

## HELLO.

For those of you who love comics and would like to create your own, for those of you who have dreams about inventing your own characters and creating your own worlds, for those of you who want to write your own screenplays but aren't sure where to begin, take heart; even the most talented artists and writers had to start somewhere. To help you along the way, we've put together some ideas of where you might begin...

## HOW TO STORYBOARD/ COMIC/ SCREENPLAY

### 1. THE BEST PLACE TO START IS TO CONSIDER YOUR STORY.

What do you want to talk about? WHO do you want to talk about? Does your tale already exist (have you already created it, or has someone else created it?) or do you need to create it? You can be as imaginative and creative as possible, but also consider the plot points and character ideas below. Most stories follow this structure and it's useful to remember when you're thinking about your storyline (it can also give you a quick overview of your tale, before you flesh it out and make it really detailed):

- ★ Equilibrium: the setting, characters and storyline are established, and we are introduced to the main character's situation.

*Imagine, if you will, a boy (our **hero**) living in the desert, on a farm with his uncle (his **father** figure) and aunt. He's expected to take on the farm when his uncle retires. The idea doesn't interest him, however; he'd rather be racing bikes. But this is the way it is.*

- ★ Disequilibrium: the equilibrium is disrupted.

*In the usual course of business, his uncle hires new farm hands to help on the farm, but the two characters he hires are from another land; they're searching for a man. They find the man, who is **old and wise**, and claims to know the young man's father. The pair have interesting news: a **princess** in a far-off place is in trouble! And even worse for our young man, his uncle and aunt are killed shortly after he meets the mysterious old man, their farm burned to the ground. Our hero has nothing left.*

- ★ Recognition that there is disequilibrium: at this point, characters often go on a quest. This is usually the longest bit of the story.

*So, our young hero leaves his uncle's farm and embarks on a journey to a strange, foreign land, with the help of the two strangers and the wise man. Along the way, they meet a hot-headed ship's captain and his faithful dog, who will steer them through perilous waters for large sums of money (rather **anti-heroic** to begin with, really.) They find and rescue the princess, but still have to save the kingdom from the evil forces and their emperor, who are aided by a **villainous man in black**. The wise man and the villain do battle, and although the wise man is struck down, his death allows the hero, the princess and their **sidekicks** to escape.*

- ★ An attempt to repair the disequilibrium: a large battle often ensues at this point.

*Our young hero and the ship's captain and his dog, who came back to rescue the boy and the princess at the last minute, lead the rebel forces in an attack against the emperor. The rebels are victorious!*

- ★ Reinstatement of the (new) equilibrium.

*The young man and his friend the Captain are rewarded by the Princess, and even though some characters are dead or gone, balance is restored.*

Recognise this famous tale? You might know a version of it set in space, but the structure of the tale is not much different from many folk and fairy tales that existed long before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The characters are common and recognisable, so worth considering when you start planning your own comic, screenplay or storyboard.

## 2. PRACTISE YOUR ART – WHATEVER FORM IT MAY TAKE!

Once you've got a rough storyline, you need to get on and write or draw or both! The best way to get good at something is to practice it, share it, get some constructive criticism – and that's what you've done well as well as where you can improve – and to go back, revisit, and improve your work. If you're looking for basic inspiration, begin with what you know, but don't limit yourself to it. The best stories might be inspired by the experiences of the author, but are not bound by them; they look further, and if they ARE writing about their experiences, they show us. Artists may be inspired by what they've seen and experienced, but need to search further, including into the depths of their imaginations, to make their own mark. Here's how a student started working on a writing project based on *The Hobbit*, which encouraged them to consider character, setting and plot summary BEFORE writing the final draft of the story:



Name: Ayden Page

Age: 17

Physical appearance: tall, slight, but strong; reminiscent of a willow bow.

Dwelling: Elf's Arc

Weapon: Birch bow, yallis sword

What else we need to know:

Born to an elf mother and a human father, Ayden moves like the wind and has a merry laugh. When his father is killed in the War of Raptak, Ayden's laughter dies with him; his reasons to live become a quest for vengeance upon Rauzak, the Kaymar King, and a search for the Freelow, a water spirit who has the power to heal his grieving mother from her ice coma...



Name: Alizshia

Age: ?

Physical appearance: tall, slender; long-legged, built for speed. Cat-like.

Dwelling: Covast Woods

Weapon: Sonic call

What else we need to know:

A mysterious character with no real heritage that she is aware of, Alizshia's pale blue skin glows from the yellow and brown tattoo-like arrows that decorate her face, arms and legs, although these are not tattoos at all but strange markings she's had ever since she can remember. Alizshia runs into Ayden when he is fleeing from a panther near Covast Woods; the sonic call made the panther lie down, whine and roll over, saving a rather grumpy Ayden's life but denting his pride. The pair have been sparring partners ever since, sharing a quest for vengeance against Rauzak, the Kaymar King.



Name: Rauzak, the Kaymar King

Age: 54

Physical appearance: fierce, athletic, able to travel swiftly on four legs but stoops and is slower on two.

Dwelling: Raptak

Weapon: Murderous fangs, steely claws (although the effect of this was somewhat depleted when Ayden's father, Lucien, sliced off Rauzak's left paw with a final dying blow during the battle of Nauzac.)

What else we need to know:

Known as The Demon Dog, Rauzak inherited his throne by way of gashing his father's neck and thus killing him in one swipe. Utterly ruthless and immensely powerful, his only weakness is the sonic call of the Amistani, a mysterious people who are thought to have been wiped out in the Raptakian Wars...



Ayden Page, Alizshia, Rauzak the Kaymar King and Map of Aziath.

Characters and map created and illustrated by Nikita Rupani, aged 14



### 3. STRUCTURE YOUR LAYOUT




So now that you've got your ideas for your story together and you've given yourself some time to practise, you need to think about your layouts. Of course, you may have thought, up until now, that a comic and a storyboard are pretty interchangeable; not quite so! While storyboards are used for planning moving image projects such as films and music videos (and are part of the pre-production), comics are final products, as you'll be able to see from the vast numbers of comics and graphic novels available at MEFCC! Screenplays are yet another form of pre-production and while there are no hard and fast rules about how to structure them, most screenwriters follow a format similar to the one you'll find here.

## **ON STORYBOARDS: WHERE TO START**

Trailers are a great place to begin, as they give you an opportunity to have a go at planning over a relatively short number of shots as well as helping you to really understand genre. Alternatively, think of an opening sequence for a new film or TV show, live action or animated; what would you want to show your audience in the first few shots?

- ★ Think **KEY GENRE ELEMENTS**. The best thing you can do is watch lots of films and trailers in your genre, and pull out a typical scene that you'd find in that genre. For example, you'd probably expect to see shots of vast sweeping landscapes in one of today's Fantasy films (think *Lord of the Rings*, *Avatar* or the *Narnia* films) as well as scenes where we become aware that relationships between place and characters, or creatures, are important. What would you expect to see in the Science Fiction genre? Or your favourite Animé TV show? You need to build these elements into your work, especially if you're working on a trailer, where understanding genre is crucial.
- ★ Think **KEY ACTION**. The idea of the storyboard is to show **KEY ACTION**, so your scene should reflect this. Remembering that film is a visual medium is very important; this means that while dialogue **IS** important, a scene with action rather than lots of dialogue is more interesting for the audience, and gives truth to the phrase 'a picture paints a thousand words.'
- ★ Think **SIMPLE**. Do not attempt to make your drawings super-complex. If you like drawing but aren't very good at it, stick people are fine (Steven Spielberg used stick people to create storyboards for the *Indiana Jones* movies, and look how well **THOSE** turned out) as long as you give a clear idea of **NARRATIVE FLOW** (i.e. where the story is going) and that your drawings are clear and **BRIEFLY** annotated using the **USEFUL** information. You **CAN** photograph your storyboard if you want to, too, but this often leads to more problems than anything; it's much easier to fly with your imagination if you're not pinned to reality. People in drawn storyboards will be more willing to do what you want when you want them to, of course.
- ★ Think **TECHNICAL DETAILS**. Storyboards should **DEFINITELY** include the following:
  - ✓ Shot Duration (make sure this is realistic. Most shots are short if they are still shots, but may last longer if the camera tracks the subject)
  - ✓ Camera Distance (is this an accurate description of the shot? Remember your CU, MS and LS, along with all the others!)
  - ✓ Camera Angle (Think low angle, high angle, tilt, pan for now.)
  - ✓ Dialogue
  - ✓ Sound effects and music (has this been carefully considered? – Films are very rarely completely silent!)

Have a look at the storyboard example here:

| KIMIYA NAJAFI         | TITLE<br>THE IMPRISONED PRINCESS  | SCENE<br>1                                       | STORYBOARD<br>1 OF 100  |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| Shot no./<br>duration | Image   | Shot<br>type                                     | Dialogue/ other sound   |
| 1<br><br>3 sec        | <p>ONCE<br/><br/>UPON<br/><br/>A TIME...</p>  | <p>Caption</p> <p>CUT</p>                        | <p>NARRATOR (V/O):<br/>Once upon a time, in a land far far away, a beautiful princess was imprisoned in a great, grey castle.</p> <p>Music box style music</p>                                      |
| 2<br><br>4 sec        |   | <p>LS,<br/><br/>LOW<br/>ANGLE</p> <p>ZOOM IN</p> | <p>NARRATOR (V/O):<br/>None knew how the princess came to be there...</p> <p>Music box style music + princess singing</p>   |
| 3<br><br>7 sec        |  | <p>MS</p> <p>CUT</p>                             | <p>NARRATOR (V/O):<br/>But every day, her beautiful voice could be heard, carrying far across the barren lands that surrounded the castle...</p> <p>Music box style music + princess singing</p>    |
| 4<br><br>6 sec        |  | <p>CU</p> <p>FADE TO</p>                         | <p>NARRATOR (V/O):<br/>And only the birds circling the highest tower witnessed her weeping, at the lonely casement window of the highest tower.</p> <p>Music box style music + princess singing</p> |

*THE IMPRISONED PRINCESS, created by Kimiya Najafi aged 12.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Inspired by Esseen, M., Phillips, M., Ashton, J., Edwards, M., *WJEC Media Studies*. London. Heinemann. 2009, p107 .