book into the correct part of speech category.
  - This can be done as a whole class or in small groups based on your students' needs.

### Extension Activity: Act it Out!

- After sorting, call out a verb from the chart and have students act it out (e.g., "Can you bloom like a flower?" For adjectives, ask: "Can you show me what a shy plant might look like?")

# English Language Arts

## Writing Prompt: Friendly Letters (See printable)

- Review the parts of a friendly letter.
  - Heading, greeting, body, closing, signature
- After discussing Spencer's friendships, ask students to imagine what they would say to their own "best bud." This can be a person, plant, pet, toy, etc.
- Prompt: Spencer cares deeply for his plant friends. Write a letter to your "best bud" to show how much you care about them!



## Math



## Counting and Sorting Friends (See printable)

- Have students sort Spencer's plant friends into two categories: Plants With Flowers and Plants Without Flowers.
- Practice counting how many plants are in each category.
- Write and solve an addition equation to determine how many total plant friends Spencer has.
- Write and solve a subtraction equation to determine how many more plants there are with flowers than without flowers.



# Science

## Grow a Friendship Garden

(See printable)

Discussion Questions:

- How did Spencer take care of his plant friends?
- What did his friends need to grow?
- How is taking care of a plant like being a good friend?

- Print multiple copies of the worksheet to create an observation journal for as many days as needed!
- Worksheets may be stapled in a packet or folded into a booklet.

### Planting Activity:

Materials:

- Small cups, pots, or clear plastic containers
- Soil
- Seeds (e.g., bean, sunflower, grass, etc.)
- Spray bottles or cups for watering
- Popsicle sticks or plant labels
- Markers/crayons for decorating
- Observation journal

Steps:

#### 1. Introduce Vocabulary

- |         |         |            |        |        |
|---------|---------|------------|--------|--------|
| ◦ Plant | ◦ Soil  | ◦ Sunlight | ◦ Stem | ◦ Grow |
| ◦ Seed  | ◦ Water | ◦ Roots    | ◦ Leaf |        |

#### 2. Planting

- Each student plants one seed in a cup of soil. Help them gently water it over time.
- Decorate plant labels with the plant's name (e.g., "Dottie Jr.") and an adjective (e.g., "Kind Kevin").

#### 3. Place plants by a sunny window and explain how sunlight, water, and time help plants grow.

#### 4. Observe and Record

- Students check and water their plant daily.
- Record observations in observation journal. Encourage drawing pictures and writing any new changes.

Discussion:

- What happens if we forget to care for our plants?
- How is that like forgetting to care for a friend?
- What does your plant friend need to feel happy?
- What do your people friends need?



A decorative border surrounds the central text area, featuring a variety of colorful plants and flowers in different styles of pots. The plants include orange hibiscus, yellow daisies, pink gerberas, purple irises, and green succulents, among others. The pots range from simple terracotta to more ornate, patterned designs.

# Social Studies

## Friendship Community

### Key Vocabulary

- Community: A group of people who live, work, or play together.
- Friendship: A caring relationship between people.
- Include: To make someone feel part of a group.
- Different: Not the same, and that's okay!
- Belonging: Feeling safe, accepted, and cared for.

### Class Discussion Questions

- Who were some of Spencer's plant friends? Were they all the same?
- What made each friend special?
- Did Spencer treat them all the same or differently? Why?
- What would happen if Spencer only picked one type of friend?
- How is that like our classroom or neighborhood?

During or after the class discussion, create a chart to record ways people (and plants!) are different.

- Examples: size, color, personality, abilities, etc.

Then create a chart to record what all friends need. Encourage students to describe similarities between caring for plants, people, pets, etc.

- Examples: care, respect, time, patience, love

# Art

## Create a Friendship Community (See printable)

This art activity can be used as an extension to the social studies and ELA activities, or used on its own!

Materials:

- Provided worksheet
- Colored pencils, crayons, or markers

1. Each student will draw their own "plant friend." Their plant can represent themselves, someone they care about, or someone new!
  - Add features: leaves, flowers, patterns, hair, eyes, smile, etc. Encourage creativity!
  - Answer the questions on the worksheet to describe what makes their plant unique
    - If using as an extension to the ELA activity, encourage students to use adjectives to describe their plant.
2. Display all of the plants in the classroom to represent a diverse friendship community.
3. Optional: Add labels or symbols showing how we care for each other (watering cans = kindness, sun = smiles, roots = respect).





A decorative border surrounds the central text area, featuring a variety of colorful potted plants and flowers. On the left, there are orange hibiscus, yellow daisies, and purple flowers. On the right, there are pink and purple flowers. At the bottom, there are blue, orange, and white pots with different plants. The background of the central area is a solid light green color.

# Social Emotional Learning

## Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Spencer felt when he made his first new friend?
2. How would you feel if you moved to a new place like Spencer did?
3. What do you like most about being a good friend?
4. Why did Spencer and Daisy need to be patient with some of their friends (like Edith and Raymond)?
5. How can we practice being patient with our friends when they need time?
6. Why do you think Spencer cared for so many different types of friends?
7. Is it okay for friends to be different from us? Why or why not?
8. What does it mean to care for and understand someone else, even if they can't talk?
9. How did Spencer show kindness to his friends?
10. What are some ways we can show kindness to the people in our classroom?
11. How can we welcome a new friend, like Daisy welcomed Spencer?
12. Spencer had to decide which friends could come with him and where. How do we decide how to take care of our friends or toys responsibly?
13. Why is it important to think about how others feel (like when Vera was nervous on the slide)?
14. What can we do if we accidentally hurt a friend's feelings?



# Standard Connections

## English Language Arts (Common Core)

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.1: With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3: Identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.K.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.K.5: Explore word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K.4: Describe familiar people, places, things, and events with details.

## Math (Common Core)

- CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.CC.B.4: Understand the relationship between numbers and quantities.
- CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.MD.B.3: Classify objects into categories; count the number in each category.
- CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.K.OA.A.1: Represent addition and subtraction with objects.





# Standard Connections

## Science (NGSS)

- K-LS1-1: Use observations to describe patterns of what plants and animals (including humans) need to survive.
- K-ESS3-1: Use a model to represent the relationship between the needs of different plants and the places they live.
- K-PS3-1: Make observations to determine the effect of sunlight on Earth's surface.
- Science and Engineering Practice: Planning and carrying out investigations; observing and recording data.

## Social Studies (C3 Framework)

- D2.Civ.2.K-2: Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community.
- D2.Civ.10.K-2: Compare their own point of view with others.
- D2.Geo.6.K-2: Identify and explain how people's different experiences influence how they understand places and regions.
- D2.His.2.K-2: Compare life in the past to life today (e.g., how friendship and community roles have changed or stayed the same).

## SEL (CASEL Core Competencies)

- Self-Awareness: Recognizing one's emotions, values, and strengths.
- Self-Management: Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve goals.
- Social Awareness: Showing understanding and empathy for others.
- Relationship Skills: Forming positive relationships and resolving conflict constructively.
- Responsible Decision-Making: Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# parts of speech sort

Directions: Cut out the words on the dotted lines. Then sort the words into the correct column: noun, verb, or adjective.

Spencer	shy	wild
talk	friend	Fred
care	patient	funny
bloom	wait	Daisy
plant	Raymond	grow
brave	quiet	move
Kevin	listen	park
share	slow	silly





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# parts of speech sort

Noun	verb	Adjective



Greeting



Heading

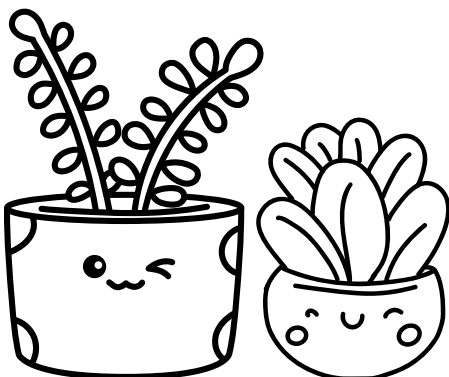
Body



Closing



Signature



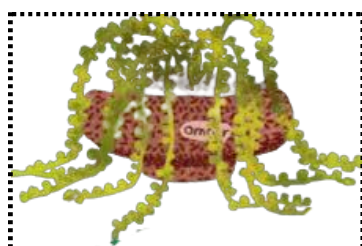
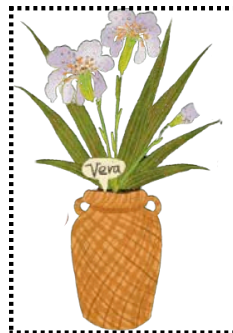
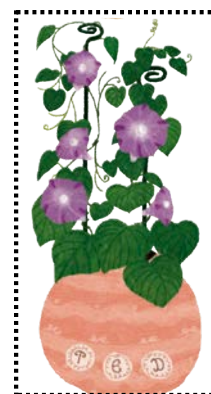


Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# count and sort

Directions: Cut out the plants on the dotted lines. Then sort the plants into the correct column: plants with flowers and without flowers.





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# count and sort

With Flowers	Without Flowers





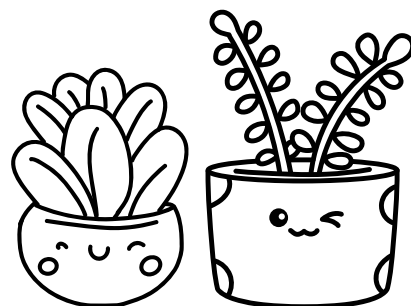
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# count and sort

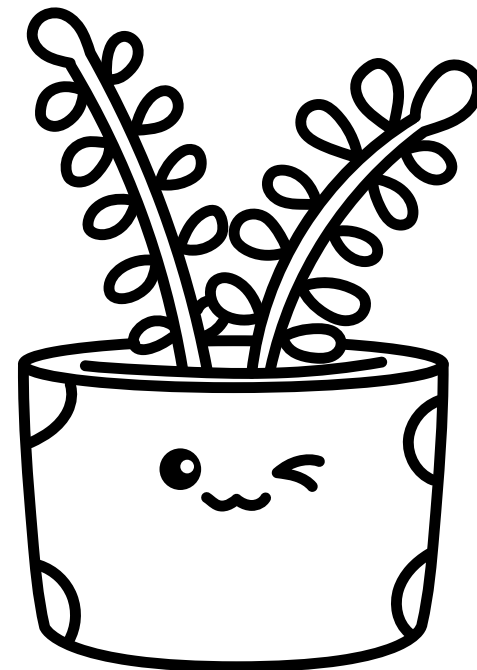
Directions: After sorting the plants, use your completed chart to answer the questions.

1. There are \_\_\_\_\_ plants with flowers.
2. There are \_\_\_\_\_ plants without flowers.
3. Write and solve addition sentence to show how many total plants there are.
4. Write and solve a subtraction sentence to show how many more plants there are with flowers than without flowers.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# MY PLANT Observation JOURNAL





**Day #** \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



I observe \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Day #** \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



I observe \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# MY PLANT Friend

Directions: Design your own plant friend. Be creative! Then answer the questions to show how your plant is unique.

Sun or  
shade?

My favorite  
music is...

My favorite  
book is...

I like to...

My  
personality  
is...

My name is...

I am unique  
because...