

Zine Workshop

objective and theme

Zines (pronounced “zeens”) and self-publishing have a long and rich history in the United States, from pamphlets on democracy (*Common Sense*, 1776), published by Thomas Paine have, to fan fiction sci-fi magazines (or zines) from the 1950s, to underground zines documenting the punk scene in the 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s saw an explosion of zine publishing, with everything from poetry and personal writing, to food and record reviews, to zines about work, cats, health, feminism, race and racism, and everything in between. What all zines have in common is that their writers and editors (often the same people/person) feel like they have something important to say that they would like to share with others.

This project can fit well with a memoir writing assignment, a personal or family history project, short story writing, or creating a poetry chapbook. This curriculum takes at least two class periods to complete, but it can be modified for shorter time periods. Additional work time may be needed outside of class. One teacher, facilitator, or student may need to be responsible for assembling and photocopying the final product if making a collective zine.

materials

1. paper (8 1/2" x 11" is best to start)
2. glue sticks
3. typewriters/computers
4. collage material
5. pens
6. letter stamps
7. scissors
8. photocopier for printing
9. staplers, needles, linen thread, embroidery thread, dental floss for binding

project

Step 1—What Is a Zine?

1. *Introduction*—What do you think a zine is? What do you know about zines? Have you ever made a zine before?
2. Show example of a zine and a glossy magazine - What are the differences?
3. *Why make a zine*—Stress the importance of self expression, writing about what interests you, making projects documenting your friends, neighborhood, family, or yourself (memoir).
4. *Different kinds of zines*—Check out different zines. There are music, personal, political, comics, work, food, art, and poetry zines. There are different sizes, styles of binding, mark making, etc.
5. *Break up*—Have students look at zines for about 10 minutes, then come back into a big group and talk about what they liked and didn't like about the zines. Encourage students to think about what they would like to make for their own zines as they look at others.

Step 2—Mark Making

1. *Computer layout vs. cut-and-paste-layout*—Talk about different methods for making zines and different layout styles.
2. *Brainstorm ways to make marks*—Use a typewriter, computer, rubber stamps, handwriting.
3. *What makes a page interesting?*—The background, putting type over a picture without making it look crowded.

Step 3—Making Your Own Zine

If the workshop has a lot of time, everyone will make their own zine; if not, a collective compilation zine with individual pages will work best.

1. *Does your zine have a theme or focus?*
2. *What size will your zine be?*—Full size (8 1/2" x 11"), half size (5 1/2" x 8 1/2"), quarter size (4 1/4" x 5 1/2")?
3. *What layout style will you use?*—Cut-and-paste? Computer? A mix of both?
4. *How will you make the cover?*—Will it be made out of special paper? Or photocopied with the rest of the zine?
5. *What will your zine be called?*

Step 4—Laying Out the Zine

1. *Margins*—Leave about 1/4" around the edge of the page so your text/image is not cut off by the photocopier.
2. *How many pages?*—This is usually the most challenging part of the process. One way to lay out your zine is to bind up a blank book, number the pages, and then take the book apart. Stress that everyone usually finds a way that works best for them to do layout.

Step 5—Printing the Zine

1. *Photocopy*
2. *Strategies for photocopying*—Doing it yourself vs. having a copy shop do it. How do copiers work? If you have a copier available demonstrate and have the group try it themselves.
3. *How to make it affordable?*—Depending on the group you can either discuss copy scams or emphasize that if you are going to pay full price for copies, go to a locally owned copy shop and not a corporate copy shop like Kinko's.

Step 6—Assembly and Binding

1. *Stapling*—Show what a long armed stapler is and how to use it.
2. *Stab binding*—page 29
3. *Pamphlet stitch*—page 37

Step 7—Getting Your Zine Out There

Explore independent bookstores that sell zines and other small press books. Do Internet searches for "zine" and "zine distributors" to learn more about different zines out there.

1. *Arrange an event to celebrate the publication of student zines*
Possibilities include holding a reading where students can read from their zines (invite friends, family, and other community members if they are comfortable), having time where students can trade for each other's zines, setting up a display in a school or local library of students' self-published work.
2. *A note about safety and zines:* Be careful about publishing your home address. Getting a P.O. Box is usually the best bet if you plan to distribute your zine widely. If you can't afford a P.O. Box, consider sharing one with another zinester or list an e-mail address so people can e-mail you before sending you mail to your home.
3. Remember that making zines is fun but a learning process.

Junk Book Journal

objective and theme

This is a visual journal project incorporating basic bookbinding and collage. Students will be encouraged to explore their interests, personality, and environment by using collage techniques, writing, and drawing.

Questions to think about: “What do you like to do? Do you collect things? Do you know what a self-portrait is? Can you represent yourself or your interests with image? What kind of images?”

Talk about collage. Collage incorporates found objects and can include drawing, writing, and images from various sources.

materials

1. collage material (magazines, newspapers, various papers, maps, photographs, etc.)
2. craft paper/paper grocery bags (or other type of paper)
3. glue stick
4. scissors
5. markers, pens, pencils
6. ruler
7. thread/ribbon
8. hole puncher (for younger students), needle (for older students)

project

Depending on the length of the class and age level, paper may be cut to size beforehand.

1. Fold paper in half. How many pages do you want in your book?
2. Punch holes for sewing.
3. Sew book together in class, step-by-step (see page 37).
4. Begin working on content of book starting with the cover. Show collage materials to students. Think about what you want on the cover. Do you want to tell a story about yourself? Can you write about yourself? What do you find interesting? Think about what you want on each page.
5. A few minutes before class is over share work with class.

conclusion and notes

Literacy: The visual journal can incorporate a particular writing project (e.g. students write about themselves). For younger students, have class directions written on the chalkboard so they can read along with the progression of class.

Environment: Students can be encouraged to bring in materials from home, such as photographs. If the class is long enough, students may be taken outside to do rubbings and collect things found on the ground, incorporating what they see (from advertisements to street life) in their environment into their book project.

“The city is like an enormous open book, written by an anonymous hand. It is enough just to look; the images speak for themselves. Walls talking to you through speech bubbles, balloons carrying words high in the air, or whirling airplanes writing messages across the sky.”—Robert Massin, *Letter and Image*, 1972

If there is time (more than one class period), discussion of advertising and typography may be introduced along with a more in-depth discussion about collage and collage artists.

Any Ol' Piece of Information Will Do

objective and theme

In this project students will learn how to develop their perspective about a particular issue and share their perspective through the book form. Ask many questions about the issue, as these questions may later provide content for the book. What do we have to say about city council politics? Why is it that we care about rent control? With whom do we want to share this information?

The pamphlet stitch is very user-friendly and can be used to transform any ol' piece of information into something of great aesthetic appeal, something someone would want to read. Postings for bake sales and gym raffles can be revolutionized when using this stitch; however, in getting students to think critically about an issue (so critically that they have to fill numerous blank pages of a book), it may perhaps prove most advantageous to discuss a subject that is affecting the students and/or the world at large.

For example, dropping out of school could be the issue. Ask yourself: Why do people drop out of school? What is it about school that encourages them to drop out? Is it true that “dropouts” have failed? Do you find the word “dropout” offensive or mean? Why do you stay in school? Why did you drop out school?

materials

1. paper (Given the idea behind this book – to distribute information in bulk – the chosen paper need not be fancy or sophisticated. Plain Jane photocopy paper will do. Use that which is most affordable and accessible.)
2. needles for sewing and safety pins for punching holes
3. thread/embroidery floss
4. means for conveying information: typewriter, computer, pens, paints, rubber stamps, stencils, stickers, collage materials (newspaper, magazines, etc.)
5. scissors
6. glue stick for reassembling images and text

procedure

1. Identify and organize information that you want copied.
2. Fold paper in half, into a folio (see page 5). A single sheet folded just once yields four pages.
3. Stack folios inside one another and number the pages.
4. Glue in your content. After having placed the text and image, unfold the pages and photocopy.
5. Refold and restack folios.
6. Punch three holes (being careful to space them proportionately) in the fold of the stack.
7. Then proceed with the pamphlet stitch (see page 37).
8. Share information with the masses.

conclusion

Other issues to ask questions about and then publish in a pamphlet: migrant labor movement, prison industrial complex, public education, environment, use of gasoline, use of natural resources, student government agenda, Euro-centric/male-centric curricula/textbooks, corporate propaganda within schools, media, rise of the Internet, fall of the handwritten letter.

Graffito

objective and theme

In this project students will learn how to understand the parallels/intersections between picture and word; to connect past use of hieroglyphics with graffiti art; to challenge and think critically about where art is found, where art can be accessed and what purposes art serves; to create our own graffiti tag for the covers of our blank books.

materials

1. five - 8 1/2" x 11" blank sheets per person
2. one - 8 1/2" x 11" cover stock per person
3. pencils / markers
4. glue stick
5. needles
6. thread
7. safety pins

critical questions

1. What purpose did hieroglyphics serve? Why do folks create graffiti today? Where was graffiti found in Egypt? Where is it found today? Who could read hieroglyphics? Who can read graffiti? How were hieroglyphics created? What tools are used for graffiti?
2. Where is graffiti found today? Where else besides the streets? What purpose does graffiti serve in advertisements? Is graffiti found in museums? Why not? What art is found in museums? Is art easy to access in museums? Why do museums cost money to get into? Do you think graffiti is vandalism? How can something be vandalism and art at the same time?
3. What symbols, pictures, or icons tell your story? Or your neighborhood's story? Or the story of your ancestors?

procedure

1. Think about words, symbols, icons, colors, and images that represent or characterize you, your family, your school or your neighborhood. Think about things you take pride in.
2. Using the entire 8 1/2" x 11" cover stock paper create a "tags" for the cover of your journal. Weave/blend the words and images in and around one another. Use markers, collage materials, and anything available in the workshop.
3. Fold the five sheets of blank paper in half. Stick the five sheets inside of the cover. Punch holes using the safety pin. Use the pamphlet stitch to create your journal (see page 37).

conclusion and notes

Is your tag easily reproducible? Try to simplify the tag or make it so that you can remember and accurately recreate your tag without looking at your original. Fill your journals with sketches of tags in your neighborhood.