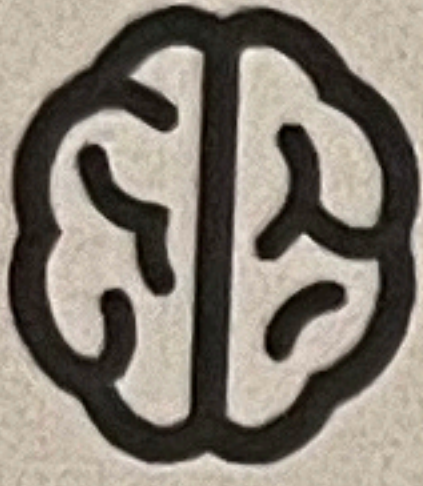
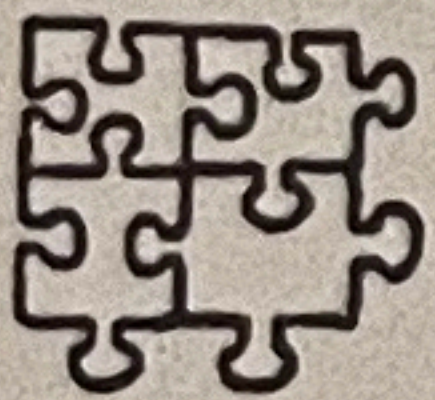
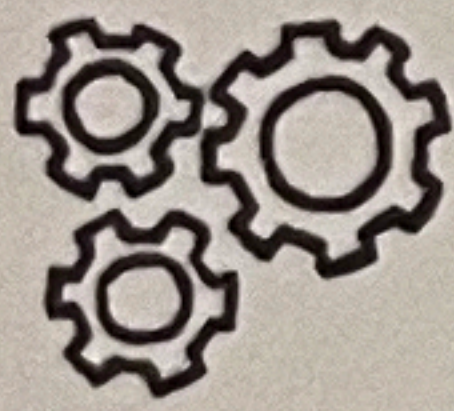


In Figure 4.10, we have developed a checklist to account for the four practices for supporting MLs' participation and engagement in peer learning. Use this checklist as a guide for developing peer learning activities that will support MLs' active participation and engagement.

FIGURE 4.10 PEER LEARNING ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

CRITERIA		YES	NO	FOLLOW-UP STEPS
	1. Have I developed a peer learning activity that will provide my MLs with • authentic opportunities to speak, • time to strengthen and deepen their responses, and • an engaging discussion prompt or task? (<i>Practice 1</i>)			
	2. Have my MLs had sufficient exposure to the content and academic language needed to participate in the activity? (<i>Practice 1</i>)			
	3. Have my MLs been taught expected nonverbal communication to support peer learning activities (e.g., looking at people when speaking, nodding understanding)? (<i>Practice 2</i>)			
	4. Do I have a way of monitoring students' nonverbal communication? (<i>Practice 2</i>)			
	5. Have I provided sufficient structure to the activity (including the use of supporting tools) and clear evaluation criteria so as to encourage all of my MLs to participate in the activity? (<i>Practice 3</i>)			
	6. Have I thought about how to intentionally group students? (<i>Practice 3</i>)			
	7. Have I considered assigning roles to students? (<i>Practice 3</i>)			
	8. Have I given sufficient thought to how to structure the classroom so that students can effectively interact and work together? (<i>Practice 3</i>)			
	9. Have I provided MLs sufficient practice and support in making connections to others' ideas before and during the activity? (<i>Practice 4</i>)			
	10. Have I considered how I might use the activity to assess MLs' acquisition and use of academic language or understanding of content? (<i>Practice 4</i>)			

Source: Adapted from Snyder & Staehr Fenner (2021), p. 172–173.

What Are Some Effective Peer Learning Activities for MLs?

There are many different peer learning activities that you can use in your classroom to support MLs' oral language development and content understanding. As you are deciding what activity to use, reflect on your learning objectives for the activity and what type of activity will best help your students meet those objectives. Also, remember, the activity should accomplish the following goals:

- Provide students opportunities to hear and practice key academic language
- Be structured in such a way so that all students will have an opportunity (and sufficient support) to share their ideas
- Push student understanding of content to deeper levels

We have described a few of our favorite activities to support MLs' oral language development and content understanding here, beginning with a more in-depth description of Socratic circles. You can adapt these activities to meet the specific needs of the MLs in your classroom by providing various types of scaffolding, such as sentence frames, sentence stems, word banks, and strategic student grouping. You can also encourage (or require) students to use specific vocabulary in their conversations.

Socratic Circle

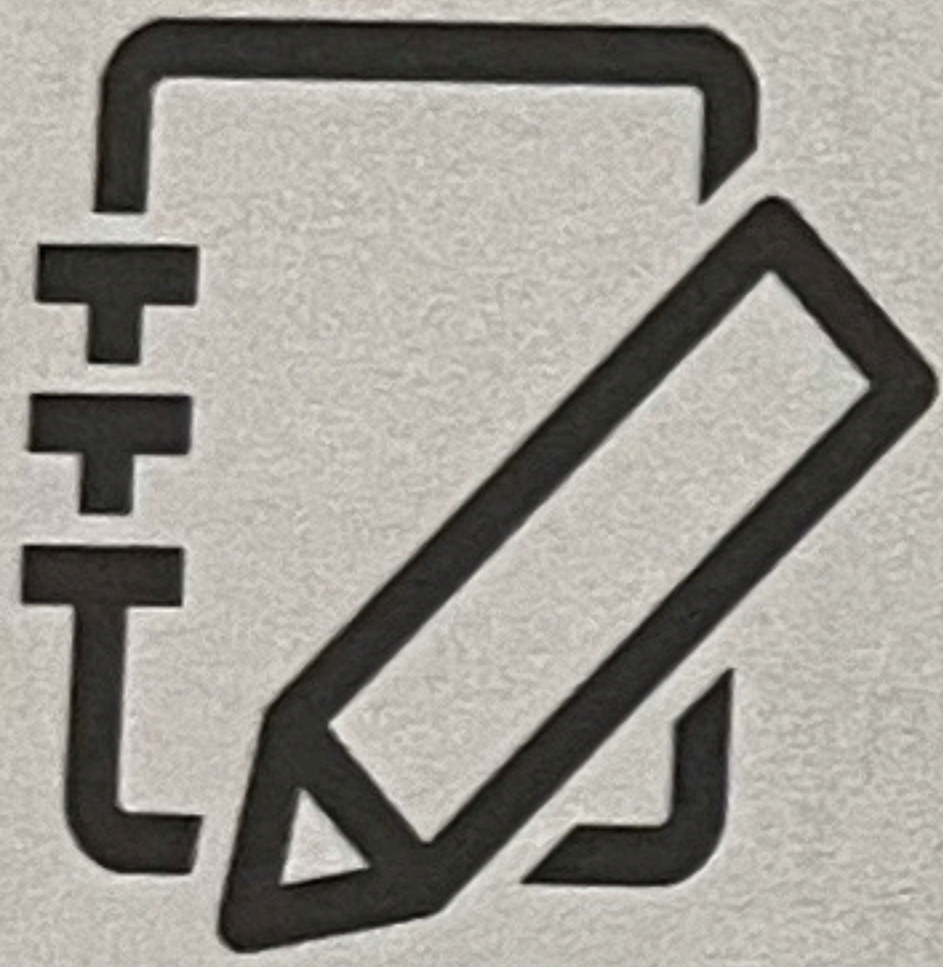
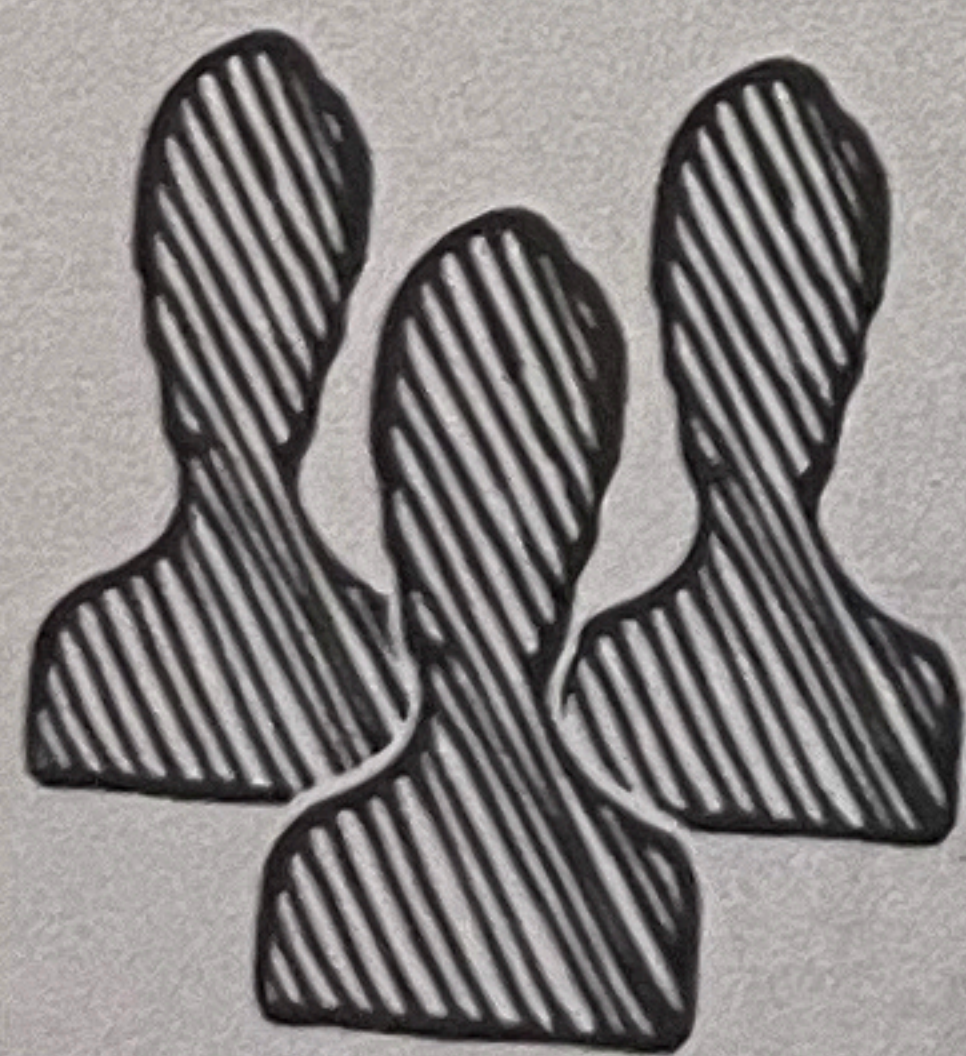
We would first like to explain an activity that may take a bit more preparation to use successfully with MLs but one that can be highly effective for all students once they are familiar with the process. It is most commonly used with middle and high school students. A **Socratic circle, also known as Socratic seminar, is a teaching strategy used to support deep understanding of a specific piece of writing, music, or art.** It is based on Socrates's belief in the importance of developing students' ability to think critically and independently through the use of dialogue. The focus of the Socratic method is on giving students questions rather than answers. By posing and responding to questions, students examine and reevaluate their beliefs on a particular topic. In addition to fostering critical thinking, Socratic circles are designed to support student collaboration, creativity, and intellectual curiosity.

Prior to the Socratic circle activity, students read, analyze, and take notes on a common "text" (e.g., novel, poem, song, or painting). Students are then typically divided into two groups—an inner and an outer circle. The activity begins with the inner circle of students engaging in dialogue about the text and the outer circle observing. After a specified period of time, the outer circle provides feedback to the inner circle on their conversation, and the two groups of students switch roles. Throughout the activity, the teacher acts as a facilitator. The activity is not meant to result in a winning argument, as opposed to debates. Students are expected to use the text to support their ideas, ask questions, share their opinions, and build on the ideas of others.

Although they present great potential to engage students in discussions around complex text, Socratic circles can be especially challenging to MLs. First of all, the mere thought of having to speak about a nuanced topic in front of the entire class without linguistic support could be especially nerve racking for emergent MLs who are at lower levels of proficiency (or quiet students in general). In order to effectively participate in this type of discourse, MLs need to have a deep understanding of the text being discussed.

Also, the pace and language of the discussion may prove a challenge for some MLs who need time and support to “digest” what others are saying and frame their ideas before presenting them orally. In addition, without specific support, MLs may not have the academic language necessary to orally summarize, refute, or support the ideas of others. Figure 4.11 provides specific strategies to help MLs prepare for and participate in Socratic circles.

FIGURE 4.11 HELPING MLs PREPARE FOR A SOCRATIC CIRCLE

STRATEGY	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MLs
Preparing for Socratic circles: MLs need deep understanding of the text. 	• Be sure that students are adequately prepared for the activity by giving them sufficient scaffolding to understand the text (e.g., concise background knowledge, glossaries, and scaffolded text-dependent questions). • Provide students with graphic organizers to help them frame their thinking about the text in writing. • Give students practice and support in developing open-ended questions about a particular text. • Give students practice in anticipating the types of open-ended questions that other students might ask about a text.
Modeling: MLs need to know what high-quality responses and questions sound like. 	• Model a successful Socratic circle by first practicing the following steps with a familiar text at a lower level of complexity. ○ Provide MLs with opportunities to practice questioning and responding in small groups before expecting them to participate in a whole-class discussion. ○ Provide sentence stems that students can use in asking and responding to questions, clarifying others' ideas, and commenting on the ideas of others. Give students practice in using these stems. ○ Highlight questions or responses that are particularly effective. Explain why those particular questions or responses are of high quality.
Balancing Participation: Help support MLs' participation in the discussion. 	• If some students are dominating the discussion, limit all participants to a certain number of questions and responses. • Guide students to invite those who are less active to participate (e.g., “Marisol, what do you think about what Sam said?”). • As the facilitator, use the last few minutes of the discussion to invite those students who haven't asked a question to take part in the discussion. • Be comfortable with silence. The time will allow those who need more time to think more opportunities to participate.

Source: Staehr Fenner & Snyder (2015a).

In Figure 4.11, MLs' oral language one, consider colleague how

FIGURE 4.12

ACTIVITY

Barometer:
Take a Stand

Carousel

Debrief Circles
(also known as
Reel Activity or
Parallel Lines)

In Figure 4.12, we outline eight additional peer learning activities for supporting MLs' oral language development and content understanding. As you read each one, consider how you might use the activity in your classroom or suggest to a colleague how it could be used in their classroom.

FIGURE 4.12 PEER LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE IN MY CLASSROOM
Barometer: Take a Stand	• Select a statement that students can have an opinion about and is connected to your lesson. • Ask students who agree with the statement to go to one end of the classroom and students who disagree to go to the other end. • Students who are neutral or undecided can go to the center of the room. • Have students find a partner in their group and share why they went where they did. Or, have students find someone in a different group to discuss why they went where they did. • Invite several students to share their ideas with the large group. • Ask if any students have changed their minds after hearing the discussion.	
Carousel	• Write questions connected to the unit of study on poster paper and hang them up around the room (one piece of poster paper per question). • Divide students into small groups so that there is one question per group. • Give each group of students a different color marker and assign them a question to start with. • Instruct students to discuss and write their responses on the poster paper. • Have the groups rotate to another question after several minutes. • Encourage the groups to add on to and provide additional evidence to the responses that are already written. • Debrief each question as a whole class, providing appropriate scaffolds for your MLs.	
Debrief Circles (also known as Reel Activity or Parallel Lines)	• Give each student an index card, and ask them to answer two questions (one on each side of the card). • Have students count off by twos. • Have students form two concentric circles, with one student facing another student (e.g., number ones in the inner circle and number twos in the outer circle). • Instruct students to share their responses to one of the questions with each other.	

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ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE IN MY CLASSROOM
	• Have students in the inner circle move one or two students to the left and then share their responses to the second question. • Consider having students move multiple times, each time sharing their responses and hearing other students' responses. You can also have students put away their index cards as they gain increasing confidence in speaking about the topic. • Ask students to compare how their responses differed from those of their peers or to share whether their responses changed based on listening to their peers.	
Gap Activity	• Put students in pairs. • Provide each student in the pair different information. • Have students ask each other questions in order to complete a task. • For example, one student might have a math word problem to solve. However, the partner's handout has all the numbers that are needed to solve the problem. Partner A must ask Partner B questions in order to solve the problem.	
Numbered Heads Together	• Set up student desks so that they are clustered in groups facing each other. • Assign each group member a number. • Pose a question or challenge to the class. • Instruct each group to discuss their ideas and come to a consensus on a response. • Identify a number and ask the group member assigned that number to share their group's response.	
Role Play	• Students might feel intimidated or strange using academic language to discuss an issue. Role-playing can be a good way to have students tackle these issues under the guise of another persona. • For example, during a science unit focused on conservation, you might ask students to take on specific roles (e.g., a scientist and a businessperson) and discuss, in pairs, the pros and cons of renewable energy sources, such as wind or solar energy.	
World Café	• Put students in groups of three to four. • Give each group a different topic or a question to discuss. All topics and questions should share a common theme. • Have each group select a leader to take notes on the discussion on a piece of poster paper. • Instruct all students, except for the leader, to move to another discussion group. Students do not have to stay in the same groups. • Have the leader provide highlights of the previous discussion to the new group. • Assign a new leader in each group. The new group discusses the same topic or question and adds to the notes. • Debrief the activity, by hanging the posters in front of the class and having students share highlights from their discussion.	

ACTIVITY

1-3-6 Protocol

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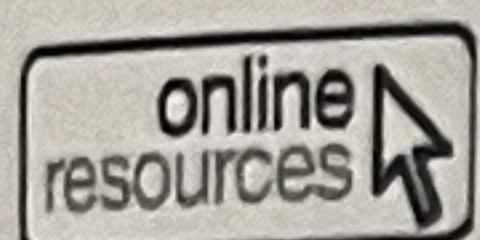
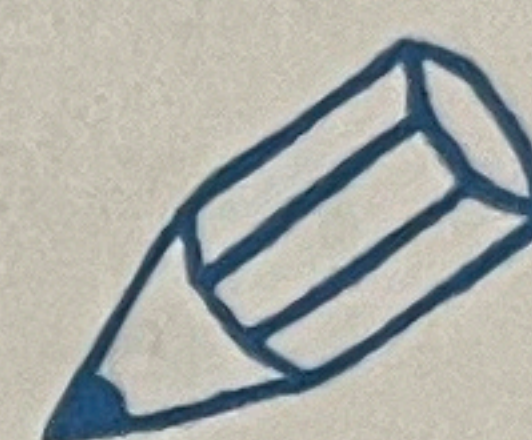
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ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	CONSIDERATIONS FOR USE IN MY CLASSROOM
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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which peer learning activity would you like to try in your context?
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Now that we've explored specific strategies to foster MLs' oral language development and content understanding, let's take a look at some considerations for ML newcomer students and SLIFE and the role of collaboration, equity, advocacy, and leadership when engaging in peer learning activities.



ML NEWCOMER STUDENTS AND SLIFE CONSIDERATIONS

What Are Key Considerations for Supporting ML Newcomer Students and SLIFE During Peer Learning Activities?

ML newcomer students and SLIFE need targeted supports for successful participation in peer learning activities.

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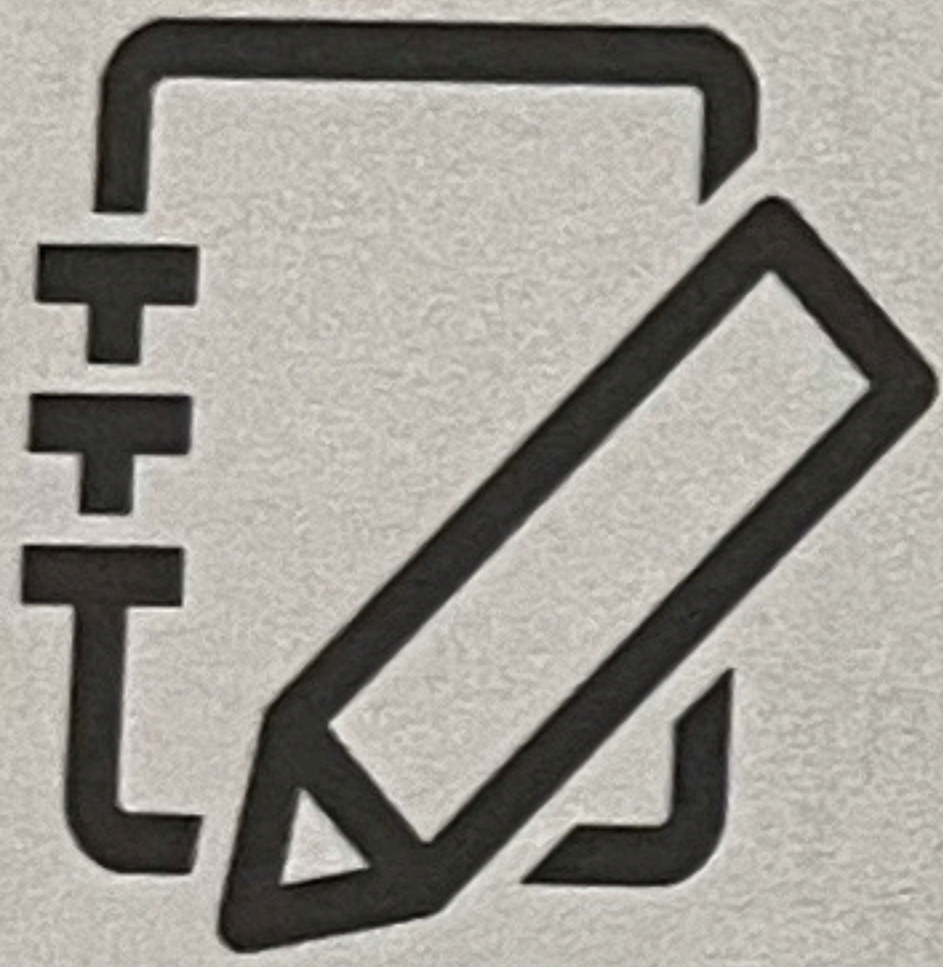
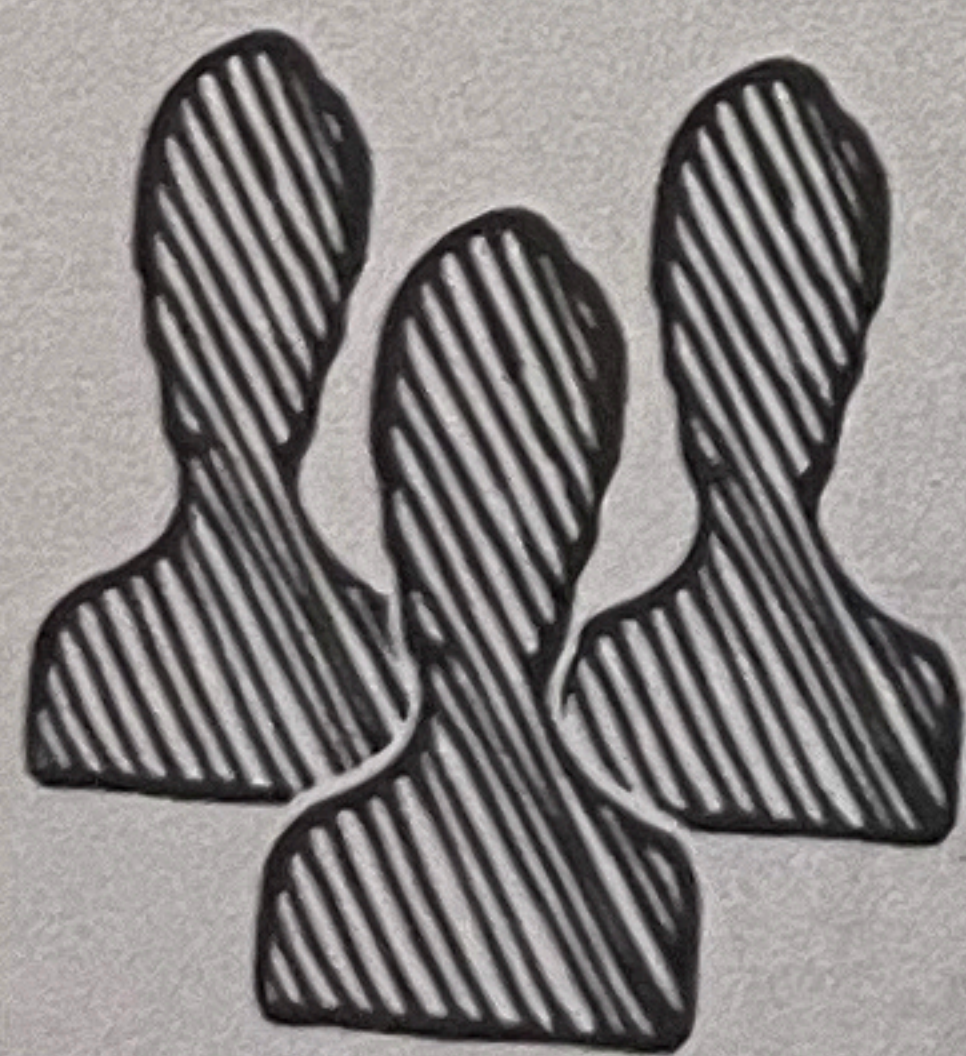
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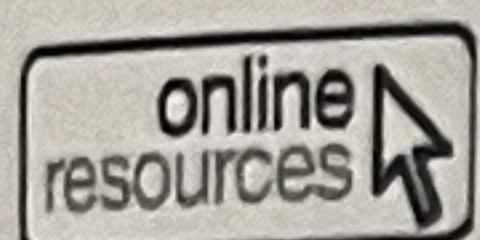
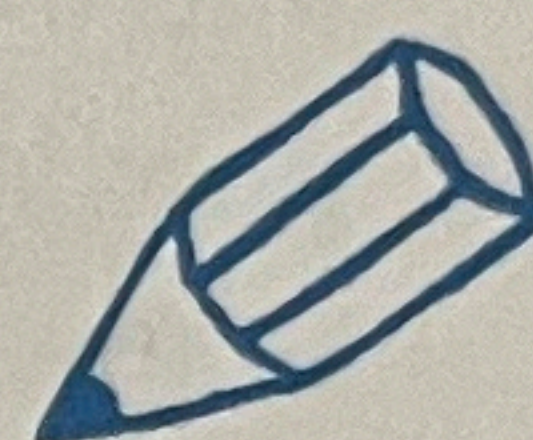
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