
Teachers' Notes

CLARA CAPYBARA

Aleesah Darlison / Ruth-Mary Smith

ISBN: 9781761111952

Recommended retail: \$27.99

Reading level: 6 to 8



BOOK SUMMARY

Clara is the cutest little capybara in the forest and she LOVES pleasing others.

But Clara is so busy taking care of everyone else, she forgets to look after herself.

Can she find a balance between being kind to others and being kind to herself?

THEMES

People pleasing • Family support • Self-Care and Habits • Kindness and helping others

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Aleesah Darlison is an internationally published, award-winning author. She has written over sixty-five books for children. She is well-known for her books that empower children and champion the cause of animals and the environment. Aleesah has won or been shortlisted for many awards including the Book Excellence Awards, the CBCA Awards, and the Speech Pathology Book of the Year Awards. Aleesah travels extensively, delivering talks and workshops to children and adults. She served three years as Panel Chair and Judge for the NSW Premier's Literary Awards and has served as past Director of Writing NSW's Kids & YA Literary Festival. You can find Aleesah on her website, Instagram, and Facebook.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Ruth-Mary Smith is an Australian illustrator with a special love of the gentle emotions portrayed in picture books. Her style has been described as sweet, warm and whimsical. She enjoys working with the traditional materials of watercolour and pencil, and she also produces digital illustrations. Most of her work is a hybrid of traditional and digital. She has been published in the USA, been the recipient of a mentorship award from the ASA, and won several awards in the CYA festival. In Australia she has been published by several publishers including Wombat, Scholastic, Larrikin and Yellow Brick Books.



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**Aleesah Darlison is available for author talks and workshops.
Contact Wombat Books for more information.**

*Clara Capybara Teachers' Notes can be used in schools
(independent learning, small groups, and whole classes); at home
with caregivers; and as part of mental health support programs
facilitated by counsellors, psychologists, children's charities, etc.*

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REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

Clara Capybara is an engaging and heartwarming picture book that offers young readers a gentle but powerful lesson about self-care, diplomacy, and setting healthy boundaries. Clara, a lovable and friendly capybara, faces a challenge many children can relate to—being too eager to please others.

Throughout the book Clara learns the importance of balancing kindness with taking care of herself, making this a wonderful starting point for discussing topics such as social anxiety, self-respect, and the art of saying “no.” These valuable life lessons are presented in an accessible way, using Clara’s struggles with social pressures to highlight themes of mental health and personal boundaries. Children will relate to Clara’s friendly nature and understand her desire to help others, but they will also see how saying “yes” to everything can lead to exhaustion and overwhelm. With the wise guidance of Mama Capybara, Clara learns the importance of diplomacy and taking time for herself, which can help young readers understand how to manage their own relationships and emotions.

In addition to its strong emotional content, *Clara Capybara* integrates educational elements like synonyms and alliteration, supporting language development and literacy skills. The delightful illustrations, featuring capybaras and other animals, will capture children’s imaginations and make the lessons even more memorable.

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

FOUNDATION

English, Arts, and Humanities and Social Science

AC9EFLE02 - respond to stories and share feelings and thoughts about their events and characters

AC9EFLA07 - explore the contribution of images and words to meaning in stories and informative texts

AC9EFLE03 - recognise different types of literary texts and identify features including events, characters, and beginnings and endings

AC9ADAF01 - create arts works that communicate ideas

AC9ADAFE01 - explore how and why the arts are important for people and communities

AC9ADFD01 - use play, imagination, arts knowledge, processes and/or skills to discover possibilities and develop ideas

AC9HSFS03 - share a perspective on information, such as stories about significant events and special places

YEAR ONE

English, Arts, Humanities and Social Science

AC9E1LE02 - discuss literary texts and share responses by making connections with students’ own experiences

AC9E1LE03 - discuss plot, character and setting, which are features of stories

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AC9E1LY05 - use comprehension strategies such as visualising, predicting, connecting, summarising and questioning when listening, viewing and reading to build literal and inferred meaning by drawing on vocabulary and growing knowledge of context and text structures

AC9AVA2C01 - use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks

AC9AVA2E01 - explore where, why and how people across cultures, communities and/or other contexts experience visual arts

AC9AVA2D01 - experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials

AC9HS1S04 - discuss perspectives related to objects, people, places and events

YEAR TWO

English, Arts, Humanities and Social Science

AC9E2LE03 - discuss the characters and settings of a range of texts and identify how language is used to present these features in different ways

AC9AVA2C01 - use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks

AC9AVA2E01 - explore where, why and how people across cultures, communities and/or other contexts experience visual arts

AC9AVA2D01 - experiment and play with visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials

AC9HS2S04 - discuss perspectives related to objects, people, places and events

YEAR THREE

English, Arts, Humanities and Social Science

AC9E3LE02 - discuss connections between personal experiences and character experiences in literary texts and share personal preferences

AC9E3LA09 - identify how images extend the meaning of a text

AC9E3LE03 - discuss how an author uses language and illustrations to portray characters and settings in texts, and explore how the settings and events influence the mood of the narrative

AC9E3LY05 - use comprehension strategies when listening and viewing to build literal and inferred meaning, and begin to evaluate texts by drawing on a growing knowledge of context, text structures and language features

AC9AVA4C01 - use visual conventions, visual arts processes and materials to create artworks that communicate ideas, perspectives and/or meaning

AC9HS3K07 - why people participate within communities and how students can actively participate and contribute to communities

TEACHING POINTS AND ACTIVITIES

This book may be used in whole class, small group or independent learning activities in schools.

Please note, the following suggestions and activities are suited to a variety of year levels spanning Foundation to Year 6 primary aged children. Some activities may be applicable to early secondary school students, as well.

KNOWLEDGE AND LITERAL UNDERSTANDING

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Show the cover to the class and ask the students what they think the book might be about.
2. Read the back cover blurb. Does this give them more of an idea of what the book could be about?
3. Ask students if they can recognize the setting of this story from the cover image.

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. Ask students if Clara or her mama remind them of anyone they know: a friend, a sibling, themselves perhaps.
2. What is their first impression of Clara?
3. How does Clara change over the course of the story?
4. Ask students how they perceive Clara's situation. Is it fair? Would students have done things differently? Did they agree with Clara's decisions and actions?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- Why does Clara Capybara always say 'yes' to everyone's requests?
- How do you think Clara feels when she tries to do everything for others?
- What happens when Clara can't say 'no'? How does it affect her?
- Have you ever felt like Clara when you had too many things to do? What did you do about it?
- How does winning an award at school make Clara feel?
- Why do you think Mama Capybara gives Clara advice about saying 'no'?
- What do you think Clara learns from her Mama? How can we apply this lesson to our own lives?
- Why does Clara finally decide to say no?
- Can you think of a time when you had to say 'no' to something or someone? How did it make you feel?
- Was it hard or easy? What helped you feel confident in saying 'no'?
- What can we do to feel good about making sure we take care of our own needs?
- What do you think the story teaches us about being a good friend and also being kind to ourselves?
- How can we show kindness to others without forgetting about our own well-being?
- Is it rude or mean for Clara to say no to her friends when they ask to go hiking?

PEOPLE PLEASING

- What does it mean to 'please' other people?
- Can you think of a time when you wanted to make someone happy or do something to please them? How did that feel?
- Why do you think Clara Capybara struggles with saying 'no' or creating boundaries?
- What might happen when we always try to please others, just like Clara?
- How does Clara feel when she agrees to do everything that's asked of her?
- Have you ever felt tired or overwhelmed after trying to please everyone? What did you do?
- Do you think it's always a good idea to say 'yes' to everything? Why or why not?
- What are some things we should think about before agreeing to help others?
- Why do you think Clara feels guilty or worried when she says 'no' to others?
- Have you ever felt guilty when you couldn't say 'yes'? Why do you think it's hard for Clara to say 'no'?
- What happens when Clara learns to set boundaries and say 'no' in a kind way?
- How does this change how Clara feels?
- Do you think it's important to make sure we are happy, too, when we try to make others happy?
- What advice would you give Clara to help her stop trying to please everyone all the time?

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- What does Clara's story teach us about knowing when to say 'yes' and when to say 'no'?

FAMILY SUPPORT

- How does Clara's Mama help her in the story?
- How does Clara feel after talking to her Mama?
- What advice does Mama give Clara, and how does it help her feel better about the situation?
- How do you think Clara's friends or family would feel if they knew Clara was always saying 'yes' to things, even if it made her tired?
- Clara's mama tells her that it's okay to say 'no.' Why do you think this is important?
- Why is it important to have family members who support us?
- Can you think of a time when a family member helped you with something? How did it make you feel?
- What do you think would have happened if Clara didn't have her mama's support?
- How would Clara have felt if she hadn't gotten the advice and help she needed from her family?
- How does Clara's Mama show that she cares about Clara's well-being?
- What do you think Clara learned from her Mama's advice? How did it change how she acted?
- In what ways do family members support each other in your family?
- How can we show support to our family members in both big and small ways?
- Why is it important to talk to family when we feel overwhelmed or unsure about something?
- Can you think of a time when you were able to help a family member the way Clara's Mama helped her?
- How can listening and offering advice help make your relationships with family and friends stronger?

SELF-CARE AND HABITS

- What is 'self-care'?
- How can saying 'no' sometimes be a good way to take care of yourself?
- What new habit does Clara start to form by the end of the story?
- How can good habits, like saying 'no' when needed, help us take care of ourselves?
- What are some habits you have that help you feel good or stay healthy?
- How can we find a balance between helping others and making sure we're not doing too much?
- What does Clara learn about self-care in the story?
- How does taking care of herself help Clara feel better?
- Can you think of a time when you needed to take a break or take care of yourself? What did you do to feel better?
- How did taking care of yourself help you feel refreshed or less stressed?
- What are some things you can do to practice self-care when you're feeling tired or overwhelmed?

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- Can you think of ways to relax or feel better when you have too many things to do?
 - Why is it important to listen to our bodies and minds when we feel tired or stressed?
 - How can we tell when we need a break or need to take care of ourselves?
 - What does self-care mean to you?
 - What are some activities or routines you can do to take care of your body and mind each day?
 - In the story, Clara feels better when she learns to say 'no' and take time for herself. How can you tell when you need to say 'no' to something?
 - Why is self-care important for everyone, not just Clara?
 - How do you think Clara feels after learning to take care of herself and set boundaries?
 - What can we do when we feel overwhelmed by all the things we need to do, just like Clara did?
 - Why is self-care important for everyone, not just Clara?
 - How do habits develop? Do you think it's easy or hard to start a new habit?
 - Clara learns a new habit of saying 'no' when she needs to. Why is it hard to change old habits, and how can we make new habits stick?
 - How do you think habits can shape the way we feel and act each day?

KINDNESS AND HELPING OTHERS

- Can you think of other ways Clara can be kind without feeling like she has to say 'yes' all the time?
- How can we be kind and helpful without saying 'yes' to everything people ask of us?
- Why is it important to take care of ourselves while also being kind to others?
- What are some polite ways to say 'no' when we need to, without hurting someone's feelings?
- How can we help our friends feel good without overloading ourselves?
- How does Clara show kindness to others in the story?
- Why does Clara want to please everyone and help them?
- Why do you think it's important to help others, but also take care of yourself?
- How does Clara feel when she tries to help everyone, even if it makes her tired?
- How do you show kindness to your friends and family?
- Can you think of a time when you helped someone out of kindness? How did it make you feel?
- What would have happened if Clara's friends didn't understand why she was saying 'no'?
- How can we explain our needs to others kindly if we can't always help them?
- Why do you think Clara learns that sometimes the best way to help others is by helping herself first?
- What do you think Clara learns about balance in helping others and caring for herself?
- What important lesson does Clara learn about kindness and taking care of her own feelings at the same time?

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ACTIVITIES

CLARA'S SELF-CARE TOOLBOX

Together we can create our own 'self-care toolbox' out of a small box or container.

On the outside, decorate the box with drawings, stickers, and designs that make you happy. Inside the toolbox, we can put items that represent self-care activities.

For example:

- A drawing of a cozy blanket for when they need rest
- A mini book for when they need to read and relax
- A small toy or item that makes them smile
- A pretend 'no' sign to remind themselves it's okay to say no

Encourage the children to talk about what self-care activities are important to them and why they included certain items in their toolbox.

REFLECT ON 'YES' AND 'NO'

Get into a small group and discuss the following times in your life:

1. Think of a time when someone asked you to do something and you said yes even though you wanted to say no. Why did you agree? Was it the right thing to do at the time?
2. Think of a time when someone asked you to do something, and you said no. How did you say no? Were you polite about it or rude?

FINDING BOUNDARY WORDS

Brainstorm a list of ways that you know how to say 'yes', 'no', and 'maybe.'

CLARA'S BOUNDARY BOOK

You can create a simple booklet titled 'Clara's Boundary Book' where we draw pictures or write (with adult help) about times when it's important to set boundaries.

For example, you can draw Clara saying 'no' to something that makes her feel overwhelmed or drawing Clara taking time for herself.

This booklet can serve as a reminder that it's okay to set boundaries in everyday life.

CLARA'S SELF-CARE SONG

Create a simple, fun song about self-care, people pleasing, or boundaries. You can do this by yourself or as a group to the tune of a familiar song like 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' or 'The Wheels on the Bus.'

Here's an example using the tune of 'Twinkle, Twinkle':

*"It's okay to take some time
Have a rest, clear your mind.
Saying no is what I'll do,
When things get hard or blue.
Take a break, it's okay,
Maybe later I can play!"*

To keep going you can add more verses or actions that represent self-care (such as pretending to take a nap, drink water, or stretch).

All About Me

NAME: BIRTHDAY: AGE: SCHOOL:

FAVOURITES

- FOOD:
- GAME:
- SPORT:

INTERESTS

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



YOU ARE A STAR!

Clara Capybara received an award at school for being the 'Most Helpful Student'.
If you were to win an award, what would it be?
Write it on the trophy.



Carrying essential themes of self-care, mental health, diplomacy, navigating relationships, manners, setting boundaries, and social anxiety, Clara the Capybara possesses layers of meaning that will appeal to both children and adults.

Written by Aineash Darlison | Illustrated by Ruth Mary-Smith
Published by Wombat Books
www.wombatbooks.com.au



A Letter to Me

Write a letter to yourself that shows self-care and understanding.
What are some kind and encouraging words you can say to yourself?

Dear _____ Date _____

All the best _____



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Clara Capybara Book Report

Name: _____ Date: _____

Book Title: _____ Genre: _____

Author: _____ Illustrator: _____

Publisher: _____ Year of Publication: _____

Main Characters:

Story Problem:

My Favourite Character and Why:

My Favourite Part and Why:

Summary:

My Rating: ☆☆☆☆☆



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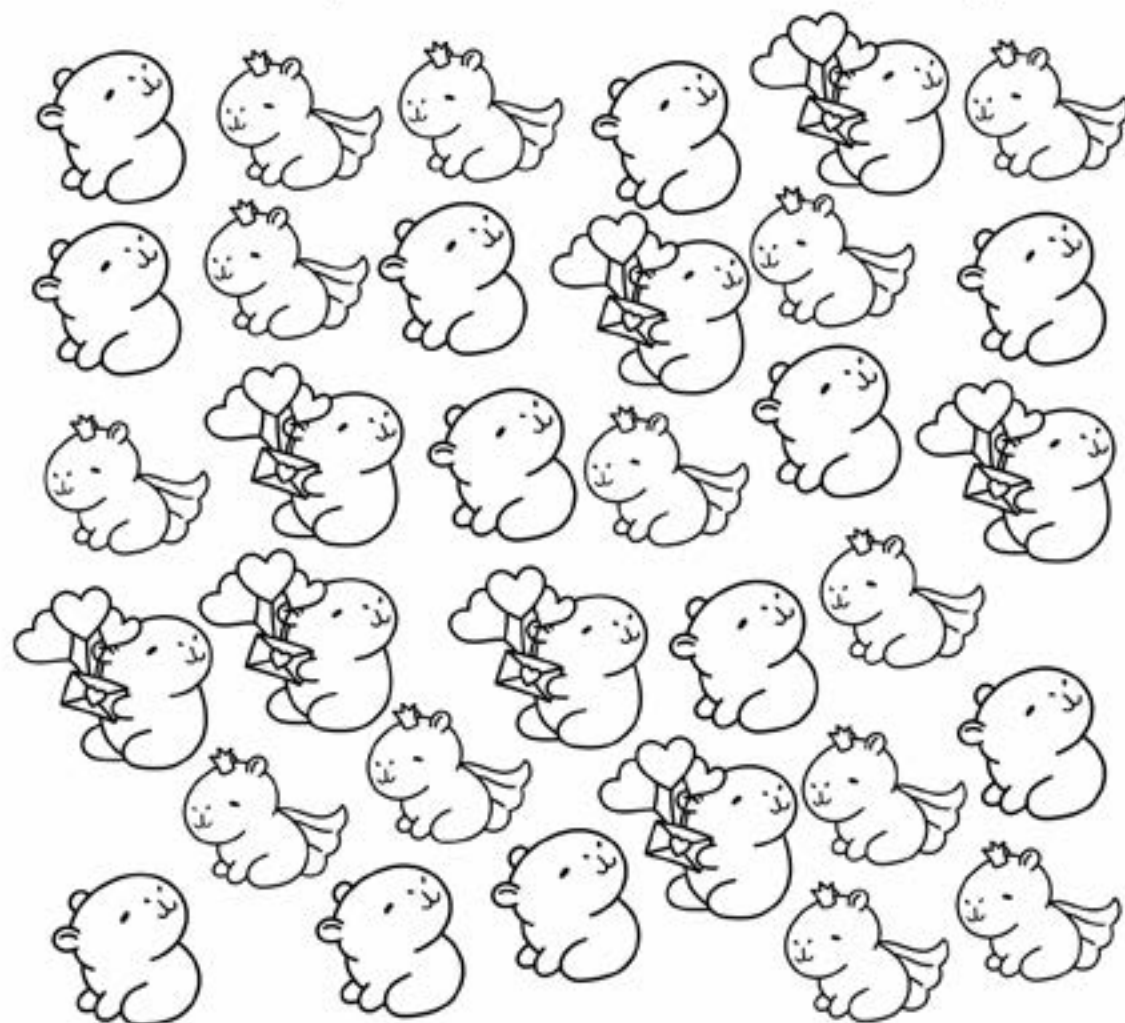
Written by Aleesah Darlison | Illustrated by Ruth Mary Smith
Published by Wombat Books
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Count and Find the Capybaras!

Name: _____

Date: _____

Use different coloured pencils to circle or colour the different types of capybaras.



How many capybaras?



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Count and Match the Capybaras

Name: _____

Date: _____

Count the capybaras on the left and draw a line to the correct number on the right.



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Count the Capybaras!

Name: _____

Date: _____

$$\text{Capybara} + \text{Capybara} =$$

$$\text{Capybara} + \text{Capybara} + \text{Capybara} =$$

$$\text{Capybara} + \text{Capybara} + \text{Capybara} + \text{Capybara} + \text{Capybara} =$$

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Capybara Information Report

Name: _____

Date: _____



Appearance

Habitat and Diet

Movement

Interesting Facts



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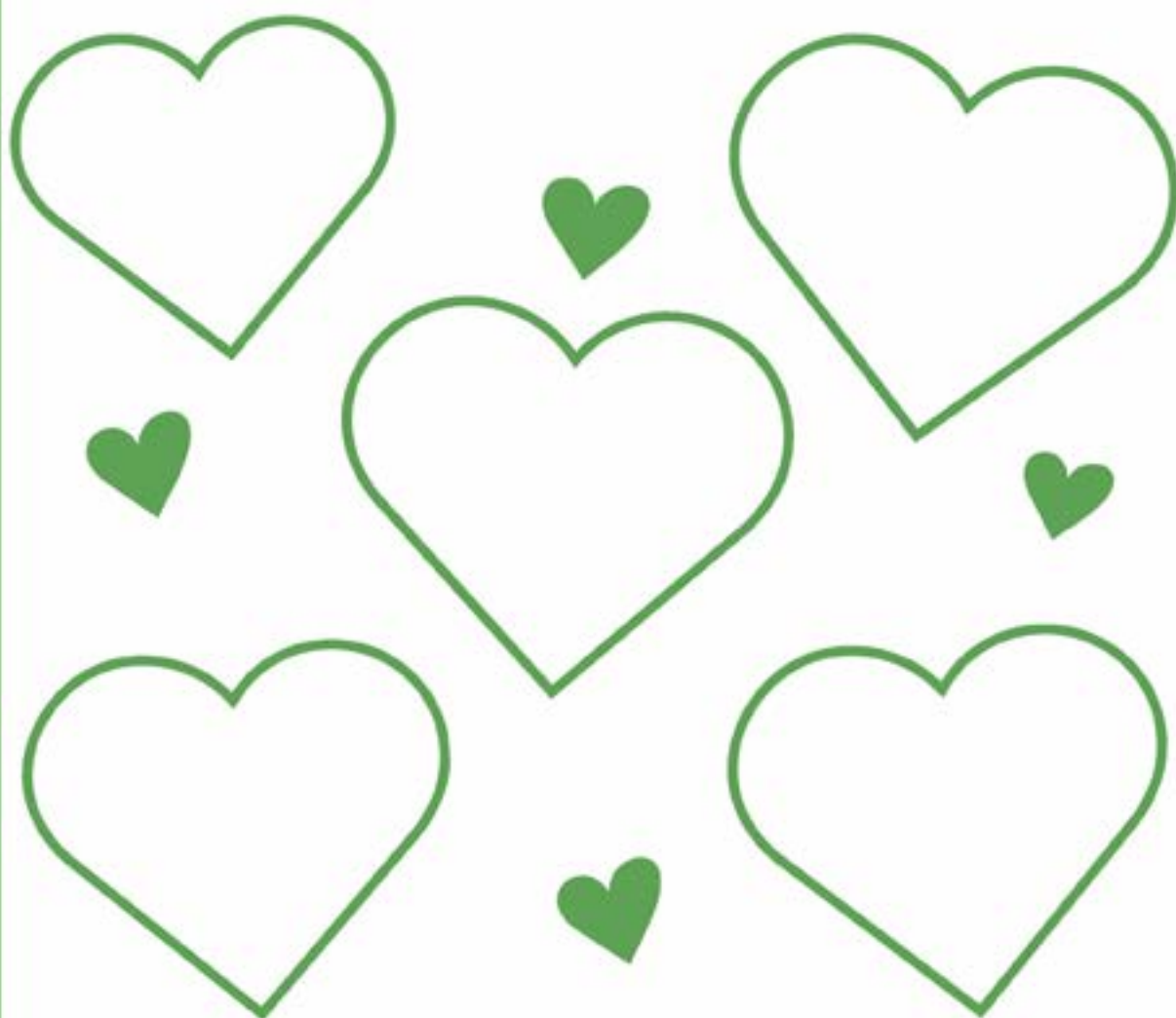
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What is Self-Care?

It's important to look after ourselves. Self-care is about taking care of our minds and bodies so that we can be the best that we can be.

Self-care is always important, but it is even more so when we are experiencing difficult times in our lives.

There are lots of ways we can look after ourselves. Can you think of five things you could do to take care of you?



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Synonyms and Antonyms

Name: _____

Date: _____

Synonyms: words that have the same meaning as another word

Antonyms: words that have the opposite meaning to another word

Word	Synonym	Antonym
kind	_____	_____
cry	_____	_____
same	_____	_____
happy	_____	_____
laugh	_____	_____
little	_____	_____
wrong	_____	_____
start	_____	_____
easy	_____	_____
above	_____	_____
sick	_____	_____
clean	_____	_____
relax	_____	_____
friend	_____	_____
rich	_____	_____



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Clara Capybara Word Search

Name: _____

Date: _____

Find the words from the book *Clara Capybara* listed below and mark them.

c c u w j h v h s w i m k f s
 c c e e s a q f y o u a g m u
 a b o r d q b t j y t b l l g
 p y e n t o p s h z e j o v a
 y w s f s a h y o a g b w o r
 b f e m l i i i v l m u b c r
 a n k v i f d n k c u n d a j
 r c m p u l r e l i h t r b y
 a r a q a o e i r y n x e u e
 q w p v n c o d e a u g s l s
 f f x b y n n l f n t j s a y
 y h e l p m d q w t d e c r l
 b o o j u z l r f h q s s y d
 q l q h z s e l f c a r e f d
 g t l j d r n o c r o d e n t

absolutely
 capybara
 cavy
 certainly
 considerate
 dress

friends
 glow
 help
 hiking
 rodent
 selfcare

smiled
 sugar
 swim
 vocabulary
 yes



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Clara
Capybara

Clara Capybara Colouring In Page



Name _____

Artwork from Clara Capybara. Published by @Wombat Books, 2025, written by @Aleesah Darlison, 2025, illustrated by @Ruth-Mary Smith, 2025.



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Clara
Capybara

ALL ABOUT THE PLANTS



Ruth-Mary, the illustrator, says: In *Clara Capybara*, I had the joy of bringing to life a gentle story set deep in the lush heart of South America. As the illustrator, it felt important to ground Clara's world in the beauty of her natural home. While most of the illustrations were created digitally, I chose to paint several native plants in watercolour to show their beauty with softness and warmth. This blending of digital and traditional techniques allowed me to celebrate nature in a way that felt both whimsical and true.

Can you spot the plants? Look at the illustration above, and other illustrations from *Clara Capybara* and see if you can identify the different plants used.

Ruth-Mary says: I researched flora native to capybara regions and chose the golden trumpet plant, tibouchina, orchids, and monsterias.

GOLDEN TRUMPET PLANT (ALLAMANDA CATHARTICA)

A bright, trumpet-shaped flower with vivid yellow petals that attract pollinators and add a sunlit glow to tropical gardens. Native to Brazil, it's often used in hedges and trellises, thriving in warm, humid climates.

TIBOUCHINA (TIBOUCHINA URVILLEANA)

Known for its velvety purple flowers and fuzzy leaves, this striking plant adds rich jewel tones to the landscape. Common in Brazil's Atlantic forests, it blooms generously and supports native insect life.

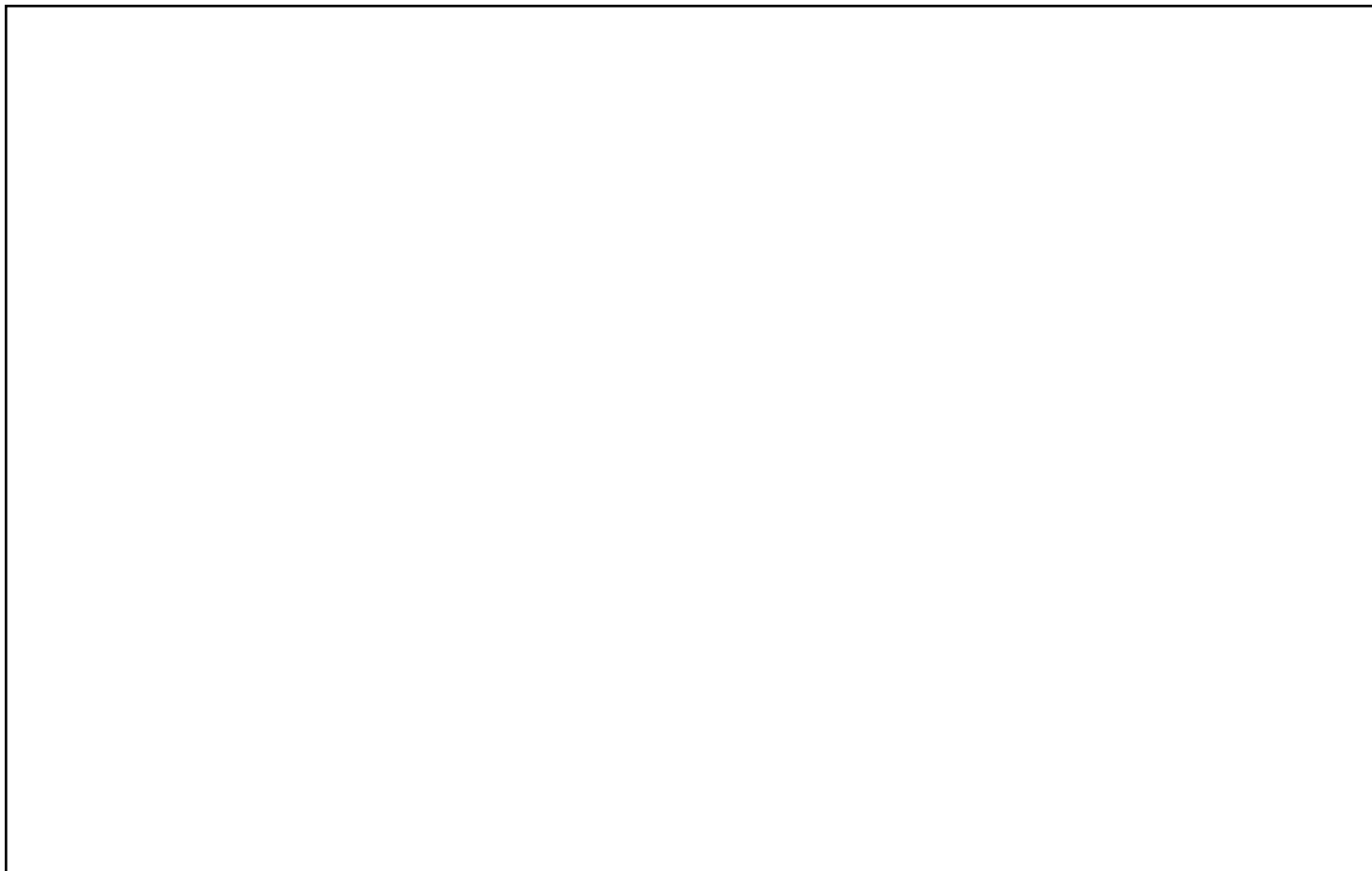
ORCHID (ORCHIDACEAE FAMILY)

Delicate and diverse, orchids symbolise beauty and resilience. South America is home to thousands of native species, each adapted to flourish in rainforest canopies or shaded forest floors.

MONSTERA (MONSTERA DELICIOSA)

Recognised by its iconic split leaves, this climbing plant thrives in the understorey of tropical rainforests. It's beloved both in the wild and as a houseplant for its lush, sculptural beauty.

Choose your favourite of these plants and draw it below.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a drawing of a plant.