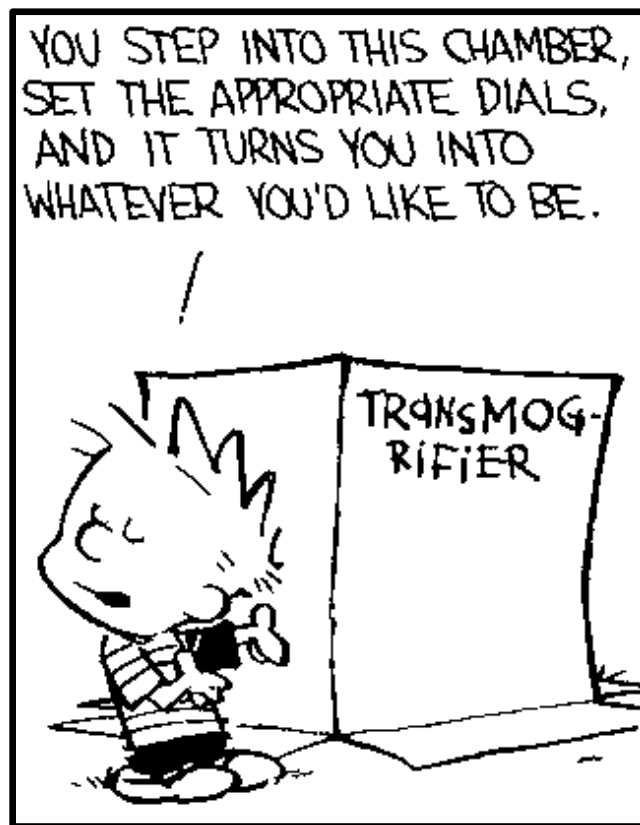


Transmogrified Stories:

The Art of Comics through Calvin & Hobbes

3rd-5th grade English Language Arts Unit



By Jodi Mills

Summer 2017

Transmogrified Stories:

The Art of Comics through Calvin & Hobbes

Unit Contents

- Introduction
 - Rationale
 - Differentiation for Gifted Learners
- Goals & Outcomes
 - Content Goal
 - Process Goal
 - Concept Goal
- Assessment Plan
 - Formative Assessments
 - Summative Assessment
- Lesson Plans & Instructional Materials
 - Lesson One
 - Lesson Two
 - Lesson Three
 - Lesson Four
- Unit Resources

Introduction

Rationale

Most people, even reluctant readers, enjoy reading comic strips. The combination of words and pictures in bite size installments create an impression of accessibility and entertainment that draws in readers of all ages and abilities. However, reading and understanding comics involves more than decoding and comprehending words; to get the most out of a comic, one must interpret the visual elements and make inferences using background knowledge from personal life experiences and common culture. Comic strips provide an engaging medium for students to develop high level literacy skills such as analyzing the influence of structure and point of view in the development of a concept or theme (RL.5.2, RL.5.5, and RL.5.6). Often, stories in comic strips are told more with pictures as with words, which demands that students analyze how the visual elements convey meaning and tone (RL.5.7).

In this unit, students will be responsible for not only reading and interpreting comic strips, but developing their own. The skills required to create a comic strip go beyond drawing and writing in speech bubbles. To be successful, students must consider their audience, understand the purpose of comic strips, and use the tools and confines of the comic form to create a clear, succinct story (W.4.4). Such a task requires students follow a process involving planning, revising, editing, and collaboration (W.4.5).

The skills presented in this unit are what educators consider “21st Century Skills,” or skills that individuals need to meet the demands of work and life in this century. This unit presents students with opportunities to practice critical thinking and interpretation through questioning, close reading, and discussion of Bill Watterson’s comic strip, *Calvin and Hobbes*. Throughout the unit, students will strengthen their communication skills – understanding what is being communicated through comics and learning how to craft a comic that communicates something meaningful. As students follow Bill Watterson’s example of excellence, they will develop adaptability and perseverance through creation and revision of their own comics. More than any other skill presented in this unit, the ability to think creatively is emphasized over and over again. Creativity is important for 21st Century learners because it allows them to see new ways of doing things and makes creating a joyful, fulfilling experience.

This unit takes a topic and medium that most students are familiar with and deepens it to new levels. In other words, it presents content that students will enjoy but would likely not have learned without intentional instruction and experience. Bill Watterson created content that inspires laughter and invites reflection. Within this unit, students will laugh out loud, but also have opportunities to analyze and discuss the meanings and methods behind *Calvin and Hobbes*. How cartoonists develop comic strips, what makes something humorous, and how to

convey meaning through visual elements are important concepts because they all bring to light aspects of communication that are complex and rarely at the forefront of language arts instruction. On the last day of the unit, students will be presented with real life content regarding Bill Watterson's unique stance on merchandizing and formatting restrictions. It is important for students to be exposed to examples of individuals who take unpopular positions for the sake of something they believe in.

Bill Watterson believed in his creation and the form it took. He wanted *Calvin and Hobbes* to come alive in the drawings and words within comic strip panels, not in plush toys or TV shows. To make them come alive in the ways he wanted, Watterson pushed back when the newspaper industry tried to enforce new size and formatting restrictions. The concept behind this unit is "creation." Specifically, it emphasizes that creation requires form. When our students begin to imagine a creation, a process that every teacher hopes to inspire, they need to know where to begin. By exploring the immense possibilities and variations within comic form, students will understand that, as creators, they have freedom to choose and manipulate the form of their choice.

Differentiation for Gifted Learners

This unit is designed specifically for gifted students; however, it can be used with any general education classroom to foster development of higher order thinking and creativity. I have observed children across a wide range of academic and intellectual levels independently choose and enjoy reading *Calvin and Hobbes*. Therefore, this unit has potential to hook students of various abilities, backgrounds, and demographics and provoke them to engage in valuable thinking, learning, and creating. Below, I have described how this unit has been adapted in content, process, product, and learning environment to meet the unique needs of gifted students.

Content: The content of this unit is fitting for gifted students because it increases the complexity and depth of reading and observing comic strips. When students learn about and experience the process of creating a story in comic form, they will be surprised at number of decisions that need to be made. In this unit, students will be given opportunities to analyze and discuss *Calvin and Hobbes* strips with a new purpose to uncover new depths of meaning and points of interpretation. In the last lesson, students will explore opposing viewpoints and discuss multiple perspectives on the topics related to comic publication. Gifted students will be drawn to the real-life nature of this unit's content.

Process: Each lesson in this unit follows a lesson model that creates a learning process suited for gifted students. The first lesson uses the Bruner lesson plan model, which

focuses on how experts engage in the work of their field. In this case, the lesson explores Bill Watterson's creative process and allows students to work within an authentic creative process that requires creativity, self-evaluation, and flexible thinking. In the second lesson, students will participate in Socratic Seminar, a student-driven discussion based on a given topic and common learning experience. Students will facilitate the seminar themselves and will be responsible for crafting questions which maintain the integrity of the seminar. The third lesson uses the Visual Thinking Strategies model. When presented with some of Watterson's masterpieces, students will use observation and critical thinking to create individual and personal meaning. The last lesson uses a Questioning lesson model in which students will be responsible for thinking about, answering, and developing high level questions.

Product: As students develop their own concepts and characters for comic strips, they will be required to think creatively. Each student's final product, a submission package for a comic strip publisher, will include the same components but with his or her own unique story and style. The creative freedom within this unit will be motivating for gifted students. They will be challenged to apply the lesson topics within the development of their submission package by finding ways to include humor and experimenting with the visual elements of comics.

Learning Environment: From the beginning of this unit, students will be expected to work in a variety of learning environments. In the first lesson, students will move to different locations within the learning environment to reflect their progression through the creative process, which will require self-awareness and intentionality. At points during this process, they will be given time and space to work and plan independently. Later, students must learn to work collaboratively by reviewing their peers' work and giving helpful feedback. The second lesson method, Socratic Seminar, employs a specific learning environment within its structure. Small groups form "inner circles" during conversation while their partners sit outside the circle to observe silently and write notes to prepare for their turn to talk. This method creates a learning environment appropriate for gifted learners because it encourages active listening and clear communication. Throughout the rest of the unit, students continue to work independently, with partners, small groups, and within a whole-class context.

Goals & Outcomes

There are three broad goals for this unit: a content goal, a process goal, and a concept goal. The content goal describes the knowledge and understanding that the students should gain throughout the unit, the process goal describes the skills and practices students should be able to do, and the concept goal describes how students should grasp and interact with the concept. Each goal is supported by several outcomes. In the case of the content and process goals, these outcomes are organized by lesson. Each day, there is a set of outcomes that students should reach in order to work toward the larger goal. In addition, each goal supports and deepens the essential understanding, *creation requires form*.

Content Goal: To develop understanding of the comic form elements and a cartoonist's creative process.

Content Outcomes by Lesson

| Lesson | Students will understand that... |
|----------|---|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cartoonists tell stories with words and pictures.▪ Comic art is recognized by the form it takes (panes, speech and thought bubbles, etc.)▪ Comic artists develop strategies and steps to help them create comics.▪ Comic artists must be willing to take feedback from others and make revisions to their original work. |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Humor is usually created by disrupting our expectations of what will or should happen normally (by "surprise").▪ Many cartoonists are inspired to build their stories upon common, everyday situations.▪ Characters' personalities and responses to situations can create humor. |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cartoonists tell stories through words and pictures organized in frames.▪ Comic frames can be a variety of shapes and sizes.▪ Comics can tell stories without or with very few words.▪ Cartoonists develop ways for their characters to express emotions and actions.▪ The setting of a comic can be integral or irrelevant to the story. |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cartoonists have different perspectives on publication and merchandising.▪ Publishers enforce rules about the size and format of comics.▪ Syndicates and cartoonists often make money by licensing companies to make merchandise based on their artwork.▪ Cartoonists improve by learning from and emulating aspects of their fellow artists. |

Process Goal: To develop reasoning and creative skills with application to the comic art form.

Process Outcomes by Lesson

| Lesson | Students will be able to... |
|---------------|---|
| 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Apply and evaluate Bill Watterson’s creative process.▪ Reflect on and revise written comic ideas.▪ Experiment with visual elements of comic art.▪ Analyze peer work for strengths and weaknesses.▪ Engage in collaborative discussions in small and whole group settings. |
| 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Undertake a close reading of comics to analyze the effects of their visual and textual components.▪ Evaluate what makes communication (jokes, stories, or comics) humorous.▪ Craft questions and maintain an inquiry based dialogue which deeply examines ideas and concepts.▪ Work collaboratively with peers to discuss and present on a given quotation and question.▪ Brainstorm and develop ideas for an original comic by trying multiple approaches (focusing on character, situation, and humor). |
| 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Work with a partner to describe and draw a comic through observation and spoken communication.▪ Analyze comics and answer open-ended questions with support from the artwork.▪ Infer the story, message, and significance of a comic strip.▪ Judge how form impacts the meaning and emotion within comics.▪ Defend an opinion with compelling reasons. |
| 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Create and present a comic idea in the form of a submission package (as defined in the performance task).▪ Form high level questions for their peers related to the concept.▪ Explore, analyze, and discuss multiple perspectives represented in a text. |

Concept Goal: To understand the concept of creation.

Concept Outcomes

| Students will be able to... |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Compare and contrast a personal creative process with that of another artist.▪ Analyze the form of creations and make inferences about the creator’s reasoning.▪ Transfer their knowledge and skills about creation to a creation of their own. |

Assessment Plan

Formative Assessments

Each student's progress toward the goals outlined above will be monitored using formative assessments throughout the unit as well as their progress and performance on the final task. The formative assessments embedded within the unit are described below for each lesson.

Lesson 1: The focus of assessment on the first day of the unit is on pre-assessment, finding out what students know about comic form (Content Goal), how they work creatively (Process Goal), and what they understand about the concept of creation (Concept Goal). Students are given time to read selections from *Calvin and Hobbes* books and told to write down words that describe the comic form. Their responses will give the teacher insight into their prior knowledge and their language development. Later, students write down a list of steps they would take to create a comic, which reveals a glimpse into their creative thought-process. When they actually begin creating a comic using Watterson's steps, the teacher can observe areas of strength and difficulty and make plans for future support. (Ex. Who has trouble getting started? Who needs a quiet place to work? Who enjoys discussing ideas with peers?) Lastly, students will write a journal response to the essential question, "How does creation require form?"

Lesson 2: In the second lesson, students will be exposed to additional content and experiences to deepen their knowledge, understanding of the concept, and skills. Students will be given a set of comics and a close reading protocol to prepare them for a Socratic Seminar discussion. What the students write down and how they discuss the comics will give the teacher insight into their content knowledge. In small groups, students will read a quotation and formulate answers to questions relating to the concept. As groups work and present, the teacher can observe how the students are discussing and building upon their understandings of the concept. Students' skills with the creative process and applying what we've learned so far will be observable during the first workshop time at the conclusion of lesson two.

Lesson 3: Lesson three gives students opportunities to interact with comic strips in new ways – describing the comic for a partner, trying to draw the comic based on a partner's description, and tracing elements of Watterson's creations. At the end of the lesson, students will decide which activity (the "blind draw" or tracing) fits best with the concepts of form and creation (one activity per concept). With their choice, students will need to write an explanation of their reasoning, which will give the teacher insight into the nuances that students are picking up on related to the concept. In the second day of workshop, the teacher will be able to see how the students are applying both their knowledge of comic form and their skills, both technical and intellectual.

Lesson 4: The last lesson is largely devoted to students completing their performance task (described in the section below). However, other opportunities for assessments are embedded within the lesson. For example, students are encouraged to write questions relating to the concept of creation and to the process of creating a comic. The quality of the questions that are written will reveal the depth of the students’ thinking. In addition, student learning can be assessed through the letters students write to Watterson. The prompts provided are aimed at assessing students’ understanding of the concept of creation.

Summative Assessment

On the first day of the unit, students will be given a description of the performance task and rubric as shown below.

Performance Task

The Universal Press Syndicate, the syndicate that published Bill Watterson’s hit comic *Calvin and Hobbes*, is looking for new comic artists to publish. Comics that are likely to be considered for syndication use high quality writing and art to reflect the cartoonist’s unique perspective on the world in a way that relates to and amuses readers. You are an artist and writer who would love to have the chance to work in the comic art form, so you decide to submit a submission package.

Your submission should include a cover letter, comic strip samples, and a character sheet. Your cover letter should describe the general nature of your comic strip (setting, characters, themes, etc.) in a page or less. Develop two to five comic strip samples for your submission package; a combination of daily black and white strips and Sunday color features is recommended. Your character sheet (one page) should display your major characters (portrait or full-body illustration) along with their names and a short paragraph description of each.

| | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Content Knowledge | Elements of comic form are used effectively to develop a meaningful story or set of characters | Some elements of comic form are used effectively; story or characters lack unifying theme/purpose | Elements of comic form are not used or used ineffectively; no story developed |
| Process Skills | Artist successfully followed creative process; reflection and high level thinking are evident | Artist followed a creative process with support; some reflection evident in final product | Artist did not progress through a creative process |
| Concept Understanding | Creation is a unique expression of the creator within comic form | Some original content created | Creation does not reflect creator’s own ideas |
| Task Completion | High quality cover letter, comic strip samples, and character sheet are completed on time | Submission package lacks an element or overall quality, or not completed on time | Submission package not complete |

Lesson Plans

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| TEACHER NAME | | Lesson # |
| Jodi Mills | | 1 |
| MODEL | CONTENT AREA | GRADE LEVEL |
| Bruner | English Language Arts | 3rd-5th grades |
| CONCEPTUAL LENS | | LESSON TOPIC |
| Creation | | Comic artists follow a creative process |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVES <i>(from State/Local Curriculum)</i> | | |
| <p>Reading: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development (RL.5.2). Analyze the structure of texts (RL.5.5). Assess how point of view or purpose influences how events are described (RL.5.6). Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (RL.5.7).</p> <p>Writing: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (W.4.4). With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing (W.4.5).</p> | | |
| THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING <i>(What is the overarching idea students will understand as a result of this lesson?)</i> | | THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION <i>(What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding)</i> |
| <i>Creation requires form.</i> | | <i>How does creation require form?</i> |
| CONTENT KNOWLEDGE <i>(What factual information will students learn in this lesson?)</i> | | PROCESS SKILLS <i>(What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?)</i> |
| <p><i>Students will understand...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cartoonists tell stories with words and pictures. ▪ Comic art is recognized by the form it takes (panes, speech and thought bubbles, etc.) ▪ Comic artists develop strategies and steps to help them create comics. ▪ Comic artists must be willing to take feedback from others and make revisions to their original work. | | <p><i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply and evaluate Bill Watterson’s creative process. • Reflect on and revise written comic ideas. • Experiment with visual elements of comic art. • Analyze peer work for strengths and weaknesses. • Engage in collaborative discussions in small and whole group settings. |
| GUIDING QUESTIONS <i>What questions will be asked to support instruction?</i> <i>Include both “lesson plan level” questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding</i> | | |
| Pre-Lesson Questions: | During Lesson Questions: | Post Lesson Questions: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What comes to mind when you see the word, “form?” • What do comic artists do? • What tools might comic artists use? • Where do they work? • What characteristics should comic artists have? • What rules or deadlines impact how comic artists work? • What determines whether or not a comic artist is | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What forms do we encounter in writing? What forms do we encounter in visual arts? Performing arts? • How would you describe Bill Watterson’s creations? • Why do we call Calvin and Hobbes a comic strip? What makes this form of art unique? • Do you think Bill Watterson could have created Calvin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn about being a comic artist? • What was the hardest part of being a comic artist? • What was your favorite part of being a comic artist? • What is the creative process? • How does form impact the process of creating something? • What do you think is more important for comic artists, |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>successful?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do comic artists work with others? • What do you think the word, 'transmogrifier' means? Why do you think that? | <p>and Hobbes in a different form? Why or why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can we learn from this comic about Bill Watterson's point of view? • What surprised you about the steps involved in Watterson's creative process? • What do you think you would you do differently if you were a comic artist? • How was Bill Watterson's creative process similar to your own? • What concept do you think inspired Watterson's comics about the Transmogrifier? | <p>creativity or being able to create the form of comics?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does creation require form? |
|--|---|---|

DIFFERENTIATION

(Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.)

| Content | Process | Product | Learning Environment |
|---------|---|---------|--|
| | Students will work within an authentic creative process that requires creativity, self-evaluation, and flexible thinking. | | Students will move to different locations within the learning environment to reflect their progression through the creative process. This movement will require self-awareness and intentionality. |

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.

Display the following comic and message on the board:



Welcome! Sit anywhere in the circle and think about something that you have created (or helped create) in your lifetime.

As students enter, the teacher will greet students at the door and instruct them to read the message on the board and prepare an answer. When everyone has arrived, the teacher will introduce herself, give a short story about something she has created (a painting, poem, picture, etc.), and explain that we will start our classes together over the next three days in the circle. Next, the teacher will explain the introduction activity.

Turn to the person sitting next to you and introduce yourselves. You will have three minutes to talk with your partner about their answer to the question on the board. I will tell you when half the time is up so you can make sure to hear from both partners. Then, you will introduce your partner to the rest of the class, sharing his or her name and creation.

As the students are making introductions, the teacher will write down the creations on chart paper under the heading, "Creations" (ex. Poem, tree fort, story, etc.). Then, the teacher will ask the following questions (using examples from the list of student creations).

How is ____ different from ____? What makes a ____ a ____? (ex. How is a poem different from a snow fort? What makes a drawing a drawing?)

Then, the teacher will write the word, "form" in the middle of a new piece of chart paper and ask, "What comes to mind when you see this word?" As students share, the teacher will record their thoughts around the word, creating a web of ideas to be added to throughout the week. The teacher will introduce the concept of the unit by explaining that every creation, or creative act, takes on a form. This week, we will be delving into the form of comic art.

Display the comic and question below on the board.



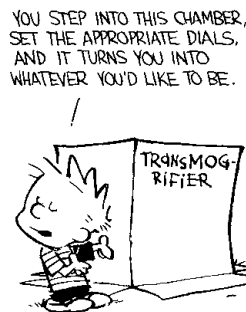
What does a comic artist do?

Students will be given one minute to think about the question. Then, the teacher will ask for responses and record their ideas in a list that is visible to the class. The pre-lesson questions will be used to help students elaborate their answers and add to the list.

The teacher will point to the grumpy looking man in the comic and ask the questions, "Who might this grumpy looking man be? What do you see that makes you say that? What is your evidence? What might you add to your description of an artist?" (Bill Watterson, creator of Calvin and Hobbes).

Explore - In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.

Teacher will display this comic on the board and ask, "What do you think the word, 'transmogripher' means? Why do you think that?" and "What kind of person would think of creating a transmogrifier out of a cardboard box?" (Add "creative" to the list on the board if it is not there already.)



Teacher will say, "Every creative endeavor has some sort of process and takes some sort of form. What forms do we encounter in writing? What forms do we encounter in visual arts? Performing arts?" For each question, teacher will call on students to respond orally.

Students will be given five minutes to examine a Calvin and Hobbes comic books with the people at their table. They will be told,
As you review Bill Watterson's creations, write as many words as you can that describe the form he uses to create the comics.

Teacher will ask someone to report out from each group and help provide the vocabulary to discuss what they students observed (Ex. Panels, borders, captions, speech bubbles, etc.). As students share, the teacher will record the elements of the comic art form on chart paper to refer to throughout the rest of the week.

Explain - Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding.

Teacher will explain that every comic artist has their own creative process and then display the comic below on the board. The class will discuss the question below, first to a partner nearby, and then to the whole group. (Bill Watterson doesn't think that the comic writing process is all that fascinating or surprising. Creating great comics is work, just like writing a poem or making a painting.)



What can we learn from this comic about Bill Watterson's point of view?

(Teacher will continue) "To get a more accurate picture of what a comic artist does, imagine the process you would use to create a comic. In the next two minutes, write down the steps you would take to create a comic. Then I will share with you what I learned about Bill Watterson's creative process from the book, *Looking for Calvin and Hobbes* by Nevin Martell." After the two minutes, the teacher will project these steps on the board.

Bill Watterson's Creative Process

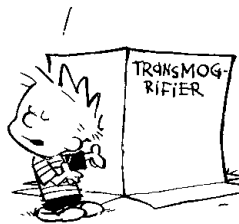
1. Sit down and "stare into space for an hour and sometimes not come up with a single decent idea, or sometimes no idea at all"
2. Write ideas in a notebook
3. Self-edit and rewrite the concepts until satisfied with results
4. Doodle rough idea of visual elements
5. Weed out weakest work, show the self-approved roughed-out strip to wife for suggestions or rejection
6. Ink-up the ideas he liked the most into a final strip

Teacher will talk through these steps with students and answer any questions students may have. The class will discuss the following questions: What surprised you about the steps involved in Watterson's creative process? What do you think you would do differently if you were a comic artist? How was Bill Watterson's creative process similar to your own?

Elaborate — Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways

"Since we don't have an hour to "stare into space," we are going to practice Bill Watterson's creative process starting on step #2. The concept we will use is based on the comic we looked at earlier today:

YOU STEP INTO THIS CHAMBER,
SET THE APPROPRIATE DIALS,
AND IT TURNS YOU INTO
WHATEVER YOU'D LIKE TO BE.



What concept do you think inspired Watterson's comics about the Transmogrifier?

The teacher will instruct students to think of ways to build on or alter the concept of the transmogrifier. Before the workshop time begins, the teacher will ask for a few students to share out ideas to help clarify the concept for the entire class. (Ex. A kitten accidentally crawls into the transmogrifier, dreams about being a lion, and wakes up a lion). The teacher will share that Bill Watterson himself stated that "the quality of a strip is determined by the quantity of ideas in the waste basket." This experience is about practicing the creative process – no one will be in trouble if their ideas end up in the waste basket.

Signs will be displayed around the room to indicate the different stages in Watterson's creative process. Students will need to self-reflect and move along to the next stage as they complete each of the prior steps. Students will be given a deadline for submitting their final strip to me, the newspaper syndicate (I will explain that cartoonists who want to be published usually have to sign a contract with a syndicate, an organization that will help market and manage the publishing of your work). If students are spending too much time at early stages, the teacher and teacher assistant will assist them in moving along.

At stage five, students will be required to show their work to at least one peer and get feedback. A conversation guide, as seen below, will be posted to help students have meaningful conversations about their work. (Students will be encouraged to seek out their partner from the opening activity if they do not know who to approach for feedback.)

Conversation Guide for Peer Review

When I read over your ideas, the first thing that came to mind was...
From my perspective, here are some things that are working well in your comic...
Some questions that I have about your comic are...
In my point of view, your comic idea could be strengthened by...

Materials needed for “final” strips will be available at stage six.

After the “deadline” for final strips, students will be asked the post-lesson questions. We will have a whole class discussion and add to our ideas of what comic artists do from the beginning of the lesson.

Evaluate: *This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.*

In their journals, students will write a response to the question, “How does creation require form?” The teacher will read responses and build upon them in following lessons.

Before the students leave, we will gather in the circle and the teacher will pass out descriptions of the performance task. She will explain that we will be working bit by bit on our comic strip submission over the course of the week.

Lesson One Instructional Materials

1. Print a copy of performance task description for each student.

Performance Task:

The Universal Press Syndicate, the syndicate that published Bill Watterson’s hit comic *Calvin and Hobbes*, is looking for new comic artists to publish. Comics that are likely to be considered for syndication use high quality writing and art to reflect the cartoonist’s unique perspective on the world in a way that relates to and amuses readers. You are an artist and writer who would love to have the chance to work in the comic art form, so you decide to submit a submission package.

Your submission should include a cover letter, comic strip samples, and a character sheet. Your cover letter should describe the general nature of your comic strip (setting, characters, themes, etc.) in a page or less. Develop two to five comic strip samples for your submission package; a combination of daily black and white strips and Sunday color features is recommended. Your character sheet (one page) should display your major characters (portrait or full-body illustration) along with their names and a short paragraph description of each.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| TEACHER NAME | | Lesson # |
| Jodi Mills | | 2 |
| MODEL | CONTENT AREA | GRADE LEVEL |
| Socratic Seminar | English Language Arts | 3 rd -5 th grades |
| CONCEPTUAL LENS | | LESSON TOPIC |
| Creation | | Inspiration for Story and Humor |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVES (from State/Local Curriculum) | | |
| <p>Reading: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development (RL.5.2). Analyze the structure of texts (RL.5.5). Assess how point of view or purpose influences how events are described (RL.5.6). Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (RL.5.7).</p> <p>Writing: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (W.4.4). With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing (W.4.5).</p> | | |
| THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING (What is the overarching idea students will understand as a result of this lesson?) | | THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION (What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding?) |
| Creation requires form. | | How does creation require form? |
| CONTENT KNOWLEDGE (What factual information will students learn in this lesson?) | | PROCESS SKILLS (What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?) |
| <p>Students will understand...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Humor is usually created by disrupting our expectations of what will or should happen normally (by “surprise”). Many cartoonists are inspired to build their stories upon common, everyday situations. Characters’ personalities and responses to situations can create humor. | | <p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a close reading of comics to analyze the effects of their visual and textual components. Evaluate what makes communication (jokes, stories, or comics) humorous. Craft questions and maintain an inquiry based dialogue which deeply examines ideas and concepts. Work collaboratively with peers to discuss and present on a given quotation and question. Brainstorm and develop ideas for an original comic by trying multiple approaches (focusing on character, situation, and humor). |
| GUIDING QUESTIONS | | |
| <p>What questions will be asked to support instruction?</p> <p>Include both “lesson plan level” questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding</p> | | |
| Pre-Lesson Questions: | During Lesson Questions: | Post Lesson Questions: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What makes something funny to read or look at? How are comics structured to become humorous? Where do you think cartoonists get inspiration? What makes a good comic idea? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the story about? What key words or phrases can you identify? How might you summarize what happened in the comic? What structures and forms were used to tell the story? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What challenges did you experience through the seminar? How did your role in the seminar impact your feelings about the Socratic Seminar? What was the one theme or |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the form of a comic? • What is a creation? • How do we identify a creation? • In what ways does the creation of a comic require form? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the author's purpose? For whom is the information important? Why? • Why did the author present the information how he did? • What inferences can you make about comics or about the characters? • What connections can you make with the text? • How do the comics relate to other stories you've read or comics you've seen? • How do the stories relate to your life? • How are these comics related to the concept of creation? | <p>"big idea" that you discovered through participating in today's lesson?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What generalizations can you make about the form of comics? • How did the seminar and task help deepen your understanding of creation? • What will be your character's most important features? How will you use comic form to communicate who your character is and what he or she is like? • How can you take every-day experiences and adapt them creatively? • How will you use form to create art that expresses your ideas clearly and creatively? |
|--|--|---|

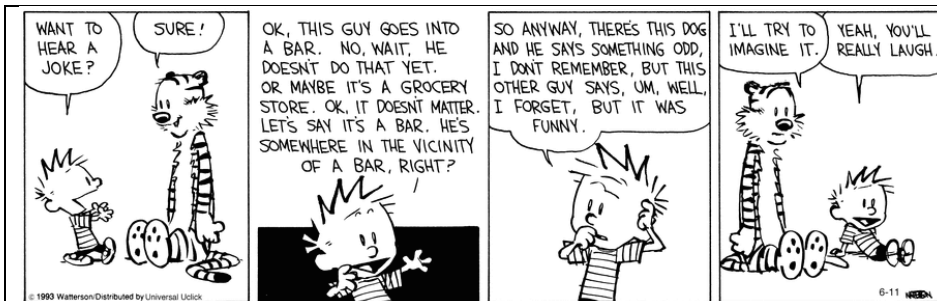
DIFFERENTIATION
 (Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.)

| Content | Process | Product | Learning Environment |
|----------------|--|--|---|
| | Students will participate in Socratic Seminar. Students will facilitate the seminar themselves and will be responsible for crafting questions which maintain the integrity of the seminar. | As students develop their own unique concepts and characters for comic strips, they will be required to think creatively and find ways to include humor. | Students will work in a variety of learning environments (independent, seminar, and small group). |

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES
 (What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.

When students enter the room, they will be given an index card and instructed to sit in the circle. On the board, the comic and instructions below will be displayed:



What is the best clean joke you know? Write it (or a couple ideas) on the index card.

After everyone has written at least one joke, the teacher will instruct, “As you listen to the jokes that are shared, be thinking about what makes a joke funny.” The teacher will ask students to remind the class of their names before sharing their joke. After each person says the joke, the class will say, “Good morning, ___!” together to reinforce names.

Students will take turns sharing aloud one at a time. The teacher will ask the pre-lesson questions as students respond aloud one at a time.

The teacher will say, “Today, we are going to look closely at some Calvin and Hobbes strips to analyze the form of Bill Watterson’s creation.”

Explore - In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.

The teacher will explain the “close reading” strategies students will use as they dig into the comics (a handout with these steps is included in the instructional materials for this lesson, see below). Students will be told to read the text multiple times, following the guiding questions below, and write their notes/thoughts/questions on the text.

1. Read all the comics once to get the gist.
 - a. What is the story about?
 - b. What key words or phrases can you identify?
 - c. How might you summarize what happened in the comic?
2. Read the text a second time to dig a little deeper.
 - a. What structures and forms were used to tell the story?
 - b. What is the author’s purpose? For whom is the information important? Why?
 - c. Why did the author present the information how he did?
3. Read the text for a third time to solidify your ideas.
 - a. What inferences can you make about comics or about the characters?
 - b. What connections can you make with the text? How do the comics relate to other stories you’ve read or comics you’ve seen? How do the stories relate to your life?
 - c. What questions come to mind when you read and view the comics?

Explain - Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding.

When the students are finished with the close read, the teacher will describe the expectations and format of a Socratic Seminar:

| Expectations for Discussion Participants | Expectations for Observers |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Do not raise your hand, but take turns talking (only one voice aloud at a time) ❖ Refer to the text in your observations, comments, and questions ❖ Listen carefully and respectfully to all participants ❖ Have fun and appreciate different perspectives (there is not one right answer!) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Do not talk ❖ Watch your partner and keep track of his or her participation ❖ Listen carefully and respectfully to the speaker ❖ Write down any questions or ideas that you come up with while you are observing |

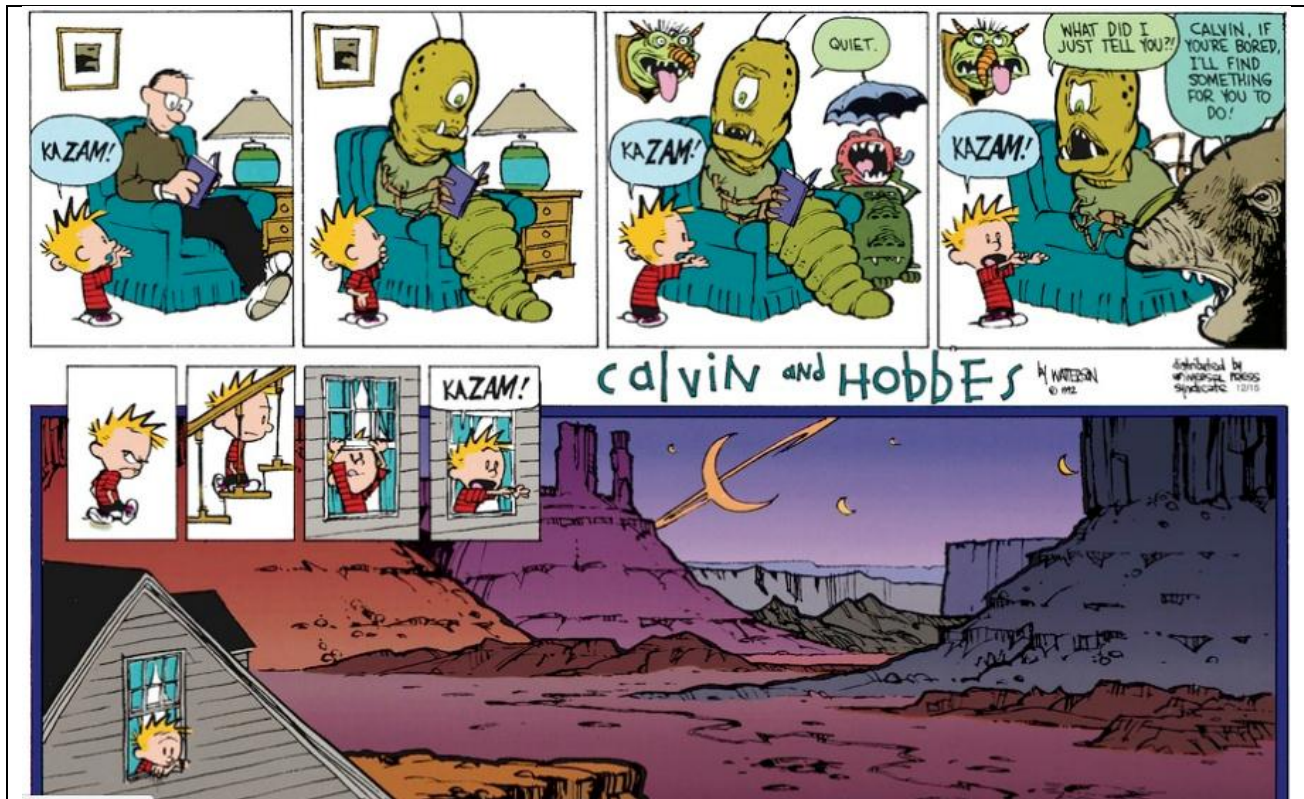
Students are divided into two groups. One group will compose the inner circle of the Socratic Seminar and the other will form the outer circle. The inner circle members begin the dialogue while the outer circle members take notes about the dialogue, craft questions they have about the dialogue, and observe one participant of the inner circle. The discussion will begin with the teacher posing the question, “How are these comics related to the concept of creation?”

Students will dialogue for 10-15 minutes and then the inner circle and outer circles will change places. The new outer circle members will now be taking notes, crafting questions, and observing their partner in the inner circle. Before moving on, the teacher will facilitate a reflective discussion about the seminar using these questions:

- What challenges did you experience through the seminar?
- How did your role in the seminar impact your feelings about the Socratic Seminar?
- What was the one theme or “big idea” that you discovered through participating in today’s lesson?
- What generalizations can you make about the form of comics?
- How did the seminar and task help deepen your understanding of creation?

Elaborate —Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways

The teacher will project the comic below on the board and discuss what students see/infer using the close reading questions as a guide. Then, the teacher will divide the class into four or eight groups (if eight, then two groups will get the same quote and question combo). Each group will get a quote/question pairing from the options below. In their groups, they will need to answer the question and prepare an explanation to share with the class.



Quotes from Bill Watterson's, *The Calvin and Hobbes Tenth Anniversary Book*. (1995). Scholastic Inc.

Quote:

"Comics are a wonderfully versatile medium. With the potent combination of words and pictures, the comic strip can depict anything the cartoonist has the imagination to envision." (p. 6)

Question:

How do you think Watterson came up with the idea of the strip? How does creation require form?

Quote:

"When I come up with a topic, I look at it through Calvin's eyes. Calvin's personality dictates a range of possible reactions to any subject, so I just tag along and see what he does. The truth of the matter is that my characters write their own material. I put them in situations and listen to them... virtually all the strip's humor comes from the character's personalities." (p. 19)

Question:

What do we learn about the character of Calvin from the displayed comic? How does creation require form?

Quotes from Nevin Martell's book, *Looking for Calvin and Hobbes: The unconventional story of Bill Watterson and his revolutionary comic strip*. (2009). The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Quote:

"Surprise is the base of all humor, and nothing is more surprising than the truth." (p. 172)

Question:

What truth is being portrayed in the comic strip on display? How does creation require form?

Quote:

"The best humor is usually what people recognize as being about part of their own lives, rather than something truly weird." (p. 184)

Question:

What can you "recognize as being about part" of your life in the displayed comic? How does creation require form?

***Evaluate:** This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.*

Student groups will present their quotes and responses to their questions for the class.

Students will spend "workshop" time developing comic ideas in their journals for their final performance task. As a guideline, they will be instructed to use at least a page to brainstorm and develop character ideas (What will be your characters' most important features? How will you use comic form to communicate who your character is and what he or she is like?), a page to list and/or draw potential situations or settings for comics (How can you take every-day experiences and adapt them creatively?), and a page to think of ways to create humor through surprise (How will you use form to create art that expresses your ideas clearly and creatively?)

Lesson Two Instructional Materials

1. Print a copy of the following four pages for each student as the Socratic Seminar text.
2. The close reading guide and Socratic Seminar Observer note-taking guide can be printed for each student.
3. You will only need one or two copies of the Quotes & Question pairings - one copy if you want to make four groups and two if you want to make eight.

Calvin and Hobbes

by NEWMAN & FIMS

THE INTREPID SPACEMAN SPIFF IS STRANDED ON A DISTANT PLANET.

OUR HERO RUEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THIS HAPPENS FAIRLY FREQUENTLY...

TO SURVIVE, SPIFF MUST...
..FIND... FOOD?

SPIFF FOLLOWS A SCAVENGER WARDON; PERHAPS THERE'S A FRESH KILL NEARBY!

UGHHH! THE STENCH; OUR HERO BECOMES A VEGETARIAN ON THE SPOT.

BUT THE GRASSES ARE INDIGESTIBLE; THE FRUIT IS POISONOUS; THERE'S NOTHING TO EAT AT ALL!

WEAK AND DESPAIRING, SPIFF PEERS INTO A FROZEN GEYSER PIT; WHAT'S DOWN THERE?

THAT'S NOT VERY HEALTHY.

I ONLY NEED TO SURVIVE UNTIL I CAN ESCAPE. OUR HERO MUTTERS GRIMLY.

ICE CREAM SANDWICHES; OUR HERO IS SAVED!





WITH ULTRA-SONIC HEARING, STUPENDOUS MAN NOTICES A CRY OF DISTRESS FROM A DISTANT ALLEYWAY!



HE LEAPS TO THE EDGE OF THE BUILDING AND PREPARES TO SWOOP TO THE RESCUE!



STUPENDOUS MAN HAD NOT QUITE REALIZED JUST HOW HIGH UP HE WAS, HOWEVER. AT THIS ALTITUDE THE WINDS WERE A LITTLE TRICKY, AND...



ARE YOU GOING, OR DO YOU NEED A PUSH?

DON'T RUSH ME, ALL RIGHT?!

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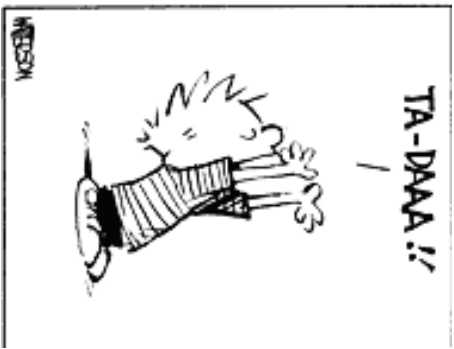


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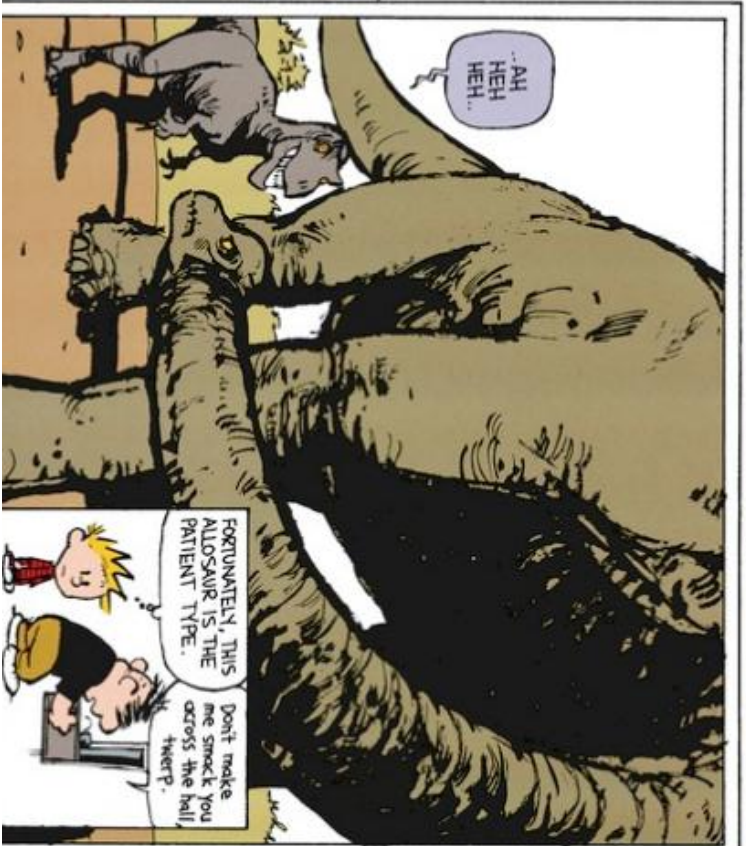
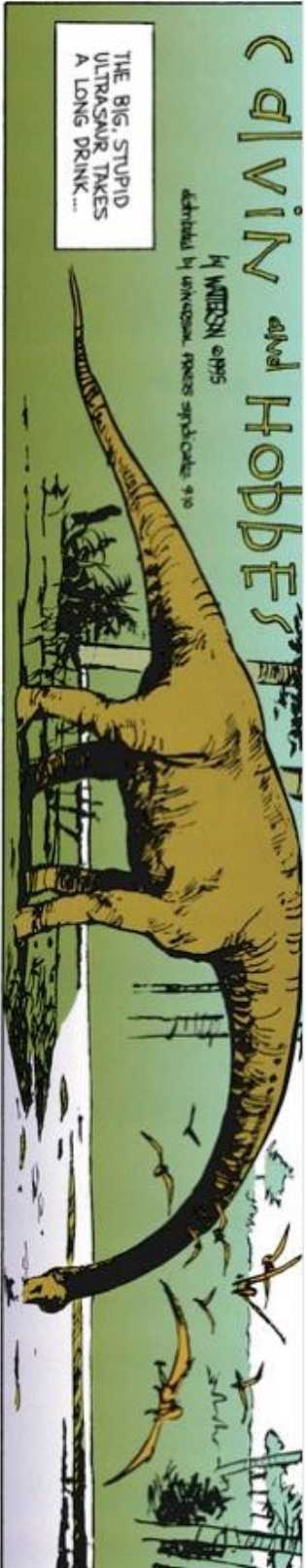


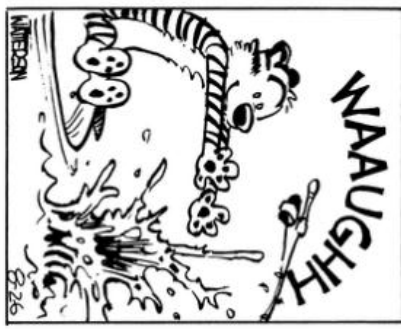
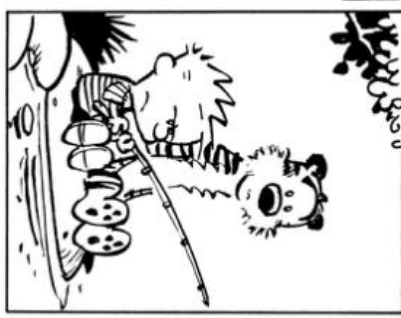
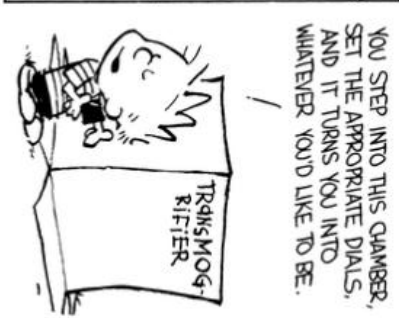
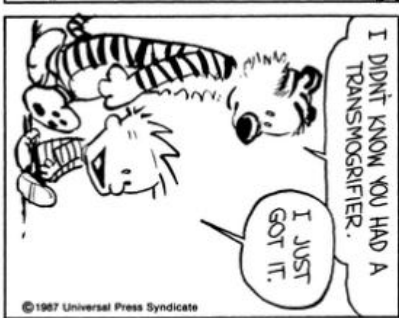
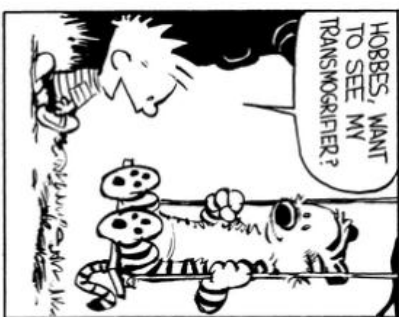
TRIP!



TA-DAAA !!

HEATSEEN





Close Reading Guide

- 1. Read all the comics once to get the gist.**
 - a. What is the story about?
 - b. What key words or phrases can you identify?
 - c. How might you summarize what happened in the comic?
 - 2. Read the text a second time to dig a little deeper.**
 - a. What structures and forms were used to tell the story?
 - b. What is the author's purpose? For whom is the information important? Why?
 - c. Why did the author present the information how he did?
 - 3. Read the text for a third time to solidify your ideas.**
 - a. What inferences can you make about comics or about the characters?
 - b. What connections can you make with the text? How do the comics relate to other stories you've read or comics you've seen? How do the stories relate to your life?
 - c. What questions come to mind when you read and view the comics?
-

Note-taking Guide for the Socratic Seminar Observer

Name _____ I am observing _____

How many times did my partner participate? (Keep a tally.)

These are the questions or comments my partner contributed... (Take notes below.)

These are the questions and/or ideas that I thought of while observing... (Use the back if needed.)

Quote: “Comics are a wonderfully versatile medium. With the potent combination of words and pictures, the comic strip can depict anything the cartoonist has the imagination to envision.”

Question: How do you think Watterson came up with the idea of the strip? How does creation require form?

Quote: “Surprise is the base of all humor, and nothing is more surprising than the truth.”

Question: What truth is being portrayed in the comic strip on display? How does creation require form?

Quote: “The best humor is usually what people recognize as being about part of their own lives, rather than something truly weird.”

Question: What can you “recognize as being about part” of your life in the displayed comic? How does creation require form?

Quote: “When I come up with a topic, I look at it through Calvin’s eyes. Calvin’s personality dictates a range of possible reactions to any subject, so I just tag along and see what he does. The truth of the matter is that my characters write their own material. I put them in situations and listen to them... virtually all the strip’s humor comes from the character’s personalities.”

Question: What do we learn about the character of Calvin from the displayed comic? How does creation require form?

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| TEACHER NAME | | Lesson # |
| Jodi Mills | | 3 |
| MODEL | CONTENT AREA | GRADE LEVEL |
| Visual Thinking Strategy | English Language Arts | 3 rd -5 th grades |
| CONCEPTUAL LENS | | LESSON TOPIC |
| Creation | | Designing Visual Elements of Comics (Art and Layout) |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVES (from State/Local Curriculum) | | |
| <p>Reading: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development (RL.5.2). Analyze the structure of texts (RL.5.5). Assess how point of view or purpose influences how events are described (RL.5.6). Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (RL.5.7).</p> <p>Writing: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (W.4.4). With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing (W.4.5).</p> | | |
| THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING (What is the overarching idea students will understand as a result of this lesson?) | | THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION (What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding?) |
| Creation requires form. | | How does creation require form? |
| CONTENT KNOWLEDGE (What factual information will students learn in this lesson?) | | PROCESS SKILLS (What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?) |
| <p>Students will understand...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cartoonists tell stories through words and pictures organized in frames. ▪ Comic frames can be a variety of shapes and sizes. ▪ Comics can tell stories without or with very few words. ▪ Cartoonists develop ways for their characters to express emotions and actions. ▪ The setting of a comic can be integral or irrelevant to the story. | | <p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with a partner to describe and draw a comic through observation and spoken communication. • Analyze comics and answer open-ended questions with support from the artwork. • Infer the story, message, and significance of a comic strip. • Judge how form impacts the meaning and emotion within comics. • Defend an opinion with compelling reasons. |
| GUIDING QUESTIONS | | |
| <p>What questions will be asked to support instruction?</p> <p>Include both “lesson plan level” questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding</p> | | |
| Pre-Lesson Questions: | During Lesson Questions: | Post Lesson Questions: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think Watterson is trying to communicate in the strip above? • What was challenging about describing the comic strip? What strategies did you use, and why? • What was challenging about drawing the comic strip? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is going on in this comic? • What do you see that makes you say that? • What else can you find? • Who do you think the characters in the comic are? How do you know? • What just happened before this comic? What might | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe the form of this comic? • Why do you think Bill Watterson chose to structure this story in this way? • What do you notice about the frames in Calvin and Hobbes? • How would you describe a |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>How did your partner make your job easier or harder?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What elements of form did your partner include in his or her description? • How was your drawing different from and similar to Bill Watterson's creation? • What did you do differently the second time? How did it effect the process? • How does your creation compare to the original comic? What do you think caused the similarities and differences? • How did this challenge relate to the concept of creation? • What did you learn about form from this challenge? | <p>happen next? Why do you think so?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you think they are? Why? • When do you think this is taking place? What makes you think this? • After all we have said, what is Watterson's creation? What story has he created? • What message do you think the artist wanted to tell us through the comic? • How did Watterson's use of form impact the comic? | <p>"typical" comic form?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do these strips adhere to typical comic form? How are they different? • What emotions or moods are expressed in your comics? • How does Watterson use form to support emotions of characters in the comic? • How does Bill Watterson express emotion through his art? • How does creation require form? • What did you learn about form and creativity from the opening activity? • What did you learn about form and creativity by tracing elements of Calvin & Hobbes? • Which activity do you think better represents the concept of creation? • Which activity do you think better represents the concept of form? |
|--|--|--|

DIFFERENTIATION

(Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.)

| Content | Process | Product | Learning Environment |
|---------|--|--|----------------------|
| | Students use observation and critical thinking to create individual and personal meaning using the Visual Thinking Strategies model. | As students experiment with the visual elements of comics in the development of their own comic strips, they will need to think creatively and flexibly. | |

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.

Students will gather in the circle. The following comic and message will be displayed on the board:



Today we are going to focus on the visual elements of comic art. What do you think Watterson is trying to communicate in the strip above?

When everyone is ready, the teacher will instruct everyone to walk around for one minute and greet everyone in the room by shaking hands and using their names. If anyone has forgotten a name of a classmate, they are to ask politely for a reminder. After the minute is up, the teacher will ask all students to go stand next to someone they haven't worked with yet this week (possibly someone whose name they had forgotten). When they have found a partner, they are to sit down together and discuss their thoughts about the question in the message on the board. After a minute of discussion, the teacher will ask for pairs to share their ideas with the whole group.

Then, the teacher will lead the group in a "blind draw" activity. One partner is given a blank piece of paper and a pencil, the other is given a Calvin and Hobbes comic strip. The student with the paper is not allowed to look at the comic or say anything/ask questions and his or her partner is not allowed to look at the paper.

The job of the partner with the comic is to describe the comic so that his or her partner can draw it on the blank paper. After the time is up, students will look at the drawing and comic strip.

The teacher will ask the following questions, with students responding aloud one at a time.

- What was challenging about describing the comic strip? What strategies did you use, and why?
- What was challenging about drawing the comic strip? How did your partner make your job easier or harder?
- What elements of form did your partner include in his or her description?

- How was your drawing different from and similar to Bill Watterson's creation?

The partners will switch roles and attempt the challenge again with new comic strips. After they are finished, the class will discuss the following questions.

- What did you do differently the second time? How did it effect the process?
- How does your creation compare to the original comic? What do you think caused the similarities and differences?
- How did this challenge relate to the concept of creation?
- What did you learn about form from this challenge?

***Explore** - In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.*

NOTE: In this lesson, the "Explore" and "Engage" sections will be repeated three times, with each new comic beginning a new exploration.

The teacher will reveal the comics below (see the end of the lesson plan) by projecting them on the board one at a time. With the presentation of a new comic, the teacher will provide three minutes of silent observation time. Students will be instructed to look at the artwork and think about what they see.

***Explain** - Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding.*

After the three minutes of observation, the teacher asks the during-lesson questions. Students will be encouraged to comment and to expand on the comments made by their peers. Also, their answers should be supported or based on elements within the comic. **The teacher will ask clarifying questions throughout the discussion when needed. For example, "How do you know ___? What makes you say ___? What clues or details from the comic make you think ___?"**

During-lesson Questions:

- What is going on in this comic?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What else can you find?
- Who do you think the characters in the comic are?
- What just happened before this comic? What might happen next?
- Where do you think they are?
- When do you think this is taking place?

In their notebooks, students will be given three minutes to write down their thoughts to the summary questions:

- After all we have said, what is Watterson's creation? What story has he created?
- What message do you think the artist wanted to tell us through the comic?
- How did Watterson's use of form impact the comic?

After the three minutes, students will share their thoughts aloud and add listen to their peers. They will be encouraged to add to their notes/answers as they hear input from their classmates.

(Return to the "Explore" phase of the lesson and begin the process again with the next comic until all three have been discussed.)

Elaborate —Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways

Students will work with their partner and the comics from the “Engage and Connect” portion of the lesson. They will be instructed to use tracing paper to trace the shapes of the frames in their comic and consider the question, “How would you describe the form of this comic? Why do you think Bill Watterson chose to structure this story in this way?”

Student pairs will be given time to work and then will share out. After each group has shared, the entire class will discuss, “What do you notice about the frames in Calvin and Hobbes?”

Then, students will be asked, “What emotions or moods are expressed in your comics?” They will be instructed to identify a facial expression from a character that expresses the previously identified emotion and trace it with their tracing paper.

Student pairs will be given time to work and then will share out. After each group has shared, the entire class will discuss, “How does Bill Watterson express emotion through his art?” And “How does Watterson use form to support emotions of characters in the comic?”

Evaluate: *This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.*

The teacher will ask students to respond to the following questions aloud one at a time:

- What did you learn about form and creation from the opening activity?
- What did you learn about form and creation by tracing elements of Calvin & Hobbes?

As students are sharing their responses, the teacher is adding on to the anchor charts from the first lesson. Then students will be asked to consider the following questions, which will be displayed on the board for them to see.

- Which activity do you think better represents the concept of creation?
- Which activity do you think better represents the concept of form?

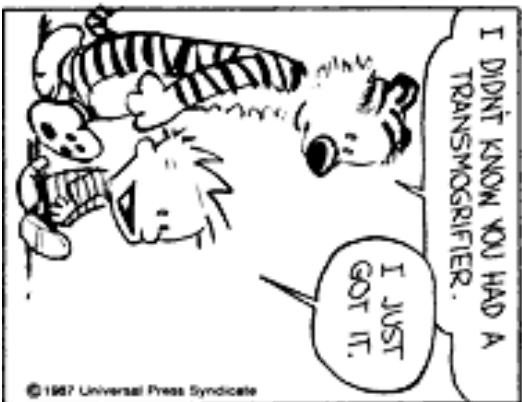
Students will be given two index cards, one for each question. On the back of one card, they will write the word “creation.” On the back of the other, they will write “form.” On the lined side of each index card, students will write which activity they think best represents the concept using details and reasons to support their answer.

Once students have completed their response and given it to the teacher, they will begin a focused workshop time in order to continue the development of their own personal comics. Today, they will choose a story concept or idea from the previous day to develop into a comic. Once they choose the concept, they will develop three different sketches for how the comic will play out. In each draft, they will be expected to experiment with the following visual elements:

- a. Size, shape, and number of frames
- b. Position and action of characters
- c. Facial expressions
- d. Setting (with or without details)
- e. Arrangement and format of text

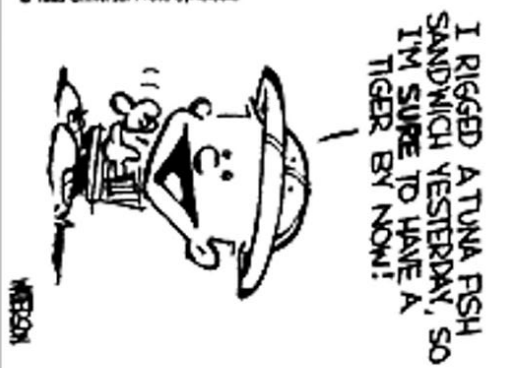
Lesson Three Instructional Materials

1. Print enough comics for your "blind draw" activity from the selection below.
2. Copy the comics labeled "VTS" into your preferred slide-show program (Google Slides, Microsoft PowerPoint, or Smart Notebook) so each comic has its own slide and is large enough for students to see clearly.

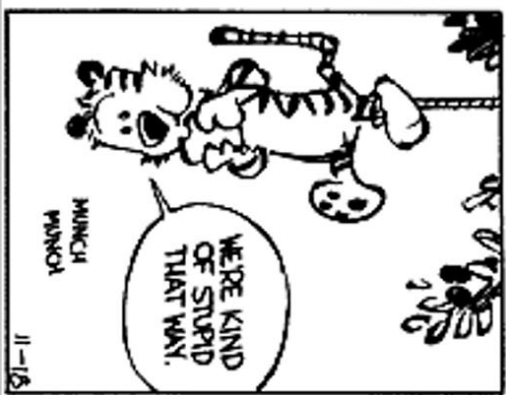




© 1985 Universal Press Syndicate

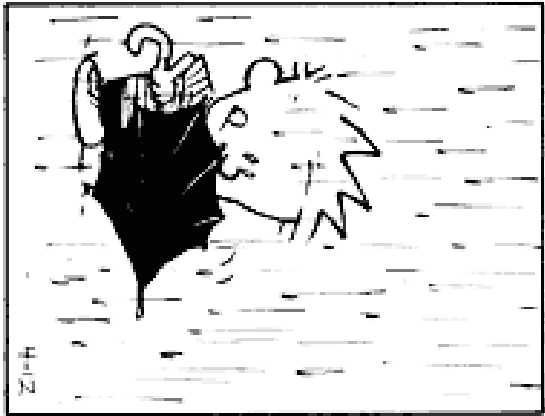
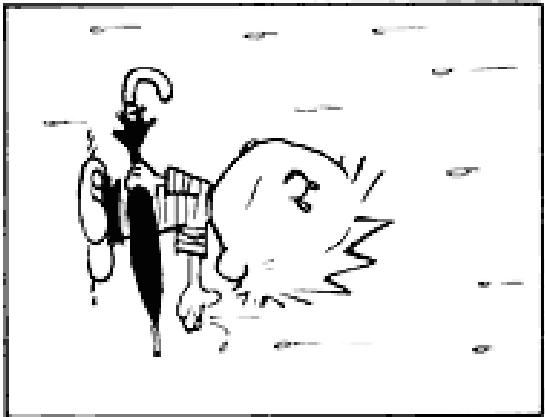
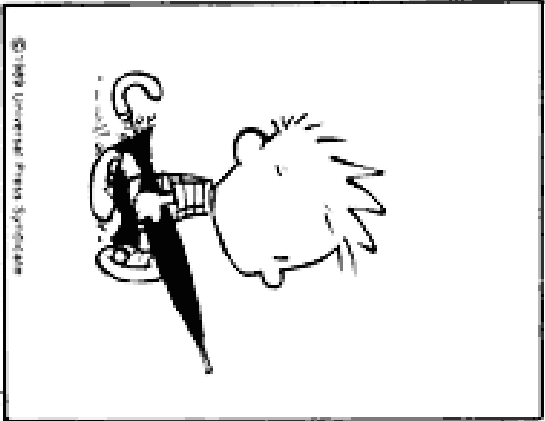


HEERSON



11-1/8



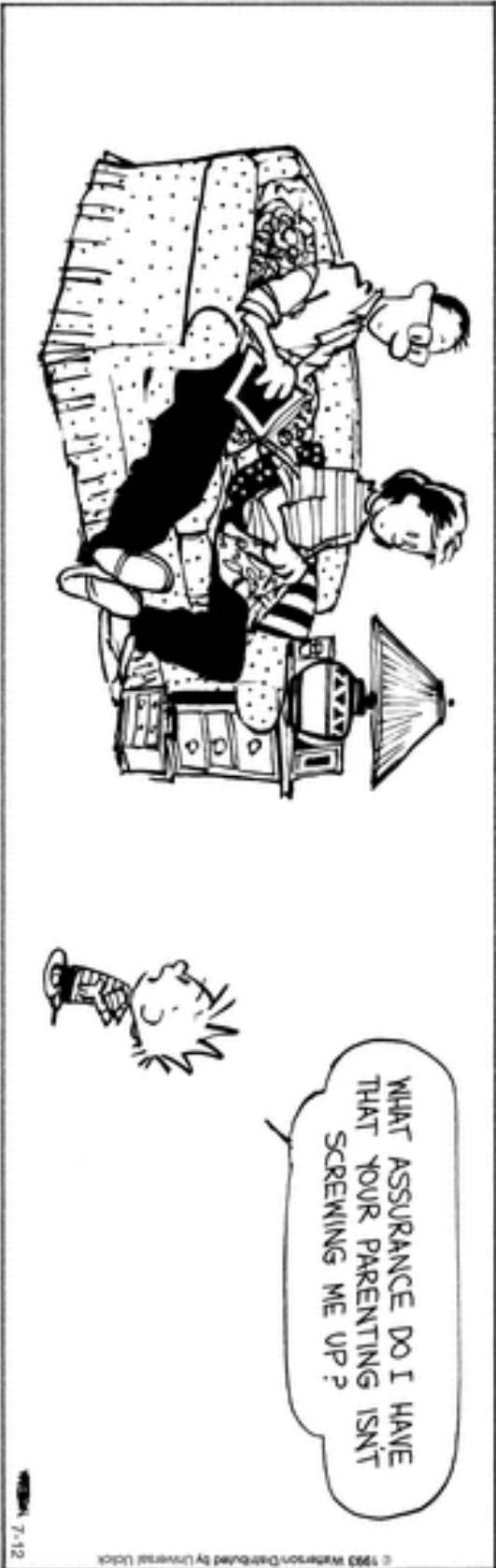


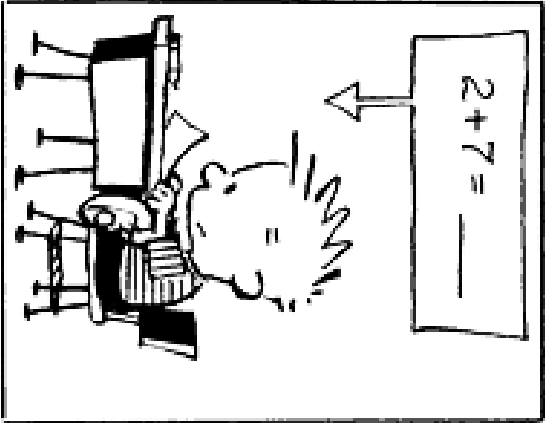


I'LL BET I'M MISSING
SOME GREAT TV SHOWS.

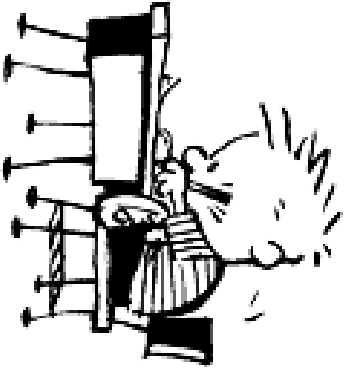
© 1999 Universal Press Syndicate

124

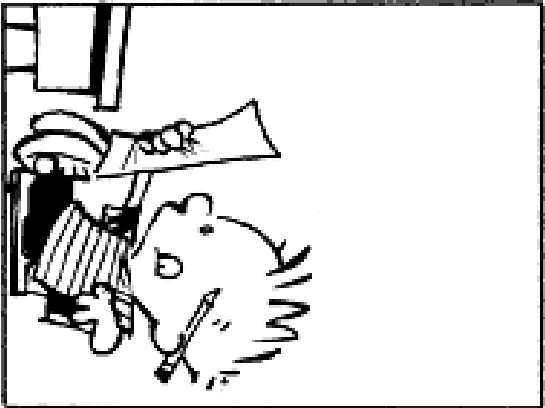




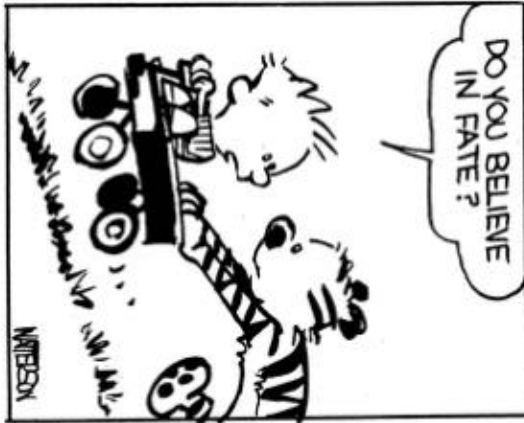
© 1988 Universal Press Syndicate



I CANNOT ANSWER THIS QUESTION, AS IT IS AGAINST MY RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES.



5-28

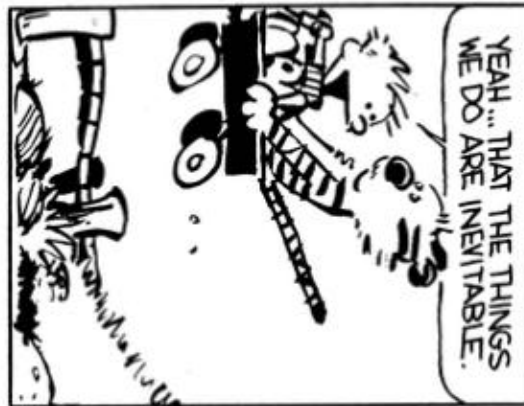


DO YOU BELIEVE IN FATE?

© 1985 Universal Press Syndicate



YOU MEAN, THAT OUR LIVES ARE PREDESTINED?



YEAH... THAT THE THINGS WE DO ARE INEVITABLE.



WHAT A SCARY THOUGHT!

11-30

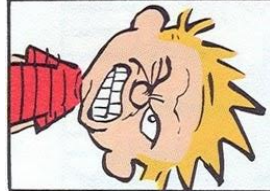
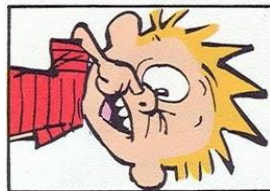
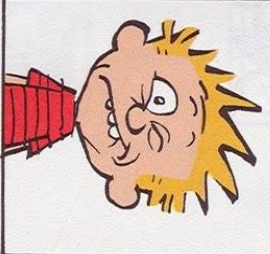
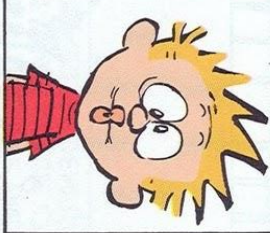
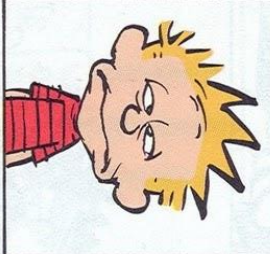
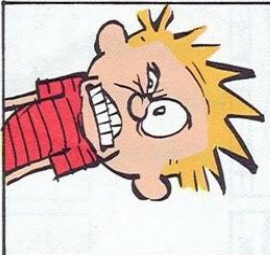
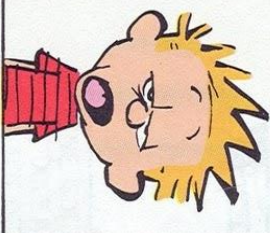
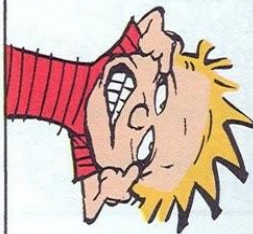


© 1986 Universal Press Syndicate



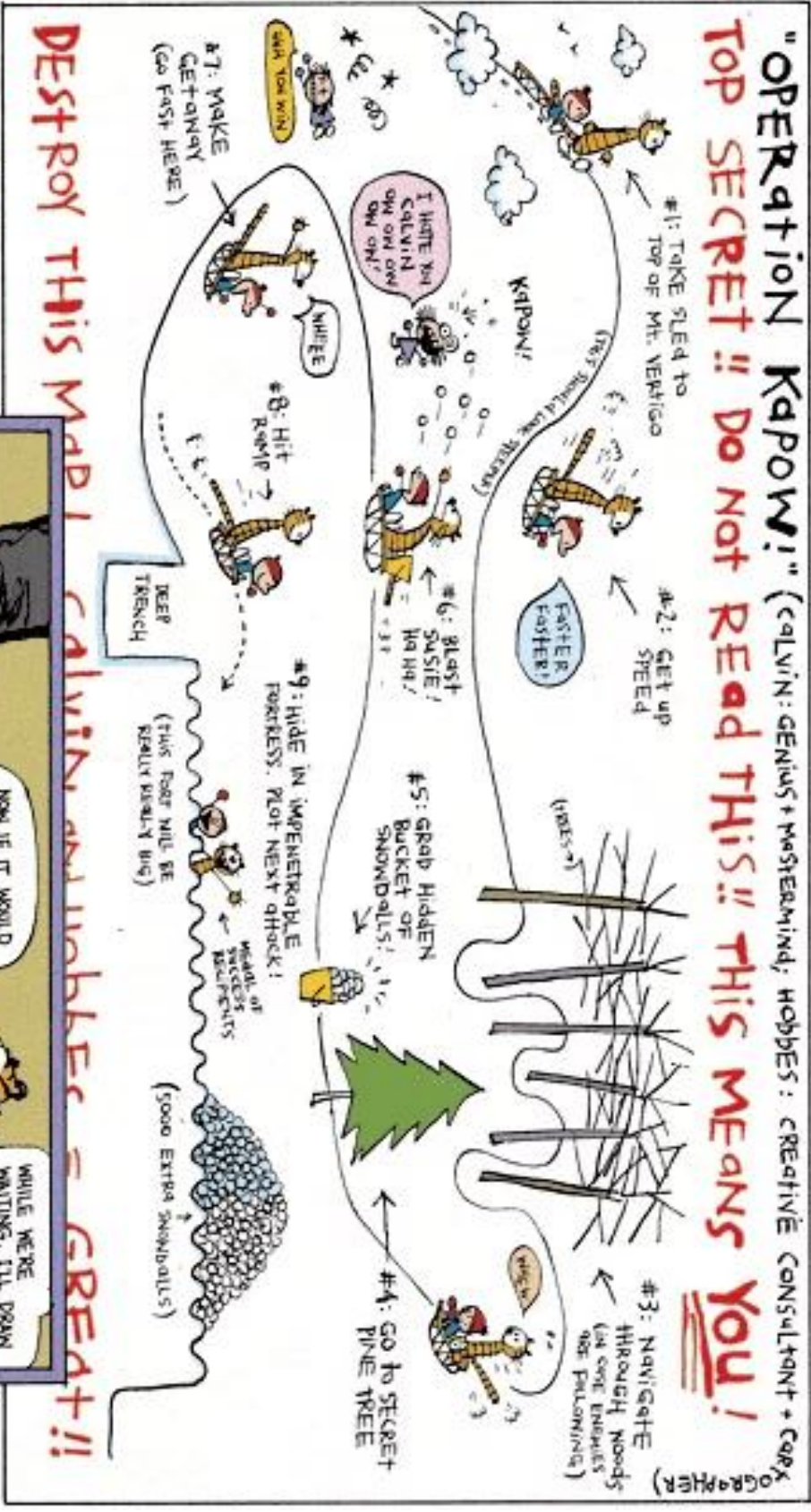
Calvin and Hobbes

BY WILSON



"OPERATION KAPOW!" (CALVIN: GENIUS + MASTERMIND; HOBBES: CREATIVE CONSULTANT + CORE OPERATOR)

TOP SECRET!! DO NOT READ THIS!! THIS MEANS YOU!



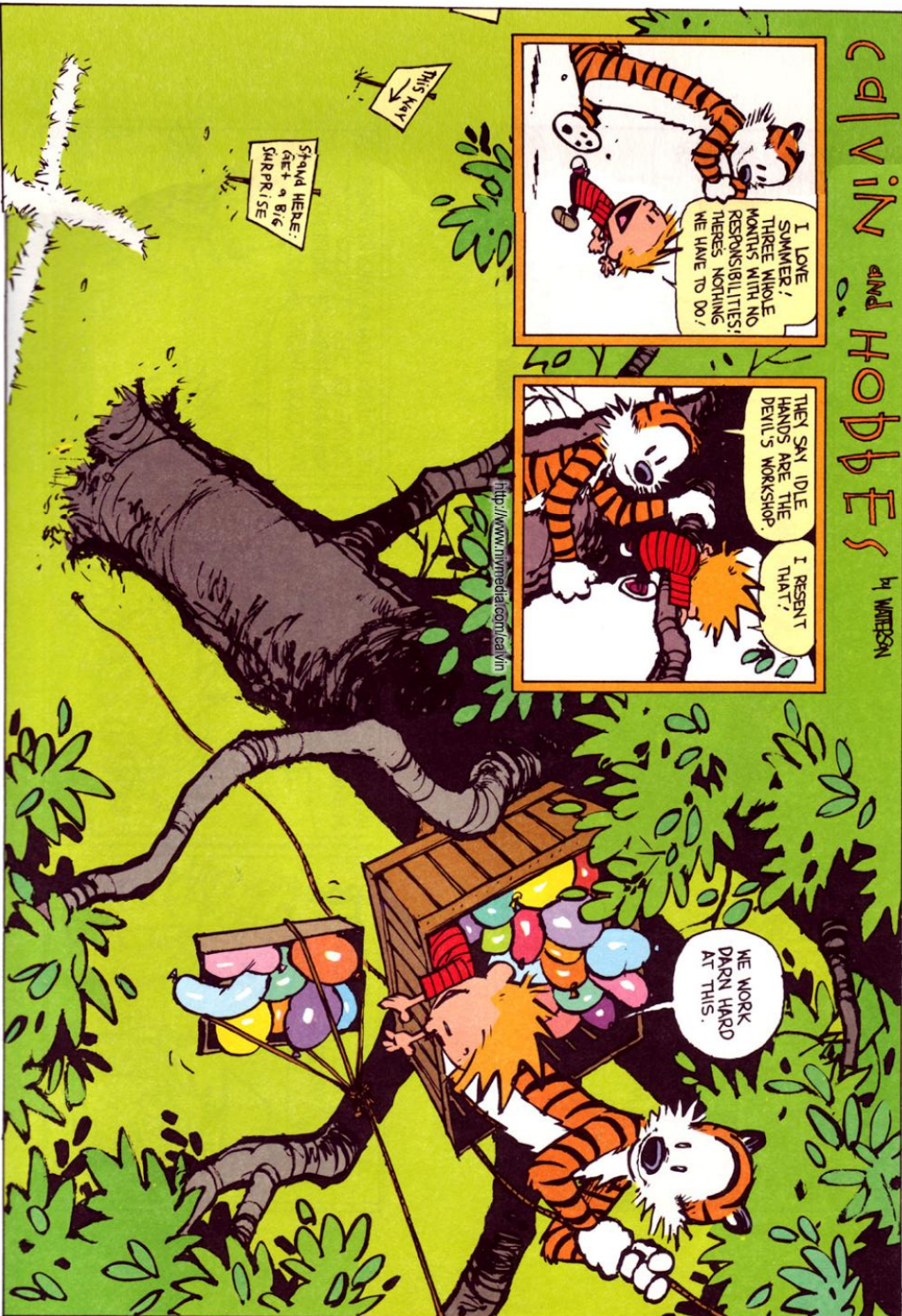
DESTROY THIS MAD! CALVIN AND HOBBES IS GREAT!!

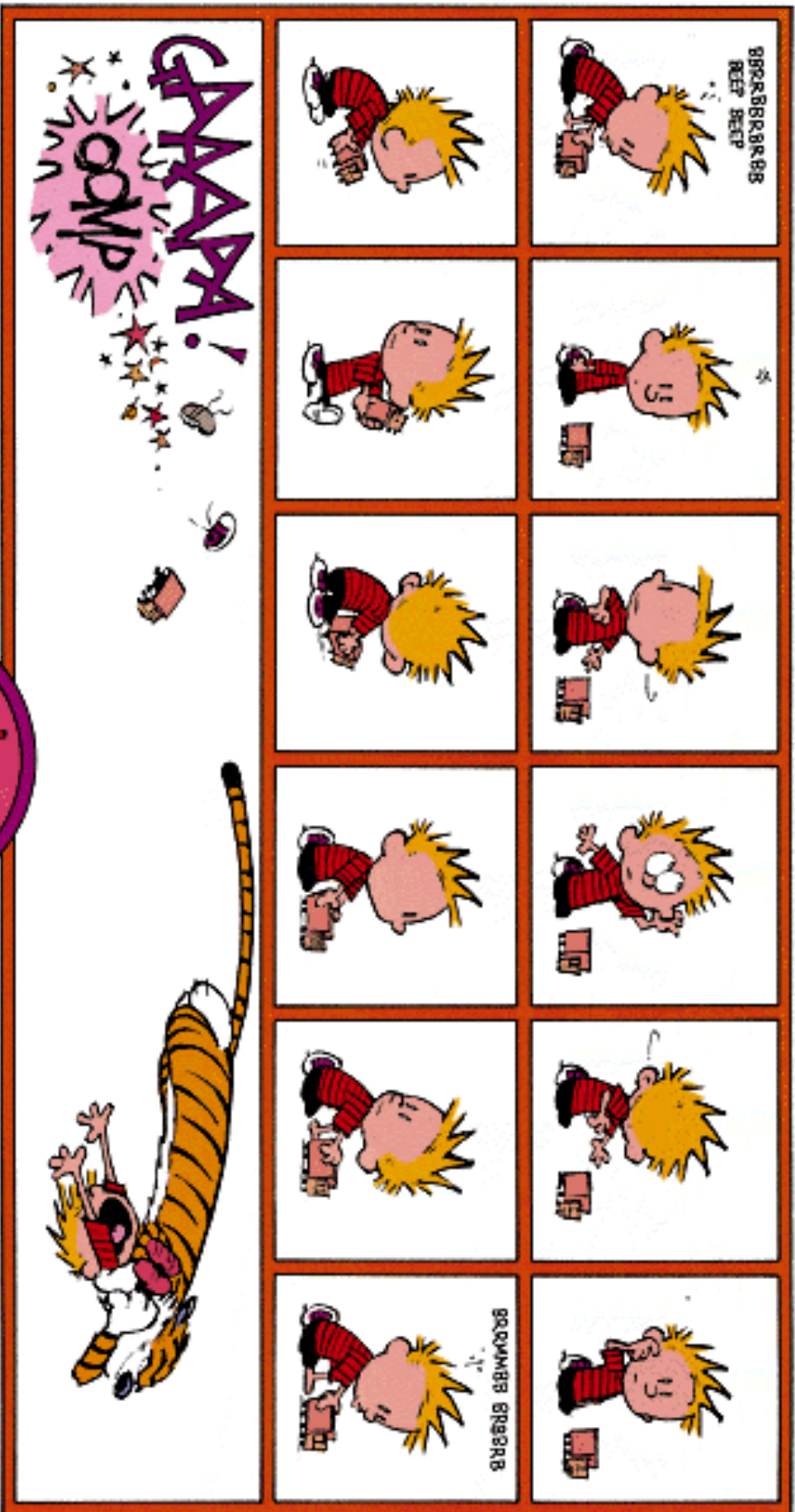
Calvin and Hobbes
by WATSON
©1985



calvin and hobbes

by WATKINSON

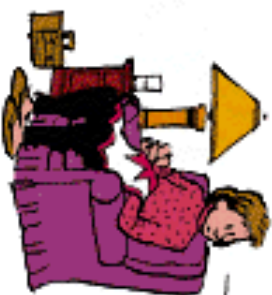




YOU MOVED UPWIND,
SILLY / SHEESH,
HUMAN SENSES
AREN'T WORTH
BEANS.

GET OFF ME,
YOU PSYCHOTIC
SAVAGE!

Calvin
Hobbles
by WATSON with
art by STEVEN MUIR
published 7/20

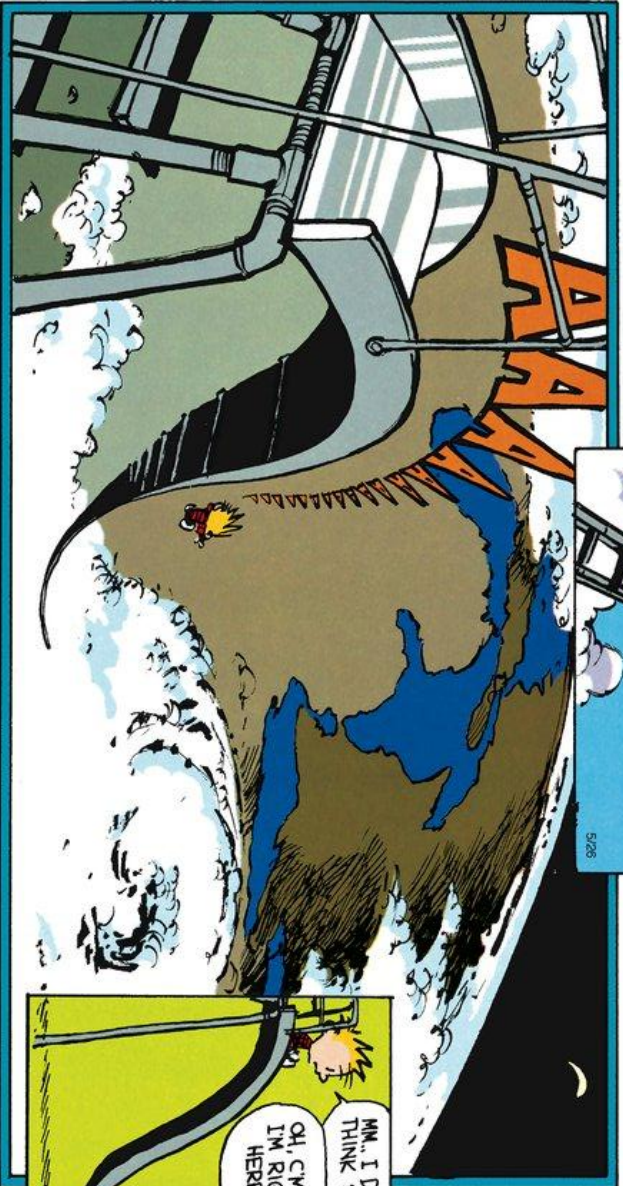
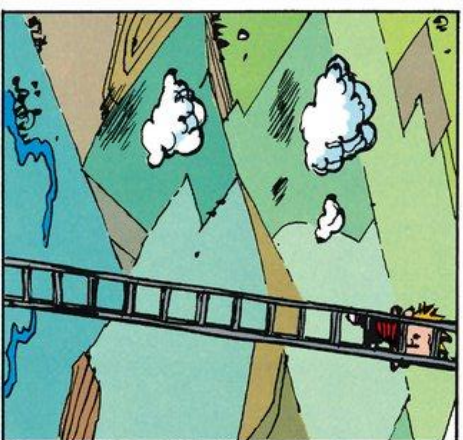
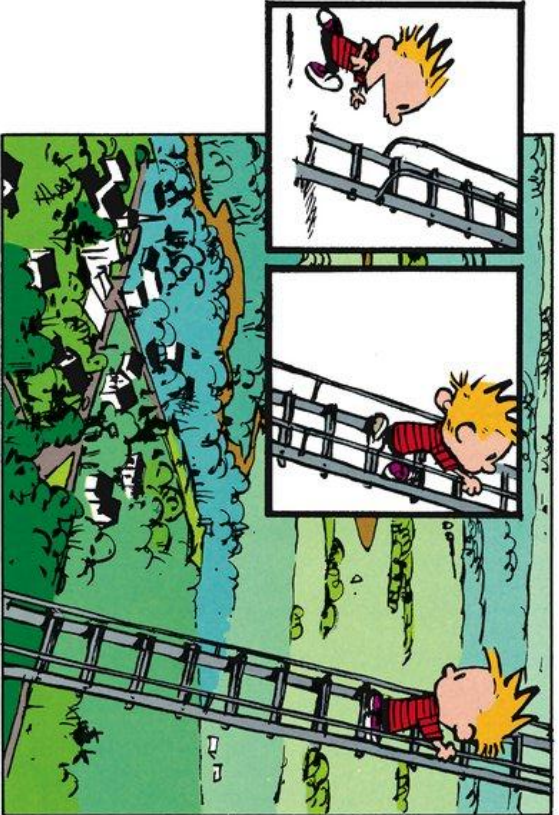


YOUR NATURE PROGRAM
IS ON, DON'T YOU WANT
TO WATCH IT?

NO!

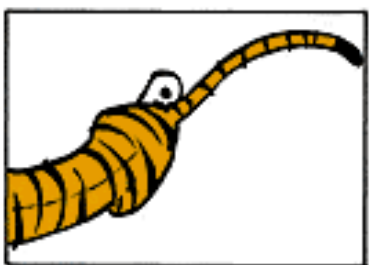
CALVIN AND HOBBES

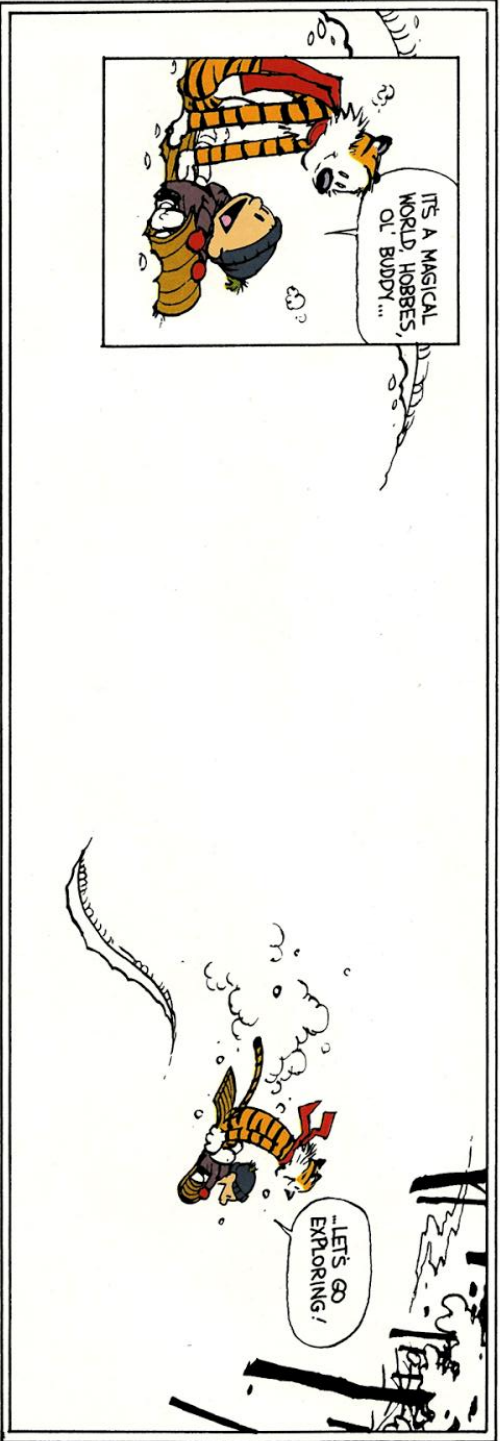
by WARREN EPPZ
with BILL AMESBACH
and BOB SHAPIRO



Calvin and Hobbes

by WATSON





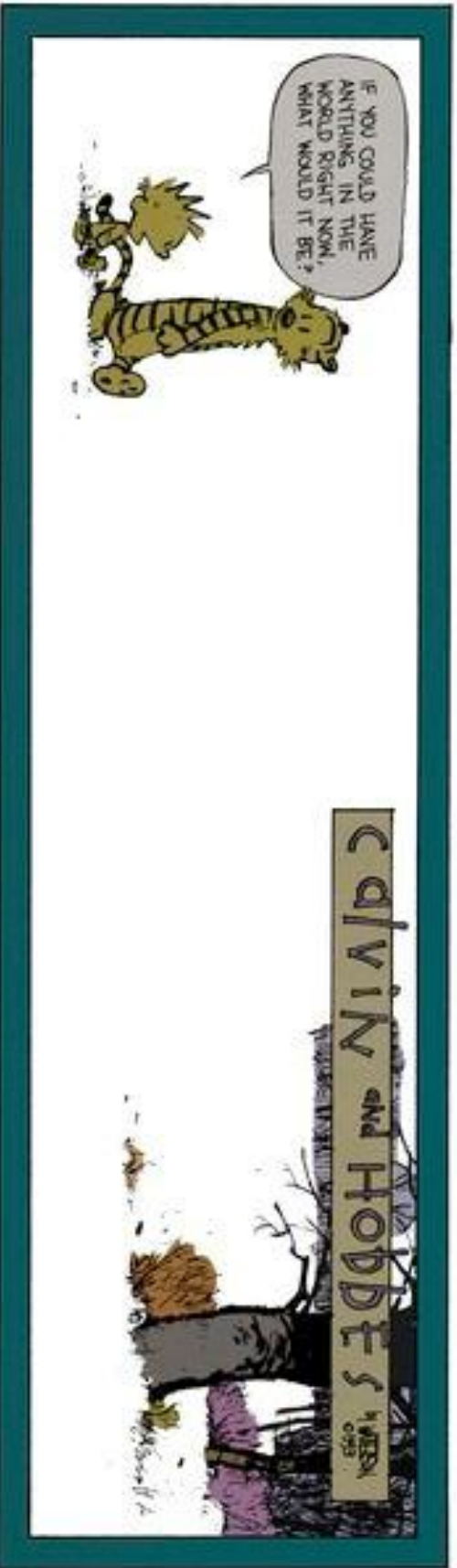
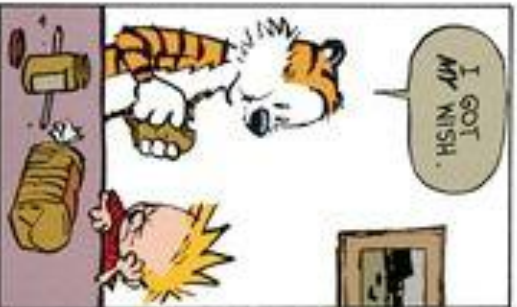


Illustration by cartoonist Bill Watterson.

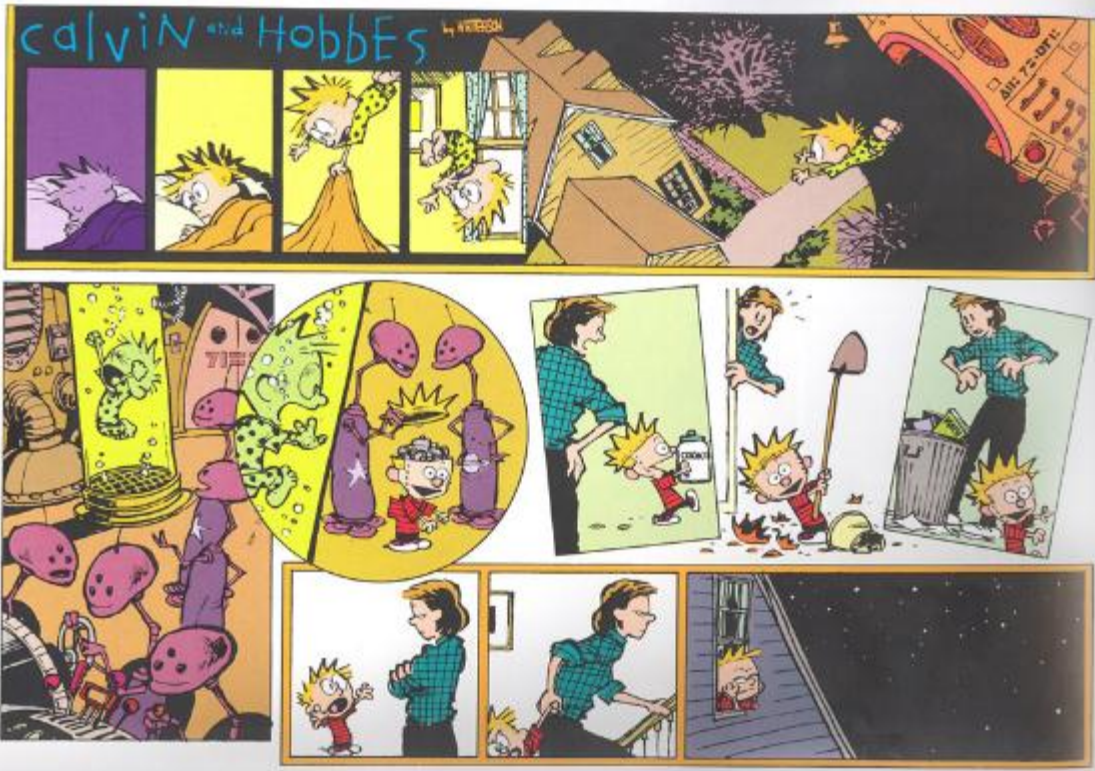
TALK ABOUT A FAILURE OF IMAGINATION! I'D ASK FOR A TRILLION BILLION DOLLARS, MY OWN SPACE SHUTTLE, AND A PRIVATE CONTINENT!



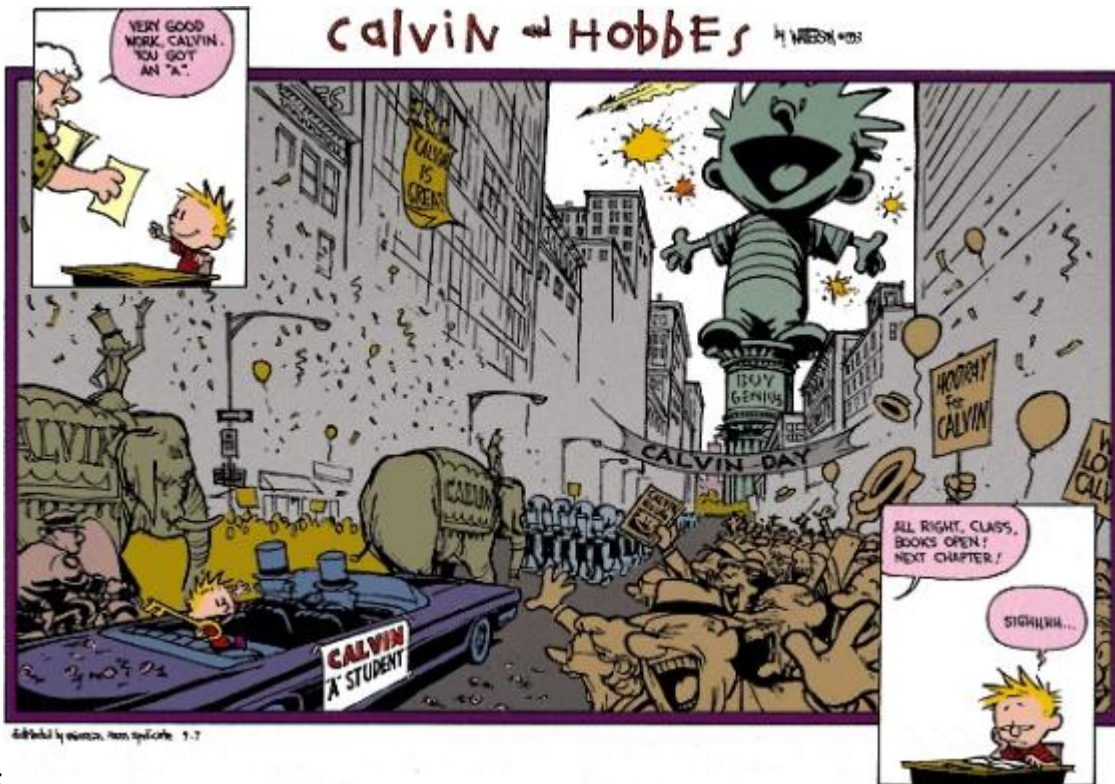
CALVIN AND HOBBES

by WATSON

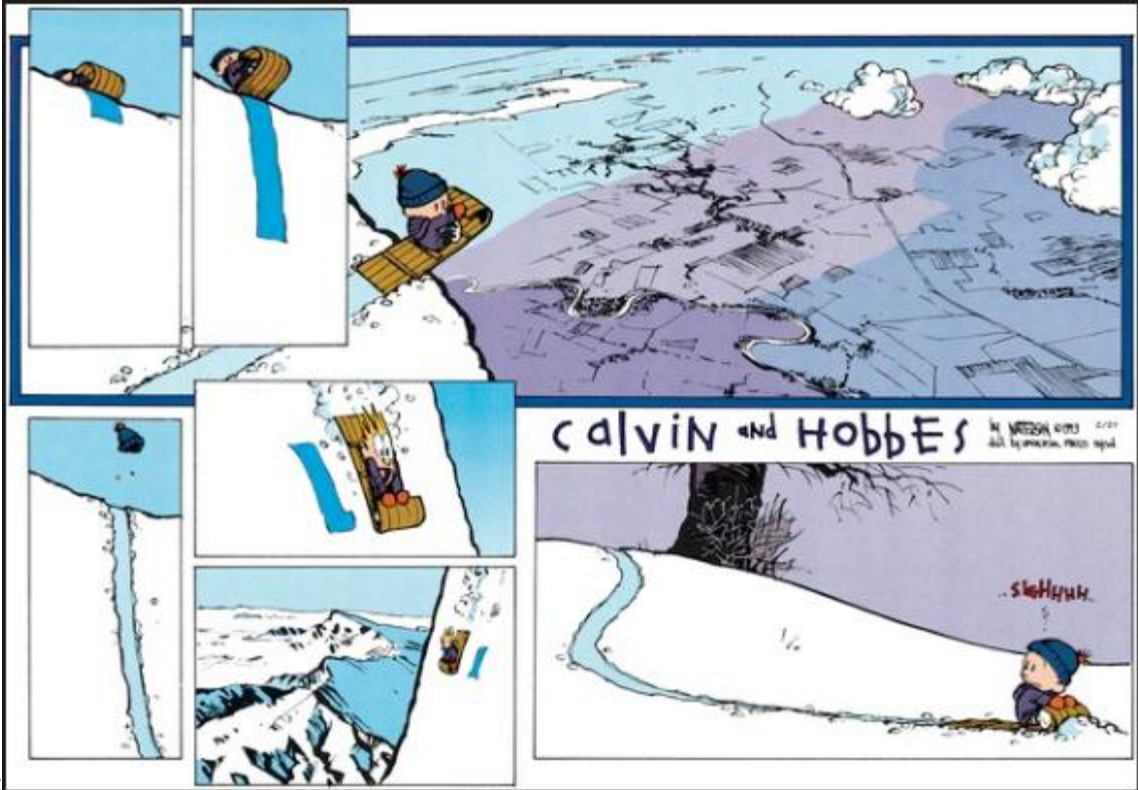




VTS #1:



VTS #2:



VTS #3:

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| TEACHER NAME | | Lesson # |
| Jodi Mills | | 4 |
| MODEL | CONTENT AREA | GRADE LEVEL |
| Questioning | English Language Arts | 3 rd -5 th grades |
| CONCEPTUAL LENS | | LESSON TOPIC |
| Creation | | Developing a Comic Idea for Publication |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVES (from State/Local Curriculum) | | |
| <p>Reading: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development (RL.5.2). Analyze the structure of texts (RL.5.5). Assess how point of view or purpose influences how events are described (RL.5.6). Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (RL.5.7).</p> <p>Writing: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (W.4.4). With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing (W.4.5).</p> | | |
| THE ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDING (What is the overarching idea students will understand as a result of this lesson?) | | THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION (What question will be asked to lead students to “uncover” the Essential Understanding) |
| Creation requires form. | | How does creation require form? |
| CONTENT KNOWLEDGE (What factual information will students learn in this lesson?) | | PROCESS SKILLS (What will students be able to do as a result of this lesson?) |
| <p>Students will understand...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cartoonists have different perspectives on publication and merchandising. Publishers enforce rules about the size and format of comics. Syndicates and cartoonists often make money by licensing companies to make merchandise based on their artwork. Cartoonists improve by learning from and emulating aspects of their fellow artists. | | <p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and present a comic idea in the form of a submission package (as defined in the performance task). Form high level questions for their peers related to the concept. Explore, analyze, and discuss multiple perspectives represented in a text. |
| GUIDING QUESTIONS | | |
| <p>What questions will be asked to support instruction?</p> <p>Include both “lesson plan level” questions as well as questions designed to guide students to the essential understanding</p> | | |
| Pre-Lesson Questions: | During Lesson Questions: | Post Lesson Questions: |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is going on? How does this comic relate to our performance task? Why do people ask questions? What is the purpose of questioning? Who benefits from questioning? What is the role of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the most important aspect of your creation? Why? Why will others enjoy your creation? Who are you hoping will enjoy your comic? What are you doing to appeal to that audience? What do you hope people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How would you describe Watterson’s perspective on creation? In what ways is Watterson’s perspective different from other cartoonists? Why do you think Watterson turned down opportunities to make millions through Calvin & |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>questioning within creation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes a good question? • Are there any such things as bad questions? • What questions do you wish someone would have asked you throughout the process of developing your own comic? • What questions could you ask to help understand other people's creations? • What questions would help you understand the concept of creation? • What questions would help you understand the concept of form? • What is still not understood about the discipline of cartooning? • In what ways is the information incomplete or lacking? | <p>will say about your comic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the form of a story evident your creation? • How does the form of humor influence your creation? • How can you make the most of the form of comic art in your creation? • What elements of your comic do you consider similar to comics you have seen before? • What makes your comic unique? • How has the gallery walk impacted your understanding of creation? • What did you observe in your peers' creation that inspired you to try something new? | <p>Hobbes merchandise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think Watterson insisted on changing the Sunday format? • In what ways is Watterson's perspective different from his publishers at Universal Press Syndicate? • How do Watterson's conflicts with Universal Press relate to the concept of creation? • How do Watterson's conflicts with Universal Press relate to the concept of form? • How does comic form limit creation? • In what ways does comic form promote and broaden creation? • How does creation require form? • Why does creation require form? • In what ways, if any, do you think form limits creation? • What did you learn from Watterson that inspired your own creations? • Why do you like to create in comic form? • What worked well? What would you change if you develop another comic? • To you, what is the most important aspect of creation? How has Watterson set an example? |
|---|---|---|

DIFFERENTIATION

(Describe how the planned learning experience has been modified to meet the needs of gifted learners. Note: Modifications may be in one or more of the areas below. Only provide details for the area(s) that have been differentiated for this lesson.)

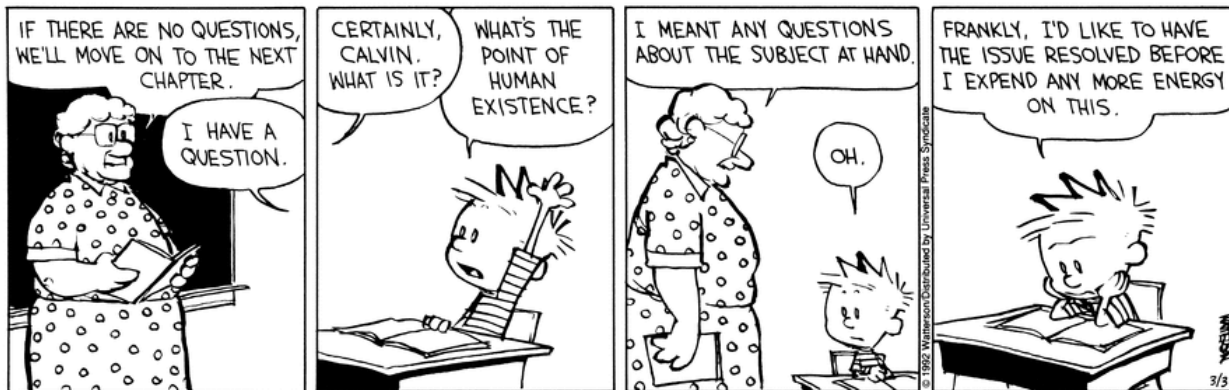
| Content | Process | Product | Learning Environment |
|---|--|---------|----------------------|
| Students will explore opposing viewpoints and discuss multiple perspectives on the topics related to comic publication. | Students will be responsible for thinking about, answering, and developing high level questions. | | |

PLANNED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

(What will the teacher input? What will the students be asked to do? For clarity, please provide detailed instructions)

Engage and Connect - This phase focuses on piquing students' interest and helping them access prior knowledge. This is the introduction to the lesson that motivates or hooks the students.

Students will enter the classroom and be seated in the circle. There will be instructions on the board to read the following comic and consider the question: **What is the purpose of questioning?**



When everyone is seated, the teacher will explain the greeting – students will take turns answering the question on the board, greet someone else in the circle by name, and then throw a soft ball or stuffed toy to him or her. The person who caught the ball will answer the question without repeating any of the previous answers before greeting the next student. To show the class that they've had a turn, students who have been greeted will cross their arms.

After everyone has been greeted, the teacher will lead the class in a brief discussion using the pre-lesson questions listed above. The teacher will explain that students will be asked to think of at least one question by the end of the sharing time today. When students think of a question during workshop and/or the gallery walk, they should write it on a sticky note and stick it to the board. The following questions will be given and displayed to help students develop high level or unanswered questions:

- What questions do you wish someone would have asked you throughout the process of developing your own comic?
- What questions could you ask to help understand other people's creations?
- What questions would help you understand the concept of creation?
- What questions would help you understand the concept of form?
- What is still not understood about the discipline of cartooning?
- In what ways is the information incomplete or lacking?

Explore - *In this phase, the students have experiences with the concepts and ideas of the lesson. Students are encouraged to work together without direct instruction from the teacher. The teacher acts as a facilitator. Students observe, question, and investigate the concepts to develop fundamental awareness of the nature of the materials and ideas.*

Students will be given extended workshop time to finish preparing their submission packages. As they work, the teacher will circulate and ask the during-lesson questions.

If anyone finishes early, he or she will be directed to read the informative page about the Universal Press Syndicate's history with Bill Watterson. If time allows, they will be asked to brainstorm comic strip ideas based on the content of the text, specifically the disagreements between Watterson and his fellow cartoonists and/or the challenges he had with his syndicate.

After the workshop time is over, the teacher will instruct students to prepare for the time of sharing (see below for details).

Explain - *Students communicate what they have learned so far and figure out what it means. This phase also provides an opportunity for teachers to directly introduce a concept, process, or skill to guide students toward a deeper understanding.*

Students will prepare for the gallery walk by laying their sample comics and character page flat on the table tops for display. They will be given an index card to fold in half and use as a tent label for their name and the name of their comic. We will gather in the circle and students will read their cover letters aloud to the class one at a time. Then, students will be given 15 minutes to walk around the room and view their peer's creations.

After the gallery walk, students will assemble in a circle and discuss the following questions: How has the gallery walk impacted your understanding of creation? What did you observe in your peers' creation that inspired you to try something new?

Then, the teacher will read the student-written questions on the board.

Elaborate —*Allow students to use their new knowledge and continue to explore its implications. At this stage students expand on the concepts they have learned, make connections to other related concepts, and apply their understandings to the world around them in new ways*

The teacher will pass out the text describing the Universal Press Syndicate's history with Bill Watterson (unless already provided for early finishers). The teacher will read the text aloud as students follow along and make notes. They will be instructed to circle any unknown or important words as they listen.

Students will be put in groups of 2-3 to answer one of the following questions (the teacher will assign each group a question). Groups will reread the text with the purpose of answering and their question within a five minute period.

1. How would you describe Watterson's perspective on creation?
2. In what ways is Watterson's perspective different from other cartoonists?
3. Why do you think Watterson turned down opportunities to make millions through Calvin & Hobbes merchandise?
4. Why do you think Watterson insisted on changing the Sunday format?
5. In what ways is Watterson's perspective different from his publishers at Universal Press Syndicate?
6. How do Watterson's conflicts with Universal Press relate to the concept of creation?
7. How do Watterson's conflicts with Universal Press relate to the concept of form?

After five minutes, each student group will share out their answer to the question they were assigned.

Evaluate: *This phase assesses both learning and teaching and can use a wide variety of informal and formal assessment strategies.*

Students' submission packages will provide adequate evidence that they have grasped the concept. However, if there is time, students will write a letter to Bill Watterson that addresses at least two of the prompts below.

Share your gratitude. What did you learn from Watterson that inspired your own creations?

Express your preference. Why do you like to create in comic form?

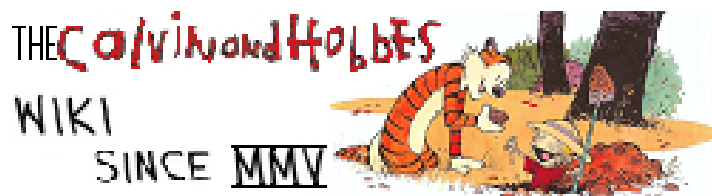
Explain your own creative process. What worked well? What would you change if you develop another comic?

Prioritize and reflect. To you, what is the most important aspect of creation? How has Watterson set an example?

Write questions for Watterson about his creation and use of comic form.

Lesson Four Instructional Materials

1. Print a copy of the text below for each student.



Universal Press Syndicate, an [Andrews McMeel Universal](#) company, is the newspaper syndicate that published [Calvin and Hobbes](#) during its 10-year run. As Universal is a subsidiary of Andrews Mcmeel, the latter published all of the *Calvin and Hobbes* printed collections.

History with Bill Watterson

In 1983, Bill Watterson pitched *In the Doghouse* to Universal Press Syndicate. However, the strip was deemed hard to sell and rejected. Watterson then went to United Feature Syndicate with the same strip, and received a better reception. Although Watterson complied with the syndicate's suggestions to focus the strip on Calvin (originally a side character), the comic was ultimately rejected by United Feature. However, it was eventually picked up by Universal Press Syndicate, which warmed up to the strip after its design revisions.

Universal published the first *Calvin and Hobbes* strip on November 18, 1985. Initially, 35 syndicated newspapers carried the comic. The comic drew nearly instant public acclaim, and climbed up to 250 newspapers carrying it within a year. As the strip continued its meteoric rise, however, quarrels began to brew between Watterson and Universal.

The syndicate pressed Watterson for merchandise licenses and book tours to promote the printed collections. Watterson, however, declined, as he believed commercialization would degrade his work. As Universal could not replace Watterson without losing the popularity of the strip (which was at one point carried in 2400 newspapers), the syndicate reluctantly agreed to lose the millions to be made in merchandise. As such, very few instances of [merchandise](#) were produced outside of the books.

Moreover, Bill Watterson struggled with the syndicate over the reduced size of newspaper comics and the creative limitations that resulted from it. After managing to convince Universal to revise the Sunday format, Bill Watterson met with outrage from editors of the syndicated newspapers, and even from fellow comic strip artists for not working within the industry standards. However, as the editors were afraid to lose the popular strip, the deal went well and there were few cancellations.

Burned out over the licensing and strip size issues, which impeded on the time he had to write the strip, Watterson took a sabbatical from May 6, 1991 to February 1st, 1992. Universal later granted him another sabbatical, for all of 1994 following April 4. Despite this second extended break, Watterson saw less possibilities for the strip and, fearing decline in quality, began to consider ending the strip. Thus, in 1995, he sent Universal Press Syndicate a letter announcing his decision to end the strip on the last day of the year. Bill Watterson continued to work with Universal to allow the publishing of new book collections, such as [Calvin and Hobbes: Sunday Pages 1985-1995](#) and [The Complete Calvin and Hobbes](#).

Universal Press Syndicate. (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2017 from the Calvin and Hobbes Wiki:
http://calvinandhobbes.wikia.com/wiki/Universal_Press_Syndicate

Unit Resources

Goebel, B. A. (2011). *Humor writing: Activities for the English classroom*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

This text is intended to help teachers integrate concepts of humor within reading and writing. Since one of the main purposes of comics is to entertain, especially using humor, this book is an excellent resource and was used to inform the planning of this unit.

Martell, N. (2009). *Looking for Calvin and Hobbes: The unconventional story of Bill Watterson and his revolutionary comic strip*. New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

This book provided a lot of the background information about Bill Watterson's creative process and beliefs about the art of comics. If you are interested in developing your own knowledge of the subject before teaching this unit, this book would be a great place to start. Although not intended for children, this book could be recommended to higher level students who are interested in learning more.

Schroeder, J. A., McUSIC, M., Browne, C. (Producers), & Schroeder, J. A (Director). (2013). *Dear Mr. Watterson* [Documentary]. United States: Gravitass Ventures

If you are looking for a fun introduction to this topic, watch this documentary! Directed and produced by a true *Calvin and Hobbes* fan, it chronicles the history of Bill Watterson's career and investigates possible sources of his inspiration. Your students would also enjoy this film, either as short selections or a whole, as time allows.

"Universal Press Syndicate." (n.d.). Retrieved June 8, 2017 from the Calvin and Hobbes Wiki:

http://calvinandhobbes.wikia.com/wiki/Universal_Press_Syndicate

This page of the Calvin and Hobbes Wiki provided a succinct and accessible summary of Bill Watterson's history with his publisher, Universal Press Syndicate. This text is used in lesson four to introduce students to the conflicts that arose when Watterson fought to have more space to publish his artwork and when he refused to sell merchandizing rights for his characters.

Watterson, B. (2005). Introduction. In *The complete Calvin and Hobbes*. Atlanta, GA: Andrews McMeel Publishing.

After Bill Watterson stopped creating new *Calvin and Hobbes* material, he worked with his publisher to create a final collection of all the strips he made over the ten years of syndication. The collection comes in three massive volumes, beautifully printed and bound. In the introduction to the collection, Watterson shares some of his insights regarding the creation and meaning of the strip.

Watterson, B. (1995). *The Calvin and Hobbes tenth anniversary book*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

After ten years of creating *Calvin and Hobbes*, Watterson put together a collection of comics into a book along with his thoughts under the following headings: The Comics in Transition, Licensing, Sabbaticals, the Sunday Strip, Influences, The Process, The Cast. In addition, Watterson included background stories and explanations for several of the strips.

Yinglin, Mike. (n.d.) The Calvin and Hobbes Search Engine. Retrieved from http://michaelyingling.com/random/calvin_and_hobbes/

If you need to find a specific *Calvin and Hobbes* strip, this website is the place to go! It is a search engine with high resolution images of every published strip along with a transcription of the script and detailed description of what is happening visually. It also tells you the original date of publication and which book or books it appears in. You can search by character, date, or subject.