

Class 7 Activity: My Graphic Story Project

Project Overview: Draft a story about an important experience you have had with medicine. It can be something memorable from your clinical training; an encounter with a doctor, patient, or nurse; an interaction with a friend or family member experiencing illness; a troubling experience in a hospital or clinic; or something else. The story could be about something that was challenging for you, or perhaps something you found funny. It might involve an ethical dilemma that you faced. The story may be something you discussed in class, such as the Writing Prompts activity in Class 2, but it need not be.

Your draft story need not be polished, but should include as many details as possible with a beginning, a middle, and an end. And there should be some sort of message to the story as well. It's important to understand that good stories don't just happen; they tend to follow a general pattern that includes several predictable features.

The final project is due on the last day of class. Start right away, as this project can be time-consuming. Here is a very basic overview of the process. You'll have to learn by experience, but these are the steps involved:

Begin by telling the story. Just put your ideas down on paper, without worrying too much about grammar, style, or length. Let your thoughts flow, and write until you have told the story fully. Include details that give life and interest to the story.

Once you have a rough draft, begin to edit. Review the basic elements of story-telling (<https://msu.edu/course/tc/842/SevenElements%20Story.htm>). What makes this interesting? Does it have a beginning, middle and end? Who is the protagonist? What obstacle did he or she face? How was the obstacle overcome? What's the climax of the story? How does it end? Once you have answered these questions to your satisfaction, start cutting. Get rid of unnecessary words, then edit some more. Make sure your story is clear and that readers can follow what you are saying.

Next, start thinking about how you will tell this story visually. What can you show rather than tell? What needs to be expressed in words, and what can be expressed with images? How do the images and words relate to one another? Think about the flow of the story as well as the flow of the images on the page. Create a storyboard with quick "thumbnail" sketches using pencil. Consider not only the individual panels but also how each panel relates to the entire page. Have an outside reader look it over and tell you if it's easy to follow.

When you are pleased with the basic flow of the story and your thumbnail sketches, start filling in details. Add features to the sketches until the project begins to look like a comic. At this point, you should still be using pencil. Add word bubbles and figure out what words go with each image.

Finally, when you are satisfied with the panels (and it will take a while until you get to this stage), start to ink. You can ink over your existing draft, or, if your draft is messy, trace the panels onto clean paper. Use black ink with crisp lines. Add text. Don't forget about the background. Repeat for each panel until you are done, and you have a comic!

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Project Guidelines:

- The story should be 3–5 pages (or as long as needed to tell your story)
- Each page should consist of 1–9 panels
- Keep it simple!
- Make sure the text is large enough to read easily
- Create drafts before committing to your final version
- Use clean lines and black ink
- Use 8 ½ x 11" card stock weight paper for the final version

Supplies:

- Sketch book
- 8 ½ x 11" card stock
- Several soft pencils (#2 or HD)
- A non-photo blue pencil (Staedtler makes a nice one)
- Eraser (white or kneaded)
- Straight edge
- Tracing paper
- Fine point permanent ink markers, such as Micron or Faber-Castell Artist Pens
- Opaque white ink (this is better than "White Out")
- A positive attitude

Expectations:

- Your graphic story (comic) is polished and suitable for display or presentation
- You will present the comic to the class (and outside guests), and explain what you did and why you did it
- You should be prepared to answer questions about the choices you made, and the challenges you needed to overcome to realize your vision