UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

Ústav cizích jazyků

Diplomová práce

Milan Řezník

Using Graphic Novels to Teach about LGBTQ+

Olomouc, 2022 **vedoucí práce: Mgr. Petr Anténe, M.A., Ph.D.**

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto práci vytvořil zcela samostatně za použití uvedených pramenů literatury.

V Olomouci, dne 19.4.2022 ……

Milan Řezník

I would like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Petr Anténe, M.A., Ph.D. for his help on this project, and to all my students, who have taught me more than I have taught them.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the possibilities of teaching about LGBTQ+ in English Language Lessons, using graphic novels as the main media for presenting the topic. The theoretical part presents the main arguments for the need of such lessons and for approaching graphic novels as an important medium in lessons. The practical part presents six lesson plans using two graphic memoirs focused on this topic and their subsequent analyses.

Contents

Abstract 4
Contents 5
List of Abbreviations 7
1. Introduction 8
2. Controversy – General 9
2.1. Controversy – Resilience and Anti-fragility 9
2.2. Controversy – Communication Skills and Civic Duties 10
2.3. Controversy – Approach 11
3. Why Teach LGBTQ+? 14
3.1. Society and Identity 14
3.2. Merits for society – Single stories 14
3.3. Merits for society – Respect 16
3.4. Identity – Position in the World 19
3.5. Identity – Understanding the Complexity 20
3.6. Identity – Pushing the Limits of Genders 20
3.7. Identity – What Might Go Wrong? 22
3.8. What to focus on? 23
3.8.1. Positioning 23
3.8.2. Visibility and Political Activity 23
4. Why to Use Graphic Novels? 25
4.1. Motivation 25
4.2. Discussing Topics and Linguistic Skills 26
4.3. The Visual Meaning and Multimodality 27
5. Why use Graphic Novels for the topic of LGBTQ+ 29
5.1. Common Ground 29
5.2. Visualizing Sexuality and Gender 29
5.3. Interaction of the Reader and the Narrative 30
6. The Practical Part – Introduction 32
6.1. Brief Characteristic of the Classes 32

7. *Gender/Queer* – Identity and the World 34
7.1. First Lesson (Introduction – Symbols and General Experience) 34
7.1.1. First Lesson – Lesson Plan 34
7.1.2. First Lesson – Presentation 35
7.1.3. First Lesson – Reflection 36
7.2. Second Lesson (Gendered Body) 38
7.2.1. Second Lesson – Lesson Plan 38
7.2.2. Second Lesson – Presentation 39
7.2.3. Second Lesson – Reflection 40
7.3. Third Lesson (Reflecting One's Gender) 42
7.3.1. Third Lesson – Lesson Plan 42
7.3.2. Third Lesson – Presentation 43
7.3.3. Third Lesson – Reflection 44
8. *How to Be Ace?* – Identity and Relationships 46
8.1. Fourth Lesson (Introduction to Asexuality and Happiness) 46
8.1.1. – Fourth Lesson – Lesson Plan 46
8.1.2. Fourth Lesson – Presentation 48
8.1.3. – Fourth Lesson – Reflection 49
8.2. Fifth Lesson (Asexuality and Personal Relationships) 50
8.2.1. Fifth Lesson – Lesson Plan 50
8.2.2. Fifth Lesson – Presentation 51
8.2.3. – Fifth Lesson – Reflection 52
8.3. Sixth Lesson (Labels, Community and Final Reflection of the Topic) 53
8.3.1. Sixth Lesson – Lesson Plan 53
8.3.2. Sixth Lesson – Presentation 55
8.3.3. Sixth Lesson – Reflection 55
9. Conclusion 57
Bibliography 58
Appendix 61
Resumé 96
Anotace 97

List of Abbreviations

CLIL - Content and language integrated learning
ELT – English Language Teaching
FEP G - Framework Education Programme for Grammar Schools

1. Introduction

This thesis aims to argue for incorporation of lessons on LGBTQ+ into English Language lessons and the usage of graphic novels as a means to teach such a complex and possibly controversial topic.

Firstly, this thesis focuses on the need for controversial topics in general. Arguing that controversial topics and not only supportive but essential for the teaching of certain skills and values that the Czech educational system aims at achieving.

Secondly, the need for incorporation of LGTBQ+ as a theme into the lesson is explored. The chapter goes through both the benefits that such a topic may have on the development of understanding students' surrounding and the society they live in, and the understanding of essential struggles that every person goes through when constructing one's identity.

The third part of this thesis presents the reasons for using graphic novels as a distinctive form of literature in the lessons. It explores the characteristics that make graphic novels important to use alongside more textual media and subsequently emphasizes the benefits that these characteristics have for the students.

The last chapter of the theoretical part of this thesis summarizes both previous chapters and presents the reasons for graphic novels to be used for teaching about LGBTQ+.

The practical part of this thesis presents six lesson plans based on two graphic memoirs by queer authors. The lessons are subsequently commented on and the chapters also include reflections of the lessons based on testing the lesson plans with three students' collectives.

2. Controversy – General

As stated in the introduction, the first chapter of this thesis focuses on the general need to open up potentially controversial topics such as gender issues and the LGBTQ+ community, and a possible approach towards the lessons incorporating these topics. It will therefore argue for less grammar-oriented lessons and the focus on communication abilities and other skill competencies, not only for the purpose of mastering a language but even more for the main purpose of education – preparing students for their future lives both on the personal level and as citizens of a democratic society.

2.1. Controversy – Resilience and Anti-fragility

In his book *No Future* (Kartous, 2019), Czech writer Bohumil Kartous argues for his vision of education in the Czech Republic as a driving force of social progress. Amongst other aspects of human life that education should focus on he points out the need to provide the students with the opportunity to develop abilities that will make them more resilient and "anti-fragile" in their lives. For Kartous, resilience stands for one's ability to face difficulties believing that one can succeed. Anti-fragility is the ability to use these difficulties for one's benefit. He claims that for the education to support resilience and anti-fragility, it needs to "expose the students to difficulties and to some extent insecurity" (Kartous, 2019, p. 203-204).

Although in many ways Kartous's views might be in conflict with the current state of Czech education, it is not necessary to resort to sources arguing for a change in the education system. Some of the key competencies mentioned in the Framework Education Programme for Grammar Schools (henceforth FEP G), which this thesis uses for its purposes, mention the need for difficult situations explicitly. Part of the competence for communication is the ability to "achieve understanding in difficult or controversial communicative situations" and section focused on social and personal competence states that the student is able to "resist social and medial pressures" (MŠMT, 2020, p. 10).

It is clear to see, that resilience (and possibly anti-fragility) is one of the shared goals of at least some of the ideals for education's future development and the current ideal of its state. To accomplish this goal, it is necessary to use potentially controversial topics (such as the one used in this thesis).

2.2. Controversy – Communication Skills and Civic Duties

Another role of education that second language teaching should reflect is the students' acquirement of abilities and values for their civic life. The Czech FEP G mentions the need for the students to value not only their personal interests and those of larger groups they are part of, but also to respect plurality of these values and interests and protect the rights of others (MŠMT, 2020, p. 10). Although, unlike in the previous part, these aims do not explicitly mention the need for such an education to be controversial, it is implicitly incorporated into them. Indeed; the Czech schools cannot hope to achieve developing the students' ability to value opinions and interests which they do not share, unless they actively confront the students with such opinions. Schramm-Pate and Lussier stress that in order to eliminate oppression in society it is necessary to empower students to work for a better society by opening up topics like class, gender, religion and others, and "seeking areas for opposition and opportunities for change" (Schramm-Pate and Lussier, 2003, p. 56-57).

Furthermore, the sole incorporation of such topics into lessons is not sufficient as it might lead to enforcing of one narrative accepted by the majority of students and suppression of the others. The teacher must therefore encourage the students to share their differing opinions and stand up for them as long as they can provide the class with arguments to support them. This obviously calls for a deliberately and carefully prepared opportunities with rules set for everyone this claim is not to be taken as an argument underestimating spontaneously emerging discussions). While Cannard's article focuses on science classes, it provides any teacher with the basic instructions to follow, possible system of assessment and a set of four rules for the whole class to know and keep. Whereas some as "cooperate and participate" might the students expect, other might be harder for them to follow (and therefore more important for the teacher to stress) such as "use a conventional voice" (Cannard, 2005, p. 16-17). By encouraging these rules and following some other suggestions (e.g. a need for a strong follow-up activity), teachers might be able to create a safe environment to discuss controversial topics in, and enhance students' communication skills and other abilities and values.

Amongst these other abilities and values is the aforementioned empowerment of students to improve their society. Including a controversial topic raises students' awareness of multiple voices in their society, enhances their communication skills while also providing them with extensive practice of some of the manifold skills needed for their future civic lives. These skills are receptive as well as creative. In their case study, Schramm-Pate and Lussier

use the locally controversial symbol of Confederate flag in their lessons. In order to create interpretations the students first need to research the symbol, practicing not only their ability to use various sources of information but also to read symbols, both of which are needed in a citizens highly visual world oversaturated with information. The research was later discussed using a debate forum, developing the students' abilities to argue using facts and interpretations (Schramm-Pate and Lussier, 2003, p. 58-59).

These examples show articulately the immense benefits of opening up controversial spaces for discussion, provided that the discussion is led in a safe environment under clear and generally accepted rules promoting respect towards plurality of opinions.

2.3. Controversy – Approach

Since it has now been argued for the inclusion of controversial topics into lessons, it is important to describe the approach that might suit best a lesson focused on benefiting from the opportunities such topics provide. First of all, it needs to be stressed that this thesis doesn't aim at discrediting grammar oriented lessons in general. They have surely their role in a foreign language classroom. However, in order to achieve maximum gain from the topics presented in this thesis a more discussion-oriented and student-oriented approach is called for.

As for the general attitude towards education as a whole, this thesis utilizes the constructivist approach. Its principles are appropriate to all that has been stated before. To start with, it builds the process of education on the premise of a conflict between the students' pre-concept (their previous knowledge of a particular topic) and newly gained information (Kalhous, 2002, p. 50). Therefore, it incorporates the need for a potentially unpleasant feeling of imbalance that ensures good conditions for progress.

Furthermore, it takes into account the significant differences between the viewpoints of various students by seeing education as a social construct. That means that whereas more teacher-oriented and transmission-focused approaches see the value of education in one view of the world (which will be discussed further on), the constructivist approach embraces and supports different interpretations of a single issue while taking into account the emotions of students (Kalhous, 2002, p. 53-54). These two elements are in accordance with the skills stressed in previous parts.

Naturally, this approach creates a highly student-oriented and thus potentially unpredictable environment. With such an emphasis on differing opinions and interpretations

and even emotions, it stands for reason that constructivist approach towards education needs to focus on the students' communication with each other. The teacher's role is not only to encourage the students to follow the needed rules for discussion (as stated above), but also to try and understand the students' perspectives and attitudes. When these are reflected in the activities teacher prepares and given opportunity to be expressed, teacher's main role becomes that of a prompter of discussion. This situation creates a valuable opportunity for combining the development of key competencies mentioned above and the more specific task of English language teaching (henceforth ELT). Communicative approach, and content and language integrated learning (henceforth CLIL) provide the directions suitable for such a lesson.

Communicative approach towards English language teaching views language as a tool to communicate a meaning, which means that it focuses on providing the students with the ability to use it on a functional level rather than building up their knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary (Çelik, 2014, p. 185-187). Therefore, the lessons approaching language from this viewpoint create opportunities for the student to use the foreign language in an authentic and unrehearsed way. Such activities must not only depend formally on discussion and/or presentation of one's own view, but in order to be effective, also have the potential to create a lively debate (thus a controversial topic). This conception of language brings about several principles suitable for the topic of this thesis such as the focus on ideas and relationships (the need for communication leads to an emphasis on interpersonal aspects of the activities), the acceptance and support of diversity (not only in the way the students use language) and the dependence on culture as "instrumental in shaping speakers' communicative competence" (Çelik, 2014, p. 188-189).

The other mentioned approach, CLIL, draws on the importance of culture of ELT lessons. It shares similar principles with communicative language teaching but connects the teaching of language skills with a teaching of a particular content. Thus, students practice working with information and, given that the content is interesting to them, get immersed into the activity personally. Just like constructivism as a whole, CLIL makes it necessary for the class environment to be anxiety-free. However, among other benefits, it increases students' motivation and improves their self-image (Çelik, 2014, p. 206-207).

All in all, these are the principles (both concerning education as a whole and ELT) that are essential for incorporation of controversial topics (such as LGBTQ+) into lessons. Not only to shape the environment to the needs of such topics but also practice skills needed in

such activities, regular lessons focusing on communication are needed. Although Çelik points out that it is to some extent necessary to point out errors that occur during the discussion (Çelik, 2014, p. 190-191), the author of this thesis chose to do the opposite during the course of his lessons and ignore any mistakes because of the focus on other communication skills and the sensitive nature of the topic.

3. Why Teach LGBTQ+?

After focusing on controversial topics in general, this chapter of the thesis will focus on a particular topic that might (and hopefully will) provoke controversy – LGBTQ+. At first this chapter will focus on several reasons while this particular topic should be reflected in a classroom. While this thesis is concerned with ELT, the inclusion of controversial topics as a means to elicit discussion and the focus on discussion as a necessary tool to practice English, have been argued for in the previous chapter. Therefore, it is now sufficient to argue for LGBTQ+ as an important topic for education in general. After the needs for inclusion of such a topic will be covered, this chapter will focus on the way how to approach the topic. Again, the potential dangers of controversial discussion and possible ways how to overcome them were part of the previous chapter and this chapter will focus only on the risks characteristic for this topic and the ways to approach them from the point of view of ELT.

3.1. Society and Identity

In line with the previously discussed aims of education and the merits of controversial topics in education, the argument for inclusion of LGBTQ+ themed topics in lessons may be led in two ways – the merit for society and the merit for identity. The aims concerned with the merit for society have been cited above very clearly and they also implicitly suggest the importance of focus on students' identity – for instance, the ability to value one's personal interest cannot be achieved without valuing one's personal interest. However, to further back the latter, it is possible to mention the aims in FEP G. These include the students' ability of self-reflection, ability to adapt to the ever changing circumstances of their lives and to present themselves appropriately (MŠMT, 2020, p. 10). As it will be seen further on, these two aspects are both connected with the topic of LGBTQ+ and interconnected with a great potential to help students, even those identifying themselves as the majority (that is heterosexual feminine female or heterosexual masculine male), to achieve these aims.

3.2. Merits for society – Single stories

Valocchi points out that the assumed binaries associated with various genders, sexualities and their combinations, together with societies' accepted normative ideal of the combinations are often implicitly thought of as "more than ideological constructs but are somehow naturally occurring phenomena" (Valocchi, 2005, p. 752). While heteronormativity and the strict relation between sex and gender is often assumed to be one of the oppressing forces as far as individual well-being goes, the necessity to disrupt the illusion that these categories are naturally given and fixed in order to improve the current state of societies might

be harder to determine. Generally, beliefs that constitute the prevalent conception of the world in societies and cultures might be inaccurate or even erroneous and unopposed they may well become the only accepted voice. However, it is hard (if not impossible) to weaken such concepts once they become the viewpoint of society in general. It is therefore an important role of education to support the students' ability approach taboos and resist the pressures of a common worldview. Moje mentions that it is a key-role of education "not only to provide opportunities access to mainstream knowledge and practices but also provide opportunities to question challenge and construct knowledge" (Moje, 2007, p. 4). The inability to do so in classroom increases the students' vulnerability to single stories, which are precisely the shared interpretations of the state of being of the world and people inhabiting it. For this teachers have to not only incorporate the less prevalent voices and their interpretations into education, but also embrace the fact that education simply is not and cannot be neutral (Dodge and Crutcher, 2015, p. 95-96). While some may argue that neutrality is important in order to avoid promoting single stories, in fact it achieves the exact opposite. Neutrality in itself promotes the strongest narrative and thus supports the prevalence of single stories.

However, disrupting single stories does not just mean discussing controversial topics that might feel important for most of the students (like was discussed in the previous chapter) since these topics are very often widely discussed across media. It falls to the teacher to open up new and possibly unpleasant discussions that might at first glance seem important only to a minority, individuals or even no one in the classroom (though the topic of LGBTQ+ was already present in two out of three of the class collectives that were included in the testing of lesson plans present in this thesis). Opening a discussion about LGBTQ+ among students may support them not only to contemplate the experience of sexual and gender minorities (as well as their own sexual and gendered experience) but also show them that it is possible and desirable to openly discuss this experience and thus prepare them to do just that repeatedly with other topics throughout their lives. Indeed, as Dodge and Crutcher point out, several topics are inseparably present in the issue of LGBTQ+ and discussing it "we teach and acknowledge broader issues of privilege and intersectionality" (Dodge and Crutcher, 2015, p. 97).

Clearly, such a determined effort of the teacher obviously has its risk and difficulties. The teacher has to pay attention to various viewpoints from which a protest might come such as the parents or even the students themselves (Dodge and Crutcher, 2015, p. 103), which more or less coincide with the general topic of controversy discussed in the previous chapter.

The problems more closely connected to LGBTQ+ mostly concern the perils and dangerous assumptions that the discussions might lead to. The chief peril amongst these is the risk of assuming. Bringing and trying to direct a discussion on sexual and gender minorities might lead to both the students' and teachers' assumption that it is clear what those minorities need in order to live fulfilled lives, where these needs are very individual and might be unintuitive for other people (Talburt, 2004, p. 119). These potentially wrong or simplistic assumptions might disturb the students' individual needs (which will be discussed further on) and the conclusions that the whole class might get to as far as the understanding of the topic goes, changing the single story to the worse or possibly creating a new inaccurate one.

The solution to such problems is essentially twofold. The first aspect is that the teachers need to question their own assumptions and presuppositions of LGBTQ+ (even if they are themselves part of this minority). As Talburt stresses, the possibility to work with the LGTBQ+ people (and the topic of their identity) in education "depends on educator's willingness to examine their own assumptions" concerning the topic (Talburt, 2004, p. 119). The second is the teachers' reliance on the students' abilities to deal with difficult questions and topics and subsequently asking them. At first such questions might be left without a clear direction towards a certain conclusion to see the variety of possibilities, thus positioning the students in the role of queer analytics, standing in front of such questions as Valocchi mentions – what if we put gay men and lesbians into the centre of our viewpoint, what if we assume gender is independent on sex and/or sexuality and so on (Valocchi, 2005, p. 753).

3.3. Merits for society – Respect

It is essential that the discussion about LGBTQ+ does not remain an example of a potential different story. It is not only a tool to disrupt the single story of all people experiencing gender in the same way, but also an important process of informing about and supporting respect of LGTBQ+ people (and thus possibly enhancing the students' capability of repeating this attitude towards other minorities). Gonzalez explores the various levels on which it is needed to promote advocacy for LGBTQ+ students stressing the process education as one of the necessary tools for "creating awareness about LGBT people or issues" (Gonzalez, 2016, p. 41). Since it is natural for people to fear what they do not understand, it is clear that the path to respecting LGBTQ+ people leads through understanding their experiences in their complexities.

As Renn points out, one of the key aspects of understanding LGBTQ+ minorities is emphasizing the intersections of different identities such as gender, race, class etc. (Renn, 2010, p. 134). Achieving this, the students might develop the understanding of how rich and variable the sexual and gender experiences might be, realizing the worth of respecting such a person's view. Such a realization might lead in turn to improvement of the overall atmosphere in classroom and school. Appreciation of variety of sexual and gender identities and interest in their experience decreases harassment between students and that creates a more positive and thus effective learning environment (Gonzalez, 2016, p. 38-39). It is once again apparent that including the topic of LGBTQ+ in a classroom is beneficial not only for the purposes of understanding the topic itself but also improving learning environment and efficiency in achieving the primary goals of education (focused on in the first chapter of this thesis).

However, there are some apparent problems in pursuing these goals via LGBTQ+ themed lessons. For instance, if it is dangerous to assume what sexual or gender (or any other) minorities want and need (as stated above), how can the students or even the teacher be sure that the information they interpret and the understanding gained are reliable and improve, not damage, their relations towards each other and the world? There are three possible approaches towards this problem which should be applied according to the particular situations and lessons.

Firstly, it might not be necessary to interpret the experiences and feelings of LGBTQ+ people presented in the lessons (such as the characters of graphic novels included in this thesis) in order to come to the level of understanding aimed at. The simple understanding that these might be feelings of these particular people and that they are relevant could be sufficient. Paired with a regular presentation of different characters (and thus points of view), certain patterns of a higher level of reliability may occur (such as the feeling of alienation).

Secondly, while there may be some interpretations that should be argued with and possibly rejected (displays of hate towards the minorities), there is no need to come to a single conclusion, which would in fact contradict the previous parts of this thesis. This means that it is desirable to let the students present their own understanding of the characters' feelings, leaving them with a variety of interpretations and the need to ponder some questions on their own (as mentioned in the previous subchapter).

And lastly, while many people might find it natural to start discussing these topics based on the differences between the sexual and gender majorities and minorities, the

opposite approach may be more effective. Dodge and Crutcher suggest LGBTQ+ themed texts to be paired with canonical texts such as *Romeo & Juliet* in order to explore what changes and what stays the same about topics common to all people when we view them from the different points of view of the majorities and the minorities. This then provides the opportunity not only to access the singular experiences of LGBTQ+ people better but also to question "static concepts" such as love (Dodge and Crutcher, 2015, p. 98-100). While this thesis does not incorporate this method since it is concerned only with LGBTQ+ themed graphic novels, it can be used as an approach towards the topic in general. Students might be asked to find similarities in their experiencing the world before discussing what is different. It might be also possible to use the narratives in class without the students knowing that it concerns sexual or gender minorities. This way they may discuss the experience of the characters based on a common ground before even considering that some parts of the presented experiences will be probably very different from their own. If handled carefully, this approach may be a good starting point for a deeper understanding of the individual lives of the LGBTQ+ characters. However, it may also lead to a presupposed similarity in goals in life and increase, rather than reduce, the dangers of assuming.

Another potential problem of raising awareness and focusing on respect towards the minorities may be also connected to the dangers of assuming. While paying respect and supporting minorities to share their worldviews and experiences is desirable, it may also create a feeling that it is the majorities that give strength and opportunity to the minorities to express themselves, thus enforcing the hierarchy which the discussion of such topics itself tries to disturb. Furthermore, this approach again increases the probability that the majorities will assume that the minorities will benefit from the same advice as them (as discussed above).

The solution to such a problem is less complicated than that to the previously discussed dangers. Given that the experiences discussed in the lessons are those of story characters (though autobiographical), the students do not need to give advice or support to anyone in particular in the lessons. If handled with care, students might benefit from being put in the position of the characters and think about their own feelings in a similar situation. This way, there could be many different approaches to the problem in the classroom without a clear statement that "this is what they need". Furthermore, in some cases there might be no need to present their views out loud at all. In some lessons, the goal could be empathy and presentation of the question itself for each of the individual students without the discussion. In

some cases it could be also beneficial not to focus on the experience of the characters themselves but try to discuss how the story impacts the students' views of a similar situation. The teacher might consider asking them how the story changed their opinions or what they valued the most, thus encouraging them not only to understand that there are various ways to experience similar things but also to value what they may gain from perceiving these differing experiences.

3.4. Identity – Position in the World

Valuing the variety of experiences that others live and respect their identities is not just a socially beneficial aim for education to pursue. Education is also a process of "auto-construction", the construction of one's identity. What is relevant for the students in the process of education are the processes and activities that help them become who they want to become in the social surroundings they live in (Kalhous, 2002, p. 50). The social aspect of constructing one's own identity hints at the dependence on our surroundings and understanding it. It is through the world that we often shape and understand who we are.

These two points (relevancy of what helps the students to become who they want to be and the dependence of our identities on the society) indicate the need to delve into the immense variety of how different people view themselves. LGBTQ+ is a very suitable topic to use when aiming at supporting the development of identities for several reasons.

As stated above, it is the relationship to our social context that shapes our identity extensively and since LGBTQ+ people have become an integral (though for many alien) part of our society, everyone naturally adopts some approach towards them. As Clark and Blackburn point out, if engaged with the LGBTQ+ people as present and relevant parts of our lives repeatedly, students will ultimately have to "consider what it means for them to be LGBTQ, allied or homophobic" (Clark and Blackburn, 2009, p. 29). This does not necessarily mean that the students did not know about their position towards this issue. People's position is created naturally over time and if confronted with it, it is usually not very surprising. However, it is the conscious exploration of one's stand that is important here. The essential from this point of view is what their position *means* for them rather than what it *is* (which does not mean that their position is irrelevant for the discussion). Focusing on exploration of their positions towards the topic might help the students (no matter their sex, gender or position towards the issue) to practice shaping their identity in relationship to the world that surrounds them.

3.5. Identity – Understanding the Complexity

However, while the students' approach towards a particular topic might be relatively categorical and easy to explore, they need to focus on exploration of their own identity in more depth. This is, nevertheless, a very complicated task. Once again, it is not possible to come to a clear conclusion (and because of the danger of single stories it is not even desirable) and thus, students have to immerse themselves in the difficult task of getting to know themselves. It was already mentioned that the binaries that separate sexual and gender identities are mere social constructs. Even if these binaries are let go of, any categorical division of identities is an insufficient one because it still relies on the "construction of normal-against-queer". Therefore, there is a need to embrace the qualities of queer theory, which "considers the influences of multiple, fluid identity domains" (Renn, 2010, p. 135). The difficulty with this is that once stripped of the socially constructed categories, identities such as gender and sex are seen as they are – "fraught with incoherence and instability (Valocchi, 2005, p. 753). Although it is desirable to strip these identities of their categorical divisions, it subsequently becomes confusing and difficult for the students to navigate their way towards understanding and appreciation of their individual experience.

Discussing LGBTQ+ in a classroom and viewing it as a variety of characteristics rather than divided categories can thus lead the students to letting go of the construction and embarking on their way towards shaping their own identity. It is worth noticing though that this is not a path towards an end-goal. As Kedley and Spiering point out, it is erroneous to believe that one can "find" their own identity, embrace it and thus gain is permanent place amongst the variety of sexualities and genders. Not only the characteristics of an ideal man or woman changes as decades go by, the way masculinity, femininity or other genders characteristic manifest also shifts according to the circumstances. For instance, gendered behaviour would be different in a bar as opposed to a gym (Kedley and Spiering, 2017, p. 56-57). LGBTQ+-themed literature often shows their queer characters struggling throughout the whole story with some sense of catharsis when they embrace who they are but no clear closure. Via discussion of these characteristics in the classroom, it is possible to accept and practice this never-ending struggle towards constructing one's own identity.

3.6. Identity – Pushing the Limits of Genders

These complexities can be seen in all the different parts of people's identities. However, LGBTQ+ has a unique position compared to other identities such as class, race or education. Gender and sexuality is widely discussed across the media and people's lives,

being one of the most vivid topics in public debates in the Czech Republic since it is more controversial than class, for instance, and the discussion about race is not that relevant in Czech society. Because of these aspects, it is essential for everyone. Even sexual and gender majorities, as Valocchi stresses, have a very complex and hard to explore identities, thus a debate disrupting the categorical taxonomies of the identities is important for them too (Valocchi, 2005, p. 753). Furthermore, the controversy surrounding gender and sexuality makes it an ideal conversation through which to examine construction of identities, since it has a great potential to create conflict. And as discussed above, conflict between an old view and a new one is the basis of constructivism (Kalhous, 2002, p. 51-54).

Nevertheless, the process of constructing one's gender and sexual identity is problematic because it is both a limiting and predominantly subconscious act (Heilman and Goodman, 1996, p. 250). It is limiting because once people identify themselves with a particular identity, they obtain only a certain number of possible reactions which are expected of them (and which are they used to) in various situations. And since these identities are constructed mostly subconsciously throughout people's lives, they are often left with a certain behaviour that does not suit them, yet it is hard for them to breach these expectations. As Barker and Scheele point out throughout their popularizing graphic guide to gender, what is important is continual raising awareness of other than just the typical set of behaviour (Barker and Scheele, 2019). It is however not sufficient to only show or inform about these possibilities. To confront rooted expectations, continual activity to push the boundaries within oneself is essential. This may be done by making the process of shaping identity more conscious. As Heilman and Goodman emphasize, it is crucial to focus on "self-imaginings and interpretations" (Heilman and Goodman, 1996, p. 253). Thus, during a lesson focused on scrutinizing the students' individual image of themselves, they might find out that their ideal of what they would find desirable behaviour is in conflict with what they find expected of them in a particular situation. This confrontation has a great potential to increase the consciousness of shaping identity and push the boundaries set previously by the subconscious construction.

Once the students are consistently supported to construct their own identities and they develop their comfort in doing so, there is one more aspect that should be paid attention to. The students should be able to efficiently communicate and if needed defend their view of their own identity. If the students actually become aware of the possibility to push the boundaries and they will consistently try to do so, so that their options suit them better, they

will undoubtedly encounter at least some resistance. In these cases their ability for self-advocacy is essential. As Gonzalez mentions, it is important that the teachers help their students "in developing strategies to navigate barriers and overcome adversity" (Gonzalez, 2016, p. 41). This development of strategies is also an essential part of the focus on identity since, while in classroom the students might be assisted and supported to self-advocate (not only by the teacher if safe environment is taken care of), ultimately in their adult lives education should help prepare them for, they often need to rely solely on themselves.

3.7. Identity – What Might Go Wrong?

As for potential problems created by focusing on the students' gender and sexual identities, these are obviously connected with the general controversy surrounding not only the topic of LGBTQ+ people but also the basic need to navigate carefully the discussion about possibly sensitive personal issues.

The need for safe environment has already been stressed. Nevertheless, it is the most basic condition for education itself. When delving into such controversial areas a focus on individual students might be in order. For instance, some students might feel safe as far as general mistakes or opinions go, but might not want to discuss their personal situations. The need not to press these students to immediately express themselves is obvious. The teacher might rather choose to start letting the students write personal notes that nobody or just the teacher reads, to accommodate themselves to this sensitive self-evaluation. Then, a pair or group discussion that the students themselves choose (if possible) might lead to their practice of stating their views out-loud. Thus, the more timid students might later feel more comfortable in a whole-class discussion.

Another measure that is essential in establishing a proper environment is the teacher's own readiness to answer personal questions. Heilman and Goodman give account of some students asking when did the teachers themselves start to think about particular topics connected to gender (Heilman and Goodman, 1996, p. 258). This hints that if the teacher demonstrates a willingness to participate and open oneself, the students might want to seek their opinions and experience. However, it is necessary that the teacher is very careful with sharing their own stance without being asked for it in order not to enforce their viewpoint.

If the students still do not feel ready to engage in the discussions it would have a detrimental effect to force them to do so. On the other hand, this situation needs to be handled carefully for two reasons. First, the louder students (or the teachers themselves) might be

highly persuasive and disrupt the views that the more timid students have of themselves. And second, in discussion about LGBTQ+ over-stressing that students do not have to engage unless they want to may lead to a clear message that it is natural to feel uncomfortable about minor sexualities or genders, thus implicitly stating that the whole class should be homophobic and disapproving of queer people (Clark and Blackburn, 2009, p. 27).

3.8. What to focus on?

This part explores some possible approaches to apply towards the topic of LGBTQ+. In other words, while previous parts mentioned potential problems and ways to solve them, this part focuses on some subtopics that might be effective in pursuing the aims mentioned above.

3.8.1. Positioning

Part of the lesson plan that might not be visible at first glance is the position that the students are put into. As mentioned above it is necessary that the teacher avoids the message that being homophobic is the norm. If the students are put into the role of observing something "other" that is not present in the world around us (and especially not in the classroom), the lessons position "the students as straight and homophobic". Furthermore, by focusing solely on the alienation that queer people often experience (and not on the experience in their communities), they promote the idea that queer people are to be supported but also pitied (Clark and Blackburn, 2009, p. 28-29). However, avoiding these harmful positions is not sufficient. Teachers might actively try to create a position to put the students into. If homophobia is not the norm, is it heterosexuality and corresponding sex and gender? Or is being queer the norm? As far as the positioning goes, teachers are put in front of a difficult task to create lessons that promote the complexity and diversity as a norm. They have to do it actively, in order not to provide possibility for the predominant identity to take place as the single generally tolerated norm.

3.8.2. Visibility and Political Activity

This can be achieved by emphasizing that homosexuality and queerness are present all around and that it is possible to express allegiance or support. Gonzalez lists several cases of teachers successfully creating an LGBTQ+-friendly environment through visible displays of their own identification with the community or of their supporting it (Gonzalez, 2016, p. 42). Nevertheless, it is not only supportive visibility that should be paid attention to. Not only does the cultural context that people live in influence the ideal gender characteristics, it is then very visibly promoted via advertisement, movies and other media (Heilman and Goodman, 1996,

p. 251, 256). It is important for this impact of culture to be analysed and described. Heilman and Goodman describe a set of activities focused on this analysis, subsequent discussions and final creative task – creating posters that presented in various ways the depiction of gender through advertisement (ibid, p. 256-257).

Making support of sexual and gender minorities visible and emphasizing the influence culture has on our concepts of gender is only part of the process. Students need to be supported to actively participate in the visualization and possibly in political activity (Clark and Blackburn, 2009, p. 28). Displaying the posters of their own making in the school environment may support them towards this behaviour. In this way, they actively influence their own surrounding, disrupt the idealized image of genders in the media and possibly may encounter and be able to react to both positive and negative reactions of their fellow students.

4. Why to Use Graphic Novels?

This chapter will focus on the various benefits of incorporating graphic novels into education. It does not explore the many reasons for using literature generally in ELT, rather it highlight the specific characteristics that make this graphical medium a fantastic inclusion in education.

4.1. Motivation

Teachers often struggle with motivating to work on the activities brought by the teacher and with promoting reading and self-education in general as something enjoyable and beneficial. Incorporating graphic novels into education might increase chances in both of these struggles. The graphic medium in general is often underused for reading in lessons and therefore, students might feel motivated simply because the teacher prepares a reading that is different from what they so often use. Furthermore, the topics used in graphic novels regularly address issues that are highly important and interesting for students (especially high school students). Topics concerning morality, estrangement, abandonment, gender or disease are often to be found (Graham, 2008, p. 12). This might lead to the students being invested in the activities and especially to their engagement in classroom discussions.

Although an important part of the activities themselves, this motivation is not limited to them. The impact of graphic novels and their reading may be very strong at times. Rice describes a telling sign that her manga-reading activities made her students especially interested – in one school year, a whole series of manga that she had obtained were stolen (Rice, 2012, p. 42). Lapp et al. describe students deciding to learn Japanese in order to understand better the culture depicted in graphic novels they read in lessons (Lapp et al., 2011, p. 24). While these outbursts of motivation might sometimes be temporary, its regular and deliberate support via reading graphic novels may prove efficient. The potential of graphic novels to entice reluctant readers is also an important benefit and though in general it is desirable, it might be appropriate not to consider graphic novels as something leading students to more serious prose texts, as Gallo and Weiner, for instance, seem to be suggesting (Gallo and Weiner, 2004, p. 115).

In this point it might also be worth noticing that while testing the lesson plans included in the practical part of this thesis, the author has come across a surprisingly high number of students (high school graduates) that considered graphic novels and the comic medium in general as something childish and not to be taken seriously. After a discussion of this topic, it

became clear that some of the students have enjoyed reading comics when they were children but have not encountered them since. This is partly the fault of high school education which often considers graphic novels as a non-serious medium.

4.2. Discussing Topics and Linguistic Skills

As mentioned above, graphic novels are a suitable means of prompting a classroom discussion due to their potential to motivate students and address topics important to them. However, it is not only the motivation that students get from the topics that is beneficial for the discussion. It is also the particular themes that the stories focus on. Graphic novels (and comics before them) often approach controversial social topics and they do it in such a way that is open for the students to explore philosophy, history and many challenging concepts. Utilizing these qualities, the teachers may find an efficient way of introducing topics that will be much easier for the students to explore once they encounter them in more depth (Lapp et al. 2011, p. 24). This potential to study important topics is caused partly by the already mentioned motivation but also by the fact that graphic novels engage many senses in the process. Boatright suggests, that after using graphic novels for exploration of a topic such as immigration, teachers might inquire as for the students' ideas of how immigration smells or sounds, because the form of graphic novels prompts these experiences (Boatright, 2010, p. 474). Graham also points out the artistic quality of the medium, mentioning among others the usage of symbols and metaphors (Graham, 2008, p. 12). The usage of symbols increases the potential for understanding certain concepts that might be hard to penetrate through a plain text or spoken explanation.

The interconnection of images and words is a feature that boosts the development of linguistic skills such as vocabulary (which is not the focus of this thesis) and the general ability to express one's thoughts. The students may not only see how the images reflect the words (and vice versa) but can also discuss how the author uses these two components to convey the atmosphere and shape the perception of the story (Frey and Fisher, 2004, p. 20-21). Thus, the students enhance their vocabulary bank and use it immediately to express their own notions and reflections.

And lastly, after discussing the methods used to create an efficient narrative, the students might be asked to actively participate in the storytelling. The character of the medium makes it possible for the students to analyse and practice several narrative techniques such as dialogue writing, narration and creating an ending (Gallo and Weiner, 2004, p. 117).

These activities do not necessarily need to include only the process of writing. The students may also design several panels for the story or enact the ending together, thus practicing the interconnection of several means to transfer information.

4.3. The Visual Meaning and Multimodality

As hinted above, authors sometimes do tend to view graphic novels as a means to bring students closer to more serious reading, though they often mention the special visual quality of the medium. However, there is every reason to consider graphic novels to be a distinct genre of literature. Rice emphasizes that it sometimes took her even more effort to read a graphic novel than to read a prose and describes the need to teach her students how to read the panels before being able to focus on benefiting from the story itself (Rice, 2012, p. 38, 41) and Graham argues for the inclusion of the medium to help students understand contemporary art and "postmodern notions of picture making" (Graham, 2008, p. 10). Indeed the visual format is often hard to accommodate oneself to and requires very different means of reading. Not accepting these singular qualities of graphic novels limits the possibilities of their use in education (Jacobs, 2007, p. 20).

Though the author of this thesis would argue that the modern world is "increasingly" visual (Boatright, 2010, p. 469), it is without question that the quantity of information that is delivered to us via visual imagery (especially in combination with both short and longer texts) rises. Therefore, being able to read and analyse these messages consciously is both increasingly important and very difficult. That is because while these messages need to be interpreted just as linguistic texts, the skill itself is different (Lapp et al. 2011, p. 23). Thus, a deliberate practice of this ability in formal education is essential. Planning lessons using this particular aspect of graphic novels helps the student to develop critical thinking as well as new literacies that reflect the need to understand visual texts (ibid, p. 25).

However, the distinction between graphic novels and linguistic texts is not limited only to the addition of visual imagery. Jacobs stresses that comics (and graphic novels) are multimodal texts that make the readers develop literacy "in ways that move beyond a focus on strictly word-based literacy". Multimodal literacy relates textual to spatial, visual, gestural and other layers of reading a text (Jacobs, 2007, p. 21). It is clear that this type of text reflects the requirements that the current society has on people more than a linguistic text.

Education should use graphic novels accordingly so that the lessons incorporate as many of these literacies as possible. For instance, the teacher can bring the students' attention

to the simple visual difference between text boxes and dialogue bubbles, the students may explain how the lettering influences their perception of a character's voice or mood or a more general description of how does the surrounding influence the story might be in order (Jacobs, 2007, p. 22-23). These and other aspects of multimodality could be approached from two perspectives. The students' focus can either be brought to these particular aspects in advance or the teacher can ask them about their general perception of the panels and what is in them and then ask them where they got that impression from. By consistently stressing the overlapping of text, image and other elements of the narrative, the students practice skills that prepare them better for understanding the world.

5. Why use Graphic Novels for the topic of LGBTQ+

This chapter focuses on the particular characteristics of graphic novels (some mentioned in the previous chapter, some emphasized here) that make this genre of literature particularly appropriate for the effective incorporation of LGBTQ+ into lessons. As for the requirements that are put on the lesson plans incorporating this topic, these are drawn from the second chapter of this thesis.

5.1. Common Ground

One of the highlights of graphic novels for education in high schools was that they often use topics that are essential for the students at this age (including gender and sexuality). This characteristic is highly important for two reasons.

First, the fact that gender and sexuality is an essential topic for everyone does not necessarily mean that every student is interested in exploring such topics. For this reason, the interest that graphic novels often cause might be a great help in motivating the students to discuss a topic that might be boring or even discomforting for them. As Clark and Blackburn point out, pleasure is an important (though often neglected) part of the lessons and, if supported, it may bring students to the activity both in and outside the classroom (Clark and Blackburn, 2009, p. 28, 30). Graphic novels that are of high quality may be very pleasurable for the students and thus fulfil this need.

Second, as mentioned above, in order to avoid the dangers of assuming it is advisable to introduce the topic based on the characteristics that the sexual and gender majorities and minorities share rather than those that makes them different. The fact that graphic novels often focus on topics such as alienation and loneliness but also community and support makes them suitable for creating such a basis for discussion.

5.2. Visualizing Sexuality and Gender

The image that is an integral part of a graphic narrative was already discussed. However, there are again some particular benefits that this quality has for the incorporation of sexuality and gender (and possibly the discussion about any aspect of people's identity).

While discussing single stories, this thesis stressed the need to disrupt such stories using controversial and provocative topics (Dodge and Crutcher, 2015, p. 97). If the teacher decides that a particular class shares a sufficiently safe environment and aims at disturbing the students in order not only to disrupt single stories but also prompt discussion about difficult

topics, there are few methods that might be as effecting as visualizing something controversial. Graphic novels that show provocative images (such as homosexual intimacy or a non-binary person menstruating) could accomplish these aims while providing sufficient context for a constructive discussion.

The visual context that graphic novels might offer is another advantage for this topic. Kedley and Spiering describe how graphic novels provide a vast source of details not only about the subtleties accompanying sexuality and gender (such as hair, clothes, gestures etc.) but also about the particular action (possibly gendered) the characters make and their surrounding's reaction towards them (Kedley and Spiering, 2017, p. 55-57). Graphic novels often provide a wealth of details that the students can analyse and interpret in their particular way, which can further support the discussion and ensure that various points of view are provided in the classroom.

5.3. Interaction of the Reader and the Narrative

The graphic novels' quality of provoking via image and containing vast amounts of details that may be interpreted makes them a very effective medium in supporting interaction with the source material and the narrative itself. This makes it possible for the teacher to emphasize and promote the personal aspect of the process of reading and the subsequent discussion, thus supporting the students to explore their own identity and practice communicating their own feelings.

One of the opportunities for a discussion on identity and gender is the fact that graphic novels (and comics) often depict people and their bodies in a hyper-idealized gendered way. Rice points out, that after reading graphic novels, the students were keen on discussing the pictures that over stress the masculinity or femininity of the characters and their inability to achieve these ideals (Rice, 2012, p. 39). Though this aspect is not reflected in the practical part of this thesis because the used material focuses on the non-ideal rather than the ideal body, the issue of gender ideal (especially in superhero comics) might be worth noticing.

Nonetheless, the particular way the images are drawn is of a great importance for this thesis. Although a detailed depiction of the characters may make them more believable at first glance and may contain additional information, characters that are depicted in a simplistic way and do not pay attention to every characteristic details may be more inclusive for the students' own personality because they might feel more natural in seeing themselves at the character's place (Boatright, 2010, p. 472). This quality is perhaps harder to draw on

consciously in the lessons but it definitely has its place implicitly in the lessons focusing on the individual experiences of each of the students.

This individualization of the perception ensures another important impact on the discussion. If each of the students views the narrative and characters in their personal and varied way, their interpretations will very probably be vastly different (Jacobs, 2007, p. 24). The students' and teacher's reading of the text will have their singular characteristics and thus not only ensure that more viewpoints are shared in the discussion (again) but also prompt the discussion and increase the pleasure made out of the activities.

6. The Practical Part – Introduction

The practical part of this thesis presents lesson plans that incorporate the topic of LGBTQ+ primarily by using graphic novels to present it and prompt discussions, a description of the purpose of the lesson plans and means of achieving it and a reflection of their testing. These lesson plans reflect the points made in the theoretical part of this thesis and attempt at making use of the advantages and avoiding the dangers that were presented. Although the theoretical part is aimed primarily at high school students, after considering the circumstances and especially the character of the topic, the author of this thesis has decided to test these lessons with students of a language school high school graduates programme, whom he teaches regularly and thus can be prepared much better to navigate the difficult and controversial topic. This is also why the lesson plans do not follow a 45 minutes long structure that is most commonly used in high schools but an hour and 30 minutes long structure that is used in the said programme.

6.1. Brief Characteristic of the Classes

The lessons were tested in three different classes, each different from the others. In order to make the lesson reflections clear, here is a brief characteristic of the three classes.

Class **A** was a class of people able to communicate effectively in the target language, where most of the students actively participated in the discussions. The topic of gender and sexuality had not often been brought up to discussion prior to the lessons presented in this thesis. However, the students had discussed willingly and sometimes of their own accord the issues of relationships, self-love etc. The students developed a very friendly and safe environment to the point that jokes among students were a commonly appreciated situation and sought to spend time with the author of this thesis outside of the classroom, thus further strengthening the relaxed environment.

Class **B** was a class of people able to communicate effectively in the target language. Most of the students participated actively in the discussions. The class repeatedly brought up the issue of sexuality and gender. Several students actively and visibly challenged the gendered behaviour expected from them and openly discussed their sexuality prior to the lessons tested in this thesis. The students developed a very friendly and safe environment. In some cases vulgar jokes would occur amongst the students closest to each other, which the author of this thesis did not supress because of the openly friendly nature of this behaviour. The students sought to spend time with each other and the teacher outside the classroom

repeatedly (and even in these cases addressed the issues of gender and sexuality amongst others).

Class **C** was a class of people who were able to understand and communicate in the target language on a basic level. Some of the students encountered problems when trying to explain a more complicated idea, but ultimately, with the help of others, they rarely failed. They did not show any interest in the topic of LGBTQ+ or any other deeply personal issue prior to the lessons tested in this thesis. This class had to be motivated the most but was willing to communicate and once their interest was woken up, they participated actively. The students developed mostly friendly atmosphere and the students felt good working in small groups. However, it was needed for the teacher to lead the lessons carefully in order not to disrupt the relationships in the class as a whole. Some of the students did show an interest in discussing some topics outside the classroom. Nonetheless, these cases were rare.

The lesson plans were the same for all the classes. The greatest differences were in the discussions which were counted on but not planned as far as the content went. The variety and depth of these topics differed based on the particular class as well as the overall tone of communication and the extent to which were the students willing to share their personal ideas and experiences.

At no point did the teacher make any inquiries as for the sexual and/or gender identity or experience of the students. Any information that the students have shared, they shared either on their own accord or after being asked by a classmate (the teacher has made sure that there was no pressure to answer these question if the students did not feel safe doing so).

7. *Gender/Queer* – Identity and the World

The lessons presented in this chapter are based on Maia Kobabe's graphic memoir *Gender/Queer* (2020). The book follows Kobabe's search for eir sexual and gender identity throughout eir childhood, adolescence and adult life. E presents not only many of the possible causes of people's disillusionment with the gender and sexual binaries but also many metaphors describing eir struggle and basic information on queer people in general and not just eir own identity (e/em/eir are so called Spivak pronouns introduced by American mathematician Michael Spivak and used by the author of the graphic memoir in question).

Parts of this graphic novel are used to explore one's own identity, how its development reflects the world and how people might reflect their identity upon other people and the world.

7.1. First Lesson (Introduction – Symbols and General Experience)

7.1.1. First Lesson – Lesson Plan

Lesson aim: Students are able to interpret visual symbolism in a graphic novel. Students are able to discuss the experience of a LGBTQ+ person based on reading a memoir.

1) Warm-up discussion

Teacher asks these questions: Are symbols important in our lives? Why? What are the most important symbols that we use? Why?

Activity length: 5-10 min

2) Picture analysis (Appendix 1 – a page with an erased text)

Students receive the picture and analyse it in pairs or small groups based on these questions: What do the symbols mean? What does the picture aim to present? Why do you think so?

Activity length: 10-15 min

3) Mind-map

After subsequent discussion aimed to present the topic of gender, the students are asked to create a mind-map of the term "gender". The teacher then draws a collective mind-map on the board based on the students' suggestions. If needed the teacher adds some terms to the mind-map (such as cisgender or straight) and explains them.

Activity length: 10 min

4) Introducing the character (author) Maia Kobabe

The students are asked to use the internet and search for some information about Maia Kobabe. After the students find some information, the teacher discusses her gender and points out the pronouns needed to use to talk about Kobabe (e/em/eir), unless the students do not bring up this topic themselves. The students are asked to make sure they use these pronouns whenever they talk about her.

Activity length: 5 min

6) Group reading (see Appendices 2-4)

The students work in groups of three (or four if needed). The teacher sends them three sets of pages to read via a common chat (each set is three pages long). Each student in the group reads one set of pages. After the reading, the students discuss these questions in the group: What does the character struggle with? Are there any similarities between what e struggles with and what straight/cisgender people feel? What interested you the most about the part you read?

Activity length: 15-20 min

7) Worksheet (Appendix 5)

Students write down feelings and wishes that Maia has about herself into the leaves of the plant. The worksheets are then gathered and spread on two or three tables with the original page (Appendix 6) with the text handwritten by the teacher. The students then look through the filled in worksheets and guess which page is the original. After the teacher points out the original, a class discussion about the activity (and possibly the whole lesson) follows.

Activity length: 20-30 min

7.1.2. First Lesson – Presentation

The first lesson focuses on introducing the whole concept of a gender that does not fit the binary male/female division as well as the process of reading a graphic novel as a unique medium.

The students are at first brought to focus on symbols in our lives, their importance and function via a general question, before they know the topic of the lesson. Thus, when they are

shown a page from the graphic novel symbolizing the gender binary and a possible third option, they already approach it in terms of using symbols. Through this analysis the topic of gender and queerness is brought up. It is also possible that discussions about femininity, masculinity and their symbols (moon and sun respectively) or other topics connected to gender emerge during the discussion.

The teacher then expands on the discussion by asking the students to create a mind-map based on the term "gender". The students are supported to use the internet if needed. Via this activity, they are introduced to the basic terminology needed for the subsequent discussions. In this part, they can also raise any question that is relevant to them and discuss it as a class.

The students are then asked to search the internet for information about the author Maia Kobabe. During the search they may find the information that e is non-binary and learn about the pronouns that e uses. These pronouns are emphasized and the students are asked to use them in subsequent discussions.

The group reading that follows this discussion is made to introduce several difficulties that the author faced while discovering eir gender as well as prompt a discussion about the difficulties in smaller groups so that the students do not feel uncomfortable sharing their views with the whole class (while practicing the neutral pronouns which are required). Throughout the group discussion, the teacher evaluates the need for and possibility (based on the time limit of the lesson) of a class discussion in order to share some general approaches towards the topic.

In the last part of the lessons, the students are put in front of the difficult task of interpreting and expressing the experience that they believe the author has lived. This may enhance not only their communication skills but also their understanding of the topic. However, it is necessary to share these interpretations as well as to point out the original text in order to avoid the danger of assuming and stress the diversity and value of individual experience.

7.1.3. First Lesson – Reflection

In the opening discussion about symbols in our lives, the students often started with discussing signs and symbols in our everyday signs such as street signs or company logos. All the classes mentioned a flag as an important symbol of a state and Ukrainian flag as a symbol

on social sites was also discussed (the lesson was tested in March 2022). The teacher then made inquiries about the meaning of such symbols and some suggestions were made. After a short discussion about the interpretations, students analysed a page from the graphic novel (Appendix 1). The symbols of masculinity and femininity were pointed out immediately. All the classes have also mentioned the Moon and the Sun as symbols and interpreted it. In class B one of the students pointed out that the "female" tree does not have leaves in contrast with the "male" tree and found that "weird" although she understood the need to make a contrast between the two trees. A discussion about alternatives to create contrast followed. All of the classes have guessed the topic of the lesson (non-binary gender).

The introduction of the author was always very fast (the students immediately found the author's Instagram account, thus finding out about eir gender). None of the students have protested against the need to use the neutral pronouns though some students felt a need to point out that they might make a mistake. They were subsequently ensured that as long as they try to correct themselves it is alright to make a mistake. Throughout the lesson, the students made mistakes in the pronouns very often. However, they either corrected themselves immediately or were corrected by their classmates. By the end of the lesson, students were using the pronouns much more naturally.

The group reading (Appendices 2-4) was successful in prompting a discussion in the groups. Each of the students had a new insight into the struggles of the author and so they could discuss various aspects of eir experience. Thus, the students could point out different points of view that the others had not thought of. During the group discussion the teacher has noticed a discussion about the similarity between Kobabe's alienation and struggles with eir identity and the difficulties that many teenagers notice. This question was brought up again during a class discussion. The students have agreed that there are many similar aspects to the experience, but that the struggles with one's own gender adds to the problem both as to the difficulty of the struggles and to the time it takes to make progress in the struggles (both of which can be seen in the excerpts read by the class).

As for the final reflection that used the worksheets based on a page from the book (Appendix 5), the students seemed to have both understood the unique experience that a non-binary person lives and realized the similarities that they share in shaping their own identity. The suggestions included "I don't understand who I am", "what do others want me to feel?" or "I hate my vagina". After being shown the original page (Appendix 6), the students

concluded that they managed to understand the author's struggles during her growing up. However, to some of them the sentence "I never want to have sex" was surprising, probably because this issue was not reflected in the reading sets.

7.2. Second Lesson (Gendered Body)

7.2.1. Second Lesson – Lesson Plan

Lesson aim: Students explore and are able to communicate the way their gender is reflected by the world and vice versa. Students can present a short reflection of their thoughts combining visual and literary components.

1) Warm-up discussion

The teacher asks the whole class whether their gender influences the way they think about themselves and their body. How strong is this influence and in what way are their thoughts about their body influenced.

Activity length: 5-10 min

2) Pair speaking + subsequent class discussion

The teacher writes these questions on the board to discuss in pairs:

"In what way are men's and women's thoughts about their bodies different because of their gender? What aspects of eir body could be the most difficult for Maia to deal with during her growing up? Why?"

Activity length: 10-15 min

3) Reading (Appendix 7) + group reflection of the reading

The students receive one page showing Kobabe experiencing her first menstruation of the story with questions to think about individually:

"What happens to Maia? How does e feel? What is eir initial reaction?"

The students then cooperate in small groups (of 3-4) to draw a picture with a short comment answering the asked questions.

Activity length: 15-20 min

4) Reading (Appendix 8) and discussion

Students are given three pages showing Kobabe's visually controversial dreams. After the reading they first work individually in written form and then in groups to answer these questions:

"What was your reaction to the reading? How does Maia feel? Why does e have such dreams? Was your previous imagining of eir reaction close?"

Activity length: 15-20 min

5) Class discussion

Students are asked what Kobabe's parents' reaction will be when e tells them. It is stressed that at that point neither Kobabe nor eir parents know of eir being non-binary.

Activity length: 5 min

6) Final reading (Appendix 9) and reflection

Students read two more pages showing Kobabe telling eir mother about eir situation and they discuss her reaction.

Activity length: 10 min

7.2.2. Second Lesson – Presentation

In the second lesson, the students are confronted with the issue of people's gender influencing their experience of the world. It does not aim at providing the students with general knowledge of various experiences that are different. Rather than that, it focuses on discussing Kobabe's single experience in more depth.

At the beginning the students start considering the impact that their thoughts about their bodies are influenced by how they approach their gender. This discussion has a potential to include how the world reflects people's bodies and their gender. After that, the students discuss in which way is a non-binary person's experience similar or different to that of a cisgender person. The teacher avoids the assumption that a non-binary person's experience is necessarily different from that of the students present. The discussion is therefore led based on these two general categories unless some students mention their own experience themselves.

During the subsequent reading, the students are introduced to a particular and intensive experience of the author – eir first menstruation. Immediately after the short reading, the students are asked to reflect on Kobabe's experience in groups. Students then communicate their reflection via a combination of picture and short text which further develops their understanding of the interconnection between these two aspects of the medium.

The intensity of the debate is further increased by the next reading that shows Kobabe's dreams connected to eir menstruation. The panels incorporate a lot of blood and a clear representation of Kobabe's fear, thus making the imagery potentially controversial. The students' reflection of the reading does not focus only on their interpretation of Kobabe's experience but also the way they experience the pictures themselves. They have to think about this on their own at first possibly making the reflections more variable and then they share their answers in groups.

The last part of the lesson focuses on the way people's surroundings reflect their particular experience and attitudes towards their body. Pages from the novel focused on Kobabe's parents reacting to her distress are used to start a discussion on the appropriateness of their reaction. This discussion has potential to shift the discussion back to a more general level, focusing on parents and their role in gender development and potentially people's surrounding in general.

7.2.3. Second Lesson – Reflection

The first part of this lesson started prolonged discussions with groups A and B. Both groups focused especially on social and other media portraying human bodies. Group C did mention this topic. However, the students did not discuss extensively among themselves and so the discussion was shortened. Ideas about the ideal of body and the way people's presentation of themselves does not have to be realistic but nonetheless influences self-esteem of other people were discussed.

The pair discussion on Kobabe's own experiencing eir own body introduced mainly ideas of hate towards the parts of her body associated with femininity the most (such as breasts). However, some students pointed out that they sometimes have similar feelings towards their body even though they are not struggling with their gender to this extent. Subsequently, the point that Kobabe's struggles resembled some experiences that cispeople have too even though they were probably more intense and longer.

After the introduction of the topic, some of the students (especially male students) were taken aback when they were asked to discuss Kobabe's experience, because they were not used to talking openly about menstruation. After some hesitation the students started getting used to the discussion, partly thanks to the fact that they discussed the topic in small groups. Furthermore, once the students started working on the visual reflection, their discussion became more natural, likely because the discussion became a means to accomplish their goal.

After the students read the panels incorporating the visual representation of menstruation most of them were taken aback at first. Some students coped with this using humour, some used the moment for their individual reaction to get themselves used to it. When asked, the students replied that they do not consider the topic vulgar or inappropriate but that they are not used to it being presented so openly. The question about their own reaction to the text was the most discussed one. When discussing whether their guess resembled Kobabe's experience, most of the students concluded that it was more or less similar, but some of them did not expect the reaction to be so intensive.

After a short reflection of the previous readings the students were asked to focus on Kobabe's story again. Some of them had problems refocusing from the discussion about their own experience from the reading back to the story. However, the students soon started a discussion on how parents' support in such a situation should look like in general. Students in class B shared their own experience or problems, whereas the other two class collectives found it more comfortable to talk in general terms. The need for support and positive attitude were repeated most often. However, there were some students that suggested that parents should ask Kobabe about eir own feelings from the experience, though the students acknowledged that they suggested it because they understand Kobabe's experience better from the previous readings.

After the last reading the students often discussed this topic further. They mentioned that the parents' reaction was very good but in classes A and B the students questioned whether this reaction does not push Kobabe to positive feelings if e does feel like that. Thus, a discussion as for the appropriateness of a positive attitude in all cases was held. In all classes the students made inquiries about Kobabe's reaction. The teacher has promised to share the next page with the classes after the lessons.

7.3. Third Lesson (Reflecting One's Gender)

7.3.1. Third Lesson – Lesson Plan

Lesson aim: Students understand and are able to talk about the ways that people can reflect their gender upon the world. Students are able to create a character and visually reflect their gender.

1) Warm-up discussion

The students are asked whether the world provides enough possibilities for them to present their view of themselves and their gender. Then the teacher poses the question whether this answer is similar or different for queer people compared to straight/cis people.

Activity length: 10-15 min

2) Group discussion

The students are asked following questions to discuss in small groups: "How can you reflect your gender upon the world? Can you influence the world's approach to your gender? What could Maia do, in eir own situation?"

Activity length: 10-15 min

3) Jigsaw activity (Čapek, 2015, p. 329, 399)

The students are divided into home groups of three people minimum. Then they are asked to remember their home groups and given a number from one to three so that in each group, all three numbers are represented. Then the students with the same number join into their expert groups. These groups are assigned a reading (Appendices 10 – 12) and questions to discuss: "What options of reflecting eir gender does Maia mention? What varieties can such steps have? How important might these steps be for Maia/eir surroundings?"

After making notes about their particular topic, the students return to their home groups and share their newly gained insight with the other members of the group.

Activity length: 25 – 30 min

4) Reflection of the reading

Based on their previous activity, the students are asked to work in pairs or small groups of their own choosing to create a queer character of their own and draw a simple visual

representation of such a character together with basic information about them (their name, gender, likes/dislikes etc.). If possible, these representations are later displayed in the classroom.

Activity length: 10 – 15 min

5) Final reading (Appendix 13)

Students are given last three pages from the graphic novel to read how Kobabe's memoir ends. A final discussion about eir struggles follows.

Activity length: 10 – 15 min

7.3.2. Third Lesson – Presentation

This lesson tries to explore the question of how can people (especially, but not only queer people) reflect their particular feelings towards their gender. During the warm-up discussion the students' focus is brought to this question directly. It is not necessary to come to some particular conclusions. Rather, the students should start thinking about the interconnected relationship between the world people live in and their personal (gender) identity. The subsequent group discussion should explore the topic in more detail and possibly come up with some particular suggestions.

It is possible that the discussion brings up topics such as a hormone therapy or using different pronouns (which the students have been using throughout the lessons). These topics are reflected in the subsequent topic using the jigsaw method. That means that the students can explore several topics into some details in a shorter amount of time via first exploring the topics themselves and then teaching it to others. Before they share their newly gained knowledge they consult this in expert groups so as to have the opportunity to look at the topic from several points of view.

The reading and exploration of the three topics (hormonal therapy and body transformation, pronouns, and clothes and accessories) is then reflected by the students' own creation of a queer character. The students are not given any more instructions as for the identity of the character. They then draw a picture of the character in pairs and add some basic information about the character. The students' creations are then displayed in the classroom so as to make the topic and the variety of representations visible not only to this particular class.

The lesson is ended by reading the ending of the graphic novel. It shows Kobabe's continued struggles. Not with her identity anymore but with her need for this identity to be reflected. If there is sufficient time in the lesson it is possible to discuss the fact that the work with one's own identity is not finished by becoming adult or finding out one's gender/sexual identity.

7.3.3. Third Lesson – Reflection

The start of the lesson seemed very difficult to all the students and a prompting from the teacher was needed in order to make the topic clearer to navigate for the students. However, once the students found a way to approach the question they found many examples for the world being both supportive and oppressive of people's own way to construct their gender identity.

During the discussion in groups the students had time to pick some of the suggestions and explore them further. The students usually concluded that there are vast possibilities for people to find reference of their own gender, usually in literature, popular movies or series, and music. However, they also mentioned regularly that the variability of gender identity and experience is not visible for those who do not seek it. As an example of this, some advertisement were mentioned. As for people's own possibilities to reflect their gender, hormonal therapy was mentioned as well as the gender neutral pronouns that the students had spent a considerable time using at that point. Some of the students spent considerable time discussing the importance of rainbow coloured bags.

Although it was hard for the students to organize themselves into the home and then expert groups according to the teacher's instructions at first, after some time they were able to work hard in order to explore the topics. Thanks to the nature of the method, they could not only learn about various topics quickly but also discuss their viewpoints with many of their colleagues (while being assisted by the teacher) and thus better shape their understanding of the issue. Contrary to the expectations of the teacher, almost none of the students found the importance of the pronouns for the identity of queer people stranger than that of a body transformation or clothes. In classes A and C, some of the students even spent some time discussing the feelings they got from various gender neutral pronouns.

Once the students started working on their queer characters and their visual representation, most of them found it more natural to start with the visual and then discuss the basic information that would accompany the character. The students that seemed most

invested in the activity claimed that they approached the character as based on themselves. Therefore, the characters reflected their own approach to their gender though it was not necessarily their exact representation. Some of the students (especially in group B) even commented their own creation in order to explain their attitudes towards the topic. When told about the possibility to display their works, few students felt uncomfortable to have their drawings visible for anyone to see and therefore, their works were not displayed.

After the final reading, none of the groups were particularly interested in discussing the ending of the novel although they agreed that it is both interesting and important to notice how Kobabe has struggled even after coming to terms with her identity. This might have been because of the lesson was nearing its end or because the lesson plan did not include any discussion in small groups. However, rather than discuss the topic extensively, the reading aimed at introducing another problem for the students to ponder individually.

8. *How to Be Ace?* – Identity and Relationships

This chapter presents lessons incorporating Rebeca Burgess's graphic novel *How to Be Ace?* (2021). Just as the previous graphic novel, *How to Be Ace?* is a memoir following Burgess through her childhood and adolescence up to the point in which she was writing the novel. However, she does not focus on her gender as much as her sexuality, or rather asexuality. The novel is an in-depth exploration of Burgess's struggles connected not only to her asexuality but also to her other anxieties and phobias as well as a guide to understanding what asexuality is.

Burgess's lack of understanding of the need to form sexual relationships makes this novel a suitable source for the exploration of people's identities and lives affecting and being affected by their relationships. The lessons focus on the issues of a need for relationships in order to be happy, the effect people's different understanding romance and sex may have on their various relationships and a possible end-goal of people's forming a relationship (or lack thereof).

8.1. Fourth Lesson (Introduction to Asexuality and Happiness)

8.1.1. – Fourth Lesson – Lesson Plan

Lesson aim: Students are aware of the extent to which our culture reflects our need for relationships and are able to discuss/question it. Students are able to write a short response to a person's worries about their being alone.

1) Warm-up discussion

The students are asked to close their eyes and evaluate the importance of relationships for people's lives by showing their fingers above their head (one – not important, five – very important). Then they open their eyes and can look at other students' answers. A short discussion about their answers follows.

Activity length: 5-10 min

2) Pair discussion

The students are asked these questions: "How important for our happiness are sexual and/or romantic relationships? What parts of our lives reflect/assume our need for these relationships? Which do not?"

Activity length: 10-15 min

3) Reading (Appendix 14)

The students are given a four-page reading introducing Burgess and her struggles with not understanding the need for a sexual relationship. After the reading they are given these questions to discuss in pairs: “Meet Rebecca. What is she like? Does she struggle with anything? Why?”

Activity length: 10-15 min

4) Reading reflection

The students are asked to answer Burgess’s questions from the text individually in a written form: “How am I supposed to do something like sex when I don’t really know how? Why is sex such a big deal? Maybe I just don’t like boys my age, [right?]” After they are done, they discuss their answers in pairs.

Activity length: 10-15 min

5) Discussion about the character’s phobias

The students are given three more pages to read (Appendix 15). The teacher points out that Burgess mentioned a therapist and a phobia and asks them what she meant by that. A short discussion follows.

Activity length: 10 min

6) Finding out the answer

After another reading (Appendix 16) showing that Burgess’s phobia is not connected to her asexuality, the students discuss whether they were right, what the problem is and whether it is connected to Burgess’s struggles with not understanding other people’s need for sexual relationships, first in small groups and then with the whole class.

Activity length: 10 min

7) Final reading (Appendix 17) and reflection

The students are given one page from the novel, showing Burgess’s doubts. They first discuss her feelings and their understanding of it in pairs and then individually write a short letter to her with whatever that they would like to tell her.

Activity length: 15 min

8.1.2. Fourth Lesson – Presentation

This lesson introduces the need for romantic and/or sexual relationships that is assumed by most aspects of the people's surroundings. This issue is brought up slowly by asking the students to evaluate the need for relationships in general. Thus, they might mention that relationships are important for life. The subsequent pair discussion aims at the students exploring the need for romantic and/or sexual relationships more rationally and through focussing on what does the world expect them to behave like. It is very probable that the question focusing on aspects of the world that do not reflect or assume people's need for relationships confronts the students with how hard it is to find such an aspect.

The first reading of this lesson introduces Burgess's struggle. The teacher needs to introduce the fact that the main character is the author shortly before the reading. The questions attached to the reading prompt the students to think about asexuality. It is probable that the students already know of asexuality but if this was not the case, the students are advised to use the internet for some basic information. They are also asked to "communicate" with the character. This way the students might explore their progress in understanding the problem and the character since they might at first write a well-meant but simplistic and general advice. However, later in the lesson these answers may become more accurate and individual.

The subsequent reading and discussion tries to have the students come up with an explanation for Burgess's needing a therapist and feeling bad in general. The students might come up with suggestions that mostly incorporate her asexuality as the main actor (given that the lesson focuses on this issue extensively). These suggestions are shortly discussed but not supported or disproved.

It is the role of the next reading to stress that Burgess's phobias might not be connected with her asexuality and thus the reader has to consider her as an individual. Discussion about whether the students were right or wrong in their suggestions has a great potential to open up the issue of people judging asexuals (or other gender and sexual minorities) based on this single aspect of their identity instead of thinking of them as complex individuals.

The last page that the students read shows Burgess being afraid of having to face her problems throughout her life alone. The students read this individually and if they wish, they can discuss Burgess's feelings in pairs. However, the last reflection – a letter sent to Burgess in reaction to her fears and struggles – is written individually and without subsequent discussion.

8.1.3. – Fourth Lesson – Reflection

As expected, in the first part of the lesson, most of the students valued the importance of relationships for our happiness very high. Very few students raised less than three fingers. However, in the following discussion, the students talked mostly about friendship as their most valued form of relationship. When asked to discuss sexual and romantic relationships in pairs, the students did mention that it is important but did not think that it is essential for people's being happy, they also emphasized friendship as part of such a relationship.

As for the students' suggestions for the world reflecting or assuming peoples' need for relationships, they were able to find great numbers of ways it does this but most of them were surprised that it is so hard to find some aspects of our lives that do not reflect it. Some of the suggestions included people's education or hobbies. Nonetheless, it was mentioned that from certain points of view, even these are questionable.

After introducing the graphic novel the students were quick to guess the topic of the lesson and showed a considerable knowledge of what asexuality is. Wherever the students lacked understanding of the topic there were students who could explain the issue to their colleagues. The students' answers to Burgess's questions were not shared.

The students' discussion about Burgess's need for a therapy and her phobia was not entirely focused on her asexuality. However, it was repeatedly mentioned as a possible cause for her anxieties and struggles with her own identity. When they were confronted with Burgess's own explanation of her phobia most of the students acknowledged that their assessment of Burgess's situation might have been influenced by their overstressing her asexuality. However, in groups A and C, some students mentioned that her phobia could have a connection to her asexuality (or the other way around). This led to a discussion amongst the students with the conclusion that it cannot be proved or disproved but that it is not possible to assess Burgess's situation solely through the lenses of her asexuality; especially since many people struggle with similar phobias.

The students' final letters to Burgess were not read and were left for the students themselves to evaluate. When asked, most of the students said that their letters were little different in nature from their answers to Burgess's questions but that they were more detailed and reflected the students' own personalities more. It might because of the students' better understanding of Burgess's character.

8.2. Fifth Lesson (Asexuality and Personal Relationships)

8.2.1. Fifth Lesson – Lesson Plan

Lesson Aim: The students are able to discuss the impact that asexuality has on people's various relationships. The students are able to create a short scene depicting asexual characters.

1) Warm-up discussion

The students are asked what parts of their lives are affected by their gender or sexual identities, possibly how and why.

Activity length: 5-10 min

2) Small groups discussion

The teacher gives the students these questions to discuss in small groups: "Does our sexuality influence only our sexual and romantic relationships? What other relationships does it influence and how?"

Activity length: 10-15 min

3) Jigsaw (Čapek, 2015, p. 329, 399)

The students are divided into home groups and given numbers again. However, unlike in second lesson, the students are first given the reading (Appendices 18-20) and the questions and after answering the questions they join the other members of their expert groups and discuss their answers. After they have discussed the answers, they go back to the home groups and present their topic.

The topics are: Friendship, Romantic relationship, and Relationship to oneself

The questions ask about how asexuality can influence the given relationship and whether there are any similarities or differences with people who are interested in sexual and romantic relationship.

Activity time: 25-35 min

4) Discussion

The students are asked whether asexual people have to go through such difficulties when forming different relationships and how this problem might be influenced. After some suggestions, the students read another two pages (Appendix 21) and continue with the discussion in small groups.

Activity time: 10-15 min

5) Final reflection

The students are divided into random groups and they then cooperate to create a scene from a story of their own making (textual, visual or both), showing asexual characters in a conversation.

Activity time: 15-20 min

8.2.2. Fifth Lesson – Presentation

The students are brought to focus on the impact people's gender or sexuality may have on their lives. Unlike in most previous lessons, this lesson puts stress on people's surroundings being affected by their identity. In their pair discussion, the students focus on various relationships, exploring how people's asexuality may influence not only sexual relationships but also the relationships that do not primarily include sex and/or romance

After discussing their suggestions and views, the students work individually and then in expert groups in order to explore Burgess's own experiences concerning these three varieties of relationships. In this way the students are sure to not only have time to express their own opinions but also confront them with many others. This way, the students might produce a high variety of views, making the complexity of such relationships clear and averting the dangers of assumption. The discussions in groups and possibly a short classroom discussion might also have potential open up the topic of interconnectedness of sexuality and

gender, and relationships that are not directly connected to these categories thus increasing awareness about the relevance of exploring and shaping one's gender and sexual identity.

This discussion leads to the issue of whether such struggles are unavoidable for asexuals (and possibly other sexual or other minorities) which is raised by the teacher. Since it is very probable that the students agree there might be some solutions to this problem, the discussion aims at exploring any suggestions quickly. After the discussion the students read two pages showing Burgess talking about asexuality in culture (Appendix 19), which will probably lead to a discussion about asexuality in popular media. The students might also ask about Burgess mentioning a girlfriend. If so, the teacher may explain the part of the story in question because it is not important for this information to remain unknown.

In the final part of the lesson, the students cooperate in random groups to create a short scene potentially combining text and image. This not only further enhances their creative abilities and potentially the understanding of the graphic medium but also forces them to view actively shape a world – although imaginary – where asexuality is not potentially harming to relationships.

8.2.3. – Fifth Lesson – Reflection

After the start of the debate about gender and sexuality affecting people's lives, the students were fast to remember the discussions about Kobabe's being non-binary and its impact on eir life. Thus, a fast and productive brainstorming followed in all of the groups. However, after posing the question on relationships some of the students (especially in group C) doubted that gender or sexual identity might have a great impact on other than romantic and/or sexual relationships at first. Nevertheless, after the pair discussion ended and this topic was reflected in a classroom discussion, there were always students who could argue for these aspects of identity influencing every kind of relationship.

Therefore, during the Jigsaw activity, the students had already accepted and thought about the interconnectedness of sexuality with other personal aspects of people's lives. During the various stages of the activity, the students have focused on the issues of other people not expecting their friends being uncomfortable with things connected to intimacy for the majority. The students were sometimes surprised that Burgess had from a certain point of view similar problems with forming friendship as with forming a sexual or romantic one.

The following discussion about the possibilities in making these problems better was largely led with the focus on communication and the need to both share one's feelings and needs, and to be supportive and understanding of the needs of others. Some students have also pointed out that in order for this to happen, people have to be aware that these issues are common and that it is not something marginal.

The final reading opened up the discussion about some works in popular culture and to what extent the creators should be made to include such topics in their work. In all three classes this started a debate about the extent to which it could and should be controlled without any clear conclusion. After a short debate, the students have agreed that it is a difficult problem and that while the presence of asexuality and other sexual and gender minorities in popular media is important, it should not be forced upon the creators.

During the final creative task, the students had problems with coming up with a basis of the scene. This was probably because of the lack of instructions which might have been more fixed, thus making it easier for the students to start working. Some students have also pointed out (mostly as a joke) that the teacher is forcing them to write about something, exactly as was discussed in the previous debate. This issue was discussed with the whole class.

8.3. Sixth Lesson (Labels, Community and Final Reflection of the Topic)

8.3.1. Sixth Lesson – Lesson Plan

Lesson Aim: Students are aware of the need to shape one's own identity throughout one's life and can discuss this need. Students are able to create a short comics story in groups depicting a selection of themes important for the topic of LGBTQ+.

1) Warm-up discussion

The teacher asks the class what they think that labels do with people's identities and lives in general.

Activity length: 5-10 min

2) Pair discussion

The teacher gives the students this question to discuss in pairs: "What might be the end-goal for asexuals? Is there any? Are "labels"/names important for that?

Activity length: 10-15 min

3) Reading (Appendix 22)

Students read two pages from the story and then discuss in small random groups what Burgess feels like and why, and whether moments like those depicted are important only for sexual and gender minorities or also for other people.

Activity length: 10 min

4) Final reading (Appendix 23)

The students are given the information that has found a girlfriend with whom she feels comfortable and can share intimate moments. Then the students read final 10 pages of the story not having to focus on any particular topics or questions in advance.

Activity length: 10-15 min

5) Final reading discussion

The students are asked these questions: “What are Rebecca’s feelings at the end of the novel? What are yours feeling from the reading?

Activity length: 5-10 min

6) Individual brainstorming

The students are asked to think back to all the lessons about Kobabe and Burgess and brainstorm the most interesting thoughts they got from these lessons.

Activity length: 5 min

7) Final Creative Task

The students are then asked to form groups of 3-4 people, discuss their suggestions and then create a short comic story incorporating several these suggestions as themes. It should depict either Kobabe or Burgess meeting a person struggling with their identity and talking to them. However, if the students wish, they can digress from the instructions if the general thought of the task remains the same.

8.3.2. Sixth Lesson – Presentation

The beginning of the lesson aims at provoking the students to a negative reaction to the word label since it is commonly used with negative connotations. However, the students are then prompted to consider the possible positive effect of finding a name for one's feelings or identity and thus "labelling" oneself in a revealing and positive way.

Another difficult question for the students is the possible "end-goal" of asexual people. While under influence of the story so far, depicting Burgess's struggles to come to terms with herself, one might believe that after accepting her identity the story of her struggles ends, shaping one's identity is a never-ending process for everyone, not only sexual or gender minorities. However, this is a good point for the students to remember the ending of Kobabe's memoir.

The subsequent reading is rather long (10 pages) however, it is the last reading in this series of lessons and therefore the students might be willing to consider a larger amount of information about the character. After the reading a general discussion about the character's and the students' feelings follows possibly opening any issued that the students might yet have in mind. The length of this discussion might be influenced by the students' interest.

The last part of the lesson is focused extensively on the students own creative reflection of the whole six lessons. The students do not only present the extent to which they understand the topic and their views of the topic but also their understanding of the graphic medium and their ability to convey meaning through a combination of text and image, thus providing a convenient ending for the series of lessons using graphic novels to teach about LGBTQ+.

8.3.3. Sixth Lesson – Reflection

As expected, the first part of the lesson provoked students to a negative reaction. The students argued for the highly harmful nature of labelling. The discussions were led in a very constructive way. In class A, some of the students pointed out the fact that it might be important to know one's "label" although they pointed out that they did not like the word.

In the following discussions some of the students explored this issue further. However, the main point of the discussion was the "end-goal" of asexual people. The students broadened this discussion to all gender and sexual minorities. After a short discussion, very few students approached some point in asexual people's lives as an "end-goal".

The reading of the very last ten pages from the novel was something that some of the students had problems with since it required them focusing on it for a longer time without any prompt questions or debates. And while many students had some remarks on the reading Burgess's memoir in general, about half of the students usually did not participate in the discussion. For future final readings it might be necessary to consider prompting the students more.

Nonetheless, the final part of the lesson, focused on the students' creative activity was generally approached in a very positive way. Not only did the students generate a large number of topics (such as "finding yourself", "explaining your identity" or "loving your body"), most of the students got very invested in the creative activity itself. They discussed their short comics extensively and worked both on the visual and the textual part of the comics. They produced very diverse products which showed their understanding of both the graphic medium and the topic of LGBTQ+. In the last short discussion all of the students agreed that their understanding of the topic has improved and a about half of the students thought that the topic was or became important to them.

9. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to present the arguments for teaching about LGBTQ+ in English Language lessons using graphic novels as a distinctive medium that is highly beneficial for the development of particular skills that Czech education aims at. The theoretical part of this thesis presented these arguments in a clear structure focused on both the improvement of understanding the world that the students live in and their values concerned with shaping their own identities throughout their lives.

The practical part presented particular lessons concerned with these topics and trying to achieve these exact moments. Once tested the series of lessons proved to be efficient in enhancing the students' understanding of the topic and their abilities to both read and create a product in the graphic medium. However, in order to achieve the aims presented in this thesis a continual work incorporating a greater variety of sources would be needed.

Bibliography

BARKER, Meg-John a Jules SCHEELE. *Gender: A Graphic Guide*. London: Icon Books, 2019. ISBN 978-178578-452-1

BOATRIGHT, Michael D. Graphic Journey: Graphic Novels' Representations of Immigrant Experiences. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* [online]. 2010, **53**(6), 468-476 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/25614591

CANNARD, Kelly. Embracing CONTROVERSY in the Classroom. *Science Scope* [online]. 2005, **28**(8), 14-17 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/43180695

ÇELIK, Servet, Kenan DIKILITAS, Esim GÜRSOY a Yasemin KIRKGÖZ. *Approaches and Principles in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Education*. 3rd ed. Ankara: Vizetek, 2020. ISBN 978-605-7523-35-8.

CLARK, Caroline T. a Mollie V. BLACKBURN. Reading LGBT-Themed Literature with Young People: What's Possible?. *The English Journal* [online]. 2009, **98**(4), 25-32 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40503257

ČAPEK, Robert. *Moderní didaktika: lexikon výukových a hodnoticích metod*. Praha: Grada, 2015. Pedagogika (Grada). ISBN 978-80-247-3450-7.

DODGE, Autumn M. a Paul A. CRUTCHER. Inclusie Classrooms for LGBTQ Students: USING LINKED TEXT SETS TO CHALLENGE THE HEGEMONIC "SINGLE STORY." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* [online]. 2015, **59**(4), 95-105 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/44011221

FREY, Nancy a Douglas FISHER. Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet in an Urban High School. *The English Journal* [online]. 2004, **93**(3), 19-25 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: https://doi.org/10.2307/4128804

GALLO, Don a Stephen WEINER. Bold Books for Innovative Teaching: Show, Don't Tell: Graphic Novels in the Classroom. *The English Journal* [online]. 2004, **94**(2), 114-117 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: https://doi.org/10.2307/4128863

GONZALEZ, Maru. ADVOCACY FOR AND WITH LGBT STUDENTS. *Theory Into Practice* [online]. 2016, **20**(1a), 38-46 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: https://www.jstor.org/stable/90014854

GRAHAM, Mark A. Graphic Novels as Contemporary Art? The Perplexing Question of Content in the High School Art Classroom. *Art Education* [online]. 2008, **61**(2), 10-16 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: https://doi.org/10.2307/27696269

HEILMAN, Elizabeth a Jesse GOODMAN. Teaching Gender Identity in High School. *The High School Journal* [online]. 1996, **79**(3), 249-261 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40364723

JACOBS, Dale. More than Words: Comics as a Means of Teaching Multiple Literacies. *The English Journal* [online]. 2007, **96**(3), 19-25 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: https://doi.org/10.2307/30047289

KALHOUS, Zdeněk. *Školní didaktika*. Praha: Portál, 2002. ISBN 80-7178-253-x.

KARTOUS, Bohumil. *No future: vezeme děti na parním stroji do virtuální reality?*. Ilustroval Jáchym Bohumil KARTOUS. Praha: 65. pole, 2019. ISBN 978-80-88268-30

KEDLEY, Kate E. a Jenna SPIERING. Using LGBTQ Graphic Novels to Dispel Myths about Gender and Sexuality in ELA. *The English Journal* [online]. 2017, **107**(1), 54-60 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/26359518

LAPP, Diane, Thomas Devere WOLSEY, Douglas FISHER a Nancy FREY. Graphic Novels: What Elementary Teachers Think About Their Instructional Value. *The Journal of Education* [online]. 2011, **192**(1), 23-35 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/42744005

MŠMT. *Rámcový vzdělávací program pro gymnázia* [online]. 2020 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: https://www.edu.cz/rvp-ramcove-vzdelavaci-programy/ramcove-vzdelavaci-programy-pro-gymnazia-rvp-g/

MOJE, Elizabeth Birr. Developing Socially Just Subject-Matter Instruction: A Review of the Literature on Disciplinary Literacy Teaching. *Review of Research in Education* [online]. 2007, **31**, 1-44 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/20185100

RENN, Kristen A. LGBT and Queer Research in Higher Education: The State and Status of the Field. *Educational Researcher* [online]. 2010, **39**(2), 132-141 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27764565

RICE, Mary. Using Graphic Texts in Secondary Classrooms: A Tale of Endurance. *The English Journal* [online]. 2012, **101**(5), 37-43 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/23269526

SCHRAMM-PATE, Susan L. a Richard LUSSIER. Teaching Students How to Think Critically: The Confederate Flag Controversy in the High School Social Studies Classroom. *The High School Journal* [online]. 2003, **87**(2), 56-65 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40364305

TALBURT, Susan. Constructions of LGBT Youth: Opening up Subject Positions. *Theory Into Practice* [online]. 2004, **43**(2), 116-121 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40984476

VALOCCHI, Stephen. Not Yet Queer Enough: The Lessons of Queer Theory for the Sociology of Gender and Sexuality. *Gender and Society* [online]. 2005, **19**(6), 750-770 [cit. 2022-04-03]. Dostupné z: http://www.jstor.org/stable/27640849

Appendix

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

I DECIDED TO TALK TO MY MOM ABOUT IT.
I know I told you ages ago that I am bi, but I think now that I'm probably genderqueer too?
What do you mean?
Well - I'm still sorting out what it means and how to explain it.
But - like I've never felt female, or identified with being female.
Specifically things like - having breasts or having a period...
No one likes having their period.
I mean - I know -
147

But I feel it goes deeper than that for me? My whole life I've wished for a magical way to switch between genders.
So that you could be male Sometimes?
Sort of, but not exactly. It's more about NOT being female than BEING male.
You don't have to be super-feminine to be a woman - I'm not.
I know.
But like... you don't hate having a vagina, do you?
No, of course not. I hope you don't hate your body!
148

No, I don't hate my body. I don't have chronic pain or any of the other health issues so many of so friends my friends deal with.
The majority of my body is great. There are just ... a few bits I don't like.
For example, if I could just remove my entire reproductive system, that would be ideal.
But what about having kids?
Uhhg, I've told you A HUNDRED TIMES, I am NEVER having children!
I wish you wouldn't say that. You'd be such a good mom.
149

Appendix 3

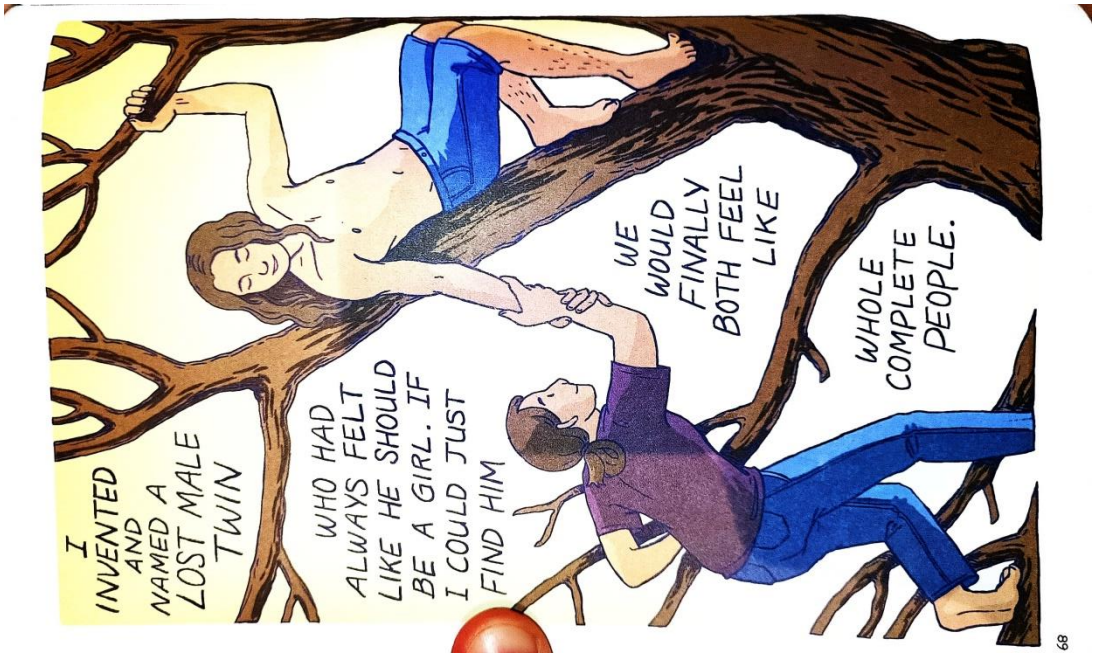
THE MAIN TRAIT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ATTRACTED TO IS ANDROGYNY
WHICH MADE CATEGORIZING MY SEXUALITY DIFFICULT
DID THE GIRL WITH A BUZZ CUT CATCH MY EYE BECAUSE SHE WAS A GIRL OR BECAUSE SHE WAS DRESSED AS A BOY?
WAS IT HIS SEEMINGLY "FEMININE" OR "MASCULINE" QUALITIES THAT DREW ME TO THE LONG-HAIRED BOY IN CHOIR?

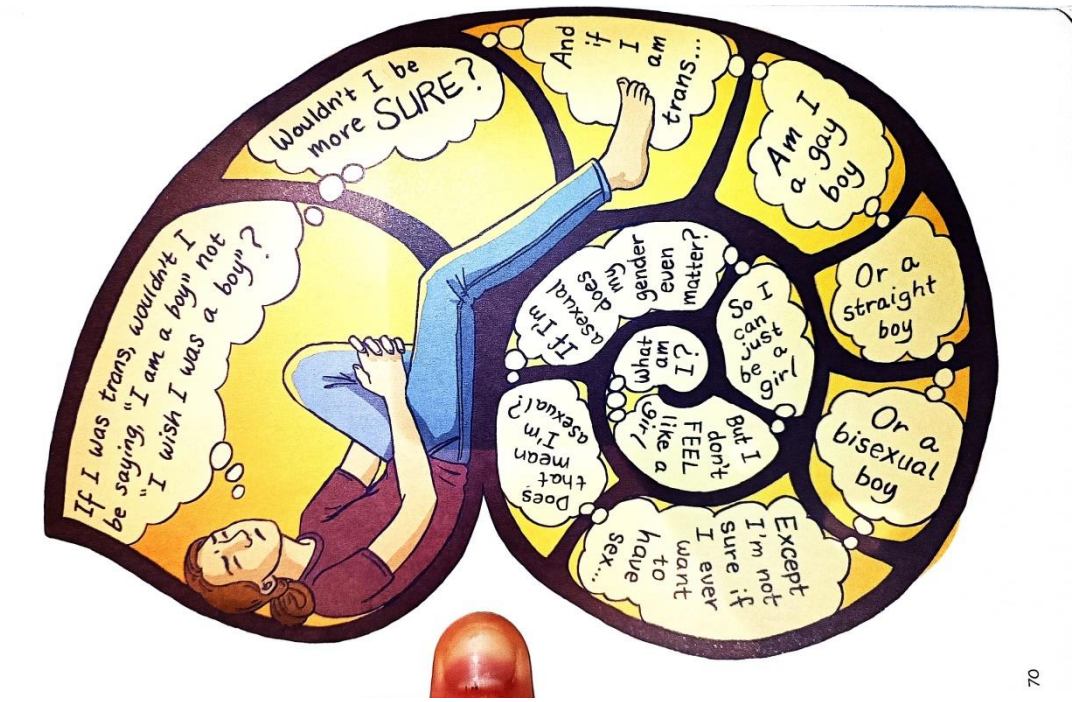
This is the visual I'd been picturing...
But I can't feel anything. This was MUCH HOTTER when it was only in my imagination.
Hey, Z...
Let's try something else.
Of course.
167

FAST-FORWARD: WE'VE BEEN DATING FOR TWO MONTHS. WE'VE MADE OUT, WE'VE HAD SEX, WE'VE MOVED ON TO SEXTING AT WORK.
I got a new strap-on harness today
I can't wait to put it on you it will fit my favorite dildo perfectly
you are going to look SO HOT
WELCOME TO THE LIBRARY
I can't wait to have your cock in my mouth- I'm going to give you the blow job of your life
then I want you inside me
HOLY SHIT
This is the most turned on I've ever been in my life. I am DYING.
BZZZ
BZZZ
166

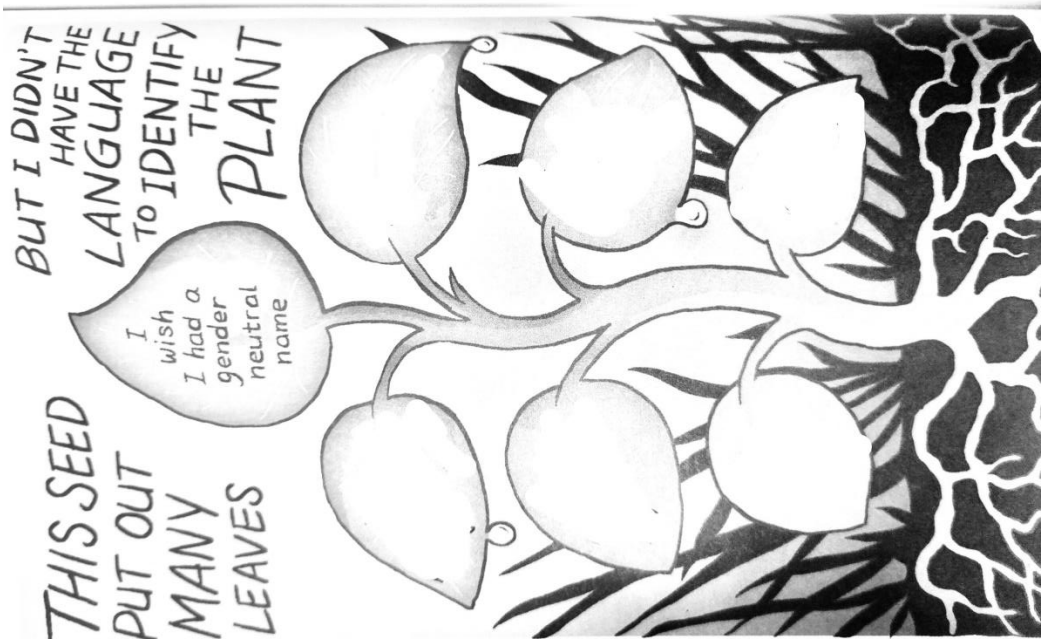
Appendix 4

IN HIGH SCHOOL I BEGAN TO THEORIZE THAT I HAD BEEN BORN WITH TWO HALF SOULS — ONE FEMALE AND ONE MALE.
67


I INVENTED AND NAMED A LOST MALE TWIN
WHO HAD ALWAYS FELT LIKE HE SHOULD BE A GIRL. IF I COULD JUST FIND HIM
WE WOULD FINALLY BOTH FEEL LIKE
WHOLE COMPLETE PEOPLE.
68


If I was trans, wouldn't I be saying, "I am a boy" not "I wish I was a boy"?
Wouldn't I be more SURE?
And if I am trans...
Am I a gay boy
Or a straight boy
Or a bisexual boy
Except I'm not sure if I ever want to have sex...
But I don't FEEL like a girl
What am I?
So I can just be a girl
If I'm asexual does my gender even matter?
Does that mean I'm asexual?
70

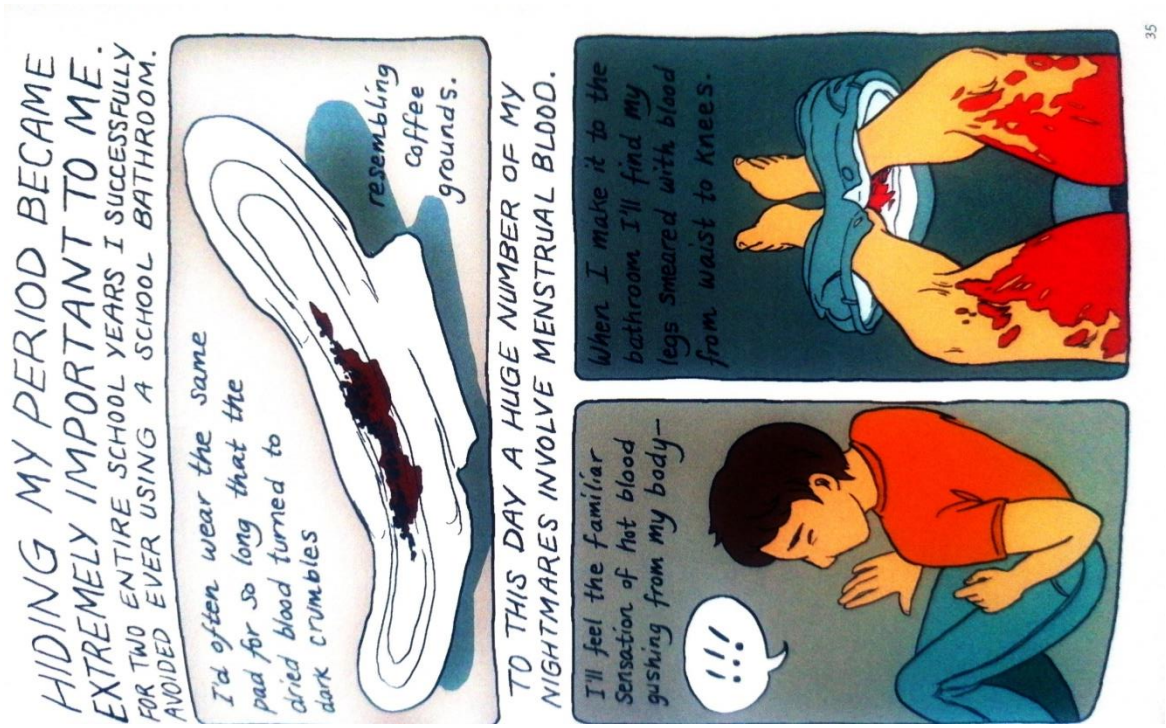
Appendix 5

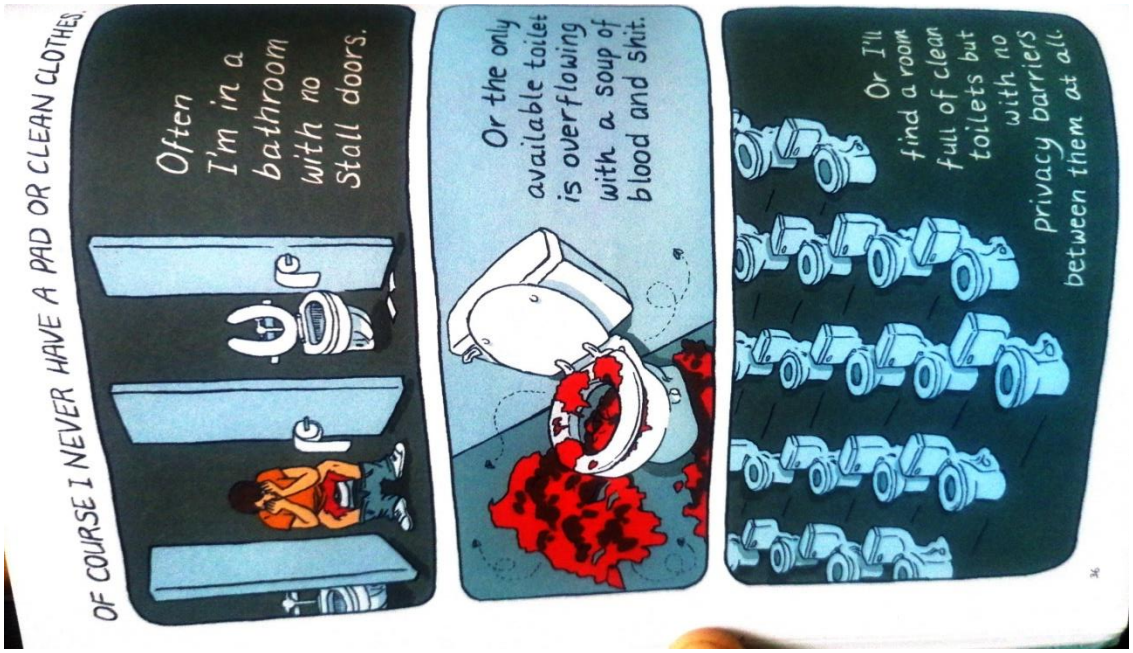

THIS SEED PUT OUT MANY LEAVES
I wish I had a gender neutral name
BUT I DIDN'T HAVE THE LANGUAGE TO IDENTIFY THE PLANT

Appendix 6

Appendix 7

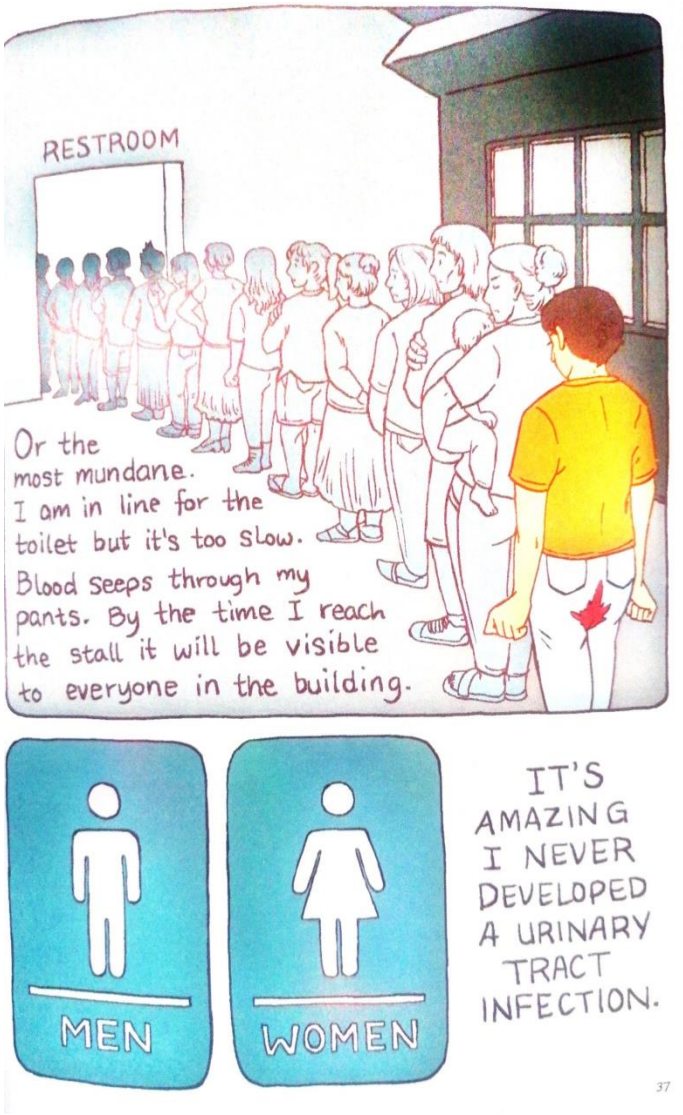
Appendix 8


HIDING MY PERIOD BECAME EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO ME. FOR TWO ENTIRE SCHOOL YEARS I SUCCESSFULLY AVOIDED EVER USING A SCHOOL BATHROOM.
I'd often wear the same pad for so long that the dried blood turned to dark crumbles resembling coffee grounds.
TO THIS DAY A HUGE NUMBER OF MY NIGHTMARES INVOLVE MENSTRUAL BLOOD.
I'll feel the familiar sensation of hot blood gushing from my body—
!!!
When I make it to the bathroom I'll find my legs smeared with blood from waist to knees.
35


OF COURSE I NEVER HAVE A PAD OR CLEAN CLOTHES.
Often I'm in a bathroom with no stall doors.
Or the only available toilet is overflowing with a soup of blood and shit.
Or I'll find a room full of clean toilets but with no privacy barriers between them at all.
36

I TRIED TO HIDE IT AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.
I lined my underwear with toilet paper,
kept quiet about the cramps,
and hid my stained shorts in my bed.
This lasted for three days.
Mom...
What's up sweetpea?
Why are you showing me this...?
32

Appendix 9


RESTROOM
Or the most mundane. I am in line for the toilet but it's too slow. Blood seeps through my pants. By the time I reach the stall it will be visible to everyone in the building.
MEN
WOMEN
IT'S AMAZING I NEVER DEVELOPED A URINARY TRACT INFECTION.
37

Oh!
Did this just start?
A few days ago.
THE NEXT DAY
We love you so much.
We have something we were planning to give you when you turned 12, but this seems like a better time.
?
33

Appendix 10

AT THANKSGIVING IN 2015, MY SISTER BROUGHT HER NEW BOYFRIEND TO STAY WITH ME AND MY PARENTS FOR THE FIRST TIME.
AMILA COORAY
He is:
-An engineer at JPL
-Owner of many Hawaiian shirts
-A lover of camping and dogs
AMILA IS THE FIRST PERSON I'VE WATCHED TAKE TESTOSTERONE.
So your period stopped—?
Months ago.
Wow. Amazing.
174

IN JANUARY, I WORE A BINDER TO WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME
It feels very good to wear it.
But it also feels very good to take it off.
Itchy!
Wearing a binder for too long
makes me feel like I need to shed out of my skin.
212

So, why do you identify as nonbinary rather than as a trans man?
Because really, I want people to be confused about my gender at all times.
I don't want a beard, and I don't want my voice to change.
I don't want MORE gendered traits, I want LESS.
If T magically makes you grow a dick though...
I'll let you know!
175

AS SENIORS IN HIGH SCHOOL, I REMEMBER ALL OF MY CLASSMATES PLANNING WHAT TATTOOS THEY WANTED AS SOON AS THEY TURNED 18.
I want a moon on my wrist!
I'm getting my zodiac sign!
I, too, had a future tattoo picked out: a small Talkien dragon.
I wanted it on my forearm.
A decade later I am still tattoo free.
At 28 I daydream not of tattoos but of top surgery.
213

Appendix 11

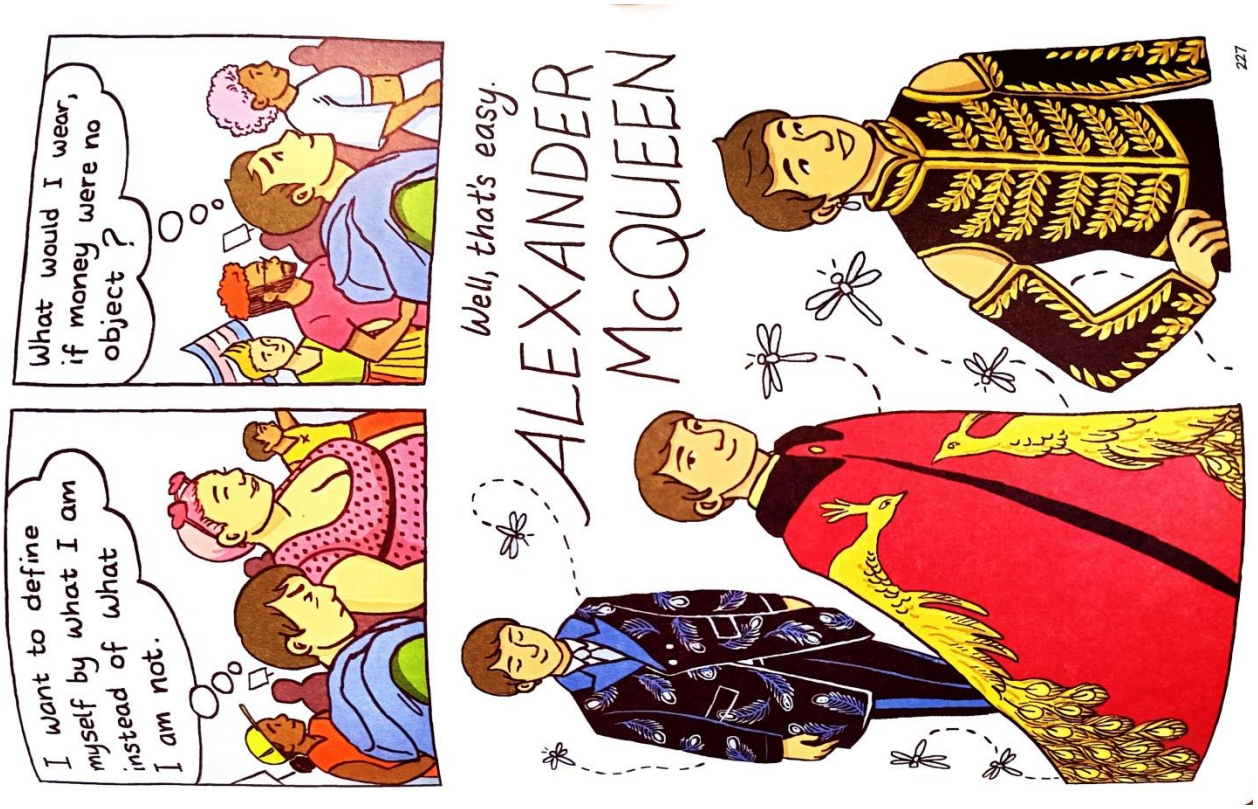
I've been thinking about switching to they/them pronouns but for some reason that doesn't feel quite right.
What pronouns do you use?
I use the Spivak pronouns e, em, eir, as in "Ask em what e wants in eir tea."
E, em, eir?
I LOVE those pronouns! I just got the biggest tingle down my spine.
That was my reaction too!
189

MY FAMILY RECENTLY WELCOMED THE FIRST BABY IN OUR NEW GENERATION.
I can't get over how small he is!
Wow!
My cousin, Josh
His wife, Faith
We were wondering what he should call you once he grows up?
I don't know a good gender-neutral term for "aunt."
Can I be his librarian? Or cartoonist?
Maybe by the time he learns to talk we will have invented some new words!
231

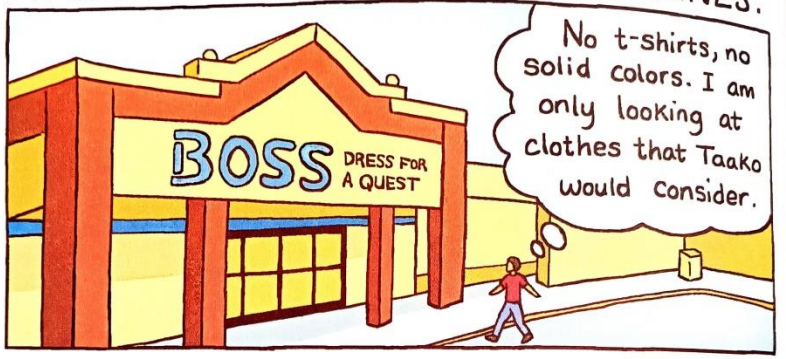
Asking people to start using new pronouns for me seems like such a huge request though...
I know people will mess up, and then what do I do? If I correct someone, will they get mad?
I'd love to use these pronouns but I don't want to inconvenience people...
So instead of asking people to do something to make you feel more comfortable, you'd rather just feel a little uncomfortable all the time?
You'd rather internalize and carry that discomfort every time someone who loves you misgenders you?
Well, when you put it that way...
190

Thank you so much for the email about your pronouns.
I am proud to be part of your family.
And I'm grateful that he will grow up knowing you!
That means the world to me.
232

Appendix 12


I want to define myself by what I am instead of what I am not.
What would I wear, if money were no object?
Well, that's easy.
ALEXANDER McQUEEN
227

IN AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THE HIGH-FANTASY-GAY-WIZARD-PRINCE LOOK OF MY DREAMS, I BEGAN GIVING MYSELF STRICT SHOPPING GUIDELINES.



228

SLOWLY I BEGAN TO COLLECT THINGS THAT FELT QUEER & MAGICAL

229

These days every time I wear a floral out of the house
it feels like a small but meaningful victory.
230

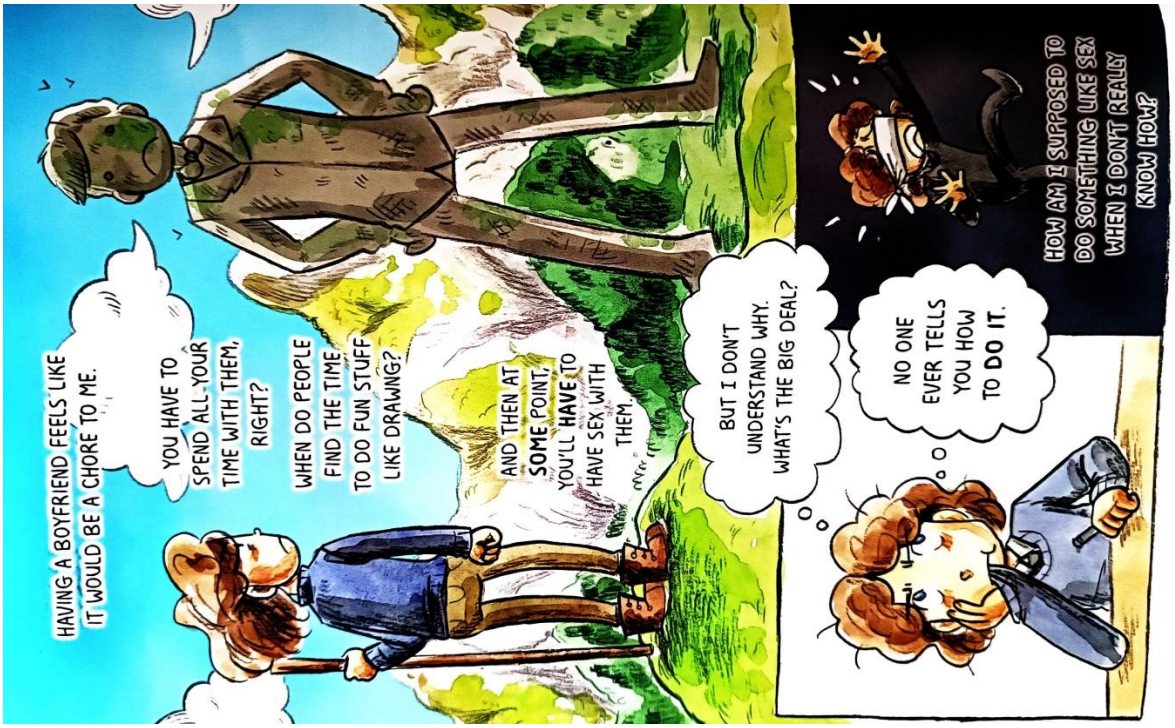
Appendix 13

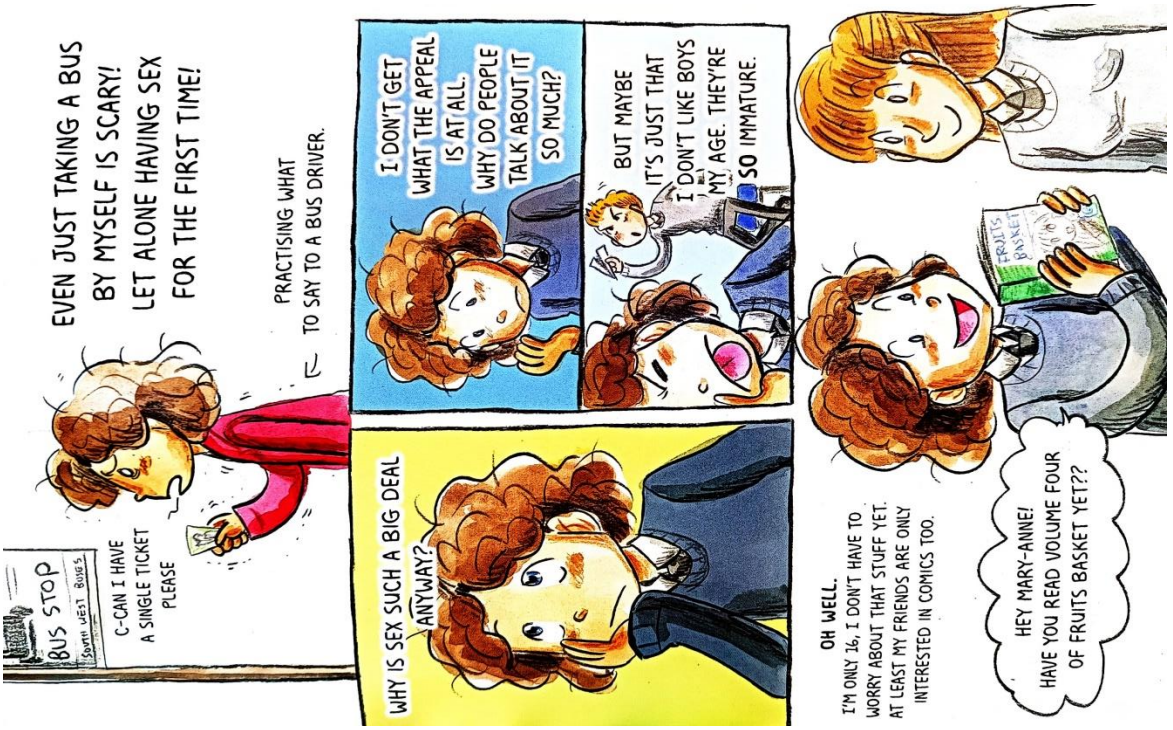
LOOKING AROUND MY CLASS TODAY:
I wonder if any of these kids are trans or nonbinary, but don't have words for it yet?
How many of them have never seen a nonbinary adult?
Is my silence actually a disservice to all of them?
237

Goodbye, take care! Keep drawing comics!
Thank you!
Bye!
Bye!
Having a nonbinary or trans teacher in junior high would have meant the world to me.
Push
Every time I fail to give my pronouns I feel like a coward.
But coming out can still be really scary, even after all this time.
Could a parent complain, and get me fired?
238

Their kids only have me for one day— if the parents hate me, they never have to see me again. And I think the administration would support me.
DRAWING COMICS WITH MAIA KOB
Hi!
I think I'm carrying... more fear than I need.
Hi!
erase
Next time. Next time I will come out.
239

Appendix 14


HAVING A BOYFRIEND FEELS LIKE IT WOULD BE A CHORE TO ME.
YOU HAVE TO SPEND ALL YOUR TIME WITH THEM, RIGHT?
WHEN DO PEOPLE FIND THE TIME TO DO FUN STUFF LIKE DRAWING?
AND THEN AT SOME POINT, YOU'LL HAVE TO HAVE SEX WITH THEM.
BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?
NO ONE EVER TELLS YOU HOW TO DO IT.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DO SOMETHING LIKE SEX WHEN I DON'T REALLY KNOW HOW?

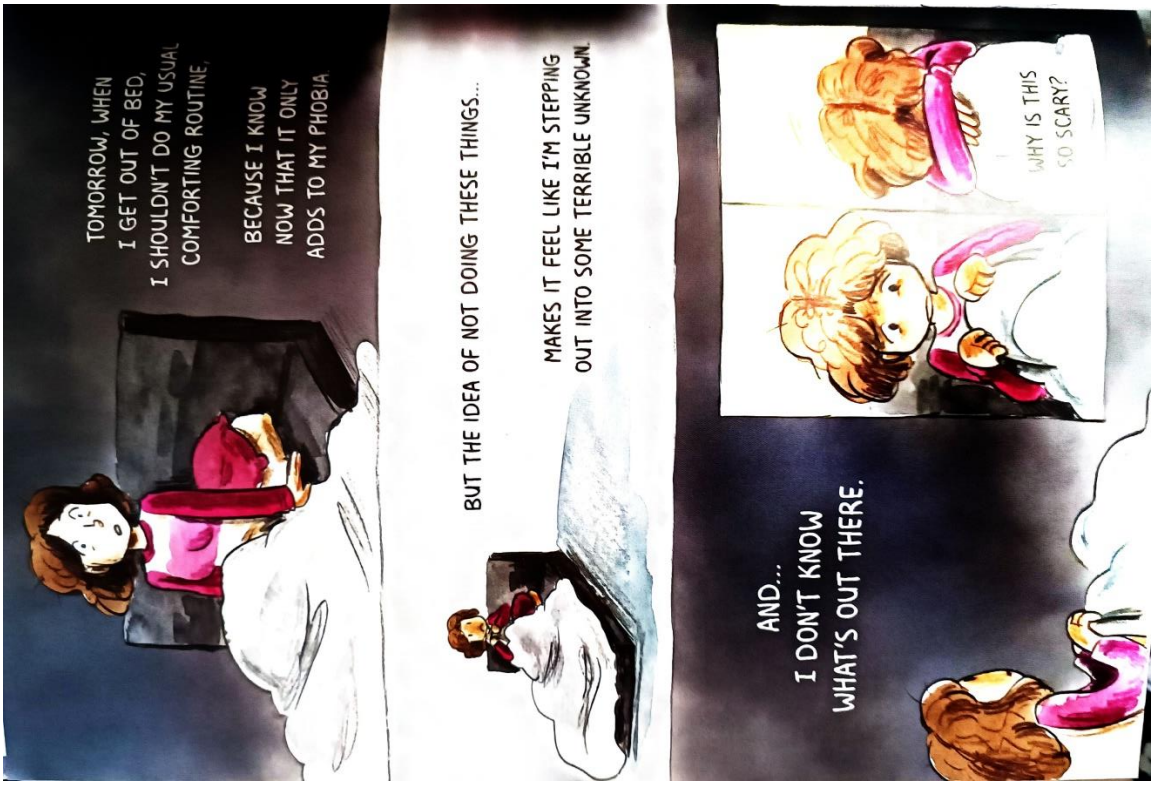

BUS STOP
C-CAN I HAVE A SINGLE TICKET PLEASE
EVEN JUST TAKING A BUS BY MYSELF IS SCARY! LET ALONE HAVING SEX FOR THE FIRST TIME!
PRACTISING WHAT TO SAY TO A BUS DRIVER.
WHY IS SEX SUCH A BIG DEAL ANYWAY?
I DON'T GET WHAT THE APPEAL IS AT ALL. WHY DO PEOPLE TALK ABOUT IT SO MUCH?
BUT MAYBE IT'S JUST THAT I DON'T LIKE BOYS MY AGE. THEY'RE SO IMMATURE.
OH WELL. I'M ONLY 16, I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT STUFF YET. AT LEAST MY FRIENDS ARE ONLY INTERESTED IN COMICS TOO.
HEY MARY-ANNE! HAVE YOU READ VOLUME FOUR OF FRUITS BASKET YET??
FRUITS BASKET

Ahhhh
I'M NOT REALLY SURE WHAT THE BIG DEAL IS, BUT...
OOOH WOW! THAT SOUNDS LIKE A REALLY GOOD COMIC!
WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I ALREADY FELT ENOUGH LIKE A WEIRDO OUTSIDE MY LITTLE FRIEND GROUP.
SO I OFTEN PRETENDED TO LIKE STUFF MY FRIENDS WERE INTO, EVEN IF I DIDN'T REALLY.
I WAS PROBABLY SCARED THAT I'D LOSE MY FRIENDS IF I DIDN'T CONNECT WITH THEM LIKE THAT!
GUY-ON-GUY ACTION IS SUPER HOT!
UH, I GUESS...?

OH, NO...NOT YET.
OH YEAH, I'VE HEARD OF THAT.
BUT I HAVE BEEN READING THIS COOL NEW COMIC!
IT'S CALLED GRAVITATION! IT'S A BOY LOVE COMIC, IT EVEN HAS SEX SCENES IN IT!
EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT HOW IT'S A BOY LOVE COMIC...
BUT WHAT'S THE STORY ABOUT EXACTLY?
OH, IT'S ABOUT A GUY WHO'S TRYING TO BECOME A ROCK STAR.
BUT THEN HE MEETS THIS OTHER GUY AND THINGS GET REALLY STEAMY. BOY LOVE COMICS ARE SO HOT!!

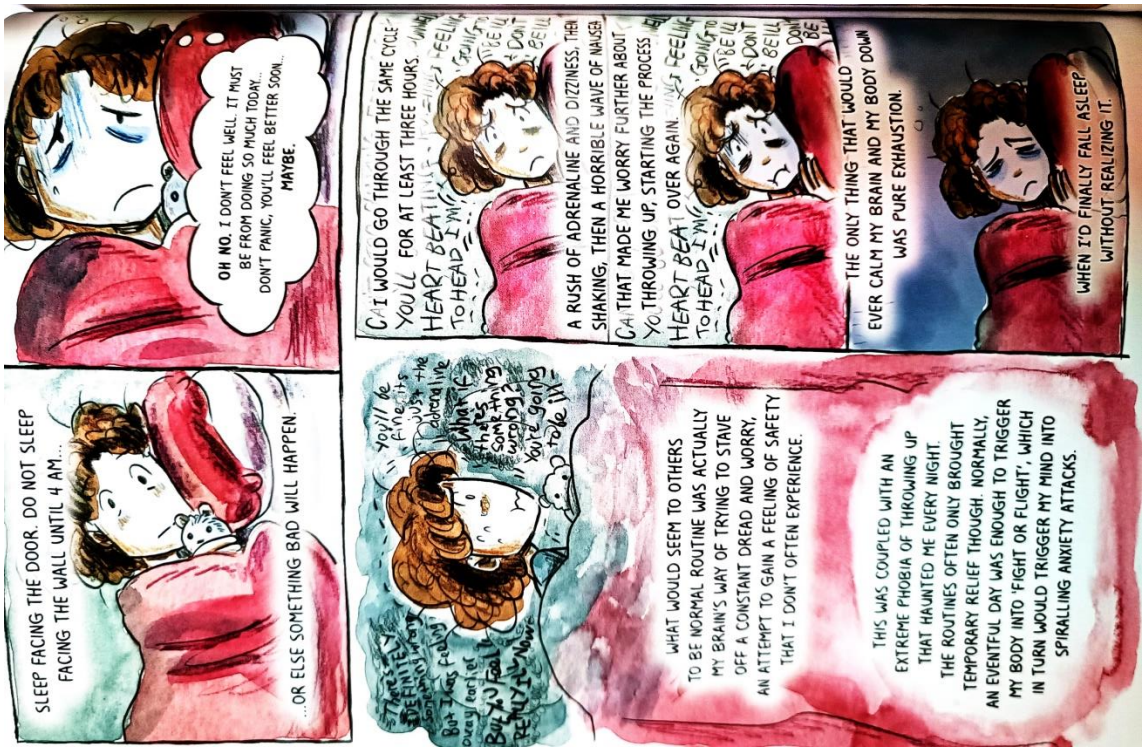
Appendix 15

...I'M JUST NOT READY TO BE PHYSICAL YET.
YEAH, MAYBE THAT'S IT...
IN THE END THOUGH, I KNOW MYSELF BETTER THAN ANYONE.
I JUST HAVE TO TAKE MY TIME!
I'LL BE READY TO GET PHYSICAL WITH TOM, 'CAUSE I LIKE HIM!
...THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK.
IN HINDSIGHT, I DON'T THINK IT'S GREAT THAT A THERAPIST INSISTED THAT I WOULD HAVE SEX ONE DAY, AND THAT I SHOULD KEEP MY SEXUALITY FIRMLY ATTACHED TO AND DEFINED BY BAD PAST EXPERIENCES.
BUT ASEXUALITY ISN'T TALKED ABOUT ENOUGH FOR ME TO HAVE EXPECTED MY THERAPIST TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. I DIDN'T TAKE MYSELF SERIOUSLY EITHER, SO CONTINUED TO THINK ONCE MORE:
I'LL BE INTO THIS STUFF SOME DAY.
JUST NOT READY YET.
JUST A BIT BROKEN RIGHT NOW.
EVERYONE GETS PHYSICAL WITH PARTNERS.
...IS EVERY CRUSH OR RELATIONSHIP I HAVE GONNA BE LIKE THIS?
I GUESS... I WAS JUST MADE TO BE ALONE.
I'LL NEVER FIND A PARTNER WHO WANTS WHAT I WANT...


TOMORROW, WHEN I GET OUT OF BED, I SHOULDN'T DO MY USUAL COMFORTING ROUTINE.
BECAUSE I KNOW NOW THAT IT ONLY ADDS TO MY PHOBIA
BUT THE IDEA OF NOT DOING THESE THINGS...
MAKES IT FEEL LIKE I'M STEPPING OUT INTO SOME TERRIBLE UNKNOWN.
AND... I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE.
WHY IS THIS SO SCARY?

Appendix 16

SEXUALITY WASN'T THE ONLY THING I LEARNED TO IGNORE, THANKS TO OUR CULTURAL NORMS.
SUCH A LONG DAY... TIME FOR BED.
FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I HAVE WORKED MY LIFE AROUND STRICT ROUTINES AND RULES THAT I FELT NEEDED TO BE UPHELD EVERY DAY.
BRUSH YOUR TEETH...
...OR ELSE SOMETHING BAD WILL HAPPEN.
GET DRESSED, SPECIFICALLY FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.
DO EVERYTHING FROM TOP TO BOTTOM...OR ELSE SOMETHING BAD WILL HAPPEN.
READ BEFORE BED, BUT ONLY ON DAYS WHEN YOU HAVEN'T HAD A SHOWER.
ALWAYS FINISH ON THE LEFT PAGE, NEVER THE RIGHT ...OR ELSE SOMETHING BAD WILL HAPPEN.

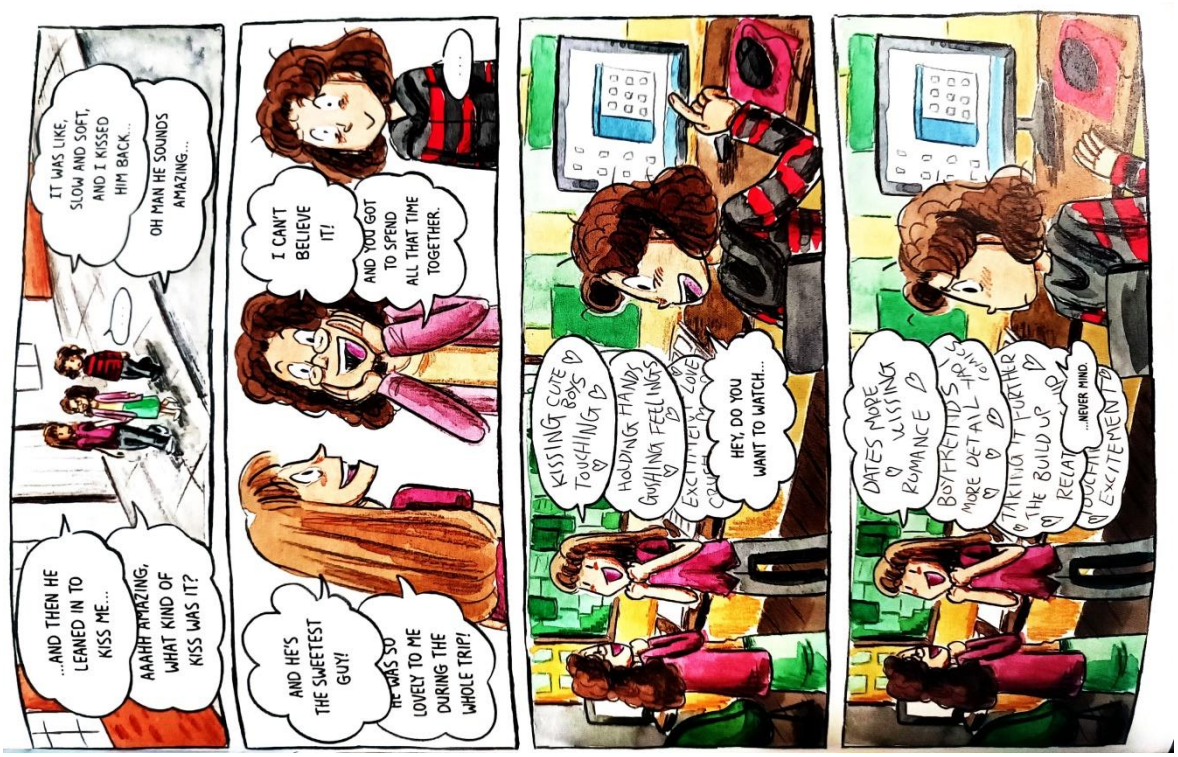

SLEEP FACING THE DOOR. DO NOT SLEEP FACING THE WALL UNTIL 4 AM...
...OR ELSE SOMETHING BAD WILL HAPPEN.
OH NO. I DON'T FEEL WELL. IT MUST BE FROM DOING SO MUCH TODAY... DON'T PANIC, YOU'LL FEEL BETTER SOON... MAYBE.
CAN I WOULD GO THROUGH THE SAME CYCLE YOU'LL FOR AT LEAST THREE HOURS.
HEART BEATING TO HEAD I'M
A RUSH OF ADRENALINE AND DIZZINESS, THEN SHAKING, THEN A HORRIBLE WAVE OF NAUSEA.
CAN THAT MADE ME WORRY FURTHER ABOUT YOU THROWING UP, STARTING THE PROCESS
HEART BEATING OVER AGAIN.
THE ONLY THING THAT WOULD EVER CALM MY BRAIN AND MY BODY DOWN WAS PURE EXHAUSTION.
WHEN I'D FINALLY FALL ASLEEP WITHOUT REALIZING IT.
WHAT WOULD SEEM TO OTHERS TO BE NORMAL ROUTINE WAS ACTUALLY MY BRAIN'S WAY OF TRYING TO STAVE OFF A CONSTANT DREAD AND WORRY, AN ATTEMPT TO GAIN A FEELING OF SAFETY THAT I DON'T OFTEN EXPERIENCE.
THIS WAS COUPLED WITH AN EXTREME PHOBIA OF THROWING UP THAT HAUNTED ME EVERY NIGHT. THE ROUTINES OFTEN ONLY BROUGHT TEMPORARY RELIEF THOUGH. NORMALLY, AN EVENTFUL DAY WAS ENOUGH TO TRIGGER MY BODY INTO 'FIGHT OR FLIGHT', WHICH IN TURN WOULD TRIGGER MY MIND INTO SPIRALLING ANXIETY ATTACKS.

Appendix 17

THE WORST THING ABOUT THIS IS THAT NOW I'M MORE SCARED THAN EVER, WHICH MEANS I JUST WANT TO DO MY USUAL ROUTINES EVEN MORE.
YOU'RE JUST NOT READY FOR REALTIONSHIPS YET.
...I'M GOING TO BE ALONE FOREVER, AREN'T I?
EVERY TIME I GO THROUGH SOMETHING SO SCARY LIKE THIS IN MY LIFE...
...WILL I HAVE TO GO THROUGH IT ALL BY MYSELF?

Appendix 18

...ALMOST.
Hehe.
Hehe.
OH WOW!
OH.
HI MARY-ANNE!
HEY!
UH, YEAH! SO GRE
THAT'S GREAT!
I KNOW!!
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?
REALLY GOOD! I HAVE A BOYFRIEND NOW!
OOOHH I WANT TO HEAR EVERY DETAIL!
YES
I CAN'T WAIT TO TELL YOU ALL ABOUT HIM!
HOW DID YOU GET TOGETHER EXACTLY?
WELL, IT ALL STARTED WHEN I WENT TO HONG KON


...AND THEN HE LEANED IN TO KISS ME...
AAAHH AMAZING, WHAT KIND OF KISS WAS IT?
IT WAS LIKE, SLOW AND SOFT, AND I KISSED HIM BACK...
OH MAN HE SOUNDS AMAZING...
AND HE'S THE SWEETEST GUY!
HE WAS SO LOVELY TO ME DURING THE WHOLE TRIP!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
AND YOU GOT TO SPEND ALL THAT TIME TOGETHER.
KISSING CUTE BOYS
TOUCHING
HOLDING HANDS
GIGGLING
EXCITEMENT
LOVE
HEY, DO YOU WANT TO WATCH...
DATES
MORE KISSING
ROMANCE
BOYFRIENDS
MORE DETAIL
TAKING IT FURTHER
THE BUILD UP
RELAT
...NEVER MIND.
EXCITEMENT

AAH, IT'S SO MUCH NICER OUT HERE!
JUST TALKING AND RELAXING IN A QUIET SPACE...WHY AREN'T PARTIES MORE LIKE THIS?
I'M LIKE AN OLD PERSON TRAPPED IN AN 18-YEAR-OLD'S BODY!
YEAH, I FEEL THE SAME WAY.
??
I REALLY PREFER JUST CHILLING OUT WITH FRIENDS TO BIG PARTIES...
WHAT THE...?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?
TOM IS FLIRTING WITH ME, I GUESS?
I KINDA LIKE HIM, SO I GUESS I SHOULD TOUCH HIM TOO?
...HOW DO YOU ENJOY PARTIES AGAIN?
I'M GONNA GO FIND SOMEONE I KNOW TO TALK TO. THAT'LL BE MORE FUN THAN DRINKING.
URGH. EVERYONE HERE IS TOO DRUNK TO TALK TO, THOUGH.
AH, TOM!
HE'S MORE INTO WEED THAN DRINK... WHICH MEANS HE'S BETTER AT CONVERSATION!
COMICS
MUSIC
MOVIES
BOOKS
GAMES
HEY, WANNA GO OUT TO TESCO WITH ME TO BUY MORE ALCOHOL?
UH, YEAH, OKAY!

Appendix 19

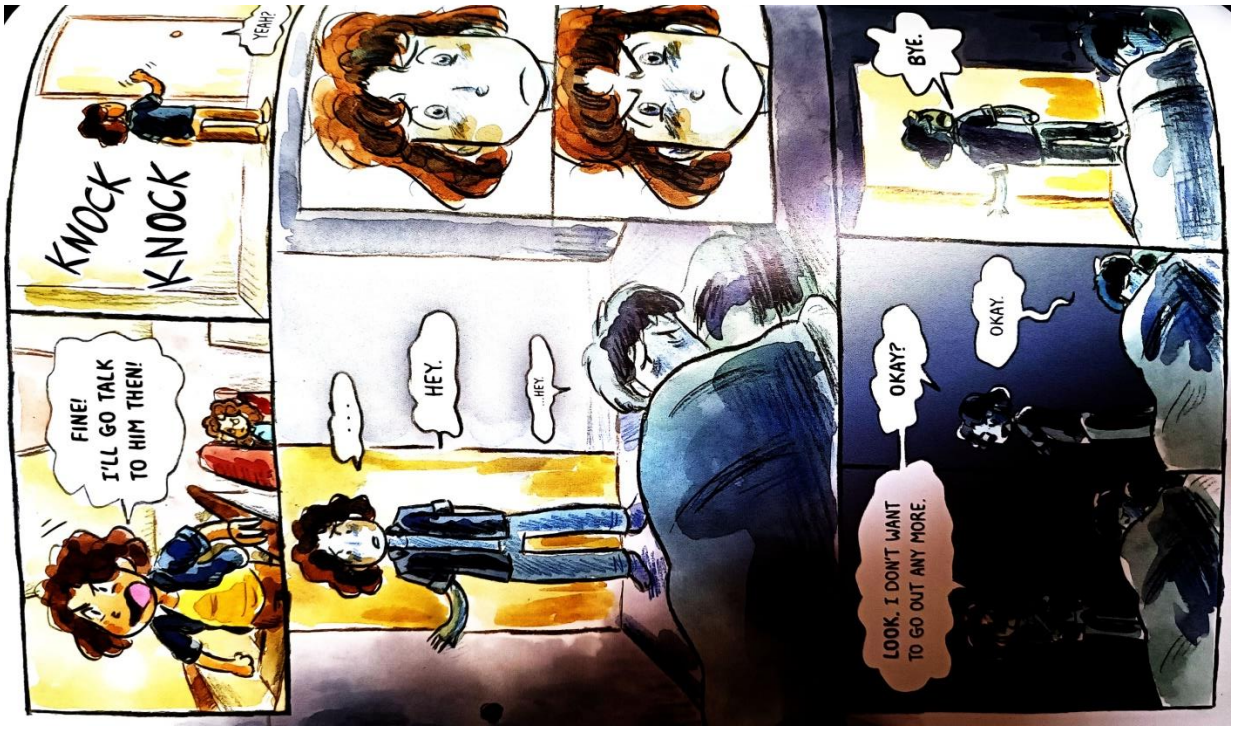
IS IT OKAY IF I HUG YOU?
SURE!
NO.
OKAY, HOP ON IN!
I DON'T THINK I WANT YOU TO...
...I REALLY LIKE ANDY...
...SO SHOULDN'T I BE FEELING SOMETHING RIGHT NOW?
ALL I FEEL IS ANXIOUS.
MMM...
OH YEAH, ANDY IS SLEEPING IN MY BED...
DESPITE NOT LIKING BEING THIS CLOSE, I PERSERVERED THROUGH THE NIGHT.
A LOT OF PEOPLE MIGHT THINK 'WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST SAY NO?' BUT, I DIDN'T KNOW THAT ASEXUALITY EXISTED...
HUG
NO
AND WHEN YOU'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING BEFORE, YOU ASSUME THAT EVERYONE FEELS THIS WAY AT FIRST, AND THAT THE NICE PART MUST COME AFTER FORCING YOURSELF TO DO THINGS.
...I'M STARTING TO GET THE SHAKES
THIS DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT. I FEEL ANXIOUS.
I CAN FEEL AN ANXIETY ATTACK COMING ON, AT LEAST IT'S 4 AM NOW.
IF I SHARE A BED WITH SOMEONE NOW...
I WON'T BE ABLE TO DO ANY OF MY NIGHT-TIME RITUALS ANYMORE.
DAMN. NORMALLY I'D TURN OVER AT 4 AM TO FACE THE WINDOW.
...GETTING AN ADRENALINE RUSH...
...STARTING TO FEEL NAUSEOUS.
IT'S JUST THE ADRENALINE. JUST ADRENALINE. YOU'RE OKAY. YOU WON'T BE ILL.
HOW WILL I FEEL SAFE IF I CAN'T DO MY RITUALS?
WHAT DO I DO TO FEEL SAFE FROM NOW ON??
THAT NIGHT, ALTHOUGH I TRIED MY BEST TO GET CLOSE TO SOMEONE I LIKED ROMANTICALLY, ALL I FELT WAS AN ANXIETY ATTACK THAT LASTED FOR THREE HOURS.

I MEAN,
I LIKE ANDY A LOT,
BUT I DON'T LIKE THE
IDEA OF HUGGING HIM...
I DIDN'T ENJOY
SHARING A BED WITH HIM
LAST NIGHT. COUPLES DO
THAT SOMETIMES, RIGHT?
UH...WELL...
I MEAN, I'VE
NEVER HEARD
OF COUPLES
DOING
THAT...BUT...
...IF YOU
GUYS WANT
TO DO THAT,
YOU CAN...
I GUESS...?
...OH...
MY MUM
OBVIOUSLY
DIDN'T
UNDERSTAND
WHAT I WAS
FEELING. NO ONE
I KNEW DID,
REALLY.
SO I THOUGHT,
'WELL, I GUESS
I'LL JUST HAVE TO
GET USED TO
BEING PHYSICAL
THEN.'

AH, IT'S FINALLY MORNING.
NOW I HAVE A GOOD
EXCUSE TO GET SOME SPACE.
URGH.
I FEEL SO
UNWELL...
AND MY HEAD
IS HURTING
TOO.
I ALWAYS
FEEL LIKE I'VE
GOT A HANGOVER
AFTER ANXIETY
ATTACKS.
HI SWEETIE!
...HI MUM...
...
...SAY, UM,
MUM?
I WAS JUST
WONDERING...
...IS IT OKAY
FOR COUPLES
TO NOT GET
PHYSICALLY
CLOSE WITH
EACH OTHER?

Appendix 20

SUMMER WENT ON, AND I BECAME MORE AND MORE ALOOF TOWARDS ANDY, WITHOUT EXPLAINING WHY.
HE MIGHT BE UPSET ABOUT... YOU KNOW... YOU TWO!
URGH... WHY DO WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT IT?
IF HE'S SO UPSET WHY CAN'T HE BRING IT UP??
WHY CAN'T YOU BRING IT UP?! YOU'RE BOTH BEING STUPID!
CLICK
TAP TAP TAP TAP
SLAM
UGH! WHY IS ANDY ACTING SO MOODY AT THE MOMENT?!


FINE! I'LL GO TALK TO HIM THEN!
KNOCK KNOCK
YEAH?
...
HEY.
...HEY
LOOK. I DON'T WANT TO GO OUT ANY MORE.
OKAY?
OKAY.
BYE.

WHEN I WAS 19 YEARS OLD, I HAD THE NEXT TEN YEARS OF MY LIFE ALL PLANNED OUT IN MY HEAD, LIKE A SIMPLE MAP, WHERE IF I FOLLOWED THE PLAN IT WOULD JUST HAPPEN.
OH LOOK, I'M PUBLISHED BEFORE LEAVING UNI!!
AMAZING BOOK
CAREER
Even though I dont like sex, we're in a happy perfect relationship!
we own a dog!
LOVE LIFE
All of my published comics are paying the bills + I'm sooo happy!
I live in a city where I can buy comics all the time!
LIVING ALONE
...AND IN TEN YEARS?
HERE'S YOUR FINAL MARKS FOR THAT PROJECT.
AAAW, WHAT?!
I GOT A 2:3? B-BUT I THOUGHT I DID REALLY WELL ON THIS PROJECT...
AH GREAT! I WORKED HARD SO I KNOW IT'LL BE A GOOD GRADE!
OF COURSE, THE REALITY IS THAT JUST BECAUSE YOU REALLY WANT SOMETHING TO HAPPEN, IT DOESN'T MEAN THAT IT WILL.

UGH.
I HANDLED THE SITUATION SO BADLY.
AT THE TIME, I WAS REALLY ANGRY AT ANDY FOR NO GOOD REASON. I TREATED HIM AWFULLY, AND REGRET HOW I ACTED TO THIS DAY.
MY POOR BEHAVIOUR WAS PARTLY DOWN TO BEING YOUNG, INEXPERIENCED IN NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS.
BUT IT WAS ALSO PARTLY DOWN TO NOT UNDERSTANDING MYSELF AT ALL.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME?
I DIDN'T KNOW PEOPLE COULD BE ASEXUAL. AT THE TIME, ASEXUALITY WASN'T SOMETHING WELL KNOWN. IT STILL ISN'T.

Appendix 21

ASEXUAL CHARACTERS IN TV ARE PRETTY NON-EXISISTENT, AND WHEN THEY DO EXIST, THEY LOOK LIKE THIS*:
BRIDESHEAD REVISITED
SHERLOCK
DEXTER
JUGHEAD
Serial Killer
*THESE ARE ALL CHARACTERS THAT PRESENT AND CAN BE INTERPRETED AS ACE, I'M NOT SAYING THEY SHOULDN'T BE INTERPRETED IN OTHER WAYS.
IT'S HARDLY THE MAIN PROBLEM, BUT IT DOES CONTRIBUTE TO THE CULTURAL IGNORANCE OF WHAT ASEXUALITY IS EXACTLY...
Have you guys tried to do it yet?
How do you know if you're more than friends?
I mean it's kind of unhealthy, right?
...AND PEOPLE'S IDEA OF WHAT A HEALTHY REALTIONSHIP SHOULD LOOK LIKE.
FRANKLY, IT EVEN SOMETIMES LEAVES ME THINKING:
...MAYBE I SHOULD BE DOING MORE FOR MY GIRLFRIEND?
ONE DAY, I CAME ACROSS A CONVERSATION ONLINE ABOUT THE SHOW GOOD OMENS. SOMEONE ASKED THE WRITER, NEIL GAIMAN, IF THE TWO MAIN CHARACTERS LOVE EACH OTHER.
HIS ANSWER?
@neilhimself Absolutely.
AWWW!
I wouldn't exclude the idea that they are ace, or aromantic, or trans. ...Whatever Crowley and Aziraphale are, it's a love story.
WOAH WHAAAAT?!
'YOU'RE TOO FAST FOR ME CROWLEY'
'WE CAN GO OFF TOGETHER IF THIS ENDS UP BEING A MESS.'
'WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE LUNCH WITH ME?'
AFTER FINDING OUT THAT THE WRITER WROTE WHAT COULD BE VIEWED AS AN ASEXUAL LOVE STORY, I WAS VERY EXCITED TO WATCH GOOD OMENS AND POSSIBLE REPRESENTATION. I BECAME SMITTEN!
GOOD OMENS IS NOW A FIRM FAVOURITE FOR ME.
I'VE NEVER GOTTEN EXCITED OVER 'SHIPS' BEFORE.
I COULD NEVER SEE THE BIG DEAL OR RELATE.
AAAAAHHHH!
WHY? BECAUSE I SAW MY EXACT EXPERIENCE, AND IT DIDN'T NEED KISSING OR TOUCHING TO BE CONSIDERED REAL, OR WRITTEN OFF AS UNHEALTHY. IT WAS A HAPPY, POSITIVE LOVE STORY.
WOW, REPRESENTATION FEELS AMAZING!
BUT WITH GOOD OMENS...
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I SAW MYSELF IN A TV SHOW!
I SAW MY RELATIONSHIP, AND IT WAS SO ROMANTIC!

Appendix 22

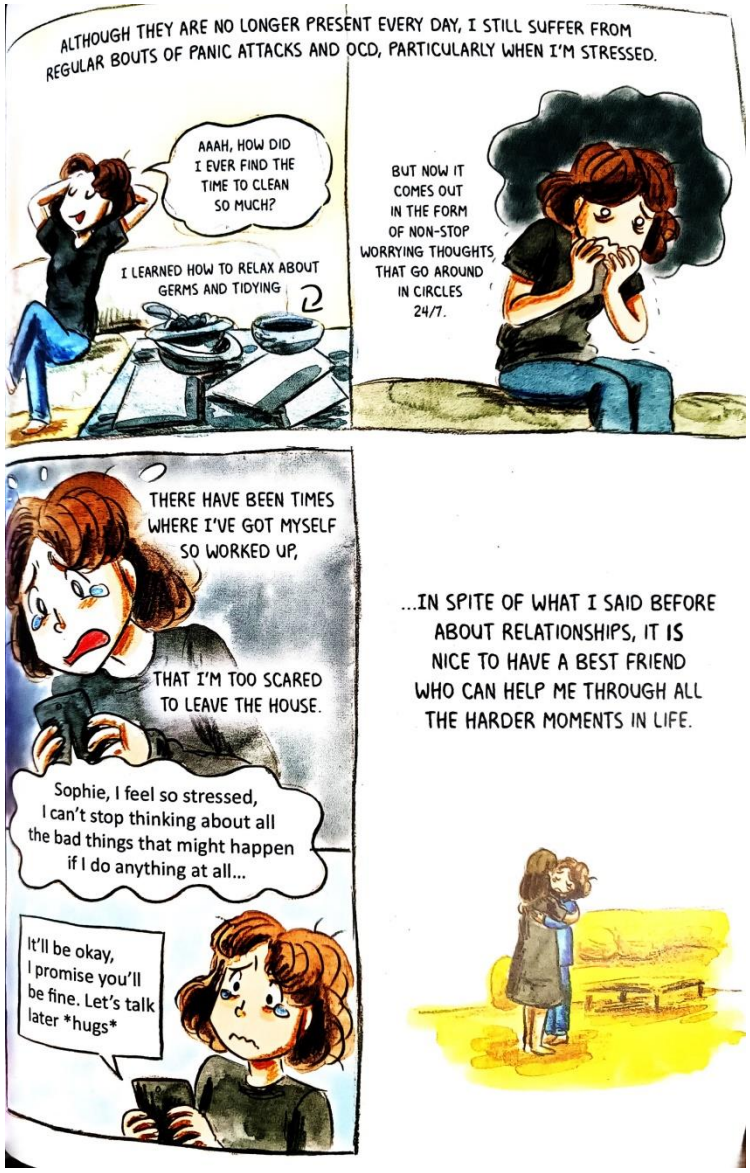
Asexual
HUH? ASEXUAL? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
Asexuality is the lack of sexual attraction to others, or low or absent interest in or desire for sexual activity. It may be considered a sexual orientation or the lack thereof. It may also be categorized more widely to include a broad spectrum of asexual sub-identities.
WHOA, WAIT. THERE'S AN ACTUAL WORD FOR HOW I FEEL?
DOES THAT MEAN I'M NOT JUST REALLY BROKEN??

DOES THIS MEAN...
THERE ARE LOADS OF PEOPLE OUT THERE LIKE ME?
...FROM THAT POINT OF UNDERSTANDING, YOU BEGIN TO MOVE ON, NO MATTER WHAT.'

Appendix 23

LIFE HAS MOVED ON AND IMPROVED FOR ME AS I'VE GROWN OLDER.
MY FEET HURT SO MUCH!
AFTER STAYING WITH MY VERY TIRING CLEANING JOB FOR FIVE YEARS THAT PAID PEANUTS...
...I FINALLY GOT OFFERED AN ILLUSTRATION JOB THAT PAID ENOUGH FOR ME TO RISK GOING FULL TIME IN THE ARTS WORLD.
YEES!
WOULD YOU BE UP FOR HELPING OUT WITH THIS?
AS OF WRITING THIS, I'M STILL NOT EARNING MUCH MONEY IN COMPARISON TO MOST PEOPLE I KNOW.
I CAN TREAT MYSELF TO SODAS NOW!
BUT COMPARED TO THE RECESSION DAYS, I'M DOING GOOD.
OUR CULTURE SAYS THAT MY LIFE SHOULD BE COMPLETE, NOW THAT I HAVE A PARTNER.
BUT OF COURSE, LIFE IS **NOT** A BINARY PATH WHERE THE END GOAL IS A HAPPY PERFECT ENDING.
JUST WHEN I THOUGHT LIFE WAS KINDA FIGURED OUT...
OW!
MY BODY DECIDED TO DEVELOP ENDOMETRIOSIS.
AND I LEARNED BACK AT UNI TO NOT RELY ON RELATIONSHIPS BEING THE END GOAL OR WHAT WILL SOLVE ALL MY PROBLEMS.
SINCE MY OWN REALIZATION THROUGH TRYING TO PURSUE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS, IT'S MADE ME AWARE OF HOW MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE THIS CULTURALLY ACCEPTED CONCEPT EXCLUDES.
IF BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP IS THE BIG THING NO ONE SHOULD BE WITHOUT, ARE WE SAYING THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE AROMANTIC HAVE LESS MEANINGFUL LIVES?
WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO WOULD HAVE RELATIONSHIPS, BUT ARE NOT CURRENTLY ABLE TO BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS?
WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO DIVORCE LATER ON IN LIFE, LOSE THEIR PARTNER OR SIMPLY HAVEN'T FOUND THE RIGHT PERSON...WHY DO WE ACT AS IF THEIR LIVES ARE MEANINGLESS?

BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AROUND WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE ASEXUAL...
...I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WILL ASSUME THAT UPON FINDING A PARTNER, ANY PROBLEMS I FACE MUST BE SOLVED.
BUT FRANKLY, MUCH LIKE OTHER SEXUALITIES, I'M FACED WITH A LOT OF STIGMA AND ANGRY OPINIONS I NEVER ASKED FOR, JUST FOR BEING HONEST ABOUT WHO I AM.
I MEAN, THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU, WHETHER YOU HAVE A NAME FOR IT OR NOT.
I ADMIT IT MAKES ME RELUCTANT TO REALLY TALK WITH OTHER PEOPLE ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP WHEN PEOPLE START CHATTING ABOUT THEIR PARTNERS.
PEOPLE MAY BE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT ASEXUALS GET JUDGED ON A POLITICAL SCALE TOO:
'I THINK IT'S OKAY THAT PEOPLE ARE REFUSED IVF IF THEY'VE NEVER HAD SEX OR TRIED TO HAVE SEX.'
HOW ARE THEY ALLOWED TO SAY THIS ON TV?!
'I'M SORRY, BUT IF YOU'RE NOT HAPPY TO HAVE SEX, YOU'RE NOT REALLY MENTALLY FIT TO BRING UP A CHILD ANYWAY.'


ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NO LONGER PRESENT EVERY DAY, I STILL SUFFER FROM REGULAR BOUTS OF PANIC ATTACKS AND OCD, PARTICULARLY WHEN I'M STRESSED.
AAAH, HOW DID I EVER FIND THE TIME TO CLEAN SO MUCH?
I LEARNED HOW TO RELAX ABOUT GERMS AND TIDYING
BUT NOW IT COMES OUT IN THE FORM OF NON-STOP WORRYING THOUGHTS THAT GO AROUND IN CIRCLES 24/7.
THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHERE I'VE GOT MYSELF SO WORKED UP,
THAT I'M TOO SCARED TO LEAVE THE HOUSE.
Sophie, I feel so stressed, I can't stop thinking about all the bad things that might happen if I do anything at all...
It'll be okay, I promise you'll be fine. Let's talk later *hugs*
...IN SPITE OF WHAT I SAID BEFORE ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS, IT IS NICE TO HAVE A BEST FRIEND WHO CAN HELP ME THROUGH ALL THE HARDER MOMENTS IN LIFE.

ALL OF THESE ISSUES ARE FELT HARDER WHEN THEY ARE SO OFTEN TRIVIALIZED BY CONSISTENTLY ANGRY COMMENTARY FROM PEOPLE ONLINE, EVEN WITHIN THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY.

ASEXUALITY SHOULD NOT BE TAUGHT IN HEALTH CLASSES BECAUSE TEENAGERS ARE STILL YOUNG AND MAY NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY ARE CAPABLE OF FEELING SEXUAL ATTRACTION OR NOT. WHY IS THIS SO HARD FOR YOU PEOPLE TO GET? JESUS CHRIST.

WHY DO WE NEED REPRESENTATION OF ASEXUALS? NOTHING HAPPENS TO THEM LMAO

These are the nice, not-death-threat comments, by the way

'ASEXUAL' IS NOT AN IDENTITY, IT'S A VIOLENT HOMOPHOBIC SLUR THAT INSULTS OUR EXPERIENCE JUST SO YOU CAN FEEL SPECIAL ABOUT YOURSELF.

OHHH MY GOD STOP WHINING YOU WHINY PISSY ACES. WHO WANTS TO KILL THEMSELVES BECAUSE THEY'RE ACE OR ARO WHAT THE FUCK. YOU'RE NOT OPPRESSED, NO ONE CARES ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE.

MADE-UP IDENTITIES ARE NOT WELCOME IN OUR SAFE SPACES. I WANT TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY UNSAFE FOR YOU.

WHEN SUCH PEOPLE SEEK YOU OUT JUST TO TELL YOU THEIR OPINION, IT'S HARD NOT TO THINK SOMETIMES:

M-MAYBE I REALLY AM JUST BEING OVER THE TOP?

RAPE AND SEXUAL ABUSE ARE **EXTREMELY** COMMON AMONG ASEXUAL PEOPLE.

I CAN'T COUNT THE AMOUNT OF STORIES I'VE HEARD WHERE SOMEONE HAS EITHER BEEN FORCED OR GUILT-TRIPPED INTO HAVING SEX.

THIS IS WHAT RESULTS FROM ASEXUALITY BEING DISMISSED AS NOT A REAL ISSUE OR SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE NEED TO BE EDUCATED ABOUT.

I'VE HAD GUYS SAY TO ME 'I'LL CHANGE YOUR MIND' BECAUSE SAYING 'I'M ACE' ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH.

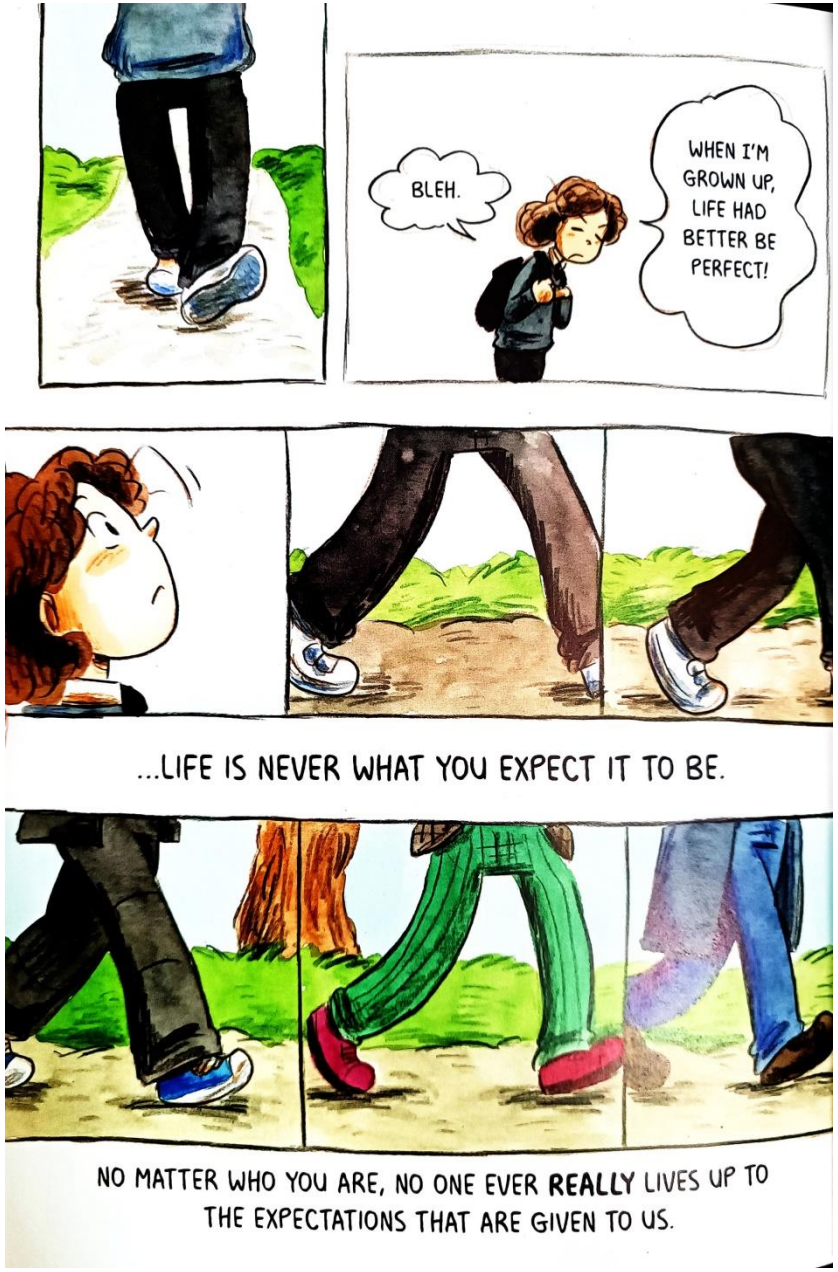
EVEN SAYING THAT YOU HAVE AN ASEXUAL PARTNER ISN'T CONVINCING ENOUGH FOR SOME PEOPLE.

OH, YEAH, THAT'S COOL. I'M ACTUALLY ASEXUAL TOO.

SO, DO YOU WANNA SEE MY DICK?

MY FRIENDS HAVE HAD PEOPLE SEEM TO THINK IT'S PART OF A 'HARD TO GET' GAME.

AND I KNOW PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN KICKED OUT OF THEIR FAMILY HOME, BECAUSE THEY'RE PERCEIVED AS BEING DIFFICULT OR DISAPPOINTING FOR NOT SEEKING OUT A FAMILY LIFE.


BLEH.
WHEN I'M GROWN UP, LIFE HAD BETTER BE PERFECT!
...LIFE IS NEVER WHAT YOU EXPECT IT TO BE.
NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, NO ONE EVER **REALLY** LIVES UP TO THE EXPECTATIONS THAT ARE GIVEN TO US.

ASEXUALITY IS STILL WIDELY INVISIBLE WITHIN OUR CULTURE, WITH SOME PEOPLE WHO ARE AWARE OF IT STLL NOT BELEIVING IT TO BE A REAL EXPERIENCE, ONLY AN IDENTITY MADE UP TO GET ATTENTION.
WE **NEED** SPACES AND VOCABULARY IN WHICH TO TALK ABOUT IT, SO THAT RAPE, ISOLATION, DISMISSAL AND ACCUSATION OF BEING UNWELL OR ACTING OUT ARE NO LONGER CONSIDERED PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE.
DON'T DEFINE MY ENTIRE LIFE BY MY SEXUALITY,
BUT IT HAS SHAPED MANY OF MY EXPERIENCES.
IF WE GIVE ASEXUALITY A LABEL, IT CAN HAVE MORE OF A PRESENCE IN OUR CULTURE.
THE MORE PRESENCE IT HAS, THE BETTER IT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD.
SO THAT MORE AND MORE, MY EXPERIENCE CAN BE MET WITH:
AH, I SEE.
THANKS, I ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT IT WAS LIKE.
INSTEAD OF THE USUAL:
YOU'RE BEING REALLY OVER THE TOP. YOU JUST HAVEN'T MET THE RIGHT PERSON.

LIFE CAN NEVER BE PERFECT...
...BUT I'M GLAD THAT I'VE FIGURED OUT HOW TO BE OKAY WITH THAT.

AW NO.
IT'S STARTING TO RAIN...
YOU NEVER **COMPLETELY** SHAKE OFF THE CHALLENGES GIVEN TO YOU.
HUH. THIS'LL WORK.
BUT, IT'S MUCH EASIER TO GET THROUGH LIFE'S CHALLENGES WHEN YOU **UNDERSTAND** WHO YOU ARE.

Resumé

Tato práce si klade za cíl zkoumat možnosti vyučování na téma LGBTQ+ v hodinách anglického jazyka za použití grafických románů. Teoretická část předkládá hlavní argumenty pro nutnost přítomnosti podobných témat ve výuce a pro využívání grafických románu coby média, které je třeba využívat ve výuce. Praktická část představuje šest plánů hodin, které používají dva grafické memoáry týkající se téma LGBTQ+. Obsahuje také analýzy a reflexe předložených plánů hodin.

Anotace

Jméno a příjmení:	Milan Řezník
Katedra nebo ústav:	Ústav cizích jazyků
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Petr Anténe, M.A., Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2022

Název závěrečné práce:	Grafické romány a jejich použití ve výuce
Název závěrečné práce v angličtině:	Graphic novels and their usage in education
Anotace závěrečné práce:	Tato práce si klade za cíl zkoumat možnosti vyučování na téma LGBTQ+ v hodinách anglického jazyka za použití grafických románů. Teoretická část předkládá hlavní argumenty pro nutnost přítomnosti podobných témat ve výuce a pro využívání grafických románu coby média, které je třeba využívat ve výuce. Praktická část představuje šest plánů hodin, které používají dva grafické memoáry týkající se téma LGBTQ+. Obsahuje také analýzy a reflexe předložených plánů hodin.
Klíčová slova:	Grafické romány, LGBTQ+, queer, memoár, kontroverze, diskuze, výuka, Maia Kobabe, Rebecca Burgess, *Gender/Queer, How to Be Ace?*

Anotace v angličtině:	The aim of this thesis is to explore the possibilities of teaching about LGBTQ+ in English Language Lessons, using graphic novels as the main media for presenting the topic. The theoretical part presents the main arguments for the need of such lessons and for approaching graphic novels as an important medium in lessons. The practical part presents six lesson plans using two graphic memoirs focused on this topic and their subsequent analyses.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Graphic novels, LGBTQ+, queer, memoir, controversy, discussion, education, Maia Kobabe, Rebecca Burgess, *Gender/Queer*, *How to Be Ace?*
Přílohy vázané v práci:	Skeny stran z grafických románů
Rozsah práce:	98 stran
Jazyk práce:	Anglický