

Reading, writing and the Moomins

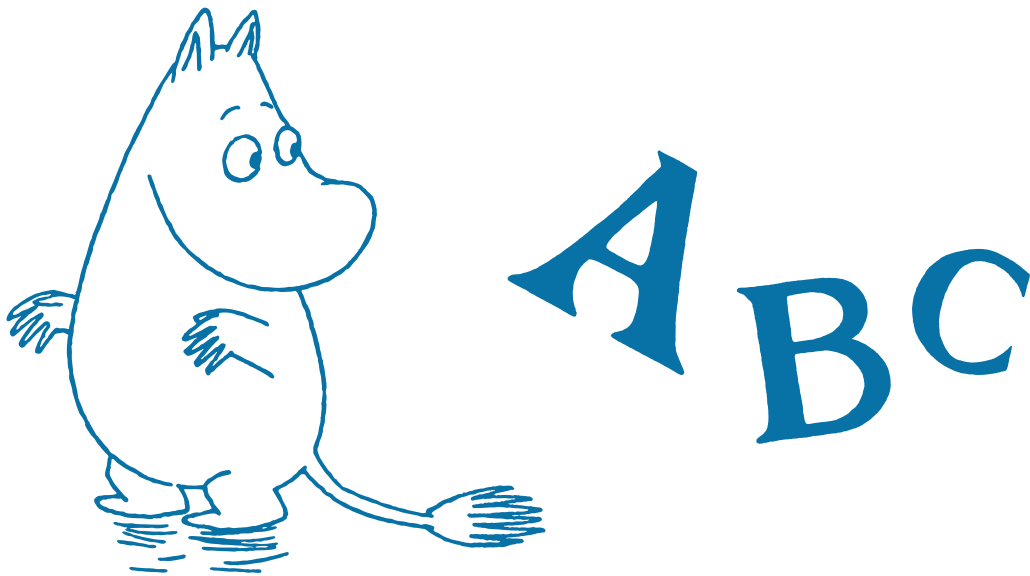
Glad you're here! Join us on a small journey among letters, pictures, stories, and emotions.

Each poster in this exhibition has its own letter, and each letter is associated with an emotion. The stories are all written by Tove Jansson and can be found in the Moomin books.

On the posters, you can see places and characters from Moominvalley. When you look at the pictures and listen to the stories, you may imagine how the characters feel.

In the following exercises, you get to talk about your feelings, play games, and complete exercises.

You can read all the stories and do all the tasks or select only some of the stories and tasks - it is up to you.



Enjoy the journey!

#MoominABC



But inside a Fillyjonk was sitting, listening to the ticking of her clock and the passing of time. Now and then she went over to the window and looked out in the fair June night, and every time she moved there was a little tinkle from the jingle bell she carried on the tassel of her cap. This used to cheer up the Fillyjonk (that was why she had sewn it on), but tonight it only made her sadder. She sighed and wandered around, sat down and got up again.

She had laid the table with three plates and glasses and a bowl of flowers, and on her stove was a pancake grown coal-black from waiting.

The Fillyjonk looked at her clock, and at the garlands over the door, and at herself in the glass on the wall - and then she buried her head in her arms on the table, and began to cry. Her cap slipped forward with a single melancholy, jingling plunk, and her tears rolled slowly down onto her empty plate.

Moominsummer Madness, 1954

Discuss

What is Fillyjonk feeling?
How do you feel when you are sad?
Do you feel it in your body somehow?
What makes children sad?
What makes adults sad?
How would you like to be comforted when you are feeling sad? How can you comfort Fillyjonk?

A sad game

First, choose a few comforters (2-4 if you are a group, 1-2 if you are a family). Think about what sadness feels like. Does it affect your posture or how you move? Walk around the room as a sad person would.

When an adult claps their hands, those who have been given the task of comforting others will start doing so, one person at a time. When everyone has been comforted, new comforters can be chosen. You can play the game how many times you'd like.



“I think”, said the whomper, “I rather think I’m a whomper who has looked and searched for his home for ten years. And now this whomper gets a sudden feeling that his home is somewhere quite near.”

He sniffed for the right direction and set off. While he walked he thought a bit about mud snakes and live fungi that came crawling after one – until they were there and started to grow in the moss.

Those things could swallow up a baby brother in a jiffy, he thought sadly. Perhaps they’ve even done it already. They’re everywhere. I fear the worst. But there is hope still, a relief expedition might save him. He started to run.

Poor baby brother, the whomper thought. So small, and so silly. If the mud snakes have got him I’ll have no baby brother any more, and then I’ll be the youngest. He sobbed and ran, his hair was damp from fright, he came darting over the yard, past the woodshed, up the front steps, calling at the top of his voice: “Mummy! Daddy! Baby brother’s been eaten up!”

The invisible child in Tales from Moominvalley, 1962

Discuss

What happens in the text?

What is Whomper feeling?

Have you ever been worried or anxious about something? Where do you feel it in your body?

Find your peace

When you are worried or nervous, it may be good to find ways to calm down. In this exercise, you get to try two methods of calming down.

1. Put both of your hands on your stomach. Take a long and deep breath, filling your stomach with air. Feel your stomach grow under your hands. Exhale slowly, blowing air out of your stomach. Repeat three times.
2. Sit on the floor with your feet in front of you. Bend your knees and let them fall to the sides so that the soles of your feet touch each other. Rub your ankles and feet with your hands.

You can also tell someone about what you are worried about. What are you going to do next time you feel worried or anxious?



I could see from Hodgkins's ears that he was secretly excited. At least he halted beside a hazel thicket, turned and gave us a grave look.

"Is your surprise in there?" the Muddler whispered respectfully. Hodgkins nodded. We crawled through the hazel bushes and emerged in a clearing. In the middle of it stood a boat, no, a ship!

It was squat and strong, like Hodgkins himself; it looked just as secure and trustworthy. I knew nothing about ships, but I experienced at once a strong feeling of the concept of a ship, so to speak. My adventurous heart started racing and I scented a new kind of freedom.

The Memoirs of Moominpappa, 1969

Discuss

Adventure can arise from blowing soap bubbles on your way to the store or getting lost between the library shelves. Sometimes, your adventures are big, like traveling on a hot air balloon, sometimes small.

Tell us about an adventure you have had.

What adventure would you like to go on with a friend?

Be my mirror!

Divide into pairs and stand facing each other. Choose which one of you will be mirroring the other one.

The mirror tries to mimic their pairs' facial expressions.

The game may make you giggle, but try your best to focus and mirror each other. You can use your arms and legs but try not to walk around too much.

Switch roles after about 30 seconds. An adult can keep track of the time.

Do this as many times as you want to!



One evening the western sky was on fire with the most beautiful sunset she had ever seen. It was a tumult of red, orange, pink and yellow flames, filling the clouds above the dark and stormy sea with smouldering colours. The wind was blowing from the south-west towards the island from the sharp, coal-black line of the horizon.

Moominmamma was standing on the table painting apples on the top of a tree with red-lead paint. "If only I had these colours to paint with outside," she thought. "What lovely apples and roses I should have!"

As she gazed at the sky, the evening light crept up the wall, lighting up the flowers in her garden. They seemed to be alive and shining. The garden opened out, and the gravel path with its curious perspective suddenly seemed quite right and to lead straight to the veranda. Moominmamma put her paws round the trunk of the tree; it was warm with sunshine and she felt that the lilac was in bloom.

Like a flash of lightning a shadow passed across the wall. Something black had flown past the window. An enormous black bird was circling round and round the lighthouse, past one window after another, west, south, east, north... like a fury, beating its wings relentlessly.

"We're surrounded!" Moominmamma thought in confusion. "It's a magic circle. I'm scared. I want to go home and leave this terrible, deserted island and the cruel sea..." She flung her arms round her apple tree and shut her eyes. The bark felt rough and warm, and the sound of the sea disappeared. Moominmamma was right inside her garden.

Moominpappa at Sea, 1965

Think

Think quietly to yourself about the following question: What do I long for?

Pearl wishes

Take a small piece of paper. Crumble the piece of paper into a ball - look, now you have a pearl! With this pearl, you can wish for what you are longing for.

Hold the pearl in your hand, close your eyes, and think about what you are longing for. Make your wish by putting the pearl into the wish jar.



“If you’re sore, you’re sore,” observed Little My, peeling her potatoes with her teeth. “You have to be angry sometimes. Every little creep has a right to be angry. But Pappa’s angry in the wrong way. He’s not letting it out, just shutting it up inside him.”

“My dear child,” said Moominmamma,

“Pappa knows what he’s doing.”

“I don’t think he does,” said Little My simply.

“He doesn’t know at all. Do you know?”

“Not really,” Moominmamma had to admit.

Moominpappa at Sea, 1965

Discuss

How does it feel to be angry? Where in the body do you feel anger? How do you feel when someone else is angry?

What makes you un-angry when you have been angry?

The Angry Game

Think of something that has made you angry in the past. Tell each other about that time.

Pretend that you are angry at the same thing again.

Now the Angry Game begins! Try being angry in the following ways:

Stomp angrily on the floor.

Everybody stomps on the floor for 10 seconds. How did it feel? Discuss it with each other.

Be angry quietly for yourself.

Everyone is angry and quiet for 10 seconds. How did it feel? Discuss.

Tell the others that you are angry and why. Divide into smaller groups or pairs and tell each other about your anger and why you feel this way. If you are a family, do it all together. How did it feel? Discuss.



After a while a few notes were heard, and then some trills and twiddles. All the small creatures stopped chattering and went down to the clearing to listen. "That sounds modern," they said. "You can dance to that."

"Oh, Mamma!" exclaimed one very small creature, pointing at Moomintroll's medal. "There's a general!" Whereupon they all gathered round the travellers with cries of astonishment and admiration.

"How nice and fluffy you are!" they said to the Snork Maiden. And the tree-spirits looked at themselves in the looking-glass with rubies on the back, and the water-spooks put their wet autographs in the Snork's exercise book.

Then there were sounds from behind the bush, and out came Snufkin and the grass-hopper playing with all their might. There was a dreadful muddle at first while they all tried to sort each other out, but at last everybody found the person he wanted to dance with, and they started off.

The Snork Maiden taught Moomintroll how to dance the samba (which isn't at all easy if you have very short legs). The Snork danced with an elderly and respectable inhabitant of the marshes, who had seaweed in her hair, and Sniff twirled round with the smallest of the small creatures. Even the midges danced, and every possible kind of creeping thing came out of the forest to have a look.

From Comet in Moominland, 1946

Discuss

How do you feel after hearing the story? How do you think the characters in the story feel? Where in the body can you feel happiness? How do you notice if someone else is happy (someone in your family, a friend, or an animal, for example)?

The imaginary ball

Stand together in a circle. If you are two, stand opposite to each other. The youngest in the group holds an imaginary ball in their hands and shows it to the others. They then share something that makes them happy and tosses the ball to someone else. The person who receives the ball repeats what makes the previous ball tosser happy, shares something that makes them happy, and tosses the ball to the next person.

If you want, you can repeat the game several times so that everyone gets to share more than one thing they are happy about.

You can also make the game into a memory game by repeating everyone's reasons to be happy when you catch the ball.

Psst! The imaginary ball may change in size during the game.

F

“Many happy returns of the day!” said Moominmamma, curtsying.

The Fisherman bowed his head with great solemnity. “You’re the first person who’s ever remembered my birthday,” he said.

“I feel very honoured.”

“We’re having a little party for you at home,” Moominmamma went on.

“In the lighthouse?” asked the fisherman, screwing up his face. “I’m not coming there!”

“Now listen to me,” said Moominmamma quietly. “There’s no need for you to look at the lighthouse at all. Just shut your eyes tight and give me your hand. My, run and put the coffee on and light the candles, please, dear.”

The Fisherman shut his eyes and held out his hand. Moominmamma took it and led him very carefully through the heather and up to the lighthouse-rock.

“Now you must take a big step,” she said.

“Yes I know,” answered the fisherman.

When the door creaked, he stopped and wouldn’t go on.

“There’s cake, and we’ve decorated the room,” said Moominmamma. “And there are presents, too.”

She got him over the threshold and they started to climb the stairs. The wind moaned round the walls outside and now and then one of the windows rattled. Moominmamma could feel the fisherman’s hand trembling. “There’s nothing to be afraid of,” she said. “It’s not as bad as it sounds. We shall soon be there.”

*She opened the door of the room and said:
“Now you can open your eyes!”*

From Moominpappa at Sea, 1965

Discuss

How does the Fisherman feel? How do you feel when you are scared? Do you feel it in your body somehow? What can you do to feel better when you are afraid of something? Who can you talk to about being scared?

The Scary Choir

What does a scary sound sound like?

Make a scary sound by using your voice, your body, or both.

Everyone gets to try making their sounds for a while.

Then everybody shares their sound, one at a time. When one person is sharing their sound, the others listen and try to mimic the sound.

Was it a nice Scary Choir?



“Hullo!” shouted Snufkin from the top. “Aren’t you coming up soon? It’s getting cold and the dew is beginning to fall.”

“In a minute,” Sniff shouted back. “There are such a lot left...” he trailed off, for he had just seen two huge red garnets shining like eyes, right at the dark end of the cleft.

Suddenly, to his horror, he realized that they were eyes – eyes that blinked and moved and came nearer, followed by a scaly body that rasped coldly on the stones.

Sniff gave one frantic squeak and ran like mad to the place where he had come down. Shaking all over he began to clamber up, his paws damp with fear, while below him sounded a soft threatening hiss.

“What’s happened?” called Moomintroll, who could hear him coming. “What’s the hurry?” Sniff didn’t answer – he just climbed. And when they pulled him over the edge at last he collapsed exhausted in a heap.

Moomintroll and Snufkin leaned over the edge of the cleft and looked down. What they saw was enough to frighten anybody. It was a giant lizard crouching over a pile of shining garnets, like a hideous dragon guarding its beautiful treasure.

“Well, strike me pink!” exclaimed Moomintroll. Sniff was sobbing on the ground. “It’s all over now,” said Snufkin. “Don’t cry anymore, Sniff.” “The garnets,” Sniff moaned. “I didn’t get a single one.”

From Comet in Moominland, 1946

Discuss

Have you ever experienced something being fun at first, and then suddenly everything has gone wrong? Have you not gotten what you wanted? How did that make you feel?

Sniff was disappointed when he didn’t get a single garnet. Do you think he got into a better mood later on? What could make him in a better mood?

When you are disappointed, what makes you in a better mood?

A disappointed balloon

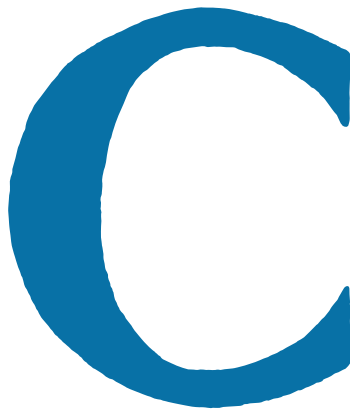
What does your face and body look like when you are disappointed, don’t get what you want, or when something goes very wrong? Everyone shows with their face, body and movements what it can look like when you feel disappointed. Discuss and look at each other. You can stand still or walk around a little.

What does your face and body look like when you are in a better mood? Everyone uses their face, body and movements to show what that looks like. Look at each other and discuss.

Stand in a circle and take each other’s hands. Pretend that you form a big balloon together. Go towards the middle of the circle while showing with your faces and bodies that you are disappointed. The balloon is now empty of air, small, and fragile.

Now take a few steps back again, making the balloon bigger, (hold each other’s hands so that the balloon doesn’t burst!) and show with your faces and bodies that you are in a better mood. Make the balloon as big as possible without letting go of each other’s hands and pulling too hard.

Release air from the balloon and inflate it again as many times as you want and remember: we cannot always get what we want, but it’s ok to feel the way we feel.



*“What song is that?” asked Moomintroll.
“It’s a song of myself,” someone answered from
the pit. “A song of Too-ticky who built a snow
lantern, but the refrain is about wholly other
things.” “I see,” Moomintroll said and seated
himself in the snow.*

*“No, you don’t,” replied Too-ticky genially and
rose up enough to show her red and white swea-
ter. “Because the refrain is about the things one
can’t understand. I’m thinking about the aurora
borealis.*

*You can’t tell if it really does exist or if it just
looks like existing. All things are so very un-
certain, and that’s exactly what makes me feel
reassured.”*

Moominland Midwinter, 1957

Discuss

How do you think Too-ticky is feeling?
What makes you feel good?
Where do you feel good?
Discuss the places where you feel good.
Outside or inside? When it’s hot or cold?
When you are alone or together with some-
one? When it’s peaceful and quiet or when a
lot is going on around you?

The Feel Good Place

Draw a place where you feel good. You can
show your drawing to the others and tell
them about the place you have drawn.