

**Ludic Pedagogy and The Classroom Story:
Exploring Classroom Engagement through Comics-based Research Self-Study**

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Abstract

The central question guiding this work is how arts-based, narrative-driven pedagogy can foster creativity, agency, and engagement in the classroom. Rather than positioning students as research subjects, this work has a focus on the teacher-researcher's evolving understanding of practice, possibility, and professional identity. The researcher integrates analysis and expression through the creation of comics. Comics-based research (CBR) as a self-study methodology is employed to critically reflect on and reimagine classroom practice. Grounded in arts-based research (ABR), CBR offers a creative, multimodal approach to inquiry and expression that aligns with the author's teaching philosophy and long-term pedagogical exploration. Connected with Ludic Pedagogy, *The Classroom Story* is a role-playing, story-driven approach to teaching. It allows the author to investigate, in a sustained manner, how imaginative, collaborative, and multimodal playful learning environments have shaped their own growth as an educator. By presenting the research analysis in comic form, this thesis offers educators an accessible and visually compelling resource for professional reflection and pedagogical innovation.

Keywords: arts-based research, collaboration, comics, comic-based research, co-creation, creativity, curriculum and learning, inquiry, multimodal texts, play, self-study.

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Terms and Definitions

CLASSROOM STORY, THE—An approach to teaching that uses narrative and characters to create a common learning experience. It is centred on the following: 1) a shared narrative; 2) writer and idea participants; 3) a mediator/mentor; 4) shared activities and events; 5) subject-specific curricular elements; 6) socially constructed knowledge; and 7) a ludic and spontaneous attitude.

CLASSROOM STORY, A—A story (or “unit”) that uses *The Classroom Story* as an approach. An attempt at starting and completing a shared, co-constructed narrative experience with some curricular learning goals.

EDU-LARP—Live-action role-plays that are designed with learning purposes in mind, typically in educational settings. An educational live-action role-play is a pedagogical activity where students take on character roles in pre-written scenarios designed to facilitate self-motivated learning, as well as teach pre-determined knowledge in a contextual framework (Peterson & Vanek, 2016).

GAME MECHANICS—Though there is not a set definition for “game mechanics,” there are a variety of interpretations. First, “game mechanics simply refers to the rules and systems that govern a game. Later definitions proceed to include that game mechanics are simply methods used by players for interacting with the game world” (Sicart, 2008). They determine how players can interact with the game, what they can and cannot do, and how they can win or lose. Game mechanics are an essential part of game design, as they help create a framework for players to engage with the game and provide a basis for strategic decision-making.

LARP—Live-action role-play(ing), or LARP is a dramatic and narrative game form that takes place in a physical environment. It is a storytelling system in which players assume character roles that they portray in person through action and interaction (Falk & Davenport, 2004).

LUDIC PEDAGOGY—The definition of “ludic” is to show spontaneous and undirected playfulness. Ludic pedagogy, therefore, is a teaching approach that incorporates play and games into the learning process. In a classroom setting, a teacher who practises ludic pedagogy might use games, puzzles, and other interactive activities to help students learn and engage with the material.

Chapter 1: Introduction & Background

I would point out only that teaching is its own art, and one can be a good instructor despite not necessarily being a great talent in that field. A good teacher, essentially, brings out good work from the students, or rather points the student toward wringing good work from themselves. (Brunetti, 2011, p. 3)

Position

With respect to my positionality: I am an able-bodied, white, cisgender male. I grew up in a traditional household where my parents were both of Mennonite descent. “Mennonite” is a term for both the cultural and religious elements of a specific Christian sect that informed my family’s worldview. In my early twenties, I realized that I had grown up with certain privileges that came with my identity. Although many of my perspectives and worldviews have changed since my formative years, justice was and remains particularly important to me. I want to help youth recognize and overcome the struggles they face, and to better understand themselves and their place in the world.

Pedagogical Beliefs

I believe that all human beings want to learn, have agency in the world, and desire to be connected to a genuine purpose. I also believe that learning can happen at any place, at any time, and to anyone. To facilitate these beliefs in a public education setting (where students are not given much choice in their schooling), I have come to call my beliefs ludic pedagogy. The word ludic means to show spontaneous and undirected playfulness. I consider this the sweet spot between rigour and interest, question and answer; a playful approach in which an educator can take things seriously,

but not too seriously. The foundation of these beliefs lies in my past experiences and interactions, and personal connections I have made.

For as long as I can remember, I have always been interested in games and play—specifically their power to teach. I first discovered this idea, teaching through games, when I was in my teens. At the time, I played a fantasy role-playing video game titled *Final Fantasy VII* for the Sony PlayStation. It is a game with a deep, winding story, vast amounts of exploration, innovative graphics for its time, original and stylish worldbuilding, and enjoyable combat. This was in 1997, so there were still little to no voice tracks in games, meaning the player had to read all the character dialogue. There was also not the same robustness with respect to online gaming communities at this time, which meant a dearth of useful tips or hints. If a player missed something during their playthrough, they would have to catch it when they played the game over again.

I mention this because my younger brother (seven years old at the time) would sit still and observe me intently as I played *Final Fantasy VII*. Then, when I was not home, he started his own game. He had to read all that text on his own, text which often included clues for how to progress in the game, like information on where to go next. I knew he was a precocious reader, but I also knew he did not decode and comprehend everything he read. He did, however, garner enough knowledge to navigate the game, and that was impressive. The *Final Fantasy* series is complex and requires knowledge of numeracy and literacy—it requires that one becomes adept at inventory management, health maintenance, buying and selling items, and managing complex upgrade systems for materials and equipment. All this information was meted out by text and numbers, with some visual cues; in other words, multimodal design. My little

brother was learning things simply by trying to play the game, and he was unaware of it. This situation helped me understand that interest creates rigour.

What struck me then (though not in so many words) was that people would endure rigour to learn the skills necessary for engaging or interacting with the things they found rewarding or enjoyable. In other words, if someone wanted something enough—to achieve an object or goal—they would go beyond their normal circumstances to achieve it. This aligns closely with Sugata Mitra's (2003) "Hole in the Wall" work, which he conducted in 1999 in Kalkaji, a poor urban area in New Delhi, India. Mitra's experiment tested self-directed learning through the installation of an internet-enabled computer in a public wall of a public building. What Mitra found was that children who interacted with the computer were able to learn how to use it and access information on their own, without any formal instruction. They were able to learn by exploring and experimenting with the computer and its applications, and by seeking help and guidance from each other and from people in the community. Mitra decided to call the method of instruction developed Minimally Invasive Education (MIE).

But what makes people want to learn in the first place? Answering this question has been a focal point of my professional career and has led to my ongoing fascination with the concept of engagement in learning. For me, engagement is a dynamic, emotional, and intellectual investment in the learning process. It involves curiosity, a sense of purpose, and the feeling that one's ideas and efforts matter. I feel that when students are truly engaged, they are connecting, questioning, creating, and caring about what they are learning.

During my early teaching years (2008–2012), I had to jump between different schools, term to term. I taught at four different schools between grades four and eleven, and because of this transitory situation, I was in a constant search for pedagogical strategies that worked. The first school I worked in was in an upper-middle-class area, and I experienced all the stereotypes that came with that: mostly compliant students, primarily supportive parents, and a homogenous school culture—of which I was part. The experience of teaching at this particular educational institution felt “standard”, it didn’t require me to try new things and the school operated for the status quo. This had the same feel as school while I was growing up. My early teaching practice followed a fairly simple model: Using the learning goals outlined by the province, I created and distributed resources, explained the tasks through direct instruction, collected worksheets, “corrected” them, and assigned numerical grades. This approach helped me develop foundational skills in lesson planning and classroom management.

My next position, however, brought me into a very different school environment that challenged many of my assumptions about classroom dynamics, engaging lessons, and the general purpose of education. The students came from diverse backgrounds and brought with them a wide range of experiences, learning needs, and strengths. To truly reach and support them, I had to adapt and rethink my approach. That was in 2011, and it is the school where I continue to teach today.

At this point, I had a good foothold in my career. I knew how to teach and manage a classroom, navigate reports and administritivia, and contribute to a school culture through extracurricular activities like coaching and running special interest clubs. During this time, I started to realize the instructional possibilities before me. As a

teacher, I could be creative with my lessons—there was not one established way to run a classroom. I could adapt and deliver the curriculum content in the manner I wanted. The biggest barriers I had observed to positive student achievement were disconnection and boredom in the classroom and with school in general. I found that youth did not want to do lessons about topics they were not excited about or could see no place for in their lives. At this school, I observed students who were being forced into a curriculum that they were reluctant to experience because it did not seem relevant to their lives. As Nel Noddings (2007) wrote, “some of us believe that it is demonstrably unfair to force students into courses they hate and deprive them of courses (or programs) better suited to their talents and interests” (p. 75). I figured that if students were excited—and if they were given some choice in how they engaged—they would be more invested in learning, whether that meant acquiring new knowledge, making a meaningful connection with a lesson, or developing stronger collaborative skills.

So how could I make school relevant, or at least interesting to these children? The idea of engagement was still fascinating to me. What was it exactly? How was it achieved? How can one learning experience be engaging for a whole classroom? In seeking to learn how to capture the attention of students, I explored and experimented with three notable areas of lesson design and delivery, seeking student connection first and foremost. By lesson design, I mean the process of planning an overarching unit of learning—by theme or subject—consisting of day-to-day lessons as well as formative and summative assessments. The word delivery in this context is defined as the physical act of teaching a planned learning experience for students in a classroom.

In terms of teaching success—defined by me as successfully engaging students—I first achieved this by using project-based learning (PBL). In PBL, there is usually a single large goal that the students in the class work toward together. The children learn the curricular goals via problem-solving or by creating an educational artifact that represents the solution to the problem. Project-based learning appealed to me because the students would be learning by doing. This is different from using a student project (e.g., a poster or a presentation) to demonstrate knowledge on a topic. Instead, the project acts as the framework for the process, which is the learning. Project-based learning has students work on authentic problems with each other, striving toward shared goals and learning objectives (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). One can see how PBL, and even the works of Sugata Mitra, have their roots in the works of John Dewey, who was adamantly against purely passive forms of education such as lectures, strict curriculums, and “blank slate” theories of education, where students were considered empty of knowledge and needing to be filled (1934). Instead, Dewey saw this type of experiential learning and community involvement as essential elements of a successful and meaningful educational experience. He suggested that education should be focused on helping students to develop the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind that they need to succeed in life, rather than simply preparing them for specific tasks or occupations (1910, 1934).

This closely aligns with the work of revolutionary educational thinker Paulo Freire. Freire rejected the notion that students are empty vessels to be filled with knowledge, or what he called the “banking model” of education. Instead, he emphasized the importance of power and agency in learning, arguing that education should be a

democratic and dialogical process grounded in mutual respect and co-construction of meaning. Central to his approach was the idea of problem-posing education, in which teachers and students engage in critical reflection and inquiry together (Freire, 2000).

My belief in this kind of education naturally extended into a project-based learning (PBL) approach, which offered students meaningful choices about how they demonstrated their learning. These choices were not limited to end-of-unit tasks but were embedded throughout the process, in dialogue with the teacher. In this way, both student and teacher became co-creators in the learning experience.

I used this approach while teaching about ancient Greece and Rome to middle school students. I found that student motivation increased when they were working on something substantial and personally meaningful. The combination of a clear framework provided by the teacher and the freedom to explore topics of interest encouraged deeper engagement. I also noticed stronger collaboration among students, as they shared a common goal they genuinely cared about. A detailed example of this process is explored further in Chapter 5.

The next pedagogical movement in which I immersed myself was Educational Technology (EdTech). My school division in Winnipeg, Manitoba took on a one-to-one iPad-to-student approach with the multifaceted idea that this would increase innovation, connect with students' desires to use technology, give all children equal access to digital devices, and thus lead to better learning outcomes. Some of these intentions were realized, and some were not. At the time, I thought EdTech was particularly important so I made sure to commit to using it in a way that I suspected could be engaging and informative for students. Based on my experience, EdTech is neither a bane nor a

solution; it is simply another tool. I believe learning how to use computers and other digital media tools is important in our world, but I do not believe students need one-to-one iPads all the time to be successful in this area. Youth do, however, need to have access to, and be able to use technology and various media tools. At this time, I achieved what I viewed as my biggest teaching success by combining elements of PBL and EdTech to help produce a summative learning experience with my students. We ultimately called this experience, “The Hobbit: An Unexpected Talk Show.” For this project, the class created a variety show where each group of students produced a video interpretation of an event, character, or topic based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s original work *The Hobbit* (1937). During this project, the students wrote many drafts of their scripts or project notes using collaborative online documents and used green screen backgrounds to edit in our backdrops. I noticed that this summative project helped create a sense of community as all groups were able to contribute to a single class project in a way of their choosing.

The final pedagogical belief with which I had an affinity was the concept of social justice or equity in schools. Teaching in public education for almost two decades has shown me the rich diversity of Winnipeg and Manitoba. Over the years I have changed many of my previously held views, and it has become important to me to include the ideals of equity and inclusion in my work, and to live them as much as possible in my life. The task to build a more peaceful, sustainable, and equitable kind of world seems like the very goal of education; a world where people are far more compassionate about each other and the planet. I wondered, *Where do I start? How can I teach my students to be “good citizens”?*

As I progressed in my teaching, I started to question what “good” meant and at whom it was directed. I was reminded of an article I read in the Summer 2013 issue of *Geez Magazine*. The author of this article, Ted Harrison, had written a letter to his goddaughter on the eighth anniversary of her baptism.

I don't want you to be good because good is a loaded word. For kids, it usually means obedient. Or compliant, or dutiful [sic]. Or just plain old does-as-she's-told. [sic] And maybe a lot of parents bring their kids up to be like that because they had to be like that—so for them that's just the way it is. We have to be difficult, we have to be courageous, we have to resist. (Harrison, 2013)

These words reverberated deeply within me. I felt they applied to the students around me. I saw many of them living in conditions that did not reflect those ideals, where learning about concepts like “goodness” and “citizenship” seemed like platitudes, unobjectionable truths, but with not a lot beneath the surface. To be good means to do what you are told; to comply with authority. And here is where I can connect this feeling with Michael Merry's (2020) idea of *failed citizenship*: “where mostly poor, mostly minority youth continue to disengage from whatever schools are trying to teach them about how to be a ‘proper’ citizen” (p.132). The use of the word “proper” here strikes me because its interpretations are diverse and ambiguous. What does a proper citizen look and act like? And who is deciding the definition of proper in most of these cases? Are the parents and community a part of this definition? I would argue that proper behaviour in schools most often equates with “compliance” and “obedience.” So how does one really teach equity? Is it through words and lessons, or actions and attitudes?

Through years of facilitating group projects shaped by student input, I began to form a vision of what a true learning community could look and sound like—one marked by shared momentum and collaborative decision-making. I often found myself wondering: *How could I bring students together even more deeply? How could I foster that sense of community more consistently?* To me, this is what justice and equity look like in practice: learners overcoming differences, contributing their individual strengths, and working collectively to create something meaningful and worth celebrating.

The Classroom Story: A Description

In mid-2013, while teaching another term at a Winnipeg high school, I stumbled upon the artist/teacher Gregory Chomichuk writing with his English class. I recognized some of the youth present as students I had taught previously in middle school. I watched my former students as they were happily moving, conversing, and writing furiously. They seemed enthusiastic, engaged, and playful. After witnessing this compelling and instructive practice, I talked to Gregory about what he was doing, and he invited me to keep visiting his class. He graciously left the conversation open while I inquired, watched, probed, questioned, learned, and made many attempts in my own classroom to emulate what Gregory was doing with his students. What this engaging, instructive practice was is something that Chomichuk and I have come to call *The Classroom Story*.

In *The Classroom Story*, the teacher acts as designer, narrator, and moderator by creating a setting, inciting an event, crafting a general plot, and planning the various game elements, all the while infusing the exercise with curricular outcomes and

language. Students engage with the story and curricular content by designing characters and becoming authors, thinkers, and creators.

After seeing it in action, I had to try it for myself, with my own pupils. My first foray into *The Classroom Story* was as an analogue for the novel *The Hunger Games*, which I was studying with my grade ten English class. I wanted to work on creative writing with this group of students while still maintaining a collaborative feel. I created a large map of our “Hunger Games Arena” using digital art software on a computer, then printed it out and hung it up in the classroom. The students designed their own characters on a game sheet, complete with strengths, weaknesses, and a backstory connected to the District they hailed from. Then we took a leap of faith together and started creating our own story in real-time.

In our story, I acted as the “head gamemaker” from the novel by subjecting their characters to events they needed to survive. Students shared ideas, wrote together, and peer-edited on the fly because they had to draft novel solutions to the problems at hand. At many points in the story, I invited student ideas to be shared through speaking, drawing, writing, or any other communication mode available. Looking back, it was a messy experience with a lot of learning on the fly, but one that I had to go through. How did I learn to use *The Classroom Story*, and how does it influence my practice then and now?

Since then, while I have continued using *The Classroom Story* as an approach toward encouraging greater engagement in the classroom, I have come to realize another of its powers—how it serves as a springboard for inquiry. The ideas, projects, and artifacts inspired by *Classroom Stories* in the past have been remarkable because

they are not prescribed; they are student created. This means that ideas pursued by students are original, unique to them, and decided collaboratively. Over the years there have been many unique projects that have crossed my desk, but I will take a moment here to explain a few that have stood out to me, to help build a picture of the possibilities. In 2016, as a summative project for our fantasy role-playing world “Carta Marina”, a student created a comic titled *Dungeon Dash*. In this comic, a child envisioned and retold the story of a classroom experience. Each character in the comic represented a real person and their avatar, and each event and action in the comic was based on the lived, collaborative experience of the classroom. In 2019, another youth created a “Carta Marina” adventure book where the reader was forced to make choices by interacting with the text and visuals. The book drew on collective classroom experiences, as well as the author’s and some guest co-authors’ own experiences.

One of my favourite examples of *The Classroom Story* being the basis of inquiry was our exploration of the Roman Republic. This unit of study had the class role-playing as famous Romans by acting as senators for various historical events. This playful exploration of content led to the creation of a museum night we titled “SPQR: A Rome Exhibition,” which was an informative and interactive event populated by and decorated with student-made projects. Each project was an exhibit based on the students’ interests in a specific domain of Roman history. Some of the projects on display included the following: Two escapes rooms (one based on Julius Caesar, another on Hannibal’s march); a *Minecraft*-constructed gladiator arena; a reality TV show based on the Roman gods; numerous high-quality informative displays covering a diverse array of topics; a Roman trivia game made with Scratch, to test visitors; original art of the

triumvirate displayed on banners; the hallway of famous Romans; and more. A level of intrinsic motivation was built through the engaging and playful experiences of the children.

Following my initial encounter with *The Classroom Story*, Gregory and I had many conversations about the various pedagogical implications we observed, which in turn encouraged us to explore diverse ways of using *The Classroom Story* approach. From our experiences, this style had a positive impact on academics, engagement, and student self-esteem, while helping with classroom dynamics. This means we observed students raising their level of work from what we saw previously, they were engaged through conversation and positive body language, and were happily conversing and working with classmates outside their peer group. The conversations Gregory and I had led us to undertake presentations and workshops on the subject both together and individually. We also developed “Classroom Story-isms,” a list of helpful reminders and ideas—not a step-by-step guide—to aid teachers wanting to try this dramatic pedagogical style for themselves.

In a recent conversation, Gregory and I talked about an idea called the “paradox path” as it relates to the *Classroom Story*. The claim is that it is not possible to know where a *Classroom Story* is going without starting to make it first, together. The story is a path you make by walking with the students. With each new step, the students are moving the story forward with their own contributions and ideas. The teacher is the mediator in this process, and it is every student's job to help decide the next path—there can be no forward momentum without student responses (G.M.B. Chomichuk, personal communication, January 4, 2022).

My excitement for this teaching style has led me to write many blog posts over the years, reflecting on successful *Classroom Stories*. My three-part blog series, called “Teaching a Gaming Generation” (Schmidt, 2016), explains why I think understanding gaming culture is important for instructing students today. My main claim in the blog was that the gaming world now belongs to people of any age, any gender, and any ethnicity around the world, using any console or device. The reason I wrote this blog series stemmed from a YouTube video by Extra Credits (2015) called “Bartle’s Taxonomy—What Type of Player Are You?” The video summarized the findings of Richard Bartle’s 1996 article, “Hearts, Clubs, Diamonds, Spades: Players Who Suit Muds.”

Bartle studied multi-user dungeon (MUDS) users and their game world, stemming from the question “What do people want out of a MUD?” (Bartle, 1996). He found that people played video games for many reasons, but he grouped and summarized them into the following roles: achievers, explorers, socializers, and killers. Achievers wanted to act upon the game world to score and collect the most, and win. Explorers wanted to find out as much as they could by interacting with the game world through experimentation and by pushing boundaries. Socializers wanted to interact with other players through conversation and role-playing. The final group, killers, wanted to act upon other players by intimidating, conquering, and causing distress. Bartle (1996) surmised that achievers act upon the game world, killers act upon other players, socializers interact with other players, and explorers act upon the world.

This concept opened my eyes; it was as if another piece of the “engagement puzzle” had fallen into place. I thought of my classroom, the instruction, and the players within it.

I began to see a parallel between Bartle's Taxonomy and the dynamics of a classroom: just as players in a game have distinct types, students also exhibit different learning dispositions, with the classroom and lesson functioning as the game world they navigate. Achievers may want to ace the test, obtain high marks, and complete all assignments. Socializers may wish to converse, play, and make peer connections. Explorers may desire to test the limits of the game, experiment with different forms, and be given interesting assessment options. Killers may seek to exert agency, have a purpose, lead, cause distress, exploit, and employ power over others. However, my mind noticed a pattern in this, for it seemed to me that our educational institutions are highly designed for one player type in particular: achievers. It is expected that this type of player will complete the assignments, obtain high marks, and achieve a place on the school's honours list, in turn receiving rewards and scholarships. I also realized, though, that these four categories do not have clearly defined boundaries, they are generalizations. There can be interplay between the personality types. For example, I see myself as an achiever and explorer both as a learner and a gamer, because I like to attain a certain level of mastery and achievement, yes, but I prefer to choose my own path and do things in my way. Overall, Bartle's ideas helped me question how I could make my classroom more engaging for all these different player types.

The Classroom Story is an amalgamation of my pedagogical beliefs, my penchant for inquiry-based learning styles, and my budding identity as an artist. Adopting this style as a pedagogical approach has afforded me flexibility, creativity, and engagement in my profession. I can make affordances with my lesson planning to reach out to all the different "player types" and the classroom transforms into a living,

breathing role-playing dramatic text. In addition to this, *The Classroom Story* also provides virtually all children with the opportunity to contribute in their own way to creating a communal experience. As such, *The Classroom Story* becomes a shared experience that can never be totally planned out, its outcomes never anticipated.

Over the years, I have observed that children are capable of remarkable self-directed learning when they are given access to purpose, agency, and the chance to develop meaningful skills over time. I have also come to understand that when students are genuinely interested in what they are doing, they are more likely to engage in deep and meaningful learning. These beliefs have shaped my philosophy and grounded my teaching practice, guiding me as I create engaging, interactive learning environments. Through this self-study and the arts-based research that follows, I hope to better understand and express how these ideas take shape in a real classroom.

Chapter 2: Research Context

Background

I seek to contribute to the broader conversation about culture and education, and I see *The Classroom Story* as a meaningful entry point that invites dialogue at a grassroots level. Inspired by the ideas in Daniel Pink's *Drive* (2011), my teaching approach is grounded in the belief that engagement flourishes when learners experience autonomy, develop meaningful skills, and connect their efforts to a larger sense of purpose. I believe that these elements are key to fostering intrinsic motivation in both students and educators.

I have often observed teachers being hesitant to try new or different strategies in their classrooms and have wondered about the roots of this belief. Why are good, caring teachers reluctant to try new things? I have gotten the sense from my colleagues that teachers feel like there are fads in education that come and go, and that they are not worth learning because someone (usually an administrator or school division) will just tell them something new next year; meanwhile, last year's "fad" will fall to the wayside. This is an unfortunate glib picture, but it can be better.

I relate this sentiment of teacher reluctance to Michael Fullan's concept of "pedagogical legacy". He has explained that through our culture, teachers (and more broadly educational institutions) have inherently learned certain ways of thinking about teaching and learning. Fullan has elaborated further: "You're used to teaching in a certain way. You want to change, and you even start to change—but you find yourself slipping back into the old, comfortable way" (Thiers, 2017). I see this playing out now in regards to how to translate pedagogical concepts of creativity and critical thinking into

modern lessons, but this kind of work is difficult and often problematic because education tends to value tradition and well-established structures (Corrigan et al., 2021). So, even if teachers try a new idea, how sustainable is it? Teaching creativity and critical thinking are wonderful ideals, but they often seem tenuous in how they are envisioned, implemented, and executed by teachers, and more broadly, educational institutions.

In my presentation, workshop, and teaching experience, I have helped motivate, inspire, and provide answers for educators about how they can make their classrooms more engaging. After many of my workshops and conversations with participants, a large number of educators have reached out asking for resources, advice, and questions to explore *The Classroom Story* further. Simply put, there is growing interest in how teachers can apply this narrative-driven, playful learning approach in their own classrooms. However, there is currently no central guiding text or resource to support them.

I believe that when being presented with novel or new classroom teaching strategies, educators need them to make sense and “fit” with their strengths and what they already do. Ideally, they should be excited about trying new learning technologies, theories, and methods with their classes. In my experience running workshops and presentations about *The Classroom Story*, the feeling in the room is exciting and electric—I have received incredibly positive feedback from the groups with whom I have worked. I believe the *Classroom Story* fits with what teachers do because it is enticing, plays to their strengths, and can work within the current education system. It is my hope that observations and data from this thesis connect to ideas about how creativity, collaboration, and co-creation can manifest in the classroom.

Educators facilitating *The Classroom Story* use tools such as narrative and characters to create a common learning experience with their teaching and students' learning. Teachers can become creative with lesson planning, relinquish power and control, adopt a playful approach to learning, and take curriculum delivery and assessment to unexpected places. It is an approach centred on the following: 1) a narrative; 2) participants; 3) a mediator/guide; 4) shared activities and events; 5) subject-specific curricular elements; 6) socially constructed knowledge; and 7) a ludic and spontaneous attitude. This is my current understanding of and teaching approach to *The Classroom Story*.

I have been developing *The Classroom Story* for over a decade and have presented and run workshops about this teaching tool a multitude of times. I encourage teachers to add their flair and expertise to how they envision and use *The Classroom Story* in their own teaching. That is what makes a *Classroom Story* impossible to replicate: Each teacher and group of students brings their own unique perspectives and ideas to the experience, resulting in different learnings, student artifacts, and new educational understandings.

I would like to point out that I have always viewed *The Classroom Story* as a loose approach or orientation. My beliefs do not subscribe to a series of acronyms or typographies, and *The Classroom Story* is not strictly about trying to make learning enjoyable—although that is a fortunate by-product of the story and gaming elements. Using this approach centres the idea that through motivation and engagement, teachers can foster students' learning and growth.

To this end, Gregory and I have developed separate ways in which to approach using a *Classroom Story*. My approach to *Classroom Story* is often interdisciplinary, aimed at using story and role-play to immerse students in the curricular content. Different teachers will teach different subjects, with different strengths, in different situations. I will be working on this thesis alone—my ideas for this thesis are mine, though Gregory and I will continue to have conversations about *The Classroom Story*, as we have always done.

I have chosen a self-study arts-based methodology, as it allows me to critically reflect on my teaching practice and explore both past and present experiences. Within this framework, I also incorporate comics-based research (CBR), which offers a unique multimodal lens through which to analyze and represent my learning journey in visually expressive and meaning-rich ways. This self-study explores the various pedagogical facets that make up *The Classroom Story* in order to help me produce an informative and engaging text to help teachers implement this exciting teaching and learning style. In this process, I wanted to legitimize *The Classroom Story* by connecting over a decade of practice to established theory. In examining the underlying theories and pedagogies at the heart of *The Classroom Story* (which are covered in the Literature Review), I hope to better elucidate to other teachers and instructors what *The Classroom Story* is and how they might run a version of it in their own classrooms. Grounded in arts-based research and supported by comics-based methods of representation, this work also invited reflection on my own beliefs and incorporated the insights of others to better understand how teachers imagine, design, and implement their own *Classroom Stories*.

Through this research process, I learned how to more effectively communicate the core concepts of *The Classroom Story* and transform them into a practical, engaging resource for educators. I found that in my reading, the only area in the academic literature that is close to *The Classroom Story* is the concept of educational live-action role-play (edu-LARP). In this thesis, I will report on the benefits of edu-LARP, but also its limitations and perceived problems. I think it is important for me to note that I have no negative issues with edu-LARPs. They are incredible educational experiences and can be leveraged in many interesting ways. My concern is that I believe training teachers to be proficient in edu-LARP would result in a large amount of resistance—edu-LARPS can be a difficult approach because teachers must be remarkably familiar with game elements, game mechanics, drama, and role-playing. And yes, these things can be part of a *Classroom Story*, but they are not requirements.

Bowman (2014) reiterated that an edu-LARP approach is not a fix-all solution for every classroom, and I have said something similar to *The Classroom Story*. It is a remarkable tool that, when used right, can create valuable and engaging learning experiences for students and teachers alike.

Purpose

The goal for my self-study is to provide a text discussing my own first-hand experiences and the experiences of other educators working with and teaching via *The Classroom Story* in K–12 education, with a concentration on middle years teaching and learning. By providing information about the underlying pedagogies and theories inherent in this approach in a playful and engaging way, I intend to help engage teachers by using their own craft and classrooms to understand and incorporate *The*

Classroom Story into their teaching. To be explicit, the purpose of this thesis is to investigate my experiences of *The Classroom Story* in use, and to analyze and convey my findings to further develop curricular ideas and pedagogical approaches.

Central to this research are two guiding questions: What will I learn about my own practice through this process? And how can I collect, analyze, and share that learning in ways that effectively convey the principles of *The Classroom Story* to other educators? These questions shape both the inquiry and the methodological choices that underpin this work, anchoring it in reflective, arts-based, and participatory modes of research.

To answer these questions, I will be looking at this subject from the teacher's point of view, in relation to difficulties in teaching and student learning; examining youth engagement through the framework of mastery, autonomy, and purpose (Pink, 2011); and studying the co-creation of youth learning. Further, I intend to use self-study in conjunction with ABR and CBR to create a text that will assist educators in utilizing *Classroom Story* methods in their own teaching, so that they can better foster student collaboration, creativity, and co-creation.

To accomplish this, I will briefly highlight my research approach (which I will cover in detail in Chapter 4) which employed multiple research methodologies. (1) I will use self-study to examine my practices and experiences in planning, teaching, and coaching others in *Classroom Story* pedagogy. (2) I will use Barone and Eisner's (2012) five-phase ABR approach, combined with (3) elements of CBR, to collect, analyze, and communicate my findings in a comic text (Chapter 5). Given the nature of my research methodology, I anticipate that additional dimensions of *The Classroom Story* pedagogy

will emerge as the process unfolds—offering new opportunities for observation, analysis, and reflection that can further inform and deepen the work.

I am inspired by the work of Lynda Barry, particularly her text *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor* (Barry, 2014). Barry's integration of image and text offers a compelling model for communicating approaches to education, blending philosophical reflection with practical classroom activities. Her chronicle-style format which is personal, reflective, and pedagogically rich—has influenced the structure of this thesis. In a similar spirit, I employ comics-based research (CBR) as a core component of this arts-based self-study, using visual narrative to document, reflect upon, and analyze my teaching practice. Comics-based research is an emerging field of practice that can provide researchers with three unique affordances that traditional research does not: (1) multimodality, (2) sequence and simultaneity, and (3) style and voice (Kuttnar et al., 2021). By creating comics as inquiry, I am following in the footsteps of the works of Barry (2014, 2018), Flowers (2017), and Sousanis (2015).

In my experience, *The Classroom Story* has fostered meaningful and engaging learning opportunities for both my students and myself. This approach has not only enriched classroom practice but also deepened my understanding of teaching and learning as a dynamic, collaborative processes. Building on what I have learned—and anticipating learning through ongoing inquiry—I am motivated to contribute to the broader educational discourse surrounding student engagement, agency, creativity, and collaboration. I believe *The Classroom Story* offers an accessible and adaptable framework for educators seeking to create purposeful and interactive learning environments. As I turn to the literature, I aim to situate this work within existing

scholarship, exploring foundational theories and contemporary research that inform and support the principles and practices underlying *The Classroom Story*. This review will provide the conceptual grounding needed to articulate the significance of this approach and to guide the research methods employed in this study.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Concepts can never be presented to me merely, they must be knitted into the structure of my being, and this can only be done through my own activity. (Follet, 1930, p. 151)

In this thesis, I will endeavour to illustrate the significance of teacher and student engagement, inquiry, creativity, co-creation, and multimodal literacies through employing self-study arts-based research (ABR) in conjunction with comics-based research (CBR) practices. I aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the importance of teacher and student engagement in learning and the utilization of the arts within education, and to provide insights on the pedagogical approaches and paradigms that facilitate creativity, collaboration, and democratic principles in a classroom. A comprehensive literature review is necessary to help explore and connect the theory and pedagogical foundations of the lived experiences and data, and to be able to connect theory to practice. In writing this review, I hope to address the: 1) epistemological, 2) theoretical, 3) ontological, and 4) pedagogical building blocks of *The Classroom Story*. Concurrently, I seek to become more aware of the interconnected nature of the research, as well as the areas in the literature where the information in this thesis could help contribute to the existing dialogue and provide meaningful research and data.

The literature review will commence with an exploration of the broader implications of arts and creativity and their indispensability within the realm of education and, more broadly, human experience. The next section of this review turns toward pedagogical possibilities, exploring how creative, inquiry-driven approaches to teaching have been shaped by foundational educational thinkers. It highlights the evolution of

hands-on, experiential learning practices that foster curiosity, collaboration, and personal expression—while also embracing the rise of multimodal literacies as essential to contemporary teaching and learning. This will be followed by a third component, a concise review of comics, highlighting the history, misconceptions, unique features, and impact this visual narrative form might have within educational contexts. To close this review, a final discussion of contemporary pedagogical theories will connect past to present. These modern paradigms highlight the importance of co-creation and play in human learning and development, and to that effect, the incorporation of games, play, and ludic pedagogies in teaching. An emerging pedagogical approach known as edu-LARP (educational live-action role-playing) will be examined within this context.

Significance of the Arts and Creativity

The arts are deeply embedded in human experience as they help shape how we see the world, how we make meaning, and how we connect with others (Dissanayake, 1990). Dissanayake (1990) argues that the arts are not a cultural luxury but a vital part of our evolution, passed down through generations because they serve essential functions in our lives such as: enhancing our perception, bringing order to complex experiences, and strengthening social relationships. In my own teaching, I have witnessed how creative processes like storytelling, performance, and visual expression can unlock student engagement in ways traditional methods often cannot. *The Classroom Story* was born from my understanding that creativity is not ornamental but central to how young people learn, explore identity, and make sense of their world. The arts offer a way to teach that is not only effective but human, but one that honours the full range of how students think, feel, and communicate.

What is Art For?

Art gives us the chance to see the world differently. Through artistic experiences, we develop the ability to step into new perspectives, empathize with others, and question the assumptions we often take for granted (Dissanayake, 1990; Greene, 1995, 2001). As Dissanayake (1990) suggests, when we transform ordinary things into something special, we imbue them with meaning. We are able to engage with the world on a deeper level—intellectually, emotionally, and socially.

The arts offer a powerful platform for expressing and communicating ideas, emotions, and viewpoints that push the boundaries of conventional thinking (Csikszentmihalyi, 2015; Eisner, 2002; Greene, 2001). That capacity to imagine alternatives, to question norms, and to create meaning is central to what I aim to foster in *The Classroom Story*. Through collaborative storytelling and multimodal expression, students are actively imagining together.

In education, then, art must be more than a set of technical skills or the reproduction of established styles. It should be about helping students discover and cultivate their own artistic sensibilities and creative voices (Eisner, 2002; Greene, 1995). This means creating space for exploration, which includes: experimenting with materials, working across different forms, and engaging in critical reflection with others (Eisner, 2002; Lowenfeld, 1957). This kind of engagement develops not only aesthetic understanding but also the cognitive flexibility and emotional intelligence needed in today's classrooms (Eisner, 2002; Gardner, 2011).

The arts also play a vital role in how we make sense of the human experience. They help us imagine who we are, who we could become, and how we might relate to one another more meaningfully. Dissanayake (1990) describes this as the act of

“making special,” a deliberate way of shaping experience so that it resonates with intention and feeling. Skills like problem-solving, critical thinking, and emotional regulation are deeply embedded in its process. Art is a generative force that helps us build new paradigms, both individually and collectively (Eisner, 2001; Greene, 1995).

In the context of collaborative classroom work, I have seen how art creates opportunities for students to express their ideas, connect with others, and explore cultural perspectives with empathy and curiosity (Eisner, 2001; Gude, 2004). These social aspects of the arts are not secondary, they are essential.

A fitting reflection on the role of art comes from Korean novelist Young-Ha Kim, who in his TEDxSeoul talk shared a playful yet poignant story. He spoke of “devils” who try to stop us from becoming artists by asking the magic question: “What for?” But as Kim reminds us, “Art is not for anything. Art is the ultimate goal. It saves our souls and makes us live happily” (Kim, 2013). For me—and for the students who co-create *The Classroom Story*—this sentiment rings true. Art is how we make meaning, how we connect, and how we stay human.

Art and Experience

When people interact with art, they are not simply observing—they are having an experience. This experience, though often fleeting or difficult to describe, has been the focus of a growing interdisciplinary field known as neuroaesthetics, where researchers explore the neural basis of aesthetic experience using neuroscience rather than traditional philosophical or psychological analysis (Skov et al., 2009). Rather than locating a single “art center” in the brain, studies show that the experience of art emerges from interactions among widely distributed brain regions—suggesting that

aesthetic response is a dynamic, embodied, and deeply integrated process (Nadal, 2013). Art experiences engage perceptual, emotional, and cognitive systems all at once. They are, as Nadal (2013) puts it, a complex of experiences, rooted in both our evolutionary past and our shared humanity (Dissanayake, 1990).

In the field of education, John Dewey's work laid early foundations for understanding the significance of these experiences. In *Art as Experience* (1934), Dewey proposed that art does not merely exist in objects, but in the imaginative engagement they provoke. Art, he argued, functions as a kind of language that helps us attend to and reflect on our lived experiences in a more concentrated and meaningful way. Aesthetic experience, in Dewey's (1934) view, is both expressive and constructive. It enables individuals to build knowledge holistically, not through abstraction alone, but through felt, embodied engagement with the world. His ideas continue to influence the work of contemporary thinkers such as Biesta and Burbules (2004), Greene (2001), and Noddings (2003), whose philosophies emphasize the importance of imagination, care, and embodied knowing in education.

These ideas are echoed and extended in the work of Lynda Barry, a contemporary cartoonist and educator whose reflections on art and memory resonate closely with Dewey's concept of aesthetic experience. Barry believes that art cannot be separated from the experience of viewing or reading it; when we engage with a piece of art, we bring ourselves into it, and the act of attention itself becomes part of the artwork (Misemer, 2020). Like Dewey, Barry emphasizes that the physical artifact is only one aspect—the art happens in the transaction between the viewer and the image (Barry, 2014; Dewey, 1934). This idea sits at the heart of *The Classroom Story* as well: art is

not a product to be evaluated at a distance, but an active, living process of imaginative engagement.

Barry's idea of the *image* captures this beautifully saying, "an image is something that is more like a ghost than a picture; something which feels somehow alive . . . and is contained and transported by something that is not alive" (Barry, 2014, p. 15). For Barry, an image is a fusion of art, experience, and memory. This description speaks directly to the kind of learning I have seen in creative classrooms: moments that feel alive, full of possibility, and shaped by what is seen and felt.

Hands-On

In *Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began* (2015), Dissanayake suggested that the origins of art can be traced back to the tactile experiences of early humans, who used their hands to create and handle objects. Through touching, manipulating, and creating, humans develop a sense of mastery and control over their environment, which in turn leads to a greater sense of self-efficacy and confidence (2015). Lowenfeld argued that art education should be structured around a sequence of experiences that allows students to develop their creative abilities and explore different media and techniques through hands-on experiences (1957).

The company that produces the stationery notebook line Leuchtturm1917 explicitly states that the hand is the window to the mind, referring to the ideas of German philosopher Immanuel Kant (Leuchtturm1917, n.d.). The brand takes the idea very seriously with the motto "denken mit der hand," or "think with your hands." The company's website elaborates on this sentiment:

Writing by hand is thinking on paper. Thoughts grow into words, sentences and pictures. Memories become stories. Ideas are transformed into projects. Notes inspire insight. We write and understand, learn, see and think—with our hands. Your ideas, your plans, your projects. It's all in your hands. (Leuchtturm1917, n.d.)

Using our hands, both literally and metaphorically, holds profound significance for human beings. Learning by doing not only connects us to our ancestors but also grounds us in our environments and invites exploration of our abilities and inclinations (Dissanayake, 2015; Lowenfeld, 1957). It is through the tactile, physical engagement with materials and ideas that we begin to cultivate both our cognitive and affective capacities (Dewey, 1934; Kolb, 2014). In the case of comics as a medium, this connection becomes particularly vivid. Scott McCloud (1993) describes the communicative arc of comics as beginning in the artist's mind, flowing through the hand, and arriving on the page—where it is then received by the viewer's eye and interpreted back in the mind. The hand, in this process, is an integral conduit for expression, shaping the form and meaning of what is communicated (McCloud, 1993).

Creativity in Education

Creativity is often celebrated as a hallmark of the arts, but in education, its role extends far beyond aesthetic expression. At its core, creativity involves risk-taking, flexibility, and a willingness to engage with uncertainty (Beghetto, 2019). It is a way of thinking and being that has the potential to transform how we teach, learn, and live (Robinson, 2011; Eisner, 2002). By exploring creativity within the context of arts and

education, we can begin to understand its broader significance and how it might be nurtured more intentionally in schools (Greene, 1995).

As early as the 1930s, Mary Parker Follett emphasized the centrality of creative experience in everyday life. In her essay *The Creative Experience* (1934), she argued that creativity is not confined to any one domain; rather, it emerges whenever individuals are willing to grapple with problems, explore new possibilities, and generate original ideas. For Follett, creativity was not an embellishment of human life but a vital and continuous process of becoming.

Nearly a century later, scholars and educators continue to expand on this idea. Robert Kelly (2012) reframed creativity as a capacity not only for artistic expression, but for innovation, entrepreneurship, and complex problem-solving. His work underscores the importance of fostering creativity as a core educational outcome, especially in light of the demands of an evolving world. Similarly, Sir Ken Robinson (2011) advocated for a broad view of creativity as “highly focused work on ideas and projects,” where students learn to craft, revise, and make meaningful decisions along the way (Robinson & Lee, p. 5). Creativity, in this sense, is both imaginative and disciplined—it involves generating new possibilities and refining them through critical judgment.

Lene Tanggaard (2020) captured the spirit of this creative process by describing it as “working between the sphere of what is and what might be” (p. 10), suggesting that creativity is about navigating possibility and bringing forth something not yet realized. This echoes Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (2015) view of creativity as the “engine that drives cultural evolution” (p. 167)—a force that shapes societies by enabling us to respond to challenges with new insight and vision.

While creativity is increasingly recognized as essential in education, it remains notoriously difficult to assess (Beghetto & Kaufman, 2014). Traditional methods of evaluation often rely on fixed criteria and standardized outputs, which can limit the very openness and risk-taking that creativity demands (Eisner, 2002). As Robert Kelly (2012) noted, creative assessment must move beyond simple rubrics and instead involve nuanced, formative processes that value originality, problem-finding, and iterative growth. Rather than assessing a final product alone, educators are encouraged to consider the creative process—including the development of ideas, experimentation with materials, and thoughtful reflection on both successes and failures. Robinson (2011) also emphasized that assessing creativity requires a shift in mindset; from seeking right answers to supporting students as they make meaning in diverse and unexpected ways. In arts-based classrooms, this means valuing experimentation, voice, and process as legitimate measures of learning.

In the context of *The Classroom Story* and similar arts-based pedagogies, creativity is foundational. It empowers students to imagine alternative worlds, collaborate, and contribute meaningfully to shared learning experiences. Cultivating creativity in education means creating spaces where students can take risks, ask questions that don't have easy answers, and experiment with different ways of making and knowing.

Models of Creativity

In exploring creativity within *The Classroom Story*, I found myself constantly returning to the idea that creativity is not a fixed trait or reserved for a select few, but a dynamic and contextual process that unfolds differently depending on who is creating,

where, and why. Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) "Four Cs" model—ranging from mini-c to Big-C—resonates with this view. Much of the creative work I observed and engaged in with students would be categorized as **mini-c** or **little-c**: personal meaning-making, playful risk-taking, and small moments of insight during storytelling, drawing, or collaboration. This aligns with Csikszentmihalyi's (2015) systems model, which sees creativity as something that arises not just from individual capacity, but from interactions between a person, a cultural domain, and a field of gatekeepers or mentors.

But unfortunately, creativity in schools is often misunderstood as Karwowski (2017) examined the intersection of creativity, education, and power dynamics. The author reviewed multiple theoretical frameworks for creativity, as well as empirical research, to examine the complex relationship between creativity and power in an educational context. Distinct levels of creative ability, openness, and independence yielded four creativity types: complex, subordinated, rebellious, and self-actualizing (Karwowski, 2017). "Rebellious" creativity is often found to be shunned within the educational system because it is nonconformist in nature and seen as a threat to the authority of teachers and institutions (Karwowski, 2017).

Ultimately, these models of creativity have helped me understand the multifaceted nature of creativity and the nuances of how creative acts emerge, evolve, and sometimes resist containment. This is what I have come to believe through my teaching practice: that creativity is not only the spark of a great idea, but the slow burn of connection, tension, iteration, and imaginative play. In the next section, I explore the social aspects of creativity and the collaborative nature of meaning-making, which have

been foundational to the work of *The Classroom Story* and the communities it helped build.

Social Aspects of Creativity

Creativity does not happen in isolation. As Sir Ken Robinson (2011) emphasized, cultivating a culture of creativity means recognizing it as a shared human capacity, not a rare trait reserved for a few. This idea is foundational to *The Classroom Story*, where creativity is framed as relational, co-constructed, and deeply embedded in the social fabric of the classroom. Robinson has emphasized that a culture of creativity must involve everyone, not only a select few (2011) and this is consistent with the literature; creativity is a social phenomenon that involves a community of people who share ways of thinking and acting, learn from each other, and imitate each other's actions (Csikszentmihalyi, 2015; Glăveanu, 2010; Tanggaard, 2020).

Csikszentmihalyi (2015) argued that creativity must be understood not only through internal, individual processes but also through its interaction with broader cultural and social forces. What counts as “creative” is shaped through communal recognition and shared understanding. Glăveanu's (2010) “we-paradigm” further challenges the myth of the lone genius, suggesting that creativity arises from dialogue, imitation, and joint meaning-making. This perspective has been critical to my own classroom practice, where student ideas—however small—gained momentum through collaborative work and peer validation.

Tanggaard (2020) built on these ideas by offering a socio-cultural model of creativity that sees learning environments as creative ecosystems. In this model, creativity is influenced by gatekeeping, cultural norms, and shared values, but also

sustained through practices of mentorship, apprenticeship, and participatory knowledge-building (Tanggaard, 2020). This echoes the work in *The Classroom Story*, where students were invited to contribute ideas that shaped our shared narrative and where authority was often distributed rather than centralized. By embracing the social dimensions of creativity, we move toward more democratic, inclusive models of learning—ones that recognize students as co-creators of knowledge and skills. The collaborative nature of *The Classroom Story* intentionally fosters a culture where creativity can flourish in relationship with others.

Teaching and Learning Creativity

Creativity thrives not through top-down instruction or prescriptive outcomes but through environments that welcome exploration, experimentation, and divergent thinking (Glăveanu, 2010; Tanggaard, 2020). As Robinson (2011) suggests, fostering creativity in schools begins with empowering teachers themselves by offering support, resources, and permission to re-engage their own creative capacities.

Key strategies for teaching creativity include asking open-ended questions, working collaboratively, encouraging imaginative exploration, and embracing uncertainty (Robinson & Lee, 2011; Tanggaard, 2020). These are not merely add-ons to the curriculum, but central pedagogical practices that align with how knowledge is created in authentic contexts. Within *The Classroom Story*, these practices emerged naturally as students co-created narratives, problem-solved within fictional worlds, and interpreted meaning through multimodal interpretation and expression. These kinds of activities demonstrate how creativity can be embedded in the process, not just the product.

Csikszentmihalyi (2015) reminds us that creativity is less about originality for its own sake and more about adaptive, meaningful engagement with the world. This repositions creative learning as an accessible and essential process, rather than an elite or mysterious trait. To better evaluate creative growth, Glăveanu (2018) proposes distinguishing between domains like Art, Invention, and Craft—each offering unique modes of creative expression.

Teaching and assessing creativity, then, requires a reframing of both curriculum and teacher practice. This could mean inviting uncertainty, imagination, and embodied knowledge into the heart of learning. It is here that the arts become not simply a subject to be taught, but a way of being and becoming within educational spaces.

Summary

The arts are significant for humans and education in myriad ways. Dissanayake (1990) has stated that they are so essential to humans that we pass them down at an evolutionary level. Greene (1995) and Eisner (2004) have claimed that engaging with the arts in an educational setting can help people shift their worldview and perspective as well as develop their cognition and imagination, while Young-Ha Kim (2013) simply stated that the arts help us live happy lives. The significance of the arts lies in their profound impact on human experience, education, and personal growth (Csikszentmihalyi, 2015; Dewey, 1934; Eisner, 2002; Greene, 2001). The arts provide a unique lens through which we view the world and our surroundings, enabling us to reflect on, question, and imagine alternative perspectives (Eisner, 2002; Greene, 2001). Engaging with art triggers complex perceptual, cognitive, and emotional experiences that involve various brain regions, making it a deeply rooted and resilient aspect of

humanity (Dewey, 1934; Nadal, 2013; Skov et al., 2009). The arts offer opportunities for hands-on learning, allowing individuals to actively experiment, create, and develop mastery and self-efficacy (Eisner, 2002; Lowenfeld, 1957). Creativity is a vital component of human existence that goes beyond art and is essential in problem solving, innovation, and entrepreneurship (Follet, 1934; Robinson 2011; Kelly 2012). Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) four Cs, and Csikszentmihalyi's (2015) systems model of creativity offer valuable insights into the different scales, contexts, and processes of creativity. The social aspects of creativity, as proposed by Glăveanu (2018) and Tanggaard (2020), highlight the importance of fostering a "We-paradigm" in education, and in creating social environments for peer-to-peer learning that democratize the learning process. Karwowski's (2017) research showed that certain types of creativity are often shunned in the educational system, as they challenge existing power structures. It is crucial to note that some teachers—and education systems in general—hold naive perspectives on creativity that can negatively affect subordinated and rebellious creative students (Karwowski, 2017).

Pedagogical Relations to the Classroom Story

Inquiry Learning

In *The Classroom Story*, inquiry functions as a foundational design principle. Students engage in story-driven scenarios that spark questions and tensions they must navigate and resolve. In my experience, this framework encourages learners to take ownership of their curiosity and drives learning forward. In this sense, inquiry is a flexible process of learning where students actively pose questions, seek answers, and reflect upon the learnings they receive (Buchanan et al., 2016; Short & Armstrong,

1993; Short & Burke, 1996). Inquiry is not a simple shift to more engaging lesson delivery and instruction but a theoretical shift in how one views curriculum, students, learning, and teaching (Friesen & Scott, 2013; Short & Burke, 1996). With inquiry, one must “begin with an interest, issue, or tension that we explore; but the specific question grows out of that exploration—it does not precede it” (Short & Burke, 1996, p. 101).

Dewey’s (1910) concept of inquiry emphasized a dynamic process: recognizing a perplexity, forming hypotheses, testing ideas, and revising thinking through action (Barrow, 2006). Vygotsky, similarly, saw learning as problem-driven and socially mediated, requiring reconstruction of understanding when current knowledge falls short (Glassman, 2001). These foundational ideas support a pedagogy where students learn through interaction with complex problems rather than through passive absorption.

Modern inquiry-based learning has evolved to include diverse methodologies such as: project-based, problem-based, design-based, and challenge-based learning. In general, these terms fall under the concept of student-directed inquiry (SDI)—where learners are supported cognitively and affectively through scaffolding, formative assessment, and essential questioning ultimately sharing their findings with authentic audiences (Buchanan et al., 2016).

In *The Classroom Story*, inquiry is not an add-on, but the engine of the experience. Students must navigate their own learning paths through questions that matter to them, embedded in fictional-yet-meaningful classroom worlds. This mirrors what Buchanan et al. (2016) describe as the core of SDI: autonomy, relevance, and community connection.

Experiential and Situated Learning

The Classroom Story was never simply about writing or role-playing for its own sake. It aimed to create embodied, interactive learning experiences that often culminated in exhibitions where students engaged their peers and the school community in shared meaning-making. These culminating events extended beyond performative outcomes and emphasized process, identity, and communal learning. This approach reflects the principles of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005), situated learning (Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1991), and arts-based inquiry (Barone & Eisner, 2012), all of which emphasize authentic engagement, context-rich learning environments, and collaborative participation.

Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning—building on the works of Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin—describes learning as a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. For Kolb, experiential learning means more than passive observation; it is rooted in doing and reflecting, allowing learners to test their ideas in action and revise based on feedback. These strategies recognize that learners come with prior knowledge and a range of learning styles, and they flourish in environments where experimentation is supported (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

While experiential learning provides a broader theoretical framework, situated learning focuses more narrowly on the importance of context and community. Lave (1988) and Anderson et al. (1996) argue that much of what we learn is tied to the specific situations in which learning occurs. Authentic learning happens not in isolation, but through engagement with real-world problems, practices, and tools. Gee (2004) has

similarly argued that context-rich environments foster deeper cognitive development and identity formation.

These experiences resembled what Lave and Wenger (1991) describe as “communities of practice,” where learning involves participating in shared cultural practices and developing identities within a collective. Students often began at the margins of such communities—through tentative storytelling, small-group collaboration, or simple imaginative choices—and gradually moved toward fuller participation through project work, exhibition planning, and peer teaching. This mirrors the concept of “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where learners become central actors in the educational process by engaging with purpose and community.

“Space” Regarding Learning

Throughout the literature, the concept of “space” emerges across multiple educational discourses, reflecting its critical role in shaping learning environments and pedagogical practices. Kolb and Kolb (2005), building on Lewin’s field theory, emphasized that creating space for active experimentation, reflection, and conceptualization enhances experiential learning in higher education. Similarly, Kelly (2012) underscored that providing students with a space where their voices are authenticated fosters agency, intrinsic motivation, and playful exploration—key components aligned with *The Classroom Story*’s emphasis on student-centered creativity and interaction. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of legitimate peripheral participation situates learning within community spaces guided by experts, yet Gee (2004) critiques this by proposing “affinity spaces” characterized by voluntary participation, shared interests, and collaborative learning without obligatory

membership. This distinction resonates with the dynamic, participatory environments cultivated in *The Classroom Story*, where students and teachers co-construct meaning.

Homi Bhabha's (1994) theorization of the "third space" adds a postcolonial perspective, describing it as an ambivalent and transformative site where cultural identity and agency are negotiated beyond dominant power structures. This notion enriches the understanding of third space as a zone of creative hybridity and resistance. Kuhlthau's (2010) invocation of Maniotes' (2005) "third space" further illuminates the intersection where formal curriculum meets students' prior knowledge and cultural experiences, creating a hybrid space that validates diverse ways of knowing. Expanding this idea, Gillespie (2019) describes games as a "third space" in schools—neutral, safe, conversational, and welcoming—that aligns with the interactive exhibitions and creative engagements central to *The Classroom Story*.

To sum, "space" in education is multidimensional: it encompasses environments that support experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kelly, 2012), social and cultural contexts that enable belonging and participation (Gee, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991), and hybrid zones that blend formal and informal learning to honor students' identities and voices (Bhabha, 1994; Kuhlthau, 2010; Gillespie, 2019). Recognizing and designing such spaces is fundamental to realizing the pedagogical potential of *The Classroom Story*.

Multimodal Literacies in Learning

Literacy is a dynamic practice, not a fixed set of skills, enacted through diverse modes such as images, sound, movement, and language (New London Group, 1996). Kress (2003) argues that different modes of communication have unique affordances and constraints, shaping how meaning is made. For example, visual modes such as images and video can be especially powerful for conveying emotion or spatial relationships, while audio modes such as music can establish mood or tone. Although literacy has always involved multiple modes, the dominant forms have shifted over time—especially in the digital age (Dalton, 2020; Duncum, 2004). In my own practice with *The Classroom Story*, students regularly interacted with these multimodal forms by integrating illustration, scriptwriting, physical design, and even performance which mirrors the aforementioned evolution in communicative literacy.

The New London Group (1996), in their foundational essay *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies*, argued for rethinking literacy education altogether. They proposed that educators should be “designers of learning processes and environments,” working with students to co-construct knowledge through collaboration and responsiveness to cultural and linguistic diversity. Scholars like Serafini (2015) and Dalton (2020) build on this by emphasizing the need for educators to help students analyze multimodal texts through multiple lenses which include cultural, political, and critical perspectives. In my classroom, this critical analysis was woven into the design process itself: students did not just consume stories, they built them, revised them, and shared them through public exhibition. Their interpretive work was deeply embodied and situated, echoing Leander and Boldt’s (2013) critique of literacy frameworks that over-rationalize youth engagement. They contend that youth engagement in literacy is often driven by

affective intensities like desire, curiosity, tension rather than cleanly disciplined academic structures. I observed this firsthand: students' excitement, hesitation, and creativity often surged in moments of playful discovery or aesthetic risk.

Research by Bohannon (2015) reinforces this connection, noting that students who engaged in multimodal composition reported significant growth and confidence as writers. They felt seen. Similarly, in *The Classroom Story*, students often expressed pride in their creative output; not just for the final product, but for the sense of authorship and agency it cultivated. These experiences validate the call for expanded teacher education in multimodal literacies (New London Group, 1996; Serafini, 2015), and suggest that when literacy is treated as a dynamic, collaborative, and multimodal practice, the classroom becomes a site for real transformation.

Co-creation

Co-creation is a term that resists easy definition as it is often confused with collaboration or used interchangeably with related concepts such as students as partners, students as producers, or students as change agents (Bovill, 2019). However, co-creation in education refers to a relational, participatory approach in which students and educators combine their unique perspectives to generate new knowledge, solve problems, and shape meaningful learning experiences (Bovill, 2020; Bovill et al., 2016; Kaminskiene et al., 2020; Meinking & Hall, 2020). While its definition may vary, co-creation is consistently described as a process that relies on building strong relationships and fostering shared responsibility for the learning environment (Kaminskiene et al., 2020). Kaminskiene et al. (2020) outlined five antecedents of

co-creation that help clarify the concept: (1) non-hierarchical relationships, (2) flexibility of curriculum, (3) scaffolding, (4) formative assessment, and (5) participatory design.

In order to support deep learning through co-creation, educators must cultivate an environment where students' contributions are seen as essential rather than supplementary (Bovill, 2020; Meinking & Hall, 2020). As Cook-Sather et al. (2014) describe, co-creation is a “reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways” (p. 1024). This was evident in my classroom when students took on different responsibilities within the story world: some led collaborative writing sessions, others illustrated scenes, composed theme music, or organized dramatic performances. These multimodal entry points allowed students to take ownership in ways aligned with their strengths, building confidence and investment.

The flexibility of the curriculum was key. Rather than following a rigid sequence, we allowed the emergent narrative to guide our inquiry. This curricular openness mirrors what Bovill et al. (2016) describe as the potential of co-creation to democratize learning. When students had the opportunity to propose quests, debate the actions of their characters, or initiate new rules within the game-world, the class shifted from a site of instruction to a space of co-authorship.

Meinking and Hall (2020) found that co-creation encouraged empathy, connection, and deeper awareness of diverse perspectives. I observed this when students—often portraying characters vastly different from themselves—engaged in difficult conversations, wrestled with moral decisions, and came to appreciate the complexity of one another's thinking. These experiences echoed the kind of

relationship-building and student agency that Kaminskiene et al. (2020) and Cook-Sather et al. (2014) identify as hallmarks of meaningful co-creation.

At the same time, implementing co-creation poses real challenges. Bovill (2020) identified several barriers, including time constraints, class size, and the difficulty of maintaining authenticity in a system still dominated by traditional assessments and expectations. Similarly, Meinking and Hall (2020) noted that students who succeed in conventional classroom models may resist co-creation due to its openness and lack of top-down structure. I encountered this in *The Classroom Story* as well. Some students were initially uncomfortable with the narrative-driven format and sought clearer rules or fixed outcomes. However, with ongoing scaffolding, formative reflection, and positive social dynamics it seemed many began to realize the value in uncertainty and experimentation.

Despite its growing visibility, co-creation remains underexplored in the literature—particularly in the context of whole-class practice. Kaminskiene et al. (2020) noted the absence of a coherent theoretical framework for co-creation, and Bovill (2020) emphasized the need for pedagogically embedded models. Through the examination of my practices, I offer one such contribution: a lived example of how role-playing, collaborative worldbuilding, and multimodal composition can serve as a structure for whole-class co-creation. It is my hope that this study can demonstrate that students are engaged and empowered when they are invited to shape their learning environments—narratively, socially, and academically.

Summary

In summary, this review of pedagogical considerations explores various educational approaches and concepts related to inquiry learning, experiential and situated learning, multimodal literacies, and co-creation.

Inquiry learning is a flexible process where students actively pose questions, seek answers, and reflect on their learning (Buchanan et al., 2016; Short & Burke, 1996). Dewey and Vygotsky viewed inquiry as progression through problem solving (Glassman, 2001). Inquiry-based learning encompasses a range of styles like project-based learning, problem-based learning, and challenge-based learning (Friesen & Scott, 2013). Student-directed inquiry empowers learners to autonomously pursue their preferred topics of study (Buchanan et al., 2016).

Experiential learning involves hands-on experiences and a cyclical process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Situated learning emphasizes learning in authentic contexts (Anderson et al., 1996; Gee, 2004; Lave, 1988) and the importance of communities of practice where newcomers gradually gain expertise through participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Multimodal literacies acknowledge that humans communicate through various modes, and that teaching should adapt to include different forms of communication (Duncum, 2004; Kress, 2003). Many scholars call for a pedagogy of multiliteracies that is inclusive and responsive to students' diverse needs (Cazden et al., 1996; Dalton, 2020; Serafini, 2015).

Co-creation is a collaborative approach to teaching and learning, where students and educators combine their perspectives to create new knowledge and solutions (Bovill, 2020; Cook-Sather et al., 2014; Kaminskiene et al., 2020). It requires positive

relationships, flexibility in the curriculum, scaffolding, formative assessment, and participatory design (Bovill, 2016; Kaminskiene et al., 2020). Co-creation fosters deeper relationships and empowers students in the learning process (Bovill, 2020; Meinking & Hall, 2020). Challenges include time constraints, resistance to change, and a lack of theory and examples in the literature (Bovill, 2020; Kaminskiene et al., 2020).

Overall, these pedagogical considerations highlight the importance of active learning, meaningful engagement, and student agency in the educational process. They emphasize the significance of understanding socio-cultural contexts, leveraging multiple modes of communication, and fostering collaborative relationships to enhance learning experiences for students. These same principles are the structure for *The Classroom Story*, which to me, has become a catalyst which operationalizes inquiry, co-creation, and multimodal literacies through collaborative storytelling and role-play. By embedding students in a shared fictional narrative where they construct meaning, solve problems, and express themselves across media, the style offers a lived example of how these pedagogical ideas can be enacted meaningfully in contemporary classrooms. Further research is needed to explore and refine such integrative, creative approaches in diverse educational settings.

Comics

The emphasis on the arts, creativity, and multimodal literacies, naturally leads into a discussion of comics. Comics are inherently multimodal, combining visual, textual, spatial, and often emotional elements to convey meaning in layered and nuanced ways. This hybrid form makes them especially relevant in classrooms that value diverse modes of expression and inclusive, student-centered learning environments. This

section will explore the educational and methodological potential of comics, situating them within broader scholarly conversations and linking them to the creative, participatory ethos at the heart of this study.

Comics are a powerful medium for communication and storytelling that, apart from personal enjoyment, can be used effectively in educational and research contexts. Although comics is a primarily visual medium and has the unfortunate yet lingering reputation of being “juvenile” (Cap & Back, 2012; Sousanis, 2020), it has been widely recognized that comics are far more complex than they appear (Bateman, 2014; Moula, 2013). The use of comics in education and research has gained momentum in recent years, with researchers and educators recognizing the potential of comics to engage students, convey complex ideas, and promote critical thinking skills (Attwood & Gerber, 2020; Kirtley et al., 2020). In this thesis, comics play a dual role: they are both a form of student-created content within the learning process and a central component of my comics-based research (CBR) self-study methodology (which will be reviewed in detail in Chapter 4).

A Brief History of Comics

Visual storytelling has existed across cultures and eras in many forms—from ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics and Mayan codices to the embroidered narrative of the Bayeux Tapestry, visual texts have long been used to communicate stories, beliefs, and cultural identity (Eisner, 1985; McCloud, 1993). In the late 19th century, the comic strip emerged as a distinct popular medium, with Richard Outcault’s *The Yellow Kid* (1895) often credited as the first comic strip to establish a serialized visual-narrative format (Eisner, 1985).

Comics gained momentum in the 1930s during the Great Depression, when newspaper comic strips featuring characters like Popeye, Mickey Mouse, Dick Tracy, and Superman captivated public attention and helped solidify comics as a mainstream cultural force (Eisner, 1985; McCloud, 1993). The publication of *Action Comics #1* in 1938, featuring Superman's debut, is widely recognized as the beginning of the Golden Age of Comics (Van Lente & Dunlavey, 2017). This era introduced enduring icons such as Batman, Wonder Woman, and Captain America, followed by the Silver Age, which saw continued growth in superhero storytelling alongside the rise of underground comix—an alternative, often subversive, countercultural form (Cap & Black, 2012).

Despite their popularity, comics have often been marginalized in educational and cultural discourse. Throughout the 20th century, they were frequently dismissed as juvenile or even morally corrupting (Cap & Black, 2012; McCloud, 1993; Van Lente & Dunlavey, 2012). However, the 1980s marked a turning point with the rise of the graphic novel—a format distinguished by extended narratives, mature themes, and literary ambition. Works such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986) and Will Eisner's *A Contract with God* (1978) helped legitimize the medium in academic and literary circles (Cap & Black, 2012).

This shifting perception of comics, from disposable entertainment to a complex, multimodal narrative form, has opened new possibilities for their use in educational contexts. The affordances of the medium allow for an author to combine image, text, and sequence makes it particularly suited for engaging diverse learners and exploring complex ideas across disciplines (Sousanis, 2015; Serafini, 2014).

Unique Features of Comics

Bateman (2014) identifies distinguishing features of comics as a medium, including the use of single-page and double-page spreads segmented by frames, panels, and gutters, alongside its integration of linguistic, graphical, and pictorial resources. Frames and panels—the rectangular boxes containing visuals and text—enable the conveyance of movement through spatial and temporal shifts (McCleod, 1993; Sousanis, 2015). The deliberate arrangement of panels demonstrates how time and space can be compressed, expanded, or fragmented both within panels and across pages, providing distinctive storytelling possibilities (Sousanis, 2015, 2020). Comics invite both sequential reading and holistic viewing, offering a dual nature where narratives can be experienced hierarchically or rhizomatically (McCloud, 1993; Sousanis, 2015, 2020). Central to this process is “the gutter,” the blank space between panels, which engages the reader’s imagination to bridge gaps in time, action, and narrative progression (Eisner, 1985; McCloud, 1993).

The unique interplay of words and images in comics creates layered meanings, allowing for rich emotional and intellectual expression through the juxtaposition of visuals and text (Eisner, 1985; McCloud, 1993). This multimodality is fundamental, as comics dynamically integrate icons, graphics, visuals, text, and sequential elements to communicate complex ideas (Bateman, 2014; Eisner, 1985; McCleod, 1990; Moula, 2013; Sousanis, 2015). The visual emphasis manifests through the use of composition, visual metaphors, and imagery to convey concepts, while sequencing, simultaneity, and textual components—including dialogue and captions—add further depth and assist in character and narrative development (Bateman, 2014; Cohn, 2013; Sousanis, 2015, 2020).

These unique features not only highlight the potential of comics as an expressive art form but also position them as a powerful research and pedagogical tool. The multimodal, layered nature of comics enables researchers and educators to explore and represent complex experiences in ways that traditional text alone may not capture. This capacity underpins the use of comics-based research (CBR), a methodology that will be detailed in the following chapter, where comics are employed not only as objects of study but as active modes of inquiry and knowledge creation.

Comics Pedagogy

The term comics pedagogy includes the study of teaching with and about comics, comic production, and how their creation is a process of thinking and learning (Kirtley et al., 2020). In the classroom, comics have gained recognition for their ability to promote multimodal thinking and enhance student engagement across various subjects (Kirtley et al., 2020, p.13; Kohlert & Sousanis, 2020; Moula, 2013; Sousanis, 2020). These affordances extend beyond student learning—they also offer researchers creative, reflective ways of engaging with educational practice, as exemplified through comics-based research methodologies like the one used in this study.

Lynda Barry and Nick Sousanis exemplify two influential approaches to using comic creation as a pedagogical tool. Barry emphasizes visual storytelling, autobiographical elements, observation skills, and playfulness, enabling students to express themselves creatively and discover the power of comics as a medium for self-expression (Barry, 2014, 2020). Sousanis focuses on guiding students to think visually, adopt multidimensional perspectives, and engage in embodied learning, fostering critical thinking and a deeper connection to subject matter (Sousanis, 2020).

These approaches underscore how making comics can itself be a method of inquiry, a position aligned with my own methodological use of comics-making as a form of reflective practice and meaning-making in educational research.

Together, these examples illustrate the versatility and impact of comics in the classroom, providing students and researchers alike with powerful tools for exploration, learning, and multimodal analysis and self-expression.

Summary

Overall, comics are a versatile and powerful medium for communication and storytelling, one that has steadily gained recognition in educational and research contexts (Attwood & Gerber, 2020; Kirtley et al., 2020). Despite the misconception of comics as juvenile, it is widely acknowledged that they possess complexity and depth (Bateman, 2014; Moula, 2013). Comics' historical journey, from ancient visual narratives to the emergence of comic strips and the subsequent rise of superheroes, displays the medium's enduring appeal (Eisner, 1985; McCleod, 1990; Van Lente & Dunlavey, 2017). The unique affordances of comics—including panel layouts, the use of gutters, and the combination of visual and verbal elements—offer distinct storytelling opportunities (McCloud, 1990; Sousanis, 2015). Comics pedagogy has gained traction, with Lynda Barry and Nick Sousanis exemplifying different approaches. Barry has emphasized visual storytelling and self-expression, while Sousanis has focused on visual thinking and embodied learning (Barry, 2014, 2020; Sousanis, 2020). These approaches harness the educational potential of comics, fostering critical thinking, engagement, and creativity among students. Further, as a “growing field of practice,” comics-based

research (CBR) is beginning to show how the unique aspects of comics can leverage multiple modes as a rich inquiry method (Kuttner et al., 2021).

Contemporary Learning Models

Play and Ludic Pedagogies

This section explores the role of play in human learning and development, considering how ludic frameworks might inform alternative educational approaches. While game-based learning and gamification are relevant to this conversation, the focus here is broader and more foundational—on play as a serious, immersive, and meaning-making practice.

Play is often misunderstood as frivolous or separate from serious work, yet it is deeply tied to how we learn, connect, and make sense of the world (Barry, 2014). As Neufeld and Maté (2013) and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) have emphasized, play promotes creativity, social bonding, and the development of cognitive and emotional regulation. It is intrinsically motivated and self-directed, which are qualities that are essential for authentic learning but often marginalized in outcome-driven educational environments. In fact, when outcomes are prescribed or externally imposed, play loses its defining qualities of freedom and exploration (Neufeld & Maté, 2013).

R. Tulloch (2014), writing from outside traditional educational discourse, frames gamification as a pedagogical mechanism in which entertainment and engagement are central aims. This signals a broader shift in thinking about learning as an immersive, experiential process. De Castell and Jenson (2003) introduced the concept of *serious*

play to describe such immersive experiences. Drawing on Rieber and Matzko (2001), they defined it as goal-oriented yet self-directed, where the process is as valuable as the outcome. When students are fully engaged, focused, and given the space to adapt and redefine goals, meaningful learning emerges. This echoes Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) notion of *flow*—an optimal state of consciousness where individuals are completely absorbed in an activity, balancing challenge with skill, and experiencing intrinsic reward. Middlebrooks (2017) described *serious fun* as the sweet spot between engagement, enjoyment, and purpose; a space where learners are not only motivated but invested in the process of discovery. It is here, in the tension between structure and spontaneity, that I believe learning can feel both playful and profound.

Games are more than just content delivery systems, they represent models of learning rooted in agency, iteration, and multimodal engagement (de Castell, 2011). In her essay *Ludic Epistemology*, de Castell (2011) poetically described what games can teach curriculum studies: play enables risk-taking; replay offers second chances; agency fosters control and mastery; pleasure supports motivation and inventiveness. This kind of engagement taps into how learners construct knowledge and take ownership of their educational journey.

Despite their potential, games remain underused in educational contexts. De Castell and Jenson (2003) argue that rigid standards and emphasis on outcomes have limited the creative possibilities of game-based approaches. In addition to this, educational games often pale in comparison to their commercial counterparts, failing to capture the depth, complexity, or appeal that makes games compelling in the first place (De Castell & Jenson, 2003). De Castell and Jenson ask a provocative question: what if

games weren't merely tools to support existing curricula, but drivers of an educational agenda in their own right? This is a question that resonates with efforts to reimagine learning environments where creativity, curiosity, and student-driven inquiry are not only permitted but prioritized. Within this landscape, play is not a diversion from learning, it is an essential part of it.

Frameworks for Gaming and Play. As educators and designers of learning experiences, I believe understanding the motivations that drive different kinds of engagement is crucial. One of the most enduring contributions to this area comes from Richard Bartle's (1996) study of Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs), early online role-playing environments that paved the way for modern multiplayer games. Bartle identified distinct player archetypes, organizing them into a now-famous taxonomy: hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades. Each type reflects a different motivation. "Hearts" seek connection and community; "clubs" thrive on competition and combat; "diamonds" chase rewards and achievement; and "spades" are explorers, drawn to discovery and the thrill of the unknown.

This framework has had a lasting influence in how we think about game design and user or learner engagement. What Bartle (1996) essentially proposed was a differentiated approach: game environments that adapt to various player motivations to create richer, more inclusive experiences. It raises an important question for educators: Can we adopt a similar mindset when designing learning experiences? What would it mean to consider our students as ludic agents; each with their own intrinsic drives, needs, and ways of playing with ideas?

This idea resonates with my own work in *The Classroom Story*, where students step into collaborative narratives that blend learning with role-play. I have found that students take on roles aligned with many of Bartle's categories from some seeking connection and group cohesion, while others chase achievement or immerse themselves in the lore and world-building. Designing for this variety means treating the classroom as a flexible system that encourages exploration, recognizes individual motivations, and leaves room for different forms of engagement to coexist.

Building on these ideas, Lauricella and Edmunds (2022) have proposed a framework specifically for education, which they call *ludic pedagogy*. Their model is guided by four defining characteristics: fun, positivity, play, and playfulness. While Bartle focused on typologies of players, Lauricella and Edmunds center the tone and affect of the learning environment itself. They define *play* as the structure and activity of a lesson, *playfulness* as a mindset infused with curiosity, humour, and spontaneity, and *positivity* as an emotional tone that cultivates optimism and resilience. At the heart of it all is *fun*, but not as a frivolous distraction, but as a powerful motivator that supports deep, intrinsic learning. In their recent book, *Ludic Pedagogy: A Seriously Fun Way to Teach and Learn* (2022), Lauricella and Edmunds return to the idea of *serious play*, framing it as a pedagogical stance rather than an add-on or technique. Their work underscores a growing recognition that learning that feels playful, engaging, and affectively rich is not incompatible with intellectual rigor. In fact, it may be essential for fostering the kind of curiosity and agency that traditional models too often neglect.

This ethos aligns closely with the pedagogical orientation of *The Classroom Story*. Through collaborative storytelling and immersive role-play, my students

encounter a learning space where fun and formality, exploration and structure, creativity and curriculum all intertwine. Rather than designing for one kind of learner—or even one kind of outcome—I aim to create conditions where different forms of engagement feel not just possible, but welcome.

edu-LARP

The acronym LARP stands for “live action role-playing,” and if one knows the term, chances are the first thought is of people acting out medieval themes and aesthetics in a park. While this is true—that is LARP—there are myriad forms it can take. Falk and Davenport (2004) defined LARP as “a dramatic and narrative game form that takes place in a physical environment. It is a story-telling system in which players assume character roles that they portray in person, through action and interaction” (p. 128). Even though LARP has its roots in games and entertainment, the underlying mechanics of role-playing and simulation have been utilized by many spheres as a pedagogical method, including business, medicine, education, and the military (Bowman 2014).

An educational live action role-play (edu-LARP) is a pedagogical activity where students take on character roles in pre-written scenarios designed to facilitate self-motivated learning, as well as teach pre-determined knowledge in a contextual framework (Peterson & Vanek, 2016). Because of the hands-on, collaborative nature of edu-LARP, it is also said that it follows the theoretical principles of experiential learning and situated learning (Bowman, 2014; Laciencia, 2020). As an activity, edu-LARP contains many elements of gameplay, drama, narrative, and art, so the ideas and tools

borrowed from video game and board game design can be useful in the creation of edu-LARPs (Mochocki, 2013).

Although the literature on edu-LARPs is limited and is based on mostly anecdotal stories, there is clear overlap in terms of the benefits and limitations of the activity documented across many papers and studies (Bowman, 2014). Firstly, edu-LARP has been shown to be highly engaging for those students who participate in it (Bowman & Standiford, 2015; Brummel et al., 2010; Brom et al., 2019; Peterson & Vanek, 2016). As an activity, edu-LARPs motivate students in an active, hands-on manner due to their use of role-play, which captures participants' attention and engages them actively (Brummel et al., 2010). Being low-cost and highly engaging, edu-LARPs were an attractive option for teachers to explore and implement since they do not require special tools beyond what is already available in most classrooms (Bowman & Standiford, 2016). Adding to this, edu-LARPs are adaptable for a variety of student populations, class sizes, school types, and courses, making them a good option for enhancing learning experiences (Lacienta, 2020). Overall, the literature has repeatedly shown that students, researchers, and teachers find the edu-LARP approach to be an “engaging” tool because of the rich involvement with content and focus on collaborative classroom dynamics.

A particularly strong testimony comes from teacher Tedd Wakeman from Peterson and Vanek's (2016) chapter about edu-LARPs. In an interview discussing what makes edu-LARPs different from a traditional teaching approach, he revealed:

Too often the teacher is maybe disengaged with the experience that the students are having. If you are standing in front of a group of kids and lecturing to them,

you are not really taking in what those kids are experiencing throughout that process. I think for us [teachers] to be able to take on roles and really play characters not only encourages the students to be more creative in their process but also breaks down that barrier of “is this cool, is this silly” when they see their teachers participating on a grand scale. With the teachers taking the material seriously (and fun), the students, too, took it seriously. (p. 229)

Teachers being disengaged, and further, disconnected from their students in the teaching and learning process is worth future research. The use of edu-LARPs offers to remedy disconnected classrooms by providing activities that are hands-on, engaging, and collaborative for both learners and educators.

In the cognitive domain, multiple studies have noted that edu-LARPs have led to an increased depth of understanding in participants during and after participating in the activity (Brummel et al., 2010; Bowman & Standiford, 2016; Cook et. al., 2017). Branc (2016) offered the idea that edu-LARPs are particularly useful for creating alternate scenarios where participants must explore new perspectives or attempt to gain a deeper understanding of a specific subject. When participants are interacting with each other and the content in a game-like setting, the play affords active engagement, problem solving, agency, and participation (Bowman 2014). Like concepts of serious play/fun and flow, this deep immersion can lead to significant learning.

Education live-action roleplay activities help students and the classroom as a whole with affective and behavioural learning domains (Bowman, 2014; Brom et al., 2019). Bowman (2014) believed this is mainly because it provides students with opportunities for self-expression, agency, and choice. The class works together on

common goals, which helps them to explore within the space that exists between stimulus and response, while uncovering attitudes and offering realization of new attitudes about new concepts (Branc, 2016). Lee (2010) reported that participants who worked through a designed LARP explored or expanded upon their self-perceptions, however, are not only about the individual. Since edu-LARPs have many active participants, conflict resolution, communication, teamwork, relationships, and initiating discussion become part of the norm and provide students with ongoing social skills practice (Bowman, 2014; Cook et. Al., 2017).

Another domain where participants in edu-LARP are found to excel is perceived competence (Brummel et al., 2010; Bowman & Standiford, 2016; Brom et al., 2019). Perceived competence is where people feel they gain a better understanding of the materials or skills being taught. If one perceives they are better at something, are they likely to be more confident in that area.

The final benefit to explore (and in fact revisit) from the literature is that of experiential learning. Kolb (1984) wrote that the rise of rationalism and behaviourism in education has separated students from the holistic experiential elements of learning. Working via Kolb's model, Laciencia (2020) posited that the experiential learning theory is present in edu-LARP because there is: a concrete experience, a reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. When students are participating in realistic situations, it provides them with elements of motivation and experiential learning opportunities (Brummel et al., 2010). This can take a variety of forms in an edu-LARP, especially when creating new experiential worlds through engaging, personally relevant, and coherent stories (Laciencia, 2020). This experiential

aspect allows students to actively participate in and construct knowledge together and individually.

The limitations found within edu-LARP primarily regard its implementation, more so than the methods or outcomes themselves. It is also refreshing when authors write that edu-LARP is not a fix-all solution for every classroom (Bowman, 2014; Brom et al., 2019, Mochocki, 2014).

The first concern is background knowledge. It was found that background knowledge in a specific subject was required by students to understand the related role-play (Brummel et al., 2010). Additionally, teachers and students may have limited previous experience spent gaming or role-playing and require more guidance (Cook et al., 2017). If participants were unsure of the intent of the activity, forced to role-play, or had a lack of gaming experience in their background, feelings of awkwardness and discomfort developed, resulting in the experience having a negative impact (Brummel et al., 2010; Laciencia, 2020).

Secondly, a reported limitation comes from researching edu-LARP. It was difficult to establish control groups (Bowman & Standiford, 2016; Brom et al., 2019), as well as for researchers to maintain control over testing in the classroom to confirm results with researchers (Mochocki, 2014). Mochocki also claimed that steering away from large, cross-curricular artistic endeavours may help teachers become more comfortable with the foundations upon which edu-LARPs are created (2013).

To close off this literature review section, two important critiques will be highlighted. First, Mochocki (2013) has argued that edu-LARPs must be simplified and user-friendly or they will be used by only a small minority. Contrary to that, to be

successful, it is said that edu-LARPs must be well-written and rigorously designed while instructors need a direct learning plan with clearly defined knowledge outcomes (Schwartz, 2017). This is an area that warrants further exploration.

Finally, the acronym LARP is just terrible. I think Peterson and Vanek (2016) would agree based on the following: “LARP is barely recognized as a word (see what your spell checker or auto-correct thinks about it), and hardly, at least in America, seen as anything beyond an escapist hobby, even among dedicated veteran larpers” (p. 233).

Summary

In summary, this section highlights the significance of play in human learning and development. Scholars like Gabor Maté (2013) and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) have emphasized that play is not merely entertainment but a fundamental aspect of human nature that promotes learning, creativity, and social connection. The concept of serious play (de Castell, 2011; de Castell & Jensen, 2003; Middlebrooks, 2017) is explored, where activities are purposeful, satisfying, and rewarding in themselves, leading to significant learning. Frameworks such as Bartle’s (1996) player taxonomy, and Lauricella and Edmunds’ (2022) ludic pedagogy provide insights into designing engaging educational experiences that cater to learners’ specific needs. By understanding the value of play and implementing innovative approaches, educators can create meaningful and enjoyable learning environments that foster deep learning and intrinsic motivation.

Meanwhile, edu-LARP, or educational live-action role-playing, is a pedagogical approach that utilizes interactive and immersive role-playing scenarios to facilitate learning in various educational contexts (Bowman, 2014; Falk & Davenport, 2004).

Despite initial perceptions and limited literature, edu-LARP has been found to be highly engaging for students, adaptable to different settings, and effective in enhancing cognitive, affective, and perceived competence domains of learning (Bowman, 2019; Mochocki, 2014; Cook et al., 2017). By providing hands-on, experiential learning opportunities and promoting collaboration, edu-LARP offers a unique approach that encourages active participation, problem-solving, and social skill development (Brummel et al., 2010; Lacientia, 2020); however, the implementation of edu-LARP may present challenges related to background knowledge and the need for careful design and instruction (Brummel et al., 2010; Cook et al., 2017; Schwartz, 2017). Further research and refinement of edu-LARP methodologies are necessary to maximize its potential as an effective teaching tool.

Conclusion

The material presented here has covered a wide array of concepts to better understand the underlying pedagogies and inner workings of *The Classroom Story*. To sum up, it is important to note some themes in the literature, where there is a paucity of information or a call for more, to identify areas where the research from this thesis could fill gaps in knowledge, theory, or practice.

First, the importance of social connections was ubiquitous throughout the literature. Communal aspects of epistemology, pedagogy, and the human experience have myriad ties to co-creation, creativity, play, edu-LARPS, and the arts. In these social links to teaching and learning, the environments are not only social but also democratic, where students are given individual and collective autonomy.

Next, this review offered insights for a culturally relevant education. Comics, multimodal literacies, creativity, and third space are all deeply dependent on historical, social, and cultural considerations. More importantly, they can be harnessed to engage students with a deep and transformative learning experience, where students take ownership of the experience and construct their own knowledge.

Another layering of themes comes in the form of play and serious fun. Play has long been known to be an important part of human development, but it is now being posited that play is an indispensable part of the arts, inquiry, and human development. With Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) connections between play and flow, and the idea of serious fun (de Castell & Jensen, 2003; Middlebrooks, 2017), the connections between play, games, engagement, and learning is evident.

The final theme to bring attention to is the concept of spaces. A space is a welcome setting or domain. Guided but not strict—a curated environment without obligation, but open invitation. An area that has potential for more exploration is the use of the concept of third spaces (Maniotes, 2005) in educational settings. This concept has the potential to help bridge the gap between curriculum, inquiry, and students' personal lives and knowledge.

If anything, this literature review calls for the implementation of a synthesis of information regarding transformative teaching practices. Throughout the literature, calls for a radical change in practice (or continued implementation) were evident in creativity (Tanggaard, 2020), co-creation (Bovill, 2020; Kaminskiene et al., 2020), multimodal texts (Bohannon, 2015; Cazden et al., 1996; Kress, 2003), comics (Kirtley et al., 2020;

Sousanis, 2020), and edu-LARP (Bowman & Standiford, 2016; Cook et al., 2017; Mochocki, 2013).

By way of co-creation, implementation of whole-class co-creation from a middle year to high school level was entirely missing from the literature. Six challenges listed by Bovill (2020) also hold the potential for fruitful research on how to overcome the difficulties facing whole-class co-creation.

In the field of creativity, Tanggaard (2020) did not want creativity to be seen as a “detached meta-competence,” but as central to all activities. In the we-paradigm for creativity championed by Tanggaard (2020) and Glăveanu (2010,2018),

there is a scarcity of empirical work to support some of the premises. It can also be argued that it needs to be connected with other research traditions such as those within art-based education and inclusive or multicultural education. It would be a fruitful future endeavour to explore if a creativity angle could shed new light on these fields. (p.13)

The research from this thesis has the potential to shed light on co-creation and creativity from a whole-class perspective, as well as explore We-paradigm concepts of creativity with arts- and comics-based research. How can whole-class co-creation be a sustained endeavour with a large class and time constraints? What insights might be gained about the we-paradigm for creativity through arts-based research?

The literature also calls for clarity in implementing the edu-LARP approach as well as the underlying frameworks of gamification, role-play, and simulation. Essentially, edu-LARPs need to streamline the background knowledge required to implement and participate (Brummel et al., 2010; Cook et al., 2017). Unless edu-LARPs become

simplified they will lack accessibility for widespread teacher use (Mochocki, 2013). It is my hope that this research can help make transformative teaching practices more accessible for K–12 classroom teachers to implement.

The main contribution to the research that this author hopes to cover, is to help break the accessibility barrier between academia and widespread implementation in K–12 classrooms; the linking of theory to practice. A goal for the author of this thesis is to gain valuable insights about how transformative teaching practices could be implemented by helping intrinsically motivate teachers. To make these concepts seem clear and actionable to teachers, I will use ABR and CBR to help break through the effects of the pedagogical legacy teachers must fight. Referring to Michael Fullen (2017), teachers are hesitant to try new ideas and often fall back on the same old teaching practices without a supportive leadership. Is there a way that ABR and CBR can be utilized to break down the barriers that teachers have to implementing and sustaining pedagogies that lead to learning that is more meaningful, relevant, responsive, and engaging to students?

Chapter 4: Methodologies

In this section, I outline the methodological framework for this thesis, which integrates self-study, arts-based research (ABR), and comics-based research (CBR). My intention was to critically explore and better understand the pedagogies and processes of *The Classroom Story*—a collaborative, story-driven educational approach I have developed and practiced over the past twelve years in middle school settings. The methodology for this thesis is grounded in self-study, which served as the foundation for a reflective and inquiry-driven exploration of *The Classroom Story*. To support this, I turned to arts-based research (ABR) as a means of engaging with the creative, affective, and expressive dimensions of teaching and learning. This layered approach allowed me to examine my pedagogical development through multiple lenses—personal, aesthetic, and scholarly. Within this framework, comics-based research (CBR) emerged as a fitting modality for both analysis and representation, offering a unique way to communicate my findings through visual storytelling.

I combined ABR with self-study methodologies in order to thoroughly examine my own teaching practices, pedagogical decisions, and the long-term development of *The Classroom Story*. As LaBoskey (2004) and Samaras (2011) argue, self-study enables practitioner-researchers to critically reflect on their practice in context, often with the goal of both personal and pedagogical transformation. This was central to my inquiry. I collected data from my teaching artifacts, journal reflections, workshop materials, and interactions with colleagues and students, and then examined these

through both narrative and visual storytelling, drawing on comics as a medium of meaning-making (Sousanis, 2015).

I chose arts-based research as my methodology because it emphasizes seeking new ways to represent and explore educational experience through creative forms (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2018; Tian, 2022). Using artistic processes as a mode of inquiry, reflection, and communication enhances the accessibility and emotional resonance of one's findings (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2018). While there is no singular "ABR process", the approach I employed is informed by Eisner and Barone's *five phases* (2012) criteria for artistic and educational significance, including the pursuit of ambiguity, layered meaning, and empathic understanding. A more detailed account of their framework follows later in this chapter.

The use of comics-based research (CBR) complemented this approach by offering a multimodal and embodied means to convey complex pedagogical concepts and emotional insights. As I aimed to create an accessible, engaging book for educators, comics became not only a method of representation but also a methodological tool that allowed for nonlinear, recursive, and imaginative exploration of *The Classroom Story's* impact.

Ultimately, this research seeks to support other educators in designing playful, collaborative, and creative learning environments. By sharing my story, I aim to spark inspiration and inquiry among teachers who wish to reimagine their practice in ways that are more meaningful, responsive, and engaging for both themselves and their students. The following sections elaborate on this integrated methodology: first, by justifying the

use of arts-based research; then, by examining the intersection of ABR and self-study; and finally, by exploring the role of artwork—specifically comics—in advancing the goals of ABR.

Justification for Arts-Based Research (ABR)

When practicing ABR, characteristics include using creative expressions to explore research questions, acknowledging the subjective nature of knowledge, and emphasizing the role of artistic processes in generating insights (Barone & Eisner, 2006, 2012; Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Leavy, 2017). My thesis has required me to make sense of a network of interrelated pedagogical topics by analyzing my own embodied experiences and artifacts, and then passing along these new understandings by producing a multimodal text through comics. I chose ABR as my methodology for this research because ABR has great potential to make sense of complexity by seeking connections and questions (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Tian, 2022; Weber, 2014; Weber & Mitchel, 2004), enhance the perspectives of the researcher and the audience (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Farrell & Winkle, 2020; Kuttner et al., 2021; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019; Sousanis, 2017), use multiple modes to relay concepts (Flowers, 2017; Kuttner et al., 2017, 2021; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019; Sousanis, 2017), and is intended to be shared with a greater audience (Barone & Eisner 2012a; Fletcher, 2020; Leavy, 2017; Tian, 2023).

The first reason I used ABR was to help make sense of complexity. Schon (1983) theorized that professionals tend to know more than they can articulate. Art-based research holds promise to shed light on both understanding and representing the complex nature of teacher education (Fletcher, 2020). I had a wealth of experiences to

draw data from, but I had been unable to elucidate in one text most of what I know about *The Classroom Story*. Arts-based research has the feature of being able to capture ideas and phenomena that are hard to put into words (Kuttner et al., 2021; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019; Tian, 2023; Weber, 2014; Weber & Mitchel, 2004). Although I had made attempts in the past to expand and refine my knowledge and understanding of *The Classroom Story*, I had not yet evinced patterns and only experimented with aesthetic inquiries that examined the processes. By undertaking the ABR process, I interrogated my ideas, assumptions, and current knowledge while analyzing and producing new and refined understandings. Many scholars have made note that with ABR, the practitioner aims to capture hard-to-describe phenomena (Kuttner et al., 2021; Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019; Tian, 2023; Weber, 2014). Barone and Eisner (2012) have claimed that ABR can capture meaning in a way that measurement cannot, aptly relaying the idea that, “to feel the heat is not the same as measuring the temperature” (p.167). Through producing this multimodal text, this thesis helped me distill and explain the concepts and patterns behind *The Classroom Story*.

Second, ABR helps lead to enhanced perspectives. Leavy (2017) claimed that art may have unmatched potential to promote deep engagement and make lasting impressions. This can help the researcher and reader experience a transformation of worldviews while challenging the dominant discourses in education (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Tian, 2023). To enhance the perspectives of oneself and the intended audience, the purpose of ABR is not to seek fact but to provoke thought (Barone & Eisner, 2006, 2012; Tian, 2023), leading the research to have effects that are immediate and lasting (Leavy, 2017). This can also be referred to as *generativity*. In educational research, ABR

allows the researcher to creatively explore research questions by provoking a way of thinking that shifts away from the quotidian (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019).

Third, ABR is meant to be shared and disseminated to an audience to be effective and lasting (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Cahnmann-Taylor & Seigesmund, 2017; Fletcher, 2020; Leavy, 2017; Tian, 2023). I am not interested in pontificating and telling other educators what they should do in their classroom teaching. My *modus operandi* is (and has been) to invite, relate with, and prompt teachers to engage with their craft by creating dynamic curriculum through *The Classroom Story* in combination with their own teaching strengths and goals. Also, I do not want this thesis to sit on a shelf somewhere unseen, beyond the reach of practising teachers. Barone and Eisner's (2012a) assessment that ABR is meant to be seen and interpreted by others is my intention. The research, like a piece of artwork, needs to be *seen* by others in order to be "complete"—the relational considerations of an audience matter.

Finally, in ABR, aesthetic qualities and design elements are infused with the inquiry process, making this research method a catalyst for multimodal text production. Multimodal texts—in this case, comics— have been used to analyze and share my results in a visual and text-based work. On that note, a recent trend is emerging where researchers use the "affordances" of comics (Kuttner et al., 2017, 2021; Sousanis, 2017) to use aesthetics as research, as well as a format for sharing findings. Using comics, researchers can combine mutually reinforcing data from different modes (multimodality), effectively using the panels as spaces of data triangulation (Kuttner et al., 2021; Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006). This made the text more appealing and easier for teachers to comprehend, as well as share. With ABR, the presentation of findings is

less dry and more accessible to audiences, so by using comics-based research (CBR) as part of my arts-based process, I provided greater accessibility to other educators (Getz & Clarke, 2016; Kuttner et al., 2021; Sousanis 2015). I will discuss more about this in the “Artwork in ABR” section in which I will review CBR as “an emerging field of practice” (Kuttner et al., 2021).

ABR and Self-Study

While using Eisner and Barone’s ABR approach, I also employed self-study research practices common to educational researchers. Like ABR, self-study has an aim to articulate exemplars instead of solutions expressed as formal knowledge (Craig, 2009; Ham & Kane, 2004; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Loughren & Northfield, 1998; Samaras, 2011). In using ABR, I selected to employ a self-study approach because I have been self-studying my methods for as long as I have been doing them; constantly reflecting, analyzing, and conferring with others; re-jigging my approaches as necessary, and sharing my findings as evidenced by the ways in which I have evolved my delivery of workshops and presentations. It was and is very much a part of my own process as an educator. Stemming from this work, which I have done over many years, are myriad notes, drawings, photographs, presentations, and workshop documents, as well as other artifacts I used for data collection and analysis. I thoroughly analyzed the data I had collected over the years, to distill and crystallize the key features.

Self-study methodologies were well suited to my ABR process because they focused on my own practice (Samaras, 2011; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015), while simultaneously improving my understanding of the research area (Hamilton, 2004; Hamilton et al., 2008; LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Loughran et al.,

2004; Samaras, 2011; Samaras & Freese, 2009). The use of critical friends to help in this process was essential and gave me a social outlet for my work (Ovens & Fletcher, 2001; Samaras, 2011; Samaras & Freese, 2009). In “Documenting the ripple effect,” Weber noted that within their research, the combination of self-study ABR: (1) fostered reflexivity, (2) captured ideas that were hard to put into words, (3) resonated with the lives of others, (4) was a more embodied experience rather than rhetoric, (5) and engaged a wider public (2014). These were all things that I encountered in my ABR self-study process. ABR had a natural synergy with self-study.

Further to this, self-study methodologies have been known to rely on other methods (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Fletcher, 2020; Hamilton et al., 2008; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015) and there is a growing number of ABR self-study examples such as the works of Hannigan et al. (2016), Mitchell et al. (2009), Samaras (2010), Weber and Mitchell (2004), and Weber (2014). Self-study research is “a research methodology in which researchers and practitioners use whatever methods will provide the needed evidence and context for understanding their practice” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 240). Self-study works with ABR’s flexible and generative processes in order to build understanding.

Kelchtermans (2009) believed that there are two components of self-study: professional self-understanding and subjective educational theory. With this thesis, I aim to improve understanding and practice of creativity, play, engagement, inquiry, and co-creation (Hamilton, 2004; Hamilton et al., 2008; LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Loughran et al., 2004; Samaras, 2011; Samaras & Freese, 2009). Loughran et al. (2004) wrote, “a common ‘big picture’ purpose for many self-studies is

linked to the desire of the teacher educator to teach in ways commensurate with the hopes for their student-teachers' teaching (i.e., the notion of 'practice what you preach' or modelling)" (p. 10). I have tried to replicate this sentiment of "practice what you preach" in my presentations, workshops, and previous multimodal texts (comics and zines) using story, working with others in collaborative ways, and inviting educators to produce their own learnings.

Although self-study may seem isolating, it is more collaborative than it lets on. Central to self-study methodologies are communities and critical friends. Self-study practitioners have a wide-ranging professional network that helps share their practice (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014). This is a group of people who focus on a more holistic and integrated approach centred on the education of teachers as enquirers of their own practice (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). I viewed the use of "critical friends" as collaboration, mentorship, and an integral part of growing as an educator. The process of self-study stakes significant importance on critical friends because it is not meant to be done alone (Samaras, 2011; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). To this end, I worked with my critical friend team of Gregory Chomichuk and Lucas Wichenko, people whom I have worked with in the past to learn about and develop *The Classroom Story*. Gregory is a practising artist working as a writer and illustrator of comics and other fiction, while Lucas Wichenko is a practising teacher and a former co-worker and teacher-candidate I mentored. The two friends provided me with unique perspectives and aptitudes with which to discuss and review my findings. This correspondence took place through my own personal lens, conveying my thoughts and reactions to this collaboration. During this time, I also observed my own teaching practice both from my

personal perspective and through speaking with colleagues. In Phase V of my research, I encountered another learning community within the non-profit organization, Prairie Comics Festival (PCF) and received invaluable mentorship from established artists and authors M.C. Joudrey, Scott A. Ford, and S.M. Beiko.

Self-study is also very much in line with ABR's focus on the sharing of learning. I used the insights I gained to share, motivate, and encourage others, since "the purpose of self-study has thus always been to move beyond the particularities of practice by making public the developed understandings to make them informative for others" (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015, p. 509). In this endeavour, I revealed and created methods that are feasible for day-to-day professional situations. To this effect, I used the power of story since they are often used to represent and relate teacher experiences rife with possibilities for inquiry (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015).

In summary, my intent was to convey my own work in *The Classroom Story* in an engaging and informative manner, illustrate my pedagogical approach, and share my curricula with other educators. In my comic research text (chapter 5), "Teach Like This! Harness Your Teaching Creativity", I detail what I believe is an engaging and exciting educational approach that illustrates my teaching, thus providing other educators with an understanding of *The Classroom Story* and how they may work to implement it in their classrooms. This self-study has become a foundational culmination of my efforts so far.

Artwork in ABR: Comics and Comics-based Research

Contemporary academics are starting to use comics for research purposes which is called comics-based research (CBR) (Kuttner et al., 2017, 2021; Mulvihill &

Swaminathan, 2019; Sohini, 2022; Sousanis, 2017). Often building off the work of Scott McLeod's *Understanding Comics* (1993), scholars have noted that using comics as a method of research, as well as a means of disseminating research, has unique affordances (Kuttner et al., 2017; Kuttner et al., 2021; Sohini, 2022; Sousanis, 2017). The "unique affordances of comics" are: (1) unification of word and image (multimodality); (2) facility with narrative (story); (3) simultaneity; and (4) expression of style (Kuttner et al., 2017). This was later streamlined as (1) multimodality, (2) sequence and simultaneity, and (3) style and voice (Kuttner et al., 2021). Multimodality refers to the way comics combine image, text, layout, and spatial arrangement to convey meaning—offering readers multiple entry points and ways to engage with content. Sequence and simultaneity highlight how comics uniquely blend linear progression with the possibility of viewing multiple moments or ideas at once, allowing readers to navigate time and meaning in flexible, layered ways. Style and voice point to the expressive potential of comics, where the visual form itself contributes to tone, emotion, and perspective, making space for personal or cultural identity to emerge through both imagery and narrative structure.

Comics, then, give researchers access to what the New London Group (1996) called multimodal design. This complex communication system affords opportunities for researchers to present more fully the "multimodal ensembles" that individuals orchestrate in real-life interactions (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010), and the ways in which people make meaning of their lives through multiple modes of communication (Flowers, 2017).

I was drawn to this medium because I found it to be highly efficacious at relaying information and complex topics (Sousanis 2017), but comics also carry some measure of “cultural baggage” (Cap & Black, 2012). In North America, for example, this negative impression includes: the idea that comics are “for kids”; a history of racial, ethnic, and gender stereotyping; and the dominance of the superhero genre (Singer, 2002; Van Lente & Dunlavey, 2012). I believe, however, that this cultural baggage is dissipating since using graphic novels and comics already has a strong background. Memoir and autobiographical reflections and representations have a robust base in the comics tradition with works like *Maus* (Spiegelman, 1986) and *American Splendor* (Pekar, 1976–2008), *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2000), *Blankets* (Thompson, 2003), and *Ducks* (Beaton, 2022). This shows that the graphic medium is an excellent way to reflect on one’s experiences and tell personal, layered stories (Cap & Black, 2012).

Lynda Barry’s *Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor* (2014) is in this vein of work as well, but there is something different about Barry’s work in that it invites participation and practice. The text has a pedagogical tilt toward those who want to teach, draw, write, and wonder again. Others who inspire my pursuits in scholarly comics-making include Ebony Flowers, Nick Sousanis, and S.C. Pirie.

Throughout the comics-making process (Phases II, III, and IV), I assessed, analyzed, and looked for meaning across 12 years of chronicled multimodal data. Using the comics-making process, I discovered new connections and uncovered new ideas that I had not thought of before. Kuttner et al. (2017) explained that through lateral thinking, a comic researcher may, “uncover new connections by paying special attention toward physical, spatial, choral [temporal], and visual aspects of the topic” (p. 411).

Again, there was a natural synergy with my methodological choice of self-study ABR. Through making comics, I was able to scaffold my thinking (Kuttner et al., 2017; Flowers, 2017) and link theory with practice by bringing together thoughts and actions (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2019). This was a form of reflexivity, which is important to self-study ABR (Weber, 2014).

It is noted that amateur-level experience is suitable for arts-based research. Practitioners (like myself) need not be trained artists, but they should be familiar with the tools they are using (Barone & Eisner, 2012). I have experience in making comics and zines to relay pedagogical information in my professional development presentations while also having submitted comics (including relevant citations) as a final paper for my *Study of Teaching* master's course. In this process, the conditions required me to adapt and learn much more than I anticipated in order to share my text the way I intended.

The use of comics as a research method offers a powerful gateway for those looking to explore the rich realm of multimodal design, as advocated by the New London Group (1996). This medium's capacity to convey complex information and relate multifaceted stories has already found a solid foundation in graphic novels and comics, which made it a fitting choice for the combination of self-study ABR.. This methodological choice meshed with self-study ABR, allowing for the scaffolding of thinking and the harmonization of theory and practice. As the field of scholarly comics-making continues to expand, I am excited to be a part of this innovative and engaging approach to research.

The Approach: Five Phases

According to Eisner and Barone (2012), when embarking on ABR, there is not a strict linear procedure to which to adhere. Instead, they have identified a five-part sequence of stages that numerous practitioners navigate as their research unfolds. I chose to follow Barone and Eisner's ABR approach because it is concrete, easy to adapt, and made sense to me as a creative educator. It is important to note that while this approach includes distinct phases, my process was not linear. There was frequent overlap and movement between stages as emerging understandings and patterns unfolded across them. As I embarked on this endeavour, I was trying to mimic and remix the processes of my role models, the researchers/comic artists Nick Sousanis and Lynda Barry.

Phase I “The Empty Canvas”

I have already framed the research questions that guided this study. Before confronting the making of the artworks, I explored the context, relevant literature, and existing knowledge to develop a clear and focused research question that was explored through artistic means. During this phase, I wondered, *what strategies will I employ to gather, assess, and share this information effectively with fellow educators?*

Phase I entailed confronting the “empty canvas” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 49). The authors noted that during this time, one must remain open to possibilities. In this phase, it is important to consider serendipitous happenings that offer possible and previously unconsidered directions. In an interview, Nick Sousanis said that at the start of a project, he always begins with something he is curious about—some ideas or information that he wants to make sense of for himself (Sohini, 2022). I did this in

respect to my examination of the ideas relating to my data collection. In this phase, I actively engaged in artistic practices to generate data and insights. In ABR, this can involve various art forms, such as painting, drawing, sculpture, music, dance, theatre, creative writing, or other expressive forms. In my case, I created comics as this is the way in which I have worked to convey *The Classroom Story* to date.

In this phase, I gathered and reviewed my notebooks, drawings, blog entries, videos, photos, artifacts, slide decks, presentation documents, and memories for all things relating to *The Classroom Story*. While collecting and reviewing this data, I remained open to all possibilities before me. Legendary cartoonists Lynda Barry (2014) and Ivan Brunetti (2011) have advocated for keeping a journal as a means of exploring drawing styles and experimenting with form. In alignment with their approach, I extensively journaled throughout the development of my comic, using this practice as a space for reflection, idea generation, and creative exploration. During this process, journal keeping became “a place for the back of the mind to come forward” (Barry, 2014). To document the gathering, collecting, and creating stages of my work, I relied heavily on notebooks (see Appendix A for photos of this process).

I found that sometimes I would encounter an “empty canvas” while in the depths of my comic creation process (Phase IV). In these instances, where I did not have a clear vision on what to do next, I would revisit my notebooks, artifacts, and past writings. They provided an invaluable place to play with my ideas until a new understanding would emerge.

Phase II: “Emerging Understanding”

Phase II entailed analyzing and interpreting the artistic data which involved carefully examining my notes, drawings, multimodal texts, presentation documents, and other writings that I have undertaken in the past—in short, my creative output—to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. I drew upon my own expertise and artistic sensibilities to interpret this data and generate insights and understandings. This corroborates with Eisner and Barone, who wrote about phase II as a refining phase, where themes begin to emerge from the collected materials. Patterns and stories surfaced, and my courses of direction became more clearly defined (2012).

In Sousanis’ experience, comics’ affordances were most useful when they were integrated into the research process from the beginning, with initial data collection and brainstorming (Kuttner et al., 2017; Sousanis, 2017). Utilizing comics as a means of analysis can direct the researcher’s focus toward aspects of a phenomenon that are inherently visual and challenging to articulate in words; it has the potential to inspire unanticipated insights and to compel the researcher to adopt a more deliberate and attentive approach (Causey, 2016; Flowers, 2017). During analysis, the creation of a spread of comic pages afforded me the chance to lay out diverse pieces of data—drawings, journal entries, field notes, photographs, and other qualitative data—in one place. Using this data, I explored similarities, contrasts, patterns, and an overall intuitive sense of what was emerging from the research (Kuttner et al., 2021). Flowers (2017), for example, has written about her “reflective and productive form of multimodal analysis” (p. 37), which included expanding on field notes through iterative drawing and writing exercises; transcribing audio recordings into a blend of text, drawings, and comics; and translating participants’ written work into comics.

As I worked with the aesthetic and inquiry elements of the research—themes, subthemes, and budding relationships began to emerge. The comic affordance of “simultaneity” opened opportunities for me to analyze content in divergent directions, build up multiple layers of meaning with frames and pages, and “explore themes that did not necessarily fall into a traditional model of causality” (Kuttner et al., 2021, p. 205).

Phase III: “Crystallization”

During Phase III, researchers draw upon their own expertise and artistic sensibilities to interpret the data and generate insights and understandings. This phase typically begins with an “aha” moment; when the data begins to reveal itself and the researcher can begin refining, carving out, and elaborating meaning—it is the point of “. . . crystallization . . .” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 50). For this to happen, a pervasive quality must first emerge. Another important feature of this phase was to eliminate the data and qualities that were not connected to the central concept of the research text.

Self-study intends to focus on one’s own practice (Samaras, 2011; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015), as I have already documented in my approach. My ideas, artifacts, practices, and experiences were the data source that was analyzed (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998). I then critically examined my own beliefs (Berry & Loughren, 2004) when analyzing the data and considered my “self in relation to others” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). As I reviewed my data patterns and themes became evident. Barone and Eisner (2012) stated, “the achievement of phase three in an arts-based research project represents a moment of great relief and enables the researcher to move on to phase four . . . the onset of the actual writing process” (2012, p. 51).

The key moment of crystallization in my ABR process occurred when I discovered how to layer the multiple nuances of my message. By the time I completed the prologue of the comic, it felt like a puzzle piece had fallen into place, allowing me to see the full scope of what I was working with. Through multiple iterations of notetaking, drawing, writing, and reflecting, I learned to craft a narrative that integrated: (1) a narrative, (2) *Classroom Story* instruction, (3) pedagogical discoveries and musings, and (4) a miniature game that could be played while reading the comic. This breakthrough propelled me deeper into the ABR process.

Phase IV: “The Creative Process”

For the composing of the research text, I created comics – my multimodal renderings to help me convey themes and findings. In this phase, I considered the artistic elements, symbolism, and visual storytelling techniques used in comics to generate meaning and understanding. Comics scaffolded my theories, supported lateral thinking, helped me uncover new connections, and pointed my attention toward the physical, spatial, and visual aspects of the topic (Kuttner et al., 2021). By creating purposeful tension between the images and words on a page, I was able to highlight ambiguity, uncertainty, and multiple perspectives—aspects that are often underplayed in the seeming certainty of academic prose (Kuttner et al., 2021).

Although narrative in comics moves in sequence from one panel to another, comics are usually experienced as complete pages or spreads of two contiguous pages. This was another instance of the affordance of simultaneity. There is a relationship between the individual panels, their shape and orientation, how images are repeated across pages, and even the overall composition of each page (McCloud, 1993; Miller,

2007; Postema, 2013; Sousanis, 2015). As Kuttner et al. have pointed out, a researcher might, for example, “use their layout to simultaneously present multiple perspectives on a topic or experience, to highlight connections across seemingly disparate contexts, or to spread the evidence for an argument out before a reader for them to make their own decisions” (2021, p. 205). When constructing my comic, I regularly made use of these affordances as meaning-making tools in this phase of the research. Careful consideration was given to how each page, or spread of pages, presented a clear message through the juxtaposition of images and text. As originally stated by Barone and Eisner, I found that during this artistic creation process was “much less a quest for certainty and much more a quest for plausibility” (2012, p. 53).

Comics also afforded me a strong platform for “thick description” (Geertz, 2008), which means it presented a chance to simultaneously explore the surface interactions and the multiple layers of meaning behind them (Kuttner et al., 2021). The process of crafting comics inherently involved a form of analysis that encompassed activities like sketching, drawing, revising, inking, graphic layout, and more – all of which involved making deliberate choices and refining my work. Much like traditional writing, creating comics is a method of honing and uncovering the intended message by way of drafting and revising a text. The act of producing this comic contributed to my comprehension and expression of the knowledge I gained (Kuttner et al., 2021).

Phase V: “Shared with Readers”

A crucial phase of ABR involves communicating the research findings in a compelling and accessible manner. Practitioners using ABR are encouraged to consider creative and aesthetic modes of dissemination, such as exhibitions, performances,

publications, multimedia presentations, or public installations (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Leavy, 2017). This phase emphasizes the importance of engaging audiences in meaningful ways and making research findings accessible beyond academic circles (Leavy, 2017; Sousanis, 2017; Tian, 2023). Barone and Eisner (2012) stated that the research is never truly finished as audience members will take the work and continue to make new meanings of it. Self-study also places immense importance on the community and audience with whom the research is shared, and the consideration of the audience is an integral piece in the research process (Fletcher, 2020).

Barone and Eisner cited a few critics of traditional academia who believe there is a tendency of academic writing to alienate readers unprepared to dig through such complex prose (2012). Comics have a way to cut through that proverbial tension. Nick Sousanis (2017) has speculated that through using images and comics, removing words is akin to “removing walls” (p.191).

In this final phase, I self-published a print-based comic that was shared with others in print and digital formats. To share my work, instead of relying on word-of-mouth or dissemination online, I applied and was accepted to “table” my comic at the 2024 Prairie Comics Festival in Winnipeg, Manitoba (pictured in Appendix B).

Trustworthiness and Generativity

Trustworthiness. Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015) believed that there are two tensions a self-study researcher must be aware of: relevance versus rigour, and effectiveness versus understanding. I believe I ameliorated this through my use of ABR and CBR. For example, using comics to analyze and share his academic ideas, Nick Sousanis spoke about how he has an awareness for the necessity of balance when

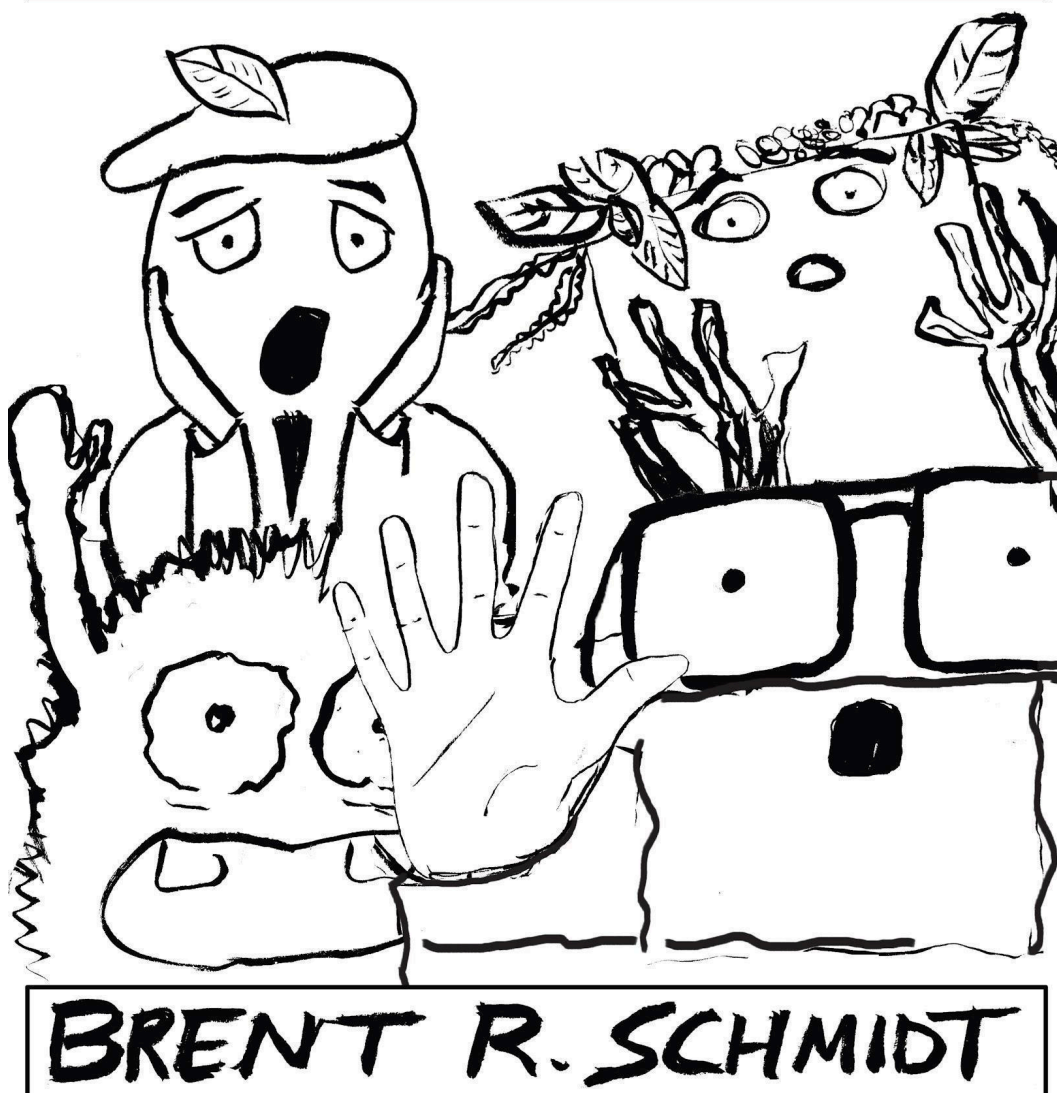
making his works aesthetically pleasing yet academically relevant. Sousanis recalled a time during one of his presentations when an attendee commented that with Sousanis' work, the aesthetics equalled the analysis. Sousanis agreed and said, "I was as concerned with making engaging artwork as I was with conducting serious research," (2017, p. 193). I had almost identical sentiments as Sousanis when undertaking comics creation, as I viewed the creation of aesthetically pleasing comics (artwork) as well-done research.

Similarly, validation of self-study research is viewed as a process embedded in the extent to which readers find the work resonant and trustworthy (Fletcher, 2020). When I shared my work, I made myself vulnerable. There is a record of my process and beliefs, and I wanted that process to come across as authentic and useful. The feedback I received from readers was relevant and encouraging while seeming to reflect a strong engagement with my text. Further, by using self-study ABR with CBR and multimodal text production, I was triangulating my methods to capitalize on the strengths of each (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). In this way, I was able to weave between relevance, rigour, effectiveness, and understanding. The multimodal analysis with the accompanying images and words produced via this thesis helped me balance these considerations throughout the five-phase process.

Generativity. True to both ABR and self-study, I was not – and am not – trying to arrive at an objective truth; rather, I hope that this research will be generative in helping teachers to engage with their craft by presenting them with a wide array of perceptions and lived experiences (Tian, 2023). Sousanis believes people have produced a large variety of unique interpretations of his comics because the background of each reader

had an effect on what they thought his works were about (Sohini, 2022). This is the kind of generativity I seek to create; where teachers can relate what I convey to their own classroom experiences. Similarly, self-study aims to articulate exemplars that represent one context and interpretation about knowledge and understanding in practice rather than to seek solutions for practice in ways that are expressed as formal knowledge (Craig, 2009; Ham & Kane, 2004; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Loughran & Northfield, 1998). My hope is that my text can continue to provide generativity by helping teachers dig into their own craft, create dynamic learning activities, and design engaging curricula and assessments for their classrooms. Ultimately, the audience determines the success of the research based on how it helps enhance and transform practice (Barone & Eisner, 2006, 2012; Fletcher, 2020; Leavy, 2017; Sousanis, 2017).

Chapter 5: Research Text “Don’t Teach Like This! Harness Your Teaching Creativity!”



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU GOES OUT TO ALLANA, GMB CHOMICHUK, LUCAS WICHENKO, JK, AND THE MANY OTHER FOLKS THAT HAVE HAD TO SUFFER HEARING ABOUT ME WORKING ON THIS PROJECT. THANKS FOR THE SUPPORT AND HELP ALONG THE WAY.

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NOTE

THIS COMIC IS AN ARTS-BASED RESEARCH TEXT AND INTENDED FOR RESEARCH AND FEEDBACK PURPOSES.

WITH ARTS-BASED RESEARCH, THE GOAL IS NOT TO ARRIVE AT A SINGLE OBJECTIVE TRUTH; RATHER, IT'S TO SPREAD EXPERIENCES AND MESSAGES IN HOPE THAT AN IDEA RESONATES WITH ANOTHER PERSON. IN THIS CASE, TEACHERS ARE THE INTENDED AUDIENCE OF THIS TEXT.

WHILE THIS TEXT OUTLINES MY BELIEFS AND METHODS, I OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS IS NOT THE "BEST" WAY TO TEACH; THIS STYLE MIGHT NOT BE FOR EVERYONE. THAT SAID, I ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO TAKE WHATEVER THEY DEEM VALUABLE FROM THIS TEXT (IF ANYTHING) AND USE IT IN A WAY THAT FITS THEIR CLASS AND GROUP OF STUDENTS.

CHEERS!



TEACHER HERO!

STAMINA POINTS
(COFFEES)

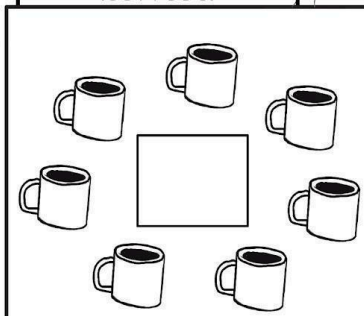


INTRO



TO PLAY THROUGH THIS COMIC, START BY USING THIS PAGE TO CREATE A CHARACTER - A TEACHER! THROUGH AN EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE, YOU WILL ENCOUNTER MANY FOES. PREPARE YOURSELF WELL. DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS ON THE NEXT PAGE.

GRAB A PENCIL, A 6-SIDED DIE, AND ENJOY!
(DON'T WORRY, YOU CAN SKIP THIS IF YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE TOO MUCH FUN)



PROFILE

NAME:

BIOGRAPHY:

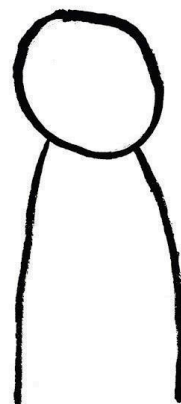
(LIST 3 FACTS AND 1 SECRET ABOUT THIS PERSON)

NEMESIS:

(PICK A "FOE" FROM THE PAGE TO THE LEFT)

IMAGE

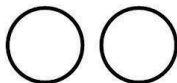
CUSTOMIZE THE FIGURE BELOW



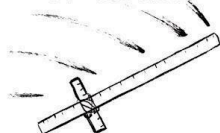
TOOLS OF THE TRADE

CIRCLE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING "TEACHING TOOLS" TO TAKE WITH YOU ON YOUR TEACHING JOURNEY. EACH CAN BE USED TWICE. DESCRIPTIONS ON NEXT PAGE.

USES

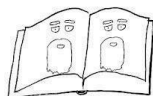


METER STICK OF JUSTICE



SWAP ROLLS WITH FOE

ENCHANTED DAYPLANNER



RE-DO YOUR ROLL.

THE MASTER KEY



SKIP A FOE ALERT.

ELIXIR OF INVIGORATING ENERGY



GAIN 1 STAMINA.

SKILLS

DISTRIBUTE 7 SKILL POINTS INTO THE CATEGORIES BELOW. EACH SKILL WILL HELP YOU WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER CERTAIN CHALLENGES AHEAD.

KNOWLEDGE + EXPERTISE (KE)

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SUBJECT CURRICULUM AND LESSON DESIGN.

CLASSROOM RAPPORT (CR)

YOUR ABILITY TO FOSTER RESPECT AND A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT WITH STUDENTS.

ENERGY + ADAPTABILITY (EA)

YOUR ABILITY TO INNOVATE, CREATE, ADAPT, AND ADJUST ON-THE-FLY.

ASSESSMENT + EVALUATION (AE)

YOUR STRENGTH OF PERCEIVING AND ANALYZING STUDENTS' PERSONAL, SOCIAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT.

TEACHER HERO

A MINI-GAME TO PLAY WHILE YOU READ THIS COMIC

PREMISE: YOU ARE YOUNG TEACHERS TRYING TO MAKE YOUR WAY THROUGH THE BEGINNING OF YOUR CAREER WHILE BEING CHALLENGED BY DEVIOUS "FOES". **TO START:** USE THE "TEACHER HERO" CHARACTER SHEET TO CREATE YOUR CHARACTER. **POINTS:** YOUR CHARACTER BEGINS WITH 7 STAMINA POINTS (COFFEES) AND 7 SKILL POINTS. STAMINA POINTS ACT AS YOUR "HEALTH". SKILL POINTS ARE PERMANENT AND DISTRIBUTED TO THE SKILL CATEGORIES OF YOUR CHOOSING. **TOOLS OF THE TRADE:** PICK A UNIQUE ITEM TO HELP YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY. EACH HAS 2 USES. **GOAL:** FINISH WITH AS MANY STAMINA POINTS AS POSSIBLE.

THE GAME: AS YOU READ THIS BOOK, THERE WILL BE VARIOUS "FOE ALERTS!" THESE ARE MINI-BOSSSES THAT IMPEDE YOUR PROGRESS AS A TEACHER. THEY WILL ATTEMPT TO DRAIN YOU OF YOUR STAMINA AND "BURN YOU OUT". IF YOU REACH ZERO STAMINA, YOU ARE, UNFORTUNATELY, NOT A TEACHER HERO AND MUST START OVER. WHEN YOU SEE "FOE ALERT!" WHILE READING, STOP AND PLAY THE MINI-GAME DESCRIBED BELOW.



FOE ALERT! MINI-GAME



* EACH FOE HAS A WEAKNESS TO ONE OF YOUR FOUR SKILLS. KE = KNOWLEDGE + EXPERTISE CR = CLASSROOM RAPPORT EA = ENERGY + ADAPTIBILITY AE = ASSESSMENT + EVALUATION. WHEN YOU ROLL YOUR DICE, ADD YOUR SCORE FOR THAT SKILL TO THE TOTAL. ** WHEN YOU ENCOUNTER YOUR "NEMESIS", DOUBLE YOUR DICE ROLL.

GAMEPLAY ORDER

- 1 - ROLL THE DIE FOR THE FOE
- 2 - ROLL THE DIE FOR YOURSELF
- 3 - ADD RELEVANT SKILL POINTS
- 4 - HIGHER SCORE WINS
- 5 - RECORD OUTCOME ON GAMESHEET BELOW.

OUTCOME:

- WIN (+1 STAMINA, MOVE ON)
- DRAW (-1 STAMINA, MOVE ON)
- LOSS (-1 STAMINA, TRY AGAIN)

RESULT:

- TALLY THE NET STAMINA LOST OR GAINED FOR EACH FOE.
- EX. +1 IF YOU WIN, -1 FOR A DRAW, -1 FOR 2 LOSSES AND 1 WIN.

GAMESHEET

RECORD THE RESULTS OF YOUR "FOE ALERTS!" IN THE BOXES BELOW.

"KIDS THESE DAYS" CR	SCARECROWS OF THE PAST EA	TIME KE	REPORTS + GRADING AE
DEVICE INFESTATION CR	THE LURKER KE	? SNEAK ATTACK	IMPOSTER! EA

SCORING

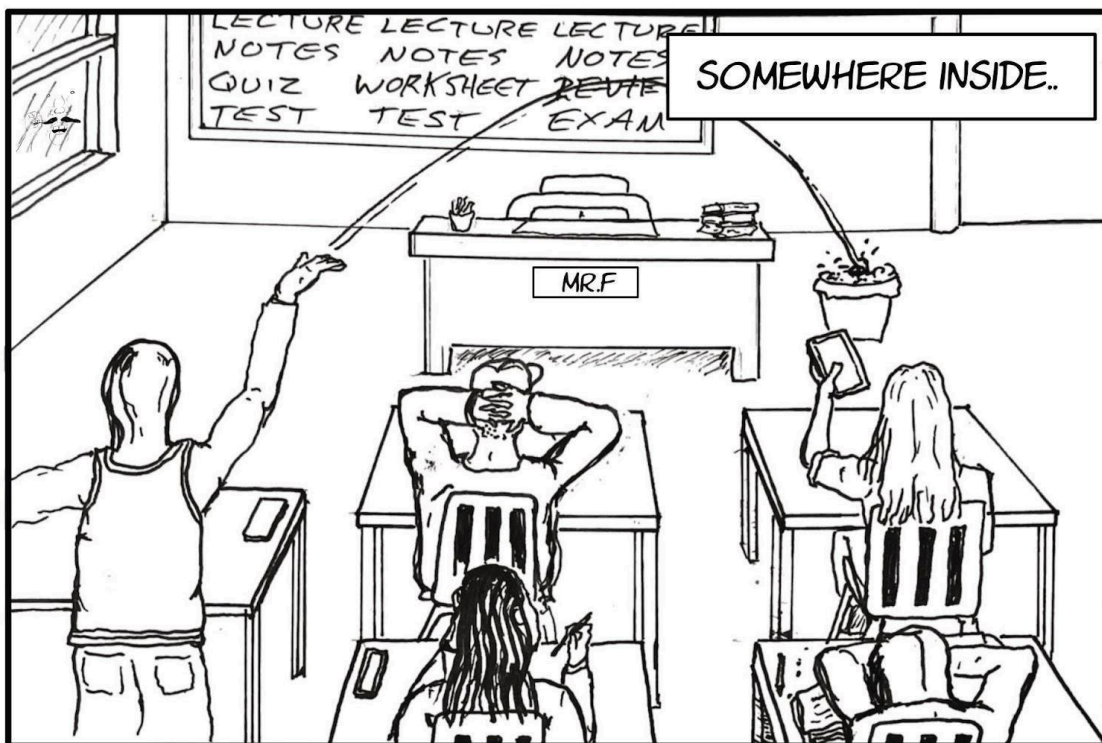
HOW MANY STAMINA POINTS DID YOU FINISH WITH?

- 0 -> BURNED OUT TEACHER
- 1 - 2 -> HANGING IN THERE

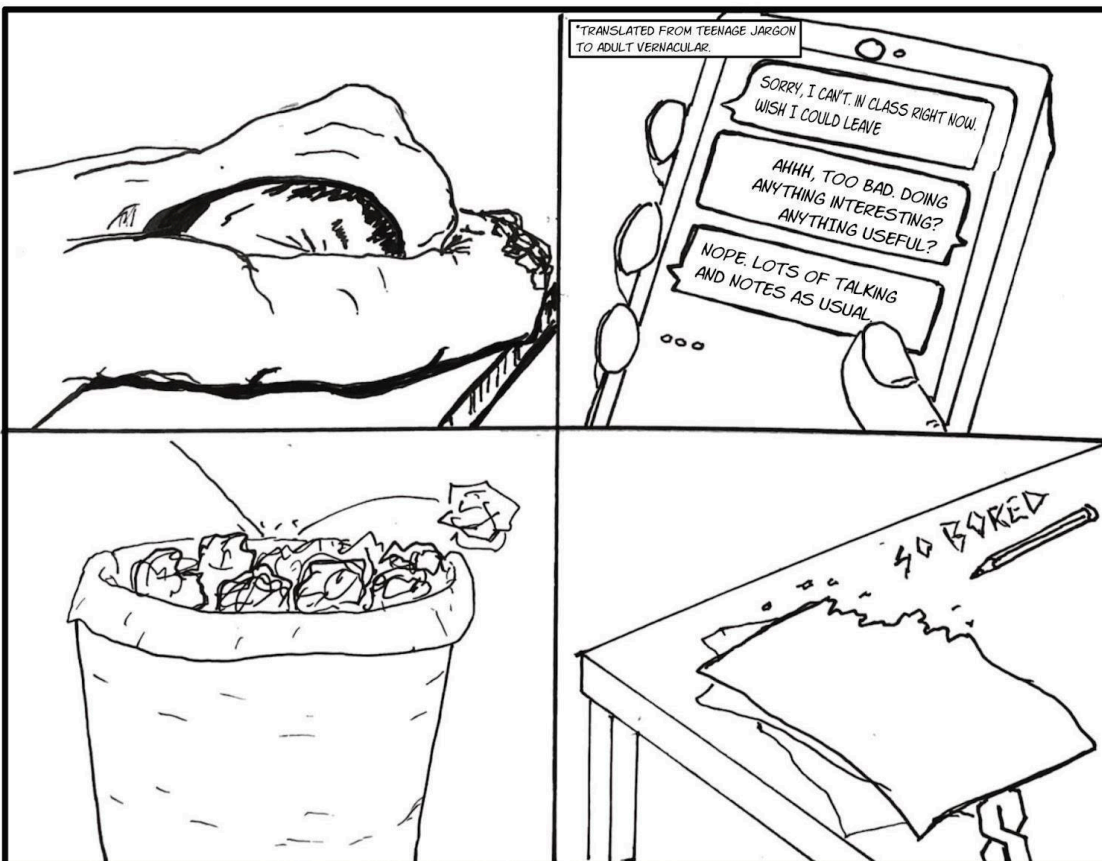
3 - 4 -> MAKING YOUR WAY

5 - 6 -> ENJOYING THE JOB

7+ -> TEACHER HERO!



A CABAL OF FOES INFLECTS A SCHOOL.





WHAT'S THE DEAL
WITH KIDS THESE DAYS?
PHONES, SOCIAL MEDIA, PRANKS,
SLANG, AND ALWAYS INDOORS!
THE LIST GOES ON!



FOE ALERT! "KIDS THESE DAYS"

THESE ARE NOT YOUR FOES!
THEY ARE YOUR STUDENTS.
ENGAGE THEM.



I'VE DONE THESE
LESSONS FOR YEARS,
BUT IT'S NOT GOOD
ENOUGH ANYMORE!
IDEAS, ANYONE?



I HEAR YA!
TEACHING SEEMS HARDER THAN
EVER THESE DAYS. WAYS OF
DOING THINGS THAT WORKED FOR
YEARS SOMEHOW FEEL
INEFFECTIVE NOW.



Dialogue in the Staffroom

CONVERSATION BETWEEN MR.F AND MR.S
-- OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT --

MR.S: I'VE GOT SOMETHING YOU CAN TRY IF YOU'D LIKE?

MR.F: OH, GREAT. ONE MORE THING TO DO. WHAT IS IT NOW? EVERY YEAR IT FEELS LIKE SOME NEW PERSON IS PAID TO TELL ME HOW TO TEACH. IT NEVER WORKS OUT.

MR.S: CAN'T DISAGREE WITH YOU THERE. OFTENTIMES IT DOES FEEL LIKE SOME NEW TREND IS TRYING TO TELL US HOW WE'RE "SUPPOSED" TO TEACH. THIS IS WHY I'M INVITING YOU TO DETERMINE FOR YOURSELF IF WHAT I HAVE TO OFFER IS APPLICABLE FOR YOU. IS IT WORTH YOUR TIME AND EFFORT?

MR.F: OH... OKAY. WHAT'S YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH? WHAT'S "YOUR WAY"? WHY SHOULD I TRY IT?

MR.S: I FEEL THAT WHEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ARE HIGHLY ENGAGED IN THE LEARNING PROCESS, THEY COLLECTIVELY ACHIEVE BIGGER THINGS AND FEEL BETTER WHILE DOING IT. LIKE THE OLD SAYING, "IF YOU WANT TO GO FAST, GO ALONE. IF YOU WANT TO GO FAR, GO TOGETHER".

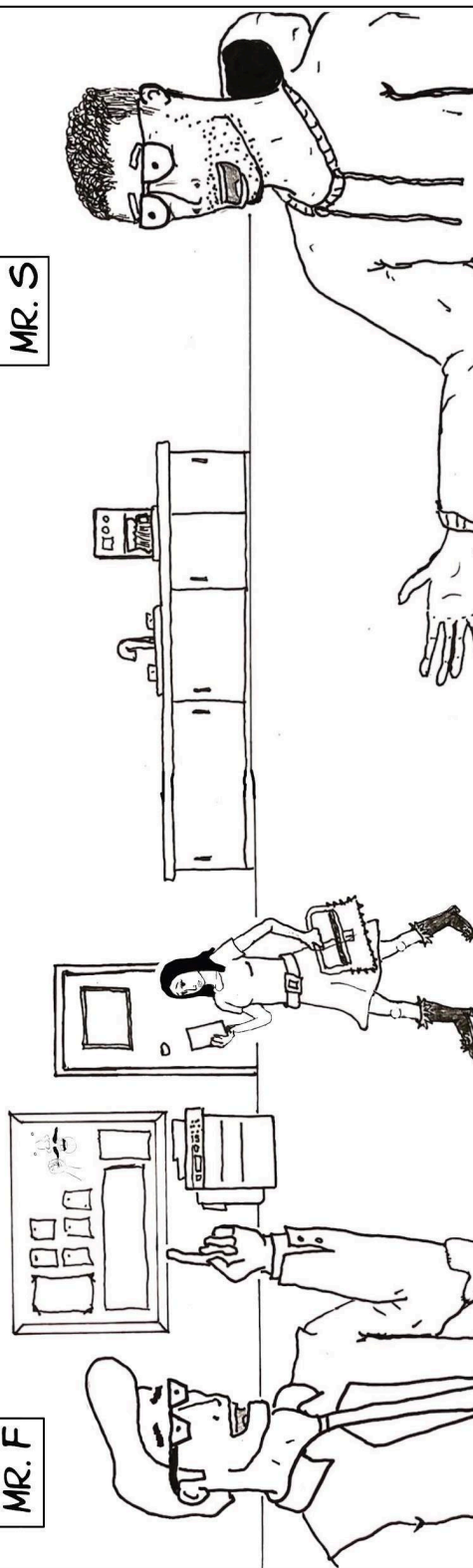
MR.F: ROUGH PITCH, BUDDY. THAT'S A PHILOSOPHY.

MR.S: SORRY, ERRR. YOU'RE RIGHT. OKAY. **PAUSE** CAN YOU STICK AROUND FOR A FEW PAGES? I FEEL LIKE I NEED TO GO A LITTLE MORE IN-DEPTH.

MR. F: PAGES?

MR. F

MR. S



The Classroom Story

THE CLASSROOM STORY IS AN APPROACH TO LESSONS DESIGN AND DELIVERY WHICH USES NARRATIVE AND CHARACTER TO CREATE A SHARED EXPERIENCE THAT LEARNERS CAN EXPAND AND EXPLORE. THE TEACHER ACTS AS CREATOR, STORYTELLER, AND MODERATOR WHILE STUDENTS BECOME CHARACTERS, AUTHORS, AND ACTORS; ENGAGING WITH THE STORY BY RESPONDING TO SHARED EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, OR IDEAS.

SHARED NARRATIVE



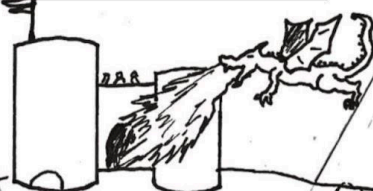
CHARACTERS



SETTING



INCITING EVENT



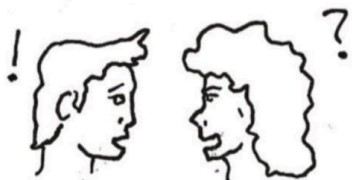
PLOT IDEAS



Curriculum



THINKING, WRITING + RECORDING IDEAS



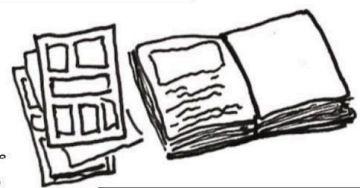
DISCUSSING + QUESTIONING



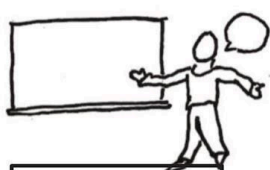
PROBLEM SOLVING



NEW UNDERSTANDING



ORIGINAL TEXT CREATION



PRESENTING AN IDEA TO OTHERS



COLLABORATION



PILLARS OF ENGAGEMENT

AUTONOMY, MASTERY, PURPOSE
AUTHOR DANIEL PINK (2011) EXAMINED A NUMBER OF STUDIES TO UNDERSTAND WHAT INCENTIVIZED PEOPLE TO DO THEIR BEST. OVERALL, HE FOUND THAT GIVING PEOPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUTONOMY, MASTERY, AND PURPOSE, EMPOWERED THEM TO THRIVE AND SUCCEED.



I HAVE FOUND THAT THESE CONCEPTS INTIMATELY RELATE TO HOW WE WORK WITH AND MOTIVATE OUR STUDENTS TO BE ENGAGED IN THEIR EDUCATION.

HOW CAN WE GIVE STUDENTS SOME MEASURE OF CHOICE IN THEIR LEARNING? HOW CAN WE BUILD OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO DEVELOP SKILLS AND BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH PEERS? CAN WE PROVIDE THE POSSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS TO WORK ON SOMETHING IN CLASS THAT SEEMS WORTHWHILE?

AUTONOMY

AUTONOMY IS BEING SELF-DIRECTED. IT'S HAVING A CHOICE IN WHAT YOU DO OR HOW YOU DO IT.



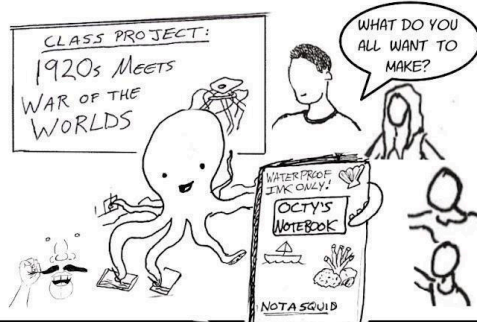
MASTERY

MASTERY IS THE URGE TO IMPROVE UPON A SKILL OR GAIN KNOWLEDGE.



PURPOSE

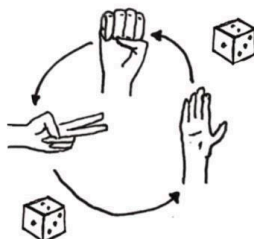
ACTIVITIES CAN BE PURPOSEFUL WHEN WE HAVE CHANCES TO WORK WITH OTHERS TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL GOAL.



BONUS!

PLAY

PLAY PRESENTS LOW-STAKES OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE, USE IMAGINATION, IMPROVISE, AND BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS.



ESCAPE THE ALIEN TRIPODS!

"IN MY SCHEMA FOR ENGAGEMENT, I ADD THE ELEMENT OF 'PLAY', BOTH AS AN ACTIVITY AND AN ATTITUDE. I HAVE FOUND THAT PLAY ADDS TO BETTER CREATIVITY, COLLABORATION, AND ENJOYMENT IN THE CLASSROOM."

I DO, WE DO, YOU DO

AN IDEA THAT HELPED ME DEVELOP AND
CONCEPTUALIZE MY TEACHING STRUCTURE
WAS SCHOLAR REGIE ROUTMAN'S (2012)
"OPTIMAL LEARNING MODEL" (OLM).
THE MONIKER "I DO, WE DO, YOU DO",
IS AN APT SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS.

PROCESS

I DO

TEACHERS: INITIATE, MODEL, AND EXPLAIN.
STUDENTS: OBSERVE, LISTEN, PARTICIPATE.

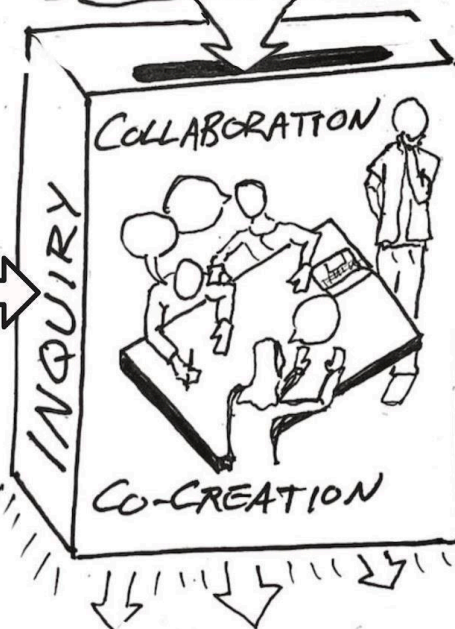
IN THIS PHASE I LEAD A CLASSROOM STORY TO
GET STUDENTS ENGAGED IN THINKING, WRITING,
TALKING, AND WORKING TOGETHER.



WE DO

TEACHERS: LEAD, DEMONSTRATE, AND SCAFFOLD.
STUDENTS: INQUIRE RESPOND, CREATE AND
PROBLEM SOLVE.

BASED ON WHAT WE COVERED IN THE
CLASSROOM STORY AND CURRICULUM, I WORK
ALONGSIDE STUDENTS TO CREATE, AND FIND
INTERESTING IDEAS TO REPRESENT.



YOU DO

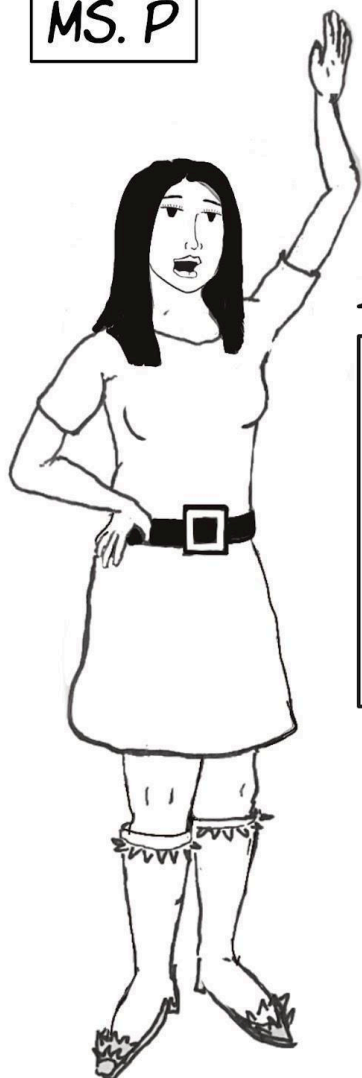
TEACHERS: AFFIRM, RESPOND, EVALUATE, AND
COACH
STUDENTS: INITIATE, SELF-DIRECT, AND APPLY
LEARNING.

IN THIS PHASE I HELP STUDENTS PLAN,
PRODUCE, AND MANIFEST A PUBLIC DISPLAY
OF THEIR LEARNING..



WE USED TO WORK ALONE

MS. P



I WANNA TRY THAT!

I WANT TO DO SOMETHING FUN,
BUT I'M NOT THAT CREATIVE.

CAN YOU SHOW ME?

ABSOLUTELY!
AS LONG AS YOU'RE WILLING TO
TRY, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE
YOU'LL LEARN SOMETHING
NEW AND USEFUL.



NOW WE CREATE TOGETHER!





CLASSROOM STORY PREP SHEET

IF YOU ARE A TEACHER, AND ARE INTERESTED IN MAKING A CLASSROOM STORY, COPY THIS PAGE AS A STARTING POINT FOR CREATING YOUR OWN. REMEMBER, THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO DO A CLASSROOM STORY. ADD YOUR OWN IDEAS AND FLAIR!

GRADE + SUBJECT

UNIT OF STUDY

CURRICULUM

- WHAT SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, OR CONTENT DO YOU WANT TO COVER?
- WHAT LESSONS DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE THAT COULD BE CONVERTED INTO CLASSROOM STORY?

GOALS

I WOULD LIKE STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE...
BETTER WRITING? IMPROVED COOPERATION? LEARNING ABOUT A THING OR CONCEPT?

POSSIBLE SETTINGS

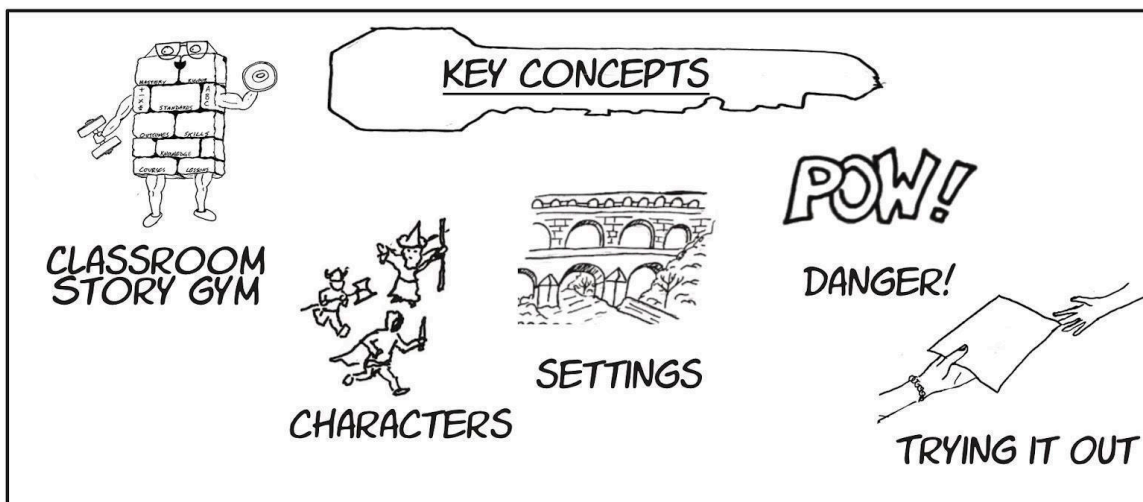
WHERE DOES THE STORY TAKE PLACE?
WHAT IS IT LIKE THERE?

POSSIBLE ROLES FOR STUDENTS

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERS LIKE?
WHAT WORLD WILL THEY INHABIT?

- ACT I -

CLASSROOM STORY GENESIS



PROCESS: I DO -> WE DO

I DO (TEACHERS): LEAD THE CLASS BY EXAMPLE AND INVITE STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND IDEAS.

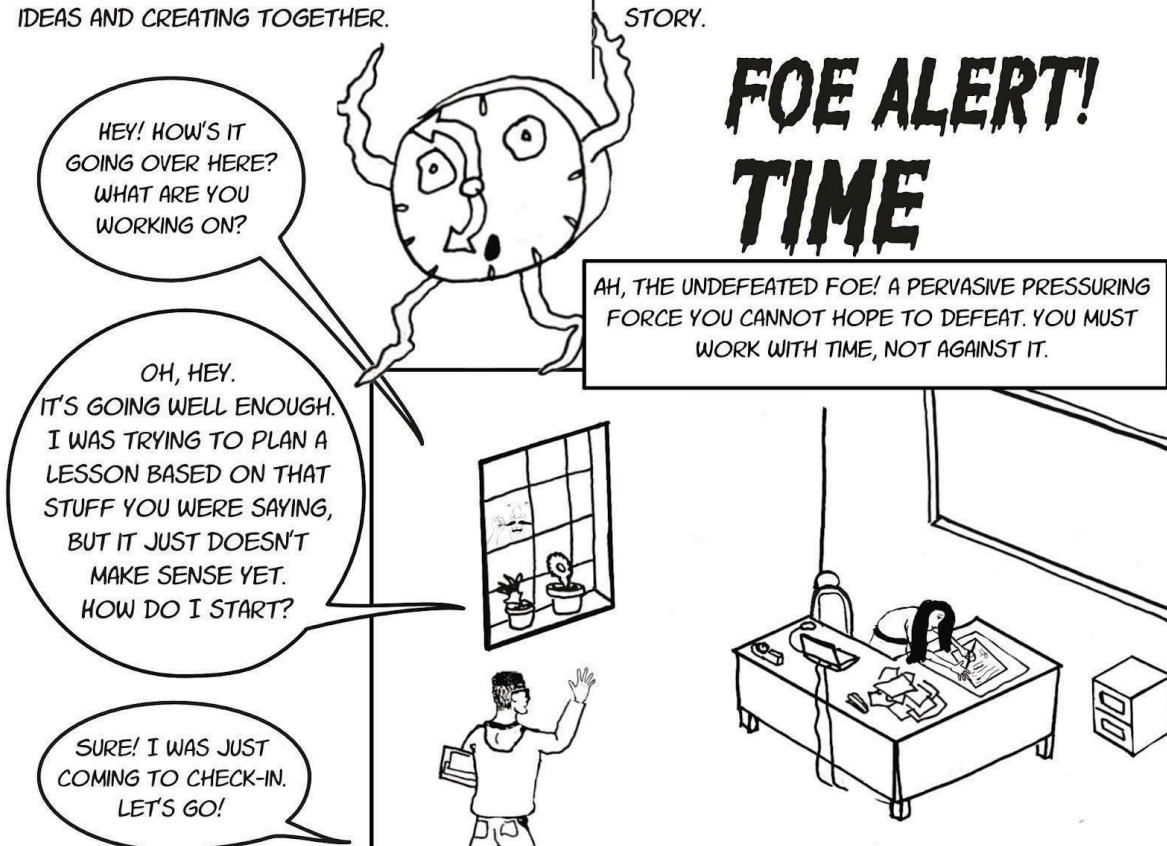
I DO (STUDENTS): ENGAGE IN THE LESSON AND COLLABORATIVE STORY THROUGH CHARACTERS.

WE DO: TEACHERS AND STUDENTS EXCHANGING IDEAS AND CREATING TOGETHER.

ENGAGEMENT: PLAYFUL AUTONOMY

PLAY: STUDENTS USE IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY WHEN MAKING THEIR CHARACTERS AND ROLE-PLAYING SCENARIOS IN THE STORY.

AUTONOMY: STUDENTS GET A CHOICE IN HOW THEY CREATE THEIR AVATARS AND NAVIGATE THE STORY.



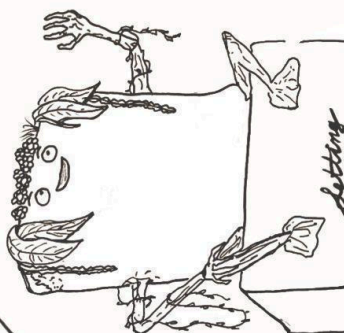
THE CLASSROOM STORY GYM

BUILD YOUR: SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE, STORYTELLING, WORLD BUILDING, IMPROVISATION, STUDENT RAPPORT, CLASSROOM COMMUNITY, AND FUN!



HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF SOME ESSENTIAL PARTS WHEN STARTING A CLASSROOM STORY. WE'VE GOT CURRICULUM, CHARACTERS, SETTING AND INCITING EVENT.

I'M THE PERFECT BACKDROP FOR YOUR STORY. EERIE JUNGLES. ANCIENT EGYPT. FANTASTIC LANDS. EVERYDAY CITIES. I CAN BE ANYWHERE!



MS. SETTING

(WHERE THE STORY TAKES PLACE)

LIKE IN A REGULAR NARRATIVE, THE SETTING IS WHERE AND WHEN THE STORY TAKES PLACE. FOR A CLASSROOM STORY, CONNECTING THE SETTING WITH THE CURRICULUM ENABLES SEAMLESS TRANSITION TO FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS (MORE ON THAT LATER).

I BRING THE STORY TO LIFE! I HAVE A RICH BACKGROUND AND DYNAMIC PERSONALITY. WHEN I ENCOUNTER AND SOLVE PROBLEMS, I DEVELOP AND BECOME ALIVE!

MX. CHARACTER

(WHO THE STUDENTS WILL BE)

THE CHARACTER (OR ROLE) IS HOW THE STUDENTS WILL ENGAGE AND INTERACT WITH THE COLLABORATIVE STORY. THE TYPE OF CHARACTERS OR ROLES YOU GIVE STUDENTS WILL HIGHLY DEPEND ON THE SETTING OF THE STORY.

CLASSROOM STORY TIPS

1. TRYING AND FAILING IS BETTER THAN NOT TRYING AT ALL.
2. START SMALL AND WORK UP.
3. NOT KNOWING IS PART OF THE FUN!
4. PLAN, IMPROVISE, ADAPT, OVERCOME.
5. WORK HARD AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF.

AT FIRST, DON'T BE OVERLY CONCERNED ABOUT DELIVERING CONTENT AND OUTCOMES. LET THE STORY DEVELOP FOR A BIT. SEE YOU AROUND!

MR. CURRICULUM

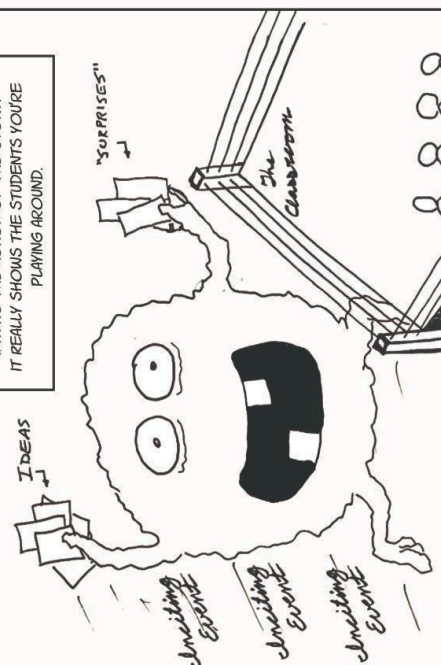
(THE STUFF YOU HAVE TO TEACH)

EDUCATORS ARE TYPICALLY MANDATED TO TEACH PARTICULAR CONTENT IN THEIR SUBJECT AREA ACCORDING TO A REGIONAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY. SO, WHEN MAKING A CLASSROOM STORY, WHAT SKILLS OR CONTENT DO YOU HOPE TO COVER WITH YOUR CLASS IN THE PROCESS?

MR. INCITING EVENT

(WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW THE PROBLEM IS INTRODUCED IN A STORY)

THIS IS A BIG EVENT, DONE AS A CLASS. THE CHARACTERS (STUDENTS) ARE FLUNG INTO A CHALLENGING SITUATION TO INITIATE THE ACTION OF THE STORY. IT REALLY SHOWS THE STUDENTS YOU'RE PLAYING AROUND.

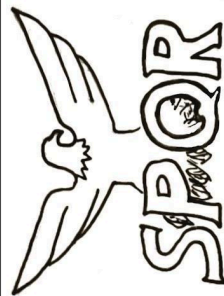


"SURPRISES!"

The Classroom

CLASSROOM STORIES FROM MY PRACTICE

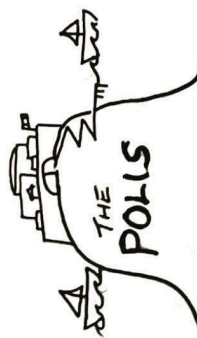
OVER THE YEARS, I'VE EXPERIMENTED WITH MANY CLASSROOM STORIES IN LANGUAGE ARTS AND SOCIAL STUDIES WITH A MIX OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE. THE FOLLOWING STORIES STAND OUT FOR THE WAY THEY HAD A HIGH LEVEL OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT PAIRED WITH EXCELLENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.



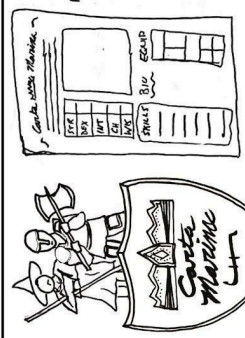
CURRICULUM: ANCIENT ROME
GRADE EIGHT SOCIAL STUDIES (WORLD HISTORY)
SETTING: ROMAN REPUBLIC 200s BCE.
ROLES: A ROLE WAS RANDOMLY ASSIGNED TO STUDENTS BASED ON POSITIONS IN ROMAN GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY.



CURRICULUM : CREATIVE WRITING AND RESPONDING. GRADE SEVEN + EIGHT LANGUAGE ARTS
SETTING: 1920s AMERICA, EAST COAST.
ROLES: STUDENTS ARE GUIDED THROUGH THE CREATION OF 3 CHARACTERS ON A GAME SHEET.



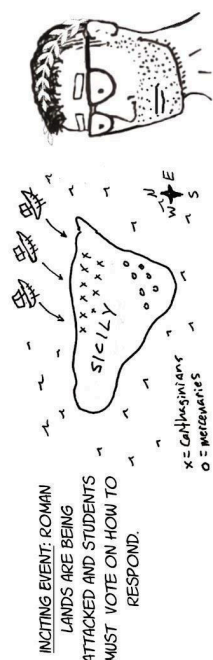
CURRICULUM: CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOCIETY. GRADE EIGHT SOCIAL STUDIES (WORLD HISTORY)
SETTING: 300s BCE, UNKNOWN SEA REGION.
STUDENTS ARE THE LEADERS OF THEIR OWN NATION IN A SHARED WORLD.



CURRICULUM : CREATIVE WRITING, SPEAKING, REPRESENTING, LISTENING, CRITICAL THINKING. GRADE SEVEN + EIGHT ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
SETTING: A FANTASY GENRE STORY IN THE FICTIONAL LAND OF CARTA MARINE.

CLASSROOM STORIES FROM MY PRACTICE

THESE UNITS STARTED AS CLASSROOM STORIES, TRANSITIONED INTO TOPICS OF STUDY AND ULTIMATELY, BECAME EXHIBITIONS OF LEARNING AND CREATIVITY. I OFFER THESE AS LOOSE GUIDELINES TO SHOW OPTIONS. USE AS YOU SEE FIT. REMEMBER, ONLY YOUR IMAGINATION LIMITS WHAT IS POSSIBLE. THERE ARE NO "CLASSROOM STORY RULES."

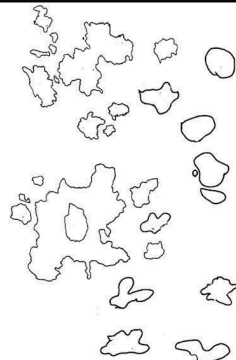
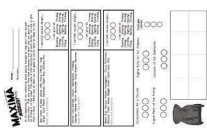


INCITING EVENT: ROMAN LANDS ARE BEING ATTACKED AND STUDENTS MUST VOTE ON HOW TO RESPOND.

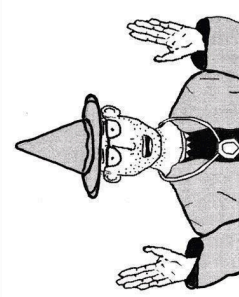
x = Gallicsians
o = mercenaries



INCITING EVENT: LARGE CYCLINDERS HOLDING MARTIN "TRIPOT" MACHINES LAND IN THE OCEAN AROUND THE CITY. CHARACTERS RELY ON EACH OTHER TO ESCAPE, SURVIVE, AND RESIST.



ROLES: ON A LARGE PIECE OF PAPER, STUDENTS ARE GUIDED THROUGH THE CREATION OF A CITY-STATE ON AN ISLAND (POLIS). THEY ARE THE LEADER OF THIS POLIS.
INCITING EVENT: CITIES ARE VISITED BY MYSTERIOUS STRANGERS FROM A FAR AWAY PLACE WITH AN INTRIGUING OFFER TO TEST THEIR LOYALTIES.



ROLES: STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN A FUN GUIDED CHARACTER CREATION WITH A GAME SHEET AND A PICTURE OF THEIR ADVENTURER.
INCITING EVENT: ADVENTURERS ARE ON THEIR WAY TO THE CITY WHEN AN EARTHQUAKE CRACKS OPEN THE GROUND AND THE CHARACTERS TUMBLE IN.

THE CHARACTERS

ROLES

CHARACTERS OR ROLES ENABLE STUDENTS TO ENTER THE STORY AND EXPLORE THE CONTENT OF THE LESSONS.

START SIMPLE

IT CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS WRITING A NAME AND 3 SENTENCE BIO ON AN INDEX CARD! HAVE SOME EXTRA TIME? ADD A DRAWING AND SOME DETAILS.

CUSTOMIZABLE

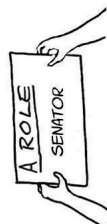
YOU CAN ALSO MAKE A WHOLE CHARACTER SHEET IF YOU'RE THE GAMER TYPE. WHAT KIND OF CHARACTERS OR ROLES WOULD SUIT YOUR STORY?

IN THIS CLASSROOM STORY STUDENTS WERE THE RULING CLASS OF ROME DURING THE PEAK OF THE REPUBLIC.



WE LEARN ABOUT THE ROLES IN ANCIENT ROME AND DISCUSS HOW ONE MIGHT "PLAY" THESE ROLES.

TO BEGIN, EACH STUDENT RECEIVES:



A RANDOMLY ASSIGNED ROLE ON AN INDEX CARD: (PATRICIAN, PHILOSOPHER, LAWYER, TRIBUNE, SENATOR, GENERAL, OR CONSUL)



CURRENCY TO HELP FUND PROJECTS AND "SWEETEN" DEALS WITH OTHERS.



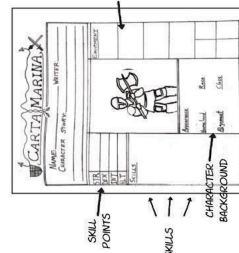
VOTES ON IMPORTANT TOPICS IN THE SENATE.

A SADDLE-STITCHED PAPER NOTEBOOK TO RECORD NOTES, DEALS, ALLIANCES, AND EVENTS FROM CLASS.

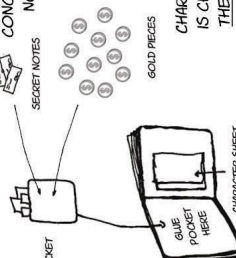


HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY TABLETOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES (RPGS), STUDENTS CREATE A UNIQUE CHARACTER TO BE AN ADVENTURER IN A FANTASY WORLD. THIS STORY IS BASED ON MY PERSONAL AFFINITY WITH RPGS AND THE FANTASY GENRE.

THE CUSTOM CHARACTER GAMESHEET WE USE FOR THIS STORY.



STUDENTS CAN STORE THEIR VARIABLES IN A POCKET CONCEALED IN THEIR NOTEBOOKS.



CHARACTER STORY IS CHRONICLED IN THE NOTEBOOK.

THE SETTING

PREMISE

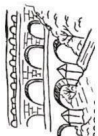
A PREMISE IS A FOUNDATIONAL IDEA TO THE STORY AND CAN HELP THE NARRATIVE MAINTAIN SHAPE. THE PREMISE COULD MORPH OR SHIFT AS THE STORY PROGRESSES.

GAME ELEMENTS

TOKENS, CHALLENGES, COINS, ROCK/PAPER/SCISSORS, DICE ROLLS, SURPRISES. FUN THINGS FOR PLAY AND ENGAGEMENT SOMETIMES LEAD TO UNEXPECTED LEARNINGS.

PLOT IDEAS

WHERE AND WHEN DOES THE STORY TAKE PLACE? WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THIS PLACE WHEN THE CHARACTERS JOIN? WHAT WILL CHARACTERS BE ASKED TO DO?



THE ROMANS WERE INCREDIBLE BUILDERS AND ENGINEERS.



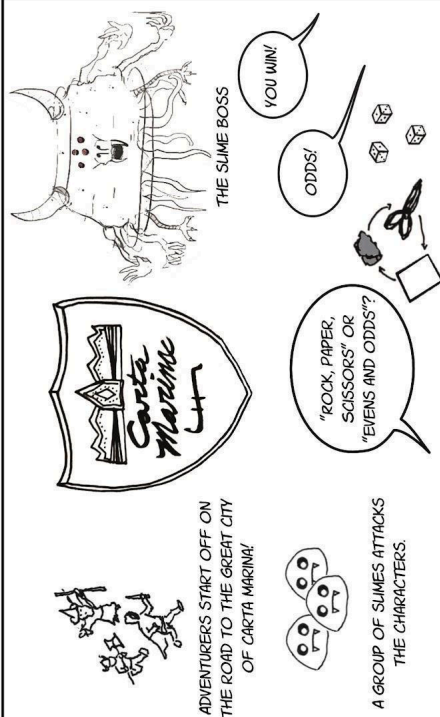
THEY HAD A REPUBLIC, WHICH MEANT THEY WOULD VOTE ON IMPORTANT MATTERS.

THEY WERE VERY WEALTHY AND POWERFUL.

POPULARES vs OPTIMATES
TWO MAIN "POLITICAL PARTIES" OF THE REPUBLIC.



PREMISE:
THE RULE OF ONE PERSON IS WRONG. KINGS AND TYRANTS ARE TO BE FEARED.



ADVENTURERS START OFF ON THE ROAD TO THE GREAT CITY OF CARTA MARINA!

THE SLIME BOSS

YOU WIN!

ODDS!

"ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS" OR "EVENS AND ODDS"?

A GROUP OF SLIMES ATTACKS THE CHARACTERS.

START THE STORY WITH CHARACTER!

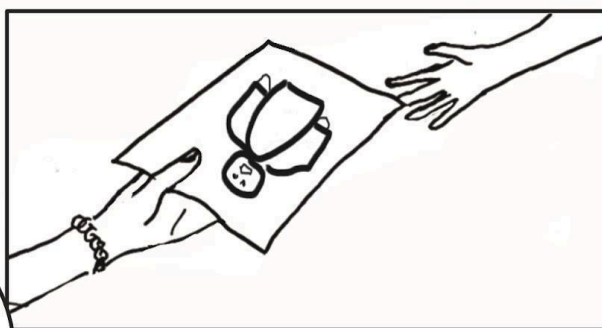
AT THIS POINT, WE SHOULD HAVE SOME CURRICULUM THAT WE'D LIKE TO COVER, A SETTING FOR OUR STORY, AND CHARACTERS (OR ROLES) FOR THE STUDENTS. WE ARE READY TO INTRODUCE THE STORY TO THE CLASS!

WE'RE GOING TO TRY SOMETHING NEW TODAY CALLED A "CLASSROOM STORY." ALL OF US, INCLUDING ME, ARE GOING TO BE WRITERS AND CREATORS.



EACH OF YOU WILL GET A SHEET OF PAPER FOR CREATING YOUR CHARACTER.

YOU WILL HAVE 10 MINUTES TO THINK, TALK TOGETHER, AND WRITE. YOUR CHARACTER WILL NEED A NAME, JOB, AND DRAWING (OR COPY ONE FROM A BOOK).



FOUND A GOOD ONE!

I LIKE THIS ONE.



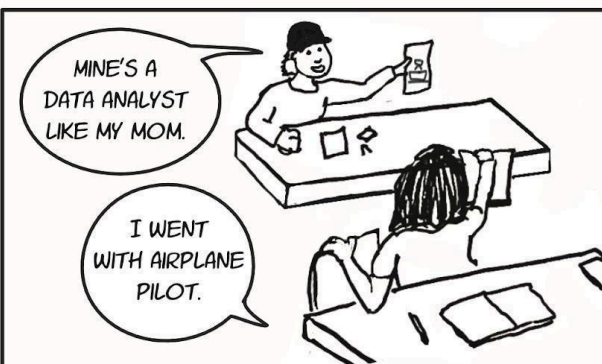
STARTER IDEAS

YOU ONLY NEED A FEW DETAILS TO START BRINGING A CHARACTER TO LIFE!

- WRITE 3 FACTS AND 1 SECRET
- DRAW YOUR OWN CHARACTER
- WHAT'S SOMETHING YOU CAN TELL JUST BY LOOKING?
- WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU CAN'T TELL BY LOOKING?

MINE'S A DATA ANALYST LIKE MY MOM.

I WENT WITH AIRPLANE PILOT.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

THIS IS A LOOK AT MSP'S BEGINNING OF A CLASSROOM STORY.
LET'S SEE HOW IT GOES.

CHARACTERS

WRITE DOWN THREE
FACTS AND ONE SECRET
ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER!
WHEN YOU'RE DONE, DRAW AND
LABEL THREE THINGS THIS
PERSON WOULD NORMALLY
HAVE ON THEM AT
THEIR JOB.



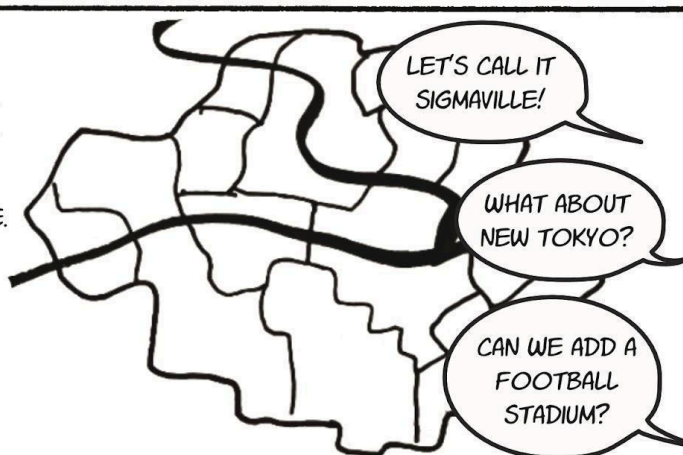
SETTING

CLASS ACTIVITY:
CREATE AND LABEL THE CITY!

- NOMINATE NAMES FOR THE CITY
AND WE'LL CHOOSE BY CLASS VOTE.

SOME IDEAS TO START:

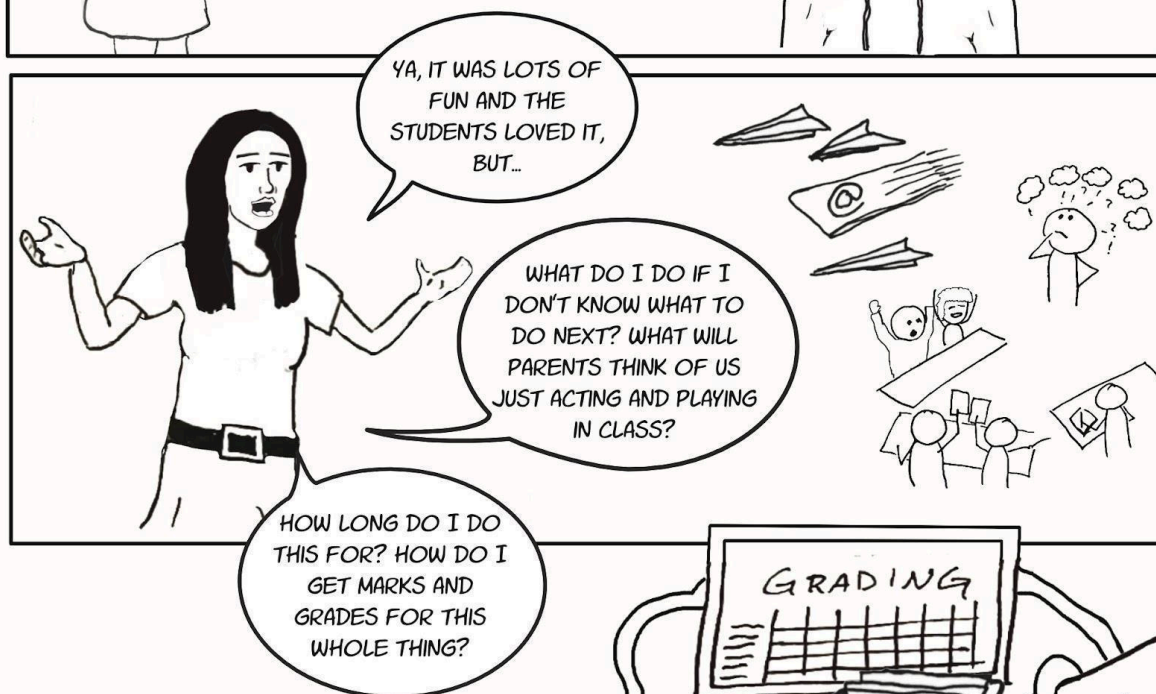
- NEIGHBOURHOODS OR DISTRICTS
- IMPORTANT PLACES
- NATURAL FEATURES



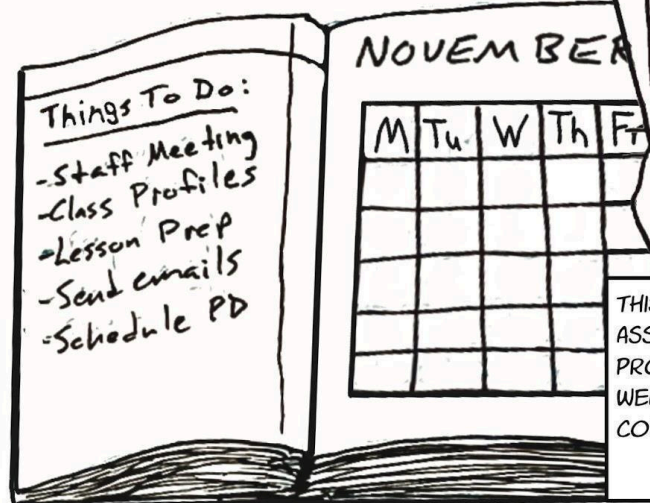
PLOT + NARRATION







FOE ALERT! GRADING & REPORTS



THIS FOE CAN BE MITIGATED BY USING MULTIPLE ASSESSMENT METHODS AND STUDENT-CENTERED PROJECTS. CLASSROOM STORIES SYNERGIZE WELL WITH TRIANGULATED ASSESSMENT COLLECTION THROUGH STUDENT PRODUCTS, CONVERSATIONS, AND OBSERVATIONS.

SEE? IT'S MORE MUMBO JUMBO. "PLAY"? THESE KIDS DON'T NEED MORE GAMES AND DEVICES, THEY NEED SOME REAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. THESE KIDS NEED TO GET READY FOR UNIVERSITY AND THEN THEIR CAREERS!

LESS DEVICE USE WOULD BE NICE, BUT WE CAN'T WAIT FOR A SOLUTION TO FALL IN OUR LAPS BEFORE TRYING OTHER OPTIONS.

PLAY IS AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING (CSIKSZENTMIHALYI, 2015); IT DOESN'T ALWAYS FEEL 'FUN' (BARRY, 2014); AND IS OFTEN TAKEN QUITE SERIOUSLY (DE CASTELL, JENSEN, 2003).

FOE ALERT! DEVICE INFESTATION

THE DIGITAL DEGENERATES ARE AN INSIDIOUS LOT. THEY EAGERLY SAPI THE ATTENTION AND FOCUS OF STUDENTS AND CREATE MANY OTHER PROBLEMS AND DISTRACTIONS. TO PASS THIS FOE, YOU MUST GET CREATIVE!

Fantasy + GAMING

BUILT YOUR CHARACTER

"MY LOVE OF FANTASY FICTION AND GAMING HAS LEAD ME TO CREATE A CLASSROOM STORY THAT FEELS LIKE THAT. I REALLY ENJOY IT, AND IT TURNS OUT THE STUDENTS DO TOO!"

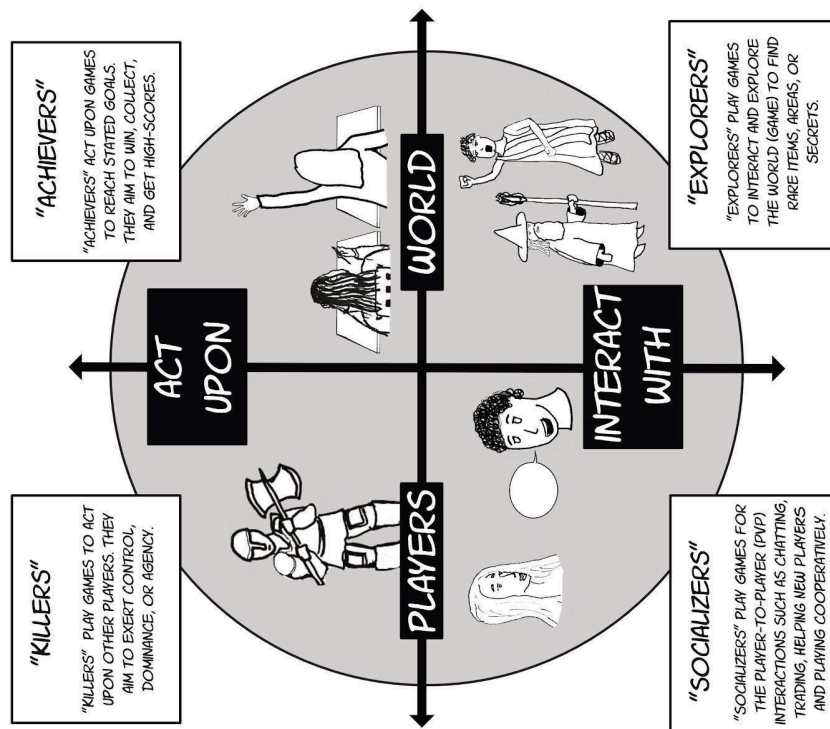
"WHEN WE'RE 'PLAYING' AND ACTING SILLY WRITING OUR CHARACTERS, IT TAKES THE PRESSURE OFF AND ALLOWS US TO ENJOY USING OUR IMAGINATIONS."

NO CHEATING! STOP!

"RELATING TO PLAY, I BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS HAVE DIFFERENT WAYS OF PARTICIPATING AND ENGAGING IN CLASS ACTIVITIES. I ADAPTED THE FOLLOWING CONCEPT TO TEACHING TO HELP ME SEE HOW 'PLAYABLE' MY LESSONS WERE AND HOW I COULD DESIGN EXPERIENCES FOR A WIDER RANGE OF STUDENTS. THIS CONCEPT WAS NOT FROM EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, IT WAS FROM GAME DESIGN RESEARCH."

BARTLE'S TAXONOMY

DR. RICHARD BARTLE - PROFESSOR • GAME DESIGNER/ RESEARCHER - RIGOROUSLY INTERVIEWED PLAYERS ABOUT WHY THEY ENGAGED IN MULTIPLAYER GAMES (1996). HE WAS ABLE TO GENERALIZE THEIR RESPONSES INTO FOUR PLAYER ARCHETYPES: "KILLERS", "ACHIEVERS", "SOCIALIZERS", AND "EXPLORERS." HE THEN PLOTTED HIS RESULTS ON A GRAPH.





- ACT II -

RUNNING A CLASSROOM STORY

THIS SECTION OUTLINES SOME OF THE TIPS FOR SUSTAINING A CLASSROOM STORY. THESE IDEAS ARE MORE LIKE SIGNPOSTS. IF YOU ARE DOING ANY OF THESE THINGS, YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT PATH. AGAIN, THE LIST IS NOT DEFINITIVE "MUST-DO'S". FEEL FREE TO USE WHAT RESONATES WITH, OR INSPIRES YOU.

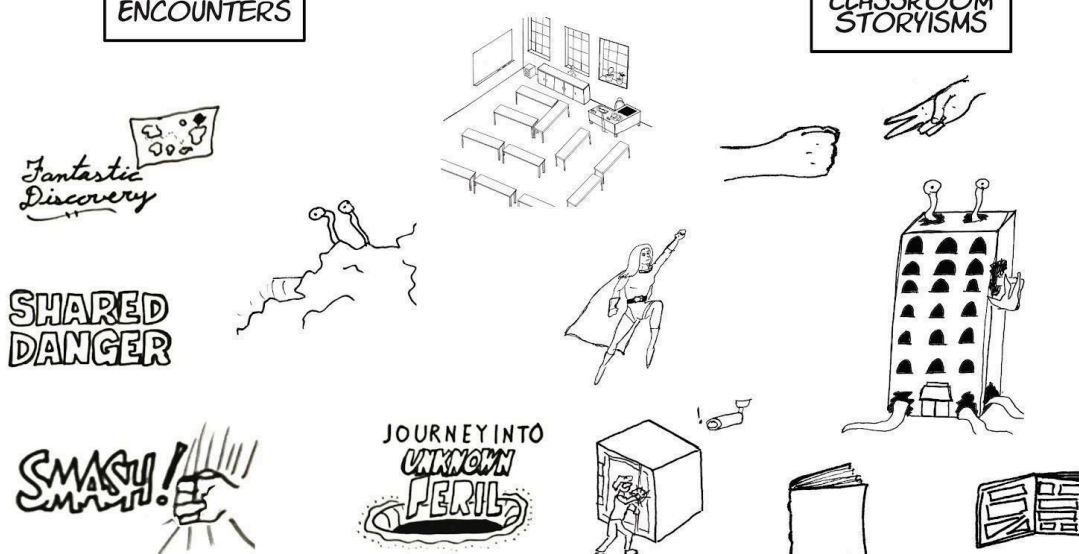
LET IT BE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE ON HOW TO PLAN AND PREPARE "CLASSROOM STORY LESSONS". YOU ARE THE EXPERT AND LEADER OF YOUR CLASSROOM AND THIS ENDEAVOUR REQUIRES YOUR CREATIVE FINGERPRINT. THE IDEAS PRESENTED HERE ARE MEANT TO ILLUMINATE AND INSPIRE. CHEERS!

- BRENT (OF COURSE)

KEY CONCEPTS

ENCOUNTERS

CLASSROOM STORYISMS



PROCESS: WE DO

WE DO (TEACHERS): PLAN LESSONS AND "ENCOUNTERS" FOR THE STUDENTS TO ENGAGE WITH. USE IDEAS THE STUDENTS COME UP WITH TO PROPEL THE STORY.

WE DO (STUDENTS): PARTICIPANTS BEGIN TO MAKE GREATER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TONE AND SHAPE OF THE STORY.

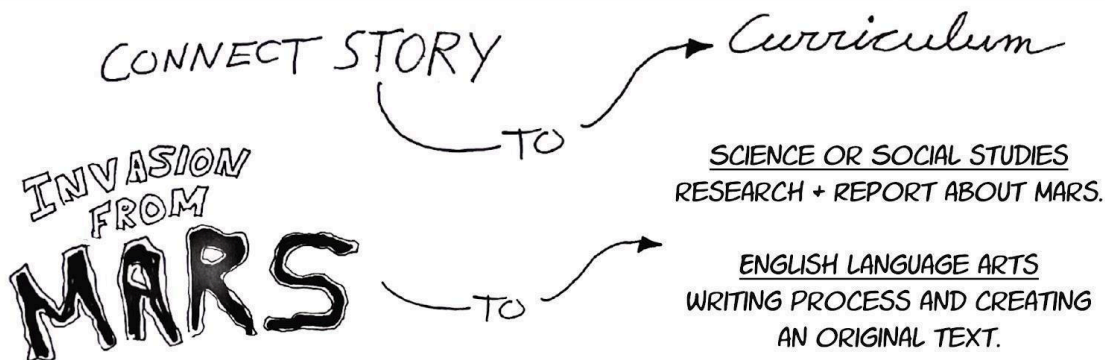
ENGAGEMENT: AUTONOMY + MASTERY

MASTERY: STUDENTS BECOME MORE IMMersed
IN THE CONTENT AND SKILLS REQUIRED TO
CONTINUE AND CREATE THE STORY.

AUTONOMY: STUDENT CHARACTERS ENGAGE IN THE STORY IN A WAY ONLY LIMITED BY THEIR IMAGINATION. CHOICES ARE PRESENTED; DECISIONS ARE MADE; RESULTS VARY.

ENCOUNTERS

PLANNED (SOMETIMES SPONTANEOUS) ACTIVITIES, LESSONS, OR CHALLENGES.



"ENCOUNTERS" ARE ANY SCENARIO OR TASK THAT YOU DESIGN FOR THE CLASS (AND SOMETIMES THEY HAPPEN SPONTANEOUSLY). MANIFEST YOUR CREATIVE POWER AS A TEACHER AND INSERT THE CURRICULUM AND LEARNING GOALS INTO THESE CLASSROOM STORY OPPORTUNITIES. FOR EXAMPLE:

 MONSTER ON THE LOOSE! "A MONSTER IS RAMPAGING THROUGH THE CITY!" - CREATE A 4 PANEL COMIC ON HOW YOU SURVIVE.	 Fantastic Discovery "WHILE EXPLORING AN UNINHABITED ISLAND, YOUR CREW FINDS ANCIENT RUINS..." - CREATE A TABLEAU OF YOUR "FANTASTIC DISCOVERY" TO PRESENT IN CLASS.
JOURNEY INTO UNKNOWN PERIL  "YOU ARE ON A SPACE CREW WITH A MISSION: FIND NEW LIFEFORMS ACROSS THE GALAXY." - DESIGN A GENERATION SPACESHIP THAT CAN SUPPORT A VOYAGE FOR CENTURIES.	DEADLY TRAP "YOUR GROUP GETS AMBUSHED AND TRAPPED IN AN UNDERGROUND CAVE SYSTEM." - CREATE A MAP OF THE CAVE INCLUDING WHERE 3 "MOMENTS OF DANGER" OCCUR.

WHEN WE LAST LEFT MS. P'S CLASS, A METEOR HAD STRUCK NEARBY AND SENT AN ODD SHOCKWAVE THROUGH THE CITY.



THE SHOCKWAVE PASSES AND STRANGELY, YOU FEEL INVIGORATED AND FULL OF LIFE.

EVERYONE, THIS WEIRD SHOCKWAVE HAS GIVEN ONLY YOUR CHARACTERS SUPER POWERS!

YOUR TASK IS TO WRITE A 200 WORD STORY ABOUT HOW YOU DISCOVER YOUR POWERS.

RUMBLE

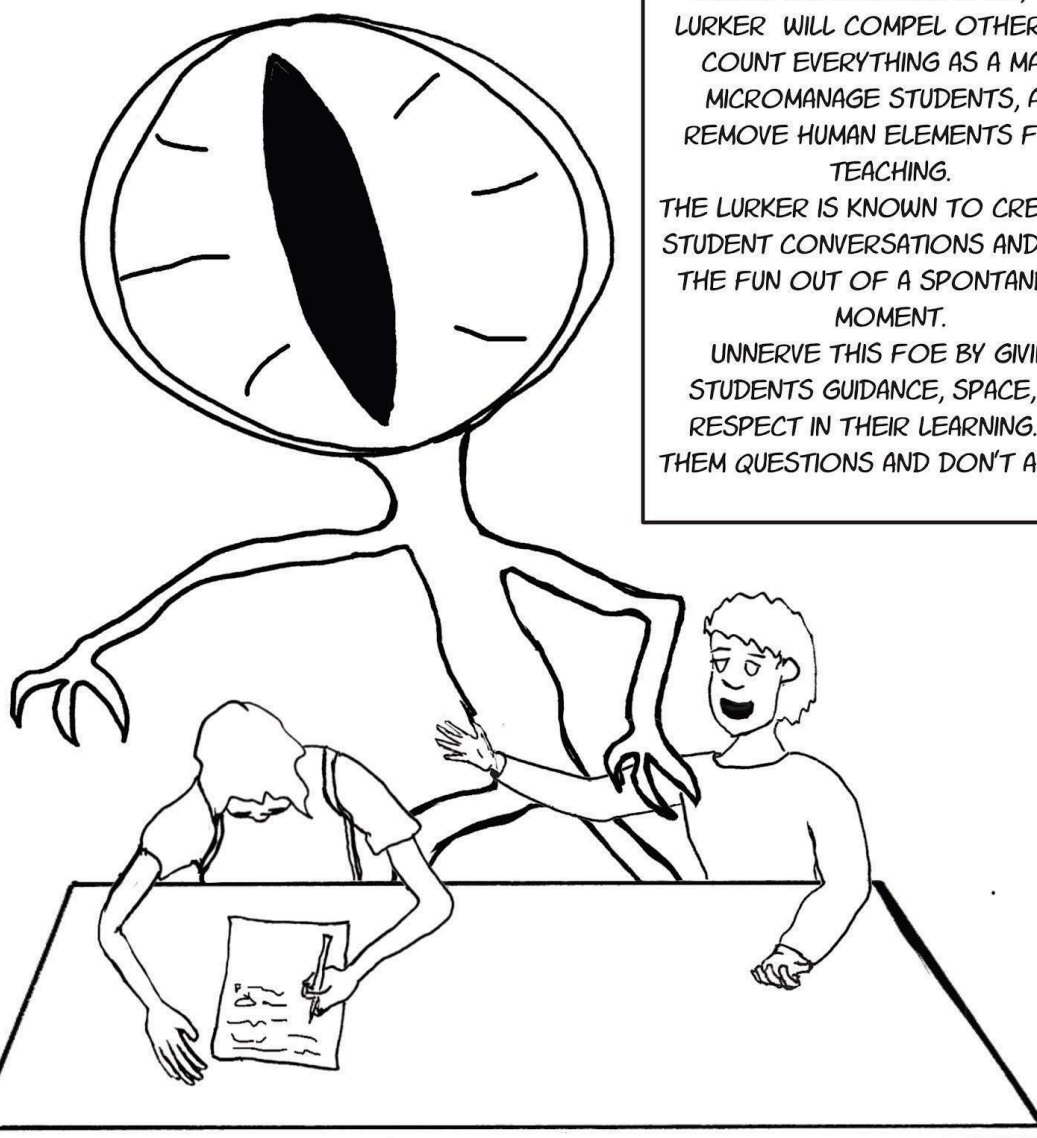
POW!

FOE ALERT!
BEWARE,
THE LURKER!

THIS DEVIOUS FOE'S POWERS ARE TO CONSTANTLY HOVER, CONTROL, SURVEIL, TALLY, AND OBTRUSIVELY OBSERVE PUPILS IN A CLASSROOM. UNDER ITS MENACING GAZE, THE LURKER WILL COMPEL OTHERS TO COUNT EVERYTHING AS A MARK, MICROMANAGE STUDENTS, AND REMOVE HUMAN ELEMENTS FROM TEACHING.

THE LURKER IS KNOWN TO CREEP ON STUDENT CONVERSATIONS AND SUCK THE FUN OUT OF A SPONTANEOUS MOMENT.

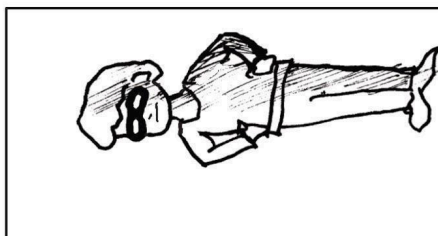
UNNERVE THIS FOE BY GIVING STUDENTS GUIDANCE, SPACE, AND RESPECT IN THEIR LEARNING. ASK THEM QUESTIONS AND DON'T ASSUME.



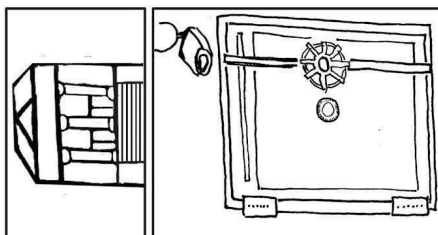
A BASIC STORY ARC

HOW DO YOU TELL A STORY?
HAVE CHARACTERS MOVE.

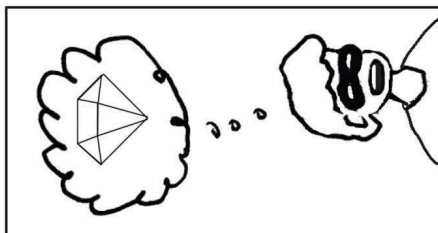
SOMEBODY.



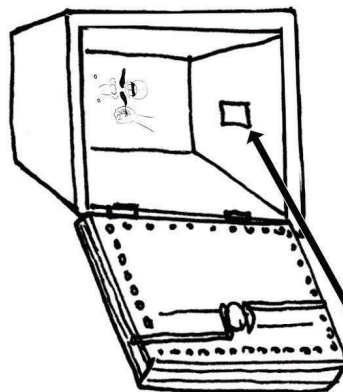
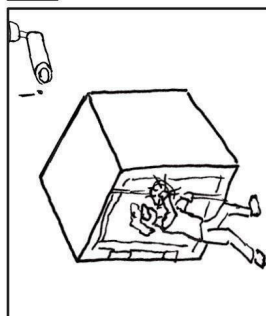
SOMEWHERE.



WANTS SOMETHING.



COMPLICATIONS ENSUE...



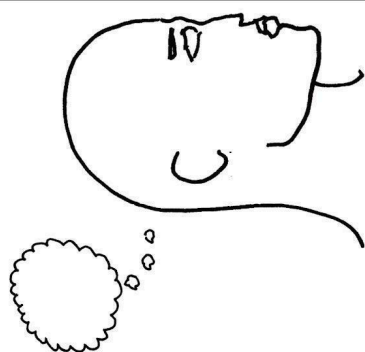
DO THIS CYCLE ONCE FOR A SHORT STORY.
REPEAT MULTIPLE TIMES FOR A LONG STORY.
IF PATTERNS EMERGE, USE THEM.

Beat you
to the
diamond!
Good luck
with the
police.

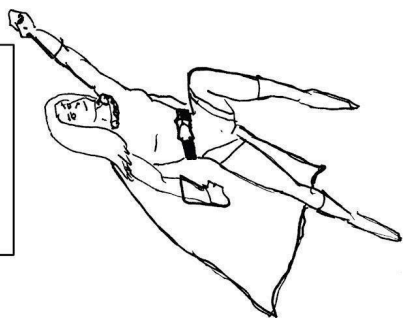
CHARACTERS CAN...

USE THE FOLLOWING WRITING PROMPTS
TO ENCOURAGE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT.

THINK



DO

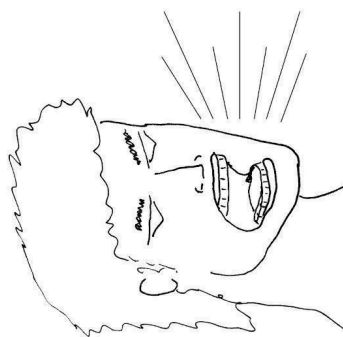


DURING THE CLASSROOM STORY, WHEN AN EVENT HAPPENS OR A SCENARIO ARISES, PARTICIPANTS CAN RESPOND BY RECORDING WHAT THEIR CHARACTERS WOULD THINK, DO, FEEL, OR SAY IN THAT SITUATION. WRITERS CAN DO ONE OR ALL FOUR. WHEN IDEAS ARE WRITTEN DOWN AND SHARED, THEY BECOME TRUE IN THE STORY.

FEEL



SAY

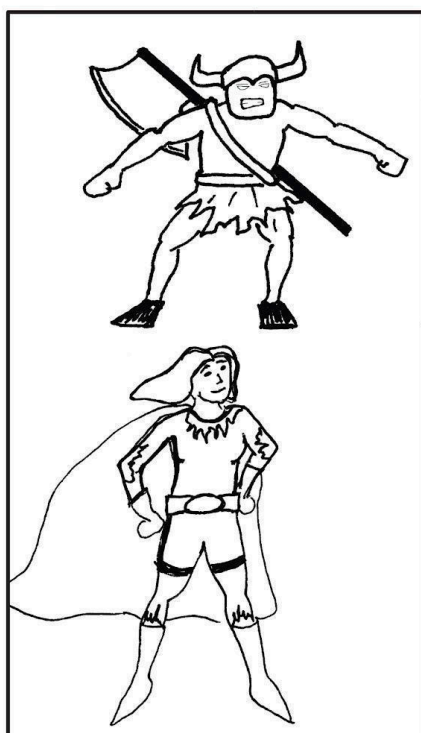


Classroom Storyisms

ENGAGE THE ROOM WITH COLLECTIVE ACTIVITIES.

A GROUP ACTIVITY GIVES THE CLASS A COMMON EXPERIENCE AND HELPS SET THE GROUNDWORK FOR FUTURE COLLABORATION AND CREATIVITY.

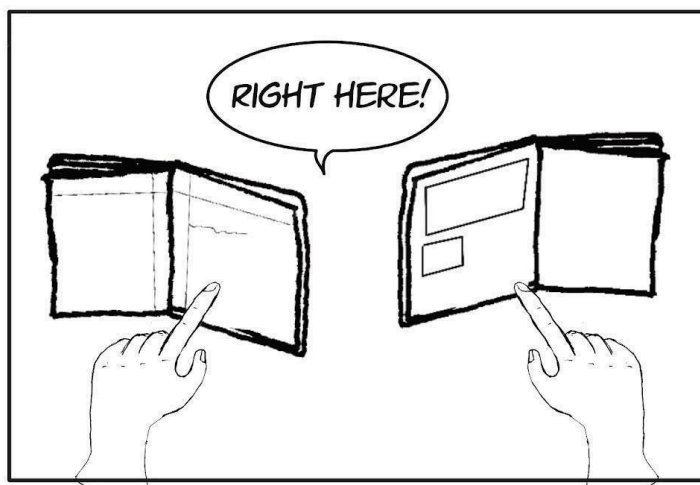
ONE MONTH LATER, TWO GIANT CREATURES EMERGE FROM INSIDE THE FALLEN SPACE ROCK! PEOPLE FLEE THE SCENE IN A PANIC!



"MY CHARACTER USES HER POWERS OF FLIGHT TO HELP RESCUE THE CITIZENS."

"MY CHARACTER - I MEAN - 'I' DISTRACT THE ALIENS."

"IT ONLY COUNTS IF YOU WRITE IT DOWN!"



SHARED DANGER MOVES THE PLOT AND CREATES COLLABORATION.

SHARED DANGER

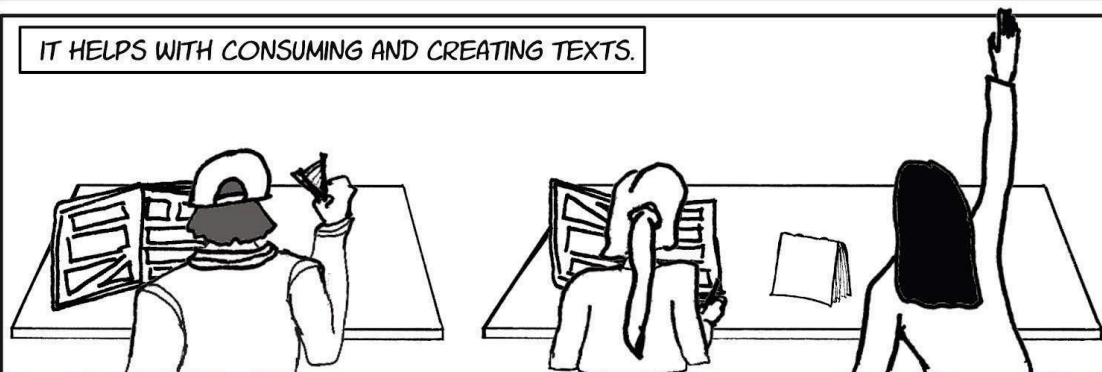
THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL CREATURES LUMBER TOWARDS THE CITY DESTROYING EVERYTHING IN THEIR PATH!

HOW DO YOU RESPOND?



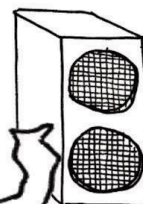
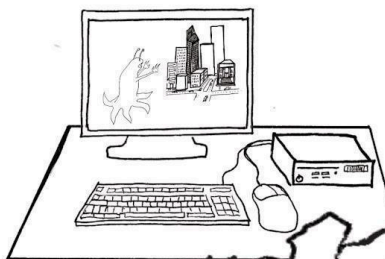
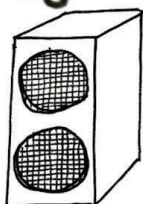
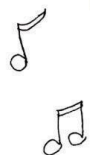
USE MULTIPLE MODES OF COMMUNICATION.
(VISUAL, AURAL, LINGUISTIC, GESTURAL, AND SPATIAL)

IT HELPS WITH CONSUMING AND CREATING TEXTS.



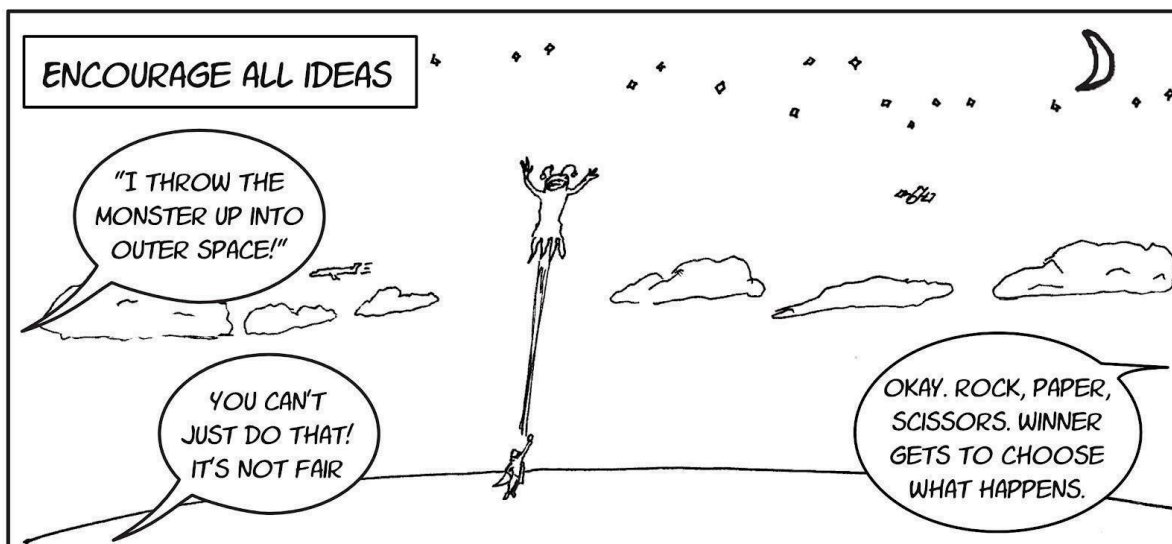
WHEN MULTIPLE MODES OF COMMUNICATION ARE USED DURING A CLASSROOM STORY, IT GRANTS MORE ACCESSIBILITY TO THE EXPERIENCES WHILE CREATING A SENSE OF IMMERSION.

Whomp!



Crash!

* I LIKE TO USE MY COMPUTER TO PLAY AMBIENCE, SOUND EFFECTS, AND MUSIC FROM YOUTUBE.



YOU ALL WORKED TOGETHER TO CREATE A SOLUTION! ALL YOUR CHARACTERS GET A BONUS!

REWARD THE BEHAVIOUR YOU WANT TO SEE AGAIN.

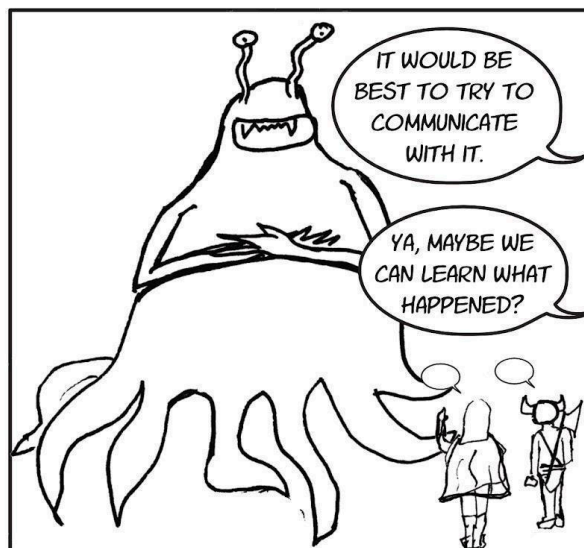
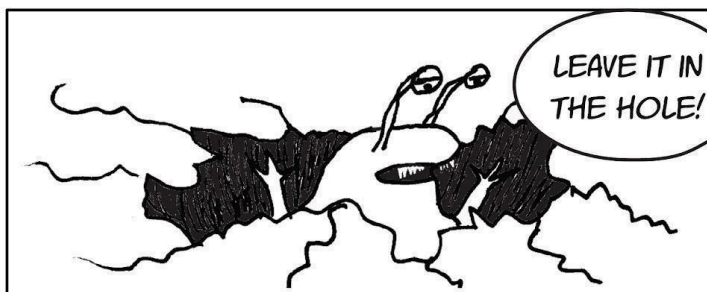
I LIKE TO REWARD STUDENTS WITH IN-STORY BONUSES WHEN THEY WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE NEW IDEAS, DEVISE SOLUTIONS, OR SHOW INCLUSIVITY TOWARDS OTHERS. I WILL MAKE UP REWARDS LIKE A RARE OR NEW ITEM, A "SECRET" PIECE OF INFORMATION, OR A NEW ALLY. THESE ARE THE TYPES OF THINGS TO HELP THE CHARACTER AND VALIDATE STUDENT IDEAS.



MYSTERY EVOKES INNOVATION

CLASS DISCUSSION

WHAT SHOULD WE DO
WITH THE ALIEN??



PLAUSIBILITY OVER REALISM

MS. P QUICKLY REponds:

"WE ARE NOT RUNNING A REAL-LIFE SIMULATION. WE ARE CREATING IDEAS AND UNDERSTANDINGS, DEVELOPING OUR WRITING, WORKING TOGETHER, AND MAKING A STORY. REALISM IS NOT THE GOAL, PLAUSIBILITY IS. PLAUSIBILITY IS MAKING SURE THAT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE STORY IS CONSISTENT WITH THE RULES OF THE SETTING. OUR SETTING HAS ALIENS ARRIVING TO EARTH ON A METEOR WHILE MANY CHARACTERS RECEIVE SUPERPOWERS. YOU'RE RIGHT, THIS IS NOT REALISTIC, BUT THESE IDEAS ARE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE STORY."

MOVEMENT GIVES SHAPE TO FORM

"MOVEMENT GIVES SHAPE TO FORM" SUGGESTS THAT MOTION OR ACTION IS WHAT DEFINES THE APPEARANCE, STRUCTURE, OR FUNCTION OF AN OBJECT OR IDEA. I BELIEVE THERE'S NO OTHER WAY TO LEARN BUT TO DO. THE SHAPE OF A STORY AND WHAT YOU DO WITH YOUR CLASS IS DEFINED BY THE MOVEMENTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN DURING THE STORY. IF YOU FEEL STUCK, THE ONLY WAY TO GET UNSTUCK IS TO MOVE.



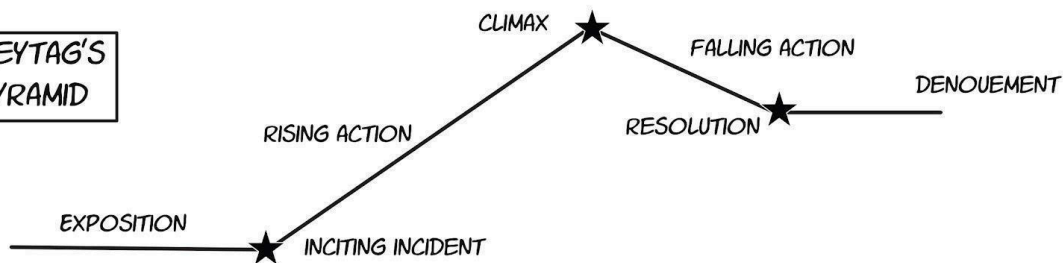
A WORD ON TIMERS AND WRITING

SETTING TIMERS FOR WRITING IS GOOD PRACTICE TO GET IDEAS OUT QUICKLY WITHOUT HESITATION. FOR EACH PROMPT, I TYPICALLY GIVE STUDENTS ANYWHERE FROM 45 SECONDS TO 3 MINUTES TO WRITE THEIR RESPONSES (ADJUSTED FOR AGE AND ABILITY).

REMEMBER, ALL WRITING IS A DRAFT. WE CAN ALWAYS CHANGE, ADD, AND TAKE AWAY IDEAS LATER. GOOD WRITING IS RE-WRITING!

ACTS, CHAPTERS, EPISODES (ETC) HELP KEEP THINGS ORGANIZED

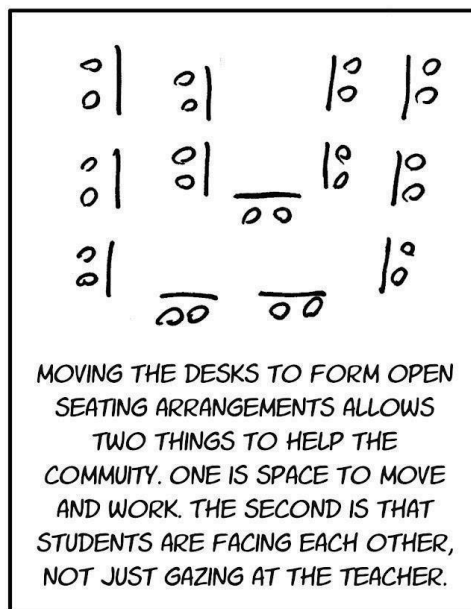
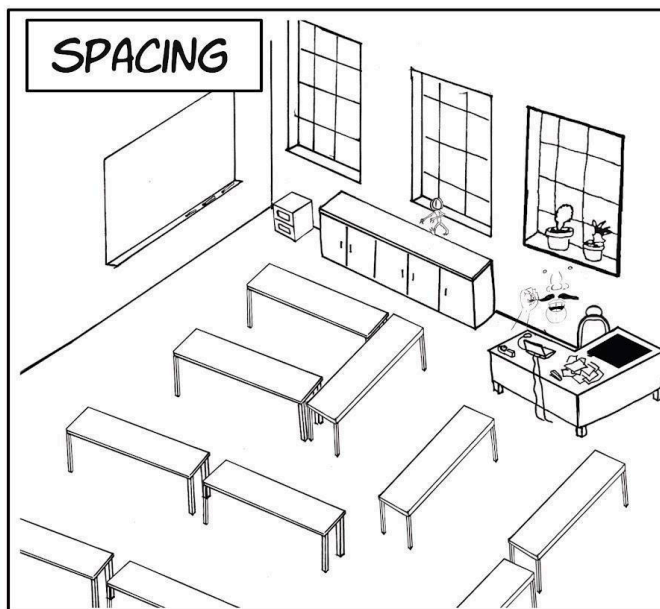
FREYTAG'S PYRAMID



SYD FIELD'S PARADIGM

ACT I	ACT II	ACT III
INCITING INCIDENT	MIDPOINT	CLIMAX
SETUP	CONFRONTATION	RESOLUTION



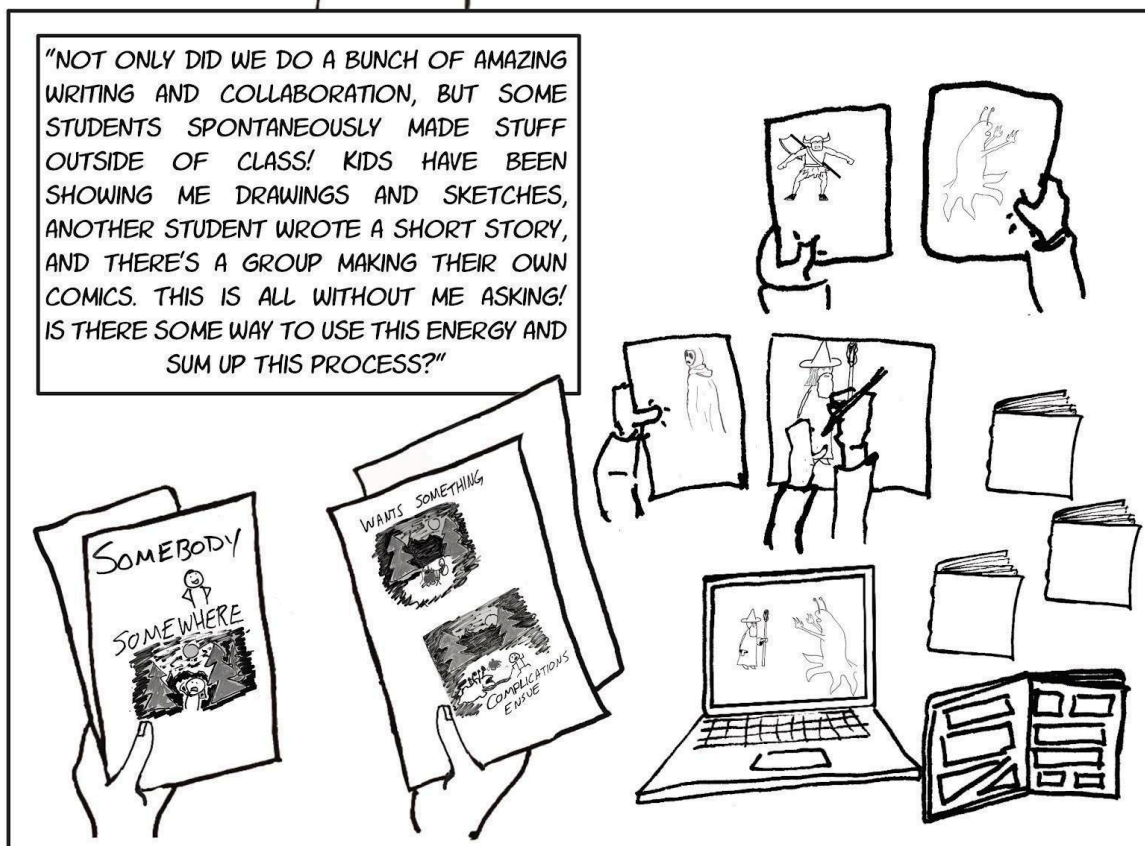


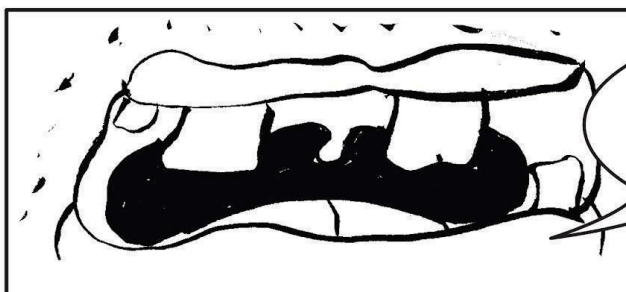
THREE WEEKS LATER...



"WHAT CAN I DO WITH ALL THIS ENERGY AND CREATIVITY?"

"NOT ONLY DID WE DO A BUNCH OF AMAZING WRITING AND COLLABORATION, BUT SOME STUDENTS SPONTANEOUSLY MADE STUFF OUTSIDE OF CLASS! KIDS HAVE BEEN SHOWING ME DRAWINGS AND SKETCHES, ANOTHER STUDENT WROTE A SHORT STORY, AND THERE'S A GROUP MAKING THEIR OWN COMICS. THIS IS ALL WITHOUT ME ASKING! IS THERE SOME WAY TO USE THIS ENERGY AND SUM UP THIS PROCESS?"





DON'T BE CREATIVE!
IT'S FOR SUCKERS. WHY MAKE
THINGS UP FOR FREE WHEN YOU
CAN PAY A COMPANY TO DO IT?

\$\$\$\$\$

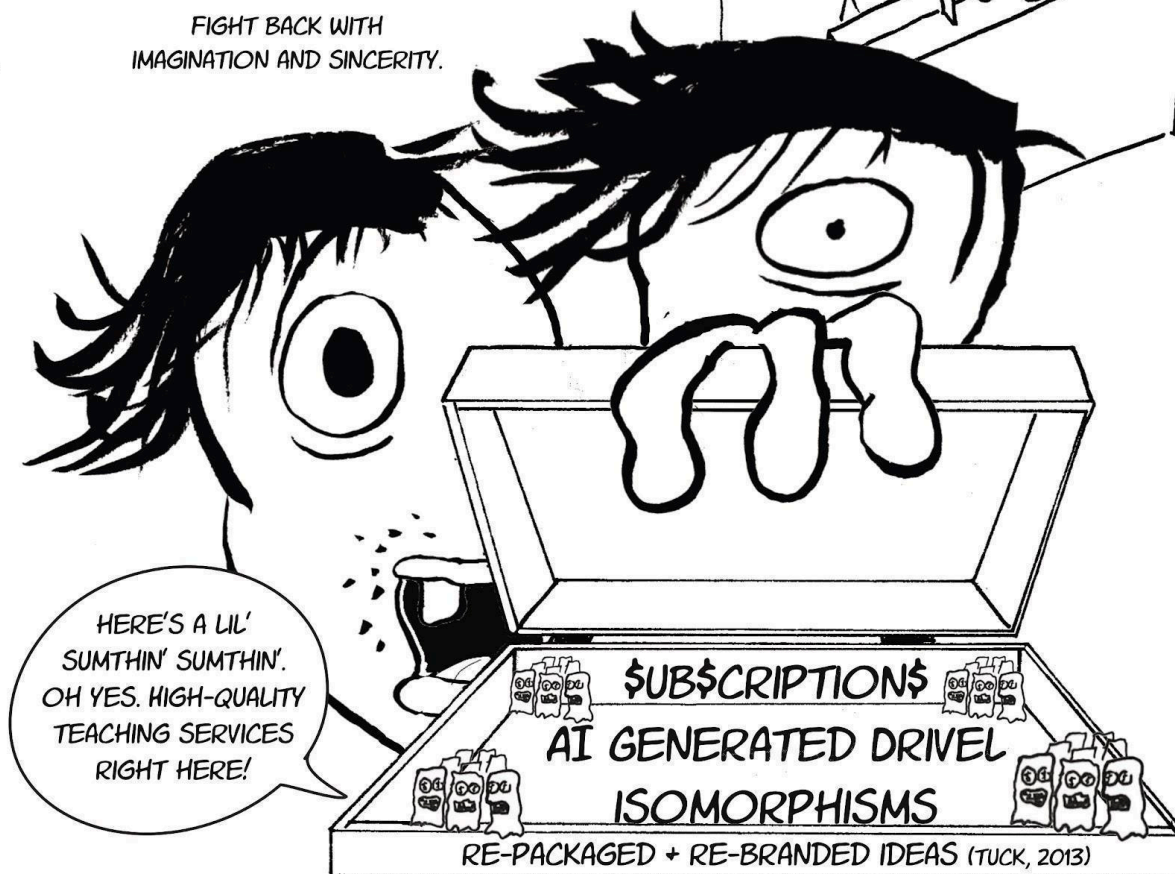
**SNEAK
ATTACK!**

AHEM...
HEY! HAVE I
GOT A DEAL
FOR YOU!

MR. EDU-CORP

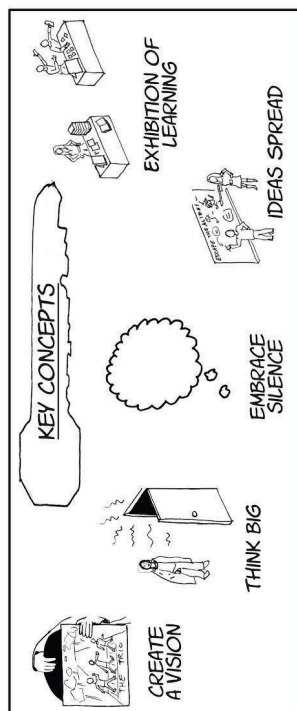
THIS FOE LURKS AROUND EVERY CORNER,
EAGER TO TAKE YOUR MONEY AND
ATTENTION. MR.EDU-CORP OFFERS CHEAP
SHORTCUTS, SHALLOW PLATTITUDES, AND
MILQUETOAST LESSON OFFERINGS.

FIGHT BACK WITH
IMAGINATION AND SINCERITY.



- ACT III -

LEARN. CREATE. SHARE.



PROCESS: WE DO -> YOU DO

WE DO: TEACHERS AND STUDENTS EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND CREATING TOGETHER. EDUCATORS ARE HELPING STUDENTS DEVELOP THEIR IDEAS.

YOU DO (STUDENTS): STUDENTS TAKE OWNERSHIP OF DEVELOPING PROJECTS. INVITING VISITORS, AND HOSTING AND EXHIBITION OF THEIR LEARNING.

ENGAGEMENT: MASTERFUL PURPOSE

MASTERY: WHILE STUDENTS WORK ON A LARGE-SCALE PROJECT, THEY GET ACQUIRE VARIETY OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING.

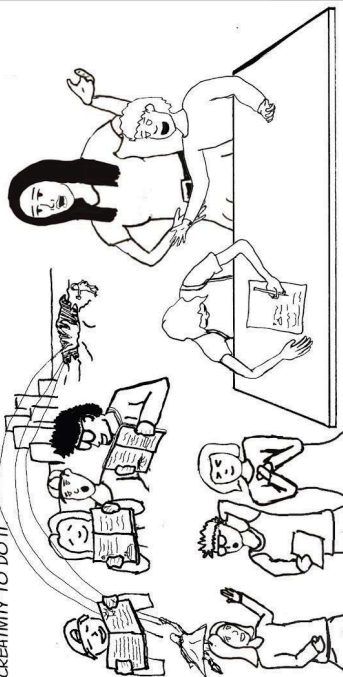
PURPOSE: HAVING AN AUDIENCE COME TO AN EVENT RUN BY STUDENTS, GIVES TREMENDOUS MOTIVATION TO A CLASS. THIS WORKS ESPECIALLY WELL SINCE STUDENTS ARE PRODUCING PROJECTS OF THEIR CHOOSING AND DESIGN.

FOE ALERT! THE IMPOSTER

THE IMPOSTER IS THE MOST INSIDIOUS FOE OF THEM ALL BECAUSE IT LURKS AROUND EVERY CORNER IT BORES INTO OUR PSYCHE WITH INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS, TELLING US THAT WE DON'T BELONG; THAT WE CAN'T; THAT WE SHOULDN'T. TO CONQUER THIS FOE WE MUST PERSEVERE. THE ONLY WAY TO LEARN IS TO DO.

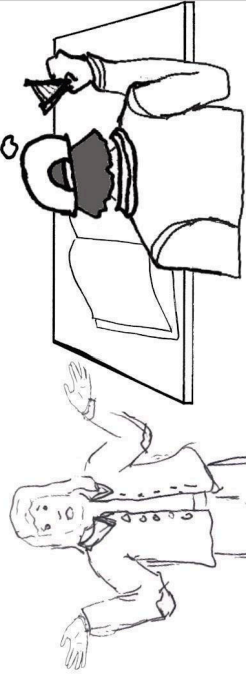
CO-CREATION

CO-CREATION IS A TEAM EFFORT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING WHERE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS BRING THEIR OWN PERSPECTIVES TOGETHER TO COME UP WITH NEW IDEAS, TACKLE PROBLEMS, AND MAKE SOMETHING MEANINGFUL (BOVILL, 2020; BOVILL ET AL. 2016; KAMINSKIENE ET AL., 2020; MENNING + HALL, 2020). IN THIS CASE, I BELIEVE A CLASSROOM STORY EMBLES THIS POSITIVE CLASSROOM DYNAMIC. STUDENTS AND TEACHERS (AND ERS!) WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE A STORY AND LEARN SKILLS AND CONTENT TO PRODUCE AND SHARE INTERESTING SCHOOL WORK WHILE GETTING THE AUTONOMY AND CREATIVITY TO DO IT.



INQUIRY

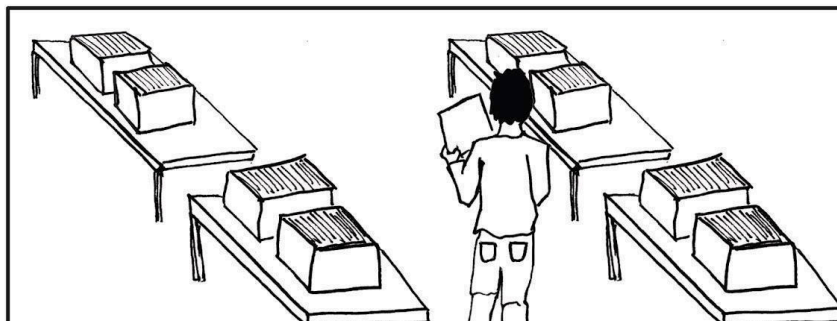
INQUIRY ISN'T JUST ABOUT HAVING A "BIG QUESTION" OR MAKING INTERACTIVE LESSONS. IT'S A WHOLE MINDSET SHIFT IN HOW ONE THINKS ABOUT CURRICULUM, STUDENTS, LEARNING, AND TEACHING (FRIESEN + SCOTT, 2013; SHORT + BURKE, 1996). FOR ME, IT'S BASING MY APPROACH ON THE CLASSROOM STORY: AUTONOMY, MASTERY, PURPOSE, AND PLAY; I DO, WE DO, AND YOU DO.



OUR INQUIRY PROCESS BEGINS WHEN DECIDING ON HOW TO HOST AN EXHIBITION OF LEARNING. STUDENTS (THE CLASS) WILL LOOK THROUGH THEIR MATERIALS WITH THE INTENTION OF FINDING SOMETHING THAT SPARKS CURIOSITY OR INTEREST. AN IDEA, OR A CHALLENGE TO DIVE INTO. SO THE ACTUAL INQUIRY QUESTIONS COME FROM THIS EXPLORATION — THEY DON'T COME BEFORE IT (SHORT + BURKE, 1996).

I WANT TO TELL A STORY ABOUT A TEACHER I KNOW AND HOW HE COMBINES HIS HOBBIES AND INTERESTS TO CREATE A VALUABLE LEARNING EXPERIENCE. HIS VISION WAS TO HAVE STUDENTS BECOME BANDS, CREATE ALBUMS, AND PRODUCE A RECORD SHOW.

VISION + INTEREST



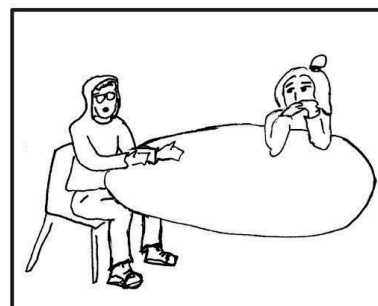
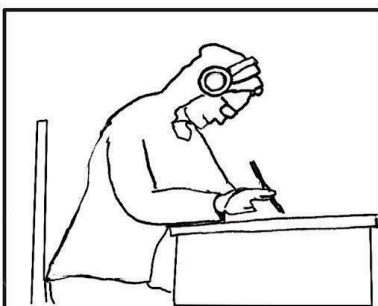
ONE OF THIS TEACHER'S HOBBIES IS COLLECTING VINYL RECORDS. HE LOVES TO GO TO RECORD SHOWS TO SEEK INTERESTING NEW ARTISTS OR FIND THAT RARE ALBUM THAT'S BEEN ELUDING HIM FOR YEARS.

HE BRINGS THIS LOVE INTO THE CLASSROOM; PLAYING RECORDS IN CLASS, SHARING HIS LOVE OF MUSIC WITH STUDENTS, AND PERIODICALLY, EVEN SINGING KARAOKE. THE STUDENTS LOVE IT AND WANT MORE. HE USES THIS ENERGY TO STUDY LANGUAGE AND POETRY IN MUSIC, BUT THIS STUDY TURNS INTO MUCH MORE.



"STANDARDS ARE BENIGN. WITH A LITTLE EXTRA WORK, TEACHERS CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY WANT TO DO, DEVELOP IT FULLY, THEN MAP IT ON WHAT THEY NEED TO DO" (AYERS, 2010, P.78).

AS A CLASS, THEY LEARN ABOUT THINGS LIKE POETIC DEVICES, FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, AND RHYME SCHEMES. THEY LISTEN TO MUSIC AND EXAMINE LYRICS, IDENTIFYING THE CHARACTERISTICS THEY JUST LEARNED. CLASS DISCUSSIONS TAKE PLACE ON HOW TO REPRESENT IDEAS, EMOTIONS, AND STORIES THROUGH LYRICS.

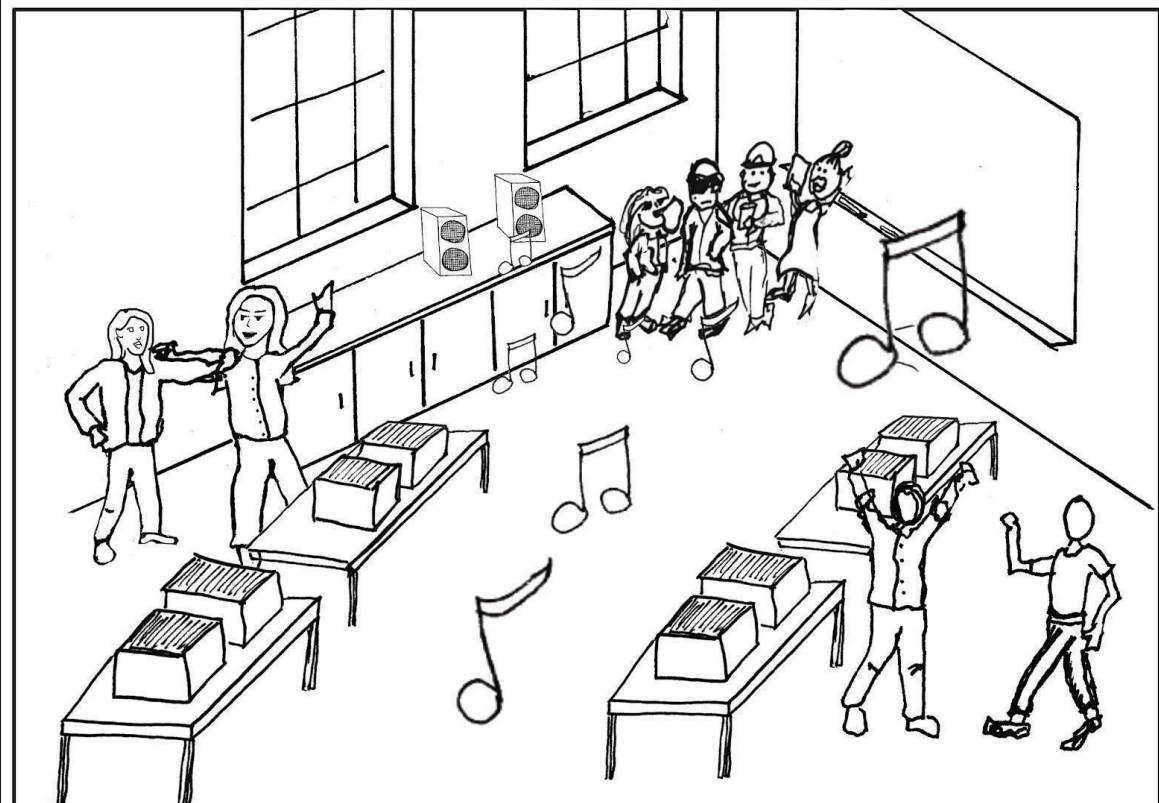


AFTER THIS STUDY, STUDENTS TEAM UP TO CREATE THEIR OWN BANDS. THE GROUPS TALK, PLAN, AND DELEGATE THEIR TASKS. EACH PERSON WORKS, CREATES, AND CONTRIBUTES. EACH "BAND" WRITES SONGS, CREATES ALBUM ARTWORK, AND BRANDS THEIR PRODUCTS.



THE RECORD SHOW

INVITES WERE SENT OUT ADVERTISING THE CLASS-MADE RECORD SHOW. ON THE BIG DAY, DESKS WERE PUSHED TO THE OUTSIDE TO FORM A GALLERY AND THE BANDS LINED UP THEIR ALBUMS AND TRACKS TO BE VIEWED. DURING THE SHOW, THERE WAS LIVE KARAOKE AND VISITORS WERE GIVEN "MONEY" TO SPEND ON ALBUMS (VOTING WITH THEIR DOLLARS).

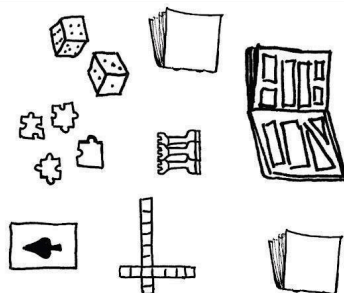


THINK BIG

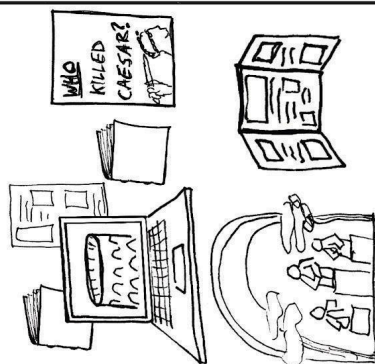
STUDENTS CREATE PROJECTS WITH THE COMMUNITY UNLIMITED TO PARTICIPATE. HOW DO YOU MAKE A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL EVENT? LET STUDENTS BE AT THE CENTER, SHARING THEIR LEARNING AND PROJECTS, AND MAKING THE EVENT ENGAGING. WHEN PREPARING FOR AN EXHIBITION OF LEARNING, I LIKE TO GIVE MY STUDENTS SIMPLE DIRECTIONS FOR THEIR PROJECTS SO THEY AREN'T LEFT WITHOUT DIRECTION, DON'T JUST SHOW, ENGAGE!

**EYE CATCHING +
ENTERTAINING**

GAMES, PUZZLES, TEXTS, ART

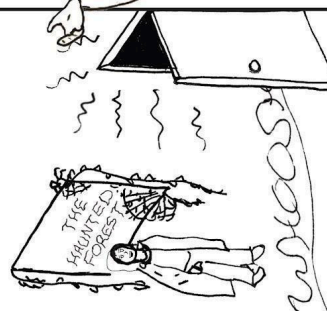


INFORMATIVE + INTERACTIVE

POSTERS, DISPLAYS, INFORMATIVE
TEXTS, DIGITAL PRESENTATIONS

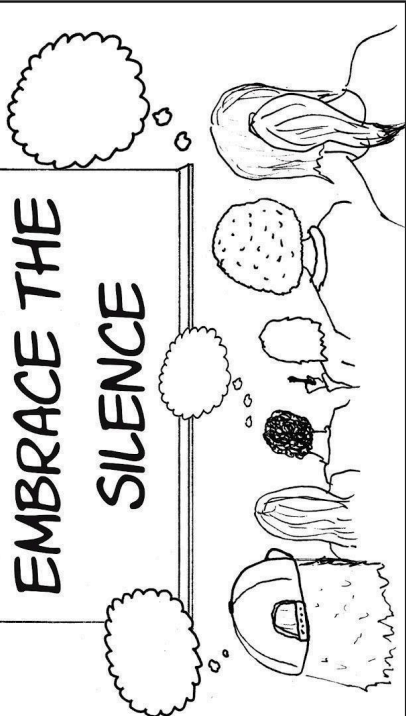
IMMERSIVE + HANDS-ON

ESCAPE ROOMS, GAMES,
PRESENTATIONS, PERFORMANCES



WE NEED TO
SHOW OFF ALL THE
WESOME WORK YOU'VE ALL
DONE. WE SHOULD HOST
SOME KIND OF EVENT FOR
FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND
COMMUNITY.
ANY IDEAS?

EMBRACE THE SILENCE



SILENCE IS NOT AN INDICATOR OF LACK OF MOTIVATION OR INTEREST. SOMETIMES WE NEED QUIET PERIODS TO THINK DEEPLY.



STUDENTS MIGHT BE PROCESSING THE IDEA AND BE DEEP IN THOUGHT, BUT DON'T INTERFERE YET! IDEAS NEED TO STEW AND MARINATE IN OUR INDIVIDUAL MINDS. BIG IDEAS JUST DON'T HAPPEN, THEY NEED TO BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED.

BUT THEN AN IDEA IS SHARED...

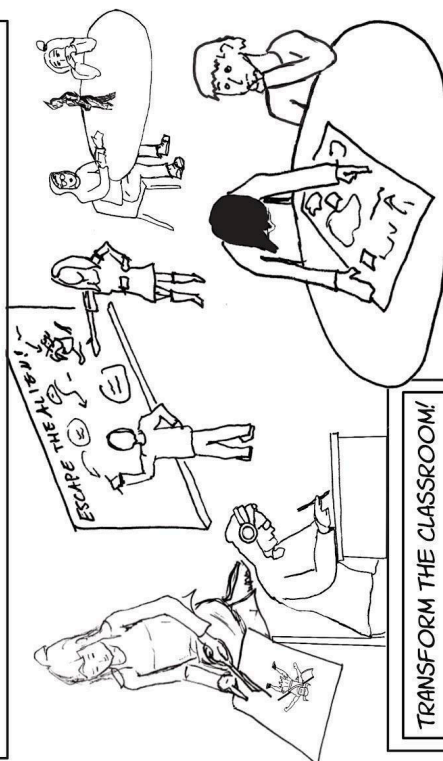
WHAT IF WE ALL
HAD OUR OWN STATIONS, AND
AT EACH STATION WE TELL A PART
OF THE STORY IN THE
WAY WE WANT

I PERSONALLY, HAVE BEEN WORKING ON CREATING A SERIES OF COMICS WITH MY FRIENDS. IT'S BASED ON MY CHARACTER FROM CLASS. I'D LOVE TO SHOW IT OFF.

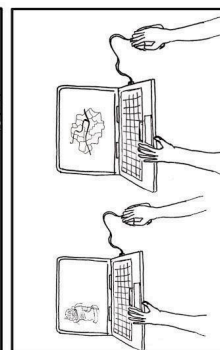
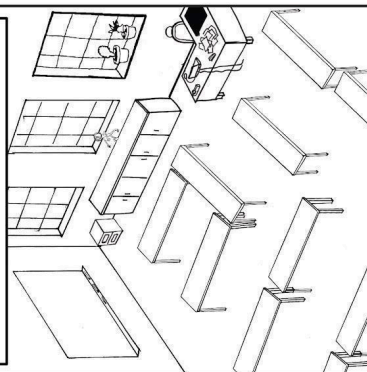
...AND WHEN AN IDEA IS SHARED IT STARTS TO SPREAD.
IT OPENS THE DOOR TO SHARING, DISCUSSION, AND CREATING SOMETHING NEW.

CO-CREATION

CO-CREATION IS WHEN EDUCATION IS PERCEIVED AS A SHARED
ENDEAVOUR WITH STUDENTS. TEACHING AND LEARNING ARE DONE WITH
STUDENTS, NOT TO THEM (COOK-SATHER ET AL., 2014). I BELIEVE
THAT THE PROCESS OF INQUIRY IS EMBEDDED IN CO-CREATION.



TRANSFORM THE CLASSROOM!
HOW CAN YOU USE THE SPACE AVAILABLE
TO SHOW STUDENT WORK AND HOST
COMMUNITY MEMBERS?



PUBLIC SPACES LIKE WHITEBOARDS AND DIGITAL NOTEBOOK FILES ARE
EXCELLENT COLLABORATIVE REPOSITORIES OF IDEAS.

FIVE ANTECEDENTS OF CO-CREATION (KHAMINSKIENE ET AL., 2020)

(1) NON-HIERARCHICAL

RELATIONSHIPS

- STUDENTS WORKING WITH STUDENTS, WITH
TEACHERS GUIDING AND MENTORING.

(2) FLEXIBILITY OF CURRICULUM

- STUDENTS GET SOME CHOICE IN HOW TO
DEMONSTRATE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE.

(3) SCAFFOLDING

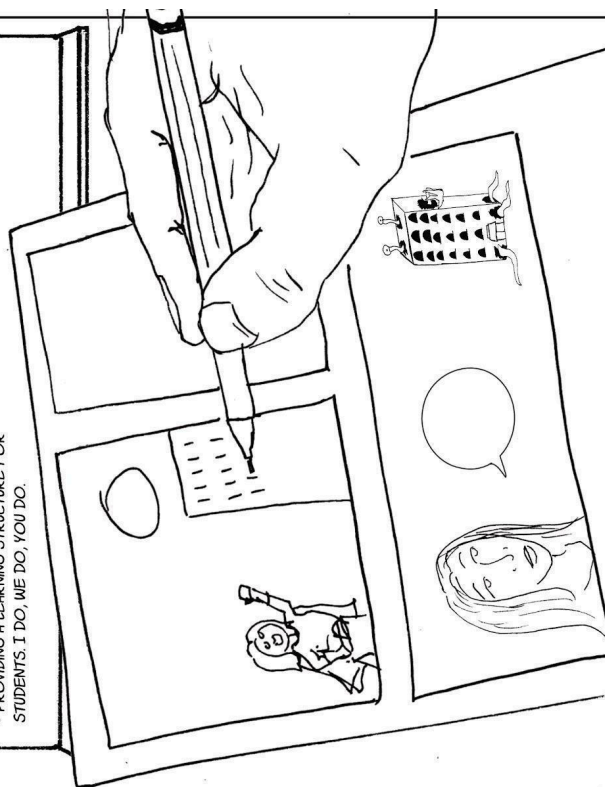
- PROVIDING A LEARNING STRUCTURE FOR
STUDENTS. I DO, WE DO, YOU DO.

(4) OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

- TEACHER PROVIDES ACTIVE FEEDBACK FOR
STUDENT PROJECTS AND LEARNING.

(5) PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

- LESSONS INVITE ENGAGEMENT,
PARTICIPATION, AND INPUT FROM STUDENTS.



A NEWER CONCEPT OF CREATIVITY, THE 'WE-PARADIGM' (TANGGAARD, 2020), IS A
SCHEMA WHERE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TEAM UP TO LEARN FROM EACH
OTHER, WORKING ON INTERESTING PROJECTS THAT CONNECT WITH THE
COMMUNITY. IT TAKES TEACHERS WITH HUMILITY TO GUIDE THE PROCESS, MAKE
LEARNING FEEL LIKE A REAL APPRENTICESHIP, AND KEEP THINGS OPEN AND
DEMOCRATIC FOR EVERYONE IN THE CLASS.

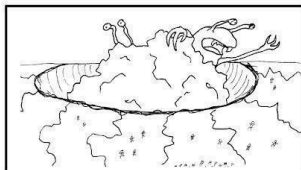
INVITE

WHETHER BY EMAIL, POSTER, WORD-OF-MOUTH, OR SOCIAL MEDIA, GET THE MESSAGE OUT AND INVITE YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.



WHEN A STRANGE
METEOR CRASHES
OUTSIDE OUR CITY,
EVERYTHING CHANGED.

ALIENS ARRIVED AND SOME
PEOPLE INHERITED POWERS.
THIS IS OUR STORY.

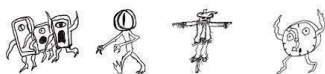


WHAT? WHO?

YOU ARE INVITED TO BE
A GUEST AT A STUDENT
PRODUCED EXHIBIT OF
ART, WRITING, AND
CREATIVITY BASED ON A
COLLABORATIVE STORY
MADE BY OUR CLASS.
ALIENS, SUPER HEROES,
MYSTERIES, DANGERS,
AND ADVENTURES AWAIT!

WHEN? WHERE?

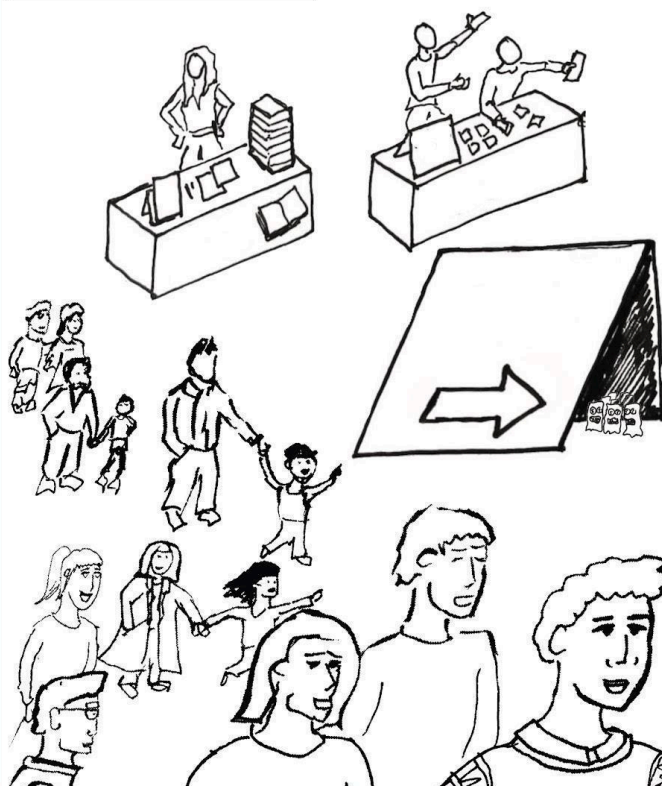
DATE!
TIME!
LOCATION!



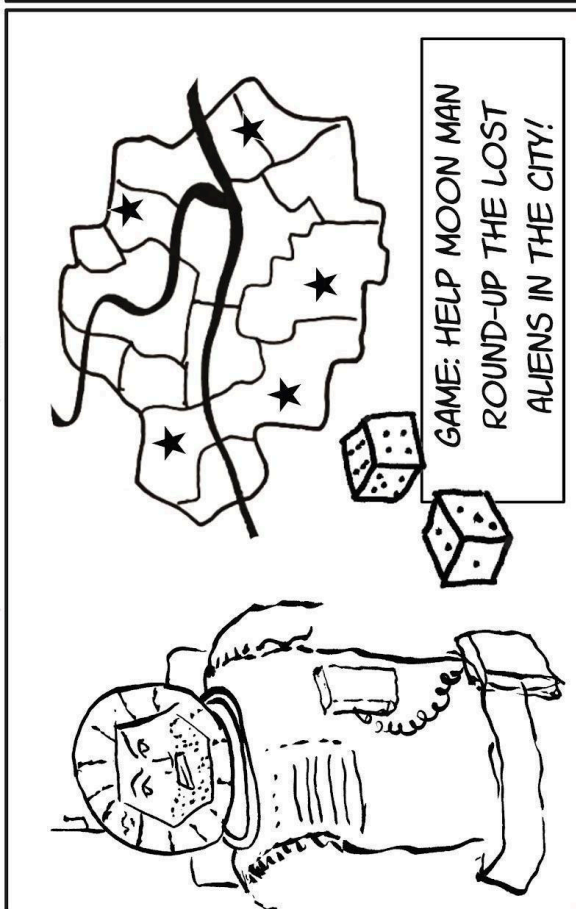
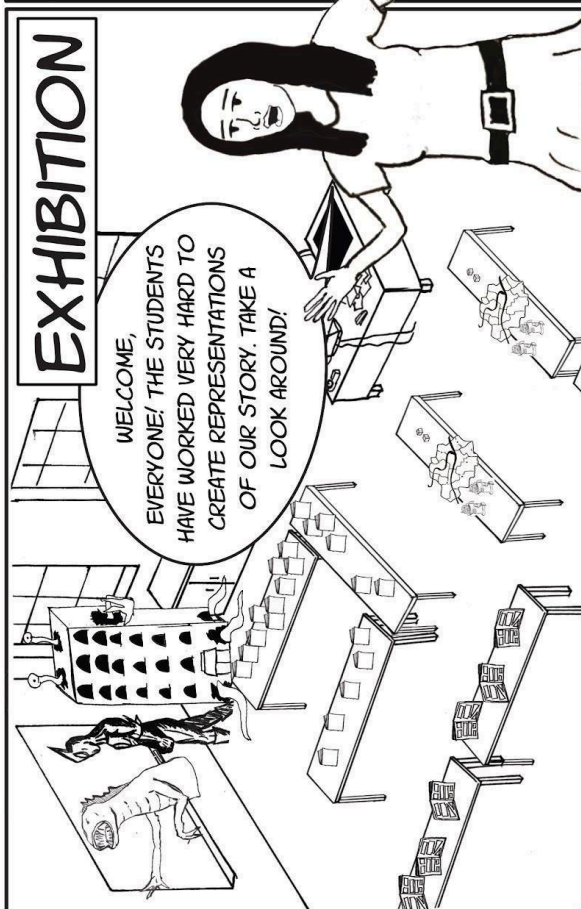
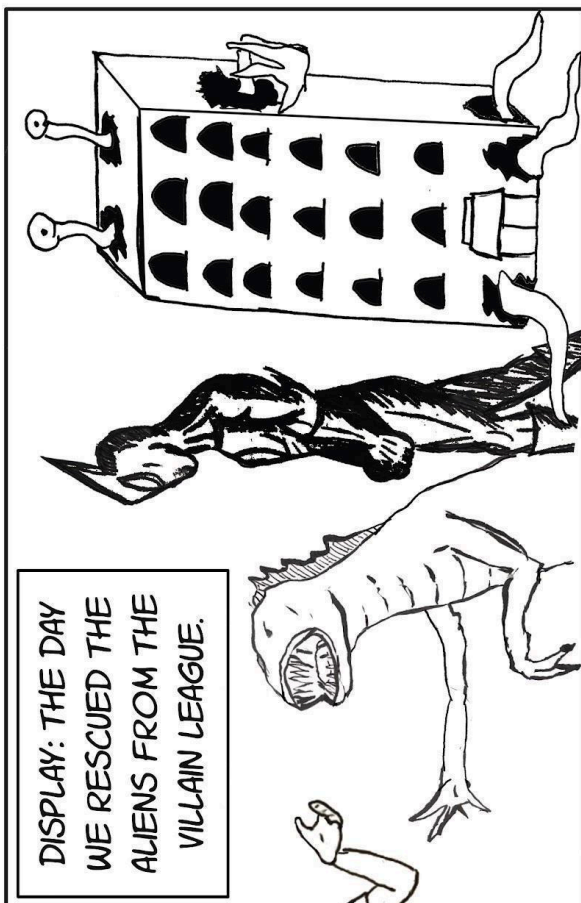
WEEKS LATER...



HOST



I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT THE "WHAT"
WE ASK STUDENTS TO DO NEEDS
TO BE CONNECTED TO A BIGGER
PURPOSE - A "WHY". I FELL IN LOVE
WITH PUBLICLY DISPLAYING AND
CELEBRATING STUDENT WORK -
NOT ON A BULLETIN BOARD
OUTSIDE THE ROOM (ALTHOUGH
THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH
THAT) - WORK THAT IS INTENDED
TO BE SEEN, IN-PERSON, BY FAMILY
AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS. AN
EVENT THAT IS INTENDED TO BE
SHARED AND ENJOYED.





"PLAYFULNESS ENABLES RISK-TAKING. REPLAY AFFORDS 'SECOND CHANCES' AND 'TRYING AGAIN'. AGENCY DEVELOPS CONTROL AND MASTERY. EMBODIMENT ENABLES MULTIMODAL ENGAGEMENT. PLEASURE SUPPORTS MOTIVATION AND INVENTIVENESS. ATTENTION MOBILIZES INTELLIGENCE. 'SERIOUS PLAY' AND 'HARD FUN' MAKE FOR DEEP LEARNING. 'ENGAGEMENT' IS CONNECTED TO THE EXPERIENCE OF MAKING THINGS UP." (DE CASTELL, 2011, P.26)"



WHAT THIS TEXT IS

- A SELF-STUDY OF MY BELIEFS AND HOW I HAVE FOUND SUCCESS IN MY TEACHING (TRANSCRIBED INTO COMICS).
- AN INVITATION TO TEACHERS TO BORROW IDEAS AND TRY NEW STRATEGIES IN THEIR CURRICULUM DESIGN AND DELIVERY.

WHAT THIS TEXT IS NOT

- A GUIDE TO A PAINT-BY-NUMBERS APPROACH TO TEACHING.
- A RIGID LIST OF HOW TO'S
- A ROAD MAP OR SHORT CUT TO EASIER TEACHING.
- A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL SOLUTION TO TEACHING AND INSTRUCTION.

WIZARD SCHMIDT



CESAR SCHMIDT



I LOVE MY JOB, AND SINCE 2006 I HAVE TAUGHT YOUTH BETWEEN GRADES 4-11 AT A VARIETY OF SCHOOLS. OVER THAT TIME, I HAVE OBSERVED MANY GREAT MENTORS AND COLLEAGUES LEADING ME TO ADOPT AN ASSORTMENT OF STRATEGIES ON HOW TO CREATE A ENGAGING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. I STRIVE TO DESIGN AND FOSTER LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS WHERE THEY HAVE CHANCES TO EXERT AGENCY, OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOP SKILLS, AND BUILD COMMUNITY - ALL WHILE HAVING FUN. WHILE IN GRAD SCHOOL, MY METHODS AND IDEAS ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING - WHAT I BELIEVE AND HOW I TEACH - HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MY STUDIES AND PUT TO THE TEST. HOW COULD I STUDY MY OWN PRACTICE? HOW COULD I EFFECTIVELY TELL PEOPLE ABOUT WHAT I DO AND HOW I DO IT?

WELL, THIS COMIC IS AN AMALGAMATION AND EXPRESSION OF THAT STUDY.

EDUCATIONAL DISCLOSURE ALERT!

HEY!
I'M BRENT SCHMIDT.
MIDDLE-SCHOOL
TEACHER, AUTHOR, AND
ILLUSTRATOR OF
THIS COMIC.

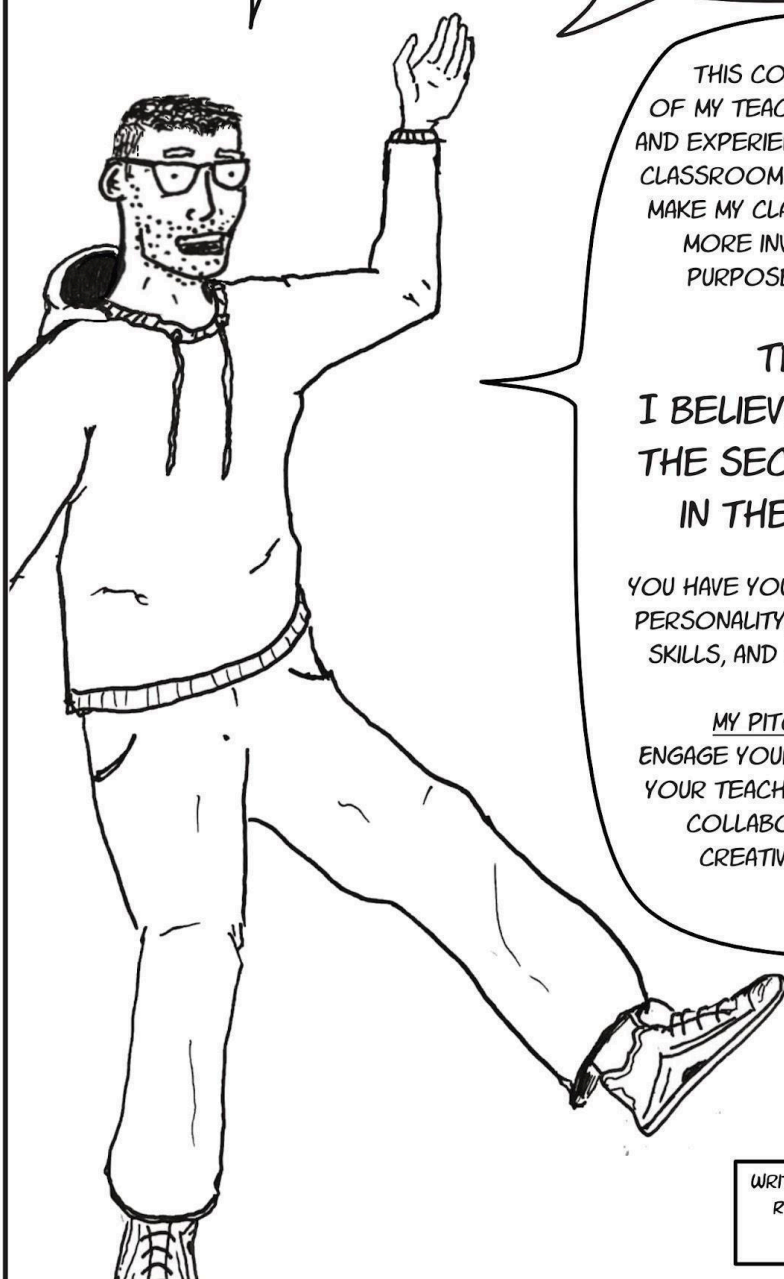
JOIN ME AS WE JOURNEY
THROUGH MY TEACHING PROCESS.
FROM "CLASSROOM STORY" TO
"EXHIBITION OF LEARNING".

THIS COMIC IS A SELF-STUDY
OF MY TEACHING CAREER, PROCESS
AND EXPERIENCE IN A MIDDLE-SCHOOL
CLASSROOM. MY QUEST HAS BEEN TO
MAKE MY CLASSROOM AND LESSONS
MORE INVITING, ENGAGING, AND
PURPOSEFUL FOR STUDENTS.

TEACHERS!
I BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE
THE SECRET INGREDIENT
IN THE CLASSROOM.

YOU HAVE YOUR OWN UNIQUE BLEND OF
PERSONALITY, INTERESTS, STRENGTHS,
SKILLS, AND CREATIVITY TO TAP INTO.

MY PITCH TO YOU IS THIS:
ENGAGE YOUR STUDENTS AND UNLOCK
YOUR TEACHING SUPERPOWERS WITH
COLLABORATIVE STORY, PLAY,
CREATIVITY, AND PROJECTS.



WRITTEN + ILLUSTRATED BY BRENT R. SCHMIDT
RESEARCH + FEEDBACK VERSION - 09/2024
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Chapter 6: Final Reflections

For this self-study, I integrated arts- and comics-based research to address what I perceived as student disengagement in modern classrooms. By employing a self-study methodology, I analyzed the teaching style I co-developed via *The Classroom Story*, an innovative role-playing approach that encourages collaborative storytelling and multimodal text creation. In this work I highlighted the transformative potential of playful and creative curriculum design in education, offering both theoretical insights and practical tools for fostering engagement and creativity. Through arts-based research (ABR), I have sought and continue to seek to influence educational practice and policy (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Fletcher, 2020) by developing tangible, engaging resources that I believe will support teachers in enhancing their classroom instruction.

My conception of engagement, as developed through *The Classroom Story*, is rooted in four key dimensions: autonomy, mastery, purpose, and play. I believe students are most engaged when they are granted real agency in the learning process; when they are trusted to make meaningful choices and when their voices shape the narrative of the classroom. Rather than viewing mastery as the attainment of fixed knowledge, I see it as the holistic development of creative, collaborative, and critical-thinking capacities over time. Essentially, an evolving process of becoming. Purpose arises when students understand the significance of what they are doing, when their work is shared publicly, and when their learning contributes to a community larger than themselves. Finally, play is not merely a break from “real” learning but the very condition under which creativity, experimentation, and connection flourish. These pillars have guided the design and evolution of *The Classroom Story*, shaping both my teaching

practice and my research methodology. They provided the foundation for my decision to engage with self-study and arts-based research in ways that reflect the very values I hope to cultivate in learners.

Throughout this process, I also developed a deeper empathy for the realities teachers face. As I examined my own practice and connected with others, it became clear to me that what can be mistaken for disengagement is often the result of a teacher's depleted bandwidth. Many educators are already stretched thin by systemic demands, administrative tasks, curriculum expectations, and the emotional labour of supporting students. Rather than assuming a lack of investment, I have come to recognize that many teachers are doing the best they can within overwhelming constraints. This realization has shifted my perspective: instead of offering more "solutions," I want my work to offer space—space for creativity, joy, reflection, and re-engagement on their own terms. My goal is not to add to teachers' plates, but to help reshape the plate itself.

With my comics-based research (CBR) text, *Don't Teach Like This: Harness Your Teaching Creativity*, I aimed to inspire and equip educators with tools to create more engaging, collaborative, and creative classrooms. In doing so, I was also encouraging teachers to inject their own personality, identity, and lived experiences into their practice—an act I see as both pedagogically powerful and politically necessary. This connects to a broader issue in educational discourse: the undervaluing of teacher knowledge. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) argue, the knowledge teachers generate through inquiry and experience is too often marginalized in favour of externally imposed standards and frameworks. My work challenges that tendency by asserting

that educators' personal creativity and reflective practice are not only valid sources of knowledge, but essential to building meaningful and responsive learning environments.

One of the most slowly realized learnings I had while engaging with both arts-based research (ABR) and comics-based research (CBR) was how deeply iterative and recursive the analytical process was. Working within the comics form required me to deconstruct my data carefully—separating themes and concepts while simultaneously building a coherent narrative arc. In my mind (and scattered across pages, sticky notes, and floor space), I held four distinct narrative threads: information about *The Classroom Story*, insights on pedagogy, the story of an evolving teacher engaging with this work, and a mini-game, “Foes of Teaching,” designed to be played throughout the comic. These threads helped me scaffold the creative process, ensuring the final comic not only told a compelling story but also served as a meaningful and usable guide for educators while synthesizing the concepts covered in the Chapter 3.

Just as important, reflexivity was inherently woven into this work. Through the process of re-storying (Galman, 2020; Pirie, 2024; LeBlanc & Irwin, 2018; Weaver Hightower, 2017), I had to revisit and reimagine my own teaching past—often stepping into alternate perspectives, such as those of a newer teacher or a more seasoned educator. These perspectives emerged as characters in the comic itself: Ms. P, the enthusiastic new teacher, and Mr. F, the experienced but skeptical veteran. Imagining and writing their dialogues allowed me to anticipate potential reader responses and explore the complexities of implementing creative pedagogical shifts. Ultimately, the recursive and reflexive nature of CBR and ABR supported both the structure of the comic and the self-inquiry at the heart of this thesis.

In my own teaching practice, I like to hold public events and exhibitions or find other opportunities to share student work. I achieved a similar purposeful outlet for my research by sharing my comic on October 4th and 5th at the 2024 Prairie Comics Festival (PCF) in Winnipeg, Manitoba (photos in Appendix B). This was a pivotal experience not only in my thesis process but also in my life. Through my books, art displays, and interactions, I received tangible feedback that connected with and validated my efforts. Comments like, “I love your style”, “The black-and-white colour scheme is striking”, “I’ll support whatever you’re doing”, and “How did you find the time to do all this?” underscored the culmination of my work. It felt like many of my personal goals converged on a single event. It was a gratifying realization of my efforts and a reminder of the potential impact of my work.

Since then, I have: (1) become a volunteer for the organizing committee for Prairie Comics Festival, (2) invited local artists to lead workshops in my classroom, and (3) continued experimenting with creativity in my own teaching practice. Co-workers and administrators have been incredibly receptive to my comic and are taking an active interest in my work and philosophies. Friends of mine who work in adult education settings have given me unsolicited praise for the format and message of my work. I am immensely grateful for the positive feedback and commendations that have come my way.

My hope is that this work encourages transformative perspectives (Barone & Eisner, 2012) and challenges dominant discourses in education (Tian, 2023). By sharing my experiences and curricula, I hope to continue to support teachers in integrating creative, playful, and multimodal approaches into their practices. Ultimately, I envision

my research serving as both a resource and a catalyst for fostering student creativity and co-creation in learning environments. Disseminating findings beyond academic audiences is essential, as practitioners of ABR and self-study aim to engage diverse stakeholders (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Fletcher, 2020; Samaras, 2011; Tian, 2023). By employing comics, I have bridged the gap between scholarly dialogue and public discourse, making complex ideas accessible without oversimplifying them (Sousanis, 2017). This medium offers a dynamic platform to convey nuanced concepts while inviting broader engagement. As I continue to present at conferences and offer workshops, I plan to further disseminate my findings in public forums.

Research underscores the potential of comics within ABR to reach both academic and non-academic audiences (Getz & Clarke, 2016; Kuttner et al., 2021; Sousanis, 2015). The multimodal affordances of comics make sophisticated subject matter accessible and invite deeper conversations (Sousanis, 2017). For me, combining ABR and self-study through comics embodied a “practice what you preach” philosophy. My passion for reading, discussing, and learning about comics in various forms and across genres aligns with this approach. To engage others, I must first immerse myself in the creative process. As Nick Sousanis observed, “By removing the words that so quickly build up walls, I could give people a reason to stick around long enough to engage in difficult conversations and perhaps find common ground” (2017, p. 191).

On a personal level, both ABR and CBR have allowed me to explore and learn in ways that align with my cognitive strengths. Following my ADHD diagnosis in May 2024, I gained valuable insights into why traditional academic tasks had often felt banal or overwhelming. My mind weaves connections between ideas, but structuring them

effectively can be challenging. The process of creating comics helped me focus and distill key ideas in an artistic manner. Starting with concepts and themes that I wanted to express, I worked on creating images that enabled me to prioritize essential information. Constructing panels and pages in a step-by-step approach scaffolded my thinking while allowing me creative freedom. This artistic process invited constant reflection and inquiry, with internal guiding questions such as: “What is the message of this panel?” “How will this page connect to the next?” and “How can I incorporate scholarly references naturally?” The ABR-CBR methodology supported both structured thinking and creative exploration, fostering a balance between rigor and reflexivity. Finding and applying methods such as ABR and CBR have been transformative in my master’s education. These flexible and creative methodologies have allowed me to transition seamlessly between artistic and academic phases, fostering inquiry, exploration, and creation. Balancing academic rigour with the fluidity of these approaches has been both challenging and inspiring. I am excited to present my findings in engaging, accessible formats while navigating the complexities of integrating personal narratives, scholarly references, and research findings into cohesive multimodal works.

Looking forward, I see tremendous potential to expand and refine *The Classroom Story* and its applications in diverse educational contexts. More importantly, I aim to explore how co-creation, creativity, and multimodal literacy can further help teachers engage students in ways that traditional methods often fail to achieve. This includes adapting the approach for different age groups, subject areas, and learning environments while ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for all learners. Moreover, I hope to collaborate with other educators and researchers to develop a comprehensive

guide that empowers teachers to integrate playful, multimodal approaches into their curricula.

Beyond the classroom, I envision contributing to educational discourse by advocating for policies that prioritize creativity and collaboration in pedagogy. Sharing this work at conferences, workshops, and public forums will remain a priority, as will fostering connections between academic and public audiences through innovative use of comics as research (CBR). I have already begun to accomplish this through my recent “Drawn to Reflection” session at the 2025 CSSE conference in Toronto, Ontario, where I introduced educators and educational developers to the power of comics as a form of reflection and expression as well as the potential of comics-based research as a creative analytical tool. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Several participants reached out afterward to express appreciation, request additional resources, and share their plans to incorporate CBR into their own teaching or scholarship. This enthusiastic reception affirmed both the accessibility and impact of the methods I have been developing throughout my career and reinforced my commitment to making workshops and presentations creative, engaging, and usable in real-world educational contexts.

Additionally, I aspire to consult, speak, and further create educational guides in accessible formats, ensuring that my work continues to bridge the gap between theory and practice while supporting educators in meaningful and practical ways. My experiences thus far have affirmed the transformative power of arts- and comics-based methodologies in education, and I am committed to continuing this journey as both a teacher and a creator.

As I reflect on this transformative journey, I am reminded that education is, at its core, a collaborative and creative endeavor. It is a space where ideas take shape, and where learners and teachers alike discover their potential. By embracing a playful attitude with our creativity and a collaborative spirit, we can foster learning environments that are not only engaging but also empowering, paving the way for a more inclusive and imaginative future in education.

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Appendix A

Photos of the comics-making process.

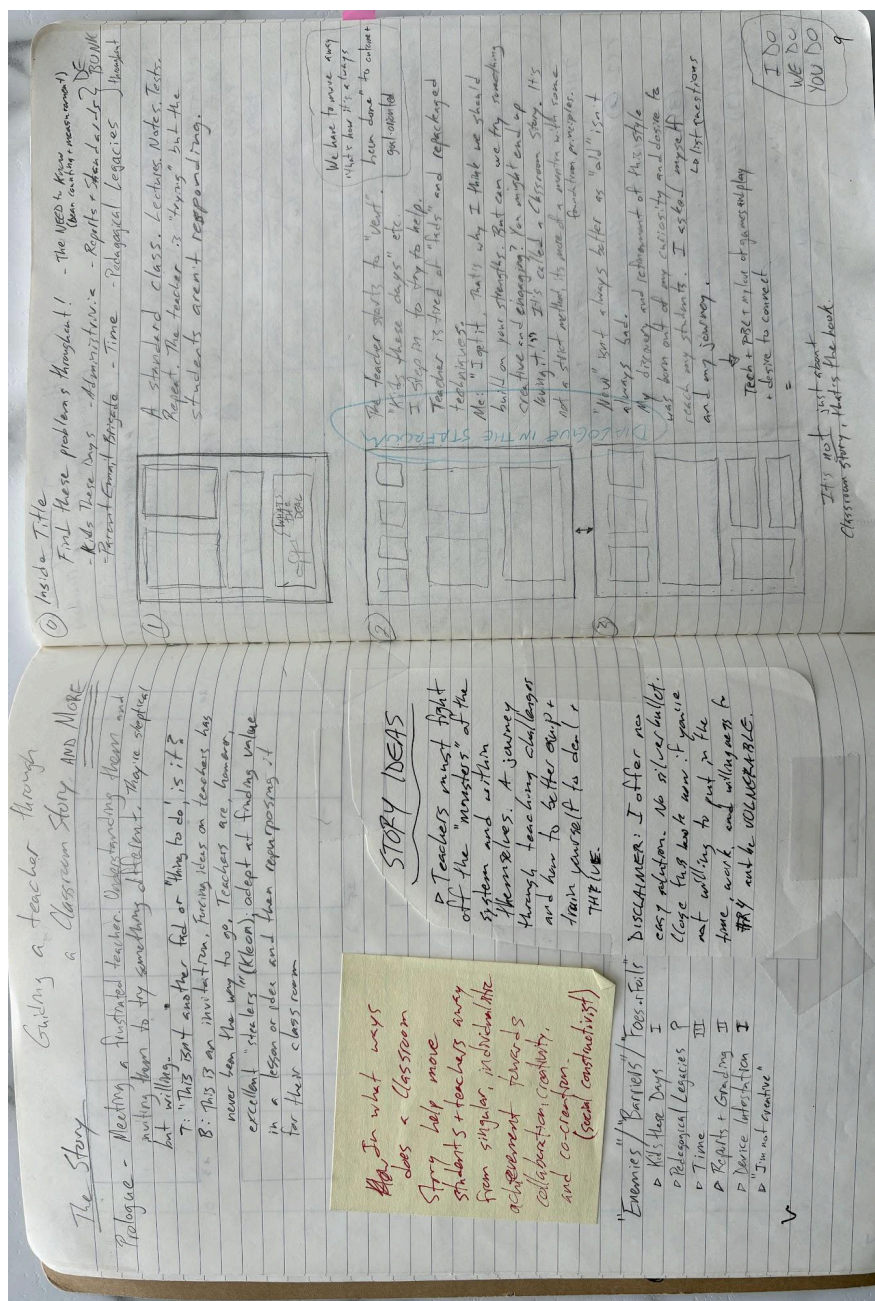


Figure A1.

Writing Process Begins. To begin forming ideas about layout, story, and concepts I create a loose scriptment of the comic. This allows me to express and filter ideas while constructing a scaffold for the comic. *Photo by author.*

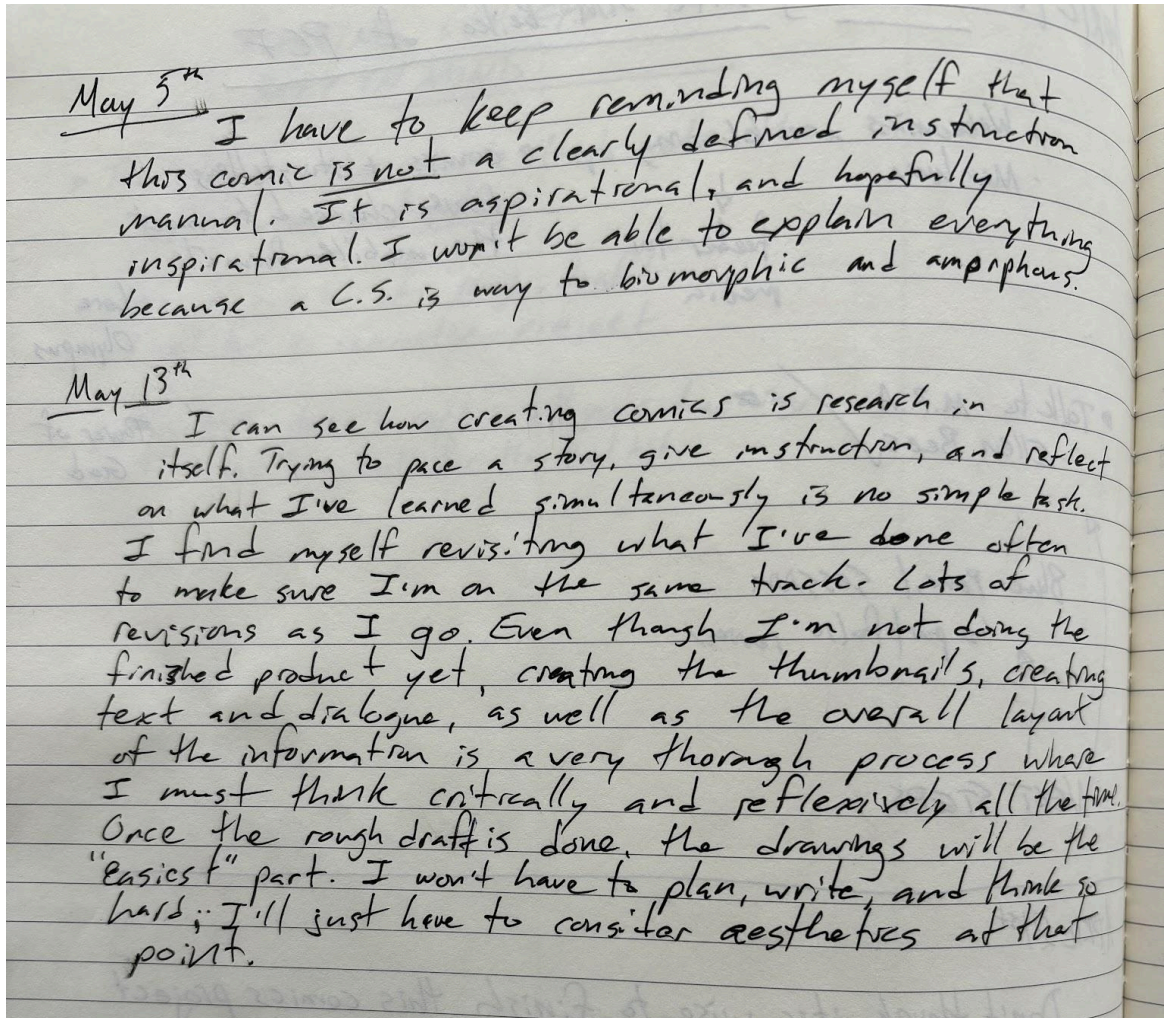


Figure A2.

May Notes. Reflecting on how to integrate the many concepts and layers into the comic.

Photo by author.

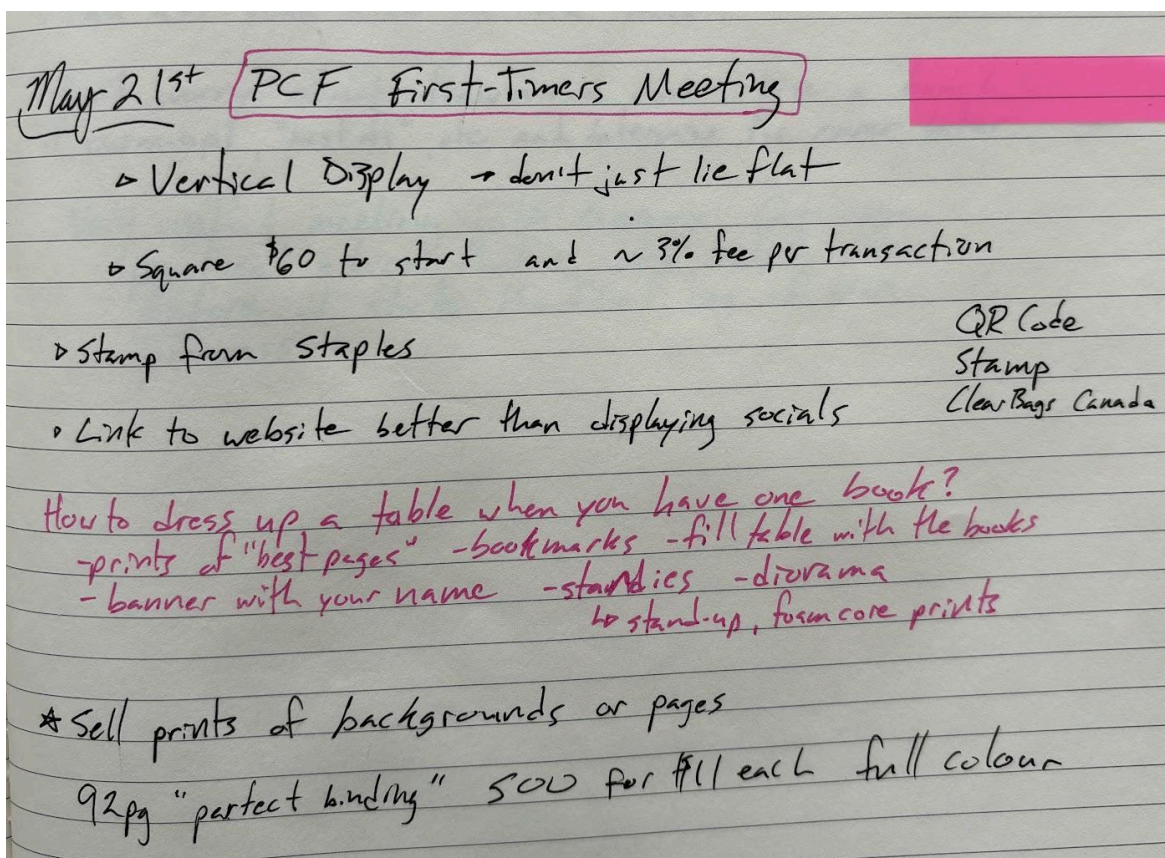


Figure A3.

PCF Mentorship. Notes from online workshop for "first-timers" hosted by Scott A. Ford. This meeting reviewed how to be prepared to set up a successful table at a comic con.
Photo by author.

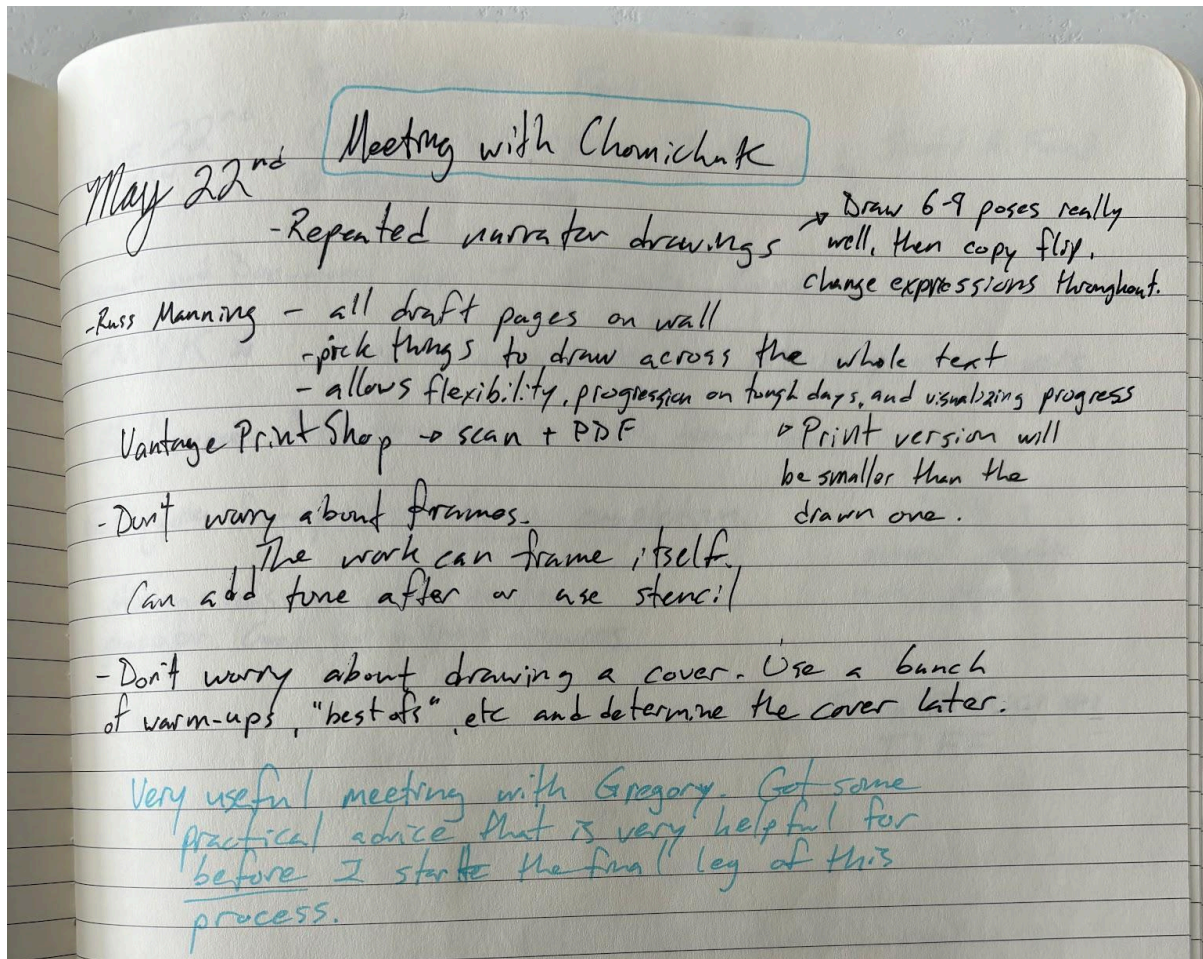


Figure A4.

Meeting with a Critical Friend. In-person meeting with G.M.B. Chomichuk where we reviewed the comic production process, especially transitioning from scriptment to drawing. Photo by author.

July 13th

Almost done the Prologue. Learned lots about the production process. Using Affinity is going to be amazing for my work quality, flow, and production. Being able to draw something anywhere and then digitally enhance and use it as an asset will allow my drawing process to quicken. Also, lettering digitally will give it a clean look and the ability to re-write and revise now and later. Finally, having Affinity on my PC desktop and my Mac Laptop will allow me to work anywhere. So now I'll have work I can accomplish while in B.C.

- * Don't overly rely on Affinity. Keep drawings hand-made and fun.
- * How to make this comic "playable".

Character Sheet + Foes + Encounters

NAME:

YRS TEACHING:

3 Strengths

1 Weakness

1 Fear

TOOLS I'M GOOD WITH

FOES

PROFILE
+ SUBJECT

perforated page?

PDF version on website (printable)

throughout text
P - Kicks Those Days
- Legacies

A1

July 17th

PROLOGUE DONE - Celebrate the small wins. I routinely drew, wrote, edited, revised, and finished 12 comics pages. Need to quickly get back to drawing and keep this momentum going.

Figure A5.

Production Milestone. Reflecting on the learning of how to use the digital software Affinity to aid in the production process and completion of the Prologue section of the comic.

Photo by author.



Figure A6.

Physical Workspace. A look at how my drawing desk might appear at any time throughout the comics making process. Layers of papers and various pages at different stages of completion. *Photo by author.*

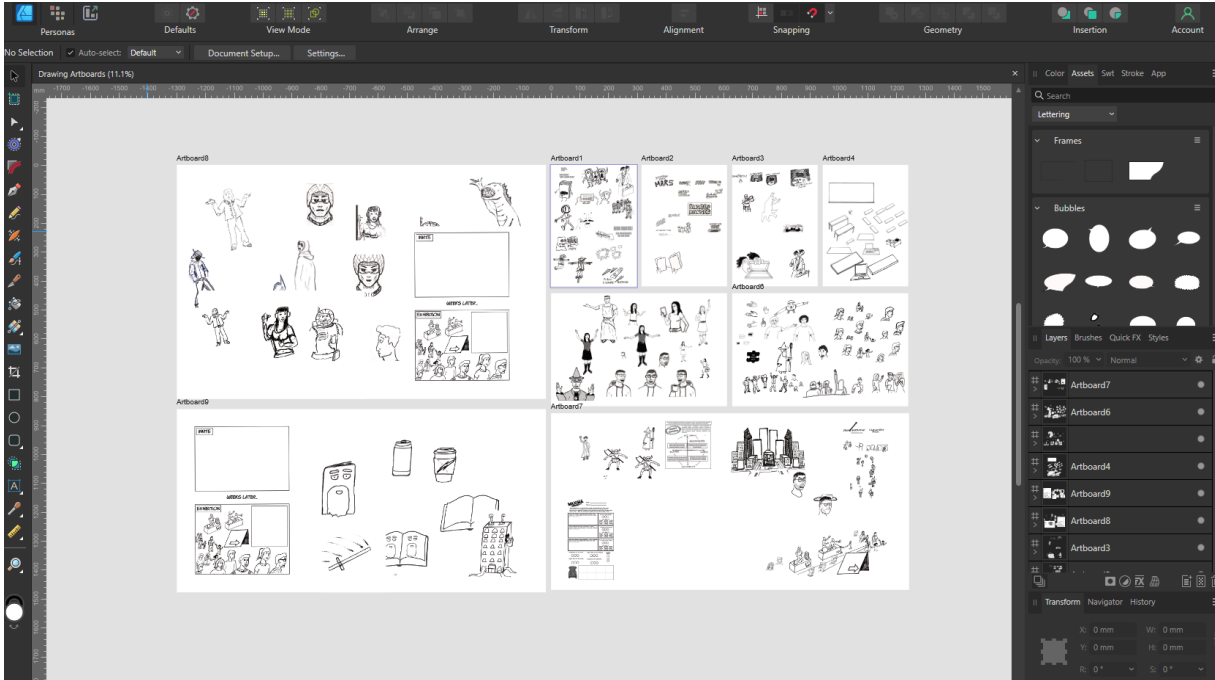


Figure A7.

Digital Workspace. A screenshot of a digital workspace where I organize and store my scanned drawings and manipulate assets for clarity. *Photo by author.*

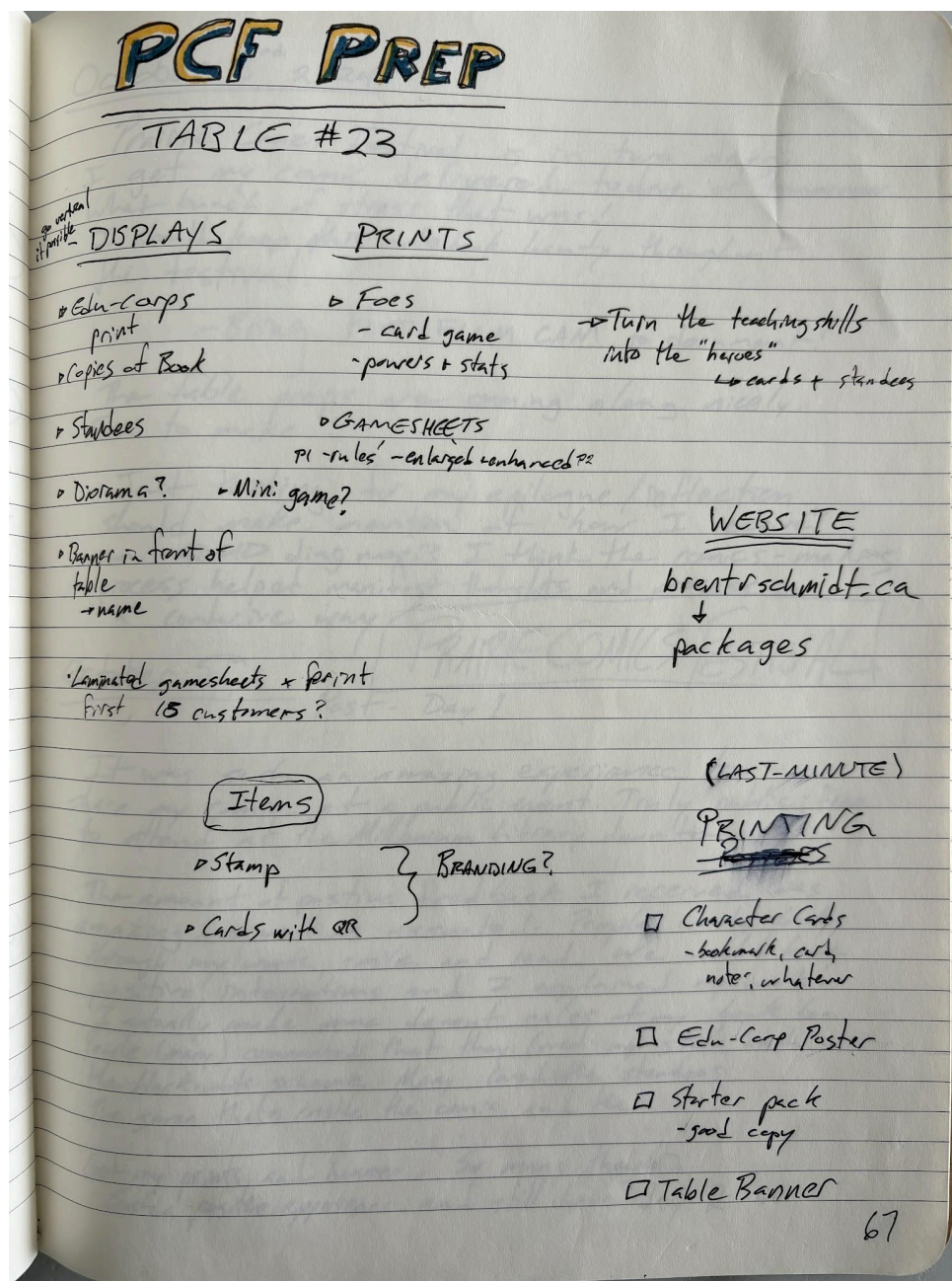


Figure A8.

PCF Prep. My notes and checklists preparing to share my comic at *Prairie Comics Festival*. Besides the book, I created various prints and standing figurines ("standees") to decorate the table. Photo by author.

Appendix B

Photos from Prairie Comics Festival at the Millenium Library, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2024.

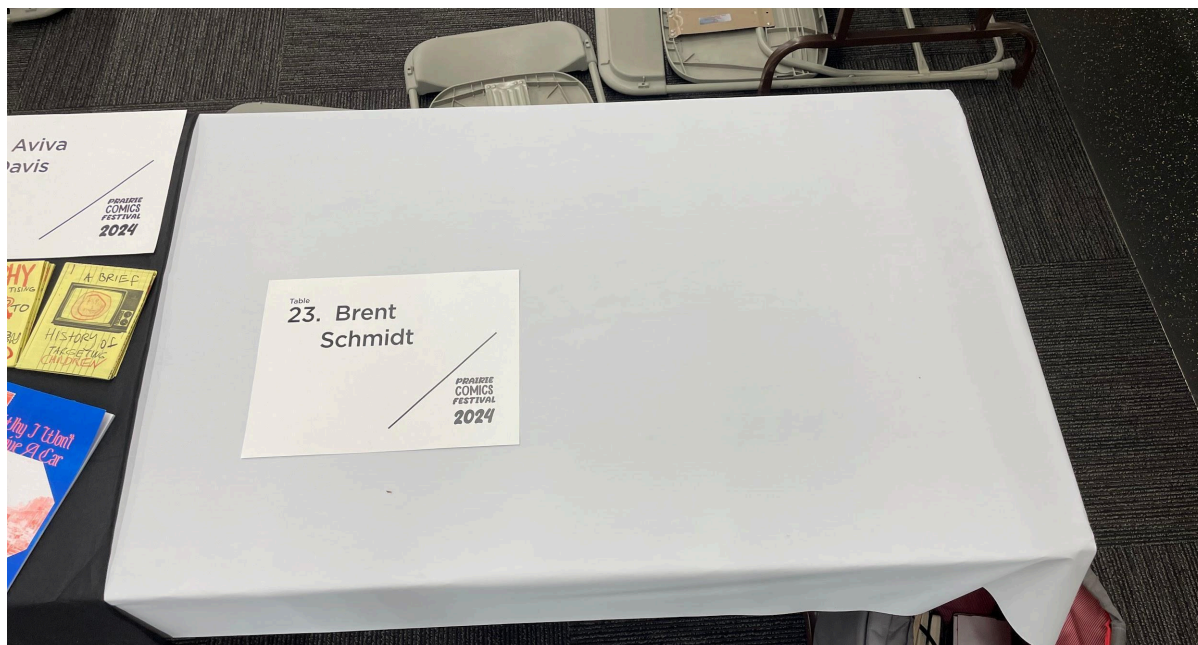


Figure B1.

A New “Empty Canvas”. I encounter my table space when I arrive the morning of the festival. A new empty canvas to work with. *Photo by author.*



Figure B2.

Canvas Filled. I came across my table space when I first arrived on the morning of the festival. A new empty canvas to work with. *Photo by author.*



Figure B3.

Ideas Actualized. Table set with books, art, and figures on display. The culmination of all my efforts. *Photo by Allana Schmidt, used with permission.*