

I show my students some of the images:

Mathematical proofs. The Moon. Clouds over Egypt. DNA. The human body. A fetus. A nude man holding hands with a nude and pregnant woman [laughter at the back of the classroom]. An Indonesian father and son. A baby breastfeeding [more laughter]. African hunters. Heron Island, Australia. Daffodils. Sequoias. A domesticated elephant. Olympic gymnast Cathy Rigby. Children at school. A man eating grapes. A grocery store. A Chinese dinner party. A suburban home. The Taj Mahal. Oxford, England. An X-ray of a human hand. The Toronto Airport. A sunset. A string quartet.

I ask them: What do you think of these images? Do you think they do a good job representing Earth?

They say: The images are old and boring. They are cringe. They lie. There's no war or violence. No drugs or money. No horses or video games. No Basque culture. No Basque Country.

I tell them that we will now have a debate. We will debate the following motion: The government should try to contact aliens. Half of you will argue in favor of the motion [thumbs up], the other half will argue against the motion [thumbs down]. Think about technology, culture, the economy and the safety of our planet.

The students scream and sing and throw garbage at each other. They are unusually restless today. Embu, the troublemaker, has stolen one of Sara's crutches (she broke her ankle while skateboarding).

"Embu give that back to Sara," I say.

"Let him keep it," says Sara. "I don't need it."

"I love E.T." says Embu. "E.T. is so beautiful to me. I want to know E.T."

"Ok," I say. "But you're supposed to tell us why we should not contact the aliens. You are against contacting the aliens."

"E.T. is so sexual," says Embu. "I want to propose marriage to E.T." Embu stands up on his chair. He holds Sara's crutch like a machine gun and aims it at Julen's head. He makes the sound of a machine gun, spitting saliva onto his desk. "Headshot, mother fucker!"

"Embu sit down."

"Stay away from my wife E.T. you mother fucker!"

"Embu this is your final warning."