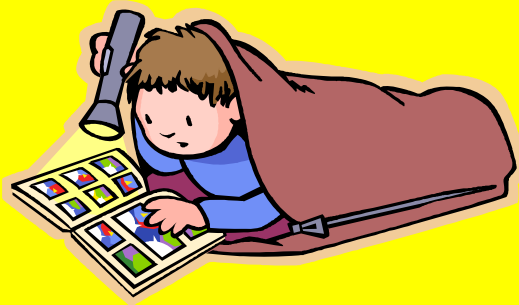


How to Kit



Comics and Graphic Novels

2011

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Comics and Graphic Novels

Taking a Closer Look at Comics and Graphic Novels

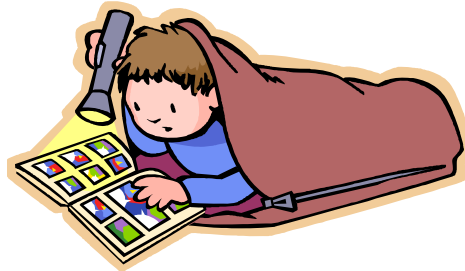
Some parents and teachers feel that comics and graphic novels are not the type of reading material that will help children grow and become better readers. They may see them as less important than “real” books or as a stepping stone for reluctant readers.

However, the idea that graphic novels are not serious reading is outdated. Excellent graphic novels are being published today with complex characters, storylines and language that require many of the same skills that readers need to understand other forms of literature.

Graphic novels often contain more advanced vocabulary than traditional books at the same age level.

How do graphic novels promote literacy?

- Diverse reading materials, including graphic novels, can help create lifelong readers.
- Graphic novels with rich, complex plots and narrative structures can be satisfying for even advanced readers.
- Graphic novels are popular with reluctant readers, especially boys—a group known to be hard to reach.
- They are engaging for visual learners, who may be less interested in reading traditional books.



Comics and Graphic Novels

What advantages do graphic novels have over traditional text?

- Readers can use the illustrations as clues to find the meaning of the written narrative.
- Graphic novels can help improve reading development for children who are struggling with language acquisition, including children with learning disabilities.
- They can provide readers with clues to emotional context that they might miss when reading traditional text.

What is the difference between a comic book and a graphic novel?

A comic book is usually a short installment of a larger story. These installments are released at regular intervals in order to tell the story from start to finish.

A graphic novel, however, is usually an entire story (or at least a significantly larger portion of a story, if it's released in a series) bound and published in a single book.



Creating
Your Own
Comics



Comics and Graphic Novels

When to Start Making Comics?

Grades K to 3

Even young children can draw the basics of a comic strip. Use another comic as an example to show them what to aim for. Then follow these steps:

1. Have children dictate a story. At this point do not worry about dividing the story into frames.
2. Create a story board by sketching key events on paper. If children are able, have them do this. Penciling in numbers in one corner is great for keeping them in order.
3. Have children practice drawing key characters so they become a little more consistent.
4. Decide what the characters will be doing or saying in each frame.
5. Place text in speech bubbles. Use pencil until children are older.
6. Colour the frames with crayons or markers.
7. Place completed squares on card stock using a glue stick to attach them.
8. Design a cover with a title of the comic. Be sure to write out the author(s) and illustrator(s).
9. Bind the comic book together using staples or yarn.
10. Date the final copy and share with friends and family!

Younger children should start with a 3 to 6 frame story. Add more frames as they get older.

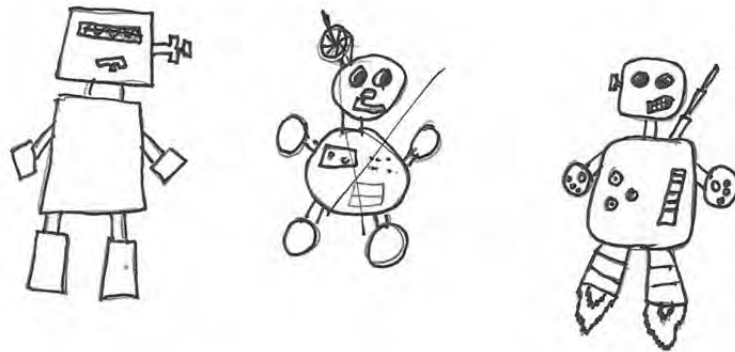
This project will probably take several sittings, depending on the children's age. If children seem frustrated put it away and take it out again on a rainy day. It's important to have fun with it.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Things to consider:

- Start simple.
- You can tell some stories with pictures alone.
- Let children dictate to you if they are not able to put their story in writing yet.
- Stop working when children are still enjoying it, before they get tired or frustrated.

Alpha concept art



So you are saying
these little creatures
think you're funny...
Really?

What's that
supposed to
mean? I'm
hilarious!

Comics and Graphic Novels

Grades 4 to 6

At this age most children will be able to produce more complicated storylines and more sophisticated art work. They will probably be able to write a story on their own.

They may want to use pencil crayons or a fine roller pen for the artwork and speech bubbles.

If handwriting becomes too difficult, try typing out the words on a computer, printing them off and cutting them out to fit in the bubbles.

Let children know that they may need to take a few tries at a frame before it turns out the way they want it.



It is always a good idea to have a variety of examples of comics to show children as a source for ideas.

Children may or may not want your help, so try to be responsive to their degree of independence. Most of all, have fun. Children's creations will likely be a keepsake and a source of great pride.

Things to consider:

- Older children can create more complicated storylines and artwork.
- Let children know they may need to revise several times, just like other authors.
- Have several types of comics for children to refer to.
- A comic club or comic-themed birthday party could be fun.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Coming Up With a Character

First Step

Before you can start your character you need to figure out what kind of comic book you want to make. Do you want to make a superhero comic? Is it going to be a comic about space explorers? Pirates? Once you figure out what you want to write about you can make a character that fits into the story.



Second Step

Create a main character, or a group of characters to write your comic book around. There are a few things to consider about your characters while you are making them:

- What drives them? In other words why are they doing the things they are doing?
- What makes the reader cheer for them?
- Are your characters believable?

Third Step

Think about what your character looks like. Can you make assumptions about them just from looking at them? Most readers look at the pictures before reading the speech bubbles so you can use this to your advantage. Also keep in mind that your character's personality should match his or her look.

Fourth Step

Create an opposition for your characters. Who or what are they fighting against? Creating villains is very important to the story and the development of the hero. You also need to justify your hero's actions and feelings towards his opposition. The hero's identity should be linked to whatever he or she is fighting against.



Comics and Graphic Novels

Fifth Step

A good method of adding depth to your character is giving them a flaw or two. For example, the bubbly teenage girl really has an anger problem. These flaws make your characters more human and easier to relate to. A good writing tool for this is to write down a list of your character's strengths. Then on the other side of the page write a couple of flaws.



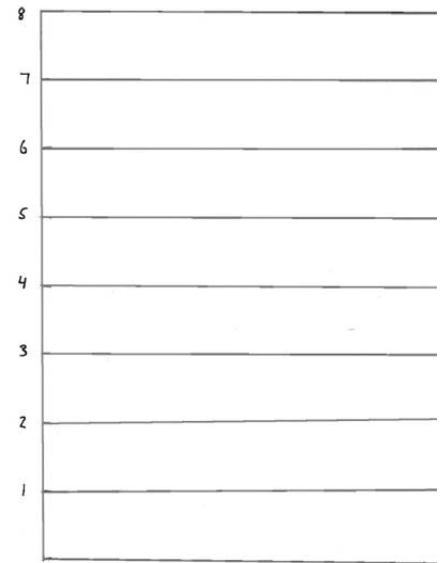
Comics and Graphic Novels

Drawing a Stick Figure and Beyond

It becomes easier to draw a person once you understand how the body should be proportioned. A male figure is usually eight times the height of his own head.

Step One

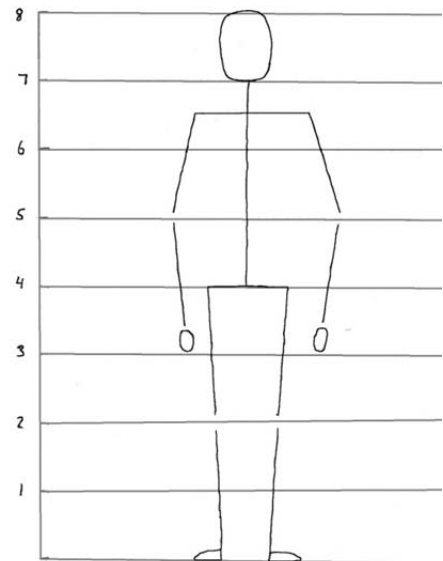
Start by using a ruler to measure out eight equal sections like the image to the right shows.



Step Two

Let's draw a stick figure. Use the image on the right as a guide.

- Draw a circle for a head, the bottom of the head should be at the 7 line.
- Draw the shoulders right in the middle of the 6th and 7th line.
- Draw the armpit at the 5th line.
- Draw the waist at the 4th line.
- Draw the knees at the 2nd line.
- Draw the feet right on top of the last line.



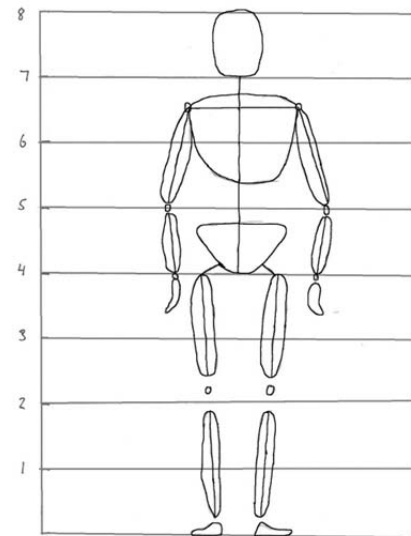
Comics and Graphic Novels

You do not need to go past this point if you want to create a stick man comic strip. Practice him in different poses, like running or sitting!

Step 3

Next we will be adding some body to your stick figure. You can use the image to the right as a guide.

- By drawing ovals around the lines for the arms and legs you add body to the limbs.
- Next turn the pelvis into a triangle, you may have to erase some of the original lines.
- Next fill in a chest like the image to the right has done.

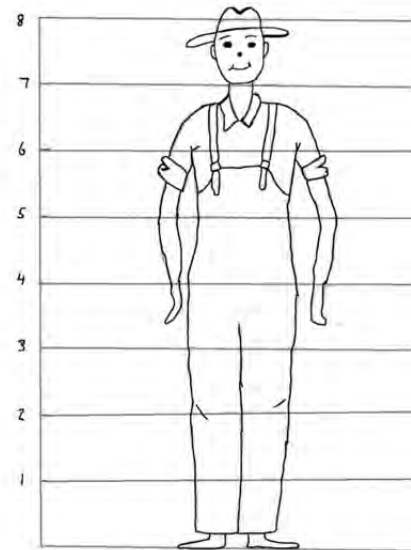


Step 4

The last step is adding detail to your character. You can dress your character any way you like! Try a space suit or a pirate outfit.

Now that you have the proportions for your man you can use that as a guide to add clothes. You will have to erase some of the original lines.

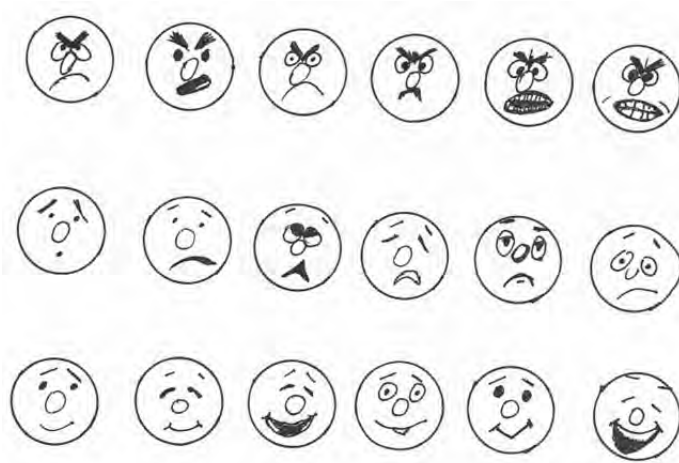
Here is an example of a farmer.



Comics and Graphic Novels

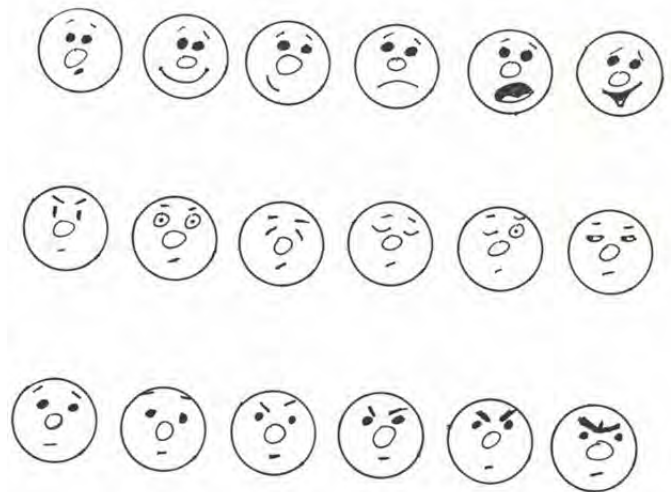
Drawing Faces

You can add a lot of emotion and humour to your characters by changing their expressions. You can make them angry, happy, confused, sleepy, excited, or any other emotion that is necessary for your story. Here are some examples:



You can change the level of the emotion by modifying some of the features. To the left there is a man getting angrier from left to right, while on the third line there is a man getting happier from left to right.

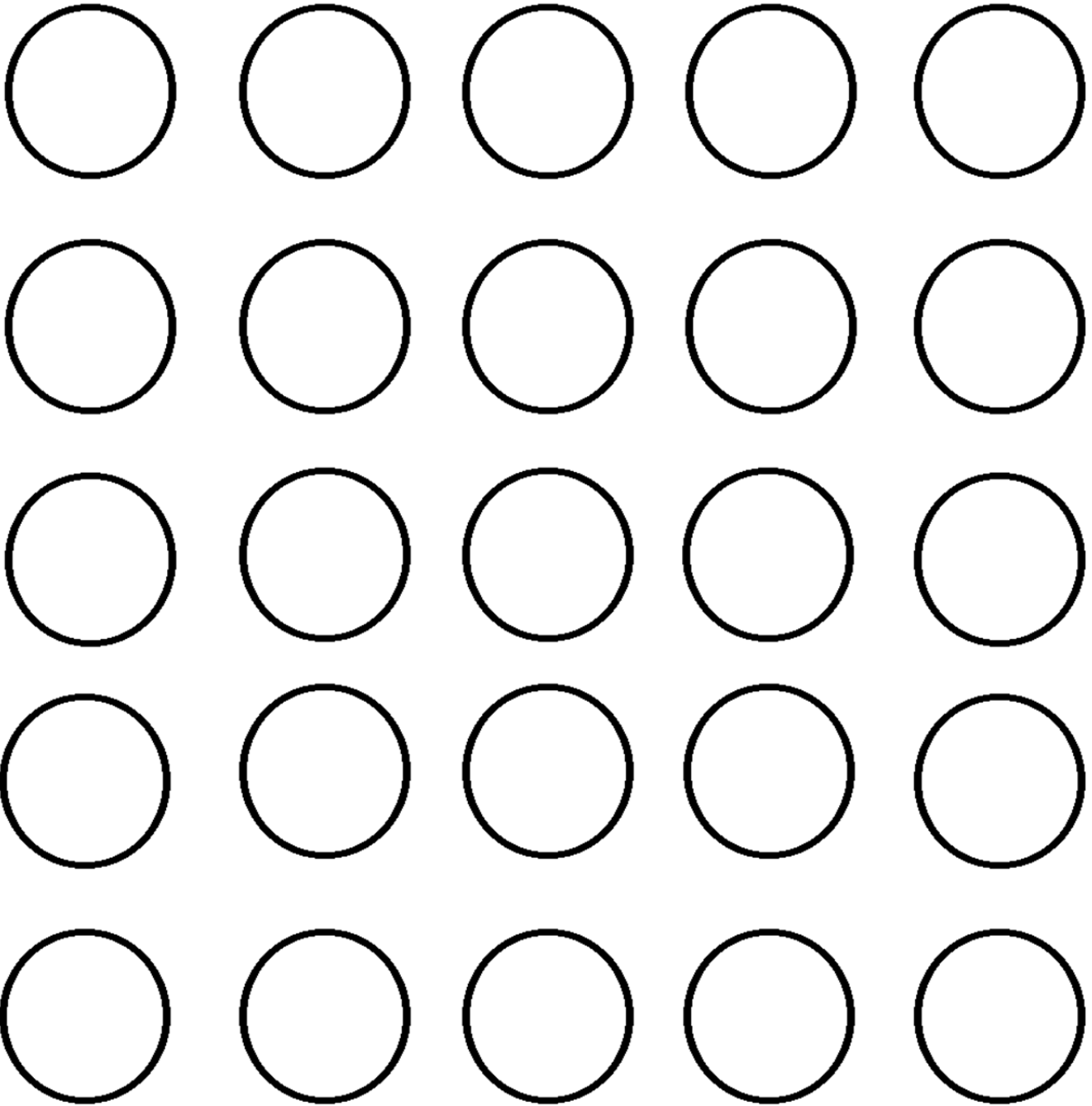
Practice is the key! Change the shape of the eyes, eyebrows and mouth to change the expression of the character.



Have fun! Look at yourself in the mirror and make some faces. Try to draw your own expressions.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Draw Your Own Faces



Comics and Graphic Novels

Speech Bubbles

Speech bubbles are key features of comics and graphic novels. Speech bubbles are the area above a character's head that contains dialogue. They:

- Show what the characters are saying to each other.
- Show what the characters are thinking about.
- Control the flow and pacing of a page by creating a path for the eye to follow.

The path should be simple and logical, most commonly moving from the top left to the bottom right of the panel.

Types of Speech Bubbles

There are two basic types of speech bubbles.

A smooth, curved bubble is a speaking bubble. It shows what people are saying to each other.



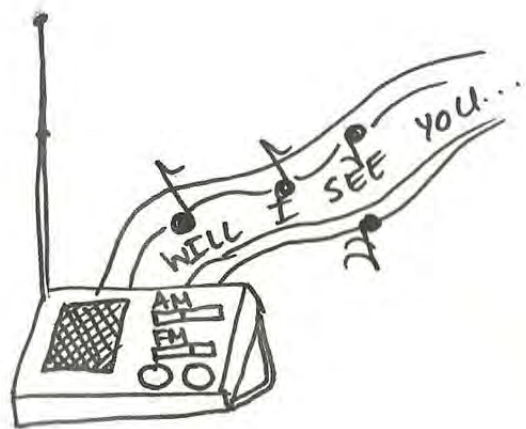
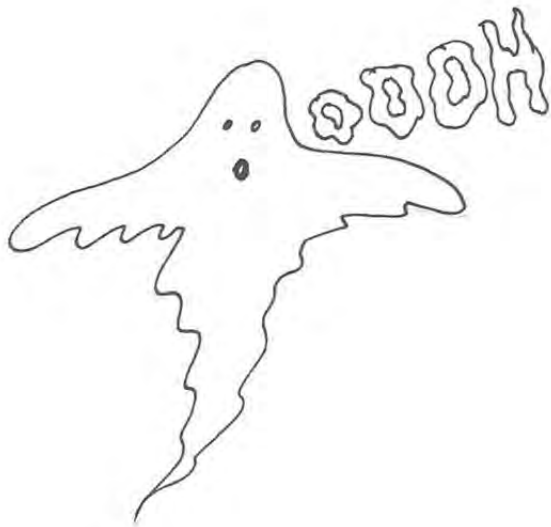
A bubble that is shaped like a cloud is a thought bubble. It shows what people are thinking to themselves.

Comics and Graphic Novels

How to Expand Your Text

You can make your text more interesting and exciting by changing the way you write the words. For example if you want your character to:

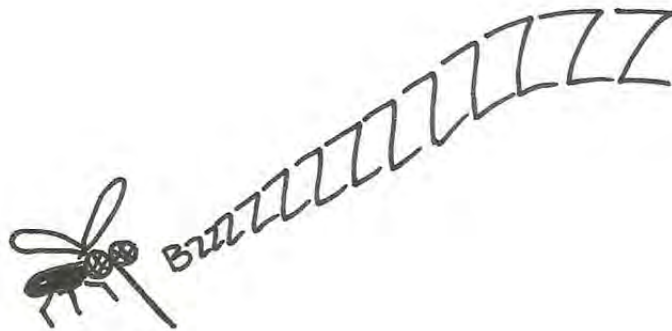
- Whisper something you could shrink the word or words that they are saying.
- **Shout** something you could enlarge the word or words that they are saying. You could also **bold** the word or use all CAPITALS.
- *Emphasize* a particular word you could put it in italics.
- Quote something they could put the word or words “in quotation marks.”



Comics and Graphic Novels

Writing in Sounds

In comic books you will often see words around the characters that are not inside a speech bubble. These words represent other sounds that are happening within the frame. This is a great way to enhance your story and can give your scenes a greater sense of action or drama.



Comics and Graphic Novels

Writing Your Story

Step 1: Brainstorming

Before you begin writing it is always a good idea to brainstorm ideas for your story. Start by coming up with a conflict of some kind that you plan to resolve. This might be something you have seen in your school like bullying or gender related issues, it could be something you have seen on TV or read in a book like super villains taking over the world, or something completely out of your own imagination!

Step 2: Concept Mapping

Map out the concept you have chosen, listing ideas and incidents tied to the theme. You will want to think about the causes of the confrontation, how it plays out, how it makes people feel, and what alternatives might happen to change the outcome.

Step 3: Story Concept

Stories have three parts: a beginning, middle and end. In this example your comic will have five parts. Start with a shorter story and if you are confident and want to try something harder move on to a longer story.

1. Beginning
2. A scene to advance the story
3. Middle
4. A scene to advance the story
5. Ending

It is a good idea to write your beginning and ending first and the middle after. After writing the middle you can finish your comic by adding the last two scenes.

Step 4: Drawing

Split your story up into frames and begin to draw your comic. Words and drawings must flow from one scene to another; this is why we have done so much planning. Does your story make sense? Do you like the way it has turned out? Do not worry if you make mistakes and have to start again.

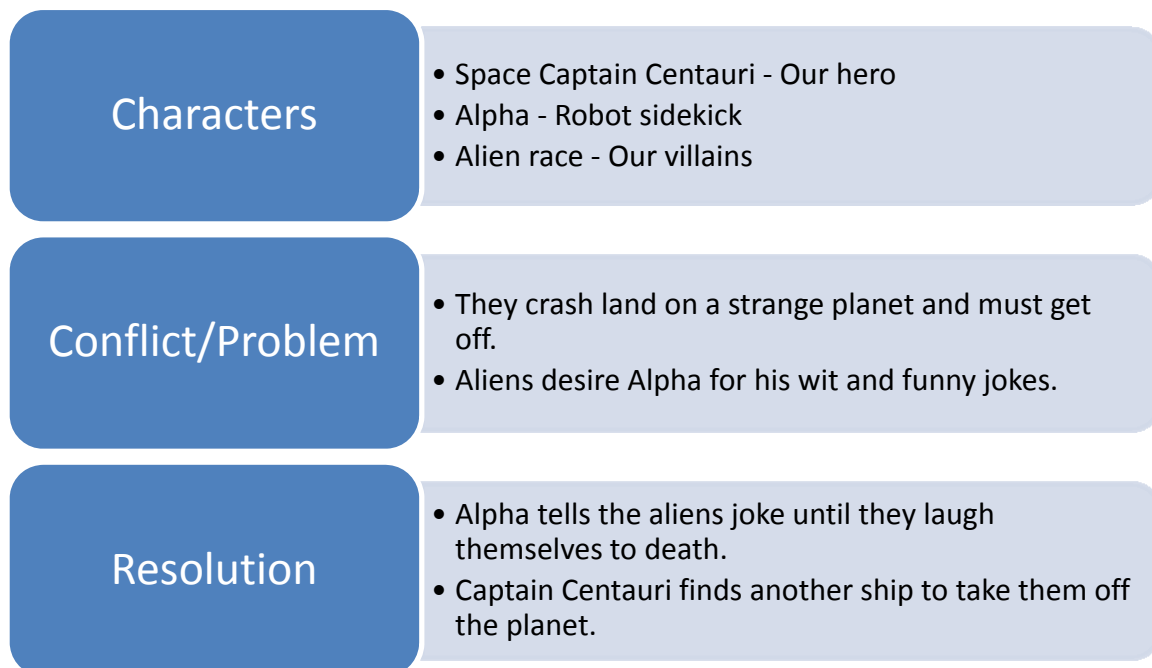


Comics and Graphic Novels

Step 5: Presenting

You may wish to present your comic strips to your friends and family. You could also "publish" them by hanging them in your room or putting them on your fridge.

Example of the brainstorming phase:



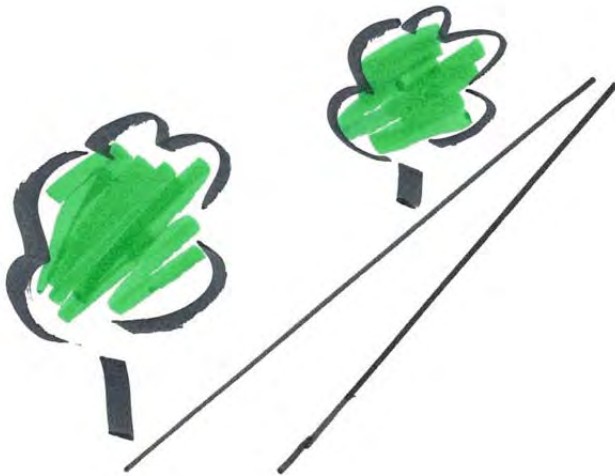
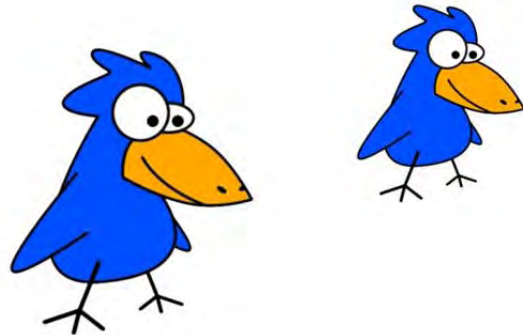
Comics and Graphic Novels

Perspective Drawing - Size

To make objects in your comic look a little less "flat", and more like they are in the "real" world, you need to add perspective. The basic idea is this:

If it's close, it's bigger. If it's far away, it's smaller.

In the picture on the right, the first bird is closer and the second bird is farther away. They aren't really. They just seem that way because the first bird is larger and the second one is smaller.



Here's another example. In the picture on the left you see a road with two trees on the far side.

Which tree is bigger?

In real life, both trees would be the same size. In this drawing, however, the tree on the right is smaller to make it look like it's further away

Comics and Graphic Novels

Here is a project to try using this new idea about perspective. Start with a blank piece of white paper and draw a background similar to the one on the right. It does not have to be perfect.



Next, cut out three trees that are the same size, and three trees that are different sizes. You can use construction paper for your trees or you can copy and paste these trees into a word document and print them.



Place three same size trees on your scene. Next, place three different sized trees on your scene.

Which seems right?

The correct answer is three trees of different sizes. These trees will give perspective to your art, and make things seem a bit more like they are in the real world.

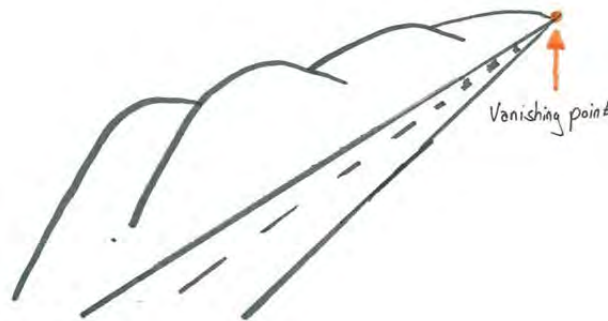
If you didn't guess correctly, you still get full points for trying.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Perspective Drawing – Vanishing Points

If things are far enough away, they seem to disappear into the distance. The point at which they disappear is called a *vanishing point*. This is an important idea when it comes to perspective drawing.

Think about what you would see if you were standing on a highway. One that's very straight with no cars. The vanishing point is the place where the highway disappears in the distance.



Most objects have at least one vanishing point. If you want to show an accurate perspective of the object you are drawing, you will need to keep its vanishing point in mind.

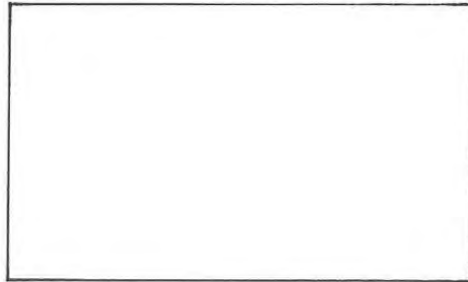
It might be helpful to draw guide lines to help you figure out where the vanishing point should be. After enough practice you may not need to use these guide lines.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Here is a way to draw a wooden crate using the concept of a vanishing point.

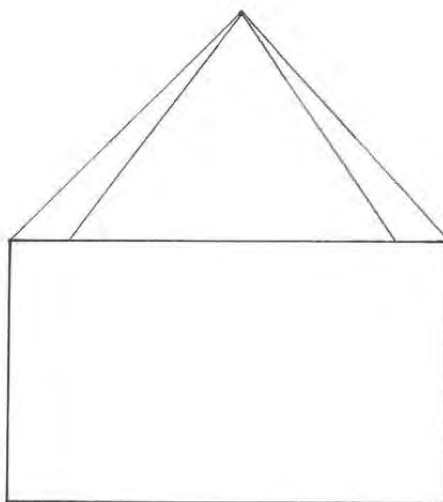
Step 1

- First draw a large square on your paper with a ruler.



Step 2

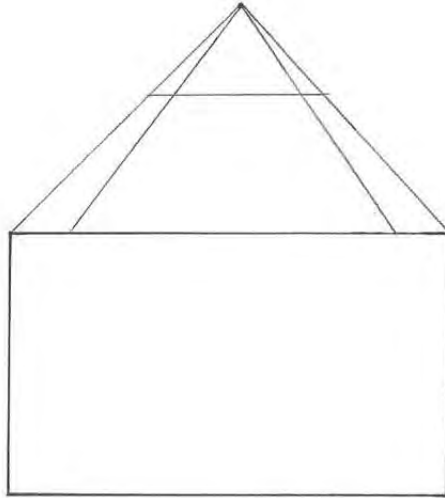
- Make a small dot above the square that will represent the vanishing point.
- Use a pencil to draw four light lines from the box to your vanishing point. They are drawn lightly so you can erase them later.



Comics and Graphic Novels

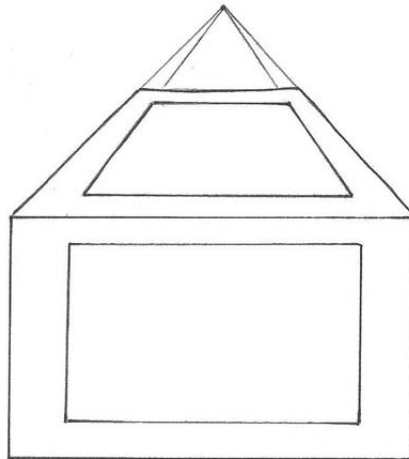
Step 3

- Draw the line for the back edge of the crate. This line should be horizontal.



Step 4

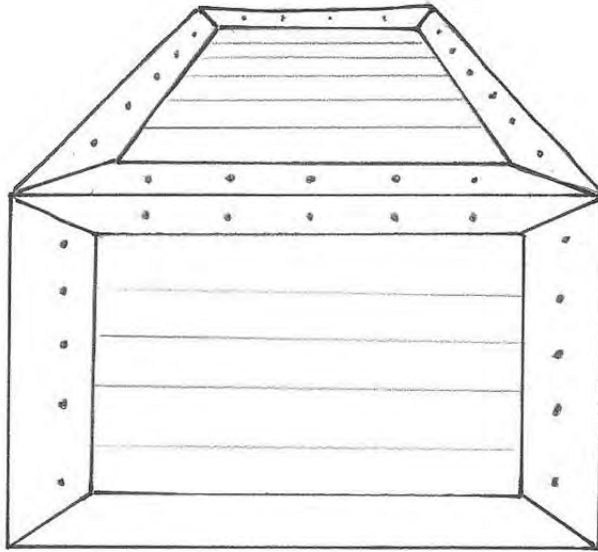
- Draw two smaller squares inside the crate to form framing planks. Using your ruler will give you a straight line.



Comics and Graphic Novels

Step 5

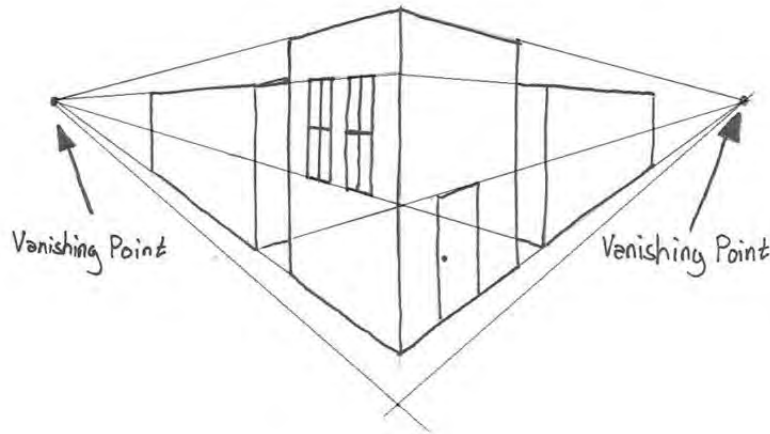
- Finish the box off with some details! Add in some nails and lines that divide each plank of wood.
- If you want you can get creative and add some knot holes and wood grain or anything you can think up.



Comics and Graphic Novels

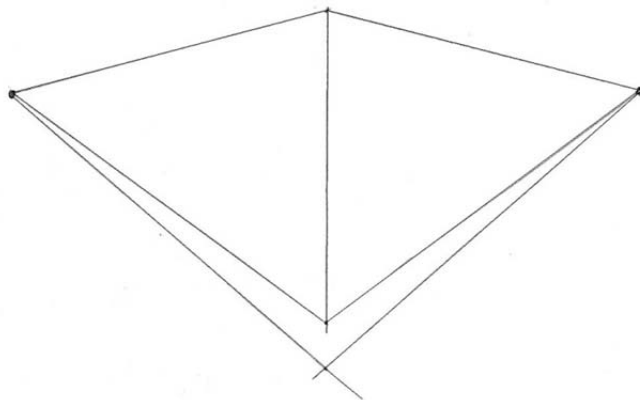
Perspective Drawing – Two-Point Perspective

Here is how to draw a city that vanishes in two different directions. This is called two-point perspective.



Step 1

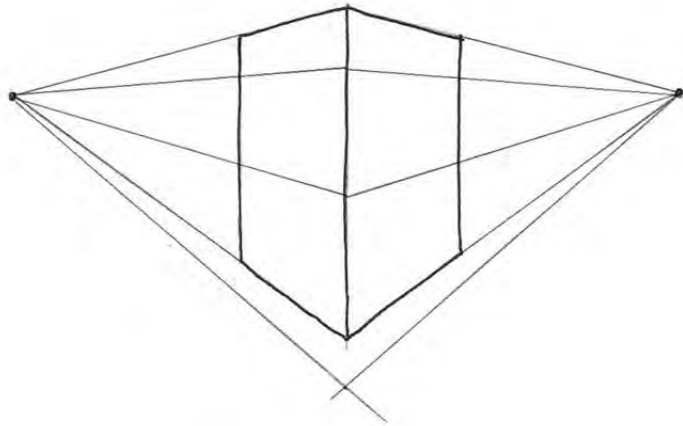
- Draw two dots for vanishing points on the left and right sides of your paper.
- Draw two dots in the center of the vanishing points. These will be the top and bottom of the building.
- Draw another dot below the building for the sidewalk.
- Using a ruler, lightly draw the guide lines that connect the dots and the vanishing points.
- Draw a vertical line down the middle dots. This will be the closest edge of the first building.



Comics and Graphic Novels

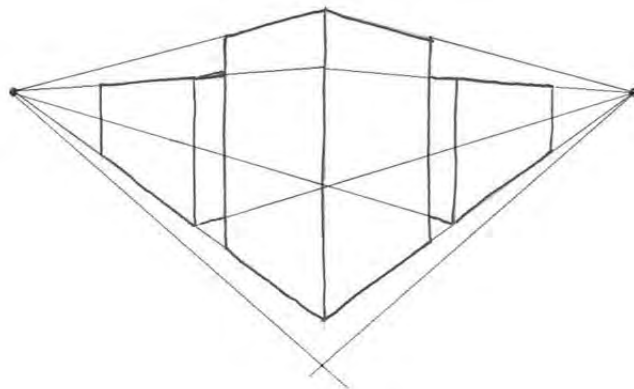
Step 2

- Decide where the far edges of this building will be.
- Draw those lines with a ruler, being sure to follow the guide lines.
- Darken the rest of the lines for this building.



Step 3

- Draw the vertical lines where you want the next two buildings to be.
- Draw a few more vanishing point guide lines from the vertical lines.
- Look at the example below to help you get the perfect angle.



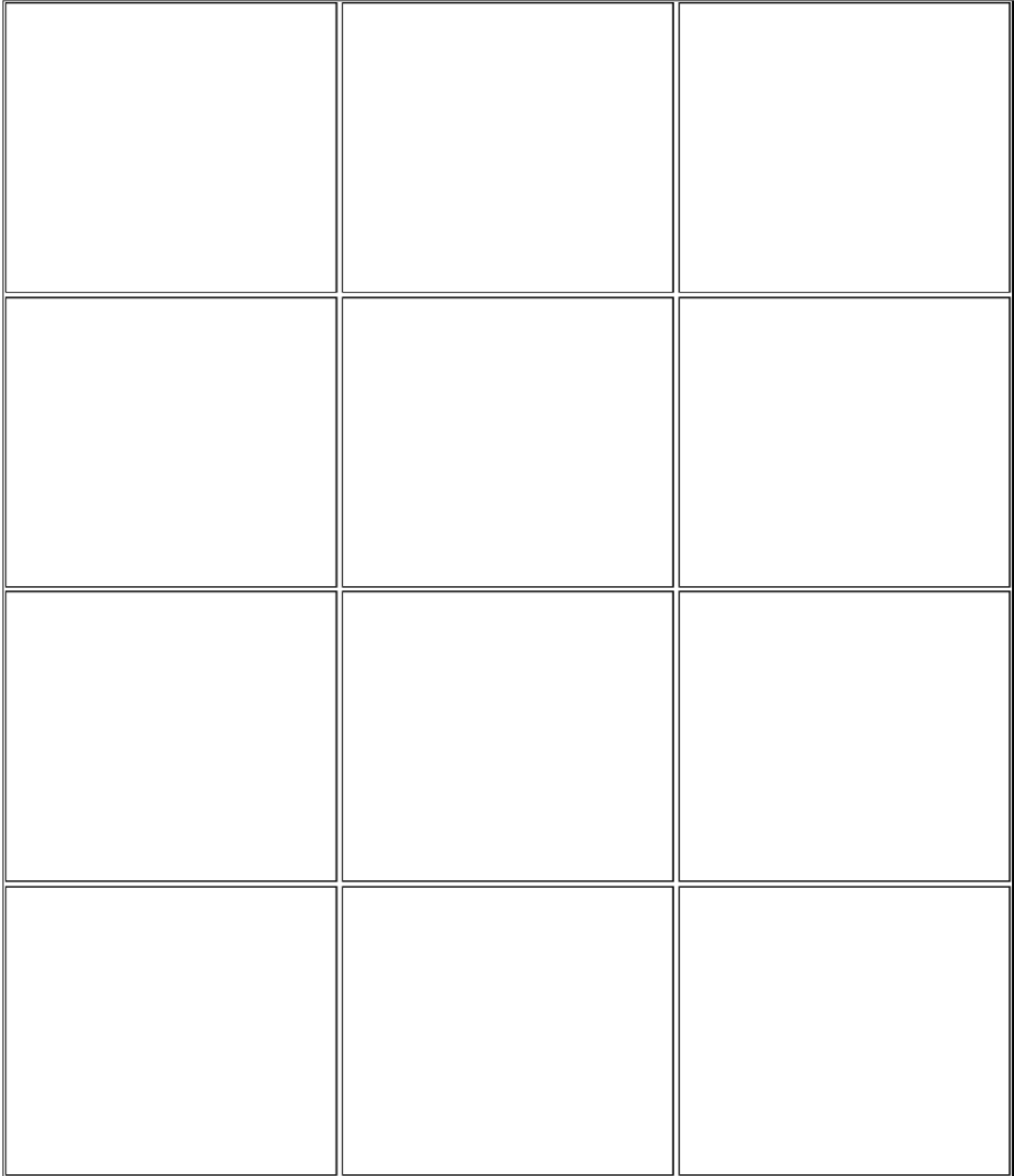
Step 4

- Add the doors and windows.
- If you want to get creative add a sidewalk or even a car driving away.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Comic Strip Examples

To find more templates visit <http://donnayoung.org/art/comics.htm>



Comics and Graphic Novels

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Comics and Graphic Novels

Comic Book List

Looking for a great comic book but do not know what is out there? Here are some suggestions. If you are interested in more, head to your local library or check out: <http://graphicclassroom.blogspot.com/2008/01/best-comics-for-your-classroom-list-for.html> .

Emergent Readers

Bliss, H. *Luke on the Loose*. Illustrated by H. Bliss. Toon Books. ISBN-13: 978-1-935179-00-9

Luke is bored. What child doesn't spin and shake in the wake of his father's incessant jabbering with a neighboring dad? Luke does what kids do: He observes a flock of pigeons cooing and when they fly the coop, so does Luke.

Spiegelman, N. *Zig and Wikki in Something Ate my Homework*. Illustrated by T. Loeffler. Toon Books. ISBN-13: 978-1-935179-02-3

No kid wants to hear those dreaded words: "Your homework is late again." For kids like Zig it's a common occurrence. He and his friend, Wikki, are making a trip to grandma's house to pick up a pet for Zig's classroom zoo. They get a bit off track and their space ship ends up near Earth.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Ages 8 and Up

Elder, J. (2006) *Mail Order Ninja*. Illustrated by E. Owen. Tokyopop.

Timmy McAlister is sick of being bullied in school but an advertisement for a mail order ninja has put that problem to rest. The jocks, the preps and the bullies all find that Timmy is off limits and his life is good. Then the uber-popular and ever-hateful Felicity sends off for her own ninja and the battle for total coolness ensues.

Smith, J. *Bone*. Illustrated by J. Smith. Graphix.

The series mixes fantasy and humour as it follows the three Bone cousins, Gran'ma Ben and her granddaughter Thorn through their many adventures.

Ages 10 and Up

Mucci, M. (2008). *Dracula*. Illustrated by B. Caldwell. Sterling. ISBN-13: 978-1402731525

A graphic adaptation of the novel by Bram Stoker featuring the familiar tale of Jonathan Harker's strange journey to the castle of Count Dracula and the evil doings of the Count in England.

Tan, S. (2006). *The Arrival*. Illustrated by S. Tan. Arthur A. Levine Books. ISBN-13: 978-0-439-89529-3

This wordless graphic novel tells the story of the immigrant experience through powerful illustrations.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Recommended for Northern Youth

Lapp, D. (2008). *Drop-In*. Illustrated by D. Lapp. Conundrum Press. ISBN-13: 978-1-894994-33-0

Drop-in is a sequence of related vignettes drawn from his experiences working at Toronto drop-in centres for underprivileged and at-risk youth.

Lemire, J. (2009). *Essex Country* Trilogy. Illustrated by J. Lemire. Top Shelf Productions. ISBN-13: 978-1603090384

The *Essex Country* trilogy is composed of three interconnected graphic novels: *Tales from the Farm*, *Ghost Stories* and *The Country Nurse*. The minimalistic, though intensely emotional trilogy gives form to the author's inspired vision of what it means to live, work, dream and even die in a Southwestern Ontario rural community.

Mitchell, B. and Audibert, T. (2010). *River Run*. The Healthy Aboriginal Network.

This smoking-prevention comic explains the difference between traditional and non-traditional tobacco use.

Sanderson, Steve K. (2011). *Droppin' the Flag*. The Healthy Aboriginal Network.

Gary agrees to attend a youth program instead of going to jail, but will it be enough to make him rethink his life in a gang?

Sanderson, Steve K. (2011). *Lighting Up the Darkness*. The Healthy Aboriginal Network.

Jenny returns to her home community after living in care for several years, which brings back some difficult memories.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Sanderson, Steve K. (2009). *Darkness Calls*. The Healthy Aboriginal Network.

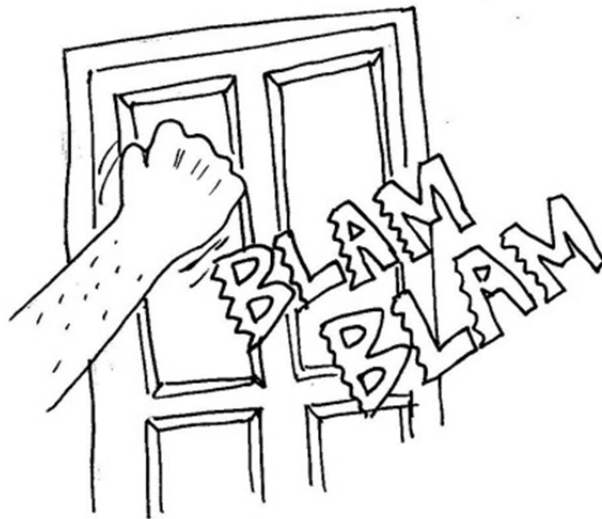
Kyle gets picked on at school and doesn't have many friends, but a family friend convinces him that suicide is not the answer.

Van Camp, R. and Sanderson, Steve K. (2009). *Path of the Warrior*. The Healthy Aboriginal Network.

Cullen's the leader of a gang, but when a gang fight goes wrong he realizes it's time to change his life.

Yahgulanaas, M. N. (2009). *Red: A Haida Manga*. Illustrated by M. N. Yahuglanass. Douglas & McIntyre. ISBN-13: 978-1553653530

Red: A Haida Manga, is a visual retelling of a story from the oral tradition of the Haida Gwaii. This cautionary tale of anger, pride and revenge follows Red, a leader so blinded by revenge that he leads his community to the brink of war and destruction.



Comics and Graphic Novels

Older Youth and Adults

Miller, F. (1997). *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. DC Comics.
ISBN-13: 978-1563893421

A middle-aged Batman comes out of retirement in a futuristic, dystopian Gotham City. A sophisticated take on the well-known character.

Moore, A. (1995). *Watchmen*. DC Comics. ISBN-13: 978-1401219260

In an alternate universe, the cold war still rages, freelance superheroes are outlawed and most of the big superheroes are retired. That is, until the murder of a government superhero forces them to confront a plot to start a nuclear war.

Satrap, M. (2004). *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. Pantheon.
ISBN-13: 978-0375714573

This autobiographical graphic novel describes the life of a girl growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution of the 1970s.

Spiegelman, A. (1986). *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Pantheon. ISBN-13: 978-0394747231

This graphic novel tells the story of life in and escape from Nazi Germany.

Vaughan, B. K. and Henrichon, N. (2005). *Pride of Baghdad*. Vertigo.
ISBN-13: 9781401203153.

In the spring of 2003, four lions escaped from the Baghdad Zoo during an American bombing raid. Lost and confused, the four lions roamed the war-torn streets in a desperate struggle for their lives.

Comics and Graphic Novels

Online Ideas

There are lots of great websites with ideas for using and creating comics.

Here are some websites where you can create your own comic strip:

<http://www.toondoo.com/createToon.do>

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic/index.html>

<http://pbskids.org/arthur/games/comiccreator/comiccreator.html>

http://superherosquad.marvel.com/create_your_own_comic

This site lets you finish off comics that are already started:

<http://www.tvokids.com/games/supercomiccreator>

This site has ideas for teachers:

<http://www.teachingdegree.org/2009/07/05/comics-in-the-classroom-100-tips-tools-and-resources-for-teachers/>