Lesson Plan: Manga Storytelling

Background
Manga ("mon-gah") has a long and rich history in Japanese culture. It serves as an important medium for stories. Today hundreds of different manga stories are created each month for readers. Manga has provided the world with some of the most interesting and exciting characters such as Astro Boy, Dragonball Z, and Inu Yasha.

One of the functions of storytelling is to answer questions about these characters and the challenges that they face. Questions such as; Who are they? Where are they from? What challenges are they facing? How do they feel? Why are they doing this? Why do they behave in a certain way? What is their motivation? How will they solve this challenge? What will be the effects of solving this problem? Who else might be affected by this challenge?

In manga storytelling, artists have many tools to answer these questions, tools such as; images, panels, gutters, text, balloons, and emanata. The students will use these tools to create their own manga stories.

Preparation
• Have students create and design their own characters before starting the manga stories. Instruct the students to write down interesting details and information about their characters, such as; who they are, what their dreams are, what their fears are, what talents or skills they possess, what their favorite food is, and so on.

• Have the students think about some problems or challenges that their character may encounter. What does this problem look like? How will their characters deal with or solve the challenge?

Interactive Classroom Discussion
• Using copies of the Manga Storytelling Page as a visual example, ask them to describe what they see. Then ask them what it is that they see that makes them say “people” or “trees.” Ask them how they think the artist drew that tree.

• Next ask them what they think is happening in these pictures. Ask them to explain what they see that tells them what is happening. Ask them to explain how they think the artist is communicating what is happening. Ask them to think about what choices the artist made in creating each image.

• As you go through each panel, fill in the dialogue with your students.

Continuing the discussion, review the following Manga Storytelling Vocabulary.

Manga Storytelling Vocabulary
Images - lines, shapes, patterns, and textures combined to create the recognizable likeness of a person, place or thing

Panels - the shapes that contain the images

Gutters - the empty spaces that separate the panels

Balloons - the circular and cloud shapes which contain the words which the characters are speaking or thinking
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Narration - the words of the artist’s voice, usually contained inside rectangles, these words help to set the time and place of the story.

Onomatopoeia - expressively rendered words representing the sounds in Manga.

Emanata (panel 3) - expressive lines radiating from characters’ faces or bodies, which help to convey exaggerated emotions such as fear and anger.

Long Shot (panel 1) - an image that shows a large part of the environment and the characters are drawn small, this helps to set the place and mood of the story.

Medium Shot (panel 2) - an image that has half of the character and parts of the environment, this helps to show character emotion and action and their relationship to the environment.

Full Shot (panel 6) - an image that shows the whole character or object, this helps to show the character pose, costume, and props.

Close Up Shot (panels 3, 5) - an image that shows one important part of the character or object, this helps to show character details and emotions, and story details.

Bird’s Eye Shot (panel 6) - an image where the viewer is looking down upon the scene, as if they were a bird flying over and looking down.

Student Activity
Make copies of the Blank Manga Panel Template for your students to begin creating their own manga stories, or they can draw their own panels. Their stories can be single or multiple pages.

Have students refer to their Character and Environment Drawings to start penciling their manga stories (lesson plans are available online at http://www.mangastart.com/blog/resource-library/). Then instruct them to draw panels that establish their characters by showing “who” their character is and “how” they behave. They are also establishing the setting and the tone by the way they illustrate the backgrounds. As their panels progress, the students then introduce the problem into the story. Then they can visualize how the character deals with the problem, and what the final solution looks like. When the penciling is finished, have the students ink and color their work.

NATIONAL STANDARDS
http://www.education-world.com/standards

Grade Level 5-8
NA-VA.5-8.1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
NA-VA.5-8.2 Using knowledge of structures and functions

Grade Level 9-12
NA-VA.9-12.1 Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
NA-VA.9-12.2 Using knowledge of structures and functions

NL-ENG.K-12.4 Communications Skills
NL-ENG.K-12.12 Applying Language Skills

Lesson Plan developed by Manga Start
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http://www.mangastart.com
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