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U of I SLIS Journal

07|02|2010

Understanding and Creating Comics with Seventh Graders

Amelia Carl



cc by Amelia Carl 2010

<http://ir.uiowa.edu/bsides/13>

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Editors | Angela Murillo & Rachel Hall

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Layout & Identity design | Colin Smalter

Abstract:

During the spring semester of 2010, as part of my graduate program in English Education, I took a class titled American Comic Book. I took what I learned there, turned around, and immediately applied it to my own teaching. I teach 7th grade language arts and developed a unit on understanding and creating comics, pulled from what I was learning in the class at the University of Iowa, and utilized some other resources including Great Source's Daybook of Critical Reading and Writing, and ideas from other books on using graphic novels as a teaching tool. The unit was taught during April and May of this year. I have collected my lesson plans, examples of student work, and much, much more on a website: <http://sites.google.com/site/7thgradecomicsunit/>.

Keywords:

education | reluctant readers | 7th grade | comics and graphic novels

7th Grade Comics Unit

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Ms. Carl -- Mid-Prairie Middle School

I teach 7th Grade Language Arts. Our school is located in Kalona, IA. My class sizes are between 20-25 students this year. I teach four sections and this year my students participated in a comics curriculum I developed in conjunction with taking American Comic Book (008:190:SCA) at the University of Iowa (Spring 2010).



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Comics Unit

Click to download Word documents of all my comics unit paperwork. Here we have lesson plans, teaching materials, and a short paper discussing the research-based benefits of teaching comics in the classroom.

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Contact Me

If you are an educator, a future educator, or know someone who might be interested in collaborating with me or wants to try this unit in their own classroom, here's my school e-mail:

acarl@mid-prairie.k12.ia.us

Feel free to e-mail with any questions or comments. We are also constantly looking for volunteers to work with kids. If you want to come down to Kalona and draw comics with with us, I'm sure the kids would love that!

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Iowa Core Curriculum

Iowa Core Curriculum (current incarnation)

A. Reading

1. Independently reads a significant number of books and texts each year. This reading should include both fiction and nonfiction in a variety of genres
2. Reads for a variety of purposes and across content areas (**Comics Analysis Presentation, Daybook lessons, Comic Book Show 'n' Tell**)
3. Uses a variety of skills and strategies to comprehend complex nonfiction and informational text
4. Uses a variety of strategies and skills to comprehend and interpret (**Comics Analysis Presentation, Comic Book Show 'n' Tell**)
5. Uses a variety of strategies to understand unfamiliar vocabulary found in a narrative text, technical reading, or literary text (**Daybook lessons, Comics Vocab**)
6. Reads with fluency silently, and aloud to support comprehension (**Daybook lessons, Comic Book Show 'n' Tell**)

B. Writing

1. Uses knowledge of purpose, audience, format, and medium in developing written communication (**Industrial Age Comic, Comic Book Show 'n' Tell**)
2. Applies writing skills and strategies to effectively communicate in a variety of genres with various audiences (**Comics Analysis Presentation, Comic Book Show 'n' Tell**)
3. Uses writing as a tool for learning (**Comics Paragraph, Industrial Age Comic**)

4. **Engages in the information literacy process: Accesses, evaluates, and communicates information and ideas (Comics Analysis Presentation)**
 5. **Is able to write on demand (Comics Paragraph, Industrial Process Comic, Comic Book Show 'n' Tell)**
 6. **Adheres to conventions generally established in spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, syntax, and style**
 7. **Incorporates technology as a tool to enhance writing**
- C. Speaking**
1. **Considers audience and variables in the speaking situation (Comics Analysis Presentation)**
 2. **Produces a coherent message (Comics Analysis Presentation)**
 3. **Participates in a variety of communication situations. (Comics Analysis Presentation)**
 4. **Uses appropriate content and conventions for purpose, audience, occasion, and context (Comics Analysis Presentation)**
 5. **Demonstrates control of delivery skills (Comics Analysis Presentation)**
 6. **Participates appropriately in one-on-one situations and group settings (Comics Analysis Presentation, Industrial Method Comic)**
1. **Recognizes the role of evaluation in oral communication**
 2. **Recognizes the role of response in oral communication**
- D. Listening**
1. **Listens for information and understanding (Comics Photostory and Presentation Guide)**
 2. **Listens for interpretation, analysis, and evaluation (Comics Analysis Presentation)**
 3. **Listens to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships (Comics Smartboard Collaboration, Industrial Method Comic)**

E. Viewing

- 1. Analyzes the effects of visual media on society and culture (Comics Photostory and Presentation Guide)**
- 2. Uses a range of strategies to interpret visual media (ENTIRE UNIT)**
- 3. Applies a variety of criteria to evaluate informational media**
- 4. Understands how literary forms can be represented in visual narratives (ENTIRE UNIT)**

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Sample Lessons

- Create a comic using the industrial process with a small group
- Analyze comics with regard to content as well as focusing on formal elements (as a class, as a small group, and individually)
- Create a "how-to" comic that explains how to do something
- Write a script for a comic that classmate will read, and then draw that comic
- Create a poetry comic

Attachments (1)

Understanding and Creating Comics Lesson Plansdoc.doc - on May 10, 2010 6:06 AM by Amelia Carl (version 1)

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Student Work

Examples of my students at work on this unit. Click on the uploaded images to see many, many more examples of comics my students have created. Each one is beautiful and different... like a snowflake!



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Why Teach Comics?

- Comics engage reluctant readers as well as engaging gifted students through in-depth analysis
- An art-rich curriculum in a high-stakes testing environment
- Learning how to think
- Promotes visual literacy, a 21st century skill
- Students practice writing skills
- Students enhance their reading skills (visualization)
- All of these are research based

Attachments (1)

Why Use Comicsdoc.doc - on May 11, 2010 5:59 AM by Amelia Carl (version 1)
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