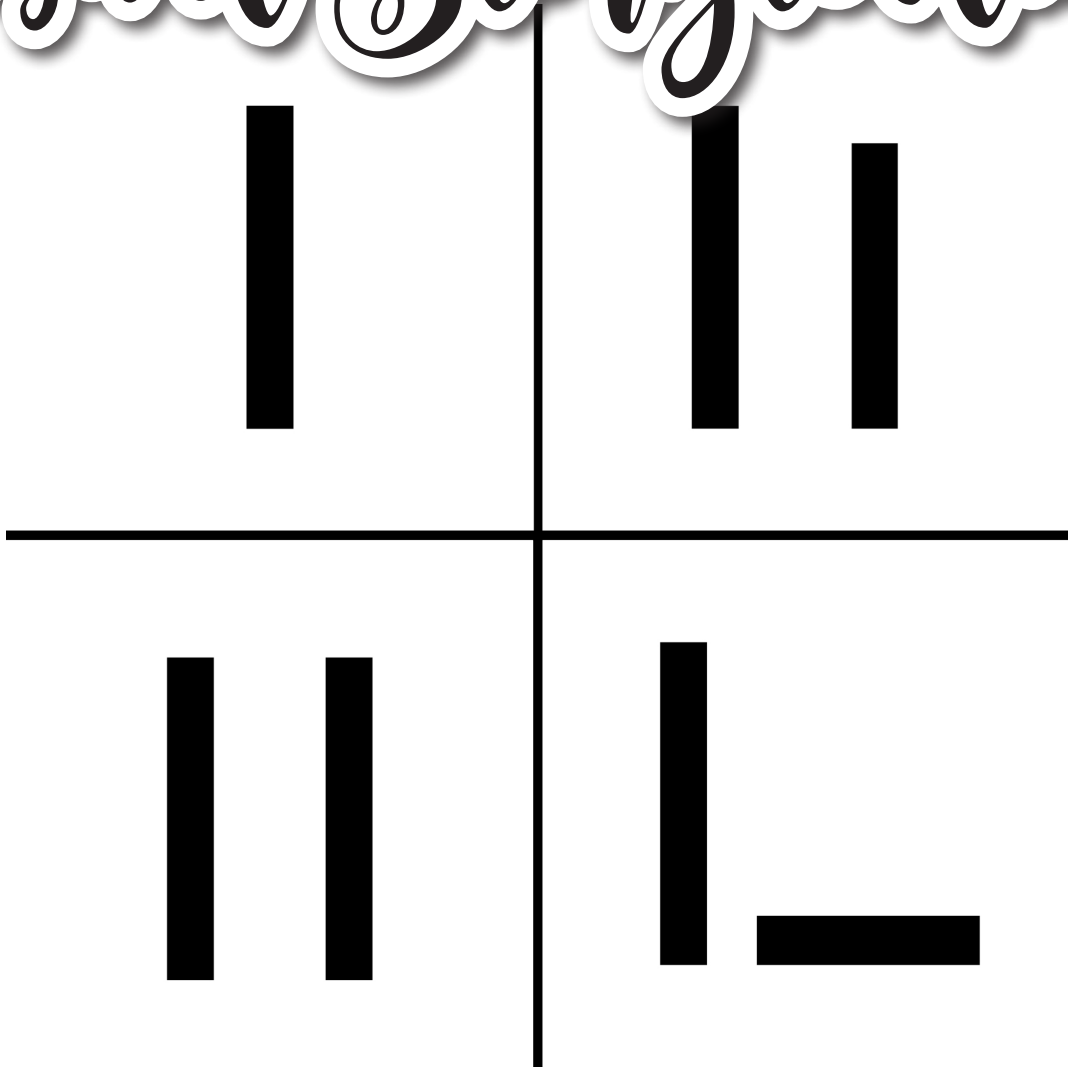


11th grade

Visual Storytelling



Thematic Unit Plan
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AEDU502

Table of Contents

Title Page 1

Table of Contents 2

Focus 3

Timeline 4

Standards 5

Lesson One - Character Design 6-9

Lesson Two - Storyboarding 10-13

Lesson Three - 4-Panel Comics 14-17

Lesson Four - Dramatic Image 18-21

Rubric 22

Learning Centers 23

Culminating Event - Print Share 24

Focus

When I was a high school student, it was a very rare occasion when we got to focus on visual media in my English Language Arts classes. We read *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi and got to watch the film adaptations of a few books, but partaking in visual media usually came down to it being your own choice and on your own time. But visual media, such as comic books, graphic novels, TV/ film, and all other kinds of art pieces are found everywhere in society and deserve the same kind of focus that educators give the written word. Students deserve to learn about the techniques used in these kinds of media and how to interact with them.

This unit focuses on visual storytelling, specifically in 2D and drawn or painted media. Students will begin the unit by learning what goes into a character design and will use their created character design in storyboards, a comic, and in a final chosen-media art piece. The lessons will build upon each other and reuse skills and assets from previous projects. By the end of the unit, students will have a small portfolio of illustrations centered around visual storytelling.

The first four weeks will be a lesson surrounding character design where students will look at artists on the TV show *Steven Universe* and how character design is used in the show. Students will create their own character which will then be used in the second lesson. The storyboarding lesson will take another four weeks and will have students write a short (one-paragraph) story to go along with a 15-20 cell storyboard. Students will be looking at the storyboarding process of artist Mimi Chao and in the movie *Into the Spider-Verse*. Next, students will use their storyboarding skills to create a four-panel comic with their created character. This lesson will take four weeks and will focus on short comics such as newspaper comics and Jim Davis's *Garfield*. The last lesson will take five weeks and will focus on visual storytelling in one image. Students will culminate all their learned technique into one impactful image. The main artist referenced will be Meg Park, a character designer and illustrator for Disney.

The culminating event will be a Print Share in which students will get to trade small prints of one of their artworks from the unit with other students in the class. Hopefully students will be able to see the love and care that went into their peers' work and will understand the processes going into and language behind visual storytelling.

Timeline

Month Week Lesson Plan Media Art History Criticism/Aesthetics Activity Assessment

Jan	1	Character Design	Sketchbooks and Graphite	Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art Steven Universe: Art & Origins	"What does this character design tell you?" Class Discussion Students begin sketching	-
Jan	2 + 3	Character Design	Student Chosen Media	^	"How to keep a character's proportions consistent" Demo In-Progress whole class critique	-
Jan	4	Character Design	Student Chosen Media	^	Final Critique	Rubric
Jan - Feb	5	Storyboarding	Sketchbooks and Graphite	Mimi Chao Into the Spider-Verse	Story Writing "Storyboarding" Demo	-
Feb	6 + 7	Storyboarding	Student Chosen Media	^	Students Work	-
Feb	8	Storyboarding	Student Chosen Media	^	Final Critique	Rubric
Feb - Mar	9	4-Panel Comic	Sketchbooks and Graphite	Garfield/Jim Davis Adam Ellis	"Story Interpretation" Class Discussion	-
Mar	10 + 11	4-Panel Comic	Student Chosen Media	^	"Revisiting Storyboarding" Demo In-Progress Group Critique	-
Mar	12	4-Panel Comic	Student Chosen Media	^	Final Critique	Rubric
Mar - Apr	13	Dramatic Image	Sketchbooks and Graphite	Meg Park Janna Sophia Eli Baum	"Revisiting Compositional Techniques" Demo	-
Apr	14	Dramatic Image	Student Chosen Media	^	In-Progress Partner Critique	-
Apr	15 + 16 + 17	Dramatic Image	Student Chosen Media	^	In-Progress Small Group Critique	-
May	18	Dramatic Image	Student Chosen Media	^	Final Critique	Rubric
May	19	Print Share	-	-	Print Share Event	Completion

Standards

Cr1.2.IIa: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

Cr3.1.IIa: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Re.7.2.IIa: Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

Cn.10.1.IIa: Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through-artmaking.

Lesson One

Character Design



Teacher Exemplar

Theme

This lesson will teach students how to use color, proportion, and visual symbolism to communicate elements of a character's backstory or personality through their design.

Goal

Students will design a character with visual elements relating to their backstory. The character's reference sheet will contain a front-view and a side- or back-view along with a color palette.

Vocabulary

Color Theory, Proportion, Visual Storytelling, Character Design, Character Sheet, Turnaround.

Activities

"What does this character design tell you?" class discussion, "How to keep a character's proportions consistent" demo, in-progress critique with whole class, final critique.



"Garnet" Character Sheet
from *Steven Universe*.



"Stevonnie" Character Sheet
from *Steven Universe*.



"Robin" Character Sheet from
Young Justice.

History

Character sheets have a long history in the field of animation, as they are required materials for making sure that characters look consistent across multiple shots/scenes. Character sheets are often created for each iteration of a character's design and may contain different angles of a character (most commonly front and back), different angles of a character, different poses, and notable details of the design.

In "Steven Universe: Art & Origins", the series creator, Rebecca Sugar, describes some techniques they used when designing the show's main characters. One technique she used is giving each character a defining trait; Garnet (seen above) has her cube-shaped hair. So even if she is drawn slightly off-model or in a different form, viewers can still tell it's Garnet by her hair. This idea transfers into many different characters on the show; Steven, the lead, has his head shape, Pearl has her nose, and Greg has his beard. Characters are also shown further simplified to draw them from far away. One character loses the detail on his t-shirt and ripped jeans but keeps the general shapes in order to be identified.

Developmental Rationale/Prior Learning

In their junior year, students will be exiting Lowenfeld's "Decision Stage", meaning that they will have developed their own artistic style and will have considered where they would like to take their art in the future (if at all). This entire unit plan is a dive into the world of illustration and will help students decide if they would like to go into the world of commercial art.

This specific lesson will focus on building skills previously learned such as figure drawing and proportion, color theory, and contour line.

Interdisciplinary Link | ELA

Students will be asked to write up a short (one-page) backstory for their character and will be asked to express how specific details in a character's design portrays that character's backstory.

Standards

Cr1.2.IIa: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

Cr3.1.IIa: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Re.7.2.IIa: Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

Cn.10.1.IIa: Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through-artmaking.

Objective | Cognitive-Head

SWBAT understand how visual characteristics express personality traits in order to design an effective character for visual storytelling.

Objective | Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT use color theory in order to design a character with a particular mood or theme.

Objective | Affective-Heart

SWBAT interpret visual character designs in media in order to better understand characters' roles and personalities in stories.

Skills

Contour line drawing, coloring and color theory, figure drawing and proportions, consistency between drawings, visual storytelling.

Materials

Students will be allowed to work in any 2D material they want to, but will be limited to materials available. These materials may include:

Accommodations

Students will be permitted to work in any 2D medium and process they find fit. Students will be asked to work quietly but can wear headphones or earbuds in order to keep focused and on track. Visual instructions about character elements will be distributed.

Assessment

Attached Rubric.

Resources

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art
Steven Universe: Art & Origins

Acrylic
Tempera
Watercolor
Colored Pencil
Marker
Ink
Graphite
Charcoal
Crayon
Digital Art

Construction Paper
Cardstock
Various Weights of Drawing Paper
Watercolor Paper
Illustration Board

“When you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face, you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon, you see yourself.”

Scott McCloud

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art

Lesson Two

Storyboarding



Teacher Exemplar

Theme

This lesson will teach students how to plan out a story using visual elements.

Goal

Students will write a short (one paragraph) story and illustrate it with a 15-to-20 panel storyboard in black and white.

Vocabulary

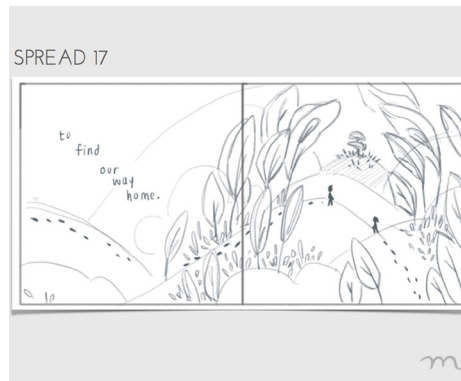
Visual Storytelling, Contour Line, Value, Hatching, Stippling, Storyboard, Thumbnail.

Activities

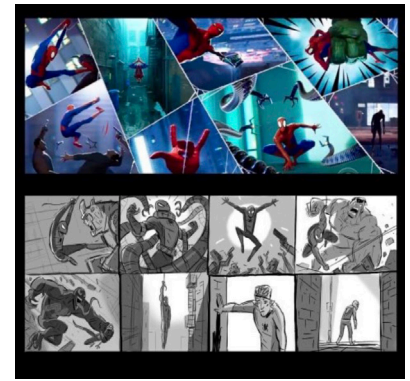
Story writing, "Storyboarding" demo, final critique.



Storyboard by Mimi Chao.



Storyboard by Mimi Chao.



Into the Spider-Verse storyboards by John Puglisi.

History

Storyboards are used in a variety of forms of visual storytelling but have different purposes for each medium. In singular illustrations, comics, and graphic novels, storyboards serve to quickly experiment with ideas and compositions to see what works without diving too deep into the subject matter. Animation, on the other hand, uses storyboards in this way but also to develop the actions and camera movement in an animation. Scenes can be depicted in a small number of frames and timed to understand what needs more vs. less emphasis.

Mimi Chao, illustrator at her own LA-based studio Mimochai, focuses on the storyboarding process in her work. She stresses the importance of understanding how storyboarding fits into your chosen media; “a traditional 32-page picture book is a great example for basic storyboarding because it’s a condensed, straight-line structure that still tells an entire story. A feature film can have thousands of storyboard panels, while a storyboard for an app interaction may include more interface instruction.” Her process focuses both on writing and visuals; you must first write what you’re going to storyboard before removing that storyboard to “Show not Tell”.

Developmental Rationale/Prior Learning

Students will be using the characters they developed in lesson one in their storyboards. This lesson will teach them the basics of how to use visual information to depict a story which will be built upon in upcoming assignments.

Students will be pushed to focus on compositional techniques learned previously as well as value, contour line, and line techniques (ie. stippling, hatching).

Interdisciplinary Link || ELA

Students will be asked to write out a short (one paragraph) story prior to completing their storyboards. Their storyboards will be based on this story and lines from the story will be included in addition to the storyboard visuals in order to explain what is happening in their storyboards.

Standards

Cr1.2.IIa: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

Cr3.1.IIa: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Re.7.2.IIa: Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

Cn.10.1.IIa: Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through-artmaking.

Objective | Cognitive-Head

SWBAT write a short story in order to visually express a plot by using simple compositional techniques.

Objective | Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT create quick and basic drawings in order to express ideas quickly and effectively in a short amount of time.

Objective | Affective-Heart

SWBAT understand the process behind creating visual media in order to better appreciate and criticize media in today's society.

Skills

Contour line drawing, consistency between drawings, visual storytelling, line technique, working quick, letting go of "precious" art.

Materials

Students will be allowed to work in any monochromatic "dry" 2D material they want to, but will be limited to materials available. These materials may include:

Accommodations

Students will be permitted to work in any monochromatic "dry" 2D medium and process they find fit. Students will be asked to work quietly but can wear headphones or earbuds in order to keep focused and on track. Visual instructions about storyboarding will be distributed. Students can plan stories in any language.

Assessment

Attached Rubric.

Resources

Into the Spider-Verse

<https://concepts.app/en/stories/art-storyboarding-interview-illustrator-mimi-chao/>

Colored Pencil
Marker
Ink
Graphite
Charcoal
Crayon
Digital Art

Construction Paper
Cardstock
Various Weights of Drawing Paper
Watercolor Paper
Illustration Board

“[Storyboarding is] like laying out the game plan before diving into the drills.”

Mimi Chao

Lesson Three

4-Panel Comic



Teacher Exemplar

Theme

This lesson will teach students how to tell a story using limited information and how to be decisive about what information to include in a comic.

Goal

Students will tell a full story (with rising action, climax, and falling action) through a comic using only four panels.

Vocabulary

Value, Proportion, Visual Storytelling, Comic Strip, Panel, Gutter.

Activities

"Story Interpretation" class discussion, "Revisiting Storyboarding" demo, in-progress critique of storyboards in small groups, final critique.



From *Garfield*
by Jim Davis.



Loss from Ctrl+Alt+Del
by Tim Buckley.



By Adam Ellis.

History

Short-form comics, or comic strips, first appeared in newspapers in the late 19th century and soon became a preferred medium for storytelling, especially in advertisements. The limited amount of space on a page forced artists and writers to condense information down into only what is completely necessary, an excellent exercise in cutting fat.

Jim Davis's comic *Garfield* was picked up by the *Chicago Sun-Times* and was an instant hit among readers. In 2002 it won the Guinness World Record for most widely syndicated comic strip and was turned into toys, clothes, TV series, films, and even a musical! Davis focuses on what he knows for the comics, claiming that others "handle it better than [he] ever would" and that which he knows is relatable to so many other readers. The short-form comedy drew in long-time fans because of the relatable and easy-to-understand characters and punchlines. Because of the notable visual language of *Garfield*, many readers also credit *Garfield* with helping them learn to read at a young age or speak English at an older age.

Developmental Rationale/Prior Learning

Students will build upon their storyboarding process from the previous lesson when making their comic. The storyboarding process will focus on value and composition while the finishing of the comic itself will focus on value and color theory. Students will revisit the idea of local color and how to adapt their character's colors to a scene.

Interdisciplinary Link || ELA

Students will be asked to consider the three main parts of a story- rising action, climax, and falling action- in order to portray a full story in their comic. Students will be asked to storyboard their comic before completing it and accompany their storyboard with a short write-up of the story (as described in Lesson Two).

Standards

Cr1.2.IIa: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

Cr3.1.IIa: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Re.7.2.IIa: Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

Cn.10.1.IIa: Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through-artmaking.

Objective | Cognitive-Head

SWBAT limit the amount of information they write in order to only give what is necessary information in a short amount of time.

Objective | Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT compose panels to go together in order to experiment with visual hierarchy and reading order in comics.

Objective | Affective-Heart

SWBAT tell a short story through visuals in order to express character-driven motive effectively.

Skills

Contour line drawing, coloring and color theory, consistency between drawings, visual storytelling, filtering information.

Materials

Students will be allowed to work in any 2D material they want to, but will be limited to materials available. These materials may include:

Accommodations

Students will be permitted to work in any 2D medium and process they find fit. Students will be asked to work quietly but can wear headphones or earbuds in order to keep focused and on track. Visual instructions about storyboarding will be distributed. Students can plan stories in any language.

Assessment

Attached Rubric.

Resources

Garfield

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jun/19/garfield-jim-davis-40-years>

<https://arthistoryteachingresources.org/lessons/newspaper-comics-in-the-united-states/>

Acrylic
Tempera
Watercolor
Colored Pencil
Marker
Ink
Graphite
Charcoal
Crayon
Digital Art

Construction Paper
Cardstock

Various Weights of Drawing Paper
Watercolor Paper
Illustration Board

“Readers have told me that their children have learned to read after years of struggle after starting to read Garfield’s comic strip and many people who have moved to the United States have said that they, too, learned English by reading Garfield.”

Jim Davis

Lesson Four

Dramatic Image



Teacher Exemplar

Theme

This lesson will teach students how to tell a story using one image and how to use both visual details and composition in order to get a point across.

Goal

Students will compose an image using their medium of choice and depict a character-driven story moment with emphasis on composition and exposition through image details.

Vocabulary

Color Theory, Proportion, Visual Storytelling, Composition.

Activities

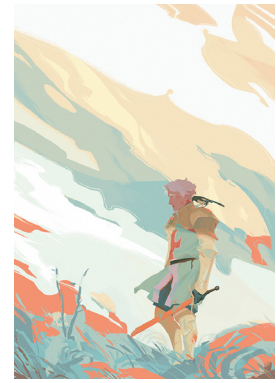
“Revisiting Compositional Techniques” demo, in-progress sketch short critique with partners, halfway-through critique with small groups, final class critique.



By Meg Park.



The Midday Man
by Janna Sophia.



Magpie Knight
by Eli Baum.

History

Meg Park is an illustrator and character designer from Scotland currently working as a Visual Development artist at Walt Disney Studios. She credits the beginning of her artistic journey to old, animated content such as Tom & Jerry Cartoons and Disney movies, as well as drawing animals.

Her work focuses heavily on character interaction and emotion, especially when it comes to developing character designs for larger projects. The work that goes into her drawings focuses on understanding “[her] subject inside and out”, and she advises artists to fully understand what they are going to illustrate and study it from life or other kinds of references. She is also able to “detach [herself] from [her] work” and to not “be precious with it”; this helps a lot in developing drawings and designs past the first idea and getting things to be the best versions of themselves they can be.

Developmental Rationale/Prior Learning

This lesson will take all of the skills learned prior and condense it down into one final image. Students will first learn to storyboard with a large amount of panels, then how to make a comic with a limited amount of panels, then how to tell a story in just one image.

Students will be asked to use all of the previous artistic skills that were utilized in the previous assignments- contour line, composition, color theory, figure drawing, and value.

Standards

Cr1.2.IIa: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

Cr3.1.IIa: Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.

Re.7.2.IIa: Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

Cn.10.1.IIa: Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through-artmaking.

Objective | Cognitive-Head

SWBAT condense storytelling elements down to one image in order to create visually compelling images in the future, even without a full backstory or character development.

Objective | Psychomotor-Hands

SWBAT use composition and color theory in order to express a mood in an overall image.

Objective | Affective-Heart

SWBAT identify compositional techniques and story elements in an image in order to better understand and interpret works of art in the everyday world.

Skills

Coloring and color theory, consistency between drawings, figure drawing and proportions, visual storytelling, filtering information.

Materials

Students will be allowed to work in any 2D material they want to, but will be limited to materials available. These materials may include:

Accommodations

Students will be permitted to work in any 2D medium and process they find fit. Students will be asked to work quietly but can wear headphones or earbuds in order to keep focused and on track.

Assessment

Attached Rubric.

Resources

<http://meg-park-interview.blogspot.com/>

Acrylic
Tempera
Watercolor
Colored Pencil
Marker
Ink
Graphite
Charcoal
Crayon
Digital Art

Construction Paper
Cardstock
Various Weights of Drawing Paper
Watercolor Paper
Illustration Board

Anonymous

A Picture is Worth
a Thousand Words.

Rubric

This rubric will be used to grade
all four lessons.

Name is on Assignment

2 points

Self-Explanatory

Completion

8 points

Self-Explanatory

Craftsmanship

5 points

Assignment is completed with care for usage of supplies and presentation.

Accuracy

5 points

All objectives of the assignment are completed as requested (ie. using correct materials, artistic techniques).

Classroom Etiquette

5 points

Student is not disruptive to self or others during class time.

Points per Project

25 points

Points per Unit

100 points

Learning Centers

Learning Center One

This center will be available during the first two projects (Character Design and Storyboarding).

One part of the Learning Center will be set up with various media related to visual storytelling. This includes but is not limited to graphic novels/comic books, books relating to the development of visual stories (such as Steven Universe: Art & Origins and Disney's "The Art Of" series), and iPads. This will allow students to explore a variety of sources for inspiration on their own time.

The other part will be set up a variety of mediums and small sheets of paper for testing different kinds of media. Students will be allowed to experiment with different kinds of materials if they are unsure of a media to decide on for their final piece.

Learning Center Two

This center will be available during the final two projects (4-Panel Comic and Dramatic Image).

One part of the Learning Center will be set up with various comic material such as Garfield books, Archie comics, and clippings from a variety of newspapers. Focus will be kept on shorter comics such as the ones found in newspapers so that students can see how stories can come across in a small number of panels.

The other part will be set up with print-out worksheets of default comic page layouts as well as viewfinders in order to help students compose their works and get ideas for how to present their final pieces.

Print Share

Culminating Event

Student Preparation I

Students will be asked to pick their favorite work from the unit and submit an image of it to a shared class Google Drive folder. There will be a demo on photographing and Photoshopping an image for students submitting traditional artwork.

Teacher Preparation

Teacher will collect all student images in a Google Drive folder and print 5-10 copies of each image on cardstock. Images should be around index card size.

Student Preparation II

Students will cut out their printed works and will be taught how to sign an edition of prints (signature, date, title, and number of prints).

Final Event

Students will swap prints with other students until they only have one of their own print left. At this point, students will be asked to return to their seats and write down which prints they received, what artist they are by, and two positive comments and one critique for each image. Students are allowed (and encouraged to) keep the prints made by other students.

Consequences

Students seen disrespecting prints (visibly throwing out prints they received, tearing prints, etc.) will be asked to leave the classroom and will not receive a participation grade for the print sharing event. This will be expressed beforehand to the students and the consequence will be made clear.