

Surfacing Stories:



Transforming the Ordinary to the Extraordinary

Presented by:
Bryan Gidinski



**LOST BOYS
CONSULTING**

Advancing guys' well-being through health & education

*Bryan Gidinski, BA., MEd.
Burnaby, B.C.*

604-434-8747

lostboysconsulting.ca



e-mail: bryangidinski@gmail.com

Available for school-based, or district professional development. Please contact for availability and rates

Brainstorming

Often, the first time that I engage students in writing for my classroom, I will do so first by inviting them to brainstorm memorable moments that they've experienced or witnessed. I will web my own set of experiences so they can view it, while they web, or list their own on a sheet of paper (I typically use 11" x 17" tabloid paper for brainstorming). It's not important that they capture the details of the story, but rather that they put some statement or reminder that prompts them to recall a story or situation they've experienced. For example: I usually begin by providing them an example of a story from a time that I was supervising a bunch of youth kayaking at a summer camp. I simply record "underwater bear" rather than any other summary. It tends to make students curious about the story.

I will generate several examples and then share one or two stories from the examples through oral storytelling, trying to stimulate connections that might surface stories they recall. In part, I want to cultivate a culture of storytelling so that it is valued and students are eager to share their own memorable moments. I also want to create a web or list of potential story ideas that they can come revisit if they're ever feeling "blocked."

As students work to fill in their brainstorms, I will circulate, add more examples to my own brainstorm, periodically ask for volunteers to share their stories, and encourage students to add stories when they make a connection to someone else's story. I also provide opportunities for students to share in partners or small groups, with the general objective of creating a momentum with their brainstorming. I also invite them to take the brainstorms home, to share them with their families and to continue to make additions over time.

I will often leave my brainstorm up for a week or so, and students, curious about some of the memories / stories I've listed get to request a story and I will share the details.

A Collection Of Good Quality Questions to Pose During Interviews
(Collected from student examples - Grade 6/7 Division 4 - 2013)

- What is the origin of your name? / Why were you named?
- Why did you choose to name me _____?
- Why did you decide to come to Canada? Why did you leave _____?
- What was your like life in _____?
- How did you feel coming to Canada?
- What were your first thoughts about Canada?
- How did I deal with coming to Canada? / How did I deal with moving to another country?
- How do you think your childhood was different from my childhood?
- How has your experience in Canada been different from where you came from?
- What are some of the advantages or disadvantages of living in Canada?
- What were you like when you were young?
- What was I like when I was little?
- Do you notice any similarities or differences between your experience growing up and my experience growing up?
- When I was young, what were some of my favourite things or my favourite things to do?
- How were you welcomed when you came to Canada? Were people friendly to you?
- How was your immigration experience?
- If you could choose between _____ and _____, what would you choose and why?
- What are some of the safety concerns you have living in Canada? If you don't have any concerns, why do you feel safe here?
- If you could go back in time, what's one thing you'd change about your childhood?
- What do you remember about your life before I was born / adopted?
- What are some of your proudest achievements?
- What do you think have been some of my proudest achievements?
- How did you accomplish those things you're proud of?
- What advice would you give to someone working on achieving a goal / dream?
- What are some interesting things that have happened to you in Canada?
- What has been your most memorable / important experience in Canada?
- What were some of your first impressions when you met me?
- Why did you choose Canada instead of any other country?
- How was your school experience different from my school experience?
- What new discoveries did you make when you came to Canada?

A Collection Of Good Quality Questions to Pose
During Interviews

(Collected from student examples - Grade 7 / Division 3)

- What kind of person was I when I was younger?
- How have I changed as a person through the years?
- What things have changed my personality?
- What did I worry about most as a child?
- Who was I inspired by when I was young?
- Are there any talents that I have now, that I didn't have before?
- When did I stop believing in Santa Claus? What made me stop believing?
- Did you have any difficulties in school and were you able to handle tough situations? Have I experienced difficulties in school? How do you think I've handled them?
- Do you ever help out the community? In what ways? Am I someone who helps out in the community? What are some of the ways you've observed me do this?
- How did I get my name?
- What do you think you might have done differently to raise me?
- What is something interesting that happened to me as a child?
- How did I react to first coming to Canada?
- Do you have dreams that you wanted to complete but never did? What dreams do you hope I will achieve?
- What kind of personality did I have in kindergarten? What were my first experiences with school like?
- What was my first interaction with technology and how did I use it?
- What was something that you particularly liked doing with me when I was younger?
- What do you think has been my most embarrassing moment?
- Do you think that there are any qualities that I need to work on? What are some suggestions for how I could work on them?
- What do you visualize for me in the future?
- Tell me one memorable event that happened in my life and why was it so memorable?
- If you could go back into the past, what things would you change?
- Where did you grow up and tell me a little bit about that place? Can you tell me a little bit about where I grew up?
- When I was younger, did I have any bad habits? How did I break them?
- Aside from my physical aspects, are there any things about me that have really changed or improved over the years?
- What are some of the differences to how I acted when I was young and how I act now?
- What were some of my most memorable achievements when I was young? How do you think that you contributed to those achievements?
- What was something significant that happened on the day I was born?

Zac Efron radiates a sort of well-scrubbed young mannishness. He's an entertainer in the most traditional sense of the word: He knows how to carry a tune and turn a step, he winks at the girls and nods at the guys, and he generally appears to be working hard not to disappoint—all of which would seem too good to be true if he didn't seem to mean it so much. It's no wonder that his bronzed image—those Hollywood-soulful eyes peering out from under a thick drape of artfully tousled hair—is tacked up in so many lockers, wallpapered on so many iPhones, and emblazoned on so many notebooks and backpacks.

Name(s): _____ Buddy's Name: _____

Notes:

Observations:

Situation:

Trapped Story (ex: The Horror)

This story involves a situation where a character is trapped with someone they “hate.” It can be somewhere very concrete like being trapped in an elevator, or under the rubble in an earthquake. With a bit of brainstorming, students get pretty creative with their story scenarios. Some have elected to write about being trapped in the backseat with a sibling during a road trip. Some have written about being trapped babysitting an uncooperative toddler. Lately, I’ve had students ask if it could be a metaphorical trap, like a dysfunctional relationship.

The key objective of the trapped story is that the character must endure the “trap” with the person they despise (without the situation simply turning into a fight). This typically results in some of the better character development I’ve observed in student stories.

I will typically demonstrate some of the complexities of the potential story dynamics by role playing some scenarios. In the role play scenarios, I focus on emphasizing how my facial expressions, my posture, or my gestures might communicate something different from my words. This helps students focus on the subtleties of typical non-verbal communication.

The Horror

“Ding,” as the elevator door opened. I found myself standing beside someone with a sly grin on her face. I quickly moved three steps to the left and faced the other way so she wouldn’t recognize me. My teeth were clenching together. My eyes were as big as basketballs and I was shaking all over. I heard a voice from behind me call my name.

“Candace,” she said. “What are you doing? Waiting for someone to come to your rescue? Or are you afraid of elevators?” She grinned.

“No,” I said in a low voice.

“Chicken, chicken, chicken... bock, bock, bock,” she chuckled. I turned around and stared into her eyes. They were like little slits that you could barely see. I saw jealousy beneath that grinning face.

“What are you staring at, you loser?” she complained.

“Nothing,” I answered with a sly grin on my face. I heard the “Ding” of the elevator and the door opened. I walked past her quietly and breathed a sigh of relief.

I was over. I had survived the horror.

- Candace (Grade 6)

Difficult Conversation Story (ex: All Bobby Wanted Was a Break)

The difficult conversation story often is an assignment I give after the Trapped Story. It allows students to continue to explore the realm in which characters have conflicting emotions. In this particular scenario, students are asked to create a scenario where a character has to reveal something that they have difficulty sharing. It could be as simple as the reluctant sharing of a secret. It could be a character trying to avoid telling their parent they got a low grade on a test. It could be as complex as someone “coming out” to a friend or family member.

The objectives in this assignment are to: 1) establish a trusting relationship so that the character is willing to engage in sharing the difficult information, 2) gradually draw out the information instead of spontaneously or freely volunteering it, and 3) maintain the continuity of a specific action or activity while the conversation is happening. (For example: creating the details of setting a table while trying to avoid letting your mom know that you got in trouble at school.)

All Bobby Wanted Was a Break

“Mom! I’m going to the basketball court with Bobby!” George yelled. He slammed the door behind his back creating a loud **“Boom!”** George and his brother carried their water bottles while they ran down to the basketball court across the street.

“Don’t play too long, dinner is almost ready!” his mom responded. She quickly ran inside to check on the barbequed ribs. Bobby grabbed the ball away from George and took the first shot from the free throw line.

“Hey!” George yelled while he collected the rebound. “So... I heard something happened to you at school today. “What happened?” he asked, bouncing the ball.

“Ummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm, I forgot,” Bobby answered. He stared at the basketball hoop waiting for George to shoot. “Hurry up and shoot!” Bobby demanded.

“OK! Don’t have a cow! What’s got into you?” George replied. He spun the ball forcefully into his high arched shot.

Bobby zipped his lips and heard **“SWOOOOOSH!”** from the basketball hoop.

“Bob! Pass it over. It’s respect,” George reminded. He jogged to the top corner of the key, getting ready to take another shot. “So what happened today?” Why can you tell mom and dad but not me?” he asked before releasing another shot.

“Something bad,” Bobby muttered under his breath. An orange round object flowed right in front of his eyes into the basket.

“Boing, boing, boing, swoosh!”

“I got it in again! I am on fire!” George celebrated. Bobby collected the rebound and fired the ball to him.

“Oh, I am George, the guy who thinks he’s so good at basketball just because he got two shots in,” Bobby mocked.

“Bobby, what’s wrong? You can tell me and I can help you. That’s why I am your older brother,” George rolled his eyes like a roller coaster on the loop. He asked himself, “What made me say that?”

“Ok, I’ll tell you! Don’t be so annoying,” Bobby responded. “Today, I was doing a speech and... I’ll tell you later. Let’s just play ball.”

“Ugh! Just tell me!” George demanded.

“I’ll tell you later. Promise.”

“No! Tell me your story as we play ball. When you play ball, it will help you feel more comfortable. I don’t know how, but it just does. Ok?” George requested.

“Ok. Whatever you say,” Bobby answered. “Since you are or feel like you’re on fire, let’s play a game because if you keep on shooting, I’ll never get to shoot. I get first ball, and no possessions,” Bobby said sarcastically.

“Why don’t we start by how it all happened?” George suggested. George passed the ball to Bobby.

“You know how we had a speech today? Well, everybody went except for me and...” Bobby did his killer crossovers through his legs and dribbled around George and had a free lane to the basket. The orange sphere went up, hit the back board and...went in. “one zip,” Bobby checked the ball to George.

"I'm starting to get hungry, aren't you?"

"Not really."

"Let's play up to five?"

"Ok."

"So... what exactly happened?" George dribbled. He tried to wiggle his way past Bobby by doing his spin move to get to the basket.

"Ok, when it was my turn to speak in front of the class, I had a little accident," Bobby replied in a low voice. George faked him out and shot the ball when Bobby was still in the air. George dribbled by him for an easy lay up. "I-I..."

"What? You peed in your pants?"

"No, no, no, no, no! A little accident with my voice."

"Oh. Go on, Bobby, George encouraged as he took a sip of water.

"Check," George handed the basketball to Bobby. "And...and...and..." he mumbled while doing his crossovers.

"Bobby, I can't hear you. Speak louder.," George shouted while Bobby was struggling to dribble around him.

"I am trying my best, but...my mouth won't open," Bobby explained like he just had a tooth taken out. George was puzzled.

"Check," Bobby reminded. When he got the ball, he released a quick shot from the three-point line. The spinning orange sphere hit the backboard and went in. "That was a two, so now it's 3-1 for me."

"Don't worry. Watch me comeback," George spoke confidently. Bobby handed him the ball and he too shot from the three-point line. Since he was taller than Bobby by a couple of inches, he didn't have to release the ball quickly. He took a good look at the basket and shot the ball when he felt he was ready. "**Swoosh!**" George walked over to his water bottle and took a sip. "What happened at school? This time give me an answer before changing the topic."

"Ok, this is what happened," Bobby started to explain. George stood still crossing his arms. When Bobby saw that, he quickly dribbled the ball past him for a lay up. He pushed the ball too hard but it didn't matter. He grabbed the rebound and shot it back up. He used the back board and banked it in. "4 - 3."

"That was cheap!" George whined.

"How? You never said time out, so as long as the game is still on, I can talk and shoot."

"Arghhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Fine, be that way!"

"I will. Don't worry," Bobby answered. George started to dribble but Bobby didn't really notice that.

"Want a taste of your own medicine?" George asked. Before Bobby could answer, George shot the ball from the corner of the key. It hit the rim, bounced up, hit the far rim and...went in.

"That's it! You're gonna lose right now!" Bobby hollered. He was getting mad.

"Come on, twerp! What happened to your voice during the speech?" George roared as he was becoming impatient.

"Did you call me a twerp?" Bobby questioned angrily as he picked up the basketball.

“Yes, I did and I would call you a coward if you can’t tell me what happened with your voice during your speech!’ George tried to reach in and strip the ball away from Bobby.

“Arghhhhhhhhhh! How dare you call me a coward and a twerp! If you really want to know what happened to me during my speech...well, my voice went from normal into a **SQUEAKY** kind of noise! It was embarrassing,” Bobby exploded with anger and with his apple coloured face.

“Uh oh, I really pushed it this time,” George thought to himself. He gave his hundred and ten percent defense on Bobby. That was not enough to stop Bobby from scoring. Bobby faked George out by pretending to go left, but he went right. George ran his fastest to catch up to Bobby, but when he got there, Bobby did his fade jumper. “**Swoosh!**”

“I can swish the ball too you know?” he walked away like a winner. It looked like he was in a sword fight with someone and had defeated his opponent.

George slammed the ball onto the blacktop. “I knew I shouldn’t have called you names, but I was trying to make you blab everything out,” George caught up to Bobby and explained.

“Uh huh. Ya right.” Bobby thought to himself. “Well, that sure worked. Cough, cough!” Bobby sighed and glanced at the red sports car zooming by.

“You don’t believe me, well that’s ok. Anyways...are you hungry, Bobby?” George asked. His stomach suddenly let out a rumbling sound.

“Ya. I’m guessing you are too, from the way your stomach just complained.”

- Wilfrid (Grade 7)

Extreme Short Stories

Dear kid bullying the only openly gay boy in class,

I dare you to lay a finger on him.

Sincerely,

The linebacker with two
amazing dads.

Dear Music Teacher who never calls on me,

Am I invisible or are you blind?

Sincerely,

Your student with all the answers.

Dear Muscle man,

Please share the gym.

From,

Your skinny neighbours.

Dear Racist boy,

You're part Asian.

Love, Mom.

Dear everyone,

I exist.

Sincerely,
Excluded Boy

Dear People that are struggling with
relationships,

There are 6.9 billion more people in the world
that can make you happier,

Sincerely,
E Harmony

Six Word Memoirs

The idea of the Six Word Memoir began with Ernest Hemingway, when he was challenged to write his autobiography in a very short passage. This was the result:

For sale. Baby shoes. Never worn.

This has since become the catalyst for a variety of writers to capture their own story in 6 words. The idea is to stimulate and capture the essence of powerful personal experiences in 6 words. Sometimes the stories are dramatic, dark, and emotional. Other times they are self-deprecating, light-hearted and humorous.

Here are a variety of samples that will help students understand the concept of the 6 word memoir and develop their own. I challenge students to work on developing a dozen of them to experiment with the concept and then to choose one that really powerfully captures some aspect of themselves and their life experience.

[Sometimes, I prefer chocolate over friends.](#)

[Sometimes, say little. Sometimes, too much.](#)

Define normal? Opposite of my family.

Living my dream. Please send money.

[Getting through adolescence is messy business.](#)

Cursed with cancer, blessed with friends.

Karma never liked me very much.

Donuts make life so much sweeter.

Some slide shows and further descriptions of 6 word memoirs can be found at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nD7Bh63fxUM&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkinPgGqKVg&NR=1&feature=endscreen>

<http://readingart.info/index.html>

Sample 6 Word Memoirs – Grade 7's

One healthy boy. Made in China.	- Kevin
Sometimes I wish I was deaf.	- Kenneth
Dreams become reality... so sleep more.	- Sumie
Sometimes smiling doesn't help anything.	- Chloe
I seem to get dangerous ideas.	- Tom
Wishing my brother was never born.	- Tom
God! Mom and Dad were right!	- Tom
Really sorry for the black eye.	- Zach
Staring in mirror. Waiting for moustache.	- Bushra
Art. Failure. Need I say more?	- James
Get off the computer, you addict.	- Jugad
Life is better with more money.	- Cole
Drawing is mostly my life already.	- Cassandra
Got 100 problems. Only 99 solutions.	- Andrew
Mom. Sister. Broke, but happy.	- Andrea
Six word memoirs not my strength.	- Ariel
Define torture? Come to my class.	- Sophia
Looked for answers. Encountered more questions.	- Edward
Screwed up your life? Press restart.	- Patrick

Quote Project Guiding Questions

Who said it?

What kind of person said it?

What do they value?

Why did they say it?

What did they mean by it?

What was the context in which they said it?

How is the person historically significant?

What is it about the person or what they have experienced that makes their quote relevant?

Does it (or how does it) influence other people's thinking?

The Murder of John Lennon

Three months earlier...

Mark

My eyes grew wide and anger flared up inside me as I stared at the newspaper in awe.

“We’re more popular than Jesus.” said John Lennon of the Beatles.

I couldn’t believe my idol, John Lennon, would say such a thing. I wasn’t the only person who was in such a state. The entire Southern United States were in shock. I became preoccupied with protests. Record burnings, demonstrations, and boycotts. It even became the most talked about topic at church. We made jokes like “Imagine, imagine if John Lennon was dead.” and “John Lennon is a Communist.”

The protests and demonstrations went on for days, but eventually stopped. The anger continued to grow inside me. Not only had John Lennon committed blasphemy, but I realized he was a phony. We all thought he didn’t value possessions, yet he had millions of dollars, yachts, and property. He was a hypocrite. Everything he said was lies. All he did was laugh at people like me who had believed the lies and bought his records and built a big part of their lives around his music.

What I felt was more than just anger. I had to break something. Kill something. I had to kill John Lennon.

I started talking to the little people that lived in my walls. I talked to them when I was a kid. It was so long ago, yet I was still their king. They would make me mad at times, but all I would do was kill them. They still treated me like their ruler, and they were my best friends.

“Are you okay Mark? Who are you talking too?” my wife, Gloria asked me when she noticed that I was talking to the little people.

“Just the little people that live on my wall.” I replied.

“...What are you talking to them about?” her voice wavered.

“My plan to kill John Lennon.”

Gloria

I dismissed Mark after he told me he was talking to the little people in the wall.

I knew he acted strange sometimes. I didn’t think it was anything to worry about.

Two months earlier...

Mark

I spent more and more time with the little people. I sat in my room most of the day and listened through recordings of John Lennon and pointed out to the little people why what he said was wrong.

“When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down ‘happy’. They told me I didn’t understand the assignment, and I told them they didn’t understand life.”

“Well your mother is a liar too.” I whispered at my stereo. A slight smirk bent across my face.

“Please don’t do this Mr. President.” Exclaimed one of the little people. The rest of the little people started chattering to each other and shouting at me.

“Think of Gloria and us!”

“This isn’t right!”

“Please! How could you murder someone?”

I quickly got up out of my chair and ran out the door.

“Wait Mr. President!” one of the little people yelled just as I left.

I drove to the nearest firearms dealer and bought a gun. I drove to the record store and bought John Lennon’s new record, *Double Fantasy*. Three days later while Gloria wasn’t home I bought plane tickets to New York City and left the same day.

I decided to spend some time and have some fun in New York before killing John. I checked myself in to the Waldorf, had dinner at the restaurant and a bottle of beer.

I flew back home to Honolulu to check on Gloria. She was very alarmed but I explained to her I would need to go back to New York for a few weeks for a job.

“For a job? Are you sure, Mark?”

“Yes. Don’t worry, I’ll be back.”

December 8, 1980...

I woke up in my hotel room, and something told me it was the day. I got up, changed and got ready, picked up Double Fantasy and my gun, and left for John Lennon's apartment at the Dakota.

I chatted with the door man as I waited hopefully for John to pass by. Almost half the day went by, but I was determined to find him. Finally, John had walked out with Yoko Ono and a large group of staff members. I was star struck for a few moments. The doorman pushed me toward John as I was frozen in my dumbfound state. All my anger disappeared just like that.

John

I smiled at the man in front of me as he held out a pen and my new record for me to autograph. I signed it: John Lennon, December 1980.

I handed the record and pen back to him. "Is that all you want?" I asked.

"Yeah." he nodded his head and shook nervously. "Thanks, John."

I left the building with Yoko and the staff. I wondered why the man was still standing at the door front. That thought wandered through my mind the rest of the day.

Mark

I was still star struck. I was about to shoot him, but I couldn't. I just couldn't move. In that one moment I forgot everything.

I figured John had gone to the studio. The doorman said he might not be back till midnight. I stayed anyway. I had come to do what I had to do.

He finally came back at 10:50. My mind raced as he approached the building.

Do it! Do it! Do it! A voice in my head told me.

"Mr. Lennon!" I shouted as he came out of a limousine.

John

“Mr. Lennon!” someone yelled.

I looked up and saw the man who asked me for an autograph this evening with a revolver in hand. I shook my head trying to decide what to do. There were only a few seconds to think. My mind still racing, I inhaled and rushed off as quickly as I could. I suddenly felt a sharp pain in my back, spreading throughout my body, taking my breath away.

Mark

I held the revolver tight in my hands, crouching on the ground. He turned around to see me holding the gun and quickly dashed in an attempt to escape. I pressed my eyes shut. Nervously shaking, I must have pulled the trigger.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

I didn't even aim. I had no idea what happened. I was so lost and confused even though I knew exactly what I did. The voice in my head took over. What had I done?

All events in this story are true. They have been slightly altered to create the storyline. Mark David Chapman was charged with second degree murder for killing John Lennon.

- Isabel (Grade 7)

Setting up the Scar Story

The objective of the story here is to create a story about an injury that has occurred. Students are asked to recall the story that accompanies a scar they “earned” and to reveal how it happened in an active, engaging, and poignant way that emphasizes the drama of the actual “accident” and hopefully leaves the reader with an emotional response. Students who don’t have a noticeable scar are asked to recall an incident where they received an injury, regardless of how minor or major. You could write a powerful “scar story” about a paper cut if you used effective story devices. More mature students might write more metaphorically about “emotional” scars instead of physical ones.

The incident should be one they can recall. Having had a surgery as an infant that they can’t recall makes it more difficult for students to accomplish this objective.

Provide students with an opportunity to share their stories with peers. Provide some guidance / feedback about things to emphasize each time they share their story with a new partner. This gives them the rehearsal that can be very beneficial in preparing to write their stories. One of the things that can be useful to introduce to help heighten the suspense in these stories is the idea of foreshadowing. Students can be encouraged to structure their story in a manner which is somewhat predictable – i.e. introducing the device of injury into the story, or having a parent warn something like “How many times do I have to tell you... Don’t run with scissors!”

The Playground's Curse

“You put your right foot in, you put your right foot out...you put your right foot in and you shake it all about.” The song would ring through my five-year-old head like a hot knife through butter. I was in preschool.

At five years old, I went to Variety Day-Care. I loved it there...the teddy bear paintings on the walls, the joyful warm colours, and toys just within my reach.

My friend, T'Brenn and I were playing with the blocks like dogs with their favourite toys, when suddenly a dark figure approached us. T'Brenn tried to hide and squealed like a pig as the figure tapped me on the shoulder and quietly cooed, “Evan, it's time for Snack... then you can go outside to play with your friends...you like that?”

As soon as I heard the word “outside,” I quickly scrambled to my feet and rushed to the bright blue table with assorted dried fruits on each of the kid's placemats. I shoved some apricots into my mouth and ran outside into the sun-bathed playground.

I loved that playground with its swings, slides and “Xs and Os” games sketched on the pavement, although I had never noticed there was a sharp wooden edge on the trestle tree set.

The most fun thing for T'Brenn and I to do was to push each other on the swings, although it wasn't that easy to push. Maybe that's why, on this day, T'Brenn had a different idea.

“Bwast off!” T'Brenn yelled as he leaped like a toad off the wooden ledge onto the pavement. His sneakers squeaked as they

broke his fall. “You too, Eben, dump off!” T’Brenn encouraged, with his hands motioning towards the ground.

“No, I’ll get hurted,” I replied to his outrageous remark.

“Fine then, chicken head!” he mocked as he trotted around in circles and made chicken noises.

I thought to myself, “Am I going to take this teasing? No, I won’t.” To prove my bravery, I did what my friend asked of me. I leapt of the play set, lunging down to the rocky surface below. I felt so proud up in the air, knowing that I had faced my fears, but then an unexpected gust of wind blew me off balance. I clamped my eyes shut as my hip hit the frayed wood of the play set. My squeaky cries were muffled by a “thump!”

My skin peeled away from my flesh, and raw skin and blood were exposed to my friend, the daycare teachers, and myself. I sat at the base of the playground, on the cold, rough pavement. Vivid blood gushed from my side. After the main tragedy – the feeling of pain and the sight of blood – was over, tears ran from my pale, white face. T’Brenn’s sorries fluttered through my head.

I am now 11 years old and have learned not to do things just because people egg me on. Now, because of that one mistake some years ago, I have a curse. Whenever, I go to a park that looks similar to that one long ago, I feel as if someone is watching me, and I hold my scar, remembering.

This feeling will probably stay with me forever...unless my curse is somehow broken.

- Evan (Grade 6)

Criteria for Graphic Novel

Story:

- Your Graphic Novel has a well-developed beginning, middle, and end
- The story flows smoothly from one event or situation to the next in a meaningful and connected manner
- You have an interesting opening that captures the readers' interest
- You have a powerful conclusion that provokes an emotional reaction from the audience

Action:

- Action is conveyed visually through the drawings
- The action develops in a way that creates a satisfying and interesting story
- The action is intense and appropriate to conveying your story
- Specific Graphic Novel devices are used effectively to set the stage for the action and to show the action
 - Long shot
 - Middle distance shots
 - Close ups
 - Flashback or foreshadowing
- You use slow motion at the most dramatic point to emphasize the action

Details:

- Important details are highlighted in your panels - You zoom in to capture specific details
- You create an effective setting and background details in each of your panels

Character development:

- Characters are developed through a combination of showing their expression, their actions, and sharing their thoughts and words using word balloons and thought bubbles
- The relationships between characters are clear and well developed

Layout

- Pages are effectively organized
- Panels are logically sequenced and appropriately sized
- Panels, gutters, captions, thought bubbles, word balloons, etc. are designed to make the action and story development easy to follow

Inking and coloring

- All edges are inked with a black marker (you can use a combination of very fine tipped marker and a wider marker)
- Coloring is boldly done using a combination of felts and pencil crayons – your objective is to create the look and feel of Graphic Novels that we have explored
- You use color to create a mood in your Graphic Novel (i.e. dark colours to create an ominous mood, or bright colors to convey a playful scene)

Story Topics: Universal Themes

Summer Story

Meaningful Person Story

Grandparent Story

Uncomfortable Moment Story

Trapped Story

Difficult Conversation Story

Time Story

Mistake Story

Special Event Story

Birthday Story

Christmas Story

Eavesdropping Story

Love/Hate Story

Scar Story



lostboysconsulting.ca
bryangidinski@gmail.com

604-434-8747

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