

Parent & Teacher Guide

Listening, Learning, and Living in Harmony with Nature

About This Story

Ollie's Whispering Woods begins the journey of a young boy who discovers his unique ability to communicate with animals. Lost in the forest one evening, he meets creatures who teach him powerful lessons about kindness, unity, and the balance of the natural world.

This opening story lays the foundation for the entire *Ollie's Adventures* series, inviting readers to see nature not as something separate from us, but as something we belong to and must protect.

Themes and Questions for Discussion

1. Listening and Understanding

Ollie's gift shows the power of empathy and quiet reflection.

“What might nature say if it could speak?”

“Why is it important to listen to the world around us?”

2. Unity and Connection

Each creature teaches that all living things are part of a greater whole.

“How are animals, plants, and humans connected?”

“What happens when we forget to work together?”

3. Respect for Nature

From beavers building dams to fish keeping rivers clean, every creature has a role.

“What can we learn from the way animals live?”

“How can we take care of our environment like Ollie does?”

4. Courage and Curiosity

Ollie steps into the unknown and learns from what he finds.

“Why is it brave to ask questions?”

“What can we discover when we explore responsibly?”

5. Hope and Responsibility

The Spirit Moose and the animals teach Ollie that harmony begins with small actions.

“What small actions could help protect nature where you live?”

“Why does taking care of the Earth make people happier too?”

Activity Guide: Practical Support for Parents & Teachers

1. The Listening Walk

Purpose:

To help children slow down, notice their surroundings, and understand that nature communicates in many ways.

You Will Need:

- A safe outdoor space (school grounds, playground edge, park, garden, or quiet street)
- Clipboards or notebooks (optional)
- Pencils or crayons
- A simple timer or stopwatch (optional)

How to Prepare:

- Choose a short route (5–10 minutes walking time).
- Brief children beforehand that this is a *quiet walk*, not a silent one — they can whisper if needed.
- Encourage them to use all their senses, not just their ears.

During the Activity:

- Pause occasionally and ask children to listen for different sounds: birds, wind, footsteps, water, distant traffic.
- Invite them to jot down or draw what they hear (words or pictures are both fine).

Afterwards:

- Gather together and ask open questions such as:
 - “Which sound surprised you the most?”
 - “What do you think that sound was telling us?”
- Reinforce that there are no right or wrong answers, it’s all about noticing.

Teacher Tip:

If going outside isn’t possible, this activity works beautifully near an open window or even indoors with a short, guided listening moment in the corridors of the school.

2. Build Your Own Ecosystem

Purpose:

To help children understand balance, interdependence, and how living and non-living elements support each other.

You Will Need:

- Shoeboxes, trays, and large sheets of paper
- Recycled materials (cereal cardboard boxes, paper, bottle tops)
- Natural items (leaves, twigs, stones) if available
- Glue, tape, scissors
- Pens and/or labels

How to Prepare:

- Divide children into small groups.
- Decide whether they will build a woodland, pond, farm, or imaginary habitat.

During the Activity:

- Ask each group to include:
 - at least two plants
 - at least one animal
 - three non-living elements (water, soil, rocks, sunlight, wind)
- Encourage discussion about how each part helps the others.

Afterwards:

- Groups can present their ecosystems and explain:
 - what would happen if one part was removed
 - which part they think is most important (and why)

Teacher Tip:

Resist correcting too much. The learning comes from discussion, not perfection.

3. Act of Care Challenge

Purpose:

To show children that small actions can make a real difference.

You Will Need:

- Small cards or paper slips
- Pens or pencils
- A display board or wall space (optional)

How to Prepare:

- Introduce the idea that everyone can help nature in their own way.

During the Activity:

- Ask each child to choose **one small act of care**, such as:
 - planting a seed
 - feeding birds
 - turning off lights
 - picking up litter
- Children can write or draw their chosen action.

Afterwards:

- Create a “Kindness to Nature” display.
- Invite children to share when they’ve created their act.

Teacher Tip:

Celebrate effort, not outcome. Trying is the success.

4. Character Connections

Purpose:

To build empathy, emotional literacy, and self-awareness.

You Will Need:

- A list of the animals from *Whispering Woods*
- Paper and colouring materials (optional)

How to Prepare:

- Briefly remind children of the animals Ollie met and what each one represented.
- Re-read parts of the book again when Ollie is talking to the animals he encounters

During the Activity:

- Ask:
 - “Which animal do you feel most like today?”
 - “Which animal would you like to be more like?”
- Children can explain verbally, write a sentence, or draw themselves with the animal.

Afterwards:

- Discuss how people can feel like different animals at different times.
- Reinforce that all feelings have a place.

Teacher Tip:

This activity works well one-to-one for quieter children.

5. The Harmony Tree

Purpose:

To turn reflection into commitment and shared responsibility.

You Will Need:

- A large tree outline (drawn, printed, or made from paper)
- Paper leaves (cut out in advance or undertaken with the children)
- Pens, crayons, or markers
- Blu-tack or tape

How to Prepare:

- Place the tree somewhere visible to the class or even the school.

During the Activity:

- Ask each child to write or draw a promise to nature:
 - something they will protect
 - something they will try to do differently
- Attach each leaf to the tree.

Afterwards:

- Revisit the tree throughout the term.
- Add new leaves as children grow and learn.

Teacher Tip:

This makes a wonderful long-term classroom anchor.

For Parents and Teachers

That is where real learning begins.

Ollie's Whispering Woods offers a gentle but powerful invitation: to slow down, to notice, and to reconnect. It reminds children (and adults) that every act of care, however small, helps keep harmony and happiness alive in the world.

Encourage young readers to explore the other *Ollie's Adventures* books as they grow. Each story expands the circle of learning, showing new environments and creatures but always returning to the same message: we belong to the Earth, and the Earth belongs to us.

These activities are designed to be flexible. They can be adapted, shortened, extended, or simply used as inspiration.

The most important thing is not completing every activity, it's about creating moments where children feel connected, listened to, and valued.

By reading, reflecting, and acting together, we can all become voices for the planet, just like Ollie.