Under the Buttonwood Tree

OFFICIAL TEACHER'S GUIDE

A classroom-ready read-aloud and activity guide for ages 4-6

Be kind.
Help others. Save with care.

Created to accompany the children's book by Richard K. Pettibone

EDUCATOR DOWNLOAD | 2026 REVIEW EDITION

How to Use This Guide

Use this guide to lead one warm, practical conversation about kindness, helpful work, earning, saving, patience, and growing dreams. Keep the book central. Choose only the questions and activities that fit your group.

AGES	TIME	FORMAT	THEMES
4-6	25-35 minutes	Read aloud + talk + activity	Kindness, earning, saving, patience

Lesson flow

1. **Connect** — Look closely at the cover and make one prediction.
2. **Read** — Read with warmth. Pause only at selected moments.
3. **Discuss** — Choose two or three questions.
4. **Create** — Complete one activity: My First Coin.
5. **Close** — Repeat the book's final message together.

Materials

- A copy of Under the Buttonwood Tree
- My First Coin activity page
- Crayons, pencils, or markers
- Optional: paper coin or token
- No real money is required.

Core purpose: Help children see that one kind choice, one helpful action, and one saved coin can become the beginning of something meaningful.

Story, Characters, and Learning Goals

Book summary: Leo and Emma discover a shiny coin beneath the magical Buttonwood Tree. The Tree helps them connect kindness with helpful work, earning, saving little by little, patience, and dreams that grow. As they practice these lessons, they return to the Tree with new understanding.

The story's path:
Discover - Listen - Help - Earn - Save - Practice - Return - Share

LEO

Leo is eager to learn, help others, and save with care as he works toward his dreams.

EMMA

Emma is eager to learn, help others, and save with care as she works toward her dreams.

BUTTONWOOD TREE

A gentle magical tree with a kind face and a warm voice. The Tree encourages thoughtful choices.

Children will be able to...

KINDNESS	Identify one kind choice.
HELPING & EARNING	Explain that useful work can connect to earning.
SAVING	Describe saving as keeping something for a future purpose.
PATIENCE	Recognize that little-by-little growth takes time.
GOAL SETTING	Name or draw one meaningful goal.
ORAL LANGUAGE	Respond through speaking, pointing, drawing, movement, or acting.

Teaching boundary: This is an introductory lesson about choices, habits, and goals. It is not a lesson about family income, wealth, investing, or comparing money.

Read-Aloud Guide: Discovering the Coin

Before reading: Ask, "What do you notice first on the cover? What might happen beneath this Tree?" Keep the opening brief and curious.

STOP 1

After the children find the coin:
- What did Leo and Emma notice?
- How do their faces show curiosity?
- What might they wonder about the coin?

STOP 2

After the Tree introduces itself:
- How do Leo and Emma react?
- What makes the Tree seem gentle and wise?
- What question would you ask the Tree?

Find the Squirrel: Invite children to look carefully for the small squirrel as each page is shared. Keep it light so the search does not interrupt the story.

Teacher pacing note: Let children wonder. Avoid turning every page into a question. Two strong pauses are enough for the first reading.

Read-Aloud Guide: Helping, Earning, and Saving

STOP 3

After the Tree explains helping:
- What does the Tree say about helping?
- What kind action could Leo or Emma do?
- How can helping be kind?

STOP 4

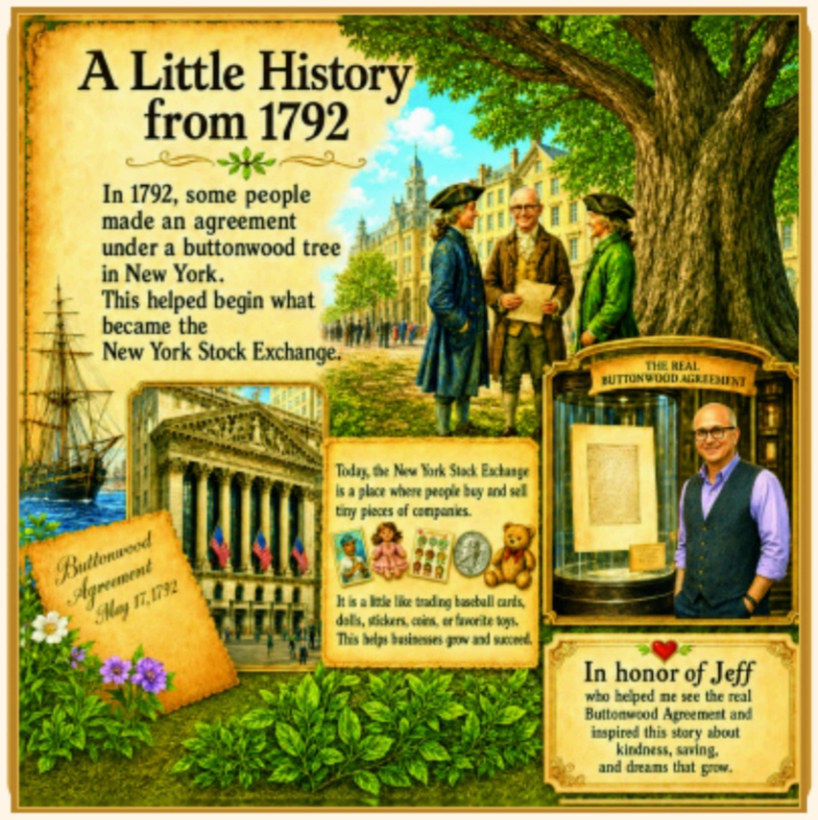
After the first coin is saved:
- What did Leo and Emma do with their coin?
- Why might saving take patience?
- How could they keep their coin safe and remember its purpose?

Four words to reinforce

HELP	EARN	SAVE	PATIENCE
Do something kind for someone.	Receive something for work.	Keep something for later.	Wait calmly and keep trying.

Important practice: Never ask children how much money their family has or saves. Do not require real coins. A paper coin, classroom token, or drawn coin is enough.

Read-Aloud Guide: Dreams and Lasting Habits



STOP 5

After Leo and Emma dream:
- What do they imagine?
- Why can saving little by little help a dream grow?
- What is one dream a child could draw?

STOP 6

During the 1792 moment:
- What is an agreement?
- What does the Buttonwood Tree help us remember?
- Why does history matter to this story?

After-reading questions - choose three

1. What part of Leo and Emma's journey stayed in your mind?
2. What did the Buttonwood Tree teach about helping and saving?
3. Why did Leo and Emma save instead of using each coin immediately?
4. What does the Tree mean when it says good things grow?
5. What small good habit could begin today?
6. Where did you notice the squirrel?

Core idea: The message is not "money makes dreams happen." Thoughtful work, saving, kindness, and patience can support growth.

Featured Activity: My First Coin

Activity Overview

Use this activity after reading Under the Buttonwood Tree to help children connect the story to saving with care and working toward a goal. Children will think about one small first step they can take and how that step can grow into something meaningful over time.

Materials

- My First Coin worksheet
- Crayons, pencils, or markers
- Optional real or pretend coin
- Optional jar, envelope, or small container

Teacher Directions

1. Read Under the Buttonwood Tree aloud.
2. Talk briefly about what Leo and Emma learn about saving with care.
3. Give each child the My First Coin worksheet.
4. Invite children to draw or identify their first coin.
5. Ask what they would like to save for.
6. Ask where the coin could be kept safe.
7. Invite children to share their ideas.

Teacher Talking Points

- A coin may be small, but it can be the start of something important.
- Saving begins with one small step.
- A good plan needs care and patience.
- Saving can help us work toward a dream.

Discussion Questions

- What is your first coin?
- What would you like to save for?
- Where will you keep your coin safe?
- Why is it important to take care of something you are saving?
- How can small steps help you reach a goal?

Optional closing: Remind children of the book's message: Be kind. Help others. Save with care.
Download note: The My First Coin worksheet is available on the Under the Buttonwood Tree website.

Vocabulary, Inclusion, and Assessment

Eight useful words

kind — A thoughtful action or word that helps someone feel cared for.

save — To keep something for later.

patience — Waiting calmly while you keep trying. Leo and Emma learn that saving for a dream takes time.

dream — Something hoped for in the future. Dreams can grow little by little.

earn — To receive something for work.

goal — Something you hope to do. Leo and Emma's goal is to save for a bicycle.

habit — Something practiced again and again. One careful choice can become a habit.

agreement — A promise or decision people accept together. 1792 connects the Tree to a historical agreement.

Ways every child can join in

Inclusive participation

- Let children respond by speaking, pointing, drawing, moving, acting, or using a communication device.
- Use simple sentence starters: "Leo learned ___." "Emma can ___." "The Tree taught ___."
- Explain what will happen first, next, and last.
- Offer the coloring pages.
- Use a paper coin or classroom token so no child needs to bring real money.

Quick teacher check

- A child describes one kind action.
- A child names one way to help.
- A child explains saving in simple words.
- A child draws or names one goal.
- A child repeats: Be kind. Help others. Save with care.

Family Connection

Dear Family,

Today we read Under the Buttonwood Tree and talked about what Leo and Emma learn from the magical Tree: helpful work can connect with earning, saving means keeping something for later, and small choices can grow through patience and care.

The purpose is not the amount saved. The purpose is choosing a goal, beginning thoughtfully, and caring for a plan over time.

Conversation starters

- What did Leo and Emma discover?
- What did the Tree teach about helpful work?
- What did Leo and Emma save their coins for?
- Where can we keep a first coin?
- Which lesson would you like to remember?

Two-minute take-home activity

1. Choose a real coin, paper coin, button, or special token.
2. Draw one meaningful goal.
3. Choose a safe place for the coin or token.
4. Repeat: I will care for my plan and add more when I can.

Family mini-plan

OUR GOAL _____

SAFE PLACE _____

NEXT STEP _____

1792 Curiosity Moment and Companion Resources

What is a stock?

Today, the New York Stock Exchange is a place where people buy and sell tiny pieces of companies.

It is a little like trading baseball cards, dolls, stickers, coins, or favorite toys.

This helps businesses grow and succeed.

A little history from 1792

A long time ago, an agreement was made under a buttonwood tree in New York.

Connect the history to the book with one simple idea: People can make thoughtful agreements and choices.

Ask three

- Where did you notice 1792?
- What does an agreement mean?
- Why might the author hide the number in the pictures?

Find the Squirrel Explorer Challenge: A small squirrel is hidden throughout the book. Invite children to look closely during a second reading. After reading, ask: Where did you notice the squirrel? What was it doing? Which one was hardest to find?

Companion Downloads

- My First Coin activity
- Find the Squirrel Explorer Challenge
- Coloring page
- Promise Certificate
- Parent & Family Guide

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