



World's Greatest Detective!

# Nate the Great

and the

## Missing Key



by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat  
illustrated by Marc Simont

ACTIVITIES  
INSIDE!



Praise for the

# Nate the Great

series

★ “Kids will like Nate the Great.”

—*School Library Journal*, Starred

“The illustrations capture the exaggerated, tongue-in-cheek humor of the story.”

—*Booklist*

“Nate, Sludge, and all their friends have been delighting beginning readers for years.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“They don’t come any cooler than Nate the Great.”

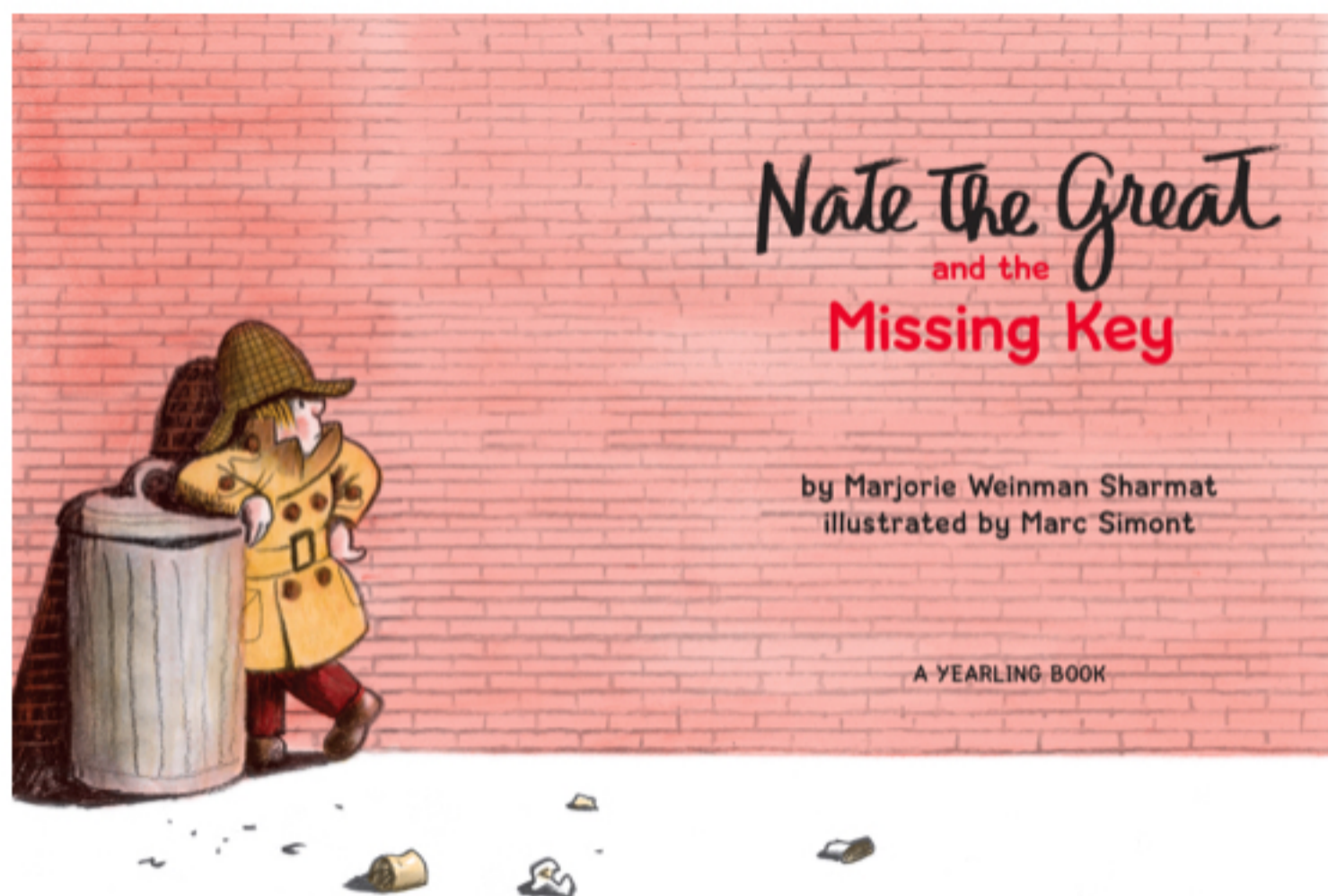
—*The Huffington Post*



at



*Nate the Great*  
and the  
**Missing Key**





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with Extra Fun Activities, in 2007.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available upon request.

ISBN 978-0-440-46191-3 (pbk.) — ISBN 978-0-385-37678-5 (ebook)

Random House Children's Books supports the First Amendment and celebrates the right to read.

eBook ISBN 9780385376785

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a



*To Mitch,  
with love and thanks  
for giving me the key  
to this mystery*

M.W.S.









**I**, Nate the Great,  
am a detective.  
I am not afraid of anything.  
Except for one thing.  
Today I am going  
to a birthday party  
for the one thing  
I am afraid of.  
Annie's dog, Fang.



This morning my dog, Sludge,  
and I were getting ready  
for the party.  
The doorbell rang.  
I opened the door.  
Annie and Fang were standing there.  
Fang looked bigger than ever  
and so did his teeth.  
But he looked like a birthday dog.  
He was wearing a stupid sweater  
and a new collar.  
“I need help,” Annie said.  
“I can’t find the key to my house.  
So I can’t get inside  
to have the birthday party  
for Fang.”





I, Nate the Great,  
was sorry about the key  
and glad about the party.  
I said,  
“Tell me about your key.”  
“Well,” Annie said,





“the last time I saw it  
was when I went out  
to get Fang a birthday surprise  
to eat.”

“To eat?” I said.

“Yes,” Annie said.





“Some surprise food.  
It’s the one present  
I had forgotten to buy.  
I got Fang lots of presents.  
A striped sweater.  
And a new collar  
with a license number,  
a name tag,  
a little silver dog dish,  
and a little silver bone  
to hang from the collar.  
See how pretty Fang looks  
and hear how nicely he jingles.”  
I, Nate the Great,  
did not want  
to look at Fang



or listen to him.

“Tell me more,” I said.

“Well, Rosamond and her four cats were at my house,” Annie said.

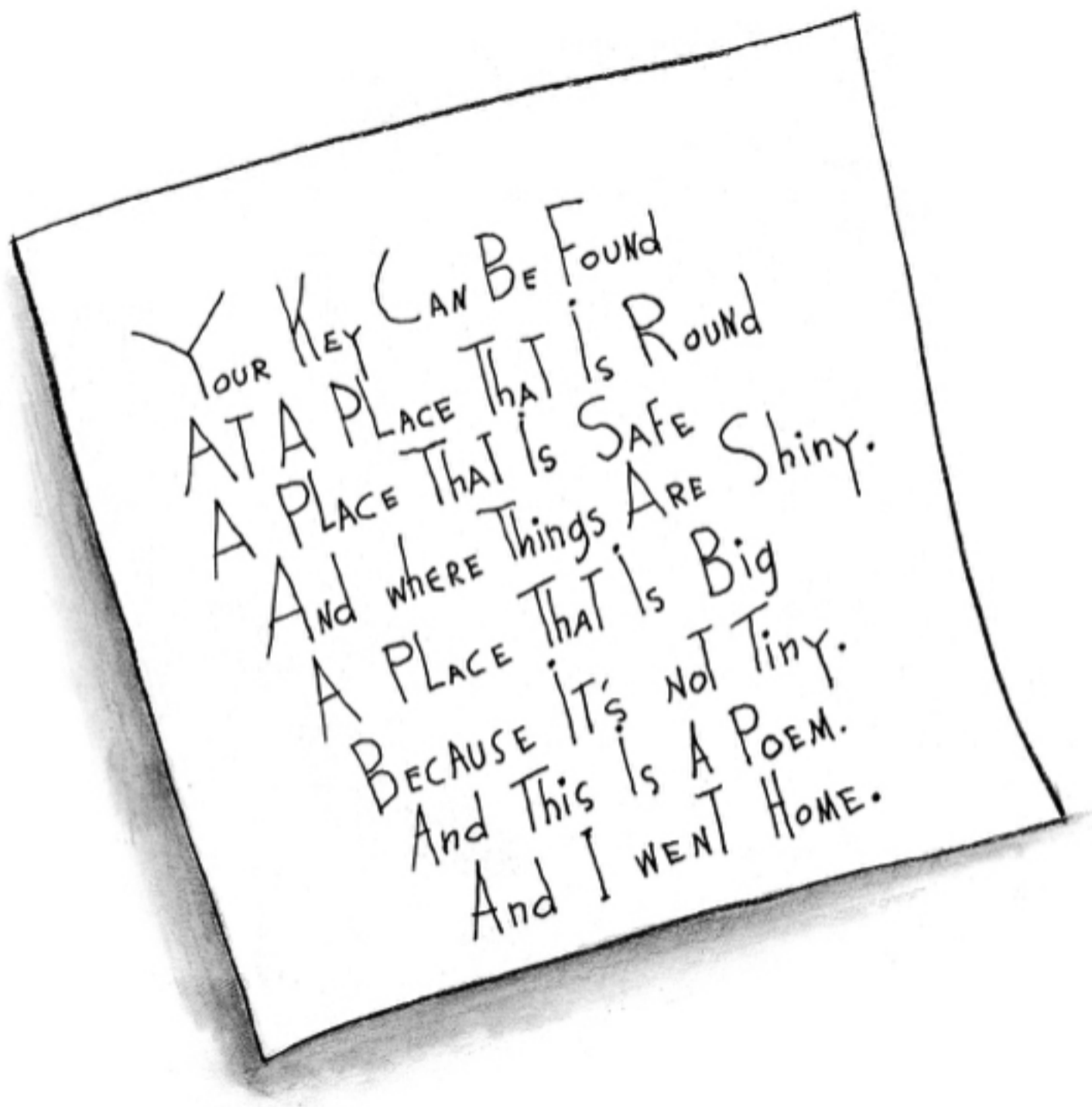
“She was helping me get ready for the party.





When I went to the store,  
I left Rosamond and the cats  
in my house.  
I left Fang in the yard.  
I left the key to my house  
on a table.  
That is the last time  
I saw the key.  
When I got back,  
Fang was still in the yard.  
But the house was locked,  
and Rosamond and her cats  
were gone.  
Rosamond left this note  
stuck to my front door.”





“That is a strange poem,”

I said.

“Sometimes Rosamond is strange,”


Annie said.

I, Nate the Great,  
already knew that.



“You must go  
to Rosamond’s house  
and ask her  
where she put your key,” I said.  
“I went to her house,”  
Annie said. “But it was locked, too.  
I rang the bell, but no one was home.”  
“This is a big day  
for Rosamond  
and locked doors,” I said.  
“Who else has a key  
to your house?”  
“My mother and father.  
But they went out for the day.  
They don’t like dog parties,”  
Annie said.

I, Nate the Great,  
knew that dog parties  
are very easy not to like.  
But I said,  
“I will take your case.”  
I wrote a note to my mother.



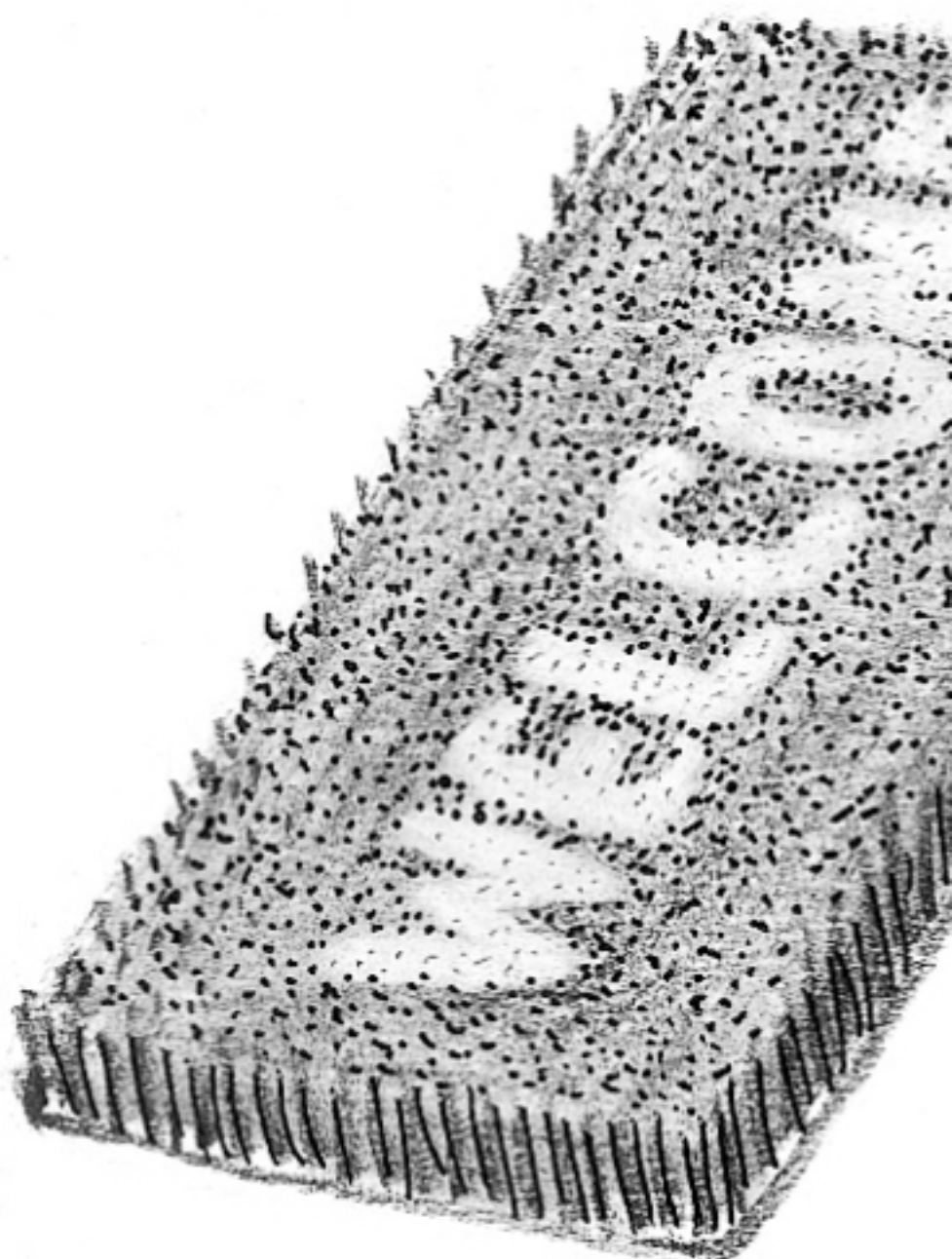
Dear mother,  
I am on a case.  
I am looking for a round, safe,  
shiny, big place.  
I do not know where or what  
a round, safe, shiny, big place is.  
But when I find it  
I will be back.

Love,  
Nate the Great



Annie, Fang, Sludge, and I  
went to  
Annie's house.

"What does your key look like?"  
I asked.





“It is silver and shiny,”

Annie said.

Sludge and I looked around.

There were many places  
to leave a key.

Under Annie’s doormat.

In her flower garden.

Up her drainpipe.

In her mailbox.

But they were not round,  
safe, shiny, and big.

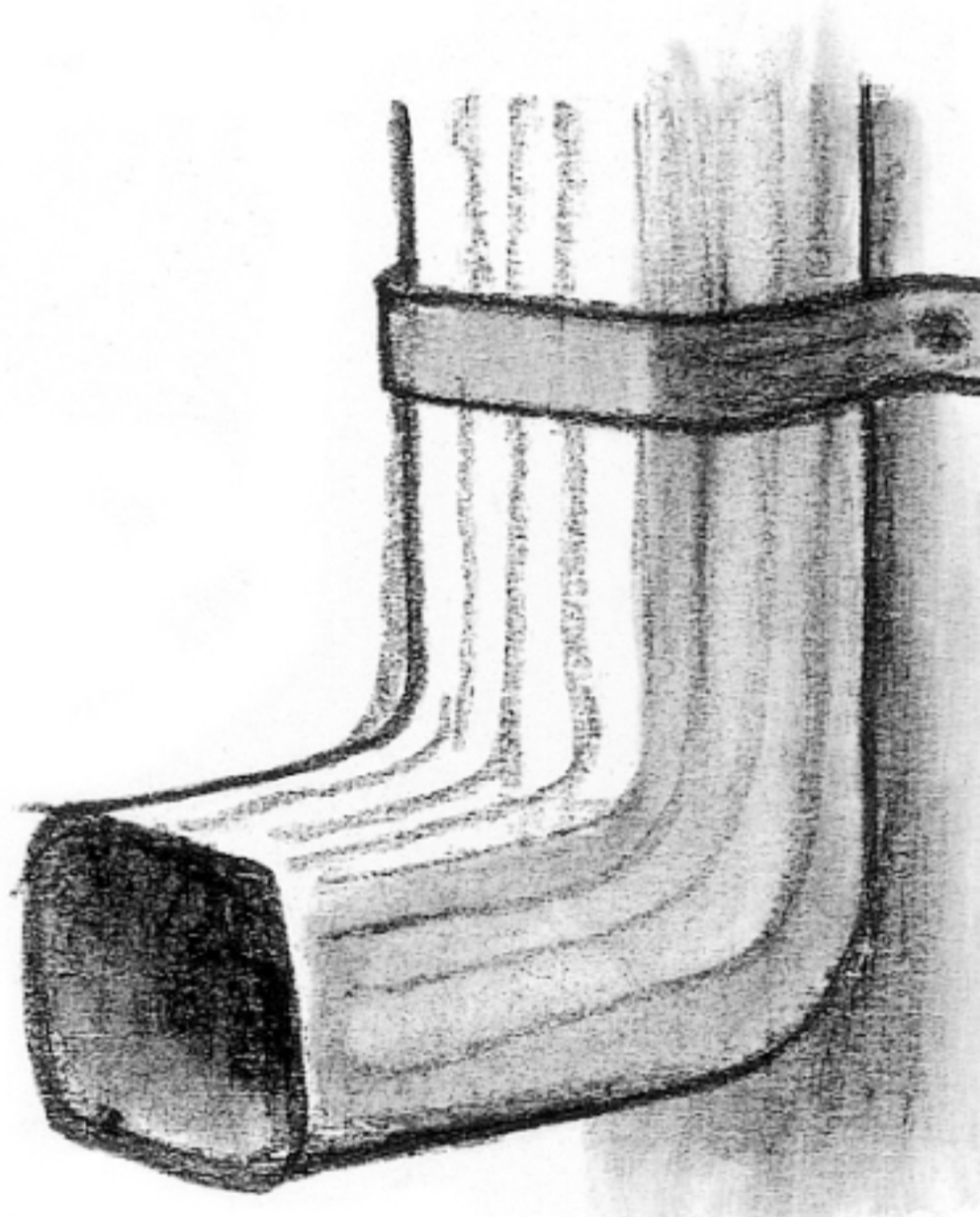
“I will have to look  
in other places,” I said.






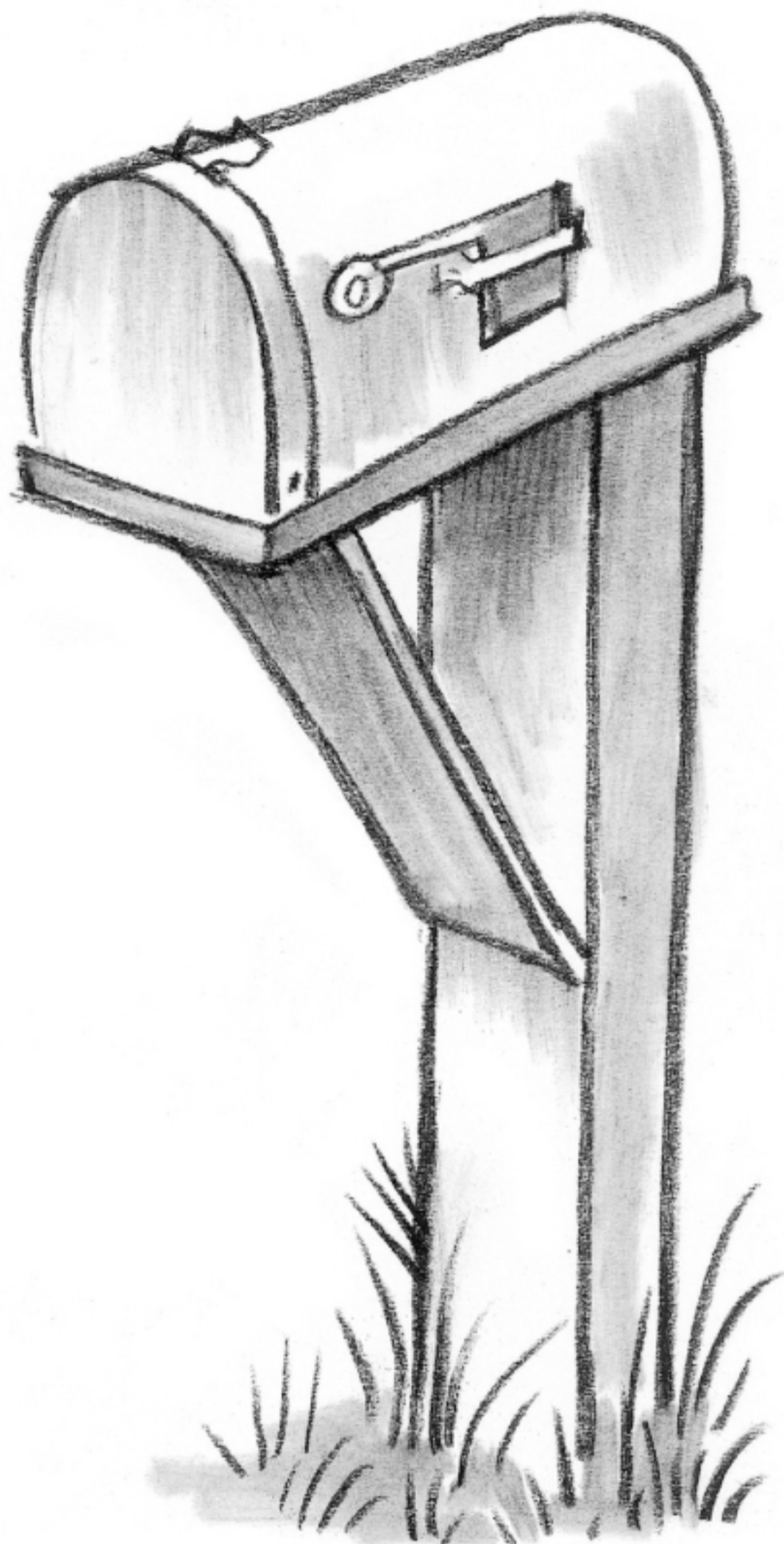


“Fang and I will wait  
for you here,” Annie said.  
I, Nate the Great,  
was glad to hear that.  
Sludge and I went to Oliver’s house.  
Oliver is a pest.  
But I had a case to solve.  
I had a job to do.





I knew that Oliver  
collects shiny things.  
Like tin cans, safety pins,  
badges, poison ivy,  
and pictures of the sun.  
Each week he collects  
one new shiny thing.  
Perhaps this week





it was a key.

“Did Rosamond leave a shiny key  
with you in a big, round, safe place?”

I asked.

“No,” Oliver said.

“This is not my key week.

This is my week

for shiny eels.

Would you like to see

my new eel?”

I, Nate the Great,

did not want to see

a new eel

or an old eel.

I started to leave.

“May I follow you?”





Oliver asked.

“No,” I said.

“I will help you look  
for the key,” Oliver said.

“All right,” I said.

“When I go east,  
you go west.

When I go south,  
you go north.”

“But we won’t be together,”  
Oliver said.

“Exactly,” I said.

Sludge and I left Oliver’s house.

I did not look back.

I knew what I would see.

Oliver.



I, Nate the Great,  
was busy thinking  
and looking.

All at once I saw  
a big, safe place.

A bank.

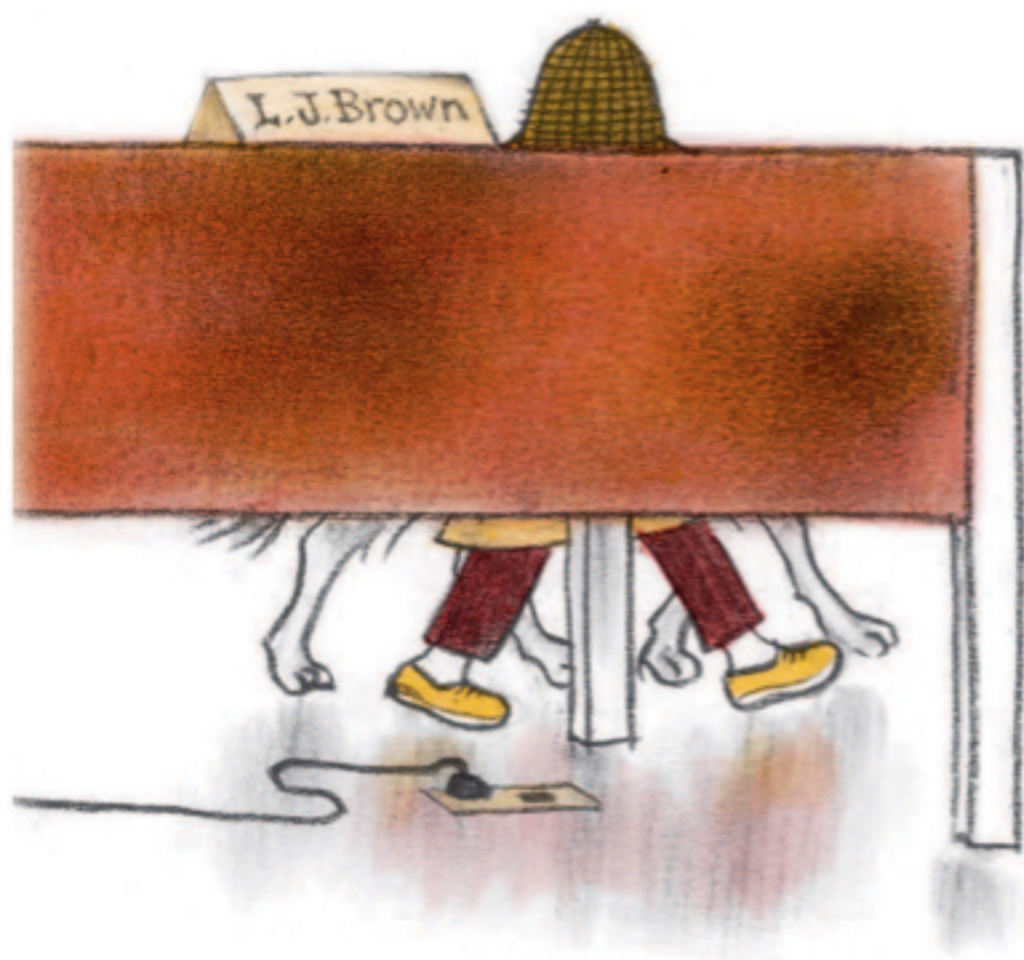
I knew there were many  
round, shiny things  
in a bank.





Like pennies  
and nickels  
and dimes  
and quarters.  
Sludge and I walked inside.  
Oliver followed us.





Sludge and I looked  
on desks and behind counters.  
Then we crawled on the floor.  
If Rosamond had been here,  
there would be cat hairs  
all over the floor.



I saw paper clips  
and a broken pen  
and a penny  
and mud.  
And a bank guard.  
First his feet.  
Then the rest of him.  
“Do you want  
to make a deposit?” he asked.  
I, Nate the Great,  
wished I could deposit Oliver  
in the bank.  
I said, “Did anyone strange  
with four cats  
leave a key here?”  
The guard pointed to the door.



Sludge and I left.

Now I, Nate the Great,  
knew where I should *not* look  
for the key.

A bank was not  
a strange enough place  
for a strange person like Rosamond  
to leave a key.

I had to think of a strange place.



I thought of a kitchen  
with bottles of syrup,  
hunks of butter,  
and stacks of pancakes.  
It was not a strange place.  
But it was a good place  
to think of  
because I, Nate the Great,  
was hungry.  
It was time for lunch.  
Sludge and I started for home.





I felt something breathing  
on the back of my neck.

I turned around.

It was Oliver.





“I will follow you forever,”  
Oliver said.

I, Nate the Great,  
knew that forever  
was far too long  
to be followed  
by Oliver.





Sludge and I started to run.  
We ran down the street,  
up a hill,  
around five corners,  
and into an alley.  
We lost Oliver.  
I sat down to rest  
beside a garbage can.  
Sludge sniffed it.  
Sludge likes garbage cans.  
I stared at the can.  
I had an idea.  
A garbage can  
would be a perfect place  
for Rosamond to hide a key!  
It was big and round and shiny  
with a shiny cover and shiny handles.  
It was safe because no one  
would look inside a garbage can.  
Except Sludge.  
And it was a very strange place  
for a key.



Strange enough for Rosamond.  
There were not  
many places like that.  
Now I, Nate the Great,  
knew that I had to look  
in Annie's garbage can.







Sludge and I walked  
to the garbage can  
behind Annie's house.  
We bent low.  
I did not want Annie  
to see me  
until I found the key  
in her garbage can.  
Then I would surprise her.  
I tried to pull up the cover.  
Sludge tried to push up the cover  
with his nose.  
I pulled harder.  
Sludge pushed harder.  
The cover came off.  
We looked inside the can.  
It was empty.  
I, Nate the Great,  
had not solved the case.  
Sludge and I slunk home.  
I was very hungry.





I gave Sludge a bone.  
I made many pancakes.  
I sat down to eat them.  
But I did not have a fork.  
I opened a drawer.  
It was full of spoons and knives  
and forks all together  
in a shiny silver pile.  
I had to pick up  
many spoons and knives  
before I found a fork.  
It is hard to find something  
silver and shiny  
when it is mixed in  
with other things  
that are silver and shiny.



I, Nate the Great,  
thought about that.  
Maybe Annie's key was someplace  
where nobody would *see* it  
because it was with other  
shiny silver things.



A strange place.  
A round place.  
A big place.  
A safe place.  
And now I, Nate the Great,  
knew the place!  
Sludge and I went back  
to Annie's house.  
Annie was sitting in front  
with Fang.  
She looked sad.  
Fang looked big.  
I ran up to Annie.  
"I know where your key is,"  
I said.  
"Where?" Annie asked.



“Look at Fang’s collar,”

I said.

Annie looked.

“I see Fang’s name tag  
hanging from his collar,”  
she said. “And his license.

And his silver dog dish.

And his silver bone



and \_\_\_\_\_my key!"

"Yes," I said. "I, Nate the Great,  
say that Rosamond hung your key  
from Fang's collar.

We did not notice it  
because there were other







silver things there.”

“But why did Rosamond  
hang it there?”

Annie asked.

“Well, it is a very strange place,”  
I said. “And remember Rosamond’s poem.





A *round* place.  
A *big* and *safe* place  
*where things are shiny.*  
Well, Fang's collar is round.  
The things hanging from it  
are shiny.  
Fang is big.  
And safe.  
There is no place  
more safe  
to leave a key  
than a few inches  
from Fang's teeth.  
No one would try  
to take off that key.  
Including me."  
I started to leave.  
"Wait!" Annie said.  
She took the key  
from Fang's collar.  
"Now I can have my party  
and you can come!"



# ~ Extra ~ Fun Activities!





# What's Inside

[Nate's Notes: Keys](#)

[Nate's Notes: Banks](#)

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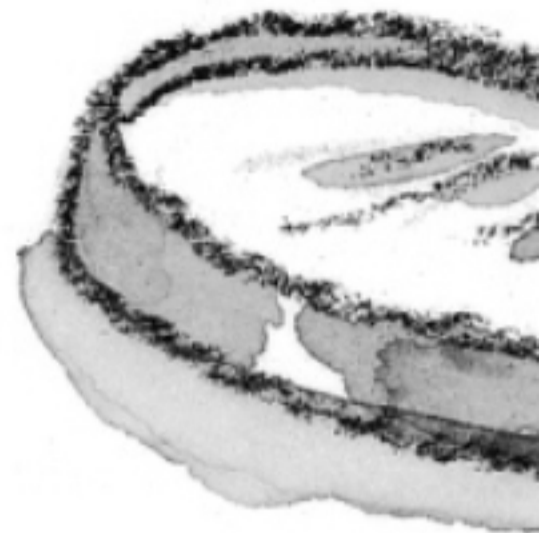
[How to Make a Fancy Dog \(or  
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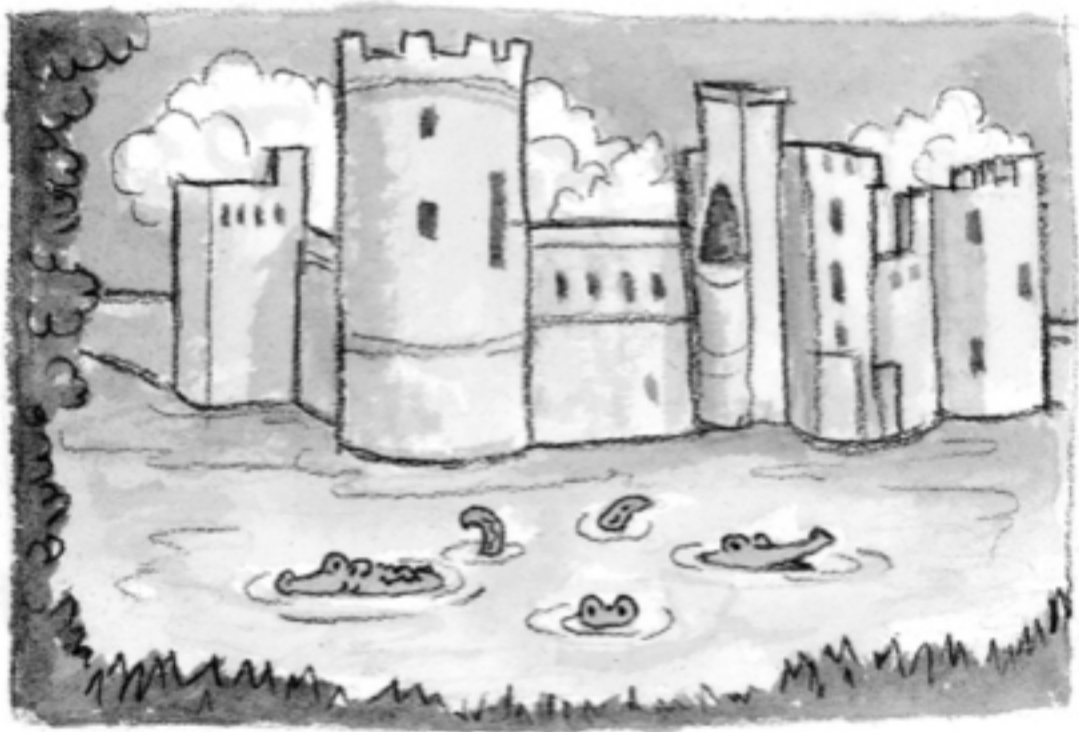
Nate researched keys on the Web. These little hunks of metal are more complex than you'd think. Here's what Nate learned.



## NATE'S NOTES: Keys

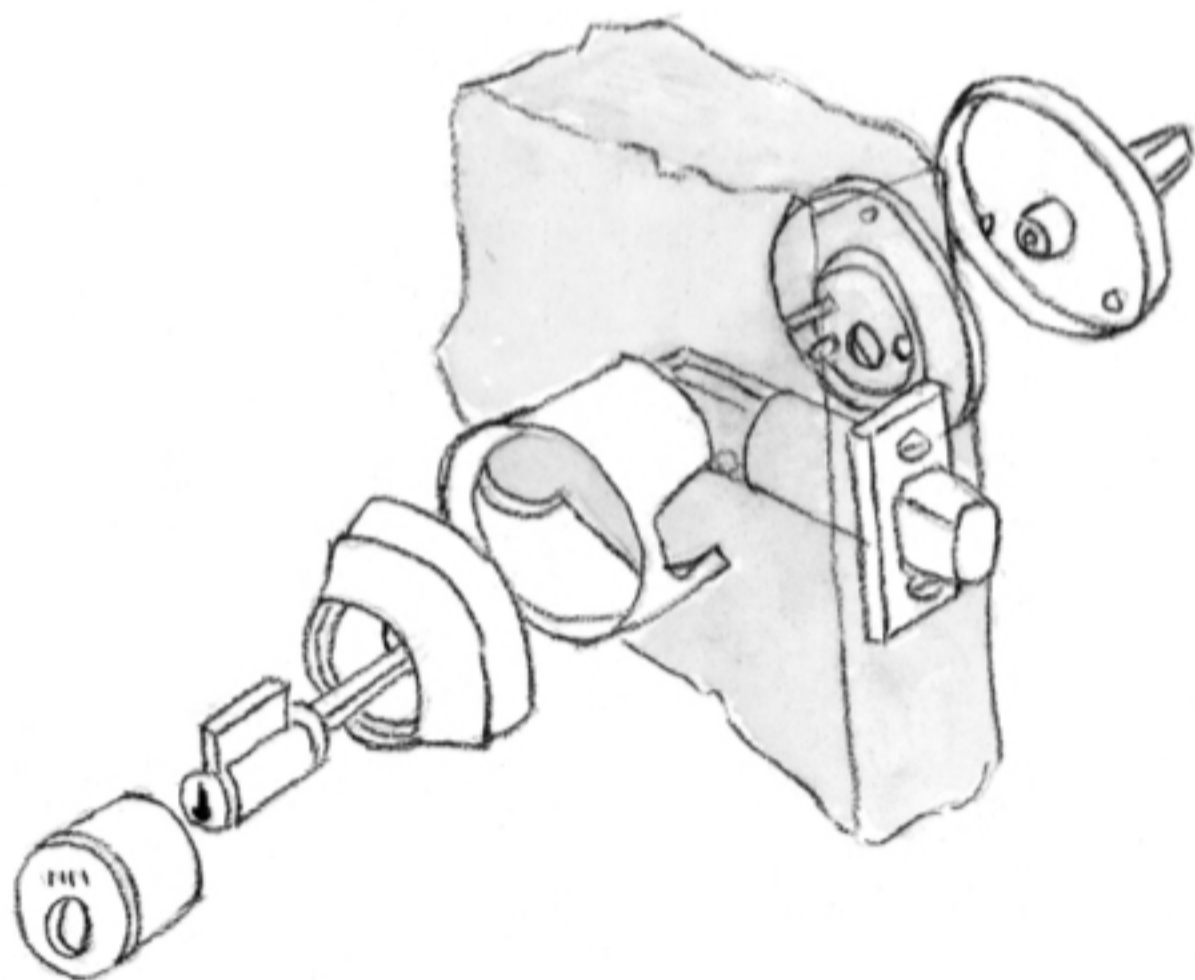
Most adults carry five to ten keys with them whenever they leave home.

Locks and keys have been in use since about 2000 BC. The earliest ones were made of wood. Before keys became common, people hid their valuables behind moats or on islands surrounded by starving crocodiles.



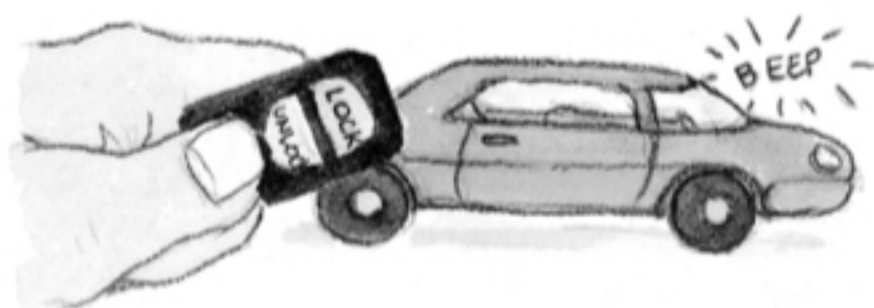


A dead bolt is a common kind of lock. When you turn the key in a dead bolt, the bolt slides into a hole on the doorframe. Inside the cylinder there is a sort of puzzle. Only the right key will solve it. Insert the right key, and its curves and grooves push up a series of pins the exact distance necessary to turn the cylinder—and open the lock!

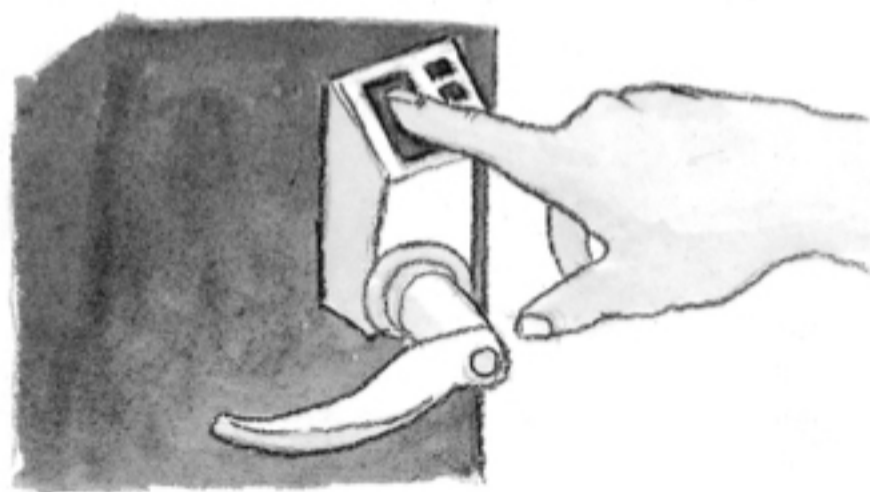




A remote-controlled lock allows you to open your car door by pushing a button. The "key" transmits a radio signal. Inside the car, a radio receiver gets the message from the "key" to lock or unlock the car.



You can also get a keyless lock for your house. You might press numbers on a keypad to open the lock. Or you might use a plastic card. A really cool keyless lock scans your fingerprint, handprint, or eyeball and then decides whether to let you in.





How many keys exist? To get an idea, think about this: The University of Toronto (in Canada) has more than 100,000 key locks on campus. That's typical for a large university. As Annie discovered, keeping track of keys can be a big job! Still, it's easier than wrestling a starving crocodile or swimming across a moat.







## NATE'S NOTES: Banks

Banks don't like detectives snooping around.  
Libraries don't mind. So Nate went to the library  
to find out more about banks.



The U.S. Mint makes pennies, nickels, dimes,  
quarters, half-dollars, and dollar coins.

Folding money is made at a place called the  
Bureau of Engraving and Printing.



Every coin or bill made by the government shows the year it was issued. (For more about the dollar bill, see pages 10 to 13.)

The vaults of the Federal Reserve Bank on Maiden Lane in New York City store more than one-quarter of the world's gold. The shiny metal is in the form of bars called bullion.





# A Map of a Buck

*Here's what you'll find on the front of a dollar bill:*



1. **A SEAL:** This seal shows which of the twelve Federal Reserve banks issued the bill. "G" stands for Chicago. (The number 7, shown four times, also stands for Chicago.)
2. **A PORTRAIT:** This is George Washington. He was the first president of the United States.
3. **A SERIAL NUMBER:** Each bill has a different number here.
4. **A SPIDER?** Some people claim to see a spider here. Other people say it's actually an owl.



What do you see?



5. **TWO SIGNATURES:** Each bill shows the signatures of the Treasurer of the United States and the Secretary of the Treasury.

*Here's what you'll find on the back of a dollar bill:*



6. MDCCLXXVI = 1776: That was the year of U.S. independence.



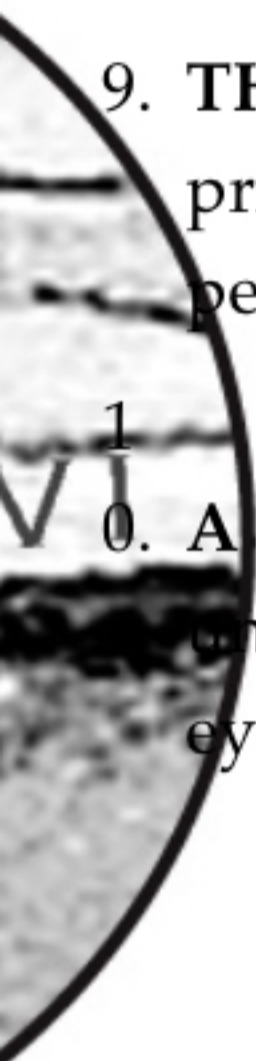
7. **NOT PAPER:** U.S. folding money is made from cloth, not paper. Red and blue fibers are spread throughout every bill. That helps make it hard to create counterfeit, or fake, money!
8. **A BALD EAGLE:** The eagle is the symbol of America. This one holds thirteen olive branches in one foot and thirteen arrows in



the other. The branches stand for peace. The arrows mean war.

9. **THINK INK:** The back of a dollar bill is printed with green ink. That's why some people call dollars greenbacks.

10. **A PYRAMID:** The circle on the left shows an unfinished pyramid with thirteen steps. An eye within a triangle radiates light. Weird!



## How to Make a Fancy Dog (or Cat) Tag

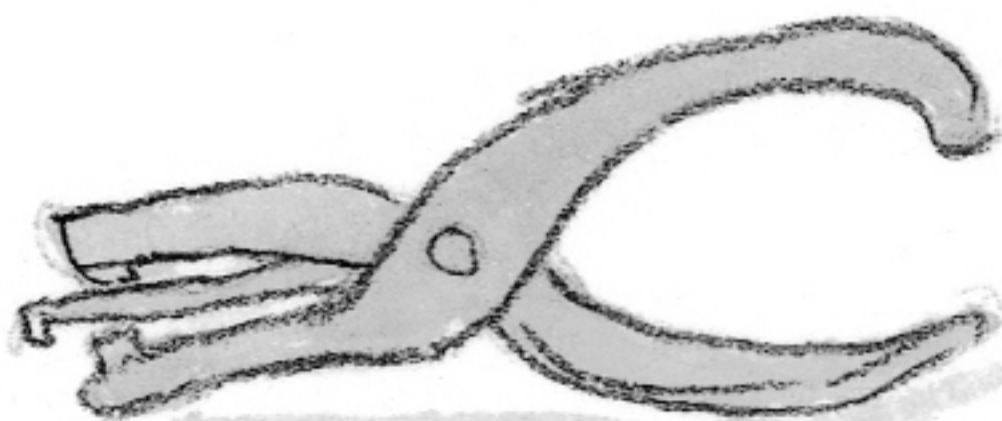
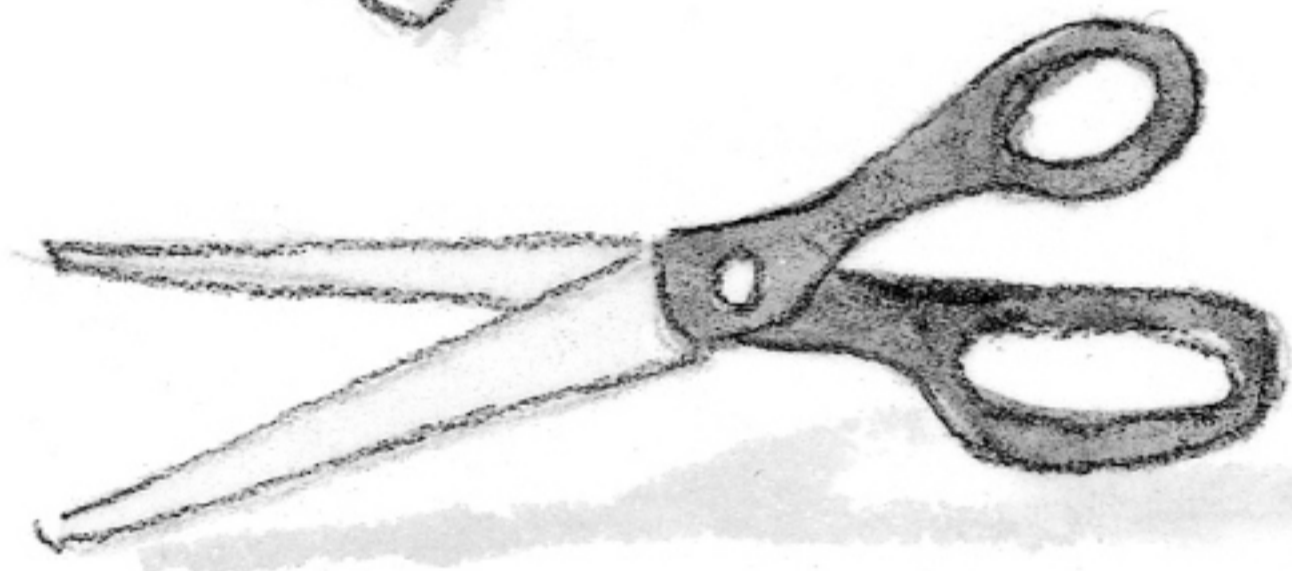
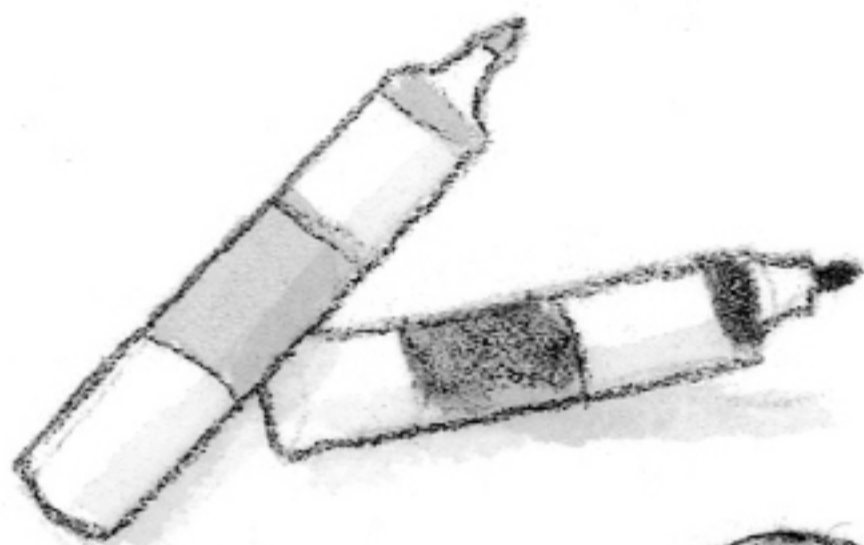
*Want to get your dog a present on his birthday? How about something shiny and round? A new tag! Cats like them too.*

### GET TOGETHER:

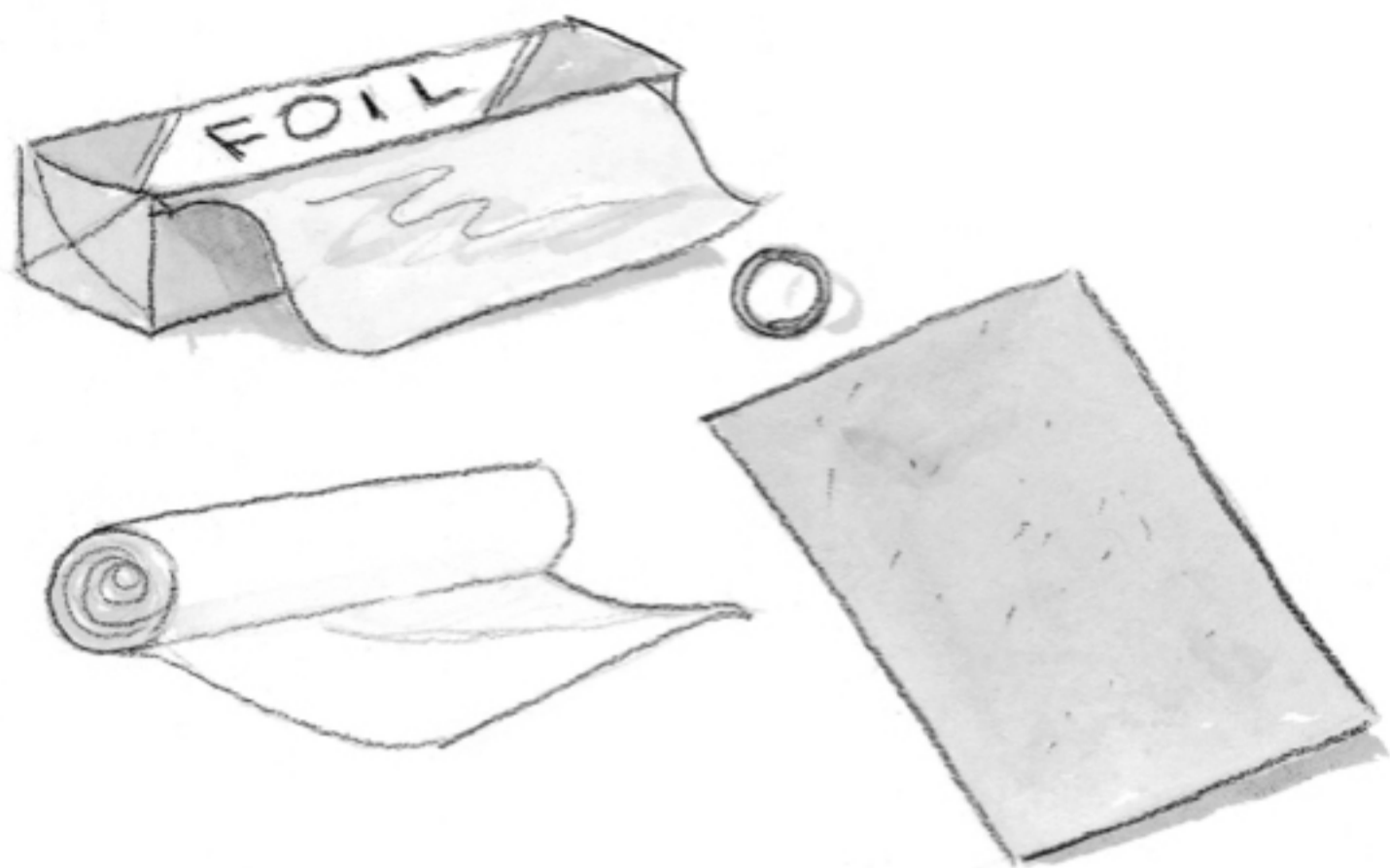
- card stock or thin cardboard
- scissors
- a hole punch



- markers
- tinfoil
- clear contact paper
- a key ring

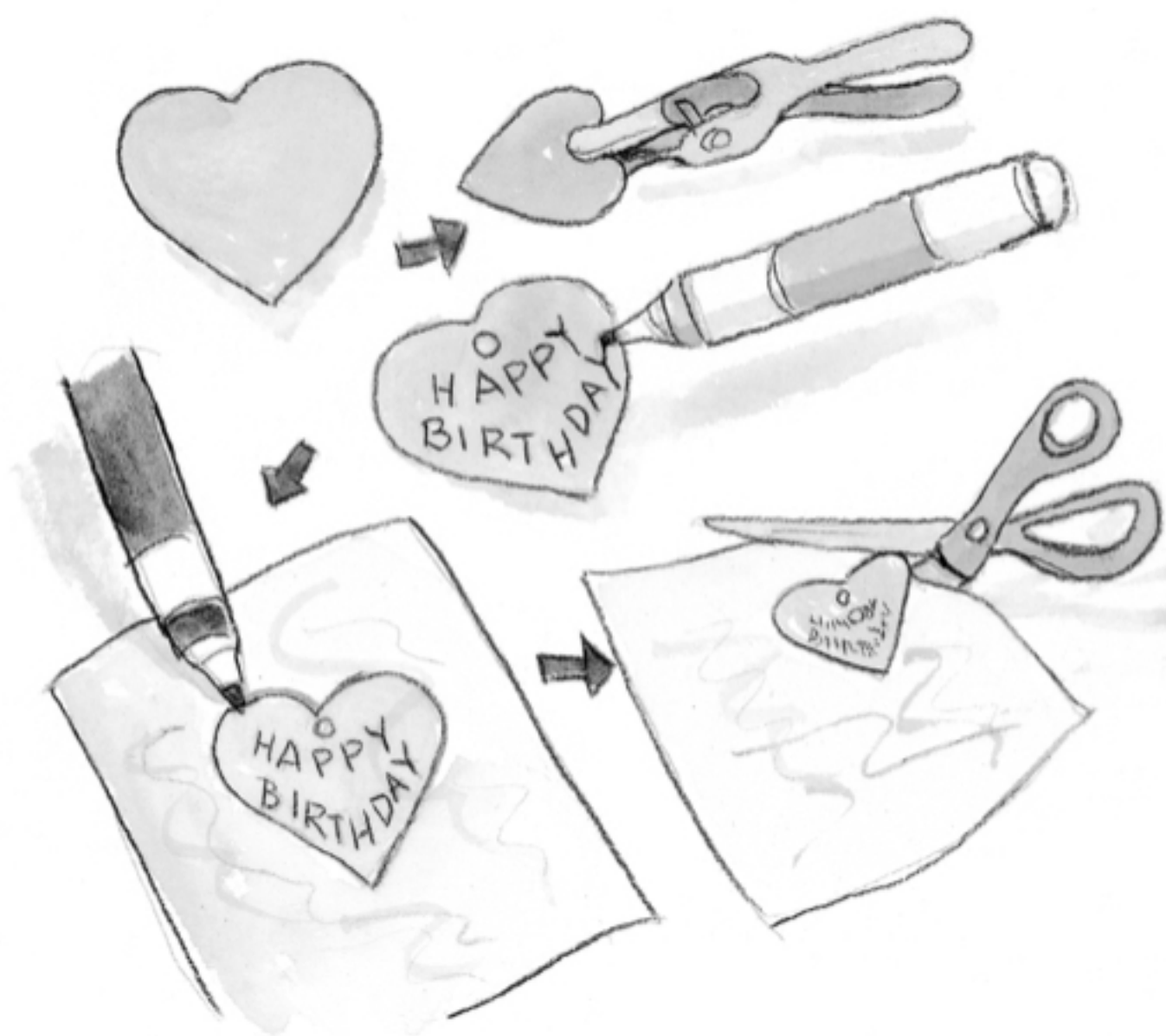




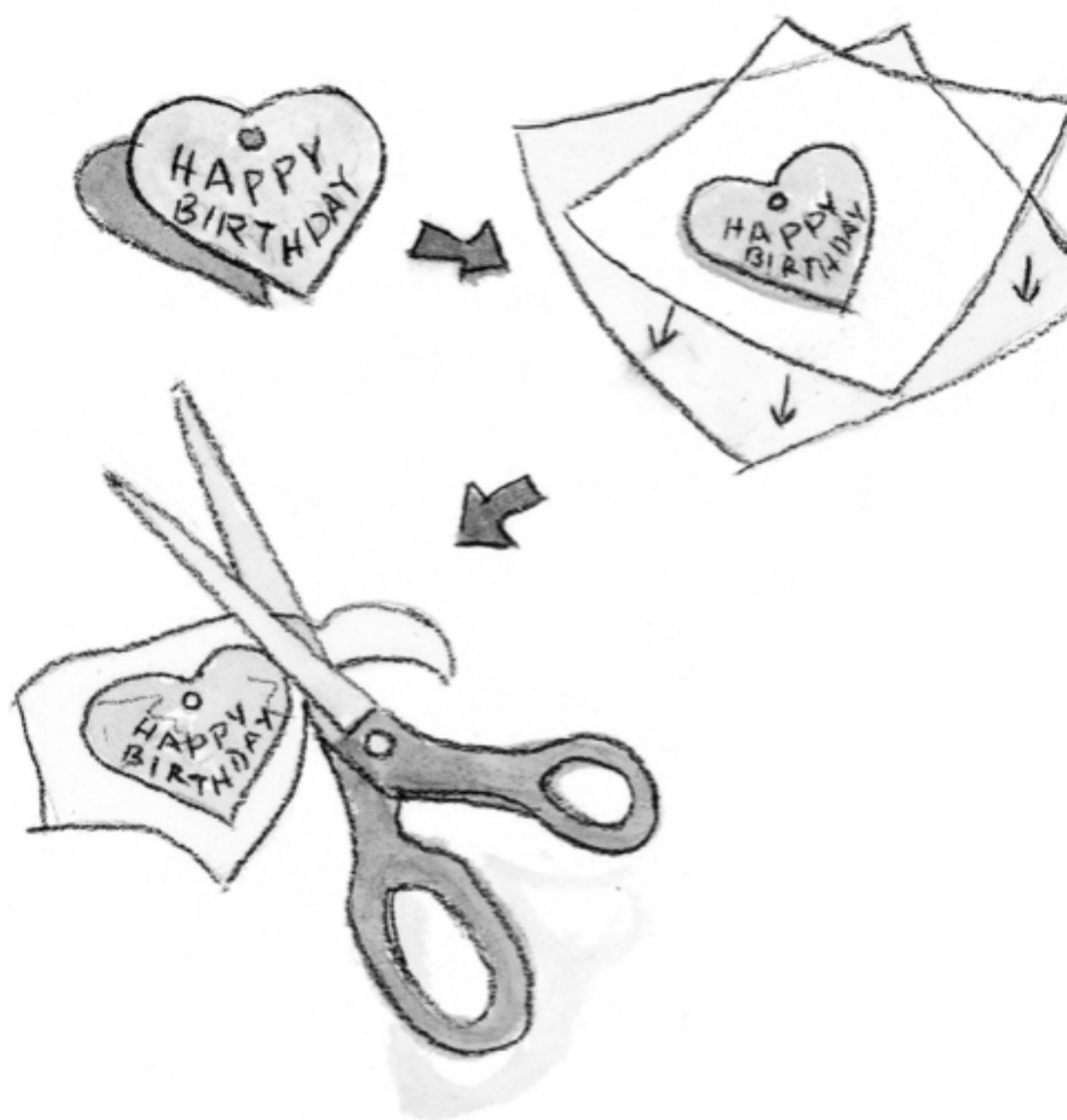


## HOW TO MAKE YOUR TAGS:

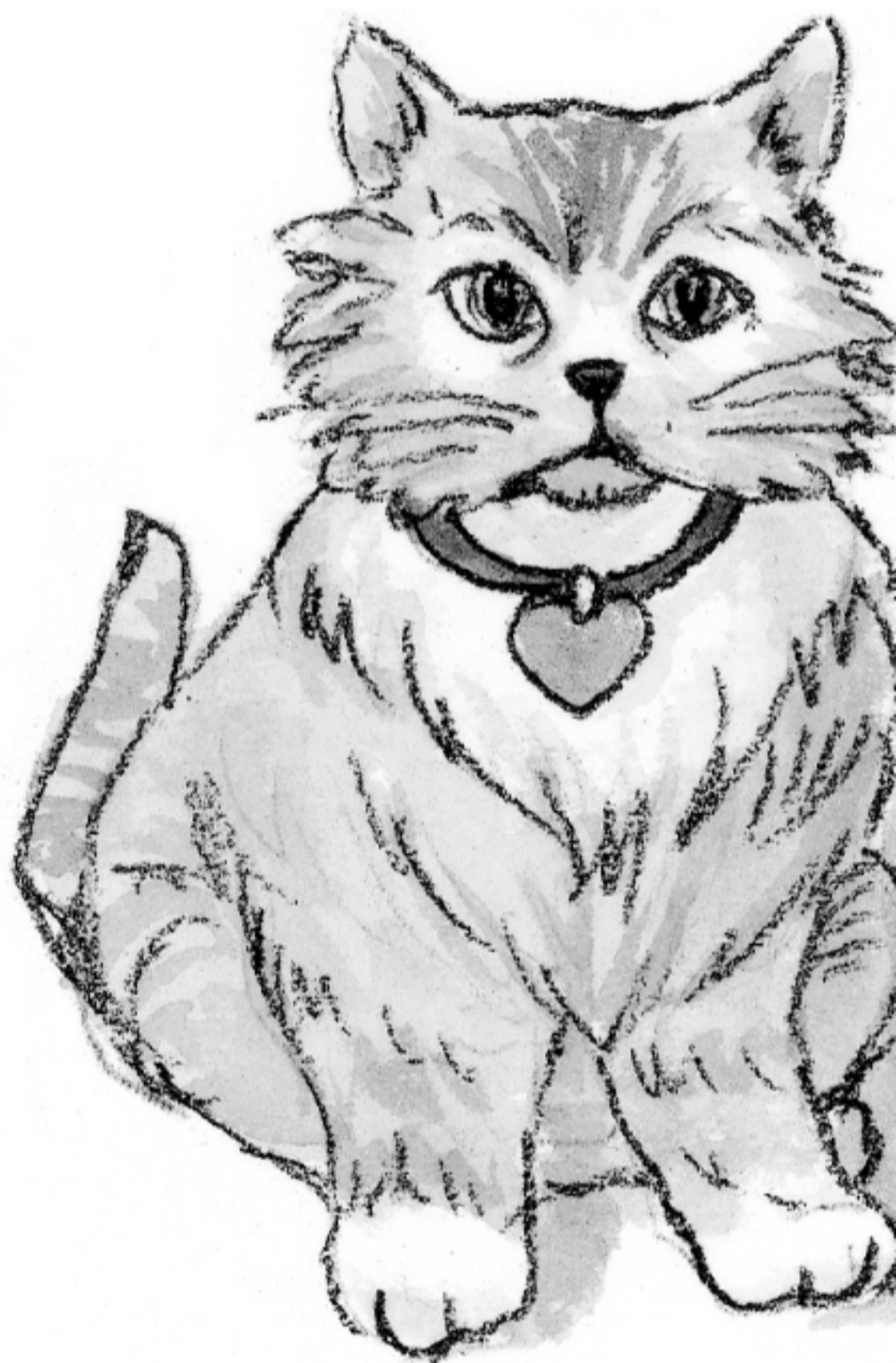
1. Cut a circle or heart shape out of the card stock or cardboard. Then punch a hole at the top.
2. Decorate one side of the card with a birthday message, like "Happy Birthday" or a drawing of a cake.
3. With a marker, trace the shape onto the tinfoil. Cut it out.



4. Place the shape and the tinfoil together. Enclose them between two pieces of clear contact paper with the sticky sides facing in.



5. Trim the contact paper close to the shape, leaving a little extra on the sides to “glue” the shape and tinfoil together.
6. Clip the tag onto your dog or cat’s collar with the key ring.



## Funny Pages



Kid: We call our teacher "treasure."

Mom: Why? Do you like her?

Kid: No, we think she should be locked up!

Q: Why did Silly Sam lock up his pet?

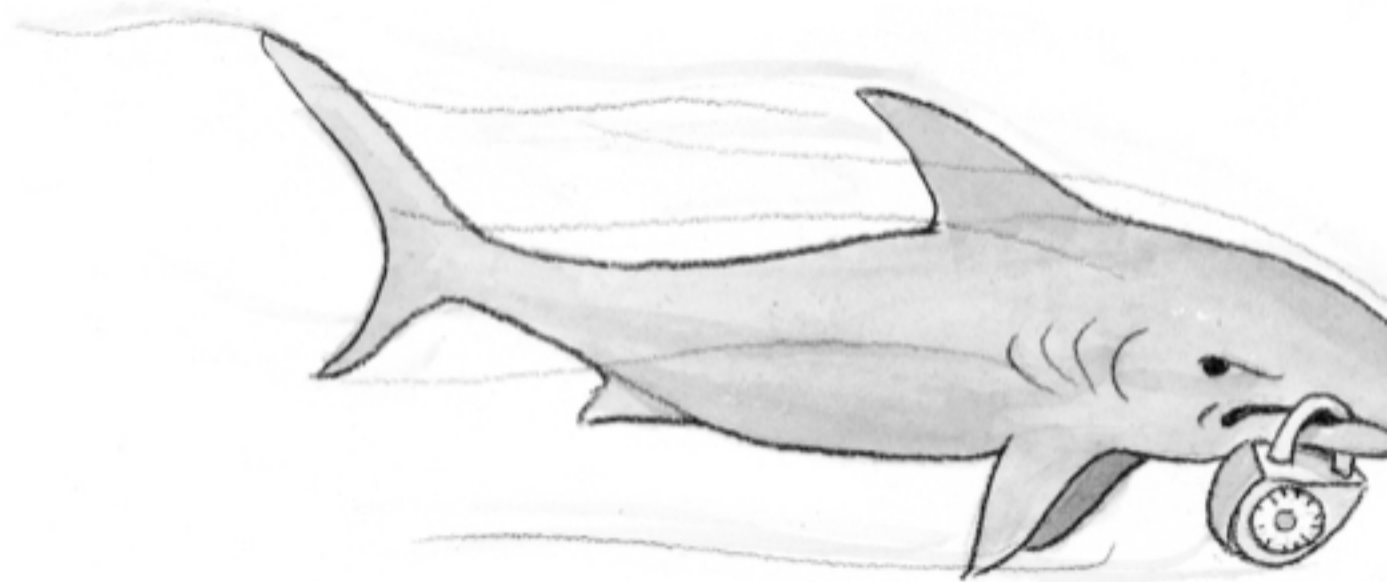
A: *It was a goldfish.*





Q: What happened to a shark that swallowed a bunch of keys?

A: *He got lockjaw!*

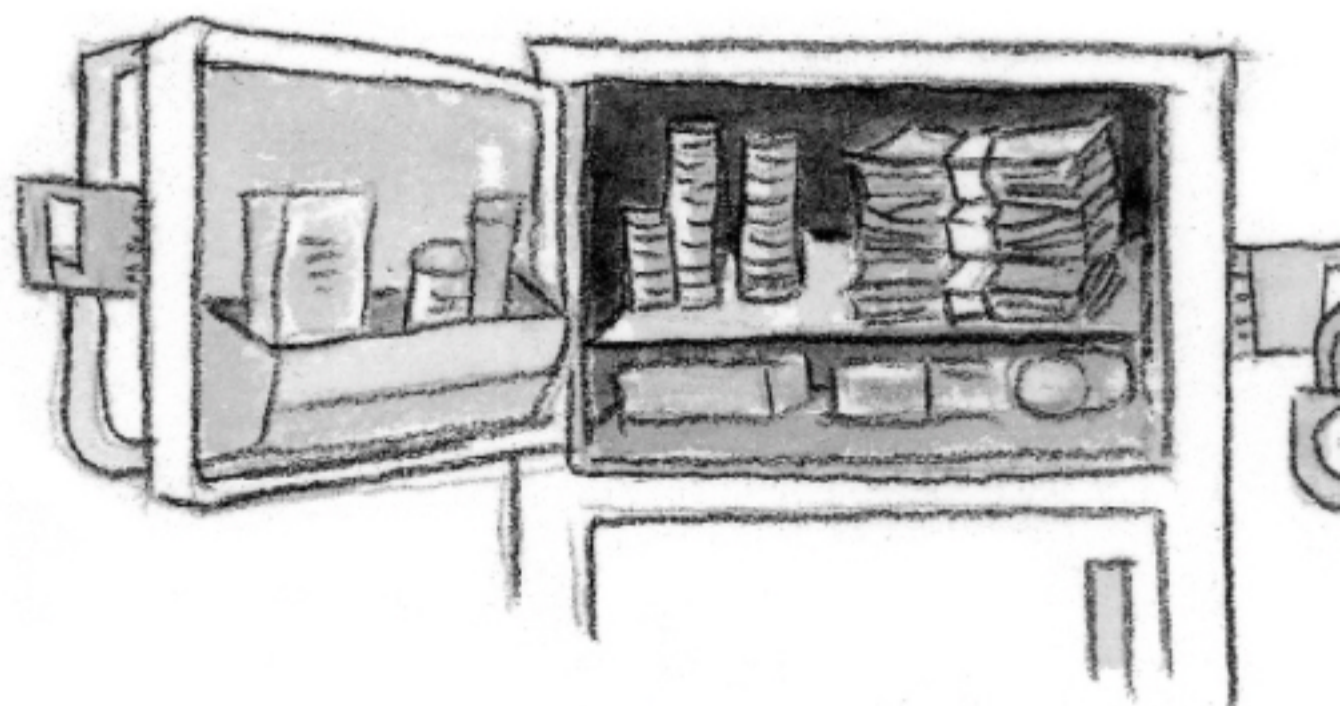


Q: Why did the football coach go to the bank?

A: *To get his quarterback.*

Q: Why did Silly Sam lock his money in the freezer?

A: *He wanted cold hard cash.*





Q: Where do snowmen keep their money?

A: *In snow banks!*



## How to Make a Present Cake

*This cake looks like a really awesome present all wrapped up with a bow. It's nice for a pet's birthday party. Or a person's.*

Ask an adult to help you with this recipe.

### GET TOGETHER:

- one package of cake mix (any flavor)
- the ingredients listed on the cake mix box



- a sheet cake pan (usually 9 inches by 13 inches)
- one can of prepared frosting
- a knife
- Fruit by the Foot
- kitchen scissors

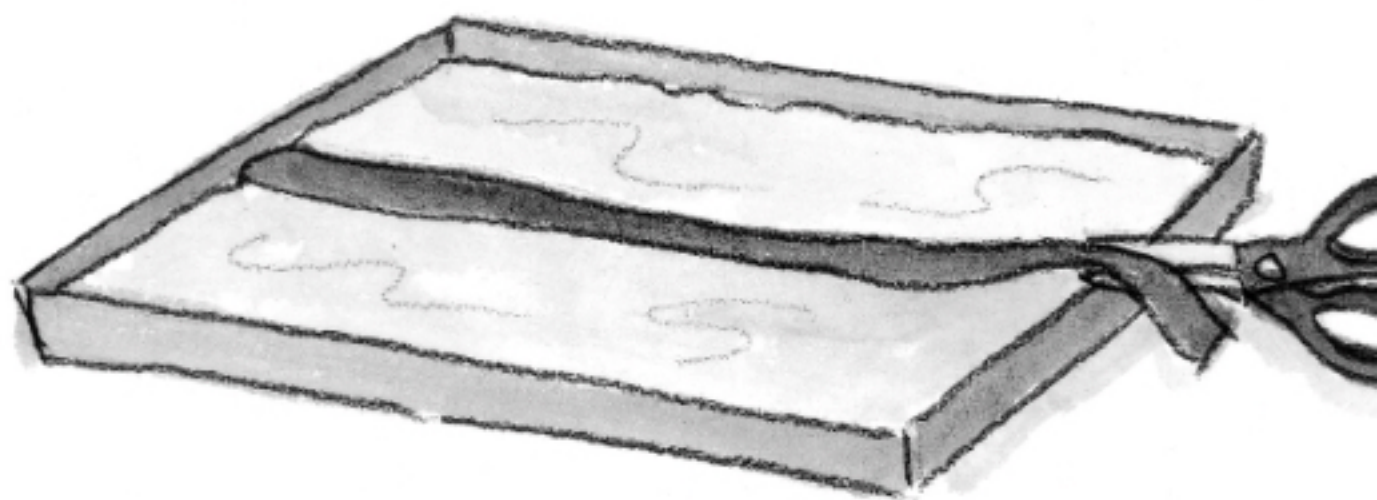




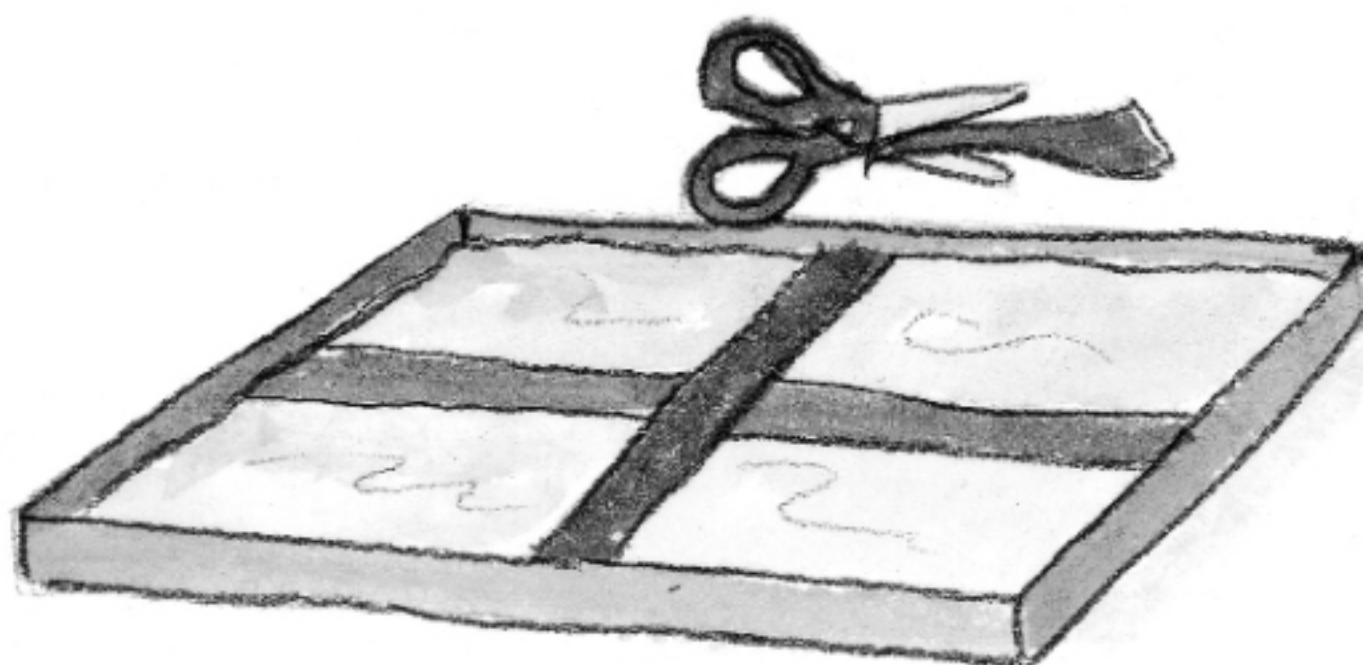


## MAKE YOUR PRESENT CAKE:

1. Make the sheet cake by following the directions on the box.
2. Allow the cake to cool for at least one hour.
3. Frost the top of the cake.
4. Wrap your cake in "ribbon": Run a piece of Fruit by the Foot down the center of the cake the long way. Trim to fit with the scissors.



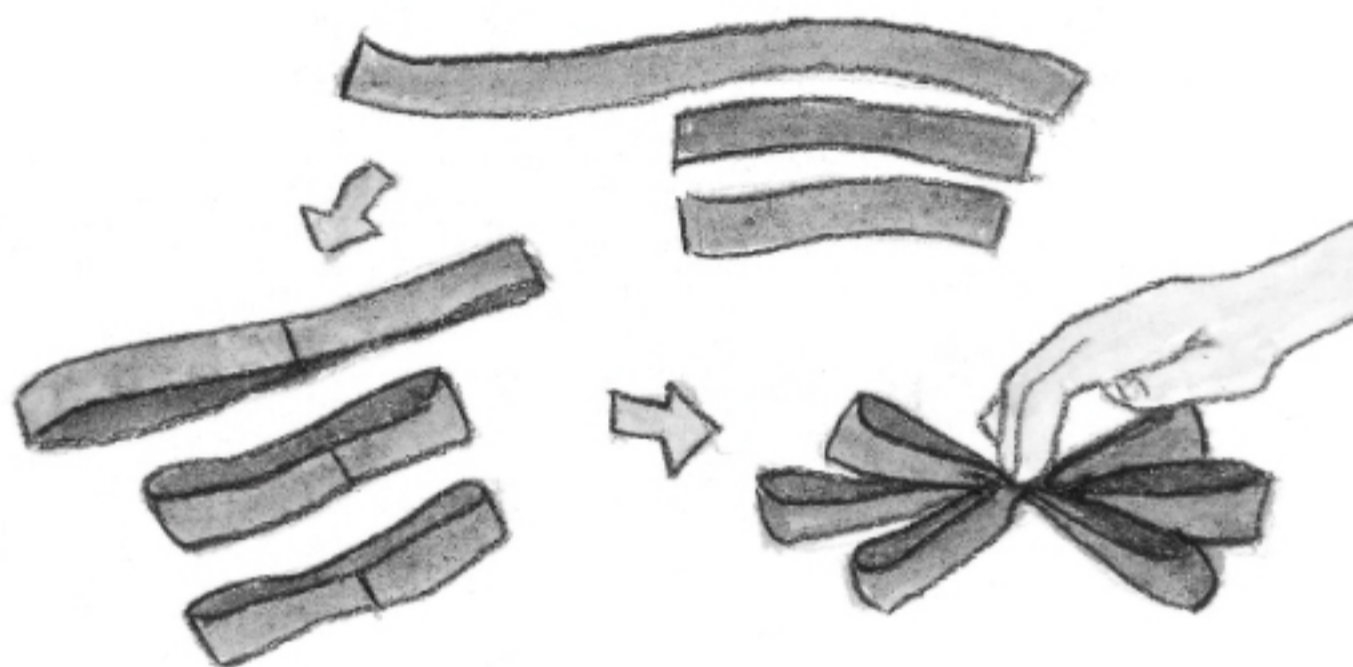
5. Now run another piece of Fruit by the Foot across the width of the cake. Trim to fit. When you're finished, your cake should look something like this:



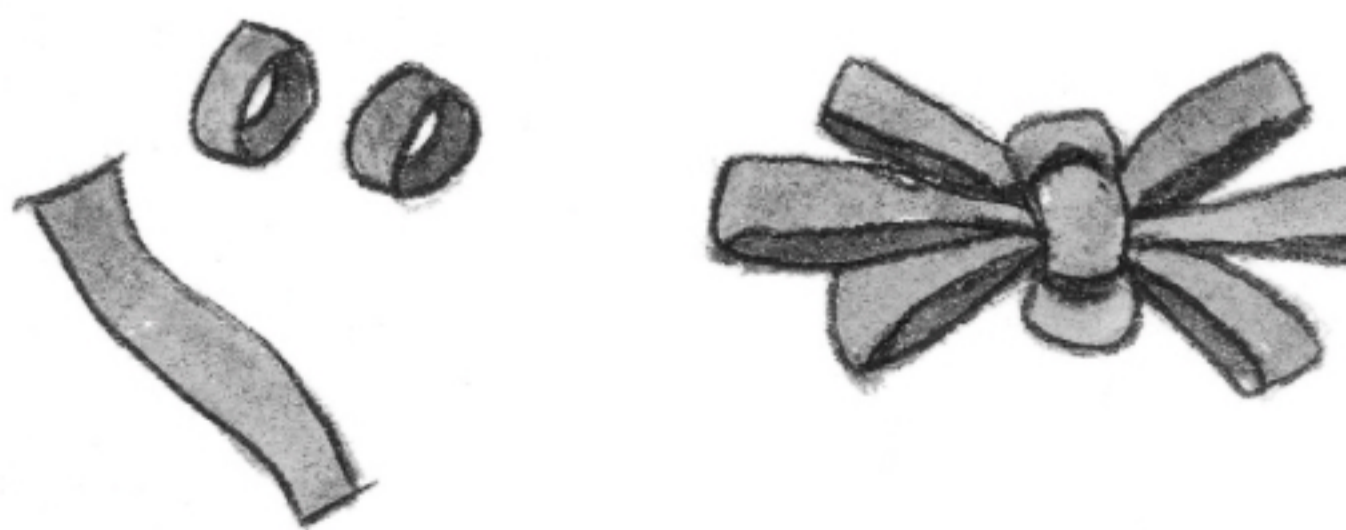
6. Make the "bow." Use the Fruit by the Foot to make three long loops. You'll need one big one (about as long as your forearm) and two medium ones (about as long as your hand).



Put the longer piece in the middle of the other two and squish the centers together like this:



7. Now make two circles, about the size of golf balls. Place the circles on either side of the loops. Run another short piece of Fruit by the Foot around the loops and through the center of each circle so that all the pieces are pulled together, like this:

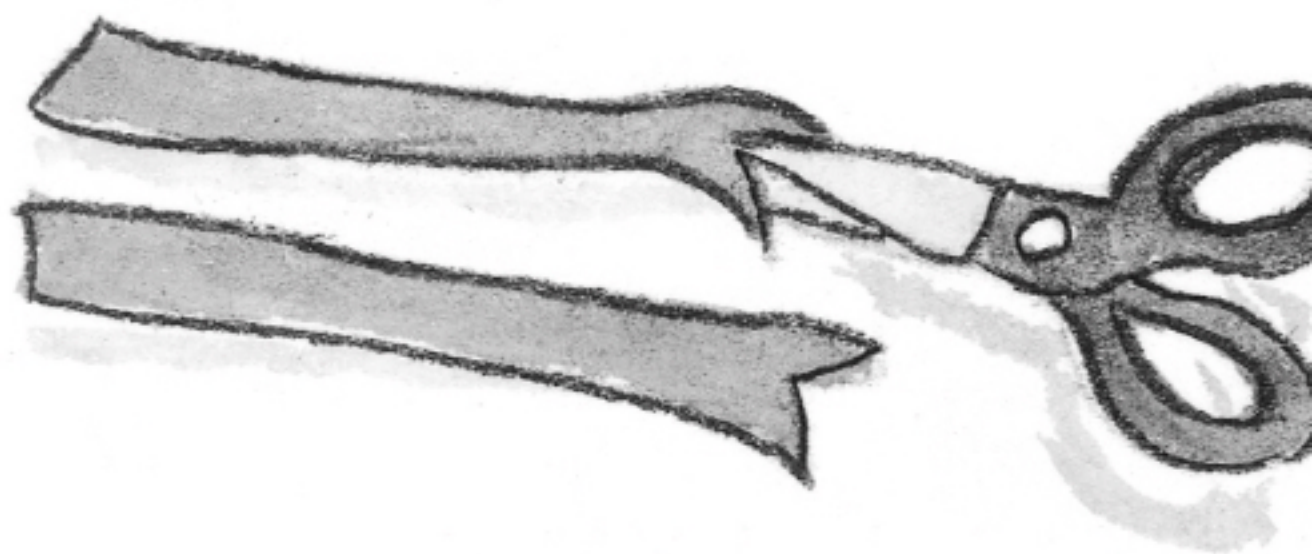




8. Place the “bow” on top of the cake.



9. Make the ribbon tails. Cut two more pieces of Fruit by the Foot. Cut one end of each into a V shape. Place the plain ends of the ribbon tails under the “bow.”



10. Serve while singing “Happy Birthday.”



♪ Happy Birthday to You! ♪



11

. Enjoy!

More Funny Pages



Doctor, Doctor, Fang's birthday cake gave me heartburn!

*Next time don't eat the candles!*

Q: What did Fang's birthday party end with?

A: A Y!

Q: What does Fang always get on his birthday?

A: *Another year older!*

Q: What do you give Fang on his birthday?

A: *I don't know, but you'd better hope he likes it.*



Q: Why do we put candles on the top of a birthday cake?

A: *Because it's too hard to put them on the bottom!*





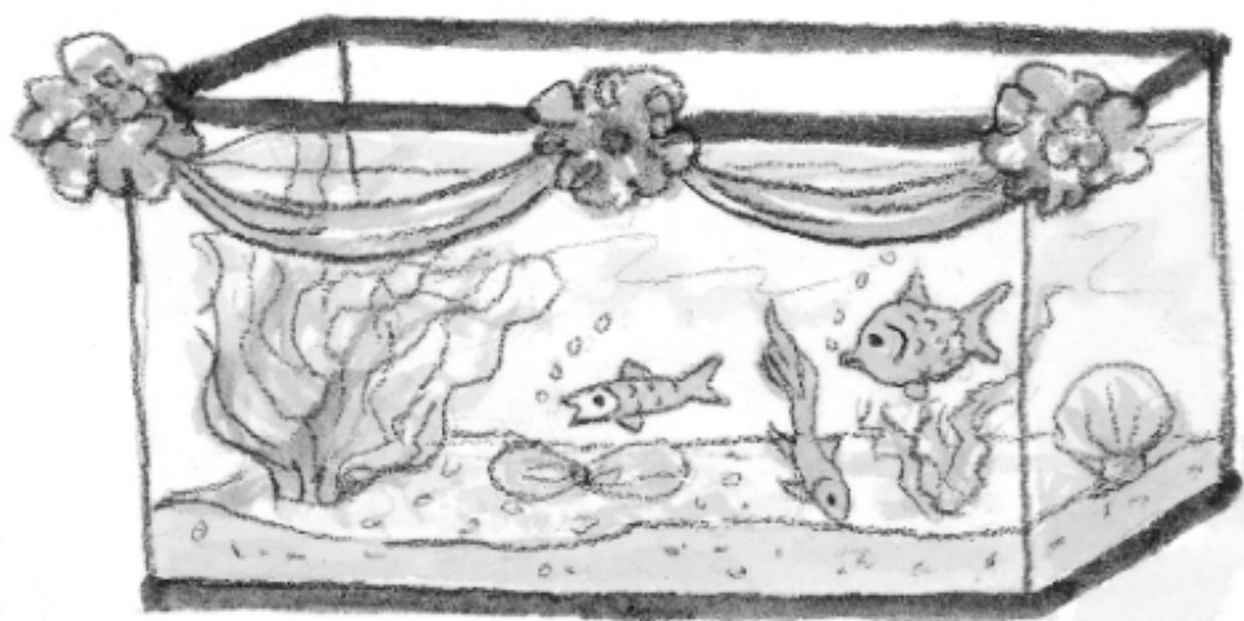




## More Ways to Make Your Pet's Birthday Special\*



**Start the day with a special treat.** Is your dog wild about bones? Does your kitty covet liver? Today is the day to go out of your way and provide a yummy breakfast for your furry, feathered, or scaly friend.

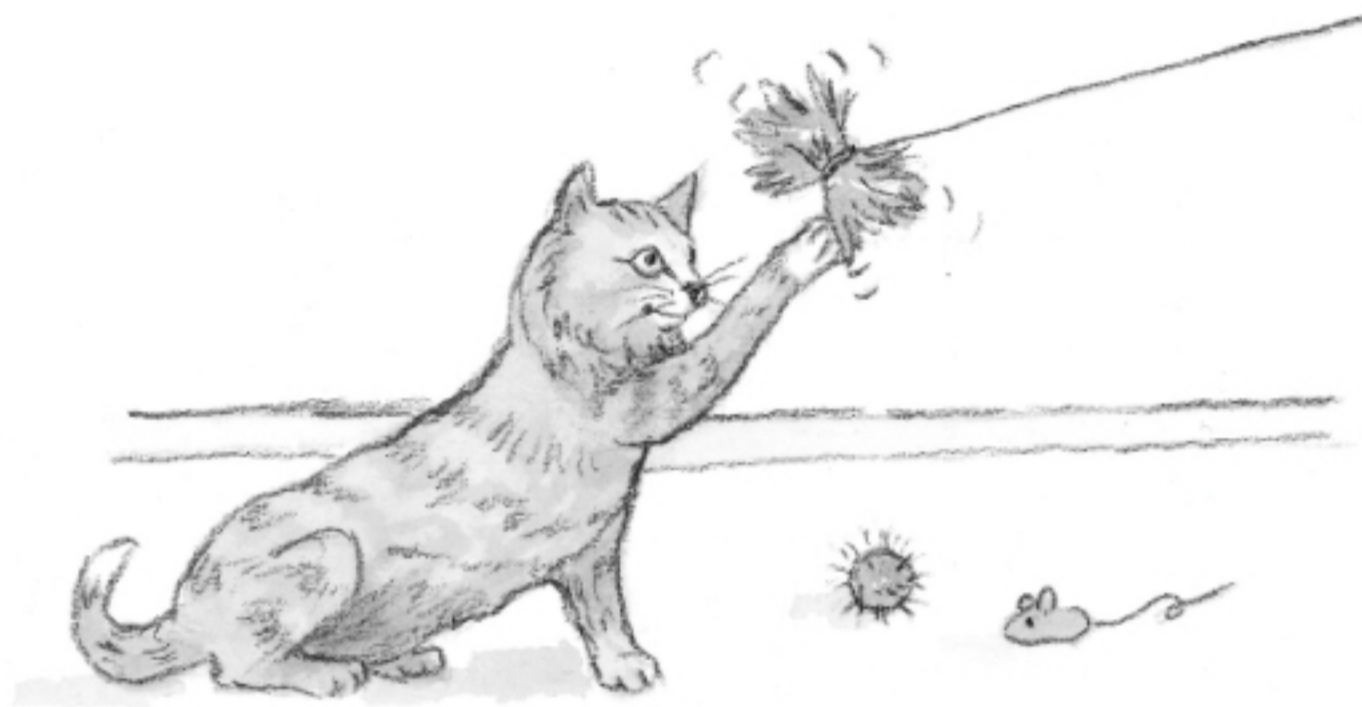


**Play dress-up.** Get into a party mood by putting a bow on your bird's cage or on your fish's



aquarium. Your dog or cat may be willing to wear a birthday hat or a special bow on her collar—at least for a few minutes.

**Spend a little time.** Toss the ball to your retriever, or give your kitty a good belly rub. Make a little extra time for your pet's favorite activity.



**Invite a friend.** If your pet is the social type, invite a friend to meet you at the park or at your house.



**Record the big day.** Take photos of your birthday boy or girl. Or make a special piece of art to celebrate the occasion.



**MARJORIE WEINMAN SHARMAT** has written more than 130 books for children and young adults, as well as movie and TV novelizations. Her books have been translated into twenty-four languages. The award-winning Nate the Great series, hailed in *Booklist* as “groundbreaking,” has resulted in Nate’s real-world appearances in many *New York Times* crossword puzzles, sporting a milk mustache in magazines and posters, residing on more than 28 million boxes of Cheerios, and touring the country in musical theater. Marjorie Weinman Sharmat and her husband, Mitchell Sharmat, have also coauthored many books, including titles in both the Nate the Great and the Olivia Sharp series.

**MARC SIMONT** won the Caldecott Medal for his artwork in *A Tree Is Nice* by Janice May Udry, as well as a Caldecott Honor for his own book, *The Stray Dog*. He illustrated the first twenty books in the Nate the Great series.