The Cleveland Trolley Strike of 1899: Learning History by Creating a Graphic Novel

James A. Gutowski
Gilmour Academy, Gates Mills, Ohio

ONE OF THE CHALLENGES of teaching high school history is helping students to understand the interpretive element of the discipline. By the time they have reached the upper grades, many students have become mired in the misconception that there is one view of the past, and that studying history merely requires mastery of that singular understanding. According to this mentality, you read a text, memorize the facts, and your mission is accomplished. One job, then, of the history teacher is to help students to appreciate the interpretive element of history, as both historian and student. To this end, I developed a project in which my students would conclude our unit on industrialization and labor by creating their own graphic novels about a notable moment in local history: the Cleveland Trolley Strike of 1899.

I developed this project for my United States Studies class at Gilmour Academy. Gilmour Academy is a Catholic independent school located in an eastern suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. United States Studies is a required course typically taken during a student's junior year. Offered as an alternative to Advanced Placement United States History, U.S. Studies is designed to emphasize pedagogical depth over scope, starting with the end of Reconstruction and

 © Society for History Education

moving toward the present day. The average class size is sixteen, and our upper school uses a block schedule, which gives the class five ninety-minute meetings over a two-week cycle for the entire academic year. The length of each meeting allows plenty of time for student-teacher interaction. In addition, Gilmour has hosted a vibrant cartooning club for years. Though none of my students were members, they had seen enough presentations by the group to be familiar with the concept. The junior English classes study the art of storytelling and learn how to weave together a cohesive narrative. Both of these would prove to be helpful during this project.

In an article about applying the lessons of developmental psychology to the practice of teaching history, Robert Bain discusses the importance of teaching students the difference between "history as past event" and "history as account." As a teaching strategy, he recommends encouraging students to create narrative through story writing.[1] Rooting that story in historical fact challenges students to develop an authentic and coherent understanding of the past and, in so doing, gain an appreciation of the historian's craft. Graphic novel pioneer Will Eisner takes this idea one step further by explaining that a storyteller has an obligation to make the story comprehensible to his/her audience, and that the graphic novel format is able to do this effectively through the combination of word and image.[2] Telling a story is the essential task of the historian. The historian must first make sense of the past, analyze that understanding to determine what elements are essential to that story of the past, and then discern how to relate those elements in a coherent manner to an audience who may not be familiar with that story. In light of these ideas, I conceived this project as a way to help students to become storytellers of history; in other words, to become historians themselves. So, to learn about industrialization in the late 1800s, students examined a particular moment of local labor unrest and told that story by producing a graphic novel.

During the initial phase of the project, students had to gather and organize information to help them make sense of what they were eventually supposed to explain. Gathering this information unearthed differing accounts of the same events, which challenged the researchers to ferret out the truth from among conflicting stories. Keith Barton and Linda Levstik worry that the typical United States history curriculum can too easily paint a "false portrait" of happy

consensus, intimating that everyone in a particular historical moment shared the same set of values and opinions, thereby allowing history to play out untroubled by any sort of dissension. According to the authors, developing the perception that different perspectives did exist in the past and must be sorted out fulfills an important educative mission in preparing young people to live in a pluralistic society with its give and take of democratic interaction.[3] In Cleveland, the widespread effect of the trolley strike on the city generated a broad variety of perspectives, such as how the transit company and the labor union both worked to portray the dispute in terms favorable to their respective positions. Similarly, the outrage that erupted when speeding trolleys killed two children in June of 1899 helped to trigger the strike in the first place.[4] Yet another such death two months later caused by a strikebreaker elicited little public excitement.[5] Having studied the method and purpose of advertising as part of their ninth grade English curriculum, most students understood the public relations efforts of labor and management, but there was genuine puzzlement about the mixed reactions to the deaths of the children. These created an opportunity for us to contextualize those tragedies within the larger story of evolving public support for the strike.

Developing the ability to discern the truth in conflicting accounts also requires the storyteller to develop some historical empathy for the people and events under consideration. Historical empathy allows students to see historical figures as human beings finding their way through their own lives much as we do today. By seeing in the past uncertainties that are similar to those of today, students are able to see these agents of historical change as people, and so gain the ability to see the potential for historical change within themselves.[6] Barton and Levstik argue that, in helping them understand the perspectives of others, the study of history can prepare students to take seriously the views of others without dismissing those out of hand as "foreign" or "stupid."[7] This development of broader perspective ties nicely into Gilmour Academy's own mission of helping students to develop "the wisdom to see" what is right and just.

Graphic Novel as Assessment

Regarding the actual format of the assessment, the graphic novel genre is one that has seen new vitality in recent decades. Publications

such as *Maus* and *Persepolis* have used the genre effectively to communicate serious stories in a compelling manner. Both of these works have found a place in the high school literature curriculum. The Cleveland area has a unique connection to the graphic novel through Harvey Pekar and his pioneering series, *American Splendor*. Many of our students come from Cleveland Heights, where Pekar lived, and have seen his statue standing outside of their local library, where he had been a regular patron.

From a pedagogical perspective, I was also drawn to the idea of concluding our labor unit with a graphic novel because of its value as an authentic assessment. In *Understanding by Design*, Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe write:

> An assessment approach grounded in authentic work calls for students (and teachers) to come to two important understandings: first, learning how adults in the larger world beyond the school *really* use or don't use the knowledge and skills that are taught in school; and second, how discrete lessons are meaningful.[8]

A project such as this could show students that the ability to understand history and relate it to others is a useful and productive skill in the world at large.

Research indicates that, in addition to its authenticity, an assessment like this yields several other benefits as well. Timothy Morrison, Gregory Bryan, and George Chilcoat studied class projects in which students produced graphic novels. They argue, using the language of Howard Gardner, that the task of combining narrative and images challenges students to engage both linguistic and visual-spatial intelligences. As they organize their story, the tellers must create a sequence of events that can be communicated effectively within the constraints of the graphic novel format, which discourages lengthy text and requires a strong visual element. Furthermore, that visual element allows students with artistic ability to communicate their understanding in ways that might be more attuned to their talents than merely writing yet another paper. The finished product helped me to see a new dimension in my students that I had previously missed as the artists in the class shared their passion for drawing. Finally, there is a cross-curricular component to creating a graphic novel that moves beyond the study of history to embrace language arts and visual arts as well.[9] Students were required to translate their understanding of the past into dialogue that was both effective and

realistic. Similarly, they had to create drawings that were effective in communicating their respective stories.

While this assignment offers more complexity than writing an essay, the graphic novel format also minimizes extensive writing as a barrier to communication. Students who find it difficult to articulate precisely or use proper grammar are able to communicate more elementally with drawings supplemented by enough dialogue and narration to tell the story effectively. In simple terms, students intimidated by writing an essay would be able to embrace this project as a more complex and sequential form of *Pictionary*. While some found more freedom in drawing a narrative, there was a certain amount of skepticism as well. When I introduced the project, one student asked: "So all I have to do is draw some pictures?" Throughout the project, I had to remind students regularly that the goal was an accurate depiction of important events that effectively combined text and visuals to tell a story.

Cleveland Trolley Strike Background and Resources

Moving on to the project itself, after introducing the larger themes of industrialization such as capitalism, unionism, technology, immigration, and urbanization, we began to learn about the actual event to be featured in the students' graphic novels. In June of 1899, employees of the Cleveland Electric Railway Company (known colloquially as "Big Consolidated" or "Big Con") went on strike. Their reasons for striking were not unusual: management tried to maximize profits from its labor force, while the workers attempted to use collective action as leverage for better pay and working conditions.[10] What resulted was a turbulent summer of mayhem and military action that ultimately had little effect on resolving the issues at hand.

The story of the strike incorporates most of the major themes of industrialization that we had already studied. Big Con was owned by Henry Everett, a local industrialist who also owned several transportation systems in the United States and Canada. The workers were backed by the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees (AASRE), a union that sought to represent Big Con employees at the bargaining table. To maximize profitability, management instituted practices that were exploitive and hazardous

to operators and bystanders.[11] The government's interest in maintaining order supported the status quo, both implicitly and explicitly, by protecting the property of Big Con.[12] A pervasive presence of violence provoked military intervention. Complaints about workers with foreign accents evoked the specter of anarchism imported from eastern Europe.[13] Public figures weighed in on both sides, though the majority favored management.

The trolley strike also had some unique characteristics that made it particularly suited for this class. It was a major event in the life of the city involving neighborhoods and suburbs well-known to the students. Despite its importance to the city at the time, there is not much coverage of the strike on the Internet. That allowed me to curate the information available and prevented students from taking shortcuts in their research, like resorting to Wikipedia. That said, there is a wealth of information easily available if one knows where to look. The Cleveland Public Library (CPL) provides access to a complete online archive of the *Plain Dealer*, a very convenient resource for pertinent newspaper articles and editorials. Being online, this database is available any time, day or night. I had previously required all students to obtain a CPL card for class work earlier in the year. This was a relatively simple matter since that library system includes many suburban libraries, so all students qualified for borrowing privileges. These cards were handy for this project because they provided complete access to the library's online resources. The CPL also maintains microfilm archives of other local newspapers from the era. These required me to spend a Saturday at the main branch in downtown Cleveland searching through microfilm to find articles pertinent to our project. Selecting a wide variety of news reports, editorials, and letters from readers, I printed hard copies to be scanned into electronic files and then made available to the class. From my own scholarly research, I knew that the editors of the *Plain Dealer* and its chief rival at the time, the *Cleveland Leader*, bitterly opposed each other and were not afraid to air their differences in print in pretty vivid terms. These resources created a rich pool of differing opinions for my students to wade through.

Coincidentally, an author specializing in local history, John Bellamy, had just published an account of the strike, *To the Bitter End: The 1899 Cleveland Streetcar Strike*.[14] The book provides a thorough reporting of the strike, describing events as they happened

day after day. While well-written, the almost microscopic level of detail tended to provide too much information for the purposes of this project. The students found that the frequent descriptions of violence and mayhem ran together, and so lost their individual impact. Making this resource more effective for our purposes created an opportunity for the class to discuss what makes an event historically important. In sorting through the litany of conflict, we were able to agree on certain criteria that could lend historical significance to a specific incident. The class reached a consensus that a disturbance that met any of the following criteria could be important to the story:

- if it caused death,
- if it represented a change in public perception of the strike, or
- if it evoked some significant response affecting the overall story.

Applying these criteria winnowed the array of events to be considered. Students were then able to make their own editorial choices, sorting through the body of evidence to develop of their own authentic understanding of the story.

The city itself also proved to be a valuable resource. In 1899, Cleveland was on the cutting edge of industrialization. We had already studied one local citizen, John D. Rockefeller, who harnessed the synergy born of interactive technologies to become arguably the wealthiest man in the world. One of the city's main thoroughfares, Euclid Avenue, was known as "Millionaire's Row" because it was lined with mansions boasting such extravagances as observatories and indoor ice rinks.[15] As it happened, Henry Everett lived on Euclid and witnessed the sabotage of one of his trolleys from his own front porch.[16] More importantly, the spirit of boosterism in the city at the time produced a rich trove of civic art that still exists today. Paintings, photographs, and postcards of Cleveland in that era exist in abundance and are easily accessible online, including in an archive maintained by Cleveland State University.[17] These resources make it easy for students to see places where some of the violence actually occurred. The art also helped students to understand more specific details such as the mechanics of trolley operation, the attire worn by people in that era, and how the city functioned in general.

Since much of the street structure of the city remains unchanged to this day, it was also possible to combine the historical artwork with the use of Google Street View. This allowed students to look

at historic images that might appear to be vaguely familiar and recognize places that they see regularly today. Several students identified places in the historical images largely unchanged in the current day, and this allowed them to connect the present to the past.

Preparing the Project

Developing Empathy and Understanding

The final project began with an exercise using Google Maps to help students develop some conception of a working-class neighborhood that would have existed in 1899. One of the mixed blessings of living in the so-called "Rust Belt" is that large swaths of downtown Cleveland maintain much the same structure as existed there a century earlier. To begin this phase of the project, students worked in pairs and were given one of a set of fictional families that I had created. To keep the exercise relatively simple, each family consisted of a father, mother, and two children. Certain specific characteristics of each family (religion, ethnicity, and age/gender of the children) were randomly assigned. Using the now-abandoned Richman Brothers clothing factory at 1600 East 55th Street as their starting point, students laid out a scenario for their family based on the premise that the primary wage earner worked at the factory. The task included finding convenient, affordable housing, schools, church, and commercial districts all within a reasonable walking distance. Google Street View allowed students to identify those structures in the neighborhood that might have already existed in 1900. As was mentioned earlier, while some development has occurred in this part of Cleveland, the vast majority of buildings are over a century old and so offered many good choices for the students to use in constructing the life of their assigned families. In the final part of this assignment, the student teams used markers on Google Maps to indicate where they chose to locate the family's housing, schools, and church attended, as well as the nearest commercial district. The markers indicated the distance from the family's dwelling to each of the assigned locations, including the factory. This exercise enabled students to visualize how life was lived at the time within the radius of few city blocks. Adding trolley tracks to the map helped them to see how public transportation connected the

neighborhood to the resources of the larger city: the large department stores near Public Square, churches serving specific ethnic groups, and the business and government offices of downtown.

It was also important in this early part of the project for students to develop a working knowledge of specific terms and actors playing key roles in the story of the strike. Understanding terms like "dray," "car barn," "omnibus," and "railroad torpedo" were key to forming a coherent picture of events. Similarly, students needed to gain some understanding of trolley design and operation since much of the action against the company involved disabling the routes and/or attacking the strikebreakers who were operating the cars in fairly open conditions. We had already studied the conventional tactics of a strike that would be employed: importation and housing of strikebreakers, both sides appealing to public opinion and how different sectors of the public reacted to the labor unrest. As part of the larger unit on industry and labor, the class had learned how these various factors played out in the Homestead Steel Strike so that they could make connections to similar events in the Cleveland story.

One of the initial challenges of the project was determining an acceptable level of scope. The strike itself lasted for over a year. While the strike definitively began on June 10th, its conclusion was less specific. The summer months of 1899 saw violence on an almost daily basis, culminating in late July when John Farley, Cleveland's mayor, called in state militia to restore order. A week of military presence helped to diminish the violence, but did not eliminate it completely.[18] The strike itself eventually faded away in early 1900 as the public lost interest and individual strikers either found other work or quietly applied to Big Con for reinstatement.[19] Given this particular sequence of events, it was easy enough to start the project with the outbreak of the strike, but students were then required to choose three or four pivotal moments to portray in their graphic novels, the last of which signaled when the strike was effectively over. Making these choices provided students with specific opportunities to act as historians. They had to gather and weigh evidence to make historical judgments and then to communicate those judgments with clarity and conviction.

With the task laid out for them, students began to accumulate data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the strike that would enable them to dig deeper into events of their choosing. We began by reading

the first chapter of *To the Bitter End.* This was helpful for three reasons. The chapter starts with a short history of how Cleveland's streetcar network evolved into two systems with the larger known as "Big Con" under the administration of the Everett family. The author also introduces the main actors and explains the causes that led to the conflict in the first place. Initially, I had reservations about beginning with a secondary source, but since one overall purpose was to teach students how to develop their own authentic vision of the past, I ultimately decided that it was more important to establish a firm foundation of knowledge on which students could build their own informed interpretations using primary sources.

Practicing Interpretation and Illustration

Step Two was to give students some experience of interpreting their understanding of events in drawing. On the first day of the strike, a trolley operated by a replacement driver collided with a heavy wagon in the Public Square, the geographic and psychological center of the city of Cleveland.[20] For this assignment, I provided newspaper accounts of the event along with links to four photographs at Shorpy.com.[21] Shorpy is a privately run website providing high-resolution photographs depicting the United States in the late 1800s and early 1900s. While the site sells reproductions of the images posted, viewing the photographs online is always free of charge. The moderator of the website is meticulous about providing the provenance of his postings, which is helpful for research purposes. Many of the city photographs available on Shorpy are highly detailed panoramic views of public spaces. The website allows the viewer to look at the entire photo at once or switch to a more magnified view, which can be used to focus in on specific details in the picture. For this part of the project, all photographs used were of the Public Square between 1900 and 1907 and provided a wealth of historical detail. In addition to depicting the area at approximately the time in question, the photos include many pertinent images of how trolleys and wagons looked then, the layout of the trolley tracks, and many other physical details. Students who preferred to emphasize historical detail in their graphic novels found these photos to be particularly helpful, but everyone benefited by being able to visualize concretely the world in which the strike occurred.

Using the Public Square photos as a model, students were required to draw the crash scene as they understood it from the sources. The drawings were then submitted electronically as photos, and the class reviewed each one. In the ensuing discussion, I discouraged any artistic criticism, focusing instead on the historical aspects. For each picture, we asked questions such as: What did the illustrator choose to depict? How do those choices shape the message conveyed? What questions about the events were raised by the drawing? The overall process was helpful in showing the students how to move forward with choosing what and how to turn their perceptions of the strike into a graphic presentation.

The next step in the project required students to develop a coherent overview of the strike. The challenge here was to provide enough information to make informed judgments without overwhelming their research by sheer volume of evidence. Using Bellamy's book as my guide, I developed a list of notable events and compiled a set of primary sources for each. These resources consisted primarily of newspaper accounts and editorials supplemented by other ephemera such as trolley maps, photographs, and newspaper illustrations. The list contained approximately twenty events including notable instances of violence that met the criteria for historical significance that the class had developed earlier. A public war of words between local ministers also made the list, as did accounts of how the union supported a boycott of Big Con by providing alternate means of public transportation. The class spent two sessions sorting through the materials to develop an initial understanding of each event. Once this was accomplished, students selected four or five events that they considered to be pivotal points in the story. While each graphic novel had to begin with the outbreak of the strike, students then used the pivotal moments they selected to form the remainder of their respective narratives. Although there were plenty of incidents from which to choose, two of those most commonly chosen by the students are as follows.

By the end of July 1899, the strike had settled into a daily pattern of violence. Cars operated by strikebreakers were routinely stopped, and their crews verbally abused and pelted with stones, bottles, etc. Big Con had issued pistols to its interim employees, but these usually provided more drama than damage. That, however, changed on July 24th, when a crowd stopped operator Ralph Hawley, one of Everett's

strikebreakers. After being bloodied by a shard of brick thrown from the crowd, Hawley determined that he had been wounded by a young man riding by on horseback. Michael Cornzweit was returning to his father's butcher shop after making a delivery when Hawley shot him in the back of the head. Cornzweit became the first fatality of the strike.[22] His death convinced Mayor Farley to request militia intervention. While the soldiers were not universally welcomed, their presence for the week significantly reduced the daily violence.

The second incident commonly chosen was typically used to signal that the strike was beginning to lose momentum. On September 13, 1899, twelve-year-old Esther Donaldson was struck and killed by a Big Con trolley operated by D. W. Wing, another of Everett's strikebreakers. Though a mob had quickly gathered on the scene, no violence broke out and Wing was quietly taken into custody by the police on a charge of manslaughter.[23] The relatively orderly outcome of this tragedy, especially after three months of strike-related violence occurring almost daily, stood out in marked contrast to similar events that had led directly to the outbreak of the strike in the first place.

Earlier that summer, on June 5th, three-year-old Roy Paley had also been struck by a speeding Big Con trolley, and his dead body dragged for several yards before the car could come to a halt. Public outrage was immediate, and mobs gathered in the boy's neighborhood to attack other trolleys running through. Two days later, a second boy was similarly killed. In both cases, the operators were arrested by police and bailed out by President Everett.[24] Public outrage mounted, however, blaming the tighter timetables recently issued by Big Con, thus forcing drivers to operate at unsafe speeds or face getting fined for late arrivals. This hue and cry quickly contributed to the outbreak of the strike, with one of the workers' demands being a return to the previous slower timetable. Conversely, the death of Esther Donaldson a few months later elicited no similar public outrage. Some students compared these events to argue that public support of the strike was starting to diminish by the middle of September.

Rubric

Since my class was new to this type of assessment, I provided a rubric offering some guidance on how the finished product should

look. The challenge with developing any rubric is to provide enough specificity to offer some direction without being so directive that there is little room for creativity. Rather than reinvent the wheel, I found a rubric online by Cathy Easter that clearly established the criteria for literary excellence.[25] After adding a standard for historical accuracy, I was able to provide a set of guidelines that gave direction without being too restrictive. A copy of the rubric is available in the **Appendix**.

Independent Work

At this point, students were permitted to assemble themselves into working teams. While working alone was also allowed, and even encouraged, most of the class organized itself into groups of two or three. While my own preference has always been to work alone, I recognize that some students prefer to work with others. I never require students to work in groups on major assessments, but will occasionally allow that as an option. If they choose to work with a partner, however, I require them to accept responsibility for their decisions. If they elect to work in a group, they must accept the results therefrom as the product of their own choice. Since the members of the class had worked individually on sorting through events and determining which were important, those who opted to work in groups had the additional task of developing consensus on which events to include in their final product. This proved to be highly beneficial to the learning process, as members worked to communicate the rightness of their own choices to the rest of the group. Having sorted through differences of opinion and interpretation in the resources, group members underwent a similar process with their peers in developing a consensus on what events to include in their graphic novel. This process of refinement helped the students to clarify their thinking about which details of each event were important enough for inclusion in the finished product.

Now that the students were actually creating their graphic novels, my role at this point became largely supervisory. Three class periods were devoted to final production. During these classes, I devoted my time to meeting with each work group to monitor progress and address any questions or problems that might arise. After the third class, I allowed an additional week before the finished product was

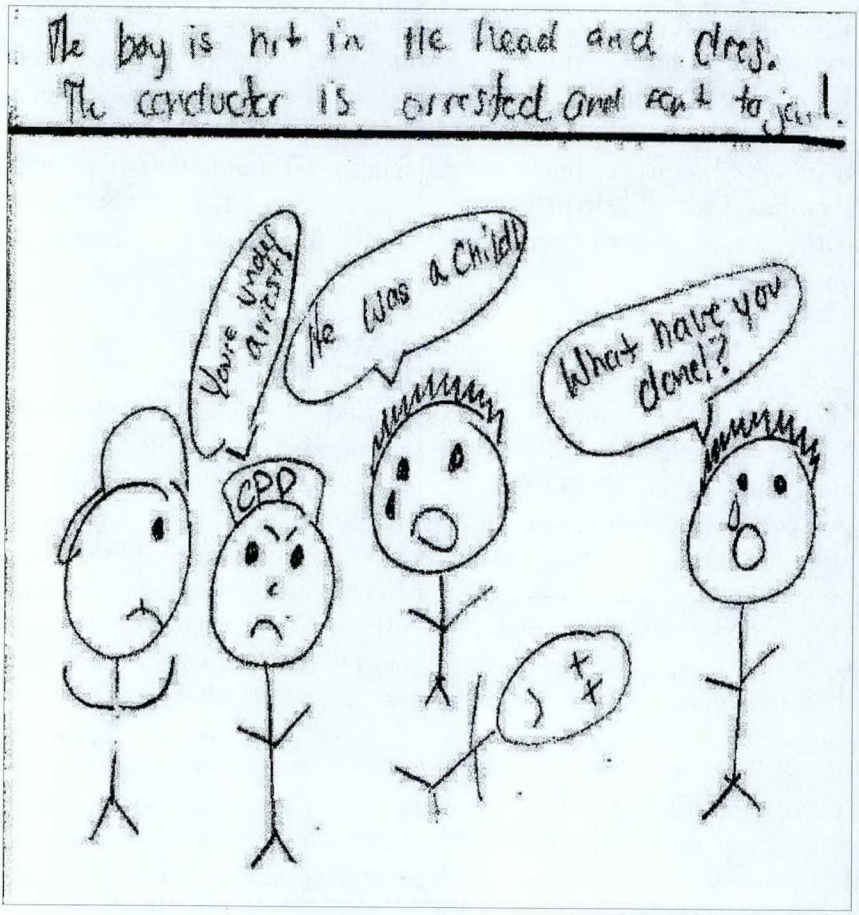


Figure 1: *Illustration from a student-created graphic novel on the death of Michael Cornzweit.*

due. While I continued to be available for advice and feedback, any finishing touches to the project became homework, while class time moved on to our next unit in the curriculum.

Student Creations

The finished products ran a gamut from cursory to creative. The weakest simply reported events without making much effort to weave them into a clear narrative. Even in these instances, however, the students fulfilled the essential purpose of the project;



Figure 2: *Illustration from a student-created graphic novel on the death of Roy Paley.*

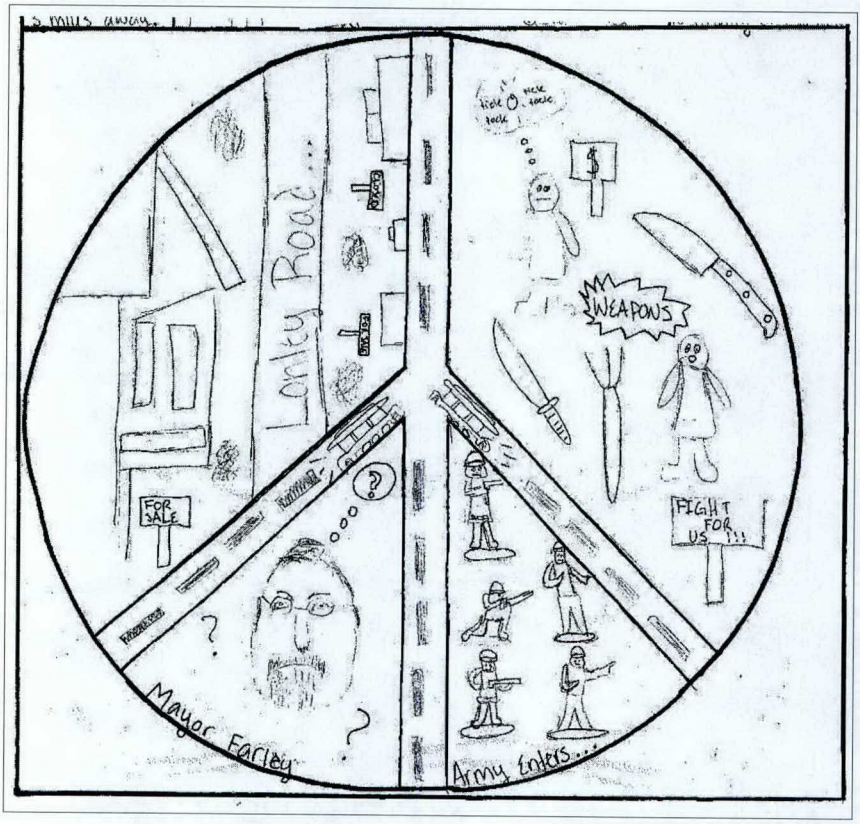


Figure 3: *Illustration from a student-created graphic novel on the actions of Mayor John Farley.*

making the choices any historian would have to make to assemble a cohesive view of the past. The stronger efforts used art or narration (sometimes both) to bring this story of the past to life.

The quality of drawing ran from fairly primitive, through colorful manga, to well-detailed and historically accurate images. Even the most rudimentary drawing could produce good results when partnered with effective narration. In **Figure 1**, the student created dialogue to articulate the public outrage at the death of Michael Cornzweit. To do this, he read several accounts of the incident and imagined what his own reaction would be had he been an eyewitness to the event. Though the drawings are rudimentary, the overall result demonstrates some level of historical empathy.

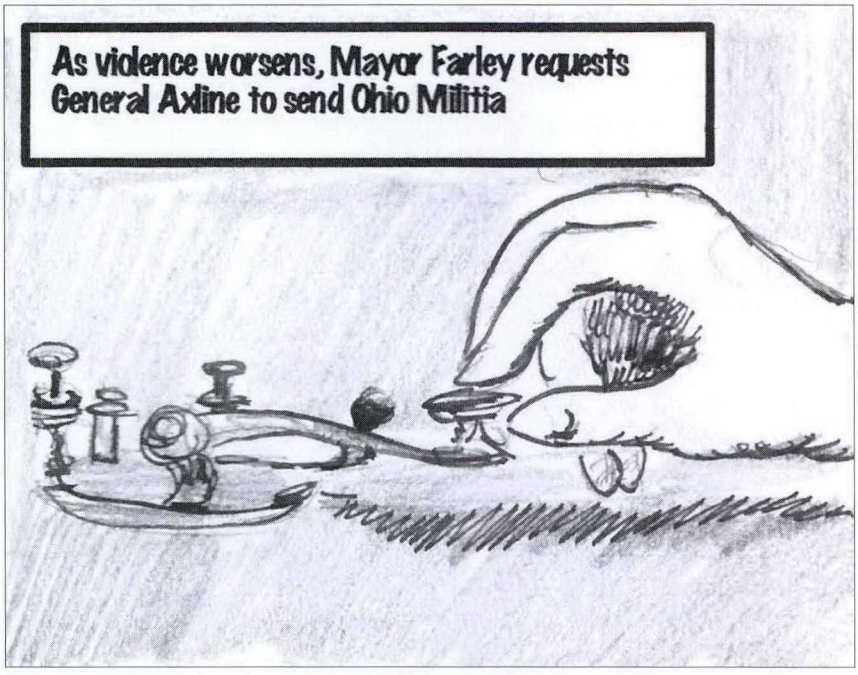


Figure 4: *Illustration from a student-created graphic novel depicting specific attention to historical detail.*

Figure 2 combines drawing and dialogue to contextualize how the death of three-year-old Roy Paley led to initial outbreak of the strike. The use of more contemporary images and language allows the student to tell this part of the story succinctly while incorporating a substantial amount of detail.

Figure 3 incorporates the subliminal imagery of a Vietnam War-era peace sign to communicate the perspective of the city's administration as Mayor John Farley looked for a way to quell the growing violence and restore order.

Figure 4 exemplifies the work of student who wanted to emphasize historical detail in both art and narration. He was careful to introduce a limited number of main characters to his story and referred to them by name throughout his story. Similarly, he located authentic images of various ephemera mentioned in the story so that he could use them as models in his drawing. The telegraph key is an example of this attention to detail.

Reflection

The actual experience of working through this project has shown me ways to streamline it and make it a richer experience for future iterations. The challenge with this is that I don't want to increase the amount of time that we devote to this project, so I need to find ways to use the time allotted more effectively. I plan to create a few very short videos explaining trolley design and operation. These should help students understand how the trolleys and their operators, running on pre-determined routes in open cars, were particularly vulnerable to the violence that could be inflicted upon them. I also intend to incorporate a Socratic seminar where we compare similar incidents from the strike and discuss how, despite their common characteristics, they produced different consequences for the larger issue at hand. For example, why did Roy Paley's death by trolley spark public outrage and violence while Esther Donaldson's similar death did not?

The most important revision I intend to implement will be to increase the focus on historical empathy. To do this, I will require students to tell the story of the strike as it would have been seen through the eyes of one of the major actors in the story. Though Henry Everett and Mayor John Farley would share a common interest in the peaceful operation of the transportation system, the president of Big Con would be far more concerned about crushing the strike altogether. Producing a list of appropriate characters for this requirement would not be difficult. To qualify for such a list, the person would have to have some interest in the strike from start to finish and, at some point, be personally involved in the action. Henry Everett and Mayor Farley would be obvious choices, as well as General Henry Axline, the commander of Ohio's militia, who monitored events from afar until he was called to Cleveland to quell the violence. Other likely candidates would include Harry Bryan, local president of the AASRE, and D. W. Wing, the strikebreaker whose car killed Esther Donaldson. This list should be expanded to include more ordinary strikers and citizens, but it would be important that enough factual evidence is available to develop a story rooted in historical fact. Having told the story from different perspectives, students could then read each other's work to develop a more complete picture of the crisis as a whole.

While the local nature of the project provided additional interest for my class, this specific project could be effective in other locations as well. The relative obscurity of the event and wide availability of resources online make it an effective and easily implemented project in many history classrooms. For better or worse, there is no scarcity of similar instances of labor violence around the United States. Finding a more local example on which to build a project like this would help students to see history unfold in their own backyard.

Though I see ways to improve the project, it ultimately achieved its purposes. At the most basic level, all students learned a new way to express their understanding of history. The more effective graphic novels found ways to make that history real for readers and authors alike, whether it was through visual detail or the expression of emotions generated by the events depicted. Though hard to measure in exact quantity, the goal of students developing historical empathy was obviously achieved inasmuch as the graphic novels humanized the events of the past. Finally, the project as authentic assessment showed signs of success as well. I converted each finished product to portable document format (PDF) which we could share with parents and other interested parties. Students were also able to use their projects as proof of academic progress during their junior year. The format of the graphic novel makes it more accessible than longer written works for showing a student's historical abilities. In other words, students could use the graphic novels that they produced as proof of their ability to be historians.

From my perspective as a teacher, the project is worth both improving and repeating. My students were able to make local connections to larger historical issues. They gained new insight into the city that comprises the core of our metropolitan region, and they got a taste of what it means to "do" history rather than merely studying what others say about it. They learned that history resides in each one of them, whether that means understanding the past or preparing to make the future.

Notes

1. Robert B. Bain, "Into the Breach: Using Research and Theory to Shape History Instruction," *Journal of Education* 189, Nos. 1-2 (2008/2009).
2. Will Eisner, *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative* (Paramus, NJ: Poorhouse Press, 1996).
3. Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004).
4. John Stark Bellamy II, *To the Bitter End: The 1899 Cleveland Streetcar Strike* (Cleveland, OH: Clio Dog Press, 2015), 25.
5. Ibid., 539.
6. Jason L. Endacott and John Sturtz, "Historical Empathy and Pedagogical Reasoning," *Journal of Social Studies Research* 39, no. 1 (January 2015): 1-16.
7. Barton and Levstik, 216.
8. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design: Expanded 2nd Edition* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005), 155.
9. Timothy G. Morrison, Gregory Bryan, and George W. Chilcoat, "Using Student-Generated Comic Books in the Classroom," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 45, no. 8 (May 2002).
10. Bellamy, 25.
11. Ibid.
12. "Farley Declares Anarchy Will Not Be Tolerated," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 21 July 1899.
13. Laura K. Wuestenberg, "Letter to the Editor," *Cleveland Leader*, 27 July 1899.
14. The book is exhaustively researched and written in a lively manner that engaged the students.
15. Jan Cigliano, *Showplace of America: Cleveland's Euclid Avenue, 1850-1910* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991).
16. Bellamy, 198.
17. *The Cleveland Memory Project*, Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University, <http://clevelandmemory.org>.
18. Bellamy, 331.
19. Bellamy, 511.
20. Ibid., 39.
21. Shorpy Historic Photo Archive and Fine-Art Prints, <https://shorpy.com>, is a vintage photo blog presenting high-resolution images of the United States. The images collected there offer a wealth of information for urban historians.
22. "First Fatality of the Strike," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 25 July 1899.
23. "Cut to Pieces by a Motor Car," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 13 September 1899.
24. Bellamy, 19-21.
25. Special thanks to Cathy Easter of Clinton Middle School in Clinton, South Carolina for allowing me to adapt her rubric for my project.

Appendix: Graphic Novel Rubric

Graphic Novel Rubric **NAME(S)**_____

	20	15	10	5
Content and Development	Novel is fully developed; gives the viewer a clear picture of the issue, its history, and why it's important; all information that is included supports the main idea through specific, relevant details; speech and thought bubbles help reader understand the action	Novel is developed in such a way that the viewer understands the issue, its history, and its importance (one of these areas may be weak); there is no random information, but details may be general; speech and thought bubbles mostly help reader understand the action	Novel development may cause confusion for the viewer; the issue, its importance, and its history are included (one of these areas may be missing or weak); some random information that is distracting for the reader and/or details may be general; speech and thought bubbles mostly help reader understand the action	Novel development causes confusion for the viewer; the issue may be unclear and/or not well supported with specific, relevant details; speech and thought bubbles distract the reader and/or may be missing
Organization	Novel is organized for maximum effectiveness; it contains an effective introduction, "body", and conclusion; contains a smooth, logical progression of ideas without being repetitious	Novel is mostly organized for effectiveness; introduction, "body", and conclusion are included, but one element may be weak; contains a logical progression of ideas	Novel is mostly organized; introduction, "body", or conclusion may be weak or missing; contains somewhat random progression and/or repetition of ideas	Novel is disorganized and/or missing introduction, "body", and/or conclusion
Voice	Precise and vivid vocabulary; tone is consistent and appropriate	Both general and precise vocabulary; tone is appropriate	Vocabulary is not emotionally appealing to the reader; does not obtain the desired result though the tone is appropriate	Vocabulary is dull and does not convey any emotion; tone may be inappropriate
Editing	Novel is attractive; contains many illustrations that are relevant and of high quality	Novel is mostly attractive; contains many illustrations that are relevant and of good quality	Novel may be somewhat choppy or dull; contains a few illustrations that are mostly relevant and of good quality	Novel is dull; photos are irrelevant and/or poor; may not enough illustrations to communicate the message and/or photo quality is poor
Historical Accuracy	Novel contains no obvious errors of history or fact	There may be minor errors	There is a significant error	Novel contains several errors


SHERIFF SAL
LET'S REIN UP HERE, SAL, HONEY... THERE'S SOMETHIN' I BEEN WANTIN' TO SAY TO YOU!
I'LL BET I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE'S GONNA SAY!
SAL, YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU! PLEASE GIVE UP YOUR JOB AS SHERIFF AND MARRY ME! A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE HOME, SAL!
I LOVE YOU TOO, FLASH, AND I'M WILLIN' TO MARRY YOU...
...THAT IS, IF YOU'LL LET ME KEEP MY JOB AS SHERIFF TOO! THE PEOPLE ELECTED ME, FLASH, AND I HANKER TO PROVE I CAN HANDLE THE JOB AS WELL AS ANYONE!

Copyright of History Teacher is the property of Society for History Education and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.