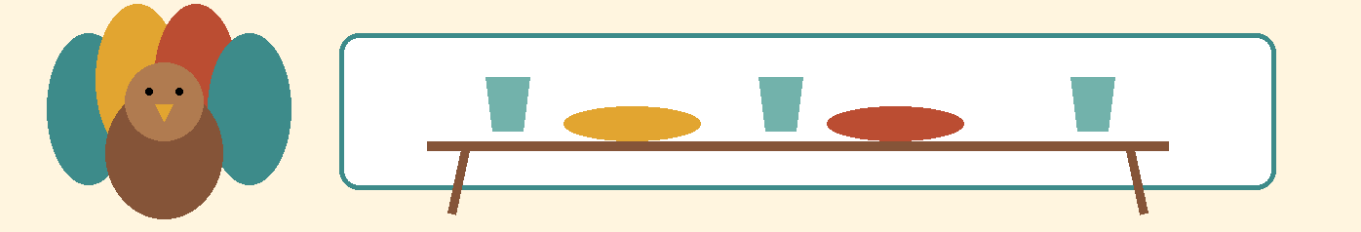
The Runaway Tray

1 • READ & ACT | Name: _____



Before you read: What does it mean to lend a hand?

On the day before Thanksgiving, Maya's class planned a sharing lunch. Each child could bring a story, a drawing, or a snack to share.

Jay made a paper turkey. Maya painted a sign that said, "All are welcome!" They put the sign on a tray with paper cups.

Then a gust of wind blew through the open door. The sign slid off the tray. Cups rolled across the floor!

"Chase the cups!" called Jay. Maya shut the door. Kim caught the sign. Ben picked up the cups. Soon the room was tidy again.

"We saved the lunch!" said Jay.

"We helped each other," said Maya. "That is something to be thankful for."

They sat in a circle and shared their stories. The paper turkey had the best seat in the room.

Partner play: Act out the problem and the solution. Take turns being the storyteller.

Story detectives

2 • FIND THE CLUES | Use the story to help you.

1. What could children bring? Circle all three.

a drawing a story a pet a snack

2. What made the cups roll? Circle one.

a bouncing ball a gust of wind a dog

3. How did the children solve the problem?

They _____

_____

4. Why does Maya feel thankful?

Maya feels thankful because _____

_____

Put the story in order

Write 1, 2, 3, and 4 in the boxes. Then retell the story.

___ The children picked up the cups and caught the sign.

___ The class planned a sharing lunch.

___ The children sat in a circle and shared stories.

___ Wind blew the sign and cups onto the floor.

Detective challenge: Underline a line in the story that shows teamwork. Tell a partner why you chose it.

Turkey word roundup

3 • SORT & PLAY | Use the word cards on page 4.

1. Say each heading with your teacher.
2. Read a card. Point to its special letters.
3. Put it in the matching box. Read your whole group.

ai • rain	ay • day
sh • ship	ch • chip

Play: Feed the turkey!

Mix the cards face down. Take turns picking one. Read it and place it in a box. Your partner checks the letters. If you need help, read it together and try again. Work as a team to sort all 16 cards.

Stretch: Pick two cards. Say a silly sentence using both words.

Cut, read, and sort

4 • WORD CARDS | Cut on the lines with adult help.

Keep this page separate from your sorting mat. No scissors? Write the words in the boxes instead.

rain	**play**	**ship**	**chop**
tray	**chin**	**paint**	**wish**
shell	**stay**	**much**	**train**
chip	**snail**	**day**	**shop**

One more game: Put four cards face up. A partner reads one. Tap it, read it, and swap it for a new card. Take turns.

My favorite word: _____

Draw it or use it in a sentence:

_____

_____

Sentence chefs

5 • MIX, FIX & WRITE | Say each sentence before writing.

Mix the words into a sentence

1. share / The / stories. / children

_____

2. the / Maya / door. / shut

_____

Fix the missing pieces

Add a capital letter and the correct end mark. Write each sentence.

3. jay made a paper turkey

_____

4. can you help me

_____

Make it bigger

5. Add one describing word and finish the sentence.
The _____ turkey sat _____.

6. Finish the idea.
I can help my class by _____.

Chef's check: ☐ Capital letter ☐ Spaces ☐ End mark
Stretch: Tell why your help matters. Use because.

A little thank-you goes far

6 • DRAW, TALK & WRITE | Choose someone you appreciate.

Think of a person who helps you, teaches you, or makes you smile. Tell a partner what that person does.

Draw that person helping. Add two labels.

Word bank: kind • help • teach • listen • share • smile

Dear _____,

Thank you for _____.

_____

It helps me because _____.

_____

From, _____

Stretch: Add a specific example of a time this person helped you.
Optional: Read or give your note to the person.

Teacher guide

7 • KEEP THIS PAGE | Flexible centers or three short lessons

Print & prepare

Student pages: 1–6. Teacher pages: 7–8. Print US Letter at 100%. Print pages 3 and 4 single-sided so pupils can cut the cards without losing the sorting mat. One set of cards per pair works well. Color is optional; all tasks also work in grayscale. Materials: pencil, crayons and scissors; glue is optional.

Try three 20-minute sessions

Session 1: Preview lend a hand and gust; read page 1 together, act it out and complete page 2. Session 2: Model the target spellings, then use pages 3–4 as a cooperative center. Session 3: Rehearse sentences orally, use page 5, then write a thank-you on page 6.

Make the story accessible

This is a shared-reading text, not a controlled decodable passage. Read aloud or echo-read when needed. Invite a pointing, spoken or scribed response for comprehension. Record that support separately from independent reading. Have pupils locate evidence in the text rather than guess from the picture.

Support without lowering the ideas

Give one direction at a time and model the first item. Cover the rest of a page if helpful. Begin the sort with only sh and ch, using four cards, then add more cards and ai/ay after teaching. Say the word, identify the sounds and connect them to the letters. Let pupils rehearse writing aloud and use the frames or dictate a sentence.

Add challenge

Ask stronger readers to explain which action best shows teamwork and cite the story. For phonics, spell a new ai or ay word after review and use it in a sentence. For writing, add a specific example and check sentence boundaries. More copying is not the goal.

Keep it welcoming

The story is fictional and set in a present-day classroom. The activities focus on helping and appreciation, not an invented account of Thanksgiving history. Do not assume every family celebrates Thanksgiving or has a particular meal. A child may thank any trusted helper; sharing personal details is optional.

Answer key & quick check

8 • KEEP THIS PAGE | Accept meaningful equivalent wording

Page 2 ● Story detectives

1. A drawing, a story, a snack. 2. A gust of wind. 3. Maya shut the door; Kim caught the sign; Ben picked up the cups. Accept a sensible summary of these actions. 4. The children helped each other. Sequence, top to bottom: 3, 1, 4, 2. Evidence challenge: any line describing one child helping, with a reasonable explanation.

Pages 3–4 ● Word sort

ai: rain, paint, train, snail.
ay: play, tray, stay, day.
sh: ship, wish, shell, shop.
ch: chop, chin, much, chip.
Teach ai and ay as spelling patterns for long a in these words. Teach sh and ch as two letters representing one sound each in these words. The game sorts spellings; it is not a claim that these letters always have one pronunciation.

Page 5 ● Sentence chefs

1. The children share stories.
2. Maya shut the door.
3. Jay made a paper turkey.
4. Can you help me?
5–6. Answers vary. Example: The funny turkey sat on a chair. I can help my class by putting books away. Accept other grammatical, meaningful sentences.

Page 6 ● Thank-you note

Answers vary. Look for an identified person, a specific helpful action and a reason it matters. Spelling approximations can be accepted while you target one taught spelling or convention. Do not judge the child’s chosen person or feeling.

A 2-minute exit check

Ask the pupil to read rain, tray, wish and chin without a model, then say one way the story’s problem was solved. Ask for one complete spoken sentence before writing. Note the response and help needed. This small check guides next teaching; it does not determine a reading level.

Pupil: _____ Date: _____

Skill	Independent / with help / next step
Reads target patterns	_____
Explains the story solution	_____
Builds a complete sentence	_____