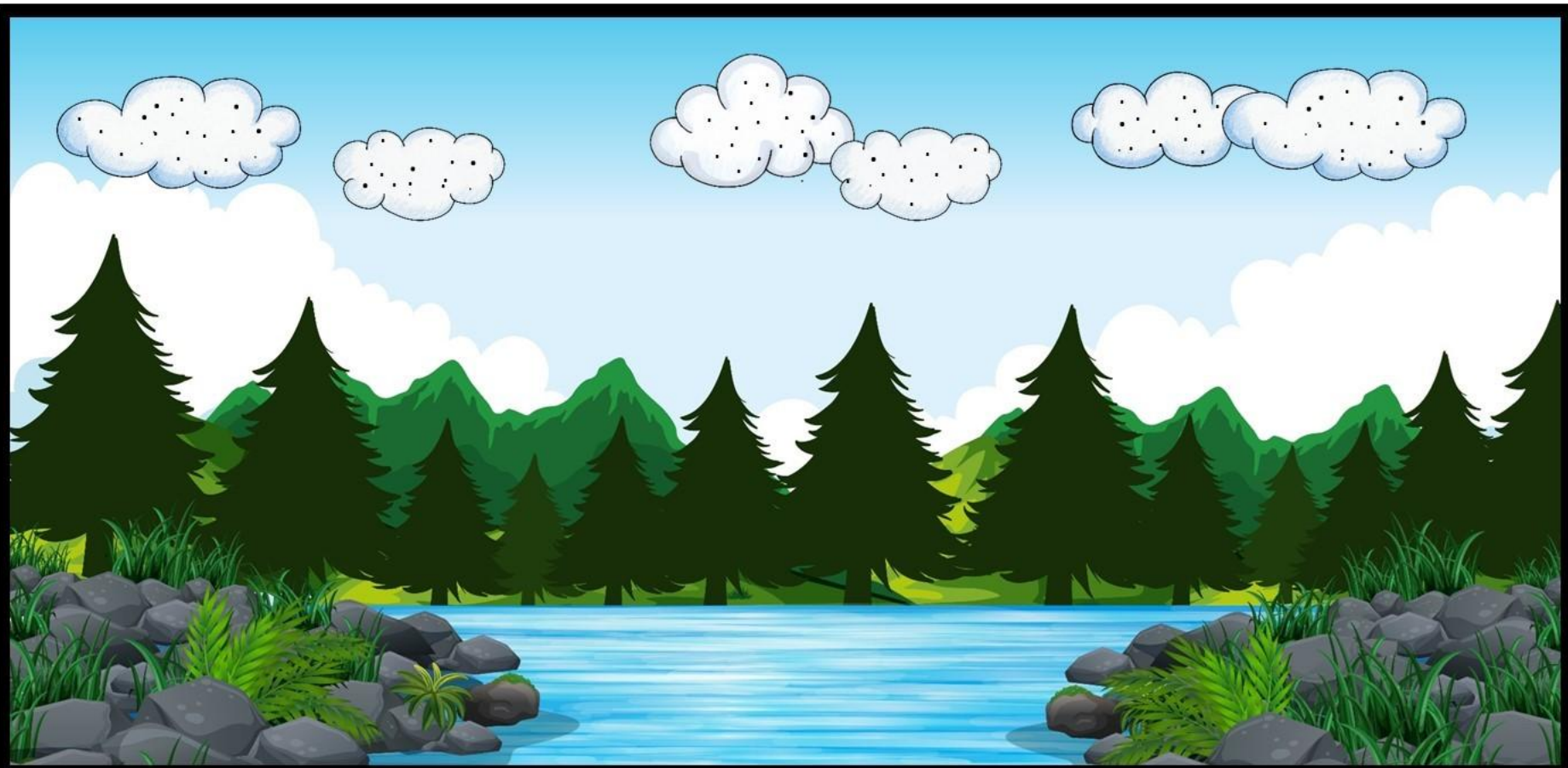
A decorative banner with snowflakes and a blue sky background. The banner is a black line with several scalloped sections, each containing a snowflake. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds and scattered snowflakes. The text is in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

HOW  
SNOWFLAKES  
ARE FORMED



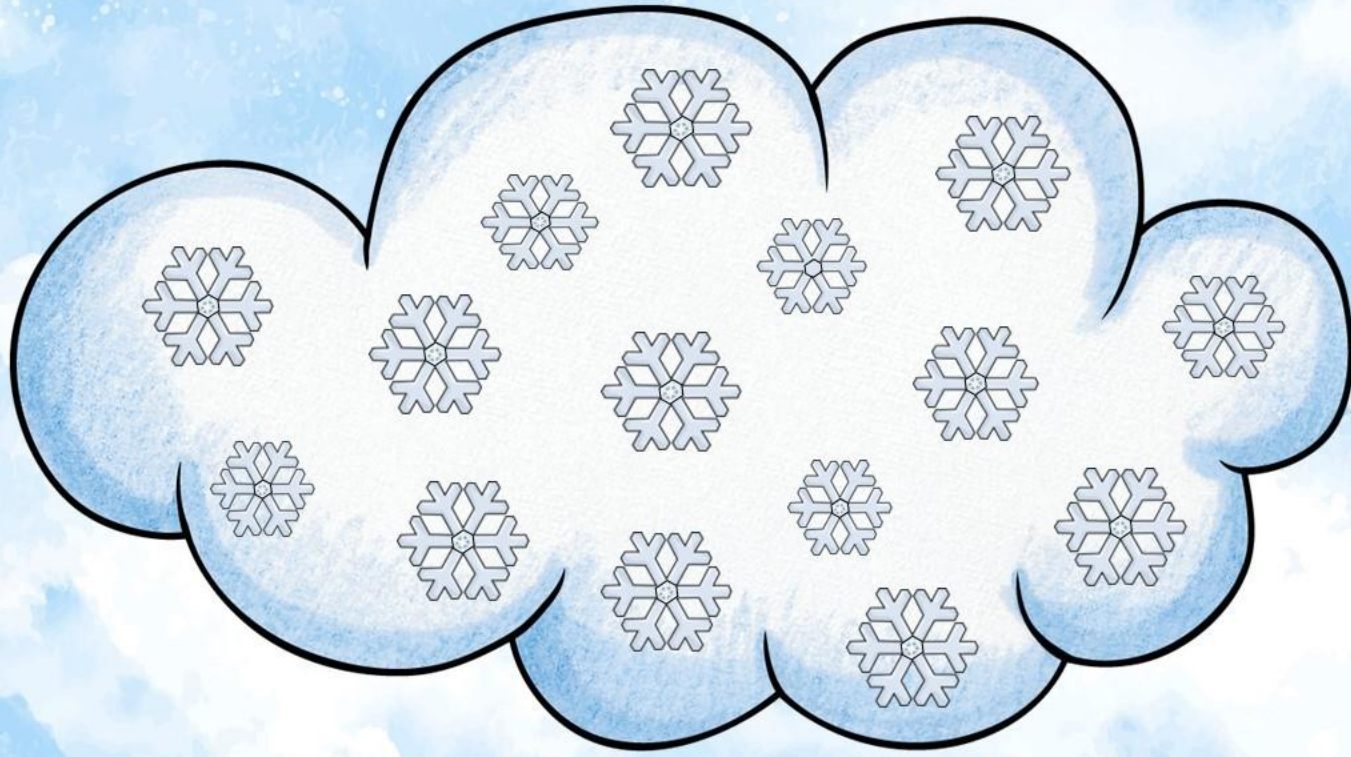
One very cold wintery day, clouds were floating in the sky above a winding river. The clouds were mostly air and water vapor, but billions of specks of dust floated around the air inside each cloud.



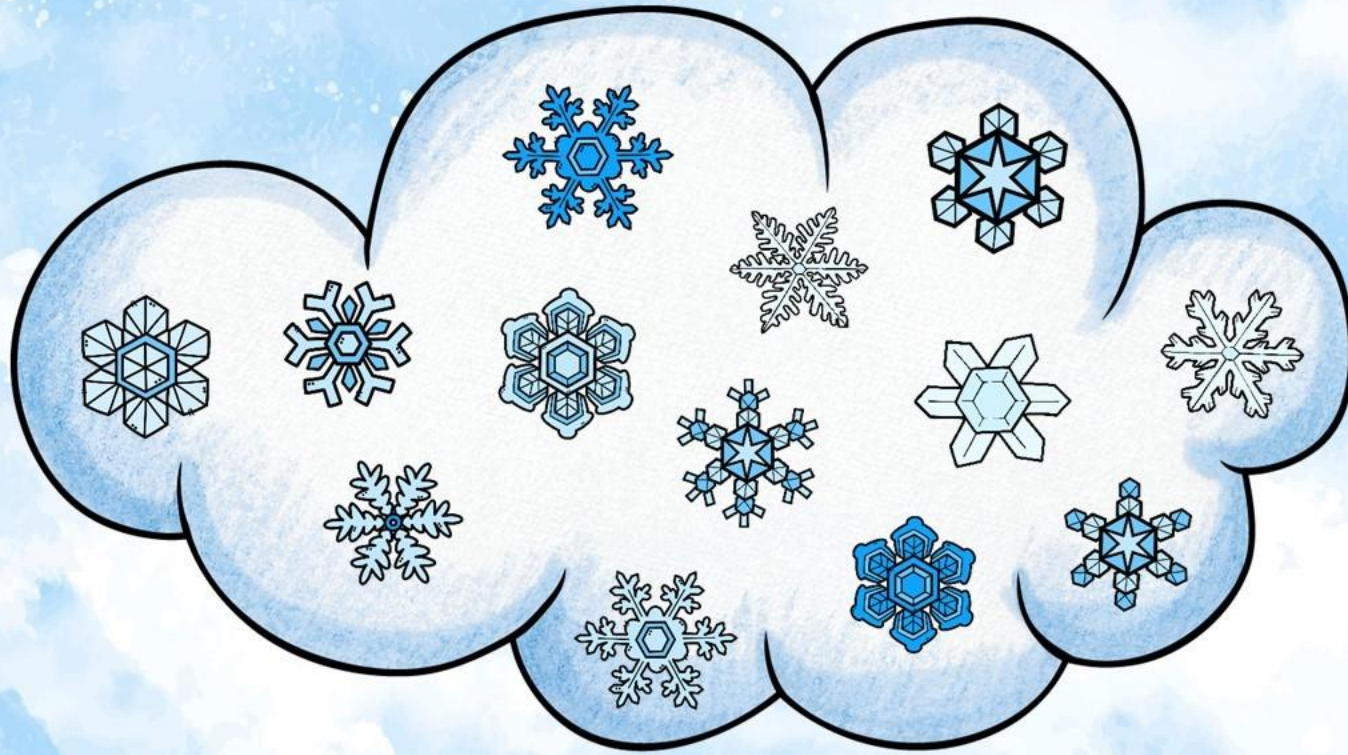
The specks of dust got so cold that water vapor began to stick to them. As more and more water vapor attached to each particle, a water droplet formed around it. Because it was so cold, the droplet froze and became a tiny ball of ice.



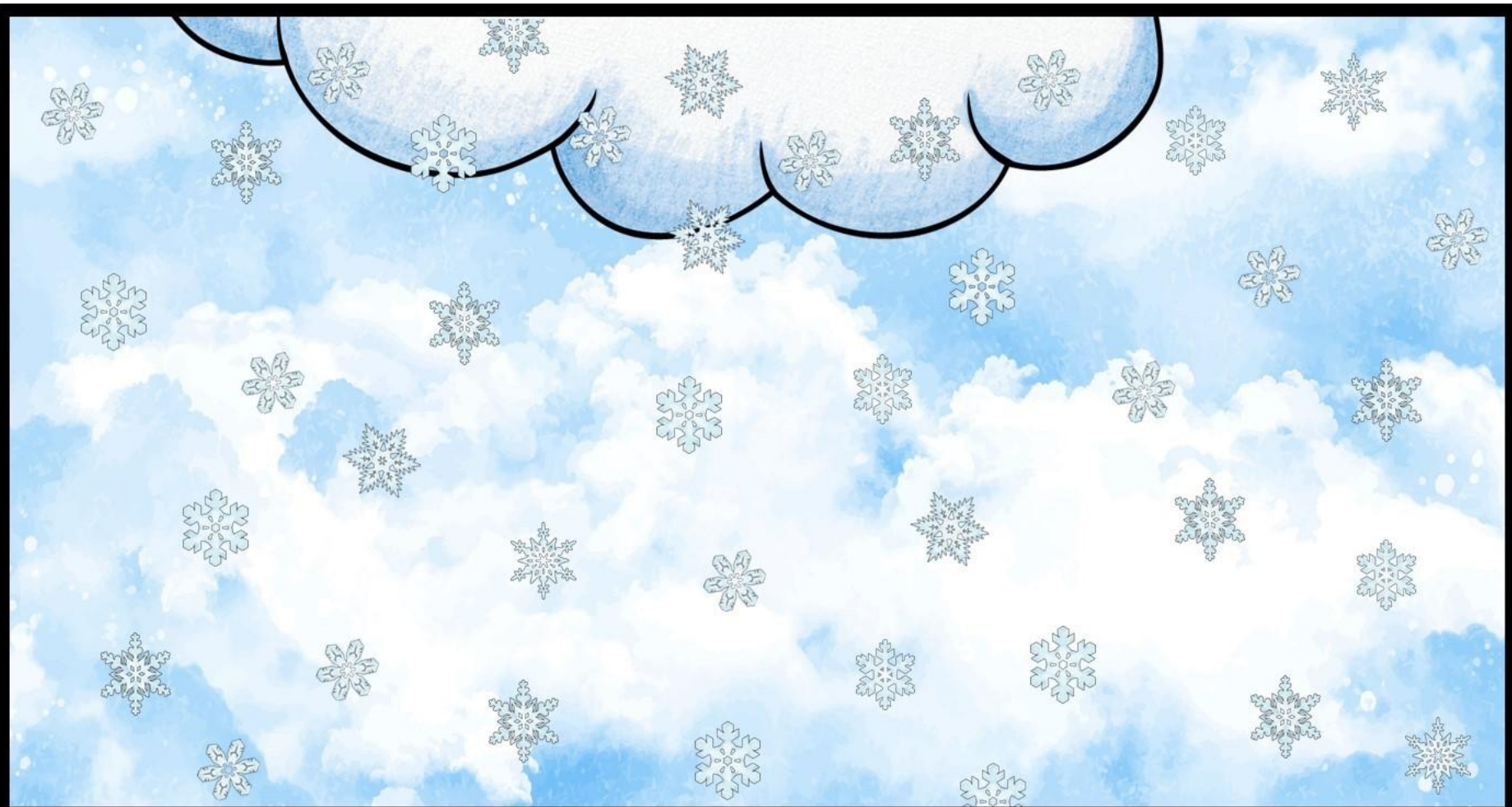
More and more water vapor droplets stuck to the tiny balls of ice, making them grow larger and larger until each ball became a small six-sided or hexagon-shaped ice crystal.



As more water vapor stuck to the newly formed snow crystals, they grew larger and larger. Because the corners of the snow crystals stuck far out into the cold, wet air in the cloud, branches began to grow out of the snow crystal's six corners.



More water droplets stuck to the branches of each snow crystal. Each branch grew smaller branches of its own. No two snow crystals were alike, but each snow crystal had six sides.



Many snow crystals stuck together to form snowflakes. When the snowflakes got heavy enough, they began to fall to the ground. It was snowing!



Because it was very cold, the snowflakes stuck to the ground forming thick, white mountains of powdery snow. The snow was fun to play in. The children went sledding, had snowball fights, and even built a snowman!





Several days later, the temperature rose. Because the days were warmer, the snow melted. The water from the melted snow ran off the hills and into the river. Life went back to normal as the children waited anxiously for the snow cycle to begin again.