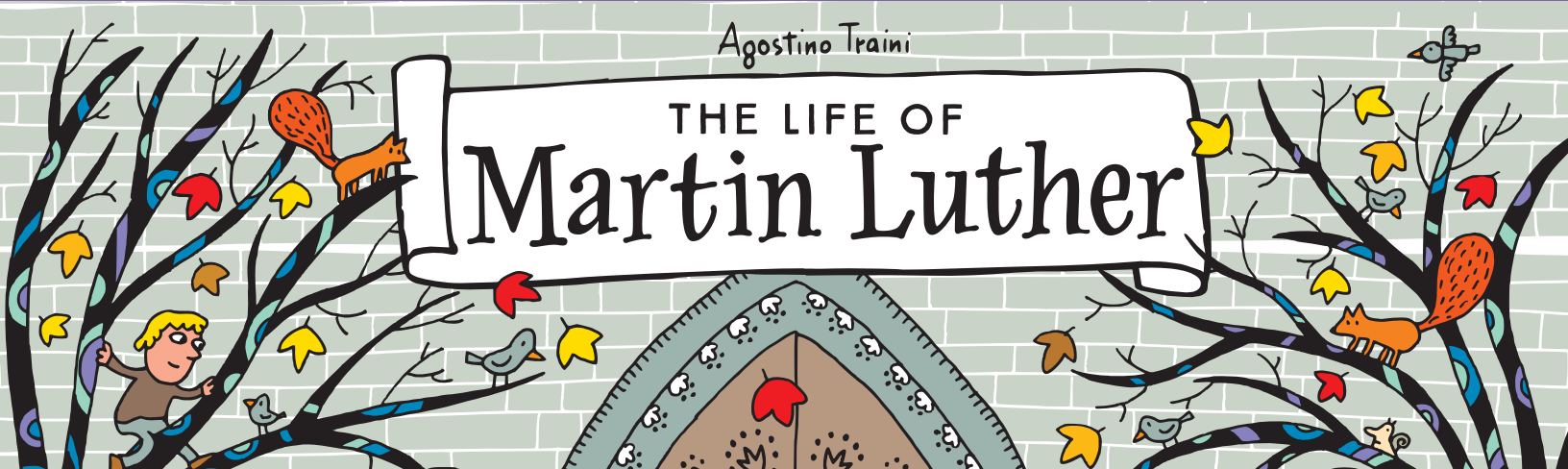


THE LIFE OF Martin Luther



The Life of Martin Luther Sunday School lesson

This single-lesson curriculum teaches kids ages 4-10 about the life of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. This will be a perfect activity for Reformation Sunday, or for any time of year when you want to introduce kids to this fascinating chapter in the history of the church. The lesson is designed so that kids of all ages can be in the same class together, but depending on the size of your group you may want to split up into smaller age-level groups. If you want, you can even invite parents to learn along with their kids!

The lesson is structured as a group story time using *The Life of Martin Luther: A Pop-Up Book*, by illustrator Agostino Traini. You'll need at least one copy of the book for each class, but you may also choose to have multiple copies scattered throughout the class, or a copy for each child to take home with them as a keepsake. Before you begin, decide how many copies of the book you'd like to use for your class or classes.

Next, read through the story-time script. You'll see you will be reading through the pop-up book, and also introducing other information and questions not in the book. **Bold text** is for you to read aloud. Plain text is not intended to be read aloud, but contains instructions for teachers. We recommend two teachers, or a teacher and a helper, for each class, one to hold the book, the other to read the script and the text of the book.

The lesson ends with an activity for all ages. There are two versions of the activity: a simple version for younger kids, and a more complex version for older kids. Read the activity instructions and decide what version you'll be doing for each class. Now you're all set!

Supplies:

- Copies of *The Life of Martin Luther: A Pop-Up Book*
- Storytime script
- Enough printouts of the activity page for all kids
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers
- Scissors, tape, and glue, if using





Welcome!

Today we get to read a book together. It's an exciting story about a person who lived a long time ago. It's also an exciting book! We'll see why in just a little bit.

Have you heard of a man named Martin Luther? He was born more than 500 years ago. He lived his whole life in what we today know as Germany. Back then, Germany was part of a bigger land known as the Holy Roman Empire.

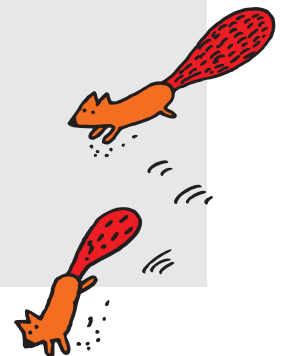
Martin was the son of a wealthy family. His father, Hans, sent Martin to school, where he did well. Martin was smart, and he liked to read, write, and argue. Martin's family wanted him to be a lawyer.

Open Spread ONE and read the text

QUESTIONS

What's happening here? What do you see?

Martin made a promise to God. When have you made a promise?
Who has made promises to you?

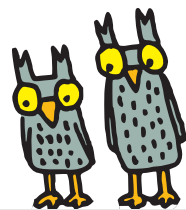




Even though his father hoped he would keep studying to be a lawyer, Martin left school and became a monk. He joined the Augustinian brothers, where he made good friends, prayed, worked, and studied every day. Martin was ordained as a priest in 1507, and became a teacher, too.

In Luther's time, not everybody could pick up and read the Bible. Books were big and rare, and the Bible was written in Latin and Greek—languages only priests and monks and scholars were able to read.

[Open Spread TWO and read]



QUESTIONS

Who helps you learn about God?

How many Bibles can you see from where you are right now?
What language are they written in?



Martin wanted to share what he discovered in the Bible. He wanted everyone to know about God's love, and about God's grace in Jesus. When church rulers taught that God's gift of forgiveness could be bought with money, Martin argued with them.

[Open Spread THREE and read]

Church doors were like bulletin boards, a place where everyone in town could read and post announcements. Martin sent his ninety-five theses to some friends and fellow teachers—he also posted them so everybody would know what he had to say.

QUESTIONS

What time of year do you think it is? What clues help you guess?

What reminds you of God's love?

In our time, where could we share this good news so people would see or hear it?





Many people liked what Martin had to say about grace. There were others, though, who disagreed with Martin. These people tried to stop him. The pope, whose name was Leo the tenth, said that Martin was a bad and dangerous teacher and an unfaithful priest. Pope Leo wanted Martin to say he was wrong.

[Open Spread FOUR and read]

Pope Leo was the head of the church, but Emperor Charles the Fifth ruled the land. He was the one who listened to Martin, and he was the one who would decide what to do about him.

QUESTIONS

Do you think Martin's ideas about God were dangerous? What other words might you use to describe his beliefs?

Martin was standing in front of the most powerful person in the land. He had to be brave. What helps you be brave?
When have you felt brave?





Emperor Charles let Luther go, but soon ruled that Martin was an outlaw! Martin had made some powerful enemies. But he also had good friends! Martin's friend Frederick the Wise was an important man in Germany. When the church and the emperor came after Luther, Frederick helped him hide.

[Open Spread FIVE and read]

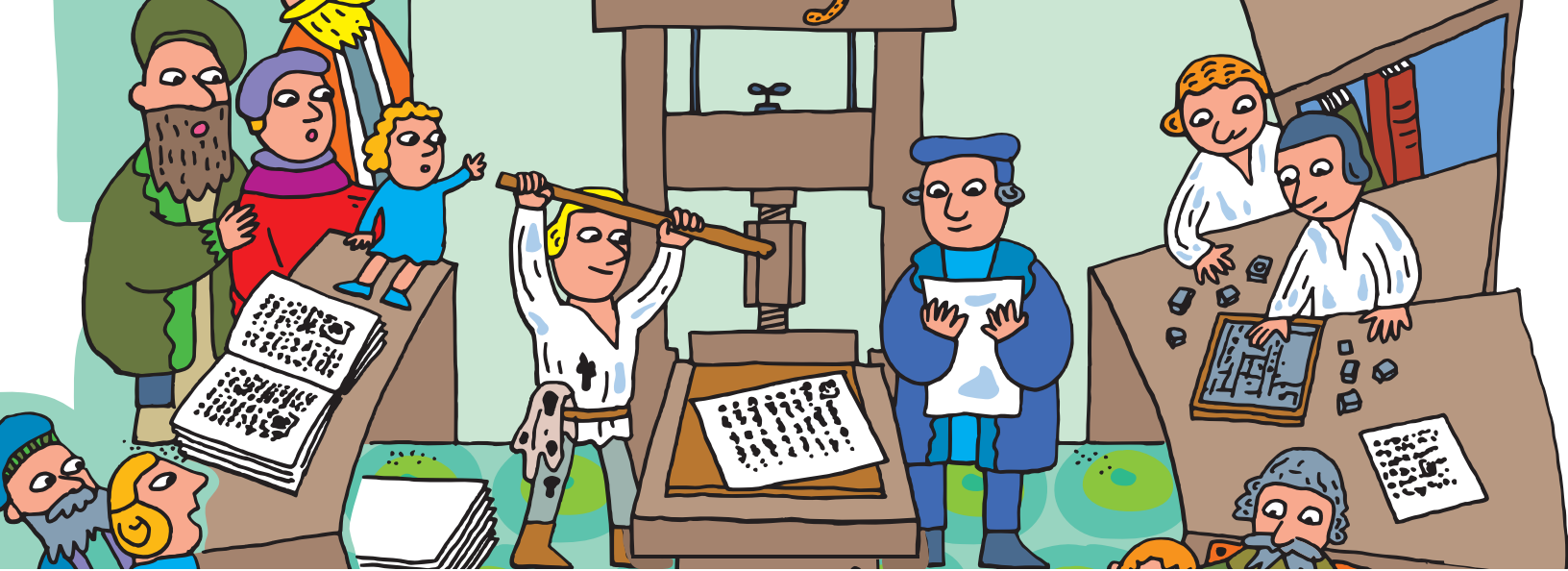
Frederick knew that Martin could be arrested soon, so he and his men took Martin to a castle called Wartburg. There, Martin pretended to be a visiting knight named George. At the castle, Martin was safe!



QUESTIONS

Who are your friends? How do good friends help keep you safe?

Martin wrote the words to a song called "A Mighty Fortress is Our God". Do you think he thought of that while he was at Castle Wartburg?



While he was hiding at Castle Wartburg, Martin didn't have his normal teaching duties to do. He got antsy and bored, so he started a huge project: to translate the Bible from Greek and Latin into German - the language people spoke every day. It took only eleven weeks for him to translate the New Testament from Greek to German. The rest of the Bible took a little longer.

[Open Spread SIX and read]

One reason that Martin Luther made such a difference in the world has to do with the big, blocky, machine in the middle of this page. It's called a printing press, and was invented and developed in the same century as Luther. Before the printing press, all books were copied out by hand. The press made Martin's words available to almost everybody!

QUESTIONS

What is your favorite book?

Who helps you understand what you read or hear in the Bible?
Do you have a favorite part of the Bible story?

Who should have access to the Bible?





[Open Spread SEVEN and read]

As you can see, the story of Martin Luther began a long time ago, but it's still going on! Christians have read and wrestled with and been blessed by Martin's words and his example for five hundred years. Can you find Martin in this picture? Do you know or recognize any of the people around him? Most of the people at the center are leaders of churches and movements that learned from and were inspired by the brave witness of Martin and Martin's wife, Katie—who is right beside him.

As you read, point out Martin and Katie Luther, as well as the reformers and leaders named here. This list of names gets long, so think about mentioning only a few of the reformers who you think would be most interesting to your audience.

Beside Katie is John Calvin. Beside Calvin is Bishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa. Below bishop Tutu is Barbara Heck, who helped build the Methodist church. On the other side of Martin is Philip Melanchthon, who was Martin's dear friend and partner in the reformation. Beside Philip are Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Dorothy Day, whose faith in God's grace gave them courage to fight injustice. At the front of the group are John Knox who founded the Presbyterian church, and John Wesley, who founded the Methodist church!

And all around them are people whose names we don't know, but whose lives and whose faith have been touched and shaped by the wonderful news at the heart of Martin's great discovery— God loves us more than we can ever know and more than we can ever deserve—and God's love for us is completely free. It's a gift; we call it grace.

You are in this circle, too! We all are.

QUESTIONS

What surprised you about today's story?

What's one thing you learned about Martin Luther?

How might God use you and your gifts to help people know about God's love?

PRAYER

Before we do an activity, let's say a quick prayer together. "God, thank you for being so close to us. For loving us so deeply. Thank you for giving us people like Martin Luther who helped us know you a little better. Help us to share your love with others, just like Martin Luther did. Amen."



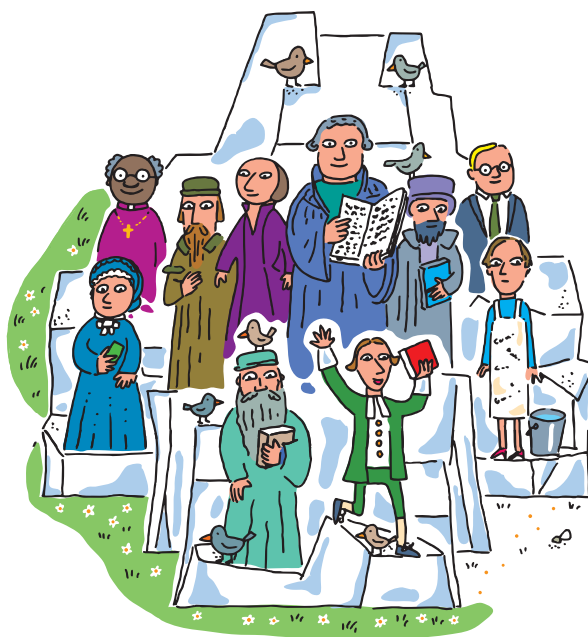
Activity

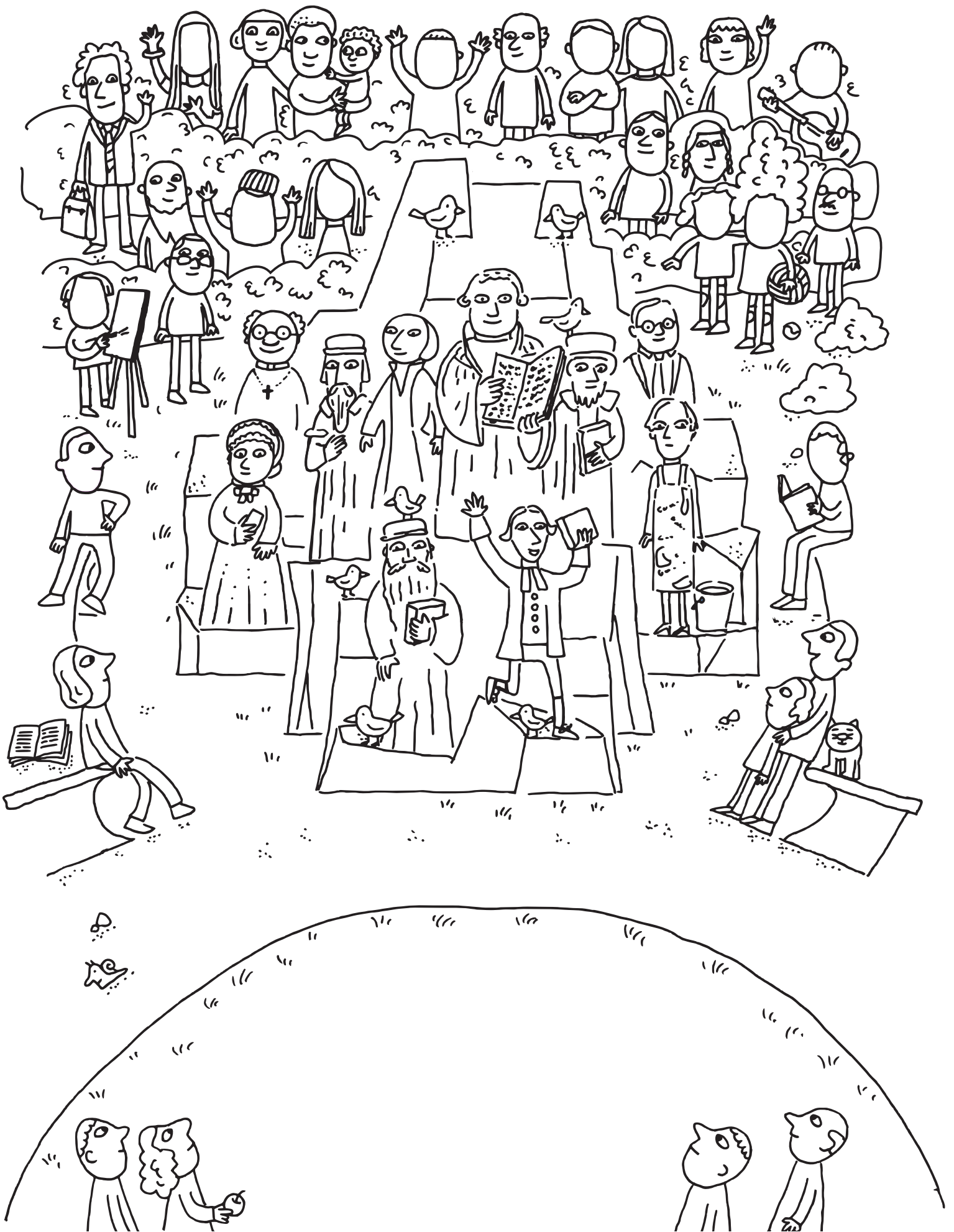
The activity allows kids to add themselves to the group of Christians surrounding Martin and the Reformers on the last page of the book. For this activity, you have the option of doing a simple coloring sheet, or having kids color and then create their own pop-up! The simple coloring activity is most appropriate for young children, while older children will enjoy coloring and then cutting and folding to create a pop-up. Choose whichever option works best for your group.

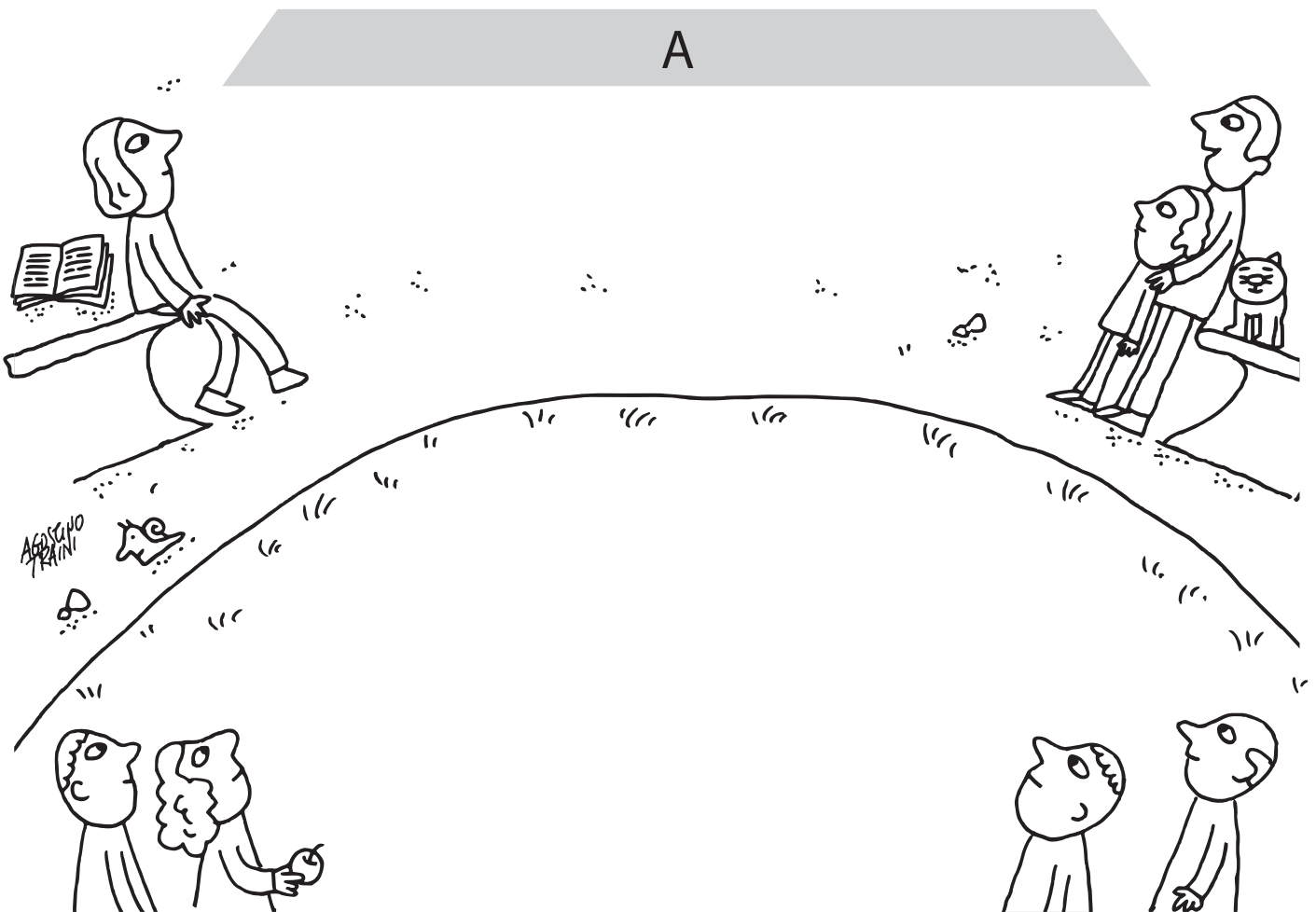
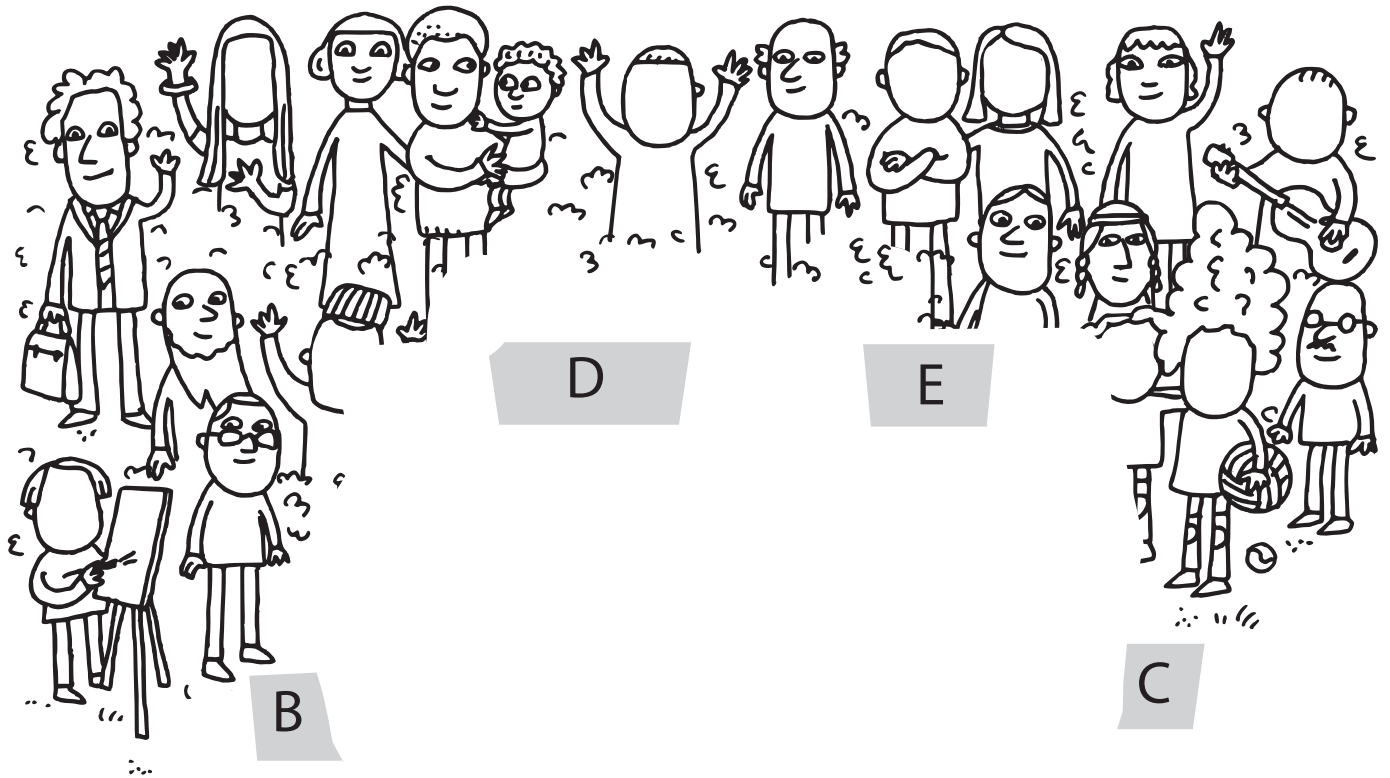
For younger kids: Print out the activity sheet for younger children. Pass out copies for each learner. Have crayons, colored pencils, or markers for kids to use to color the page. Point out that some of the faces of the people in the crowd have been removed, and encourage kids to use their drawing skills to add themselves, and people they know and admire, to the crowd with Martin. If it works for you, you can even have copies of photographs of people from your church for kids to cut out and tape to the coloring sheet, or ask kids to bring photographs from home. Make sure kids use photos that are okay to cut!

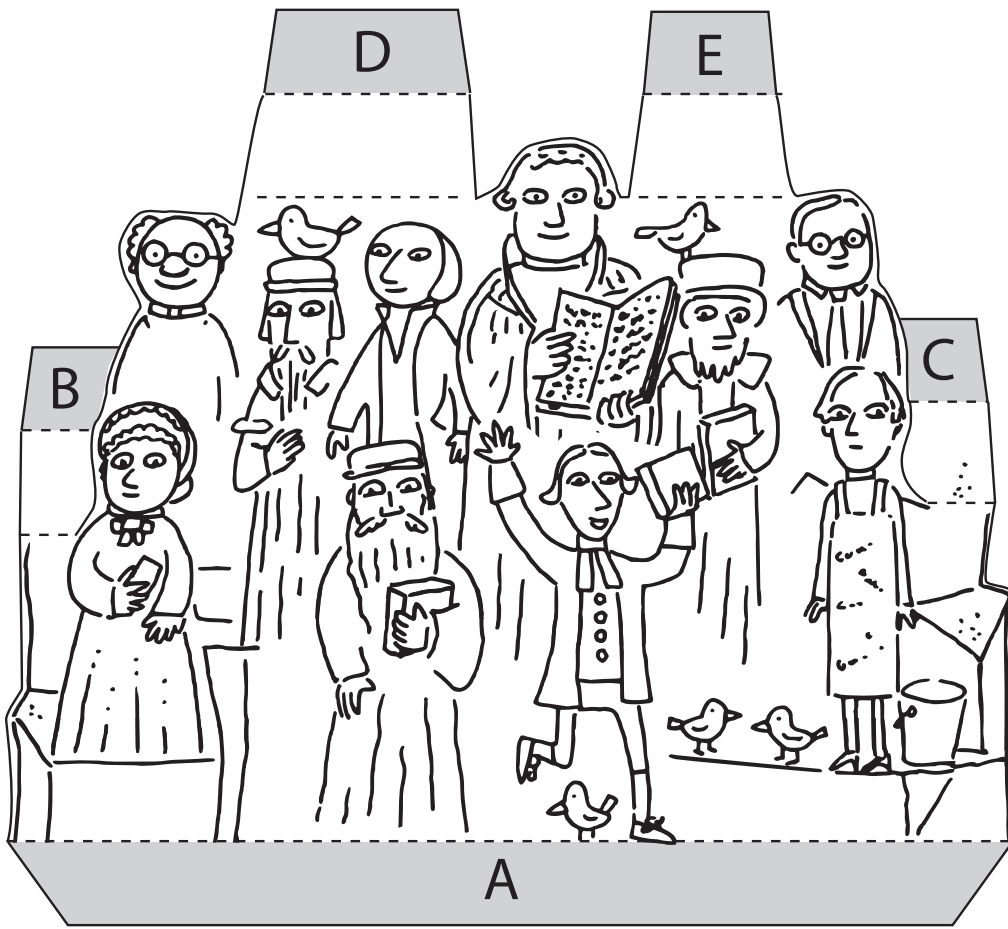
For older kids: Older kids can color and add faces of people they know to the crowd just like the younger kids. But they also have the option of creating a pop-up after they're done! Print out the two coloring sheets for older kids. After kids have colored and added faces to the crowd, have them cut out the pop-up section, then fold along the dotted lines and tape or glue the tabs to the larger sheet of paper. Note: the pop-ups will be sturdiest if you can print on a stronger sheet of paper, like construction paper. Regular printer paper will work, though!

After the children have done the activity, admire everyone's work and point out that they, and people they know and love, are now part of the crowd with Martin Luther and the other Reformers. They can be brave and follow God, just like Martin Luther did!









fold

cut

