

# The cricket Companion

## Hello, *Cricket* Reader!

We're so glad you're reading *Cricket*'s September/October 2025 issue, "A Single Step"! This expanded issue of *Cricket* asks: **How do our first steps—both physical and emotional—shape the journeys we take in life?** It explores where our feet, hearts, and minds can take us.

In this guide, you'll find creative activities based on these selections from *Cricket*.

- **Soft Steps**

How can a first step be bold or quiet? Write a poem or story that model's the author's use of rhythm and imagery to describe loud, energetic steps.

- **Selling Socks to Save Seabirds**

Take your first step into birdwatching! Observe, record, and connect with the birds in your own backyard or neighborhood.

- **Marching for Jobs and Freedom**

What does it mean to stand up for something you believe in? Research an aspect of the march that you would like to know more about.

- **The Savoy**

Have you ever had to find a new way to do something you love? Share your story through writing, drawing, and music.

- **Plus: NYC 3D Maze**

Challenge yourself with a maze!

Visit Chatterbox at [cricketmagkids.com](http://cricketmagkids.com) to post your creative projects and to check out what other *Cricket* readers are up to. Share your thoughts about the latest issue of *Cricket* by emailing [cricket@cricketmedia.com](mailto:cricket@cricketmedia.com) with "Cricket Feedback" in the subject line.

With each issue, enter a new contest for a chance to have your writing or artwork appear in the pages of *Cricket* magazine. Find the Cricket League prompt and the contest rules in the last pages of each issue.

We hope this guide helps you reflect on the September/October 2025 *Cricket* issue and sparks your imagination!

Happy reading,

Your *Cricket* Companions



Scan to go to  
Chatterbox!





# SOFT STEPS

In the poem “Soft Steps” by Eric Ode (page 15), the author paints a quiet picture of the forest floor, using soft, repetitive language to create a gentle, peaceful feeling. In the poem, the first steps are gentle and slow. Now it’s your turn to take a bold step in a new direction.

Write your own creative poem or short story about loud steps. Instead of soft and quiet, make it noisy and bold. Let it burst with energy!

Use repetition and strong imagery, like the original poem, but create a completely different mood. What kinds of creatures, objects, or ideas could you describe that go *STOMP*, *CLANG*, or *CRASH* through their environment? Use your senses—what do you see, hear, smell, or feel?

You don’t need to rhyme. Just paint a picture with your words.

Tips to get started:

- Think about onomatopoeia: sound words like *BOOM*, *BAM*, *WHOOSH*.
- Use repetition to create rhythm.
- Choose strong, vivid verbs to show motion and noise.
- You might want to start with a phrase like “Step loudly” or “Big, bold steps” and build from there!
- Make some noise with your creativity!



## Dig Deeper

After you write your poem or story, draw a picture to go with it! Show your character or creature in the moment of taking that first loud step. How does that step set them on a new path?



## Talk About It!

- Where would you take soft steps? Where would you take loud steps?
- How does the mood of your poem compare to the mood of “Soft Steps”?
- When have you taken a first step that felt loud or noticeable to others? How did it shape what happened next?





# Selling Socks to Save Seabirds

In the article “Selling Socks to Save Seabirds” by Elizabeth Watson Chaney (page 26), you read about amateur birders Will and Matty Gladstone. Their first step—selling bright blue socks—was both physical (taking action to start a project) and emotional (caring deeply about a cause). That step shaped the journey they’ve been on ever since, helping birds and inspiring others.

This activity invites you to take your own first step into birdwatching. You’ll observe, record, and connect with the living world around you—just like the Gladstone brothers did when they first fell in love with birding.

## What You’ll Need

- A pencil or pen
- Binoculars (if you have them)
- A bird guide or app (Check your library or ask an adult to help.)

## What To Do

1. Find a good spot outside, like a park, backyard, or schoolyard. Or find a good window to look out of. Stay still and quiet.
2. Watch the birds around you for 15 to 30 minutes. Notice what they look like and what they’re doing.
3. Use the bird observation checklist on the next page to track the birds you see! Each time you see a bird, fill out a new checklist. Check the boxes that match what you see.

Sketch a bird you observed!



## Talk About It!

- How did Will and Matty’s idea show both creativity and problem-solving?
- How can learning more about a species change the way people feel about protecting it?
- How might small steps, like taking notes or sharing what you saw, lead to bigger actions for conservation?



### Dig Deeper

The Gladstone brothers created the Blue Feet Foundation to support conservation efforts for the blue-footed booby. Imagine that you want to raise awareness about one of the birds on your list. What product would you create? What would you call your organization? Make a poster advertising your product or organization. Think about how your first step in creating it could lead to something bigger.

## Bird Observation Checklist

Where and when did you see the bird?

What was the bird doing?

- ☐ Flying
- ☐ Hopping
- ☐ Eating
- ☐ Perching
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What size was the bird?

- ☐ Tiny (like a hummingbird)
- ☐ Small (like a sparrow)
- ☐ Medium (like a pigeon)
- ☐ Large (like a crow or hawk)

What shape was the bird's body?

- ☐ Round
- ☐ Long and thin
- ☐ Plump
- ☐ Tall

What colors did you see on the bird?

- ☐ Red
- ☐ Blue
- ☐ Gray
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Yellow
- ☐ Green
- ☐ Brown
- ☐ White
- ☐ Orange
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What shape is the beak?

- ☐ Long and pointy
- ☐ Short and thick
- ☐ Hooked
- ☐ Flat

What shape is the tail?

- ☐ Long and narrow
- ☐ Short and square
- ☐ Fan-shaped
- ☐ Forked

What sounds did the bird make?

- ☐ Chirping
- ☐ Singing
- ☐ Squawking
- ☐ Silent

What type of bird do you think it is?

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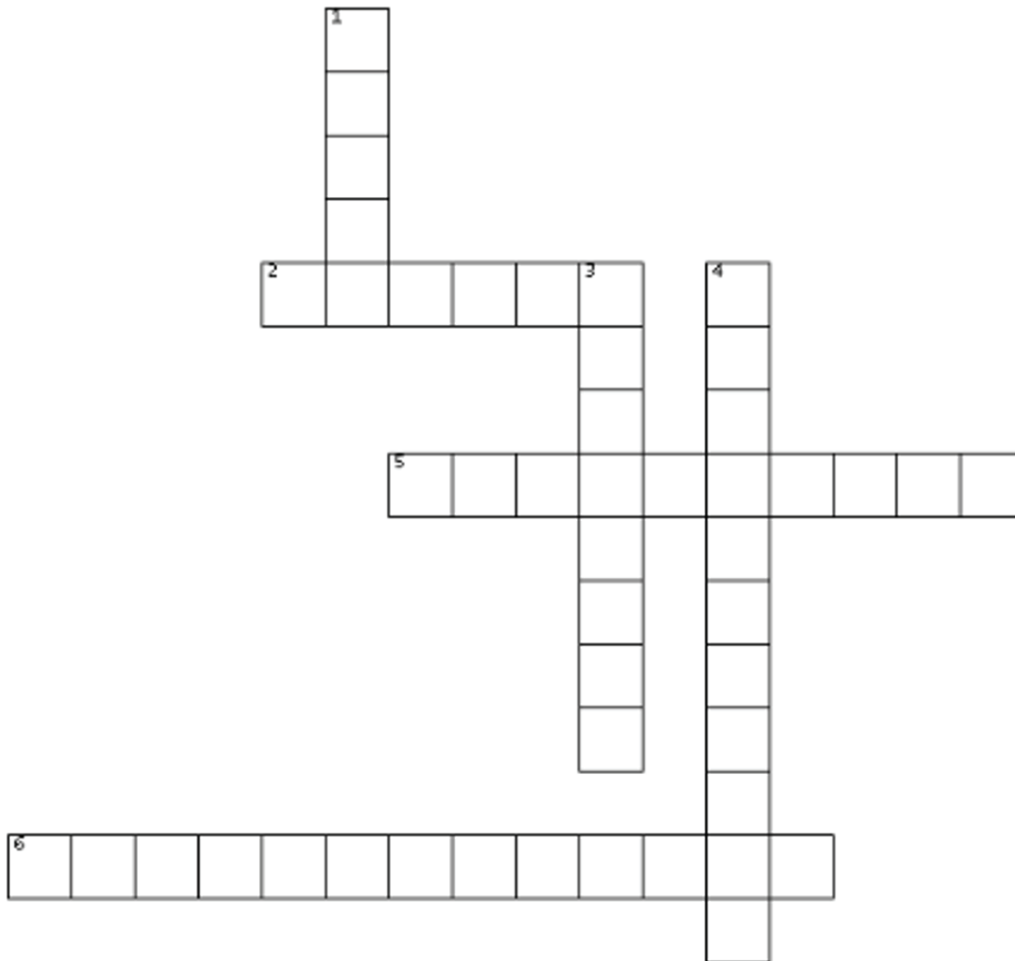


# MARCHING for JOBS and FREEDOM

In the article “Marching for Jobs and Freedom” by Eric Arnesen (page 30), you read about a historic event that took place in 1963. Hundreds of thousands of Americans gathered in Washington, DC, to demand civil rights and economic justice. Reflect on the lasting impact of this powerful gathering.

Use the words in the box to complete the crossword puzzle. Each word connects to something BIG from the March on Washington! Not all words will be used. Answers are on page 9.

civil legislation organizers pledge demonstration equality



## Across

2. The crowd made a powerful \_\_\_\_ to keep marching for change.
5. Dedicated \_\_\_\_ like Bayard Rustin planned the whole event.
6. The March on Washington was a large \_\_\_\_ where people wanted to make their voices heard.

## Down

1. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and many others demanded equal \_\_\_\_ rights for all Americans.
3. One big goal of the march was economic \_\_\_\_, so everyone could have fair job opportunities.
4. The march led to new \_\_\_\_ passed by Congress to protect people's rights.





### *Dig Deeper*

The March on Washington was a powerful first step toward change. Choose one aspect of the march you want to learn more about. It could be a person who spoke, a group who participated, a song or chant that inspired the crowd, or a change that people hoped would come afterward. Research it, then use the space below to jot down key words, short phrases, or quick sketches showing what you learned about the journey toward civil rights and justice.



### **Talk About It!**

- How might the courage shown at the March on Washington inspire people to take their own first steps for change today?
- What emotions do you think people felt during the march? How would you feel if you were there?
- If you were planning a march or rally for something you believe in, what would your first step be, and why?





# The Savoy

In the short story “The Savoy” by Scott C. Mikula (page 32), Eugene takes a big first step: He follows his love of music into a new and unfamiliar place—the dance floor. Even though his weak leg makes dancing difficult, he tries. And when it doesn’t go the way he hoped, he feels disappointed. But he keeps going. He finds a new way to be part of the music, through drumming.

Eugene’s story is about more than an unforgettable dance hall. It’s about how trying something new can lead to something unexpected and meaningful, even when it’s hard or scary.

## 1. Reflect on Eugene’s Journey

- What did Eugene want at the beginning of the story?
- What was hard for him?
- What changed—and how did he grow?

## 2. Think About Your Own Experience

- Have you ever tried something new and had it not go as planned?
- Have you ever found a new way to do something you cared about?
- When is a time you kept going, even when something was hard?

## 3. Show Your Story

Choose one of the options below to share your own story of learning, growth, or resilience—just like Eugene’s.

- Write a short story or journal entry about a real moment when you kept going or found a new way.
- Create a comic, series of drawings, or collage showing the steps in your journey.



**Dig Deeper**  
Make a playlist of songs that remind you of who you are and make you feel brave.



## Talk About It!

- Eugene’s journey changed when he took a first step into something new. What’s a first step you’ve taken that shaped who you are?
- How does Eugene handle his disappointment after falling on the dance floor? What can we learn from his response?
- Why is it important for friends, like Willa Mae, to encourage each other to try new experiences—even if they might be challenging?





# NYC 3D MAZE by Nick McDougal

The pigeon is in the big city, New York City to be exact. Use the steps and ladders to help him climb his way to the donut shop. Solution is on page 7.





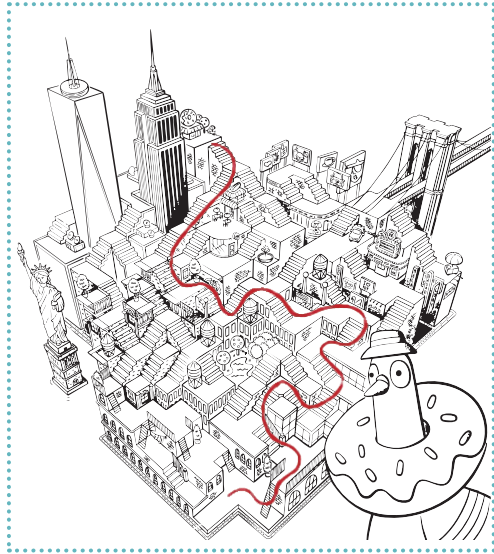


# ANSWER KEY

## MARCH FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM CROSSWORD

1. civil 2. pledge 3. equality 4. legislation 5. organizers  
6. demonstration

## NYC 3D MAZE



## For Parents, Educators, and Grown-Ups

Thank you for encouraging joyful reading and learning!

The *Cricket* Companion includes multi-disciplinary activities that promote reading comprehension, creative thinking, STEM curiosity, and love of learning.

Each activity connects directly to featured content in *Cricket* magazine and is designed for flexible use in classrooms, homeschooling, or independent exploration.

For more ideas, questions, or to share feedback, please reach out to us — we love hearing from you! Email us at [cricket@cricketmedia.com](mailto:cricket@cricketmedia.com).

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# STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

ACTIVITY	KEY SKILLS/FOCUS	ALIGNED STANDARDS
Soft Steps	Creative writing, sensory language, repetition, onomatopoeia	CCSS.ELA.W.4.3; CCSS.ELA.W.4.4; CCSS.ELA.L.4.5; CCSS.ELA.RL.4.4; Creative Arts; Language Development
Selling Socks to Save Seabirds	Observation, environmental awareness, research, poster design	CCSS.ELA.W.4.7; CCSS.ELA.W.4.8; Environmental Literacy; Creative Arts
Marching for Jobs and Freedom	Historical understanding, civic responsibility, vocabulary, critical thinking	NCSS Themes: Culture; Time, Continuity & Change; Civic Ideals & Practices; CCSS.ELA.RI.4.3; CCSS.ELA.W.4.2; Social Studies; Visual Literacy
The Savoy	Narrative writing, history through arts	CCSS.ELA.W.4.3; CCSS.ELA.RL.4.7; CCSS.ELA.SL.4.5; Arts Integration; Historical and Cultural Context
NYC 3D Maze	Spatial reasoning, visual problem-solving, logic	CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP.1; CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP.7; Executive Function; STEM Engagement