Lesson 1 – What is a graphic novel?

**Learning objectives:**

- To understand what a graphic novel is, and to be able to identify the conventions of the format.

**Resources:**

- Student booklets (extract from Fish-Head Steve!), Features of a Graphic Novel worksheet, Plan your Graphic Novel worksheet.

**Starter:**

- On the board, write ‘What is a Graphic Novel?’ Invite students to bullet point what they think a graphic novel is and discuss their ideas.
- You might like to ask them what they think the difference is between a graphic novel and a comic book. On page 21 of the student booklet, Tony Lee explains the difference - you could ask students to find this and write the definition in their own words.

**Development:**

- Using the Features of a Graphic Novel worksheet - ask students to cut out and pair the graphic novel terms with their definitions.
- In pairs, ask students to think about why we might look at graphic novels in an English lesson - what can we learn from a graphic novel as opposed to a play or traditional novel? Who might benefit from studying a text in graphic novel form?
- Now, as a class, look at the Fish-Head Steve! extract in detail. What is happening? Who might this graphic novel appeal to? Why?
- Ask students to write a brief explanation of what they think has happened to cause the problem the characters find themselves in, using clues from the pictures to help them. Students could also think about how the author has combined images and words to create humour.
- Explain that over the course of this unit of work, as well as looking at a variety of graphic novels, students will be creating their own graphic novels. Ask students to think about what they would like to write about. Explain that some graphic novels deal with everyday stories, some deal with completely fantastic ideas – students could flick through the student booklet to get an idea of the different styles and genres. Encourage them that the sky really is the limit! Students should bullet point five ideas - no more than a couple of sentences for each idea.
- Students should pick one they like and decide on a name for their graphic novel, filling out this section of the Plan Your Graphic Novel worksheet - they could work either in pairs or individually.

**Plenary:**

- Ask students to form small groups and to share with each other their planning process; how they have come up with ideas and what inspired them. You might consider putting some discussion prompts on the board to help.
- One student from each group should feed back on their group’s discussions to the whole class.
# Lesson 2 - Creating character

## Learning objectives:

- To understand how images and words can be combined to create character.

## Resources:

- Student booklets (extracts from *Smile* and *Stormbreaker: The Graphic Novel*), Plan your Graphic Novel worksheet, pencils, paper.

## Starter:

- Start by recapping from the last lesson - give students one minute to write down as many features of graphic novels as they can. As a class, go through the answers on the board.

## Development:

- Together, read through the extracts from *Smile* and *Stormbreaker*, pointing out the key features of graphic novels as you go - you might like to encourage students to label the features in the booklets or on photocopies. Discuss with students their initial reactions to the two extracts - which appeals to them more? Why? Who would they recommend each extract to and why?

- In pairs, ask students to draw up a chart to compare the two main characters, Raina and Alex. They should think about their appearance, way of speaking, attitude and behaviour. Which of these do they know about because of the images, and which do they know from the words?

- One member of each pair should move to sit with someone else. These new pairs should then share their thoughts about the two characters. Prompt them to discuss what they think might happen next to each character.

- Have two large pieces of paper, each one labelled with the name of a character, stuck to a wall. Ask each student to write one word that they think describes each character on the relevant piece of paper. You could then discuss this as a class, thinking about how the characteristics were portrayed in the graphic novel.

- Leading on from this, students should start to think about the characters from their own graphic novel. Ask them to come up with some adjectives to describe their main characters and list them on their planning sheets, encouraging descriptions of personality and appearance. There is also space on the sheet for students to sketch and label their characters.

## Plenary:

- Students should share one of their characters - either in small groups or with the class. They may choose to do this through hot seating or a show-and-tell. Prompt them to explain where their inspiration for the character came from and how they fit in with the storyline they are planning.
Lesson 3 - The structure of graphic novels

**Learning objectives:**

- To understand how structure is used to tell a story in a graphic novel.

**Resources:**

Photocopy of extract from *Amulet: The Stonekeeper* cut into panels, student booklets, dictionaries, plain paper, pencils, Blu Tack.

**Starter:**

- Individually, ask students to bullet point five things that make a good story, in order of importance. Then share these, and as a class come up with a list of the five things all good stories should have.

**Development:**

- Ask students to produce a list of elements that they might expect to find in a successful fantasy story.
- Give small groups of students the cut out panels from *Amulet* and ask them to try and put the story in the correct order. How did they decide what order it should go in?
- Give out the student booklets, and ask students to turn to the extract from *Amulet* (p26). Did they get the order right?
- In pairs, students now read the extract. Make sure students understand that there is very little dialogue in this piece. Ask them to reflect on how the narrative is moved forward using images instead of words.
- Students should now plan three new boxes for one of the extracts they’ve already looked at - one to show what happened before the extract and two to show what they think happens next. For example, what are Emily and Navin hiding from at the start of the extract? Where do they go after they jump? Encourage creativity in student responses.
- Students should then draw these, using graphic novel conventions. This can be done either individually, in pairs or small groups as before. If working in groups, A3 paper should be used.

**Plenary:**

- Get students to pin their stories up on the wall with a sheet of paper for feedback. The paper should have two headings – ‘What was done well?’, and ‘What could be done better?’
- Ask the class to go and look at each one, writing a comment on the paper under each heading. Students can then reflect on their work - what did they do well, and what could they improve next time?
Lesson 4 – Comparing plays and graphic novels

Learning objectives:

• To understand how stories can be adapted from another source to tell the same story through images.

Resources:

Extract from The Tempest (play); student booklet (extract from Manga Shakespeare: The Tempest), pencils, Plan Your Graphic Novel worksheet.

Starter:

• Ask students to look at the play extract and write down one word to show how they feel about it – this could be on a piece of paper, a mini-whiteboard or the board at the front of the class.
• Select a few students to explain why they chose this word. Show students the Manga Shakespeare extract. How do they feel about this? Is it easier/interesting/better? Why?

Development:

• Ask students to consider how the same story is shown through the two media. They should make a list of the differences between the play script and the graphic novel. Make sure that students understand that the artist has chosen to replace words with images.
• Look in detail at the graphic novel extract; how does the artist use images and language to tell the story? Is it an effective way of re-telling a story? Is it easy to understand?
• In pairs, ask the students to read both extracts again, writing notes about how the characters are presented and how tension/excitement/a sense of danger is created in the graphic novel. Do they feel the same emotions when reading the play extract? Does the use of black and white in the graphic novel add or detract from these feelings? Make sure students can explain their answers, using prompts if necessary.
• Students should then look at their planning so far and make rough notes - these could be as simple as a series of bullet points - for each panel, detailing what they will draw in each one. They should be able to explain their choices and how they will use images to give the reader the detail we usually associate with descriptive language.

Plenary:

• Ask students to mind map the ingredients that are needed for a reader to successfully understand what is happening in a graphic novel. Discuss in pairs how they are going to apply these ingredients to their own work. What do they need to keep in mind when creating their own graphic novel? Ask each pair to feedback one idea to the class.
# Lesson 5 – Mood and setting in graphic novels

## Learning objectives:
- To understand how mood and setting are established in a graphic novel.
- To create their own short graphic novel.

## Resources:
Student booklets (extract from Outlaw: The Legend of Robin Hood plus other extracts already studied), Plan Your Graphic Novel worksheet, paper, coloured pens and pencils, Post-it notes.

## Starter:
- As a class, ask students to read through the extract from Outlaw and make a note of the way in which colour is used to set the tone of the story. What genre is it? Who would it appeal to? Why?

## Development:
- Ask students to pick another of the extracts already studied and compare it with Outlaw (an interesting comparison might be Fish-Head Steve! or Smile). Students should look at different aspects such as colour, theme and language.
- Now ask students to read through all the extracts and identify who they think each extract appeals to. They should consider how the drawing style of each, the language, the use of colour and even typography could be used to appeal to a particular type of person.
- Students should think about their own graphic novel - what is the theme? Who would they like to read it? How can colours, images etc. help this?
- Explain to students that they will be drawing together all of their planning from the previous four lessons to create their own short story using graphic novel techniques.
- Recap all the key techniques for students and explain that you expect to see at least three used in their own work.
- Reiterate that it is the storytelling that is important, not whether students can draw!
- Students should now work on creating their own graphic novels – this may require another lesson, or could be continued for homework.

## Plenary:
- Ask students in pairs or small groups to discuss their graphic novels. Encourage them to talk about what they enjoyed and felt their strengths were.
- To finish, give each student a Post-it note and ask them to write one word to sum up their experience of this unit; as they leave the room, they can stick it on the door.
Play Script

Extract from The Tempest

by William Shakespeare

Act 1 Scene 2

Prospero: Hast thou, spirit,
   Perform'd to point the tempest that I bade thee?
Ariel: To every article.
   I boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,
   Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
   I flamed amazement: sometime I'd divide,
   And burn in many places; on the topmast,
   The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,
   Then meet and join. Jove's lightnings, the precursors
   O' the dreadful thunder-claps, more momentary
   And sight-outrunning were not; the fire and cracks
   Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
   Seem to besiege and make his bold waves tremble,
   Yea, his dread trident shake.

Prospero: My brave spirit!
   Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil
   Would not infect his reason?
Ariel: Not a soul
   But felt a fever of the mad and play'd
   Some tricks of desperation. All but mariners
   Plunged in the foaming brine and quit the vessel,
   Then all afire with me: the king's son, Ferdinand,
   With hair up-staring,—then like reeds, not hair,—
   Was the first man that leap'd; cried, 'Hell is empty
   And all the devils are here.'