

## *A Wizard of Earthsea* Graphic Novel of Awesomeness

Hello, artists! The time has come: we've made our way through Ursula K. Le Guin'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 manage your time over the course of the project; and how you actively help 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.

**Big Idea:** How do we honor Ursula K. Le Guin's vision in our adaptation work? This applies to both the text and the visuals. For example, what clues do we have—from Le Guin's text—as to how Ged looks and the time period and civilization that he exists in. Although we might view (the early) him as kind of emo, we probably aren't going to draw him with eyeliner—that would be Ged in today's world, in our civilization.

For this project, you will work in pairs (and a few trios). 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 to also explore *Making Comics* and other book and online resources regarding comic book creation, and 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 movie or from online fan art**. You get zero points for copying fan art or book cover images; you get lots of points for drawing evidence from the text and using that evidence to support your own work.

As a class, we will develop guidelines for character creation (things that should look the same, regardless of who is drawing the characters)—you'll need to have a good understanding of which parts of the guidelines apply to your section. You are encouraged to carefully read and re-read the section you are assigned, so as to gain inspiration from Ms. Le Guin'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 skim 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 leading the adaptation of the text or proofreading it? What will you need help with? What can you teach each other?

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

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

### Planning Your Text

#### Step One

**Reread your chapter, slowly and thoughtfully, with your comp book at hand and open.**

What are the **amazing images** in your chapter? There is probably one big “**WOW**” moment—what is it?

There are probably other amazing images that, when we read the book together, really grabbed your inner world. Work with your partner(s) to identify these images and **record them in your comp books**.

#### Step Two

Isolate the **dialogue** spoken in your section. **Retype** the dialogue into a Word or Google doc, treating it like a script.

For example:

G:       When will my apprenticeship begin, sir?

O:       It has begun.

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

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 Ursula K. Le Guin 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. This will get messy; that's okay.

### **Step Three**

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 Four**

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 Five

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 Six

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 graphic novel chapter 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 Ursula K. Le Guin's text, so that you are **remaining true to her 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***. Look at other instructional resources (*Making Comics*, online tutorials, books from the library). **Make notes to yourself** about ideas and techniques that will be useful to you in your work.

### Step Six

**Storyboard your section.**

Working with quick sketches (stick people, Brunetti people, or outlines are okay here), do a rough draft, in pencil, of each page, panel by panel. If you find yourself spending a lot of time drawing, **remind yourself that this part of the project is not about pretty pictures; it's about planning.**

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:

- **Ivan Brunetti's thinking model** for his *Catcher in the Rye* panel—apply this approach to each panel you create. What are the spatial relationships within each panel? Why is each aspect included? What is not included? What is your intention? What are you trying to convey?
- 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)?
- How are you going to represent the **themes** we have decided upon visually? This can be done overtly and subtly.
- How will you treat your “**WOW**” **moment(s)**? Is it a full-page image, or a series of interestingly constructed panels that have a sense of build? Consider the Storm vs. Callisto battle in *X-Men* 170. What can you do visually to create the same impact reading Le Guin’s words had on us as we read your chapter last term?
- Consult the **Maybe Ideas** that we generated in our Socratic Circle explorations as to how we might apply *Understanding Comics* techniques to our adaptation, and well as the notes you yourself made during that process—are there ideas there that you are excited to try out?
- 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?
- Within or under each panel, list any **dialogue, thinking bubbles, and captions** that you will use.
- **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?

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.

**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.

### **Two other challenges:**

1. You will need to incorporate the title of your chapter, the chapter number, and an image that represents the Big Idea of the chapter on the top of your first page.
2. You will need to incorporate a map somewhere in your chapter—a map that will be helpful for the reader, to orient them to where they are in Earthsea. This can be anywhere in your chapter, and it can be woven into the flow of the panels, or it can be a stand-alone page, purposefully placed. Base your work on Ursula K. Le Guin’s maps (feel free to copy)—if you want to zoom in even further and add your own details based on a careful reading of the text, that is okay, too.

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

### **Key Things to Remember:**

Use your checklist.

Keep the project outline close at hand.

Focus on mindset.

Be purposeful.

Honor and celebrate Ursula K. Le Guin’s vision.

The rubric is your friend.

Your partner is your friend.

You are enough.

Go!

## 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.
- CEC work: “Begin again.” When you find yourself freaking out and thinking you’ll never be able to do it, take a breath, listen to the sounds in the room, find your Here and your Now, and begin again in the present, with presence.

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.

Remember to leave space at the center-bottom of each page for page numbers; we will do those at the very end, once we know how many pages each section is using.



## **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.

## **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 (consider the spiral and/or some purposeful breathing).
3. Draw the characters in pencil. A sharp pencil.
4. Add speaking bubbles, thinking bubbles, and captions in pencil—*text first, then containers*.
4. Proofread your text and make corrections.
5. Draw the background in pencil.
6. Have your Semi-Final Artist Moment—is there anything you want to change, edit, or adjust?
7. Ink in your work, including the panel.
8. Erase any visible pencil lines.
9. Color—slowly, purposefully, moving in one direction.
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).

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