

Frida was born in Coyoacán, Mexico, in 1907, to a Mexican mother and a German father.

She grew up in the Casa Azul, a beautiful 'Blue House' designed by her father.

Matilde Calderón y Gonzalez

Matilde was beautiful and elegant, but very strict, and was probably suffering from depression.

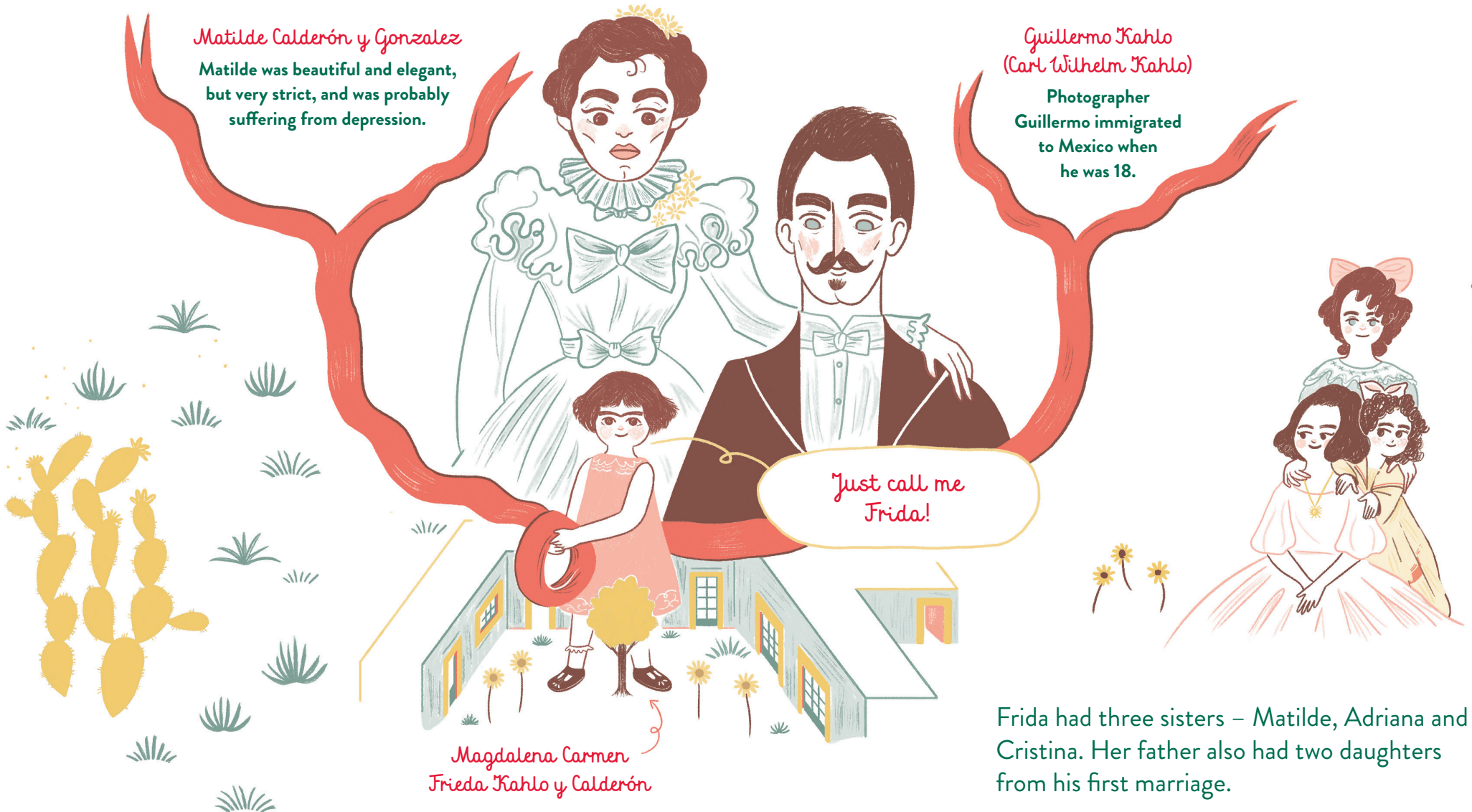
*Guillermo Kahlo
(Carl Wilhelm Kahlo)*

Photographer
Guillermo immigrated to Mexico when he was 18.

*Just call me
Frida!*

*Magdalena Carmen
Frieda Kahlo y Calderón*

Frida had three sisters – Matilde, Adriana and Cristina. Her father also had two daughters from his first marriage.



Frida enjoyed learning about anatomy, biology and zoology. She wanted to study medicine and become a doctor. But tragedy was about to interfere with her plans again.

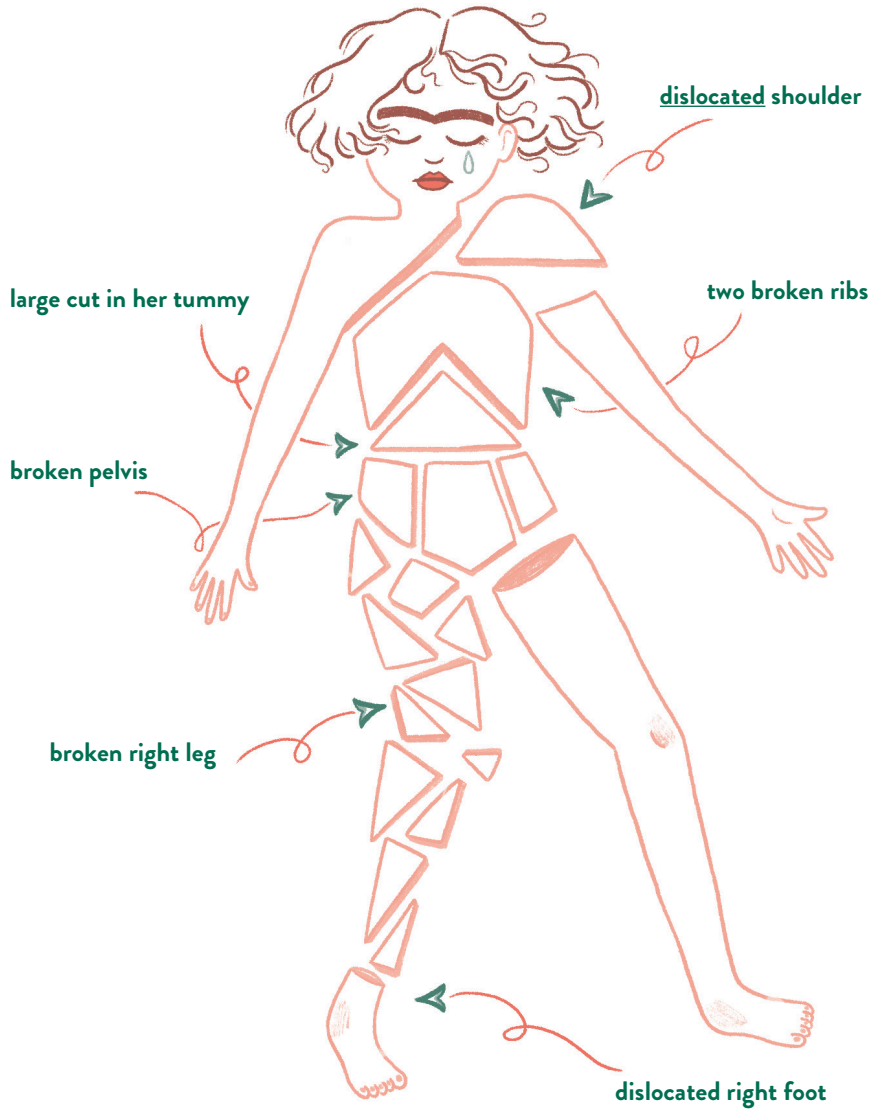
The Accident, 17 September 1925

*"I sat down at the side next to the handrail...
A moment or two later, the bus collided with a tram.*

It injured everyone. Me most of all..."



Frida's entire body was broken.



Several people had been killed by the accident, and the doctors did not think Frida would make it.



Everyone was amazed when Frida began to recover. But her life would never be the same again.

But things didn't go smoothly for long. The couple moved to San Francisco, in the USA, where Diego was hired to paint a mural. He loved being there, but Frida felt lonely. Diego was always at parties and meetings, while she found it hard to make friends.

I don't much like the gringos.
They're boring and they all
have faces like unbaked rolls.



In San Francisco, Frida faced tragedy again, when her first pregnancy ended. Her body had been damaged so much in the bus accident, doctors told her she would probably never be able to have a baby. Frida was heartbroken.



Frida was pleased when Diego had to return to Mexico for work. She loved being back among the country's wonderful sights, sounds and smells.

They began to build a brilliant new house, but before long Diego returned to the USA – this time to New York. Frida didn't want to stay in Mexico alone, so she went with him.

Diego loved New York, but once again Frida was homesick and unhappy. She created an unflattering collage of the city, showing everything she hated about it...



"Americans live as if in an enormous chicken coop that is dirty and uncomfortable..."

...the rich live in luxury right next to homelessness and poverty...

...people pretend to be something they are not...

...the only colour is my Mexican costumes..."



Diego's next mural was in Detroit – a city of factories and machines. It was a much poorer area of the USA, but Frida and Diego found it more welcoming than New York.

However, while Diego painted one of his greatest masterpieces, Frida was recovering from losing another baby.

This time she painted like never before. Her self-portraits showed the terrible thoughts and images swirling around in her head. She was not afraid to paint her heartbreak and pain.

Even Diego was astonished. He said, “No woman had ever put as much poetic sorrow on canvas as Frida.”



In 1946, the Mexican Ministry of Education awarded Frida a prize for one of her paintings. Although Frida was often in a lot of pain, she came to the prize ceremony, and continued to paint.

In *Tree of Hope* she painted two different versions of herself: Frida on the outside, lying in a hospital bed at the edge of a bottomless pit...



...and Frida on the inside, dressed in beautiful clothes, sitting up and holding a banner that says 'Tree of Hope Stand Firm'.

The painting shows that even in the most difficult times, she could find courage inside.

I never lost my spirit. I always spent my time painting.

Since her death, Frida has become even more famous. Today her paintings sell for millions, and copies hang in homes in Mexico and all around the world. Books and films celebrate her life.

Frida made small paintings with big themes. They show us that sadness, pain and loss are a normal part of life. But they also show how the courage, hope and passion we have inside can help us to cope, whatever life throws at us.

One of Frida's last paintings was of colourful watermelons, with her final message to the world – "Live life".



TIMELINE

1907

Magdalena Carmen Frieda Kahlo y Calderón is born in Coyoacán, Mexico, on 6 July. She is known as 'Frida'.

1910

The Mexican Revolution begins. It has such an impact on young Frida that she later claims 1910 as the year of her birth.

1914

Frida catches polio and has to spend the next nine months in bed to recover.



1922

Frida enrolls in the National Preparatory School, where she enjoys studying anatomy, biology and zoology.



1925

On 17 September, Frida is in a bus accident in Mexico City. She is badly injured and, once again, has to spend months in bed. She seems to make a full recovery...

1926

...but a year later, the doctors discover problems with her spine, and she is bedbound for another nine months. Frida begins to paint to pass the time, creating her first self-portrait.



1927

Finally free from her cast, Frida joins the Mexican Communist Party.



1928

Frida meets the famous Mexican painter Diego Rivera. They marry the following year.



1930

The newlyweds move to San Francisco. Frida is unhappy and homesick.

1931

The couple return to Mexico for five months and begin work on a new house, though they soon return to the USA – this time to New York. Frida paints *My Dress Hangs There*.



1932

Frida and Diego move to Detroit.

1933

Frida and Diego finally return to Mexico and move into their new home.



1938

Frida holds her first solo exhibition, in New York's Levy Gallery, which is a great success!

1939

Frida paints *The Two Fridas*, one of her most well-known works. Frida and Diego divorce.



1940

After her divorce, Frida paints *Self-portrait with Cropped Hair* in response. She remarries Diego that same year, however, on the condition that she remains totally independent.

1943

Frida paints *Self-portrait with Monkeys* and becomes a professor of painting at the Mexican School of Painting and Sculpture.

1944

With her health getting worse, Frida is often forced to lie in bed, wearing a steel corset. She paints *The Broken Column* to show her pain.



1946

The Mexican Ministry of Education awards Frida a prize for *Moses*. She paints *Tree of Hope*.

1953

Frida holds her first solo exhibition in Mexico. She hosts the show from a bed at the centre of the gallery.



1954

Frida dies on 13 July, aged just 47.

Today

Frida Kahlo is remembered for her incredible self-portraits, colourful dress sense and her courage in the face of adversity.

