

The Book of Three Graphic Novel of Awesomeness

Hello, artists! The time has come: we've made our way through Lloyd Alexander's masterpiece and now we will work together to create a graphic novel adaptation of this great book.

This project will be part of your assessment in **ADST** (following the Curricular Competencies outlined in the ADST curriculum), **Career** (how you create a respectful, inclusive, and positive atmosphere in your work group and the class as a whole), **Writing** (how you adapt your section to suit the graphic novel form), **Art** (the precision with which you create the visuals of this work, as well as your incorporation of the techniques explored in *Understanding Comics*), and **Math** (how you measure and execute the creation of your panels). This is a big project that will require careful thinking and planning and effective time management.

For this project, you will work in pairs (and one trio). You and your partner(s) will be given a section of the book to adapt; it is up to you how you divide the "making" part of your work, but both/all of you should have an equal voice in planning and finalizing your work.

You are encouraged to revisit *Understanding Comics* throughout the process, and also to draw inspiration from graphic novels you have enjoyed reading in the past.

As discussed, it is a great idea to "copy" various aspects such as clothing, buildings, and natural objects from online or real life sources, but the creation of character should be drawn from your imagination – please resist the impulse to copy from the cover of the book or from online fan art.

As a class, we will skim read *The Book of Three*, looking for Lloyd Alexander's description of characters, and together we will come up with guidelines for character creation (things that should look the same, regardless of who is drawing the characters). You are encouraged to carefully read and re-read the section you are assigned, so as to gain inspiration from Mr. Alexander's words. Creation of places and objects should be inspired by the text, filtered through your imagination.

PLANNING

This is maybe the most important part of your work: careful planning will lead to confident creation. Please do not neglect or rush this aspect of the project. Work with your partner(s) to find consensus with each aspect of the work. Remember that **actively** working to create a feeling of respect, inclusiveness, and positivity within your group is of upmost importance to the creative process. *People need to feel seen, heard, and appreciated in order to bring their best work to the table.*

Before you begin, have an open and frank discussion about the individual strengths you each bring to the work, and what your areas of concern are. Are you more comfortable drawing characters or backgrounds? Do you feel stronger with your inking or your coloring skills? Do you think you would be more valuable adapting the text or proofreading it? What will you need help with? What can you teach each other?

Only begin to plan after you have a deep sense of each other.

There are two parts to the planning process: text and visuals.

Planning Your Text

Step One

Isolate the dialogue spoken in your section. Retype the dialogue into a Word document, treating it like a script.

For example:

T: Why? Why must it be horseshoes? As if we had any horses!

C: Lucky for the horses.

Once you have completed this process, the tricky part begins: making a decision about what dialogue you will keep and what dialogue you will jettison.

Print out a copy of your transcribed dialogue. As you read through your script, consider the following:

- What is essential dialogue? What dialogue *must* be included in order for the reader to follow the story?
- What dialogue needs to be included because it relates to the overall themes we have chosen as a class?
- How does each character speak? What are the patterns in characters' speech that Lloyd Alexander reveals in the book? This will require you having conversations with other groups.
- Is there any dialogue you can compress in order to make the necessary point while still moving the story forward?
- Is there any dialogue you will need to write yourself because it is either not included in the book or is expressed through narration?
- Is there any dialogue you can let go of because although it might be interesting or amusing, it wouldn't be missed if it were gone?

As you answer these questions, make notes in pencil on your script – feel free to cross things out and rewrite things in the margins or above and below each line.

Step Two

Reread your section of the book, looking for essential narration. What elements of the narration are vital to a reader's understanding and appreciation of the story? Highlight these things on the photocopy of your section.

Step Three

Reread your section, looking for important descriptions of places, objects, weather, and mood. Highlight these things in a different color on the photocopy of your section, or underline or circle them with a pencil crayon.

Step Four

Reread your section, looking for elements of the narration that relate to the themes we have decided upon as a class. Highlight these things in a different color on the photocopy of your section, or underline or circle them with a different colored pencil crayon.

Step Five

Go back to your worked up script and add captions and thinking bubbles. What do you need to express in thinking bubbles in order to help us understand the story (subtext and motivation)? What do you need to express in narration/captions in order to help move the plot forward?

Planning the Merging of Your Text with Visuals

Where does your section begin? Where does it end? How do you get from the beginning to the end?

Each page of your contribution should be complete, in and of itself, in terms of design; and each page should fit into the whole of your section, stylistically.

Think page by page, and then panel by panel.

Step One (On-Going)

Reread your section and make a list of the things you will need to draw: characters, objects, buildings, backgrounds, aspects of nature, clothing, jewelry, etc.

Search online for any inspirational images related to everything listed above – excluding characters but including clothing – and print them out. Keep all of your print-outs in a manila envelope or a folder – these will be your resources for the project and you can continue to add to this collection as you go. This envelope/folder needs to be kept somewhere safe.

Step Two (On-Going)

Practice drawing each of the above items that you identified, as well as the characters you will be working with. Continue to revisit Lloyd Alexander's text, so that you are remaining true to his vision.

With the characters, please consult the class guidelines. Practice drawing each character in individual pieces – faces, hands, body, etc. – and practice drawing them as a whole, face-on, in profile, and from behind. Also practice drawing the characters experiencing different emotions, especially as related to the events in your section. Remember that emotion is revealed in the body as well as the face.

Step Three

Make a timeline of your section of the story. What are the important plot points and character-turning points that need to be covered? Do this in standard timeline format (to be discussed in class).

Step Four

Look at your timeline and break it down into logical sections. Decide: does each section fit onto one page, or does it need two pages? Three? More?

Step Five

Re-read chapters 3-7 of *Understanding Comics*.

Step Six

Storyboard your section.

Working with quick sketches (stick people or outlines are okay here), do a rough draft, in pencil, of each page, panel by panel.

Before you begin, remind yourself of the main themes we have decided upon in class and allow those themes to guide your work and help you make decisions.

Things to consider:

- How can you use the structure of panels to help tell the story?
- What transitions make the most sense to use, from panel to panel, in order to tell the story (think about closure here: what do you need to show us, and what can the readers fill in with their imagination)?
- What will your last panel on each page be? How can you use this to help create the “Just one more page...” feeling inside your reader?
- Consult with the artists creating the sections before and after you. Is there anything you need to keep in mind as you receive and pass the baton?

Extension:

- How can you help direct your reader’s eye across the page, from panel to panel?

There are lots of great online and print resources with tutorials for how to plan a comic book page; you are encouraged to seek these out as a part of the planning process. If you find a particularly valuable resource, let me know so that I can share it with the class.

Within or under each panel, list any dialogue, thinking bubbles, and captions that you will use.

It is okay – it is even expected – that you will be doing a lot of erasing and redrafting in this part of the process. Be comfortable with changing your mind. This is your opportunity to experiment.

Before you begin your final version, you will show me your planning: sketches, script, and storyboards.

CREATING

After you have finalized your storyboards, keep this in mind: sometimes the creative process follows its own rules – be prepared to be flexible in your thinking as you begin your work; expect the unexpected. Strange and interesting things sometimes happen when pencil meets paper – allow your intuition to guide you, but also keep in mind your end-goal and how your piece fits into the greater puzzle of the graphic novel as a whole.

I cannot stress enough how important mindset will be here, as you begin to create your final draft. Keep these things in mind:

- Bruce Lee and pliable awareness: being relaxed and focused
- Bruce Lee and natural instinct vs. control/technique: “You are to combine the two in harmony. If you have one to the extreme, you will be very unscientific. If you have the other to the extreme, you will become a mechanical man.”
- Wu Mei’s advice to Wing Chun: By focusing on the small details, you gain an understanding of the whole.
- Lynda Barry’s calm and friendly place as the starting point for creation: images are like wild animals that are easily scared away – you need to make space for them to come for you (and it’s hard to do that if you’re making a lot of noise, either out loud or inside your brain).
- Lynda Barry and The Two Questions: there is no good or bad in art, there only *is*. Actively work to silence The Two Questions, both when looking at your own art and when looking at the art of others. Notice what is, without judgement. I have seen all of your index cards – all of you are more than capable of being successful with this task.

How you divide up the work for creation is entirely up to you, but each of you needs to play an active role. **Be very clear with your partner(s) about who is responsible for what.** Do not begin until each of you is in agreement and is clear about what will be expected.

Consult one more time with the artists before and after you, so that everyone is clear about any creative choices regarding the handover from one section to the other.

Consult the character guidelines, so that you are clear about what “must” be represented with each character.

Remind yourself about the overall themes we agreed upon.

Creating Your Page

The first step is to create your panels.

1. Refer back to your storyboarding. How many panels will go on each page? What structure or shape will each panel take?
2. Measure your page.
3. Do the math. What dimensions will each panel take? How much space do you need to leave between each panel? The size of the space between each panel – and from outer panels to the edges of the page – should be consistent, unless you are breaking the consistency for effect.
4. Draw your panels in pencil, using a straight edge.
5. Make any adjustments.
6. Ink in your panels with a fineliner.
7. Erase any visible pencil lines.

Prepare for Each Panel

In your comp book, practice drawing any particularly tricky bits: facial expression, hands, bodies in movement, etc.

Create Each Panel

For each panel, follow the format we have been exploring in class:

1. Remove any distracting objects (or people!).
2. Consciously relax your mind and your body.
3. Draw the characters.
4. Add speaking bubbles, thinking bubbles, and captions.
4. Proofread your text.
5. Draw the background.
6. Have your Semi-Final Artist Moment – is there anything you want to change, edit, or adjust?
7. Ink in your work.
8. Erase any visible pencil lines.
9. Color.
10. Take your Final Artist Moment.
11. Repeat for the next panel.

If you make a mistake in a panel, don't panic: you can always redraw it on a separate piece of paper and then glue it onto your original. Keep in mind that this works best when you glue against the grain (to be discussed in class).

Use your checklist.

The rubric is your friend.

Your partner is your friend.

You are enough.

Go!