

Woah...this book is
really traumatizing!

**Critical Inquiry and Respectful
Play in Students' Responses
To Art Spiegelman's *Maus***

Rob Simon
Ty Walkland
Ben Gallagher
Sarah Evis
benjamin lee hicks

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education • University of Toronto



What happens when
youth and teachers use

COMICS as a means of

WORKING THROUGH

their responses to a text about the

HOLOCAUST?

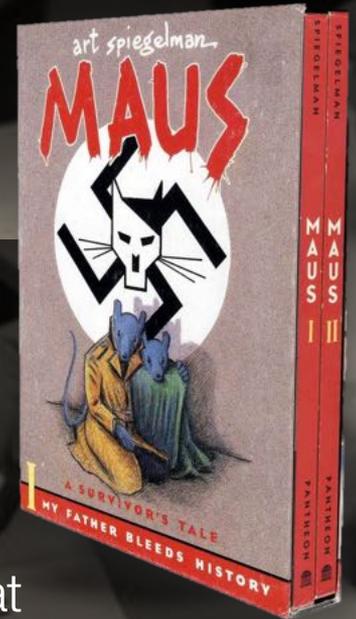
ADDRESSING INJUSTICES

Context

Five year participatory action research project involving 150 students and 100 teacher candidates as partners in co-constructing curriculum for five young adult novels that explore issues of identity, culture, and power

Methodology

- Critical practitioner research (e.g. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Simon & Campano, 2013; Simon, Campano, Broderick, & Pantoja, 2012)
- Youth participatory action research (e.g. Cammarota, 2011; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Tuck, 2009)



Generating lines of inquiry



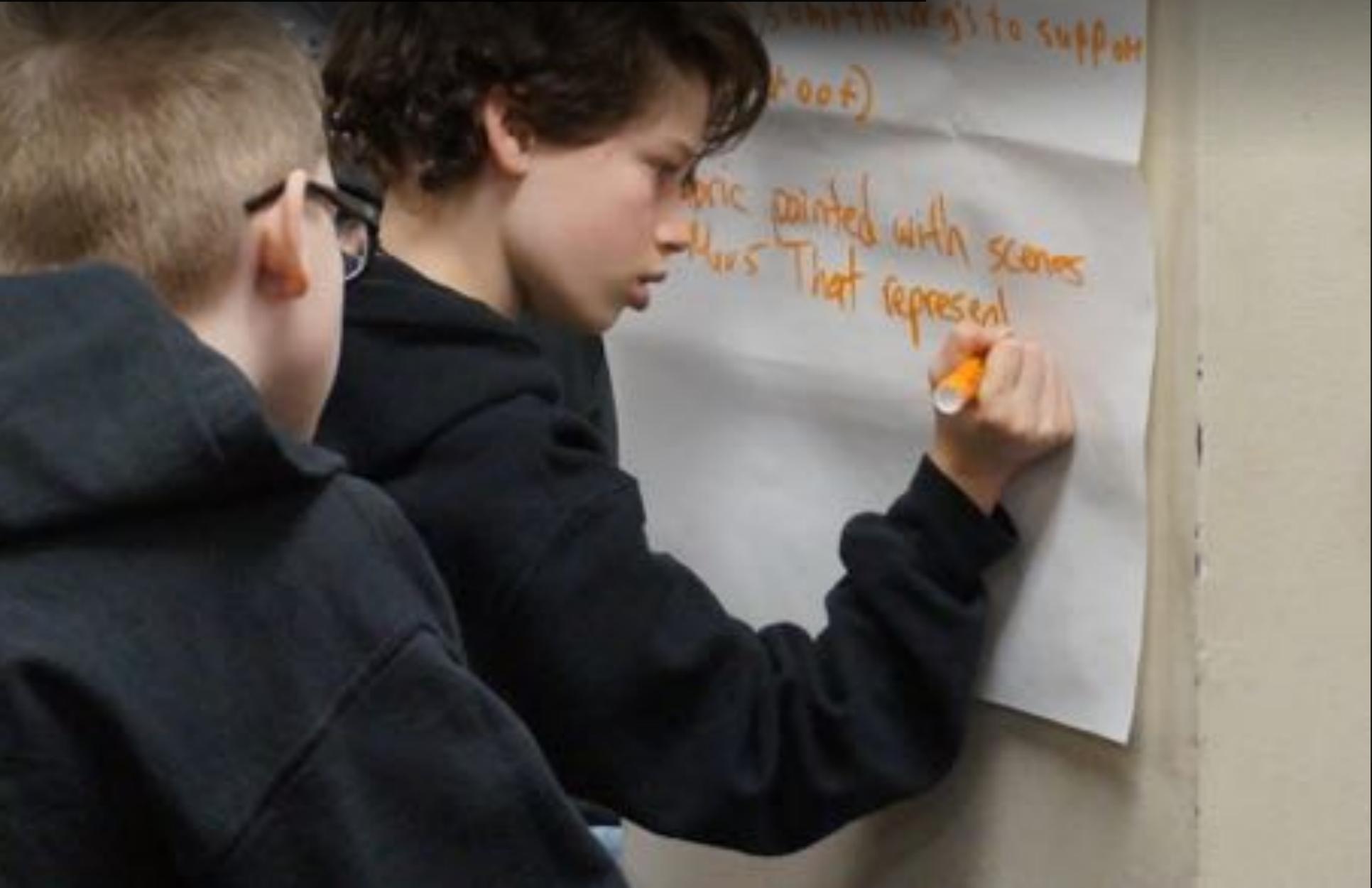
Generating lines of inquiry

The Holocaust + happened
Moreover, it was allowed to
happen. Why? How?

Witnessing survivor testimony



Co-constructing literacy curriculum



Co-constructing literacy curriculum



Comics making



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reading the wor(l)d → Problem-posing education (Freire, 1970/2005)

Critical literacy (Janks, 2010; Enciso, 2011; Luke, et al., 2011; Morell, 2008); Multimodality (Jewitt, 2008; Siegel, 1995)

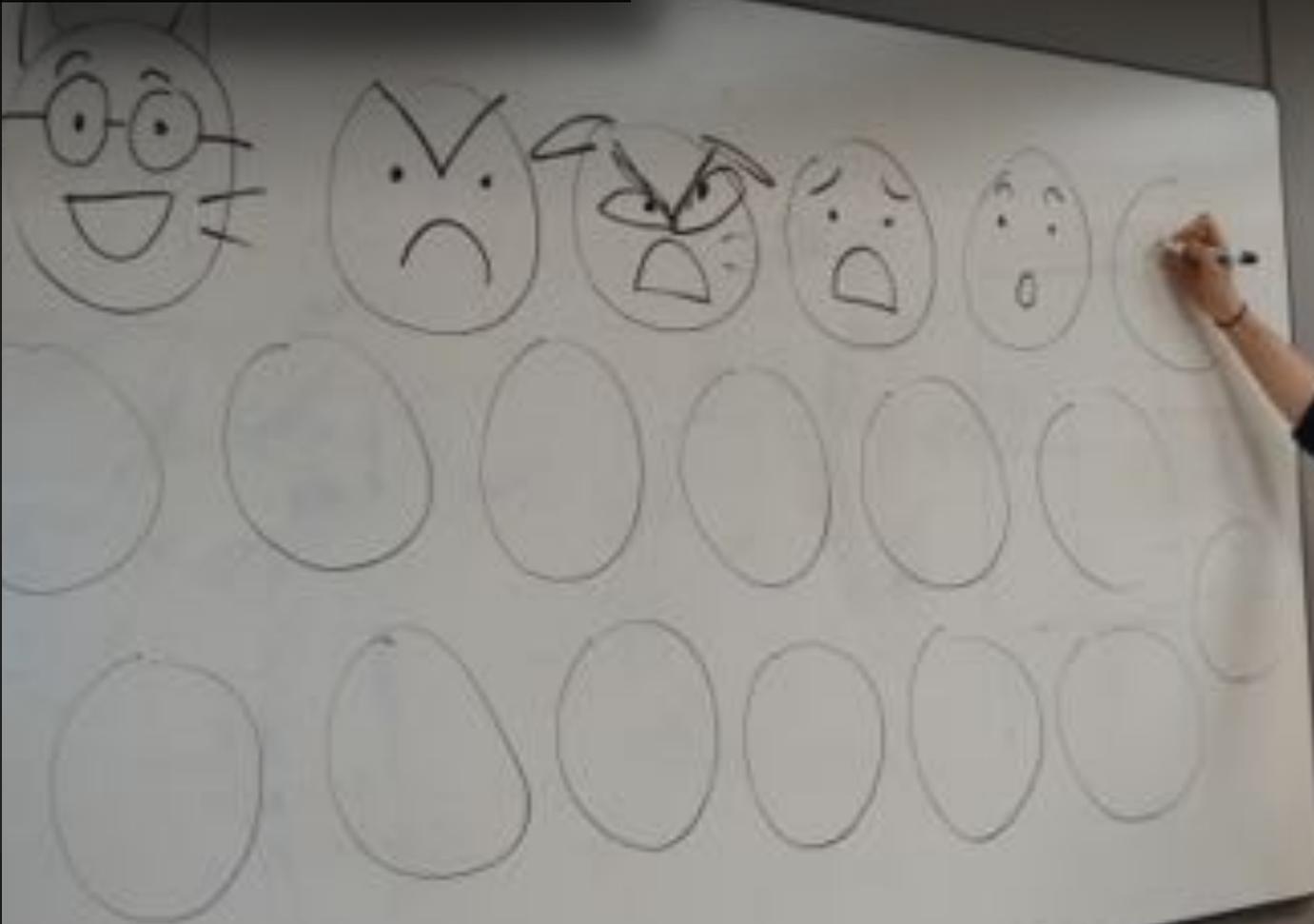
Comics as critical medium (Barry, 2014; Low, 2017; Spiegelman, 2014)

Redefining what counts as literate engagement (Ballenger, 1999)

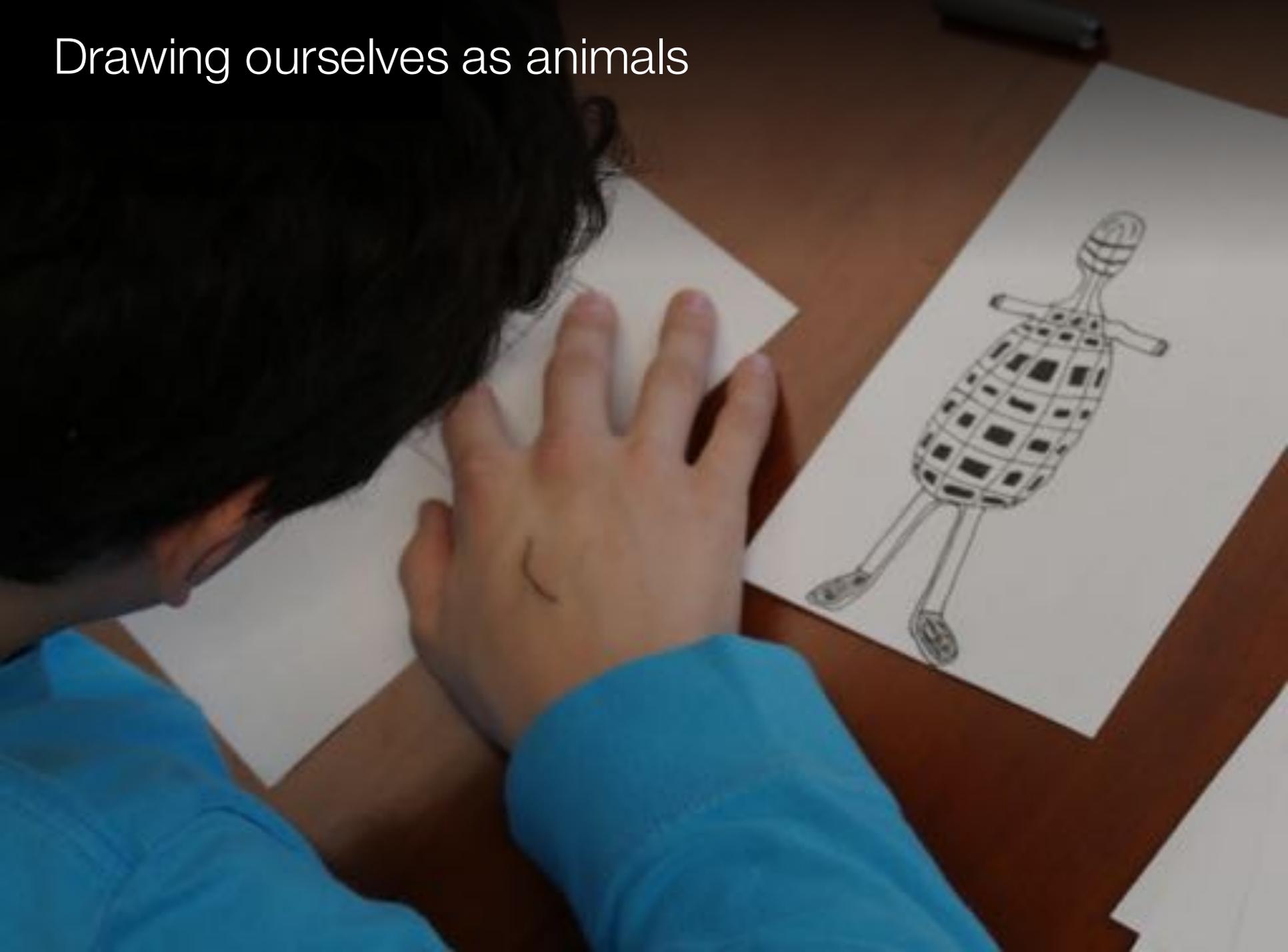
Comics as a mode of inquiry

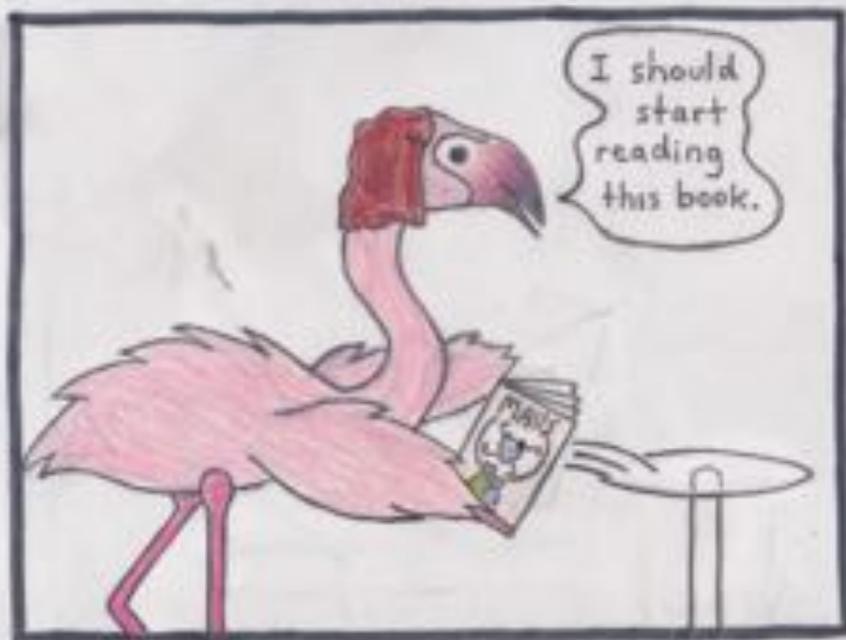


Comics making

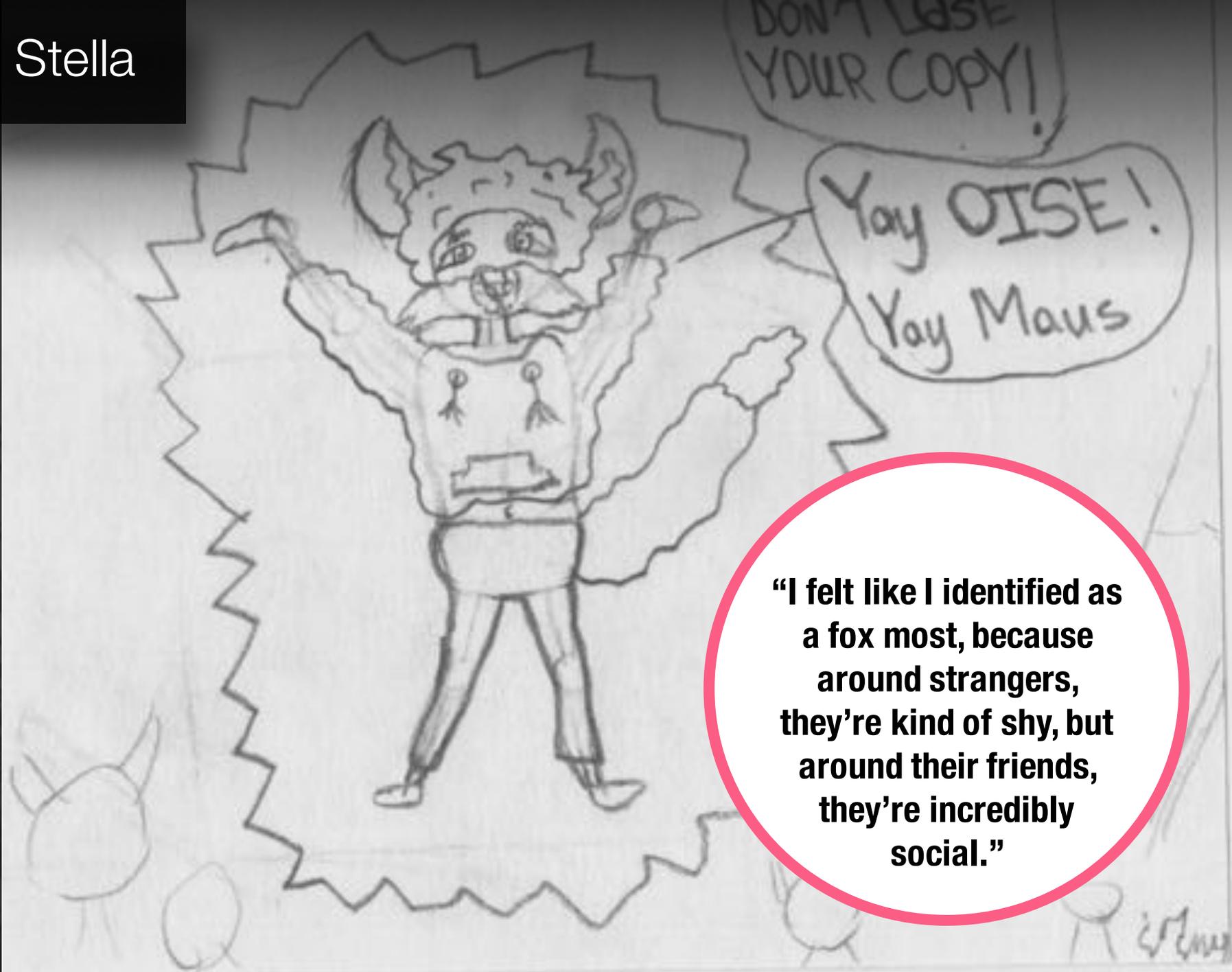


Drawing ourselves as animals





Stella



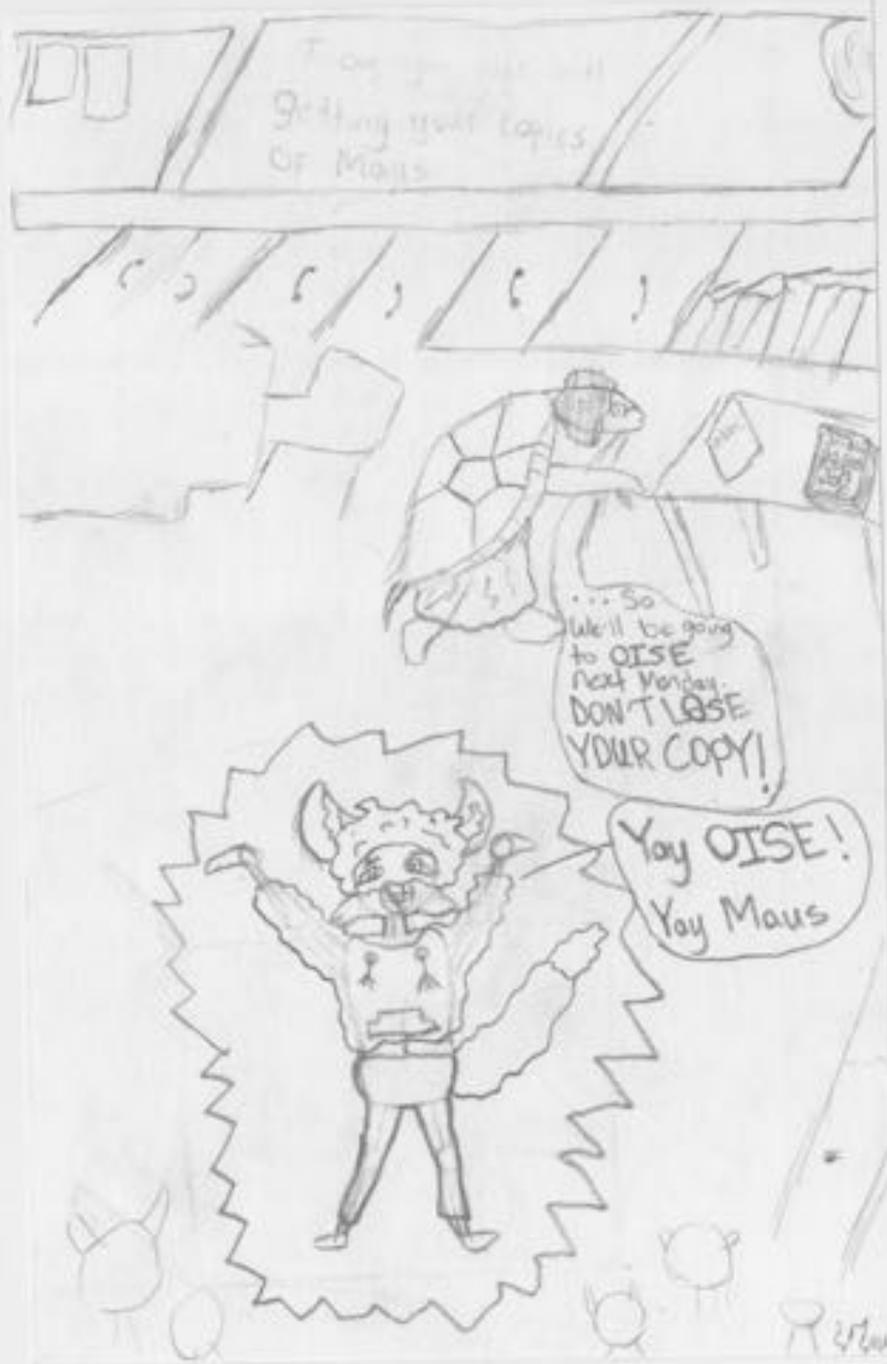
“I felt like I identified as a fox most, because around strangers, they’re kind of shy, but around their friends, they’re incredibly social.”

Stella

“I was super ready when the time came to start drawing our comics. I was ready even before then.”



Stella



Stella



Stella



“The fact that they survived [...] left my body swirling a million feelings into one. Heartbreak, inspiration, rage—I didn’t know how to feel.”

Stella



“When I stopped eating and started trying to figure out why, I realized it was because of what I was reading.”

Maisie



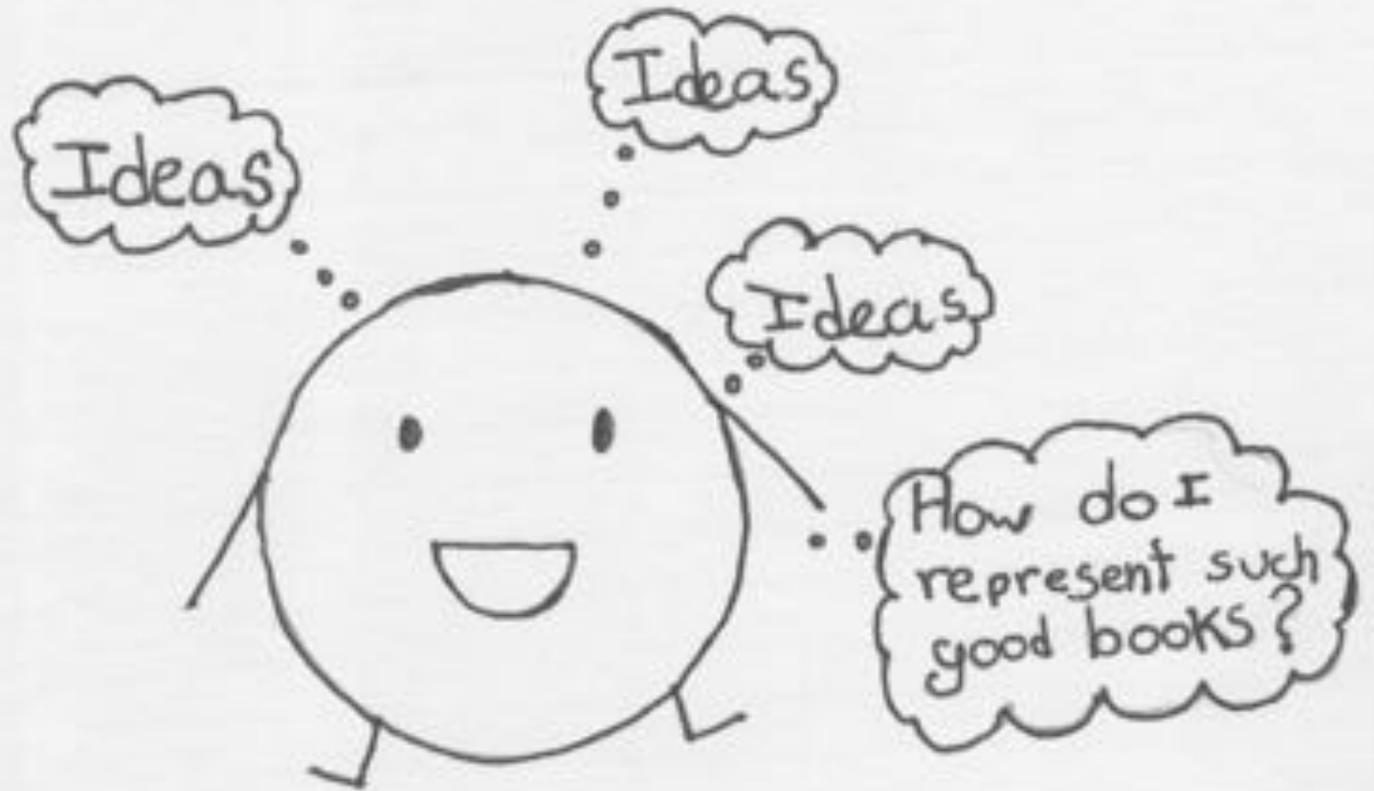
“I was really worried that I wouldn't do well because I am not good at drawing. I soon realized the comics were not only about the drawings, they were about the message behind the drawings.”

Maisie

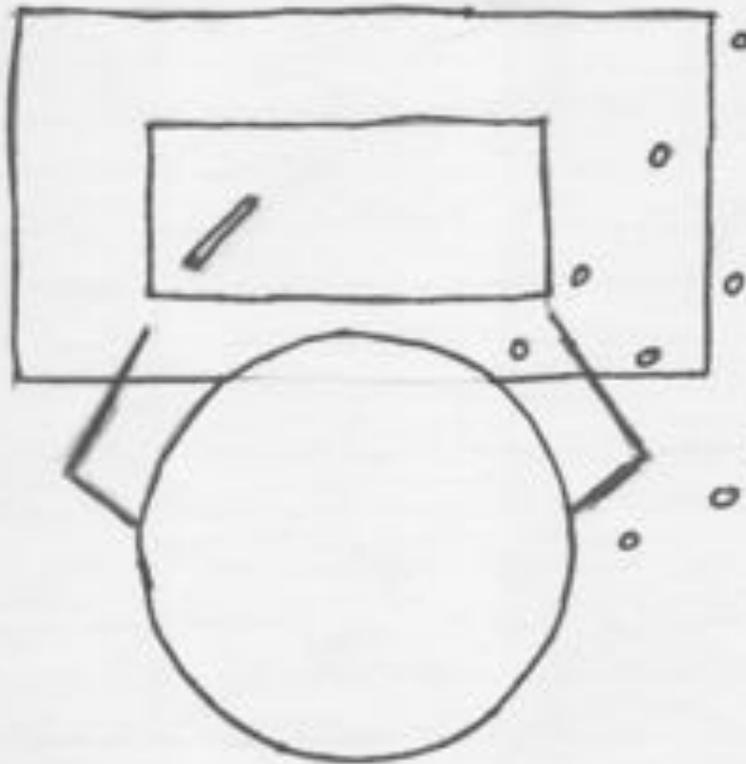
I don't know what to do....



Maisie



Maisie



This is taking so long...

Spiegelman took 13 years...

What do I draw?

Maisie

Everyone is so distracting...

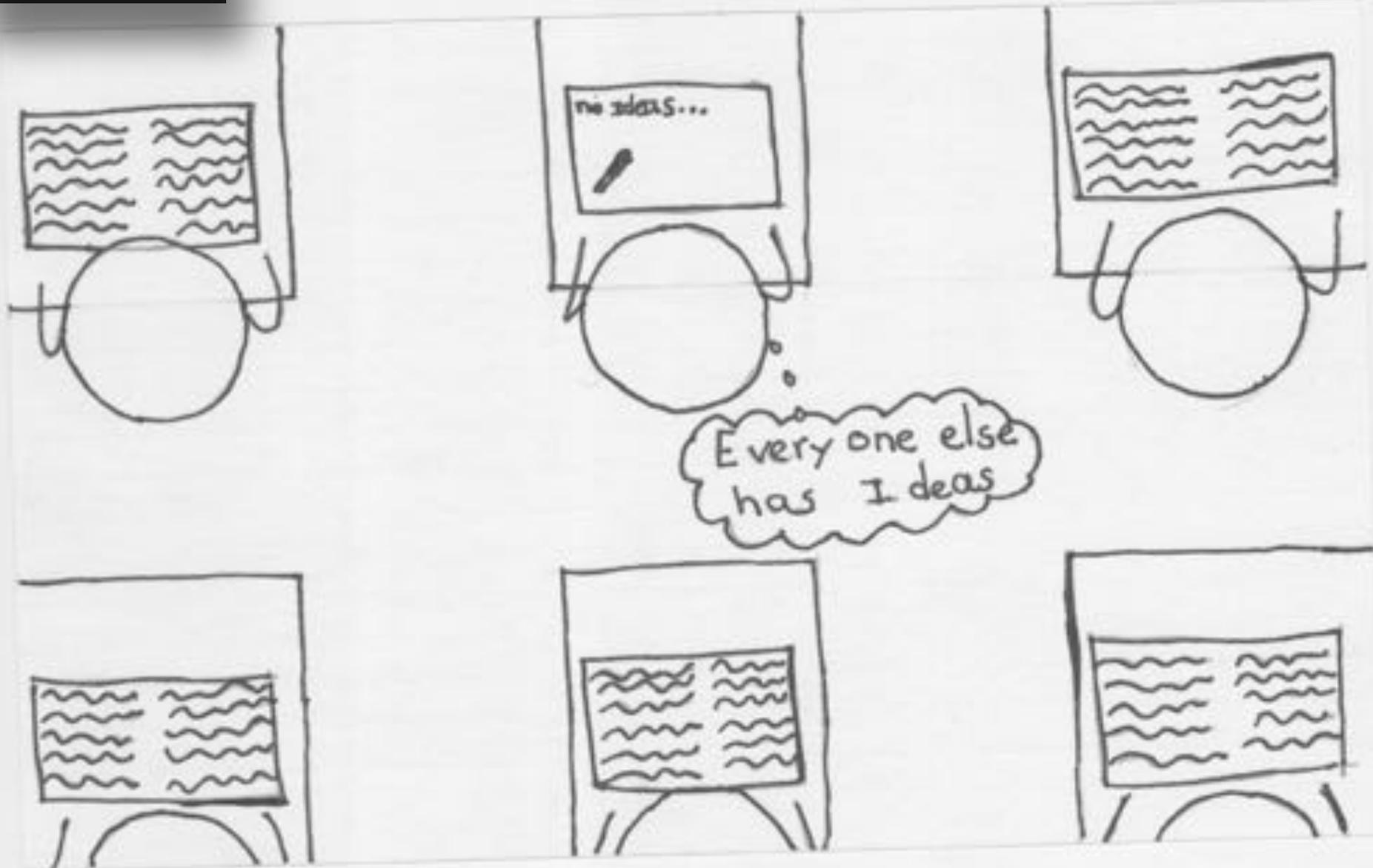


Bla Bla
Bla

How can they concentrate?

etc

Maisie



Maisie



Maisie



I don't have
anything to say,
yet I can't fit
everything I
want to say into
a comic.

Maisie

Urgh. I give up.



How did Spiegelman get through this?

Maisie



“When I was reading *Maus*, I felt like I didn’t fully connect with the characters. They felt more distant because they were mice and not humans.”

IMPLICATIONS

Comics as Medium

- Complicates linearity of time, experience, and emotion; creates space to represent a maelstrom of conflicting emotions simultaneously

Comics as Pedagogy

- Creates multiple entry-ways; invites readers and makers into the struggles of representation

“Working Through”

- Acknowledging the impossibility of the subject and the impossibility of finding neat resolution

Questions as Answers

- Learning to sit more comfortably with questions as/instead of answers



FINAL

**THOUGHTS &
QUESTIONS**

rob.simon@utoronto.ca

ty.walkland@mail.utoronto.ca

ben.gallagher@mail.utoronto.ca