



FROM IRON MAN TO IRONHEART – B1

I. About this lesson

Activity title: From Iron Man to Ironheart: reinventing characters

Level: B1

Recommended Age: 10-18 years

Subject: English as a foreign language

Timing: 50 minutes

Resources: Worksheet, one computer per 2 students or printed copy of [this article](#).

Learning objectives:

- a. Improving independent reading skills
- b. Reviewing vocabulary about personality and character

Material needed: A copy of Invincible Iron Man (2015) #9, physical or digital per student or to share to read before the class

(https://www.marvel.com/comics/issue/55530/invincible_iron_man_2015_9). Do not hesitate to look for trial and promotional offers on subscriptions such as Free Comic Book Day in May, Marvel Unlimited or Comixology to limit costs.



II. Lesson scenario

1. Instruction for the teacher

Preparation to do before the lesson

Two weeks before the lesson, ask your students to prepare for the course by:

- Reading Iron Man (2015) #9

- Reading about Iron Man in the comic books at:

<https://www.marvel.com/characters/iron-man-tony-stark/in-comics/profile>

- Watch the trailer of Iron Man (2008) at: <https://www.marvel.com/videos/iron-man-trailer>

- Read about Ironheart at: <https://www.marvel.com/articles/comics/first-appearances-riri-williams>

About this comic book:

Ironheart is a character created by writer Brian Michael Bendis and illustrator Mike Deodato who first appeared in 2016's INVINCIBLE IRON MAN #7. She appears again 2 volumes later as the person who 'inherits' from Iron Man's suit after his death. Her name is Riri Williams. At 15, she is admitted to MIT due to her genius-level intelligence.

She was created to offer more representation of female characters in STEM as well as more representation of black women and provides a good basis to discuss representativity and the perception of STEM careers.

Ask your students to read the whole graphic novel: remind them not to stop at each word or scene they do not



understand but try to progress through the story as it might help them understand them better. The approximate reading time should be less than an hour.

Encourage your students to write down vocabulary or sentences they do not understand.

Introduction

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

- a. Today, we will compare the characters Iron Man and Ironheart.
- b. For the preparation, I asked you to read the a comic book, to write down things you did not understand, and to explore resources to learn more about Iron Man and Ironheart.
- c. Here is the plan for today’s lesson:

- First, we will complete a true/false exercise about the characters in small groups, which we will correct together.

(If you want to remind your students about forming the comparative, use our lesson [‘Stories and Legends’](#)).

- Then, we will do an exercise in pairs by writing 3 sentences using the comparative.
- Finally, we will discuss what you understood from the story, what you may have found difficult to understand, and what you think about the story and characterisation of Iron Man and Ironheart.

Step 1: True or False exercise (10 min)

- a. Put students in pairs and ask them to complete the true or false exercise.
- b. Then, ask students what they answered and why.



- c. Finally, provide the correct answers and give the context listed below to your students. Make sure to explain any points, in terms of vocabulary or story, that they would not understand. If you plan to do another lesson on Iron Man and Ironheart, you can ask your students to read specific moments of the story again so they understand it better.

Answers to exercise 1:

1. True
2. False, he owns a company that makes weapons.
3. False, they are not part of the same family (your students might hesitate as it is not stated clearly in the books, it has to be inferred from context).
4. False, they haven't met before Riri Williams appeared in the comic books.
5. True
6. False: Tony Stark made a replacement heart that he has to keep but he has no superpower. He is however a genius, and he can create a lot of innovative technology as he is rich.

Step 2: Comparing Iron Man and Ironheart (30 min)

- a. Have the students take turns to read [this article](#), either on a computer or hand them a printout.
- b. Then, ask them if there are any words or sentences that they did not understand, and explain.
- c. Then, ask them to complete exercise 2 by writing 3 sentences about Iron Man and Ironheart using the comparative.
- d. After this exercise, ask all students to share at least one sentence with the class. Moderate if some disagree.



Step 3: Discuss the story and the characters with the class (10 minutes)

- a.** You can ask your students if there are any words or points of the story that they did not understand. See if the rest of the class can explain the story: if your students generally do not understand the story, it might be good to ask them to read again and spend another class to finish studying the story.
- b.** Open up the discussion by asking students what they think about the comic book.
- c.** Then, read the worksheet and comic strips together.
- d.** Finally, ask your students to share their thoughts about the story and characterisation of Iron Man and Ironheart, and moderate their conversation.



2. Worksheet for the student

INTRODUCTION: PRESENTATION OF THE COMIC BOOK

Title: Invincible Iron Man (2015) #9

Type of comic: Comic book

Authors: Writer Brian Michael Bendis and penciller Mike Deodato.

Summary: After Iron Man's death, genius Riri Williams receives an armor directly from Tony Stark and becomes superhero Ironheart.

Link to the comic:

https://www.marvel.com/comics/issue/55530/invincible_iron_man_2015_9



STEP 1: UNDERSTANDING THE STORY

EXERCISE 1: Understanding Iron Man.

Write 'TRUE', 'FALSE' or "I DON'T KNOW" to indicate whether the following statements are true or false. This is a reading comprehension exercise, do not be afraid to make mistakes!

1. In the Marvel Universe, Iron Man is one of the richest people on Earth.

2. Iron Man is a philanthropist.

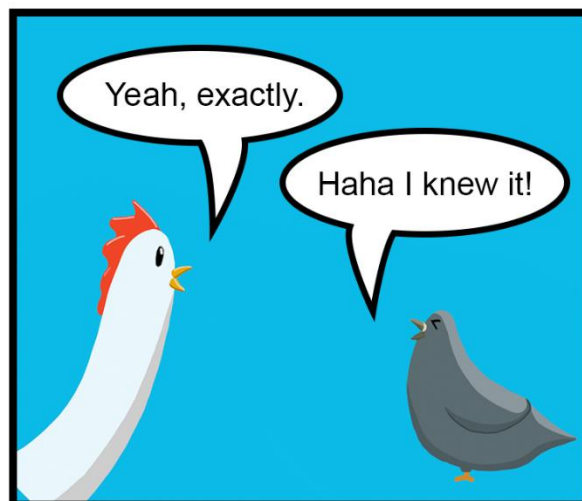
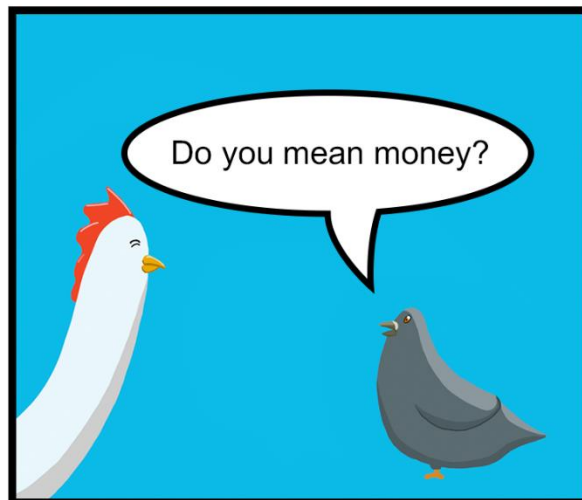
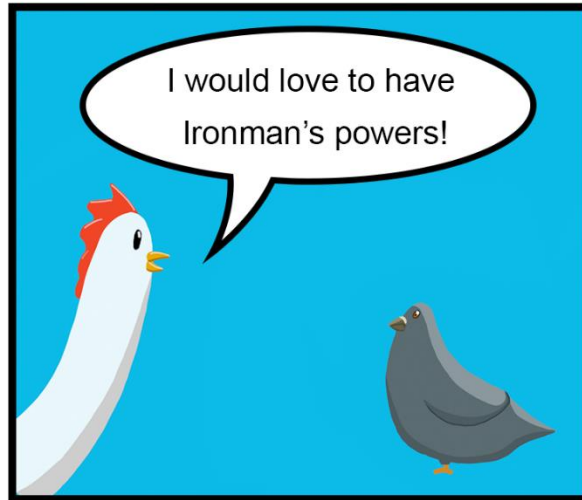
3. Iron Man is related to Ironheart.

4. Iron Man is Ironheart's mentor and teacher.

5. Iron Man's armor is one of the most technologically advanced weapons.

6. Tony Stark has superpowers.

Read the strip below to learn the most important information about Tony Stark and Iron Man's character.





STEP 2: Comparing Iron Man and Ironheart

First, read this article ([link](#)) with the class: 'Ironheart became smarter than Iron Man to prove the patriarchy wrong' by Shawna Masiello on poptopic.com.eu.

Ask your teacher about anything you do not understand.

EXERCISE 2: With your partner, try to think about 3 ways to compare Tony Stark or Iron Man and Riri Williams or Ironheart. Then share it with the class.

Example: Riri Williams is more intelligent than Tony Stark.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

STEP 3: Discuss the story and the characters with the class

ACTIVITY 1: Understanding the story

First, share with the class any words, sentences or moments in the story that you did not understand or did not understand clearly. Do not hesitate to ask as many questions as you need!

You can also help the other students if you know the answers to their questions.

ACTIVITY 2: Share your thoughts about the story and the characters.

Now, your teachers will lead the discussion to know who prefers which character or background story. There is no right or wrong opinion, as long as it is respectful.

Consider the comic strip below: in the first scenario, the second character does not value the first character's opinion, which disappoints them.



In this second scenario, the second character is respectful of the second character's opinion, which supports conversation and creates a more positive atmosphere.

Remember not to interrupt the others not to make fun of their opinion, even if you disagree with them! They might also disagree with you, and the best is to ask them about the reasons why they think this or that way to expand your views. They might see something in a character that you had not noticed before and that you might find interesting in the end!





III. Modification and differentiation ideas

- a. You could spend another 2 other classes on this lesson topic: one to go through the whole comic book in details, and the second to research and speak about Ironheart's characterization. For instance, the evolution of her costume reflects new authors' take on the character, and also target different audiences. It can be a good activity to discuss representativity.

You can see all of Ironheart's costumes at:

[https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Riri_Williams_\(Earth-616\)/Gallery](https://marvel.fandom.com/wiki/Riri_Williams_(Earth-616)/Gallery)

- b. As homework, you could ask your students to research other new interpretations of classic comic book characters to understand how and why they promote more inclusive representations of superheroes, such as:
- The Green Lanterns (DC),
 - The different Robins, Batman's sidekick (DC),
 - Different versions of Thor or Loki (Marvel).