

Graphic Novel Project for LLED 368

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Brainstorming and Process

We began by brainstorming as a group, using the syllabus for prompts. Jessica decided that she wanted to do a graphic novel and Nicolas agreed. Erin decided she would like to try creating a graphic novel because it was something she had never done before. Together, we decided this would be a fun project that we may want to use in our classrooms in the future.

The first problem we encountered was deciding on a text to adapt into a graphic novel. We brainstormed a list of short story ideas, taking into account story content and the ability to translate from text to image. We decided to use the short story genre because we wanted to create a succinct novel. After much deliberation, we finally decided to adapt "The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe. After choosing this text, we then began to think about how we might translate the text into a series of images. We broke up the story into three sections and then decided to create three pages each. As long as we completed our own section, we had the creative freedom to do whatever we wanted with our pages.

Nic's Reflection on Process

First I started with the agreed elements that had to be in my pages. I tried to pace it out so the Prince would have some good "screen time" by having him be the major attention holder through the first page. I wanted him to chase the masked man through the second page, and catch him by the end in order to get the pacing right for him to fall over dead by the third page. This needed to occur quickly in order for there to be time for his friends to attempt to get revenge, find nothing beneath the masked man's costume, and then consequently die. I tried panelling out my ideas a few times. I knew I wanted to start with bigger panels, and get smaller and smaller as my three pages concluded. I wanted to also try throwing in photos in some of the backgrounds which I did in a few (though I did everything by hand so this slowed down my process A LOT). I originally intended for some narration and a bit of dialogue, but after the time I had already put it in I decided my images spoke for the narrative well enough (or I hoped it did). I sketched out a rough draft then completed the pages mostly chronologically. I then cut the panels up and pasted them to black construction paper. After finishing all this I photocopied and then coloured parts of the pages. Finally, I scanned the finished product.

Jessica's Reflection on Process

For my pages of the graphic novel, I decided to first roughly sketch out the main images and points I wanted on each page. However, I realized what I pictured in my head did not always translate onto the page. Hence, I thought Photoshop might offer greater potential to create the visuals I wanted, so I decided to draw whichever pictures I could and then edit them in Photoshop. In contrast to Nic and Erin's contributions, scanning the images took place in the middle of the project rather than at the end.

I then experimented adding shading and colour both in Photoshop and on paper. At first we thought we would stick to black and white images and later on add in colour to specific pages or panels, but after creating our pages we decided to leave the colour up to the artist to decide. Hence, I ended up creating most of the graphics in black and white and added in colour later on to emphasize certain images or to give the page a certain feel, such as the black-white-red colour scheme on page one. I also originally did not plan on adding very much text to the graphic novel, but I later decided to take excerpts from the story to set the scene, as it made sense given that I was completing the first three

pages. In all, this project allowed me to practice skills in summarizing, storyboarding, planning, drawing, image editing, and matching juxtaposing or complementary text and images.

The very last part of this project was putting all the pages into a single pdf. This turned out to be more time-consuming than I had hoped, as it required careful cropping of the scanned images, setting the page dimensions and adjusting the resolution, as well as adding page numbers.

Erin's Reflection on Process

First, I read through the text and tried to pick out the main ideas that I wanted to include in my pages. I had about four or five pages of text to pick through. It actually took much longer to decide which parts of the story to use than I expected. I began by creating a storyboard of the main ideas. I created a rough sketch outlining what I planned to include in each panel. It was really difficult trying to figure out which things to include and then how I was going to draw these things! Once the sketch was complete, I used a black fine line pen to draw out the images again. Once this was done, I went back over the images again using pencil crayons, a black felt, or the fine tip black pen. Colours were added to highlight the colours of the seven rooms.

It was also used to create a contrast between light and dark in some of the panels. Once my drawings were complete, I decided to go back and add in text bubbles. I didn't feel that my drawings captured the events taking place in the story and really felt that text was needed in order to gain a better understanding of what was going on.

I have never created a graphic novel before and was shocked at the amount of time and effort that I put into creating just three pages. I spent many hours trying to come up with ideas for images and translate those ideas onto the paper. I actually felt somewhat limited during my creation of the graphic novel because of my own artistic ability. I had some great ideas in my mind that I couldn't accurately translate onto the paper once I started drawing. If I was to do this project with students in the future, I would encourage them to use magazine clippings or a digital program to try and reduce the amount of time spent on drawings.

Assessment

We felt assessing a graphic novel would be challenging due to the creative freedom of the project. We would ask the students to self-assess and reflect on their own process. The students would also be asked to reflect on their own contributions to the group project. These reflections would help us guide our final assessment of the piece, though we thought the emphasis of the project would be on process and collaboration rather than the product itself.

Integrating into the Classroom

The greatest challenges of bringing a graphic novel project into the classroom would be resistance to group work, drawing, and work-load. This type of project requires a great deal of time and effort in order to make it a reality. Some students would also feel hesitant towards drawing and artwork. You may need to provide students with alternative ways to visually represent the text such as using images from online or magazines. Additionally, students would require some formal teaching about the various artistic and narrative techniques used in graphic novels so that they have the tools to create one of their own. Before starting the project, we would go over elements such as narration, dialogue, camera angles, sound effects, use of colour, panel layout, and other things pertaining to this genre.

References

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