

The Sweater She Has Not Decided About



Nussbaum Mind

Illustration coming soon

Ages 12-15



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Chapter 1: The box with the ribbon

On Sunday afternoon, Aunt Leah arrives with a flat box tied in green ribbon.

"I made it myself," she says. "It took three weeks."

Tehila, who is thirteen, lifts the lid. Inside is a mustard-yellow sweater with a long, thick collar and a row of wooden buttons. The stitches are even. The sleeves are long.

The color is the problem. Tehila has never worn mustard in her life. It makes her skin look tired.

Aunt Leah watches her face.

"Do you love it?"

Chapter 2: The easy answer

Tehila can feel the easy answer waiting behind her teeth.

I love it. It's perfect. It is a small sentence, and it would make Aunt Leah glow.

But the words do not match the feeling in her stomach. If she says them, she will have to keep saying them. She will say them next week when Aunt Leah asks if she wore it. She will say them next year.

She is not sure she can keep a pretend for that long.



She also does not want to hurt the person who spent three weeks on it.

"Give me a second," she says, and holds the sweater by the shoulders, buying time.

Chapter 3: What is true

Mama stands by the doorway with a dish towel, saying nothing.

Tehila runs her thumb along a button.

Some things are true. The stitches are lovely. The sleeves are the right length. The buttons are handsome. Aunt Leah worked on this for three weeks, and that is an actual fact, not a pretend.

One thing is not true. She does not love the color. She is not yet sure she will wear it.

She turns the list over in her mind. A good answer can use only the true parts.

Chapter 4: The sentence she says

"Aunt Leah, thank you so much for making this. The stitches are so even, and I love the buttons. I'm still getting used to the color, because I've never worn mustard. But I can see how much work went into it."

Aunt Leah's face goes soft, and then a little puzzled.

"You don't like the color."



"I'm not sure yet," says Tehila. "I might need to wear it a few times. Is that okay?"

There is a pause. A hot place in Tehila's cheeks grows.

Aunt Leah laughs, once, short.

"I should have asked what color you wanted," she says. "I saw it in a shop and thought of you."

Chapter 5: The hug that is not a promise

Aunt Leah hugs her anyway.

Tehila hugs back. She feels relieved and a little guilty at the same time, and she lets both feelings sit.

"If you'd rather exchange the yarn color," Aunt Leah says, "I can make a second one in blue. I won't be offended."

"I don't want you to knit a second whole sweater," says Tehila.

"Then I'll tell you what," says Aunt Leah. "Wear this one on a cold day. If it grows on you, good. If not, you have my blessing to leave it in the closet. And next time I'll ask first."

"That's kind."

"It is also honest."



Chapter 6: The cold day

On Tuesday morning, the heating is slow.

Tehila's closet holds three sweaters. She takes out the mustard one and puts it on over her blouse. It is soft and heavy and warm.

In the mirror, it still looks like mustard.

But when she buttons it, the wooden buttons click in a neat row, and the collar turns up near her chin like a hug.

She does not decide anything big. She decides to wear it to school once.

A friend says, "Cute sweater."

"Thanks," says Tehila. "My aunt made it." That sentence is easy. It is entirely true.

Chapter 7: Next time

At the end of the week, Aunt Leah stops by.

"Did it get a chance?" she asks.

"I wore it Tuesday," says Tehila. "It was warm. I still don't love mustard. But I like how it feels, and I like that you made it."

Aunt Leah nods. She seems to like this answer better than an enormous one.

"Next time," she says, "tell me a color you like."



"Deep green," says Tehila. "Like the ribbon."

Aunt Leah looks at the empty ribbon on the table and starts to smile.



From box to cold day

Number the cards in story order.

Tehila says the thank-you built from true things.

Tehila opens the box and sees the mustard sweater.

Tehila wears the sweater once on a cold day.

Tehila feels the easy answer waiting.

Tehila lists what is true about the sweater.



True or pretend?

Mark TRUE for what Tehila can honestly say. Mark PRETEND for what she would have to fake.

Statement	TRUE	PRETEND
The stitches are even.	☐	☐
I love the color.	☐	☐
Aunt Leah worked on it for three weeks.	☐	☐
It is perfect.	☐	☐



A thank-you with true parts

Choose the reply that thanks honestly. Rewrite one other reply in your own words.

Reply	Honest?
☐ Thank you for making this. The stitches are so even.	
☐ I love it. It is perfect.	
☐ I'm still getting used to the color.	

One reply in your own words



Building a thank-you

Draw a path through the parts of a kind, honest thank-you.

Start

Say thank you.

Say you love it when you do not.

Name a true thing you like.

Say what you are unsure about.

Say it is ugly.

Ask for time.

Say next time you will tell a color you like.

A kind, honest thank-you



My true parts

Use a fictional gift and a fictional giver. No private information is needed.

A fictional gift

Two true things to say

One thing the character is unsure about, said kindly



Thanks without pretending

Read the reminders with an adult. Choose one that fits. Final stickers are 2 1/4-inch squares.

**Thank you is
true**

**Name what you
like**

**Not sure yet is
okay**

**Kind and
honest**

Ask for time

**Say a color you
like**



The wooden buttons

Draw a row of five wooden buttons on a plain sweater front. Leave the color blank.



A detail I add to the sweater



Find the honest words

Find SWEATER, BUTTONS, STITCH, HONEST, THANKS, COLOR, TRUE, ASK. All go left to right. Tell one word's part in the story.

S	W	E	A	T	E	R	X	Q	Z
X	B	U	T	T	O	N	S	D	F
Z	S	T	I	T	C	H	P	X	K
Q	H	O	N	E	S	T	B	V	D
X	T	H	A	N	K	S	M	Z	P
B	C	O	L	O	R	Q	W	X	D
X	T	R	U	E	Q	D	F	G	H
K	A	S	K	X	C	B	N	M	Z
P	Q	M	Z	X	W	V	B	D	F
C	B	N	M	K	X	Q	Z	P	D

SWEATER**BUTTONS****STITCH****HONEST****THANKS****COLOR****TRUE****ASK**

One word's part in the story



Parent notes and answers

Discussion questions:

What was the easy answer Tehila did not say?

What true things could she say?

What did she say about the color?

How did Aunt Leah answer?

What did Tehila decide about wearing the sweater?

Parent tool: Gratitude can be real without pretending to love a gift. Help the teen build a thank-you from true parts, name a limit kindly and leave room for the giver to respond. Do not treat honesty as permission to criticize. A giver's generosity does not require the receiver to use or keep a gift forever.

1. Listed order 4, 1, 5, 2, 3.

2. TRUE: the stitches are even; Aunt Leah worked three weeks; the buttons are handsome.
PRETEND: I love the color; it is perfect.

3. Honest: thank you for making this; the stitches are even; I'm still getting used to the color. Not honest: I love it, it is perfect.

4. Useful nodes: Say thank you; Name a true thing you like; Say what you are unsure about; Ask for time; Say next time you will tell a color you like. Not useful nodes: Say you love it when you do not; Say it is ugly.

5. Open. Example: a handmade scarf; true things: warm, careful work; unsure: the pattern.

6. Open. Honest and kind can go together.

7. Open. No people needed.

8. SWEATER: row 1, column 1, right; BUTTONS: row 2, column 2, right; STITCH: row 3, column 2, right; HONEST: row 4, column 2, right; THANKS: row 5, column 2, right; COLOR: row 6, column 2, right; TRUE: row 7, column 2, right; ASK: row 8, column 2, right