

The Challenge: "Make It More Postmodern"

Objective

Students analyse how postmodern graphic novels challenge traditional storytelling through techniques such as:

- Metafiction - fiction in which the author self-consciously alludes to the artificiality or literariness of a work by parodying or departing from novelistic conventions and traditional narrative techniques.
- Fragmented narratives - a storytelling technique in which the plot is presented in a non-linear, disjointed, or broken sequence rather than in a straightforward chronological order.
- Intertextuality - the connections between different works of literature and art, and the meanings that are created.
- Pastiche - an artistic work in a style that imitates that of another work, artist, or period.
- Unreliable narrators
- Blurring fiction and reality
- Self-awareness

Setup

Divide students into groups of 2-3.

Give each group a familiar story that everyone knows:

- Little Red Riding Hood
- Cinderella
- Sherlock Holmes
- Romeo and Juliet
- Dracula
- Frankenstein
- Batman

Round 1: The Traditional Version

Groups spend 2 minutes outlining the story in its conventional form.

Round 2: The Postmodern Mutation

Now they must transform it into a postmodern graphic novel by introducing at least **four** of the following:

The narrator lies to the reader.

Characters realise they are in a comic.

Different art styles appear on different pages.

A story within a story.

References to other books, films, comics, or popular culture.

Multiple contradictory endings.

Gaps in the narrative that readers must fill themselves.

The villain becomes the hero.

Historical and contemporary settings collide.

The reader is addressed directly.

The Pitch

Each group has 90 seconds to pitch:

Title

Main plot

The postmodern techniques used

Example

Original: Dracula

Postmodern Version: *Dracula.exe*

- Dracula discovers he is a fictional character.
- He hacks between different versions of his story.
- Every chapter is drawn in a different graphic style.
- Van Helsing is revealed to be an unreliable narrator.
- Readers must choose which ending they believe.

Discussion Questions

After the activity, ask:

Is postmodernism making stories more meaningful or just more complicated?

Can a graphic novel be postmodern without confusing the reader?

Which contemporary graphic novels still use postmodern techniques today?