

COMIC BOOKS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

BAM!
POW



WORKSHOP OVERVIEW:
Students will learn to create and design their own one-page comic books addressing social issues relevant to them. Afterwards, they can turn their work into animated short films using Mozilla's free online video editor, Popcorn Maker.

LENGTH:
5-6 hours or a full day.

MATERIALS:
#2 pencils (HB)
white paper or card stock
erasers
black and blue pens
black markers
rulers, tape and scissors

TECH REQUIREMENTS:
computer with internet access
and web-browser
scanners or phone cameras

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Creating comic books is an ideal and creative way to reach teenagers. This workshop engages young people with digital media and allows them to create characters and stories that address social issues relevant to them and their communities. This curriculum fits easily into school and after-school programs and also can be used at community center and NGO programs.

SKILL LEVEL: Beginner



PRIYA'S SHAKTI



PART 1: WHY?

Students receive an overview of the workshop. Social issues relevant to the students are discussed, along with how comic books can creatively express their points of view and develop awareness.

LENGTH:
60 minutes

STEPS:

1. Instructor gives overview of the workshop and describes expectations for student work.
2. Instructor leads a breathing and stretching warm-up and an ice-breaker activity to get students relaxed and engaged. Students introduce themselves to each other.
3. The entire group brainstorms some social issues in their schools and communities. The instructor writes the topics on the board or on a piece of chart paper with the question "Why are these issues important to you?"
4. Each of the students picks one social issue he or she wants to explore in his/her comic.

POSSIBLE SOCIAL ISSUES TO DISCUSS:

Gender equality, representation of women in the media, bullying, domestic and gender-based sexual violence, AIDS education, racism, gun violence in schools, "isms" and similar topics.

DISCUSSION:

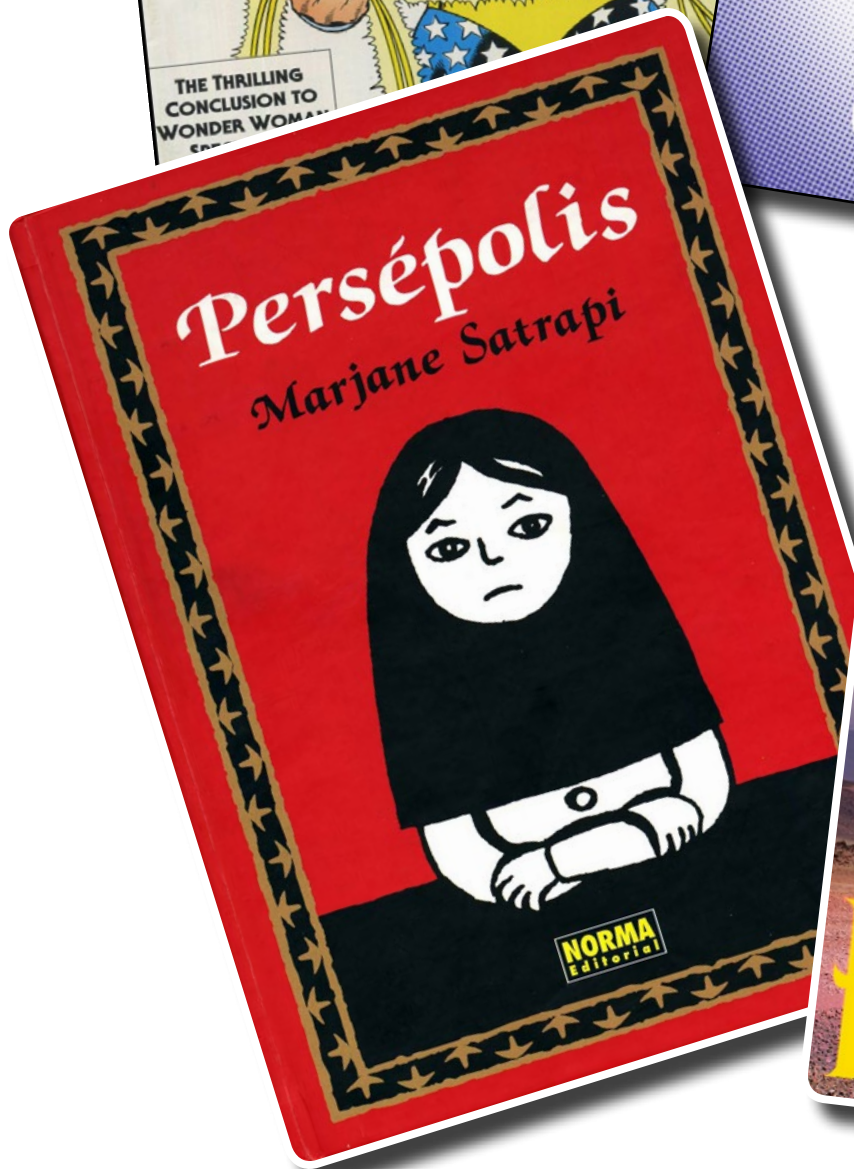
Comic books are very diverse. Some have superheroes like Batman, Superman or Wonder Woman, while others focus on real people like a little girl who comes of age against the backdrop of a revolution in the graphic novel, "Persepolis."

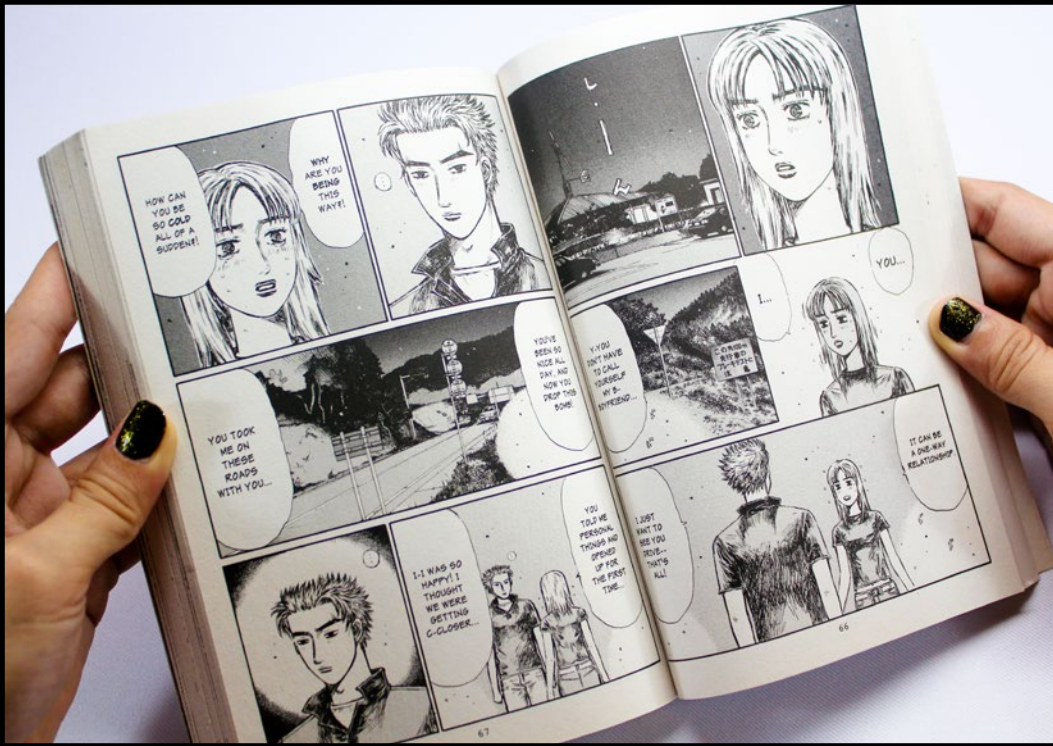
All comic books have illustrations, a story and a central character.



QUESTIONS:

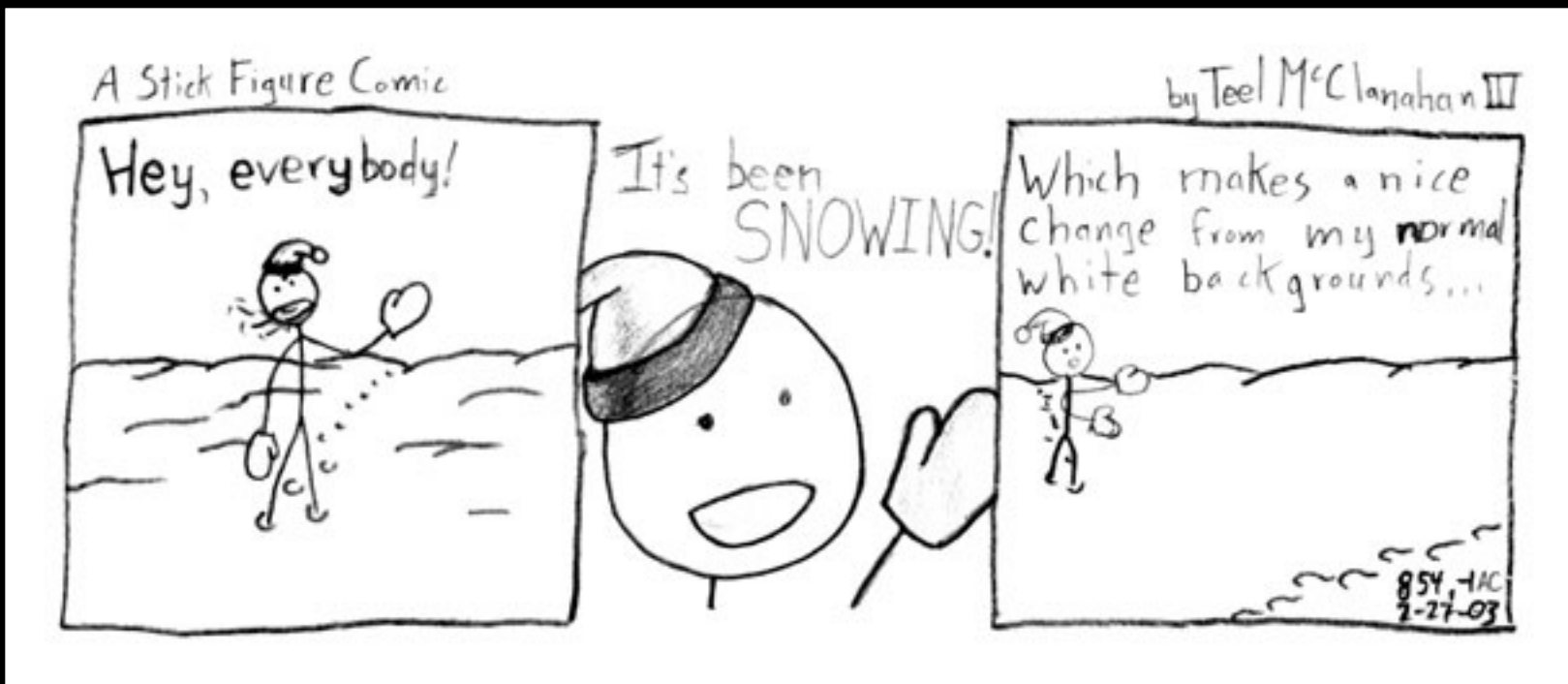
1. Who is your favorite superhero and why? Why would you create a superhero to fight people's problems?
2. Can comic books be about regular teenagers? Give some examples and why they are unique.
3. Who is the main character in your comic book? Is it you? What issue will you focus on? How will your character overcome or address the problem?





DIFFERENT STYLES OF COMIC BOOKS:

There are many different styles of telling a story in comic books. Popular genres range from Japanese manga (left) to simple stick characters (below) by Teel McClanahan III. All tell a story using panels. **Comic books are visual stories**, so there are interactions between the different panels on each of the pages.



FUMETTI:

Comics do not have to be drawn with pencils on paper. Today, lots of comic books are created with computers using software like Adobe Photoshop. Some comics are a series of photos or movie stills with speech balloons. One classic example is *Star Trek* (next page). These comics are called fumetti (Italian for "little puffs of smoke") after the speech balloons.

CAPTAIN'S LOG, STAR DATE 4626.7

LT. UHURA HAS REPORTED A
SIGNAL OF UNDETERMINED
ORIGIN...

ANY LUCK
NARROWING DOWN
THAT TRANSMIS-
SION SOURCE,
LIEUTENANT?

NO, SIR.
I'VE NEVER SEEN
A SIGNAL LIKE
THIS BEFORE.

I DO NOT THINK
MISS UHURA WILL HAVE ANY
GREATER SUCCESS,
CAPTAIN. THE NATURE OF
THE SIGNAL IS SUCH THAT IT
DEFIES ANALYSIS BY
CONVENTIONAL MEANS.

HOWEVER, BY
MEASURING WHERE THE
SIGNAL IS NOT COMING
FROM, I BELIEVE I MAY
HAVE ISOLATED THE
SOURCE.

JIM...
IT'S DELTA
VEGA.

...DELTA
VEGA...

DELTA VEGA?
THAT IS OUT BY
THE GALACTIC RIM.
WHAT COULD
BE THERE?

SOMETHING
I'D RATHER NOT
HAVE TO DEAL
WITH AGAIN!

CAPTAIN...
WE'RE NOT
GOING
TO...?

DO WE HAVE A
CHOICE,
MR. SULLY?

MAKE YOUR
COURSE FOR
DELTA
VEGA.

PART 2: WHO?

Students explore character design and learn the basic techniques for drawing figures.

LENGTH:

60 minutes



STEPS:

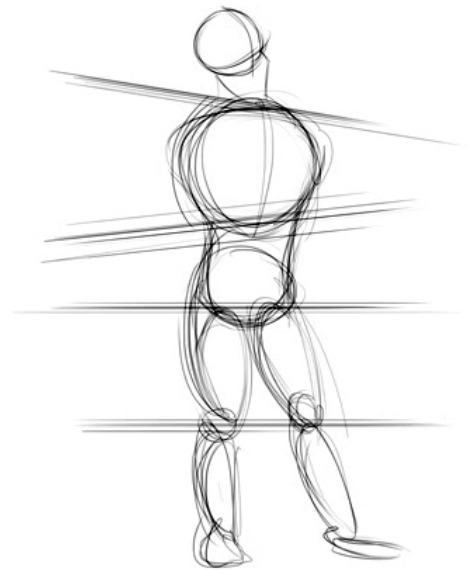
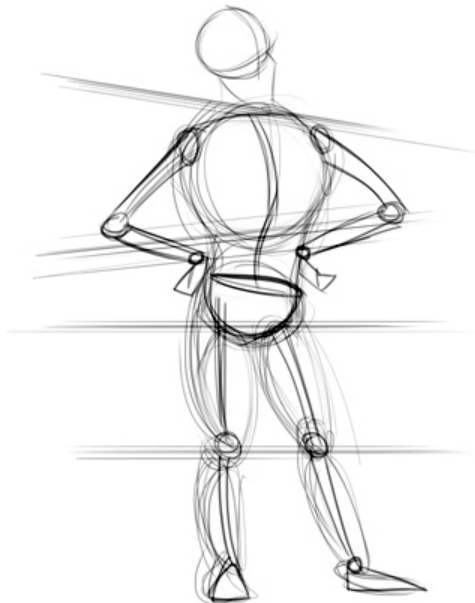
1. The instructor leads a simple lesson on drawing the human body (See the module below.).
2. Students are broken up into pairs, and each student draws another. If time permits, pair students with different partners and continue the exercise.
3. Have the students draw different facial gestures to add range to the expressions represented.

HOW TO DRAW A PERSON

By Carlos Gomes Cabral

STEP 1:

We will start by building the head and body with rounded shapes. Proportion is the most important factor to consider in building a cartoon character. The artist should keep in mind the relative size of the body parts, because, based on them, we'll define the structural features of our characters. It's common practice among designers to use **pear shapes**--or similar objects--to build the body's structure, because of the association that generates inside everybody's head. Along with the proportions, we added a few directional lines throughout the character to guide us in relation to his bodily stance.



STEP 2:

We will then add the lines that simulate the joints of skeleton. Notice here that we've drawn a common posture for a cartoon hero where the body weight shifts to just one leg. It's important to mark the hip area in the format of a bowl, because it is easier to see the movement. This movement in the hips is essential to add dynamism to the posture.

STEP 3:

Finally, we will include the details of the face and the muscles of our character. To build the muscles you'll need to have some basic knowledge of anatomy. Otherwise it will be difficult to add the right amount that the character needs. The gestures and physical characteristics of your characters must be clear even without any dialogue or scene orientation.



STEP 4:

Once you've defined the whole person, we will add some clothing. By adding the costumes and ideal accessories, we have achieved a great final result. Keep a sketch of the character because he or she will need to be replicated in different postures and movements throughout the comic book. Later we will go into inking and removing the sketch's lines.



PART 3: HOW?

Students practice the basics of storytelling from scripting the comic book to composing each panel. They explore the following questions: How many panels do I draw on each page? How do I connect each panel to the others? How do I get to the point of my story quickly? Students design the panels using movie-style concepts like close-up, long shot, and placing background on the page simply and easily.

LENGTH: 60 minutes

STEPS:

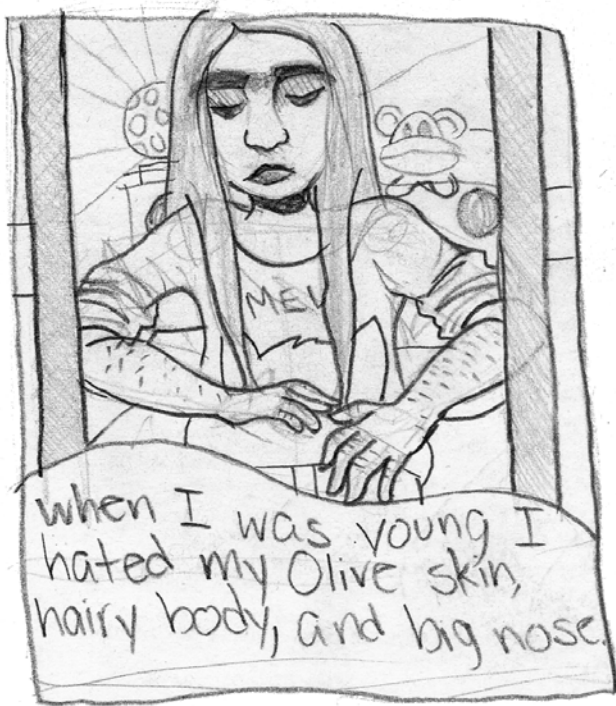
1. Students write out their script before drawing. They determine how many panels are required to tell the story as well as what each panel will reveal and the dialogue for the panel (See the module on the next page.).
2. Students draw the panels with a ruler and do rough sketches of the story in each panel with their pencils.

WRITING A COMIC BOOK SCRIPT

Before drawing their comic books, the students need to script their stories. Consider: What will each panel tell us? How will the panels connect to tell the entire story? **If they have personal stories, those are best and will be easier to script.**

The first panel normally sets up the character and environment. In Jade's comic book (below), we learn that she is a teenager uncomfortable with her looks who is sulking in her bedroom. The middle panels go further into the story and the problems she is dealing with in her daily life. In her case, it is the unfair representation of women in the media. The last panel shows the results or conclusion of her problem and how Jade will or will not address it. Below are her comic and script. Notice how the captions and speech bubbles are presented in each panel. If possible, text should be reduced or used sparingly. **Let the visuals tell most of the story.**

After their scripts are written and approved by the instructor, the students can begin by drawing their panels using their pencils and rulers before roughly sketching the story in each panel.



PANEL 1:

Medium shot: Jade is her bedroom looking into a mirror. She is displeased with her looks. Her shirt is rolled up to reveal her hairy arms.

Caption: When I was a young, I hated my olive skin, hairy body, and big nose.

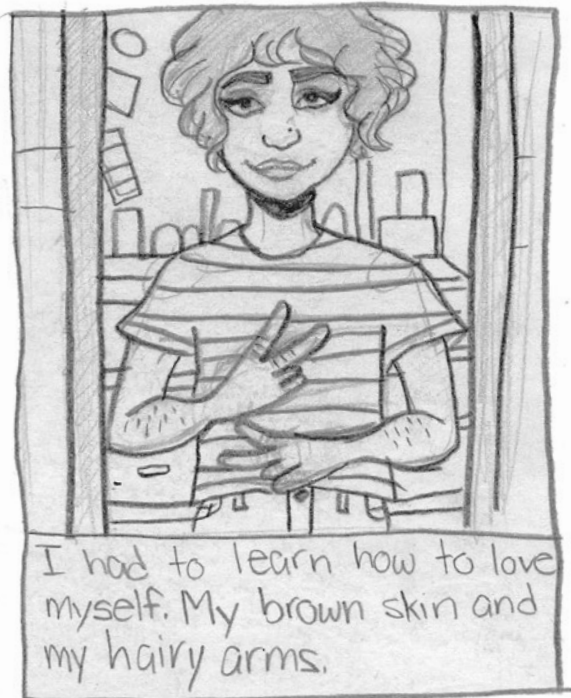


PANEL 2:

Point-of-view: From Jade's view, she is looking at some fashion magazines.

Voice Bubble (Jade): I wish I looked like her!

Caption: I was conditioned into thinking European features were the standard of beauty. I wished I had white skin and a slender nose.



PANEL 3:

Medium shot: Jade is her bedroom looking into a mirror again, but this time she is comfortable with her looks.

Caption: I had to learn how to love myself. My brown skin and hairy arms.



PANEL 4:

Close-up: Jade pinching her nose. Her eyes are cross-eyed.

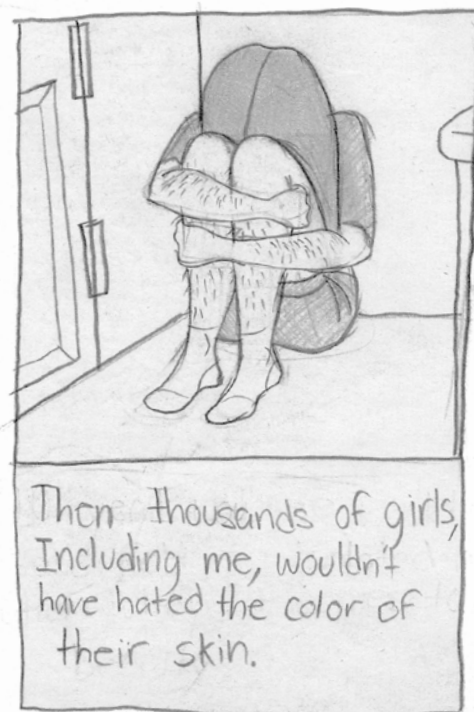
Caption: I still struggle accepting my nose. I wax my brows, shave my legs, and try to fit in as much as I can.



PANEL 5:

Medium Shot: Different fashion magazines and a beautiful singer on TV.

Caption: If only people showed all races are beautiful. If only we had more **representation** in the media.



PANEL 6:

Medium Shot: Jade hunches in a corner with her head between her knees, looking sad.

Caption: Then thousands of girls, including me, wouldn't have hated the color of their skin.



PART 4: WHAM!

Students finalize their comics and discuss the techniques needed to finish their work: lettering, balloon placement, darkening the lines and erasing pencil marks.

LENGTH:
120 minutes

I AM A
SPEECH
BALLOON

STEPS:

1. Everyone is given time to work on their comic books.
2. Add captions and voice balloons. A caption is drawn in a box and provides additional information that the drawings is not conveying, while voice balloons are dialogue spoken by the characters. Example is shown.
3. Thought bubbles are internal dialogue -- what the character is thinking. They are usually drawn like clouds. Example is shown.
4. When the comic book is finalized, use the black marker to trace over all of the lines and text to make it permanent. Then remove the pencil marks with the eraser.



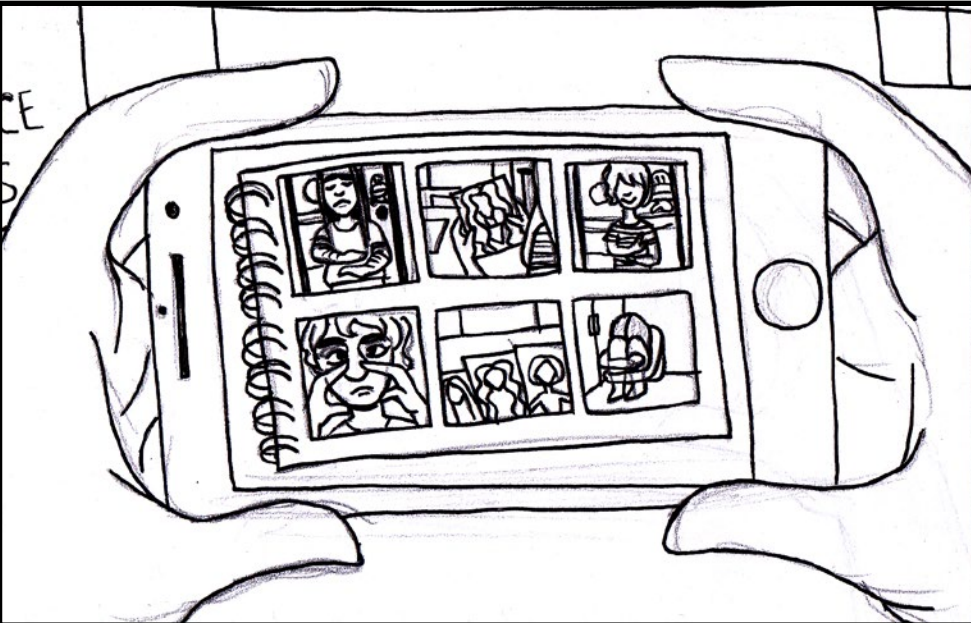
I AM A
THOUGHT
BALLOON

SURVEY & ASSESSMENT:

Students complete survey questions, and the instructor assesses the outcome of the workshop. These questions can be posed in a formal written survey or informally as a discussion.

LENGTH: 15 minutes

- What did you like best about today's workshop and why?
- What did you find challenging and why?
- What was something new that you learned today?
- What did you learn about the social issue that you depicted?
- How will use your comic book to educate your friends, family and community?
- Do you have any suggestions about how we might improve today's workshop?
- Optional: What is your opinion of Mozilla's Popcorn Maker?



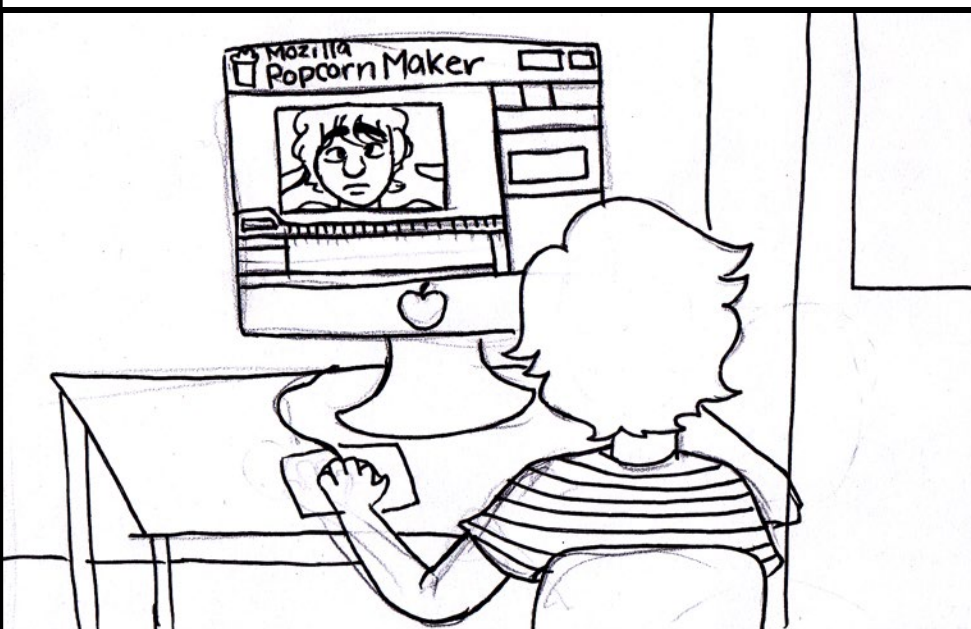
PART 5: WOW!

Using Mozilla's free video editor, Popcorn Maker, students turn their comic books into animated films and share them online with their friends and family.

LENGTH:
60 minutes

STEPS:

1. Before teaching Popcorn Maker, become familiar with its capabilities and play around with it. It is lots of fun and easy to learn.
2. Scan or take a photo of each panel in the comic book. Plan ahead because it might take some time to scan all of the images.



STEPS:

3. Login to Mozilla's Popcorn Maker: <https://popcorn.webmaker.org/>
4. Copy the links that were generated in step 2 into the "Create New Media Clip" window, and the comic book panels will appear in the time line.
5. Save the images online in a free cloud-based service like Dropbox, Microsoft's One-drive or Google Drive. Generate links for each image by right-clicking the image and select "share" or something similar.

CREDITS:

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