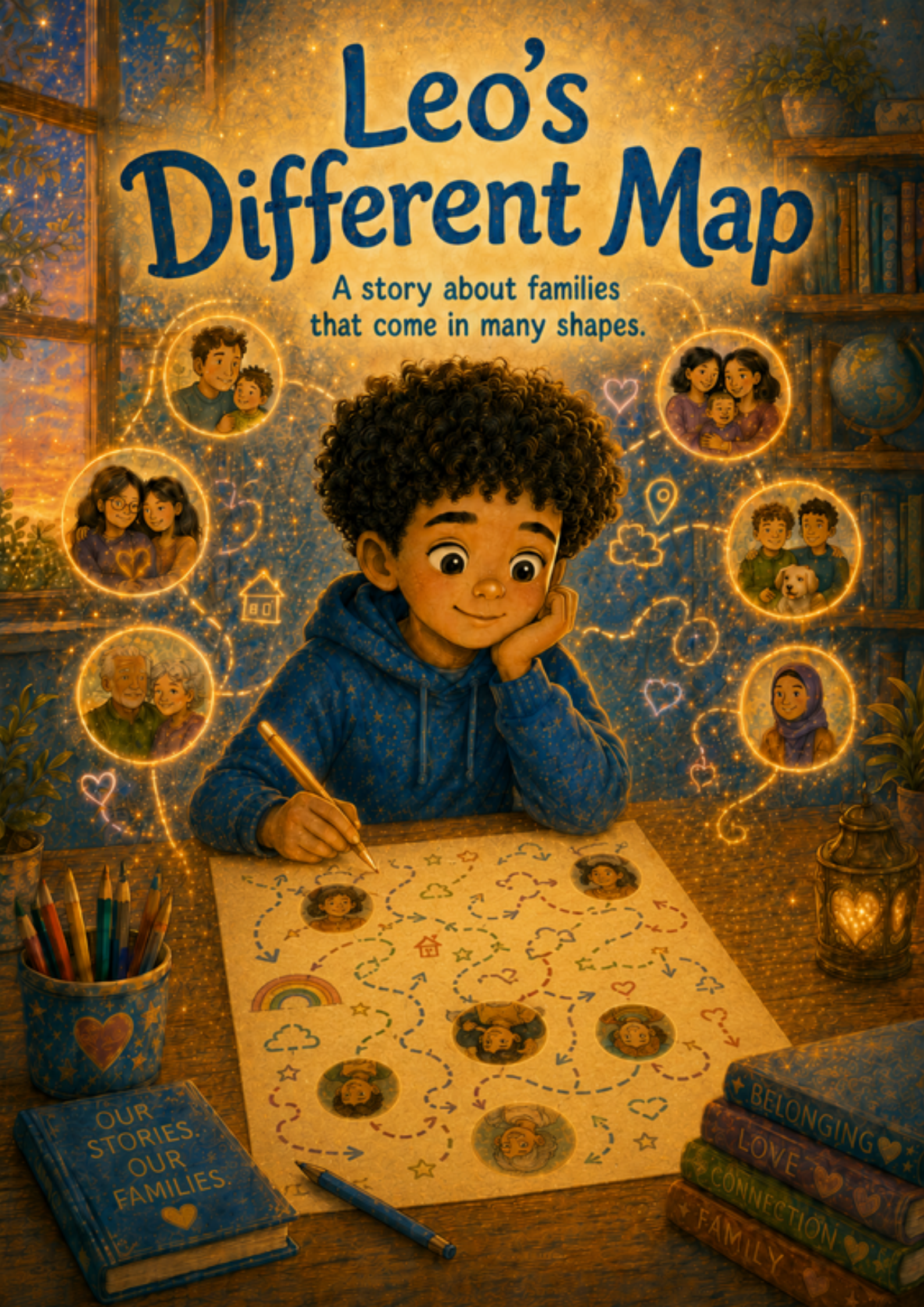


Leo's Different Map

A story about families
that come in many shapes.



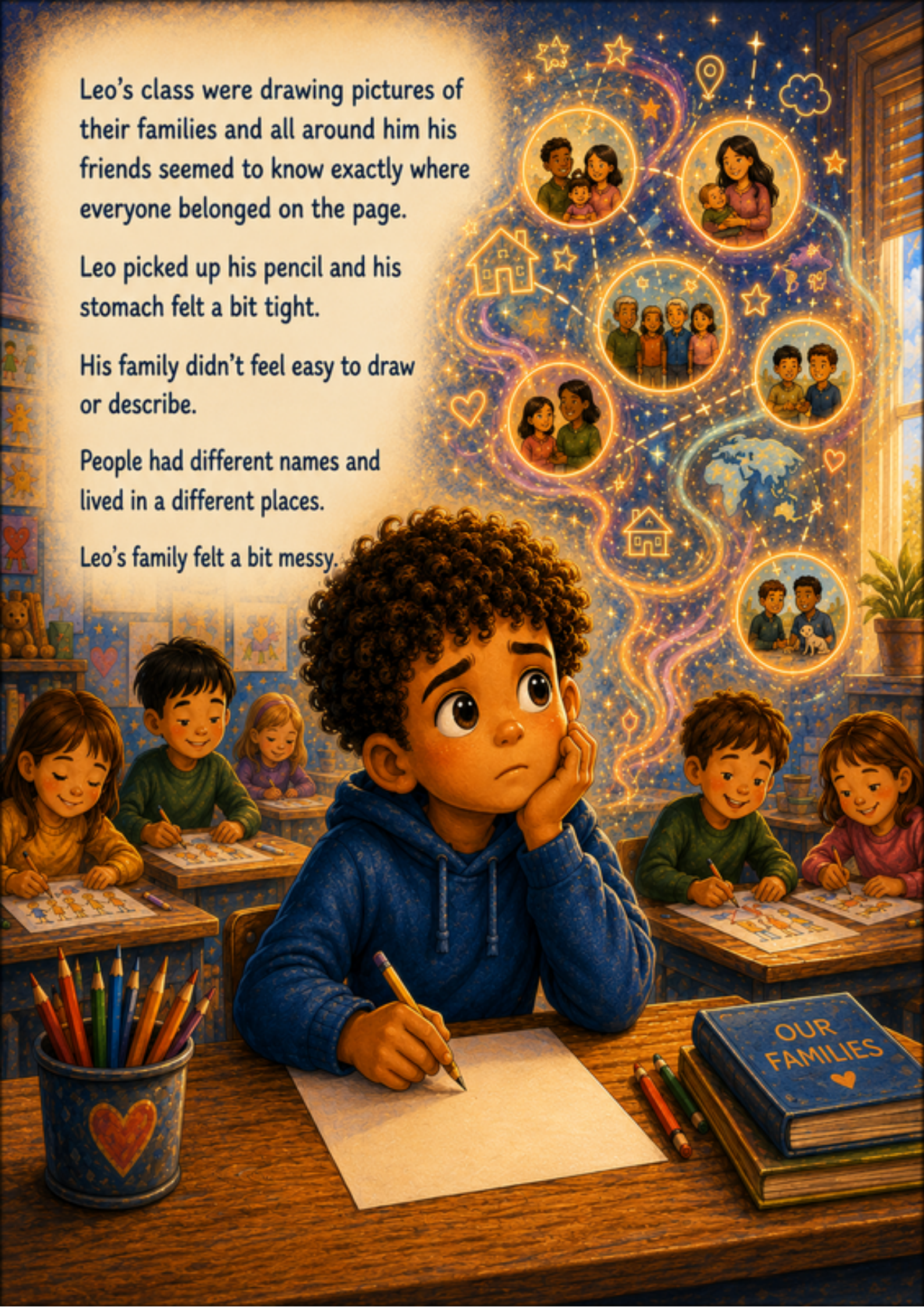
Leo's class were drawing pictures of their families and all around him his friends seemed to know exactly where everyone belonged on the page.

Leo picked up his pencil and his stomach felt a bit tight.

His family didn't feel easy to draw or describe.

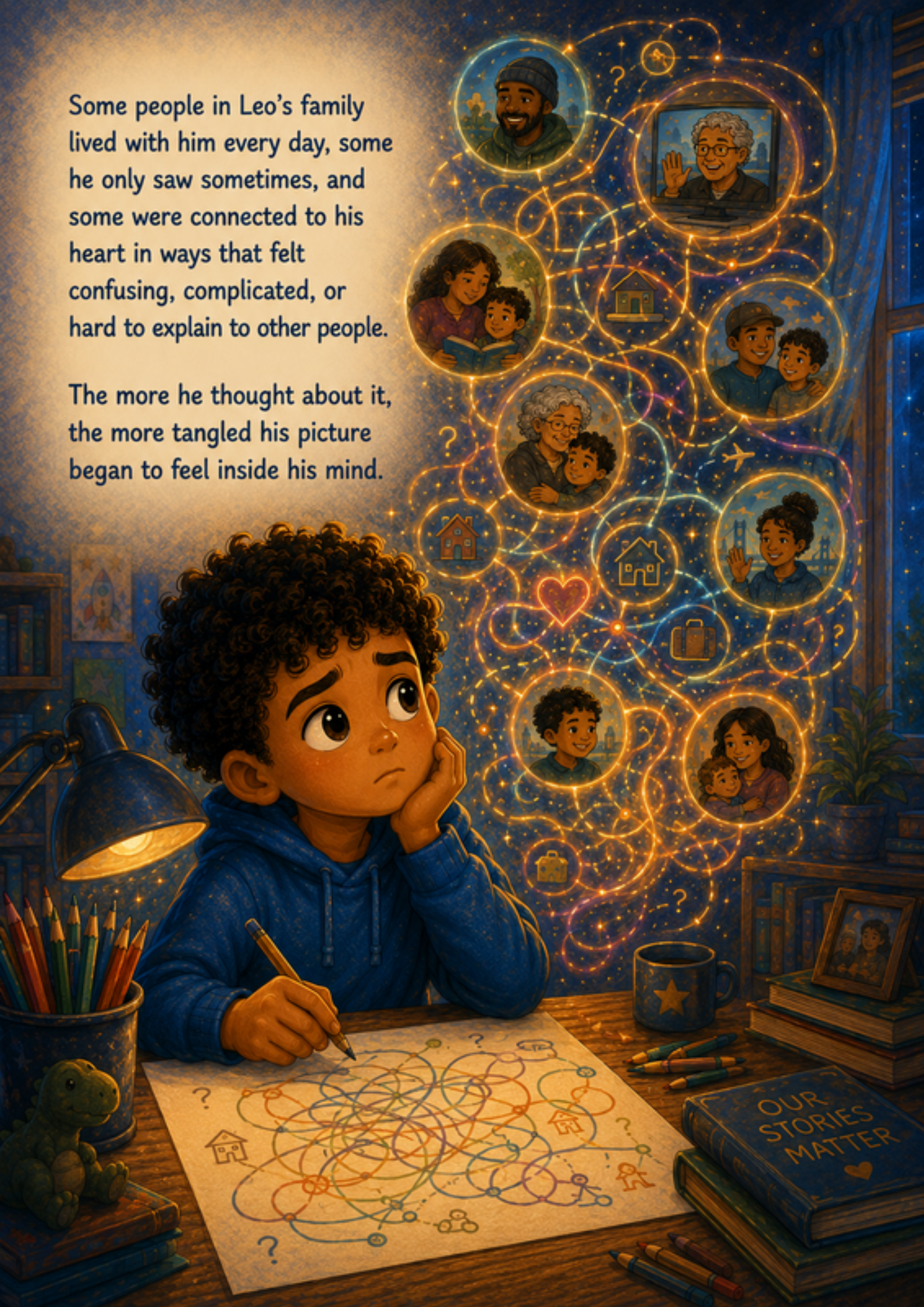
People had different names and lived in a different places.

Leo's family felt a bit messy.



Some people in Leo's family lived with him every day, some he only saw sometimes, and some were connected to his heart in ways that felt confusing, complicated, or hard to explain to other people.

The more he thought about it, the more tangled his picture began to feel inside his mind.



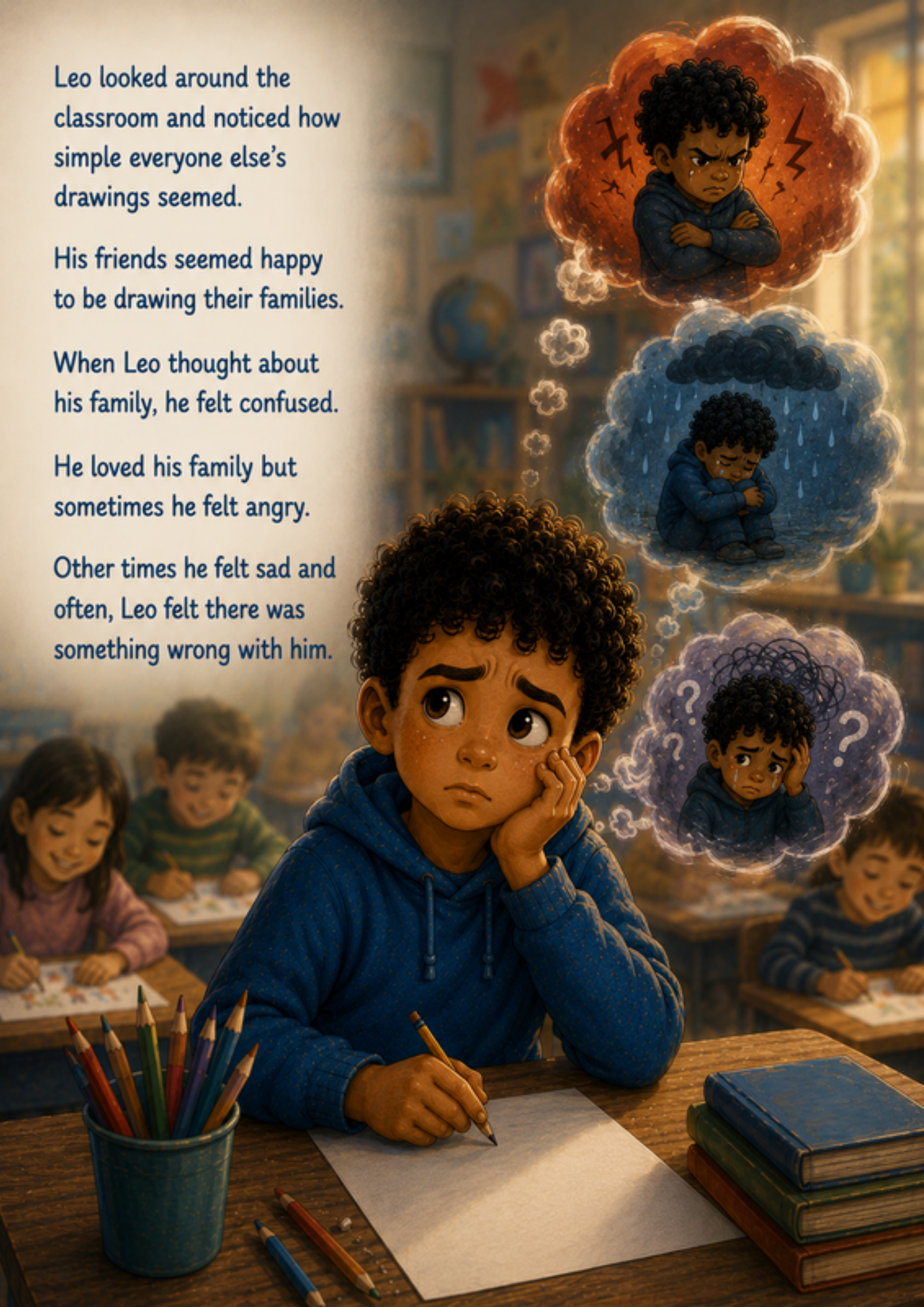
Leo looked around the classroom and noticed how simple everyone else's drawings seemed.

His friends seemed happy to be drawing their families.

When Leo thought about his family, he felt confused.

He loved his family but sometimes he felt angry.

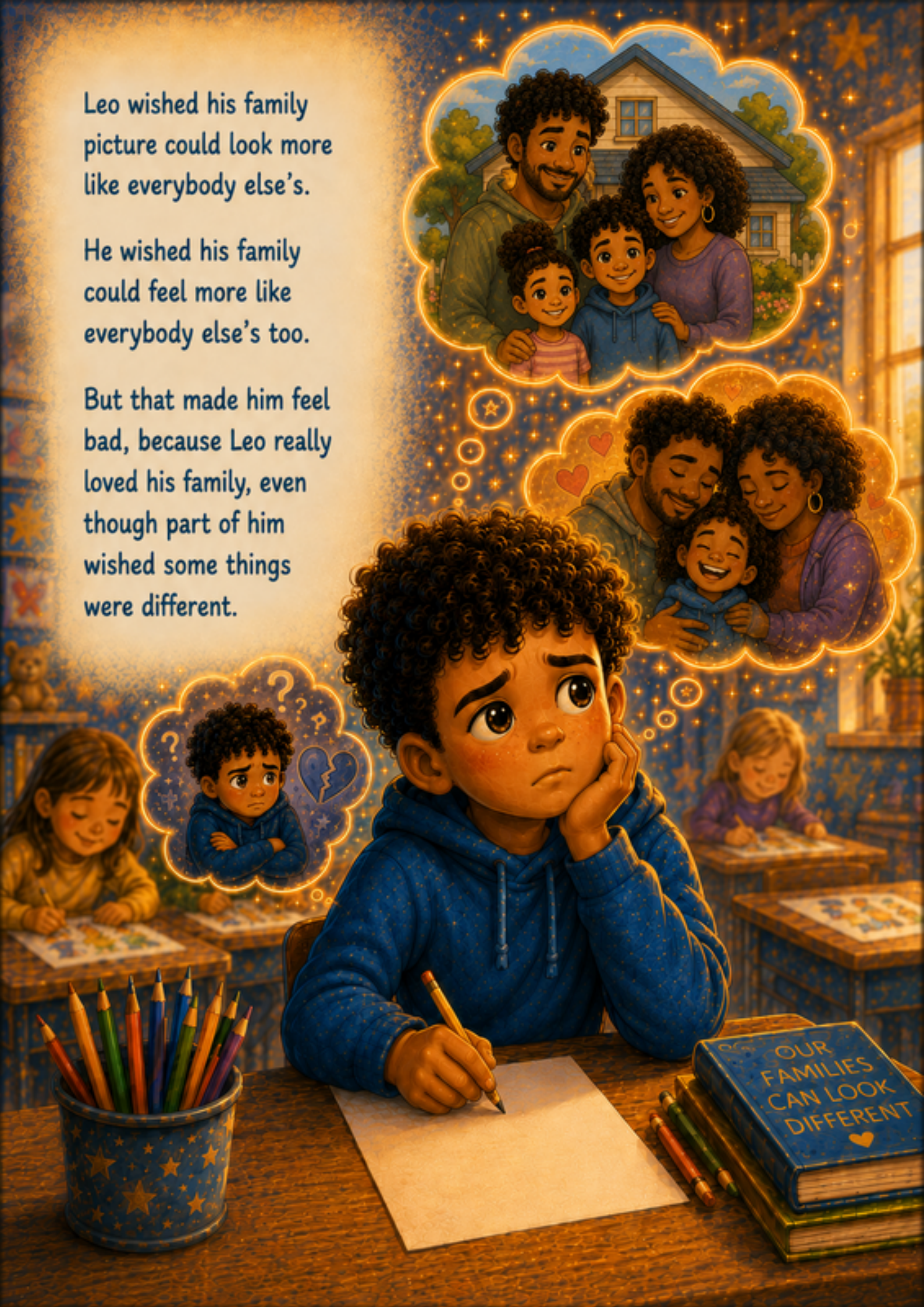
Other times he felt sad and often, Leo felt there was something wrong with him.



Leo wished his family picture could look more like everybody else's.

He wished his family could feel more like everybody else's too.

But that made him feel bad, because Leo really loved his family, even though part of him wished some things were different.





My family map has
messy parts too.
And sometimes my feelings
about my family are messy,
even when people can't see
that from the outside.

His teacher took her own piece of paper and began to draw a map with circles, lines, spaces, and people who belonged in different ways.

She had one dad who came into her life when she was four and cared for her kindly, and another dad who was part of her story but not really part of her family because he had not been kind to her mum.

Some people connected to him, like her nan and auntie, still mattered to her, so they belonged somewhere on the map too.



'When I was younger, I felt sad sometimes, thankful sometimes, and angry sometimes,' his teacher said.

'I had lots of questions, and the answers did not always make sense to me.'

Leo wondered if maybe his feelings were not wrong, but just trying to help him understand a family story with lots of different parts.



His teacher said the first step
was not to make the map neat,
because sometimes our feelings
have to come out messy first.

So Leo drew circles, lines, bridges,
question marks, mazes, and spaces
where he did not know what
belonged yet.

For the first time, the feelings
inside him began to appear
on the page.



Then Leo and his teacher began to colour-code the map.

They used colours for things he felt sure about, things that only happened sometimes, things that changed a lot, things that made him happy, and things that made him sad.

The map still looked messy, but now it also looked important, thoughtful, and beautiful.



Leo and his teacher decided they would keep working on his map another day, because some family stories take time.

But Leo did not feel ashamed anymore; his brain felt clearer, and his feelings felt less tangled.

Later, he showed his friends and said, "My family is a bit messy, and sometimes it makes me feel a bit messy too, but look at my map — it's beautiful."

