



## GAVIN AUNG THAN

Illustration portfolio

[aungthan.com](http://aungthan.com)

IG: @zenpencils

**Gavin Aung Than** is obsessed with comics, first while reading them as a kid and now living his dream by making them for a profession. He is best known for his webcomic series *Zen Pencils*, where he adapted quotes, poems and book passages into fun and inspirational comic strips. The site was a perfect combination of Gavin's love of history, science, literature, martial arts and monsters. The *Zen Pencils* book collections, published by Andrews McMeel, were NYT bestsellers. Gavin also loves to draw action adventure comics for kids, as seen in his current *Super Sidekicks* graphic novel series (published by Random House

Children's Books). Gavin is Australian with Burmese heritage and lives in Perth, Western Australia (one of the most isolated cities in the world!).

From Gav: ***"I specialise in adapting difficult and adult concepts into fun and relatable comics. I also love drawing kid-friendly adventure stories that combine action, humour and heart."***

Gavin is represented by Chelsea Eberly at Greenhouse Literary Agency. To work with him, please email Chelsea at [chelseae@greenhouseliterary.com](mailto:chelseae@greenhouseliterary.com)

## COMICS (ALL AGES)

### SUPER SIDEKICKS

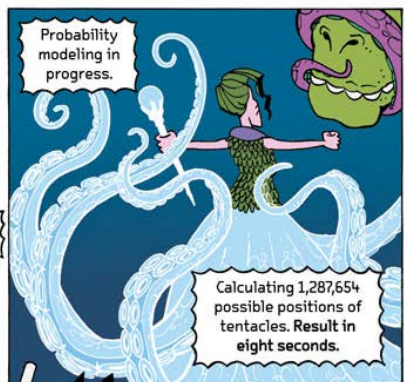
Three spreads from *Super Sidekicks #2: Ocean's Revenge* (Penguin Random House). Winner of the 2020 Environment Award for Children's Literature.



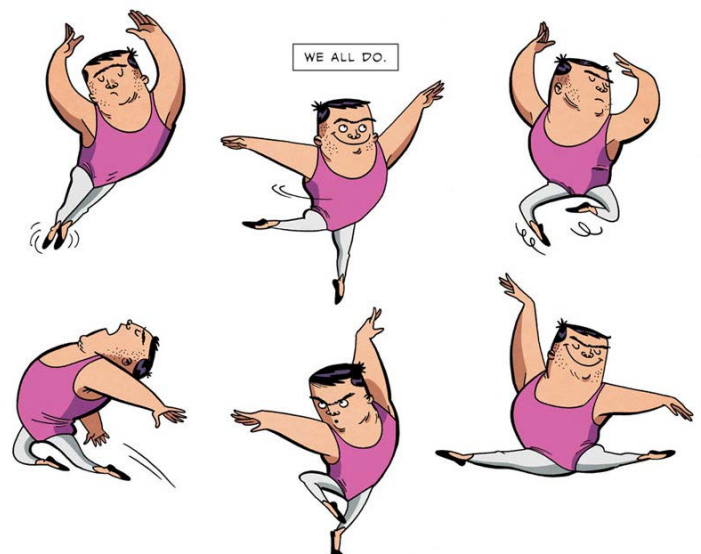
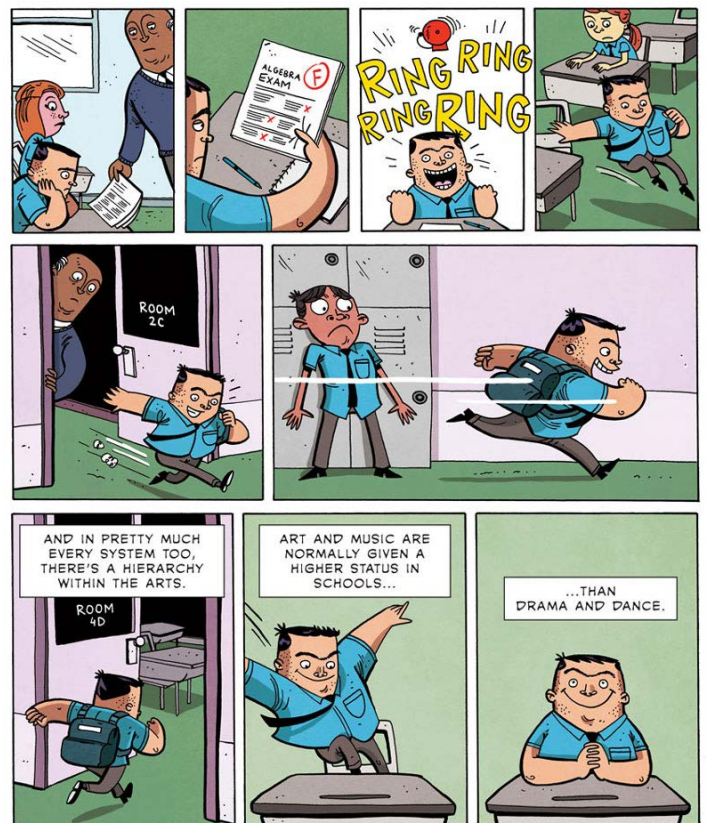
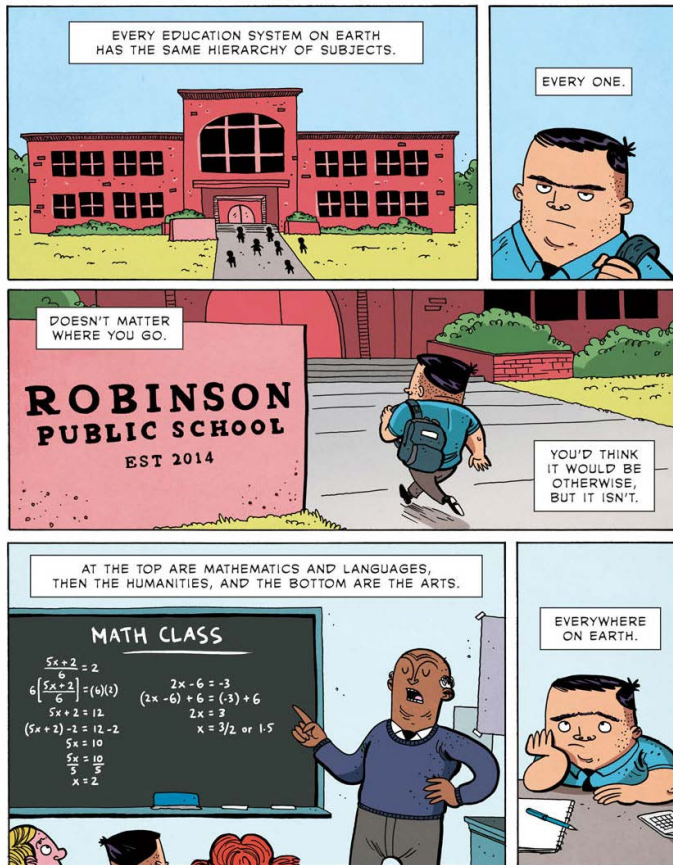




115



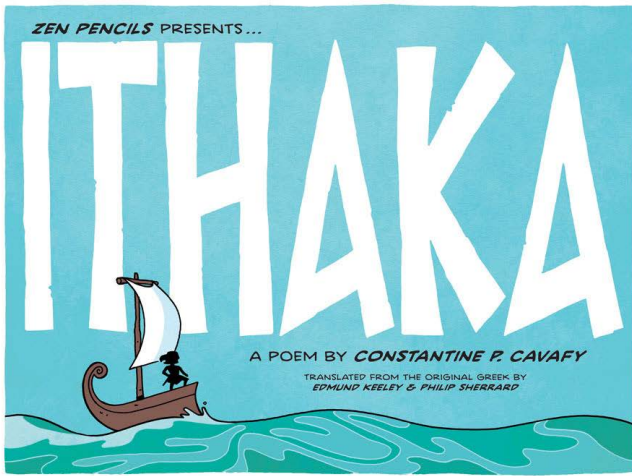




### FULL BODY EDUCATION

Excerpt from my Zen Pencils comic adapting the words of Sir Ken Robinson. For the full comic visit: [zenpencils.com/comic/kenrobinson/](http://zenpencils.com/comic/kenrobinson/)





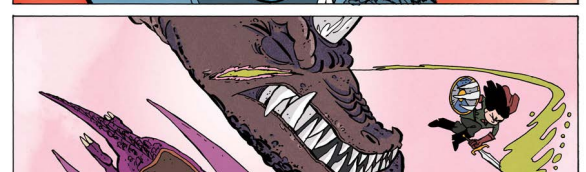
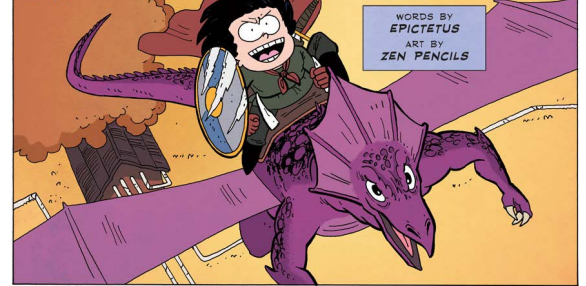
## ITHAKA POEM

Excerpt from my Zen Pencils comic adapting the poem, *Ithaka*. For the full comic visit: [zenpencils.com/comic/131-c-p-cavafy-ithaka/](http://zenpencils.com/comic/131-c-p-cavafy-ithaka/)



## A WORTHY CRISIS

WORDS BY  
EPICTETUS  
ART BY  
ZEN PENCILS



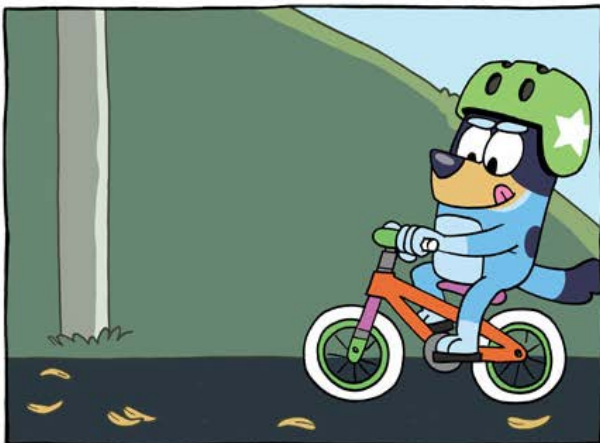
## A WORTHY CRISIS

Excerpt from my Zen Pencils comic adapting a quote from Epictetus. For the full comic visit: [zenpencils.com/comic/epictetus/](http://zenpencils.com/comic/epictetus/)









**BLUEY GRAPHIC NOVEL**

Sample spreads from a proposed young readers graphic novel based on the *Bluey* cartoon.



# NON-FICTION & EDUCATIONAL



## BRUCE LEE COMIC

Excerpt from my Bruce Lee comic about pushing oneself to their limits.

## SAINTS & SINNERS

Panel from a Zen Pencils comic.



MARIE CURIE

LEO DA VINCI

EINSTEIN

VAN GOGH

NIKOLA TESLA

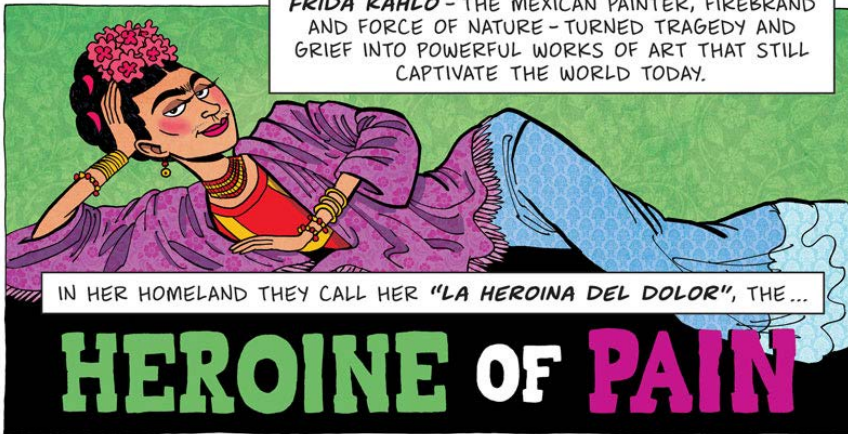
FRIDA KAHLO

## CREATIVE HEADSHOTS

From my book collection *Creative Struggle: Illustrated Advice from Masters of Creativity*.



FRIDA KAHLO - THE MEXICAN PAINTER, FIREBRAND AND FORCE OF NATURE - TURNED TRAGEDY AND GRIEF INTO POWERFUL WORKS OF ART THAT STILL CAPTIVATE THE WORLD TODAY.



IN HER HOMETOWN THEY CALL HER "LA HEROINA DEL DOLOR", THE...

## HEROINE OF PAIN

AT AGE SIX, FRIDA CONTRACTED POLIO WHICH MADE HER RIGHT LEG WITHERED AND FRAIL. SHE WALKED WITH A LIMP AND WAS TEASED AT SCHOOL.



OVER TIME HER LIMP SEVERELY DAMAGED HER SPINE AND PELVIS WHICH CAUSED FRIDA PROBLEMS FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE.



### FRIDA KAHLO BIO COMIC

Excerpt from my Frida Kahlo bio comic, from my book collection *Creative Struggle: Illustrated Advice from Masters of Creativity*.

WHEN SHE WAS 18, FRIDA SUFFERED HORRIFIC INJURIES WHEN THE WOODEN BUS SHE WAS RIDING IN WITH HER BOYFRIEND...



...SMASHED INTO AN ELECTRIC TROLLEY CAR

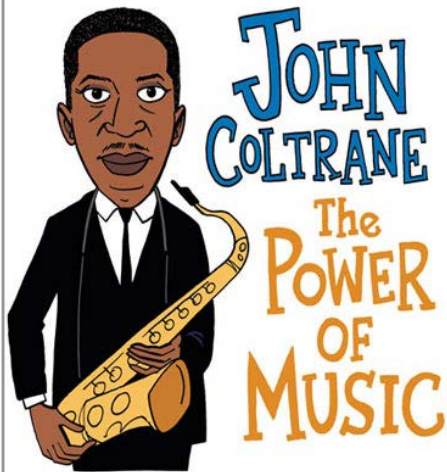


NOT ONLY WAS SHE IMPALED BY A LOOSE METAL HANDRAIL, WHICH ENTERED IN HER LEFT SIDE AND EXITED THROUGH HER VAGINA...



...BUT HER SPINAL COLUMN AND PELVIS WERE BOTH **BROKEN IN THREE PLACES**. HER COLLARBONE AND TWO RIBS WERE ALSO BROKEN. FRIDA'S ALREADY DAMAGED RIGHT LEG WAS **SHATTERED IN ELEVEN PLACES** AND HER RIGHT FOOT WAS CRUSHED.





MY GOAL IS TO LIVE THE TRULY RELIGIOUS LIFE AND EXPRESS IT IN MY MUSIC.



TO BE A MUSICIAN IS REALLY SOMETHING. IT GOES VERY, VERY DEEP.

MY MUSIC IS THE SPIRITUAL EXPRESSION OF WHAT I AM.

MY FAITH, MY KNOWLEDGE, MY BEING.



#### JOHN COLTRANE COMIC

Excerpt from my John Coltrane comic, from my book collection *Creative Struggle: Illustrated Advice from Masters of Creativity*.

THE CANVAS HAS AN IDIOTIC STARE AND MESMERISES SOME PAINTERS SO MUCH...



...THAT THEY TURN INTO IDIOTS THEMSELVES.



MANY PAINTERS ARE AFRAID IN FRONT OF THE BLANK CANVAS.



#### VAN GOGH COMIC

Excerpt from my Vincent van Gogh comic, from my book collection *Creative Struggle: Illustrated Advice from Masters of Creativity*.



# RICHARD FEYNMAN ON THE BEAUTY OF A FLOWER

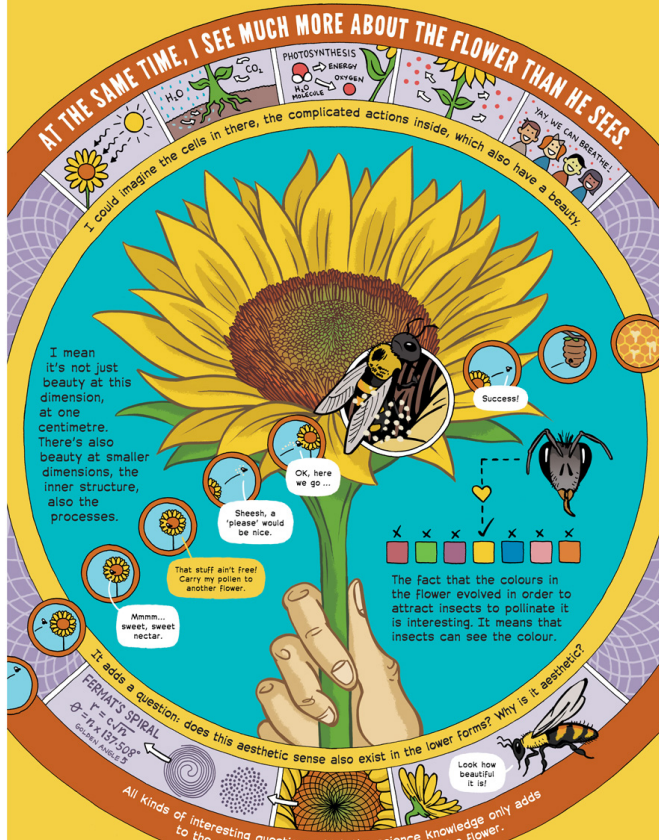
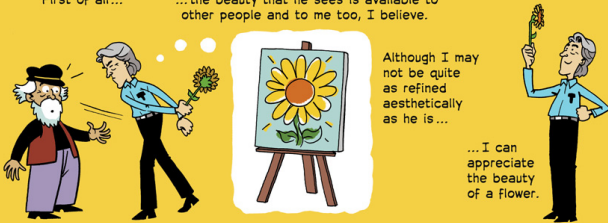
I have a friend who's an artist and has sometimes taken a view which I don't agree with very well. He'll hold up a flower and say...



AND I THINK THAT HE'S KIND OF NUTTY.

First of all...

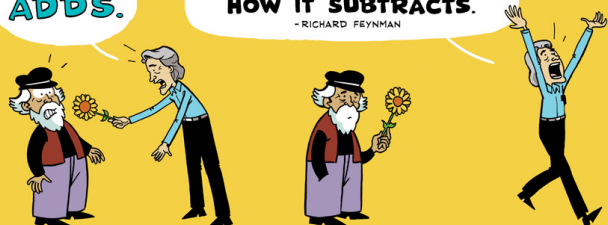
...the beauty that he sees is available to other people and to me too, I believe.



IT ONLY ADDS.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW IT SUBTRACTS.

- RICHARD FEYNMAN



## SCIENCE ALL-STARS

I'm a bit of a science geek so I made this poster celebrating the greatest scientific minds in history.

## RICHARD FEYNMAN INFOGRAPHIC

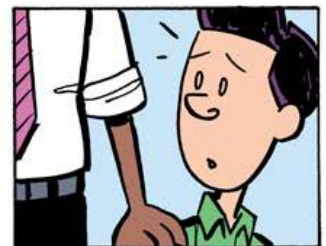
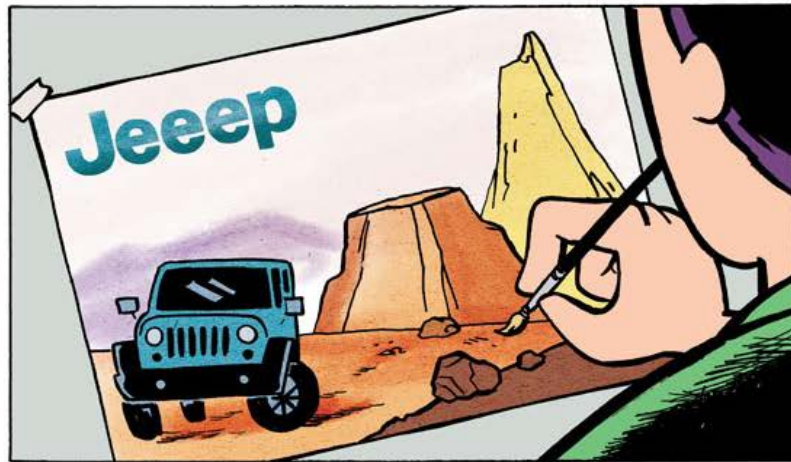
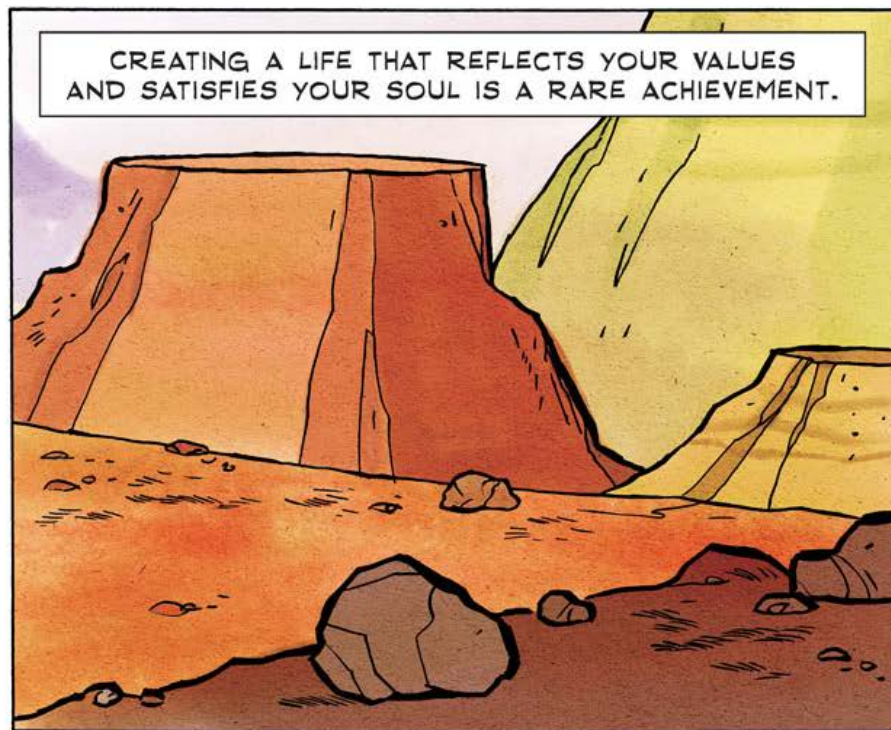
A Zen Pencils comic adapting the words of physicist Richard Feynman into a fun infographic. For a better look visit [zenpencils.com/comic/137-richard-feynman-the-beauty-of-a-flower/](http://zenpencils.com/comic/137-richard-feynman-the-beauty-of-a-flower/)



# INSPIRATIONAL

## ZEN PENCILS

Here is one of my most popular Zen Pencils comics, a tribute to Bill Watterson and *Calvin and Hobbes*. For many more of my inspirational comics visit [zenpencils.com/newreaders](http://zenpencils.com/newreaders)





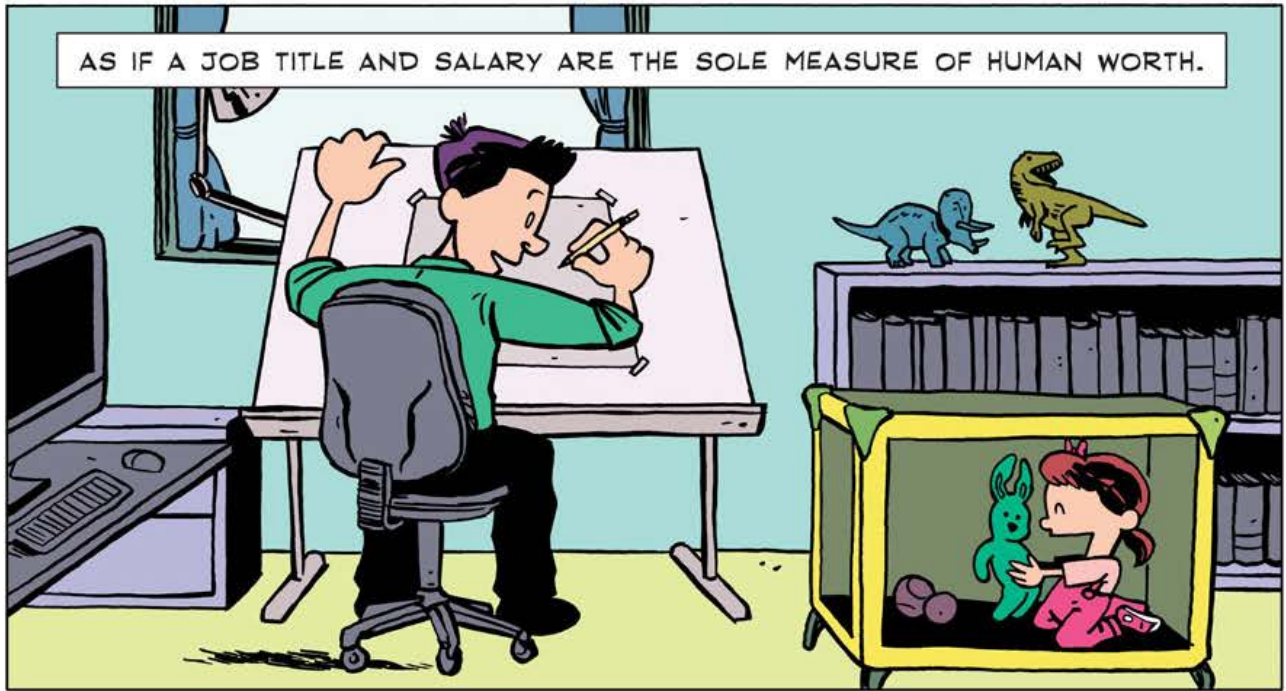




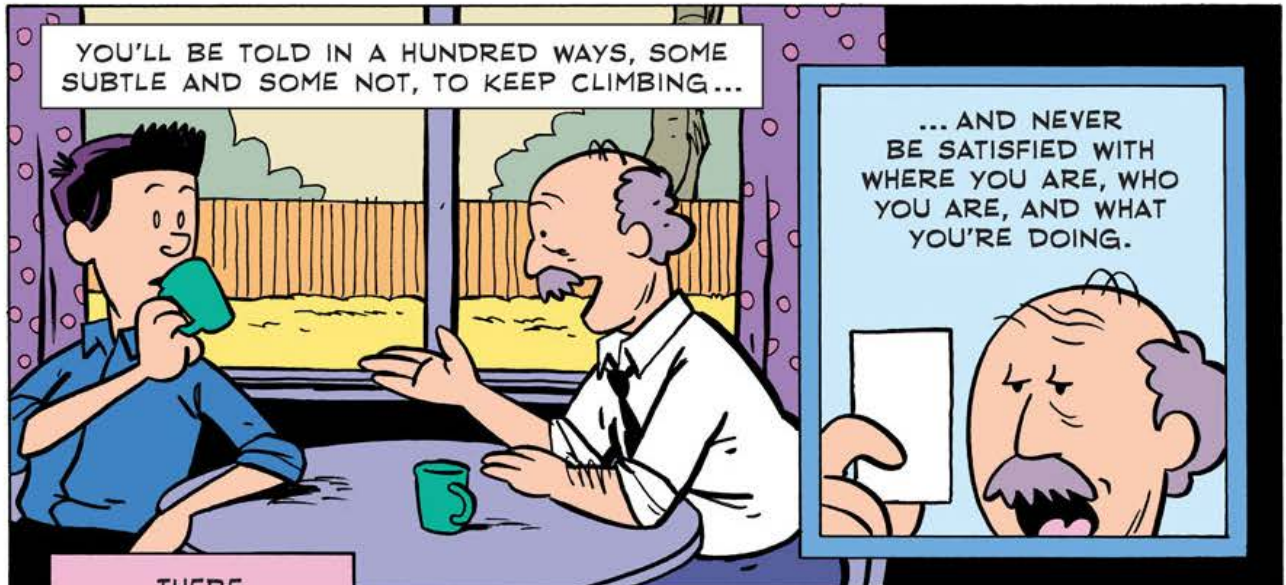




AS IF A JOB TITLE AND SALARY ARE THE SOLE MEASURE OF HUMAN WORTH.



YOU'LL BE TOLD IN A HUNDRED WAYS, SOME  
SUBTLE AND SOME NOT, TO KEEP CLIMBING...



... AND NEVER  
BE SATISFIED WITH  
WHERE YOU ARE, WHO  
YOU ARE, AND WHAT  
YOU'RE DOING.

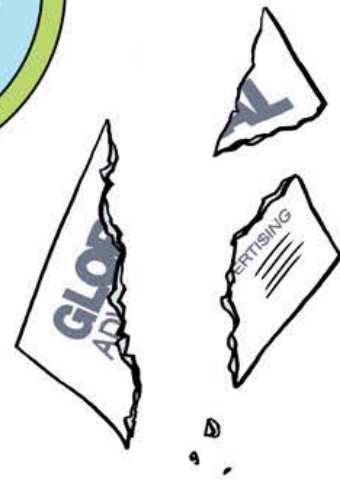
THERE  
ARE A MILLION  
WAYS TO SELL  
YOURSELF OUT...



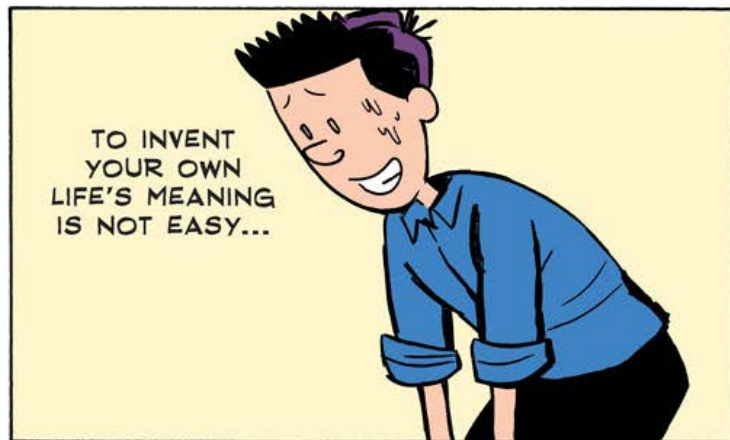
...AND I GUARANTEE  
YOU'LL HEAR ABOUT THEM.











*Amal*



# POETRY ADAPTATIONS

Besides inspirational quotes, I also adapted many poems for my *Zen Pencils* website. Here is one of my favourites, a spoken word poem and ode to teachers by Taylor Mali. For many more of my poetry adaptations visit [zenpencils.com/newreaders](http://zenpencils.com/newreaders)

## WHAT TEACHERS MAKE

A POEM BY  
**TAYLOR MALI**  
ART BY ZEN PENCILS

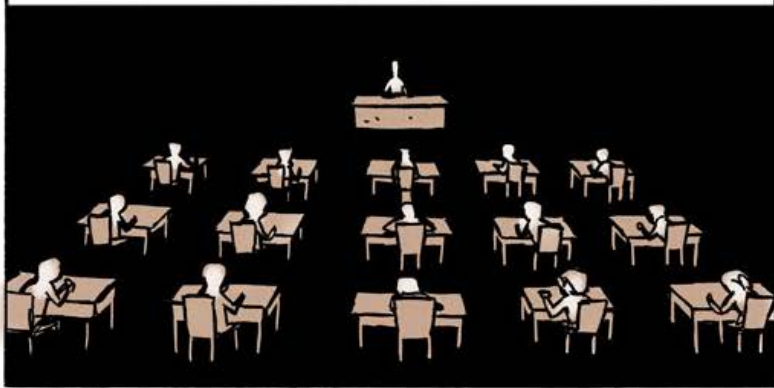








I MAKE KIDS SIT THROUGH FORTY MINUTES  
OF STUDY HALL IN *ABSOLUTE SILENCE*.



NO, YOU MAY  
NOT WORK IN  
GROUPS.



NO, YOU MAY  
NOT ASK A  
QUESTION.



WHY WON'T I  
LET YOU GO TO  
THE BATHROOM?



BECAUSE  
YOU'RE  
BORED.



AND YOU DON'T  
REALLY HAVE TO GO  
TO THE BATHROOM,  
DO YOU?



I MAKE PARENTS TREMBLE  
IN FEAR WHEN I CALL HOME.

RING!  
RING!



HI. THIS IS MR MALI.  
I HOPE I HAVEN'T CALLED  
AT A BAD TIME.



I JUST  
WANTED TO  
TALK TO  
YOU ABOUT  
SOMETHING  
YOUR SON  
SAID  
TODAY.

TO THE BIGGEST BULLY  
IN THE GRADE, HE SAID:

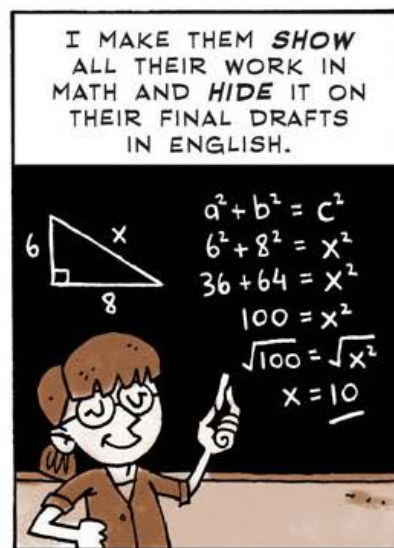
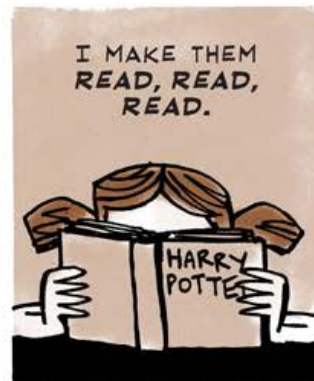
LEAVE THE KID  
ALONE. I STILL  
CRY SOMETIMES,  
DON'T YOU?



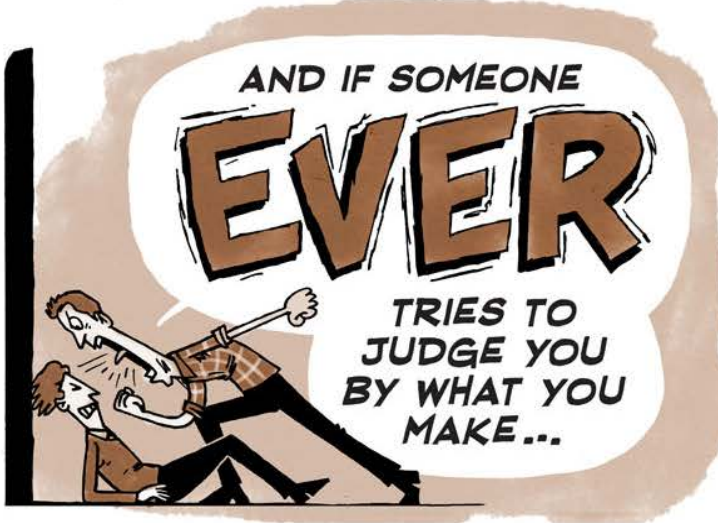
IT'S  
NO BIG  
DEAL.







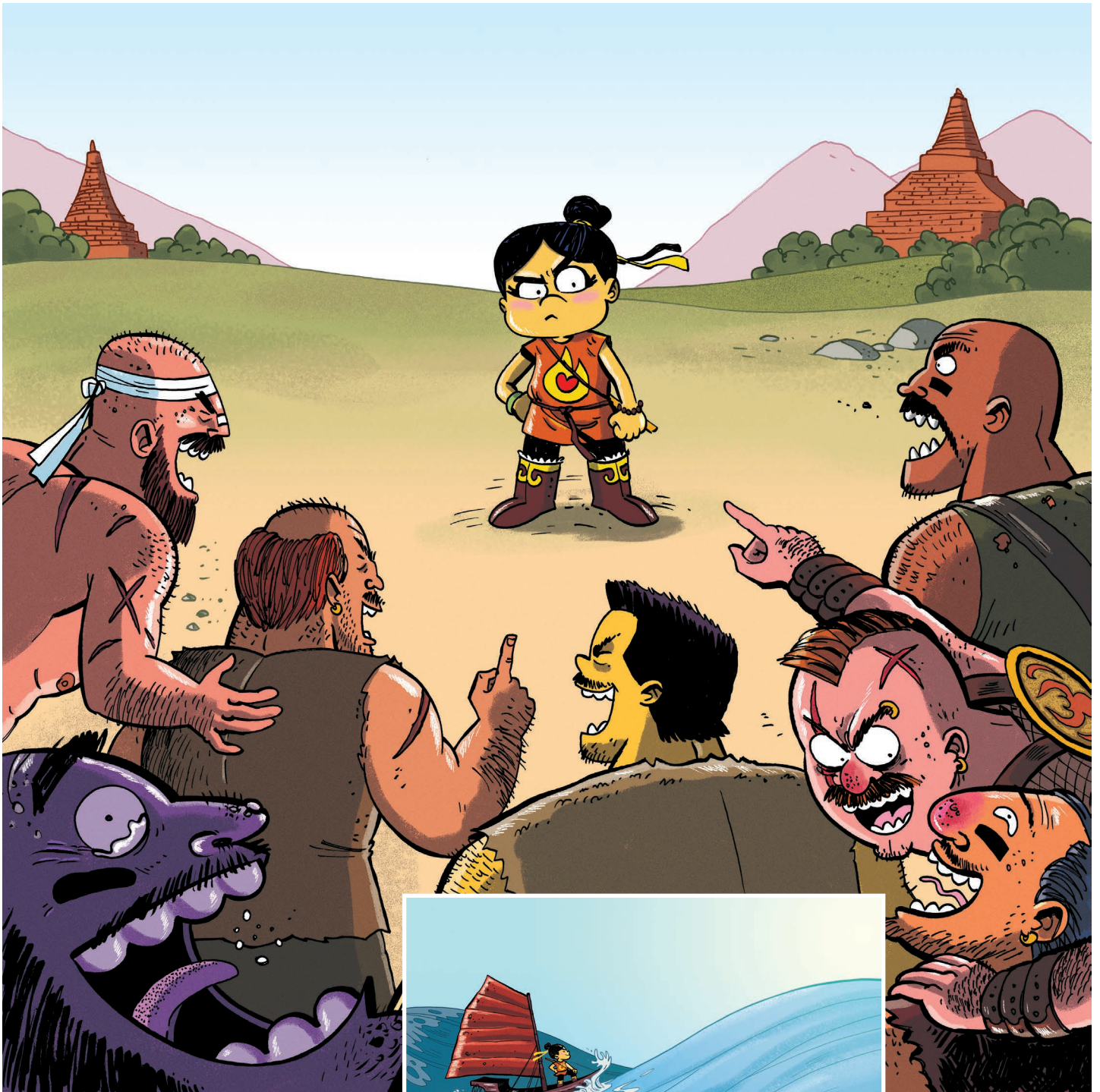






Sample page from a picture book proposal

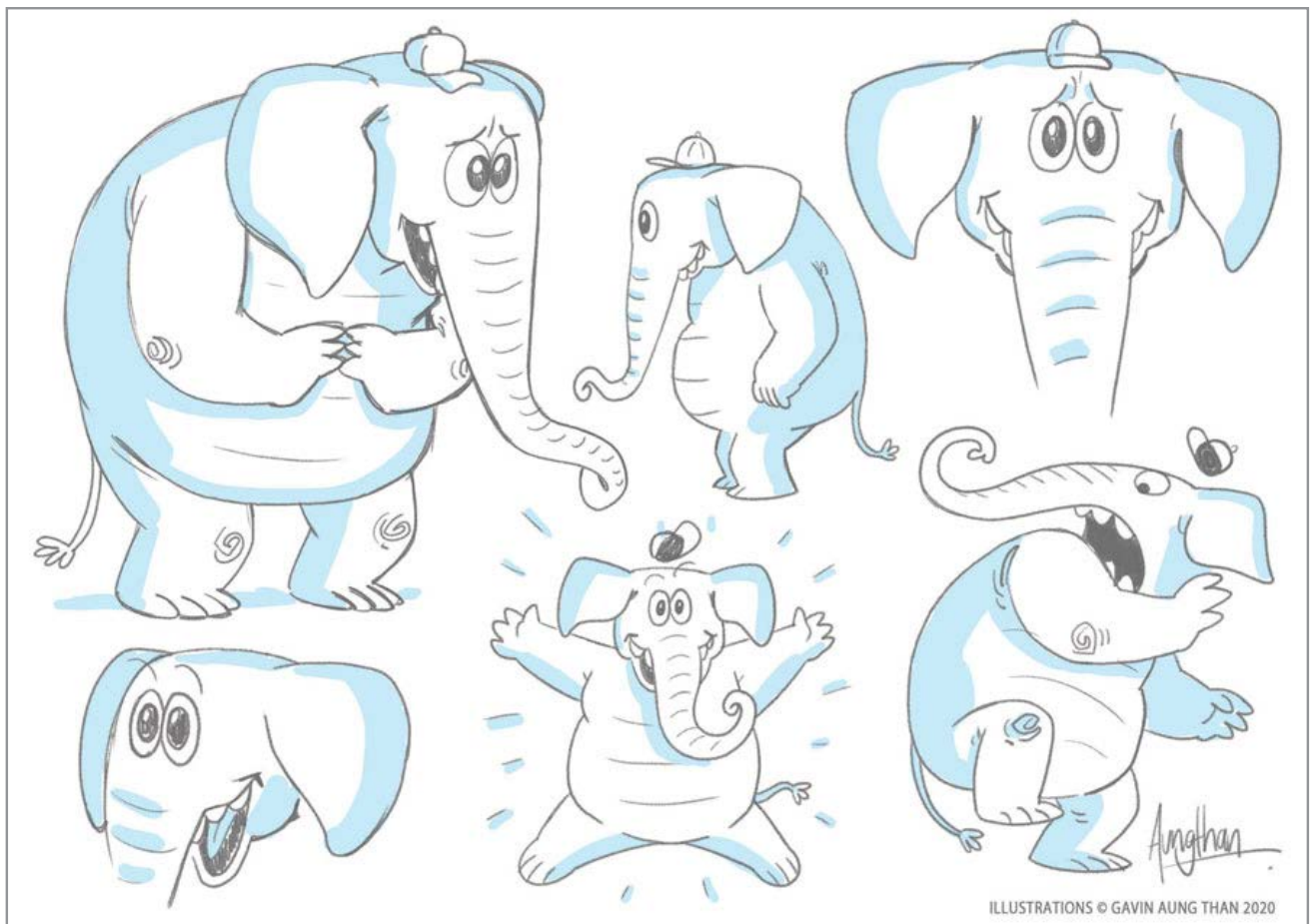
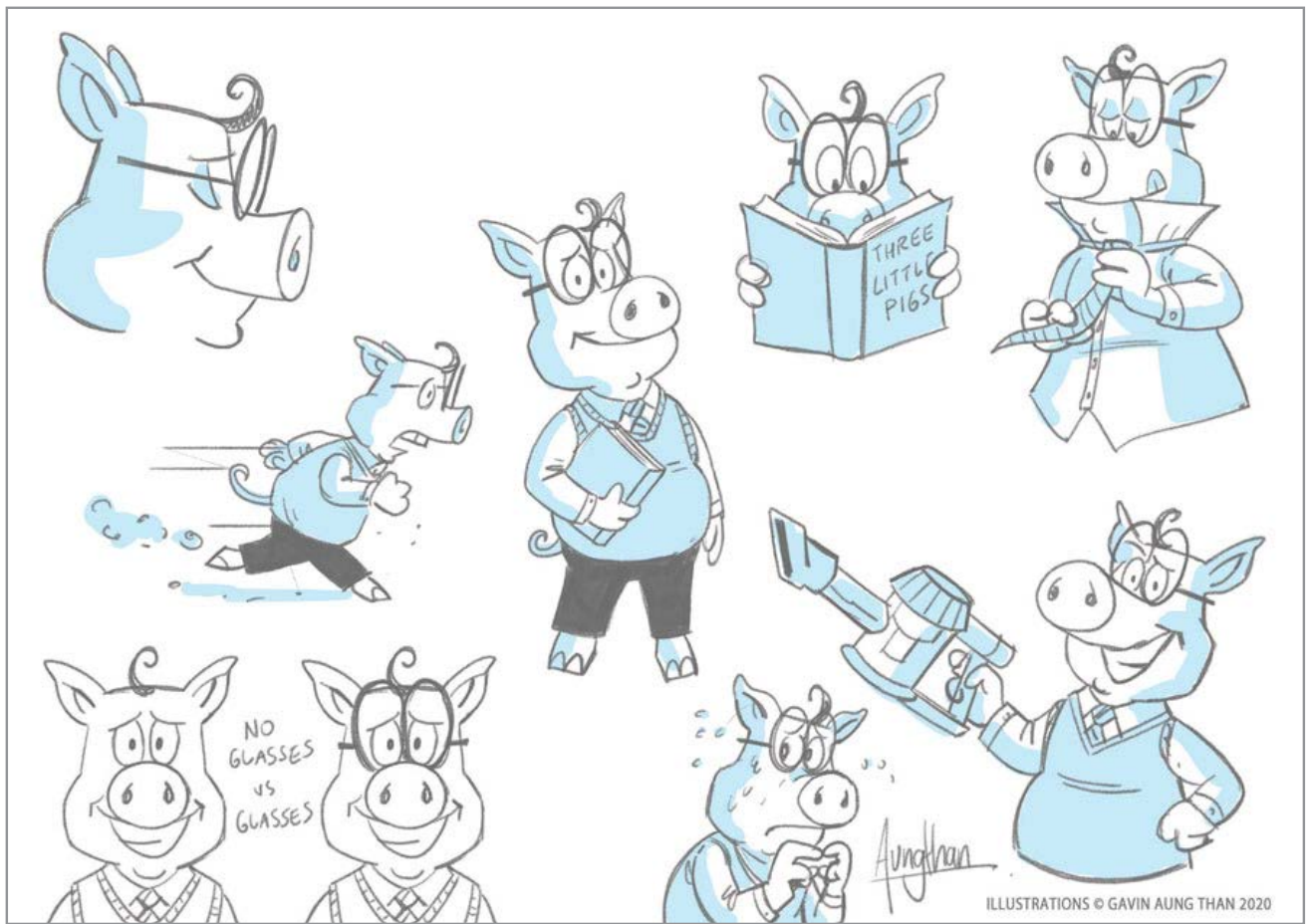




**PICTURE BOOK**

Some sample pages from a proposal  
about a little Burmese warrior girl.





## CHARACTER DESIGNS

Character designs from a proposed young readers series.



# The Universal Declaration of HUMAN RIGHTS

Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.

**WE ARE ALL BORN FREE AND EQUAL**

**EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO THESE RIGHTS**

NO MATTER YOUR RACE, RELIGION OR NATIONALITY

**EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE, FREEDOM AND SAFETY**



No one has the right to hold you in slavery.

No one has the right to torture you.

You have the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

We are all equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.

You have the right to seek legal help if your rights are violated.

No one has the right to wrongly imprison you or force you to leave your country.

You have the right to a fair and public trial.

Everyone is innocent until **PROVEN** guilty.

You have the right to privacy. No one can interfere with your reputation, family, home or correspondence.

You can travel wherever you want.

You have the right to seek asylum in another country if you are being persecuted in your own country.

Everyone has the right to a nationality.

All adults have the right to marriage and to raise a family.

You have the right to own property.

Everyone has the right to belong to a religion.

Freedom of Expression: You have the right to free thought and to voice your opinions to others.

Everyone has the right to gather as a peaceful assembly.

You have the right to help choose and to take part in governing your country, directly or through chosen representatives.

You have the right to social security and are entitled to economic, social and cultural help from your government.

Workers' rights: Every adult has the right to a job, a fair wage and to join a trade union.

You have the right to leisure and rest from work.

Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family.

Everyone has the right to education.

Your intellectual property as an artist or scientist should be protected.

We are all entitled to social order so we can enjoy these rights.

*You have the responsibility to respect the rights of others*

**NO ONE CAN TAKE AWAY ANY OF YOUR RIGHTS**

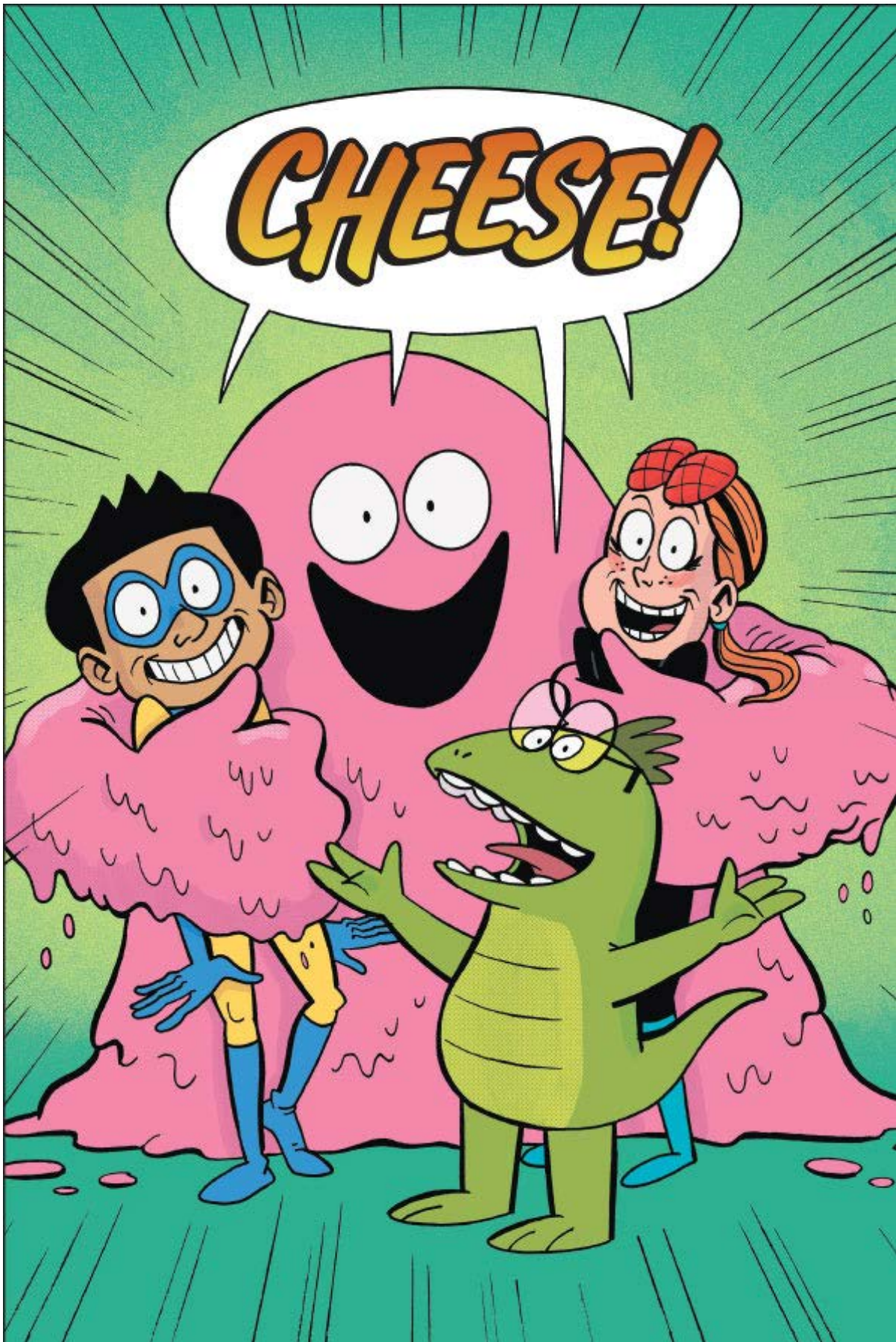
zen pencils

ARTWORK © GAVIN AUNG THAN 2018

## HUMAN RIGHTS POSTER

My kid-friendly version of the Declaration of Human Rights, now proudly hanging in numerous schools all over the world.





### **SUPER SIDEKICKS**

The team pose for their first official photo, from *Super Sidekicks #1: No Adults Allowed*.