

Strategy Scheme: Ten Ways to Work with Graphic Texts Dramatically

1. READERS THEATRE

Readers theatre is a dramatic reading for which students are assigned to read both the narration and dialogue of a story. Since the focus of readers theatre is the words, the use of gestures and props is kept to a minimum. Once students have identified their parts (one or more can be assigned to read narration), they need to practice different ways that a character might say the words. Students can rehearse and present a favorite graphic story as readers theatre. Note: longer graphic stories can be divided amongst different groups.

2. ACT IT OUT

Graphic stories are ideal for dramatization, since students can become the characters on the page, and say the words written in the speech bubbles. Challenge the students to represent the different scenes in a graphic story as closely as possible to the words and images featured in each panel. Groups can present the story in sequential order, frame by frame. A signal, such as a clap or a drumbeat, can be used to make changes from scene to scene.

3. IN-BETWEEN TIME

A graphic artist makes choices about which scenes will be included to tell the story. Often there is a gap in time between one frame and the next. As readers, we can infer what is happening in the story.

Invite students to examine a graphic text closely and discuss scenes that they think might be happening between two different panels. Students can work in small groups to improvise scenes that might have been included in the graphic story.

4. INTERVIEWING CHARACTERS

Students imagine that they have a chance to interview a character from a graphic story. They work in pairs or small groups to conduct an interview to find out about the characters' experiences. To prepare for this activity, have students brainstorm reasons why this character might be in an interview situation; i.e., what role will the interviewer take? The activity can be repeated with students switching roles and/or interviewing other characters.

5. TABLEAU PLAYS

Students physically recreate visual images from a graphic story to make tableaux. Encourage students to pay close attention to the position, gesture, and facial expression of each of the characters in the scene. Consideration should also be given to the blocking of one or more characters. Groups can create short tableau plays of a graphic story using four or five still images. Tableaux can be arranged sequentially to show the beginning, middle, and end of the story. A narrative caption can be read aloud to designate each tableau scene.

6. FACE TO FACE

A graphic artist is able to convey a lot of information in the facial expression of the characters in a story. Invite the students to examine the expressions on the characters' faces and discuss: What is each character feeling? How are the eyes different in each scene? How is the mouth different in each scene?

Working in pairs, students re-create these facial expressions to convey the feelings of the character. Each student can "direct" his or her partner to re-create the character as he/or she appears in a number of scenes.

7. INNER VOICES

The speech bubbles that appear in graphic texts provide readers with a character's dialogue. We might not, however, get to know what a character is thinking.

Students add a *thought* to each of the character's dialogue speech bubbles, thus showing the inner voice of the character. Students can re-create the dialogue from one or more graphic novel scenes. As each person says his or her line, someone can suggest what the thoughts (i.e. inner voice) of the character might be

8. IMPROVISATION

Once students are familiar with the plot of a graphic story, groups can improvise scenes that would tell the story, or part of the story. Encourage students to use their own dialogue and improvise the action that would be used to tell the story.

9. DANCE DRAMA

Although a graphic story is told with verbal text and visual images, challenge the students to tell part of a graphic story nonverbally. To begin, students create tableau images that would be used to retell the story. Students then transition from scene to scene by moving in slow motion. By adding musical accompaniment to the movement pieces, students can create a dance drama based on a graphic text.

10. STORYTELLING

Students sit in a group to retell a graphic story. Students can each offer one or two sentences to tell the story sequentially. Encourage students to include as many details as possible to describe what happens and what is said in the story. Once the telling is completed, students can revisit the story to determine details that have been omitted or changed. The activity can be repeated by having the students tell the story in role from the point of view of one of the characters.