

P E N N Y L E A R N I N G L I T E R A T U R E

Penny's Bluebird Climb

A story about thinking levels, climbing from red to blue

Book Twelve • The Up My Thinking Tree Song

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Penny sat at her desk with her recess essay.
The page was no longer blank, which helped.
Still, something felt small. Her reasons were
true, yet they sat side by side like stones.
Penny wanted her thinking to grow. She
tapped her pencil and sighed. Champ rested
his chin on her shoe.

Mrs. Ray walked by and saw Penny's frown. She pulled a chair close. "Your essay has a good start," she said. "Now we can help your thinking climb. Good writers do not stay on one branch. They move up, level by level."

On paper, Mrs. Ray drew a tree. Its branches were red, orange, yellow, and green. Above them, a bluebird perched in the air. “These are thinking levels,” she said. “Each color is a step. We climb with care.”

Red is foundational. “I do what I am shown,” Mrs. Ray said. Penny looked at her first sentence: Recess gives students a break. “That follows the example,” Penny said. “That is red.”

Orange is emergent. “I am trying on my own,” Penny said. She wrote: I feel calmer after recess. Mrs. Ray nodded. “That is your own voice. Keep climbing.”

Yellow is visible. “My connection can be seen,” Penny said. She drew an arrow from recess to class. When we run outside, my brain is ready for math. “Now readers can see how one thing helps another,” Mrs. Ray said.

Green is independent. “I infer independently,” Penny said. She thought hard. Recess is where students practice sharing, taking turns, and solving small problems. Those skills help in every classroom. “I figured that out myself,” Penny said.

Mrs. Ray pointed to the bluebird. “Blue is a Bluebird Moment,” she said. “It is reflective thinking. Your idea flies free and grows bigger than just you. It becomes a thought for everyone.”

Penny wondered how recess matters to everyone. She looked out the window. Students played, laughed, and helped each other. She wrote: Recess helps all students grow as people, not only as learners. It teaches fairness and friendship. That matters in school and everywhere. Her thought lifted like wings.

Mrs. Ray sang the song, and Penny joined in:
Red, orange, yellow, green, Climbing up my
thinking tree! Step by step, my thinking
grows, Higher, stronger, up it goes! Red,
orange, yellow, green, Then BLUE flies free!

Penny read her essay again. She marked the levels in the margin. Red gave her a strong base. Orange held her own feeling. Yellow showed a clear connection. Green shared her inference. Blue asked what her idea could mean for everyone.

She added one more sentence to her essay:
Recess is not a pause from learning. It is part
of how students learn to live together. Mrs.
Ray smiled. Champ wagged his tail. Penny
felt her thinking stand tall, branch by branch
and wing by wing.

Your thinking can climb too. Start with what you know. Add what you feel. Show what connects. Infer what you notice. Then let one idea fly for everyone. Your next bright thought is already lifting its wings.