

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND COMICS

# SUPERHEROES: HEROES & VILLAINS

GRADES  
6-12

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this guide, students will:

- Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop over the course of the story.
- Discover the multiple jobs involved in the creation of a comic.
- Explore how the composition and layout of drawings on a page effect a story.

# 1. ABOUT THIS GRAPHIC NOVEL AND COMICS RESOURCE

---

This teacher's resource is an introduction to the process of making comic books and graphic novels. Comic books and graphic novels fuse multiple art disciplines into a completed work of art. In the creation of a comic book or graphic novel, visual art and creative writing are joined. In this resource, you'll find three different artworks, with introductions to the artists and a glossary of terms related to comic books. This resource can help K–12 teachers create short, modifiable lessons for their students. The language and themes in some artworks may be most appropriate for grades 6–12.

## 2. ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

---

This collection consists of original comic book and graphic novel art created by artists and distributed by publishers. The collection offers the unique opportunity to compare the artist's draft to the final, published comic book or graphic novel. Students can see where artists added dialogue, corrected mistakes, or changed direction. Through this collection students are introduced to art, writing, and storytelling.

## 3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

---

In this guide, students will:

Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop over the course of the story.

Discover the multiple jobs involved in the creation of a comic.

Explore how the composition and layout of drawings on a page effect a story.

## 4. PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

---

Have students write a story with the intent of turning it into a comic book.

Have students create a superhero of their own. Ask them to draw their superhero and write a paragraph or short story about their powers and origin.

Discuss the different jobs and roles that are required for the creation of a comic book. Have students elaborate on what skill each person would need to excel at to be effective.

## 5. VOCABULARY

---

### **Colorist**

The colorist adds color to the black and white pages created by both the penciller and inker.

### **Comic Book**

A paper or digital publication that tells a story through artwork and writing.

### **Graphic Novel**

A broadly used term that describes comic books collected in a single volume or a story or miniseries collected in a volume or multiple volumes. Graphic novels are usually longer, larger, and printed on higher quality paper than comic books.

### **Inker**

The inker adds ink to the lines drawn by the penciller. This adds highlights and deep blacks to the artwork.

### **Page**

The main media on which comics are created. The entirety of a comic is drawn on multiple pages, either a physical piece of paper or a digital canvas.

### **Panel**

The sectioned areas on a page where the action or story is drawn. The story advances through the artwork, events, and action in the panels.

### **Penciller**

The artist that draws the figures, forms, and superheroes on the page. Some pencillers are exacting in the artwork they draw on the page, others rely on the inker to help shape the figures and forms.

### **Writer**

The person creating the story and the narrative of a comic book or graphic novel. Usually, the writer is the first person involved in the creative process of making a comic book or graphic novel.



## 6. OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS BRAD WALKER AND ANDREW HENNESSEY



Brad Walker (American) and Andrew Hennessey (American)  
*Avengers: Ultron Quest*, pg. 2, Marvel Comics, 2012  
Paper, ink, pencil, 21 x 15 in.  
Stanley School Programs Collections, GNC.19

Brad Walker, the **penciller** of this image, is an artist for both Marvel and DC comics. He attended the Savannah College of Art and Design and received a degree in Sequential Art. Andrew Hennessey, the **inker**, is a frequent collaborator with Brad Walker, working on the titles *Sinestro*, *Aquaman*, *The Demon*, *Titans*, and *Detective Comics*.

This **page** from the comic is based upon the *Avengers, Age of Ultron* in which Iron Man creates a global defense program called Ultron. Ultron concludes that to save Earth he must eradicate humanity. This page from the comic shows Captain America, Thor, the Hulk, and Iron Man fighting Ultron. The artists made a deliberate decision about how to lay out the comic book **panels**: the slanted panels add to the frenetic pace of the scenes. Backgrounds and layouts of the page help tell the story as much as the writing and figures. All of these elements are utilized on the page to make a cohesive story and work of art.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

The *Avengers* page is laid out in four panels that are slanted to show the fast pace of the battle. How would you lay out a page to convey different kinds of action: a celebration, a classroom, the cafeteria, a suspenseful moment, something scary, or a peaceful scene?

This page is an unfinished product where the colorist hasn't added color yet. If you were the colorist, what colors would you choose for the page? Discuss your color choices with your classmates and why you chose those colors.

Write dialogue or add onomatopoeic effects to this page. Be creative and have fun.

## 6. OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS MITCHELL BREITWEISER



Mitchell Breitweiser (American)  
*Captain America: The Chosen*, no. 2, pp. 18–19, Marvel Comics, 2007  
 Paper, ink, pencil, 20 ¾ x 25 ½ in.  
 Stanley School Programs Collections, GNC.20A–B

Mitchell Breitweiser is widely recognized for his artwork on Marvel comics. In 2020 he formed a new comic book publishing company, Allegiance Arts and Entertainment, with his wife Elizabeth Breitweiser.

*Captain America: The Chosen* originally had the working title *The End*, which can be seen on the top left page. The story for the six-issue series was written by *New York Times* best-selling author David Morrell, the creator of the fictional character (John) Rambo, a Vietnam veteran. The **writer** is just as important as the visual artists, and often collaborates with the **artist**, **inker**, and **colorist** to complete these works.

*Captain America: The Chosen* is a contemporary story in which Captain America's super soldier serum has gradually deteriorated in his system. No longer powerful and slowly dying, Captain America volunteers for experiments that let him project his image onto the battlefield. He helps Marine Corporal James Newman in Afghanistan. Newman is never sure if Captain America is real, or if he is just imagining him because of combat stress and exhaustion. In the Marvel Universe this is a non-canon story, meaning it does not fit into the continuing Marvel Universe and is not officially recognized in the storyline.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

Look at Captain America's gear. The artist chooses to place Captain America in gear that Corporal Newman would have seen as a child. How do these two pages change if we place them in the Vietnam era, or World War II?

In this story Captain America is dying. Write or draw a short story that is a tribute to Captain America. Lay it out on a comic book page or write a news story or newspaper article that pays tribute. Be creative and experiment with different formats.

Captain America is known for his strength and speed, but also for his character traits. He is honest, brave, and fights until the very end. The writer makes use of these traits to propel the story in *The Chosen*. What character traits are found in most superheroes? What character traits are commonly found in villains? Do any traits overlap between hero and villain? Discuss with your classmates.



## 6. OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS DON KRAMER AND WAYNE FAUCHER



Don Kramer (Korean-American) and Wayne Faucher (American)  
*Batman*, no. 653, pg. 4, DC Comics, 2006  
Paper, ink, pencil, 21 x 15 in.  
Gift in honor of Laurie Zaiger from Craig and Catherine Quehl-Engel  
Stanley School Programs Collections, GNC.21

Don Kramer became interested in comic art while reading comics as a child. He began his career by traveling to the Chicago Comicon and submitting his work to publishers. He worked on some independent drawing jobs until he was hired by Marvel Comics for *The Thing*. He eventually began working full-time with DC comics on a *Dr. Fate* mini-series. Wayne Faucher is an **inker** at DC comics. He was raised in Rhode Island and attended Rhode Island School of Design. He is also known for his work with Marvel on the *Spiderman* series.

This **page** is part of an eight-issue story arc that crossed over into two *Batman* titles, *Batman* and *Detective Comics*. Harvey Dent was the district attorney of Gotham City. After Dent's face is hideously scarred, he becomes a dangerous criminal, until he is redeemed at the beginning of this story. He receives plastic surgery, mental health help, and becomes an ally of Batman. Batman trusts Dent and leaves Gotham in his care for a year. This **page** shows Batman thanking Dent for protecting Gotham in his absence. Although Dent performed his duties as protector well, his criminal alter-ego is still present: in the last **panel**, Dent sees the face of the broken, scarred criminal in the mirror.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

In the last panel we see Harvey Dent looking into a mirror. The writer and artist have worked together to show a man that is breaking down mentally. How is it depicted on the page? What other techniques could the writer or the artist have used to the same effect? Discuss your ideas with your classmates.

Think of Batman's other iconic villains: the Joker, the Penguin, and the Riddler. Replace Two-Face in the story with one of the other villains. How does the story change? What doesn't change in the story? Discuss your ideas with your classmates.

Imagine if this scene involved a confrontation instead of Batman thanking Dent. Draw or discuss this page. What panels would change? What would the dialogue look like?

## 7. POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

---

Artists use rulers and straight edges to create the panels on a page. Have students create a comic book page using a ruler. Remember to leave margins on the outside and space between the panels. After students have written a story and made a page during the pre-visit activities, have them complete their story by drawing it out in comic book form.

Return to the superhero that students created during the pre-visit activities. Ask them to create a villain to challenge the superhero. Students could also create a sidekick to help the superhero in his adventures.

The creation of comics is often a collaborative process. Have your students create a comic about life in the classroom. Students can try the different roles of comic book creators, from writer, artist, inker, colorist, and letterer, as part of a group project.

## 8. STATE STANDARDS

---

Teachers can adapt the lesson to apply to a number of state standards. We included a few standards that the lesson meets below.

### VISUAL ARTS - CREATING

---

#### **Anchor Standard 1**

Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

#### **Enduring Understanding**

Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.

#### **Essential Question(s)**

What conditions, attitudes, and behaviors support creativity and innovative thinking? What factors prevent or encourage people to take creative risks? How does collaboration expand the creative process?

### IOWA CORE: STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

---

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events. (RL.1.7)

#### **Craft and Structure**

Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot. (RL.6.5)

## 9. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

---

### ***Drawing Words and Writing Pictures***

A textbook by Jessica Abel and Matt Madden.

A comprehensive guide on everything needed to create comic books and graphic novels. This includes creative needs such as story, worlds, and artwork as well as physical objects to complete a comic book project.

### **Comics in the Curriculum:**

<https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/comics>

An online comics gallery by Columbia University Libraries titled Comics in the Curriculum. Compares and contrasts historical works of art with comic books. Warning: mature content and themes in this gallery.

### **Comics Forum:**

<https://comicsforum.org/>

Comics Forum places the educational value of comics as its starting point. The goal is to increase the visibility and accessibility of comics scholarship through an academic conference that brings together scholars, artists, and fans in a spirit of mutual cooperation and development. Updated frequently with postings and articles on comic books.