



Between the pages

11-12



Between the pages

Topic: Literature

Level: Secondary education (11-12 years old)

Concepts: Comics terminology and composition – Camera shots

Time required: +/- 30 min

Summary of the activity: While exploring the school library, you find a torn-up comic book and get transported within the story. The characters ask for your help to repair the damaged pages so you can escape back into the real world.

Material needed: A pen, two blank comic pages (provided) and... motivation!

Itinerary/Process Summary: This is a classical path with multiple choices. The right choice leads to the continuity of the story. Generally, the wrong choice leads to an explanation and goes back to the previous paragraph to try again. Sometimes, the wrong answer leads to another exercise to solve before joining the right answer path.

Practical advice: Considering the lower level of difficulty of this adventure, it could be used at the beginning of a sequence as an introduction to the topic. The students can complete the blank pages throughout the adventure with the corresponding terms (page components and types of shots), which are all highlighted in bold in this adventure.

Download all the visual materials [here](#).

1

Your teacher has asked you to go find a specific book in the school library. While roaming the shelves, you realise a few books have fallen on the ground. As you kneel down to pick them up, an old torn-up comic book unexpectedly opens on its own, and you are suddenly surrounded by a very bright light. The floor under your feet seems to shake and wobble.

You close your eyes and scream in shock, filled with confusion. You can feel your body being lifted off the ground and thrown forward, turning in all directions as you fly through the blinding light. What's going on?!

 **Go to paragraph 11.**



2

That doesn't seem quite right... The spiky bubble could be related to emotions like anger or shock, but those feelings can also be expressed in a regular balloon or even in a cloudy one...

Maybe it's something else.

- The shape is related to the meaning of the words.

 **Go to paragraph 10.**

- The shape is related to the type of speech.

 **Go to paragraph 8.**

3

Correct! Those rectangles can contain information about the places where the story is happening or where the characters are going or coming from, especially if there are some missing elements in the drawings.

But that's not all they can be used for... What else do you think they can also include?

- Time periods to develop the evolution of the story.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 9.**

- Descriptions to specify what the character is doing.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 17.**

- All of the above. ➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 12.**

4

Oops, that's not it... They are full written sentences, not sounds.

That means it must be the other option!

→ **Go to paragraph 16.**

5

Oops, that's not correct. Those aren't the names of emotions...

You'll figure it out. Try again!

- They represent locations. ➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 7.**

- They represent sounds. ➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 18.**

6

"I can't remember what those are called," one of the boys wonders.

"I know it's a weird word..."

The other exclaims: "A word which represents a sound is called an **onomatopoeia**. Very weird indeed! But very useful in a world without sound!"

The other says: "Now that we know what they mean, we can direct them to the pages where they belong based on the events and actions that cause such sounds. Thank you very much! You can go to the next pages now and see what can be done to help the other characters!"



"Good luck!" they both chant as they wave goodbye. Time to turn the page!

 **Go to paragraph 14.**

7

Oops, that's not correct. Those don't seem to be the names of places...

You'll figure it out. Try again!

- They represent emotions.  **Go to paragraph 5.**
- They represent sounds.  **Go to paragraph 18.**

8

Correct! The characters smile and confirm. One explains: "The normal balloon-shaped bubbles are the most common for regular speech. The spiky shape means someone is screaming or being loud because of excitement, anger or panic. Like you right now!! They can take different shapes depending on the emotion that's expressed. For example, some have flowery outlines to represent a loving tone, or discontinued or wobbly outlines to symbolise that the character is whispering or mumbling."

The other one adds: "As for the cloud shape, it means that the words are not spoken but thought by the character. It's thus called a **thought balloon**. And sometimes, they don't contain words but symbols, like a question mark, exclamation point or other icons and **ideograms** like a heart, lightning bolt or lightbulb, to represent an emotion or mindset expressed nonverbally by the character. Those can appear outside of speech balloons too."

 **Go to paragraph 13.**

9

Correct! Those rectangles can contain information about when the action is taking place or what time period has gone by between the different panels... But that's not all they can be used for... What else do you think they can also include?

- Places to identify where the story is happening.

 **Go to paragraph 3.**

- Descriptions to specify what the character is doing.

 **Go to paragraph 17.**

- All of the above.  **Go to paragraph 12.**

10

That doesn't seem to be right... Their questions were in normal balloons with different meanings, and your curiosity about the different shapes was in a cloud... Maybe it's something else.

- The shape is related to the type of speech.

➡➡➡➡➡➡ ➡ **Go to paragraph 8.**

- The shape is related to the emotions of the character.

➡➡➡➡➡➡ ➡ **Go to paragraph 2.**

11

After a few seconds, you fall to the ground and slowly open your eyes. The light has disappeared, but you are not in the school library anymore... You discover the decor of a city, but it all looks like a drawing... You were transported into the comic book!! How could this happen?!



Looking around, you see two men walking towards you, seeming concerned. They are drawn characters, and their lips move but make no sound.

“Hey! Why are you on the floor? Are you ok?”

“You look weird... You're not from here, right?”

You watch as the words appear above them inside balloon shapes with a weird pointy element at the bottom. What is this?!

- A sound effect ➡➡➡➡➡➡ ➡ **Go to paragraph 4.**

- A speech balloon ➡➡➡➡➡➡ ➡ **Go to paragraph 16.**

12

Exactly! Those rectangles could contain different types of information to develop the story. It could be information about when the story is occurring or what time period has gone by between the different panels (such as “An hour later”), specifications about the places where the story is happening or where the characters are going or coming from in case it isn't clear in the images (“In front of his apartment”), or descriptions of actions and events that the characters are going through (“He relaxed on the couch for a while”). They can also provide the general context of the story or characters' thoughts or mindsets.

They are called **captions** and are part of the narration, providing additional information to the drawings, outside of the character dialogues, to add to the story and improve the reader's understanding.

Now that you have identified what's missing on this page, the backgrounds and objects slowly start to appear, giving more information about where the character is and what he's doing in each panel.



The story can now write itself again, thanks to your help!

The character remains silent and unmoving, but you know this page is fixed since you can now understand what it's telling. You can turn to the next one!

Additional exercise:

Imagine the "story" of this character and the purpose or message of this short comic. Write down the 3 texts that could appear in the rectangles. You can use the drawings shown here as inspiration or imagine a completely different setting that could match the first blank page.



Go to paragraph 19.

13

The two boys help you get back up on your feet, and one says:

"I'm not sure how you ended up in this comic but now that you are here, we could use your help! This comic book is old and damaged, but it's also magic! It knows you are curious and good-hearted; that's why it brought you here to help us!"

The other explains: "Some pages are missing parts, and some characters and stories could disappear if the book keeps deteriorating! There is a lot that we cannot do since we can't leave the pages that we were drawn on. But maybe you can travel through the pages and help the other characters repair their stories! I'm sure the magic will guide you and allow you to go back to your world once all the pages are complete again!"

It seems you don't have much of a choice. Let's see what you can do.

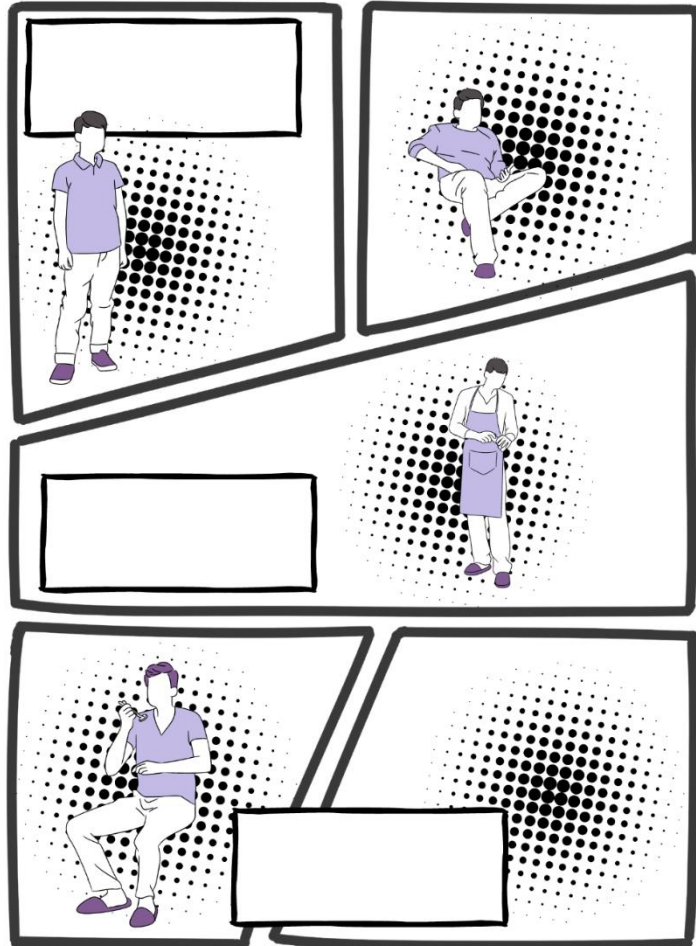


Go to paragraph 15.

14

You are now on a different page divided into 5 panels. It is mostly blank, apart from one simple character. You see him standing or sitting on different panels, but there are no backgrounds, objects or words, only three empty rectangles.

You realise that the character on this page does not speak and that everything but him is missing... Maybe if those rectangles were filled with something, the story would appear again!



What type of information should be placed in the rectangles and why?

- Time periods to develop the evolution of the story.

➤➤➤➤➤ ➔ **Go to paragraph 9.**

- Places to identify where the story is happening.

➤➤➤➤➤ ➔ **Go to paragraph 3.**

- Descriptions to specify what the character is doing.

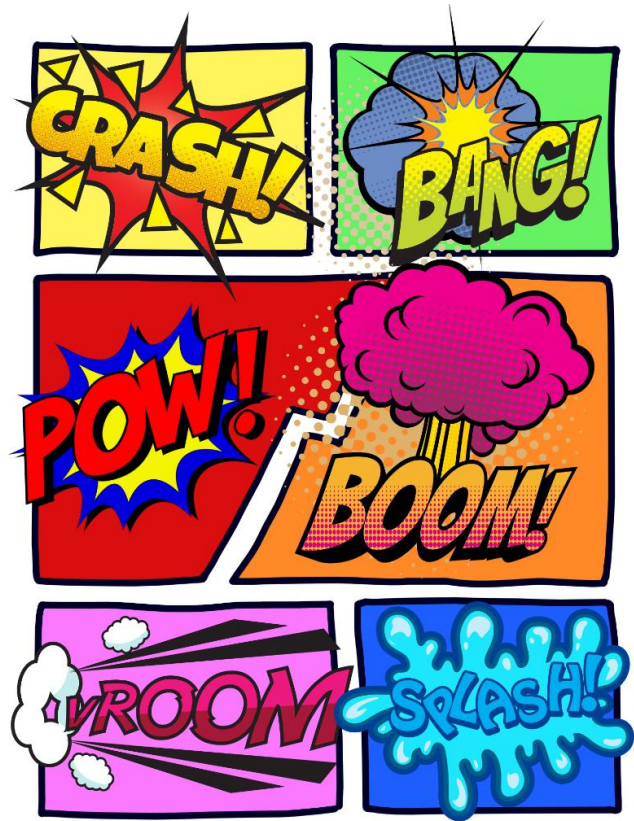
➤➤➤➤➤ ➔ **Go to paragraph 17.**

- All of the above.

➤➤➤➤➤ ➔ **Go to paragraph 12.**

15

One of the characters says: “The first thing you could do is help us identify what these elements on the next page are. See, in comics, a page is divided into “boxes” of different sizes and shapes. They are called **panels**, usually surrounded by **borders or outlines**, and inside of them are images, characters, words and events developing a story.”



The other boy continues: “On this next page, there are 6 panels, each one containing a strange word... These elements were originally on other pages all over this book, and they ended up here, but we do not know what they mean or where they belong...”

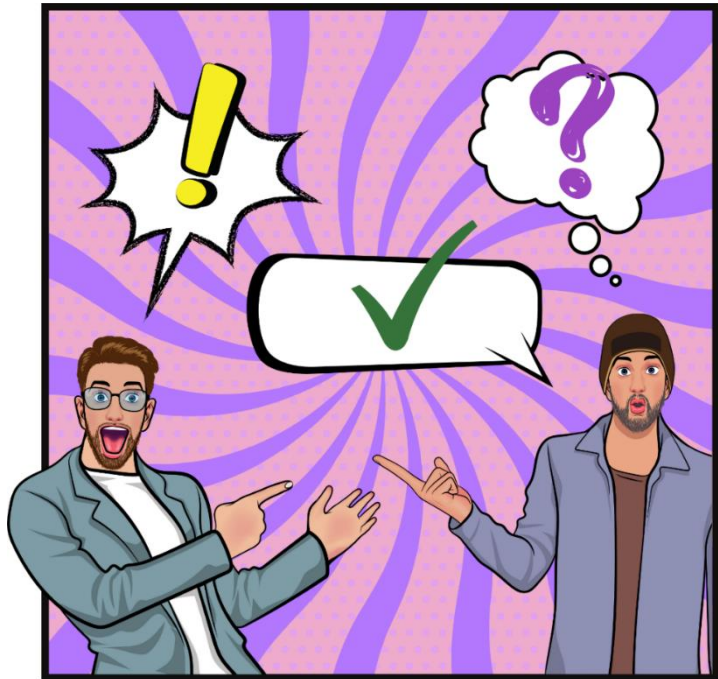
On the next page are these short words with colourful elements around them: “Crash”, “Bang”, “Pow”, “Boom”, “Vroom” and “Splash”.

What do those words mean? What are they used for?

- They represent emotions. >>> → Go to paragraph 5.
- They represent locations. >>> → Go to paragraph 7.
- They represent sounds. >>> → Go to paragraph 18.

Indeed, those are **speech balloons**, also known as word bubbles! They contain what a character is saying. They can be round, oval or rectangular and identify who is speaking with the **pointer** or **tail** aiming towards the character.

You try to speak, panicked by the situation, and your words appear in a spiky shape with a few exclamation marks around it.



"I'm not from this world! I don't know how I got here! I need to get out!"

Confused, you try to understand why this bubble is spiky instead of balloon-shaped. And as you wonder, another balloon forms, but it looks like a cloud with little circles linking it to you instead of a pointer. What does this mean?!

- The shape is related to the meaning of the words.

➡➡➡ ➔ **Go to paragraph 10.**

- The shape is related to the type of speech.

➡➡➡ ➔ **Go to paragraph 8.**

- The shape is related to the emotions of the character.

➡➡➡ ➔ **Go to paragraph 2.**

17

Correct! Those rectangles can contain information about the actions and events that the characters are going through, especially if some aren't shown in the image or if there are gaps between the panels.

But that's not all they can be used for... What else do you think they can also include?

- Time periods to develop the evolution of the story.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 9.**

- Places to identify where the story is happening.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 3.**

- All of the above.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 12.**

18

"Oh, that's right!" one of the men exclaims. "Since comic books do not have any audio, the noise of the actions needs to be expressed with words which could sound like what they represent."

"There are many other examples of sound effects in comics", confirms the other one. "Some are just the verb or noun of the sound, like 'squeak' or 'growl', and they are also used to describe the noises that animals make, like 'woof' or 'meow'! Isn't that fun?"

The other boy continues: "And sometimes, they are accompanied by visual representations of the sound, like explosions or clouds. For example, 'Vroom' represents the sound of a car and is surrounded by what is called **motion lines**, indicating a movement in a certain direction!"

→ **Go to paragraph 6.**

19

You are now on a Western-themed page, divided into 5 panels. You see a woman on a horse, shown in different shots and sizes throughout the page. “Hello, traveller. I have heard you are stuck in these fine parts. Such a pity,” she says calmly. “Well, as you can see, my page is a bit of a mess. The



panels are out of order, which makes the beginning of my story quite confusing for some. Can you help me put them back in order?"

You notice that each panel shows a different shot of the character's introduction, each shot having a different purpose and focus, providing different degrees of information. In which order do you think the panels should be placed?

- The first panel should be panel n°1. >>> → **Go to paragraph 21.**
- The first panel should be panel n°2. >>> → **Go to paragraph 30.**
- The first panel should be panel n°3. >>> → **Go to paragraph 23.**
- The first panel should be panel n°4. >>> → **Go to paragraph 27.**
- The first panel should be panel n°5. >>> → **Go to paragraph 24.**

20

Oops, that's not correct... There needs to be something else before this one. Try again!

 **Go back to paragraph 24.**

21

Oops, that's not correct... It'd be confusing if this were the first panel of the story. The reader would need more information before that. Try again!

 **Go back to paragraph 19.**

22

Oops, not quite... You're going too fast! Try again!

 **Go back to paragraph 26.**

23

Oops, that's not correct... It'd be very confusing if this were the first panel of the story. The reader would need more information before that. Try again!

 **Go back to paragraph 19.**

24

Correct! Panel n°5 should appear first to give a general context to the story, providing information about when and where the story will occur. It is called an **extreme wide shot**, depicting a large scene to show the overall landscape and environment. Therefore, it could also be called an **establishing shot**.

You also notice that this panel is composed of two different images stuck together with no space or **gutter** between them, merging into one panel instead of a **tier** of multiple panels in a horizontal line across the page.

Now that you know where to start, what would be the next panel?

- The next panel should be panel n°1.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 20.**

- The next panel should be panel n°2.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 26.**

- The next panel should be panel n°3.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 31.**

- The next panel should be panel n°4.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 25.**

(Check **paragraph 19** to see the page again)

25

Oops, that's not correct... There needs to be something else before this one. Try again!

↪ → **Go back to paragraph 24.**

26

Indeed! Panel n°2 shows the character within the decor and context, getting a bit closer to the subject of the story. It's called a **wide shot**.

Now that the landscape and context are set, which panel should be next?

- The next panel should be panel n°1.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 28.**

- The next panel should be panel n°3.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 22.**

- The next panel should be panel n°4.

➡➡➡ → **Go to paragraph 29.**

(Check **paragraph 19** to see the page again)

27

Oops, that's not correct... It'd be very confusing if this were the first panel of the story. The reader would need more information before that. Try again!



⚡ → **Go back to paragraph 19.**

28

Perfect! Panel n°1 starts to focus on the character. It is called a **full shot** and shows the character from head to toe.

You notice that we are getting closer and closer as we progress. It makes sense, as this order provides a larger context first before focusing on more precise elements of the story.

Based on that observation, which order do you think the last panels should be in?

- First panel n°3 then panel n°4.  **Go to paragraph 32.**
- First panel n°4 then panel n°3.  **Go to paragraph 35.**

(Check **paragraph 19** to see the page again)

29

Oops, not quite... You're going too fast! Try again!

 **Go back to paragraph 26.**

30

Oops, that's not correct... The reader would need more information before that. Try again!

 **Go back to paragraph 19.**

31

Oops, that's not correct... There needs to be something else before this one.
Try again!

 → **Go back to paragraph 24.**

32

Oops, that's not right... It must be the other option then!

 → **Go to paragraph 35.**

33

That doesn't seem right... This panel uses a **medium close-up shot**, which shows the character from the top of the head to the middle of the torso and does focus on emotions, but it doesn't show the threatening element here...

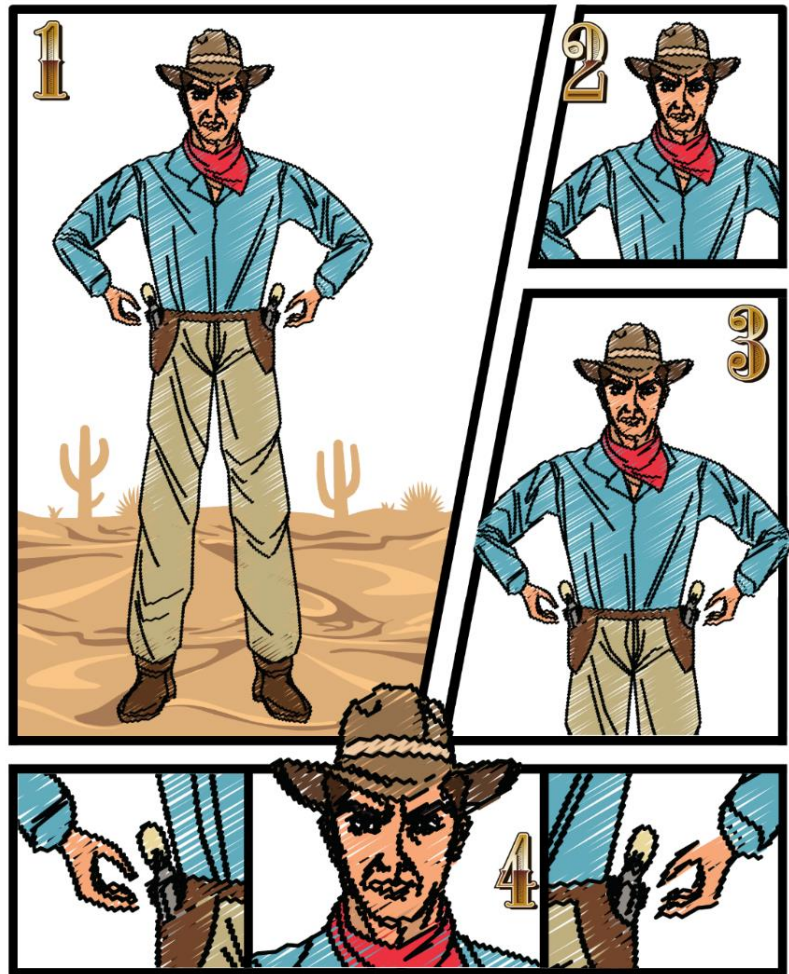
Which panel could seem more threatening?

 → **Go back to paragraph 34.**

34

You are now on another page with the same Western theme. This time, you see 4 panels with different shots of the same cowboy scowling at you, standing with his hands near the guns attached to each of his hips.

“Well, hello!” he says. “I hope I didn’t scare you too much! See, in this part of my story, I am



challenging my rival to a duel! Therefore, I need to appear threatening. Can you help me pick which of these shots would fit that purpose?”

- Panel n°1: Full shot. >>> → Go to paragraph 37.
- Panel n°2: Medium close-up shot. >>> → Go to paragraph 33.
- Panel n°3: Cowboy shot. >>> → Go to paragraph 39.
- Panel n°4: Close-up shots. >>> → Go to paragraph 36.

Perfect! Panel n°4 is called a **medium shot**, showing the character from the torso up, while panel n°3 is called an **extreme close-up shot**, focusing on a specific detail, such as the character's facial expression in this case, or an object, for example.

We now have all the panels in order, and indeed, they keep getting closer and closer to the character, as if the 'camera' was zooming in like in a movie scene.

The lady smiles at you: "Thank you very much, traveller. The beginning of my story is now in order. You can go on your way now! The next story concerns a friend of mine who may need

your help as well. You will be nearing the end of the book, so your adventure is almost over. I wish you a safe travel, stranger."

You wave goodbye as she rides her horse away into the sunset, and you turn the page for your next mission.



→ Go to paragraph 34.

36

Nice! This panel uses a series of 3 **close-up shots** which show a part of the character, such as the head from the shoulders up or a specific body part.

It can also show an object or part of the environment and is less close and specific than the **extreme close-up** that you saw on the previous page, which focused on the woman's face, but it has a similar purpose of focusing on a specific element. In this case, the cowboy's facial expression and his hands close to the guns definitely provide a threatening vibe.

Another panel could also appear threatening. Which one?

- You haven't found the two threatening panels?

 **Go back to paragraph 34.**

- You already found the two threatening panels?

 **Go to paragraph 38.**

37

That doesn't seem right... This panel uses a **full shot** which shows the character from head to toe, displaying their actions, general attitude and environment, but it doesn't focus much on a specific emotion and doesn't seem that aggressive.

Which panel could seem more threatening?

 **Go back to paragraph 34.**

38

Now that you've figured that panels n° 3 and 4 would fit the character's purpose of appearing threatening, he tips his hat in appreciation:

"Thank you very much for your help, stranger! This was your last mission! I now have to battle my rival. Farewell!"

You wave goodbye and turn the page for the last time.



Go to paragraph 40.

39

Nice! This panel uses a **cowboy shot** which shows the character from the top of the head to the middle of their thighs. It's called that because it is used in Western movies to show the holsters at the hips of a gunslinger. Thus, it does fit the aim of appearing threatening!

It's quite similar to a **medium wide shot**, which shows characters from the knee up.

Another panel could also appear threatening. Which one?

- You haven't found the two threatening panels?

 **Go back to paragraph 34.**

- You already found the two threatening panels?

 **Go to paragraph 38.**

40

It seems you've reached the end of the comic book; there are no more stories to complete or panels to fix!

Suddenly, the pages start to flip quickly as you travel between the different stories you have just explored. The **onomatopoeias** and **motion lines** return to the right pages, the **captions** and **speech balloons** fill with the right sentences, the different **shots** are all in the right order and every character you've met smiles at you with gratitude.

The pages continue flipping as a bright light starts to surround you, and you can see the front cover of the book closing as you are transported back to the school library.

The comic book, which looked old and torn-up before, now looks complete and brand new! You pick it up with a smile and place it neatly on the bookshelf with other comics, then go back to searching for the book your teacher asked you to find.

Your strange adventure is over, but you are now richer with knowledge and accomplishment. Who knew it was that easy to become a superhero?

The End



Designed by 6 European organisations, the project intends to create efficient, engaging pedagogical materials and tools for teachers in order to implement an innovative gamified Homework methodology with pupils. In doing so, we wish to contribute to boosting their efficiency and engagement rate in remote work and, more specifically, in Homework.

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