

**Title:** Capt'n Eli Inspires Creative Writing and Original Comic Art

**Grades:** 4-8

**Subject:** Art/Writing

**Overview of Lesson:**

This lesson incorporates both art and writing. After having read *The Undersea Adventures of Capt'n Eli*, students learn about the history of *newspaper adventure strips*. In groups, students collaborate as they examine and discuss social and political issues of today. Ultimately, they choose a cause, imagine how Eli would respond to this cause, develop a storyline with characters, and create an original comic strip. All of the comic strips will then be published in an online classroom newspaper. Elements of art and principles of design will be integrated as students learn specific vocabulary and techniques of comic strip creation.

**Time for completion**

**3-4 days**

**Materials:**

Thin sharpie markers and white sulfite drawing paper

Watercolors (tempera works best because it is more opaque and photographs well)

Digital camera for photographing original artwork to be imported to iPhoto

Comic Life for creating the comic strip and this program interfaces with iPhoto for importing sketches etc. (watch tutorial movie)

Collection of Undersea Adventure of Capt'n Eli graphic novels

**Maine Sate Learning Results/National Standards**

**Creative Expression-** Students will create and/or perform to express ideas and feelings. Students communicate through their works, revise and problem-solve, use a variety of processes, and integrate their works with other disciplines.

- Each art form has specific vocabulary, elements, principles, and structures that allow for communication of ideas, feelings, and moods.
- Problem-solving skills, reflection, self-evaluation, revising, and refinement are part of the process used in the creation and development of art works.
- The development and creation of work in the arts use a variety of approaches, styles, media, and performance modes, including electronic technology.

**Cultural Heritage-** Students will understand the cultural contributions (social, ethical, political, religious dimensions) of the arts, how the arts shape and are shaped by prevailing cultural and social beliefs and values, and recognize exemplary works from a variety of cultures and historical periods.

- Explain how the arts originate from human experience, are a communal experience, and encourage kinship with others.
- Discriminate among the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes for the purposes of selecting appropriate media to communicate artistic ideas.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how achievement in the arts can support achievement in other disciplines.

- Create original works that integrate one or more of the characteristics and purposes of artworks from different cultures (include own community and culture).

**Literacy Skills Across the Content Areas** - The English Language Arts Standards describe the knowledge and skills all students need to be successful. These skills are important for career, college, and citizenship. These skills are also essential as students progress through their Pre-K-Diploma experience for accessing and sharing knowledge across content areas. Schools and teachers must take particular care to support and hold students accountable for the application of the performance indicators related to research, analysis of media, informational/position-taking writing, informational reading, listening, and speaking, where applicable, across all content areas. Maine's business community and higher education institutions have and informally underscored this need for effective communication and cross-content literacy.

**Writing-** Students use a writing process to develop an appropriate genre, exhibiting an explicit organizational structure, perspective, and style to communicate with target audiences for specific purposes.

- Apply aspects of various genres for rhetorical effect, strong diction, and distinctive voice.
- Revise drafts to improve synthesis of information from sources, ensuring that the organizational structure, perspective, and style are effective for the targeted audience and purpose.
- Edit for correct grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- Create legible final drafts

### **Students will learn:**

#### **Objectives/Skills**

Through the use of comic art, students learn to define, recognize and employ the various elements of art and the principals of design

The student will apply the elements of art and the principles of design in two-dimensional works of art, including line, shape, form, color, value, texture, space, and proportion.

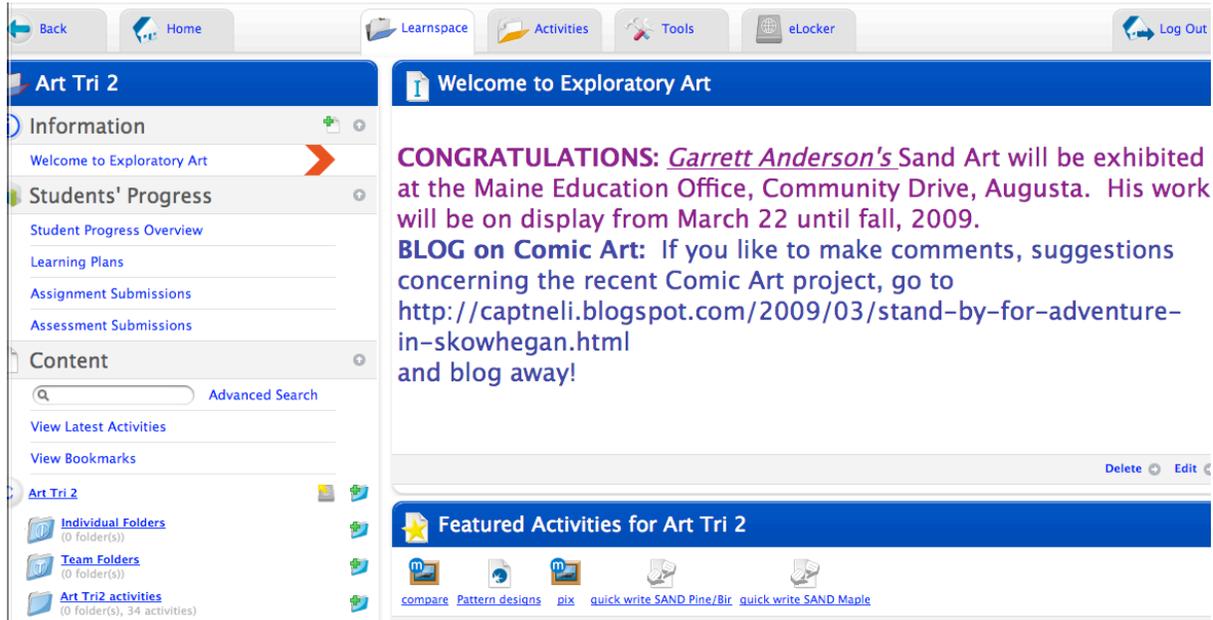
The student will visualize and communicate information and ideas through illustration.

The student will create original works of art using computer design programs.

#### **Technology integration:**

In MLTI classrooms with 1:1 laptops, students will use a variety of programs throughout this series of lessons.

## Studywiz:



This online environment provides a rich forum for student and teacher interaction as they share files, conduct online discussions, and communicate daily. This art classroom screen shot shows the teacher's landing page and the featured activities show the materials the teacher is providing for the students.

## StudyWiz

allows the students an electronic eLocker to store their comics and images and they fully enjoy commenting on one another's comic strip in the Gallery area.

## Studywiz

## Gimp:

Some may choose to sketch characters or scenes with the program, Gimp and save as images for importing into Comic Life. Others may decide to hand sketch the characters and scan into iPhoto. iPhoto images can then be imported to Comic Life.

Storyboarding can occur right in Comic Life or can be done in Pages, a word processing program that is part of the iWorks suite. Storyboarding can also be done with pencil and paper in a traditional setting.

Writing to The Undersea Adventures of Capt'n Eli author, Jay Piscopo, is very important as a real world connection. Students need to be able to collaborate with an author whenever possible. Email is a perfect way to contact Jay – [jaypiscopo@captneli.com](mailto:jaypiscopo@captneli.com). Visiting his website at [www.captneli.com](http://www.captneli.com) will also provide students with videos showing how he thinks and plans his creative designs and text.

### **Procedure: Day one mini lesson-The History of Newspaper Comics in America**

Students have finished reading the graphic novels. In the middle school setting, it works well to have the language arts teacher assign the reading of the book, and the art teacher then has a basis for launching this lesson. In the elementary classroom, this interdisciplinary approach is also beneficial and in a self contained classroom it will be a natural flow from reading the book to integrating it with the other content areas.

As a whole class, recap the highlights of Eli's adventures. You can talk about characters, plot and action. (If needed, refer to the language arts lesson for details). As you talk about the theme of good vs. evil, ask the class how Eli responded to situations where injustice occurred. You can chart their responses on the projector with the laptop connected or on large chart paper in front of the classroom. As a general overview explain that for the coming week they will be learning more about the history of comic design and artistic elements/ techniques used when developing a comic strip. Talk about the difference between a sequential comic strip and a graphic novel and that they will specifically be focusing on the newspaper comic strip genre. On your landing page in StudyWiz or as an e-bulletin, include hyperlinks for this in class activity. If you are not using StudyWiz, you can write the Web Address on the board for them to type in a browser. Decide how you will divide the class into groups of 4 and proceed to share with them the task for today.

As researchers I would like you to find out information on the history of newspaper comic strips. We will be using the [think-pair-share](#) strategy to complete this task where each group will be reading about the history of newspaper comics in America and making a timeline with the important dates and comic information provided. Create 5 Keynote slides with information from the timeline and one on your assigned comic strip. Use both text and graphics in your slideshow.

[If you do not have enough computers for the class to create the slideshow, they can present the material orally to the class]

ARTICLE ([link on art lesson](#))

Allow time for each group to read the article and plot the dates on a timeline. This can be done in the Keynote or drawn out on paper.

#### Day 2

Assign each group an adventure comic strip- each group can use the provided link and search for other sites. In their Keynote presentation, they will include information about the comic, graphics, and date of creation.

Captain Easy

Young, Tarzan

Buck Rogers  
Dick Tracy  
Flash Gordon  
Prince Valiant (links on website)

Give plenty of time for each group to present their information on the time line and the comic assigned to them. After processing all of the group information, students should have a good awareness of the history of American newspaper adventure comic strips.

#### Homework:

Explain that they will be choosing a political or a social issue that they feel strongly about and will imagine how Capt'n Eli would react to that issue. Brainstorm situations where Capt'n Eli overcame adversity while assisting others in need. This will help them review qualities of Eli as an adventure hero.

Assignment- have them list 10 political or social issues and explain why they are important to them. If students have the program *Noteshare*, they should set up a Notebook for this Art/writing project and include the list of issues in one of the *Sections*.

#### Day 3 -4 Introducing vocabulary, discuss social/political issues and create a storyboard

Have students take out their list of issues and ask who would like to share. Chart the issues and have them share any ideas they have for a scenario for their narratives. Remind them that they will be placing Capt'n Eli in a situation where he must respond to the issue. Refer back to the adventures of Eli and have them brainstorm instances where Eli was heroic.

It may take you longer to conduct the mini lessons needed for artistic techniques, but remember that they will be developing a storyline in conjunction with their artistic creation.

The vocabulary listed below, needs to be introduced and shown by example. Also, make sure you tell the students that their final comic strips will all be included in a classroom Comic Newspaper. Knowing that they will be published provides great incentive and gives them a worldwide audience. Combining comic strips and using a newsletter template can easily create the online newspaper. Make sure to publish the newspaper online when finished.

#### Introducing Storyboarding

By examining the graphic novel, *The Undersea Adventures of Capt'n Eli*, students begin to understand narrative by looking closely at the frames created. Storyboarding will help the students formulate and visualize the ideas that they have for their original comic strip. While looking at the graphic novel, have students pay attention to how the sequences are framed out have them note how the pictures tell the story.

Explain to the students that a storyboard is a map with visuals that tells their story. Each frame should continue the storyline. On the storyboard they sketch the basic action but use very few words. The program *Comic Life* can be used right from the beginning for sketching the story or students can sketch with pen and ink. They should keep in mind a few key guides.

### **The Story**

- First they must ask themselves what the overall story will be about and what will happen to the characters. They should also keep in mind the message or the “why” of the story. This will help both organize and focus the story.
- The script can be brief. Because there is such limited text space in each frame, they need to know what each character will think or say.
- You may want to have students read a feature story from a newspaper and actually storyboard it so they can see the sequencing of events.

### **The Characters**

- Tell students that they are the director casting the actors. Character design will reflect the kind of person they are portraying. Give basic instruction on positioning of eyes, facial expressions, angles etc. Explain that a character must look the same throughout the strip even though it may be drawn from different perspectives. (see example)
- Have students sketch a full-length picture of the main character and minor characters.

### **Drawing the Storyboard**

- Have them determine what will take place in each frame and decide what size would fit the action.
- Have them place the characters in the frame and draw out the balloons so they can see how much text will fit the action.
- Teach them about action and how it must face inward from the ends rather than outward (see example)
- Make sure they know that this sketch is very rough and meant to be modified if need be. They will be drawing the final copy separate from this rough sketch.

### **How to use Balloons**

Explain that a balloon is the space used for the dialogue of the story and are important to the overall meaning of the story. There are a few simple things to remember about using balloons.

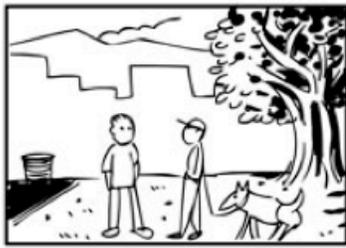
1. Balloons should be read from left to right and from the top to bottom.
2. Balloons should be simple (using Comic life is not an issue)
3. When lettering by hand, leave adequate and even space around your lettering.
4. Balloons provide variety to the layout and can include *thinking balloons*, *whispering balloons* (jagged balloon), and when emphasizing a word make it bold or heavy.
5. Captions are added as text in square frame or separate.
6. When sketching, write the text first and then the balloon so that you will have enough space.

### **Reviewing your Storyboard**

Remember that the storyboard is a kind of timeline and when you are finished with the sketch, ask yourself if the storyboard adequately explains the story.

Peer edit by pairing up with another student as you talk about the story itself:

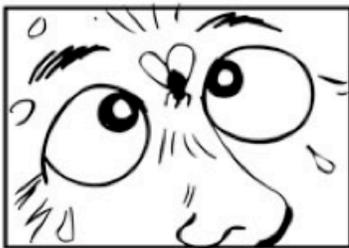
1. Who is the main character and what is his/her intention or need? How does this get resolved? Does the action here capture your interest? Is it lacking in any way? If so, how?
2. Did the story fit the length of frames? Was the conclusion interesting?
3. Ask about the artwork. Are the drawings well integrated with the text? Choose a panel where the words and art fit nicely together and talk about it. If you find one that doesn't mesh well, talk about possible solutions.
4. Discuss the writing and how well it fits the characters. Do they have distinctive voice?



Establishing Shot



Close Up



Extreme Close-Up



Worms Eye View



Birds Eye View



Eyes in center of head: human



Eyes above center: ape-like



Eyes below center: alien



Anatomy of the page

### Comic Vocabulary

Wide shot	Long shot	Medium shot	Close up	Splash panel
Spread	Gutter	Speech balloon	Recto/verso	Caption box
Borderless panel	Bleed	Indicia		

### Definitions:

**Sequential art**- telling a story with graphics in sequence

**Wide shot** - the name for a shot taken from far away. The subjects appear small in this kind of shot. Usually a scene that introduces the reader to the place occurs in the beginning.

**Spread**-Two pages facing one another in a printed book

**Borderless panel-** Panel or frame without dark border

**Long shot-** this is closer than a wide shot but you can see the person top to bottom and see what surrounds them.

**Close up-**Shows just the head of a person. This is important when showing the emotions of characters.

**Gutter-**The space between panels in a comic strip

**Bleed-** When the image runs off the page (full bleed is when the entire image runs off the page on all sides)

**Medium shot-**This shows a person from just below the waist to above the head. You can see their expressions, and what they are doing with their hands.

**Speech balloon-**The space used for dialogue of the story.

**Indicia-**Important legal information/copyright printed in the beginning of a book

**Recto/verso-** The technical terms for pages in a spread. Recto- right page and verso -left page.

**Splash panel-**full panel drawing (can also be a splash page if it is a whole page)

**Caption box-**Square text box around narration

Tutorial on Comic Life

Tutorial on how to use comic life

<http://www.macinstruct.com/node/69> how to use comic life in the classroom

### Rubric

Drawing	Drawing is expressive and detailed. Shapes, patterns, shading and/or texture are used to add interest to the painting. Student has great control and is able to experiment a little.	Drawing is expressive and somewhat detailed. Little use has been made of pattern, shading, or texture. Student has basics, but had not "branched" out.	Drawing has few details. It is primarily representational with very little use of pattern, shading or texture. Student needs to improve control.	The drawing lacks almost all detail OR it is unclear what the drawing is intended to be. Student needs to work on control.
Creativity	Student has taken the technique being studied and applied it in a way that is totally his/her own. The student's personality/voice comes through.	Student has taken the technique being studied and has used source material as a starting place. The student's personality comes through in parts of the painting.	Student has copied some painting from the source material. There is little evidence of creativity, but the student has done the assignment.	Student has not made much attempt to meet the requirements of the assignment.
Design and	Student applies	Student applies	Student tries to	The student does

Composition	design principles (such as unity, contrast, balance, movement, direction, emphasis, and center of interest) with great skill.	design principles (such as unity, contrast, balance, movement, direction, emphasis, and center of interest) with fair skill.	apply design principles (such as unity, contrast, balance, movement, direction, emphasis, and center of interest) but the overall result is not pleasing.	not appear to be able to apply most design principles to his/her own work.
Collaborative worker	Almost always listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Tries to keep people working well together.	Usually listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Does not cause "waves" in the group.	Often listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others, but sometimes is not a good team member.	Rarely listens to, shares with, and supports the efforts of others. Often is not a good team player.
Writing Process	Student devotes a lot of time and effort to the writing process (prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and editing). Works hard to make the story wonderful.	Student devotes sufficient time and effort to the writing process (prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and editing). Works and gets the job done.	Student devotes some time and effort to the writing process but was not very thorough. Does enough to get by.	Student devotes little time and effort to the writing process. Doesn't seem to care.
Illustrations	Original illustrations are detailed, attractive, creative and relate to the text on the page.	Original illustrations are somewhat detailed, attractive, and relate to the text on the page.	Original illustrations relate to the text on the page.	Illustrations are not present OR they are not original.