



**Story Summary**

What child has not daydreamed about having wings like a butterfly? But secretly, the flashy butterfly yearns for a stick insect's privacy. And the stick insect wants to swim like a whirligig beetle. One after the other, the denizens of the garden wish to be like somebody else. From the glowing firefly to the capable spider to the adorable ladybugs, each one brings something to be admired. And when the dragonfly wishes to be like a child who can run, play, laugh, and build, a world of possibilities opens up.

**Mies van Hout** is the author and illustrator of the picture books *Happy, Friends, Surprise,* and *From One to Ten,* among others, which have been hugely popular in Europe and North America. She studied graphic design at the Arts Academy in Groningen, the Netherlands, and has worked as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer since 1989. Her distinctive paintings are cheerful and bold, and her work has been published in more than twenty countries.

Pair this book with:

*Lili Macaroni* by Nicole Testa

*I Like Myself!* by Karen Beaumont

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle



Picture Book Ages 4–7 | 978-1-77278-196-0 | Pages: 32

**THEMES**

Social-Emotional Learning, Self-Awareness and Self-Esteem, Insects

**BISAC CODES**

JUV039140 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Self-Esteem & Self-Reliance

JUV039050 JUVENILE FICTION / Social Themes / Emotions & Feelings

JUV002140 JUVENILE FICTION / Animals / Insects, Spiders, etc.

**CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Language Arts—verbs and adjectives; compare/contrast features of writing and artwork

Drama—performing movements to words; dramatizing scenes

Visual Arts—collage

Health—characteristics that make us unique

Science—characteristics of a chosen insect

**CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:**

<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>MAIN SUBJECT AREAS</b>	<b>SPECIFIC SKILLS</b>
Read-Aloud	Language Arts Drama	Activate prior knowledge, making connections Verbs and adjectives Performing movements to words
Compare/Contrast Texts	Language Arts	Compare/Contrast features of writing and artwork
Collage Creations	Visual Arts	Create a class book of collage creature creations
Act It Out	Drama	Create scenes based on each page of the story to complete an overall play for viewing by others
Dance Response	Dance	Depict the movements of the insects/creatures as a way of responding to the text
I'm Happy I'm Me	Health	Identify some of the characteristics that make us unique
Insect Characteristics	Science	Identify characteristics of a chosen insect.

**THE READ-ALoud**

For this activity, teachers can choose the discussion points most appropriate for their particular group of students.

**Learning expectations:**

Students will:

- Activate prior knowledge and make connections while reading and listening to text
- be introduced to (or review) verbs and adjectives
- put movements to words

**You Will Need**

- *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout
- chart paper
- markers
- *I Like Myself* by Karen Beaumont (optional)
- *Lili Macaroni* by Nicole Testa (optional)

**How To:**  
**Before Reading**

Show students the front and back cover of the book. Ask them what they notice? (rich colors, insects, etc.).

Tell students that you will be exploring the sentence starter “If only...”

Ask students to predict what they think the story will be about based on the cover and sentence-starter question. Prompt students to explain what makes them think that.

**During Reading**

During each spread in this book, read each word slowly, placing emphasis in different places (e.g. “The child thought, **if only** I were a **butterfly**, then I could fly **everywhere**”).

**First spread:** After reading this page, show students the illustrations. Ask students what they notice about the butterflies. (drawing attention to the uniqueness of each butterfly and making the connection that we are all unique).

**Second spread:** The page is illustrated with only a few colors. The butterfly is a bright color, but doesn’t want to stand out. What does it mean to “stand out?” Are there negative or positive situations where you can stand out? Can you think of situations or reasons why someone should be proud to stand out?

**Third spread:** On this page, the stick insect wants to ‘swirl’ across the water. What would it look like to ‘swirl’ across the water? (Have students demonstrate by acting it out or generate ideas through whole class discussion).

**Fourth spread:** The whirligig beetle is afraid of the dark. The beetle is a similar color to the background on these pages. Why do you think the illustrator chose to do this? Ask students to make connections to times when they have felt afraid of the dark. What strategies did they use to overcome their fears? Point out similarities between student answers, showing that everyone experiences fear.

Mies van Hout  
*If Only...*

**Fifth spread:** Why does the beetle think that bees are always together? (activate student prior knowledge about bees). What are some things that you have done to help a friend? The illustrator created a mostly-yellow background on these pages. How do the illustrations relate to the text on the page?

**Sixth spread:** Compare the bee on these pages to the bees shown on the previous pages. What do you notice? Why do you think the bee on the sixth spread looks like it has been illustrated into the background?

**Seventh spread:** The spider wants to be a ladybug because they are “adorable”. What does the word adorable mean? Explore this adjective as a class. What images come to students’ minds when they think of this word?

**Eighth spread:** Continue your adjective discussion by exploring the adjectives strong and tough. What do these words mean to the students? What images do they think of when they hear these words? Challenge any stereotypes that may arise.

**Ninth spread:** The ant doesn’t think that the snails are busy. What do you think? Look at each snail and think about what they are doing. Is what they are doing considered being “busy”? Why or why not? Look at the expressions on their faces. What do you think they are feeling? Compare this to the ant’s expression. What do you notice?

**Tenth spread:** The snail wants to “jump”. This is another verb. When would you jump? What does it look like? Have students demonstrate. If you look at the blades of grass on the page, they are flowing to one side. How does this illustration affect how you look at the story pages? How can art create movement?

**Eleventh spread:** The dragonfly on this page is a larger size than the grasshopper. Do think this is on purpose? How does this illustration feature relate to the text on these pages?

**Twelfth spread:** What do you notice about all of the children? Are they the same or different? Looking closely at all of the insects on these pages, what do you notice? (Each insect from the book is represented here—make a connection to the general theme and message of the story).

**Thirteenth spread:** Review each creature in the glossary. Identify what a glossary is if students aren't familiar with this text feature.

**Fourteenth spread:** Draw attention to this page. The author/illustrator poses these questions: What creature would you like to be? What is something they can do that you can't? Brainstorm different creatures with your students. Include suggestions from students on a piece of chart paper

### After Reading

- In this story, there is a prominent theme of always wanting to be something or someone else. How do you think the twelfth spread of the book addresses this by including every child and creature together?
- Go back and review each page. How does the prominent color on each page relate to the feeling of the insect or creature who wants to be something or someone else? (i.e., in the seventh spread, the dominant color is a dark blue. How does this relate to the spider feeling sad that they aren't adorable?).
- Consider reading *Lili Macaroni* by Nicole Testa or *I Like Myself!* by Karen Beaumont and have a whole-class discussion centered on what lessons the creatures and insects from the *If Only...* text could learn from the lessons in *Lili Macaroni* or *I Like Myself*.

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*If Only...*

### ACTIVITY 1: COMPARE/CONTRAST TEXTS

Students will compare and contrast different books while looking at the artwork created by the illustrators.

#### Learning expectations:

Students will:

- compare and contrast artistic elements of different texts

#### You Will Need

- *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- chart paper
- markers

#### How To:

1. Read *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout. Draw attention to artistic details mentioned in the above “during reading” suggestions.
2. Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and draw attention to different colors used on each page.

For a whole-class discussion, use chart paper to write down comments from each student about what they notice. You may also choose to do individual venn diagram sheets if students are able to independently write their thoughts.

If you choose this option, have students share what they noticed. Draw attention to what students noticed were similar features between both texts



## ACTIVITY 2: COLLAGE CREATIONS

Students will co-create a class book in the writing style of Mies Van Hout.

### Learning Expectations

Students will:

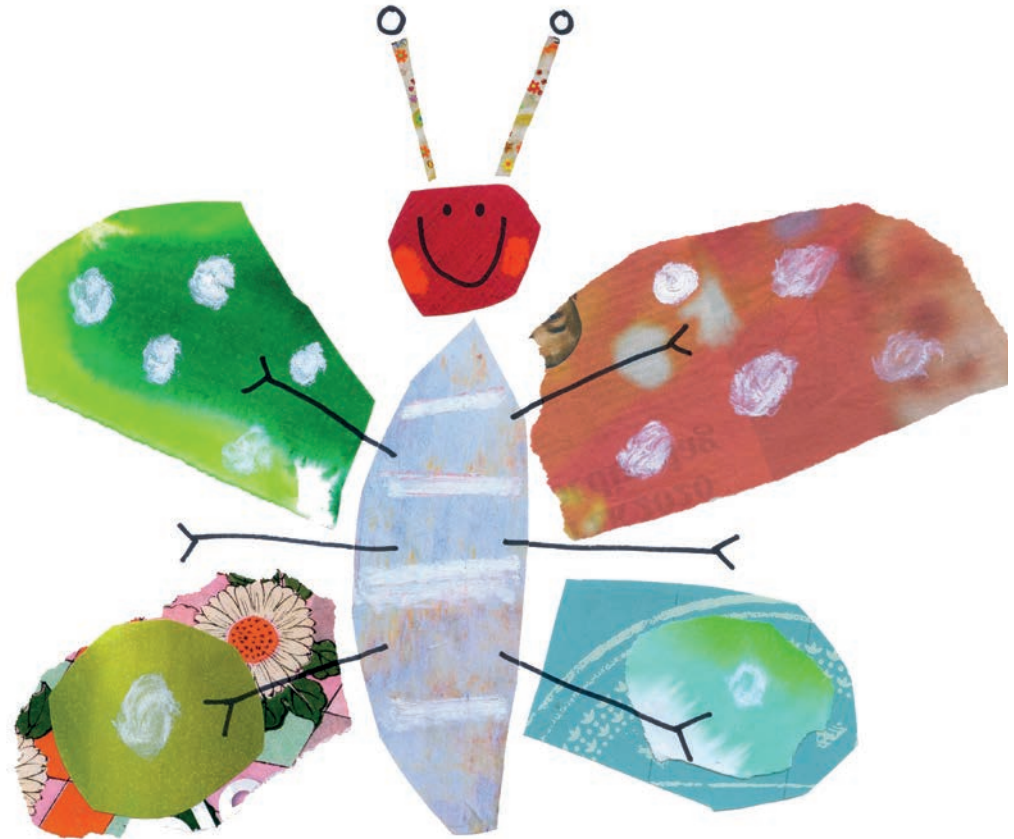
- use the collage-making art elements demonstrated by the author, Mies Van Hout, at the back of *If Only...* to create their own unique creature. Each student will contribute their piece of artwork to a class book.

### You Will Need

- *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout
- One large piece of paper per student
- scraps of colored paper
- self-painted paper (optional)
- old magazines
- markers or crayons
- scissors
- glue
- laminator (optional)
- binder rings or ribbon (optional)

### How To:

1. Do a picture walk of the *If Only...* book, focusing on the colors and creatures.
2. Brainstorm a list of creatures students could make.
3. Follow the steps in the art activity “Collage Your Creature” from the *If Only...* book.
4. Laminate each student’s creation to include in the class book. Bind all pages together or use binder rings or ribbon to put it together.
5. When the class book is completed, do a whole class sharing of each creature and discuss what makes each one unique.



### ACTIVITY 3: ACT IT OUT

Students will read and act out scenes from the pages of *If Only...*

#### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- practice reading with expression for dramatic effect
- add movement to characters shown in the illustrations

#### You Will Need

- *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout

#### How To:

1. Students will be assigned in pairs or small groups.
2. Each pairing/group will be assigned a page of the story.
3. For each assignment, the pairing/group will need to have someone who will read the text on the page 1–2 other students will act out the scene. For example, in the first spread, one student would be responsible for reading: “The child thought, If Only I were a butterfly, Then I could fly everywhere.” Then one student would be the child (posing with a thoughtful expression) and one child could be the butterfly pretending to fly everywhere.
4. Once all pairings/groups have completed their practice, put all scenes together to form a play.
5. Consider performing for other classes or for families



Mies van Hout  
*If Only...*

### ACTIVITY 4: DANCE RESPONSE

Students will respond to the text with a dance sequence.

#### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- combine learned dance movements to create a dance sequence that responds to the text.

#### You Will Need

- *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout
- chart paper
- markers

#### How To:

1. Read the story *If Only...* and have a class discussion about the overall message of the story.
2. Make a list of the creatures or insects that are included within the story.
3. In small groups or as a whole class, depict the movements of each type of insect/creature from the book (for example, students could depict an ant lifting and carrying something overhead).
4. Create a dance sequence based on all or a select few of the insects from the book.

### ACTIVITY 5: I'M HAPPY I'M ME

Students will celebrate characteristics that make them unique.

#### Learning Expectations

Students will:

- identify characteristics that make each person unique
- demonstrate an understanding of things that make us unique
- identify visible and invisible characteristics
- look at the similarities and differences of their classroom community, made up of people with unique characteristics

**You Will Need**

- *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout
- I'm Happy I'm Me sheet
- chart paper
- markers/crayons/pencil crayons

**How To:**

1. On a piece of chart paper, create two columns: one labeled **Visible** and the other labeled **Invisible**.
2. As a class, have a discussion about what these words mean in relation to our bodies and what makes each of us unique.
3. Have students do a think-pair-share on some of the visible and invisible characteristics that make them unique. After about 1–2 minutes, have pairs share their thinking with the class. Jot down ideas under the correct heading to have a list that students can refer to during their independent work time.
4. Have students complete the “I’m Happy I’m Me” sheet. They can draw on the child image to show what makes them unique, as well as write down their visible and invisible characteristics that are unique to them.
5. Display finished pieces on a bulletin board display for members of the school community to see.

**ACTIVITY 5: INSECT CHARACTERISTICS**

Students will investigate physical characteristics and other fun facts about the insects from the text.

**Learning Expectations**

Students will:

- identify physical characteristics for the insects included within the text (i.e., size, shape, color, parts, etc.).

**You Will Need**

- *If Only...* by Mies Van Hout
- access to Google or other research engines (alternatively use books that have information on each insect)

**How To:**

1. Choose one of the insects from the text to research
2. Use either an online resource or a book to identify the physical characteristics of your chosen insect.
3. Include your insect name in the middle of the mind map.
4. Write or draw (depending on ability) each physical characteristic of your chosen insect.
5. When finished, orally share your findings with the class

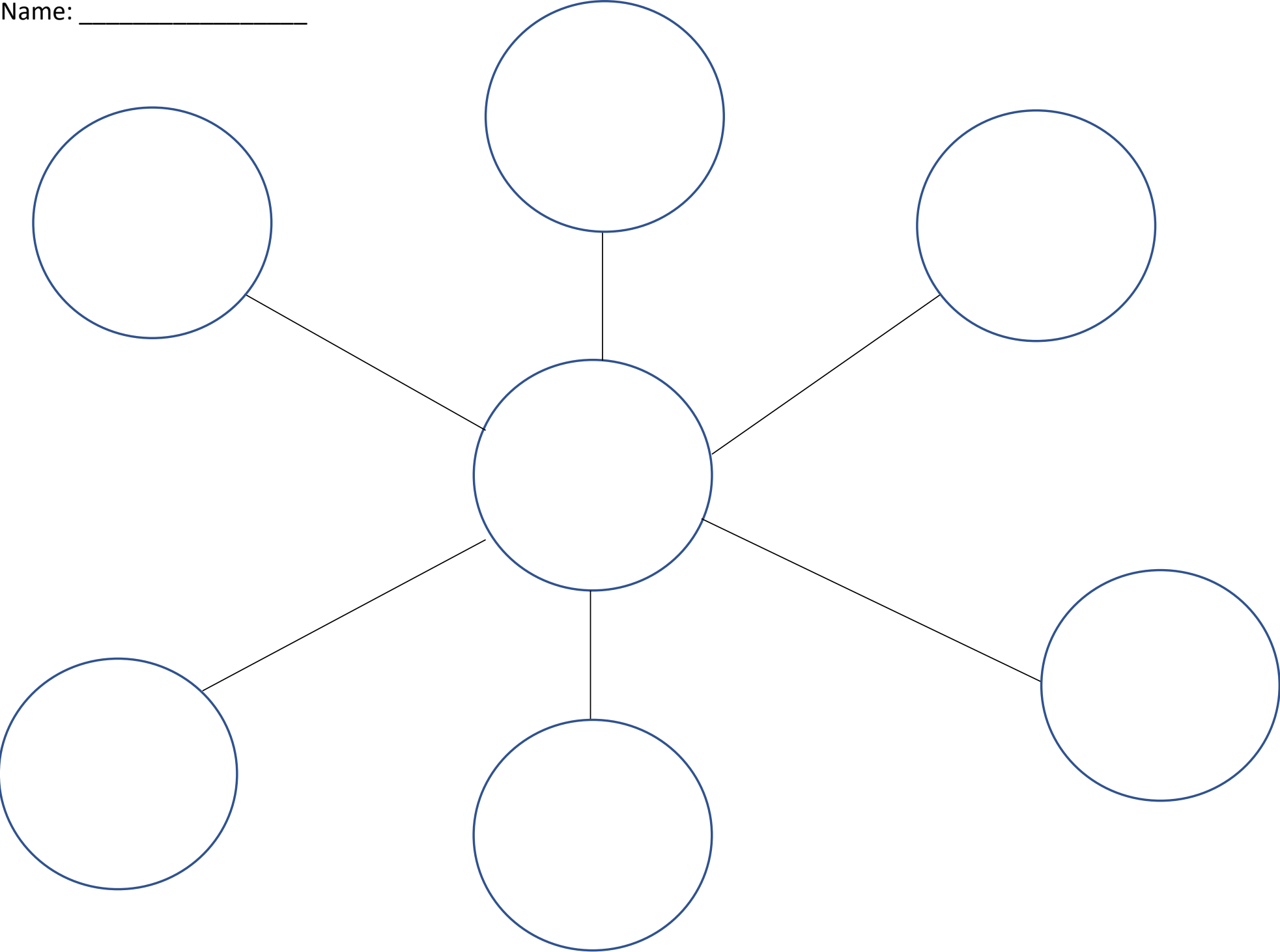
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**Bibliography**

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- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf>
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/2019-health-physical-education-grades-1to8.pdf>

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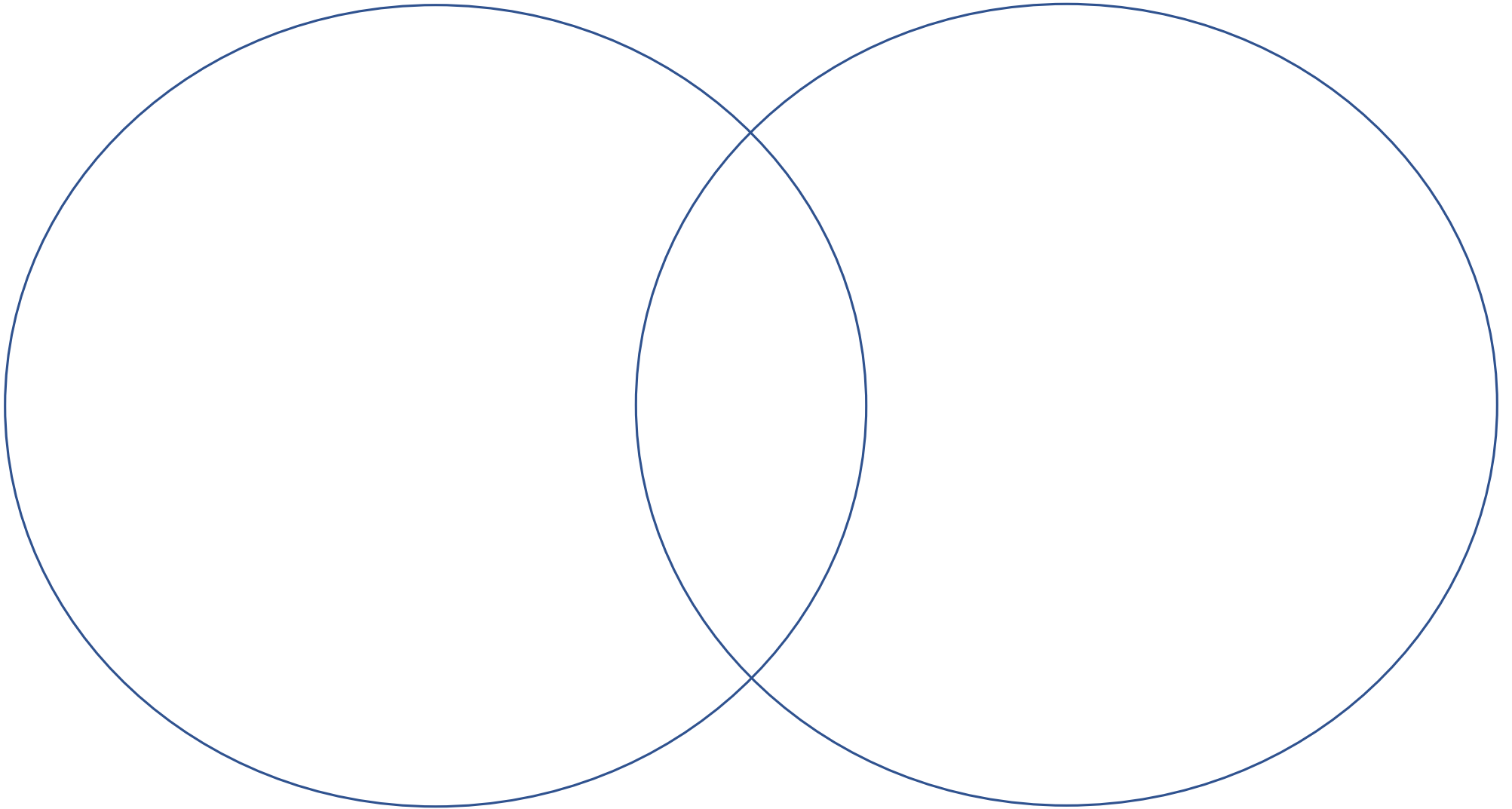




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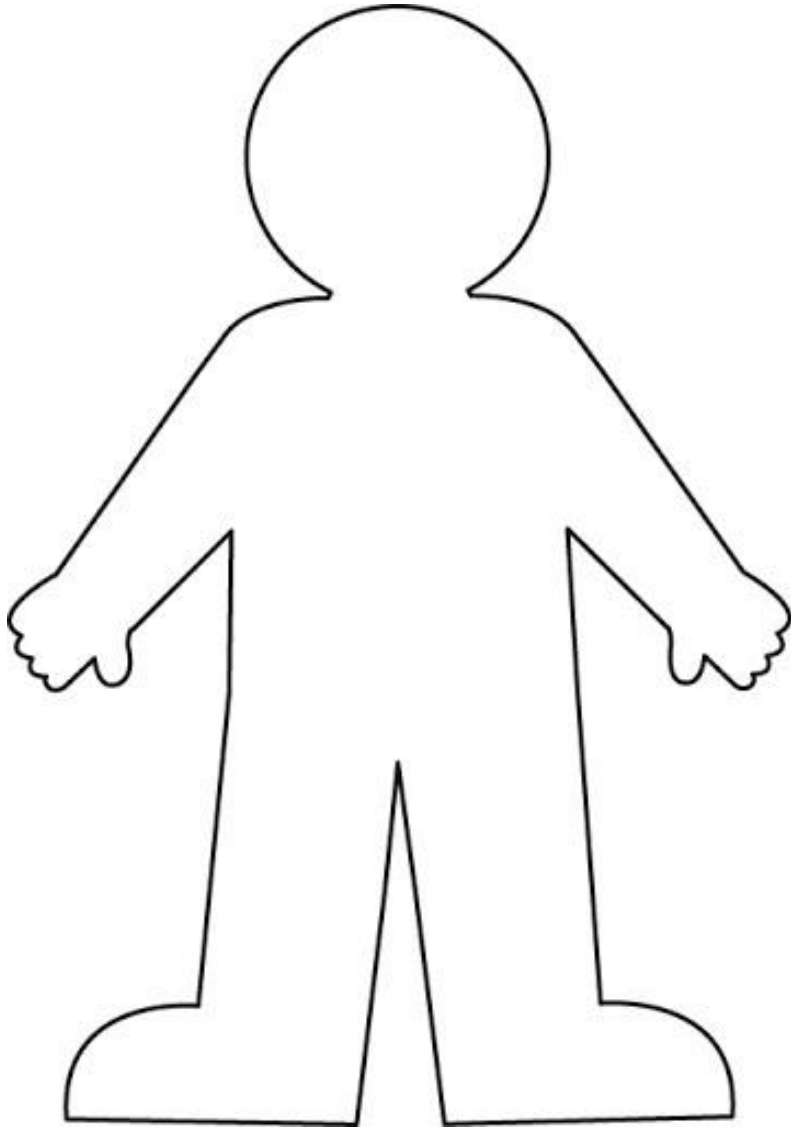
*If Only...* by Mies Van Hout

*The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle



Name:

I'm Happy I'm Me



These are some **visible** (things you can see) characteristics that make me unique:

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These are some **invisible** (things you can't see) characteristics that make me unique:

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