

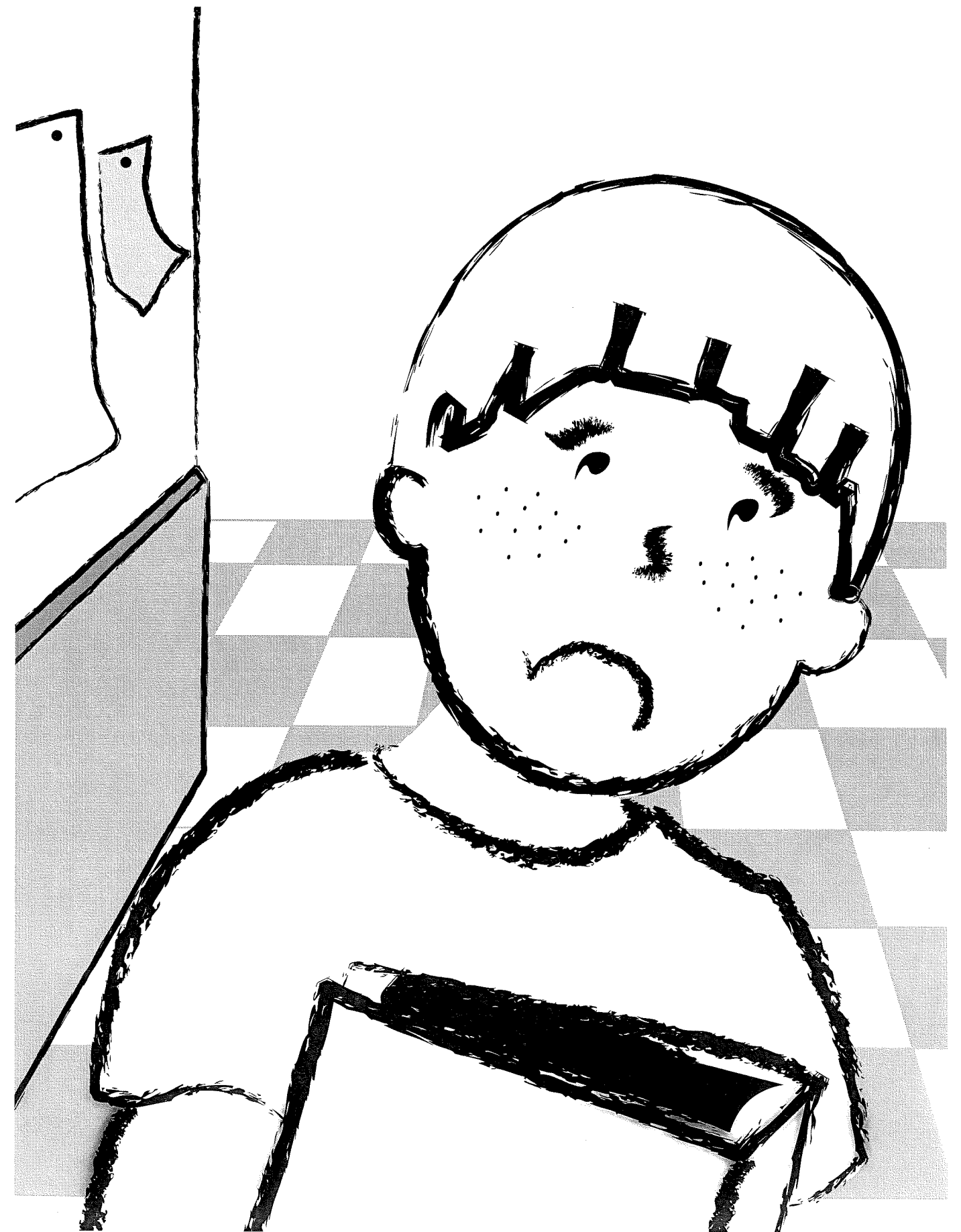
Tyler
Tames
the
Testing
Tiger

The Story...

The morning bell rang and Tyler walked very slowly down the hallway and into his third-grade classroom.

He was usually excited to return to school on Mondays after a weekend apart from his friends. But this Monday was different. Today, everyone in the third grade would begin taking the state achievement test. Tyler had four days of testing ahead of him and he wasn't looking forward to it.

How do you feel about taking tests?



For weeks now, Tyler's teacher, Mrs. Best, had been talking about this test and how important it was to do well on it. Students would be tested in math, reading and writing. Tyler was pretty good in math, but his reading was another story. He liked to listen to stories, but when he tried to read aloud he got nervous and missed lots of words. Tyler remembered from the sample tests Mrs. Best had given that the questions at the end of the story each had four possible answers to choose from. He had a hard time remembering what had happened in the story he had read, so he often got confused when trying to choose an answer. And to make things worse, sometimes he couldn't read or understand all the words in the questions.

When do you get nervous in school? - Partners

Which subject is your best?

Is there a subject that is harder for you than the others?

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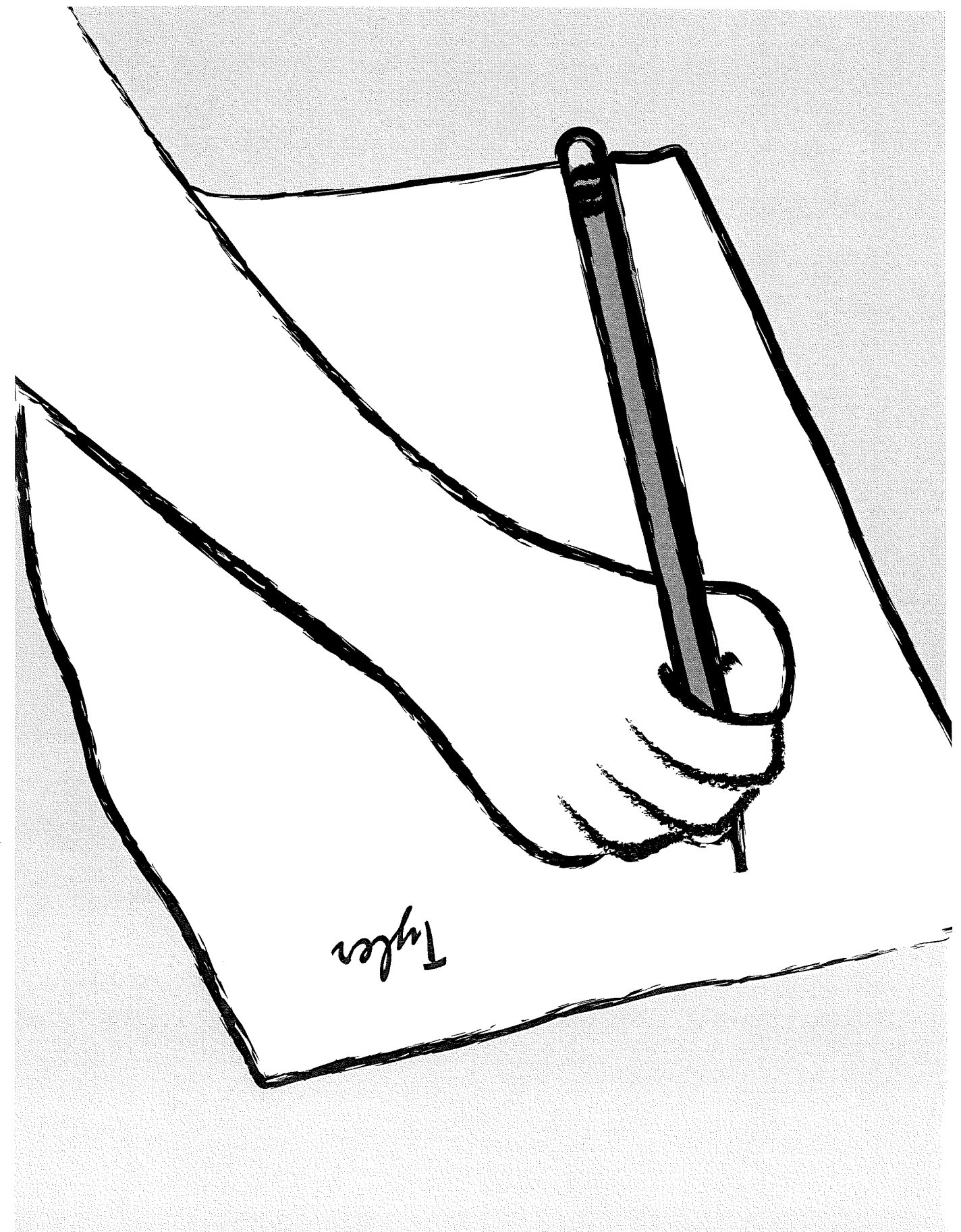
For weeks now, Tyler's teacher, Mrs. Best, had been talking about this test and how important it was for the school to do well on it. Students would be tested in math, reading and writing. Tyler was pretty good in math, but his reading was another story. He liked to hear stories, but when he tried to read aloud he got nervous and missed lots of words. Tyler remembered from the sample tests Mrs. Best had given that the questions at the end of the story had four possible answers to choose from. He had a hard time remembering what had happened in the story, he often got confused when trying to choose an answer. And to make things worse, sometimes he couldn't read or understand all the words in the questions.

Frank is my basketball coach. He teaches us how to shoot the basketball and how to shoot with each other as a team. We practice every day at school so we can be better players and teammates. Basketball is my favorite sport. I can practice shooting it with my friends. I have a basketball.

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And then there was the writing part of the test. On the writing test, Tyler would be given a topic to write about in a limited amount of time. They had practiced this in class many times; but when it came to putting it down on paper at test time, spelling all the words correctly, with the test timer ticking, his mind went blank and he couldn't think of anything to write.

*Did you ever have a time when your mind went "blank?"
What else might happen when someone gets very nervous?*

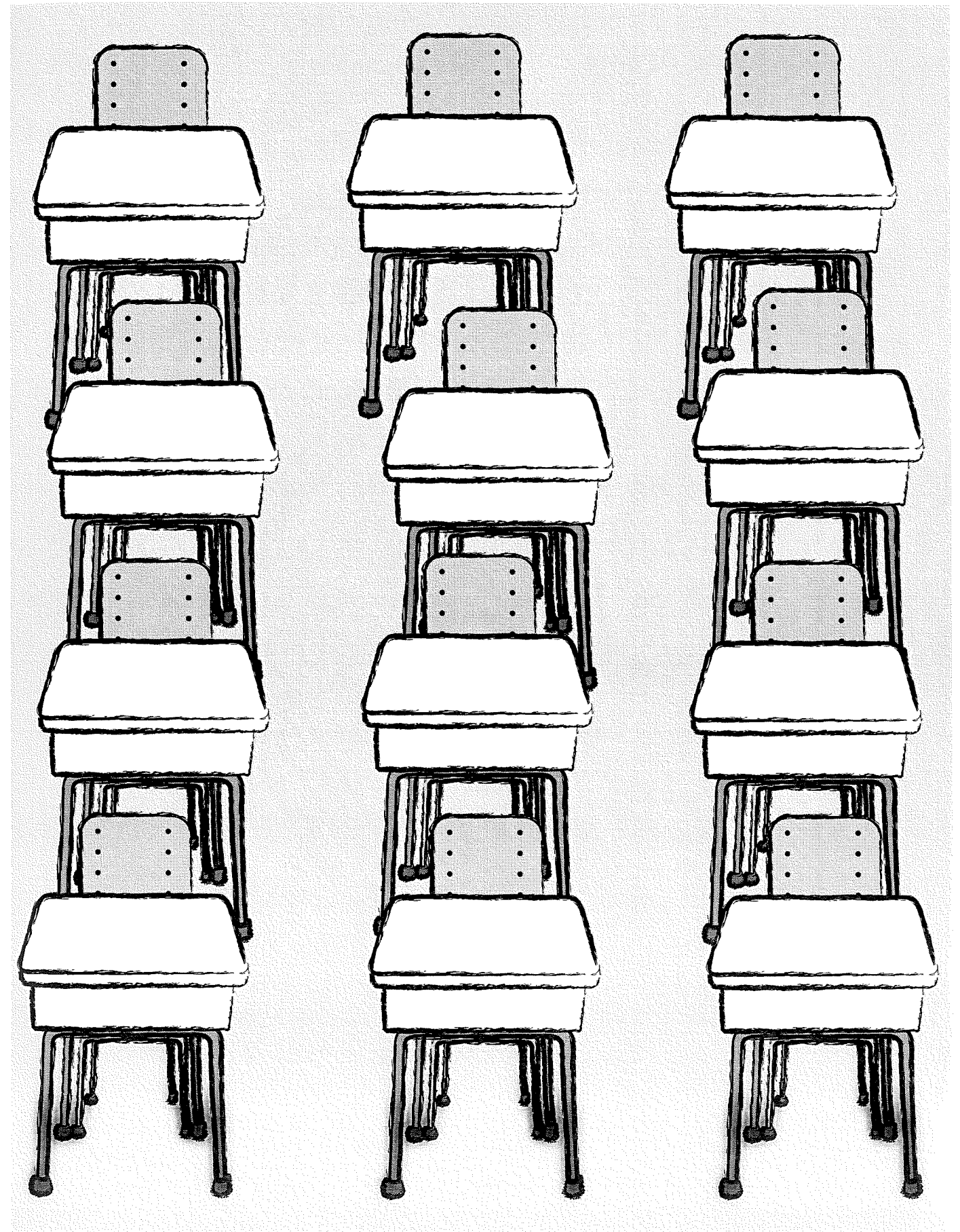


Mrs. Best greeted Tyler and the other children and hurried them to their desks with a tense smile—seeming less relaxed than usual. The classroom looked different too. All the desks were spread far apart instead of in the normal groups of four, so it took Tyler a minute or two to find his desk. As he took his seat and looked around the room, he noticed that the walls of the classroom were covered with large sheets of colored paper, which covered up the familiar bulletin boards, charts and displays. This didn't look like the classroom he remembered from last week.

Does your classroom look different on testing days?

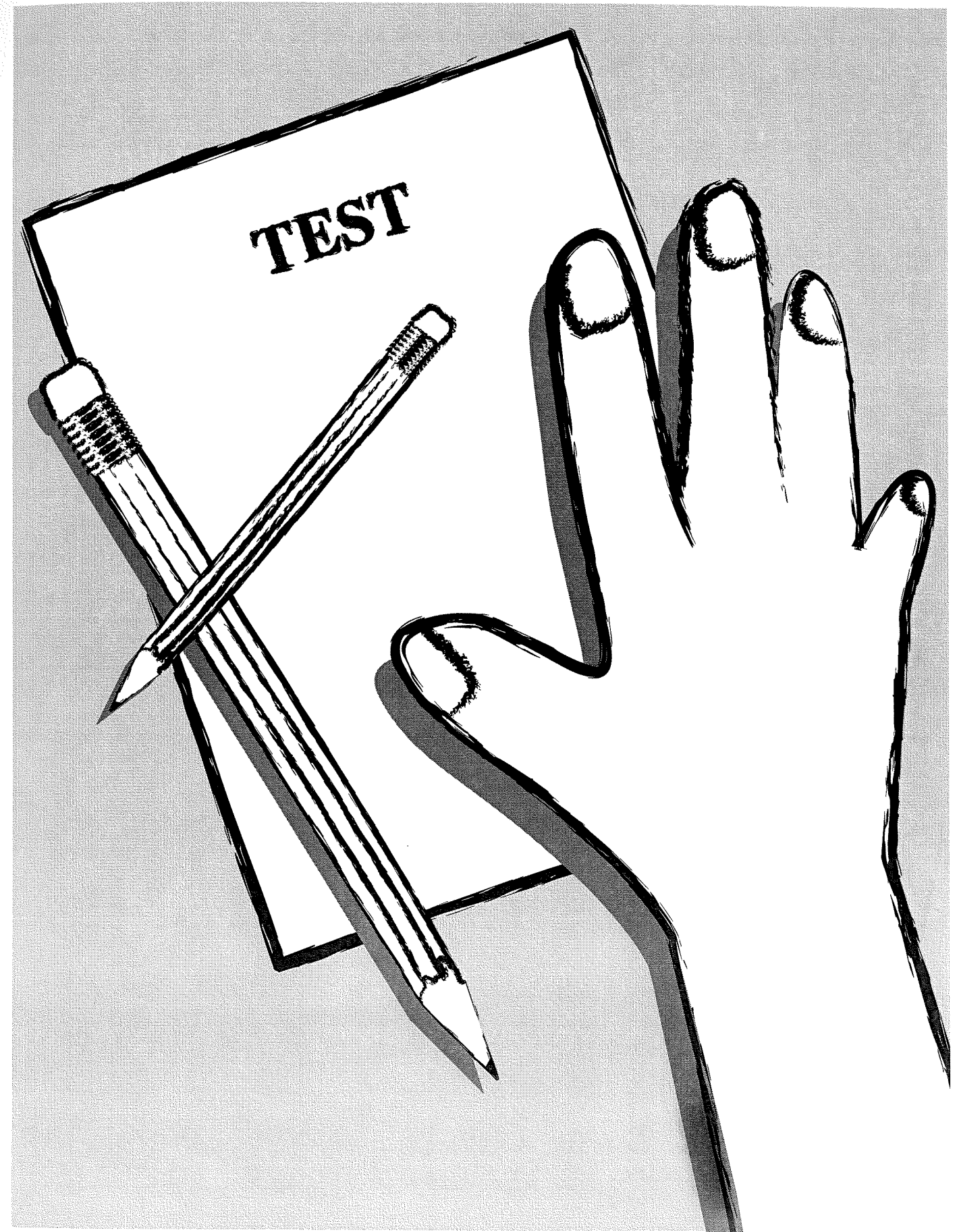
How?

Why?



Tyler's stomach tightened as Mrs. Best called the roll and had the students sharpen their two #2 pencils. There was also another grown-up in the class today. Mrs. Best introduced her as a monitor to help during testing. Students were told to raise their hands if they needed another pencil or had any emergency. Otherwise, they were warned not to talk or get out of their seats until the testing was over.

How can you tell that Tyler was nervous about the test?



After everyone was settled in their desks with pencils, cover sheets, and test booklets, Mrs. Best began the instructions for Part I of the test.

In a slow and serious voice, she told the students to relax and do their best.

Tyler thought, "How can I relax when everything seems so different, and my teacher is acting so weird? This state test must be awful." Tyler imagined the test booklet on his desk as a fearful tiger getting ready to devour him in one bite.

simile?

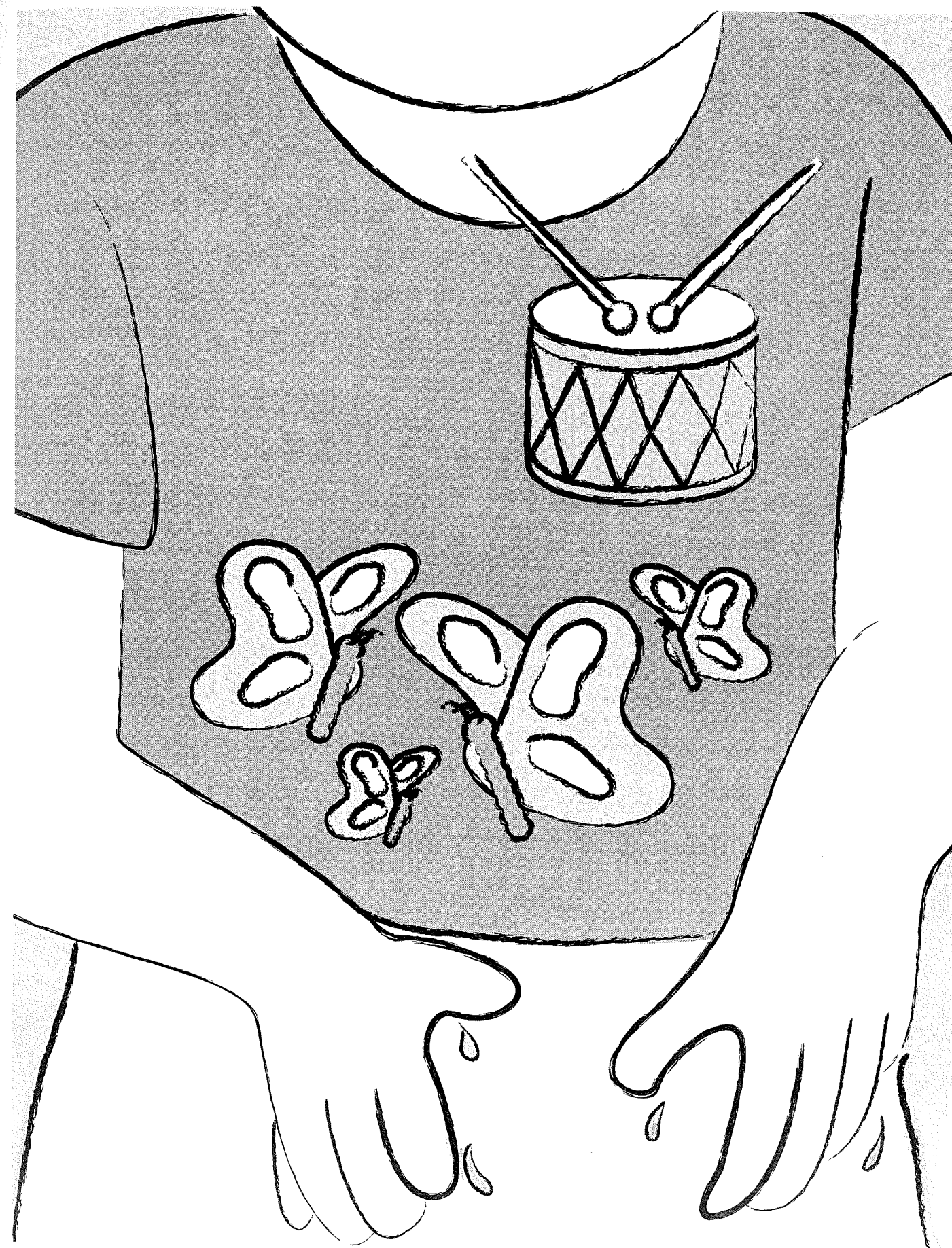
*When you're nervous, do you ever
imagine unpleasant things? - Partners*



Personification

His stomach flapped like a butterfly, his hands began to sweat, and his heart pounded like a drum. Then, suddenly he remembered something his basketball coach, Mr. Frank, had taught him at practice in the last few weeks.

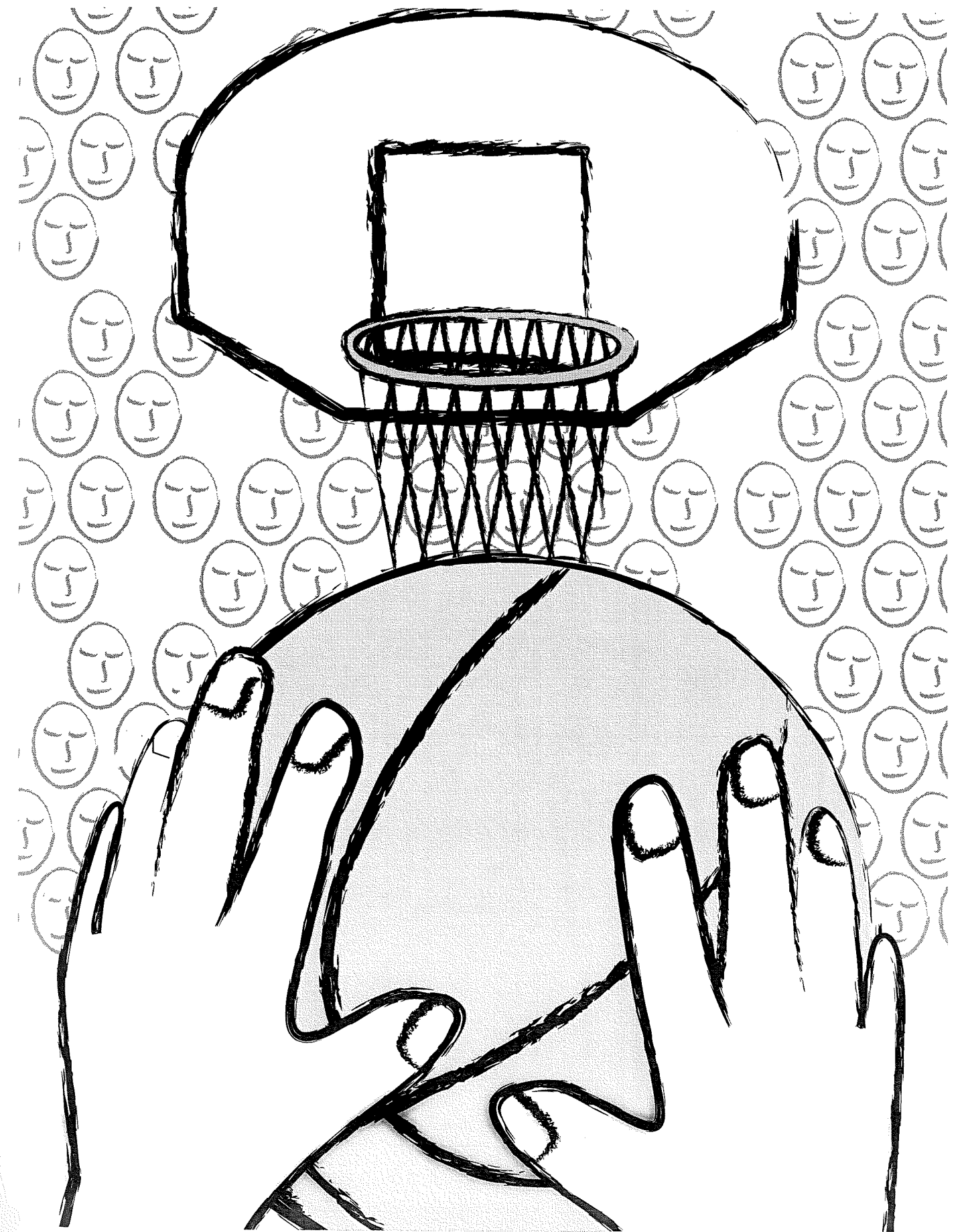
How does your body react to stress or nervousness?



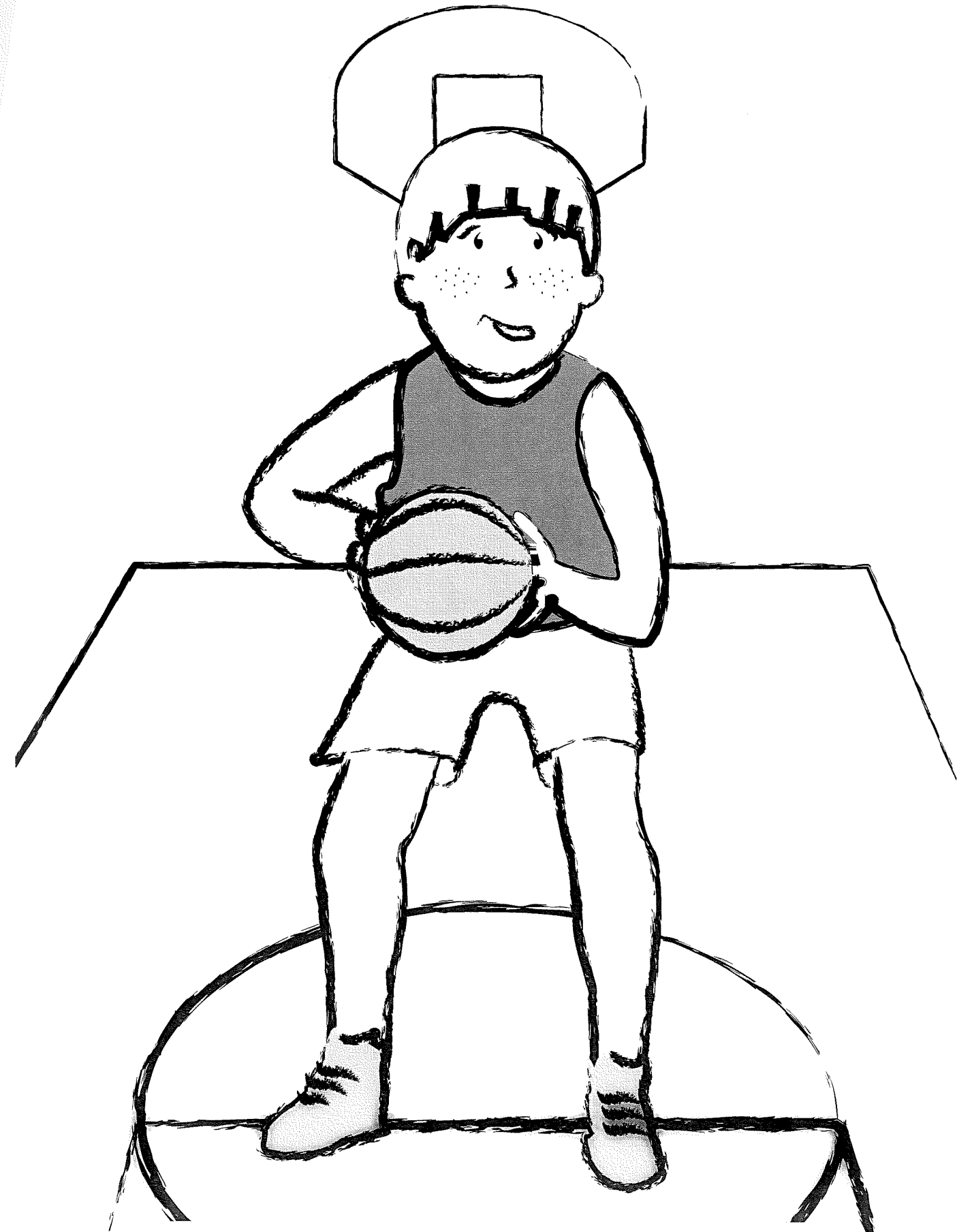
Tyler usually played well during practice, but at a game with a gym full of screaming spectators he often got nervous and couldn't concentrate on his foul shots. Mr. Frank's tips had helped him relax and perform better in basketball games, so maybe they could help with test-taking, too.

Mr. Frank had shared with Tyler his own technique for dealing with a case of shaky nerves during a basketball game. He suggested that Tyler **develop his own way to calm himself** before shooting foul shots and repeat the same thing every time he stepped up to the line to attempt a shot.

What helps you relax when you are nervous? Partners



In basketball, the process that seemed to help Tyler was to square off his feet, bounce the ball three times, take a deep breath, let it out, and shoot. If he missed the shot and had another one coming, Tyler had learned to go through his exact steps again. With this routine in place, his foul shooting was improving.



The second thing his coach taught him was to think positively about making each basketball shot. When Tyler approached the basket, he thought to himself, "I'm a good player. I'm gonna make this shot." Before Mr. Frank came along, Tyler thought about how ashamed he would feel if he missed the shot. He had worried that his parents and coaches would think he was a bad player.

Mr. Frank also reassured Tyler that nobody—even the great professional players—makes all of their shots. Everyone makes mistakes. From then on, Tyler tried not to be so hard on himself when he missed a shot or a pass. Getting stuck thinking about the shot he missed, would hurt his concentration on the next shot. He tried to put it out of his head and go on with the game.

Think of a positive message you can say to yourself when you need to calm down.



Tyler learned the hard way that preparing himself physically for a game also really helped improve his performance. One week, he had a game on Saturday morning at 9:00, and he had spent the night with a friend on Friday. Of course, they had stayed up too late playing video games. On Saturday morning, Tyler had to drag himself out of bed and got to the gym just in time for the game to start. He was too tired to play his very best.

How can you prepare better for tests so you won't be as nervous on test day?



In addition to thinking positively, following his shooting routine, and getting the proper amount of rest, Tyler learned the importance of **regular practice**. He was discouraged early in the season because he didn't play as well as some of the other boys. Mr. Frank encouraged him to spend extra time after school practicing. Tyler found that practice didn't make him a perfect player, but it sure did improve his performance and his confidence.

Tell about something you can do better after practicing regularly.

