



**GAIL SIMONE** @GailSimone

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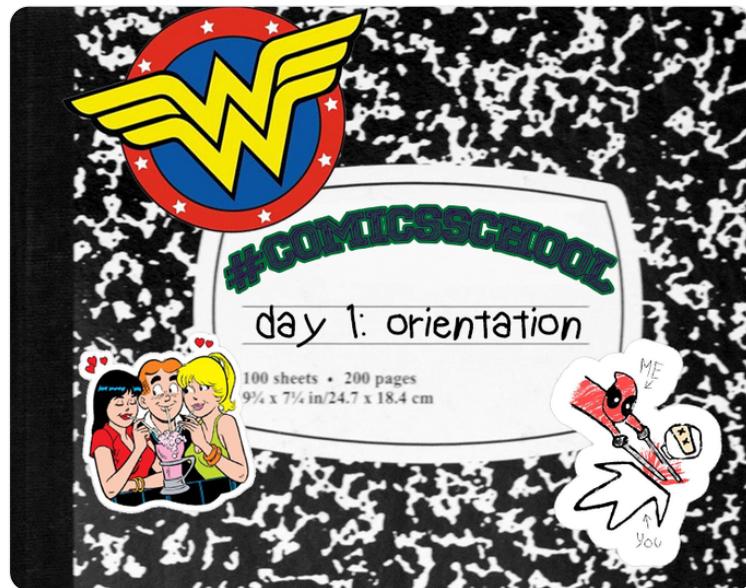
Okay, students! Welcome to [#ComicsSchool](#) campus, and  
CLASS IS IN SESSION!



Today is DAY ONE of FIVE.

## ORIENTATION DAY!

#ComicsSchool



For today's class, it would be helpful for you to have the following equipment.

- A pen or pencil
- A Notebook or notepad
- A small box or container

It would also be great if you had  
Your Cell Phone (we won't be calling)  
An Eight Sided Die

But the last two are NOT necessary.

If you miss a session, don't worry, you can catch up online. But please don't skip ahead, try to do a session and the exercise included, wait a bit, then catch up if necessary, okay?

First, the goal here is NOT to help you make a perfect story. It is also NOT to get you published, at this stage.

What it is, is part lesson, part simulator, of what writing comics is for most people working for a publisher.

If you do the exercises, you may in fact learn some things you didn't even realize at the time. So some stuff might sound a bit theatrical or specific, but it all has a point, I promise.

At the end of sessions 2-5, we will have a short Q&A for specific questions.

But the thing here is, this is about the nuts and bolts of writing. Part of the exercise is to create a short story under specific guidelines revealed to you a little piece at a time.

If we all do it right, it'll be fun. But you'll learn a LOT about what we do.

I'm going to have some guests sit in in later sessions, to teach a bit about their expertise.

Most important, DON'T WORRY, you can't mess this up. The only person grading you is YOU.

Later on, if you want to share your work, feel free. But you don't HAVE to. And please everyone, be helpful, anyone being naughty has to go sit in the closet where that one kid's ghost lives and the light bulb doesn't work.

Now, I'm not an artist, I can't draw at all. But I have written 600+ comics, and I've HIRED a lot of artists. This class is specifically to learn some storytelling tips and some skills that might help you when you start working with collaborators.

Because this is Day One, it's about the very first steps.

And we have a theme word for the day, and that word is FOCUS.

There ARE people who have the dedication and cussedness to write a graphic novel and fund it and oversee it and get it printed as their first project. We DO NOT have to be that person. And many of THEM wish they had started smaller.

FOCUS is your friend.

FOCUS in every aspect of the process.

Focus on an idea you believe in.

Focus on keeping it narrow and impactful.

Focus on FINISHING.

One project, one idea, one executed story.

That's our goal.

So your thesis at the end is going to be something manageable, something that can be accomplished.

A five-eight page complete story.

Now, even that can sound intimidating, but I promise, we are doing this in minnow-sized bits.

And at the end, you will have written a real, complete comic script, with a lot of help and suggestions from people who do this for a living.

Sound good?

There are a couple thought exercises here that are going to possibly sound a little silly.

I promise, they are anything but.

These two things can be the difference between writer and ASPIRING writer.

Step One.

Pick up your cell phone, if you have one.

Turn it on. Go to camera mode.

Switch it to selfie mode.

What I am about to say is probably the most important thing we will cover.

See that person in your camera screen?

That is the person who is by MILES the most likely to stop you from achieving your goals and dreams.

That person is the person who will say you aren't good enough, you're too busy, you're not from the right background or education.

Look at that smug bastard!

Talent is out there. Education can be acquired.

But this person onscreen may already be planning to hold you back.

And we all have that person in our screen.

I absolutely do, and I have run out of shelf space for the comics I've written.

Turn your phone off.

We need to make that person our friend, our fan, and our supporter.

We'll work on it. But remember, it's not weird haters, it's not critics, it's not family who are our biggest hurdle. It's almost always us.

So let's make an agreement with that person that they will shut the hell up for five days.

Because I'll guarantee you, speaking as a former hairdresser who lived in the boonies and never had been to a con, it CAN be done. It happens all the time.

All right. I was just handed an announcement from the campus nurse that there's a bit of a bug going around, and it's called Imposter Syndrome.

Symptoms are waffling and a panicked feeling that you don't belong.

Screw that noise, if you want to make comics, you belong.

Take two Astro Citys and call me in the morning.

Now, one more thing before we get started on the first exercise.

Take out your pen and notebook, if you have one.

All right, class. I want you to think for a moment. When you think of the excuses (and I am not judging, they may be entirely legitimate) for why you have NOT written a comic script before, what are the top three reasons for you?

Write them down on a sheet of paper. Just three.

You don't have to say what they are here. Just right them down. If you FEEL like listing one, two, or all three here, go ahead.

Don't be afraid of them, and don't be worried what people think.

Just list three on the paper.

Okay. I am seeing a lot of self-punishment in the replies, which is to be expected.

Folks. I promise. Half of your reasons are things that have been instilled into you, they aren't necessarily true.

I turned down comics offers because I thought I would suck at dialog.

Now it's my favorite part.

EVERYONE thinks it's impossible until they try and find out it isn't. They MAY even find out they're good at it.

But at the very LEAST they can find out it can be done.

That's what we're going to do.

All right. Now, if you can, tear that sheet out of your notebook. Don't tear it up or throw it away, we're going to use it later. But tear the sheet with your reasons out.

Fold that sheet of paper up and put it in the box and close the lid, if you have one.

This isn't a joke, I'm serious.

The box is our ROADBLOCK BOX and it's going to come into play later.

But for right now, we are taking our excuses and fears and we are putting them in a box and putting that box aside. It is not currently relevant and would only be in the way.

I promise you, nearly every writer you admire has or had a list like this, and it's only repetition and endurance that made them learn to see past it.

I guarantee you, those Eisner winners? Most of them wrote the same kinds of things you did.

So screw those things, too.

All right. Now we're ready.

We know the person we have to arm wrestle, and we put our excuses where they can't be heard.

So we have a blank page. And that's terrifying.

But it's EXCITING AS HELL, TOO, YOU GUYS.

That blank page is NOT your enemy.

That blank page is the passport, the conduit between the thrilling ideas in YOUR head to the open receptors in everyone ELSE's.

You get to put stuff on it. Places and people.

That is the BEST part.

So much so that it's overwhelming. There are too MANY options, too many ideas, too many things to say.

That's where that theme comes in.

FOCUS.

A small idea executed perfectly, that's like a crystal goblet in the sun.

But it takes focus.

So our story for this series is small. 5-8 pages. If you go over, you have to edit down.

Because we are simulating NOT what you would write given endless freedom, we are simulating that you have a publisher and an editor.

5-8 pages, no more.

I used to hear a lot that people would say writing pro work is no different than writing fanfic. That's not true. I understand the sentiment.

But writing as a pro means you are Voltron, you are part of a warrior robot made of several pieces. And the other limbs move differently.

So, I am going to ask again, don't jump ahead, we're trying to simulate what writing under those job conditions can be like.

So some things given to you will be curveballs.

And finally, I will be looking at a bunch of these things if requested.

So for the purpose of this exercise, do NOT use licensed characters, okay? I absolutely CANNOT check your work if you put Batman in it.

I believe in you, I believe you can do this.

This is a safe thread, anyone being rude will just get flunked (and blocked).

It does NOT have to be pulling teeth.

You can make it fun, you can make rewarding.

All right, get your eight-sided die if you have one.

If not, here is an online generator from the lovely folks at [@Wizards\\_DnD](#).

<https://www.wizards.com/dnd/dice/dice.htm>

We're going to do the first step only today. It's probably the easiest portion of the entire series, BUT it's also the most important.

You have to do a springboard.

In comics, you either PITCH a comic to an editor, or an editor calls YOU and asks you to write something. In either case, you have to give them something brief, very brief, that explains your basic idea with little detail.

This is called a springboard, and it's SHORT.

The editor doesn't have time and doesn't want to read three pages of outline for a story they have no interest in. So you do a springboard, generally a few sentences at most. It contains the characters, conflict, and what makes the story worth printing.

Often, you will be asked for a FEW springboards, so the editor has a choice.

That's your assignment today, for tomorrow.

Two springboards, short notice. Can you create on the fly? Can you convey a great idea succinctly?

A springboard is the ignition key. Nothing goes without it.

Now, here are the genres you can write your springboard from. Remember, the one that gets chosen will become a full, 5-8 page story. You choose the genre from the list next tweet.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** Roll the die to RANDOMLY pick a genre

**EXTRA EXTRA:** Roll twice to COMBINE two genres

1. SF

2. Fantasy

3. Slice of life
4. Horror
5. Romance
6. Crime
7. Superhero
8. Comedy

Choose from these genres, OR roll for extra difficulty.

Now, what we are doing here is VERY LIKE what happens to pro comic writers all the time.

Marvel called me and said they were doing a 'weird romance' book. I had a set page number to fill.

That's what this mimics. It's very real world.

If you can do this, if you can make a story come out of elements thrown at you like this...?

Congratulations, you are seriously on your way.

So here is your assignment.

In the SAME genre you chose/rolled, create TWO separate springboards, separate ideas, no licensed characters.

And here's the twist...each has to fit in a single tweet.

I am very serious about this. Don't stress yourself, no one is reading your work if you don't want them to.

But if you can do this, you will have a FOUNDATIONAL SKILL that pro writers have to have.

The ability to make a story from ingredients someone hurls at you.

That's your homework.

Remember the person on the phone screen has a muzzle and the excuses are locked tight in the box.

It's just you, and your blank page.

Have fun. Don't torture yourself. Give yourself the chance to be good before self-criticizing.

Don't skip ahead, don't start writing pages.

Because we learn how to make our first page, tomorrow.

:)

I promise you, you don't know what you can do until you try.

Don't worry about format or perfection. Sell your story ideas in ONE TWEET EACH.

Because that is a skill that will serve you your entire career.

You will take out of this what you put into it. Have fun, be bold, be silly, be serious.

Take your passion with you because that's what gets you through the nights when you have no idea what you're doing.

Passion is the second tool in your toolbox.

FOCUS.

and PASSION.

That's it for today!

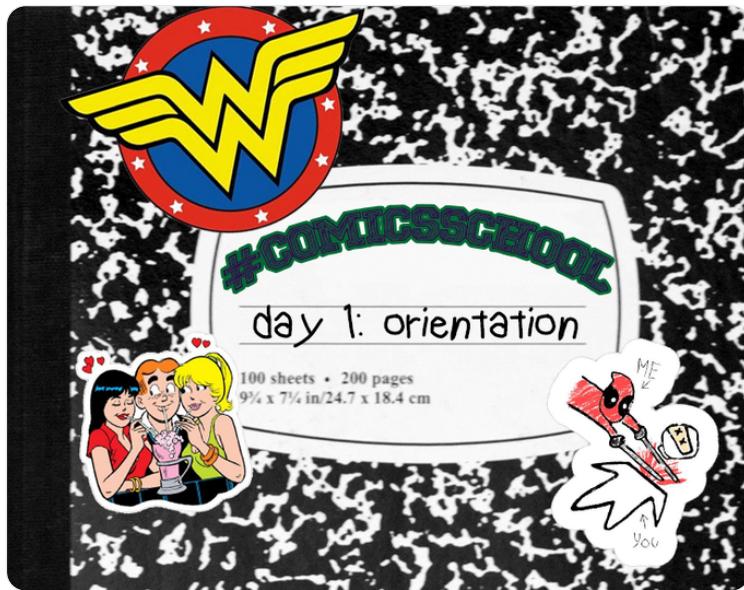
SCHOOL'S OUT, EVERYONE. See you tomorrow!

TOMORROW you turn in your springboards (if you are willing to share!).

Good day, and stay away from the Kite-Eating Tree!

Upcoming topics include page layout, outlines, working with artists, editorial, and more. FUN!

[#ComicsSchool](#) OUT!



Special Announcement on the loudspeaker:

You are MORE than welcome to hang out and discuss your ideas with each other in

the gym, which is currently empty because Team Captain [@JodyHouser](#) had a Sloppy Joe Frito Pie and barfed on the volleyballs.

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