

MINING LESSON PLAN:

Creating Graphic Histories

by Reilly Jensen

Students will compare and contrast primary references (in support of UT Standard 2.2 and 2.3; U.S. 1 Strand 6.2; 6.3--such as personal journal accounts of Immigrants and Settlers in Utah Territory; popular songs about their journeys; historic and contemporary photo records, etc.) to assemble a narrative from a chosen perspective (i.e. from the perspective of an individual). After studying examples of comics that relate historical events (such as the Buffalo Soldiers Comic from Sema Hadithi), and studying visual narrative and comic-book fundamentals, students will create an original narrative (using historic resources to inform the narrative) and draw their own comics that relay the perspective and story of a person or a group of people in history (UT CREATE Standard 7-8.E.CR.2; 3; 4; 5; 6).

Objectives:

- Students will gain experience with 1) critical analysis of resources (Secondary Library Media 6-12 Strand 2.1; 2.2; 5.1; 5.2; 6.1; 8.1), 2) identify gaps in existing research, and 3) think critically about which documents or accounts provide more reliable information. This lesson plan also empowers students to ask critical questions of the historic resources—whose perspective does one resource illustrate? Whose perspective is missing? Why?
- Additionally, by creating sequential visual narratives that reflect a perspective about the past, students will also be creating their own primary documents which may be valuable to future researchers wanting to understand what was important to students/children during the 2020's. Students then also learn the value of creating art/graphic histories that inform future knowledge. What is/was important to students learning their own history? How did they think about the past vs how they saw themselves?

Grade level:

K-12, Grade 7

Duration:

Variable—Ideally 2 weeks, but can be adapted to meet individual classroom needs.

Materials:

- Pencils
- Ink pens
- Masking tape
- Sketchpaper
- Six-Frame Comic Storyboard Blank pages (see resources)
- Buffalo Soldier PDF examples
- Examples of original source references from the attached UMFA and Marriott Special Collections Resource List
- Optional: computer and projector.

Vocabulary/Key Terms:

- Narrative – a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious.
- Sequence – the following of one thing after another; succession.
- Comic Strip – a sequence of drawings, either in color or black and white, relating a comic incident, an adventure or mystery story, etc., often serialized, typically having dialogue printed in balloons, and usually printed as a horizontal strip in daily newspapers and in an uninterrupted block or longer sequence of such strips in Sunday newspapers and in comic books.
- Graphic Novel – a novel in the form of comic strips.
- Buffalo Soldiers – (formerly, especially among American Indians) a Black soldier.
- Protagonist – the leading character, hero, or heroine of a drama or other literary work.
- Antagonist – a person who is opposed to, struggles against, or competes with another; opponent; adversary.

Activity

Activity 1: Introducing historic references (2 hours):

Use the artwork / archival materials as inspiration for your lesson.

Introduce the concept of Primary Documents in history and as a class, go over the primary source materials included in this lesson package:

- Historic documents tell us many things about the past. Not only do they show a perspective on the creator who made the document (whether it's a personal history, journal entry, photograph, song, map or drawing, etc.), they also help us infer the values and preferences of the creator(s). With enough images or references, we can begin piecing together the past. We can use our detective skills to understand not only how the past looked, but imagine what it could have been like for people experiencing it as part of their lives.
- Ask students in the class to make observations out loud as you look at these documents together, stick to (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How):

Who/What/Where/When/Why/How do they see?

Why do they think someone made this document?

Who do they think the document was made for?

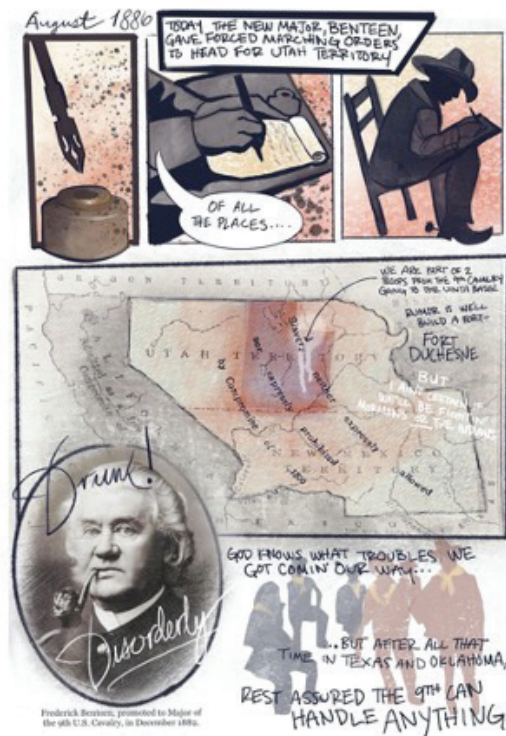
What can they infer about this document? What resources were available to the creator?

What do they wonder about this document? Is there a way to find more information? What would that be?

- HOMEWORK: Make the example resources (i.e. work of art, historical document, newspaper story, etc.) available to students independently as homework. Ask them to identify 3 resources that are interesting to them, that they will use to tell a story about the past (to be used in the next activity)

Activity 2: Writing the story (2 hours):

Introducing Storytelling and Narratives. Distribute the sample comic strips to small groups or project them for the whole class to see.



- Look together at examples of comics that tell a historic story (Buffalo Soldier Examples are provided, but you can use any comics you like, such as Joe Sacco's Paying the Land). Read the story or a sample of the story together as a class. Together, analyze how the artist/comic creator combined text, quotes, and images to tell a story, event, or to convey a message. Have students identify the characters, setting, and plot, to identify elements of a story.

Who is telling the story?

What is the story about?

Who is the intended audience for this story?

How do the visuals (i.e. the art and the way it is organized) further the story?

- Point out any captions that appear and explain that these are often used to provide a brief narration or give additional information. Have students identify speech and thought bubbles in the examples, and explain how these devices are used: a speech bubble contains the character's spoken words while a thought bubble expresses the character's unspoken thoughts. Summarize by telling students that, due to limited space, comic strips focus on the main idea and the most important elements of the topic, event, or message to be communicated.
- Discuss how story and narrative is fundamental to understanding primary documents. What is the difference between data and interpretation? What is the value of a graphic history? How does it help you understand different aspects of history or the past?

HOMEWORK: Using their selected 3 resources, challenge your students to write a 300 word story about the primary references from Activity 1. Use a prompt like: "Imagine you are the creator of these 3 documents, and write a story about your experience in Utah Territory from the perspective of 1) either the creator of the documents, 2) the subjects in the documents, 3) people missing from the document. Your story must convey what daily life was like for your narrator/ protagonist, and what their values or goals might have been."

Activity 3: Storyboarding (4 hours):

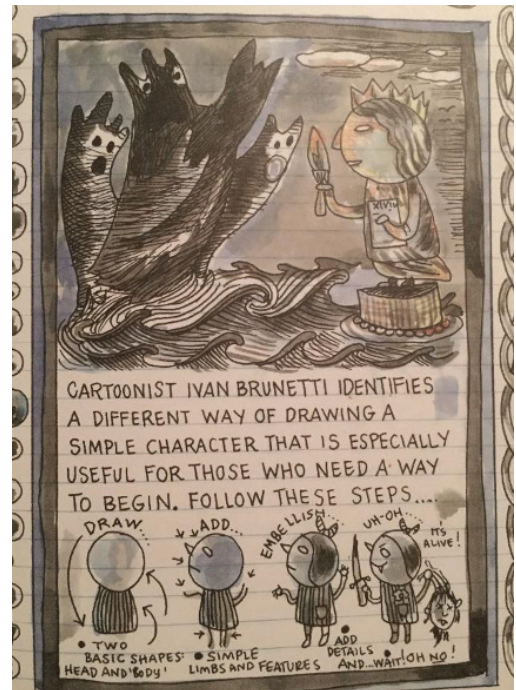
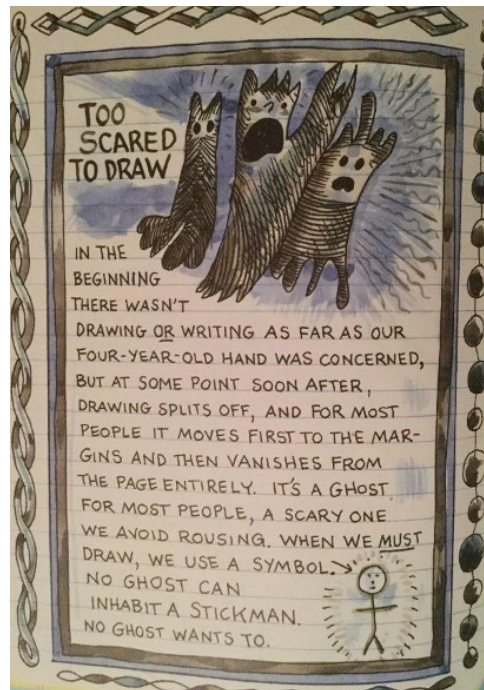
Using the 300 word narrative from Activity 2, your students will now visualize and draw that story using the storyboard blank page (found in resources), pencils. Explain to students that they will create one six-frame comic strip about Utah History. They can set up each frame and add captions, dialogue, and character thoughts to construct comic strips that recap the whole story, retell a part of the story, show a new version, depict a problem and its solution, share information, or express an opinion.



- Before students begin the activity, review with them the Buffalo Soldiers comic sample, and remind them that all the frames of the comic together create a sequence, which helps us read the comic as a story. Discuss the characters, setting, and sequence of events in each frame.
- In order to guide their own storyboarding, ask students to identify the main idea of their story, and begin to visualize that story with stick figures/ rough sketches or writing in the frames of the blank storyboard page. Remind students that each frame helps build that story, and that they will have time later to refine/draw the comic. The goal of this activity is to lay out a story, not just to draw it (yet! That's Activity 4).
- At the end of this activity, have students share their storyboard with each other, or go around the room as a class and ask the class to provide feedback about their preliminary storyboards. They can ask questions, share frustrations, or provide helpful suggestions about what is necessary for the storyboard to make sense to a reader. Keep the feedback constructive, remember, the goal is not to make high art but to convey a message, concept, or story.

Activity 4: Storyboarding (4 hours):

Using the 300 word narrative from Activity 2, your students will now visualize and draw that story using the storyboard blank page (found in resources), pencils. Explain to students that they will create one six-frame comic strip about Utah History. They can set up each frame and add captions, dialogue, and character thoughts to construct comic strips that recap the whole story, retell a part of the story, show a new version, depict a problem and its solution, share information, or express an opinion.



Activity 5: Inking/Finished Product (2 hours):

Once Students have finished their sketches, ask them to ink their drawings with a pen on a new piece of paper. Overlay a new sheet of paper onto the sketch drawing and lock it in place with masking tape, before drawing the inked lines. This is the final step of the comic process—students can take care with their linework and clean up the previous sketch in this new iteration.

Methods for Assessment:

If possible include a photograph of example work. Educator should look for student engagement with the materials in the finished works:

- Did the students engage with the original source materials to inform their assignment? Can you see or infer direct influence?
- Can you read the comic book and is it clear that the student utilized storytelling techniques to progress a narrative?
- Did the student complete a storyboard and a written narrative?

Additional Resources

State Core Links:

- **UT Strand 2: UTAH’S DIVERSE PEOPLES (Ca. 1847–1896):** The arrival of European immigrants in Utah launched a period of immigration, dramatic cultural change, and conflict among Utah’s many diverse peoples. This period begins with the Mormon migration, expansion of settlement in the Great Basin and Colorado Plateau, and accompanying political conflict, wars, and violence. After 1860 the development of mining and other industries created a complex economy and drew new immigrants to the state, increasing Utah’s religious and cultural diversity. Railroads became an important engine of social, cultural, political, and economic change. Utah’s transition from territory to state was long and difficult. By 1896 Utah had become deeply and increasingly interconnected with the nation and the world.

Possible Guiding Questions to Consider:

What factors led various peoples to settle in Utah?

What geographic factors positioned Utah to become “the crossroads of the West”?

What was the role of Brigham Young and other pioneer leaders in the settlement of Utah?

How do culture and the interaction of cultures shape a sense of place?

How did white settlement effect Native American Indian communities?

Why did Utah struggle to attain statehood?

How did Mormons interrelate with other immigrant groups in Utah?

How did improved transportation, industry, and mining transform Utah’s economy, politics, and other aspects of culture?

What were the causes of the various conflicts that occurred during the territorial period? How were these conflicts resolved? What were the lasting consequences of these conflicts?

- UT Standard 2.2: Students will compare the causes and lasting effects of various non-Mormon groups’ migrations to Utah. (history)
- UT Standard 2.3: Students will use geographic inquiry to explain patterns in the settlement of Utah and the subsequent trends in urbanization, referring to a range of communities as case studies. (geography)
- Strand: CREATE (7–8.E.CR.): Students will conceptualize, generate, develop, and organize artistic ideas and work. They will complete and refine media art works (Standards 7–8.E.CR.1–8).
- Standard 7–8.E.CR.2: Generate ideas, goals, and solutions for original media artworks through application of focused creative processes.
- Standard 7–8.E.CR.3: Design, propose, and evaluate artistic ideas, plans, prototypes, and production processes for media arts productions, considering expressive intent and resources.
- Standard 7–8.E.CR.4: Structure and critique ideas, plans, prototypes, and production processes for media arts productions, considering intent, resources, and the presentation context.
- Standard 7–8.E.CR.5: Implement production processes to integrate content and components for determined purpose and meaning in media arts productions, demonstrating understanding of associated principles, such as narrative structures and composition.
- Standard 7–8.E.CR.6: Improve and refine media artworks by intentionally emphasizing particular expressive U.S. I Strand 6: EXPANSION

(Ca. 1783–1890)

The territorial expansion of the United States created challenges and opportunities for the young nation. Significant advances in industrial technology, discoveries of vast natural resources, a series of gold rushes, visions of the destiny of the nation, continuing conflicts between American Indians and settlers, disagreements between slave states and free states, and a number of push and pull factors influenced territorial expansion. The physical, political, and human geography of the United States today reflects, in part, the 19th century expansion of the nation.

Possible Guiding Questions to Consider:

What motivated settlers to move west?

How do 19th century events such as the Louisiana Purchase and the Mexican-American War continue to affect the United States today?

What is the relationship between land and power?

How did the continent's physical geography affect the expansion of the United States?

What were the costs and benefits of the Industrial Revolution?

How did industrial leaders use markets and capital to grow their businesses?

- U.S. I Standard 6.1: Students will compare and contrast historians' interpretations of the ideas, resources, and events that motivated the territorial expansion of the United States.
- U.S. I Standard 6.2: Students will use primary sources representing multiple perspectives to interpret conflicts that arose during American expansion, especially as American Indians were forced from their traditional lands and as tensions grew over free and slave holding territory.
- U.S. I Standard 6.3: Students will identify the economic and geographic impact of the early Industrial Revolution's new inventions and transportation methods, such as the Erie Canal, the transcontinental railroad, steam engines, the telegraph, the cotton gin, and interchangeable parts.
- U.S. I Standard 6.4: Students will make a case for the most significant cultural, political, and economic impacts of territorial and/or industrial expansion.

Work and Labor Songs associated with Utah History for use in Activity #1:

- [Echo Canyon](#)
- [The Handcart Song](#)
- [On the Road to California](#)
- [Big Rock Candy Mountain](#)
- [Starving to Death on a Government Claim](#)
- [St. George](#)
- [16Tons](#)

Six-frame blank storyboard:

Contributer Bio:

Reilly Jensen is a multimedia artist, illustrator, and archaeologist who grew up in the sagebrush and slickrock of southern Utah. Growing up at rural communities' fringe has challenged the reconciliation of her Identity and Place through memory and material culture. She adapts and assesses narratives surrounding cultural resources, land management, and memory and heritage into visual digital and multimedia art experiences adapted for public knowledge. This lesson plan is an extension of a special project that identifies gaps in the historic record in an attempt to better understand the intersectional history of Utah:

"This project began with an in-depth look at the intersectional history of Uintah and Carbon Counties focusing on contributions of Buffalo Soldiers from the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments in the 19th century. I noticed discrepancies in the written histories, memoirs, and photographic content available in the Special Collections from the Marriot Library. Photographs of the Buffalo Soldiers themselves are lacking: portraits, candid, or official photographs are scarce, while the histories highlight contributions of soldiers to infrastructure, establishment and protection of communities and late federal forts. One of the only photos that is witness to this history is a celebratory parade held for 9th and 10th cavalry departing Price, Utah for the Spanish-American war. Without more primary documents to draw inspiration from, this led me to look for evidence on the landscape, specifically in Nine Mile Canyon, which acted as a historic superhighway for goods and trades from the Uintah Basin to the Salt Lake Valley."

Reilly serves as Director of the Charlie Bethel Legacy Project, an Associate Director of the Bat Archaeological Project, as the Section 106 And Stewardship Coordinator for the Nine Mile Canyon Coalition, and researcher for Sema Hadithi African American Heritage and Culture Foundation. She has an M.A. in Middle East Studies, History and Archaeology. She is working towards an MFA in Community-Based Arts Education (anticipated graduation 2022) at the University of Utah.

Heading image | Photograph of the Buckeye Mine at Silver Reef, Utah, ca. 1885. detail, Mark A. Pendleton Photograph Collection, P0008, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.