

Comics: Cartoons & Graphic Novels from the Inside Out Seminar
Visioning the 7 Habits of Happy Kids
Merry Ostheimer

Introduction

Located about a mile from the heart of University of Delaware (UD) in Newark, West Park Place Elementary School has a wonderfully diverse population of under 340 students that represents ten countries and eleven different languages. West Park Place hosts several programs that include English Language Learner (ELL), Delaware Autistic Program, REACH (Realistic Educational Alternatives for Children with Disabilities), Accelerated Academic, and Montessori. Ninety percent of our ELL students met their goals on the ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) test.

According to the annual report generated by the Christina School District, out of our total student body, we have about 17% English Language Learners, 56% Eligible for free/reduced meals, and 11% Students with Disabilities. I am a second grade, self-contained teacher and teach multiple subjects that include English Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. 72% of students were proficient in English language arts (ELA) last school year. 78% of students were proficient in math last school year. This year, my class has twenty students, four of whom are Special Education learners, and one of whom is a English Language Learners.

Many students have parents who work for UD or are visiting from other countries to teach or attend higher education UD programs, which creates a bustling hub where education is highly valued. Just last month, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program recognized West Park Place Elementary School in its Exemplary High Performing Schools category. Last year, West Park Place was one of sixty-eight schools in the nation to be a 2018 National ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) Distinguished School for the exceptional student performance for two or more consecutive years. In 2015, we were awarded \$50,000 for closing achievement gaps in Special Education and English Language Learners. In 2011, West Park Place received the National Blue Ribbon School designation from the United States Department of Education for consistent student achievement.

Our instruction is aligned with Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards. My fellow teachers work with our administrators collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities to analyze student data, set goals, monitor progress, and plan meaningful learning activities. Currently, we look at beginning year data derived from IReady to respond to students' needs. Based on the Christina School District's annual report, West Park Place teachers are predominantly Highly Effective and Highly

Qualified and have many years of experience with most carrying at least one master's degree. We are a PBS (Positive Behavior Support) school and expect our students to demonstrate positive, prepared, and productive behavior each day. West Park has a strong Parent Teacher Association which supports curriculum nights, Scholastic Book Fairs, the 500 Book Challenge, and extracurricular programs.

Delaware Teachers Institute (DTI) is well-represented here at West Park Place Elementary School. Since 2014, at least at least one, and up to five teachers have taken part in seminars in a given cohort. Students have been the true benefactors of this partnership between the University of Delaware and Christina School District.

Rationale

West Park Place Elementary School is hoping to launch the Leader in Me program this coming year. Incorporating Stephen Covey's 7 Habits for Highly Effective People, the, Leader in Me (LiM) program is an "evidence-based, comprehensive school improvement model-- developed in partnership with educators-- that empowers students with the leadership and life skills they need to thrive in the 21st century."

"I can lead myself- there's a leader in me." Here are the seven habits:

1. Be proactive: I'm in charge of myself.
2. Begin with the end in mind: Have a plan.
3. Put first things first: Work first, then play.
4. Think win-win: Everyone can win.
5. Seek first to understand, then be understood: Listen before speaking.
6. Synergize: Together is better.
7. Sharpen the saw: Balance is best. Be the best me.

By the conclusion of this unit, I want students to have drawn quick sketches of the seven habits to make their learning more complete. For instance, I would expect to see comics that show children sharpening pencils to get ready for the day, setting a goal with their computational fluency work, and completing their reading work so they can take a five-minute brain break for habits one, two, and three. For the next two habits, I look forward to watching my students create comics that tell the stories of characters who learn that they should listen first before they jump to conclusions and that everyone can win if you are compassionate and thoughtful. Depicting the final two habits in comics could reveal teamwork is often more fun than solo projects and balance is best. My rationale is that teaching comics will improve my students' written and visual work while making their learning more concrete. By drawing, writing, and reading about themselves in social situations, they can see another person's point of view, as well as feel empowered by using cartooning tools to tell a story using pictures and words. Most of all,

my students will be more apt to empathize with others because they have put themselves in their character's shoes.

Content Objectives

Appropriate for grades one, two, or three, this unit will target three main areas: Sean Covey's the 7 Habits of Happy Kids and their stories, art and design concepts, and comic creations. **Common Core State Standards** that I plan to address include **Reading: Literature Key Ideas and Details 2.1** Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text and **2.3** Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. I will also include **Reading: Literature Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 2.7** Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate an understanding of its characters, setting, or plot. Next, I will work on **Writing Text Types and Purposes 2.3** Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure. Finally, there will be a lot of teamwork and collaboration so I will include **Speaking & Listening Comprehension and Collaboration 2.1** Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners, follow agreed-upon rules of discussion, build on others' talk in conversations, and ask for clarification and further explanation about what a speaker says in order to clarify or gather more information, or deepen understanding of a topic.

History of Comics

Comics, cartoons, and graphic novels are not new inventions. If you think about it, some early civilizations have created comics. For example, there is a mural from the Tomb of "Menna" an Ancient Egyptian Scribe, which was constructed around 1400 BC - 1390 BC which you can see at <https://www.arce.org/project/tomb-menna-theban-necropolis>. In order to "read" this comic, you need to begin at the lower left-hand corner and read right. When you get to the right end, go up and read left until you get to the end. Then go up and read right to the end. The mural shows a variety of jobs that Menna, an Egyptian official held while he worked as a scribe. If you look carefully, you can see various figures taking measurements of a field, inspecting land, recording what crops were harvested, and watching over wheat threshing. It makes sense that ancient history was chronicled with "comics" since stories had to be told with words or with pictures. Each civilization used pictures to communicate first, and then conceived their own alphabet later down their timeline.

Comics as storytelling devices are very popular. Today, comics are much more than just superheroes: they come in any genre and are often full of text. So, if any parents of my students question why I encourage their child to read graphic novels, I can point out that graphic novels have several advantages. Graphic novels are full of drawings with

words that my second graders need to decode, analyze, and comprehend. In addition, graphic novels have interesting characters, exciting plots, and engaging conflicts. The illustrations keep young minds captivated and the likelihood of my students finishing a graphic novel is much higher than an ordinary chapter book. When they finish reading one graphic novel, my students are proud, feel accomplished, and ready to tackle another graphic novel. There has never been any resistance from my students to read more comics, cartoons, or graphic novels. Since I have started this seminar last April, my interactive read alouds include graphic novels which is a very enjoyable activity for everyone.

Understanding Comics, Cartoons, and Graphic Novels

So, what are comics, cartoons, and graphic novels and why should my students read them, never mind write them? My fellow teachers and I discussed this with Professor Greg Shelnut in our seminar *Comics: Cartoons & Graphic Novels from the Inside Out*. We talked about how our reluctant readers would enjoy picking up graphic novels and how there is way more to comics than what we think. I like to think of comics, cartoons, and graphic novels of a type of “gateway” book- it gets kids addicted without them realizing that they are getting hooked on reading! That is what we teach reading for anyway- for a purpose. And this purpose for reading is for entertainment!

Understanding comics does not require one single, comprehension skill either. It takes a lot of savvy to read comics. In his book, *The Invisible Art Understanding Comics*, Scott McCloud defines comics as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.”¹ When you look at a comic strip, you see an image and an image that follows it. Events happen between the images. So, there is the passage of time. It can be as quick as a wink, or as long as time passing on a clock. You can see the first static image of each sequential series and then you see the next static image. Our minds put both acts together to understand what happens in between. The man touches the rim of his hat. The man lifts his hat. He must be greeting us. The sun shines in the sky. The sun is lower in the sky. The sun must be setting. There are other examples of how the first image leads to the second image and how a conclusion is made and how a story is told. When my students read comics, their minds are doing acrobatics! They are rapidly putting together events and drawing conclusions as quick as a wink!

Panels, Gutters, and Transitions

When you look at a comic, you will see a series of frames of drawings. The frames are called *panels* and the space between the panels is called the *gutter*. Here is how Scott McCloud describes the gutter:

“The gutter plays host to much of the magic and the mystery that are at the very heart of comics. Here in the limbo of the gutter, human imagination takes two separate images and transforms them into a single idea.”²

It is fascinating how the empty space is so important to the comic. This is a big reason why children reading comics is so valuable- they need to keep drawing conclusions. Time is also a big element that can be altered easily in comics with either the sun setting or the clock showing five minutes passing.

Motion is another factor that can be accelerated in the gutters of comics. Picture a ball that is in someone’s hand. It is in the hand the first moment, then there is the gutter between frames, and the ball is in the air the later moment. The reader’s eyes and brain have drawn the conclusion that some action has happened, but it is only the comic author who knows exactly what happened in the gutter and can sway us readers by their transition.

Comic authors use different types of transitions within the gutter to move forth time and motion. This next part will list, describe, and give examples of McCloud’s six types of transitions:³

1. **Panel-to-Panel Transitions** which are more moment-to-moment with not much closure. Here is a great example: in the first frame we see someone tucked, snugly in bed sleeping soundly, but we glance down at the blanket and notice a spider! In the later frame, the person is in the same cozy position, but the spider is *closer*! The subtle change stirs a tingle in my spine.
2. **Action-to-Action Transitions** which feature a single subject performing a distinct action like a baseball player who is up at bat in the first frame and then “wham!” hits the ball in the later frame.
3. **Subject-to-Subject Transitions** takes us from within a specific scene and call for us readers to get involved. For instance, in the first frame, we see a person racing towards a finish line. Then we see a hand holding a stopwatch, with the thumb pressing the stop button, “klik!” We feel involved like we were the timers of the race and we had a stake in this victory. We feel victorious too!
4. **Scene-to-Scene Transitions** require us readers to use deductive reasoning because the scenes transport us across significant time and space. Imagine we see a man consoling a crying woman by saying, “Noone could have survived that crash!” Then in the later frame, we read the word “Meanwhile...” and see a single man sitting on a beach under a single palm tree on an island in an ocean.
5. **Aspect-to-Aspect Transitions** bypass time and set a wandering eye on different aspects of a place, idea, or mood. Picture three frames. The first frame has us readers looking up to a sunny sky, seeing tops of trees. The first later frame shows a man wearing sunglasses and looking relaxed. The second later frame shows the sky, but this time there are puffy clouds and three birds flying. Different

perspectives can be seen, but there does not seem to be any rhyme or reason to this comic-- nothing really is happening here.

6. **Non-sequitur Transitions** offer no logical relationship between panels whatsoever. There are no logical connection between panels in this example: the first frame shows a mine-bomb -EP! BEEP! The second frame shows American Gothic- American Gothic is an iconic painting by Grant Wood in 1930 of a farmer and his wife outside their house. The third frame shows a profile of a man showing all of his teeth saying, “Cheese!” The fourth frame shows a bare tree. The fifth frame shows fish swimming. The sixth frame shows a politician who is probably Nixon, with two outstretched arms and fingers gesturing the V sign for victory, while in the background confetti, balloons, and ribbon hang.

McCloud wondered which category of transition was most common, so he analyzed the transition types in Jack Kirby-Stan Lee *Fantastic Four* comic book from 1966. He found that 65% were Action-to-Action, 20% were Subject-to-Subject, and 15% were Scene-to-Scene transitions.⁴ Next, McCloud examined a very different type of comic book *Tintin* by Herge and got similar results. In fact, McCloud randomly sampled various American comics and the same proportions resulted on a consistent basis.⁵

Now, when children **draw** comics, there are even more benefits to their learning than **reading** comics, cartoons, and graphic novels. A recent study entitled, *The Surprisingly Powerful Influence of Drawing on Memory*, shows that “drawing is superior to activities such as reading or writing because it forces the person to process information in multiple ways: visually, kinesthetically, and semantically.”⁶ Three memory experts “conducted experiments to better understand how activities such as writing, looking at pictures, listening to lectures, drawing, and visualizing images affect a student’s ability to remember information.”⁷ After they performed over eight experiments, they concluded that “drawing is a robust encoding strategy that can, and does, improve memory performance dramatically.”⁸ So, when we encourage our students to incorporate drawing to enrich their learning, we are really tapping into multiple, not one, modality.

For the next part of this unit, I will feature some basic cartoon concepts that non-art teachers, like me, can use to teach my students how to draw cool cartoons.

Basic Building Blocks of Comics for Children

As I looked for books that teach children how to draw, I came across one of my personal favorites: *How to Teach Art to Children*, an Evan-Moor education publication. I love this book because it covers grades 1 through 6 and breaks tasks down into steps that can be accelerated for older learners or slowed down for younger learners. Of the seven art elements this book features, I will target just line and shape because emphasizing attributes of lines and shapes will be essential to skills needed to start cartooning.

Lines

“Lines have names that describe their place in space- diagonal, vertical, horizontal. Lines may be thick or thin, solid or broken. When two lines sit next to each other they become parallel lines. Lines can be bent into curves and broken into angles.”⁹

My students can learn a lot about art and design by playing with lines in structured lessons as well as free drawing time. For example, I will lead exercises that explore diagonal, vertical, and horizontal lines and another that play with shaded, dotted, and solid lines. There are many games we can play that distinguish between thick, thin, and broken lines and still others that include changing straight lines into ones that zigzag, or are wavy, loopy, curly, spiral, stair-step, or squiggle. Playing with lines can make students feel very artful. These are the building blocks of drawing. As we discover ways lines can curve, bend, and straighten, we will shift over to learning about shape.

In Chapter Five *Living in Line*, McCloud shows how blunt, long, spiraled, blurred, jagged, and other kinds of lines evoke a range of emotions without words or images. When we read graphic novels together, my students pick up this concept quickly. One example is in *Dog Man, A Tale of Two Kitties*. The half dog-half man character enters the police station to find the police chief, who he loves more than anything. Like any other dog, when Dog Man sees Chief, he leaps to him with joy! On page 16, we can see Chief has a regular speaking, but leaning towards a becoming excited voice that has a talk bubble using smooth lines. Then, in the next three frames when Chief is covered by Dog Man's affectionate dancing, the talk bubbles use jagged lines to show his loudening voice. After that, Dog Man has pinned Chief and the subsequent frames have foregone the talk bubbles altogether to just use words that have gone off the rails because Chief has gone off the rails and is screaming to “Quit it!” and then finally says the two words that no dog ever wants to hear-- “Bad Doggy!”¹⁰

Later in this chapter, McCloud questions “don't all lines carry with them an expressive potential?” He goes on to show a straight, horizontal line and describes it as “passive and timeless,” a bold, vertical line as “proud and strong,” a diagonal line as “dynamic and changing,” and a curved line as “warm and gentle.”¹¹ I will be sure to give plenty of opportunities to my students to play with lines and how lines can show a range of emotions.

Shape

“Lines create the outline of shapes. Each time a line outlines a shape, it is really creating two images: the positive one and a negative one.”¹²

Cornerstones of geometry, the basic shapes squares, circles, rectangles, and triangles are all that we need to start sketching simple cartoons in the style of Ivan Brunetti. Some activities that I will lead have students placing cut-outs of circles, squares, rectangles, and

triangles into abstract designs. When they are done, they will re-create the design on a piece of paper. Another activity will be to use construction sheet squares to fold once, cut a shape in the center, and unfold to have two shapes which show the positive and negative representation of a shape.

In seminar, we learned about Notan, which is an arrangement of five black, biomorphic shapes placed on white paper. The black shapes must be in a sequence of sizes where there is one large, one very small, and three different sizes in between. When the black pieces are arranged on white, there will be some hierarchy or dominant, sub-dominant, and subordinate shapes. When I did one in seminar, I found that I arranged my black pieces so that they resembled a face. But the objective is to create asymmetrical balance. I am very interested in trying this exercise with my second-grade class.

In this next portion, I would like to give some background information about two influential figures who have made a great impact on me and my plans to implement my unit.

Influences in Cartooning Strategies and Mindsets

When our seminar began and Greg handed out our syllabus, I was so excited to embark on my own exploration of the process artists use to develop graphic novels. by reading comics and keeping a diary. Greg introduced us to Lynda Barry and her six-minute daily diary and Ivan Brunetti and his characters composed of simple shapes.

Lynda Barry

Lynda Barry is an American cartoonist who work with in her book, *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor*, Barry shares her creative writing exercises and samples of her students. One mind-blowing exercise I love is her spiral drawing to promote relaxation and concentration. The object is to begin drawing a spiral and “get the lines as close together as possible without letting them touch. If they touch, you get electrocuted.”¹³ Barry encourages spiral drawing while someone else is reading their work and while listening to a guided meditation to activate memories. Another excellent workout is her daily six-minute diary where she encourages her students to stop and notice the world around them.

Ivan Brunetti

“I learned not only how to read from comic books, but also how to see. I learned about line, shape, color, value, space, texture, color, balance, harmony, unity, contrast, variety, rhythm, repetition, emphasis, continuity, spatial systems, structures and grids, proportion and scale, and composition by studying and copying the drawings from the comic books of my Italian childhood.”¹⁴

Ivan Brunetti is an Italian-American cartoonist who stresses minimalism, dynamic drawing, and clear, simple lines.¹⁵ His exercises are rigorous and methodical. One exercise starts with drawing a car in a 2-minute time limit and gradually reduces the time to 5 seconds. His message is that the quicker the response, the closer to the essence of the thing we draw. Thus, you spontaneously create simple icons that convey all the essential information about something.¹⁶

When Brunetti draws people, he uses a circle for a head, triangle or rectangle for body, curved lines for arms and legs, simple hands and feet, nose, mouth, eye, ear, and hair. Then, he puts a simple design on the clothes, puts a simple prop in the hand, and fills in a setting behind the person. I love the Ivan Brunetti style because it is easy to do freehand for most children.

The next part of this unit will be teaching strategies that I will address will be the teaching strategies I will use in my classroom.

Teaching Strategies

Five Minute Graphic Novel Read Aloud

I think the best strategy for teaching comics, cartoons, and graphic novels is to read at least one of them every day for about five minutes. One author I love to read to the class is Dav Pilkey's *Dog Man* series. I project the page on the Smartboard so that everyone can see all of the panels, details, and writing. We stop and examine the way Pilkey shows how time passes. The class loves when we all experience Flip-O-Rama together!

This strategy will take place at the beginning of the cartooning unit to allow for a whole group study of understanding comics, cartoons, and graphic novels. We will have a close read for five minutes and then talk about how the author uses transitions with frames and gutters. We will also study how lines and shapes are used. Then, we will incorporate these conversations into our lines and shapes workouts later in our lesson.

I hope that reading comics, cartoons, graphic novels, and other entertaining books will become a routine that will promote Habit 7 Sharpen the Saw: Balance is best. By promoting reading as an enjoyable activity, my students will always make time in their day to read a book.

Attendance Drawings

In her book *Syllabus*, Lynda Barry shares many of her strategies for unlocking creativity in her students. One such exercise is to "begin each class by drawing a 2-minute self-portrait on an index card and turn it in, dated."¹⁷ She uses these initial cards as baselines

to compare the ending cards with to see how her students grow. From the first week of this unit, I plan to have my students begin the day by drawing a 3-minute self-portrait on an index card. The purpose of this activity is to give everyone the same starting point but with a slightly longer time than the two minutes that Barry gives her adult students. Throughout the four-week unit, we will see how my students' confidence and skills grow.

I hope that noticing how they feel each day when they complete their attendance drawing will help my students with Habit 1: Be Proactive. I would like my students to understand that while we cannot change others' moods, we are in charge of our own moods. Seeing how their emotions change from day to day and reflecting on how we can redirect ourselves and change our moods from cloudy to sunny by having a positive mindset.

Five Minute Basic Line and Shape Workouts

Throughout the unit, I will give exercises in line and shape that will keep fine motor skills sharp and minds flexible. There will be a series of workouts that I have found in Evan-Moor's book that will lay the foundation for creating comics, cartoons, and graphic novels. One exercise for exploring lines will be to practice making zigzag, wavy, looped, curly, scalloped, and blocky types of lines.*¹⁸ Another will be to give each student two four inch squares of white construction paper. The students will use only straight, bent, and angular lines to create a design on one of the squares. On the other, they will only use curved lines to create a design. When both squares are completed, the designs will be grouped together for display on black paper.¹⁹

To explore shapes, there are several activities that involve construction paper and scissors. One workout that explores positive and negative shape is to use four inch squares of construction paper. The students choose one color to fold once, then cut a shape out of the center. Then, they choose a different color to mount the positive and negative shape to that shows off the contrasting colors.*²⁰ In another exercise, the students each get a simple shape that they glue on a white square. Then, the student draws lines to complete a picture that must include the simple shape.²¹

I hope that this strategy reinforces Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind. These exercises teach skills that will help them concentrate better, draw with better fine motor skills, and acquire art and design concepts easier. When they acquire these new skills, they build a foundation on which greater skills get built. This discipline brings organization and clarity so my students will have an easier time to have a plan.

Daily Five-Minute Diary

Lynda Barry uses The Daily Six Minute Diary to get her adult students to notice things around them because it “will teach you to hear, see, and remember the world all around you.”²² Her exercise is done in a composition book where you draw a two column, two row table. In the first column, students list seven things they did that day. In the second column, students list seven things they saw that day. In the bottom row, first column, students write one thing they heard. In the bottom row second column, students draw one thing they drew. Starting with the 3rd week of this unit, I plan to scale down Barry’s Daily Six Minute Diary and reduce the number of things from seven things to two things, because they are second graders. Maybe third graders can write three things, fourth graders can write four things, and so on. The most important point is to get my students to notice things around them.

Classroom Activities

Introduction to Comics Week 1

During this week, we will read graphic novels together and discuss various art and design elements that lead to reading and understanding comics. We will begin forming the habits of observation by attending to graphic novel read alouds and discipline by practicing making shapes that will get students ready for creating their own cartoons.

Content Objectives: Students will understand that by using simple shapes, characters can be created that will use straightforward props and will display a range of emotions that include happy, sad, mad, and bored.

Standards: English Language Arts-Literacy Speaking and Listening 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7. Writing-Text Types and Purposes 2.3.

Vocabulary: frame, gutter

Materials: *Dog Man*, blank paper, pencils, index cards

Five Minute Graphic Novel Read Aloud: Dog Man by Dav Pilkey

As I read *Dog Man*, I will display the book by one page at a time. I will draw my students’ attention to the frame or box where the characters are and the action takes place. I will introduce this box the “frame” of the comic. I will point out that there is white space between the frames. I will introduce this white space as the “gutter” of the comic. After reading on for about three minutes, I will ask my class to pause and ponder, “What happens between this frame and the next frame?” “How much time do you think has passed in the gutter?” “How do you know?” I will explain that the gutter, or the white space that exists between the frames, is very important because it is the transition between two different times and two different places. We will look closely at one frame

and see how something has transpired between that frame and the next frame. I will guide students to use the vocabulary words frame and gutter as they discuss.

Three Minute Attendance Drawings

I will introduce this practice to the class and, for the sake of quicker transitions, keep a basket at each table grouping for the students to put their cards when their time is over.

Five Minute Basic Shape workout: Drawing Emotions

I will hand out one sheet of blank paper to each student and ask everyone to orient their papers to portrait and then make one fold, picking the bottom of the paper and matching it to the top of the paper to make one good crease. Then, I will direct everyone to turn our papers so it is tall again. Next, we will make another fold by picking up the bottom and matching it to the top of the paper. I will ask everyone to unfold their papers and lay it open on their desks in landscape orientation.

Now, I will ask everyone to get ready to make a face in the center of the page. We will first make a circle for the head, then make two dots for eyes, a sideways 'v' for a nose, a curved line for a smile, and finish up with hair. Then, I will direct my students to write the word "happy" in the upper left corner, "sad" in the upper right corner, "mad" in the lower right corner, and "bored" in the lower left corner of their sheet of paper. Then we will focus on "happy" and make a happy face. We'll talk about what our face does when we get happy. Then, we will draw a face that is happy in the upper left corner. This will be about the five-minute mark and I will ask the group to please turn and talk to their elbow partners about what we just did with our papers (folded, labeled, and started to draw faces). On the subsequent days of this week, we will work on the other emotions and be aware of the way our faces can change with the way our emotions change.

Introduction to Comics Week 2

During this week, we will study types of lines and discuss how they evoke emotions even when they are present with no images or words.

Content Objectives: Students will understand that "lines have names that describe their time in space and may be diagonal, vertical, or horizontal. Lines may also be thick or thin, solid or broken. When two lines are the same distance apart for their entire length, they are parallel." *(Evan-Moor p.8)

Standards: English Language Arts-Literacy Speaking and Listening 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7. Writing-Text Types and Purposes 2.3.

Vocabulary: diagonal, vertical, horizontal, thick, thin, broken, solid, parallel

Materials: *Ook and Gluk, Kung-Fu Cavemen From the Future* by Dav Pilkey, paper, pencils, markers with beveled edges to make fine and bold lines

Five Minute Graphic Novel Read Aloud: Ook and Gluk, blank paper, pencil, index cards

I will review the concepts of “frame” and “gutter” and focus the class to look for types of lines in the frames. For example, on page 9, there is a zigzagged bubble that breaks the narrative to tell about another adventure. We can discuss how the line type changes from smooth to zigzag so we get more excited and want to learn more about what happened before.

Three Minute Attendance Drawings

I will continue to keep collecting the cards and sort them into each student’s pile.

Five Minute Basic Line and Shape Workouts

For this week’s focus, I will introduce Evan-Moor’s *Lines of All Kinds* exercise by describing diagonal, horizontal, and vertical lines and looking for these lines around our classroom. I will hand out page 9 of Evan-Moor’s book, *How to Teach Art to Children*. This page has a large table divided into three rows, each labeled for a specific line: diagonal, vertical, and horizontal. According to Evan-Moor’s instructions, I will direct the class to draw one line of each type of line in the appropriate box and then draw another line parallel to the original line. Next, I will ask students to shade in the area between the parallel lines. This creates a thick line out of the two thin lines. We will continue adding lines to each of the boxes together, varying the line types so that the students can see solid, broken, bold, thin, dotted, and other kinds of lines together.

Introduction to Comics Week 3

During this week, students will start their Daily Five Minute Diary that will help them focus on two things they saw, two things they did, one thing they heard, and one thing they drew during the day.

Content Objectives: Students will understand that paying attention to things you do, see and hear are details that may improve their writing and drawing.

Standards: English Language Arts-Literacy Speaking and Listening 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7. Writing-Text Types and Purposes 2.3.

Vocabulary: composition, classics, literature, precious

Materials: *Dog Man Lord of the Fleas*, composition book, index cards

Five Minute Graphic Novel Read Aloud: Dog Man, Lord of the Fleas

Three Minute Attendance Drawings

I will continue to keep collecting the cards and sort them into each student’s pile.

Five Minute Daily Diary

Prior to this week, I would have requested students bring in a new composition book. I will direct my students to notice the composition notebook they have before them. We will compare their composition book with a library book that they have at their desk and compare them: How are these books the same? If you want your composition book to have writing in it, how would you start? Would you skip pages when you write or would you write on the back of each page? We will talk about the outside cover, the inside covers, the pages, and the back of the book. I will explain that we will use this book as a tool to sharpen our exploration skills: we will pay close attention to our surroundings and take notice of things we see, sounds we hear, and activities we do: this will be our Five Minute Daily Diary.

I will ask them to open the book to the first page and write today's date at the top. Then, I will have them fold the page in half. I will direct them to write the word "did" on the top of the left column and "saw" on the top of the right column. Then, I will ask them to count down about ten lines and write "heard" on the left column and "drew" on the right column. Next, I will explain that we will make a list of two things that we have done today. I will show them where we will write these words. I will guide them through the next two categories "saw" and "heard." When we get to "drew," I will ask the class if anyone has drawn anything today. After hearing ideas from the class, I select one and show how I can draw it under the word "drew." For rest of the unit, I will lead this activity with diminishing cues until it will become a five-minute independent activity.

Introduction to Comics Week 4

During this week, students will apply their skills in cartooning to create a comic strip on the book, *Just the Way I Am* by Sean Covey.

Content Objectives: Students will understand that they can create frames on paper, then retell the story in comic strip form by using gutters to convey time and space transitions.

Standards: English Language Arts-Literacy Speaking and Listening 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.1, 2.3, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7. Writing-Text Types and Purposes 2.3.

Vocabulary: porcupine, quills, outlandish, rude

Materials: *Just the Way I Am* by Sean Covey, Five Minute Daily Diary Composition Book, paper, pencil, crayon box

Five Minute Graphic Novel Read Aloud: Dog Man, Lord of the Fleas

Three Minute Attendance Drawings

I will continue to keep collecting the cards and sort them into each student's pile.

Five Minute Daily Diary

We will continue this habit of noticing things we did, saw, heard, and drew.

Five Minute 7 Habits of Happy Kids Read Aloud: Just the Way I Am

This story is about Pokey the porcupine who gets teased by school bullies because he is different. His friends surprise him with a visit and tell him that they like him just the way he is, pointy quills and all. He feels better and the next day at school, Pokey is proud of his quills and adorns them with sparkles. At the end of the story, everyone, including the bully, wants quills just like him.

Comic Strip of 7 Habits of Happy Kids Read Aloud: Just the Way I Am by Sean Covey

After reading the story to the class, we will create a comic strip to retell the story. We will use a crayon box positioned horizontally to outline a frame using a pencil. I will direct my students to draw characters in the style of Ivan Brunetti to keep it simple. I will encourage my students to add something in the background to cue us in to where this part of the story takes place. As we retell the story, we will be mindful of how time and place pass from one frame to the next. We will also discuss ways our lines will trigger a character's feelings. This comic strip will take about one week to create and will be done in pencil at first. After it is revised, then the cartoon strip can be colored and displayed.

Resources

Mentor Texts:

Baby-sitters Club Series by Raina Telgemeier

Captain Underpants Series by Dav Pilkey

Dog Man Series by Dav Pilkey

Guts by Raina Telgemeier

Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson

Ook and Gluk, Kung-Fu Cavemen From the Future by Dav Pilkey

Smile by Raina Telgemeier

Appendix

The Common Core State Standards I plan to implement include:

English Language Arts-Literacy Speaking and Listening 2.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

English Language Arts-Literacy Speaking and Listening 2.2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

English Language Arts-Literacy Speaking and Listening 2.3. Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.1. Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.

English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.5. Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.6. Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.

English Language Arts- Reading- Literature 2.7. Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, settings, or plot.

Writing-Text Types and Purposes 2.3. Write narratives in which they recount a well-elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

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¹ McCloud, Scott. *The Invisible Art Understanding Comics*. p. 9

² McCloud, p.69.

³ McCloud, p.72.

⁴ McCloud, p.75.

⁵ McCloud, p.75.

⁶ Terada, Youki. "The Science of Drawing and Memory."

⁷ Fernandes, Myra A., Jeffrey D. Wammes, and Melissa E. Meade. "The Surprisingly Powerful Influence of Drawing on Memory."

⁸ Fernandes, Myra A., Jeffrey D. Wammes, and Melissa E. Meade. "The Surprisingly Powerful Influence of Drawing on Memory."

⁹ Evans, Joy, Tanya Skelton, and Jill Norris. *How to Teach Art to Children: Line, Shape, Color, Value, Texture, Form, Space*.

¹⁰ Pilkey, *Dog Man, Tale of Two Kitties*, p. 16.

¹¹ McCoud, p. 125.

¹² Evans, p. 17.

¹³ Barry, p. 76.

¹⁴ Brunetti, Ivan. *Aesthetics: a Memoir*. Introduction, no page assigned.

¹⁵ Brunetti, Ivan. *Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice*. p. 25.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Barry, p. 55.

¹⁸ Evans, p. 11.

¹⁹ Evans, p. 12.

²⁰ Evans, p. 20.

²¹ Evans, p. 24.

²² Barry, p. 61.