Words and pictures and learning: **comics** as a method of **reflecting on learning**, facilitating collaboration, and **working with narratives**.

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Presentation structure
Overall points about comics:

- It’s a medium (comparable to writing, drawing, film, photography, television...)
- It’s a medium that can do things other mediums can’t
- It can be unassuming (or intimidating)
- The comics medium, and specific comic books, have attracted different sorts of scholarly attention
Example:

When teachers complain, "You're not working at your full potential!"

Don't take it too hard.

They complain way more when you do.

Boom

Crash

It's headed this way! Somebody stop him!

AAAAAAA AAAAAA

http://xkcd.com/987/
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WHEN TEACHERS COMPLAIN,
"YOU'RE NOT WORKING AT YOUR FULL POTENTIAL!"

DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD.

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THEY COMPLAIN WAY MORE WHEN YOU DO.

BOOM

CRASH

AAAAAAAAAAAAAA

IT'S HEADED THIS WAY! SOMEBODY STOP HIM!!
Example: working with narratives

- making comics about specific science research and information
- setting boundaries of who does what in this collaborative process
- focus on both content and presentation; can now reverse engineer completed comics to untangle this process
- the comics medium offers unique ways to communicate a narrative
- working with existing narratives in research and archive materials, and finding out what comics can add to this
- using hyperlinked hotspots to embed links to digitised archive materials

http://newcastlesciencecomic.blogspot.co.uk/
• Provide the science
• Have some creative input

• Devise the images
• Put the images and words on the page
• Make it look good

• Devise the story
• Put the story into words

SCIENCE + ART & WRITING
EPIC THEMES
also known as
FACTUAL CONTENT

AWESOME WAYS
also known as
METHODS OF PRESENTATION
or
STORYTELLING
LOBSTERS SWIM BACKWARDS FROM PREDATORS!

ARGHYYYYYYYY!

I need to find a hiding place!
I agree. I've been admiring it all day!

It's a shame you can't see it in all its glory...

...it must look so flat to you

Huh? Who said that?

Oh, only me...

...as I was saying, if only you had 3D vision like me...

Artist/writer: Samuel Williams
Science: Vivek Nityananda
1. A Diplomat is Born
2. To Catch a Thief
3. Friends in High Places
4. The Gang's All Here
5. The Viceroy and I
6. Birth of a Nation
7. Rock of Ages

- The Gertrude Bell Archive
- John Miers (cartoonist)
- Dr Mark Jackson & Dr Jane Webster (Archaeology, Newcastle University)
- Gillian Johnston (Special Collections)
- Lydia Wysocki (editing & project management)
- Britt Coxon (web developer)
November 30th 1915
Mr Hogarth, Mr Lawrence and I all dine together. Occasionally we have the Graves in to dinner - he was Times Correspondent in C'ple; I knew him there.

This proved invaluable in matters other than administration too, particularly when she suggested a diplomatic mission to India...

14th May 1916
I do know the way which is and it is that which makes the intelligence files with

Local Knowledge
"I have got hold of the maps and am now bringing them out in an intelligible form, but that is only one among the many odd jobs which I do."

Letters 14/5/1916 - Gertrude Bell Archive, click the marker to read the letter.

http://research.ncl.ac.uk/gertrudecomics/
Example: facilitating collaboration

- making storyboards as a way for strangers to work together on a new short project (‘science-data’ professionals and ‘creative-arts’ professionals)
- storyboarding as a way to communicate a precise vision to a team
- or, storyboards as a working document
- comics as a space to work together
Ridley Scott

http://raydillonrandom.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/art-video-ridley-scotts-art-of.html
Example: reflecting on learning

- making comics as a way to reflect on learning, as part of the larger FaSMEd project
- annotating and editing draft comics to improve the clarity of focus and communication
- working on a pencil draft before the final ink version
- comics as a prompt in interviewing pupils about their experiences of the project

https://research.ncl.ac.uk/fasmed/
ALEX

FASMED

last year (2015)

me (Me)

Steven

hiding from the CCTV camera

classroom

because we were trying to get away from the camera

1 hour later.

I

- Who

- What

- When

- Where

- Why
Presentation structure
Starting point:

- Overall Marxist view of how the world works (and a bit Critical Realist)
  - Critical Theory on mass culture products and mechanisms (Adorno 1991; Marcuse 1964; Benjamin 1973)
  - Cultural Studies on representation (Hall 1997)
- Sociocultural theories of learning
  - learning happens through language (Wells 1999; Barnes & Todd 1995)
  - dialogism; multiple meanings in one ‘text’ (Bakhtin 2001; Holquist 2002)
Focus on:
• what readers read
• whether different people read the same meaning from the same comics
• what representations of ‘Britishness’ are present in GB comics
• why these specific representations exist in GB comics
• what this could mean for inclusion/exclusion in ideas of British national identity, as one of many sources of input (in the context of FBVs and Prevent: broad or narrow conceptions of Britishness, particularly infused with constructions of race and class)

Aim for:
• increased awareness of comics medium as a multimodal (words and pictures) ‘space’ for learning and for using verbal and visual literacies
• a focus on verbal and visual literacies (and multimodal literacy) in their own right, not only in comics
Examples:

newspaper comic strips
political cartoons
episodic web comics
one-off web comics and cartoons
children’s weekly comics
adults’ weekly comics
adults’/young adults’ one-off comics, or longer-running series
long comics printed in book form (‘graphic novel’ is a tricky phrase)
photostories
adverts in comics form
...and more

Comics explicitly arguing a point, or comics as less-intentional carriers of meaning.
One is a Nazi cartoon laughing at Jews denied entry to democratic countries. The other is the Daily Mail today.
'Draw and you'll go to jail': the fight to save comics from the censor

From worried parents to policemen with built-in 'Satan detectors', underground comics have never lacked enemies. And for 30 years Neil Gaiman and his friends have fought back in the name of free speech.

“When it comes to comic books ... you might not want to look at it, but that doesn’t mean it should be prosecuted,” he says. “As Neil Gaiman says, we have to defend the icky speech as well as the mainstream speech.”

“When people say, I don’t see how you can approve of that or defend this, or that something shouldn’t be supported,” Gaiman adds, “I think of Mike Diana, in the cells for making comics. I think of Mike Diana, given the choice between not drawing, which was all he loved, or doing it surreptitiously, afraid of a police raid. I think of Mike Diana, who was only young himself, told he couldn’t do any job working with children. So, yes, you can always defend someone who is essentially just making marks on paper. It’s not like they’re killing people, is it?”
References:


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