

Akash and the Pigeons – Teachers’ Notes

A short story for children by Penny Reeve, illustrated by Alex Hammond

Introduction:

Akash and the Pigeons is a fictional story, but the trafficking and enslavement of children around the world is a sad reality. This story allows you to share this truth with the children in your group. Although many details are left vague by this story there are likely to be many aspects of it that may raise questions, concern and even sadness from the children you share this story with. Spend some time in preparation thinking and praying through likely responses. Sometimes it is enough to just share a moment of sadness, without attempting to explain the situation away.

These Teachers’ Notes include:

- Discussion Starters,
- Activity Suggestions and
- Printable Templates.



As you share this story with children, encourage them to become *part* of the story, not to place blame, but to empower gentle age appropriate advocacy and empathetic attitudes. Feel free to pick and choose the activities from those suggested below to best suit your situation.

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Discussion Starters:

Here are some examples of questions and comments that can be used to facilitate discussion.

- *How much of this story do you think might be true?*

[Allow children to offer various answers.]

A possible response:

Akash is a made up character, but there are many children like him all over the world who are trapped and working as slaves. They are not paid for their work, they are not allowed to go to school and they are not allowed to play games. Some of these children work in tea plantations and make the tea we drink. Some work in cocoa plantations and harvest the cocoa beans from where we get our chocolate. There are also many, many children working in other industries, like the factories or businesses that make the clothes you and I wear today.



- *What do you think God feels about children being trapped as slaves? Can you think of any slaves in the Bible?*

[Allow children to offer various answers.]

A possible response:

There are many slaves mentioned in the Bible, and if we read the Bible carefully we see that God cares deeply about people without freedom. One example was Joseph, the son of Jacob.

[Share a picture from a story Bible if desired.]

Joseph was a Bible character who sold into slavery. For many, many years he felt like no one knew where he was or cared about how he was being treated, but God never forgot about him.

[You can use this opportunity to tell the story of Joseph in more detail if you wish. Story can be found in Genesis 37:12 – 36 and Genesis 39:1 - 57.]

- *Why do you think Akash, in this story, tried to tell the pigeons to tell his parents where he was?*

[Allow this question to generate a discussion about people in slavery not having a voice.]

- *Can pigeons really pass on messages like this?
If they can't who can?*

Do you think we could be a part of real life stories like this?

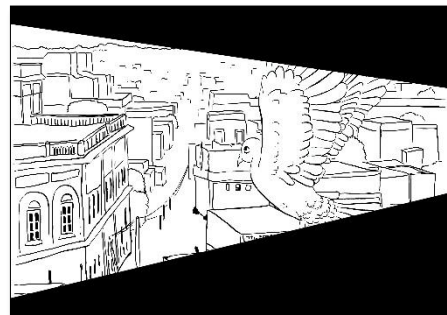
[Allow various answers.]

A possible response:

The pigeons can't really pass on messages, but we can. We can tell other people about slaves. We can write to companies that make tea, or clothes and ask them to make sure nobody is being forced into slavery to make the things we buy. We can buy chocolate that is ***fair-trade*** – this means that no one has been forced into work without fair pay for the chocolate we enjoy.

[Share examples of fair trade logos such as *Rainforest Alliance* and *Fair Trade*.]

We can pray for children like Akash and ask God to help rescue them and bring them back to their families.



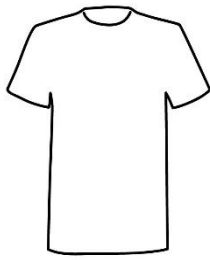
Prayer Time:

Spend some time in prayer with your group. Allow the children opportunities to voice their prayers too. Some may pray for the fictional Akash – we can trust that God knows Akash to be a fictional representation of the very real children trapped in slavery.

Activities:

- Colour a T-shirt: use the reproducible outline included below and encourage children to 'embroider' their 'T-Shirt' however they like. Provide a variety of colouring pencils, pens, crayons and even some sequins for decoration. Next time they go to the shops to buy an article of clothing they can hand this drawing into the shop assistant to

forward onto the business CEO to highlight the fact that even children are interested in where their clothes are sourced and who makes them.



Alternatively print the image on postcard sized pieces of card and send them to the head office of your favourite children's clothing brand.

- Some children might like to write their own ending to the story. Share these aloud and discuss why each child wrote the ending they did.
- Have your group prepare the story as a skit to perform for the wider church or community. Discuss alternate endings and perform the ending you'd like to have happen.
- Pigeons can't really carry messages to families – but they were once used as mail carriers around the world. Give each child a cut out pigeon shape and allow some quiet time for reflection and prayer. Children can write simple prayers for victims of trafficking onto their pigeon shape. These can then be taken home, or hung up as a flock of prayer reminders in your room.

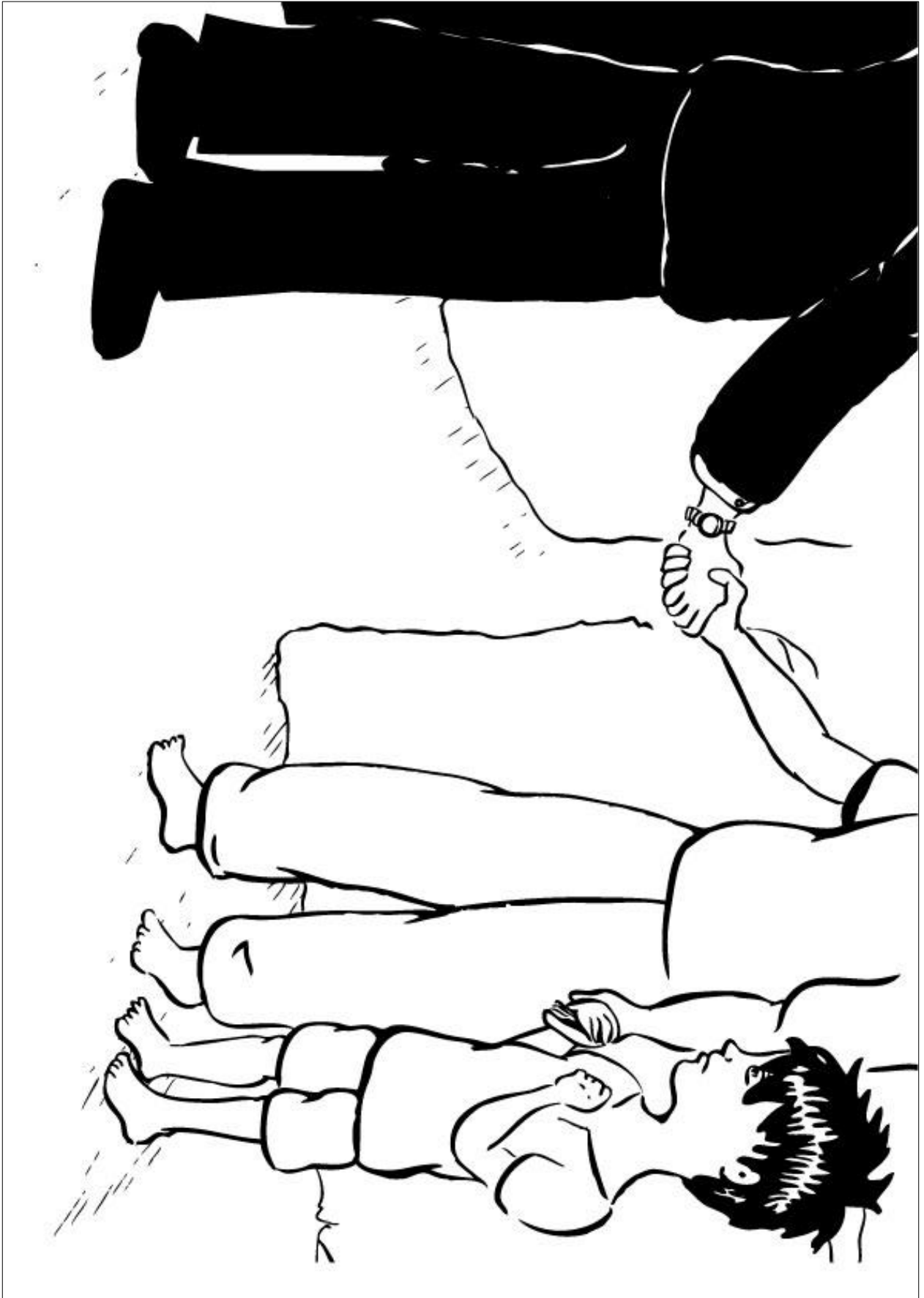


Reproducible resources:

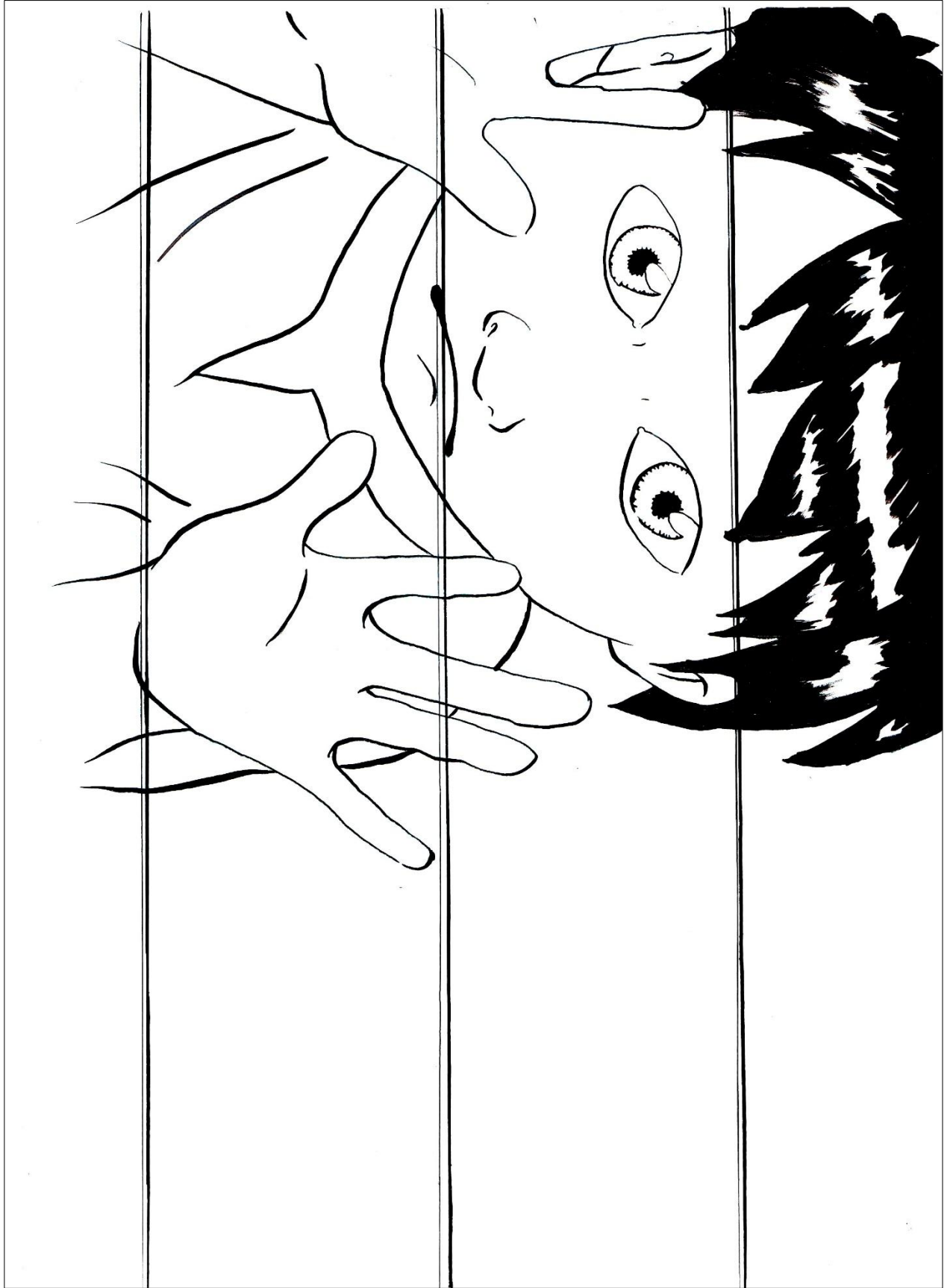
- Flashcards 1-7 are illustrations to support the telling of Akash's story. Some of these illustrations could also be used as colouring sheets.
 - 1 – Akash outside his family home.
 - 2 – The man with shiny shoes comes and gives money to Akash's parents
 - 3 – Akash travels to the city
 - 4 – Akash walking through the city with the man with shiny shoes.
 - 5 – Akash sewing in the room of boys
 - 6 – The pigeon outside the window
 - 7 – Pigeon flying over the city
- T-Shirt template.
- Pigeon template for writing prayers.



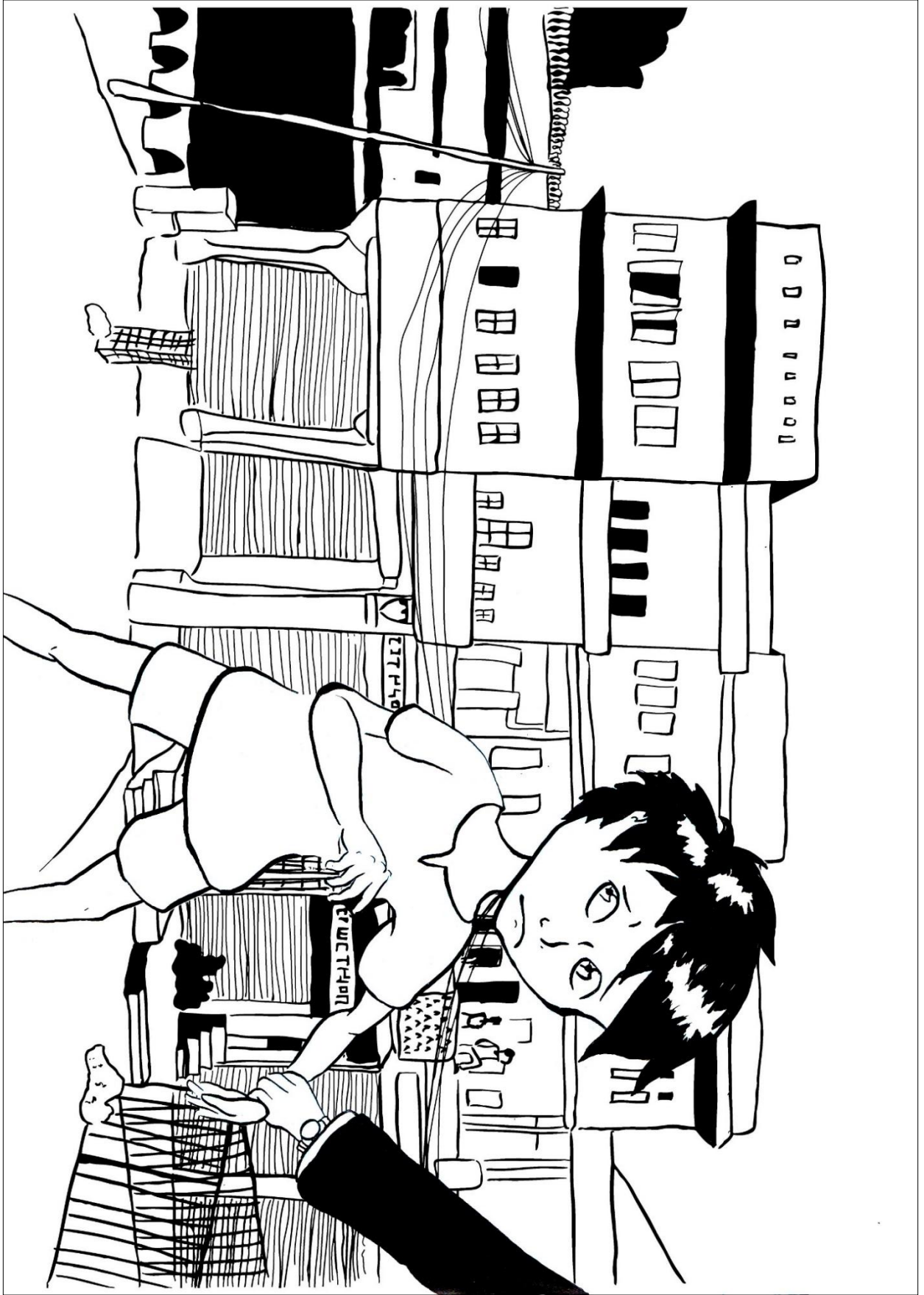
Flashcard 1



Flashcard 2



Flashcard 3



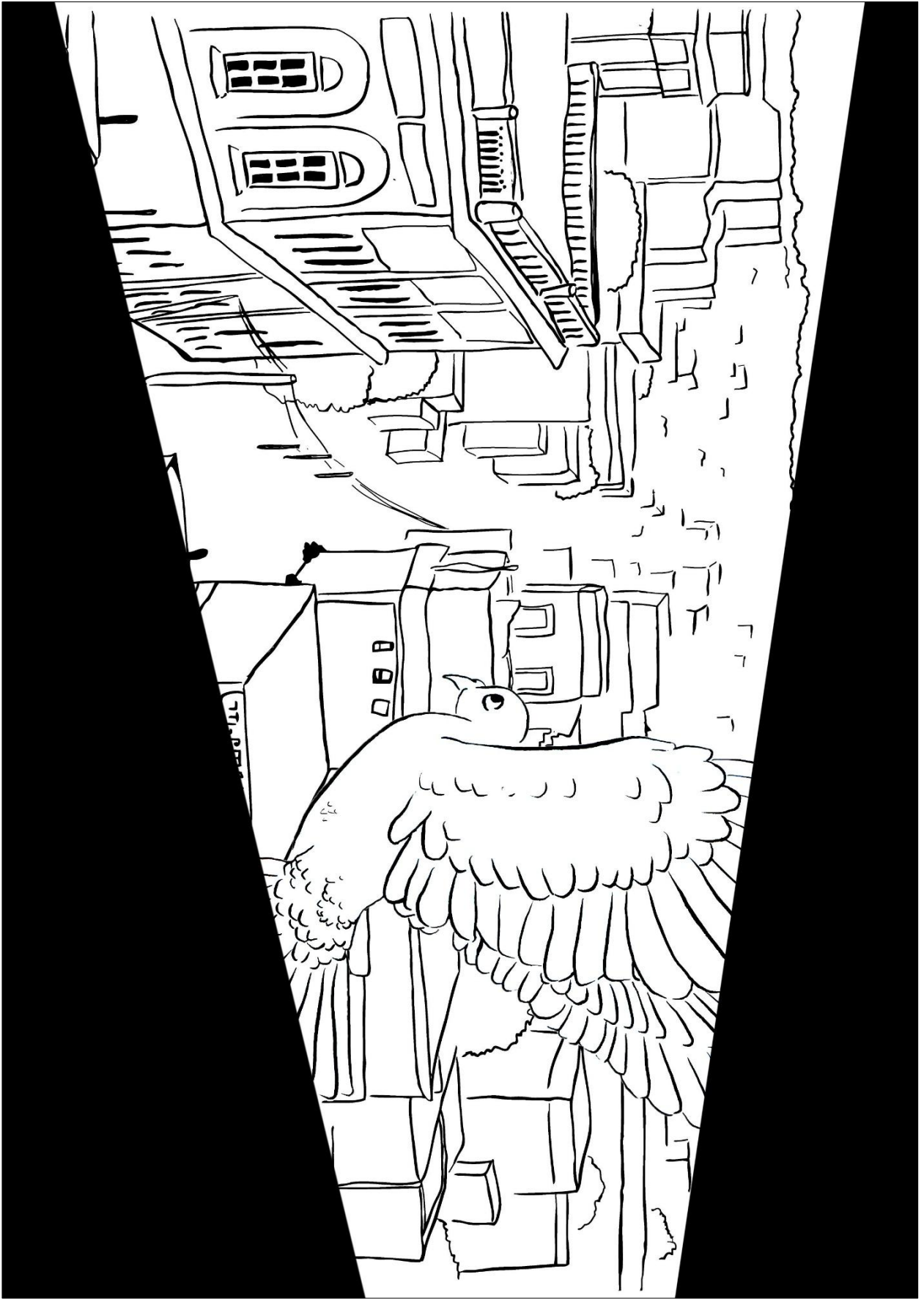
Flashcard 4



Flashcard 5



Flashcard 6



Flashcard 7

