

# Phoebe and Her Unicorn

By Dana Simpson

## Teacher's Guide

For Students in Grades 3-5

### **Galloping into the Realm of Language Arts with *Phoebe and Her Unicorn***

Phoebe Grizelda Howell is a somewhat awkward nine-year-old girl whose best friend just happens to be a magical unicorn named Marigold Heavenly Nostrils. Their unlikely friendship takes them on beautifully drawn, hilarious adventures that readers love. The dynamic between the vain mythical beast and the young daydreamer is comical and heartwarming. Their unusual bond draws students in and inspires them to read, write, analyze, discuss, investigate, and create in the classroom. No magic required!

This guide pairs with any *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* book and includes:

- a variety of lessons
- clear instructions
- corresponding activity sheets
- extended reading and writing prompts

...making teaching a zap! Trotting through the pages with Phoebe and Marigold, students will build vocabulary, analyze text and characters, hone essay writing skills, and engage in creative writing, classroom discussions, and group and individual projects.



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# Lesson Plan 1:

## English Language Arts

### Objective:

Student groups will select a book to read, participate in a group discussion, complete group presentation activities, and use the book as a springboard for individual creative writing exercises.

### 1) Collaborative Discussion

#### Neigh What? — Identifying Interesting Words and Phrases

##### Pre-Reading:

Ask students to keep a vocabulary notebook as they are reading the book. They should record any unfamiliar words or phrases, note their interpretation of the word from the context, and then use a dictionary to look up and record the real definition.

##### Post-Reading Discussion:

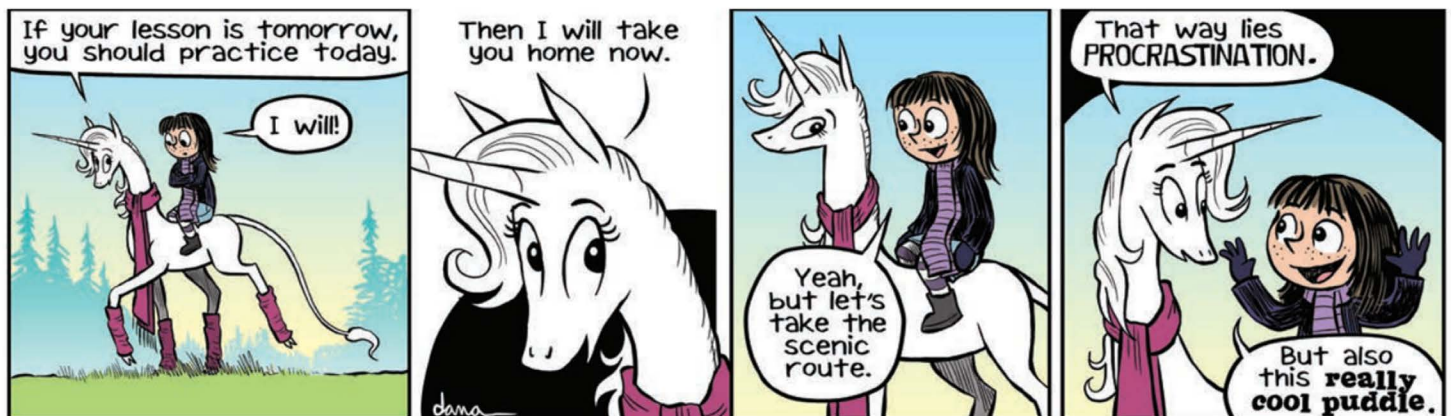
Ask students to share a favorite word or expression they found in their reading. Ask if any of these are new to most students? If so, were they able to guess the definition from the story context?

#### Life Is a Pasture — Discussing Significance of Setting

Ask students to identify and describe the different settings throughout their books. Then ask how the story would be different if it took place in a different setting. Would the story be the same if it took place at a different location or a different time? How does the setting make this unicorn story different from others students know?

#### Bask in Her Awesomeness — Character Analysis and Creative Assumption

Ask students if any of them have read other books or other graphic novels about unicorns. Have they watched movies or cartoons about unicorns? What do they know about other unicorns from these other stories? How is Marigold alike or different from other unicorns? How would the story be different if Marigold acted like a different unicorn (perhaps one from an earlier mentioned example)?



## 2) Group Activity

### Friend, Frenemy, or Archenemy — Character Analysis and Creative Assumption

Divide the class into small groups and ask them to pick two characters. Have them analyze the relationship between those characters. Are they family, friends, frenemies, archenemies, or something else? How does the relationship between those characters affect the story?

Have each group find examples in their books to support their analysis. Then, brainstorm how those scenes would be different if the characters' relationships changed and present their examples to the class.



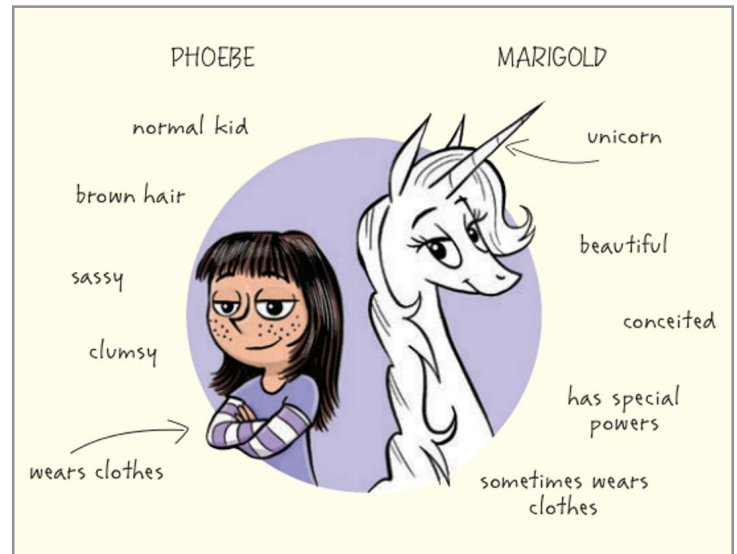
## 3) Creative Writing

### Hooves or Hands — Character Compare and Contrast

Ask students to compare and contrast two of their favorite characters using the **Character Compare and Contrast Activity Sheet** (p.13).

### Sparkle On — Writing a Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph

With the information students wrote in their Venn diagram activity sheet, have them write a compare-and-contrast paragraph using the prompts on the **Writing a Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph Activity Sheet** (p.14).



### What Does It Mean? — Investigating Adjectives

Have students choose adjectives from their books and vocab notebooks, or select their own to fill out the **What Does It Mean? Activity Sheet** (p.15-16). Using three to five of the students' collective adjectives, have students write one to two paragraph stories using them.

Or challenge students, just for fun, to write a sentence with as many adjectives as possible. The sentence has to make sense! Depending on students' prior knowledge, you may want to discuss the use of commas between modifiers.

## 4) Art

### Work Your Magic — Designing a Strip Using Comic Elements

Have students flip through a *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* book to find examples of how cartoonists imply expression through lettering and drawing styles. For example:

Speech bubbles — this shows that someone is talking.

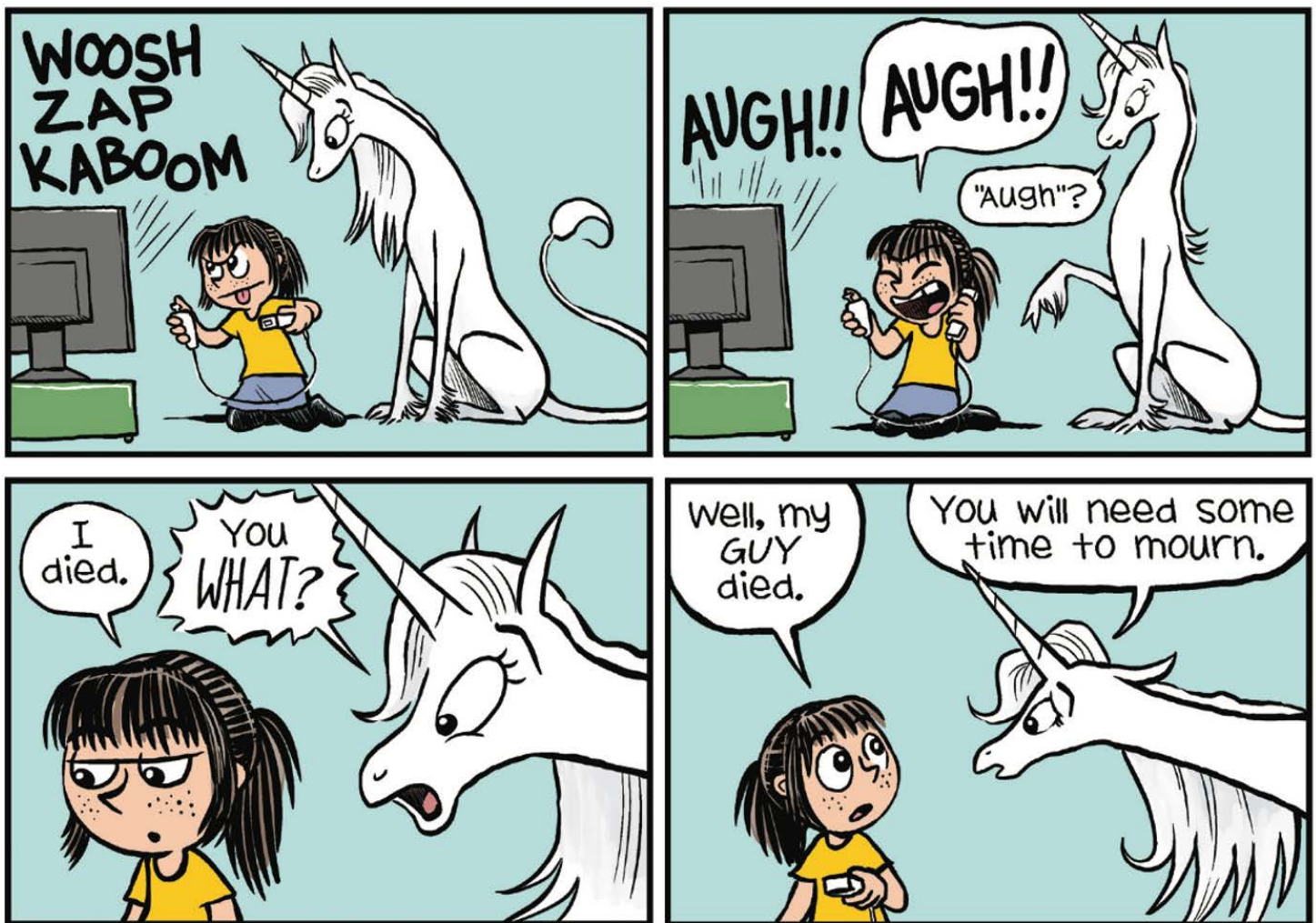
Jagged edges — this shows that the person speaking is unhappy, angry, or very excited.

Bold type, normal letters — this shows that someone is emphasizing.

Bold type, large letters — this shows that someone is shouting.

Words or symbols outside of speech bubbles — this shows sound effects.

Challenge students to design comic strips of their own using at least three of these elements and the **Create Your Own Cartoon Strip Activity Sheet** (p.17-18).



# Lesson Plan 2:

## English Language Arts

### Objective:

Student groups will select a book to read, participate in a group discussion, complete group presentation activities, and use the book as a springboard for individual creative writing exercises.

### 1) Reading and Discussion

#### Procedure:

#### Before Reading — Walk Through the Book

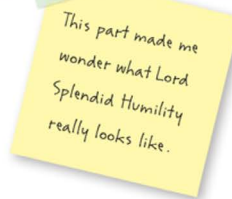
- Take students on a quick book walk through the book without reading the dialogue. Ask students what they think the book is about.
- Ask students to point out who they think the main characters are in the comic, describe them, and make predictions about the characters based on visual cues.
- Tell students that as they read, they will be making notes about their own reactions to the story. Show students this list of the kinds of things they might make note of:
  - o This part made me laugh.
  - o This part made me sad or worried.
  - o This part made me wonder.
  - o This part surprised me.
  - o I didn't understand this part.
  - o This part reminds me of another story.
  - o I would change this part because...

Add to the list any additional types of notes that students suggest. Display the list in the classroom for students to refer to as they read. Remind students that in comics, information comes from the words as well as the pictures (and the way they work together), so they should make notes about the drawings as well as the dialogue.



## During Reading — Observe the Characters

- Give students sticky notes. Tell them that as they read, they should jot down on the sticky notes any thoughts they have related to the list they made earlier and stick their notes to the pages. They will be referencing these notes later, so they should be legible. (If sticky notes are not available, student can write on small scraps of paper and tuck them between the pages like bookmarks).



## After Reading — Discussion

- Tell students that they will be discussing the book in small groups. Either review your class rules and procedures for discussion, or have students create guidelines or rules (e.g., talk when it's your turn; be a good listener; come to the group prepared).
- With students, list some sentence starts that will help them have positive conversations (e.g., I agree/I disagree because...; I'm confused about...; In my opinion...).
- Place students in small discussion groups. These can be teacher-assigned or student choice. Let students know that they don't need to write anything down for this part (unless they want to), but that they should have an engaging discussion that includes all members of the group. Display the following discussion directions for students to refer to during their group discussion:
  - o Summarize: What was the story about?
  - o Describe each character (using evidence from both the images and the text).
  - o Share with the group the parts of the story you marked with sticky notes.
- Have each group report back to the class on how their discussion went. Have students share any exciting discoveries they made about the book or about each other. Discuss what might be improved in future discussions.



## 2) Writing

### Magic Quest(ion) — Writing a Complex, Text-Based Question

Distribute a copy of the **Complex, Text-Based Question Activity Sheet** (p.19) to each group. With students, review the concept of a complex, text-based question. A text-based question is one that someone should be able to answer by looking at the words and pictures in the book. A complex question uses words like how and why and requires an answer of more than a word or two. Review the examples and non-examples on the activity sheet with students.

Direct students to work together with their group to create a complex, text-based question about the book and write it in the first column of the chart. Monitor the groups and assist as necessary so that every group has a complex, text-based question.

Have each group trade papers with another group. On the paper they receive, they should work together to find text evidence to answer the question, looking at both the words and the pictures, and write their evidence and answer in the chart.



Have each group return their completed paper to the group that wrote the question. Ask each group to share with the class the question they wrote and the text evidence and answers they received.

### Walk a Mile in my Horn — Write from a Character's Point of View

Every character has a different point of view and a different side to the story. In this exercise, have students explore the points of view of other characters in the story. Ask them what the story would be like if another character was the main character instead of Phoebe. What adventures would they go on with Marigold? Would that character even befriend Marigold in the first place? How would their action differ from Phoebe's as the main character? Have students write down one or two ideas.



### 3) Art

#### Create A Comic

Using Dana Simpson's **Cartooning Guide** and the **Create Your Own Cartoon Strip Activity Sheet** (p. 20-25), have students create their own comics with the different point of view ideas they created before. Students can use other ideas, but the different point of view could be used as an easy, creative springboard into the comic strip.

#### Behold My Splendor! — Character Role-Play

Give students an opportunity to act out the scenarios they created in their comics. Remind students of the point of view that they are seeing and acting through. Give students time to create props or costumes, if desired, and to plan and rehearse their performances. Let students present their skits and have the class discuss the point of view and reasoning behind each action.



# Extended Reading and Writing

- Students will identify character actions and motivations in a *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* book of their choice.
- Students will create autobiographical four-panel comics based on real-life situations in which they show both action and motivation.
- Students will observe and discuss ways to convey action and feeling in comics and use what they learn to create their own comics.



## Materials:

- Copies of *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* books
- **Character Actions and Motivations Activity Sheet** (p.26)
- **Motivate to Action! Comic Activity Sheet** (p.27)
- Pencils
- Colored pencils, markers, or other art supplies

## Grade 3

### 1) Reading

- Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.
- Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

### 2) Writing

- With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

## Grade 4

### 1) Reading

- Identify a character, setting, or event in the book that has specific details revealed in both text and images (e.g., a character's thoughts, word, and/or actions).
- Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, word, or actions).

### 2) Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## Grade 5

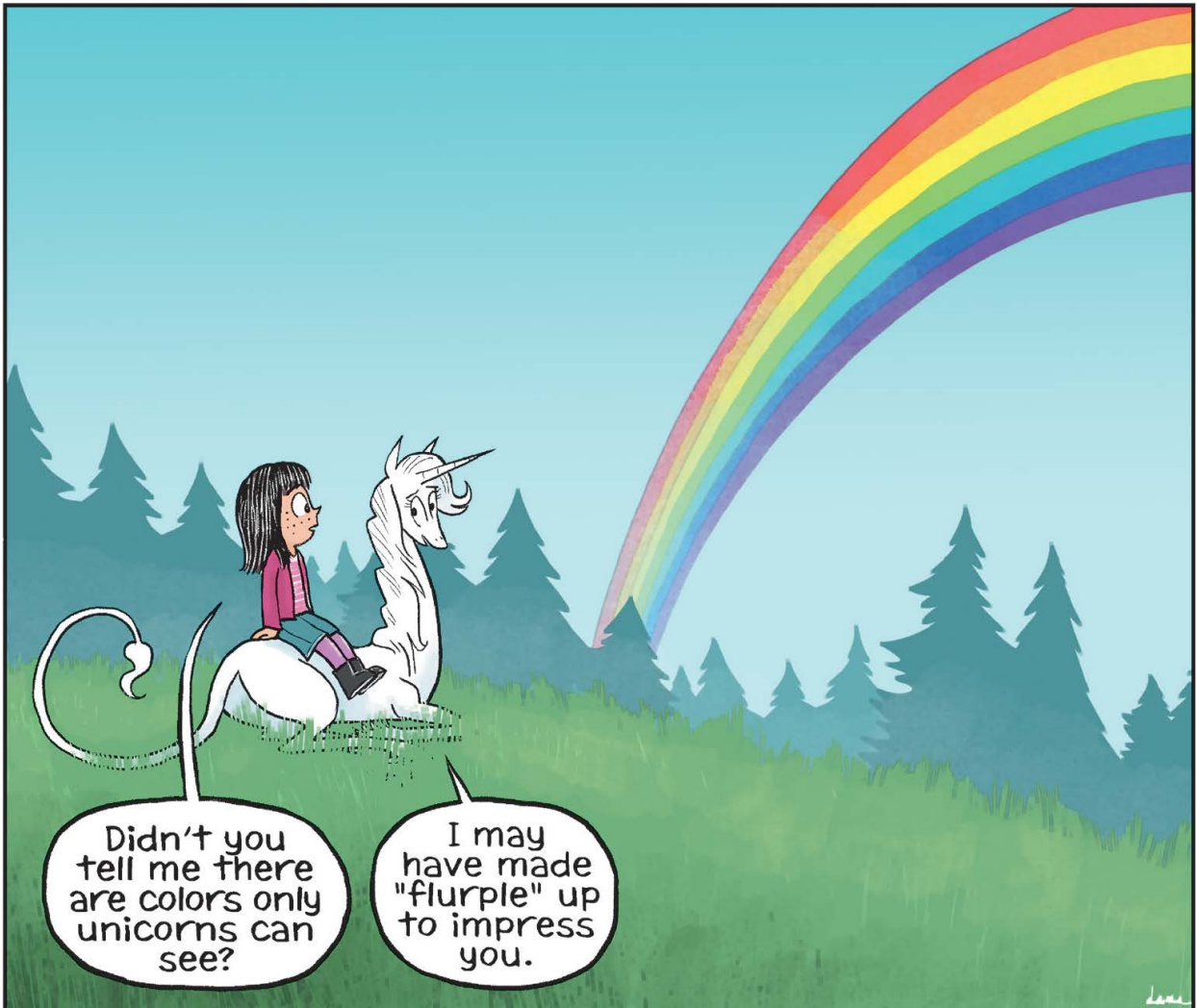
### 1) Reading

- As students read, have them look for two or more characters, settings, or events in the story that can be compared and contrasted with specific details found in both the text and images.
- Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).



### 2) Writing

- Have students write a compare and contrast paragraph using specific details found in their reading.



# Activity Sheets

## Lesson 1:

- Character Compare and Contrast
- Writing a Compare-and-Contrast Paragraph
- What Does It Mean?
- Create Your Own Cartoon Strip

## Lesson 2:

- Complex, Text-Based Question
- Dana Simpson's Cartooning Guide
- Create Your Own Cartoon Strip

## Extended Reading and Writing:

- Character Actions and Motivations
- Motivate to Action! Comic

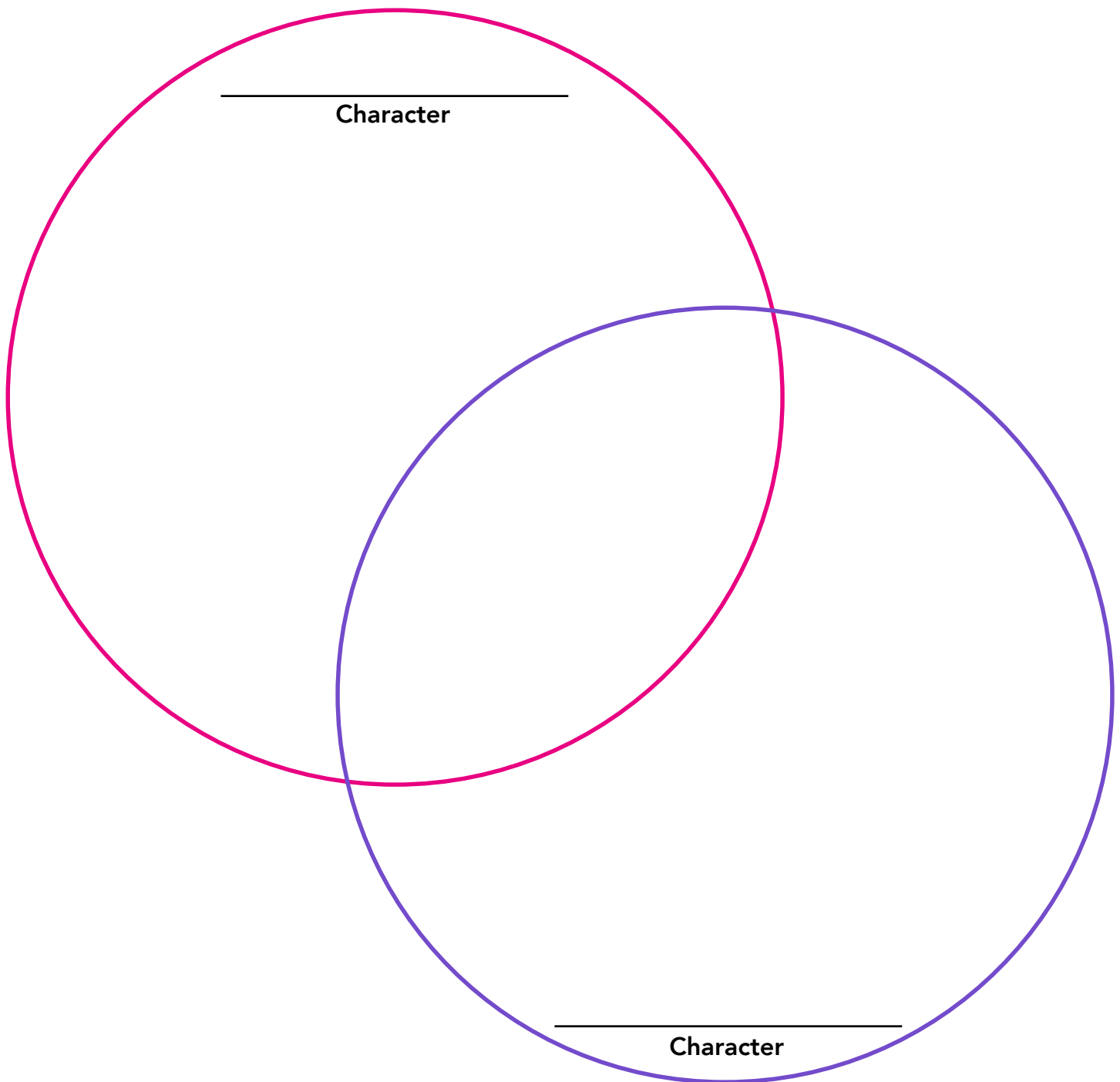


NAME(S) \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# Character Compare and Contrast

**Directions:** Write the names of your two favorite characters in the blanks. In the circle surrounding the first character's name, write some things that make that character unique. Repeat this step in the circle surrounding the second character's name. In the middle, write things that both characters have in common. Be sure to list all kinds of characteristics: physical traits, actions, feelings, things they say, relationships with other characters, etc.



# Writing a Compare-And-Contrast Paragraph

**Directions:** Use the information in your Venn diagram to write a compare-and-contrast paragraph about the two characters you chose. You can use the guide below to write your paragraph. Be sure to include:

- Details about the similarities and/or differences
- Signal words or phrases to emphasize the similarities and differences:

**Alike:** *alike, same as, similar to, equally, in common, as well as, both, also*

**Different:** *but, while, different from, however, although, instead of, on the other hand*

**1.** Write a topic sentence that names the two characters and tells whether they are alike, different, or both.

**2.** Write a sentence that compares and/or contrasts the characters' physical traits.

**3.** Write a sentence that compares and/or contrasts the characters' personality traits.

**4.** Write a sentence that compares and/or contrasts the characters' relationships with other characters.

**5.** Write a concluding sentence that retells the major similarities and differences of the characters.

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

## GAME CARD

Directions: Create a card for the *What Does It Mean?* game by following these steps:

1. Choose an adjective and write it in plain text in the top box on the front of the card.
2. In the second box, write your adjective in special lettering. The style of lettering should give some idea about the meaning of the adjective.
3. In the third box, write a sentence using your adjective. The sentence must show the meaning of the word in context.
4. In the last box, write a few nouns that your adjective might be used to modify.
5. Cut out your *What Does It Mean?* card and fold it in half along the dotted line.
6. On the back of your card, write a definition of your adjective. You can use a dictionary if you like.

<b>Adjective:</b>	<b>Definition:</b>
<b>Special lettering:</b>	
<b>Sentence:</b>	
<b>Nouns the adjective can modify:</b>	



<b>Adjective:</b>	<b>Definition:</b>
GRACEFUL	Pleasing or attractive in appearance or movement; characterized by elegance or beauty
<b>Special lettering:</b>	
<i>Graceful</i>	
<b>Sentence:</b>	
The ballerina's dance was beautiful, smooth, and graceful.	
<b>Nouns the adjective can modify:</b>	
Dancer, butterfly, swan	

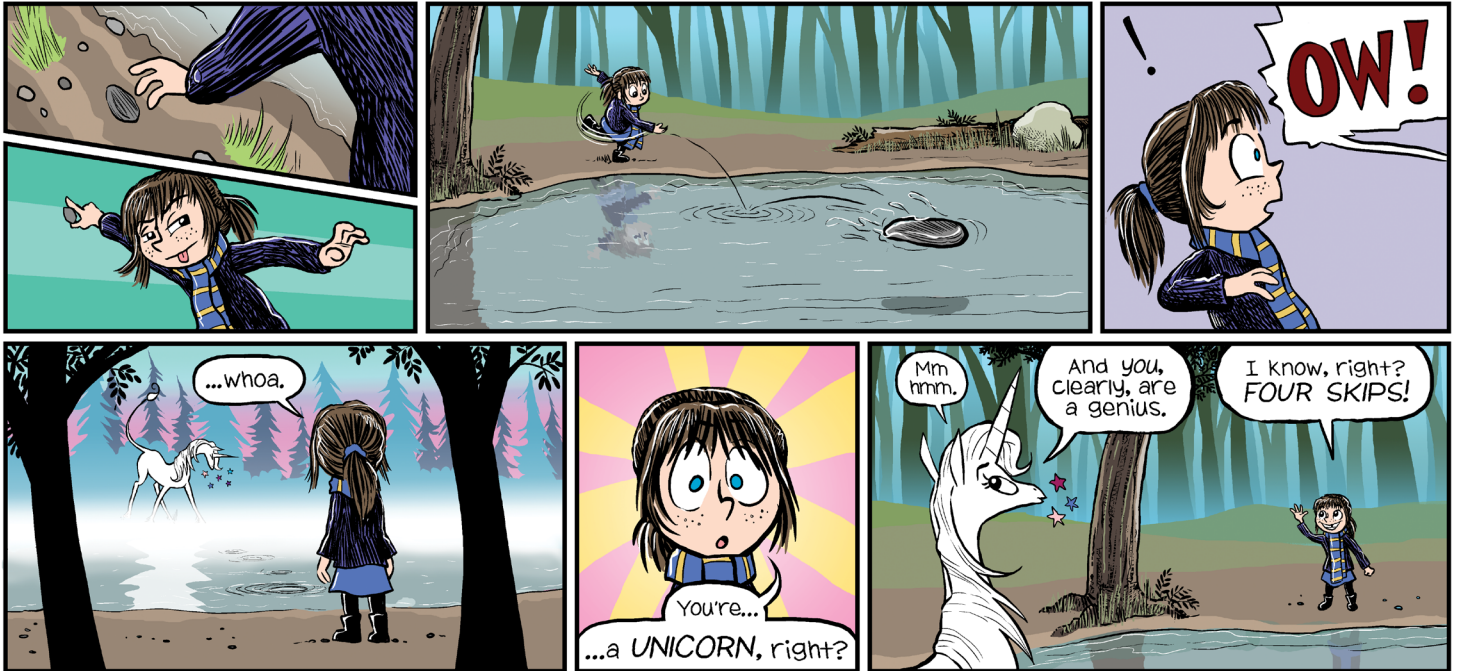


<b>Adjective:</b>	<b>Definition:</b>
TERRIFYING	Causing extreme fear or dread; extremely frightening
<b>Special lettering:</b>	
<b>TERRIFYING</b>	
<b>Sentence:</b>	
The movie was so terrifying that the entire audience screamed and ran out.	
<b>Nouns the adjective can modify:</b>	
Monster, nightmare	





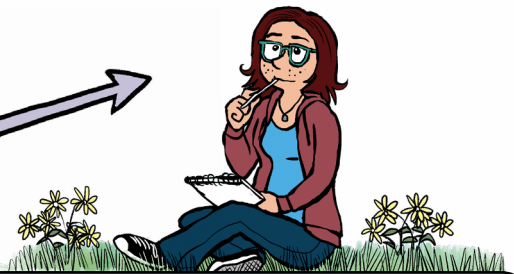
# Create Your Own Cartoon Strip with Phoebe and Her Unicorn



The comic strip *Phoebe and Her Unicorn* started when Phoebe skipped a rock across a pond, accidentally hit a unicorn in the face, and was granted a single wish... which she used to make the unicorn, Marigold Heavenly Nostrils, her obligational best friend. They may have gotten off to a rocky start, but now Phoebe and Marigold are inseparable!

## Instructions

Phoebe and  
Her Unicorn  
Creator Dana  
Simpson



- Imagine you have a magical creature for a best friend. It can be a unicorn, dragon, goblin, or something completely different!
- Look at the example to see how Dana Simpson sets the stage for the meeting and ends with a punchline.
- Draw your own comic on the other side of this sheet, telling the made-up story of how you met your magical friend. Try to include a beginning, middle, and end.
- Once you're done, give your comic strip a name!

# Create Your Own Cartoon Strip

&

(your name)

(possessive  
adjective)

(magical creature)

A 2x2 grid of empty rectangular boxes for drawing a cartoon strip. The grid is composed of four large, empty rectangular frames arranged in two rows and two columns, separated by thin black lines. The top-left frame is intended for the character's name, the top-right for a possessive adjective, and the bottom two frames for the main drawing of the cartoon strip.

### Complex, Text-Based Question

As a group, create a complex, text-based question about this book and write it in the chart below. Someone should be able to answer your question by looking at the words and pictures in the book, but it shouldn't be an easy question to answer in just a few words. Use words like how and why to make your question more complex.

#### Non-example and example questions:

- \* Too Easy: What color are Marigold's scarf and legwarmers?
- \* Not Text-Based: What was your favorite part of the story?
- \* Complex, Text-Based Question: How does Phoebe feel about Max? How can you tell?

Once you've written your complex, text-based question, trade papers with another group.

On the paper you receive, work together to find text evidence to answer each question, looking at both the words and the pictures, and use this evidence to write an answer to the question.

Question	Text Evidence in Words	Text Evidence in Pictures	Answer

# Phoebe and Her Unicorn

Dana Simpson's  
Cartooning Guide



Andrews McMeel KIDS

# Dana Simpson's Cartooning Guide

Like all creative projects, comics can be made in any number of ways! Here is Dana Simpson's process. After reading how she creates her comics, create your own with the activity at the end!

First, I have to come up with ideas.

I like to leave my house to do that. My house is full of distractions.



When I draw them in my notebook, they look like this:



It doesn't have to be much, just enough to show who's talking and what they're doing. (Sometimes, Marigold is just an M, or Phoebe is just a P.)



I take a picture of it on my phone and send it to my editor, so she can tell me what she thinks.

Sometimes she thinks something could be clearer, or funnier.

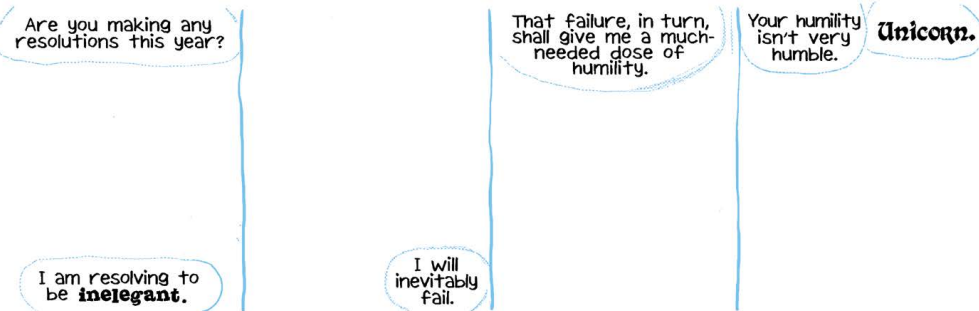
Other times, she just says:



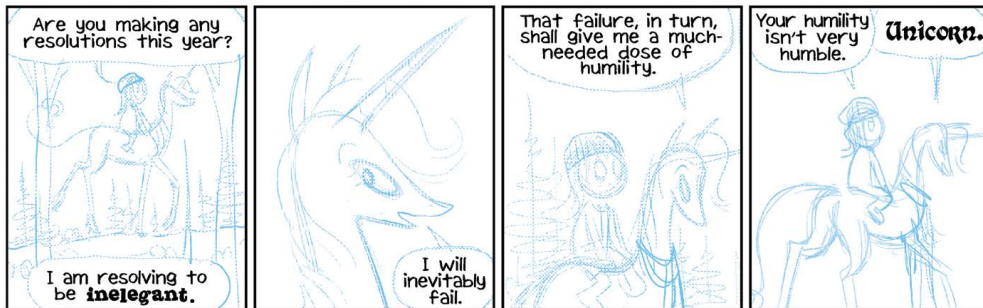
Once she approves, I get to work on the finished artwork. I do all that on my computer.



First, I add the lettering, so I know how much space I have for the artwork.



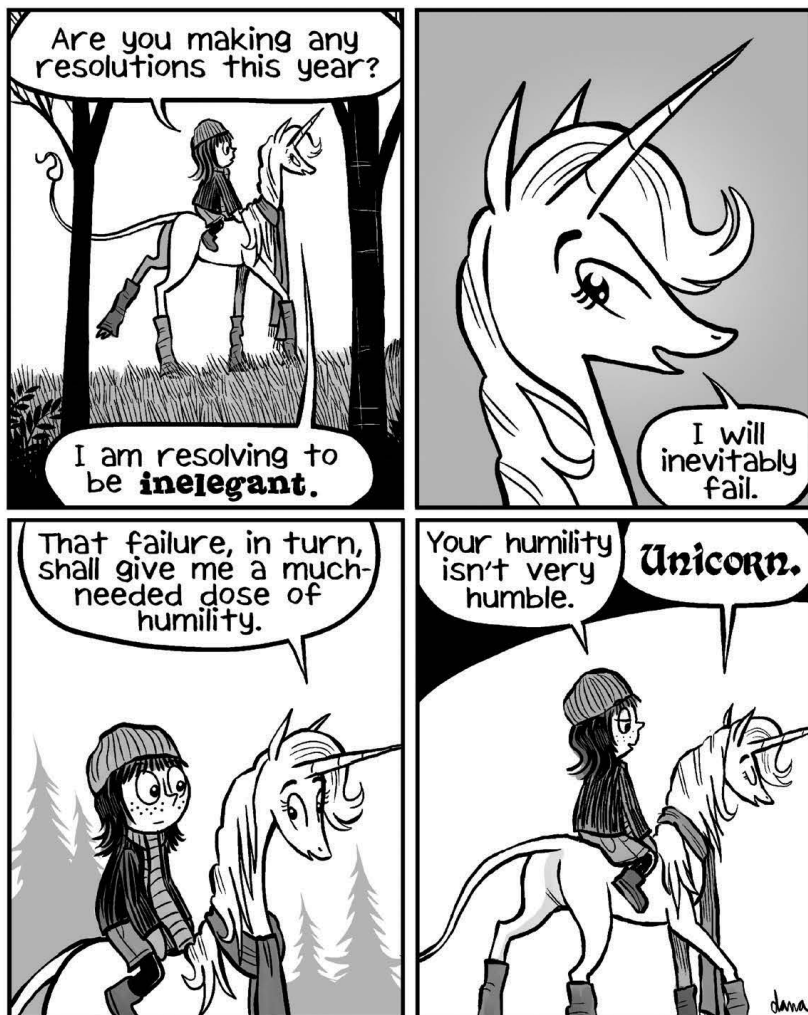
Then, I add the rough "pencil" lines, usually in light blue.



Next, I add the black "ink" lines...



Finally, I add in various shades of gray.



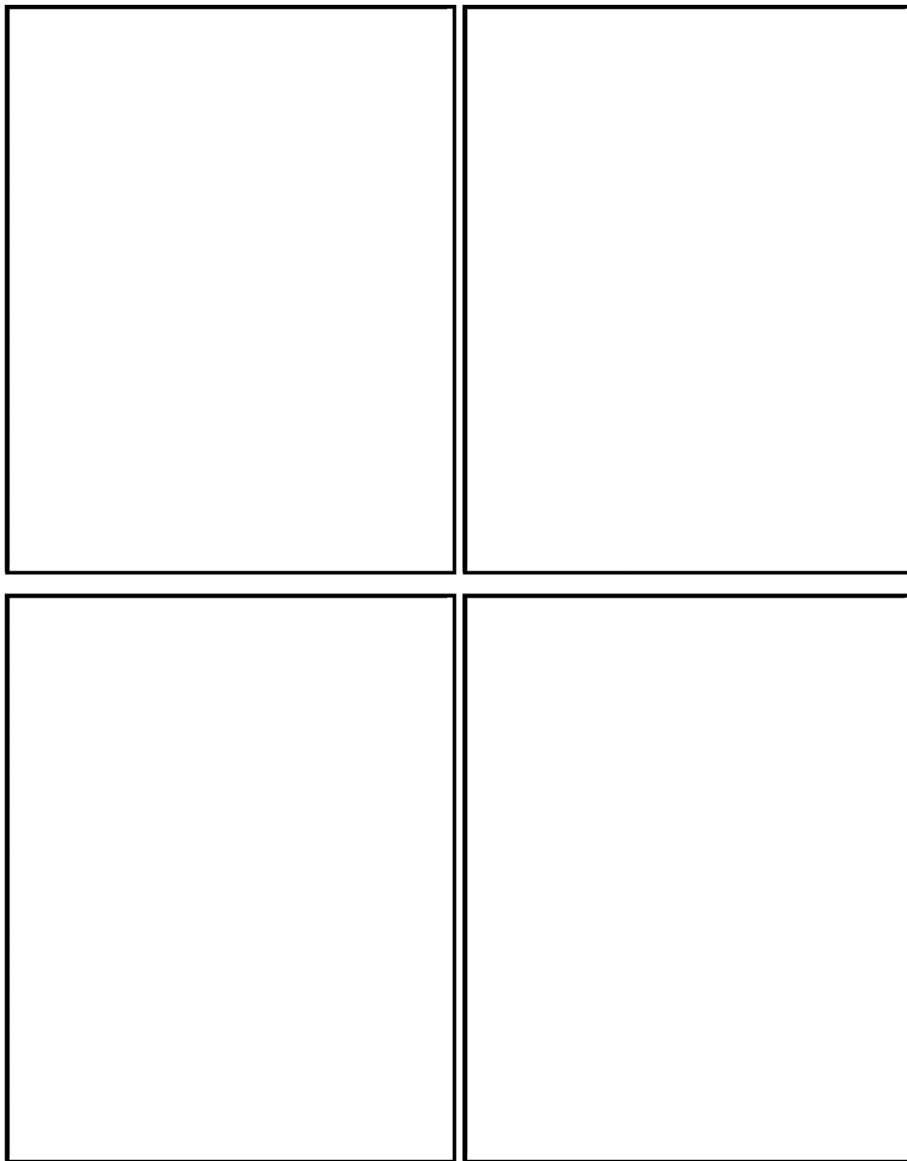
(A colorist who works for my publisher does most of the coloring, and as you can see throughout this book, he does a pretty amazing job!)



# Create Your Own Cartoon Strip

Now it's your turn! In the space below, draw a four-panel cartoon strip. It can be about anything you want, but if you need ideas, try telling a story about something fun you've done with a friend!

Remember, this is just one way to make a cartoon! After you're done, try experimenting with different panel sizes, close-ups, and styles of speech bubbles!



# Character **ACTIONS** and **MOTIVATIONS**

Name:

Date:

Directions: Choose three comics from the book in which a character performs an action. For each comic, write the page number and the name of the character. In each "Action" section, write and draw what the character does in the comic (action). Then, in the "Motivation" section, write and draw what you think the character wanted, needed, thought, or felt that caused him or her to make those choices (motivation).

1. Page number:

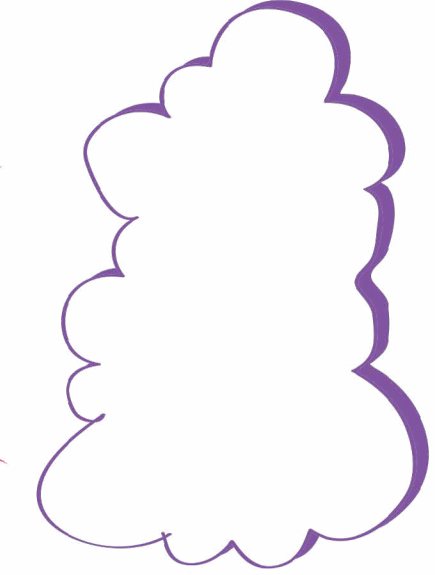
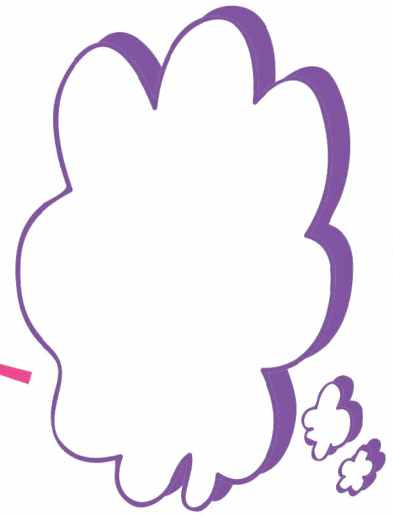
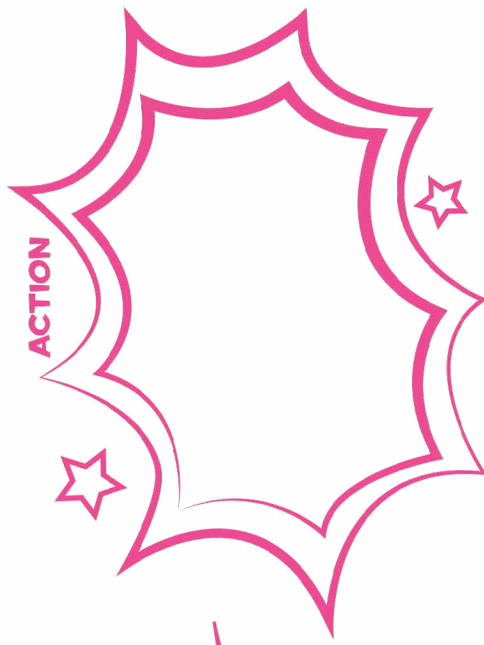
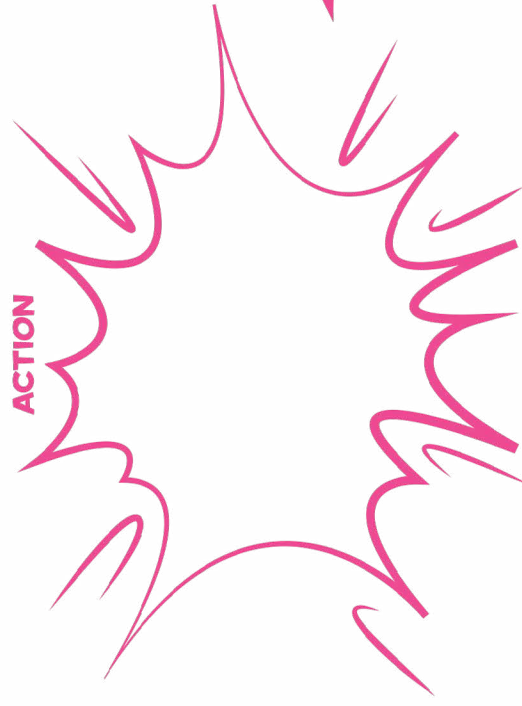
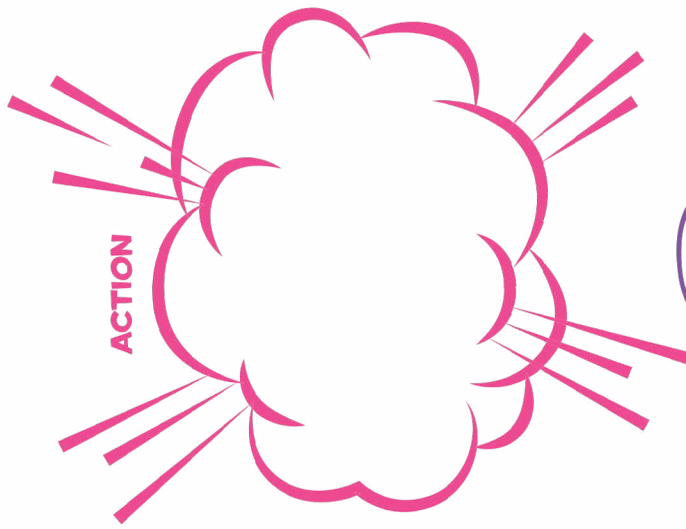
Character:

2. Page number:

Character:

2. Page number:

Character:



# MOTIVATE to ACTION! Comic

Name:

Date:

Directions: Think of a situation in your life in which you might have to make a choice about how to behave. What action would you take? What would your motivation be for taking that action?

My Situation: \_\_\_\_\_

My Action: \_\_\_\_\_

My Motivation: \_\_\_\_\_

Using the comic frame below, sketch out your idea for a comic about the situation starring YOU. Be creative in your use of panel-to-panel action, within-panel action, and feeling symbols—and make sure that your comic is clear and easy to read.

