Make a Birthday Cake for Zahra

At the National Zoo, our animals love eating special treats, especially if it's their birthday! Help Zahra, our western lowland gorilla, celebrate her birthday by creating a birthday cake made up of her favorite food.

But first...What is a western lowland gorilla?

Gorillas are the largest kind of ape, but the western lowland gorilla is the smallest type. These gorillas live in the Congo Basin, a big forest in Africa, and mostly eat plants like leaves, stems, vines, and fresh fruit. They are generally quiet animals, but when they do need to talk, they will bark or roar! At the National Zoo, we have seven western lowland gorillas, including Baraka, Mandara, Calaya, Kibibi, Moke, and Zahra.

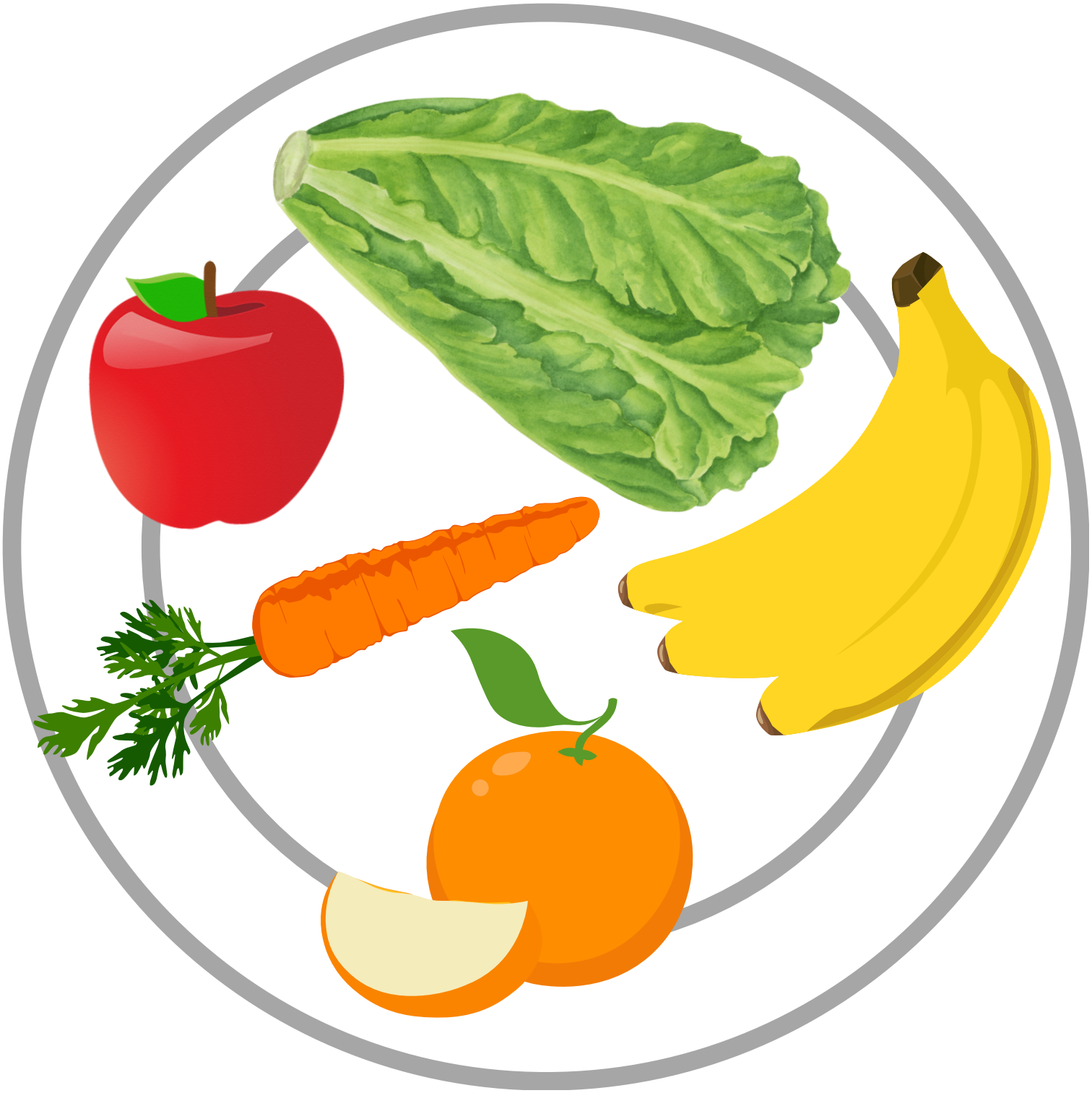
Explain to your young learners that animals have favorite foods just like people. The following is a list of Zahra's favorite food.

- Bananas
- Mangoes
- Oranges
- Apples
- Lettuce
- Carrots

Now, ask your young learner what their favorite food is. Compare their favorite food to the gorillas. Are any of the foods the same, or are they all different?

Use the provided dinner plate visuals to help your kids understand how different animals and people need different food to stay healthy and happy.

What is a gorilla’s favorite food?



What is your favorite food?

Make a Birthday Cake Activity

Age: 2+

ELOF Standards: P-ATL 10, P-ATL 11, P-ATL 12, P-SCI 1, P-SCI 2, P-PMP 4.

Description: Have your preschoolers create a birthday cake for Zahra using her favorite food! Additionally, have your children make their own favorite food birthday cake. At the end of the lesson, compare and contrast the two cakes to see what is similar or different.

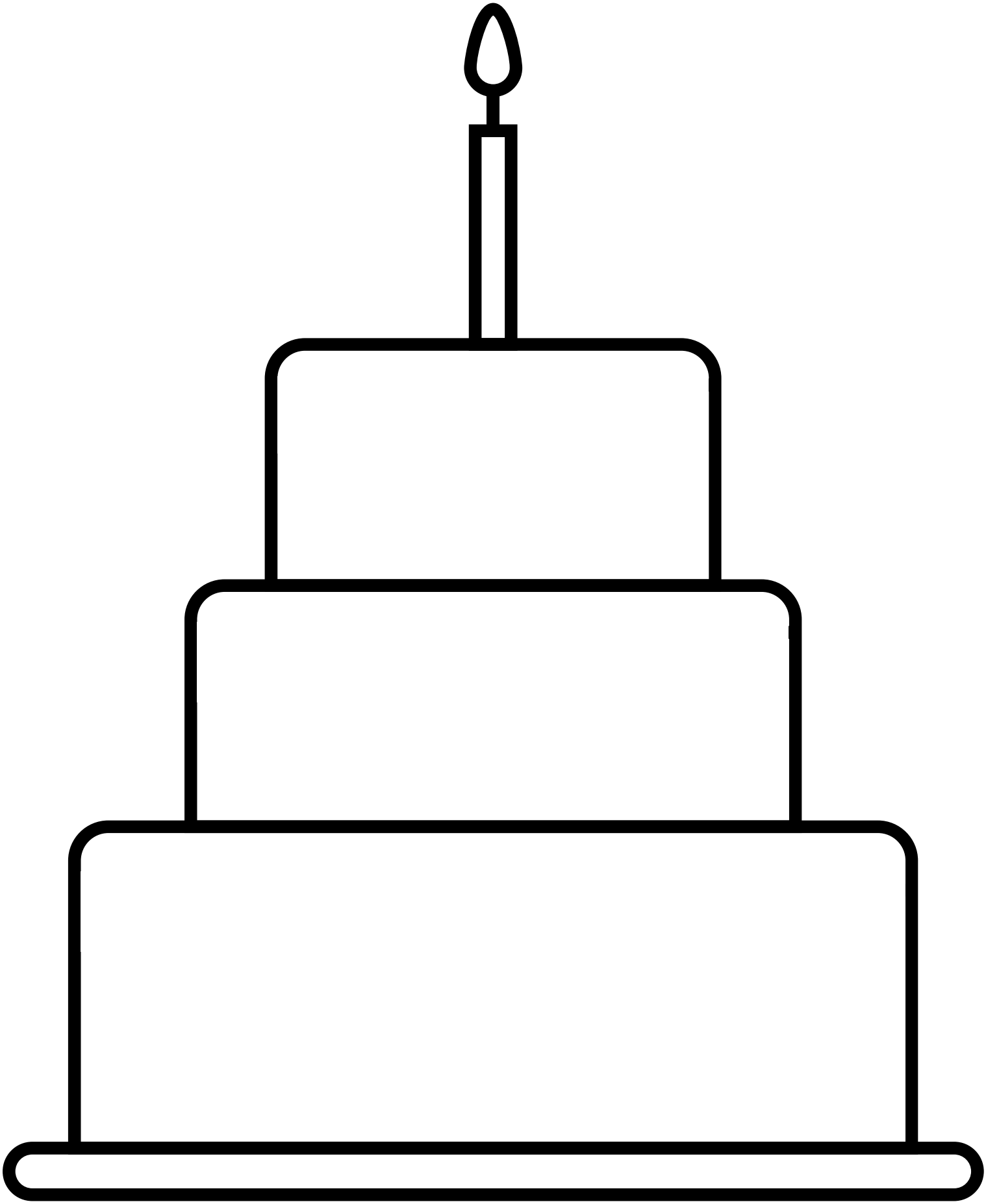
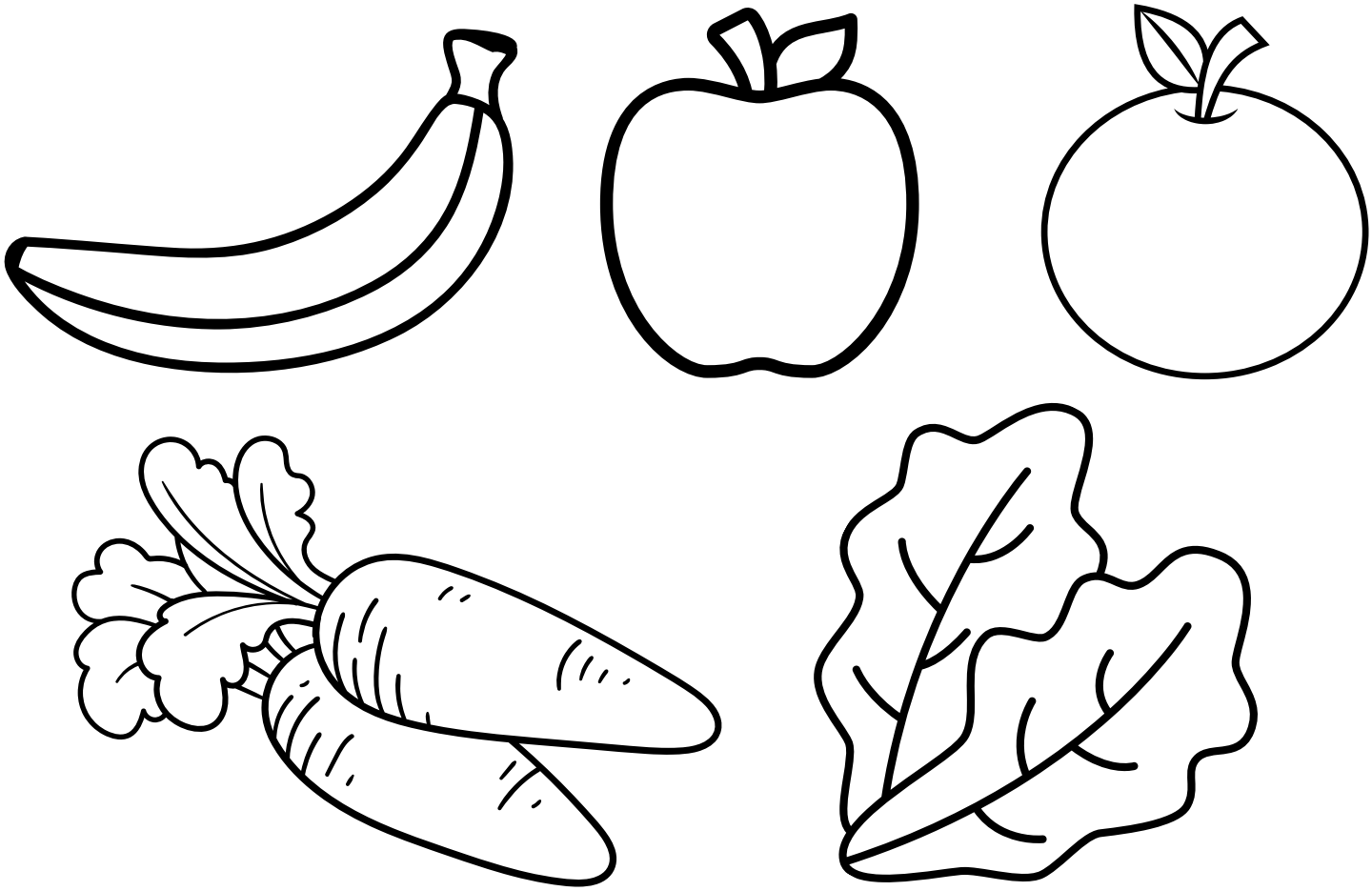
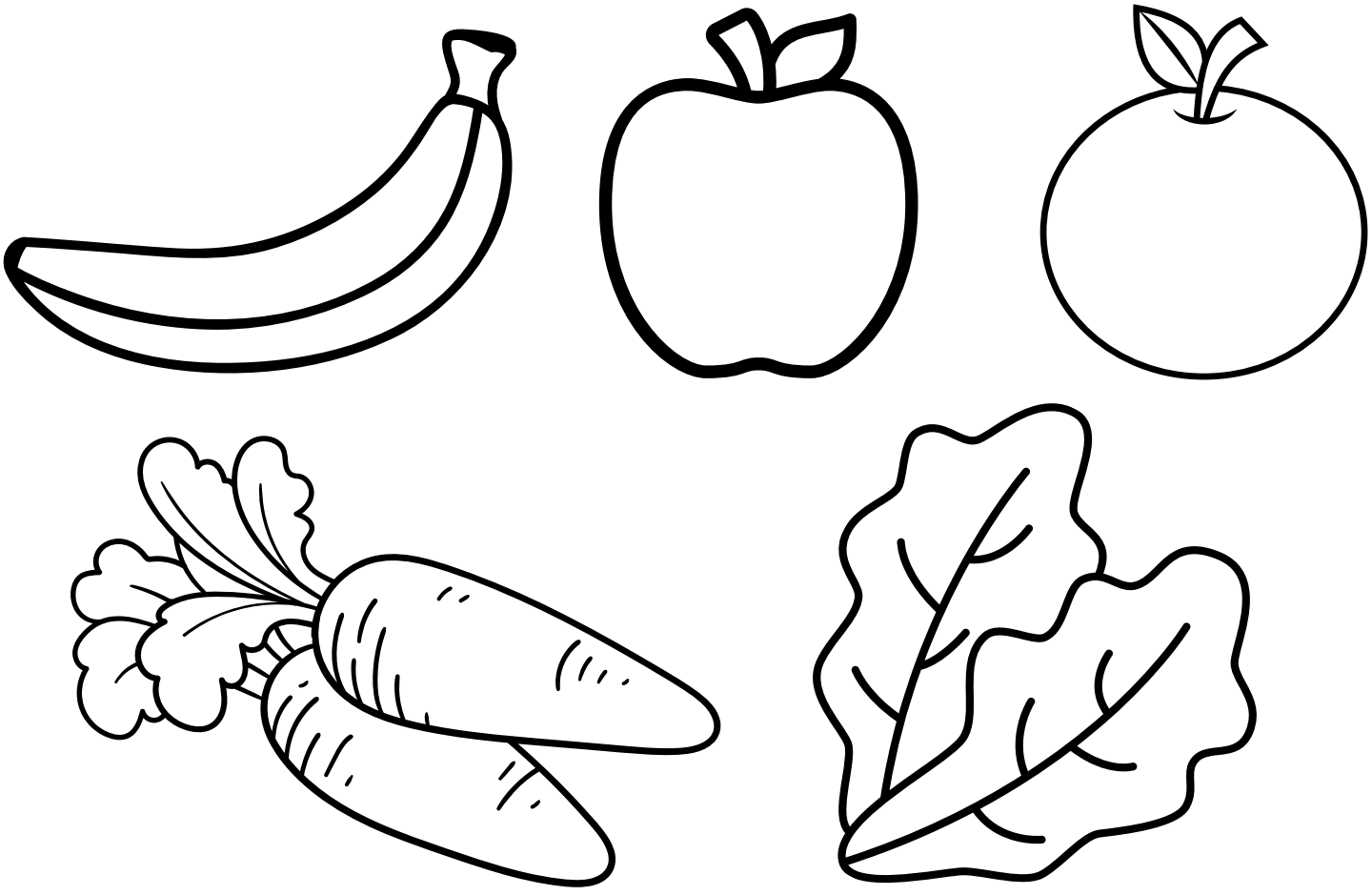
Needed Materials:

- Birthday cake printout
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers, etc.
- Optional: printed food shapes, scissors, tape/glue

Steps:

1. After completing the western lowland gorilla introduction and lesson, give each child a printed birthday cake outline.

2. Have your child use colored pencils, markers, etc., to decorate the birthday cake with the gorilla's favorite food. OR: Print out the provided food shapes and have them color in and cut out the food items before gluing them to the cake outline.

3. After completing the gorilla cake, hand out another birthday cake outline for the preschoolers to fill in with their own favorite food.

4. Based on the group's size, have each child share their gorilla birthday cake and their own favorite food birthday cake. Ask them to describe each cake and answer whether they see any similarities or differences. Why do gorillas need different foods compared to humans?