

Art History Goes Graphic



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Acknowledgement

This resource was developed through generous support from the Janice Thomson Memorial Grant program that commemorates the goals Janice Thomson achieved as an educator. (See www.curriculum.org for more details.)

Notes:

Graphic novels can be controversial. The resources listed in the bibliography are suggestions only. Teachers should consider cultural norms and ensure that materials are appropriate for their students.

Teachers should consult their school board policies regarding use of any copyrighted material, e.g., reproducing material for student use from printed publications, screening videos/films, reproduction of any work or substantial part of any work on the Internet.

Introduction

Art History Goes Graphic offers a unique approach to the study of art history through the use of graphic novels. Students develop literacy and drawing skills as they learn various concepts and techniques of illustration. The use of drawing for graphic novels is incorporated in a study of art history through active learning and hands-on activities. As a culminating activity, students create an original graphic work as a vehicle to communicate their research on a particular artist and/or art work. Eager and reluctant readers, high achievers, and at-risk students can achieve success when *Art History Goes Graphic!*

This resource can be used with Visual Arts, English, Media Studies courses, or in an integrated cross-discipline approach. Teachers may decide to use the entire resource or select a part that supports their curriculum.

Curriculum Links

Visual Arts

- Apply elements and principles of design to personal, historical, and contemporary artworks
- Compare artworks from different cultures and make connections between art and culture
- Apply the creative process in their work
- Create artworks that convey ideas or concepts using basic drawing skills and illustration techniques
- Critically analyse expression in artworks
- Explain how visual content is organized in the creation of artworks

English

- Use elements of short stories (setting, character, conflict, rising action, and resolution)
- Examine and compare a variety of media works
- Use a variety of print and electronic sources to gather and summarize information
- Use a variety of organizational techniques
- Edit and proofread written work
- Create a media work in the form of a graphic story

Prior Knowledge

Students should be familiar with the elements and principles of design and have an understanding of composition, perspective, foreshortening, and focal points. Some experience with a variety of art media and techniques such as blending and shading with pencil crayons would be advantageous. Students should also be familiar with the elements of the short story (setting, character, conflict, rising action, and resolution).

Student Achievement

Teachers can track students' completion of the activities using "Record of Activities" and adapt it to suit their assessment criteria, e.g., the level of understanding and thoroughness of students' work.

"Criteria for a Graphic Story" can be used by students as a checklist during for culminating activity and by teachers in evaluating students' products.

"Personal Reflection" provides questions to guide students in assessing their learning.

Examine a Graphic Novel

Students select a graphic novel and read an excerpt paying attention to both the story elements and the visual presentation of the story.

Individually, students complete a worksheet that addresses various elements of story telling (character, setting, conflict, action) and visual presentation (use of background, placement and perspective, colour, choice of media, dialogue balloons, etc.) See “Examining a Graphic Novel.”

In small groups, students share their observations of the story and the visual presentation of it.

Facilitate a class discussion of some elements and techniques of the graphic novel and list students’ ideas.

Teacher Notes

Suggested Time: 1–2 periods

- Determine what graphic novels are available in the school’s resource library.
- Supplement the school collection with resources from a public library. Students with public library cards could bring in a graphic novel which they select themselves.
- The bibliography suggests graphic novels in a variety of styles and genres.

Illustrate a Graphic Novel

Examine and discuss aspects of the following elements with the class:

- Various styles of illustration in graphic novels (comic, manga, etc.)
- Figure drawing including realistic body proportion and exaggeration or simplification of body proportion for cartoons and foreshortening
- How to show emotion (facial expression, body stance, language, shape of dialogue balloons, font, etc.)
- Drawing to show action
- Creating texture (cross-hatching, shading, etc.)
- Point of view
- Use of backgrounds
- Colour scheme
- Page layout, e.g., use and size of panels to control time and pacing (small panels speed up pace of story, whereas large panels slow the pace down as reader stops to examine details); flow of panels for reading; line and shape of panels.

Students practise thumbnail sketches to illustrate their understanding of these elements in a section of their sketchbooks. Collect sketchbooks for feedback and assessment.

Students draw and imitate a work of art that uses realistic proportions, such as a work from the Renaissance. They make a second drawing that converts the same image to a comic-style drawing using exaggerated proportions such as manga or comic-hero proportions.

Quick Tips for Drawing Comic Characters

- The average male figure is 7 heads tall, whereas a male comic hero is 8 – 8 1/2 heads tall.
- The average female comic hero is 6 1/2 – 7 heads tall (waist to neck – 2 heads and hips to toe – 4 heads).
- Basic geometric shapes such as ovals, circles, and cylinders can help to outline and shape figures. Erase and redraw details in pencil to add further definition.
- Use a quadrant to help draw faces. Most facial details are in the lower 2 quadrants with eyes at the midline point.
- The same face can be adapted to show different emotions simply by changing the eyes, mouth, and eyebrows.
- Noses are often minimized in manga drawings and eyes are larger than normal.

Teacher Notes

Suggested Time: 2–3 periods

- In examining body proportions, particularly in comic styles of manga and super heroes, discuss the exaggeration of human form and consider how other body types may be presented positively in a comic style.
- A wooden art mannequin which can be manipulated into a variety of poses can be a model for students to sketch basic figures in motion.
- Books on anatomy are useful references for figure drawings. Magazines on fitness and body building maybe also useful class reference tools, especially for drawing muscular heroes.
- Fashion magazines maybe helpful for ideas on clothing and hairstyles.
- A list of text resources for drawing and illustration is included in the Bibliography.

Suggestions for Sketches

- Sketch a figure in realistic proportion and adapt it in a second sketch which uses an exaggerated or simplified figure.
- Create one character and draw it in three different body positions.
- Sketch three faces in quadrants with three different expressions.

Tell a Story

Students use an artwork as a stimulus for story telling. They learn how to develop a narrative and illustration based on an artwork.

Working in small groups, students create a story based on a photograph or artwork – how the image came to be, the story behind a specific detail in the image, the image as the beginning or end of the story, etc. Their story should incorporate the basic elements of the short story: setting or place, character, conflict, rising action, and resolution.

Students brainstorm ideas and plan the story through discussion. They decide how to depict this story in five frames or panels. They include the original image as one of the frames and each group member draws a thumbnail sketch of his or her part of the story for the remaining frames.

Each group tells its story to the class, using the sketches as illustrative cue cards.

Artworks for Building a Story

- *The Toreador Fresco*, Minoan mural; Museum Heraklion in Crete
- *Herakles Strangling the Nemean Lion*; Pottery painting; Museo Civico in Brescia, Italy
- *Mona Lisa*, Leonardo Da Vinci; The Louvre in Paris
- *Wedding Portrait*, Jan Van Eyck; The National Gallery in London.
- *Fur Traders on the Missouri*, George Caleb Bingham; The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York
- *Bathers*, Georges Seurat; The Tate Gallery in London
- *A Bar at the Folies-Bergeres*, Edouard Manet; The Courtauld Collection in London
- *To Prince Edward Island*, Alex Colville, The National Gallery in Ottawa
- *Lacing Up*, Ken Danby

Teacher Notes

Suggested Time: 1 period

- Create a file of artworks or photographs, e.g., newspapers, magazines, postcards, or Internet images.
- Identify and mark suitable images in art survey books. (See Bibliography.)

Frame Culture in Art History

Students analyse an artwork, develop a narrative, and apply stylistic conventions for comics.

Pairs of students use a series of artworks from a particular culture, e.g., several scenes from the ceiling in the Sistine Chapel, painted by Michelangelo, and an envelope or worksheet with empty dialogue balloons. They put the images in a sequence that makes sense in terms of story, action, and character. They add dialogue balloons and action words to help to portray the story more effectively.

Students share their sequence of images and the dialogue they added with two other pairs. They discuss similarities between the cultures they selected and how the stories are told through the artworks.

Each pair could report to the class so students can view the artworks from many different cultures.

Cultural Artworks

- Prehistoric cave painting
- Incan reliefs, Mayan reliefs
- Aboriginal and Inuit drawings
- Egyptian paintings and reliefs
- Minoan artworks,
- Greek pottery and reliefs
- Trajan's column
- Byzantine mosaics
- Sistine chapel artworks
- Norman tapestries
- Epic historical paintings

Teacher Notes

Suggested Time: 1–2 periods

- Find examples of artworks from different cultures which could be viewed in segments to tell a story sequentially.
- Create a worksheet with a variety of dialogue balloons in different shapes and sizes. Students can cut out the ones they wish to use and design others.
- Art survey texts are sources of artworks. (See Bibliography.)

Create a Graphic Story – A Culminating Activity

Research

Working with a partner, students select a particular artist and/or a famous artwork to research. They locate and use a variety of types of resources such as books, encyclopedias, and web sites in their research.

Each student completes a biography of the artist and background on one or more artworks. They make a pencil sketch of a famous work by that artist and include any notes about the work which they have found through their research. See “Art History Research.”

Emphasize that students will use their research as the basis for creating their own graphic story about the artist.

Studio Work and Creation of Graphic Story

After completing the research, each pair of students creates a graphic story that focuses on a particular part of the artist’s life, and/or the story behind the creation of one of their works.

Students fill in the details of the story, using their imaginations, e.g., present a specific point of view:

- a weaver involved in creating a Norman tapestry
- the artist, Van Gogh, who sliced off his ear
- Tom Thomson on a canoe trip in Algonquin Park
- Emily Carr visiting a native village
- Ken Danby preparing to paint the goalie “In the Crease”

Students apply the elements and principles of design as they create a graphic story, i.e., students apply their knowledge of composition, perspective, foreshortening, and focal points.

As pairs plan their story, each student takes responsibility for half of the graphic story and records a summary of events, the time and place of the events, an outline of panels/illustrations and a sketch of the main character or artist. Students use “Graphic Sample Planning Sheet” and “Criteria for a Graphic Story” checklist as they develop their story.

Each student represents their half of the story on one page of frames. The pair mounts the two pages of story frames sequentially on large cardboard for display. The class takes a gallery walk to view each other’s projects. They add their constructive comments to a graffiti page that accompanies each project.

Students reflect on what they learned during the various activities. See “Personal Reflection.”

Teacher Notes

Suggested Time: 6–8 periods

- Create a list of artists for students to choose from that reflects the art history curriculum. Include some contemporary artists about whom information is available for students in their research. (See Bibliography.)
- Review the list of artists with the library resource person to check that suitable resources are available. Arrange research time in the library/resource centre.
- Review the elements and principles of design to guide students in assessing the particular strengths of the artist they are researching.
- Students can match the style of their illustrations with that of their chosen artist and reflect the artist’s colour palette in the colour scheme for their graphic story.
- Some students may choose to create their story with less text and more illustrations.
- The medium used for the graphic story depends on the skills of the students, e.g., pencil crayons with a fine felt tip marker for outlining, pen and ink, water colour.
- If a class has experience with a digital art program and access to computers, the project could be adapted to a digital presentation – scanning hand-drawn images into a program, and adding colour and digital enhancements.
- Students can form a series of dramatic tableaux representing the desired panels that can be photographed using a digital camera. The images can be adapted in a digital art program by adding line, colour, and background.

Record of Activities

Name:

Activity	Date Completed	Comments
1. Examination of a Graphic Novel - worksheet (Elements and Visual Presentation) - worksheet (Layout and Dialogue)		
2. Student Sketchbook - body shape and proportion - facial details - body in motion - variations - thumbnail sketches - artwork sketch - comic adaptation		
3. Group Story - thumbnail sketch - oral participation		
4. Culture Frames Activity - sequencing images - dialogue		
5. Art History Research - effective use of time in library - worksheets - sketch of artwork and notes		
6. Planning for Graphic Story - worksheet including outline of panels and sketch of main character		
7. Studio Work - effective use of class time - creation of panels and sketches - adding colour		
8. Graphic Story - criteria checklist - panels completed - mounted on black cardboard		
9. Personal Reflection - thoughtful reflections and answers to questions (worksheet)		

Other Comments

Examining a Graphic Novel

Name:

Elements of a Graphic Novel

Title of Novel: _____

Make notes for the graphic novel you are reading.

Storyline

Main Character

Conflict

Visual Presentation

Consider these elements and record your observations.

Use of Colour and Line

Background Detail and Settings

Characters

Panels (different shapes and sizes)

Examining a Graphic Novel (continued)

Name: _____

Layout

Select a page you feel has an effective layout. Consider the arrangement and sizes of panels, the artist's use of colour, and the portrayal of action in illustrations.

Describe features of this layout that appealed to you.

Page selected: _____

Sketch the design of the layout in geometric shapes (circles, rectangles, etc.)

Dialogue

Sketch 4 different shapes of dialogue balloons or describe dialogue techniques found anywhere in the graphic novel. Suggest a purpose or effect for each shape/technique.

Art History Research

Name:

Research an artist and complete a outline of this person's life and artworks.

Biographical Details

Artist Researched _____

Birth Date and Place

Childhood and Education

Significant Events

Works of Art

Titles of Artworks

Media Used

Artist's Style

Art History Research (continued) Name:

Select and sketch an artwork created by the artist.

Title of the artwork: _____

Date of the artwork: _____

Comment on the artist's strengths. Use your knowledge of the elements (line, shape, colour, texture, etc.) and principles (harmony, balance, emphasis, etc.) of design.

Note any other unique aspects of this artist's style.

Sources of Information

Print

Web sites

Graphic Story Planning Sheet Name:

Artist Studied _____

Story Line:

Describe or summarize the action and events to be portrayed through your illustrations and dialogue or narrative balloons.

Location for the story:

Approximate date and/or time of the story:

Sketch the basic layout of panels you plan to create. Include a brief description of the contents of each panel at the side.

Draw a sketch of your main characters and identify them. Use the reverse side of the paper.

Criteria for a Graphic Story

Name:

Visual Art and Design	✓	Comments
Figure Drawing Facial Details and Expressions Body in Motion/Action Backgrounds Layout and Composition Dialogue Effective Use of Panels Effective Use of Medium (pen and ink, coloured pencil, etc.) Application of Elements of Design (colour, line, shape, texture etc.) Application of Principles of Design (harmony, emphasis, balance, etc.)		
Content and Art History		
Information about the Artist Elements of the Short Story (setting, character, conflict, rising action, resolution) Interesting and Effective Story Line Artworks/Art Style Included Time period/Location Included		

Personal Reflection

Name:

1. What did I learn about comics and graphic novels?
2. What did I learn about Art History and the artist I researched?
3. What did I learn about my own drawing and designing skills?
4. How did I convey my learning effectively in the culminating activity? Explain.
5. What would I change?
6. What did I enjoy most?

Bibliography

Art Survey Texts

These books are sources for finding artwork.

Grosenick, Uta and B. Reimschneider, (eds.). *Art Now*, Vol. 1. Jackson, Tennessee: Taschen, 2002.
ISBN 3-8228-1444-X

Grosenick, Uta, (ed.). *Art Now*, Vol. 2. Jackson, Tennessee: Taschen, 2005. ISBN 3-8228-3996-5

Janson, H.W. and A.F. Janson. *History of Art for Young People*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002.
ISBN 0 8 10941503

Resources for Drawing and Illustration

Chinn, Mike. *Writing and Illustrating the Graphic Novel: Everything You Need to Know to Create Great Graphic Works*. Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2004. ISBN 0-7641-2788-8
Covers many topics briefly including different genres of the graphic novel, script writing, illustration, and publishing. Includes many colour illustrations, and a detailed resource list.

Davila, Victor. *How to Draw Graphic Novels*. New York: Scholastic and Tangerine Press, 2004.
ISBN 0-439-66469-1
Covers the basics of several topics including figure drawing, page layout, word balloons, and materials.

Fabry, Glenn. *Anatomy for Fantasy Artists: An Illustrator's Guide to Creating Action Figures and Fantastical Forms*. Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2005. ISBN 0-7641-2950-3
Offers detailed sections on anatomy, drawing facial details, and capturing body movement, and contains a catalogue of character drawings.

Hart, Christopher. *Anime Mania: How to Draw Characters for Japanese Animation*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2002. ISBN 0-8230-0158-X
Explains the basic construction of figure shapes, facial details, animals, monsters, and machines.

Hart, Christopher. *Drawing Cutting Edge Anatomy: The Ultimate Reference Guide for Comic Book Artists*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2004. ISBN 0-8230-2398-2
A reference for drawing every body part from head to toe.

Layman, John and David Hutchison. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Drawing Manga, (Illustrated)*. New York: Alpha Books, 2005. ISBN 1-59257-335-5
Covers basic male and female body shapes, bodies in motion, and facial detailing. Uses geometric shapes such as circles and cylinders to define body shape.

McKenzie, Alan. *How to Draw and Sell Comics, 3rd edition*. London: Quarto Publishing, 2005.
ISBN 1-58180-716-3
Includes a history of comics, the basics of figure drawing, use of panels, lettering, digital colour, and a listing of publishing houses.

McLeod, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: Paradox Press, 2000. ISBN 1-56389-557-9
Examines the theory of comics and contains a detailed examination of the industry, art form, and design of comics. The entire text is written in comic form using panels and dialogue balloons. A useful teacher resource for this project.

Scott-Baron, Hayden. *Digital Manga Techniques*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2005.
ISBN 0-7641-3091-9
The opening two chapters analyse manga style and offer a variety of character drawings. Provides suggestions for using computers to create comics. Software programs, scanning techniques, inking, colouring, airbrush style, screen tones, shading, and page layout are among the topics examined in detail. A list of web resources is included.

Manga

The Japanese style of illustration is usually read from back cover to front cover, from left to right on each page and illustrations are often in black-and-white. Popular titles have many volumes in a series. The titles suggested have been selected to offer variety in character type and genre.

Clamp. *Cardcaptor Sakura: Master of the Clow, Vol. 2*. Los Angeles: TOKYOPOP Inc., 2003. ISBN 1-899213-76-1

The female protagonist of this series is in high school. The story line blends elements of fantasy, mystery and romance. The illustrative style is simple with little background detail.

Kishimoto, Masashi. *Naruto, Vol. 1: The Quest Begins*. San Francisco: VIZ Media, LLC, 2005. ISBN 1-56931-900-6

This series features a trio of junior ninja: two males and one female. During their training, they are assigned various tasks and must work as a team to overcome obstacles.

Kurumada, Masami. *BTX, Vol. 8*. Los Angeles: TOKYOPOP Inc., 2005. ISBN 1-59532-378-3

A futuristic series that includes monsters and machines. Violent adventures lead to combat and destruction.

Mashima, Hiro. *Rave Master, Vol. 1*. Los Angeles: Mixx Entertainment, Inc., 2003. ISBN 1-59182-064-2

This series has a sixteen-year-old main character who is an unlikely hero. Stories combine elements of fantasy such as a transforming sword and a magical guide in classic conflicts between forces of good and evil.

Nishiyama, Yuriko. *Dragon Voice, Vol. 1*. Los Angeles: TOKYOPOP Inc., 2004. ISBN 1-59532-119-5

Series revolves around musical performers called 'Beatmen' who sing, dance, and perform in concerts.

Takahashi, Kazuko. *Yu-Gi-Oh! Vol. 1: The Millennium Puzzle*. San Francisco: VIZ LLC., 2003.

ISBN 1-56931-903-0

The hero of this popular series, Yugi, is in Grade 10. (His adventurous exploits can also be seen in an anime companion series on television.)

Toriyama, Akira. *Dragon Ball Z, Vol. 4*. San Francisco: Viz Communications, Inc., 2001. ISBN 1-56931-532-9

Series involves heroes, villains, aliens, and monsters in a battle to preserve Earth and the human race. Magical dragon balls and martial arts add to the action.

Graphic Novels with Super Heroes

There may be several volumes or a series revolving around one Super Hero. This list offers a taste of this genre.

Byrne, John. *Fantastic Four: Visionaries*. New York: DC Comics, 2004. ISBN 0-7851-0779-7

A collection of 9 individual comic books from 1981-82 using medium detail in characters and backgrounds.

Jemas, Bill and Brian Michael Bendis. *Ultimate Spiderman: Power and Responsibility*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2002. ISBN 0-7851-1143-3

This comic uses intense colour, large panels, and minimal dialogue.

Rucka, G., D. Johnson, and R. Snyder. *Wonder Woman: Down to Earth*. New York: DC Comics, 2004.

ISBN 1-4012-0226-8

A colourful work with highly detailed backgrounds and settings and good variety of panel size and arrangement.

Siegel, Jerry, Joe Shuster, et al. *Superman: The Greatest Stories Ever Told*. New York: DC Comics, 2004.

ISBN 1-4012-0339-6

A collection of eleven stories with original artwork from the 1930's through to 2001 – a reference for an examination of changing illustration design and style through several decades.

Graphic Novels Adapted from Literature and History

- Anderson, Ho Che. *King: A Comics Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Seattle, WA: Fantagraphics Books, Inc., 2005. ISBN 1560976225
A biography of civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, that uses multi-layering techniques and photo-collage. It also features different perspectives on King and the events of the time. Black-and-white panels use occasional splashes of colour to heighten emotional impact.
- Brown, Chester. *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography.* Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2003. ISBN 1896597637
This award-winning biography of Canadian rebel, Louis Riel, uses black-and-white illustrations. (The web site of the publishing house features a comic style interactive home page as well as information on and sketches by the artists featured in their publications – www.drawnandquarterly.com/)
- Carnell, John and Steve Leialoha. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (Hitchhiker's Guide Series #1).* New York: DC Comics, 1997. ISBN 1-56389-271-5
A colourful adaptation of Douglas Adams' Hitchhiker novels.
- Debon, Nicholas. *Four Pictures by Emily Carr.* Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2003. ISBN 0-88899-532-6
Using colours in earth tones, this graphic novel details the story behind four paintings by Canadian artist, Emily Carr. Could be use as an exemplar for the culminating project.
- Gaiman, Neil and Dave McKean. *The Day I Swapped My Dad for 2 Goldfish.* Clarkston, GA: White Wolf Publishing, 1998. ISBN 1565041992
A children's story that blends elements of picture books and comics. Artwork includes interesting techniques of collage, use of colour, and outlining.
- Gosciny, Rene and Albert Uderzo. *Asterix and the Roman Agent.* London: Orion Books, Ltd., 2004. ISBN 0-75286-633-8
A humorous treatment of Roman history using simple backgrounds and exaggerated features in character drawings. (Many titles in this series.)
- Hamilton, Tim. *Treasure Island: The Graphic Novel.* New York: Puffin Books, 2005. ISBN 0-14-240470-5
An adaptation of R.L. Stevenson's classic adventure that features black-and-white illustrations combining the elements of treasure, pirates, and the high seas. (Other literary classics in this series include Frankenstein, the Red Badge of Courage, and Dracula.)
- Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood.* New York: Pantheon Books, 2003. ISBN 0-375-71457-X
Tells the story of a rebellious girl growing up in Iran during the 1980's. Simple, stylized illustrations are two-dimensional in black-and-white. Two books in the series. A good example for a beginning artist to examine.
- Page, Philip and Marilyn Pettit, (eds.). *William Shakespeare's Macbeth.* Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2005. ISBN 0-7641-3140-0
This resource is half play/half graphic novel. Illustrations are black-and-white portraying key scenes from the play. (Several Shakespearean titles are available in this series.)