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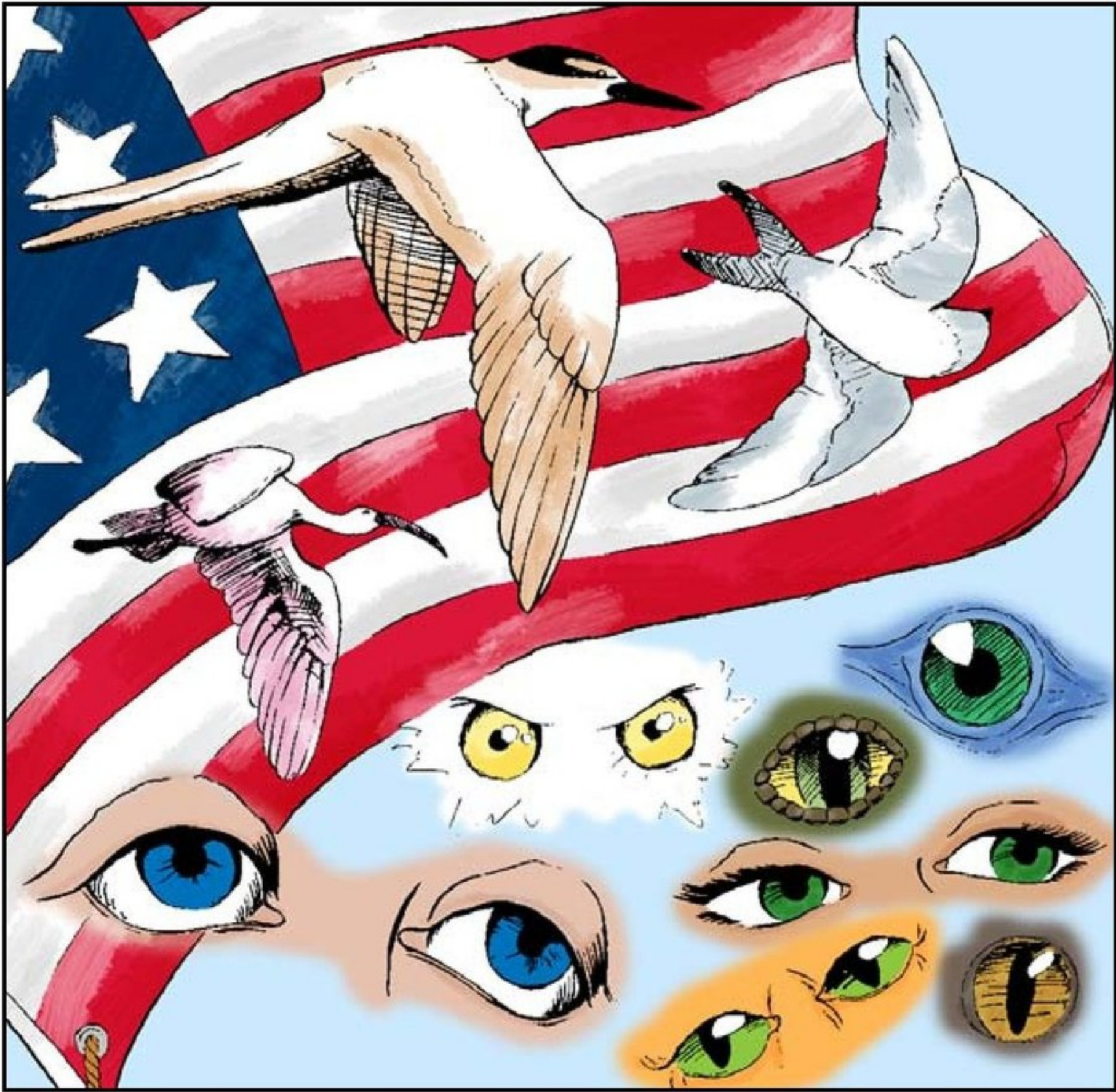
# Li's Tangram Animals



Written by Maribeth Boelts • Illustrated by Rush Kress



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It was the first day of school, and Li stood alone, missing his home in **China**. Everywhere there was shouting and laughter in a **language** Li worked hard to understand.

When the bell rang, Li hung up his backpack and placed the gift his father had sent on his teacher's desk.





“We’re so happy you’re in our class, Li,” said Miss Hess, opening her present. It was a **tangram puzzle** Li’s father had made, along with tangram puzzle cards.

“What a lovely gift!” said Miss Hess. “Would you like to tell the children about the tangram puzzle?”

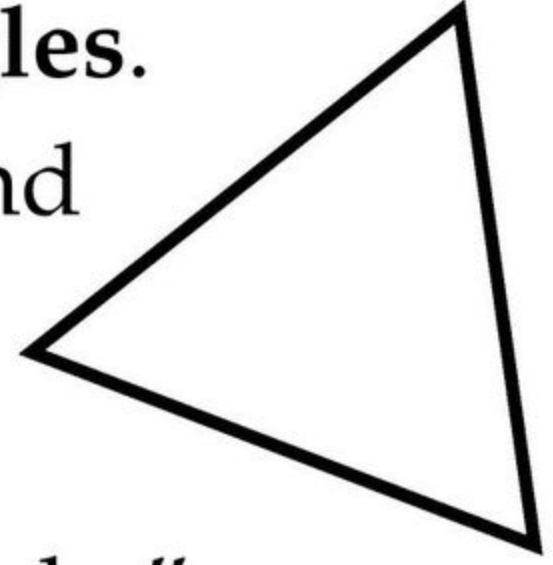
Li looked down at the floor.

“That’s okay, Li,” said Miss Hess. “Josh, why don’t you pick a shape from the puzzle and describe it to the class?”



Josh picked up the five **triangles**.

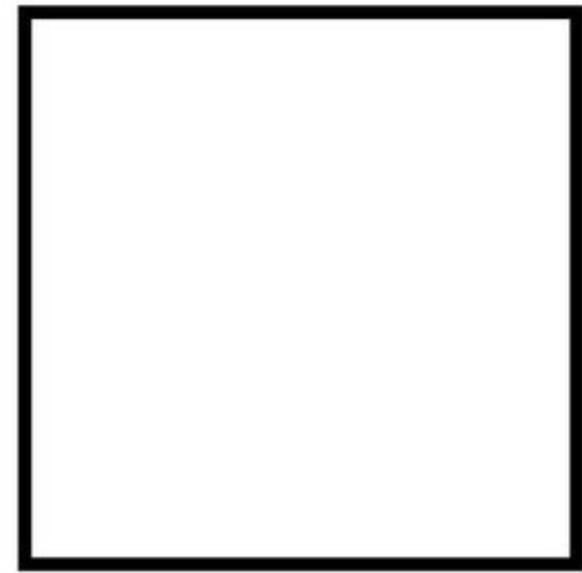
“This shape has three sides and is called a triangle. There are two small, one medium, and two large triangles in the puzzle.”



Miss Hess held up another shape.

“What makes this one a **square**?”

Becka answered, “It has four sides that are the same length.”







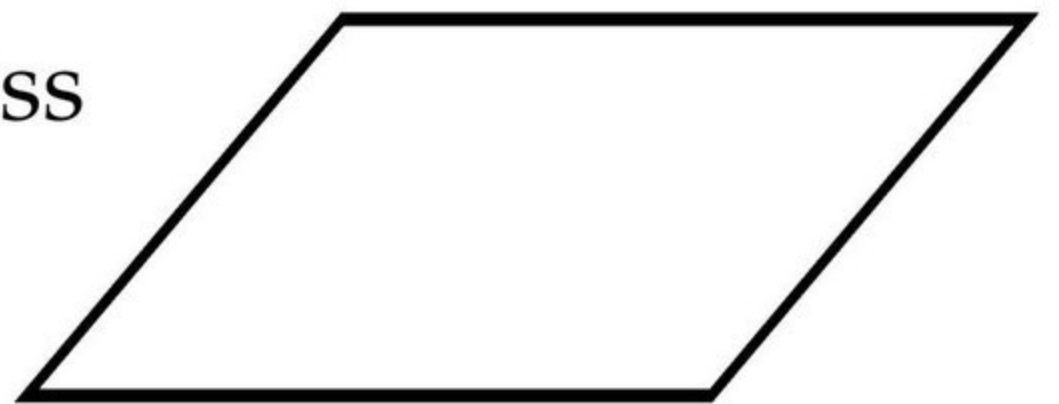
The last shape was trickier.

“This shape has two pairs of opposite sides that are **parallel**. The word parallel means two lines that run side by side and are an equal distance apart,” said Miss Hess.

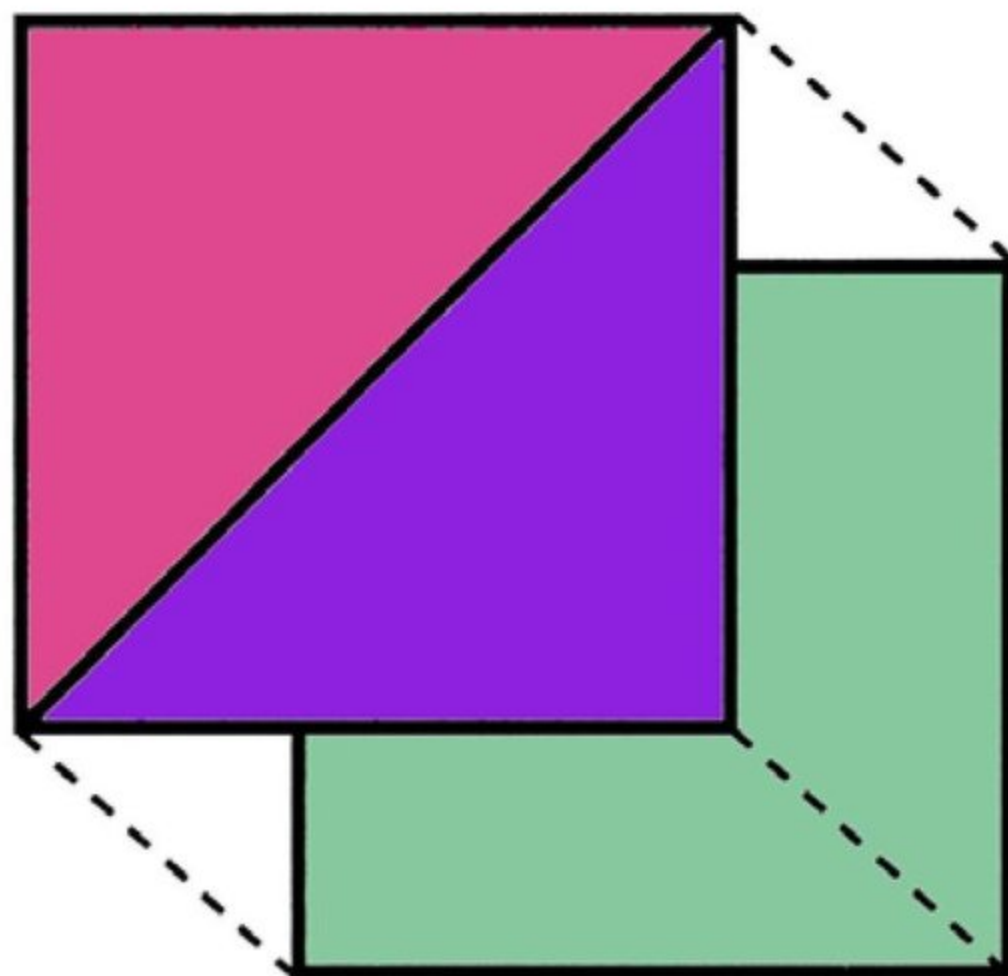


“Like railroad tracks?” asked Sam.

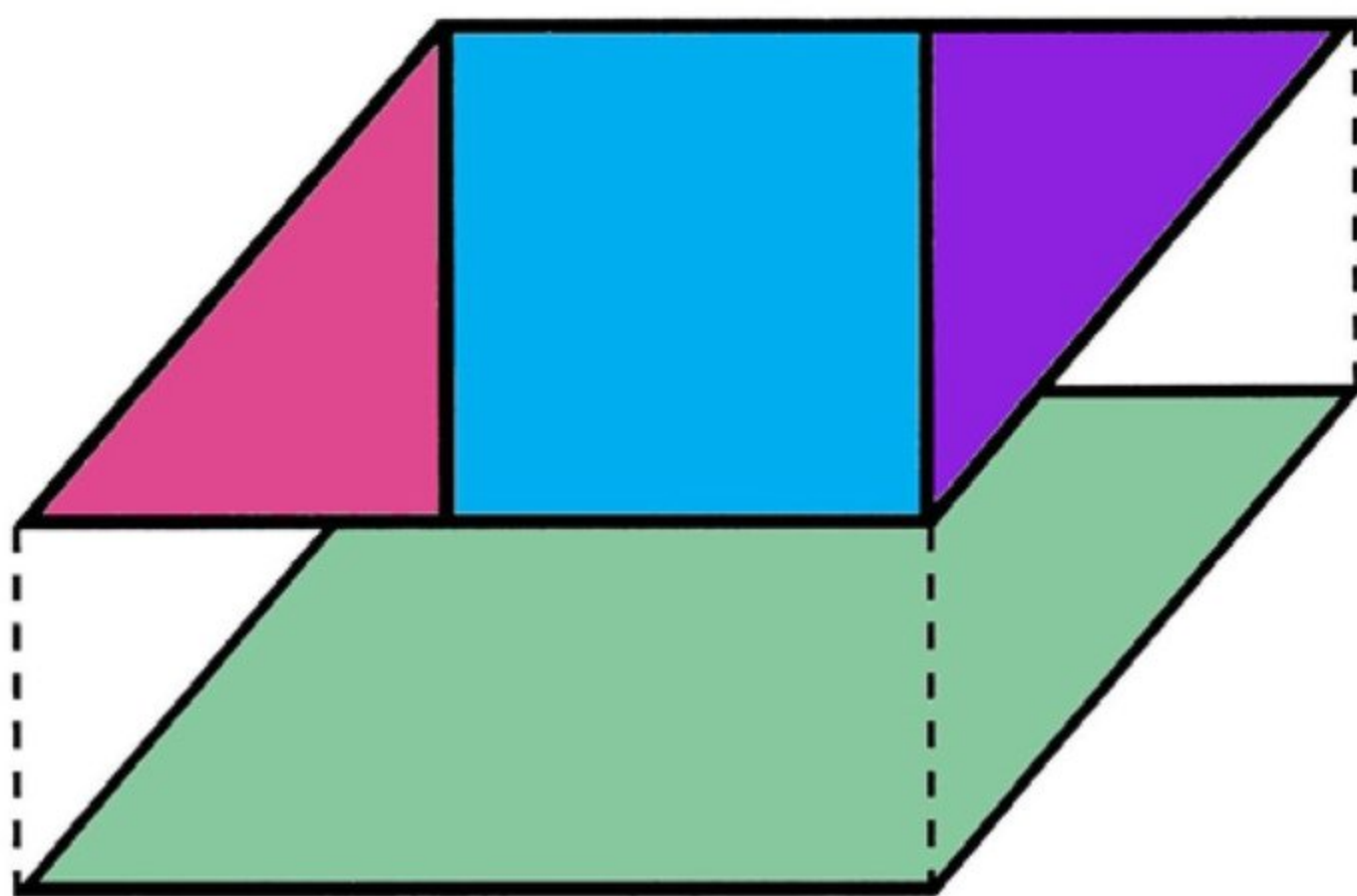
“That’s right,” said Miss Hess. “It’s called a **parallelogram**.”



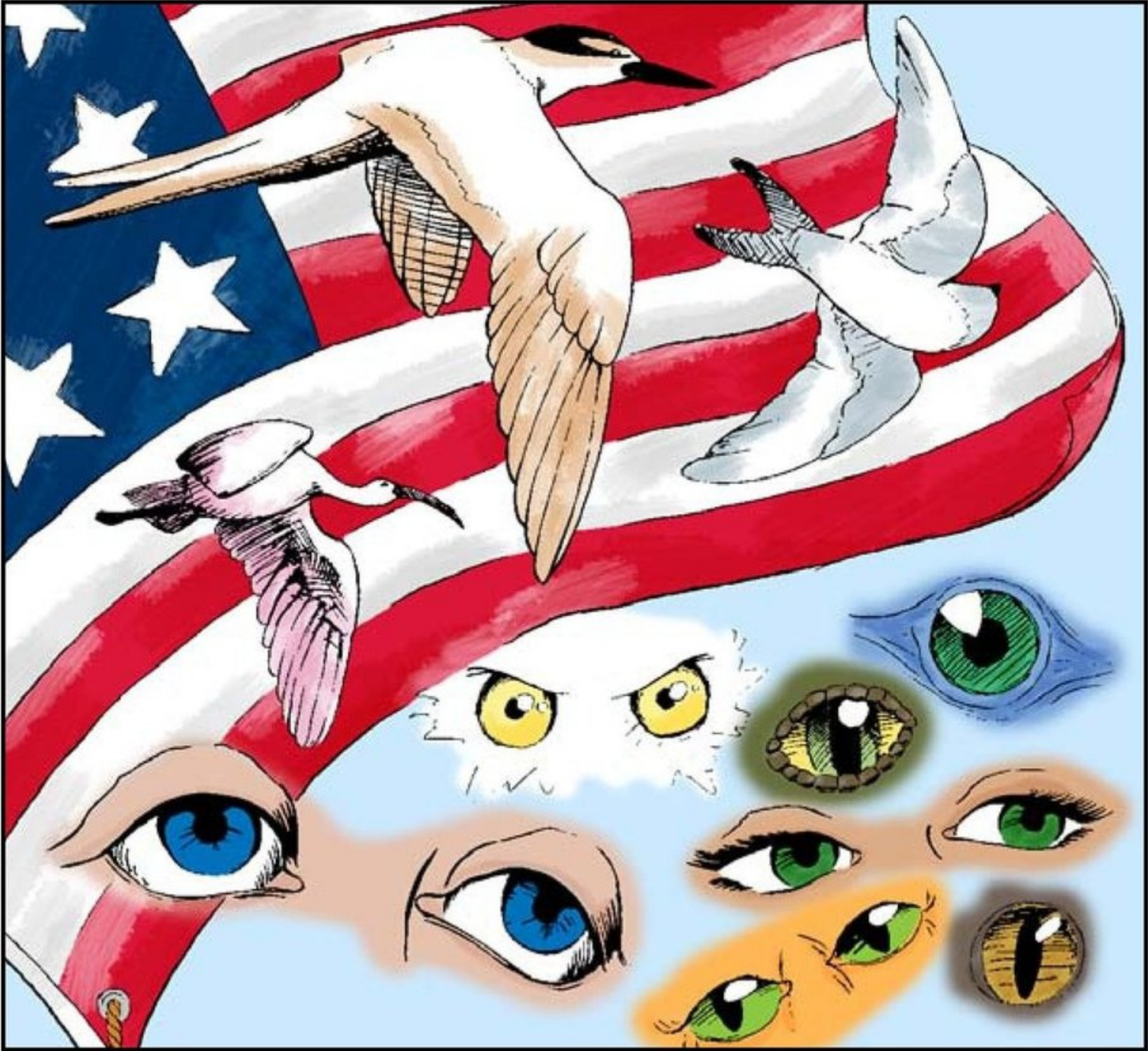




Miss Hess put the tangram puzzle and the cards on a table next to Li's desk. During free time, Li watched as kids covered tangram pieces with other pieces. Two small triangles covered the square exactly. Two small triangles and a square covered the parallelogram.







One day, Miss Hess told the class they would be starting an animal science unit.

“I’ll give you some **riddles**, and then you can guess the animals we’re going to study,” said Miss Hess.

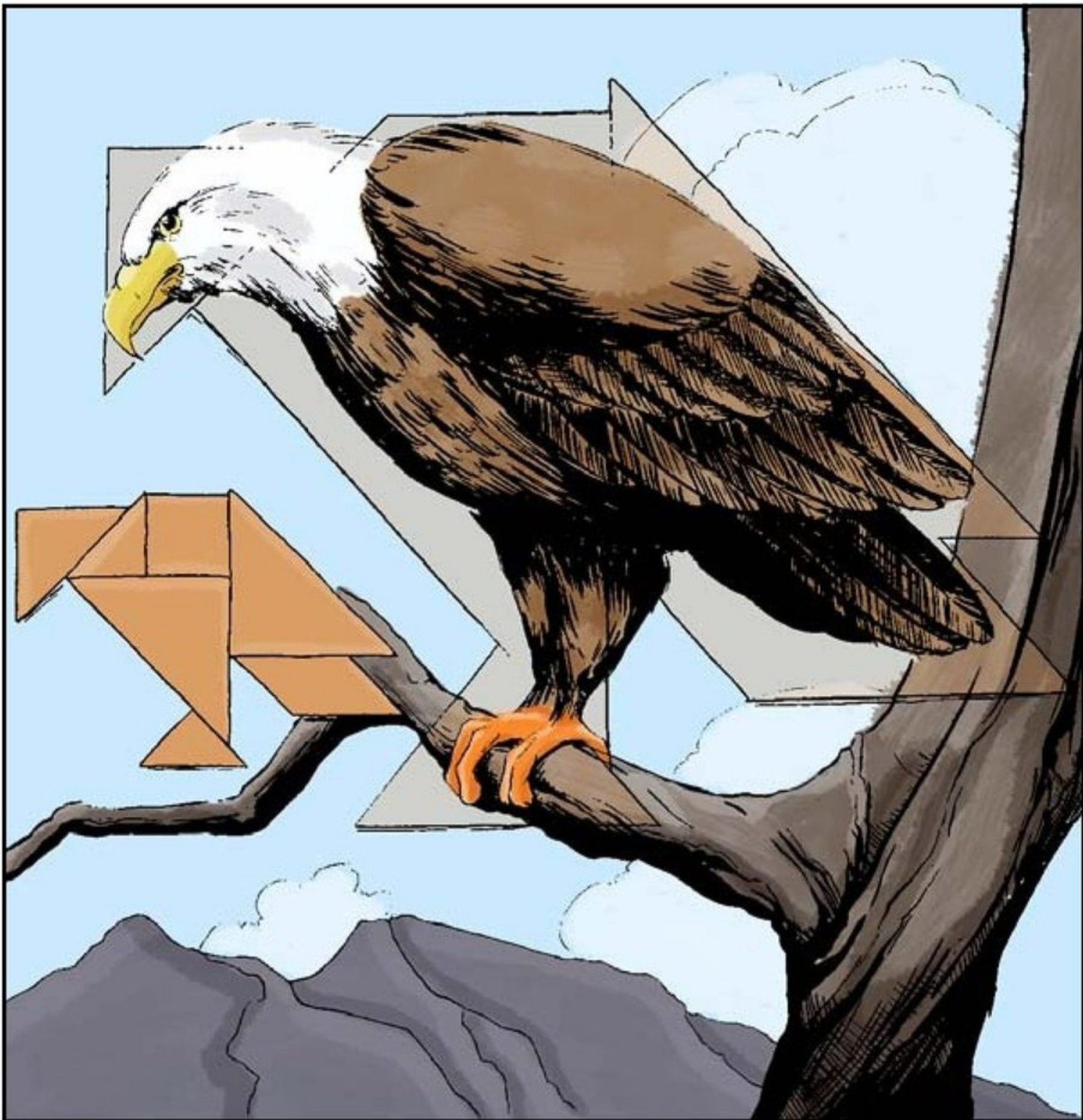
“The first animal is a **symbol** of the United States. It is one of the largest birds of prey, and its eyesight is excellent. Any guesses?” asked Miss Hess.



Li knew right away. Too shy to raise his hand, Li had an idea. He quickly looked through the tangram cards and arranged the puzzle. He showed Miss Hess as she passed his desk.

“How **clever**, Li!” said Miss Hess.

“You’re right, the bald eagle will be the first animal we’ll study.”





“This second animal’s skeleton is not made of bone but of **cartilage**. Most of these animals have four rows of teeth. They live in the ocean and their babies are called ‘pups’,” said Miss Hess.

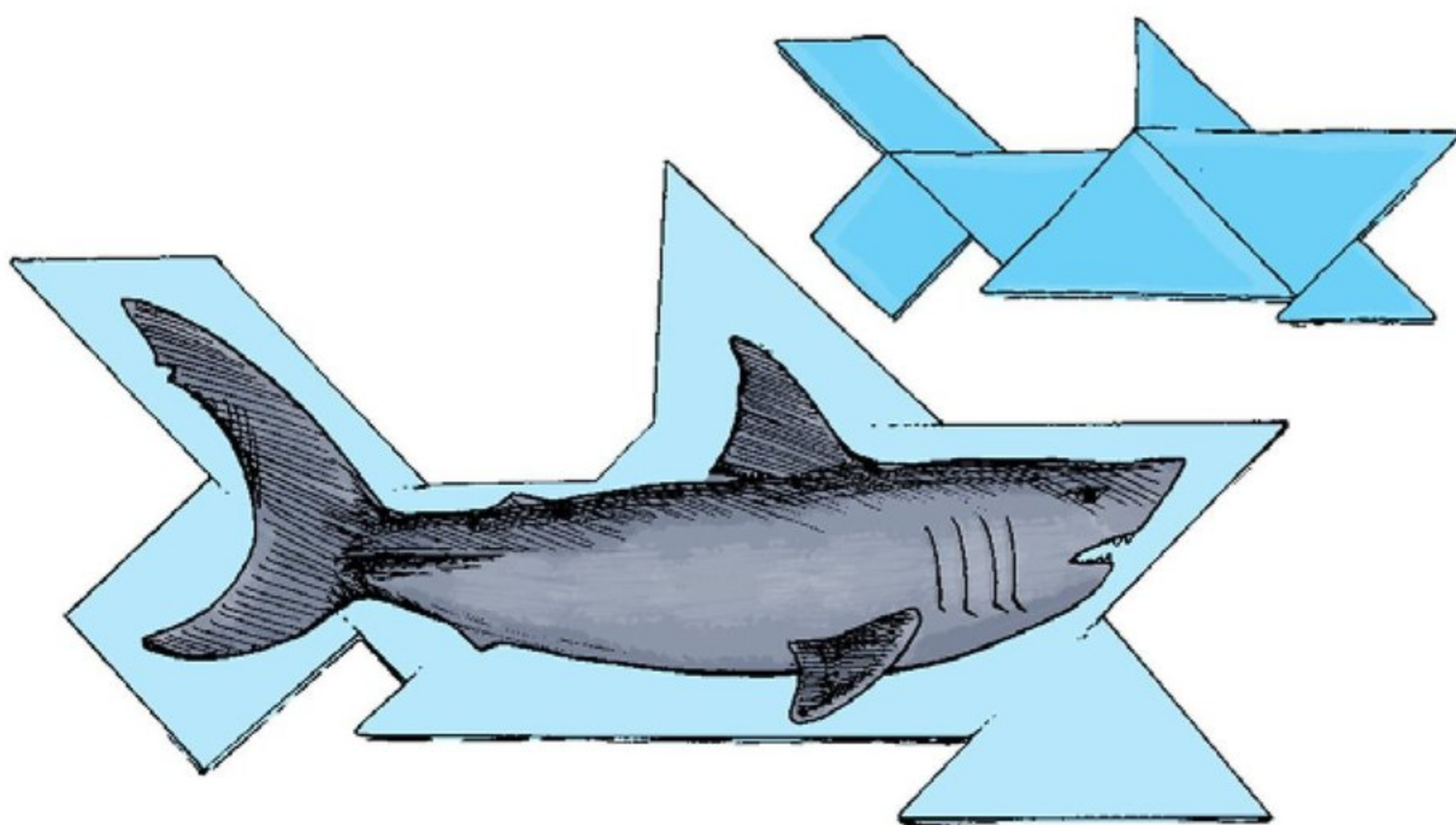
Sam guessed, “A walrus?”

“You’re getting warm,” teased Miss Hess.

Li searched through the cards again and arranged the tangram puzzle.

“Right again, Li!” said Miss Hess. “Can you tell the kids what you’ve made?”

“A shark,” said Li proudly.







Miss Hess gave the class the last riddle. “This animal lives in Australia. They need little water to survive. They are the largest **marsupial** mammals, and they use their big tails to steer and balance.”

Li didn’t recognize the word “marsupial,” but he thought he knew the answer.

He found the card, and this time, he showed it to Josh.

“Want to try?” Li asked.



Josh moved the  
tangram pieces  
into place.

“I’ve got it, Miss  
Hess!” he said.

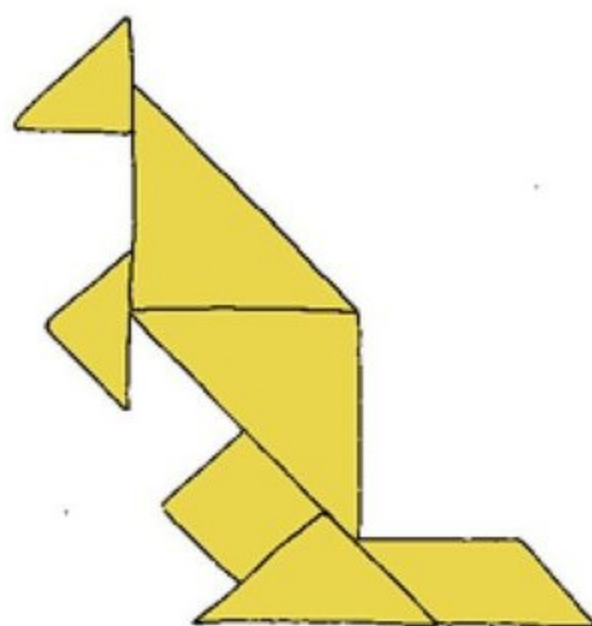
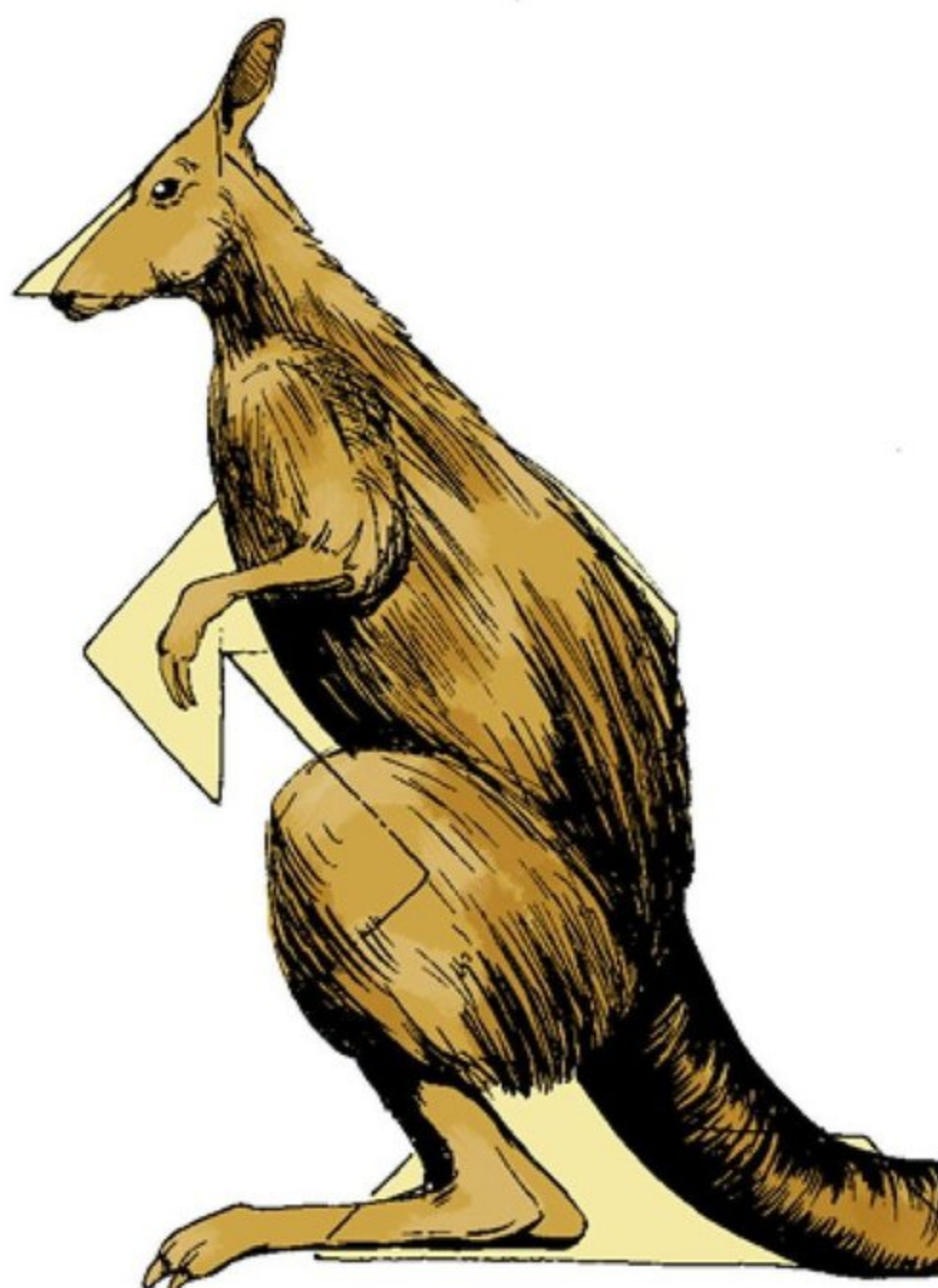
“Good job!” said  
Miss Hess.

“Li, could you  
give the kids  
one more clue  
to the riddle so  
they can get it,  
too?”

Li’s heart  
pounded.  
Would he get all  
the words right?

“This animal carries its baby in a . . .  
pouch?” said Li.

“It’s a KANGAROO!” said the class.







Just then, there was a clap of thunder and the rain poured down. During inside recess, Li showed the kids how to make other tangram animals, such as lions, giraffes, camels, and mountain goats.





A few weeks later, Li brought a **surprise** for the class. Miss Hess invited Li to share a riddle about it.

Li began, “Inside this box, there are puzzles that came from China, and each has seven pieces. Can you guess what they are?”



“Tangrams!” said the class.

“And there are enough for everyone,”  
said Li proudly.





# Glossary

<b>cartilage</b>	elastic tissue that makes up the skeletons of some animals (p. 10)
<b>China</b>	an East Asian country (p. 3)
<b>clever</b>	having a quick mind (p. 9)
<b>language</b>	the words used and understood by a group of people to express ideas (p. 3)
<b>marsupial</b>	one of a type of mammal whose females' abdomens have pouches to carry babies (p. 11)
<b>parallel</b>	lying or moving in the same direction, and the same distance apart (p. 6)
<b>parallelogram</b>	a figure with four sides whose opposite sides are equal lengths and parallel (p. 6)
<b>riddles</b>	puzzles to be solved by guessing (p. 8)
<b>square</b>	a figure with four equal sides and four right angles (p. 5)
<b>surprise</b>	something unexpected (p. 14)
<b>symbol</b>	an object that stands for something else (p. 8)
<b>tangram puzzle</b>	a Chinese puzzle made up of a square cut into seven pieces, used to make figures (p. 4)
<b>triangles</b>	figures with three sides and three angles (p. 5)



Li's Tangram Animals  
Level O Leveled Book  
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