



LAW AND JUSTICE – B1

I. About this Lesson

Activity title: Law and Justice through 'BLACKSAD' graphic novel

Level: B1

Recommended Age: 15+ (Nudity in the first pages, violence)

Subject: English as a foreign language

Timing: 55-60 minutes

Resources: worksheet

Learning objectives:

- a. Being able to discuss and reflect on justice and civil life;
- b. Learn vocabulary and idioms related to civil life;
- c. Practice the superlatives.

Materials needed:

'BLACKSAD #1' by Juan Diaz Carnales and Juanjo Guarnido

(<http://www.europecomics.com/album/1-somewhere-within-the-shadows/>)



II. Lesson scenario

1. Instructions for the teacher

Preparation to do before the lesson

One month before the lesson:

- a. Ask your students to read the first book of the BLACKSAD series titled 'Somewhere within the shadows' by Juan Diaz Carnales and Juanjo Guarnido.
- b. Note well that they should read the book through and use a dictionary in case they encounter unknown vocabulary. The goal is for them to understand the story well and get acquainted with new vocabulary and idioms that you can discuss in this class.

One week before the lesson:

- c. Ask your students to write in maximum one page the story of BLACKSAD #1 which they have read.
- d. You can also ask them to bring a separate page with their notes about unknown vocabulary or other questions concerning the graphic novel. In this case, make sure to ask them to bring at least 3 things they didn't understand (unknown words or questions about the book).

Introduction (5 min)

Start the lesson with a short "Check IN" by telling students:

- a. Today, we will talk about crime, law and justice.
- b. For the preparation, I asked you to read the first episode of episode1 graphic novel titled 'Somewhere within the shadows' and write its story briefly within



a page. Also, I asked you to note 3 things you did not understand of its meaning or vocabulary. We will use all of this during this lesson.

- c.** Here is the plan for today's lesson:
- First, we will remember together and discuss the story.
 - We will solve your questions, learn the unknown words and idioms.
 - We will also remember the superlative degree from our English grammar lessons and do some exercises to practice.
 - Then, we will create small groups of 4-5 people and work on a specific scene of the book. We will discuss its meaning and messages about civil life.
 - Finally, we will create a comic strip inspired by the topics discussed while applying grammar notions too.

Step 1: Revising the story and solving questions (10 min)

- a.** Help your students to understand the story better, by discussing it in the classroom. Allow your students to consult the book or the document they have written (one page summary of the story) and ask questions to guide the discussion.
- b.** You can already print for each student the worksheet and share it with them so they can see the questions in the introduction part. Ask them to think and answer orally to some of the questions from task 1.



Answers:

1. BLACKSAD the detective (cat), NATALIA WIFORD the actress (cat), IVO STATOC the businessman (frog), the spy (lizard) and SMIRNOV the Chief police officer (dog - German Shepherd).
2. With a crime committed; the assassination of an actress (NATALIA WIFORD).
3. He is called for help by the Chief Police Officer, SMIRNOV.
4. NATALIA and BLACKSAD used to be a couple once.
5. NATALIA's last lover and a film scriptwriter. The person whom BLACKSAD first attempt to reach, but found he was dead.
6. BLACKSAD had a bad intuition about the rat. The rat took him to the place where LEON KRONSKI was (which was a cemetery) but he set him up with two bad guys who beat BLACKSAD.
7. SMIRNOV proposes him to find and eliminate Natalia's murderer and he would ensure that BLACKSAD would not to be blamed.
8. For whom is the lizard character working for?
9. For IVO STATOC, a rich guy who killed Natalia.
10. BLACKSAD finds IVO STATOC and kills him.
11. No, SMIRNOV gives him an alibi and he doesn't get in prison.

Step 2: Vocabulary and idioms (10 minutes)

- a. Start with checking all students' questions regarding the vocabulary they did not understand. In EXERCISE 1 on students' worksheet, ask them first to note the unknown words they have or learned (TASK 1) so they can keep it for revision at home.



- b.** After you ensure that all questions are answered, move on to TASK 2 on their worksheet about idioms. Students should be familiar with most of the idioms, as they are used in the graphic novel.

Answers:

1. curiosity killed the cat.
 2. something tells me
 3. cloud of suspicion
 4. I'm caught between the devil and the deep blue sea!
 5. funny feeling
 6. get the feeling
 7. cold blood
- c.** Finishing this step, read with your students the comic strip in EXERCISE 1 and continue to the next unit.

Step 3: Grammar – Comparison and superlative degree (10 minutes)

- a.** Review the comparative and superlative degrees and use the worksheet to practice (EXERCISE 2).
- b.** Give time to students to work on TASK 1 and TASK 2 either individually, or in pairs, or all together in the classroom.

Answers to task 1:

- 1) better; 2) slower; 3) more beautiful; 4) safer; 5) hotter, less; 6) happier; 7) more expensive; 8) older/elder.



Answers to task 2:

- 1) most delicious; 2) fastest, 3) lowest, 4) most boring, 5) highest, 6) laziest
- c. At the end of this step, you can tell your students to search and find words using comparative or superlative degree in the book they read as a homework. There are three:
- 1) page 15: 'Those were **the happiest** days of my life'
 - 2) page 19: 'Memory ain't one of my **stronger** points'
 - 3) page 40: 'Even after what had happened, I felt a little **happier**'

Step 4: Group work - scene analysis (20 minutes)

- a. Put students into groups of 3-5.
- b. Introduce the activity (EXERCISE 3) which refers to the analysis of a scene. Specifically in pages 50-51 of the book, the scene where BLACKSAD is holding the gun against IVO STATOC. In that scene, IVO STATOC tries to bribe BLACKSAD by offering him to work with him, even though BLAKSAD has come to his office to render justice by killing him.
- c. The first step is to read and explain the dialogue of the scene.
- d. Then, you can use that dialogue to initiate a discussion about justice, bribery, crime, conscience and human rights. Ask students to brainstorm in groups following TASK 1 and TASK 2. Take 8-10 minutes for each task.
 - Please note that the text from TASK 2 is slightly above the language level mentioned for this lesson. Make sure your students understand before starting it.



- e. TASK 3 consists in the creation of their own scenario and comic strip. It is recommended to do it as a homework, or if you have time, you can start working on it in the classroom and finalize it in the next class.
- f. After this time, make all students come back to their seat and finish the class with a small check out of the main highlights of the lesson and what they will need to do until the next class (in case there are incomplete tasks or another activity to do as homework).



2. Worksheet for student

INTRODUCTION: SUMMARY OF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL

Title: BLACKSAD #1 'SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE SHADOWS'

Type of comic: Graphic novel (Mainstream comics)

Authors: Script by Juan Díaz Canales, illustration by Juanjo Guarnido

Summary: This is the story of a private detective seeking revenge for the death of his assassinated ex-girlfriend. A noir detective story in a world where all characters are anthropomorphic animals that best reflect the nuances of their personalities.

TASK 1: Questions to discuss

1. Who are the 5 main characters of the story?
2. How does the story begin?
3. Why is BLACKSAD involved in the resolution of the case?
4. What is the relationship between BLACKSAD and the victim of the story?
5. Who is LEON KRONSKI?
6. What intuition did BLACKSAD have about the rat? Was it correct?
7. What does SMIRNOV (Chief Police officer) propose to BLACKSAD when he is in jail?
8. For whom is the lizard character working for?
9. How is justice done in this story?
10. Is BLACKSAD arrested in the end?



EXERCISE 1: VOCABULARY AND IDIOMS

TASK 1: Discuss in the classroom the unknown vocabulary that you and your classmates have encountered while reading the book.

Then, note the new words and their meaning in the table below:

NEW WORD OR PHRASE	MEANING





TASK 2: See the list of idioms below and try to fill the gaps in the sentences below.

IDIOM	MEANING
something tells me that... or my gut tells me	I have a strong belief, suspicion, or intuition that something will happen or prove true.
A cloud of suspicion	A general sentiment of suspicion of wrongdoing or illegality.
To get/have the feeling	To develop a sense or suspicion that something is the case.
A funny feeling	An intuition or premonition about something; a sense of foreknowledge about a situation, condition, or set of circumstances.
Curiosity killed the cat	Being curious can get you into trouble. (Often used to warn someone against prying into other's affairs).
to be the shining star	to be the most promising or attractive person in a specific context.
In cold blood	Ruthlessly and without feeling any remorse. Typically said of a murder that is committed in a calm and deliberate manner.
caught between the devil and the deep blue sea	Faced with two undesirable choices or situations.

Note: the definitions for the idioms below come from

<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>



1. – Where did you get all that money?
– You shouldn't care to know. After all, _____ .

2. After the fight we put up, _____ they won't come back to bother us again anytime soon.

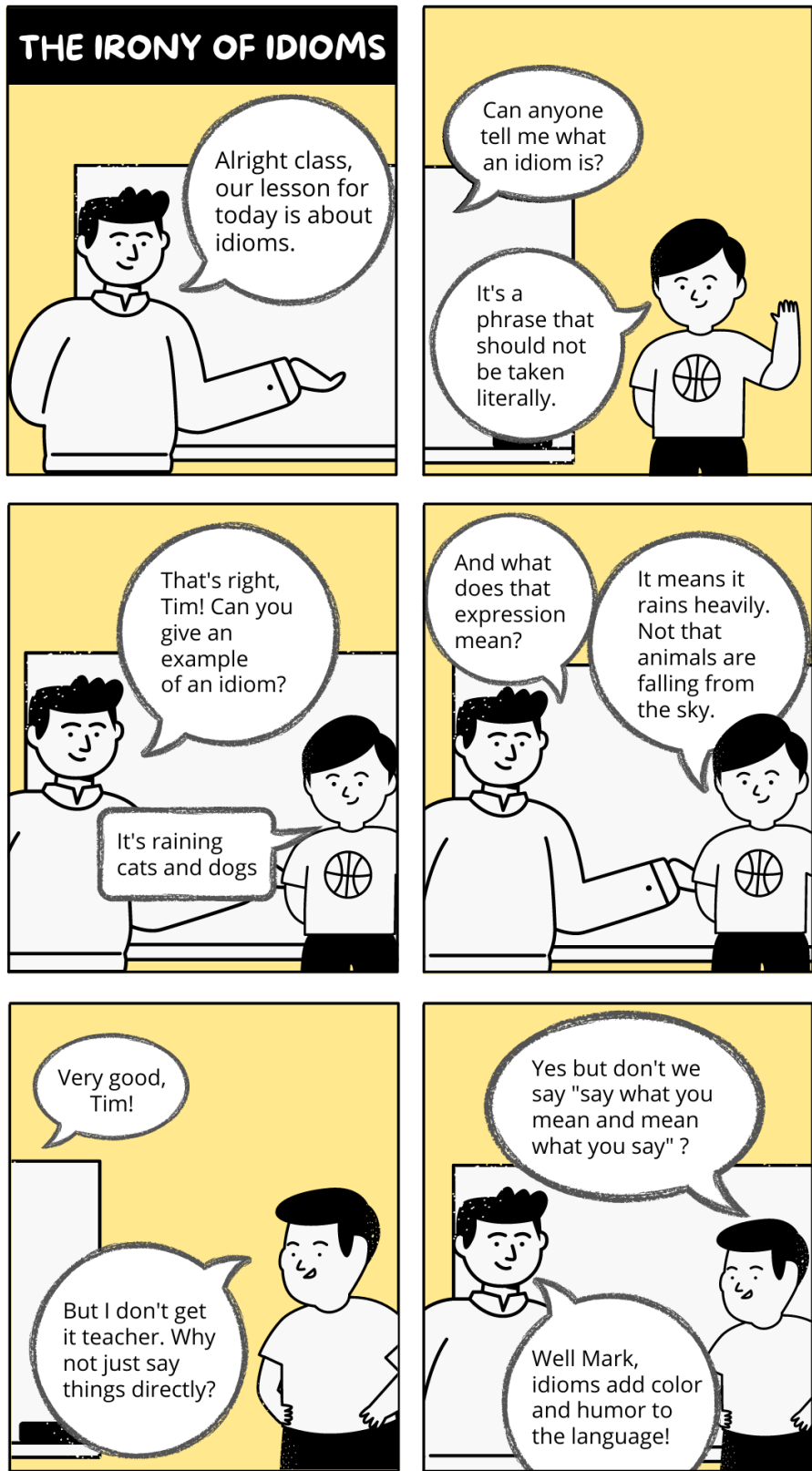
3. There is a _____ in the whole book about the who could have killed the actress.

4. Sleeping in the car for 3 days or going back to my parents' house for one week is like I'm _____.

5. I have this _____ that I've met this person before.

6. Why do I _____ I have done something wrong?

7. He would have to do it _____, otherwise he would have missed the opportunity.





EXERCISE 2: GRAMMAR

COMPARATIVE AND SUPERLATIVE DEGREE

To compare one thing, person, place or idea with another in a group, we use the **comparison adjectives** that differentiate between three different forms or degrees:

1. The **positive** which merely represents the characteristic of something.

Example: His chair is **small**.

2. The **comparative** which shows something greater.

Example: His chair is **smaller** than mine.

The comparative form is made by adding ' -er ' (' r ' if the word ends in -e), or the word 'more' before the adjective:

long → the longer

difficult → more difficult

3. The **superlative** which stands for the greatest.

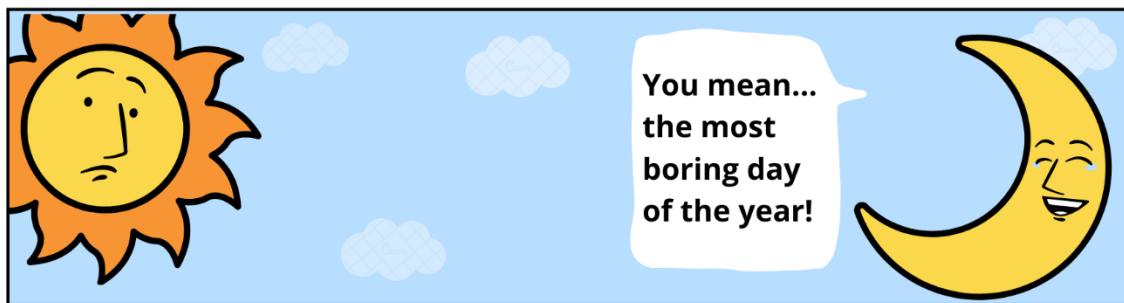
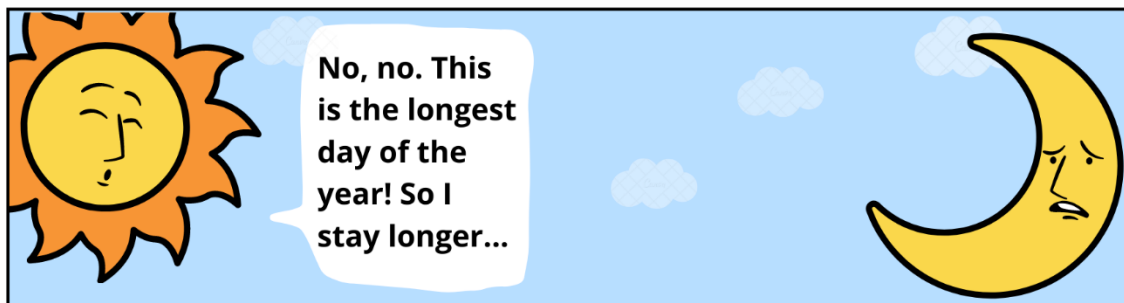
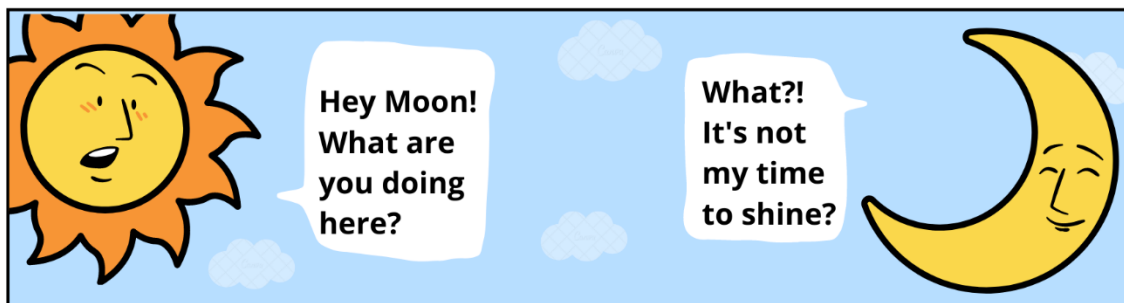
Example: His chair is the **smallest** in the classroom.

The superlative form is made by adding ' -est ' at the end of the adjective, or the word "most" before the adjective:

hard → the hardest

difficult → the most difficult

SMALL SMALLER SMALLEST





The irregular adjectives use a different word instead of adding -er, -est or "more" to create their comparative and superlative forms:

Irregular adjective	Comparative Adjective	Superlative Adjective
bad	worse	worst
far (distance)	farther	farthest
far (additional)	further	furthest
good	better	best
little	less	least
many	more	most
old (people)	Elder (or "older")	Eldest (or "oldest")
good/well	better	best

TASK 1: Fill the gap in the sentences by forming the comparative of the adjective in brackets.

Example: A rock is _____ (heavy) than a leaf.

→ A rock is **heavier** than a leaf.

1. Nick is a _____ (good) student than Alice.
2. I've asked you three times to go _____ (slow)! I get dizzy in the car.



3. None of these kittens is _____ (beautiful) than the other! They are all super cute!
4. Bicycles are _____ (safe) than motorbikes.
5. Sometimes in Brussels, September is _____ (hot) and _____ (little) rainy than July and August.
6. A cake would make me _____ (happy) at this moment!
7. Sometimes tablets can be _____ (expensive) than desktop computers.
8. I would keep the chairs in the room, for the _____ (old) people.

TASK 2: Fill the gap in the sentences by forming the superlative of the adjective in brackets.

Example: She's the _____ (**rich**) person in the neighbourhood.

→ She's the **richest** person in the neighbourhood.

1. This is my favourite dish of my mum's cuisine! It's the _____ (delicious) food that she makes!
2. That dog broke all records in the running competition! He is the _____ (fast) dog in the world!



3. We bought a new sound system, but because of the neighbours, we put the music to the _____(low) possible!
4. I almost fell asleep in the cinema. It was the _____ (boring) film ever!
5. Mount Everest is the _____ (high) mountain in the world.
6. The teacher complains of having the _____ (lazy) boys in her class.

EXERCISE 3: ANALYSIS OF THE SCENE

TASK 1: Open your graphic novel at pages 50-51 and read again the scene in these pages.

In your group, take time to think and discuss the following questions:

1. Why does IVO STATOC try to bribe BLACKSAD?
2. What is BLACKSAD's response?
3. How does BLACKSAD describe justice?
4. What does conscience mean?



TASK 2: Brainstorm in your group on the idea of justice in today's society and civil life. Then try to fill the diagram below with relevant key words.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Civil rights include guarantees of equal social opportunities and equal protection under the law, regardless of race, religion, or other personal characteristics. In contrast to civil liberties, which are freedoms that are secured by placing restraints on government, civil rights are secured by positive government action, often in the form of legislation.

TASK 3: Can you create a new scenario based on the brainstorming activity above?

How could the story be rewritten?

Make your own scenario and comic strip!



III. Modification and Differentiation ideas

- This lesson bases its content on the graphic novel that students should have read and understood, so they can reflect and think critically on the topics of justice, law and civil life. It can be used to focus on these topics, but it is in the hands of the teacher if they want to propose different topics for discussion such as the "the noir genre" or "using anthromorphic animals to tell stories".
- Nonetheless, the lesson provides vocabulary and grammar sections to create a well-rounded English class for teen students. Teachers can enrich either of these points by adding more exercises to practice.
- In case teachers want to insist on conducting a lesson based on the present lesson plan, it is recommended to break the lesson plan in two or more sessions. This way, students could feel more confident and benefit from the discussions, brainstorming and practicing with their new acquisitions.