USING COMICS IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL AFTER-SCHOOL ART PROGRAM TO PROMOTE STORYTELLING

by

OLIVIA CARTER

(Under the direction of Dr. Lynn Sanders-Bustle)

ABSTRACT

Exploring how the visual and written formats of comics can promote adolescents' interest in literacy, I pose the question: How do students use literacy and artmaking processes to create comics? This research was conducted through teaching a comic arts program for local middle school students, which took place over the course of five weeks from April to May 2024, as part of the after-school programming at a local middle-school. I conducted a total of six two-hour workshops; four were once a week and there were two workshops during the fifth week. The data collected for this research included both visual and written artifacts the students created over the course of the program: character trait worksheet, story parts graphic organizer, story brainstorming worksheet, drawings from different stages of their comics, and their final comic art piece. Two key findings emerged: 1) Offering students multiple modalities (writing, audio recording, oral storytelling, visual format) allowed them to engage with their stories in a way that led to a variety of end products; and 2) each comic correlated with a student’s interest from the start which was developed differently through a range of modalities.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Pages

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Personal Background

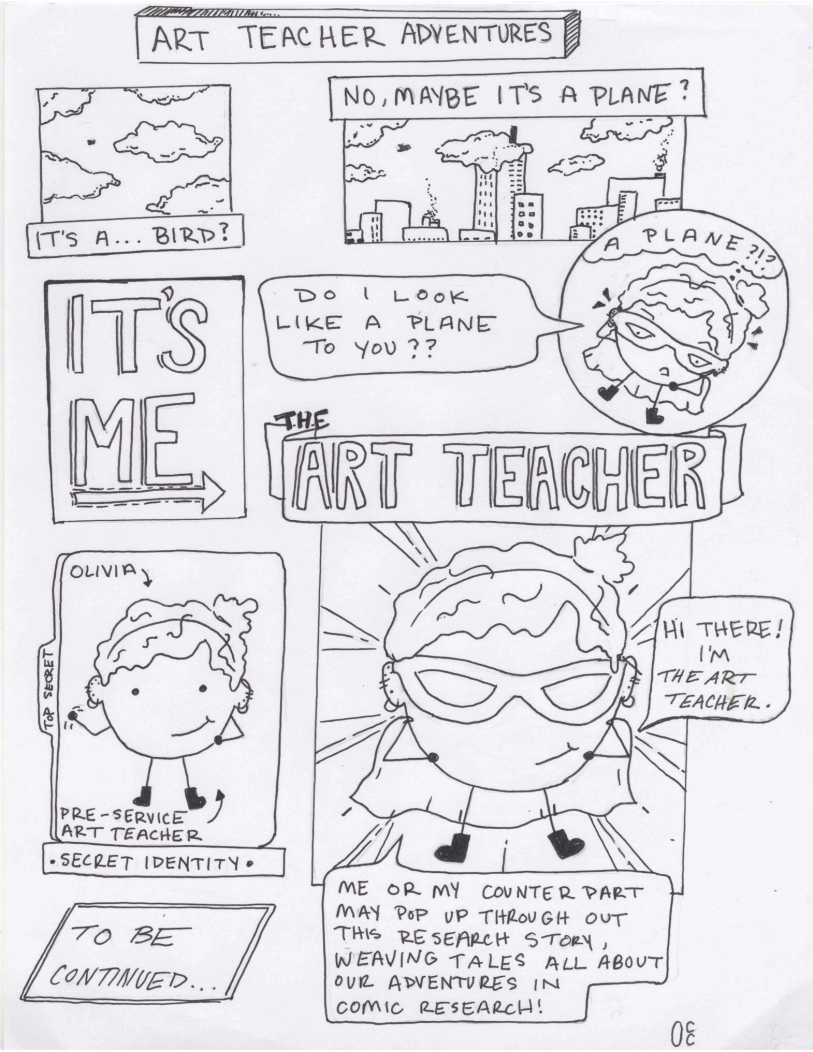
I can still recall the first time I read a comic in a school setting, as in, specifically reading a comic for a class assignment. It was one of the options on the reading assignment list for an eighth-grade history class in middle school titled *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman. Maus tells the story and experiences of Spiegelman's father, a Holocaust survivor, during World War II. This book was a popular book on the reading list because it was mostly pictures, so the consensus was that it was an 'easy read' because it had fewer words. I think that opinion might still be a popular one among middle school students today when they pick up a graphic novel or comic book, seeing the lack of words as an easy out for reading a book. But the pictorial format for telling a story actually adds a whole extra layer to the subject matter by incorporating visual storytelling with written storytelling to produce a more fleshed-out world for the reader, creating an enhanced learning experience on the subject matter and beyond. I speculate the same can be said about the experience of creating comic stories as well, which is what I am exploring through my research.

While *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* was my first encounter with comics in an academic setting, it was not my first time reading comics. Growing up, my dad had a large collection of comic books that my younger brother and I were always welcome to read. My interest in superhero comics seriously started to take shape when I was in college with the release and popularity of *The Avengers* and *The Amazing Spider-Man* in 2012. My interest in these films easily transformed into an interest in reading Marvel Comics, and especially *Spider-Man* comics. Spider-Man continues to be my favorite superhero because I enjoy reading about a quippy main

character and personally relate to the core of Spider-Man's superhero persona, which is his desire to take care of his community and look out for those who are forgotten in society. This has greatly influenced my interest in playing an active role in my community as an art educator in the making, which, in turn, was the jumping off point in forming my own original superhero character as part of this research. The creation of my superhero alter-ego The Art Teacher, also affectionately named "my little comic blorbo", has played a key role in forming the narrative of my research, as you'll see throughout this paper (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Art Teacher Adventures, "Adventures in Comic Research"



Statement of the Problem

The problem my research addresses is how to get adolescents more interested in literacy, and how the visual and written formats of comics can promote this by helping students simultaneously utilize their writing and artmaking skills to create stories. Throughout the teaching and research process, I focused on learning what stories emerge through the students' creation of comics and what sort of literacy and artmaking tools, skills, and materials they implemented to create their comic stories. I looked at how creating comic books in a middle school after-school art program can promote storytelling, interest, and engagement with writing while facilitating multimodal meaning-making through art making. As part of my exploration of this problem, I asked how do students use literacy and artmaking processes to create comics?

Background and Significance of the Problem

This research is important because recent studies show that middle school students are struggling with their reading comprehension and showing a decline in interest in literacy outside the classroom (Coggins, 2023). A 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report showed that 70% of secondary students required reading remediation in order to read at their grade level, with only 31% of eighth graders in the study reaching the reading proficiency range for their grade (Coggins, 2023). A 2020 report from the NAEP on long-term trends in reading for thirteen-year-olds showed a decrease in interest in reading for fun daily from 2012 to 2020 to only 17% and an increase in thirteen-year-olds who never read for fun to 29% (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2021).

I speculate that the inclusion of a variety of media, such as comics, in the middle school reading selection could get learners interested in literacy and possibly help to make them stronger readers and writers as well. I would theorize that the standards in school literacy

curriculum may also play a part in students' interest in literacy learning. For example, traditional literacy practices may not allow students to express themselves fully in their writing or reading choices. However, the multimodal processes included in comic creation may help facilitate more engaged writing and literacy practices among students in and out of the classroom.

Interestingly, these speculations and my corresponding research are happening at a time when there is a push to teach reading comprehension in all subjects for grades P-12 in the state of Georgia. In July 2023, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) enacted the Foundations of Reading, Literacy, and Language Preparation Rule (Rule 505-3-.03), a three-part program for P-12 preservice educators of all subjects, including Art Education, to learn about the Science of Reading and implement reading comprehension lessons in their teaching curriculums (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2023). The Science of Reading is based on the connection between information processing and academic outcomes and involves learning to teach the various components of reading in a systematic way (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2023). This program began phase one in October 2023, where Educator Preparation Providers (EPP) assessed the readiness of educational programs to implement Rule 505-3-.03 to see what changes may need to be made for successful application.

Project Overview

For my inquiry, I collected data while conducting a comic arts pilot program with middle school students in a local school district as part of an after-school program. In this program, I facilitated six two-hour artmaking workshops that revolved around storytelling through comics, both in print and online. The technical art skills students learned throughout the workshops included the technical elements used in comic book creation, such as comic panel and text bubble layout, creating original characters, engaging in world-building, and how to utilize all

these parts to construct a short comic story of their own. Students also explored a variety of drawing and illustration materials, incorporating the technical comic skills they learned with their characters and the environment they created.

In this research I define world-building as the literal making of a visual space on the page by identifying a location in a comic using artmaking processes, such as drawing. For example, I drew a city skyline in the top panels of my comic in Figure 1 to depict that my character is flying through the sky above a city scape. A secondary definition of world-building used in this research refers to the imaginative creation process used in literary settings, and plays a role in the written portion of this comic creation process. Literary world-building is successful when the author creates a fully developed, consistent foundation that the story can be built upon that resonates with the reader and maintains their interest throughout the story (Presley, 2021).

This research focuses on comic books rather than graphic novels because they tend to be shorter and sometimes include more visual components to tell a story on the page. Incorporating multimodal learning into the comic art curriculum enhances the visual nature of storytelling that comics provide, fits well within a visual arts curriculum and can be used to teach both visual and written forms of story creation as well as multiple aspects of art, including scene composition and medium techniques like drawing and illustration as well as digital art. The use of comics to help teach storytelling also fits well with the National Visual Art Standards (NVAS), which include essential questions on how to “read” visual images as well as specific standards for teaching students how to create stories to communicate visual narratives (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014). The multitude of objectives that can be taught using comics adds to the significance of this work for the field of art education.

Research Terms

In my applied project, the term comics refers to both the art format for the artmaking experiences I facilitated and is an umbrella term for the genre of visual literature that is a part of this research. For the purposes of my research and my pedagogy, I define comics in the following ways:

Comic Book: A printed visual story that may be told in a single comic book or over a series of comics. In this instance, comic books are also referred to as comic issues. A series of comics is called a comic run.

Graphic Novel: A printed visual story that uses the same story components as a written book, such as the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion.

Webcomic: A digital form of a comic that typically follows the same storytelling format as a comic book. Webcomics tend to be referred to as episodes when they are a part of a series. Just like in comic books, the story is not always told over a series of episodes and can be told in a single webcomic. Webcomics can be found on the Internet, through websites like Tumblr, as well as on mobile phone applications such as Webtoons and Tapas.

A comic book utilizes several design components that are universal throughout all comic layouts, which I define as follows:

A **comic panel** is the individual box on the comic page, so there are multiple panels on each page. A **comic page** is the entire page of the comic, and is made up of multiple comic panels. If text is in a **text bubble**, or a similar organic shape, its spoken aloud. If text is in a rectangle or other geometric shape, it signals that the text is the inner thoughts

or monologue of the character. I also want to note that when referring to a comic in writing it is usually done so like this: *Comic name* (year the run started) #issue.

Theoretical Framework: Social Semiotics and Multimodality

Social semiotics is a theory that branches out from the theory of Semiotics. In its simplest terms, social semiotics is the way that we, as human beings, receive, see, interact with, and interpret the things around us. A specific aspect of this theory that relates to my research on the reading, writing, and creation of comic book narratives is how we, as readers, visually take in and read the images on the page and how our brain translates those visuals into a story in our heads, using our own lived experiences to influence our interpretation of the text and images. Social semiotics can be used to help explain how we read the still images in a comic book and interpret them into a fleshed-out story in our brain.

Figure 2

Hawkeye (2012) #19, Page 12

The images on a comic book page are referred to as ‘resources’ or ‘signs’ in the context of social semiotics. These resources are responsible for both the production of the end product,

the overall vessel of information, and for the interpretation of this vessel and the resources used in its creation (van Leeuwen, 2005). Resources and signs are tools that can be used to interpret and make sense of the world around us. In the context of comic books, this means the images themselves, both individually in comic panels and as a whole on a comic page or in a comic book, help us make sense of the story that they, the images, are trying to tell.

Social semiotics is most effective when applied to specific examples rather than broader topics or themes (van Leeuwen, 2005). Using Figure 2 as an example, I explore how social semiotics is at play in this image. The act of looking at this image and trying to interpret what is happening within the context, and the story that this image is telling is social semiotics at work. Because social semiotics as a theory is a "form of inquiry" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 1), the act of reading and interpreting this comic image is a form of actively engaging in this semiotic theory. The reader/viewer accomplishes this form of social semiotic meaning making by reading and interpreting alphabetic text and visual images together. In this research, the term "reader/viewer" refers to both the reading of an image and the reading of the text. While the reader/viewer may notice the visual images first or skim the text first, constructing meaning involves interacting with both components. Figure 2 is an excerpt of comic panels from Hawkeye (2012) #19. In this series of comic panels, Barney, the man in the wheelchair, is holding his nose and pointing at Clint, the man on the left holding the milk bottle. Even without having the larger context of what's going on in the overarching storyline or being able to read the sign language in the panels, the reader/viewer can interpret that Barney, by pinching his nose and pointing his finger at Clint, is signaling to Clint that he stinks and needs a shower. The visual cues that we are receiving and interpreting by way of a universal knowledge of what those cues mean, is social semiotics in play. This is an example of a key part of social semiotics, which is that the "actions and artifacts

we used to communicate" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3) within society and with our world are being deployed in this comic panel to provide meaning to the visual story. While we are all a part of the collective society that these social cues come from, our individual lived experiences and how we personally define those social cues may cause each reader/viewer to interpret the visual story differently. Meaning making is an integral aspect of social semiotics because, at its core, this theory focuses on the concept of meaning in all its variations, such as in an array of environments and spaces, or through social interactions. These social avenues of meaning are key to the making that happens using social semiotics (Kress, 2010).

This practice of reading and interpreting visual images, and sometimes text as well, is an example of multimodality, which is an integral element of social semiotics. Multimodality as it relates to the reading and interpreting of comic book images and to the theory of social semiotics is about utilizing both text and image to relate to the reader what is happening within the story context of the image. This use of multiple domains, both writing and images, is an example of utilizing multimodality in order to create the semiotic production of stories with images (Kress, 2010). The addition of textual elements in a comic panel provides further context to the visual images of a comic story, which is a key aspect of how multimodality is used within social semiotics (Kress, 2010).

Figure 3

Spider-Men (2024) #1, Page 9

My second example of social semiotics and multimodality at work comes from a page in *Spider-Men* (2024) #1 (Figure 3). This comic page utilizes a combination of visual imagery, textual conversation between the two characters, and the depiction of character movement by way of textual descriptions of sound as well as the dramatic positioning of the two figures. While Figure 2 does not utilize text to provide context to the story happening with the image, Figure 3 utilizes dialogue between Miles Morales's Spider-Man and Peter Parker's Spider-Man to showcase their differing demeanors during a battle with The Jackal. As the reader, we might interpret that Miles, who is wearing the black and red suit, is saying that he does not have previous experience with this villain, and that because he is fighting an unfamiliar villain he may

be taking this fight more seriously than Peter, who is in the blue and red suit. It can be interpreted from the text that Peter is saying that, because he has previous experience fighting and defeating The Jackal, which we can infer from him knowing the villain's name, he may be less focused than Miles during this fight. At the very least, Peter seems to be more easily distracted because he's trying to figure out what is the plural for nemesis rather than discussing battle strategy with Miles. This interpretation and contextualizing of the textual and visual components showcases how a social semiotics approach is employed when viewing and reading visual stories because, as Kress points out, readers ask themselves two questions related to social semiotics, which are: what meaning is being made within the context of an image, and how is it being made (Kress, 2010)?

Showcasing Key Comics

There were two comics that were central to my comic creation curriculum, and I used them as examples in my lesson presentations and the various activity worksheets the students used during their story creation process. They were both key example components during Session Two of the curriculum, which focused on teaching the students how to identify and then create the different parts of a story. Issue #19 from the 2012 run of *Hawkeye* was used in this session in our guided notes activity. While panels from the first issue from the 2022 run of *Spider-Man* made an appearance in multiple presentations during the program, the spread on page 21 was an important example during the story pats presentation during Session Two.

Letting Images Tell the Story

When I first started doing this research, I learned that there was a comic book that had little to no text in it and heavily relied on visual art to tell the story. I was simultaneously intrigued and confused by the prospect. How could a comic story *be* a comic story without that

key component, text. *Hawkeye* (2012) #19 is a great example of how the visual art side of comics can take center stage and still successfully convey the context of a story to the reader. This run of Hawkeye includes an overarching story about the tumultuous interactions and territory war between Hawkeye, also known as Clint Barton, and the Tracksuit Mafia. The Tracksuit Mafia have taken over the area of New York City where Clint lives. Clint's solution is to just buy his apartment building in Brooklyn, which leads to many physical altercations as they fight for who has control of the apartment building and the neighborhood. There are other storylines in this comic run as well, but this particular one is a key part of the story in Issue #19.

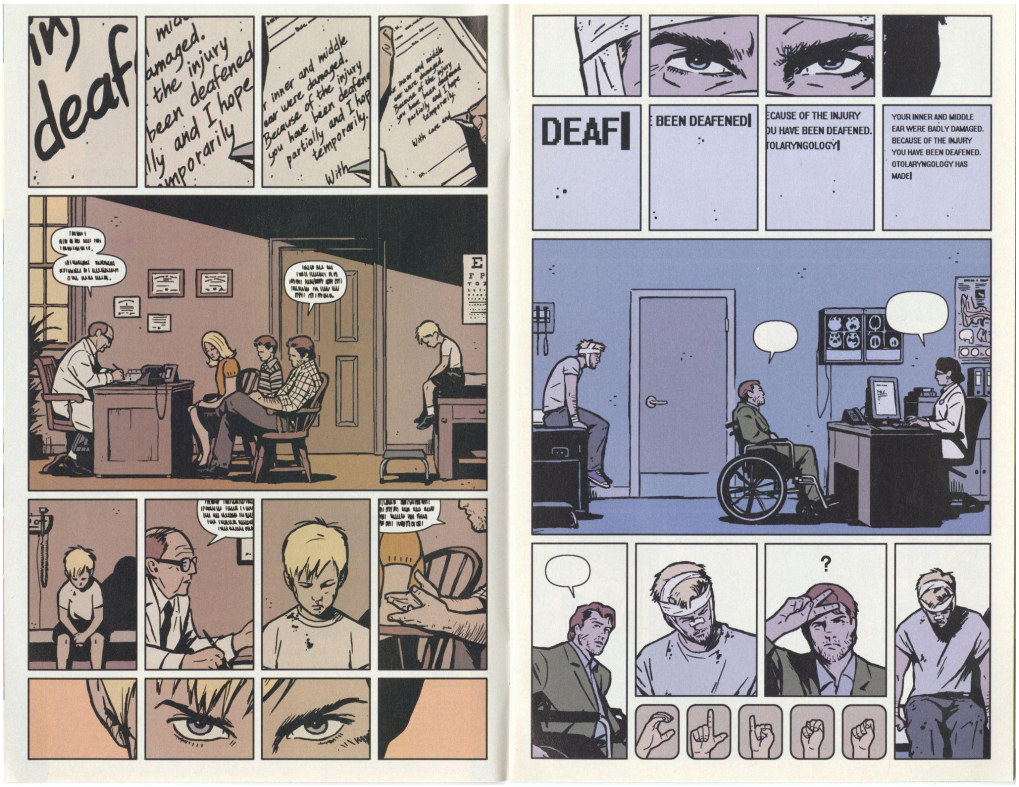
Hawkeye (2012) #19 follows the aftermath of a fight between Hawkeye and members of the Tracksuit Mafia which results in Clint's hearing aids being broken during the battle. At the very beginning of this issue, readers learn about how Clint got his diagnosis as a child of partial deafness due to damage to his middle and inner ear after an unspecified injury. His injuries from the fight with the Tracksuit Mafia caused his deafness to worsen. I would speculate that this change in his diagnosis and the damage to his hearing aids is a key factor in Clint's character choices and motivations throughout this comic.

Figure 4 shows the opening pages of this comic story. The page on the left shows Clint as a young child in a doctor's office receiving his hard-of-hearing diagnosis. He is sitting slumped on the examination table while his parents and older brother, Barney, sit some distance from him, and with their backs to him, talking to the doctor about Clint's diagnosis. The page on the right shows a similar scene from Clint's life, but as an adult. He is slumped similarly to the younger version of himself on the left page. Barney is depicted as playing the role of guardian/parent in this scene, talking to the doctor about Clint with his back to him. These two pages are an example of using comic panel composition and contrasting colors to show the reader two

"similar but different" scenarios in the main character's life revolving around an important aspect in his life, his hearing. The panels of written text on the top of each page show us Clint's original diagnosis as a child and his updated one after his most recent fight with the Tracksuit Mafia as an adult. The use of sign language in the bottom panels also shows us how time has passed, in the sense that Barney has tried to learn how to better communicate with Clint since his diagnosis as a kid.

Figure 4

Hawkeye (2012) #19, Pages 4-5



This issue of *Hawkeye* is important to my comic arts research because there is very little text in this comic, and the visual images pull most of the weight in telling this story to the reader. When text is used in conversations between Clint and the other characters in the story, it is stylized to showcase the way Clint is receiving the words. Two main ways this is shown are by

way of blurry, hard-to-read text for muffled hearing, or by having text in parentheses and phrased as questions, using a blocky typewriter font that is different from the regular font used for when people are speaking, to show when he is reading lips. The two comic pages in Figure 4 juxtapose Clint's muffled hearing as a child to being able to hear nothing as an adult.

These two comic pages were used in the graphic organizer activity during Session Two, which focused on teaching the students the different parts in a superhero story. The five elements are the introduction to the characters' superpowers (what they are and how they got them), the beginning (setting the scene), the middle of the comic story, the climax (pivot point), and the ending. Students completed the graphic organizer activity as a class after a presentation on story parts, where I introduced and defined each aspect to them. These comic pages were labeled as the character introduction in the comic in the graphic organizer activity. While these panels do not showcase Hawkeye's superpower, his archery abilities, they do introduce the character of Clint Barton, his hard-of-hearing diagnosis, and his demeanor as it relates to the storyline of this particular comic book. The *Hawkeye* comic (Figure 4) served as a useful example to help students understand how a story can be built around the visual image.

Letting Text Tell the Story: Peter Parker and the Pivot Point: *Now What?*

While issue #19 of *Hawkeye* (2012) conveyed to students how images can be used to tell the comic story, similarly *Spider-Man* (2022) (Figure 5) was used as an example of the role text plays in the comic story. Since his first appearance as Spider-Man in 1962 (Marvel, 2019), Peter Parker has told and re-told a version of his origin story numerous times. This *Spider-Man* #1 is similar to its predecessors in that it includes panels showing how he got bit by a radioactive spider and what his life is like living as both a super-powered vigilante and a young 20-something in New York City. It gives us a glimpse into his working relationship with Norman

Osborne, who is aware of his secret identity as Spider-Man in this story run. An exciting difference in this run of the superhero's story is the inclusion of the Spider-Verse. The Spider-Verse refers to the existence of infinite different universes and their respective versions of Spider-People (Marvel, 2018). While the concept of this multiverse was incorporated into an animated Spider-Man series in the 1990's and in a 2010 Spider-Man video game (Dietsch, 2021), it became a part of the Marvel comic book universe in *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2014) #19 (Wilson, 2014) (Marvel, n.d.).

The main story in this first issue of *Spider-Man* (2022) involves a villain-of-the-week who is bringing forth swarms of bugs through dimensional portals to terrorize New York City. Figure 5 shows the page in the comic that follows the reveal of whom the villain is that Spider-Man is fighting, and the beginning of their physical battle. The villain of this fight is Morlun. Morlun is a central villain in the overarching Spider-Verse story that was originally introduced in *Amazing Spider-Man* (2014) #19 (Dietsch, 2021).

I chose Figure 5 to be a part of my research and to be included as an image in my comic art curriculum because of its incorporation of key story writing elements I was teaching my students with the visual comic components. This comic page conveys to the reader the problem the character is facing (Morlun and his swarm of flesh-eating flies), the character's initial solution (punching his way out of the problem), followed by the character realizing that his initial solution won't work, taking a pause, and realizing he has to go back to the drawing board in order to beat the villain. I believe that showcasing comic stories like this one, where the superhero assesses situations and acts with strength and bravery, can potentially empower students in how they react and act in situations in their own lives.

Figure 5

Spider-Man (2022) #1, Page 21

I first introduced the students to this comic page during Session Two of my applied project as part of the lesson presentation on parts of a story. This panel (Figure 5) was used as an example of how to write and draw the climax and/or pivot point in a comic story. I specifically pointed out to them how Spider-Man's initial plan of using brute force to defeat the villain was not working and how that was being shown through the deterioration of his suit as it fell apart around his fists as he punched Morlun. I then moved the students' attention down to the larger bottom panel, pointing out how Spider-Man points out how serious and potentially

life-threatening this fight is, and how he is screwed if he continues to try and punch his way through this villain. This comic page is what I referred to during the comic arts program as the "now what?" moment in a comic story, which is the moment at the climax of the story arc where the character may have to make a hard decision or change their plan in order to defeat the villain or achieve whatever is the overarching goal of the story arc. There are a few things of note on this comic page as it relates to the overall story structure, as well as examples of traits and key choices that are characteristic of who Spider-Man, and Peter Parker, is as a character. First and foremost, as it relates to my research and the comic art curriculum I taught as part of my applied project, I classify the actions happening in these panels as the pivot point in the climax of this story.

The first two horizontal panels on the top of the page (Figure 5) showcase Spider-Man's physical actions while fighting Morlun and the direct consequences of his punches, which are shown by his suit tearing apart around his knuckles and fists. Text is also written alongside the visual actions of these first two panels in the form of Peter Parker's inner thoughts as he expresses how dangerous Morlun is for him and how difficult fighting him turns out to be. The larger, vertical panel below those two takes up more than half of the page. In this panel we get a full-body view of what state Spider-Man is in, including the details of his suit being worse for wear around his hands. He also appears to be hunched over a bit, compared to Morlun, who is standing tall, peering down at Peter with his hands on his hips in a definite power stance, with his swarm of flesh-eating flies buzzing all around both of them. This panel contains the first dialogue bubble on the entire page and this fact alone provides weight to the reader of the importance of Peter's words, "I am so screwed". In this climactic moment of this fight between

Spider-Man and Morlun, Spider-Man (and Peter Parker) realizes that his normal plan of attack will not work to defeat this villain-of-the-week.

There is also a smaller, rectangular panel in the right-hand corner that shows Peter's face from the point of view of inside his suit. While I would speculate that the purpose of this panel is to show that Norman can check Peter's vitals in his suit, and may be establishing that these two characters have a working relationship in the world of this particular run of *Spider-Man*, I do not see this panel as essential to the overarching climax-plot that is happening in the rest of this page or the rest of the story. I would speculate that the placement and size of this particular panel may be purposeful in order to provide that dialogue without taking away from the main action that is happening on the page. The comic pages after this one show Spider-Man receiving help from other Spider-People across the multiverse to defeat Morlun because he can not do it on his own.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

My research is separated into the following main topics: visual storytelling, literacy learning, teaching comics in schools, and the middle school after-school program environment. Middle school grade levels are defined for this specific research as grades 6th through 8th grade, with an age range of 11 to 14 years old. The literature I looked at focused on how visual storytelling and comics have been used in school settings.

Middle School After-School Program Environment

Implementing my comics curriculum in an after-school program allowed for flexibility in how I constructed and taught my comic arts curriculum. This is because I was not beholden to a rotating class schedule of students or expectations for teaching certain art standards. This assertion is shared by Vess et al. (2017), who argue that the decrease in structure of an after-school program environment allows teachers more autonomy in how they engage with their students. Vess et al. (2017) researched a group of pre-service teachers who taught an after-school writing and photography class. They found that they were able to create more personal connections with the students and noticed that teaching outside the regular school environment allowed for more in-depth conversations between the students and the pre-service teachers. I agree with this observation and feel that I encountered similar results in my comic arts after-school program. That being said, teaching in an after-school environment comes with its own set of obstacles as well. The main obstacle I encountered in my teaching was trying to engage students in learning after they had already had a full day of school. I accomplished this

by providing less-taxing activities, reading comics and free-drawing in their sketchbook, which they could do if they needed a break from the main tasks of each workshop.

Teaching middle-school-aged students can be challenging because, as early adolescents, they are unique in how they react to their environment and their desire for increased independence in their decision-making as young adults (Bruce et al., 2013). Creating an environment that allows for structured independence is an desired option when wanting to provide middle-school-aged students with the freedom to explore and express their ideas while maintaining some semblance of control over the classroom as the teacher. This can be achieved by establishing the after-school class as a shared community space, explaining to the students that, while they may still be physically in a school environment, they are not going to be held to the same expectations and regulations they encounter during the regular school day. Making this distinction and labeling the after-school program as a community, acts as a way for students to transition into an environment that not only allows for but supports their self-expression.

In *Engaging Middle-Grade Students to Learn in a Caring Community*, Bruce et al. (2013) examined how the Caring Community Teaching Model (CCTM) can be used in the classroom to better serve the learning needs of middle grade students. I read this article prior to teaching my comic arts program and implemented some of the aspects of CCTM in my teaching practices with middle school students. For example, on day one, I established that the comic arts program space was a positive, caring space where students should feel comfortable exploring their story ideas and artmaking without fear of being judged or graded on anything other than participating and trying their best. I also welcomed student input on the type of content I included in the curriculum, which helped establish the classroom as a shared community space (Bruce et al., 2013).

Visual Storytelling

Fostering a physical space for community in my after-school program allowed students to interpret and utilize the space in an effective manner geared towards arts exploration after regular school hours. Similarly, visual storytelling encompasses the way that people perceive, interpret, and utilize images and other visual components in their storytelling practice. These components and processes are foundational in successful visual storytelling but were not the only elements being used in my practice. Visual elements, like those being taught in an art classroom, also played a key role in transforming storytelling into *visual* storytelling.

In her recent work, Williams (2019) examines art and design principles people utilize when engaging in forms of visual storytelling, noting that color was the most discussed principle by students in her undergraduate Visual Narratives class, who were a part of the study. I agree with Williams' assertion that color is a key component of visual storytelling because of its role in our society, and how we associate certain colors with specific feelings or ideas (Williams, 2019).

According to Nayek (2021), comics are a form of visual storytelling that can provide commentary on the culture and opinions within a society. She claims that comics, and more specifically webcomics, provide a format of storytelling that allows for depictions of “certain realities as well as subversions that could not have been printed or expressed completely through a textual language” (pg. 1354). I agree with Nayek's claim that graphic novels tend to tell visual stories related to more mainstream cultures and ideas because they are published books, while less popular cultural ideas can have a platform through digital webcomics spaces. Digital platforms can provide adolescents with a space for their voices to be heard, and to explore subversive cultures (non-mainstream ideas) by telling stories that may challenge the status quo in a healthy way.

Visual Literacy Learning

While visual storytelling involves the practice of *doing* as it relates to utilizing the visual components all around to tell a story, it serves as a broader umbrella that encompasses a variety of settings. Plainly put, visual literacy learning happens when students are taught *how* to interpret and create visual narratives. This is accomplished by teaching students how to identify the skills being used when interacting with the visual world around them: imagination, problem-solving, narrative structure, and target audience (Williams, 2019). Once students can identify these moving parts within a story, they are more successful when they use those skills to create original visual stories of their own (Williams, 2019). Yet at the same time, according to Bowen (2017), many students are not fully aware of the influence and impact the visual imagery they interact with on a daily basis has on them. This is one reason why integrating visual literacy learning into the classroom curriculum is beneficial to students beyond solely academic benefits. Golding & Verrier's (2020) research backs Bowen's claim, adding that not only do students who lack visual literacy skills fail to comprehend the impact of the visuals around them, they also miss the opportunity to benefit from any visuals they do interact with. This can also lead to negative effects on a student's broader comprehension abilities as it relates to other academic subjects (Golding & Verrier, 2020). In the language arts classroom, visual literacy learning has been taught in the form of visual interpretations of literature, such as posters, as part of book projects (Williams, 2019). In one example, Sanders-Bustle (2004) collaborated with a language arts teacher to help eighth grade students explore characters in Paul Zindel's play, *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon-Marigold*, through fingerpainting. A process which included identifying descriptive words for a selected character and integrating them into a painting representing the character increased motivation, improved comprehension, and fostered a higher

level of critical thinking. This way of teaching students how to visually interpret literature can easily be translated to the art classroom and can be taken one step further by facilitating the generation of original visual representations instead of interpretations of already existing text.

Comics in General Education

Here, I want to look at other disciplines as they relate to comics in the classroom before diving into how it relates to art education specifically. This is because I speculate that there may be beneficial insights from general education literature on the subject that could be missed if I only focused on how comics are implemented in the art room. Using a historical lens, Thomas (2011) offered insights into the history of how and when comics have been used in the classroom setting, arguing that while comics have been established as a legitimate medium in literature, it does not necessarily mean that it is seen as such in academic and educational settings. I would argue that this sentiment has changed since this article was published in 2011 with the rise in interest in incorporating literacy learning in all areas of a child's schooling, which has led to a rise in interest in using comics and graphic novels in the academic curriculum. I do agree with Thomas's (2011) assertion that comics are ideal for the classroom due to their "visual nature … as a powerful educational quality associated with multiple intelligences and multiliteracies" (p. 189).

In a recent work, Lewkowich (2019) explores how reading comics that focus on the stories of teens may help teachers better connect with their students by encouraging teachers to reflect on what it was like for them when they were their students' age. Lewkowich conducted his research with a class of six pre-service teachers, in which they had to create visual responses to a variety of graphic novels, focusing on parts of the comics that made them think of memories from their youth. I agree with Lewkowich's claim that reading comics about the lived

experiences of adolescents can help teachers relate to their teenage students (Lewkowich, 2019), but I would add that these types of comic stories are also beneficial for teenage students to read and relate to as well. Incorporating comic stories about adolescent experiences into the curriculum allows for meaning-making to happen in the classroom as it relates to visual literacy learning (Lewkowich, 2019). Looking at the use of comics in a broader scope of education may provide further insights as we narrow the view of how comics are being used in the art classroom specifically.

Comics in the Art Classroom

Research related to comics in the art classroom is especially relevant as policies related to literacy inclusion in all academic subject areas are being implemented in the State of Georgia, like GaPSC Rule 505-3-.03, the Foundations of Reading, Literacy, and Language Preparation Rule (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2023). While this new rule relates to the Georgia Education Standards for all academic subject areas, literacy in the visual arts was already a part of both the National and Georgia Visual Art Standards, which is briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. For example, Anchor Standard 8 in the NVAS invites all grade levels to explore questions such as "How can the viewer 'read' a work of art as text? How does knowing and using visual art vocabularies help us understand and interpret works of art" (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014, p. 7).

Like the NVAS, the Georgia Visual Art Standards (GVAS) also focus on the literacy processes specifically for teaching art criticism. While the NVAS uses language that leans towards reading literacy more so than writing, the GVAS does include language on writing specifically in the standards. Responding Standard 3 states that students in grades 6th-8th will learn how to "engage in the process of art criticism to make meaning and increase visual

literacy… [by] writ[ing] responses to works of art through various approaches" (Georgia Department of Education, 2017, p. 22, 25, 28). There are developmentally appropriate versions of this standard for all other grade levels as well.

In 2022, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) released an updated position statement on visual literacy and art education, supporting the inclusion of visual literacy alongside other academic areas, like reading and writing, in order to fully prepare students for their academic futures. They emphasize that the five areas of the NVAS: creating, presenting, producing, responding, and connecting, are processes that equip teachers to successfully nurture their students' comprehensive literacy skills (NAEA, 2022). One of the visual literacy teaching strategies the NAEA suggests is to encourage student engagement in making art using a variety of media to channel their ideas using visual language (NAEA, 2022). Because comics are a visual artform, they lend themselves nicely to becoming a prominent example of ways to teach literacy, visual storytelling, and art in the art classroom.

Current research on the topic of comics is predominantly focused on how it relates to undergraduate and/or pre-service learning programs, but I was able to find some examples of comic arts research with secondary students as well. I chose to focus this section on the research of Kulinski (2023), Kwon (2020), and Williams (2008) because they discuss the benefits of incorporating comics in the classroom. Before going further, it is important to note that their research includes a wide range of comic art projects, and the end products of these projects are classified as graphic novels/graphic novellas in some of the texts (Kulinski, 2023; Kwon, 2020) and comic in others (Williams, 2008). In the context of the field of comic arts research, graphic novels/graphic novellas and comics/comic books all refer to the same art genre of visual storytelling. This means that while there may be variation in whether one researcher taught

students how to make graphic novels and another taught them how to make comics, they are both teaching the same foundation of ideas and skills that involve both alphabetic text and images.

Current research (Kwon, 2020; Williams, 2008) predominantly focuses on undergraduate and/or pre-service learning programs, but there are some examples (Kulinski, 2023; Williams, 2008) of comic arts research with secondary students. Kwon (2020) taught comic art to her combined class of both undergraduate and graduate art education students. She scaffolded teaching the comic creation process over the course of three graphic novella projects focused on contextualizing the work of existing graphic novels and then creating a graphic novella on their original ideas (Kwon, 2020). While Kwon's class focused on slowly scaffolding comic arts skills over the course of the semester-long class, Alexa Kulinski (2023) took a more arts-intensive approach by leading a 2-week comic arts program where they facilitated studio art workshops on comic art for six high-school-aged students. Williams' (2008) research encompassed three separate comic art projects she taught to college-level and secondary-age student groups (Williams, 2008). Williams' (2008) taught the comic art process to a class of undergraduate students as well as a separate class of pre-service art education students. She also collaborated with an English teacher at a separate time to teach a class of secondary students how to create visual narratives that were the final project as part of a 12-week curriculum on human rights.

Despite the fact that these three educators carried out their research in different age groups and in different settings, they all came to similar conclusions that the comic creation process provides students with opportunities to share their lived experiences and viewpoints while also learning how to create visual narratives (Kulinski, 2023). Williams (2008) concluded specifically that comics can be an outlet for students to be able to participate in conversations about what they want their futures to look like and where they fit in the larger conversation about

society. Kulinski (2023) addressed how this relates to the art curriculum specifically, describing comic creation as a "generative component of art education that can open new pathways for students to share their experiences and connect with one another" (p. 31). By tapping into students' previous knowledge of visual storytelling, art teachers can continue to build on what their students already know (Kulinski, 2023). Kwon (2020) discusses further evidence of the role comic creation can play in art education in their findings, stating that it can provide opportunities for multimodal learning through the incorporation of visual art and literature. She also points out that comic art can be used as an effective tool in the art classroom to take apart any assumptions about what is 'good art' because the comic art genre includes such a wide range of styles (Kwon, 2020).

Conclusion

By looking at literature on visual storytelling, literacy learning, and comic creation in the classroom, I hope this literature review provides context on how creating comics can positively impact the visual and verbal literacy skills of middle school-aged students, as well as the implementation in various settings. While I was able to find some literature related to the topics of my research, there seemed to be a lack of articles specifically on creating and/or using comics in the middle school art classroom. This suggests to me that there is a need for more published work relating to comics in the field of art education.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

Action Research Methodology

Due to the hands-on teaching of comics and my interactions with students throughout their story creation and the artmaking process, for my inquiry, I employed action research as the methodology Action research involves the process of action and reflection, and is a continuous cycle of "planning, acting, observing and reflecting" (Zuber-Skerritt, p. 516, 2018). One way the research process of action and reflection was conducted in my research was through my audio note-taking process. I go into detail on this later in this chapter, but briefly, I reflected after each session by dictating my thoughts using audio recording and then used that audio reflection to guide my actions during the next session, a cycle that repeated over the course of the entire program. These processes were also woven into my planning as an educator through my teaching and interactions with the students, and through observing the stories and characters they created during the program.

One of the roadblocks teachers may face when doing research in the classrooms is trying to fit their research under the larger umbrella of educational research, which can sometimes be disconnected from the reality of the everyday classroom (Niemi, 2019). By implementing an action research methodology when conducting teacher research in the classroom setting, it allows the setting the research is conducted in, the everyday classroom, in this instance, to play a more active role in the actual research (Niemi, 2019). My research was implemented in three different classroom settings, and each had an impact on how the students and I conducted ourselves and interacted with others during the sessions, which I go into detail about later in this chapter. I speculate that the lack of having a consistent classroom setting for the entire research

period also impacted my research in that there wasn't an opportunity for the environment to actively play a role in the research as much as it could have if we were in the same room for every session.

Curriculum Design

A key part of the design and planning of the after-school workshops was to incorporate flexibility through a collaborative curriculum which was introduced first through the use of interest surveys the students filled out during Session One (Appendix L). The surveys asked the students which superheroes and comics they were interested in, and any artmaking techniques they wanted to learn during the program. I then incorporated their answers as part of the art examples I shared throughout the six workshops. I also included demonstrations of the art techniques students wanted to learn about. Worksheets and packets that I created for this comic creation program can be found in Appendix L. This is what made the curriculum collaborative and allowed for the facilitation of "a democratic collaborative effort when in charge of a group" (Zuber-Skerritt, p. 515, 2018). This form of student participation in the development and delivery of the curriculum used in this comic program encouraged student engagement with the learning tasks, which in this case was story writing and comic character creation. This student engagement became a teaching tool I utilized to help facilitate the students' learning (Niemi, 2019).

After-School Program Context

This research took place over the course of five weeks from April to May 2024, as part of the after-school programming at a local middle-school. I conducted a total of six two-hour workshops; four were once a week and there were two workshops during the fifth week. The after-school program was a part of grant-funded programming whose goal is to provide

opportunities for the community during out-of-school hours that focus on academic achievement, educational growth including literacy development, as well as other services and activities for students that help strengthen their regular academic curriculum (21st Century, 2021).

When I initially discussed taking part in this program at the middle-school, I was told by the program director that the after-school program was a STEAM-based program in addition to the other goals of the after-school programming. STEAM refers to the areas of study of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics. The goal of STEAM programming is the integration of standards and curricula from the five content areas designed to provide students with comprehensive learning experiences in these subjects (NAEA, 2022). The comic arts program fit within the classification of STEAM because it incorporated subject matter from both Language Arts and Visual Art. I explained the connection of the comic arts program to STEAM learning to the head of the program, and she agreed that my pilot program would fit well with the vision of the middle school after-school program.

However, there were two main hurdles I had to navigate that directly related to teaching in an after-school setting. The first one related to the students' energy levels and social batteries. Their school day ran from 8 A.M. to 3:45 P.M., which meant that students had been at school for almost eight hours straight before they came to me for our after-school activities, which ran for an additional two hours. I noticed that when we came to the one-hour mark during our first session, some students had visibly reached their limit on social interactions and using their brains for learning. Sarah (pseudonym), a sixth grader, asked me at this point what I would do if she put her sunglasses on and pretended not to take a nap. This interaction prompted me to ask the students about their school schedule and how long they had been at school that day. After learning just how long their school day was, I jokingly said to

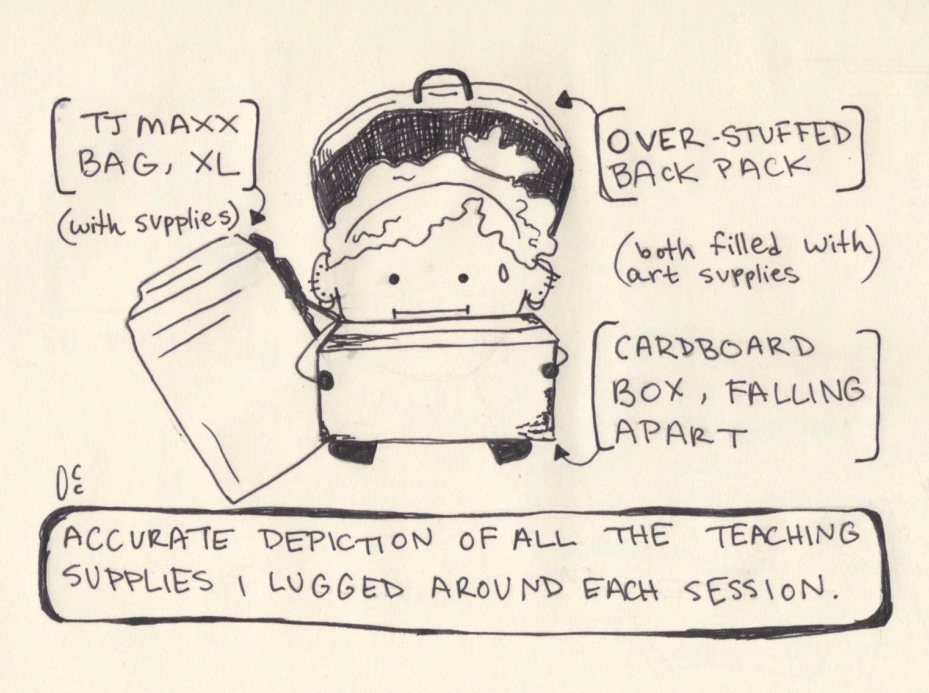
Sarah that if she started snoring loudly I'd have to nudge her awake, but that I didn't mind if she rested her eyes for a bit. Before she was able to put her sunglasses on, I got the entire group's attention again and let them know that, since they had been working on their comic characters and figure drawings for an hour, that they were welcome to take a break and read any of the comics I brought with me, free draw in their sketchbook, or just take a moment to have a brain break. Sarah did put her glasses on and rested for a short period before going back to drawing her character design ideas in her sketchbook. Prior to Sarah's initial question, she had engaged and participated a good bit in our group discussions and worked on her worksheet activities for the day with minimal interruption. This interaction on the first day helped show me one way I could successfully navigate the students' level of engagement and that it is important for me to engage with them with compassion when it comes to worksheets and artmaking activities I have them do. After that first day, I continued to use that one-hour mark to check in with the class and gauge if they may need to take a break or possibly be done with their work for the day. I continued to offer reading comics, and free drawing in their sketchbooks or on paper as options for when they needed a break from working on their comics.

The second hurdle relates to teaching in this after-school setting and the lack of a designated classroom space for teaching art during after-school hours. I do not have a specific explanation as to why this was, but I speculate that it had to do with the fact that I did not teach art during the day at this school and so didn't have a preassigned classroom. On top of that, I was only at the middle school for a short period of time, once a week, near the end of their academic school year. Another thing I encountered related to space was that, while there was a stand-alone cabinet that the after-school program used to store supplies for their

program, I kept the rest of the supplies I brought with me, my teaching materials, as well as the students' portfolios and artwork in a backpack and a comically large TJ Maxx tote. The after-school program purchased most of the supplies, and they were kept in a cardboard box in the supply cabinet that I would take out when I arrived and then carry along with my backpack and tote to wherever I was teaching that day.

Figure 6

Art Teacher Adventures, "Art Supplies"



Recruitment Process

Recruiting for the comic arts pilot program took place over the course of two weeks prior to the start of the program. I went to the middle school five separate times, introducing myself, handing out information flyers (Appendix A) and research permission forms, and gaining any interest in the "comic art club" as it was coined by the students. I initially met with the Dungeons and Dragons club that met on Wednesdays, because the program director and site coordinator

said that they thought those students might be the most interested in creating comics. This assumption may be because Dungeons and Dragons, an interactive tabletop role-playing game, involves improvisational storytelling and fictional fantasy characters, which is in a similar vein to the world of comic superhero stories. Both require using your imagination to create fictional characters and tell a story revolving around them. Seven of the fifteen participants came from the Dungeons and Dragons club, while the remaining eight were a part of the general study, tutoring, and gym groups that were a part of the after-school programming.

Prior to the in-person recruitment process, I submitted a research proposal to the University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (UGA-IRB), and an additional proposal to the Local County School District (LCSD) (pseudonym). As part of the LCSD proposal process, I learned about the research parameters and recruitment guidelines I needed to follow in order to be allowed to do research in the Local County school setting. There were additional recruitment guidelines given to me by LCSD that were put in place to ensure all students had equal opportunity to be part of research. I had to provide a parental research consent form, a student research consent form, and a student documentation release form written at a 5th grade reading level and available to students and parents in both English and Spanish. UGA-IRB and LCSD had templates available for me to use when creating my research forms in English, and I used Google Translate to translate the forms into Spanish, except for the documentation release form, which LCSD had a Spanish version I used. (Appendices B-D)

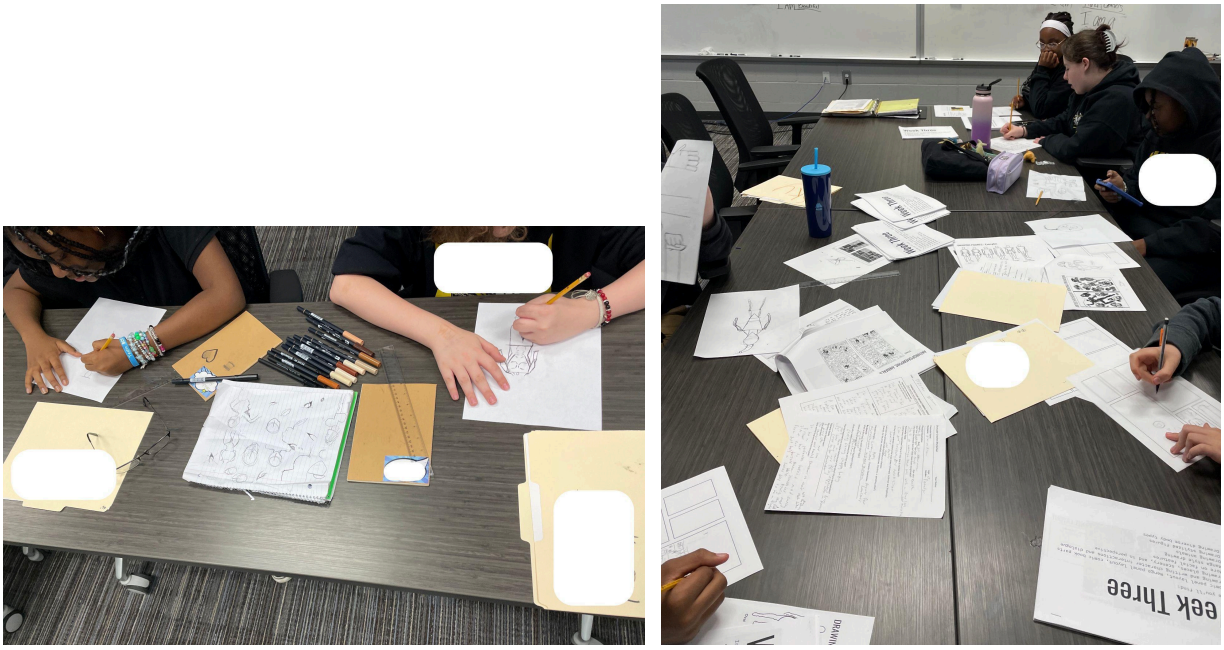
Classroom Settings

Since there was not a designated classroom for art during the after-school program, I rotated through a few different classrooms over the course of the five-week period. The first and third sessions were held in the media conference room at the front of the school (Figure 7). This

room was carpeted, had many movable tables and chairs, a wall-length whiteboard, two smart boards, no sink, and a wall of windows with blinds that were always closed. The modular table and chair arrangement in this room allowed for flexible seating that I could move and rearrange as we needed. However, the lack of sinks and carpeted floors meant that we couldn't use our messier artmaking materials, so we focused on drawing with pencil and writing our stories during those sessions. Even with the blinds closed, the room had plenty of natural light from the wall of windows.

Figure 7

Students Working During Session One and Session Three in The Media Conference Room



The second session was held in a math classroom. When I arrived to teach during the second week, I originally set up in the media conference room but was relocated due to a meeting already scheduled in that room at the same time. After trying to find space in the home-economics classroom and art classroom to no avail, the program coordinator had me use a math classroom. I was given instructions upon entering that we could not make a mess or touch

any of the technology or other items in the room because the classroom belonged to a teacher who was very particular about her classroom and had a reputation among the students for, in their words, “yelling at anyone who moves anything even a little out of place”. Thankfully, that day's workshop was focused on brainstorming the comic stories, so minimal materials were required. Even with my patented optimistic and flexible teaching style, this restrictive environment did have an impact on my teaching that day. This experience made me realize how much of an impact the classroom environment can have on your mindset as a teacher and affect how your students interact with each other and you within the classroom, as depicted in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Art Teacher Adventures, “Don’t Touch Anything!”

During sessions four through six, we gained access to the art classroom. I speculate that the change in environment and scenery to a room that outwardly promoted creativity and artmaking had such a positive effect on the remainder of our comic workshops. We were not able to use the art classroom prior to Session Four simply because the art teacher was teaching her unit on clay and ceramics, so the room was a bit wet, dusty, and muddy during that time. The art classroom had four rows of long worktables and stools, two sinks, a row of windows on one wall that looked out onto a grassy courtyard area, and a dry-erase board and a smart board at the front of the room. The variety of classrooms I encountered throughout the comic workshops showcased the wide range of environments and classroom setups that are contained within the walls of a school. It definitely felt like a Goldilocks and the Three Bears scenario, with the art classroom being comparable to the bed that felt just right for my teaching (Stobbs, 1965).

Overview of Participants

Over the course of five weeks, in a total of six two-hour-long sessions, I saw 15 students. I kept track of the students' attendance to assess if there was successful scaffolding of skills happening throughout the program (Appendix E). Participants in the pilot program included middle school learners in grades sixth through eighth, with an age range of 11 to 14 years old. The grade level breakdown consisted of nine sixth graders, three seventh graders, and three eighth graders. The age groups include a total of two 11-year-olds, five 12-year-olds, four 13-year-olds, and one 14-year-old. There were three students whose grade level I was told but not their age, and all three took part in only Session two.

In total, three students attended all six sessions, four students attended five sessions, three students attended four sessions, two students attended two sessions, and three students attended one session. No students attended only three sessions. The three students who attended only one

session happened to all be a part of Session Two. Out of these three students, two of them were never formally a part of the comic art pilot program, meaning I did not receive paperwork for them. I learned at the beginning of the next workshop, Session Three, that they were supposed to have gone to a different section of the after-school program that afternoon and accidentally joined the wrong line when students were being sent to their separate classrooms after snack time. The other student who only attended Session Two had turned in paperwork and shown interest in the pilot program during recruitment but ended up only showing up for the after-school program for that one day during the entire five-week period. During my data analysis, I narrowed down my list of research participants from the total number of workshop participants to three students: Jason, Beth, and Tina (pseudonyms). I go into more detail on this process later on in this chapter.

A Flexible Pedagogy in Action

As shown throughout this chapter, the motivation of the pedagogical choices I made over the course of this research is rooted in flexibility. Flexibility is the foundation of my personal teaching practice because it is important to me that I am able to adapt any component of my teaching, in the moment, to best meet students where they are, either academically, emotionally, or as it relates to their interests. In this comic arts research, my pedagogical choices are seen through the strategy I took when creating the curriculum and lesson concepts. I purposefully created each week's lesson in a way that would allow for any changes that needed to be made to best meet the students' academic needs (Appendix L). Since this curriculum incorporated reading and writing, I was mindful that there were a variety of reading and writing levels in the program. This resulted in me providing students with alternative ways of recording their stories using audio or video. I adapted my workload expectations from the students during our two-hour-long

sessions to better meet their emotional needs and energy levels, since I was seeing these students after they had already had a full day of school. This type of adaptation also became crucial during Session Three, which took place during the week of school-wide state testing.

It was important to me that the students were engaged with and interested in the content I taught during the comic arts program. This was accomplished through the use of interest surveys that the students filled out during the first session, as stated in the above section. By incorporating the students' interests into the curriculum, I feel that I successfully created opportunities for the students to fully engage with the content. The incorporation of engaging examples falls under the scope of my flexible pedagogy because I purposefully left the art examples blank in my lessons so that I could build those sections around images and characters that my students enjoyed.

Data Collection

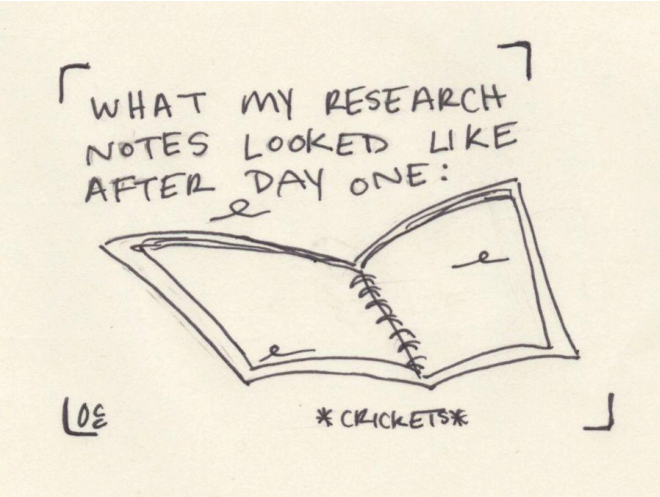
This applied project was my first large-scale plunge into being a teacher researcher. My initial note-taking strategy was heavily influenced by the chapter on data collection strategies in Hubbard and Power's (2003) book, *The art of classroom inquiry: A handbook for teacher-researchers*. I purchased a brand-new spiral-bound notebook just for this program, scoured my office supplies for various sized sticky notes, and packed multiple of my favorite type of pen in my research binder. I read and reread this chapter so that I felt prepared to take the best notes I could for this project. The students entered the classroom I was teaching in for the first session, and it was then that I was faced with the reality of being a teacher researcher. I was attempting to actively teach art to a group of middle schoolers while simultaneously taking detailed and/or abbreviated notes of what was happening in the moment. It was much more

difficult than I expected it to be. At the end of the first session, I realized that I hadn't taken a single note (Figure 9).

After the lack of notetaking during the first session, I was stumped about how I was going to be able to effectively take notes. While meeting with my advisor, Dr. Bustle, she suggested that I try taking audio notes on my phone at the end of each day of teaching. This audio note-taking strategy was much more effective. I was able to remember everything from the session, so I could provide a summary of events for myself, and it was also a way for me to talk through my thoughts about that day of teaching while driving home in my car. When going back through my audio notes after the completion of the pilot program, I found that being able to hear my tone of voice as well as the words I was saying was helpful in hearing the fuller picture of what happened during each session and how it may have affected me. Another thing I was able to accomplish with this audio note-taking strategy was to leave notes and questions for future me when I came back to listen and transcribe the audio recordings as I combed through the data before beginning writing.

Figure 9

Art Teacher Adventures, "The Reality of Note Taking"



The note-taking strategies I used were not really a part of the data collection process as much as they were a form of documenting things that happened for future reference during the writing phase of the research. Instead, the main focus of my data collection was the art portfolios, which included the visual and written artifacts students created over the course of the program. This included their character trait worksheet from Session One, their story parts graphic organizer and story brainstorming worksheet from Session Two, various drawings from different stages of working on their comic ideas, and their final comic art piece that they finished during Session Six. All these items were collected and stored in manilla folders, referred to as their art portfolios, that they received and decorated during Session One. The students also received a sketchbook at the same time. While I did take photos of some of the students' sketchbook pages to have for the data analysis process, the purpose of those was really to give the students a sketchbook to keep and draw in during the program as well as outside our time together, since they were able to take the sketchbook home with them. I chose to focus my data collection process on the student portfolio artifacts because I feel that they provide the best insight into the students' understanding of the content, which is using images and text together in story creation.

Data Analysis Overview

Looking through the three portfolios of the students whose work I chose to focus on for this research, more broadly I wanted to know about the kind of stories they were telling, asking, Are they fantastical? Could they be based on real-life? Are they action-packed? Do they involve interpersonal conflicts? Secondly, I analyzed *how* they accomplished the story they set out to tell. Specifically, I wanted to know how they employed literacy and artmaking processes throughout this program. The result of focusing on integrating story-based writing activities and comic

artmaking activities was seen when looking at the students' story brainstorming worksheets, where they wrote out the beginning, middle, climax, and ending of their story, and compared it to their final comic art piece. The story worksheets were created during Session Two, before they started working on the first draft, or plan, for the drawn version of their story during Sessions Three and Four. Because of this order of doing things, I speculate that the story worksheets were able to act as a storyboard for the comic art creation process. By using their written work as a guide for their visual artmaking, the students encountered and engaged in a form of multimodal learning.

Initial Data Analysis Process

My analysis was focused on the students' portfolios, which include the various writing activity worksheets from the program, character sketches, their work from the figure drawing lesson during Session One, and any artmaking drafts for their final comic story, as well as their final product that they created over the course of this program. My analysis was also guided by the informal audio and video recordings I took of conversations I had with students during the workshops as well. These recordings include some students' oral storytelling of their comic stories, conversations between myself and students as we worked through any artmaking questions they had during the comic creation process, as well as show-and-tell videos from the last session where students showcased their final artwork and the written story they created that goes along with it. The audio and video recordings provide further context and depth to the digital artifacts of the students' portfolios.

My data analysis process began with scanning all the artwork, activity worksheets, and anything in between in the students' portfolios. These portfolios were given to the students at the beginning of our very first session with the instructions to put their name on them and to keep

any drawings and writings in the portfolios throughout the program. During the process of scanning all the artifacts, I realized I was doing a sort of preliminary, informal, and organic analysis of the students' work because I hadn't seen some of the writing worksheets and figure-drawing pages since the beginning of the program. By exploring their portfolios during this scanning process, I was able to learn more about the evolution of each student's storytelling, writing, and artmaking process over the course of this five-week program.

The next step in my data analysis involved transcribing all the video and audio recordings I took during the comic arts program. The transcription process was the first time I have listened to or watched most of these recordings since they were initially taken. As a result of this process, I chose to focus the scope of my data on the students' portfolios as a whole, rather than only look at their final artwork or other singular pieces from their portfolios. Prior to transcribing the recordings, I initially thought I would only focus on the students' final artwork and written comic story. There was a specific video that helped me realize that I should broaden the scope of the data that I was focusing on to include the entire portfolio, because that would allow me to be able to analyze the students' entire comic creation process. The video that facilitated this lightbulb moment is of a conversation I had with Beth while she was working on her final comic character piece. In it, Beth asked me for help on how to decide on what colors to use for her character's superhero outfit. She said she was nervous about trying random color combinations directly on her final artwork and was looking for a way to "test" the colors out without having a draft artwork to practice on. The video picks up after her initial inquiry, showing me demonstrating how to use a blank piece of paper to trace an outline of the character and their outfit in order to create a template where she could test out different color combinations before executing it in her final work. While watching the video, I noticed that Beth's portfolio included pieces from Beth's

art process that were in the video: the paper I used to demonstrate the tracing and color-choosing process as well as the paper with Beth's color trial that did end up being the color combination she used for her final artwork (Figure 10). This interaction I had with the data helped me realize that I should use the student portfolios as a whole for my data analysis, as well as include these video and audio recordings to provide further context for myself for my overall data analysis, because then I would be able to see the bigger picture of their overall comic creation process.

Figure 10

Beth Working on Her Final Comic During Session Six

Narrowing Down Research Participant List

My next step involved narrowing down how many students I would be including in this analysis. I worked with a total of fifteen students over the course of the program, with ten of them having consistent attendance. I sorted the students into groups based on how many total sessions they attended because I thought that by choosing the students who attended all six sessions, they would also have the most work in their portfolio. This assertion ended up not being true because there were students who did not attend all six sessions whose portfolios were filled with work.

Out of the ten students who consistently attended the workshops, I narrowed down the list of participants again to six students whose portfolios showcased their proficiency in either the storytelling process, the artmaking process, or a combination of both. I wanted to make sure that the participants I chose for this data analysis had created work that incorporated and showcased both processes: story writing, and making art. Because of this, I narrowed down the participant list even further to focus on the portfolios of three students at the end of the next step, my formal analysis process. Those three students are Jason, who attended five sessions, and Beth and Tina, who both attended four sessions.

Sorting The Data into Buckets

After deciding on the artifacts I would analyze, and which participants I would focus on, I turned to a more formal data analysis process to comb through and sort the artifacts into deductive and inductive buckets. I utilized *The Good, The Bad, and The Data* by Sally Campbell Gelman (2013) as my main source for data analysis. The first step I took was to go through every piece of data I had collected during the research process and look for any repetitive themes or categories that I could label each piece of data with, which led to my initial list of big ideas, or,

my deductive buckets. The five most prevalent big ideas relating to my data were storytelling, comic stories and characters, multimodal learning, translating and reading images, and the creation process. Next, I looked for further themes or categories for the data in order to create a list of my inductive ideas. The inductive categories were program preparation, teaching, teaching materials, artifacts, and documentation.

Next, I studied the portfolios of my initial six participants, and wrote down what key artifacts were in each portfolio and any themes that stood out from those artifacts. I noted if their final work was a comic story or a character art piece. I compared the content of their written work to their artwork to see how the ideas transferred over from their writing to their artmaking. After spending time sorting and categorizing my data artifacts and placing them in their respective inductive and deductive buckets, I then used these results in my qualitative data analysis process to narrow down my participant list further to three: Jason, Beth, and Tina.

Portfolio Analysis: Jason

Jason was a student who clearly had a love for writing stories because his character and story worksheets were literally filled front and back with his ideas. He attended a total of five sessions and managed to work on two separate stories during this program. His first story idea revolved around a character inspired by the Alicia Keys song, *Girl on Fire*. I explained when he first pitched his story idea to me that we were trying to create original characters and stories. He insisted that this was just his inspiration for the story. During Session Three I learned that this wasn't exactly the case. His story was heavily influenced by an already existing comic story that was inspired by the Alicia Keys song, *Girl on Fire*. I discovered this when I found him drawing his character that looked exactly like the image on his phone he was referencing. He said that that was the *Girl on Fir*e character. After an explanation from him and a realization from me, I

pushed him to think of any other story ideas he wanted to explore in his comic that weren't related to a comic that existed already, and that if he really wanted to stay in the story world of this already existing character, he would need to have a character design and written story that was different and not a copy. It wasn't until the end of that day that he came up to me and said that he came up with a different story he wanted to talk to me about and asked for a blank set of character and story worksheets that he filled out before the next session (Appendices F-G).

Jason's second story showcases his interest in anime and therefore does include character tropes and vocabulary terms that are regularly associated with anime. Those terms are defined below:

Anime girl: This trope, as it relates to Jason's comic, refers to the way he visually depicts his main character. She has pigtails, big eyes, and wears a school uniform, which is one of the ways women in anime and manga are often depicted.

Waifu: The word loosely translates to "wife" in Japanese and is used to describe a female character who is the romantic partner of another character. She may showcase characteristics of doting on or serving the other character.

Weeb: A character who is depicted as dorky, nerdy, or awkward. They tend to be male and are often drawn wearing glasses and a button-down shirt.

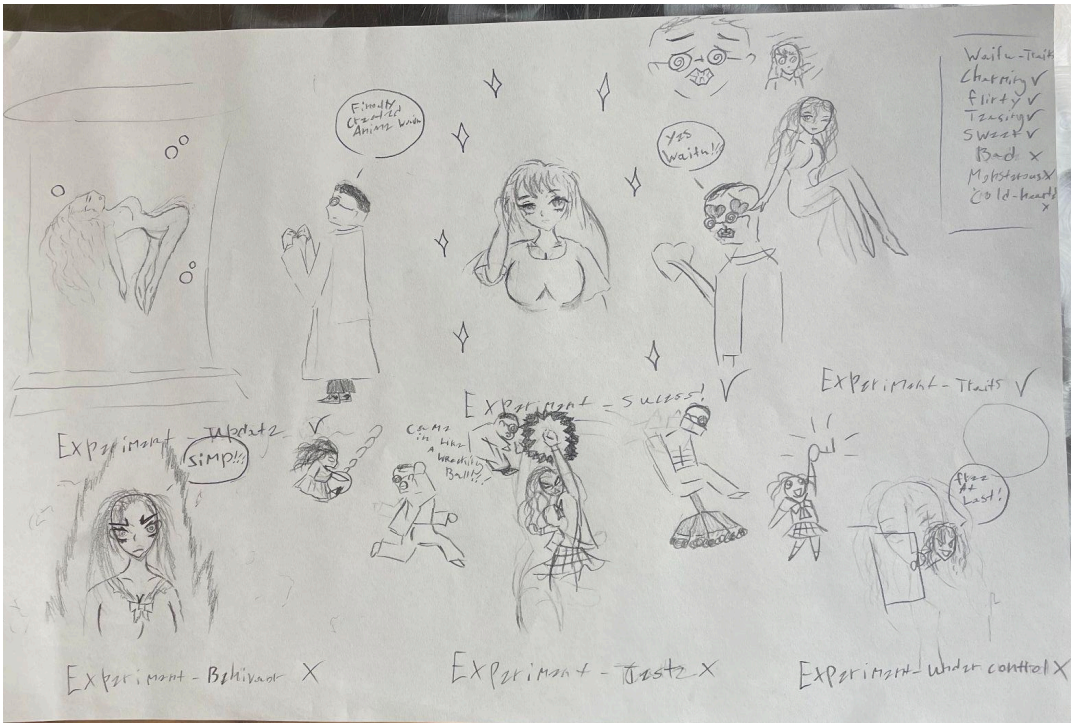
His story, in his own words, is about the oversexualization of women in anime. It follows an anime girl who was created in a waifu factory by a weeb scientist to serve him. During the creation process, something goes awry, which leads to the anime girl forming a conscience of her own. She breaks out of the experiment chamber she is in and attacks the weeb, her creator. The story concludes with the anime girl realizing that she can do anything and be anyone she wants, not just a waifu, which Jason narrated during his show-and-tell recording during the final

session. When he first pitched the idea of this story to me at the end of Session Three we had a relevant conversation about how he was describing the characters in his story and the importance of critically thinking about his depictions of these characters in order to avoid negatively stereotyping them.

Jason's work (Figure 11) showcases how he successfully incorporated one of his personal interests into his comic story about a topical social issue related to anime. It was clear to me that he also enjoyed writing and telling stories because he volunteered to rewrite his character creation worksheet and his story brainstorming worksheet for his second story idea, meaning he wrote out characters and stories twice. He also drew a completed second version of his final comic art because he wanted to make changes to the first.

Figure 11

Jason's Final Comic Story



Portfolio Analysis: Beth

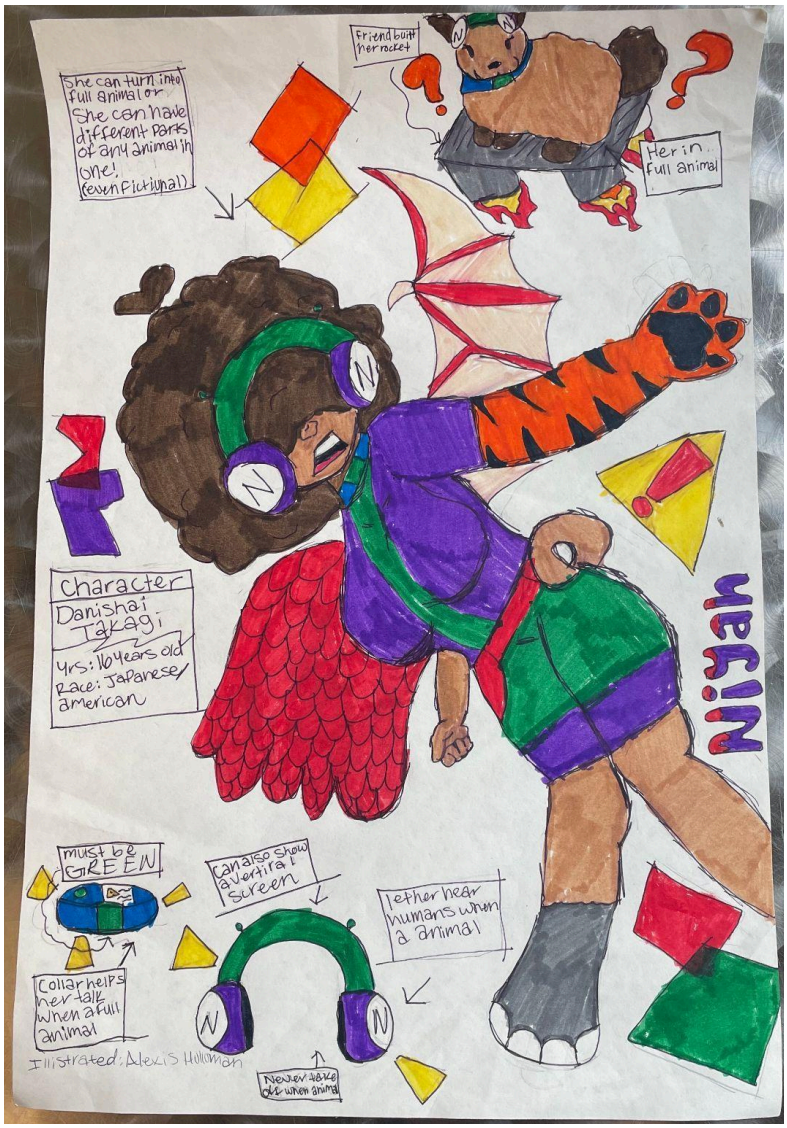
Beth was a part of the group of students who joined the program starting with session two, but she was picked up that day after only being with us for the very beginning of the lesson, about fifteen minutes. Overall, she was present for a total of four sessions. When Beth came into the classroom for our third workshop, she appeared to be eager to catch up on what she missed during the previous two sessions and even came in with a character and story idea ready that she wanted to explore and develop further (Appendix H). One thing I found very interesting about Beth's story creation process was how she utilized the option to record her story as a video. While I originally introduced the option of recording story ideas using my iPad as an option for Nick (pseudonym) to talk through his ideas without having to physically write them, I gave the entire class this option as well and had a few others take me up on the offer. I found Beth's recording intriguing because while the others told their story from the perspective of a narrator, she told her story from the point of view of her main character, Danishai. Her written story was detailed and written in first person, from the point of view of the character (Appendix I). This writing choice interests me because it shows how each student may interpret the comic creation process differently and may make a variety of artmaking and writing choices that differ from their peers. I did not specify that the comic stories needed to be written a certain way, I only provided them with the story building blocks and the story brainstorming worksheet, which provided the students with open-ended prompts. This allowed the students to interpret the instructions and create a story truly of their own creation.

Rather than use the comic panel style to tell her story, Beth chose to draw a full-color character design using markers and pen that incorporated elements of the story that surrounded her main character in the middle of the page. She shared her story during the show-and-tell

during the last session and narrated how each item or creature surrounding her main character related to her comic story (Figure 12). Beth's story is about a teenage girl, Danishai, who is forced to move to Japan and change her name as part of witness protection because there are villains that are after her for her powers. She was attacked by the villains when she was a baby, resulting in the loss of one of her eyes and a huge scar over that eye, which she covers up with her hair.

Figure 12

Beth's Final Comic Story



Portfolio Analysis: Tina

Tina was one of the two eighth grade students that took part in this program. She did not attend the last session, Session Six, because it was scheduled on a different day than our regular schedule. Because of this, I did not get to inquire further about her artmaking process and decisions in the same capacity as I did with Jason and Beth, and therefore I made more speculations about her artmaking choices and any meaning behind the content of her comic. While I was unable to get confirmation from Tina about this, I speculate that her story (Appendix K) was somewhat of a self-insert story. Self-insert stories allow the artist/writer to put themselves in a world they want to be in or allow them to explore feelings or experiences in a fictional world that they may be navigating in their actual lives as well. The main character shared the same name as her, and while some of the character's physical traits were superpower-related, such as the character's glowing heterochromatic eyes, there were some details that were the same as Tina herself, like her skin tone and hair (Appendix J).

Tina gave herself a huge task over the course of the four sessions she attended to create a full comic book, including a cover, as opposed to the single-paged comic episode I suggested that they do. I speculate this could be because of a few things. First, her story was very fleshed out and detailed and did seem like it would take more than just one page to tell the entire story. Second, Tina did enjoy comics and was engaged during our lesson during Session Four on the different physical and technical parts of a comic book. She said she wanted to make a cover for her comic and the pages, which I had no problem with. I noticed that after I introduced the other artmaking materials to the group, including markers, art pens, and charcoal, she chose to continue using graphite pencil for her comic. In the end, she was able to create a fully written

story, fleshed out characters, the comic cover page (Figure 13), and two full comic pages for her story (Figure 14).

Figure 13

Cover of Tina's Final Comic Story

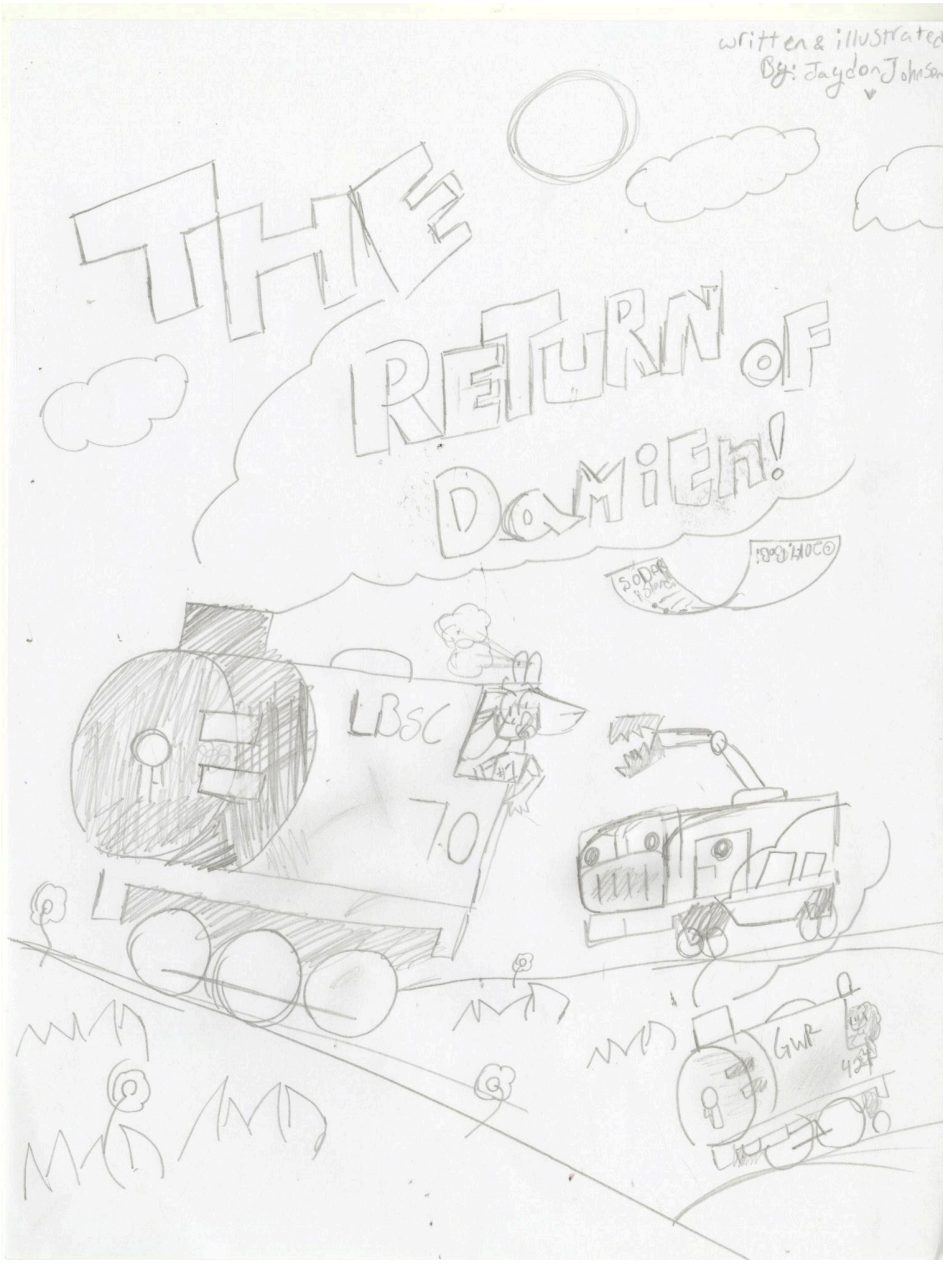


Figure 14

First Page of Tina's Final Comic Story

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Beginning The Findings Process: My Perspective

When it was finally time to identify my findings for this research after analyzing all my data, I was stuck. Staring at the vast expanse of my collected data as well as my analysis of the portfolios, I honestly couldn't make sense of it. So, I began writing every detail I thought was important for my findings chapter on sticky notes, hoping to organize my thoughts better. After creating a small mound of written-on sticky notes, I stuck them all to the wall next to my desk, covering the space with colorful squares containing ideas I prayed would turn into findings on their own. As I took a step backwards, surveying the scene, I expected a beam of light to shine down upon my wall of sticky notes and for a choir of angels to begin singing about how this was a brilliant idea. Instead, I got… nothing. "That didn't clarify anything! What does all this even mean?!" I thought to myself, exasperated. I began moving the sticky notes around, optimistic that perhaps that would make a difference. Once some of the sticky notes were grouped together, I surveyed the scene again, getting the same result as before. I began glaring at the sticky notes, my newfound enemies. "This would be so much easier if you could just talk to me!" I exclaimed. And that was when all hell broke loose (Figure 15).

Figure 15

Art Teacher Adventures, "When Sticky Notes Attack!"


THIS WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER IF YOU COULD JUST TALK TO ME!
MAYBE WE CAN HELP!
AHHHH!
I'VE FINALLY LOST MY MIND! MIGHT AS WELL GO WITH IT.
WE CAN HELP YOU SORT YOUR FINDINGS!
YEAH! THIS IS A GOOD START!
HMM... I THINK I COULD MOVE THIS ONE OVER HERE—
NO! YOU CAN'T CHANGE US!
THAT IS NOT TRUE! I NEED TO ALLOW FOR MY FINDINGS TO CHANGE AS I MOVE THROUGH THIS PROCESS!
INITIAL FINDINGS ARE RIGID AND FINAL!


FINE! YOU ASKED FOR IT!
THIS IS ONE STICKY SITUATION!
FINDINGS PILE
FINDINGS PILE
NOTE TO SELF: NEVER GET ON A STICKY NOTES BAD SIDE!

Findings Overview

While looking at how students use literacy and artmaking processes to create comics, two key findings emerged: 1) Offering students multiple modalities (writing, audio recording, oral storytelling, visual format) allowed them to engage with their stories in a way that led to a variety of end products; and 2) each comic correlated with a student's interest from the start which was developed differently through a range of modalities.

Facilitating Different Potentials through Comics

It is important when facilitating comic creation with students not to restrict how they create their comics, allowing for them to be able to select which modalities work best for their process. By employing this form of flexibility in how students go about their comic creation process, different potentials are allowed to emerge. If you only focused on having students fill out a story writing sheet like the one I used, and then had them visually replicate that story using a comic panel template, then you would be eliminating the potential for important story building processes. This includes opportunities to tell their story out loud as a process for reflection and assessment, and steps to elaborate on their story as they go about their creation process, potentially getting inspiration for new ideas. The result of allowing for flexible multimodal processes to happen in the comic creation process can be seen when comparing the work of Beth and Tina.

Tina chose to go the route of a more traditional comic story layout: cover page (Figure 13), a linear story told using text bubbles, and comic panels (Figure 14). Her creation process focused on writing out the story first, visually creating the characters second, and then putting them both together in her final work. On the other hand, Beth's final comic art (Figure 12) has her character as the focal point of the page, with visual and textual story elements surrounding

the character. She engaged with both written and audio recording processes to create her story, and also employed oral storytelling when sharing her story with me. While the modalities each student chose to engage with during their creation process was different, the outcome allowed them to create unique comic stories and original characters in a way that best suited their creative process and their ideas for their stories.

It was important to me to meet my students where they were at academically when it came to their reading and writing skills, because this allowed them to successfully transform the story ideas in their heads into their final written and visual work. This flexibility was facilitated by providing multiple modality processes that they could use when developing their story ideas: writing and audio recording. All the students were given the story brainstorming worksheet to write down their story ideas during Session Two, as well as the option to record their stories as a video on my iPad if they wanted to talk out their ideas out loud before writing them down or instead of writing them down. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I originally added the option for using the iPad for a specific student, Nick, before giving this recording option to the other students as well. I noticed during the first session that Nick had trouble reading and writing. While I never got confirmation from anyone at the school, I speculated that he read and wrote below his grade level. Nick voiced his trouble with writing while filling out his interest survey. After having a one-on-one discussion about his reading and writing skills with him, I came up with the idea of bringing my iPad with me to the next session so that he could record his story rather than write it.

By introducing this oral storytelling option for the students to document, brainstorm, and explore their initial story ideas with, another modality process was added for the students to build on their comic creation process. While this flexible brainstorming strategy was initially added for Nick and any other students who might struggle to write down their ideas, it became clear that

providing more than one way to record and build their stories allowed students to creatively explore their own story creation process in whatever way best suited them. Oral storytelling was also employed at the end of the program by both Beth and Jason, who narrated their comic pieces aloud to me during a show-and-tell opportunity in our last session giving them another chance to add to the meaning through verbal expression.

On their own, modalities offer varying possibilities, so when they are employed together, they are able to support one another, leading to further discoveries. In this stage of the comic creation process, multiple processes such as brainstorming and writing supported storytelling. This multimodal story creation process is shown in Beth's work (Figure 12) as well. Beth came into the program with an already existing story idea she wanted to develop further. She fleshed out her initial ideas further by filling out the story brainstorming worksheet and chose to record her story on the iPad. Other students who chose to utilize the iPad recording option for their story development told their story in third person, but Beth narrated hers in first person, from the perspective of her main character. This example shows how students interpret the comic creation process individually and make different choices than their peers. Which shows the importance of my flexible story recording guidelines because it allowed for the students to be able to explore and develop their stories in a way that best suited their creation process rather than giving them strict guidelines for how they were to record and develop their stories. I learned that giving the students these modality options for recording their stories allowed for their success in fully developing their stories.

How Students Embedded Their Interests into Their Comics

Students completed an interest survey during their first session so that I could learn more about their favorite superheroes and what kinds of comics they read and shaped the curriculum to

match their interests. Comparing the students' interest surveys with their final comic, I saw that their survey responses correlated with the subject matter of their final comic art. This supported my assertion that the comic stories that the students created correlated to their personal interests and suggests that knowing the student's interests at the start can help the teacher best guide the students in their comic creation. It also serves as a starting point from which the students can create their comic.

Jason's comic (Figure 11) showcases how his interests influenced his final comic. He shared his interest in anime and manga during a story brainstorming discussion we had in Session Three (B. Wise, personal communication, April 22, 2024). His story was about a social issue that he noticed in the genre he enjoys, anime. During our brainstorming conversation (B. Wise, personal communication, April 22, 2024) he talked about the social issue he wanted to address in his comic, which was how female characters in anime were often oversexualized in the way they were drawn and how they were depicted textually in their stories. Jason's interest in anime and manga also influenced the visual elements of the comic, which he drew in a manga art style. His story is about an anime girl who takes control of her own narrative and is able to make her own life choices by the end of the story. The progression of Jason's story is depicted visually (Figure 11) as the anime girl realizes she is trapped in a waifu factory, makes the decision to try and escape the factory, fights and defeats the weeb scientist that created her, and successfully escapes the factory. Jason developed his story through writing, drawing, and oral storytelling. He used these processes to guide his decision making, building on one idea to the next.

In summary, through my research, I found that both students' personal interests and comic-specific interests influenced the comic stories they crafted during this program. Students engaged with a variety of modalities when creating their comic stories such as writing, reading,

and oral presentation to build a story based on their interests. Then, they incorporated drawing techniques such as figure drawing, perspective drawing, and image composition in order to transform their written work into a visual story format. I also learned that providing flexible story recording strategies helped the students develop their stories in whatever way best suited their creative and academic needs.

Research Constraints

The results of this research include both methodological and research process constraints. As discussed in the After-School Program Setting section in Chapter 3, there were time constraints that limited time for my research. I only met with the participants a total of six times for 2 hours at a time. We met once-a-week four times and then twice during the fifth week. This meant that there was a significant chunk of time in between each artmaking session. This may have impacted the flow of ideas during the creation process and required the students to need to spend time during each session getting reacquainted with their work and where they left off last time before they could jump back into creating art.

The total number of participants for this comic arts program was 15 students, but only 10 of those came frequently enough to be able to comprehend and learn the comic creation process in full. The methodological limitations of this small sample size mean that while the findings from the comics that were created were significant, facilitating the comic creation process with a larger group of students may lead to different results and findings. I believe that future research on the comic creation process should be done through a comic arts program like the one I taught, making sure to recruit a larger group of students and to increase the frequency at which the sessions happen during the comic arts program.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

What Have I Learned?

This research project was born out of my personal love for comic stories and superhero characters, and my interest in exploring this content matter through an art education lens. As I cross the finish line of this research project, I feel that I have just begun my exploration of how to incorporate comics into the art curriculum. That being said, I have made a few key discoveries from what I consider my first step in this topic of research.

My stance on incorporating reading and writing in the art classroom is that no matter what, the subject of art should always be at the forefront and always be the subject that is taught first, with reading and/or writing playing a supporting role. The arts, and in this case, comics, serve as a motivating catalyst for wanting to write and create stories that are relevant. This is possible by using reading and writing as beneficial processes in facilitating the overall artmaking that students are doing. This is crucial to remember so that art doesn't become the secondary subject we teach in the art classroom. Creating comic stories inherently utilizes the writing process to fully develop a visual comic story. In my comic creation curriculum, the students used the written story creation process to brainstorm and "sketch" their comic storylines similarly to how a visual artist makes thumbnail sketches to brainstorm their artwork.

Creating a flexible and collaborative style of curriculum as part of my pedagogy was beneficial because it allowed me and the middle school students to work together during the process of choosing which specific superhero characters and comic genres would be included in the lessons. This led to the students feeling comfortable in showcasing their personal interests in their comic artwork, making the content relevant and increasing motivation. This is inherently in

line with what I think makes comic stories and superhero characters so appealing, which is that there is such a wide variety of genres and characters, allowing the reader/viewer to be able to find and engage with stories that match their specific interests. In order to successfully teach comic art creation, it is important that teachers allow space and flexibility for students to be able to show their own interests in their comic artwork. This includes the genre of manga and anime, which has a reputation in the art classroom as being an art style that many teachers often ban completely. I would suggest that if a student is interested in manga and drawing in that art style, teachers should incorporate a variety of manga art examples and find similar art style examples to show that student as a way to try and broaden their view on what the manga art style is and potentially inspire them to branch out in the art styles they replicate in their artwork.

Another discovery from this research relates to how the students explored world-building through their comic creation process. As defined in my first chapter, the definition of world-building is twofold for the purposes of this research: the actual making of a visual space or place on the page, and the imaginative literary creation process used to create an interesting, fully developed, consistent story foundation that can be built upon in order to tell a story (Presley, 2021). Watching the participants take their initial story idea and loose plan for the location and cast of characters, and then transform those ideas into a fleshed-out story world over the course of five weeks was amazing. The comic creation process utilized visual and textual storytelling simultaneously, allowing students to take the ideas in their head and develop the world they're creating in their comics. I believe that the comic creation process helps in facilitating and fostering this multimodal world-building process, allowing students agency in the art and stories they create.

The artwork that the participants created during this comic arts program is the result of successful world-building exploration. Jason's comic about an anime girl escaping a waifu factory (Figure 11) is a commentary on the oversexualization of female characters in anime, and shows how comic art can be used to voice opinions. Tina's original character she created during the program shared many similarities to Tina herself (Figure 18, Figure 19), including some physical traits and the name of the character. I think her comic allowed her to imagine a place where she felt she belonged. Beth's written comic story (Appendix I) about a teen girl who must run away to Japan and hide from the mafia was very well-thought-out and perhaps shows how the imagination is a tool for imagining other ways of being safe in a world that sometimes feels unsafe. All are examples of successful world-building exploration. These three comics are also examples of what can happen when students are not given strict parameters in how they must go about their comic creation process or what the result must look like. If a group of students were all given the same blank comic panel page and set of step-by-step instructions, limitations would be put on the students and their potential comic art from the very beginning. It is extremely important to not use narrow requirements when teaching students how to create comics to allow for the full potential of the creation process.

Significance for the Field of Art Education

This research topic is very timely and relevant as the conversation about literacy learning inclusion within non-academic class subjects progresses in Georgia as Rule 505-3-.03 is being implemented within pre-service educator programs (Georgia Professional Standards Commission, 2023), and as part of the continuing conversation on how educators can help confront the reality that children are reading and/or writing below grade level (Coggins, 2023). It is also timely given the unsettled nature of the world: ecological crises, school shootings, and

social media. Students need processes that allow them to process and express their concerns as well as their hopes and dreams.

As discussed at the beginning of this research paper in the social semiotics section in my introductory chapter, comics use visual imagery to tell a story. The storytelling created in *Hawkeye* (2012) #19 (Figure 2, Figure 4) heavily relies on the reader/viewer to see/read, consume, and interpret the images on the page in order to understand what is happening in the story, because there is minimal written text in this comic story. This is an example of how comics can be utilized as visual storytelling tools. This is important to consider when discussing what literacy learning looks like in a visual art classroom. It is important to have an emphasis on the visual art aspects of the content being taught when integrating lessons on storytelling, writing, or literacy in the art classroom setting.

Student engagement in learning is crucial when it comes to incorporating academic subjects into connection classes, such as visual art. This can be fostered by making students' interests a priority in the way you teach the content and in the climate you create in the classroom. It was important to me to learn what specific superhero characters and comic genres my participants enjoyed reading in their own personal time so that I could incorporate those stories and characters into the artmaking lessons I was teaching. This helped in facilitating positive engagement in the artmaking lessons and the comic creation curriculum as a whole. It is important to ensure that building a safe and creative space for exploration receives the same level of priority as student engagement. Creating a safe creative space allows students to be more likely to share their comic stories with others and take risks in their art making and story writing.

Further Recommendations and Questions

I chose to implement this curriculum with middle-school students partly because I initially presumed that teaching comic creation and storytelling writing to elementary school-aged children might be too difficult for them or above their grade level. I now believe that this presumption could be incorrect. The art of storytelling is for all ages. It is just a matter of altering the comic creation curriculum to be academically and developmentally appropriate for elementary school students. Younger children use their imagination and world-building skills when they play or create, so why wouldn't they be able to utilize that type of imaginative creation process to make their own superhero characters and comic stories? I think they could. I speculate that it would be extremely beneficial to explore this comic art research with lower grade levels. I would be especially interested in seeing how the superhero characters and comic stories that elementary school-aged students engage with influence the results of the collaborative curriculum style that I used for this research.

Another recommendation I have regarding teaching comics revolves around having a foundational understanding about comics. I believe that it is important to point out that my passion for comics translates to having a foundation of knowledge on the subject matter, which is beneficial for teaching the comic creation process. It is crucial for others that may not be as knowledgeable about comics, but are wanting to teach how to create comics, to do their research and become informed on the basics of the comic genre and the elements that make up the comic creation process. If that seems too daunting of a task because the world of comics is vast and seemingly never ending, an alternate suggestion would be to utilize students who have a preexisting understanding of comics to help assist in teaching other students how to create comics.

While my knowledge of comics greatly helped me in designing my comic arts program, there are two specific things about the way I structured my after-school comic arts program that I would want to change if I were to teach it again. Firstly, I would have liked to allow the students more time to work on their comics. My original program included once-a-week, two-hour-long workshops over the course of five weeks. While the participants were able to create their comics in that amount of time, I believe it would've been beneficial if we were able to meet multiple days in a row or over the course of a longer timeframe. While I did attempt to jam many different comic creation concepts in a short amount of time, I believe the students could have benefited if I were able to break up what I was trying to teach them into smaller, more manageable sections.

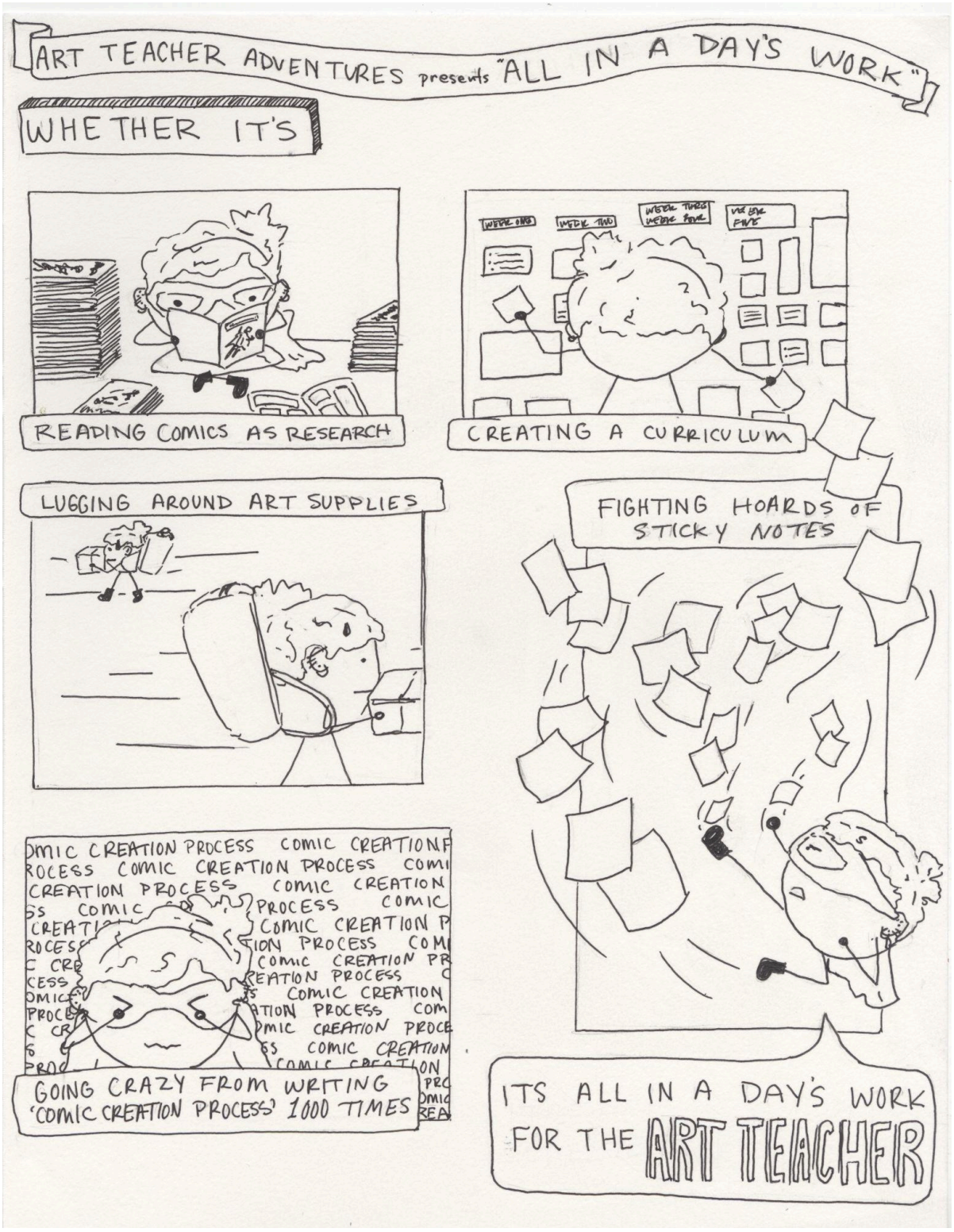
The second thing that I would change if I were to teach this comic art program again is that I would not put such an emphasis on teaching figure drawing or a more realistic style of drawing people to the students. This is a realization I had during my own comic creation process for this research paper as I was developing my "little comic blorbo" character. My own personal art style is not realistic nor do I enjoy drawing realistic figures when I am creating my own characters. I think I may have inadvertently stifled the creation process of my participants by suggesting parameters that their comic characters should be drawn using realistic humanoid proportions and the figure drawing techniques I taught them. I did provide step-by-step guides for a variety of comic drawing styles in the packets used for Session Three, because I taught them figure drawing on the very first day of this program and I think I may have made them feel like that was the one way they should be drawing their figures. Furthermore, focusing on drawing can be very difficult for some and might in fact get in the way of their creative process (Manifold, 2019). Looking at the final comic art of the three research participants I chose to focus on in my findings chapter (Figure 11, Figure 12, Figure 14), there is variety in the way in

which they all drew their characters. That being said, I still think that it would be beneficial to further incorporate teaching a wider variety of figure drawing styles when teaching comic creation, and to teach practical figure drawing only after sharing the packet with a variety of figure drawing styles.

Through this research, I hope to provide further evidence distinctive to the field of art education on the multimodal benefits of the inclusion of comics in the middle school art curriculum. By providing hands-on teaching of the subject matter and through interactions with the students throughout their story creation and artmaking process, I was able to explore the implications that student-led artmaking can have on visual storytelling through comics (Figure 16). I look forward to exploring this research topic further in any future research I may do surrounding comic art. And I hope that as we further explore ways to include literacy learning in the art classroom, the topic of comic creation is seen as an exemplary way to do this.

Figure 16

Art Teacher Adventures, "All In a Day's Work"


ART TEACHER ADVENTURES presents "ALL IN A DAY'S WORK"
WHETHER IT'S
READING COMICS AS RESEARCH
CREATING A CURRICULUM
LUGGING AROUND ART SUPPLIES
FIGHTING HOARDS OF STICKY NOTES
GOING CRAZY FROM WRITING 'COMIC CREATION PROCESS' 1000 TIMES
ITS ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR THE ART TEACHER


NOW, IF YOU DON'T MIND...
SUPPLY CLOSET
SUPPLY CLOSET
SUPPLY CLOSET
I HAVE AN ART CLASS TO TEACH!
SUPPL
CLOSE

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Appendix A

Comic Art Program Flyer

Appendix B

School District Photo & Video Consent Form: In English and Spanish

Clarke County School District
Better Together

PHOTO & VIDEO CONSENT FORM FOR
RESEARCH STUDIES CONDUCTED IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Please print.

I voluntarily grant to Olivia Carter (researcher/individual) permission to photograph or videotape my child while conducting research or student teaching in the Clarke County School District. Photographs or videotapes will be used for research, teaching, or professional-learning purposes only. The title of the study is

Effective dates will be from 03/01/2024 to 05/31/2024

Child's name: _____

Address: _____

School: _____

I certify that I am a custodial parent/guardian and have the right to grant permission for my child to be photographed or videotaped.

Parent's or guardian's signature: _____

Telephone number: _____

Address: _____

Today's date: _____

COPIES OF THIS SIGNED CONSENT FORM MUST BE SENT TO THE CHILD'S SCHOOL (FOR STUDENT FILES) AND TO THE GRANTS AND RESEARCH OFFICE BEFORE THE RESEARCH PROJECT OR STUDENT TEACHING MAY BEGIN.

Clarke County School District
Juntos Somos Mejores

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO DE FOTOGRAFÍAS Y VÍDEOS
PARA LOS ESTUDIOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN REALIZADOS EN EL DISTRITO ESCOLAR

Por favor, use letras mayúsculas.

Concedo voluntariamente a Olivia Carter
(investigador o indivíduo) permiso para fotografiar o grabar en vídeo a mi hijo/a mientras realiza una investigación o imparte clases en el Distrito Escolar del Condado de Clarke. Las fotografías o cintas de vídeo se utilizarán únicamente con fines de investigación, enseñanza o aprendizaje profesional. El título del estudio es

_____

Las fechas de aplicación serán de 03/01/2024 a 05/31/2024

Nombre del niño/a: _____

Dirección: _____

Escuela: _____

Certifico que soy el padre, madre o tutor y que tengo derecho a autorizar que mi hijo/a sea fotografiado o grabado en vídeo.

Firma del padre, madre o tutor: _____

Número de teléfono: _____

Dirección: _____

Fecha de hoy: _____

COPIAS DE ESTE FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO DEBEN ENVIARSE A LA ESCUELA DE SU HIJO/A (PARA EL EXPEDIENTE DEL ESTUDIANTE) YA LA OFICINA RESPONSABLE DEL PROYECTO DE INVESTIGACION ANTES DE QUE EL ESTUDIO O PASANTIA SE INICIE.

Appendix C

Assent Form for Participation in Research: In English and Spanish

Assent Form for Participation in Research
[Using Comics in the Middle School After-School Art Program to Promote Storytelling]

We are doing an art research study to learn more about the benefits of incorporating art-making with written story creation. We are asking you to be in this six-week art research study because you take part in the 21st Century Community Learning Program at Hilsman Middle School. If you agree to be in the study, you will take part in art-making sessions once a week on Monday afternoons for six weeks, where you will learn art skills and writing skills related to making comics. During this research we will collect written observations about your responses to art, comics, and the writing process for creating stories. We will take photos of you working on your art and your artwork itself. **This is only done so with expressed permission from you.** You can change your mind about this at any time during this research. There will also be **optional**, voluntary opportunities for you to be interviewed about the art you create. These interviews will be recorded using either audio or video. This choice is based on which format you are more comfortable with.

You do not have to say "yes" if you don't want to. No one, including your parents, will be mad at you if you say "no" now or if you change your mind later. We have also asked your parent's permission to do this. Even if your parent says "yes," you can still say "no." Remember, you can ask us to stop at any time. Your grades in school will not be affected whether you say "yes" or "no."

We will be using pseudonyms in our written work about this research, so your real name will not be used. Any photos, videos, or audio used to present this research will not include identifying markers of the participants, such as faces.

You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can contact Olivia Carter at ocarter@uga.edu

---

Name of Child: _____ **Parental Permission on File:** ☐ Yes ☐ No

(For Written Assent) **Signing here means that you have read this paper or had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign.**

Signature of Child: _____ **Date:** _____

(For Verbal Assent) **Indicate Child's Voluntary Response to Participation:** ☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature of Researcher: _____ **Date:** 02/23/2024

Page **1** of **1**

Formulario de Asentimiento para Participación en Investigación

[Uso de cómics en el programa de arte A4er-School de la escuela secundaria para promover la narración]

Estamos realizando un estudio de investigación de arte para aprender más sobre los beneficios de incorporar la creación artística con la creación de historias escritas. Le pedimos que participe en este estudio de investigación de arte de seis semanas porque participa en el Programa de aprendizaje comunitario del siglo XXI en la escuela secundaria Hilsman. Si acepta participar en el estudio, participará en sesiones de creación de arte una vez a la semana los lunes por la tarde durante seis semanas, donde aprenderá habilidades artísticas y de escritura relacionadas con la creación de cómics. Durante esta investigación, recopilaremos observaciones escritas sobre sus respuestas al arte, los cómics y el proceso de escritura para crear historias. Le tomaremos fotografías trabajando en su arte y en su propia obra de arte. Esto sólo se hace con su permiso expreso. Puede cambiar de opinión sobre esto en cualquier momento durante esta investigación. También habrá oportunidades opcionales y voluntarias para que te entrevisten sobre el arte que creas. Estas entrevistas se grabarán mediante audio o vídeo. Esta elección se basa en el formato con el que se sienta más cómodo.

No tienes que decir "sí" si no quieres. Nadie, incluidos tus padres, se enojará contigo si dices "no" ahora o si cambias de opinión más tarde. También hemos pedido permiso a tus padres para hacer esto. Incluso si tus padres dicen "sí", todavía puedes decir "no". Recuerda que puedes pedirnos que paremos en cualquier momento. Tus calificaciones en la escuela no se verán afectadas si dices "sí" o "no".

Usaremos seudónimos en nuestro trabajo escrito sobre esta investigación, por lo que no se utilizará su nombre real. Cualquier foto, video o audio utilizado para presentar esta investigación no incluirá marcadores de identificación de los participantes, como rostros.

Puede hacer cualquier pregunta que tenga sobre este estudio. Si tiene alguna pregunta más adelante que no se le ocurrió ahora, puede comunicarse con Olivia Carter en ocarter@uga.edu.

Nombre del niño: _____ **Permiso de los padres en el archivo:** □Sí□ No

(Para consentimiento por escrito)Firmar aquí significa que ha leído este documento o que se lo han leído y que está dispuesto a participar en este estudio. Si no desea participar en el estudio, no firme.

Firma del niño: _____ **Fecha:**_____

(Para consentimiento verbal)Indique la respuesta voluntaria del niño a la participación: □Sí □ No

Firma del Investigador: _____ **Fecha:** 02/23/2024

Appendix D

University of Georgia Parental Permission Form: In English and Spanish

University of Georgia Parental Permission Form
[Using Comics in the Middle School After-School Art Program to Promote Storytelling]

You are being asked to allow your child take part in an art research study. The information in this form will help you decide if you want your child to be in the study. Please ask the researchers below if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

Principal Investigator: *Dr. Lynn Sanders-Bustle, Art Education, bustle@uga.edu*

Co-Investigator: *Olivia Carter, Art Education, ocarter@uga.edu*

Your child is invited to be in this research study because they take part in the 21st Century Community Learning Program at Hilsman Middle School. We are doing this art research study to learn more about the benefits of incorporating art-making with written story creation. This will be done through a six-week comic curriculum where students learn how to draw, write, and create comic stories. During this program, I, Olivia Carter, will teach students the technical art skills needed to draw and create comic art and superhero characters, as well as the literary elements of story creation and world-building.

During the spring semester, for one six-week period, students will take part in art-making sessions once a week on Monday afternoons where they will learn art skills and writing skills related to making comics. If you agree to allow your child to be in the research study, your child will not be asked to do anything outside of these normal after-school program activities.

With your permission, we will collect written observations about your child's responses during the six-week program as well as photos of them working on their art and the artwork itself. With your permission, we will also conduct a voluntary interview with your child about the art they create. These interviews will be recorded using either audio or video. This choice is based on which format they are more comfortable with.

Participation is voluntary. Anyone can stop at any time without penalty. While the after-school program activities will continue, we will not collect information from or about your child to use in our research if you or your child want us to stop. The decision to take part or not to take part in the study will not affect your child's participation in the after-school program.

We will take steps to protect your child's privacy by replacing your child's name with a pseudonym. Any photos, videos, or audio used to present this research will not include identifying markers of your child, such as their face. We may publish articles and present the research at conferences but we will not publicly identify your child. We do not plan to share identifiable information with anyone who is not connected to this research study.

If you have any questions about the study, contact the Co-Investigator, Olivia Carter at ocarter@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at IRB@uga.edu or 706-542-3199.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study, please sign below:

Olivia Carter		02/23/2024
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Name of Child

Name of Parent/Guardian	Signature	Date

Please keep one copy and return the signed copy to the researcher.

Formulario de permiso de los padres de la Universidad de Georgia

[Uso de cómics en el programa de arte A4er-School de la escuela secundaria para promover la narración]

Se le pide que permita que su hijo participe en un estudio de investigación artística. La información en este formulario lo ayudará a decidir si desea que su hijo participe en el estudio. Pregunte a los investigadores a continuación si hay algo que no esté claro o si necesita más información.

Investigador principal: Dra. Lynn Sanders-Bustle, Educación Artística, bustle@uga.edu

Co-investigador: Olivia Carter, Educación Artística, ocarter@uga.edu

Su hijo está invitado a participar en este estudio de investigación porque participa en el Programa de aprendizaje comunitario del siglo XXI en la escuela secundaria Hilsman. Estamos realizando este estudio de investigación de arte para aprender más sobre los beneficios de incorporar la creación de arte con la creación de historias escritas. Esto se hará a través de un plan de estudios de historietas de seis semanas donde los estudiantes aprenderán a dibujar, escribir y crear historias de historietas. Durante este programa, yo, Olivia Carter, enseñaré a los estudiantes las habilidades artísticas técnicas necesarias para dibujar y crear cómics y personajes de superhéroes, así como los elementos literarios de la creación de historias y la construcción de mundos.

Durante el semestre de primavera, durante un período de seis semanas, los estudiantes participarán en sesiones de creación de arte una vez a la semana los lunes por la tarde, donde aprenderán habilidades artísticas y de escritura relacionadas con la creación de cómics. Si acepta permitir que su hijo participe en el estudio de investigación, no se le pedirá que haga nada fuera de estas actividades normales del programa después de la escuela.

Con su permiso, recopilaremos observaciones escritas sobre las respuestas de su hijo durante el programa de seis semanas, así como fotografías de ellos trabajando en su arte y la obra de arte en sí. Con su permiso, también realizaremos una entrevista voluntaria con su hijo sobre el arte que crea. Estas entrevistas se grabarán mediante audio o vídeo. Esta elección se basa en el formato con el que se sientan más cómodos.

La parcipación es voluntaria. Cualquiera puede detenerse en cualquier momento sin penalización. Si bien las actividades del programa aMer-school continuarán, no recopilaremos información de o sobre su hijo para utilizarla en nuestra investigación si usted o su hijo desean que dejemos de hacerlo. La decisión de participar o no en el estudio no afectará la parcipación de su hijo en el programa aMer-school.

Tomaremos medidas para proteger la privacidad de su hijo reemplazando el nombre de su hijo con un seudónimo. Cualquier foto, video o audio utilizado para presentar esta investigación no incluirá marcadores de identificación de su hijo, como su rostro. Podemos publicar artículos y presentar la investigación en conferencias, pero no identificaremos públicamente a su hijo. No planeamos compartir información identificable con nadie que no esté relacionado con este estudio de investigación.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, comuníquese con la co-investigadora, Olivia Carter en ocarter@uga.edu . Si tiene alguna queja o pregunta sobre sus derechos como voluntario de investigación, comuníquese con la Junta de Revisión Institutional (IRB) en IRB@uga.edu o al 706-542-3199.

Si acepta permitir que su hijo participe en este estudio de investigación, firme a continuación:

Olivia Carter		02/23/2024
Nombre del Investigador	Firma	Fecha
_____		
Nombre del niño		
_____	_____	_____
Nombre del padre/tutor	Firma	Fecha

Guarde una copia y devuelva la copia firmada al investigador.

Appendix E

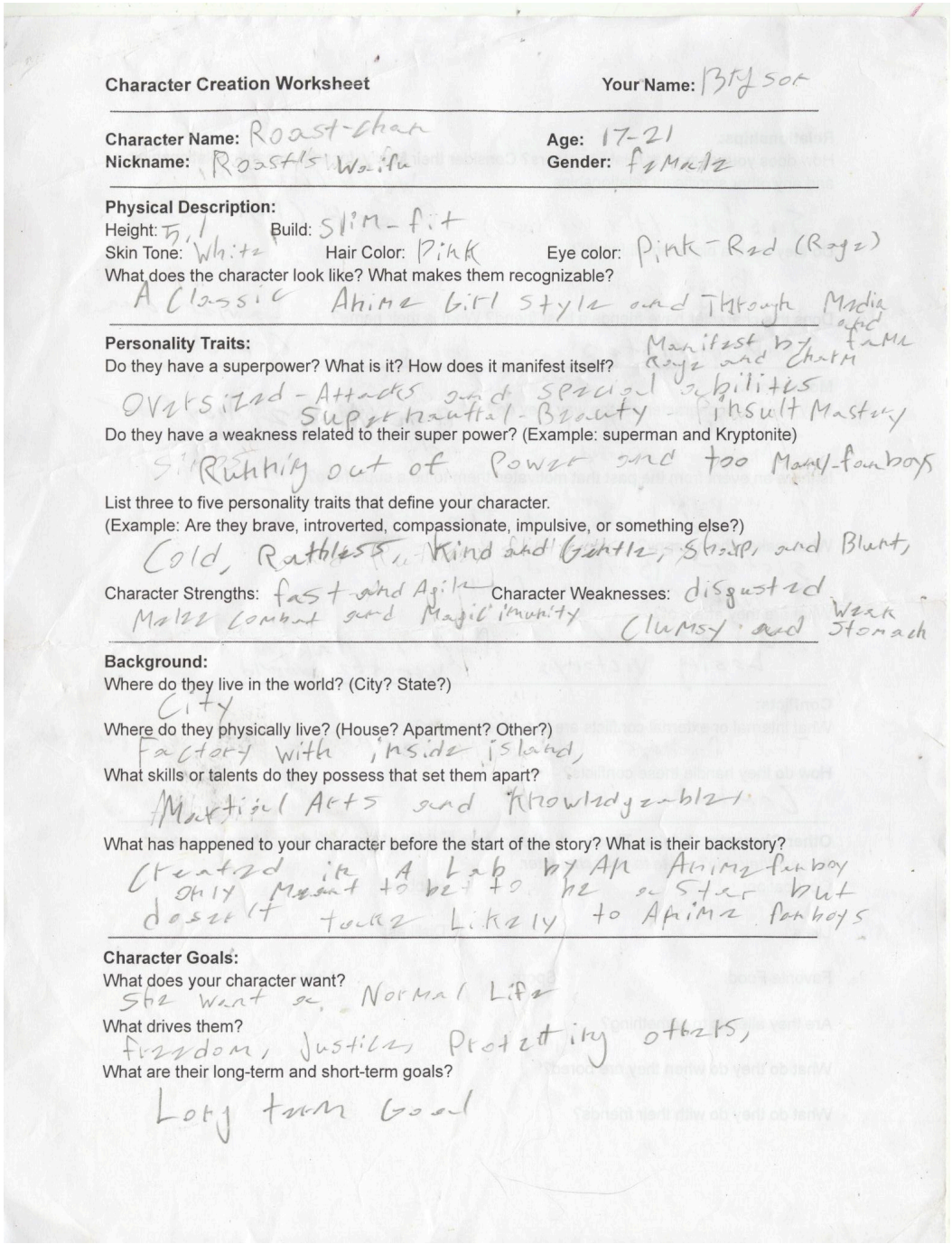
Student Attendance Sheet

Program Participants (*All names are pseudonyms.*)

Name	Grade	Age		Workshop Attendance					
Students who attended all 6 workshops: 3				1	2	3	4	5	6
Meagan Webber	6th	11		X	X	X	X	X	X
Nick Piastri	7th	13		X	X	X	X	X	X
Sarah Carr	6th	12		X	X	X	X	X	X
Students who attended 5 workshops: 4									
Max Stokes	6th	12		X	X	X	X	X	
Jason Reddy	8th	14		X	X	X		X	X
Chance Green	6th	11		X	X	X		X	X
Ben Jackson	6th	12		X	X		X	X	X
Students who attended 4 workshops: 3									
Toby Swift	6th	12		X	X	X			X
Tina Jones	8th	13			X	X	X	X	
Beth Lynn	6th	12			X	X	X		X
Students who attended 3 workshops: 0									
Students who attended 2 workshops: 2									
Craig Smith	7th	13			X				X
Leah Watson	7th	13			X	X			
Students who attended 1 workshop: 3									
Taylor Moore	8th	N/A			X				
Walker Brown	6th	N/A			X				
David Miller	6th	N/A			X				

Appendix F

Jason's Second Character Worksheet



Character Creation Worksheet **Your Name:** Jason

Character Name: Roast-chan **Age:** 17-21
Nickname: Roast's Waifu **Gender:** Female

Physical Description:
Height: 5,1 Build: Slim-fit
Skin Tone: White Hair Color: Pink Eye color: Pink-Red (Rage)
What does the character look like? What makes them recognizable?
A Classic Anime Girl Style and Through Media and Fame

Personality Traits:
Do they have a superpower? What is it? How does it manifest itself? Manifest by Rage and Charm
Oversized-Attacks and special abilities
Supernatural-Beauty - Insult Mastery
Do they have a weakness related to their super power? (Example: superman and Kryptonite)
Ruthless out of Power and too Many-fanboys
List three to five personality traits that define your character.
(Example: Are they brave, introverted, compassionate, impulsive, or something else?)
Cold, Ruthless, Kind and Gentle, Sharp, and Blunt,
Character Strengths: fast and Agile Character Weaknesses: disgusted
Melee Combat and Magic Immunity Clumsy and Weak Stomach

Background:
Where do they live in the world? (City? State?)
City
Where do they physically live? (House? Apartment? Other?)
Factory with inside island,
What skills or talents do they possess that set them apart?
Martial Arts and Knowledgeable
What has happened to your character before the start of the story? What is their backstory?
Created in A Lab by An Anime fanboy only Meant to be to be a Star but doesn't looks Likely to Anime fanboys

Character Goals:
What does your character want?
She Want a Normal Life
What drives them?
freedom, Justice Protecting others,
What are their long-term and short-term goals?
Long term Goal

Appendix G

Jason's Second Story Brainstorming Sheet

NAME: Bry son wise

CHARACTER STORY BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

Write ideas for each part of your story in the boxes below.

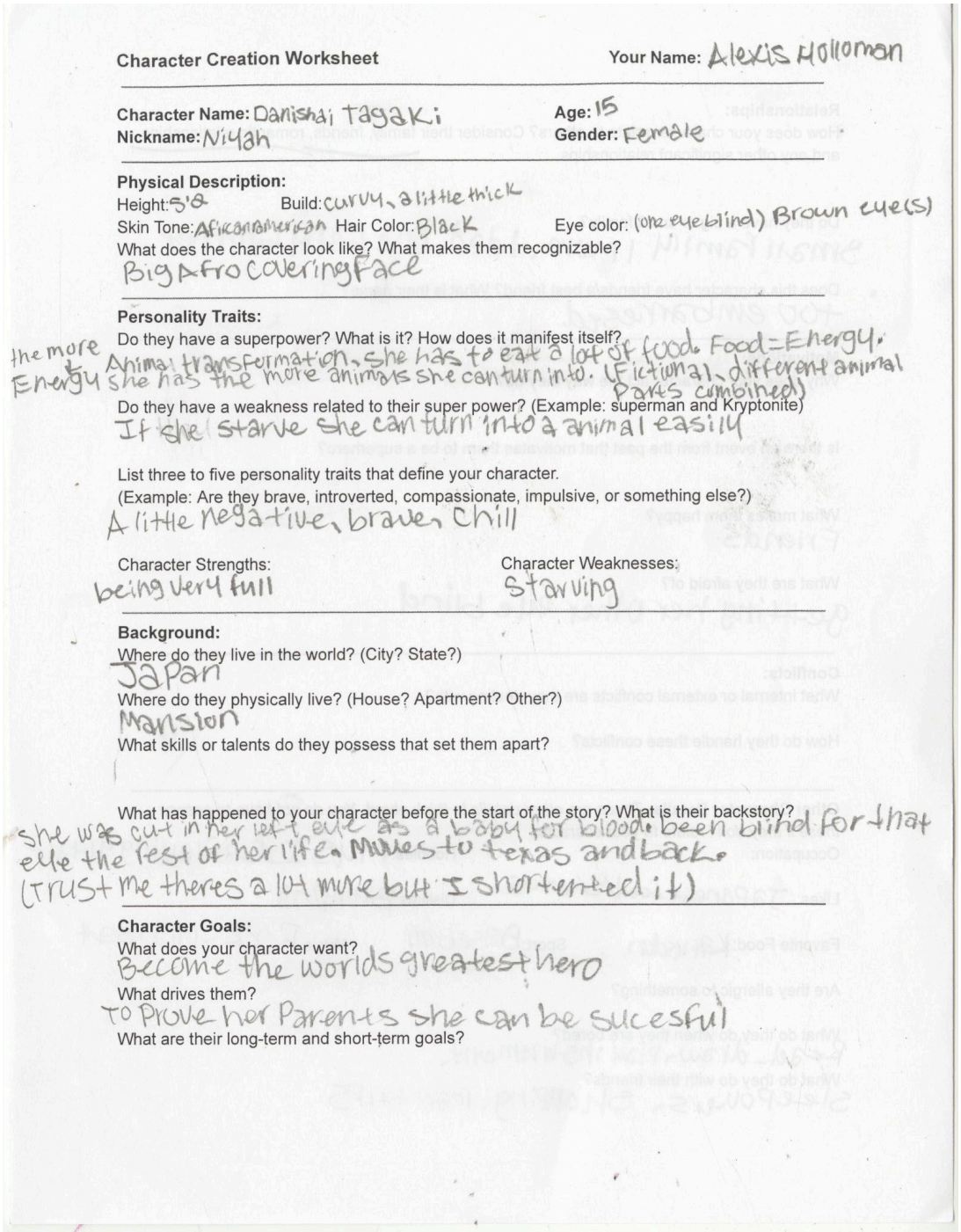
Introduction to superpowers How will you show the reader how the character got their powers?	**Beginning: Set the scene**
A path of Rage and Pure Angers	it All Starts with a Lonely old Anime fanman Who Lives Alone until he decide to use his intelligence to Make a factory of Anime Girls soon she was invented.

Middle: What happens in the story?
She's Running her Role As An Anime Girl participating in Live streams and Anime shows & Reverse harem series with Manga and everything, she's soon take a Break to enjoy her life with boyfriend and sisters,

Climax Moment:	**Ending:**
The Anime fanboys have had it and Run A dystopian empire putting all the Anime Girls in danger until Roast-chan Goes on her quest to defeat!	As soon as her quest is completely finished she Returns to her Normal Life with her friends and family and goes on Adventures to stop fanboys,

Appendix H

Beth's Character Worksheet



Character Creation Worksheet Your Name: Alexis Holloman

Character Name: Danishai Tagaki **Age:** 15
Nickname: Niyah **Gender:** Female

Physical Description:
Height: 5'8 Build: curvy, a little thick
Skin Tone: Africanamerican Hair Color: Black Eye color: (one eye blind) Brown eye(s)
What does the character look like? What makes them recognizable?
Big Afro covering face

Personality Traits:
Do they have a superpower? What is it? How does it manifest itself?
Animal transformation, she has to eat a lot of food. Food=Energy. the more Energy she has the more animals she can turn into. (Fictional, different animal parts combined)
Do they have a weakness related to their super power? (Example: superman and Kryptonite)
If she starve she can turn into a animal easily

List three to five personality traits that define your character.
(Example: Are they brave, introverted, compassionate, impulsive, or something else?)
A little negative, brave, Chill

Character Strengths: being very full
Character Weaknesses: Starving

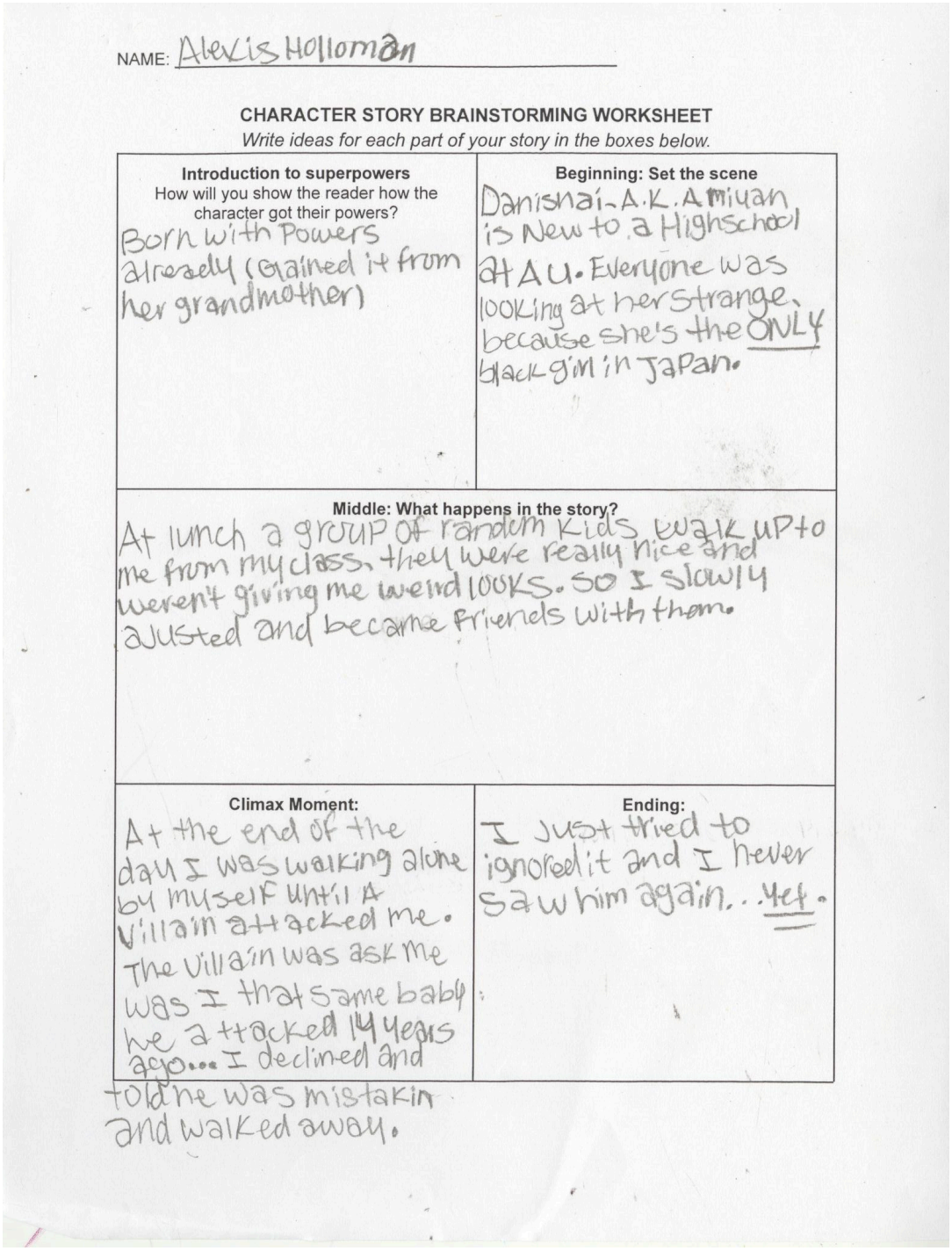
Background:
Where do they live in the world? (City? State?)
Japan
Where do they physically live? (House? Apartment? Other?)
Mansion
What skills or talents do they possess that set them apart?

What has happened to your character before the start of the story? What is their backstory?
she was cut in her left eye as a baby for blood. been blind for that eye the rest of her life. Moves to texas and back.
(TRUST me theres a lot more but I shortened it)

Character Goals:
What does your character want?
Become the worlds greatest hero
What drives them?
To prove her Parents she can be sucesful
What are their long-term and short-term goals?

Appendix I

Beth's Story Brainstorming Sheet



NAME: Alexis Holloman

CHARACTER STORY BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

Write ideas for each part of your story in the boxes below.

Introduction to superpowers
How will you show the reader how the character got their powers?

Born with Powers already (Gained it from her grandmother)

Beginning: Set the scene

Danishai-A.K.A Miyan is New to a Highschool at AU. Everyone was looking at her strange, because she's the ONLY black girl in Japan.

Middle: What happens in the story?

At lunch a group of random kids walk up to me from my class. they were really nice and weren't giving me weird looks. so I slowly adjusted and became friends with them.

Climax Moment:

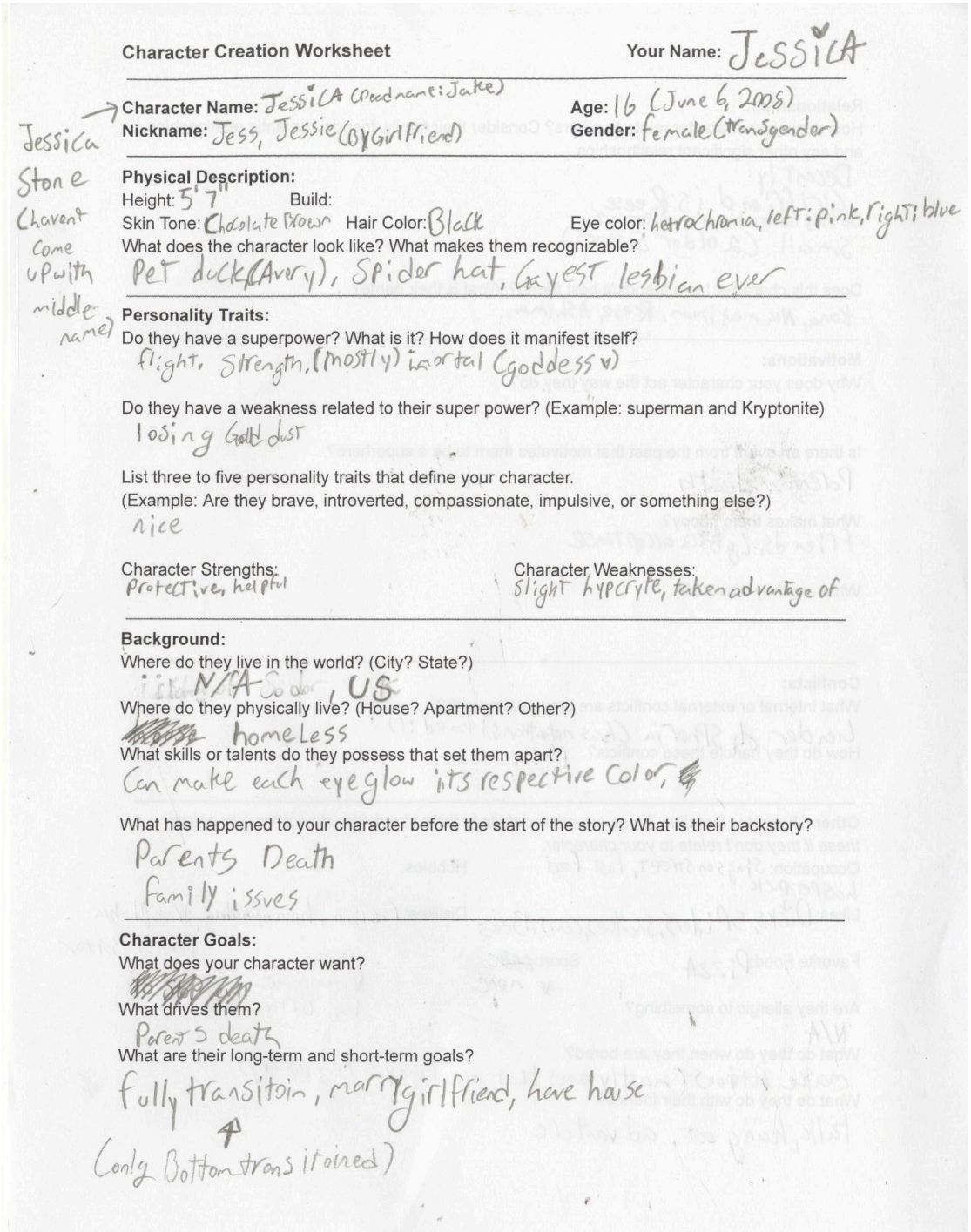
At the end of the day I was walking alone by myself until A villain attacked me. The villain was ask me was I that same baby he attacked 14 years ago... I declined and told he was mistakin and walked away.

Ending:

I just tried to ignored it and I never saw him again... Yet.

Appendix J

Tina's Character Worksheet



Character Creation Worksheet **Your Name:** JeSSiCA

Character Name: JessiCA (real name: Jake) **Age:** 16 (June 6, 2008)
Nickname: Jess, Jessie (GF/Girlfriend) **Gender:** female (transgender)

Jessica Stone (haven't come up with middle name)

Physical Description:
Height: 5'7" Build:
Skin Tone: Chocolate brown Hair Color: Black Eye color: heterochromia, left: pink, right: blue
What does the character look like? What makes them recognizable?
Pet duck (Avery), Spider hat, Gayest lesbian ever

Personality Traits:
Do they have a superpower? What is it? How does it manifest itself?
flight, strength, (mostly) immortal (goddess v)

Do they have a weakness related to their super power? (Example: superman and Kryptonite)
losing Gold dust

List three to five personality traits that define your character.
(Example: Are they brave, introverted, compassionate, impulsive, or something else?)
nice

Character Strengths:
protective, helpful

Character Weaknesses:
slight hypocryte, taken advantage of

Background:
Where do they live in the world? (City? State?)
N/A, US
Where do they physically live? (House? Apartment? Other?)
homeless
What skills or talents do they possess that set them apart?
Can make each eyeglow its respective color,

What has happened to your character before the start of the story? What is their backstory?
Parents Death
family issues

Character Goals:
What does your character want?
What drives them?
Parents death
What are their long-term and short-term goals?
fully transition, marry girlfriend, have house
(only Bottom trans itoined)

Appendix K

Tina's Story Brainstorming Sheet

NAME: Jessica Johnson

CHARACTER STORY BRAINSTORMING WORKSHEET

Write ideas for each part of your story in the boxes below.

Introduction to superpowers How will you show the reader how the character got their powers?	**Beginning: Set the scene**
(Born with them) Learns to use them around age 15-16	at school w/ friends & other supporting characters romours of Damain (villan) returning

Middle: What happens in the story?

Damien puts the community in danger (wanting to take gold dust & dominate Main, supporting & side/By characters)

Climax Moment:	**Ending:**
Jessica, Nia, Matthew, Kona & James are chased by Damien*	Damien is defeated via Bridge collapse, Then is turned to sludge By Jasmine (Jessica's older sister) ↑ not oldest

*They get in a couple of trains to save & protect gold dust, gets chased after.

Appendix L

Links to Program Handouts: Worksheets, Slides, and Packets

Interest Survey, Session One

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_lkkRnTgr1eRV5abJGK1LsjCNQ3q3fvs8xapKkt2ce4/edit?usp=sharing]

Session One Slides

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/16FnQUmRFNgRYtjjjgOEWgy5DQRUqgCPUA3VUZCgByhU/edit?usp=sharing]

Character Creation Worksheet, Session One

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gLzurKyefOI81boq6heJufrNtJYvVeMii3fH70Tw8EE/edit?usp=sharing]

Session Two Slides

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1OvnwWwyClpqq448om299zDuzZN2p1pCpcGKwdPjWYZE/edit?usp=sharing]

Guided Notes, Session Two

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/10_w555ls_z6ulRUjev07EacP7conFo7umEcLDSIGkMk/edit?usp=sharing]

Character Story Brainstorming Worksheet, Session Two

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WJYhy2sjXtgoreqwu_YwSettu31rnHXfTbCq6Nqf2QM/edit?usp=sharing]

Slides Packet, Sessions Three-Six

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BKnvX8igGTriOIAsRVG1khSUZHTHvx9UqchRvaJreeM/edit?usp=sharing]