



Just Mercy

A STORY OF JUSTICE AND REDEMPTION

Bryan Stevenson

Cooperative Storytelling Activity/Assignment

Storytelling works as an effective strategy for learning in the arts, sciences, humanities and social sciences. It adds a level of reflection that asks students to become aware of what they have learned, what they know, and what they think they know. Through effective analog or digital storytelling projects, students may challenge and question fundamental assumptions.

This simple cooperative group activity allows students to identify confrontational issues and then imagine solutions. This activity focuses on students creating a visual item to help them understand an issue presented in the text. Along with engaging a visual and team-based learning approach, the activity provides opportunity for students to write reflective pieces on what they've learned and how it connects to a larger idea (for example, this could be a past experience or a central idea of the text).

STEP ONE: Select a Passage from *Just Mercy*

Select a passage from *Just Mercy* that is no longer than one paragraph. Usually, a section of text that is about 100-200 words. In addition, the section of text should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.

STEP TWO: Brainstorming As a class, brainstorm and list the key concepts, keywords, and ideas found in the passage. Then connect these key moments to larger themes found in the text, such as how race or socio-economic status connects to different forms of justice. Write this brainstorming session on the board.

Divide students into groups of three or four (depending on class size). Have each group select an item from the brainstorming session, allowing them to choose the one they find most engaging.

STEP THREE: Concept Mapping

Student groups map out the concept they've chosen, listing ideas and keywords that are tied to the theme. Guide them in thinking about why these items are connected, how it plays out in the passage, how it makes people feel, and what alternatives might happen to change the outcome.

STEP FOUR: Story Concept

Explain that a story has parts: a beginning, middle and end. Instruct the students that they will be making a visual story about what happened in the passage, then create one panel that depicts the main idea of the story.

1. Beginning
2. A scene to advance the story
3. Middle
4. A scene to advance the story
5. Ending
6. Thematic depiction

Have student groups discuss how their “story” begins and ends. Then have them add a middle. Next, let them create the two scenes that will complete their comic. Finally, have students plan out how the passage connects to a larger theme.

Here is an example: Comic books are visual literature. Students can choose to create a comic story using six panels (the boxes in a comic page), like the parts of the story mentioned here.

STEP FIVE: Drawing

Students split up the six frames of the story with each of them

doing, at least, one scene. Words and drawings must flow from one scene to another, so it is important that they discuss what is going on. Is it clear? Can you see this in the text? Is this the correct language from the text?

STEP SIX: Presenting

Students can present their strips orally to the class and also "publish" them by hanging them in the classroom. Students can also create a digital story as well.

STEP SEVEN: Individual Reflection

After the class, the students can write individual reflections where they discuss how the comic helped them understand how the passage connects to a larger theme in the book. They can also incorporate personal reflection about how the theme of the book relates to their life and/or understanding of society, justice, and equality.

Students will have an opportunity to convert their storytelling activity to a poster, and submit it to the **Hostos Reads Poster Contest** to have an opportunity to showcase their work at the Hostos Teaching Day on May, 2, 2017 and earn a certificate of recognition. More information can be found on the Hostos Reads website: <http://commons.hostos.cuny.edu/hostosreads>