

# Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World

By Joe Illick

Based on the book *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World* by  
Laurence Aholt

Libretto by Mark Campbell

**A Study Guide prepared by:**



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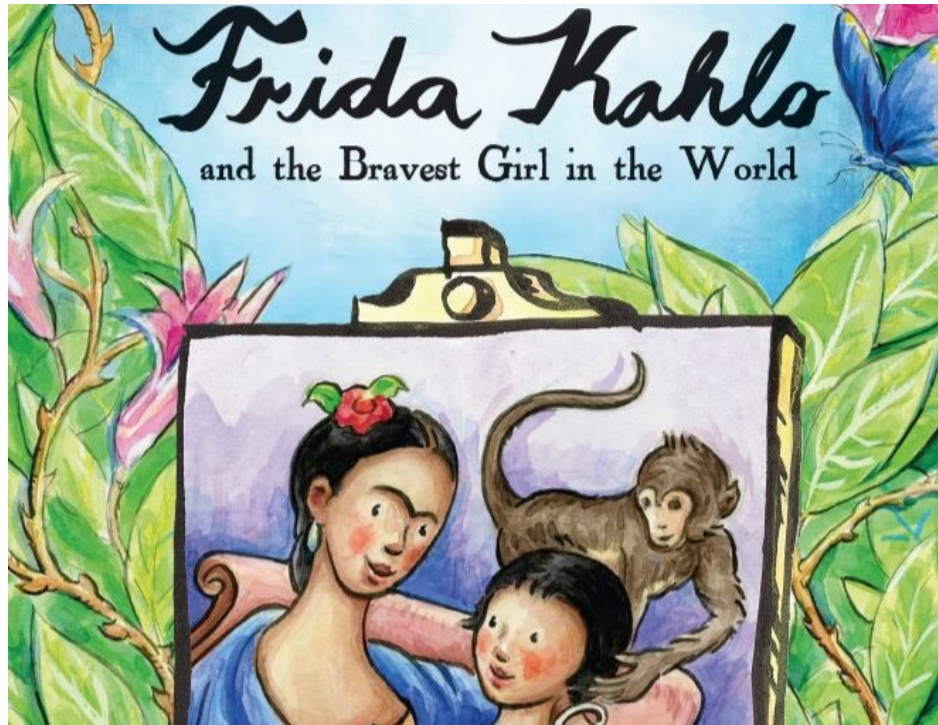


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# Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World



## Cast of Characters

Mariana, a young girl .....	Soprano
Rosita, Mariana's grandmother; Mrs. Xoloti, a dog .....	Soprano
Alicia, Mariana's mother; Frida Kahlo .....	Mezzo-soprano
Eduardo Jr., Mariana's brother; Fulang Chang, a monkey .....	Tenor
Eduardo, Mariana's father; Bonito, a parrot; Diego Rivera .....	Baritone

# Summary

**Mariana** introduces herself at her house. She sings about the portraits of her family members on the wall behind her. **Frida Kahlo** painted all of the portraits. Mariana sings about how much she loves her family. Each family member introduces themselves. They tell Mariana that she should ask Frida to paint her portrait – she is the only family member without one. **Eduardo** teases Mariana and tells her it will be scary to have her portrait painted. **Rosita** says it will be boring. Mariana says she will go visit Frida today in a place called Colonia del Carmen.

When Mariana arrives at Frida's big blue house, she is too scared to knock on the door. Mariana is scared because of the rumors she has heard about Frida. Some say Frida has horns. Others say she's a mean witch! With some help from the audience, Frida musters enough courage to knock on Frida's door.

Frida hears the knock at the door and asks for quiet. She invites Mariana inside. Mariana enters even though she is very scared. Mariana is greeted by Frida's three friends: a monkey named **Fulang**, a dog named **Mrs. Xoloti**, and a parrot named **Bonito**. They tell Mariana to make herself at home. Bonito says he likes to yak and jabber. Mrs. Xoloti says she likes to bark and growl. Fulang says he likes to swing, howl, and screech. Frida shoos her friends away because she wants to start to paint Mariana's portrait.

Mariana is shaking and tells Frida that she is afraid. Frida tells her that she has nothing to be afraid of. She tells Mariana to sit on a stool so Frida can paint her. She tells Mariana she must sit still. She begins to paint.

Suddenly, Mariana hears a man's voice call out to Frida. It scares her and she jumps up from her stool. Frida tells Mariana that the voice belongs to her husband, **Diego Rivera**. Diego enters the house and kisses Frida. Frida introduces Mariana and Diego to each other. She tells Diego that Mariana is a very brave girl. She tells Mariana that Diego is a very good painter. Diego paints murals. Murals are big paintings on walls. Mariana says that she gets in trouble if she paints on walls. Diego tells Mariana that art can happen anywhere – even on walls! As long as you can tell a story, you can be an artist, too!

Frida shoos Diego out of the room. She wants to continue painting Mariana's portrait. While Frida is painting her portrait, Mariana says that Diego seems strong. Frida says that women are stronger than men. Mariana tells Frida that she likes her dress. Frida says she wears long dresses because she has a bad leg. When she was a little girl, Frida was in an accident and hurt her leg. Her father told her she had to be brave and strong. Frida could not run and play while her leg was hurting. So, her father bought her paints and an easel. Frida was afraid because she had never painted before. She repeated her father's advice – to be brave and strong. Frida gathered her strength and painted for the first time even though she was afraid. While Frida's leg was getting better, she painted everything she saw. Painting helped Frida become strong.

Frida paints Mariana everyday for a few weeks. Mariana was sad when Frida finished her portrait. She didn't want to stop going to Frida's house. Frida tells Mariana that she will be back. Brave people stick together. Mariana promises Frida that she will be strong. Frida, Fulang, Mrs. Xoloti, and Bonito tell Mariana goodbye. They tell her she is welcome back anytime. Mariana returns home. She sings with the portraits of her family.

## Frida's portrait of Mariana



Courtesy of [www.fridakhalo.org](http://www.fridakhalo.org)

# MUSIC VOCABULARY

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**ALTO** (al-toe)

A low female voice.

**ARIA** (Ah-ree-ah)

A song for solo voice.

**BARITONE** (Barr-ah-tone)

The middle range male voice, between tenor and bass.

**BASS** (Base)

Lowest of the male voices.

**COSTUME**

Clothing a singer wears to portray a character.

**COMPOSER**

The person who writes the music.

**DESIGNER**

The person who creates the scenery, costumes and lights.

**DUET** (do-et)

Music written for two people to sing together, usually to each other.

**ENSEMBLE** (on-som-buhl)

Two or more singers singing at the same time to express their emotions and tell the story.

**LIBRETTO** (lih-bret-oh)

This word literally means "little book" and it is the text or words of an opera.

**MELODY**

A series of musical tones that make up a tune.

**MEZZO-SOPRANO** (met-so soh-pranh-oh)

The middle female voice, between soprano and alto.

**OPERA** (ah-per-ah)

A play that uses singing instead of speaking and is accompanied usually by piano in rehearsals and orchestra in performances.

**ORCHESTRA** (or-khe-struh)

A group of musicians that play different musical instruments. They play the music for the singers in an opera.

**PIANO**

A musical instrument used to accompany singers in rehearsals when there is no orchestra.

**RECITATIVE** (ress-it-uh-teeve)

A type of song using words sung with the rhythm of natural speech with some melody added. Recitatives help describe the story in an opera.

**REHEARSAL**

The time singers and musicians spend practicing before a performance.

**SCORE**

The book which contains both the music and the text of the opera.

**SET**

The scenery used on the stage to show the location of the opera.

**SOPRANO** (soh-pranh-oh)

The highest female voice.

**STAGE DIRECTOR**

The person who decides how the singers will move on stage and how they will act while they are singing their parts.

**TENOR** (teh-nor)

A high male voice.

**TRIO** (tree-oh)

Music written for three characters to sing together.

## Some Musical Instruments from an Orchestra



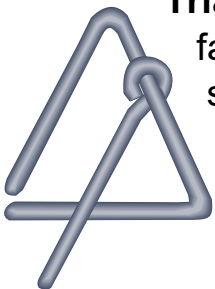
**Flute:** The flute is a musical instrument of the woodwind group. It produces its sound from the flow of air across an opening. The stream of air is directed across a hole in the instrument and it creates a vibration of air at the hole. The flute is the oldest known wind instrument. It dates back to 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC. The original flutes were made of wood but in the 1800's; flutes began to be made out of metals.



**Trumpet:** A trumpet is a musical instrument with the highest pitch in the brass family. They are constructed of brass tubing bent twice into an oblong shape. It is played by blowing air through closed lips, producing a “buzzing” sound.



**French Horn:** The French horn is a brass instrument consisting of about 12 feet of tubing wrapped into a coil with a flared bell. To produce different notes on the horn, one must do many things – the four most important are pressing the valves, holding the appropriate amount of lip tension, blowing air into the instrument, and placing the hand in the bell. More lip tension and faster air produces higher notes. Less lip tension and slower air produces lower notes.



**Triangle:** The triangle is a musical instrument from the percussion family. It is a bar of metal bent into a triangle shape. It creates sound primarily by way of vibrating itself struck by a metal beater giving it a high-pitched, ringing tone.





## Meet the Composer for

# *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World*

Joe Illick lives in Texas. He works for the Fort Worth Opera. He writes music for the Fort Worth Opera. He is also the Music Director at the Fort Worth Opera. This means that he conducts the orchestra. He spends lots of time with the musicians in the orchestra to make sure they play the music right. Mr. Illick has a lot of experience helping orchestras play music. He also worked as a Music Director in New York, Florida, and Pennsylvania. Mr. Illick has even helped orchestras learn music in Europe!



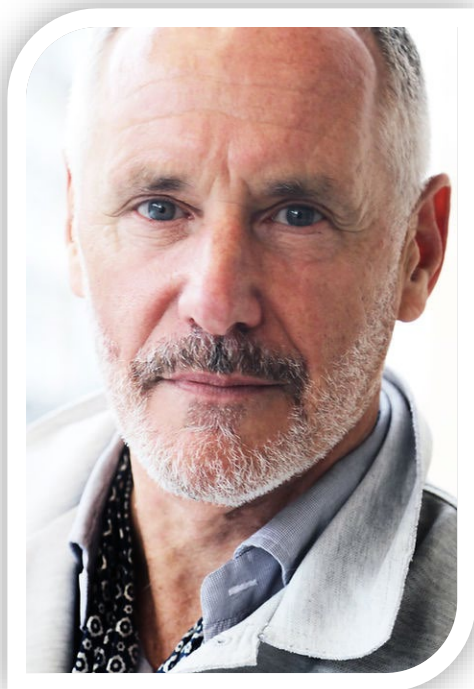
Mr. Illick also plays the piano. He won an award for winning a contest for playing the piano in England. He also plays the piano for concerts.

Mr. Illick has written lots of music. He wrote another opera for kids called *Stone Soup*. In that opera, everyone in a village puts their own ingredients into a big pot of soup. At the end, everyone shares a meal of the soup that everyone helped create. He also writes music that only has instruments and no singing. These pieces of music are called symphonic works. That means that they are played by people who play musical instruments that are in an orchestra. Mr. Illick has won lots of awards for the music he has written.

Mr. Illick is also a teacher. He talks to kids and adults on the radio, on TV, and in person about music. He teaches people in the United States and in Europe. Maybe one day you can travel like Mr. Illick, and help people learn music across the world!

## Meet the Librettist for

# *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World*



Mark Campbell lives in New York City. He is like a magician with words and stories, and he's won some really important awards for his amazing work. Mr. Campbell is known for creating special words for operas, musicals, and other musical pieces that make us feel all sorts of emotions. He helps tell stories through music all across the United States.

One of Mr. Campbell's most famous operas is called *Silent Night*. It's about a special moment during a war when soldiers from different countries stopped fighting on Christmas. He also helped Mr. Illick write *Stone Soup*. He even helped write an opera about Steve Jobs – the guy who made the iPhone!

Mr. Campbell also likes to help others create amazing music. He is a mentor, which means that he guides and inspires young writers who want to create beautiful musical stories. In

2020, he started something really special – the Campbell Opera Librettist Prize. This award helps and celebrates other people who want to write words for operas. He is already writing new words for operas, so keep your ears open. Maybe one day, you can write stories to inspire people, too!



## Vocabulary/Vocabulario

Frida, Mariana, and Mariana's family live in Mexico. People who live in Mexico speak Spanish. In the table below, you can find the Spanish words that you heard in the opera today.

English (Inglés)	Spanish (Español)
Good afternoon!	Buenos tardes!
Good day!	Buenos días!
Brother	Hermano
Grandmother	Abuela
Our home is your home.	Nuestra casa es su casa.
My dear	Mi querida
I am Mariana.	Soy Mariana.

Write the following sentences in Spanish:

1. Good afternoon, my dear!

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2. Good day, Grandmother!

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3. Our home is your home, Brother.

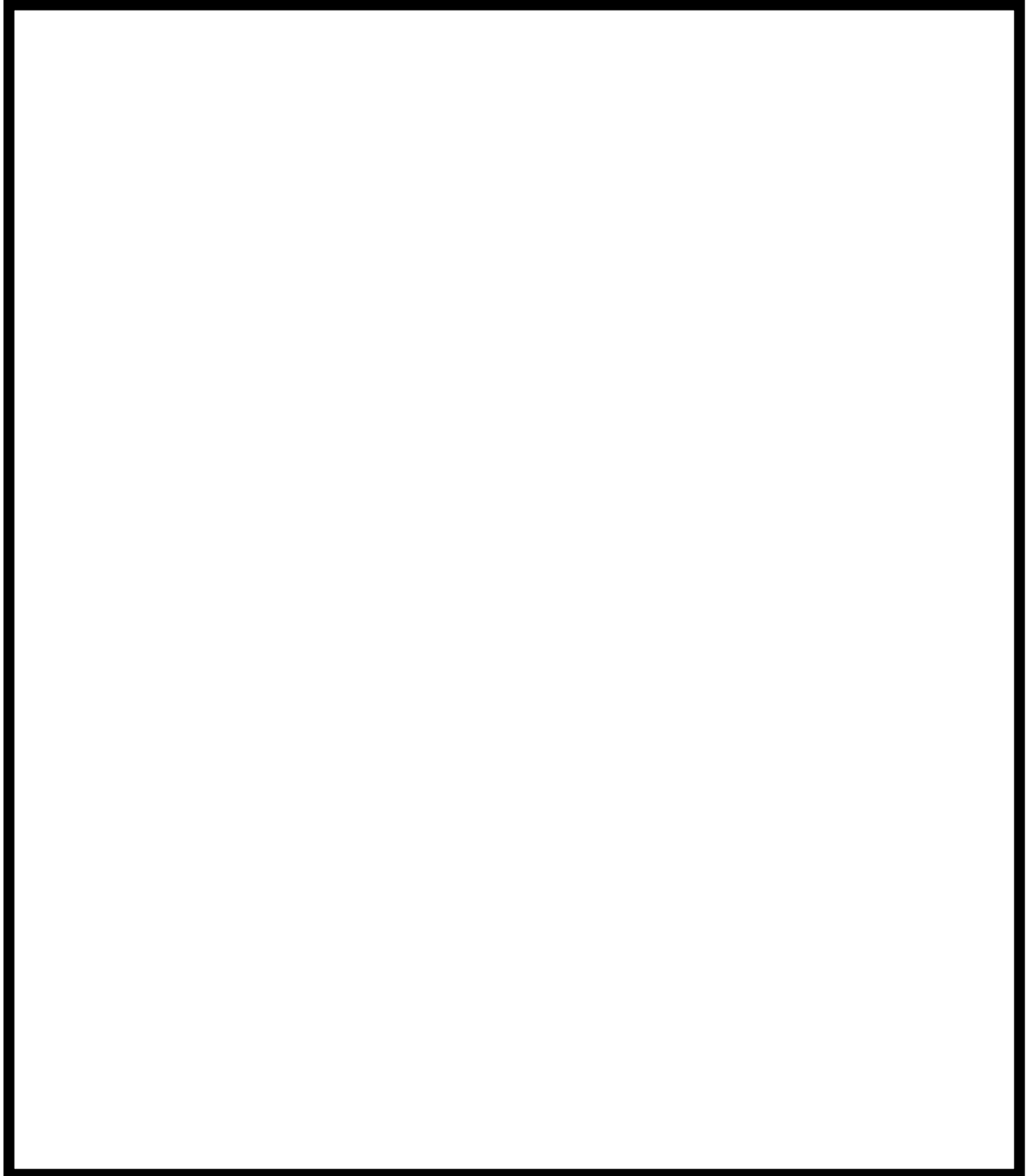
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4. I am (write your own name).

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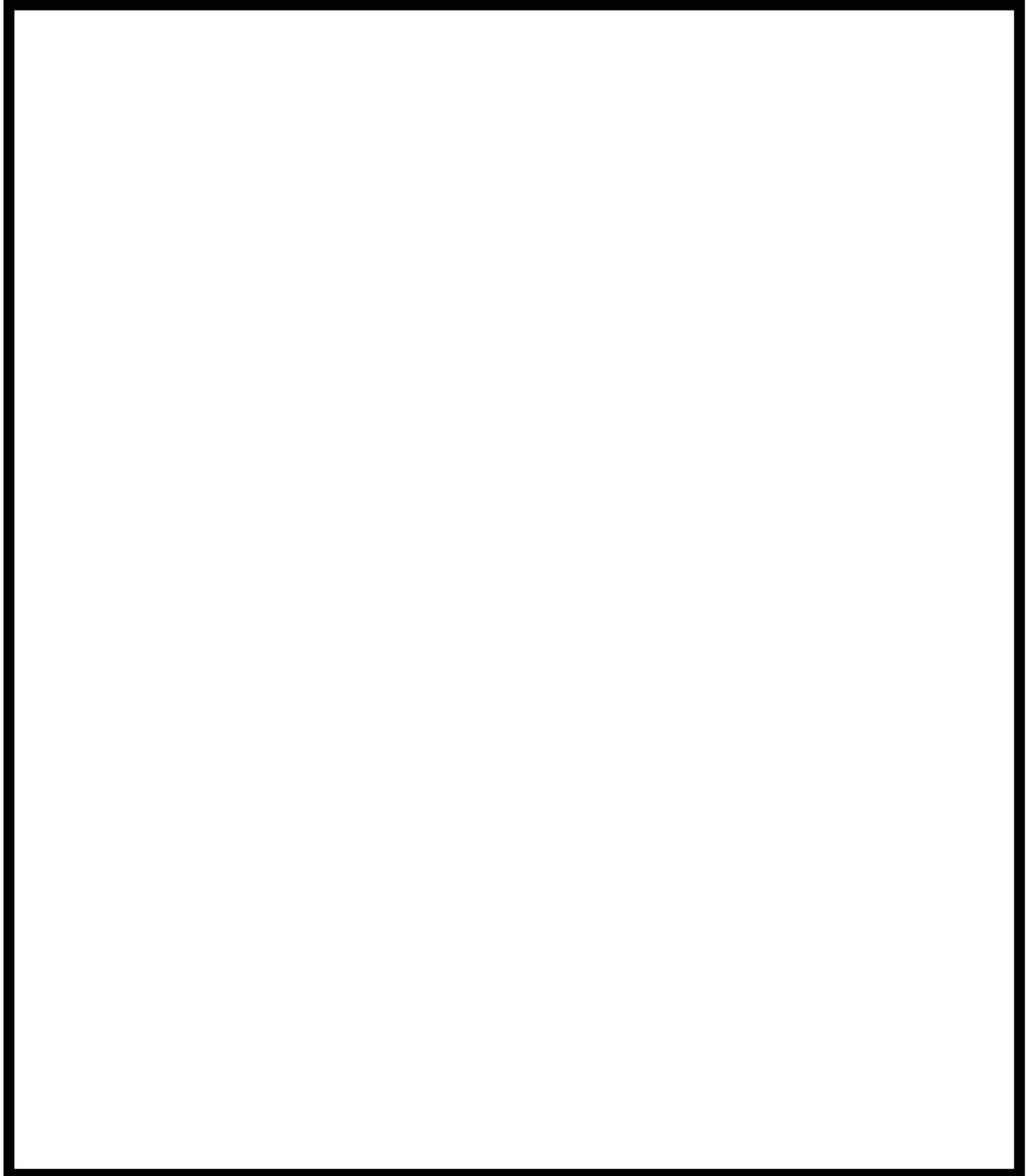
## Self-Portrait

Frida Kahlo painted a lot of portraits of herself. Sometimes she painted herself with her pets, with food, or with fun clothes. Draw a picture of yourself below with any animals or other fun things!



## Family Portrait

Frida Kahlo painted portraits of Mariana and members of her family. Draw a picture below of you and your family. Draw as many family members as you want!



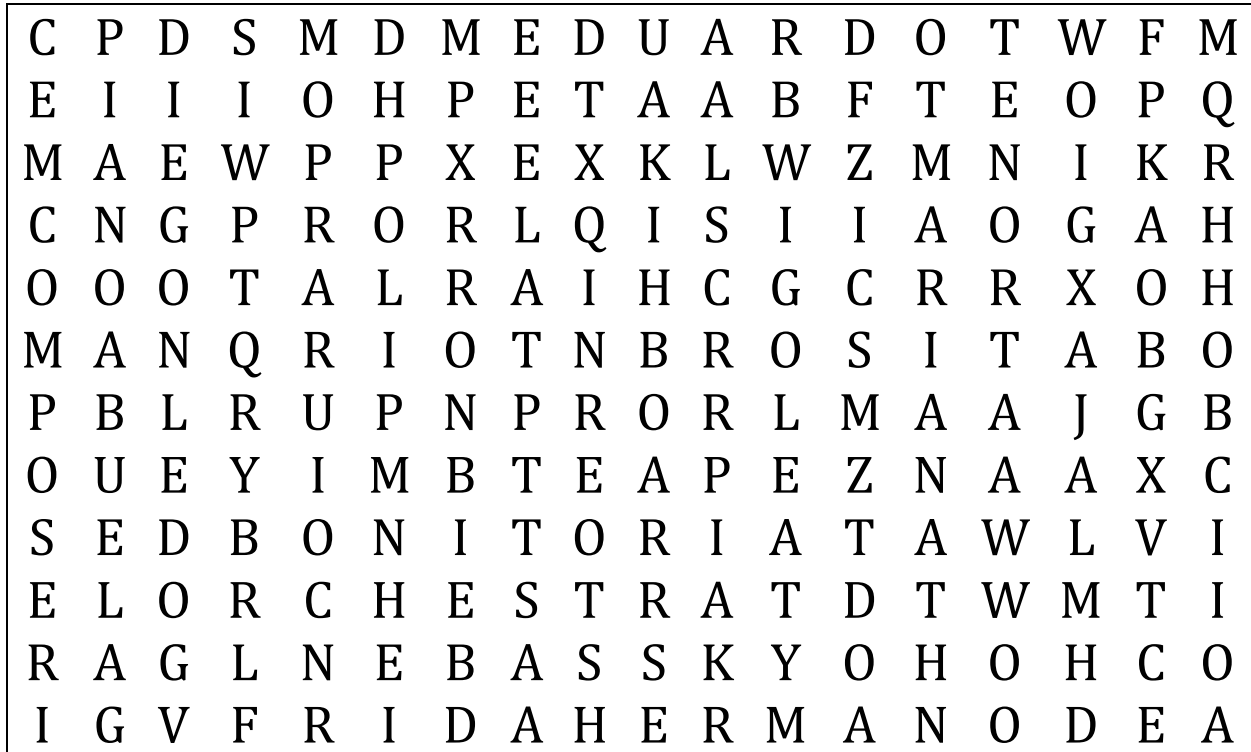








## Frida Kahlo Word Search



Find the words below in the puzzle. Words are hidden ⇒ ↓ and ↘.

ORCHESTRA

COMPOSER

PORTRAIT

LIBRETTO

MARIANA

EDUARDO

HERMANO

SOPRANO

ROSITA

BONITO

ALICIA

ABUELA

MEXICO

OPERA

PIANO

FRIDA

TENOR

DIEGO

PAINT

BASS

ALTO

## Discussion questions

1. What was your favorite part about watching the opera? Did you like the music, the singing, the costumes or something else?
2. Who is your favorite character from the opera? What do you like about that character?
3. Frida Kahlo had lots of pets. What pets do you have? How do your pets make you feel?
4. Why do you think Mariana was scared to meet Frida? Do you think Mariana was brave?
5. Frida painted pictures to help her feel better when she was sick. What do you do to feel better when you are sick? How about when you are sad?