



# Pixton Practices Handout

## Storytelling

For Use With Pixton PowerUp Webinar

### Best Practice #1: Narrative Structure

#### Prep


To prepare for a Narrative Structure activity, select a story or event that has a clear beginning, middle, and end. It could be a personal story, a historical event, or a work of fiction. Use Pixton's comic maker to create a comic with three to five panels that summarize and visually represent the narrative as a standard and example for students. These panels should represent key moments and elements of the narrative that introduce characters, build conflict, and ultimately resolve the plot in a very short, summarized format. Stories that follow the classic "Hero's Journey" template are often easier to use and condense into a short series of odd-numbered panels.

#### Activity

Ask students to recreate a short story or event of their own by breaking it into its basic narrative structure in three to five steps. Using Pixton, students can storyboard the key moments in their comic, visually showing the progression of the story. They can use Pixton's Story Starters and customizable characters to illustrate each step, adjusting backgrounds, poses, and emotions to fit the narrative. Students can create custom characters or choose pre-made real and literary characters to save time and avoid having to create it. Once the comic is created, students should present it to the class using Pixton's sharing features, explaining how they broke down the story into its essential elements and why they chose specific moments for the comic that best tell the story.

#### PowerUp Variations

One variation is the Flashback Technique, where you challenge students to retell the story by using flashbacks only. They can add frames that show events leading up to the main narrative (in the style of a prequel) or parallel or intermediate moments that support the main storyline (similar to an interquel). Another variation is the Twist Ending, where students create a variation of the



story with a twist or alternate ending, changing the conclusion of the original narrative by providing a fresh perspective or surprising outcome.

## Differentiation

**Adjust Text Complexity:** Provide students with simplified or more complex versions of a narrative, depending on their reading level.

**Visual Supports:** Encourage the use of more detailed backgrounds or more specific visual cues for younger students or English language learners.

**Guiding Questions:** Offer pointed questions that prompt students to consider and better understand elements of the narrative, such as, “What motivates the characters?” or “How do the events build tension?” or “What events most affected the climax or outcome?”

**Peer Review:** After students complete their comics, they can exchange their work with a peer or in groups for feedback and to encourage collaboration, allowing students to think critically from different perspectives.


## Best Practice #2: Character Development

### Prep

For a Character Development activity, choose a central character in a story. If working with a well-known narrative, pick the protagonist or any key/essential character. Students will create their own comics that explore the development of that specific character, such as their primary motivations, individual challenges, and their growth or development throughout the story. Pixton's customizable avatars and wide range of character options allow students to visually depict changes in the character's appearance, demeanor, and even facial expressions as they evolve. With Pixton's user-friendly tools, students can fine-tune the character's look to reflect internal changes, making it easier to visualize and express character development.

### Activity

Ask students to create a series of at least three comic panels, using Pixton's comic maker, that showcase the development of their character of choice. While they will not be strictly sequential in terms of the whole narrative, the panels should highlight key moments where the character faces challenges, experiences growth, or makes important choices that affect the course of the story. Pixton's dialogue and speech bubble features can be used to show key interactions between characters, helping students show how others react to the protagonist's changes or are



directly affected by their actions. Thought bubbles and customizable captions allow students to emphasize important turning points, focusing not on summarizing the story but on capturing the pivotal moments of character transformation.

## PowerUp Variations

One variation is the Character Reflection, which involves students creating a panel where the character reflects on their own growth (likely including captions and almost definitely including thought bubbles). This could include a critical moment of self-realization in the story (whether actually occurring or contrived) or dialogue with another character about their personal journey. Another variation is the Alternate Reality, where students can create and explore an alternate-reality version of the character by asking what might happen if they made different important choices at key points in the narrative.

## Differentiation

**Support with Templates:** Offer character template worksheets with suggested characteristics and essential traits for students who might need extra support with developing robust characters.

**Scaffolding:** Provide sentence starter prompts or vocabulary related to character traits to help students better articulate their ideas.

**Character Evolution Journal:** Have students create a mock character journal where they briefly track the protagonist's emotions, decisions, and actions throughout the story. This additional component can help support students who need more verbal reflection to aid in visualization.

**Multiple Perspectives:** Have students depict the character's development from multiple viewpoints, such as from that of a side character or even an antagonist.

## Best Practice #3: Visual Storytelling

### Prep

Select a moment or a scene in a story where visual elements (as opposed to spoken or thought elements) play a critical role in the course of the narrative, for example, a moment that involves strong imagery, powerful moods, or an impactful setting. Pixton's wide range of customizable backgrounds, character poses, and weather effects allows students to experiment with the visual components that set the tone. Prepare by selecting a Story Starter or creating a custom comic where students can fully adjust these elements to fit the chosen scene.

## Activity

Students create a comic that embodies the visual aspects of storytelling, using a scene from a fictional story or historical event. With Pixton's intuitive design, they can focus on how dramatic settings, lighting, and character expressions convey key emotions and themes to the viewer—without relying on captions, thought bubbles, or onomatopoeia. Students should explore how these visual elements alone enhance the narrative beyond the written word. Afterward, they can present their comics, explaining how the visuals they selected complement and/or enhance the plot overall.

## PowerUp Variations

One variation is the Mood Shift, where students alter the mood of a scene by changing the background, character expressions or poses, and colors, focusing on the question of how the mood shift can affect storytelling.

## Differentiation

**Dialectic Versions:** Allow students to create versions of the comic with only captions, using dialogue and/or monologue (but no captions or thought bubbles) to enhance the visual elements of the story.


**Visual Prompts:** Provide a set of imagery or symbols for students to incorporate into their comics to help them focus on visual communication.

**Use of Color and Contrast:** Encourage students to experiment with alternate color palettes and motifs to highlight or alter mood (e.g., warm tones for happiness, cool tones for sadness, bright colors for action).

**Visual Vocabulary Flashcards:** Students who need additional support with visual storytelling can be provided with image flashcards made with Pixton tools that show different moods, environments, and character expressions. They can use these as references to select visuals that fit their story's tone.

## Associated Research

Duke, N. K., Ward, A. E., & Pearson, P. D. (2021). The science of reading comprehension instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 74(6), 663–672. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1993>



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Joneyd, N., & Deris, F. D. (2019). Using student-generated web comics on Pixton as a tool for learning Shakespearean drama. *International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering*, 8(2S9), 800–803. <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijrte.B1166.0982S919>

Mayer, R. E., & Moreno, R. (2003). Nine ways to reduce cognitive load in multimedia learning. *Educational Psychologist*, 38(1), 43–52. [https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3801\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3801_6)

Robin, B. R. (2008). Digital storytelling: A powerful technology tool for the 21st century classroom. *Theory Into Practice*, 47(3), 220–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840802153916>