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THE PRINCE AND THE BALD MAN

SUMMARY: The youngest of the three nephews of the Emperor is chosen to become his successor. Standing in his way, however, is a Bald Man who takes his place. To regain his legacy, the young man has to overcome many challenges and free a captive princess, with the help of his magic horse.

ORIGINAL TITLE: HARAP ALB

ORIGIN: ROMANIA

KEYWORDS: BEAR; BALD; COURAGE

GENRE: FAIRY TALE

AGE: 9–10 YEARS

THE PRINCE AND THE BALD MAN

Long, long ago in a faraway place, the empires of two brothers bordered one another. Their lives had passed peacefully until the time to choose a successor had come.

While one had three sons the other unfortunately had no heir. He wrote to his brother asking him to send him one of his nephews so that he could crown him successor.

"We should put your sons to the test," he wrote, "therefore, prepare everything so that we may judge their courage!" The emperor put on the bear's skin, transforming himself into a large and ferocious animal, and waited for the departure of his eldest son who, unaware of everything, had set out on his way to his uncle's empire.

The thick forest had grown dark, and out of the shadows came a frighteningly huge bear with raised front paws ready to attack.

The young man almost fell off his horse, terrified, and galloped away without even turning around for fear of being chased.



At first the father laughed, but then realised that this son could not be chosen, so he sent the second son to whom he gave the same treatment.

This one too, despite his initial boldness, was so frightened when he saw the bear's fierce eyes, that he got off his horse and started running, hoping that the bear would be satisfied with his mount instead of chasing after him for a meal.

The emperor did not even laugh this time. All that remained was the younger one, who was nevertheless very young.



Neither of the brothers wanted to talk of their misadventure, and the younger son asked his father if he could try his luck. The doubtful emperor denied his request.

The young man went out into the street crying, angry and disappointed.

As he walked aimlessly, an old beggar approached him.

The young man gave her a coin.

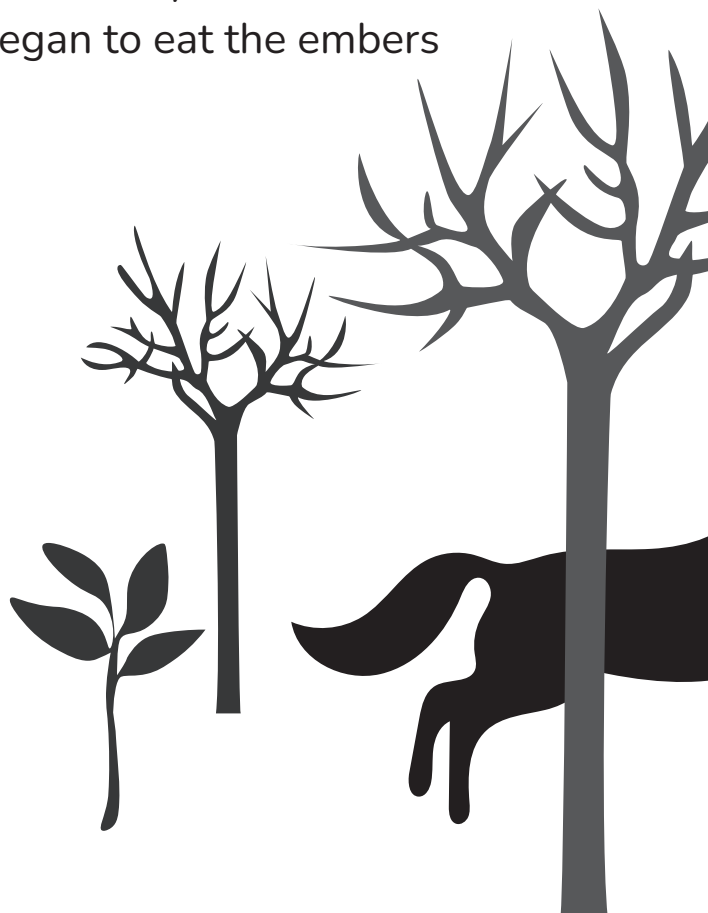
"Don't cry - the woman reassured him - you'll see that if you do what I say, you will be emperor."

The young man looked at her, surprised, but attentive.

"Go up to the attic and look for the clothes that were your father's, then go to the stables and look for the horse that will eat the embers" said the old woman.

The young man thanked her and ran to look for his father's armour.

After he went down to the stables, he brought the embers close to the nostrils of all the horses, which all turned away in horror, except for one old nag that kept coming towards them. The young man tried to push him away, but the stubborn and heedless old horse began to eat the embers as if they were straw.



Then raising himself up on his hind legs, the horse shook his long mane, which had suddenly turned from grey to shiny. He had transformed into the most majestic thoroughbred. Its coat seemed like silk and its mane as if it was made of wonderful golden threads.

The young man climbed on it without delay, and the horse began to run with such powerful strides that it soared up to the clouds.

The prince held on tight, shouting with joy and wonder as the horse climbed even higher to the moon and back, so high that the young man felt the warmth of the sun on him.



Happily they returned to earth, the horse resumed its nag-like appearance and they set off immediately for the uncle's castle. The father disguised as a bear was waiting to test him. The young man spurred the horse, which fearlessly ran over the poor emperor. Despite the tumble, the sovereign began to laugh happily, taking off his bearskin and embracing his incredulous son.

"I am proud of you. You are truly worthy of being Emperor. I have only one recommendation for you: you must never trust bald men."

Once he imparted these words on his son, he gave him the old fur of the animal that he no longer needed.

The young man embraced his father, remounted his old horse and got on his way.

While he was still pondering the strange recommendation, a Bald Man appeared.

"Knight, Prince, take me as your servant and you will not regret it."

"Thank you very much, but I don't need anything," he replied, continuing on his way. After a few steps, however, a man with flowing, curly hair appeared.



"Knight, Prince, take me as your servant and you will not regret it," said the curly haired man.

The prince, knowing that he only had to keep himself away from bald men, said, "Alright, I just needed a squire!"

His horse shook its head, but the young man did not take the hint and so they all three went on together.

They soon came near a well.

"I would like to drink, so if you don't mind, I will go down into the well to fetch some water," said the squire,

as he was already descending to the bottom of the well.

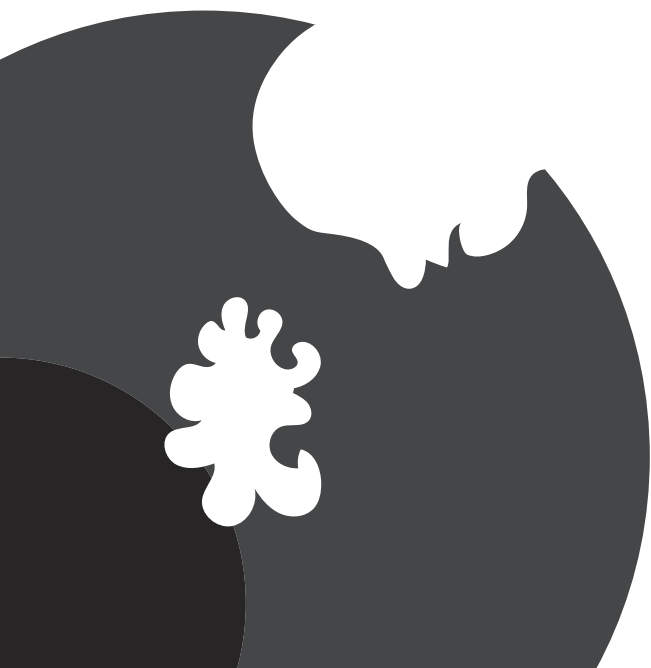
"You should see what a wonderful place this is, it feels great!" he shouted.

"There is such a freshness! Now I am going up, but I advise you to descend to try it yourself!" the squire said again.

The prince descended through a narrow rope ladder.

As soon as he reached the bottom, however, the man quickly withdrew the ladder, leaving the prince trapped in the well.

"What are you doing? Let me out!" cried the young prince.



"Of course, I'll let you out," the man said, grinning as he leaned into the well and dropped his wig full of curly ringlets down the well.

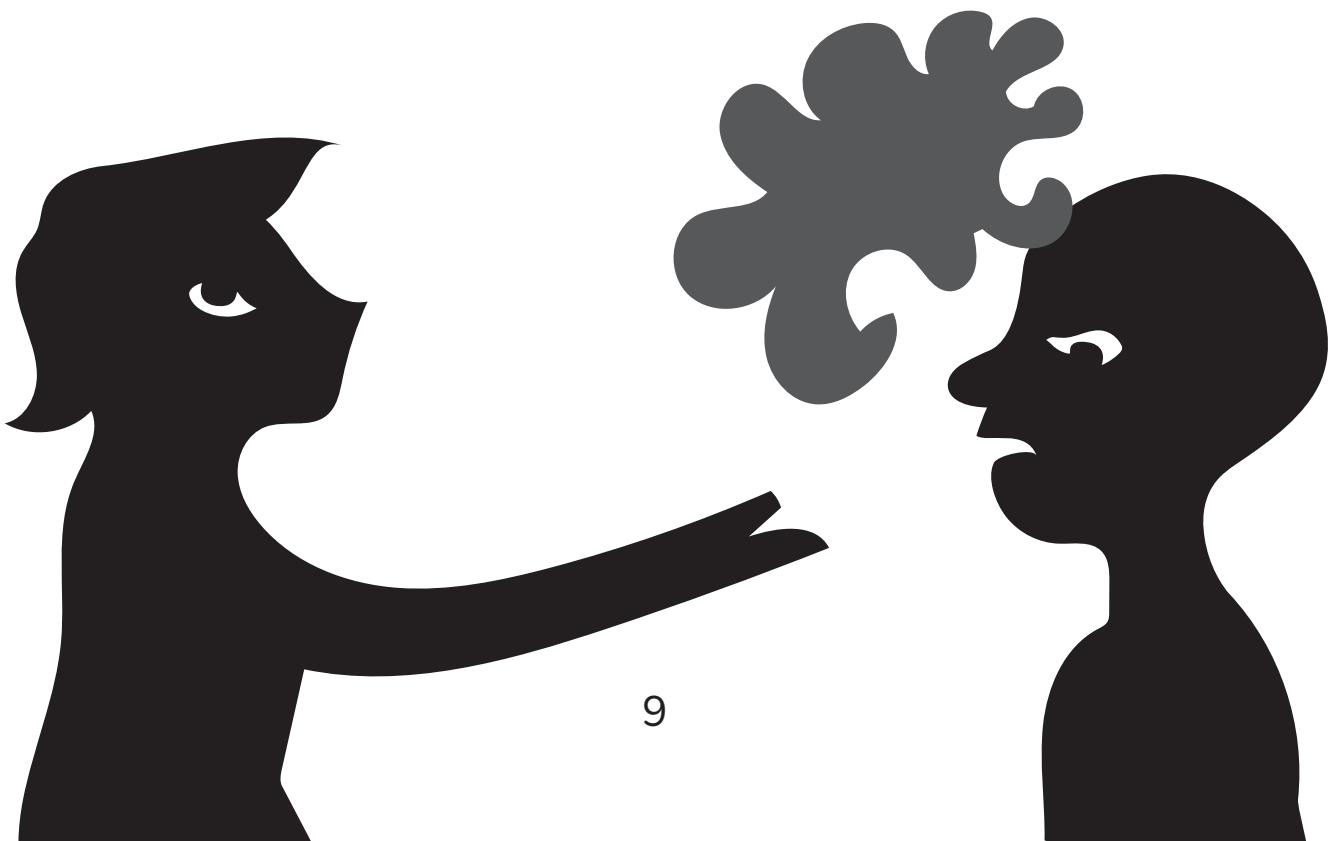
The prince looked with surprise at the curly-haired wig and then up to where the bald man's shiny head shone in the sunlight.

"I will let you out only if you take my place. I will be the Crown Prince and you will become my servant. You are free not to accept, but in that case, you will remain at the bottom of that well to keep my hair company!"

The young man agreed. The Bald Man put on his wig again and took the prince's armour.

"You will be my servant from today, you must never speak of this pact of ours for I would have tokill you. From today on you shall be called Harap Alb."

Once they arrived at the court of the uncle, they were welcomed with the highest honours.



The uncle, who had not seen his nephew for many years, did not recognise him and, seeing his brother's armour worn by the strange curly-haired man, he assumed it was his brother's son and embraced him warmly. Harap Alb's elegance and innate kindness, however, did not go unnoticed.

Not a day went by without the old emperor asking for his company, arousing the envy of the Bald Man, who began to devise a thousand plans to get rid of him.

However, the young prince, with the help of his horse, succeeded each time in passing the emperor's challenges brilliantly, thus increasing the emperor's esteem for him as well as the Bald Man's hate.

One day, while they were all in the garden, a blue parrot appeared at the top of a tree:

"Please, I need your help! My beloved mistress has been kidnapped by the Red Emperor!".



The Bald Man stepped forward arrogantly thinking it was his chance to show off.

"He is holding her captive on a mysterious island... Her father, the king, has beheaded all those who have tried to save her."

With his hand still suspended in the air to offer his help, The Bald Man turned to the young prince:

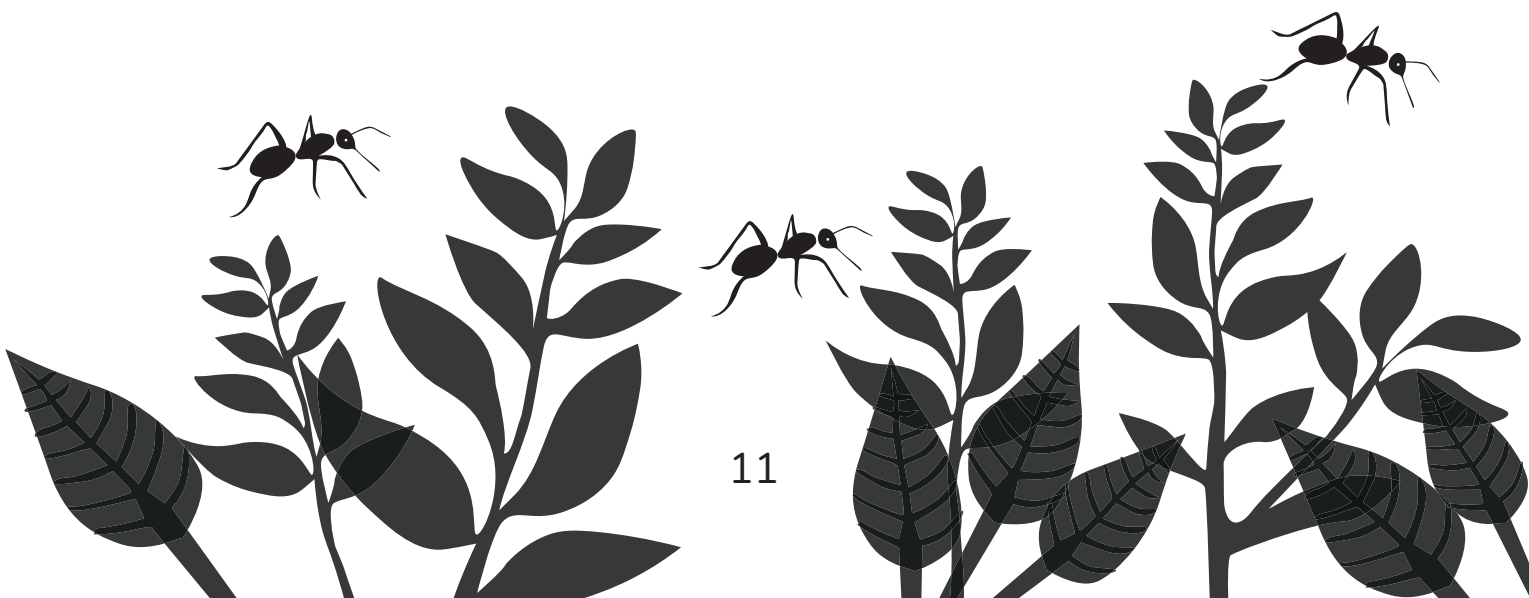
"You shall go! And if the king doesn't cut your head off, I will do it myself."

The somewhat frightened prince began his journey, trying to imagine the dangers and challenges that lay ahead, when suddenly he saw before him a long line of ants all focused on their work.

The road he had chosen would have led him quickly to the Red Emperor's Island, but he would have had to trample over the ant hill and its inhabitants.

So he makes his horse turn around and take the longer road. In that moment, a small flying ant landed on his nose.

"You have been generous and for that we want to reward you. This is my little paw if you need help just throw it into the fire and we will come to you."



The prince thanked the ant and continued his journey. On the way, he saw a big bear intent on destroying a honeycomb. Without wasting any time, the young man put on the bear skin given to him by his father and immediately started to roar at the animal who, seeing another old bear looming over, sprinted away.

The queen bee came out to thank the prince.

"As a reward for your courage, take this wing of mine. If you find yourself in danger just wave it like a fan, and we will come." He set out on his journey again.

As he passed through a dense forest, he saw a small spider intent on weaving its web.

However, such a strong wind had risen that the little insect was struggling to stay on the web.

Immediately, the prince took off his cloak and sheltered the insect so that it could finish its work.

The spider gave the prince some of his silk thread in sign of gratitude. "If you need me, wrap this thread around your finger and I will come to you."

The prince resumed the journey leading him to the edge of the forest, grateful for his gifts, even if their use seemed quite mysterious and improbable to him.



There, at the edge of the forest, laid a large lake with deep, dark waters in the middle of which stood the mysterious island. The nag shook his head and immediately transformed into the magnificent horse that he was. With a leap he was immediately on the island, and then resumed his modest appearance once more.



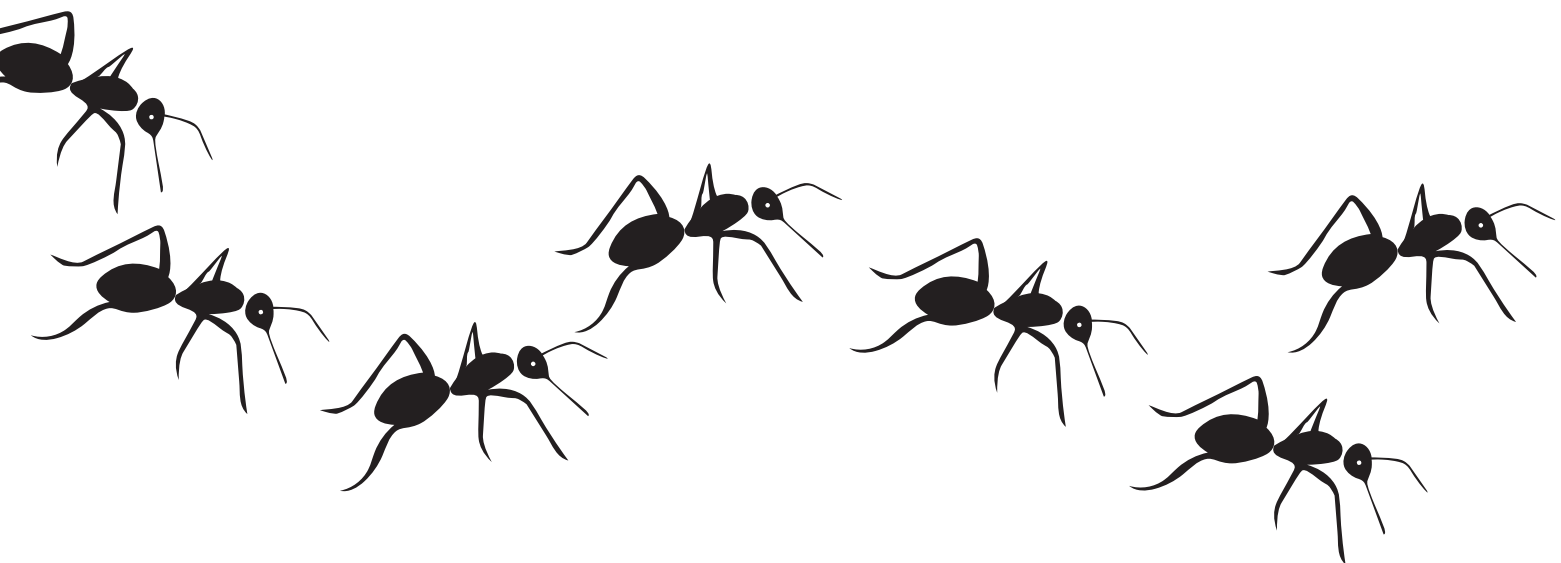
Following a winding path, they arrived at a castle. The hall they entered was full of seeds of all kinds: wheat, barley, sunflower, all mixed together and piled up in mountains that reached up to touch the vaults. A large and tall man clad entirely in red appeared in front of them with a menacing look.

"If you want to save the princess, you must sort all these seeds by tomorrow morning," he said in a thundering voice, he then turned around, wrapping himself in his fire cloak and disappeared. The young man looked around in dismay, it was an impossible task.

But then he remembers about the encounters he made along the way so he threw the little paw the ant had given him into the fire.

All of a sudden, the flying ants appeared as if emerging from a secret tunnel.

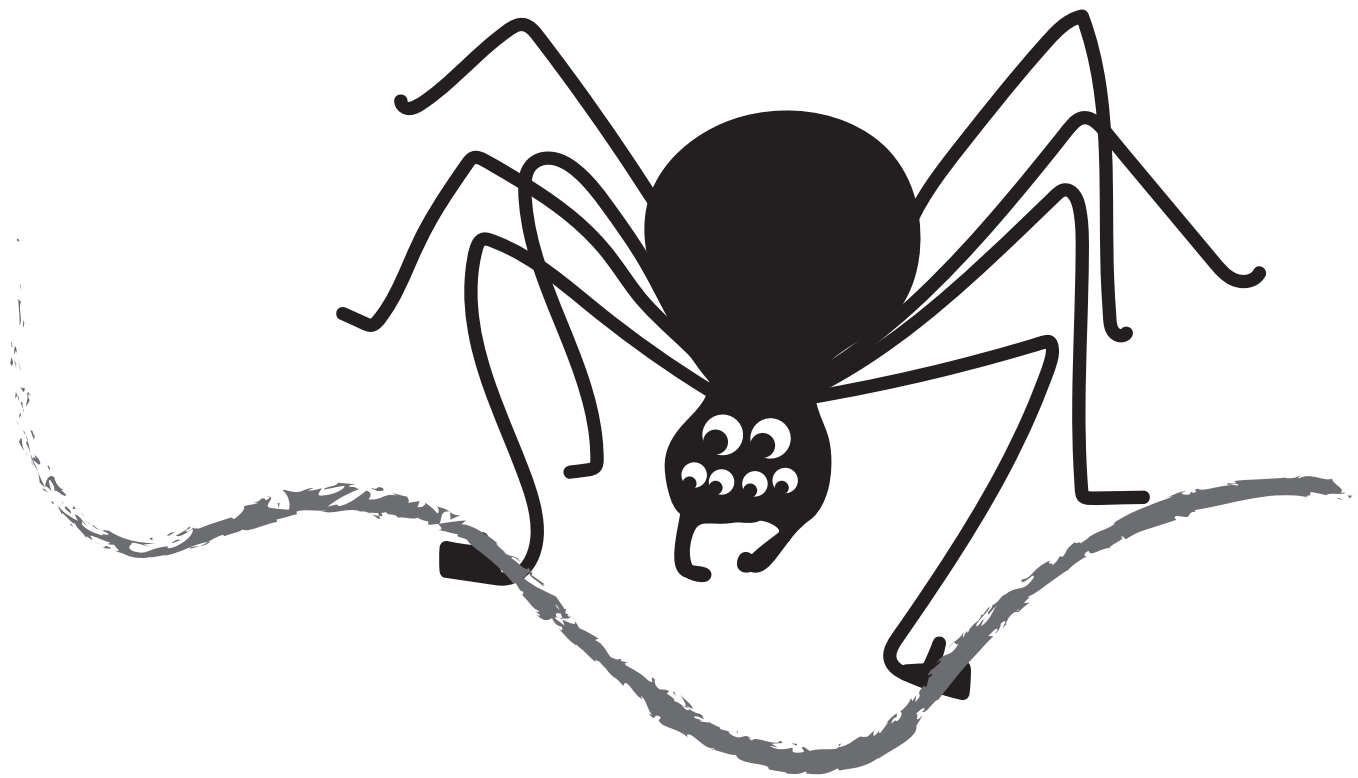
Laborious and meticulous as ever, they set about sorting the seeds and finished the task in no time.



When the Emperor arrived thinking himself victorious, he discovered that the challenge had been overcome. He thus led the young man to another room where there were sacks full of wool.

"I want them to be all spun by tomorrow, I want a cloth so light and large that it can wrap the whole castle".

The prince was despondent but then remembered the little spider and wound the thread carefully around his finger. The little spider descended from above the hall, picked up the wool and spun without stop and with such speed that the web simply materialised. At dawn, he presented it to the Red Emperor.





Although angry, the Emperor seemed weaker and less confident. He led the prince to yet another inner courtyard of the castle where thousands of flowers of every species and colours filled the ground and climbed the walls and columns as in some tropical jungle.

The scent was so intense that the poor prince's head was spinning.

"By tomorrow morning I want these flowers to be turned into the elixir of eternal life", he said furiously.

Without wasting any time, the prince summoned the bees, who arrived in a buzzing golden cloud and immediately set to work, making a honey so clear and sweet that it could cure any wound, even a fatal one.



The defeated Red Emperor had no choice but to give up the princess to the prince and his mount.

As soon as the horse leapt onto the opposite shore, the island on which the princess had been held hostage sank.

Led by the blue parrot who was jumping out of his feathers with joy to be reunited with the princess again, the two young people entered the uncle's court, who greeted them with warm embraces.

The envious Bald Man drew his sword and, in an instant, attacked the young prince, killing him.

He did it so fiercely that his curly wig fell off, revealing his true nature.

The valiant stallion lifted the treacherous Bald Man up with his mouth, loaded him onto his rump and threw him up towards the sky.



As he fell, the Bald Man shattered as if he were made of shards.

The prince had brought with him the elixir made by the bees and the web made by the spider with which he had won the challenge.

The princess used them to bring her beloved back to life. She sprinkled his wounds with honey and wrapped them in the spider's light web.

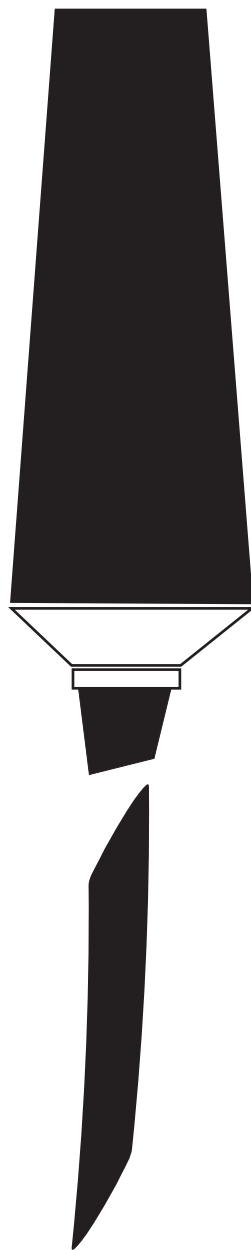
The prince stood up as if nothing had happened, revealing to his uncle that he was in fact his real nephew.

The prince and the princess wed and the youngest of the three nephews thus reclaimed his place as the rightful heir to the Empire.

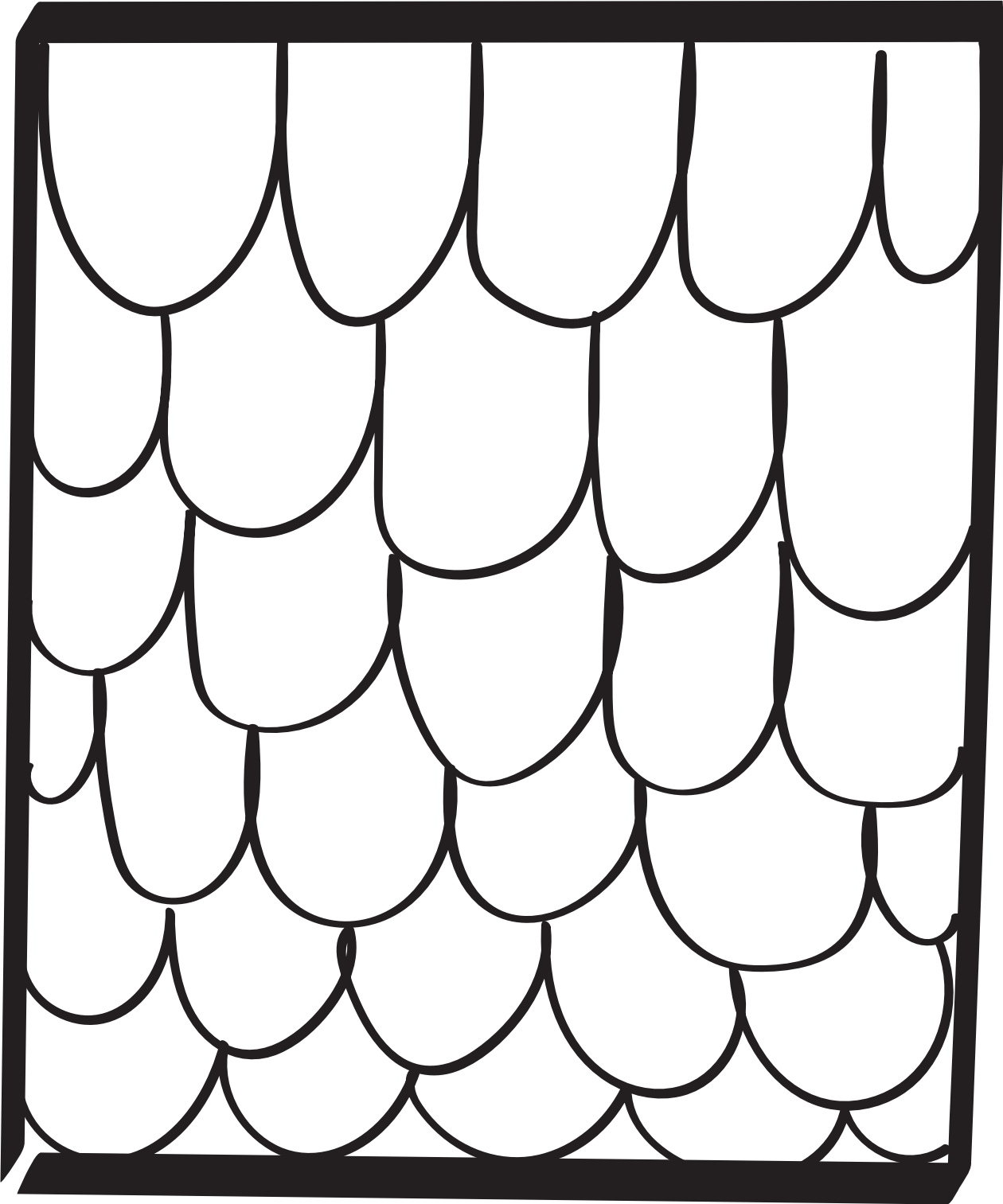


ACTIVITIES

The tools we draw with are important.
Get markers with different tips:
flat, round, brush. Also get some brushes
and tempera paints.
You can choose black
or any other colour you like.



In a frame, draw many «u» letters all attached and consecutive.
Create many small boxes.

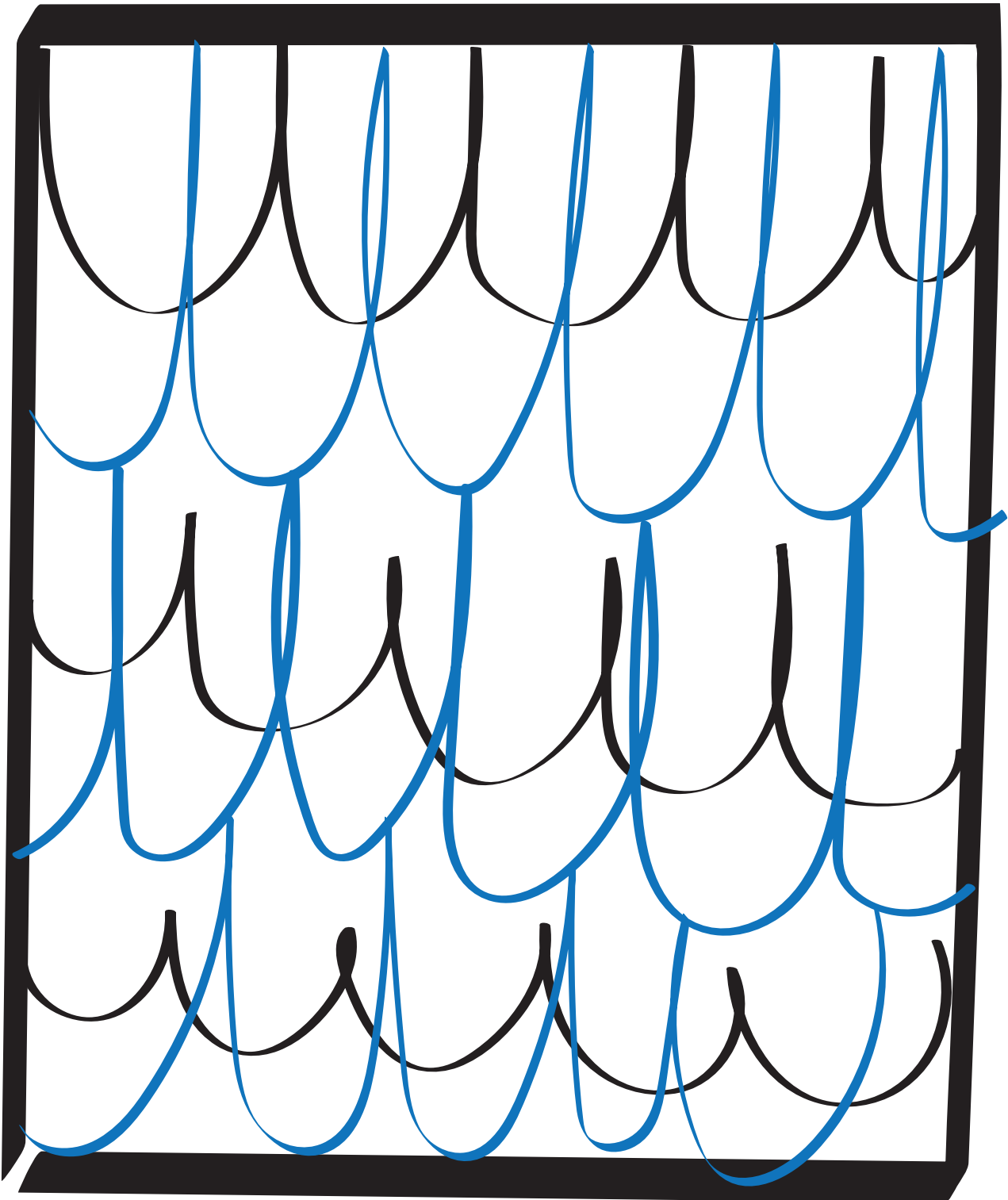


In another frame, draw many «u» letters.

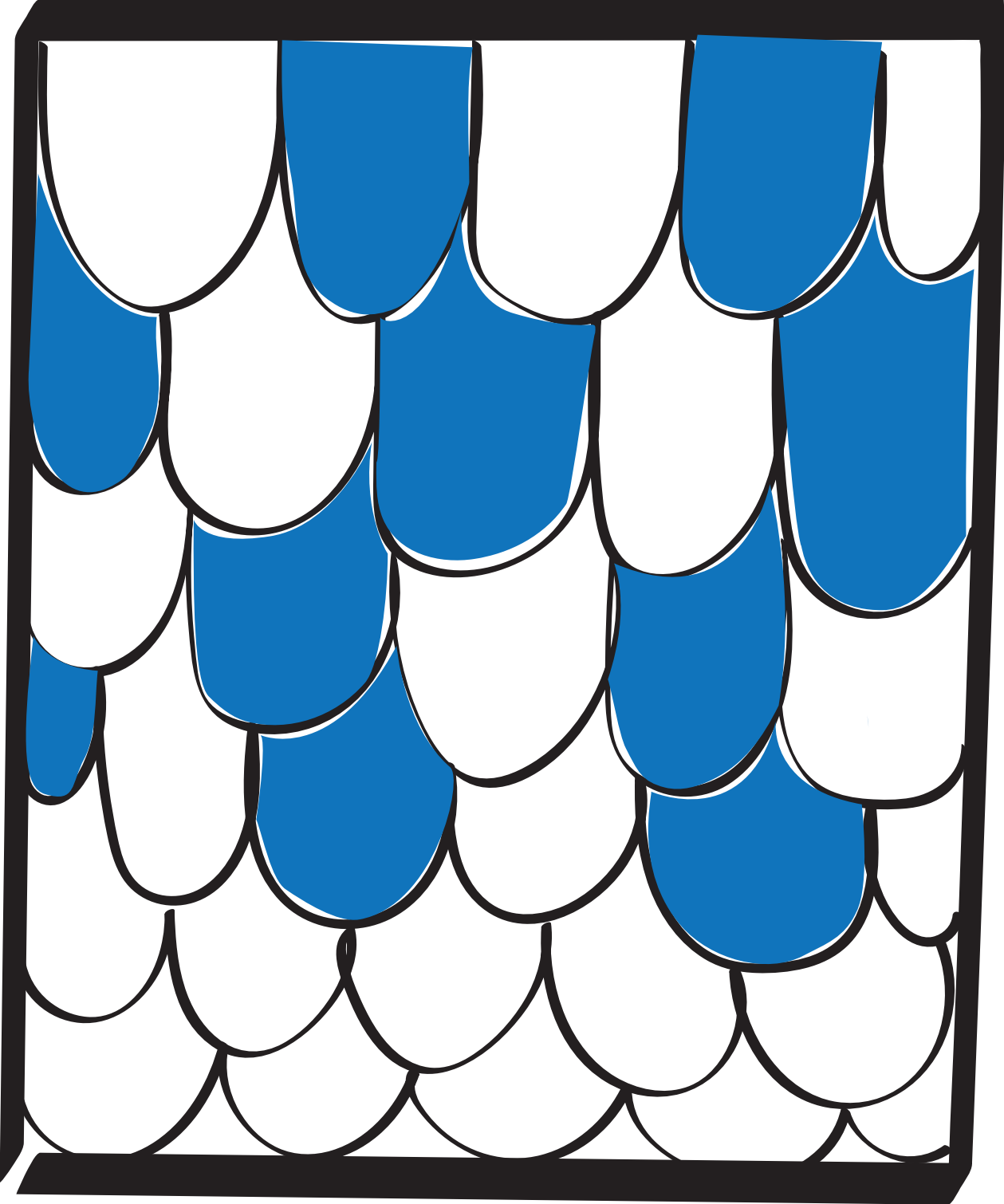
Draw them all attached, alternating short «u» letters with elongated «u» letters.

Do it many times.

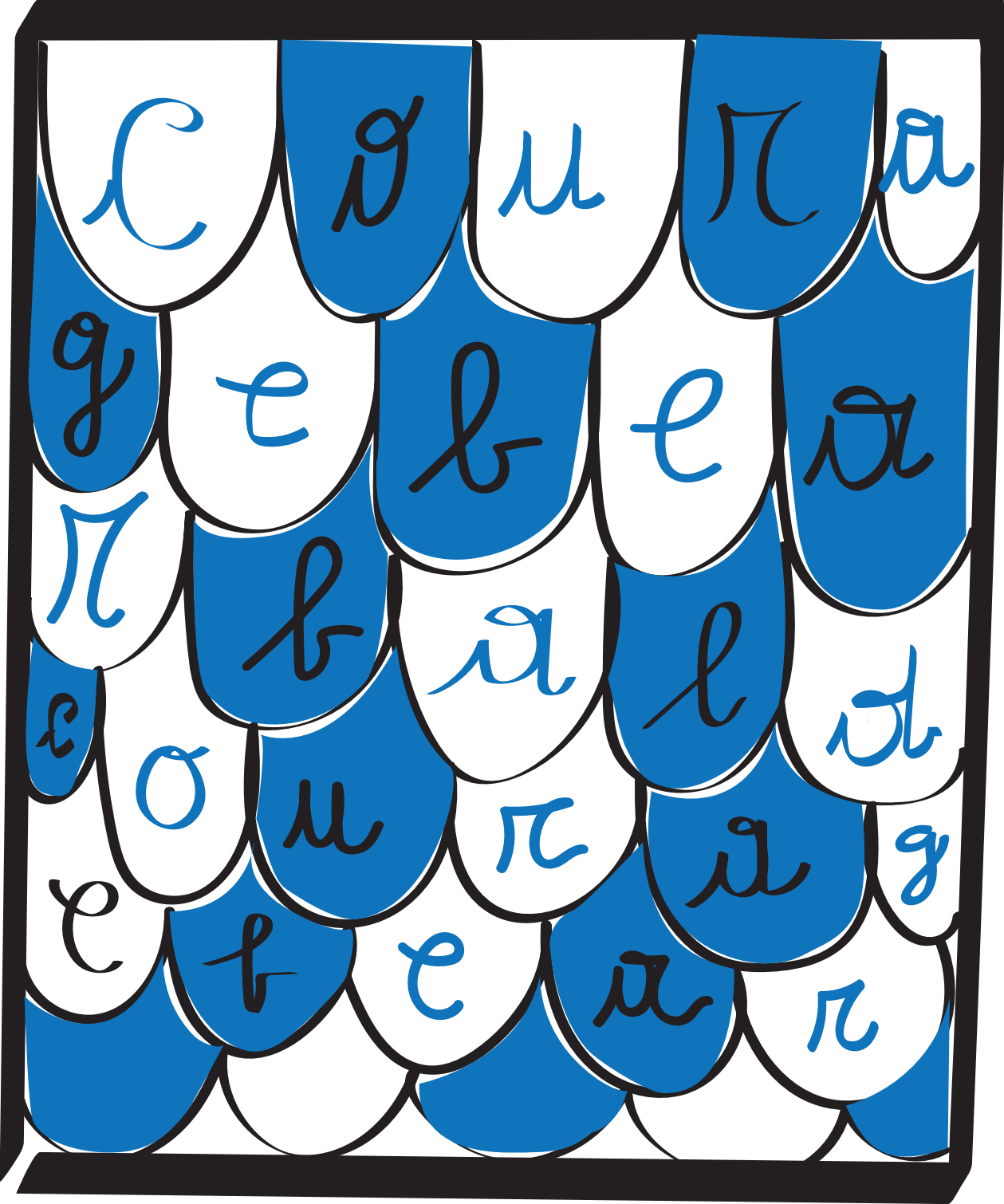
Alternate the colors, it will be easier to distinguish them.



Draw or retake a frame with «u» (as on PAGE 20).
Using two different colours, alternately colour
the created spaces.



Using two different colours, write the key words by inserting the cursive letters in the created spaces.





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(Project code: 2021-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000029483)