

**SECRET IDENTITIES IN THE CLASSROOM: NEGOTIATING CONCEPTIONS OF
IDENTITY WITH COMICS AND BILINGUAL GRADE FOUR STUDENTS**

by

Julian Lawrence

B.M.A., Emily Carr University of Art and Design, 2009

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Abstract

Most educators are unfamiliar with ways to use comics and cartooning, thus classroom opportunities for students to engage in a medium they love are uncommon. In this study, I investigate integrating the language of comics into classroom learning strategies and research some of the ways writing//cartooning can help students negotiate conceptions of identity. I wrote a lesson plan that weaved connections between making comics and curriculum, and taught the participants sequential narratives through freehand cartooning. This study investigates some of the ways drawing fictional comics support bilingual grade four students' learning and negotiations of identity in the classroom.

This is a qualitative research project that gathers data in the form of student-generated art and one-on-one audio interviews with three participants. A/r/tography, semiotics and life-writing inform the study's hybrid methodology as I research grade four students' understandings through comics. Conceptions of identity emerge in the participants' comics, as well as in my own autographics.

A class of twenty-five bilingual students participated in this study. Due to time constraints and the large volume of data generated, I narrowed the scope of the study to three participants, thus creating opportunities for more detailed analysis of information. Data tracking was supported by theories of authorship such as *l'auteur complet* [the complete author](Groensteen, 2012a; Uidhir, 2012) and *l'écriture féminine* [the feminine writing](Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996; Taylor, 2014). Deeper analysis of the students' comics reveals that the perception/drawing/meaning systems (Cohn, 2012) involved with image-making create unconscious (Hancock, 2009; Jung & Franz, 1964) pathways for students to engage and

negotiate identity. In this way, they are personally invested in the narratives they create and thus engaged to learn and explore. This engagement is amplified when their works are to be displayed and, especially, printed, as they were in this study.

Students can tell stories, express concerns, and resolve issues when they make comics. Thus, implications for practice include, but are not limited to, finding methods to incorporate more comics into curriculum, legitimizing academic departments of comics studies, and investigating the intersectional, unconscious and multimodal relationships students negotiate when they draw comics by hand.

Preface

All of the work presented henceforth was initiated and completed within the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, in the Faculty of Education, at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver campus. This thesis is an original intellectual product of the author, Julian Lawrence. I was responsible for all major areas of concept formation and development, data collection and analysis, as well as all manuscript composition. Dr. Sandrine Han was my supervisor on this research project, and involved throughout the study in overseeing concept development and content.

This study required ethics approval, which was granted by the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) on November 9th 2015. The BREB certificate number is H15-02525.

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Description of Terms

A/r/tography: A practice-based methodology that weaves art/research/teaching.

Auteur complet: A French theory of comics authorship whereby a singular, thus *complete author*, writes and draws the work.

Autographics: A shorthand term that brings together the words autobiography, graphic novel and comics into one descriptor.

Bandes dessinées: French word for comics, which translates literally as *drawn strips*.

Ecriture féminine: A French theory of authorship that means *feminine writing*, which was developed by feminist writer Hélène Cixous (Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996).

Indivitrío: A term I invented to describe the trio of identities (subject/voice/character) that can locate the author in a comics text.

Ninth art: A term coined by Franco-Belgian comics scholars and practitioners in the 1960s. *Le neuvième art* [the ninth art] effectively situates comics as a medium of self-expression amongst a pantheon of eight other creative and distinct muses such as architecture, painting, and cinema, amongst others.

Unconscious: The portion of an individual's intellect or perception that is often never brought to understanding.

Writing//cartooning: A theory and practice that employs freehand drawing of comics as a means to explore, transmit, and understand negotiations between the unconscious, identity and authorship.

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Dedication

*In loving memory of my grandparents Margaret Wallbridge, née Cowley (1919-2013)
and Ralph Wallbridge (1918-2004).*

Chapter 1: Introduction

I have been drawing comics for most of my life, beginning when I was in grade four and growing up in Quebec, Canada. Over the years, through education, self-study, collaboration and work experience I have developed theories and practices of cartooning (Brunetti, 2011) that permit me to teach in schools and academies across North America. During the fourteen years that I have travelled as a cartoonist and educator, I have observed the ways that comics can assist multimodal learning (Hagan, 2007; Ventola, Charles, & Kaltenbacher, 2004), engagement with curriculum (Bakis, 2012; Bitz, 2009, 2010), and negotiations of identity (Cary, 2004; Lawrence, Lin, & Irwin, 2017; Norton, 2003; Tilley, 2014). For several years I have sought an opportunity to study and analyze the comics, drawings and sketches students generate in one of the classroom units that I teach, and now I am doing it!

1.1 Comics and the Classroom

Studies have found “a link between educational attainment and arts participation” (Hickey-Moody, 2013, p. 60) and that some of these links lie in the reflective and collaborative aspects within arts practices (Bitz, 2009, 2010; Scripp & Paradis, 2014). Yet as schools across North America struggle with budget cuts, standardizations and technological intensification (Hill, Campbell, & Gross, 2013; Huebner, Pinar, & Hillis, 1999; Kanu & Glor, 2012; Noddings, 2007; Pinar, 1995; Postman, 1992, 2006; Shaw & Shaw, 2016; Snaza, 2014) opportunities for students to engage with the arts appear to be decreasing (Garvis, 2009; Olson, 2009; Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013). I suggest that a perceived decline in art activities in Canadian schools forecasts a dim future for comics in the classroom. This is somewhat puzzling

to me due to the multiplicity of research that finds positive implications for comics and learning in terms of literacy, comprehension, and critical thinking, amongst others (Bakis, 2012; Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2010, 2015; Bolton-Gary, 2012; Chilcoat, 1993; Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011; Norton, 2003). Additionally, I have observed that the majority of pedagogical studies researching comics employ the “cultural form” (Baetens, 2011, p. 111) of the medium such as graphic novels, comic books, webcomics, etc., as texts for reading and rarely employ comics language for self-expression in writing (Williams, 2008; Kraver, 2013).

It is generally understood that the literate practitioner of a language possesses abilities to read and write in that language (Collins & Blot, 2003). There are theorists who refer to the comics medium as a language (Groensteen, 2007, 2008, 2013; Miller, 1999; Miodrag, 2013) and, as such, I suggest understandings of this semiotic language benefit from practices of both reading (Carter, 2015; Groensteen, 2007, 2013; Williams, 2008; Wilson, 2013) and writing (Carter, 2013; Harbi, 2016; Kraver, 2013). Therefore, I contend that one reason comics are rarely engaged with in classrooms as either a cultural form for reading or, especially, a creative medium for writing can be attributed to the observation that educators are, broadly speaking, only partially–literate in comics. In other words, educators can read comics language in forms such as comic books, graphic novels, and albums, but they lack some of the writing and cartooning techniques and practices (Brunetti, 2011; Irwin, 2010; Taylor, 2014) of the comics medium.

Comics is a language adored by children (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2010; Norton, 2003; Sones, 1944; Tilley, 2014). However, there is a perceived deficiency of comics as a tool of curricular support in the classroom. I argue this paucity is the result of at least two phenomena:

(1) The historical vilification of comics by the academy and cultural hierarchies (Baetens, 2013a; Beaty, 2009, 2012; Groensteen, 2002; Ndalianis, 2011); which created

(2) A general misapprehension and disinterestedness in the medium (Dorrell, Curtis, & Rampal, 1995; Hajdu, 2008; Uidhir, 2012).

This broad academic unfamiliarity with comics and cartooning has resulted in their limited use as forms for reading in education and virtual absence as a medium for writing in the classroom. Essentially, most educators and scholars can read comics but they can't (or, perhaps, have not had the opportunity to) write comics.

1.2 The Emergence of a Questing

I believe life-writing with comics can open unique spaces for self-reflection in the classroom. However, a perceived deficiency of opportunities for cartooning in elementary schools led me to question the ways that life-writing and autobiographical comics, or autographics (Whitlock, 2006), could be integrated into the classroom. I wanted to employ autobiography with students because it is one of my favourite genres of literature and it has been observed, in the small number of studies that engage participants with making comics in the classroom, that the narratives students create are sometimes linked to their identities and to positive learning outcomes in literacy, critical thinking, and participatory culture (Bitz, 2009, 2010, 2015; Chilcoat, 1993; Karr, 2013; Morrison, Bryan & Chilcoat, 2002; Thomas, 1983; Williams, 2008). Thus the research question I asked when I first began this investigation was: *In what ways can making autobiographical comics help students explore conceptions of identity?*

The twenty-five participants in this study, however, claimed agency and a form of authorship immediately after the first lesson when they unanimously rejected life-writing

autobiographical narratives about themselves, preferring to draw stories about original cartoon characters. A large number of the students in that first lesson claimed to have already invented their own characters. This necessitated a modification to my original research question. Therefore it became: *In what ways can drawing fictional comics by hand help bilingual grade four students negotiate conceptions of identity?* This question evolved from a perceived gap in the knowledge whereby classroom studies of bilingual students' explorations with making comics by hand are scarce indeed.

1.3 Designing a Framework

This qualitative, practice-based research (Barrett & Bolt, 2014; Bryman, Bell, & Teevan, 2009; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008; Stewart, 2007) is informed by a hybrid methodology of a/r/tography (Irwin, 2010, 2013), semiotic analysis (Groensteen, 2007; Lim, 2007) and autographic life-writing (Baetens, 2013b; El Refaie, 2012; Leggo, 2010). Data analysis is focused through the lenses of two French theories of authorship: *l'auteur complet* (Groensteen, 2012a; Uidhir, 2012) and *l'écriture féminine* (Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996; Taylor, 2014). Data for this study is gathered in the form of observations, student-generated comics, drawings, and one-on-one interviews with three participants. A/r/tography (Guyas, 2008; Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Madrid-Manrique, 2015a; 2015b; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005), with its blending of art/research/teaching, informs the weave, flow, and braiding (Groensteen, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2016; Leggo et al., 2011; Lim, 2004, 2007) of this study, as well as my own autographic and life-writing explorations of identity in Chapter Three. Making comics with a classroom of twenty-five bilingual grade four students inspired much self-reflection of my own. Furthermore, emergent questions formed within myself as I looked

backwards to my own experiences as a grade four bilingual student in Quebec learning to make comics.

The bilingual students at l'Ecole Française (a pseudonym I have chosen for the school), which is in the predominantly English-speaking community of Vancouver, British Columbia, were selected for this study because they have perceived distinct identities. Another reason I selected bilingual students in a French school was that my own career as a cartoonist began in a French grade four classroom. Furthermore, in my experience, Francophone schools maintain a broad cultural identification with the canon of French-European *bandes dessinées* [comics].

During conversations with the classroom participants, I observed that most had learned English as their mother tongue and were acquiring French as a second language. Various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds populate the Ecole Française community, but the language spoken in the playground, hallways and classrooms is, generally speaking, French. I recall that it was forbidden to speak English in my French Catholic elementary school in Quebec, and a similar code appears to be enforced at l'Ecole Française. For example, during recess I walked past two girls in the hallway chatting to each other in English, and overheard a teacher say to them, “Les filles... en français!” [“Girls... in French!”]. In Chapter Three I present a similar encounter, which happened to me a number of times during my elementary school years.

A form of collaborative and narrative storytelling between myself, the a/r/tographical *indivitrío* of artist/researcher/teacher, and the three random participants develops. As such, this research “is impacted by and addresses the ethics and aesthetics of interdependent relationship with others” (Bickel, 2005, p. 128) as we share stories and make comics together. Shared themes and patterns come into focus during my analysis of the data. For instance, both Stella (a pseudonym I have given to one of the participants) and myself explore experiences of school

bullying. Another theme that is shared amongst most of the twenty-five participants of this study and myself is that we all learned English as our mother tongue. Additionally we all acquired and explored two additional languages while in grade four: French and comics.

1.4 Teaching and Cartooning

I have a deep interest in comics and cartooning, and my love for the medium took root when I was a grade four English student in a Francophone school. I was born in England but I grew up in Quebec, and comics in that French-Canadian province are perceived to be part of the cultural heritage and identity with links to the French European *bandes dessinées* (Bramlet, 2012). The greatest teacher I ever had was Madame Vachon, who taught me grade four in Gatineau (formerly Hull), Quebec. She noticed the passion I had for drawing cartoons and reading the French comic albums that I signed out of the school library. She encouraged me to submit homework assignments and create original stories as comics, and from then on I've expressed myself creatively with sequential narratives and cartooning.

For the last fourteen years I have been teaching students of all ages the techniques of writing and cartooning comics. I have observed instances of focused student engagement when comics are introduced into the classroom. However teachers, scholars, and educators are broadly unfamiliar with the medium (Uidhir, 2012), thus classroom opportunities for students to engage with an artform and visual language (Bramlett, 2012; Cohn, 2005, 2013; Haddad, 2015) they appear to intuitively understand are rarely, if ever, presented (Bahl, 2015; Carter, 2013, 2015; Kraver, 2013; Pratt, 2009). Therefore, I set out to investigate ways comics as a writing medium and language of self-expression can be integrated into the classroom.

Before designing the study, I reflected on my experiences teaching comics to students of all ages. I then created a six-part lesson plan (Appendices A and C) devised to teach participants techniques of drawing autobiographical comics. I selected grade four bilingual students for three reasons: (1) bilingual students at an all-French school in a predominantly English-speaking community such as Vancouver, British Columbia (StatsCan, 2011) have perceived distinct identities (Menard-Warwick, 2005; Sade, 2009); (2) my own career as a cartoonist and comics author began when I was a grade four English kid growing up in the French-Canadian province of Quebec, Canada; and (3) my observations as an educational professional have led me to conclude that French language schools are generally receptive to *les bandes dessinées* (French for comics) and identify with many of the popular European comics and albums I grew up reading in Quebec, such as Tintin, Astérix and Lucky Luke.

Flowing through the design of this study's lessons are connections to the British Columbia curriculum. For instance, links to learning outcomes in French language arts, social studies, art, and mathematics (BC Ministry of Education, 2016) are entrenched within the lesson plan. In this way I aim to demonstrate some of the curricular links that can be forged when employing comics in the classroom (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2010; Gavigan, & Tomasevich, 2011). Therefore, implicit within the study's research question are the goals to:

- Investigate the unique ways that making comics engages students in the classroom;
- Explore meaningful methods that comics can be integrated into curriculum; and
- Contribute to the growing knowledge and research of comics studies in education.

As a means to these ends, circumstances had to be created “that produce knowledge and understanding through *artistic and educational* inquiry-laden processes” (Irwin, 2008, p. xxvi,

italics in original). Thus, I created a series of arts-based knowledge mobilization activities in the form of six ninety-minute cartooning lessons. Arrangements were made, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, with the administration at l'Ecole Française. In the first lesson introduced the twenty-five bilingual students in Madame Centour's (also a pseudonym) grade four class to some of the ways they could create autobiographical caricatures of themselves. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, by the end of the lesson the students complained that they did not want to draw comics about their own lives but that they wanted to draw comics about their own original, made-up characters. Moreover, several students claimed to have characters they already wanted to write about. As such, the research question evolved into: *In what ways can drawing fictional comics by hand help bilingual grade four students negotiate conceptions of identity?*

1.5 Secret Identities

This research project investigates the secret (and not so secret) identities that students, as authors, can hide in the comics they draw by hand. The fictional characters students create are metaphors and avatars that mask their families, their friends and themselves (Chuang Xin, 2011; Lea, Belliveau, Wager, & Beck, 2011; Whitlock, 2006). This phenomenon manifests through the students' triangulating of perception with drawing and meaning systems (Cohn, 2012). Moreover, when students create original cartoon characters and narratives they claim ownership and, as a result, appear to be engaged and personally invested with achieving success.

I also research broad connections between making comics in the classroom and students' learning outcomes in curriculum subjects such as languages (Bitz, 2010; Bramlet, 2012) and art (Beaty, 2012). Comics studies (Heer & Worcester, 2009; Horsman, 2015) offers teachers and curricular theorists a rich platform with which to achieve learning outcomes of literacy, critical

thinking and participatory culture (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2010; Thomas, 1983; Tilley, 2014; Williams, 2008; Wilson, 2013). Additionally, applications of the comics medium is presented in this study as a language and art-form whose materials of practice are inexpensive and, generally speaking, readily available. Comics is a language (Groensteen, 2007, 2012b) and research tool that can be acquired through “a laborious process but a generative one” (Jones & Woglom, 2013, p. 188) and yet, at its essence, requires only a pencil and paper.

In this study, I demonstrate to the grade four participants historical modes of comics production (Groensteen, 2012a; Uidhir, 2012), whereby they develop techniques of writing, penciling, inking, lettering, editing, etc. in order to produce camera-ready artwork for printing. I argue the freehand drawing of comics, as a tool of pedagogical inquiry, provides students, artists, teachers and researchers unique ways of learning as well as a new language of inquiry. Furthermore, I suggest life-writing (Baetens, 2013b; Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997; El Refaie, 2012; Leggo, 2010) autobiographical comics or *autographics* (Scherr, 2013; Whitlock, 2006) generates a tool of self-study for students, educational professionals and researchers that can provide new understandings of identity, storytelling and writing beyond the self (Bitz, 2004a, 2009; Brunetti, 2011; Cixous & Sellers, 1994; Rippl & Etter, 2012). Therefore, I initially posited that teaching participants techniques of drawing autobiographical comics by hand could be a unique method for researching some of the ways the comics medium helps students’ negotiations of identity.

1.6 Auteur Complet and Ecriture Féminine

This study employs research methods of drawing comics, semiotic analysis, and a/r/tographical self-study to create understandings and explore emergent questions when making

comics and negotiating conceptions of identity. Analysis of the data is focused through two theories of authorship: l'auteur complet [the complete author] and l'écriture féminine [the feminine writing], whereby I argue that the freehand drawing of comics created by the singular artist (auteur complet) contains writing that endeavors beyond the self, and towards the other (écriture féminine). These two French theories of writing and authorship are employed in order to interpret and understand:

- The original characters students invent for their comics;
- The fictional narratives students write with the comics medium; and
- The classroom observations and audio interviews with the participants.

As such, the dual lenses of l'auteur complet and l'écriture féminine provide the binoculars with which to analyze some of the ways that bilingual English/French students negotiate conceptions of identity with comics.

1.6.1 L'Auteur Complet

Comics theorist Thierry Groensteen (2012a) writes that, “the complete author has the privilege and ‘irreplaceable chance’ of inventing his narrative while working on the page, because from the very beginning this narrative can take the form of a comic” (p. 116). Thus, Groensteen’s theory of “un auteur complet” [“a complete author”] (p. 116) is the framework that guides this study. Freehand drawing by the singular and complete author is, I suggest, one key to unlocking understandings of students’ conceptions of identity through comics. Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2013) writes that, “so long as it is done by hand, all writing is drawing” (p. 139), thus the freehand “narrative drawing” (Groensteen, 2012a, p. 118) of comics on a page can be

called writing. The “graphic trace of a specific artist” (p.117) is, ultimately, what propels this study of grade four bilingual students and the ways writing comics can connect with curriculum and student explorations of authorship and negotiations of identity.

Comics created by the complete author ascribe all production roles to “a single individual (the putative auteur)” (Uidhir, 2012, p. 49) who assumes the role of “writer, inker, penciller, colorist, letterer, editor, etc.” (p. 49). In this way, it is observed that the author’s authentic voice is transmitted to the reader (Bitz, 2009; Horstkotte, 2013; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Witek, 1989). The subjective and freehand semiotics (Chandler, 2002) of words and pictures traced by a singular author flow (Lim, 2004, 2007) and braid (Groensteen, 2007, 2008, 2013, 2016) together on the page to make meaning. Furthermore, the relationships amongst images drawn by hand on the comics page share what Groensteen (2007) terms an “iconic solidarity” (p. 18), which is described as “the central element of comics, the first criteria in the foundational order” (p. 18).

1.6.2 L’Ecriture Féminine

A graphic novel’s iconic solidarity is observed between the features (such as the frames, gutters, panels, signifieds, etc.) of the text’s pages. Thus a contiguous relationship between the elements on one page of comics is also maintained with the elements located upon the text’s preceding and following pages (Groensteen, 2007, 2008, 2013). These relationships bond with their author’s subjective writing and cartooning of comics language.

Artist/researcher Jaqueline Taylor (2014) writes that, “it is through intertextual and intermaterial relations that sites can be opened up for multiple articulations of knowledges” (p. 308). In this way, the theory and practice of applied cartooning (Barry, 2008, 2014; Brunetti, 2011; Eisner, 2008; Sturm & Bennett, 2014) are both manifest in this study of comics, learning

and identity. The iconic solidarity (Groensteen, 2007, 2013) of freehand words and pictures on a page of comics, which I call writing//cartooning, becomes a component of this research.

Writing//cartooning borrows its etymology from a/r/tography (Irwin, 2010) and writing//painting (Taylor, 2014), whereby the term “performs itself by persisting in using forward slashes to represent folds between the broadly conceived identities” (Irwin, 2010, para. 2) of writer and cartoonist. The two forward slashes stand in-between-together as a gutter that signals a movement towards understandings of the theories and practices that framework the comics medium and its forms in research, education, and literature.

In this study, the rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Irwin et al., 2006) of subjective semiotic symbols traced within the pages of the participants’ comics (Brunetti, 2011; Cohn, 2012, Groensteen, 2012a; Swarte, 2016) unfolds as narratives that disclose their authors’ unconscious (Hancock, 2009; Jung & Franz, 1964) understandings of identity (El Refaie, 2012; Nabizadeh, 2016). As such, a second theory of writing known as *l’écriture féminine* [the feminine writing] (Cixous, 1995; Cixous & Sellers, 1994) engages with this research. Analysis of the students’ comics reveals a political and feminist writing that strives to create narratives beyond the self, attends to the gaps between author and reader, and which speaks to the other (Bonnstetter & Ott, 2011; Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996; Taylor, 2014). Thus dual lenses of *l’auteur complet* and *l’écriture féminine* are focused analytically onto the students’ comics and doodles (Barry, 2008, 2014; Brunetti, 2011).

The participants’ comics contained openings for *l’écriture féminine* to inform some of the analysis. The feminist theory of *l’écriture féminine* brings into focus understandings of students’ negotiations of identity, writing beyond the self, and communicating to the other with comics. It is through their made-up characters and their fictional narratives that students communicate their

personalities, fears and hopes to the other (Bonnstetter & Ott, 2011; Brunetti, 2011; Cixous, 1995; Cixous & Clément, 1986; Taylor, 2014). The students achieve this by writing//cartooning in a comics language that is personal, subjective and, like their mother tongues, rooted in the unconscious (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997; McLuhan, 1964; Sellers, 1996).

Cartooning by hand is a multimodal learning activity (Carter, 2015; Sousanis, 2015) theorized by practitioner/scholar Neil Cohn (2012) as: “(a) the perceptual system, (b) the drawing system, and (c) meaning” (p. 175). In other words, I suggest the comics author triangulates repeated connections between nodes such as imagination (perception), motor-control (drawing) and visualization (meaning). Comics language is not tethered to a strict arrangement of signs and symbols (Groensteen, 2007) but leaves room for subjective interpretations and understandings of meaning. As such, French theories of *l’auteur complet* and *l’écriture féminine* focus onto the freehand comics and cartoons created by the bilingual participants of this research project. Applications of writing//cartooning are taught to the participants with theories of *l’auteur complet*. In this way the students can control each step of the process of the making of their comics, from the conception to the penciling and then to the inking.

1.7 Comics, Identity and Authorship

This study evolved from a perceived gap in opportunities for students to make comics by hand in the classroom, despite studies that link improved learning outcomes with comics (Bitz, 2004a, 2010; Norton, 2003; Scherr, 2013). The small number of studies that employ comics in the classroom use them predominantly as texts for reading, and their findings don’t generally focus on student engagements with comics as a language for writing. For instance, this study finds that a comics practice of writing//cartooning can create opportunities for students to

incorporate new vocabulary, develop storytelling techniques, and negotiate identity. This is accomplished through applied techniques of one of the comics medium's modes of production, whereby the narrative is created initially in pencil, proofread (by the student and the teacher), edited and then revised to incorporate new words and learning. Once the revisions are done, students trace over their pencil drawings in black ink so that the comic can be printed or photocopied.

Furthermore, explorations of identity and authorship are observed in the various pages of comics generated by the grade four bilingual students. Their sequential narratives and cartoon characters unconsciously reflect their fears, hopes, personalities, families and friends. Conversations and interviews with the participants of this study reveal their love for writing and cartooning with comics and they all expressed a desire for more classroom time with art and comics.

1.8 Looking Forward

This thesis explores the connections between students' negotiations of identity and drawing comics by hand. I contend there is a noticeable lack of opportunity for students to engage with the freehand drawing of comics in the classroom. In my experience, students really enjoy learning through comics, yet why are comics so rarely employed in classrooms and how can this be changed?

In Chapter Two's literature review, I chronicle some of the history and evolution of comics studies, along with more elaborate discussions on theories of identity and authorship through the freehand drawing of comics. In Chapter Three, I present one of this study's research methods by employing the comics medium itself to explore theories of practice, express my own

autographic life-writing, and negotiate the research design. Chapter Four discusses the data analysis, with particular attention paid to three randomly selected participants as case studies. Finally, in Chapter Five, I summarize the study's findings and objectives and posit the following suggestions, amongst others, for future study: establishing academic departments of comics studies; investigating the ways a comics-based curriculum can be developed; and exploring what phenomena affect student perceptions when they draw comics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

A review of the literature unveils generations of studies that find positive connections between comic books and education in terms of literacy, comprehension and engagement (Bitz, 2010; Chilcoat, 1993; Frank, 1949; Mackey, 1952; Roux, 1970; Thomas, 1983; Zorbaugh, 1944). I have observed, however, that most scholarly research of comics in the classroom employs the language predominantly as a form for reading and comprehension rather than as a medium for writing and self-expression. I argue this gap of practice (Brunetti, 2011) and applied cartooning (Sturm & Bennett, 2014) in education can be attributed to the pedagogical academy's broadly deficient knowledge and scarce practical or written applications of comics language (Bahl, 2015; Kraver, 2013; Uidhir, 2012). Furthermore, the perceived partial-literacy among educators with regards to comics is the result of a decades-long vituperation towards the medium by cultural hierarchies (Baetens, 2013a; Beaty, 2009). However, comics is slowly gaining momentum as a:

- Research tool in education (Jones & Woglom, 2013);
- Field of academic inquiry (Beaty, 2012; Groensteen, 2012a); and
- Practical language of self-expression to present scholarly findings (Ayers & Alexander-Tanner, 2010; Madrid-Manrique, 2015a, 2015b; Sousanis, 2015).

Throughout the four ages of comics, i.e. Golden, Silver, Bronze, and Modern (Benton, 1992; Blumberg, 2003; Jacobs & Jones, 1985; Klock, 2002) [which are explained below] the medium has suffered from diminished capital within the art world and educational fields (Beaty, 2009, 2012; Dorrell et al., 1995; Hajdu, 2008; Thomas, 2012; Tilley, 2014; Williams, 2008). Despite initial academic studies in the 1940s that pointed to improved literacy and classroom

engagement (Frank, 1949; Mackey, 1952; Sones, 1944; Zorbaugh, 1944), most research employing comics as pedagogical tool in education vanished by 1955. At that time censorship led to a virtual ban of the form in classrooms due, in part, to falsified data linking comics with juvenile delinquency (Dorrell et al., 1995; Tilley, 2012; Wertham, 1954a). Yet, over the last three decades, academics all over the world are re-investigating comics forms and are once again finding positive results that mirror the earlier studies from generations ago.

My passion for comics as professional art practice and theory coupled with my experiences as an art educator are what move me to investigate the ways in which the medium of comics can be integrated into curriculum. I suggest that making comics offers opportunities for students to create meaningful stories. As such, this project attempts to strengthen integration of comics language into curriculum by investigating this research question: *In what ways can drawing fictional comics by hand help bilingual grade four students negotiate conceptions of identity?*

2.1 The Ages of Comics

Comics and cartooning as tools in education have a history that can be traced back to the pen of early nineteenth century Swiss schoolteacher and (perhaps) inventor of comics, Rudolph Töpffer (Dacheux, 2014; Smolderen, 2014). Newspaper comics became immensely popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Blackbeard, Williams, & Smithsonian Institution, 1977), and in the 1930s the comic book emerged as a popular sociological phenomenon (Beaty, 2012; Hajdu, 2008). Extensive studies of comics in the classroom were soon initiated, and encouraging analyses linking comics to potentials in student learning appeared in journal articles (Bender & Lourie, 1941; Frank, 1949; Mackey, 1952; Sones, 1944;

Zorbaugh, 1944) throughout the Golden Age of Comics (approximately 1938-1953). In 1944, educator Sidonie Gruenberg wrote that the comics “have barely begun to show what is possible when writers and artists have learned to use the form for expressing their own ideas and sentiments, for transmitting their enthusiasm, their own likes and dislikes.” (p. 207)

A sea change occurred during the Silver Age of Comics (approximately 1954-1970) and the medium never got the opportunity to fully "show what is possible" (p. 207) due to a vocal anti-comic book contingent led by psychiatrist Dr. Fredric Wertham (1954a, 1954b, 1955). Wertham gained fame during the Golden Age by presenting research and dubious data (Tilley, 2012) he claimed proved connections between comics and juvenile delinquency (Dorrell et al., 1995; Wertham, 1954a; Williams, 2008). Following United States Senate (1954) hearings on comics and juvenile delinquency, an oppressive board of censors was established: The Comics Code Authority. This Code, despite being vociferously opposed to by the American Civil Liberties Union (1955), imposed strict limits on what could and could not be represented in comics. Scholarly journals soon demonstrated reactionary attitudes against comics by publishing articles with titles such as *Curse of the Comic Books* (Wertham, 1954b), *Comic Books: The Most Insidious Poison* (Gardiner, 1954), *Regulation Of Comic Books* (Harvard Law Review, 1955), and *The Problem Of Comic Books* (American Journal of Psychiatry, 1956). As a result, comics essentially disappeared from the classroom (Dorrell et al., 1995; Hajdu, 2008) as a form for reading and medium for writing.

On the other side of the Atlantic, comics were slowly emerging from a similar European vilification (Miller & Beaty, 2014). In the 1960s, burgeoning Franco-Belgian comics scholars termed les bandes dessinées to be *le neuvième art* [the ninth art] (Groensteen, 2007, 2010, 2012b, 2013; Miller, 1999, 2007) and acknowledged the medium’s aesthetic and pedagogical

capabilities (Andre, 1965; Couperie, 1972; Couperie, Destefanis, & François, 1967; Fresnault-Deruelle, 1972; Roux, 1970). As the ninth art, comics is a medium unique from the other eight arts, which are broadly understood to be architecture, sculpture, painting/drawing, music, poetry/literature, theatre/histrionics, film, and radio/TV (Kedney, 1885; Groensteen, 2012b).

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a market for adult comics was developing in France, which led to the creation of sequential narratives and albums that portrayed mature themes such as sex and politics (Miller, 2007). Furthermore, the American Underground Comix movement of this time provided revolutionary new understandings of comics in North America (Estren, 1974; Goldweber, 2013; Witek, 1989) and opened additional doors to the medium's ongoing cultural legitimacy. For instance, artist Art Spiegelman, following twenty years as one of the cartoonists in the Underground Comix phenomenon, was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for his graphic novel *Maus* (1997) in 1992 (Ma, 1997; Orbán, 2007).

The Bronze Age of Comics (approximately 1971–1985) saw the birth of the graphic novel (Baetens & Frey, 2015; Gravett, 2005; Williams, 2008) in America, a literary term for a form that can be traced back to the European albums (Stein & Thon, 2013) such as Franco-Belgian cartoonist Hergé's comic *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* which was published in 1930. However, the term graphic novel opened up diverse opportunities for the medium as bookstores, libraries and universities made shelf-space for the emerging new book forms of comics .

During the Modern Age (approximately 1986 to 1999) the popular phenomenon of Japanese comics, known as *manga*, exploded across North America and Europe (Goldstein & Phelan, 2009; Groensteen, 2013; Groensteen, Jennequin, & Morgan, 1991; Thompson, 2007). Growing cultural acceptance of comics is observed in France during the 1980s (Groensteen, 2007; Miller, 2007; Williams, 2008) when left-leaning governments began funding “an apparatus

of legitimization” (Miller, 2007, p. 31) consisting of comics conferences, salons and schools. Additionally, a more rigorous comics scholarship and theorizing developed in North America during the Modern Age, especially after the success of *Maus* in 1992 (Horsman, 2015; Ndalianis, 2011). However research at that time, much as it is today, employed comic books and graphic novels predominantly for reading and rarely as a writing and drawing medium of self-expression (Bahl, 2015; Carter, 2013; Kraver, 2013; Pratt, 2009). It is observed that encouraging pedagogical implications for education in terms of literacy and comprehension are rediscovered in the Modern Age of Comics (Chilcoat; 1993; Gloeckner, 1989; Sawicki, 1989; Ujiie & Krashen, 1996).

Sequential narratives in the twenty-first century appear to be increasingly subsumed into what I call the Digital Age of Comics (2000-present) whereby metaphors for drawing, turning pages, and lettering are manifest virtually on screens as applications, websites and mechanical type. The Digital Age has witnessed slow but progressive developments for comics whereby stakeholders are slowly implementing the ninth art into the academy (Baetens, 2013a; Ndalianis, 2011), whether as texts for reading or, in rare instances, as creative language of writing. A slow but growing acceptance by cultural gatekeepers of comics as a form of literature can be observed in scholar/practitioner Nick Sousanis’ PhD dissertation, *Unflattening*, which was published as a graphic novel in 2015, almost twenty years after educator Matt Freeman (1997) wrote the article *The Case For Comics*. Freeman’s article was published twenty-seven years after Roux (1970) wrote his book *La Bande Dessinée Peut Être Educative [Comics Can be Educational]*, and fifty-three years after Gruenberg’s (1944) declaration that the comics “have barely begun to show what is possible” (p. 207).

Growing perceptions of the graphic novel as a literary form in the first two decades of the

twenty-first century have led to a slow legitimization of the medium by cultural hierarchies and elites in the art world (Baetens, 2013a; Beaty, 2009, 2011). For instance, Hergé and Art Spiegelman, amongst others, have exhibited their comics in galleries and museums internationally (Spiegelman, 2013; Taylor, 2010). However, scholar Bart Beaty (2009) writes that the Louvre’s disappointing show of comics “sadly reaffirm(s) dominant cultural hierarchies rather than challenging them” (p. 162) by holding the exhibit in one small, poorly-lit room in the basement thereby doing “little to enhance the reputation of comics” (p. 161).

2.2 Building Identity

Connections between making comics and identity-negotiating can be encountered in the practices and rituals of the medium. As such, explorations of identity are revealed in the canon of autographic works that have been published over the years. For instance, negotiations of identity with comics are presented in cartoonist Marjane Satrapi’s (2007) graphic novel *Persepolis*, which explores the implications of being an Iranian immigrant in Europe (Davis, 2005; Nabizadeh, 2016). Furthermore, Art Spiegelman (2011) investigates the relationship he has with his father in the graphic novel *Maus* (1997) and in so doing documents a form of self-therapy and identity exploration through comics (Silberstein, 2000). Additionally, studies indicate student investigations with comics help them to develop literacy, empathy and conceptions of identity that can assist in negotiating issues of bullying, cyber-bullying, engagement and community through the participatory possibilities of the medium in the classroom (Bitz, 2009, 2010; Norton, 2003; Tilley, 2014).

Educator Michael Bitz (2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2010, 2015) has been researching students’ experiences with making comics since 2002. In his findings he writes, “students create their

comics with a heightened sense of self-identity if they know that their comics will be read by others” (2010, p. 88). This phenomenon of sharing comics in the classroom is fascinating to me and represents another component of this study of grade four bilingual children and comics. For instance, following the conclusion of the cartooning lessons in this study of grade four students, printed copies of their comics were compiled and distributed to each classroom participant, their teacher and the school’s principal. All students were aware from the beginning that their comics would be collected into anthologies, with each participant receiving a copy. As such, each one of the twenty-five classroom students who participated completed at least one page of comics. Many exceeded expectations and created multi-page sequential narratives. It is observed that the students have a vested and personal interest in the final product. As one participant said to me when she saw her classmates’ work, along with her own, printed into a comic book, “I felt proud, and I felt proud for the other people”. In this way, making comics creates openings for students to share stories with each other (Barry, 2008; Bitz, 2010).

2.3 The Author and the Other

In order to recognize the ways comics can help students’ negotiations of identity, I suggest that some understandings of identity are necessary. Jacques Lacan (2001) describes identity as beginning with “the mirror stage” (p. 1), which is the moment a child recognizes his or her reflection in a mirror. The child identifies with the image and sees the “ ‘*Thou art that*’, in which is revealed to him [her] the cipher of his [her] mortal destiny” (p. 5). Elizabeth Grosz writes “the subject recognizes itself at the moment it loses itself in/as the other. The other is the foundation and support of its identity, as well as what destabilizes or annihilates it” (as cited in Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 18). The child declares that its reflection is “ ‘me’! And thus the ‘I’

becomes split. The split in the subject inaugurated by the entrance into language generates the sense of an ever elusive grasping for self–presence that is forever unachievable” (p. 18). In other words, the child declares it’s being in a world of others who equally declare their presence.

Hélène Cixous writes that she sees herself “as the first other” (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997, p. 90), and the second other is the “m/other” (Sellers, 1996, p. 8). The communication of language to the other encodes a physical bond that is passed on materially from the m/other to the child through singing, holding, caressing, etc. In this way, the mother tongue of acquired language can manifest materially in a comics author’s work. This can occur when attention is paid to the contiguous nature of the panels and the liminal spaces (Grauer et al., 2011) of the gutters in-between. This writing to the other is, broadly speaking, a theory of *écriture féminine* (Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996; Taylor, 2014) as practiced in comics, upon which I elaborate below in the thesis.

Comics can be a medium for communicating an author’s voice to the reader, yet the medium can also be a metaphorical mirror upon which the reader reflects their own being. The language of comics assists both the author and the reader to identify and empathize with an image through a phenomenon that I suggest is similar to the child’s recognition of his/herself in a mirror (Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997; Lacan, 2001). For example, English language scholar Gillian Whitlock (2006) describes the autographic cartoon character as a “cipher” (p. 977) with whom both the author and the reader can empathetically identify.

Cartoonist Scott McCloud (1994) deciphers this as “when you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face-- you see it as the face of another... but when you enter the world of the cartoon-- you see yourself” (p. 36). Thus the comics author’s manifestation of a cartoon character opens at least two opportunities for explorations of identity: one in which the comics

writer/author develops an empathetic identification with their “autobiographical avatar” (Whitlock, 2006, p. 977) or fictional cartoon character (Bitz, 2009, 2010); and another opportunity is presented for the reader/other to negotiate identity by embracing and empathizing with the author/other’s cartoon avatar (Morgan, 2009).

2.4 Bilingual Students and Identity

Lacan & Sheridan (2001) observe that the child of the mirror stage recognizes its reflection is an image that “has been mastered and found empty” (p. 1). The child “immediately rebounds... in a series of gestures in which he experiences at play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment” (p.1). Furthermore, studies find that bilingual students, when telling a story, often express themselves with more hand gestures than monolingual students, and it has been observed that these gestures facilitated memory retrieval (Pika, Nicoladis & Marentette, 2006; Smithson, Nicoladis, & Marentette, 2011). I suggest embodied and gestural movements can also be mapped through a comic’s freehand words and pictures to the author’s perception, drawing, and meaning systems (Cohn, 2012).

University of Pitesti educator Adela Dumitrescu (2011) defines identity as “a product of social, cultural, political and other ways of construction through different approaches” (p.148). Language scholar Bonny Norton further elaborates social and cultural contexts for identity building within a framework of second language acquisition (SLA). SLA theory and research has grown over the years (Ellis, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992; Heller, 1987; Johanson, 2009; Schumann, 1978) and, at its core, Norton (2013) emphasizes concepts of investment, identity and “imagined communities” (p.195). Norton writes:

I use the term identity to reference how a person understands his or her

relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future. I argue that SLA needs to develop a conception of identity that is understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable, social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction. In taking this position, I foreground the role of language as constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's identity (p. 45).

2.5 Assumed Roles

Identity through comics can also be built from assumed roles. For example, Michael Bitz (2010) organized a collaborative comic book project where individuals within artist-teams of collective authorship (Groensteen, 2012a; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Uidhr, 2012) each assumed a particular role: writer, artist, letterer, colourist, etc. Bitz writes that multiple opportunities arose for either collaboration and/or singular authorship with comics in the classroom, including mentoring, brainstorming and self-reflection. I recall similar identity-building organization occurring when I was a bilingual grade four student drawing comics in the classroom with my friends. Production of our narratives developed organically and collaboratively with everyone contributing in areas they felt confident, and even learning and attempting new activities such as colouring, lettering or storytelling.

Over the last three decades, comics from Japan, known as *manga*, have become increasingly popular in North America and Europe (Bitz, 2009; Goldstein & Phelan, 2009; Groensteen, 2013; Groensteen, et al., 1991; Thompson, 2007) as they offer many of the “same themes of identity as young adult fiction” (Goldstein & Phelan, 2009, p. 33). These include questions that involve the poststructuralist framework of Lacan's view, which suggests that

identity is influenced by language, culture and unconscious aspects (Chen, 2011). Norton (2013) also employs poststructuralist perspectives on identity in relation to SLA theory when she writes: “poststructuralism depicts the individual – the subject – as diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space. Subjectivity is conceived of as multiple rather than unitary, decentered rather than centered” (p. 162). It is observed in this study of grade four bilingual students that pluralities in their subjective identity constructions and conceptions emerge in the comics they create. This occurs because comics is a living language (Brunetti, 2011) that does not adhere to a strict set of signs or symbols (Groensteen, 2007) and is thus modified and customized according to the subjective aesthetics, techniques and intentions of the author.

2.6 Writing//Cartooning

My arts research of writing//cartooning theorizes practice and practices theory (Kraver, 2013; Taylor, 2014) by employing the freehand drawing of comics (Eisner, 2008; Horstkotte, 2013; Witek, 1989) as a means to explore, transmit, and understand relationships between the unconscious, identity and authorship. Meanings of comics texts are mediated materially (Groensteen, 2007, 2013; Qvortrup, 2006; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Thon & Wilde, 2016; Wilde, 2015) as both a language of self-expression (the medium) for the author and a mode of delivery (the form) for the reader. For example, a printed page from Satrapi’s (2007) *Persepolis* transmits the freehand lines of the author into the hands of the reader, who is now free to create personal meanings, establish the timing of the narrative, project images in the gaps, create voices for the characters, etc.

The hybrid research (Taylor, 2014) of writing//cartooning that I employ is informed by a “material practice” (Bolt, 2007, p. 31) of pen-to-paper writing, doodling, sketching and drawing comics (Brunetti, 2011; Horsman, 2015; Swarte, 2016). I suggest that these techniques can create data, present findings and open up new ways of investigating relationships between students, educators, curriculum, learning, authorship, identity and language. As such, this research project studies the material and lifeworld phenomenon of freehand drawing comics in the classroom, and the impacts this activity can have on bilingual grade four students’ engagements with learning, developments of authorship and negotiations of identity.

The embodied and gestural activities (i.e., freehand drawing, sketching and lettering) of this project are studied for links between the “empathetic doodling” (Horsman, 2015, p. 149) of cartooning and students’ negotiations of identity (Bitz, 2009; Gauld, 2016; Horsman, 2015; Swarte, 2016; Witek, 1989). Analysis of the data generated in this study began with readings, translations and semiosis (Han, 2011) of the students’ comics and interviews. During analysis and research into understandings of the data, two conceptual theories of authorship came into focus. The lenses of these theories were then turned back towards the data and employed for further understandings. The theories that complicate this research are:

- L’auteur complet [the complete author] (Groensteen, 2012a; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Uidhr, 2012) whereby comics texts are written and drawn by a singular creator; and
- L’écriture féminine [the feminine writing] (Bonnstetter & Ott, 2011; Cixous, 1995; Cixous & Clément, 1986; Taylor, 2014), a feminist and political theory of authorship that associates language as materially passed on from the “m/other” (Sellers, 1996, p. 6) to the child.

Studies whereby making comics are investigated for negotiations of learning, identity and authorship are rarely undertaken in arts research, and understandings of student-generated comics through theories of *auteur complet* and *écriture féminine* are non-existent in pedagogy.

2.7 Authorship and Language Development

Texts written through a lens of *écriture féminine* situate authorship as a function of the body (Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996) whereby thoughts are translated metaphorically as “writing the body” (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. XVI). For instance, the ritualistic, material and physical gesture of dipping a pen into a bottle of ink and drawing a cartoon on the page is an embodied act that writes perceptual and cognitive thought into a personal language that contains a plurality of subjective meanings (Bickel, 2008; Brunetti, 2011; Cohn, 2005, 2012; Gauld, 2016; Groensteen, 2007). The practices and theories of freehand cartooning embody materially as language and are grounded on the understanding that writing is drawing when created by hand (Cohn, 2012; Gauld, 2016; Ingold, 2013; Swarte, 2016). To put this into context, please visualize, or better yet create yourself, dear reader, the drawing of a circle that possesses two dots for eyes and a curved line for a mouth (Figure 2.1). A simple drawing in four strokes such as this initiates semiosis (Han, 2011; Lim, 2007) of a smiling face and, potentially, a meaning transmits to the reader.

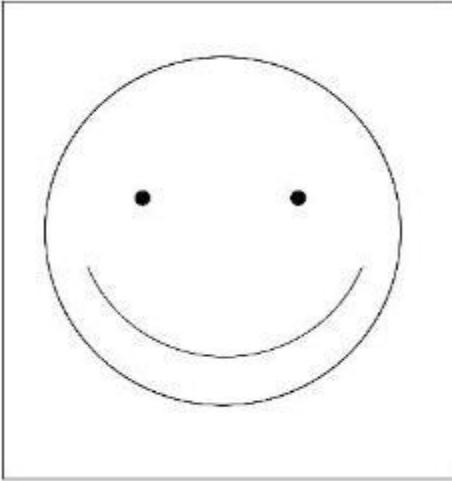


Figure 2.1 A happy face in four strokes of the pen.

Researcher Barbara Walker (1983) writes that early in humanity's evolution "motherhood was the only recognized bond of relationship" (p. 680) and that "the Goddess created the civilized arts... alphabets, pictographs, mandalas and other magical signs" (pp. 684-685). Feminist theorists Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément situate language acquisition in the physical and material "*mater* and matter, woman and nature" (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. XV, italics in original) role of the nurturing mother who holds, feeds, caresses, talks and sings in "a critical exchange that is reflective, responsive, and relational" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 106), as when she softly sings, gently caresses, or lovingly nurses her baby. These physical, material and gestural life world acts transmit early language developments to the child who in turn analyzes, absorbs, encodes and communicates back, initially by babbling, crying or laughing and, eventually, through speech and writing. This solidarity with the m/other (Sellers, 1996) as "Other" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 19) creates what Elizabeth Grosz calls the child's "foundation and support of its identity, as well as what destabilizes or annihilates it" (p. 18), thus uniting language into an intimate partnership of the child's identification with the m/other.

An example of the potential destabilization of identity Grosz mentions occurs when authors write characters in heroic positions of masculine mastery (Cixous, 1995; Groensteen, 2013; Sellers, 1996) thus rupturing identification with the other. Similarly, in *The Comic Book Project: The Lives of Urban Youth*, educator Michael Bitz (2004a) found that students portrayed “their daily environments. The authors were usually the main characters but they rarely acted as heroes. They were often at the mercy of uncontrollable circumstances” (p. 3).

Theories of *écriture féminine* posit that mother tongue language acquisition introduces the child to an empathetic identification with the other thus refuting the “either/or logic of complete separation from the m/other, and argues for the continuing impact of the body in adult life” (Sellers, 1996, p. 6). Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan (1964) wrote in his book *Understanding Media* that “each mother tongue teaches its users a way of seeing and feeling the world, and of acting in the world, that is quite unique” (p. 83). For example, McLuhan’s Canadian compatriot, comedian Norm MacDonald (2016), recalls in his memoir that when he was a baby, “my mother did all my talking for me back then because I hadn’t gotten the hang of it yet... My best friend was the cat who only knew one word, ‘meow’, but at the time it was one more word than I knew” (p. 14). A broad analysis of this quote reveals MacDonald’s cognitive language development to be connected materially to his mother (mater/matter) and perceptually to a cat (nature/the other) in his process of meaning-making and language acquisition.

The mother tongue develops through a bond of natural and physical contact between m/other and child. This contact embodies as a material “holding, touching, caressing, singing and babbling” (Sellers, 1996, p. 8) of the mother whereby the feminine “goes in the direction of animality, plants, the inhuman” (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. 8) through nursing, cooing and even the act of giving birth itself. Yet *écriture féminine* does not represent a male/female gender

dichotomy, as works by writers such as William Shakespeare and Franz Kafka are cited as feminine writing (Cixous, 1995; Cixous & Calle-Gruber, 1997) because “writing transcends sexual identity” (Miller, 1995, p. 197).

Écriture féminine endeavours “to write the other in ways which refuse to appropriate or annihilate the other’s difference in order to create and glorify the self in a masculine position of mastery” (Sellers, 1996, pp. 11–12) thus potentially destabilizing identity in the author and the reader. Groensteen suggests this destabilization potentially occurs in a phenomenon known as “‘cosplay’ (derived from ‘costume play’)” (Groensteen, 2013, p. 76) whereby enthusiasts “dress up as their favourite hero (and) have little interest in the story - what they are seeking is the hero or the heroine with whom they identify” (p. 76) thus rupturing an aspect of the intimate relationship a comics author can create with the reader/other.

Cixous advises the writer to avoid solipsism and attend “to the gaps” (Sellers, 1996, p. 16) in order to “prevent constructing the self in a position of mastery” (p. 16), thus shattering the trio of the comics author as narrator, monstrator and reciter (Groensteen, 2007, 2010) by creating a fourth masculine and heroic identity. Within the gaps between the panels in comics (known as the gutter), an author empathetically relinquishes mastery to the reader who “projects the missing image (or images)” (Groensteen, 2007, p. 113) because “meaning is constituted between beings” (Irwin, 2010, para. 5). Therefore writing comics “involves respect for the other and an honest appraisal of the self’s own needs... embarking on ‘the passage toward more than the self, toward another than the self, toward the other’ ” (Sellers, 1996, pp. 18-19). In other words, the comics author creates openings in the braiding and flow of the panels (Brunetti, 2011; Groensteen, 2006, 2007, 2013, 2016; Lim, 2007) within which the reader is invited to narratively construct meaning.

Michel Foucault (1998) and Thierry Groensteen (2012a, 2013) discuss the bond between a work's authorial voice and its lifeworld writer. For instance, Foucault wrote that the writer is discovered in "sketches, letters, fragments, etc. . . . the text always contains a certain number of signs referring to the author" (p. 215) and that writing is "an interplay of signs arranged less according to its signified content than according to the very nature of the signifier" (p. 206). As such, a comics text can reveal its author through the variety of subjective and semiotic arrangements traced onto its pages. For instance, Art Spiegelman's life-writing draws upon a variety of art styles that reveal the author's understandings of trauma (Davo, 2011; Devlin, Heer, & Oliveros, 2013; Orbán, 2007; Spiegelman, 1997, 2004, 2009, 2011, 2013; Versluys, 2007; Witek, 1989). Groensteen (2007, 2010) posits that a comics page reveals *narrator*, *monstrator* and *reciter* as a hybrid and authorial communicator of comics language to the reader. I put forward narrative texts in captions or word balloons and narrative drawings such as the "fictitious speaker" (Foucault, 1998, p. 215) of the cartoon character unite with the writer, thus creating a three-way identity in the author:

- The 3D lifeworld *subject* is the narrative source (narrator);
- The metonymic and diegetic *voice* of the narrative text (reciter);
- The 2D semiotics of narrative drawings and *character* (monstrator).

The term I created to describe the singular comics author as a construction of threes (subject/voice/character-artist/researcher/teacher/-narrator/reciter/monstrator) is the *indivitrío* (as opposed to the implied dichotomy known as the *individual*). According to Groensteen (2013), the "I-as-character" (p. 98) construction is not obvious amidst the assemblages of words and pictures. Furthermore, the *indivitrío* construction threatens to shatter should the author portray

the character as a hero or in a “masculine position of mastery” (Sellers, 1996, p. 12). Such a scenario potentially creates a new, fourth identity that neglects the other and destabilizes the relationship between author and reader.

Scholar Bart Beaty (2012) refers to comics as “Art’s Other” (p. 25) and explains that the form’s marginalization is the result of “the relationship between elite and mass culture as a gendered dynamic” (p. 186). As such, the masculine modern art world (Taylor, 2014) deemed comic books “a feminized form for a major part of their history” (Beaty, 2012, p. 186) due, in part, to their perceived sentimental and kitsch appeal. Thus *écriture féminine* and writing//cartooning comics break away from conventional practices (Cixous, 1995; Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996; Smith & Watson, 1998) by rupturing “the law that structures... more masculine forms of writing” (Sellers, 1996, p. 21). For instance, in his introduction to cartoonist Joe Sacco’s (2002) book *Palestine*, Edward Said wrote that:

comics in their relentless foregrounding... seemed to say what couldn’t otherwise be said, perhaps what wasn’t permitted to be said or imagined, defying the ordinary processes of thought, which are policed, shaped and re-shaped by all sorts of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures... I felt that comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently (p. x).

The feminist cry of “the personal is political” (Miller, 1995, p. 200) emerged in the 1960s and Cixous’ (1995) *écriture féminine* is “*political* and not just literary work... which goes beyond... the masculine command” (p. 174, italics in original). *Ecriture féminine* is, therefore, “a fundamentally political strategy, designed to address the wrongs of culture through a revalidation of the rights of nature” (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. XV).

2.8 Medium and Materiality

Understandings of comics medium's auteur complet [complete author] (Groensteen, 2012a, Rippl & Etter, 2013; Uidhr, 2012), in addition to the practices of physical, material and freehand drawing (Cohn, 2012; Groensteen 2012a; Swarte, 2016; Witek, 1989) open opportunities for further investigations into Cixous' contentions of the m/other, the "*mater* and matter" (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. XV, italics in original), as nexus of language.

Broadly speaking, the medium of comics is mediated as a material exchange between writer and reader, author and other. Rippl & Etter (2013) write that:

'medium' refers in a very general sense to the material side of the sign, i.e., its carrier – it is that which mediates... and the focus is on the question of how this material side of the sign/semiotic system is involved in the production of narrative meaning (p. 193).

Comics medium is defined by its "material substance and mode of encoding" (194) and, as Rippl & Etter suggest, the experience of the author's lines on paper are "remediated through print" (197) materially to the reader (Baumann, 2009; Bitz, 2009; Groensteen, 2006; Horsman, 2015; Lim, 2007; Rippl & Etter, 2013). Thus authors who are writing in the language of the ninth art transmit their narratives to the reader through the multiplicity of the medium's material forms such as albums, comic books, or graphic novels, amongst others. Therefore, as educators Barone & Eisner (2012) write, "paying close attention to the nuances that flow from the perception of qualities becomes a critical feature in qualitative research" (p. 11) with comics. A comic's material and aesthetic experiences contribute to the text's narrative (Groensteen, 2006; Pratt, 2009; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Thon & Wilde, 2016; Wilde, 2015) and create understandings of the

medium's strengths as mode of participatory culture in the classroom (Norton, 2003; Tilley, 2014). As Bitz (2010) has observed, "Comics, and the process of creating such works, connect students in unique and stimulating ways" (p. 93).

Material and physically printed comics also create openings for community building within the classroom (Norton, 2003, 2013; Thomas, 1983; Tilley, 2014) as students share their stories with each other. There is a plurality of emergent meanings and subjective language properties (Bramlett, 2012; Groensteen, 2007) found in the comics students make. As such, the personal meanings of the singular comics artist, who is writing//cartooning and/or doodling as *l'auteur complet*, appear in the triangulation of three systems: perception, drawing and meaning (Cohn, 2012).

2.9 The Unconscious

Psychologist Carl Jung (1964) writes that "we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend" (p. 21) and that we "also produce symbols unconsciously and spontaneously" (p. 21). Thus, an author's voice can be said to develop from systems that are unconsciously rooted in the physical and gestural interactions embodied in mother tongue and language acquisition (Cohn, 2012; Norton, 2013; Pika, Nicoladis, & Marentette, 2006; Sellers, 1996; Smithson, Nicoladis & Marentette, 2011). Lacan believed "that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" (Liu, 2010, p. 6) and Sellers (1996) writes that author communication "attends to the gaps – to what is repressed or marginalized – in the text" (p. 16) in consideration of the other's experience of reading.

This form of empathetic writing is rooted in "the (feminine) motivations of mother-love (which) offer the model for a radically different relation to the other" (p. 8) by renegotiating

hegemonic patriarchy and creating possibilities for progressive revolution in writing (Cixous, 1995). The comics author can achieve an empathetic transmission to the reader by writing to the “difference that has been mis/identified in the Law of the Father. This new language would be, according to Cixous, a writing of and from the body” (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 19).

Chris Ware is a master comics artist (Ball & Kuhlman, 2010; Freedman, 2015; Mauro, 2010) who calls freehand cartooning "empathetic doodling" (Horsman, 2015, p. 149). In the same article, Art Spiegelman suggests that, "comics drawings have the power to establish an intimate link between the doodling hand of the artist in the body of the reader, communicating first and foremost on the affective level" (p. 149). Thus it is observed that one way in which the embodied and freehand gestures of the comics author can be transmitted materially to the reader is through print (Rippl & Etter, 2013; Wilde, 2015). A scan of comics history reveals the medium and its forms evolved in print under the singular hands and freehand drawings of many complete authors (Beauchamp, 2014) working pen to paper. Additionally, the top five comics assigned to college students (Beaty, 2016) are all drawn freehand printed texts; and four of the five are essentially works of complete authorship. Those four are *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud (1994), *Maus* by Art Spiegelman (1997), *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (2007), and *Jimmy Corrigan* by Chris Ware (2000).

2.10 A/r/tography and Comics

The writing//cartooning of this study is informed by a methodology of a/r/tography (Berk, 2015; Irwin, 2010; Springgay et al., 2008). A/r/tography is “practitioner based research that perceives research as a disposition for knowledge creation through acts of theorizing as a complication” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxiii) and, as such, allows for renderings of

theoretical and rhizomatic spaces such as contiguity, metaphor, and living inquiry, amongst others (Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Lea et al., 2011).

This study inspires a questing into “concepts within the movement of events” (Irwin, 2013, p. 200) and represents investigations into the liminal spaces between cognitive drawing, learning and identity (Grauer et al., 2011). In this study, observations of student authorship focus on a living inquiry into the triangulation of drawing, perception and meaning (Cohn, 2012). Theories of *écriture féminine*, *auteur complet* and freehand drawing complicate events (Cixous, 1995; Groensteen, 2012a; Horstkotte, 2013; Witek, 1989) and represent ongoing questions into student learning. Thus this research advances questions that an a/r/tographical methodology can guide towards understandings:

- What aspects of comics do students want to explore?
- In what ways are original cartoon characters manifestations of student authorship and identity?
- How is drawing comics important in helping authors develop an authentic voice?

Relationships between writing//cartooning and a/r/tography are also examined in the comics I draw for this study. Chapter Three is drawn as an autobiographical comic that “constructs the very thing one is attempting to make sense of” (Springgay, 2008, p. 159). Poet Carl Leggo (2008) writes, “we need to write autobiographically in order to connect with others” (p. 4) and, because comics can be a language written for the other (Brunetti, 2011; Groensteen, 2007), autobiographical comics do, I suggest, create strong connections between author and reader. Questing autobiographically is one opening that has allowed the comics medium to slowly emerge from institutional vilification. For instance, three of the top five comics assigned to

college students (*Maus* by Spiegelman, *Persepolis* by Satrapi, and *Understanding Comics* by McCloud) are autobiographical (Beaty, 2016).

2.11 Comics in School Settings

Since the 1990s a small number of studies have involved freehand drawing of comics in the school classroom. In 1993, social studies educator George Chilcoat developed research whereby students created historical comics for a secondary school classroom project. Chilcoat outlined some of the practical and theoretical considerations students were encouraged to incorporate into their comics: panels as basic units; the relationships between panels; story development; speech balloons; characters; and drawing.

This was the earliest study I could locate in the literature that suggests both theorizing and practicing a basic language of comics in a school classroom project. Chilcoat's (1993) advice around drawing, however, can be summed up as "draw each panel as realistically as possible, draw each scene with historical accuracy, draw in color, and keep the drawings simple" (para. 19). Almost ten years later, Morrison et al. (2002) elaborate on Chilcoat's earlier 1993 findings with the same advice to "draw each panel as realistically and as believably as possible" (p. 762). This is perhaps unsatisfying criteria for works as subjective and diverse as student-generated comics. Groensteen (2007) asserts that comics language is a "semiotic system devoid of signs, or at least not reliant on a finished system of signs" (p. 4) and, as such, is a medium that embraces subjective customizations and adaptations. Authors bring their individual experience, creativity and style to the practice and theory of writing//cartooning. Therefore asserting that comics authors "draw each panel as realistically and as believably as possible" (Morrison et al., 2002, p. 762) imposes restrictive conditions that constrain students' agency and creativity.

In 2001, researcher Michael Bitz set into motion his long-running *Comic Book Project* (CBP). The CBP began as an after-school comic book club for 733 participating fourth-through-eighth grade students and forty-eight teachers at thirty-three sites across New York City. Three years later, Bitz wrote two papers studying comics and education, with results that echoed the positive ones from studies sixty years earlier including improved literacy, enhanced comprehension, and focused engagement (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b).

In *The Comic Book Project: The Lives of Urban Youth*, Bitz (2004a) finds that students tell stories about living in New York City. He writes that students portrayed “their daily environments. The authors were usually the main characters but they rarely acted as heroes. They were often at the mercy of uncontrollable circumstances” (p. 3). Bitz’s observations reflect Cixous’ contentions that writers should not portray themselves in heroic positions of mastery (Sellers, 1996). Groensteen (2013) and Brunetti (2011) posit similar warnings, especially in phenomena such as “cosplay” (Groensteen, 2013, p. 76). Comics practice in education provides opportunities for students to negotiate conceptions of identity and difference, for when they put “their words into the mouths of comic book characters, students find a voice and, in turn, an outlet for self-expression” (Bitz, 2010, p. 88).

Most pedagogical applications and studies of comics employ the forms as texts for reading, theory and/or literacy (Bahl, 2015; Kraver, 2013; Pratt, 2009; Syma & Weiner, 2013), whereas the CBP is one in a small number of classroom studies where participants practice making their own comics (Bitz, 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2010, 2015; Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011; Maliszewski, 2013). In his book *Manga High: Literacy, Identity, and Coming of Age in an Urban High School*, Bitz (2009) writes that the inherent handmade quality of comics is what readers find appealing and inspiring. However most of the students in the examples abandon the

freehand voice of the medium in order to render the lettering of their comics on the computer. Only two of the nine case studies showcased in *Manga High* are drawn and lettered entirely freehand. Interestingly, those two comics (Bitz, 2009, p. 102; pp. 108–110) are the most self-reflective/reflexive representations of authorial voice (Brunetti, 2011; Horstkotte, 2013; Witek, 1989). However, in Bitz’s (2010) follow-up book, *When Commas Meet Kryptonite*, a larger percentage of the participants’ comics have retained their authors’ hand-lettered text and dialogue thereby maintaining the “highly discursive qualities” (Horstkotte, 2013, p. 33) of their authors’ freehand voices.

Mechanical type in comics overlays an artificiality to the author’s voice (Horstkotte, 2013; Witek, 1989) and skirts understandings of Ivan Brunetti’s (2011) “*5 Cs of cartooning*” (p. 25), which are composition, communication, consistency, clarity, and calligraphy. The criteria of calligraphy (Eisner, 2008; Khouri, 2011; Zubrzycki, 2012) is posited in comics scholar Stephen Witek’s (1989) observation that “for a formal analysis of comic books, freehand lettering, no matter how precisely done... more closely approximates the nuances of the human voice than does mechanically produced type” (p. 23). This observation is further supported by comics veteran and pioneer Will Eisner (2008) who writes that, “hand lettering will always be the most idiosyncratic and expressive means of inserting words into balloons and text panels” and that “personal calligraphy... adds a recognizable ‘human’ quality to graphic stories” (p. 26).

The concepts, goals, and curricular links of this research are unique and dynamic, and comply with some of the objectives of the BC Ministry of Education’s (2016) new curriculum for grade four (<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum>). Examples of these core curricular competencies, as they apply to the comics created by the grade four bilingual participants in this study, include, but are not limited to:

Arts Education

- Choose artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques and environments using combinations and selections for specific purposes in art making;
- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences;
- Experience, document and present creative works in a variety of ways.

French

- Préciser le rôle des personnages dans un texte [Define the parts of characters in a text];
- Réviser ses textes et clarifier ses propos [Revise writing and clarify purpose].

Mathematics

- Develop, demonstrate, and apply mathematical understanding through play, inquiry, and problem solving;
- Connect mathematical concepts to each other and to other areas and personal interests (BC Ministry of Education, 2016).

The connections between the government's curriculum objectives and elements of this study's methods are addressed in the research design.

2.12 Coming Up

Academic studies of comics texts have, over the last two decades, developed into diverse and exciting fields for research and theory. However, practices of materially making comics as a

component to pedagogical inquiries is a neglected yet, I argue, important component to sequential narratives and art education research. A perceived academic laxity towards comics has resulted in deficient opportunities for students to engage with making them in the classroom. As such, Chapter Three is presented as research through the language of comics whereby I explore understandings of sequential narratives in the realm of the ninth art. In this light, Chapters Three and Four lead to more clarity and understandings of the question: *In what ways can drawing fictional comics by hand help bilingual grade four students negotiate conceptions of identity?*

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I invite the reader on a tour of comics theory and practice as I investigate the ways drawing comics can help negotiate conceptions of identity. I employ an autobiographical avatar as guide in this study of the subjective semiotics, signs and symbols of the comics language. Along the way, I braid my own narrative of identity and explore the roots of my passion for comics from when I was a grade four bilingual student living in Quebec.

I employ life-writing (Baetens, 2013b; El Refaie, 2012; Leggo, 2008, 2010) with autobiographical comics or *autographics* (Whitlock, 2006; Scherr, 2013). In this way I aim to generate a tool of self-study for students, educational professionals and researchers that can provide new understandings of identity, storytelling and writing beyond the self. The practice-based research of this study is informed by life-writing, semiotic analysis (Groensteen, 2007, 2013; Lim, 2004, 2007) and a/r/tography (Irwin, 2010; Irwin & Springgay, 2008), whereby I shift away “from ethnographic note taking to the a/r/tographic practice of living inquiry and the embodied act of note-making to illustrate the conditions of researching in the field” (Leggo et al., 2011, p. 247).

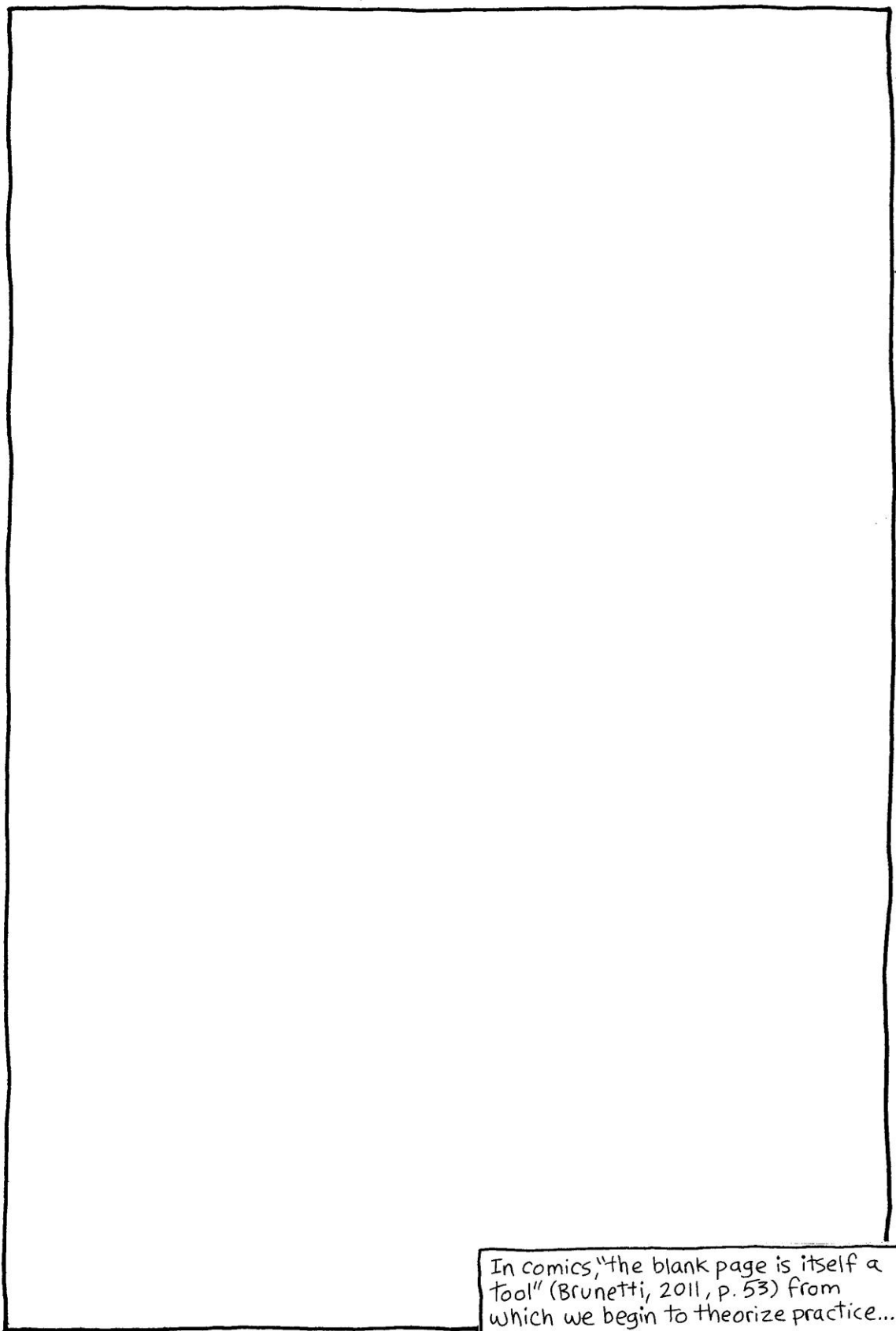
Visual metaphors such as “*métissage*” (Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, Oberg, & Leggo, 2008, p. 57, italics in original), flow (Lim, 2007), and braiding (Groensteen, 2007) are terms commonly employed in a/r/tography and semiotic comics studies. Parallels between the relationships discovered in life-writing are structured in ways similar to Groensteen’s (2007, 2013) arthrology (which is elaborated upon in Chapter Three) and its descriptor of a comics’ multiplicity of connections between the words and images. I employ comics, autobiography and a/r/tographical *métissage* to “mix and braid issues and topics that arise out of our individual and collaborative interests and praxis” (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2008, p. 58). I centre the research within “a space of

productive tension” (Leggo et al., 2011, p. 252), i.e. the “ecotone” (p. 252), which can be visualized as a liminal space between a comics text’s panels as well as the gap between researcher/participant, author/other, and question/answer. The sequential narratives and reflections in Chapter Three: (1) demonstrate the application of a cartoon character as one means of negotiating identity; (2) describe identity and comics as the primary interpreter of the data in this study; and (3) vividly exemplify the capacity to represent identity through comics. In this way, I believe the students will demonstrate narrative concepts through cartooning, describe original characters within their narratives, and thus exemplify their identities through the comics that they make.

Please note that, apart from instances of block or bubble lettering, the text in Chapter Three appears in two formats:

- Upper case for dialogue in speech balloons; and
- Sentence case for narration in captions.

This is an aesthetic consideration I subjectively employ to assist the reader in distinguishing between a character’s dialogue and the text’s narration.



In comics, "the blank page is itself a tool" (Brunetti, 2011, p. 53) from which we begin to theorize practice...



THIS STUDY OF BILINGUAL GRADE FOUR STUDENTS IS A LIVING INQUIRY (LEGGO ET AL., 2011) INTO COMICS, SELF-EXPRESSION, AUTHORSHIP, AND IDENTITY AND IS FOUNDED IN THE CENTURIES-OLD THEORIA-PRAXIS-POESIS (IRWIN & SPRINGGAY, 2008) OF WRITING//CARTOONING.

...informs this arts and practice-based research. Thus the signs, symbols and semiotics of the Ninth Art (Miller, 2007) flow (Lim, 2007) and braid (Groensteen, 2007, 2013) rhizomatically within a broad autobiographical methodology of:

The art/research/teaching of:



Hi!

A/R/TOGRAPHY

POET AND EDUCATOR CARL LEGGO (2008), BELIEVES THAT,

"WE NEED TO WRITE PERSONALLY BECAUSE WE LIVE PERSONALLY, AND OUR PERSONAL LIVING IS ALWAYS BRAIDED WITH OUR OTHER WAYS OF LIVING- PROFESSIONAL, ACADEMIC, ADMINISTRATIVE, ARTISTIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL" (P.5).



INTERESTINGLY, COMICS SCHOLAR THIERRY GROENSTEEN (2007) CALLS "THE WAY PANELS... CAN BE LINKED IN SERIES" (P.1X) **BRAIDING**.

I love both comics medium and its plurality of forms:



THEREFORE, IN THIS CHAPTER, I EMPLOY THE LANGUAGE OF COMICS TO TRANSMIT MEANING AUTOBIOGRAPHICALLY. AS SUCH, I, AS AUTHOR, AM ATTEMPTING TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN READER AND MYSELF BY VISUALLY SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO THE READER.

KNOWING COMICS (THEORIA) COMPLICATES UNDERSTANDINGS THROUGH A **QUESTING**. QUESTIONS INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: WHAT IS COMICS MEDIUM? WHY DID EDUCATORS VILIFY THE FORM? ARE INTERACTIVE WEB COMICS STILL COMICS?



Autobiographical and metaphoric cartoon avatar of this study's author.

DOING COMICS (PRAXIS) OPENS OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN ART OF INQUIRY BUILT ON REFLECTION, RESEARCH AND RITUAL. THEREFORE, THIS STUDY DOES COMICS BY INTRODUCING GRADE FOUR PARTICIPANTS TO FUNDAMENTAL APPROACHES OF THE NINTH ART.

MAKING COMICS (POESIS) RENDERS MEDIUM INTO FORM. FOR INSTANCE, CARTOONIST ART SPIEGELMAN'S EXHIBIT, **BREAKDOWNS** (2013), AT THE VAN COUVER ART GALLERY, DEMONSTRATED THE ARTIST'S PRACTICE IN THE MEDIUM OF COMICS, AND HIS GRAPHIC NOVEL, **MAUS**, TRANSMITS THE COMICS MEDIUM IN TO COMIC FORM.



Examples of scholarly findings presented as comic forms are growing and include academic articles (Jones & Woglom, 2013), PhD dissertations (Madrid-Manrique, 2015a, 2015b; Sousanis, 2015), and pedagogical research (Ayers & Alexander-Tanner, 2011).

As this study's lens shifted from renderings of autobiography with bilingual grade four students to explorations of authorship with fictional characters, implications of writing // cartooning for the indivitrio of artist/researcher/teacher as well as that of narrator/monstrator/reciter (Groensteen, 2007) began to emerge through a series of evolving questions:

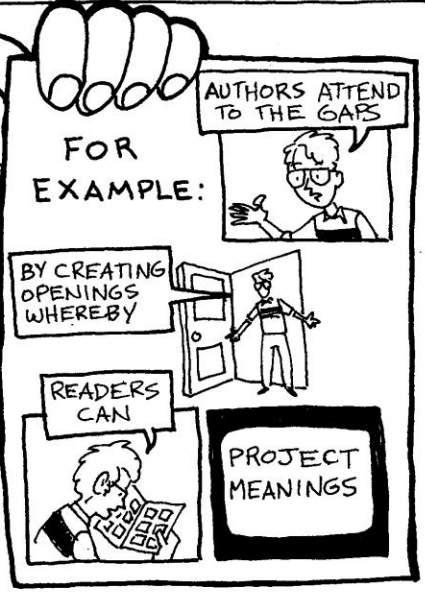


WHAT ASPECTS OF COMICS DO STUDENTS WANT TO EXPLORE?

IN WHAT WAYS ARE ORIGINAL CARTOON CHARACTERS MANIFESTATIONS OF AUTHORSHIP AND IDENTITY?

HOW IS DRAWING COMICS BY HAND IMPORTANT IN HELPING ARTISTS DEVELOP AN AUTHENTIC VOICE?

COMICS ARE "CONTIGUOUS" (GROENSTEEN, 2007, P. 34), WITH PANELS THAT BORDER EACH OTHER IN A STATE OF PERPETUAL CONTACT, YET SEPARATED BY GUTTERS OF LIMINAL SPACES THAT ARE "TRANSFORMED INTO A LABYRINTH" (P. 31). IT IS "IN THE IN-BETWEEN SPACES OF LIMINALITY" (SAMESHIMA, 2008, P. 49) THAT NEW UNDERSTANDINGS EMERGE AND MEANINGS CAN BE MADE.



An a/r/tographical inquiry structures on the conception of the rhizome's (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) myriad connections flowing one into the other through lived experience and re-interpreted as autobiographical life-writing (Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008). The comics medium is likewise--

RHIZOMATIC

The rhizomatic qualities of cartooning and comics as research tools of autobiographical methodology are many. For instance, Spiegelman's two-volume memoir *Maus* braids a narrative of the Holocaust's traumatic impact on two generations of one family with a dark and stark cartooning style.

As such, the knowing/doing/making (theoria/praxis/poesies) of a/r/tography blends with the data of this research into artful representations.

Explorations of a comics page's in-between spaces reveal openings such as the gutters between panels, or the distance between author and other.

THE BLANK PAGE IS A TOOL, AND THE FREEHAND LINES THE WRITER/CARTOONIST TRACES UPON IT COMPLICATE THE RHIZOME THAT FRAMES THE PAGE, THUS CREATING NEW LOCATIONS OF INQUIRY.

IN THE FALL OF 2015, I POSITIONED MYSELF ON THE FRONT LINES OF PEDAGOGICAL INQUIRY AND DESIGNED AND DELIVERED SIX CARTOONING LESSONS TO THE TWENTY-FIVE GRADE FOUR PARTICIPANTS OF THIS STUDY. THIS CREATING CIRCUMSTANCES IN ORDER TO "PRODUCE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING" (IRWIN & SPRINGGAY, 2008, P. XXIV) OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMICS, IDENTITY AND AUTHORSHIP.

I HAVE OBSERVED FIRST-HAND STUDENTS OF ALL AGES EAGER TO DEVELOP THEIR STORYTELLING VOICES THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF COMICS. I BELIEVE MOST CLASSROOM TEACHERS RECOGNIZE THE PASSION CHILDREN HAVE FOR ART; YET, AS ONE GRADE FOUR STUDENT LAMENTED TO ME ONE DAY, "WE ONLY DO ART ONCE A WEEK." (ANONYMOUS, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, NOVEMBER 18, 2015)

MCCLLOUD (1994) WRITES THAT, "COMICS CAN BE MADDEENLY VAGUE ABOUT WHAT IT SHOWS US, BY SHOWING LITTLE OF A GIVEN SCENE AND OFFERING ONLY CLUES TO THE READER-- THE ARTIST CAN TRIGGER ANY NUMBER OF IMAGES IN THE READER'S IMAGINATION" (P. 86). FURTHERMORE, I SUGGEST AN EXPLORATION OF WRITING//CARTOONING BY DRAWING AUTOGRAPHICS TRIGGERS A MULTIPLICITY OF IMAGES IN THE ARTIST'S IMAGINATION. A/R/TOGRAPHICAL AUTOGRAPHICS FRAMEWORK THIS STUDY'S EMERGENT THEORIES OF L'ÉCRITURE FÉMININE AND L'AUTEUR COMPLET.

IN WHAT WAYS DO MY MOTHER TONGUE, BILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AFFECT MY PRACTICE OF WRITING//CARTOONING? WHAT NEW UNDERSTANDINGS WILL DEVELOP THROUGH THE CREATION OF A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION INTO MY OWN IDENTITY? WHAT ASPECTS WILL BE TRANSFORMATIVE?

THESE QUESTIONS EMERGE IN THE STUDY AND GUIDE TOWARDS THE AUTOGRAPHICS OF THIS CHAPTER. AS SUCH, I AM CONSTRUCTING "THE VERY THING ONE IS ATTEMPTING TO MAKE SENSE OF" (SPRINGGAY, 2008, P. 159).



A/R/TOGRAPHY DWELLS IN DIFFERENCE (IRWIN & SPRINGGAY, 2008) AND, AS SUCH, EMPLOYS DIFFERENCE TO PRODUCE KNOWLEDGE. THE POSITION I AM TAKING IS ONE OF MOVEMENT AND "BEING-IN-THE-WORLD" (HEIDEGGER, 1962, P. 245) WHEREBY I "UNCOUPLE FROM THE ORDINARY" (GREENE, 2001, P. 17) AND PRESENT COMICS AS DATA AND FINDINGS.

DURING HIS KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO THE AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (AERA) CONFERENCE IN 1993, EDUCATOR ELLIOT EISNER CALLED FOR:

"METHODOLOGICAL PLURALISM IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH"
 (O'DONOGHUE, 2009, P. 351)



Twenty years later, Tim Ingold wrote in his book *Making*, "we need a theory... that allows matter its due as an active participant of the world's becoming" (2013, p. 97).

THIS CHAPTER THREE OF THIS STUDY IS PRESENTED AS SEQUENTIAL NARRATIVE DRAWINGS IN THE FORM OF COMICS. THE PAGES' BREAKDOWNS ARE BUILT UPON DEMOCRATIC AND HIERARCHICAL GRIDS (BRUNETTI, 2011) --



-- AND THE COMICS IN THIS THESIS ARE SIMILAR TO AN OLD ARCHIE COMIC AND "HIGHLY CONVENTIONALIZED IN TERMS OF LOOK, LAYOUT AND DESIGN" (BEATY, 2015, P. 9) WITH SIX PANELS OF EQUAL SIZE DIVIDING UP THE PAGE.





THE WORLD IS REVEALED "ONLY AFTER WE HAVE COME TO UNDERSTAND IT THROUGH HANDLING" (BARRETT & BOLT, 2010, P. 30) FOR THERE IS "A KNOWING THAT ARISES THROUGH HANDLING MATERIALS IN PRACTICE" (P. 29).

A/R/TOGRAPHY IS A METHODOLOGY OF BEING THAT EXAMINES PHENOMENON THROUGH TOUCH. IN THE COMICS MEDIUM TOUCH, AS KNOWING, IS REVEALED THROUGH THE SHARPENING OF THE PENCIL, THE GRIP OF THE PEN, AND THE FEEL OF THE PAPER.

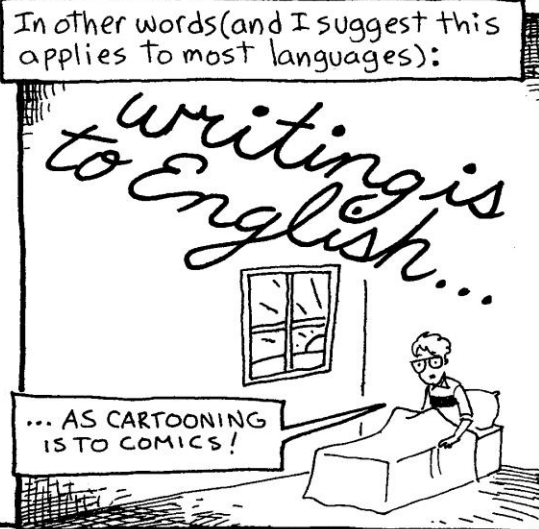
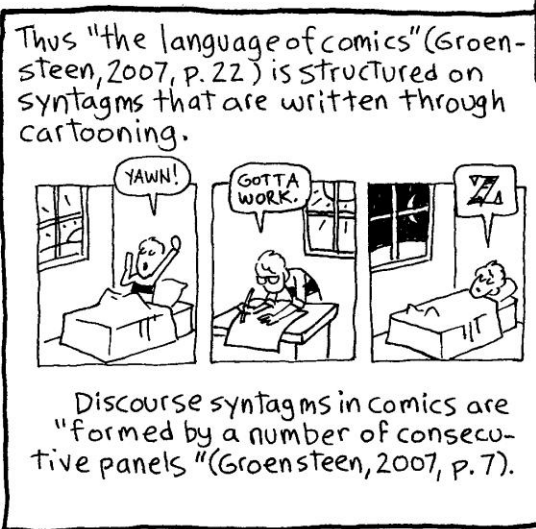
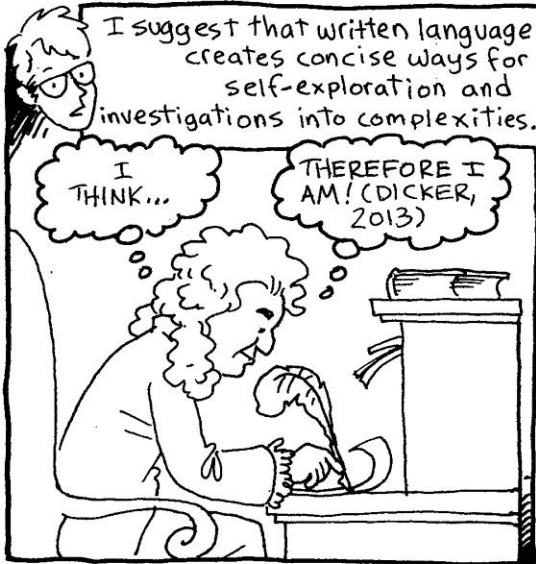


THE CHILD LEARNS LANGUAGE THROUGH NATURAL AND PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS WITH THE M/OTHER. THE COMICS LANGUAGE OF THE COMPLETE AUTHOR IS COMMUNICATED TO THE READER THROUGH THE MEDIUM'S "MATERIAL SUBSTANCE AND MODE OF ENCODING" (CRIPPL & ETTER, 2013, P. 194).



WRITER//CARTOONIST CONSCIOUSNESS DWELLS IN THE FREEHAND LINES DRAWN ON THE PAGE. MEANING IS TRANSMITTED MATERIALLY FROM THE PAGE TO THE READER. COMICS EDITOR FRANÇOISE MOULY UNDERSTANDS THESE HAND-DRAWN LINES OF WRITING TO BE "THE VOICE OF THEIR AUTHOR." (BITZ, 2009, P. X)





The grammar and vocabulary of comics language is structured on what I call:

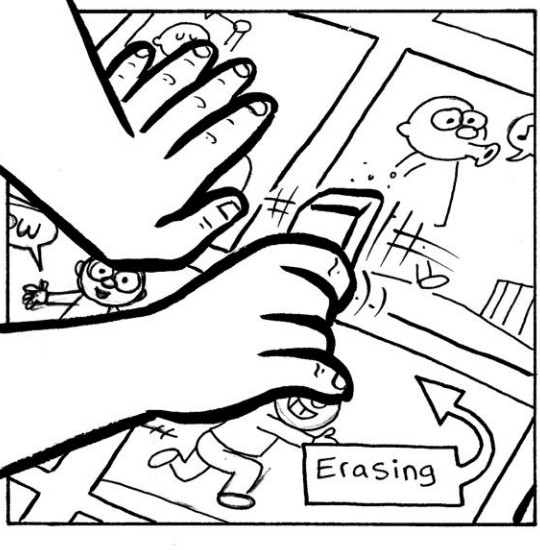
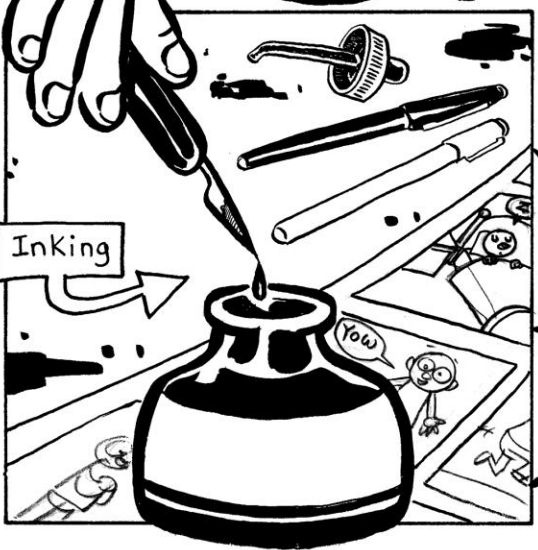
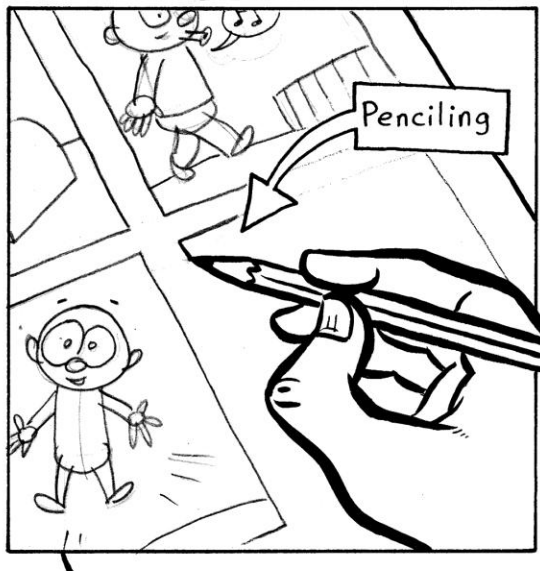
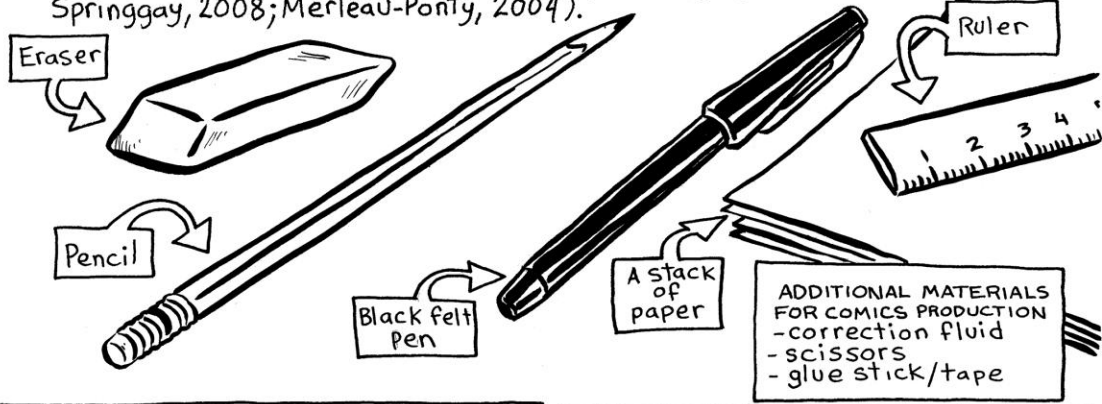
WRITING // CARTOONING

"[I am] a writer who draws."
Saul Steinberg,
quoted in
Brunetti
(2011, n.p.).



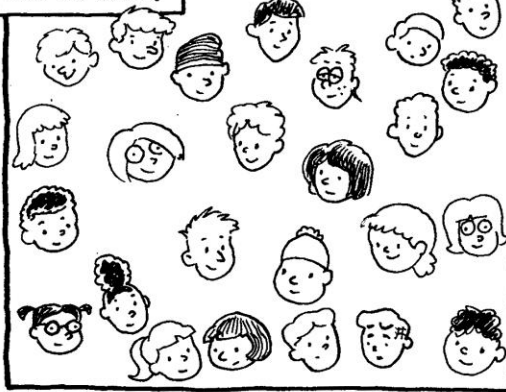
"A comic artist ain't no different than you or me or anybody excep' he knows how to draw pitchers and is crazy in the head" (Segar, 2009, p.86).

Groensteen (2007) writes, "the practice of comics is, technically and financially speaking, available to everyone" (p. 19). Authorship for students is facilitated by a relative ease of accessibility to the tools of the medium. From these real world and material encounters, Being creates meaning, mediates environment and forms an identity (Bolt, 2007; Greene, 2001; Heidegger, 1962; Irwin & Springgay, 2008; Merleau-Ponty, 2004).

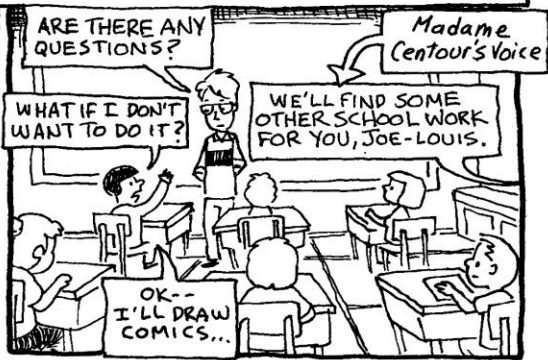


The circumstances created for this study include the drafting of a six-part lesson plan (Appendices A and C).

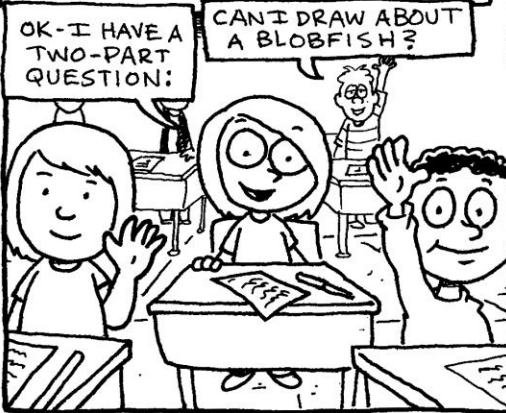
I delivered six cartooning lessons over the course of two months to one classroom of twenty-five participants in the Fall of 2015.



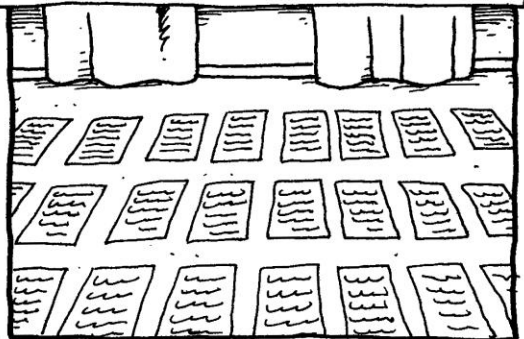
Two weeks before the first lesson, I visited Madame Centour's class to hand out consent/assent forms and explain the project. Everyone appeared to be excited-- except one student...



One week later I returned to gather the signed consent/assent forms. The students had even more questions...



The night before the first lesson, I laid out the forms in a grid pattern on the living room floor. I asked my wife, Kim, and our friend, Isin (who have both been helping me draft this thesis)...

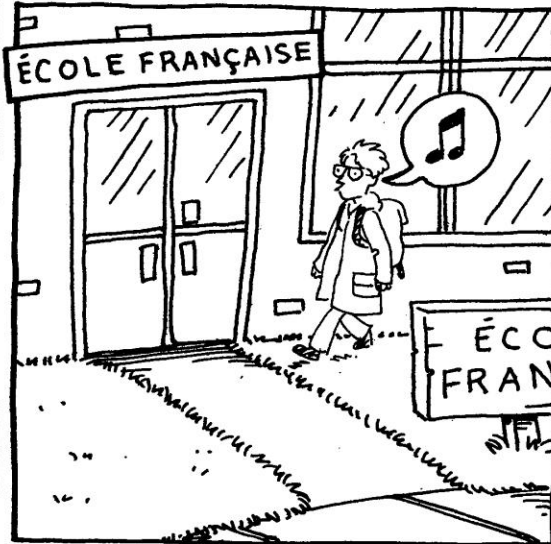
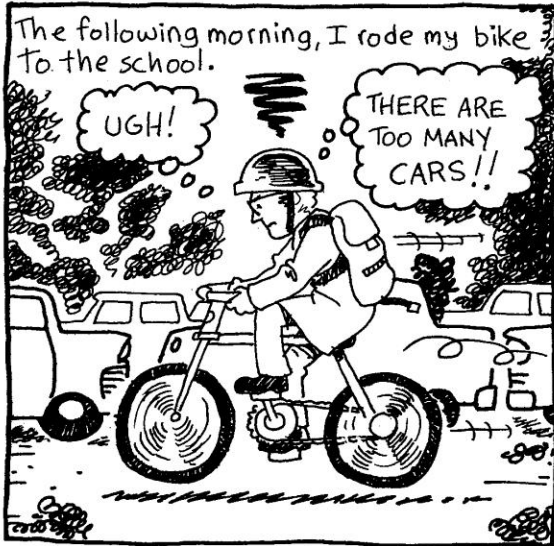


...to pick three forms at random. Kim picked out two--

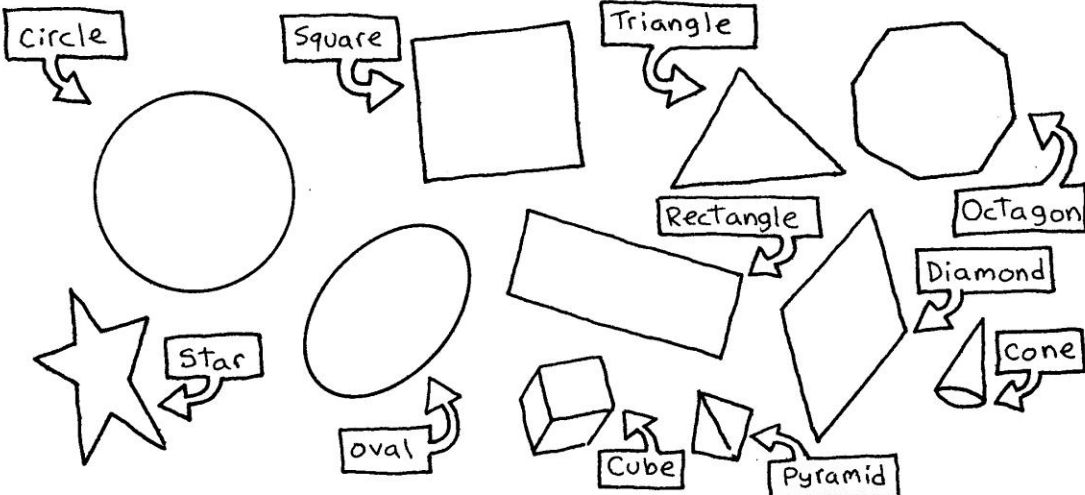


-- and Isin picked out one. Those eventually became the three case studies in Chapter 4.





This metaphoric geometry manifests literally in the basic shapes employed by cartoonists as the fundamental building blocks of character designs (see Appendix C).



CARTOONISTS CAN ARRANGE GEOMETRIC SHAPES INTO THE ESSENTIAL FORMS OF THE CHARACTERS THEY ARE DRAWING.



ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?



YES?--

DO YOU DRAW GARFIELD?



uh--

NO--

-- BUT IF YOU THINK ABOUT GARFIELD'S EYES -- WHAT SHAPE ARE THEY?

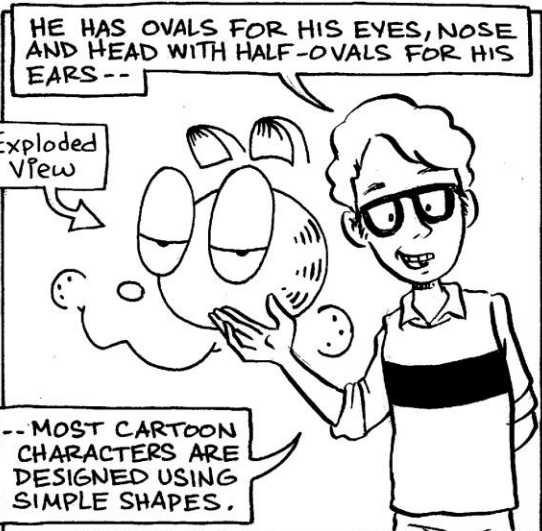


CIRCLES!

OVALS!

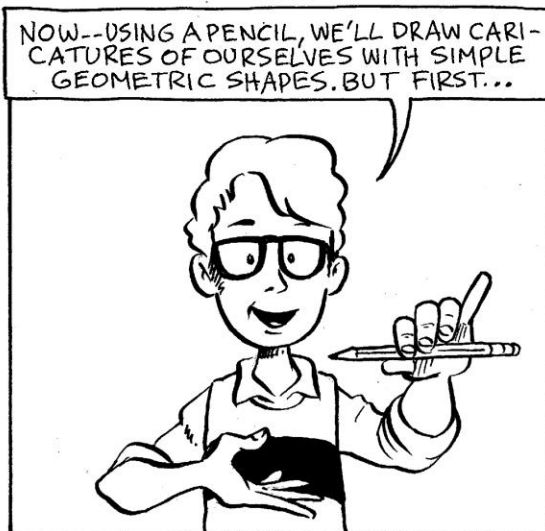
HE HAS OVALS FOR HIS EYES, NOSE AND HEAD WITH HALF-OVALS FOR HIS EARS --

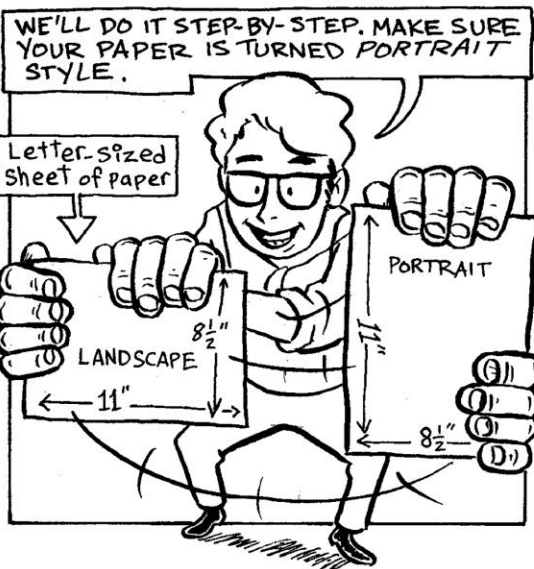
Exploded View



-- MOST CARTOON CHARACTERS ARE DESIGNED USING SIMPLE SHAPES.

NOW--USING A PENCIL, WE'LL DRAW CARICATURES OF OURSELVES WITH SIMPLE GEOMETRIC SHAPES. BUT FIRST...





One hour later...

I WOULD LIKE YOU ALL TO KEEP WORKING ON YOUR CARICATURE/SELF-PORTRAIT AND TO THINK ABOUT AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STORY.

CAN SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT AUTOBIOGRAPHY MEANS?



YES? AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS A TRUE STORY ABOUT YOURSELF ... BUT--

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION?



WELL--

--DO WE HAVE TO DRAW A STORY ABOUT OURSELVES?



YEAH-- I DON'T WANT TO DRAW ME!

DO WE HAVE TO DRAW US?

CAN I DRAW GARFIELD INSTEAD?

CAN I DRAW MY OWN CHARACTER?

GRRR!



Hmmm...

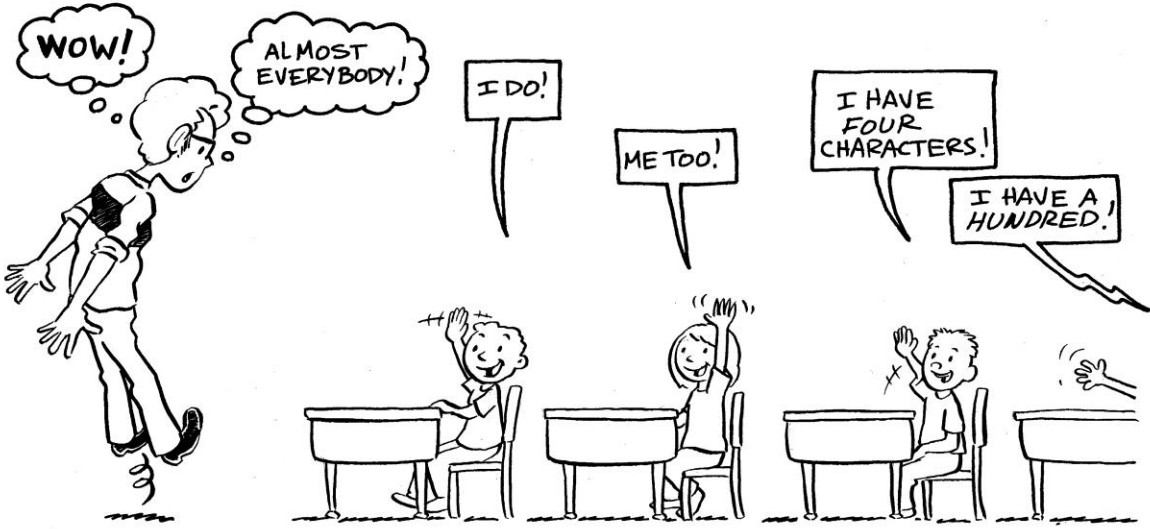
I HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT THAT-- THEY'RE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT DRAWING COMICS--



OK!
OK!

RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU ALREADY HAVE AN ORIGINAL CARTOON CHARACTER OF YOUR OWN...

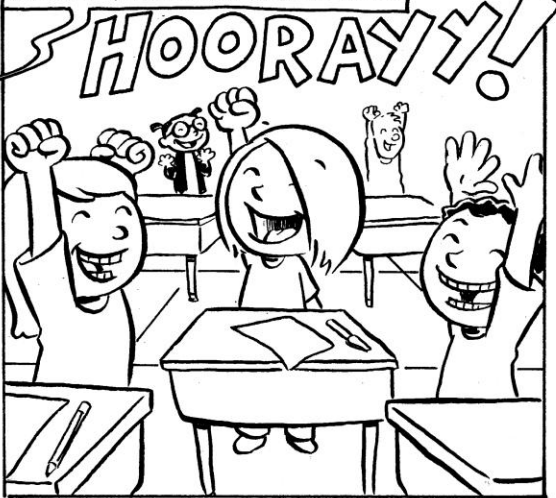




WELL THAT'S GREAT, AND IT GIVES YOU ALL A CHOICE: YOU CAN EITHER DRAW AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC...



-- YOU CAN DRAW A COMIC ABOUT YOUR OWN CHARACTER.



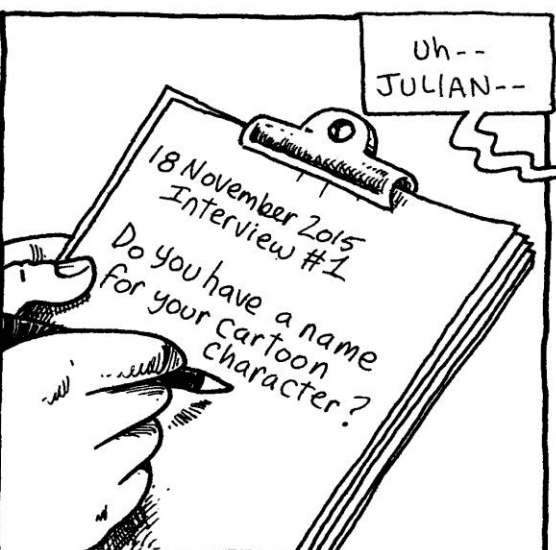
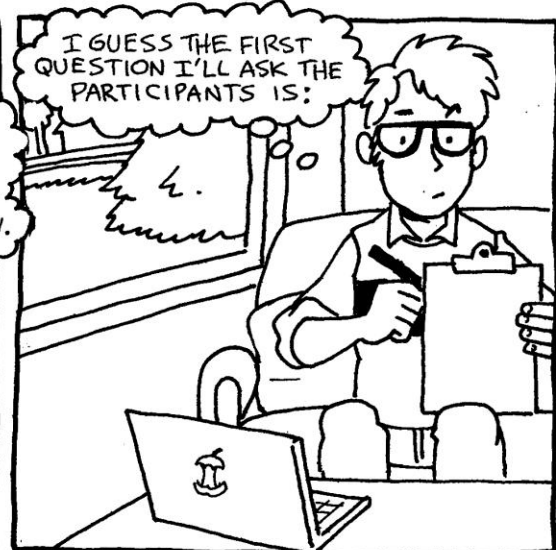
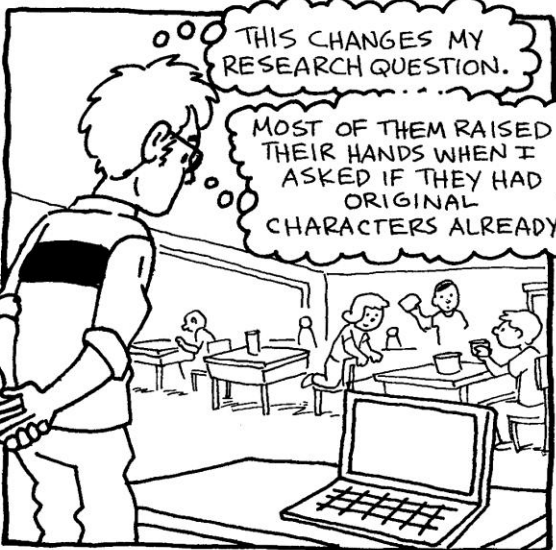
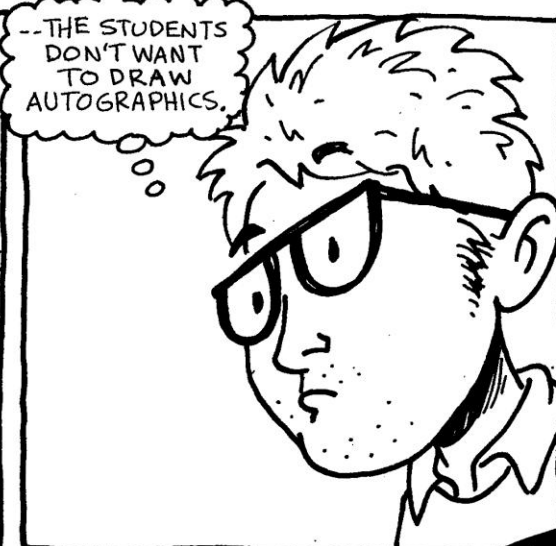
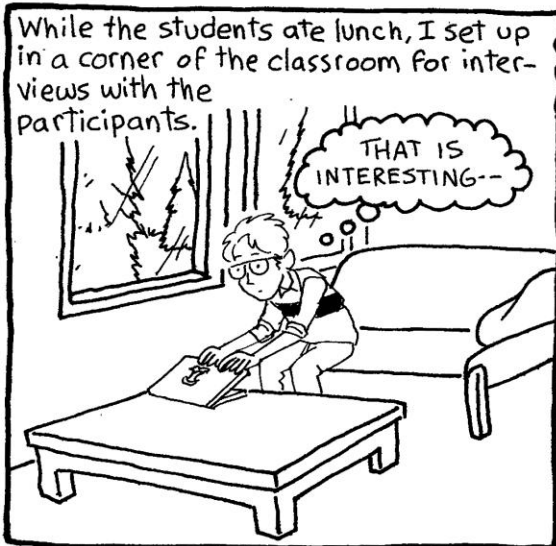
SHOULD I SUGGEST THEY INSERT THEMSELVES INTO THEIR STORIES? ...



NO-- I SHOULDN'T...

I DON'T WANT TO INTERFERE TOO MUCH...





The students expressed an overwhelming desire not to write autobiographically. Thus, my research question became:

In what ways can drawing fictional comics by hand help bilingual grade four students explore conceptions of identity in Vancouver, Canada?

The research generated hundreds of pages of artwork, and analysis of all twenty-five participants is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore three randomly selected students were chosen for more focused analysis of their interviews and comics.

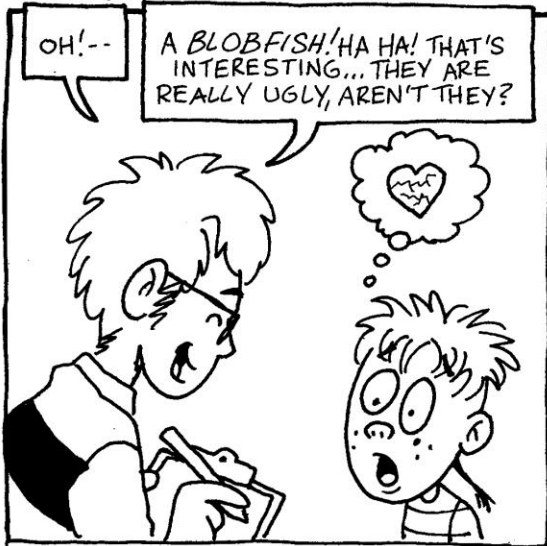
It should be noted that all participants' names are pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. Additionally, the classroom teacher's name is, for the purposes of this study, Madame Centour; the school's principal is named Monsieur LaBrosse and the school is referred to as l'École Française.

A total of six interviews were conducted in French with three participants. Five of the interviews were audio-taped and one was written.

All three spoke French with varying degrees of English accents. The first five interviews were conducted during the months of November and December 2015 on days that I delivered the cartooning lessons. The sixth and last interview was conducted one year later in November 2016.

In the final analysis, I focused on the following three participants as case studies.

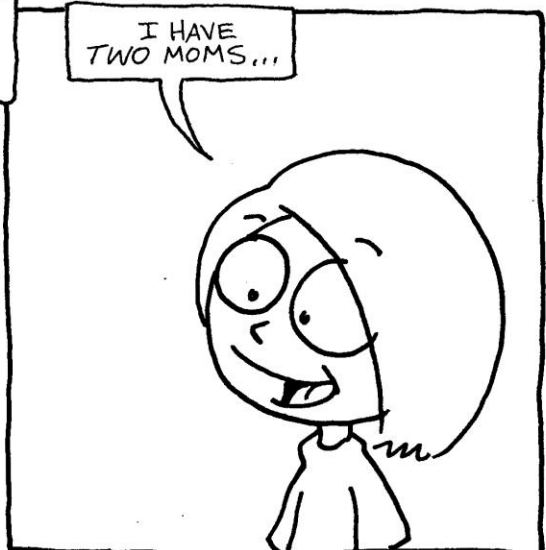
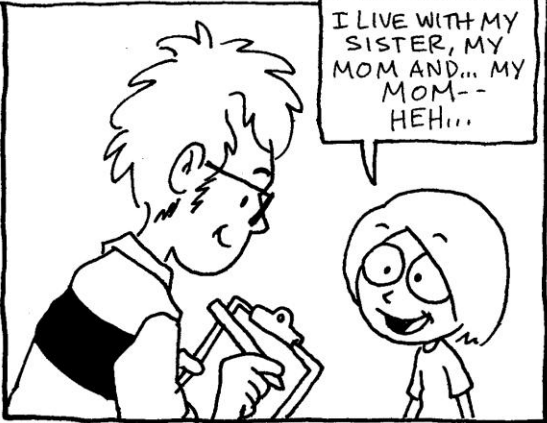




The laptop recorded pretty well, despite all the background noise from the other students eating lunch.



The six interviews with the participants as well as the field notes, artwork and sketches are analyzed for this study of comics and learning.



After the first interview session, the Classroom Teacher, Madame Centour, and I talked about French comics.



HAVE YOU READ TARDI?

I LOVE TARDI!

"The Franco-Belgian comics tradition has a definitive canon of works..." (Miller & Beaty, 2014, p.12).



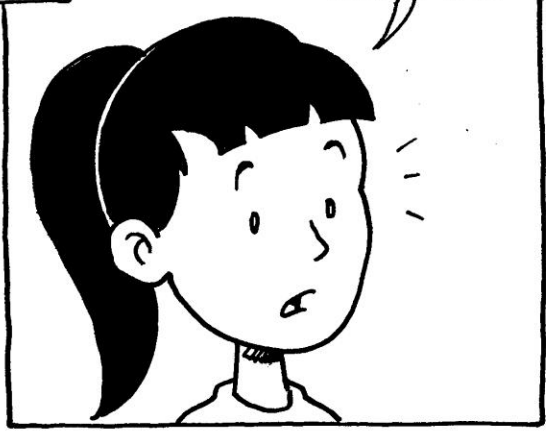
THE STUDENTS OFTEN CHOOSE TO READ COMICS LIKE **TINTIN** AND **ASTERIX** DURING SILENT READING.

HOW DID THE STUDENT INTERVIEWS GO?

GREAT-- DANIEL ALREADY HAS HIS CHARACTER: A BLOBFISH NAMED **HASH BROWN**. ANOTHER STUDENT SHOWED ME ONE CALLED **TORNADO MAN!**



ENGLISH NAMES!?



IS THAT OK?

WELL-- I'LL LEAVE THAT UP TO YOU...



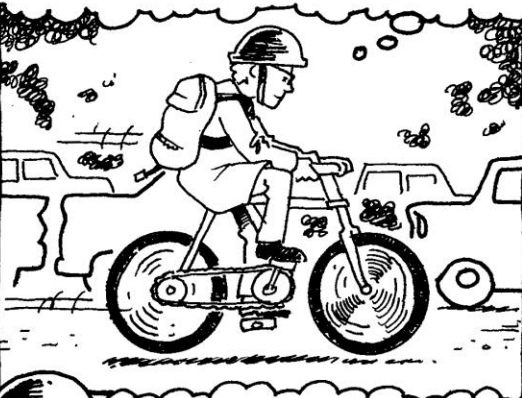
BUT I WOULD PREFER THEY USE FRENCH NAMES INSTEAD.

OK... SEE YOU NEXT WEEK.



As I rode home...

I THINK THAT, IN AN ENGLISH SCHOOL, THE PRESENCE OF A FRENCH NAME IN A STUDENT'S WORK WOULD NOT BE AN ISSUE.



HOWEVER, I WAS BORN IN ENGLAND AND GREW UP IN THE FRENCH PROVINCE OF QUEBEC IN CANADA. AS SUCH, I THINK I UNDERSTAND THIS PHENOMENON OF FRANCO-AVERSION TO ENGLISH NAMES.



I RECALL A NUMBER OF INSTANCES WHEN I WAS AN ENGLISH STUDENT IN A FRANCOPHONE SCHOOL...



DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT MOVIE "THE EXORCIST?"



NO... WHAT IS IT?

Me in grade four

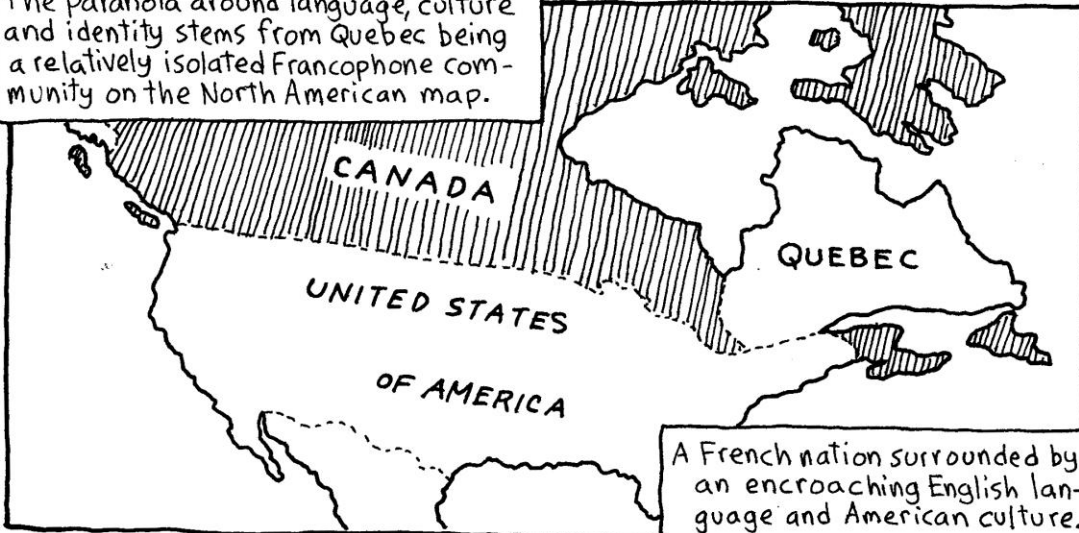
ON PARLE * FRANÇAIS A L'ÉCOLE!



OUI, ** MADAME!

* We speak French in school! ** Yes, madam!

The paranoia around language, culture and identity stems from Quebec being a relatively isolated Francophone community on the North American map.



A French nation surrounded by an encroaching English language and American culture.

Reflection I Anglophone

I grew up in the French-Canadian province of Quebec but, due to my British heritage, I always felt like the other.

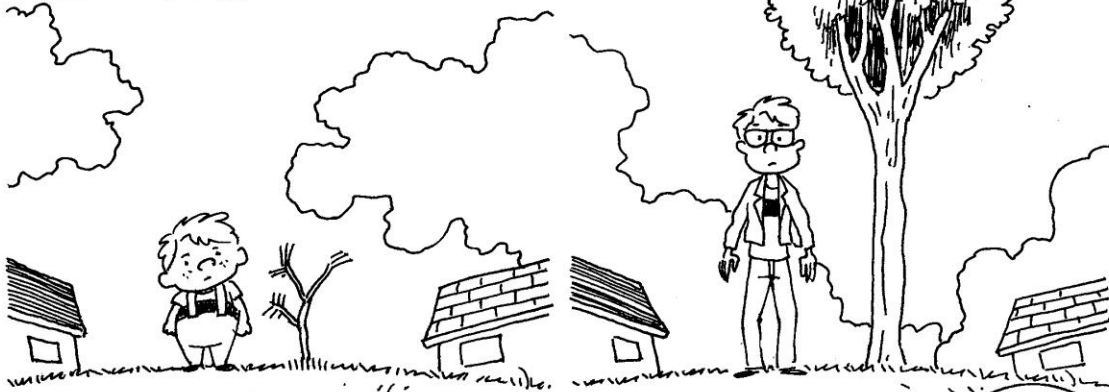
***MAUDIT ANGLAIS!**



*Damn English!

I was born in England and moved to Hull, Quebec in 1966 when I was two. I attended French school from the time I was five...

...until my family and I moved to English-speaking Winnipeg, Manitoba thirteen years later.



Yet on my first day of school in Winnipeg, as I walked along the pristine suburban streets of this English-Canadian prairie town, I was struck dumb by the first bit of graffiti I saw in my neighborhood:



Someone had spray-painted the initials FLQ on a fence!



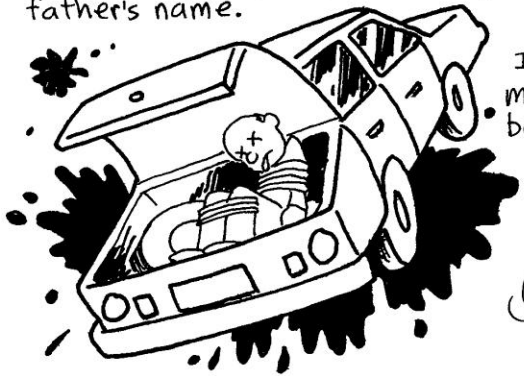
The FLQ (Front de libération du Québec [Quebec Liberation Front]) was a domestic Terrorist group that used violence to fight perceived Anglophone oppression of the French and to push for Quebec separation. The group claimed responsibility for dozens of bombings that killed six people over the course of seven years during the 1960s (Fournier, 1982; Spry, 1973).

Despite being a pre-schooler at this time, I was well aware of a great tension that was broadcast on TV, radio and newspapers.

In 1970, the FLQ kidnapped British trade commissioner James Cross and Quebec politician Pierre LaPorte. I was just learning to speak French and I remember thinking that LaPorte [the door] was a funny last name. But I also realized LaPorte's first name, Pierre, was French for the name Peter, which is my father's name.



I thought for sure my dad was going to be kidnapped next!



Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau invoked the War Measures Act and the army moved into Quebec. James Cross was released and the FLQ either fled to Cuba or were jailed.

Following LaPorte's assassination, prominent English Quebecers were advised to leave the province.

During my childhood, the political othering of Anglos was palpable. Sometimes groups of French kids would be waiting after school to fight with me.

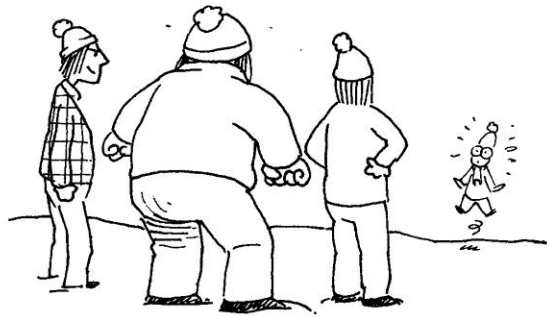
I'd call my mother from the school office and she would pick me up.



HI, MUMMY...

CAN YOU PICK ME UP FROM SCHOOL PLEASE?

YES--THEY WANT TO FIGHT AGAIN!



Growing up Anglophone in Quebec during the 1970s was often challenging.

I entered French kindergarten as a unilingual Anglophone...



HI!
HOW ARE
YOU?



...and emerged one year later bilingual.

We spoke English at home and hardly ever spoke French.

BONJOUR!
COMMENT ÇA
VA?



HOW ARE YOUR FRENCH
LESSONS GOING, DADDY?

OH...
COMME-ÇA,
COMME-ÇA.



My mother never learned the language of her adoptive province.

In fact, she held on tightly to the slang and colloquialisms of her own very British m/other tongue.

WHY CAN'T YOU COME
ON THE SCHOOL FIELD
TRIP TOMORROW?

OH... I FEEL
OUT OF
PLACE-NO ONE
SPEAKS ENGLISH.



COR BLIMEY!

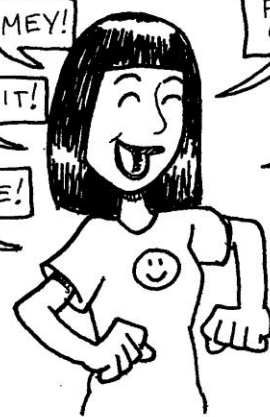
DAFT TWIT!

OY MATE!

FANCY A
CUPPA?

WHAT A
PONG!

OH, YOU
DIRTY
BUGGER!



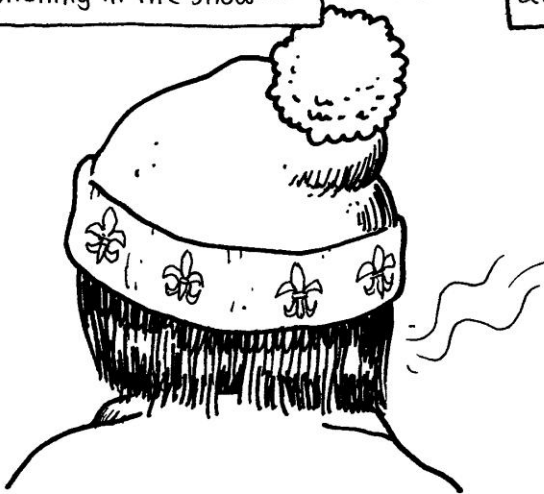
Reflection II
Traumatic
Memory
from Grade Four

This is what I remember...

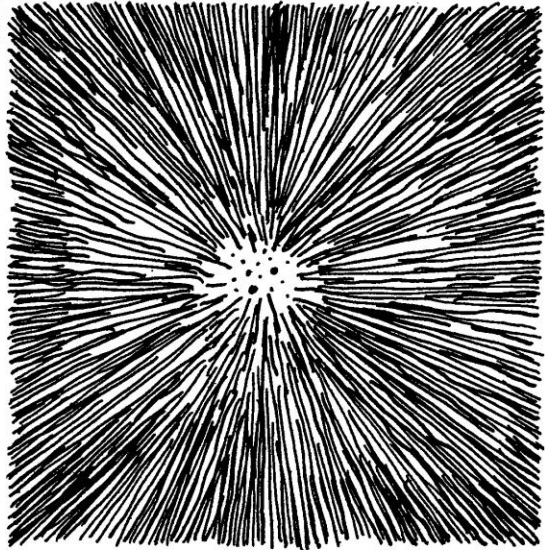


I walked up behind him, my feet
crunching in the snow--

-- He heard me coming... turned
around, and smirked.



I felt like I was pushing my fist through
molasses!



My first punch!



He screamed, pulled his toque over his face...



... and then he buried his head in my chest. I felt horrible.



He fell to his knees, still screaming through his toque--



But I had to do it... He had punched my kid brother, Martin.



Reflection III

Writing//Cartooning

When I teach I am often asked this question:

WHEN DID YOU KNOW YOU WANTED TO BE A CARTOONIST?



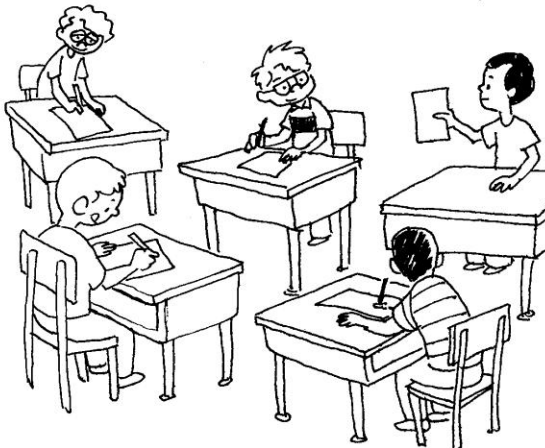
I knew I wanted to be a cartoonist in grade four.



I remember my teacher, Madame Vachon, encouraged the use of comics in her classroom.



There was a half-dozen of us budding cartoonists. I called us "The Groop!"



I think her name was Vachon...



My grade four year in Hull, Quebec started in September, 1973 and ended in June, 1974.



Madame Vachon was one of three teachers I had that school year.



I don't remember the other two...



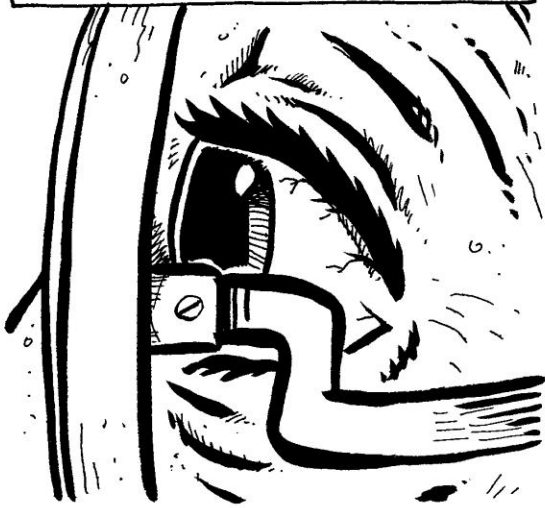
...but I remember Madame Vachon fairly well.



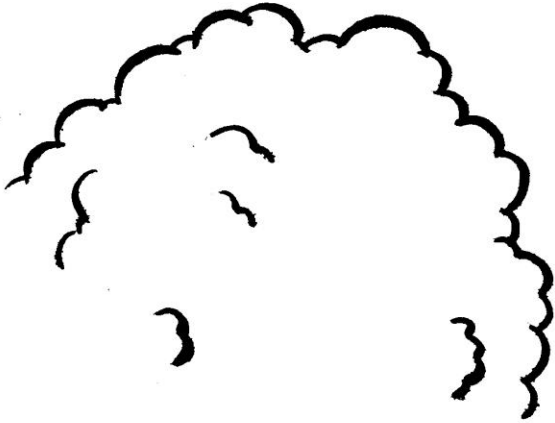
She was in her forties or fifties-- or maybe even her sixties.



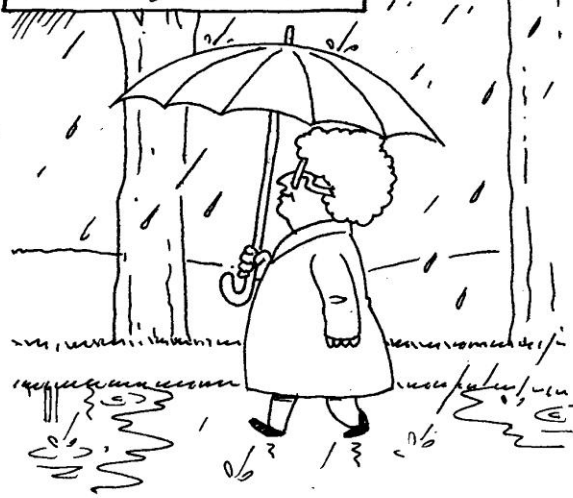
She wore a pair of large glasses.



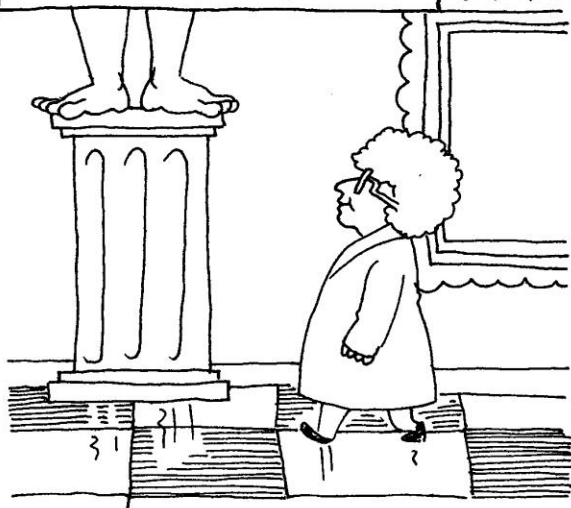
She had a big puff ball of orange hair.



She traveled to Italy and told us about Michelangelo's David.



My group of friends and I drew a comic about her trip abroad.



She encouraged us to draw comics, and I took her words to heart.



I've never stopped cartooning. Thank you, Madame Vachon...

...wherever you are--



I drew a lot of comics when I was a kid, either alone or with my friends at school... but only fragments survive.



Madame Vachon encouraged us to complete homework and projects in the form of comics.

I'M GOING TO DRAW MICHEL ANGELO'S DAVID MEETING MY CHARACTER HARRY.

YOU WILL HAVE TO GIVE DAVID A FIG LEAF.



Eventually a second group of Francophone cartoonists developed in the classroom.

THESE GUYS ARE DRAWING COMICS TOO!

HEY LOOK--



One day, my friend Roy told me that one of the French kids was drawing comics about a character I had created.

WHAT?! BUT HARRY IS MINE!

I HEARD BENOIT SAY HE INVENTED HARRY.



After school that day, I went into Benoit's locker and found the Harry comic he was drawing...

Needless to say, word got out and I lost a lot of friends after that.

W-WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU DON'T WANT TO TALK TO ME?

BECAUSE YOU ARE TRASH!

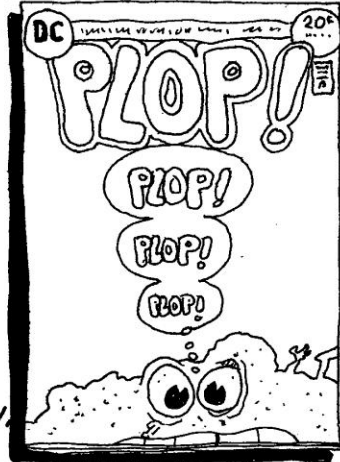
CLICK!



Reflection IV

Medium and Materiality

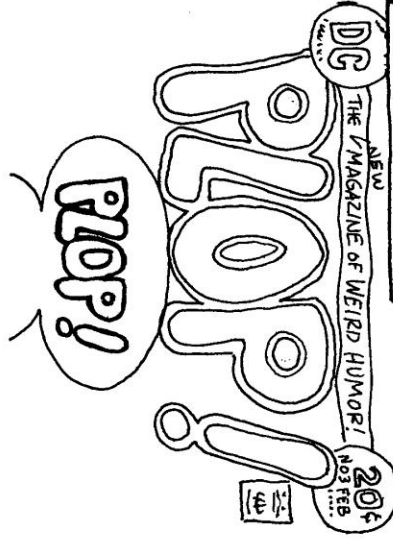
I recently bought a vintage copy of a comic I used to own in grade four.



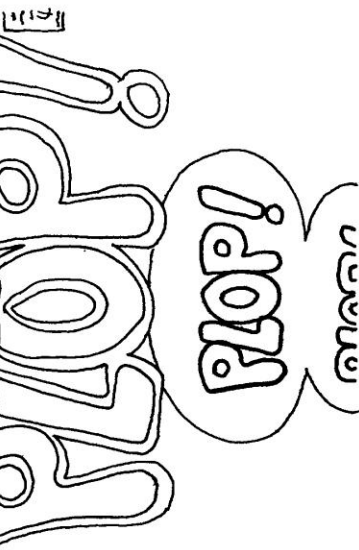
The material handling of lost objects embody memory. The material artifact mediates the form (Rippel & Etter, 2013; Wilde, 2015), which is created by the medium...



I can hold it, I turn it around, flip through it-- much as I did when I was nine... Even now, I am inviting you to turn this page around.



A material reconnection is established with my other-self (as a nine year-old) for, as Groensteen (2012a) writes, "our passion for comics is explained by the memory of our own experiences as a child" (P.117).



I bought it with my allowance from the local convenience store. It was the last comic book I was permitted to buy.



After Wolverton

PLOP! Volume two, number 3, Jan/Feb, 1974 informed me.

WELL, IT'S NOT WHAT HE'S AFTER, BUT MAYBE AT LONG LAST IT WILL SATISFY HIM ... IT'S A REINCARNATION DRUG!!

After Aragones



It contained a sarcastic wit and a fatalistic irony in its storytelling, with O. Henry-inspired twist endings and no advertisements!

After Draut



In retrospect, PLOP! appears to be a mainstream attempt at a kids' version of Underground Comix.

NUMBER 3

JAN./FEB. 1974

CARMINE INFANTINO - PUBLISHER OF

PLOP!

JOE ORLANDO, EDITOR & CHIEF GURU
Paul Levitz, Associate Editor & Resident Radical

Contributing Artists, Writers, Troublemakers & Weirdos

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Sergio Aragones | Michael Pellowski |
| Maxene Fabe | Alfredo Alcala |
| Bill Draut | George Kashdan |
| Basil Wolwerton | Victor Schwartzman |

Cartoons featuring death, monsters, physical injury...

After DeCarlo



... the occult...

ELSE ABO THIS.

After Alcala



... and black humour (Cassell, 2007).

Unknown artist

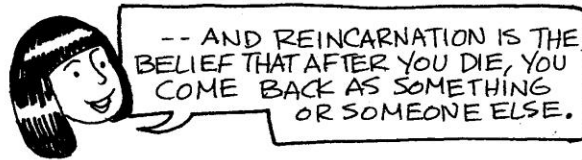


I was raised by a devout Catholic father and an agnostic mother. From the time I was a baby until I became an atheist at fifteen, I attended church once-a-week and went to Catholic school.

That issue of PLOP! Number three introduced me to spiritual concepts I'd never heard of before.



WELL, JULIAN,,, THERE ARE LOTS OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS---



She explained if a person were good during their life, they could come back rich, but a bad person comes back as something horrid--

I wondered what it might be like to be a fly--

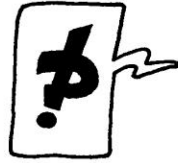


This new understanding, that there exists a plurality of beliefs, shook my faith.

A GOD WHO SACRIFICES HIMSELF TO HIMSELF?



When I was nine years old, I believed everyone was either Catholic (like me at the time) or a devil worshipper...



... until PLOP! introduced me to the concept of reincarnation.

Thus, the agnostic mother transmitted information that conflicted with the Law of the Father (Smith & Watson, 1998).



... whereas my father emphasized Catholic ritual and language.

BUT WHY DO WE HAVE TO GO TO CHURCH EVERY WEEK?

IT'S SO BORING!



As mentioned earlier, my mother tongue is rooted in a colloquial British heritage...

BLIMEY, PETER-YOU TROD ON ME TOE!



Therefore, comic books that portrayed reincarnation, suicide, and the occult were frowned upon.

WHAT IS THIS HORRIBLE COMIC?

IT'S PLOP!





WHERE DID YOU GET IT?

UH--
TH--THE
CORNER
STORE.



Later--

JULIAN, WE HAVE DECIDED THAT YOU
CAN'T BUY COMICS ANYMORE.

WHAT?
WHY?!

They attempted an appeal to my
altruism.
MARTIN IS FALLING BEHIND IN READING
BECAUSE OF THESE COMIC BOOKS.

WELL, HE ONLY LOOKS AT THE
PICTURES AND DOESN'T
READ THE WORDS.



HOW
COME?



WHY IS THE
CHICKEN'S HEAD
CUT OFF?

I was in a panic, but my parents had a
compromise--

The Québécois translations of American
superhero comics were reprinted
in black and white on an even
cheaper newsprint paper.



YOU CAN STILL READ
COMICS, BUT THEY
MUST BE IN FRENCH.

EVEN
SPIDERMAN?

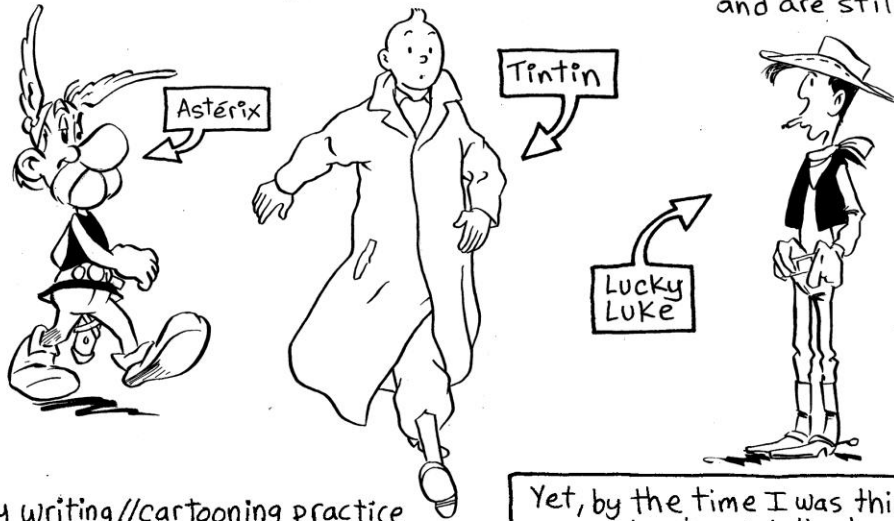
YES.



UGH,.. AND THE
LETTERING IS
SO SLOPPY!

Comics have maintained a tenuous relationship with education-- but not so much in French schools. The "bandes dessinées" from France and Belgium were in classrooms and libraries... and are still there.

After Uderzo, Hergé and Morris



Thus, my writing//cartooning practice is largely informed by many of the Franco-Belgian artists who helped shape the medium.

Yet, by the time I was thirteen, I could not resist the lure of the Anglo-American superhero comics--
I-I-VE JUST GOTTA GET THIS SPIDERMAN COMIC!

HERGÉ
GOTLIB
BRETECHER
Franquin



I secretly bought English-language American comics for two years...

I'LL HIDE IT IN MY UNDERWEAR DRAWER.

...until our move to Winnipeg, at which time I finally came out as a comic book collector and atheist.

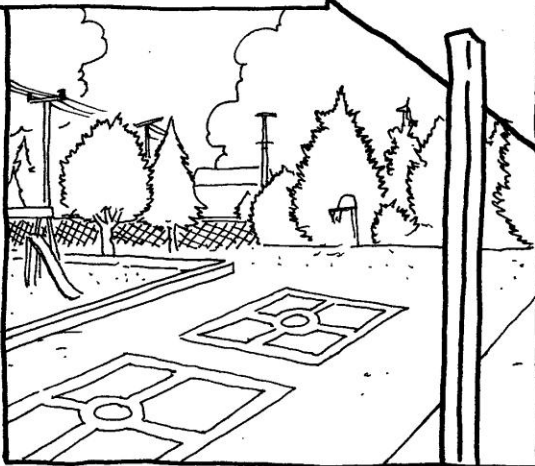


Reflection V
The Plains of Abraham

While writing this thesis, I visited my old elementary school in Gatineau (formerly Hull), Quebec for the first time in **37** years. The secretary gave me a tour and a flood of memories came rushing in...



... the schoolyard where I punched that kid in the face...



... the lockers where I tore up Benoit's comic...



... and the library, where I read from the Franco-Belgian canon: Tintin; Astérix; Lucky Luke; etc.



Most of all though, I remember not enjoying school very much.



*VA AU DIABLE!

TAPETTE!

TÊTE CARRÉE!

*Go to the devil! **Fag! *** Square-head!

I stared across the schoolyard and reflected...



One reason I never fit in is because I'm British. France's loss to England on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 (Mathieu, 1993) led to the Quiet Revolution (Gauvreau, 2005), the FLQ (Fournier, 1982), and schoolyard bullying.



One of my earliest aesthetic experiences occurred when I was five years old. On a visit to the National Gallery in Ottawa with my parents, I was horrified by an enormous painting entitled "The Death of General Wolfe" (painted in 1770 by Benjamin West). The work depicts two moments in time simultaneously:

1 - The moment a messenger appears informing the British General Wolfe of his victory over the French on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 (Mathieu, 1993).

2- The moment Wolfe dies, perhaps oblivious to his victory.



Wow--
BLOOD!

I think my parents explained to me what the painting signified, but I didn't realize until recently that it told the origins of Canada's "two solitudes" (MacLennan, 1945).



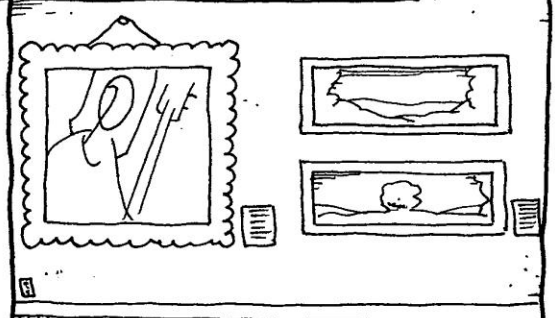
So... THAT'S WHAT A DEAD GUY LOOKS LIKE?

I went back to the National Gallery on my visit to Hull and the painting was still on prominent display.



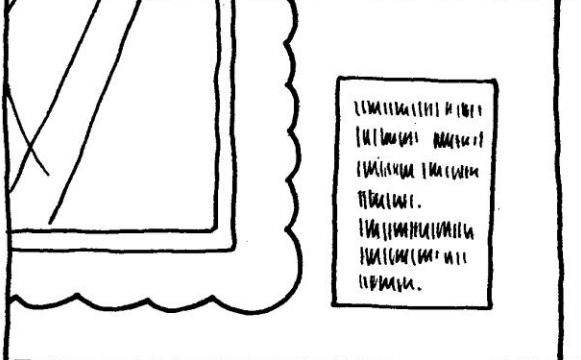
THAT BLOOD ON WOLFE'S COAT LOOKS LIKE A RED DRIP OF COURAGE.

Imagine, for a moment, that the paintings hanging on an art gallery wall are the panels in a comic...



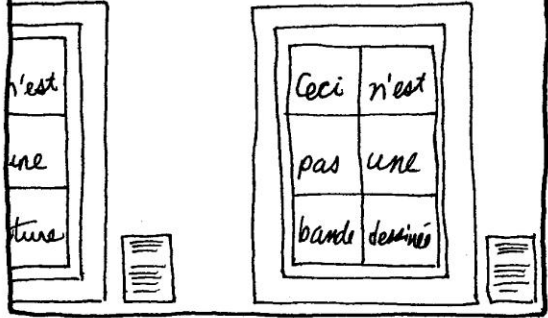
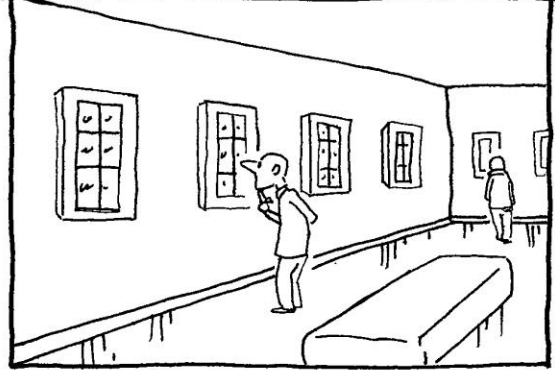
Indeed, the frames' contents, like a comics' panel, signify meanings...

--and information cards provide narrative descriptions, much like the captions in a comic. Yet, I suggest an art gallery wall is not a comics page or hyper-frame (Groensteen, 2007, 2013)...



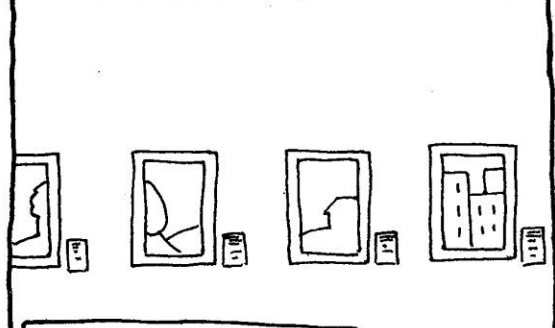
...and an art gallery is not a comic book or multiframe (Groensteen, 2007, 2013). Lukas Wilde (2015) writes that mediality understands the "differences that make a difference" (p.5) between mediums.

Thus comics and painting, including their material qualities, are perceived as essentially different mediums. This was understood by Franco-Belgian comics theorists in the 1960s when they declared comics to be the ninth art (Groensteen, 2012b).



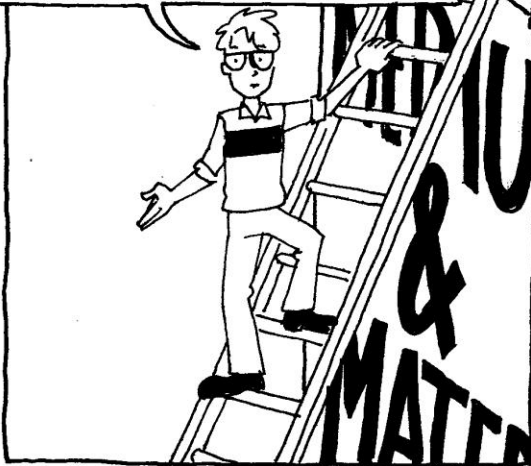
For instance, paintings hang as singular works in their sites on a gallery wall.

THE READING OF AN ART GALLERY'S EXHIBIT, HOWEVER, IS NOT HELD TOGETHER BY WHAT GROENSTEEN (2007) CALLS THE MEDIUM'S "FIRST CRITERIA ... ICONIC SOLIDARITY" (P.18).



Broadly speaking... the framed artworks form a collection of disconnected single-panel cartoons.

COMICS IS A MEDIUM WHEREBY
AUTHORS CUSTOMIZE ITS LANGUAGE.



THUS READINGS OF COMICS TEXTS
TRANSCEND THE SUPERFICIAL
HYBRIDITY OF WORDS AND PICTURES--



OR, AS BRUNETTI
(2011) WRITES,
"COMICS NEED
NOT BE A DEAD
LANGUAGE OF
WORD BALLOONS
AND STINK LINES"
(P.68).

I CONTEND THAT
COMICS IS A LIVING
LANGUAGE THAT
THRIVES UNDER THE
FREEHAND PEN
OF ITS AUTHORS.

A basic grammar of
comics contains:

SPEECH
BALLOONS;

captions;

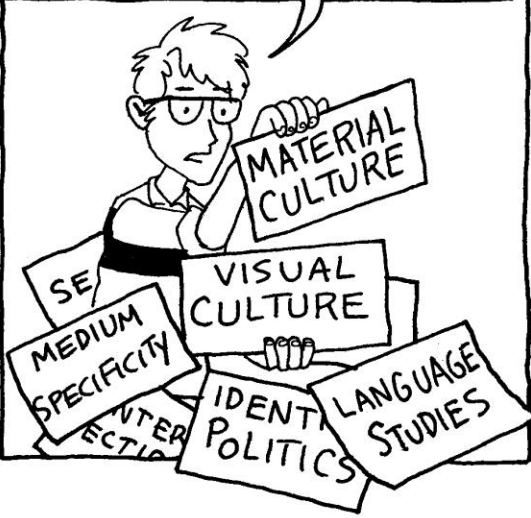
and panels
surrounded
by frames.



YET ANALYSIS OF WHAT AN
AUTHOR DOES WITH THESE
BUILDING BLOCKS BECOMES A
COMPLICATED UNDERTAKING!



COMICS CAN BE READ BY EMPLOYING ANY
NUMBER OF THEORIES OR STRATEGIES...



--I SUGGEST ONE PLACE TO BEGIN IS
WITH A READING OF PRACTITIONER
AND SCHOLAR SCOTT Mc CLOUD'S
(1994) BOOK UNDERSTANDING
COMICS.



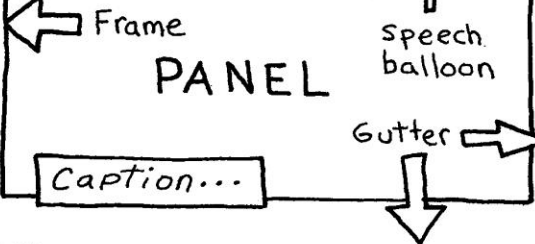
IN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT-GENERATED COMICS, I EMPLOY THEORIES OF *L'ÉCRITURE FÉMININE* (CIXOUS, 1995; TAYLOR, 2014) AND *L'AUTEUR COMPLET* (GROENSTEEN, 2012 a). CLOSE READINGS OF STUDENT COMICS IS SUPPORTED BY TWO SYSTEMS:

The comics page "demands to be traversed, crossed, glanced at, and analytically deciphered" (Groensteen, 2007, p.19).

THE READER, UPON DISCOVERING THE PAGE, SEPARATES IT INTO ITS VARIOUS ELEMENTS.

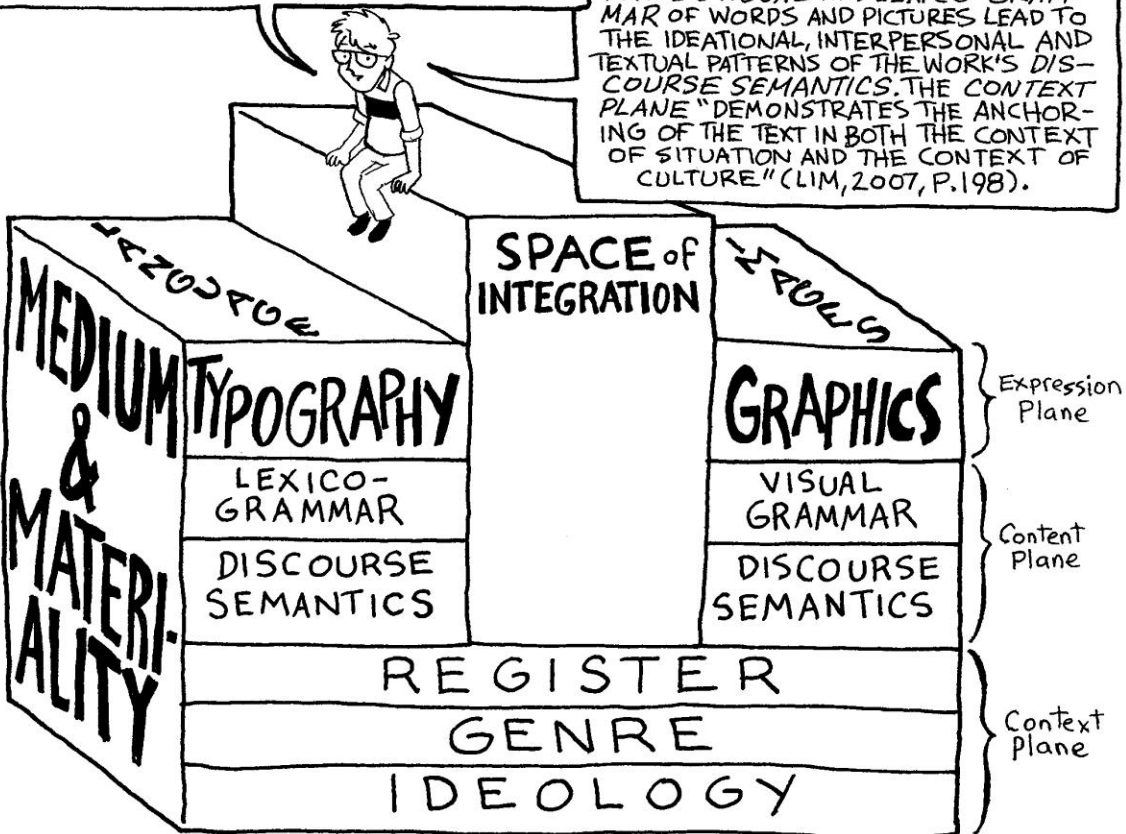
Thierry Groensteen's System of Comics (2007)

Victor Lim Fei's Integrative Multi-Semiotic Model (IMM) (2007)



LIM'S IMM AND GROENSTEEN'S SYSTEM OF COMICS BOTH FRAMEWORK SIMILAR APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING COMICS LANGUAGE. TOGETHER THEY CAN FACILITATE READINGS OF A "SEMIOTIC SYSTEM DEVOID OF SIGNS, OR AT LEAST NOT RELIANT ON A FINISHED SYSTEM OF SIGNS" (GROENSTEEN, 2007, P.4). IN OTHER WORDS, COMICS AUTHORS SUBJECTIVELY PERSONALIZE THE MEDIUM'S LANGUAGE.

OBSERVATION OF A COMICS PAGE BEGINS WITH A VISUAL SCAN OF THE WORDS AND PICTURES OF THE EXPRESSION PLANE. ANALYSIS AND SEMIOSIS CONTINUES TO THE CONTENT PLANE WHERE "THE RELATIONSHIP OF LANGUAGE TO REALITY" (POSTMAN, 1992, P.194) IS DISCOVERED. THE CONTENT PLANE'S VISUAL AND LEXICO-GRAMMAR OF WORDS AND PICTURES LEAD TO THE IDEATIONAL, INTERPERSONAL AND TEXTUAL PATTERNS OF THE WORK'S DISCOURSE SEMANTICS. THE CONTEXT PLANE "DEMONSTRATES THE ANCHORING OF THE TEXT IN BOTH THE CONTEXT OF SITUATION AND THE CONTEXT OF CULTURE" (LIM, 2007, P.198).



MEDIUM & MATERIALITY

MEDIUM AND MATERIALITY ARE DETERMINED THROUGH MEDIALITY (RIPPL & ETTER, 2013; WILDE, 2015).

MATERIAL MEDIATION LEADS TO A VISUAL SCAN OF THE TEXT'S LANGUAGE AND IMAGES...

-- WHICH ARE PRESENTED IN THE FORMS OF TYPOGRAPHY AND GRAPHICS ON THE EXPRESSION PLANE.

THE EXPRESSION PLANE IS ANALYZED THROUGH ITS "SYSTEMS OF COLOUR AND FORM" (LIM, 2004, P. 227).

SPACE of INTEGRATION

Expres-sion Plane

TYPOGRAPHY

I CONTEND THAT IT IS ON THIS PLANE WHERE THE READER CAN DETERMINE WHETHER FREEHAND DRAWING AND LETTERING ARE PRESENTED AS THE AUTHOR'S VOICE, OR IF COMPUTER GRAPHICS AND MECHANICAL TYPE ARE EMPLOYED.

Expres-sion Plane

GRAPHICS

COMICS SCHOLAR JOSEPH WITEK (1989) EXPLAINS--

"FOR A FORMAL ANALYSIS OF COMIC BOOKS, FREEHAND LETTERING, NO MATTER HOW PRECISELY DONE, ALWAYS BETRAYS THE CALLIGRAPHER'S HAND, AND THUS MORE CLOSELY APPROXIMATES THE NUANCES OF THE HUMAN VOICE THAN DOES MECHANICALLY PRODUCED TYPE" (P. 23).

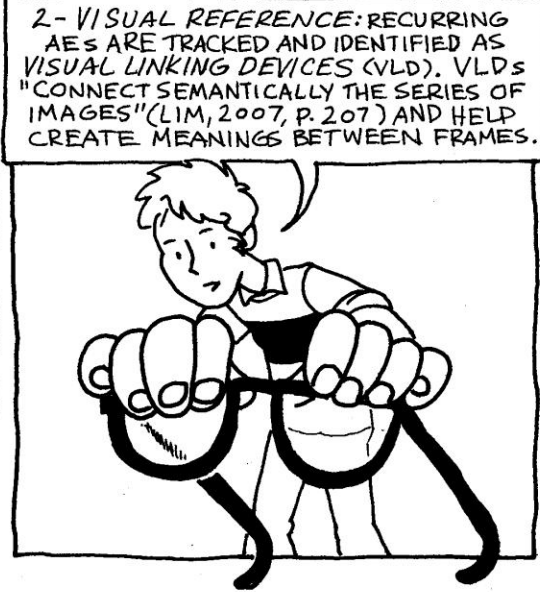
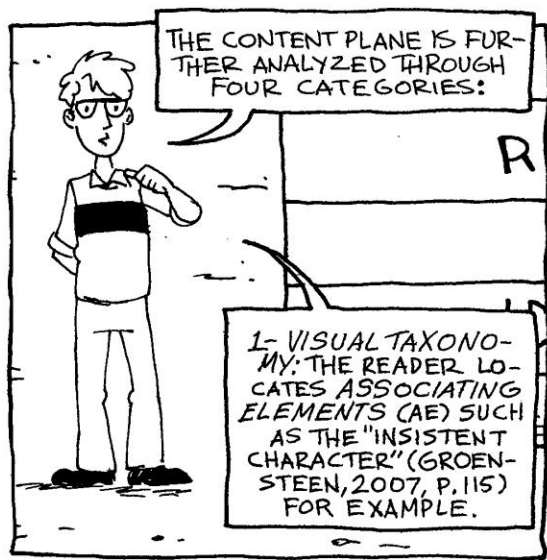
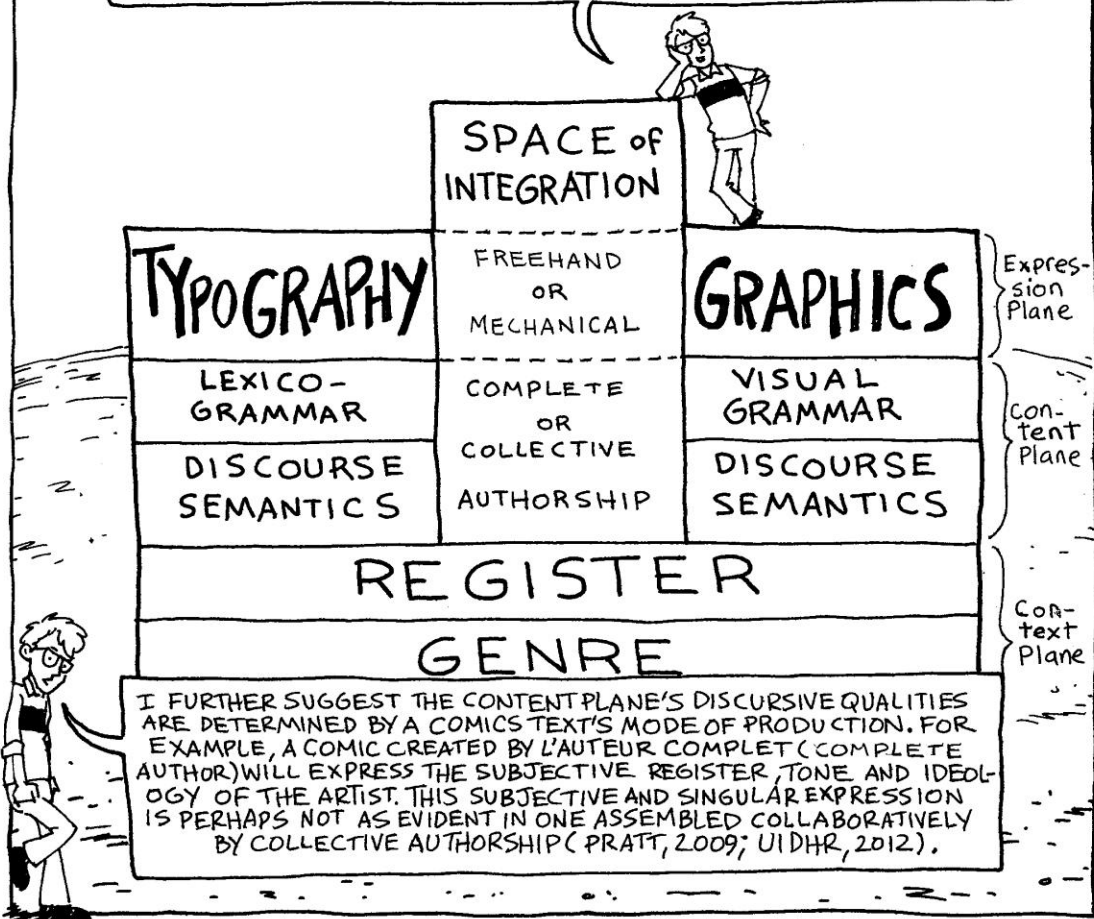
FURTHERMORE, AS SCHOLAR SILKE HORSTKOTTE (2013) WRITES--

"THE STRONGLY STYLIZED, HAND-DRAWN QUALITY OF MUCH CARTOONING SERVES TO HIGHLIGHT THE DISCURSIVE QUALITIES OF THE NARRATIVE REPRESENTATION" (P. 33).

GRAPHICS

VISUAL

I CONTEND THE FREEHAND GRAPHIC LETTERING, "NARRATIVE DRAWING" (GROENSTEEN, 2021a, p.118) AND "GRAPHIATION" (P.117) OF COMICS CREATE OPENINGS DISTINCT FROM OTHER NARRATIVE MEDIUMS. THUS THE FREEHAND MEDIUM OF COMICS LANGUAGE IS EMPLOYED IN THE DOCUMENT GATHERING, DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OUTPUTS OF THIS STUDY OF GRADE FOUR BILINGUAL STUDENTS.



3- VISUAL CONFIGURATION: READER ENGAGEMENT IS BUILT ON THE "FLOW" (LIM, 2007, P. 202) OR "BRAIDING" (GROENSTEEN, 2007, P. 144) IN A COMIC.



4- VISUAL TAXIS: THE READER'S LOGICAL METAFUNCTION IS EMPLOYED TO MAKE LOGICO-SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE FRAMES AND THEIR SIGNIFIEDS. McCLLOUD (1994) NAMES SIX TRANSITIONS OR VISUAL TAXIS BETWEEN FRAMES (P. 74).

MOMENT TO MOMENT	ACTION TO ACTION	SUBJECT TO SUBJECT
SCENE TO SCENE	ASPECT TO ASPECT	NON SEQUITUR

THE STRENGTH OF THE STRIP'S FLOW, ACCORDING TO LIM, RELIES ON THE AEs AND VLDS TO MAKE LINKAGES.

RAPID GRAPHICS

THE CONTEXT PLANE IS COMPRISED OF THREE STRATA, WHICH ARE DESCRIBED AS:

REGISTER: "WHO IS COMMUNICATING (TENOR), ABOUT WHAT (FIELD) AND BY WHAT MEANS" (HOFINGER & VENTOLA, 2004, P. 194).

GENRE: "CULTURAL TYPES OF UNFOLDING SOCIAL ACTION" (HOFINGER & VENTOLA, 2004, P. 194).

IDEOLOGY: "OUR VALUES, OUR DESIRES" (HOFINGER & VENTOLA, 2004, P. 196).

REGISTER
GENRE
IDEOLOGY



I EMPLOY LIM'S IMM AS A BROAD ANALYTICAL TOOL FOR GENERATING UNDERSTANDINGS OF COMICS' SEMIOTICS, NARRATIVES AND AUTHORSHIP POTENTIALS. LIM IDENTIFIES SEVERAL STRATEGIES THAT ARE SIMILARLY ARTICULATED IN GROENSTEEN'S SYSTEM OF COMICS (2007, 2008, 2013), INCLUDING THE INSISTENT CHARACTER, FLOW (OR BRAIDING, AS GROENSTEEN NAMES IT) AND SEMIOTICS.



Groensteen (2007) writes that "the central element of comics, the first criteria in the foundational order, is iconic solidarity" (p. 18).

HE DEFINES THIS AS:



"INTERDEPENDENT IMAGES THAT, PARTICIPATING IN A SERIES, PRESENT THE DOUBLE CHARACTERISTIC OF BEING SEPARATED..."



--AND WHICH ARE PLASTICALLY...



--AND SEMANTICALLY OVER-DETERMINED...



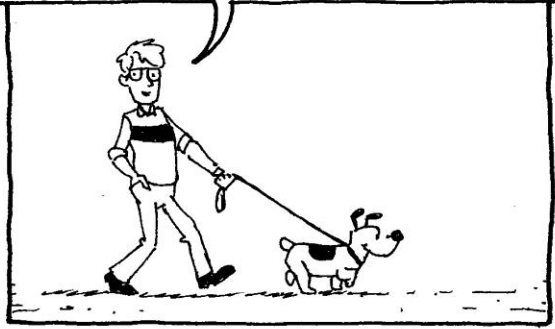
--BY THE FACT OF THEIR COEXISTENCE IN PRAESENTIA" (P.18).



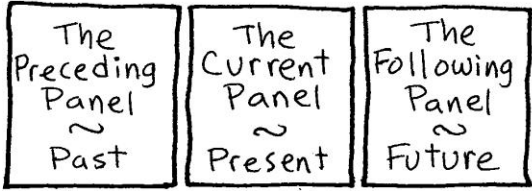
A COMIC'S ICONIC SOLIDARITY IS HELD TOGETHER BY TWO BRANCHES OF WHAT GROENSTEEN CALLS ARTHROLOGY.



THE FIRST BRANCH IS CALLED *RESTRICTED ARTHROLOGY* (THE LINEAR NARRATIVE)... THE SECOND IS *GENERAL ARTHROLOGY*, WHICH BRAIDS THE PLOT WITHIN THE SPATIO/TOPICAL (SPACE/PLACE) LAYOUT ON THE PAGE, OR "HYPERFRAME" (P.30), AND OF THE BOOK/ALBUM, OR "MULTIFRAME" (P.28), AS A WHOLE.



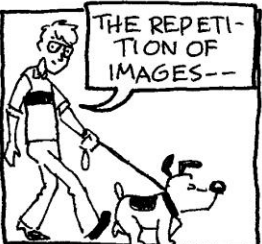
Restricted arthrology represents "the elementary relations, of the linear type" (Groensteen, 2007, p. 22) and identifies a sequence whereby a panel's meaning is understood by the ones that precede and follow it. Thus, a syntagm of semantic discourse is established through a trio of panels.



A panel's site on the page remains constant in space but shifts rhizomatically in time as the reader moves from frame and its signifieds to frame.

The gutter is a void that reinforces the frame and where readers form semantic meaning.

THE GUTTER FUNCTIONS WITH SINGLE PANELS



Later...

GENERAL ARTHROLOGY CHALLENGES PANEL CONTIGUITY...

For example: the motif of the leash connects the narrative to the previous page's panels...

--AND ESTABLISHES CONTIGUITY...

--yet only a portion of the leash is revealed, thus setting up a visual gag in three panels.

--BY EMPLOYING "THE RESURGENCE OF AN ICONIC MOTIF" (P. 151).

PANELS SEVERAL PAGES APART ARE THUS LINKED THROUGH BRAIDING.

HOO HAH!

Some thoughts on word balloons.

THEY DIRECT THE READER'S GAZE.

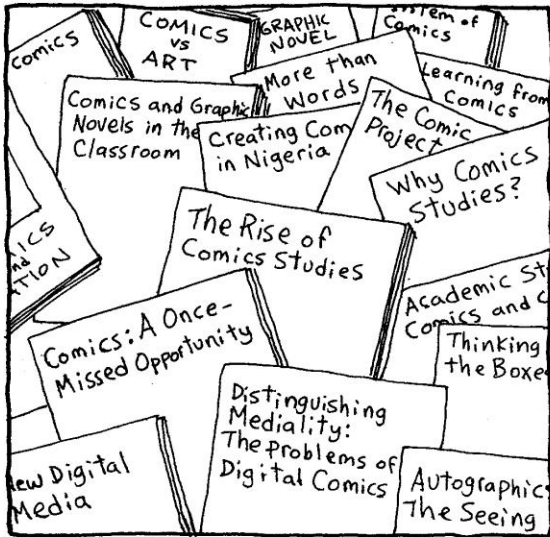
FUNCTIONING MUCH LIKE THE PANEL'S FRAME.

A word balloon's shape moderates voice. For instance:

A SAWTOOTH DESIGN REPRESENTS YELLING!

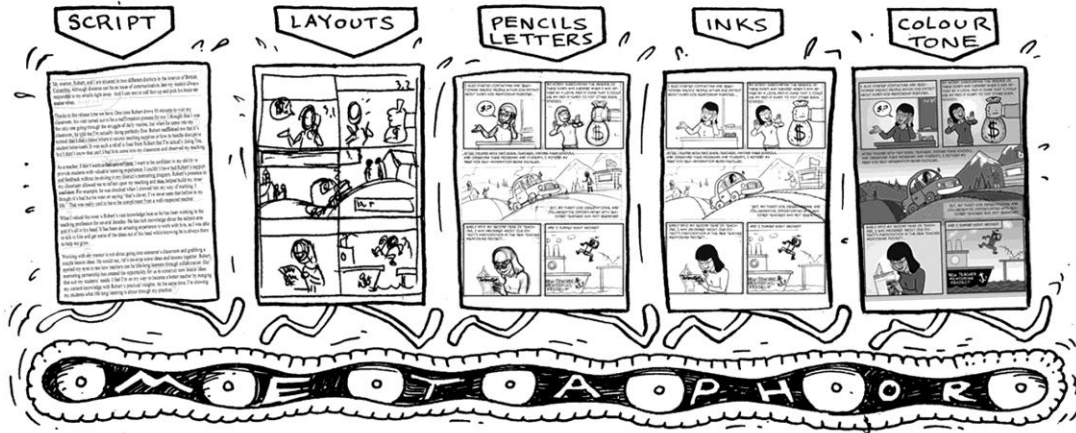
A CLOUD-LIKE SHAPE INDICATES THOUGHT.

Groensteen (2007) observes that word balloons mimic real life in that characters, like people, talk.



Comics scholarship is a growing phenomenon, however the literature shows that current educational studies involving comic books and graphic novels predominantly employ them for reading in research of classroom literacy or scholarly theorizing (Bahl, 2015; Pratt, 2009; Syma & Weiner, 2013) rather than creating comics texts as modes for meaning making.

Furthermore, educator Jeraldine Kraver (2013) writes "we need to understand how the mode itself involves what comics artist and theorist Scott McCloud calls 'making' comics... rather than scattershot approaches used to incorporate comics into discrete classroom lessons" (p. 3).



I argue that understandings of "the language of comics" (Groensteen, 2007, p. 3) improve when scholars become writers as well as readers of comics, for it can be understood that literacy negotiates relationships between reading and writing (Collins & Blot, 2003).

READING
WRITING

Therefore, educators and "students should be visually literate when they construct new knowledge" (Han, 2011, p. 62) through the comics medium.



Classification and Categorization.

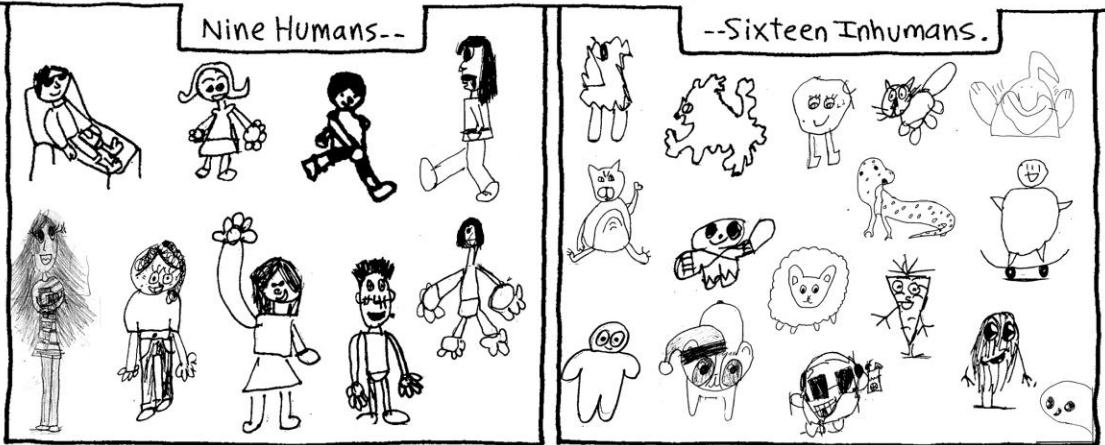
The first stage of this study's data analysis involves scanning, reading, describing, transcribing and translating the participants' comics, sketches, drawings and interviews.

In conducting close, descriptive and deconstructive readings of the students' comics I applied Lim's Integrative Multi-Semiotic Model (IMM) (2004, 2007) as well as Groensteen's System of Comics (2007, 2013) whereby VLDs, such as insistent characters, are located and the relationships between images on the page are interpreted.

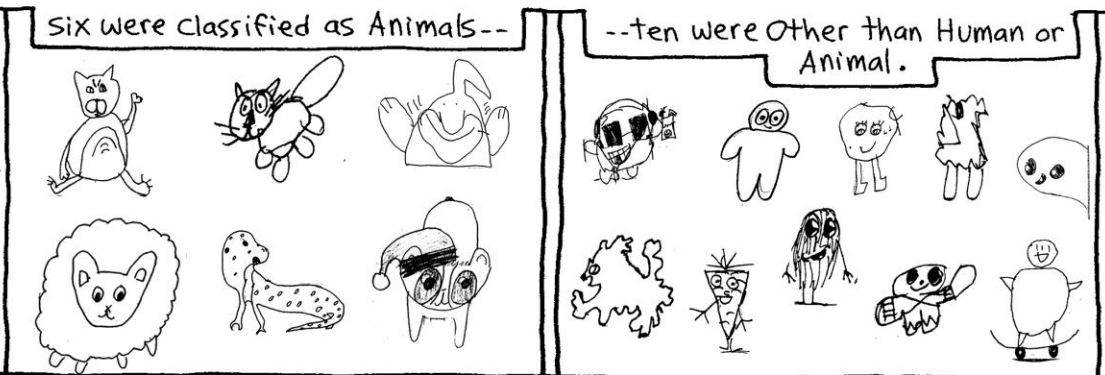
The twenty-five grade four bilingual participants in this study created comics that were, for the most part, not derivative of genres such as manga, horror, or superheroes. Their comics did, however, display a plurality of multimodal semiotic inventions and personal significations (Bitz, 2009, 2010; Groensteen, 2007, 2012a; Lim, 2004, 2007) that discussed broad themes such as moral messages, humour, social relations, and ethics, amongst others. Therefore, classification of the data began with situating the fictional main character within each student's comic...



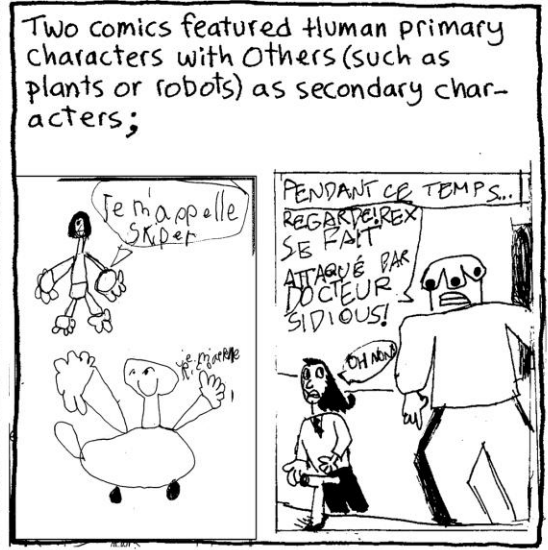
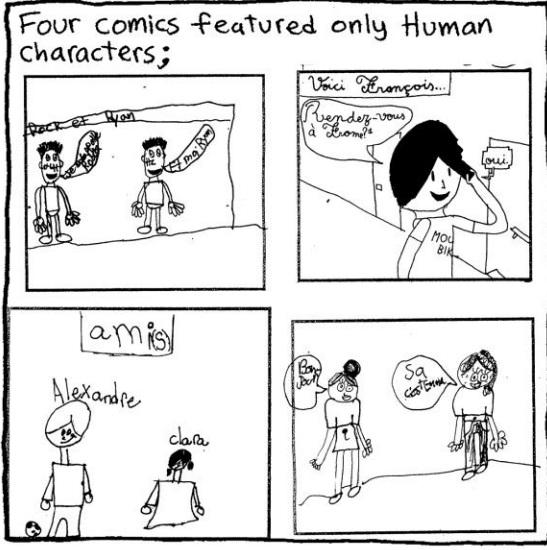
Themes and patterns were tracked through "manual coding" (Harbi, 2016, p. 434) as I catalogued the students' twenty-five main characters into two categories, Human and Inhuman. Thus, the participants' primary characters are tracked as:



Analysis of the Inhuman main characters opened up additional subcategories whereby



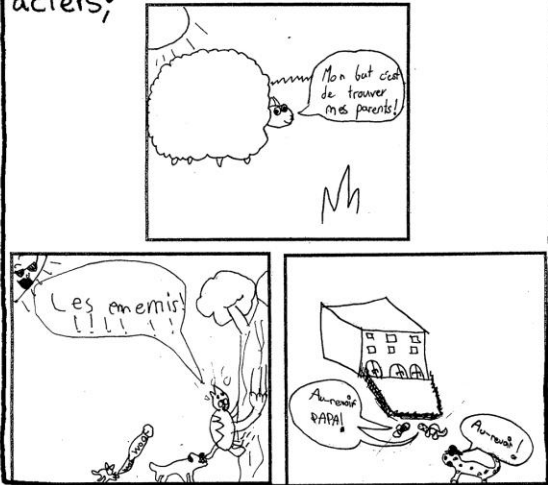
Further analysis of the Human, Animal and Other primary characters in the students' comics opened understandings of their secondary characters. Hence, perceived combinations of the primary and secondary characters created by the participants emerged as follows:



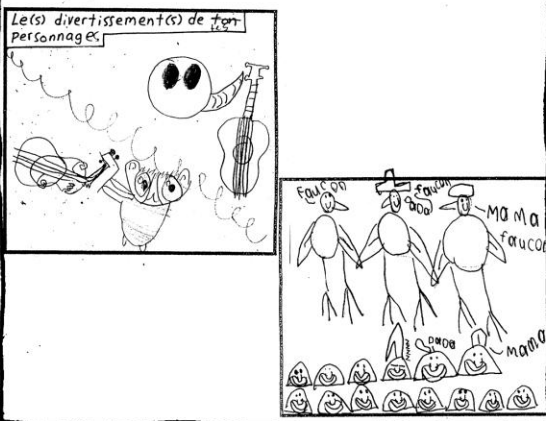
Three comics featured Human primary characters with Animals as secondary characters;



Three comics featured only Animal characters;



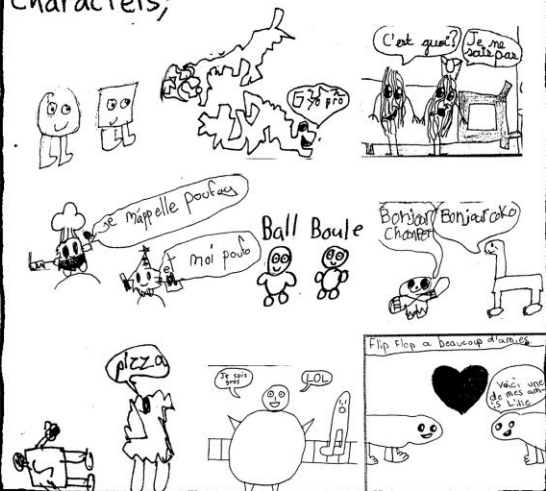
Two comics featured Animal main characters with Others, such as monsters, as secondary characters;



One comic featured an Animal primary character with a Human secondary character;



Nine comics featured only Others as characters;

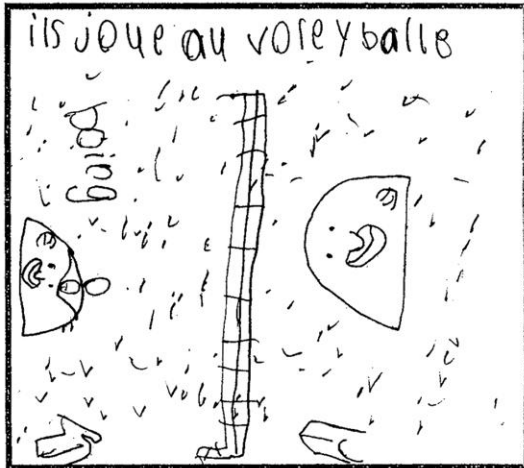


One comic featured an Other as primary character with a Human as a secondary character;



Subsequently, the three participants selected for closer analysis created comics that feature the following combinations of characters:

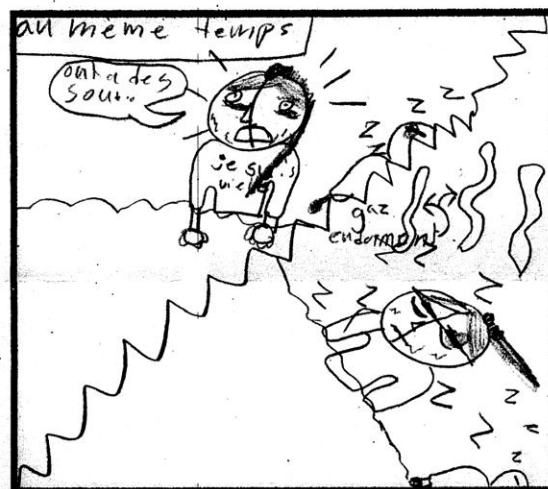
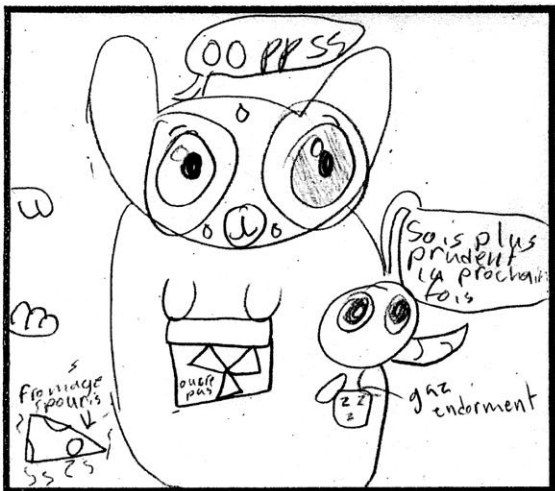
Daniel employed Animals and Others as characters;



Stella employed Human and Animal characters;



Anna employed Animals, Others and Humans as characters.

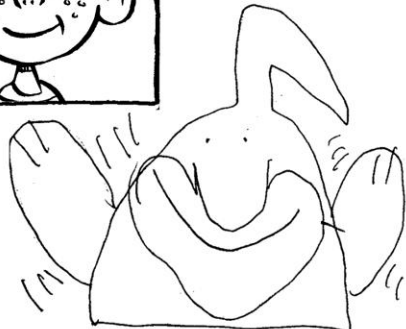


RESEARCH WITH COMICS IS HARD WORK, BUT IT ALLOWS SCHOLARS
WAYS "TO THINK ABOUT RESEARCH IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAY-
THROUGH VISUAL CREATION-THAT ISN'T LIMITED TO THE LANGUAGE OF
WORDS" (JONES & WOGLOM, 2013, P. 188).

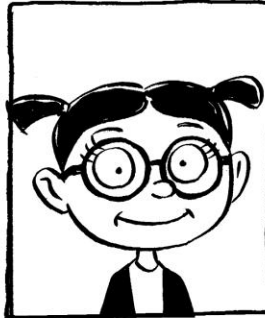
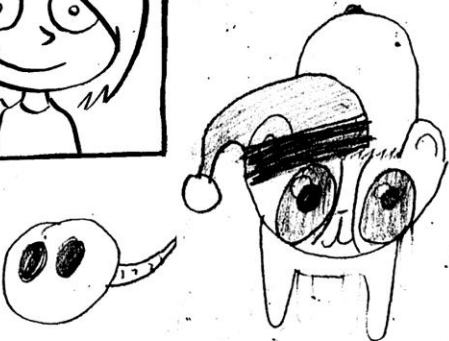
ITURN NOW TO THE STUDENTS' NARRATIVES AS THEY ARE "CULTURALLY
PROVIDED STORIES ABOUT SELVES AND THEIR PASSAGE THROUGH
LIVES THAT PROVIDE RESOURCES DRAWN UPON BY INDIVIDUALS IN THEIR
INTERACTIONS WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH THEMSELVES" (SACHS,
2003, P. 132). NARRATIVES, AS GERGEN AND GERGEN (1988) WRITE,
ARE "INEFFECT, SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS, UNDERGOING CONTINUOUS
ALTERATION AS INTERACTION PROGRESSES" (P. 20). AS SUCH,
I FOCUS ON THE NARRATIVES OF THE FOLLOWING THREE PARTICIPANTS:



Daniel and his
character, Hache
Brown the
Blobfish.



Anna and her
characters, TTOD
and Hamy.



Stella and
her character,
Rosette.



Chapter 4: Data Analysis

The theme of the secret identity is a common trope in the superhero genre of comics. For instance, Superman is Clark Kent, Batman is Bruce Wayne, Wonder Woman is Diana Prince, etc. The research in this study complicates this theme of identity by presenting student-generated comics as the secret identities of their authors. For the most part, these identities are perceived to be written unconsciously. Indeed, these manifestations of identity are secrets to the students-as-authors themselves in most instances.

This study's original focus was to explore autobiographical comics and that genre's possibilities with grade four bilingual students' explorations of identity. The students, however, insisted that they be allowed to draw fictional stories. As such, the research questing became an exploration into: *What are the ways drawing fictional comics by hand can help bilingual grade four students negotiate conceptions of identity?* Many of the participants asserted they already had original characters with whom they had developed close connections. For example, during my first visit to the participating classroom, Daniel (a pseudonym) asked if he was allowed to draw a comic about a blobfish. This turned out to be *Hache Brown* (Figure 4.2), and Daniel's empathetic identification with his character is explained in our interviews.

4.1 The Integrative Multi-Semiotic Model and the System of Comics

My own explorations of learning and identity emerged in this study through the creation of an overt autobiographical cartoon character, or avatar, featured in the previous chapter. This insistent (Groensteen, 2007) and metaphoric character (Lea et al., 2011), though purporting to be an autobiographical cartoon of myself, is nonetheless a stylized and exaggerated caricature. For

example, to help the reader make meaning and to support their journey through Chapter Three's sequential narrative, the author-as-character (i.e. the metaphoric indivitrío that I designed) is wearing easily identifiable clothes such as glasses, rolled-up sleeves and a large stripe running around the chest. These repeated signifiers are what educator Victor Lim Fei (2007) calls Associating Elements (AEs) and Visual Linking Devices (VLDs). The AEs and VLDs permit the reader to cognitively make meaning and perceptually create connections between panels. In my quest to learn more of the medium's intricacies, I investigate relationships between two theories of reading and interpreting comics: The Integrative Multi-Semiotic Model (IMM) (Lim, 2004, 2007) and The System of Comics (Groensteen, 2007).

In Chapter Three, as a means of facilitating the life-writing method of my investigations, I employ an autobiographical avatar. This is a familiar device employed by Ayers & Alexander-Tanner (2010), Jones & Woglom (2013), and McCloud (1994), among others, in presentations of their comics research findings. Furthermore, close readings and deep analysis of the participants' comics, coupled with research into theories of writing, uncovered connections between two theories of authorship: *l'auteur complet* [the complete author] and *l'écriture féminine* [the feminine writing]. Metaphorically speaking, one could say I was looking at the comics through one end of the binoculars. Theories of *auteur complet* and *écriture féminine* came into sharper focus when I turned the binoculars around and oriented closer and more detailed analysis of the data through those lenses.

I developed techniques of writing//cartooning, which I taught to the grade four students as six ninety-minute cartooning lessons delivered over the course of two months. My research into the ways students negotiate identity through the freehand drawing of comics generated hundreds of pages of original student art. From rough sketches to camera-ready comics, the

twenty-five participants at l'Ecole Française (a pseudonym) and their teacher, Madame Centour (also a pseudonym), applied learned techniques of writing//cartooning. A richer analysis of the students' comics, drawings and sketches was conducted through a lens of *écriture féminine* (Bonnstetter & Ott, 2011; Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996; Taylor, 2014) and reveals a multiplicity of shared themes, including second language acquisition, connections to family, writing beyond the self, and unconscious explorations of identity. In light of the enormous amount of data generated in this study, I focus on three participants, to whom I have given the following pseudonyms: Daniel, Anna, and Stella.

My singular criterion for all twenty-five participants was for everyone to create at least one page of comics each by the end of my six cartooning lessons. I provided the classroom with two templates (Appendix B) that were designed to help the students introduce the reader to their original cartoon character, along with his/her/its world. As a result, all of the participants completed at least one page of comics, and several students in the classroom produced more than just one page. For instance, the three participants who were selected randomly for interviews (i.e. Daniel, Anna and Stella) created multi-page narratives. As such, I focus on those three participants as case studies in this chapter.

In my initial readings and early analysis of the twenty-five students' comics, I weaved various systems (such as the Integrated Multi-Semiotic Model (Lim, 2004, 2007), the System of Comics (Groensteen, 2007, 2008), and the integrated systems of perception, drawing, and meaning (Cohn, 2012)) to interpret the data. In so doing, I was able to locate main characters, understand narratives and track themes. As I excavated deeper into the information however, theories of *l'auteur complet* (Groensteen, 2012a; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Uidhr, 2012) and *l'écriture*

féminine (Bonnstetter & Ott, 2011; Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996; Taylor, 2014) were employed in analysis.

4.2 Two Theories of Authorship

Theories of *auteur complet* (Groensteen, 2012a, Rippl & Etter, 2013; Uidhr, 2012) and *écriture féminine* (Bonnstetter & Ott, 2011; Cixous, 1995; Cixous & Clément, 1986) were employed in the analysis and “provide the necessary direction and organizing framework through which to bring together the different concepts” (Dey, 1993, p. 53) and to support the “prospecting” (Anderson & Thomas, 2014, p. 1) for nuggets of information hidden in the data of student-generated artwork. I contend theories of *auteur complet* and *écriture féminine* have yet to be employed as a framework to study comics created by bilingual English-French students. However, feminist theory can be helpful in forming “methodological approaches in art practice research” (Taylor, 2014, p. 309) and *écriture féminine* “embraces theory *and* practice” (p. 309, italics in original). Additionally, the freehand “intertextual and intermaterial relations” (p. 308) of what I call writing//cartooning opens “multiple articulations of knowledges” (p. 308) through a hybrid research approach. As such, I am analyzing student-generated comics with an eye to understand the ways making comics can help negotiate conceptions of identity.

Informing theories of *l’auteur complet* and *l’écriture féminine* is an a/r/tographical (Irwin, 2010, 2013) *métissage* (Hasebe-Ludt et al., 2008) via life-writing (Baetens, 2013b; El Refaie, 2012; Leggo, 2008, 2010). A/r/tography complicates the autographical self-studies in this research by disrupting the theoretical, material and procedural connections and barriers between writing//cartooning, researching, teaching and identity. The comics, writings, drawings and sketches generated in this study are, I contend, rife with semiotic and metaphoric meanings. For

example, I observed mid-way through the six cartooning lessons that Joe-Louis (a pseudonym) was struggling with the exercises and activities. He vocally expressed his frustration to me while doodling inhuman creatures on a sheet of white paper. His abstract and amoeba-like characters were formless yet expressive and, I suggest, metaphorically signified his frustrations. Joe-Louis reacted with great enthusiasm when I encouraged him to draw a comic employing his abstract doodles as characters.

A scan of Joe-Louis' six-panel comic (figure 4.1) reveals a balanced sequence of narrative drawings and graphic writing, whereby comics language has been customized to communicate the author's subjective meanings. Furthermore, Joe-Louis was the only participant to draw his comic on the six-panel template (Appendix B) in a landscape, as opposed to a portrait, orientation. In using the page as a tool, and customizing language, Joe-Louis is, I contend, claiming a form of authorship. As such, the grade four bilingual students of this study, along with myself as comics artist/researcher/teacher, are perceived as living inquiries into the multimodal (Hagan, 2007; Ventola et al., 2004) and rhizomatic (Irwin et al., 2006) interactions between learning, identity, authorship and comics.

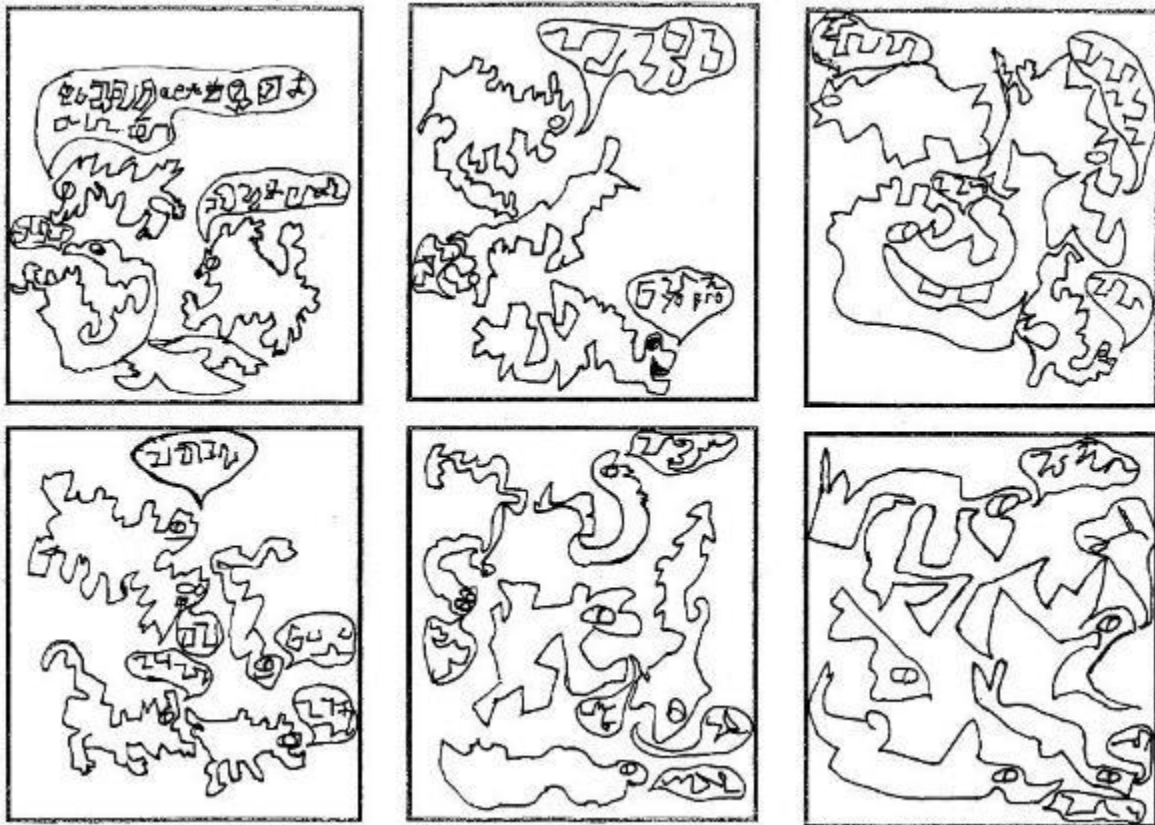


Figure 4.1. Abstract comic by grade four participant, Joe-Louis.

Every comic (except, perhaps, Joe-Louis') shared at least one common characteristic: that of the repeated, insistent character. Analysis of the student-generated artwork reveals l'écriture féminine's "direction of animality, plants, the inhuman" (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. 8), thus initial classification of their comics is based on broad and essential distinctions of their fictional main characters. In other words, main characters that students have created are identified and divided into a dichotomy of *Human* or *Inhuman* categories.

4.3 Case Study #1: Daniel

On November 18th 2015, I sat down with Daniel for our first interview over lunchtime in a corner of Madame Centour's noisy grade four classroom. I noted on my first visit two weeks earlier that Daniel (whom I didn't know by name at the time) was full of questions. I recorded in my field notes that "one student wanted to know if he can draw a fish character". I assumed Daniel's mother tongue was English, based on his pronounced English accent when speaking in French, as well as his usage of English words to substitute for the French ones he did not know. However in our final interview, one year later in November 2016, he informed me that his mother tongue is both English and French and that his mother speaks French, but his father does not.

At our first interview, and before seeing any of his drawings, I ask Daniel if he has a name for his cartoon character. He replies, " Je dessine un personnage dans ma bande dessinée et il s'appelle Hache Brown... il est une sorte de poisson qui s'appelle un *blobfish*. Ils sont roses et tout comme..." ["I draw a character and his name is Hache Brown (Figure 4.2)... He's a kind of fish that is called a blobfish. They are pink and all like..."]. At this point Daniel's voice audibly trails off on the recording as he struggles to translate his thoughts from, what I perceive to be, his mother tongue of English into his second language of French. I suddenly realize what he is talking about and I break the silence by exclaiming, " Oh un blobfish! C'est super laid! ["Oh, a blobfish! They're super ugly!" Daniel stares silently at me for a moment before a sad expression comes across his face. He looks down at his feet and murmurs, "Oui" ["Yes"]. My understanding of Daniel's "nonverbal emotion cues" (Uhls et al., 2014, p. 387) communicate his belief that blobfish are, in his opinion, beautiful animals... and now I've created a rupture by othering one of the personal connections he has developed with the natural world!

le Blobfish

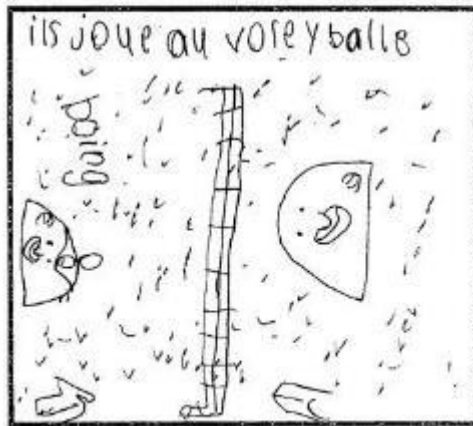
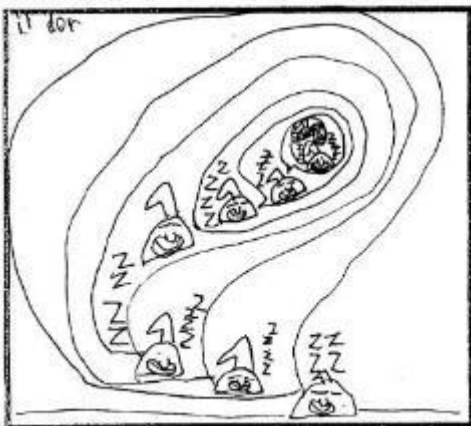
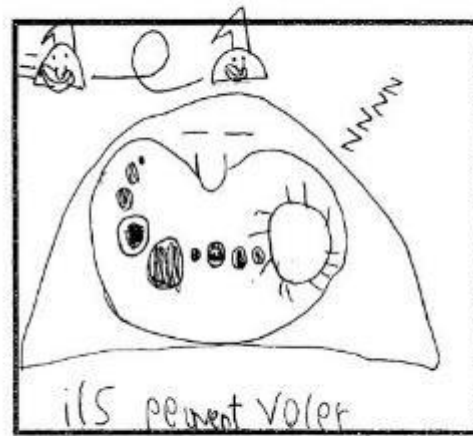
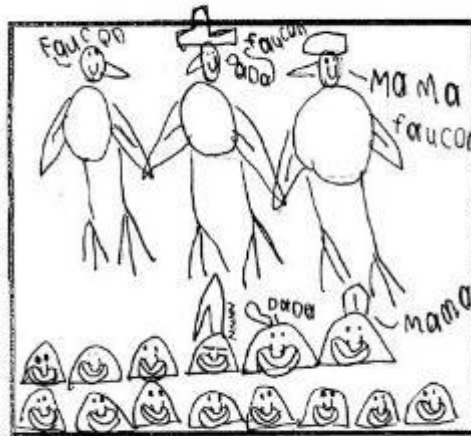


Figure 4.2. Daniel's one-page character introduction. Translation: Panel 1- The Blobfish. Panel 2- Caption: This is Hache Brown. Panel 3- Labels: Falcon, Falcon Dada, Falcon Mama. Labels: Dada, Mama. Panel 4- Caption: They can fly. Panel 5- Caption: He sleeps. Panel 6- Caption: They play volleyball

My empathetic reading of Daniel's facial response is confirmed in our second interview one week later when I ask him why he chose to draw a blobfish. He replies (somewhat sarcastically), "Parce que j'aime vraiment les blobfish" ["Because I really like blobfish"]. When queried as to why he likes blobfish, he says without making eye contact, "Ils sont mignons pour seulement moi... et quelques autres personnes-- mais quelques autres personnes pensent qu'ils ne sont pas mignons" ["They are cute for me only... and some other people -- but some other people think they are not cute"]. Daniel's answer reveals an unfortunate and lingering impact created by my inadvertent othering of his relationship with Hache Brown the blobfish. The intensity of this relationship comes into sharper focus when, in our sixth and last interview one year later, Daniel says to me without prompting, "Je pense que je base Hache Brown sur moi. Je crois ça c'est pourquoi j'ai dit qu'il joue au volleyball beaucoup" ["I think I base Hache Brown on myself. I think that's why I said he plays volleyball all the time"].

Daniel expresses his relationship with the m/other when he says in an earlier interview that one of the similarities he shares with his fictional character Hache Brown is that they both like "*cuddles*". Daniel uses the English term "*cuddles*" when speaking in French, which perhaps indicates the physical and material connection between language acquisition, the "*mater and matter*" (Cixous & Clément, 1986, p. XV, italics in original) of the natural world and the m/other tongue. In another entirely different drawing (Figure 4.3), Daniel reinforces the bond he has with the natural world while attempting to reconcile his love for animals with his taste for meat.

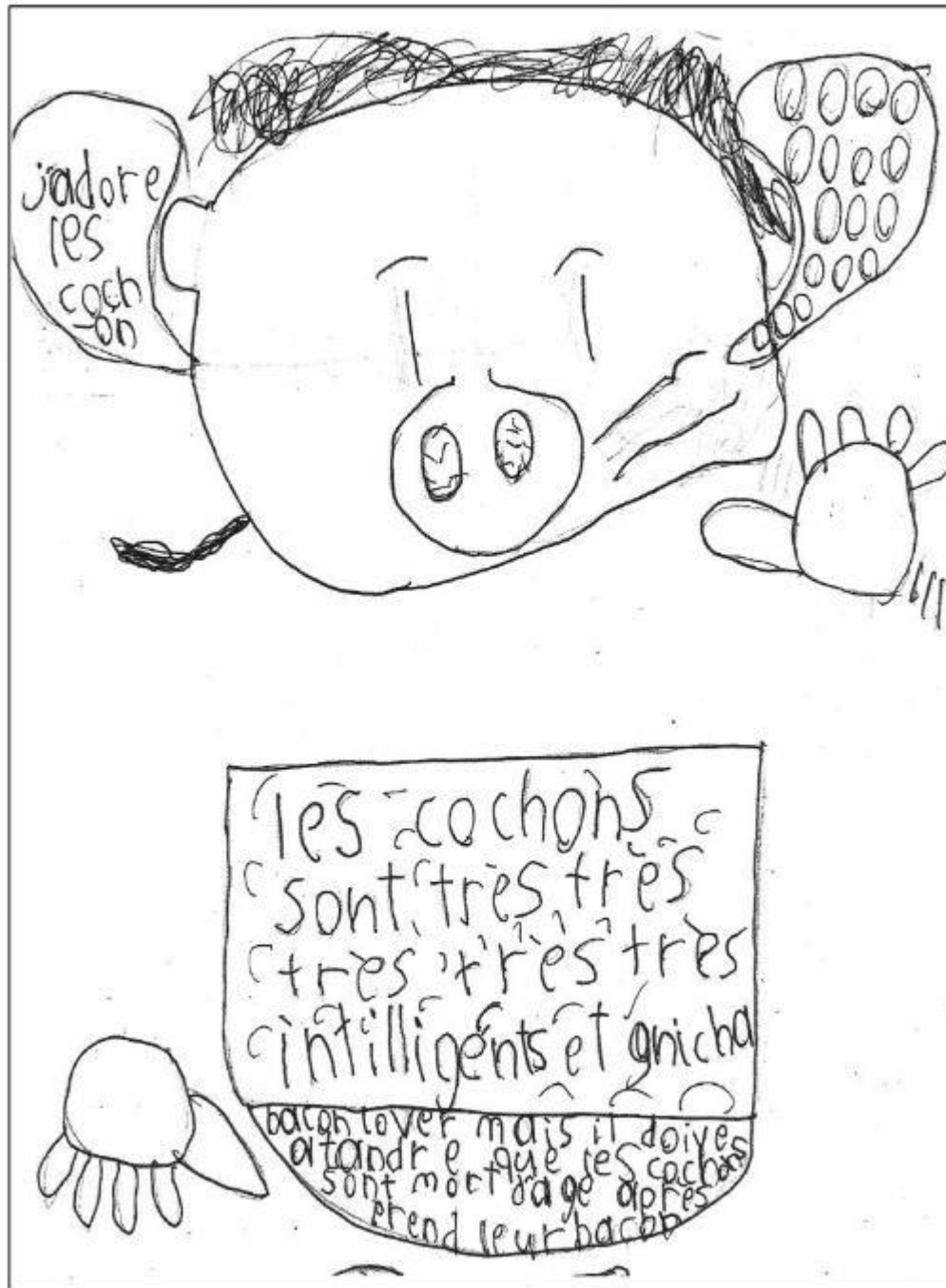


Figure 4.3. Daniel's one-panel gag cartoon. Translation: First speech balloon: "I love pigs." Second speech balloon: "Ooooooooooooooooooooo." Caption: Pigs are very, very, very, very, very intelligent and gnicha (sic). Bacon lover but he must wait for the pigs to die of old age and after take their bacon.

The talking pig in Figure 4.3 is, according to Daniel, a self-portrait. This is reinforced by the “rat-tail” of hair visibly sticking out from behind the character’s head below the speech balloon on the left: a distinctive hair style shared by both Daniel and the character in his drawing. This, I suggest, is a Visual Linking Device (Lim, 2007) that forges a relationship between the lifeworld author and cartoon character. In this way Daniel negotiates identity by assuming features of the other. The pig-like inhuman says in the first speech balloon, “I love pigs.” This is followed by a cry of, “Oooooooooooooooooo” in the second speech balloon, which Daniel explains is the character whistling. There is a caption situated where the character’s stomach would be, and Daniel writes how very intelligent pigs are. Yet the text assumes a more serious tone when he broaches the subject of eating animals. In the drawing, Daniel admits to loving bacon and appears to express relief in the somewhat misguided belief that pig meat is not harvested until after the animal dies of old age. In our sixth and last interview, Daniel states, “Si j’étais un fermier et j’avais des cochons je ne l’ai pas tuer (sic) et après prendre leur bacon, parce que si tu fais ça le bacon est plus bon” [“If I were a farmer and I had pigs, I would not kill them and then take their bacon, because if you do that the bacon is no longer any good”]. I suggest the empathetic connection with the other, which is observed in both Daniel’s cartoon and in his conversation, communicates a love and empathy for animals, nature, and the inhuman.

From my point of view as a vegan who doesn’t consume animal products, I believe I understand what Daniel is expressing: an unconscious revulsion at the conditions under which pigs, cows, chickens, etc. are tortured and killed under often violent, militaristic and industrial factory farming methods (Pollan, 2006; Schlosser, 2001; Singer & Mason, 2006). I argue that Daniel’s sketch is a message to the patriarchal capitalist masters who control the global

production of animals as food and, as such, represents a strong work of poetic and political écriture féminine. Furthermore, I argue that in an educational setting, such as a classroom, Daniel's drawing can serve as a catalyst for conversations around the ethics of diet, food production, social justice and social responsibility.

This study of grade four bilingual students and comics observes that the theme of a search for the material connection to the m/other and family emerges in some of the works, thus explorations of l'écriture féminine, as a feminist theory of authorship, came into focus. For example, in Chapter Three, I trace my m/other's explanation of reincarnation when I was in grade four as the beginning of a quest beyond my father's Catholic language. Furthermore, Daniel explains in one interview that the most important part of his story is when his character, Hache Brown (Figure 4.2), finds his family. Similarly, Genevieve's (a pseudonym) character, *François the Sheep*, travels to France in a search for his family, and Stella's character *Rosette* (detailed in Case Study #3) resolves a school conflict by (reluctantly) appealing to the m/other. I suggest these represent metaphorical graspings for the mother tongue of expression. In both the participants' varied comics and my own autographic life-writing in Chapter Three, we engage and explore in a mutual living inquiry through communities of practice (Irwin & Springgay, 2008) into the ways meaning is made when writing//cartooning sequential narratives with comics language.

4.4 Case Study #2: Anna

In our first interview, I ask Anna who lives with her at home. She answers, "Ma soeur, ma mère et... ma mère... j'ai deux mères" ["My sister, my mother and (*here she pauses*)... my mother... (*she laughs gently*)... I have two mothers"]. The hesitation in her voice, and the laugh

she utters, before saying she has two mothers are indications of Anna's awareness of a distinctive quality involving her family. In other words, Anna has two m/others and is conscious of this unique aspect to her home life. Daniel and Stella each declared living with a mother and a father, and when I ask Anna if she perceives having two mothers as a distinctive scenario she replies, "Oui parce qu'il n'y a personne d'autre dans l'école" ["Yes, because there is no one else in the school"].

Anna tells me in our second interview that her character's name, the English-sounding TTOD, is spelled with "deux 'Ts' parce que je voulais que ça soit unique" ["two 'Ts' because I wanted it to be unique"]. This evokes Marshall McLuhan's (1964) statement that "(e)ach mother tongue teaches its users a way... of acting in the world, that is quite unique" (p. 83), especially within a plurality of others who are "in a 'mutual' reliance" (Kristeva, 2001, p. 57) such as the classroom. I suggest l'écriture féminine has not been employed as a theory to study comics created by bilingual English-French students, yet its ideas can assist in developing organizational methodologies in comics art education research. Indeed, close readings of Anna's fictional cartoon characters (Figure 4.4) and three-page comics story (Figures 4.5-4.7) analyzed in context with her interviews, generate further understandings of the relationships between comics authorship and the bond of language with the natural, material and physical world's m/other (Cixous & Clément, 1986; Sellers, 1996).

For example, of the twenty-five classroom participants, Anna is one of only a handful to have a third defined cartoon character. This third character of Anna's is named *Jeff* and she describes him as an ant who is "the boss" of Hamy and TTOD. In her conversations and in her comics, Anna employs the English word "boss" rather than the French "*patron*", indicating her connection to the English mother tongue. Additionally, it is through the third inhuman character

of Jeff the ant that I contend Anna metaphorically (and unconsciously) negotiates conceptions of her own identity.



Figure 4.4. Anna's one-page character introduction. Translation: Panel 1- The Title: The Adventures of Hamy and TTOD - Operation Under the Bed. Panel 2- Caption: Introduction of your characters. Hamy. TTOD. Panel 3.1- Caption: The boss of your characters. Jeff: Hey ho, I'm here. Panel 3.2- Sound Effect: ZOOM. Jeff: Hello, I am an ant. Panel 4- Caption: The world of your characters. The normal world. Hamy and TTOD: Yippeeee! Panel 5- What do your characters do for work? They are spies. Panel 6- What your characters do for fun.

Anna describes Hamy as “vraiment comme dramatique” [“really like dramatic”], and TTOD as “plus calme” [“more calm”]. In terms of her own temperament and relationship with those two characters, Anna says she positions herself “entre le milieu” [“in the middle”]. Employing *écriture féminine* as a lens for analysis opens interesting connections when contextualizing her interview comments with her comics. For instance, Anna situates herself between two main characters who are good friends, which can perhaps be contrasted with her perceptions of living with “deux mères” [“two moms”]. Thus the relationship between Hamy, TTOD, and Jeff suggests perceptual openings into Anna’s negotiations of her own identity as the daughter of two mothers. I decide to pursue this line of inquiry and organize a sixth and final interview with the three participants almost one year after my classroom visits had ended.

The dynamics between Hamy and TTOD are the polar opposites of each other. For example, in the last panel of Figure 4.4, TTOD is portrayed playing music on the guitar while simultaneously Hamy likes to destroy guitars. I suggest the character of Jeff the ant offers Anna metaphoric perspectives into her own experience of living in between two m/others, thus opening opportunities for authorial explorations into social relations. In our final interview together I ask Anna if her two mothers have different personalities from each other. She replies, “Oui, très différents” [“Yes, very different”]. I continue by asking her, “Alors, est-ce-que tu penses que Hamy représente une mère puis TTOD représente l’autre mère puis Jeff te représente au milieu de ces deux là?” [“So, do you think Hamy represents one mother, TTOD represents the other mother, and Jeff represents you in-between these two?”]. Without hesitation Anna replies with an enthusiastic “Oui!” [“Yes!”].

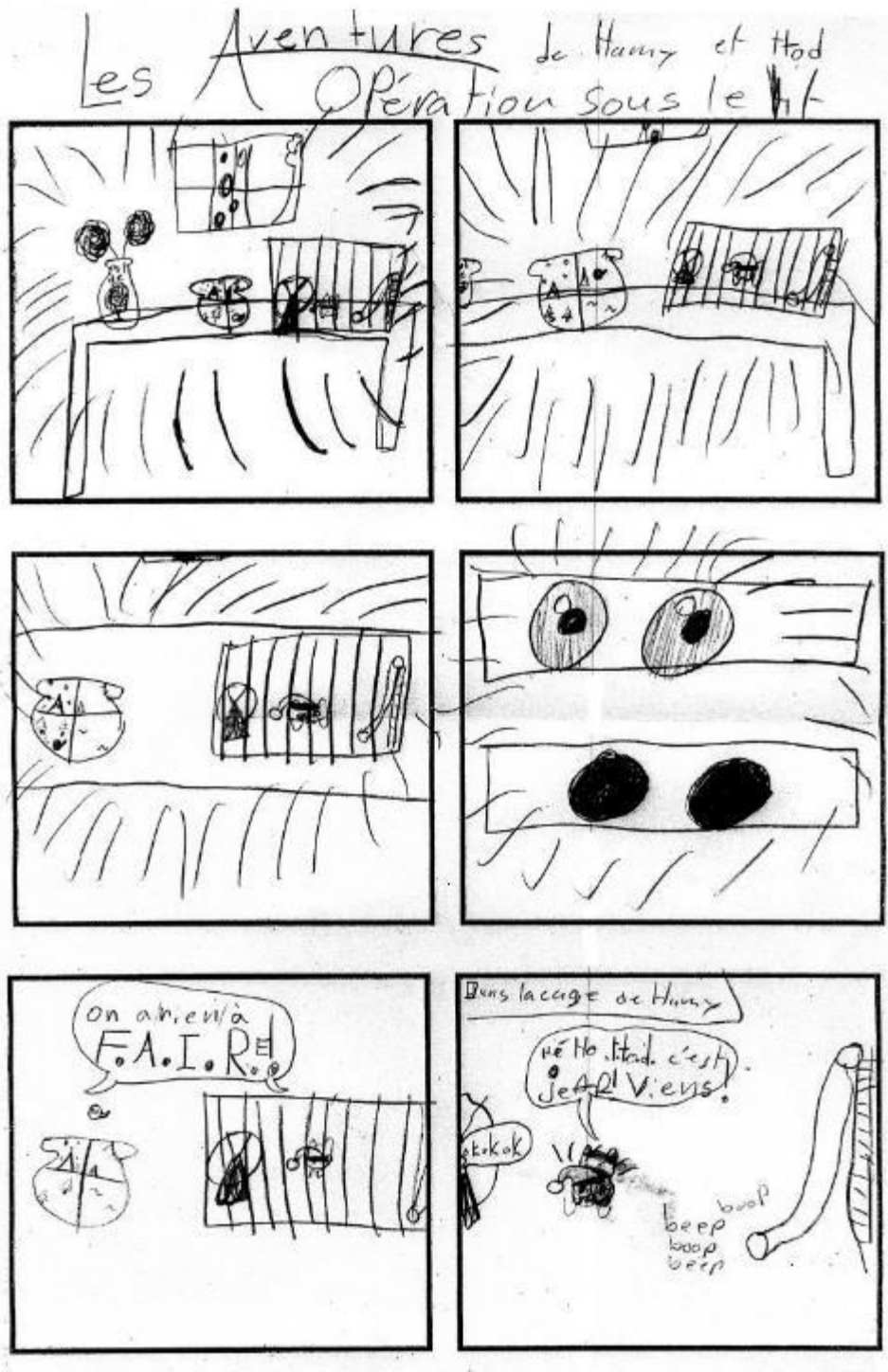


Figure 4.5. The Adventures of Hammy and ttod: Operation Under The Bed, Page 1. Translation: Operation Under the Bed. Panels 1 to 4- No captions/no dialogue. Panel 5- Hammy and TTOD (together): We have nothing to DO! Panel 6- Caption: Inside Hammy's cage. Hammy: Hey, ho TTOD, it's Jeff! Come here! TTOD (off-frame): Ok ok ok.

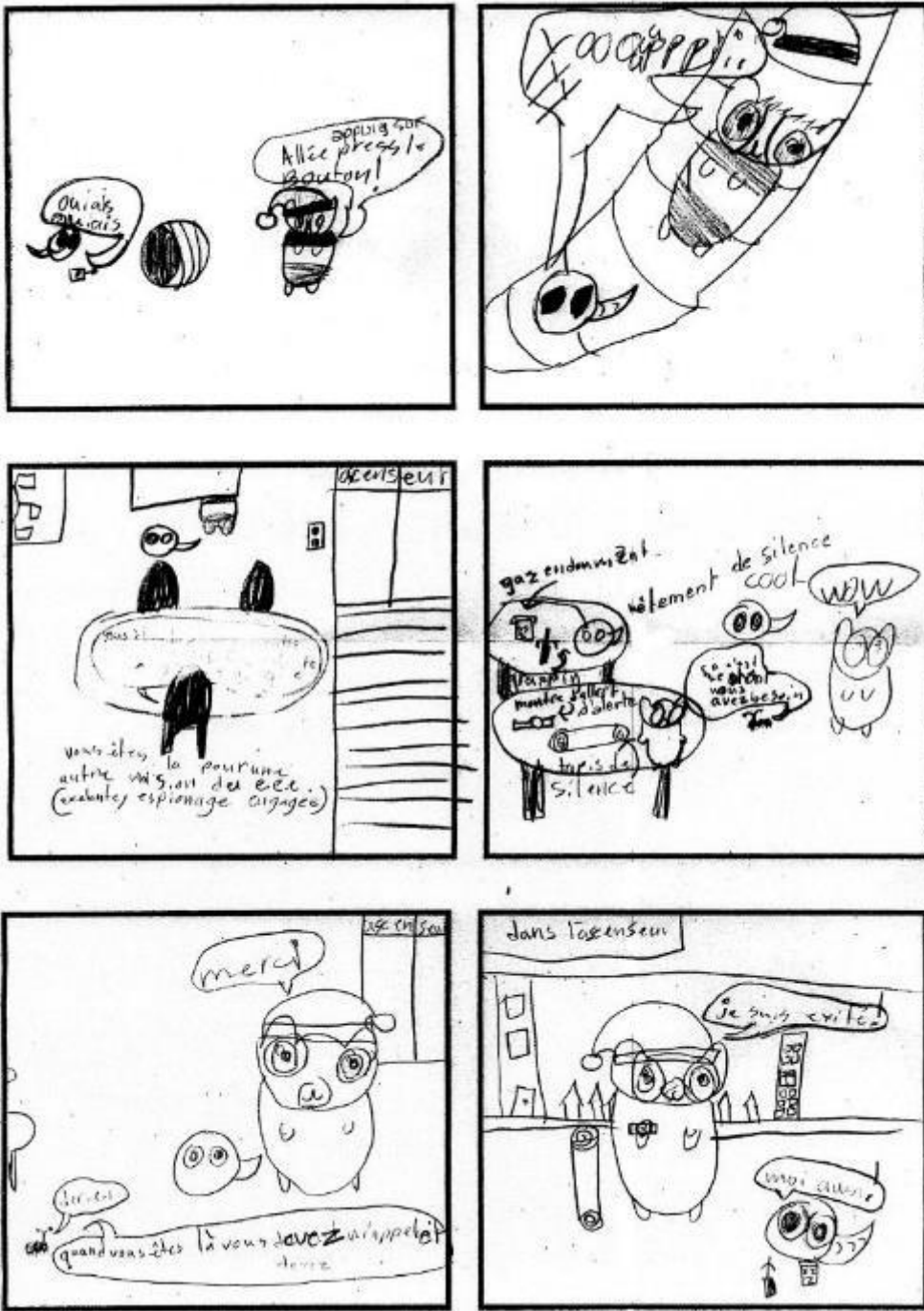


Figure 4.6. Operation Under The Bed, Page 2. Translation: Panel 1- Hamy: Go on, press on the button. TTOD: Yeah, yeah. Panel 2- Hamy and TTOD: Yippee! Panel 3- Jeff: You are here for another mission from E.E.E. (Excellent and Engaged Spies) Panel 4- Labels: Sleeping gas, clothes of silence, grappling hooks, watch alarm, carpet of silence. Jeff: These are the things you will need. TTOD: Cool. Hamy: Wow. Panel 5- Hamy: Thank you. Jeff: You're welcome. Once you get there, you must call me. Panel 6- Caption: In the elevator. Hamy: I'm excited! TTOD: Me too!



Figure 4.7. Operation Under The Bed, Page 3. Translation: Panel 1- Hamy: Ok, Jeff, we're here. What are we looking for? Jeff (on the phone): You're looking for a black box, but do not open it! Labels: Bizarre thing, carpet of silence. Panel 2- Caption: Later, under the bed. Labels: Rotten pizza, broken glasses, old socks, book for old people, rotten cheese. Hamy: Wow, there are a lot of things here. TTOD: Hey Hamy, I found it. Panel 3- TTOD: Hurry up. Hamy: I'm coming! I'm coming! Panel 4- Caption: At the same time. Old Lady: We have mice. Labels: "I am old" (on shirt), sleeping gas. Panel 5- Hamy: Oops. TTOD: Be more careful next time. Labels: Do not open (on box), sleeping gas. Panel 6- Label: False teeth. Hamy and TTOD (together): AHHHHH!

Further explorations into Anna's understandings of identity through comics are found in her three-page story *Operation Under the Bed* (Figures 4.5–4.7). The story features a panel (Figure 4.7/Panel 6) whereby Hamy and TODD are chased by a pair of false teeth under an old woman's bed. Anna explains in an interview that this is the most important part of her story and that the teeth catch the two main characters. Consistent analysis of Anna's comics through *écriture féminine* raises more questions. For instance, what is the significance of the old woman and of the false teeth?

Anna signifies the presence of an old person in her comic in a couple of ways, most notably in Figure 4.7/Panel 4 when a human sits up in bed wearing a shirt that reads, “Je suis vieille” [“I'm an old woman”]. Hamy soon puts her back to sleep with a blast of sleeping gas. I suggest the image of the old woman in bed and the threatening false teeth represent the figure of the wolf-as-grandmother from the French writer Perrault's folk tale *Little Red Riding Hood* (Cixous, 1995; Segarra, 2007). Additionally, the emergence of this narrative development in the comic evokes Little Red Riding Hood's exclamation, “Oh, grandmother! What big teeth you have!” This, I suggest, requires deep psychoanalytical readings (Cixous, 1995; Cixous & Sellers, 1994) that I am not qualified to deconstruct.

I do, however, question the significance behind Hamy and TODD being carried by false teeth to their boss, and why does Anna contend this is the most important part of the story? Do the false teeth belong to the old woman? Is the old woman representative of the grandmother? Questions such as these provoked me into interviewing Anna and the other two participants one last time. I asked Anna, “Pourquoi dis-tu que le moment le plus important de l'histoire c'est

quand ils se font attraper par les fausses dents?” [“Why do you say the most important part of your story is when they (Hamy and TTOD) are captured by the false teeth?”].

“Ils se font capturer... il y a un gars qui les capture, c’est le *‘bad guy’* et puis ils essaient d’échapper” [“They get captured... there’s a guy who captures them, he’s the *bad guy* (this was said in English) and they (Hamy and TTOD) try to escape”].

I ask, “Les fausses dents, ils appartient a qui? [“Whom do the false teeth belong to?”]

Anna replies, “La grand-mère qui dort au-dessus du lit” [“To the grandmother who’s asleep in the bed above them”].

Without prompting, Anna confirms my original suspicion that the old woman represents a manifestation of the grandmother. The grandmother can, I suggest, open new investigations into language acquisition and concepts of the *grand-m/other tongue* and its effect on language transmission a generation later from m/other to child. For instance, my own mother steadfastly held on to her own m/other tongue (therefore my grand-m/other tongue) by speaking in the slang and colloquial language of her British birthplace.

4.5 Case Study #3: Stella

Daniel and Anna’s characters are animals that have English names such as Hache Brown, Hamy, and Jeff. Stella is the third randomly selected participant for this study of grade four bilingual students, comics and identity. Her cartoon character is different from Daniel’s and Anna’s, as Stella’s has a French name, Rosette (Figure 4.8), and she is a human being. Analysis of Stella’s six-page story (Figures 4.9-4.14) unveils relationships between *auteur complet*, *écriture féminine*, and the m/other tongue. The main players in Stella’s sequential narrative are

female, and the bond between the comic's daughter and mother (author and m/other) is demonstrated in three ways:

- The love expressed in the mother's dialogue for her daughter, such as the word "chérie" [darling];
- Stella's drawings of Rosette and her mother holding hands on the couch for several panels (Figs. 4.13-4.14) as they discuss the problem;
- The intercession of the mother in resolving the bullying issue by discussing it with the school's principal.

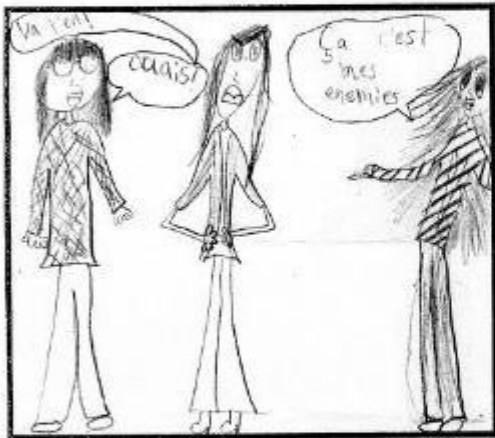
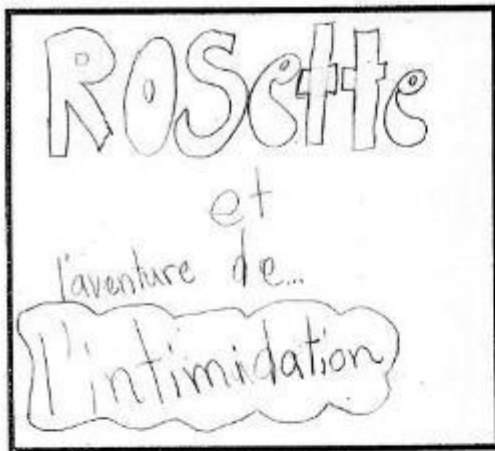


Figure 4.8. Stella's one-page character introduction. Translation: Panel 1- Title: Rosette and the Adventure of... Bullying. Panel 2- Rosette: Hello! My name is Rosette! Panel 3- Rosette: Those are my enemies. Bully #1: Go away! Bully #2: Yeah! Panel 4- Rosette: I have two worlds. One is my school and the second is my home! Panel 5- Rosette: I am a student. Panel 6- Rosette: I love playing with my dog for fun!



Figure 4.9. Rosette, page 1. Translation: Panel 1- Title: Rosette. Rosette: Hello! My name is Rosette. Caption: Once upon a time there was a girl named Rosette. Panel 2- Caption: One day... Rosette: Wow! Panel 3- Caption: In the classroom... Teacher: So, what is the answer? Yes, Rosette. Rosette: Six? Teacher: No. In fact the answer is nine. Good effort. Panel 4- Caption: At lunch... Bully #1: Look, it's the girl who doesn't know what 3x3 is. She is really not smart. Bully #2: Yeah! She's really not smart.



Figure 4.10. Rosette, page 2. Translation: Panel 1- Caption: Lunchtime. Rosette: Hey! I heard that! Bully #1: We didn't say anything! Bully #2: Yeah! Seriously! Panel 2- Rosette: Ok! Say what you want! It doesn't bother me! Panel 3- Rosette: In fact, it does bother me a bit. Panel 4- Caption: Later, in the classroom. Whiteboard: Social Sciences. Teacher: Take out your books.



Figure 4.11. Rosette, page 3. Translation: Panel 1- Rosette: Oh! Panel 2- Note: "You are really not smart." Panel 3- Rosette (crying): Sniff... sniff... Panel 4- Rosette: May I go to the washroom? Teacher: But of course!



Figure 4.12. Rosette, page 4. Translation: Panel 1- Sign: EXIT. Girl's Washroom. Panel 2- Caption: At the end of the day. Sign: Bus Stop. Panel 3- Caption: At home... Mother (off-panel): So, how was your first day, dear? Rosette: I don't want to talk about it. Panel 4- Mother: What is going on, dear? Rosette: The girls at school are very mean!



Figure 4.13. Rosette, page 5. Translation: Panel 1- Mother: How is that? Rosette: They tell me that I'm stupid! Panel 2- Mother: We will have to talk with your principal. Rosette: What! No! Mother: We must. Panel 3- Caption: The next day... in the principal's office... Principal: So, what seems to be the problem? Mother: My daughter is being bullied. Principal: Ok, I'll talk to the girls. Mother: Thank you. Panel 4- Caption: In the auditorium... Principal: Hello everybody!



Figure 4.14. Rosette, page 6. Translation: Panel 1- Principal: Rosette was bullied and I want to know who did it immediately. If not you will have to clean the whole school. Panel 2- Bully #2: We did it! Bully #1: Be quiet, stupid! Why did you say that? Bully #2: If not, we would have to clean the whole school! Principal: Thank you, girls! Now you can go and apologize to Rosette. Panel 3- Bully #1 and #2: I'm sorry! Rosette: I accept your apologies. Panel 4- Caption: Finally... Bully #1: Can we be friends? Bully #2: Yeah! Rosette: Of course! I feel so much better!

Stella and I sat in the corner of Madame Centour's classroom for our interviews as her classmates ate their lunch and talked noisily in the background. During one of our conversations, Stella said that comics can be good for school because "ils ont des morales" ["they (comics) have morals"]. Analysis of her comics and interviews reveals Stella's perceptions of bullying, community, social justice and responsibility. In this way, Stella's six-page comic communicates an important anti-bullying message.

In Figure 4.11/Panel 1, Stella portrays the moment Rosette opens an insulting note tossed at her by two bullies in class. In Panel 2, the point-of-view shifts thus directing the reader to empathetically and metaphorically become Rosette. The author (Stella, that is) invites the reader to reciprocally share in the *indivitrío* experience of narrator-monstrator-reciter, and thus negotiate identity through the character's perspective. In fact, the author and the reader are sharing the eyes of the character: thus Rosette's striped sleeves are now the arms of the reader; the hands that grasp the insulting note are also those of the reader; and the eyes reading the note are those of the reader now as well. The reader is Rosette, and Rosette is the reader... an empathetic symbiosis and new *indivitrío* of author, character and reader. Stella claims comics authorship by tearing down the fourth wall. In this way she pays attention to the liminal space between writer and reader whereby the author writes "toward the other" (Sellers, 1996, p. 19) and invites the reader into the narrative through a multimodal hybridity of character design, panel composition, non-verbal emotion cues, and camera angles (Groensteen, 2007, 2013; Lim, 2007; Uhls et al., 2014; Williams, 2008).

I asked Stella, in our last interview, "Est-ce que tu voulais que le lecteur pense pour un instant qu'il peut devenir Rosette avec un dessin comme ça? ["Did you want the reader to think

for a moment that they can become Rosette with a drawing like this?"]. She replied, “J’ai pas trop penser a faire un dessin comme ça” [“I didn’t really think too much about doing a drawing like that”]. I contend Stella is, in this comic, unconsciously claiming authorship by attending “to the gaps” (Sellers, 1996, p. 16) and communicating vividly with the other. Furthermore, Stella’s unconscious invitation to the reader to become the character is supported by another drawing on the next page of the story. In Figure 4.12/Panel 1, Rosette is facing the reader and crying mournfully in the girls’ washroom below the *EXIT* sign. It is interesting to observe the mirror behind Rosette. Instead of seeing the reflection of the back of Rosette’s head, a reflection of the reader can be observed... yet I suggest it is a reflection of the reader in the form of a sobbing Rosette, appearing ghost-like and unnoticed yet in solidarity, like a friend (Morgan, 2009), with the main character.

Reading Stella’s story through a lens of *écriture féminine* reveals a narrative whereby the author is exploring conceptions of identity. Originally Stella described Rosette as a grade four student, yet she later denied any parallels between herself and her fictional character. For instance, in our fourth interview I asked Stella if she perceived any similarities between herself and Rosette. She replied no. I pointed out that Rosette was a girl and a student, much like herself. “Rosette est en quelle année?” [“What grade is Rosette in?”] I asked. “ Ben, oui... en quatrième année” [“Well, yes... in grade four”], she replied. I said, “Like yourself then, that’s another similarity. Can you think of any others?” Stella replied with a firm “Non.” When I returned to the school two weeks later with their printed books, Stella wanted me to know that Rosette was in grade five and not grade four.

Stella’s rejection of Rosette as avatar of her autobiographical voice (despite its unconscious manifestation) represents a microcosm of the classroom’s broad preference to tell

stories about fictional cartoon characters. The students have stories they want to tell in the comics language, yet as authors they prefer to conceal their true identities. Indeed, the fictional character acts as a device that metaphorically masks the author while simultaneously inviting the reader to participate actively in the narrative. Perhaps Rosette's mother is the voice of the author? Or the school's principal? I could also suggest Stella is speaking through the bullies. I asked Stella in our last interview if she shared a resemblance with any of the characters in her story. She replied, "Mmmm... je ne sais pas... Pas Rosette—ça m'a jamais arriver ça" ["Mmm... I don't know... Not Rosette—that has never happened to me"]. Nonetheless, I contend Stella is learning by conceptualizing moral messages of social responsibility with comics and negotiating identity by speaking through various fictional cartoon characters.

One last observation: Stella additionally explores identity, voice and authorship by practicing and developing her own cartooning style and page layouts. For instance, all of the participants completed at least one page of comics by filling out a six-panel template (Appendix B). Stella, however, employs a four-panel layout and foregoes employing the template in favour of her own page design. In this instance, Stella perceives "the blank page is itself a tool" (Brunetti, 2011, p. 53), in much the same way Joe-Louis did when he decided to orient his page horizontally. Stella employs the page as a tool by folding the paper twice and then using the folds as the frames around the panels. Furthermore, she abandoned tracing over her preliminary work with black ink, thus maintaining the rough textures of the pencils, and claiming another instance of authorship by establishing a "graphic style" (Groensteen, 2012a) of her own.

4.6 Closing Thoughts

Some of the comics generated in this study of grade four bilingual students narrate

situations that appear to be beyond their control, thus echoing findings from *The Comic Book Project: The Lives of Urban Youth*, whereby educator Michael Bitz (2004a) writes that the participants in that study portrayed themselves “at the mercy of uncontrollable circumstances” (p. 3). For instance, Daniel’s character Hache Brown is lost and in search of his family, and his pig character will soon become bacon. Anna’s characters are at the mercy of a pair of giant false teeth. Additionally, Stella draws a six-page story for this study that explores the theme of bullying through the eyes of the other. As an author, Stella empathetically invites the reader to make meaning from her story and employs a number of unconscious (Cohn, 2012) and sophisticated semiotic techniques (Groensteen, 2007; Lim, 2007) to accomplish this. In Figure 4.11/panel 2, for instance, Stella’s choices of camera angle, point-of-view and composition of the frame’s signifieds permit the reader to literally become the narrative’s bullied main character, Rosette.

Stella’s anti-bullying narrative resolves the conflict between a victim and her bullies through dialogue, intercession and mediation in lieu of the banal masculine fighting repeated ad nauseam in mainstream superhero comics. Stella’s narrative can be contrasted with my own autobiographical comic in Reflection III, narrated in Chapter Three. In this graphic memoir I reflect upon the revenge I exacted on a classmate, when I was in grade four, due to a perceived slight. My decision to tear up Benoit’s comic was an over-reaction, and merely perpetuated and added to a culture of bullying (Bucci, 2016; Jacobson, 2013). This can be contrasted with Stella’s resolution whereby the bullying is peacefully ended through an intercession by Rosette’s m/other.

Several of the comics and drawings from this study uncover identification with an other of the physical, material, inhuman and natural world. For instance, Anna is also credited, along

with three other girls, with collaboratively contributing ideas for a comic entitled *Mister*, which features a character named “*Feuillete*” [literally translated as “Leafgirl”] who has “tout les pouvoirs de la nature” [“all the power of nature”]. Daniel’s self-portrait as a pig (Figure 4.3) signifies his relationship with the natural world as he unpacks a critical investigation into the cognitive dissonance that justifies eating the flesh of an animal he believes to be very intelligent and cute, and therefore deserving of protection. Students tell stories, express concerns, and resolve issues when they create comics with original and fictional cartoon characters.

Chapter 5: Making Comics in the Classroom

A multiplicity of studies have established links between reading comics and literacy, yet studies that investigate the ways drawing comics can help students negotiate conceptions of identity are slim (Carter, 2013; Kraver, 2013). What phenomena engage students when they make comics in the classroom? This study documents my questing into some of the ways that drawing comics can create openings and opportunities for students to explore curriculum, storytelling and identity.

Students want to draw original characters, and analysis of their stories reveals that the perception/drawing/meaning systems employed in cartooning create unconscious avenues for students to engage with learning, negotiate identity and develop authorship. In this way, they are empowered by the characters and the narratives they create, and thus engaged in the classroom. This phenomenon enlarges when their sequential narratives are either displayed or printed into comic books and shared with the classroom community, as they were in this study. As such, this research of bilingual students and comics supports the material and medial aesthetics of the author-print-reader phenomenon (Horsman, 2015; Rippl & Etter, 2013; Thon & Wilde, 2016; Wilde, 2015).

5.1 Investigating the Research Question

This research project investigates the question: *In what ways can drawing fictional comics by hand help bilingual grade four students negotiate conceptions of identity?* Following instruction (Appendices A and C) into some of the fundamentals of comics' grammar and syntagm construction (Groensteen, 2007; McCloud, 1994), the students in this study customize the language's symbols in order to communicate their narratives. A customization occurs

because all of the comics generated in this study are written, drawn and lettered freehand employing techniques of l'auteur complet. As a result, cartooning and doodling are observed to be subjective abilities that students adapt to their own agency, frame of mind, and motivations. I conclude that assisting students to unite systems of perception, meaning and drawing (Cohn, 2012) through cartooning can help them give expression to authentic and authorial voice in the ninth art.

One understanding of the research question is this: When students draw comics in the classroom they are engaging cognitive, motor-control and multimodal systems such as perception, meaning and drawing. Furthermore, these systems braid into focused objectives for the student such as storytelling, composition, and language acquisition, amongst others. When drawing fictional narratives by hand students are personally invested in the telling of their stories. In this way students perceptibly engage with learning and negotiate conceptions of identity. In other words, making comics encourages both self-reflection and communication.

5.2 Comics Medium and Curriculum

What follows are two examples that illustrate some of the ways comics can be integrated into curriculum. First, it is observed that the comics medium is a democratic language for education, in that the tools of its practice are relatively inexpensive and widely available. Making comics in the classroom as an educational medium for writing is facilitated by the accessibility to its materials of production, such as paper, pencils, pens and erasers (Groensteen, 2007). A photocopier provides distribution of the comic as material product and cultural form and, in this way, can enlarge the scope of the classroom's aesthetic experience in multiple ways.

Secondly, students can enlarge their learning when they negotiate themes and ideas with their cartoon and metaphorical avatars as masks. When students draw comics by hand, they understand these lines to be their own voices. As such they create fictional characters on the page that function as masks, behind which students can confidently explore ideas. When drawn as comics, these explorations appear as their author's unconscious and subjective negotiations of society, family, and individuality.

The material handling of objects (such as pencil, pen, paper and eraser) assists young learners to mediate their environment. The freehand writing//cartooning of comics can communicate an author's genuine voice by triangulating subjective systems of perception, meaning and drawing (Cohn, 2012). A comics author coordinates these systems into an image on the page, which is in a relationship with other images (or icons) on the page. This is a theory of arthrology (Groensteen, 2007) that explains the ways meaning braids within a comics' iconic solidarity. The theory continues that the images on the page of a comics text (a page from a graphic novel for instance) are in relationships with other images on the text's other pages, thus the pages themselves are in relationships with each other as well. For example, figure 4.12/ Panel 1 presents Stella's character, Rosette, crying in the school's bathroom. Panel 2 indicates a shift in time and place whereby Rosette is pictured standing outside in the rain. The drops falling from the sky in Panel 2 braid symbolically with the tears in Panel 1. This page and its images, however, are in a relationship with the previous page (figure 4.11) where, in Panel 3, Rosette's tears are appearing like drops of rain from her eyes.

5.3 Conclusions and Implications

Pedagogical research overwhelmingly supports comics as a tool for reading, comprehension, and literacy. Yet scholars and educators rarely discuss the writing and drawing of sequential narratives in the classroom. I have argued that this phenomenon is due to an historical vilification of comics, leading to a broad lack of knowledge and understanding of the medium by educators and academics. This has resulted in deficient classroom and pedagogical opportunities for students to engage with a visual language that they all, generally speaking, appear to love. This study points to comics as a medium of self-expression in the classroom with links to curriculum and learning outcomes in language arts, visual literacy, social justice, critical thinking, and conceptions of identity. Therefore, investigating the ways that educators can incorporate comics into curriculum affects various fields, and introduces several implications for comics as theory and practice in pedagogy.

The first implication is this: In order for comics to be integrated into curriculum, scholars and educators need to be better educated in the reading and the writing, hence the literacy, of the language (Collins & Blot, 2003). For this improved comics literacy to occur departments of comics studies, separate from art, illustration, literature and sociology departments, should be established in universities. Comics scholar Bart Beaty urges academics to not only, “build the institutions that other fields take for granted - learned societies, conferences, journals, publishing lines (many of which we have already begun to put together) – but that the historical bias against the form (and against its readers!) be overthrown” (Baetens, 2013a, p. 181).

Media scholar Angela Ndaljianis (2011) writes that, “Comics Studies as a serious scholarly undertaking has come into being because of a passion and commitment on the part of academics working in the field” (p. 115). The task at hand is to increase scholarly understandings

with regards to the writing and practice of the ninth art. This can begin at both ends of the pedagogical spectrum: from elementary schools to the universities.

Secondly, as the corpus of comics in the academy grows, researching works by scholars/practitioners such as Ivan Brunetti (2011), Lynda Barry (2008, 2014), and Nick Sousanis (2015), amongst others, will help to establish foundations of new understandings for art educators and scholars in comics. Conversely, comics professionals, who are constructing the “cultural form” (Baetens, 2011, p. 111), can contribute to the field by researching more rigorous scholarly understandings that broaden perceptions beyond the market value of the commodities they create (Beatty, 2012; Groensteen, 2006, 2012a; McGurk, 2017).

In terms of art education for grade four students, a third implication emerges with the envisioning of a comics based curriculum, at least starting with half a year. The multimodal learning opportunities and “intersectional identity negotiations” (Compton-Lilly, Papoi, Venegas, Hamman & Schwabenbauer, 2017, p. 2) that the medium and language of comics can provide classrooms have yet to be fully explored. I believe it is about time to teach students, and educators, how “to use the form for expressing their own ideas and sentiments, for transmitting their enthusiasm, their own likes and dislikes” (Gruenberg, 1944, p. 207). A comics-based curriculum would create, I contend, an exciting environment for student learning through participatory culture (Norton, 2003; Tilley, 2014).

Suggestions for Future Studies

This study of grade four students finds relationships between drawing comics freehand, engagements with learning, and explorations of authorship and identity. These findings suggest that incorporating more of the ninth art into curriculum performs not only as a measure of

reading and writing achievements, but also as a platform for students to develop a voice, claim authorship and negotiate conceptions of identity. The possibility for further studies in the area of the relationships between making comics, learning and identity are vast and include the following recommendations:

- Comics' connections to curriculum help students to learn. Therefore discovering ways a comics-based curriculum can be developed should be explored;
- This study reveals the unconscious connections students create in the comics they draw. Thus investigations into the various phenomena that affect students' perceptions when they draw comics should be undertaken;
- A paradox emerges whereby the students don't want to draw autobiographical narratives, yet the fictional characters they create appear to mask their own negotiations of identity. It would be interesting to research further this seeming contradiction;
- Making comics helped the students, and myself, learn French as a second language. Hence, the relationships between Second Language Acquisition and comics in the classroom should be further investigated;
- This study researches bilingual grade four students' experiences creating comics in the classroom. However, investigations of comics beginning with kindergarten students all the way through to high school should be conducted;
- Further research on the emergence model with students' comics and their insistence of non-human and original cartoon characters can tie into new materialism studies;
- Additionally, I suggest intersectional investigations into themes of autographics and conceptions of student identity should also be undertaken.

5.4 Finis

The goals of this research project involve:

- Investigating the ways that making comics in the classroom engages students;
- Exploring meaningful methods whereby making comics can be integrated into curriculum; and
- Contributing to the growing knowledge of comics research in education.

In the small number of studies that research the physical and freehand drawing of comics in the classroom, all find positive connections to curriculum. I myself have observed a multiplicity of successes when comics are integrated into the lessons. Indeed, the grade four bilingual students in this study enjoyed participating in learning activities with comics such as narrative storytelling, incorporating new vocabulary, and revising texts.

I observed that cartooning triggers unconscious systems of identity negotiation, especially when students are permitted to create original narratives. Unconscious understandings of my own identity emerge in the a/r/tographical life-writing I create in Chapter Three. I reflected on my own experiences cartooning as a bilingual grade four student, and adapted my thoughts by writing//cartooning them into comics. Similarly, when students express themselves with original cartoon characters on a page, authentic and authorial voices emerge in the freehand writing and drawing of their unconscious doodles. I believe students engage with learning when making comics in the classroom because they want to create successful narratives, especially when they are reciting their own original stories. Therefore, if educators want students to engage with curriculum and learning, then I contend techniques of writing//cartooning need to be employed more often in the classroom. As one means towards that goal, this study supports and promotes cartooning and comics for students, teachers and educators by providing a detailed

lesson plan as an example in Appendix A, as well as presenting the lessons as a six-part comic in Appendix C.

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Appendices

A.1 Autographics Lesson Plan

Lesson Name

What's Your Story?

Artist/Site

Julian Lawrence at L'École Française

Subject

Social Studies/Language Arts/Media Arts

Topic

Autobiography and Identity

Descriptive Sentence

Students will create an original page of autobiographical cartoon art over the course of six cartooning lessons.

Curricular Outcomes/Expectations

Retrieved from the BC Ministry of Education Grade 4 curriculum:

- Social Studies
 - Organize information to plan their presentation
 - Identify patterns in information, and use those patterns to draw inferences
 - Apply strategies for note taking and organizing information gathered from a variety of information sources

- Language Arts

- Write clear, focused personal writing for a range of purposes and audiences that demonstrates connections to personal experiences, ideas, and opinions
- Create meaningful visual representations that communicate personal response, information, and ideas relevant to the topic
- Visual Arts
 - Create an image using stylization as an image-development strategy (e.g., simplify an image to create a logo or a cartoon)
 - Create images using a variety of technologies (e.g., photocopier, sandpaper, plastic carving knives)
 - Create 3-D forms (e.g., cubes, spheres, pyramids; models of architecture)

Materials: White paper (8.5 x 11), HB pencils, black felt pens (Papermate Flairs are preferred), erasers, light blue “Col-Erase” cartooning pencils or regular HB pencils, rulers, and pencil sharpeners. Camera for documenting the process. Access to a photocopier, colour pencils and markers, scissors, glue stick, and correction fluid. A folder for each participant to keep all their art.

Space Requirements: Classroom with desks and chairs, a clear space for demonstrations with a whiteboard and/or chart paper.

Classroom activities before the first lesson: Before the first lesson, the visiting artist/researcher/teacher explains the project to the participants, and hands out consent forms to be signed by the students and their parent/guardian.

LESSON ONE

Getting Ready: Introduce myself, and the project in more detail (5 min).

Develop: Warm-up and drawing exercises. Demonstrate using geometric shapes such as ovals, circles, squares, etc. for drawing simple cartoon characters (25 min).

Application: Using simple shapes, students create cartoon characters based on themselves. Students are asked to invent a name for this metaphoric avatar/character. Students will also be given a personal folder into which all artwork will be kept (45 min).

Closure: Q&A period. All artwork collected into student folders (5 min).

First Interview Session: Three consenting participants will be audio interviewed individually. Questions will prospect for student perceptions of identity, interests, and aspirations.

Classroom activities prior to next lesson: Between lessons one and two, students develop their characters and invent a pseudonym for their autobiographical character.

LESSON TWO

Getting Ready: Continue from lesson one. Begin with a brief discussion and review, followed by some warm up drawing exercises (5 min).

Develop: Demonstrate how to draw gestural poses and facial expressions on cartoon characters. Discuss four basic expressions: mad; sad; happy; surprised. Additional demonstrations include design and composition considerations such as placement of speech balloons, text boxes/captions, characters and backgrounds within a comic panel. Divide students into small groups in order to brainstorm and share ideas in regards to research methods for shaping autographic narratives (25 min).

Application: Students draw a picture of their character expressing an emotion. Criteria for this activity include the use of captions, speech balloon(s), and an indication as to why the character is feeling the particular emotion as illustrated on the face. Drawing the extenuating circumstances in a scene to indicate why an emotion impacts the character. For example, if the character is happy because she finds a kitten, the artist draws an expression of happiness, an exaggerated and gestural jump for joy, perhaps, and sitting on the sidewalk, a little kitten with the implication being the character is happy because she found this kitten (45 min).

Closure: Q&A and discussion to clarify any issues. All artwork collected into student folders (5 min).

Classroom activities prior to next lesson: Between lessons two and three, students continue practicing drawing their characters using gestural poses and facial expressions. All artwork collected into student folders. They will also begin researching and creating a rough version of their autographic.

LESSON THREE

Getting Ready: Discussions, warm up exercises (5 min).

Develop: Demonstrate four different camera angles that can be used in the panels of comics: extreme long-shot; long-shot; medium shot; and close-up. Students draw their character in four different panels from 4 different camera angles (25 min).

Application: Using their roughs as a story concept, students draw a pencil copy of their autobiographical comic. A basic 6-panel template is used, but students are encouraged to expand on panel number and layout. Remind students to use facial expressions, gestural poses and comics language, elements of panels, captions, and speech balloons in their drawings (45 min).

Closure: Q&A and discussion to clarify any issues. All artwork collected into student folders (5 min).

Second Interview Session: Continue interviews with the same three consenting participants.

Classroom activities prior to next lesson: Between lessons three and four, students complete drawing the rough copy of their comics. Additional research might be required from students as they live their inquiry and develop autobiographical narratives. For example, students wanting to know what country their great-grandparents were born must probe more deeply.

LESSON FOUR

Getting Ready: Discussions, warm up exercises (5 min).

Develop: Demonstrate and discuss converting rough drawings into clean pencils. Show various examples from different artists, and from personal experiences. Discuss titles and writing with block letters (25 min).

Application: The artist/researcher provides each student with a comic template (Appendix B). Students pencil their stories into an 11x17 inch, 6-panel comic-strip poster. Students learn to incorporate characters into settings and to interpret and understand story. They demonstrate the practical use of words and pictures to structure meaningful graphic narratives. Panels must include comics devices such as caption/text boxes and dialogue in speech balloons. The participating classroom teacher will assist students with spelling, grammar, and new vocabulary (45 min).

Closure: Q&A and discussion. All artwork collected into student folders (5 min).

Classroom activities prior to next lesson: Between lessons four and five, students complete the clean pencil version of their comics.

LESSON FIVE

Getting Ready: Review of previous four lessons. (5 min)

Develop: Demonstration of simple inking techniques. Students draw a character and practice tracing over the drawing in black ink. Explain that when inking, everything that is to be photocopied must be traced over (25 min).

Application: Students begin inking their comics. The teacher and the artist will work together to correct any spelling, grammar or inking mistakes in the students' comics. As the students

complete their cartoons, black and white photocopies of the original artwork are made for colouring as a poster (45 min).

Closure: Q&A and discussion. All artwork collected into student folders (5 min).

Classroom activities prior to next lesson: Between lessons five and six, students complete the final inked version of their comics.

LESSON SIX

Getting Ready: Review of previous five lessons (5 min).

Develop: Demonstration of drawing game called The Comics Jam (5 min).

Application: Students participate in The Comics Jam activity. Every student pencils and inks the first panel on a blank sheet of paper, and then trades with another student who has also completed the first panel on a sheet of paper. Each one draws the second panel. Once inked, students trade with other classmates who proceed to create the third panel, and so on until the page is complete. As students are engaged in the activity, I will collect their individual folders, as well as making last-minute photocopies and ensuring all data is collected (75 min).

Closure: Discuss the process we have all completed together and the next step, which involves the making of an anthology comic book featuring all the students' comics. Explain that I will return in two weeks' time to hand everyone a copy of a comic book that collects all of their completed stories (5 min).

A.2 Two Templates

Pictured below are the two templates employed in the class. The first template describes the expectations for each panel such as the title in Panel 1, introduction of the main character/s in Panel 2, introduction of the secondary characters, depiction of the character's world, the character's occupation and, finally, what they do for fun in Panel 6. Figure 4.4 illustrates how Anna employed the template as a rough exploration of her characters.

The second template is a six-panel page breakdown. The panels are blank and most of the participants used this template to tell their one-page narratives. Some students, such as Stella for example (Figures 4.9-4.14), abandoned the template in favour of original page breakdowns and layouts. Only one student, Joe-Louis (Figure 4.1), positioned their template horizontally rather than vertically.

Le
TITRE!

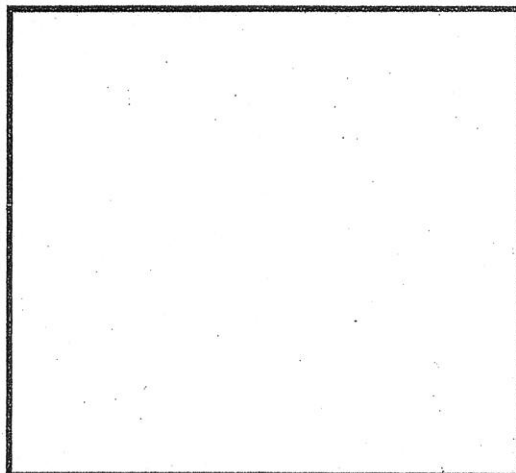
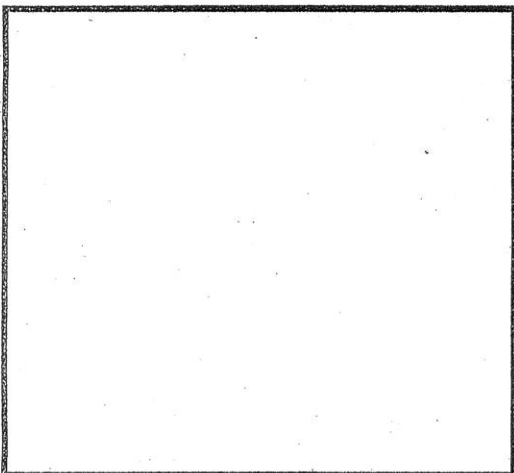
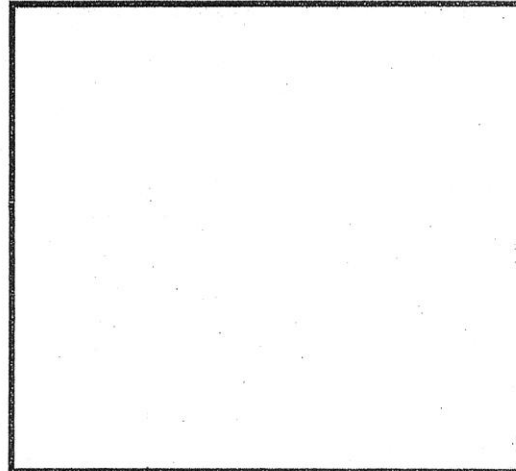
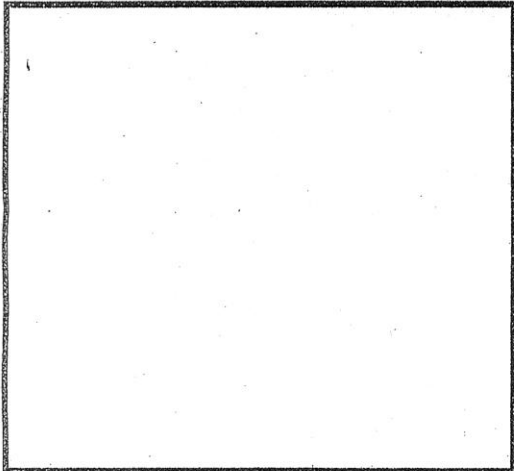
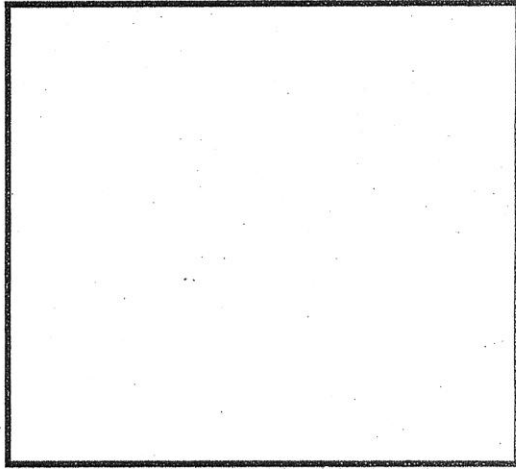
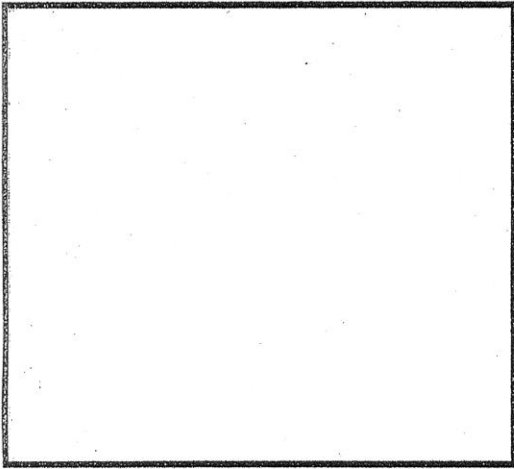
Introduction de ton personnage.

Le (ou les) ami(s) de ton personnage.

Le monde de ton personnage,

Le travail de ton personnage.

Le(s) divertissement(s) de ton personnage.



A.3 Autographics as Lesson Plan

What follows is a comics adaptation of the six-part cartooning lesson plan (in Appendix A) I taught to the bilingual grade four students in this study.

LESSON



Comics have maintained a tenuous relationship with education-- but not so much in French schools. The "bandes dessinées" from France and Belgium were in classrooms and libraries... and are still there.



Asterix



Tintin

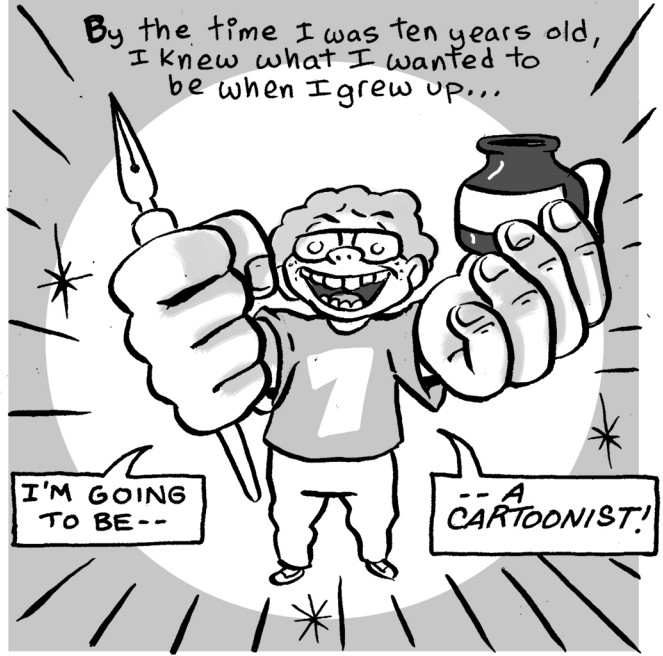
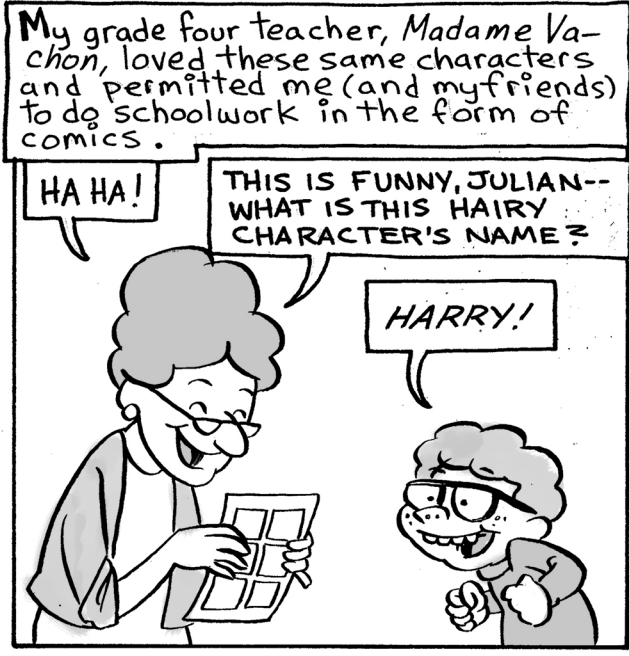


Lucky Luke

European scholars classify comics as "le neuvième art" (the Ninth Art) along with:

- 1- Architecture
- 2- Sculpture
- 3- Painting/drawing
- 4- Music
- 5- Literature
- 6- Theatre/dance
- 7- Cinema
- 8- Radio/Television
- 9- Comics

After Uderzo, Hergé and Morris



Following high school, university, and other experiences, I worked as a storybook illustrator, comic book artist and writer, editor, publisher, storyboard artist, illustrator, and much, much more!



FOR THE LAST TWELVE YEARS, I'VE BEEN TEACHING STUDENTS OF ALL AGES SOME OF THE TECHNIQUES FOR DRAWING COMICS.



ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?



YES?--

DO YOU DRAW GARFIELD?



uh--

No--

-- BUT IF YOU THINK ABOUT GARFIELD'S EYES -- WHAT SHAPE ARE THEY?

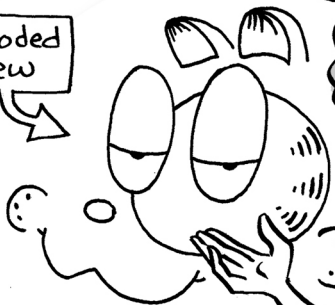


CIRCLES!

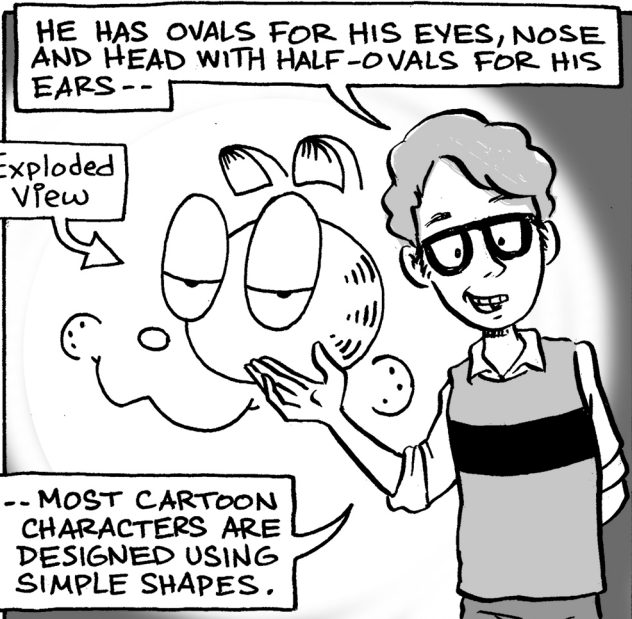
OVALS!

HE HAS OVALS FOR HIS EYES, NOSE AND HEAD WITH HALF-OVALS FOR HIS EARS --

Exploded View



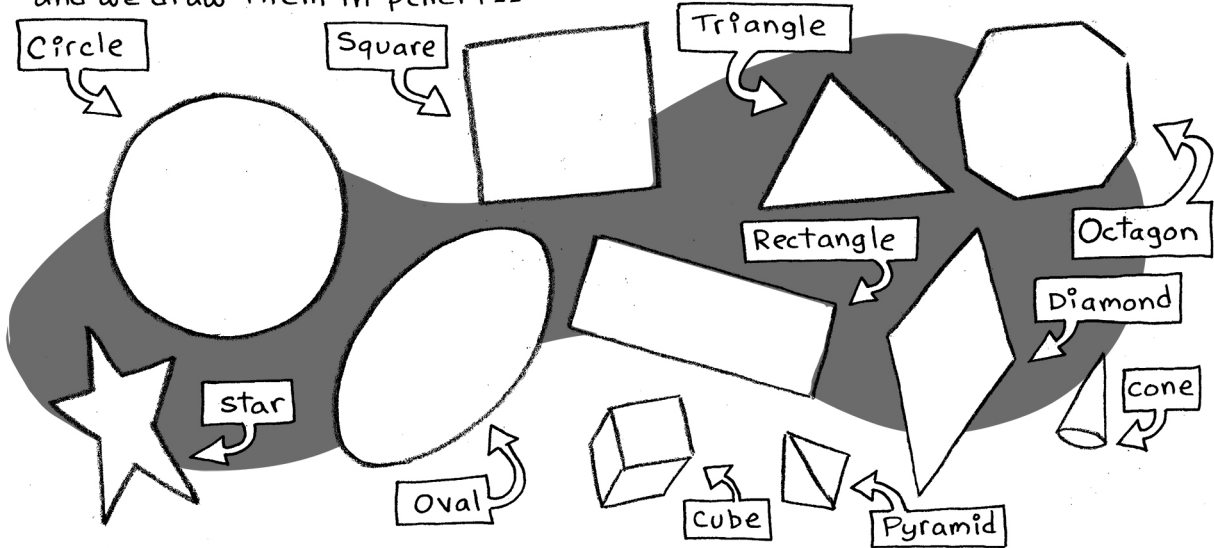
-- MOST CARTOON CHARACTERS ARE DESIGNED USING SIMPLE SHAPES.



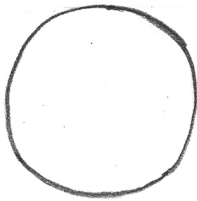
PLEASE PICK UP YOUR PENCILS AND LET'S DRAW SOME SIMPLE GEOMETRIC SHAPES TOGETHER, ...



The kids in the class share the variety of shapes they know, and we draw them in pencil --

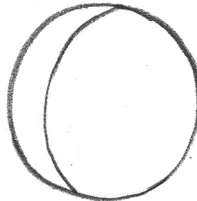


Next we draw a cartoon character named Drippy step-by-step.



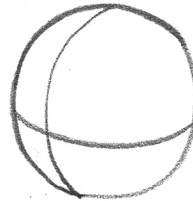
STEP ① Draw a circle a bit smaller than the size of your fist in the middle of a sheet of letter-sized paper.

We want to imagine that it's a three-dimensional sphere or a ball.

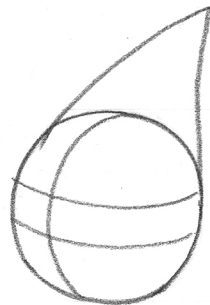


STEP ② Draw a curved vertical line along the surface of the sphere.

Continue visualizing the circle as a ball --



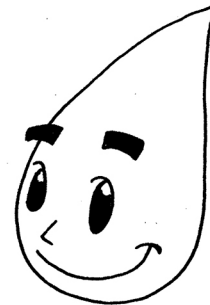
STEP ③ Draw a curved horizontal line along the imagined, rounded surface.



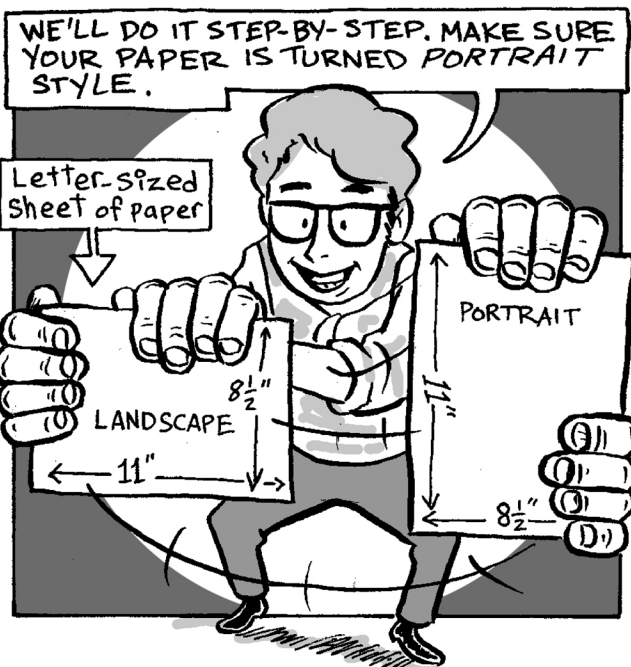
STEP ④ Draw an upside-down letter "v" on top of the ball. Draw another horizontal curved guide-line above the one from step ③



STEP ⑤ Use the curved lines as guides to place two ovals for eyes, a letter "L" for a nose, a curved line for a mouth and rectangles for eyebrows.



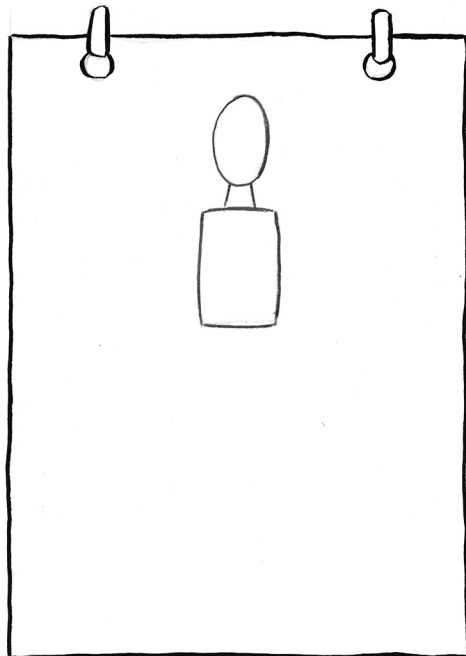
STEP ⑥ With a black, felt-tip pen, trace on top of all the pencil lines you want to keep. Erase the pencils when the ink is dry.



TAKE A NEW SHEET OF LETTER-SIZED PAPER, TURN IT PORTRAIT AND DRAW AN EGG-SIZED OVAL IN PENCIL NEAR THE TOP.

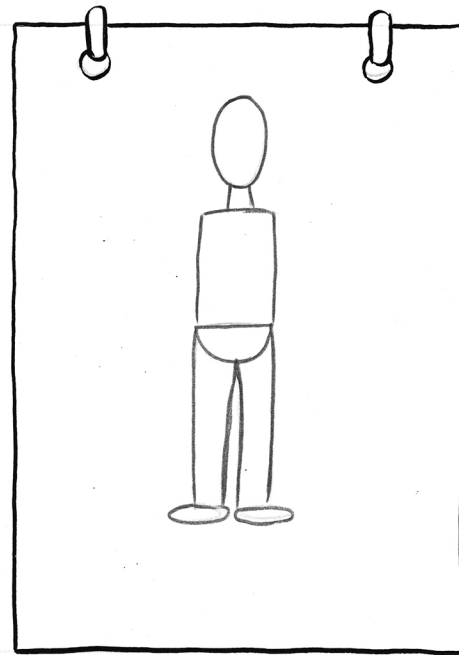


STEP ①



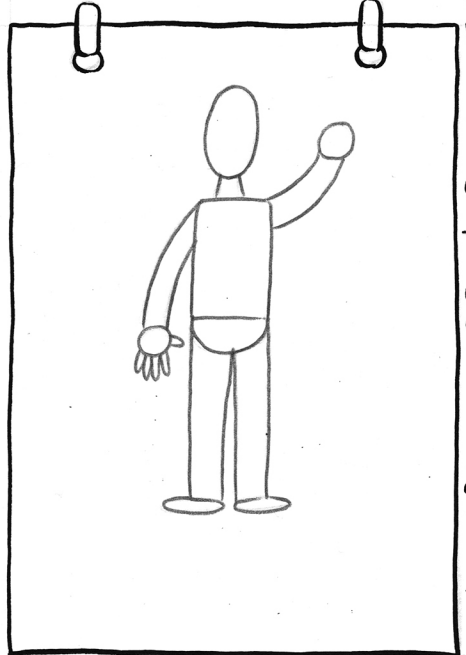
STEP ②

Draw two lines for a neck and a square or rectangle for the shoulders, body and hips.
REMEMBER: We are drawing in pencil!



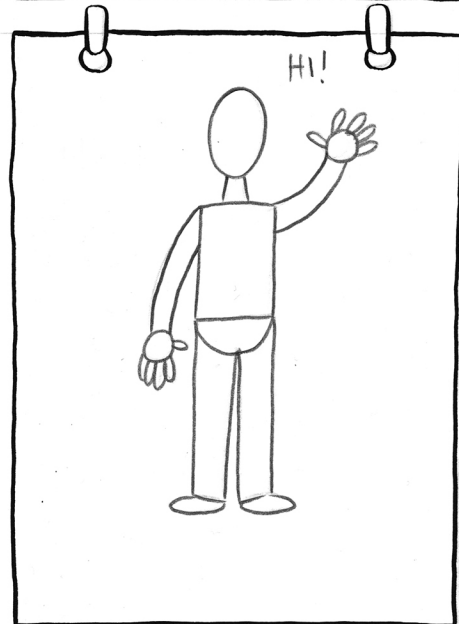
STEP ③

Draw a half-circle under the hips and add two long rectangles for legs and ovals for feet.



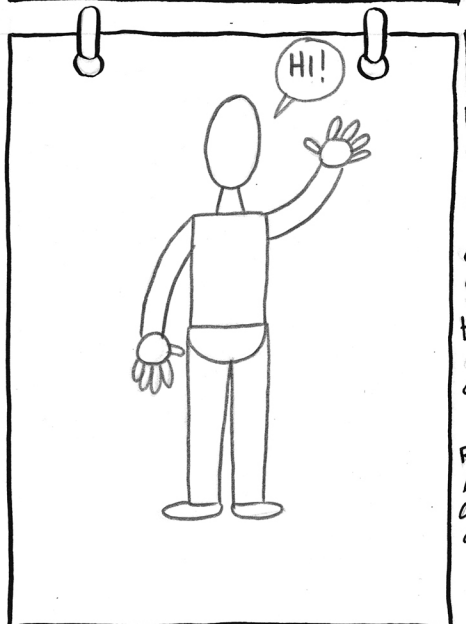
STEP ④

Make the character wave "hello" by drawing two curved lines going up for the arms with a circle at the end for the palm. Do the same on the opposite side of the body, but hang the arm down.



STEP ⑤

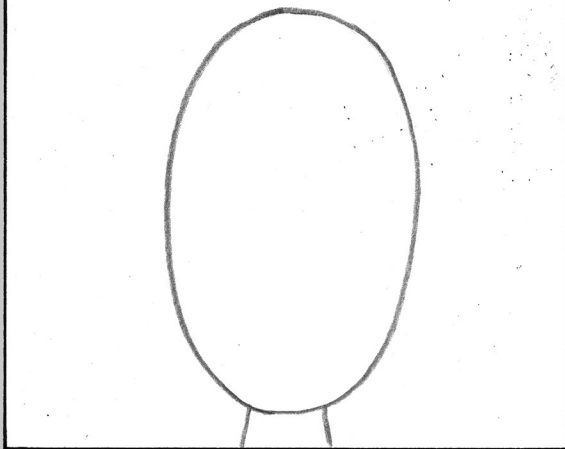
Draw some ovals for fingers on the palms. Because the character is waving, let's make it say a greeting. Write "HI!" (or what-have-you) a small distance above the head.



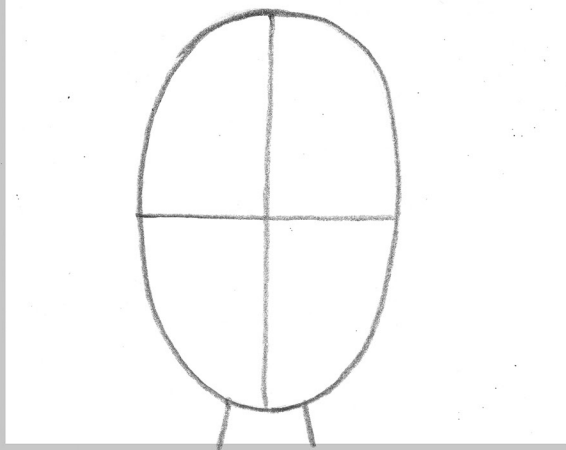
STEP ⑥

Now draw a small triangle pointing to the character and attach that to a bubble you draw around the dialogue.
REMEMBER: Write the words first, and then draw the bubble.

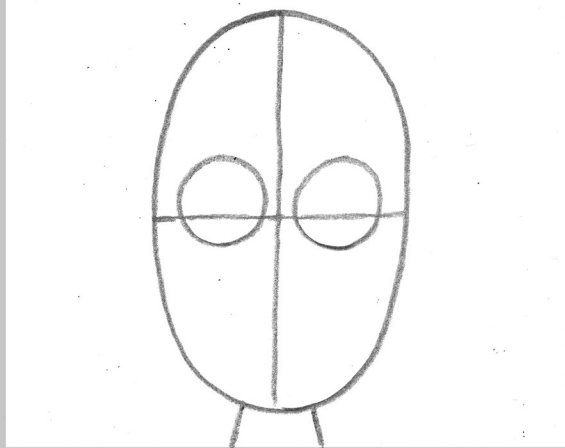
Let's concentrate on the face...
REMEMBER: We are still drawing in pencil.



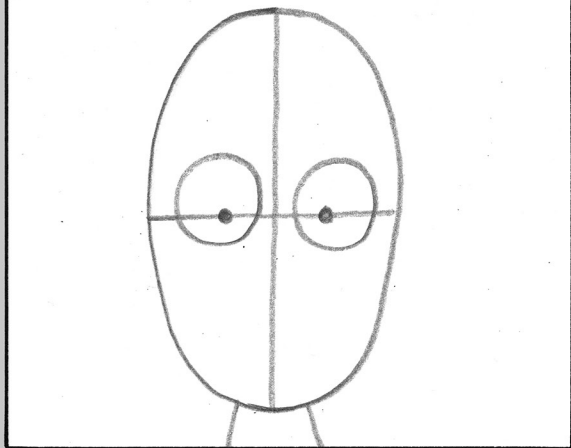
Divide the head/oval in half horizontally and vertically.



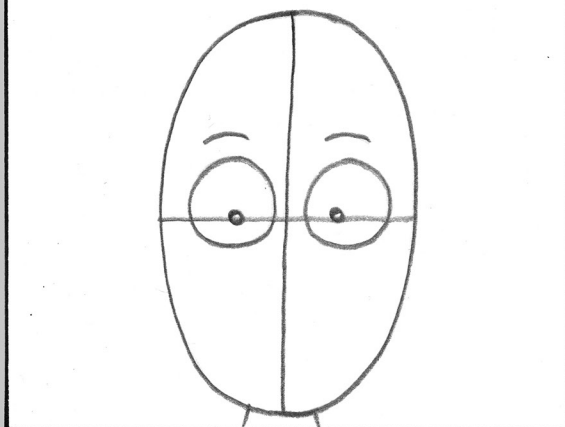
Draw two circles on the horizontal guide-line for eyes.



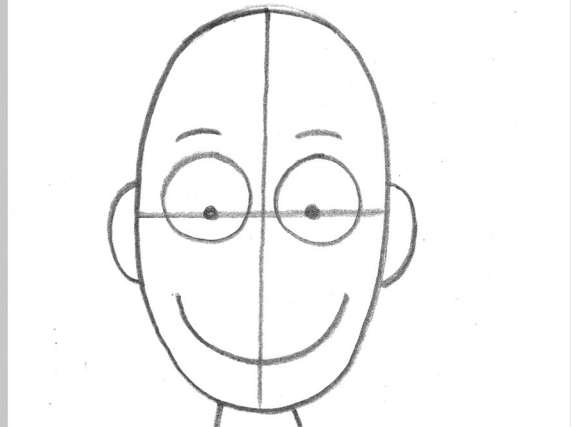
Add pupils into each one of the circles/eyes.



Draw some curved lines above the circles for eye brows.



Draw a line curving up into a smile and two half-ovals on either side of the head for ears.



A cartoon nose can also be made from simple shapes or letters of the alphabet. Listed below are a variety of suggestions that can be used as a cartoon nose.

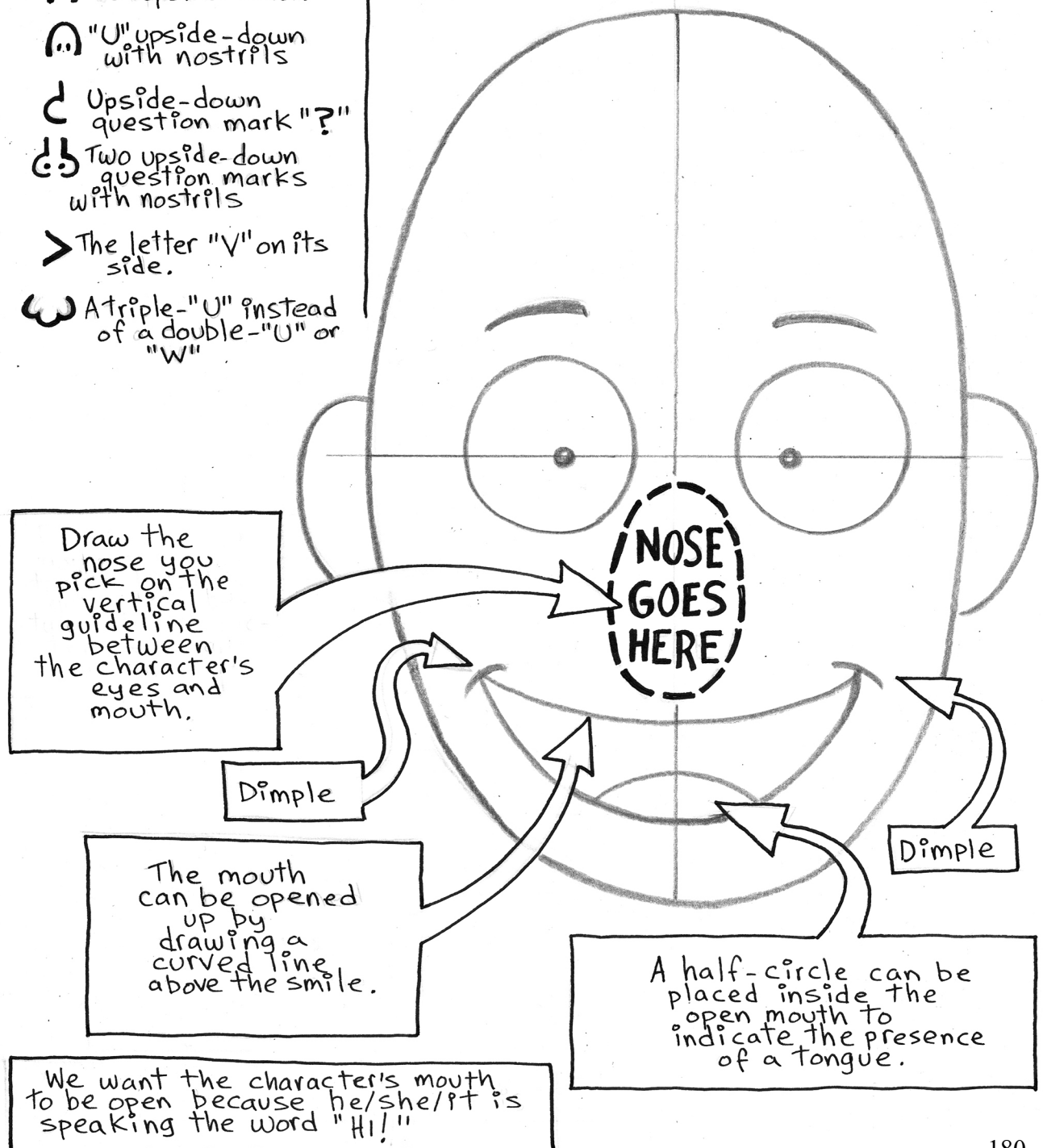
TYPES of NOSES

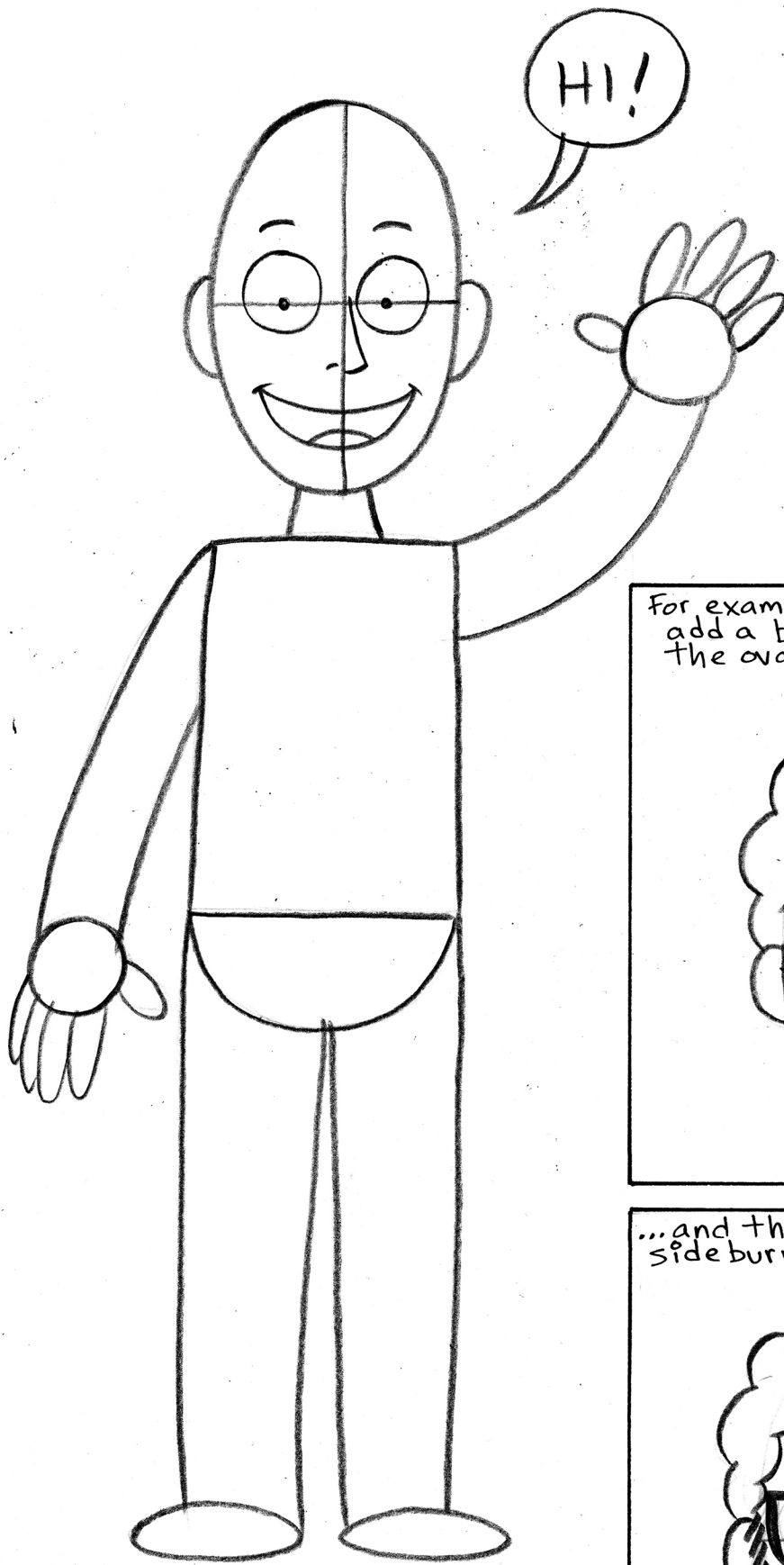
FROM THE ALPHABET

- ⌋ The letter "L"
- Ⓜ The letter "J"
- Ⓒ The letter "C"
- Ⓤ The letter "U"
- ∩ "U" upside-down
- ∩ "U" upside-down with nostrils
- ⌋ Upside-down question mark "?"
- Ⓝ Two upside-down question marks with nostrils
- > The letter "V" on its side.
- Ⓦ A triple-"U" instead of a double-"U" or "W"

SIMPLE SHAPES

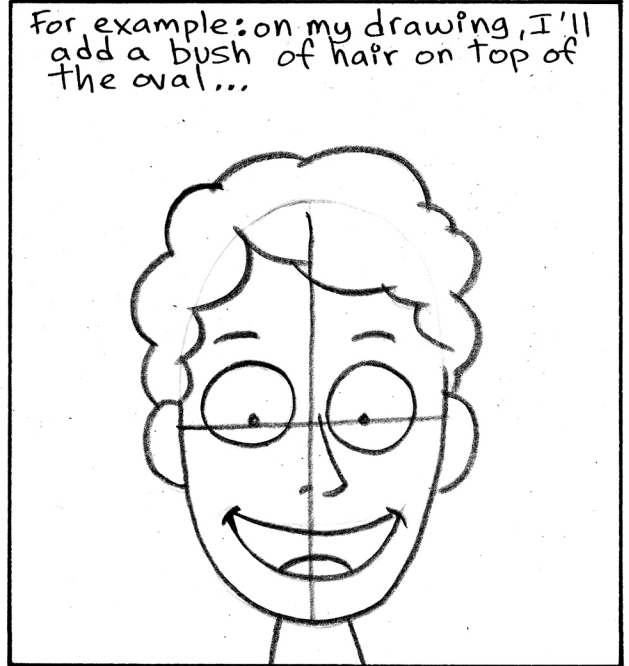
- An oval
 - ⦿ An oval with nostrils
 - A circle
 - ⦿ A circle with nostrils
 - △ A triangle with nostrils
 - △ A triangle with two half-circles for nostrils...
- Can you think of any others?



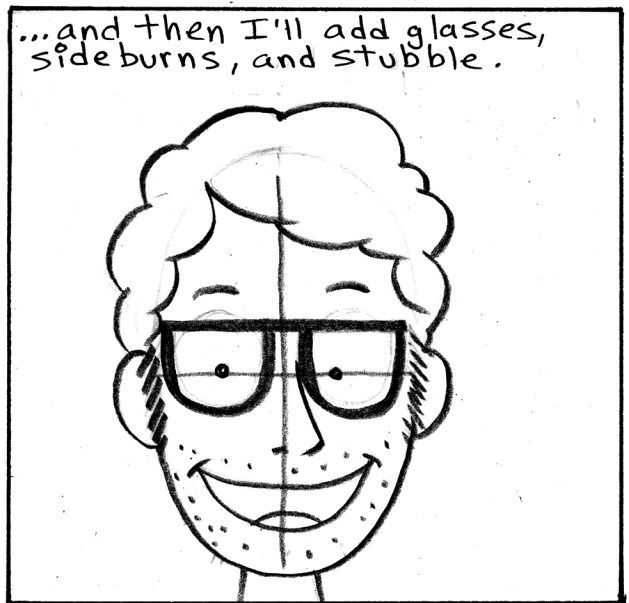


At this point we should all have basically the same drawing-- the only difference might be the nose.
(I used a backwards letter "L" with a nostril).
Now, we need to modify the design by adding details to make it look more like ourselves.

For example: on my drawing, I'll add a bush of hair on top of the oval...



...and then I'll add glasses, sideburns, and stubble.



PLEASE NOTE:
Unless you want to create a character that resembles the author, do not copy this page's examples exactly.

HI!!

With the face complete, the next thing to do is add the clothes, accessories and props to make the drawing more closely resemble the person it is caricaturing. For example: I will add rolled-up sleeves at the elbows, a decorative sweater vest, shirt and collar, pants and shoes.

Simple shapes for the collar.

Rectangles for rolled-up sleeves.

Ideas for feminizing the character's features can include:

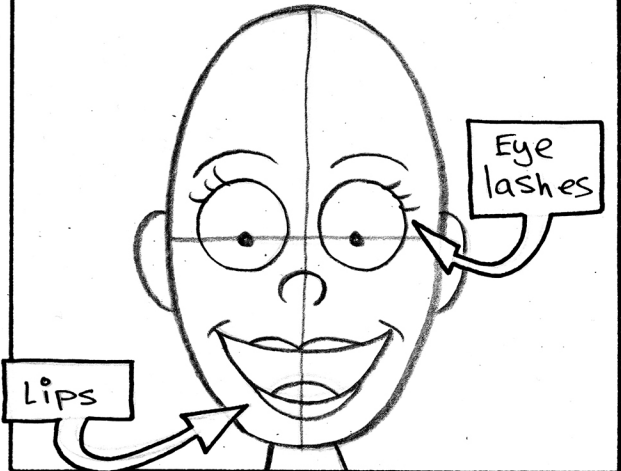
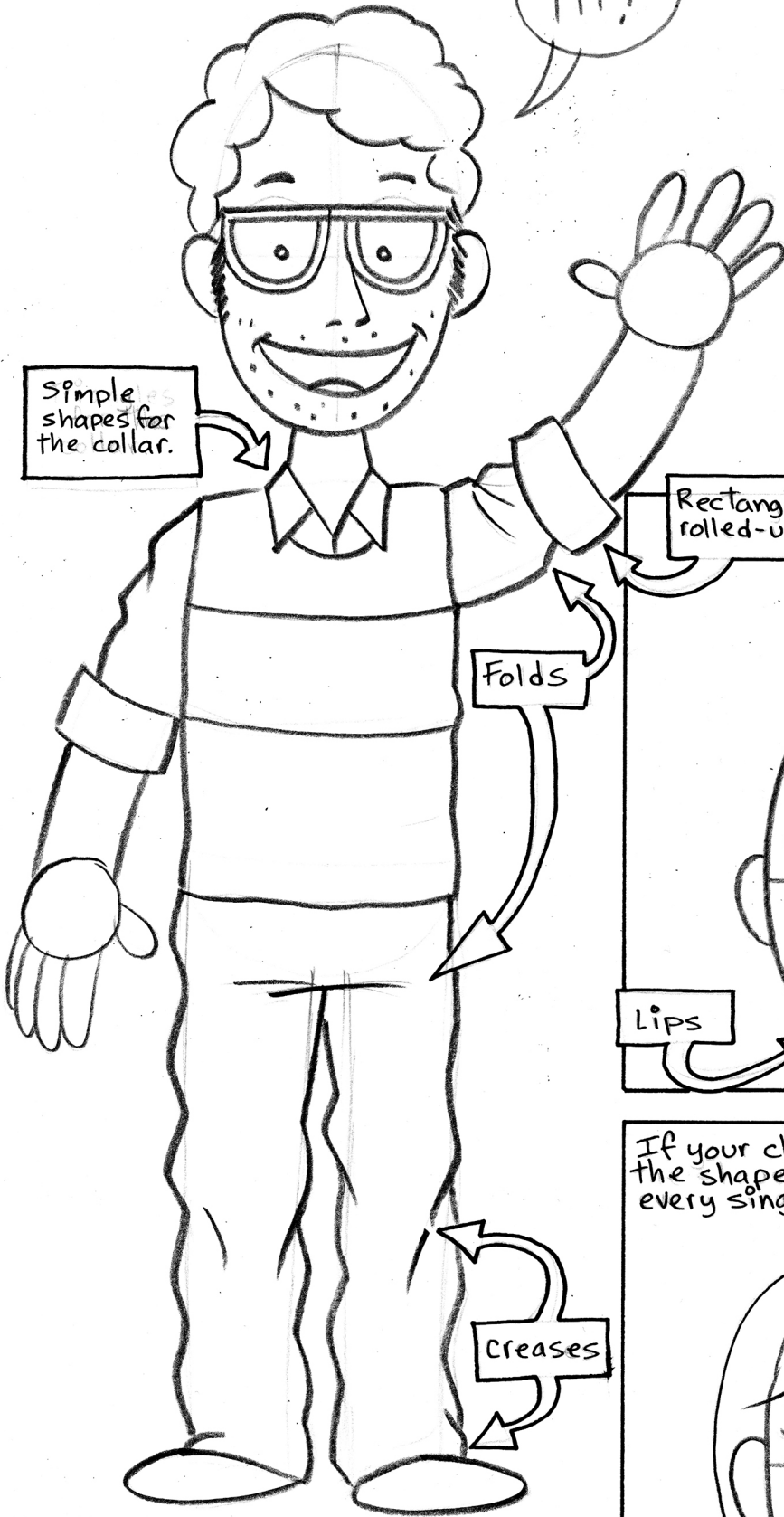
Folds

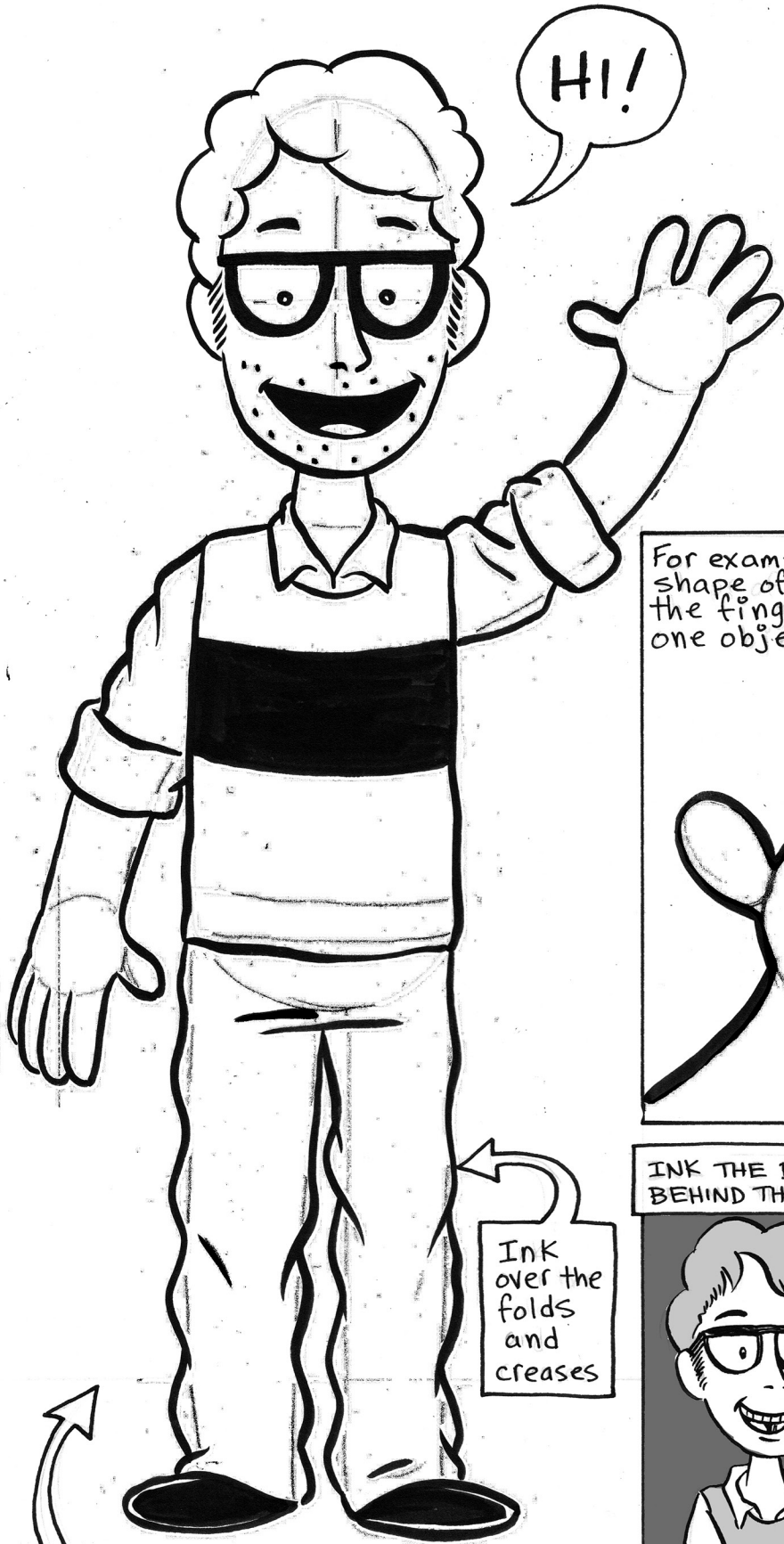
Lips

Eye lashes

If your character has hair, draw the shape of the coiffure and not every single hair.

Creases



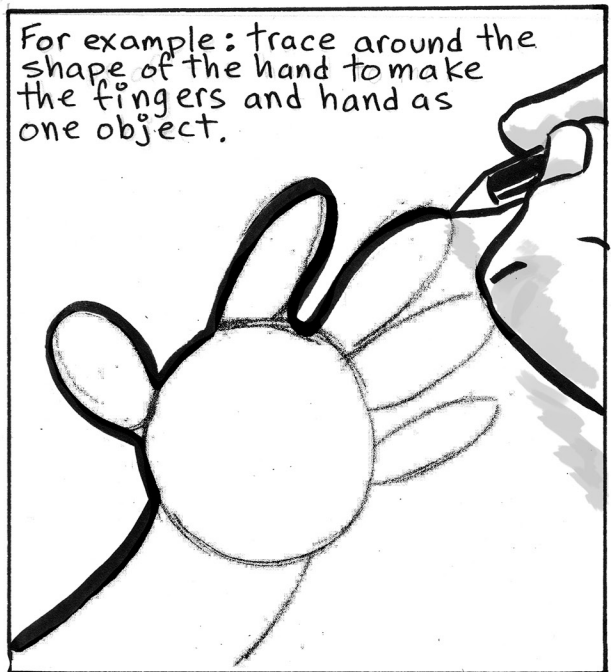


HI!

The next thing to do is to ink the drawing. Trace over the pencil lines with a black felt pen.

REMEMBER:
Don't trace over all the pencil lines, just the ones you want to keep.

For example: trace around the shape of the hand to make the fingers and hand as one object.



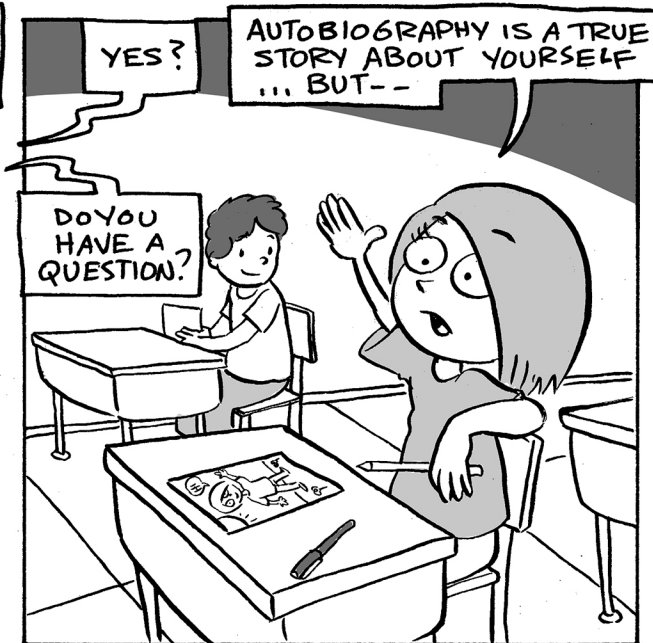
Pencil-in a background

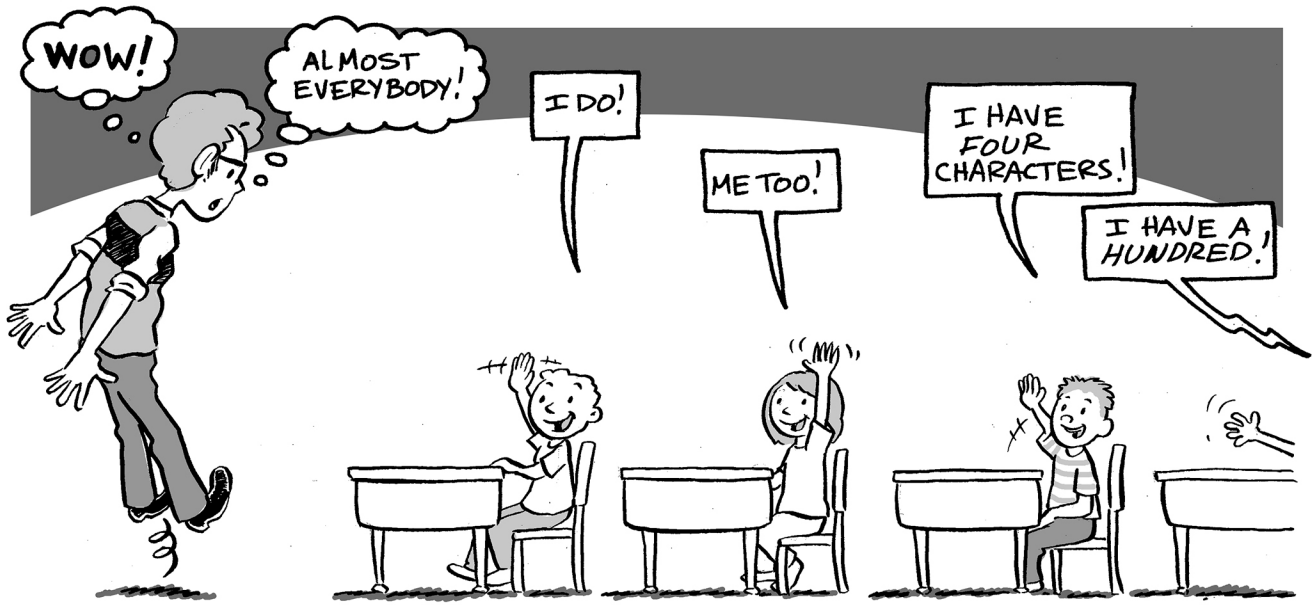
Ink over the folds and creases

INK THE BACKGROUND BEHIND THE CHARACTER.

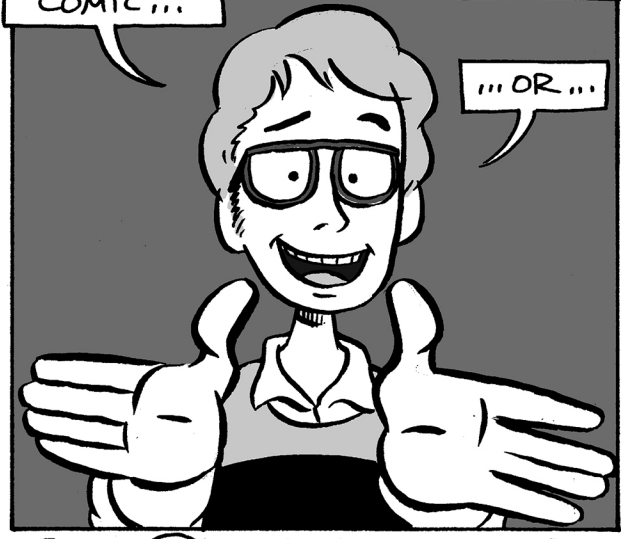
IF YOU MAKE AN INKING MISTAKE, YOU CAN FIX IT WITH CORRECTION FLUID!



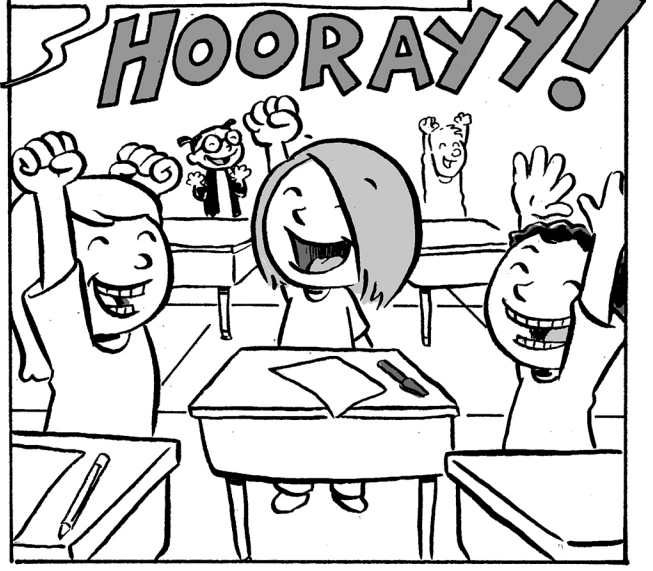




WELL THAT'S GREAT, AND IT GIVES YOU ALL A CHOICE: YOU CAN EITHER DRAW AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC...



-- YOU CAN DRAW A COMIC ABOUT YOUR OWN CHARACTER.



SHOULD I SUGGEST THEY INSERT THEMSELVES INTO THEIR STORIES?...



NO-- I SHOULDN'T...

I DON'T WANT TO INTERFERE TOO MUCH...

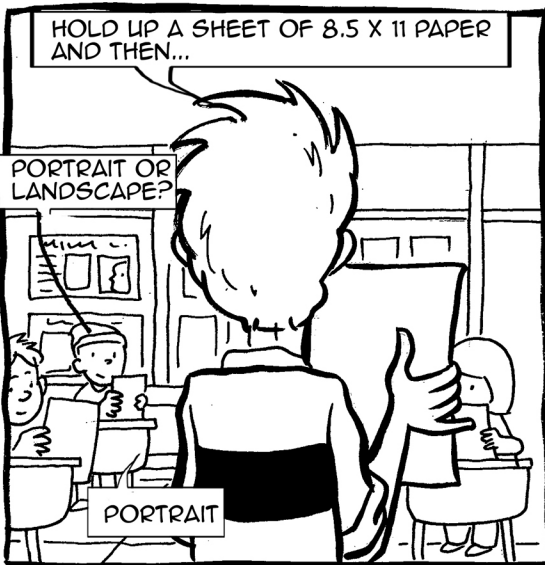


Lesson 2 Cartooning

TO SUMMARIZE FROM THE PREVIOUS LESSON...



- Participants did not want to draw autobiographical comics
- participants did want to draw stories about fictional characters they create
- employ simple shapes in designing your cartoon characters
- use emotion in the face to let the reader know with the character is feeling

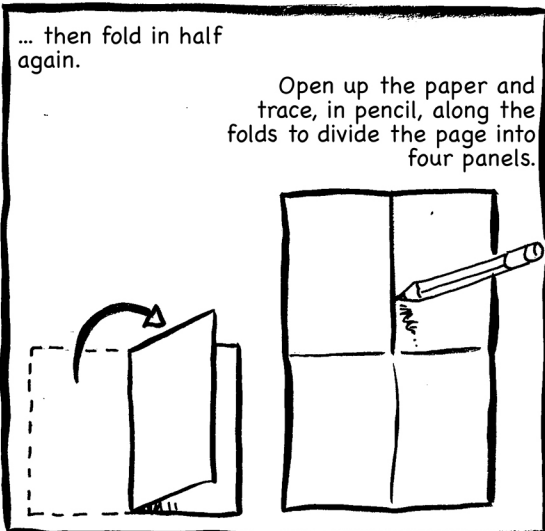
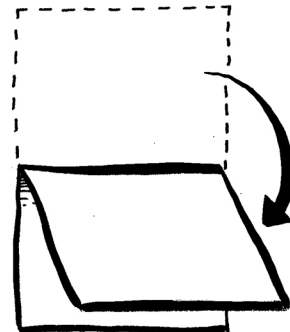
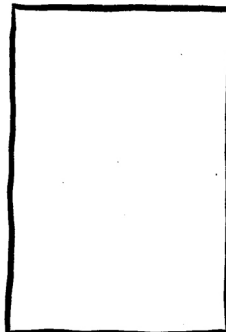


HOLD UP A SHEET OF 8.5 X 11 PAPER AND THEN...

PORTRAIT OR LANDSCAPE?

PORTRAIT

Fold the sheet in half--

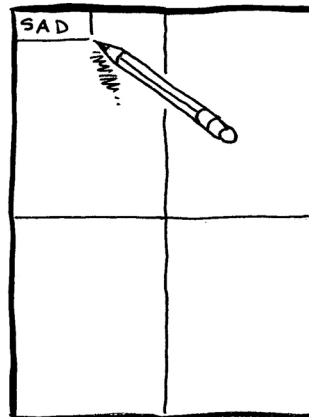


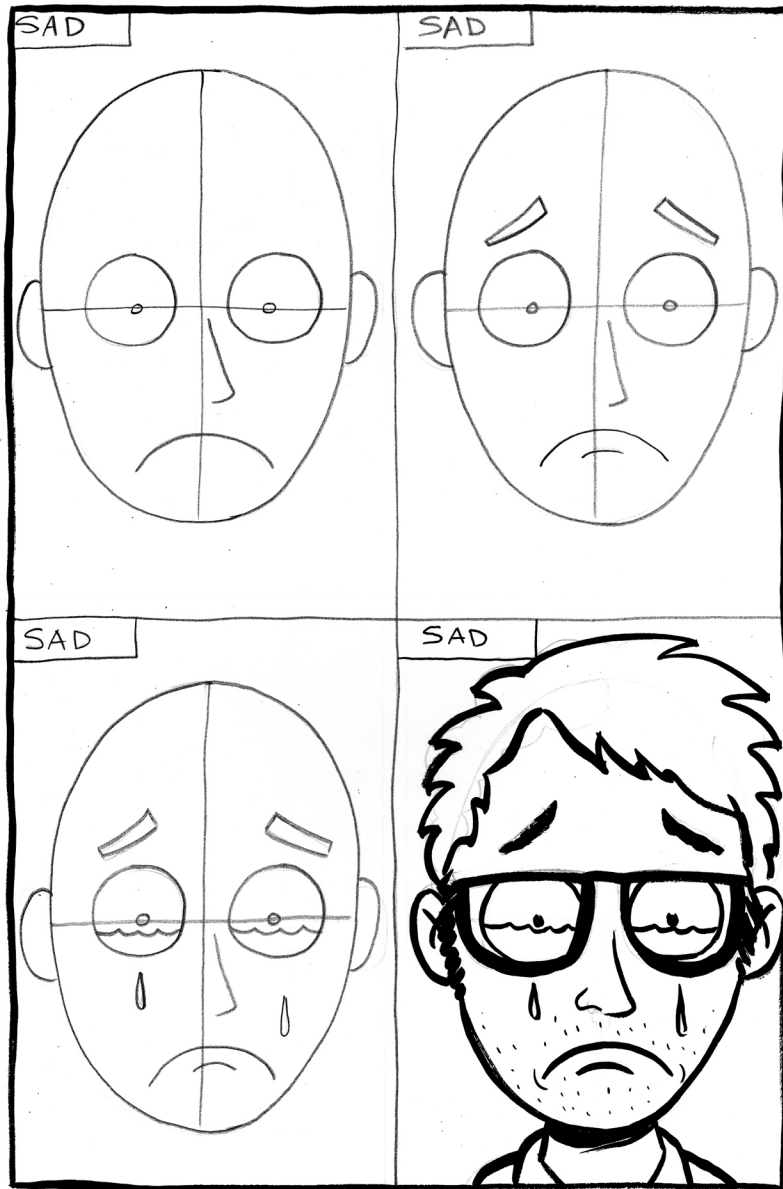
... then fold in half again.

Open up the paper and trace, in pencil, along the folds to divide the page into four panels.

"It looks like a window" remarked one student.

Draw a rectangle in the top, left-hand corner of the first panel. Write the word "SAD" inside the rectangle.





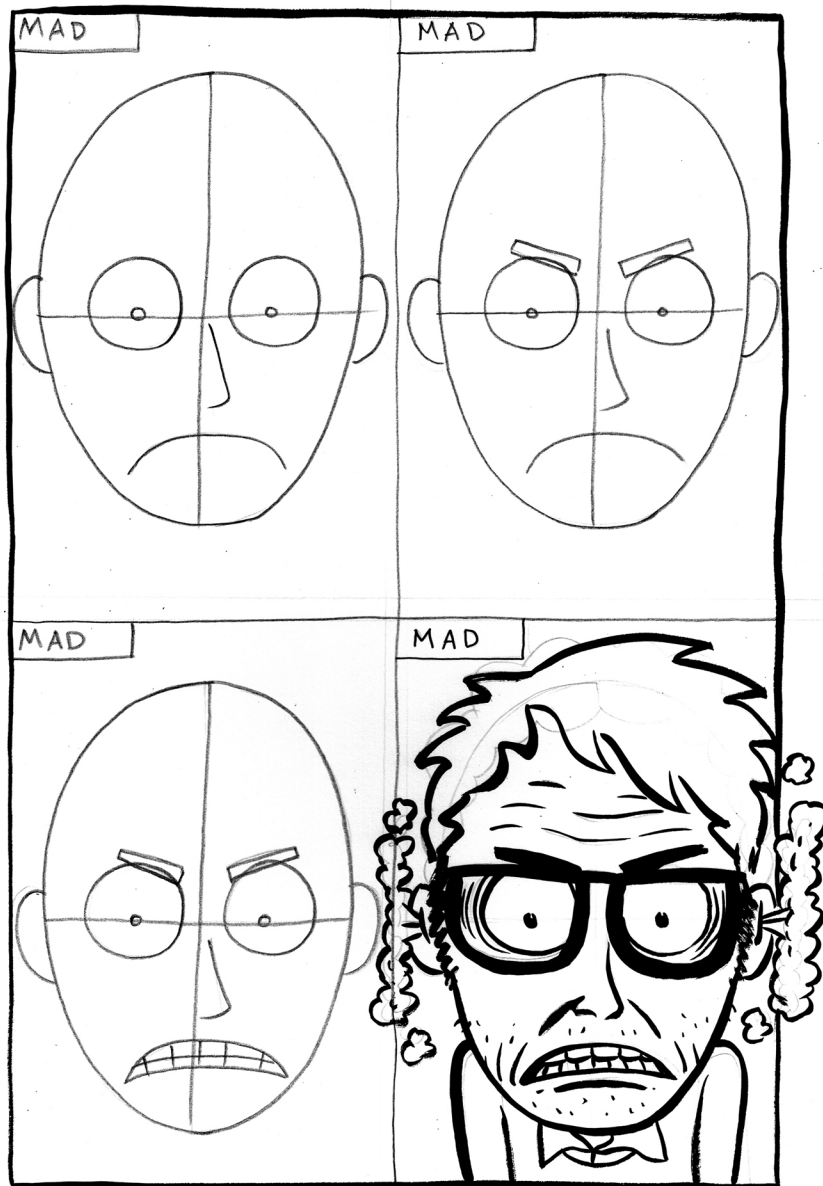
SAD

Step One: Draw an oval and guidelines. Use circles for eyes and pupils, add a simple nose and line curving down for the mouth.

Step Two: Add eyebrows that slope like the sides of a triangle.

Step Three: Draw tears.

Step Four: Add hair, details and trace over in ink with a fine or medium black felt-tip pen.



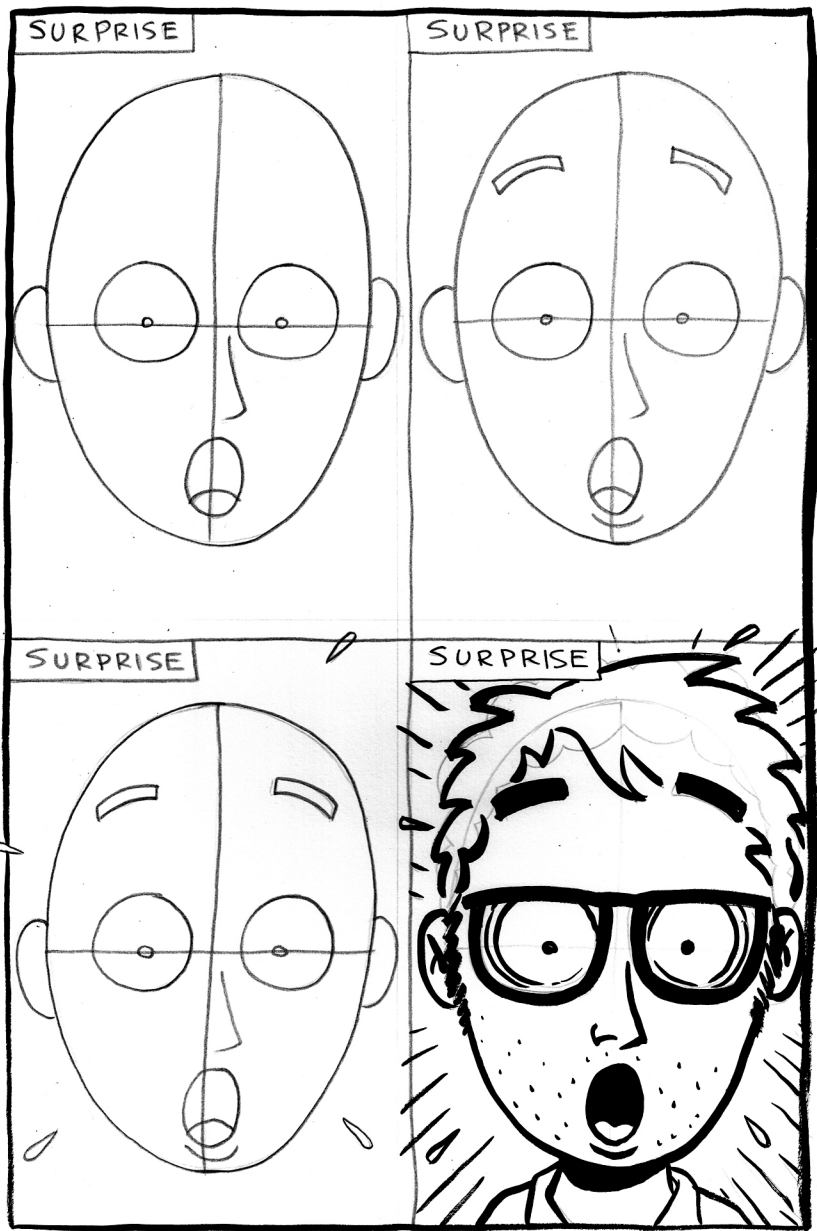
MAD

Step One: Follow the same steps as Step One for SAD.

Step Two: Add eyebrows that slope like the sides of the letter "V"

Step Three: Draw some clenched teeth in the mouth.

Step Four: Add details and ink.



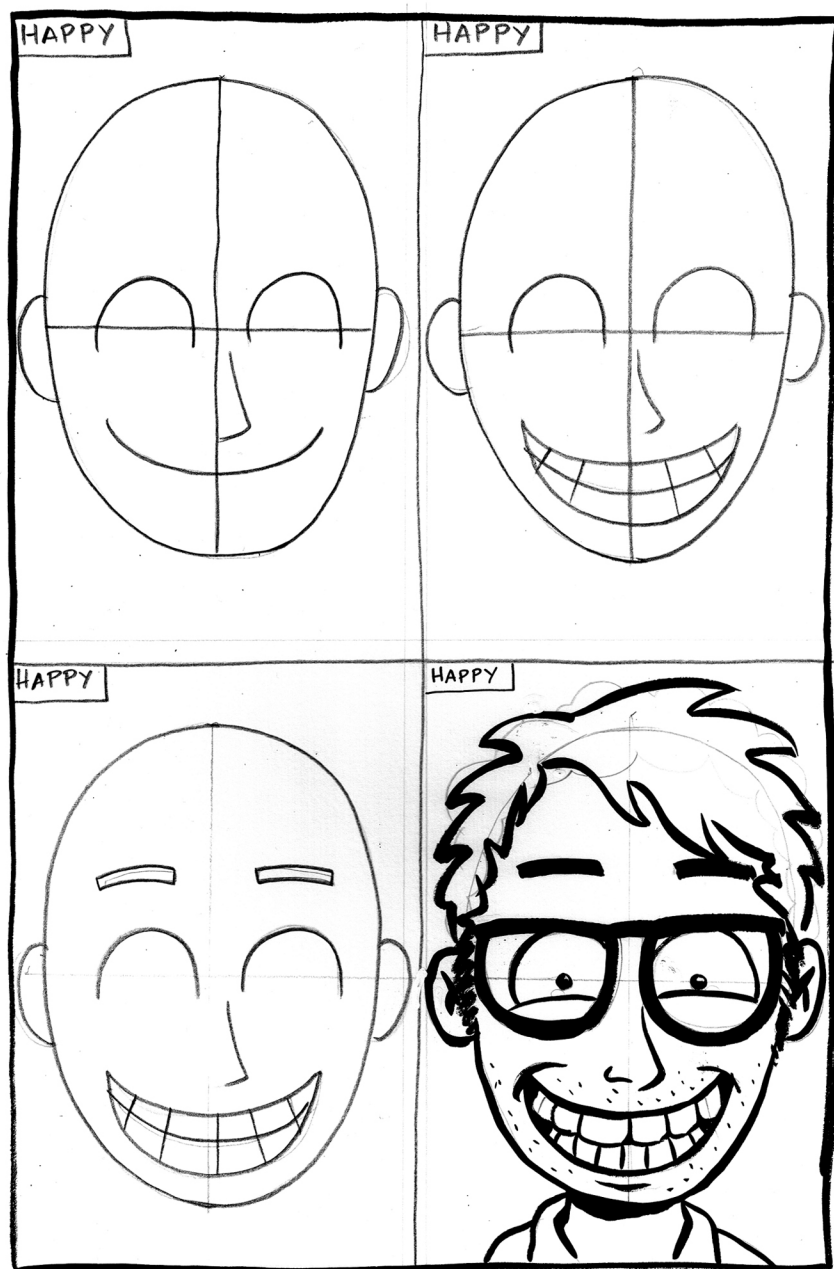
SURPRISE

Step One: Draw a head, guidelines, eyes, nose, and an oval for the mouth.

Step Two: Add two curved eyebrows high on the forehead. Draw a tongue inside the mouth and a curved line for a bottom lip.

Step Three: Draw some sweat and shock lines popping off the head.

Step Four: Add more details and ink.



HAPPY

Step One: Draw a head, guidelines, eyes, nose, and curved line for a mouth.

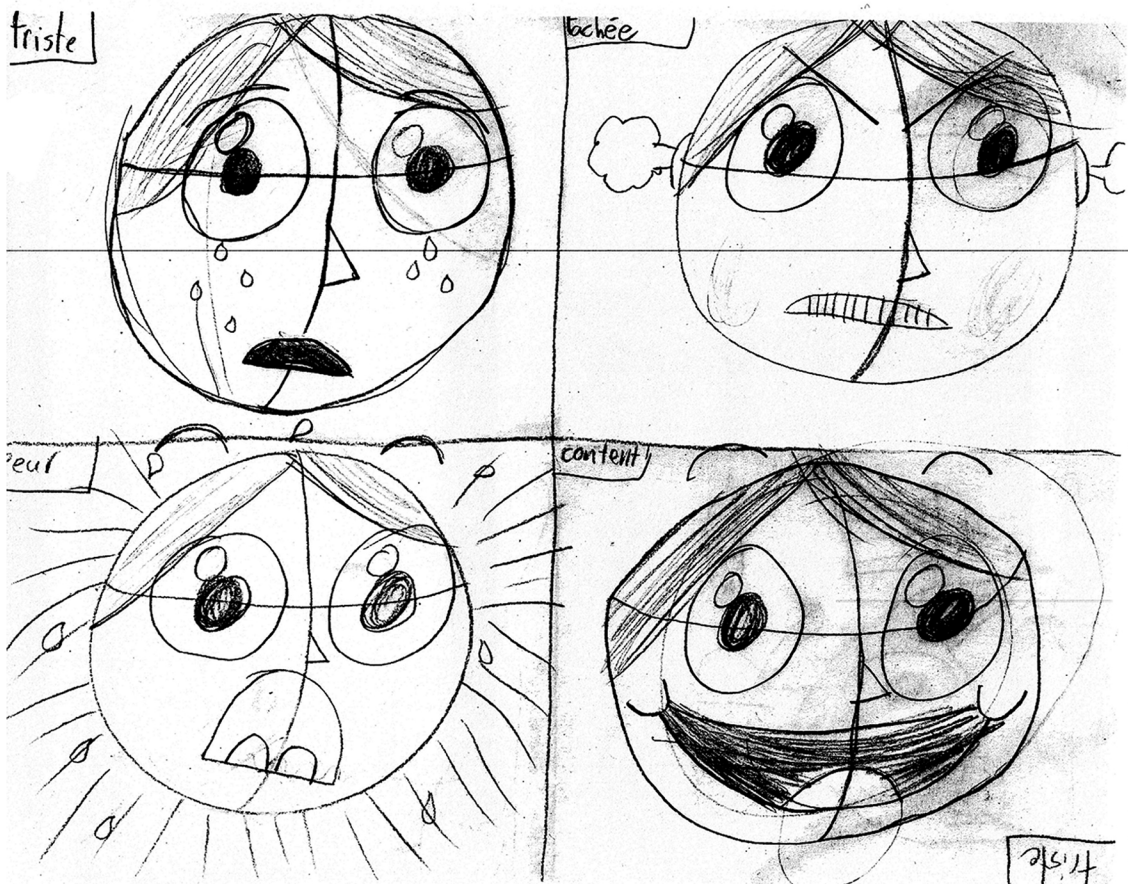
Step Two: Add two upside-down letter "U"s for eyes. Draw a another curved line under the mouth and add grinning teeth..

Step Three: Draw some relaxed eyebrows on the forehead.

Step Four: Add more details and ink.

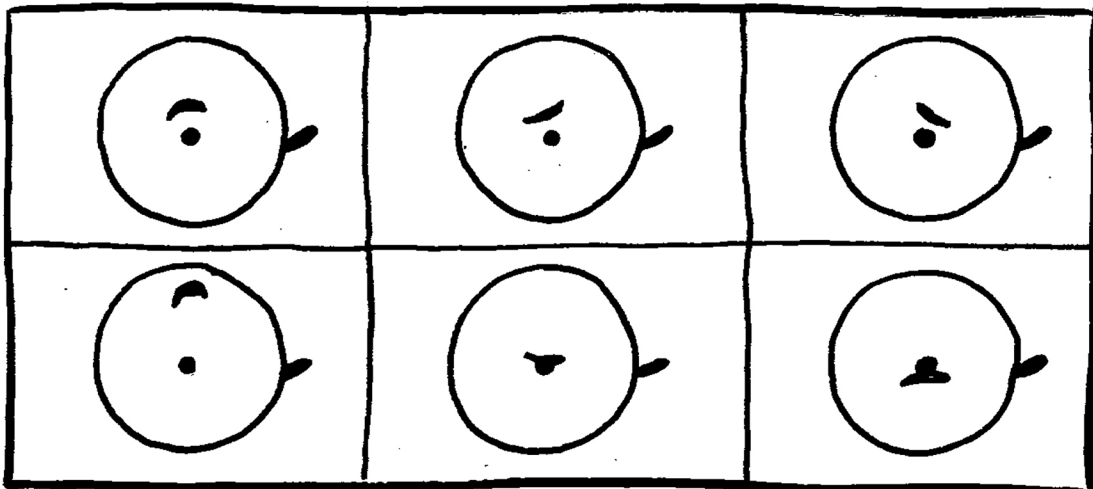


At the end of this exercise you will have a sheet of paper divided into four, with each panel displaying a facial expression or emotion.



Pictured above is an example of the facial expressions drawing exercise by one of the grade four participants, Anna (a pseudonym). The drawing lessons emphasize exaggerations in character gesture and expression. Brunetti (2011) writes "that minute shifts in the eyebrows... subtly alter the emotional expression" (p. 46). These coded subtleties act as introductions for students into semiotic meaning-making in comics.

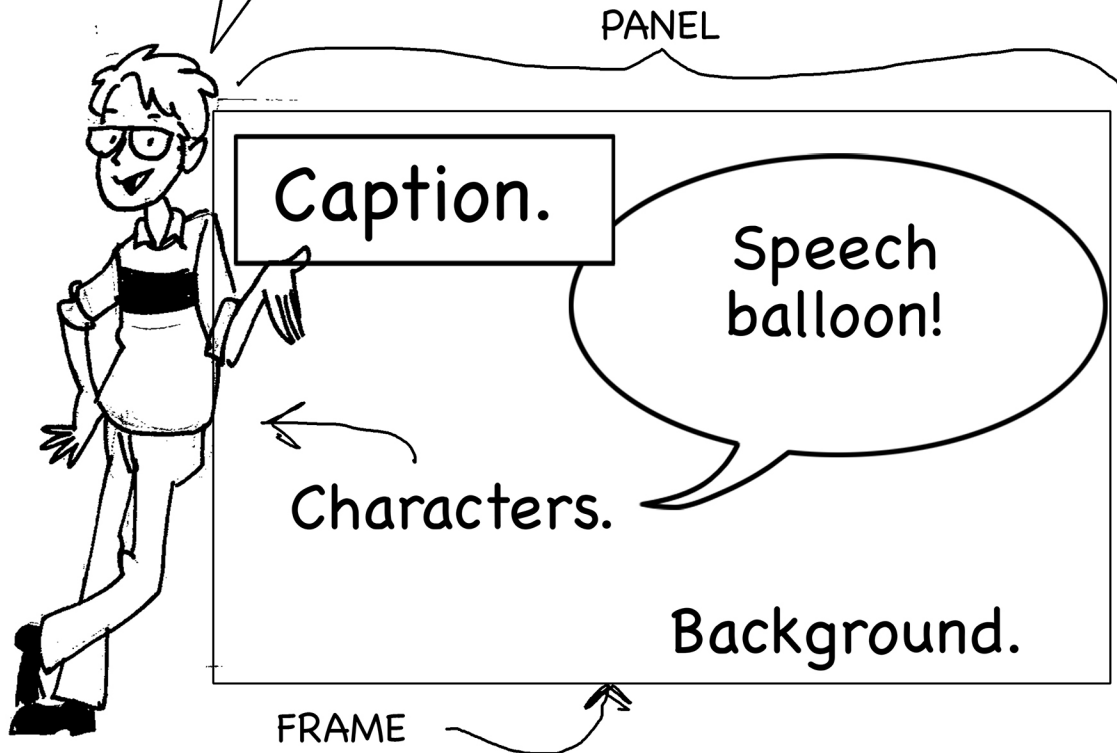
The language of comics employs cartooning, signs, and semiotics (Groensteen, 2007, 2013; Lim, 2004, 2007). In ritual and practice, authors develop an identifying voice as customizations and modifications are made to the vocabulary.



Subtle shifts of an eyebrow alter expression.

After Brunetti

THUS FAR, THE EXERCISES AND DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE ADDRESSED CHARACTER DESIGN, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE FRAME'S SIGNIFIEDS INSIDE THE PANEL.

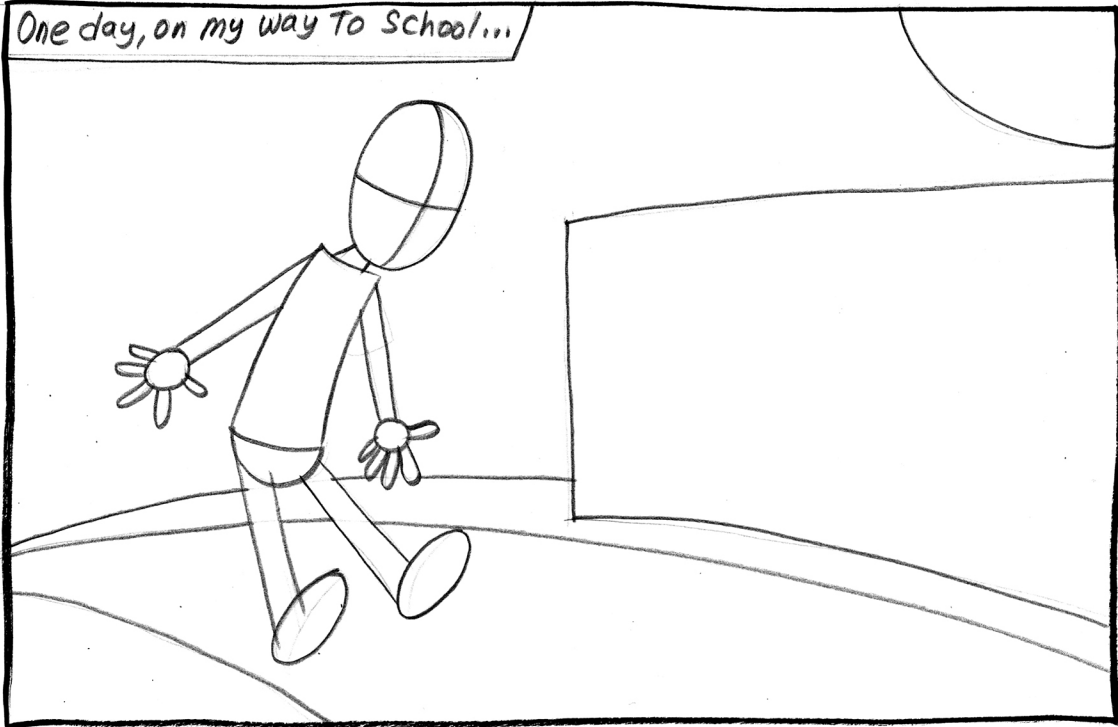


THE NEXT EXERCISE

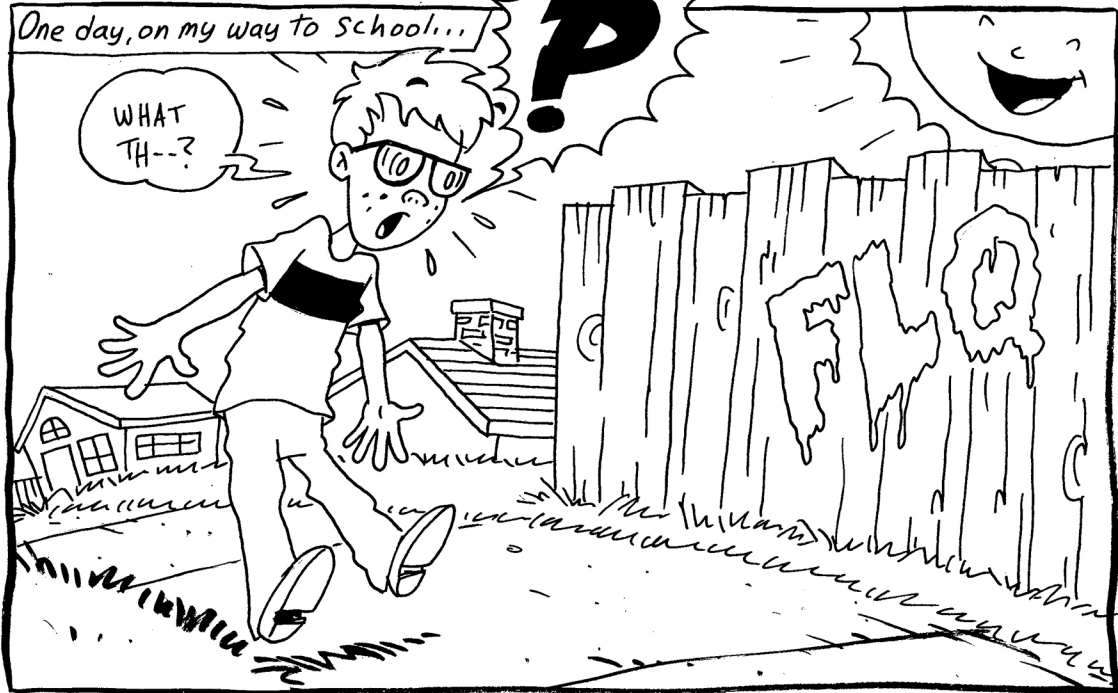
Create a scene featuring a character reacting to a person, place or thing. Indicate emotion on the face and action in the body. Employ elements of the language's grammar and semiotic narrative mechanisms asuch as caption boxes, speech balloons, facial expression, gesture, background elements, etc.

Please see the example on the next page.

On a sheet of letter-sized paper draw simple shapes in pencil arranged into a scene. Use the entire sheet of paper.



Next, add details, trace over with black ink, and erase the pencils.

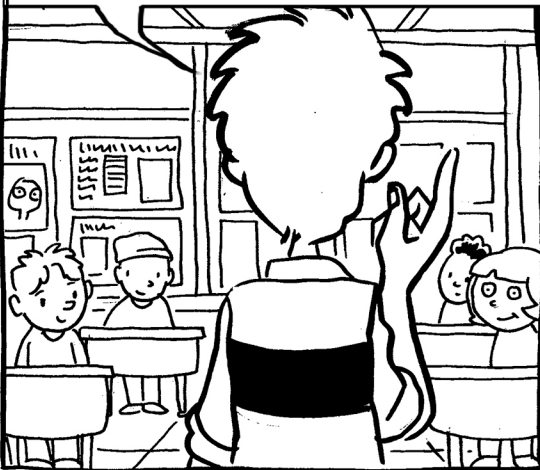


Lesson 3 Camera Angles

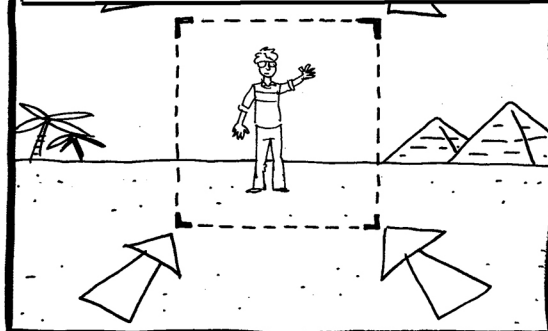
REVIEW

- Employ simple shapes in the design of people, animals, things, etc.
- Rough out scenes before working in the details.
- Use clear gestures, poses, and facial expressions on characters.
- Employ the semiotic language of the comics medium such as captions, speech balloons, facial expressions, onomatopoeia, etc.

THE AUTHOR OF A COMIC IS LIKE THE DIRECTOR OF A FILM: THE DIRECTOR CHOOSES WHAT AND WHO TO ARRANGE WITHIN SCENES.



Similarly, the comics artist selects how much to reveal to the reader within the panel (McCloud, 1994). Visualize a scene in your head... the image of a character standing in the desert, surrounded by sand, with the sun, palm trees and pyramids in the background.



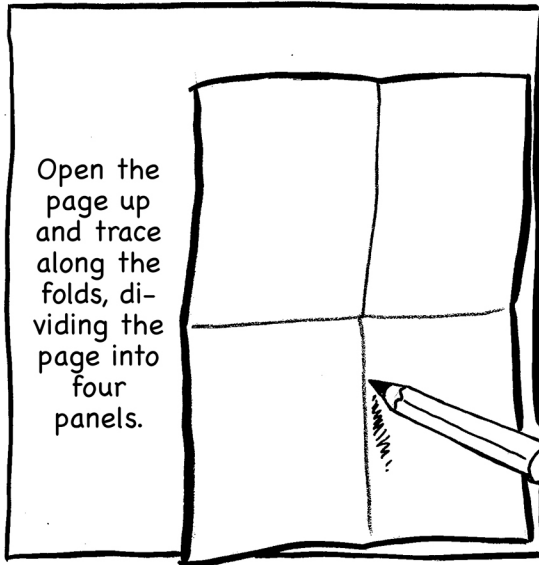
Pretend there is a button that allows the frame to zoom-in on an element of the scene. By zooming-in, the artist chooses a particular section of the drawn world to present.



For the next exercise--

FOLD A PIECE OF PAPER IN HALF AND THEN FOLD IT AGAIN AS DONE BEFORE WITH THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS EXERCISE...

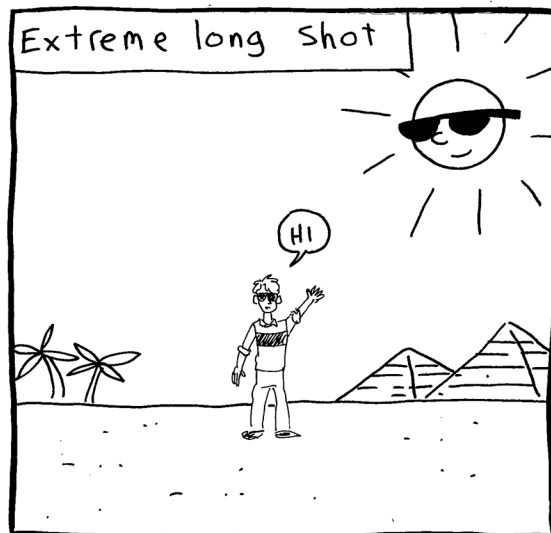




The first camera angle is the extreme longshot. Draw a very small character in the middle of the first panel. Draw a horizon line somewhere behind the knees of the character. Use clear gestures in the pose.



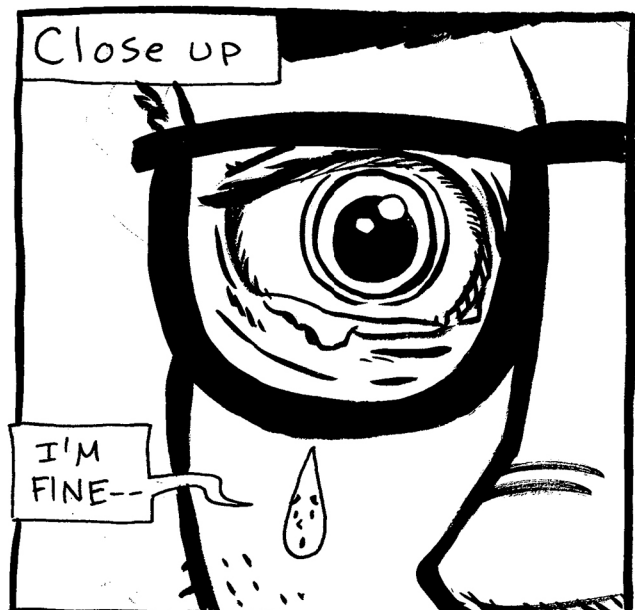
Add the background details. The extreme long shot reveals a large area of the scene within the panel and can establish, for the author and reader, where the narrative is occurring.

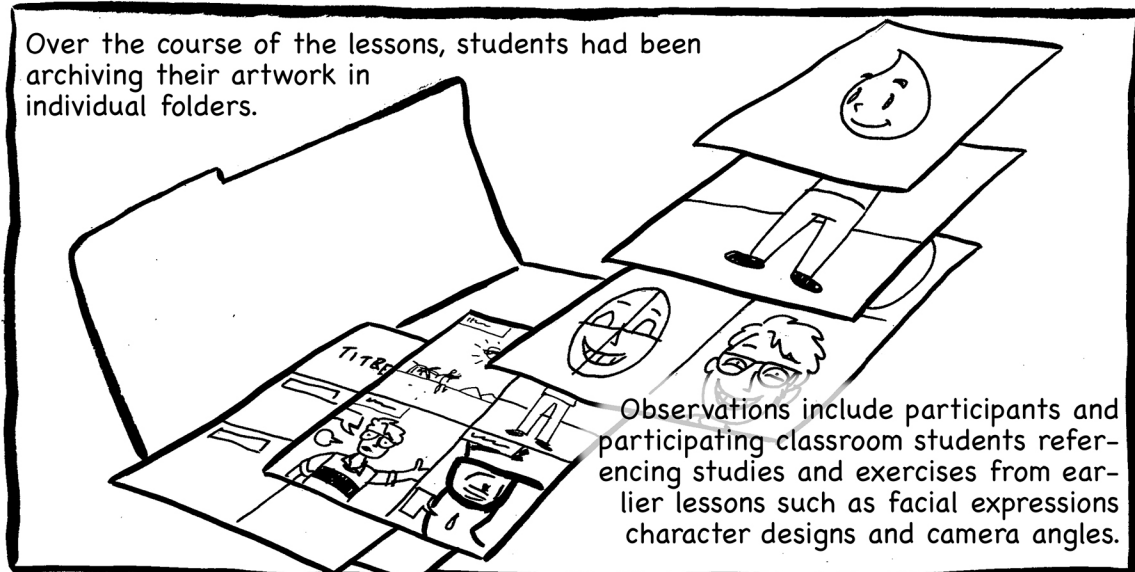


FOUR MAIN CAMERA ANGLES:

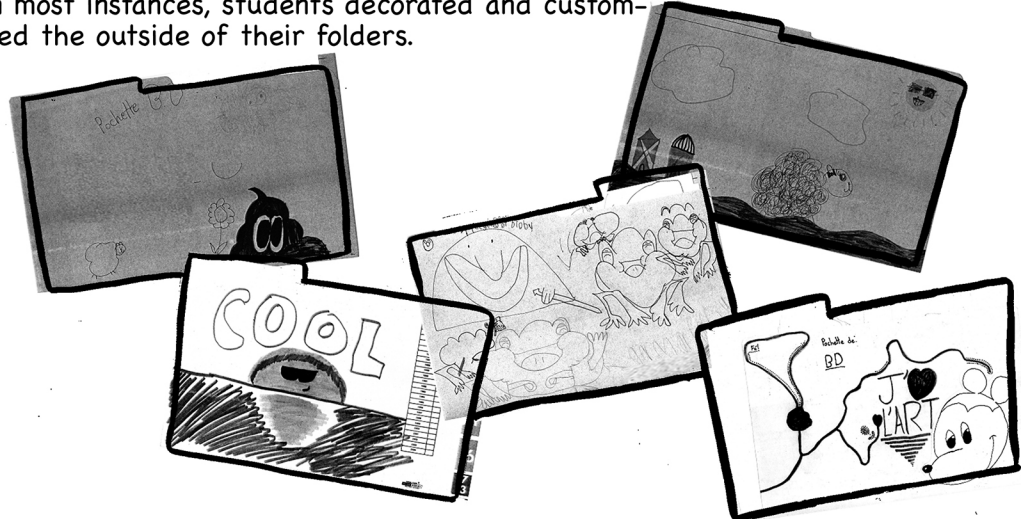
- Extreme long shot: the scene is zoomed out and establishes location.
- Long shot: the frame of the panel zooms-in to an aspect of the scene.
- Medium shot: the panel zooms-in closer to the person place or thing.
- Close up: the panel frames tightly around a close detail in the scene.

Camera angles can help with meaning-making as "close-ups, panoramic shots, and birds' eye views, as well as specific ways of composing shots in a sequence by means of editing and montage have established meanings and functions in film narrative which graphic narrative here productively adapts" (Horstkotte, 2013, p. 32).

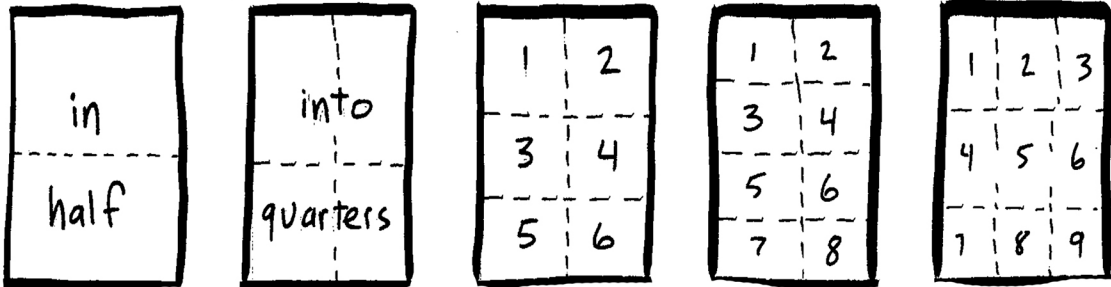




In most instances, students decorated and customized the outside of their folders.

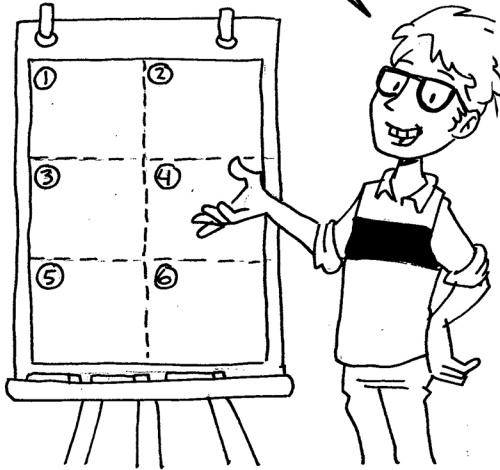


Brunetti encourages artists to visualize the page as a tool. Cartoonist Linda Barry (2014) posits “you can learn a lot about paper by folding and unfolding it. This can help your drawing” (p. 98).



Students wanted to begin work on long-form stories right away. Some began to instinctively divide their pages into haphazard grids (Groensteen, 2007; Sousanis, 2014). An initial mechanism was required which could framework the students’ narratives. To establish a “matrix of support” (Groensteen, 2007, p. 96) fold a sheet of letter – size paper into six panels. Before commencing a comic book epic, the following exercise helps establish and develop character.

DIVIDE A SHEET OF LETTER-SIZED PAPER INTO SIX PANELS.



① TITLE	② INTRODUCE THE CHARACTER
③ INTRODUCE CHARACTER'S FAMILY, FRIENDS, ETC.	④ DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTER'S WORLD
⑤ THE CHARACTER'S OCCUPATION	⑥ WHAT THE CHARACTER DOES FOR FUN

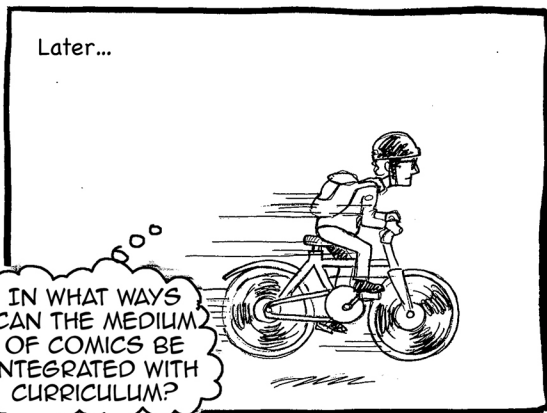
USE THIS FRAMEWORK TO SKETCH INSIDE EACH OF THE SIX PANELS. THIS EXERCISE WILL ASSIST IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. EMPLOY AN ORIGINAL CHARACTER CREATION, OR THE SELF-PORTRAIT CHARACTER DESIGNED IN LESSON ONE.



See Appendix B for examples of templates .

At the conclusion of Lesson 4...

CONTINUE WORKING ON THE GOOD COPY PENCIL DRAWINGS OF YOUR COMIC.



LESSON 4 Penciling

Over the course of the following week

all 25 students, including the three study participants, had completed a rough six-panel introduction to their cartoon character.



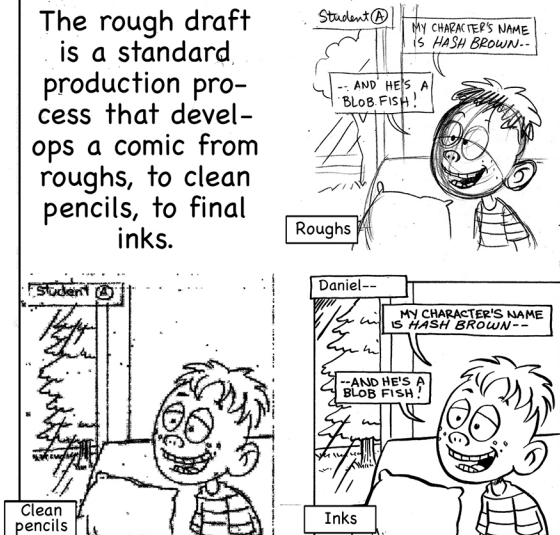
Madame Centour and the classroom assistant had also worked with students to correct spelling, revise grammar, and insert new vocabulary into the rough drafts.



DOING A ROUGH VERSION OF THE COMIC HELPS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVE. CARTOONIST HERGE (2007) WORKED THIS WAY, AS EVIDENCED IN HIS UNFINISHED LAST ALBUM *TINTIN AND ALPH ART*.



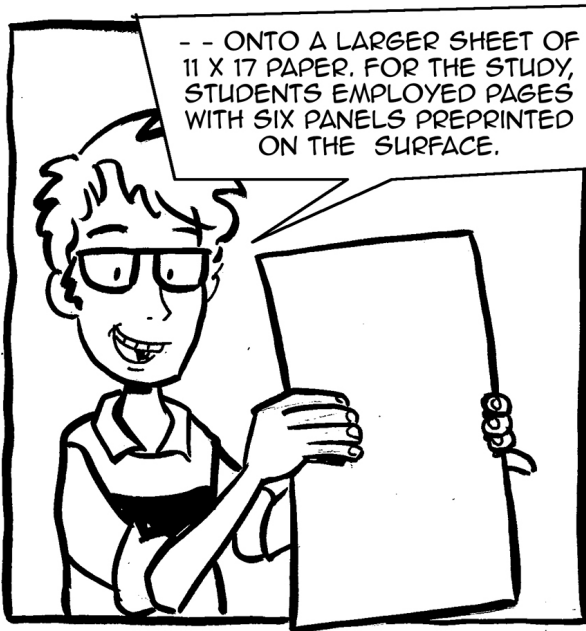
The rough draft is a standard production process that develops a comic from roughs, to clean pencils, to final inks.



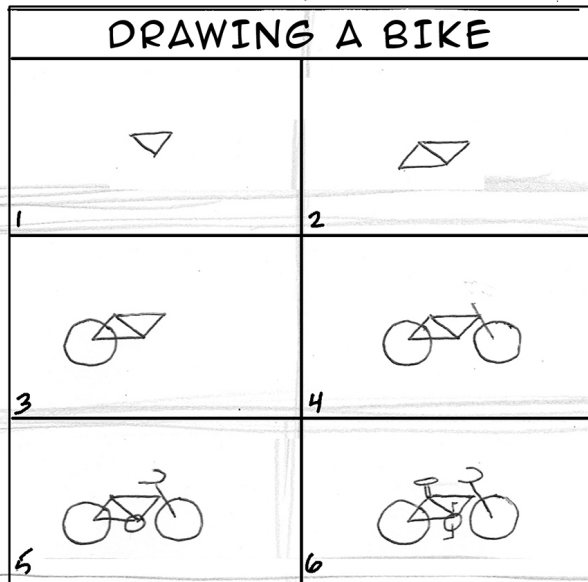
I observed that some students wanted to avoid the first two steps of the process and draw stories as quickly as possible in black ink.



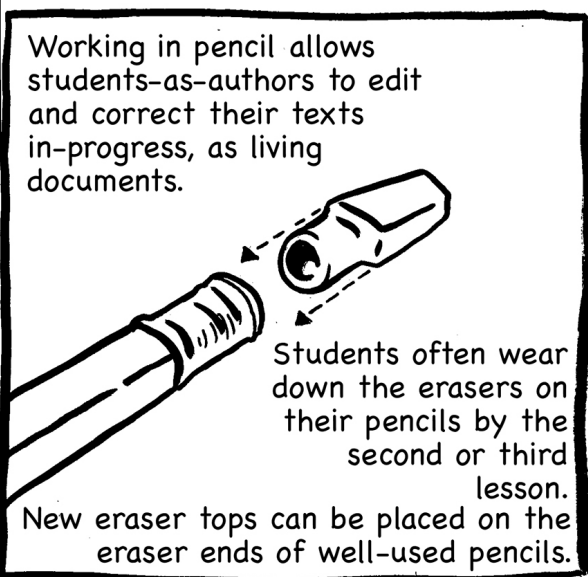
The results often looked rushed and I would encourage the student to try another in pencil.



As the students worked on the good copy and pencils, I circulated around the classroom.



I also observed opportunities for grammar, vocabulary, and literacy development.



The process involves transferring the rough concepts onto the large sheet in pencil.

HOW COME THE GOOD COPY IS SO BIG?

THE LARGER SPACE ALLOWS YOU MORE ROOM TO ADD DETAILS.

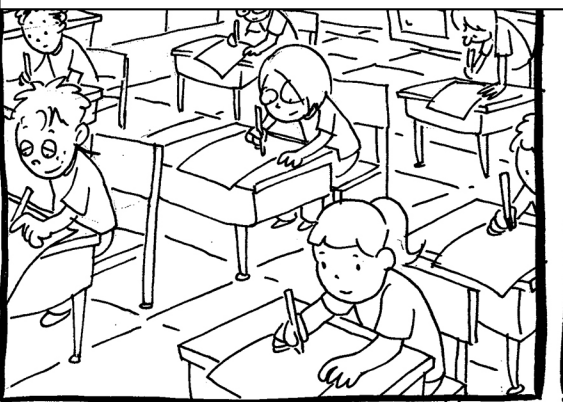


Working on larger paper is a standard professional practice for comic book artists.

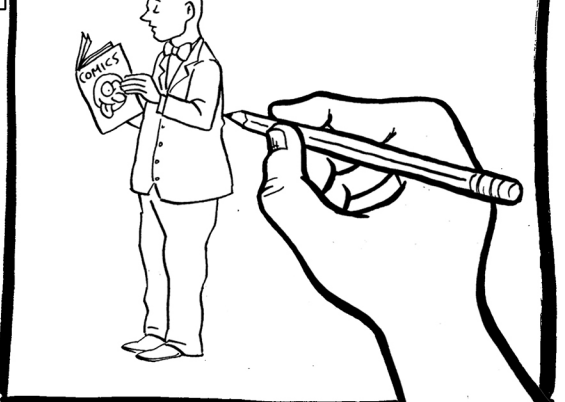
THIS STUDY INVITES STUDENTS TO AUTHOR COMICS USING HISTORIC MODES OF PRODUCTION. THE ORIGINALS WILL BE REDUCED 70 PERCENT TO 8.5 X 11 SIZE, AND PRINTED INTO AN ANTHOLOGY OF ALL THE PARTICIPANTS' COMICS.



For the purposes of this study, students worked alone, penciling narratives of self-expression in the medium of comics. Students would consult with each other and discuss ideas however.



The ninth art allows artists to tell stories, claim authorship, and connect empathetically with readers (Horsman, 2015).



One example of this empathetic connection is observed through the author's hand-drawn images--

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MEDIUMS ARE REVEALED BY THEIR MATERIAL, REAL WORLD DIFFERENCES (HEIDEGGER, 1977; RIPPL & ETTER, 2013; WILDE, 2015).



In her introduction to Michael Bitz's (2009) book **Manga High**, comics editor and publisher Francoise Mouly wrote:

"COMICS' VISIBLY HANDMADE QUALITY PROMPTS READERS TO INTUITIVELY PERCEIVE THEM AS EXPRESSIONS OF THEIR AUTHOR. READERS ARE INSPIRED TO BECOME AUTHORS" (P. X).

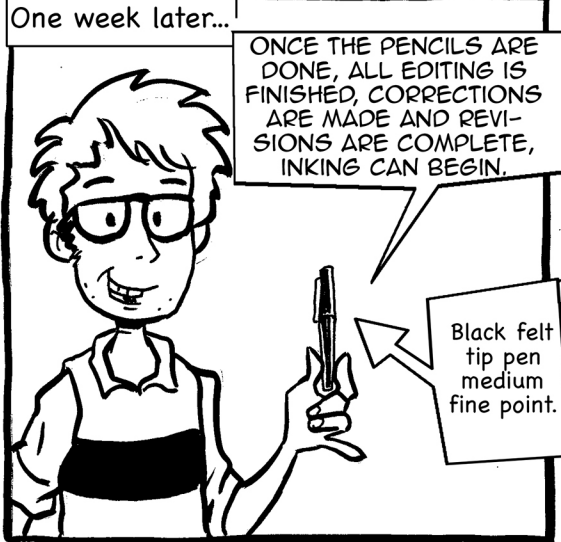


Lesson 4 Inking

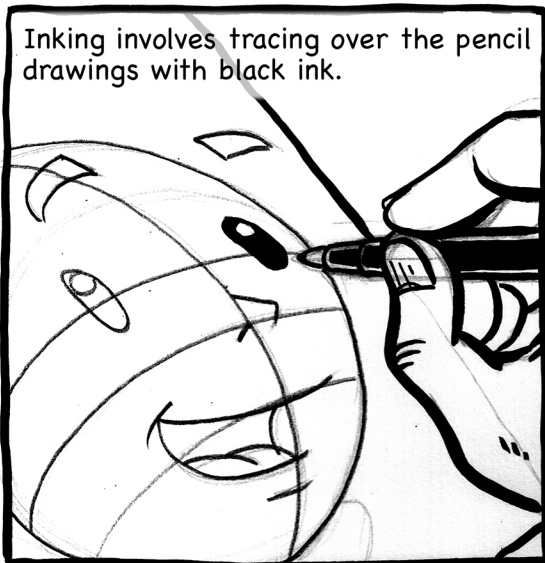
One week later...

ONCE THE PENCILS ARE DONE, ALL EDITING IS FINISHED, CORRECTIONS ARE MADE AND REVISIONS ARE COMPLETE, INKING CAN BEGIN.

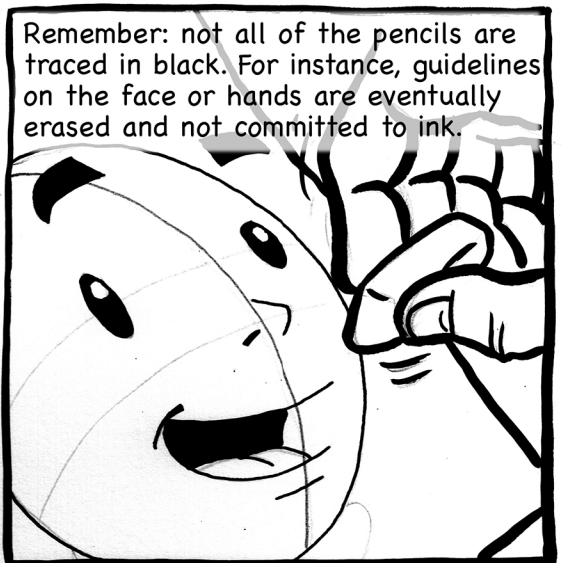
Black felt tip pen medium fine point.



Inking involves tracing over the pencil drawings with black ink.



Remember: not all of the pencils are traced in black. For instance, guidelines on the face or hands are eventually erased and not committed to ink.



Inking mistakes can be fixed with correction fluid.

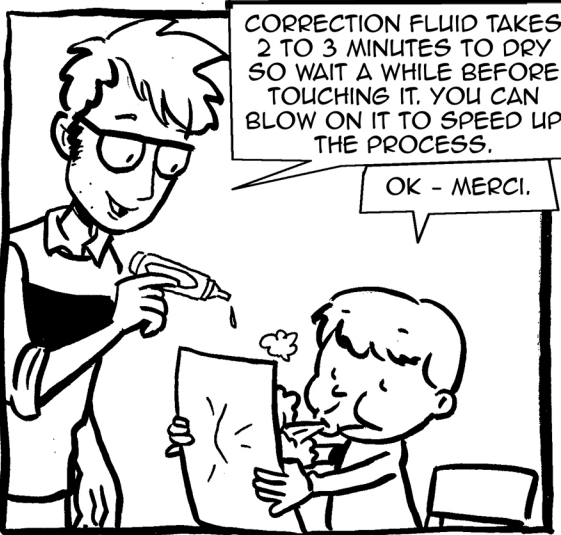
Bottle

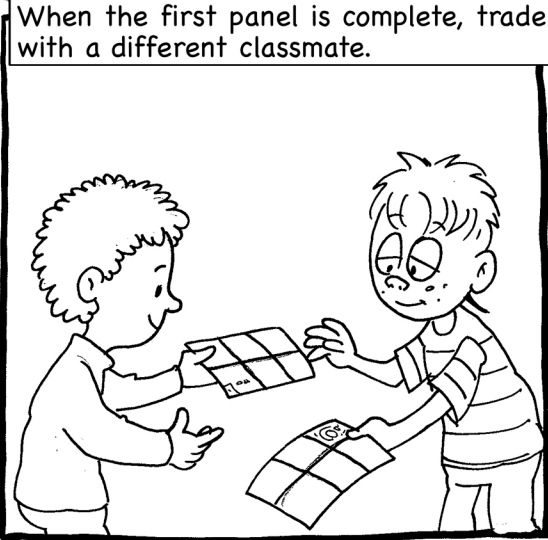
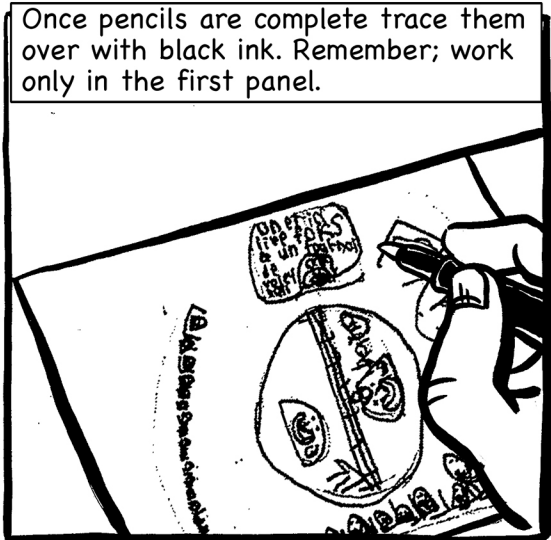
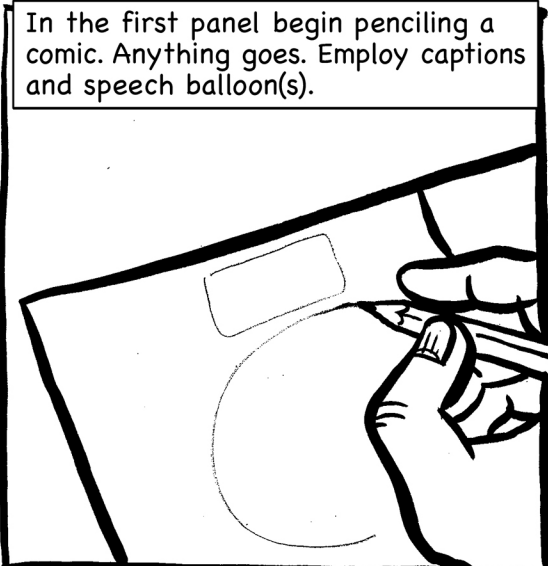
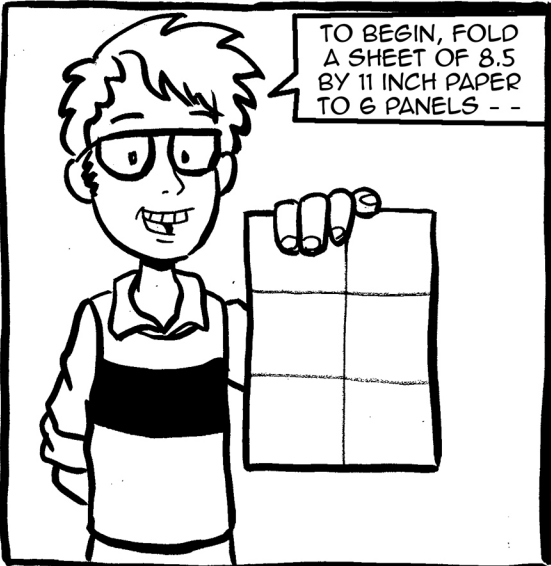
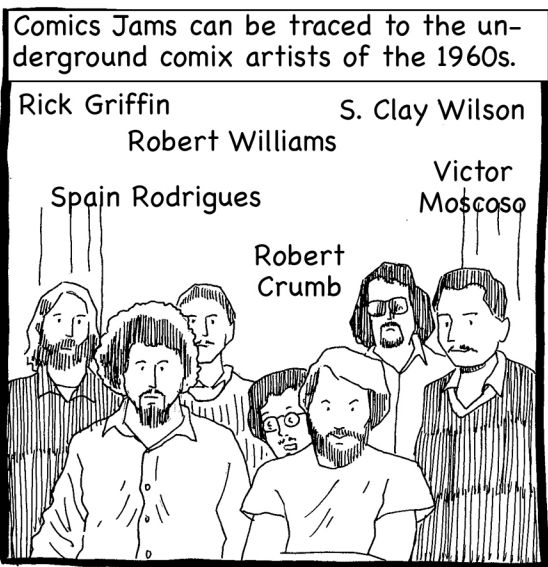
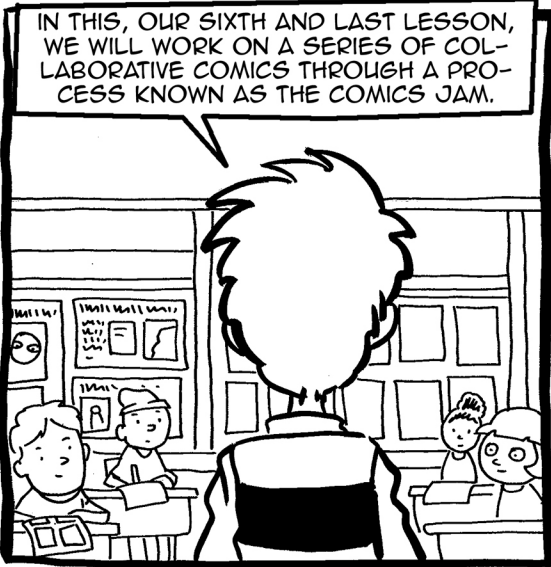
Pen

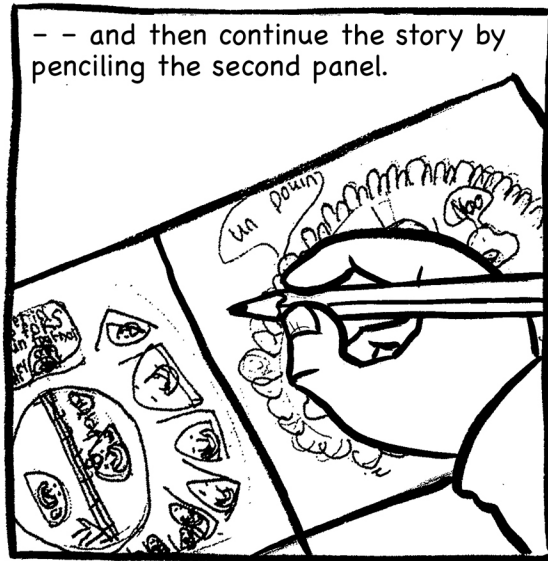
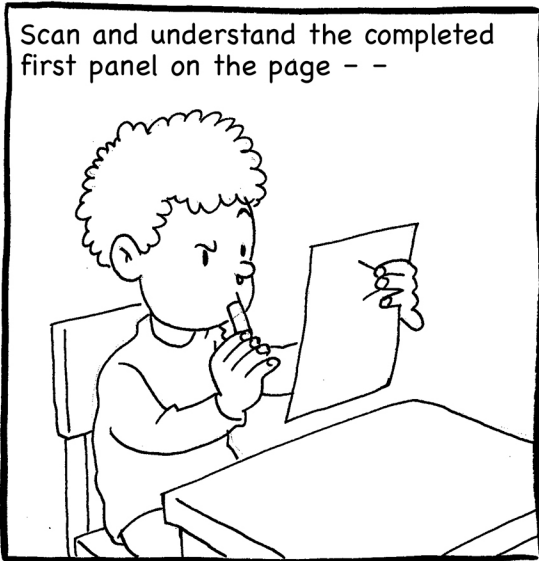


CORRECTION FLUID TAKES 2 TO 3 MINUTES TO DRY SO WAIT A WHILE BEFORE TOUCHING IT. YOU CAN BLOW ON IT TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS.

OK - MERCI.







Having learned through direct group instruction how to create comics as singular and complete authors, Madame Centour's students are equipped to collaborate as collective authors and develop comics in a group activity.

Pictured on the left is a Comics Jam by four grade four students.

While students were jamming, I made photocopies of their finished comics in the school office.

ONCE AGAIN, PRINCIPAL REMI, THANKS

AND THANK YOU...

DIRECTEUR



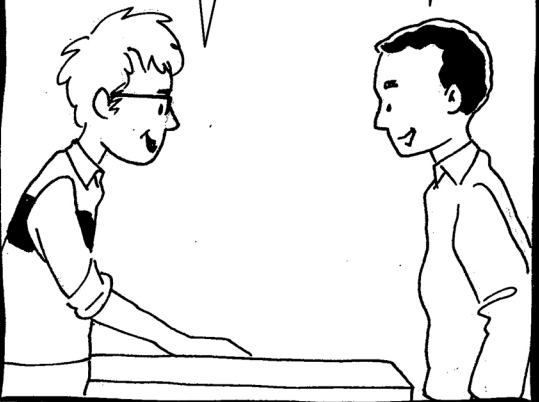
-- WE WOULD LOVE TO HAVE YOU BACK AND PERHAPS TEACH A SIMILAR SERIES OF LESSONS TO THE WHOLE SCHOOL?



THAT WOULD BE GREAT!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW?

MAKING COPIES OF STUDENT ARTWORK.



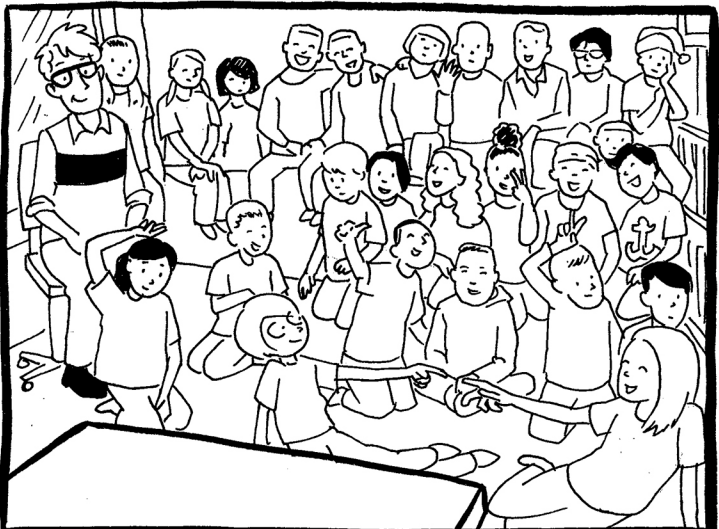
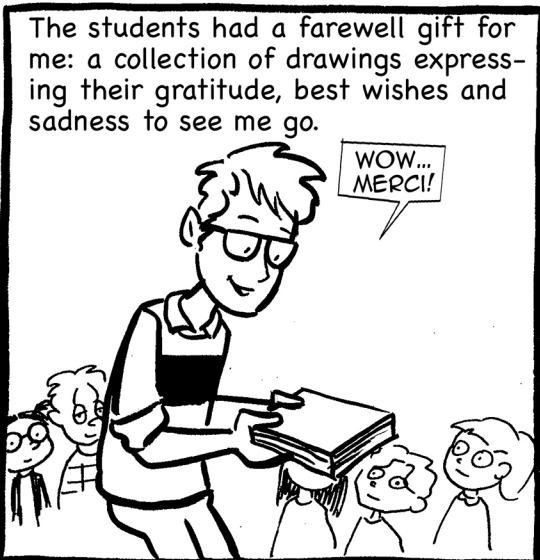
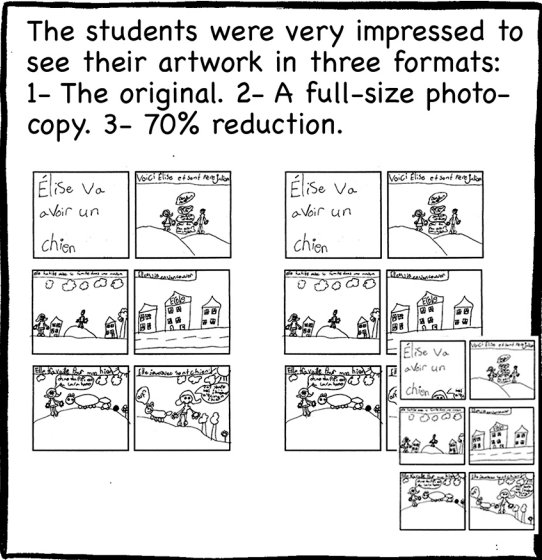
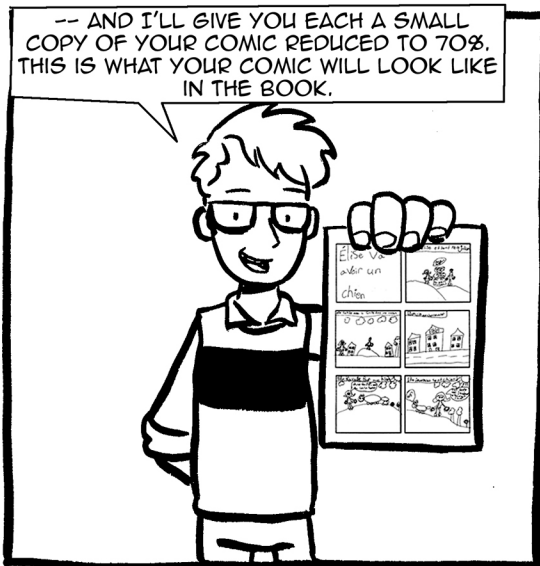
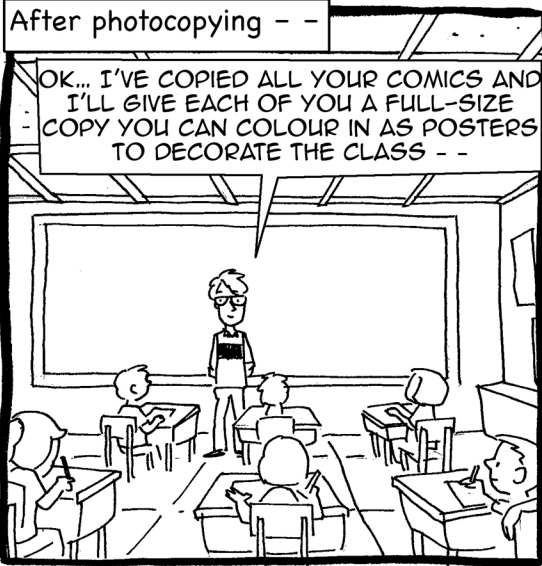
THE ORIGINAL ART WAS DRAWN ON 11 X 17 PAPER. BY REDUCING THE ART 70% ON THE PHOTOCOPIER, THE COMIC FITS ON 8.5 X 11 PAPER.



I'LL PUT ALL THE COMICS TOGETHER INTO A BOOK AND PRINT ONE OUT FOR EACH STUDENT, THE PARTICIPATING TEACHERS, AND FOR YOURSELF.



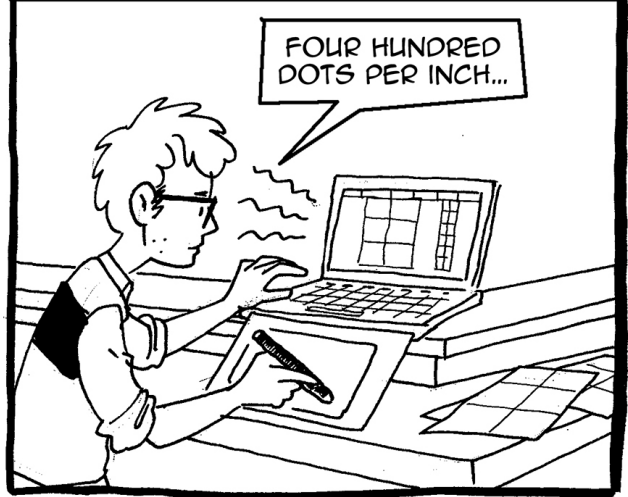
HOW WONDERFUL! I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THE FINAL PRODUCT.



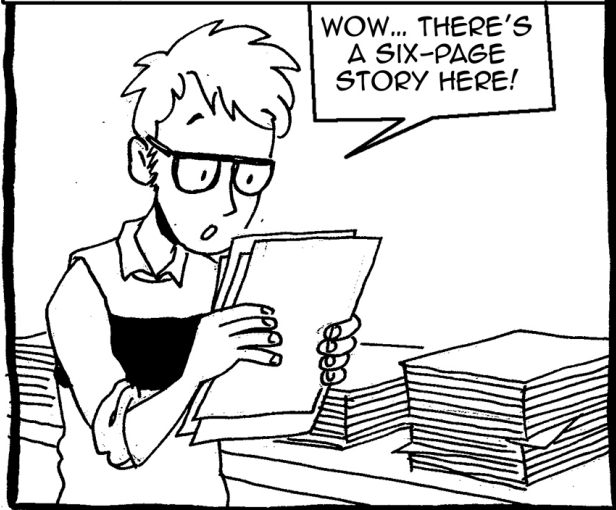
We all gathered in the area where the interviews were conducted to pose for a group photo.

Conclusion TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

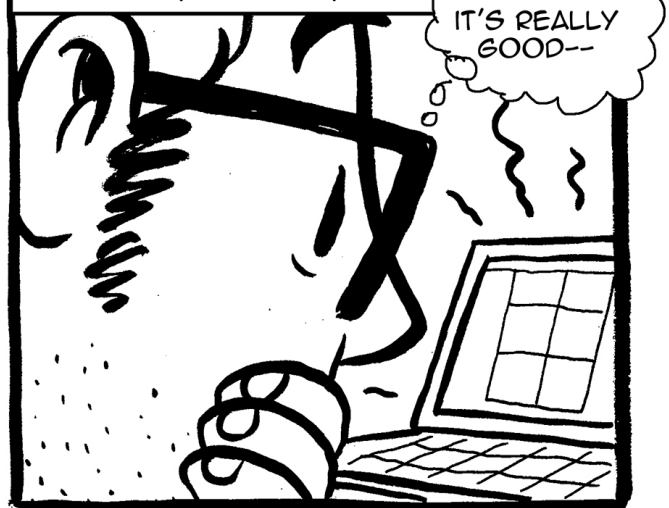
The first thing to do is scan all student artwork that will be included in the printed collection of their comics.



I noticed Stella's story about Rosette a few days earlier when I was photocopying in the office.



The deeper I analyzed the narrative, the more I understood and was touched by the story.

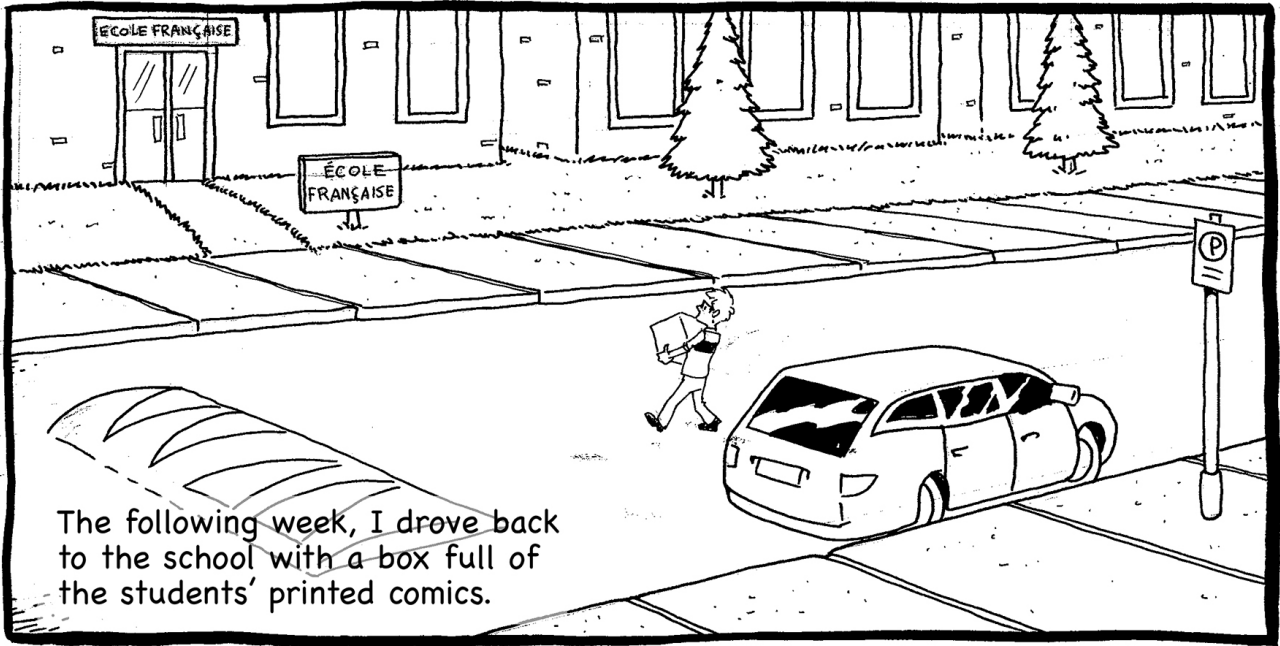


After laying-out the artwork in a computer design program, I phoned the printer for a quote to see how much it would cost to print forty, 44-page comic books.

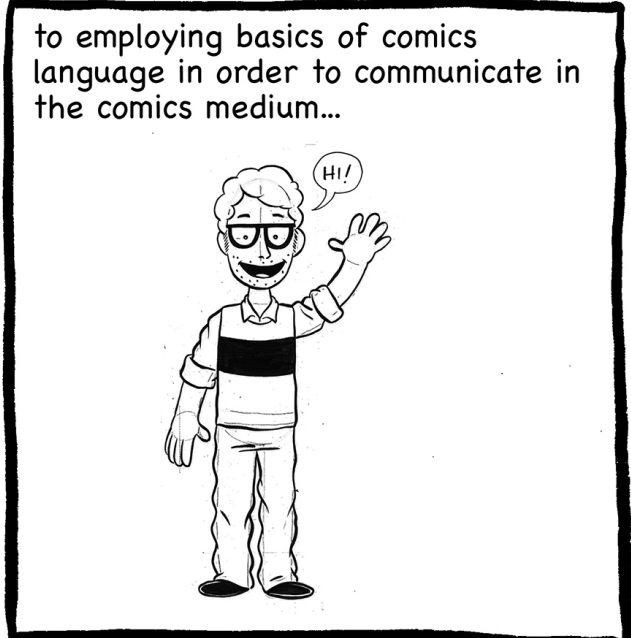
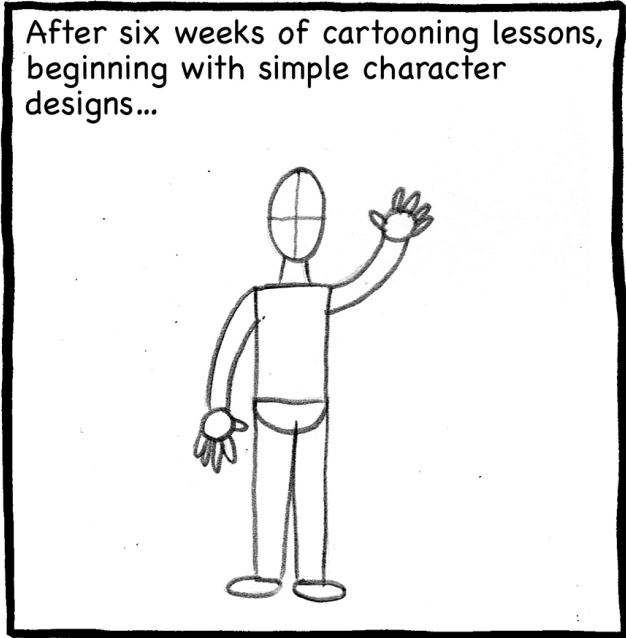


The file was converted to a PDF and emailed to the printer. A few days later, I went into the printer's office to verify the proofs.





The following week, I drove back to the school with a box full of the students' printed comics.



-- the project is complete. I gave everyone their own copy of the printed comic...

