

ENGL 1101: Autobiographical Graphic Novels

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Graphic Memoir Assignment

Basic Assignment

Now that you have defined a specific topic and focus in your memoir essay, you can begin to adapt this to a graphic format. Using the guidelines from McCloud's *Understanding Comics* and the *WOVENText* p. 284, we will create short comics that include these genre conventions: complex relationship between visuals and text, stylistic choices in layout (including panels shape and gutter spacing) that help readers move forward through the story, consideration of font and design elements of words in addition to text, and appealing to multiple senses in the image/text. There's no need for additional sources or citations, as you are working strictly from your own personal history. You can choose any type of memory you like, but know that you will be sharing it with the class, so let that guide your choices. Your comic should be 12-20 pages, double-sided and presented as a physical book and electronic document. Comic paging will be in multiples of 4, so you will have either 12, 16, or 20 pages. Don't forget when planning that your page count also includes a front and back cover.

Process and Details

You have established your general topic for this project by completing your memoir essay. Now we move into **brainstorming** how to present this project as a graphic novel. Following the questions on p. 286 of the *WOVENText* you will create a **script** that helps you define:

- **Modes and Media**—What aspects will I represent visually, and what aspects will I represent in graphic form? How will I consider the text as part of my visual communication? Do I want to create my images using paper/ink or a digital program?
- **Rhetorical Appeals**—How will I establish my authority as a writer? To what extent will I appeal to readers emotions? How much or little information will I include for readers in the text?

Once you have brainstormed some answers to those questions you can begin **drafting**. Using your **script**, we will then create a series of **thumbnails**—very rough sketches that begin to establish layout for your comic. This will help you decide how long the comic will be.

- **Elements of genre**—How will I visually represent my characters? Will they be true to life or exaggerated? How will I balance the narrative with dialogue?

After you have completed your thumbnails then you can work on **revising** them into a more formal **storyboard**. The storyboard will help you refine your style and design.

- **Elements of style**—placement of dialogue, external text, and images. Here you can consider use of white space, font choices, and density of images. This is also a time to make some decisions about using color in your comic.
- **Organization**—storyboards will include a consideration of layout that the thumbnails did not. You should begin to plot panel sizing and spacing to think about how time and/or motion are represented in the graphic novel.

You and your writing group will sign up for a **storyboard workshop** with your professor during the week of **November 6-8**.

After the process of scripting, thumbnails, and storyboarding you are ready to go! We will have periodic check-ins on your project, but you will have a month to **execute** and **edit** your design plan.

Some options for creating your comic: use ink and paper (obviously!), use a hybrid of ink/paper and programs like InDesign or Publisher to help with layout/fonts, use an online comics creator such as Pixton, Storyboard That, Canva, ToonDoo, or others. Make sure before committing that you can *download* and *print* your comic easily!

Before you **publish** you should also put some thought into presentation. Do you want it to be a small booklet or full 8.5x11" pages? To be put together with simple staples or bound in a way that reflects the content?

Publish your piece by **physically** bringing a copy to class and **electronically** to Canvas.

Process deadlines:

- Complete your **script** and upload on **October 17th**
- Use that script to create **thumbnail** which you will upload on **October 24th** and create a revision plan after discussion on **October 29th**
- **Revise** and create a **storyboard** for your group meeting the week of **November 6-8th**
- **Edit** and **publish** your comic for class on **November 14th**
- **Reflect** on your project in-class on **November 14th**

Grading:

- The **A comic** will have a clearly defined subject matter and follow the conventions of a memoir in a mature or exemplary manner. That means that it will have a consistent tone to reach its audience, clearly defined choices in terms of visuals and text, excellent use of comic conventions for panels, gutters, and structure, and have considered emotional/logical appeals. The A comic will also clearly highlight

the *significance* of the event—this is something that matters to you, that you want us to reflect on and come away with some new perspective or knowledge on the subject. It will be professionally presented in person and uploaded to Canvas.

- The **B comic** will have a clearly defined subject and follow conventions in a competent manner. It will have a consistent tone but may lack some clear choices on images/text, organization, OR storytelling. The B comic likewise highlight the *significance* of the event—this is something that matters to you, that you want us to reflect on and come away with some new perspective or knowledge on the subject. It will be professionally presented but may have minor errors.
- The **C comic** will have a subject, but it may not always be evident in the use of images and text. It follows conventions in a developing manner, that is, it tries for a consistent tone but sometimes fails. It likely has flat language, overly trite visuals, or lacks some consideration of panel/gutter use. The C comic may have the good conventions found in a B paper, but it lacks the ability for readers to see the significance of the event. Readers fail to come away with any new perspectives. It may not follow all publication requirements and likely has a pattern of errors. C papers also may be significantly under page count.
- The **D comic** lacks a clear subject and is likely disorganized because of this. It lacks two or more of the conventions for good memoir: the consistent tone, careful consideration of the relationship between image/text, use of space for logical organization, OR audience appeals. It likely lacks the element of significance, or if it is present, it is hindered by poor organization and use of memoir conventions. It may not follow all formatting requirements and likely has a pattern of errors. D papers are also often significantly under page count.
- **Failing** comics are poorly organized, fail to highlight the significance of the event, and lack image/text that helps us engage with the story. They are incorrectly formatted, have a major pattern of errors, and may be significantly under page requirements.