

Overview

This article introduces the readers to Michel Mulipola, an Auckland-based Samoan artist. The title refers to Mulipola's passion for comics and comic-book heroes. Most students will be familiar with a range of superheroes in comic strips and films, but may not have considered comics as a finely crafted genre and another way to present a narrative. The artist discusses the world of fiction as portrayed in comics and shares a few "secrets" on cartooning, which could motivate many students to create their own comic strips.

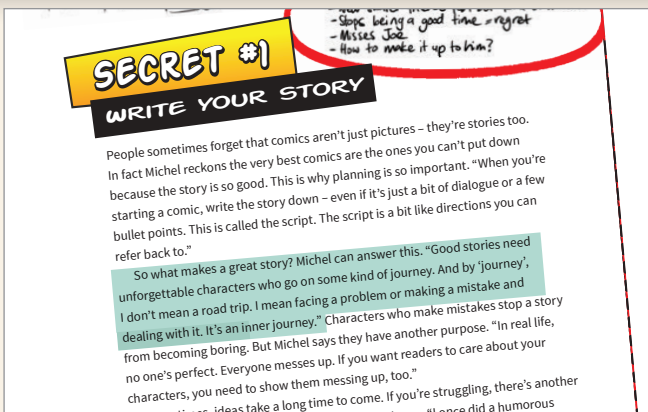
This article:

- encourages discussion about purpose (telling a story) and form (the comic strip)
- prompts thought about choice of purpose and form to suit an audience
- provides graphics to illustrate the process of creating cartoons and comics
- includes tips for creating a comic.

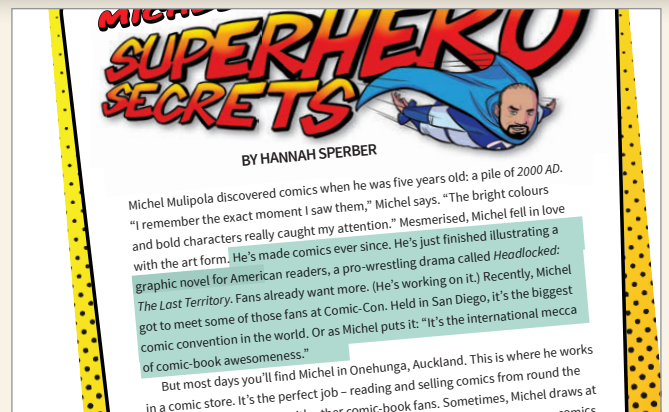
A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme "Comic Man" SJ L4 Oct 2016 | "Miri & Raru" SJ L3 Oct 2015 | Breathless SJSL L3 2016

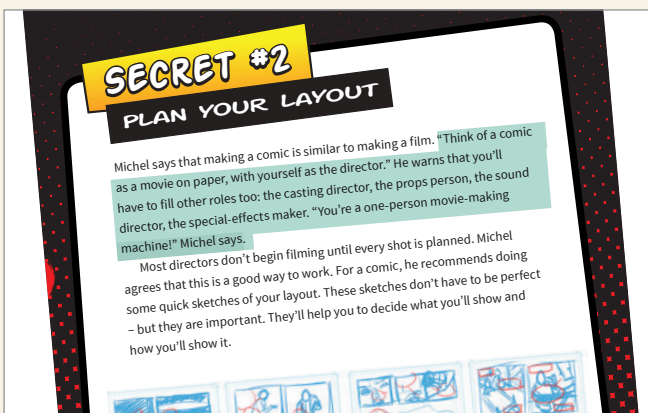
Text characteristics from the year 5 reading standard



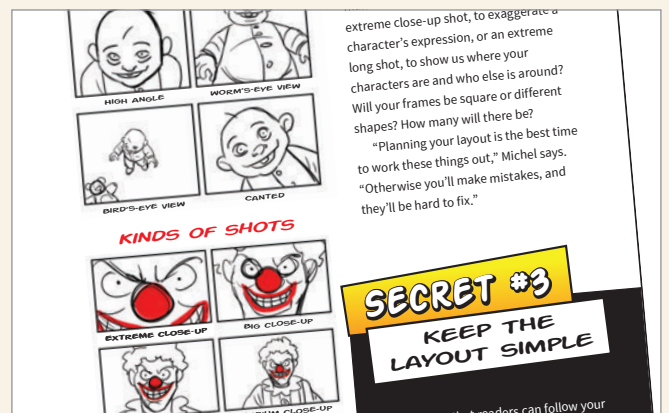
abstract ideas, in greater numbers than in texts at earlier levels, accompanied by concrete examples in the text that help support the students' understanding



sentences that vary in length and in structure (for example, sentences that begin in different ways and different kinds of complex sentences with a number of subordinate clauses)



a significant amount of vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the students (including academic and content-specific words and phrases), which is generally explained in the text by words or illustrations



illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs that clarify or extend the text and may require some interpretation

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

– Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

– Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

Possible first reading purposes

- To respond to the ideas about comics as a graphic art form that tells a story
- To learn about the process of making a comic.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To find out about the structure of a comic strip narrative
- To use information in the text to create a comic
- To explore different ways to record speech.

Possible writing purposes

- To turn a known story into a comic strip, using the “Z formation”
- To create a character description of a comic-book superhero
- To complete a table comparing two or more superheroes
- To write a personal narrative in comic form using Michel’s Secret #1 (write your own story).



The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

(Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students’ needs.)

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words, including “mesmerised”, “convention”, “mecca”, “iconic”, “siblings”, “extended family”, “canted”, “conundrum”
- Topic-specific words and phrases: “art form”, “cartoonists”, “graphic novel”, “comic convention”, “iconic comic-book characters”, “casting director”, “props person”, “sound director”, “Z formation”.

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt students’ prior knowledge of comics, cartoons, and film, introducing the concept of these as art forms.
- Explain to students that they will find out about a process, which has some topic-specific words. Support or prompt students to use context clues to work out unfamiliar words or phrases.
- Direct students to the visual supports, such as the “Z formation”.
- The *English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Familiarity with comics, graphic novels, cartoons, and film
- Understanding that stories can be told in a variety of ways
- Knowledge of superheroes, such as Superman and Batman
- Awareness of the purpose of quotation marks and parentheses.

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt students to discuss, in pairs, what they know about comics and superhero characters.
- Direct them to discuss the graphics showing specific camera angles and camera shots.
- Support students’ use of devices with cameras to reproduce the range of camera angles and camera shots portrayed in the article.
- Ask the students to work in pairs to identify Michel’s spoken words.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- Two main sections: an introduction to the artist and his work followed by the six “secrets”
- The use of quotes, embedded in the text, to provide information
- The use of parentheses to provide extra detail or comment
- Knowledge of narrative structure to make sense of “Secret #1”.

Possible supporting strategies

- Discuss the structure of an article and prompt or feed in what students can expect to find in one (for example, there will probably be information, photographs, and diagrams).
- Create a concept map to display the features of narratives.
- Discuss the form of interviews and review the students’ knowledge of reported speech, direct speech, and quotes.
- Provide copies of “Miri & Raru” (in *School Journal*, Level 3, Oct 2015) Discuss the text, focusing on layout, camera angles, camera shots, and the Z formation.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences; Structure: Show a developing understanding of text structures.

First reading

- Set the purpose for reading.
- Explain to the students that this text will tell them about an artist who writes and draws comics. Students can think, pair, share to prompt prior knowledge and make personal connections with comics and superheroes.
- Suggest that there will be things the students will want to find out about comics and how they are created. Remind them to ask questions of the text. *What are the artist's secrets? Who decides which superhero stories become films? Are all comics about superheroes?*
- Skim the text with the students, focusing on the visual text. Use “think-alouds” to invite responses. *I wonder if the artist sits in front of a mirror to model facial expressions. I love the way that a change to the eyebrow makes such a difference. The layout plan looks quite complex – I guess it has to show everything he is going to include.*
- Direct the students to read the first paragraph and to notice what mesmerised Michel. *Did we find out what Michel Mulipola fell in love with when he found the big pile of 2000 AD comics?*
- Direct the students to work in pairs. Ask them to read one paragraph at a time, stopping to discuss the content of each and clarify meaning. *We'll find out what a “script” for a comic is. What does Michel mean by an “inner journey”? Can we make comics about ordinary people doing ordinary things?*

If the students struggle with this text

- Clarify topic-specific vocabulary.
- Clarify the titles *2000 AD*, *Marvel*, and *DC*.
- Read aloud *Secret #1*. Lead discussion about the abstract idea of characters being on a “journey”. Make the concept less abstract by reminding students of the traditional narratives they will be familiar with, where the main character faces a problem.
- Direct students to talk with a partner to clarify their thinking.
- Provide a framework like the one below and have the students work in pairs to identify and record the key points of the “secrets”.

Secret	Topic	Key points
#1	Story	Characters; the journey; the “problem”
#2	Layout	
#3	Z formation	
#4	Lettering	
#5	Practice	
#6	Have fun!	

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

The teacher

Check that students understood the main ideas in the article.

- *What did we find out about Michel Mulipola?*
- *What were his “secrets”?*
- *Is he happy to share what he knows about creating comics? How do we know?*
- *Can anyone make a comic? Provide reasons for your answer from the text.*
- *What are some of the different ways we can tell stories?*
- *Does every face tell a story?*

Direct the students to the photographs and drawings of faces on page 27. Lead discussion about the possibilities of what is happening for the character.

- *What is he thinking here? What has just happened to make him respond like this?*
- *Model a possible thought bubble for one of the faces.*
- *The words you choose should reflect the facial expression so that the reader will get an idea what the character is feeling.*

Prompt reflection on the importance of the visual text as well as the written.

The teacher

Provide copies of the related text “Miri & Raru” by Dylan Horrocks. Direct students to the speech bubbles on page 2. Support students to identify who is saying what. Model an alternative way to record the direct speech, using speech marks and a new line for a change of speaker.

Make explicit links between reading and writing.

- *How do writers decide what will be said in a story?*
- *Would they need more words if there were no pictures?*
- *What do we find out about the character from the pictures?*

The students:

- find and discuss the main ideas about Michel
- integrate information across paragraphs to answer questions they may have and to offer opinions and responses
- make connections to prior knowledge and experiences of reading stories in other formats
- make inferences based on the visuals and the supporting text.

The students

- consider the faces and the expressions on page 27
- create a speech bubble for one of the faces
- share and discuss their interpretation with others in the group
- reflect on the importance of the visual text and the written text
- evaluate the effectiveness of using comic strips to tell a story.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose.

The teacher

Provide material for students to research DC Comics and Marvel Comics (including information about the comics and, if possible, copies of the comics themselves). Direct students to work in pairs or groups and provide them with guiding questions for their research. Have them create a table like the one below to show the characters from each publishing company.

DC Comics

Superman

Batman

Wonder Woman

Green Lantern

The Flash

Marvel Comics

Spider-Man

Captain America

Hulk

Wolverine

Doctor Strange

You could ask them to extend the table by adding key traits of each character.

- *What did we find out about each of the superheroes?*

Prompt them to note the layout.

- *Do these comics follow the Z formation?*
- *How many frames are needed to tell a story?*

The students:

- engage in a research project on the “Who’s Who” of comics and complete a table to show what they found out.

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You made connections with your own experience of the graphic novels and used these to explain why readers might enjoy other types of stories written in comic form. That’s a good place to start when you’re thinking about how others might respond to those texts.*
- *You mentioned how the facial expression must match the character’s words. That’s a good example to support your statement that in comics, the visual text has to connect closely with the words.*

METACOGNITION

- How did you decide which story could be crafted as a comic?
- What strategies did you use to get to the key points of each secret?



Reading standard: by the end of year 5



Assessment Resource Banks



The Literacy Learning Progressions

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 3 – Purposes and audiences: Show a developing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences; Structure: Organise texts, using a range of appropriate structures.

Text excerpts from “Michel Mulipola: Superhero Secrets”

Examples of text characteristics Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 26

Michel’s dream is to be the first Samoan to draw for Marvel Comics or DC Comics. He doesn’t mind which. Between them, these two publishing companies are responsible for some of the world’s most iconic comic-book characters: Spider-Man, Wolverine, the Hulk, Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman.

SENTENCE STRUCTURES

Sentences can have a variety of structures, beginnings, and lengths. Writers vary their sentences to make their writing more interesting and for particular effects. They also use specific punctuation for specific purposes. For example, they will often use a colon to introduce a list and commas to separate the items in that list.

Direct students to the first two sentences in this excerpt.

- What do you notice about the sentence lengths?
- Does the short sentence provide some extra detail?

Lead discussion about the “tongue-in-cheek” tone exemplified by the statement “He doesn’t mind which.” Students will need to have some understanding of the enormous reputations of both publishing companies.

Discuss the use of the colon – that it’s telling us that something more is coming. What comes is a list. Model by rewriting the sentence with the same structure and punctuation, but different content, for example, *Film-makers are responsible for many camera angles: eye-level, low angle, high angle, worm’s eye view, bird’s eye view, and canted.*

Support the students to review their own writing.

- Think about the way you want to present your ideas. You may need to include a list in a description or explanation. How will you punctuate it?

Page 28

Sometimes, ideas take a long time to come. If you’re struggling, there’s another option. “Write about something familiar,” Michel says. “I once did a humorous comic about the lighter side of life. You know the kind of thing: siblings fighting over the TV remote; Sunday lunch with the extended family turning into a food fight. For me it was an easy topic, but people really liked it.”

USING SPEECH IN THE TEXT

The artist Michel Mulipola is quoted throughout the article. His quotes are identifiable by the use of speech marks. This indicates that he has been interviewed. The text does not follow a conventional question-and-answer interview format. Instead, the writer provides information that is illustrated by a quote.

Have the students work with a partner or small group.

- Find all the direct quotes from Michel Mulipola. Present them in comic book form, using speech balloons.

Discuss the possible interview questions that prompted the quotes from the artist.

- What would the interviewer have asked to prompt Michel’s response: “I remember the exact moment I saw them”?
- Why is it useful to have a new line for a different speaker?
- Review the use of dialogue in your own writing. When we describe a character, is it useful to hear what they say?

Page 30

Will you use high angles to make your characters look small or low angles to make them intimidating? Will you use an extreme close-up shot, to exaggerate a character’s expression, or an extreme long shot, to show us where your characters are and who else is around?

AWARENESS OF PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

The writer uses a series of questions, summarised with a quote: “Planning your layout is the best time to work these things out,” Michel says. When the questions are asking things of “you”, the reader often feels that they are being addressed directly, which helps to engage them with the text.

Explain the use of the pronouns “you”, “I”, and “he”.

- We feel that the writer is talking directly to us when he or she uses “you”. If the writer had used “he” (“Will he use high angles to make his characters look small or low angles to make them intimidating?”), do we still feel that this relates to us? How would it feel if he used “I”?

Prompt the students to review their own writing to identify first person “I”, second person “you”, and third person “he” or “she” (and to check that the pronouns match: “I” and “my”; “you” and “your”; “he/she” and “his/hers”).

Have them discuss with a partner whether it’s the most appropriate form to use for their piece of writing.

- What would be the effect if you changed from third person to first or second person?

METACOGNITION

- Do you think it’s easier or harder to show a character through dialogue? Can you use too much dialogue?
- Sometimes writers choose to use a semicolon to separate items in a list. Why do you think that is?

GIVE FEEDBACK

- Your questions lead directly to the quotes in the article. That means you understand what the interviewer was hoping to find out.
- You have used a listing sentence and separated the items with commas. This makes it easy to read.



Reading standard: by the end of year 5



The Literacy Learning Progressions

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

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