



Educator & Caregiver Toolkit

Mary and the Echo Valley

The Wishkeeper Chronicles - Book Two

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A gentle guide for listening, naming feelings, friendship repair, self-belief,
and helping every voice find room.

Welcome

Mary and the Echo Valley is a gentle fantasy story about listening deeply, telling the truth softly, and remembering that a quiet voice still matters. Mary follows the Mirror into a valley where feelings, echoes, and almost-spoken words are waiting to be heard.

In this story, Mary learns that friendship can grow quiet without becoming lost. Through Rowan, the Starlings, and the Skyprancers, readers explore overwhelm, belonging, repair, and the courage it takes to say what is true.

This toolkit is designed for classrooms, counseling groups, family read-alouds, and bedtime conversations. Children do not need to share personal stories. They may answer through the story, drawing, imagination, or quiet reflection.

Best For

Ages 6-10 - SEL lessons - read-alouds - counseling groups - literacy circles - friendship repair - family reflection

Core Themes

Listening - Emotional Awareness - Gentle Truth - Belonging - Friendship Repair - Inclusion - Self-Trust - Rest - Every Voice Matters

Adult Reminder

The goal is not to make children talk before they are ready. The goal is to create room for noticing, listening, and choosing one small brave action.

How to Use This Toolkit

- Read gently. Pause only when it feels natural.
- Ask one open question. One prompt is often enough.
- Try one small action: listen, name a feeling, save a seat, apologize, or rest.

Helpful sentence for adults: There are no wrong answers. We are practicing listening.

Dialogue Anchors

Use these lines to connect story moments to real-life social-emotional skills. They can become discussion prompts, journal starters, or calm pauses during read-aloud.

Chapter	Dialogue Anchor	SEL Connection
1 - Quiet Morning	Feelings are not silly just because they are quiet.	Self-awareness; feelings deserve notice.
1 - Quiet Morning	Time does not ask brave hearts to hurry.	Self-management; children can pause and breathe.
2 - Voice in the Rain	Sometimes listening is how kindness stays.	Relationship skills; presence can matter.
3 - Return of the Light	A feeling does not need another person's permission to be real.	Self-awareness; validate inner experience.
4 - Silver Path	You are not here to quiet every sound... help one true voice find room.	Social awareness; listening makes space.

More Dialogue Anchors

Chapter	Dialogue Anchor	SEL Connection
5 - Valley of Echoes	Truth has a sound here. Even quiet truth.	Honest feelings can be named gently.
6 - Silent Song	Then I won't just say it. I'll show you.	Trust grows through actions.
7 - Echo Test	Then I'll remember for you until you can.	Support and co-regulation.
8 - Broken Chord	A feeling can be small and still deserve care.	Empathy for quiet hurt.
9 - Song Restored	Quiet is not always the same as peace.	Peace includes room for truth.
14 - Every Voice	A voice does not need to be loud to be true.	Self-belief and inclusion.

Character Growth Map

Character	Begins With	Grows Toward
Mary	worry, missing Eli, unsure how to speak	gentle truth, listening inward and outward
Eli	not meaning harm, assuming Mary knows she belongs	repair, reassurance, reaching out
Rowan	overwhelmed by echoes and crowded feelings	space, voice, rest, shared listening
Clarice	steady guide and keeper of first light	helps Mary trust the true voice inside
Belle, Rae, Tamera, Olivia Sue	communication, courage, wisdom, earth-care	different ways of listening and belonging
Strong, Peaches, Sprout, Silverbell	courage, joy, care, laughter	next steps, trust, rest, play as healing

Before Reading

Choose one or two warm-up questions. Children may answer aloud, draw, or simply think quietly.

- What does it mean to listen with your heart?
- Can a quiet voice still be important?
- What helps you speak when a feeling feels small?
- Have you ever needed someone to save room for you?
- What is one kind way to repair a friendship?

Tip: Do not push for personal disclosures. A child can answer from the story, imagination, or observation.

During Reading Prompts

Use these sparingly. The story works best when children have time to feel it.

Chapters 1-3: Rain, the Mirror, and the returned Starlings

- What does Mary notice in the quiet morning?
- Why does the Mirror call Mary again?
- How do the Starlings help Mary understand different kinds of listening?

Chapters 4-6: Silver Path, Valley of Echoes, and Rowan

- What does Charlie mean by helping one true voice find room?
- Why does Rowan need Mary to wait?
- How does Mary show she is listening without pretending to understand everything?

During Reading Prompts, continued

Chapters 7-9: Echo Test, Broken Chord, and Song Restored

- What happens when the echoes rush back?
- How does Mary make room instead of chasing quiet?
- What does the cracked crystal teach Mary about truth and healing?
- Why is peace different from silence?

Chapters 10-14: Returning home, Eli, and every voice changing the song

- How do Mary and Eli repair the quiet space between them?
- Why does Eli need to hear Mary's truth?
- What does Mary learn about her own voice?
- How can different voices make a song stronger?

After Reading Discussion

Understanding the Story

- Why did the Valley of Echoes need a listener?
- How did Rowan change? How did Mary change?
- What helped Mary speak to Eli?
- Why did the story end with many voices instead of one perfect song?

Real-Life Connection

- What is one way to help someone feel heard this week?
- What is one gentle sentence you can use when friendship feels awkward?
- How can you listen without trying to fix everything?

Chapter-by-Chapter Toolkit

Chapter	Focus	Prompt
1 Quiet Morning	Mary notices her own quiet hurt.	What feeling is asking Mary to listen?
2 Voice in the Rain	Clarice returns; the Mirror calls.	What does it mean to listen slowly?
3 Return of the Light	Starlings return with different strengths.	Which kind of listening would you need today?
4 Silver Path	Mary travels toward feelings waiting to be heard.	What does one true voice need?
5 Valley of Echoes	The valley holds almost-spoken words.	How can silence carry feelings?
6 Silent Song	Rowan needs room, patience, and honesty.	Why is waiting a kind action?
7 Echo Test	The echoes rush back; Mary makes room.	How can we stay calm when feelings return?

Chapter-by-Chapter Toolkit, continued

Chapter	Focus	Prompt
8 Broken Chord	Mary names the fear of being forgotten.	Why can a small feeling still need care?
9 Song Restored	The valley learns peace is not hiding feelings.	What is the difference between quiet and peace?
10 Promise of Listening	Mary learns care also needs rest.	How can taking a break be part of kindness?
11 Back Through the Mirror	Mary prepares to bring listening home.	What skill can travel back to ordinary life?
12 Echo Home	Mary remembers her voice matters.	What is one true thing Mary carries home?
13 Words in the Dark	Eli learns remembering must become reaching.	How can someone repair hurt they did not mean to cause?
14 Every Voice Changes the Song	Mary, Eli, and the echoes make room for many voices.	How can different voices make belonging stronger?

SEL Alignment: CASEL 5

Self-Awareness

In the story: Mary notices missing Eli, fear of being forgotten, and the truth that her voice matters. Skill supported: naming feelings and personal needs. Prompt: What feeling does Mary name gently?

Self-Management

In the story: Mary pauses, breathes, waits, and listens when the echoes return. Skill supported: emotional regulation and patience. Prompt: What does Mary do before she acts?

Social Awareness

In the story: Mary notices Rowan's overwhelm and does not pretend to fully understand. Skill supported: empathy and perspective-taking. Prompt: How does Mary respect Rowan's needs?

Relationship Skills

In the story: Mary and Eli practice gentle truth, apology, reassurance, and repair. Skill supported: communication, inclusion, and friendship repair. Prompt: What helped their friendship feel safer?

Responsible Decision-Making

In the story: Mary chooses not to force quiet; she chooses to make room for one true voice. Skill supported: thoughtful choices connected to care. Prompt: What is one choice Mary makes that helps someone else?

ELA and Counseling Connections

Theme: listening, belonging, quiet courage, and truth spoken gently.

Character response: Mary changes because she listens inward before reaching outward. Rowan changes because someone waits without pretending. Eli changes because he learns that remembering is not always the same as reaching.

Narrative writing: Children can write their own scene using a feeling, a pause, a true sentence, and one small kind action.

Counseling use: This story can support conversations about friendship repair, feeling left out, emotional overwhelm, sensory sensitivity, quiet voices, jealousy, trust, and belonging without requiring direct disclosure.

Activities

Heart Listening Journal

Draw or write about one feeling that wants to be heard. Sentence starter: Today my heart is saying...

My Gentle Truth Sentence

Practice a kind truth: I felt..., I need..., I miss..., I want to try again..., or My voice matters because...

Echo Map

Draw a valley. Add colors for feelings: gold for joy, blue for sadness, violet for worry, green for care, gray for fear. Then add space between them.

Broken Chord Repair

Draw a cracked crystal. Write one feeling near the crack. Add light through the crack to show how truth can help healing begin.

More Activities

Friendship Repair Role-Play

Use story-safe situations instead of personal ones. Practice: "I didn't mean to hurt you," "It still hurt," "I'm sorry," and "You still have a place."

Listening Promise

Write: "I promise to listen with kindness by..." Decorate with stars, rain, music notes, feathers, or mirrors.

One Voice Circle

Pass a small object. Only the person holding it speaks. Everyone else practices listening without fixing, interrupting, or rushing.

Rest Is Care

Discuss Belle's reminder that care without rest can become heavy. Make a list of gentle rest choices: breathe, pause, draw, ask for space, take a break, or sit quietly.

Printable Reflection Prompts

- One thing I heard in the story was...
- One feeling I can name gently is...
- A quiet voice can still...
- When friendship feels awkward, I can...
- One way to help someone feel heard is...
- Today I can make room by...



Drawing and Writing Pages

Invite children to draw first and write second. For younger readers, adults can label the drawing with the child's own words.

- Draw the rain making shapes on Mary's window.
- Draw the Mirror glowing under the stage.
- Draw the Valley of Echoes.
- Draw Rowan's quiet song.
- Draw a feeling as a color.
- Draw the Hall of Harmony.
- Draw a broken chord becoming healed.
- Draw a friendship being repaired.
- Draw your own listening promise.
- Draw your favorite part of the story.

Low-pressure option: Children may simply choose one color for how the scene feels. A full drawing is not required.



For Sensitive Readers

Some children may relate strongly to Rowan feeling overwhelmed, Mary feeling forgotten, Eli not meaning to hurt someone, or the fear of speaking a true feeling. These connections can be meaningful, but they should be handled gently.

Helpful adult responses

- That makes sense.
- You do not have to talk about it if you do not want to.
- We can think about Mary or Rowan instead.
- A feeling can be true even if it is hard to explain.
- You are safe right now.
- Your voice can take its time.

Avoid

- Asking children to publicly name who has felt left out.
- Turning the story into a behavior correction.
- Rushing children to apologize, forgive, speak, join, or disclose.
- Forcing a child to accept attention or help.
- Calling quiet children shy in front of others.

Let the story do the teaching. Adults can offer calm presence, simple choices, and room to respond in different ways.

Take one quiet breath. Think of one feeling you can name gently.



Adult Scripts for Real Moments

When a child feels left out

"You can care about someone and still tell the truth about your heart."

When a child is overwhelmed

"You do not have to hold every feeling at once. Let us make room one breath at a time."

When friendship feels awkward

"Awkward and kind can happen at the same time. What is one gentle sentence you could use?"

When a child makes a mistake

"Not meaning to hurt someone does not always mean they did not hurt. We can repair with care."

When a child is quiet

"Quiet does not mean empty. Your thoughts can have time."

When a child wants to fix everything

"Listening does not mean fixing every sound. Sometimes it means making room for one true voice."

When a child needs rest

"Care needs room. Taking a break can help kindness keep growing."

One-Session Read-Aloud Plan

Time: 30-45 minutes

Goal: Children identify one listening skill and one gentle truth sentence.

1. Warm-up - 5 minutes

Ask: Can a quiet voice still be true? Invite thumbs-up, sideways thumb, drawing, or quiet think time.

2. Read selected chapters - 15-20 minutes

Use Chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, and 14 for a shortened read-aloud arc.

3. Discuss - 5 minutes

Ask: What did Mary do that helped someone feel heard?

4. Create - 10 minutes

Have children draw an echo, crystal, feather, or music note and write one listening promise.

5. Close - 2 minutes

Say together: My voice does not have to be loud to be true.

Take-Home Connection

Dear Families, today we read from *Mary and the Echo Valley*, a story about listening, friendship repair, and remembering that every voice matters. Children learned that feelings can be named gently and that listening can make room for healing.

At home, you might ask: What is one way Mary listened? What is one gentle truth you could say this week? Family practice: Choose a listening promise, then try it once before bedtime.

Closing Thought for Adults

This book works best when it is treated as an invitation, not a lecture.

An invitation to pause.

An invitation to listen.

An invitation to tell the truth gently.

An invitation to remember that every voice changes the song.

Because a voice does not have to be loud to be true.

Key Vocabulary

echo, listening, courage, quiet truth, harmony, belonging, repair, friendship, overwhelm, voice, promise, rest, self-belief

Suggested standards connections

Theme, character response, narrative writing, speaking and listening, social awareness, self-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making.

May every child find one gentle way to listen, speak, and belong.