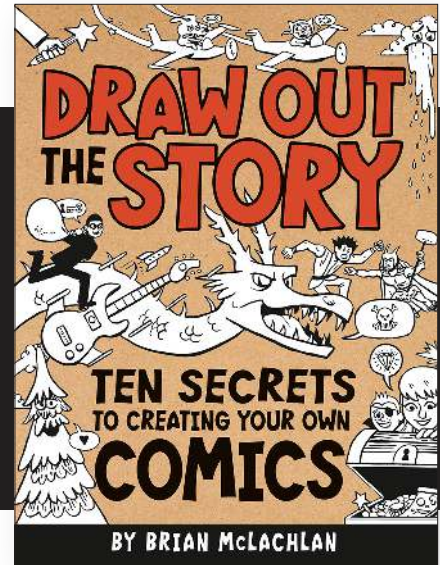


Draw Out the Story: Ten Secrets to Creating Your Own Comics

BY BRIAN MCLACHLAN

Target grade: 6
Reading levels: Fountas & Pinnell: V
Lexile® Measure: 800L

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INTRODUCTION

Draw Out the Story is more than an introduction to comic books/graphic novels for readers and aspiring comic-book creators; it also offers new ways to think about and understand traditional literature and other visual media as it helps students become better masters of language. Simply written, but with complex ideas presented, *Draw Out the Story* has one powerful main idea: to aid each student in telling his or her own story. Each chapter explores one facet of accomplishing that goal — with plenty of examples and opportunities to try each technique.

This classroom guide follows the format of the book, using the chapters as teaching opportunities, and then delving further into the storytelling world beyond comics. The guide helps you integrate curriculum in Language Arts: Reading, Writing (creative, narrative, and opinion), Vocabulary, Speaking and Listening; Art (appreciation and creation); Critical Thinking; Cooperative Learning; and Social Studies. In addition, you'll find the indications for Common Core State Standards for each activity noted, with a list of their descriptions at the end of the guide.

THE WHOLE BOOK

Your class is introduced to many new words that are specific to comic books. Some of the words are defined in the text; the meaning of others is made clear through context. Each student should create a “Comics Glossary.” Using 3 × 5-inch index cards, they should define each new word in two ways: on one side of the card, they should write a traditional dictionary definition in words only; on the other side, they should draw a single-panel comic that visually defines the word. The cards should be kept in alphabetical order. Your students can also create larger versions of the illustrated vocabulary words, which can be displayed around the room.

Students should be certain to include the words in the “grammar lesson” on page 12, those in the “Definitions of tools that rule” section on pages 92–95, and various new words or comic-specific uses of words they may know in other contexts (for example, “gutter”) that they come across as they read.

SECRET ONE: Comics Let You Show & Tell

(pages 8–17)

From the Book

Have students work on their own to create their “first comics” following the directions in the “Your Turn” section of this chapter.

Curriculum Connections: Language
Arts: Vocabulary, Writing; Art
Common Core State Standards: **RI 6.4**

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Curriculum Connections: Language
Arts: Reading, Writing, Speaking and
Listening; Cooperative Learning; Art

Common Core State Standards:
RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6;
W 6.3, 6.4, SL 6.1

Beyond the Book

Discuss what Brian McLachlan means when he suggests that readers of comics ought to be “active readers.” Give your class a chance to delve deeply into a comic or a graphic novel. Ask students to bring in their own comics/graphic novels or borrow copies from the school library.

Divide the class into groups of six, and have each group read a short section of one of their books closely, actively. Each group should read their section once through, with students taking turns reading aloud and showing the illustrations. The group should stop any time one of them has a question or comment, to discuss it.

They should read the same section several times, focusing on specific aspects: character, setting, plot, and meaning or theme, as well as exploring how the words and pictures work together to tell the story and reveal character. They should notice and talk about how details are presented and the way they work to contribute to the whole of the story. How do they know the age of the characters, for example? How do they know where the action is taking place, what season it is, what time of day?

Next, within each group, have students work in pairs. Each member of a pair should bring in photographs, pictures from magazines, illustrations from favorite picture books, or copies of well-known works of fine art. They should look at each illustration and then tell each other the story in the picture, articulating details such as who the characters are, where and when the story is taking place, what the situation is, and what happened just before and immediately after the moment the photo or illustration depicts.

Then they should select two of the illustrations and the stories they’ve told about them and decide the best way to express those stories. They can write fictional narratives, poems, plays or screenplays, or they may decide to treat the stories as fact and write newspaper articles or explanatory essays. Stories should be one to three pages long.

Each pair should select one of their pieces and present it to their larger group for review and suggestions. Finally, students can read their stories aloud to the entire class and show the original illustration that was the inspiration for their work.

SECRET TWO: There are 3 Parts to Presenting a Comic

(pages 18–31)

From the Book

The “Your Turn” activities suggested at the end of Chapter Two ask readers to find comics artists and genres they like; say what it is they like about them; and then trace the favorite artists’ work and create comics in the genres they like best. As with all artistic endeavors, your students are being urged to learn from what they think of as the best examples.

Beyond the Book

Make a classroom list of the genres depicted on pages 24 and 25. Students should add additional categories that fit their previous reading experiences. They might want to add “school stories,” “family stories,” “animal stories,” “fantasies,” and others. Have each student create a chart of the genres and titles of books they’ve read that fit into the various categories. For example, the Harry Potter books could fit into adventure, fantasy, coming-of-age, action, and even romance.

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A sample chart is below:

Categorizing Stories

TITLE	GENRES
Harry Potter series	Fantasy, battle, adventure, coming-of-age, drama, heist, mystery, action, romance
Diary of a Wimpy Kid series	
<i>The Fault in Our Stars</i>	

Curriculum Connections:
Language Arts: Reading, Writing,
Speaking and Listening

Common Core State Standards:
RL 6.1, 6.6, 6.7, 6.9; W 6.1, 6.4; SL 6.5

Invite the school librarian to your class to bring examples of some of the most popular titles in the library. Have the librarian ask the class to put the books into their various genre categories. If there is no one in the class who knows a book, then the librarian should describe it enough so the students can categorize it.

Have each student write a persuasive essay to convince classmates that his or her favorite genre is the best.

SECRET THREE: Simple Art Doesn't Equal Simple Stories

(pages 32–43)

From (and Beyond) the Book

The first exercise Brian McLachlan suggests is for each reader to fill a page with as many icons and emoticons as he or she can think of. Turn this into a “marketing lesson” for the whole class. Ask the class to come up with lists of commercial icons that are immediately recognizable: for example, the Nike swoosh and the McDonald’s arches. Discuss why advertisers and manufacturers work hard to make this instant-recognition universal.

Then each student should work on his or her own to do the other exercises at the end of this chapter and to discover for themselves how icons and emoticons help readers better recognize aspects of a story and character.

Beyond the Book

Introduce your students to narrative poetry. As a group, watch and listen to James Earl Jones read the classic “Casey at the Bat” by Ernest Lawrence Thayer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xWtysMlrcA>

Discuss how a narrative poem tells its story. Give the students a chance to read “Casey at the Bat” on their own. The poem is easy to find online or in poetry anthologies. Then engage in a discussion

Curriculum Connections: Language
Arts: Literature — Poetry, Speaking and
Listening; Art; Social Studies

Common Core State Standards:
**RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.9; W 6.9;
SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.5**

Curriculum Connections: Language
Arts: Writing, Speaking and Listening;
Critical Thinking; Cooperative Learning

Common Core State Standards:
RI 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.7; SL 6.1, 6.2

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of literary elements your students find in this entertaining poem. They should notice figurative language; rhythm; rhyme; setting; and character.

Now have them use icons, emoticons or word, letter, or number symbols to illustrate each stanza, making sure to capture the emotional ups and downs of the baseball crowd and the star batter, Casey.

As a follow-up, repeat the activity with Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Raven.”

SECRET FOUR: Details Make the Difference

(pages 44–57)

From the Book

Students should work independently on the practice exercises at the end of the chapter. Give each a chance to share one of the cartoons he or she creates for activity #5 or #6. Classmates should offer praise and suggest ways to help each other improve their work.

Beyond the Book

Ask each student to bring in three photographs: one that features people or animals, one that focuses on an object, and one of a place. These can be family snapshots or magazine photos. Place the photos in three separate bins, one for each type (people/animals, objects, and places). Each student should draw out a photo from each bin. Set a timer for 60 seconds; in that time, each student should make a list of what they see in the photo of the object. Then reset the timer for 3 minutes and repeat the exercise with the same photo. Your students should compare the two lists and discuss how their initial observations differed from what they saw during the longer, second look. Talk about the kinds of details they missed on the first glance, and then what they picked up the second time. Repeat the activity with the photo of people/animals and then with the photo of a place. How did the difference in subject affect the level of detail they noted?

SECRET FIVE: Let the Personality Shine

(pages 58–69)

From the Book

The exercises in chapter five’s “Your Turn” section ask each reader to become an actor in order to feel and capture emotions so that he or she can draw or write about characters’ feelings well. There’s lots of fun in the noise-making in this section as well.

Beyond the Book

Brian McLachlan tells readers: “Sound effects are another personality-adding tool. They don’t just show sound — they also show how you hear sound.... This is called *onomatopoeia*.” (page 66)

Go to the “Ereading Worksheets” website to find 101 words that are examples of onomatopoeia:

www.ereadingworksheets.com/figurative-language/poetic-devices/onomatopoeia-examples/

Curriculum Connections: Language
Arts: Literature — Poetry, Writing; Art

Common Core State Standards:
RL 6.4, 6.7; W 6.3, 6.4, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9

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Then have the class view a short YouTube video from the old Batman TV program highlighting onomatopoeia:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=VJTwRvFO48c

Now have your class write a paragraph, poem, or monologue using several of the words from this list and adding some of their own. They should then illustrate some of the sound words. To help them along, do a Google search for “onomatopoeia examples” and click on images.

SECRET SIX: Take It One Moment at a Time

(pages 70–81)

From the Book

The “Your Turn” activities emphasize sequencing and will give your students practice at this important aspect of storytelling.

Beyond the Book

Have one student volunteer to tell the story of a recent novel everyone has read, taking care to tell the events of the story in chronological order. When he/she is finished, ask the class if any important scenes were missed or placed in the wrong order. Repeat this with other novels or television episodes. Discuss how the book would have been different if the author switched the order of some of the events.

Now, on a large piece of lined paper, start a story with a three-word opening phrase. For example, **WHENEVER I HEAR...** Pass the paper around the room. Each student will add his or her own three-word phrase that logically continues the idea. Students can end a sentence, or add any punctuation they think is needed. The goal is to tell a logical story in the proper sequence. You’ll be sure to have kids throw some curves into the narration. That’s the fun of it.

SECRET SEVEN: Know Your Tools

(pages 82–97)

From the Book

Each student should select and carry out one of the five exercises in the “Your Turn” section (pages 96–97). Give them a chance to talk about their experience with the various techniques, so students can benefit from each other’s perspectives.

Beyond the Book

In this chapter, Brian McLachlan introduces a variety of specific tools and techniques your students have at their disposal to create comics. Recognizing and understanding these tools will help them to become more astute readers and critics of books, movies, television, and videos.

Some of the tools described are specific to comics, but many can be applied to other visual media and others are relevant to traditional books. Divide your class in half — with one group assigned to visual media (movies, television, and videos) and the other to books. Each group should look for and

Curriculum Connections:
Language Arts: Reading, Writing

Common Core State Standards:
RL 6.3, 6.5, 6.7; W 6.3, 6.4; SL 6.1, 6.4

Curriculum Connections:
Language Arts: Reading, Literature
and Media Evaluation; Writing; Critical
Thinking; Cooperative Learning

Common Core State Standards:
**RI 6.2, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7;
W 6.3, 6.4; SL 6.1, 6.3, 6.5**

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create a list of specific tools in their assigned medium. Then rate the effectiveness of the tool using a star-rating system, with one star meaning fair use and four stars meaning excellent use. The group should also be ready to explain why each example got the rating it did.

The visual media group should be looking for use of:

- Establishing shots
- Full-body shots
- Medium shots
- Closeups
- Extreme closeups
- Focus on a subject
- Transitions
- Cutaways
- Point of view
- Silent shots
- Foreground, middleground, background
- Wide-angle shots

The books group should be looking for use of:

- Establishing shot, or how the writer describes the setting
- Focus on a subject, or how the writer draws attention to an important detail
- Transition, or how the writer deals with the passage of time or change of place
- Foreshadowing
- Use of *in medias res*
- Point of view
- Flashbacks
- Different voices, or how the writer communicates the messages in the special word balloons listed on page 95

Students in the visual media group should create their own videos (individually or in small teams) using the tools they have identified. The students in the books group should write short stories using several of the techniques they've been studying and rating.

Then to give all the students the experience of creating videos and writing short stories, have the groups reverse roles and repeat the activity.

SECRET EIGHT: You Need More than One Good Idea

(pages 99–111)

and

SECRET NINE: There Are 2 Ways to Tell a Story

(pages 113–127)

From the Book and Beyond

The activities in the “Your Turn” section of Chapter 8 (pages 108–111) are all about getting kids’ creativity going. They are geared to making comics, but you can easily broaden them to work for all kinds of creative work. Make a list of selected writing forms and discuss them with your class:

- Monologue
- Dialogue
- Poetry — you can specify different poetic forms, if you wish
- Plays
- Prose Fiction — again, you can specify mystery, fantasy, realistic, historical

Curriculum Connections: Language Arts:
Creative Writing

Common Core State Standards:
RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7 6.9; W 6.3, 6.4

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Have your students apply any of the first four “Your Turn” exercises to any of these forms.

Next, each student should do the activities for Chapter 9 (pages 126–127). Now they are ready to go back to the format they worked on above and build a full piece. They have to decide if it will be structured by plot or if it will be a series of vignettes. They also have to discover the conflict, characters, and other elements that will enable them to tell their story.

SECRET TEN: Go Beyond the Normal

(pages 128–137)

From the Book

Your students should test their skills with the subtleties of creating comics that are introduced in Chapter 10 by working on the activities in the “Your Turn” section (pages 138–39).

FINAL PROJECT

Now that they have they completed reading and doing the activities in *Draw Out the Story*, your students are ready to work on a large project of creating their own comics. Divide your class into three or four creative comic studios with the assignment to make a comic book that is about life in your classroom. The students in each group should divide the responsibilities according to their talents: they will need writers, illustrators, editors, proofreaders, and an editorial director to set deadlines, oversee work, and keep things moving. Each studio should decide on the story they want to tell. Then they should review the various comics formats (on pages 26–29). They should brainstorm their story or incidents, characters, the period of time they want to cover, etc. Remind them to be kind to their classmates and not make jokes or references that could hurt others. Then give them the time they need to do the work and put their masterpieces together. Publish the comics so that every student will have his or her own copy. You might want to donate a copy of each comic to the school library, too.

Teaching guide prepared by Clifford Wohl, Educational Consultant.

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Curriculum Connections:
Language Arts: Writing; Art

Curriculum Connections: Cooperative
Learning; Language Arts: Writing; Art

Common Core State Standards:
SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5;
W 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4

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COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS – GRADE 6

CODE:

CCSS: Common Core State Standards

W: Writing

RL: Reading Literature

SL: Speaking and Listening

RI: Reading Information

READING LITERATURE

RL 6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL 6.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RL 6.3

Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

RL 6.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

RL 6.5

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

RL 6.6

Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

RL 6.7

Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.

RL 6.9

Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

READING INFORMATION

RI 6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

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RI 6.2

Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI 6.3

Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated on in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

RI 6.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings.

RI 6.5

Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

RI 6.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

RI 6.7

Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

WRITING:

W 6.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

W 6.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W 6.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

W 6.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W 6.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W 6.8

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources.

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W 6.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

SL 6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 6.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

SL 6.3

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

SL 6.4

Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

SL 6.5

Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, images, music, sound) and visual displays in presentations to clarify information.