



Galactic Absurdities: A Graphic Novel Expedition through The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:
12th Grade Honors English IV

Keywords: Satire, Graphic Novels, Irony, Hyperbole, Diction, Humor, Visual Narrative Storytelling, Political Cartoons, Restoration and 18th Century, Meaning of Life, Panels, Symbolism

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: This curriculum unit centers on a 12-day unit designed for 12th-grade honors English students, focusing on the world of satire and employing classic literature and graphic novels as educational tools. It begins with a satire carousel activity and an exploration of political cartoons, allowing students to create their own cartoons addressing contemporary issues. These cartoons form the foundation for their final graphic narrative problem and solution project. The unit then transitions to the Restoration and 18th century, emphasizing historical and social contexts while exploring the satirical works of Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), introducing students to satirical elements in literature. The centerpiece of this exploration is Swift's thought-provoking essay, "A Modest Proposal," which I will use to encourage student engagement in close reading and the analysis of profound questions. As the unit progresses, students will deeply engage Douglas Adams's graphic novel, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. They will explore character development, graphic narrative structure, and thematic elements while navigating the novel's unique blend of humor and depth. Throughout the unit, students will steadily work on crafting their final 'problem and solution' graphic narrative projects. These projects incorporate satire, and humor to address contemporary issues in a satirical manner.

I plan to teach this unit during the fall semester of the 2023-2024 school year to approximately 100 12th grade Honors English IV students.

I give permission for the Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

Introduction

In this unit, we embark on a journey to understand how graphic novels, with their unique visual and storytelling language, convey insightful commentary on our society. Drawing parallels with the narrative of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, we explore how graphic novels offer a distinctive perspective. Through these narratives, we will critically examine societal norms and inspire transformative thought. My mission for my students is twofold: 1.) to uncover the concealed satire within graphic novels; and 2.) to harness its power to stimulate critical thinking and inspire change.

Rationale

As a 12th-grade English teacher with eleven years of experience, I've continually sought innovative approaches to inspire my students and equip them with skills that extend beyond traditional literary analysis. Recognizing the dynamic nature of language arts and the evolving interests of today's youth, I've embarked on the creation of this unit centered around graphic novels.

Graphic novels, with their fusion of visual and textual storytelling, offer a unique avenue for literary exploration that resonates with the artistic inclinations and digital-era sensibilities of modern students. The allure of graphic novels lies not only in their captivating narratives but also in their potential to nurture creativity, critical thinking, and a deep appreciation for visual storytelling. This dynamic format encourages a diverse range of students to delve into the world of literature, unlocking the joys of storytelling and critical thinking while accommodating varying reading abilities and preferences.

The driving force behind this unit is to provide my 12th-grade students with an opportunity they rarely encounter in their academic journey: the chance to read classic literature in a new and exciting way, through the lens of graphic novels. Beyond that, this approach seeks to empower them to express their artistic abilities and unique perspectives while delving into the complexities of satirical storytelling. By breaking away from the norms of Honors English IV, this unit encourages students to explore the world of graphic novels (a new genre of reading) and unleash their creativity, all while honing essential research, analytical, vocabulary, and communication skills.

At its core, this unit aims to bridge the gap between traditional literary analysis and personal expression by offering students a deeper understanding of the graphic novel medium and encouraging them to reflect on profound questions that they can incorporate into their own creative work. Through this unit, students will not only enhance their literacy skills but also gain a deeper appreciation for the power of storytelling in all its visual and textual forms. In an era of information overload, equipping students with the ability to decode and critically engage with diverse forms of narratives is a fundamental skill that extends beyond the classroom and into their future endeavors **as well as lifelong learning.**

Demographics

Merancas Middle College High School (MMCHS) is situated within the Northeast Learning community of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system. Established in the fall of 2017, MMCHS is the fourth Middle College program under the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools umbrella. Our institution, an honors program spanning grades 11 through 13, provides students with a unique opportunity to earn college credits during their junior and senior years. Additionally, there is an option for a thirteenth year in which students can work towards an Associate's Degree or accumulate two years' worth of transferable college credits. This extended year often results in students **graduating** with valuable trade certifications.

MMCHS operates as a Cooperative Innovative High School and is located on the Merancas Campus of Central Piedmont Community College. With an enrollment cap set at 300 students, our student body comprises 100 juniors, 100 seniors, and 100 thirteenth-year students. All of our courses are offered at the Honors or Advanced Placement level, and each student is required to enroll in a minimum of four courses per semester, including both high school and college-level courses. As of the 2022-2023 academic year, our current enrollment stands at 163 students, with a diverse composition of 44.8% white, 35.6% African-American, 10.4% Asian, 6.7% Hispanic, and 2.5% Multi-racial students.

Our staff includes one principal, one career and development coordinator, and one counselor. Merancas Middle College High School currently employs four certified teachers who provide instruction to our students. It's noteworthy that 75% of our teaching staff holds Master's Degrees, and 25% are National Board Certified. Our faculty includes teachers specializing in science, mathematics, and two English instructors.

In my role as an English educator, I teach two Honors English IV- British Literature classes in the fall semester, one in the spring, and one AP Literature and Composition class in the spring. Typically, each class comprises fewer than 25 students, and the total enrollment for my current semester includes 50 students across two blocks of Honors English IV. While I have five students with 504 plans, I have no students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) this semester, and there are no significant behavioral issues requiring attention.

Objectives/Unit Goals

Research and Analytical Skills: The primary goal of this unit is to equip students with essential research and analytical skills tailored specifically to the graphic novel genre, with a deep exploration of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Students will engage in comprehensive research, delving into various graphic novels and critically evaluating the distinctive approaches authors employ to craft their visual stories.

Vocabulary Comprehension: Another crucial aspect of this unit centers on nurturing students' vocabulary comprehension. This skill will not only help them better understand the meanings behind words and phrases within graphic novels but also enable them to grasp how an author's artistic choices shape the narrative's tone. The focus of the vocabulary journey will be on *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, renowned for its witty and satirical language.

Textual Evidence and Inference: Additionally, students will develop proficiency in the art of effectively using textual evidence to support their interpretations. This skill will enable them to distinguish between explicit textual references and subtle inferences within the graphic narrative.

Creative Expression: By mastering these techniques, students will gain valuable insights into both the graphic novel medium which will help unlock their creative potential. They will have the opportunity to depart from the norm of Honors English IV and explore and express their artistic interpretations with confidence in this unique world of satirical storytelling.

Communication and Presentation Skills: Furthermore, the unit aims to nurture effective communication and presentation skills. By the end of this unit, students will have the confidence to articulate their insights and apply their newfound skills in a cumulative project. This project will encourage them to explore and respond to the quasi-satiric question posed by the novel, "What is the meaning of life?", by creating their own graphic narratives. They will employ the analytical techniques they've acquired throughout the unit to convey their interpretations creatively. This approach will not only deepen their understanding of the graphic novel medium but also enable them to express their artistic abilities and individual perspective while reflecting on the tongue in cheek question about life. Ultimately, the objective is to make this unit directly relevant to their lives, bridging the gap between literature and personal expression, all within the vibrant world of graphic novels.

Content Research

Overview of Unit Specific Terms and Phrases

Graphic Narrative: A Pedagogical Perspective

In English education, graphic novels have emerged as valuable teaching tools, challenging conventional views of literature. (Reid 2) Initially, skepticism surrounded them due to their association with graphic violence and explicit content prevalent in popular culture. However, graphic novels encompass a wide array of genres, essentially representing book-length stories conveyed through the medium of comics. (Reid 2) While they may incorporate graphic elements, these elements do not solely define them. "Graphic narrative" serves as a more encompassing term for these works. (Reid 2) This term acknowledges their capacity to explore profound themes as effectively, albeit differently, as conventional novels.

Renowned comics scholar Scott McCloud defines comics as a deliberate sequence of juxtaposed pictures and other images intended to convey information and evoke aesthetic responses. (Reid 2) Visual storytelling forms the crux of this medium. However, an ongoing debate revolves around the nomenclature. Some, like comics scholar Paul Gravett, argue that the term "graphic novel" can be somewhat misleading and was coined to disassociate the medium from any notions of being juvenile. (Reid 2) Consequently, employing "graphic narrative" not only encompasses nonfiction works but also more accurately portrays this versatile medium.

Autobiographical graphic narratives, such as Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, and Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, hold particular interest for students. (Reid 2) These

narratives delve deeply into personal, often traumatic life experiences, blurring the lines between memoir and art. Educators face a challenge in categorizing and instructing with these texts. "Graphic memoir" appears to be a fitting term for such works, aligning with their dual nature of being both "graphic" and a "memoir." (Reid 2)

The educational significance of these graphic narratives is substantial. (Reid 32) Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus* exemplifies that comics can explore profound themes on par with traditional novels. (Reid 32) As English educators, our objective is to understand how these narratives function, how they address profound themes, and how they provoke responses through a combination of visual and textual materials. (Reid 32) By doing so, we can optimally utilize their potential for teaching visual literacy to engage students in critical discussions encompassing various facets of contemporary media. (Reid 32)

Satirical Visual Symbols and Metaphors

In the world of graphic novels, satirical visual symbols and metaphors are not merely artistic embellishments; they serve as essential tools for conveying complex societal commentary. According to Frederick Luis Aldama in his preface to *Analyzing World Fiction: New Horizons in Narrative Theory* (2011), these symbols and metaphors act as a visual language that allows graphic novelists to critique and dissect various aspects of society, from politics to culture.

Incorporating this concept into the classroom, these visual elements become valuable teaching tools. They enable students to engage critically with the material, fostering a deeper level of analysis.

Moreover, the use of satirical visual symbols and metaphors aligns with the broader goals of encouraging critical thinking and cultural awareness in education. It empowers students to decode the layered messages within graphic novels, ultimately preparing them to approach literature and media with a more discerning eye. This approach helps bridge the gap between traditional literary analysis and the visual storytelling unique to the graphic novel medium and to the complex matrix of text and image that commands our constant attention in a media driven environment.

In essence, understanding and teaching the importance of satirical visual symbols and metaphors in graphic novels enriches both the educational experience and students' ability to navigate a visually oriented world filled with elusive messages and meanings.

Word-Image Satirical Interaction

Within the captivating world of graphic novels and comics, the interplay between written text and visual imagery is a dynamic canvas for satirical expression. (Wysocki 2012) Much akin to the satirical wit that pervades *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, graphic narratives harness this convergence of words and images to craft intricate social commentaries. As outlined in Wysocki's exploration of "The Visual Rhetoric of Graphic Narratives: Infographics as Persuasive Visual Argument," this interplay forms a persuasive visual argument—a dialogue between text and visuals that invites readers into a realm of critical analysis and reflection.

Panel Layout for Satire

Panel layout in graphic novels plays a pivotal role in conveying satire effectively. According to Scott McCloud in his influential work *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), the arrangement of panels is akin to a visual language that authors use to guide readers through the narrative. Just like the clever humor we find in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the choice of panel layout can establish comedic timing and deliver satirical punchlines.

By analyzing how the placement and sequencing of panels influence the pacing and impact of satire, students gain a deeper appreciation for the nuances of visual narrative. This approach encourages students to think critically about the deliberate choices authors make in crafting satirical elements within the medium. Understanding panel layout enhances broader literacy skills. It equips students with the ability to analyze and interpret visual narratives, which are prevalent in our digital age. This skill not only deepens their comprehension of graphic novels but also makes them more discerning consumers of various forms of media.

Satire through Visual Perspective in Graphic Novels:

Exploring satire through the visual perspective in graphic novels unveils a compelling facet of how humor and satire contribute significantly to our cultural memory. (Twark, 2017) In these narratives, the interplay between visual elements and satirical commentary echoes the wit and satire found in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Twark's extensive research delves into the intricate ways in which comics and graphic novels use humor and satire to exaggerate approach historical events and address pressing societal issues. This lens invites readers to recognize the universal nature of humor and satire, transcending language and cultural barriers, thus becoming potent tools for conveying profound cultural commentary.

Twark's scholarship underscores the broader impact of satire within the realm of graphic storytelling, emphasizing its role in preserving cultural memory through humor and visual storytelling. By exploring how graphic novels employ humor and satire to address historical and contemporary concerns, readers and scholars alike gain deeper insights into the enduring power of these mediums to both entertain and enlighten. This approach enriches our understanding of how graphic narratives serve as essential vehicles for societal critique, humor, and memory preservation in our ever-evolving cultural landscape.

Satire in Sequential Art and Visual Language

Understanding the aesthetics of satire in sequential art and visual language is an essential aspect of **decoding** graphic novels. Carrier (2000) offers valuable insights into the aesthetics of comics, emphasizing the significance of visual storytelling. By recognizing the intricate balance between text and imagery, students gain a deeper appreciation of how satire is conveyed through the deliberate choices made by artists and authors. This article underscores the importance of visual language in amplifying the impact of satirical narratives.

Much like the witticisms and absurdities encountered in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, graphic novels employ a unique visual language that plays a pivotal role in satirical storytelling.

(Carrier, 2000) Carrier's scholarly work examines the aesthetics of comics, shedding light on the deliberate choices made by artists and authors to convey satire effectively. By understanding the intricate interplay between text and imagery, students develop a profound appreciation for the nuanced ways in which satire unfolds within this visual medium. This article serves as a compass, guiding readers to recognize the subtle yet powerful visual cues that enhance the impact of satirical narratives. Through this exploration, students are equipped with the tools to decipher the hidden layers of social commentary within graphic novels, enriching their literary and visual literacy skills.

Satirical Elements in Graphic Novel Composition

In her work, *Comics and Language: Reimagining Critical Discourse on the Form* (McFarland, 2013), Hannah Miodrag provides valuable insights into the intricacies of graphic novel composition and the incorporation of satire. Miodrag's analysis highlights the significance of visual elements, panel layout, and linguistic choices in graphic storytelling.

Through Miodrag's research, students uncover the deliberate choices authors make in every panel, from the arrangement of visuals to the use of onomatopoeia. These elements serve as potent tools for infusing wit, humor, and social critique into the narratives. By engaging with *Comics and Language*, students embark on a journey to interpret the subtleties of satirical elements within graphic novel composition. Armed with this knowledge, they develop a sharper eye for the nuances of satire, enriching their understanding of the medium's narrative depth and its capacity for incisive social commentary.

Typography for Satire

Typography, often overlooked in its role within graphic novels, serves as a subtle yet powerful tool for conveying satire, mirroring the nuanced humor prevalent in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. In her work, "Surrogate Multiplicities: Typography in the Age of Invisibility," Katie Salen (2001) delves into the complexities of typography in visual communication, shedding light on how font choices, spacing, and design elements are employed within graphic narratives to amplify satirical themes. This research underscores the importance of discerning the deliberate typographic choices made by graphic novelists, allowing readers to decipher the layers of satire woven into the text. By examining the role of typography in visual storytelling, educators and students gain a deeper appreciation of how graphic novels employ this often-unnoticed element as a vehicle for satirical commentary, further enriching their understanding of this unique medium.

Satirical Character Design

Character design serves as a potent vehicle for satire and storytelling. Elizabeth M. Downey's research in "Graphic Novels in Curriculum and Instruction Collections" (2009) delves into the pedagogical aspects of graphic novels, shedding light on their multifaceted roles within education. This insightful source resonates with the clever satire woven throughout *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, illuminating how character design can be a compelling instrument for conveying satire and societal commentary within graphic narratives. By closely examining the nuances of character portrayal, educators and students gain a profound

understanding of how graphic novels employ character design as a tool for satire, thereby enriching their appreciation of the medium's narrative complexity.

Satire through Visual Perspective

The use of visual perspective emerges as a pivotal narrative tool, one that significantly contributes to the conveyance of satire and storytelling. Elizabeth M. Downey's research in "Graphic Novels in Curriculum and Instruction Collections" (2009) **delves** into the educational aspects of graphic novels, shedding light on their multifaceted roles within curriculum and instruction. This insightful source resonates with the clever satire intertwined throughout *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, illuminating how visual perspective choices can serve as powerful conduits for satire and societal commentary within graphic narratives. By closely examining the subtleties of visual storytelling, educators and students alike gain a profound understanding of how graphic novels utilize perspective as an instrument for satire, thereby deepening their appreciation of the medium's intricate narrative dynamics.

Instructional Implementation

Teaching Strategies

Close Reading and Annotation

Through close reading and annotation, students will explore the nuances of graphic novels, analyzing both textual and visual elements to understand how satire is conveyed. This approach will cultivate critical thinking skills for effective satire identification and interpretation in graphic novels.

Visual Interpretation Exercises

Visual interpretation exercises aim to sharpen students' skills in deciphering visual symbols and metaphors present in graphic novels, to say nothing of other visual media they encounter. By engaging in these exercises, students will become adept at recognizing the subtle and sometimes overt visual cues that contribute to satirical messaging. Additionally, these activities empower students to harness the power of visual storytelling in their own creative work.

Group Discussions and Debates

Group discussions and debates foster a collaborative learning environment where students can engage in thoughtful conversations about the use of satire in graphic novels. These discussions encourage students to share diverse perspectives and interpretations, enhancing their ability to analyze and critique satirical themes effectively. Debates, in particular, challenge students to articulate their viewpoints and refine their critical thinking skills.

Storyboarding and Visual Narrative Creation

Storyboarding and visual narrative creation give students hands-on experience in crafting satirical visual stories. This creative process lets students experiment with layout, sequencing, and visual elements, providing insights into how artists construct satirical narratives in graphic novels.

Creative Satire Projects

Creative satire projects **empower** students to become creators of satirical graphic narratives. Through the process of ideation, storytelling, and illustration, students will apply their understanding of satire to produce their own graphic novels or comic strips. This hands-on endeavor fosters creative expression and enables students to synthesize their knowledge of satire into original works.

Classroom Lessons/Activities and Assessment

This curriculum unit consists of 12 distinct lessons, workdays, and presentation sessions, tailored for high school seniors. It serves as an independent module that can be seamlessly integrated into existing curricula. Each lesson, workday, or presentation session is structured to fit a 90-minute, face-to-face class block. The lessons are thoughtfully designed to accommodate diverse learning needs, including Academically or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) and Talent Development (TD) students, as well as those with special needs or specific modification requirements. Every lesson is meticulously aligned to facilitate students in achieving the Common Core Objectives and 21st Century Skills outlined in Appendix 1.

Lesson One

Lesson Standard: Day 1: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Lesson Summary: On the first day, students engage in a satire carousel, introducing them to satirical techniques in traditional literature and graphic novels, which sets the stage for analysis and inference.

Objective: Students will be able to create and share their own political/social issue cartoons that can serve as foundational elements for their final projects.

Activities:

Exploration of Satirical Techniques: To begin, students will explore satire, diction, irony, hyperbole, and sarcasm in both traditional and graphic novels through a satire carousel activity. Around the room will be five posters, one for each term. Students are responsible for spending two minutes at each poster with their group, discussing and recording the definition and example for the term. This interactive session provides students with the foundational understanding needed to better understand and apply satire.

Political Cartoon Creation: Following their exposure to satirical techniques, students are tasked with creating their own political or social issue cartoons. They choose an important issue that resonates with them and craft a visual narrative that employs satirical elements to convey their message. The cartoons can take the form of traditional drawings or digital creations, providing students with a creative outlet.

Connection to Final Project: The political/social issue cartoons created on Day 1 serve as a foundational element for the students' final projects. These cartoons provide a starting point for addressing a contemporary issue in a satirical manner, tying into the broader theme of critiquing societal problems, while exploring graphic narratives. Students will expand on their initial ideas and use them as inspiration for their later 'problem and solution' projects.

Lesson Two

Lesson Standard: Day 2: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Lesson Summary: The second day revolves around deepening students' understanding of the Restoration and 18th-century context and the satirical works of Jonathan Swift. The centerpiece of the day is a gallery crawl featuring a curated selection of political cartoons. However, these are not just any political cartoons; they are the very ones that students created on day one, addressing pressing social and political issues of their choosing. This approach ensures a strong connection between their creative endeavors and the critical analysis that follows.

Objective: Students will be able to proficiently analyze satirical techniques in political cartoons, especially in the context of cartoons they created on Day 1, connecting their own creative expressions to historical and societal influences, and strengthening their critical thinking skills for effective satire interpretation and creation.

Activities:

Gallery Crawl of Political/Social Issue Cartoons: Student political/social issue cartoons from day one will be displayed in the classroom or hallway. As students stroll through the gallery, they are guided by a set of analytical lenses, honing their skills in identifying and understanding satirical techniques. They closely examine the cartoons with a particular focus on:

- Context
- Audience
- Reality
- Tongue-in-Cheek
- Overstatement
- One Thing Like Another
- Nuance
- Symbols

Analytical Discussion: Following the gallery crawl, students come together for an analytical discussion. They share their observations and analyses of the political cartoons, engaging in

thought-provoking conversations about the context, audience, reality, tongue-in-cheek humor, overstatement, one thing like another, nuance, and the use of symbols in these historical satirical pieces. This analytical exercise helps students refine their critical thinking and interpretive skills.

Introduction to Historical and Social Context: This activity begins with a comprehensive introduction to the Restoration and 18th-century historical and social context. Students learn about significant events, cultural changes, and the overall atmosphere of this transformative period. This historical backdrop serves as a crucial foundation for understanding the satirical works produced during this time.

Background on Jonathan Swift: Building upon the historical context, students are introduced to the life and contributions of Jonathan Swift, a prolific satirist of the era. They explore Swift's background, including his upbringing, education, and his role in various capacities, all of which significantly influenced his satirical works. Students also gain an understanding of the problems and issues that concerned Swift and led him to employ satire as a means of commentary and critique.

Lesson Three

Lesson Standard: Day 3: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Lesson Summary: Day three is dedicated to close reading “A Modest Proposal,” with students citing textual evidence and making inferences to understand Swift's argument explicitly and between the lines.

Objective: Students will be able to conduct a close reading of Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and participate in a satirical debate, fostering critical thinking and satirical skills.

Activities:

Close Reading and Annotations: Students embark on a close reading of "A Modest Proposal." During this process, they carefully identify and annotate various elements within the text, which may include satirical devices, rhetorical strategies, vivid imagery, and thought-provoking questions.

Analysis of Swift's Argument: Following the close reading, begin to do an analysis of Swift's argument. They explore how he employs satire to craft a compelling argument while using elements like irony, hyperbole, and diction to convey his satirical message. This exercise deepens their understanding of how satire can serve as a powerful tool for addressing complex issues and societal problems.

Satirical Debate: Students will end the class by participating in a satirical debate. They are divided into groups, with each group taking a stance on a satirical issue inspired by "A Modest Proposal." The debate encourages students to apply their understanding of satire, rhetorical devices, and argumentation as they employ humor and irony to present their viewpoints.

Lesson Four

Lesson Standard: Day 4: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Lesson Summary: Day four is dedicated to introducing students to essential graphic novel techniques that are crucial for comprehending *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and preparing them for their final project.

Objective: Students will be able to engage in a hands-on group activity to apply these techniques, gain an understanding of the final project focusing on the 'meaning of life,' and begin brainstorming ideas for their satirical problem and solution projects.

Activities:

Graphic Novel Techniques Introduction: The day begins with an exploration of fundamental graphic novel techniques. Students explore the unique storytelling aspects of graphic novels, including the use of panels, layouts, visual metaphors, and the interplay of text and images. These techniques are vital for understanding the nuances of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and will be indispensable when students create their own graphic narratives later in the unit.

Graphic Novel Collaborative Storytelling: In this activity, students work together in groups to create a short narrative using graphic novel elements, panels, and visual storytelling techniques. It's a hands-on and interactive approach to familiarize students with the unique aspects of graphic narratives while encouraging creativity and collaboration.

Final Project Introduction: After the graphic novel exploration, the final project is introduced. Students will embark on a problem and solution project that directly relates to their initial political cartoon issue. This project integrates the theme of the 'meaning of life,' drawing inspiration from the text and its satirical exploration of this profound question. Students will devise a satirical solution to a contemporary problem while incorporating graphic novel elements to tell their story. The project aligns with the core themes of the unit, encouraging students to apply satire and humor to address real-world issues in a visually engaging format.

Project Brainstorming: To kickstart the project, students are given dedicated work time for brainstorming. They are encouraged to reflect on their initial political cartoon issue, consider how the “meaning of life” theme can be woven into their narrative, and begin to formulate their satirical solutions. This initial brainstorming session provides a foundation for their creative and critical thinking processes, setting the stage for their project development.

Lesson Five

Lesson Standard: Day 5: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Lesson Summary: Day 5 focuses on analyzing themes and character development in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Students cite textual evidence and observe how themes interact and evolve.

Objective: Students will be able to understand of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and the objectives of its author, Douglas Adams.

Activities:

Self-Paced Group Reading: Students will read, with a partner or small group, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with a known completion date of day 11.

Overview of the Graphic Novel: The day begins with an in-depth overview of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Students learn about the graphic novel's author, Douglas Adams, exploring his background, writing style, and contributions to the world of science fiction. This activity provides students with essential context and insights into the author's influences and intentions.

Exploration of Key Themes: Following the introduction, students engage in discussions about the key themes and concepts presented in the graphic novel. One prominent theme is the 'meaning of life,' a philosophical and existential question that runs throughout the narrative. Students are encouraged to consider how this theme is depicted and how it connects with the satirical aspects of the story.

Lesson Six

Lesson Standard: Day 6: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Lesson Summary: On this day, there is a focus on a comprehensive analysis of the main characters in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* graphic novel, with a special emphasis on character development and humor as tools for characterization.

Objective: Students will be able to analyze of the main characters in the graphic novel, with a focus on character development and the role of humor in characterization.

Activities:

Self-Paced Group Reading: Students will read, with a partner or small group, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with a known completion date of day 11.

Character Analysis: The day begins with an exploration of the main characters, particularly Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect. Students review the traits, motivations, and idiosyncrasies of these characters, examining how they are depicted in both text and visual elements. This analysis fosters a deeper understanding of the characters' roles and the dynamics between them.

Character Development: Students also engage in discussions about character development within the graphic novel. They trace the evolution of characters throughout the story, identifying key events and experiences that shape the characters' personalities and relationships. This discussion underscores the importance of character growth in storytelling.

Role of Humor in Characterization: Humor is a defining feature of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and this activity explores how humor is used to shape characters. Students analyze how humor, including irony, satire, and wit, contributes to character development and adds depth to the characters' personalities.

Analysis of Graphic Novel Elements: Simultaneously, students are introduced to graphic novel elements such as panels, visual cues, and page layout. They discuss how these elements are employed in character depiction, emphasizing the unique marriage of text and visuals to convey character traits and development.

Lesson 7

Lesson Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Lesson Summary: Students delve into the meaning of words and phrases used in the graphic novel, assessing figurative and connotative meanings and their impact on meaning and tone.

Objective: Students will be able to understand both the plot and the narrative structure of the graphic novel. They will recognize how humor and satire are integral to advancing the storyline, enhancing character development, and engaging the audience.

Activities:

Self-Paced Group Reading: Students will read, with a partner or small group, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with a known completion date of day 11.

Plot Analysis: Students delve into the plot of the graphic novel, examining the sequence of events, story arcs, and key plot points. They discuss the progression of the narrative, identifying pivotal moments that shape the story's direction.

Narrative Structure: Discussions revolve around the overall narrative structure, including any non-linear elements or unique storytelling techniques used in the graphic novel. Students analyze how the story is organized and presented to the reader.

Humor and Satire in Plot Advancement: Humor and satire are central components of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Students explore how these elements are strategically employed to advance the plot and engage the audience. They identify instances where humor and satire enhance the narrative and character interactions.

Lesson Eight

Lesson Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Lesson Summary: Day 8 continues to explore the meaning of words and phrases in the graphic novel, assessing their impact on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or those that are vivid, engaging, or beautiful.

Objective: Students will be able to understand of the plot and narrative structure within the graphic novel, while also recognizing how humor and satire function as narrative drivers, contributing to the story's engagement and development.

Activities:

Self-Paced Group Reading: Students will read, with a partner or small group, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with a known completion date of Day 11.

Plot Analysis: During this session, students embark on a close examination of the graphic novel's plot, focusing on the sequence of events, character arcs, and key narrative milestones. They identify turning points and plot developments that steer the story's course.

Narrative Structure: The day's discussions encompass the larger framework that holds the narrative together, examining elements such as the use of flashbacks, non-linear storytelling, or other unique structural choices within the graphic novel. This analysis offers insights into how the story's pieces fit together.

Humor and Satire in Plot Development: In addition to understanding the story's structure, students analyze how humor and satire play pivotal roles in advancing the narrative. They pinpoint moments where humor enriches character interactions and propels the plot forward, contributing to the reader's engagement and comprehension of the story's underlying themes and messages.

Lesson Nine

Lesson Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Lesson Summary: Students critically analyze points of view in graphic novels, distinguishing between what is directly stated and what is implied, especially when dealing with satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement.

Objective: Students will be able to develop their skills in identifying and analyzing satirical elements within *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, particularly focusing on graphic novel elements and the theme of the meaning of life.

Activities:

Self-Paced Group Reading: Students will read, with a partner or small group, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with a known completion date of Day 11.

Satirical Elements Identification: Students explore the graphic novel's content, searching for instances of satire. They examine how the author employs humor, irony, exaggeration, and other satirical elements to convey deeper messages and insights. The central focus is on how these elements relate to the overarching theme of the “meaning of life.”

Discussion about Satirical Interpretation: In group discussions, students share their findings on the satirical elements they've uncovered. They consider the layers of meaning and the nuanced ways in which humor and satire contribute to the narrative's depth and complexity.

Project Work Time: A significant portion of the day is dedicated to project development. Students revisit their initial political/social issue and the “meaning of life” question posed in the graphic novel to weave a satirical problem and solution narrative. This time allows them to brainstorm, outline, and begin crafting their projects, drawing inspiration from the graphic novel's satirical techniques.

Lesson Ten

Lesson Standard: Day 10: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3

Lesson Summary: On this day, students begin crafting their problem and solution projects, drawing on effective narrative techniques and well-chosen details, essential for both traditional and graphic narratives.

Objective: Students will be able to achieve a comprehensive understanding of visual storytelling techniques, encompassing panel composition, visual metaphors, and symbolism in the graphic novel, which they will employ to enhance their problem and solution projects and refine their narratives.

Activities:

Self-Paced Group Reading: Students will read, with a partner or small group, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with a known completion date of Day 11.

Visual Storytelling Exploration: This day centers on the analysis of visual storytelling elements within the graphic novel. Students explore the intricacies of panel composition, examining how the arrangement and size of panels influence pacing, emphasis, and the reader's engagement. They also scrutinize visual metaphors and symbols used to convey deeper meanings.

Interactive Analysis: In group discussions and activities, students collectively analyze specific sequences from the graphic novel that exemplify the utilization of visual storytelling techniques.

This interaction encourages them to share insights and discover the multifaceted layers of meaning embedded within the visuals.

Project Work Time: Students will continue to work on their projects.

Lesson Eleven

Lesson Standard: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4

Lesson Summary: Day 11 involves further development of the problem and solution projects, ensuring clear and coherent writing, suitable for the task, purpose, and audience, in both traditional and visual storytelling.

Objective: Students will be able to refine their ability to compare and contrast the use of satire and humor in written and graphic novel formats, applying this analysis to enhance their final problem and solution projects.

Activities:

Self-Paced Group Reading: Students will read, with a partner or small group, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* with a known completion date of Day 11.

Comparative Analysis: This day focuses on a comparative study of satire and humor between "A Modest Proposal" and "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy." Students explore how each text addresses the "meaning of life" question through distinct satirical lenses. Group discussions and independent analysis will lead the students to identify similarities and differences in the application of satire, humor, and social commentary.

Written vs Visual Satire: A crucial part of the discussion centers on the unique methods employed in written and visual satire. Students investigate how verbal and written humor in Swift's text differs from the visual and narrative humor in Adams' graphic novel. They gain insight into how each medium leverages satire to convey complex themes.

Project Refinement: While continuously refining their problem and solution projects, students integrate the knowledge gained from the day's visual storytelling analysis. They will incorporate visual metaphors and symbolism to enhance the satirical aspects of their narratives, emphasizing the interplay between text and images.

Lesson Twelve

Lesson Standard(s): CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4

Lesson Summary: The final day culminates in presentations of the problem and solution projects, where students initiate and participate in collaborative discussions, conveying a clear perspective

and addressing alternative perspectives effectively, suited for both traditional and graphic literature discussions.

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate their ability to present problem and solution projects that address contemporary issues, draw inspiration from the “meaning of life” theme, and provide satirical solutions.

Activities:

Project Presentations: Students will take turns presenting their problem and solution projects. Each project should address a contemporary issue, incorporate elements of satire, and draw inspiration from the “meaning of life” theme. Presentations should include a clear articulation of the problem, the satirical approach employed, and the proposed solution, while displaying the use of graphic narrative storytelling and elements.

Peer and Teacher Evaluation: Following each presentation, peers and the teacher will provide constructive feedback and assessment. This evaluation process encourages thoughtful reflection on the effectiveness of satirical elements and how they relate to the problem and solution presented.

Group Discussion: The class will engage in a group discussion that delves into the broader implications of using satire to address real-world problems. They will explore how satire can serve as a tool for social critique and change. Additionally, the discussion will examine how the “meaning of life” question influenced students' approach to their projects.

Reflection and Analysis: Students will reflect on the overall experience of the unit, considering how their understanding of satire has evolved and how the study of literary techniques and graphic novel elements contributed to their project development.

Appendix 1: Implementing Teaching Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- This standard is vital for this unit as it teaches students how to find strong evidence in both traditional literature and graphic novels, which helps them analyze the text effectively. It also encourages them to make inferences, particularly useful when working with graphic novels, enabling a better understanding of complex themes and literary techniques. This skill equips students to engage critically with both traditional and visual storytelling, enhancing their ability to appreciate and analyze literature.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

- This standard is highly relevant to this unit as it necessitates students to identify and analyze two or more themes or central ideas within the texts they study, including graphic novels, while examining how these themes interact and evolve throughout the narrative. This analytical process ultimately yields a multifaceted account. Additionally, students are charged with delivering an impartial summary of the text, which extends to graphic novels, fostering a deeper understanding of the narrative structures and thematic development within literature, and enhancing their proficiency in evaluating and appreciating the complexities of both traditional and visual storytelling.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

- This standard is highly pertinent to this unit as it instructs students to discern the meanings of words and phrases in the context of the text, encompassing figurative and connotative interpretations. This skill is particularly valuable in the case of graphic novels, where the combination of text and visual elements often necessitates students to closely examine the nuanced interplay between words and images to grasp the intended meaning. Furthermore, the standard prompts students to assess how specific word choices influence the text's overall meaning and tone, encompassing words with multiple interpretations or language that is exceptionally vivid, captivating, or aesthetically pleasing. This proficiency equips students with the tools to not only appreciate the nuances in language but also to critically analyze and deeply engage with the literary and visual works, including graphic novels, encountered in this unit.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

- This standard is highly pertinent to this unit as it instructs students to discern the meanings of words and phrases in the context of the text, encompassing figurative and connotative interpretations. This skill is particularly valuable in the case of graphic novels, where the combination of text and visual elements often requires students to closely examine the nuanced interplay between words and images to grasp the intended meaning. Furthermore, the standard prompts students to assess how specific word choices influence the text's overall meaning and tone, encompassing words with multiple interpretations or language that is exceptionally vivid, captivating, or aesthetically pleasing. This proficiency equips students with the tools to not only appreciate the nuances in language but also to critically analyze and deeply engage with the literary and visual works encountered in this unit.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6: Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

- This standard is essential for this unit as it challenges students to analyze situations where grasping a perspective requires distinguishing between the explicit statements in a text and the underlying intentions, which can encompass elements such as satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement. This proficiency is particularly valuable for comprehending graphic novels, where the interplay between text and visual elements is central to conveying complex layers of meaning and intention. It not only enhances students' comprehension of the graphic novels they encounter but also equips them with the ability to critically assess nuanced layers of meaning and intention in literature, whether conveyed through text, images, or their intricate combination.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

- This standard is especially pertinent to this unit, as it encourages students to compose narratives, drawing from both real-life experiences and imaginative scenarios, while leveraging effective narrative techniques. This proficiency extends to graphic narratives, where students learn to incorporate visuals, carefully chosen details, and well-structured sequences of events to create compelling stories. By honing these narrative skills across both traditional and graphic formats, students develop a holistic understanding of storytelling, which not only enhances their creative expression but also deepens their engagement with the literary works explored in this unit.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- This standard holds particular significance for this unit as it empowers students to produce clear and coherent writing that caters to the demands of different tasks, purposes, and audiences. This proficiency is especially beneficial when students are tasked with

crafting narratives or analytical responses to traditional literature and graphic novels. Whether conveying a story's nuances or analyzing the subtleties of visual storytelling, students develop the capacity to adapt their writing style, organization, and development to suit the unique requirements of the text form and the intended audience, thus strengthening their skills in both traditional and visual literary expression.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- This standard is highly pertinent to this unit as it encourages students to initiate and engage effectively in collaborative discussions on various topics, including those related to traditional literature and graphic novels. By collaborating with diverse partners, whether in one-on-one dialogues, group discussions, or teacher-led interactions, students have the opportunity to build on others' ideas and express their own insights clearly and persuasively. This collaborative skill is especially valuable when discussing the nuances of visual storytelling, as encountered in graphic novels. It equips students to articulate their interpretations of both traditional and graphic literature, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of the diverse range of texts and issues explored in this unit.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

- This standard plays a pivotal role in this unit as it challenges students to present information, findings, and supporting evidence, effectively conveying a clear and distinct perspective that is tailored to both the subject matter of traditional literature and graphic novels. It requires students to ensure that their presentations are structured in a manner that allows listeners to follow their line of reasoning and understand the nuances of visual storytelling. Additionally, this skill equips students to address alternative or opposing perspectives effectively, a vital aspect when discussing the multiple layers of meaning present in graphic novels. By developing proficiency in the organization, development, substance, and style of their presentations, students can adapt to a range of formal and informal tasks and effectively engage with both the traditional and visual aspects of literature explored in this unit.

List of Materials for Classroom Use

Materials for Students and Teachers

Books and Texts

Classic Literature: Copies of the classic literary works, including "A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift. Graphic Novel: Copies of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams, the selected graphic novel for the unit.

Art Supplies

Drawing and Art Materials: Pencils, erasers, markers, colored pencils, and sketchbooks or drawing paper for activities related to creating political cartoons and graphic novel elements.

Computers or Tablets

Access to digital devices for research, writing, and possibly creating digital comics or graphic novel panels.

Projector

To display and analyze visual elements from graphic novels, political cartoons, and student projects.

Display Space

For showcasing students' projects, presentations, or artwork in the classroom.

Resources for Students

Texts and Novels

Copies of classic literary works ("A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift). This text will serve as a foundation for understanding satirical writing. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: Copies of the selected graphic novel for each student. This graphic novel will be the central text for exploring satire and humor in visual storytelling.

Art Supplies

Provide art supplies like paper, colored pencils, markers, and other drawing tools. These are necessary for students to create political cartoons and graphic novel elements.

Technology

Access to computers or tablets for students to explore digital resources related to graphic novels, conduct online research, and create digital content.

Printed Cartoons

If students do not create their own political/social issue cartoon, an option for teachers is to prepare a collection of printed political cartoons for the gallery crawl. These will be used to allow the students to analyze a variety of satirical techniques.

Online Resources

Provide a list of reputable online resources, websites, or databases that students can use for research and reference. Include websites that analyze graphic novels and provide historical and literary context. Here are a few that my students have used:

- Comic Book Plus (www.comicbookplus.com): This website offers a vast collection of public domain comic books and graphic novels. It's a great resource for students to explore the history of comics.
- *The Comics Journal* (www.tcj.com): *The Comics Journal* features critical essays, interviews, and reviews of graphic novels, providing students with literary context and thoughtful analysis.

Graphic Novel Software (optional)

Access to graphic novel creation software or apps, enabling them to gain hands-on experience to guide students in digital storytelling. Charlotte-Mecklenburg teachers and students can access a digital graphic novel creation tool through launchpad for free.

Resources for Teachers

Curriculum Unit

This comprehensive curriculum guide for teachers outlining the objectives, standards, daily lesson plans, and assessment strategies for the entire 12 day unit. Feel free to make this unit your own by changing things to match your students' needs.

Texts and Graphic Novels

Access to copies of classic literary works ("A Modest Proposal" by Jonathan Swift), along with supplementary materials and analysis guides for teachers to effectively teach satire. Copies of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Multiple copies of the selected graphic novel for teachers to reference and gain an in-depth understanding of its content. I like to have physical copies but sometimes digital versions are available through school library resources.

Art Supplies

Art materials similar to what students will use, in case teachers want to provide demonstrations or explanations related to drawing, cartoons, or graphic novel elements. I'm not the best artist, but I will attempt my own rendition using a variety of Expo markers.

Discussion Materials

Discussion materials to facilitate class conversations on topics like satire, humor, and visual storytelling. These questions normally depend on the class. I tend to start off with simple questions on satire, then allow for conversation and discussion to flow based on the students in the class.

Teaching Aids

Resources such as posters, visual aids, and multimedia presentations to enhance classroom discussions on graphic novel elements. I usually use a Google Slides Presentations, but this is where you can find additional resources and use your personal creativity to personalize the unit.

Access to Graphic Novel Software (optional)

Access to graphic novel creation software or apps, enabling them to gain hands-on experience to guide students in digital storytelling. Charlotte-Mecklenburg teachers and students can access a digital graphic novel creation tool through launchpad for free.

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