

MY PERSONAL LIFE HISTORY BOOK

**A Guided Activity Workbook for Foster Children
(Their Families, Case Workers and Teachers)**

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BRIEF GUIDE FOR FOSTER PARENTS, BIRTH PARENTS, CASE WORKERS AND TEACHERS

This workbook is meant to give psychological first aid to both you and the children you know, love, help and teach. A separate in-depth MANUAL is available for caseworkers, foster parents, birth parents and therapists who want to use MY PERSONAL LIFE HISTORY BOOK as part of a structured psychotherapy.

Your child, and possibly some of you, may have been through a great deal of stress in connection with the child's foster placement.

If you want to get started right away, your idea is probably the same as ours. You want to try to help a foster child change a possibly traumatic situation into a constructive learning and coping experience.

GETTING STARTED

1. Adults: read the whole book before your child or student does, if he or she is under ten or eleven years of age, or does not read well.
2. Point out to your child or student that foster placement was a moment in his history that his family will remember. He or she can be part of an important happening and can help make a record of it with this workbook. Perhaps years later he and people he loves will read his workbook and it will be part of his history. Meanwhile it will help him get stronger and smarter.
3. Be flexible in your working with your child. Never force a child to face a section of the book against his or her will. Allow each child to select which parts of the book to work with first.
4. Adults should respect the resistance of a child who cannot or will not work on any section of this book. See the Mental Health Checklist at the end of the book.

USING THE WORKBOOK WITH THE YOUNGEST CHILDREN

You cannot expect much complicated verbal participation in the use of this workbook with children younger than three. But two and three year olds can color in picture sections with some help. Try to let babies and toddlers be present while older children work with you unless the older children are very upset about the topics.

A sense of family caring and unity is a help to babies and toddlers in stressful times.

Please see the section on use of illustrations with young children for further guidance.

PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN

If your child is between ages 3 and 6, let him or her do a lot of coloring. You may want to read much of the book to him. Let the child choose some of the topics by reading the captions and asking which part he or she wants to work on first.

You can often help a preschool or kindergarten child make the drawings and speak his story to you. You should act as an interested reporter-secretary, trying to draw your child out while giving encouragement. Write down exactly what he or she has to say.

Take your time. Don't insist on the child answering. It may be enough for him to know that you think the topic can be shared.

MIDDLE CHILDHOOD

If your child is between ages 6 and 11, try using as much of the book as you think your child can understand-- allowing him to set the pace. Gently try to work through all of the sections, but let the child direct which sections to work on first. Don't insist on reading any sections a child of any age does not want to read. Encourage clipping pictures and articles from newspapers and magazines, adding them to make the workbook into a scrapbook. Use the backs of pages for extra clippings.

At the very least, ask the child to color in the illustrations, while you are present to offer support.

Children often work on The Personal Life History Book on and off as they are able, over many weeks and months. They are often able to complete a difficult section at a later date.

ELEVEN YEARS AND OLDER

Most children over age 11 will want to work on the book pretty much on their own, but may need your assistance at times. Be available as a resource for your child or teenager, helping to find information and answering questions.

IF YOUR CHILD WAS BEREAVED OR ABUSED OR LIVING IN THE STREETS

Such children may benefit from brief professional consultations with psychologists or child psychiatrists. Ask your caseworker for a preventive referral.

FOR YOU, THE ADULTS

Remember, even adults may find that using this book can help them understand better and cope better with their experiences during foster care. You may add your own questions as well as answering the questions asked of the children. You may also find that drawing or coloring some of the scenes may help you.

FOR USE AS A FAMILY

Each foster child should have his or her own book. One very helpful way of using the books involves working together on it as a family or group. You may each individually work on the same questions. Engaging in a "shared remembering" may help your children feel safer as they work jointly on the project under your direction. This may help bring your family closer.

USE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The drawings throughout the book can be used by families, teenagers and children in a variety of ways to help strengthen normal coping during foster care.

Young children (ages 2-4), severely traumatized children and learning disabled or learning specific children (who may have a preference for visual as opposed to auditory communication) can color in the illustrations with an adult to aid in nonverbally reexperiencing and remembering events in their lives. The pictures can then be used as starting points for open-ended discussions about the events

pictured.

Family members can all work on a drawing together, each coloring a portion.

The illustrations can also be used as topics for discussion. This can be an aid in remembering and reexperiencing for those children who remain emotionally numb or have some trouble remembering what they experienced. For example, a parent could ask about an illustration: "What is this child feeling?" or "What is happening?" Children often can respond by describing what someone else is feeling, when they can't talk about themselves.

The illustrations can also be used as a mastery-promoting activity by asking the child to draw a picture showing what the child or family can do, or what the building, or car, etc. would look like repaired.

USE BY TEACHERS

Teachers can use *The Personal Life History Book* in a classroom setting, with children working on the project individually or in small groups with teachers' assistance. This could be a very effective way to support group togetherness, something that has been shown to help children and adults cope with stress.

USE BY MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Therapists can use *The Personal Life History Book* in individual, family or group sessions as a supplement to treatment for foster children.

THIS IS A PERSONAL BOOK ABOUT MY OWN LIFE

My NAME IS: _____

This is a picture or drawing of me:

This is where I live:

The person(s) who helped me write this book was:



My Birthday is: _____

I was born in a place called: _____

My birth mother's first name is: _____

Her last name is: _____

My birth father's name is: _____

His last name is: _____

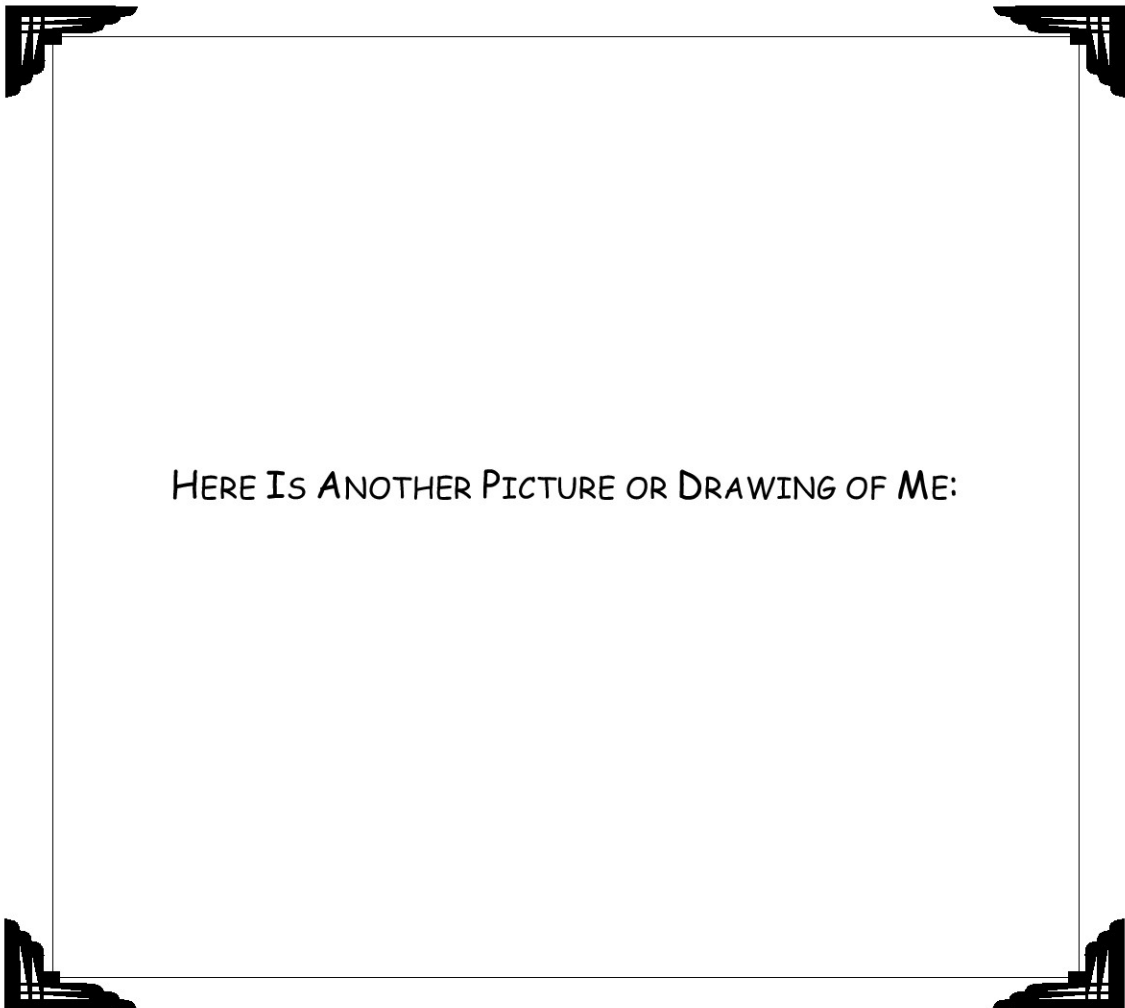
People living with me and my birth mother where I was born were:



Today is _____, 19_____.

I am now _____ years old. Some of the things that are special about me are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Some things I like to do are: _____

My best friends are:

1. Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
2. Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____

If I want to call my family, I can telephone my mother or my father or _____ at this telephone number: _____

My mother's address is:

Another member of my family is: _____

He/She lives at:

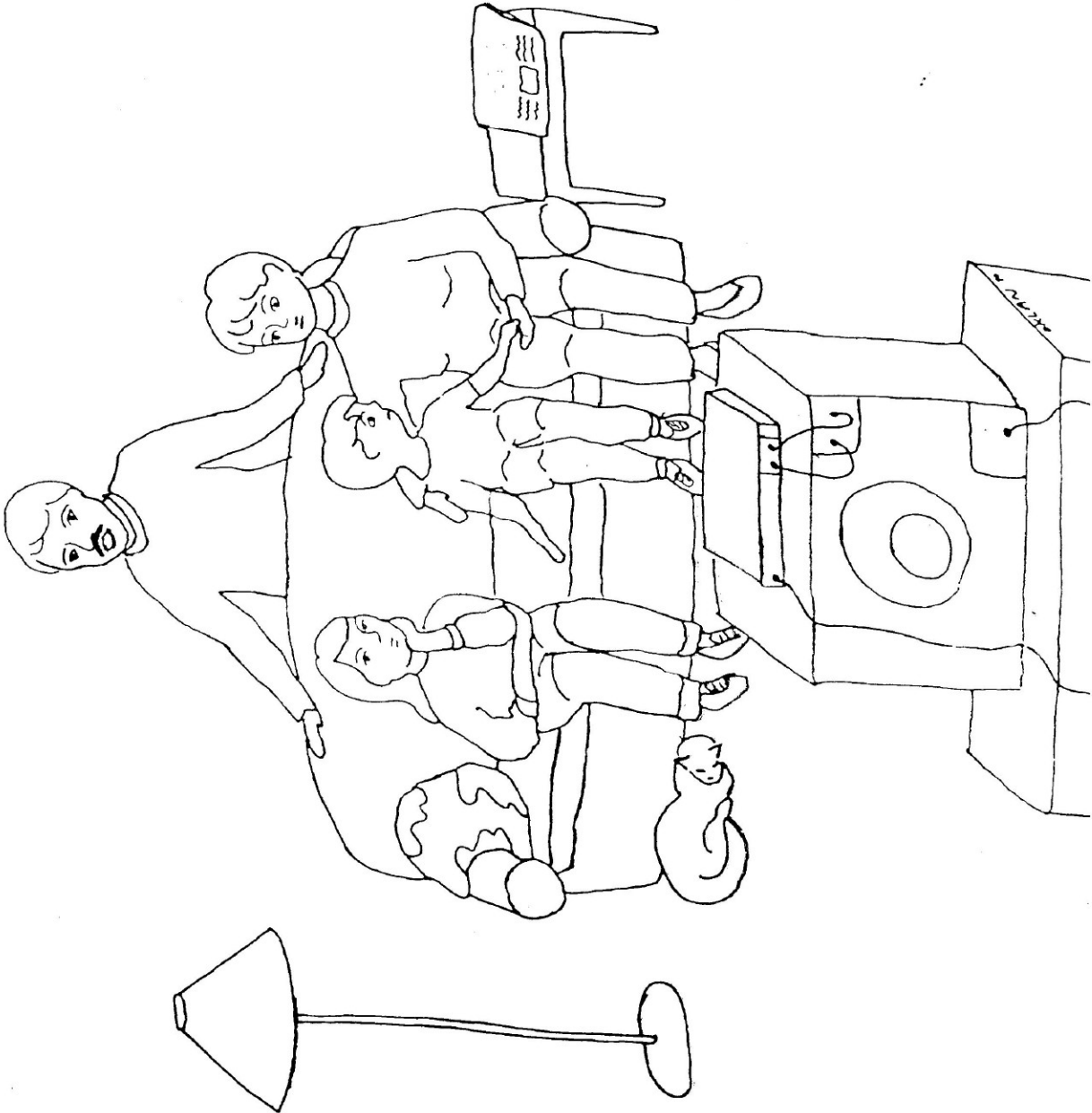
People who lived with me just before I came into foster care were:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

We lived at: _____

Names and ages of my brothers and sisters:

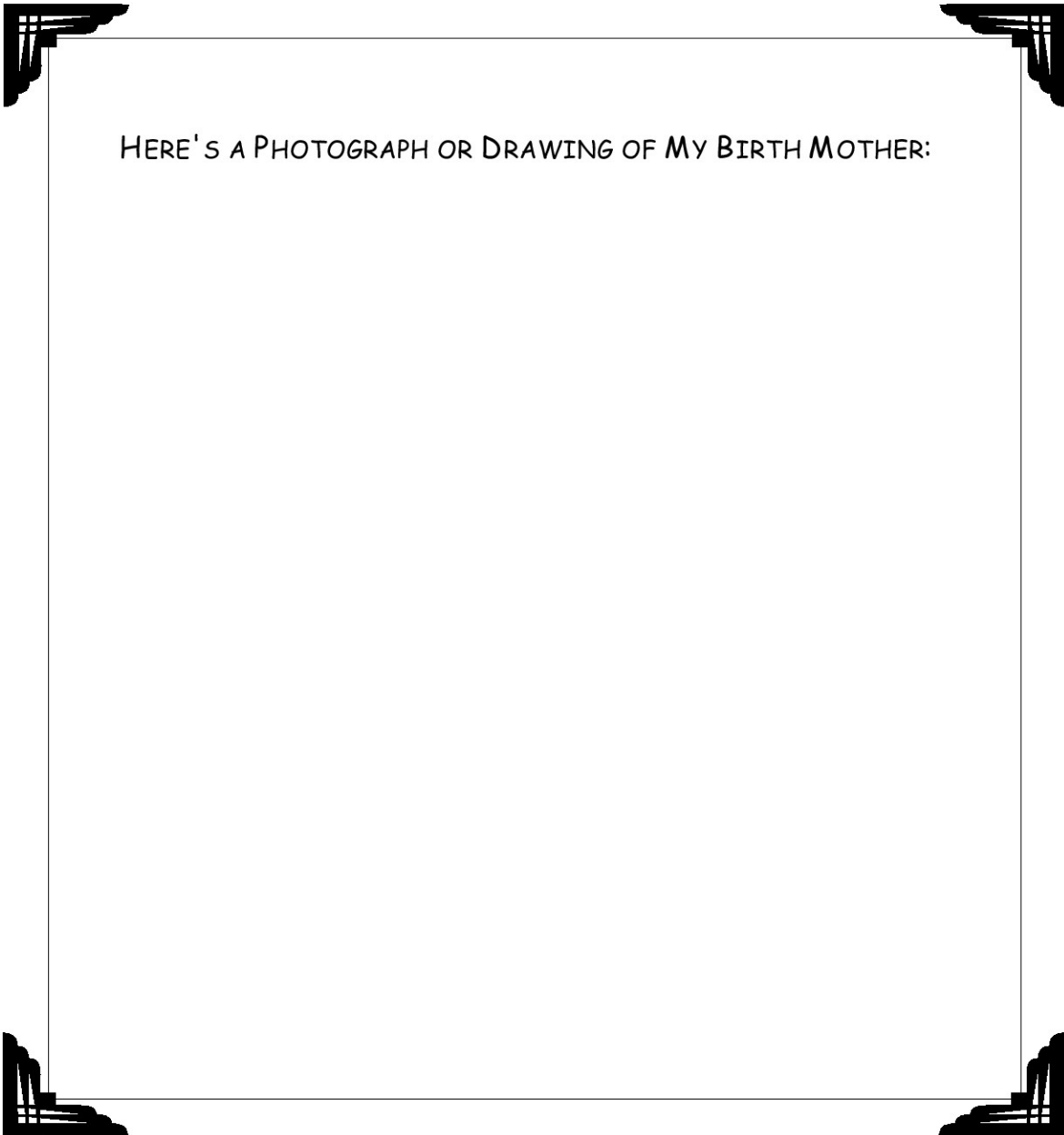
_____	Age: _____
_____	Age: _____
_____	Age: _____
_____	Age: _____
_____	Age: _____



My birth mother's name: _____

Her birthday: _____

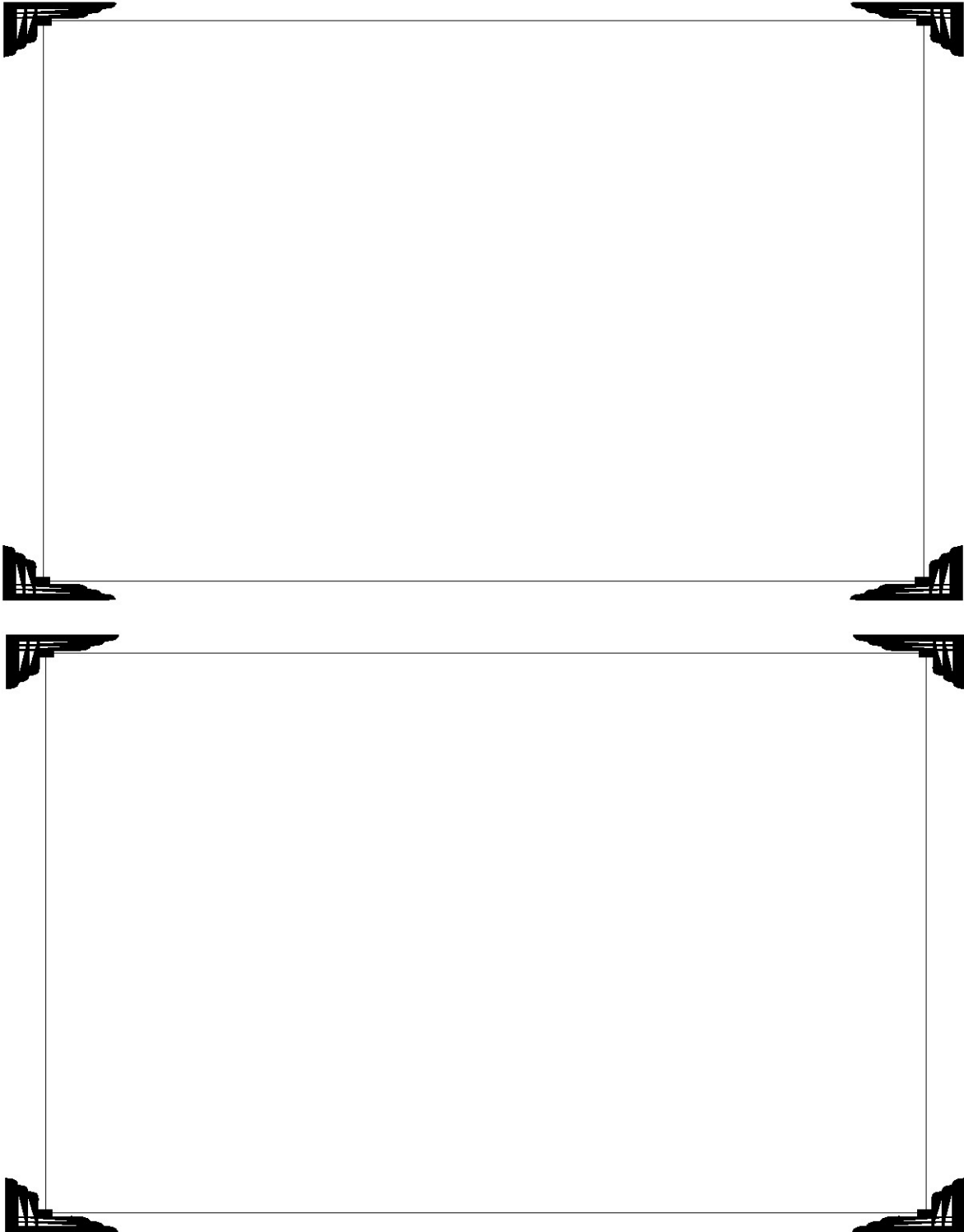
Her age: _____



This picture was taken/made around _____.

PHOTO PAGE:

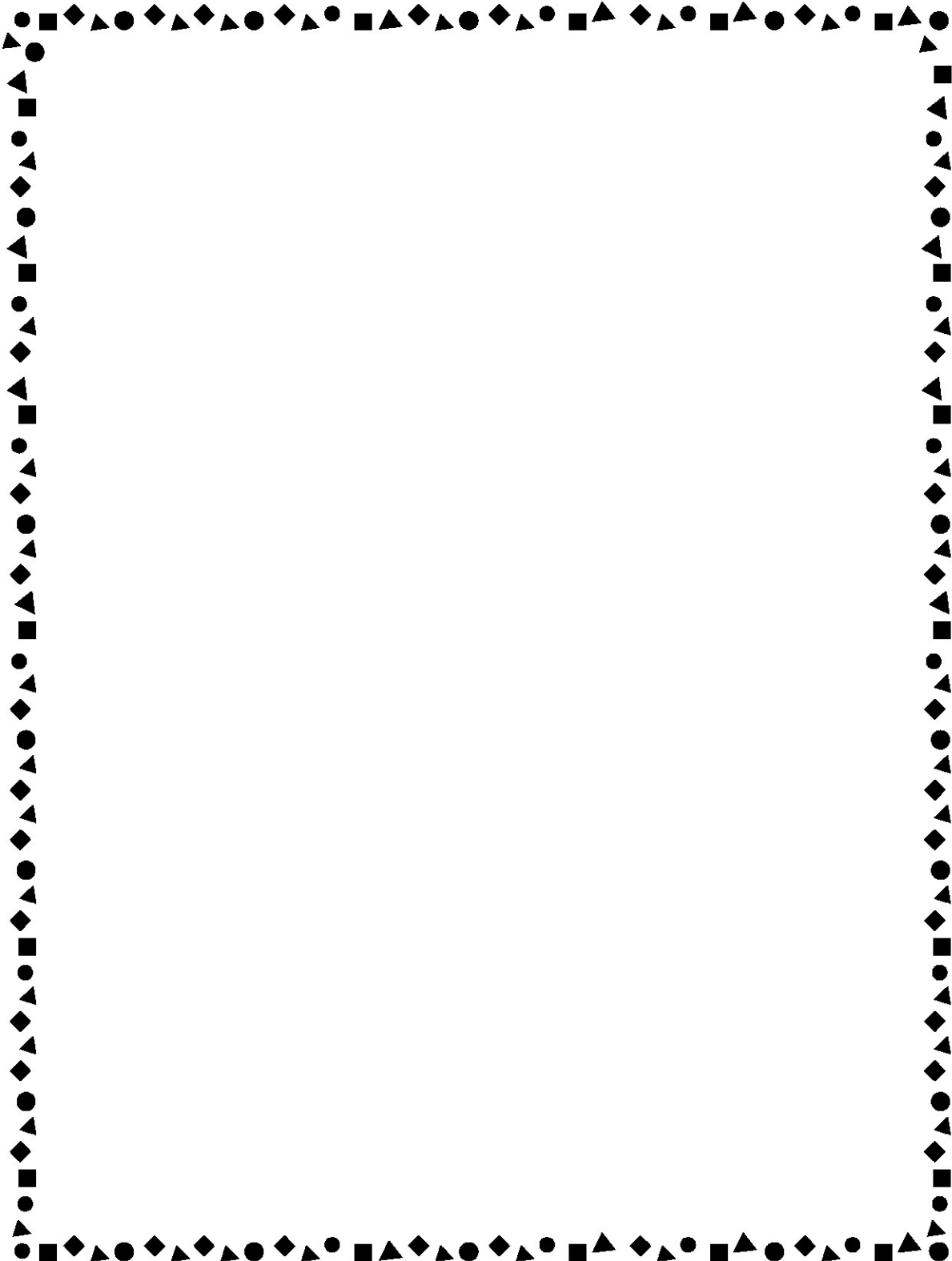
Pictures or drawings of other members of my birth family

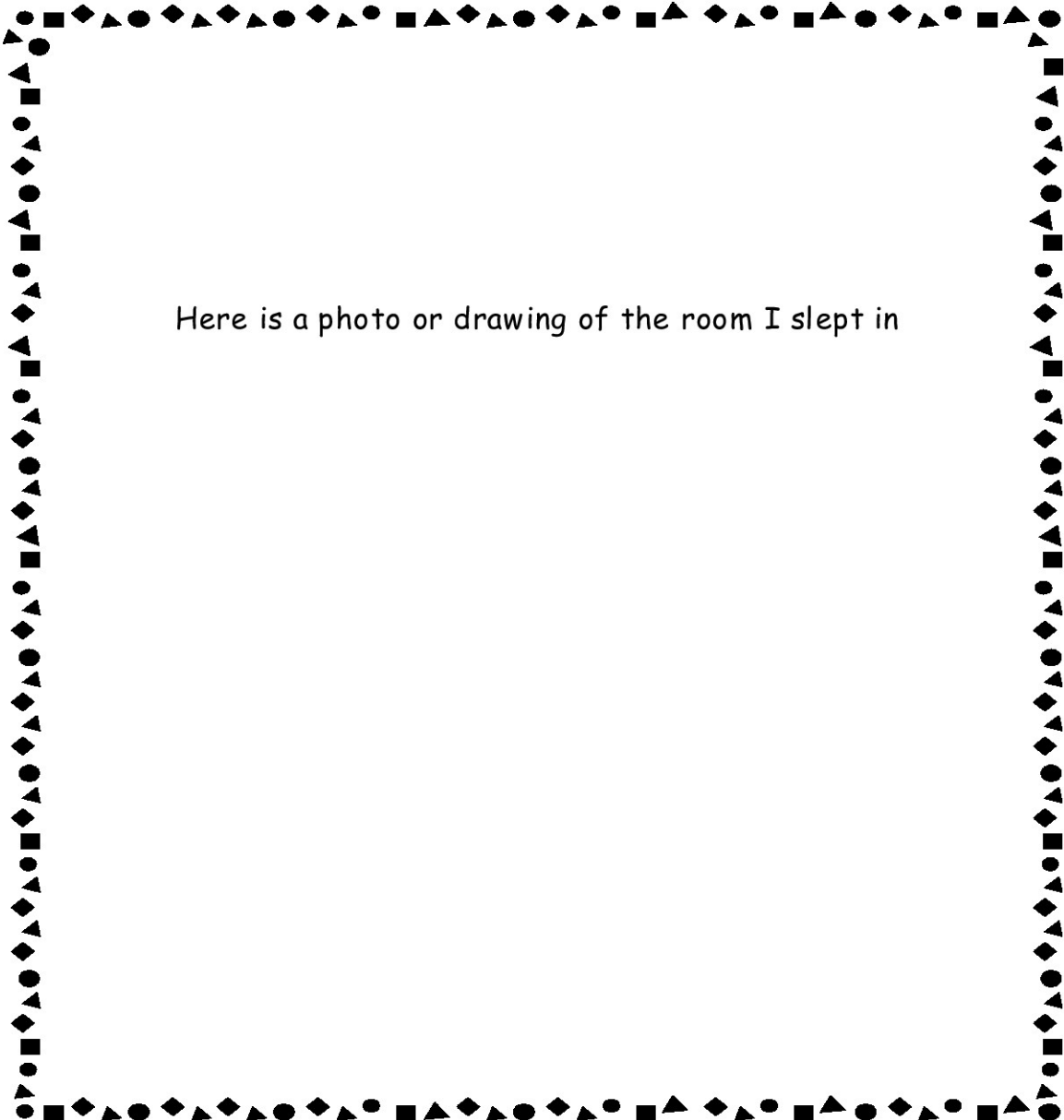


Other photos from before I came into foster care:



HERE IS A DRAWING OR PHOTO OF MY HOUSE, WHERE I USED TO LIVE:





Here is a photo or drawing of the room I slept in

Here is a list of some of the things I remember were in the room:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

When I lived there, my favorite games and toys were:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

My favorite books then were:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

My favorite television shows were:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Other things I remember about that place:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____

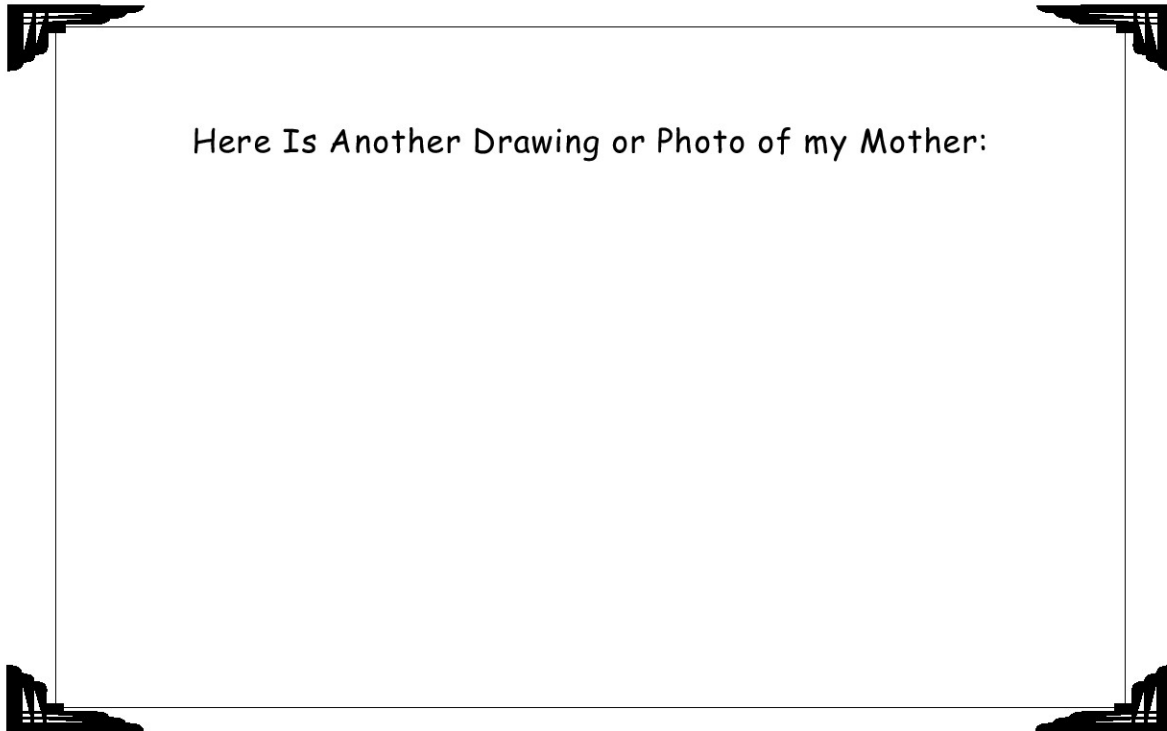
Some of the things we used to do in my birth family that I liked were:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

I remember the best thing that ever happened in my birth family was:

I remember the worst thing that happened in my birth family was:

My mother is about _____ years old.



Some of the things I like best about my mother are:

Some of the troubles I had with my mother are:

When my mother works around the house she does these things:

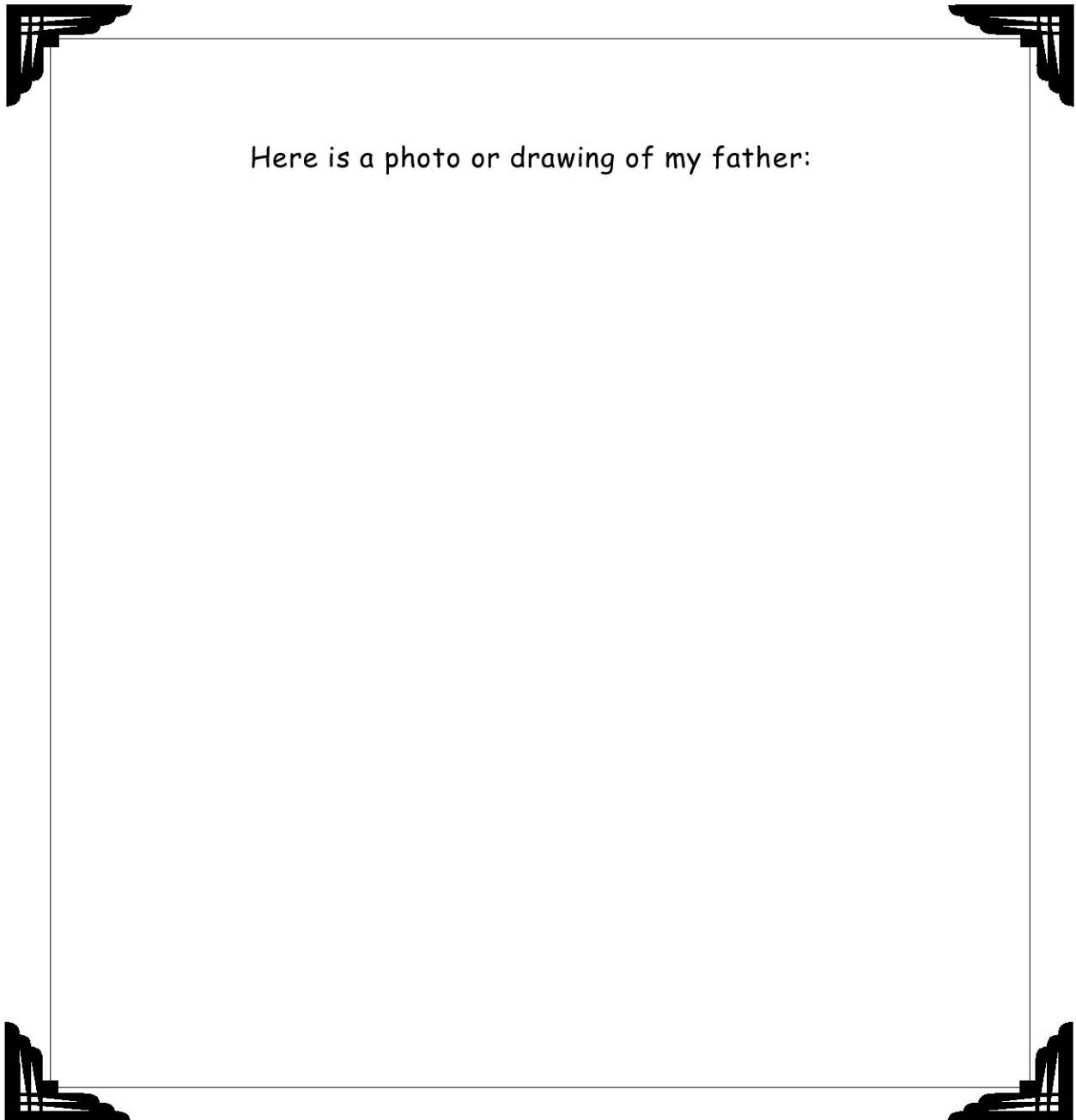
My mother does/doesn't work outside the house. If she's working outside the house, her job is:

Right now I think my mother is:

When I think about my mother right now, I feel (circle all the words/phrases that apply):

sad	lonely	angry at her	angry at me	sorry for her	sorry for me	glad	happy
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My birth father is about _____ years old.



Here is a photo or drawing of my father:

Some of the things I like best about my birth father are:

Some of the troubles I had with my birth father are:

What I miss most when I think about my father is:

Right now I think my father is:

When I think about my father right now, I feel (underline all the words/phrases that apply):

sad	lonely	angry at him	angry at me	sorry for him	sorry for me	glad	happy
-----	--------	-----------------	----------------	------------------	-----------------	------	-------

There are lots of reasons any child can be in a foster home. Some of the reasons are:

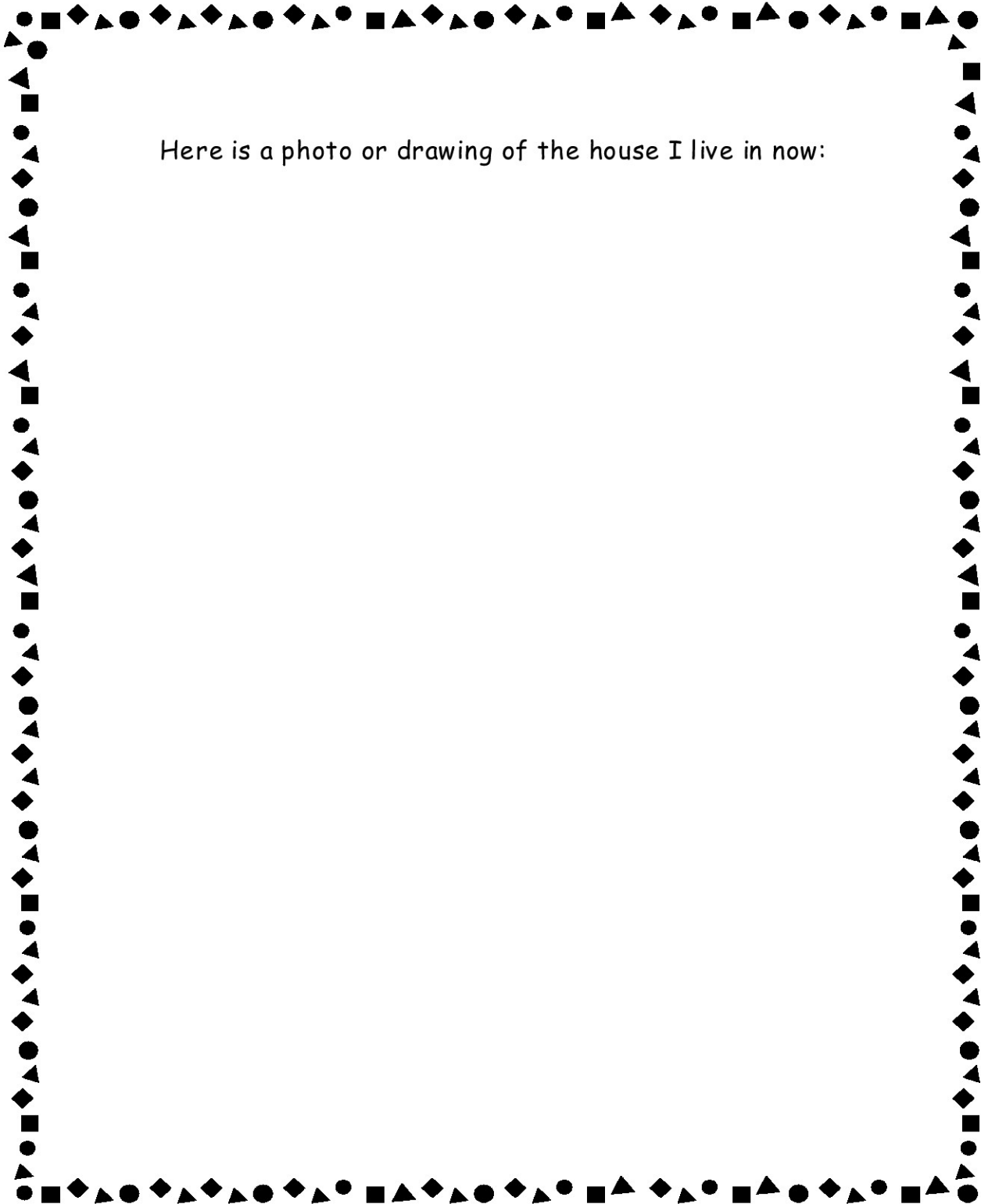
The way I got into this foster home was:

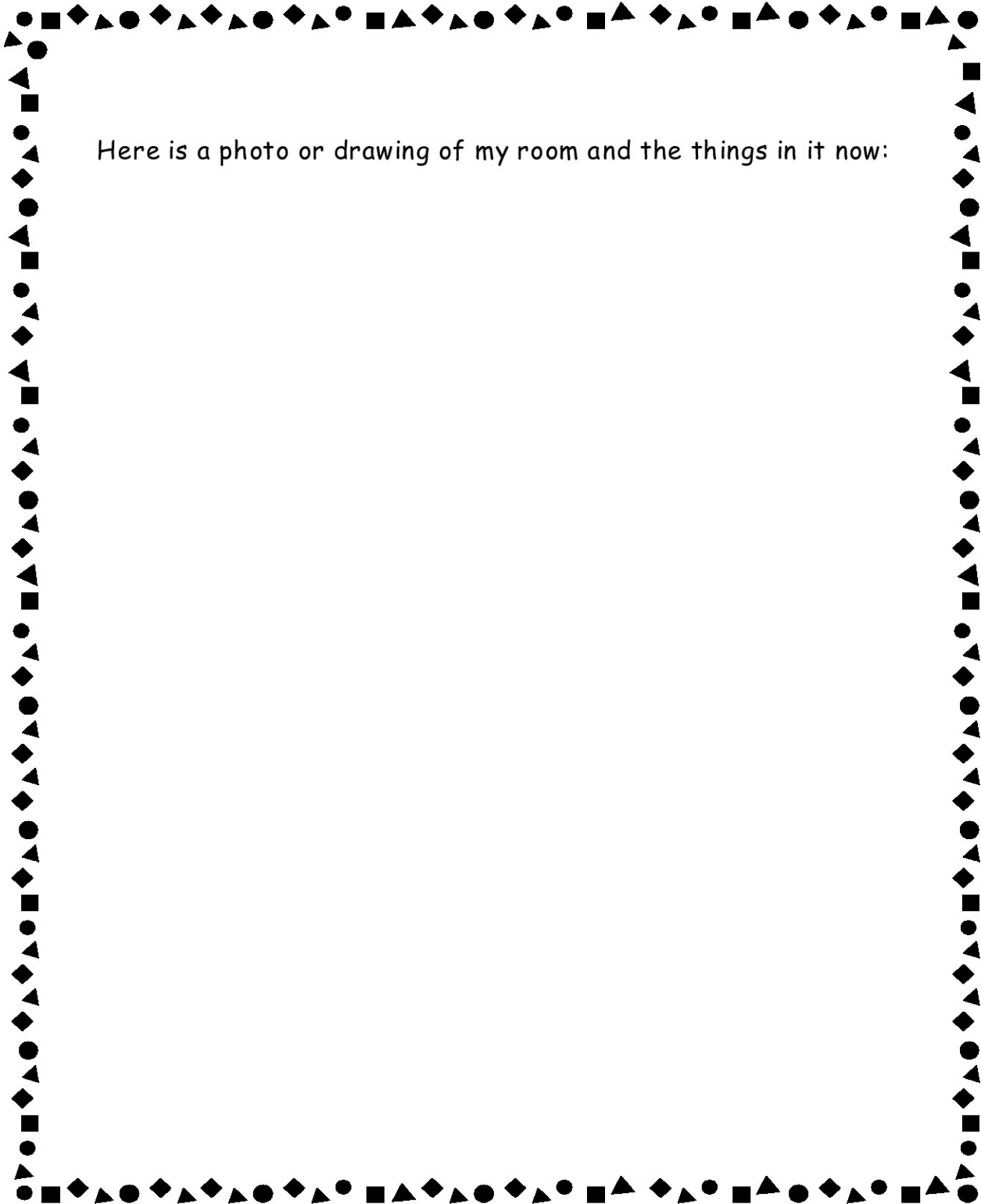
The first person who told me I was going to live with a foster family was:

He or she told me that:

I think there are other reasons I am living in a foster home. The other reasons are:

I think I might go back to my own family if:





My foster mother's name is: _____



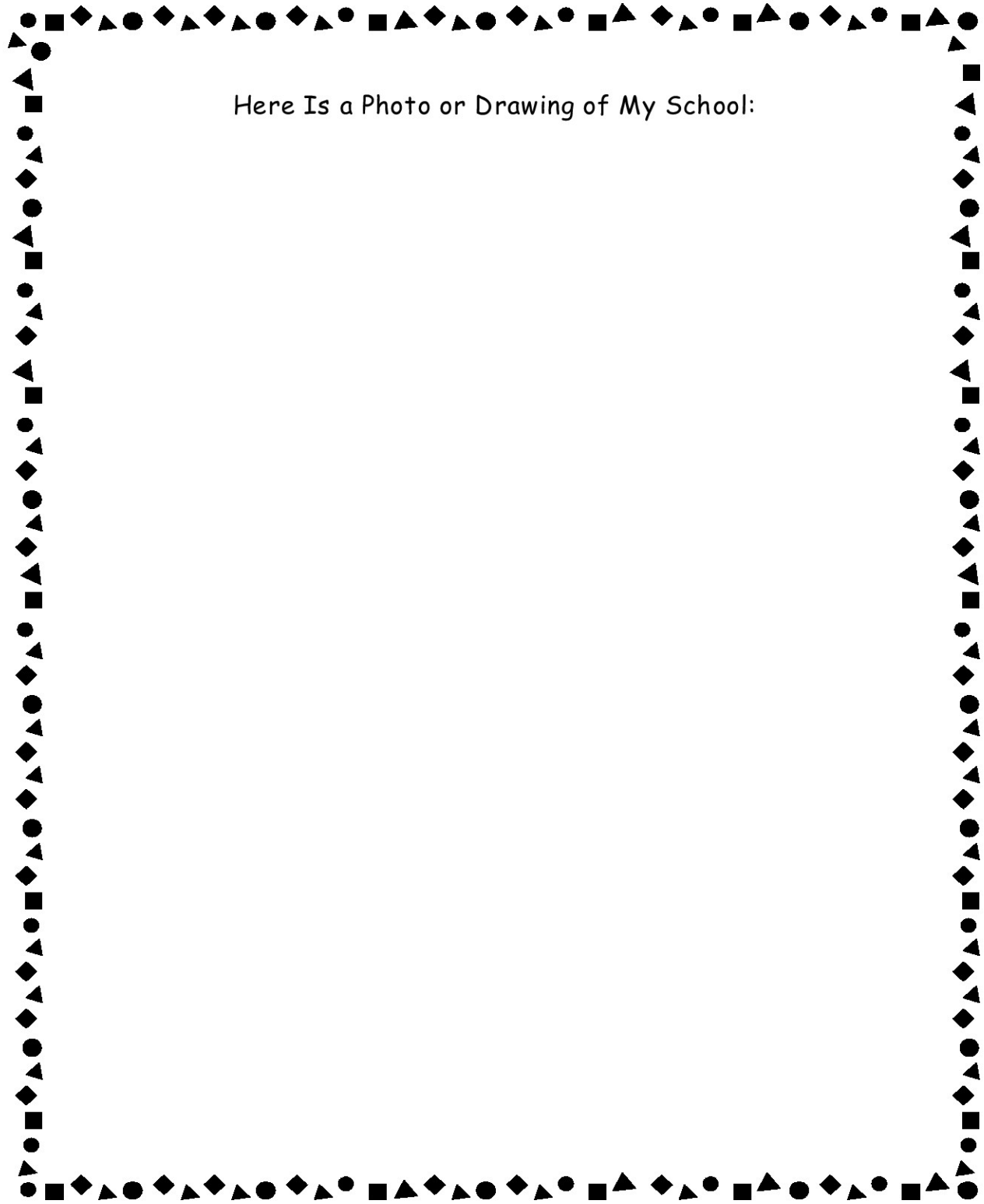
My foster father's name is: _____



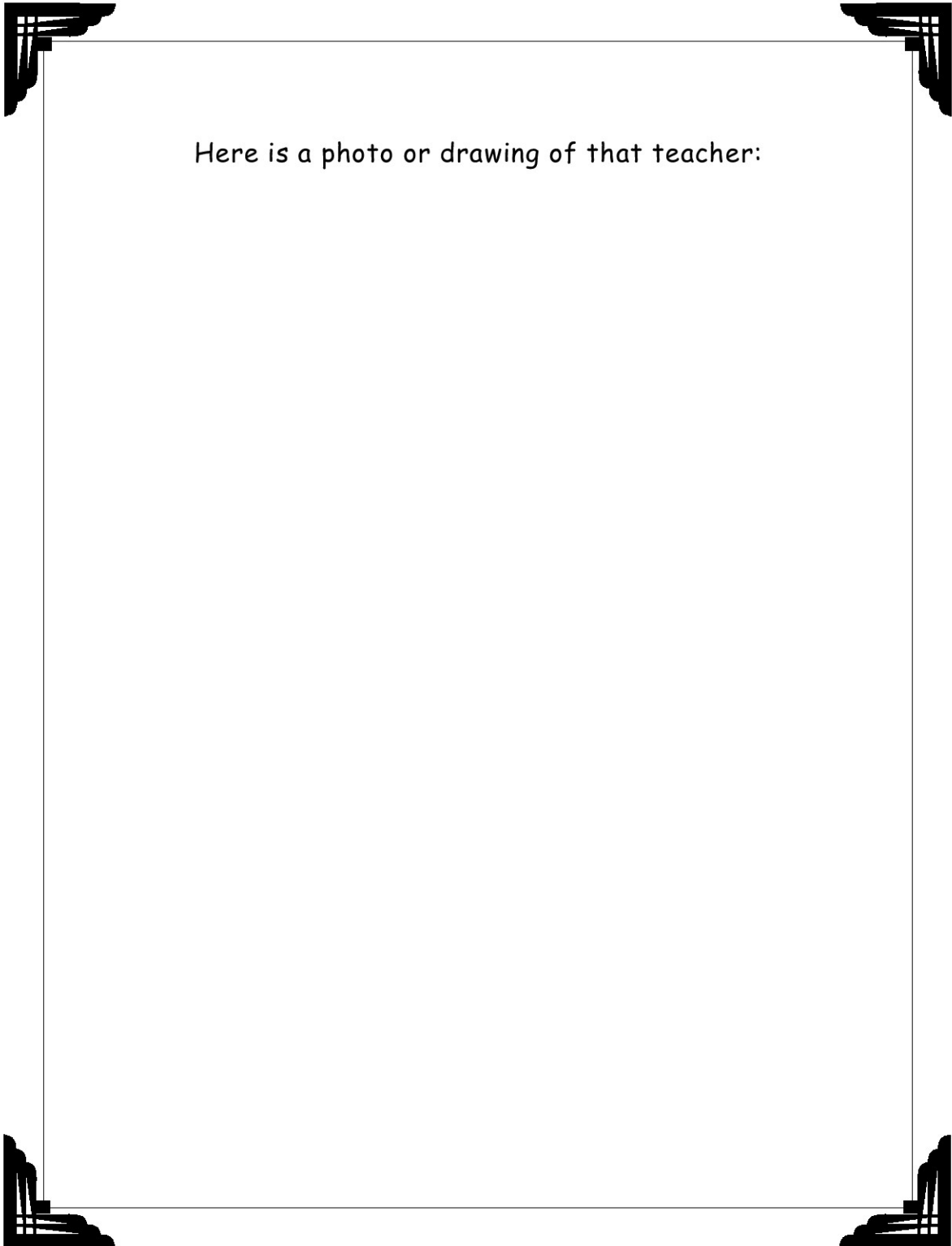
Here are drawings or photos of other people who live in my foster home:



Right now I am going to school at: _____



One of my best teachers here is: _____



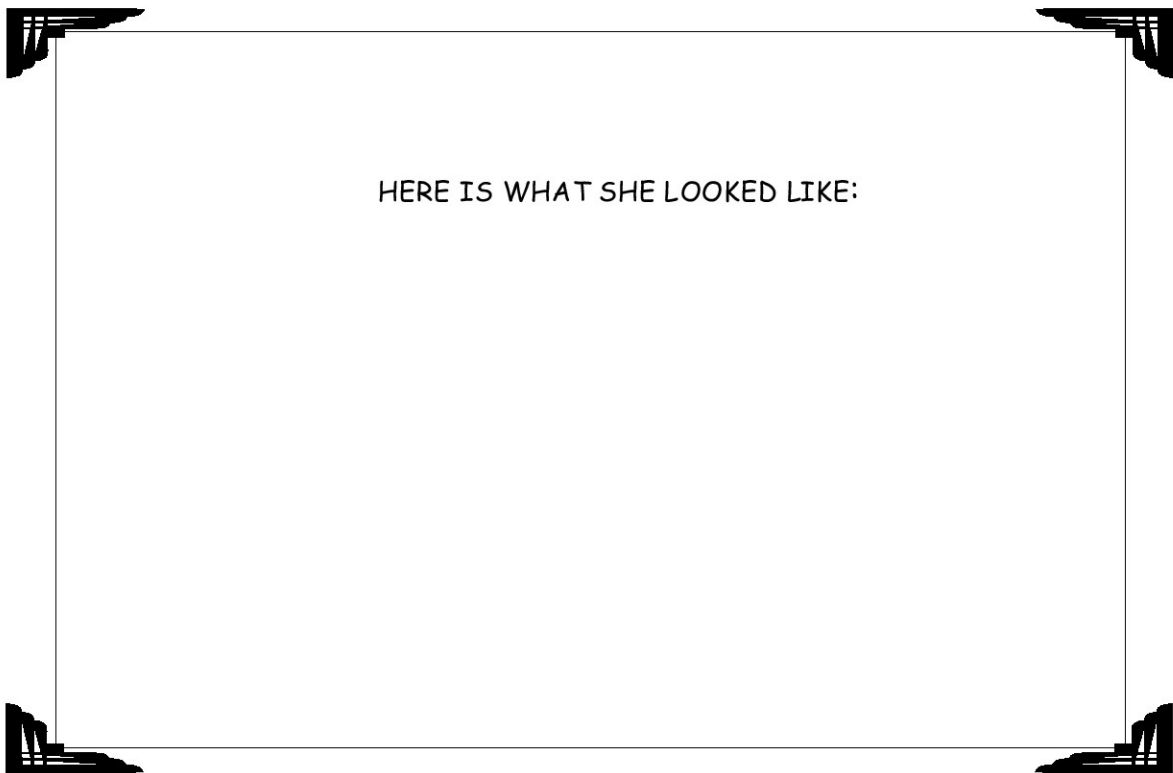
A HISTORY OF SCHOOLS I HAVE GONE TO:			
SCHOOL'S NAME	CITY	STATE	YEARS



The name of this school is: _____

The address of this school is: _____

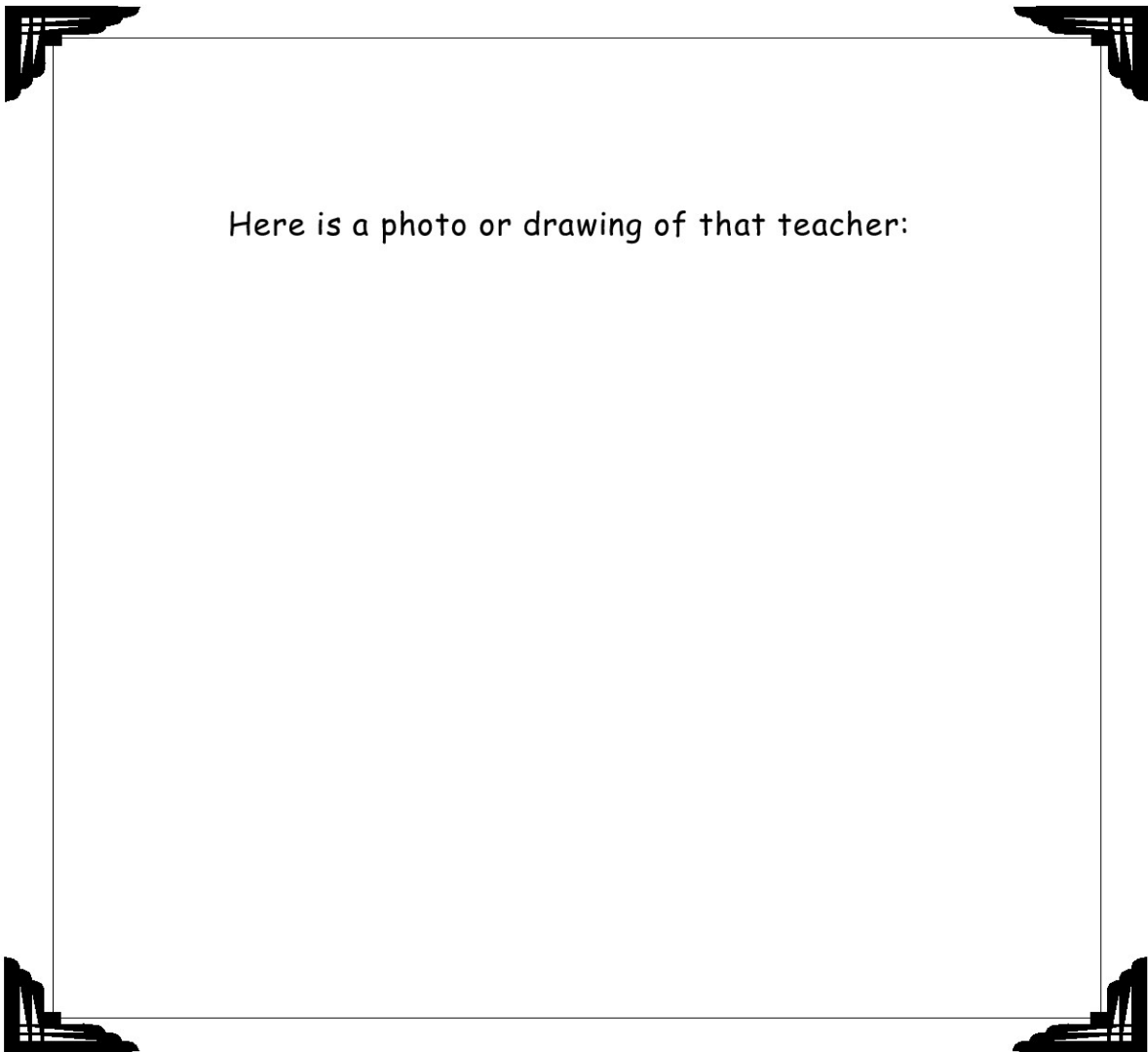
The teacher I liked best there was: _____



Some of the things that made me like her were:

Other teachers I remember from that school are:

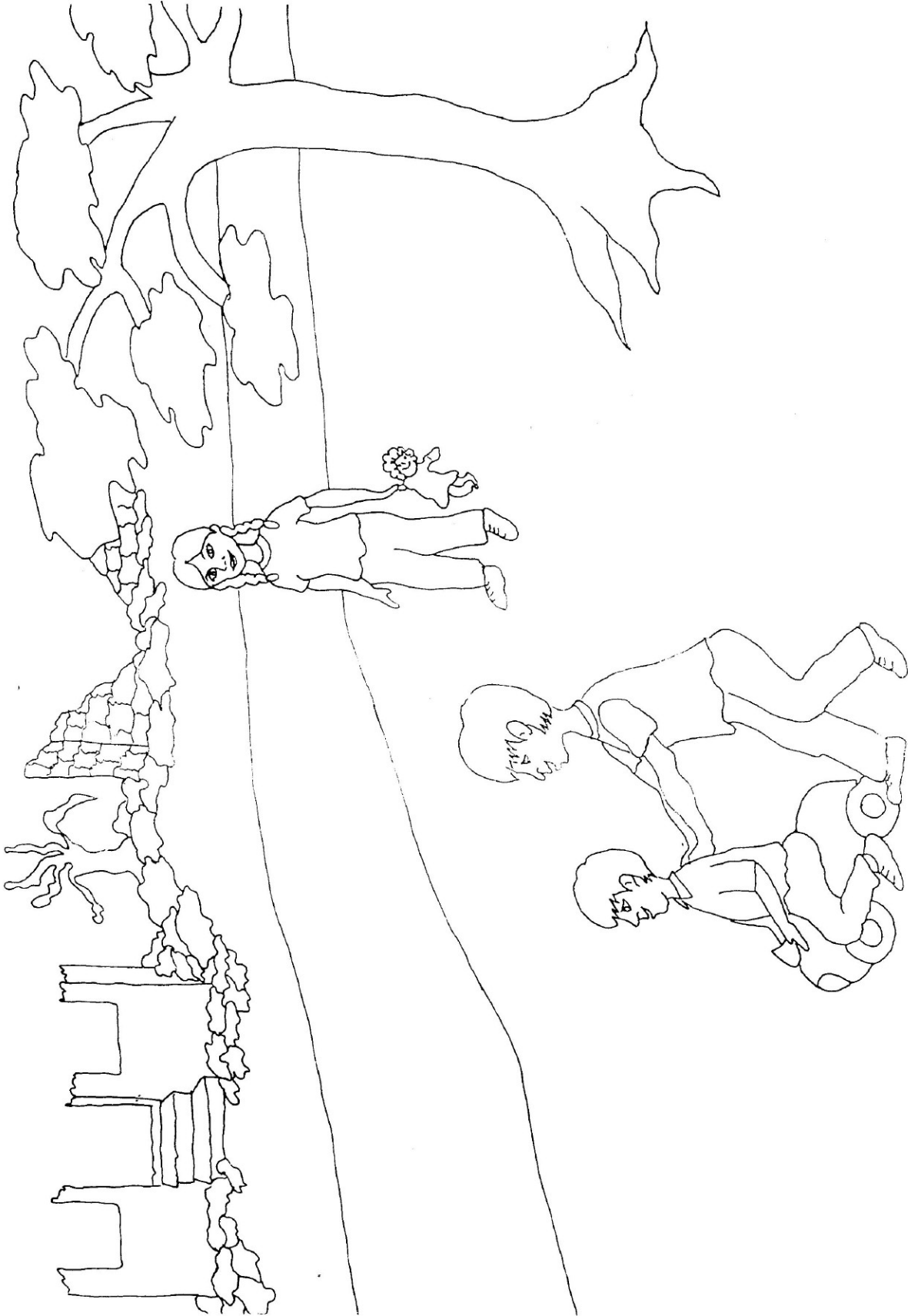
The worst teacher there was: _____



One reason I don't like that teacher is:

What I like best about my school right now is:

Troubles I have in school right now are:



HERE ARE SOME TRUE STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE I WISH I COULD BE WITH NOW:

HERE ARE SOME TRUE STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE I WISH I COULD BE WITH NOW:



HERE ARE SOME TRUE STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE I AM AFRAID OF OR PEOPLE WHO USED TO HURT ME:



What I want to do when I'm grown up is:

What I want to happen in my family is:

If I had three wishes right now, I would wish for:

1.

2.

3.

My earliest memory is: _____

The feelings I have of that memory are: _____

About my birth mother, my earliest memory is: _____

The feelings I have of that memory are: _____

The closest words to describe the feelings I have about that memory are
(circle all words that are true):

happy	angry	sad	lonely	scared	upset	glad	frightened
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Here is another thing I remember from a long time ago: _____

The way I feel in that memory is (circle all words that are true):

happy	angry	sad	lonely	scared	upset	glad	frightened
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Here Is a Drawing of Something I Remember from a Long Time Ago:



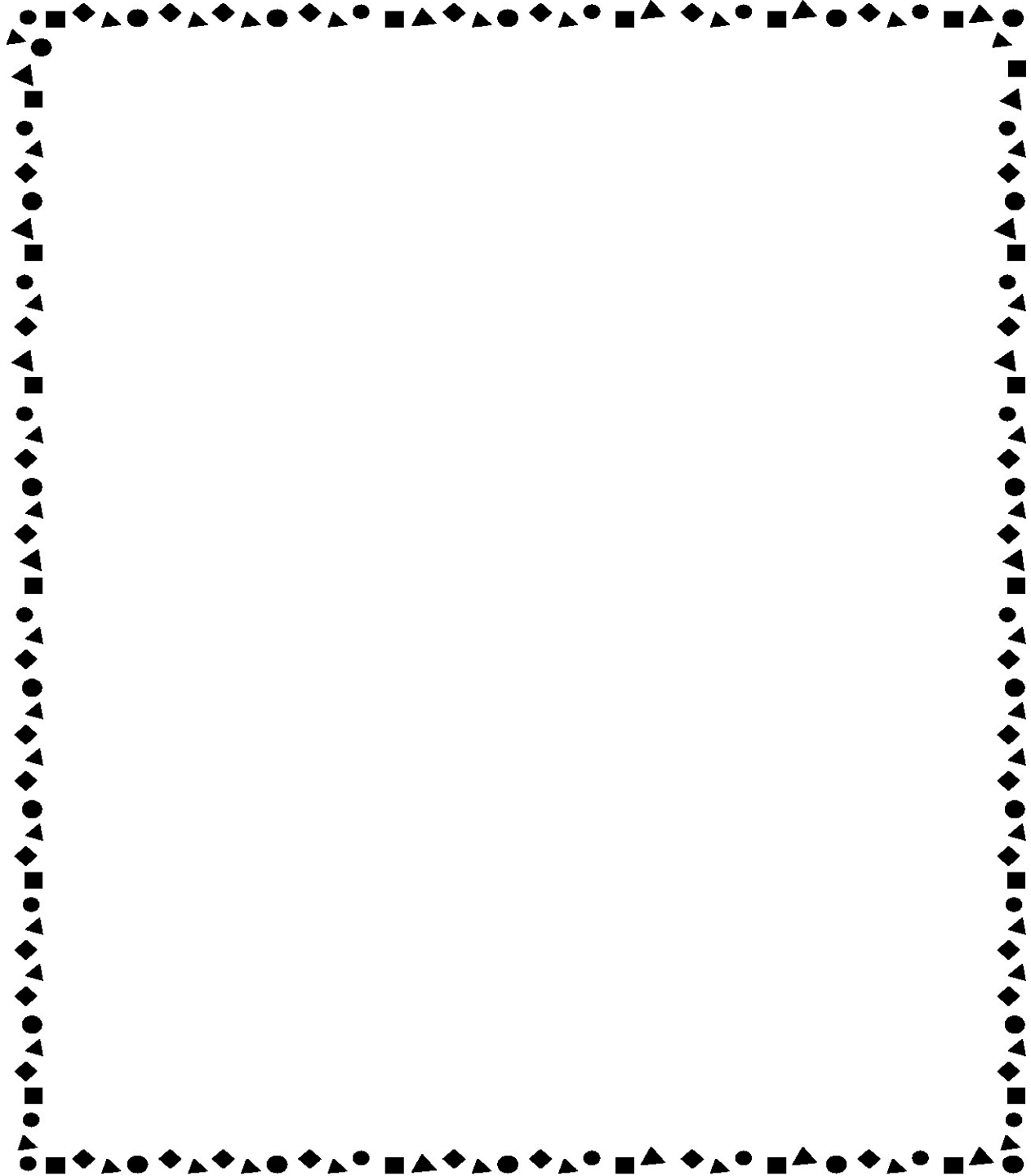
The way I feel in that memory is (circle all words that are true):

happy	angry	sad	lonely	scared	upset	glad	frightened
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Here are the names of some children who are my friends now: _____

Some of the things I do with my friends are: _____

HERE IS A DRAWING OF SOMETHING I DO WITH A FRIEND



HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING ABOUT VISITS:

I expect my first visit to happen on _____.

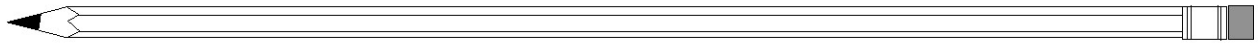
The way I feel about having visits is (circle all words that are true):

sad	angry	lonely	glad	happy	scared	puzzled	I don't know
-----	-------	--------	------	-------	--------	---------	--------------

The way I feel about not being visited is (circle all words that are true):

sad	angry	lonely	glad	happy	scared	puzzled	I don't know
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Here's what I would like to do about visits: _____



A DIARY OF VISITS WITH MY FAMILY

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

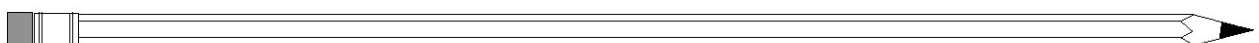
Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

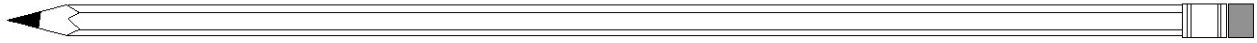
Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:







A DIARY OF VISITS WITH MY FAMILY

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

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Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

Date: ___/___/___ How it went:

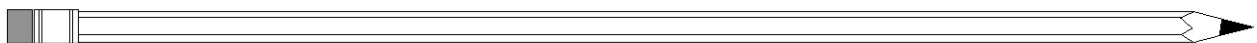


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PHOTOS TAKEN ON VISITS:

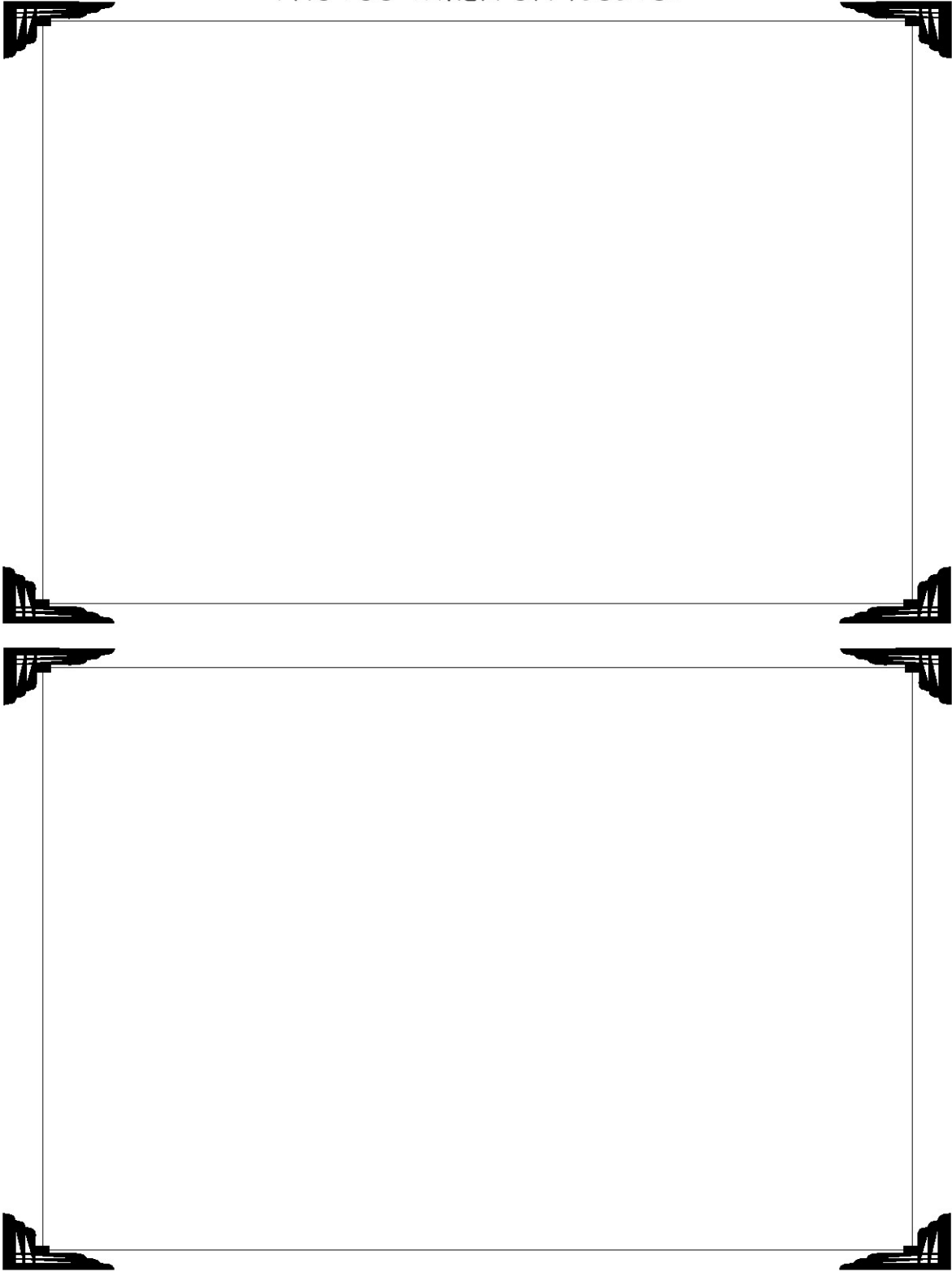
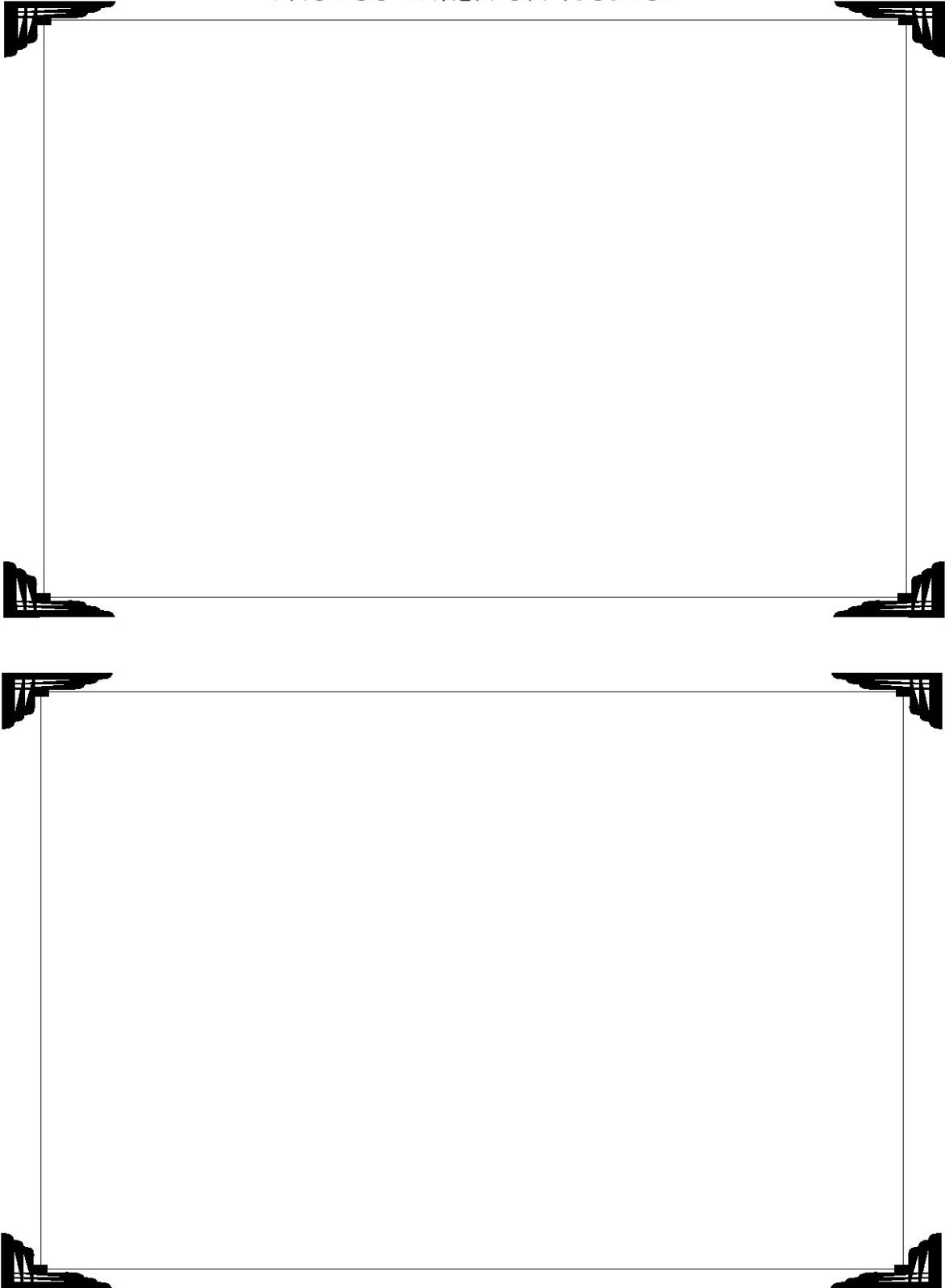
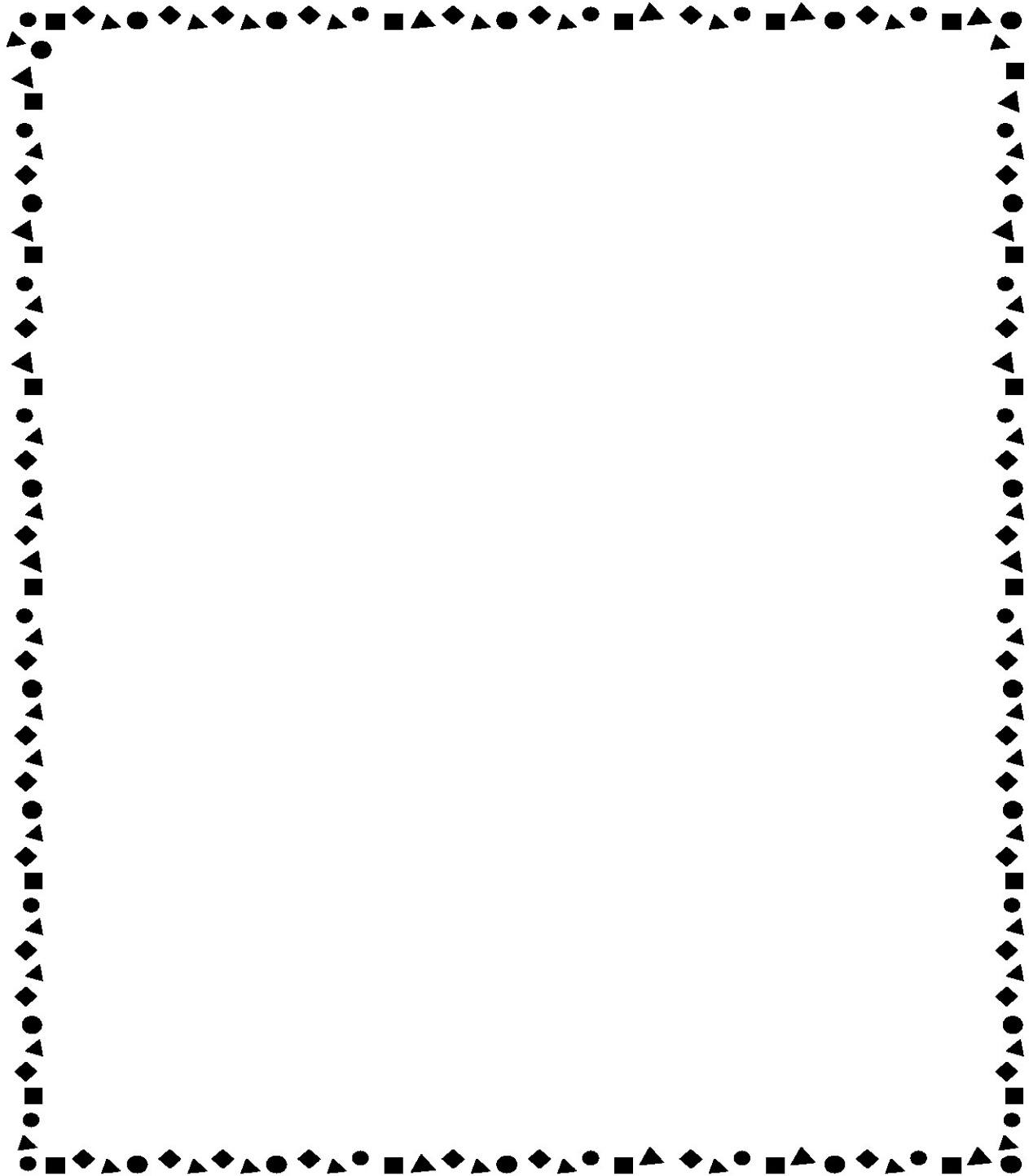


PHOTO PAGE

PHOTOS TAKEN ON VISITS:



Here is a drawing of something I would like to happen on a visit:





NAMES, ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE
I MET WHILE I WAS IN FOSTER CARE

Come back to this section at Holiday time, and use it to send Holiday cards.

Some day you may need this information for an emergency or it may help you find some of your friends and family.

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER





MY BIRTH FAMILY TELEPHONE AND ADDRESS BOOK:

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
MY BIRTH MOTHER:		
MY BIRTH FATHER:		
MY BIRTH BROTHERS & SISTERS:		



NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
BIRTH UNCLES:		
BIRTH AUNTS:		
BIRTH COUSINS:		



MY STEP FAMILY TELEPHONE AND ADDRESS BOOK:

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
MY STEPMOTHER:		
MY STEPFATHER:		
MY STEPBROTHERS & STEPSISTERS:		



OTHER STEP FAMILY MEMBERS I USED TO LIVE WITH OR VISIT

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER
STEP UNCLAS:		
STEP AUNTS:		
STEP COUSINS:		



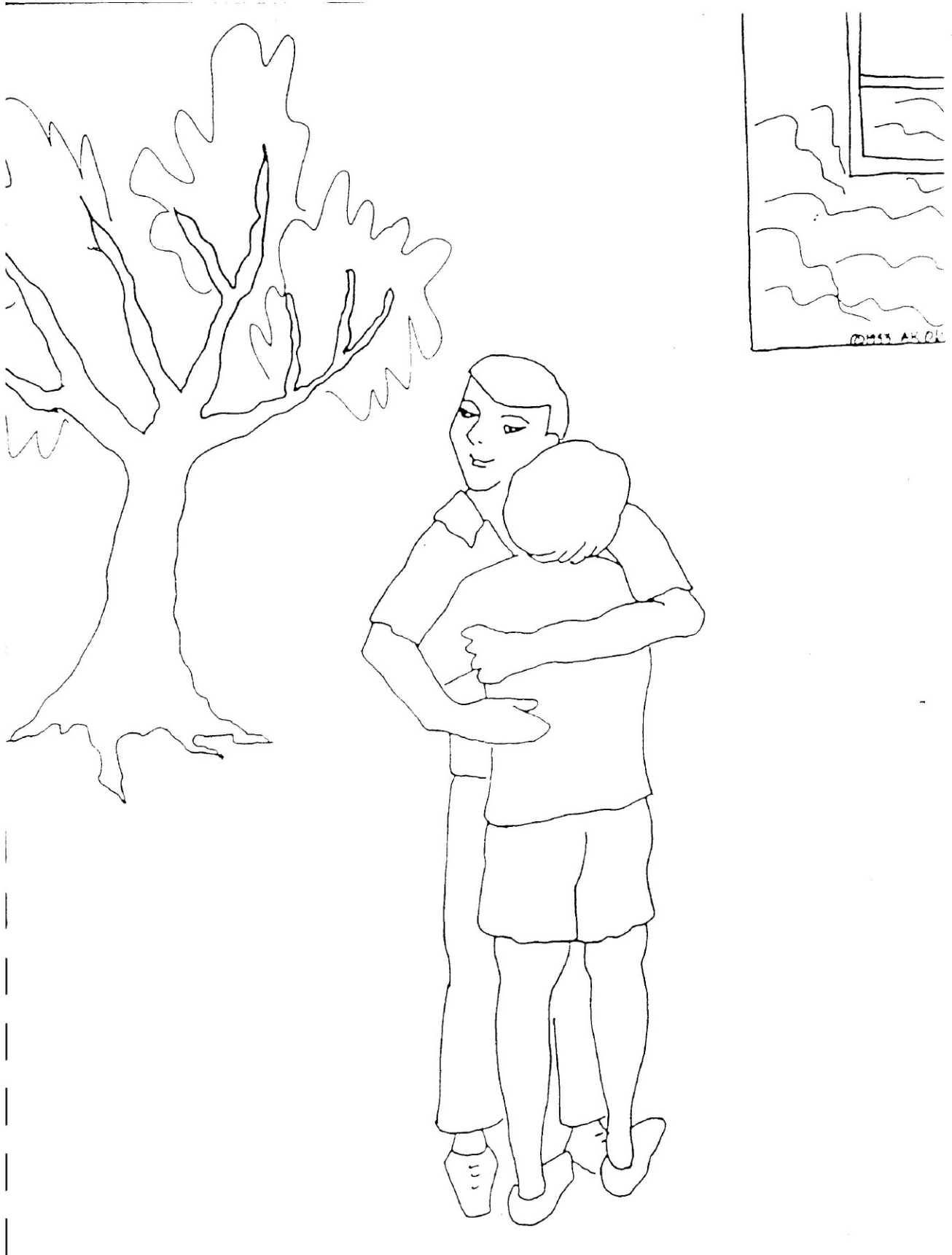
OTHER PEOPLE I USED TO LIVE WITH OR VISIT

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER



OTHER PEOPLE I USED TO LIVE WITH OR VISIT

NAME	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE NUMBER



HERE ARE SOME OF MY MOST UPSETTING MEMORIES ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED IN MY LIFE:

If there will be a change in placement, fill in this page:

Today is _____. I think I will be going to live with _____.
That will mean a change from living with the _____ family I live with now. I think the change will happen around _____.

Here are some of the things I am doing to get ready for the change:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

(Use a large manila envelope kept in this section to save all report cards. Punch loose leaf holes in the envelope and put it here if you keep the Personal Life History Book in a loose leaf cover.)

Save your report cards here.

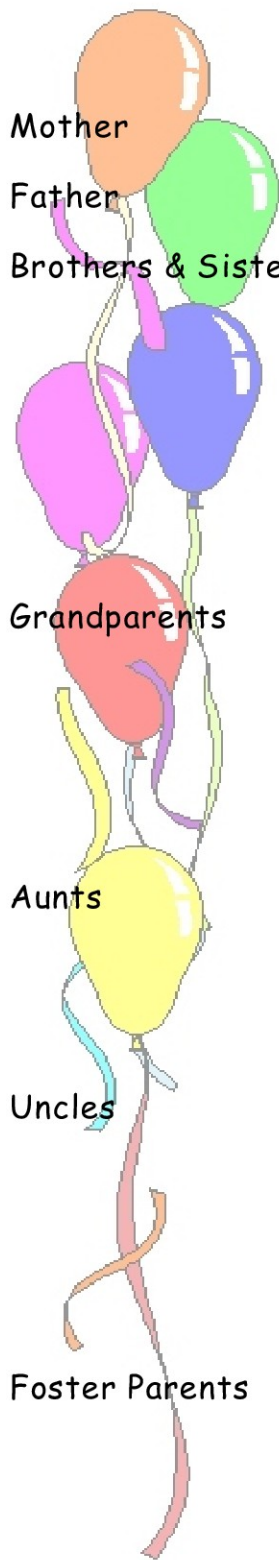


For foster parents to complete

Child's full name:	Today's Date:
Date of birth:	Medicaid number:
DSS ID number:	
Foster parents' names:	
Foster parents' address and phone:	
Medical doctor's full name:	
Medical doctor's address:	
Dentist's full name:	
Dentist's address:	
Child's illnesses and operations known to you (give dates if known)	
Blood type:	

Allergies to medication:
Immunizations (give dates if known):
Other medical problems:
Medications now being used (name, dose, purpose):

(USE THIS PAGE TO REMIND YOU WHEN TO SEND BIRTHDAY CARDS.)



NAME	DATE
Mother	/ /
Father	/ /
Brothers & Sisters	/ /
	/ /
	/ /
	/ /
Grandparents	/ /
	/ /
	/ /
	/ /
Aunts	/ /
	/ /
	/ /
Uncles	/ /
	/ /
	/ /
	/ /
Foster Parents	/ /
	/ /

MORE BIRTHDAYS TO REMEMBER

NAME	DATE
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