

FOR THE RECORD

A MONTHLY MEDIA LITERACY RESOURCE FROM TORONTO STAR CLASSROOM CONNECTION

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A FEW LAUGHS TO LIGHTEN THE NEWS

Comics are one of the most popular features of any news publication. They provide a chuckle amid the more serious news articles. But do you ever think about who creates them—who thinks up the ideas, writes the words and draws the pictures? Rina Piccolo creates the comic Rhymes With Orange. It is seen in more than 300 newspapers, magazines and websites every day including the Toronto Star.

Cartoonists think up jokes—or “gags” as they call them—and draw pictures to go with them. Unlike “[editorial cartoons](#)” (covered in the April 2020 edition of For the Record) which are a form of news and are about current events, comics like Rhymes with Orange are just for fun.

“We just want to give people a laugh, a smile—it’s fun. (Comics are) fun to do and fun to read,” says Piccolo. Piccolo didn’t go to school to learn how to make comics, although some cartoonists do. She is self-taught.

“The only schooling I would advise for someone who wants to do this kind of work is get an education in however many topics that you can handle: history, science, sociology, politics,” she says. “And read. Read a lot! You’ve got to fill your brain with stuff! Because it’s going to come in really handy when you’re sitting down trying to drum up ideas.”

Around the age of 3 or 4, Piccolo says, she started scribbling and never stopped.

And she says that’s key to getting really good at drawing—keep at it. She points out that kids also have lots of resources, like YouTube, that offer free lessons.

How does Piccolo get her ideas? She says she sits down every morning for about an hour and a half, flipping through magazines looking at the ads, the photographs and the articles for ideas. She’s not thinking, “what’s funny?” she’s asking herself “what irritates people? What’s really annoying?”

For instance, waiting in line can be really boring and it’s something we all experience. Once she’s hit upon an interesting idea, she asks herself a what-if question. What if... a monster came along? (See the other side for your chance to draw this comic yourself!)



HOW WAS THIS COMIC MADE?

Rina Piccolo was thinking about news stations and how some of them have a “news ticker” that scrolls along the bottom of the screen during broadcasts. She was thinking how annoying those tickers are when you’re trying to read them and watch the news anchor at the same time. She has heard other people say they find them annoying, too. “On the piece of paper I was working with I had little sketches of medieval court jesters and kings and queens. And I thought in the medieval days, people used to get the news from a guy on the horse who would just ride

from town to town and spread the news. If there’s a messenger delivering the news to the king and queen how could I tie that into the ticker thing going along the bottom? They didn’t have electronics. So it would just be a bunch of messengers going across the bottom. And I started to laugh—a bunch of guys literally crawling around the floor. This is one Hilary’s going to say yes to right away—and she did, absolutely. Those are the kinds of cartoons where you almost have no doubt that it works.”

SYNDICATION

How does Rhymes With Orange get into the newspaper or a news website? Once Piccolo has come up with an idea, she does a rough sketch and sends it to Hilary Price, the cartoonist who started Rhymes With Orange and does the series' colour panels on the weekends. Price looks them over

to make sure they fit with the series and, of course, are funny. After that, the comics go to a syndicator, a company that makes agreements between the artist and the media who run the comics. That syndicator sends the comics out to its more than 300 publishers.

Check out more Rhymes With Orange comics on their website at rhymeswithorange.com. You can also visit Rina's website at rinapiccolo.com. Visit Hilary Price's website at hilaryprice.net.



DRAW YOUR OWN COMIC

Line-ups can be super annoying sometimes. And boring. But what if ... a monster came along? Try writing a caption for this comic to make it funny. You can add a speech bubble, with someone (even the monster) saying something. Think about what they're waiting in line for and why the monster is there. What's going to happen? Put a twist on reality – and make it funny!



THE NEXT BIG THING

What's next? Digital comics you can virtually "walk through" and interact with online. Check out the Rhymes With Orange website here for their first interactive comic.

VISIT:
**Rhymes with
orange**



DID YOU KNOW?

What word rhymes with orange? There isn't one. That's the joke! Literally no word in the English language rhymes with orange. (Try to think of one—we bet you can't. It's funny!)

