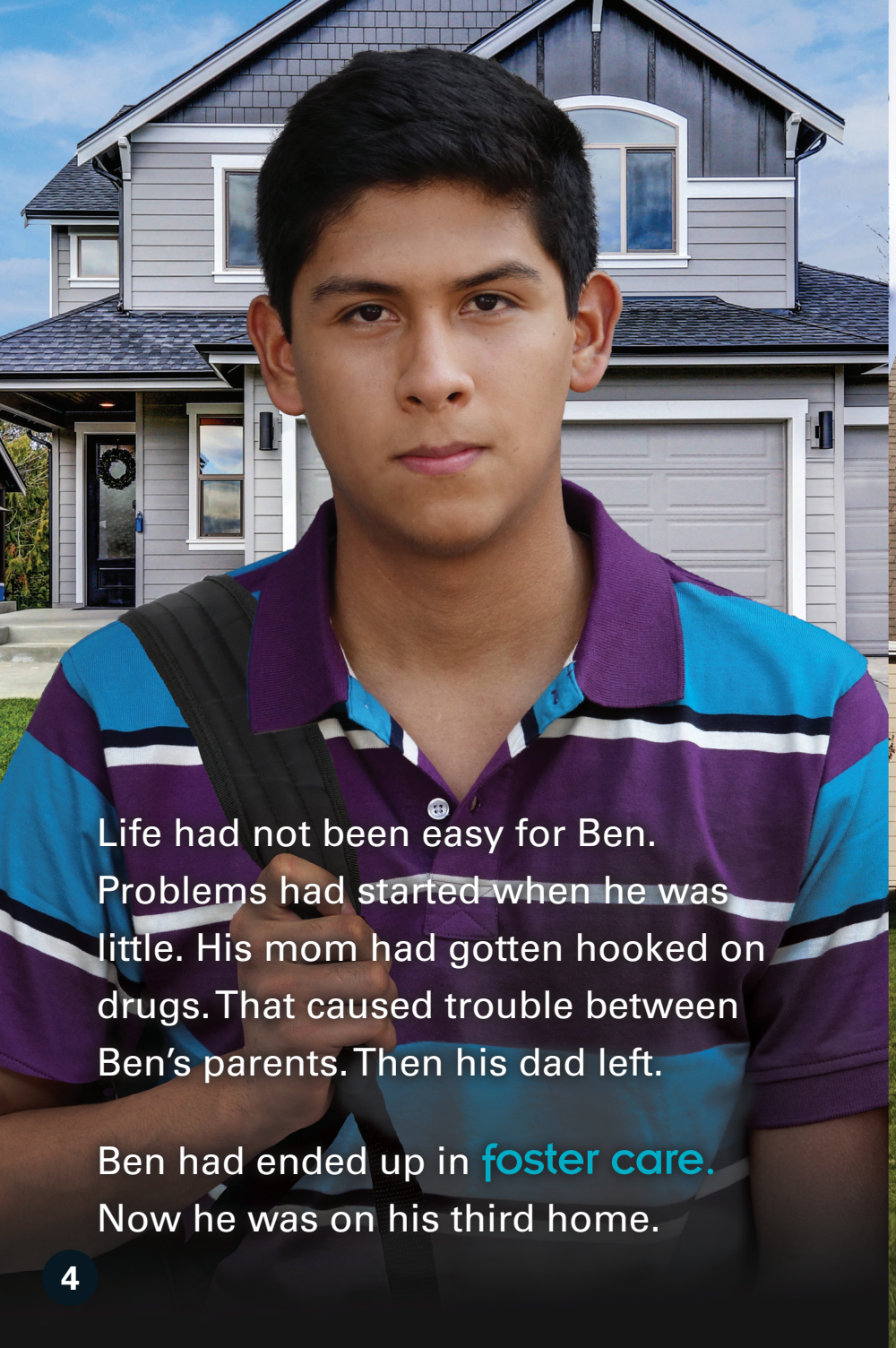




Ben was having a bad day. And
it was only going to get **worse**.
What else was new?





Life had not been easy for Ben. Problems had started when he was little. His mom had gotten hooked on drugs. That caused trouble between Ben's parents. Then his dad left.

Ben had ended up in **foster care**. Now he was on his third home.

Ana was his sister. They had the same mom but different dads. Ana was in foster care too. But she lived with another family.





Ben and Ana went to the same high school. Neither felt like they fit in. Most of the kids were white. Many were rich. Only a few kids were Latino.

Making friends was not easy for Ben. He found it hard to trust people.

Most of the time, being alone was easier. But today he felt **lonely**.





It was his birthday. No one at school knew except Ana. Even his mom probably **forgot**. That was nothing new. Besides, he had not heard from her in months. It was better that way.