



GAIL SIMONE

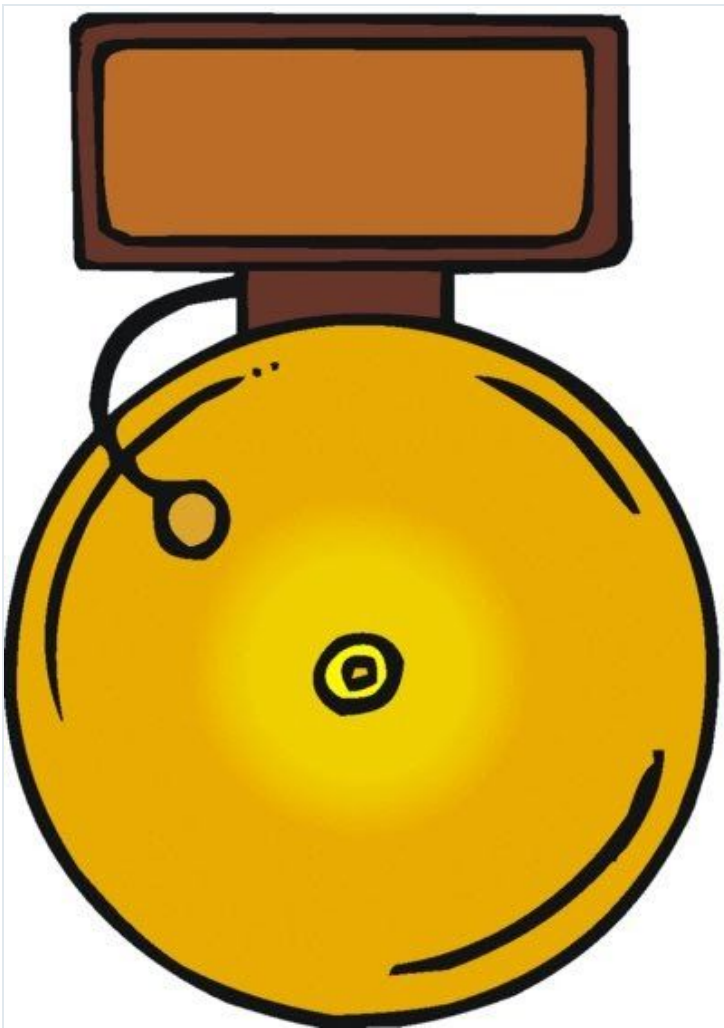
@GailSimone

HELLO, STUDENTS!

Welcome to [#ComicsSchool](#). DAY TWO!

Today will be fun, but a bit intense!

SO let's get to it!



First, this thing kind of BLEW UP. It made a bunch of news sites, it's already been translated all over the world, we got 200000 impressions on our first tweet opening Day One yesterday.

That is because of you students, taking a chance and sharing your enthusiasm. THANK YOU!



Now, today, we have a couple exercises, and one piece of homework. They should not be too painful.

But a couple notes here, before we begin talking about OUTLINES and FIRST PAGES.

First, I took an hour or so and looked at a lot of springboards, that people had posted from their homework assignments.

The idea was to choose or roll a genre, and write TWO SEPARATE springboards for a 5-8 page story in that genre.

Many already posted theirs...

...but if you haven't, please look down my timeline a little bit, find the tweet with the hashtags [#Springboards](#) and post both of your springboards there, okay?

Remember, you don't HAVE to share them. But if you do, I may potentially talk about them.

Don't worry, it's not scary!

Also, don't eat the hamburger surprise in the cafeteria today because I'm pretty sure [@neilhimsel](#) got some stardust in it or maybe dandruff.

Here is the thing, folks. The springboard is usually the first step to an editor's approval. Sometimes, it's done over the phone.

It is a brief, brief, brief idea for a story.

"A gigantic, planet-eating being sends a herald to scout Earth to see if it is appropriate for his next meal. The herald develops feelings for Ben Grimm's girlfriend."

That's a springboard.

A student asked an excellent question about this yesterday. They asked if this was an 'elevator pitch,' a phrase commonly used in film, meaning a story idea that could be conveyed in the space of an elevator ride. It IS like that, yes.

But my advice with springboards is, avoid cliché at all cost. Don't say, "Imagine a world where..." or "It's a cross between Die Hard and _____"

Remember, at every stage, you are trying to sell your story, told your way. Don't give your editor reason to yawn, okay?

I am going to tell you a bit of an industry secret, that's not that secret if you really think about it.

Readers believe the READER is their customer. And it's true, they are.

But they aren't the FIRST customer.

The first customer is probably the editor.

Then you AGAIN have to sell to the publisher.

Then you AGAIN AGAIN have to sell to the retailer.

FINALLY your customer is the reader.

If any stage doesn't fly, then the reader never even GETS the book, and the whole thing collapses.

So this is something every potential comics writer has to keep in mind, at least when going through traditional comic shop distribution (hand selling or crowdfunding skip these).

The good news?

I read a TON of the springboards people put up yesterday, and I was surprised and DELIGHTED how many of you got the concept so quickly.

I am really, REALLY proud.

So you may need to rethink your understanding of the idea-to-product development process. A LOT of each project's development time goes into trying to catch the RETAILER's attention. They have a thousand books a month to choose from.

KEEP THEIR NEEDS IN MIND AT ALL TIMES.

Here is your first exercise for today, and it's for the [#Springboards](#). You will need one person's help, it can be a student on this thread or any friend. You don't HAVE to do this bit right now, but sometime today.

Show your work. Let someone read your springboards.

That person is going to be acting as FRED, your imaginary editor for this entire project, in this one instance.

Have that person read both springboards, and pick the one they most like. And students, THAT becomes the story you will write.

It is not YOUR choice, it's FRED's.

Everyone get that? If you have NO ONE you can ask by email or phone, go ahead and ask for help in the [#springboards](#) hashtag and then take the suggestion of the first person who responds.

The point here is, someone ELSE chooses which story you write.

Got it?

Because here's the thing. When writing for a publisher, especially starting out, we do NOT get to always have final say on every aspect of the idea process.

Now, again, I was IMPRESSED by the [#springboards](#) I saw. I cannot WAIT to see what you do with the next stage.

And there is also the @comicsschool discord server, which has a LOT of people helping each other, and you can find your FRED there if that helps!

I want to post just a couple of these [#springboards](#). This is from Sean.

‘A young squire becomes imbued with amazing powers that could change the course of the war that is raging between the Humans and the Fae. But which side will the squire fight for now?’

FromJMHL:

“Horror/crime

Nine year old Charlie Dixon fell asleep at home in his bed but woke up somewhere else.

Now, hunted and stalked by a demon hell bent on keeping him in this familiar but different place, Charlie must learn to face his fears if he is to survive and escape.”

See, these are exactly what a [#springboard](#) is supposed to be. We know the genre, a bit of what the protagonist is going to face, and how things get complex.

THAT is what a springboard is for. And it sells YOUR idea to your first customer, Fred the Editor.

Great job, guys!

I have to move on but again, the vast, VAST majority of the springboards I have read so far from you all would not at all seem out of place on a real comic editor’s desk.

Congratulations, that is a HUGE first step.

So be sure to check out the [#springboards](#) thread and also the discord server if you can. Try to give positive feedback, this is an exercise in learning, not a final stage critique from anyone, okay?

But check them out, there's a LIBRARY of story potential there.

Okay. Before we move on to OUTLINES, please grab your pen and notepad.

We are going to use two pages, and they stay in the book, they don't go in the roadblock box.

Write at the top of one page UNIVERSAL TOOLBOX

Then PERSONAL ASSETS on the next.

There are a total of SIX TOOLS that will go in the Universal Toolbox. Every writer has to have a little BIT of each.

We talked a little about the first two, anyone remember them from yesterday's lesson?

You remembered!

Now, these are not hippy-dippy ideals. These are things you NEED.

FOCUS. Focus is what keeps scope creep away, it makes you a person who FINISHES things, and it keeps your story lean and mean.

PASSION. Passion is your drive. Your WILL as a writer.

SO under UNIVERSAL TOOLBOX, write the first two tools you need.

1). FOCUS

2). PASSION

Today we are talking a little bit about number 3.

3). CRAFT.

The UNIVERSAL TOOLBOX is the stuff that every writer has to have. You can be strong in one category and weak in others. Every editor, even Fred, learns your strengths and weaknesses.

But you have to have SOME of all, okay?

Now here is exercise two for today. And again, do this after class

PERSONAL ASSETS is a list of what weapons YOU PERSONALLY have that could be helpful to you as a writer.

It can be anything,

Large vocabulary? Multi-lingual? Unusual background or skill? Education?

So after class, take ten minutes, list EVERYTHING you feel could be an asset that YOU have, that others might not.

This list is for you, you don't have to share it. But I am willing to bet you have more in the PLUS column than you think.

Now we talk about OUTLINES.

This is an essential step.

INDUSTRY SECRET OF THE DAY #2: You actually will write your story, or some version of it, potentially several times.

Springboard, outline, first draft, revisions.

That's optimal. It can be more!

As a special treat, I have some extra superstar faculty who have given me some advice to impart to you.

But here is the thing. The OUTLINE is where you start to shape your story, this is where you use your toolbox. You're not selling so much, you're making assembling the story.

Now, here is where we get into craft. Unlike screenwriting, comics does not have an actual agreed-upon format. Each writer writes their outlines and scripts differently, and we will get into that.

But for today, I am going to give you a potential method, and an actual example.

So Fred approves your springboard and tells you which story to do.

In comics, you would then go to an outline.

The outline is the halfway point between the springboard and the first draft. You tell the story, including major beats and characters.

Here is where CRAFT from the Toolbox comes in. You WILL get better at this every time you do it.

And as a reminder, NOT ALL STORIES WORK THE SAME WAY.

BUT!

Most stories have similar elements, regardless of length.

They can be named different things:

Introduction (establishes scene and character)

Conflict (puts our character in a situation of increasing stress)

Climax (a resolution, not the dirty thing you are thinking)

And POSSIBLY a denouement, an after-climax character moment.

Now for a treat, I have some big name faculty with some helpful advice.

First, one of the hottest writers going, [@TomTaylorMade](#), has this advice about the importance of outlines.

“The outline is the place to write without fear. No one will see your generation of thought, the average ideas that become something greater. It’s the place to take big risks and forge diamonds.

You can’t forge diamonds.

I should have deleted that in the outline.”

Tom’s right. If you take a HUGE chance in the actual scripting, Fred may tell you, “You can’t have Batman eating babies.”

And you have to start over. The OUTLINE is the place to try for an outrageous idea.

Thanks, Tom! Everyone follow Professor [@TomTaylorMade](#), he’s awesome.

We are coming to near the end, don’t worry. And there’s a fun homework bit left.

But just a couple more words on the outline portion. EVERYONE does it differently.

Keep it brief, cover all the main character beats, INCLUDE A CLIMAX OR RESOLUTION.

I have one last CRAFT detail to impart.

One of the greatest fiction weapons is the REVEAL. This is someone that the reader and/or protagonist doesn't know. It's a secret. It's a locked box that someone opens in the story.

"Luke, I AM your father" is a REVEAL.

Used properly, a reveal can land like an h-bomb. Is it the element of surprise woven into your story.

Almost every great work of fiction has them, many revolve completely around them.

And using one shows you are growing in CRAFT.

So consider, is there a secret in your story?

All right. So just a couple more tweets and class is over.

What does an outline LOOK like?

For [@jodyhouser](#), she breaks down the story page by page and tells what happens in each.

OR it can be an expansion and fleshing out of the techniques used in your springboard.

The way I learned to do it was taught to me by Mark Waid.

He goes by journalism rules of WHO WHAT WHY WHEN AND WHERE.

Who did What, why did they do it, When did they do it, and Where?

That works really well for me.

BUT!

I asked the hardest working, most over-prepared writer in the business for an example and he kindly opened a page from his normally locked patreon, for an example of an outline, just for you [#comicsschool](#) students. This was extremely nice of him!

So this outline example, which is a PERFECT sample of how it can be done, is by master writer and organizing wizard [@jimzub](#).

PLEASE take a look, this is INCREDIBLY valuable information.

patreon.com/posts/6791009

We were very lucky to get [@JimZub](#) on staff because he usually is writing eleven hundred books.

He also has one of the BEST comics patreons out there.

ALL RIGHT! I am proud of you all for sticking with it through the outline stage.

You have your two exercises for the day, right?

- 1) Get a Fred to choose your springboard, and
- 2) List the writer assets YOU feel you have.

Now, your homework, and it's going to be FUN.

You probably think I am going to ask you to write an outline.

Well, I'm not!

You most certainly can, if you want, it's VERY good practice.

But I have a DIFFERENT homework assignment for you today.

I want you to take the springboard that Fred chose for you, and...

Write the first page.

JUST the first page.

But I want you to do something small first. Grab a few comics you enjoyed. Look at their first page. ONLY the first page.

THEN and only THEN...

...you write your first page, to the story Fred chose. Got it?

I want you to write it BEFORE we learn formatting and other tricks. Just write it cold.

You will make mistakes. That is okay. There's an important lesson here.

You can write it in any format you like. If you draw, you can do thumbnails. If you have layout ideas, try to include them.

OR you can simply do a format like this...

PAGE ONE:

This page is a four panel grid.

PANEL ONE: A lonely warehouse in the snow, the roads are blocked, a man in a black overcoat, breath trailing vapor in the cold air, leaves footsteps as he walks to the abandoned building.

That format, a simplified screenplay format, is the way I do it, actually.

Do NOT worry, you can NOT mess this assignment up.

We just want to see what you come up with, got it?

That's it!

Two exercises and a single scripted page!

Feel free to post your work on this thread as a reply, if you like.

So!

- 1) Find a Fred to chose your story
- 2) List your personal writer assets
- 3) Write the first page, do NOT self-critique!

And seriously, HAVE FUN. Don't hit yourself in the head, ENJOY what you are doing. It's a good habit to create!

That's it, see you tomorrow at 1:00 pm.

CLASS DISMISSED!



Folks, I am finding that these longer threads sometimes break. Until we can get them archived properly, if it FEELS like the thread ends on a dead end, simply go back to the PENULTIMATE post and click on it, and the rest should restore!

And here's the Discord server for Q7A, finding a Fred, and more!