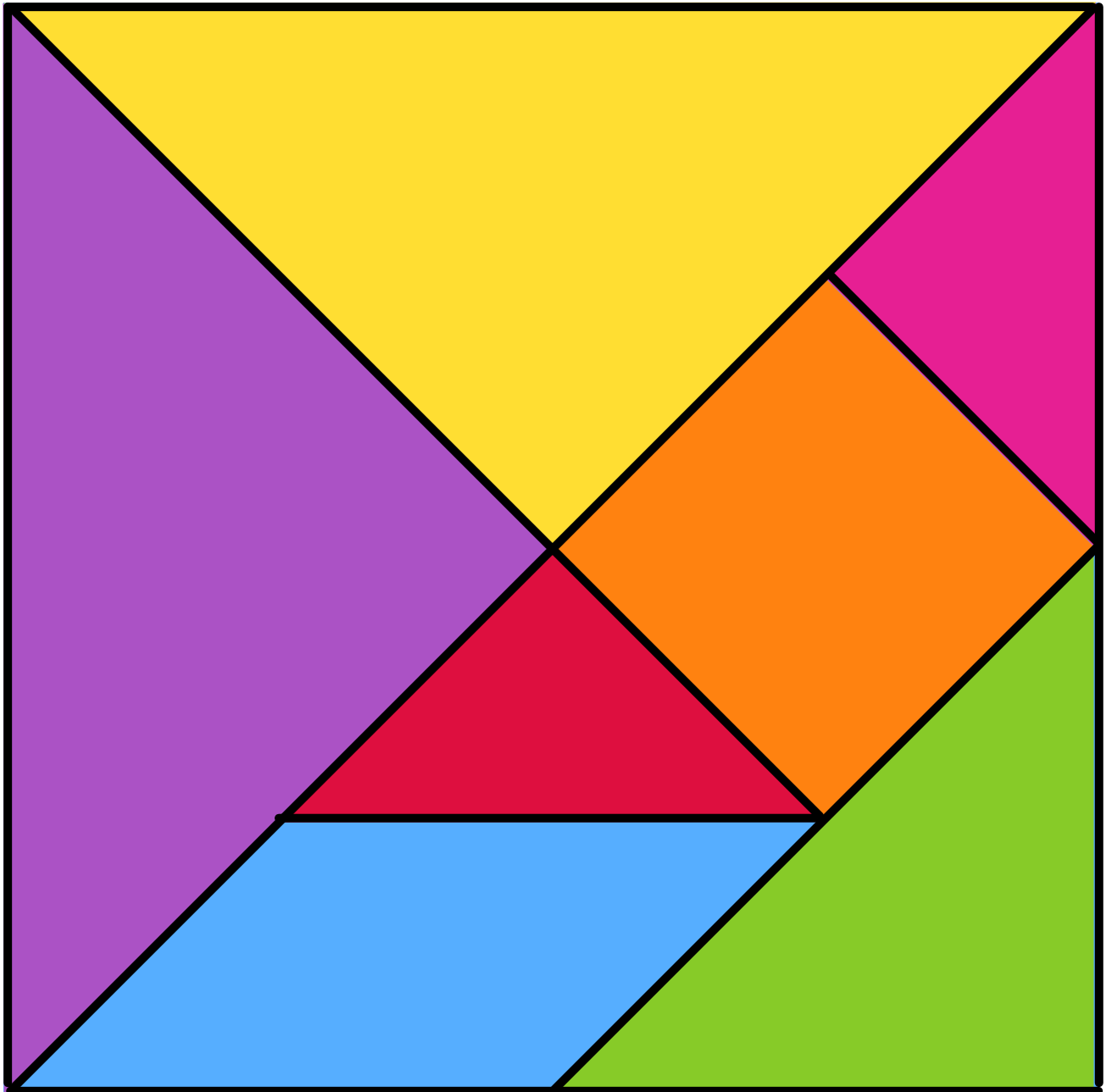


Tangram Mystery Challenge

A tangram is a type of puzzle created hundreds of years ago in China and made up of 7 shapes that form a large square. While most puzzles have only one way to put them together, there are endless ways to arrange your tangram shapes to make different pictures.

To solve the Tangram Mystery Challenge, print the tangram set on this page and cut apart the shapes. Then, begin reading the story. When you come to a tangram picture, you must figure out how to make that picture with your 7 shapes before moving on in the story and solving the mystery. (If you get stuck, there is an answer key at the end.) Good luck!



Your mystery begins here...

You've been at your favorite place, the public library, all afternoon when you suddenly notice the sun is beginning to set. Uh-oh, your family will be worried if you're not home soon. The new house you moved into last month is not far from town, but it sits on the edge of a lake at the end of a long, dirt road surrounded by dense forest. It gets dark fast on your road, and you don't have a flashlight with you. Hastily, you check out your books and put them in your backpack, and with a quick wave good-bye to your favorite librarian, you head out the door. Once outside, you realize it's much later than you'd thought. Walking quickly through the orange and yellow glow of the sunset, you soon turn onto your road and squint your eyes as you try to make out your house at the end of the road. It's gotten so dark under the cover of the trees that you can't see very far in front of you.

In order to arrive home, you must make the picture below using all 7 shapes of your tangram set.

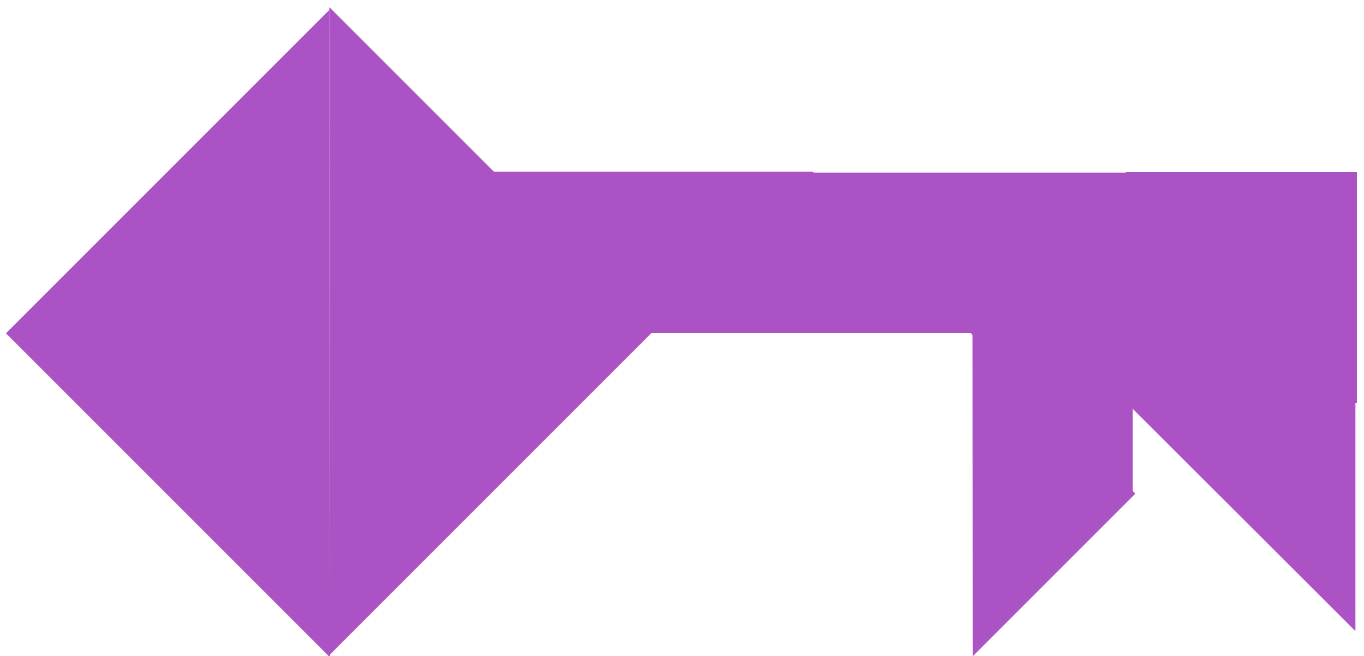
Picture #1



What a relief! Your house finally emerges out of the darkness at the end of the road, and you bound eagerly up the front steps. But strangely, when you turn the knob, the door doesn't open. Your family always leaves the door unlocked when they know you are coming home soon, and you didn't even think to bring your key with you. You knock loudly and call out for someone to let you in, but no one answers. You make your way around the side of the house to try the back door, but that one is locked, too. Where could your family be, and how are you going to get inside? Then you remember that when you first moved in, your parents hid a spare key somewhere on the front porch. Now if only you could find that key...

In order to get into your house, you must make the picture below using all 7 shapes of your tangram set.

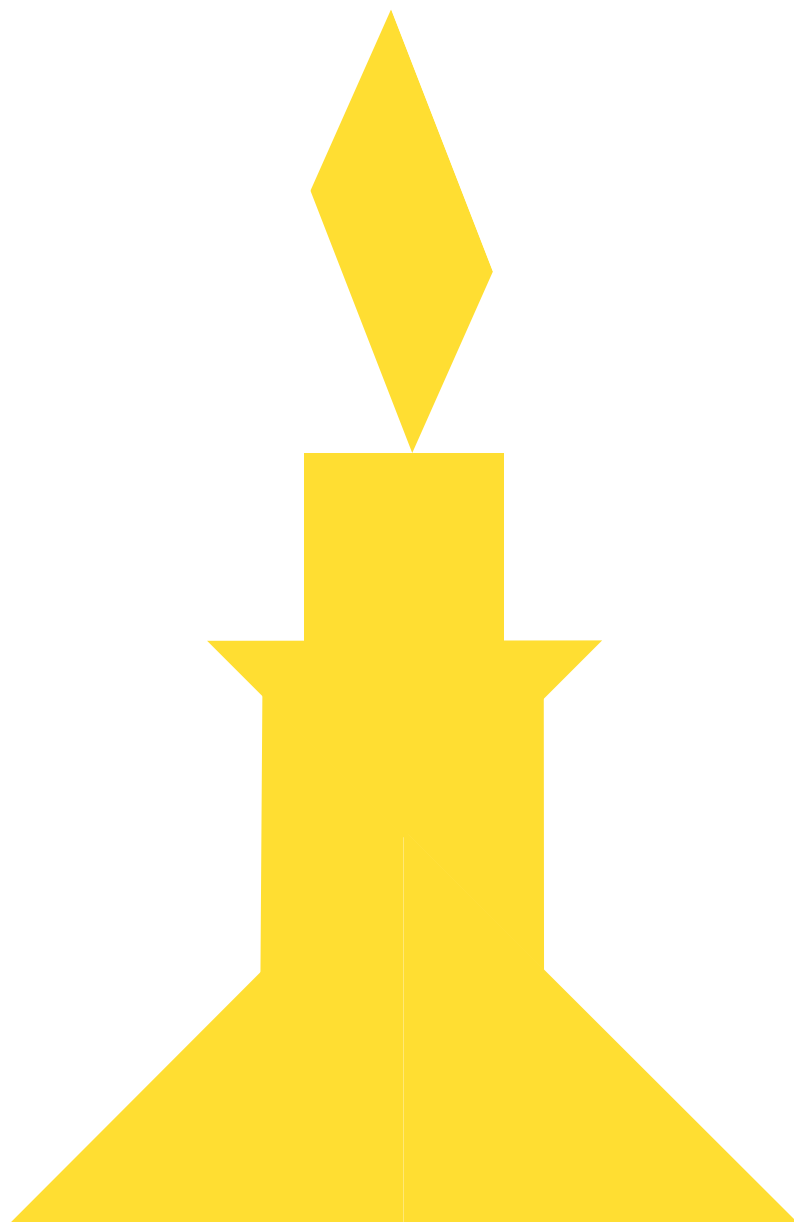
Picture #2



Aha! After checking under the doormat, flowerpot, and boot rack, you finally find the spare key behind the welcome sign next to the door. And you're in! But it's strangely dark inside the house, too, and when you flip the light switch, nothing happens. No one seems to be home, and even your dog, Daisy, doesn't come to greet you like usual. Shuffling slowly, with your arms stretched out in front of you so you don't bump into anything, you make your way into the kitchen to try the light there. But that one is out, as well. You're starting to feel that this is all just a little too spooky when you notice there's a note on the floor just inside the back door. Is it a note from your family that fell to the floor, or did someone else slide it under the door from outside? You pick up the note, but it's too dark to make out the words. If you had a flashlight or candle, maybe you could read the note and finally figure out what's going on here. You know your parents keep candles and flashlights in one of the kitchen drawers for when the power goes out. It's happened before in this house, and you seem to remember your parents saying something about an old circuit breaker. Now which drawer was it?

In order to read the note, you must make the picture below using all 7 shapes of your tangram set.

Picture #3



Finally, in the very last drawer you could possibly try, you find the candles and flashlights. Whew! With a gently glowing light on the table, you feel much better as you pick up the note. But that spooky feeling quickly returns. The message on the note doesn't make any sense. It says, "As soon as you read this, go to the island." You've been to the small island in the center of the lake several times since your family moved in, but you can't imagine why someone would want you to go there tonight. There's only one way to find out. You leave through the back door and carefully pick your way down the little path that leads to the pebbly beach at the edge of the lake. Fortunately, the trees are thinner here, and it's not nearly as dark as by the house. The setting sun makes golden ripples across the water and lights up one side of the small island. That's where you need to go to solve this mystery, and there's only one way to get there.

In order to reach the island, you must make the picture below using all 7 shapes of your tangram set.

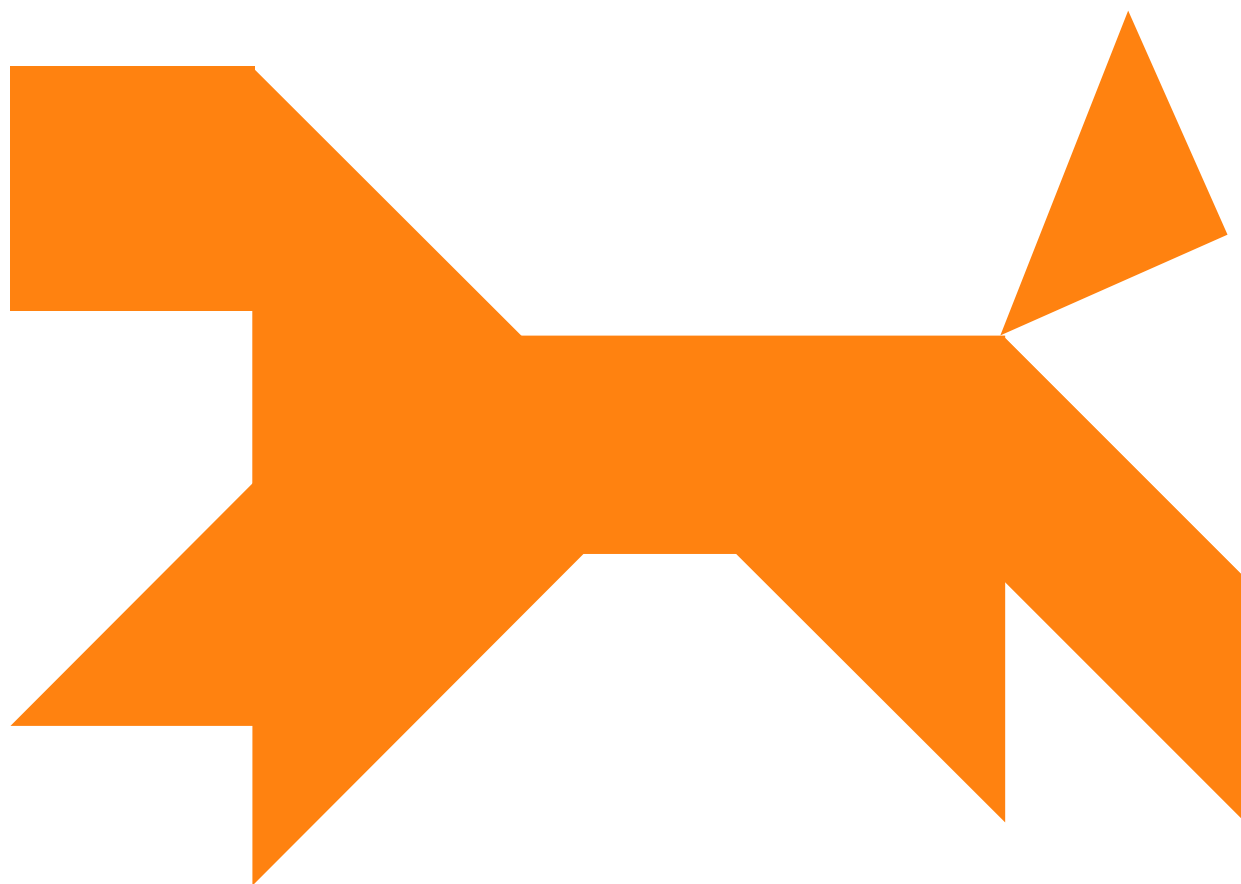
Picture #4



By the time you've rowed all the way to the island, your arms are sore. You've never had to do all the rowing by yourself before. As you climb out of the boat and take off your life jacket, another strange surprise awaits you. You hear a loud rustling in the bushes that sounds like it could be a large animal, but before you can grab an oar from the boat to defend yourself, Daisy bounds out of the bushes barking excitedly and jumps up to lick your face. Laughing with relief, you hug your dog and pat her head, but a puzzled frown quickly replaces your laughter. How could Daisy have gotten to the island alone? It's much too far for her to swim. Someone must have brought her here, which means someone else is on the island. You didn't see any other boats, so you're guessing they hid their boat on the other side of the island. Should you try to find out who it is, or should you get in the boat with Daisy and row back to the house to wait for your family? Before you can decide, Daisy barks and runs off through the bushes towards the center of the island. There's nothing you can do but follow and see where she goes.

In order to follow Daisy, you must make the picture below using all 7 shapes of your tangram set.

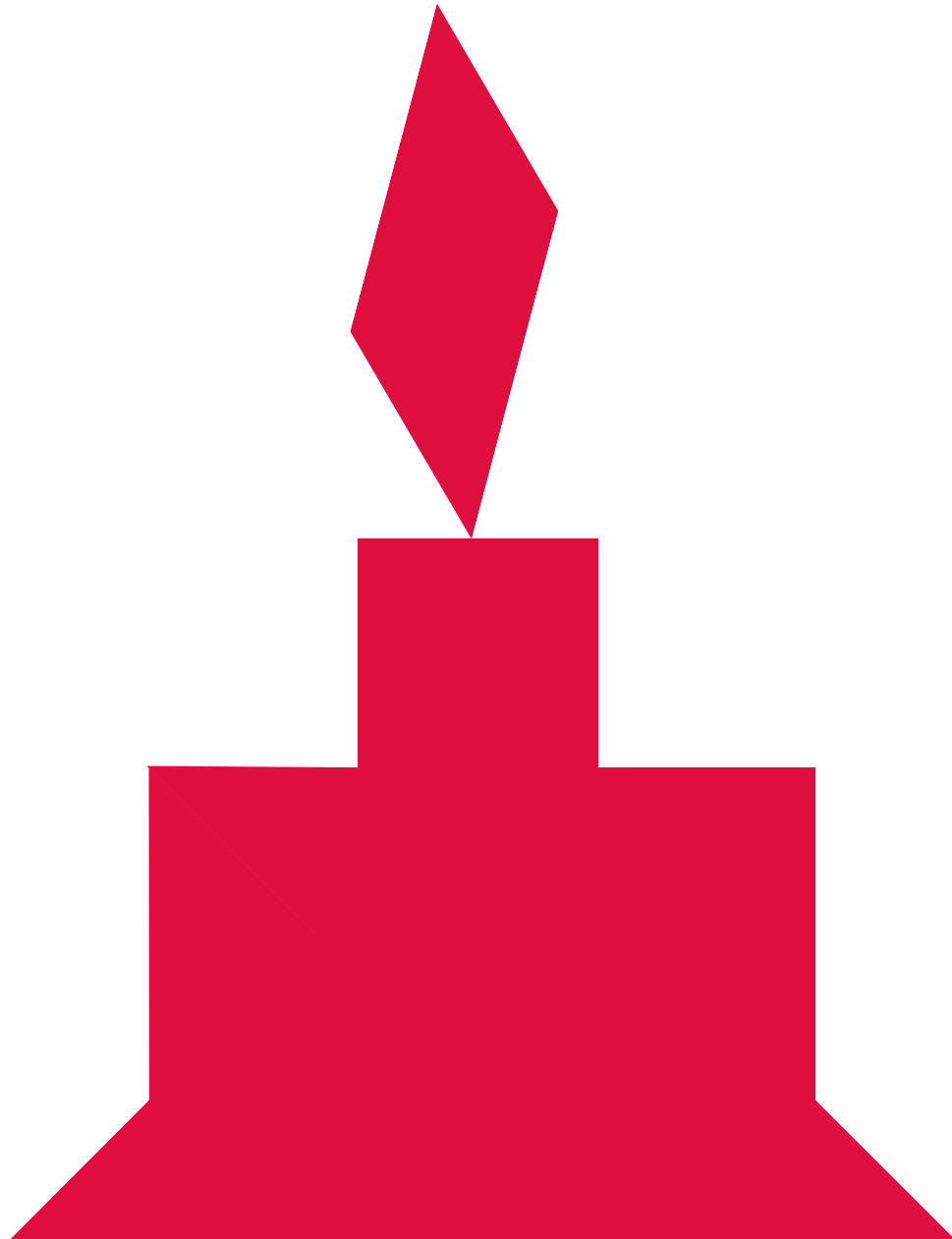
Picture #5



Following Daisy is not easy as she swerves around bushes and large rocks. Finally, you arrive at the edge of a small field. The sun is almost finished setting by now, and across the field, you can just make out some tall, shadowy figures surrounding a small, glowing light. Daisy looks up at you, barks loudly, and dashes off across the field, heading right towards the shadowy figures. Cautiously, you make your way across the field, and as you get closer to the glowing light, your ears pick up the quiet sound of singing. Just as you're wondering if you should get any closer, the shadowy figures move towards you and the singing gets louder. Suddenly, you can hear the words they are singing, and you know what the glow is. In fact, you're sure now that you can make out some of the faces of the shadowy figures, and you understand why Daisy ran towards them.

To solve the mystery, make the picture below using all 7 shapes of your tangram set.

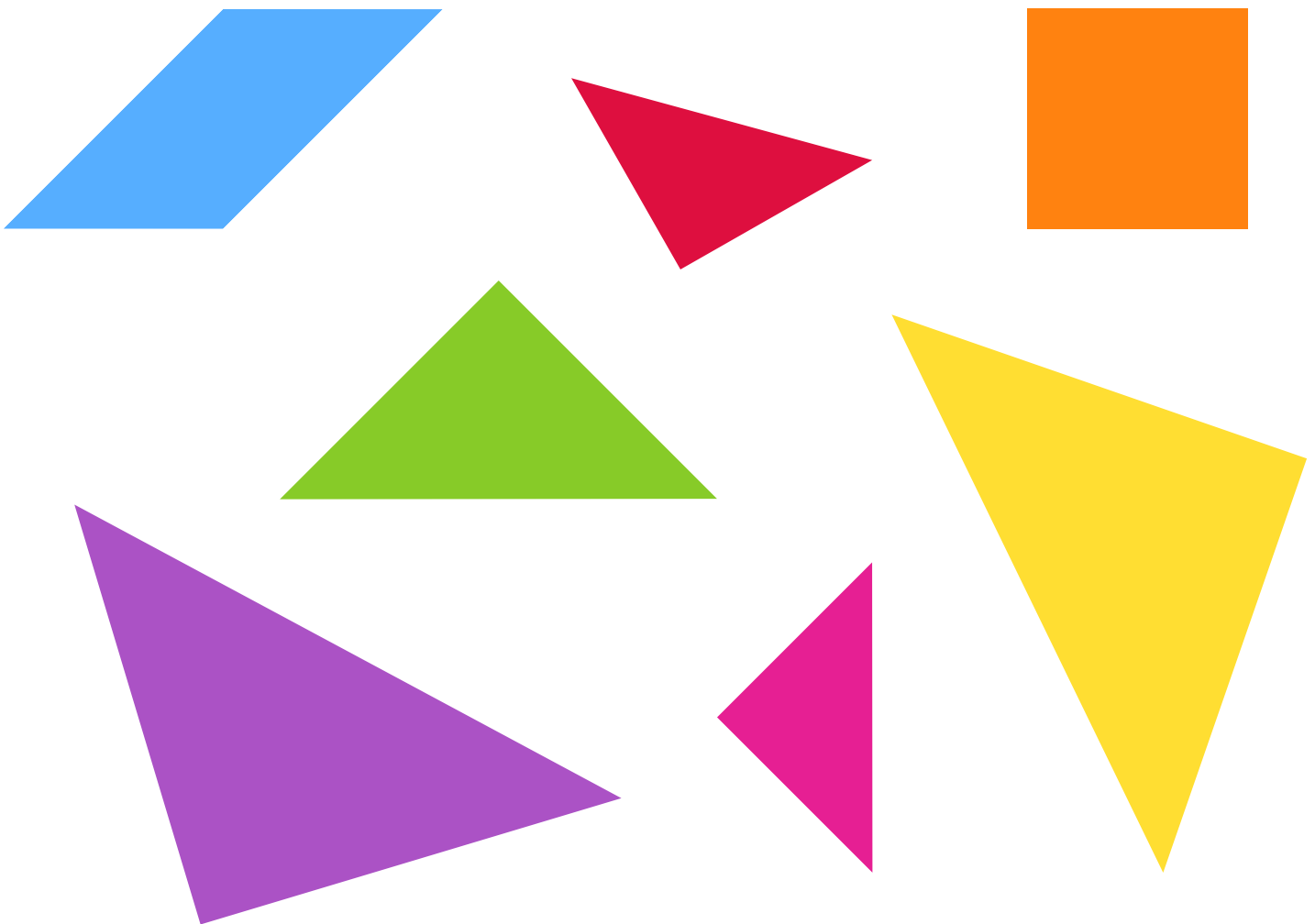
Picture #6



The glowing light is the candles on a cake, and the shadowy figures are all of your family members singing “Happy Birthday” to you! How could you have forgotten it was your birthday? But of course your family wouldn’t forget! It’s just like them to plan such a mysterious surprise. After you blow out the candles on the cake, everyone helps light lanterns and spread blankets on the ground. They unpack plates, napkins, food, and drinks from large baskets. Someone hands you a piece of cake on a plate with a fork and asks, “Were you surprised?”

Laughing, you take a large bite of cake and say, “Just a little.”

Congratulations! You've solved the Tangram Mystery Challenge. Now you can use your tangram set to tell your own story!

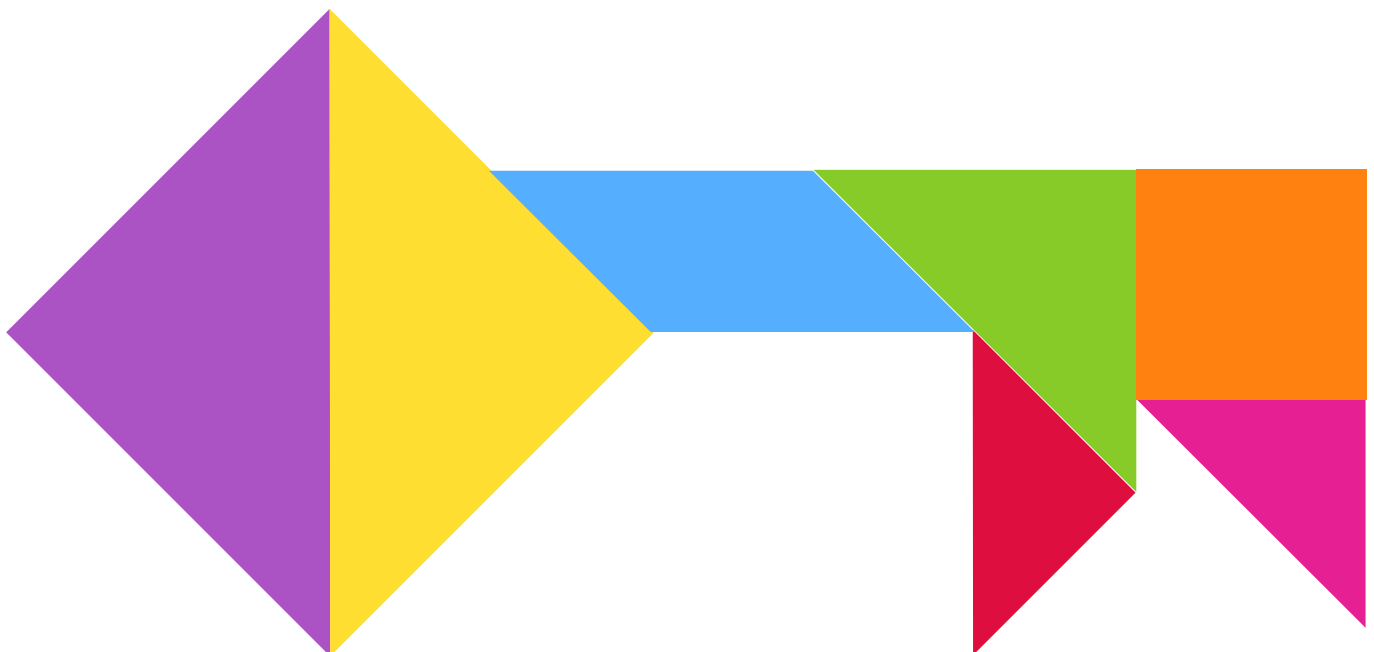


Answer Key

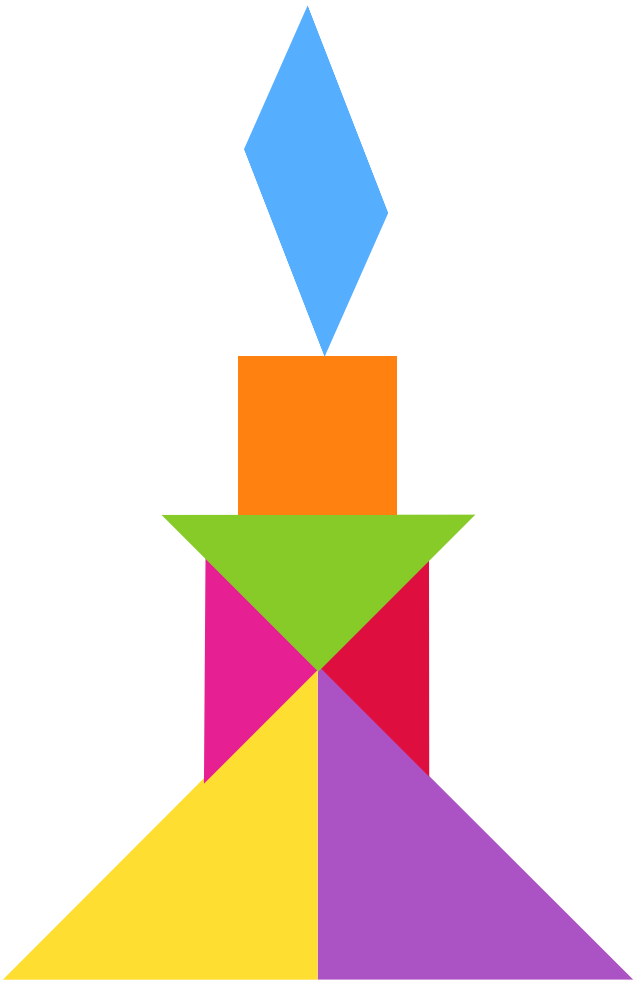
Picture #1



Picture #2



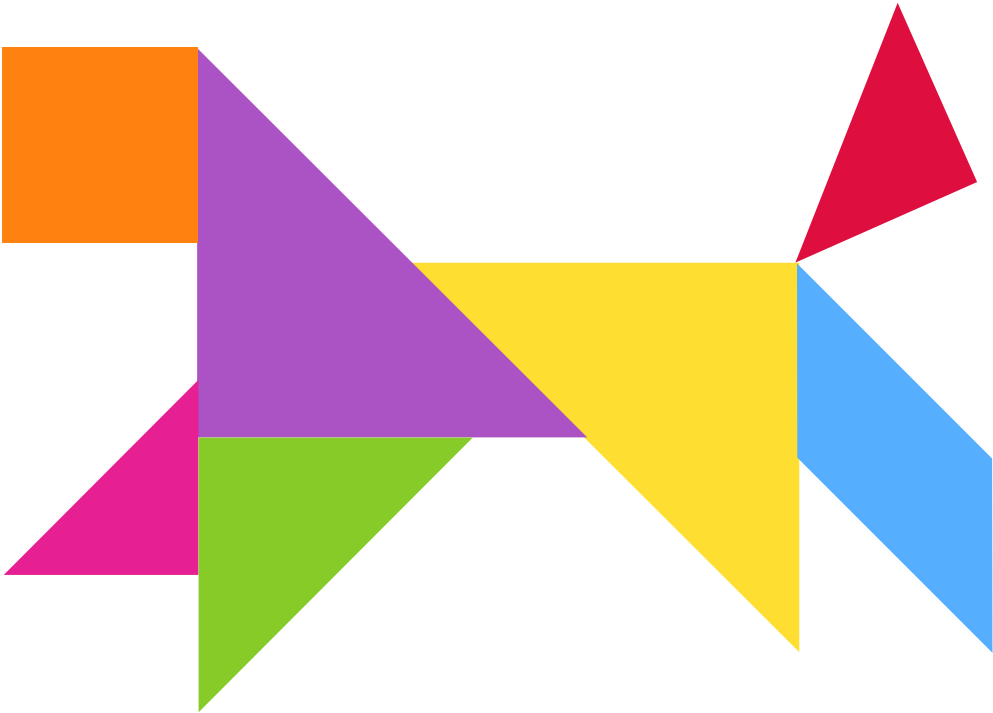
Picture #3



Picture #4



Picture #5



Picture #6

