



MY PROJECT



BERLIN

THE COLLABORATIVE COMIC BOOK
MAJOR PROJECT

A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



The Collaborative Comic Book Major Project

Introduction

The ideological tensions and political and social issues that characterized the Cold War are reflected by the popular media in various forms of visual arts, music, film and literature, among other things. The examples of these that emerged from many Western democracies, led by the United States, often tended to celebrate certain values and traditions that were viewed as foundational to capitalism, freedom of speech and thought, and democracy, and condemned any characteristics of the communist Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union that opposed these things. Within the range of popular culture media, comic books (or graphic novels) present an exciting example of the ways in which the two sides saw themselves as different and chose to portray those differences. This major project package will prompt students to both analyze Cold War comic books for different themes, metaphors and other literary and artistic techniques, and then provide them with the opportunity to create their own comic book as a class about a suggested Cold War event and accompanying central character.

This project aims to provide students with a critical understanding of the creative process surrounding the production of a comic book as well as of the research and strategic approach required to achieve a particular goal in a collaborative process. In analyzing comic book tropes like superheroes, enemies, dialogues and basic plot motifs, students will be able to gain an understanding of how the West (and the United States in particular) perceived and depicted the USSR and communist Asia in enemy roles throughout the duration of the Cold War. The Collaborative Comic Book Creation Project can be modified to meet the needs of the grade level and subject in which it is being undertaken. Educators and students can also choose the level of participation they will have in this project. There are several degrees of collaboration, the fullest of which provides students with the opportunity to work with other students on a national scale.

Levels of Collaboration

National Collaboration

Participation at the national level allows students within one particular classroom to contribute to a comic book publication that will ultimately be created in collaboration with other students across the country, from different schools, provinces, and grade levels. Their comic book will follow a plot skeleton provided by the Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum, supplementing it with their own text and illustrations.

Each participating class will be assigned a particular section of the overall plot line to complete. Their work will then be compiled with that from other classes and published together by the Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum as a single, cohesive comic book. The comic books produced from the national collaboration projects will be displayed in an upcoming exhibit at the museum that will showcase Cold War school projects and learning in the classroom.





School/Classroom Collaboration

If desired, this project can also be completed on a smaller scale at the level of the individual classroom. Rather than being assigned a segment of a comic book plotline, students within a single classroom or school will work collaboratively on a whole plotline to create a single comic book that covers the topic start to finish. This final comic book can then be sent to the Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum for inclusion in an education exhibit that will showcase students' work in Cold War history from across the country. The projects completed at the school/classroom level can be based on the given plot skeletons included in this package, or can follow a different, original Cold War story according to preference. The museum exhibit will seek to emphasize the national collaboration projects, but any school or classroom collaborations that are sent in will feature in a smaller way in the exhibit as well.

The Project

Included in this curriculum package is a set of potential plot ideas for a comic book at the national or classroom level. The basic synopses also feature links to online sources where teachers and students can find more historical information if desired. It is the responsibility of the educator and students to decide how to allocate the required work components of the project such as character and plot development, dialogue, illustrations, and formatting. There is a wide variety of ways in which this can be completed, and the educator is free to choose a work strategy that functions best for his or her students and given context. If you are planning on sending your students' work to the Diefenbunker: Canada's Cold War Museum for inclusion in the upcoming exhibit, please ensure that each panel (comic book square) is created using a piece of paper that is 8.5 x 11 inches in size. For younger students, there is the option to choose between story templates that have been created for three of the given 25 topics. They are "Hiroshima 1945 and Sadako Sasaki," "Berlin Wall 1961 and Conrad Schumann," and "The 1972 Summit Series and Paul Henderson." In these templates, a more structured storyline has been completed, which will allow students to focus on designing appropriate illustrations to go along with each section of the story. Older students will likely prefer the challenge of writing their own storylines and dialogue, and are free to draw from any of the given event and character synopses as a foundation for these.

