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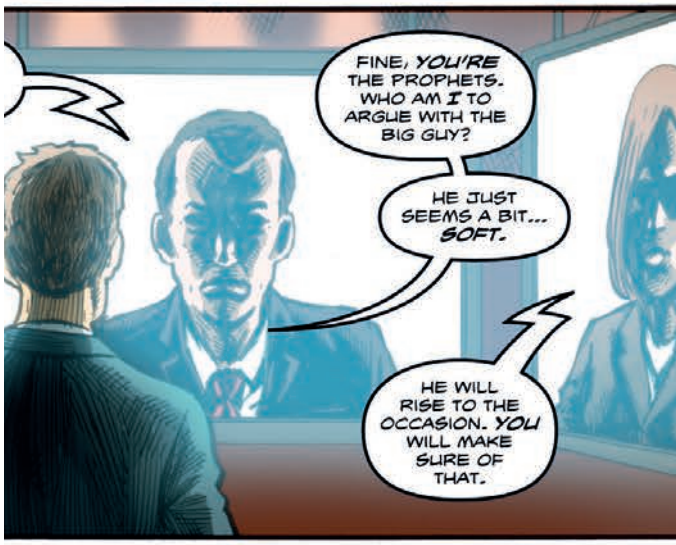

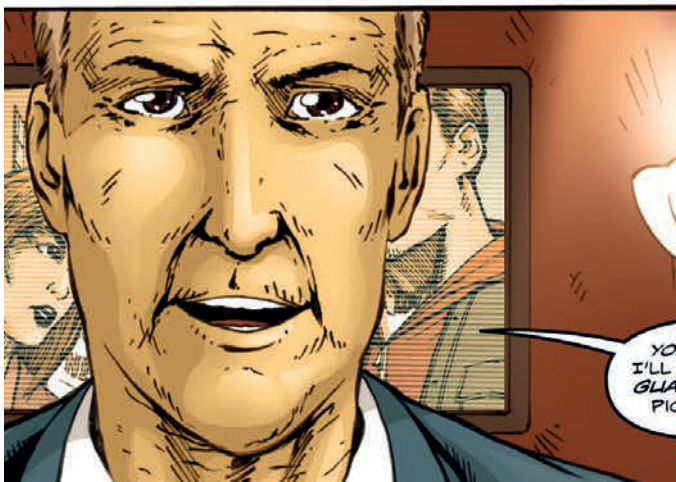

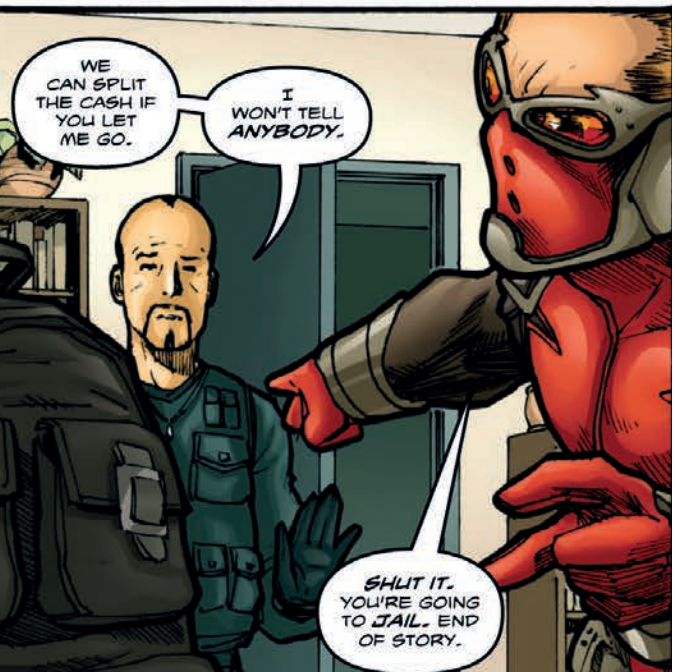

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CHARACTER:

To write a truly great story, one that people are willing to buy and read, it all starts with the main character. This character will be the reader's guide through your narrative, so it's essential to craft someone they can connect with, understand, and root for (or against, depending on your story). The development process involves considering various aspects, from their physical appearance to their inner motivations. It's a gradual process of discovery, where you, as the creator, get to know your character as intimately as possible.

First off, let's remember what makes up the character element:

> Character—A main character we care about
>
> Often referred to as the "protagonist," your main character is so much more. He is a character with habits, desires, fears, quirks, weaknesses, strengths, etc. All the things that make us identify with him and, therefore, care about him. If readers don't care about your character or don't like or identify with him in any way, then they won't care about any of the story. In fact, the story goal or other characters, or even the epic battles—none of this will matter if readers don't care about your main character.

Start by thinking about the role your character plays in the story. Are they the protagonist driving the plot forward, or are they a more passive observer reacting to the events around them? Their role will influence their personality and motivations. Consider their background: Where did they come from? What experiences have shaped them? These formative experiences will influence their worldview and how they interact with others. Even seemingly small details from their past can provide depth and complexity to their character.

It's also important to consider their personality. Are they outgoing and confident, or shy and introverted? What are their strengths and weaknesses? No one is perfect, and flaws make characters more relatable and human. Think about their values: What do they believe in? What are they willing to fight for? These values will often be the driving force behind their actions. Don't be afraid to give your character contradictions. A character who is both brave and fearful, or kind and ruthless, can be far more interesting than a character who is consistently one thing.

Consider their relationships with other characters in the story. How do they interact with their family, friends, and enemies? These relationships can reveal a lot about their personality and motivations. Think about their goals: What do they want to achieve? What are their dreams and aspirations? Their goals will provide direction for their actions and create conflict within the story. Internal conflict, such as struggling with a moral dilemma, or external conflict, like battling an antagonist, are both important for driving the narrative.

Visualizing your character is also key, especially in a visual medium like a graphic novel. What do they look like? Their physical appearance can reflect their personality or background. Think about their clothing, hairstyle, and any distinguishing features. Are they tall and muscular, or short and slight? Do they have any scars or tattoos that tell a story? The visual aspects of your character are just as important as their internal characteristics.

Once you have a good understanding of your character's internal and external attributes, you can start to think about their arc. How will they change and grow throughout the story? What lessons will they learn? A character arc is essential for creating a satisfying narrative. It allows the reader to witness the character's journey and feel invested in their fate. Even if your character doesn't undergo a dramatic transformation, they should still experience some form of growth or change.

Remember that character development is an ongoing process. As you write and draw your graphic novel, you may discover new things about your character. Don't be afraid to let your character evolve and surprise you. Sometimes, the best characters are the ones that take on a life of their own.

Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind:

- Give them a clear motivation; What drives their actions?
- Establish their strengths and weaknesses; What are they good at, and what are they bad at?
- Show, don't tell; Let their actions and dialogue reveal their personality.

Types of Conflict Table

Person v. Person	Person v. Self	Person v. Society
In this type of conflict, a character clashes with another character. It can also be an animal or other living being.	This is typically a dilemma; doubt, lack of confidence, or a touch choice. Although the conflict is within the character, it most likely affects others.	A character challenges a law, institution, culture, or tradition. He battles against those that represent these things and is often in dystopian stories.
Person v. Nature	**Person v. Technology**	**Person v. Supernatural**
The character is fighting to overcome forces of nature. This could be survival, navigating, or meeting basic needs.	The character is resisting or fighting technological forces. Either a super computer taking over the world or resistance to using certain technology at all.	The character is battling any force that is not of this world. Whether monsters or aliens, some otherworldly force that may have powers will take on the hero to total domination.

Many authors will have more than one type of conflict in their story, but only if it makes sense. A story about the hardships of the Oregon Trail or a medieval dictator will not have person vs. technology and, generally, not person vs. supernatural. These will have strong person vs. nature and person vs. self or society conflicts.

In a short story, multiple types of conflict are difficult to represent fully. It is best if you choose one mode of conflict and let that be the basis of your antagonist (or antagonistic force). If you are particularly drawn to two conflicts, make sure they go well together, like person vs. self and person vs. nature. In this case, your main character has many internal issues and a character arc while externally battling deadly nature.

Now, let's discuss external and internal suffering.

EXTERNAL SUFFERING (DISASTER):

External suffering is essentially physical suffering. It might not be as emotionally moving as internal suffering, but it is a consequence of taking risks and fighting the bad guy. It is important not to overdo physical suffering because it can easily become unrealistic or the accepted normal. Readers might start to think, "Really? The character got beat up and then hit by a car, but he's up and chasing the bad guy again." And in the next scene, "Now he's been shot? Wow, this guy has nine lives. He shoulda been a cat." Okay, maybe that was not the plan, but you get the idea. Limit the amount of physical injuries and perhaps be willing to imply the physical pain rather than state it.

Most of what the main character will suffer will be a result of his own choices, even good choices. For example, he is stabbed in the leg because he fights to protect the village, or his father is killed because he refuses to betray the rebels to the evil king.

Everything has a price, and suffering is the price to be paid in every main character's story. However, the suffering must make sense. Random suffering will not establish a value because it will confuse the plot and bewilder the reader.

Physical suffering is not always the result of an injury, either. It does not have to have your main character laid up in the medic station with round-the-clock nursing care. It can be a stomach virus after the villain poisons his soup or even a bad flu during a winter storm when the character and his sidekick are trying to cross a mountain pass to escape the villain's army.

Physical pain can take many forms. Bruises may not be necessary. Something does not have to be cut off, and blood does not even have to be involved for there to be physical pain. Physical suffering can be an inconvenience or discomfort. The best idea is to make the suffering match the scene and always make sure it is rising action and rising conflict.

Fill out the following worksheets to brainstorm some physical suffering that your character might experience.

Worldbuilding Worksheet

Location _____

Brief Description

What are the people/culture like?

How is the climate & terrain?

What do people do all day?

What are the people/culture like?

Website Resources Used

_____

_____

_____

Notes

_____

_____

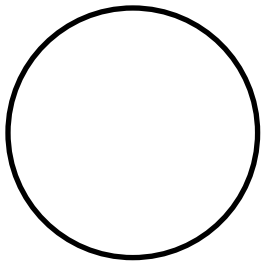
_____

DRAWING 101:

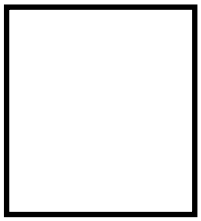
Can we get real about drawing? The truth is, it's not magic. It's work. And anyone telling you otherwise has probably not put in their thousand hours of practice, trust me. While there are some who are more naturally talented artists, the rest of us have to work at it. I actually think that's good news. It means that you can *learn* to draw whether you start out with stick figures or not. Seriously. It's just a matter of sticking with it, being patient, and yeah, putting in some dedication.

Since we're diving into the graphic side of novels, and drawing can seem intimidating, we're going to start simple. Like, even ridiculously simple. This chapter is all about the basics, the stuff every artist needs to know. Hopefully, I can show you how approachable drawing comics really is.

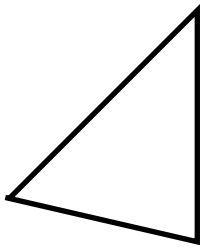
Here are some basics to understand:



Simple Shapes, Big Impact—Are you staring at a blank page and thinking, "Where do I even begin?" Start with shapes. Seriously. Circles, squares, triangles—that's your foundation. Don't overthink it. Just start drawing them.



Playing with Shapes: Shape Composition—Shape composition involves the use of shapes to create an image or artwork. There are numerous character designs that can be broken down into squares, circles, and triangles alike.



Steal Like an Artist (The Simple Kind)—Every artist starts somewhere, and one of the best ways to get better is to copy art styles. My advice is to start simple. Find a style you like, something easy to replicate, and just go for it. It's a fantastic confidence booster, and it'll give you a solid base to build your own style later.

References: Your Secret Weapon—Let's bust a myth right now; nobody pulls amazing artwork out of thin air all the time. Okay, maybe a few geniuses, but the rest of us mere mortals? We tend to use references. Photos, other artwork, real life—it's all fair game. Don't be afraid to use them. It's not cheating, it's smart. And honestly? It's how the pros do it.

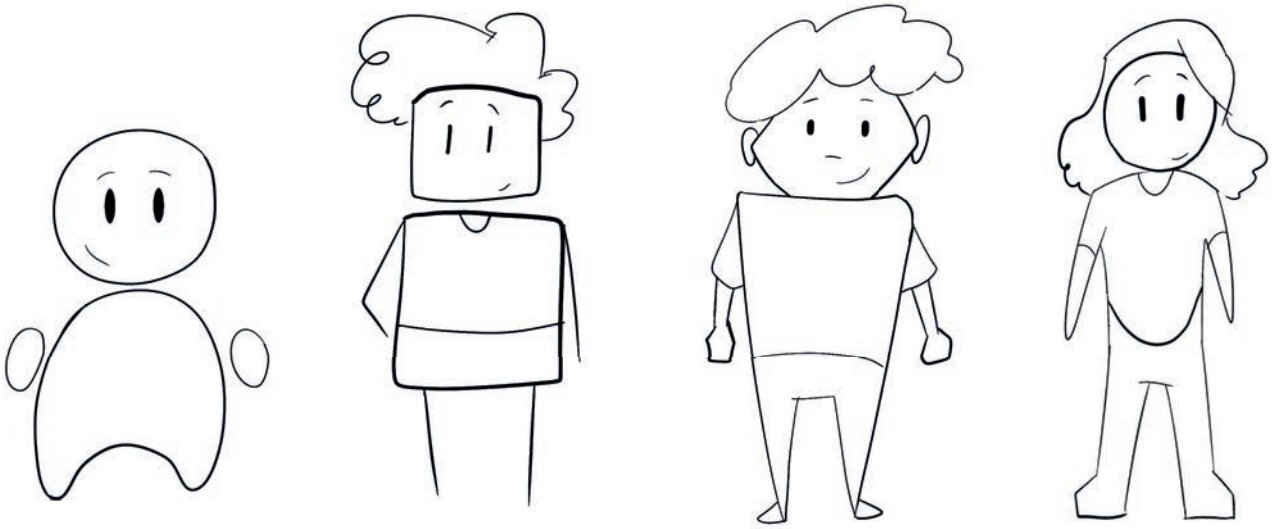
Now, let's talk about line confidence. That's a big one. My friend and a valued collaborator in designing this class, Christian Washington, is an instructor, author, and

artist. Christian claims to be a "bit of a perfectionist," or, well, he was one. He says he used to stress so much about every single line. Like, it had to be *perfect*, or it was a disaster.

But that's a recipe for artist burnout. According to Christian, you have to let go of that. It just stifles your growth.

Here's the lesson; your lines don't have to be perfect, they just have to be *yours*. And the only way to get that confidence with your art? Practice. Just like cramming for a test, you have to put in the hours. No shortcuts, no magic wands. Great artists? They weren't born that way. They grinded. They practiced. And they probably messed up a lot along the way.

KEY POINTS:

- Start with Simple Shapes
- Shape Composition
- Simple Art Styles
- Using Reference
- Line Confidence
- Practice, Practice, Practice

Examples