

Dear Friends,

Exciting News—REACH is Growing!

When I first launched REACH (Reading Establishes A Connection Home), the goal was simple: to bring grandparents and grandchildren together through books. But I've realized something important—reading together can connect even more people in even more ways!

Now, REACH is for:

- 📖 Parents – Read in person or over video calls to stay connected.
- 👴 Grandparents – Keep the bond strong with shared stories.
- 👧 Siblings & Cousins – Make reading a fun family tradition.
- 🎓 Reading Buddies – Pair older and younger students for shared reading.
- 🏫 Classroom & Reading Clubs – Schools can create peer reading groups.
- 🤝 Community Volunteers – Seniors, retired teachers, and local readers can connect with students.
- 🔗 High School & College Mentors – Start REACH chapters to inspire younger readers.

Why does this matter? Because loneliness is real, and sharing stories creates belonging, laughter, and joy. Studies even show loneliness is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day! Reading together can change that.

Over the next few weeks, I'll be updating my website to reflect these exciting changes. In the meantime, I hope you'll pick a REACH partner, choose a book, and start connecting!

This month's REACH Guide features *Giant Trouble: The Mystery of the Magic Beans* by Laurel Decher—complete with fun discussion questions and activities. Let's give Laurel a warm welcome to the initiative and a huge thanks for the fun activities she created and shared with us.

Thank you for being part of this growing movement. Let's read to REACH!

See you next month!
Donna B.

Donna Boock
REACH Editor & Concierge of Children's Book Fun



Bookish Days to Celebrate!

National Reading Month; National Small Press Month; National March into Literacy Month; Gardening, Nature, and Ecology Books Month

March 1-7: National Ghostwriters Week

March 2: National Read Across America Day

March 4: National Grammar Day

March 2-8: Read an Ebook Week | Return Borrowed Books Week

March 14: National Write Your Story Day

March 16: National Freedom of Information Day

March 16-22: World Folktales & Fables Week

March 19: International Read to Me Day

March 20: World Storytelling Day | Bibliomania Day

March 21: World Poetry Day

March 21-27: Shakespeare Week

March 25: Tolkien Reading Day

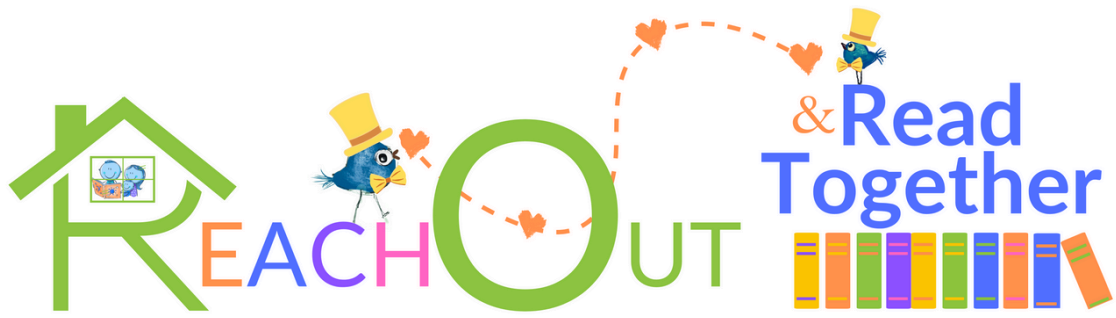
March 30: National Pencil Day

Where can you find Donna in March?

March 14 - Venice Writer's Festival - discussions and great speakers during this day of social learning at the library. From 3:00-4:00pm, I will be sharing my experience and advice about designing an author's website, creating an online presence, and building a publishing company. Register to join here: <https://venicebookfair.com/writers-festival/>.

March 15 - Venice Book Fair - will take place on Saturday, March 15, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in Blalock Park, bordered by Pensacola and Nassau Avenues in downtown Venice, FL. I will be there with my books and Rescue Readers, and will also be reading from *Moo-La-La-Ti-Da!*

Grab the kiddoes and come on down to Blalock Park for the Venice Book Fair and Writers' Festival Children's Experience! Fantastic for elementary-aged students to get excited about reading, featuring children's book author readings, Coloring Pages, Puppet Show, Face Painting, Photo Booth, and a Scavenger Hunt! Scavenger Hunt Passports will describe the children's book authors, kids can visit their tents and get a stamp in their Passports, then come back to our Children's Corner for a prize!



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This Month's Featured Book:

Giant Trouble: The Mystery of the Magic Beans (Seven Kingdoms Fairy Tale)

by Laurel Decher

Whether it's speaking up at a feast, reading a map, taking a test in a strange kingdom, or standing up for your friends, Seven Kingdoms Fairy Tales are about finding the magic in life.

Could You Stick Up For a Giant?

When the beloved Mr. Giant keels over in the Royal Marigold Restaurant, it's a recipe for trouble for eleven-year-old Prince William of Marigold!

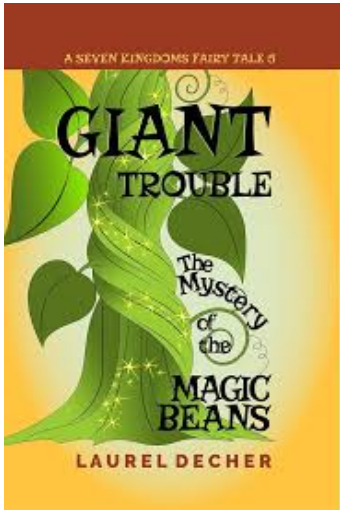
Find the cure for Mr. Giant's mysterious sleeping sickness and cook up a plan to prevent a War on Giants? Phew!

Years ago, his family was warmly welcomed by the Seven Kingdoms. Suddenly, it's William's job to remind everyone how to make friends!?

Fee, Fie, Foe, FUN!

And if you're on a quest for **AR points**, this book is a **goldmine—earn up to 11 points** with this magical adventure!

Suggested for ages 9-12



A Little about Laurel...

Meet Laurel Decher, the imaginative author behind the Seven Kingdoms Fairy Tales series, where young readers embark on whimsical adventures filled with magic and mayhem. Laurel crafts her tales from the outskirts of a mid-sized German city, nestled between a medieval chapel on St. James' Way and a boundary marker tree adorned with a delightfully spooky face. It's a setting that sparks endless story ideas, even though she once thought she'd call Vermont home forever.



Writing for readers aged 9 to 12, Laurel believes this vibrant period is perfect for unlocking lifelong passions. Her books encourage kids to fling open every door of possibility, celebrating their "reading superpowers" while exploring fantastical realms. Laurel's own adventurous spirit was evident at age eight, as she dove into escapades that now inspire her storytelling.

When she's not weaving tales, Laurel enjoys connecting with families of eager readers, offering book recommendations and behind-the-scenes glimpses into her creative process. Her mission? To sprinkle a little magic into every child's life, one story at a time.

So, whether you're navigating the quirks of the Seven Kingdoms or simply seeking a hearty laugh, Laurel Decher's stories promise a delightful escape into worlds where the extraordinary is just a page away.

How can you connect with Laurel? Find her here: laureldecher.com!

Giant Trouble: The Mystery of the Magic Beans **Discussion Questions for REACH Partners**

from author Laurel Decher & REACH editor Donna Boock

1. William uses his comic strips to defend a friend, clear up a misunderstanding, and speak up for someone. Discuss with your reading buddy: Have either of you used a skill or talent to help someone else? How did it go? What happened?
2. Have you ever moved to a new school or community? What was hard for you? What helped you feel at home? Do you have helpful tips for someone your age?
3. Do you have a recipe for making friends? Brainstorm ways to make someone new feel at home.
4. There are so many kinds of beans in the world. Does your family like beans? What's your favorite kind? Do you have a family recipe or one that you would like to learn?
5. William and his friends have to work together to solve a mystery. Can you think of a time when teamwork helped you accomplish something? What made working together easier?

Discussion Questions for Classroom Teachers & Librarians

1. Using art and story can be a powerful way to make the world a better place. Is there something important you want everyone to understand? Design a t-shirt (or several) or a comic strip airplane and get the word out.
2. Throughout the book, William and his friends face misunderstandings that they must clear up. Why do misunderstandings happen? What are some good ways to solve them?
3. Mr. Giant is different from everyone else in the story, and some people are afraid of him at first. Have you ever had an experience where you judged someone before getting to know them? How can we make sure we include and welcome others?
4. Magic beans are at the center of this mystery. If you had a magic bean that could do anything, what power would it have? How would you use it?
5. Fairy tales often have messages or lessons. What do you think is the most important lesson from Giant Trouble? How does it connect to real life?

REACH Activities

created by Laurel Decher

DELIVER YOUR COMIC BY AIRMAIL



In *Giant Trouble: The Mystery of the Magic Beans*, William folds his comic strips into paper airplanes to spread his message on the battlefield.

Draw a comic, fill in your title and byline, and add your name and the year to the copyright line.

Fold the paper in half so the comic is inside. Then fold the paper airplane of your choice. You can add a piece of tape to hold the wings together.

Fly the Friendly Skies!

<https://laureldecher.com>

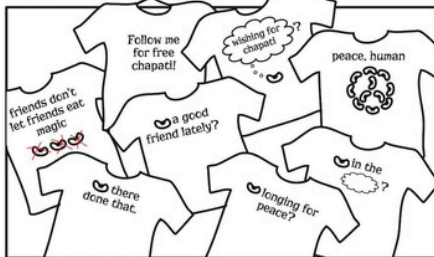
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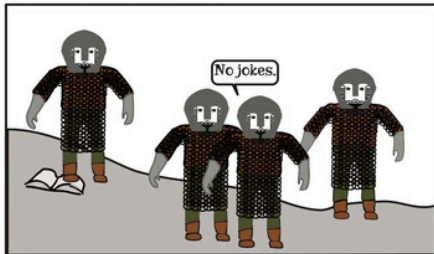
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FRIENDS OR INVADERS?

BY JACK



FRIENDS WEAR FUN TSHIRTS



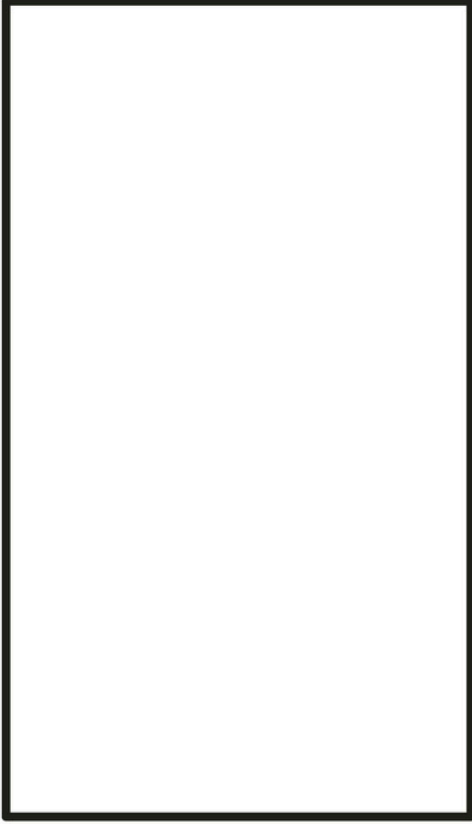
INVADERS WEAR CHAIN MAIL

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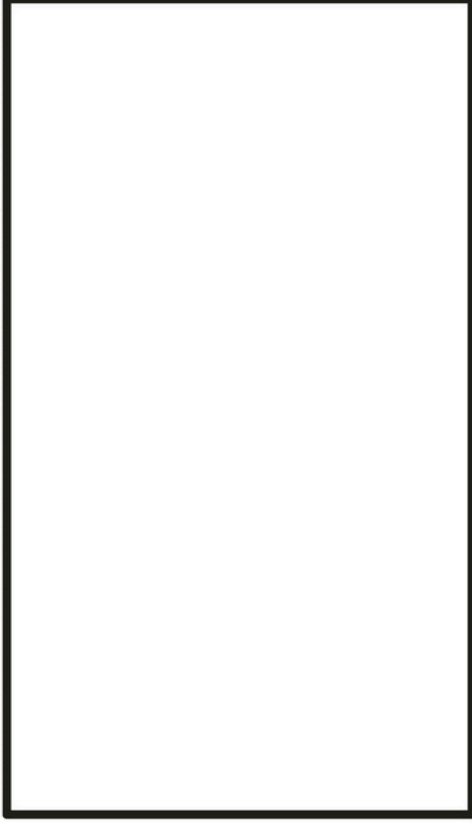
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IDEA BY LAUREL DECHER

DESIGN YOUR OWN T-SHIRT WITH YOUR MESSAGE



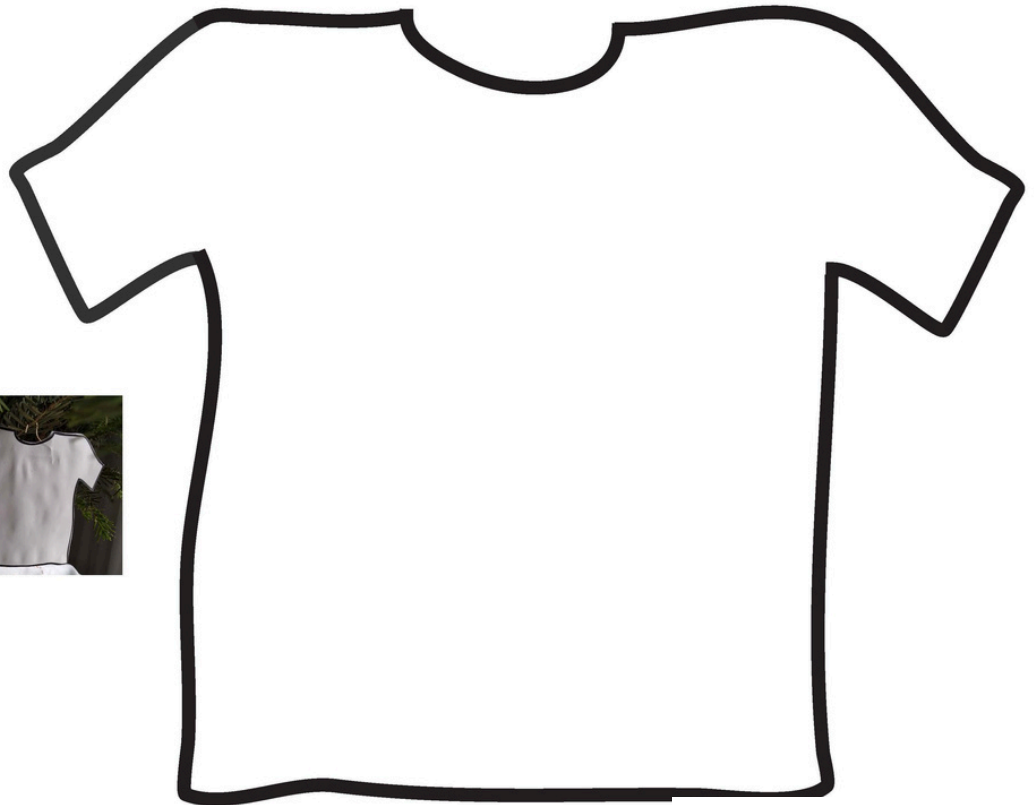
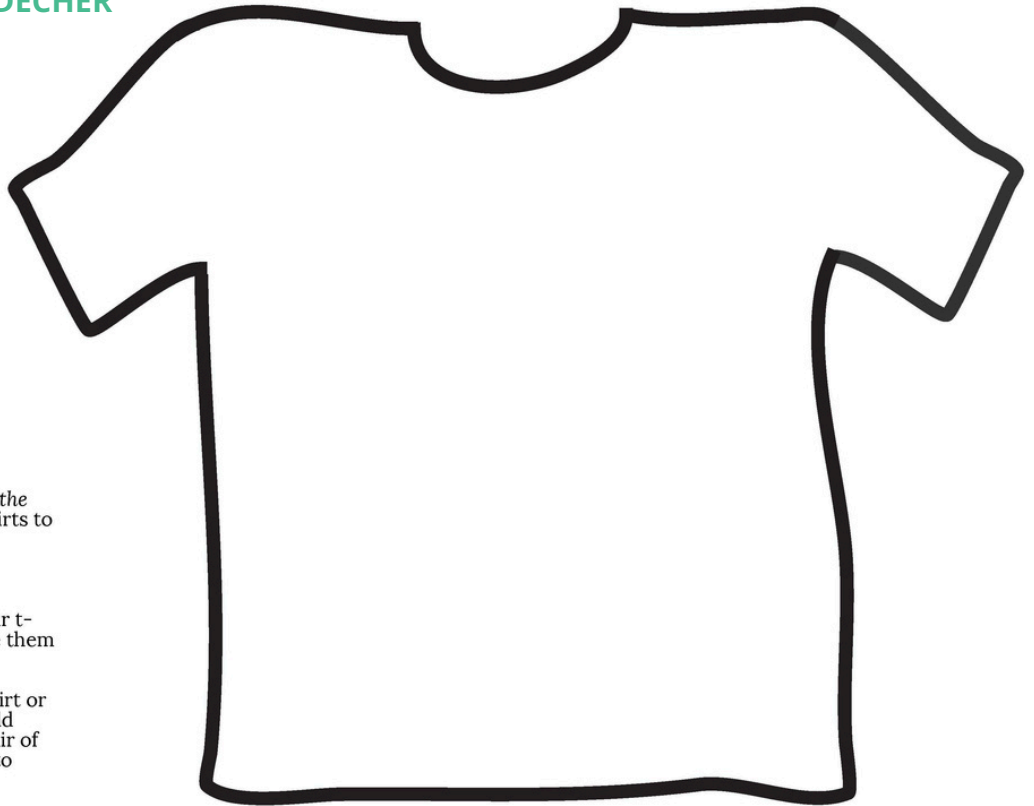
In *Giant Trouble: The Mystery of the Magic Beans*, the giants use t-shirts to get their message across.

What's your message?

Design the front and back of your t-shirt. Cut out the shirts and glue them together.

If you want to hang up your t-shirt or make a display, you can use a gold paperclip to make a hanger. A pair of pliers makes it easier to bend into shape.

<https://laureldecher.com>



MAKE YOUR OWN



STRIP!

Get ready to bring your own story to life—just like William in Giant Trouble!

Follow these simple steps to create your very own comic strip.

1. Print the Comic Strip Template on standard printer paper or cardstock for a sturdier feel.
2. Sketch your characters and scenes in the comic panels. Start with simple stick figures or get creative with details!
3. Add speech bubbles & captions to tell your story. Remember, comics are all about ACTION and EXPRESSION!
4. Color it in (optional) to make your comic pop!
5. Share your comic with a reading buddy, family member, or even take a picture and send it to a friend!

Need Inspiration? Try These Comic Starters!

◆ Character + 🌍 Setting + ? Problem = A Great Story!

🧑‍🎓 Kid with superpowers + 🏫 School Cafeteria + 🚀 The lunch trays start floating away!

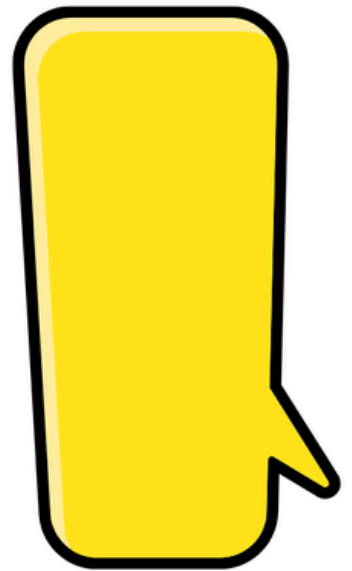
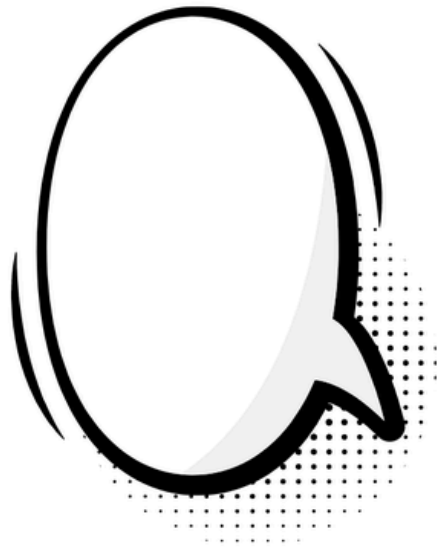
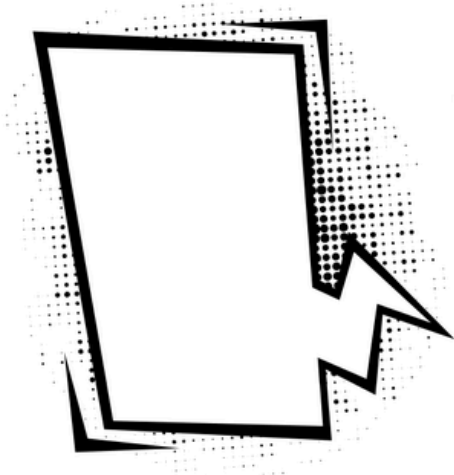
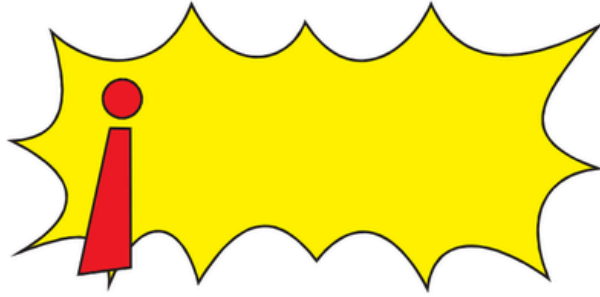
🕵️ Kid-Detective + 📖 Enchanted Library + 🔍 The most magical book has vanished!

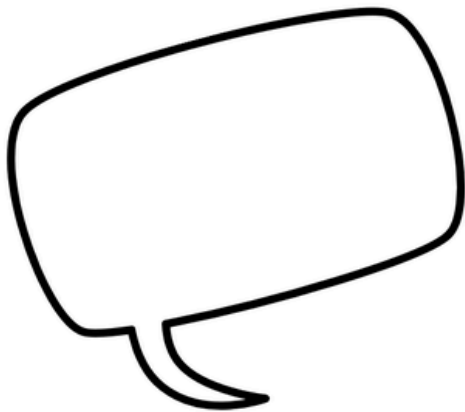
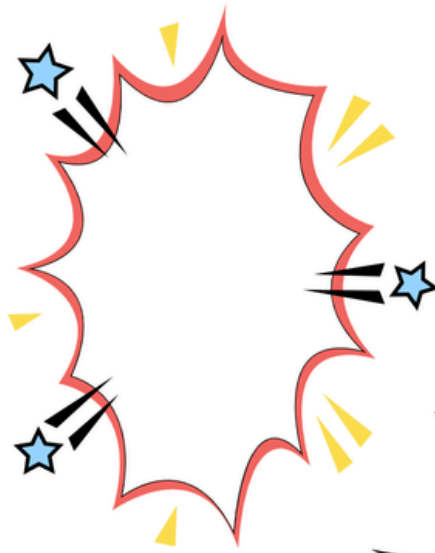
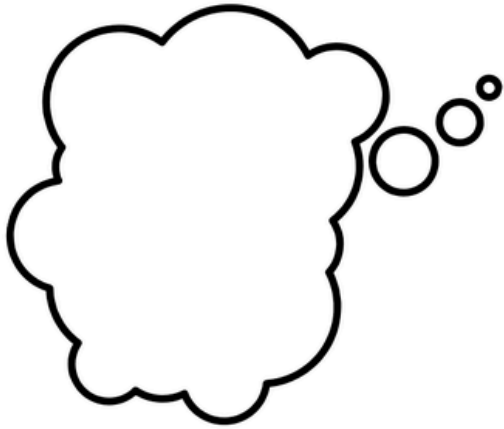
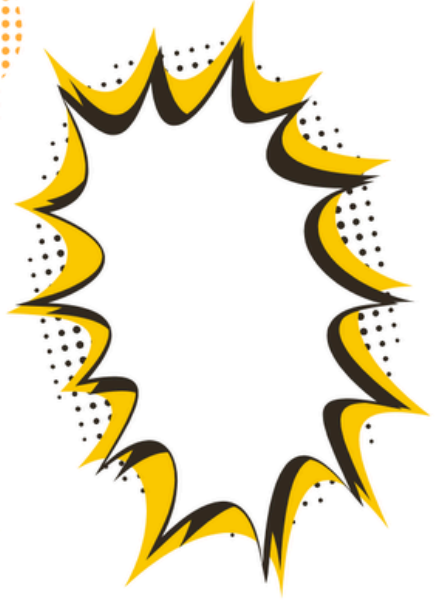
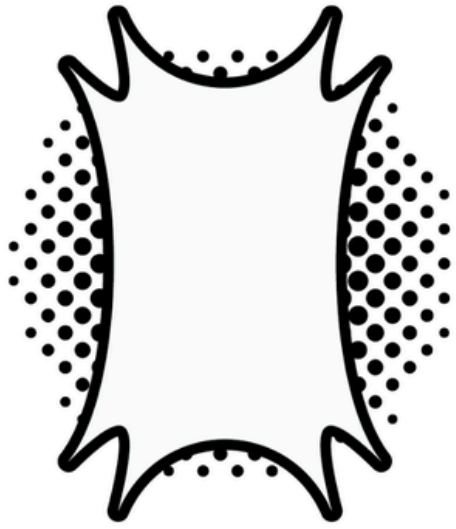
🧑‍🔬 Kid Inventor + 🏠 A backyard laboratory + ⚡ An invention that works a little too well...

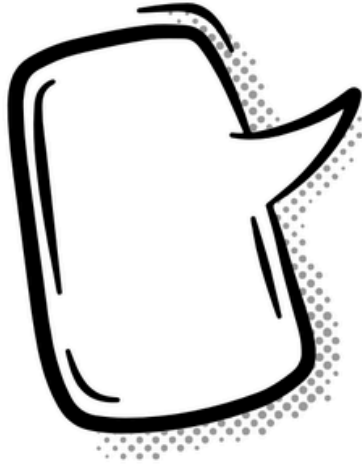
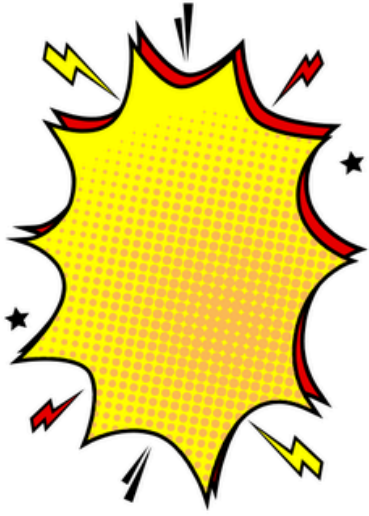
🐉 A tiny Dragon with a cold + 🎢 Amusement Park + 🔥 The dragon accidentally sneezes fire onto the cotton candy stand!

🌍 Aliens from Planet Zig Zag + 🏀 The School Gym + 🧠 They don't understand basketball rules... but they really want to make the team!

Or, come up with any character, setting, and problem of your own & let your imagination take the lead and have fun creating!









Magic BEAN Trail Mix

A fun, customizable snack mix that looks like a collection of magical beans!

Ingredients:

- Jelly beans (magic beans!)
- Chocolate-covered nuts (for strength)
- Yogurt-covered raisins (for wisdom)
- Dried fruit (for speed)
- Popcorn (for lightness—so you don't fall from a beanstalk!)
- Mini pretzels (for twists and turns in the adventure!)

Instructions:

1. Set out all the ingredients in bowls.
2. Let kids scoop and mix their own magic bean trail mix.
3. As they create, encourage them to assign "powers" to different beans (e.g., red = strength, yellow = invisibility).
4. Enjoy while reading *Giant Trouble*!

You did it!



Start here

Read for 20 minutes each day, mark one space, and race to the finish to win!
Get more game boards at www.DonnaBook.com/for-kids.