Documentation of a Pre-Texts workshop with Waldschule Mannheim, November 8 till 10, 2021

Maximiliane Houck,
Lina Seiß,
Sina Weschke

Stadtbibliothek Mannheim

Table of contents

STADTBIBLIOTHEK**MANNHEIM**

Details

- Date: 8th, 9th and 10th November 2021
- Time: 8 am till 1 pm (= 15 hours)
- Organization and documentation: 12 hours
- School/class: Waldschule Mannheim, 9th grade
- Workshop location: Mannheim library (first day) and Waldschule Mannheim (last two days)
- Workshop language: German (first two days) and (partly) English (third day)
- Students: teenagers from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, most of them have stayed down a year at least once
- Most students didn't consent to have their pictures taken. Some agreed to have pictures taken of their backs only. Very few agreed to be pictured.

Day 1: November 8, 2021

1. **Welcome everyone**

2. **Introduction: show PowerPoint presentation**
   -> What is Pre-Texts?
   -> What makes Pre-Texts so special?
   -> What will happen today?

3. **Are there any questions?**
   -> No questions yet

4. **Present German text "An manchen Tagen" by Nadja Einzmann**
   -> Distribute sheets with text
   -> Who wants to read text?
   -> One student volunteers and reads whole text aloud

5. **"to go off on a tangent"**
   -> What does this mean? (show PowerPoint)
   -> A few examples
   -> Activity: pick a tangent
   -> "Chain of communication": What does this mean?
   -> Each person presents their tangent, then picks the next person
   -> RESULTS (examples): depression; What is a raft?; jobs where you work so hard your hands hurt; negativity/pessimism; bullying; …

6. **Activity: tangents**
   -> Students are free to walk around the library and find a medium that represents someone else's tangent
   -> A book, an audio book, a movie etc. whose title, topic or cover reminds them of

STADTBIBLIOTHEK**MANNHEIM**

someone's tangent
-> Afterwards: students present and explain the medium they found; chain of communication
-> RESULTS (examples of book titles they associate with someone else's tangent):
  - "Kinder denken mit dem Herzen" (-> feelings/heavy heart)
  - "Kindersorgen" (-> a mother's worries about her child)
  - "Mobbing" (-> bullying)
  - "Zurück zum Glück" (-> trying to find joy and happiness)
  - "Psychopathen" (-> pessimism/negativity)

7. **Activity: boy or girl?**
   -> Question arises whether the narrator is male or female
   -> Everyone gets handed a sheet of paper and has to write down "boy" or "girl", depending on what they think is true
   -> Questions and recommendations? (none)
   -> Students are surprised to find that even the librarians have different thoughts on it
   -> The text doesn't state whether it's a boy or a girl
   -> Students think it might be a girl because it is mentioned that the wind waves through the narrator's hair
   -> Students think it might be a boy because the narrator is being asked to go fishing with their father
   -> What is true? No one knows

8. **What did we do?**
   -> Chain of communication
   -> A few students are confused and ask why they have to repeat everything so many times

9. **Present German text "Der Sieger" by Erich Junge**
   -> Distribute sheets with text
   -> Who wants to read text?
   -> One person volunteers and picks the next (chain of communication)

10. **Activity: to go off on a leaf**
    -> Which part of the text spoke to you most and why? Which parts/sentences/facts struck you?
    -> Time to think about it, then share thoughts via chain of communication
    -> RESULTS (examples): "Gewichtheben", "die Ziege, die in der Wiese liegt wie ein weißer Fleck", "dass er weint", "warum schüttelt er ihm nicht die Hand?"

11. **Activity: role-play a scene**
    -> Are there ideas?
    -> Someone suggests the idea of role-play
    -> Questions and recommendations?
    -> Everyone agrees, but there is one question: pantomime or also with words?
    -> Class agrees that they want to do pantomime
    -> Class is split in three groups; 15 mins to prepare one scene of the text
    -> After 15 mins: first group starts to pantomime, then picks the next group
    -> RESULTS (scenes that were pantomimed): shaking hands after the pentathlon;

when Dannwitz (antagonist) stands in front of Bert (protagonist) but decides to not attack and then cries (this scene was pantomimed by two groups)
-> Interesting that the majority chose one certain scene, even though there are many other opportunities/text passages you could pantomime

Students playing the scene when everyone, except for Dannwitz, shakes Bert's hand

12. **Activity: draw a scene**
-> Are there ideas for another activity?
-> Class decides to draw a scene from the text
-> Questions and recommendations?
-> Recommendation: draw a scene on a sheet of paper, then hand the sheet to the next group, which should draw a different scene
-> Everyone agrees
-> Class is divided in groups, each group gets a sheet of paper
-> RESULTS (examples of scenes being drawn): Bert sitting at the dinnertable with his father telling him what happened; Dannwitz crying; Bert with his friends after he won; Dannwitz turning his back and walking away

13. **Activity: debate**
-> Are there any ideas for another activity?
-> Someone suggests a debate, like in debate clubs
-> Questions and recommendations?
-> Recommendation/wish: to do it in groups
-> Groups are being formed

-> Each group gets a topic and an opinion on this topic; task: to find arguments that support their opinion (using text is also possible)

-> Present arguments/have discussion after 10-15 mins

-> RESULTS (groups and examples of their arguments):

   a) Group 1: pro using violence in conflicts
- Easy to end conflict immediately
- Sometimes the only way to end conflict
- What would you do if someone hurt your child? Then you would also like to take revenge

    -> You can't always rely on the justice system

   b) Group 2: against violence in conflicts

    -> Violence always produces counter-violence, this is no way to solve a conflict

    -> With violence, someone will most likely be hurt, which is not desirable

    -> Self-administered justice is not the way; it is better to call the police and let the justice system do its job

   c) Group 3: opinion that Dannwitz and Bert can become friends

    -> Dannwitz is relatively new, so maybe they will get closer over time

    -> They are classmates, so they could become friends

   d) Group 4: opinion that Dannwitz and Bert can't ever become friends

    -> They are very different

    -> Bert already has friends, he doesn't need more

    -> Dannwitz wanted to beat Bert, so he clearly doesn't like him

   e) Group 5: opinion that Dannwitz's reaction in the end was realistic

    -> Maybe he is very insecure and sad

    -> Maybe he feels left-out and he realized this

    -> Maybe he realized that he would have lost against Bert, since Bert already won the fight

   f) Group 6: opinion that Dannwitz's reaction in the end was unrealistic

    -> Dannwitz is strong, he could have won easily

    -> Why do you go there with the intention of beating someone up, but then end up crying and walking away?

Students during the debate with a different group

14. **What did we do?**
    -> Chain of communication

15. **Homework**
    -> What do you think will happen the next day in school between Dannwitz and Bert? Think about it and take some notes for the next day

16. **Goodbye**
    -> First day of Pre-Texts is over, hope you liked it
    -> Tomorrow we will visit you in your school
    -> Bye bye

# Day 2: November 9, 2021

1. **Welcome back everyone**

2. **Talk about homework**
    -> Homework: imagine what will happen the next day in school
    -> RESULTS: Most students think that Dannwitz and Bert will become friends; only two think that they will not become friends

3. **Activity: characteristics**
   -> Suggestion: talk about characteristics of the two main characters
   -> Questions and recommendations?
   -> Recommendation: also talk about how they (secretly) want to be
   -> What are the characteristics of Bert and Dannwitz? Which characteristics would
   they maybe secretly like to have?
   -> Each student gets a green and an orange sheet of paper
   -> Green paper: characteristics of Bert
   -> Orange paper: characteristics of Dannwitz
   -> Each student writes down a few characteristics
   -> Afterwards: use blackboard to collect characteristics (green chalk = Bert; red chalk
   = Dannwitz; white chalk = characteristics they might wish they had)
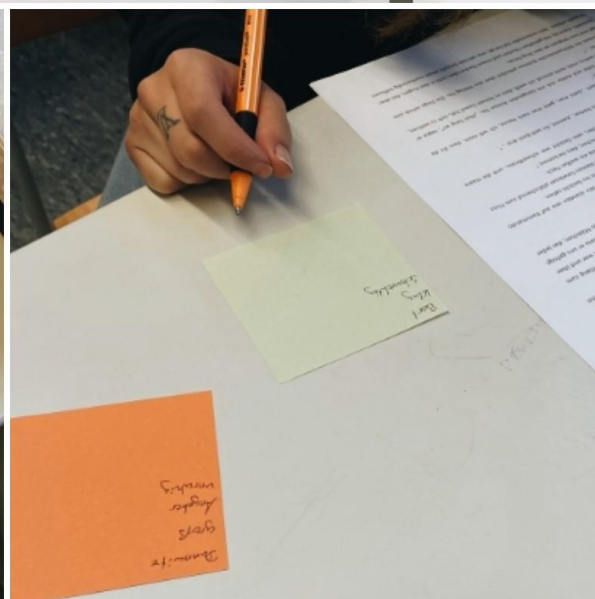
Characteristics of the main characters of "Der Sieger" by Erich Junge that students collected;
students collecting characteristics on colored sheets

4. **Activity: What could have happened before?**
   -> Suggestion: think of the story before the scenes in the text
   -> Questions and recommendations?
   -> Recommendation 1: think about the story 1.5 years ago, when Dannwitz arrived and was the new guy
   -> Recommendation 2: Since the students can't decide on who to focus on, students sitting on the left side of the room will think of how Bert's life was before, students on the right side of the room will think of how Dannwitz's life was before
   -> Recommendation 3: work in teams to discuss, but choose your own story
   -> RESULTS (examples of ideas that students had):
     - There was a fight between the students and Dannwitz
     - Dannwitz and Bert were friends, but then they had an argument about who is the best (comment from another student: they were in fact never friends before, as the text states)
   - Before Dannwitz came to this new school, there was not a group of friends around Bert, but when Dannwitz played the cool, tough, dangerous guy, the group formed
   - Bert and Dannwitz had many arguments and at some point it escalated
   - Bert was intelligent, Dannwitz was powerful and threatening, and they annoyed each other due to their character traits
   - Bert and Dannwitz have always been competitors when it comes to sports, and this is what started the argument/tension between them

5. **What did we do?**
   -> Chain of communication

6. **Present German text "Das Brot" by Wolfgang Borchert**
   -> Distribute sheets with text
   -> Who wants to read text?
   -> One person volunteers and picks the next (chain of communication)

7. **"to go off on a tangent"**
   -> One volunteer, then chain of communication
   -> RESULTS (examples of tangents that students picked):
     - "Dachrinne", because what's that?
     - bread, because why does the woman's stomach not tolerate bread?
     - "in the morning", because it's the opposite of "at night"
     - chewing gum, because the guy was chewing bread
     - my mother, because she also always tells me I shouldn't walk barefoot on the cold tiles
     - old people, because the married couple is old
     - Why would the other side of the bed be empty? Maybe because your partner left or they died
   -> Students understand much better now what a tangent is, so the quality of some of the tangents is great

8. **Activity: do research on someone's tangent**
   -> Use tablets and browse the internet
   -> Afterwards: share results in group, using chain of communication
   -> RESULTS (examples of some of the things students found out):

STADTBIBLIOTHEK**MANNHEIM**[2]

- Definition of "Dachrinne"
- In the evening you should eat vitamins and carbs (comment by other student: bread has carbs, so this does not mean you shouldn't eat bread in the evening)
- It's not healthy to walk barefoot on cold tiles since when your feet get cold, your nasal mucosa is not supplied sufficiently with blood and becomes dry; this makes you more prone to catching a virus
- Stages of grief after having lost a partner
- You can be called old when you are older than 60, in some cultures/regions older than 65
- Chewing gum can improve your ability to pay attention
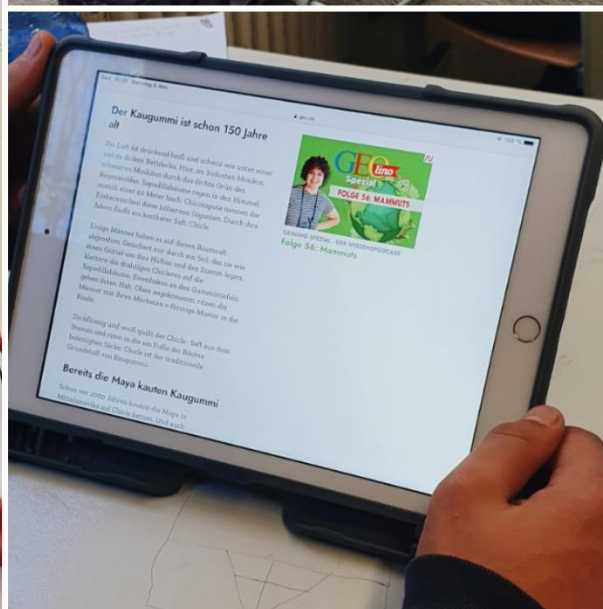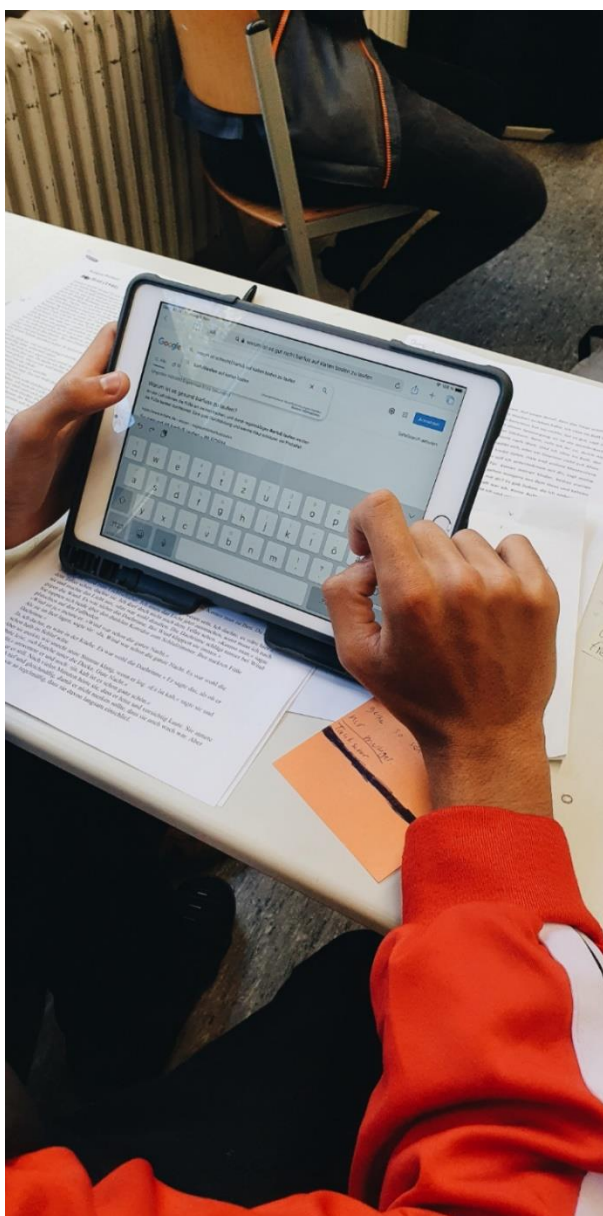
Students researching a tangent with tablets

9. **Activity: research the author**
   -> Suggestion: to do some more research with the tablets
   -> Questions and recommendations?
   -> Recommendation 1: do research the author, Wolfgang Borchert
   -> Recommendation 2: collect results on the blackboard

STADTBIBLIOTHEK**MANNHEIM**

-> RESULTS (examples of the facts students found out about the author):
- He was in prison for 9 months
- His parents were called Fritz and Hertha
- He died very young, at the age of 26
- He was a representative of the "Trümmerliteratur"
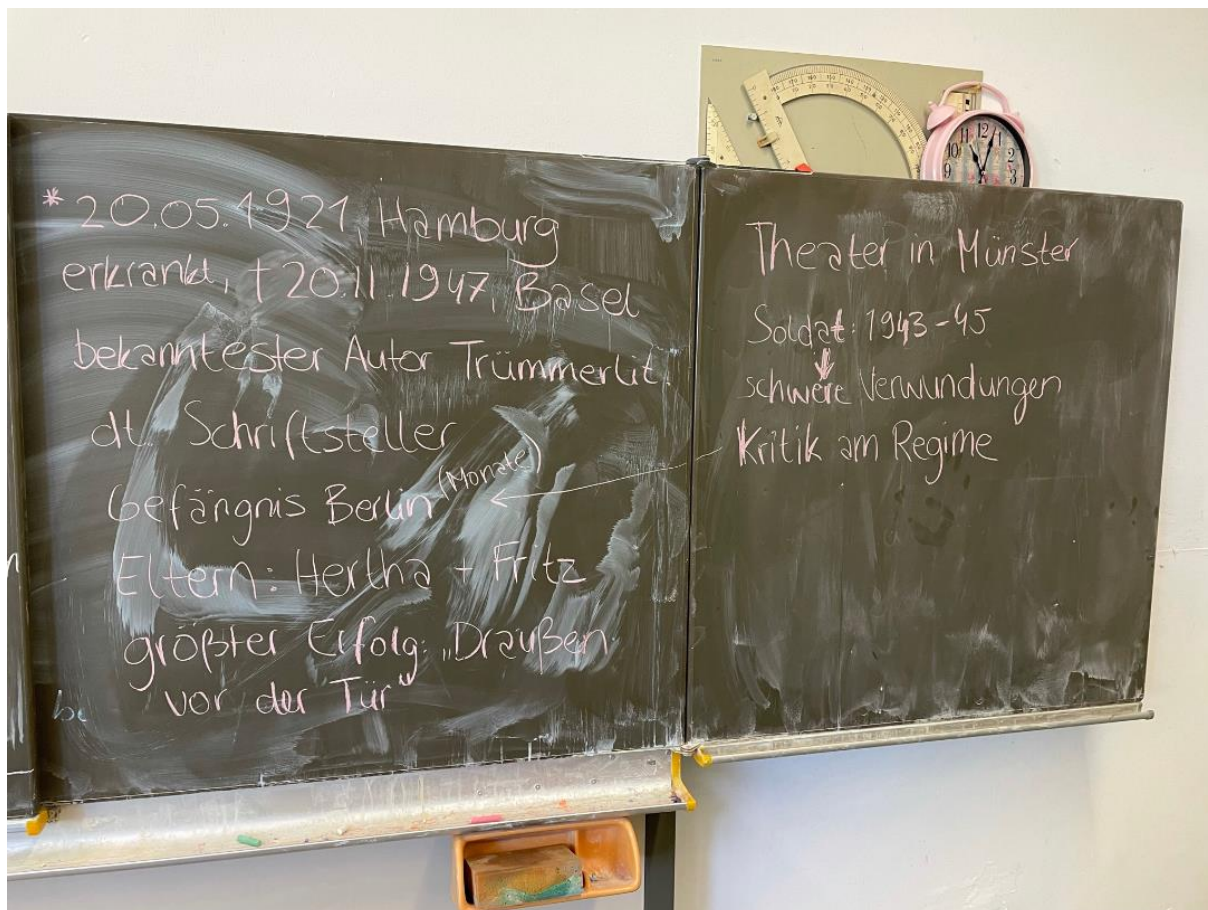
Information students found on the author Wolfgang Borchert

10. **Activity: play a scene**
-> Suggestion: play a scene from the text
-> Questions and recommendations?
-> Recommendation 1: do it in groups
-> Recommendation 2: the others have to guess which scene you are playing
-> RESULTS (examples of scenes that students chose to play):
- Final scene when the couple is sitting at the dinner table and the woman gives her husband 4 slices of bread instead of 3
- Wife waking up to an empty bed and getting up to look for her husband
-> Most groups chose the end scene

Students playing a scene from the text "Das Brot" by Wolfgang Borchert

11. **What did we do?**
    -> chain of communication

12. **Goodbye**
    -> second day is over
    -> tomorrow we'll talk in English and will have an English text

Day 3: November 10, 2021

1. **Welcome back everyone**

2. **Present English text "Emancipation. A Fable of Life" by Kate Chopin**
   -> Distribute sheets with text
   -> Who wants to read text?
   -> One person volunteers and picks the next (chain of communication)

3. **Activity: collect words we don't know**
   -> Many students state that there are many words they don't know
   -> Suggestion: collect them on the blackboard
   -> Questions and recommendations?
   -> Recommendation: after collecting the words, we can see if someone else knows one of these words
   -> One person starts, then picks the next (chain of communication)
   -> RESULTS: words on the blackboard (red chalk):
     - awaking
     - provided
     - flanks
     - wider
     - broad
     - canopy
     - bask
     - crouched
     - noxious
   -> Class collects so many words that the blackboard is full
   -> Use green chalk to write the translation/meaning next to these words
   -> Brainstorm together: Does anyone know what this word means?
   -> Help and give hints: What does "wide" mean? The German word is very similar
   -> In the end: 9 words are left that the group cannot translate/understand

4. **Activity: look up words in the dictionary**
   -> Suggestion: look up the remaining words in a dictionary to find out the meaning
   -> Questions and recommendations?
   -> Recommendation: do it in teams of 2 or 3
   -> RESULTS: student find the meaning of most remaining words (see words written with white chalk), but in fact not all of the words can be found in the dictionary, e.g. "heedless" is not there
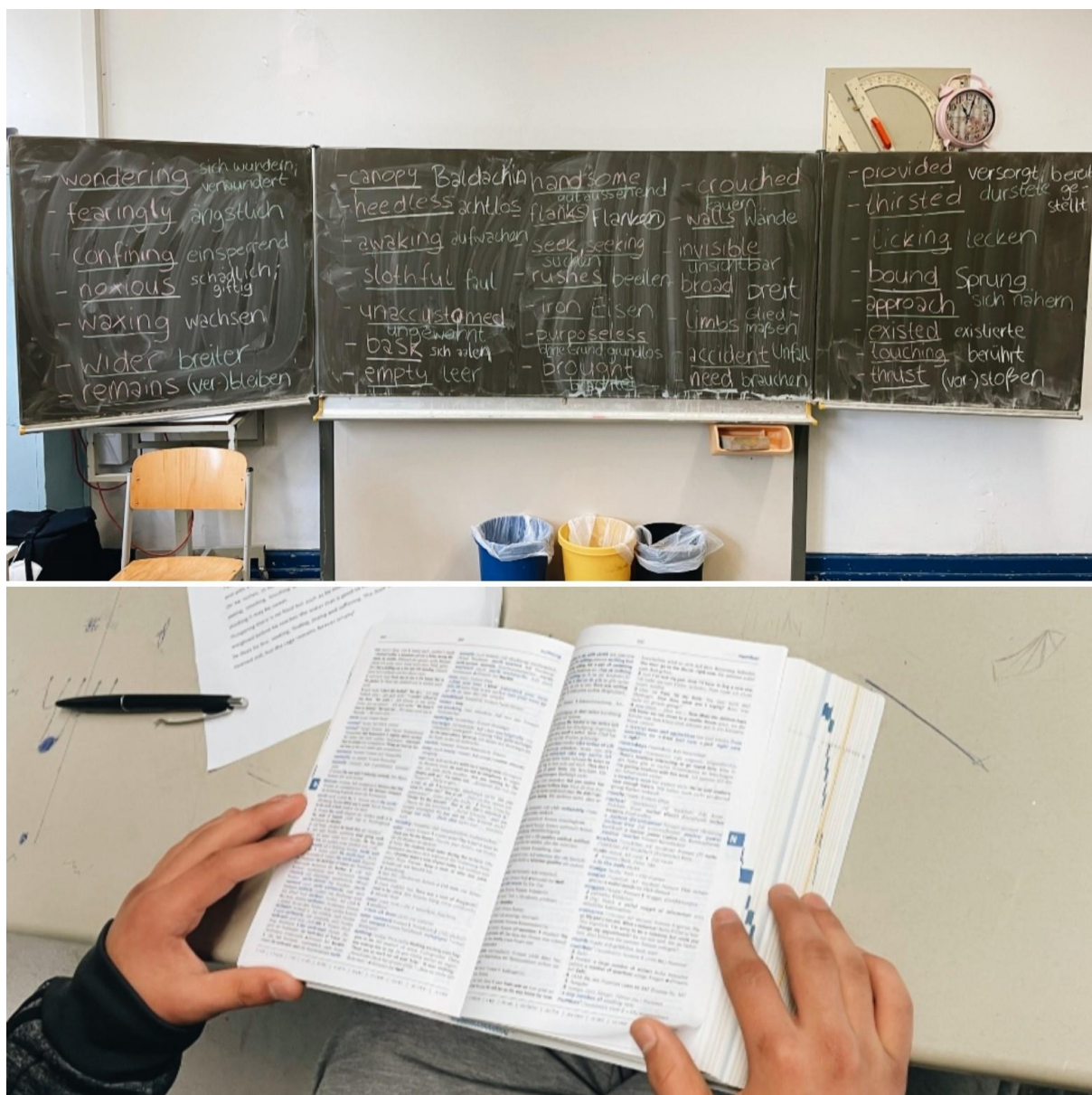
The blackboard with English words students didn't know; a student using a dictionary

5. **Activity: find music that fits to a scene**
   -> Suggestion: use phones to find music that fits to a scene
   -> Questions and recommendations?
   -> Recommendation: not everyone has a phone with data volume, this is why every team should consist of one person with data and one without
   -> Pre-Texts moderators assign each group one of the paragraphs
   -> RESULTS: music/songs that students chose :
      - paragraph 1: sad music, title: "Born in a Cage", since it's about the animal which was born in a cage
      - paragraph 2: gangster music about being in prison, since the animal is like in a prison
      - paragraph 3: instrumental music which fits to the mood when the animal sees that the cage door is open
      - paragraph 4: instrumental music which fits to the mood when the animal finally decides to jump into freedom
      - paragraph 5: rap song, title: "Run Run Run", since the animal now runs around

outside and experiences the world
   - paragraph 6: soundtrack of German soap opera "Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten" (= "Good Times, Bad Times"), since the animal is now free but experiences both joy and suffering

6. **Activity: pantomime a scene**
-> Suggestion: do pantomime
-> Questions and recommendations?
-> Recommendation 1: Some don't want to do pantomime, so those could draw a scene from the text
-> Recommendation 2: stay in same groups like before
-> Recommendation 3: every group gets assigned a paragraph they should pantomime or draw, otherwise most groups might use the same paragraph (as happened before)
-> Recommendation 4: other groups have to guess which paragraph it is; therefore the paragraphs should be assigned secretly
-> RESULTS: scenes students pantomimed and drew:
   - paragraph 1: was drawn
   - paragraph 2: was pantomimed
   - paragraph 3: was drawn
   - paragraph 4: was pantomimed
   - paragraph 5: was drawn
   - paragraph 6: was pantomimed

7. **Additional information and feedback**
-> how to get a library card
-> T!BB flyers: if you ever need help for an exam or a presentation
-> distribute feedback questionnaire for students and teachers to anonymously fill out

8. **Goodbye**
-> Pre-Texts workshop has ended
-> we hope you had some fun
-> goodbye

Results from and material used in the Pre-Texts workshop with Waldschule Mannheim