The Pebble Song

A Great River Story

Ages 3–5

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The Great River whispered past the sandy shore. Beside it, Gecko was polishing three little pebbles. He rubbed each one with a leaf until it felt smooth beneath his fingertips. Aro, the macaw, landed beside him and lifted her beak. She had a morning song. "River, hello!"

Aro left a little space after her words. The river filled it with a soft swish. Gecko's toes curled into the sand. He wanted to put something into that space, too.



"I want to make a song with you! My pebbles can answer," said Gecko.

"I brought two wooden trays. I'll put my three pebbles in this one. The other can stay empty. Here's my little stick, and two number signs. Aro, will you listen?"

"Tap, tap, tap. A little gap."

Aro settled on a low branch to listen. That was the song Gecko wanted: three little taps, with room for his friend's hello.



First, Gecko lifted the tray with all three pebbles and gave it a shake. The pebbles bumped together. They bumped the wood. They bumped together again. His neat little song had turned into a pebble tumble! Aro opened her beak, then waited. There was nowhere for her hello to land.

"Oh. That's one big rattle. Where did my little taps go?" said Gecko.

"I'm still here. We can try again," Aro answered.



Gecko set the tray down. This time he spread the pebbles apart and tapped each one with his stick. Each pebble made its own sound. But he hurried straight into the next three taps, and the next. Aro tried to begin. Her hello was squeezed between the taps.

"Tap, tap, tap. A little gap." "I said the gap. But I didn't make one! My stick is already on its way back down!" Gecko said.



"Wait. I want to hear your song, too," said Gecko.

Gecko laid the stick across his knees and listened. Aro took a breath. "River, hello!"

This time Gecko heard every word. After the hello came that lovely little space again. Nothing was missing. The space was waiting for his answer. Gecko's eyes moved from the stick to the empty tray.



"One. Two. Three. That's three pebbles in this tray. I'll put the three sign beside it. This other tray has no pebbles at all. I'll put the zero sign here, and set the trays side by side," said Gecko.

"This tray says three taps. This one says no taps. That's where I can listen!"

"You kept a place for my hello! That empty tray has a job after all," Aro answered.



Gecko lifted his stick. He tapped the first pebble, the second, and the third. Slowly. Three clear notes, each with a little room around it. Then he turned toward the zero tray and rested his stick. He kept it still. Aro leaned forward.

"River, hello!"

Her whole hello fitted into the quiet. Gecko heard the last bright sound all the way to the end. Now his pebbles and Aro's voice belonged to the same song.



"Tap, tap, tap. A little gap," said Gecko. "River, hello!" Aro answered.

They played it again, and once more. Gecko waited for Aro. Aro waited for Gecko. Between their sounds, the river whispered along. When the song was finished, they carried both trays home together: the tray with three pebbles, and the empty tray that had made room for a friend. "I'm keeping the quiet part," Gecko said.

When playing together gets muddled, stop for a moment and listen. A little space can make room for both of you.



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Gecko wants to make a song with Aro. Three pebbles can make three little taps. But what can an empty tray do?

"When playing together gets muddled, stop for a moment and listen. A little space can make room for both of you." — Ori

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