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# Artists as Storytellers: Designing a personal comic book [6th-8th grade]

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# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: **Artists as Storytellers: Designing a personal comic book**

Grade Level: **6, 7 & 8**

Subject/Topic Area(s): **Art (cross-curricular opportunities for English, reading, writing)**

Designed By: **Elizabeth Bendele**

Time Frame: **3 – 4 weeks**

School District: **North East Independent School District**

School: **Jackson Middle School**

School Address and Phone: **210.442-0550 x 704**  
**4538 Vance Jackson Road, San Antonio, Texas 78230**

### **Brief Summary of Unit:**

In this unit, students will examine and interpret past examples of storytelling, and will tell their own story by designing a comic book panel illustrating a momentous event or experience in their lives. As this unit encourages personal expression and imparts the significance of individuality and creativity, it was written to be the first unit of the term; it will give students a structured roadmap for the year, and will also give the teacher insight on where each student stands not only as an artist— but as a writer, reader, thinker, and class participant as well.

### **Understandings:**

- Storytellers transfer culture and memories by portraying events using words, images and sounds.
- All artists are storytellers.

### **Essential Questions:**

- Why do we tell stories?
- How can I tell my story?

Unit: **Artists as Storytellers: Designing a personal comic book**

Grade: **6, 7 & 8**

### Stage 1: Desired Results

#### Established Goals (Standards)

*The student is expected to:*

- **TEKS 117.38.c.1.A.** Illustrate ideas from direct observation, imagination, and personal experience and from experiences at school and community events;
- **TEKS 117.38.c.2.B.** Apply design skills to communicate effectively ideas and thoughts in everyday life;
- **TEKS 117.38.c.3.B.** Identify cultural ideas expressed in artworks relating to social, political, and environmental themes;
- **TEKS 117.38.c.4.B.** Analyze original artworks, portfolios, and exhibitions by peers and others to form conclusions about formal properties, historical and cultural contexts, intents, and meanings.

#### Understandings

*Students will understand that...*

- Storytellers transfer culture and memories by portraying events using words, images and sounds.
- All artists are storytellers.

#### Essential Questions

- Why do we tell stories?
- How can I tell my story?

#### Knowledge

*Students will know...*

- A brief history of the art of storytelling;
- A brief history and terminology of the art of comic books;
- How artwork captures and passes down contemporary culture;
- How each storyteller uniquely interpret events.

#### Skills

*Students will be able to...*

- Seek, analyze and interpret the message in a work of art;
- Design a visual narrative to illustrate an event he/she experienced;
- Identify and utilize the basic vocabulary/components of comic books: panel, panel frame, bleed, splash page, speech balloon, narrative captions, motion lines, sound effects, gutter, comic book, graphic novel, commix, comics writer, comics artist (penciler, inker, colorist).

### Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

#### Performance Task:

Students will design a series of comic book panels to illustrate a momentous event in their lives.

#### Other evidence:

- Purpose of storytelling chalk talk: Advice to 10 year old brother/sister
- History of storytelling class discussion and exit-slip: Tell me about one storytelling tradition outside of modern American culture
- Check for understanding/review discussion with class: How do humans tell stories?
- Discerning the story's message, class/group/individual discussions: one fairy tale clip, one ancient artwork, one short fable and one recent artwork
- Exit-slip: Does your family have a tradition of sharing stories?
- Personal narrative brainstorm: Identify a momentous event and brainstorm every detail you remember including smells, sounds, dialogue, thoughts, setting
- Comic book component label/notes
- Ordering the narrative worksheet: antecedent, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution
- Design, draw, color, write the comic strip

### Stage 3: Learning Activities

*(Steps taken to get students to answer Stage 1 questions and complete performance task)*

#### Why do we tell stories?

**Day One & Two:** Begin class with a chalk talk (advice to 10 year old brother/sister on birthday) – class discussion

about storytelling, including its purpose and significance; emphasize: artwork captures and passes down culture from one generation to the next. World culture history lesson breakout/share-out in partners on the history of storytelling (Shuochang in China, Seanchai in Ireland, Villupputtu in Tamil, Burra Katha in India, Maggid in eastern Europe Jewish communities, Native Americans stories from North America); exit-slip: Tell me about one storytelling tradition of one world culture.

Day Three & Four: Check for understanding/review: how do humans tell stories? Create a working definition as a class: “the art of portraying real or fictitious events in words, images or sounds.” Discerning the story’s message, group discussions: one fairy tale/stop-action film clip (as a class), one short fable (as a group, then debrief as a class), one ancient artwork (as a class), and one manga artwork (as an individual, share-out as a class). Emphasis: artwork captures and passes down culture from one generation to the next. Exit slip write/draw: Does your family have a tradition of sharing stories?

Day Five: Buffer day.

### **How can I tell my story?**

Day Six: Review: family tradition exit-slips. Introduce concept of personal narrative (journaling/blogging/daily events). Brainstorm on worksheet: Identify a momentous event and brainstorm every detail you remember including smells, sounds, dialogue, thoughts, setting.

Day Seven: Comic book as an art form. Demonstration of comic book components, using traditional and non-traditional examples. Label/notes worksheet: panel, panel frame, bleed, splash page, speech/thought balloon, narrative captions, motion lines, sound effects, gutter, comic book, graphic novel, comix, comics writer, comics artist (penciler, inker, colorist). Submit at end of class.

Day Eight & Nine: Introduce the order of the narrative: antecedent, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution. As a class, read a child’s picture book and place each page on a large plotline. As a table, students fill in a plotline for a well-known fairy-tale and present to the class. Finally, each student completes individual worksheet of plotline for his/her personal narrative.

Day Ten: Introduction of performance task. Demonstration and distribution of available materials; introduce expectations for size, number of panels, inclusion of sound/motion lines.

Day Eleven: Buffer day.

Day Twelve to Seventeen/completion: Design, draw, color, write the comic strip.

Day Eighteen: Class review and critique of comic anthology.



# COMIC BOOK: My Story

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

|  | 4. 100%  | 3. 80%   | 2. 65%  | 1. 50 - 0%   |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Personal Narrative/<br/>Storytelling: 40%</b> | The student has documented a personal event, the narrative is clear and the plotline is obvious and easy to follow (40 points) | The student has documented an event from personal history, the narrative is clear and the plotline is evident (30 points)  | The student documented a personal experience but the storyline is fragmented and confuses the reader (25 points)        | The student did not document a personal experience, the story is fragmented and does not make sense (20-0 points)                |
| <b>Comic Book<br/>Components: 30%</b>            | The student included all the necessary components of comic books and uses them to the advantage of the comic strip (30 points) | The student has completed a comic and has included the required components: frames, splash page, talking bubble, thought bubble, caption, motion/action or sound (25 points) | The student included four or fewer components of comic books (20 points)  | The student included two or fewer standard components of the comic book (15-0 points)  |
| <b>Effort: 30 %</b>                              | The frames, drawings, writing and color are legible and contribute to the mood of the strip (30 points)                        | The frames are even and straight, the drawings clear, the writing legible, the color purposeful (25 points)  | The frames are mostly straight, the writing evident, color is used, drawings are present and comprehensible (20 points) | The frames are uneven, the writing illegible, the color nonexistent, the drawings are stick figures or nonexistent (15-0 points) |

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_