

# Teachers guide: Ecclesiastes

How do we go about teaching Ecclesiastes to kids? We rarely hear it taught to adults. But it is such an important book and deeply relevant in shaping our understanding of life and God.

It's important to read Ecclesiastes in the context of the whole Bible, and try and see the big picture of the book. I do not have space to give a full commentary. However, in this guide I wish to highlight some ideas that I have tried to bring across in the lessons.

## The hope that does disappoint

Ecclesiastes is a book of disillusionment and disappointment. This is a very relevant and honest echo of living life. In general, as young people we have hopes and dreams of the future, and then as we age reality sets in and these start to fade. Most of us do not achieve our dreams, and the few that do find that success is not all it's cracked up to be.

We can find all sorts of positive messages on inspirational mugs and calendars

- You can achieve anything if you believe it
- Everything will work out. It just will.
- Follow your heart and nothing is impossible
- Smile, and the whole world smiles with you
- Karma: What you give is what you get returned.
- Wish upon a star and your dreams will come true.

**These ideas are just not true. They are false hopes.**

It is important to develop a healthy cynicism about these ideas, and not to put our hope in them. Life is hard and unfair, and it's important to acknowledge this in the way that the author of Ecclesiastes does. We are not designed to find our deepest fulfilment and meaning apart from knowing God.

God does not call us to look at life through rose tinted spectacles, but to face its brutal realities. He does not shelter those that love him from the hardships of the world. He allows us to experience its tragedies and disappointments. Part of his plan for those that love him is uprooting our hope from the things that do disappoint so that we can put our hope in him who does not. (Romans 5:5).

## Happiness in the world

Many people who do not know God develop a contented enjoyment of life, accepting the highs and lows and making the most of the happiness to be had. We can find a strong fulfilment in career and family. It's possible to focus on the beauty

rather than the sadness of the world. Many unbelievers have learned to rise above disillusionment and appreciate life.

However, God has designed us for more than this. He has made us to know him, the God of the whole universe, and to love him. This is the only place we can find our deepest fulfilment, meaning, and purpose.

C.S. Lewis says that our issue is not that our desire for happiness is too strong. It's that it's too weak. We are too easily satisfied filling our lives with things of the world when God wants to give us something better. Himself.

## **When I know God, why do I feel sad?**

As Christians we experience times of deep sadness. This does not indicate lack of trust in God. Self-pity is sin but not all sadness comes into this category. Jesus himself was 'a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief (Isaiah 53:3) and when his friends wept over the death of Lazarus, he wept with them, entering into their sadness at loss and the brokenness of the world (John 11:35)

Grief is a valid and vital part of our Christian walk. Joy does not mean a permanent state of happiness. He wants to give us a joy that goes beyond our circumstances, and even how we feel, but who we know: God himself.

A passage that expresses life's ups and downs so well is Ecclesiastes 3:1-12, where there truly is a time for everything.

Rather than seeing the valleys and lows in life as something to be avoided at all costs, we can embrace them as a part of God's plan for us. God allows the difficult times to give us depth and draw us close to him, and as a part of the life-long journey of uprooting our hope in the world and putting it in God.

We can know that if we live life without God 'everything is meaningless' Ecclesiastes 1:1-2. But that when we entrust our lives to God and follow him, nothing is wasted. and he works everything for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28). He makes everything meaningful.

The answer is not to dwell in self-pity, or to go to the other extreme of pretending to ourselves that nothing is wrong. Instead we can share our grief and joy with God and find comfort in his presence through every step of our life.

## **Our search for happiness**

Our search for happiness and fulfilment is normal and healthy, but let us not search in the wrong place. God has put eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We are never satisfied with this life because God has called us to eternal life. We are never filled with any amount of success or praise or possessions because we are designed

to be filled with God's Spirit. No relationship can make us feel whole because we are designed to be in relationship with the God of the whole universe who knows us and loves us perfectly. Our souls are never at rest until we know God.

In conclusion, Ecclesiastes can serve as a reminder to us to change our perspective and lift our eyes to God, rather than looking to the world. We can develop a strong and healthy disbelief of the hope that the world gives, and put our hope in God.

## **But how do I teach this to kids?**

Children tend to think in a way that is concrete, and many of these ideas we have talked about are very abstract. They are also outside of the sphere of children's experience.

The best way I know how to teach an idea to a child is to tell a story. This helps to hold their attention and to bring the idea home.

I have written two stories about a knight called Sir Lived A Lot on a quest for happiness. These stories correspond to two basic lessons.

1. Searching for happiness in this world.
2. Knowing God, but still feeling sad.

The idea of these lessons is not that children will become an overnight expert in Ecclesiastes, but to begin to consider these ideas and to shape their thoughts about life. I hope that you will find the following lessons helpful.

## Ecclesiastes script 2

There is a time for everything Ecclesiastes 3:1-11

Key lesson idea: Life is full of ups and downs, and God wants us to share our whole life with him and be with us.

Introduction: Do you ever feel sad? We all feel sad sometimes. And today, so did sir lived a lot. Let's have a story.

(the numbers indicate slide numbers)

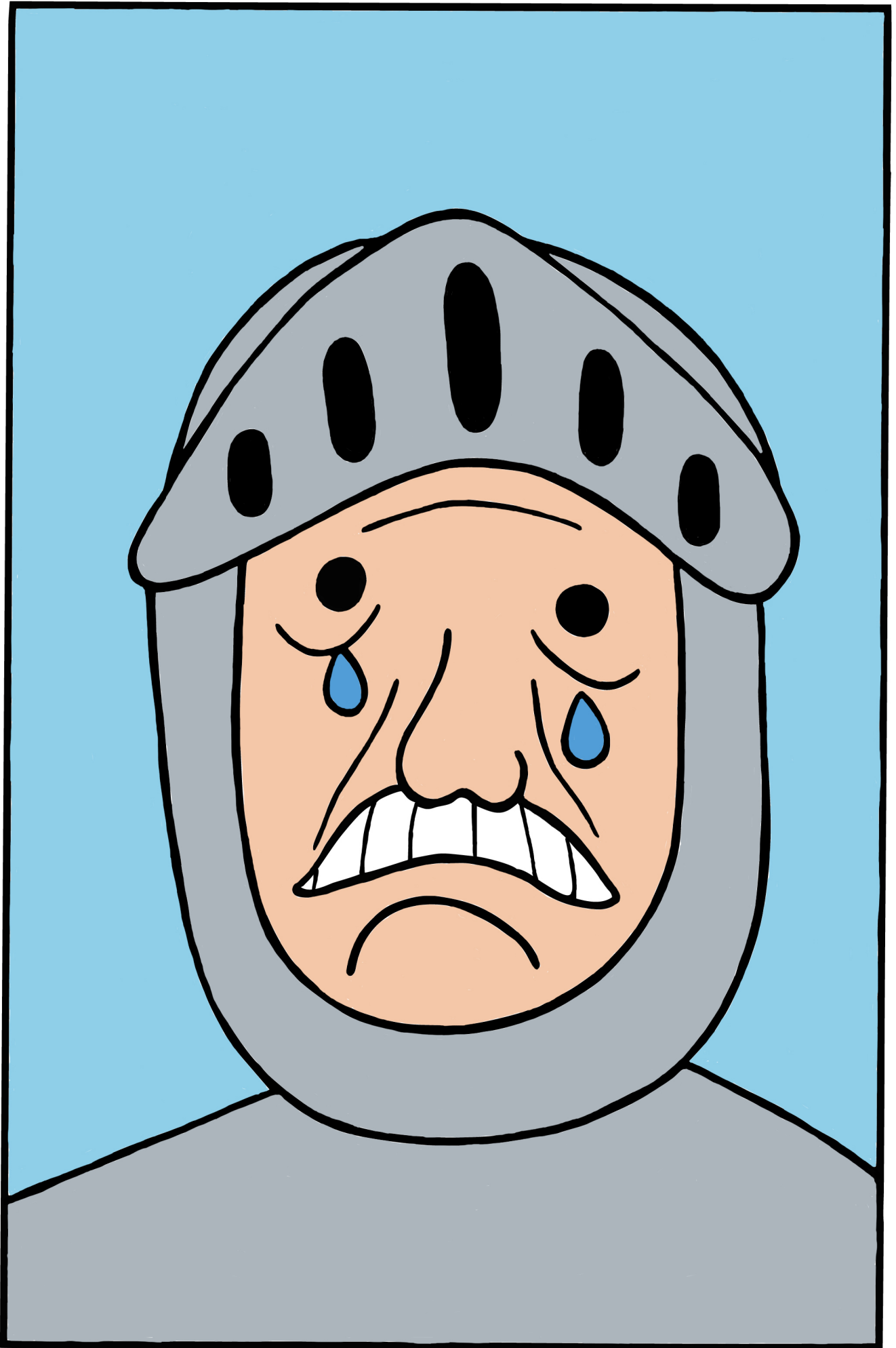
1. Sir lived a lot felt sad today. What is the point of having the golden happy face if I don't feel happy? He asked the king.
2. The king replied. Life can be like a roller coaster, full of highs and lows, ups and downs and turn arounds.
3. Life is always changing with different seasons. There is a time for everything under the sun
4. There's a time to be born
5. And a time to die
6. There's a time to plant
7. And a time to harvest
8. There's a time to kill
9. and a time to heal
10. There's a time to break down
11. And a time to build up
12. There's a time to weep
13. And a time to laugh
14. A time to mourn
15. and a time to dance.
16. a time to cast away stones

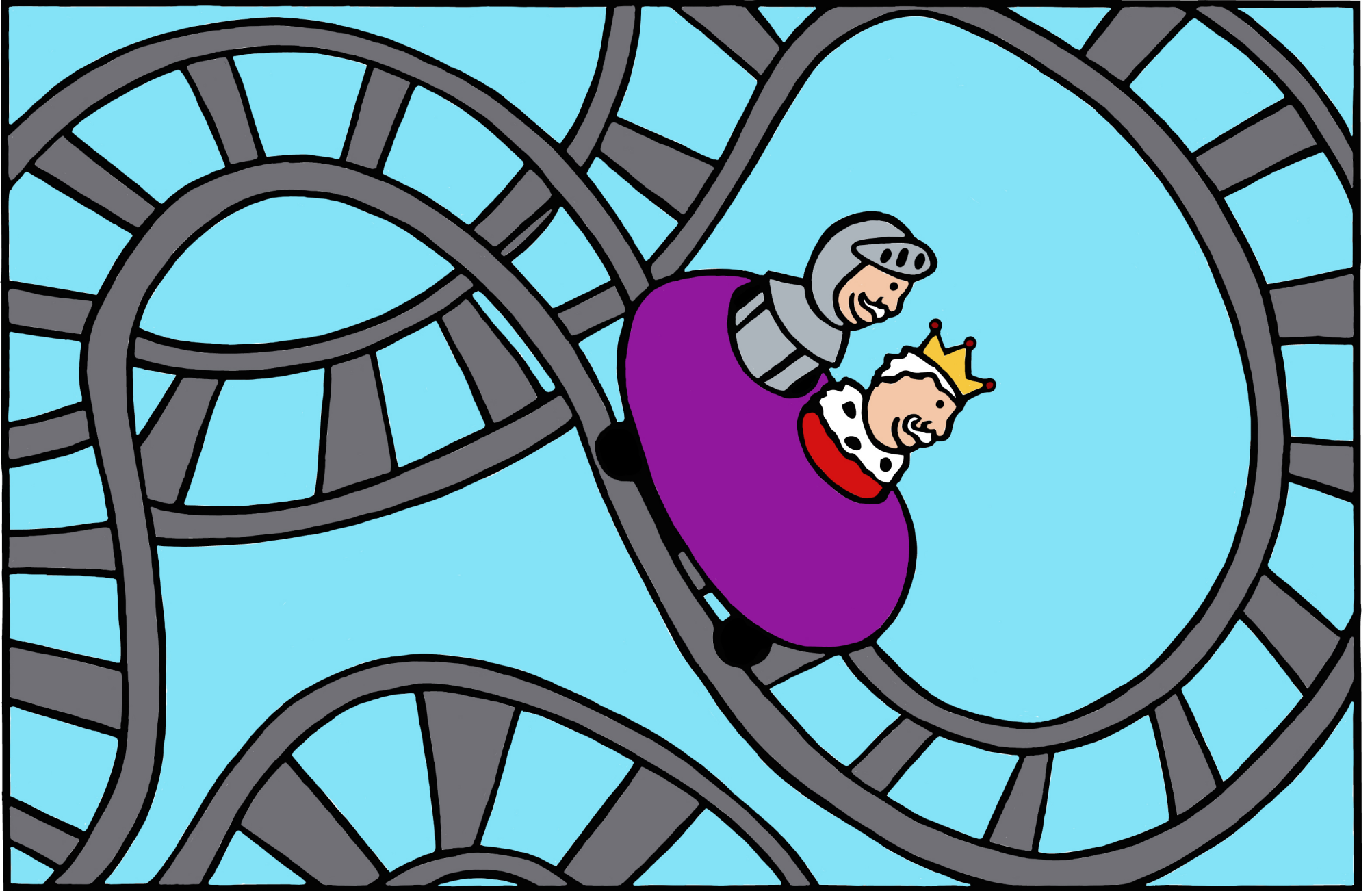
17. and a time to gather stones
18. a time to hug
19. and a time not to hug
20. a time to seek
21. and a time to lose
22. A time to keep
23. and a time to cast away
24. A time to tear
25. and a time to sew
26. a time to keep silent
27. and a time to speak
28. a time to love
29. and a time to hate
30. A time for war
31. and a time for peace
32. And I make everything beautiful in its time.
33. So, share your life with me. All of it. Share you're joy with me
34. And share your sadness with me. Sad days are a part of life's journey, but I want to walk with you. Because having the golden happy face is deeper then what is happening, or even how you feel. It is about who you know.

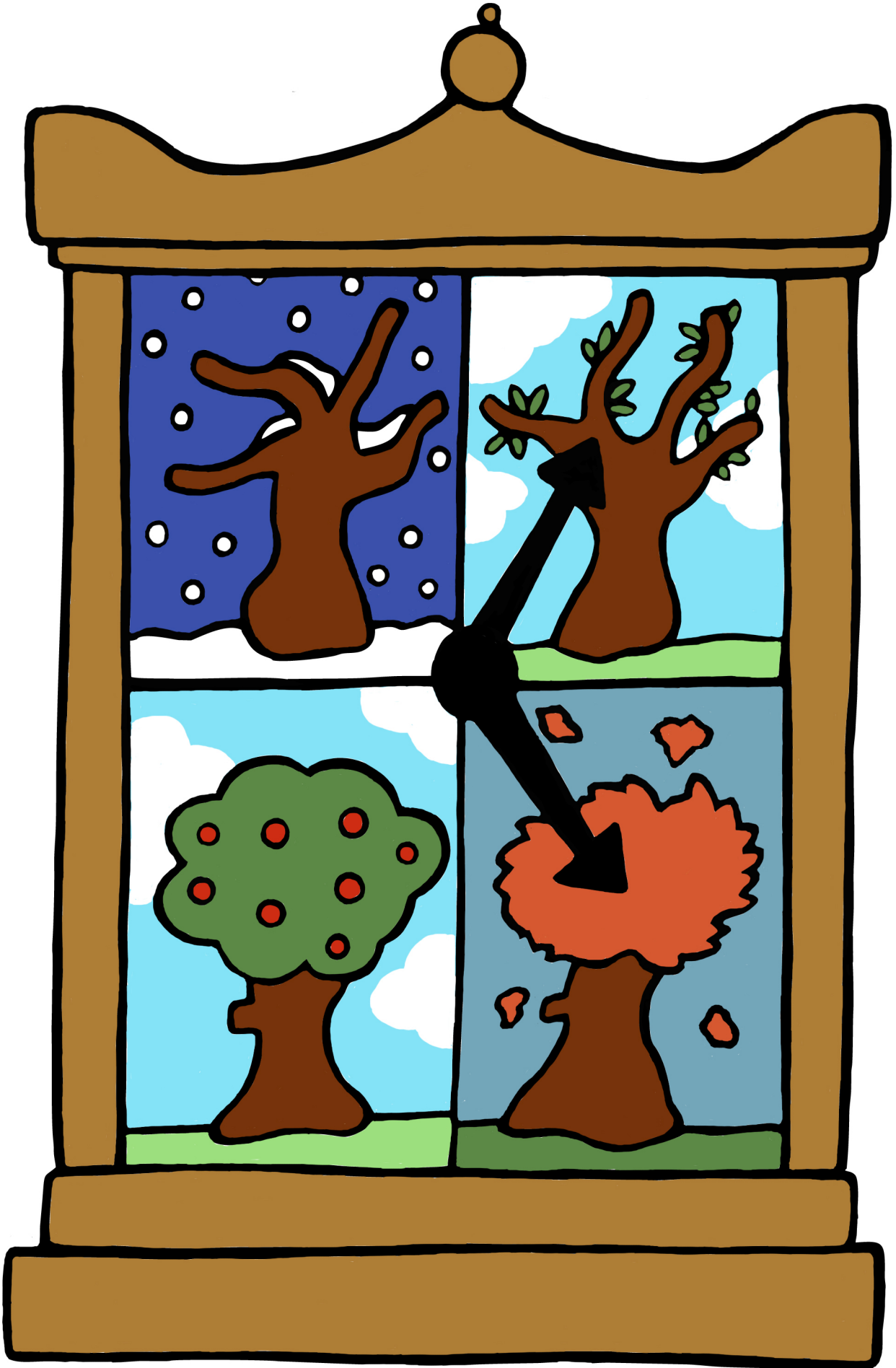
Discussion points:

Talking about times when we feel sad and disappointed.

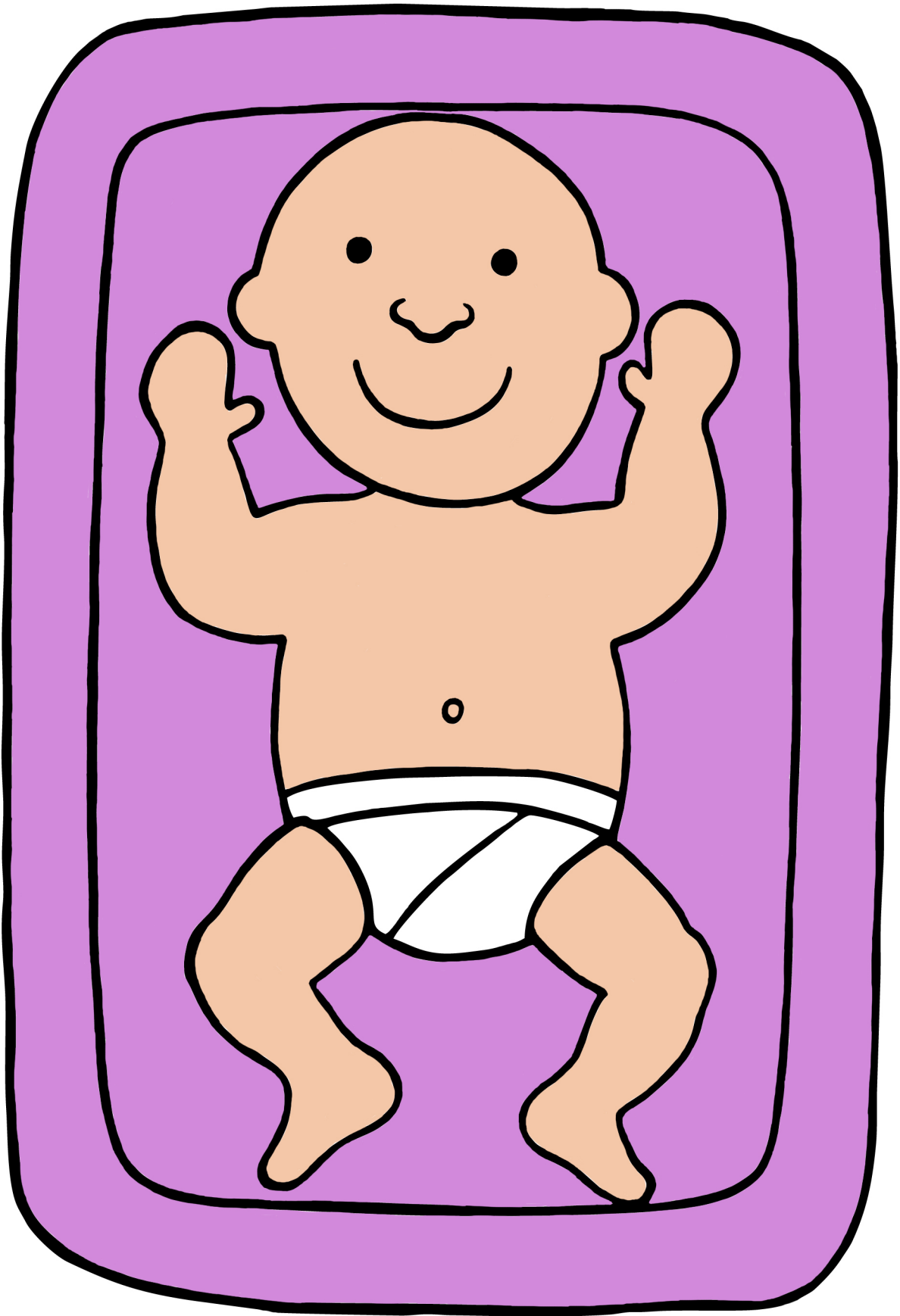
Prayer time: Talking to God about our sad feelings.

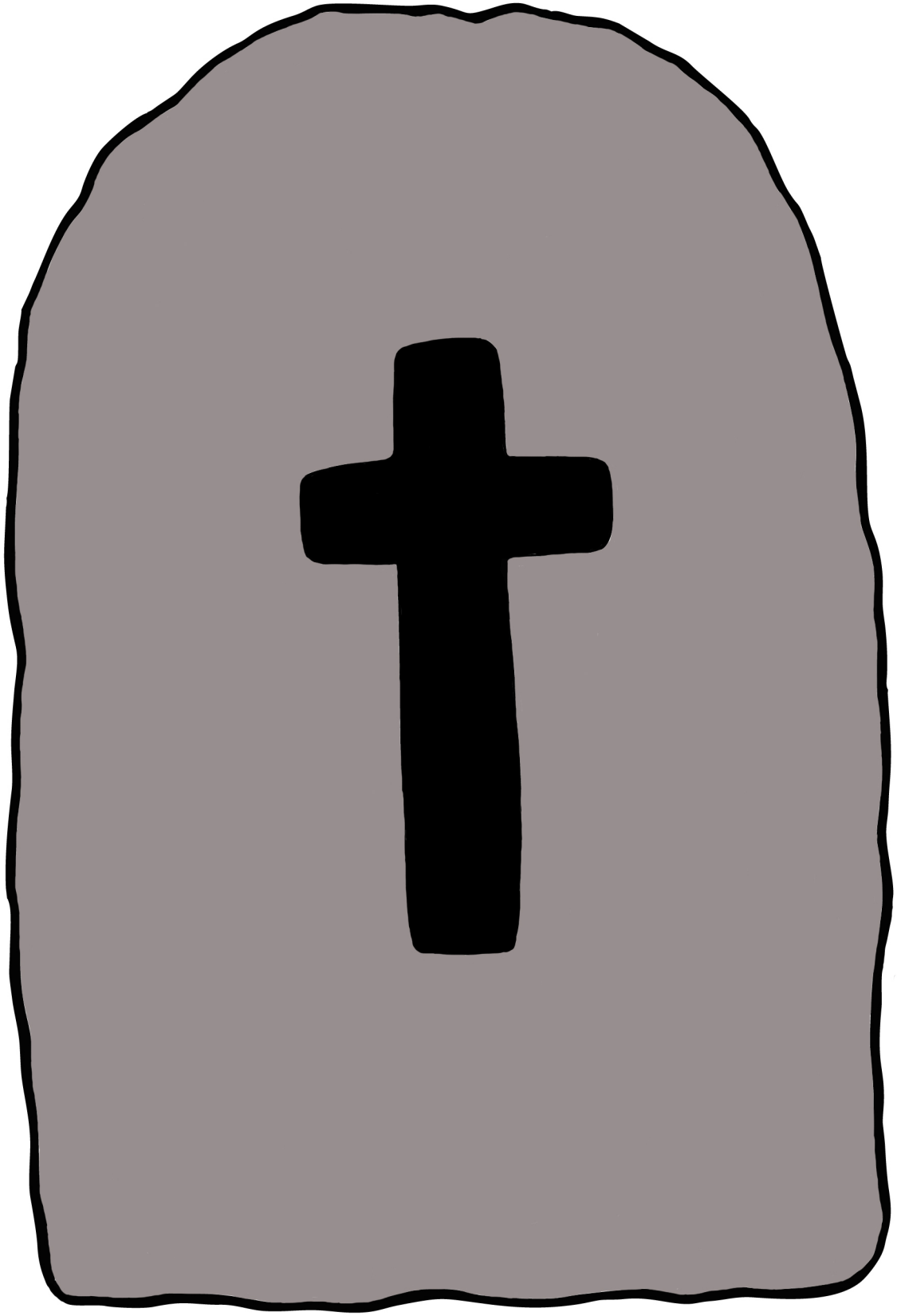


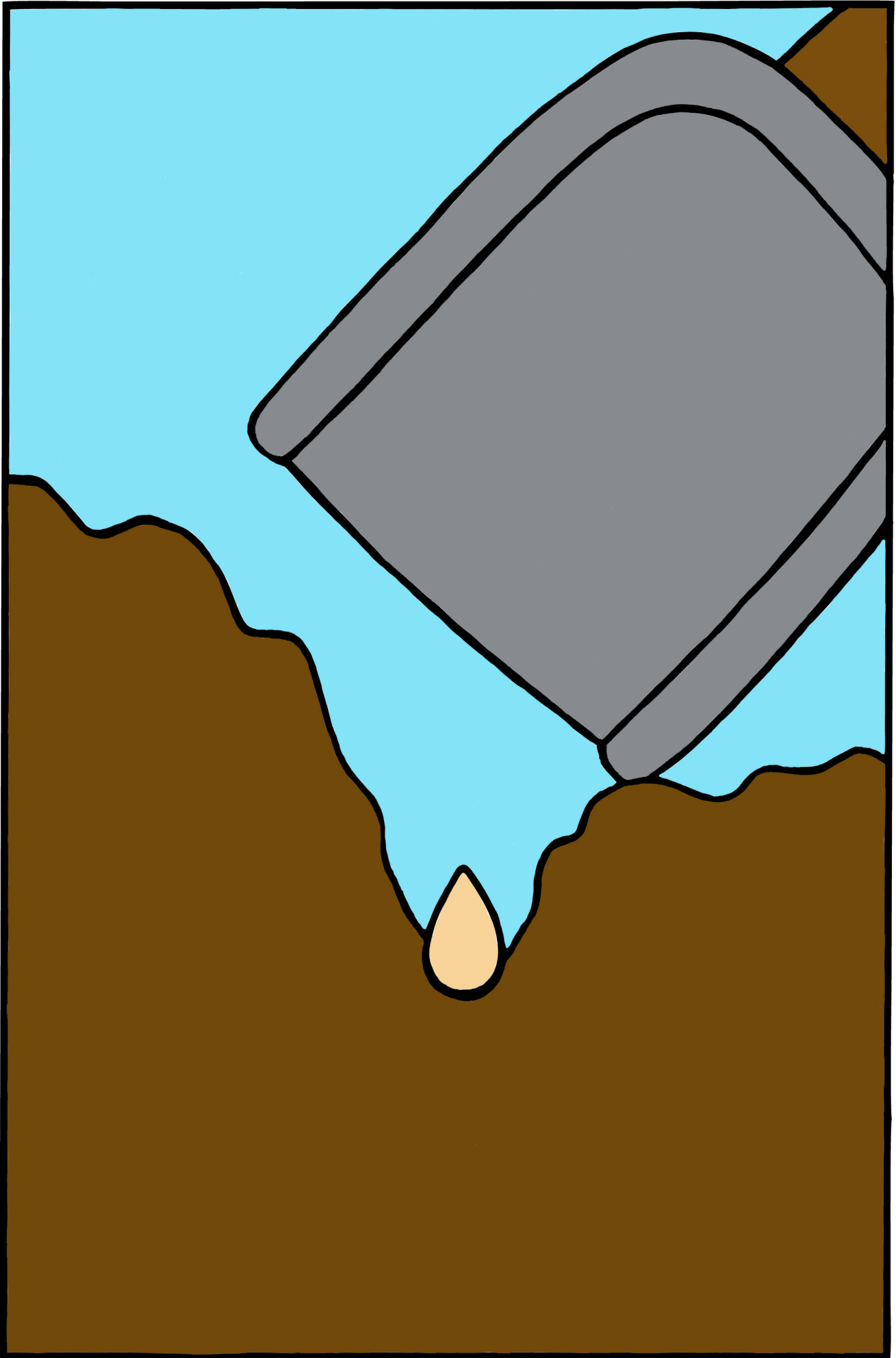


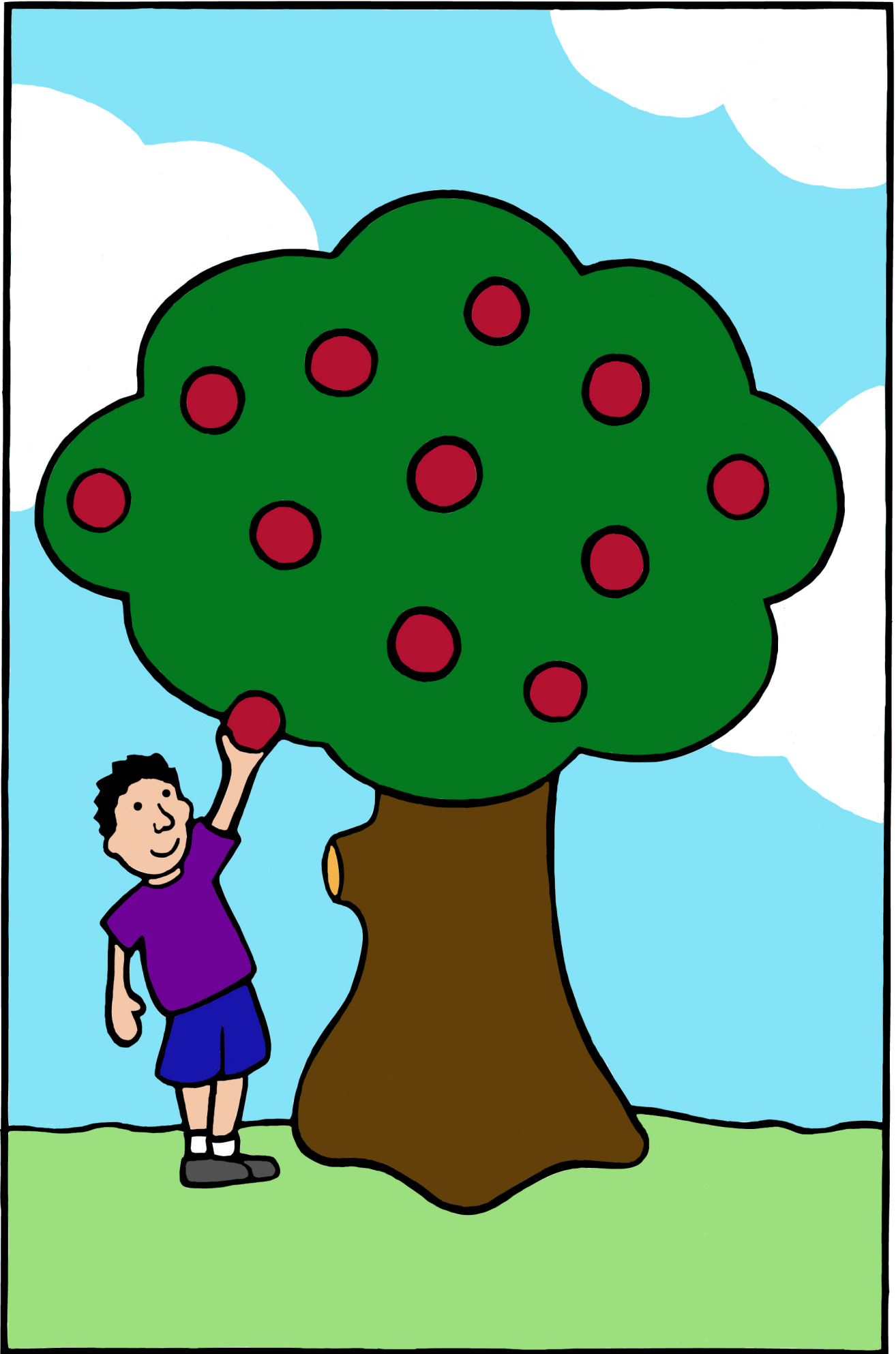


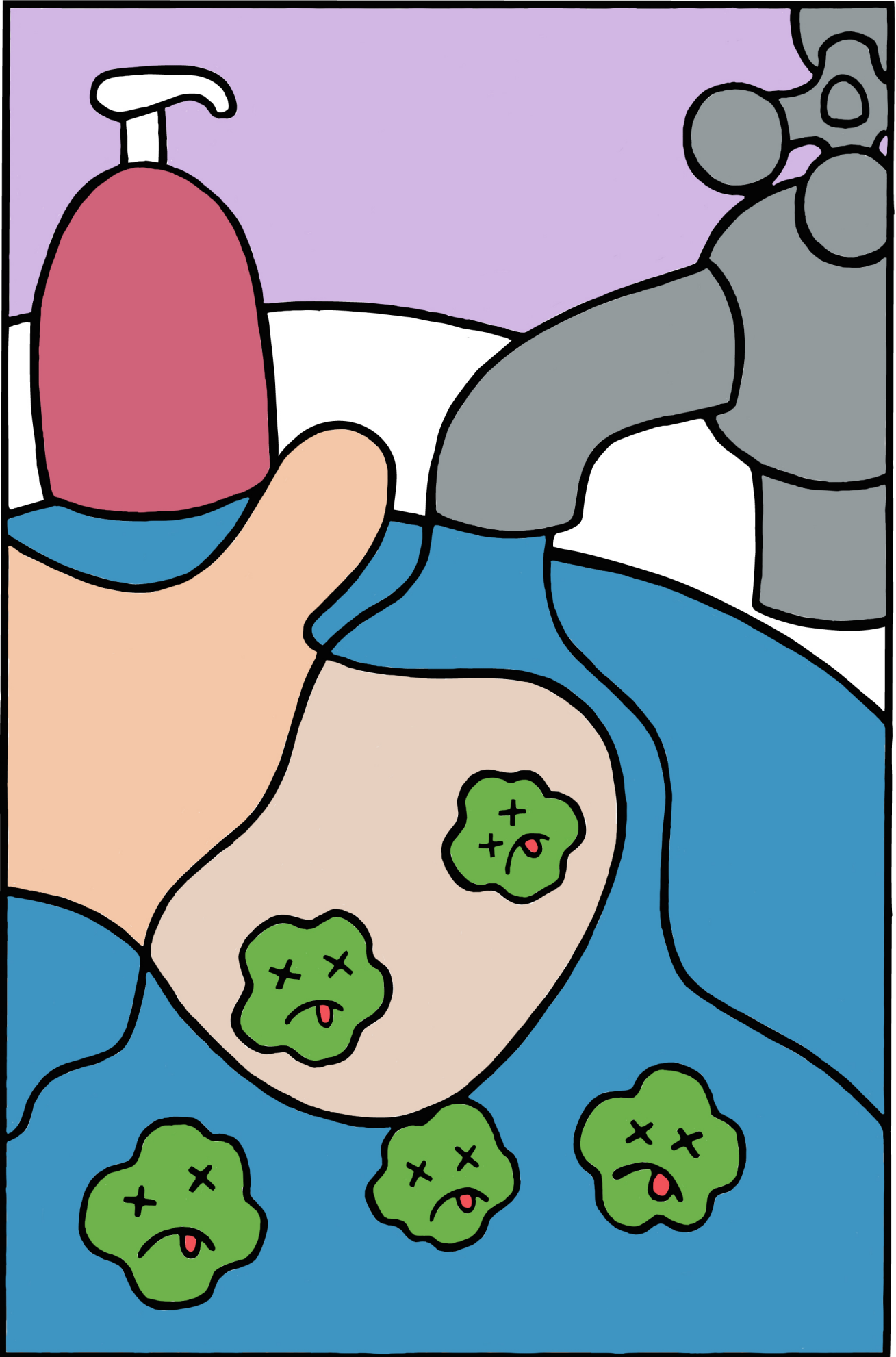


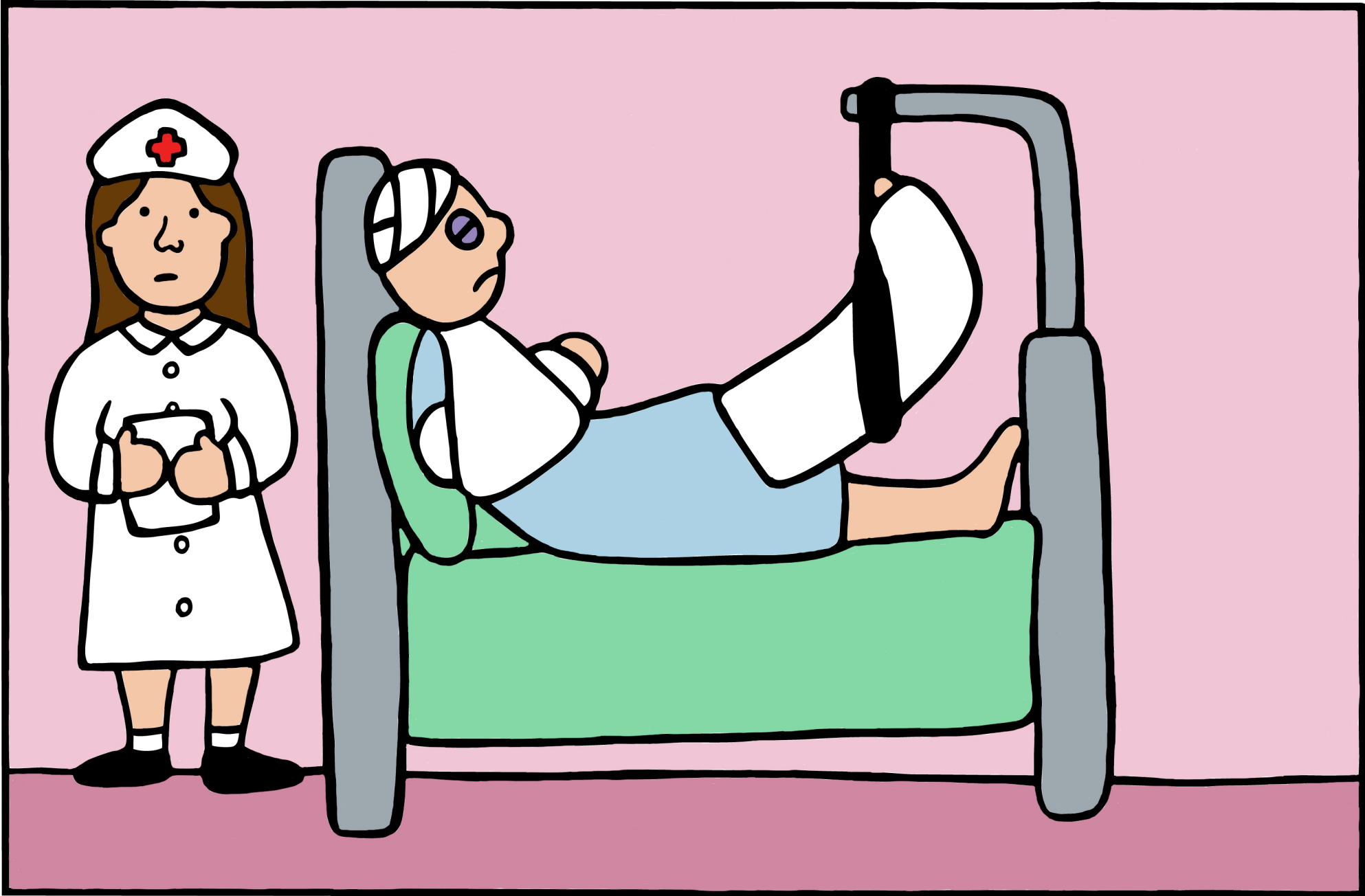


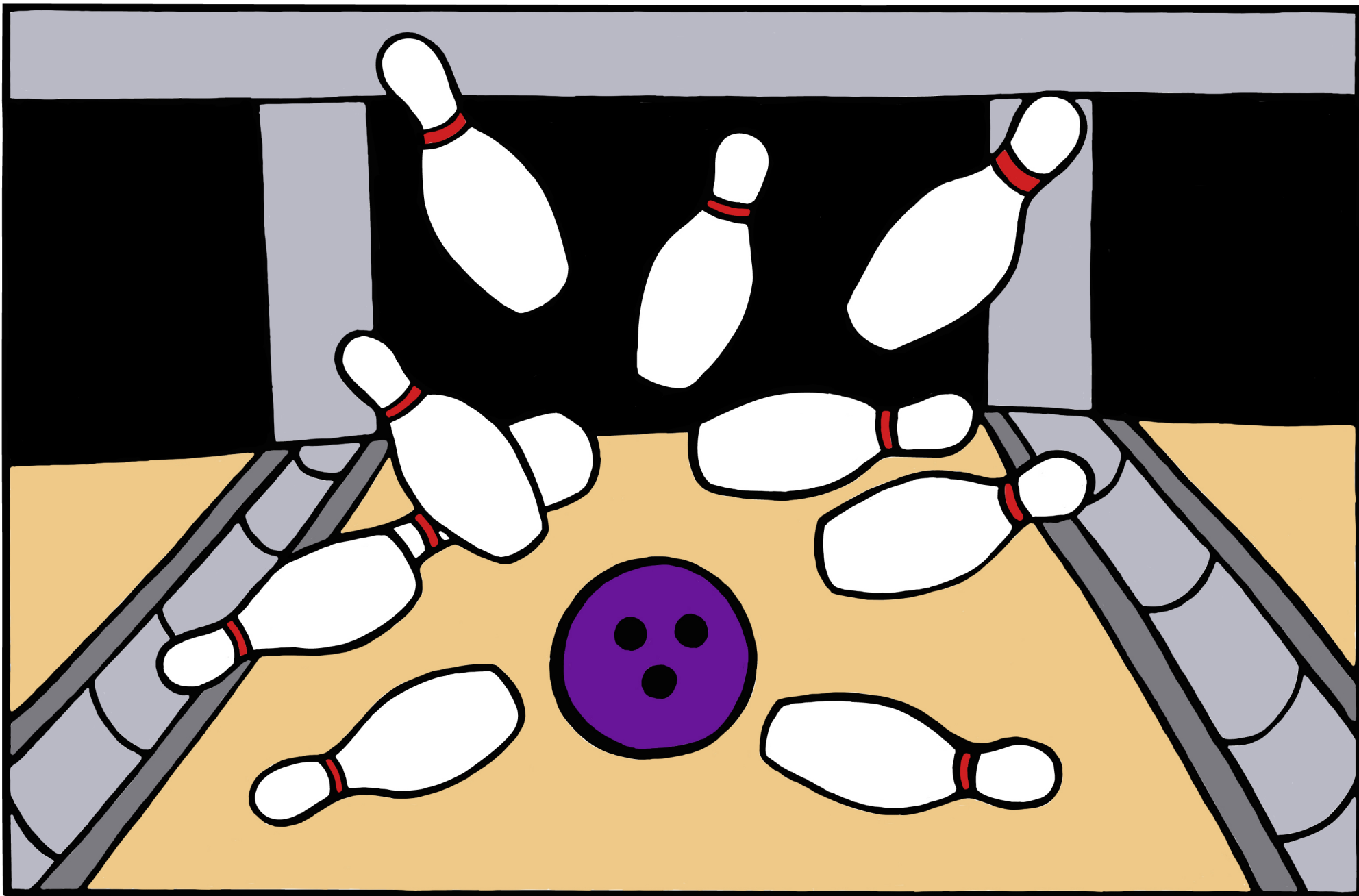


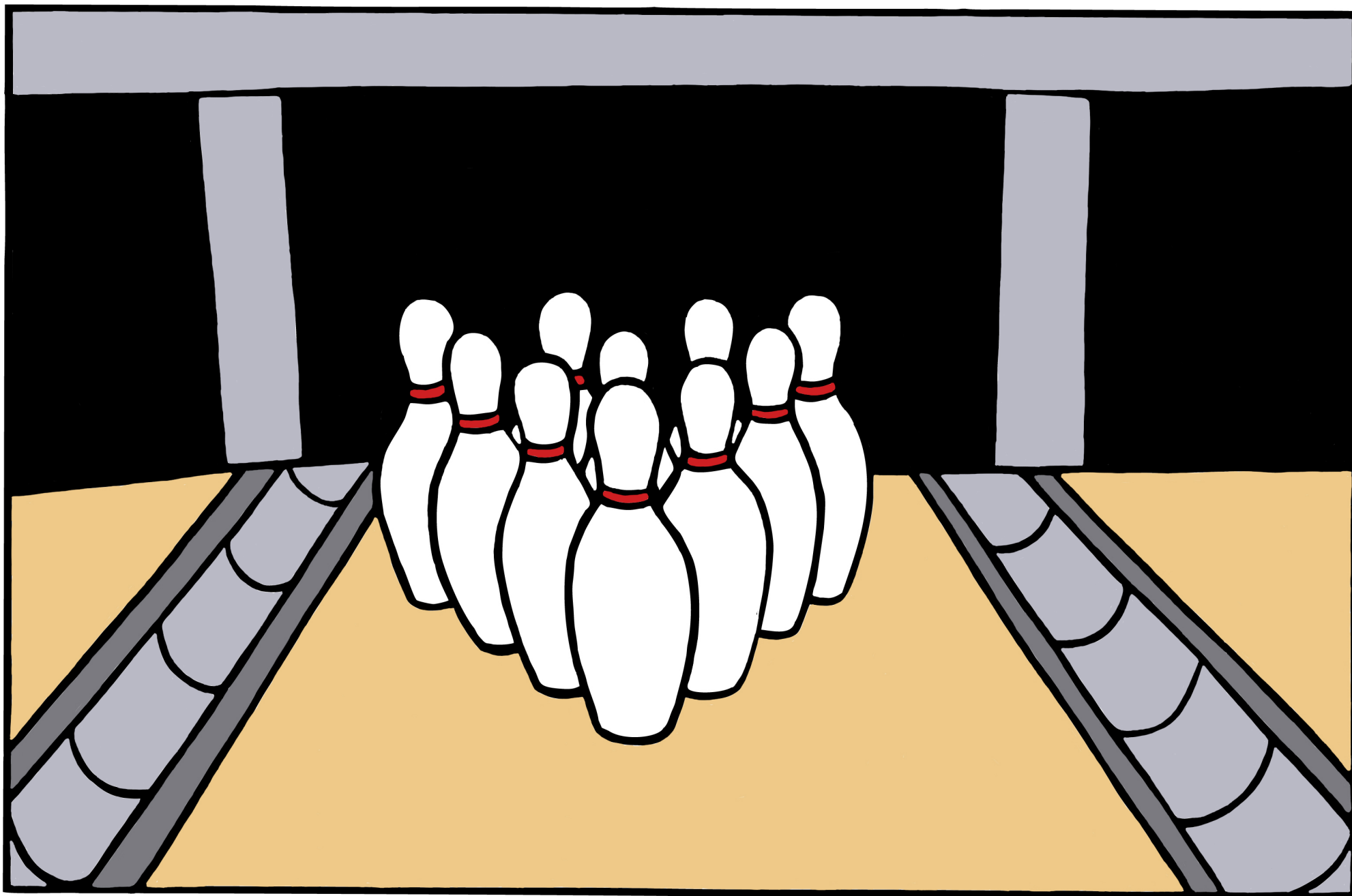




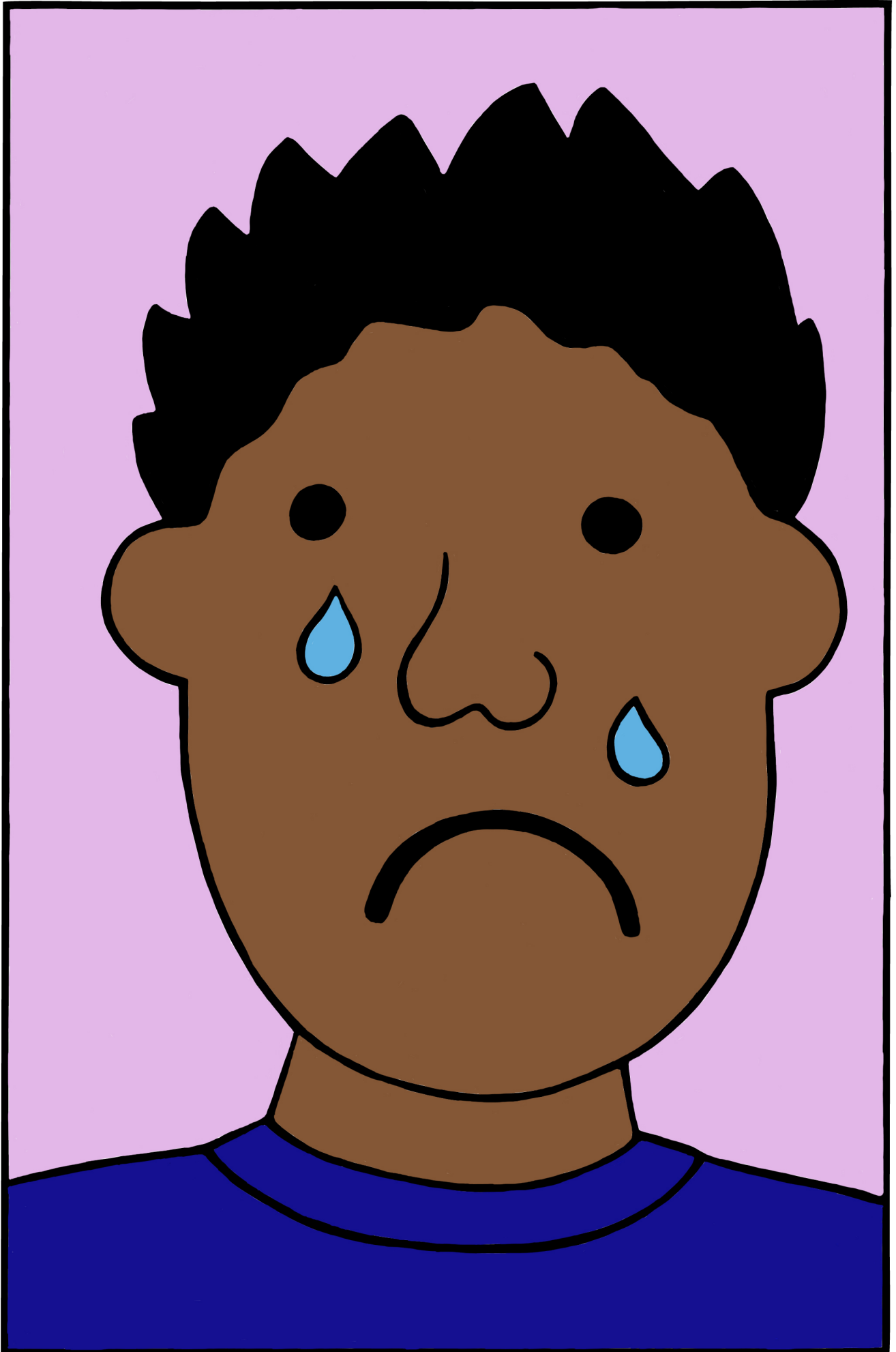


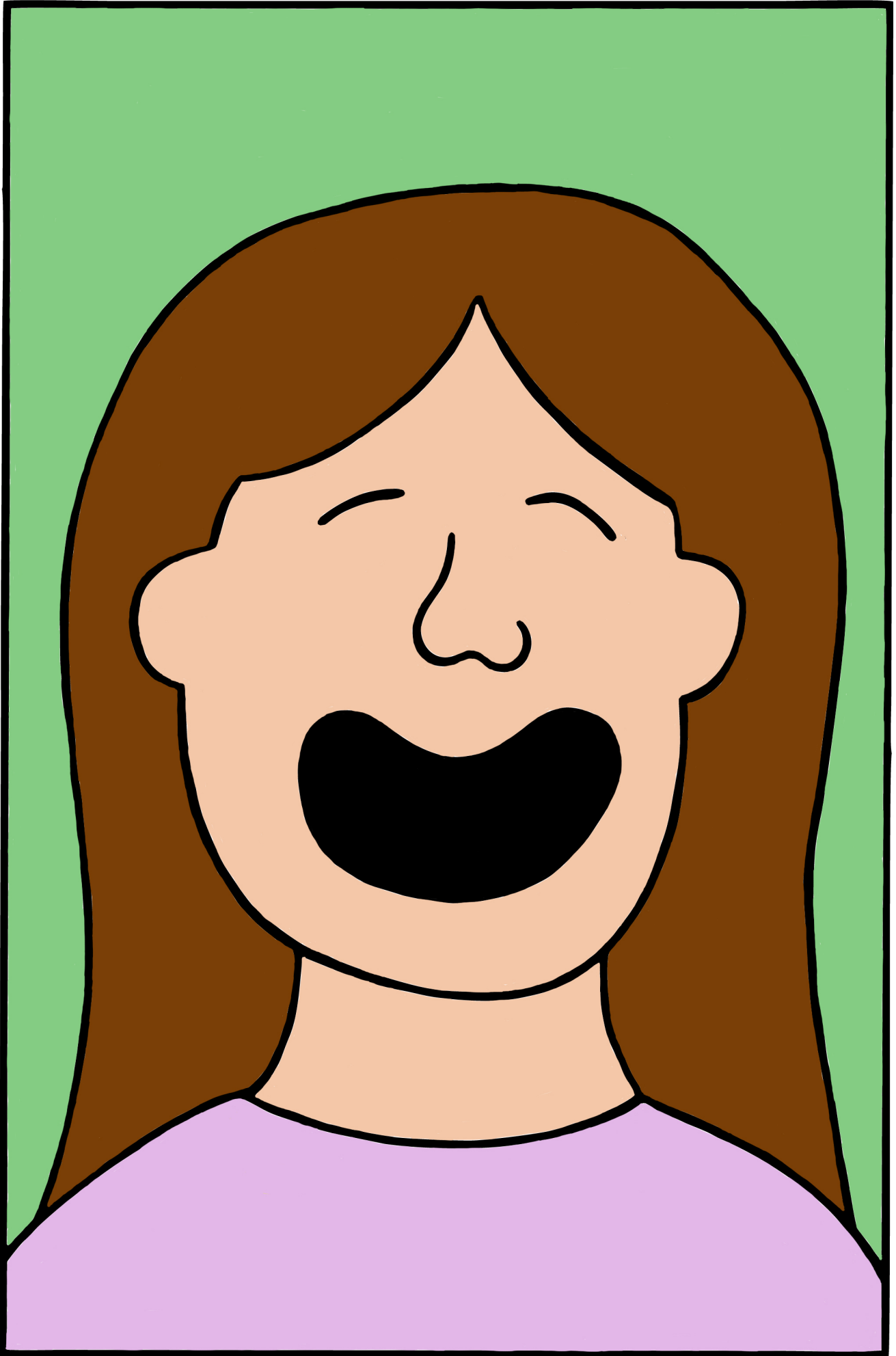


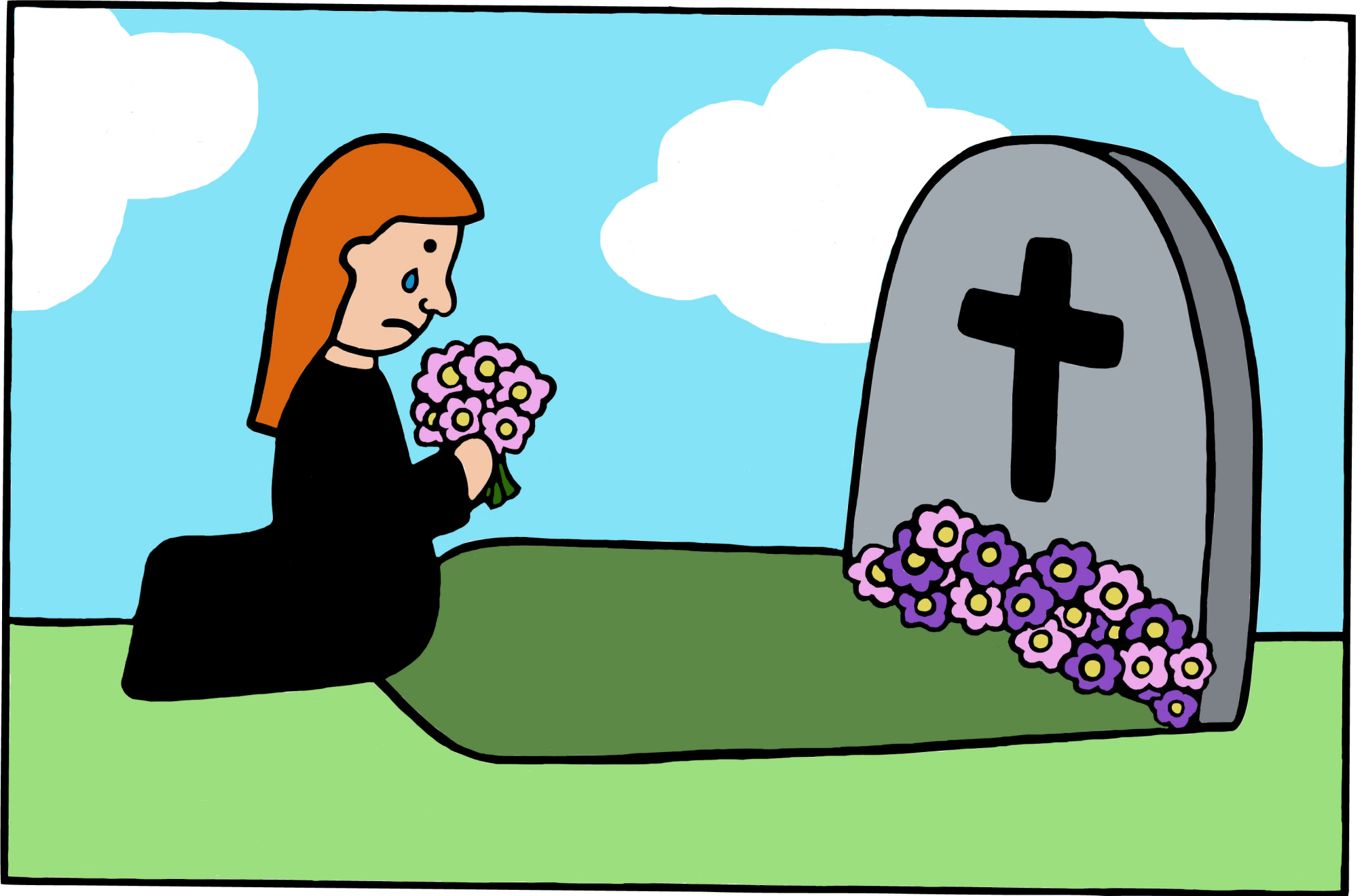


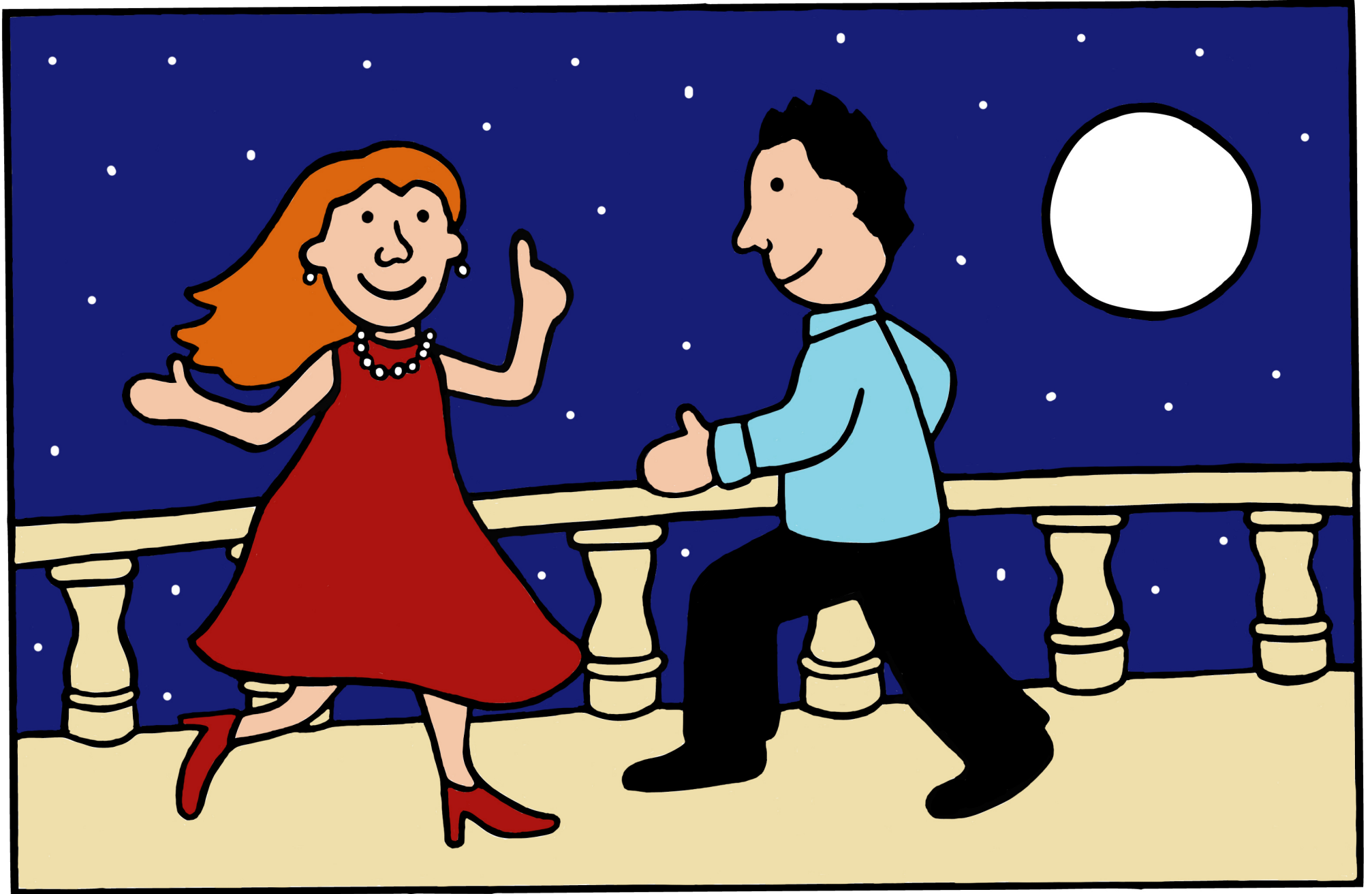


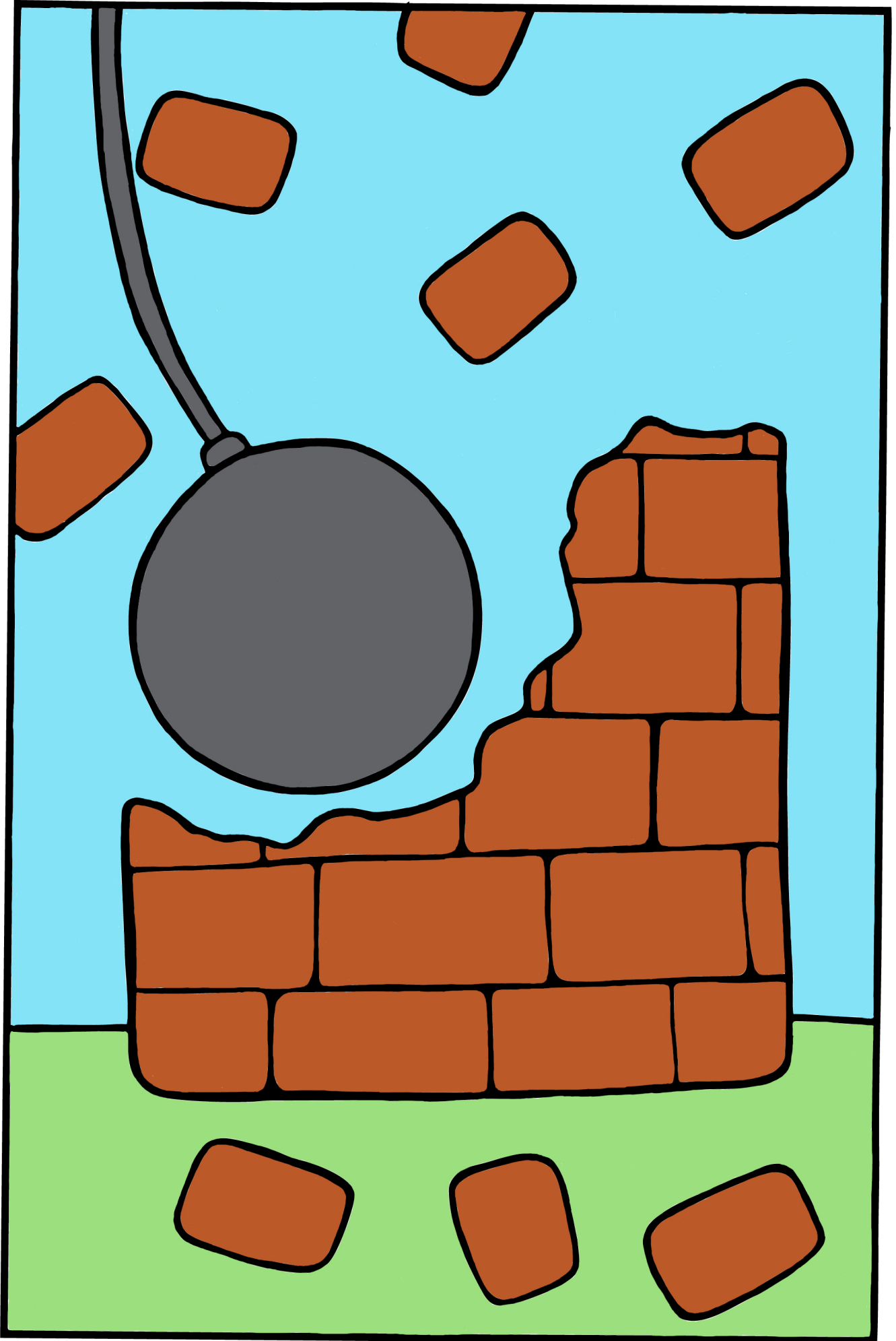


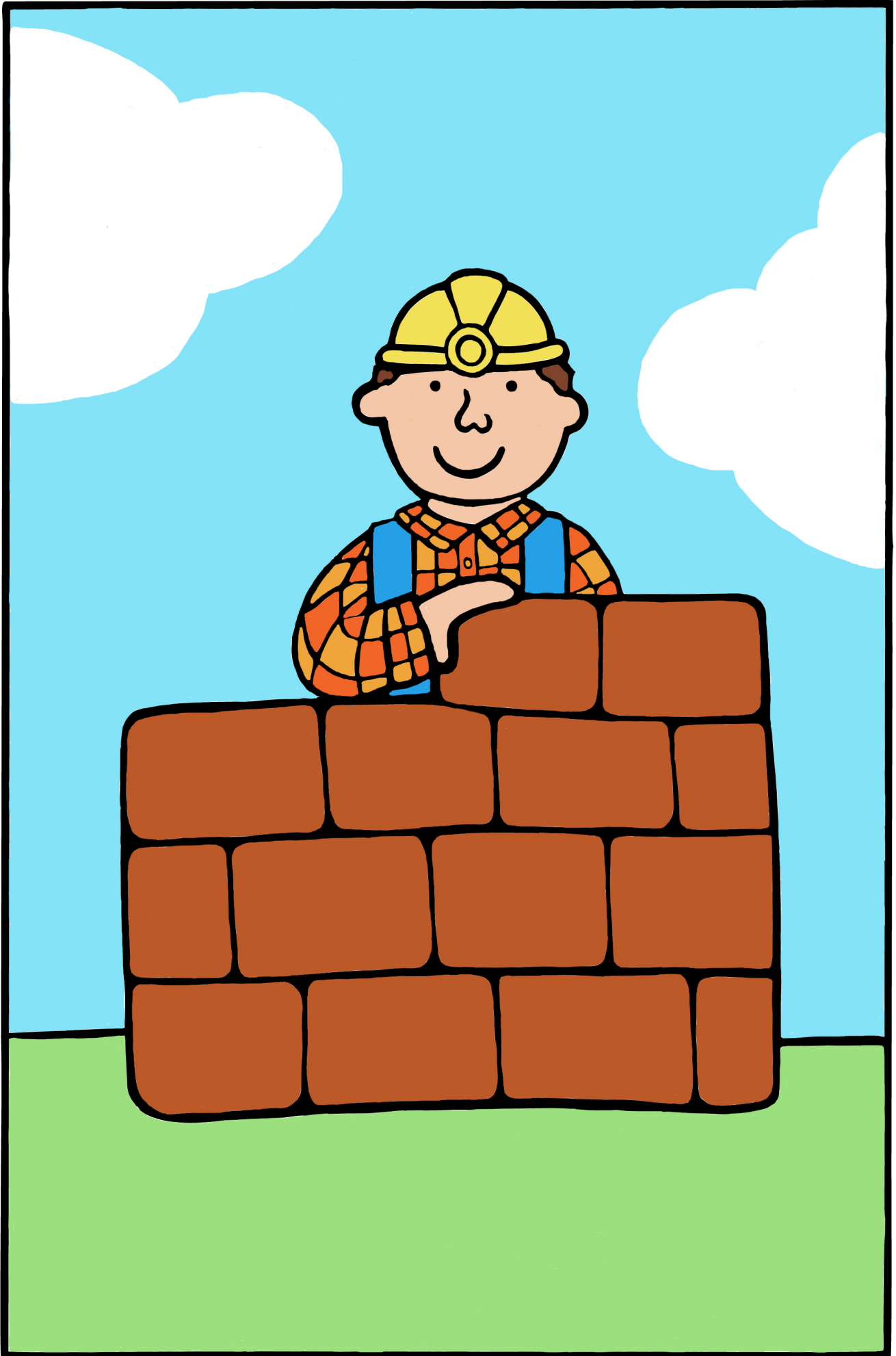




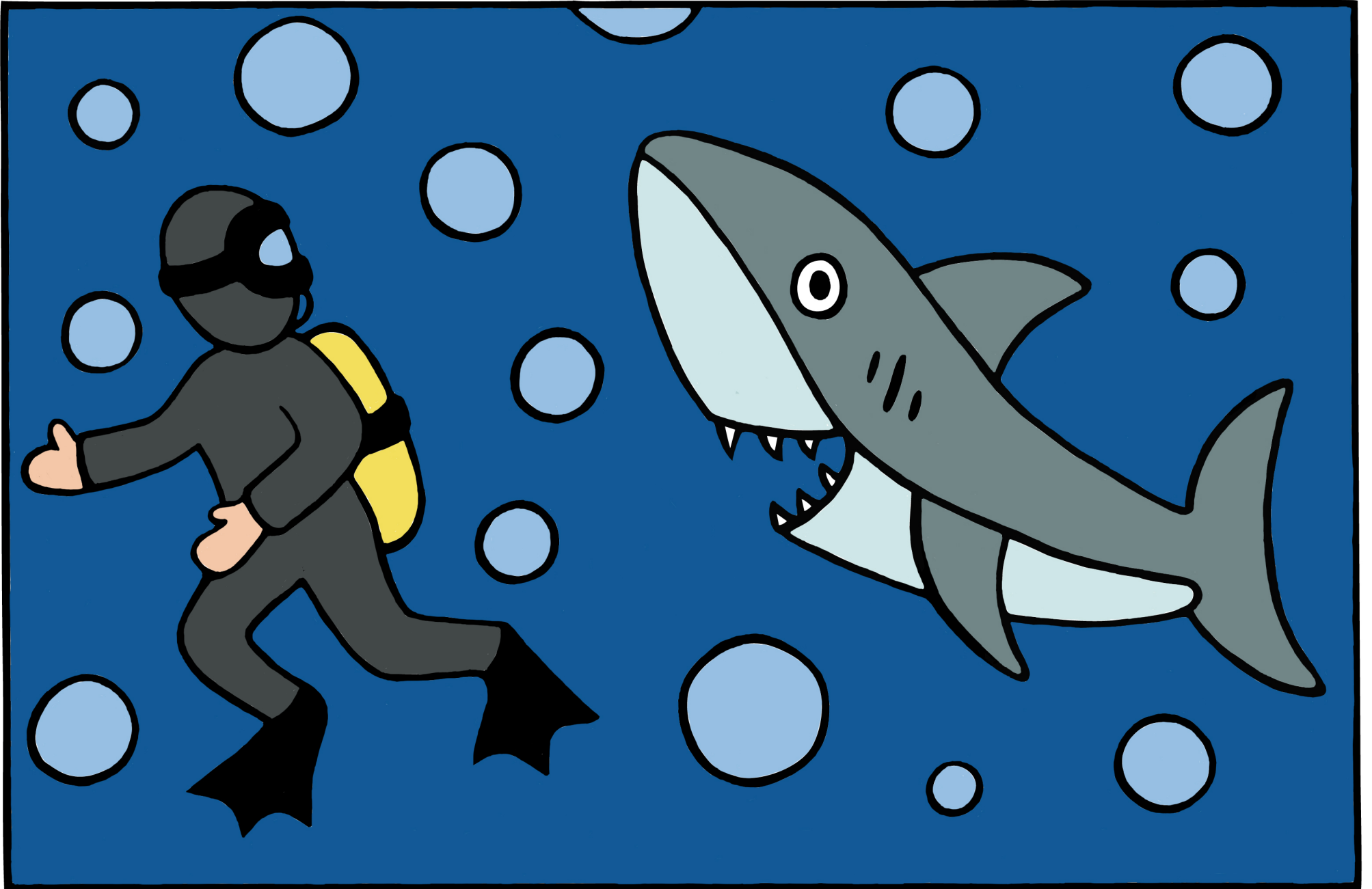




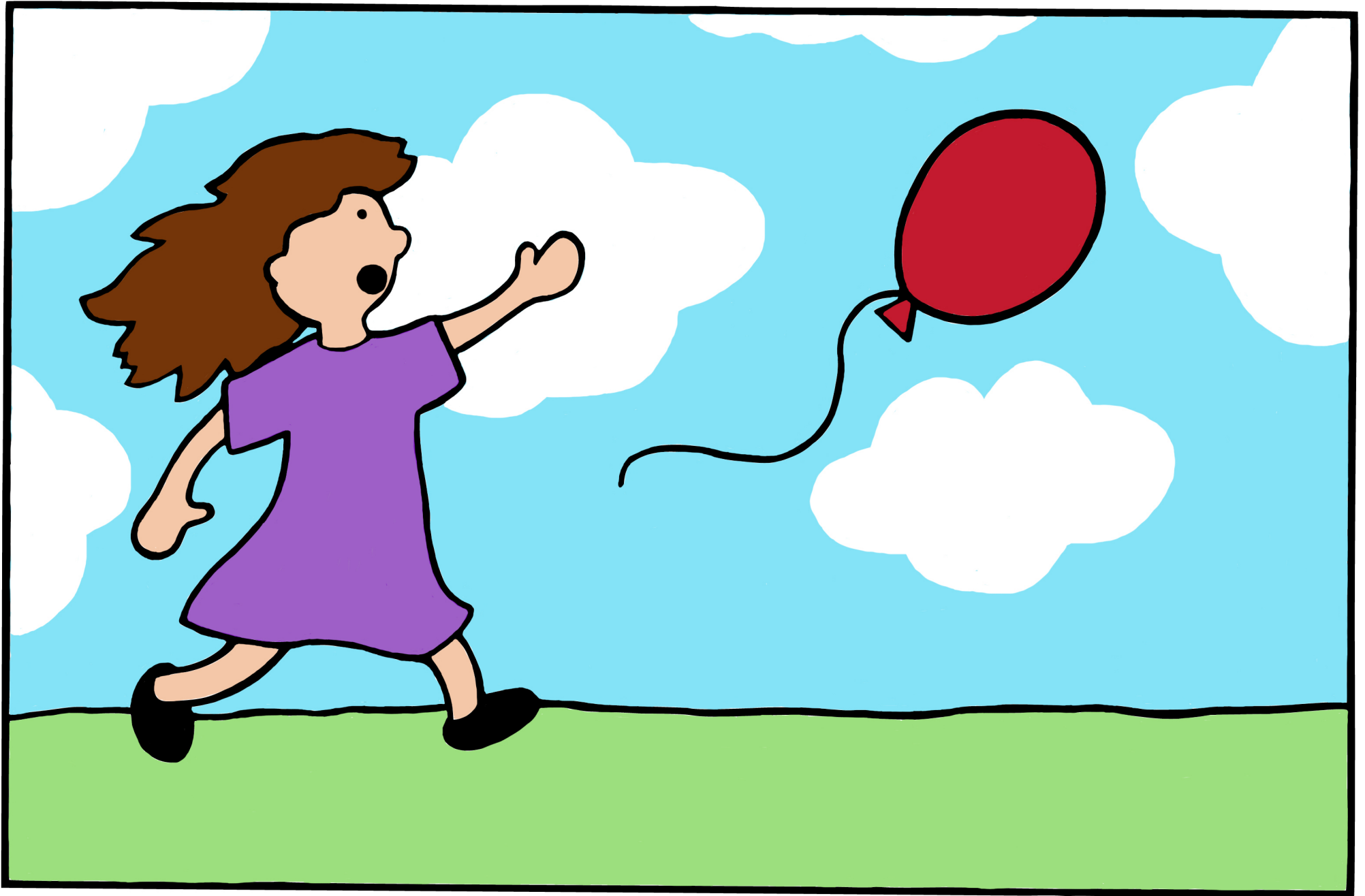


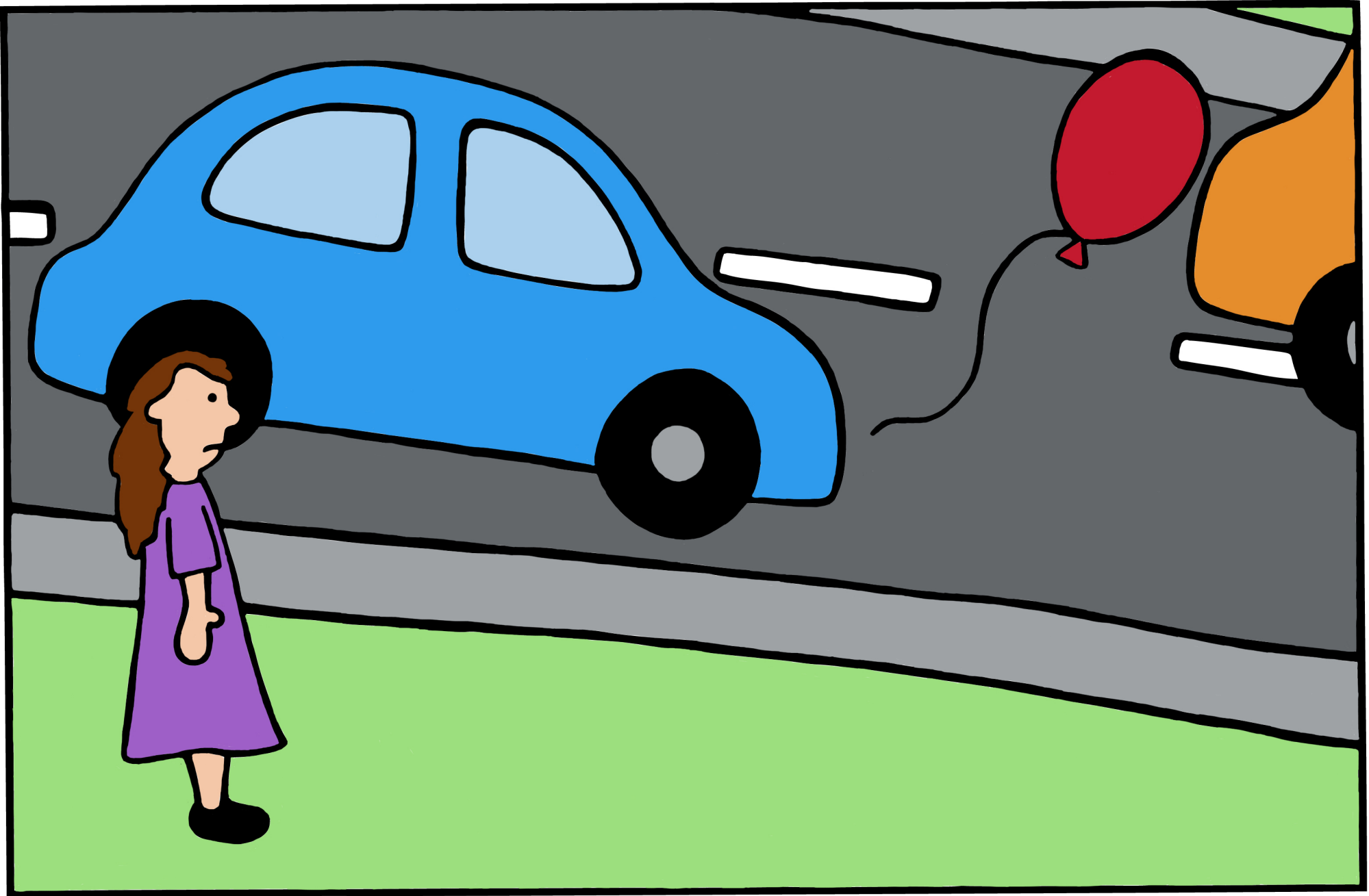




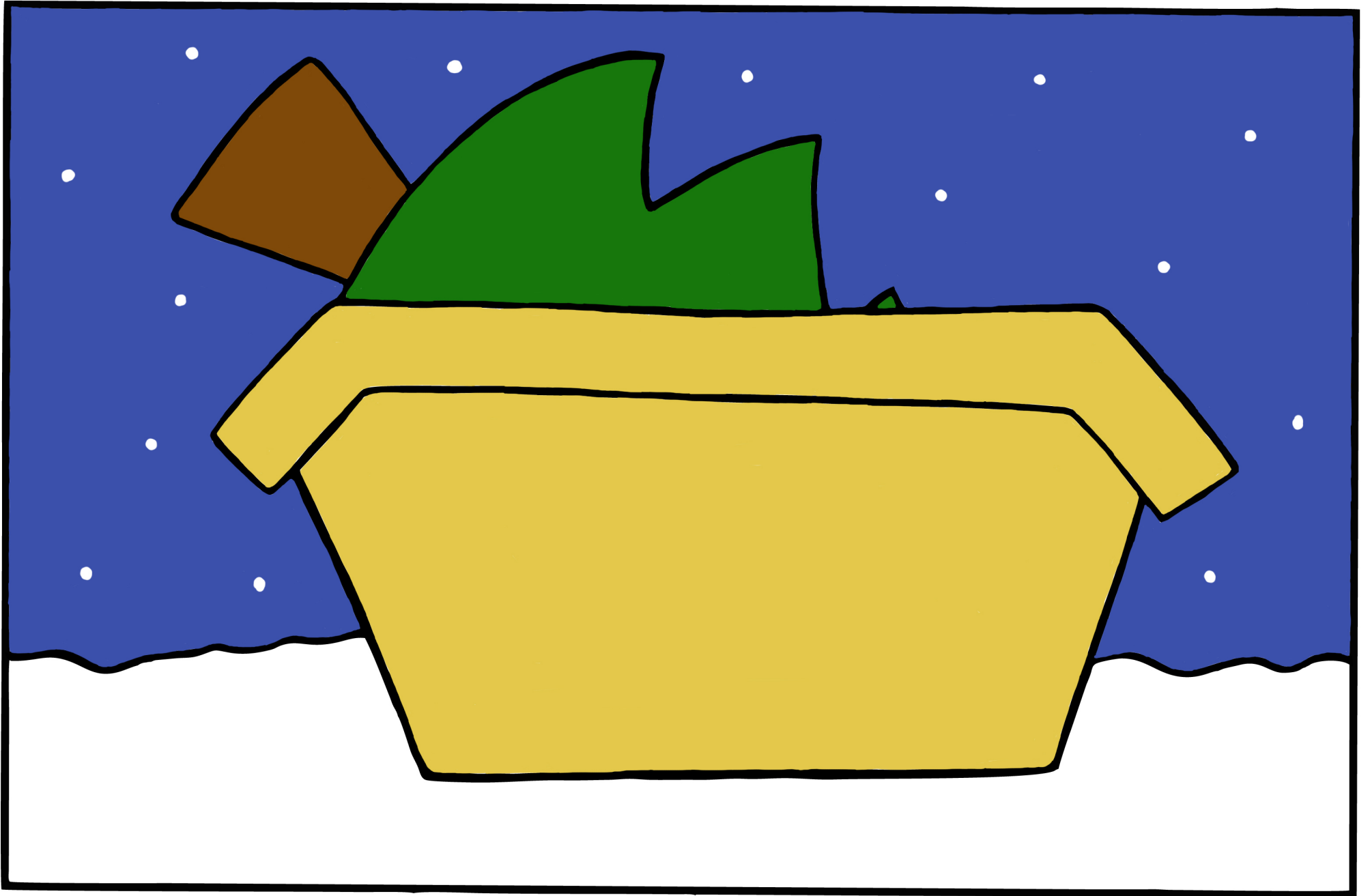


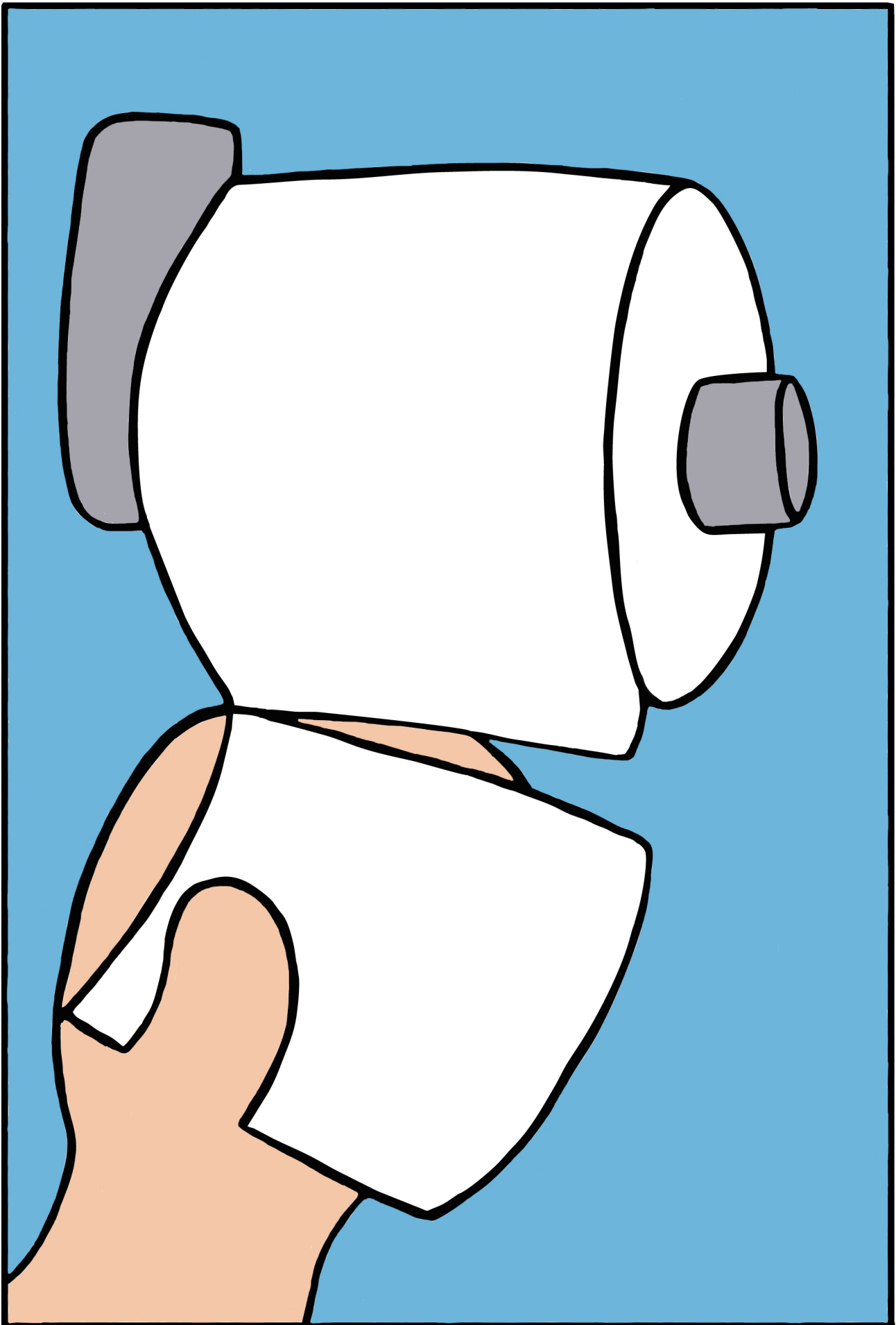




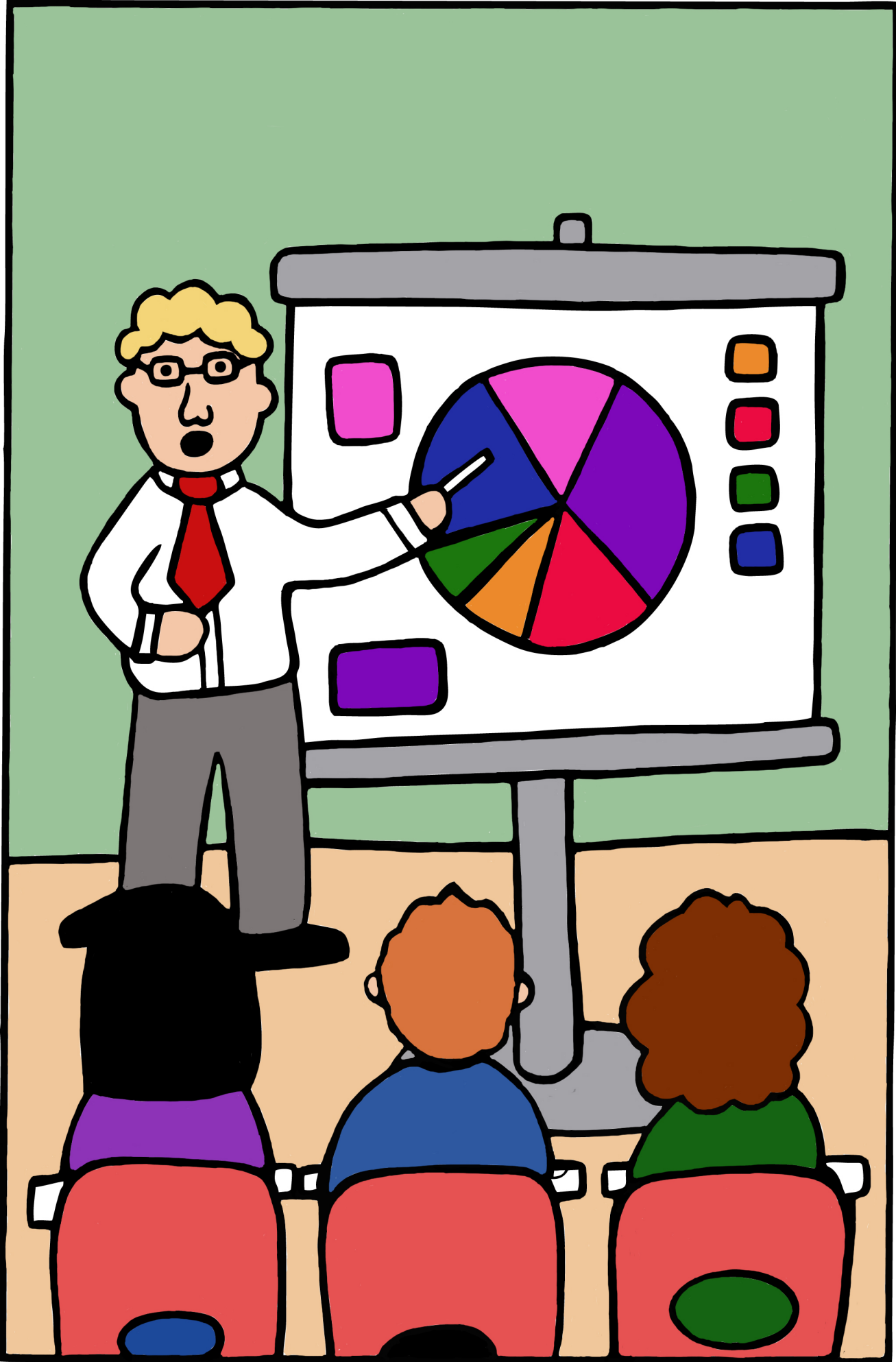


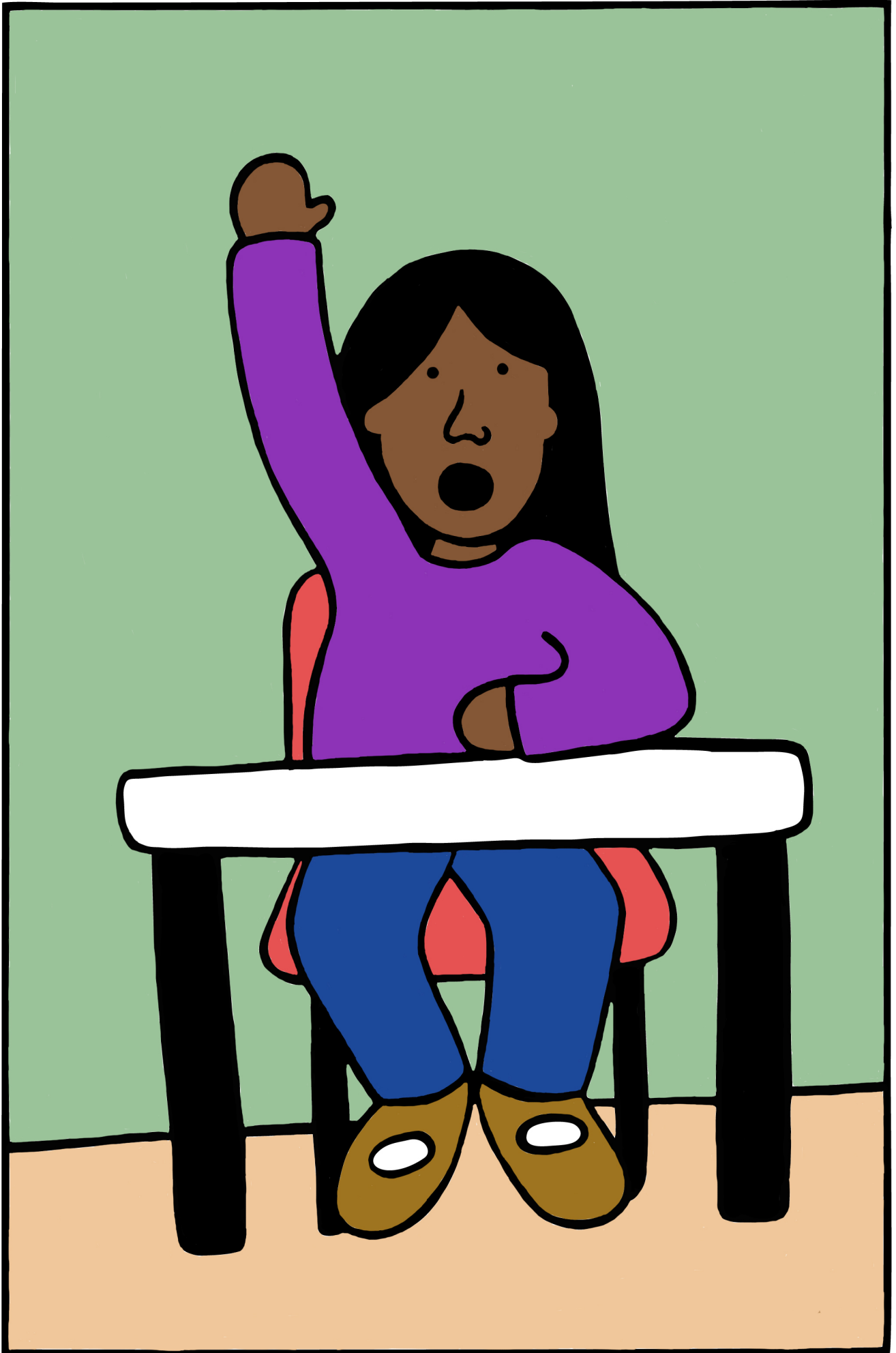




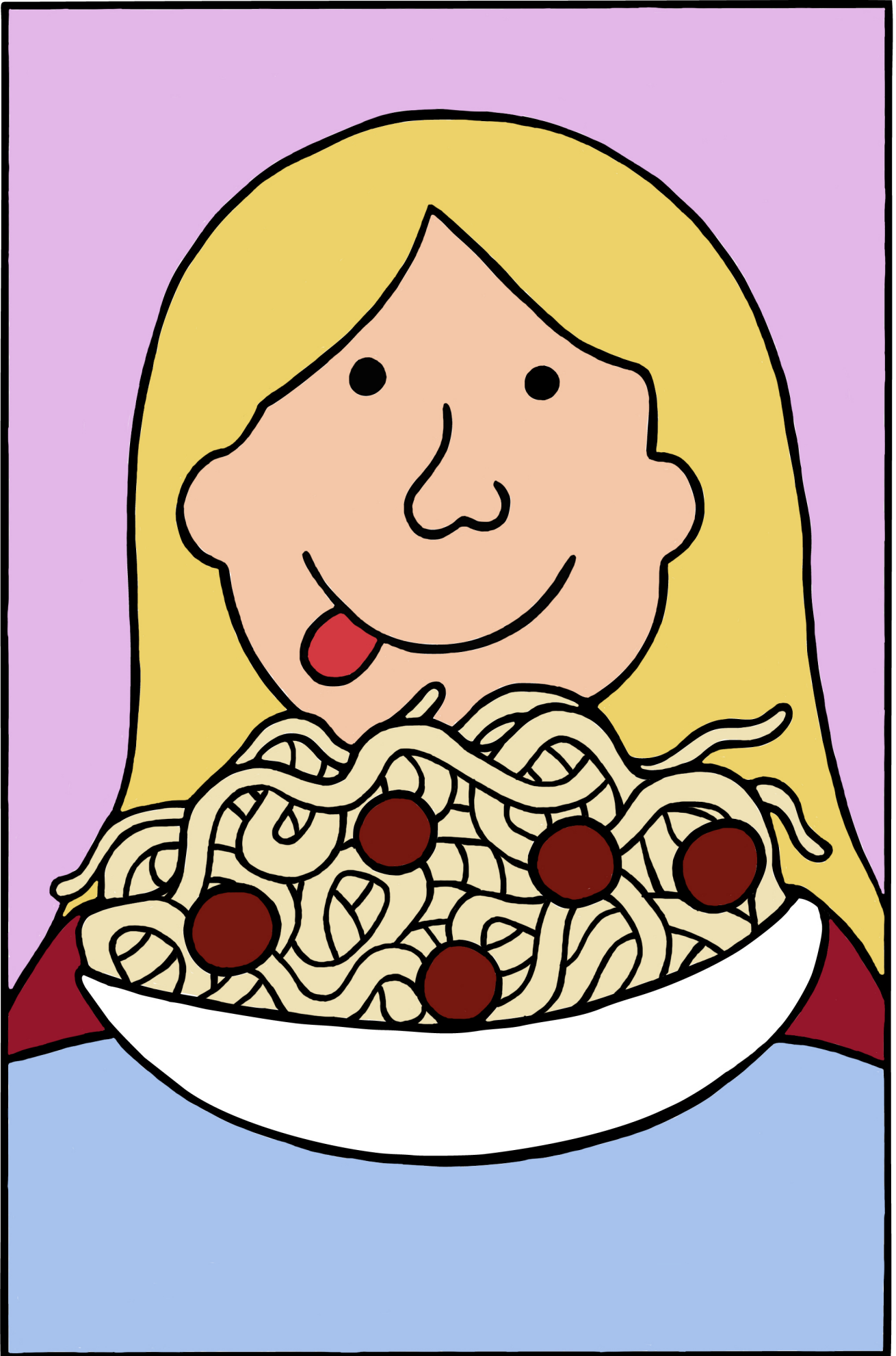


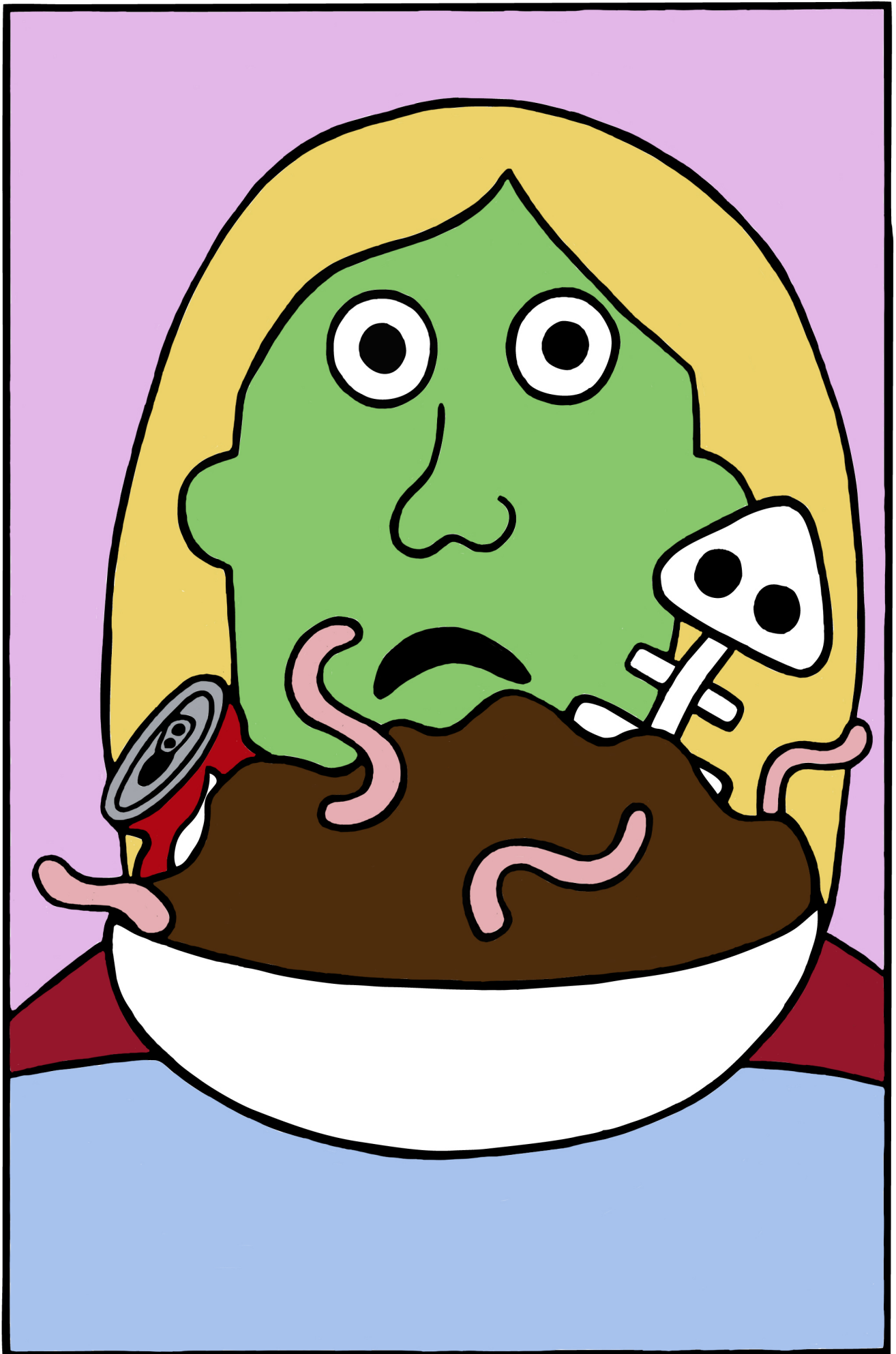


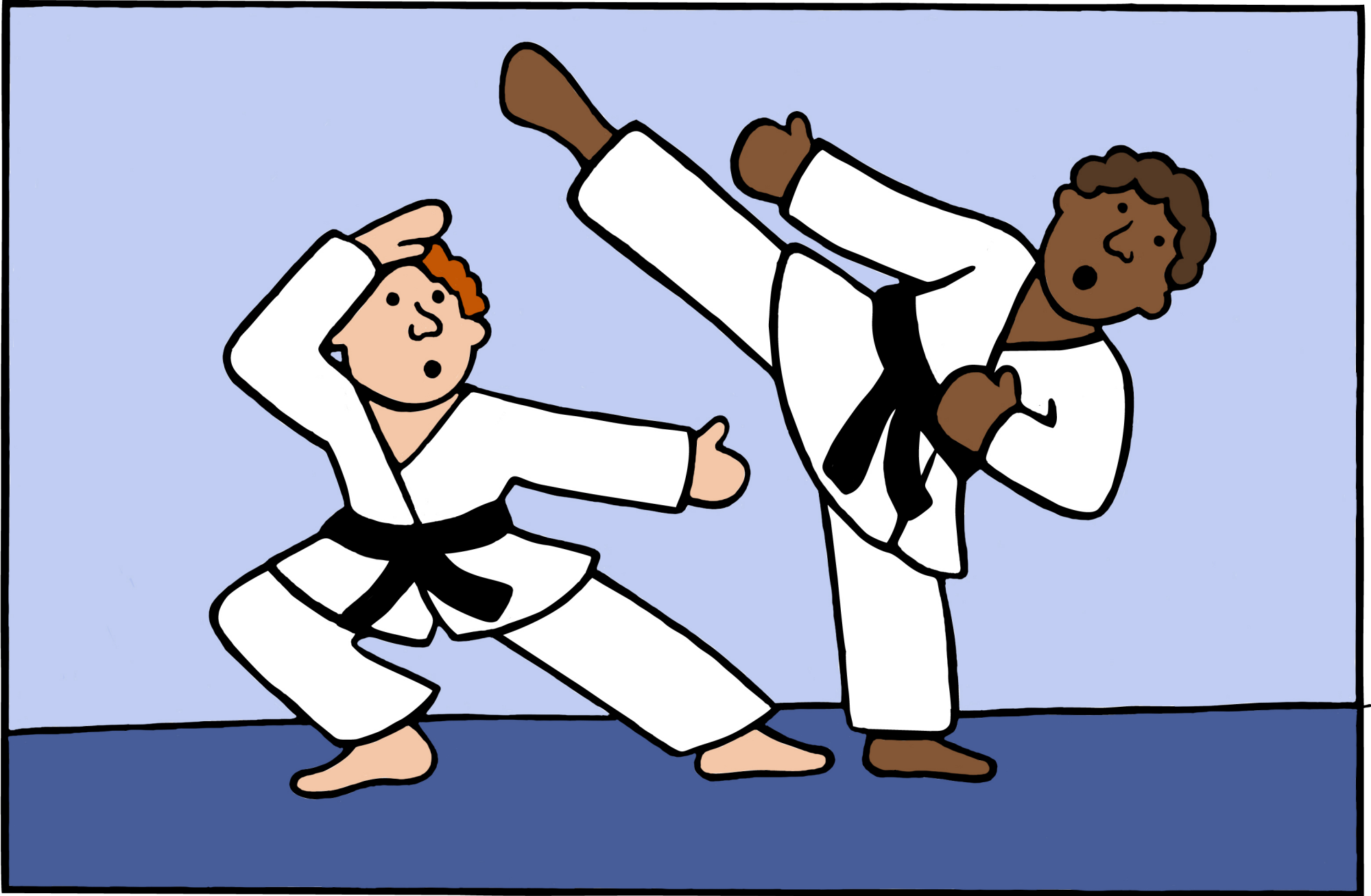


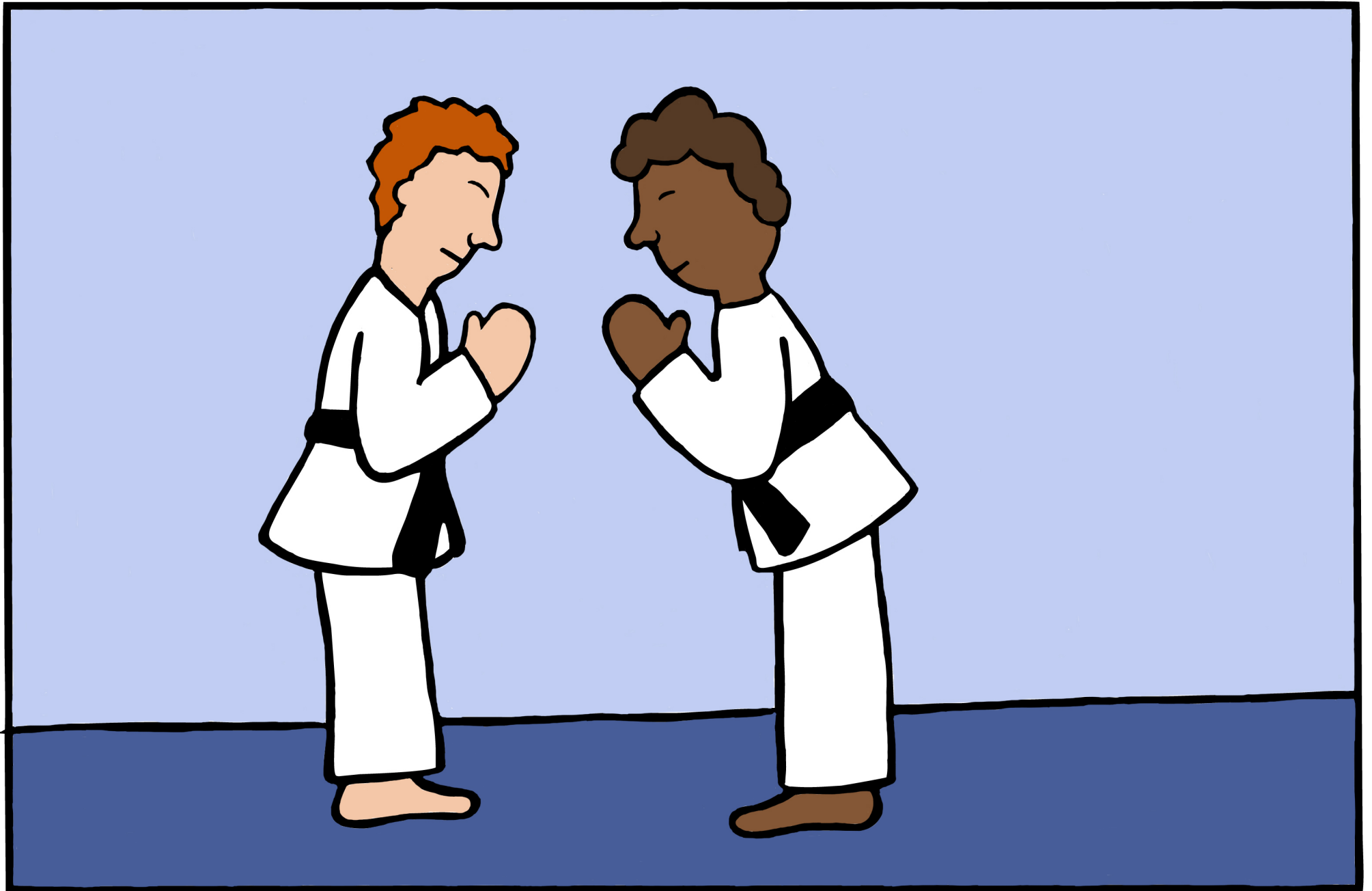




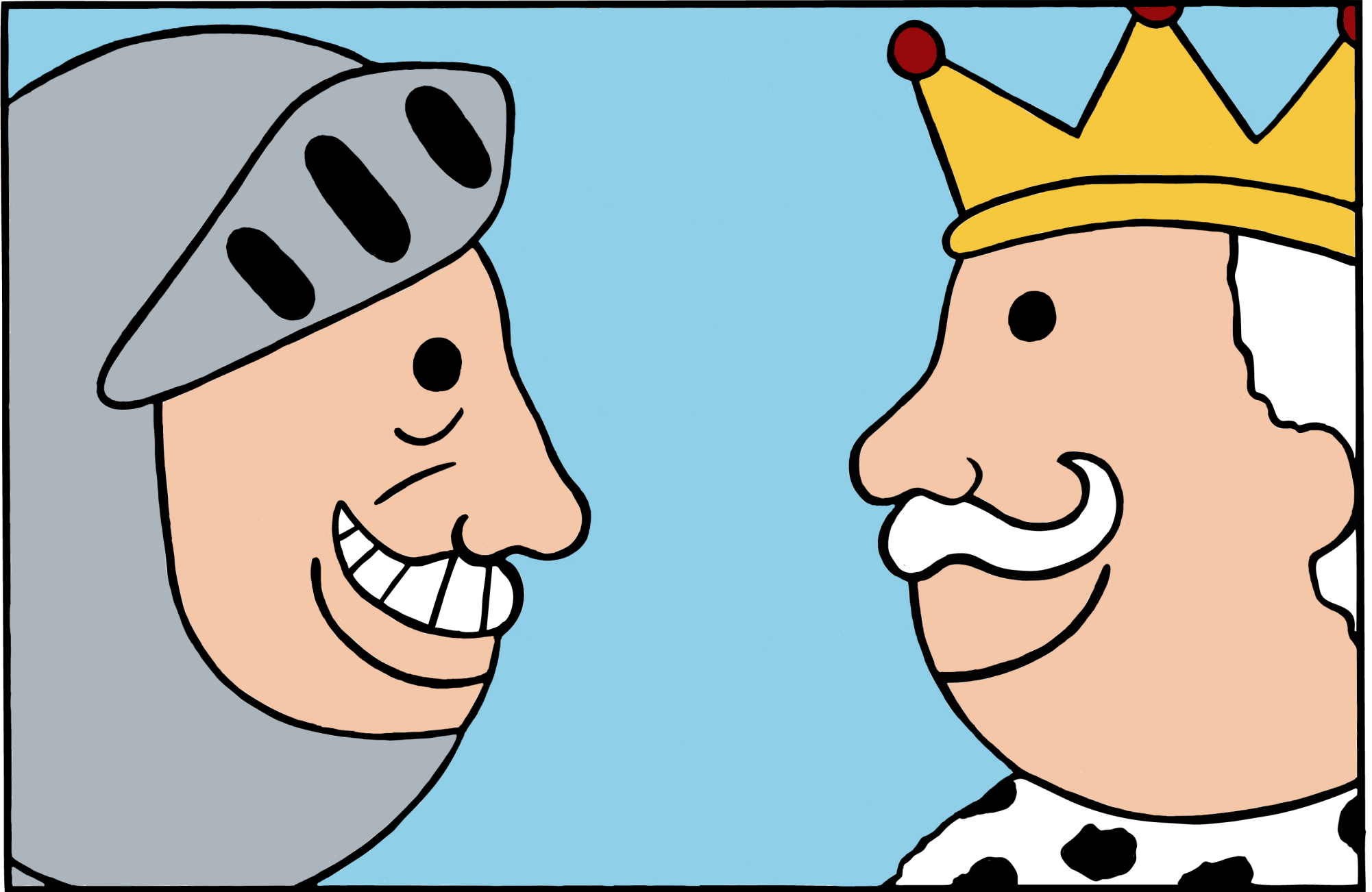


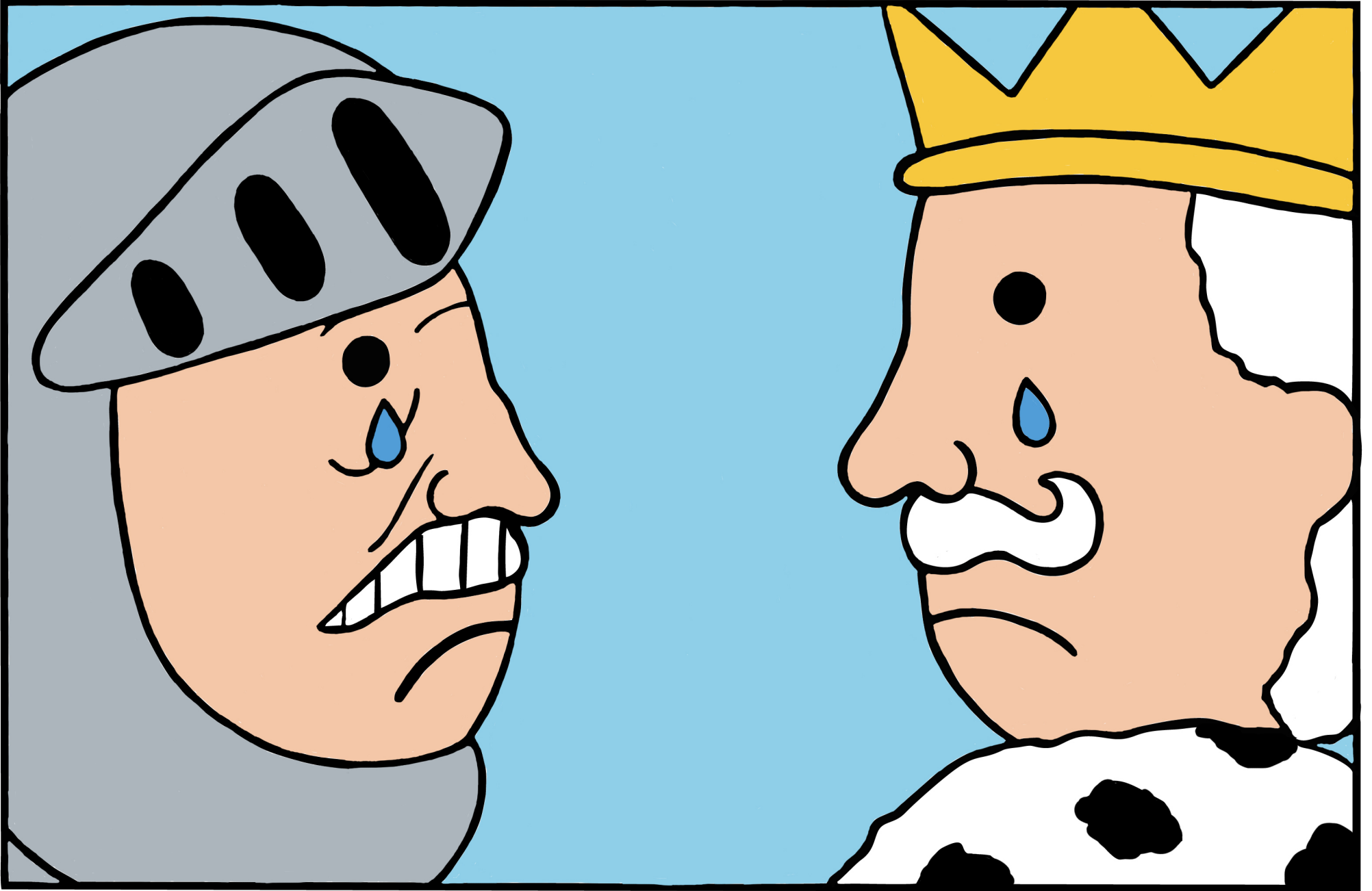












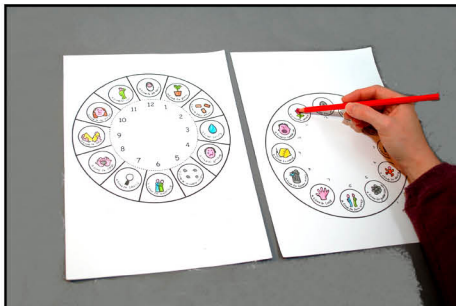
# ECCLESIASTES: THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8

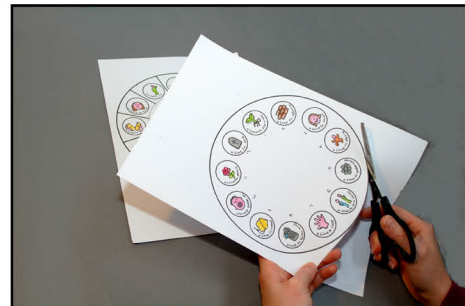


## YOU WILL NEED:

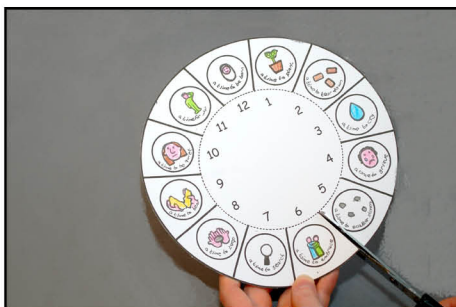
- TEMPLATE 1 AND 2 PRINTED ONTO WHITE CARD
- TEMPLATE 3 PRINTED ONTO COLOURED CARD
- SPLIT PIN OR PAPER FASTENER
- SCISSORS
- COLOURED PENCILS OR FELT TIPS
- DOUBLE-SIDED TAPE OR GLUE STICK



STEP 1: COLOUR IN TEMPLATE 1 AND 2



STEP 2: CUT OUT TEMPLATE 1 AND 2

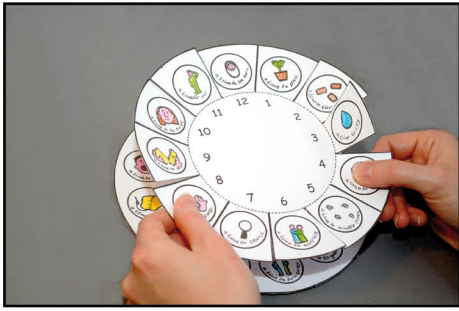


STEP 3: CUT THE SOLID LINES INTO TEMPLATE 1, STOPPING AT THE DOTTED LINE

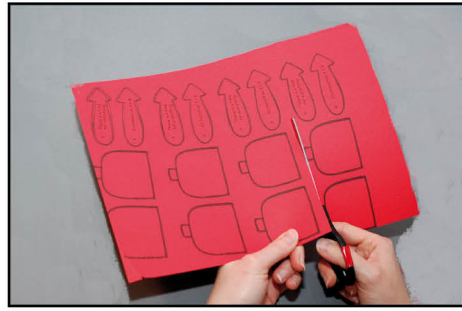


STEP 4: FOLD THE DOTTED LINES TO MAKE FLAPS





**STEP 5: STICK TEMPLATE ONE ON TOP OF TEMPLATE 2, MAKING SURE YOU LINE UP THE NUMBERS. STICK ONLY THE MIDDLE SECTION, NOT THE FLAPS**



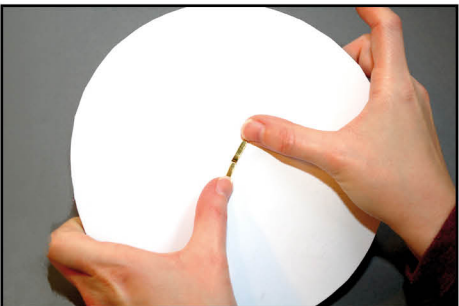
**STEP 6: CUT OUT TEMPLATE 3**



**STEP 7: USE A SPLIT PIN OR PAPER FASTENER TO PIN TOGETHER THE CLOCK HANDS. DO NOT OPEN IT OUT YET**



**STEP 8: PUSH THE SAME PIN THROUGH THE MIDDLE OF THE CLOCK FACE**



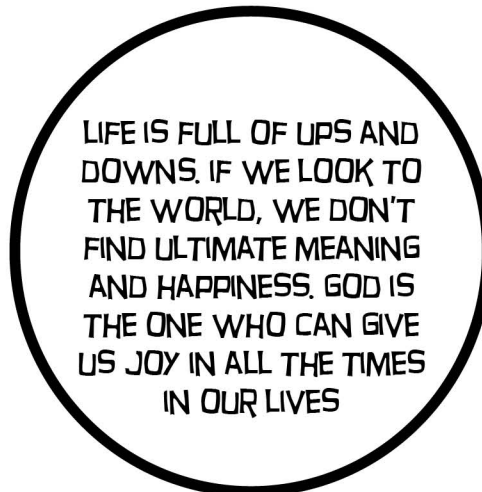
**STEP 9: OPEN THE SPLIT PIN OR PAPER FASTENER AT THE BACK OF THE CLOCK**



**STEP 10: STICK THE BELLS ONO THE BACK OF TEMPLATE 2**

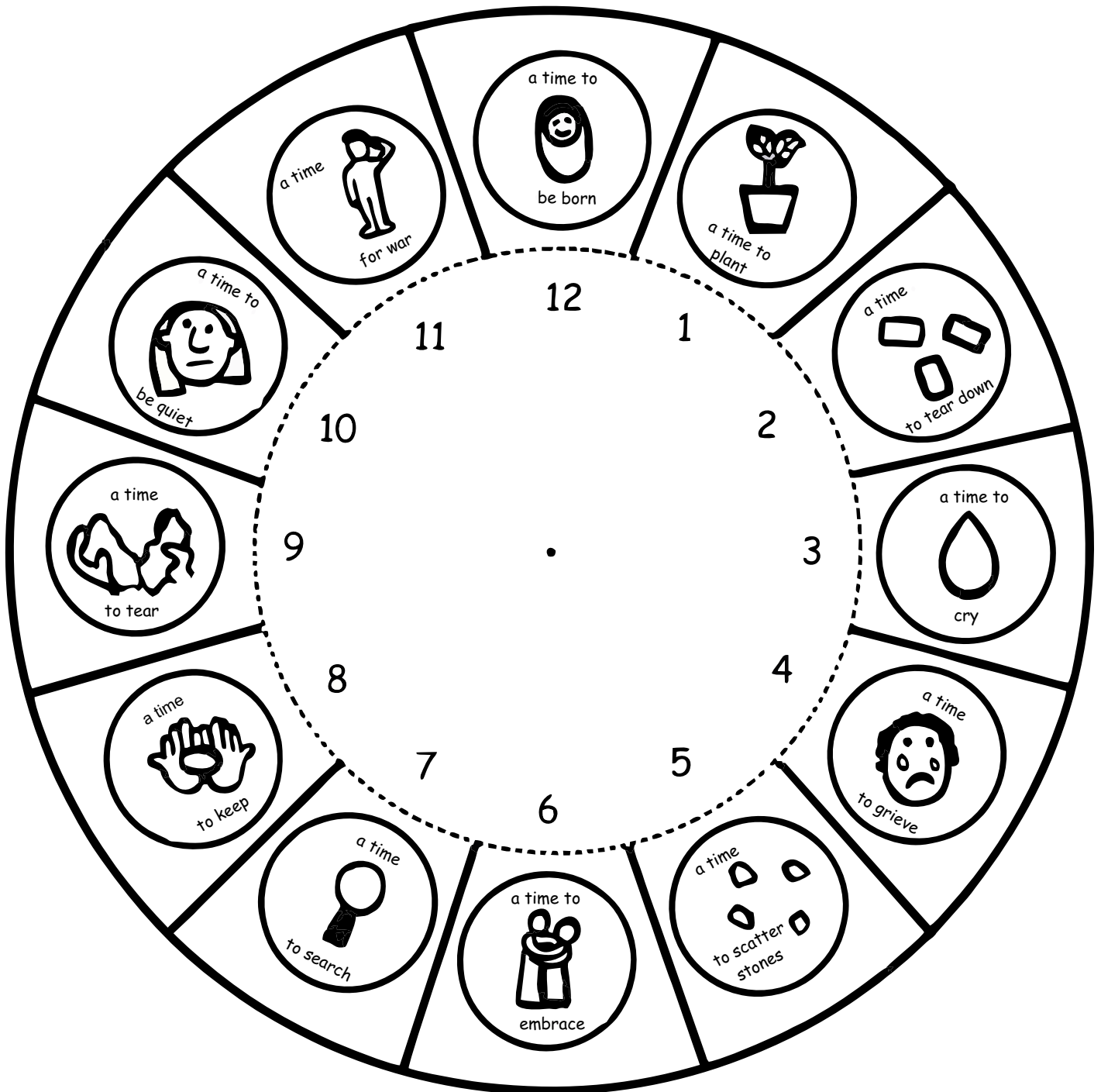


**FOR A SHORTER SESSION:  
PREPARE STEP 6  
FOR A SHORTER SESSION STILL:  
PREPARE STEP 2 AND 3**

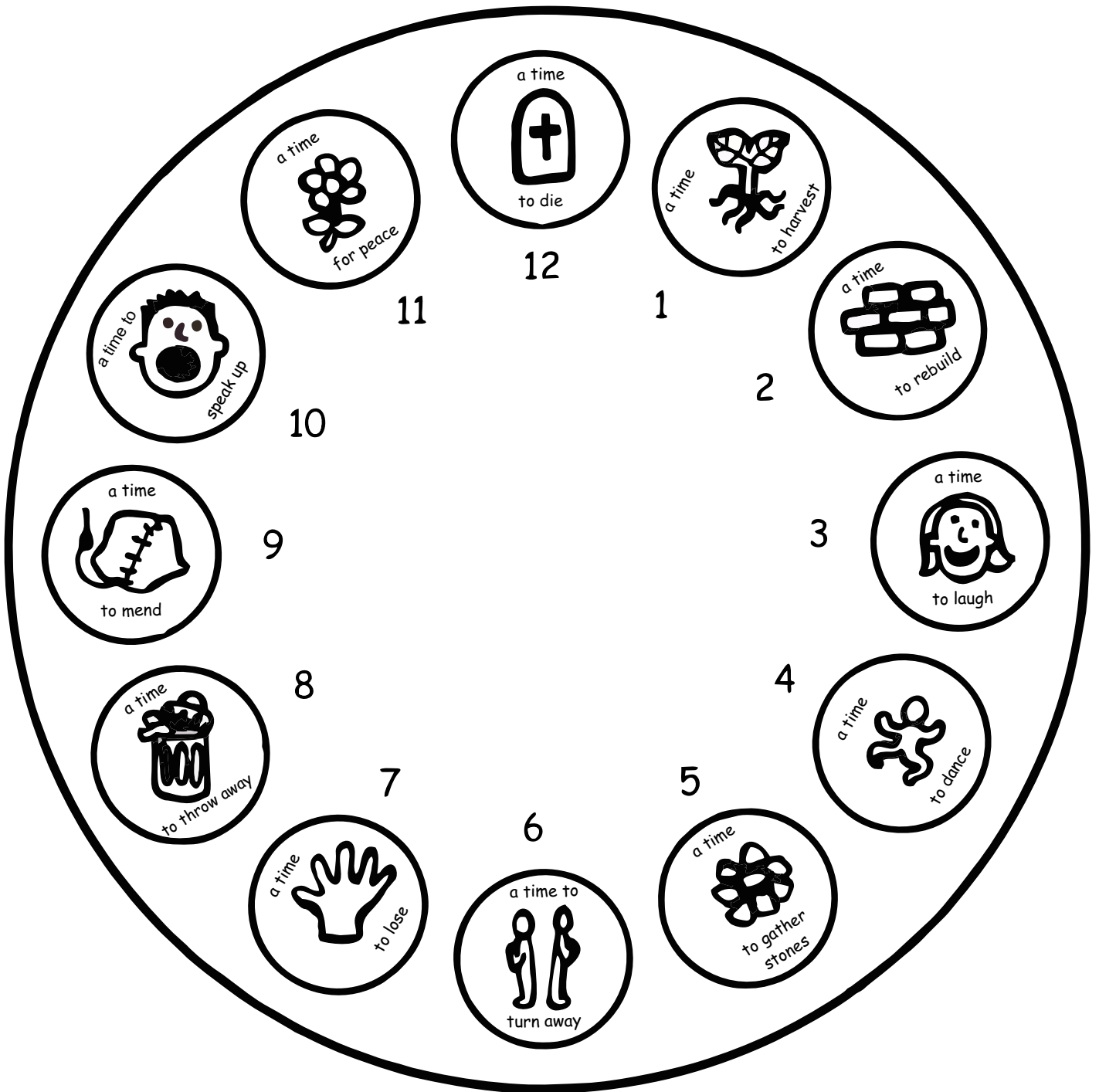


**LIFE IS FULL OF UPS AND DOWNS. IF WE LOOK TO THE WORLD, WE DON'T FIND ULTIMATE MEANING AND HAPPINESS. GOD IS THE ONE WHO CAN GIVE US JOY IN ALL THE TIMES IN OUR LIVES**

# Template 1



# Template 2



# Template 3

