



Family Reunions

Family Reunions Unit Study

prepared by Michelle Light and Suzanne Stewart

This family reunions unit study is based on three books: *When Lightning Comes in a Jar* by Patricia Polacco, *The Relatives Came* by Cynthia Rylant, and *Emma Jo's Song* by Faye Gibbons.

Lessons for When Lightning Comes in a Jar

Social Studies: Family Reunions

Discuss family reunions with your student. A family reunion is an event where a family can all reunite (come together) and visit with one another all at one time.

Social Studies/Language Arts: Family Traditions

Family traditions are associated with practices and beliefs which are handed over from one generation to the next generation. Discuss some of your family traditions with your student. Do you know when the traditions were started? Who started the tradition or why? Make a book together about your current family traditions. Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. What is your favorite place to go as a family.
2. What is your family's favorite meal? The meal may be traditional for holidays, birthdays, or other special occasions.
3. What is a favorite book your family likes to read together? Why is it a book your family enjoys?
4. Describe two family traditions. They may include holidays, vacations, birthdays, or other celebrations.

Note: With your older student, you may want to make a page in your book for each holiday.

Science: Fireflies

Fireflies are beetles. They light up to attract mates. Almost all of the male's abdomen lights up, only the middle portion of the female's body glows. The larva (called wireworms) of the lightning bug also lights up but not as brilliant as the adult firefly.

Activity: Catching Lightning Bugs

"Fireflies! we all called out. We grabbed our jars and the dash was on to capture lightning and put it in a jar."

What you need:

A clear plastic jar with a lid

A summer night

Lightning bugs

What to do: Wait for a summer night in July, August or September and observe the fireflies glowing just above the grass but no higher than the trees. Catch a few in a jar, put the lid on and observe their glow. Be sure and let the fireflies out of the jar after a few minutes so they can continue to light the night.

Go-along Books

Fireflies in the Night by Judy Hawes

Fireflies Sally Walker (good reference book-lots of information)

Language Arts: Writing Family Stories

Write and illustrate some of your family stories.

The older relatives at the family reunion took turns telling stories about their lives to the children. Gramma told about the first time she saw a flying machine (airplane). Aunt Adah told about the first time she rode in a car. Aunt Ivah told about the time she saw a rattle snake.

What you need:

Paper

Pencil, crayons or markers

What to do: Tell some stories to your children about some memorable events in your life. The first time you swam in the ocean or flew on a plane or ate frog legs or some uncommon food. Remind the children to ask relatives to tell stories about their lives. Have children tell stories about their own lives. Try writing down some of your family stories. Children will enjoy drawing pictures to go with the stories.

Language Arts: Copywork

If You Catch a Firefly
by Lilian Moore

If you catch a firefly
and keep it in a jar
You may find that
you have lost
a tiny star.

If you let it go then,
back into the night,
You may see it
once again
Star bright.

If desired, use the stationery page provided to copy the poem.

Math: Measurement

“Grampa waved a yardstick in the air. All of us kids dropped what we were doing and ran to the milk shed. We knew it was time to get measured.” Practice measuring each other and plan a place in your home to keep measurements. Over time children can see how tall they have grown.

What you need:

A yardstick or measuring tape

The side of a door or wall or a strip of paper attached to the wall with tape.

What to do:

Measure the children and make a mark for their height. Put their age and the date. Every six months or year measure again and do the same. Show the children how much they have grown. Many young children will enjoy measuring you and each other and learning about inches and feet and yards.

Craft: Make a Family Photo Album

“Aunt Bertha had gone to the house and fetched all the family portrait albums.”

What you need:

Family pictures, paper, crayons or markers, glue or glue stick

What to do: Cut paper to form a small book. Sew or staple the paper together so the pages turn easily. Help your child paste pictures of family members and themselves in the paper book. Be sure to help your child write the names of the people in the photographs underneath each picture. Show your child how to decorate the cover of their photo album.

Physical Education

"After we ate it was time for our annual baseball game... Next it was time for croquet... We had bag races, watermelon – seed- spitting contests, and rides on grandpa's draft horse too."

Give your students some old pillow cases and let them have an old fashioned bag race. You could also introduce them to croquet if you have the right equipment.

Cooking

Make orange Jell-O salad (or try many different types of Jell-O salad this week!)

"Wonder how many Jell-O salads there will be?" my cousin Freddie asked.

"Gazillions. There always are," my cousin Billy answered. Sure enough, there were gazillions. They jumped and shook every time we bumped the table. They seemed alive.

What you need:

- 1 package of orange gelatin
- 1 cup of boiling water
- 1/2 cup of sugar
- 1 small can crushed pineapple
- 1 can of Mandarin oranges
- 1/ 2 pint of sour cream

What to do:

Mix gelatin, sugar and boiling water until dissolved. Add other ingredients and pour into a Bundt cake pan. Chill several hours before serving.

Project Idea: Create a Family Cookbook

Let your student ask various relatives to submit family favorite recipes so that she can compile a family cookbook. This will be a treasured keepsake!

Lessons for The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

Social Studies: Human Relationships- Relatives

Discuss the different relationship words we use (aunt, uncle, cousin, great aunt, etc.) and what each means.

Social Studies: Family Tree

Help your student construct a family tree.

Geography: Map Your Relatives!

Where did the relatives in this story come from? (Virginia). Show your student where his relatives come from. Then, put markers on your map indicating where various family members live. You may even want to make markers (cut small circles from extra family photos) and add them to your map. You may even want to ask some relatives to send your student a letter or postcard. Look at the postmark together and find the location on the map.

Math: Count and Graph Your Relatives

Make a list of all the relatives you can think of (cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc.). Then, create a graph to organize and record your data. Which category has the most? Least? You may want to make two graphs (one for paternal relatives and one for maternal relatives). Your student can then use the two graphs to compare the two sides of his family. On which side are there more uncles? Cousins? etc.

You could also use the graph provided.

My Family Graph Instructions

Print one tally page and one graph page for each student.

Have count family members. Put tally marks in the boxes. You may also want to demonstrate how to make a bundle of tally marks.

After the student has gathered and recorded enough information, show her how to use the information to graph the first type of family member.

Encourage student to continue with the other five.

Use discussion questions to help your student compare and analyze the data on the graph. (How many grandparents do you have in total? How many cousins do you have in total? Do you have more uncles or aunts?)

Math: Distance

In the story it mentions that the relatives traveled for miles. Can your older student use a map and determine how many miles he lives from some of his relatives? Which relative is closest? Which one lives the farthest away?

Science: Local Fruits

What fruits are mentioned in this story? Discuss that different types of fruits grow in different climates (you may even want to find out where different fruits such as oranges, bananas, coconuts, apples, etc. grow the best). Learn about the fruits that grow in your neck of the woods. You may even want to make a fruit mini-book or go to a u-pick farm.

Challenge your older student to make a large list of fruits and to find out where each fruit is grown.

Writing Prompt

Write about a time when your relatives came for a visit, when you visited them, or when you gathered at a family reunion.

Lessons for Emma Jo's Song

Language Arts: Dialogue and Proper English.

Faye Gibbons chose to give the characters some colorful dialect in this story. Using your best accent read some of the examples of dialogue to your student. You can also use this as an opportunity to discuss proper English. Read some of the passages the "right" way. Do the characters lose their flavor?

With your older student, you may choose to dive into a lesson on characters and

how to develop great characters when writing a story.

Language Arts: Vocabulary

Rekon-I understand

Kinfolk-relatives

Makeshift tables-using just about anything you can find to make a table.

Waded-going into the water keeping it below the waist.

Plunked-sat down hard.

Toppled -turned over

Funeral home fans-these are ordinary cardboard fans used in older homes without AC.

Language Arts: Expressions

On page three Emma Jo says she “lit out for the barn lot.” What does this mean?

(She ran fast out of the barn.) What does it mean when she said, "I flew mad"?

Look for other expressions in this story that your student may not be familiar with and discuss.

Language Arts: List Making

List several things that this family and the children liked to do at their reunion-- play music, wade and swim in the creek, swing on grapevines, play hide and seek and pop the whip. What would your student like to do at a reunion?

Language Arts: Compare and Contrast

Make a Venn diagram and compare and contrast this book with *When Lightning Comes in a Jar*.

Art: Watercolors

The illustrations in the book were done with watercolors. Discuss this with your student. Encourage your student to create a water color picture of a family reunion.

Music: Instruments

Discuss the instruments in the book.

Harmonica

an instrument you play with your mouth by blowing air into it.

Harmonica wailing means playing the harmonica in a way that it would almost sound like crying (wailing).

Dulcimer

Is a stringed instrument with three or four strings; it is played by laying it flat on the lap and pluck or strum the strings with one hand, while fretting with the other.

Fiddle

The term fiddle refers to a violin when used in folk music.

Guitar

A guitar is played by strumming it-- running your thumb or pick across the strings of the guitar to play it.

Piano

A piano is a stringed instrument; the keys are moved by the strings. It is also considered a percussion instrument (since the keys are pressed). *Plinking* is a term that means to press on the keys.

Banjo

A smaller stringed instrument played by picking-- to use your thumb and fingers together to make music. (An older lady is playing it on page 18.)

Music: Different Types of Singing

Discuss the different types of singing that are mentioned throughout the story; you may even want to demonstrate and try some of these different types together!

Humming- to produce musical tones while keeping the lips closed

Yodeling- to sing while frequently going back and forth between the range of one's natural voice and a higher range

Whistling- a shrill clear sound made by forcing air through puckered lips

Music: Songs

Learn some of the songs mentioned in the story

This Little Light of Mine

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

(The kids hold up their index finger and move it in a circular motion.)

Won't let Satan blow it out.

I'm gonna let it shine.

Won't let Satan blow it out.

I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

(When the kids sing "Won't let Satan blow it out....they blow on their finger.)

Let it shine til Jesus comes.

I'm gonna let it shine.

Let it shine til Jesus comes.

I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

(The children cup one hand over their finger and when shouting NO they remove their cupped hand)

Hide it under a bushel - NO!

I'm gonna let it shine.

Hide it under a bushel - NO!

I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Let it shine over the whole wide world,

I'm gonna let it shine.

Let it shine over the whole wide world,

I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Library List

Going Down Home with Daddy by Kelly Starling Lyons

Family, Familia by Diane Gonzales Bertrand

Tanya's Reunion by Valerie Flournoy

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Five Fast Facts Fireflies

fact

one

fact

two

fact

three

fact

four

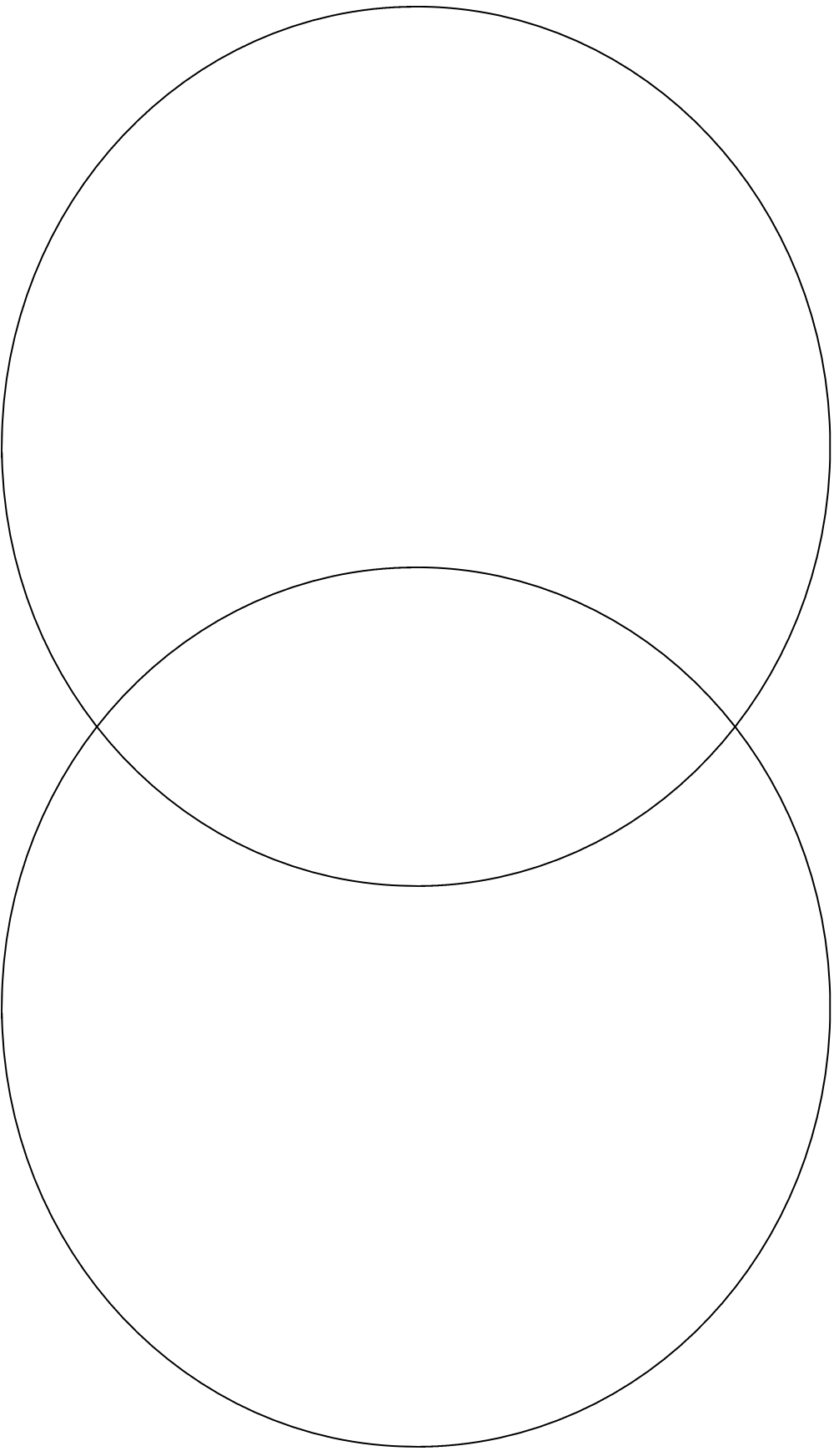
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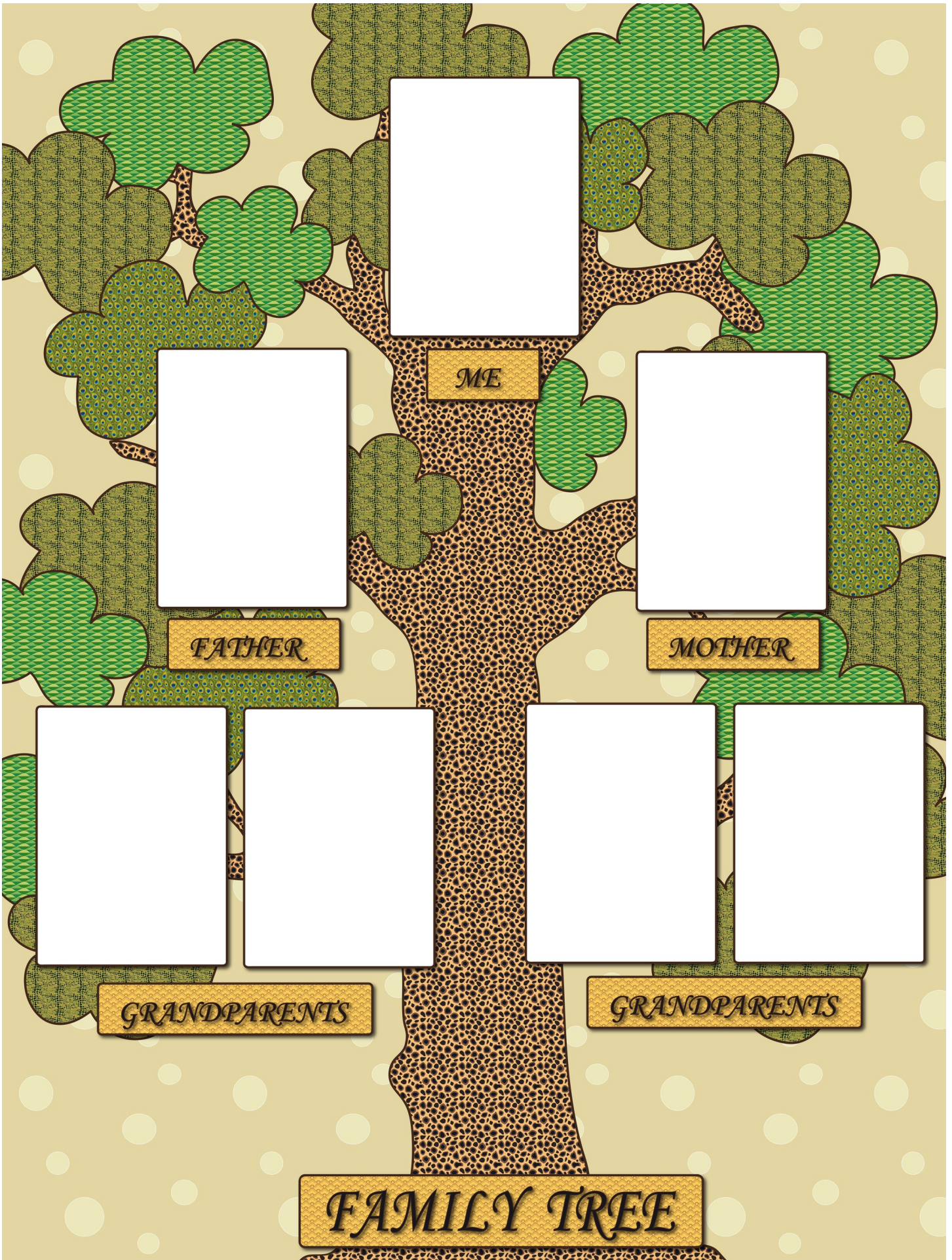
five



**when lightning
comes in a jar**

**emma jo's
song**





ME

FATHER

MOTHER

GRANDPARENTS

GRANDPARENTS

FAMILY TREE

My Family



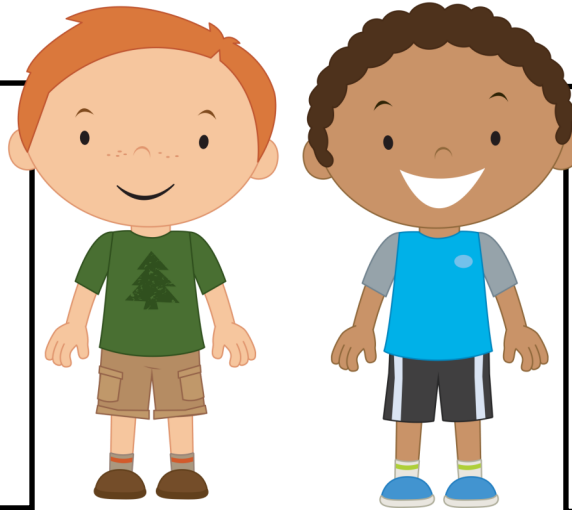
Grandmas

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing about grandmas.

Grandpas

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing about grandpas.

Uncles

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing about uncles.

Aunts

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing about aunts.

Boy Cousins

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing about boy cousins.

Girl Cousins

A large empty rectangular box for drawing or writing about girl cousins.

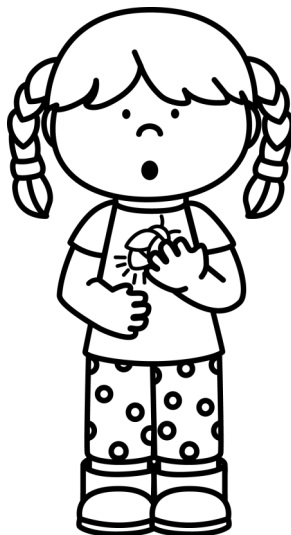


My Family Graph

10						
9						
8						
7						
6						
5						
4						
3						
2						
1						
	Grandpas	Grandmas	Aunts	Uncles	Boy Cousins	Girl Cousins



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