What is extremism, really?

Part 1

Learning objectives

Explain what the words like radicalisation, extremism, and ideology mean

Discuss why tolerance and respect are important in everyday life

Ground rules

Do:

- Respect, listen, and let others finish
- Share ideas, not others' personal details
- Pass if you wish
- Raise any concerns with staff
- Use respectful language
- Keep things private unless safety is at risk
- Ask questions

Don't

- Interrupt
- Share private information about others
- Use offensive/extremist language

Starter activity

What is extremism, really?

Starter activity

In pairs, or small groups, match the terms to their correct definitions

Term	Definition
Digital literacy	Digital literacy is…

Matching activity online

Starter activity

https://wordwall.net/resource/94387411

Reflection

- Were any of these terms new to you?

- If not, where have you seen or heard these terms being used before?

Picture stimuli

What is extremism, really?

Image 1:

What do you think is happening in this image?

Photo credit: ArtemisDiana

Image 2:

What do think is happening in this image?

Photo credit: csfotoimage

Image 3:

What has happened in this image?

What does the message mean?

Image 4:

What does this mean?

How does this affect you?

Photo credit: M R Fakhrurrozi

Reflection

- Has the image activity made you think or feel differently about anything, or consider a different perspective?

Debate

What is extremism, really?

Debate motion - You should always engage respectfully with people spreading extremist content online.

Debate motion

FOR	AGAINST
You should always engage respectfully with people spreading extremist content online.	You should never engage respectfully with people spreading extremist content online.

Debate roles and rules

Be respectful of others' opinions

Listen carefully to opposing views

Ask questions to clarify or challenge ideas

Only one person speaking at a time

Support your arguments with examples or evidence

Debate motion - You should always engage respectfully with people spreading extremist content online.

- What's the difference between challenging ideas and attacking people?

- When does online engagement become unsafe or unhelpful?

- How does tolerance apply when someone is promoting hate?

- What is the difference between challenging **an** idea and attacking **a** person?

Debate motion - You should always engage respectfully with people spreading extremist content online.

- When does engagement become unsafe or unhelpful?

- How does tolerance apply when someone is promoting hateful or extreme views?

- What are the risks of ignoring extremist content?

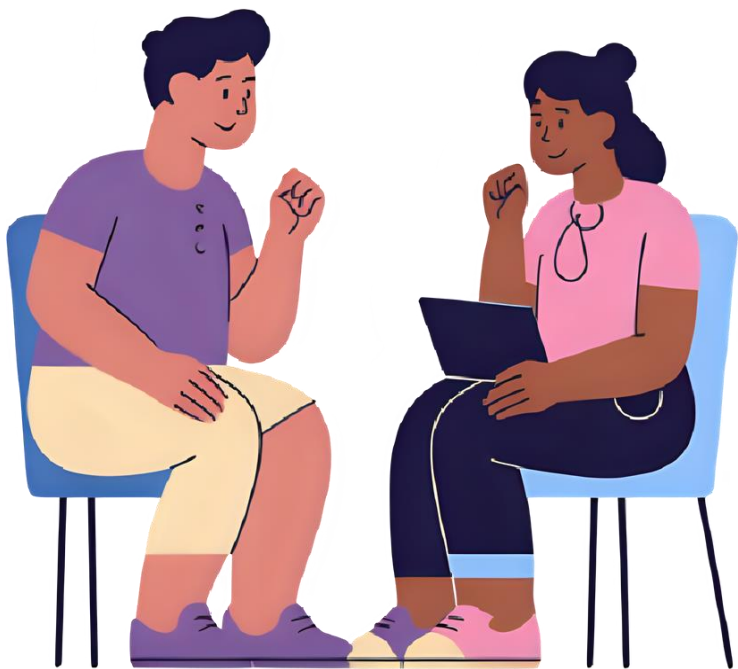- How do British values (tolerance, respect, rule of law) relate to this issue?

Reflection

- What went well?

- What was challenging?

- What did you learn about the topic and about debating?

Let's discuss

- Are you able to explain the following words?
  - radicalisation
  - extremism
  - ideology

- Why is tolerance and respect important in everyday life?

- What one thing are you going to take away from today?

Learning objectives

Talk about the ways people can be persuaded or tricked into believing harmful ideas

Describe ways to spot and push back against extremist messages

Ground rules

Do:

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Quiz activity

What is extremism, really?

Quiz

1) Which of these best describes extremism?

a) A mild political opinion

b) A belief system that accepts violence, hatred, and intolerance **CORRECT**

c) A way of being obsessed with something

d) A way of going far and beyond for something you want

Quiz

2) Mixed influence extremism means:

a) Extreme beliefs come from one single ideology

b) Mixing music styles online

c) Extreme beliefs from several different ideas or influences   **CORRECT**

d) Only happening in other countries

3) Grievance-based violence is often linked to:

a) Feeling happy about society

b) Acts or threats of violence that are motivated by a perceived injustice   **CORRECT**

c) Moving to a new school or neighbourhood

d) Drinking too much caffeine

Quiz

4) What is an echo chamber?

a) A place where people go to meditate in silence

b) A scientific device used to measure sound waves

c) An online space where people only listen to views they agree with, and other opinions are shut out **CORRECT**

d) A type of music studio used to create sound effects

5) Which of these is an example of an ideology?

a) Eating vegetarian food because you enjoy the taste

b) A set of political or religious beliefs   **CORRECT**

c) Liking a particular sports team

d) Becoming obsessed with lots of different ideas

6) Terrorism refers to:

Quiz

a) A natural disaster that causes widespread panic

b) Arguing with someone online about politics

c) A way of protesting peacefully

d) Ideologically motivated violence, or threat or violence

   CORRECT

7) Someone who believes in cultural nationalism, white nationalism and white supremacism, and advocates for violent ways to achieve this is likely to be:

a) A right wing extremist **CORRECT**

b) A left wing extremist

c) An Islamist extremist

d) A chicken wing extremist

Quiz

8) Someone who believes in an Islamic state governed by Sharia law, and advocates for violent means to do this, is likely to be:

a) An Islamist extremist   **CORRECT**

b) A right wing extremist

c) A left wing extremist

d) A High Court judge

Quiz

9) Someone who believes in overthrowing capitalism, and advocates for violent means to do this, is likely to be:

a) A strict vegan

b) An Islamist extremist

c) A left wing extremist   **CORRECT**

d) A right wing extremist

10) Groups of individuals who gather on internet platforms to share, develop, and promote extremist beliefs, ideologies, or narratives are called:

a) Influencers

b) Online extremist communities **CORRECT**

c) Terrorists

d) Gamers

Online quiz activity

Quiz   https://wordwall.net/resource/94384257

Video

What is extremism, really?

Discuss the following quote and consider what it means in the context of influence, manipulation, and personal responsibility:

"Persuasion is the art of getting someone to do something they wouldn't ordinarily do if you didn't ask."

Aristotle, Greek philosopher

Video activity

Video feedback

- What did you notice first?

- How did this video make you feel?

- What is the story behind this video?

- Who might be affected by what is shown here?

Video feedback

- Do you think the character is essentially bad, or are they just misguided. Why?

- What do you think might be going on at the fitness club? How could they find out if it was legitimate or not?

- What alternatives did the character have in this situation? How could this have gone differently?

- What long term implications could there be for the character? How could their actions affect their future?

Optional video 1

Karl, a former Nazi speaks

https://dai.ly/x91ijdg

What turns young Britons into extremists?

https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01xs0jg

The young man who was radicalised until Prevent prised him away from the far-right extremists

Optional video 3

https://youtu.be/udRpKAlu-Q8?si=ENS-13wjezQvAKWo

Video feedback

- What do you notice about these stories?

- How do you feel about the changes people made to their lives?

Case study

What is extremism, really?

Case study: Tyler's story

Tyler, aged 16, is a keen gamer and active online. They and others often spend evenings playing multiplayer games and chatting on Discord servers.

During lockdown, Tyler became more isolated and joined a new gaming server that was promoted by a YouTuber they followed. At first, the server was mostly about gaming tips and sharing memes - Tyler quickly felt part of the community.

Over time, some people on the server started sharing strong 'alternative news' that challenged what most people believe about world events. They blamed rich corporations and powerful governments for unfairness and poverty. Their posts had angry messages about fighting against capitalism and empire-building. Along with this, there were harsh attacks on big drug companies and mainstream science, plus mentions of anarchist 'truth channels'.

Because Tyler trusted the influencer and felt connected to the group, they started clicking on suggested YouTube videos and Telegram links that promoted these views. Tyler became convinced that they were being shown 'what the mainstream media won't tell you'.

Case study: Tyler's story

As Tyler absorbed more of this content, their own posts began to change tone - becoming more aggressive and less tolerant of differing views. They shared a meme on Instagram saying – 'They don't want you to know that corporations are pulling the strings behind every law - the whole system is rigged to keep workers in chains'. This caused tension with their friends.
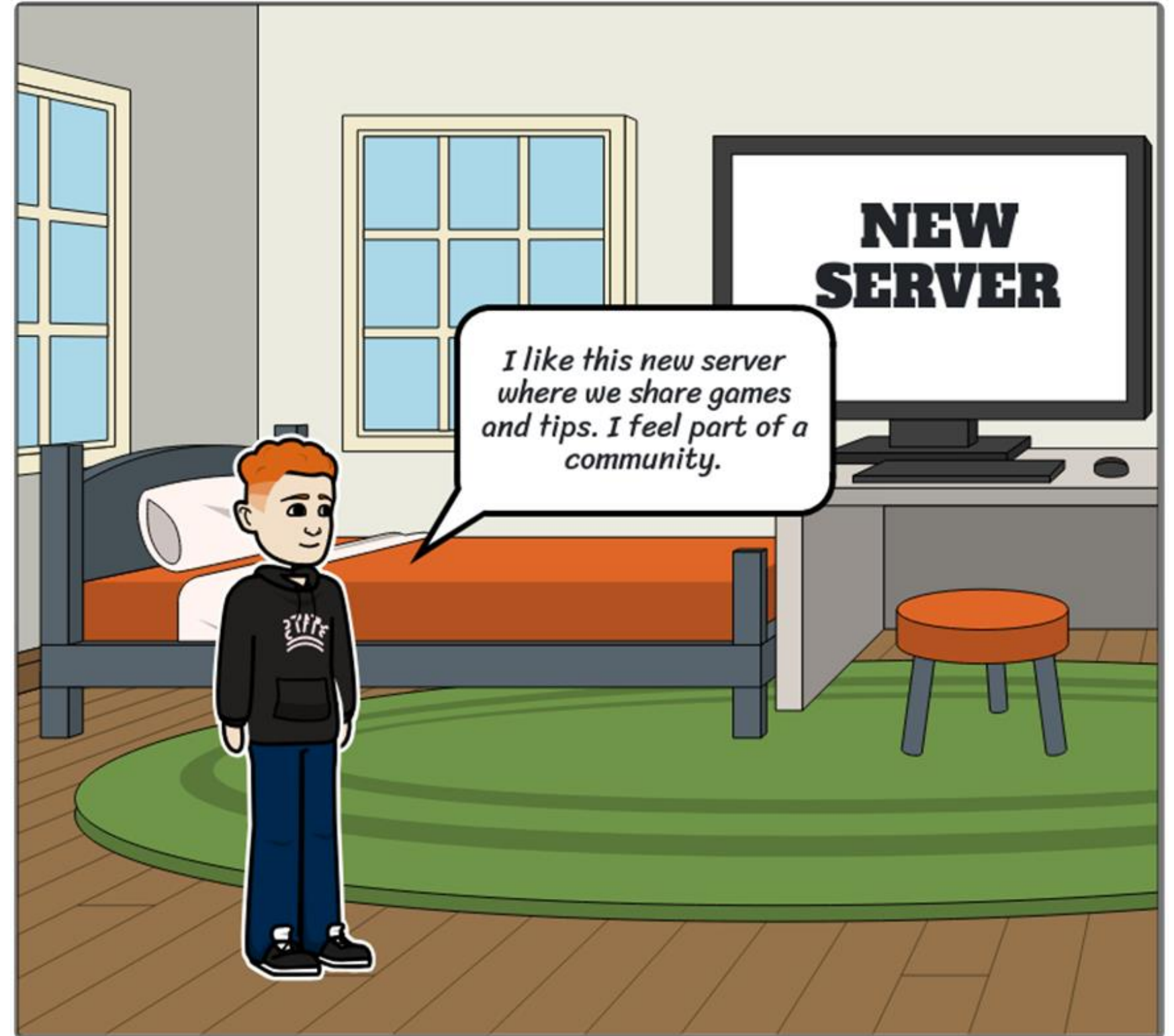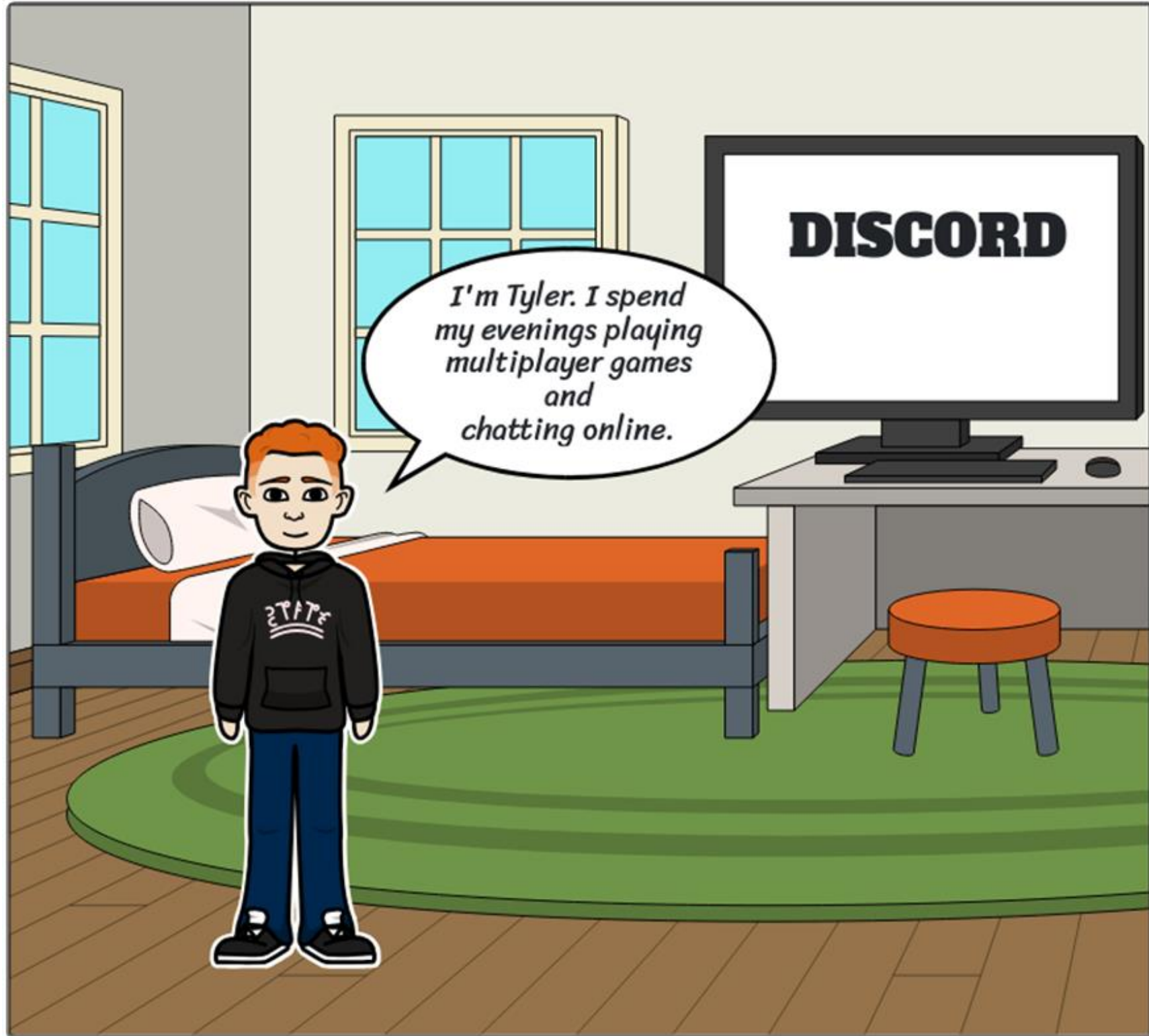
One friend, Amira, responded by respectfully questioning the content and offering alternative sources of information. They expressed concern but tried to avoid directly attacking Tyler.

Another friend, Ben, responded by calling Tyler 'a brainwashed extremist', which only made Tyler defensive and more convinced they were right.
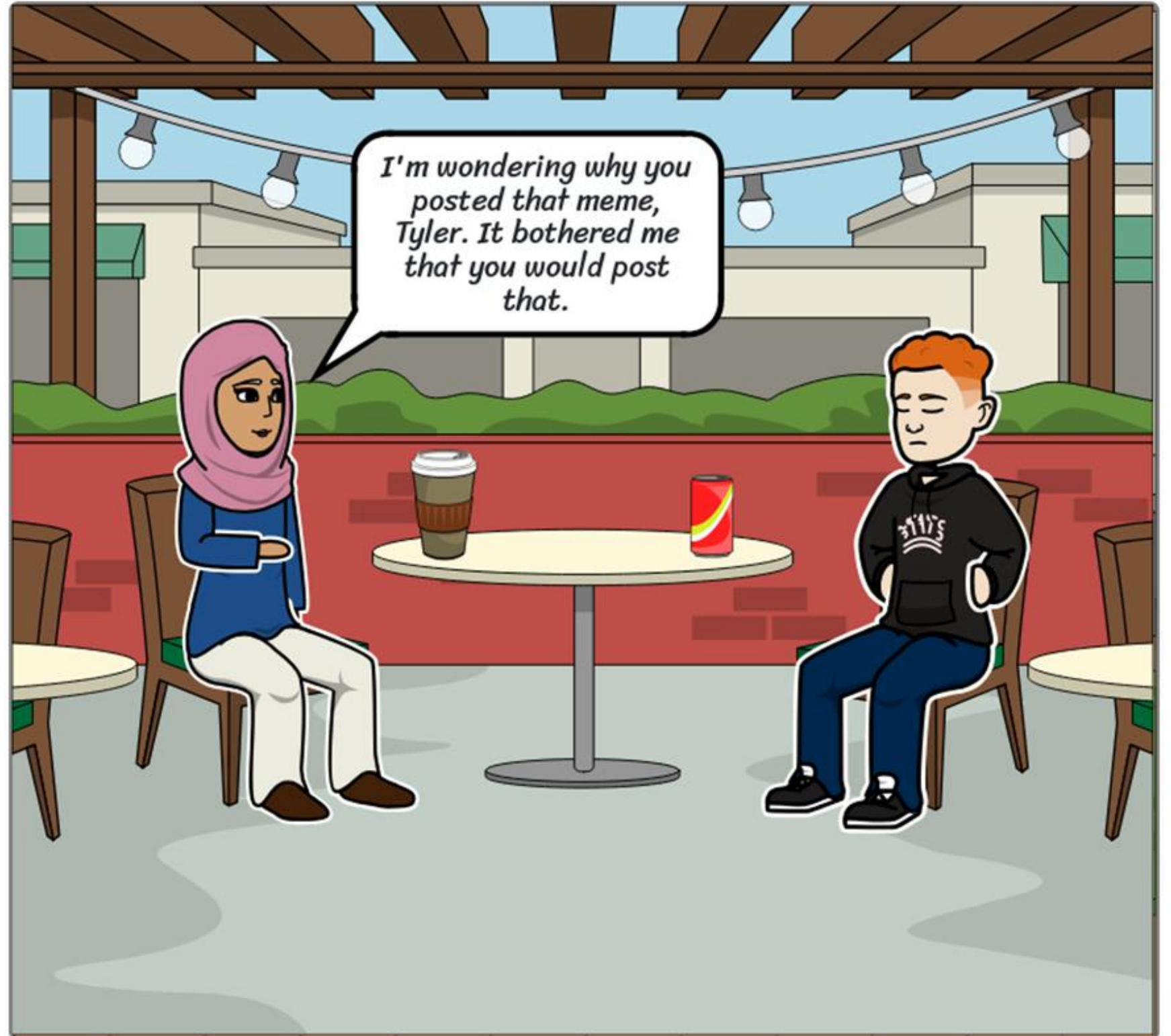
Tyler is now confused, feeling torn between loyalty to the online group and doubts raised by Amira.
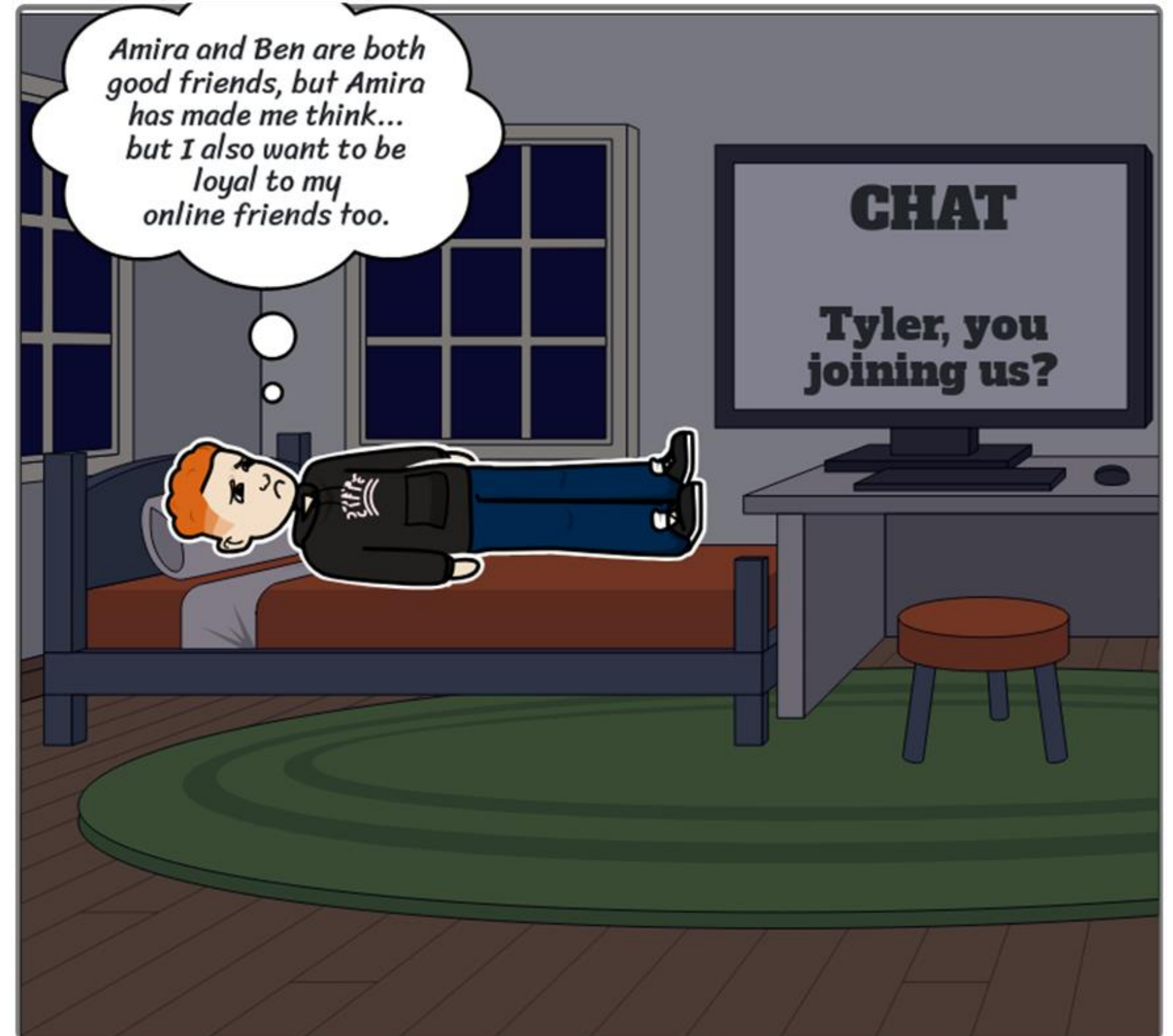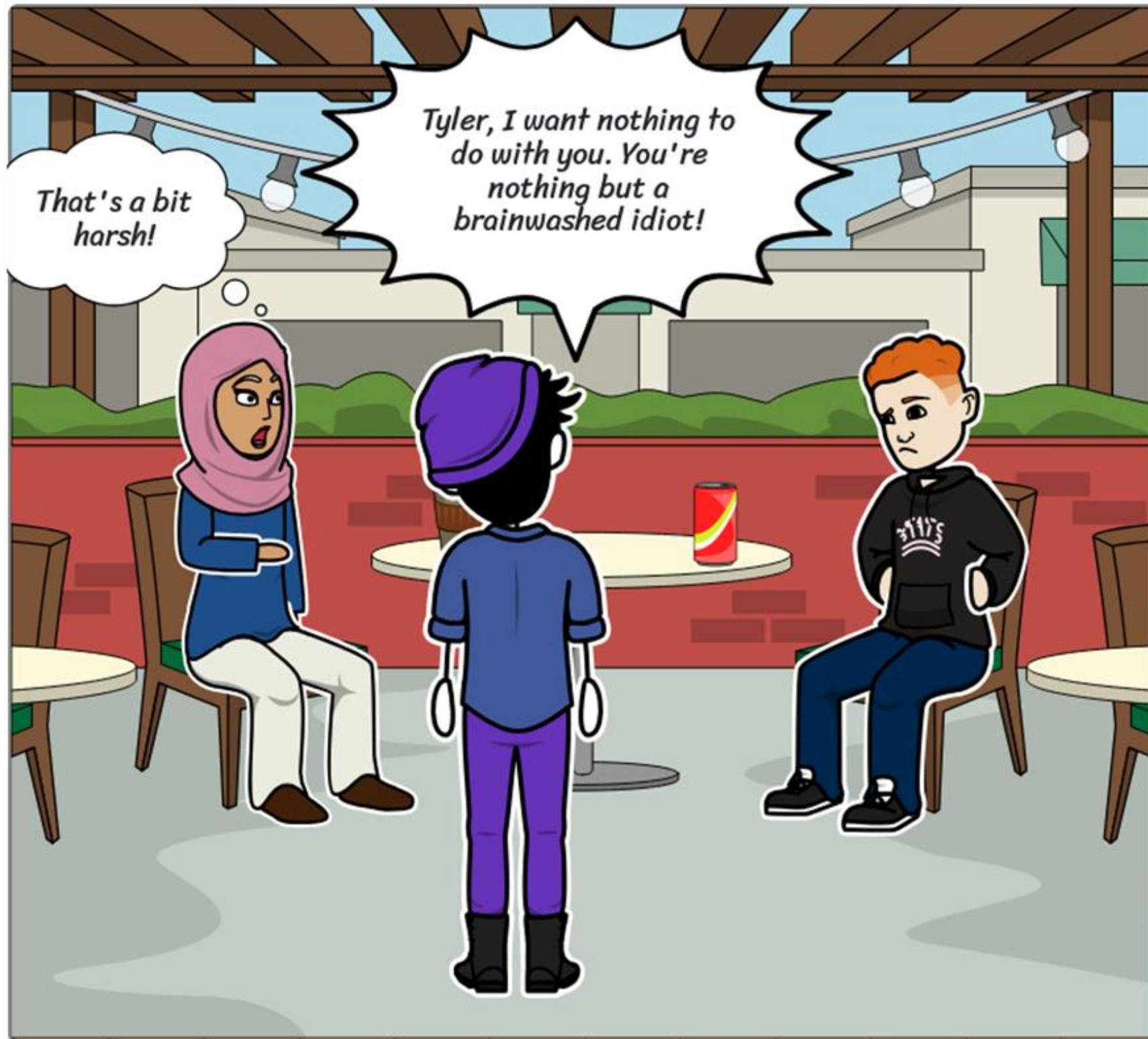
Case study: Tyler's story

Case study: Tyler's story

Case study: Tyler's story

Case study: Tyler's story

In your groups, discuss one of the questions below:

Case study: Tyler's story

- What online tactics were used to manipulate?

- How did grooming happen in this scenario?

- Were there any early warning signs?

- What was the role of Tyler's peers?

- How could Tyler have better protected themselves?

Reflection

Think about a time you have seen content online that seemed shocking or biased:

- What made it believable?

- Did you check other sources or talk to someone about it?

Let's discuss

- What are some of the ways people can be persuaded or tricked into believing harmful ideas?

- How can you spot extremist messages? What can you do if you do come across them?

- How will you protect yourself from extremist content?

- What one thing are you going to take away from today?