



Calling Students to Adventure

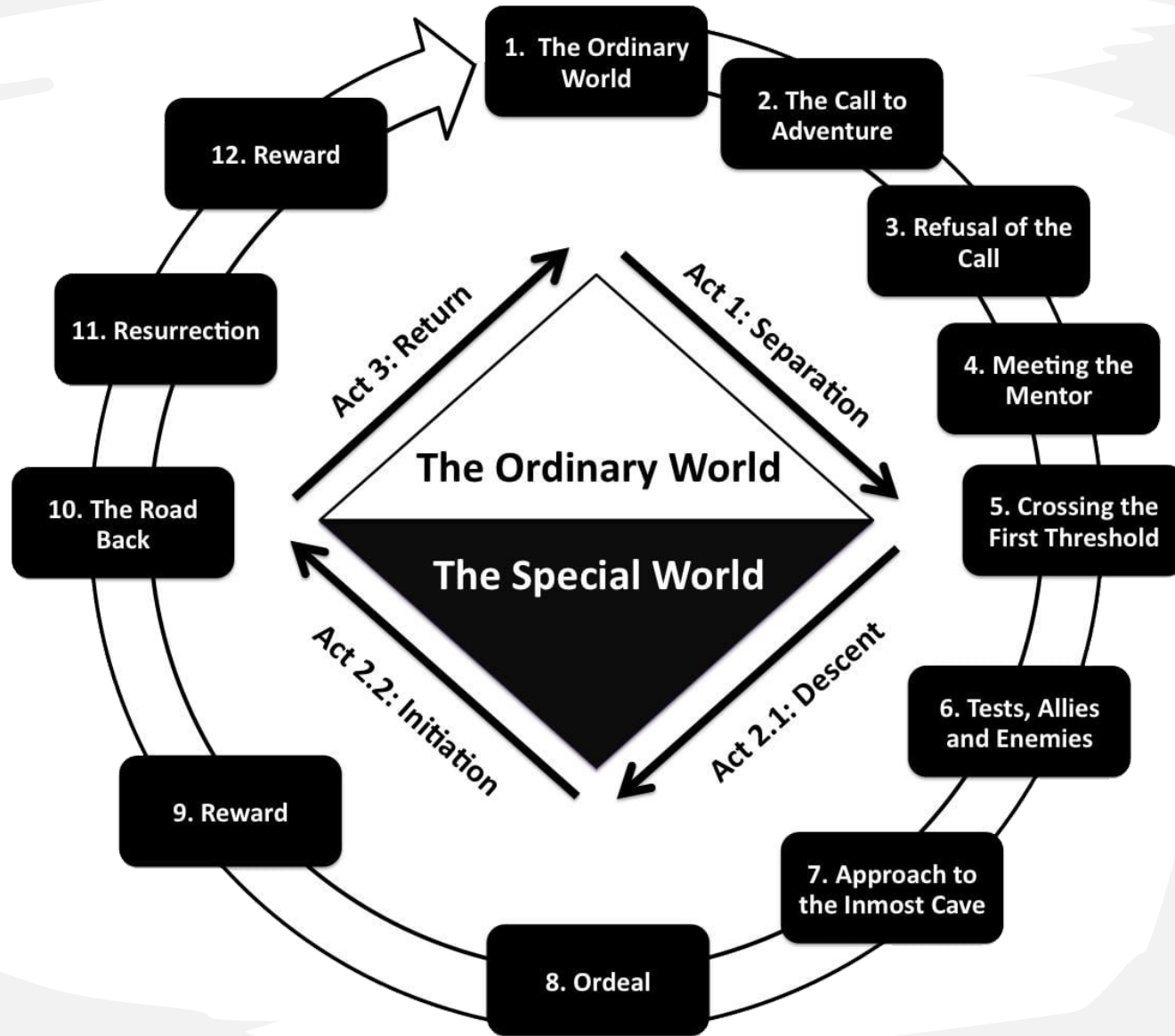
Using the hero's journey as a tool for curriculum planning and reviewing course design

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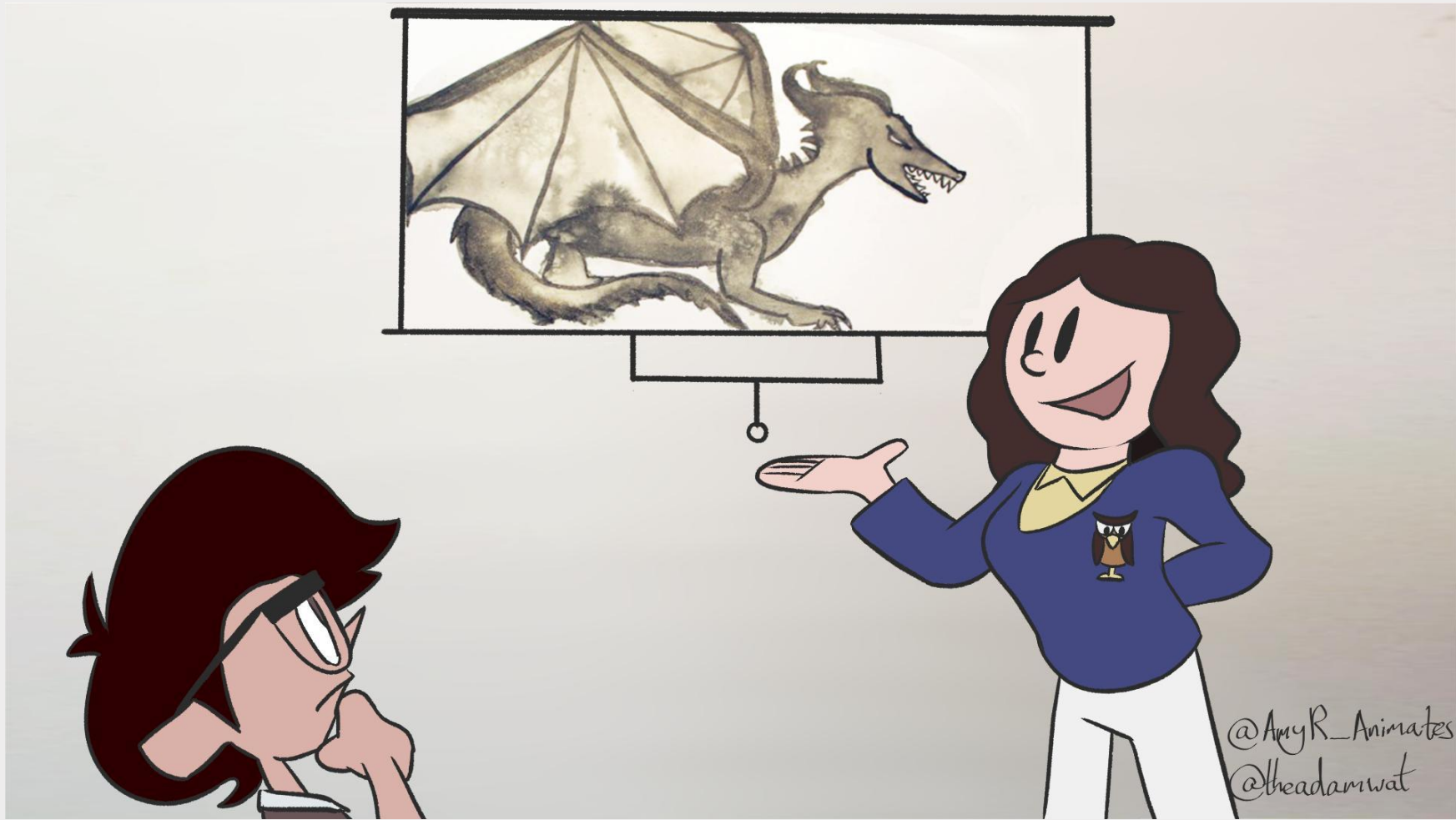
Images by Amy Rose and Adam Watkins (Staffordshire University)

The Stages of the Hero's Journey

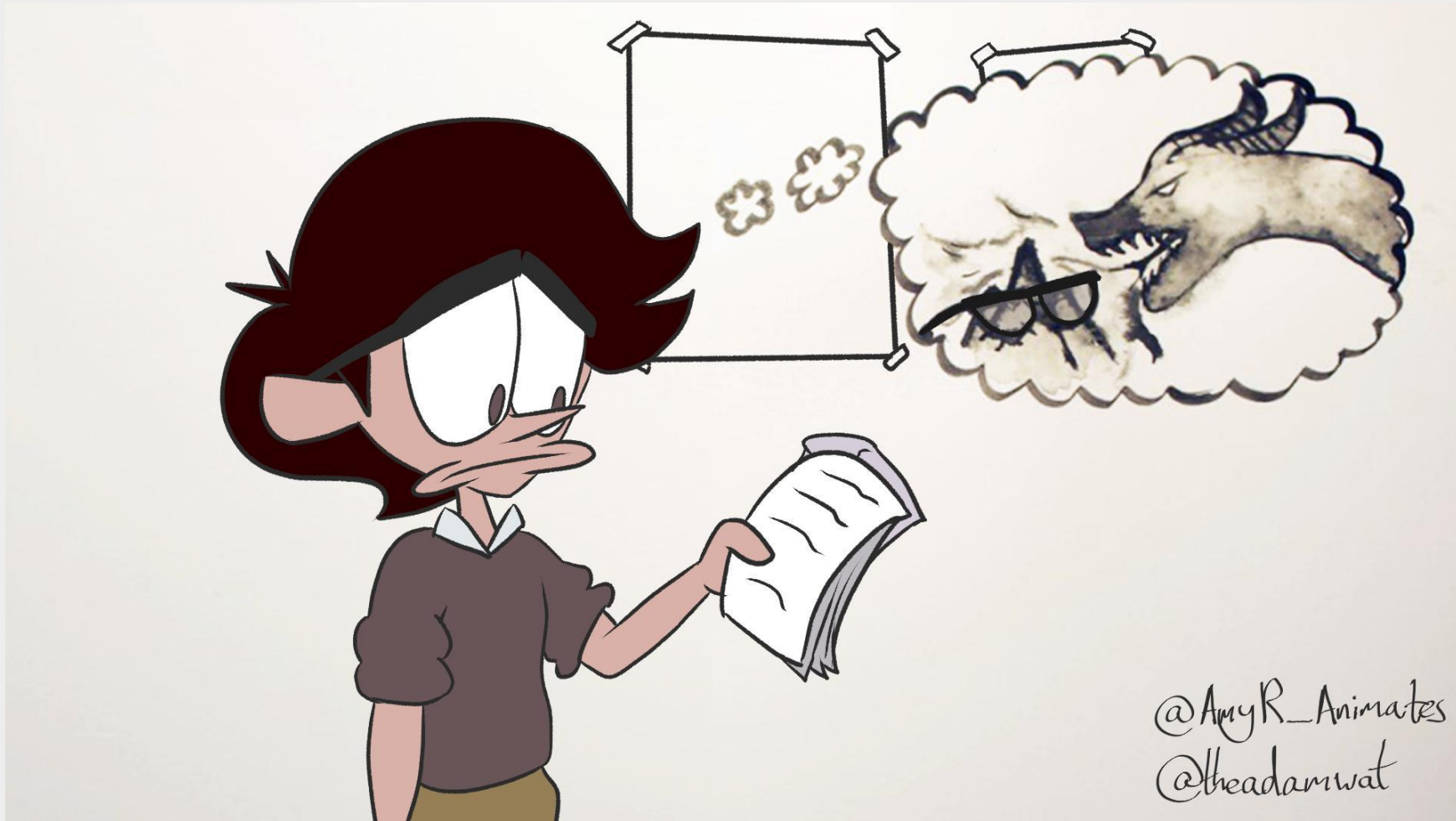




Stage i) The hero is introduced in their ORDINARY WORLD



Stage ii) The CALL TO ADVENTURE



Stage iii) The hero is reluctant at first (REFUSAL OF THE CALL)



**Stage iv) The hero is encouraged by the Wise Old Man or Woman
(MEETING WITH THE MENTOR(S))**



Stage v) The hero passes the first threshold (CROSSING THE THRESHOLD)

Scavenger Hunt

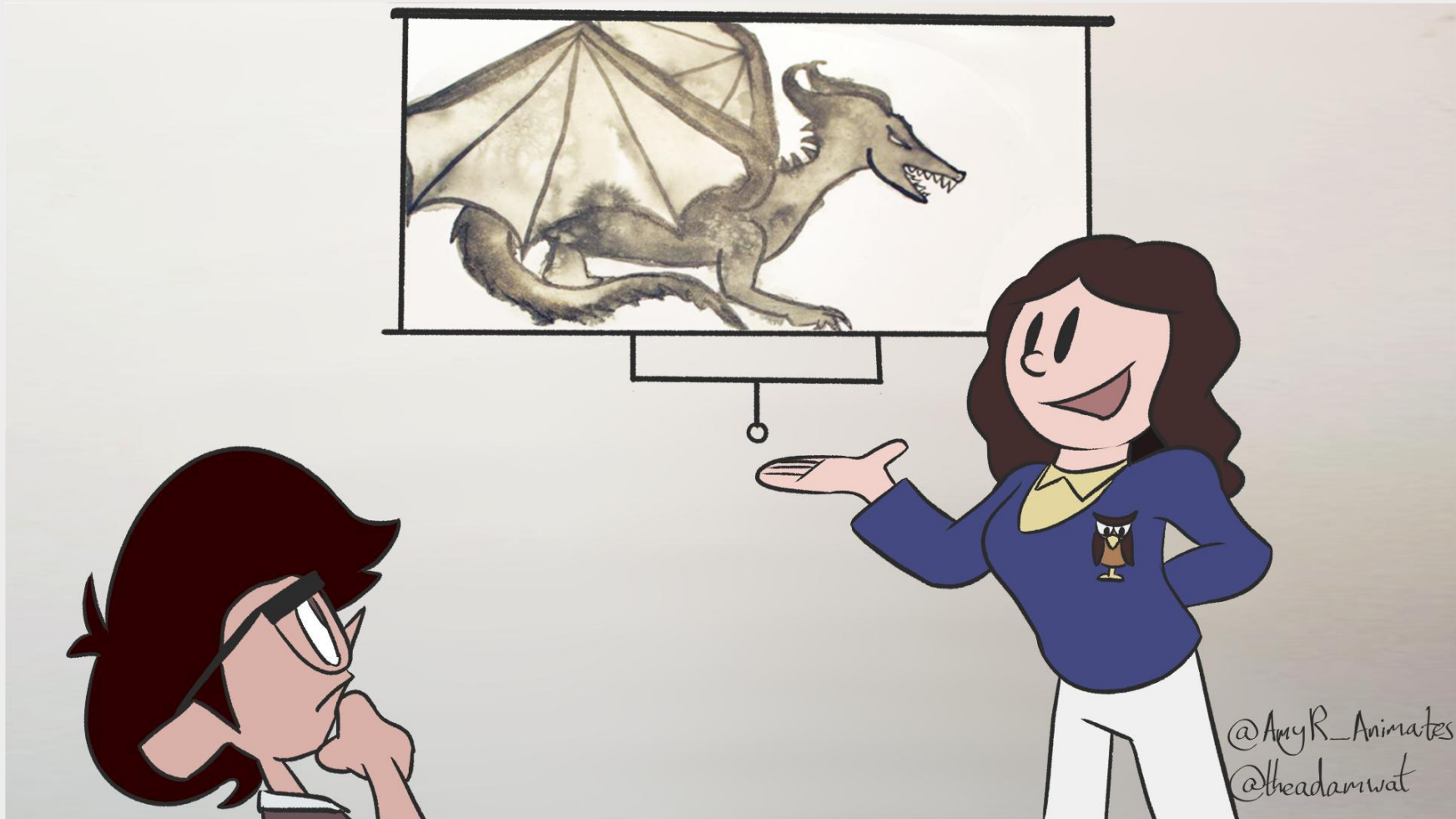
(Individual Activity)

You have 5 minutes to represent

1. The special world
2. The ordinary world

Using, for example

- Film still
- Book
- Go outside and take a photograph
- Food or drink stuff
- Garment/something from your wardrobe
- Something that makes sound/music
- Souvenir/memento from somewhere else
- Everyday household item



Stage ii) The CALL TO ADVENTURE

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Diagnostic questions for stage ii):

- What will your students be able to do as a result of studying this unit with you?
- What are the big/major/important questions that will this unit raise, or that this unit is designed to help students answer?
- What is the core challenge/promise/intended learning outcome for this unit?
- How is the challenge/promise of the unit presented to the students? Do you clearly brief them on it, or is it somewhat hidden? If you choose to hide it, what is the reason for it?
- How are you setting expectations – do you clearly state what is expected of students? Do you start with a task that ‘talks the talk’? (And if you do, do you explain to the student in retrospect?)
- Does this unit contain tasks and/or assessments? (If not, how will you know that your students are learning?) Are these formative or summative? How do you explain to the students what they should be doing, how they get feedback on it and how and if it gets judged (and by whom)?
- Do you explain or model the journey as a whole and explain how this unit fits into it?
- Do you explain your teaching philosophy (your approach to teaching) to students? (Why have you chosen to teach in the way that you do, and what evidence do you have that your teaching approach works? Have you written, or might you consider writing, a teaching philosophy statement?)
- If you’re adopting a pedagogical strategy or approach to teaching with which students may be unfamiliar, how do you explain or ‘sell’ this to your students?

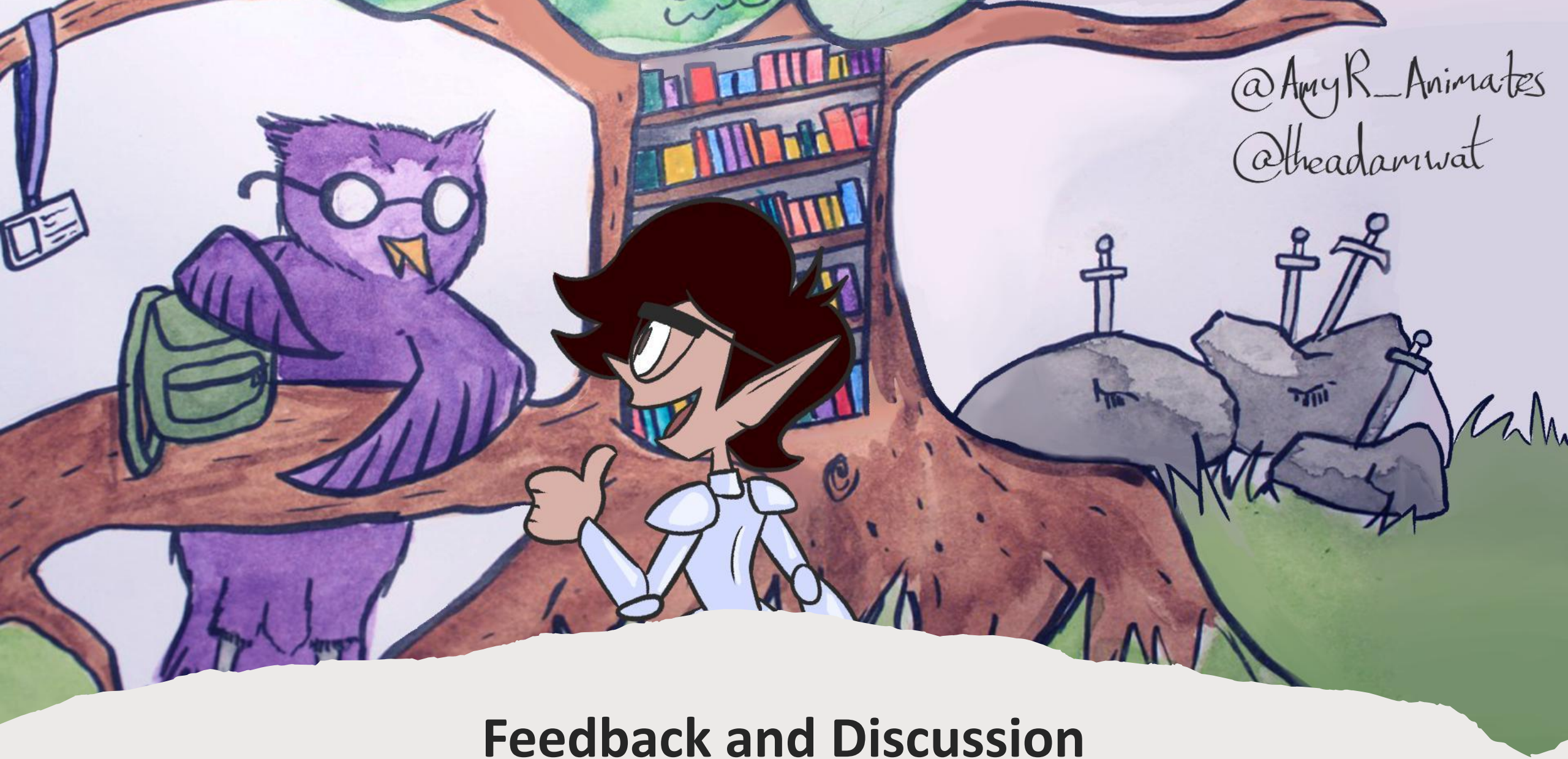
Diagnostic Questions

(Group activity)

Taking the following two diagnostic questions from stage ii, consider whether and how you address these with your students on your units/modules:

- How is the challenge/promise of the unit presented to the students? Do you clearly brief them on it, or is it somewhat hidden? If you choose to hide it, what is the reason for it?
- How are you setting expectations – do you clearly state what is expected of students? Do you start with a task that ‘talks the talk’? (And if you do, do you explain to the student in retrospect?)

Following on from this, could using the objects you found in the previous activity help you to better understand potential issues that students might be having when first encountering your unit/module?



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Feedback and Discussion

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THE HERO'S JOURNEY

CREDITS & FURTHER READING

Introduction

*"Is your course like a journey, a parable, a game, a museum, a romance, a concerto, an Aristotelian tragedy, an obstacle course, one or all or some of the above?"**

The 'student experience' and the 'student journey' are at the forefront of contemporary Higher Education, which is much more seen as an individually transformational endeavour than the simple collection of knowledge it once was. In this context it has become more and more important to consider the role and agency of students as part of learning and teaching planning, rather than just focus on content that is to be mysteriously transmitted. We suggest that it is worth considering the framework provided by the hero's journey, a model coming out of scriptwriting, as a guiding principle behind planning new and reflecting on old learning and teaching design. In so doing, educators can provide a fresh look at their courses and modules and truly put the individual student front and centre of their own learning journey, by casting them in the role of hero. The somewhat simple formula of the hero who encounters many obstacles on their journey, and returns to the ordinary world transformed, and often with some kind of magical boon, can easily be read as the student who encounters many obstacles and tests on their journey through university (but more specifically through subject knowledge/content/skills), and (hopefully) returns to the ordinary world (or the 'real world' outside of the realm of academia) transformed, with the 'magical' boon of subject knowledge and relevant skills to their chosen discipline.



<https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/hero/>