

# Big Lunch: Sharing Stories

Event pack for schools  
and settings working with  
children and families

**GO  
ALL  
IN.**

National  
Year of  
Reading  
2026

# Go All In at your Big Lunch

Welcome to your Big Lunch: Sharing Stories event pack.

The National Year of Reading 2026 is a fantastic opportunity for people, groups and communities throughout the UK to connect and share stories.

This June, we're delighted to be collaborating with the National Literacy Trust, the Eden Project and EmpathyLab to mark the UK's biggest celebration of community and storytelling, bringing together:

## Volunteers' Week:

**1-7 June 2026**

NCVO, Volunteer Scotland,  
WCVA and Volunteer Now

## Empathy Day Festival:

**4-11 June 2026**

EmpathyLab

## The Big Lunch:

**5-8 June 2026**

Eden Project

This event pack is filled with simple, fun activities for children from all partners to help you go all in at your Big Lunch: Sharing Stories celebration. Whether you are a teacher, a youth leader in the community or a volunteer in a school, we are delighted that you're joining us. To discover more resources, please scan the QR codes.

**Enjoy your Big Lunch: Sharing Stories celebrations. Let's go all in together!**



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Change your story



In partnership with



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# Activity ideas for your Big Lunch

This pack offers activities and conversation starters for children at your Big Lunch event around themes of connection, sharing stories, community action and food.

Choose the activities that feel most appropriate for the children you work with – you don't have to use them all. You could leave pages from this pack on tables and invite children to choose which one they'd like to focus on. Some of the activities involve drawing, so make sure there are pens or pencils available too.

## How can I support children when using these resources?

- **Go first:** It can help if you start by answering questions yourself or modelling one of the activities – sharing a little about yourself breaks down barriers and shows children that there is no 'right' answer.
- **Follow their lead:** Use these ideas to get the conversation flowing but remember that it is a conversation and not an interview! Listen to what children want to share, encourage them to chat with their friends and follow tangents wherever they lead.
- **Be curious:** If children share a story or character you haven't heard of or mention something about their community that you didn't know about, ask them to tell you more. Children love to be the expert and a genuine interest nurtures confidence and shows children that you value their voices and their stories.
- **Make space:** Some children will jump in quickly while others may need a little encouragement. Gently invite quieter voices by asking questions like "I haven't heard of that story. Have you?" or "What do you think about what \_\_\_ said?"
- **Lower the expectations:** Let children know that they can just listen to conversations rather than contributing right away. Many will join in once they feel comfortable or if the topic catches their attention. Some children may open up if they can begin with a drawing activity.



# Sharing Stories: “Would you rather..?” reading edition

Change your story

**Would you rather...**

... read animal stories or stories about people?

... read stories set in the past or the future?

... read a book without pictures or read a book without words?

... read fiction or non-fiction?

... share a story with someone else or read on your own?

... read magical stories or realistic stories?

Change your story

## Sharing Stories: Make a group story

In a group, somebody chooses one of the words below to create the first line of a story.

For example, *“One day, a **hamster** called Sir Nibbles decided it was time for an adventure.”*

Cross out the word used below. The next person should choose another word from the list to continue the story. Taking it in turns, each group member should continue to add a new sentence until all the words below have been used.

hamster

skateboard

lunch

time machine

dinosaur

computer game

pineapple

custard

giraffe

spaceship

rollercoaster

unicorn

trampoline

# Sharing Stories: If you're into it, read into it!

If you could have lunch with any book or story character, who would you choose and why?

If you were a character from a book or story, who would you be and why?

Can you share a story about a friend or family member? What makes it special?

If you could spend a day inside a story world, where would you go and why?

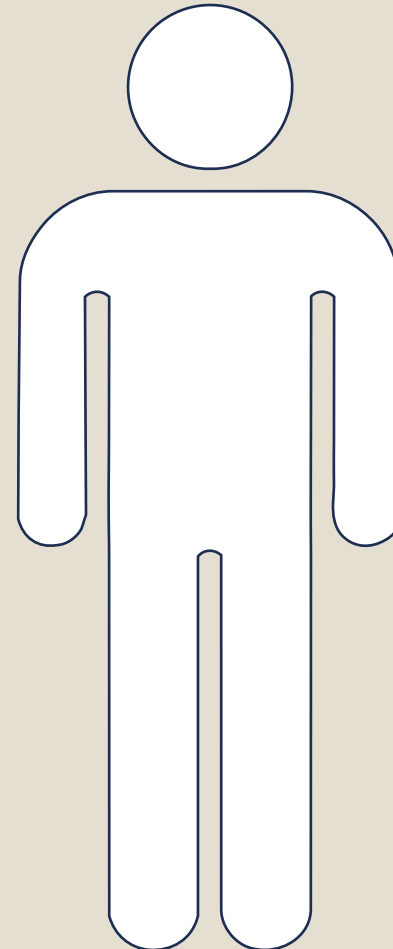
What would you need for your journey?

# Sharing Stories: What sort of superhero does your school or community need?

If you were designing a superhero for your community, what would they be like? What skills and characteristics would they need? What would they do to make this place better?

## Ask the people around you

- What is one thing you would like to change about the place where you live?
- How could you make that happen?
- What can we do to make people feel happy and safe in our community?



## Ideas bank

My superhero would be...

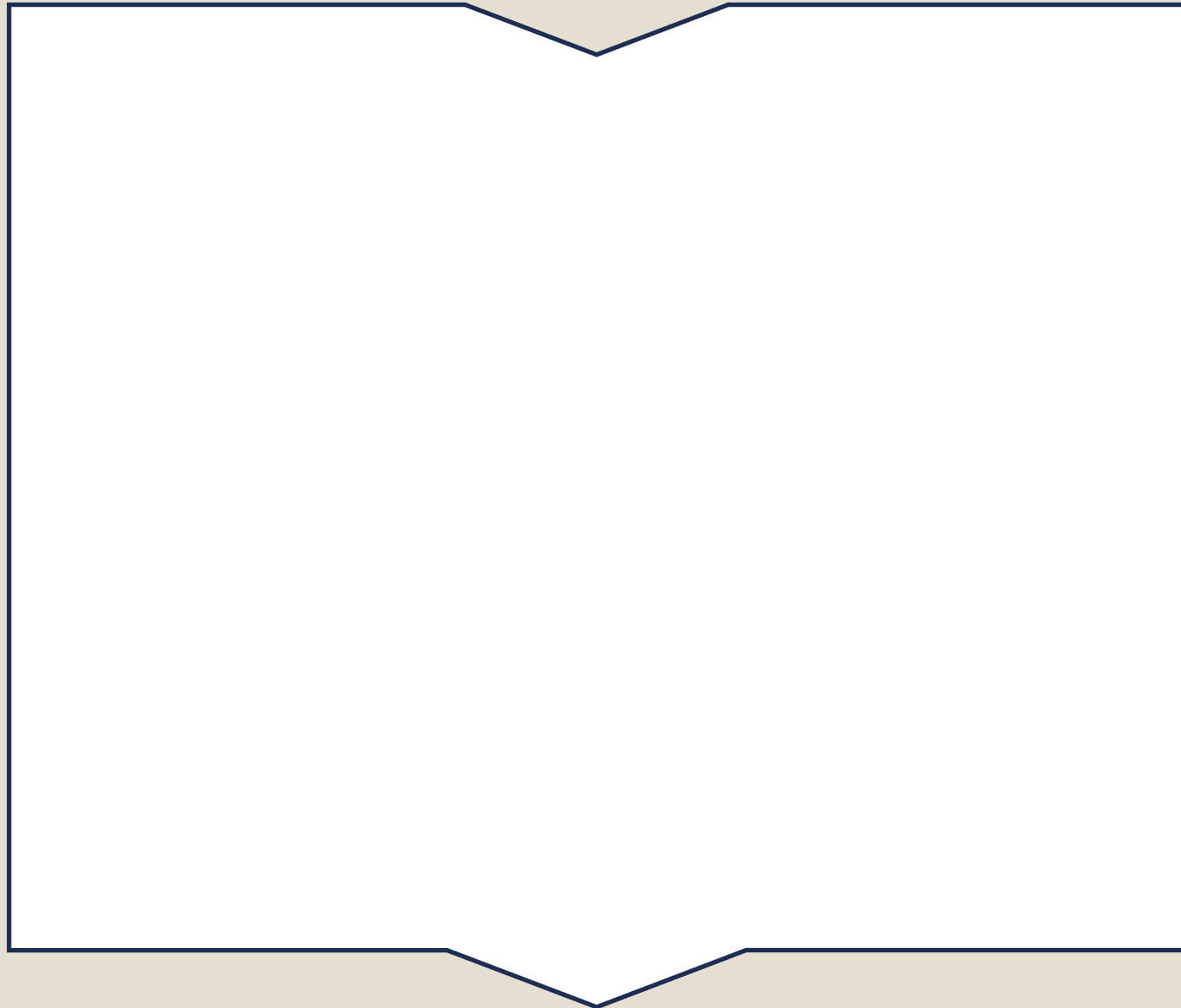
- Strong
- Kind
- Generous
- Brave
- Helpful
- Determined
- Curious

**National  
Literacy  
Trust**

Change your story

What sort  
of story  
are you in?

## Sharing Stories: Draw yourself as a book character!


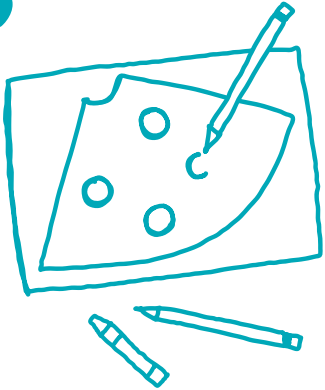
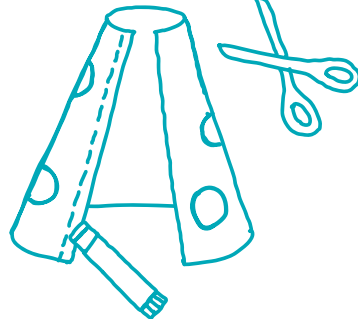

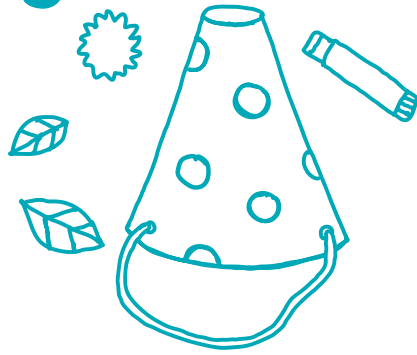



# HOW TO MAKE A PARTY HAT

## YOU'LL NEED

- ✓ An A4 sheet of thick paper or card
- ✓ Coloured pencils, crayons or felt tips
- ✓ Extra decorative bits like pressed flowers, leaves, a pom pom, tin foil, tissue or patterned paper
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ Ribbon or string
- ✓ A stapler or hole punch



<p>1</p>  <p>Use the template or draw the shape onto a piece of card</p>	<p>2</p>  <p>Use pens, pencils or crayons to colour in, or decorate your hat</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>Cut out, roll it up to create a cone and secure in place with glue or tape</p>
<p>4</p>  <p>Use ribbon or string to create a chin strap</p>	<p>5</p>  <p>Attach any extras – like pompoms or leaves</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>Ta da! You've got your own party hat!</p>

## CREATE-YOUR-OWN PARTY HAT

- ➔ Decorate your party hat template and carefully cut it out.
- ➔ Glue along the edge to create a cone, add string or ribbon for chin straps.
- ➔ Then pop your party hat on and enjoy!

Glue here

Playfully brought to you by



eden  
project

Pears  
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CO  
OP

 Little notes you can use to say thank you. Write or draw something kind for someone and help spread some joy!



**YOU'RE  
AWESOME!**

THANK YOU FOR...

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THANK YOU FOR...



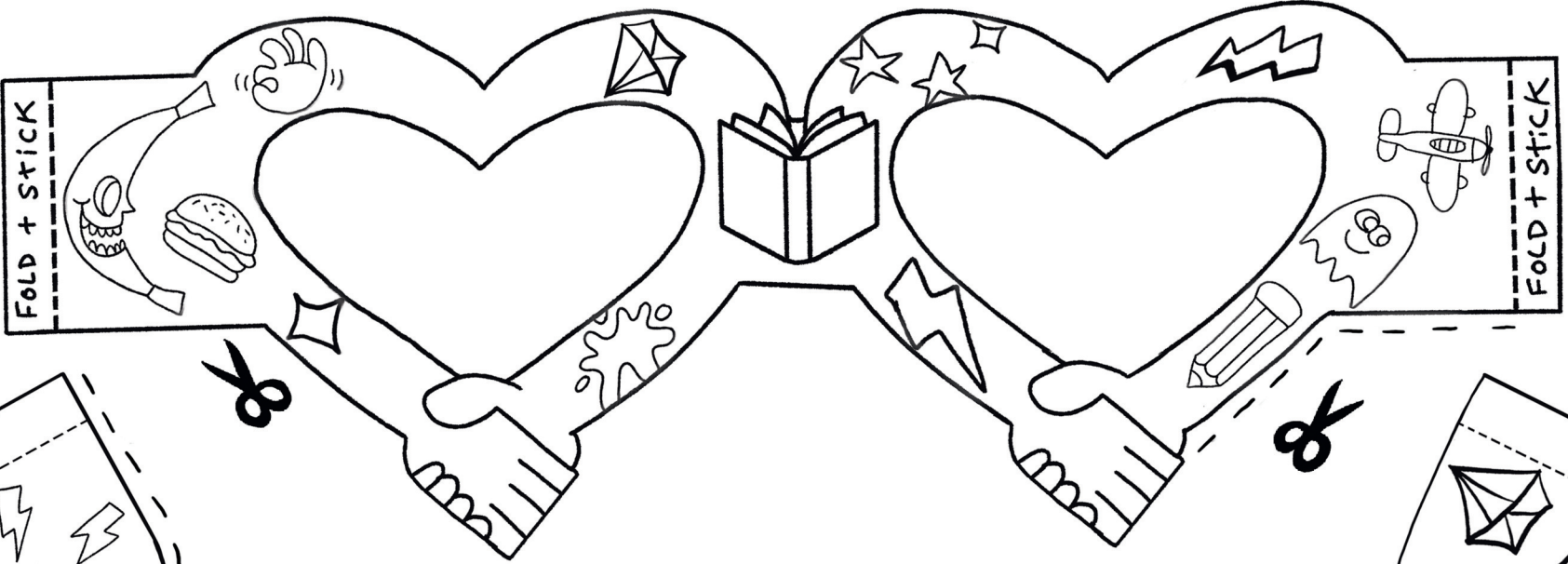
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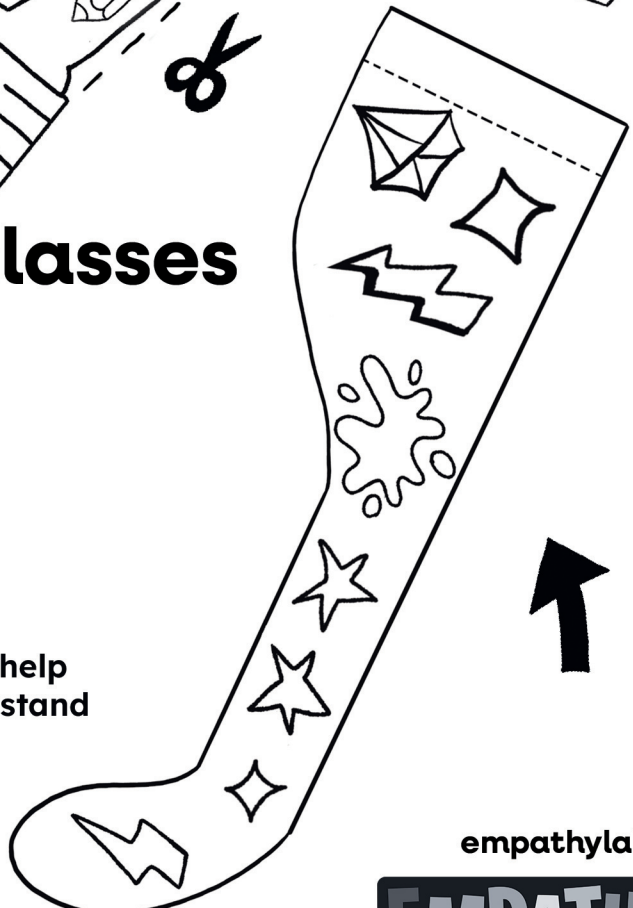
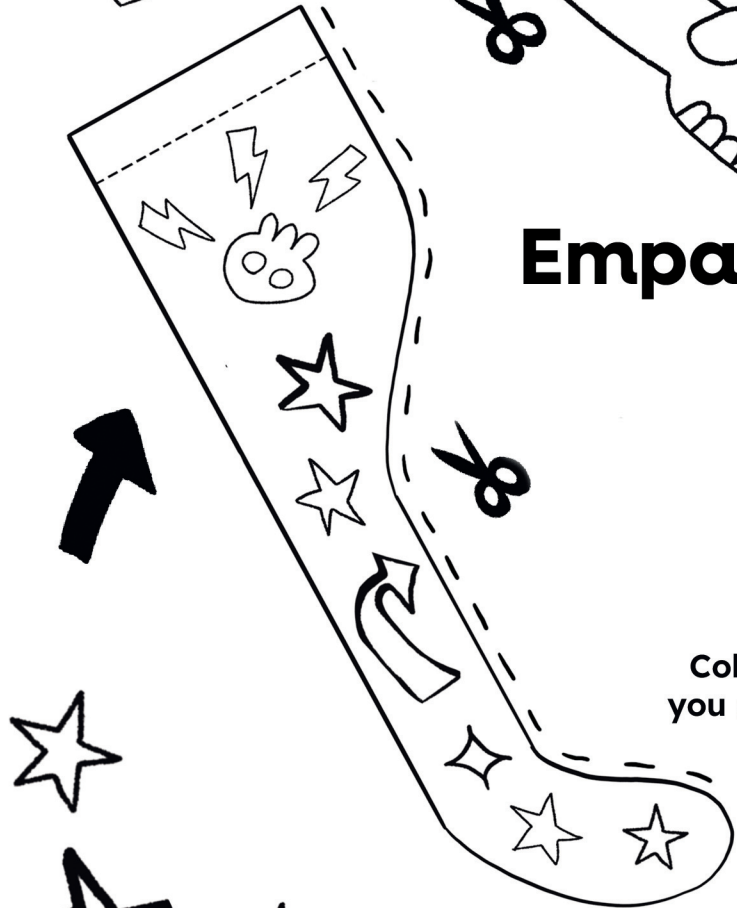


# Empathy Superpower Glasses



Colour in and try on these amazing glasses to help you see other people's points of view and understand how they are feeling.

Cut out (x2 in the centre of each lens)



This is what your glasses will look like

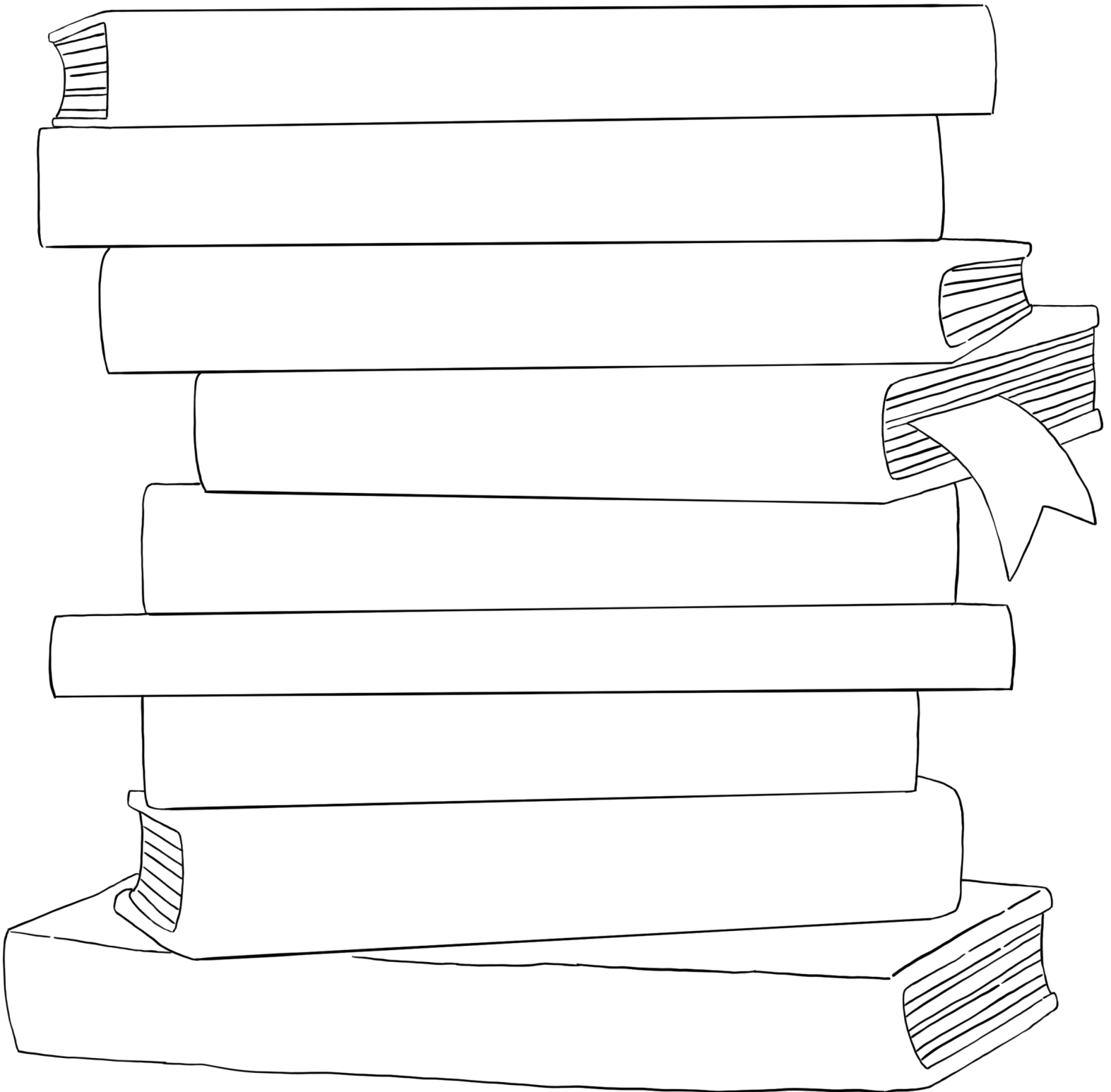
[empathylab.uk](http://empathylab.uk)



# Empathy Choice

Share your favourite empathy-building read. Colour in the books adding in the titles you would put on your empathy bookshelf, and decorate as you wish.

Help us create a nationwide library full of brilliant empathy-boosting reads. Add your choice and tell us why - we want to hear your voice!



# Empathy Exchange

Connect with someone you don't know well and get to know them better. These questions have been designed to spark empathy-filled conversations. Take turns asking in pairs. Try to really LISTEN to their answers.



When you're having a difficult day, what can other people do to help you?

What book cheers you up?

What qualities do you value most in a good friend?

What's your favourite animal and why?

What makes you, you?

If you could be a book character for a day, who would it be?

What's the biggest challenge you've overcome?

Many thanks to the pupils of Hallam Fields Junior School, Carrick Academy, The High School of Glasgow, Moorlands Primary & Kirk Hallam Community Academy for their contributions.

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How do you show your feelings?

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Who is the most inspirational person in your life?

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What is a TV show, book, film or song that makes you happy?

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Where and when do you feel most comfortable?

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What have you achieved that you're proud of?

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What makes a good life?

---

Would you want to be happy all the time?

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If I told you that your biggest fear is behind that door...  
what do you think is behind that door?

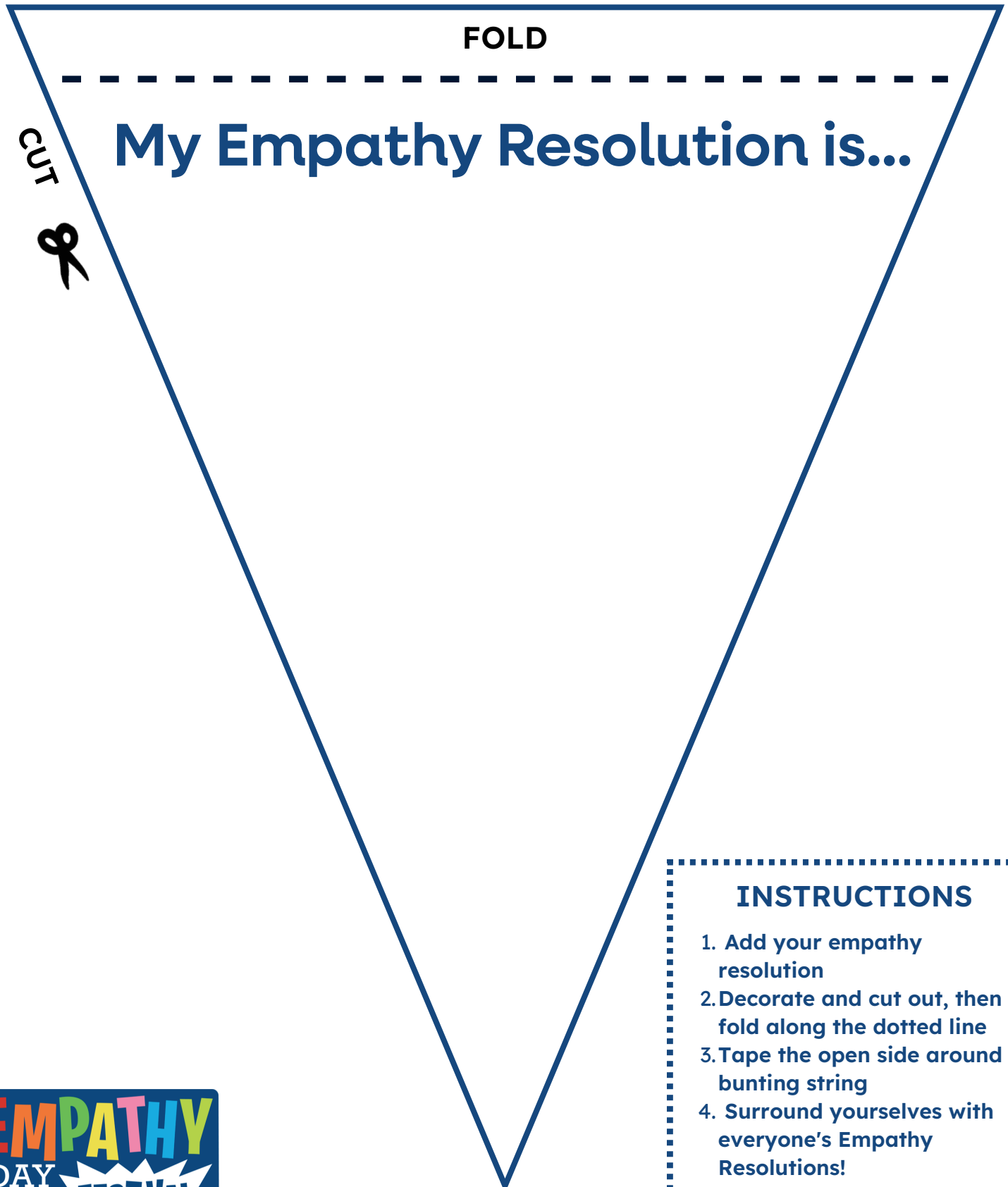
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# Make your own Empathy Resolution bunting

Use our bunting to decorate your space with Empathy Resolutions!

An Empathy Resolution is an action YOU can take - however small - to make things better for others. What will you promise to do?



## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add your empathy resolution
2. Decorate and cut out, then fold along the dotted line
3. Tape the open side around bunting string
4. Surround yourselves with everyone's Empathy Resolutions!

