

Sequential Rhetoric: Using Freire and Quintilian to Teach Students to Read and Create Comics

Robert Dennis Watkins <watkrobe_at_isu_dot_edu>, Idaho State University
Tom Lindsley <tomwlindsley_at_gmail_dot_com>, Interaction Designer, Workiva

Abstract

Our comic combines visual literacy, progymnasmata, and critical pedagogy to showcase a classroom study that used comics production to teach visual literacy. The comic first looks at comics criticism, visual rhetoric, and comics scholarship to set a base to build a methodology build in critical pedagogy and ancient rhetoric. Critical pedagogy's tradition of inviting students to find meaning in the origin of ideas fits in with having students design and study a medium that's often overlooked during their college experience. Such an approach echoes Freire's ideas of using critical strategies as an effective model for change. Progymnasmata, and Quintilian's work in general, allows students to approach the new medium of comics through reading and production through an ancient rhetorical practice that relies on a step-by-step process. Looking at Quintilian's pedagogy, we demonstrate a modern classroom study that uses progymnasmata to make the strange familiar while introducing visuality. The actual study is briefly discussed as well. This amalgamation of ancient rhetoric, comics studies, and critical pedagogy is the basis of the research behind this pieces' goal of exploring comics as a multimodal means of composition.

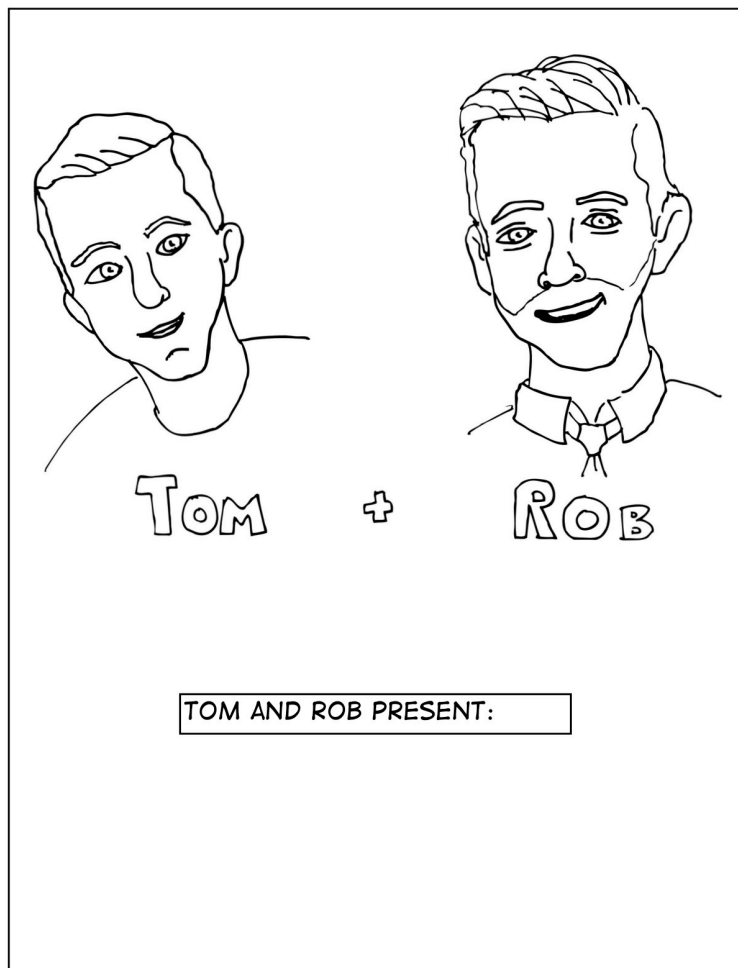


Figure 1.

Sequential Rhetoric:

using Freire + Quintilian to teach

students to read + create comics

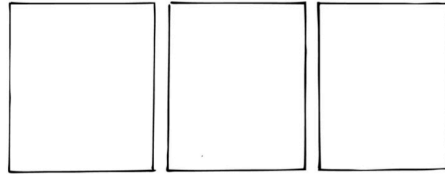


Figure 2.

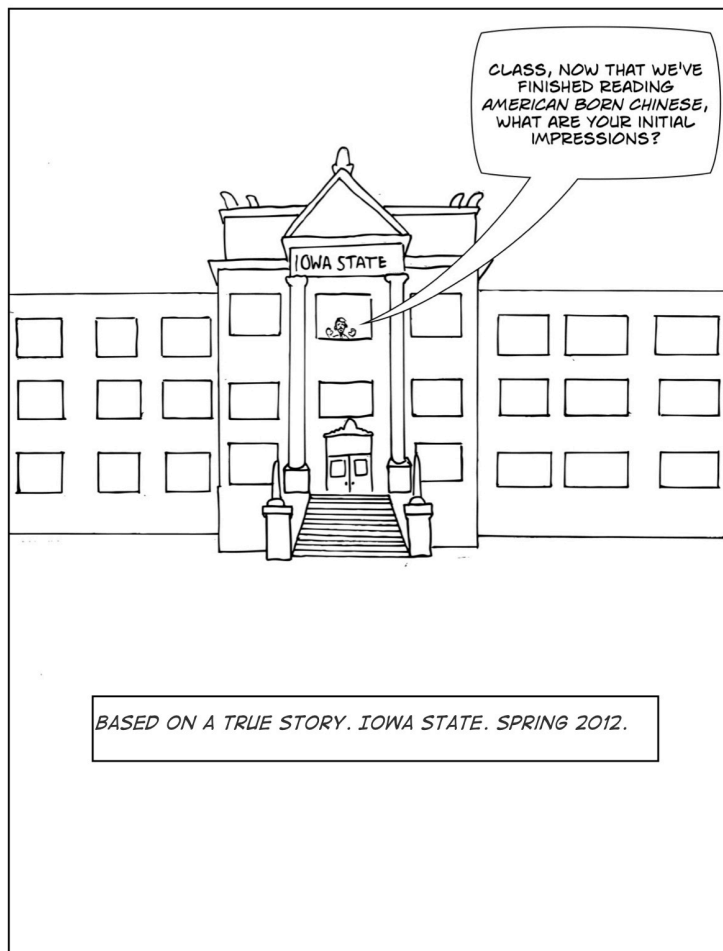


Figure 3.

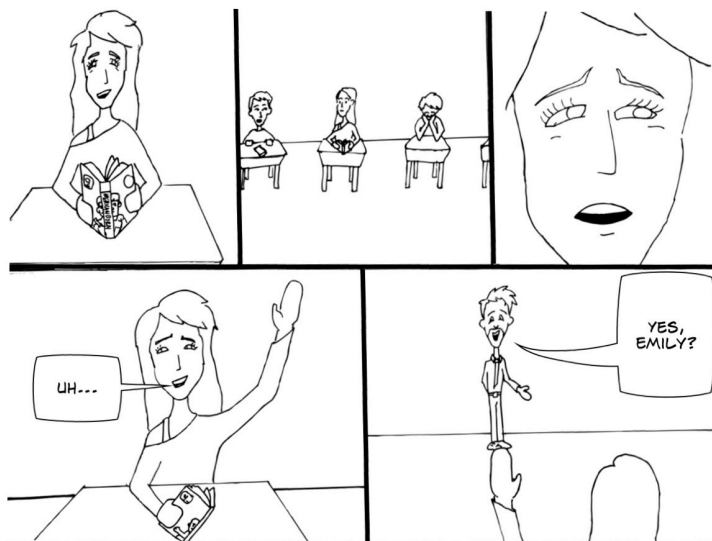


Figure 4.



Figure 5.



Figure 6.

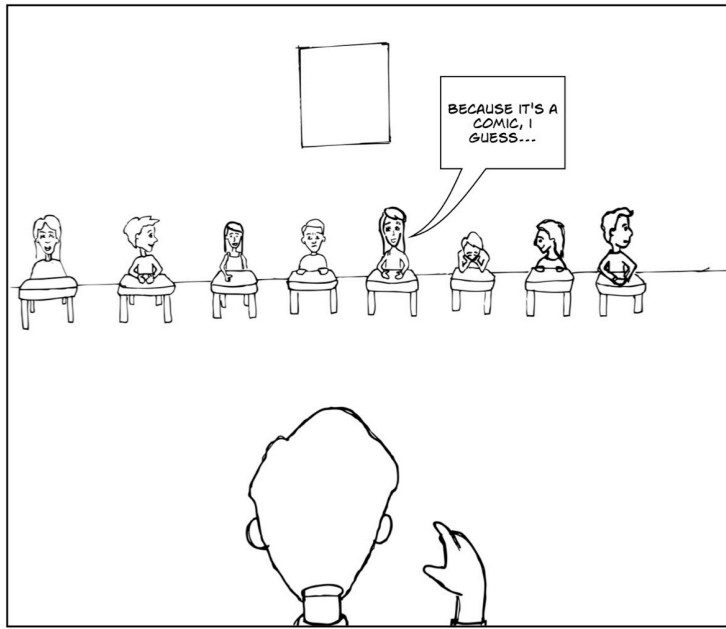


Figure 7.

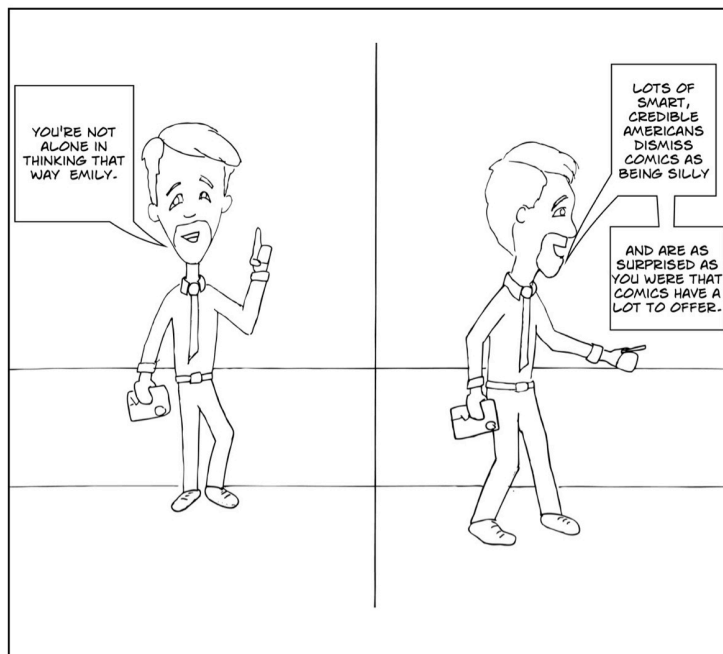


Figure 8.

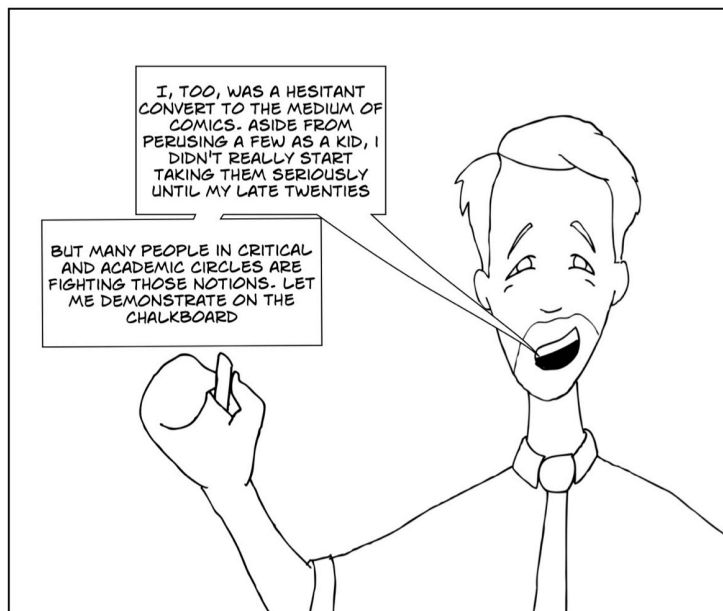


Figure 9.

Will Eisner

WHEN THE COMICS CODE RULED AMERICAN COMICS PRIMARILY PRODUCING OBEDIENT-TO-AUTHORITY SUPERHEROES SAVING DAMSELS IN DISTRESS, WILL EISNER WORKED TO ELEVATE THE MEDIUM. EISNER PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN LEGITIMIZING COMICS, AS HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO EXPLORE INSTRUCTIONAL COMICS. HE CALLED THESE STORIES TO INSTRUCT.

HIS WORK IN PS MAGAZINE COMBINES INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS WITH HUMOR, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SHOCKINGLY SEXIST NOTIONS. HIS COMICS AND HIS WRITTEN THEORY ABOUT COMICS (E.G., COMICS AND SEQUENTIAL ART AND GRAPHIC STORYTELLING AND VISUAL NARRATIVE) PAVED THE WAY FOR LATER DISCUSSION.

Figure 10.



Figure 11.



MANY OTHER COMICS PRACTITIONERS HAVE LABORED IN FOR ADVOCATING COMICS AS WELL. ALISON BECHDEL, FAMOUS FOR CREATING THE BECHDEL-WALLACE TEST, ADVOCATES FOR WOMEN, HOMOSEXUALS, AND OTHER UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS FROM TRADITIONAL COMICS HISTORIES AND LIFE IN GENERAL. HER WORK, AMONG MANY OTHERS, IS INVALUABLE. IT'S ESPECIALLY RELEVANT CONSIDERING THE CRITICAL PEDAGOGY ASPECT OF THIS PIECE.

Figure 12.

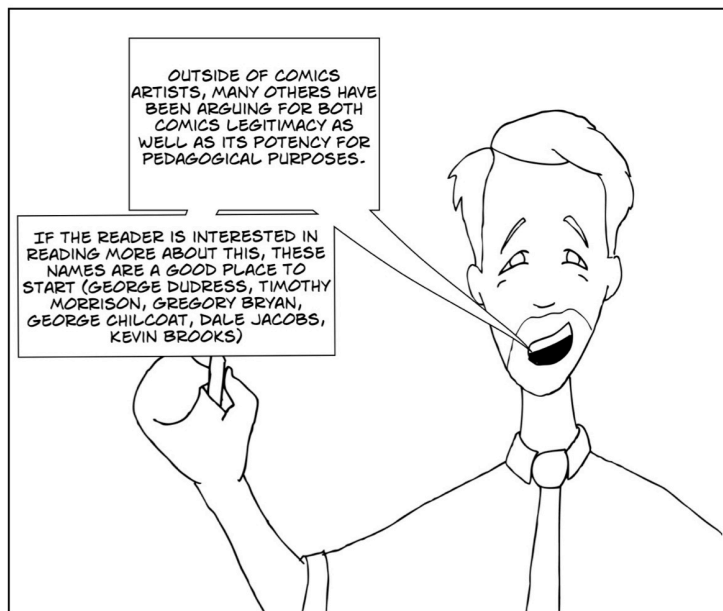


Figure 13.

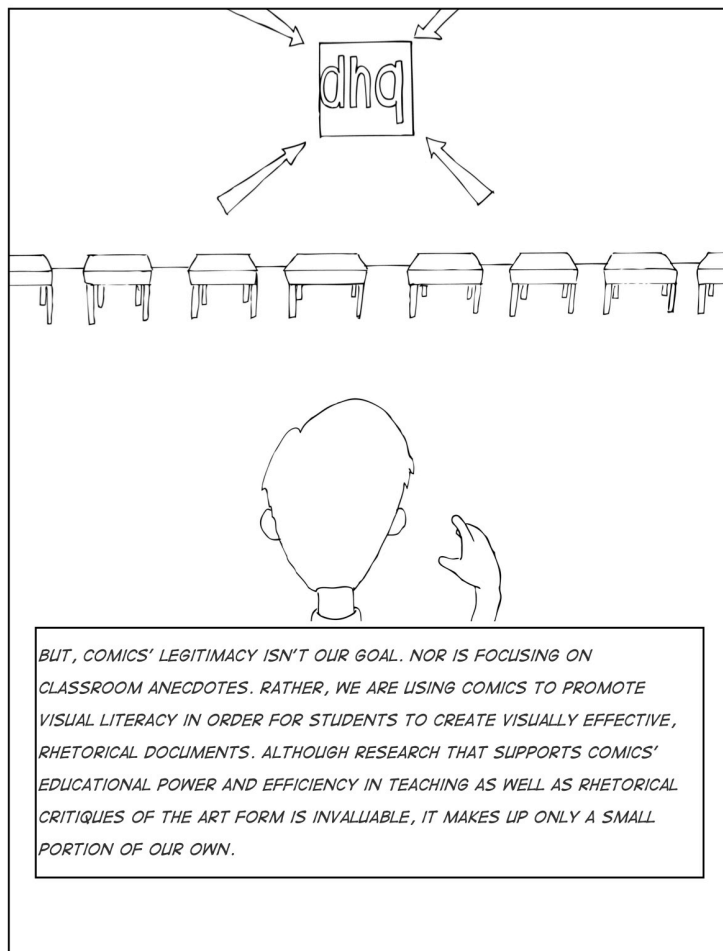


Figure 14.

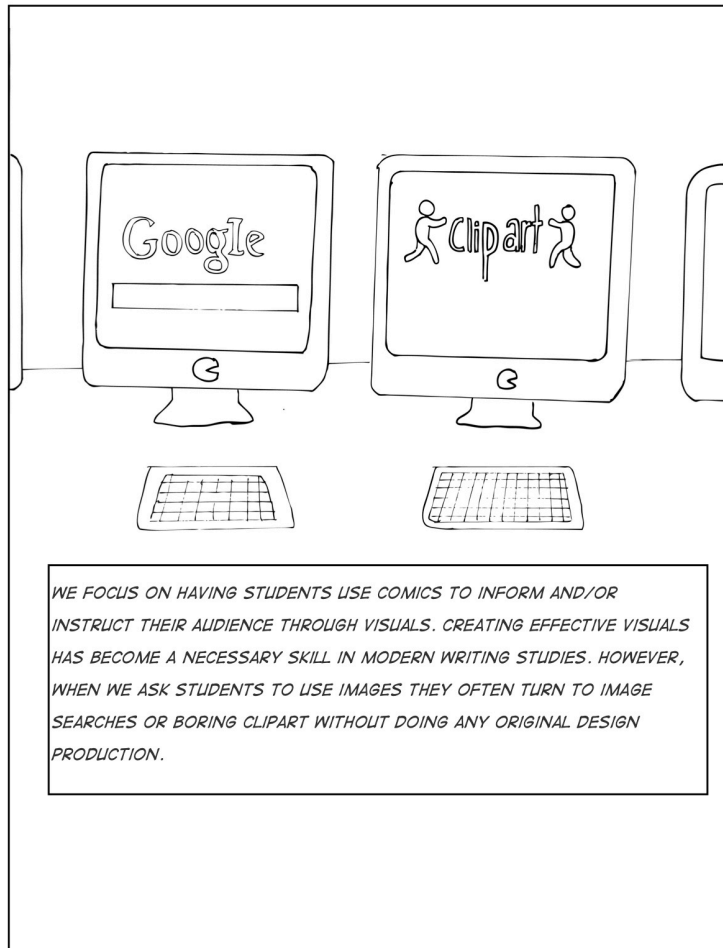
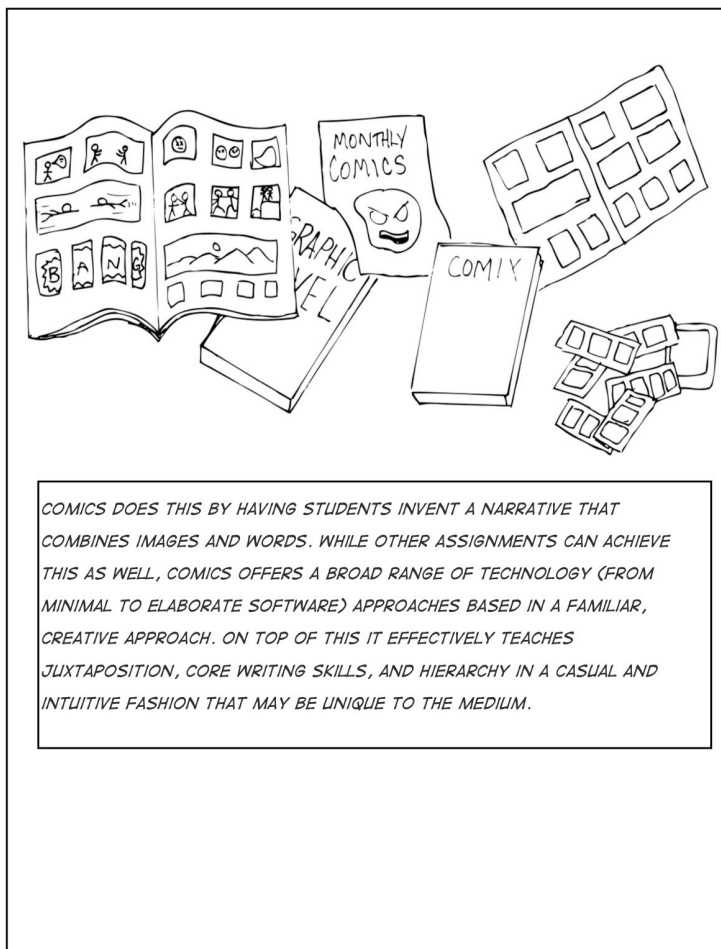


Figure 15.



COMICS DOES THIS BY HAVING STUDENTS INVENT A NARRATIVE THAT COMBINES IMAGES AND WORDS. WHILE OTHER ASSIGNMENTS CAN ACHIEVE THIS AS WELL, COMICS OFFERS A BROAD RANGE OF TECHNOLOGY (FROM MINIMAL TO ELABORATE SOFTWARE) APPROACHES BASED IN A FAMILIAR, CREATIVE APPROACH. ON TOP OF THIS IT EFFECTIVELY TEACHES JUXTAPOSITION, CORE WRITING SKILLS, AND HIERARCHY IN A CASUAL AND INTUITIVE FASHION THAT MAY BE UNIQUE TO THE MEDIUM.

Figure 16.

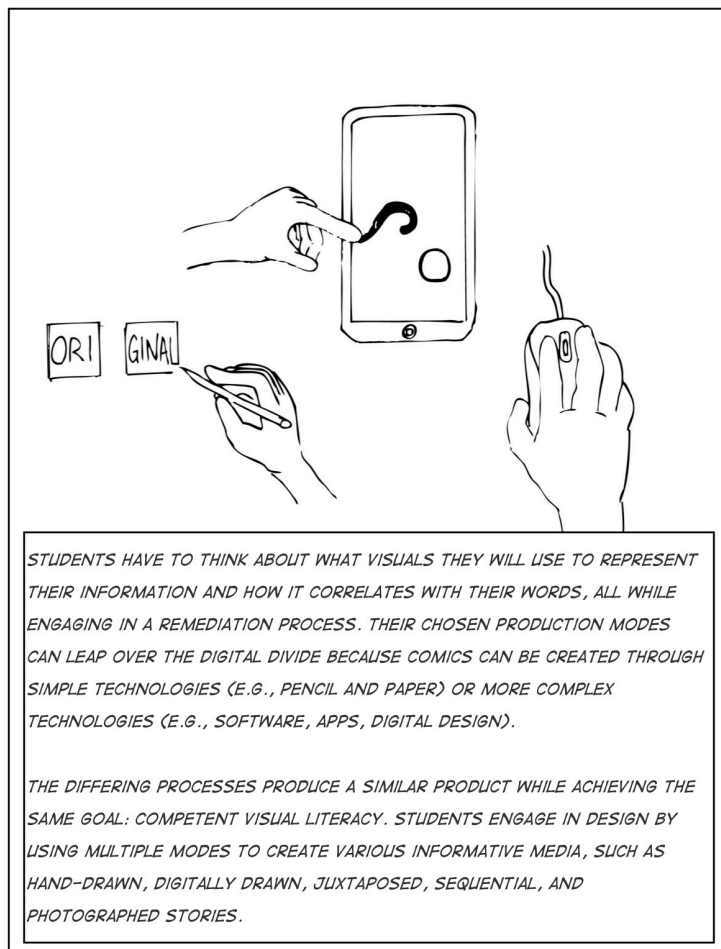
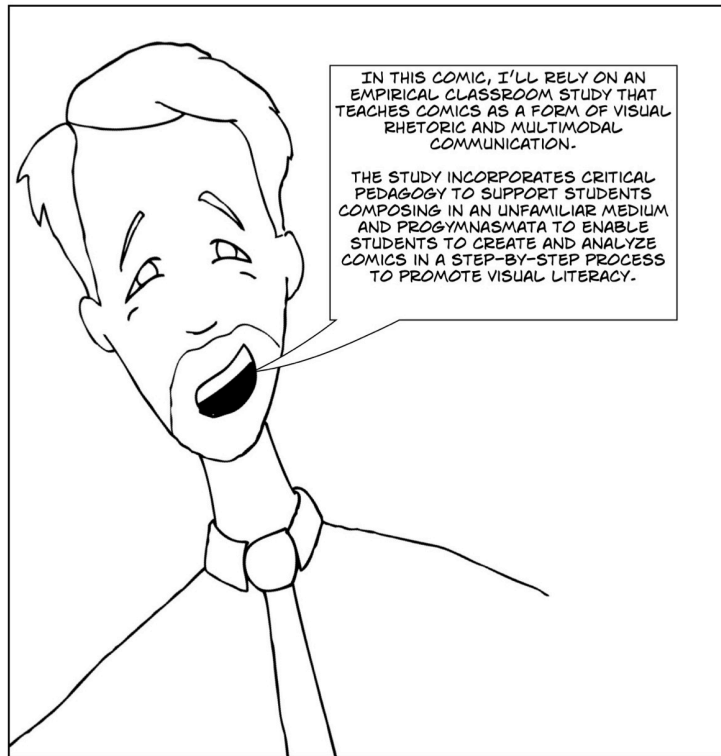


Figure 17.



IN THIS COMIC, I'LL RELY ON AN
EMPIRICAL CLASSROOM STUDY THAT
TEACHES COMICS AS A FORM OF VISUAL
RHETORIC AND MULTIMODAL
COMMUNICATION.

THE STUDY INCORPORATES CRITICAL
PEDAGOGY TO SUPPORT STUDENTS
COMPOSING IN AN UNFAMILIAR MEDIUM
AND PROGYMNASMATA TO ENABLE
STUDENTS TO CREATE AND ANALYZE
COMICS IN A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS
TO PROMOTE VISUAL LITERACY.

Figure 18.

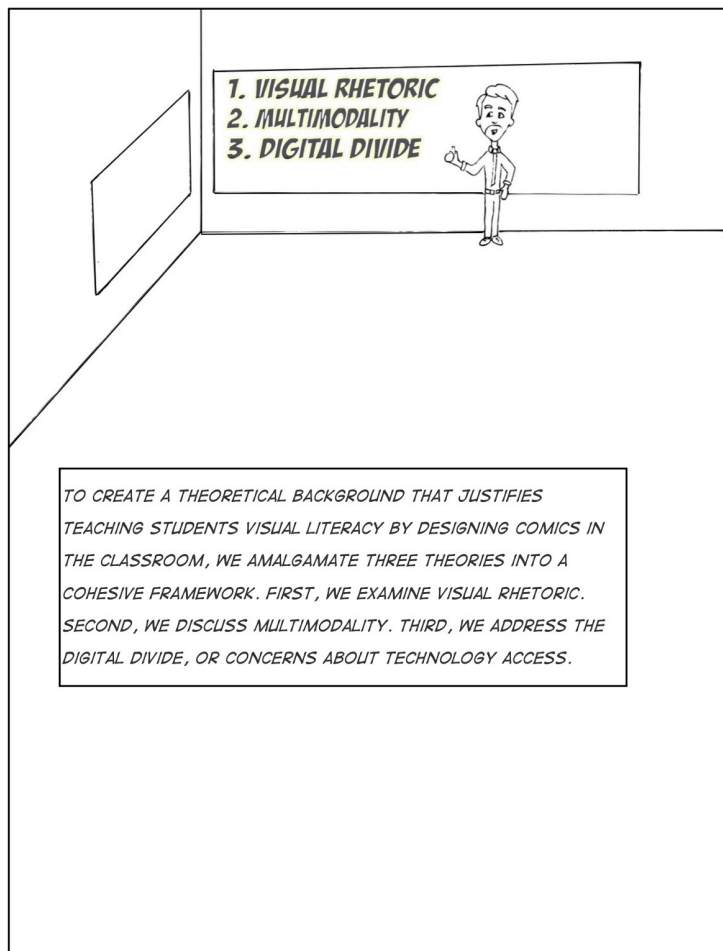


Figure 19.

STEPHEN BERNHARDT

EVA BRUMBERGER

PETER DALLOW

CAROLYN HANDA

JAMES ELKINS

KATHRYN NORTHCUT

MANY, MANY MORE

VISUAL RHETORIC IS COMPLEX, AND AS JO ALLEN MENTIONS WITH DEFINING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION, GIVING IT A FIXED DEFINITION MIGHT HURT THE MOVEMENT (75). STILL, RELYING ON VARIOUS SCHOLARS, WHOSE NAMES I AM WRITING HERE, WE CAN FIND AT LEAST THREE UNIFYING PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS TO THE SCHOLARSHIP: USING GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY DESIGN ELEMENTS, DEMYSTIFYING DESIGN, AND USING TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL.

Figure 20.

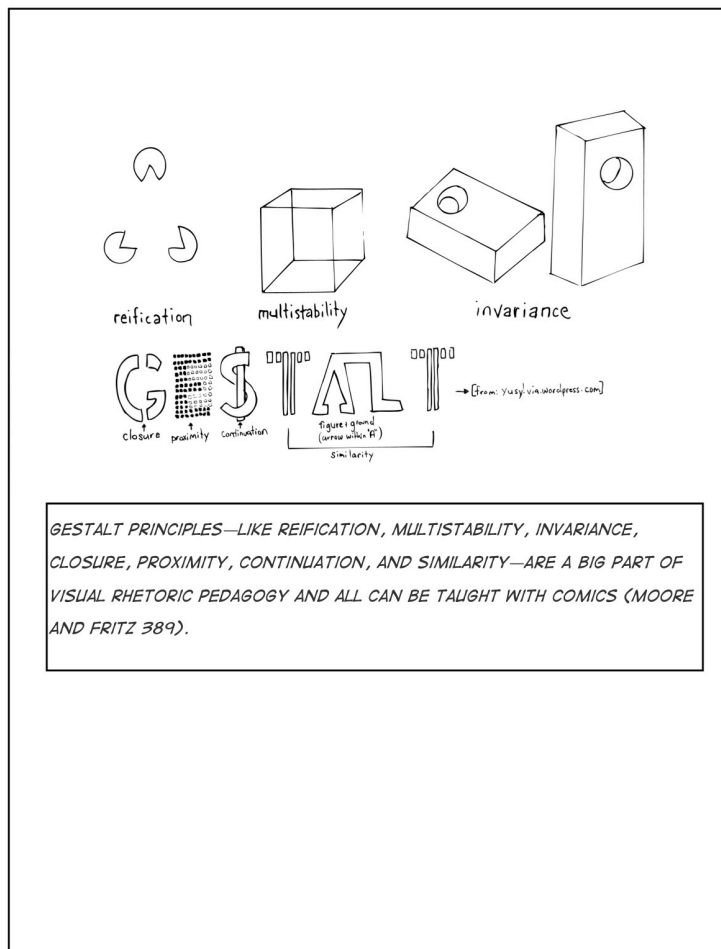
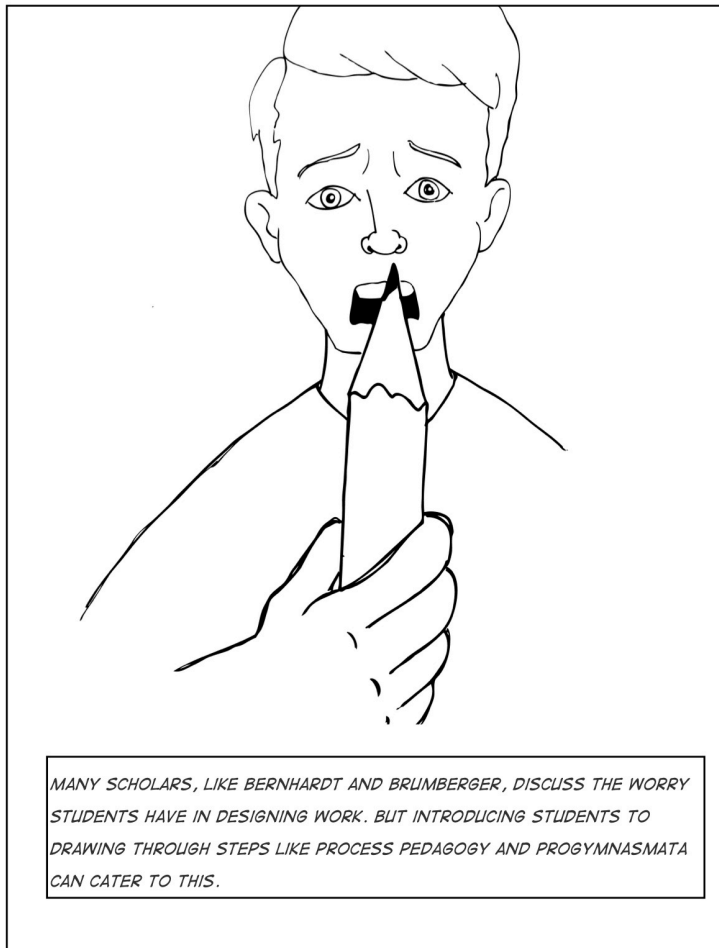


Figure 21.



MANY SCHOLARS, LIKE BERNHARDT AND BRUMBERGER, DISCUSS THE WORRY STUDENTS HAVE IN DESIGNING WORK. BUT INTRODUCING STUDENTS TO DRAWING THROUGH STEPS LIKE PROCESS PEDAGOGY AND PROGYMNASMATA CAN CATER TO THIS.

Figure 22.

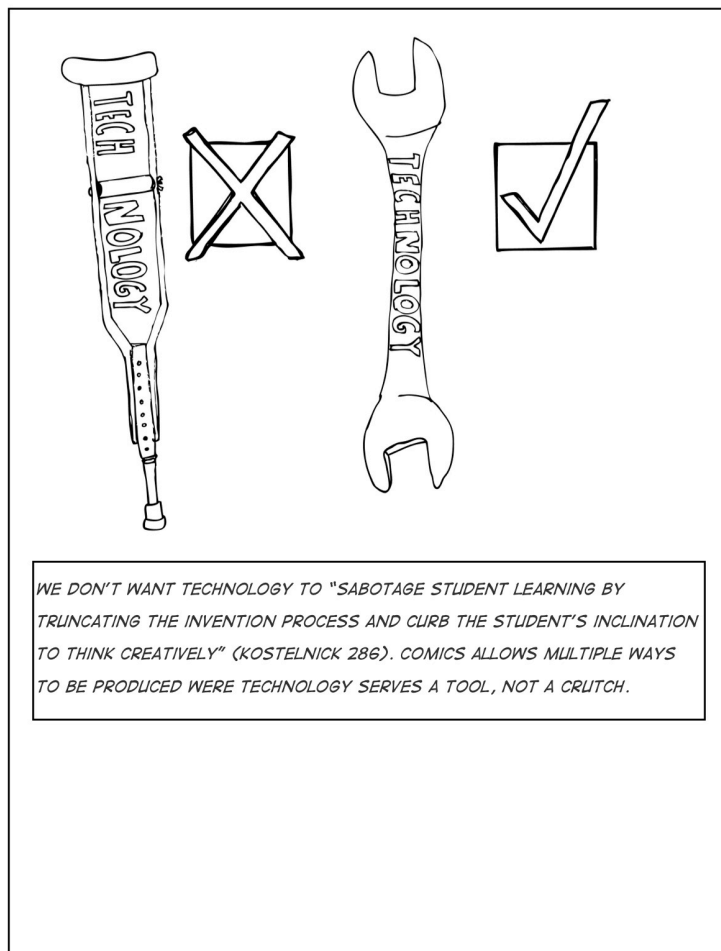
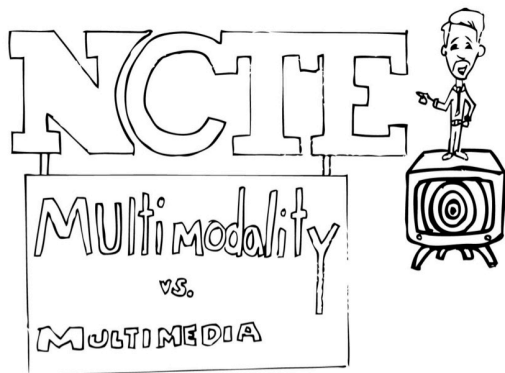


Figure 23.



THE NCTE HAS URGED ALL WRITING INSTRUCTORS TO EMBRACE MULTIPLE MODES OF TEACHING WRITING. FOR THIS, IT'S USEFUL TO TURN TO MULTIMODAL SCHOLARSHIP. CLAIRE LAUER ARGUES THAT THE CONCEPT OF MULTIMODALITY HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE AT LEAST THE 1970S, BUT HASN'T ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN UNDER THAT NAME. THE NEW LONDON GROUP'S USE OF THE TERM OF MULTIMODALITY MADE COMPOSING WITH MULTIPLE MODES BECOME MORE POPULAR IN THE 1990S AND GAVE IT AN ACADEMIC TITLE (39). LAUER DID A SURVEY OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION SCHOLARSHIP AND FOUND THE PHRASE MULTIMODALITY USED ONLY THRICE WHILE MULTIMEDIA WAS USED 243 TIMES (32).

Figure 24.

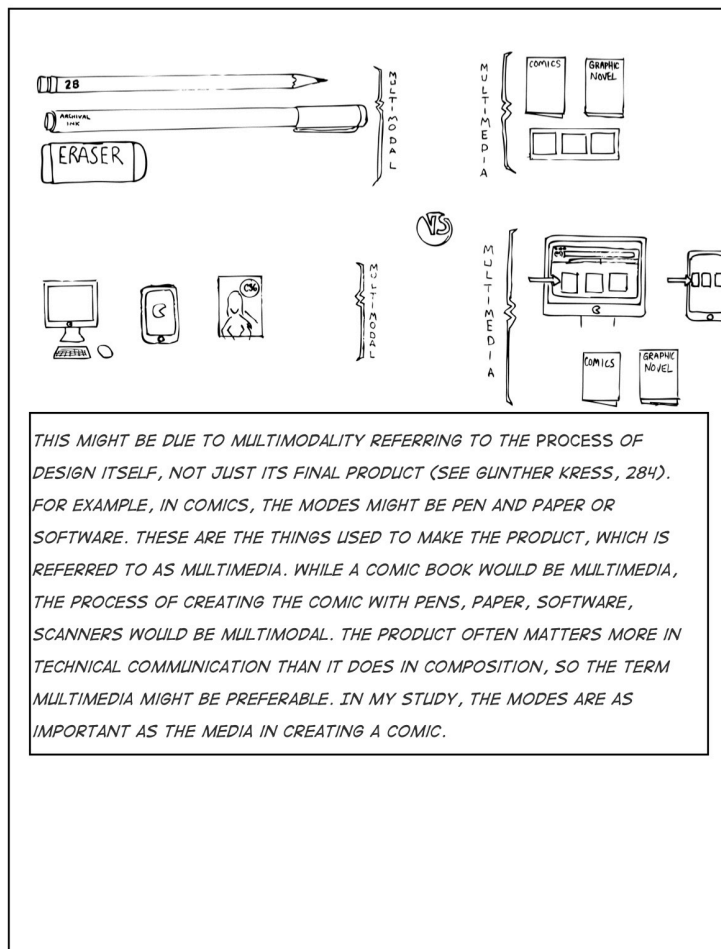
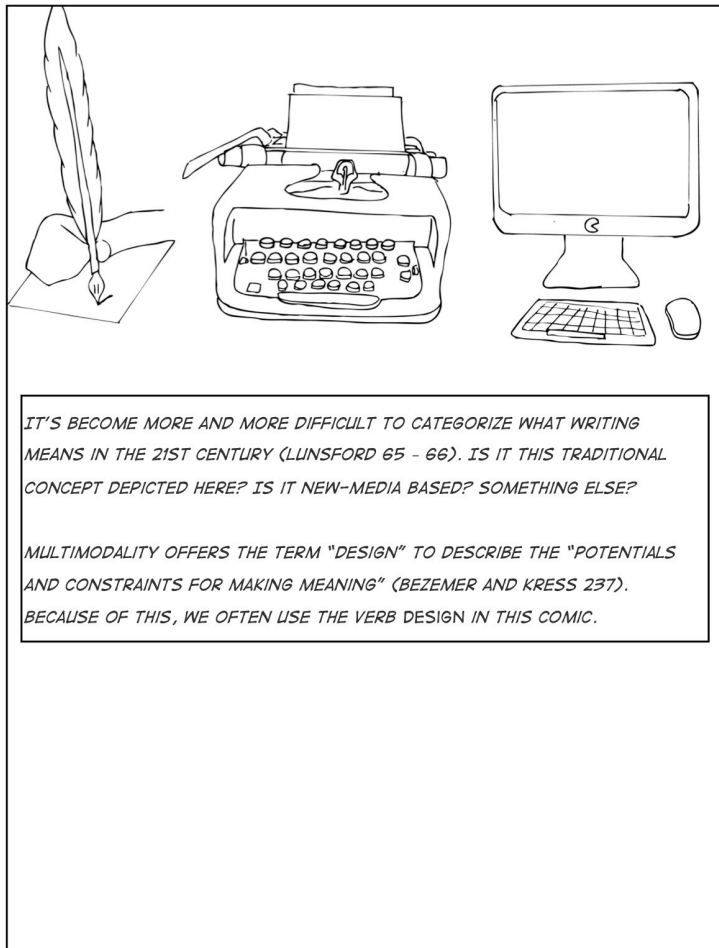


Figure 25.



IT'S BECOME MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO CATEGORIZE WHAT WRITING MEANS IN THE 21ST CENTURY (LUNSFORD 65 - 66). IS IT THIS TRADITIONAL CONCEPT DEPICTED HERE? IS IT NEW-MEDIA BASED? SOMETHING ELSE?

MULTIMODALITY OFFERS THE TERM "DESIGN" TO DESCRIBE THE "POTENTIALS AND CONSTRAINTS FOR MAKING MEANING" (BEZEMER AND KRESS 237). BECAUSE OF THIS, WE OFTEN USE THE VERB DESIGN IN THIS COMIC.

Figure 26.

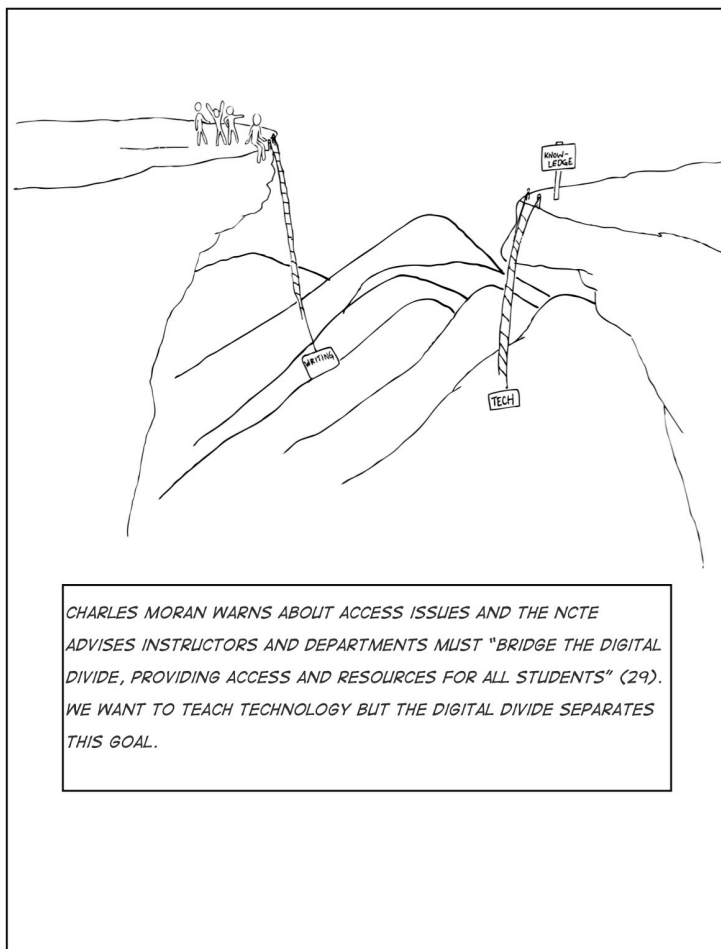


Figure 27.

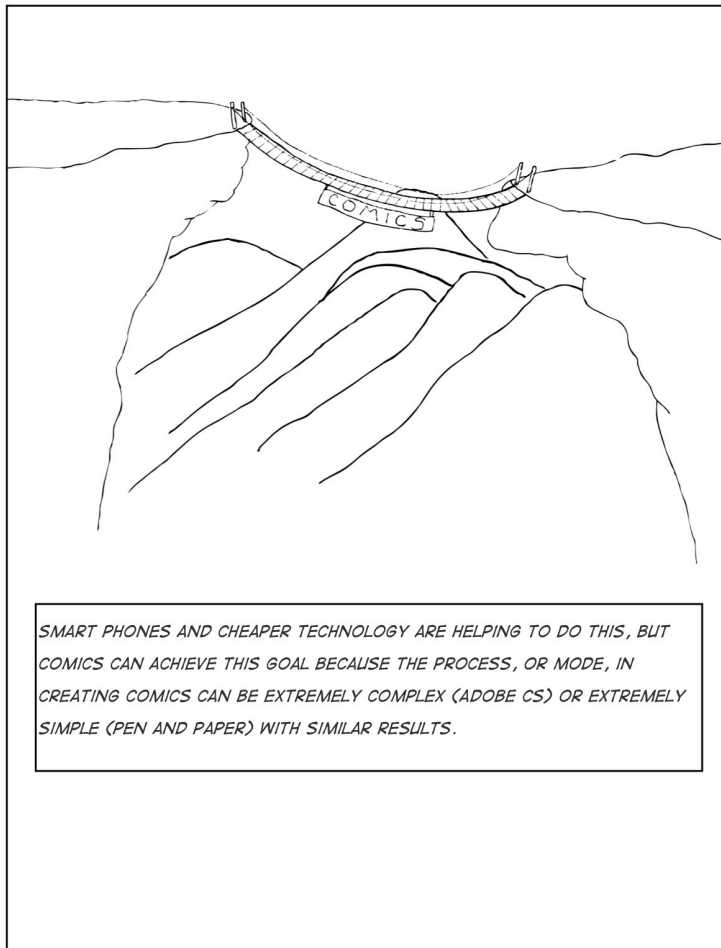


Figure 28.

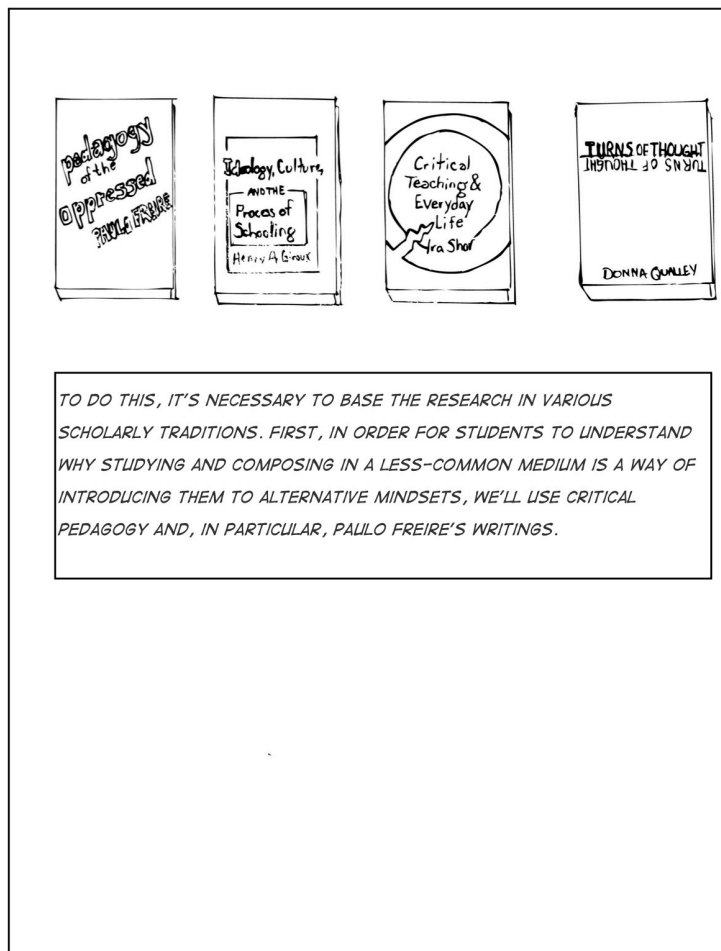
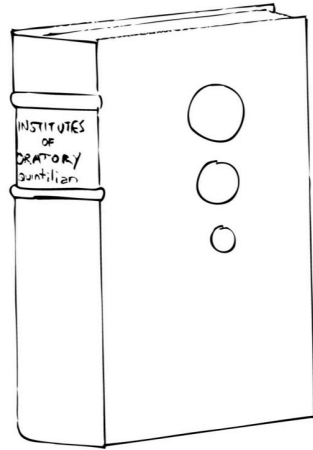
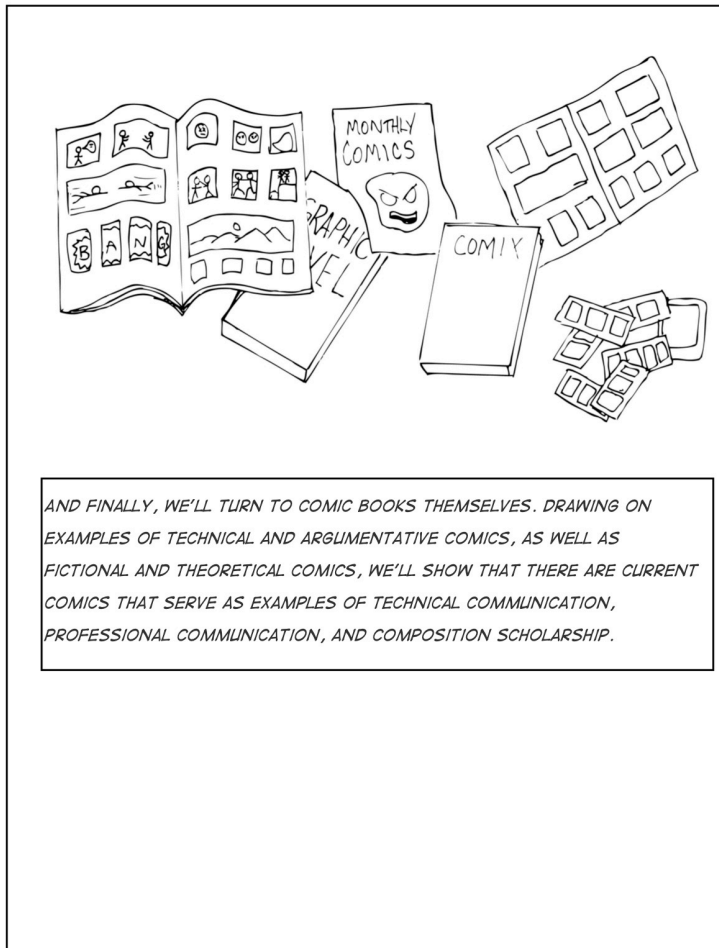


Figure 29.



SECOND, IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THAT THE PEDAGOGY OF TEACHING COMICS CAN BE BASED IN ANCIENT RHETORIC AND FIRMLY ESTABLISHED SCHOLARSHIP, WE'LL RELY ON THE TEACHING METHODS OF QUINTILIAN AND THE PRACTICE OF PROGYMNASMATA.

Figure 30.



AND FINALLY, WE'LL TURN TO COMIC BOOKS THEMSELVES. DRAWING ON
EXAMPLES OF TECHNICAL AND ARGUMENTATIVE COMICS, AS WELL AS
FICTIONAL AND THEORETICAL COMICS, WE'LL SHOW THAT THERE ARE CURRENT
COMICS THAT SERVE AS EXAMPLES OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION,
PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION, AND COMPOSITION SCHOLARSHIP.

Figure 31.

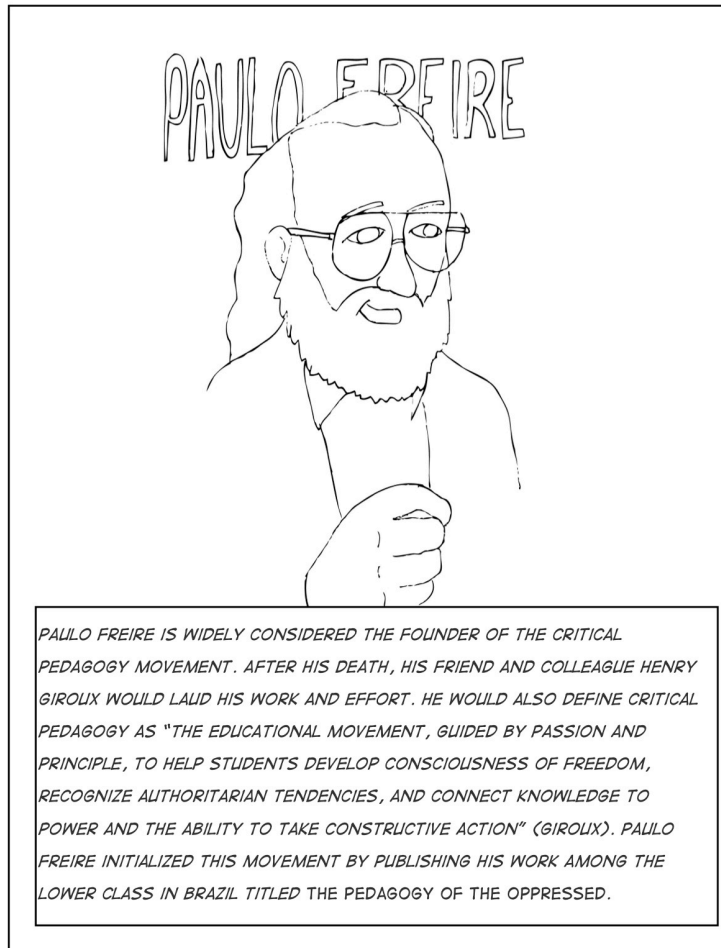


Figure 32.

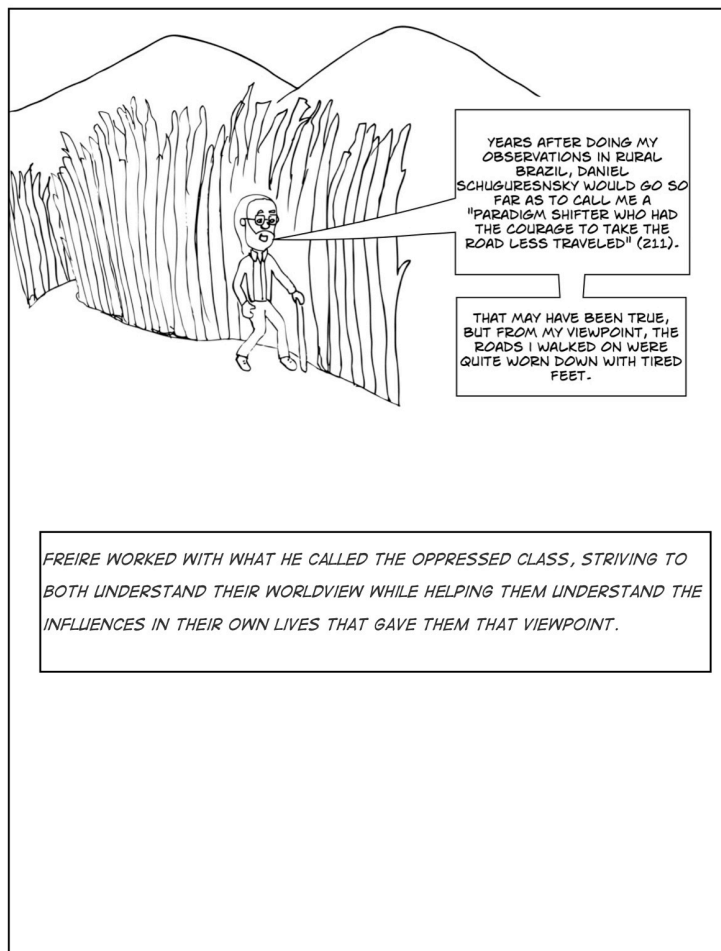


Figure 33.

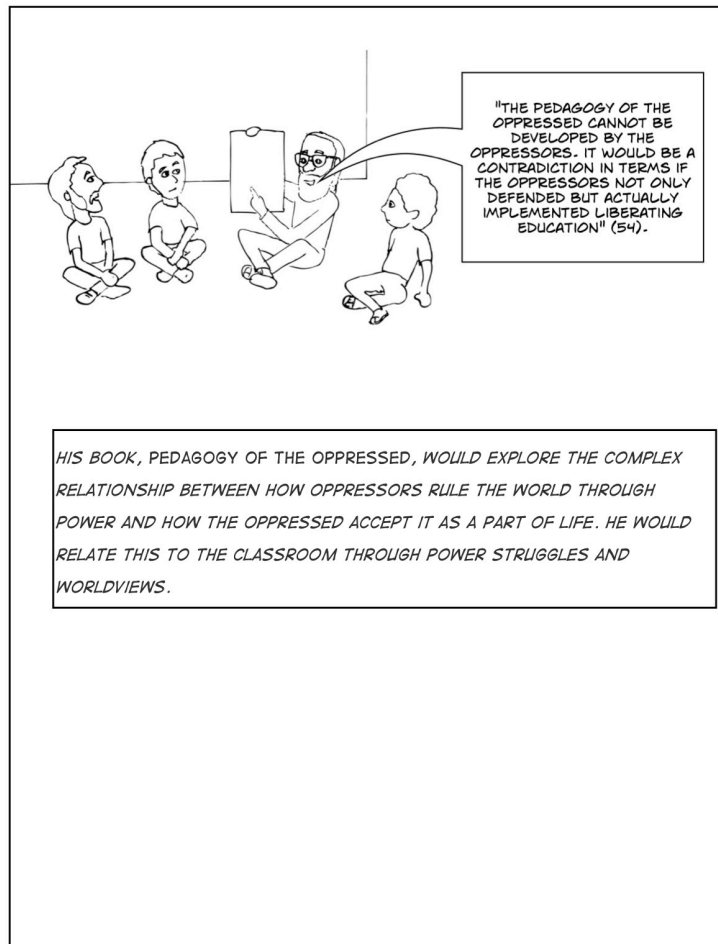


Figure 34.

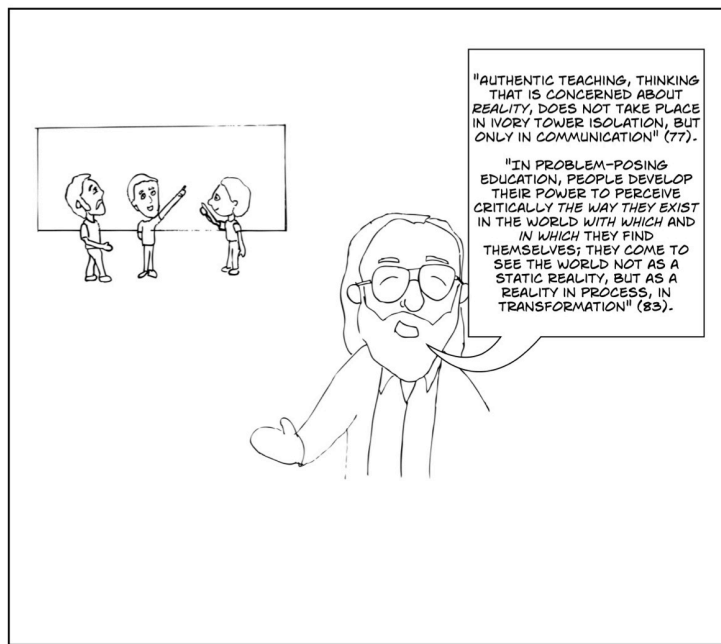


Figure 35.

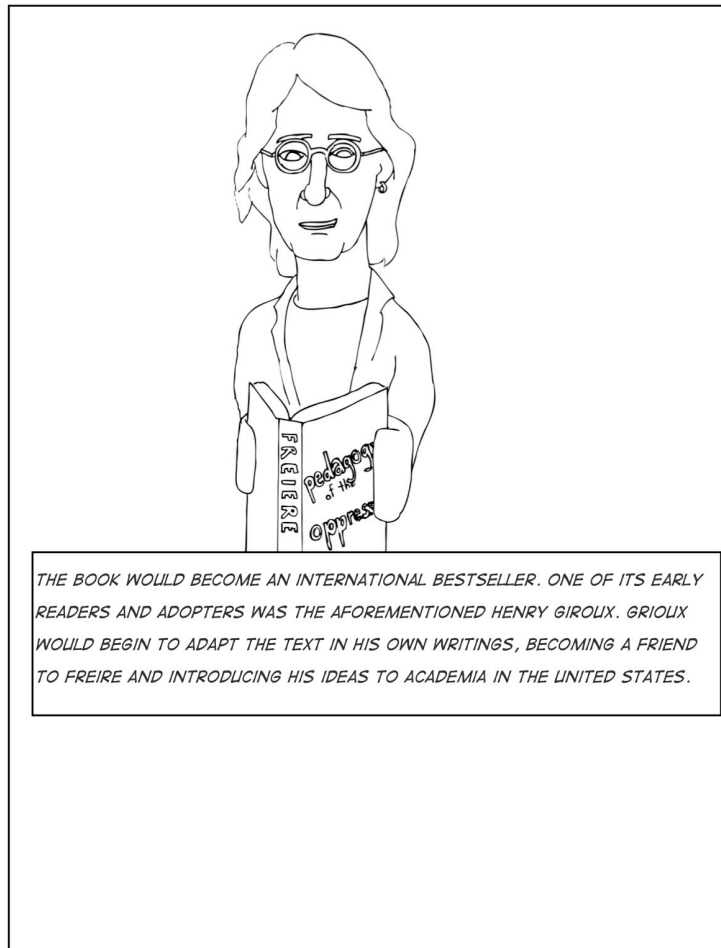


Figure 36.

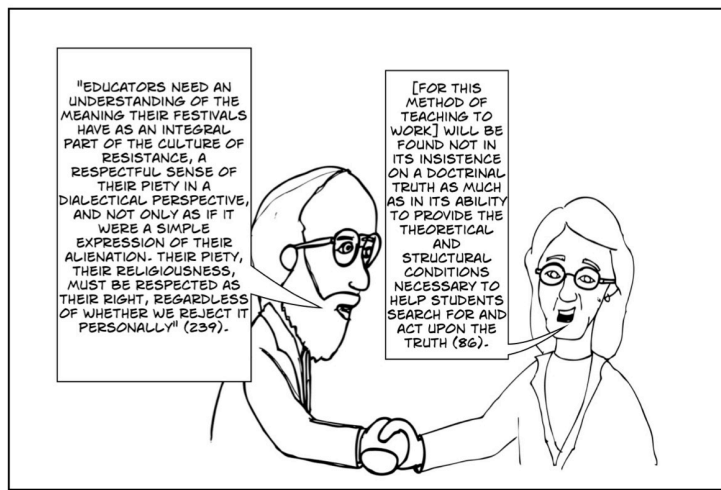


Figure 37.



Figure 38.

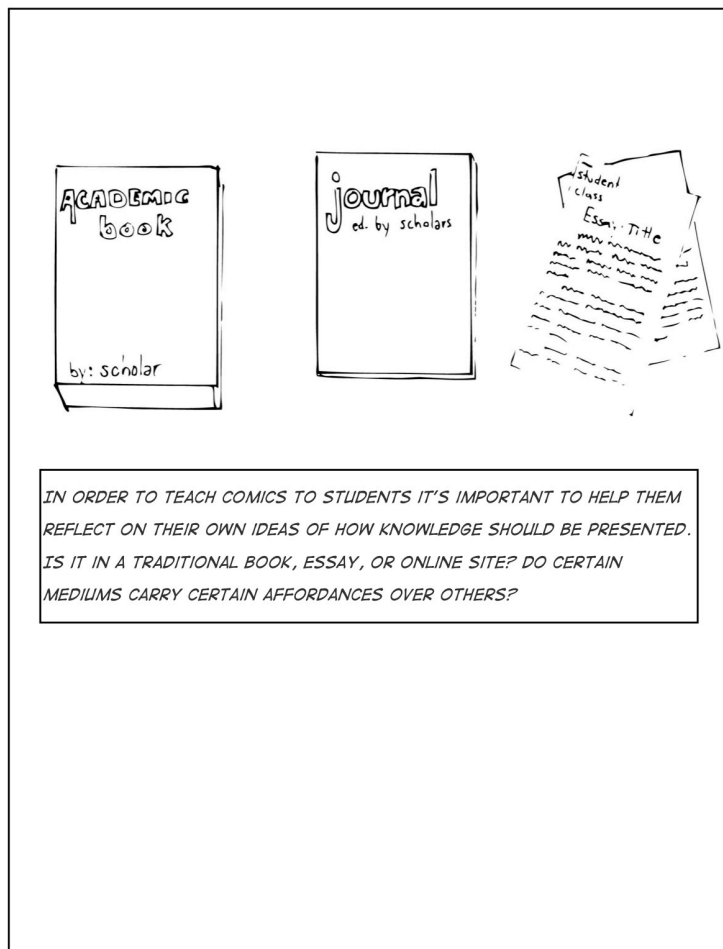


Figure 39.

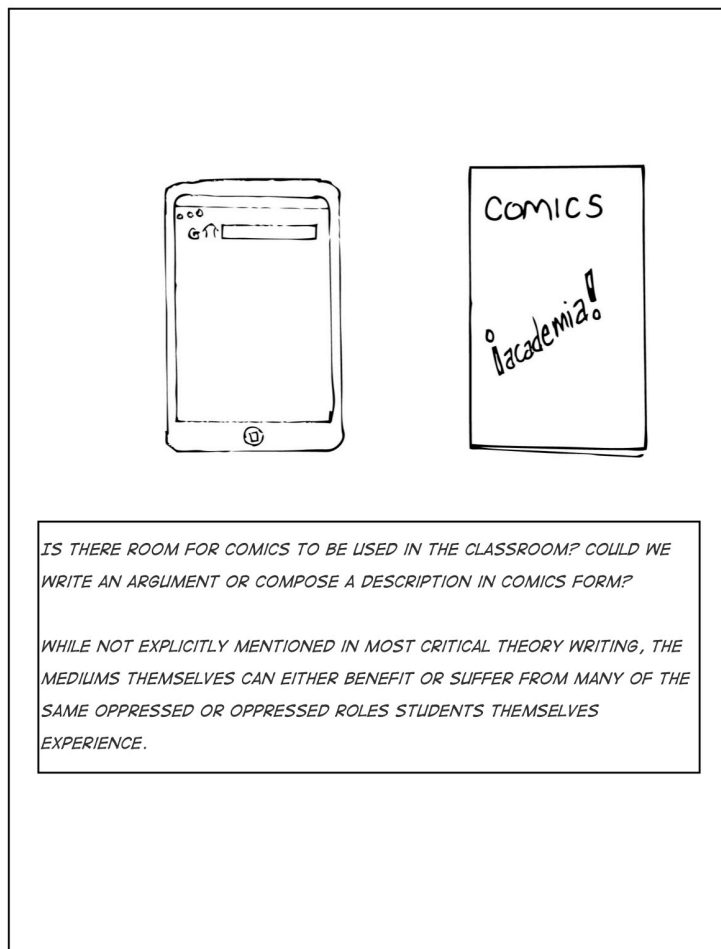


Figure 40.



MOST LIKELY, STUDENTS WILL HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF COMICS IN A VAGUE SENSE (ALTHOUGH THERE WILL PROBABLY BE A FAN OR TWO). WHEN PRESSED THEY WILL ADMIT THEIR PREJUDICES OF THE MEDIUM INCLUDE THAT THEY DON'T EVEN CONSIDER IT A MEDIUM. INSTEAD THEY'RE KIDS' BOOKS THAT ENTERTAIN EITHER BY BEING HILARIOUS OR BY BEING ABOUT SUPERHEROES.

THIS IS WHERE CRITICAL PEDAGOGY BECOMES IMPORTANT. STUDENTS SHOULD BECOME AWARE OF WHY THEY HAVE THESE PRECONCEPTIONS OF HOW MATERIALS AND KNOWLEDGE ARE PRESENTED.

Figure 41.

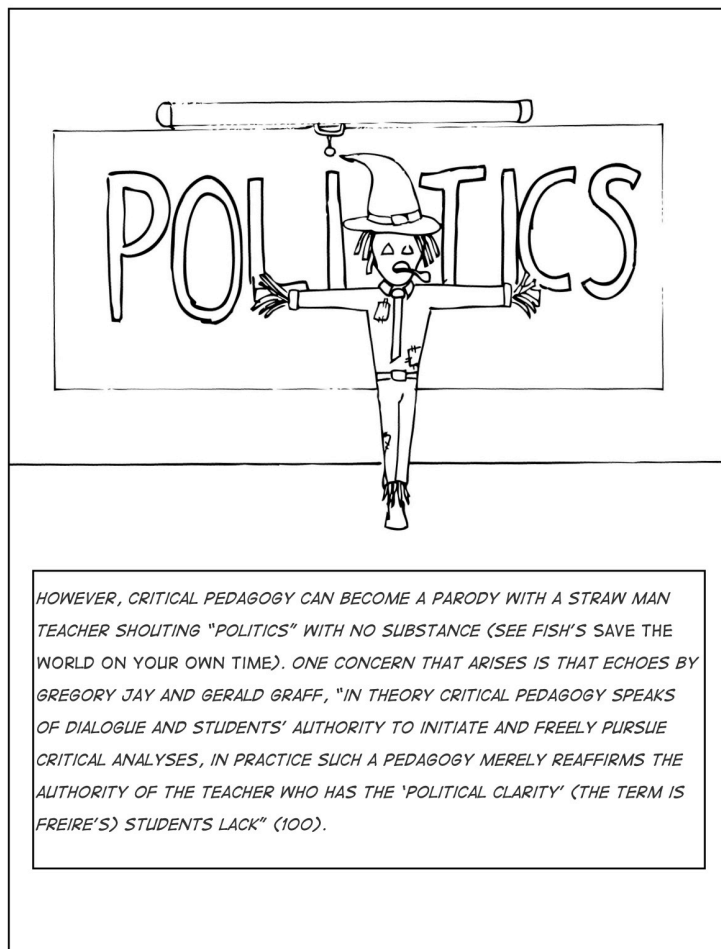


Figure 42.

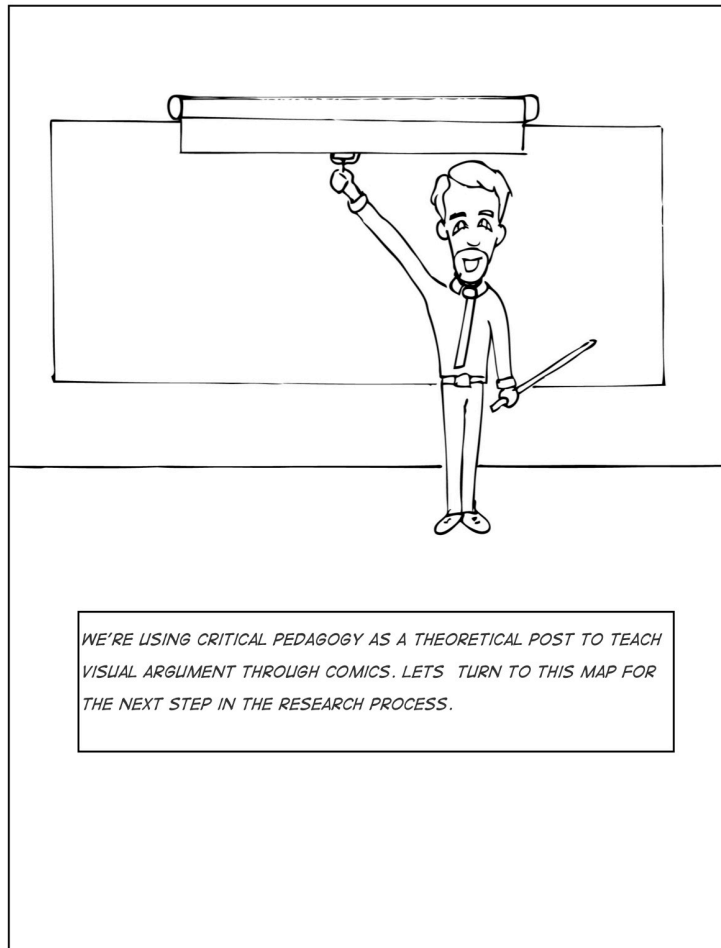


Figure 43.

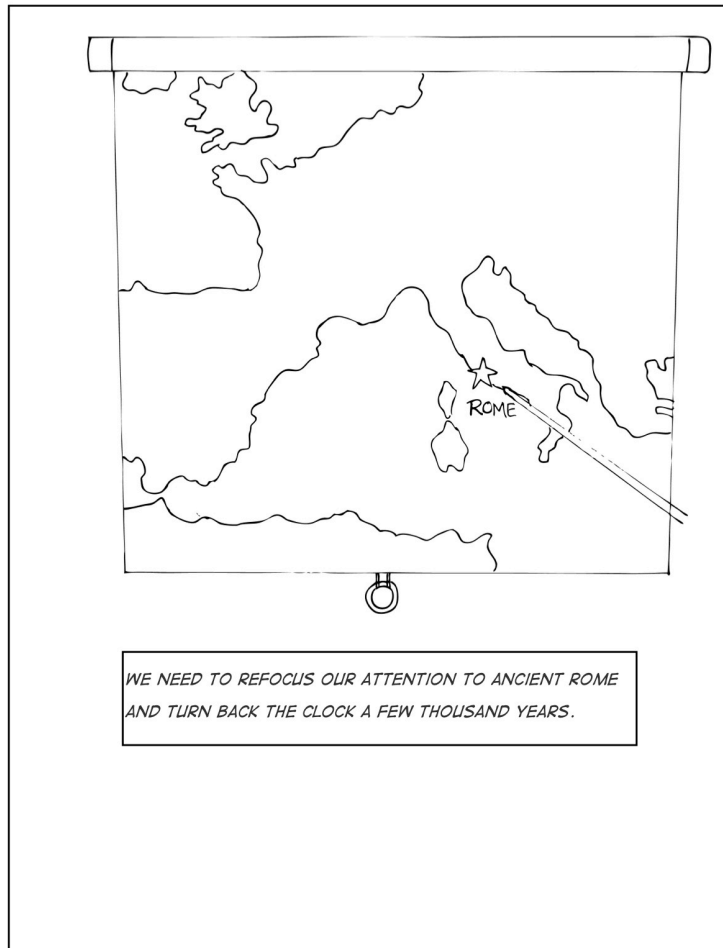


Figure 44.

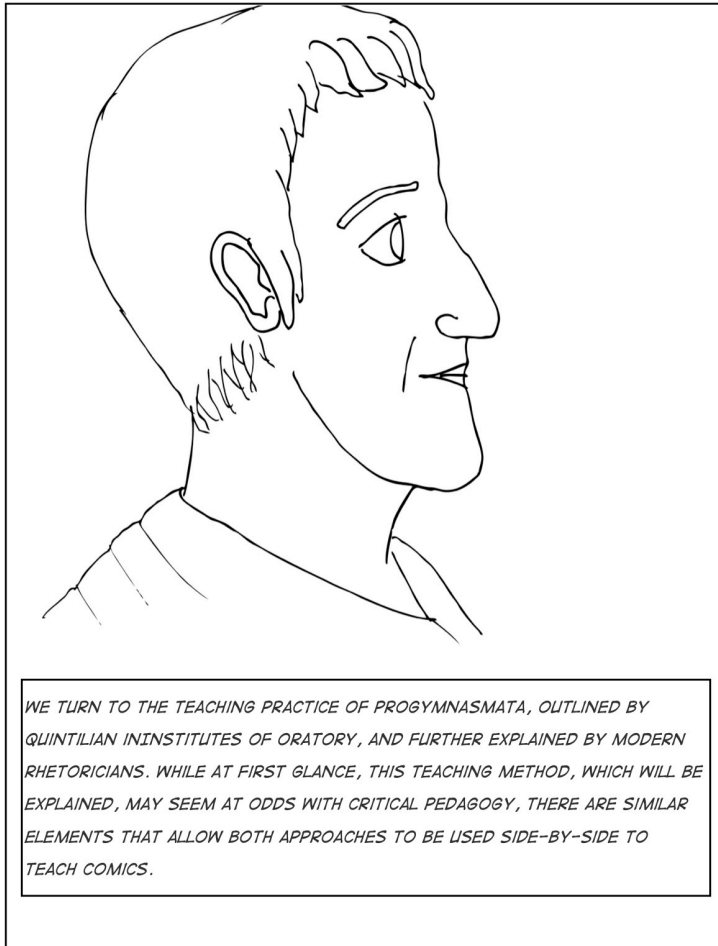


Figure 45.

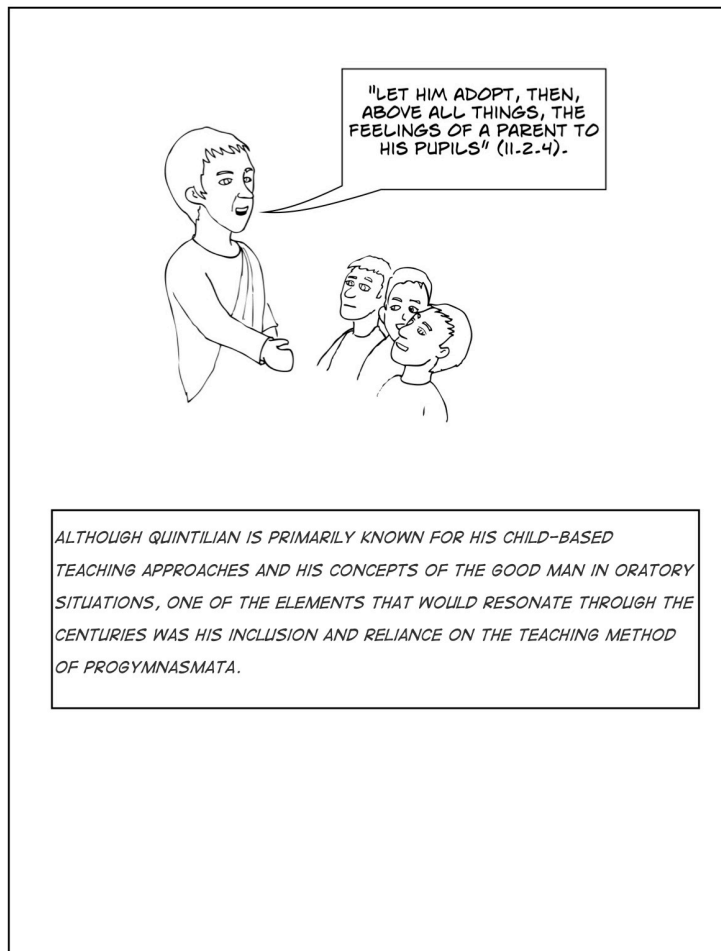


Figure 46.

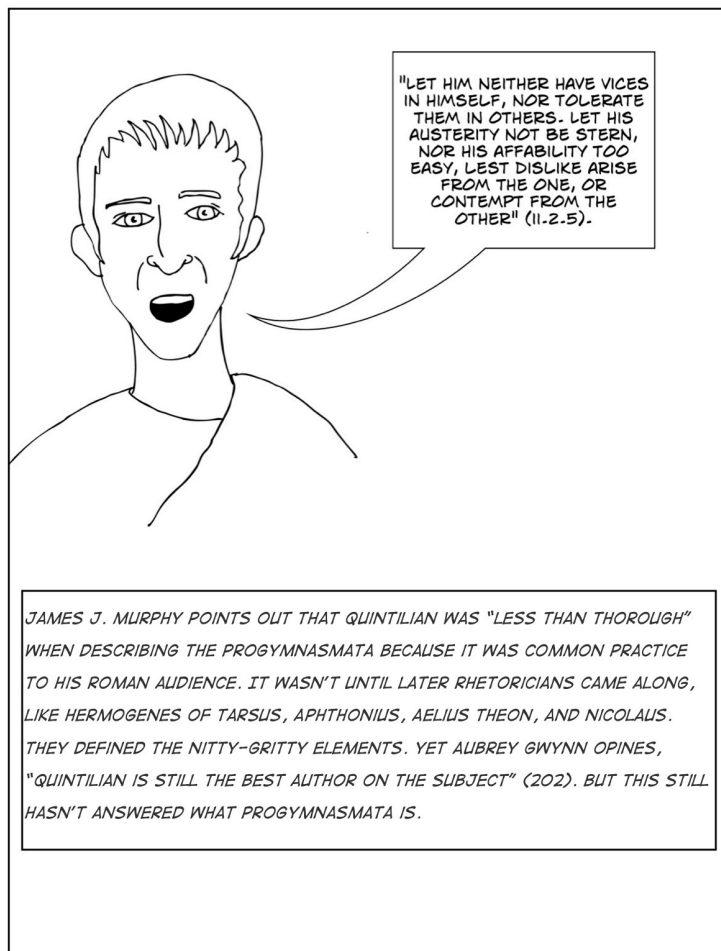


Figure 47.

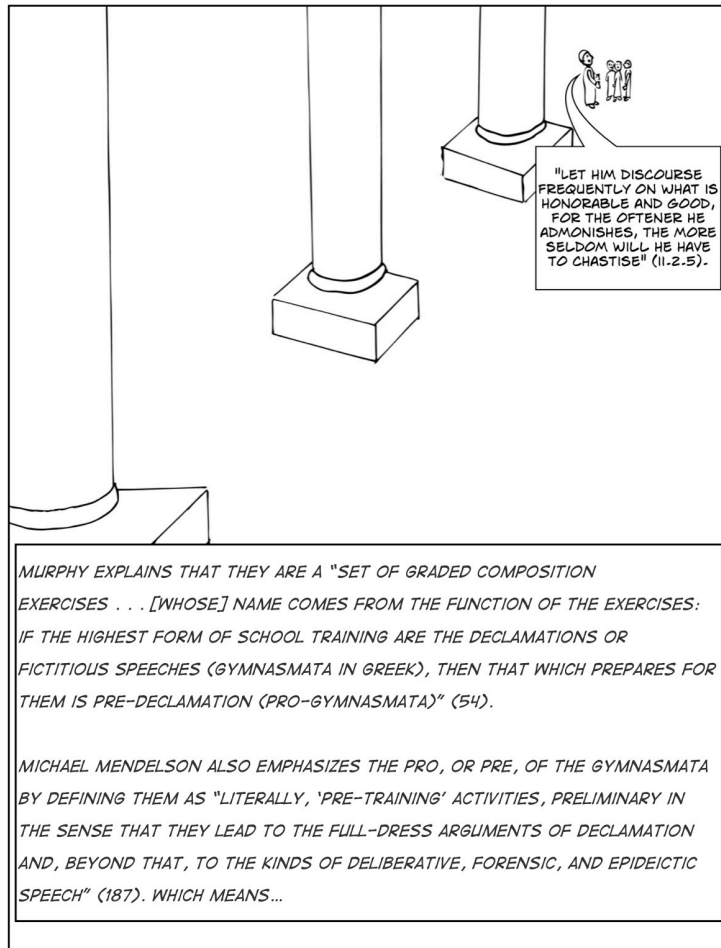


Figure 48.

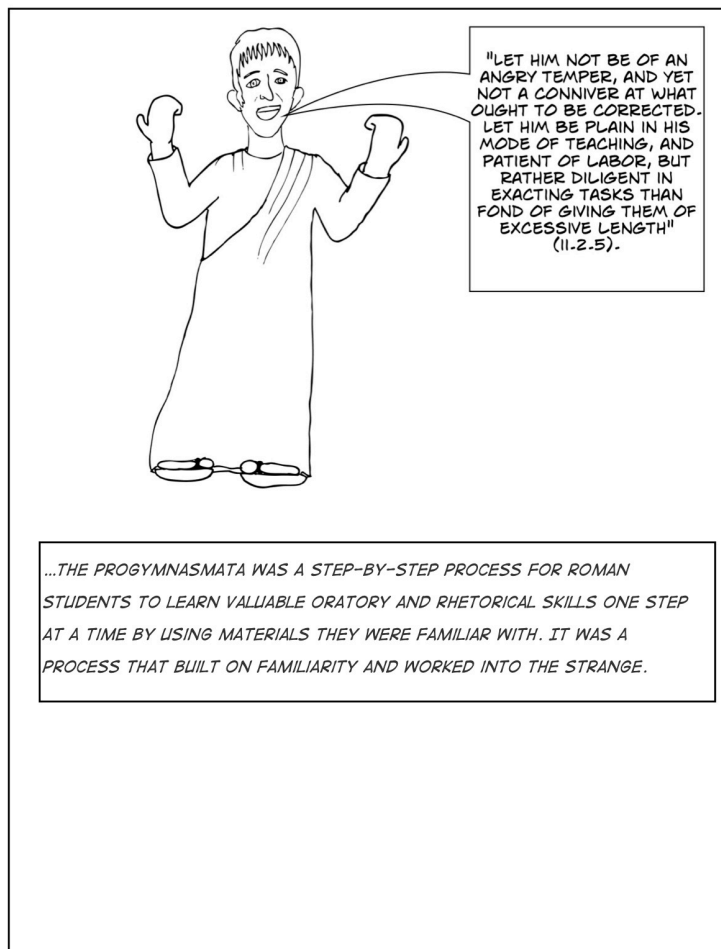


Figure 49.

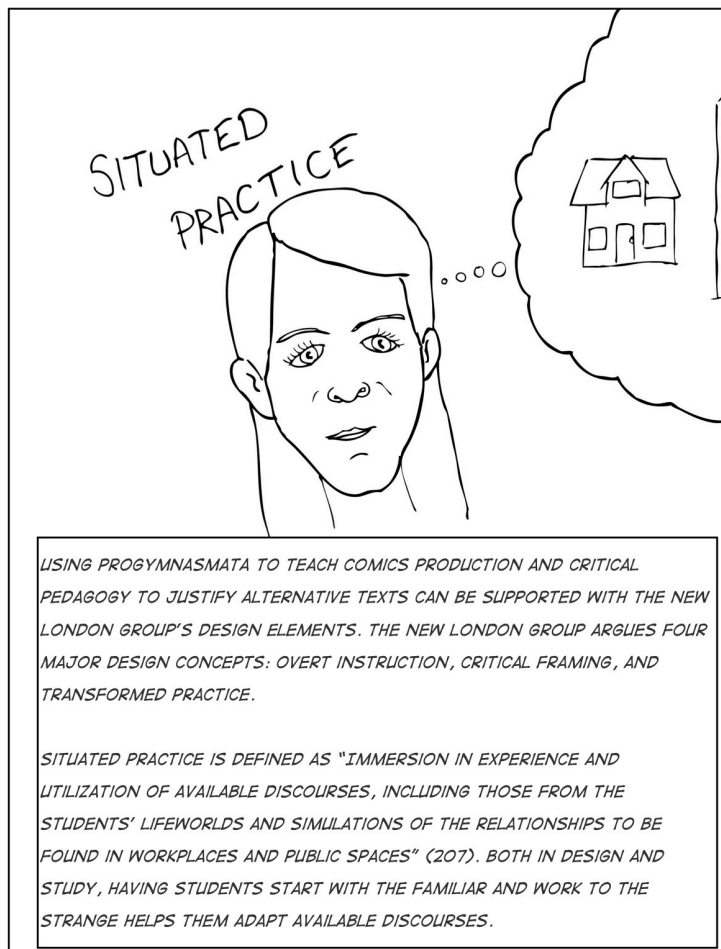


Figure 50.

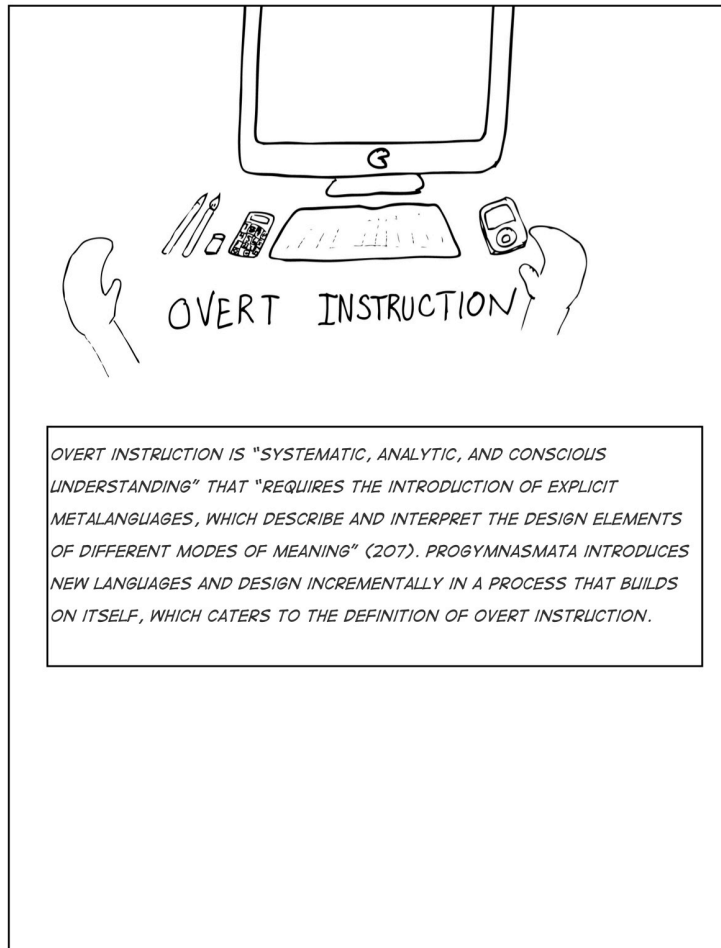


Figure 51.

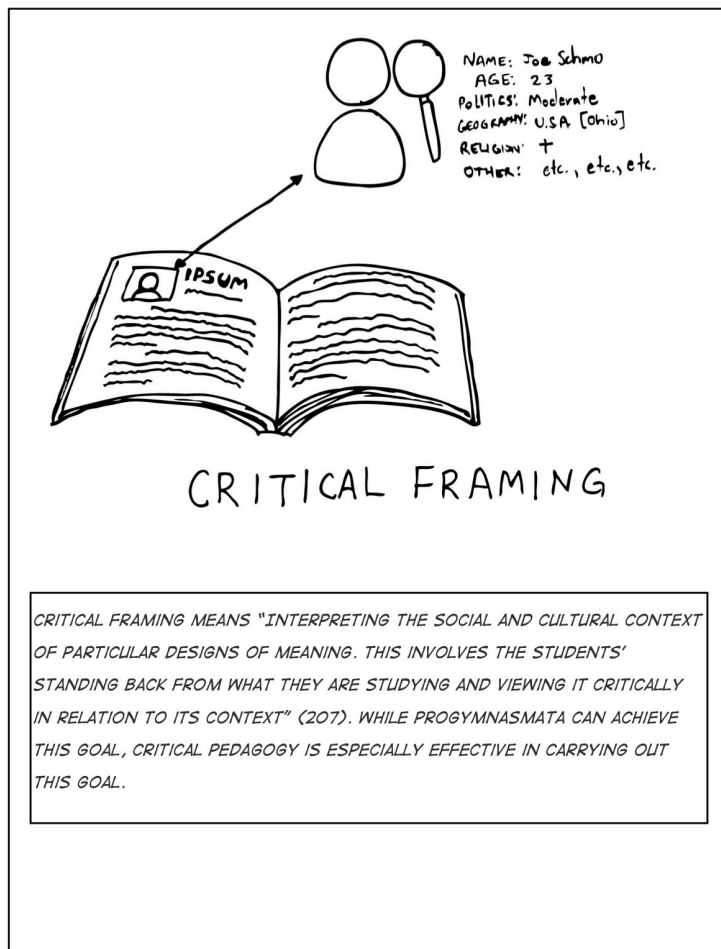


Figure 52.

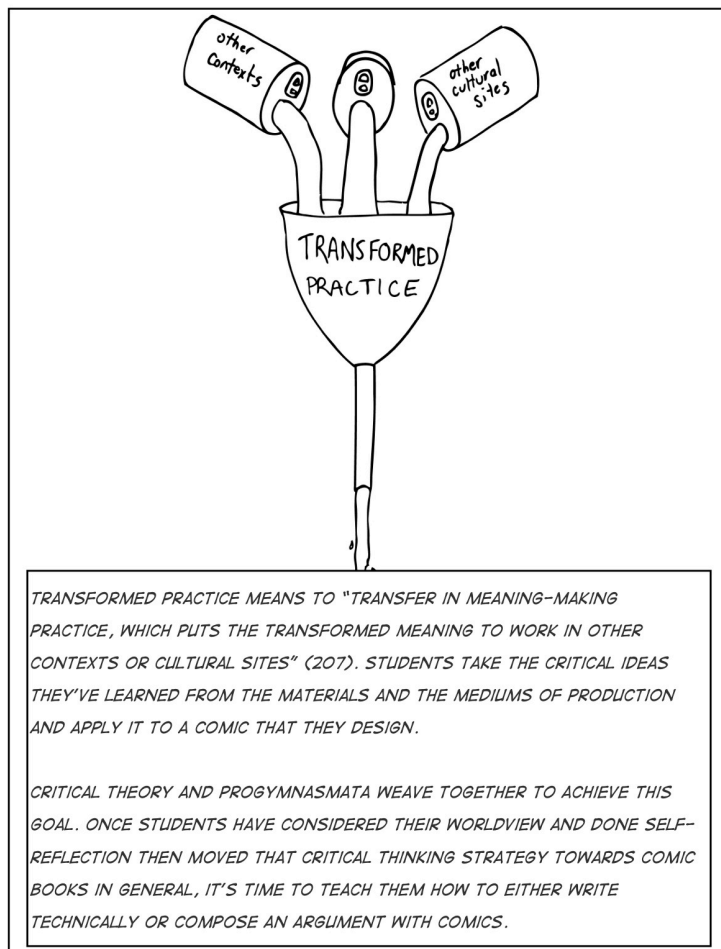


Figure 53.

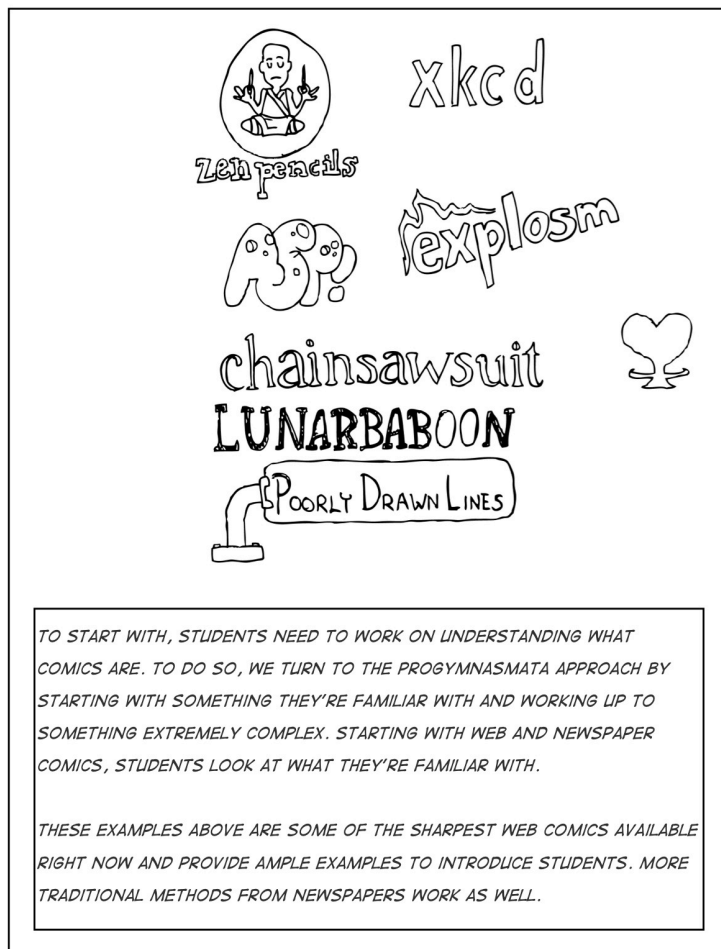


Figure 54.



THE NEXT STEP IS TO BUILD ON THE SMALLER STRIPS INTO A FULL-LENGTH, BUT FICTIONAL, COMIC STRIP. SINCE WE ARE WORKING WITH FICTIONAL STORIES, THIS IS THE LOGICAL BUILDUP. AMERICAN BORN CHINESE IS A FANTASTIC EXAMPLE OF FICTION DEALING WITH HEAVY TOPICS. THIS NATIONAL BOOK AWARD NOMINEE REALLY DRIVES HOME THE HEAVY MATTERS THAT COMICS CAN DEAL WITH. AS A BONUS, IT DEALS WITH WORLDVIEW PARADIGM SHIFTS.

Figure 55.



NEXT WE LEAP FROM FICTION TO NON-FICTION. THIS IS A CRUCIAL SWITCH FOR STUDENTS TO SEE HOW THE MEDIUM THEY'VE SEEN PRIMARILY HANDLE FICTION CAN BE USED TO PRESENT NON-FICTION TOPICS—AND HEAVY ONES AT THAT. IT'S NOT NECESSARY TO READ THE WHOLE BOOK OF UNDERSTANDING COMICS IN THIS CASE, BUT TO FOCUS ON CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO WHERE MCCLOUD DEFINES COMICS AND THEN DISSEMINATES VISUALS AND ICONS. IT HELPS STUDENTS TOWARD THE END GOAL OF ACHIEVING VISUAL ARGUMENTATIVE OR VISUAL INSTRUCTIVE MEANS.

Figure 56.

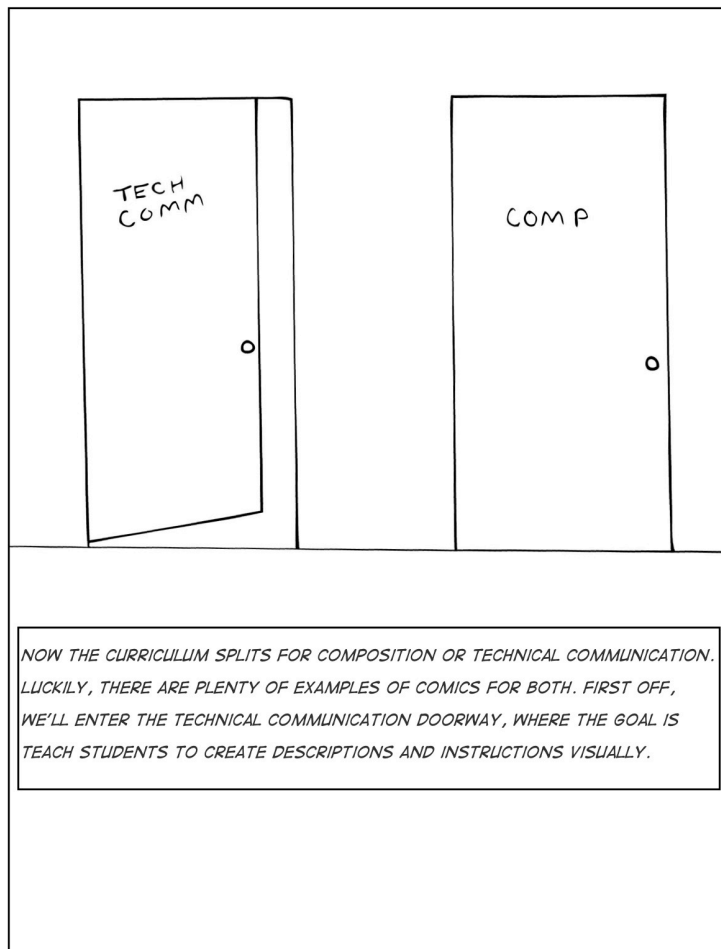
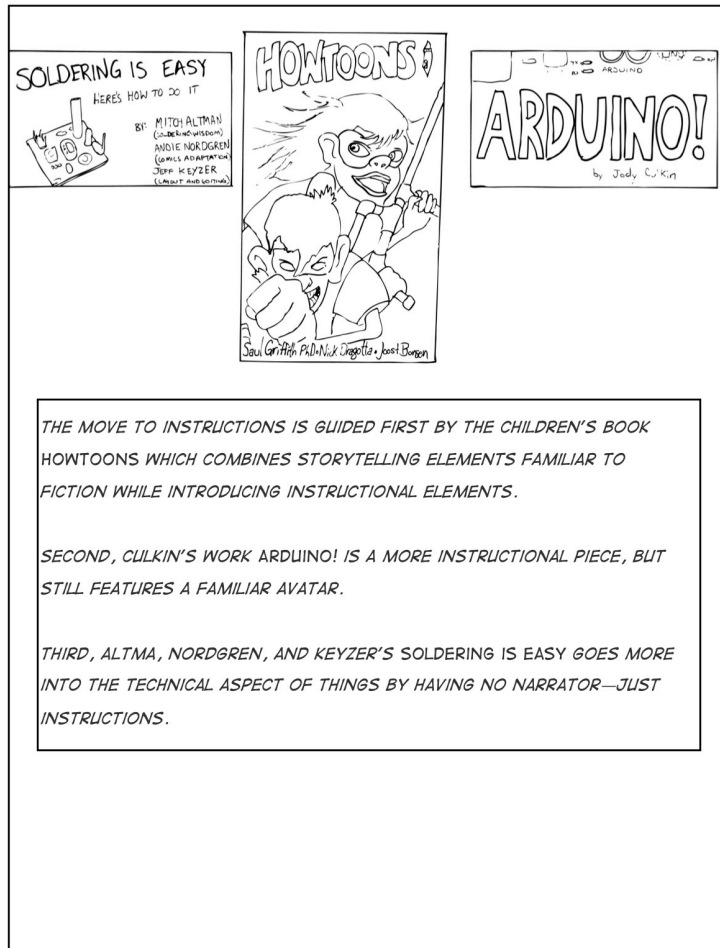


Figure 57.



THE MOVE TO INSTRUCTIONS IS GUIDED FIRST BY THE CHILDREN'S BOOK HOWTOONS WHICH COMBINES STORYTELLING ELEMENTS FAMILIAR TO FICTION WHILE INTRODUCING INSTRUCTIONAL ELEMENTS.

SECOND, CULKIN'S WORK ARDUINO! IS A MORE INSTRUCTIONAL PIECE, BUT STILL FEATURES A FAMILIAR AVATAR.

THIRD, ALTMAN, NORDGREN, AND KEYZER'S SOLDERING IS EASY GOES MORE INTO THE TECHNICAL ASPECT OF THINGS BY HAVING NO NARRATOR—JUST INSTRUCTIONS.

Figure 58.

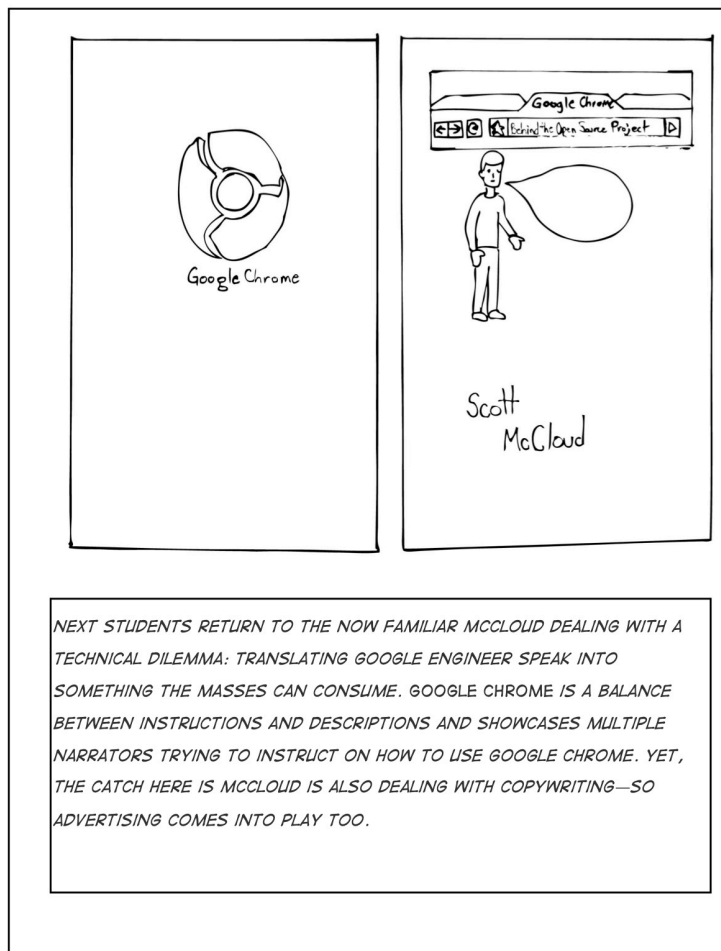
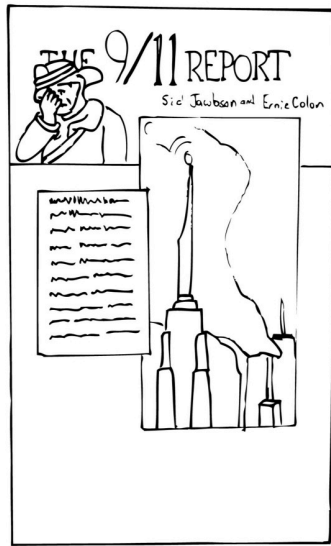


Figure 59.



THE FINAL BOOK TO GUIDE STUDENTS INTO COMPOSING TECHNICAL COMICS IS THE 9/11 COMMISSION REPORT: A GRAPHIC ADAPTATION BY SID JACOBSON AND ERNIE COLON. HERE IS A GOVERNMENT-APPROVED ADAPTATION OF A THICK, STUFFY 500+ PAGE BOOK INTO A DIGESTIBLE COMIC BOOK. STUDENTS CAN SEE THE ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF FAMILIAR GOVERNMENT FIGURES AND HOW SENSITIVE MATERIALS AND TOPICS CAN BE TASTEFULLY REPRESENTED. THIS IS A FINE EXAMPLE OF ETHICAL COMICS-BASED TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION.

Figure 60.

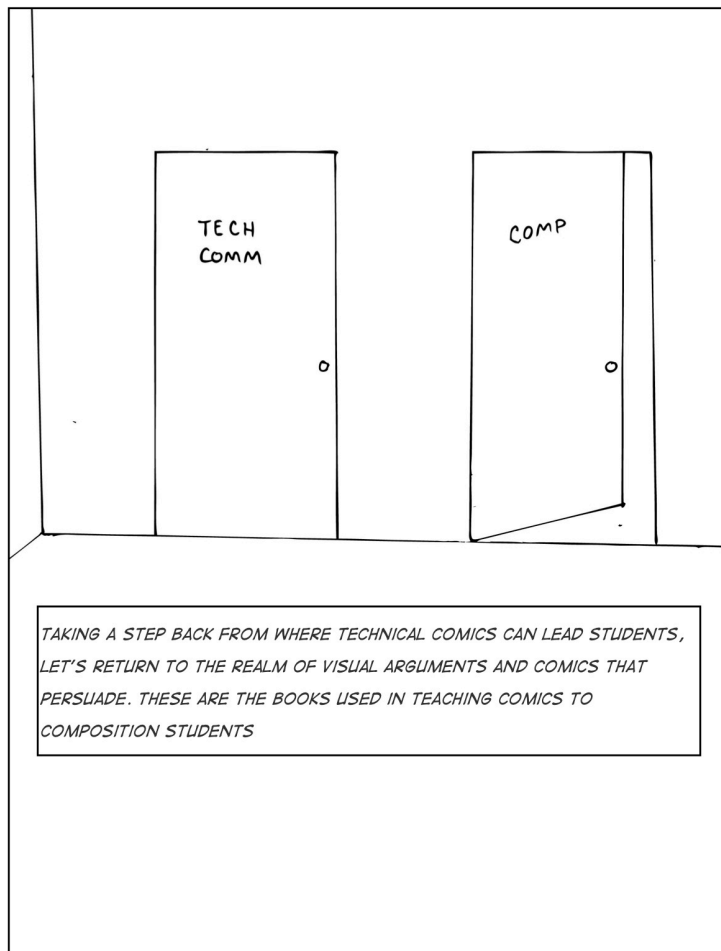
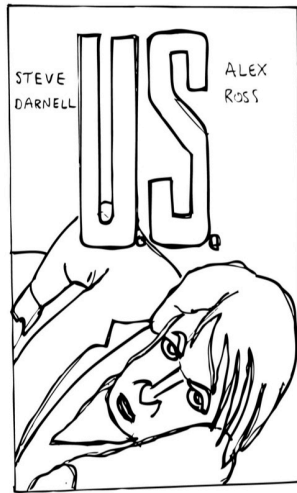


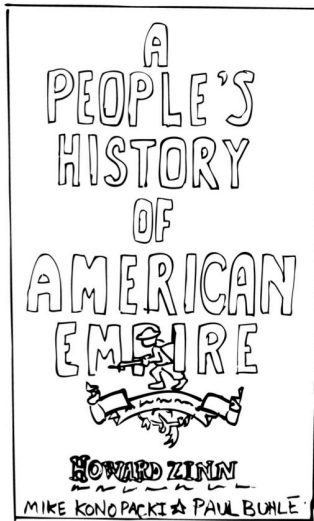
Figure 61.



THE FIRST STEP TOWARD PERSUASIVE COMICS IS A FICTIONAL COMIC, UNCLE SAM BY STEVE DARNELL AND ALES ROSS. THE JOURNEY HERE IS A FICTIONAL ONE OF LINCLE SAM WALKING THROUGH MODERN AMERICA TRYING TO SORT OUT HIS MEMORY FROM PATRIOTIC SPEECHES, ATROCITIES DONE IN WARS, AND OTHER COMPLICATED ASPECTS OF AMERICAN HISTORY.

WHILE FICTIONAL, THE BOOK ACTUALLY RELIES ON SOURCES AND THE WORK OF SCHOLARS TO PRESENT ITS TALE—WHICH IS FAR MORE PERSUASIVE THAN MOST FICTION. BECAUSE OF THIS, IT'S ALSO A BIT ON THE NOSE.

Figure 62.



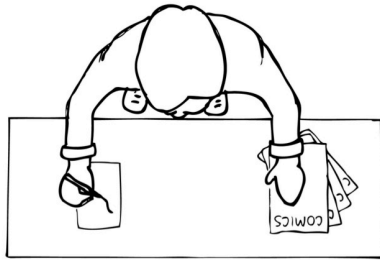
LALINCHING FROM UNCLE SAM STUDENTS WILL GET A PRIMARILY NON-FICTION
READING OF A SIMILAR THEME. NOW, INSTEAD OF THE FICTIONAL
REPRESENTATION OF ALTERNATIVE AMERICAN HISTORIES, THEY GET THE
SOURCE MATERIAL FROM HISTORIAN HOWARD ZINN. THIS IS A CHANCE TO TIE IN
CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION WHILE LEARNING ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY
THROUGH AN ARGUMENT. ZINN'S VIEW IS PRESENTED THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP
AND BIOGRAPHY. IT ALSO ALLOWS STUDENTS THE CHANCE TO SEE THE
PROBLEMATIC WAY IN WHICH CHARACTERS CAN BE REPRESENTED IN COMICS.
COMPARED TO 9/11 THE REPRESENTATION OF HISTORICAL FIGURES HERE IS
CLEARLY MANIPULATIVE AND PROBLEMATIC.

Figure 63.



HERE IS AN ARGUMENT DONE IN COMICS FORM. WITH LITTLE TO NO RELIANCE ON BIOGRAPHY OR NARRATOR STORIES, THIS BOOK PRESENTS A VISUAL ARGUMENT CONSTRUCTED THROUGH COMICS. IN HEALTH CARE REFORM JONATHAN GRUBER ARGUES FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM AND PROVIDES A CLEAN, USEFUL EXAMPLE FOR STUDENTS TO CREATE THEIR OWN ARGUMENTS.

Figure 64.



NOW THE STAGE IS SET FOR STUDENTS TO CREATE THEIR OWN VISUAL ARGUMENTS.

THEY'VE BEEN SCHOOLED IN CRITICAL PEDAGOGY TO VIEW HOW INFORMATION CAN BE PRESENTED IN PRIVILEGED FORMS THAT RELATES TO THEIR OWN LIVES AND WORLD.

THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO HOW IT CAN BE DONE THROUGH PROGYMNASMATA.

STUDENTS NOW RELY ON ONE OF THEIR WORKS FROM EARLIER IN THE SEMESTER, EITHER A TRADITIONALLY WRITTEN PERSUASIVE ESSAY OR A TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OR INSTRUCTION. THEY'RE GOING TO REMEDIATE IT VISUALLY.

Figure 65.



BEFORE THE ADAPTATION, IT'S HELPFUL TO LOOK AT JEFF RICE'S POINT OF WRITING ABOUT IMAGES NEGATES WRITING WITH IMAGES: "IN MUCH OF TODAY'S PEDAGOGY, THE PREFERENCE IS FOR WRITING ABOUT IMAGES, NOT WITH IMAGES" RICE RELATES THIS PROBLEM TO COMICS SPECIFICALLY IN SAYING IF COMICS ARE MENTIONED BY TEXTBOOKS, THEY NEVER ASK STUDENTS TO PRODUCE THEM, JUST TO CRITIQUE AND ANALYZE THEM (151 - 152).

IN THE SAME WAY STUDENTS WERE INTRODUCED TO READING COMICS, THEY BEGIN CREATING THEM, STARTING WITH THEIR ORIGINAL WORK DONE EARLIER IN THE SEMESTER, TURNING IT INTO A SCRIPT, SKETCHING IDEAS, AND FINALLY CREATING THE COMIC.

Figure 66.

HOWEVER, WHEN STUDENTS BEGIN THIS PROCESS THEY USUALLY RESPOND WITH THE FOLLOWING:

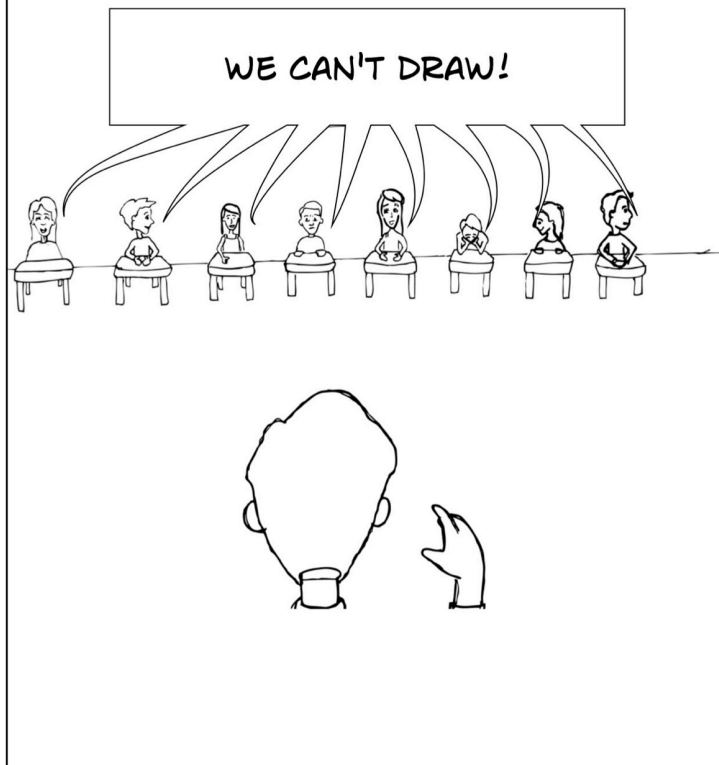


Figure 67.

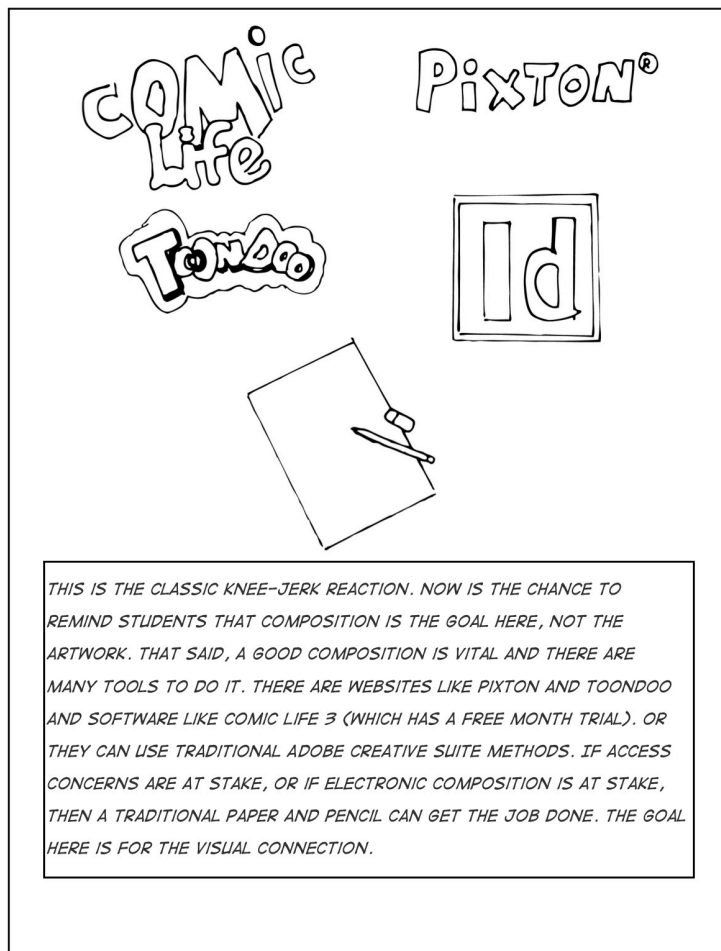


Figure 68.

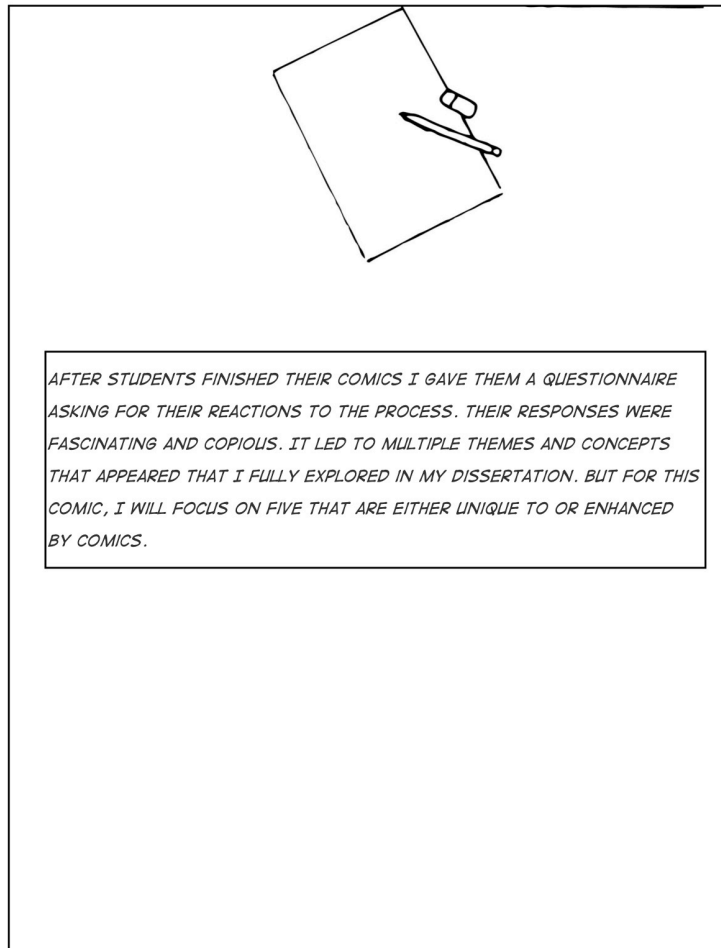


Figure 69.

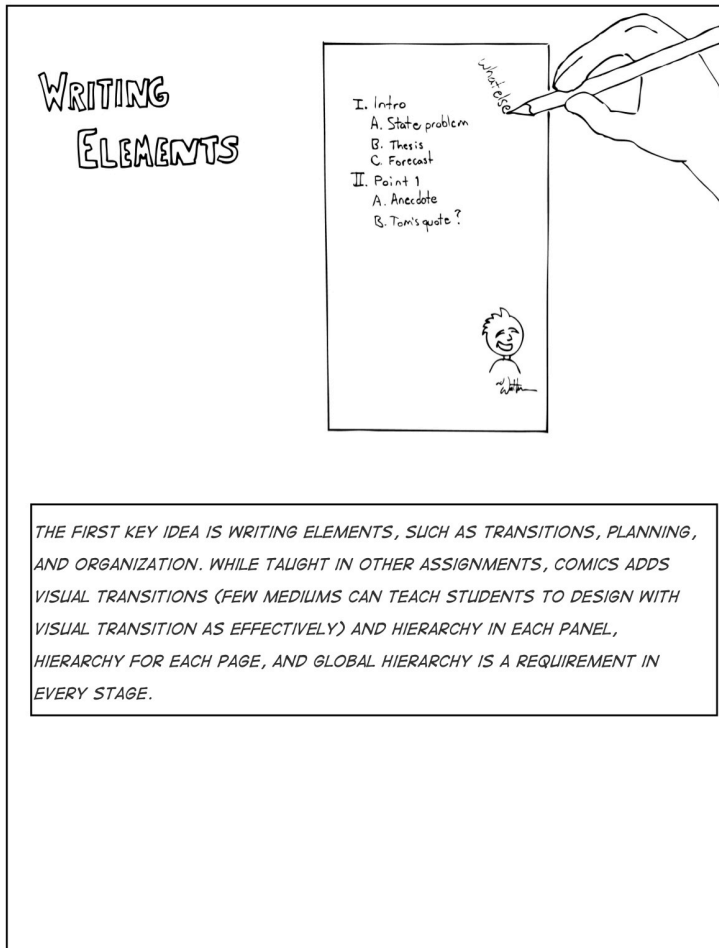
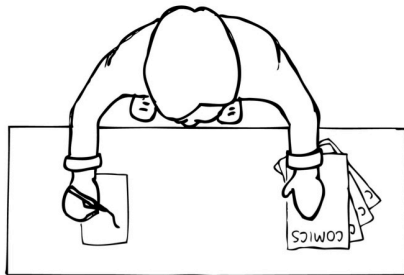


Figure 70.



THE SECOND KEY IDEA IS CORE WRITING. WHILE TAUGHT BY OTHER ASSIGNMENTS, COMICS ADDS MANDATORY CONCISE WRITING (PANELS LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF TEXT AND STUDENTS HAVE TO PLAN ON EVERY STAGE TO ADAPT THEIR MESSAGE BOTH VISUALLY AND TEXTUALLY), REMEDIATION SKILLS DUE TO MULTIPLE ADAPTATIONS OF STUDENTS' OWN WORK IN MULTIPLE STAGES (BY PARTICIPATING IN A NEW MEDIUM, STUDENTS REMEDIATE TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION GENRE), AND PLAGIARISM CURBING (DUE TO THE RARITY OF TECHNICAL COMICS AS WELL AS THE THREE-STEP PROCESS OF WRITING, IT BECOMES NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TO PLAGIARIZE).

Figure 71.

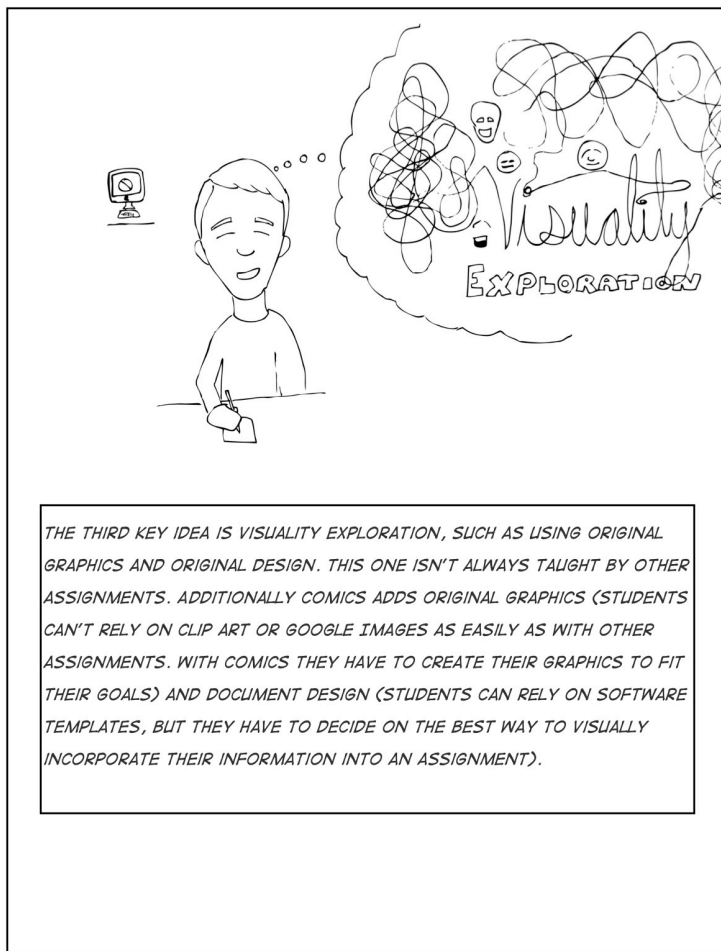


Figure 72.

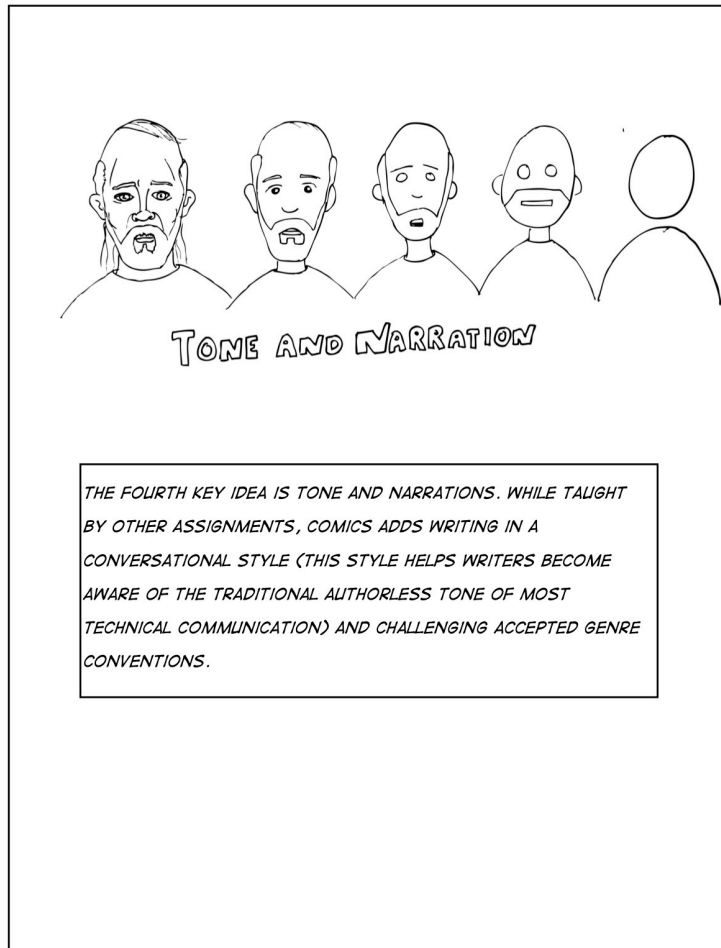


Figure 73.

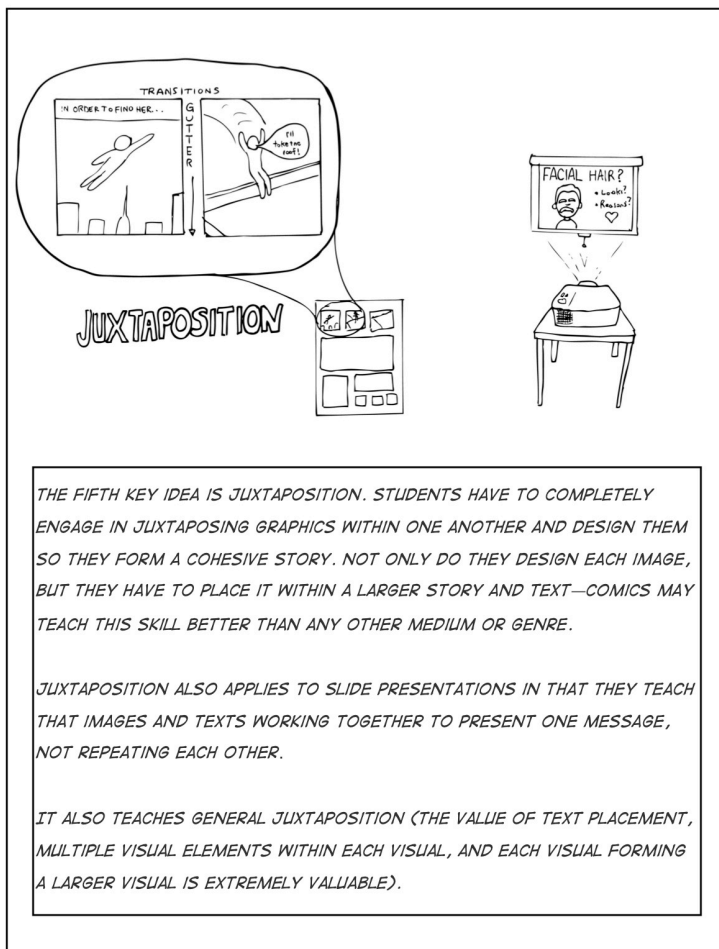


Figure 74.

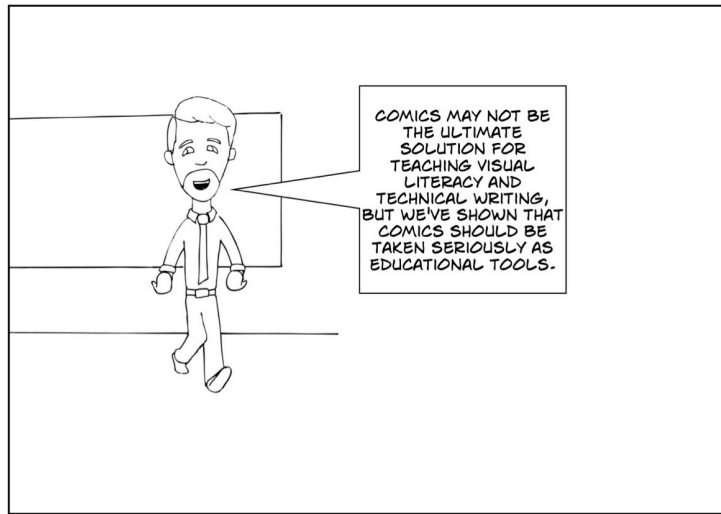


Figure 75.

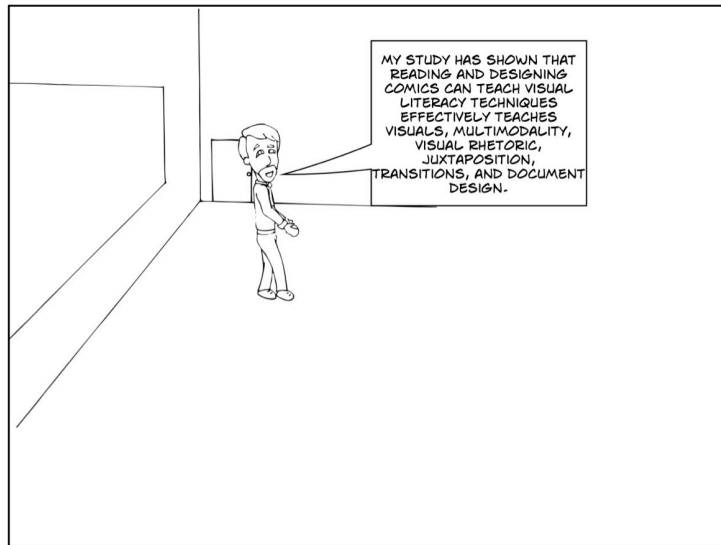


Figure 76.

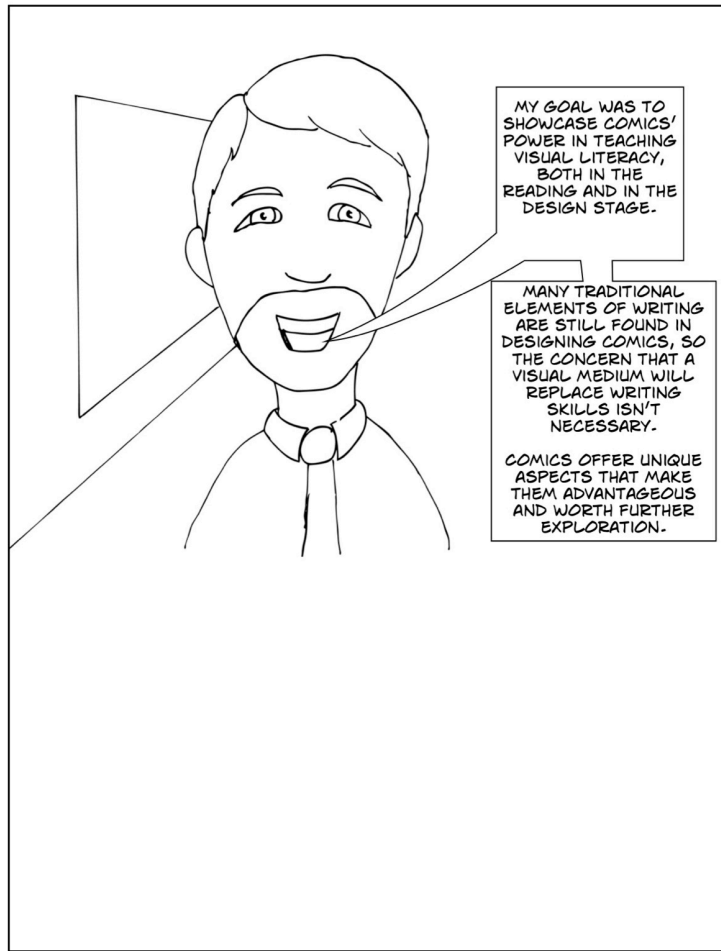


Figure 77.

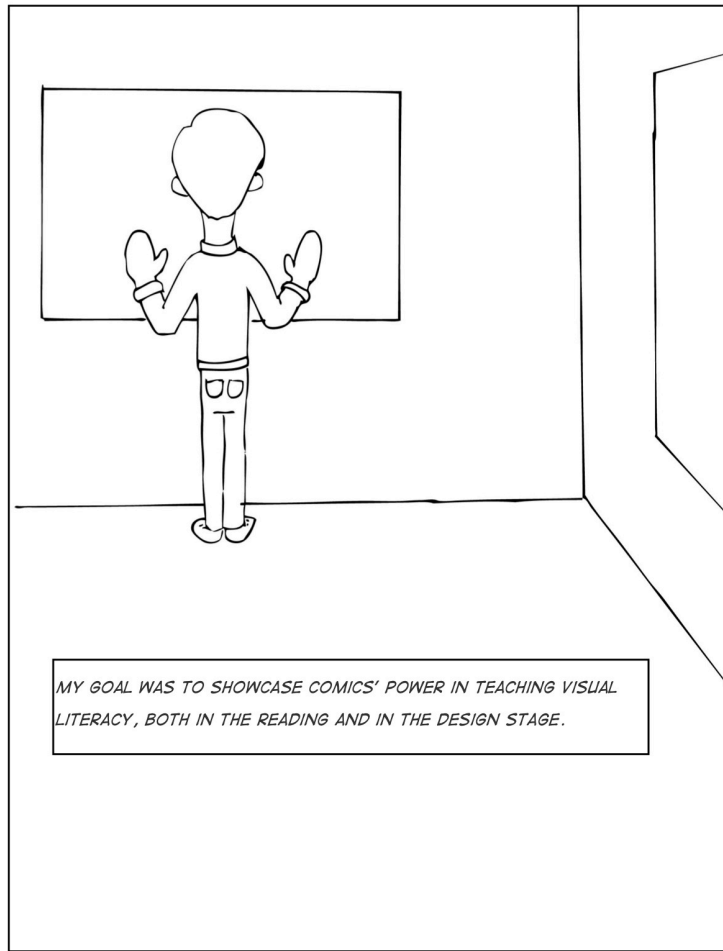


Figure 78.

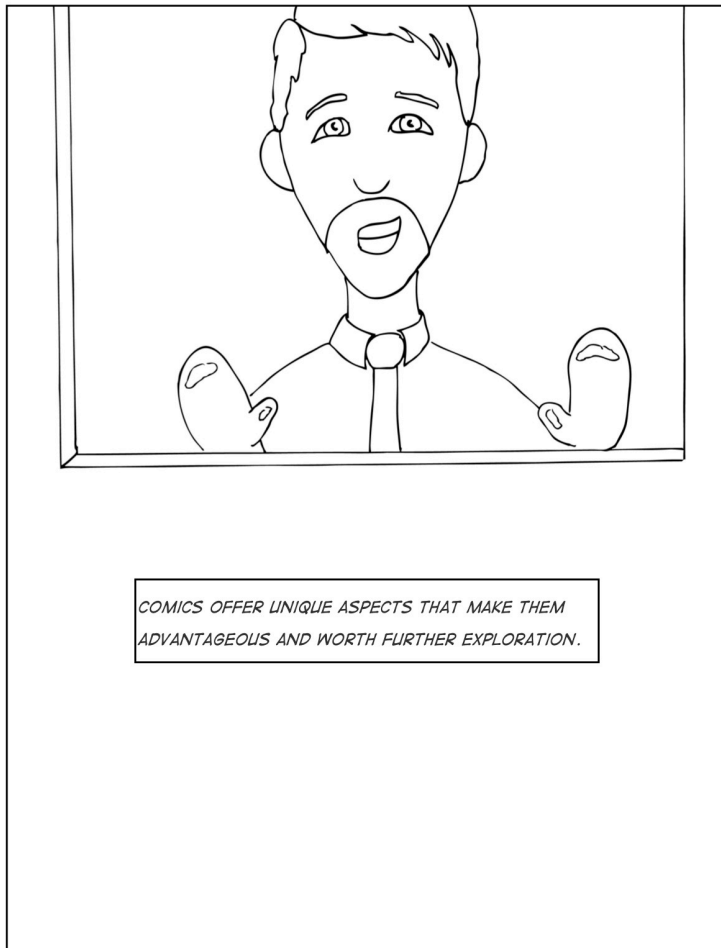


Figure 79.

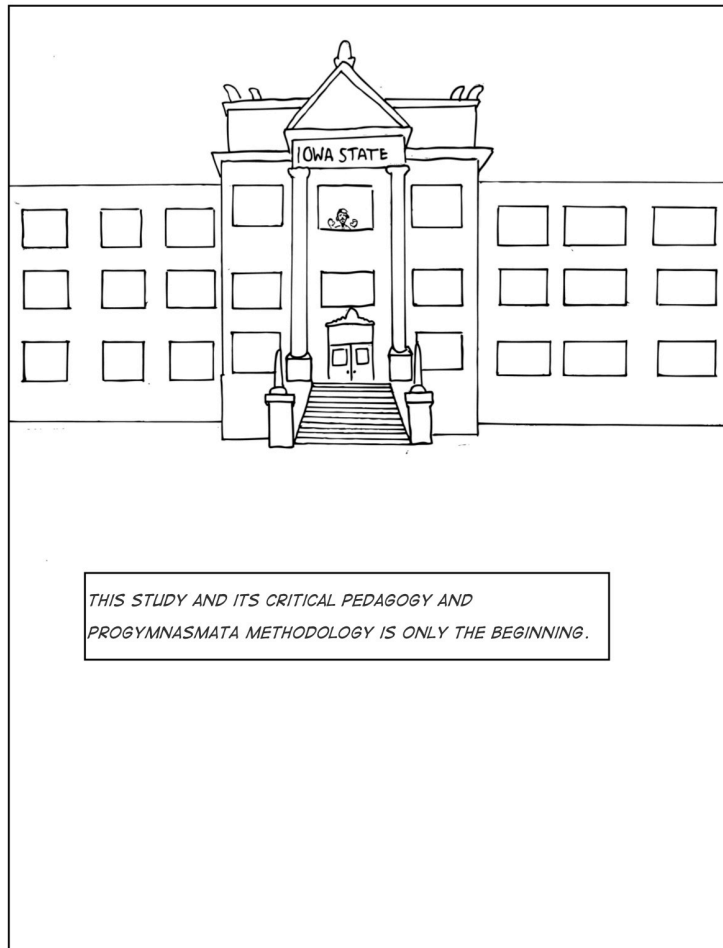


Figure 80.

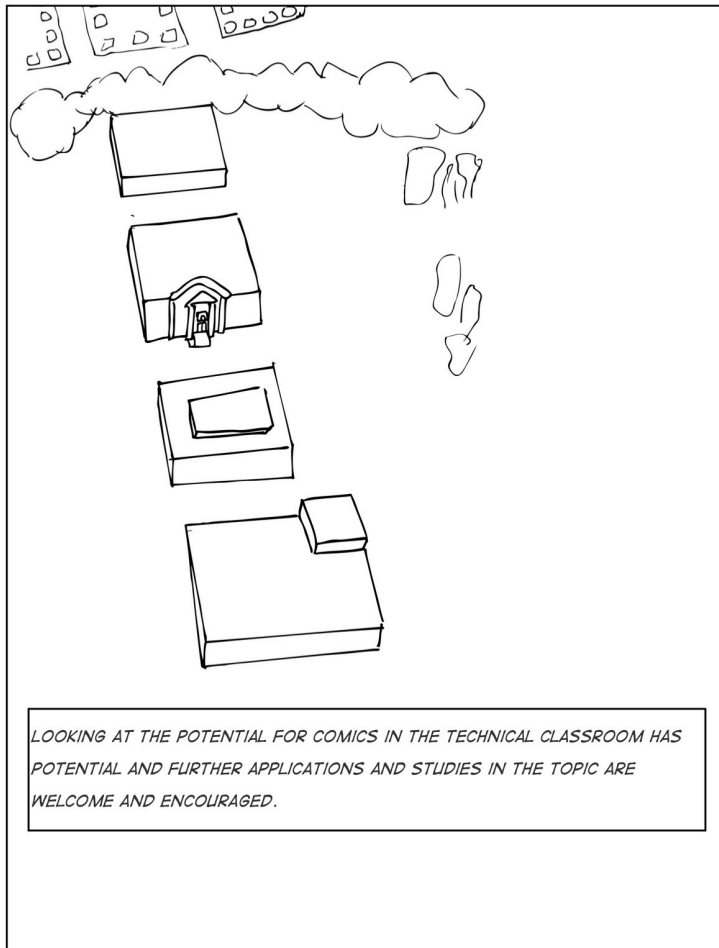


Figure 81.



THE POTENTIAL IN COMICS PRODUCTION IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS IS JUST BEING TAPPED. BUT THIS NEXT STEP IS UP TO YOU AND ME, DEAR READERS.

Figure 82.

WORKS CITED
ALLEN, JO. "THE CASE AGAINST DEFINING TECHNICAL WRITING." <i>JOURNAL OF BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION</i> 4.2 (1990): 68-77. PRINT.
FREIRE, PAULO. <i>PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED: 30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION</i> . NEW YORK: CONTINUUM INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHING GROUP INC., 1993. PRINT.
GIROLIX, HENRY A. "LESSONS FROM PAULO FREIRE." <i>CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION</i> 57.9 (2010): B15-B16. <i>ACADEMIC SEARCH ELITE</i> . WEB. 1 MAR. 2013.
GWYNN, AUBREY. <i>ROMAN EDUCATION: FROM CICERO TO QUINTILIAN</i> . LONDON: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1926. PRINT.
KOSTELNICK, CHARLES. "TEACHING STUDENTS TO DESIGN RHETORICALLY: A LOW-TECH PROCESS APPROACH." <i>DESIGNING TEXTS: TEACHING VISUAL COMMUNICATION</i> . EDS. EVA R. BRUMBERGER. AMITYVILLE: BAYWOOD, 2013. PRINT.
KRESS, GUNTHER. <i>LITERACY IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE</i> . NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2003. PRINT.
LAUER, CLAIRE. "CONTENDING WITH TERMS: 'MULTIMODAL' AND 'MULTIMEDIA' IN THE ACADEMIC AND PUBLIC SPHERES." <i>MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION: A CRITICAL SOURCEBOOK</i> . ED. CLAIRE LUTKEWITTE. BOSTON: BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN'S, 2014. 22 - 41. PRINT.
LUNSFORD, ANDREA A. <i>WRITING MATTERS: RHETORIC IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIVES</i> . GEORGIA: UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA PRESS, 2004. PRINT.
MENDELSON, MICHAEL. <i>MANY SIDES: A PROTAGOREAN APPROACH TO THE THEORY, PRACTICE, AND PEDAGOGY OF ARGUMENT</i> . DORDRECHT: KLUWER, 2002. PRINT.

Figure 83.

MOORE, PATRICK AND CHAD FRITZ. "USING GESTALT THEORY TO TEACH DOCUMENT DESIGN AND GRAPHICS." *TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION QUARTERLY* 2.4 (FALL 1993): 389-410. PRINT.

MORAN, CHARLES. "ACCESS: THE 'A' WORD IN TECHNOLOGY STUDIES, PASSIONS, PEDAGOGIES, AND 21ST-CENTURY TECHNOLOGIES. HAWISHER, GAIL AND CYNTHIA L. SELFE (EDS.). LOGAN: UTAH STATE PRESS, 1999. PRINT.

MURPHY, JAMES J. *A SHORT HISTORY OF WRITING INSTRUCTION*. HERMAGORAS PRESS, 1990. PRINT.

NEW LONDON GROUP. "A PEDAGOGY OF MULTILITERACIES: DESIGNING SOCIAL FUTURES." *MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION: A CRITICAL SOURCEBOOK*. ED. CLAIRE LITKEWITTE. BOSTON: BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN'S, 2014. 193 - 210. PRINT.

QUINTILIAN. "FROM INSTITUTES OF ORATORY." *THE RHETORICAL TRADITION: READINGS FROM CLASSICAL TIMES TO THE PRESENT*. BIZZELL, PATRICIA AND BRUCE HERZBERG EDS. BOSTON: BEDFORD/ST. MARTIN'S, 2001. PRINT.

RICE, JEFF. *THE RHETORIC OF COOL: COMPOSITION STUDIES AND NEW MEDIA*. CARBONDALE: SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UP, 2007. PRINT.

Figure 84.

Creator's Statements

We decided to present our argument through an omniscient narrator that mimics the tone and moves of the academic genre's tones and invisible (and partially objective) narrator. This means that instead of relying on a traditional avatar like most comics do, it relies on academic writing and technical instruction techniques (like Jody Culkin, Mitch Altman, Andie Nordgren, and Jeff Keyzer have done), where the narrator occasionally shows up, but primarily lets the findings and arguments do the work. That said, the teacher that bookends the story serves in many ways as the narrator as do some of the characters.

Ideally, our comic would have been done by an artist, someone like Jeff Lemire, Emily Carroll, Alex Ross, Scott McCloud, Richard McGuire, Seth, Kate Beaton, Vitaly S. Alexius, Hope Larson, Gabriel Rodriguez, or any other talented artist. However that defeats the purpose of our argument: that students and instructors can engage in the comics medium and gain from its affordances. This is why the art relies on a simple style based in examples of the medium, but done with inadequate art training. However, this isn't a weakness; instead it embodies the call of the paper to get students and scholars to write visually no matter the skill level involved.

Original Contribution of Work

The goal of many contemporary compositionists, rhetoricians, and professional/technical communication scholars is to incorporate multimodal elements and visual rhetoric into the classroom. Research in this area, as well as the desire to use multimodal texts, is nothing new or unique, but the practice itself has been adopted slowly. Many reasons for this exist: courses are already brimming over with content, competing mediums don't carry sufficient academic weight, and

accessibility concerns abound. These are legitimate critiques; multimodality is complex and taxes an already crowded composition and technical communication field. Yet, a simple form of multimodality already exists and has legitimate research to support it — comics. Comics is a medium capable of handling many genres and incorporating comics as a form of multimodality in research, composition, rhetoric, and professional communication is a practice that is simple. Since publishing in comics is usually not at option, in order to justify the analysis and creation of comics in the classroom — and in turn, academia — one can turn to established practices, in particular, critical pedagogy and the ancient rhetoric practice of progymnasmata.

Comic Studies

Comics in academia isn't a new idea either, though it's usually limited to being the subject of rhetorical analysis in published articles or as a catalyst for analysis in the classroom. If it's used as a means for composing or creation, it's primarily for reflective and autobiographical writing. These approaches are helpful and important, but comics can be used in other academic formats, including peer-reviewed research. Comics use rhetorical skills to teach important lessons and students can compose with comics to create arguments and instructional texts. In the process of composing with comics, students learn visual rhetoric and effectively realize multimodal writing. This isn't the end though. Teaching students to compose with comics is the first step toward arguing that comics can be a means of publishing research in addition to the traditional essay.

Comics studies is a steadily growing trend in academia across multiple disciplines. The medium was once considered merely pulp-art or a children's genre (and in some audiences still is), but many scholars (both in popular culture and in academia) have worked for years to show its potential and depth. Research has already been done proving comics' usefulness in the classroom (from elementary to higher education) as a medium to teach from and to analyze. Although many have argued for comics' positive influence, and there are comics that have been accepted as textbooks and readers (see McCloud; Losh, Alexander, Cannon; Gonick; etc.), the majority of instructors and scholars are either unaware such a movement exists, indifferent to the movement, or unconvinced it's legitimate.

Important and Academic-esque Comics

Usually titles like *Maus*, *Persepolis*, or any of McCloud's non-fiction work come to mind when serious comics are mentioned. These are a great start, but they are only the surface of many more works that deserve further exploration. The non-fiction genres that stray from memoir and lie on the margins of academic scholarship are a great place to start. These pieces include Colon and Jacobson's 9/11 pieces (the first a graphic adaptation of the 9/11 commission report and the second a history of the wars that followed), the journalism cartoon movement (including Sacco's books), McCloud's *Chrome* instructions (and earlier work), Paul Buhle's editorial work on multiple academic-themed comics — including historical texts like Zinn's adapted *People's History* — biographies, history tomes, technical communication done in comics format (like Eisner's work and other instructional comics), post-modern philosophical debates like in *Logicomix*, and the textbook *Understanding Comics* done in comics form (see Losh, Alexander, Cannon). This is the line where entertainment and scholarship blur, which are explored in the justification in our piece.

Comics, Progymnasmata, and Multimodality

Although the overall goal is to see the acceptance of comics as a means to publish research findings (not to replace the essay format, but to be a companion when appropriate), this piece focuses on the initial steps — teaching the idea to students as a goal to teach visual rhetoric and multimodality. This piece looks at a method of teaching that draws on critical pedagogy, analyzes comics that read like scholarship, and has students compose in that format. Critical pedagogy's tradition of inviting students to challenge the authority and looking below the surface level to see where meaning lies fits in with the idea of having students compose in and study a medium that's often overlooked during their college experience. Such an approach echoes Freire's ideas of using critical strategies as an effective model for change. He writes, "the teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, an re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own" [Freire 1993, 81]). In order for an acceptance of new media and mediums to occur, it's often necessary to engage students in the process of discovering. Empirical evidence based on

students' experiences can provide valuable evidence to support the bigger goal of having the larger academic community accept such a medium as a way to compose arguments.

Progymnasmata, and Quintilian's work in general, make up another significant section of our piece. Combining ancient rhetorical pedagogical practices with comics studies hasn't been explored. In addition, this piece draws on critical pedagogy concepts of otherness and oppression, in this case making a literal observation of the inherently "other" medium of comics compared to the safer essay and textual pieces. This amalgamation of ancient rhetoric, comics studies, and critical pedagogy is the basis of the research behind this pieces' goal of exploring comics as a multimodal means of composition.

Works Cited

- Moran, Charles. "Access: The 'A' Word in Technology Studies." *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st-Century Technologies*. Hawisher, Gail and Cynthia L. Selfe (Eds.). Logan: Utah State Press, 1999. Print.
- Allen 1990** Allen, Jo. "The Case Against Defining Technical Writing." *Journal Of Business and Technical Communication* 4.2 (1990): 68-77. Print.
- Freire 1993** Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed: 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 1993. Print.
- Giroux2010** Giroux, Henry A. "Lessons From Paulo Freire." *Chronicle Of Higher Education* 57.9 (2010): B15-B16. Academic Search Elite. Web. 1 Mar. 2013.
- Gwynn1926** Gwynn, Aubrey. *Roman Education: From Cicero to Quintilian*. London: Oxford University Press, 1926. Print.
- Kostelnick2013** Kostelnick, Charles. "Teaching Students to Design Rhetorically: A Low-tech Process Approach." *Designing Texts: Teaching Visual Communication*. Eds. Eva R. Brumberger. Amityville: Baywood, 2013. Print.
- Kress 2003** Kress, Gunther. *Literacy in the New Media Age*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Lauer 2014** Lauer, Claire. "Contending with Terms: 'Multimodal' and 'Multimedia' in the Academic and Public Spheres." *Multimodal Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Claire Lutkewitte. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014. 22-41. Print.
- Lunsford 2004** Lunsford, Andrea A. *Writing Matters: Rhetoric in Public and Private Lives*. Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2004. Print.
- Mendelson 2002** Mendelson, Michael. *Many Sides: A Protagorean Approach to the Theory, Practice, and Pedagogy of Argument*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2002. Print.
- Moore 1993** Moore, Patrick and Chad Fritz. "Using Gestalt Theory to Teach Document Design and Graphics." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 2.4 (Fall 1993): 389-410. Print.
- Murphy 1990** Murphy, James J. *A Short History of Writing Instruction*. Hermagoras Press, 1990. Print.
- New London Group 2013** New London Group. "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures." *Multimodal Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. Ed. Claire Lutkewitte. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014. 193 – 210. Print.
- Quintilian2001** Quintilian. "from Institutes of Oratory." *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Bizzell, Patricia and Bruce Herzberg eds. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. Print.
- Rice 2007** Rice, Jeff. *The Rhetoric of Cool: Composition Studies and New Media*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2007. Print.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.