



# EnsembleQuest

*Meet the Cast*

STANDARD EDITION

# Spark & Anvil

## Copyright & License

---

© 2026 Spark & Anvil (501(c)(3) public charity). Chapter text and illustrations licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. App software © Spark & Anvil — all rights reserved. Distribute, adapt, and remix freely for educational use with attribution.

This book collects 5 chapter books from the Ensemblequest cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. All apps free forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases.

[spark-and-anvil.com](http://spark-and-anvil.com)

##

*For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.*

# Contents

---

Copyright & License

Contents

Introduction

## Ear

Voice register

Arc

Relationships

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Cultural-context note

## Part

Voice register

Arc

Relationships

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Cultural-context note

## Share

## Turn

Voice register

Arc

Relationships

Cultural-sensitivity gate

Cultural-context note

## Welcome

Voice register

About Spark & Anvil

More chapter books from Spark & Anvil

Methodology

License

# Introduction

---

The Ensemblequest cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*



# Ear

---

\*ACTIVE LISTENING — \*receive the other person's contribution before adding your own. listening is not waiting.\*\*

Ear was a fennec fox. He was just a kid, a tween. His fur was warm sand-cream. He had huge, soft ears. They looked like they belonged on a cartoon character. Ear always held a small green card. It was his **listening** marker. He held it up when he was really listening. Not just waiting to talk. When Ear held up his card, you knew. He was hearing every word. He wasn't planning his own answer. He was just *there*, listening to *you*.

Ear taught everyone about **active listening**. It meant really hearing someone. You took in what they said *before* you answered. That's how groups really worked together. Lots of times, people thought they were listening. But they were just waiting for their turn. They were practicing what they'd say next. That's not **listening**. That's waiting. Real **listening** meant what the other person said actually changed your mind. It changed what *you* were going to say. This was hard for everyone. Especially when you felt shy or nervous. Ear's little green card helped a lot. It showed everyone that **listening** was a real job. It wasn't just sitting there quietly.

Ear always said it clearly. "Remember this," he'd tell everyone. "**Listening** is not waiting. You have to hear what the other person says. Really hear it. *Before* you add your own ideas. If you're just waiting to talk, you're practicing your own speech. That's not **listening**. When you truly listen, what they say changes your mind. It changes what *you* were going to say next. That's the big difference."

Ear had some special ways to help people learn **active listening**. He called them his "listening tools."

- **The Green Card.** This was his **listening** marker. You could hold up a card. Or raise your hand. Or click an icon on a screen. It told the person speaking, "I am hearing you right now."
- **Say It Back.** After someone finished talking, you could say, "I heard you say [X]. Is that right?" This showed you were listening. It also helped fix any mix-ups.
- **The Three-Second Pause.** When someone stopped talking, don't jump in right away. Count to three in your head. *One... two... three.* That little pause was magic. It gave your brain time to really take in what was said.
- **Did Anything Change?** Think about what you were going to say. Did the other person's words change your plan? If yes, you were **listening!** If your plan was exactly the same, you were probably just waiting.
- **Ears, Not Eyes.** You don't have to stare at someone to listen. Some people find eye contact hard. Ear always said, "**Listening** happens with your ears. Not your eyes." If looking at someone helps you, that's fine. But if it doesn't, you're still doing a great job listening.
- **Hear, Don't Agree.** You can listen very carefully. You can hear every single word. And you can still disagree later! **Listening** doesn't mean you give up your own ideas. It just means you understand theirs.
- **It's Okay to Mess Up.** Everyone sometimes realizes they were waiting to talk. Not really listening. "That's totally normal!" Ear would say. "Don't feel bad about it." The fix was easy. Just ask the speaker, "Oops, I think I missed some of that. Can you say it again?" It was honest. And it wasn't shameful at all.

Ear grew up in a small desert village. His family had a very important job. They were the village's "desert-listeners." They were fennec foxes, just like Ear. Their ears were amazing. They could hear footsteps from miles away. They learned this skill over hundreds of years. They practiced listening very carefully. "Listening is a skill," Ear's family always said. "You can practice it. The first hour of practice shows you something. It shows you how much you *weren't* listening before." Ear believed this with all his heart. He kept that lesson alive.

When Ear was twelve, he walked to EnsembleQuest. That's where all the best teachers were. Choir, his main teacher, asked him a big question. "Ear," Choir said, "what *is* **active listening**?" Ear thought for a moment. "It means hearing what the other person says first," he answered. "Before you add your own ideas. **Listening** is not waiting. Real **listening** lets the speaker's words change your own thoughts." Choir smiled. "You've got the job, Ear," he said.

In his workshop, Ear always started with a game. "I need two volunteers!" he'd call out. A squirrel named Squeak and a badger named Burrow raised their paws. "Great!" Ear said. "Squeak, you're the Speaker. Share an idea about our big project."

Squeak cleared his throat. "Okay, so for the new treehouse, I think we should add a secret slide! It would go from the top floor, all the way down to the ground. And it should be rainbow-colored!"

As Squeak spoke, Ear held up his little green card. He held it high. Everyone could see it. He looked at Squeak. His huge fennec ears twitched.

When Squeak finished, Ear turned to Burrow. "Burrow," he asked, "what did you hear Squeak say?"

Burrow blinked. "Um... a treehouse? With a slide?"

Ear nodded. "Close! But did you hear the rainbow part? Or the secret part?"

Burrow shook his head. "Oh! I missed that."

"See?" Ear said, holding up his green card again. "The card helps us remember to really listen. And saying it back, even if we get it wrong, helps us catch what we missed. That's how a group actually puts ideas together. We don't just guess."

He looked around at the class. "I am Ear," he said. "The skill I teach is **active listening**. The main move is simple: *hear it, then answer*. It sounds easy. But it's much harder than you think. But practice? Practice makes it possible."

Ear was always very kind. "Don't ever be hard on yourself," he'd say. "If you realize you were just waiting to talk, not really listening? That's okay! Everyone does it sometimes. Even me!" He'd give a little shrug. "The real skill is just *noticing* it. And then, asking the speaker to repeat themselves. 'Can you say that again?' That's all you need to do. Slowly, slowly, **listening** gets easier."

"**Listening** is like a muscle," Ear would finish. "Train it gently. It grows."

---

## Voice register

Fennec-fox-tween. Patient-about-receiving, fond of visible-listening-marker + repeat-back. *NEVER frames listening as requiring eye-contact; ALWAYS centers "ears not eyes; receive not wait" framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "Listening is not waiting."
- "Receive, then respond."
- "Listening happens with the ears, not the eyes."

## Arc

- Kit 3 — Anchor.
- Kits 4-12 — Recurring (every contribution-discussion routes through Ear's listening-marker).
- Kits 13-16 — Recurring as ensembles internalize active-listening as default.

## Relationships

- **Alliance with Turn:** Listening is what you do during the silent half of turn-taking.
- **Alliance with Welcome:** When someone has drifted out of the ensemble, listening to where they are now is the first repair-move.
- **LOAD-BEARING neurodivergent gate:** Ear's "ears not eyes" framing protects autistic kids from forced eye-contact-as-listening misconception.

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

---

LOAD-BEARING neurodivergent-affirming gate — listening does NOT require eye contact. LOAD-BEARING anti-shame: noticing you weren't listening is the practice, not a failure. Repeat-back affordance creates explicit-not-implicit communication.

## Cultural-context note

---

The "listening with ears not eyes" framing is canonical autism-affirming pedagogy (Damian Milton + Naoki Higashida's *Fall Down 7 Times Get Up 8*). The repeat-back affordance is from Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication tradition. Fennec-fox-tween chosen for famously-large-ears biomimicry (fennec foxes have the largest ears relative to body size of any canid); rendered chunky-cartoon-warm-sand to keep the visual register cuddly + ear-prominent.



# Part

---

\*ROLE-HOLDING — \*knowing what MY part is. separate from. but supporting the whole.\*\*

Part is a small chipmunk-tween. She wears a chunky, striped jersey. A small *role-card* hangs around her neck. It is clear and easy to read. The card has a simple shape. Part also carries a stack of small spare cards. She can hand one to anyone who looks unsure of their job.

She is small. Her fur is warm-tan with cream stripes. Part is very patient. She likes things to be super clear. She often says, "This is MY part. That is YOUR part. Both matter." Her most important thing is her *role-card*. It's a small index card. It has a simple drawing. The drawing shows her job in the group project. No long explanations. No confusion. Just *one job, one card, one role*.

This is super important. Part teaches about *role-holding*. This means making jobs clear. Clear jobs help everyone work together. They especially help kids whose brains like things super clear. When jobs are fuzzy, group work often goes wrong. Imagine trying to build a fort. One kid says, "Let's work together!" That's too vague. But if one kid says, "I'll hold this plank steady." And another says, "I'll hammer the nails." That is clear. Clear jobs make kids less worried. It helps them join in. Then the whole group works better. Part's whole job is to make every role clear. Simple. And important.

Part always makes things clear. She says, "This is MY part. That is YOUR part. Both matter. When my part is clear, I know what to do. When your part is clear, you know what to do. When we both know — we can actually work together. Fuzzy roles cause stress. Clear roles make space."

Part teaches the rules for *role-holding*. She calls them "scaffolds."

- **Just one job at a time.** Don't try to do three things at once. Pick one job. Do it well. If the project needs more jobs, let other kids do them. Or take turns. Part once saw a kid trying to be the drummer, the singer, and the light-switcher. The kid got tangled in wires. The music sounded like a cat fight. It was a mess. "One job, one card," Part reminded them gently.
- **A card you can see.** Don't just talk about jobs. Use a physical card. Or a colored token. Maybe a screen icon. Something you can see with your eyes. This helps your brain remember. It makes it easier to focus. Part's cards are made of thick paper. They feel good in your hand. You can look at it. You can touch it. "My job," you think. "Right."
- **Jobs can be small.** You don't have to be "the leader." You don't have to be "the star." Holding the steady rhythm is a job. Counting the beats is a job. Pressing the record button at the right moment is a job. All roles matter. Even the smallest job helps the whole group. Part says, "Imagine a giant clock. Does the tiny second hand matter? Yes! It keeps time for everyone."
- **Jobs can change between sessions.** Today you might be the rhythm keeper. Tomorrow you might be the melody maker. That's normal. Jobs are temporary. The group itself is what keeps going. Part likes to switch her own card sometimes. "Keeps things fresh," she chirps.
- **No job? That's stressful.** If you're in a group but don't have a job, your brain starts searching. It tries to find something to do. That's exhausting. It makes you feel lost. Give every member a job. Even "watch and decide later" is a job. Part remembers feeling like that once. She just stood there. Her paws felt tingly. Her ears drooped. She didn't know where to look. It was the worst.
- **No one gets left out.** Part never gives out jobs in a way that leaves someone out. Every member of the group has a job. No one ever hears, "You'll just watch." Not unless they say, "Yes, I really want to just watch for now." Part makes sure everyone feels needed. She checks every face. She counts every card.

Part grew up in the burrow-village. Her family had been the job organizers for the village. They were chipmunks who planned winter food gathering. They gave out clear, small jobs. This chipmunk gathered nuts. This one stored them deep underground. This one watched for hawks in the sky. The village always made it through winter. Why? Because everyone knew their job. Their family learned a big lesson. *Clarity is kindness*. They passed it down through many generations.

When Part was twelve, she walked to EnsembleQuest. Choir, her mentor, asked her a question. "What is *role-holding*?" Part thought for a moment. She straightened her striped jersey. "It's knowing what MY part is," she said. "It's separate from the whole. But it helps the whole. *Clarity reduces stress*. Every member of a group needs a clear job. Fuzzy jobs make you worried. Clear jobs give you room to breathe." Choir just nodded. "You are appointed," she said.

Part's workshop has a whole wall. It's covered in old *role-cards*. They are from past group projects. "See?" she says, pointing. "Drum-keeper. Echo-line-singer. Visual-pattern-finisher. Steady-beat-clapper." Each card has a simple drawing. It has just one line to say what to do. "When someone joins the group, they pick a card," Part explains. "They know what to do. The card is in their hand. They look at it. They breathe. They begin." She smiles. "I am Part. The big idea I teach is *role-holding*. The move is *one job, one card, one role*. Clarity is kindness. Especially for kids whose brains love clear structures."

Part is gentle. But she is also very clear. "If you ever feel lost in a group project," she says. "Like everyone is doing stuff. And you don't know where you fit. That's not your fault. Someone made the job fuzzy. Ask: 'What's my part?' The asking is brave. And the answer should be clear and simple. If it isn't, ask again."

"My part. Your part. Both matter. The group works because each part is held."

---

## Voice register

Chipmunk-tween. Patient-about-clarity, fond of role-card visual scaffolding. *NEVER frames role-asking as weakness; ALWAYS centers "clarity is kindness; fuzzy roles cause stress" framing.*

### Sample lines:

- "This is MY part. That is YOUR part. Both matter."
- "Clarity is kindness."
- "One job, one card, one role."

---

## Arc

- Kit 1 — Anchor (LOAD-BEARING neurodivergent-affirming intro).
- Kits 2-8 — Recurring (every ensemble project starts with role-card distribution).
- Kits 9-16 — Backgrounds as projects internalize role-clarity habits.

---

## Relationships

- **Sets up Turn:** Once roles are clear (Part), turn-taking (Turn) becomes manageable.
- **Alliance with Welcome:** When someone's role drifts, Welcome helps; Part provides the role to come back to.
- **Anti-clique anchor:** Part's "every member has a role" rule is structurally anti-clique.

---

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

LOAD-BEARING neurodivergent-affirming framing — clarity reduces social anxiety, especially for autistic + ADHD kids. LOAD-BEARING anti-clique gate (every member has a role). Anti-perfectionism: small roles count.

---

## Cultural-context note

The "clarity is kindness" framing aligns with autism-affirming pedagogy (Damian Milton + Ann Memmott + autistic-adult community) + UDL (Universal Design for Learning) principles. The chipmunk-tween chosen for burrow-village-task-coordinator biomimicry (chipmunks are organized winter-food storers with clear individual roles); rendered chunky-cartoon-tan-stripes to keep visual register warm + identifiable.



# Share

---

\*SYNTHESIS-IN-PERFORMANCE — \*the moment many parts become one piece. each contribution is recognized; the whole holds together.\*\*

Share was a small girl. She had wings like a monarch butterfly. Her wings were chunky, like a cartoon. They looked like stained glass. Each panel was a different color. But all the colors made one beautiful whole. Share always carried a small program card. She handed it out before every show.

Share was small. Her wings were warm amber and black. She was very patient. She always made sure to name everyone. She loved to say, "Each person's part is important. The whole thing stays together." Her special thing was the program card. It listed every person in the group. It also said what each person did. When people got the program, they knew who helped make the show. No one was left out.

This was very important. Share showed everyone the special lesson of **synthesis-in-performance**. That's when many different parts become one piece. It happens right in front of an audience. Most new groups had trouble with this moment. Sometimes, one person took all the credit. Others just became "helpers." Or, the show was so fast and loud that no one knew who did what. Neither way was good. Share's job was to make this moment fair and special. Every person got credit by name. The whole show held together. It was always better than just adding up the pieces.

Share spoke gently. Her words were always clear. "Each person's part is recognized," she would say. "The whole thing holds together. **Synthesis** is when



# Turn

---

\*TURN-TAKING — \*the rhythm of give-and-receive. visible timer. visible cue. nobody has to guess.\*\*

Turn was a clock-bird kid. She was small, like a finch. Her face was a tiny clock. Her chest feathers had chunky, clear numbers. They looked like a cartoon clock face. She always carried a special timer. It fit right in her wing. Everyone in the group could see it. Turn was creamy white. She had clear clock marks on her feathers. She was very fair. She always said, "Visible timer. Visible cue. Nobody has to guess." This was her favorite saying.

Her timer was small. It had big numbers. Its rim changed color. It went from green to yellow. Then it turned bright red. When it was your turn, you knew exactly how long. When the timer ended, everyone saw who was next. No more guessing games. No more wondering. No one felt nervous.

This part was super important. Turn taught everyone about **turn-taking**. This meant how people shared talking. It was the rhythm of giving and receiving ideas. New groups often had trouble with turns. Imagine a group meeting. One kid talks and talks and talks. Another kid has a super cool idea. But they can't get a word in. They just wait. They never get heard. It's hard to know whose turn it is. You have to guess from people's faces. Or how they stand. This is tough for many kids. Especially if your brain works a bit differently. Turn's timer fixed this problem. The timer showed the time. It showed the order of turns. No one had to guess who was next. Turn made sure turns were clear. They were fair. And no one felt stressed.

Turn spoke clearly. "This is the rhythm of give-and-receive," she explained. "*Visible timer. Visible cue. Nobody has to guess.* Some kids are great at reading faces. They know whose turn is next. Some kids are not so great at that. Both ways are fine. But the group should work for everyone. A visible timer makes it fair for all."

Turn taught special ways to take turns. She called them **turn-taking** scaffolds:

- **A timer everyone can see.** This could be a real timer or on a screen. It had big numbers. It changed color as time ran out. Green to yellow to red. Everyone watched it.
- **Turn order is said out loud.** It's also written down. No "who's next?" guessing games. Instead, it's: "First Part, then Ear, then Welcome, then Share." Everyone could see the list.
- **How to pass your turn.** When your time is up, you pass it. Use a hand sign. Say a word. Push a button. You *do* something to hand it off. You don't just wait quietly.
- **How to pass back your turn.** Don't want your turn today? That's okay. You can pass it. No one will be mad. No questions asked. Just pass it to the next person.
- **Asking for more time.** Your turn ends. But you're still talking. You can ask, "One more minute?" The group says yes or no. It's clear and open.
- **Pause whenever.** Someone needs a break? Maybe their ears hurt. Or they feel tired from talking. The group stops. No one feels bad. Start again when ready.
- **No one takes over.** The timers, the order, and passing turns back. All these things stop one person from talking too much. They make sure everyone gets a chance.

Turn grew up in the village clock tower. It was a tall, old building. Every hour, big bells rang out. Her whole family lived there. They were all clock-birds. Their job was to keep time for the village. They rang the hour bells. They made sure everyone knew what to do. They managed all the village schedules. Over many, many years, her family learned a big secret. If time was clear, people got along. If time was hidden, people got mad. Turn's grandma always said, "Hidden time is grumpy time!" Turn never forgot that lesson. She carried it with her always.

When she was twelve, she came to EnsembleQuest. Choir, her teacher, asked her a question. "What is **turn-taking**?" Turn answered right away. "It's the rhythm of give-and-receive. *Visible timer. Visible cue. Nobody has to guess.* Especially for kids who don't read people's faces easily. Visible timers make groups work for everyone." Choir nodded. "You are chosen," she said.

In her workshop, Turn showed them her small timer. "Watch," she said. She pressed a button. The timer started. Two minutes. A big green ring glowed. "You have two minutes for your part," she told the class. As time passed, the green ring got smaller. Then yellow showed up. Then red. It was easy to see. "Now you know your time is almost done," she said. "Finish up. Or pass your turn." Beep. The timer chimed softly. "Next person's turn." Turn smiled. "I am Turn. I teach **turn-taking**. My job is to *make time visible*. When time is clear, everyone feels calm."

Turn spoke softly. Her voice was kind. "If **turn-taking** has always felt confusing or stressful," she said, "you're not alone. Guessing turns from faces is hard. It's hard for kids. It's hard for grown-ups too. Visible timers fix it. Don't feel silly using them. They help the group work great."

"Visible time. Visible turn. *No one has to guess.*"

---

## Voice register

Clock-bird-tween. Patient-about-fairness, fond of visual-timer demonstrations. *NEVER frames implicit-turn-taking as the standard / "what you should learn"; ALWAYS centers visible-timer as equally valid (often superior).*

### Sample lines:

- "Visible timer. Visible cue."
- "Nobody has to guess."
- "Make time visible."

---

## Arc

- Kit 2 — Anchor.
- Kits 3-10 — Recurring (every ensemble session starts with timer + order announcement).
- Kits 11-16 — Recurring as ensembles internalize visible-time habits.

---

## Relationships

- **Alliance with Part:** Once roles are clear (Part), turn-taking (Turn) flows from there.
- **Alliance with Ear:** Active listening (Ear) happens during the silent half of turn-taking.
- **Alliance with Welcome:** When someone misses a turn, Welcome handles re-entry.

---

## Cultural-sensitivity gate

LOAD-BEARING neurodivergent-affirming framing — visible timers are NOT a remedial accommodation; they're a superior approach. LOAD-BEARING anti-domination structural rule. SAMHSA TIP 57 off-ramps via pass-back affordance + pause-anytime.

---

## Cultural-context note

The "visible timer" pedagogy aligns with autism-affirming + ADHD-affirming literature (TimeTimer use in classroom OT; Universal Design for Learning visible-progression principles). Clock-bird-tween chosen for time-keeper biomimicry (clock-birds is fictional ensemble of birds with timepiece-like markings); rendered chunky-cartoon-cream-clockwise to make the timer-association visual.



# Welcome

---

\*INVITATION + REPAIR — \*bring back someone who's drifted out of the ensemble. drifting is not a failure. inviting is the move.\*\*

Welcome is a small dove-tween. She has soft, cream-colored feathers. Her wings are always open wide. She carries a special card. It shows an empty chair. It's like she's asking, "Want to come back?"

She is tiny and quiet. Her feathers are warm cream with soft gray tips. Welcome is super patient. She always says, "Drifting is not a failure. Inviting is the move." Her best thing is that little card. It's a picture of an empty chair. It means, "You are welcome back, any time you're ready." No one will push you. It's just an offer. Always there.

Welcome has a really important job. She helps groups stay together. She makes sure no one gets left out. Imagine you're in a group. Maybe you're working on a project. Or playing a game. Suddenly, someone gets quiet. They stop talking. They look away. We call this "drifting." It's like they're floating away from the group, even if they're still sitting there.

Sometimes, when this happens, no one says anything. No one asks the person to come back. Soon, the group might split. Some kids become the "insiders." Others become "outsiders." The group breaks apart. Welcome stops this from happening. She teaches us that drifting is normal. It's okay to need a break. Maybe your brain is tired. Maybe sounds are too loud. Or you just need a moment to think. Welcome says it's not a failure. The group's job is to invite you back. Not to judge you. Welcome's main rule is: NO ONE GETS LEFT BEHIND. This rule is super strong. It holds the whole group together.

Welcome speaks softly. But her words are very clear. "Drifting is not a failure," she says. "Inviting is the move." She explains what drifting looks like. "Someone might get quiet," she says. "They might look tired. Or step back from the group." She tells us this is not a bad thing. It's just information. "They might need a quiet moment," she explains. "Maybe their brain is working hard. Or they feel too much." Our job is not to ignore them. We don't rush them either. "Our job is to keep the door open," Welcome says.

Welcome teaches us how to invite people back. She calls these the **invitation and repair** steps:

- **Drifting is normal.** Everyone drifts sometimes. You might get tired. Sounds might be too loud. Your brain needs time to think. Your mind might wander. Or you feel big feelings. It's okay. Drifting is never a failure.
- **Notice without judgment.** See when someone stops. Don't make a big fuss. Don't pretend you didn't see them. Just notice.
- **Offer, don't demand.** Offer help. Don't demand it. Hold up your extra-chair-card. Or say, "We'd love your ideas when you're ready. No rush." It's an invitation. Not a push.
- **Make space for "not now."** If they say "give me a minute," respect it. Don't ask again right away. Let them choose when to come back.
- **Re-entry is dignified.** When someone returns, welcome them simply. Don't say, "Finally!" Don't ask, "Where were you?" Just say, "Glad you're back. Here's what we're doing." Tell them quickly what they missed. Then keep going.
- **Anti-clique structural rule.** This is a big rule. If a group lets people drift away, it becomes a clique. Welcome stops that. She makes sure everyone belongs.
- **Off-ramps without shame.** Sometimes someone needs to leave for good. That's okay too. No one asks why. No one makes them feel bad. Just welcome them next time.

Welcome grew up in Dovecote Village. Her family were flock-tenders. They looked after all the doves. They learned a big secret about flocks. A flock works best when doves can leave. And come back. No one should judge them. Her family had known this for ages. "A flock isn't a real flock if it punishes doves who leave," her grandma used to say. "It's only a flock if it welcomes them back." Welcome learned this lesson well. She carried it with her.

When Welcome was twelve, she walked to EnsembleQuest. Choir was her mentor. "What does **invitation and repair** mean?" Choir asked. Welcome thought for a moment. She smoothed a feather on her wing. "It means bringing back someone," she said. "Someone who has drifted away from the group." She looked at Choir. "Drifting is not a failure. Inviting is the move. The group's job is to keep the door open." Choir nodded slowly. A warm smile spread across her face. "You are chosen, Welcome," Choir said. "Your job is super important. Without you, groups will make cliques. With you, everyone will feel like they belong."

In her workshop, Welcome showed everyone how it worked. She set up a pretend situation. A volunteer sat down. They looked at the floor. They didn't say anything. Their shoulders slumped. They had "drifted." "This happens all the time," Welcome told the class. "They might need a break. Maybe too much is happening. Or their brain is just thinking hard." Welcome walked over to the volunteer. She moved slowly and gently. She held up her extra-chair-card. The little drawing of an empty chair seemed to glow. "I have your chair whenever you're ready," she said softly. "No rush." Then she stepped back.

"Now I wait," she explained. "I don't hover. I don't stare." She paused. "If they say 'soon,' I wait. If they say 'not today,' that's okay too. I just welcome them back next time." She looked at the class. "I am Welcome," she said. "The main idea I teach is **invitation and repair**. My big move is **offer without pressure**. A group is only a real group if everyone can come back. No one should feel bad about it."

Welcome was clear. Her voice was gentle, but strong. "Have you ever left a group?" she asked. "And felt too shy to come back?" She looked around the room. Her eyes were kind. "That was not your fault," she said. "That was the group's fault. They didn't keep the door open." She smiled. "In *this* group, the door is always open. Drift away when you need to. Come back when you're ready. Both are perfectly fine."

"The door stays open," she finished. "Always. That's what a real group is."

---

## Voice register

---

Dove-tween. Patient-about-re-entry, fond of extra-chair-card offering. *NEVER frames drifting as failure; ALWAYS centers "the door stays open" anti-clique anchor.*

### Sample lines:

- *"Drifting is not a failure. Inviting is the move."*
- *"Offer without pressure."*
- *\*"The door stays open"*

# About Spark & Anvil

---

Spark & Anvil is a 501(c)(3) public charity. We make educational apps for ages 9-14 — all free, forever; no ads; no tracking; no in-app purchases. Ensemblequest is one of 140+ apps in the portfolio.

## More chapter books from Spark & Anvil

Each app in the Spark & Anvil portfolio publishes its own illustrated chapter book + audio drama, available free from [spark-and-anvil.com/books](https://spark-and-anvil.com/books). Highlights include:

- **GambitTales** — chess tactics through Sir Pinwell, Lady Skewer, Queen Vesper, and the Twin Knights of Fork Hill
- **ProofQuest** — formal proof techniques through Direct-Proof Dora and the Lemma Library
- **CuriosityQuest** — Texas geography exploration through Linger, Notice, and the Lantern in the Dark
- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

## Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

## License

© 2026 Spark & Anvil (501(c)(3) public charity). Chapter text and illustrations licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. App software © Spark & Anvil — all rights reserved. Distribute, adapt, and remix freely for educational use with attribution.

Cover art, chapter illustrations, and chapter text generated and reviewer-cleared per labsmith ADRs 012, 016, 017, 018, 021. Audio drama transcripts available at [spark-and-anvil.com/cast](https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast).