

Le roman-photo

For this intermediate class, students use the application Comic Life (free for the duration of the 30 days trial period) to create a roman-photo. At the beginning of the unit, they make a honor promise that they will use French outside of the classroom to discuss pictures and context.

Although the use of Comic Life was already in place at Brown, I structured my class differently than other sections, because, over the course of my first use of Comic Life, students produced pages that had too many mistakes in their final products.

The original structuring involved a quick jump from producing the story to taking pictures to integrate them into the roman-photo. I divided the lessons as follow:

1) Original idea process: The first phase involves finding an outline of their story by defining style, characters, actions. Then they write a synopsis, which they flesh out, through collaborative writing, in a complete story with dialogues.

2) Writing process: To avoid finding grammar and vocabulary mistakes in the final product, unlike other sections, they write a more extensive storyboard. They write in a table I provide them, for each scene, the characters, what the characters and narrative bubbles say, location. This table is produced in a Google document to which I have access, so I can correct the mistakes every time they add to the scenario. While I am correcting, I also include comments as to why I think they made a mistake, so students have feedback and not just a digested version of why they made a mistake. This collaborative teaching is, I find, very efficient in having polished final products that involve everyone, even the quietest students.

3) Shooting process: They then end up with a story board-like series of scenes, which they shoot outside of classroom time.

4) Creating the final Comic Life novel: In this sequence, students are instructed to bring their laptop or tablets to class, and they collaboratively finish the roman.

5) Voting process: After I have approved final proofs of the roman, they send the final versions to me and we project them in class, and then vote on the one they think is the best. Each group presents a short explanation of their creative process before we look at the project, and I read out loud the narrative bubbles, while the students of the group act out the speech bubbles.

Occasionally, I also enjoy being one of the characters of the stories, as you can see here below, where I am Patient Zero of a zombie outbreak on College Hill, provoked by a bad veggie burger (it is a recurring joke at Brown that the Sharpe Refectory, affectionately nicknamed the Ratty by our students, has some of the worst veggie burgers ever known to man). I made time during my office hours to shoot with them.



We had a lot of fun shooting this picture and getting the right light. My students particularly enjoyed being able to give me creative directions in what kind of face I should make, although, the burger was so bad, it was not hard to get me to frown.