POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

STORYTELLING THROUGH COMICS

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LESSON PLANS

STORYTELLING THROUGH COMICS

Pop Culture Classroom's Storytelling Through Comics program is an exciting literacy and arts curriculum that introduces students to comic book culture, enhances their reading abilities, and promotes their artistic skills in an interactive, standards-based format using comic books. This program, designed for 10-14 year old students, is currently conceived as an after-school course, a stand-alone unit, or a complement to an existing language arts curriculum in a classroom.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Storytelling Through Comics (STC) is a standards-based curriculum that examines and explores age-appropriate comic literature with the intent of furthering literacy and introducing students to book culture in the larger scope. STC provides unique and scaffolded drawing lessons based on developing skill and artistic self-esteem. The goal of the program is to teach students not just reading and art skills, but engage them in discussions about the texts that may help them tackle problems in their own lives and local communities. Through the curriculum and reading material, students may define (or redefine) their own identities and interrogate the choices they make about friendships and role models. Through the investigation of storytelling and the creation of story, students may also acquire problem-solving skills and self-expression in ways previously unavailable to them.

The STC curriculum was created to address the fact that high percentages of elementary and middle school aged children in Colorado (and the entire U.S.) do not have or cannot afford after-school care[1]. Furthermore, it is well-documented by scholars and educators alike that children who receive arts education almost categorically outperform children who do not in most educational areas[2]. Studies also show that ELL and learning disabled students in particular receive a specific benefit from comic book reading, as it utilizes a different skill set than regular prose reading, and often broaches thematic topics easily applicable to these groups, such as feelings of otherness and isolation[3]. Thus, this Pop Culture Classroom curriculum seeks to both fill a need for quality after-school care and provide unique and rewarding literature and arts programming to all students.

Pedagogically, the Storytelling Through Comics curriculum is designed to meet the needs of early and challenged readers as well as students in more advanced stages of literacy. The program achieves this through participation with text and image, discussion and usage of vocabulary and terminology, culminating in students' direct application of knowledge via the creation of their own comic books. Such an act allows them to demonstrate their knowledge and improve their writing and comprehension skills, while providing an outlet for self-expression and individuality. The larger goals of the curriculum are to teach literacy and arts engagement while fostering identity growth, positive peer relationships, communication skills, and community development among its participants.

In the Fall of 2014, Pop Culture Classroom administered a pilot program for STC consisting of over 200 students. The results of this pilot showed a **statistically significant growth in literacy skills.** What's more, a strong majority of pilot students demonstrated increased interest and engagement with forms of pop culture literacy emphasized during Storytelling Through Comics.

ABOUT POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

Pop Culture Classroom was founded in Denver, Colorado in 2010. The driving force behind the development of this organization stems from the personal experiences of the founders, each of whom has their own story of the positive influence of comics, gaming, music, and arts education in their own lives.

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1. See "Facts About After School Programs & At Risk Youth" www.afterschoolallstars.org/programs/need-for-after-school/

2. See www.nasaa-arts.org/Publications/critical-evidence.pdf for example

3. See Frey and Fisher (eds.), Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2008. See also "Superheroes Save Struggling ELLs!" in ESL Magazine, vol. 62, (March-April 2008), for example

GOALS OF STORYTELLING THROUGH COMICS

PCC's Storytelling Through Comics offers a dynamic graphic literature creation program. The program achieves this by studying comics through a serious literary and artistic perspective in order to show students, parents and schools that comic art combined with story-telling is a valid form of literature. After discussing how art and words work together to tell a story, students create a comic of their own.

Using the STC curriculum, Pop Culture Classroom seeks to:

Emphasize reading as entertainment first— We create an engagement with text through activities with an emphasis on reading first. We then create games and activities related to elements of the text which engage its specific content.

Provide an introduction to literature (terminology and use) — We teach important terms to know and define concepts for broader reading such as symbol, metaphor, simile, plot, character, audience and dialogue.

Provide an introduction to the comic arts (terminology and use) — We cover how to talk about and read images and define basic terms and language pertaining to sequential art such as: speech and thought balloon, emanata, panel, layout, and caption. We also cover the basics and practice of drawing, coloring, and nonverbal expression.

Build language learning skills — We focus on vocabulary building by going beyond simple terms and concepts, using the actual language of the text(s) being acquired and incorporating them into daily usage.

Provide stated, measurable learning outcomes — We help students with the ability to read at their current grade level or higher by providing a keystone text, Princeless by Jeremy Whitley and M. Goodwin. The graphical/textual blend of comics allows for greater comprehension, interpretation, visualization, and inference. Each of these reading strategies support reading growth and metacognition.

Additionally, STC supports readers by:

- Explaining the plot, setting and characterizations of the story and anticipating movements of a story appropriate to context cues.

- Using basic terms to describe artwork and discuss it beyond simple responses.

- Conceptualizing the connections between words and pictures in sequential storytelling by teaching students to create basic versions of their own comics, either in group or individual settings.

- Providing understanding of figurative concepts, such as metaphor, simile and symbolism, as they relate to storytelling.

- Defining how a text is conceptually situated next to or near another text in some meaningful way, as well as recognizing thematic, symbolic, structural, character or referential connections.

Please utilize the rubrics (Comic Story and Art) for both the Comic Pre Assessment and the student-generated Final Comic. Teachers and students also use these rubrics for self-evaluation.

PROGRAM EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

A great degree of thought, usage and refinement has gone into creating the evaluative measures for Storytelling Through Comics. The Assessment packet consists of four provided parts, with the fifth being the students' final comic. Each of the provided assessment tools can be found in the handout section, labeled "Assessment."

Comic Pre Assessment— Measures students' basic understanding of comic books, utilization of comic book techniques, and artistic abilities.

Vocabulary Pre/Post Assessment— We recommend using the Vocabulary Assessment at the beginning and end of the unit, in order to accurately gauge student vocabulary growth over the course of the unit.

Comic Art Rubric — Measures students' grasp on comic terms, character representation, setting, and layout.*

Comic Story Rubric — Measures students' grasp on story arc, character development, setting, and dialogue/captions.*

IMPORTANT NOTES

Teachers have designed this curriculum. We completely understand that your class, timeframe, administration, and community are different than every other. As a result, the curriculum is intended to be flexible. Each lesson is designed for a 50-minute session, and each lesson plan includes extensions that can be expanded upon as necessary and available. We expect and encourage you to modify the lessons to best meet the needs of your group. We trust that as experts, you will arrange your teaching accordingly.

Also, just as any comic book would be inadequate without either the art or text, we ask that you lend equal credence to the study of both during this unit. One major goal of Storytelling Through Comics is to increase student engagement. STC teachers have found, over years of program implementation, that focusing too heavily on the literacy aspect prevented them from meeting student engagement goals. We encourage you to learn from our mistakes!

HELPFUL HINTS

Students love having guest artists come in to visit and support their work. Contact your local comic shop to see if there are any that might come in and discuss their work.

Be sure to give your students plenty of time to create their final comic. It takes more time than you might think.

Provide time for artistic, vocabulary, and story pre and post assessment. We have seen huge gains in each of these three areas when STC is implemented with fidelity. Your students will appreciate the opportunity to see how much they've grown.

If possible, allow your students to self-evaluate with the two rubrics. This provides an opportunity for authentic personal reflection on effort and output.

PRINCELESS #1

"Princeless" is the story of Princess Adrienne, one princess who's tired of waiting to be rescued. Join Adrienne and her guardian dragon, Sparky, as they begin their own quest in an all-ages action adventure designed specifically for those who are tired of waiting to be rescued... and who are ready to save themselves.

A creation of Action Labs Comics, "Princeless" is generously provided to Pop Culture Classroom as a resource for the Storytelling Through Comics curriculum. To find out more about Action Lab Comics, please visit www.actionlabcomics.com, where you can purchase digital/print issues of the Princeless series and other titles using their online store.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

JEREMY WHITLEY is the writer/creator of the Eisner Award Nominated and Glyph Award Winning all-ages comic "Princeless" and the upcoming spin-off "Raven: The Pirate Princess". Jeremy is also the writer/creator of the Kickstarter funded original series "Illegal". Jeremy is also a frequent writer for IDW's "My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic", "My Little Pony: Friends Forever", "Powerpuff Girls: Super Smash-Up" and recently wrote the first issue of their villain focused "FIENDship is Magic" series. Other original works include "The Order of Dagonet" with co-creator Jason Strutz and contributions for the anthologies "Shakespeare Shaken" and "27" from Red Stylo and the story "The Long Lives of Heroes" for BullSpec Magazine. Whitley lives in Durham, North Carolina with his wife and editor Alicia Whitley and their long running creator owned collaboration (and daughter) Zuri Whitley.

MIA GOODWIN is an award winning comic and concept artist with an MFA in Sequential Art. She currently resides in Hong Kong, where she works as a Professor by day and an artist by night. Her recent work as an art director has been featured by Ocean Park and McDonalds and she has several comic projects due out this year, including a new series for Action Lab Entertainment.http://www.miagoodwin.com

WHY PRINCELESS?

Pop Culture Classroom is proud to feature "Princeless" in the STC curriculum. With its diverse characters, complex storylines, kid-friendly focus, and emphasis on self-empowerment, Princeless aligns with PCC's own mission to build diverse communities, increase literacy, and ignite a love of learning through the tools of pop culture and the power of self-expression. We are thrilled to partner with Action Lab Comics in support of this mission.

"WHAT IS A GRAPHIC NOVEL?" BY JESSICA ABEL

"What is a Graphic Novel" by Jessica Abel is provided to educators from artbomb.net. It is a useful tool for those of you who might not be entirely familiar with comics and/or graphic novels. Feel free to read, print, and distribute for educational purposes.

If you would like additional resource articles about using comics and graphic novels in the classroom, please visit our website: www.popcultureclassroom.org

by Jessica Abel   For educational use only. Page 1 of 2, See more of Jessica Abel's work at www.ARTBABE.com

Panel 1: You think you're funny, huh?

Hee hee!

I'll deal with you later!

Panel 2: "Wait a minute," you may be saying, "what *ABOUT* those superheroes?

Ahem.

OK. "Comics" is the name of a medium, like "film" or "painting."

You don't think "film" means movies about gangsters, or cowboys, do you? Film is a way to express ideas. Any ideas you want to express.

Panel 3: Comics is like that. It's a container for ideas.

mmm...

Panel 4: TASTE MY OCTO-RAY! AAAAH!!

Not a lot of vitamins in this kind, but you get a taste for it.

I'm done talking about it.

OK, let's stop.

my favorite flavor!

delicious and nutricious!

Panel 5: OK, so what is a "graphic novel" besides a comic book?

Well, "graphic" means "told in images," not "naughty pictures."

Panel 6: But "novel" is used less precisely. The term "graphic novel" is often applied to short-story collections as well. I don't know why.

I think "novel" is just used to mean "long book."

Panel 7: Hardcover or softcover, graphic novels have enough pages to need a square spine...

The term is also sometimes used to imply adult-level content — i.e. "comics are kids' stuff," but graphic novels are for adults. But then, sometimes they call long kids' comics "graphic novels," too.

Panel 8: ...so they can sit on the shelf with your other books.

But don't worry...

The great thing about comics is, you can get an idea of their content just by flipping them open!

This piece was first published by Artbomb.net

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Lessons, activities, and assessments address the following:

COMMON CORE STANDARDS		LESSON														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
READING																
1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.																
2	Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.																
3	Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.																
4	Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.																
5	Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.																
6	Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.																
7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.																
8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.																
9	Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.																
10	Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.																

Shaded area indicates the lesson is aligned with the standard.

www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy

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COMMON CORE STANDARDS		LESSON														
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
WRITING																
1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.				■	■	■	■		■		■	■			
2	Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.				■	■	■		■			■				
3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
5	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
7	Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.					■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■		■
8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.		■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■
9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		■	■	■
10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.		■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
LANGUAGE																
1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
3	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
4	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple- meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
6	Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Shaded area indicates the lesson is aligned with the standard.

www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy

UNIT PLANNING

5, 10, or 15 DAY UNIT PLANNING CHART

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IF YOU ARE GOING TO TEACH THE UNIT OVER THE COURSE OF 5 DAYS, USE THE FOLLOWING LESSONS:

DAY	1	2	3	4	5
Literacy Time	**LESSON 2:** The Vocabulary of Comic Books	**LESSON 4:** Problems in Our World	**LESSON 7:** Now You Create Characters!	**LESSON 10:** Story Arc	**LESSON 13:** Studio Days
Drawing Lesson	Art Pre-Assessment and Scribbles	Drawing Simple Robots	Character Design Part 1	Basic Settings Part 1	

IF YOU ARE GOING TO TEACH THE UNIT OVER THE COURSE OF 10 DAYS, USE THE FOLLOWING LESSONS:

DAY	1	2	3	4	5
Literacy Time	**LESSON 1:** Alter Egos	**LESSON 2:** The Vocabulary of Comic Books	**LESSON 4:** Problems in Our World	**LESSON 5:** Setting is Another Character	**LESSON 7:** Now You Create Characters!
Drawing Lesson	Art Pre-Assessment and Scribbles	Drawing Vocabulary Terms	Drawing Simple Robots	Basic Settings Part 1	Character Design Part 1
DAY	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Literacy Time	**LESSON 8:** What's my Backstory?	**LESSON 9:** Catch Phrases	**LESSON 12:** Layout	**SCRIPT OR LESSON 13:** Studio Days	**LESSON 13:** Studio Days
Drawing Lesson	Simple Faces	Facial Expressions	Drawing Hands Part 1		

IF YOU ARE GOING TO TEACH THE UNIT OVER THE COURSE OF 15 DAYS, USE THE FOLLOWING LESSONS:

DAY	1	2	3	4	5
Literacy Time	**LESSON 1:** Alter Egos	**LESSON 2:** The Vocabulary of Comic Books	**LESSON 3:** Final Expectations and Favorite Comics	**LESSON 4:** Problems in Our World	**LESSON 5:** Setting is Another Character
Drawing Lesson	Art Pre-Assessment and Scribbles	Drawing Vocabulary Terms	Drawing Simple Robots	Basic Settings Part 1	Basic Settings Part 2
DAY	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Literacy Time	**LESSON 6:** Let's Create a Conflict!	**LESSON 7:** Now You Create Characters!	**LESSON 8:** What's my Backstory?	**LESSON 9:** Catch Phrases	**LESSON 10:** Story Arc
Drawing Lesson	Character Design Part 1	Character Design Part 2	Simple Faces	Facial Expressions	Drawing Hands Part 1
DAY	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Literacy Time	**LESSON 11:** Scripts	**LESSON 12:** Layout	**LESSON 13:** Studio Days	**LESSON 14:** Studio Days	**LESSON 15:** Studio Days
Drawing Lesson	Drawing Hands Part 2	Thumbnails/Layouts			

Day	Lesson Title	Objectives	Materials	Copies
1.	Literacy: Alter Egos	Students will create alter egos (pseudonym, pen name...) for themselves.	Copies of Pre-Assessment Handout, Construction Paper, two-pocket folders, pencils, markers, white paper	None
	Drawing: Scribbles Into Objects	Students will explore the process of drawing.	Pencils, markers, white paper	Drawing Preassessment Handout
2.	Literacy: The Vocabulary of Comic Books	Students will learn key vocabulary words that pertain to comic books and their creation.	Copies of Princeless #1 by Jeremy Whitley and M. Goodwin	Copies of Vocabulary Preassessment, copies of precut vocabulary handouts
	Drawing: Sketching Vocabulary Terms	Students will learn to draw each vocabulary term or explore stick figure illustration.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	How to Draw Stick Figures handout
3.	Literacy: Expectations and Favorite Comics	Students will learn the expectations for their final comics. Students will also share their favorite comics.	Student-provided favorite comics	Final Expectations handout
	Drawing: Simple Robots	Students will earn to draw simple structures and robots.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Simple Robots handouts
4.	Literacy: Problems in Our World	Students will create a list of potential conflicts that they can use for their comic storyline	Pencils	Problems in Our World handout
	Drawing: Mountain and Forest Settings	Students will practice drawing simple settings.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Mountain and Forest drawing handouts
5.	Literacy: Setting is Another Character	Students will learn that the setting in a story is as important as another main character.		Setting handout
	Drawing: Lunarscape, Desert, Castle Settings	Students will practice drawing simple settings.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Desert, Castle, and Lunarscape handouts
6.	Literacy: Let's Create a Conflict!	Whole group will create a protagonist/antagonist relationship based on a problem.		Problems in Our World and Create a Character handout
	Drawing: Students will learn how characteristics can be represented visually.	Students will learn the fundamentals of character design.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Character Design drawing handouts
7.	Literacy: Now You Create Characters!	Students will create a protagonist/antagonist relationship based on a problem.	Completed Problems in Our World handout	Create a Character handout
	Drawing: Students will learn how characteristics can be represented visually.	Students will learn the fundamentals of character design.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Character Design drawing handouts

Day	Lesson Title	Objectives	Materials	Copies
8.	Literacy: What's my Character's Backstory?	Students will understand the importance of backstory in character development.		Rowan Pepper Backstory handout
	Drawing: Basic Faces	Students will practice drawing basic faces.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Simple Faces drawing handouts
9.	Literacy: Catch Phrases	Students will understand how dialogue can support characterization. Students will create a catch phrase for their hero or villain.		
	Drawing: Facial Expressions	Students will practice drawing basic facial expressions.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Facial Expressions handouts
10.	Literacy: Story Arc	Students will understand the purpose for planning out a story arc. Students will create a story arc for their own comics.		Story Arc handout, pre-cut copies of Princeless Page 1
	Drawing: Simple Hands	Students will practice drawing basic hands.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Simple Hands drawing handouts
11.	Literacy: Scripts	Students will create a script for their comic.	Class set of Princeless #1	Script Writing handout
	Drawing: Thumbnails	Students will develop their ability to thumbnail sketch.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	Thumbnailing handout
12.	Literacy: Page Layout	Students will understand the main principles of page layout.		Copies of Layout handouts A, B, and C.
	Drawing: Layout	Students will practice page layout.	Drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners	
13. 14. 15.	Literacy and Drawing: Studio Days	Students will create and complete a quality comic.	Final quality drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, markers, colored pencils, crayons, examples of published comics	Final Expectations handout

LESSONS

ALTER EGOS

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will create alter egos (pseudonym, pen name…) for themselves.

- Students will explore the process of drawing.

Materials: Copies of Pre Assessment Handout, Construction Paper, two-pocket folders, pencils, markers, white paper

PROCEDURE:

0-10 minutes: Tell students that they will be creating a pseudonym or pen name to write from. They get to purposefully create a name that either appeals to or represents their inner self. As you go through the following points, encourage students to write down ideas that come up.

TECHNIQUES:

- "Something"-Man/Woman/Boy/Girl e.g. Batgirl, MossMan, or Invisible Woman

- Human "something" e.g. Human Torch

- "Title-Name" e.g. Captain America, Black Widow, Mister Incredible

- "Noun Noun" e.g. Swamp Thing, Rocket Raccoon

- "Adjective Noun" e.g. Red Skull, Martian Manhunter, Savage Dragon

- A unique name e.g. Thor, Mystique, Magneto, Storm, Deadpool

CONSIDERATIONS

- Some names come directly from powers like Magneto or Spider-man

- Certain names indicate beliefs like Captain America

- Some names come from appearances like Red Skull and Goat Faced Girl

- Names should be brief and easy to say

- Names should be easy to understand

- Try to have the tone of the name match how you want to be portrayed. E.g. Captain Ferocious vs. Sad Panda

Note: This exercise is also intended to support the students later on in the unit, as they name characters in their own comics.

10-20 minutes: Give students 10 minutes to finalize their name and draw it out on the construction or white paper. This will go on the cover of their folder where they will keep their work for the rest of the unit. Collect these after 10-15 minutes or have students affix to their folders.

20-35 minutes: Shift into the drawing activity. Begin by administering the drawing preassessment handout. Remind students that they are not expected to be experts. This is supposed to just be a window into how they tell comic stories before learning about how to do just that. Collect when completed. Hold on to these assessments, and distribute them after the unit to allow the students (and you) the chance to compare and observe personal growth.

35-50 minutes: The second drawing activity gives students a chance to explore. Ask students to just scribble lightly on the page, experiment with making different shapes, swirls, zigzags, nonsensical forms. The idea is to help the students forget that their mark making needs to look like something.

The next step is to have students pass their paper to their neighbor. Ask the neighbor to look at the scribbles until they see the beginnings of something: A mountain, a house, an island, a cat's ear…anything. Then, enhance it with eyes, snow, chimney, whatever comes to mind. Just have fun with it.

When the group is ready, have students pass their papers to the next person and continue the process again. Use different eyes to see drawing from scribbles.

When time is nearly up, have the sheets returned to their owners to enjoy what has come up!

Don't forget, there are plenty of handouts and/or video lessons to support you and the students in this art activity.

THE VOCABULARY OF COMIC BOOKS

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn key vocabulary words that pertain to comic books and their creation.
- Students will develop their ability to draw each of these comic elements.

Materials: Copies of Vocabulary Preassessment, copies of precut vocabulary handouts, drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-10 minutes: Administer the vocabulary preassessment, collect when finished.

10-25 minutes: Hand out groups of precut vocabulary handouts to small groups of students. Tell students that it is their job to arrange the pieces of paper into groups that make sense. Each group should have a term, definition, and a drawing. If necessary, show them an example of what you are looking for.

Students may get some of these wrong, and that's OK. This activity is designed to help them figure out the vocabulary terms as best they can.

When students are done, have them compare with another group or correct misunderstandings in the whole group. Make sure that each group has the correct answers in their final arrangement. Finish this up by having students tape or staple their correct terms, definitions, and drawings together.

25-50 minutes: Transition into the drawing lesson for the day. Distribute the model handout or show the video lessons for these sections. Give students a chance to explore drawing each of the vocabulary terms. Encourage creativity and modification. Ideas could include:

- Draw a panel that includes a caption box, word balloon, thought balloon, and an emanata.
- Change the shape of word balloons to give an icy, angry, or whimsical feel to the words
- Connect word balloons to show a conversation in one panel
- Play with different sized panels on a page

Another idea for today's drawing lesson could be to have students play with stick figures, making them more expressive than the typical "scarecrow" pose and face. This can be an accessible way for students who don't think they can draw. Tips for this include the following:

- Start with the basic "scarecrow" shape and then change some features

- Play with the shape and size of the eyes
- Try long, short, curly, or wavy hair, braids or pigtails, dreads or a mohawk
- How about different body shapes: oval, square, rectangle, or triangle?
- Bend the limbs to show someone pointing, running, or bending over

Have students place the vocab terms and drawings in their folders.

Close out the lesson by reminding students that next class session, they are expected to bring in an example of some of their favorite comics – it could be a book, floppy, trade paperback, printout of a webcomic, or some other form of comic that they have enjoyed reading in the past.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Have students go on a scavenger hunt in Princeless #1. Ask them to use sticky notes to flag places in the comic where they notice each vocabulary term.

2. Discuss the need for accurate vocabulary. Why is it necessary and/or helpful to have the right words to describe a situation or need? Where else is this applicable in life?

3. What other kinds of comics have students read? Where do they read these comics? What types of vocab terms show up in these comics?

4. Write a letter to your classroom teacher requesting that comics be allowed during reading time. Use specific vocabulary from today's conversation to make your point.

5. From a selection of pages, or all the pages, of Princeless #1, collect data on the numbers of each vocab term and create a graph to represent the variation. What does this variation tell you about the comic and how the story is being told?

POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

EXPECTATIONS AND FAVORITE COMICS

OBJECTIVES:

• Students will learn the expectations for their final comics.

• Students will also share their favorite comics, creating and/or deepening an emotional buy in to this unit of study.

• Students will learn to draw simple robots.

Materials: Copies of the Final Comic Expectations handout, student examples of favorite comics, drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners
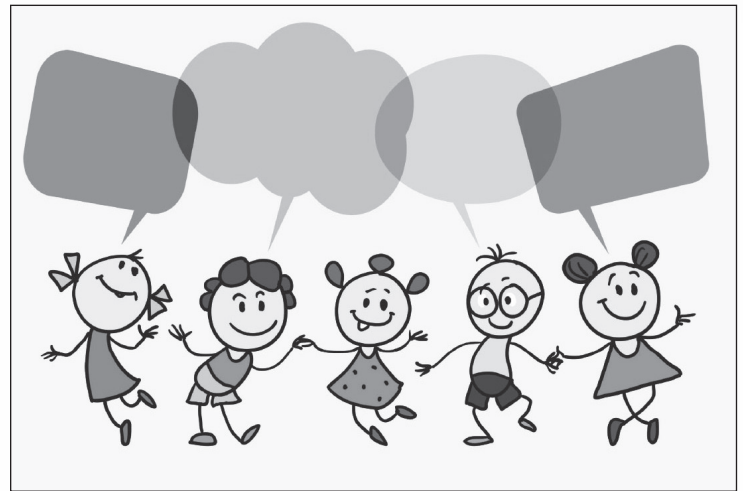
DRAWING:

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-10 minutes: Introduce lesson. Hand out Final Comic Expectation Sheet. Review the expectations with students. Refer to these expectations over the course of the unit as a motivator and a focusing tool.

10-25 minutes: Either from their chairs or at the front of the room, give students the opportunity to share their favorite comics. It may be helpful for the teacher to begin by sharing their favorite comic. Have students address some or all of the following questions:

• What about the comic appeals to you?

• Why are the characters enjoyable to read?

• What kinds of problems show up in the stories?

• How did you first find this comic?

25-50 minutes: Shift to the drawing activity. In this lesson, give students the chance to draw simple robots. Essentially, these simple robots can look like stick figures with thicker legs and arms, and a round head. PCC has provided both paper and video examples for you, and the Internet is a wonderful place to find even more simple robot drawings. Encourage students to try some of the following variations:

• Rounded heads

• Oval or C-shaped hands

• Bent arms and legs

• Rectangles or ovals where the arms and legs meet the torso

• Rounded, rectangular or oddly shaped torsos

• Segmented arms and legs

When time is about up, give students an opportunity to share anything they might want to show the rest of the group. Ask them what they are proud of or were surprised by during today's lesson. Ask them to put their drawings in their folders for safekeeping.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Students can look online for simple robots that they want to draw in their spare time or at home. Use discretion and good sense when searching online.

2. Research, with or without students, some of the all time favorite comics, and discuss why certain artists show up. Why do so many people enjoy certain comics and not others?

3. Create a Final Comics Expectation sheet for your own class with the students. Often, when students have a say in what is asked of them they will set (and meet) even higher expectations.

PROBLEMS IN OUR WORLD

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will create a list of potential conflicts that they can use for their comic storyline.
- Students will practice drawing simple settings.

Materials: Copies of Problems in Our World Handout, drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners

PROCEDURE:

0-20 minutes: Introduce the lesson. Distribute the Problems in Our World handout. As a whole group, brainstorm problems that you and the students see in the world. They can be large scale, (poverty), or small scale, (lost pet). The idea is to get as many as possible down on paper.

Some classes may need a kickstart. Consider getting them going with some of the following: classmates, grades, family, war, money, disasters, health, drugs, the environment, stress, and/or friendships/lack of friendships.

Ask the students to circle a few of these problems that jump out at them. It is their task to ultimately choose one that they want to use as the main/central conflict in the comic they are going to write in the coming weeks. Students should choose a problem that they feel comfortable thinking about and working with over the next several class sessions. It would also be helpful for students to choose a problem that they know about, unless part of the class time will be dedicated toward research.

20-50 minutes: Shift into the drawing lesson for the day. Today's drawing lesson will be one of two lessons on how to draw basic settings. There are several different settings that the students can practice drawing today: city buildings, lunarscape, mountains/volcano, and desert.   Refer to the handouts and/or video lessons for support on how to draw these basic settings for guidance.

When time is almost up, have them share out what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Have students discuss their favorite comics and how the setting adds to the story.

2. Have students discuss problems in the news – religious conflicts, plane crash, traffic accident, and come up with fantastical resolutions to the problems. This will help them learn about conflict/resolution and protagonist/antagonist relationships.

3. Create a T Chart with "Classic Fairytales" on one side and "Main Problem" on the other. Investigate what the main problems of these stories are. Do you notice any similarities/differences among the problems? How can this apply to the students' stories?

SETTING IS ANOTHER CHARACTER

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn that the setting in a story is as important as another main character.
- Students will practice drawing simple settings.

Materials: Copies of Setting is Another Character handout, drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-20 minutes: Introduce the lesson. Ask the students if they can describe what "setting" is. Keep notes on the board. Guide the students toward the idea that setting is, "the place and time at which a story is told to be happening."

Distribute the Setting is Another Character handout. After giving the students time to read through all three stories, begin a conversation with the following questions:

- Why is setting so important?
- How can the setting support the characters in the story?
- Can you think of other stories where setting is vital?
- Why can we think of setting as another character?

20-50 minutes: Shift into the drawing lesson for the day. Today's drawing lesson will be the second of two lessons on how to draw basic settings. There are four different settings that the students can practice drawing today: old west town, laboratory, castle, and jungle. Refer to the videos and/or handouts on how to draw these basic settings for guidance.

When time is almost up, have the students share what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Have students make a list of their favorite movies, books, comics, etc. Twist the setting and discuss how the story would/could be different. This could create some fun situations: cowboys in space, ponies in a laboratory...

2. Students can list places they feel most comfortable and places they feel least comfortable. These locations can be great fodder for future stories.

LESSON 6

LET'S CREATE A CONFLICT!

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn how to create a protagonist/antagonist relationship based on a problem.
- Students will learn how characteristics can be represented visually.

Materials: Copies of Create A Character handout, Problems in Our World handout (already completed), drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-20 minutes: Introduce the lesson by telling the students that we are going to create a villain and hero relationship today. Refer back to the Problems in Our World handout. As a class, choose one of the problems that the group came up with.

Distribute copies of the Create a Character handout copies back to back, so the students have two copies. Lead a process where the group creates a villain that causes the problem that was chosen earlier. Have the students follow along by filling out all the sections on their handouts.

Flip the sheet over and continue as a whole group. Lead the students through the process of creating a hero that does battle with the villain over the problem. Remember to give the hero flaws and powers that will add to the protagonist/antagonist relationship.

The goal here is to model the character creation process for the students, so they can take over on their own during the next lesson.

25-50 minutes: Shift into the drawing lesson for the day. Today's drawing lesson is based on designing characters that fit with their powers and flaws. Refer to the Character Design videos and/or handouts for support.

When time is almost up, have the students share what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Use some of the Problems in Our World, discuss who are some characters involved in each conflict. How do we see a protagonist/antagonist relationship show up in the real world?

NOW YOU CREATE CHARACTERS!

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will create a protagonist/antagonist relationship based on a problem.
- Students will learn how characteristics can be represented visually.

Materials: Copies of Create A Character handout, Problems in Our World handout (already completed), copies of Character Design handout, drawing paper, pencils, erasers, sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-25 minutes: Introduce the lesson by letting the students know that today's lesson gives them a chance to build on the previous lesson. Today, they will get to create their villain and hero relationship. Have the students refer back to their Problems in Our World handout. They get to choose the problem that they want to tackle in their comic!

After students have chosen a problem, distribute copies of the Create a Character handout, copied back to back, so the students have two copies. Give the students time to create their villain and then hero on each side of their sheet. Let them know that they don't have to complete the sketch if they want to fully develop the character first.

The goal here is for the students to develop the characters based on the problem/solution relationship. Each character needs to represent one side of that conflict.

25-50 minutes: Shift into the drawing lesson for the day. Today's drawing lesson is the second part of designing characters that fit with their powers and flaws. Refer to the Character Design videos and/or handouts for support.

Alternative: Another possibility for today is to shift away from drawing instruction time and give students the chance to begin a rough draft of their comic. Watch the Layout/

Rough Draft video and have your students begin their drawing process. If your class is more process oriented, this might be a good time to give them the chance to begin exploring their character in different settings, working on potential storylines, layouts, and/or character designs. Some classes need extra time for the creative process, and this might be a chance to give them that opportunity.

When time is almost up, have students share out what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Discuss powerful protagonist/antagonist relationships that the students have seen in their lives. What is the central problem in this relationship? Don't limit the conversation to comics and media. Where do we see conflict at home, in your city, in the nation or world? Who are the parties involved?

2. Have students research and report on the roots of the words protagonist and antagonist.

WHAT'S MY CHARACTER'S BACKSTORY?

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will understand the importance of backstory in character development.
- Students will practice drawing basic faces.

Materials: Copies of Rowan Pepper Backstory, copies of Basic Faces handouts, drawing paper, pencils, paper, erasers, pencil sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-15 minutes: Begin the lesson by explaining the main idea. Google defines backstory as, "A history or background created for a fictional character in a book, short story, comic, motion picture or television program." Today, the students are going to learn about how events in a character's past can drive them to make choices in the present.

Distribute the Rowan Pepper Backstory handout. Have students read through with the goal of looking for events in her past that influence her choices in the present. Afterward, have a discussion using some of the following questions:

- Why do you think Rowan decided to stand up to the bully?
- How did the events of her past influence her current choices?
- Could Rowan's past have caused her to present choices to look differently?
- Based on her backstory, what do you think are some of Rowan's fears and beliefs?
- Why is it important to get to know parts of your character that don't ever show up in the story you're writing?

15-25 minutes: Have students develop a Character Web for their hero and villain. This web can include things like the character's name and age, family situation, friends, coworkers, schooling, job, (or lack of), and key events in life. When students are done, have them keep these handouts in their folders for future reference.

25-50 minutes: Introduce the drawing lesson for the day. Today, students will get the chance to learn how to draw a simple face with correct proportions. Refer to the Simple Faces video and/or handouts for reference here.

Provide time and materials for students to practice these skills. When time is almost up, have students share out what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Students can work cooperatively to come up with backstories

for each other. It can become a game where students choose other character's favorite foods, movies, bands, and even places where they get their hair styled.

2. Discuss other famous characters (Real or fictional) the students are familiar with. Are there backstories that we know about? For example, Batman has a powerful backstory that directly influences the life that he chooses to live. What other characters can we look at through this lens?

3. Flaws are an important part of backstories. Investigate these for the characters we know about and the ones that students want to create. No one is perfect, and our characters should reflect this.

CATCH PHRASES

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will understand how dialogue can support characterization.
- Students will create a catch phrase for their hero or villain.
- Students will practice drawing basic facial expressions.

Materials: Copies of Facial Expressions handout, drawing and/or writing paper, pencils, paper, erasers, pencil sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-10 minutes: Start by describing what a catch phrase is. Google describes it as a well-known sentence or phrase, typically one that is associated with a particular famous person. Continue by inviting the class to brainstorm a list of comic characters that have unique catch phrases. Here are some for your reference:

- Superman: "Up, up, and away!"
- The Thing: "IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!"
- Human Torch: "Flame On!"
- Thor: "By Odin's Beard!"
- Hulk: "Hulk Smash!"
- Avengers: "Avengers Assemble!"

After coming up with a list, discuss how these catch phrases make sense for the characters.

- How does each of these fit the character(s)?
- When is the right time to use a catch phrase?
- How do each of these catch phrases help us get to know the character better?

10-25 minutes: Give students some time to brainstorm several catch phrases that might work to support their hero or villain. Encourage them to write down as many as possible, not just to go with the first one that they come up with. There are also some helpful tips that can be used:

Decide on the purpose of a catch phrase. Greeting, goodbye, rallying cry...

- Keep it short and sweet. "D'oh!"
- Keep it in the present. "May the force be with you.
- Use some interesting words. "Yabba Dabba Doo!"

25-50 minutes: Introduce the drawing lesson for the day. Today, students will get the chance to learn how to draw a simple face with facial expressions. Refer to the Facial Expressions video and/or handout for reference here.

Provide time and materials for students to practice these skills. When time is almost up, have students share out what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Discuss the idea of a cliché. Have any catchphrases become cliché? If so, which ones and why?

2. Politicians have catch phrases all the time. Look into catchphrases that have been used in previous campaigns. What effect have they had on the candidates for better or worse?

STORY ARC

OBJECTIVES:

• Students will understand the purpose for planning out a story arc.

• Students will create a story arc for their own comics.

• Students will practice drawing basic hands.

Materials: Copies of Story Arc handout, precut copies of page three of Princeless #1, drawing and/or writing paper, pencils, paper, erasers, pencil sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

Be sure to print and precut the panels out of page 3 of Princeless #1. Have enough of these for groups that you will create. This is the page about the blond-haired princess.

0-10 minutes: Begin by explaining the idea of a story arc. Essentially, story arc is a way of breaking down the plot of a story into its essential elements: introduction, inciting incident(s), climax, and resolution. It's also important to note that the introduction starts at one level of normal and, after a period of character growth, the resolution arrives at a new level of normal. This is seen on the Story Arc handout.

Distribute the precut page to groups. Have the groups fit the puzzle together as a way of assembling the story in a logical manner. Afterward, complete the story arc for this story on the board. Be sure to point out the introduction, inciting incidents, climax, resolution, and resulting new normal.

10-25 minutes: Distribute the Story Arc handouts to students and provide them with time to create a story arc using their characters and conflict. This will become the general story arc for their comic that they will create over the next week.

Alternative: Since this planning day is essential to a quality final outcome, if necessary, reread the entire Princeless #1 instead of doing the puzzle activity. Also, focus on the storytelling choices of Jeremy Whitley. This could assist the students in their creative process if they are having difficulty coming up with a story of their own. Also note that this alternative method to teaching Story Arc will likely take the entire day, so bypass the art lesson if you so choose.

25-50 minutes: Introduce the drawing lesson for the day. Today, students will get the chance to learn how to draw a simple hand structures. Refer to the Simple Hands video and/or handout for reference here.

Provide time and materials for students to practice these skills. When time is almost up, have students share out what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.
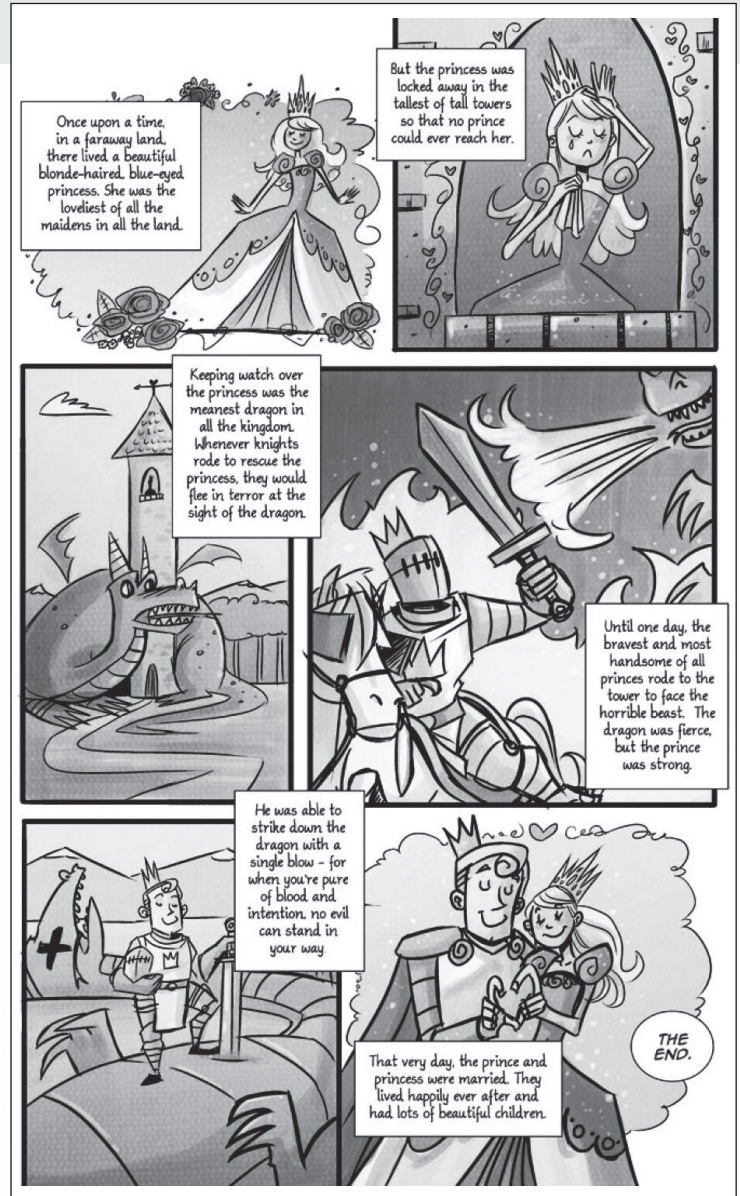
EXTENSIONS:

1. Story-based jokes, picture books, movies and TV shows often move along a typical story arc. Examine a story arc from one or all of these mediums that students want to create.

SCRIPTS

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will create a script for their comic.
- Students will develop their ability to thumbnail sketch.

Materials: Copies of "Princeless" #1 by J. Whitley and M. Goodwin, copies of A Comic Script Handout, drawing paper, pencils, paper, erasers, pencil sharpeners

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

Ahead of time, figure out how you want to reproduce "Princeless" #1: paper, on a screen, projector...

0-30 minutes: Introduce the lesson by leading a brief discussion about scripts. What are they? What can they be useful for? What do we need to include in them? What doesn't need to be included in them? Jeremy Whitley, author of Princeless, spends a tremendous amount of time writing the scripts for his comics. Proceed with Option 1 or Option 2.

Option 1: Have students look at the first page of "Princeless" #1. In pairs, ask them to write a script for the first page only. Provide them with as much structure as you want to make this a successful experience. You could tell them that they need to write instructions for every panel, art directions, describe caption boxes...

After students have completed and pair-shared their scripts, distribute copies of A Comic Script handout. Discuss the choices that the Jeremy Whitley made as an author. How does his script vary from what the students created? How much detail did he include? Did he make assumptions about how the artist, M. Goodwin would interpret his work? If so, what were they?

Option 2: Distribute copies of A Comic Script Handout and copies of the first page of Princeless. Give the students time to read both handouts. Then, as a group, chart answers to some questions. Topics and chart could vary based on the level of the class: similarities and differences, author's expectations and outcomes.

30-50 minutes: At this point, make a decision about how to move forward. Either give students time to write their own scripts or move on to the art lesson for the day. We have found that a developed script makes the final creation much easier for the students.

If you choose/have time, shift to the drawing lesson for the day. Students will get the chance to develop their skill in drawing hands. The second Drawing Hands video will be of assistance here.

Provide time and materials for students to practice these skills. When time is almost up, have students share out what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. In order to make hand drawing simpler, one possibility is to give students a transparency and VisAVis pen. Working in pairs, one can hold the transparency against the other's non-dominant hand. The artist then traces the outsides of their fingers and wrist that they can see through the transparency. Observe, wipe off, switch! Experiment with more complex hand configurations.

2. Copy a Sunday Comic from a popular strip. Using that scenario as a guide, explain the situation that the students get to perform as a skit with 2 min preparation. Ask them to improvise dialogue and interactions while getting the point across. The goal is to help them internalize the difficulty of not having a plan or a script. Afterwards, give the students the "script"(comic) and let them perform with a script.

3. Writing a script is an important part of making a plan for your comics. You can lead a discussion about times when you had plans that helped and another time when a lack of plans made things go astray. This conversation could also be lead with student input.

PAGE LAYOUT

OBJECTIVES:

- Students will understand the main principles of page layout.
- Students will practice page layout.

Materials: Copies of Page Layout handouts 1, 2, & 3, pencils, paper, erasers, pencil sharpeners, rulers/straight edges

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

Ahead of time, make sure you have enough sets of the Page Layout handouts 1, 2, & 3 made for the class. Please note that handout #1 is a "poor" layout example, handout #2 is a "good" layout example, and handout #3 is an "excellent" layout example.

0-10 minutes: Begin the lesson by explaining the main idea. Remember to explain that page layout refers to the way the panels are placed on the page. Then hand out the copies of the different examples of layout. Ask the students to read them in pairs. While reading, the students are to address the following:

- Which comic is easiest to read? Why? Hardest? Why?
- What do you notice about the layout in each comic?
- Circle the parts of the comics that are hard to follow because of the way the panels are arranged.

10-20 minutes: Discuss student responses, being sure to point out the problems and successes about the poor and excellent layouts. Then, lead into the basic principles of comic layout. For added reinforcement, show the students the Layout video from the video library. Examples of these principles can be seen on the three layout comics.

1. The panels should easily move from left to right and top to bottom, just like you would read a novel.

2. The most important panel on the page should contain the most important part of the story on that page.

3. The most important panel on the page should be the biggest.

4. Borders provide boundaries for the panels. Gutters are the spaces between each panel and provide a hint that time is passing between each panel.

5. Don't stack panels on the left side of the page if there's a tall panel to the right.

6. Make sure the bottoms of the panels are at the same height, so that there is no confusion as to what panel is on top.

7. For more advanced students, encourage them to use artwork within the panel to lead the reader's eye to next panel.

20-50 minutes: Students will now thumbnail out their pages based on the script that they have written. Thumbnails are a small representation of the final comic page. They are NOT PRETTY at all. Essentially, they are a step above scribbles. The intention is to get a quick layout of what the layout and inside of the panels can look like. Please refer to the Process handout for an example of thumbnails.

Ask students to refer to the script in order to determine what the thumbnails on each page can look like.

Let students explore with various three, four, six, and nine panel layouts. Let them draw several pages quickly without having to worry about making them perfect. Circulate through the room and comment on successes and areas for improvement. If necessary, use sample comics to point out how the pros do it well, (or not)!

A useful tool in this exercise for students that aren't ready to sketch the inside of the panels is to have students draw a smaller rectangle that represents the comic page (you can fit four on a typical piece of paper). Then inside, draw experimental layouts, and color the panels in with a black marker or crayon. This exaggerates the effect of layout, without having to focus on the art that's inside each panel. It makes it easier to see what effect the layout can have, as well as determining which panel is the most important. Have fun!

When time is almost up, have students share out what they would like to show the group and then place all their artwork into their folders.

EXTENSIONS:

1. Read Princeless #1 and focus on layout. Are there pages that are a simple layout? Does M. Goodwin make unique choices in certain places? Are there places where she strays from sound layout principles? Do students have a favorite layout in the book? Why?

2. Often, we will see experts deviate from the traditional structure. An example of this is page 7 of Princeless #1. The entire background of the page is a letter that is also a narration block. Another example of this deviation are the poems of e.e.cummings. Discuss why experts are able to deviate from the traditional formula and still make things work.

STUDIO DAYS

OBJECTIVES:

• Students will create and complete a quality comic.

Materials: Copies of Final Expectations handout, pencils, drawing paper, heavier weight paper for final comics, erasers, pencil sharpeners, rulers/straight edges, markers, colored pencils, crayons

Time: 50 minutes

PROCEDURE:

0-10 minutes: Introduce the Studio Day. Tell students that they have done great work in planning their comics, and for the next few days they will be able to put all that work into action by creating their comics! It's important to give the students time to create – they won't be able to act on all the great planning work without adequate studio time.

Feel free to use one of the following warm up activities if necessary.

• Draw a block letter, and then turn it into a monster.

• Draw things that float.

• Draw the monster that hides under your bed.

• Draw a sample room from a bird's eye view.

• Draw your favorite place.

• Draw foods that you hate. Make them come alive.

• Draw yourself during one of your happiest moments.

10-45 minutes: Provide the students time and resources to make their plans a reality.

ESSENTIAL TIPS:

We've found that larger, heavier weight paper lends a certain importance and special feel to their final product. If you have any available, 12"x18" paper is a great size. It gives the students space for their settings, characters, speech balloons, and/or caption boxes. A heavier weight paper also withstands more erasing, as students often (wonderfully so) want their final products to be "just right."

Also, make lots of reference material available. All artists benefit from resources when they are trying to draw a unique object or perspective. We recommend keeping as many of the following on hand: multiple copies of the drawing handouts, reference comics, web access to look up artistic representations of objects, magazines, and any other drawing reference material you might have available. Check out our website www.popcultureclassroom.org for recommended reading lists. Or, check out your local comic shop. Often, local retailers will give educators a great deal on books – heck, you're getting your students into a new form of literature!

Another strategy for some students is to trace a difficult part of their comic. Artists regularly trace and copy from one another, and this technique is absolutely valid. We've found it helpful to tape the source material and drawing paper to a window, if a light box is not available.

Above all, this time is supposed to be enjoyable! Students are expected to push themselves in ways that feel good. If frustration and disappointment are creeping in, support students by scaling back expectations or facilitate an easier process by making use of mentor drawings or tracing.

One wonderful strategy is to have students outline their drawings with a black fine point marker. This light outline gives the work a more polished, comic feel to it. Students comment over and over again just how cool this effect is. Essentially, it helps their drawings pop out of the page a bit more.

45-50 minutes: Once materials have been cleaned up, consider asking students to leave their work on the desks. Have the class walk around and notice what their peers are doing. Celebrate, observe, and comment. We all understand the benefits of positive feedback.

On the last day of class, consider having a publishing party, where students are given the opportunity to share their final products with the rest of the class. Create a special place, a decorated chair, or even just the front of the room for the authors to feel like their achievement is being recognized.
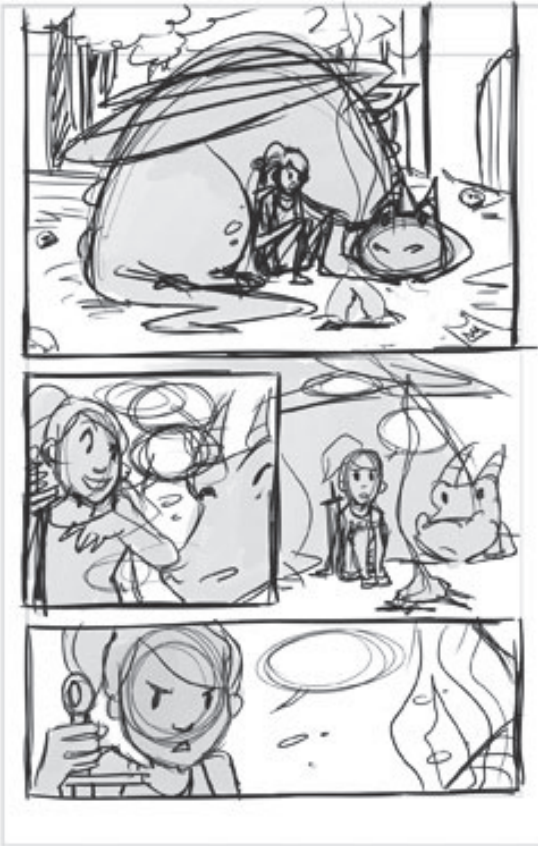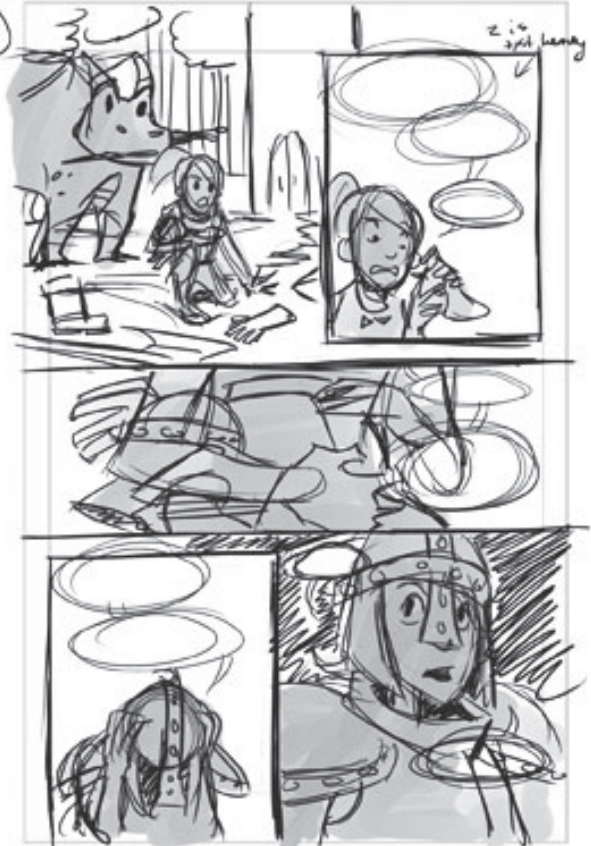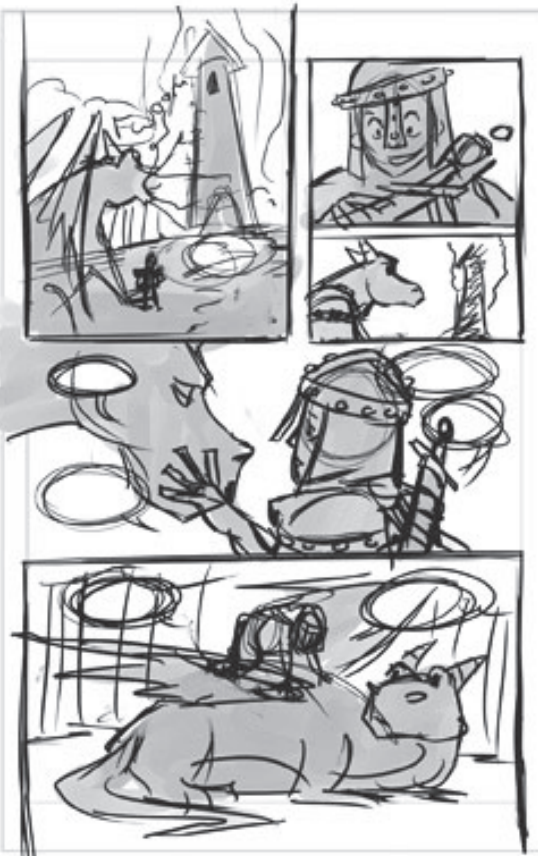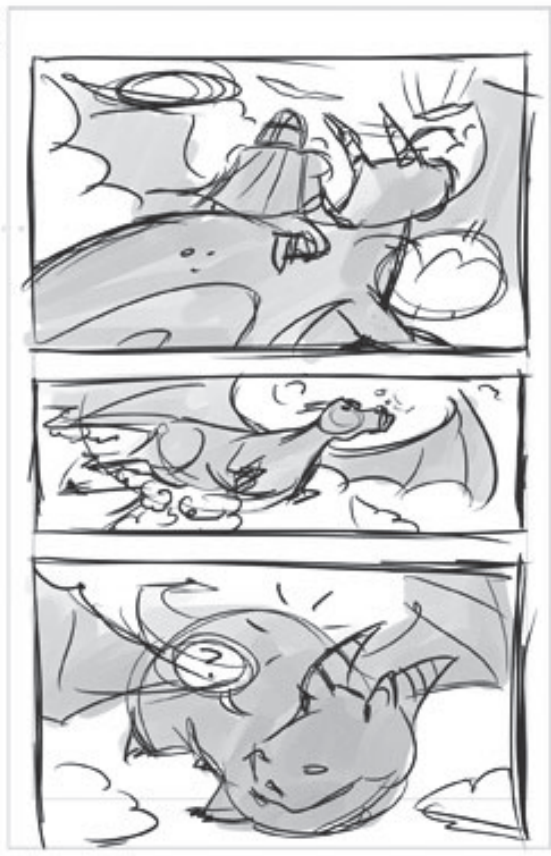
ASSESSMENTS

Name _____

COMICS PRE-ASSESSMENT

In the panel below, draw a comic that completes this statement:

"I'm walking down the street and..."

Pop Culture CLASSROOM

COMICS VOCABULARY
PRE- AND POST-ASSESSMENT

Draw an image of the vocabulary word in the box next to the word.

Bleed			Word Balloon
Close-up			Thought Balloon
Border			Caption Box
Open Panel			Emanata
Setting			Sound Effects

PRE- AND POST-COMIC STORY RUBRIC

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Story Arc	Story has a clear and enjoyable introduction, inciting incident(s), climax, and new normal.	Story has a clear an introduction, a climax, and new normal.	Story has a path that moves from one event to the other, without any clear rising action, climax or resolution.	There is no discernable story arc. Events happen in isolation from one another.
Character Development	A protagonist/ antagonist relationship exists. Characters have a name, backstory, strengths/ weaknesses, and a sidekick and/or friends.	A protagonist/ antagonist relationship exists. Characters have a name and strengths/ weaknesses,	A protagonist/ antagonist relationship may exist. Characters have names.	A protagonist/ antagonist relationship does exist. Characters do not support the story.
Setting	The setting is vital to the story. Setting is consistent and supportive of the characters.	Setting is sensible, but does not deepen the storyline. Character connection is present.	Setting does not support the storyline. Little thought has been put into the setting.	There is no setting present.
Dialogue/ Captions	Dialogue and captions feature rich, appropriate word choices based on characterization and situation. Catch phrases support the storyline and character development.	Dialogue and captions feature rich, appropriate word choices based on characterization and situation.	Dialogue and captions are present. Word choice is flat.	Minimal or no dialogue exists. Captions are not present.

NOTES

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_____

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_____

PRE- AND POST-COMIC
ART RUBRIC

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Comic Terms	More than 8 of the comic terms are represented in the final piece.	More than 6 of the Comic Terms are represented in the final piece.	More than 4 of the Comic Terms are represented in the final piece.	More than 2 of the Comic Terms are represented in the final piece.
Character Representation	Character artwork represents and strengthens their role and development through the use of shapes, expression, color, and action.	Character artwork represents their role and development through the use of shapes, expression, and action.	Character artwork is minimally connected to each character's role.	Character artwork has no connection the each character's role in the story.
Setting	Settings are created in a thoughtful and detailed manner. The settings create another character that deepen the story.	Settings are created in a thoughtful manner, though minimal detail is used. Resulting story development may be minimal.	Settings exist and are somewhat connected to the story. Setting artwork is not consistent with character artwork.	Settings are minimal and/or non-existent.
Layout	The panels move from left to right and top to bottom. Borders and gutters are evident. The most important panel on each page is the largest. There are no stacked panels on the left, and all panels have vertical alignment.	The panels move from left to right and top to bottom. Borders and gutters are evident. The most important panel on each page is the largest.	The panels move from left to right and top to bottom. Borders and gutters are evident.	The panels do not move from left to right and top to bottom.

NOTES

_____

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HANDOUTS

POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

Do you know what these terms mean?

✂ Cut along dotted lines

Term	Definition	Image
Bleed	Images that run outside the border of the panel	
Close-up	Images that are shown in a large view	
Border	Edge or outline of the comic page	
Open Panel	Panels that have no borders	
Setting	Time and place the story is happening	

Do you know what these terms mean?

✂ Cut along dotted lines

Word Balloon	Balloon that holds a character's spoken words	THIS IS THE COOLEST CLASS EVER.
Thought Balloon	Puffy balloon that holds a character's thoughts	WHY WOULD I WANT TO EAT THAT?
Caption Box	Words that tell the reader about the story. These aren't spoken by a character	IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT.
Emanata	Text or icons that represent what is going on in the character's head. (i.e. ?, ZZZ, light bulbs)	? ZZZZZZZZZZ
Sound Effects	Words that show a sound is happening	CRASH! POW! BOOM SLUUURP

DEAR FAMILIES,

I am pleased to inform you that we are about to begin a unit of study called Storytelling Through Comics (STC), a comic book-focused curriculum from the nonprofit organization Pop Culture Classroom. In this unit, we will be developing literacy, art, and personal awareness skills using comics. In order to do this, we will be critically reading comic books and talking about the storyline, character development, conflict, climax, and resolution, among many other topics.

During the course of the STC program, students will brainstorm problems they see in their local communities and world. After choosing one to focus on, they will be expected to plan, write, illustrate, and ink their own comic that addresses this problem. Through this process, students will have the opportunity to build important language and learning skills, as well as develop some perspective and awareness about themselves in the world.

Each of the lessons in this unit are aligned with the new Common Core Standards, so we will be meeting the needs of all students in several areas of expected academic growth.

If you have any questions about this unit of study, please feel free to contact me and/or check out www.popcultureclassroom.org.

Sincerely,

BLEED
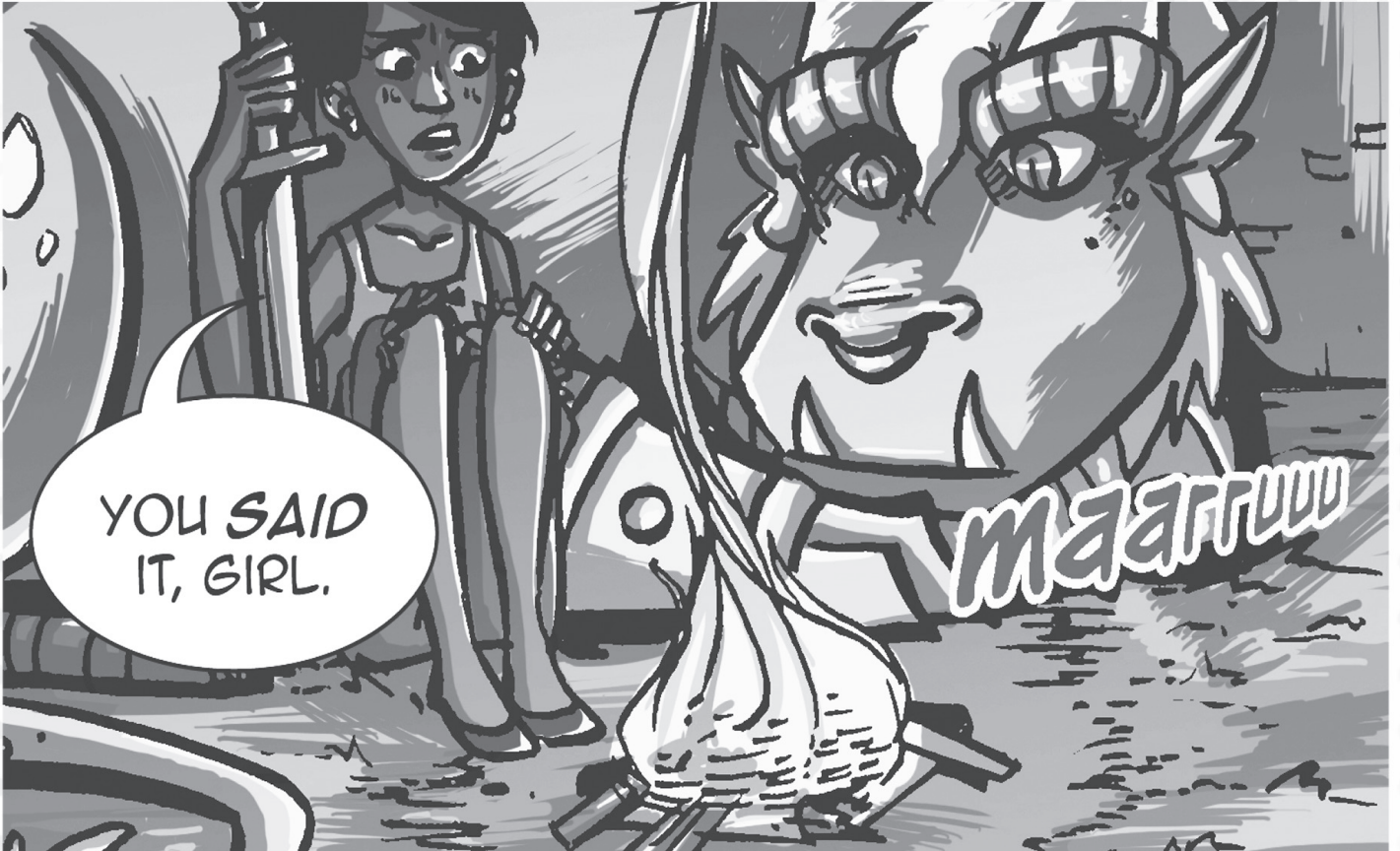
Images that go all the way to the edge of the comic page.

BORDER

Border

The edge or outline of a comic panel.

CAPTION BOX

It was a dark and stormy night.

Boxes that tell the reader about the story. These aren't spoken by the character.

CLOSE-UP

Details of images that are shown in a large view.

EMANATA

Text or icons that represent what is going on in a character's head. (i.e. zzzz, !!!, ?, etc.)

OPEN PANEL
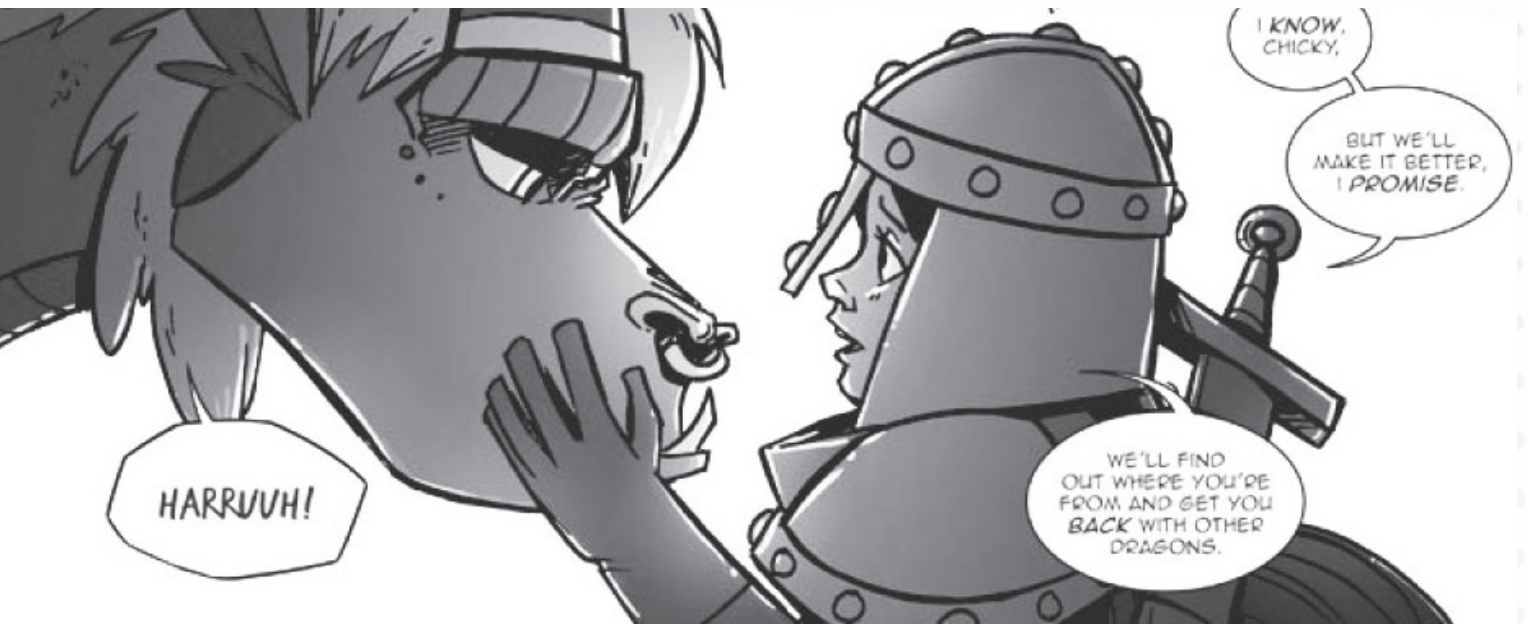
Panels that have no border.

SETTING

Time and place the story is happening.

SOUND EFFECTS

HUH?!

CRUNCH!!!

!!!!

BANG

CRAAAAAAAACCK

OUCH

SPLAT!!

BOOOOOOOOM

VRROOOOM

POW

CLAP

ZAAAAP

WHAP!

!!!!

WHAM!!

ZWOSH!

ZAM!

ZZAAAP

ZAP

POW POW

Words that show a sound is happening.

THOUGHT BALLOON

Why would I WANT to eat that?

Puffy balloons that hold a character's thoughts.

POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

WORD BALLOON

This is
the COOLEST
class ever!

Balloons that hold a character's spoken words.

FINAL COMIC EXPECTATIONS

THE COMIC **HAS** AN INTRODUCTION, MAJOR EVENTS, CLIMAX, AND RESOLUTION.

THERE ARE **LESS** THAN **THREE** MISTAKES IN WRITING MECHANICS.

COMIC IS WELL WRITTEN **AND** ILLUSTRATED. IT IS **ENJOYABLE** TO READ.

THE PROBLEM, DIALOGUE, RESOLUTION, AND **RELATIONSHIPS** ARE WELL DEVELOPED **AND** COMPELLING.

TIME, CONSIDERATION, AND **ATTENTION** HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE DRAWING **AND** LAYOUT.

Thumbnails

Pencils

Final Line Drawings

Printed Page

Name_____

PROBLEMS IN OUR WORLD

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

SETTING IS A CHARACTER

Art by Jay Peteranetz

Name _____
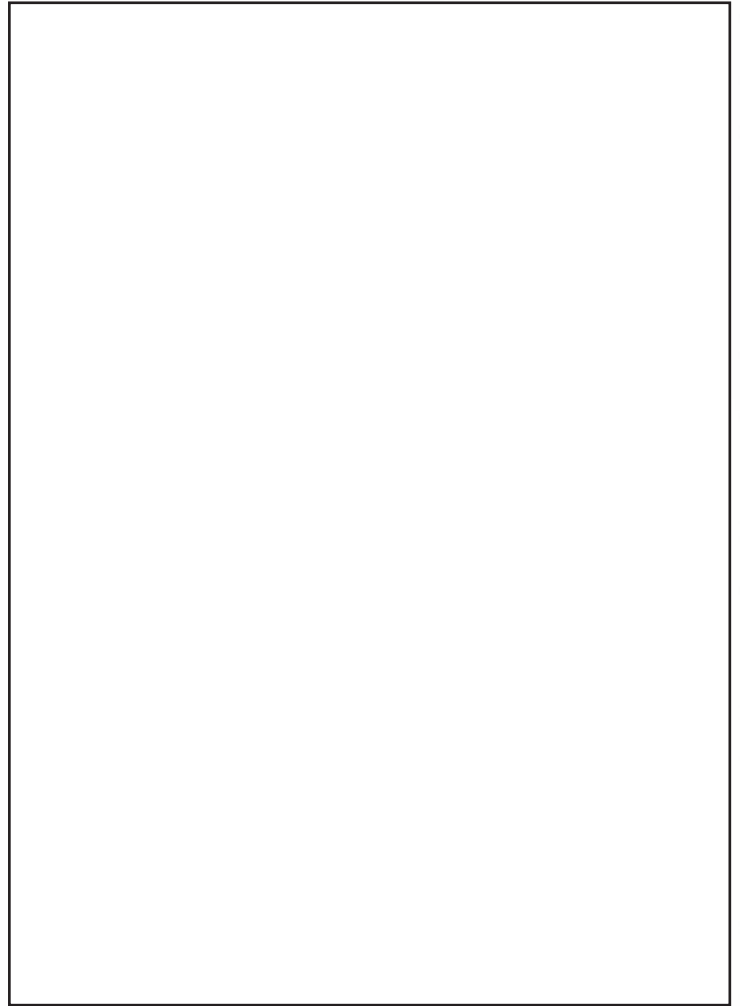
CREATE A CHARACTER

What's my name?

_____

Who are my friends?

_____

_____

What are my tools and superpowers?

_____

_____

What are my weaknesses?

_____

_____

What are some influential events from my past? _____

_____

_____

Who is my nemesis? Why? _____

_____

POP CULTURE CLASSROOM

WHAT'S MY CHARACTER'S BACKSTORY?

Rowan Pepper Backstory

Art by Jay Peteranetz

STORY ARC TERMS

MAIN CHARACTER/PROTAGONIST/HERO: _____

ANTAGONIST/VILLAIN: _____

CLIMAX!!!

IMPORTANCE

CONFLICT!/RISING ACTION!

DENOUMENT/RESOLUTION

Inciting incident/spark

New normal

Introduction/normal
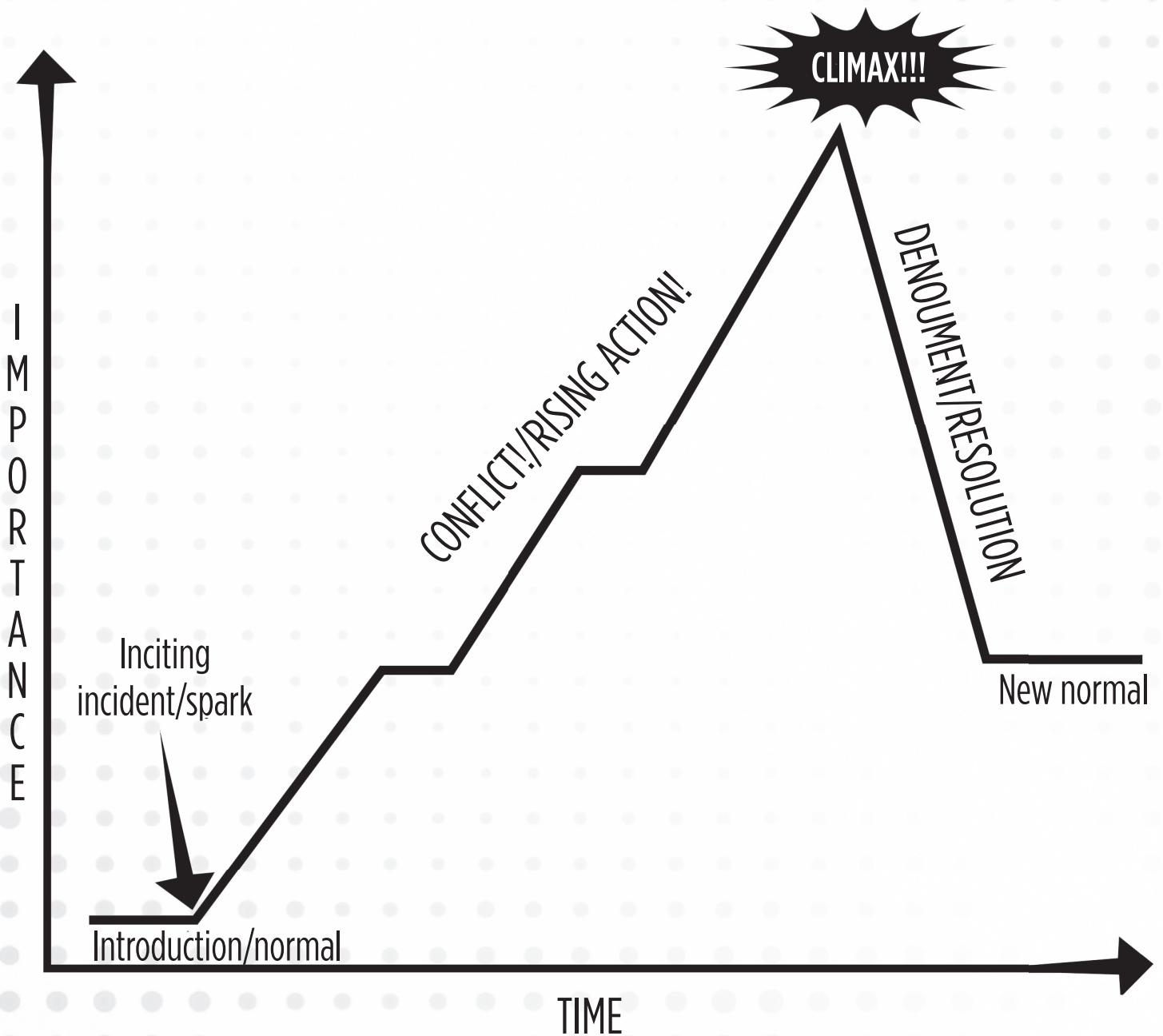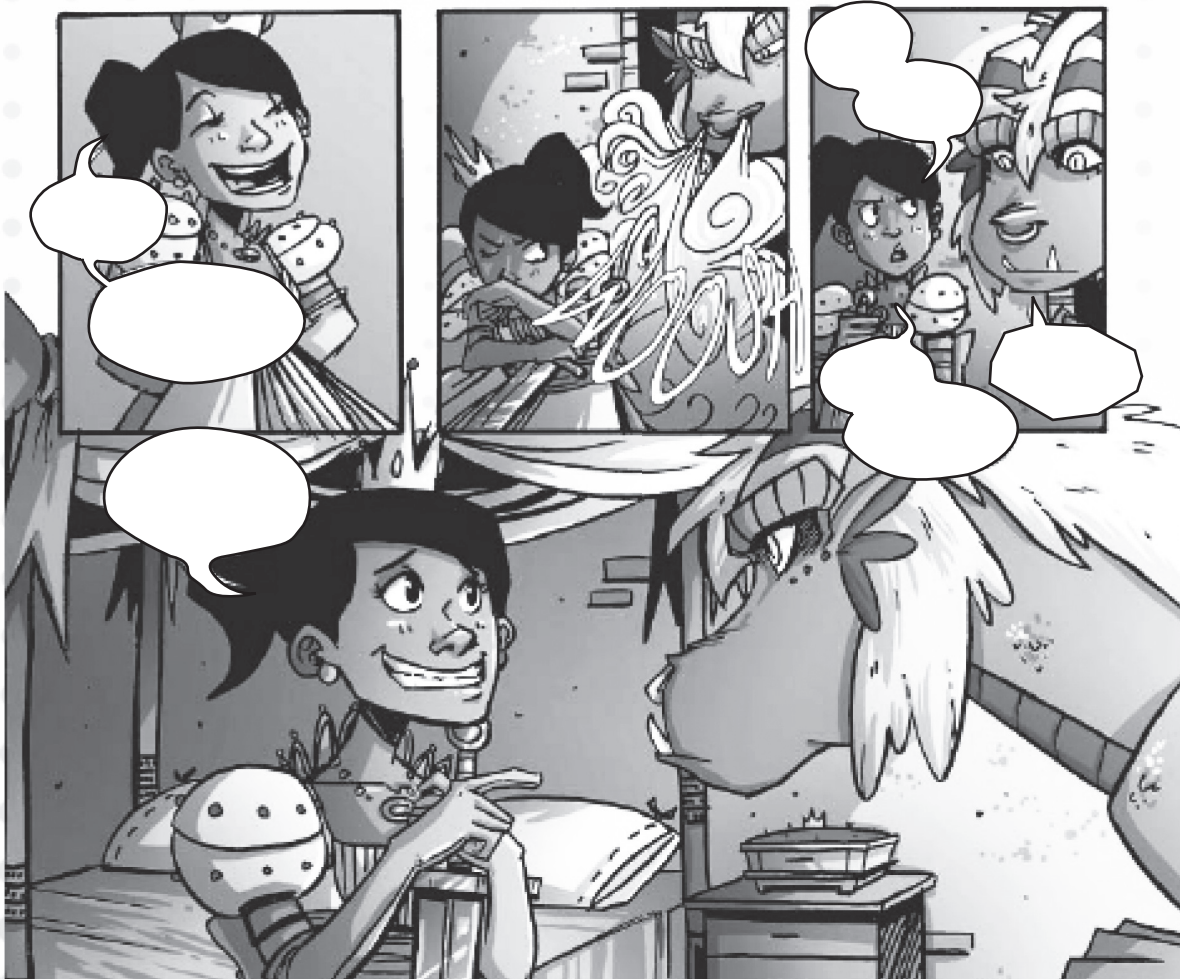
TIME
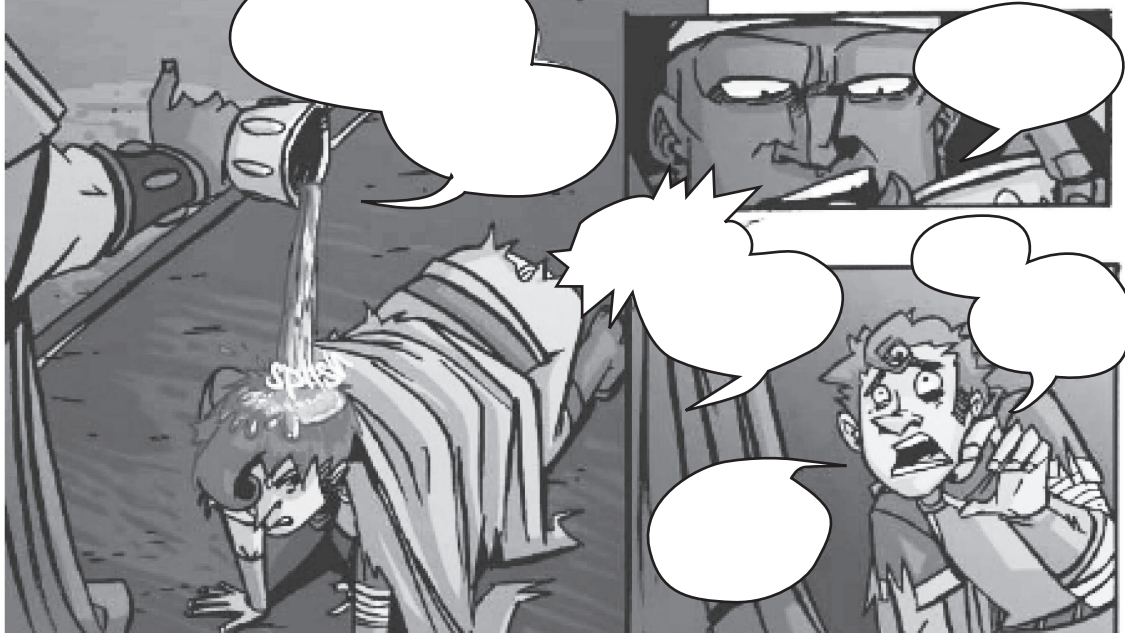
PAGE 1: (6 PANELS)

Panel 1: The panels in this page are drawn as a storybook and should have an art style all their own. The characters should look somewhat square and iconic. The text is written in a storybook format.

This is a picture of the beautiful blond princess.

> *TEXT*
>
> Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there lived a beautiful blonde-haired, blue-eyed princess. She was the loveliest of all the maidens in all the land.

Panel 2: The princess is trapped in a tower.

> *TEXT*
>
> But the princess was locked away in the tallest of tall towers so that no prince could ever reach her.

Panel 3: A mean looking dragon is seated at the bottom of the tower. The princess can be seen in her tower the back of her wrist pressed to her forehead.

> *TEXT*
>
> Keeping watch over the princess was the meanest dragon in all the kingdom.
> Whenever knights rode to rescue the princess, they would flee in terror at the sight of the dragon.

Panel 4: A brave knight on a white horse rides into battle with the dragon. The dragon breathes fire, which he blocks with his sword.

> *TEXT*
>
> Until one day, the bravest and most handsome of all princes rode to the tower to face the horrible beast.
> The dragon was fierce, but the prince was strong.

Panel 5: The prince stands atop the dragon with his sword in the dragon's belly. His helmet is off. He is ridiculously handsome.

> *TEXT*
>
> He was able to strike down the dragon with a single blow - for when you're pure of blood and intention, no evil can stand in your way.

Panel 6: The prince and princess stand in front of the tower, holding one another gingerly.

> *TEXT*
>
> That very day, the prince and princess were married.
> They lived happily ever after and had lots of beautiful children.

> *SPEECH BUBBLE (OFF PANEL)*
>
> The End.

PAGE LAYOUT #1
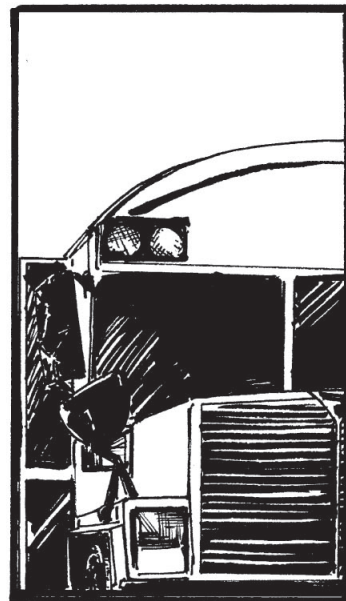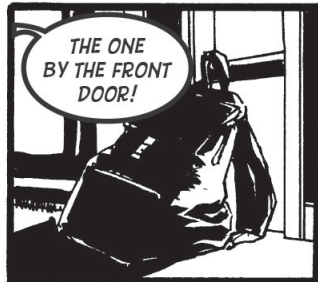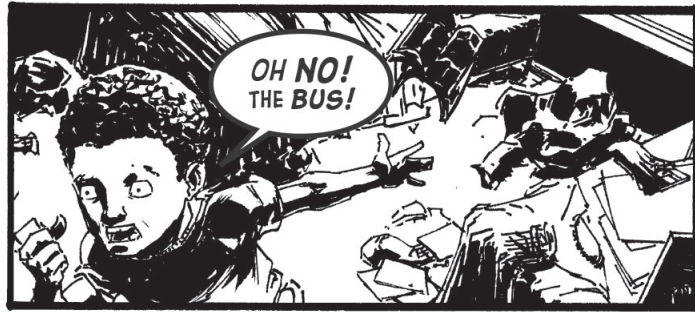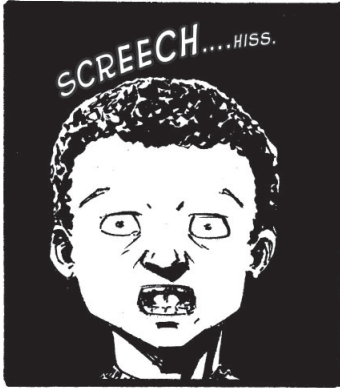
Art by Jay Peteranetz

PAGE LAYOUT #2

Art by Jay Peteranetz

PAGE LAYOUT #3

Art by Jay Peteranetz

POP CULTURE
CLASSROOM

HERO

VILLIAN

POP CULTURE CLASSROOM
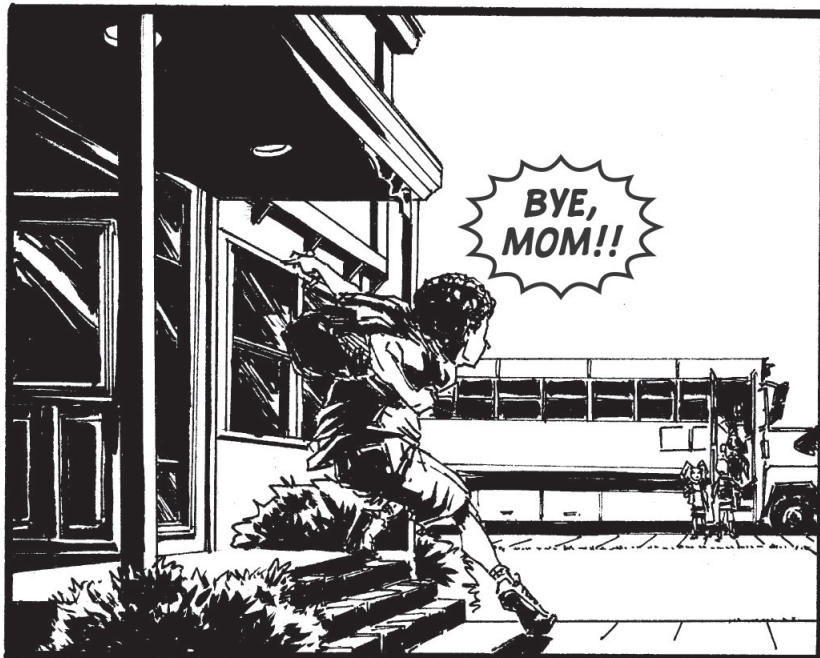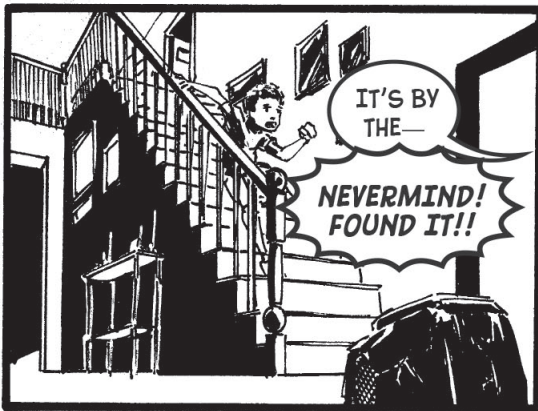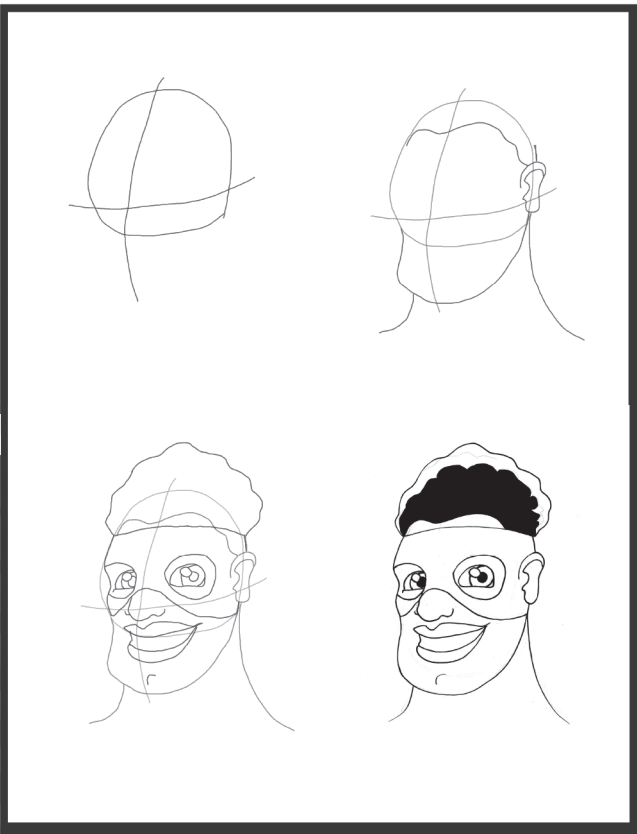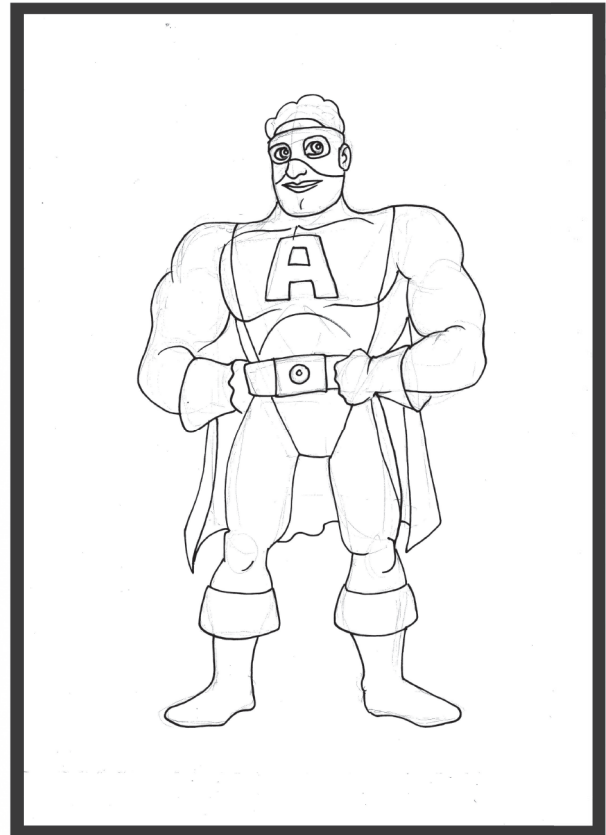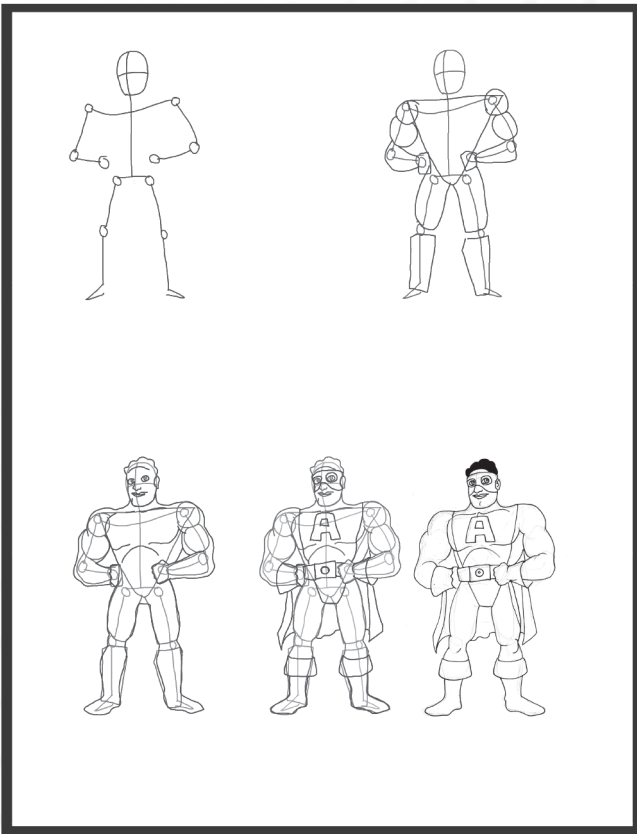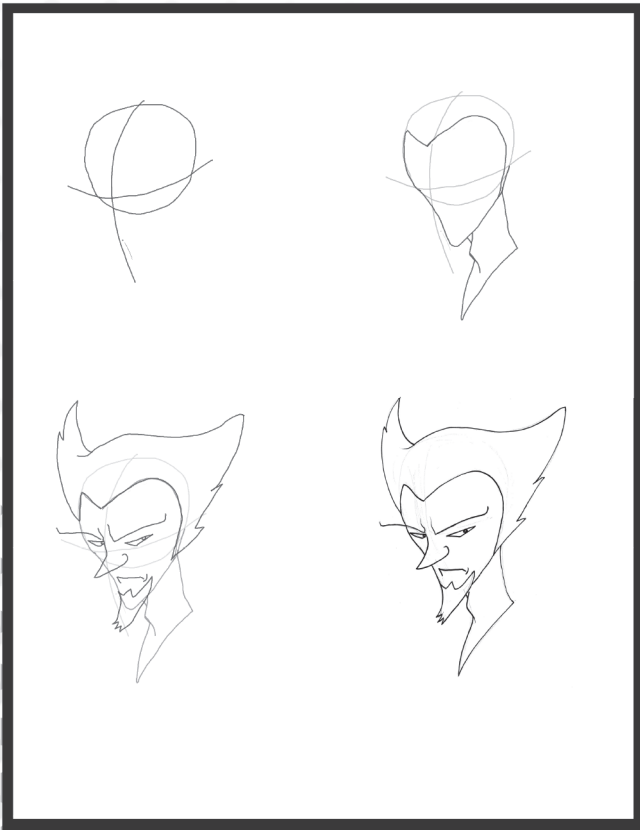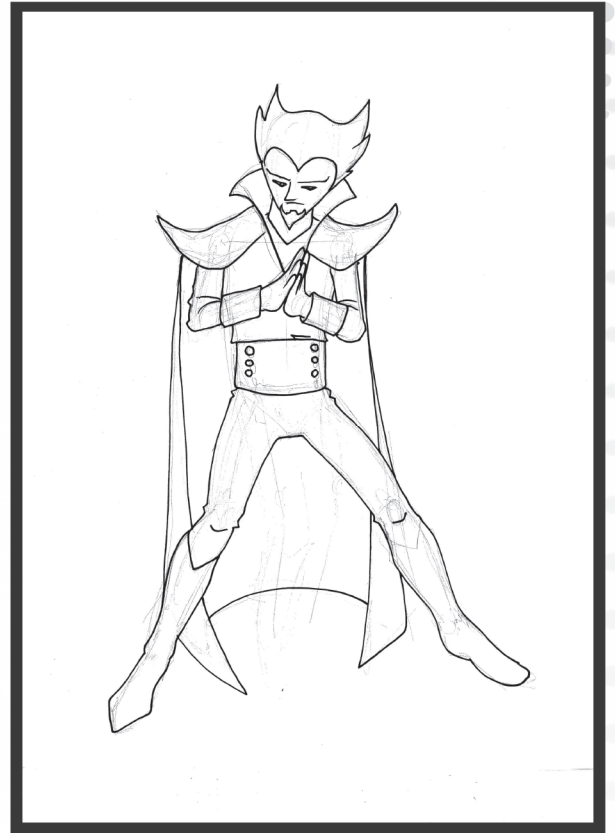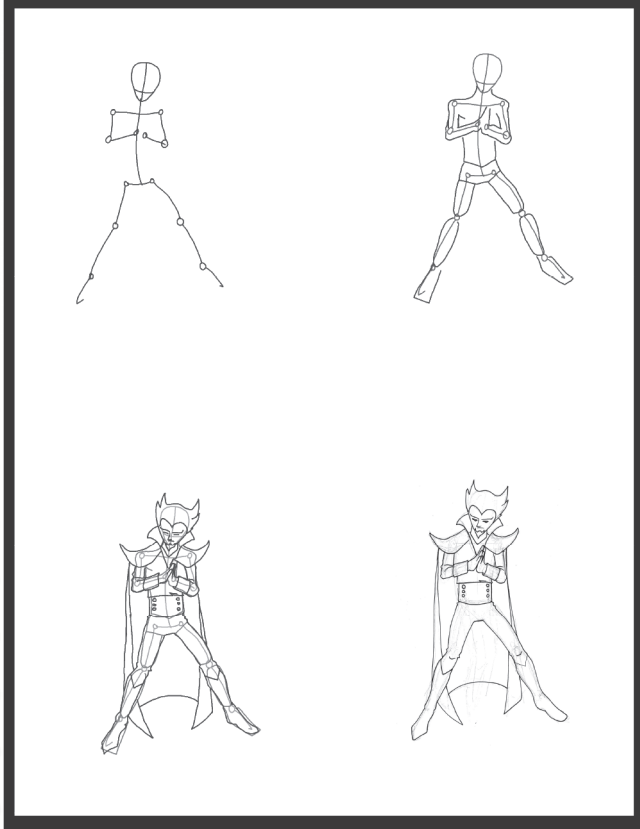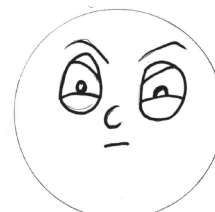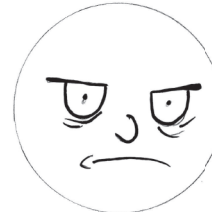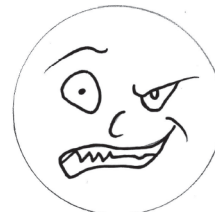
ROBOTS
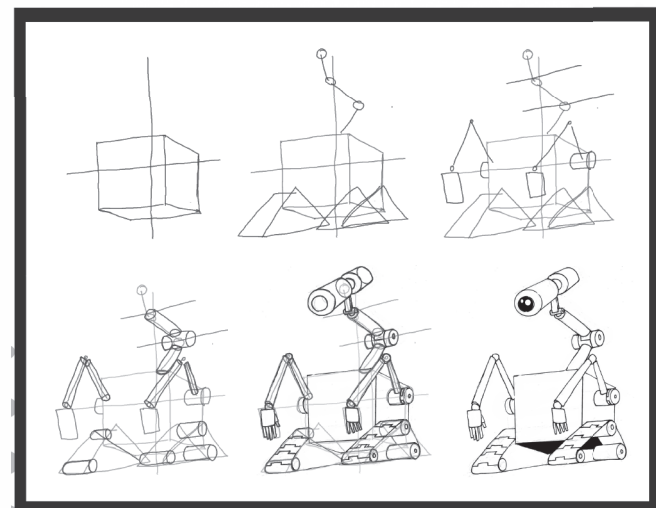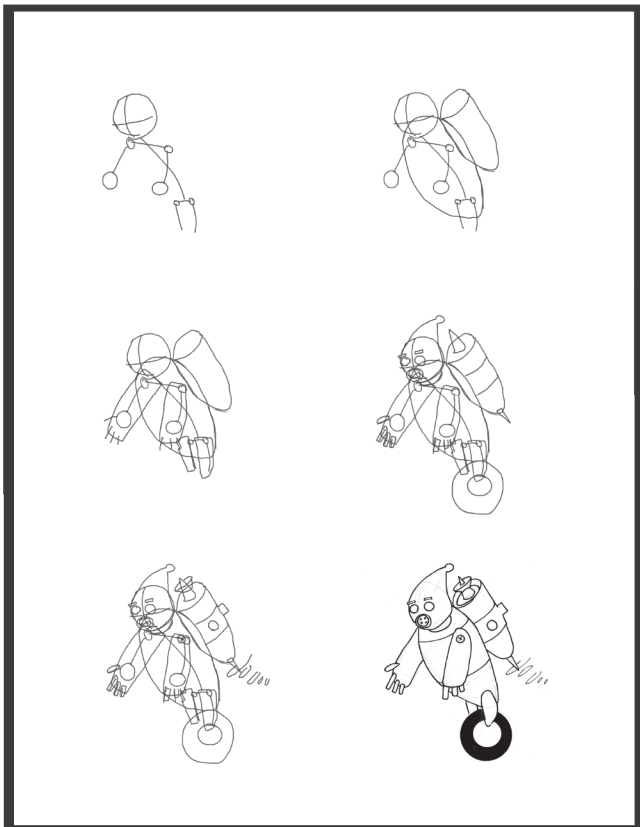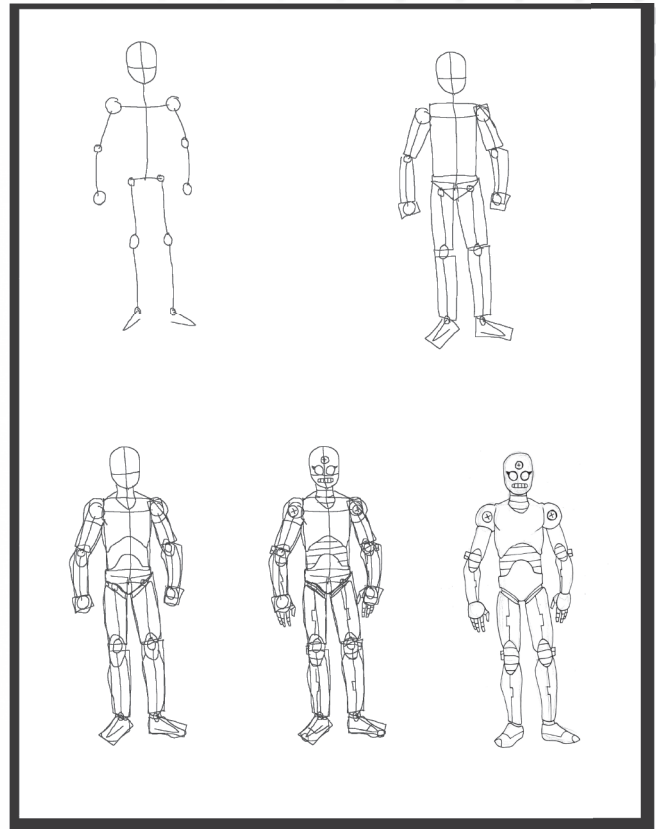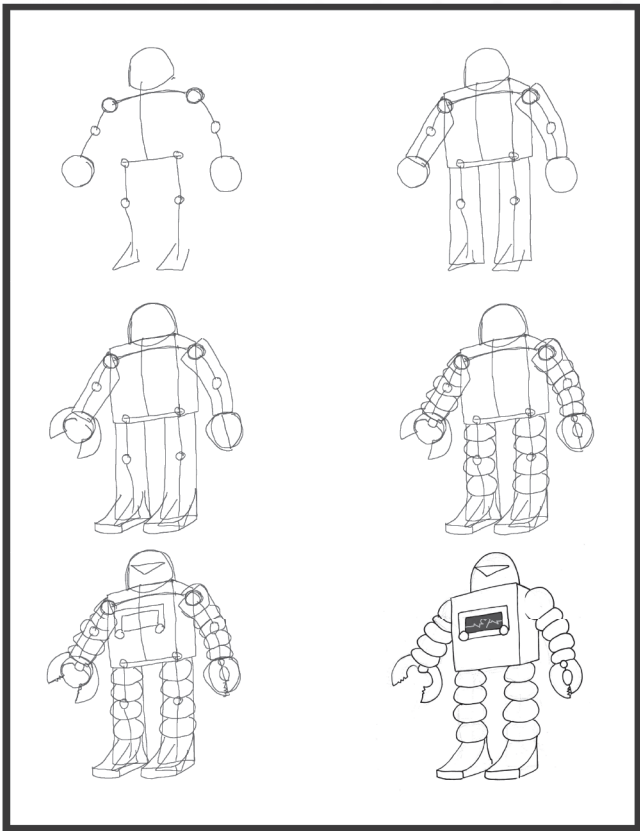
SIMPLE FACES
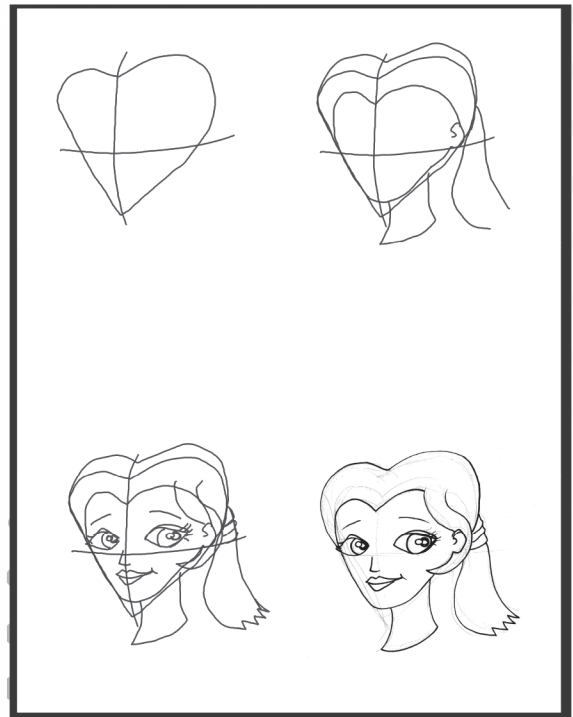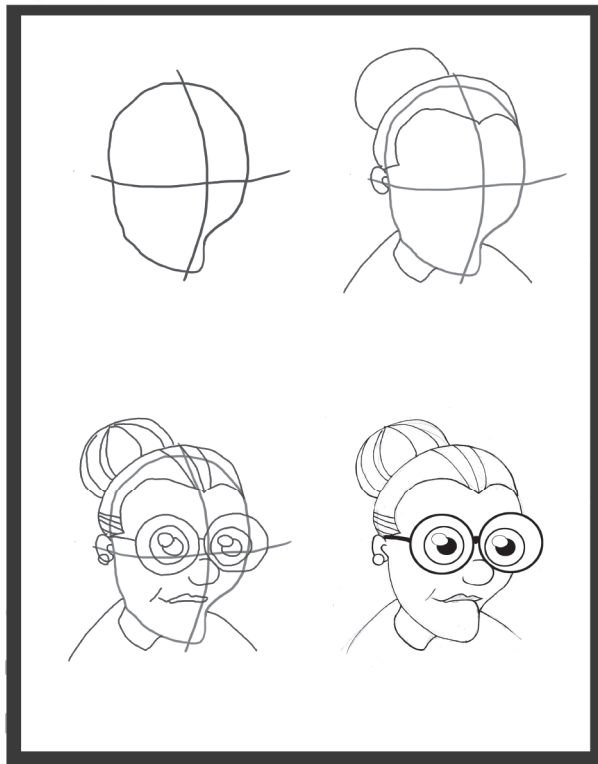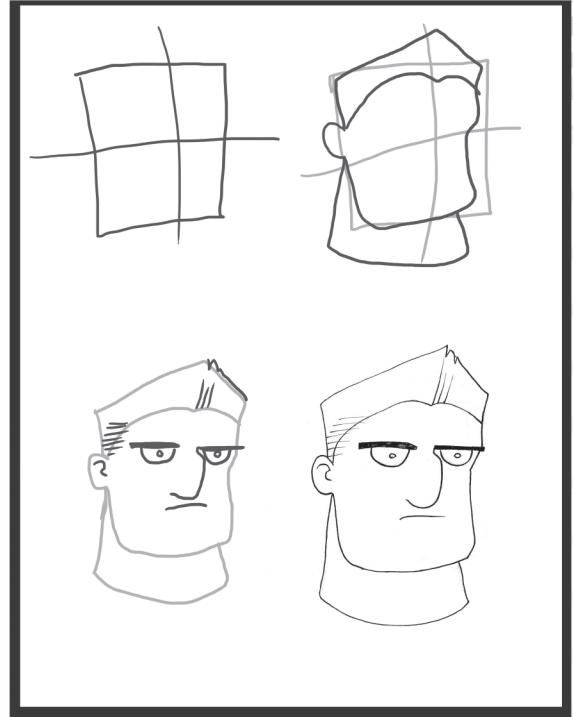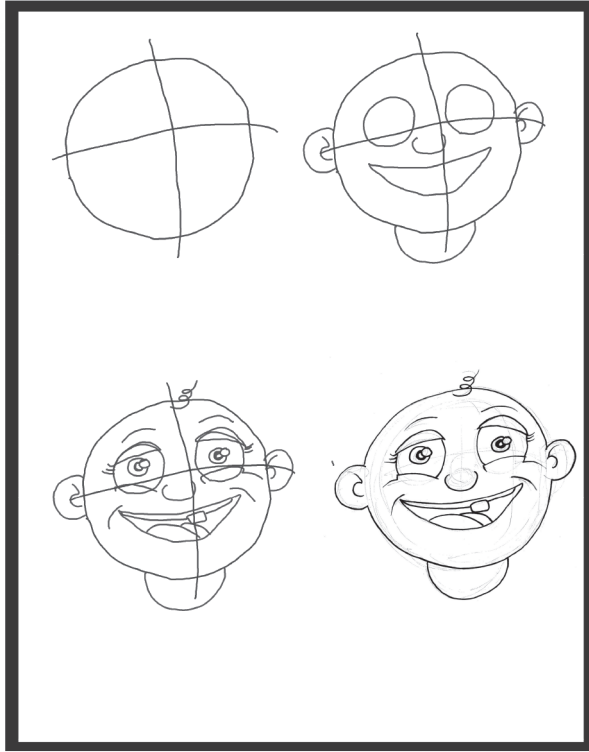
FACIAL EXPRESSIONS
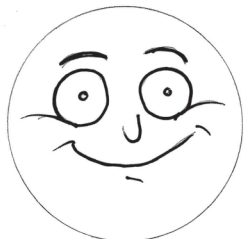
happy

confused
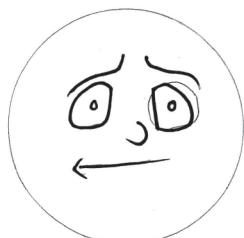
worried

angry

sad

laughter
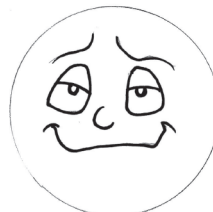
goofy

frustrated

crazy

agitated

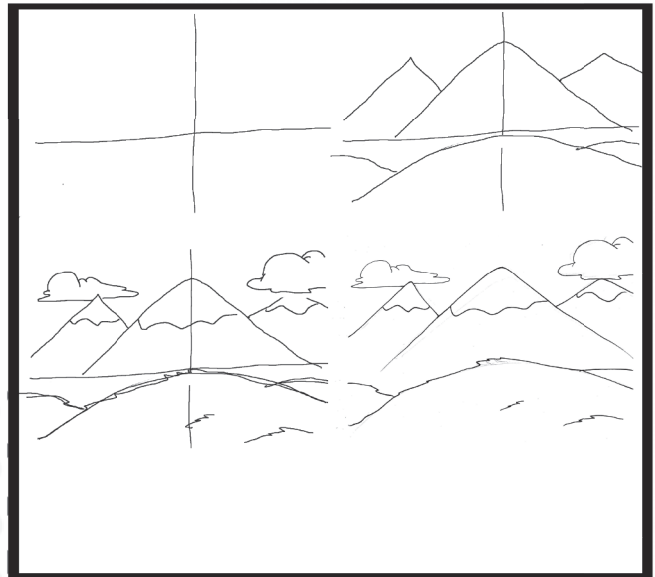bi-polar
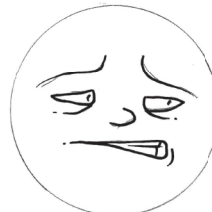
paranoid

SETTING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

POP CULTURE
CLASSROOM

Igniting Imaginations.