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Celia and Nonna
by Victoria Lane and Kayleen West

Showcase Note:

Celia and Nonna is a gentle story about the special bond between grandparents and children – and what happens when our lives change.

ISBN: 9781925000603 (hardback) 9781925000610 (paperback)	
Publication date: September 2014	
Extent: 32 page	
Format: Portrait picture book 255 x 265 mm	
Price: AUD $24.95 HC AUD $14.95 PB	
Category: Grandparents; family; love; ageing; change	
Age guide: 4+	
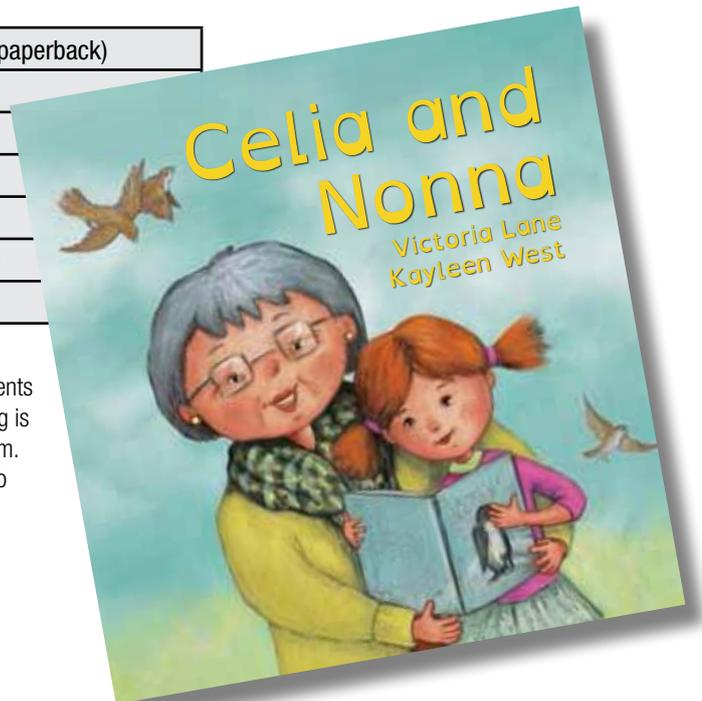
Celia and Nonna is a significant and heart-warming picture book about the special bond between children and grandparents – and what happens when life changes. Grandparents ageing is a universal experience, yet it is rarely told in picture book form. In this story, young Celia finds a delightful and positive way to navigate this confusing time.

Synopsis

Celia and Nonna is one of those rare books that tackles a difficult topic of grandparents ageing. It approaches it with such a gentle, positive outlook that both children and adults will enjoy it. The story invites kids to think about their grandparents' ageing and may inspire them to simple activities such as drawing a picture for their grandma or granddad as a gift.

The story begins with all the fun activities that Celia enjoys when she gets to sleep over at her grandmother's house. They cook and bake cupcakes together. Celia has her own special cupboard full of activities. At bedtime, she gets not just one or two stories read to her but seven, eight or nine!

Then things start to change. Celia notices that her grandma is starting to forget things. The forgetfulness escalates until it becomes clear that grandma will need someone to help look after her. This means moving out of her own home.

The story does not name the illness that affects the grandma. It could be dementia, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's but the illness is not the focus of the book. The single biggest consequence of it is that the granddaughter, Celia, can no longer sleep over at her grandma's house.

As Celia observes that her beloved grandma is starting to forget things, this realisation can be the starting point for discussion about what happens to us as we get older. Our bodies ache, sometimes our memory fails. These discussions can help children develop empathy for family members who may be at a similar stage of life (grandparents, aunts and uncles) and older members of our community.

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Grandma, called Nonna throughout the story (the Italian word for Grandma) enters a nursing home. It is simply described as a "new home". In contrast to the old home with its own kitchen, furniture and memories, Nonna is now in a plain and nearly empty room. Celia is at a loss for what to do. Like Nonna, she has none of the comforts of the old home around her.

Then, Celia picks up a pencil and starts to draw. And that's when the second half of takes on a magical life of its own, as Celia draws delightful, colourful pictures that help to decorate Nonna's new room. The pictures also serve another purpose; to show favourite places in Nonna's old home, like the garden and the kitchen. There, she is surround her with happy memories. At the end of the book, both Celia and Nonna have settled in to the new home and made it their own, together.

About the author

Victoria writes picture books and chapter books and lives in Melbourne, Australia, with her husband, two daughters, a cat and some fish.

Long before Victoria started writing for children, she wrote for grown-ups. She still does both. Her other self is Victoria Thieberger, an accomplished journalist. She has lived and worked in New York, London, Sydney and Melbourne.

Her career as a correspondent and editor spans more than 25 years, including seven years in New York where she won two journalism awards and covered fun stuff like economics. Her articles have been published in the world's leading media including *The New York Times, The Washington Post* and *The Guardian.*

www.victorialanebooks.com

About the illustrator

Kayleen pursued her childhood dream to write and illustrate children's books in late 2009 publishing two picture books in 2013, *Adoptive Father* and *Without Me?* She has illustrated two Australian titles for Australian publishers in 2014, *Better Than A Superhero* and *Celia and Nonna.*

Kayleen enjoys blogging and leading workshops with children and adults. She also enjoys surface design and other freelance illustration work.

She is a busy mum who draws and writes every day. She has a black shadow shaped like a poodle that barely leaves her side and is regularly seen mending her super-mum cape, as it is well used.

www.kayleenwest.com.au

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Study Notes for Teachers

Discussion points and themes:

Ageing, dementia, how illness can change family relationships, and how we cope with change are all themes of *Celia and Nonna.*

The book is ideal for older picture book readers, or for younger readers to enjoy the story at a simpler level. The book could be used as an educational resource for teachers, librarians, parents and counsellors, as well as staff in aged care facilities.

The book uses a gentle story with a positive outlook to address ageing and illness in an older relative.

Books on this topic are relatively rare, and books set against the backdrop of a nursing home are even more unusual. But as our population ages, visiting elderly relatives has become increasingly common and it is important for children to feel welcome and involved in those visits. This story aims to make the transition to a nursing home a little bit easier for families, and by encouraging kids to come and visit, contribute to the welfare of the older relative.

Classroom discussion and activities

"The Australian Curriculum: English (also) helps students to engage imaginatively and critically with literature to expand the scope of their experience."

Post visit / virtual visit English Activities

Teachers might divide their class into groups, with the following questions shared between the groups, then have the group leader report back to the class:

- The illustration on the front cover gives a clue about what happens in *Celia and Nonna.* What do you think the book will be about?

- Look at the illustrations in the book. Choose one and write down how the picture makes you feel.

- What does Celia like about going to Nonna's house?

- Are there special activities that you like to do with an older relative?

- What does Nonna do that makes Celia feel special?

- What does Celia notice changing at Nonna's house?

- What are some of the things that Nonna forgets?

- If Nonna is becoming forgetful, is it safe for her to keep living alone?

- Where does Nonna have to move to?

- Why can't Celia stay for a sleepover in the new home?

- What is different about Nonna's new room compared with her old home?

- Does Celia have her old activities to enjoy?

- What does Celia decide to do instead?

- Why do you think Celia starts to draw pictures of Nonna's old house?

- Where does Nonna put the pictures?

- Do you think Nonna likes the pictures? How can you tell?

- How do you think Celia and Nonna feel at the end of the story?

- Discuss what feelings children have when they see a sick or elderly relative.

Students might:

- Develop storylines or mind maps for their own stories

- Decide on the main character for their story

- Work out what problem the character will face

- Plan some illustrations for their story

- Work with a friend to re-read the story and making editing changes to help make the story clearer

- Use software, write the story in a word processing program and select or edit images to go with the text

- Present the story to others in the group using a range of communication forms (reading, acting out, printing out the finished story)

- Do a drawing for an older relative – a grandmother or grandfather.

- Do a drawing of an older relative, a grandparent, aunt or uncle. Are they looking happy or sad?

- The next time you see an older relative or go for a visit, ask them how they are feeling.

LANGUAGE

Understand that English is one of many languages spoken in Australia and that different languages may be spoken by family, classmates and community (ACELA1426)

Some unfamiliar words in *Celia and Nonna.*

First of all, the title: What is a nonna? Do you have a gran, a grandma or a nan? Perhaps a Yiayia or an Abuela? Well, nonna is the Italian word for grandma. By calling the grandma character Nonna throughout the story, the book hints at the multicultural nature of society in modern Australia, where foreign words creep into our language and no one bats an eyelid.

What are felts? There are two main meanings. "Felts" can be a shorthand reference to the picture boards with felt pieces, where kids can create their own scenes (and therefore foreshadow Celia's creativity later in the story). Or, if you are in New Zealand, "felts" can mean felt-tip pens or Textas. Either way, they hint at the artistic interests of the little girl.

What are borlotti beans? These are an Italian bean, usually dried or tinned, that are a key ingredient in many delicious Italian soups.

What does "Bella" mean? Bella is the Italian word for beautiful or lovely. It also has significance in the story since many elderly people revert to their mother tongue unconsciously when dementia sets in. Or, Nonna may have a history of speaking Italian with her family; we aren't told. But we understand what she means. The use of the word shows us that different languages (Italian) may be spoken by family members.

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The Australian Curriculum - English Scope and Sequence

The English curriculum is built around the three interrelated strands of Language, Literature and Literacy.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Suggested Activities
Literature: Sub Strand - Literature and context - How texts reflect the context of culture and situation in which they are created						
Discuss how authors create characters using language and images	Discuss how depictions of characters in print, sound and images reflect the contexts in which they were created	Discuss texts in which characters, events and settings are portrayed in different ways, and speculate on the authors' reasons		Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts	Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social & cultural contexts	During a visit/virtual visit to your school, Victoria Lane might discuss her inspiration for *Celia and Nonna*. Students might ask: -Why Victoria wrote this story -Why Nonna needs to move to a new home -Why Celia misses Nonna's old home -Why the artist chose to depict the characters the way she has Students might share their experiences of a sick or ageing relative.
Literature: Sub Strand - Responding to literature - Personal responses to the ideas, characters and viewpoints in texts						
Discuss characters and events in a range of literary texts and share personal responses to these texts, making connections with students' own experiences	Compare opinions about characters, events and settings in and between texts	Draw connections between personal experiences and the worlds of texts, and share responses with others	Discuss literary experiences with others, sharing responses and expressing a point of view	Identify and explain how choices in language, for example modality, emphasis, repetition and metaphor, influence personal response to different texts	Analyse and evaluate similarities and differences in texts on similar topics, themes or plots	After a visit/virtual visit, students might: - discuss their opinion of the characters of *Celia and Nonna* - make connections with what happens in the story to their own experience - find another story about a Nanna, Nan or Grandma - discuss the choice of language and special words in the story (see separate section below)
Literature: Sub Strand – Features of literary texts - The key features of literary texts and how they work to construct a literary work, such as plot, setting, characterisation, mood and theme						
Discuss features of plot, character and setting in different types of literature and explore some features of characters in different texts	Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways	Discuss how language is used to describe the settings in texts, and explore how the settings shape the events and influence the mood of the narrative	Discuss how authors and illustrators make stories exciting, moving and absorbing and hold readers' interest by using various techniques, for example character development and plot tension	Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations & responses	Identify, describe, and discuss similarities and differences between texts, including those by the same author or illustrator, and evaluate characteristics that define an author's individual style	Students might: - discuss how the setting changes from Nonna's old home to the new room. What are some of the differences described in the story and shown in the pictures? - discuss how the mood changes from old home to the new home. How is this conveyed? - Is the story told from Celia's point of view or Nonna's? How might the story change if the point of view shifted?
Literature – Creating Literature – Experimentation and adaptation Creating a variety of texts, including multimodal texts, adapting ideas and devices from literary texts						
		Create texts that adapt language features and patterns encountered in literary texts, for example characterisation ….	Create literary texts by developing storylines, characters and settings	Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors	Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, e.g. using imagery, sentence variation…	Following a visit or virtual visit by the author or illustrator, students might use *Celia and Nonna* as inspiration to: - Draw a picture for their own relative - plan and create their own story, with characters, plot and setting.
Literacy: Sub Strand - Interacting with others - Listening and speaking interactions						
Engage in conversations and discussions, using active listening behaviours showing interest, and contributing ideas, information and questions	Listen for specific purposes and information, including instructions, and extend students' own and others' ideas in discussions	Listen to and contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas and negotiate in collaborative situations	Interpret ideas and information in spoken texts and listen for key points in order to carry out tasks and use information to share and extend ideas and information	Clarify understanding of content as it unfolds in formal and informal situations, connecting ideas to students' own experiences and present and justify a point of view	Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions	Before a visit or virtual visit to the school by the author or illustrator, students might: - read *Celia and Nonna* - think about some questions to ask the author or illustrator - participate in a class discussion about the story to assist with their understanding of the themes
Literacy: Sub Strand- Interpreting, analysing, evaluating – Analysing and evaluating texts						
					Analyse strategies authors use to influence readers	Students might list strategies which the author and the illustrator have used in *Celia and Nonna* to influence our feelings about the main characters. .
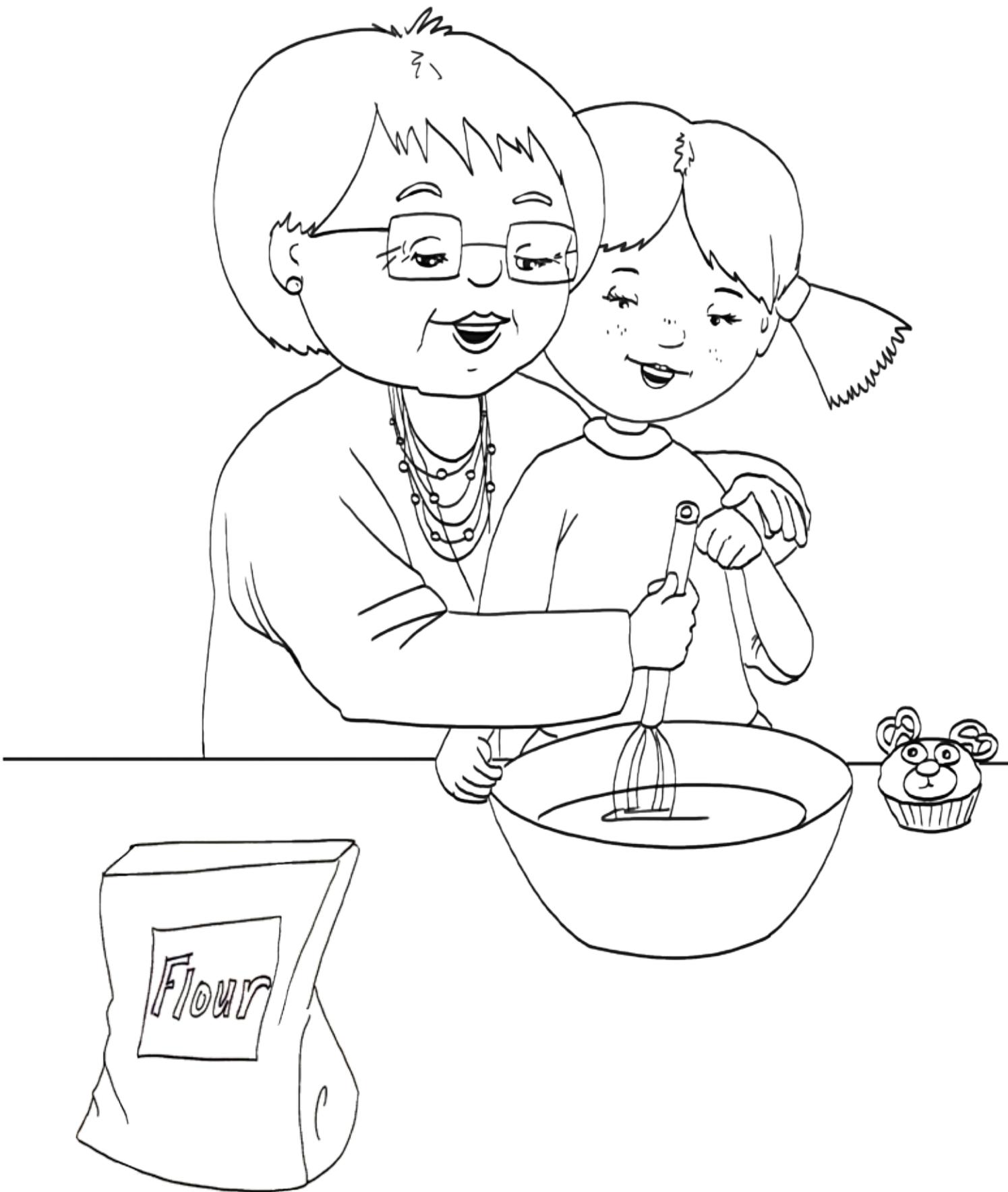
What is Celia drawing?
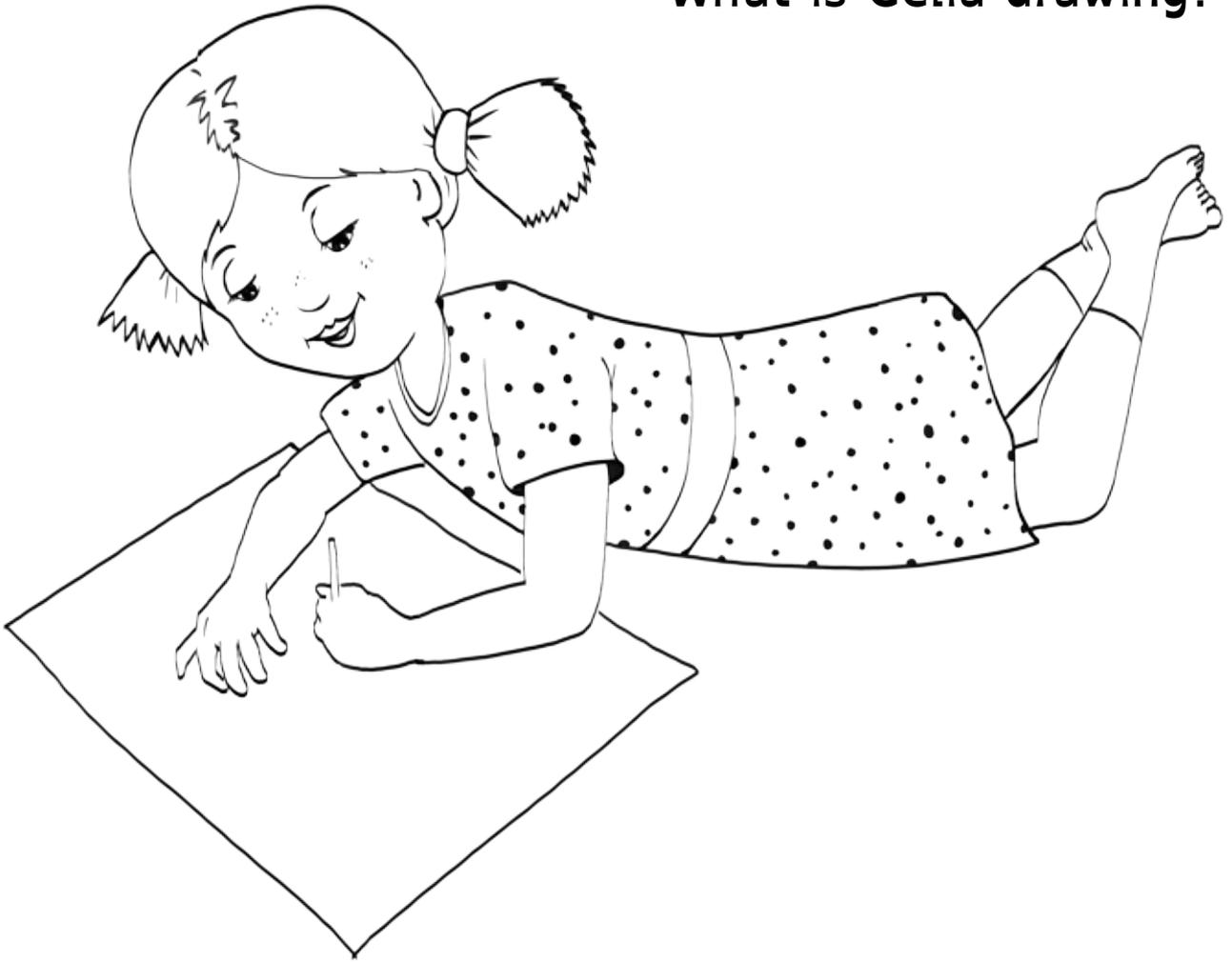
**Draw for someone special.
Give it to them next time you see them.**