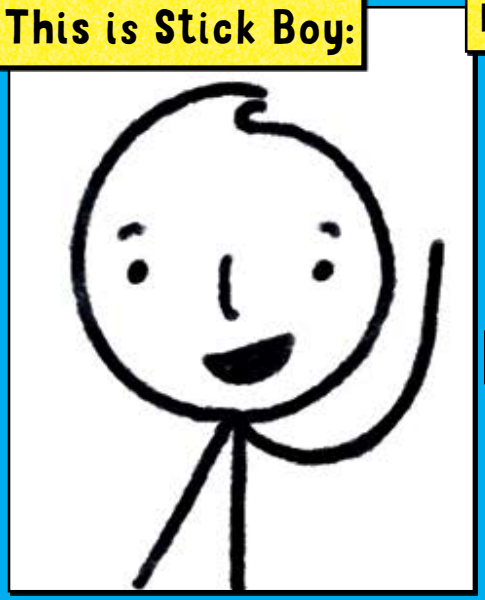
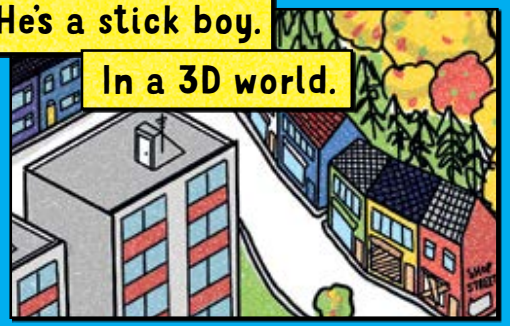
This is Stick Boy:



He's a stick boy.
In a 3D world.



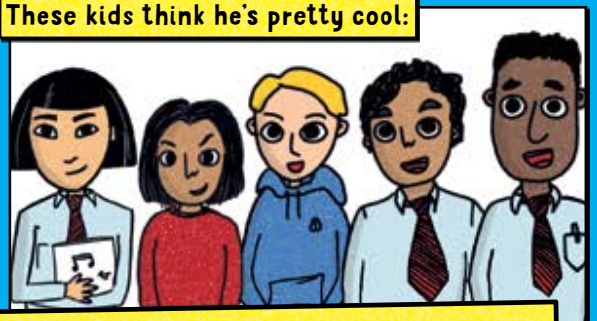
This is his new school:



These kids are out to get him:



These kids think he's pretty cool:



But being the new kid is the least of Stick Boy's problems! *Stick* with us for...

Sticky situations!

Super villains!

Sketchy characters!

Robot spies!

And... terrible pop songs!

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#StickBoy
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PAUL COOMEY

STICK BOY



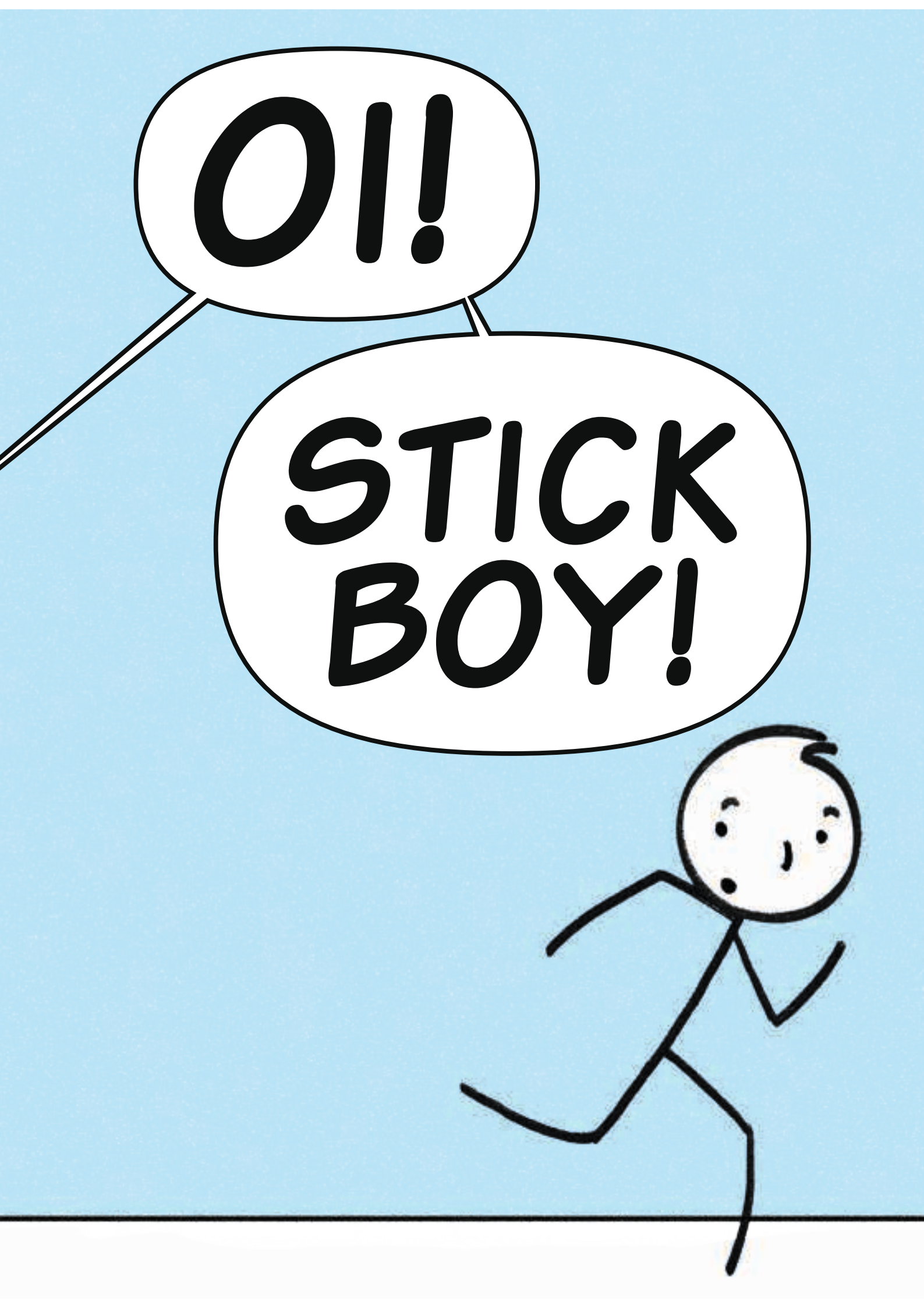
LITTLE TIGER

He's a stick boy.

In a 3D world.

STICK BOY

PAUL COOMEY


OI!
STICK BOY!

To Tanvi Kant, a chuisle mo chroí.

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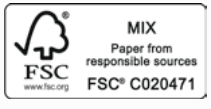
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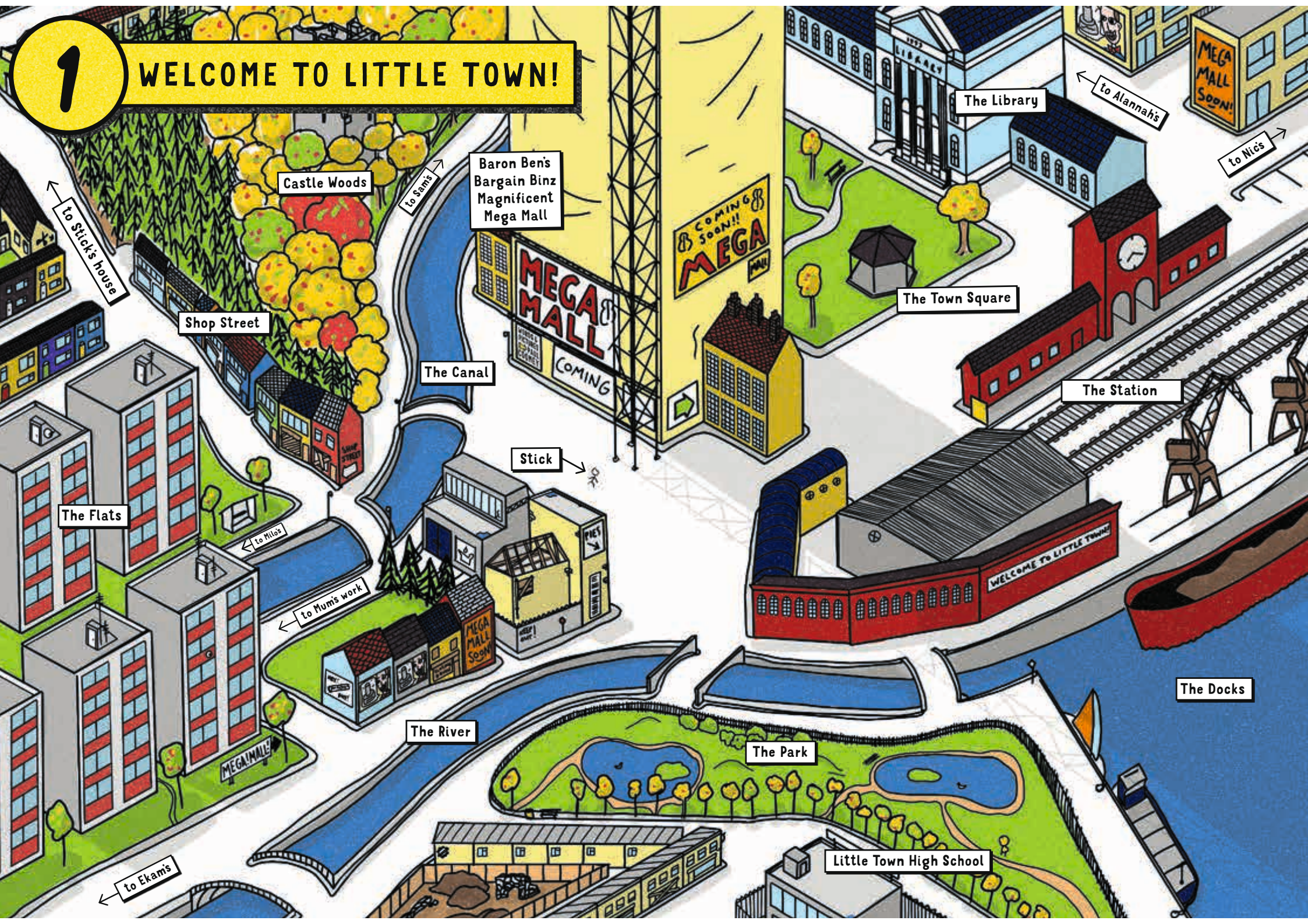


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1
WELCOME TO LITTLE TOWN!
to Stick's house
Castle Woods
to Sam's
Baron Ben's Bargain Binz Magnificent Mega Mall
COMING SOON!! MEGA MALL
The Library
to Alannah's
MEGA MALL SOON!
to Nic's
The Town Square
Shop Street
The Canal
The Station
Stick
The Flats
to Milo's
to Mum's work
WELCOME TO LITTLE TOWN!
The Docks
The River
The Park
MEGA MALL SOON
MEGA MALL
to Ekam's
Little Town High School



This is Stick Boy, running as fast as he can.
And who is that shouting at him?

Ah, that'd be Sam.

Sam looks like a big bully. Sam IS a big bully. Sam is, in fact, the second biggest bully in the whole school.





So here we are in the little town of Little Town, and Sam is chasing Stick Boy.

This is not good. It's Stick's second day at a new school in a new town. This time was supposed to be different. He was supposed to leave his old problems behind (again) and start somewhere new (again). A familiar feeling grows in his belly – dark, heavy, swirling dread.

He needs a place to hide, fast.

He sprints around a corner …

spots a handy signpost …

and slips behind it.

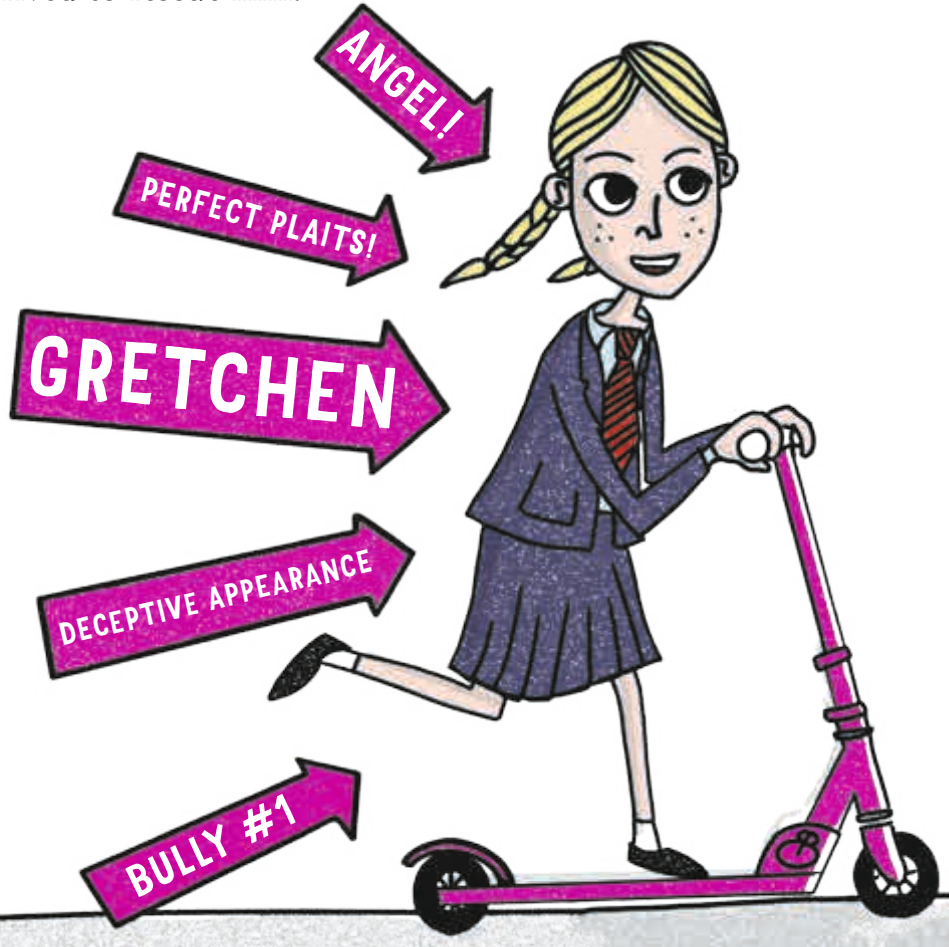
Sam pounds past then screeches to a halt. She looks left and right, up and down, her head swivelling around like a meerkat at a disco.

Stick stands still. He holds his breath. Has he managed to escape?

Hopefully.

Wait, who's this?

Hurrah! "Stick is *saved*!" I hear you cry. An angel has arrived to rescue him!



"Hello, Sam," the angel says with a sneer.

Oh. This doesn't look promising.

"Er, hello, Gretchen."

"Have you forgotten our little arrangement?"

"Er, no, Gretchen."

"Err, *noo, Gretchen*," mimics Gretchen. "Well, it would appear you have. *I* am in charge of acquiring new victims and *you* handle repeat clients. Why were *you* chasing the new boy?"

"Er, I don't know, Gretchen."

"What do you mean, you don't know?" Gretchen laughs. "Did you think you'd show some initiative? Were you trying to *impress* me?"

"No, I, yes, er—"

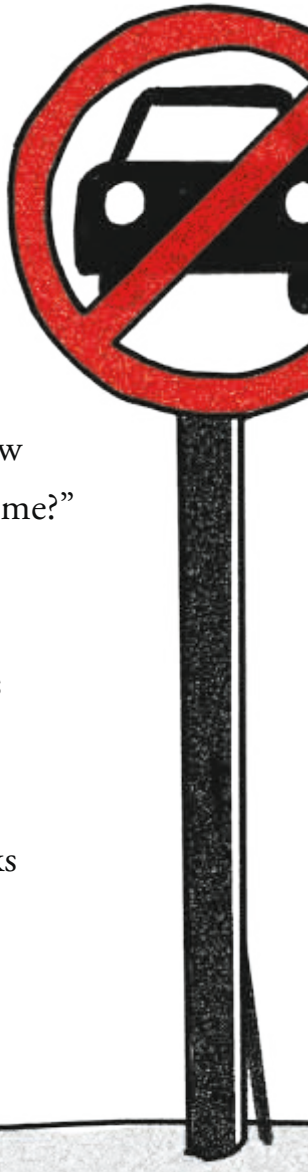
"Zip it. We're wasting time. Now, this new boy looks a bit like a big lollipop, does he not?"

"Er, yes?"

"And what else in our vicinity, Sam, looks like a big lollipop?"

"Er … that signpost?"

"Yes, Sam, *that signpost*." Gretchen sighs.



Stick already knows the game is up. He steps out. Sam makes a lunge for him, but Gretchen stops her.

"Not so fast, Sam. I'll handle this." She steps towards Stick.

"Well, hellooo there! How do you do, dear fellow?"

This is not what Stick was expecting.

"I-I'm doing all right, thank you," he says in a quiet voice.

"Dear fellow, the correct response to the enquiry of 'How do you do?' is in fact '*How do you do?*'"

"What?" says Stick.

"Don't you mean *pardon*?" Gretchen tuts again. "I'm afraid we've got ourselves off to rather a bumpy beginning here. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Gretchen and this is my associate, Sam. Sam and I *rule* the *school*. What, may I ask, is your name, you perfectly peculiar-looking person?"

"Stick."

"I *do* beg your pardon?"

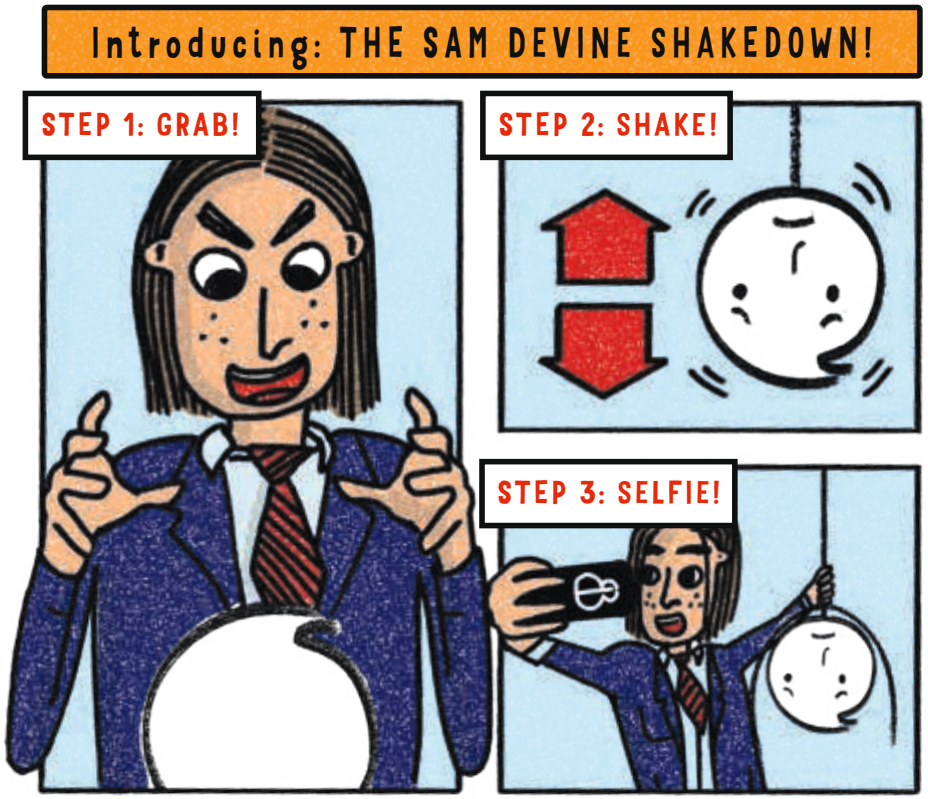
"My name is Stick. Stick Boy."

"How perfectly preposterous. Nobody is called Stick."

"I am," says Stick.

Stick looks at the ground. He's been through this before. His family have moved three times in as many years. You might think it's because Stick is picked on wherever he goes, but it's *actually* because Stick's mum has a super top-secret job in a super top-secret government agency. At least that's what Stick thinks. His big sister, Bella, reckons they move because the branches of Supersavers Superdiscount Superstores, where Mum works, keep closing down.

"Stick, Mick, Rick, whatever," says Gretchen. "Sam, shake him down."



Gretchen glowers. "Enough grinning! Let's see what we have here."

Everything that was in Stick's pockets now lies scattered on the ground.

Yes, pockets. Some things can't be explained easily.

Stick watches, upside-down, as Gretchen pokes at:

- One black marker, fat
- One shoelace, red
- One button, blue
- Two dice, yellow with black dots
- One silver key ring, with the following attached:
  - A shiny new locker key for locker number 6161 at Little Town High School
  - A new membership card for Little Town Library
  - A Supersavers Superdiscount Superstore Kidzsaver Loyalty Card
  - A front door key to number 25 Foxhollow Drive
  - An "I Love NY" key ring from the time Grandma Boy and Grandad Boy went to New York
  - A souvenir bottle opener in the shape of a flip-flop from Lanzarote, the absolute furthest-away place that Stick has ever been, and where he wishes he was right now.

Gretchen sneers. "Ugh. Sam, dispose of these *trinkets*."

Sam drops Stick into a puddle and scoops up his belongings. She spots a very high wall topped with some particularly nasty-looking spikes. She's about to throw everything over the wall when—

"*STOP!*" shrieks Gretchen. "Hand me those dice. I do believe I may find a use for them."

Then, like a champion bowler, Sam runs, grunts, swings her arm over her head and chucks Stick's keys and cards and everything else high into the air and over the wall.

"That's going to look *ace* on Vidwire," Sam says.

Gretchen smirks. "If, of course, it had been recorded."

"You didn't—?"

"Well, you didn't *ask* anyone to record it, did you? Silly old Sam."

Sam looks hurt but Stick doesn't see. He's sitting on his bum in the puddle, staring down at his reflection in the grimy water.

"Ta-ta then, Stick Boy!" And with that, Gretchen scoots off down the hill towards school, Sam thumping along behind.



Stick Boy sits.

And sits.

His throat feels tight. His eyes feel hot and prickly.

His tears plop into the puddle and swirl like ink in the grey water.

He had hoped it would be different this time. A school without the old problems. A new start.

In the surface of the puddle, Stick sees the reflection of a boy.

No, not *himself*. Another boy.

"Hello," says the boy.

"Hello," says Stick.

The boy looks about his age, with messy brown hair, brown eyes and a big smile. He has a football under his arm. He's holding out a hand to Stick.

In it are:

- One shoelace, red
- One button, blue

"Are these yours?" he asks.

"Yes," says Stick.

"I'll help you up," says the boy, putting down the football and pulling Stick to his feet. "You're heavier than you look. I'm Ekam."

"I'm Stick."



"Cool name."

"Thanks. I didn't pick it, my mum and dad did. Aren't you in our school?"

"Yeah, it's my second day," Stick says.

"Sorry about your keys and stuff. Sam's got a pretty good throw."

"Did you see where she threw them?"

Ekam nods towards the high wall. He hands Stick the button and the shoelace. "These fell before they reached the wall. I think the wind caught them."

"Thanks."

"Are you not worried about your stuff?"

"Not really." Stick looks up at the spikes on top of the wall. "This isn't the first time."

It's not even the second time. Or the third.

"Do you still have your locker key?"

"No, but I have a little trick for that." Stick smiles.



ABOUT THE CREATOR



Paul Coomey was born in Cork, where his mother taught him to read in 1982. His favourite book that year was *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss, and he hasn't stopped reading since. He learned to write creatively at Kilmurry National School, where he was the only student to ever achieve a mark of 9/10 for an essay, awarded by Headmaster Der Hartnett for a story about a wolf in the snow.

When he isn't writing and illustrating books, Paul works as an Art Director in Children's Publishing. He lives in London with his wife Tanvi Kant, and in his spare time his favourite things to do are read comics and go to the sea.