

Comic Design: Selecting a Topic

Time Required: One 40-minute class period

Materials: sample comic strips, Student Worksheet 1 *Comic Design: Story and Character Creation*, blank paper, pens/pencils

LESSON STEPS

- 1 Ask students to name some comic strips that they like or read. Distribute samples of current comics. You can cut comics out of a newspaper or look for free comics online through websites such as www.gocomics.com.
- 2 Have students read the comic samples. Then ask students to describe what they think makes for a good comic. Write their responses on the board. Answers may include: funny, well-drawn, smart, or suspenseful. Tell students that comic strips are a type of cartoon that tells a story. As the students have noted in their descriptions, these stories are often humorous and clever. Comic strips can focus on particular topics, like workplace life (*Dilbert*) or politics (*Doonesbury*). They can feature particular characters (*Garfield*) or no main characters at all (*The Far Side*). The comic strip can take many different forms, and come in many different styles of art, writing, and tone.
- 3 Inform students that they will be creating their own comics. Guide students in understanding that the first step they should take is to come up with a topic for their comic.
- 4 Tell students that one of the best ways to decide on a topic is to think about their own experiences. They can think of a current event that interests them, or a situation in their own lives that they want to show, or a particular area of interest that they know a lot about. Tell students that it will be easier to create a comic that is on a topic that they find appealing.
- 5 Give students five minutes to brainstorm some possible topics. You can have students do this individually or in groups, depending on your class. Once the brainstorm is complete, ask for volunteers

to share some of their topic ideas with the class. At the end of the class discussion, ask each student to have a single topic in mind for their comic strip.

- 6 Download Student Worksheet 1 *Comic Design: Story and Character Creation* from www.scholastic.com/prismacolor and distribute to students. Tell students that their comic should tell a story in three panels that is related to their chosen topic. The story should follow a simple “arc”—which has a beginning (the first panel), a middle (the second panel), and a conclusion (the final panel). Encourage students to look at the comic samples and talk with fellow students about their story arcs for inspiration.
- 7 Have students complete Part I of the student worksheet. This will help them to develop their topic and the story that they want to tell. As part of the story, they should think about the scene where their story occurs. Invite students to write a description of the scene on the worksheet, or use their pens or pencils to sketch out the scene that they are imagining. Deciding on the scene will help students in the next step of their comic strip development: creating characters.

Scholar™ by Prismacolor Art Tip:

It is best to use a graphite pencil to begin your sketching. Remember that things far away will appear small and things close up will be larger. Even the strokes of the pencil will be lighter and more delicate if the object is far away versus more bold and distinct close-up. Remember to think about different angles to draw from. Pretend you are taking a photo of the scene. You can crop in for a dramatic effect. Zooming in on someone's eyes can tell a story in itself: scared, sad, surprised, anxious are all emotions that can be portrayed with your drawing.