

# Mikayla and Moe

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## Chapter 1

Mikayla's iguana shook his head yes when she asked if he was cold. She shut the window by his cage and he crawled out of its open door. While carefully curling his scaly toes around the bars of his reptile playpen, he climbed to the top with the ease of a limber ninja. He fixed his eyes on her and cocked his head, perplexed, as he often did when she was in the middle of a project.

A metallic rainbow of origami paper squares covered the carpet surrounding Mikayla and her floor desk. Sitting on the floor helped her think better. "Moe, this is the most complicated design I've ever tried! I need to connect all these triangular parts pointing in until it forms a circle. Then I should be able to flip the points to the outside so it converts to a star." Mikayla steadily slipped the folded corner of one triangle into the pocket of another, but when she tried attaching one more the whole thing fell apart. "Uggh!!" She was frustrated, but she wasn't giving up.

"Mikayla!" her dad called from downstairs. "Is your homework done?"

Mikayla whipped her head around to Moe. He covered his head with his right claw. "Yes, Dad!" Origami paper flew up like confetti as she looked around for her math workbook. She had to do eight word problems on multiplication and division. She hated division. Her third grade teacher Mrs. Smarkle kept telling her they were inverse operations. Mikayla didn't care that they were related. She much preferred multiplication. It made her think of origami. If she made 3 convertible stars using 6 paper

squares each, how much paper would she need in all? She decided to write that problem on the back of a purple metallic square to turn in for extra credit. Moe gave Mikayla a teacher-look. “Alright! I’ll do the actual problems.”

“Dinner will be ready in ten minutes!” Dad called. He didn’t like it if she was late. Sometimes it was hard to pull Mikayla away from a project.

Mikayla sped through her homework until she got to question 8 which asked her to write her own division word problem and solve it. Her shoulders slumped. She couldn’t think of anything. She would have to finish it after dinner. She ran down the stairs and shouted to Moe, “I’ll bring you up some salad!” He hoped it was his favorite—romaine lettuce with cucumbers and strawberries.

At the bottom of the steps Mikayla caught a whiff of fresh basil. Mmm! Her dad must’ve made his famous homemade pasta sauce! She loved it on spaghetti and meatballs. Then she turned the corner and froze—eyes wide—staring at the plates on the table. *What is that goopy, gloppy stuff?!* she thought to herself. There is no way I am eating *that!* Mikayla and her dad both liked to invent things, but his idea of inventing was creating weird concoctions in the kitchen and having her try them.

“What did you do at school today, Mikayla?” her dad asked.

Trying not to gag from the sight of the shloppy-glop on the plates, Mikayla moved toward her chair as slowly as a sloth, trying to delay the first fork-full as much as possible. “Mrs. Smarkle told us there is a special event coming up at school, but they’re announcing it tomorrow. She said to put on our creative thinking caps to get ready for it.”

“Well you’ve got enough creativity for a cap big enough to cover all those bouncy curls,” he joked. She got her brown tightly curled hair from him.

## Chapter 2

Mrs. Smarkle’s words entered her brain again. Mikayla said them out loud. “Inverse operations.” She bit her lip. Then suddenly her eyes lit up. “Wait a minute! If division undoes multiplication, then I can use my extra credit problem *backwards*.” She rewrote her purple foil square problem.

Mikayla used 18 squares of paper for 3 origami stars. How many squares of paper did she use in each star?

$$18 \div 3 = ? \quad \text{If } 3 \times 6 = 18, \text{ then } 18 \div 3 = 6$$

Yes! Her homework was done. Back to the paper star! Mikayla thought about using tape to stick her star together, but that’s not how real origami worked. She carefully creased each side of the triangles and as steadily as she could hold them, precisely stuck them into each neighboring pocket. She held her breath for a moment. So far so good! She gently picked up the circle, slowly flipped each of the six points outward, and held it out for Moe to see. A beautiful rainbow star! He clapped his claws as best as an iguana could clap. She hung the star on her hat stand, collected each leaf of origami paper from the floor, and stacked them neatly inside her wooden unicorn box.

“Moe, I’m stumped! The Invent-a-thon is in one week and I can’t bend my origami robot into the right shape. How can I program a robot that won’t stand up?” Moe tilted his head to the other side and sighed. He didn’t know how to fold paper or write computer code. Those weren’t on a reptile’s list of special talents. He was a good swimmer, though, and was not afraid of heights.

Mikayla didn’t have a T.V. Not because her family couldn’t afford one, but because her dad got sick of it and decided to get rid of it. He had a new goal of spending less time sitting on the couch and more time going bike riding. Mikayla didn’t mind. She liked going on bike rides with her dad, especially since she didn’t need training wheels anymore. Not watching TV gave her more time to invent things. Like foldable robots.