

Graphic Family Stories: Turning Our World War II Families' Stories into Sequenced Panels

Where: Wilbur Elementary school
4050 Wrangle Hill Rd.

When: Tuesday, July 9th 2019
Who: 25-30 Arts teachers, educators
and teaching artists.

Over arching line of inquiry:

How can we take our families World War II memories and turn them into sequence graphic panels, or bande dessinée French for drawing strip, to appreciate the Distant Voices performance?

Materials for this workshop: artist black ink-pens and a block of blank square white post it notes paper, computer paper, tracing paper, pencils. Stencils with the six panels cut out. This will be used by the participants to draw in their panels or we can photocopy a blank piece of paper with a six comic panel on it.

General Thoughts about the 75 minutes workshop

One hour and fifteen minutes workshop using Distant Voices as our focal work of art. Part of a daylong workshop for the development of teachers and teaching artists.

We will be working from family stories. So how do we retrieve these memories?

Maybe some people will have long form prose stories where as others may only have a vague memorie or an old photo portrait. Still others may be completely blocked and it maybe a complex process to extract any image or story. So how do we organise the workshop in order to help all the teachers be successful at creating a graphic novel of 6 panels.

One has to understand how sequence graphic panels work. Learning how to use sequence graphic panels to tell stories can be taught in a short form pre-workshop as a pre-beat to the main work of art; the 6 panel page. The process of doing this pre-beat workshop may help breakthrough resistance.

How can we take a person's words and transform them into image? How can we take images and transform them into a story. We want to build a logical, user friendly, workshop that includes at all stages and beats of the workshop; reflection, inquiry, built in contextual information and hands-on participation.

Pre-workshop format please think about your family history and World War II do you have any memorabilia photographs, medals, maps of battles et cetera that have a family story. Or maybe there is a story that you've been told? Please bring an image or 2 to the workshop, thank you.

I also had a magazine National Geographic special marking the Beginning of the Second World War 80 years ago. That could be used in some way to find images. Is it important to have a connection to World War II?

I believe it is important because it relates to the work of art: The Distant Voices performance

Vocabulary: bande dessinée, panels, gutters, graphic novels, and comic book strips.

First beat **hands-on** 5 mins

Each person is given a square post it note and they will have One minute to write a word or draw an image **about World War II contextual informations** on the post it note. We can also have a few people write a word or a short sentence on the post-it notes and integrate them into the story. Then, in groups of six, the participants will sequence or arrange post-it notes so that they can be read from left to right and top to bottom, with gutters between the panels. Gutters is the technical word in comics for the space in between the panels which needs to be kept clean in order for the panels to be read correctly.

Inquiry and reflections 10 mins What story can a participant, tell to the group, reading the panels? I will model this so that people can see how it works. Using the same six images but rearranging the sequence can someone else tell a complete different story? Together as a large group Explore as an **inquiry and reflection**.

For example:

What did we discover about panelled images in sequence?

Where did the story take place?

Is there an obvious connection into World War II?

How is drama/crisis/war depicted?

How do we know what is taking place?

Is everybody reading the same story from the images?

Is it necessary to have both an image and words?

What happens if the words contradict the image?

We will explore and explain how graphic novels are read and why clean gutters are important. Make sure that participant notice how people's minds make stories and connection between random images. It's just how the human mind works.

Summary In groups of six used to post notes to tell Visual story Go round the tables so that you can see the stories with one table have them re-tale the story by changing the sequence. Review how images relate to each other and how our minds, bridge the images and the words together, to tell a story. Although this could be the whole workshop we will move on.

10 mins

The second beat of the workshop. What stories do we know about our family during World War II. Introduce yourself to your neighbour and share your story with the person sitting next to you. Then share with a larger group or on your table, depending on the size of the workshop, telling your neighbours story to the group of Five or six depending on how big the goods. **Built in contextual information, inquiry, hands-on participation and reflection.**

This is where people who have done their homework can share those stories. Other thoughts- Set up a list of scenarios that could be used instead of personal stories. Just in case anyone is stuck and does not have a family story that comes to mind at that instant.

Together as a large group Explore as an **inquiry and reflection**.

For example:

What did we discover about each other's stories ?

Where did the story take place?

Is there an obvious connection into World War II?

How is drama/crisis/war Described?

How do we know what is taking place?

Main activity Time 20 mins in total

contextual information, inquiry, hands-on

7mins

The main beat of the workshop. Hand out one page comic layouts and do a round robin. Each picture Panel has to be completed within a timed minute or two. **Hands on and contextual information** Each participants will work within a group of three so if there are six as a table there would be two groups on each table. We will have a mini Comic Jam with just two other partners. The advantage to limiting the drawing time - use the idea of visual versus haptic drawing - drawing from feeling rather than from a visual likeness. (2 min per panel)

Materials needed - one page 6 panel paper, and pens.

The idea is to start the panel with something that comes from a story of your family during World War II. Each person starts a drawing in the second panel (the title will be in the first panel and will be done at the end). Once the second panel is drawn we hand the page to our partner (2 min per panel) Each participants will have to react to the previous drawn image and incorporate something from the previous image into the new panel that they are drawing so that it continues the story in some way. We continue until panel two, three and four are complete. Then the person who started the page will be handed back the original page and will complete the page and the title. In other words the person whose page it is will have completed panel number one the title panel at the end two, five and six.

Reflection and Inquiry activity. 12 mins

Critique - Have the participants display their graphic novel pages on the table and then doing a roaming critique. Each group of students would rotate to the next groups novels.

Specific aspects for focus for students to discuss and a limited time to share Did anyone find great examples of :

Interesting characters with interesting body gestures or facial expressions?

Efficient use of line?

Interesting dialogue that moved the story along ?

Rotate and have them view the next groups novels through a different lens. This can continue till they make it back to their own novels.

Ask them selves:

Can we make each panel as legible, and expressive as possible?

Which panels are most successful in moving the story forward?

Which images create a vivid characterization of story?

Which images summarize the conflict or the resolution to the conflict most graphically?

Time to finish off the page so how to move the story on.

6 mins

Each participant will have the opportunity to complete their story.

The reflection for the workshop 4 mins

Questions may come out of the work that's been done. Stories that have been told and It will be interesting to see if and how people connected with their family stories to World War II.

Tell something that surprised you about making your own 6 panel drawn strip?

It there something we would add or take away to develop the story?

Does anybody have questions about technical aspects of graphic panels?

I will have some books that hopefully will answer those questions.

For example someone may find it frustrating that they can't make their words clearer or that the words are not in a straight line I could then show them some technical tricks to help solve that problem.

If there was more time or everybody goes very fast workshop could be extended

The participants draw the next six panels so they have to complete double page story.

Then writing the title in the first Title panel. This is their own bande dessinée or drawn strip.

Reflection and Inquiry 10 mins

Reflection - on bande dessinée or drawn strip.

Tell something that surprised you about making your own 12 panel drawn strip?

It there something we would add or take away to develop the story?

Think about using bande dessinée or drawn strip instead of a poster as an activity for your next school project.