

Eliciting Children's Values Through 4-Frame Comics Strip Illustrations of Life Situations

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Abstract: This is a qualitative study of children's written responses to projective type situations which they meet in school or at home. Ten situations in 4-frame comic strips with simple one-line descriptions and/or conversations between story characters were used. Each situation was depicted in one sheet, and after the fourth frame asked the child was asked what he would do if he were in the situation described.

The subjects were one hundred eighty-one (181), 7 to 12 year old pupils from two government elementary schools in rural Philippines. The children's responses were in sentences in either English or Filipino language from which the values were inferred. The responses were categorized values-wise by a panel consisting of two teachers, two psychologists and one parent.

The study results showed varied values of the children which implied developmental differences with respect to age as well as grade level in school.

Values, especially those of children, are commonly inferred from observation of children, hearing their spontaneous statements, comments and utterances, and the stories they make in their imaginative, social and creative plays. Sometimes children's values are elicited through contrived situations and responses to interviews.

This study used a strategy of eliciting values held by children ages 7 to 12.

The study sought to answer these questions:

1. What are the children's reactions to home and school situations depicted in picture story form?
2. What values of children may be inferred from their responses to questions about the depicted situations?
3. Do their responses imply development changes across age levels?

The Sample

Children in the Philippines start formal education in Grade 1 at age 6 years. The sample for this study consisted of children, ages 7 to 12 drawn from Grades 2 to 6 in a public elementary school in a rural town in the Philippines.

The Instrument

Ten situations drawn from home and school life which children can identify with were used for children in Grades 2, 3, and 4. Another ten situations were used for children from Grades 5 and 6. The situations were depicted in 3-frame comics-type illustrations with some verbal conversations written in "bubbles". The comic-type presentation was in Filipino, the National Language, which the children learn to speak, read, and write from Grade 1.

In the 4th frame of each comic strip, a question was posed, which in English, is equivalent to, "What would you do?" or "What will [the character] do/say?" and the like.

The pupils wrote their answers in the 4th frame, either in Filipino or in English, which is taught at or before Grade 3 in elementary school.

Five of the 10 situations depicted in comics form for Grades 2, 3, and 4 are the following:

1. Tala, a young girl is crying. Her classmates are laughing at her because of her tattered and worn out dress. Imelda, an older classmate, remembers that her mother has taught her to sew torn clothes.

Question: What do you think Imelda will do?

2. Every Sunday Willie helps in house chores. He does his work fast so he can go out and play with his friends. However, as he is about to leave the house, he sees his father cleaning the yard and garden.

Q: What do you think Willie will do?

3. Vincent comes from a poor farmer's family. He wants to finish school but often he has to skip school because he needs to help his father in the fields. Vincent's teacher talks to him and advises him to come to school everyday if he wants to graduate.

Q: What will Vincent do?

4. Rolly is very hungry. At supper, he notices that his youngest brother had finished his food but is still hungry.

Q: Do you think Rolly will share his food with his brother?

5. There is a new boy in class – a dark skinned Aeta. The teacher sits him beside Lito.

Q: What do you think Lito will do?

Five of the ten situations in the instrument for Grades 5 and 6 are the following:

1. Andrea needs to submit a project for her Practical Arts class. She asks her elder sister to make the project for her. When she submits the project, the teacher asks her if it is really done by her.

Q: What do you think Andrea answered?

2. Ron and his younger brother, Dan, are watching TV. Dan wants to watch his favorite cartoons, but Ron wants to watch Plant and Animal Kingdom.

Q: What do you think the brothers will do?

3. Glen's parents promised him a party on his birthday, but a few days before the day came, a sister of Eric's mother asked help for an emergency – her son was gravely ill. Eric's parents asked him if they could forego his birthday party.

Q: What do you think Glen said?

4. Eric has a 10-year old retarded brother, a special child who thinks and behaves like a 3-year old. Eric is ashamed of his brother. One day, the two boys met friends of Eric who asked, "Who is the boy with you?"

Q: What do you think Eric answered?

5. There is a new student in Abel's class, an American boy who just arrived from the U.S. Mike, the new boy, asks Abel why Filipino children have dark skin.

Q: What do you think Abel will answer?

The 10 situations for each grade level are designed to elicit values like kindness, compassion, consideration for the feelings of others, truthfulness, honesty, pride in the Filipino, love for family, etc. The set of 10 situations was answered for 45 minutes.

The pupils' answers to the questions were categorized in terms of values. Some answers which did not particularly show values (e.g. just copying part of the verbal exchanges in the bubbles) were put under an "other" category.

The test was given early in the school year to determine the children's values at the start of the year. Separate analyses were done of the responses from Grade 5 versus Grade 6, as well as those from Grades 2 to 4.

Findings and Interpretation

The pupils' responses to the five illustrated situations were analyzed in terms of frequencies and the values expressed or implied:

Grade 5 vs. Grade 6

There were 36 and 46 pupils respectively in the two grade samples. The distributions of the responses by situation follow:

Situation 1: Andrea submits a project for her Practical Arts class which her sister made for her. The teacher asks Andrea if the project was really her work.
Q: What do you think Andrea will answer?

Here are the pupils' answers and their frequencies in the two grade groups

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>
She will admit that the work is not hers but someone else's	14	3
She will tell that her sister did it	18	27
She will insist it is her work	3	2
She will ask "How can I make it?"	11	2
Others	-	2
Total	46	36

The predominant value in both grades is telling the "truth". Among the sixth graders, the responses on why they did not do the project, is they rationalized why they sought help from the sister. A few said they thought deeply before asking sister to do it because "she [Andrea] did not know how to make the project." Only two of the grade 5 pupils rationalized this way. A few said that Andrea would insist that the work is hers.

Situation 2: Ron and his younger brother Dan are watching TV. Dan wants to watch his favorite cartoons, but Ron wants to watch Animal Kingdom.
Q: What do you think the brothers will do?

The projective question was answered thus:

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>
• Ron will give in to his younger brother	10	5
• One will give in; they will agree to take turns	17	7
• They will switch channels during the commercials	2	5
• They will not fight	5	4
• They will fight and not agree	8	4
• They will toss a coin to decide who wins	1	4
• Ron will win; he is older	2	4
• They will turn off the TV and watch another program	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	46	36

The situation elicited the most varied responses. They showed the values respect for family relationships and peaceful resolution of differences. The sixth graders were more conciliatory, suggesting the Filipino value in which older siblings gives in to younger ones.

Situation 3: Glen’s parents promised him a party on his birthday, but a few days before the day came, a sister of Eric’s mother asked for financial help for an emergency – her son was gravely ill. Eric’s parents asked him if they could forego his birthday party.
Q: What do you think Glen said?

The pupils assessments of the situation yielded these categorized responses, and frequencies:

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>
• Glen will agree to help his aunt	15	10
• Glen will agree to forego his birthday party	12	4
• Glen will put off the celebration; there’s another day	2	8
• Glen will be happy to help	3	4
• Glen will be sad, or he will cry	6	2
• Glen will insist on having the party	4	2
• Glen will agree to give only part of the amount	1	1
• Other	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	46	36

The values evident in the pupils’ responses are: compassion, helping those in need and support even for distant family members. Some of the children tended to be slightly self-centered, perhaps not yet quite into the Filipino value system called “*pakikiramay*” or “*magkapamilya*” or family oneness. For some children in their preteens, a birthday party is a big thing and seems more weighty than helping a relative in need.

Situation 4: Eric has a 10-year old retarded brother, a special child who thinks and behaves like a 3-year old. Eric is ashamed of his brother. One day, the two boys met friends of Eric who asked, “Who is the boy with you?”
Q: What do you think Eric answered?

The responses elicited are:

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>
• “This is my brother Marco”.	15	9
• “My brother [who is retarded]”	19	15
• “My friend / cousin”	3	3
• He is ashamed of his brother Marco	5	6
• Other responses	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	46	36

The answers that the pupils projected were mostly positive - - Eric, introducing his brother. In most of the answers Eric even added the information that Marco is retarded. Only a few indicated that Eric was ashamed of his brother. The values elicited are of compassion for the less able and family supportiveness or oneness. No age or grade level difference was noted in the answers to the projective question. In Filipino families, children do not discriminate against special siblings. Much less do their parents.

Situation 5: There is a new student in Abel’s class, an American boy who just arrived from the U.S. Mike, the new boy, asks Abel why Filipino children have dark skin.
Q: What do you think Abel will answer?

The answers which the pupils projected as answers of Abel are:

	<u>Grade 6</u>	<u>Grade 5</u>
• We are brown (<i>kayumanggi</i>).	28	11
• We are a different / beautiful race	4	2
• That is the natural Filipino color – <i>kayumanggi</i>	6	12
• We work in the sun; God made us that way	1	4
• Don’t know	2	2
• Other	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	46	36

Except for a few responses. (“Don’t know”/ Other), all the responses indicate pride in the Filipino and his heritage, with no tinge of apology for being brown instead of fair skinned. The sixth grade pupils were particularly assertive of being “*kayumanggi*” (copper tone”) in color.

Grades 2, 3, and 4

Five of the ten situations presented to the children ages 5 to 10 years are discussed below. Analyses of the five other situations are not included in this paper due to exigencies of time, but all the ten comic strips for the two age/grade groupings are included in the Appendix.

Comparisons of frequencies across the three grade groups are made and the interpretations of the data are anchored on the frequencies of actual answers from the children (and translated to English).

Situation 1: Tala, a young girl is crying. Her classmates are laughing at her because of her tattered and worn out dress. Imelda, an older classmate, remembers that her mother has taught her to sew torn clothes.
Question: What do you think Imelda will do?

The answers are:

	<u>Grade 2</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 4</u>
• <i>Tatahiin ang damit</i> (Will sew her skirt)	26	16	26
• <i>Tutulungan</i> (Will help her)	3	5	7
• <i>Tuturuan manahi</i> (Will teach her to sew)	-	3	6
• Others	-	<u>5</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	<u>29</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>41</u>

The Grade 2 pupils all said that Imelda will help Tala. These were also the predominant projections from the higher grades. There was evident concern for the poor girl and a predisposition to help her. The value is *concern/consideration for others* which is obviously held by the children early in their school life.

Situation 2: Every Sunday Willie helps in house chores. He does his work fast so he can go out and play with his friends. However, as he is about to leave the house, he sees his father cleaning the yard and garden.
Q: What do you think Willie will do?

The answers are:

	<u>Grade 2</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 4</u>
• <i>Tutulungan niya an tatay</i> (Will help his father)	26	20	40
• <i>Pagod na siya</i> (He's tired already)	2	8	-
• Others	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	<u>29</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>41</u>

No other situation gave as homogeneous answers from all the three grade-groups as this one. The children were _____ in saying Willie would help his father. The obvious value here is love for parents and family, unity, and cooperation.

Situation 3: Vincent comes from a poor farmer's family. He wants to finish school but often he has to skip school because he needs to help his father in the fields. Vincent's teacher talks to him and advises him to come to school everyday if he wants to graduate.
Q: What will Vincent do?

	<u>Grade 2</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 4</u>
• <i>Papasok araw-araw</i> (Come to school everyday)	20	14	25
• <i>Sumunod sa guro</i> (follow his teachers advice)	3	2	6
• <i>Mag-aral ng mabuti</i> (Study hard)	2	-	1
• <i>Tutulungan ang tatay</i> (Help his father)	3	1	2
• <i>Kailangang tumulong sa bukid</i> (Help in the farm)	1	4	-
• <i>Kakausapin ang tatay</i> (Talk to his father)	-	6	7
• Others	-	<u>2</u>	-
Total	<u>29</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>41</u>

The pupil respondents projected and their values on what Vincent should be doing and that is, to go to school everyday as advised by his teacher, and studying well in order to graduate.

The responses bear out the Filipino’s high value for education. At the same time, some answers convey the value of family closeness/unity, values they learned no doubt in their own homes.

Situation 4: Rolly is very hungry. At supper, he notices that his youngest brother had finished his food but is still hungry.
Q: Do you think Rolly will share his food with his brother?

The answers and their frequencies of mention are:

	<u>Grade 2</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 4</u>
• Share his food with his brother	17	20	28
• He will look for more food for his brother	7	-	1
• He will refuse to give his food to his brother	3	2	5
• He will give next time but not now; think of himself	-	1	-
• Others	-	6	7
Total	29	29	41

This situation also elicited the values *love, good family relationship*, and compassion for others.

Situation 5: Lito is new in his class. He is an Aeta* in Ben’s classroom. The teacher made Lito sit beside Ben.
Q: What do you think Ben did?
 *An aborigine

The children’s responses are:

	<u>Grade 2</u>	<u>Grade 3</u>	<u>Grade 4</u>
• Ben will greet his Aeta classmate	14	15	35
• Ben will introduce himself to Lito	3	8	-
• Ben will ignore (not to talk to) Lito	10	1	1
• Ben will tell Lito to leave him alone	1	2	2
• Ben will tell Lito not to talk to him	1	1	
• Other	-	2	3
Total	29	29	-

While most of the children were inclined to say Ben would greet, welcome or speak to the Aeta, there are clearly some who are inclined to discriminate the color of the skin of one with peculiar looks, especially when the pupil has had few chances of mingling with such people. By and large, however, the values compassion and friendliness were shown by the young pupils.

Summary and Conclusions

Comic strips are effective for surfacing children’s values. The approach used is projective type, where there is less risk of the social desirability syndrome. The survey was done at the beginning of the school year and it can be safely assumed that the children’s answers are honest and frank.

After the initial instructions for the projective test, they were left by themselves to write their answers. The Grade 2 pupils gave one-sentence or one-phrase answers, due perhaps to

their limited writing ability. The upper-grade pupils often gave explanations or justifications for their answers.

The 10 situations elicited values of compassion, kindness, honesty, consideration for others' feelings, strong family orientation, and pride in one's country. The study surfaced some partly negative values which teachers can focus on correcting in lessons.

The responses of the older children (Grades 5 and 6) showed values learned from school, among them love of country and pride in being different in skin color. The responses also clearly showed the children's concern for poor children.

APPENDIX

Intermediate Level (Grs. 5-6)

NAME: _____ GRADE AND SECTION: _____

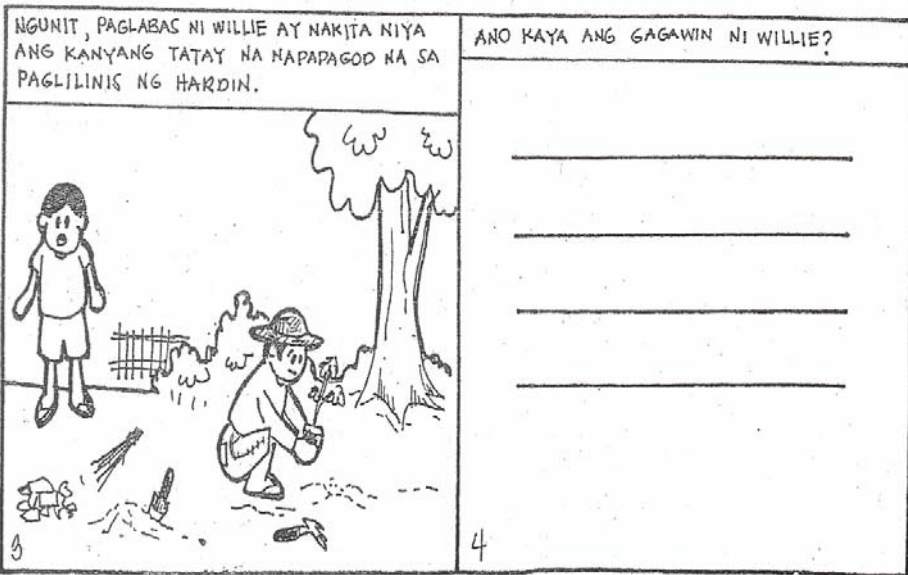
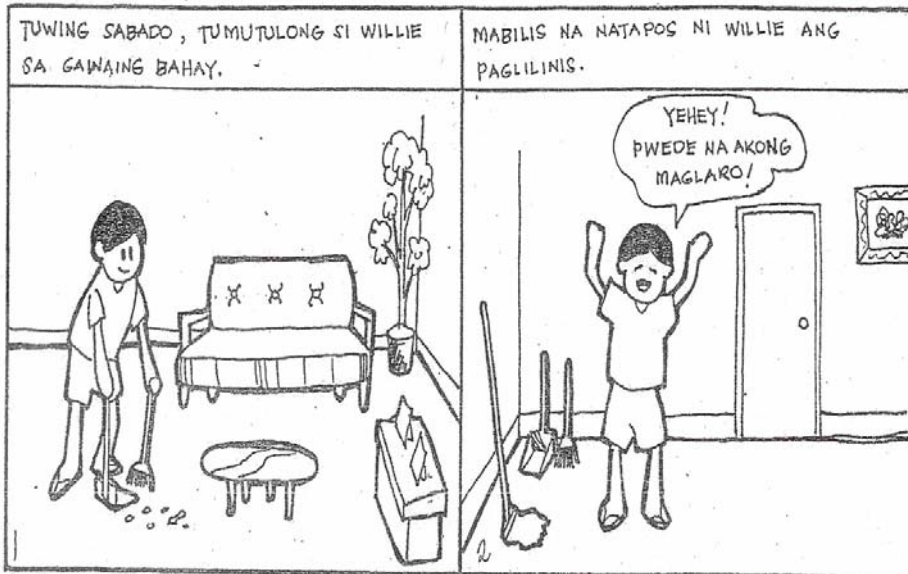
SCHOOL: _____ DATE: _____

SITUATION 1

DIRECTIONS: BASAHIN AT KUMPLETUHIN ANG SUMUSUNOD NA KWENTO. ISULAT SA PANG-APAT NA KAHON KUNG ANO SA IYONG PALAGAY ANG KATAPUSAN NG MAIKLING KWENTO.

<p>MERONG PROJECT SI ANDREA.</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">1</p>	<p>IPINAGAWA NIYA ITO SA KANYANG ATE.</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">2</p>
<p>IPINASA NIYA ITO SA KANYANG GURO. TINANONG SIYA NITO...</p>  <p style="text-align: right;">3</p>	<p>ANO KAYA ANG SINABI NI ANDREA?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p style="text-align: right;">4</p>



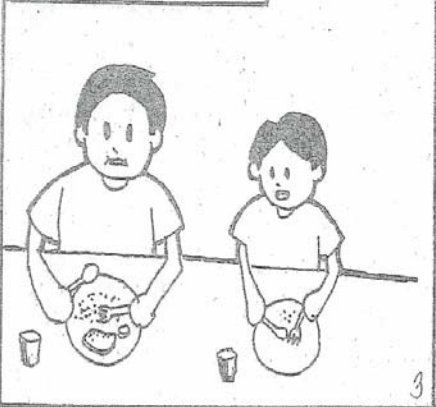
SITUATION 2



SITUATION 3



SITUATION 4

<p>GUTOM NA GUTOM NA SI ROLLY, KASI KAUNTI LANG ANG KINAIN NIYA SA PANANGHALIAN.</p>	<p>NANG KUMAKAIN NA SILA NG HAPUNAN, NAPANSIN NIYANG UBOS NA ANG PAGKAIN NG BUNSO NIYANG KAPATID, PERO GUTOM PA ITO...</p>
 <p>NAGUGUTOM NA AKO...</p>	 <p>KUYA WALA NA AKONG PAGKAIN PERO GUTOM PA AKO...</p>
<p>MAYROON PANG PAGKAIN SA PINGGAN SI ROLLY PERO GUTOM RIN SIYA.</p>	<p>ANO ANG GAGAWIN NI ROLLY?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	<p>3 4</p>

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SITUATION 5



ANO KAYA ANG GAGAWIN NI BEN?

APPENDIX

Intermediate Level (Grs. 5-6)

NAME: _____ GRADE AND SECTION: _____
SCHOOL: _____ DATE: _____

SITUATION 1

DIRECTIONS: BASAHIN AT KUMPLETUHIN ANG SUMUSUNOD NA KWENTO. ISULAT SA PANG-APAT NA KAHON KUNG ANO SA IYONG PALAGAY ANG KATAPUSAN NG MAIKLING KWENTO.

MERONG PROJECT SI ANDREA.



IPINAGAWA NIYA ITO SA KANYANG ATE.



IPINASA NIYA ITO SA KANYANG GURO. TINANONG SIYA NITO...



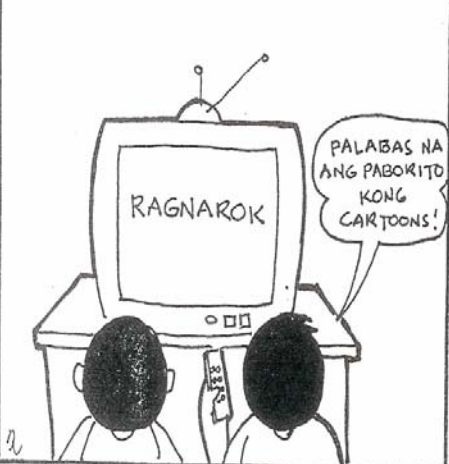
ANO KAYA ANG SINABI NI ANDREA?

SITUATION 2

1 ISANG GABI, NANUNUOD NG TV ANG MAGKAPATID NA SINA-DAN AT RON.



2 GUSTO NI DAN MANUOD NG CARTOONS...

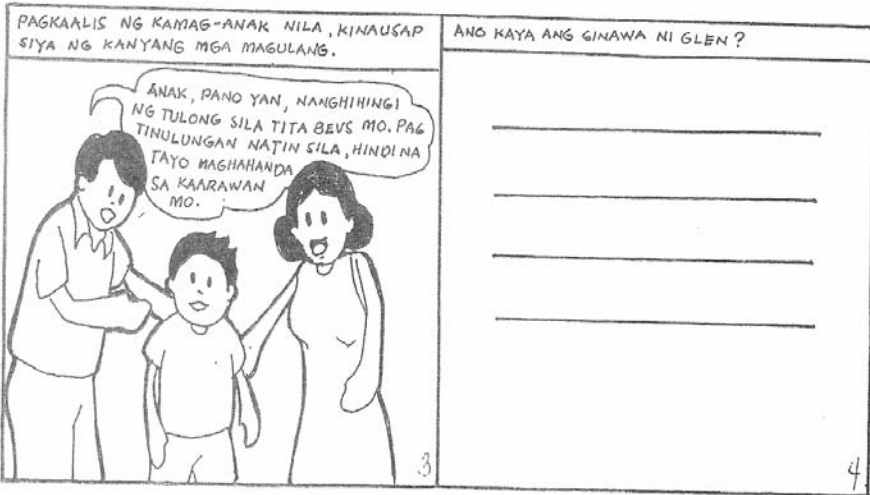


3 PERO ANG GUSTONG PANUORIN NI RON AY ANG PALABAS NA METEOR GARDEN.



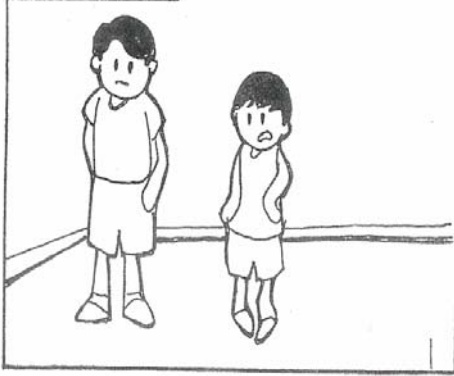
4 ANO ANG GAGAWIN NG MAGKAPATID?

SITUATION 3



SITUATION 4

SI ERIC AT MARCO AY MAGKAPATID. SI ERIC AY ISANG NORMAL NA BATA, SAMANTALA SI MARCO AY MAY KAPANSANAN SA ISIPAN. KAHIT SAMPUNG TAON NA ITO, PARANG TATLONG TAON LANG KUNG ITO AY MAG-ISIP.



ITO ANG DAHILAN KUNG BAKIT MADALAS NA IKAHIYA NI ERIC ANG KAPATID



ISANG ARAW, HABANG NAGLALAKAD SA MALL ANG MAGKAPATID, NAKASALUBONG NI ERIC ANG MGA KAKLASE.



ANO KAYA ANG ISASAGOT NI ERIC?

3

4

SITUATION 5

MAYROONG BAGONG KAKLASE SINA ABEL...

CLASS, MAY BAGO KAYONG CLASSMATE. GALING SIYA NG AMERIKA.

MAPUTI ANG KULAY NITO, MATANGOS ANG ILONG AT MAGALING MAG-INGLES.

HI GUYS! MY NAME IS MIKE!



TINANONG NG BATANG AMERIKANO SI ABEL KUNG BAKIT IBA ANG KULAY NG BALAT NG MGA BATANG PILIPINO.

ANO KAYA ANG ISASAGOT NI ABEL?

