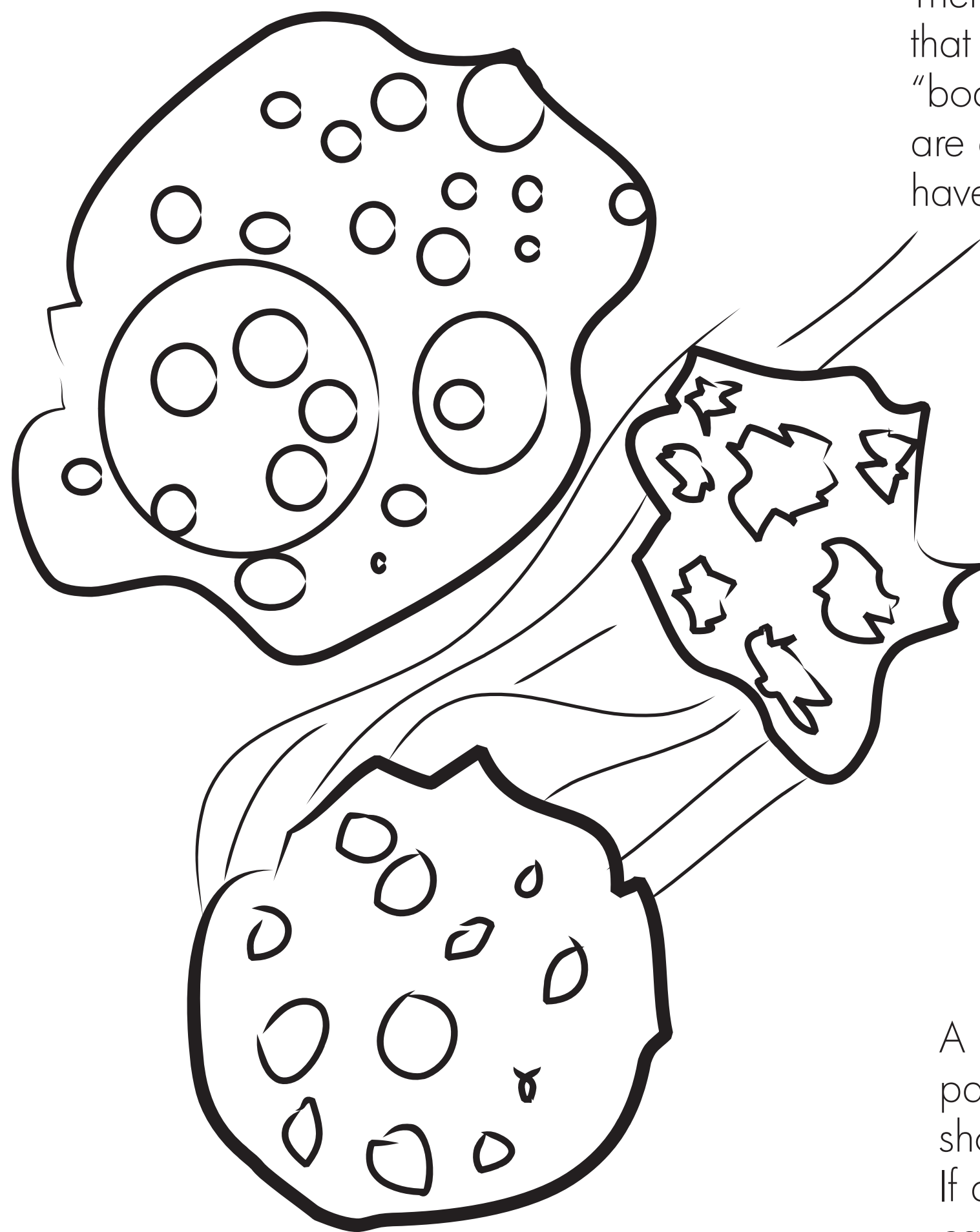




The Solar System

Asteroids, Meteors and Comets

There is a huge asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter that has millions of asteroids in it. Asteroids are small "bodies" that orbit a larger object in space, but they are different from the moons of a planet. Asteroids can have carbon, stone or metal in them.



A comet is a small object with an elliptical orbit that has collected ice and cosmic dust and other gases like helium, methane and hydrogen. As it passes near the sun and heats up, gasses and ice are disburshed and it reflects solar radiation, producing its "tail." The most famous comet in the night sky is Haley's Comet, which orbits once every 78 years.

A meteor is a particle of space dust or rock that passes the Earth's atmosphere in the sky. Meteor showers occur when many pass at the same time. If a meteor survives and impacts Earth, it is called a meteorite. Most people commonly refer to them as falling stars.

The last time Haley's Comet passed by the Earth was 1986.

What year will Haley's Comet come by again? How old will you be?

