

INTE 6710 ~ Creative Designs for Instructional Materials

Project 2: Comic-Inspired Handout Design Document

John Gagnepain – October 14, 2013

Overview

I focused my handout on the story of man's journey from the Earth to the Moon. Specifically, I detailed the major events of NASA's Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs. I integrated events to give perspective on the state of the country. These included the roles the Soviet Union and President Kennedy played in our space race to the moon.

My daughter's elementary school announced it was having a science week in October and asked for parents and students to work on projects to display. I have studied this topic extensively and I took this project as an opportunity to distribute the information to a new generation, including my own daughter.

My audience for this handout is middle school students. I gained experience with this age group through my own daughter as well as coaching her soccer team for several years.

Most, if not all, of the students had a very limited knowledge base of space exploration. They had heard of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, but nothing further. I believed the topic would interest my audience, but I also hoped they would embrace reading a comic book style handout on the subject as an alternative to the textbooks they were accustomed to using in class.

Based on the reaction my daughter had to the idea, I believed there would be interest in this topic. In my introductory panels, I included interesting images to draw the attention of my audience including the introduction of a narrator. I focused on the individuals who played the key roles in each step of the project and on the dramatic events leading from a fifteen-minute flight to the first lunar landing.

I included the following learning objectives: After reading this handout, middle school students will identify the main steps the United States took to land a man on the Moon including orbit, spacewalk, rendezvous, docking, and lunar landing. After reading this handout, middle school students will identify several key people involved in the space race. After reading this handout, middle school students will gain historical perspective on the events surrounding the space race.

I used pencil and paper to design the panel layout for the book and write the script. I created the layouts in Photoshop. I added the images into the panels followed by the script. I exported the files to pdf for distribution.

I based my design decisions on readings from Heath & Heath, Scott McCloud, Nancy Duarte, Garr Reynolds, and Golombisky & Hagen. The key decisions included using Neil Armstrong as a first person narrator, using the handout to tell a challenge story, including a running checklist and timeline, finding items relatable to my audience, and focusing on the core elements and a simple layout.

Design Decisions

Design Decision #1

Rather than use a third person narrator, I utilized an active participant in the story, in this case, Neil Armstrong. I choose Neil specifically because he played a prominent role in the story I was telling. In addition, I wanted his name and accomplishments to be a key learning point (Duarte, 2010, pg 28).

On the first page of the handout, you can see I introduced Neil in the title and as a speaker directly to the audience. I included a repetitive image of Neil on pages 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, and 10 when I wanted to draw attention to key facts (Reynolds, 2009, Chapter 3, Section 3, Paragraph 4). When he became an active participant during the Apollo 11 panels on pages 12-13, I did not choose to use the narrator image, but instead used photos from his Apollo 11 mission. I reverted to his repetitive image in the last panel to parallel the front cover.

Design Decision #2

I told a positive story with a clear beginning, middle, and end and established an identifiable structure (Duarte, 2012, pg 30). I ensured the audience knew the result of the story by including it in the title of the handout, and in the text spoken by the narrator on the cover.

With this structure, I made it clear to the audience the handout explained the steps involved in landing Neil Armstrong on the moon. I conveyed the thrills and disappointments that accompanied the space race. I told a story of many events, but they were all tied under the premise of landing Neil on the moon. I ensured the core of the story was always about the steps of getting to moon (Heath and Heath, 2007, Chapter 1, Section 1, Paragraph 15).

I demonstrated the positive nature of the achievement and removed any cynical views from the story. I intended the story to inspire the audience that the seemingly impossible can be possible (Heath and Heath, 2007, Chapter 6, Section 5, Paragraph 6).

I utilized the challenge plot by showing NASA achieved something nearly impossible in only eight years because a president challenged us to do it. I demonstrated they reached the

goal through will power and overcoming setbacks and tragedy (Heath and Heath, 2007, Chapter 6, Section 5, Paragraph 11).

Design Decision #3

I included a running checklist and timeline throughout the handout on the right hand side of pages 3 through 13 (Roam, 2008, pg 176). I allowed the audience to follow the progress but also reinforce the steps needed to reach the goal. (Golombisky & Hagen, 2013, pg 165).

I included several repeatable sound bites. These were quotes synonymous with the early space program including President Kennedy's address to Congress on page 4, Armstrong's quote upon landing on the moon on page 12, and his words after his first steps on the moon on page 13 (Duarte, 2010, pg 142).

Design Decision #4

Because the content contained unfamiliar language and settings, I included familiar ideas to connect to the audience. Specifically I included John Glenn's run for President after leaving NASA on page 5 because the Presidency is a common title. I mentioned the crews of Gemini 6 and 7 waved at each other during their rendezvous on page 7 to show the astronauts were real people who did ordinary things under extraordinary circumstances. I compared the near disaster of Gemini 9 to a carnival ride on page 8. I included an image of Armstrong's family watching his launch on page 12 because his children were of similar age to my audience when he landed on the moon (Heath & Heath, 2008, Chapter 1, Section 12, Paragraph 5).

Design Decision #5

I choose specific moments to show in the handout that were integral to reaching the moon. Each panel included a concept vital to explaining the process and the setting of the space race. Numerous additional items and events could have been included, but eventually I deemed them non-essential (McCloud, 2006, pg 10).

After listing all possible elements to include, I grouped items together I felt were related (Golombisky & Hagen, 2013, pg 161). This also aided me in editing out elements that did not flow as part of the core narrative.

I decided to maintain a standard reading flow between the panels. I did not assume my audience had any prior comic book reading experience so I did not vary the flow too drastically (McCloud, 2006, pg 32).

Formative Evaluation Response

I conducted a peer review process for this handout over a three-day period. I submitted a draft of the first five pages of the handout to two classmates working on the same project. We each had three days to review the content and answer the formalized evaluation questions.

The information below contains the questions, the responses from the two reviewers, and my response based on their feedback. All the reviewer responses are included verbatim including any typos or spelling mistakes.

1. In what ways would you make the project more appealing to my target audience?

First Response: I do not work with your target audience much, but a couple of ideas. Add a sidekick, maybe the narration, the parts in yellow could be told by a character of some kind? One that isn't confined inside the boxes of content? I like to inclusion of real photographs, perhaps this audience would like them a bit more cartoony?

Second Response: I think that it is already appealing to kids that have an inclination for science and exploration. To bring in some others, I'd consider an animated tour guide/narrator. The colors are a little bit bright to me. Otherwise, I think that you're on target!

My Response: I took some of the above advice by including additional images of Neil Armstrong throughout the handout. I choose not to make the images "more cartoony" because I did not want to imply any of this was make-believe.

2. What is your opinion of using Neil Armstrong as the narrator of the information?

First Response: Oh, I read that part - and somehow missed that he was telling the story in the yellow parts. My mistake. I like the narrator being a character, perhaps the color of the voice balloon on the cover could match the narration yellow? and show his picture a few more times to emphasize him as storyteller?

Second Response: I think that he is a good choice.

My Response: Similar to my first response, I included Neil in several additional panels throughout the handout.

3. In what ways can the sidebar/checklist could be used more effectively beyond its use as an advanced organizer?

First Response: Did you consider having it grow with its content? It would give a little more graphics space to the first few pages and create a little more variety inlay out. Perhaps that would just make things more confusing, I am not sure

Second Response: I didn't think that it was necessary to keep it there. Or maybe drop the last checklist and only concentrate on the current one. Or maybe put tangential/trivia/cultural references over there

My Response: I kept the checklist intact, but I did add additional information next to each check box as it was completed.

4. I am considering running some additional "Fun Facts" at the bottom and/or top of each page. What sort of information do you think would be useful and engaging for the audience?

First Response: MPG of the different rockets, Costs of building and launch, materials used, how hot the exhaust is, etc

Second Response: I think that this is what I had in mind in number 3. Visits to the space center, number of launches since, planets/moons explored, distance of moon relative to things kids understand, size of moon, past beliefs about the moon.

My Response: I included some quick facts at the bottom of the sidebar.

5. I am using a photo editor to change the look of actual photos. Although I've tried numerous filter combinations, I am not entirely happy with the results. What is your How would you change the look of the photos?

First Response: I mentioned it earlier, but making them look a bit more comic style. I am struggling with this now, having switched from bad line drawings to photos of me standing. I am using GIMP to edit, are you using photoshop? take a look at this it is getting me going. http://www.gimp.org/tutorials/Sketch_Effect/ Honestly I don't think you have far to go, I like the real world effect that is there.

Second Response: As you saw in my presentation, I kind of like mixing animation with actual photos. I think a lot of the photos that you manipulated look good. This is one of the biggest struggles with a lot of this work. It takes a long time to be really good/not generic with the technology that you use. For the scope of the project and with the time that we had, I think that the work is fine.

My Response: Based on this feedback, I did not adjust the style of the images.

6. I was also considering the use of a repetitive indicator when something on the checklist was completed. If you had a choice, would you prefer a) an indicator on the panel b) making the new check mark on the sidebar checklist stand out differently, c) both a and b, or d) some other option altogether?

First Response: I think I'd like the new check mark to stand out differently, and maybe a visual indicator in the story frame that is has added something to the list be it a check mark or a to do item?

Second Response: I like the idea of adding the 'fun facts' or something else instead of, or in combination with, the counter. I found that the checklist was the thing that I wanted to know about the least, but saw the most

My Response: I did not include an additional checkmark as I felt it would be redundant to the existing checklist.

7. What words or phrases may need further explanation for this age group?

First Response: I don't know. I think you will get a great variety of prior knowledge here, and I think your explanation frames (a satellite is...) are quite good. Maybe those would be places to see Neil again?

Second Response: I think that you have done a good job with explanation. With that age group, there is sometimes a big range of ability. You can't explain everything that kids might have trouble with, or you'll be way over explaining. You just have to pick that parts that you most want to emphasize and go wit that--which I think that you are already on track to do

My Response: Based on the feedback, I did not add any extra definitions, but I did follow the advice of the first reviewer and included an image of Neil as narrator for each one.

Bibliography

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