



“THE PRESENT” AND LIVING WITH A DISABILITY

The Present is an animated short film that was released in 2014 and quickly went viral. The film was created by German animator Jacob Frey who was inspired by a comic strip by Brazilian artist Fabio Coala. Frey said he was in awe of the storyline of the comic and was inspired to translate it into an animated short film. The film is about a boy who is enthusiastically playing video games indoors; his Mom comes home and brings him a new puppy as a present but the boy seems more interested in his video games than playing with his new dog. The dog has a disability and it turns out that the dog and the boy have something in common, which is revealed at the end. The film can spark a conversation about people with disabilities in an age appropriate, accessible and engaging way.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to watch and reflect upon the film, learn more about people with disabilities and create their own comic strip based on the film or another story about a person with a disability.

[Note to Teacher: In discussing the topic of people with disabilities with students, be sensitive and thoughtful about whether you have students with disabilities in your class, especially “invisible” ones. Carefully consider the sensitivity of your students, the extent to which you have discussed the topic before and whether you might want to talk with those students in advance.]

See these additional ADL resources: *Curriculum Connections* “[Equal Treatment, Equal Access: Raising Awareness about People with Disabilities and Their Struggle for Equal Rights](#),” *Current Events Classroom* “[Dolls are Us](#)” and “[The Sound of Silence in Football](#),” [Disability Glossary](#) and [Communication Guidelines Relating to Ability](#).

Grade Level: grades 2–6

Time: 45 minutes

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language

Learning Objectives:

- Students will watch and reflect on *The Present*, a short film about a boy with a disability.
- Students will learn more about people with disabilities.
- Students will create a comic strip that highlights a part of the story or another story that resonates with them.

Compelling Question: What does it mean to live with a disability?

Material:

- *The Present* video (2014, 3 mins., Institute of Animation, Visual Effects & Digital Postproduction, <https://vimeo.com/152985022>)
- “Alabama teen with "nubs" for legs is state high school wrestling champ” (Newsela, March 3, 2016, <https://newsela.com/articles/teenage-wrestler/id/15185/>, one copy for each student)
- [Comic Strip Templates](#) (at least one copy for each student)

Vocabulary:

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL’s “[Glossary of Education Terms](#).”)

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|--------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
| • ableism | • census | • independence | • tibias |
| • accessible | • devices | • physical | • walker |
| • amputate | • disability | • prosthetic | • wrestling |

WATCH VIDEO: THE PRESENT

1. Watch the short film, *The Present*. Tell students they can jot down notes if they want to while watching.
2. Engage students in discussion by asking some or all the following questions (you may choose to stop the video halfway through and ask some questions, then resume and ask the rest of the questions):
 - What happens in the video?
 - How does the boy feel when he opens the box? How do you know?
 - What does the boy notice about the dog? What’s his reaction?
 - What is the dog doing and what is the boy’s reaction?
 - How is the boy feeling as he watches the dog play? How do you know?
 - Why do think the boy decides to go outside with the dog?
 - What happens in the end?
 - Did anything surprise you?
 - What is the message of the video?
 - Why do you think it is called *The Present*?

INFORMATION SHARING

1. Following up from the discussion after the video, elicit from the students that the video is about a boy with a disability who is playing a video game. He becomes inspired by a dog who is also disabled to play the dog outside because he sees the dog playing inside.
2. Ask students: *What is a disability?* Elicit and define **disability** as a mental or physical condition that affects a person’s movements, senses or activities. Ask students: *What are some examples of disabilities?* Provide examples such as: hearing loss and deafness, vision loss and blindness, learning disability such

as dyslexia, speech and language disorders, physical disabilities such as an inability to use legs, arms or the body trunk, mobility and movement impairments, etc.

3. Ask students: *What else do you know about disabilities?* Share some information about people with disabilities, including:
 - According to the 2010 Census, 19% of the U.S. population (almost 1 in 5 people), have a disability and 2.8 million school-age children have a disability.
 - People with physical disabilities make up the largest minority group in the U.S.
 - Students with disabilities or special needs have lower rates of participation in afterschool activities than other students, and face other challenges in school and in their communities.
4. Ask students: *Do you know what assistive technology is?* Before providing the definition, allow them to see if they can figure it out by taking the words apart. Explain that **assistive technology** helps people who are disabled perform tasks they were previously unable to do in order to gain more independence. Assistive technology provides tools or devices (i.e. wheelchair, hearing aid, braille) to help perform that task. Ask: *Can you think of any examples of assistive technology from the video or that you have seen in life?* Remind students that the boy in *The Present* had forearm crutches, which allow him to walk and do other activities with his legs that he would be unable to do otherwise.

Draw out and emphasize the point that while people with disabilities may have some limitations in what they can do, this doesn't mean they are incapable of doing most things and many have assistive technology to help them.
5. Explain to students that sometimes schools and other aspects of our society do not provide what is needed for people with disabilities. Also, explain that there is sometimes name-calling, bias, bullying, and discrimination directed at people with disabilities, in addition to being treated differently in areas of their lives where they shouldn't be. This is called **ableism**, which is defined as prejudice and/or discrimination against people because of their physical or mental disabilities. Engage students in a discussion by asking: *How is our school (and community) accessible and welcoming for people with disabilities? What would make it more safe, respectful and accessible?* Record their responses on the board/smart board and save for later as a possible activity to address some of the issues.

READING ACTIVITY

1. Distribute a copy of the article "[Alabama teen with "nubs" for legs is state high school wrestling champ](#)" (4th grade reading level) to all students and have them read silently for 10 minutes. You may also choose to read the article aloud or have students take turns reading aloud.

NOTE: If you require reading material for students with different reading levels, you can use [Newsela](#), a website that publishes high-interest news articles daily at five reading levels. There are articles about Hassan Hawthorne, a disabled teenage wrestler, available from Newsela at Grade Levels 2, 3, 4, 5, 12. You have to register (free) to access the articles. Depending on the grade level you teach, you may need to adjust the discussion questions below.

2. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions (*these questions are based on the 4th grade article referenced above*):
 - What did you learn about Hassan Hawthorne from the article?
 - What was the difficult choice that Hassan's parents had to make? Why do you think it was difficult?

- When Hassan says he is “just like other people, just with different legs,” what does he mean by this? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your thinking.
- Why do you think Hassan’s parents taught him that life isn’t fair?
- What does it mean to “live with a disability?”
- How did you feel reading about Hassan’s story?
- What did you learn from reading about his story?

CREATE A COMIC STRIP

1. Explain to students that the filmmaker who made *The Present* originally came up with the idea from a comic strip he felt inspired by. Tell them that they are going to make their own comic strips, which can be based on *The Present*, the article they read about Hassan Hawthorne or another story about a person with a disability.
2. Explain to students that they will need to decide in advance what story, or part of the story, they wish to tell. They should consider what characters will be included, the words they will use for the speech and thought bubbles, how many panels/boxes are needed and what each will represent. It might be helpful to have students write out their plot, characters and dialogue in advance on a separate piece of paper. Have them select the Comic Strip Templates they need. If students need more than one template, give them additional templates. Speech/thought bubbles are also provided to be resized and reproduced as needed.
3. Give students 10–15 minutes to sketch out their comic strip and write in the speech and thought bubbles. If they need more time, assign the completion of it for homework.

CLOSING

Have students share their comic strip with each other, either by having them get into small groups of 4–5 students and share among the group or have each student share aloud with the class.

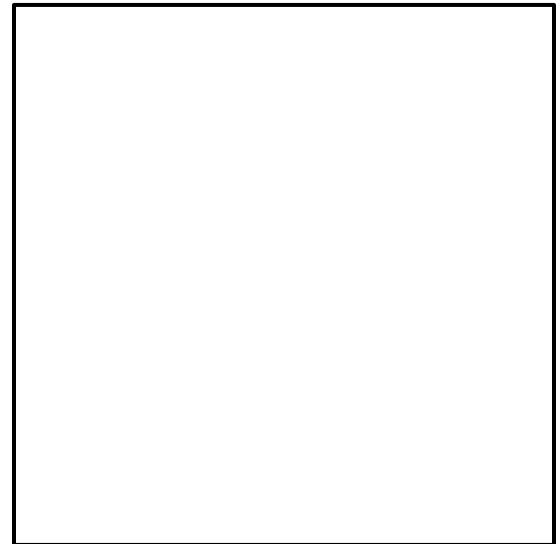
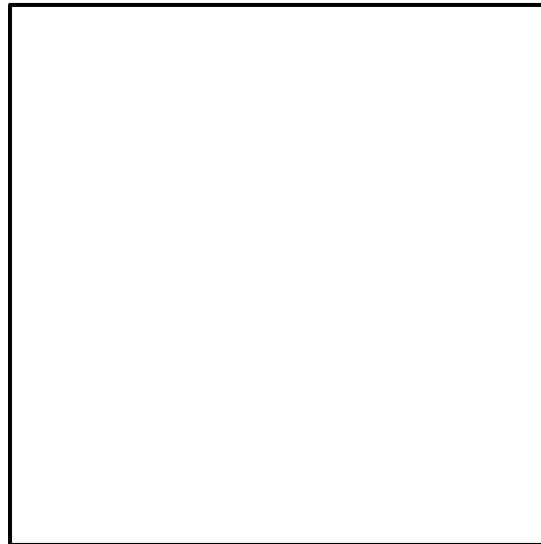
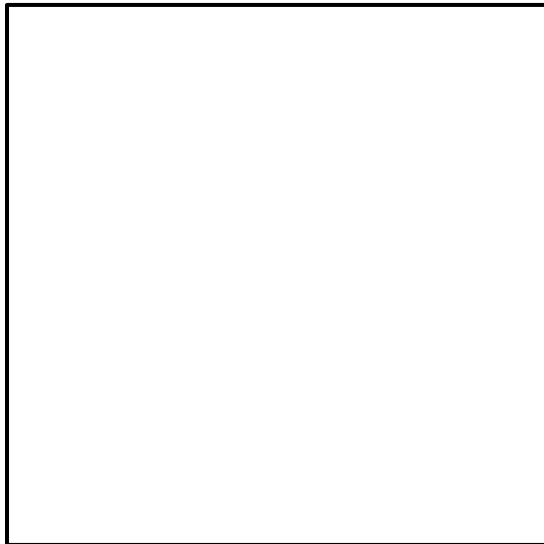
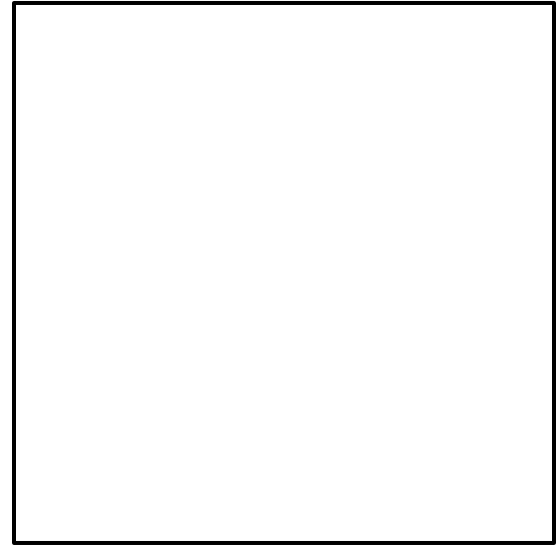
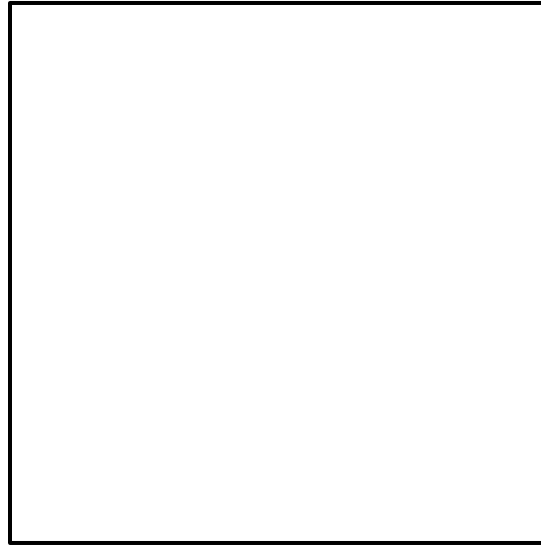
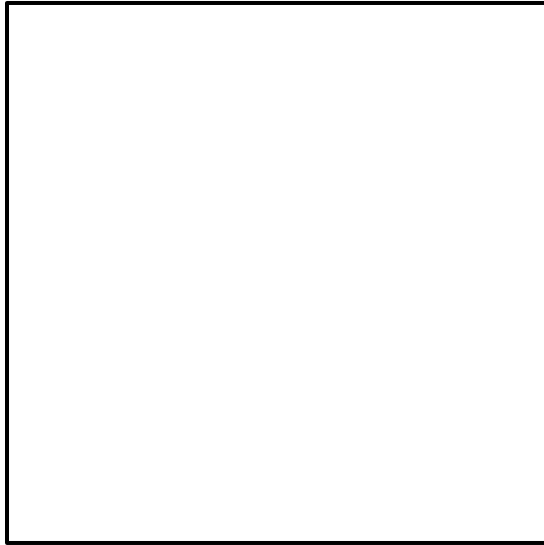
ADDITIONAL READING

- [11 Facts About Physical Disability](#) (Do Something)
- [“Disability Awareness: 10 Things Parents Should Teach Their Kids About Disabilities”](#) (*The Huffington Post*, August 2, 2013)
- [Nearly 1 in 5 People Have a Disability in the U.S., Census Bureau Reports](#) (U.S. Census Bureau, July 25, 2012)
- [“Students With Physical Disabilities Speak Out on Challenges in School”](#) (NEA Today, March 28, 2013)
- [“Uplifting short film shows the touching bond between a boy and his puppy”](#) (Today, May 13, 2016)
- [Teaching Your Child About Peers With Special Needs](#) (Care.com)

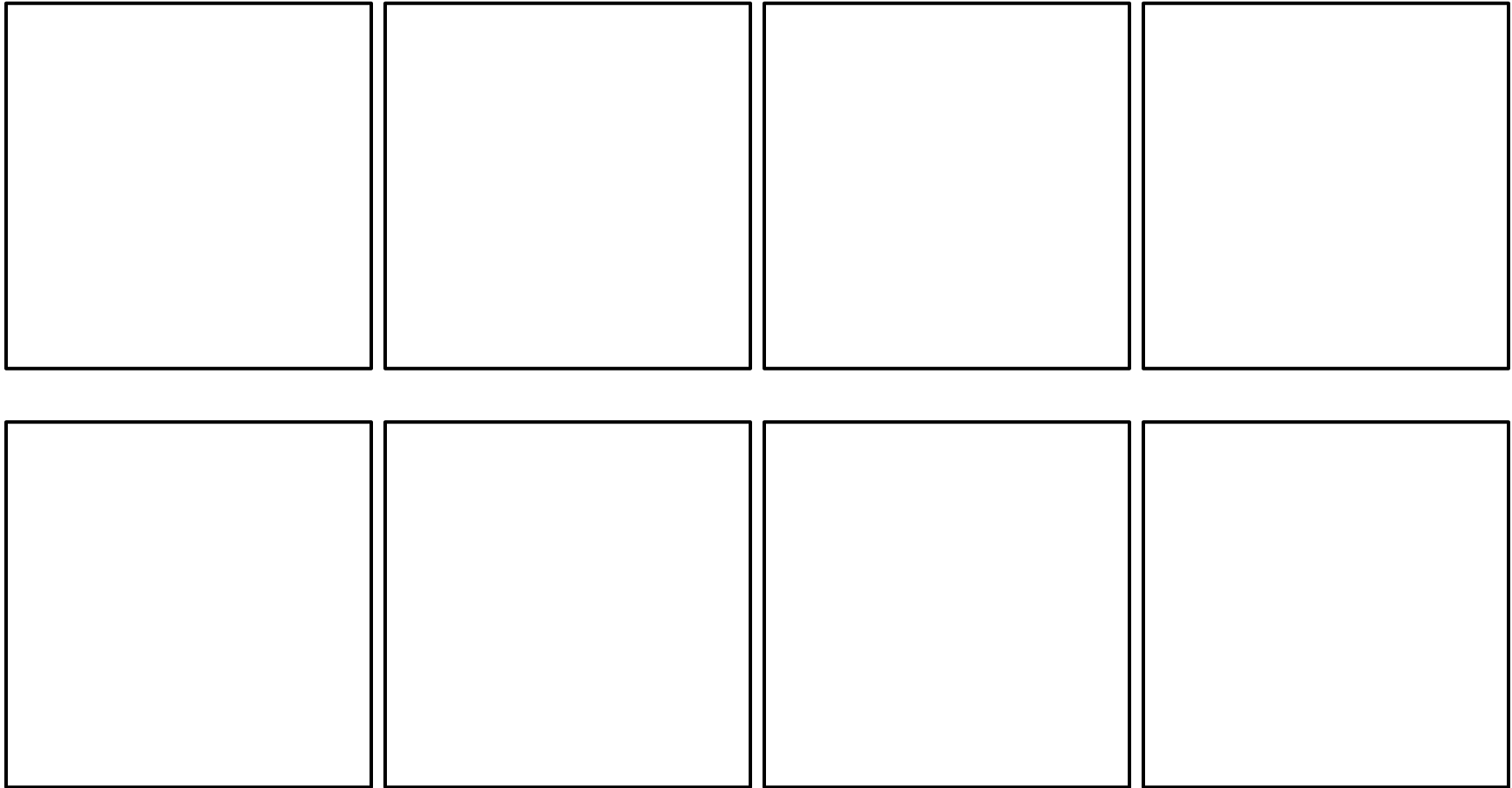
COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
Standard 5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
Language
Standard 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts and consulting general and specialized reference materials as appropriate.

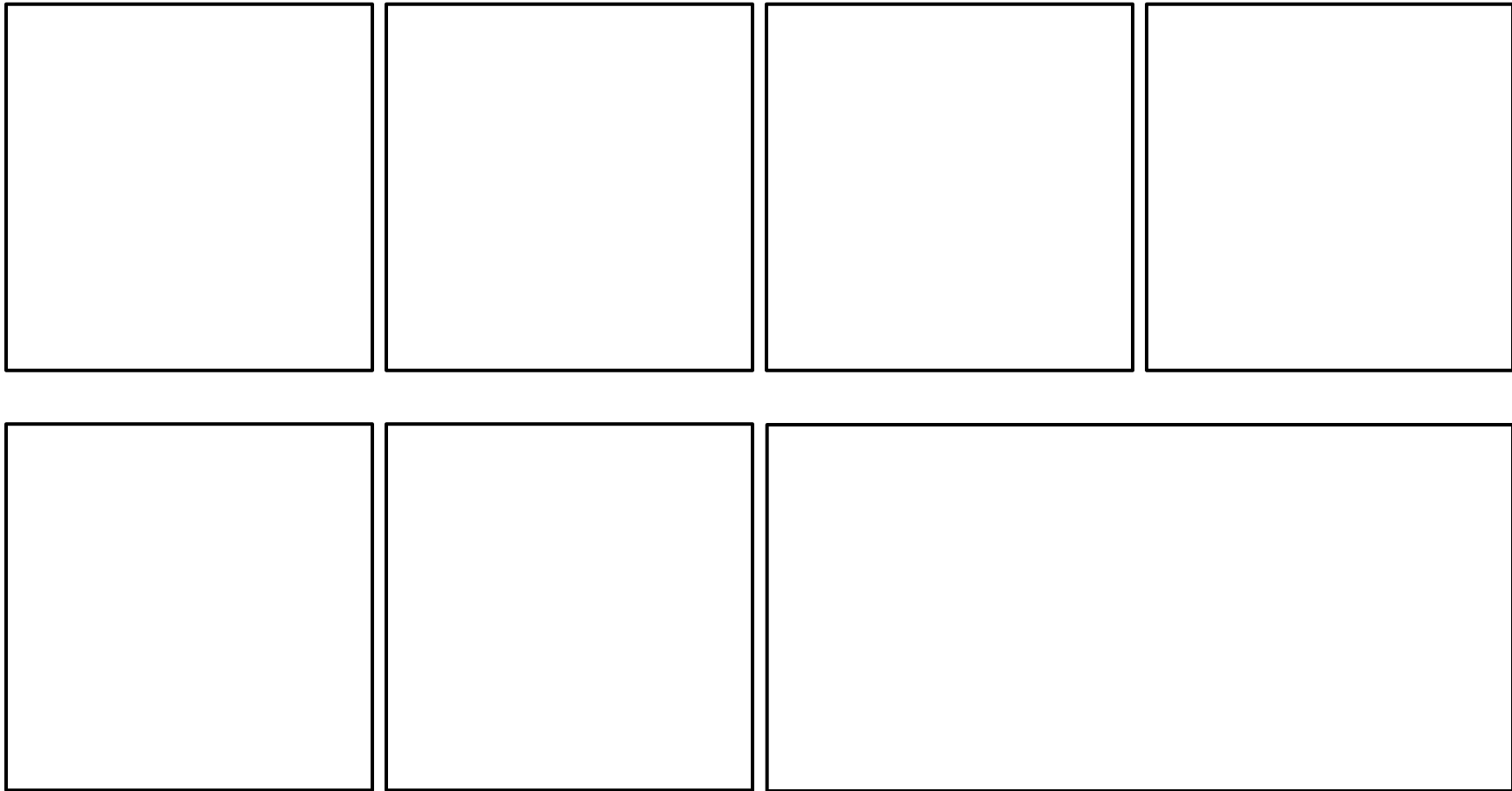
COMIC STRIP TEMPLATE SAMPLES



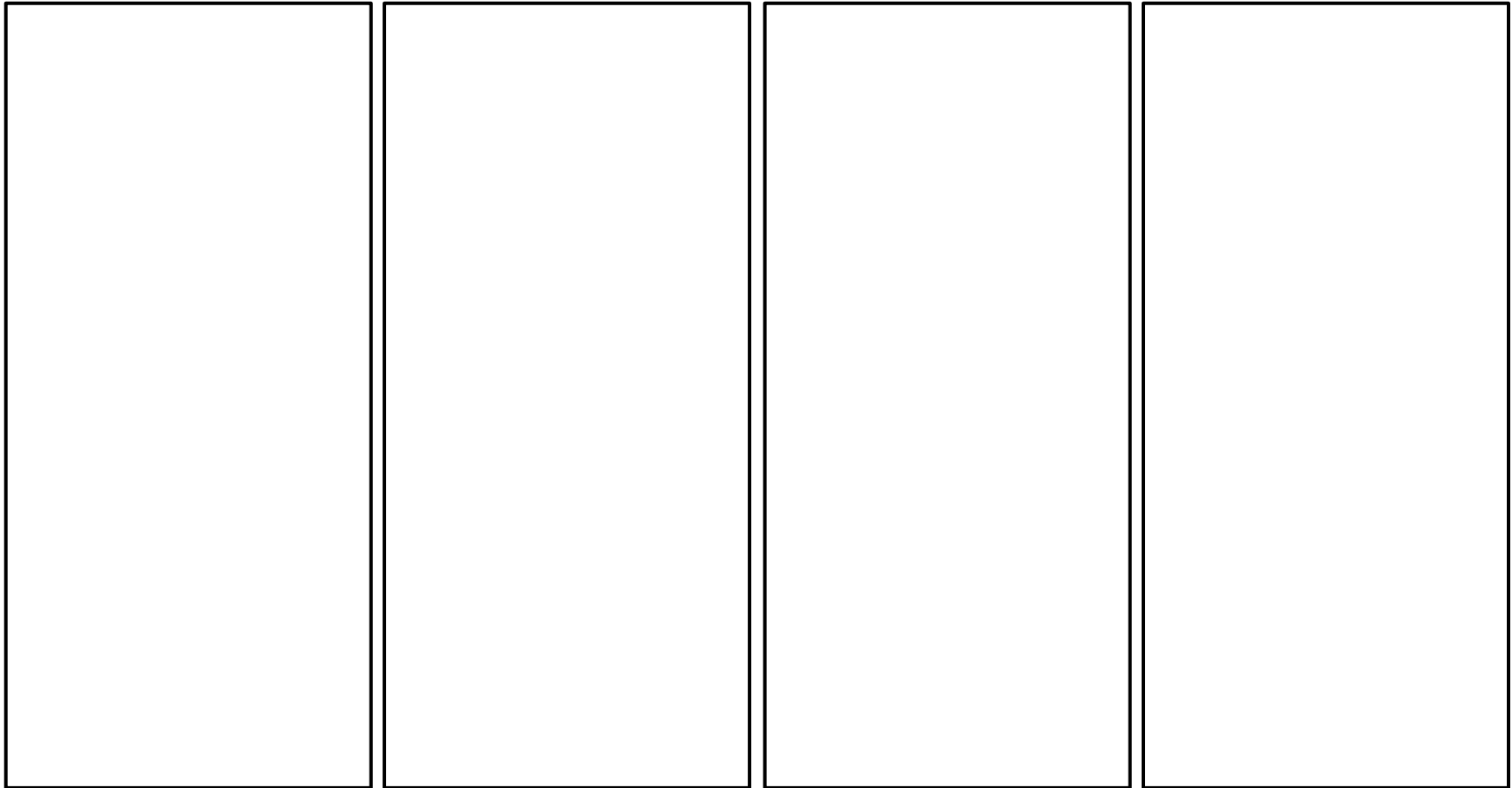
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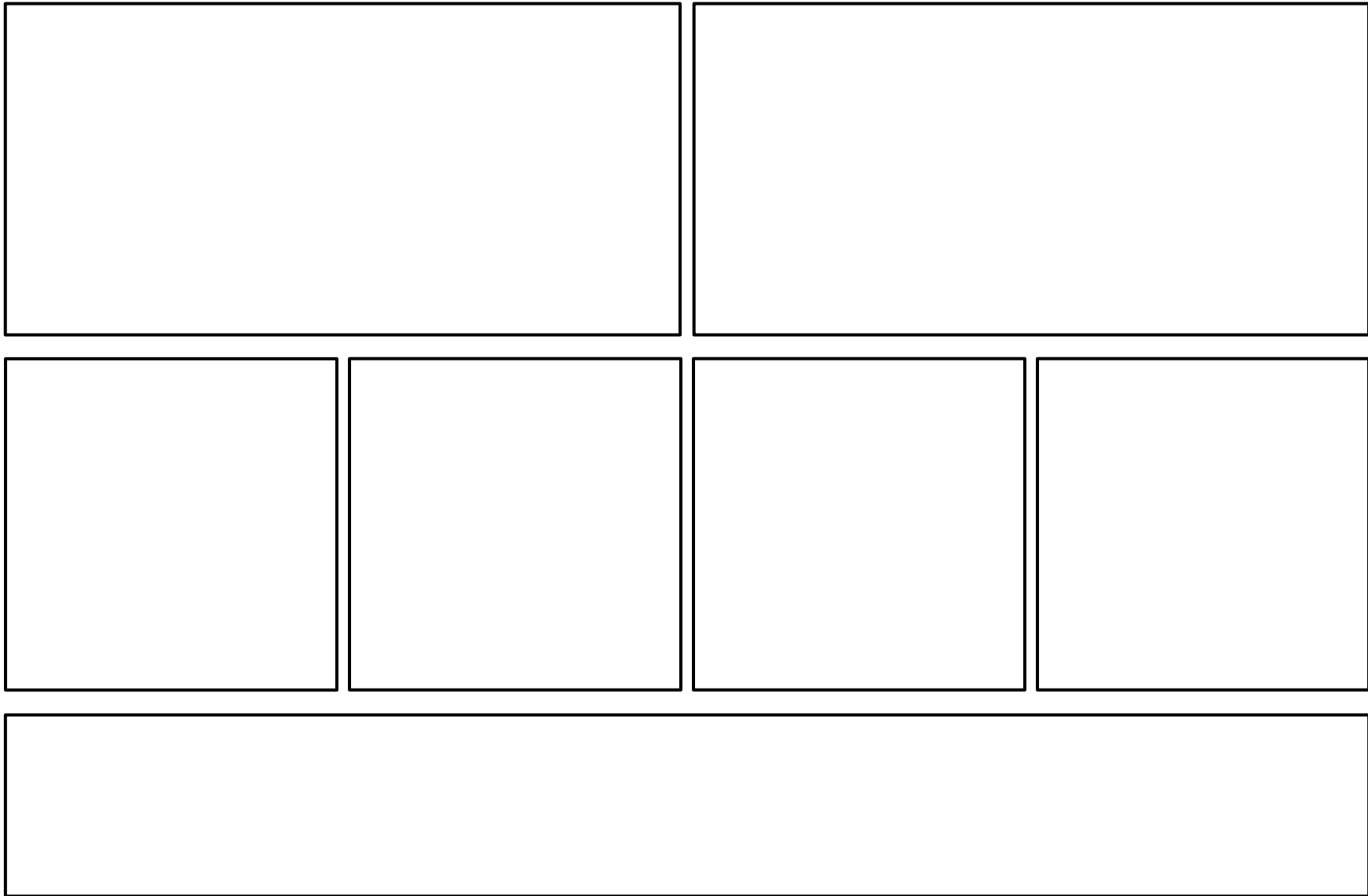
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COMIC STRIP TEMPLATE SAMPLES

The image shows a comic strip template with five panels. The first two rows each contain two panels of equal size. The third row contains a single, wide panel that spans the width of both panels from the rows above. All panels are empty, providing a space for drawing and writing.

COMIC STRIP SPEECH/THOUGHT BUBBLES

