Assignment

Project 3: Information Comics

Using the Comic Life software, compose a 4-6 page info comic that uses dialogue and images to situate and dramatize the concept you analyzed in Project 2.

We have focused so far on the academic essay and the importance of making clear arguments through clear writing, sharpening concepts and their connections through lean, active sentences, coherent paragraphs, and an overall structure that builds toward concluding insights, questions, or recommendations.

At the same time, we have seen that info comics' visual narratives can translate specialized knowledge into common everyday situations and thereby appeal to *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos* in subtle yet powerful ways: thus, *It Takes a Village* embodies the concept of culturally competent care for Aboriginal women in ways that a scientific article simply cannot.

However, essays and info comics also share many traits, such as tackling conceptual material, incorporating multiple perspectives, and providing choices and recommendations. Essays usually cite different authors' perspectives, while comics often stage different perspectives through characters. Essays present logical alternatives, whereas narratives present characters' behavioral choices situated in specific situations.

In this project, you will apply what you've learned about info comics and essay writing to experiment and create your own info comics. You will need to decide how to translate your conceptual analysis into an engaging narrative. The basic steps:

1. Decide on a scenario to situate key elements of your conceptual analysis: use 2-4 characters with one or more scenes that stages the struggle/drama of your concept.
2. Write a 350-500 word text with character dialogue (for speech bubbles) and narration (for narrator boxes).
3. Draw a simple but complete storyboard with panels, characters (stick figures are fine) and text.
3. Next find copyright-free images online for characters, setting, and props and save into one folder.
4. Bring text and images into Comic Life and compose your visual narrative. Tweak text and images.
5. Export as PDF and print drafts either in B/W or color to share with friends and family

Regarding characters: what characters can best embody your issue as protagonists, antagonists, helpers, and hinderers? Also, information comics target specific audiences, not just school children, but adults and researchers. Your audience here: fellow students and professors and/or friends and family.

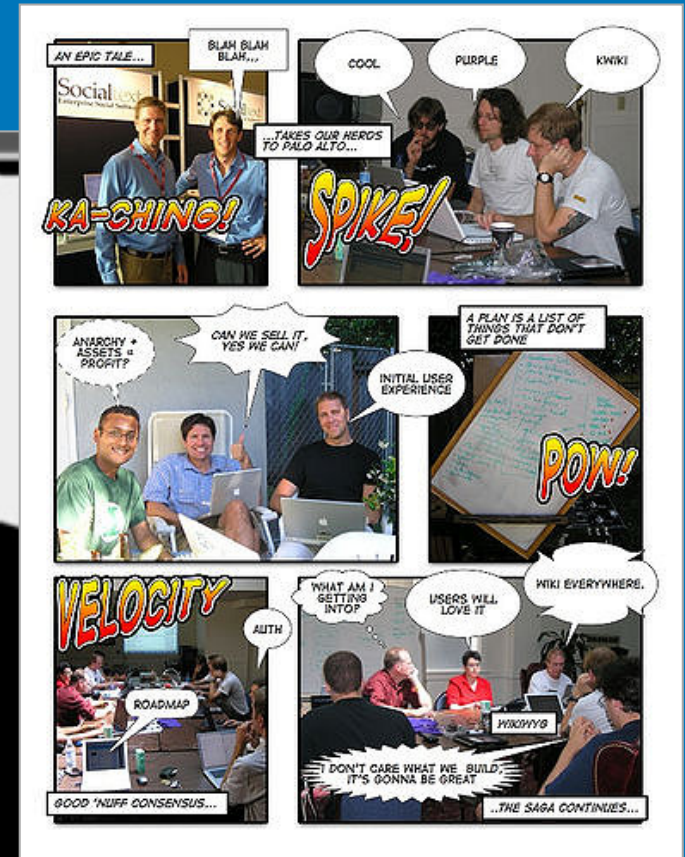Use Creative Commons or Google Image Search tool to filter for reusable images.

We will hold workshops on dialogues, Comic Life, and narrative sparklines that will provide additional guidance on creating your info comics.
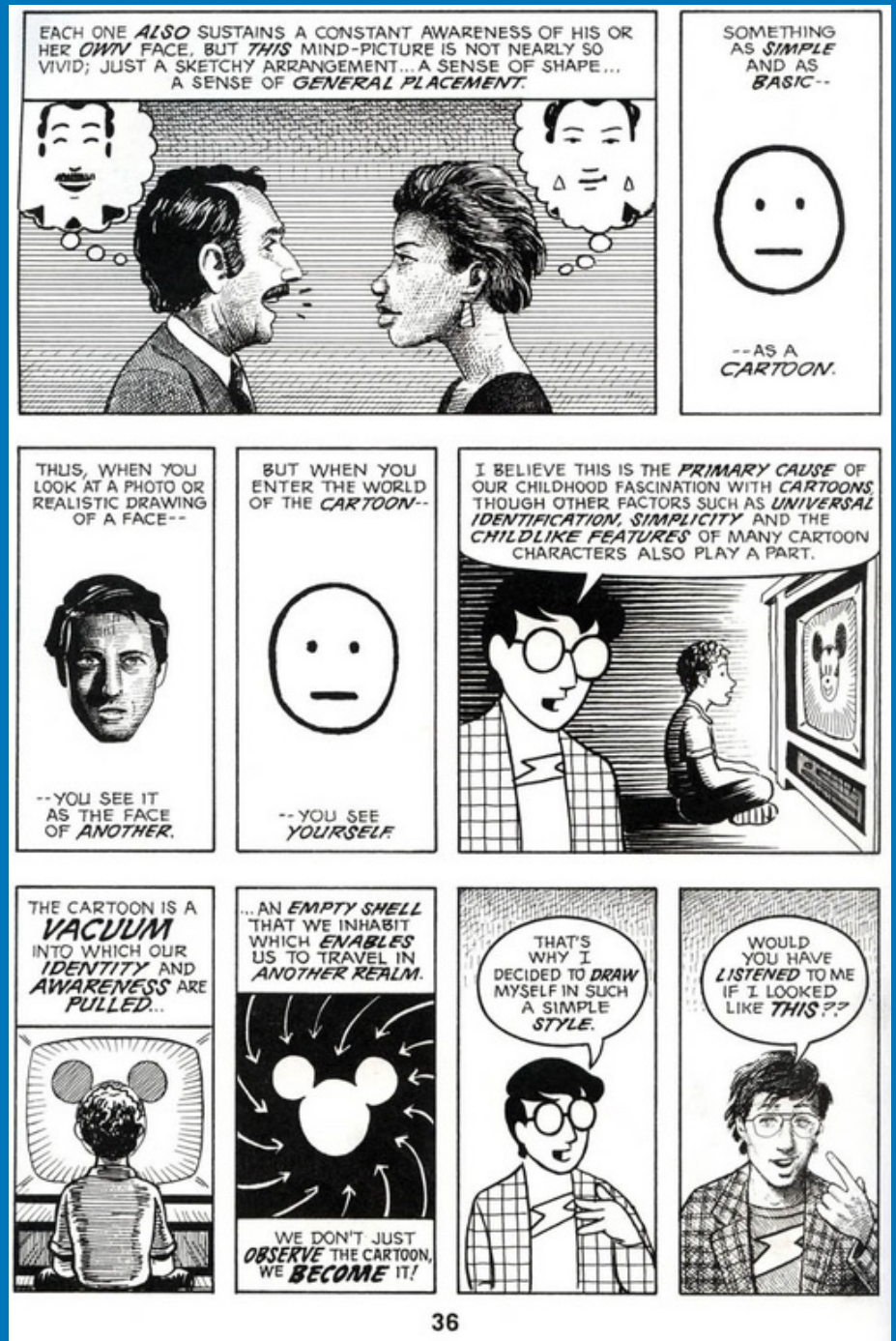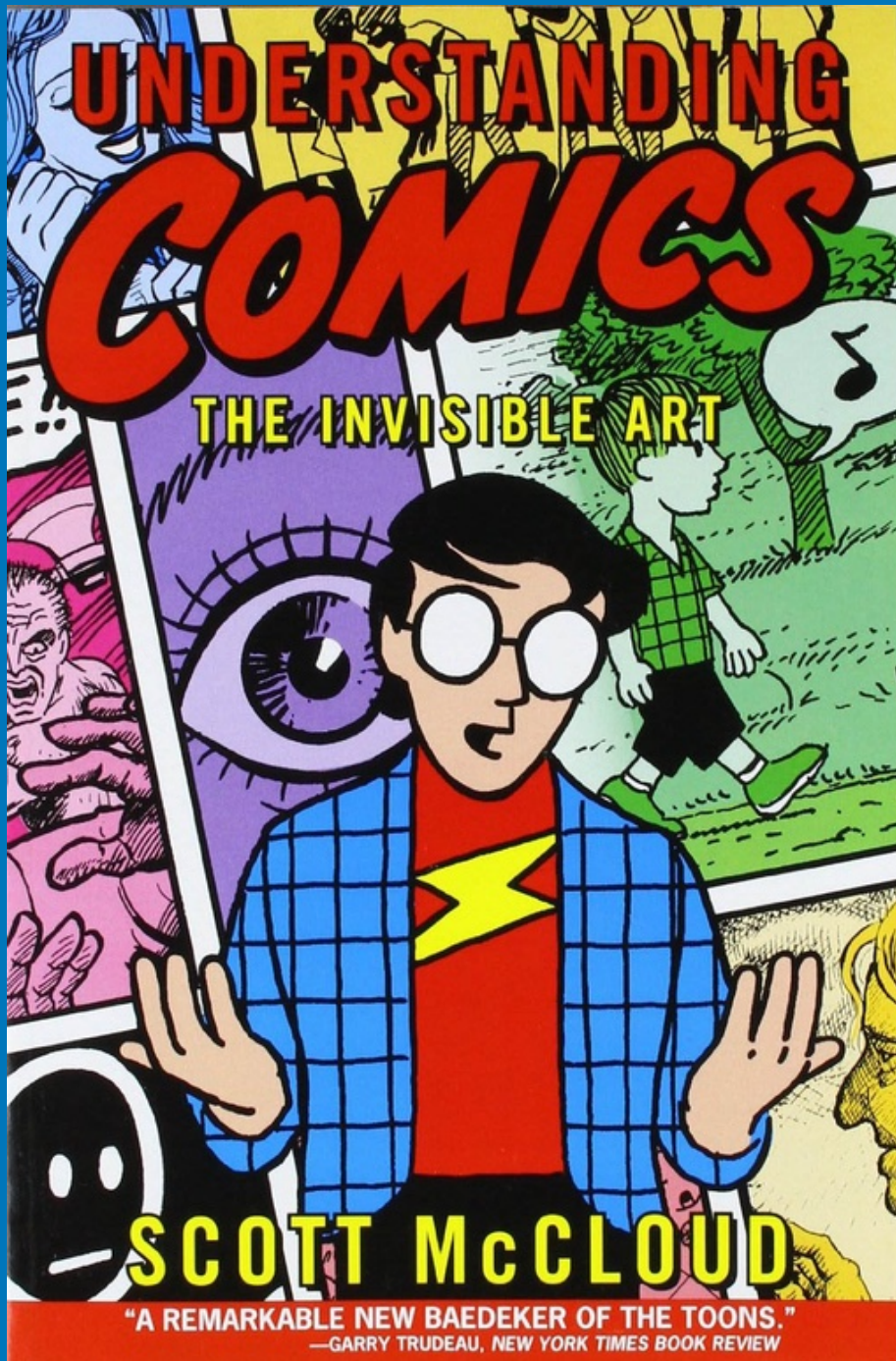
Draft dialogues due: T 9/26   Draft comics due: TH 10/5   Final comics due: TH 10/12

What *ARE* Information Comics?

UNDERSTANDING COMICS

THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT McCLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."
—GARRY TRUDEAU, *NEW YORK TIMES* BOOK REVIEW

EACH ONE *ALSO* SUSTAINS A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF HIS OR HER *OWN* FACE, BUT *THIS* MIND-PICTURE IS NOT NEARLY SO VIVID; JUST A SKETCHY ARRANGEMENT...A SENSE OF SHAPE... A SENSE OF *GENERAL PLACEMENT.*

SOMETHING AS *SIMPLE* AND AS *BASIC*-- --AS A *CARTOON.*

THUS, WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PHOTO OR REALISTIC DRAWING OF A FACE-- --YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF *ANOTHER.*

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE *CARTOON*-- --YOU SEE *YOURSELF.*

I BELIEVE THIS IS THE *PRIMARY CAUSE* OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH *CARTOONS,* THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS *UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY* AND THE *CHILDLIKE FEATURES* OF MANY CARTOON CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.

THE CARTOON IS A *VACUUM* INTO WHICH OUR *IDENTITY* AND *AWARENESS* ARE *PULLED...*

...AN *EMPTY SHELL* THAT WE INHABIT WHICH *ENABLES* US TO TRAVEL IN *ANOTHER REALM.* WE DON'T JUST *OBSERVE* THE CARTOON, WE *BECOME* IT!

THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO *DRAW* MYSELF IN SUCH A SIMPLE *STYLE.*

WOULD YOU HAVE *LISTENED* TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE *THIS??*

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Information Comics: an Overview

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Abstract - The analysis of the structure of comics is increasing but only recently have "information comics" been analyzed. These are a subset of comics whose purpose is not to tell a story or entertain but to transfer information or communicate concepts, even though that narrative is often considered an essential element of comics. Information transfer is considered an essential element of many texts, especially educational ones. The effective use of comics in education settings has been discussed since at least 1944. While "information comics" do differ in some aspects, this study will show via Peircean Visual Design that "information comics" are fundamentally the same as other comics, and while comics as a whole may be effective in knowledge transfer there appears to be little data supporting this claim.

Index Terms – Comics, information transfer, Peircean Visual Design..

COMICS

As early as the 1940s, research into the effectiveness of comics in knowledge transfer was undertaken [1]. Unfortunately, due to social stigma and the perceived juvenile nature of comics, much of this research has been ignored or forgotten until recently. Comics are experiencing a resurgence in mainstream culture. Major publishing houses, such as Pantheon and Scholastic, are now publishing graphic novels, a.k.a. comics; and public and school libraries are building comics and graphic novel collections [2, p. 19]. Major motion pictures are increasingly based off comics (e.g., *Men in Black*, *Spiderman*, *Scott Pilgrim versus the World*, *Watchmen*, *Road to Perdition*, *Red*, etc.). The Savannah College of Art and Design has established undergraduate and graduate programs in comics. Academic journals are even accepting graphical abstracts [3] and some are even publishing articles in comic form [4]. All of this shows that comics as a medium are worthy of academic study in and of themselves.

I. Recent research

Thus, academic research has started to again examine comics. Three main areas of research exist: first, the values and social impact of comics; second, the use of comics in education; and third, how comics function as a medium of communication.

While the social impact of comics is research worthy, it has little bearing for this article and will not be covered. The use of comics in education directly relates to information comics and will be covered in detail. The research on the structure of comics provides a basis for analysis of the information transferability of comics, and thus a brief summary of this research will be provided.

This article will provide a brief overview and examples of information comics. It will then examine comics from a Peircean visual design perspective and evaluate current research on the effectiveness of comics in information transfer.

II. Information comics

Information comics are comics designed to educate, inform, or teach the reader something. Though sometimes described as "a cruel hoax," these "comics that introduce history, mathematics, reading, and even the theory of relativity are being gobbled up by parents for their comics-afflicted children and promise to be the growth area of the future" [5, pp. 152-153].

The most thorough examination of information comics is by Jüngst [6]. Her purpose is to show "how" information comics are designed and how they are meant to work as a means of knowledge transfer rather than "why" they might or might not work [6, p. 3]. She examines the type of pictures, texts, the relationships between the pictures, and the texts within information comics, and discovers that there is no significant structural difference between information comics and non-information comics [6]. Unfortunately, most common information comics are pamphlets and are readily discarded [6, p. 27]

Examples of information comics include:

1. Jay Hosler's *Sandwalk Adventures*, a comic book starring Charles Darwin and a talking follicle mite that introduces readers to evolutionary biology [7].
2. The book titled "Hello! Global Citizens" aims to teach children about peace, human rights, and sustainable development. UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding created the educational comic aimed to help elementary and high school students to overcome cultural differences [8].
3. The financial newspaper Nihon Keizai Shinbun published *Japan Inc., An Introduction into Japanese Economics in Manga (Manga Nihon Keizai no Nyumon)*, a Japanese comic about Japanese economics [9].
4. *Skin Deep!* was developed by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre and the NSW Department of Corrective Services to inform inmates about the dangers of hepatitis, HIV, etc. [10, p. 139].
5. Eisner's military work: *Army Motors* and *The Preventive Maintenance Monthly* [11].
6. Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* [12], a comic about the structure and theory of comics.

III. Comic structure

While non-academic sources have formed the basis for much of the discussion of comics' structure, the writings of comic artists Will Eisner [11] and Scott McCloud [12] being the most influential, both academic and non-academic sources propose that comics function as a system and communicate via rules, often described as linguistic in nature.

Research in this area is often sidelined by a discussion of the exact definition of comics. Many people may find an exact definition of the term "comics" to be simply superfluous, believing that everyone knows what a comic is [6, p. 11]. The debate over the definition focuses on whether comics are a language in themselves, a medium of communication, or a form of communication written in a visual language.

McCloud defines comics as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in a deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response" [11, p. 9]. This definition ignited the debate. It is criticized as being too broad. As Magnussen explains, a collection of paintings by a particular artist arranged chronologically would fit into this definition [13, p. 199] because it would be any deliberate sequence conveying information, e.g., the evolution of an artist's style through time. Much of the discussion mixes the form with the method of communication. Kunzle specifically requires that comics be created for a mass medium [14, p. 5]. Magnussen emphatically insists that comics be narratives [13, p. 199]. Many "information comics" meet neither of these requirements, but are intuitively a form of comics. Thus, for the remainder of this paper, comics are a form of communication written in a visual language.

Comics make use of both verbal and visual elements to communicate. These verbal and visual elements can be arranged into an overarching framework or visual language.

The visual elements used within comics are often associated with specific meanings. "Readers of comics learn how to associate certain repetitive pictorial elements with specific meanings, effectively treating them as linguistic units" [15, p. 439]. An example of this can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2, examples from the Asterix the Gaul adventure comic, *La Zizanie* [16].

FIGURE 1. MULTIPLE VISUAL ELEMENTS DEPICTING ANGER

In Figure 1 we see multiple visual elements indicating that this person is angry; the squiggly spirals emanating from his face, the darkened, reddish hue, the closing of his eyes and the arching of his eyebrows, the jagged tail of his speech box, etc. all indicate anger. Taken together the meaning of these elements is transparent.

Caldwell on Information Comics   McKenzie on Information Comics

Lots of commonalities
Word/image language that moves across comics, PPT, articles (transmedia knowledge)
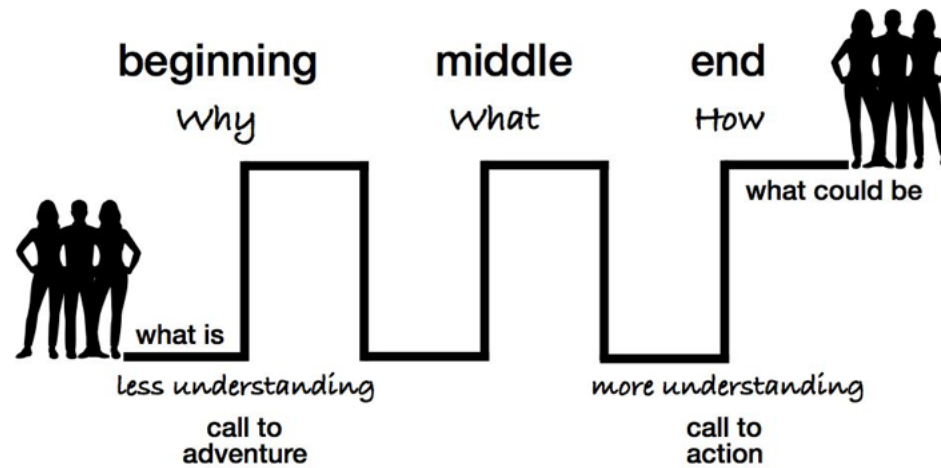Mix of logos and stories, ideas and images

Caldwell on Information Comics	McKenzie on Information Comics
Info comic as communication of information	Info comic as generation and sharing of transmedia knowledge
Communication: writing communicates thought	Generation: thinking through writing (Horton)
Knowledge assumed, then transferred	Creation of knowledge and sharing of wisdom
Specialized knowledge	Holistic wisdom and practices
Pierce/semiology (science of signs)	Derrida/grammatology (~~science~~ of writing)
Informative signs over decorative(!) & indicative	All signs polysemic, concept are metaphors
Panels function as tables of information	Panels frame scenes of actions, passions, ideas
Kunst: Comics create no new genres	Info comics and graphic novels *are* new genres
Representation of one true world	Designing of multiple possible worlds
Focus on WHAT: content	Focus on WHY-WHAT-HOW: context, content, action
Top down: Episteme over doxa: From expert to commoners	Bottom up: doxa precedes episteme: Mix of experts & commoners
Dumbing down: Episteme becomes doxa	Wising up: Knowledge becomes smart, agile, wisdom via doxa
Informing of reader	Transforming of reader
Reader/viewer as passive audiences	Reader/viewer as active stakeholders
No quantitative data that shows reading skills improve for all	Qualitative data shows info comics creating new modes of reading, writing, and thinking
Conclusion: ethical duty to study comics' effects	Ethical duty for experts to engage nonspecialists

Information Comics

Info comics create and share knowledge and wisdom

using graphic texts that take the form of comics.

beginning — **Why**
middle — **What**
end — **How**

what is

what could be

less understanding

more understanding

call to adventure

call to action

Use the info comic to gather and present arguments, stories, and images that create resonances between your concept and your target audience or stakeholder: try to transport them from *what is* to *what could be*.

Beginning: **What Is?**	**Middle**: **Contrast of What Is/Could Be**	**End**: **What Could Be?**
Who are your stakeholders?	What makes the concept distinctive?	How can project best succeed?
Why is your concept important to each stakeholder?	**What** are the core issues and potential solutions?	**How** does your concept engage each stakeholder?
What is the **adventure**, what's at stake for each stakeholder?	What are the key **perspectives** and **challenges**?	What **action** can your stakeholders take?

Questions for Info Comics workshop

- What is concept being transmediated into comic?
- What is narrative arc and/or elements?
- Can we find WWH sparkline at work?
- What different stakeholders do we see?

- How conceptually rich is comic?
- How are aesthetics (images and words) working?
- Any tech problems (misalignments, low-res images)?
- Who is intended audience of info comic?

Prisoners Sentenced to Death in Tanzania:

A New Decision by the African Court Affects Your Case

...THE AFRICAN COURT DECIDED THAT, BEFORE IMPOSING A SENTENCE OF DEATH, THE TANZANIAN COURTS MUST CONSIDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CRIME AND OF EACH OFFENDER . . .

The court would have to consider…
- Our youth
- Our good character
- Hardships, illnesses, difficulties while growing up
- Physical and mental harm we experienced
- Whether it is our first time having been convicted of a crime
- Whether we were intoxicated at the time of the offense
- Whether we have mental or physical disabilities

I've seen you've been working on something, what are you writing?

I am filling out a petition to the African Court because of their recent decision in the case of Rajabu.

Oh, what's that about?

In Tanzania, if you're convicted of murder, you're automatically sentenced to death.

Yes, that's what happened to me.

A Tanzanian prisoner named Rajabu thought that this was wrong, so he brought a case to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

But what does the Rajabu decision mean for me? Can I benefit from this decision?

Yes, but you will have to ask the African Court to make the same ruling in your case. You can file an application with the court yourself, but you will need to do so before the deadline. In your application, you will need to ask the African Court to order Tanzania to hold a new sentencing hearing in your case.

TANZANIA HAS SAID THAT INDIVIDUALS MAY NO LONGER SUBMIT PETITIONS TO THE AFRICAN COURT.

THIS DECISION TAKES EFFECT ON NOVEMBER 20TH, 2020.

That doesn't seem like much time. I don't even know how to start.

If you need help, there is an organization that is willing to help inmates on death row file petitions to the African Court. Volunteer lawyers will provide applications to the prison that you can fill out and send to the African Court.

Mr. Rajabu, the court convicts you of murder.

Under Tanzanian law, anyone convicted of murder must be given the death penalty.

Your background isn't relevant.

The court hereby sentences you to death.

Death? Don't I get to tell you about my background?

... RAJABU THOUGHT THIS WAS WRONG, SO HE FILED AN APPLICATION WITH THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS....

YOU MUST SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION BY

NOVEMBER 20TH, 2020

THE PAN AFRICAN LAWYERS UNION

PALU

Pan African Lawyers Union

We are PALU lawyers.

We are volunteer lawyers, so our services are FREE. We are asking the African Court to clarify that *Rajabu* applies to everyone. But you can also file your own application.

Well, is it guaranteed that I will get off death row?

It's not guaranteed. But isn't it better to try and have the possibility of life beyond prison?

You're right, I will try and file an application!

beginning — Why
middle — What
end — How

what is

less understanding

more understanding

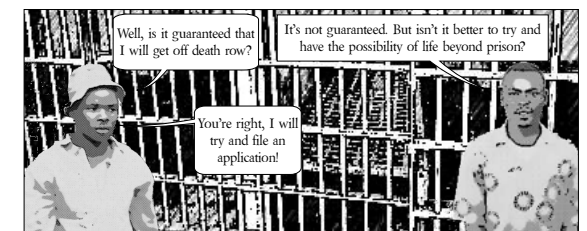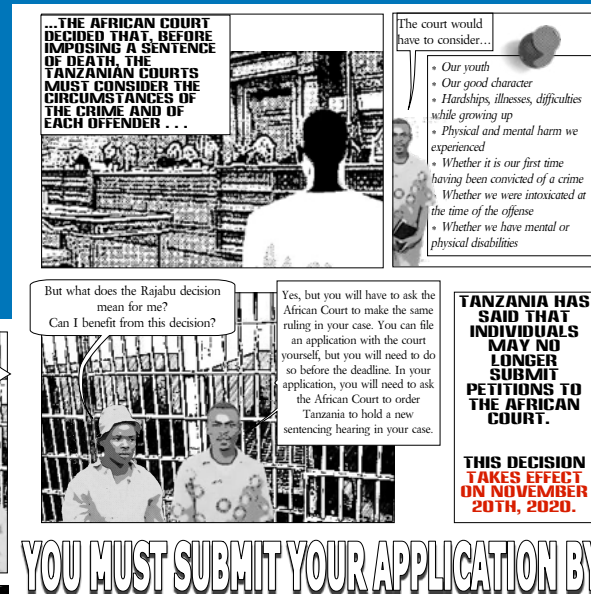call to adventure

call to action

what could be

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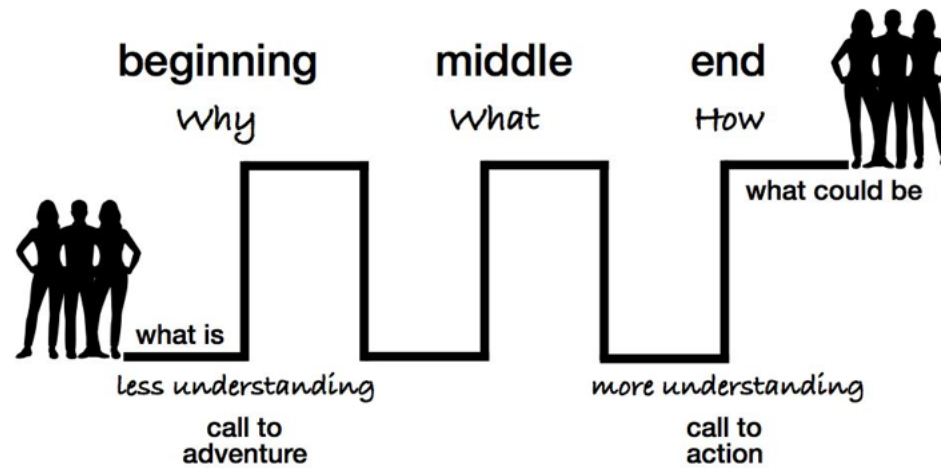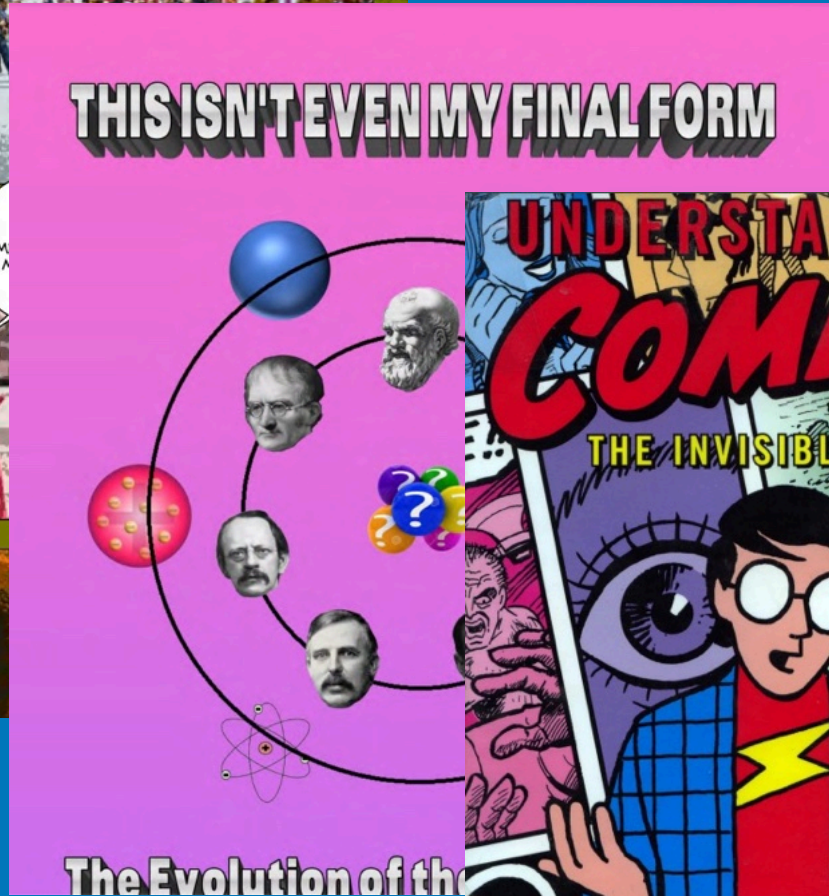
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What is the **adventure**, what's at stake for each stakeholder?	What are the key **perspectives** and **challenges**?	What **action** can your stakeholders take?

LIVING AT THE INTERSECTION

IMAGINE HOW EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US LIVES IN THE WORLD, WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AND EXPERIENCES.

COM
TO N

AS WELL AS EXPOSES ME TO...

THIS ISN'T EVEN MY FINAL FORM

The Evolution of the

UNDERSTANDING
COMICS
THE INVISIBLE ART

SCOTT McCLOUD

"A REMARKABLE NEW BAEDEKER OF THE TOONS."
—GARRY TRUDEAU, NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Sparkline workshop

- Scenario: specific situation in which concept is embodied in life event

- 3-4 Stakeholders as characters, plus protagonist

- Conceptual plotting: Use WWH sparkline

  - Why (context: values and goals of each stakeholder)

  - What (concept)

  - How (actions each stakeholder can take)

- Call to adventure: appeal to values and goals of different stakeholders.

- Call to action: desired actions for different stakeholders.

Homework: transmediate sparkline into draft dialogue

Plato's *Phaedrus*

PLATO

SOCRATES: Let us look at it like this.

PHAEDRUS: How?

SOCRATES: Suppose I am trying to persuade you to buy a horse for service on a campaign. Neither of us knows exactly what a horse is, but I happen to know this much about you – Phaedrus believes a horse to be the longest-eared of the domestic animals.

PHAEDRUS: A ludicrous idea, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Wait a moment. Suppose that in a serious effort to persuade you I make use of a piece that I have composed in praise of the donkey. I call the donkey a horse, and tell you that the beast is highly serviceable both at home and in the field; you can use it to fight on, and to carry your baggage besides, and for many other purposes.

PHAEDRUS: That would be the height of absurdity.

SOCRATES: Isn't it better to be an absurd friend than a clever enemy?

PHAEDRUS: Of course.

SOCRATES: Well, when a speaker who does not know the difference between good and evil tries to convince a people as ignorant as himself, not by ascribing to a poor beast like a donkey the virtues of a horse, but by representing evil as in fact good, and so by a careful study of popular notions succeeds in persuading them to do evil instead of good, what kind of harvest do you think his rhetoric will reap from the seed he has sown?

PHAEDRUS: No very satisfactory harvest, I should say.

SOCRATES: But can it be, my friend, that we have treated the art of speech-making more roughly than we should? Perhaps she might reply: 'What nonsense is this, my good sirs? I do not insist on ignorance of truth as an essential qualification for the would-be speaker; for what my advice is worth I suggest that he should acquire that knowledge before embarking on me.[1] I do emphatically assert, however,

1. cf. *Gorgias* 460A, where Gorgias, though he has disclaimed responsibility for the use made by his pupils of his rhetorical teaching, admits that if a pupil came to him ignorant of the nature of right and wrong he would feel bound to teach him.

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Ronell's *Crack Wars*

Installation .01 *In a Thanatorium, metabolist decor, the sonic blare of neon lights, not too bright, buzzing in constant conjugation with translucent walls. Different channels, wind tunnels.*

ERNST JÜNGER: I considered engaging a total mobilization of spirit.

MARTIN HEIDEGGER: Nobody talks that way anymore. At least put quotation marks on spirit.

JACQUES DERRIDA: Don't get hooked on spirit. All these quotation marks are so many signs of being hooked.

HEIDEGGER: Sometimes I withdraw the quotation marks, but they're like vampiric bites, they leave traces and, anyway, it's hard to get off spirit.

DERRIDA: I see. But you do recognize the spectral supplement, don't you, the way we've swished from spirit to spirits. That can't be merely an accident. (*Looking around.*) This place is still too metaphysical for me. Can't you ventilate this textual space?

HEIDEGGER: You French are so fast. Your velocities overwhelm me. I'll never forget that high speed drive with Lacan in the country. It nearly freaked out my wife. He refused to slow down. But you have to slow down, we all do, thinking takes time, *its* time. I'm going back to Aristotle. Why don't you stay?

DERRIDA: There's something about this thanatopos that seems too, how shall I say, scientific to me. Anyway, you're

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