

Our Democracy: Active Citizens

Activity: The Wish Tree

Get kids thinking ...

Ask kids to think about a big issue that they wish could come true.

Supplies

- Colored index cards or light-colored construction paper
 - Pens, pencils, or thin markers
 - Hole puncher
 - String or yarn, cut to 12-inch lengths
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Let's get started

Punch a hole in each card or construction paper square and give each child something to write with and a piece of string or yarn. Have kids write in big letters the topic they care about, and then a brief sentence about their wish for the world. Here are some examples:

Clean Oceans: I hope that one day there will be no more plastic in the oceans so that sea creatures can have a healthier environment.

No Violence: I want a world where no child or family has to experience war or violence.

Kindness to Animals: I hope we can live in a world where all animals are treated humanely.

Tie each wish card to a tree in your yard or the community green space. Or you could string the punched cards on a long piece of yarn or string and hang up a “wish strand” in your home.

This can also be a community or neighborhood event where you invite families nearby to contribute to the wish tree. Ask each child to share their wish out loud, and invite questions and conversation around each topic.

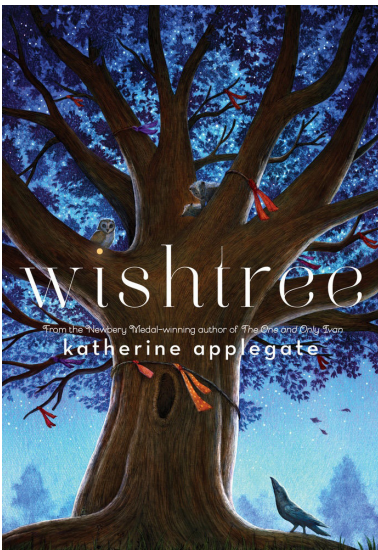
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Yoko Ono, Wish Tree for Washington, DC (Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden)

More options



The chapter book [Wishtree](#) by Katherine Applegate is a wonderful book to read aloud together and talk about. It's the story of a community coming together to welcome people who are different from them. Red, an oak tree, is the neighborhood "wishtree" — people write their wishes on pieces of cloth and tie them to Red's branches. This wishtree watches over the neighborhood. When a new family moves in, not everyone is welcoming, and Red's experience becomes more important than ever. You can explore the [All Are Welcome Here resources](#) on the Wishtree website.

I Have a Dream: With the [I Have a Dream Mobile](#) activity, children express their dreams for their community, country, and the world. (National Constitution Center)

