



zen pencils

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES FOR KIDS

TEACHER RESOURCE

New York Times Bestselling Cartoonist
GAVIN AUNG THAN

Zen Pencils is an exciting and unique comic form that takes inspirational and famous quotations and adapts them into graphic stories. Take your students beyond everyday curriculum and allow them to explore these complex and engaging visual narratives that are great springboards to introspection, conversation, and creation in the classroom.

Each *Zen Pencils* comic can spark a new attitude or help students see themselves in a different light. Let this book inspire deep conversations in your classroom, build your classroom community, and help students express their emotions—and watch for the many teachable moments that will arise.

The themes in *Zen Pencils* will get your students thinking and talking about many aspects of social-emotional learning and character education:

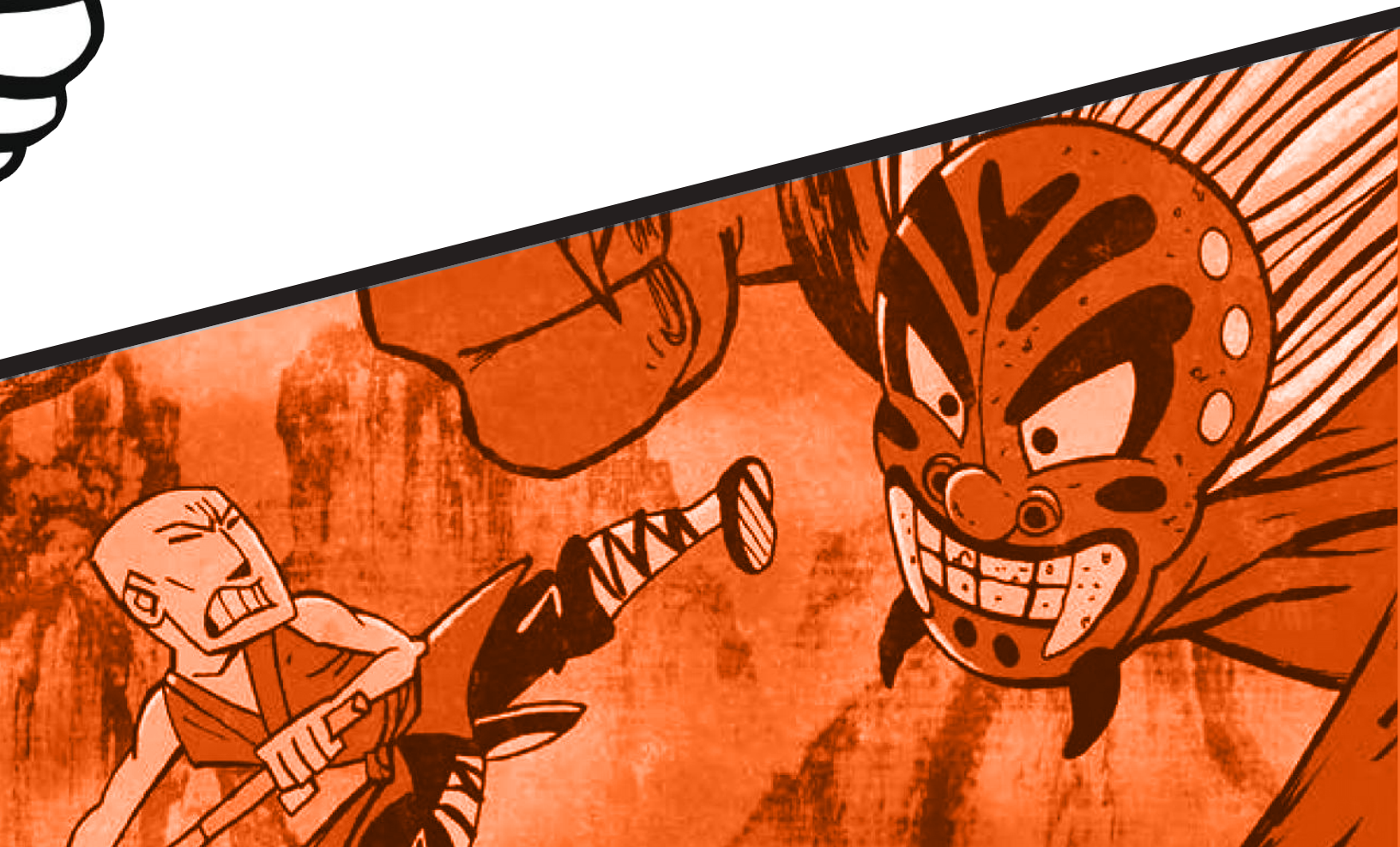
- **PERSISTENCE AND DETERMINATION**
- **RESILIENCE**
- **STRENGTH OF CHARACTER**
- **SELF-CONFIDENCE**
- **MOTIVATION**
- **COMMITMENT**
- **EMPATHY**
- **GRATITUDE**
- **CREATIVITY**
- **FRIENDSHIP**
- **HAPPINESS**



Shantanu Rajadhyaksha at B.D Somani International School in India uses *Zen Pencils* as an anchor point to start the school day and weaves the lessons throughout the curriculum.

“ We used them in our morning meetings, to talk about the quote/personality and discuss further. The comics...are great starting points to expand on connected ideas of socio-emotional learning, philosophy and global issues. These are critical (and sometimes awkward for adolescents) issues...and the comics help provide a comfortable way in which students can spark their own learning. ”

—Shantanu Rajadhyaksha, Teacher



Choose a theme from one or more of the comics and you can use them across the curriculum.

CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING, HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY

The quotes come from a wide cross-section of inspiring individuals, including Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore, aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart, Chinese philosopher Confucius, Civil Rights leader Howard Thurman, writer and internet phenom John Green, inventor Margaret E. Knight, and Stoic philosopher Epictetus. Encourage students to delve into the life of the author of their favorite quote—the selection is diverse and inspiring.

CHOOSE A JOB YOU LOVE Confucius



CHOOSE A JOB YOU LOVE,
AND YOU WILL NEVER HAVE
TO WORK A DAY IN YOUR LIFE.
-CONFUCIUS



POETRY AND LITERATURE

A number of the comics are drawn to poems, and all are ripe for rich literature practices such as close reading, interpretation, and analysis.

“ *This marriage of visual and original text is a sophisticated form of synthesis that we strive to teach our students to do in the language arts. In fact, if given the opportunity, students will leap at the chance to take material they often see as “boring” and make it into something to which they would react more favorably.* ”

—Ronell Whitaker, Teacher, Comics Education Outreach



... IT WILL COME
AND SIT SOFTLY ON
YOUR SHOULDER.

- HENRY DAVID THOREAU

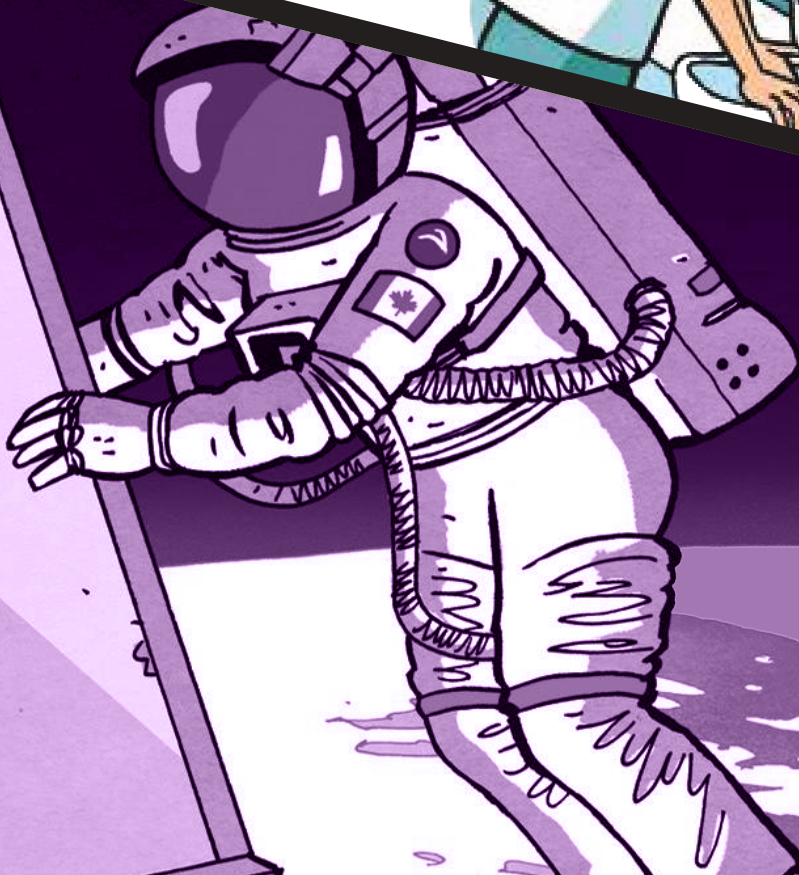
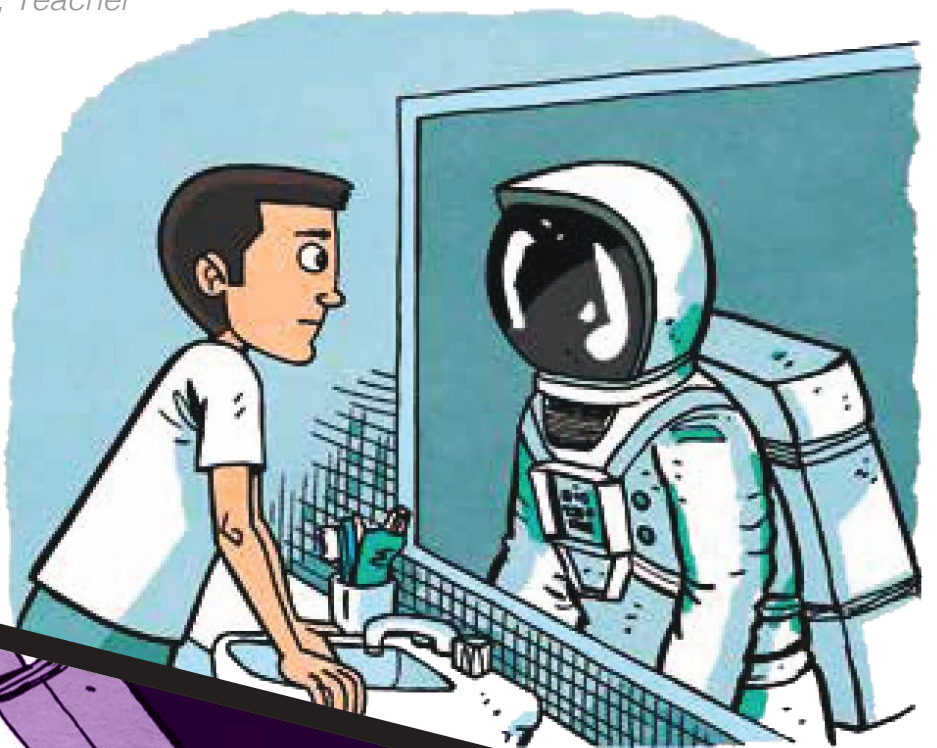
ART

Gavin Aung Than uses a wide variety of styles in *Zen Pencils*. Some are fairly direct translations of the chosen quotes; others are separate narratives illustrating the meaning or lesson of the quote. Each is filled with meaning, symbolism, and metaphor for students to uncover. And engaging students in the creation of their own visual narratives expands their ability to express themselves, and offers multiliterate and multimodal means of documenting learning.

“*Students have also found Zen Pencils to help them reflect effectively, as doodling and drawing helps tap into their visual imagination making it easier to articulate emotions and describe detail.*”

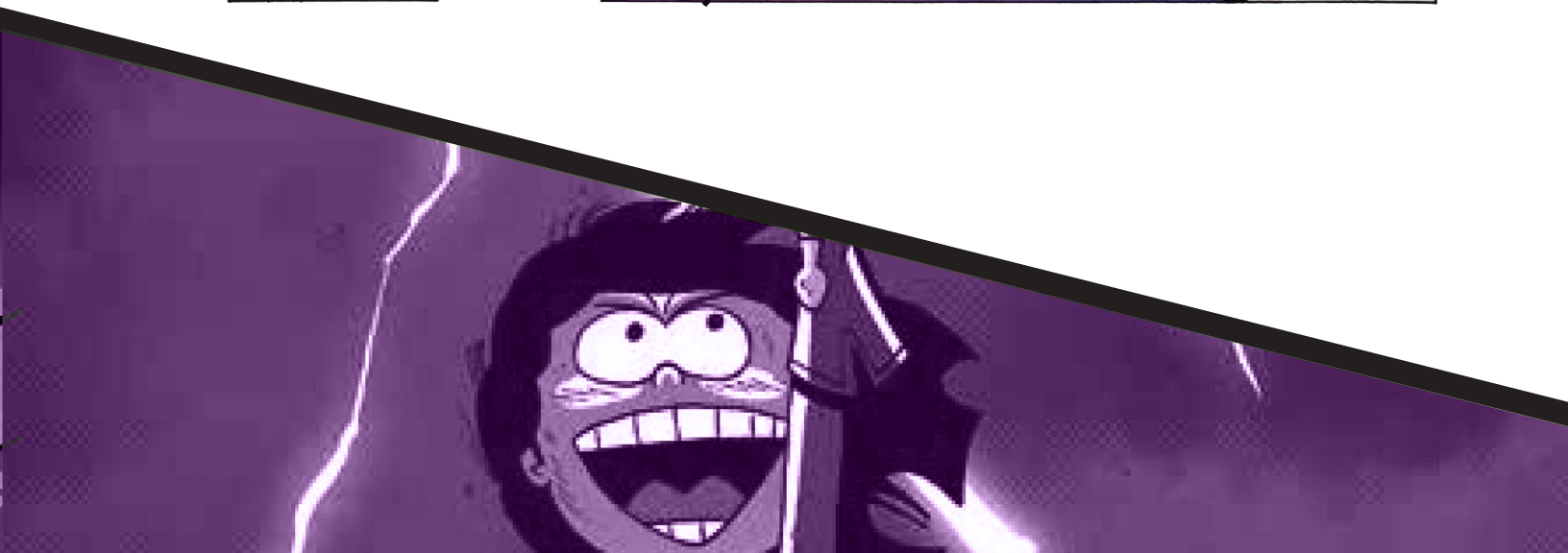
—Shantanu Rajadhyaksha, Teacher

LOOK AT
WHO YOU
WANT TO BE,
AND START
SCULPTING
YOURSELF
INTO THAT
PERSON.



PHILOSOPHY, ETHICS, AND REASONING

What does it all mean? Is life ever fair? Who am I, and who do I want to be? *Zen Pencils* gives students the opportunity to explore ethical, logical, and other philosophical aspects of their experiences that are already intensely meaningful for them, but that are not often given attention in schools. Unleash their natural inclination to wonder at themselves, each other, and the world. Can you be brave and scared at the same time? What is “good art”? Is it better to burn out than fade away?



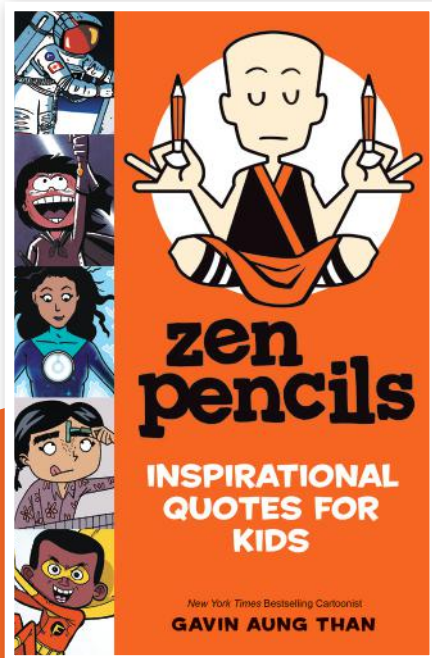
GAVIN'S STORY

As a whole, Gavin's work has been excellent as a learning tool for students and...his journey is very inspirational for kids to believe in themselves and their dreams. —*Shantanu Rajadhyaksha, Teacher*

Cartoonist Gavin Aung Than's story reads like one of his most inspiring cartoons. He followed his own motivational advice, setting an example for those who wish to make their dreams into reality:

“*After years of working a soul-crushing job as well as doing two different comic strips every week, I had burnt myself out and decided to re-evaluate my life. At my old job, when my boss wasn't looking, I would waste time reading Wikipedia pages, mainly biographies about people whose lives were a lot more interesting than mine. Their stories and quotes eventually inspired me to leave my job to focus on what I really wanted to do. The idea of taking these inspiring quotes, combining them with my love of drawing, and sharing them with others led to the creation of Zen Pencils. It's easy to get tired of all the 'anything is possible' and 'follow your dreams' mantras that saturate today's social media world, but Zen Pencils is proof that it worked for me, and if it only does one thing, I hope that this book shows that it can work for you, too.*”

—Gavin Aung Than



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