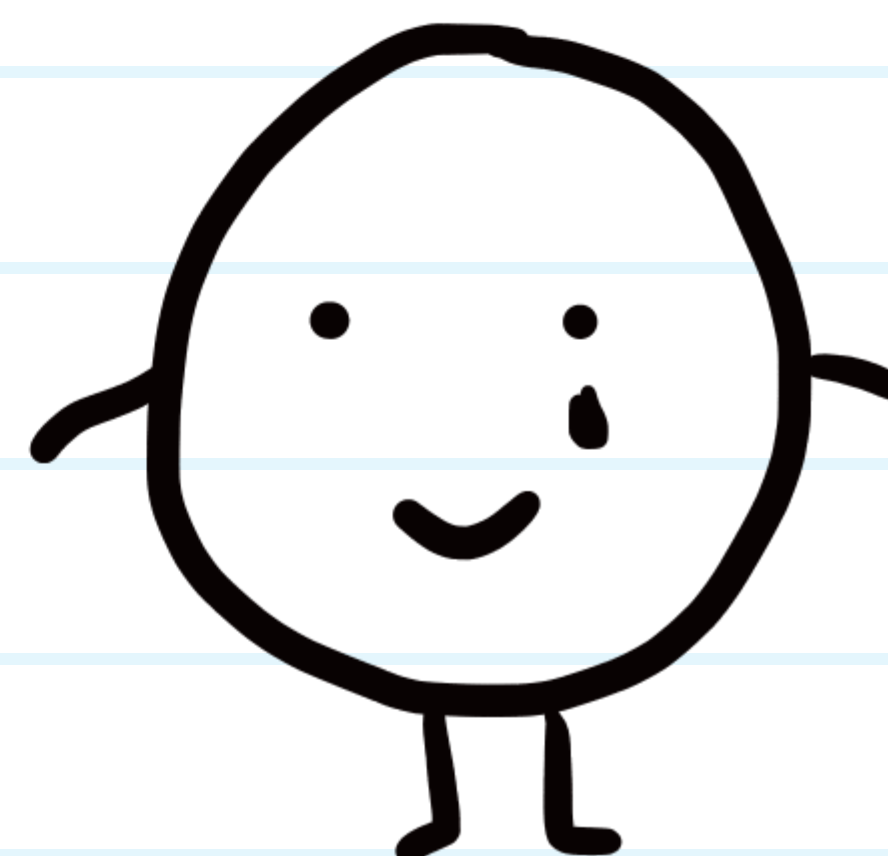


TO THE SYSTEM

A MEDIOCRE HUMOURED WAKE-UP CALL TO
REDO EDUCATION



JO YANG

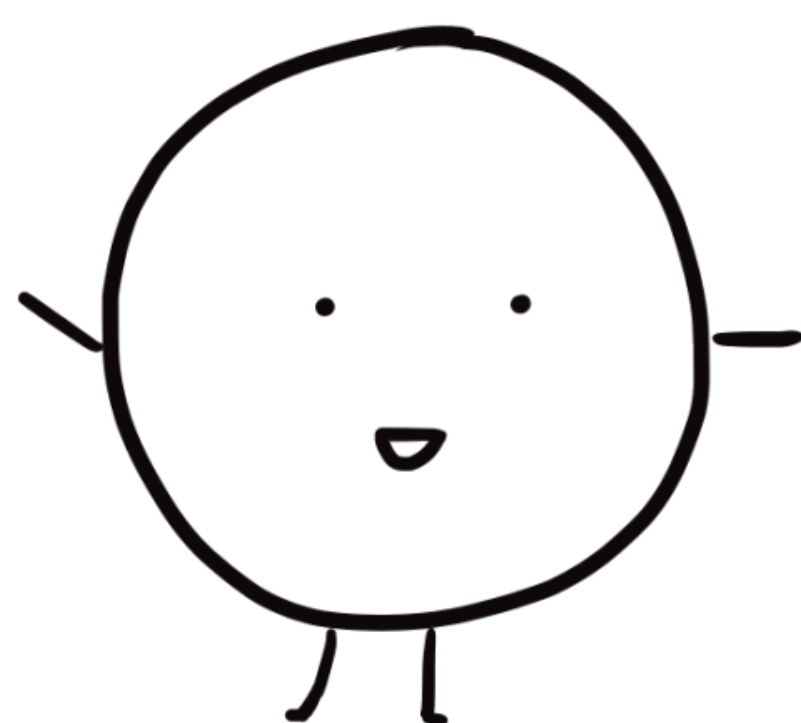


“The whole purpose of
education
is to turn
mirrors
into **windows**”

SYDNEY J HARRIS

This ebook is completely free, and meant to
be shared far and wide!

If any segment of this resonates with you, or
would with someone you know, please
spread the message!



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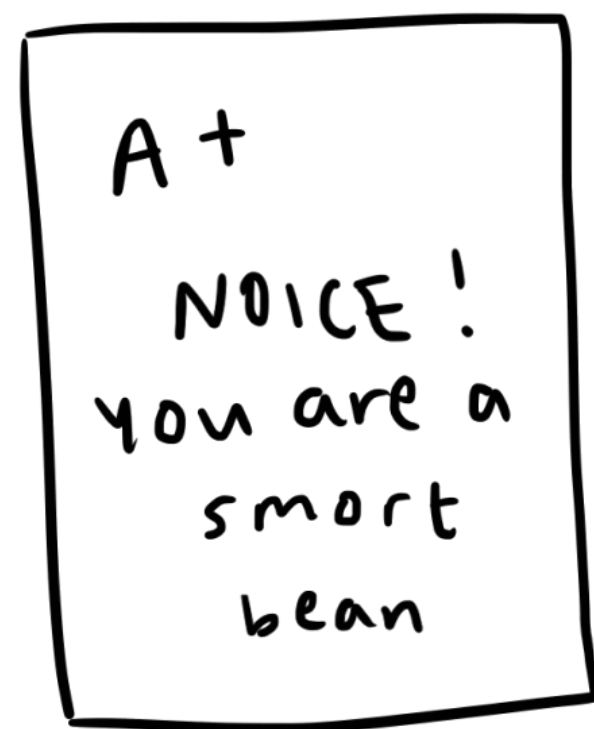


Story of a Bean

Enter Jo, a shiny clueless lil' bean.



She rides the waves in high school, getting A's not particularly because she likes the work, but because she's told it's a good thing. Plus she loves following the rules and getting validated by teachers.



She doesn't question **why** she analyses Heathcliffe and Cathy's mentally abusive 'relationship'. **Why** she needs to graph complex parabolas, **why** she must memorise the timeline of historical chemists.

She studies a curriculum she didn't choose, cramming for tests with topics she doesn't like, in a pace that makes her either ahead or behind in class. Honestly, she'd be happier playing Pokemon Sapphire, but that's besides the point.

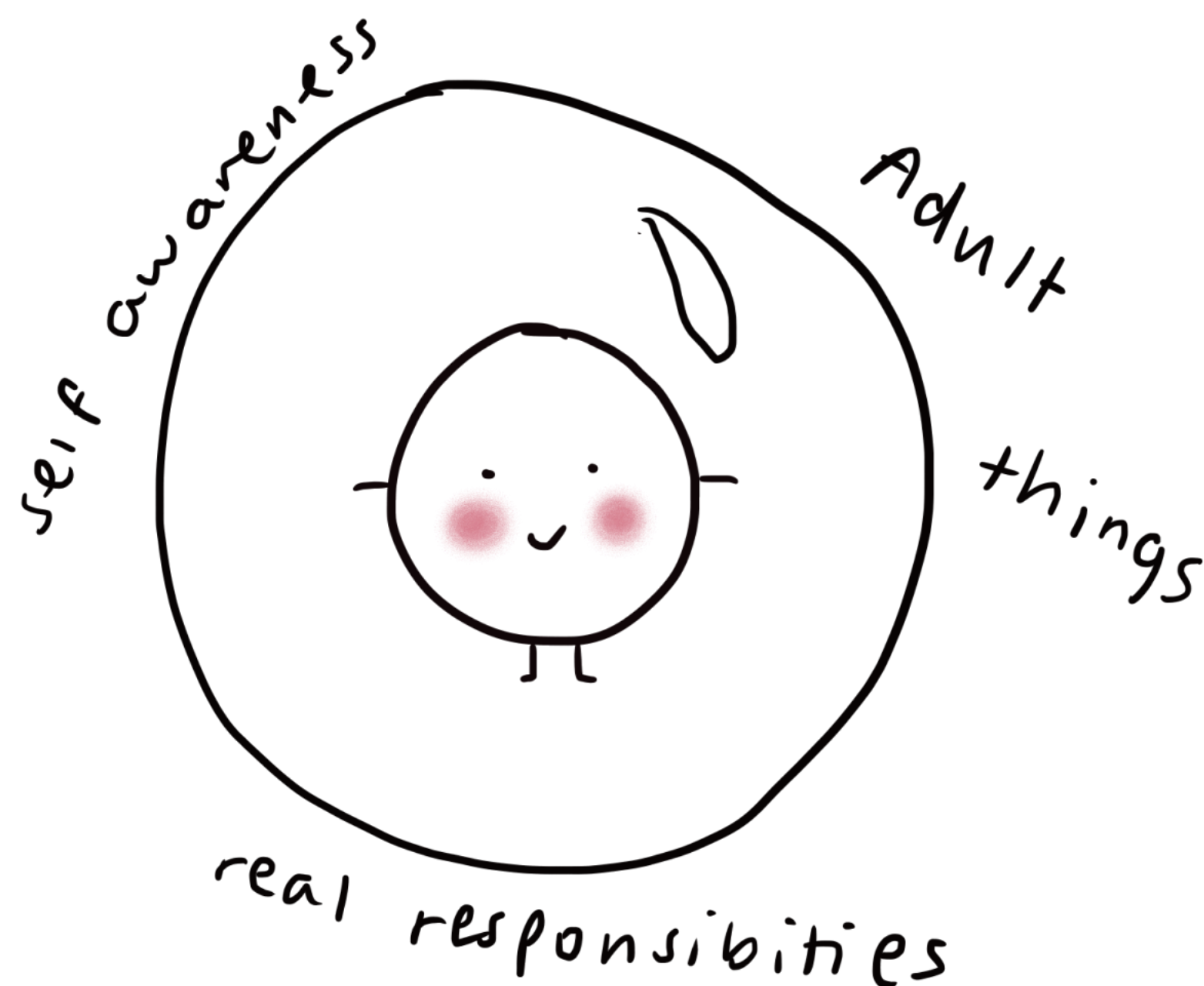
HOWEVER

She loves those special moments of free time, doing fun assignments, bantering with teachers, eating lunch with friends, going on camps, excursions, extra curricular activities, the list goes on.

But unfortunately, this doesn't happen often enough.
For the most part, school's just something you have to do. So she *endures* it like many other teenage beans.



Her school proudly claims she'll be ready for the world ahead. Yet, *she* feels unprepared as ever, as if her knowledge is confined to a small bubble.

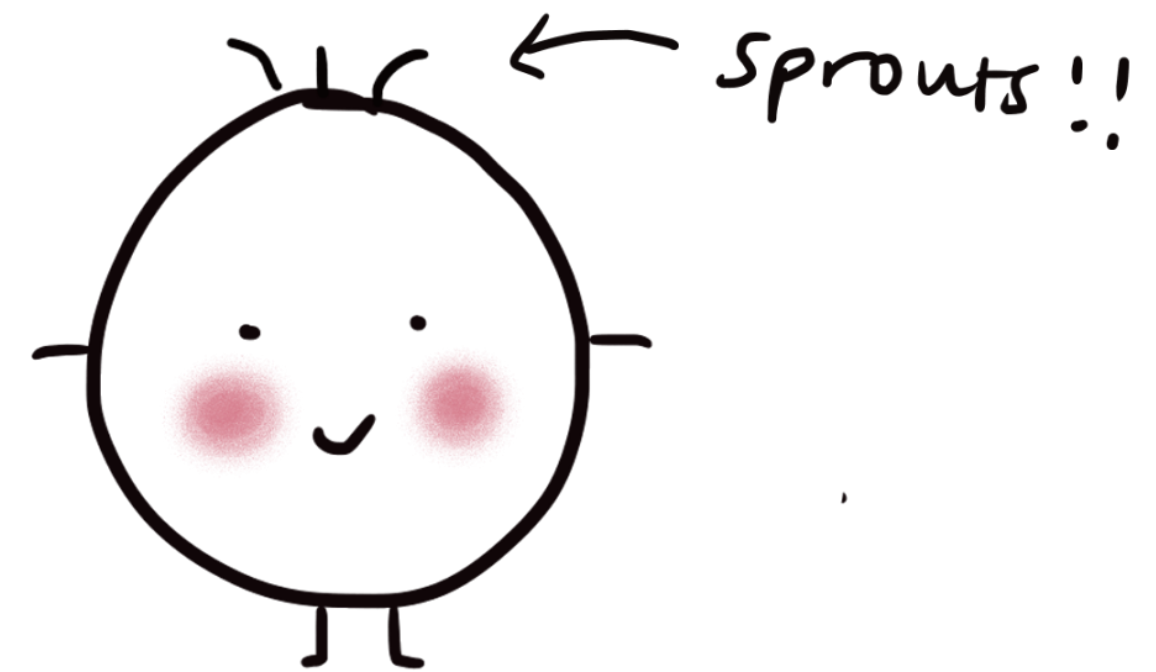


She has no idea about finances, how to negotiate, to manage her anxiety, to lead others and make decisions with **real** consequences.

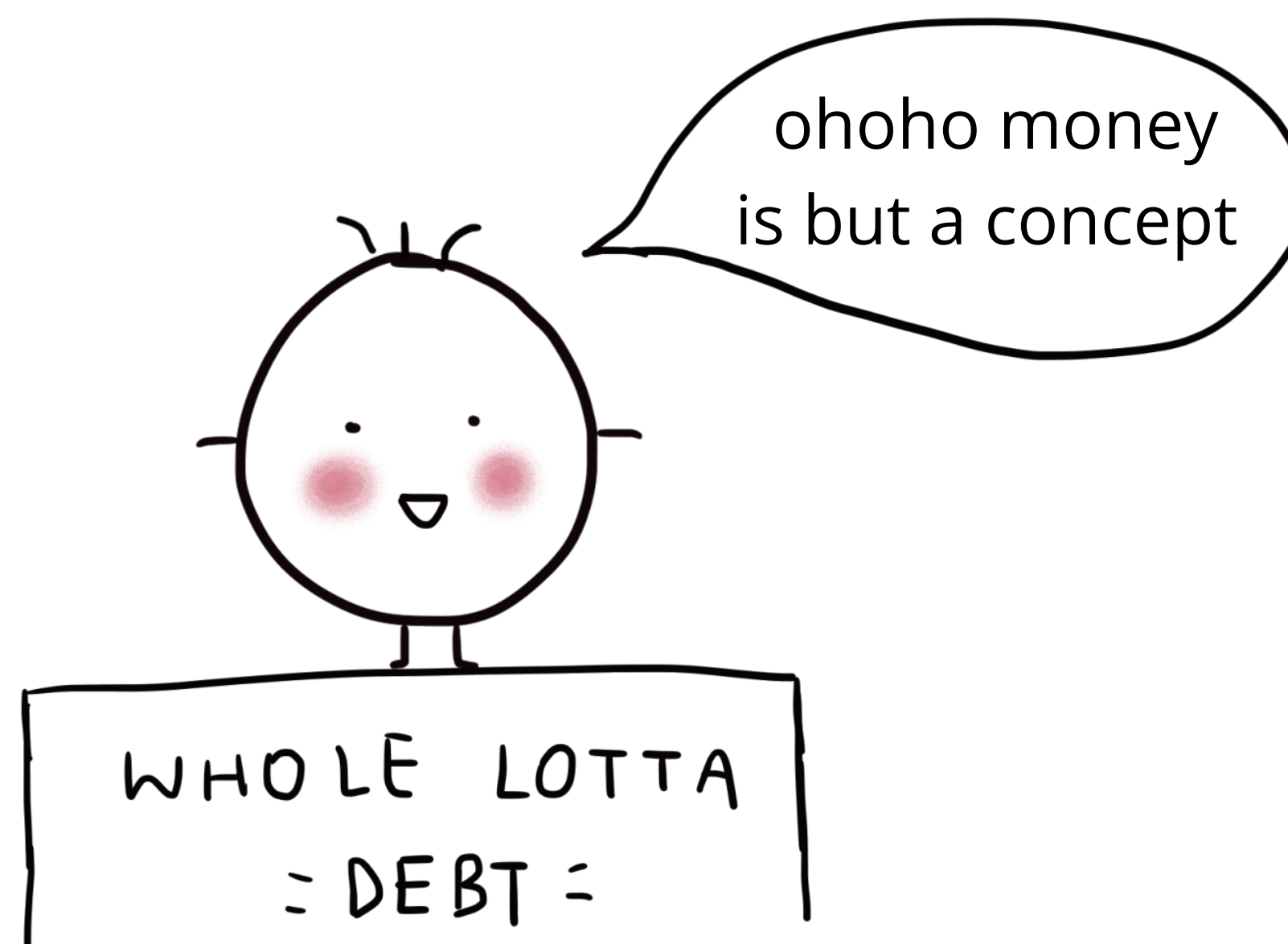
She struggles with her fear of failure, to not get swept up by others' expectations, and to choose something for herself. She lacks self awareness, constantly looking outwards for solutions.

Her decisions are not her own.

Enter Jo, a freshly sprouted 18 year old bean.
(still clueless)



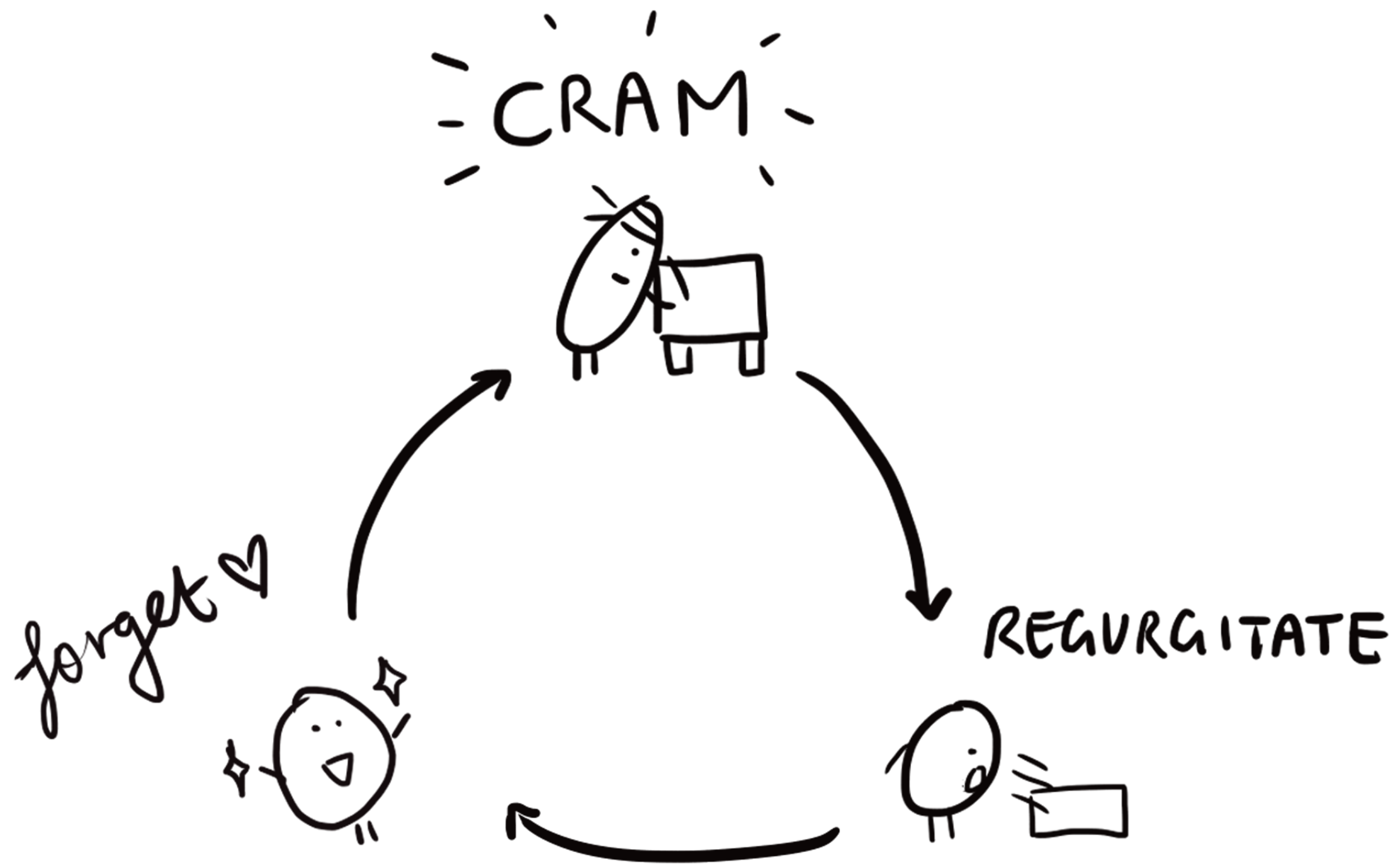
She has no idea what to do. So without thinking it through, she goes straight into
~\$30,000 AUD of student uni debt.



She's ridiculously excited to meet new people, and treats uni like a break from high school. Plus, she expects that it will solve all of her problems. It will tell her what her strengths are, teach her relevant life skills, and get her a sick ass job.

So she goes through the motions of her science degree, and like others around her, she:

1. Crams for tests a few days before
2. Regurgitates what she's memorised
3. Completely forgets everything a week later.



She does this not because she likes it (not a sadist), but to prepare her for medicine. A career which she convinced herself to take on, despite her attitude of:

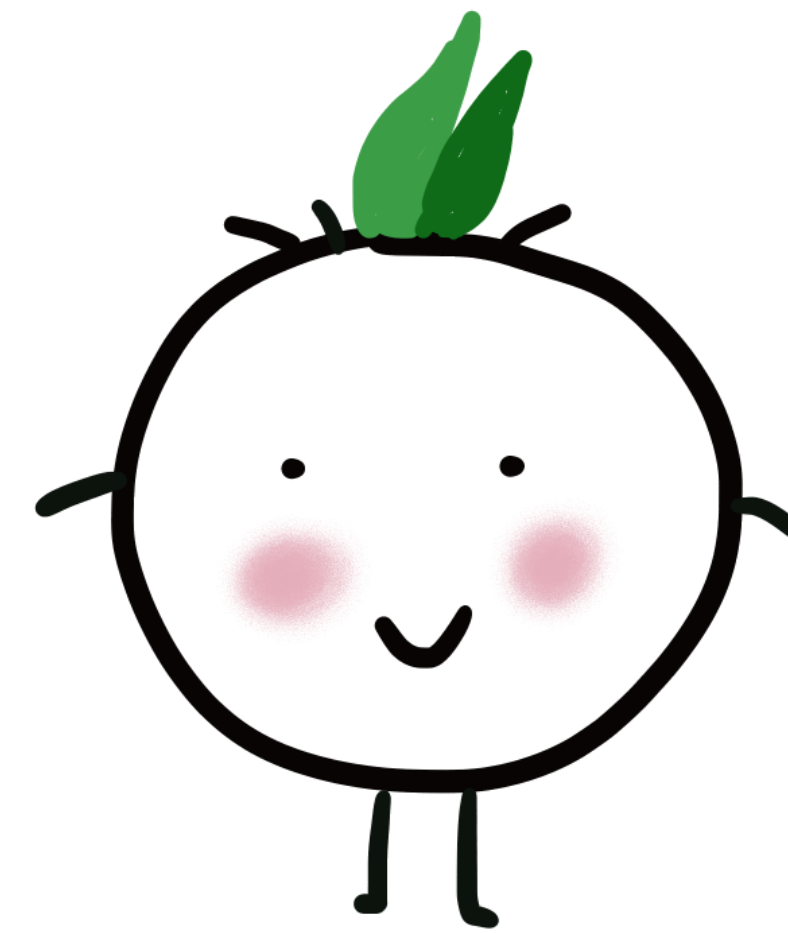


She busts her ass trying to get a high WAM/GPA score. But finally, she overcooks, burning out in 3rd year uni.

During this whole kerfuffle, she's perplexed.

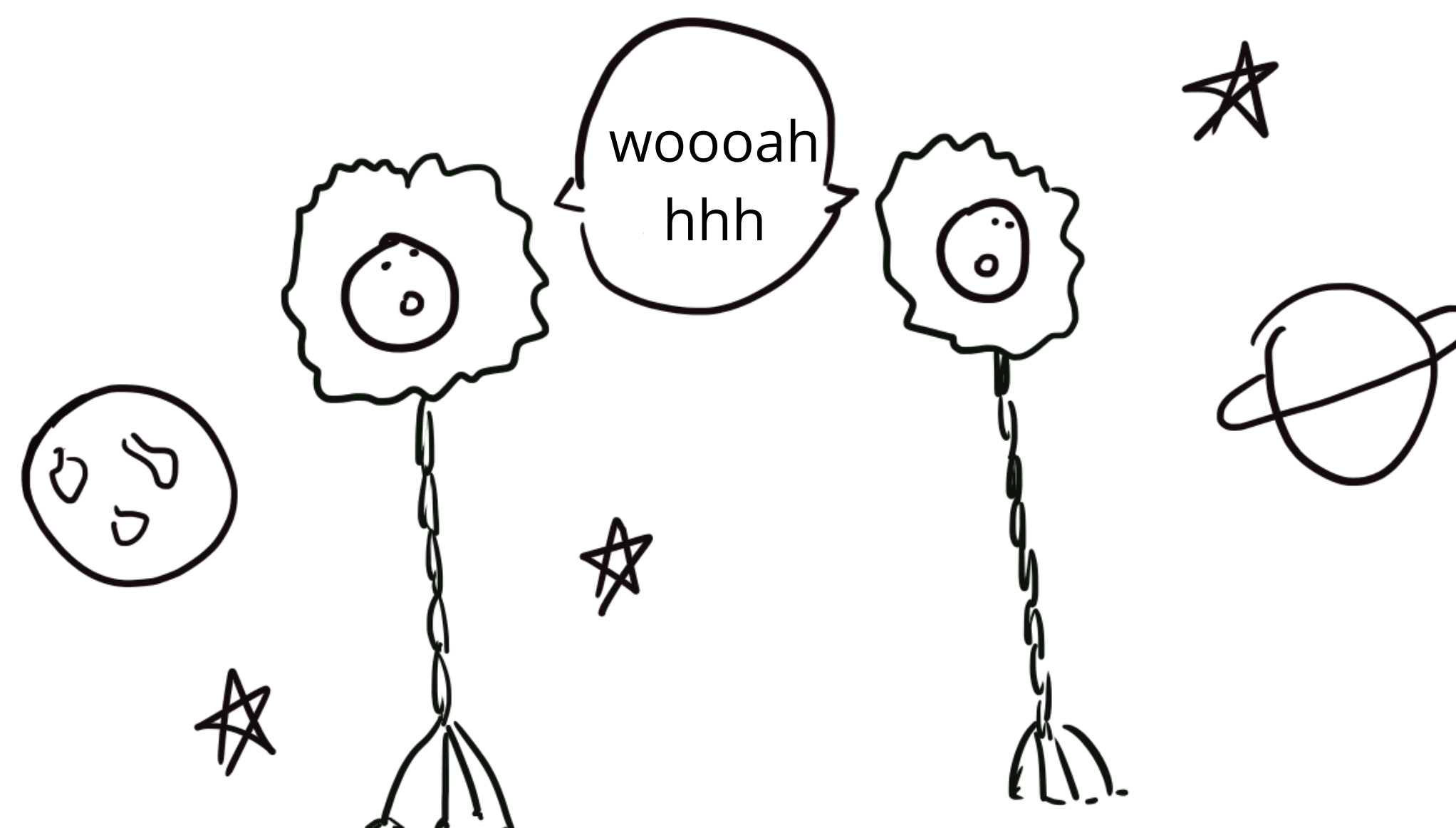
Why do I technically 'know' so much, yet know so little?

Enter 22 year old Jo, a matured, flowering bean.



She's finishes her last uni semester on exchange (best decision of uni), and stumbles upon Seth Godin's book 'Linchpin'.

The mangled dots in her brain connect. Her brain hurtles into another dimension.



She realises the system we trust is broken. While it boasts efficiency and success, the number of graduates who lose out... says otherwise.

Sadly, my story is not unique. And if we don't do something about this, we'll just churn out students with the same fate. This is the time to change.

I'm a fiery bean, with plenty of nuggets to share. Here they are, loud and clear.

Let's get into it!

Silent but Deadly...

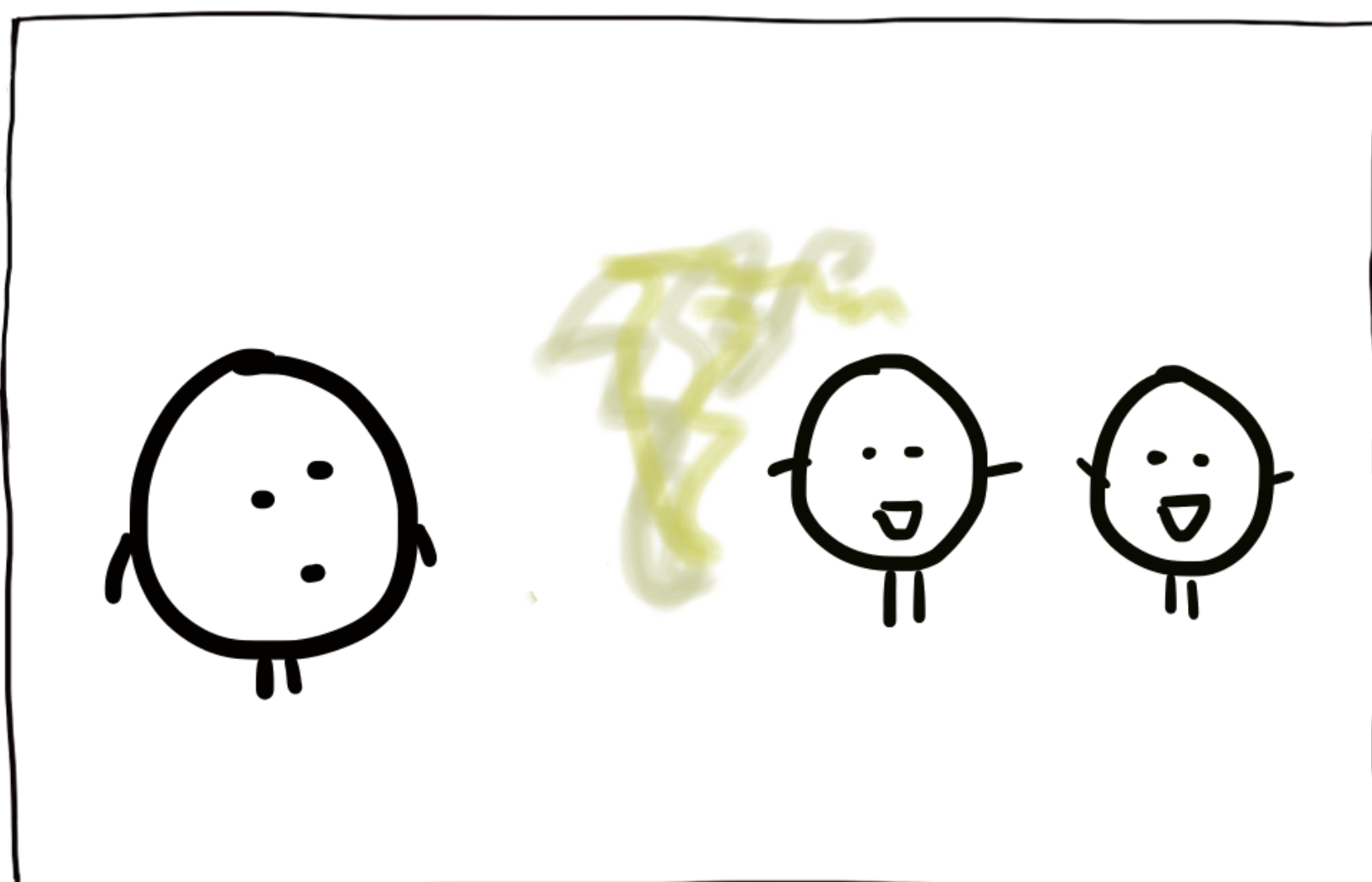
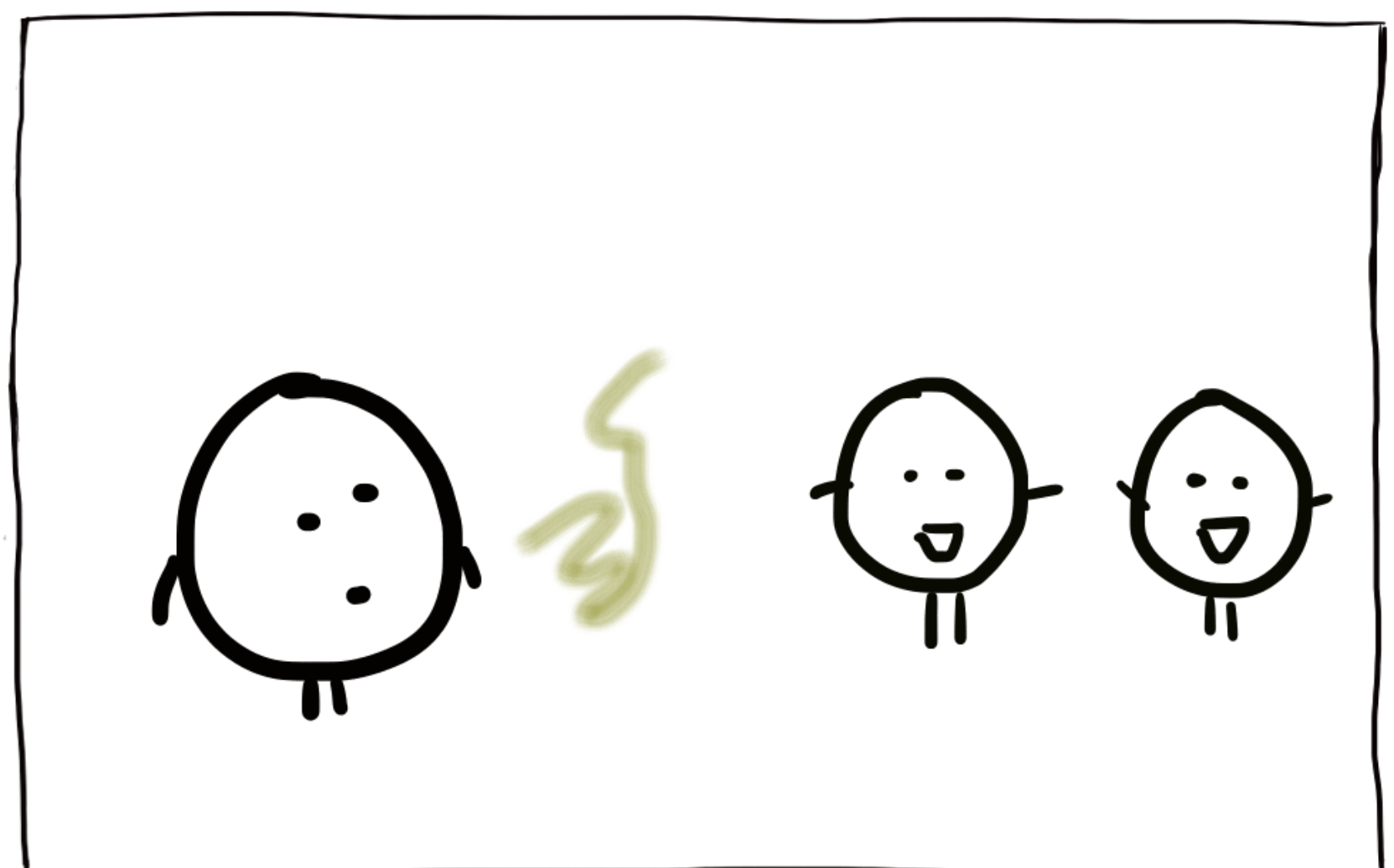
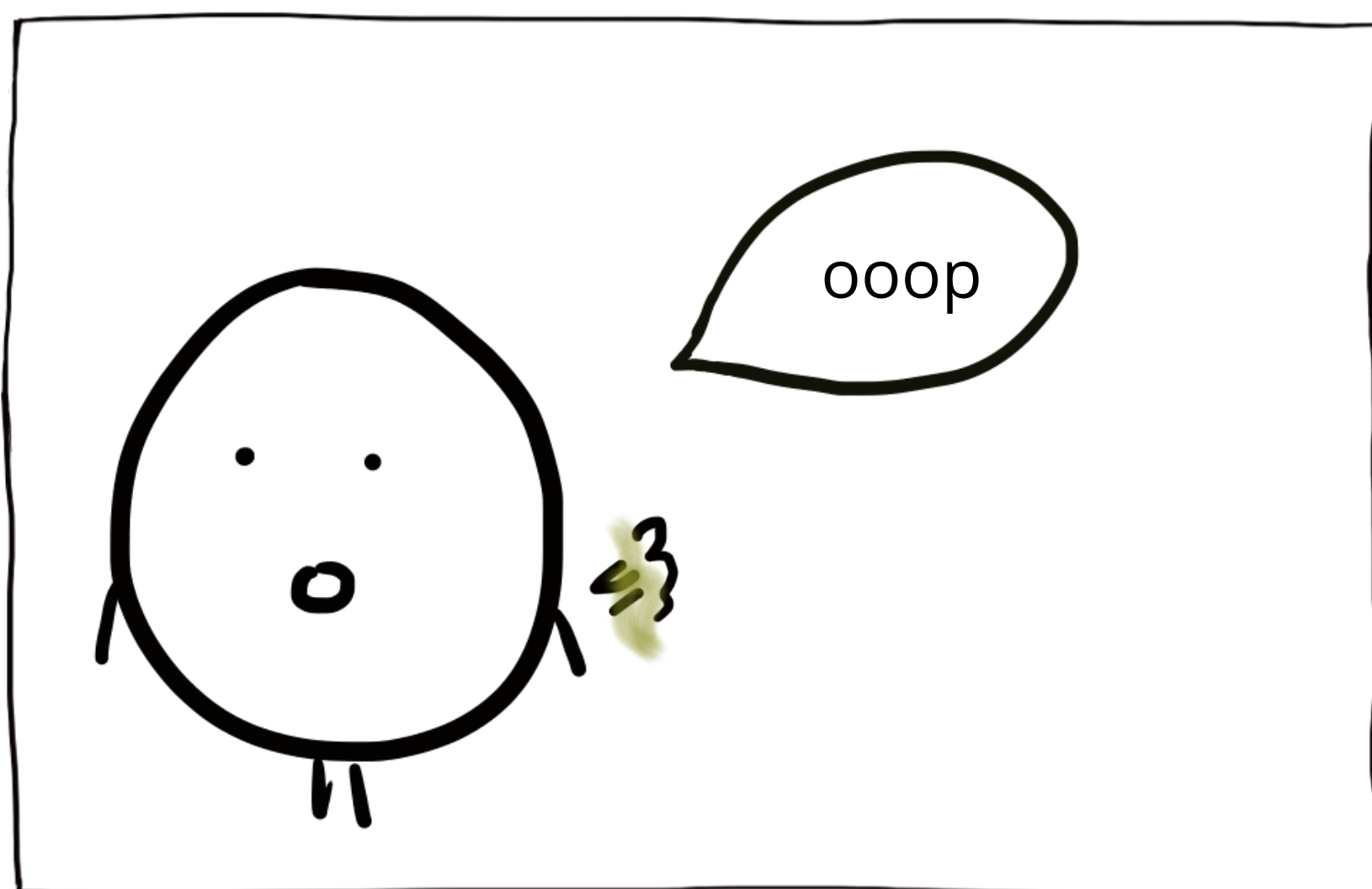
The education system's a giant SBD.

It's a problem so potent, so under our noses... yet so deceptively concealed. We're completely oblivious.

Then, out of nowhere, it **HITS** us.

But by then it's too late. No amount of cotton scented spray can eliminate this monster.

We have to evacuate the building. We have to redo.



The Bedrock Ingredient

We focus so much on academic theory, of facts, figures and hard knowledge, that we **lack** the most important ingredient of all...

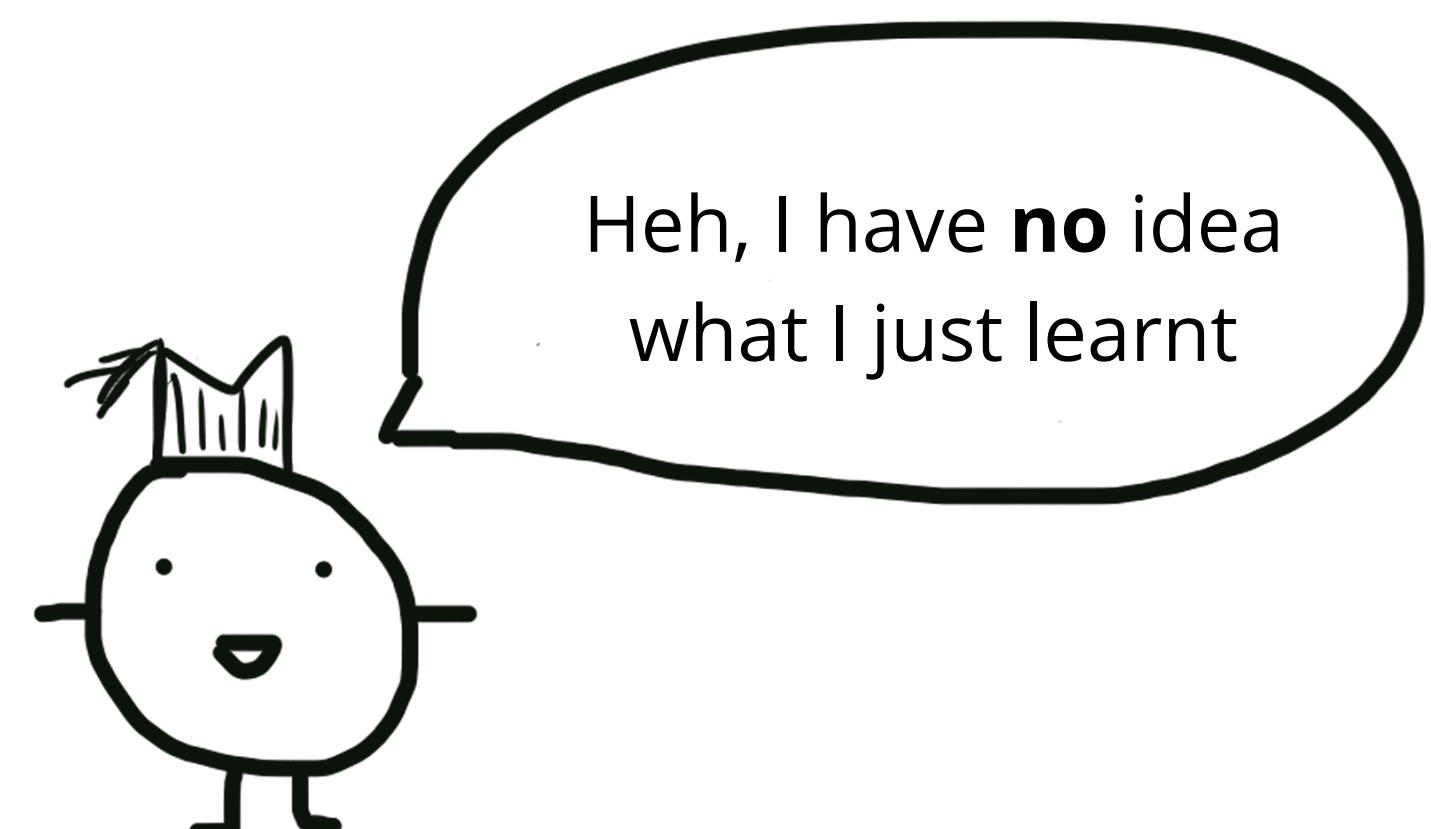


passion.

Desire. The curiosity to learn. The scrambling to google, research, and then share with other beans. Not because some authority figure orders us to, but because we *genuinely* just want to.

Without it, we go through the motions, completing tests only for test scores, and making whoever around us proud.

Without it, we look back on school/uni and say:



So we need to

L O O S E N

the reins.

We need more freedom.

Yet school corners us into their curriculum, dismissing the chance for lessons on a topic of our choice. What if i'm super interested in lobsters but biology's focused on plants? What then?

More choice = more passion

More passion = more effort

More effort = more work that'll impress you more than a curriculum ever could

"when we observe,
the **world** becomes our
school"

CHRIS DO

Delicately Obsessed

My eyes are



Blue light radiating, pulsing, dissolving my cornea.

But I. can't. stop.

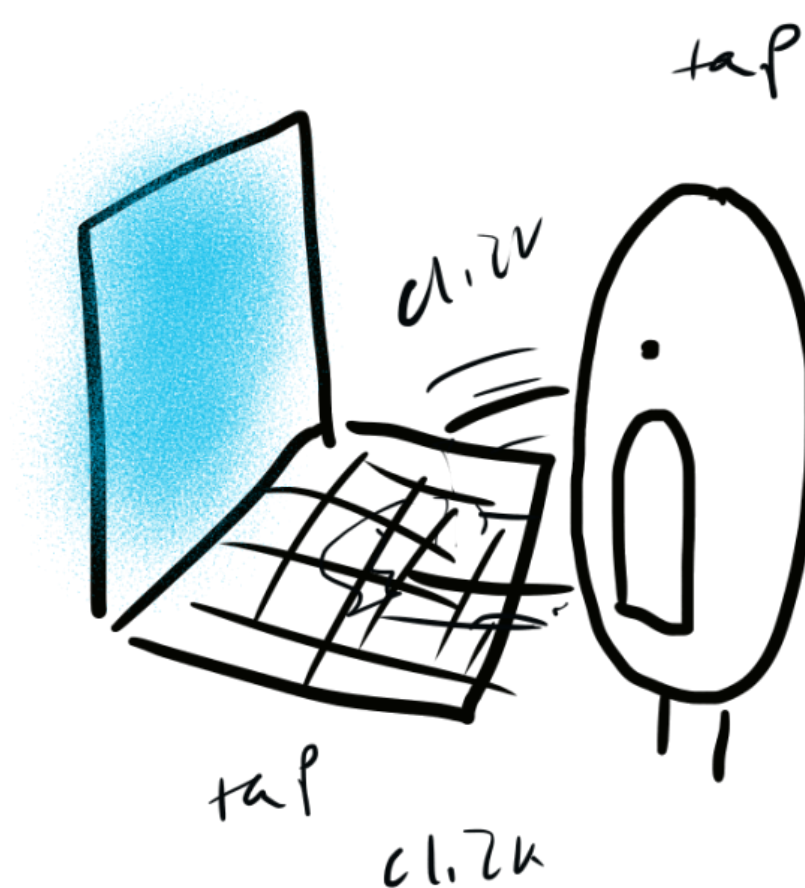
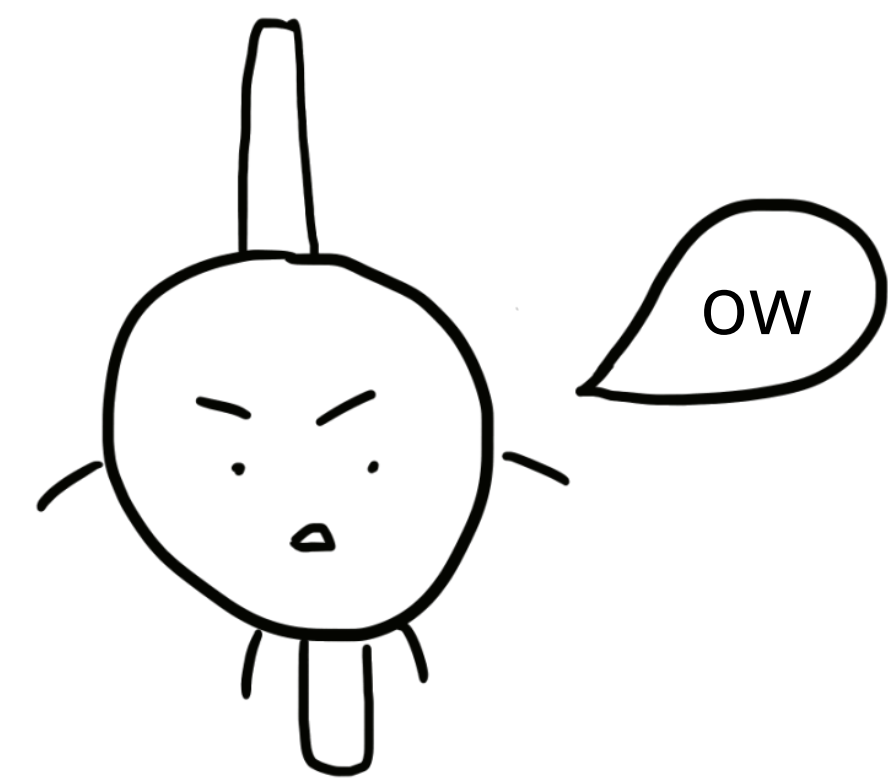
Triangular torture... mouse abdomen eating...

WOAH dracula impaled people on poles?

DAYUM.

My fingers frantically dart across my keyboard, my mind exploding with every tab I open.

Thank the lord for medieval torture, history has honestly never been so cool ...



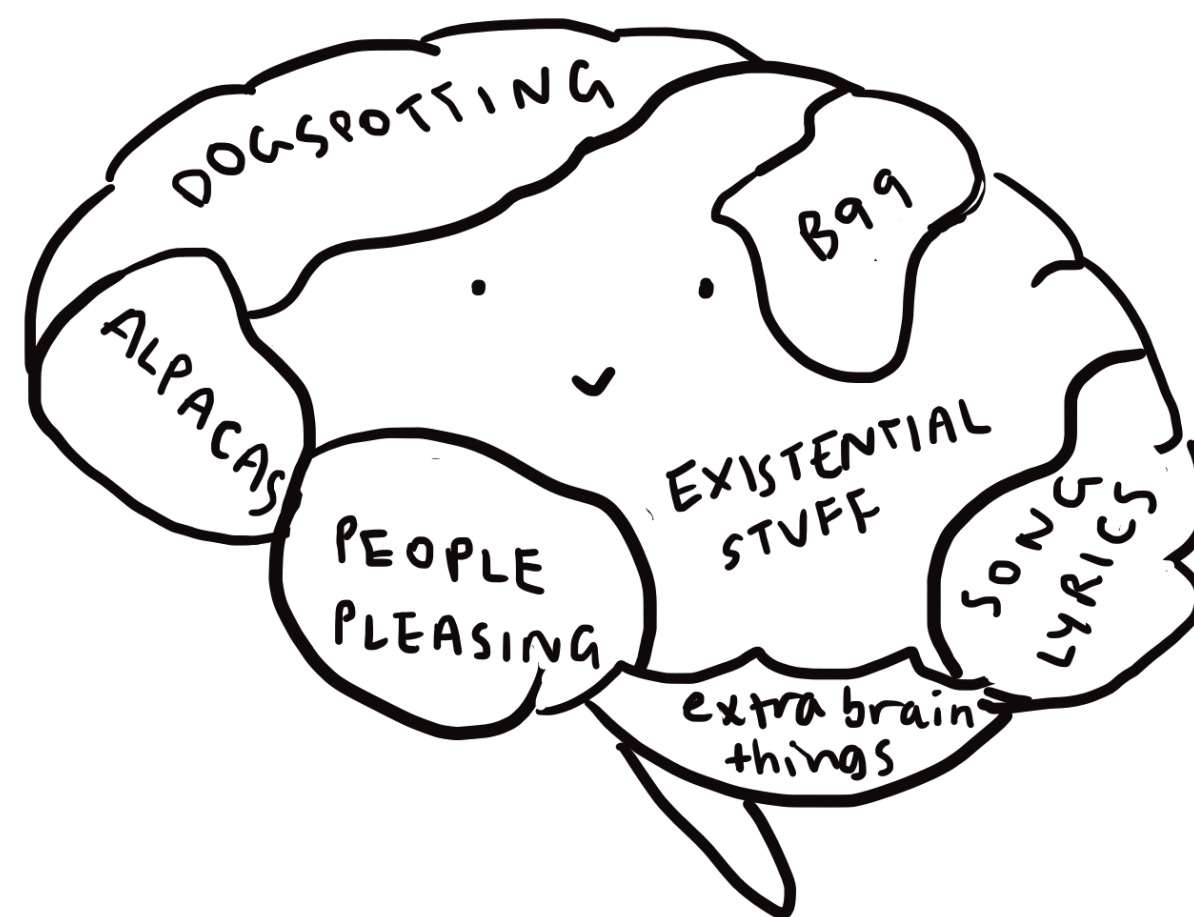
So... what assignments made **your** brain run wild?

Make it RELEVANT

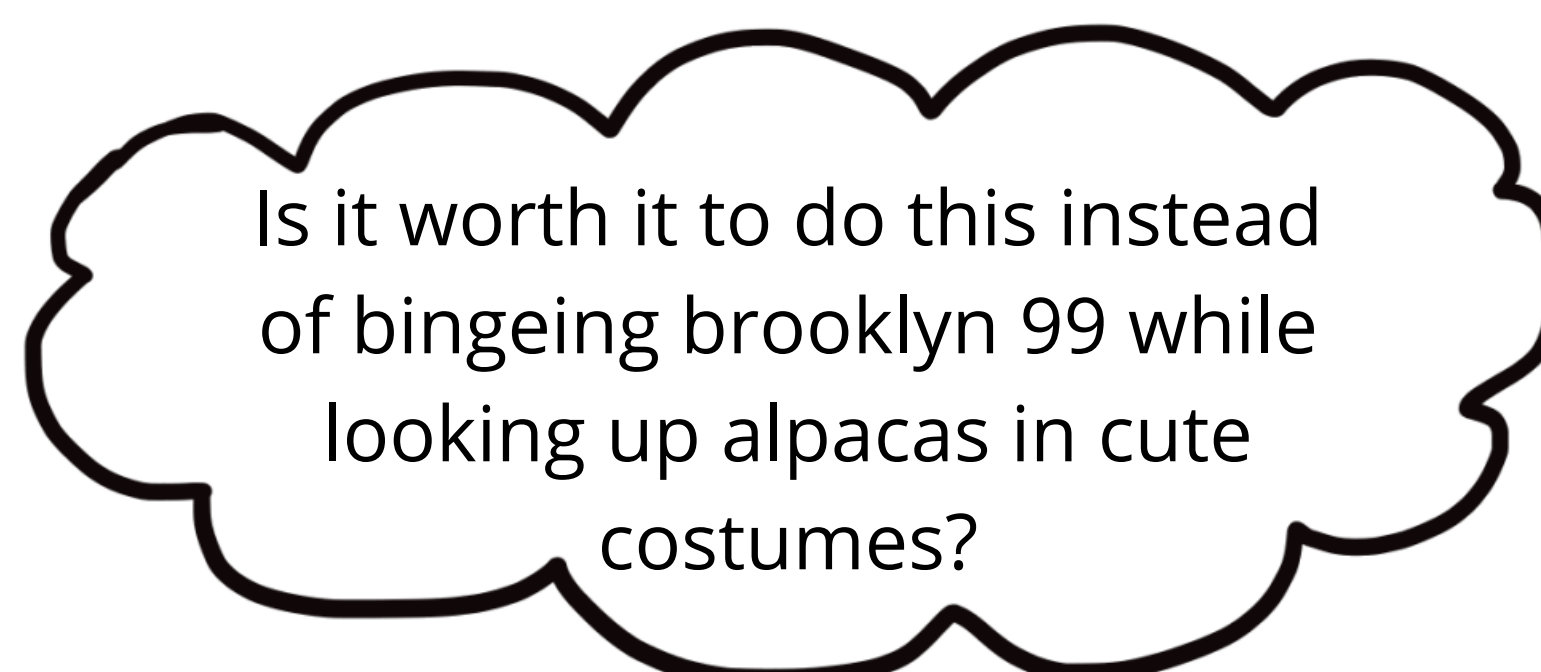
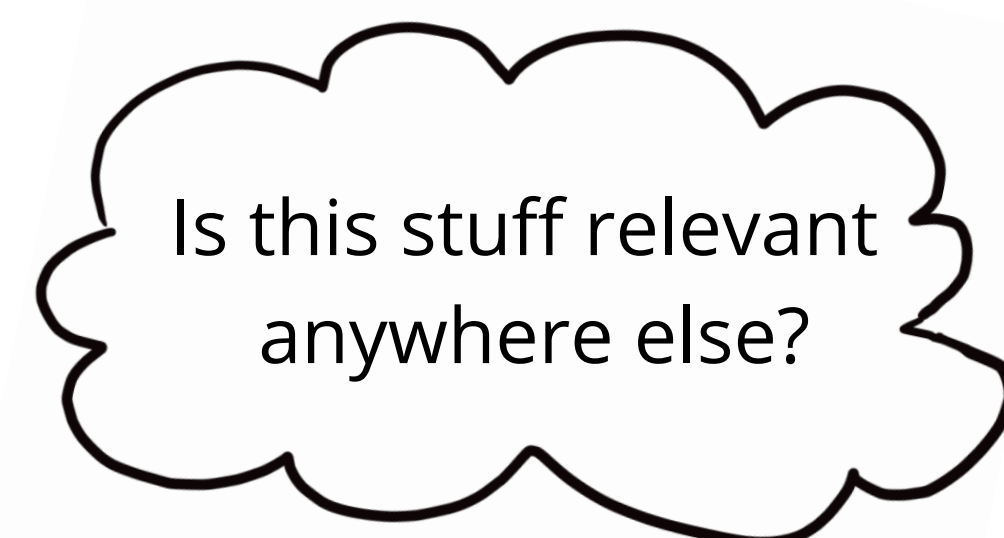
Here's something I don't understand.

Why're we forcing students to study things they don't care about, and expect them to retain ... anything?

If it ain't relevant, then no point keeping it. Our brain's pretty occupied with other stuff.



We need to know the **why**.



So here's a suggestion:

Besides giving students more freedom...

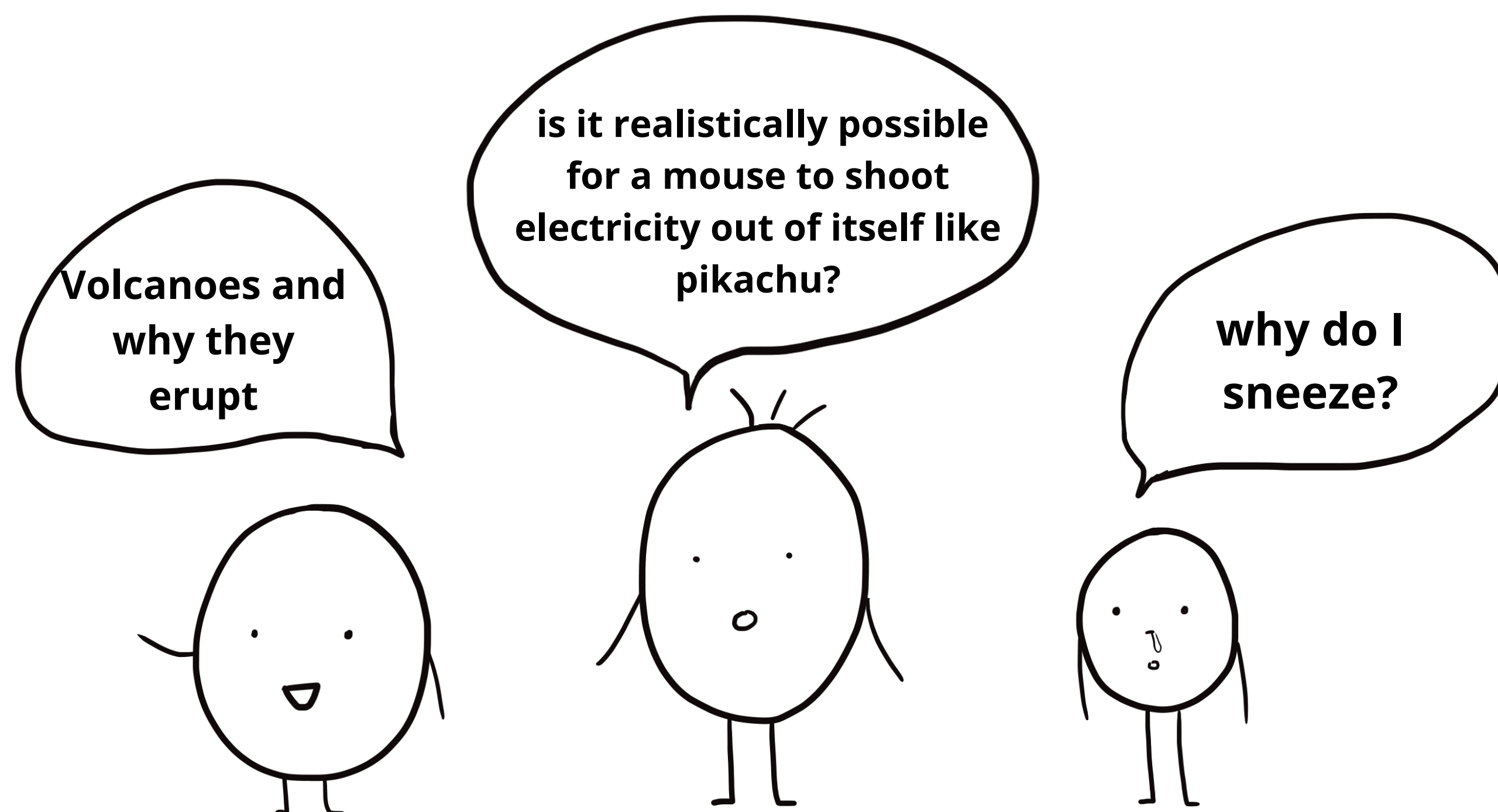


Work

backwards.



First, ask the students what they want to learn

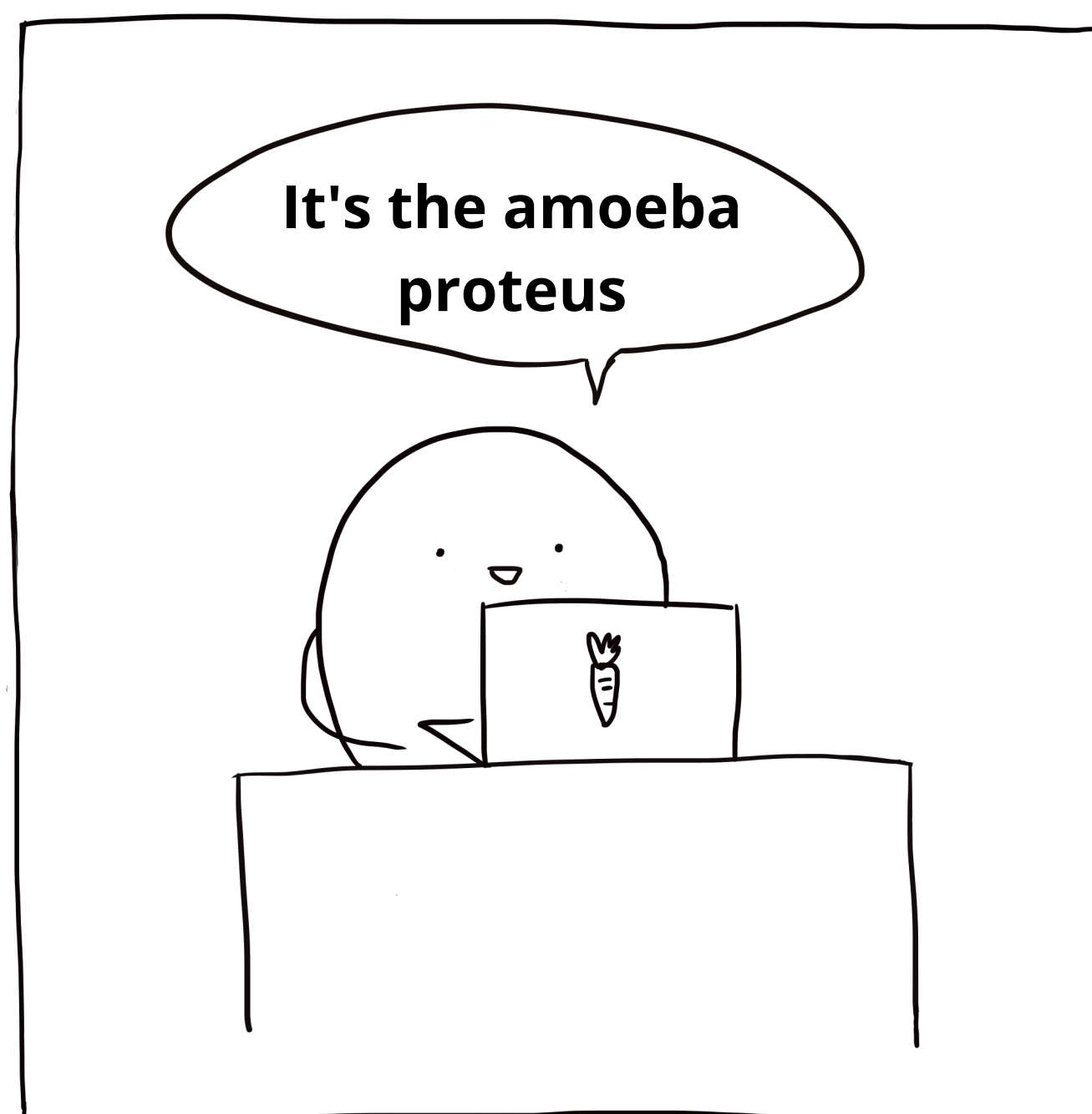
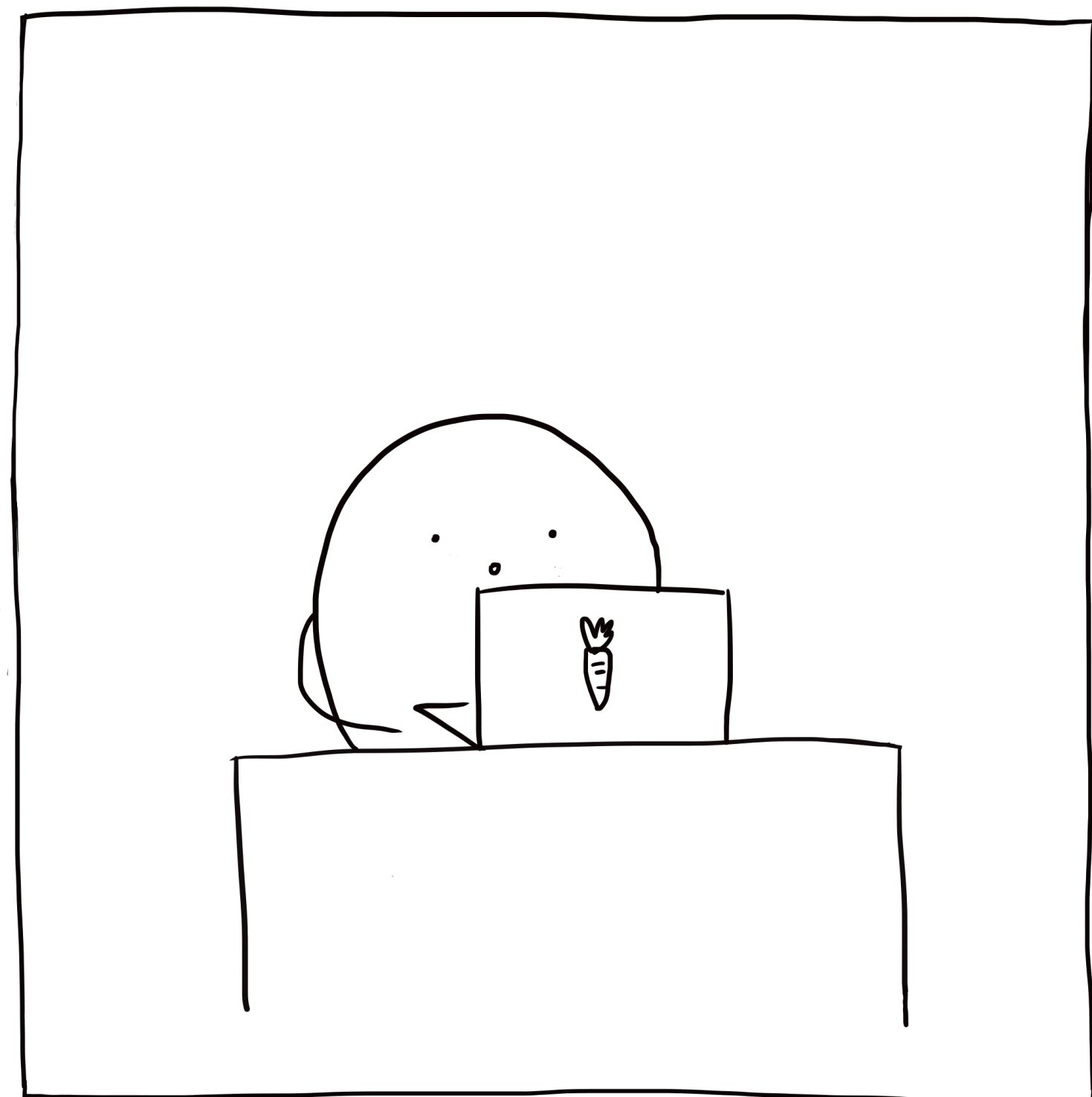
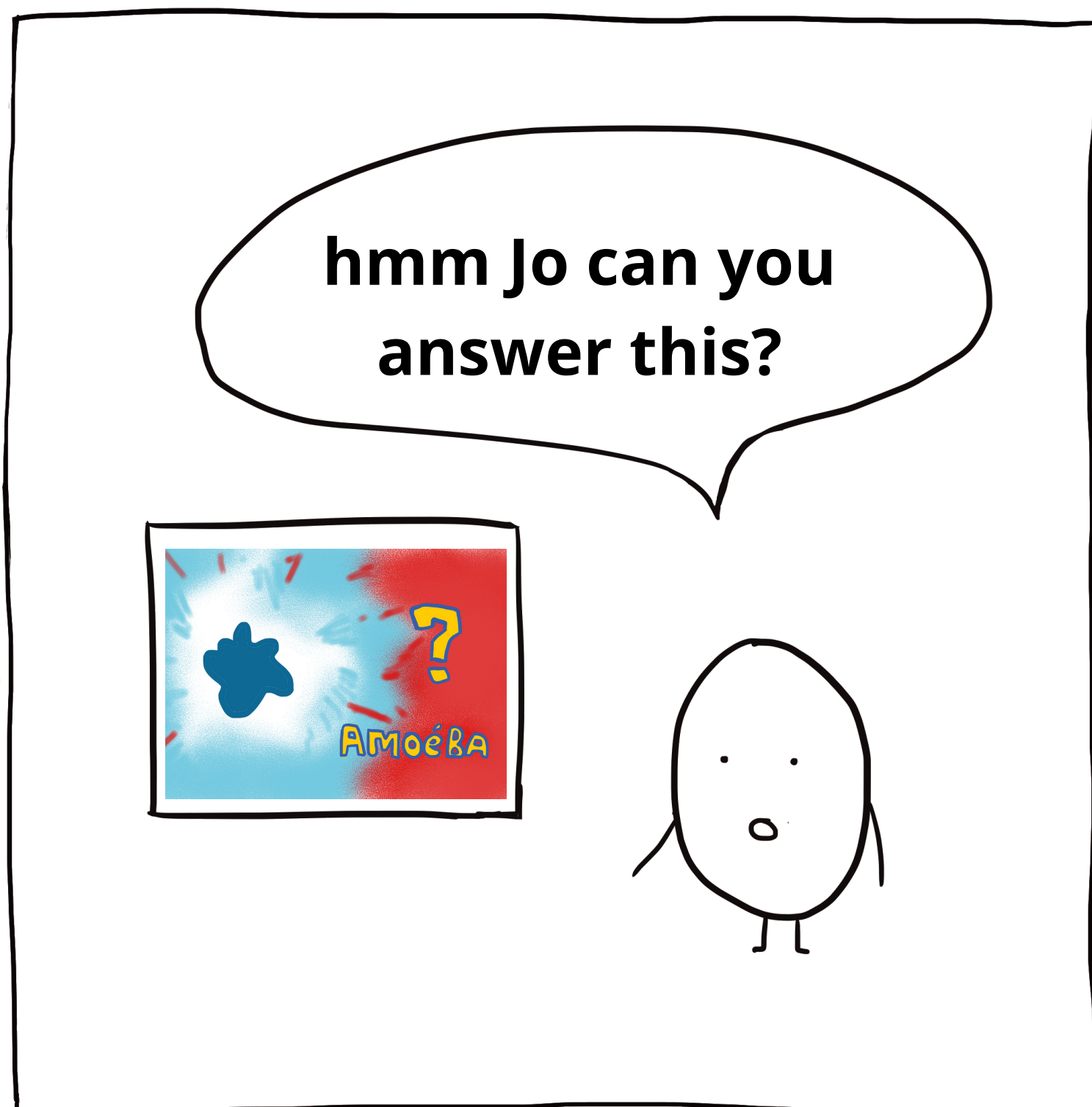
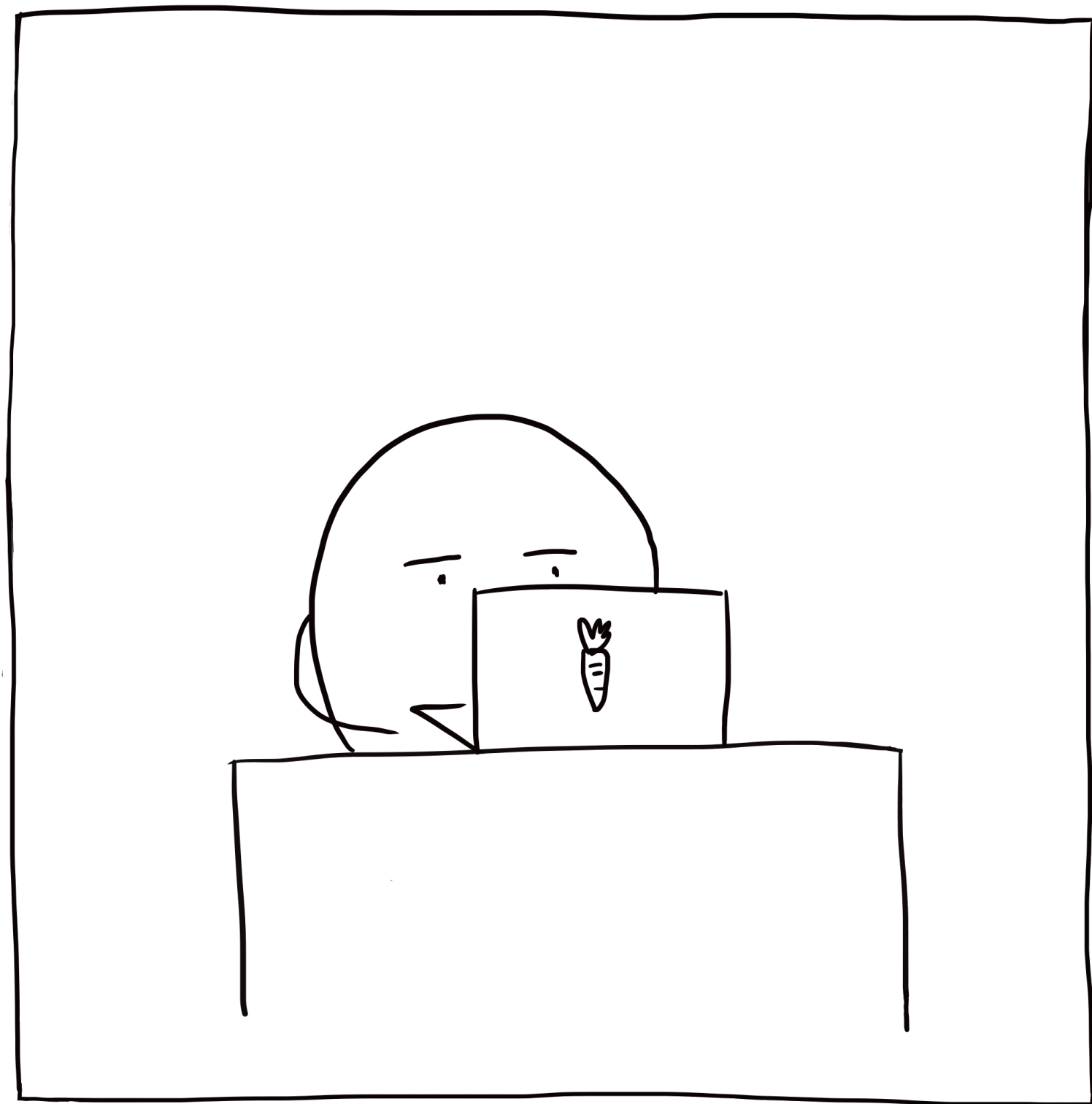
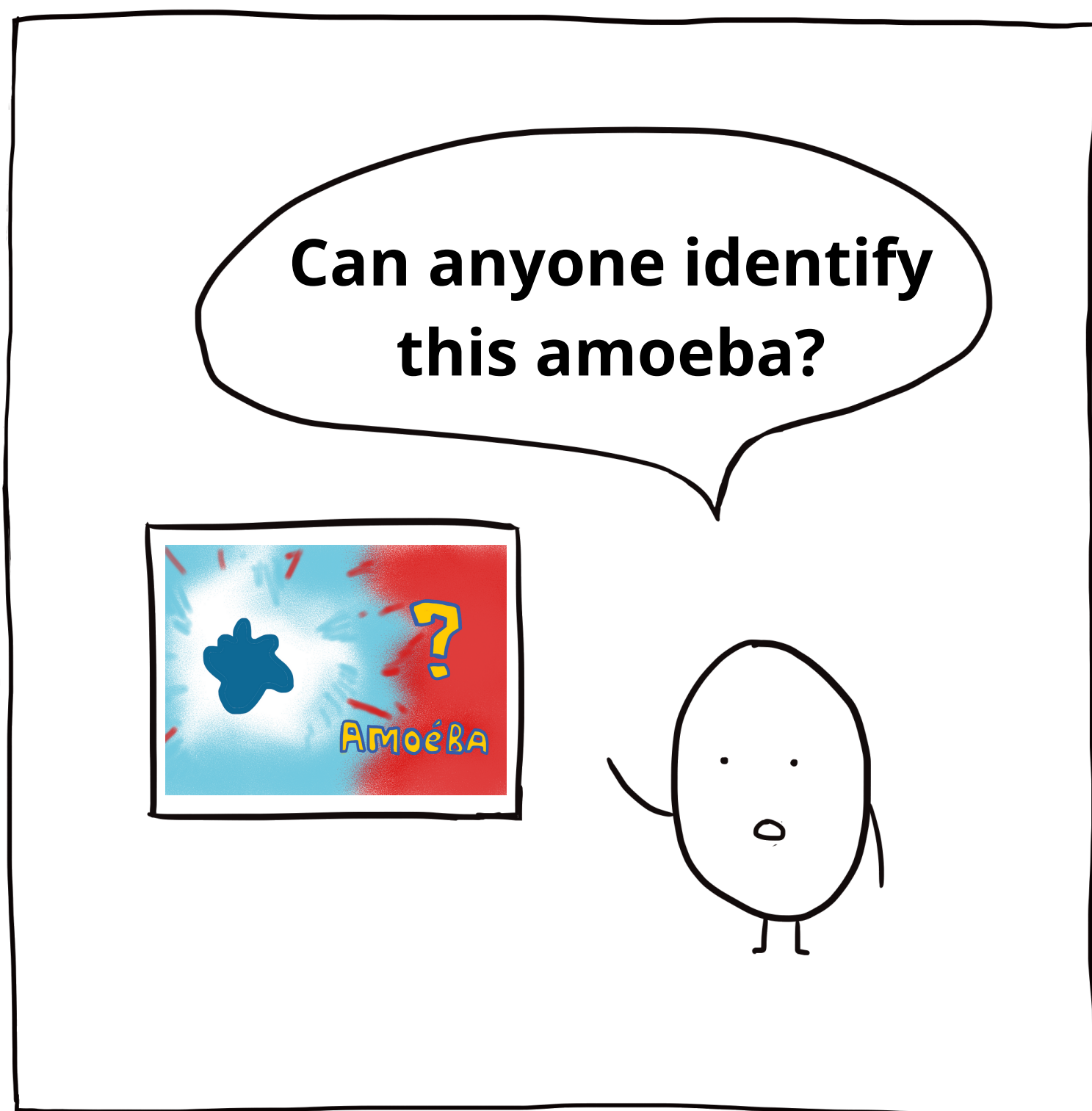


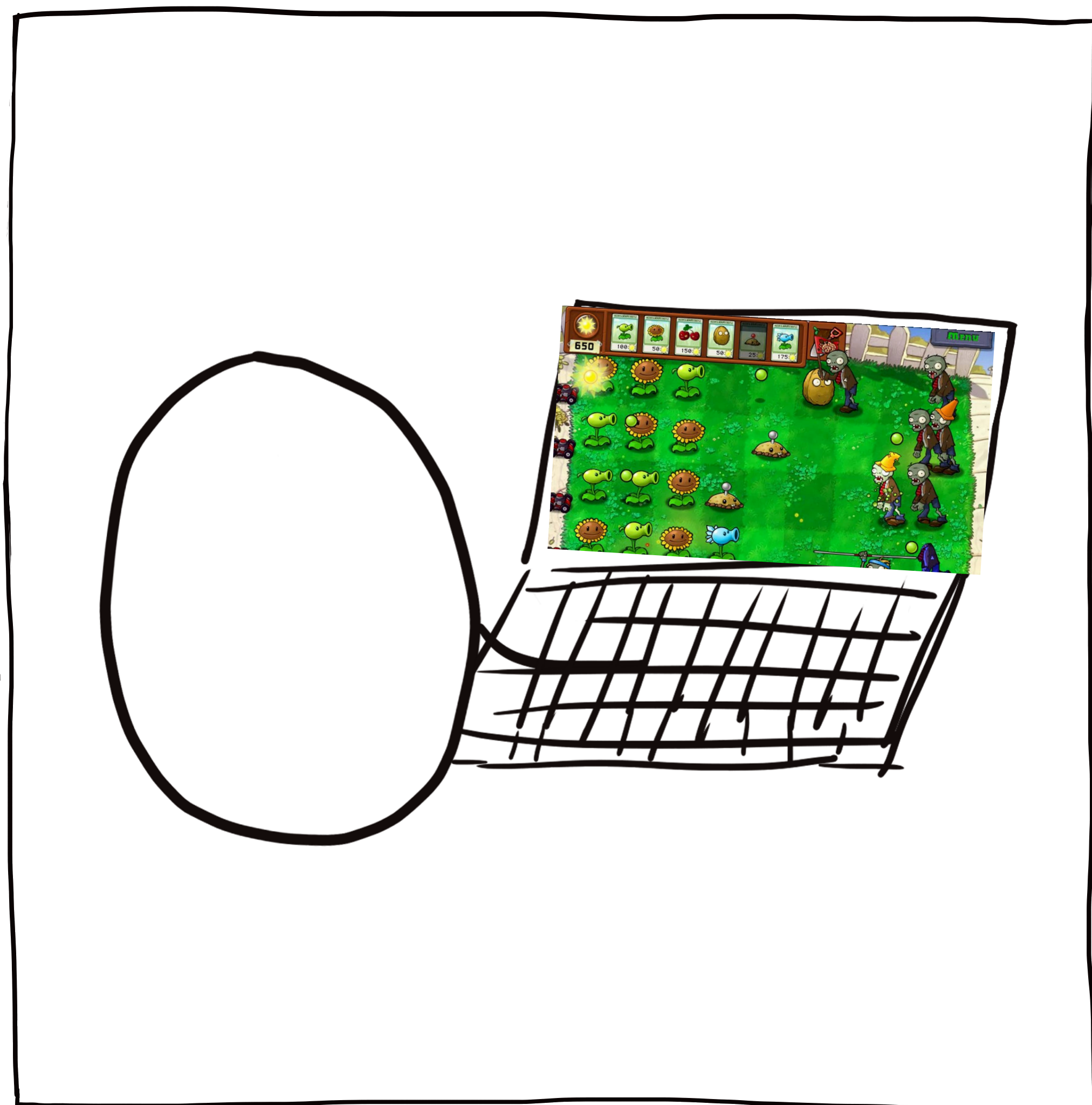
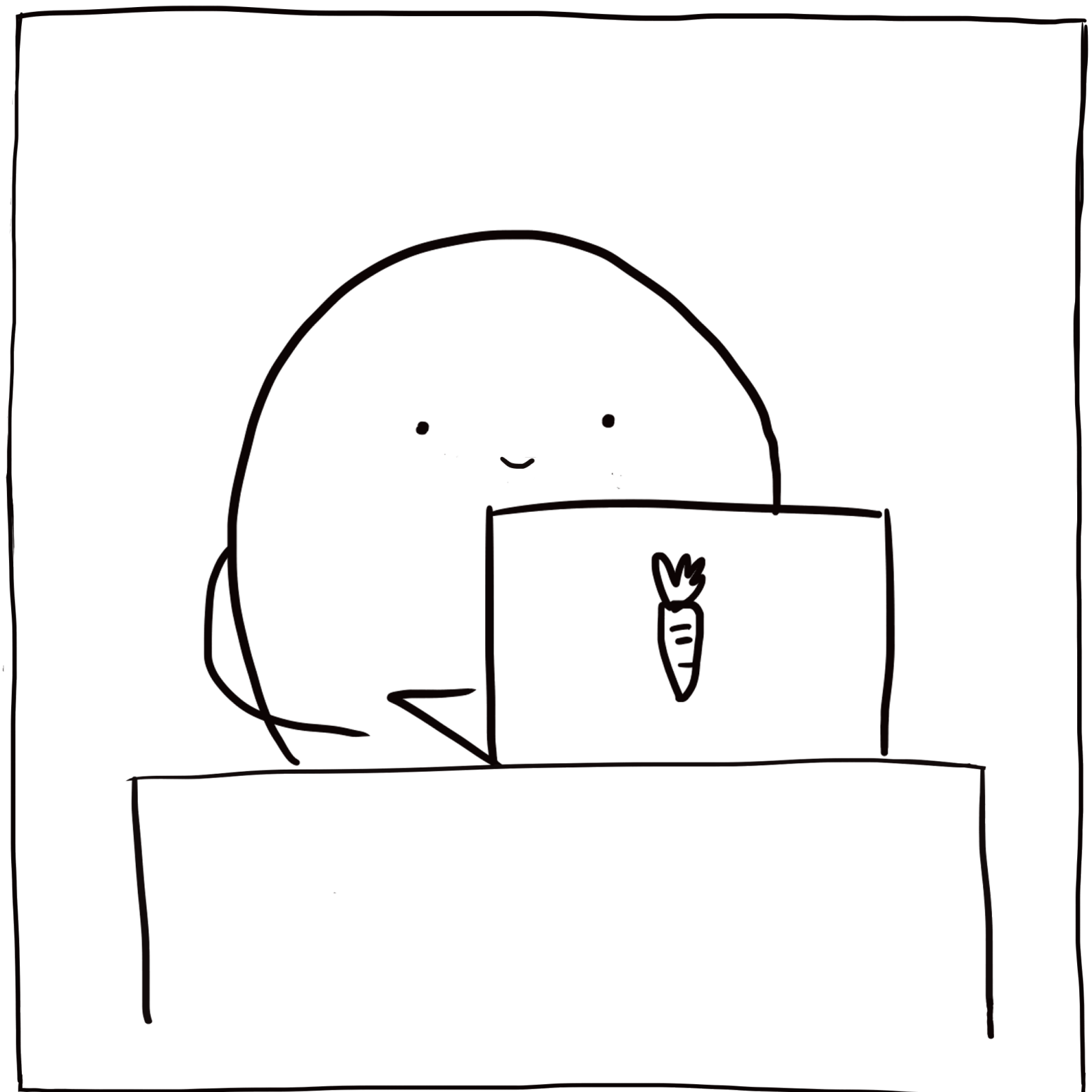
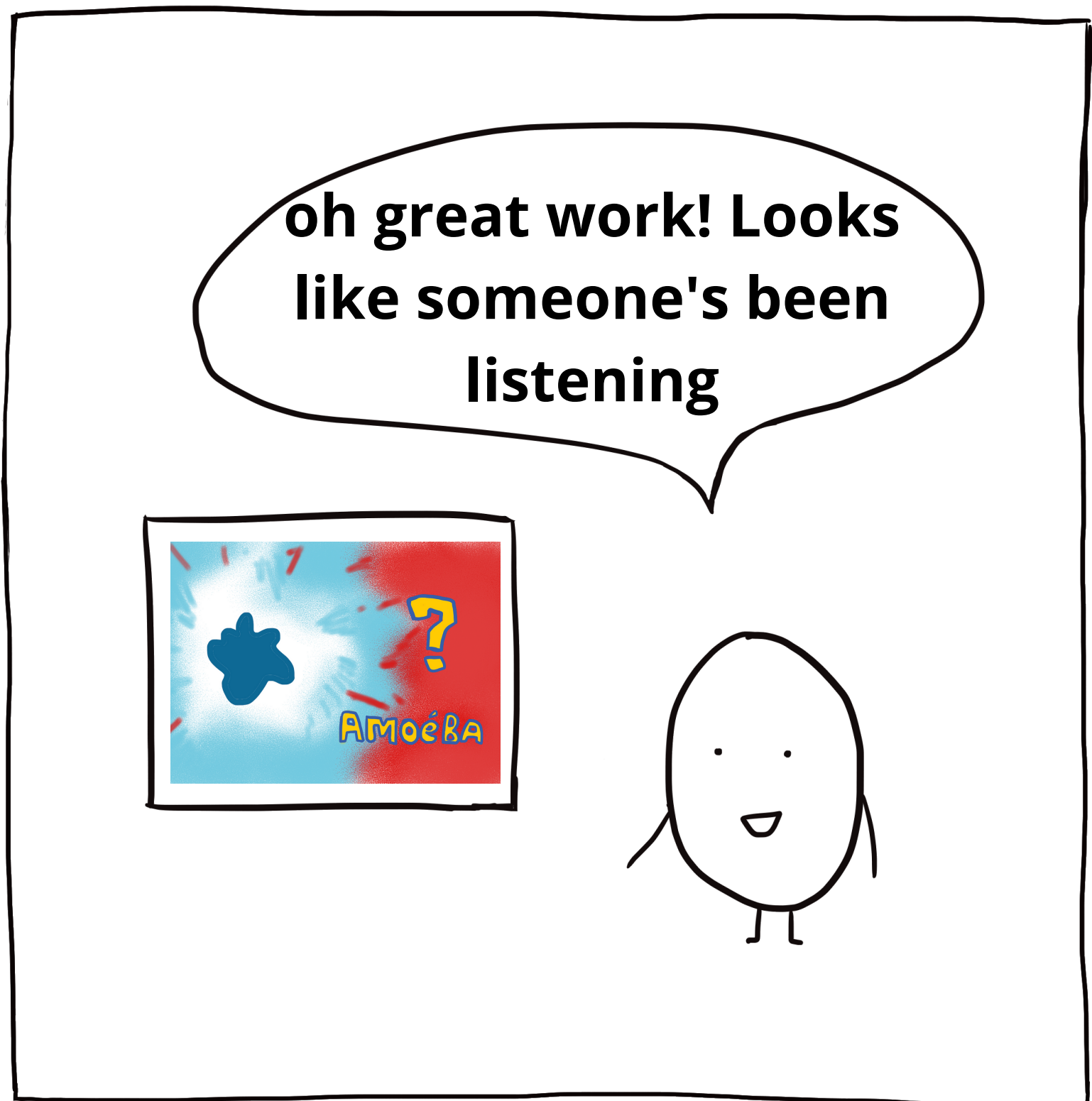
Then get them to research a bit first.

They'll inevitably stumble onto a term that doesn't make sense, or a concept they've never learnt. That's the time for the teacher to guide them and fill the gaps with relevant theory.

First, let the students discover their why.

Fake it till ya make it





"I have no special talents. I
am only passionately
curious"

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Most needed 'subjects' (as chosen by you!)

Thanks to all you 29 beans who completed the survey! Here's what we found:

For the question: **"What do you wish you were taught in high school / uni?"**, the most popular vote was...



financial planning.

Adult things- taxes, loans (mortgages, HECS etc), investing,

More about money

How to do essential financial things such as taxes,

Taxes/finances

How taxes and loans and financial stuff works

financial skills;

Finances. |

Taxes, entrepreneurship/making money, personal financial literacy

taxes

(paying taxes, buying a house, saving money etc.).

Taxes, |

taxes and bills and budgeting

Finance?? Taxes??

And also wtf taxes are

Followed by....

Mental Health, social wellbeing-
emotional wellbeing,
mental health teaching and how to take care of it and be aware of your own mental health.
Self Care/talk, mental health & wellbeing,
mental health management, More about mental health
Self care and self love

And:

how to debate, public speak, answer questions in job interviews
How to communicate efficiently (e.g. science communication) speaking more effectively,
how to be an effective/clear communicator;
How to communicate and explain ideas to people with different educational backgrounds,

And:

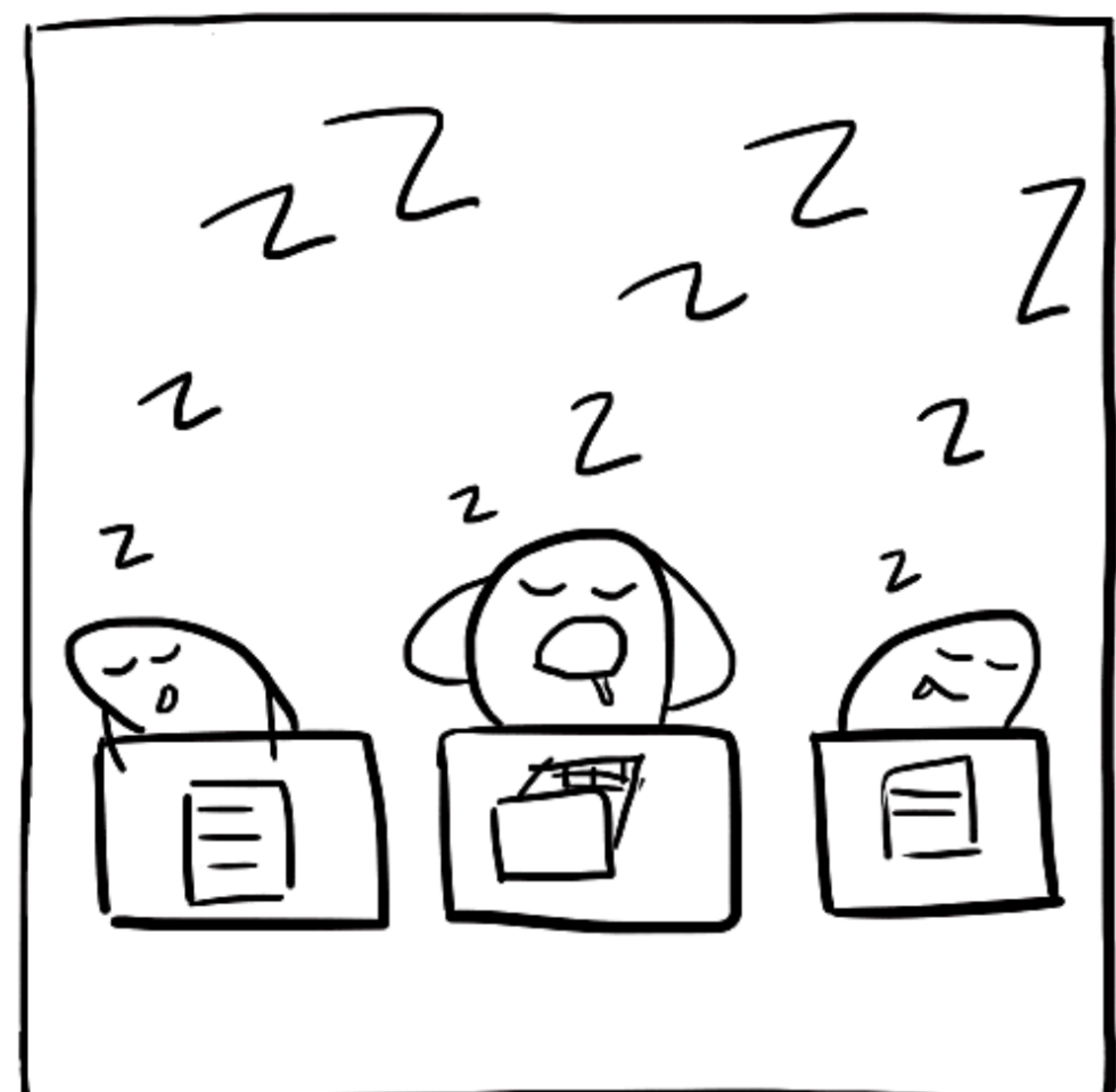
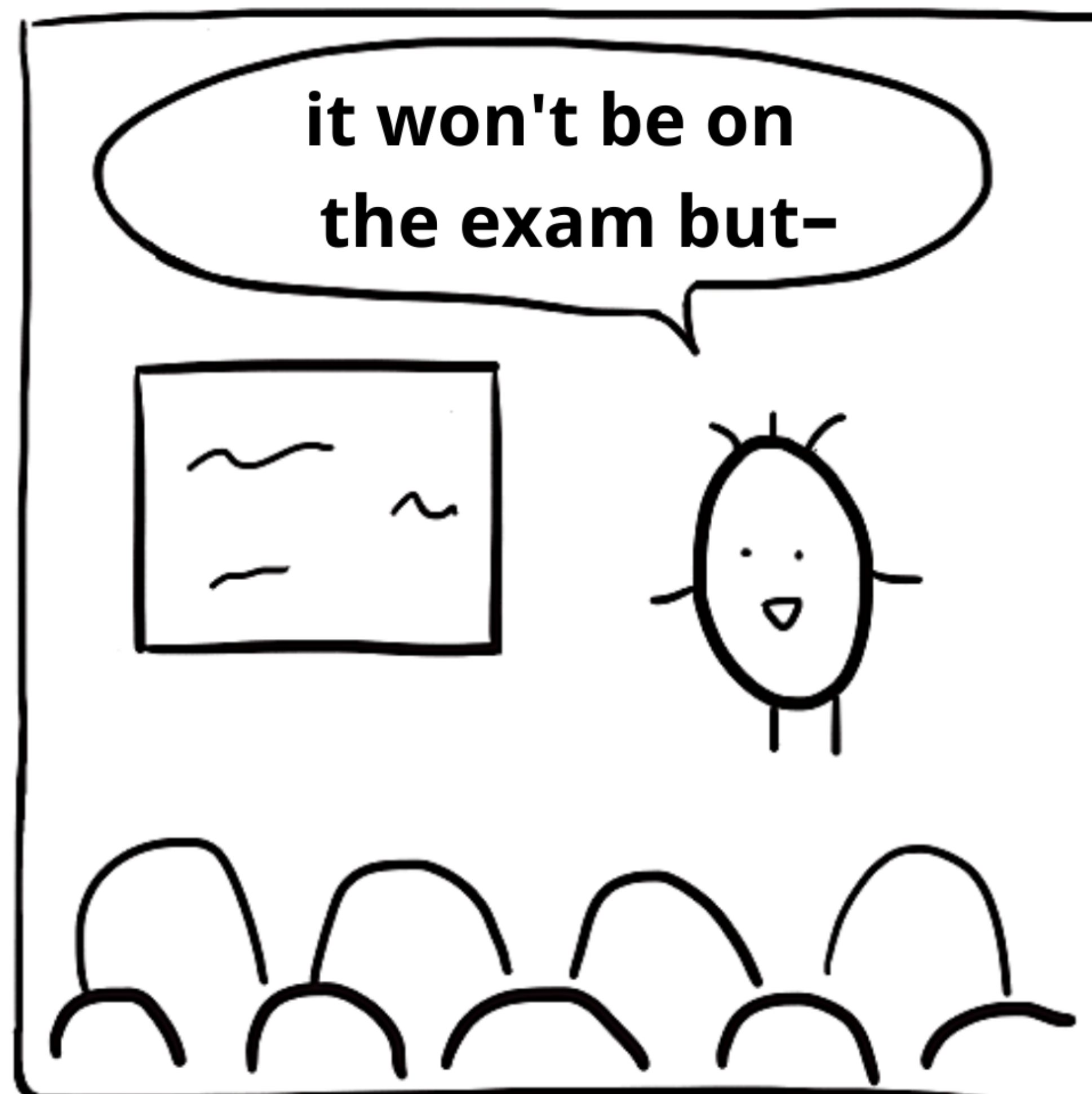
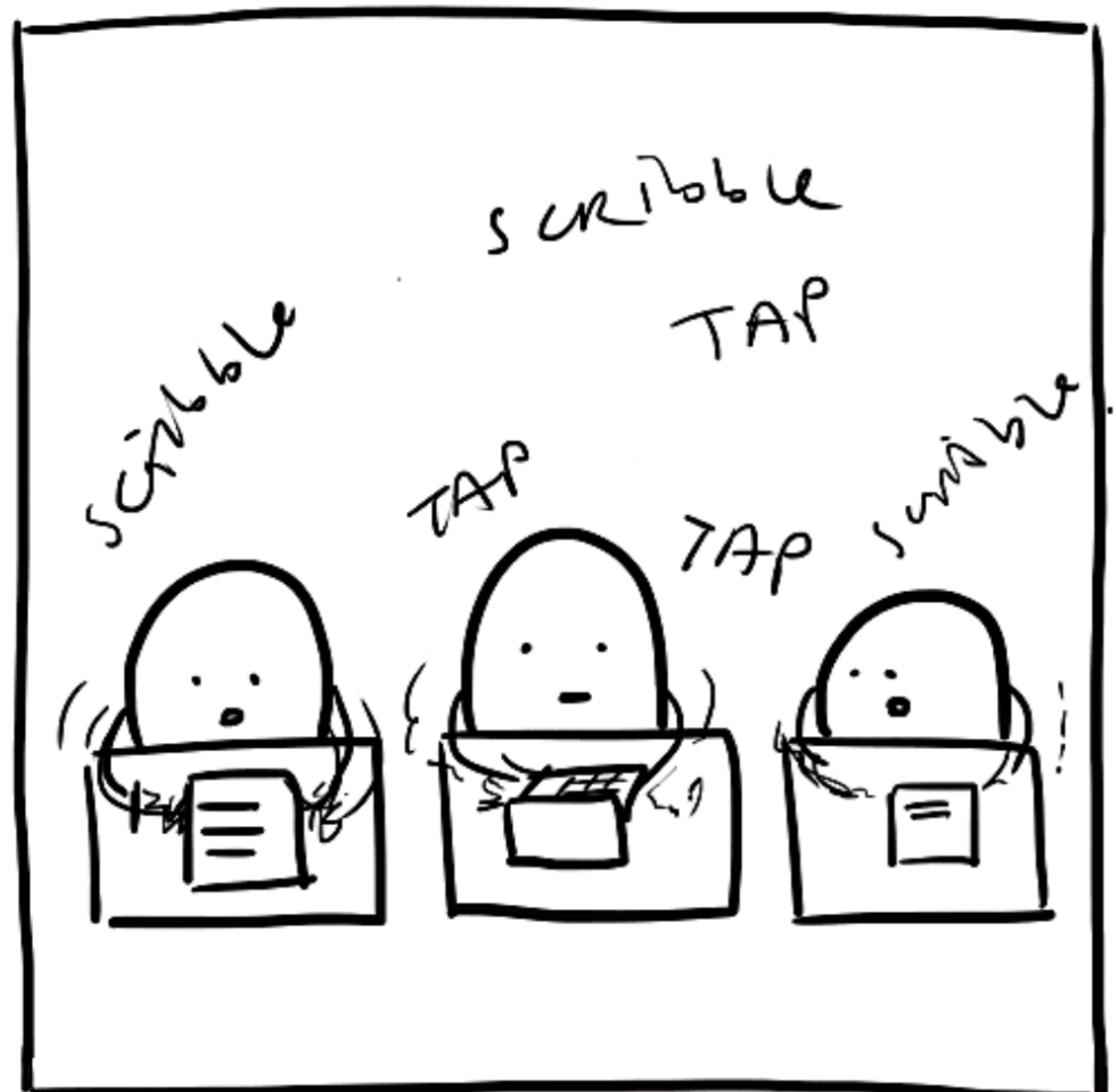
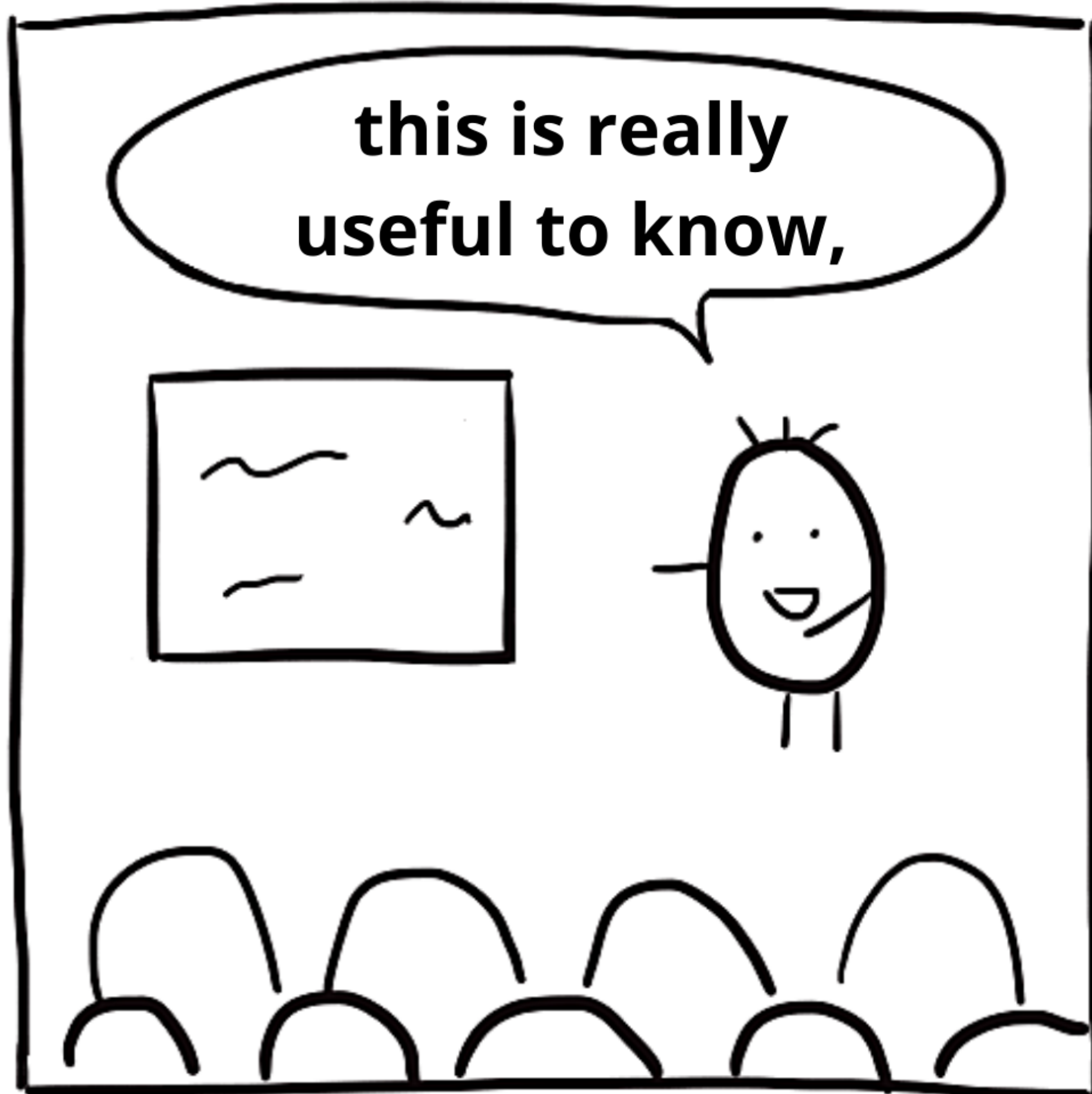
I wish other streams that non-mainstream career pathways
of work were talked about and valued (not the typical uni route) exist and are valid
what jobs are out there

What do all of these have in common?

They're relevant life skills. Skills that we use every single day, yet never learnt in class. Sure academics are important...

But as we can see, life isn't all about that.

PRIORITIES



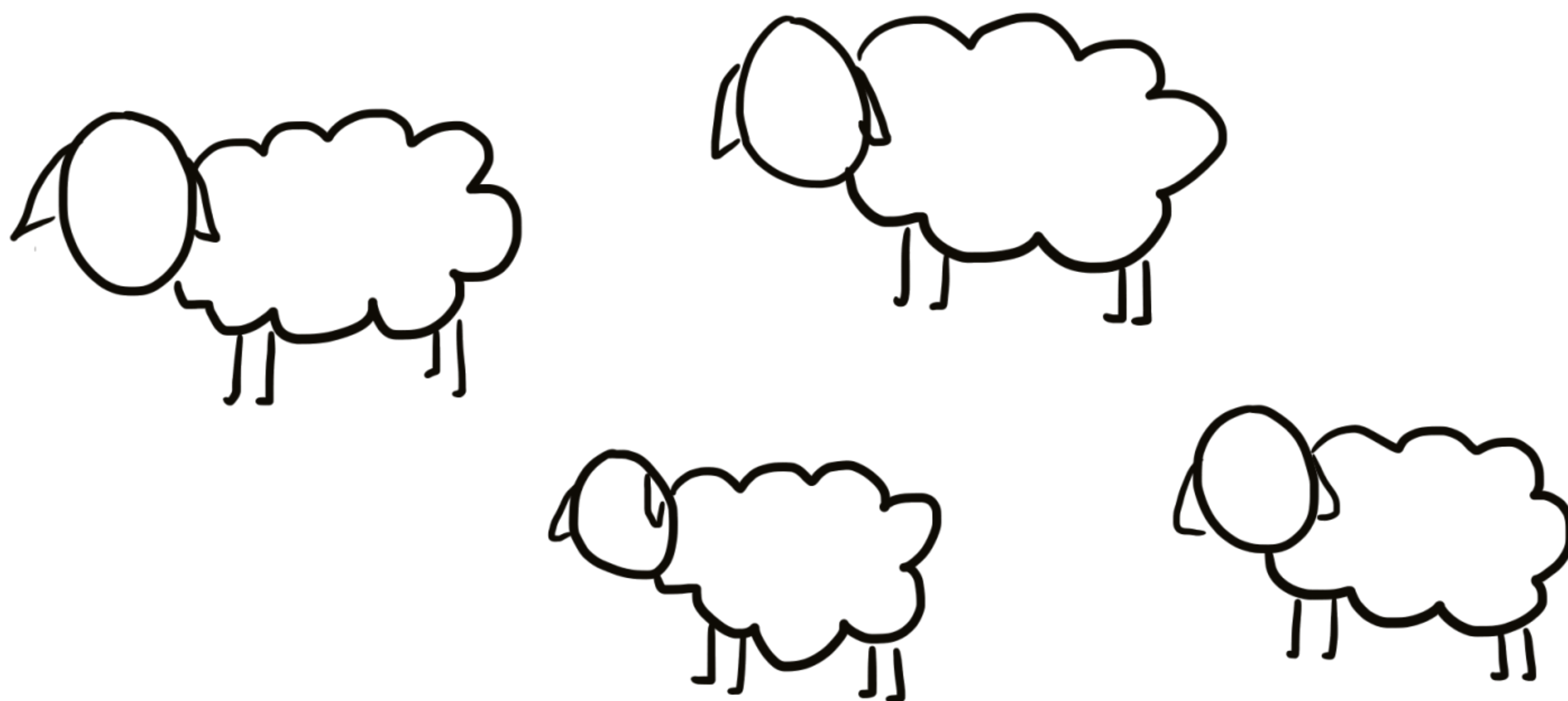
LET'S GET PERSONAL(ISED)

The current system is *meant* to standardise and conform.

adapted from
'Ready to Redo'
[episode 2](#)



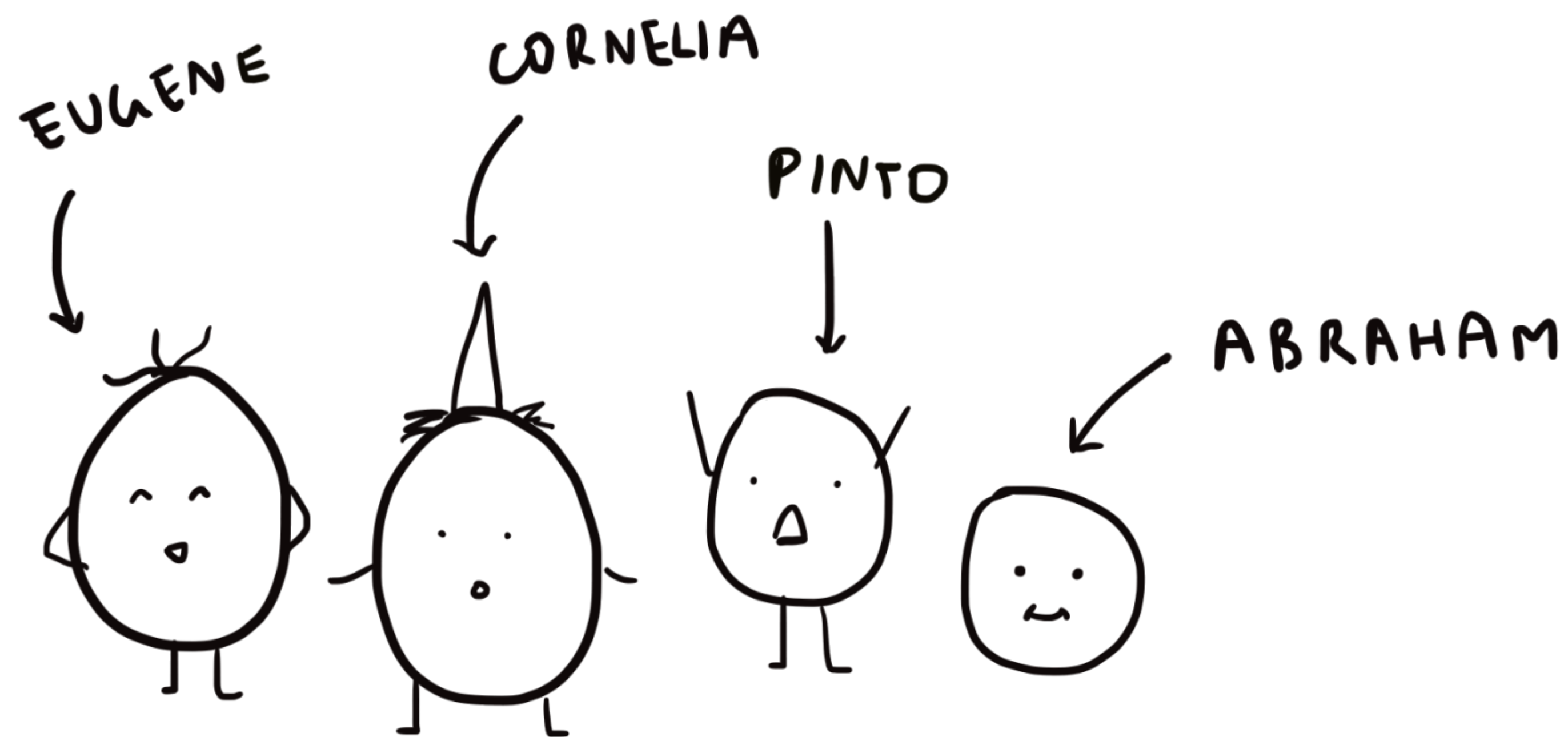
For efficiency, each student learns the same material, gets taught the exact same way, churns out the same assignments, gets graded on a standardised scale, and is shepherded blindly at the same pace.



But a system for everyone,

will fit

no one.



Big Bean Eugene likes how maths class is run, and enjoys having work assigned for him.

Cornelia cannot maths like Eugene can. Plus she needs a break after 25 minutes (too bad class are 50 minutes long)

Unfortunately Lil' Pinto's a little bored in class. The teacher keeps repeating what she already knows, and she'd much prefer learning about bridges and the maths behind that.

Abraham just is.

We can't lump everyone together and expect them all to flourish.

... To create a system for everyone means

L E T T I N G

G O

Letting go of a strict curriculum.

Personalising the experience, and treating each student like a unique, wholesome little bean.

Rocky Foundations

Adapted from
Sal Khan's
[Ted talk](#)

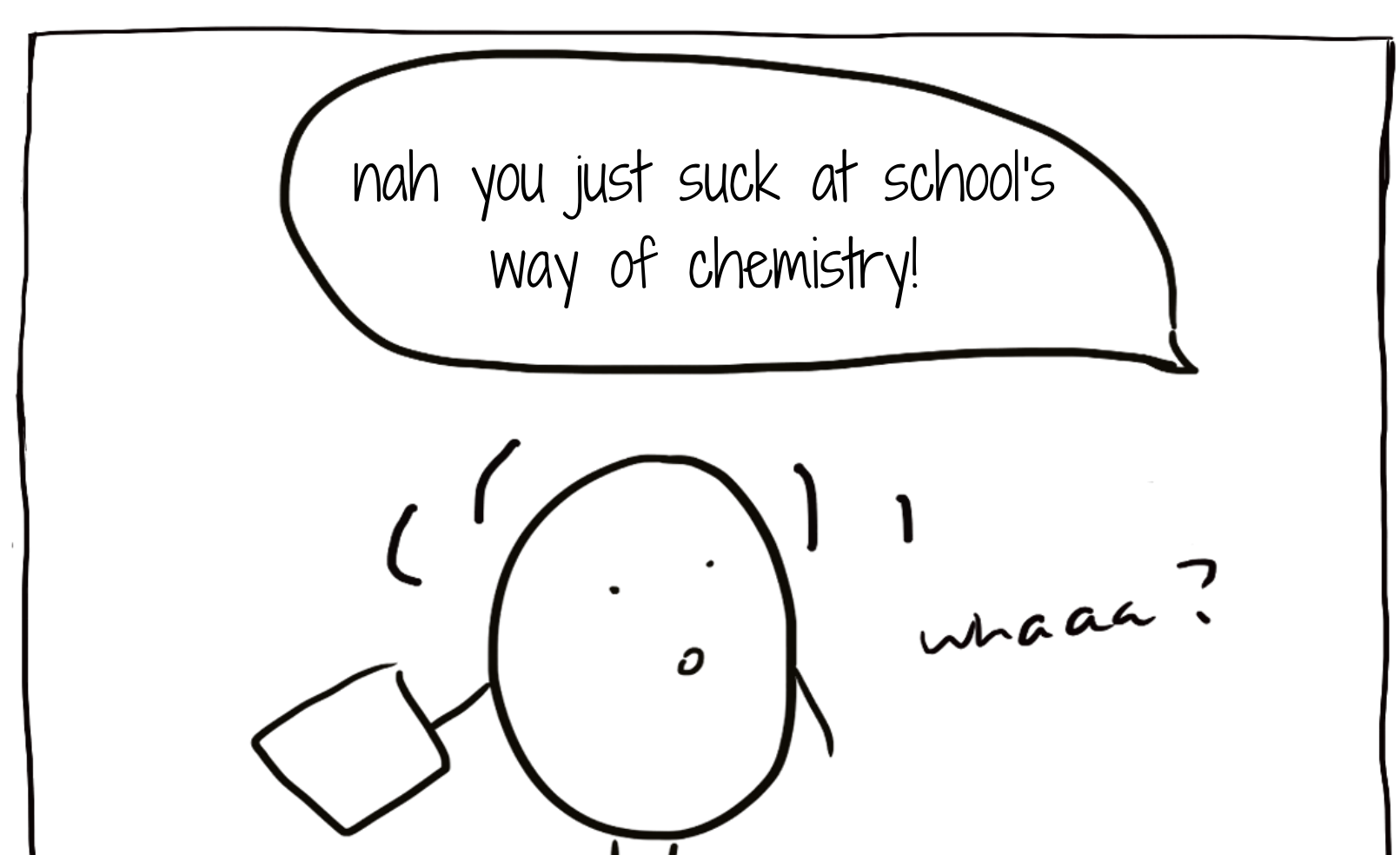
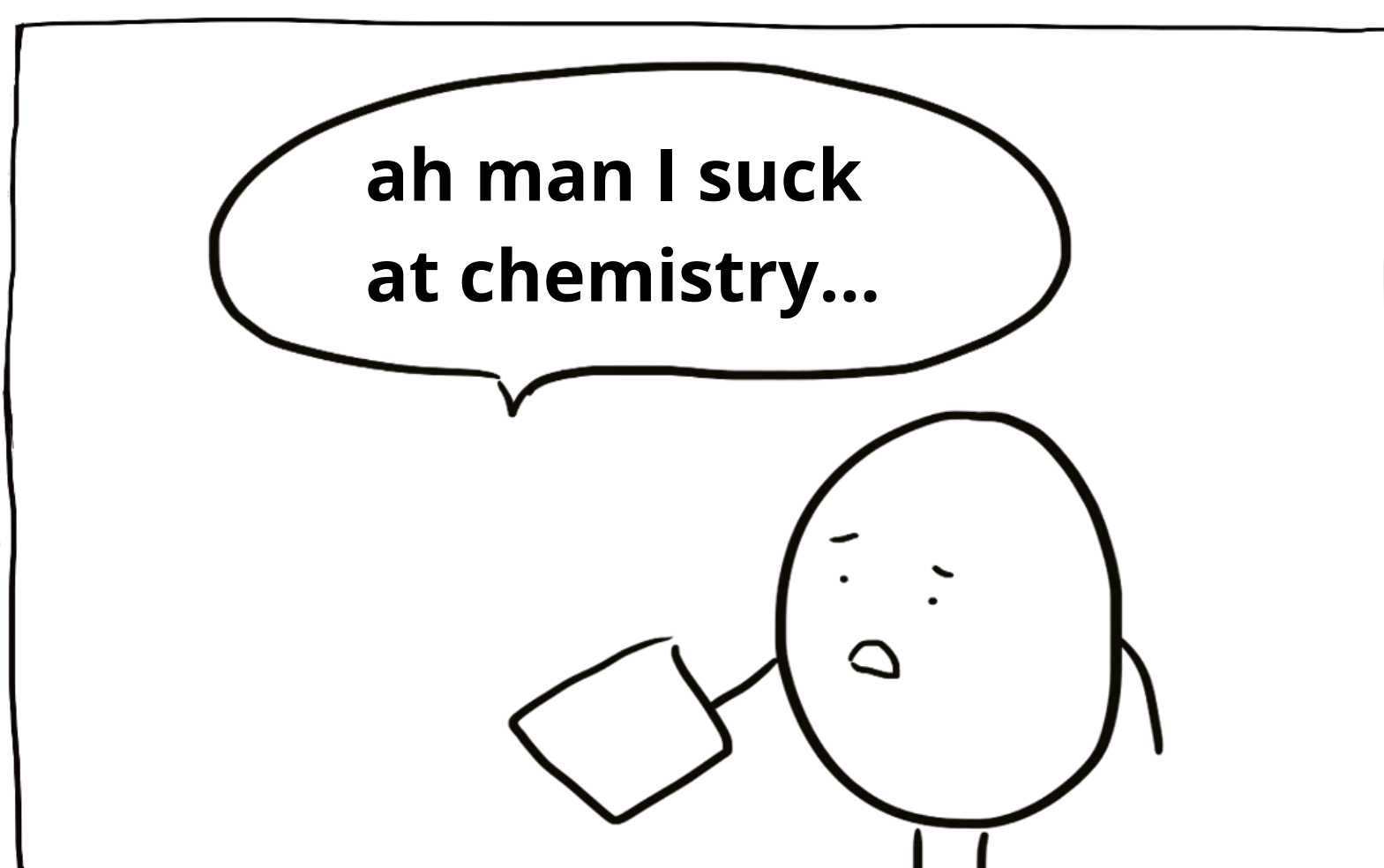
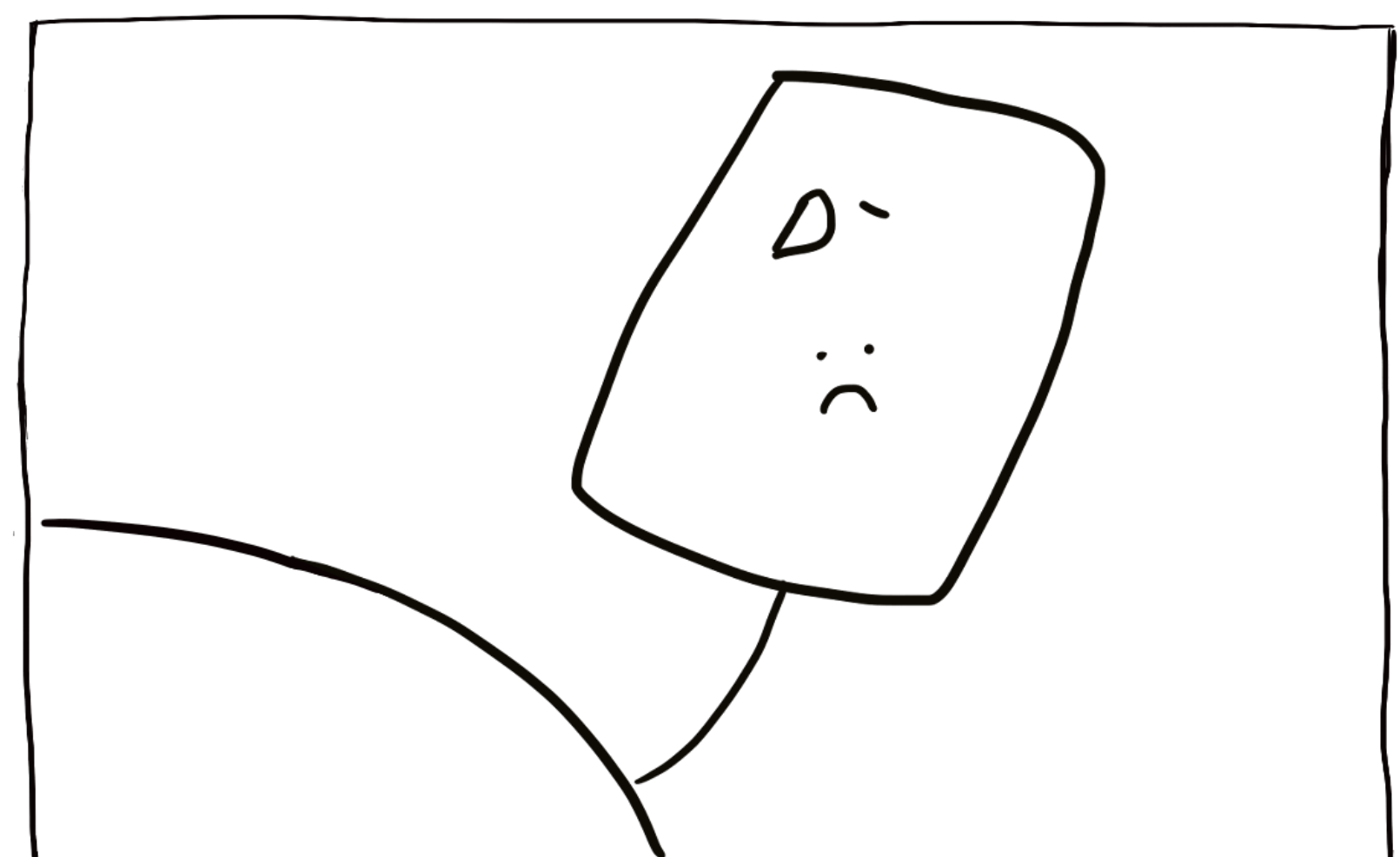
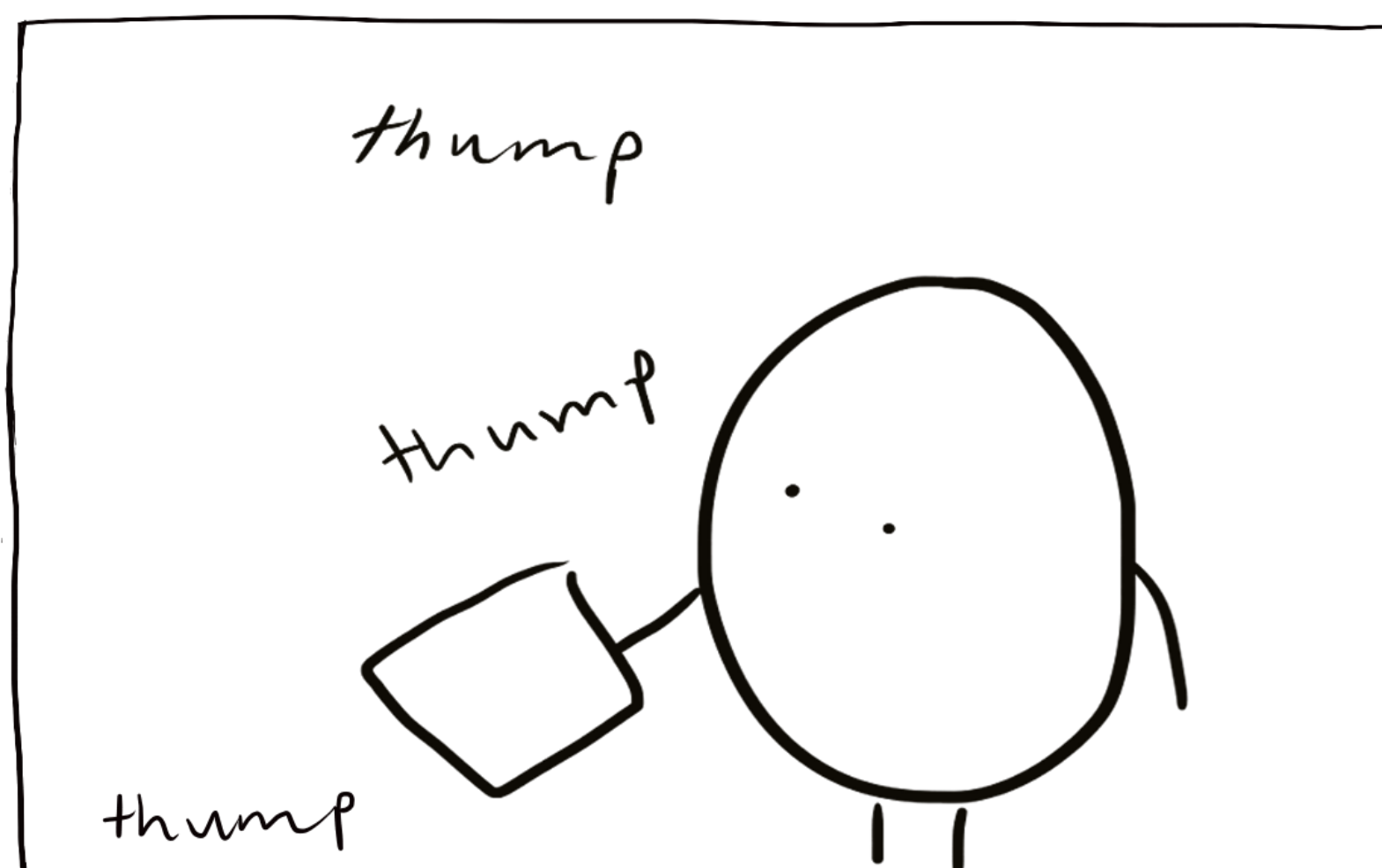


When I get a 70% for a test, there's still 30% I don't get.

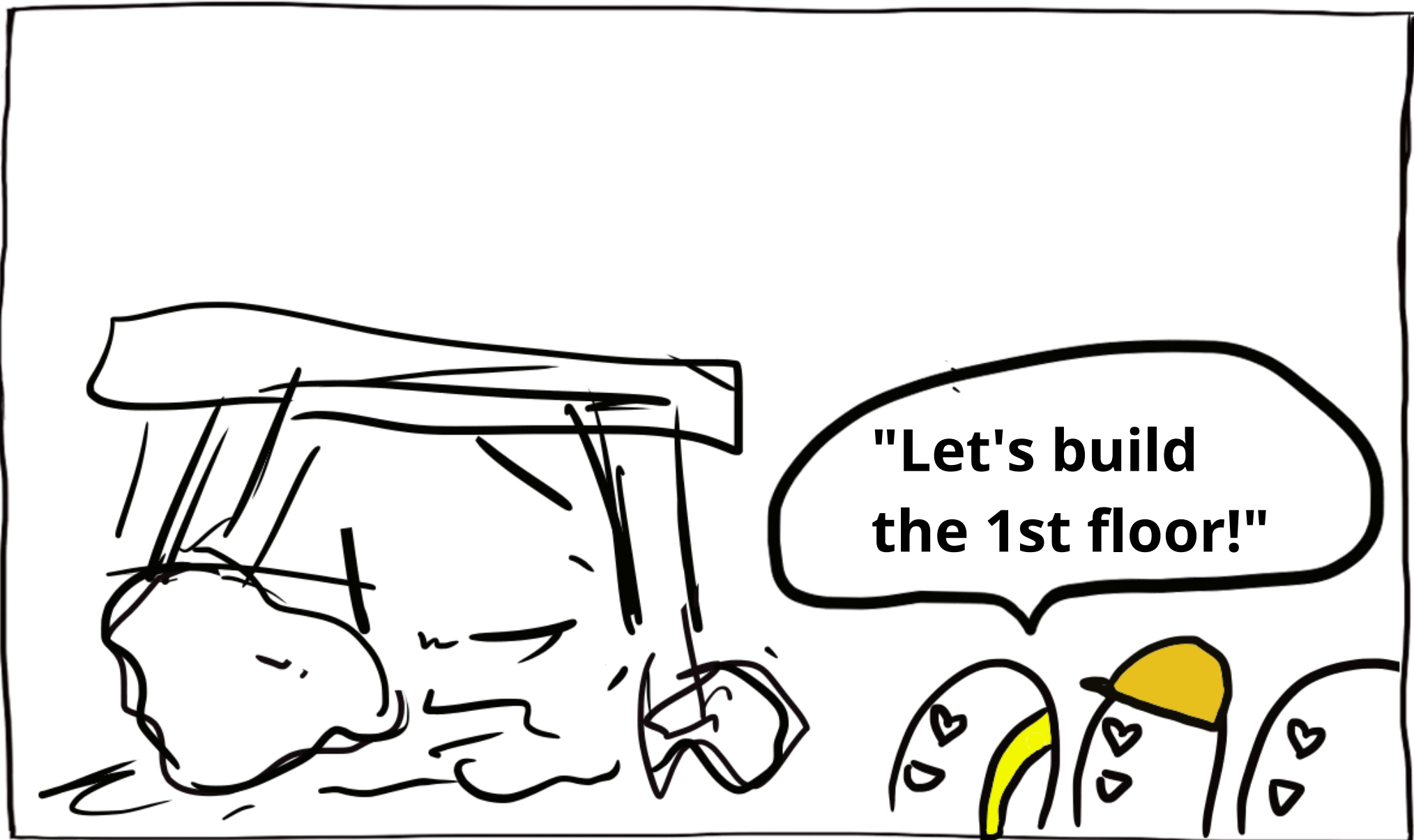
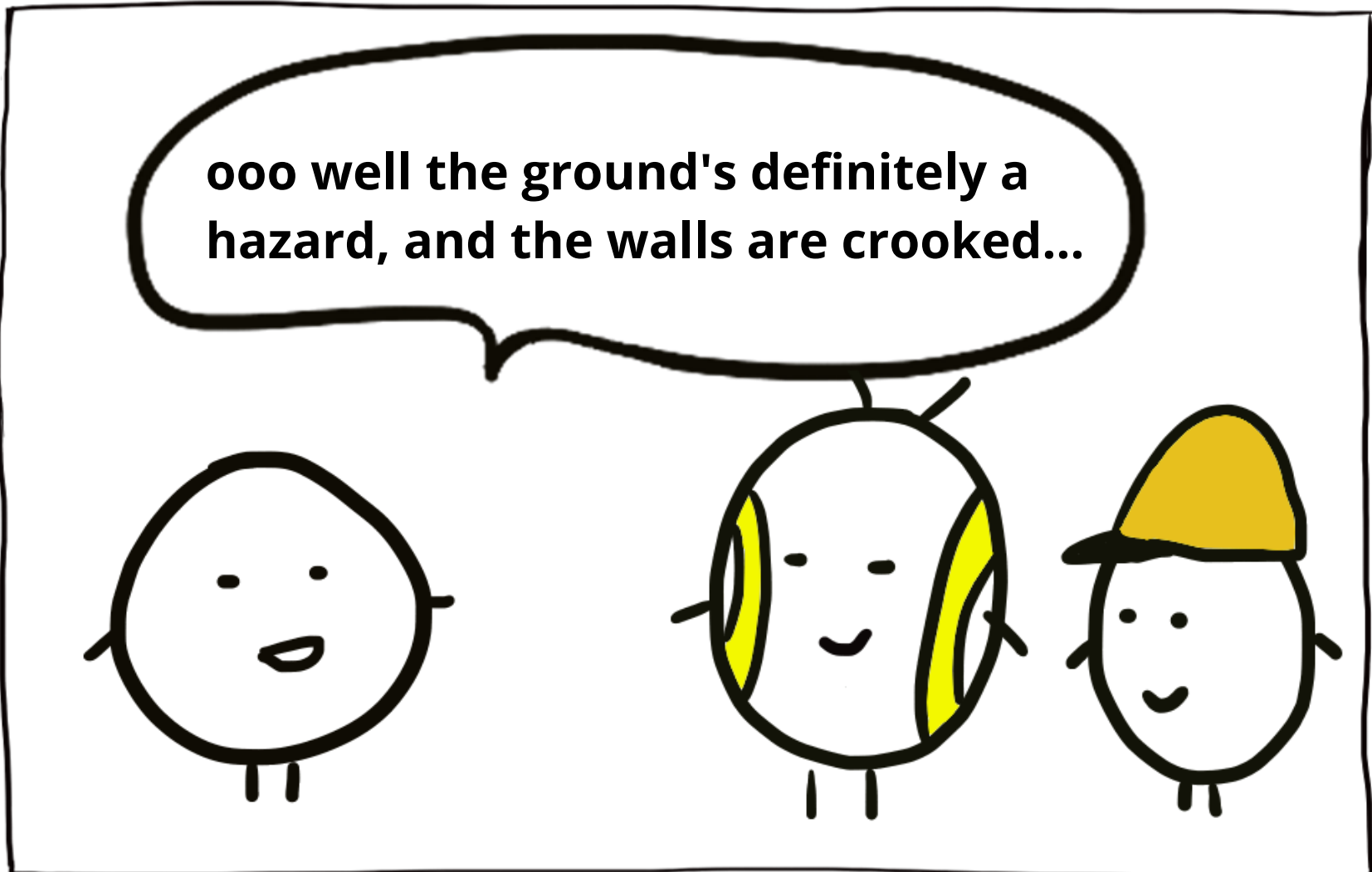
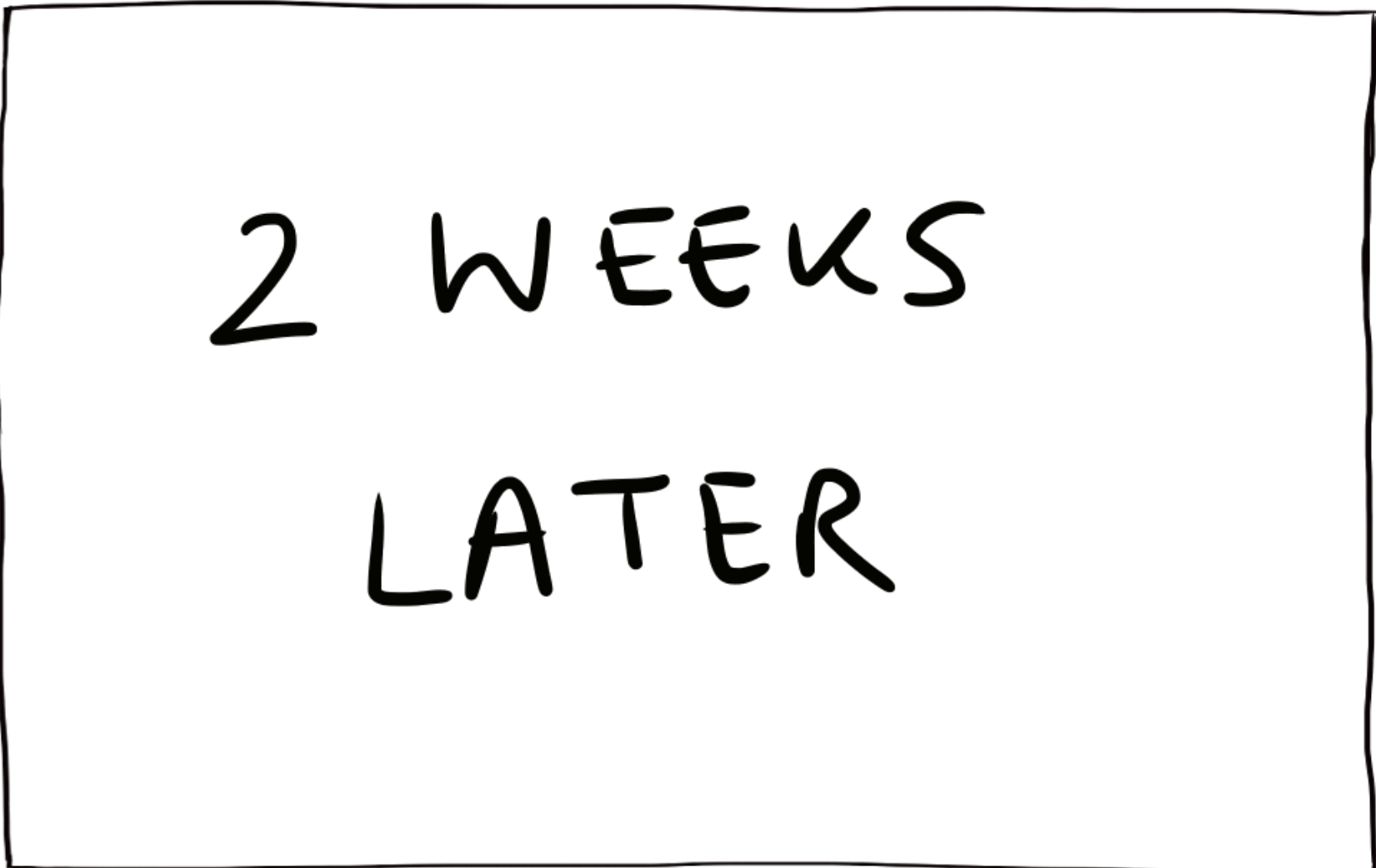
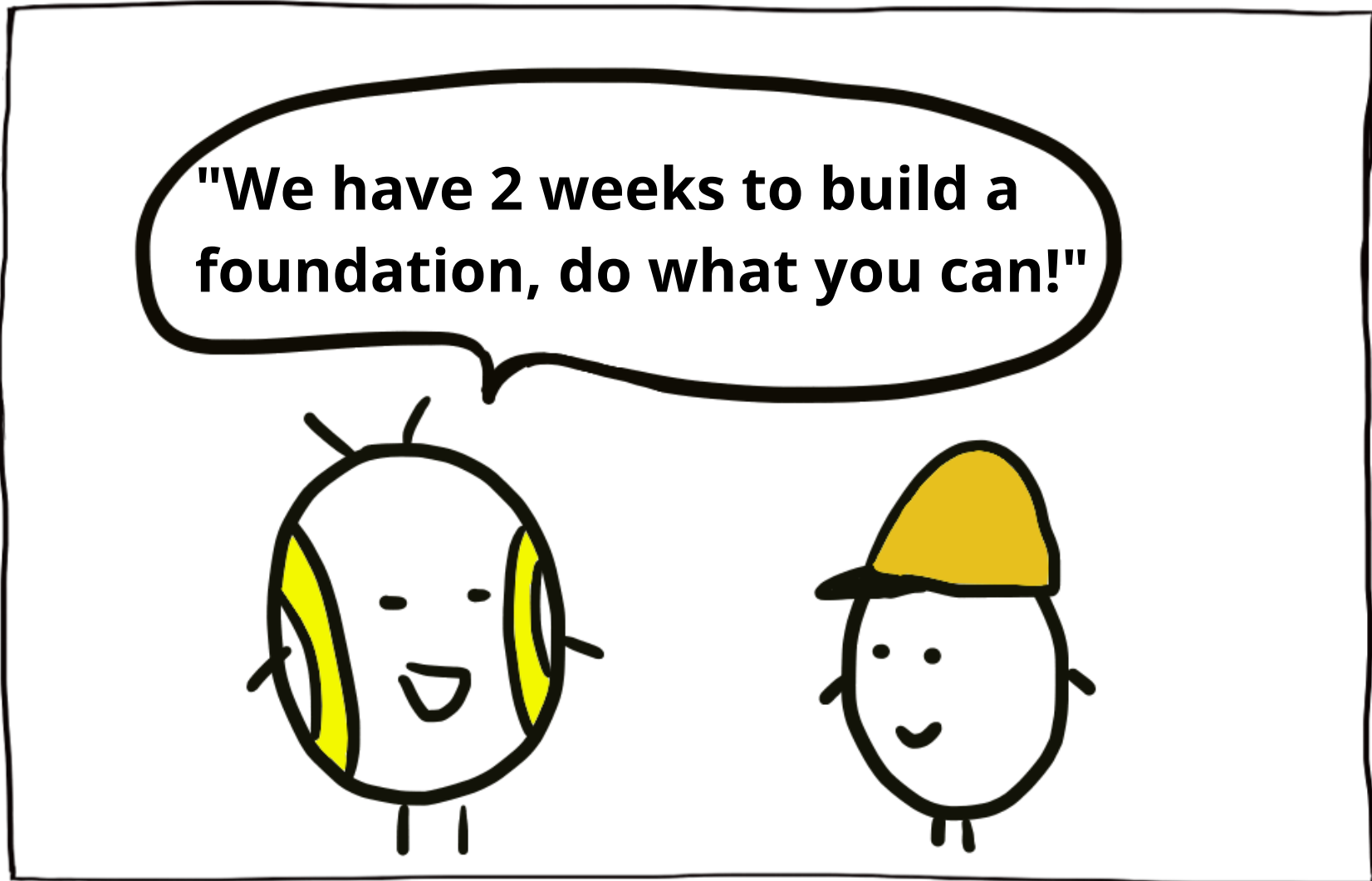
Rather than going over my mistakes and redoing the test... the class has to move on.
There's no time to spare, we're tethered to a curriculum.

But then, we cover even more advanced topics. These rely on the gaps i'm missing. This repeats and repeats, until there are so many gaps in my knowledge that I hit a wall.

That's the time when I identify as 'not a science kid' or 'horrible at English'.



Imagine if we treated home building the same way.



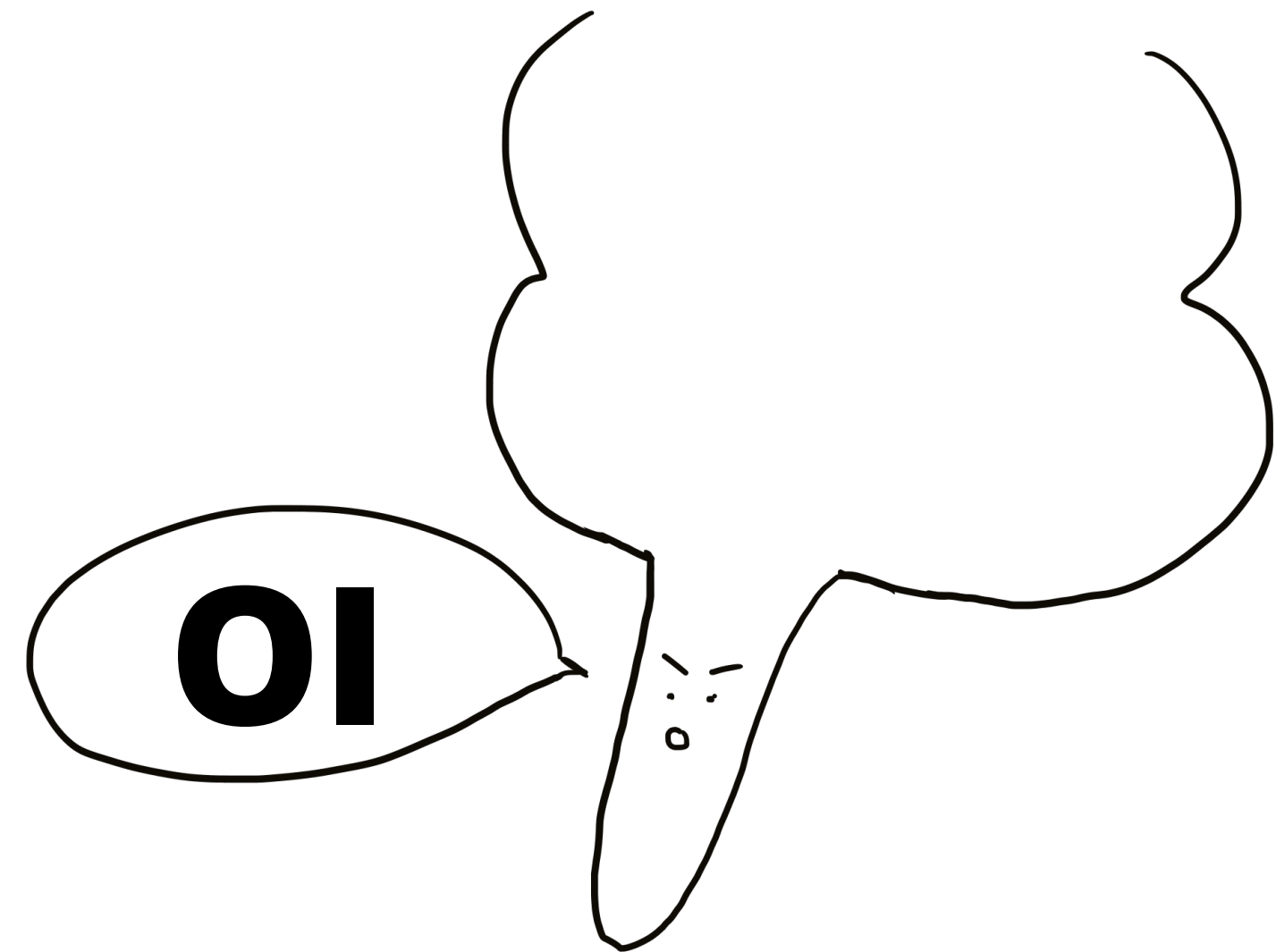
"In a world of individuals,
comparison makes no
sense at all"

UNKNOWN

SHUN grades

Grades are like our appendix.

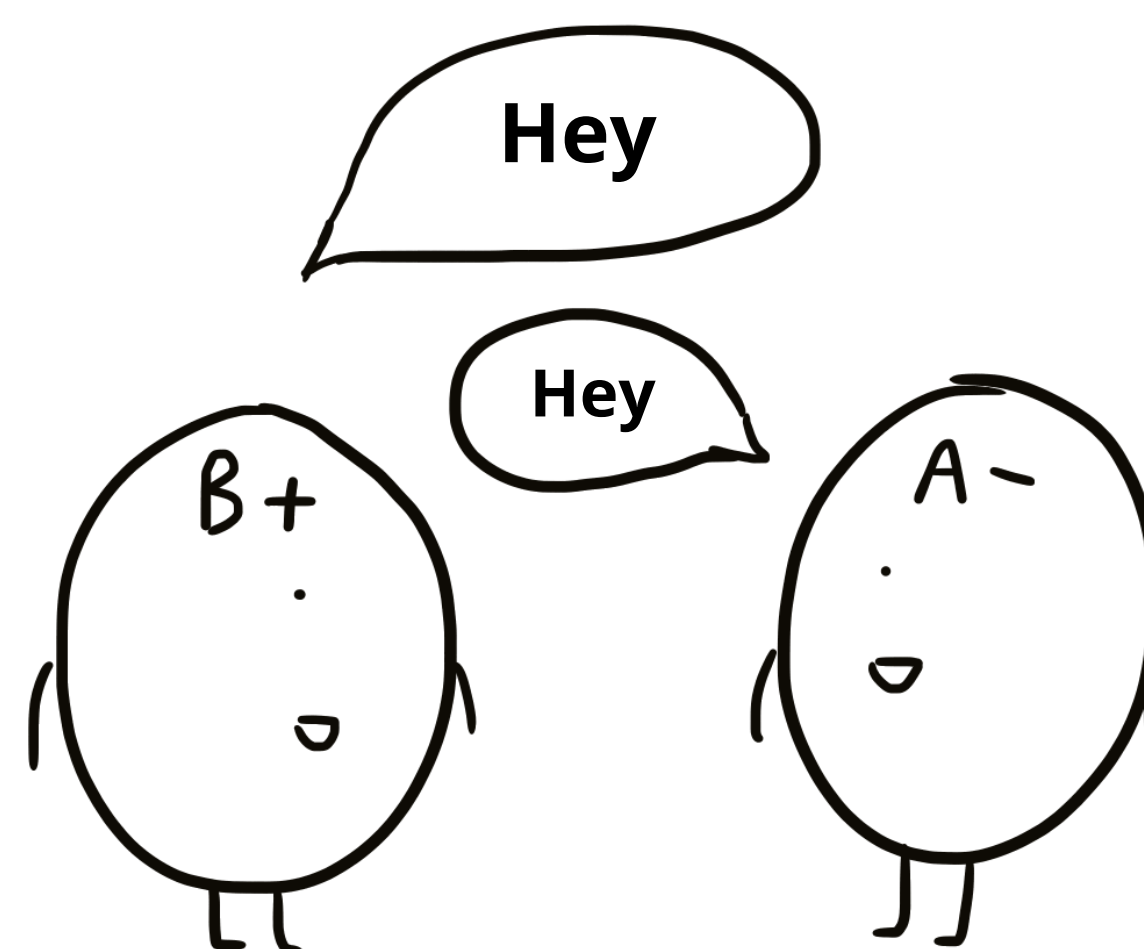
Completely useless, and easy to remove.



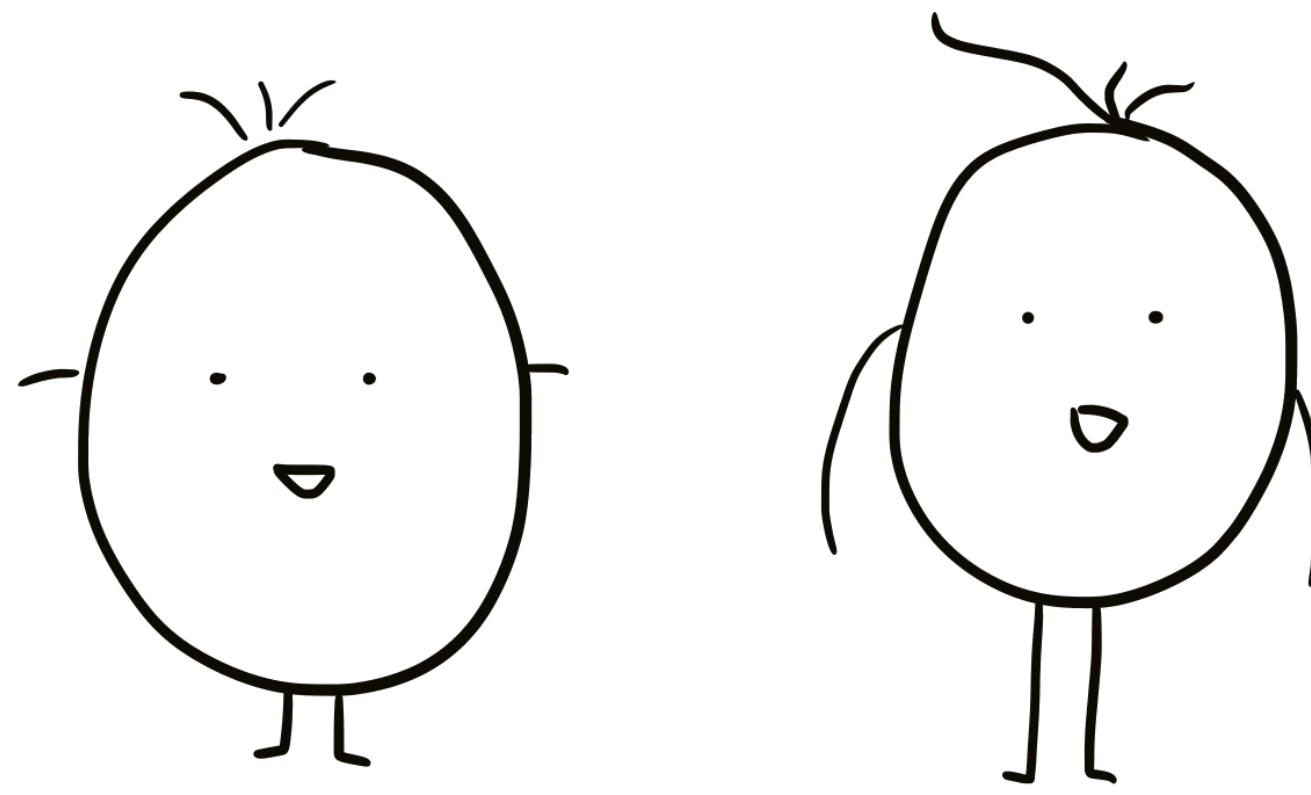
Sure slapping every student onto a standardised scale is efficient. We see how schools are going, which ones need funding, and which students will make the cut for university.

But who actually benefits?

Obviously not the students. Instead, we get ranked, and identify more as a letter or number than a wholesome bean.



and worst of all, we're lured into the comparison trap.

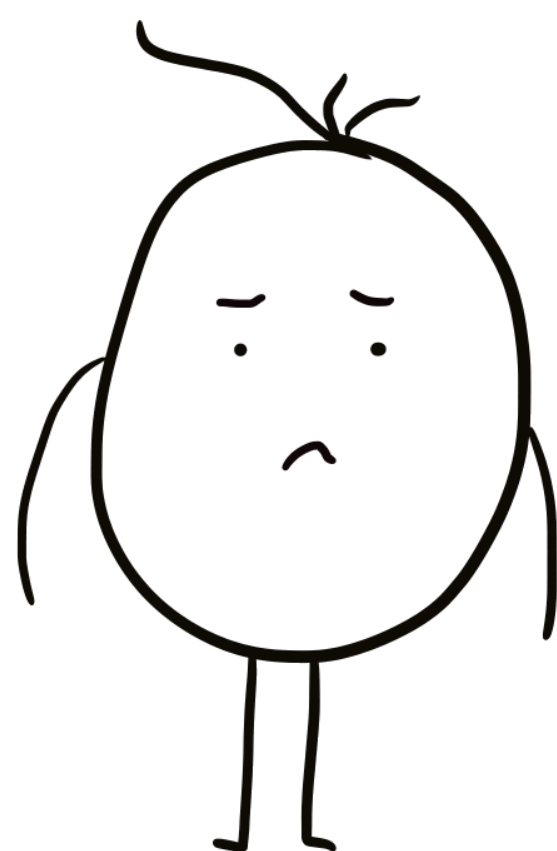


Crustie and Finneas have a geography test



Crustie already knows this topic pretty well, and barely exerts any effort to get an A.

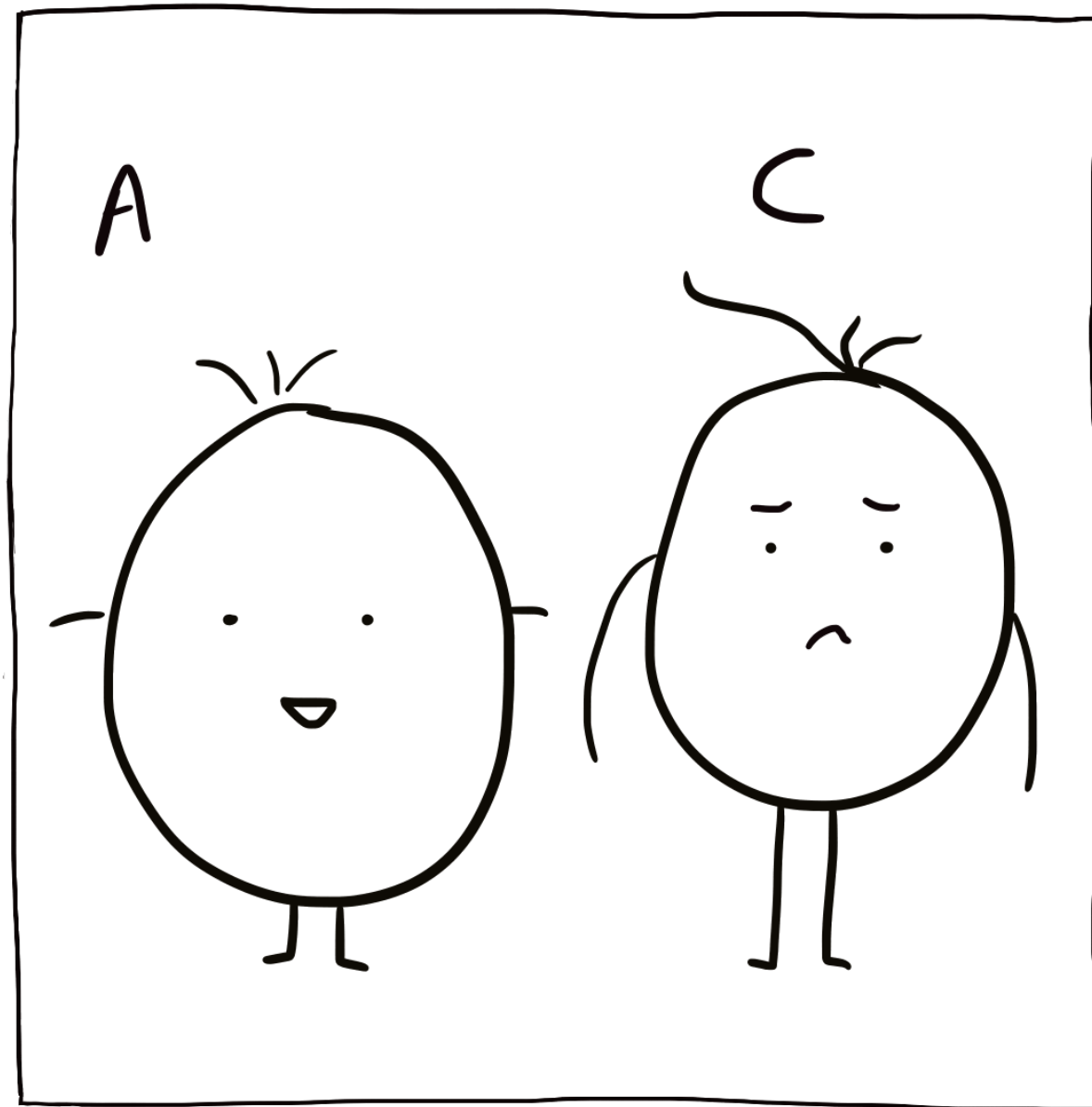
Whereas Finneas struggles... a lot. He's sure to scrape a D but after working his bean butt off, he unlocks his eureka! moment and achieves a C.



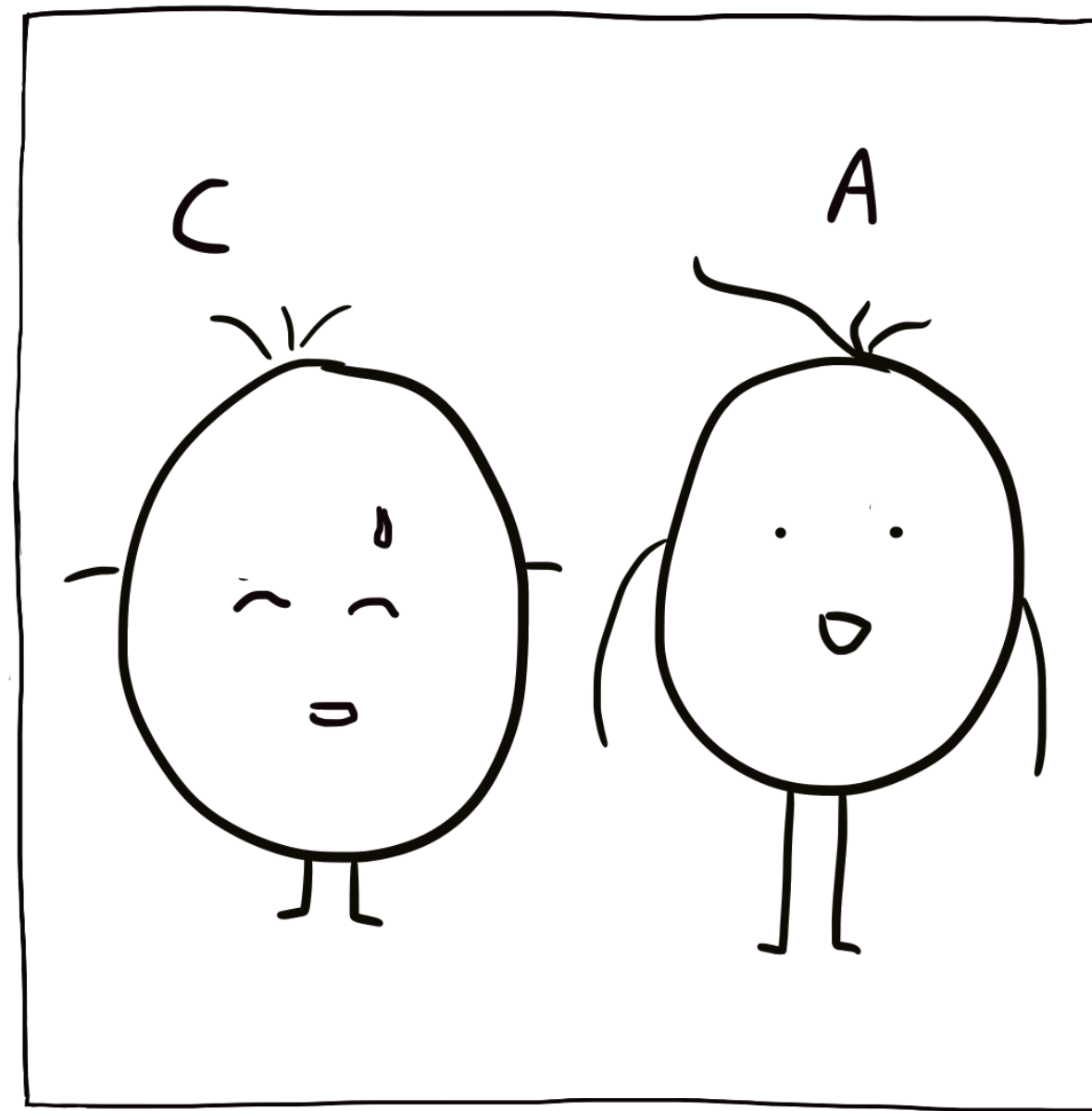
Unfortunately Finneas looks at his grade and doesn't think it's worth the effort. He's accepts he's not a geography student.

So what grade do they actually deserve?

Standardised



Personalised



SOLUTION TO THIS MADNESS?

We could give *personalised* grading scales. I track my progress, and only mine.
Or better yet:

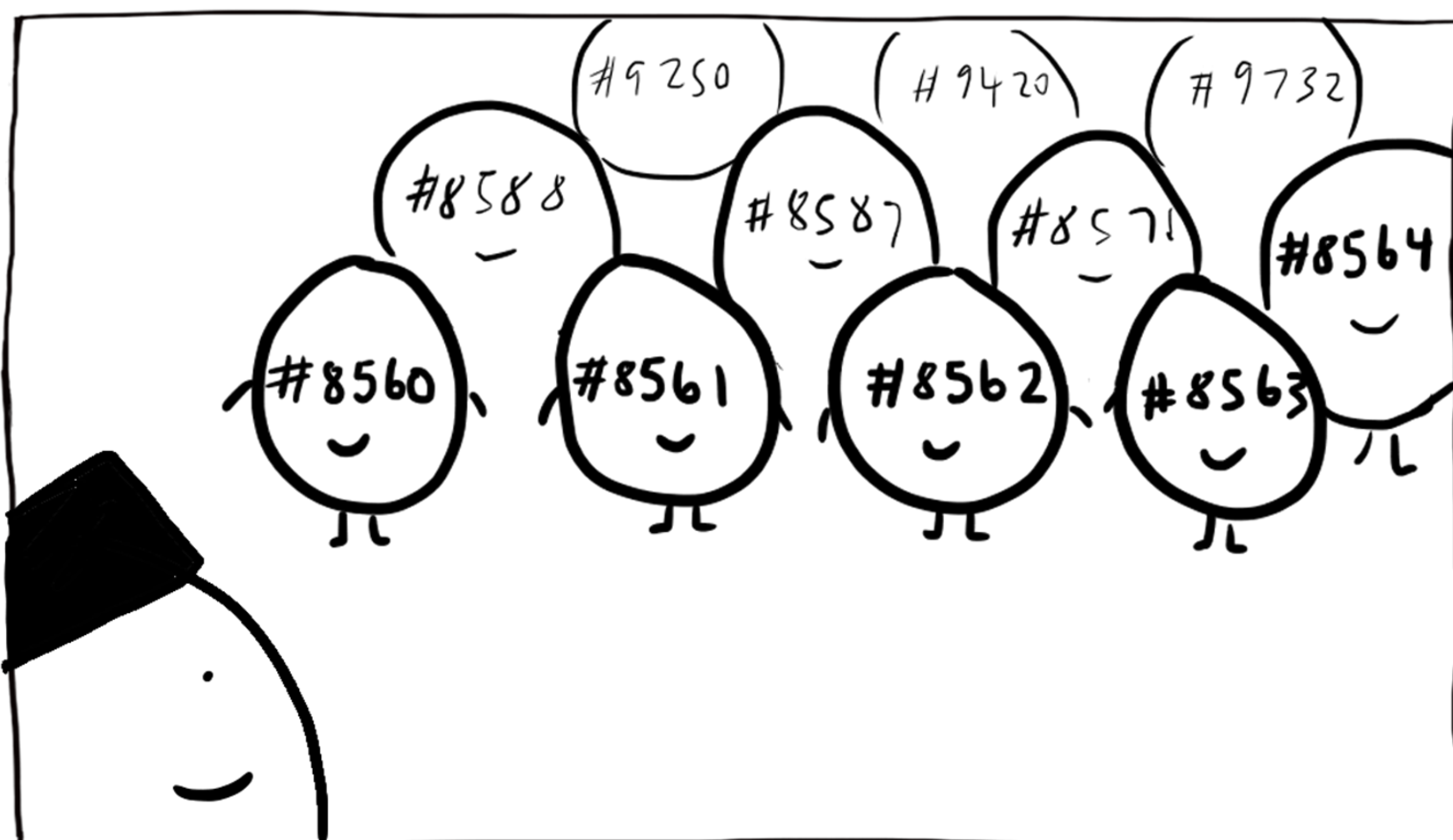
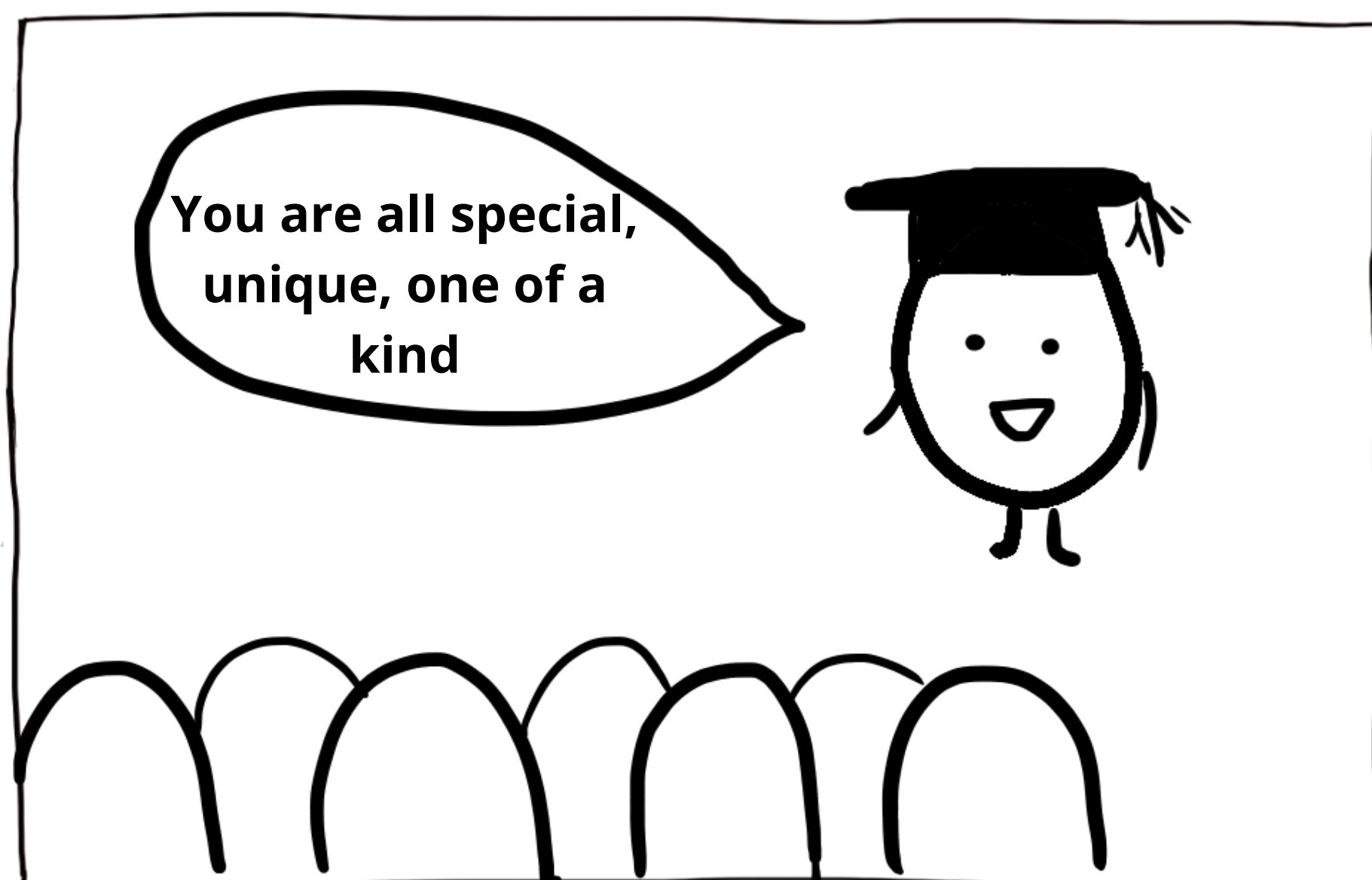
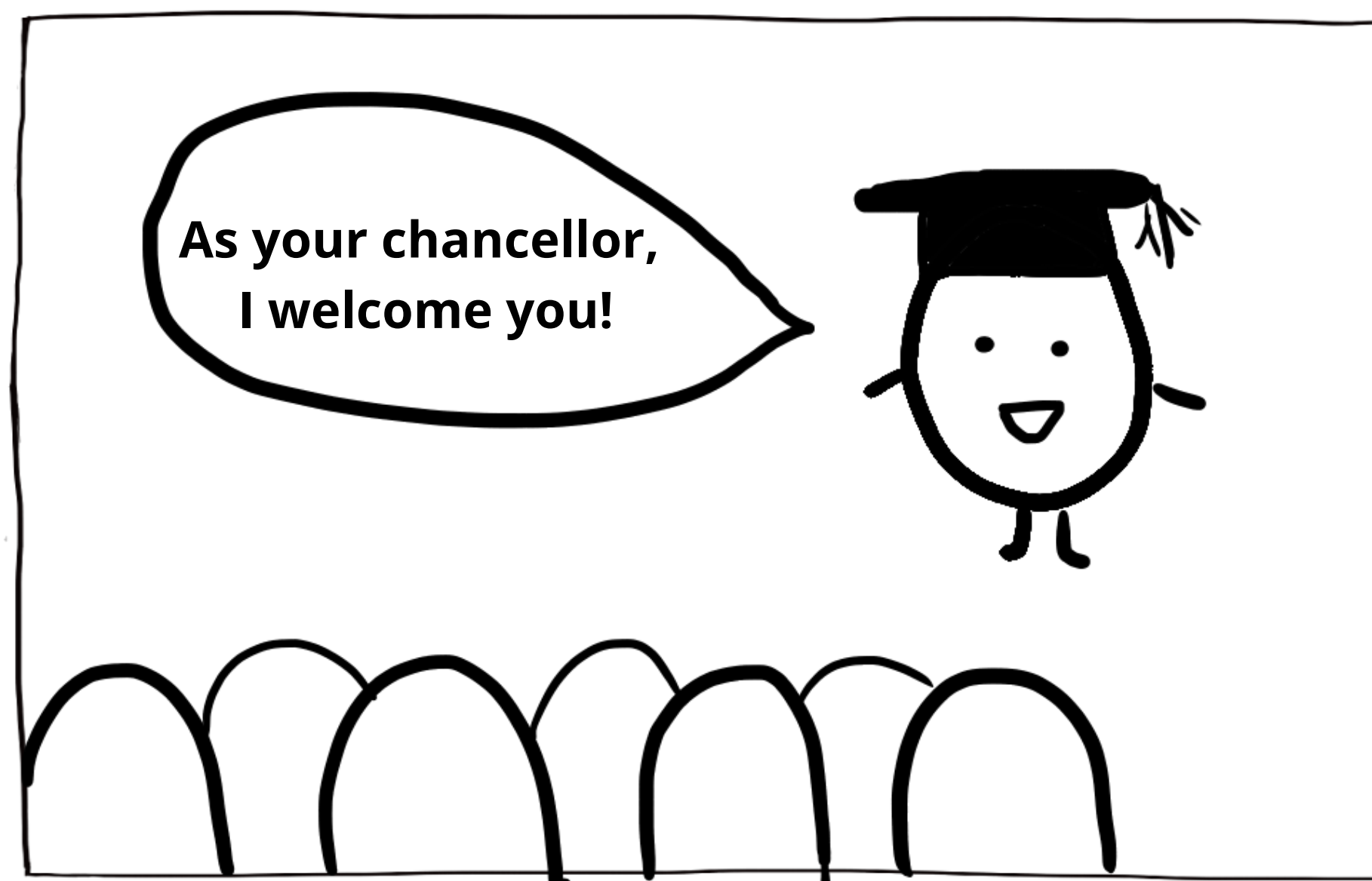
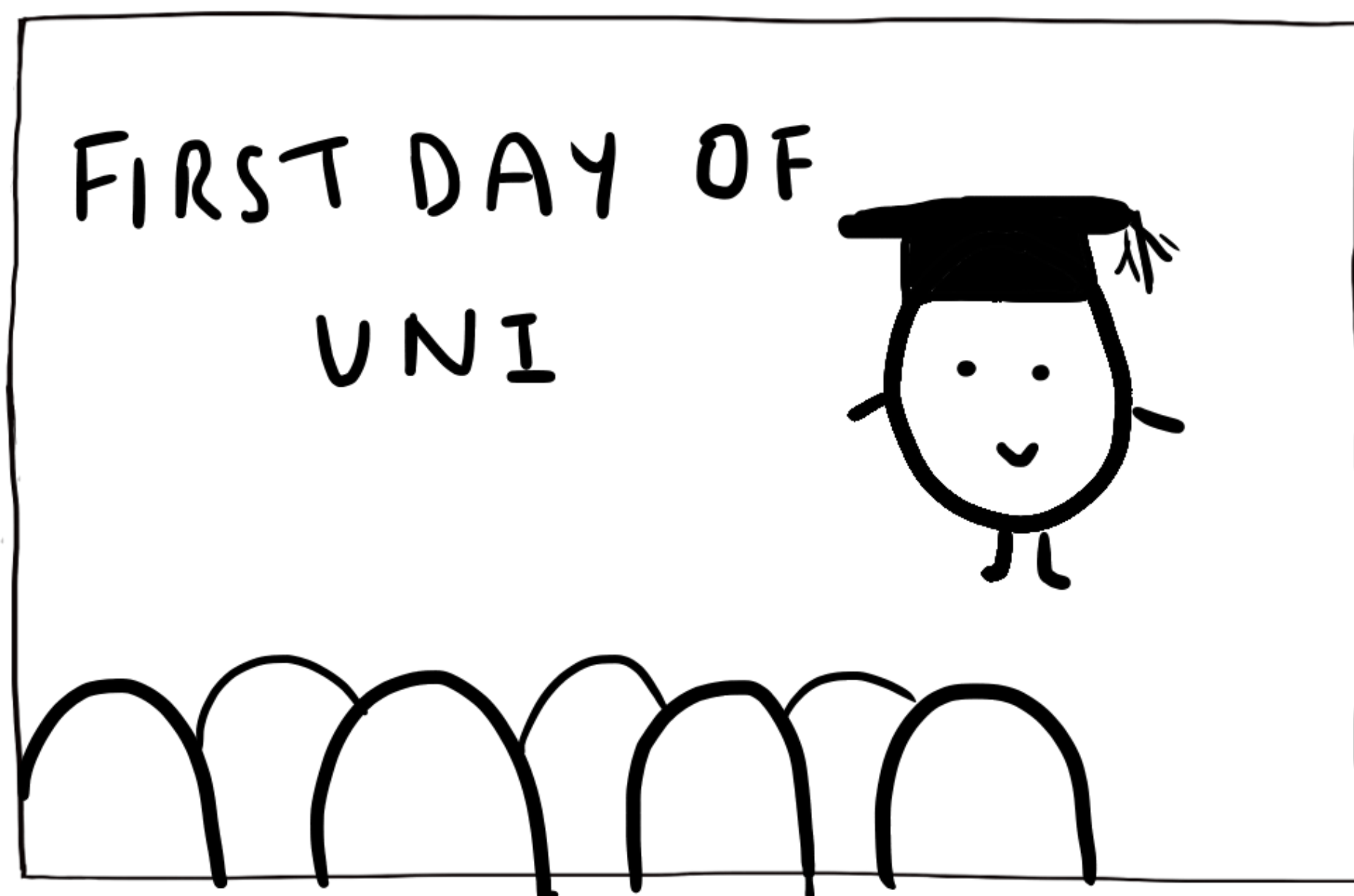
Scrap grades altogether. Give feedback instead.

We don't even use grades past school. Instead, we get evaluated, and receive personalised feedback... ie. things we can actually learn from.

If it's a practical assessment, incorporate peer feedback. Were the customers satisfied with your work? Did advisors notice your initiative?

Also, ask students to give themselves feedback. Ask them to identify their areas of improvement. They learn to reflect, plus they don't feel attached to a grade. Win win.

Unique(ly Similar)



"If you're not prepared to
be wrong, you'll never
come up with anything
original."

SIR KEN ROBINSON

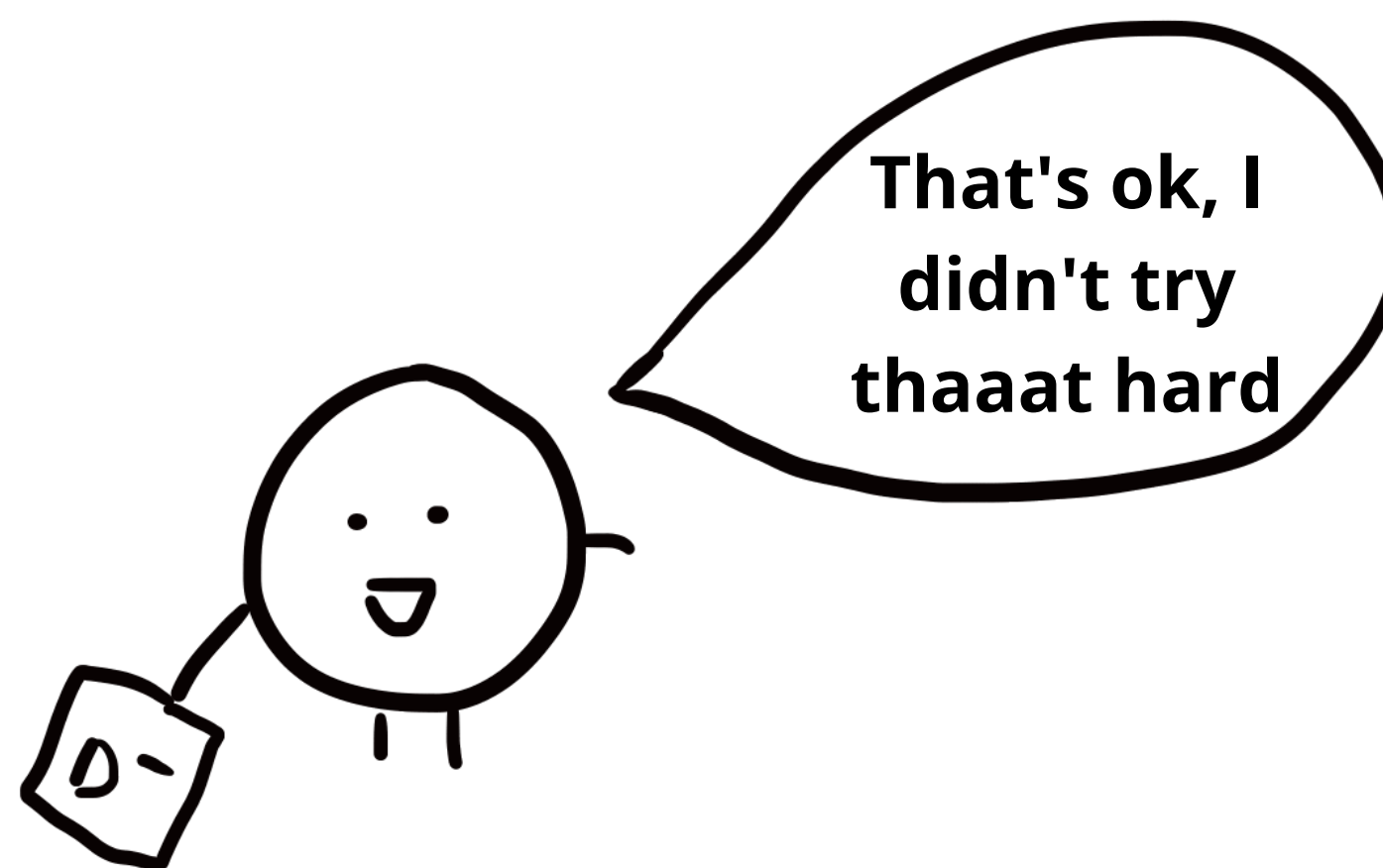
FEAR of failure

Adapted from
Ready to
Redo
[episode 3](#)



One chance to get this right. One mark that will show up on my transcript.

When the system reduces us to a test score, it's no wonder why most of us fear failure.
We even make excuses for doing less.



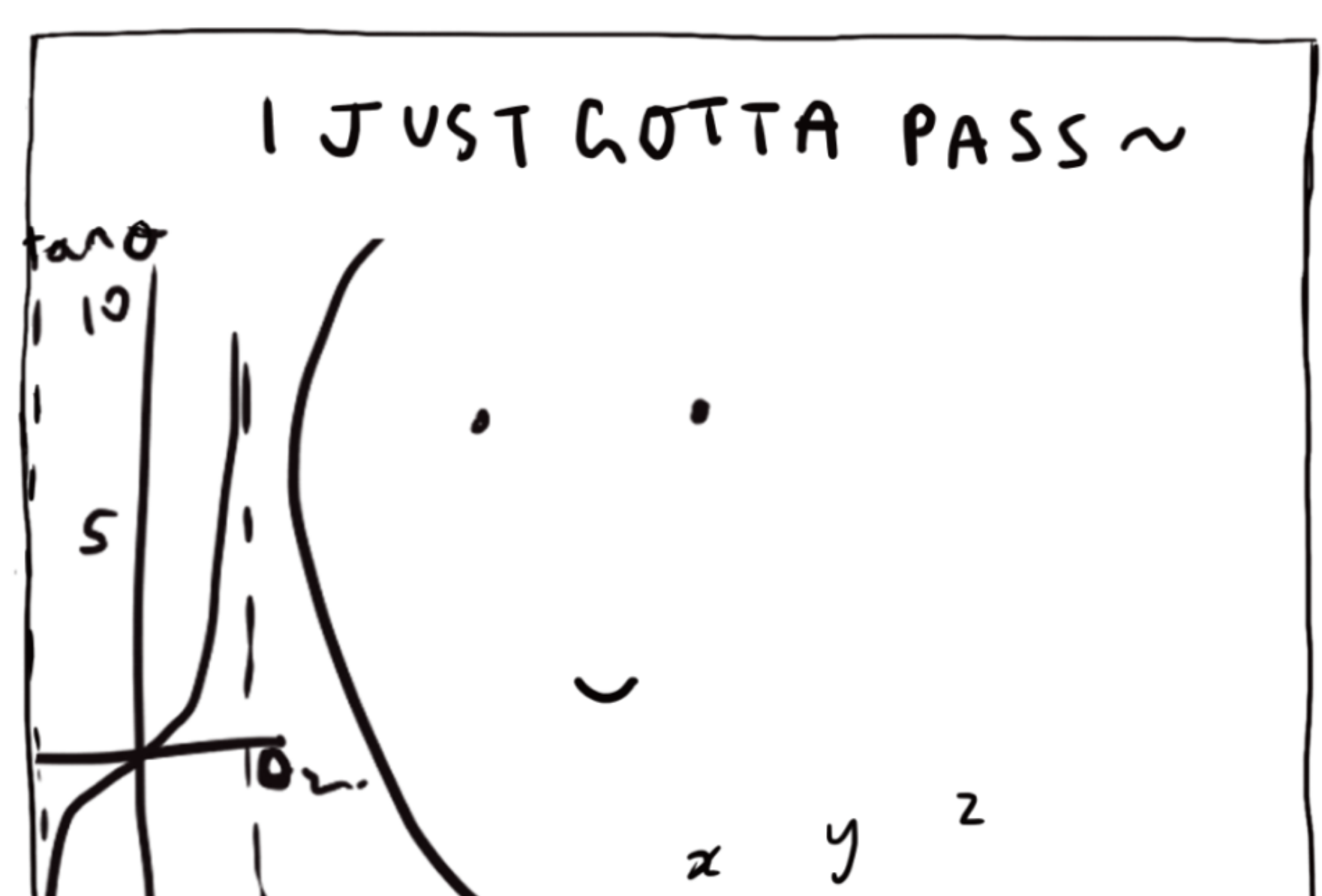
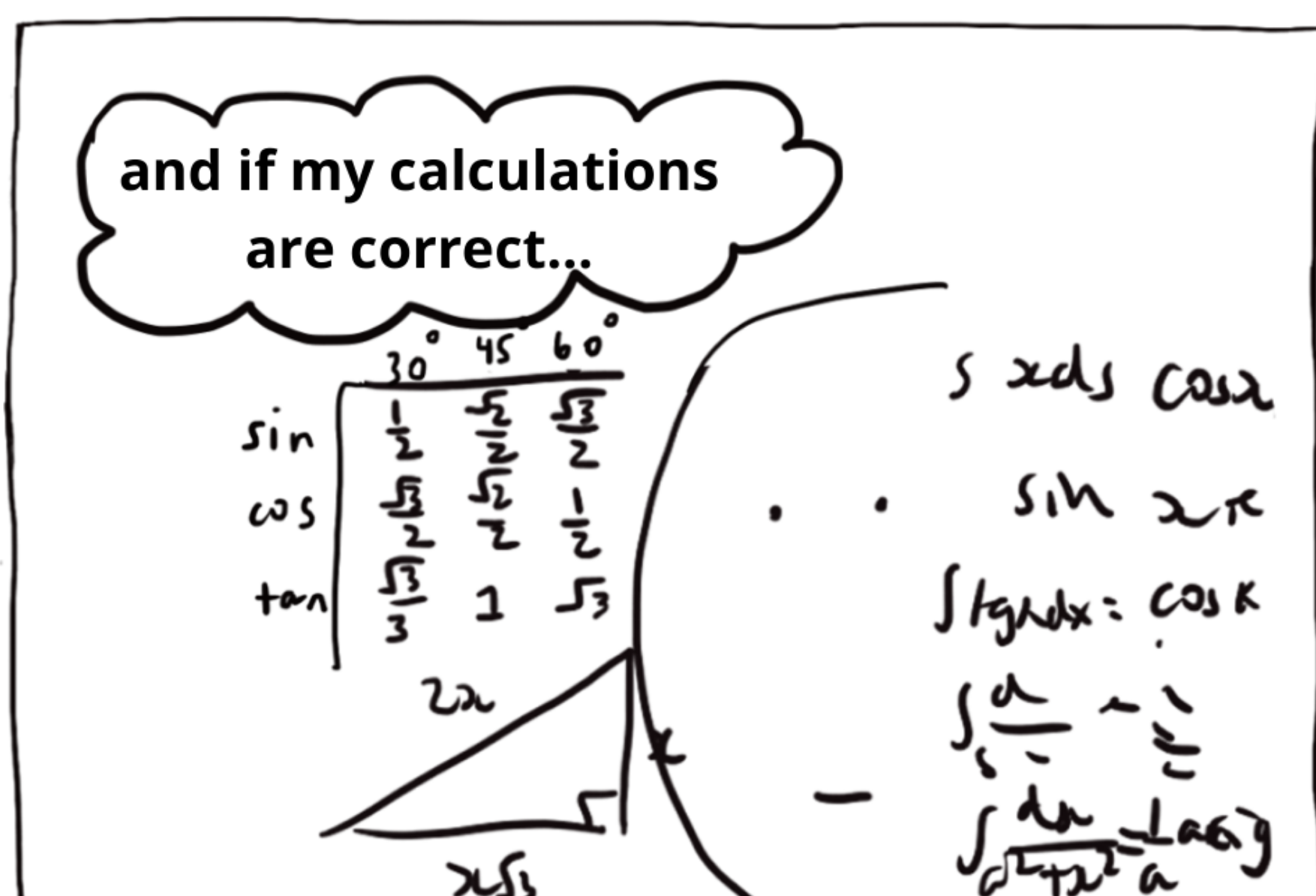
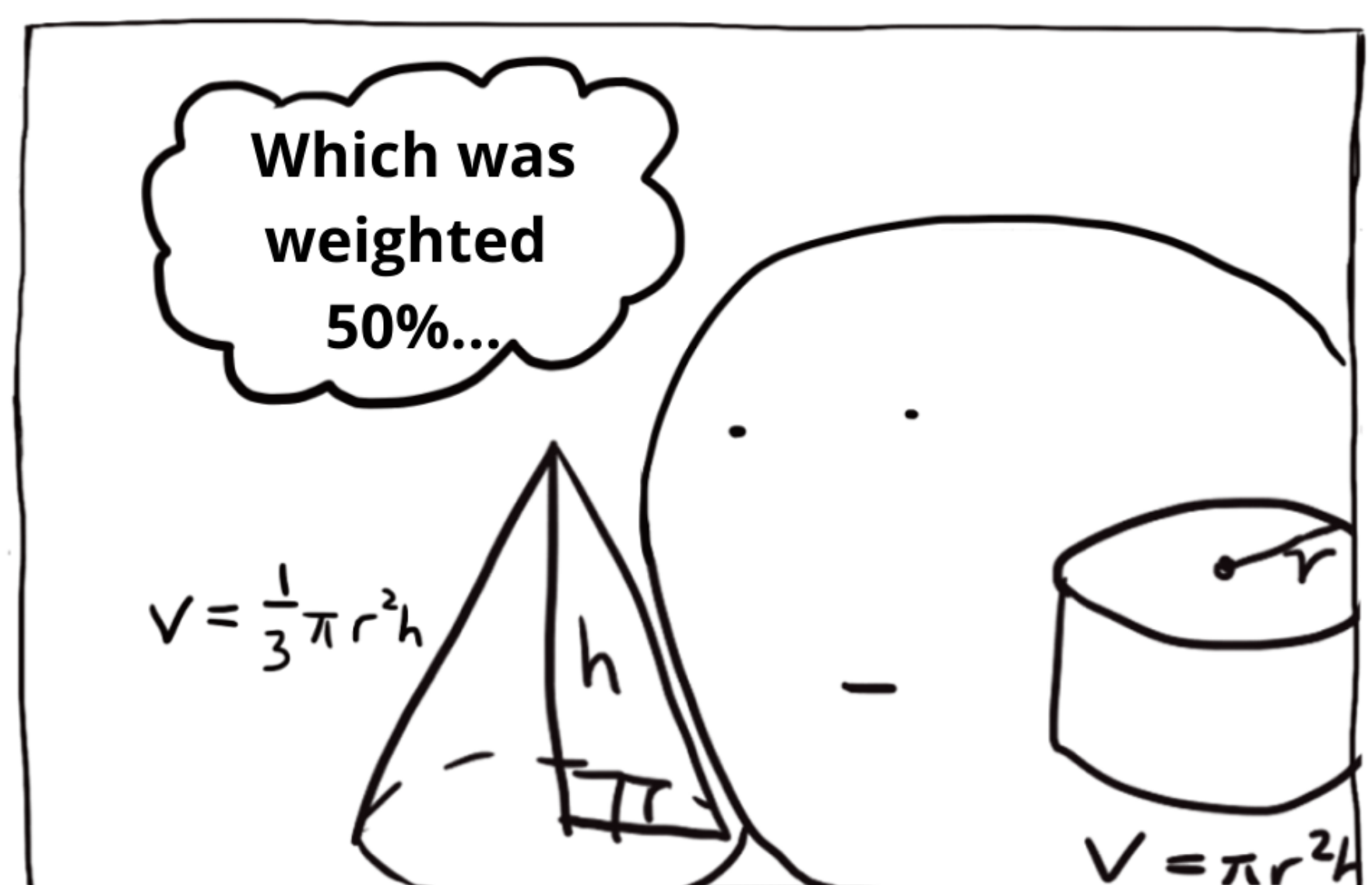
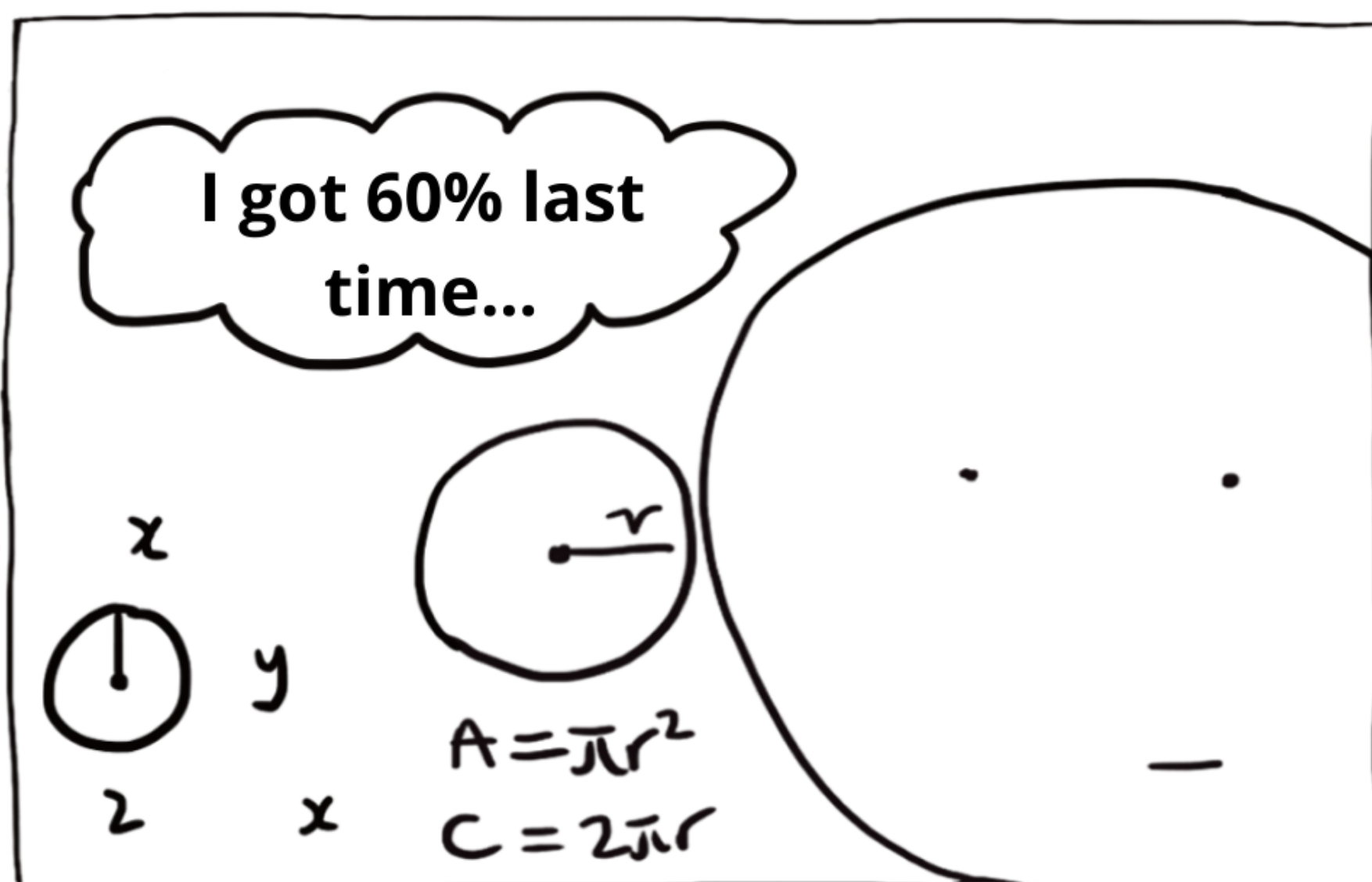
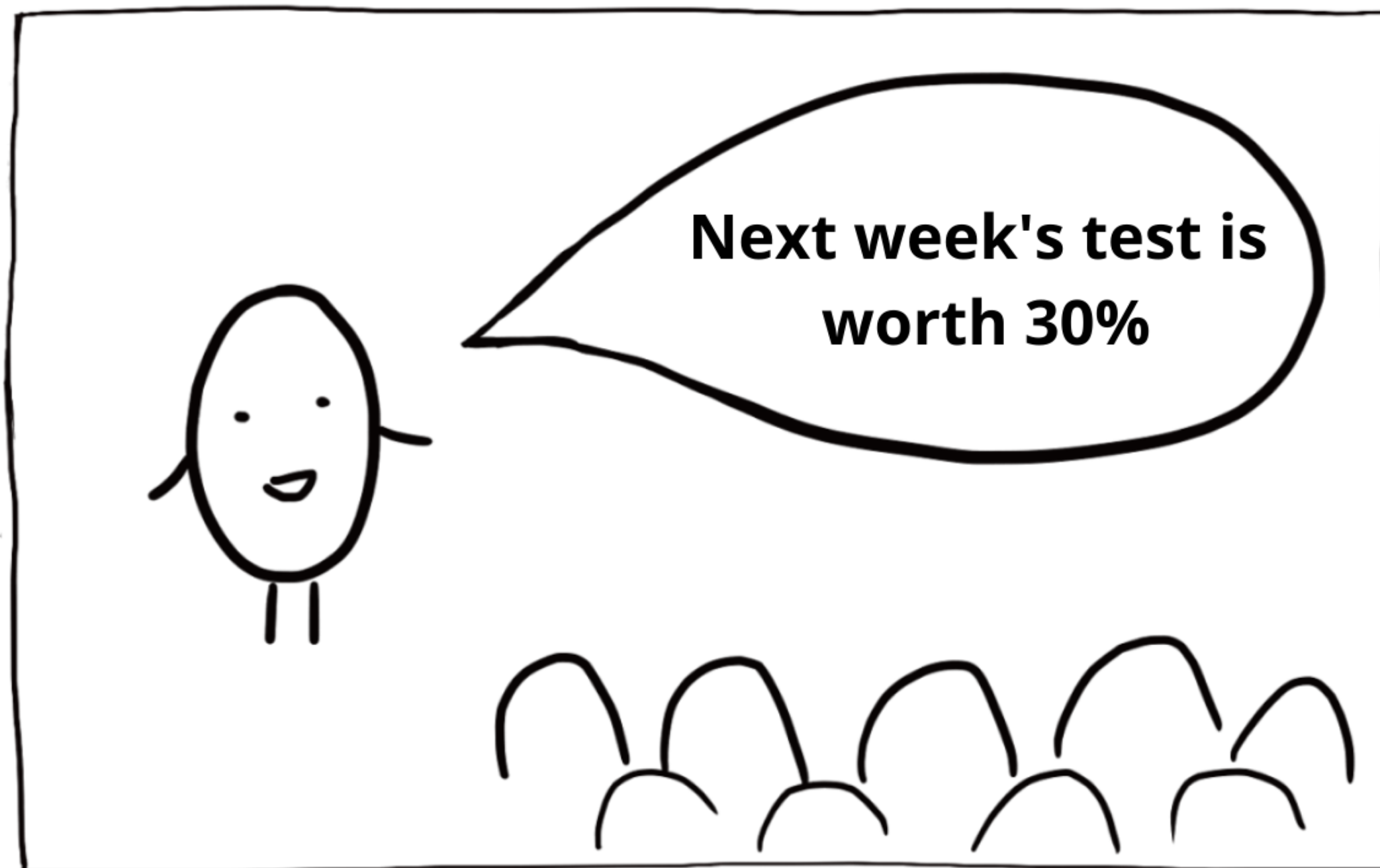
We need an environment that supports us when we fail, not punish us.
We want to celebrate 'not YET'. The idea that even though we failed this time, we have plenty of chances to redo and succeed.

What can we do?

1. Get rid of grades
2. Give personalised challenges to each student. It doesn't matter whether they fail or succeed, it's the process of trying relentlessly and being ok if it goes sideways.
3. Let students redo tests they're not satisfied with. They learn from their mistakes, and have the chance to try and try again.

Study for our love to learn. Not out of our fear of failure.

Calculations



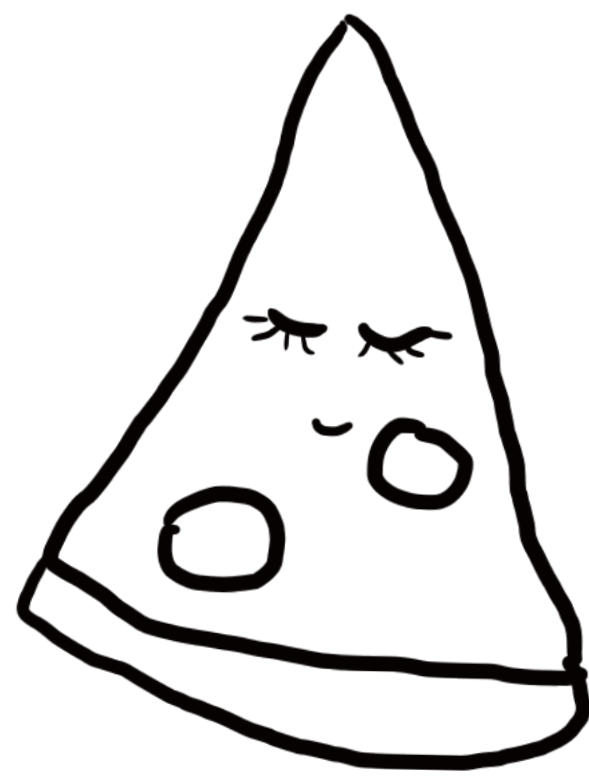
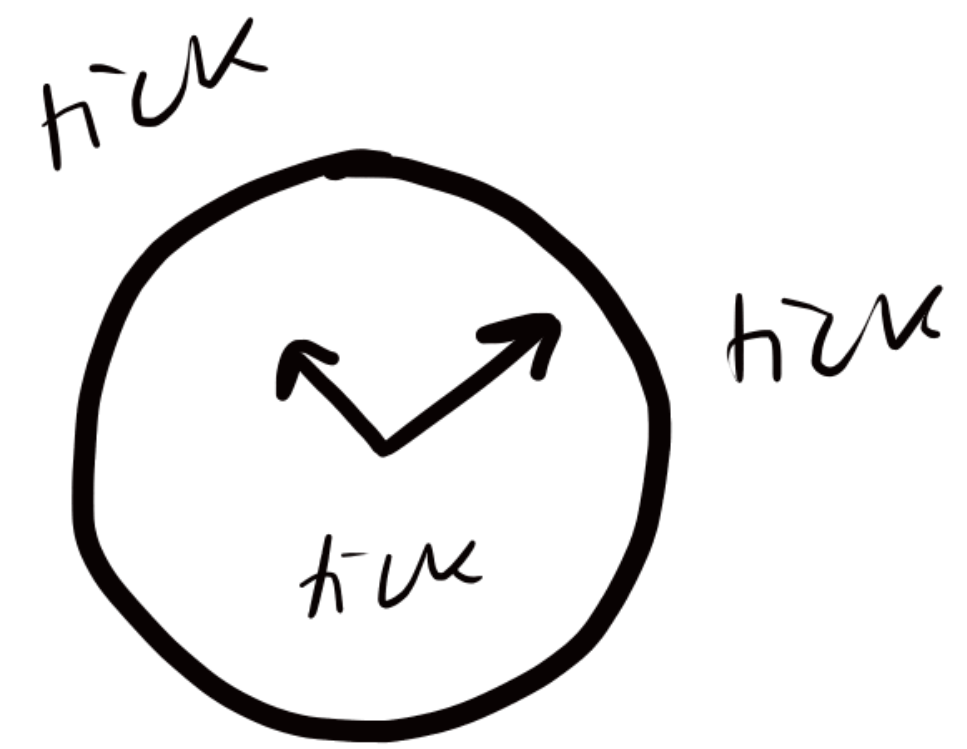
Patience, My Friend

My head sinks against my palm, wrist bent at an awkward angle, with barely any energy to carry the weight.

"Shit" I sigh

Only 20 minutes into class and my stomach gnaws insatiably.

My focus wavers in and out of the clock ticking away.



"You all need to eat before or after class. Class time is for work, not to distract yourself with food"

It's ironic isn't it?

Eating is a distraction, but daydreaming about the seductive pizza in your bag and pleading with your stomach to shut up ...isn't.

When we fail to satisfy our basic needs, curiosity for learning is a *luxury*.

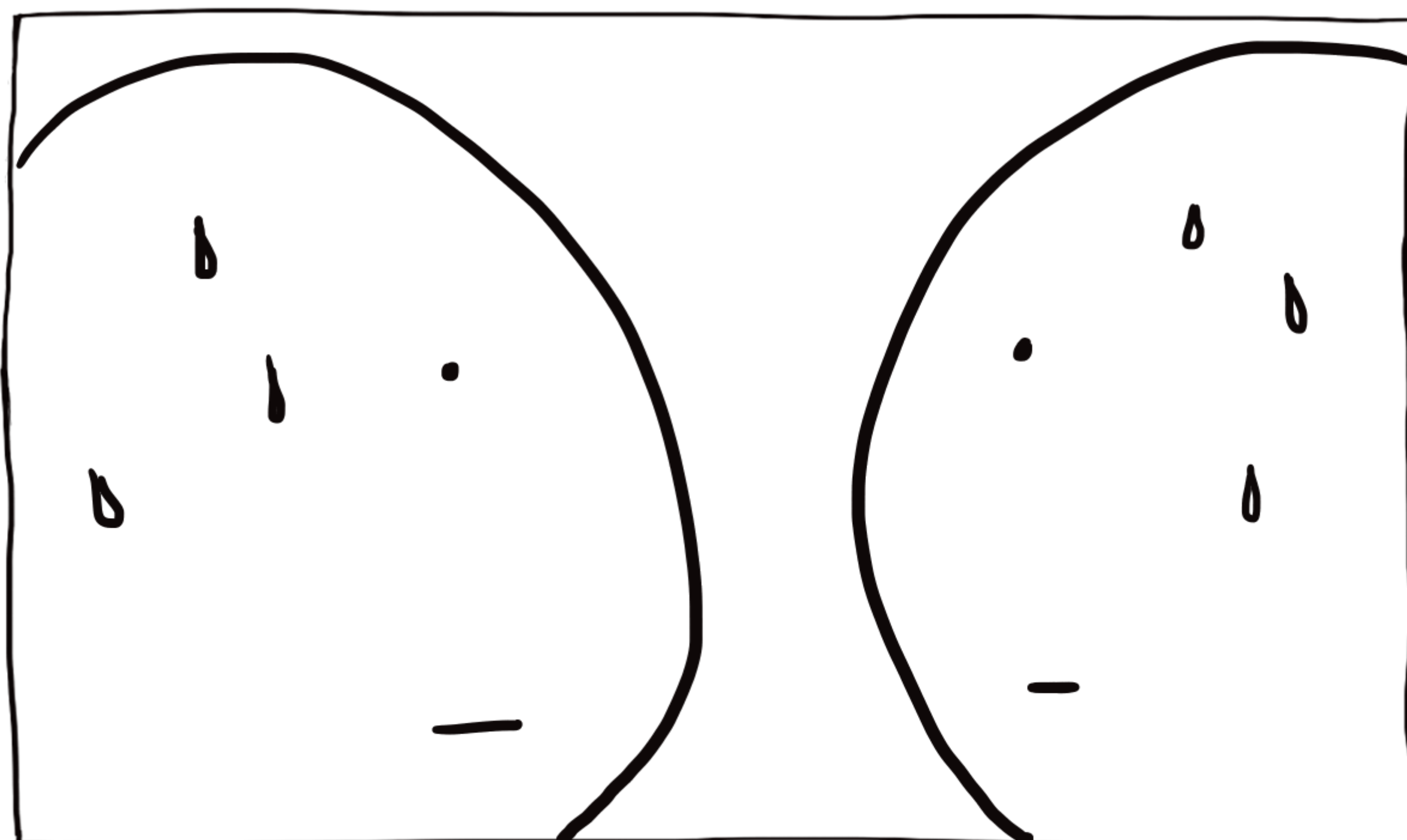
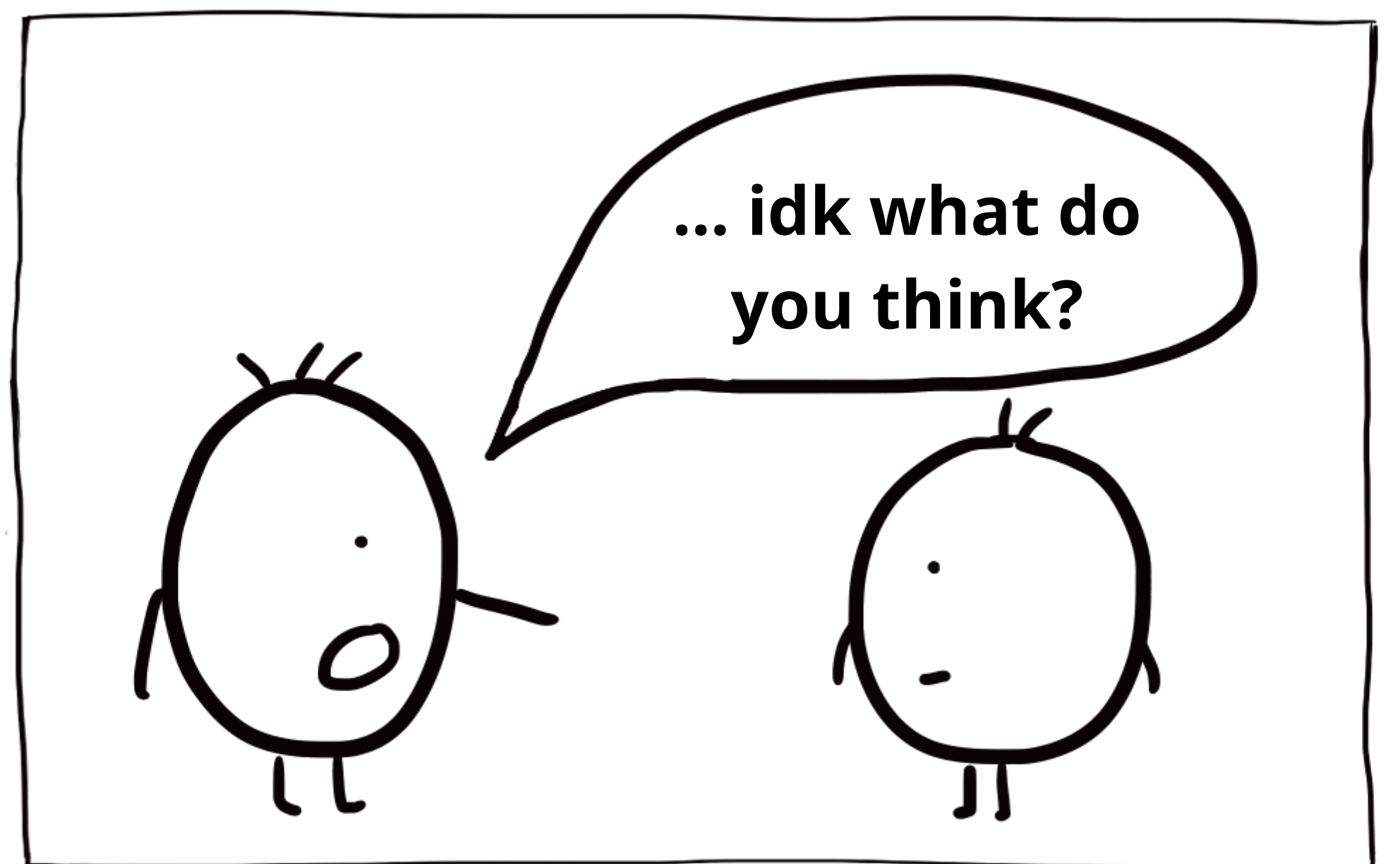
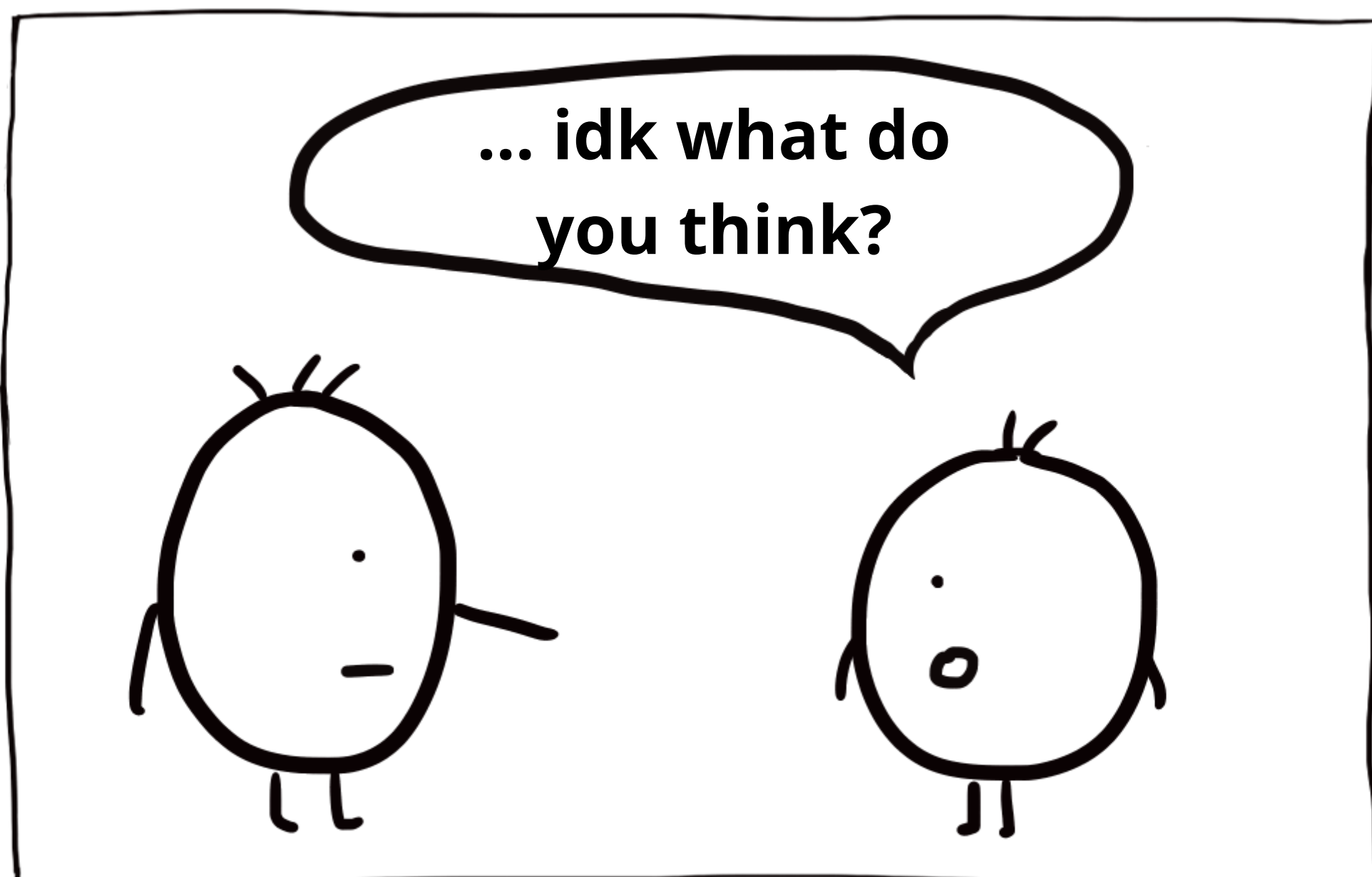
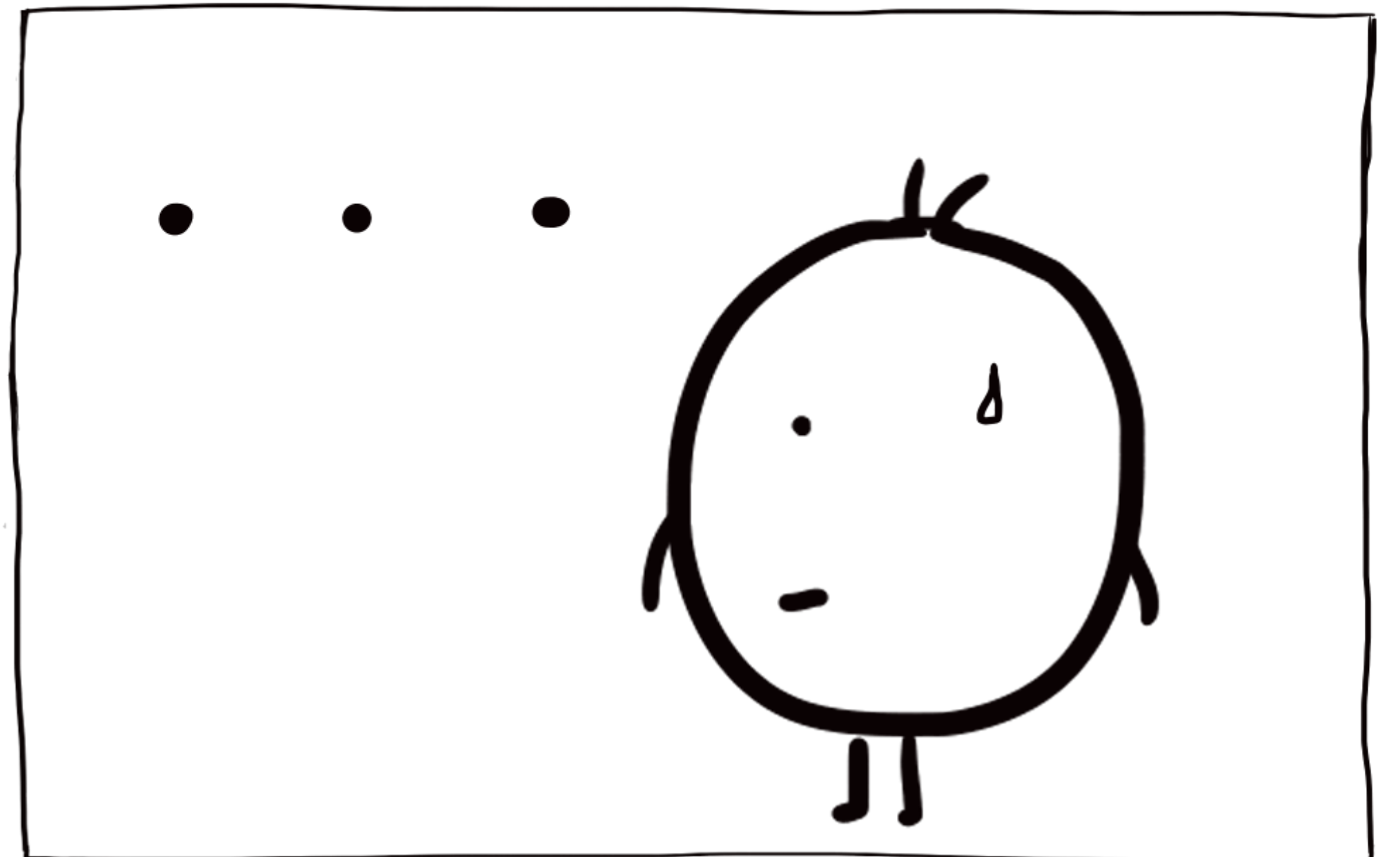
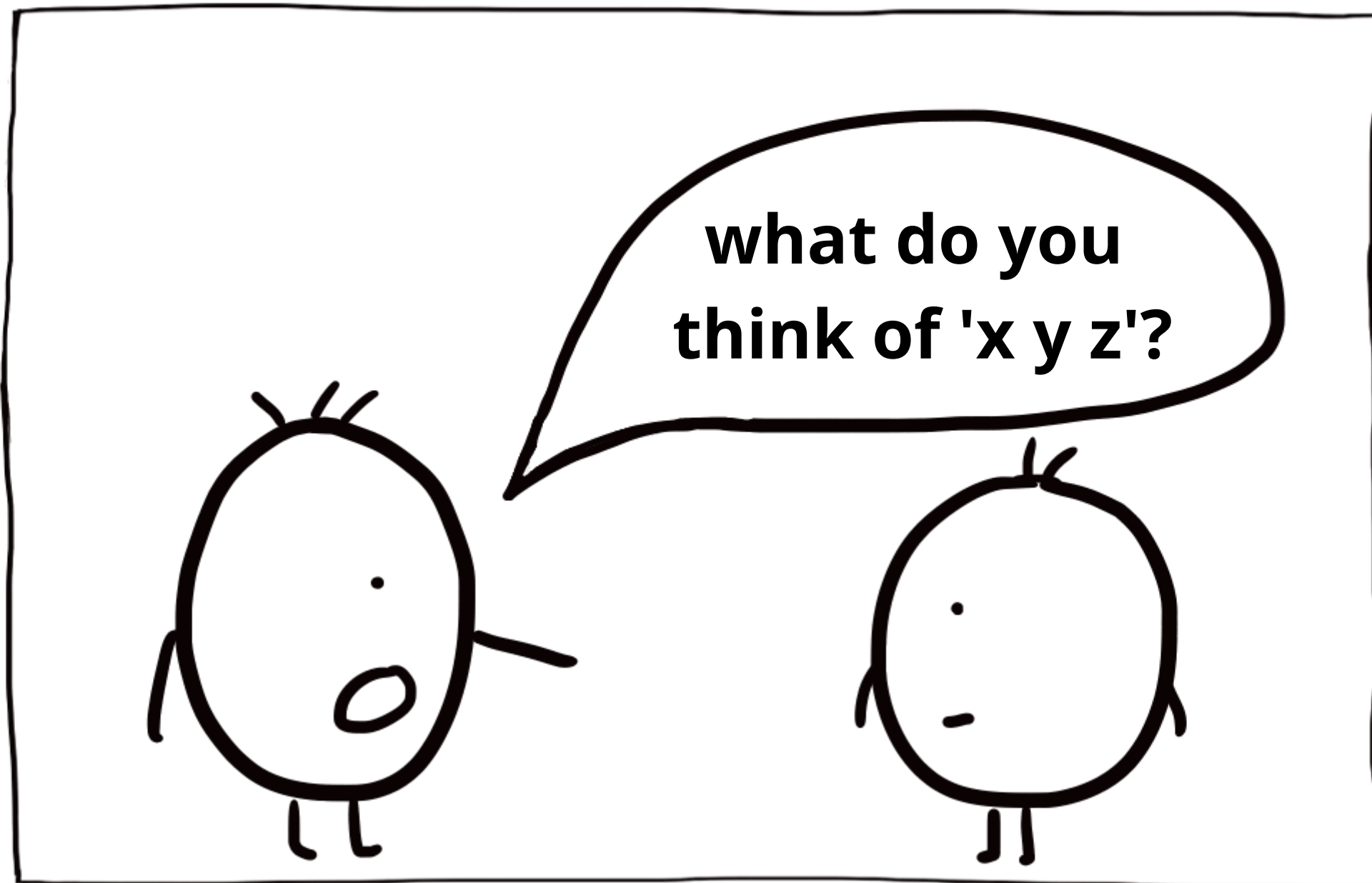


By the end of class, our minds cannot take it any longer. We are like desperate mice, scrambling to our lockers, savouring that small morsel of food.

"The function of education
is to teach one to think
intensively and critically...
Intelligence plus
character—that is the goal
of true education"

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

So it goes...



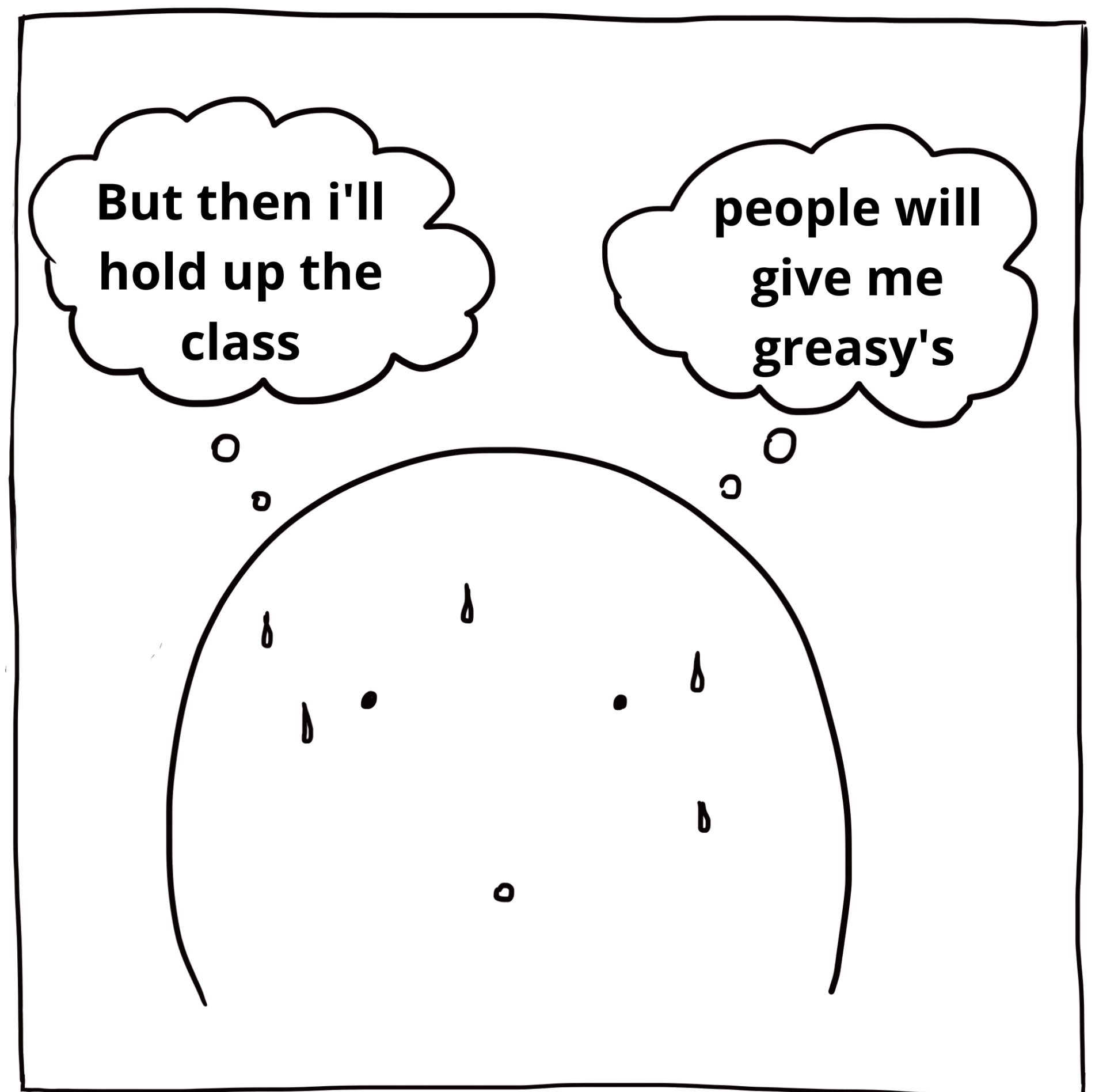
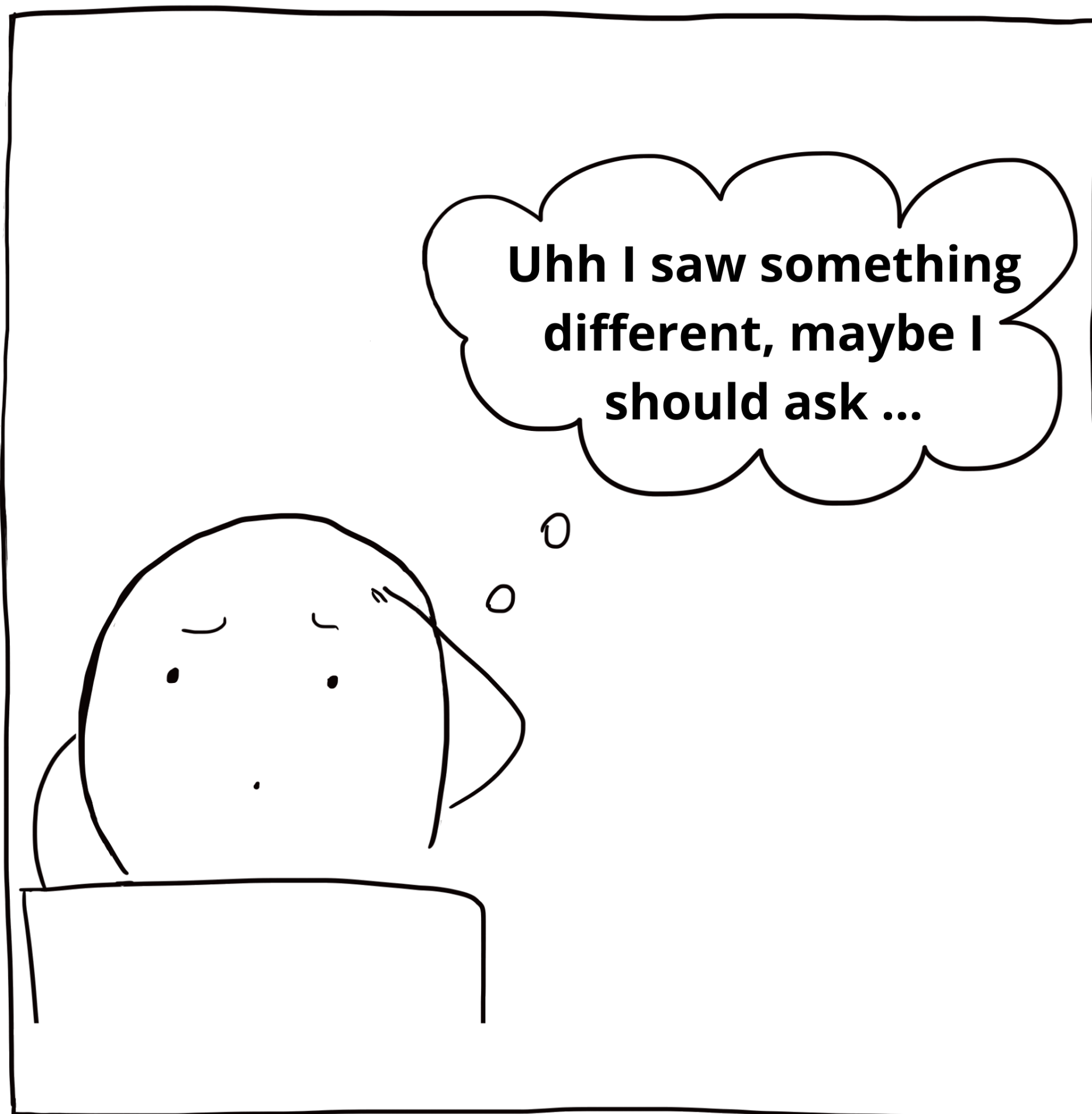
THINK FOR YOURSELF

We've been conditioned.

Conditioned to blindly consume school-work. To not hesitate and think twice, and wonder whether alternatives exist.

If the teacher said it, then it must be right... right?

(Plus there's a test soon, ain't nobody got time to waste)



Students aren't encouraged to question:

***Are there exceptions
to the rule?***

***How did they come to this
conclusion...***

***Are we missing
something here?***

And to top it off, students don't learn to **have an opinion**. To come up with an idea yourself (with valid evidence), to confidently argue your case (despite whether others agree), and to humbly admit when you realise you're wrong.

(Though, out of any sector, the arts does this well)



All of this leads to a few things:

- students who don't think for themselves
- students who lack the hunger to question and claw deeper
- students who can't research, take initiative, speak up, and problem solve



The solution?

More heated discussions. More time dedicated to research. More debates. More existential questions. More lessons for unpacking the news, studies, and discoveries.

More student input.

TO PUNISH OR NOT TO PUNISH?

adapted
from Ready
to Redo
[ep 15!](#)



Disrupt the class? Blue slip

Not hand in work? Blue slip

Be consistently late? Blue slip

In a diary entry from 2010, I wrote "so and so got blue slips in class"

Triggered, my brain flashed back to when teachers would hand detention 'blue slips' out to anyone who didn't follow the rules.

Sure, it looks like we've fixed the problem. That through a detention, the student 'learns' to not act out again.

But all we've done is



a bandaid on the real problem.

Well ok, bandaids can work ... IF the problem only needs a bandaid to fix it. Sometimes we do just need a detention to know when we're little shits.

But often, that's not enough.

We know that if someone's satisfied, secure and happy, there's no need to act out. So if we don't dig deeper and ask WHY someone behaves the way they do, then we'll always replace bandaid after bandaid, never treating the wound.

WHY would someone act out?

Maybe... they want others to laugh and receive attention

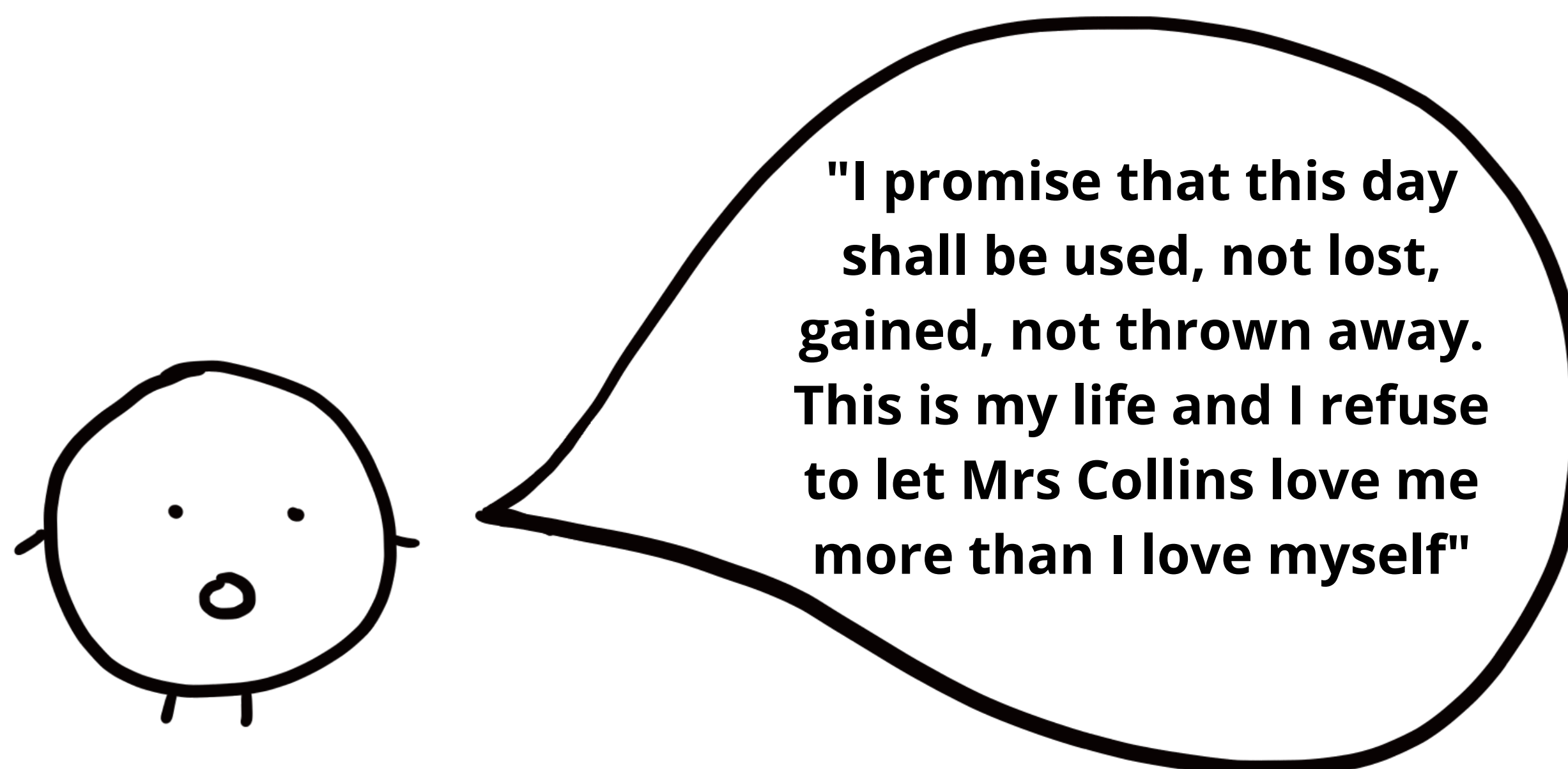
Maybe... they're bored in class

Maybe... they're feeling vulnerable, and they express it through disrespectful behaviour

Say if a kid misbehaves in class and seeks attention, it might signal that they're just lonely. So sending them out, or giving them detention further isolates them from the class, therefore *amplifying* the situation.

Instead, show them kindness. Tell them that while their actions aren't tolerated, they are welcome in this classroom, and that they'll be accepted no matter what.

As 'punishment', the great Marva Collins asked her student to repeat these words:



"Always use positively
whatever he does. You
throw the paper, so you're
going to write a
composition on
'Why I Throw Paper'.
Everything here is to
learn"

MARVA COLLINS

"Knowledge is not
something a learner
absorbs, but something a
learner **creates**."

GEORGE COUROS

Theory Overload

I can draw out and label bacteria, but identify it in a microscope...?

I can explain the 8 theories of effective teaching, but practice that in the classroom...?

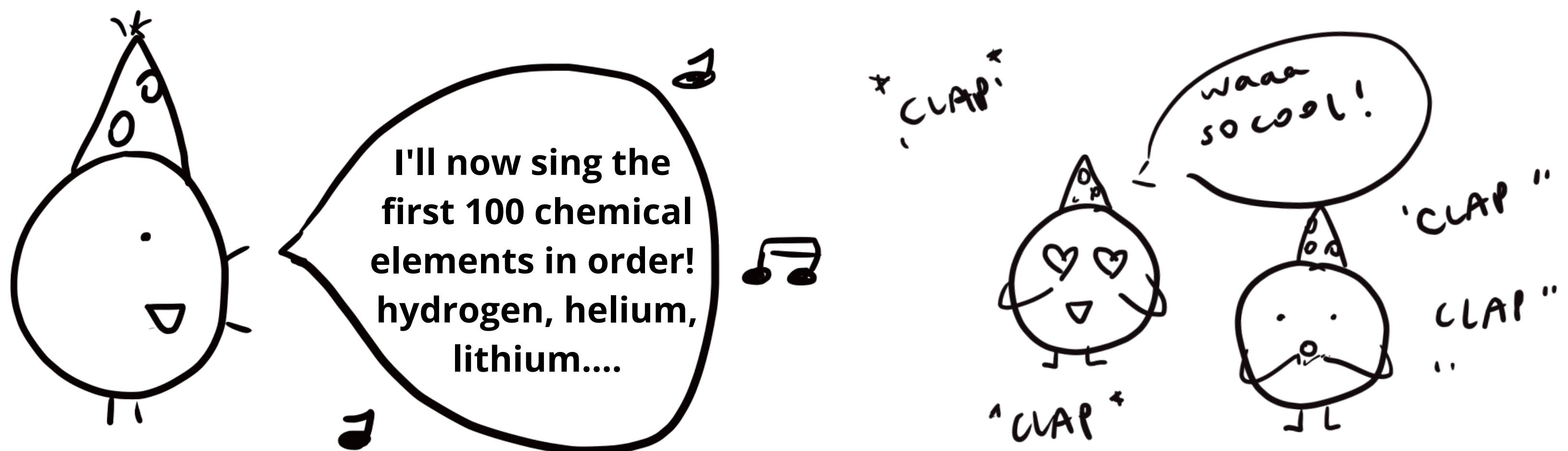
I can recite the 12 cranial nerves, but identify which is damaged in a patient...?

Just give me a sec to look at my notes...



Theory is just theory.

By itself, it's a cool party trick.



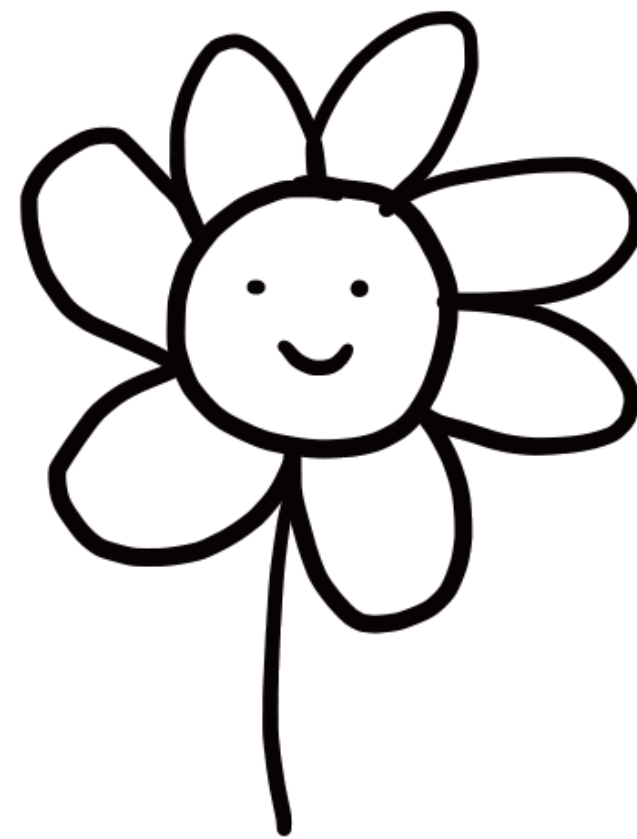
But for theory to be useful, we need to **apply** it.

Not through a written test, but through practical work. Something that forces us to think critically, and adapt theoretical knowledge to unpredictable situations.

So the solution?

For plant biology, instead of copying notes from a powerpoint and answering a multiple choice test...

Grow a plant yourself.



Test out how different fertilisers, watering frequencies, soil density can change the plant's anatomy. Map out how the structure changes in its life cycle. Then importantly, share that knowledge through a lab report, or even a presentation to your local gardening community. The possibilities are endless!

For an Italian language class, find a school in Italy and invite their students to do weekly zoom calls with yours. Everyone gets a buddy. The only catch is, you're **only** allowed to speak Italian with them, and them english to you. You're now accountable for your learning. If you haven't done your work, then the conversation will be hella awkward...

The Beauty of Exchange

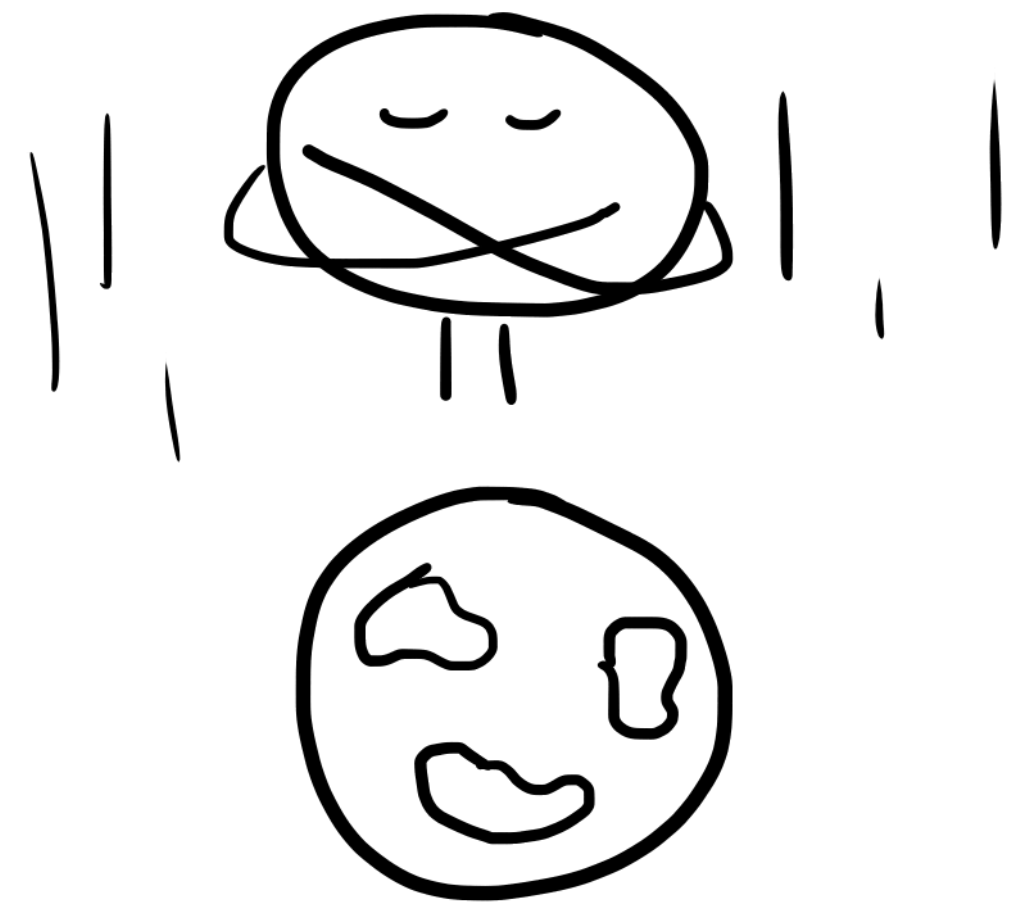
adapted from
podcast
[episode 6](#)



Just like for a language, every subject needs an exchange.

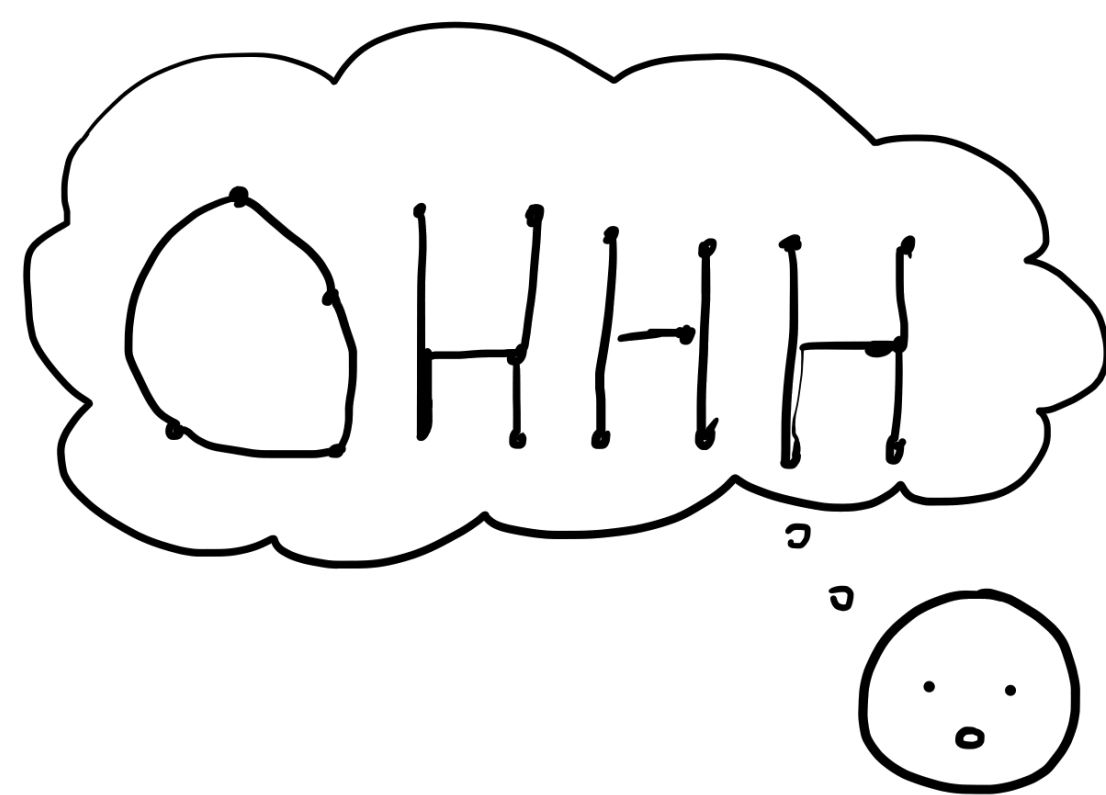
The chance to

**P
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G
E**



into a completely new culture, and tango with the real world.

At first, we're shocked and overwhelmed by how much we don't know. We have nothing to depend on apart from ourselves and what we've learnt. But despite the struggle, slowly, the dots connect.



In 3 days, we can learn more than we do in 3 months.

We also realise how relevant our classes are. Or ... the opposite. Turns out your 100% theoretically perfect grammar sounds weird to an average person. They prefer slang.

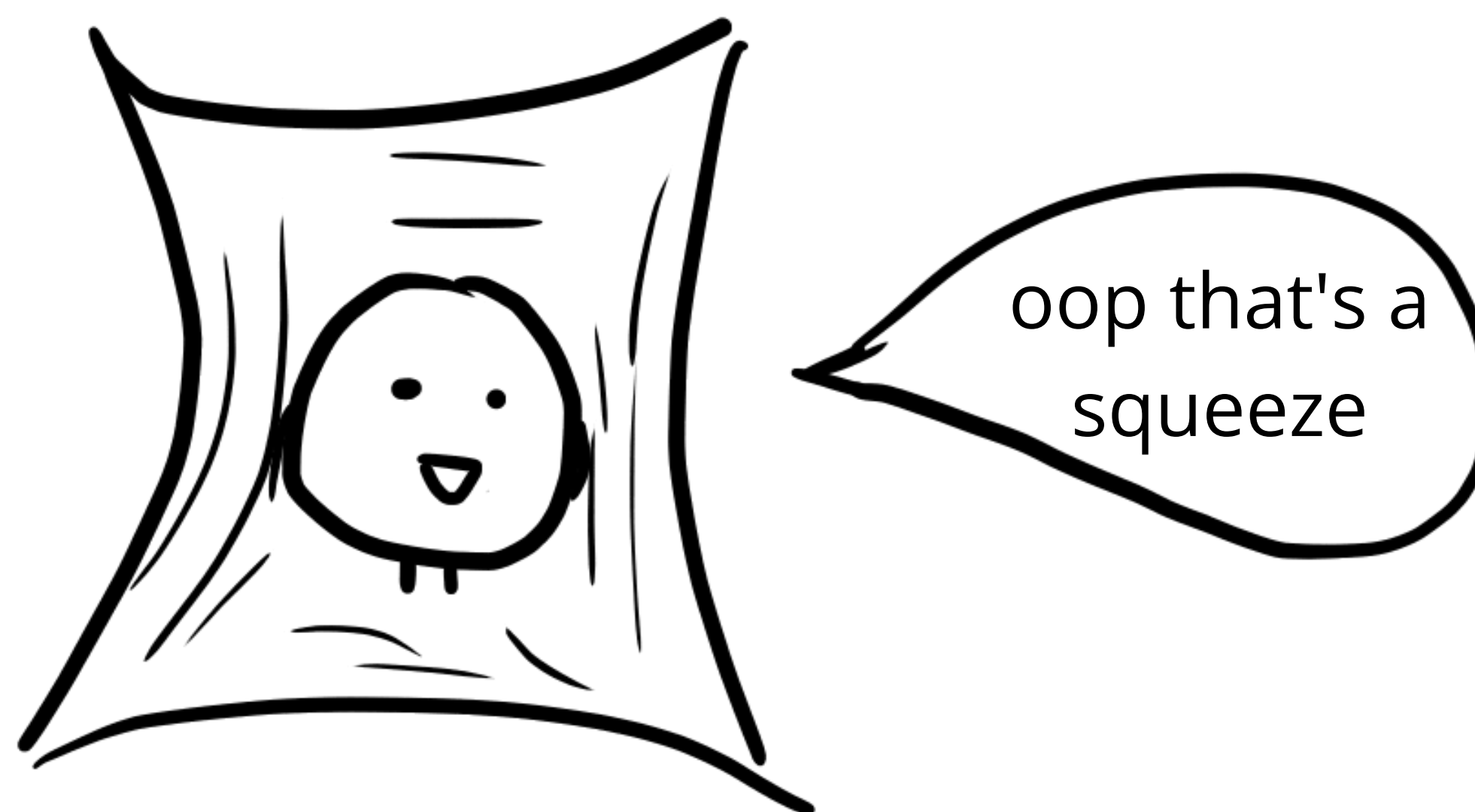
So now you're back in the classroom, knowing exactly what theory you need to work on. You want to speak more with normal people? Well, practice your slang. You realise you don't understand basic lab techniques? Well, research them.

So what?

We need frequent work placements, even for students in year 7. We need **real responsibilities**, and to be reminded that work (despite what school makes us think), is interdisciplinary.

This is also the time to practice soft skills such as working with people of all cultures, professions and opinions.

Life is **not** a vacuum. The sooner we acknowledge that in schools, the better.



“I never teach my pupils,
I only attempt to provide
the conditions in which
they can learn.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Not just a Teacher

Don't teach me **what** to learn, teach me **how** to learn.

Don't give me the answers, give me the **tools** to find them out for myself.

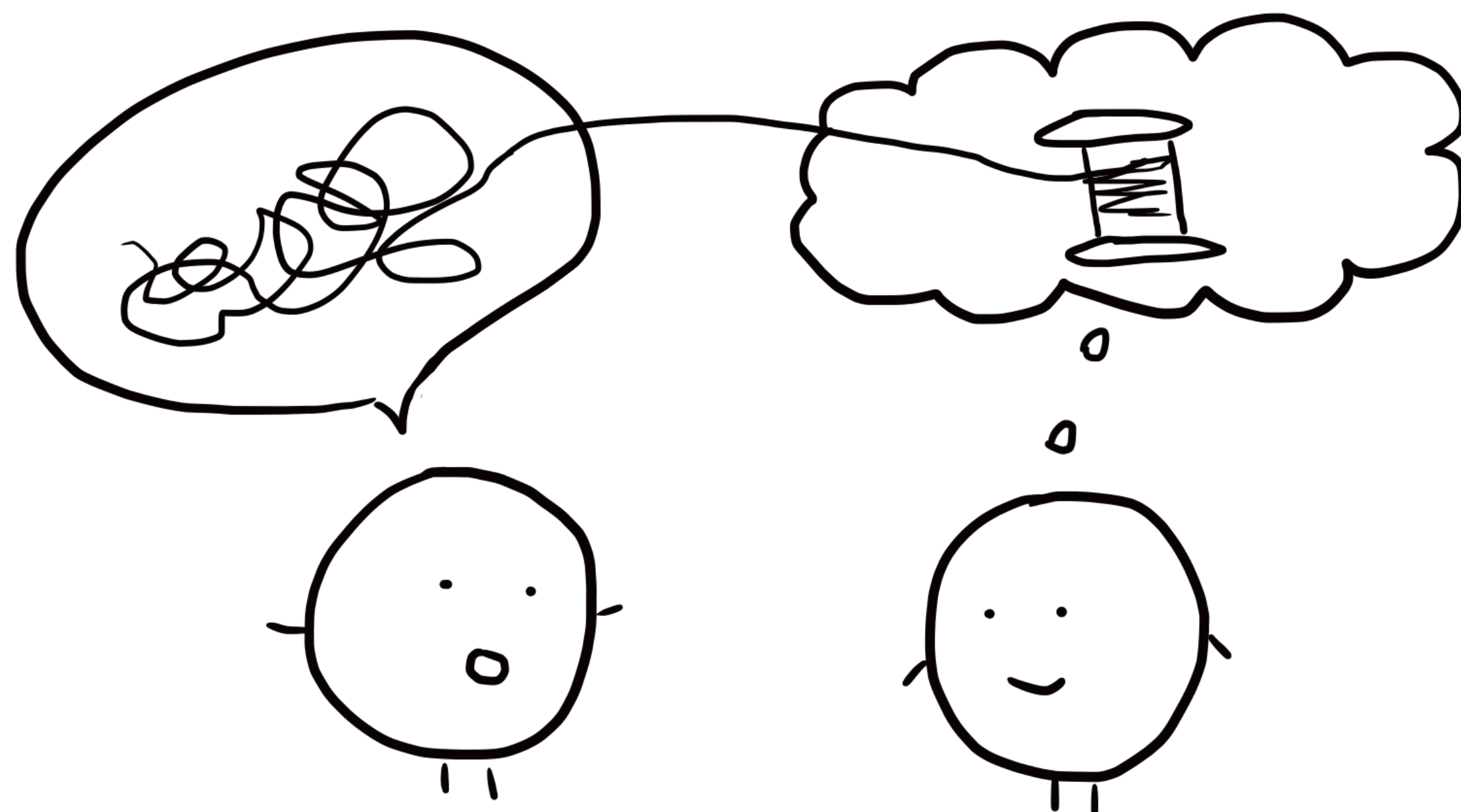
Each time we hand students pre-assigned topics, tell them how they should study for the test and which exercises to complete, we're missing out on real learning opportunities. Opportunities like making your own decisions, experimenting and failing, and importantly, being curious to try something new.

As students (i'm guilty of this), we see teachers as experts in their subjects. If they don't know the answer, then what are they even here for?

But instead of bearers of all knowledge, let's view teachers as **coaches**.

They're here to stimulate passion. To guide us with their knowledge and the questions and suggestions they toss in. All to help us succeed on our own terms.

And importantly, to give **perspective**, and untangle the mess in our heads.



“Once children learn **how** to
learn, nothing is going to
narrow their mind.
The essence of teaching is to
make learning **contagious**, to
have one idea spark
another.”

MARVA COLLINS

What is an 'education'?

adapted from
podcast
[episode 18](#)

When we say 'education', we automatically think of school.

Yet the fact that we know more about parabolas than ourselves when we leave ... makes it time to rethink this.

Education is much more than test papers and curriculums. It is self discovery, self awareness, and a constant dance of unlearning and relearning.

It's more than cramming and memorising, it's having the hunger to learn and grow, and welcome challenges rather than hide from them.

What is School?

School is our support network. The place to give us the confidence to try, to fail and to get back up. It's here to give us relevant tools to succeed, and a space to create freely.

When we associate school work as fun, and have students who wake up excited to be here, we know we've done it right.

Utopian?

A little

Realistic?

I'd say **yes**.

"Education is not
preparation for life;
education is life itself."

JOHN DEWEY

Thank you to all you wonderful beans for
sticking 'til the end!

I hope this lit you on fire and that you're
burning with a (wholesome) vengeance.
There's a lot of work to be done, but I know
it'll be worth it.

If you'd like a physical
copy of the ebook,
please request [here!](#)

