



**HUGO** The boy with the curious mark

### Synopsis

HUGO was born with a beautifully curious mark. Although it's something special, HUGO is concerned: he has never seen a rainbow mark on anyone else. But there must be someone out there like him! Determined to find that someone else, Hugo sets out on a rollercoaster of emotion and adventure. He searches crowded spots around his city, experiencing a rich array of human difference. His quest seems to be in vain. But just as he gives up, something amazing happens ...

This gentle and heart-warming story explores how it feels to be different, with a contemporary edge that will resonate with modern readers. HUGO will help children understand the importance and power of acceptance, no matter what types of differences they may encounter in others.

### About the author: Johann Devezzy

Johann Devezzy is a debut author who seeks to create beautiful books with messages of hope, strength and acceptance. He is driven by a desire to write stories that can be shared across generations - stories that are underpinned by the embracing of inclusivity and diversity. He is passionate about LGBTIQ inclusion and broader social justice issues. Born in France, Johann now lives in Perth, Australia, where he works as a chef and a teacher.

### About the illustrator: Manuela Adreani

Award-winning illustrator Manuela Adreani was born in Rome (Italy) but now lives in Turin. After completing a diploma in illustration, she worked as a graphic artist and then progressed to the world of animation. She won a scholarship for a master course in animation at Turin's IED (European Institute of Design) and then worked for the Lastrego e Testa studio on TV series produced and broadcast by Italy's RAI television. In 2011 she embarked on a career as a freelance illustrator. She was one of the winners of the illustration contest organised for the 130th anniversary of the creation of Pinocchio.

**HUGO** The boy with the curious mark**Author inspirations**

"This book is one that I would have wanted to read as a young person growing up in an uncertain world. I believe that stories such as this are not only powerful for those who feel different, but also for those around them. I wanted to write a book with a theme of openness and acceptance that could reach both children and their parents, one that expresses the importance of understanding difference and accepting it as a core part of someone's individuality. HUGO's story is based on my own experience of growing up gay within my family. While I was incredibly close to them, I never felt wholly comfortable expressing who I was until I was a young adult."

**Illustrator inspirations**

"When I read the story, I imagined HUGO as a brave child who believes in empathy in others despite his difference. I let the words inspire my work. I tried to feel his emotions and when I drew his expressions, I mimicked them. I usually picture images in my mind when I read a text. For this book, the ideas for the illustrations appeared quite naturally as I read along, so the only thing I needed to do afterwards was to draw. The story translated beautifully on paper.

I hope that I have created a proud, respectful HUGO with a kind message because this is what I meant to do in this project."

**Educational topics**

This book can be shared with younger children but can also be studied by older students up to a young adult audience. The underlying issue in the book is that of difference and ways in which we treat others. Younger students may also identify with the teasing and loneliness experienced by Hugo. These ideas can be discussed in a general way with this age group.

For older students, Hugo's rainbow may be recognised as a symbol for LGBTIQ social movements (in particular, the rainbow flag) and this can open up specific discussion about gender identity and sexual orientation. It is important to exercise sensitivity in these discussions and create a safe and supportive environment in which students feel comfortable to express their thoughts on these topics, if they wish.

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## Discussion topics

Themes: Diversity, acceptance, difference, kindness, LGBTIQ+

Before reading the book

### Younger students

- Look at the cover and the title. What mark does the boy have on his forehead?
- How do you think he might feel about it?
- What do you think might happen to the boy?
- Who is the author? Who is the illustrator?

### Older students

- What is significant about the type of mark the boy has?
- What might younger readers make of this mark?

After reading the book

### Younger students

- How did Hugo feel at the beginning of the story? How did this change by the end?
- How would you describe the way the other children treated HUGO?
- If you saw someone being treated this way, would you join in? Why or why not?
- If you had a mark like HUGO's, what would you do? Why?
- Why do you think HUGO wanted to find someone else with a rainbow mark?
- What was your favourite part in the story?
- How important do you think finding the girl was to HUGO?

### Older students

- What message do you think this book is trying to convey?
- What might the rainbow mark represent?
- 'Hugo was pleased; he looked almost like everyone else.' Why do you think, at this point of the story, that this was important to HUGO?
- How important is it to find someone who can support you when you feel different?
- Is it okay to be different? What can be some problems with being different from others?
- If you could give advice to HUGO, what would you say to him?  
(Remember that the character is a young child.)

**HUGO** The boy with the curious mark**Additional activities for younger students****THE ARTS****LANGUAGE****Writing**

- Write a story based on HUGO's grandmother's words: 'A little difference is wonderful, and so are you!' Use the story plan on Worksheet 1 to help you.
- Write the story of the girl on the train. How does she feel about her rainbow mark?
- Write a short poem about being lonely. What does it feel like? What is the cure?

**Word study**

- Find the compound words in the story (rainbow, skyscrapers, someday) and make a class list of some more.
- Make a list of all the feeling words in the story. Write synonyms for them.
- Write the five describing words that you like the most in the story.

**ART**

- Make a cartoon strip showing Hugo at the three different stops in the story. Include the people he encounters.
- Complete the colour-me-in pages.
- Draw a picture of yourself with an unusual mark. Show how your friends are reacting to it.
- Create a 'rainbow of kindness'. In each stripe of colour, write words about how we should treat others (e.g. kind, respectful, friendly). (See Worksheet 2 and 3). This can be done on a large canvas or a wall.
- Make paper boat and hide a message in it [Worksheet 4]

**Drama**

- Create a role play with a partner set in a playground that shows one of you being laughed at by the other for being different. Show how the person being teased deals with the situation in a positive way.
- Find a small group to work with and create a series of tableaux that show the major events in the book.

**Additional activities for older students****LANGUAGE/HEALTH EDUCATION**

- Research the use of the rainbow symbol to represent the LGBTIQ community and write a report showing your findings. (See Worksheet 3.)
- Write a poem that explores some of the feelings expressed in Hugo's story.
- Research to write a pamphlet that could help to support LGBTIQ teens.
- With a partner, discuss some ways in which primary schools could better support children with gender diverse identities. Use the internet to find some real examples of schools that have a positive approach to this.

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**Further information**

- Children who are bullied because of their sexual orientation are often subject to some of the most violent bullying incidents.
- Most children begin to express their gender identity at around three years of age.
- Research suggests students from schools with clear policies on LGBTIQ bullying are less likely to report serious bullying issues.

- **Safe Schools Coalition Australia:** please visit

[studentwellbeinghub.edu.au](http://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au)

**Further reading**

Julián is a Mermaid, by Jessica Love

Sparkle Boy, by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Maria Mola

The Terrible Thing That happened to Barnaby Brocket, by John Boyne illustrated by Oliver Jeffers

10,000 dresses by Marcus Ewert, illustrated by Rex Ray

And Tango makes three by Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell and Henry Cole

The boy who cried fabulous by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Peter Ferguson

It's okay to be different by Todd Parr

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Story plan

Write a story based on HUGO's grandmother's words:  
'A little difference is wonderful, and so are you!'. Plan your story in the space below.

1. Think of an animal or a human character who is teased about looking different from others in some way. It might be to do with their hair, ears, clothes or something else.

2. Complete the first sentence of the story here.

..... was born with .....

3. Explain how the character is teased and how it makes him/her feel.

4. Write two things the character does to try to stop the teasing.

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5. What happens at the end of your story? Complete the sentence.

Then, one day,.....

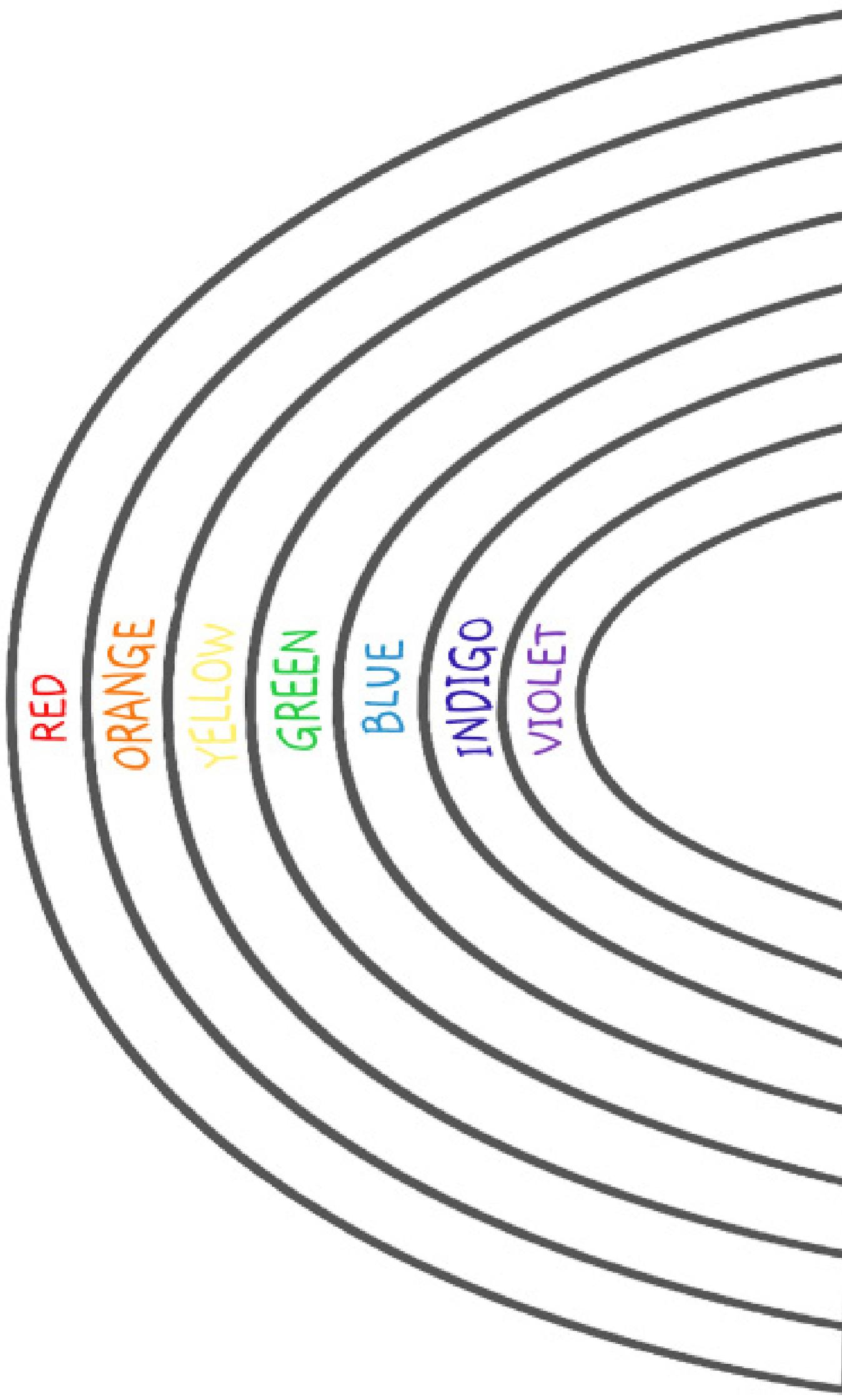
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**Rainbow of kindness [Worksheets 2 &3]**

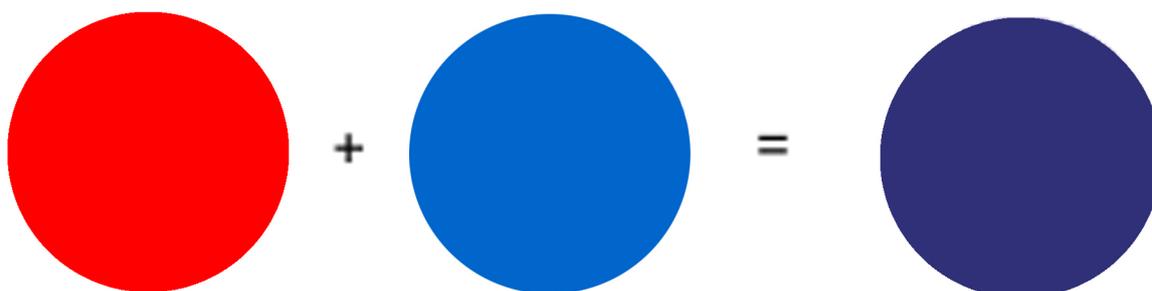
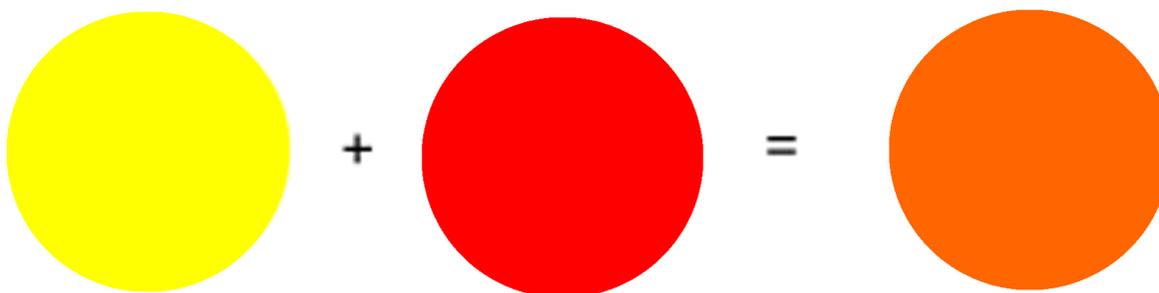
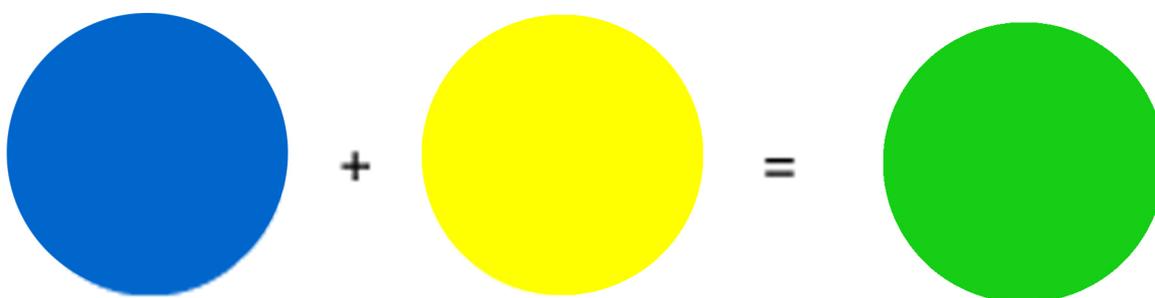
Colour in the rainbow on the next page - or on a large canvas.  
In each rainbow stripe, write words that describe how we should treat other people.  
For example, 'kind' and 'friendly'. Colour the rainbow correctly.

How many colours can you count in a rainbow?  
List them below.





# HOW TO MAKE RAINBOW COLORS



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Rainbow research

Use this worksheet to guide your research about the LGBTIQ rainbow symbol. When you have finished the questions, write a report that would be suitable for an online newspaper. Use at least four subheadings.

1. Who created the rainbow pride flag?
  
2. Why was a rainbow chosen as an appropriate symbol?
  
3. How has the flag changed over time?
  
4. What does each colour in the current flag represent?
  
5. Write three extra interesting facts you discovered about the rainbow flag.
  - 
  - 
  -

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### Planning a picture book

Plan your own 24-page picture book based on a social issue; e.g. poverty, racism, special needs or homelessness. It should be a fiction book with one main character. Think carefully about the words and images you will choose so that they will be appropriate for your target audience. You can use **The boy with the curious mark** and other picture books for inspiration. Write your initial ideas below.

**Issue:**

**Target age:**

**Character/s:**

**Setting:**

**Plot ideas:**

2. Create a 'dummy' picture book by stapling sheets of paper together. Add your text and either sketch or describe your picture ideas for each page.



### Create a paper boat - see Worksheet 4

Who is HUGO sending this paper boat to?  
Did he hide a secret message in it?

Here are comments from the author and illustrator:

#### **Manuela Adreani - Illustrator**

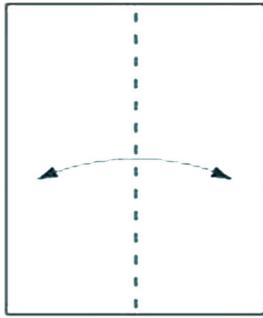
'Water represents emotions. Hugo is wishing to find someone like him and tries to send a metaphorical message to the world, symbolised by a paper boat.'

#### **Yohann Devezy - Author**

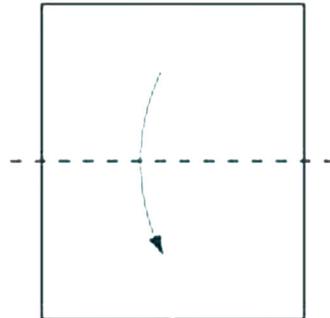
'This silent illustration powerfully represents the time one might spend reflecting in solitude.'

I like that Hugo is sending out a paper boat on the water, similar to a message in a bottle.  
I like to imagine that he has written a note telling of his secret wishes for his future.  
Or perhaps comforting words to his younger self.'

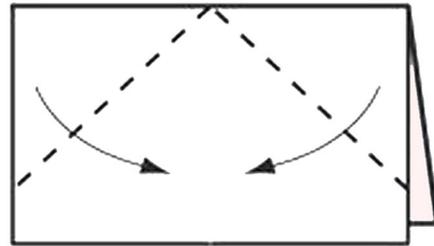
# How to make a paper boat



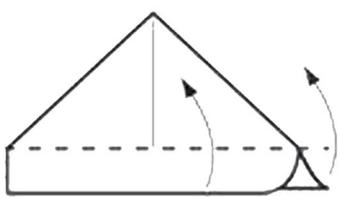
step 1  
Fold in half



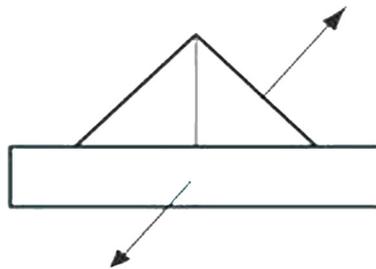
step 2  
Fold in half again



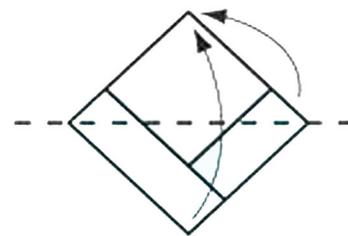
step 3  
Fold in corners



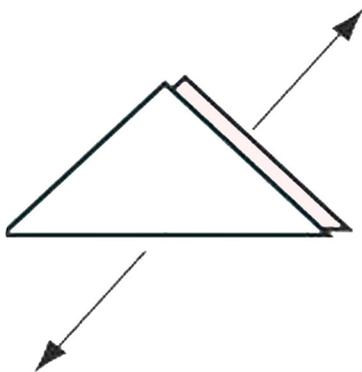
step 4  
Fold up edges -  
both sides



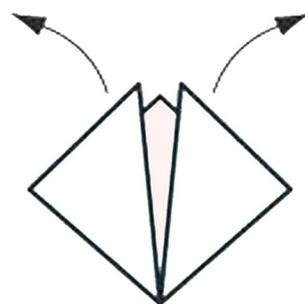
step 5  
Pull the sides out,  
flatten



step 6  
Fold front and  
back layers  
up



step 7  
Pull sides apart,  
flatten

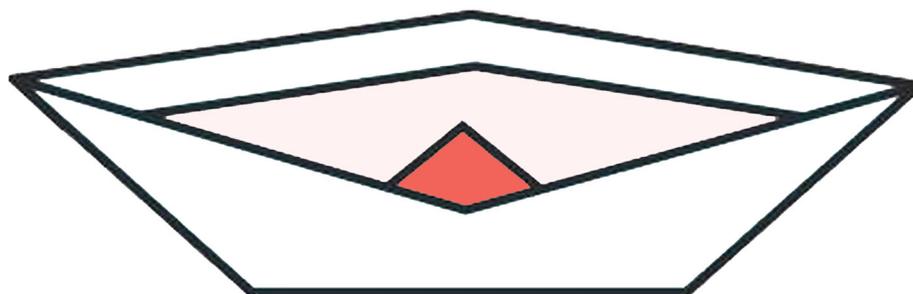


step 8  
Pull top flaps  
outwards



step 9  
Flatten the bottom,  
pull the sides out

10. Voilà!





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