YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE
to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2025 Volume III: Graphic Narratives as Teaching Tools

Overcoming Challenges in Graphic Narratives

Guide for Curriculum Unit 25.03.06, published September 2025
by Sarah Lewand

This unit will explore the illustrative components of graphic narratives. The main output of this unit will be a graphic narrative that students create on their own about a story about overcoming a challenge. In order to develop a finished project, students will need to focus on three main content objectives: illustration (realistic and stylistic), storytelling, and the traditional visual and written components of graphic novels. Through a series of mini units focusing on each objective, students will build the tools necessary to create a short illustrated narrative in their own personal style.

Students will be pushed out of their comfort zones to try realistic drawing, only to then break this down and use their knowledge to establish their own drawing style. They will gradually build from learning the most basic elements of storytelling to demonstrating a grasp on the subject matter by applying it to part of their own story. Students reflect individually and collaboratively throughout this process by applying peer critiques. There is an emphasis on student choice and artistic license throughout the project, allowing even the most tentative artists the chance to grow and reflect on their success.

(Developed for Visual Art, grades 6-8; recommended for Visual Art and English, grades 6-8)

https://teachers.yale.edu
©2025 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.
For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use