



story explorer

The Boy at the Back of the Class by Onjali Q. Raúf Week 1 – The Boy with the Lion Eyes (Chapters 1–2)

Activity 1A: Exploring the Story

You can answer these questions by thinking them through, talking with a friend, or writing them down.

Chapter 1: The Empty Chair

1 - What do you think is the best thing about starting a brand-new term? Is it being able to see all your friends again, learn more about your favourite subject, or something else entirely?

2 - Which friend would you most like to meet, Tom, Josie or Michael? Why do you think you would get on well?

3 - Have you ever started at a new school or other group where the other children seem to know each other or have no problem making friends? How did it make you feel?

OUR ACTIVITIES

1A - EXPLORING THE STORY

ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FIRST TWO CHAPTERS

1B - WONDERFUL WORDS

COLLECT AND USE INTERESTING NEW WORDS

1C - STATIONERY SET

DESIGN THE STATIONERY SET OF YOUR DREAMS

1D - SCHOOL YEARBOOK

CREATE A YEARBOOK FOR THE SCHOOL IN THE BOOK

1E - AHMET'S DIARY

WRITE A DIARY ENTRY FROM AHMET'S PERSPECTIVE

Chapter 2: The Boy with the Lion Eyes

1 - Why do you think Ahmet kept staring at his rucksack?

2 - Jennie likes to make up stories that are more convincing than the truth. The narrator says “Sometimes I think everyone likes to believe a lie even when they know it’s a lie because it’s more exciting than the truth.” Do you agree? Has this ever happened to you?

3 - Ahmet is given a lemon sherbet sweet. Why do think the narrator does that?

Activity 1B – Wonderful Words

Mrs Sanders makes the children in detention learn the meanings and spellings of long words from the dictionary. Learning words shouldn’t be a punishment - it can be fun.

Maybe when you’re at school, writing a story, or with your friends, you could try and use a new word!

Let’s imagine that Mrs Khan encourages the children in her class to make a note of any unusual and interesting words that they come across. They write them into their vocabulary books. Here are some words from the first two chapters - now it is up to you to use them!

Adam's apple: a lump that can be seen at the front of the neck

Afro: natural hairstyle worn by people of African ancestry

allergic: unable to eat, breathe or touch something without becoming ill

barnacles: small shellfish that cling to rocks, piers and the bottom of boats

gangly: thin and tall, maybe a little awkward

ingenious: clever, full of good ideas

insightful: sensitive and good at understanding people and events

lemon sherbets: a lemon-flavoured boiled sweet with fizzy powder inside (the favourite sweet of Albus Dumbledore in the Harry Potter books)

scowl: an angry and unfriendly look

stationery: things we use for writing and drawing

submarine: a boat that can travel under the sea

Activity 1C – Stationery Set

Our narrator really does love stationery sets.

“Usually, the best thing about starting a brand-new term is that you get extra pocket money to buy new stationery with. Every year... my mum takes me on an Extra-Special Adventure to hunt down my stationery set for the new school year...”

The Boy at the Back of the Class, Chapter One

Do you have a favourite pencil case or stationery set? Is it the colours and patterns you like? Does it have a theme?

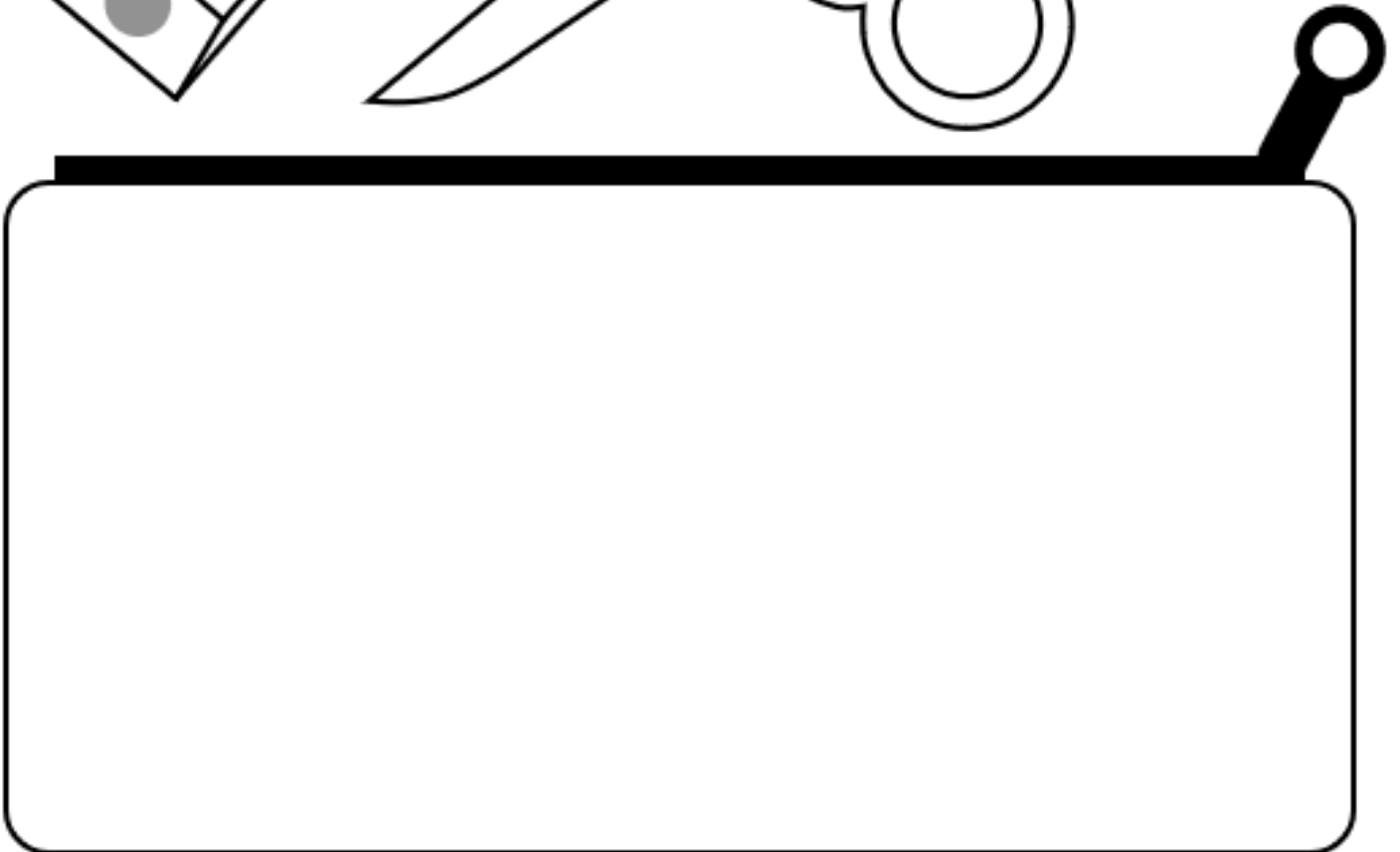
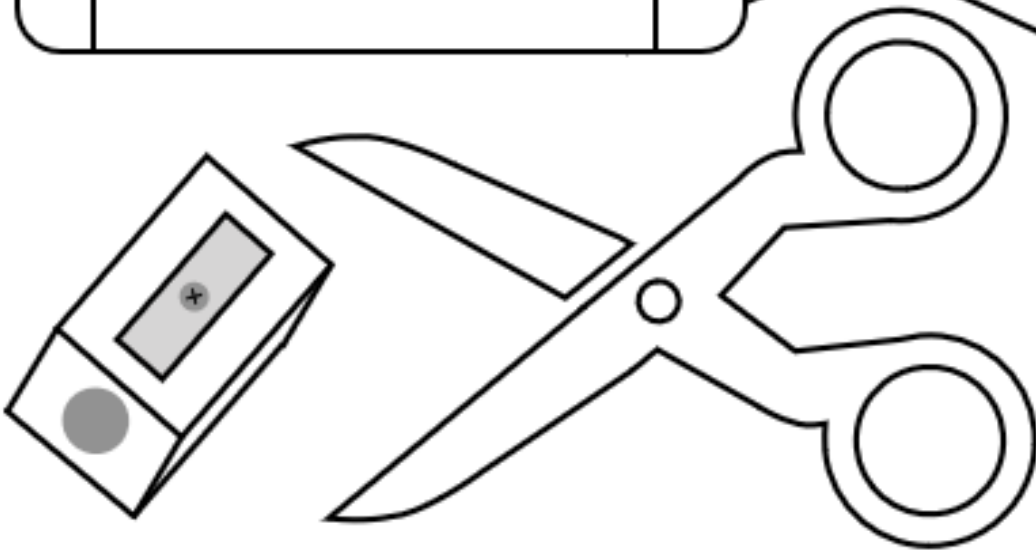
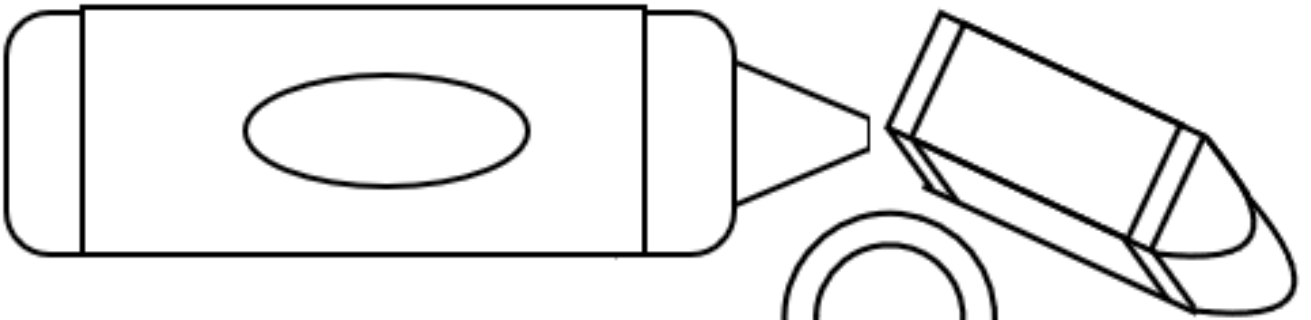
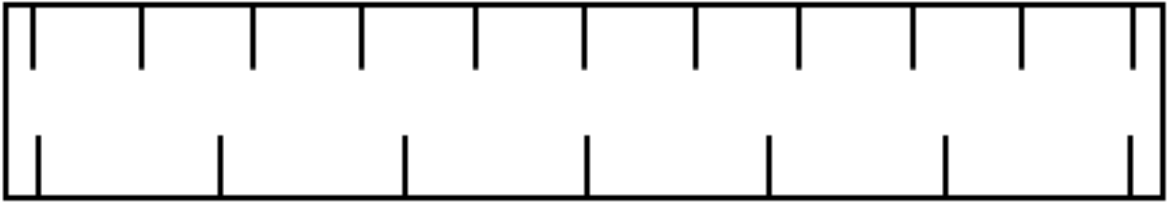
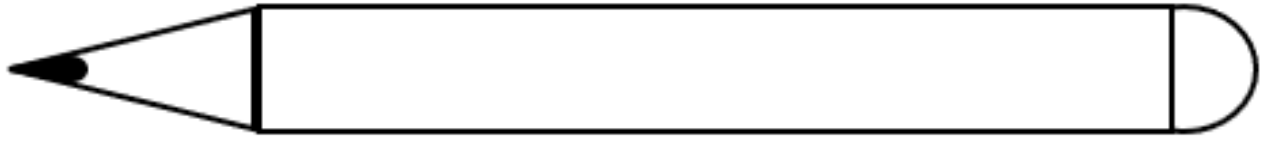
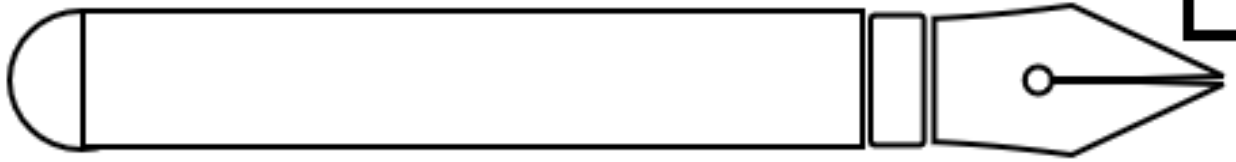
“Last year, I found a space-themed set with pictures of an astronaut floating past the moon. It was on sale too, so I bought a pencil case, a maths set, rubbers and a long ruler... The ruler is one of my favourite stationery pieces, because the astronaut floats across it in water mixed with silver stars...”

This year, I bought a Tintin and Snowy set... I could only buy a pencil case, a small ruler and two rubbers... if you press a button on the pencil case, Snowy barks and Captain Haddock’s voice cries out ‘Blistering barnacles!’”

The Boy at the Back of the Class, Chapter One

Now you have the chance to design the stationery set of your dreams. You can use activity sheet 1C, which contains the outlines of a pen, pencil, small ruler, crayon, eraser, pencil sharpener and scissors, as well as a pencil case for storing them. Or you may prefer to draw items of different shapes on a piece of paper or inside a book. Use whatever coloured pencils, felt pens or crayons you like to decorate your stationery set.

1C



Activity 1D – School Yearbook

Have you ever seen a school yearbook? If not, search on the internet and you will see lots of examples. Sometimes they are printed, some are online. But they are always full of photographs of children and teachers, memories of important events, hopes and plans for the future, and profiles or descriptions of what people are like.

We are going to create pages of a school yearbook for the school in *The Boy at the Back of the Class*.

At the beginning of the book, we are introduced to a group of friends who do everything together:

“Tom’s got short spiky hair and a side-smile and a big Adam’s apple that looks like a ping-pong ball got stuck in his throat. He’s the smallest in our group but he’s also the funniest. He only joined our class last year after his parents moved here from America, but we became friends instantly. He has three older brothers who all tease and bully him. Not seriously - only for a joke. But I think they steal his food too which is why he’s so skinny and always super-hungry. I once saw him eat a whole pizza with extra toppings and a double cheeseburger for lunch and still not be full up! So I hide my snacks and chocolate bars from him when I can.”


The Boy at the Back of the Class, Chapter One

“Josie has large, brown eyes and at least a million freckles across her face. She’s tall and gangly and is always chewing on her hair. She’s the fastest girl in our year and can kick a football past any goalie from the other side of the pitch. She’s the coolest person I know, and I’ve known her since we were three.”

The Boy at the Back of the Class, Chapter One

“Michael has the neatest, puffiest Afro out of all the boys in our year. Most people think he’s weird. But not us. His glasses are always broken, and his shoelaces are never done right, so he’s always tripping up or bumping into things when he walks. But we’re all so used to it now that we never notice... Michael gets made fun of a lot because he can’t run fast or kick a ball in a straight line, but he doesn’t care. I wouldn’t care either if I was as rich as him.”

The Boy at the Back of the Class, Chapter One



Use these descriptions to draw the children in your book or inside the frames on Activity Sheet 1D. Onjali Q. Raúf doesn't tell us what the children are wearing, so you can use your own ideas for that.

Underneath each picture frame there is room for a bit of writing about the character. You can fill these in as you find out more about them.

But wait, there is another friend - the one who is telling the story! We don't know what they look like yet, but we do know that they like comics and stationery sets. So write that down in the writing frame that says 'Narrator', and that is why the yearbook is in a comic book style.

A new person starts in Mrs Khan's class: Ahmet. You can draw him as well. Later, as we meet them, you can draw other classmates in the other three frames.

He had short dark hair and large eyes that hardly blinked and smooth pale skin... a boy who looked as scared and as sad as the one now sitting at the back of our class... He had the strangest coloured eyes I'd ever seen - like a bright ocean but on a half-sunny, half-cloudy day. They were grey and silvery-blue with specks of golden-brown.

The Boy at the Back of the Class, Chapters One and Two

Of course, not all the characters at this school are children. We are also introduced to Mr Thompson, Mrs Khan and Mrs Sanders, and there is room in the yearbook for them as well. So far, we haven't got much information about what they look like (all we are told about Mrs Khan is that she 'has extra bouncy hair and likes strawberry jam'), so write notes about this and wait until we find out more.

NARRATOR

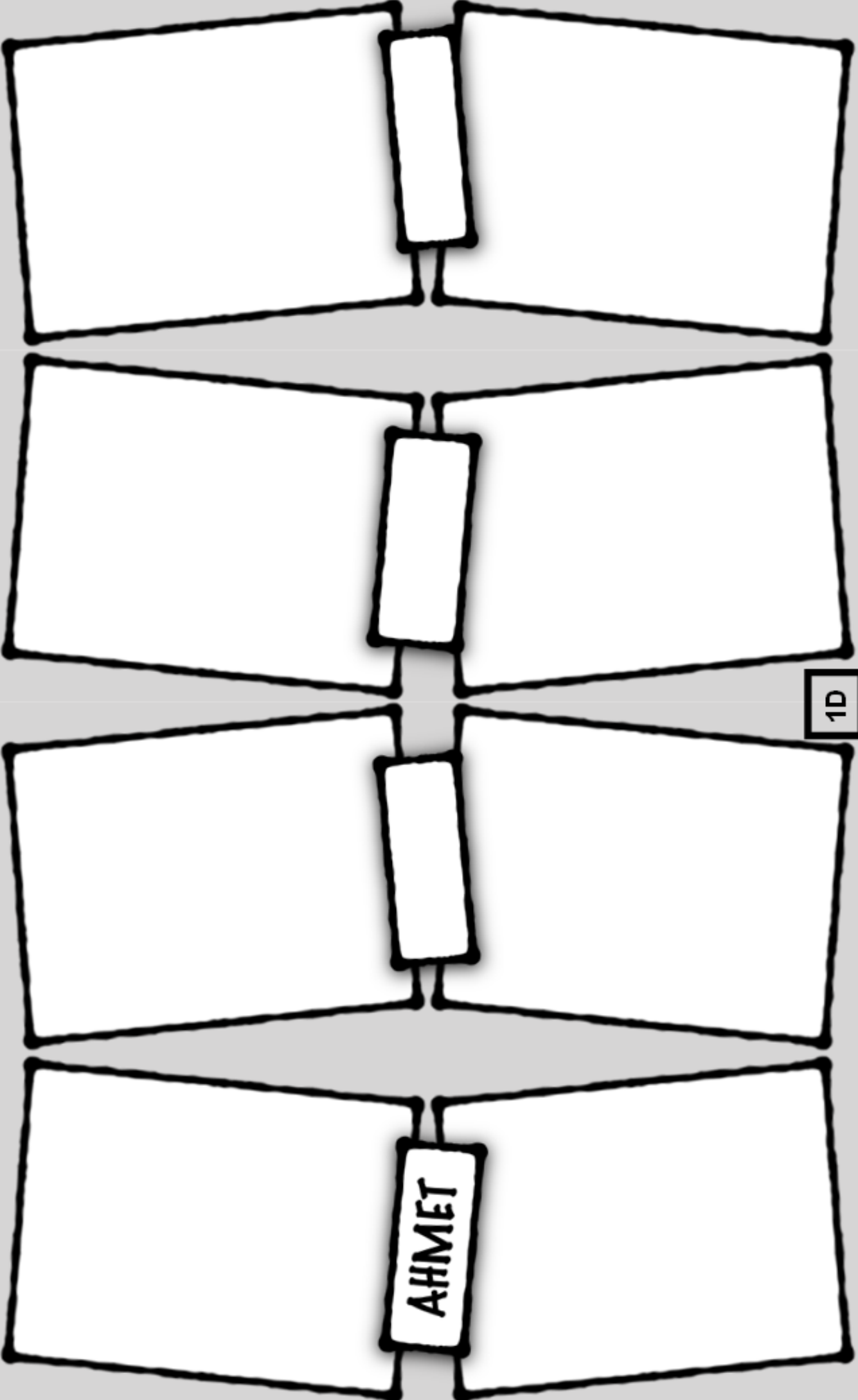
MICHAEL

JOSIE

TOM

1D

AHMET



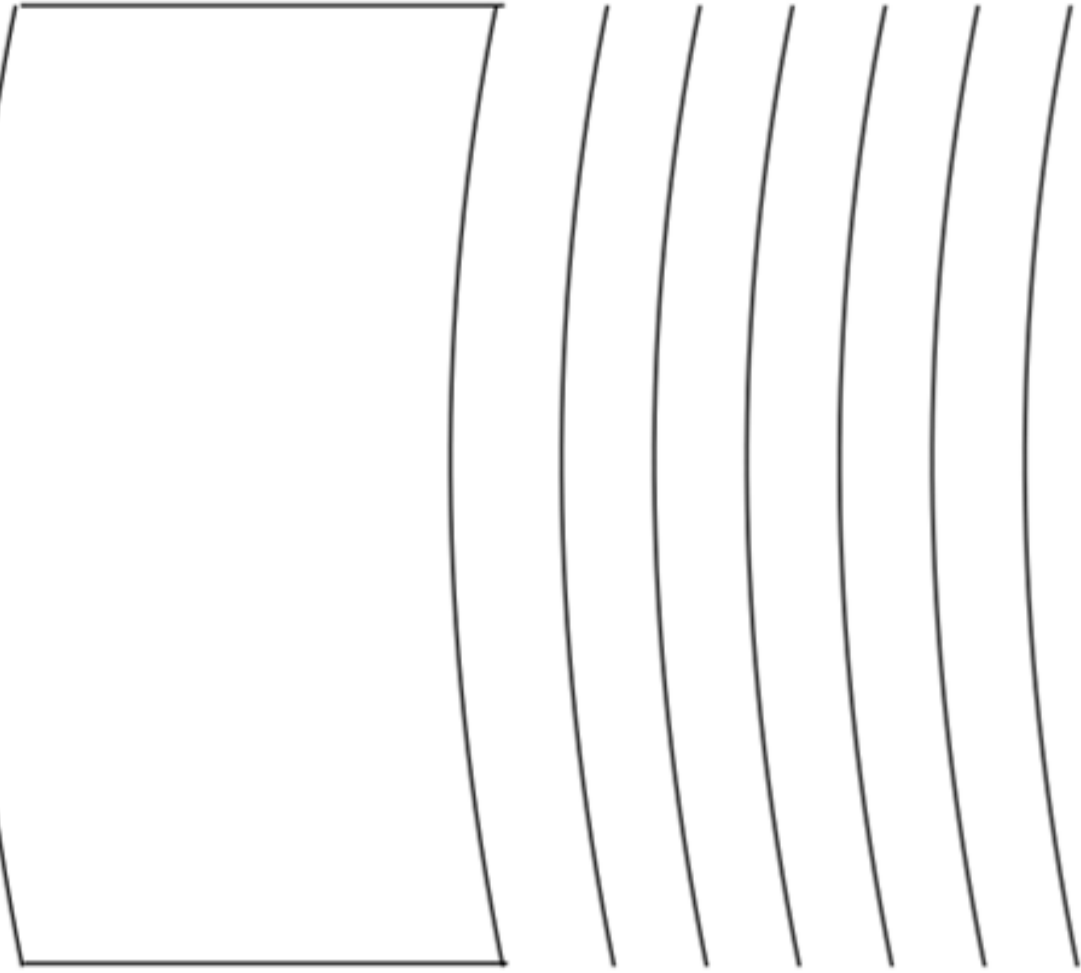
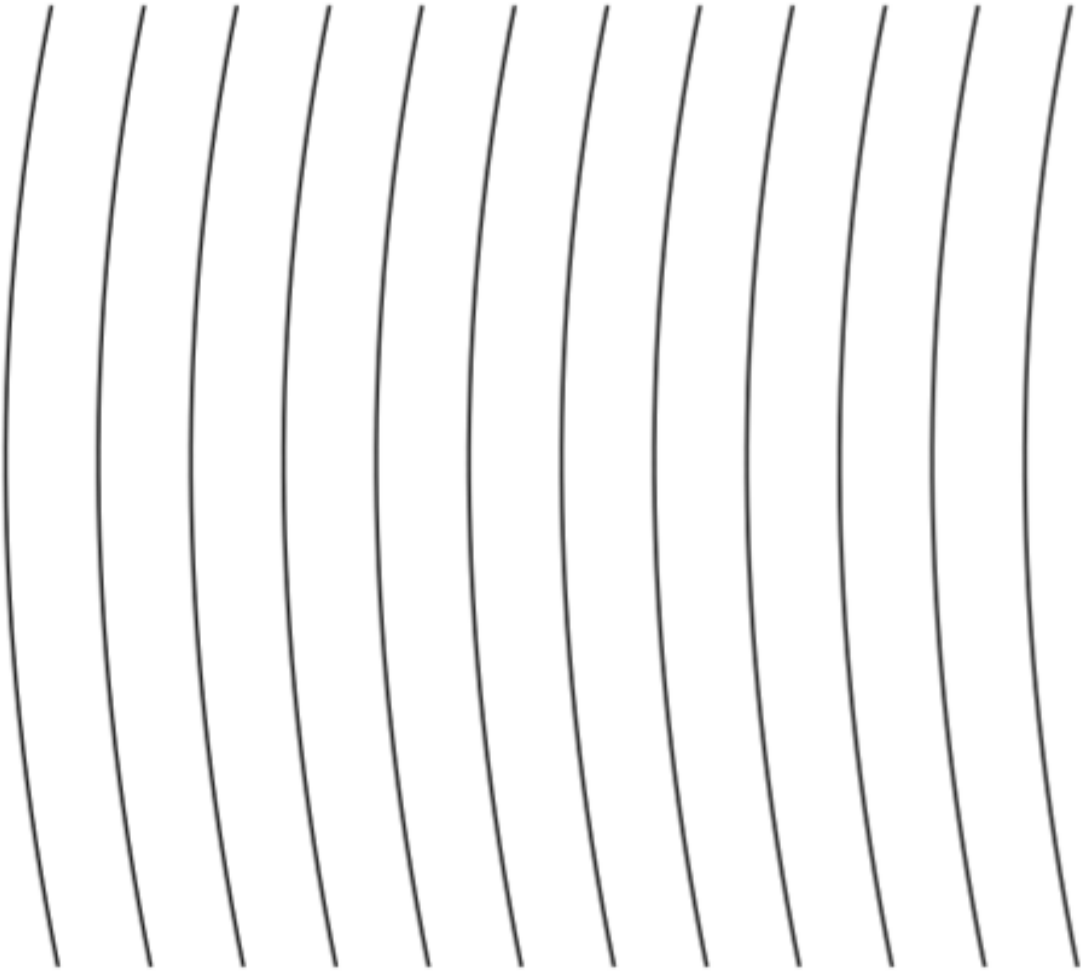
Activity 1E – Ahmet's Diary

This story is told by the (so far unnamed) narrator who is able to give us information about the school and the children in Mrs Khan's class. But imagine if Ahmet were to write about his first day at school in his diary; how different would it be?

Put yourself in Ahmet's place and think about how he feels and what is important to him. Use the diary on Activity Sheet 1E (or a page in your book or a piece of paper) to write about that day from his point of view. There is also a space for you to draw an illustration.

You can choose whether you want to plan your diary entry or to jump in and write straight away - whichever you prefer!

Dear Diary



1E