

ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

REDEFINING THE ALASKAN NARRATIVE: NONLINEAR
STORYTELLING



Rie Muñoz

Lunchbreak at Kodiak Cannery, 1979

Watercolor, Paper

Anchorage Museum collection; 1979.041.002

Education Department • 625 C St. Anchorage, AK 99501 • anchagemuseum.org

ANCHORAGE
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UNIT AT A GLANCE

Learn more about the ways in which people tell and learn from stories. Students will examine 2 objects from the Anchorage Museum collection, learn about nonlinear modes of storytelling, and create comics using nonlinear storytelling techniques.

Redefining the Alaskan Narrative is a series of lesson plans connecting to the Anchorage Museum's previous *Lines of Sight: Comic Art and Storytelling in Alaska* exhibition that ran from November 2023 to October 2024. This series seeks to explore both storytelling themes from Alaska's Indigenous cultures and the processes involved in comic books.

MATERIALS

2 and 2.5 inch x 11.5 inch strips of white paper

Paper Dice Outline

Mobius Strip tutorial

Writing and coloring utensils

Scissors

Glue

String

Straightedge

Bond receipt paper rolls

Double-sided tape

KEY TERMS

<i>cyclical</i>	something that happens again and again; recurring
<i>nonlinear storytelling</i>	forms of storytelling that occur outside of a standard beginning, middle, and end sequence
<i>interrelated</i>	the connection or relation of things to one another
<i>hwzosh</i>	Dinak'i (Upper Kuskokwim) term for story
<i>kadaangaadaŝ/ kadaangiidaŝ</i>	Unangam Tunuu terms for old stories
<i>ugyikaŝ/ ugyiikaŝ</i>	Unangam Tunuu terms for tale, legend, or fictional story

CLOSE-LOOKING

TIME FRAME

Approximately 40 minutes

MATERIALS

Lunchbreak at Kodiak Cannery, Rie Muñoz, Anchorage Museum collection; 1979.041.002
He Carried Neeluk on His Back, Howard Rock, Anchorage Museum collection; 2003.068.021

DIRECTIONS

1. Begin by looking closely at provided photographs. Use the questions below to guide discussion.

[30 min.]

CLOSE-LOOKING: Look closely and quietly at the objects for a few minutes.

OBSERVE: Share your observations about each photograph.



***Lunchbreak at Kodiak Cannery*, Rie Muñoz, 1979, Anchorage Museum collection; 1979.041.002**

ASK: *What do you notice about this image?
 Describe the objects and people that you see in this image.
 What might the people be doing in this image?
 How would you describe the mood of this image?
 What does this remind you of?
 What more can you find?*



***He Carried Neeluk on His Back*, Howard Rock, 1939, Anchorage Museum collection; 2003.068.021**

ASK: *What is the first thing you notice in this image?
 Describe the objects and people that you see in this image.
 What might it feel like if you were in this image?
 How would you describe the mood of this image?
 What does this remind you of?
 What more can you find?*

DISCUSS: Use the [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the photographs.

2. As a class, discuss how we relate to one another. Ask: *How do we tell stories? Do we change how we tell them based on our audience? Do they change when we have to provide additional context?*

[10 min.]

NONLINEAR COMICS 6-8**TIME FRAME**

Approximately 30-45 minutes

MATERIALS

2 and 2.5 inch x 11.5 inch strips of white paper

[Paper Dice Outline](#)[Mobius Strip tutorial](#)

Writing and coloring utensils

Scissors

Glue

String

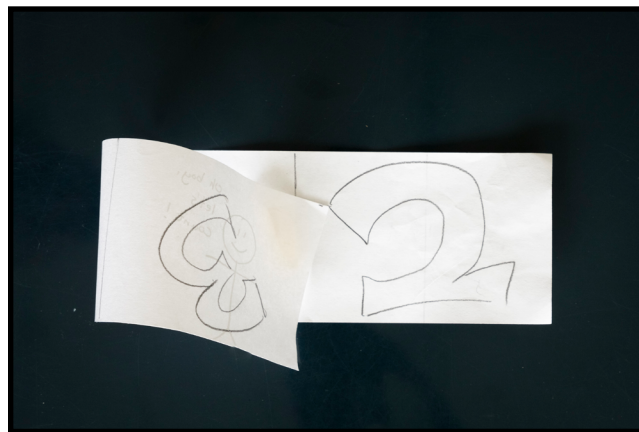
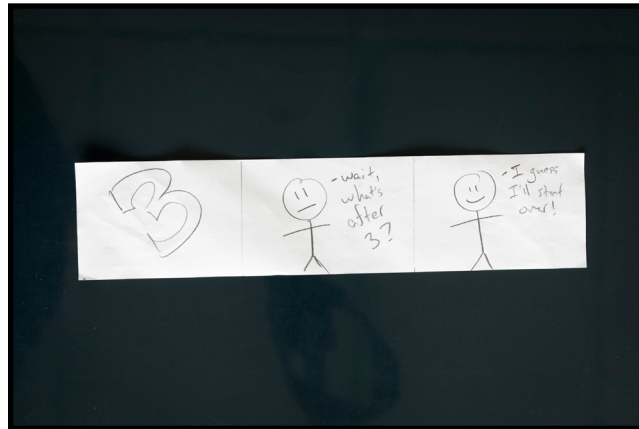
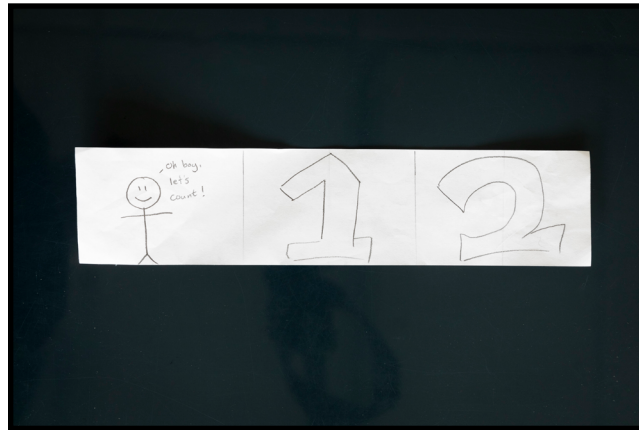
Straightedge

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare by printing and cutting out several dice from this [Paper Dice Outline](#), and many 2 and 2.5 inch by 11.5 inch strips of paper from standard sheets of printing paper.
2. Create three stations. Station 1 will have string, glue, scissors, dice templates, writing & coloring utensils, and straightedges. Stations 2 and 3 will both have the strips of paper prepared beforehand, glue or tape, writing & coloring utensils, and straightedges, but station two will also make use of the Mobius Strip tutorial. Station instructions are described in steps 4, 5, and 6.
3. Discuss with the class how people can tell stories in multiple ways. Ask students: *What if stories were not only a beginning, middle, and end?*
[5 min.]
4. Station 1 (string, glue or tape, scissors, [dice templates](#), writing & coloring utensils, and straightedges): Students will create a three-panel comic on a paper dice. Each face of the dice represents a comic book panel. The tops and bottoms of the dice are the first and third panels. The other four panels represent four different paths that the comic takes. Instruct students to first draw their comics before assembling their cube. Once comics are finished and the cubes assembled, instruct students to tape or glue four strings on each corner of the top and bottom of their cubes. After the strings are attached, invite students to hold four strings from the top and bottom panel in each of their hands and spin their cube to represent a story being told in four ways.
[15-20 min.]
5. Station 2 (2.5 inch x 11 inch paper strips, glue or tape, scissors, writing & coloring utensils, and straightedges, [Mobius Strip tutorial](#)): Invite students to create a 6-panel comic in which the last panel leads into the first.



Instruct students that 3 of the panels of the comic will be on the reverse side of the paper strip and should be upside down when flipped on the short edge. See the next page for a visual.



Once the comics are finished, have students refer to the Mobius Strip guide and create the mobius strip using their comic and some tape or glue.

7. Once finished, reflect with the class: *Our personal stories come from experiences that we share with other people. Sometimes, people will tell those stories differently from their own perspective. Other times, stories only make sense if the audience knows who the storyteller is or who the people in the story are. What does it mean once someone writes our stories down for others to read?*

[5-10 min.]

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of their comics.

NONLINEAR COMICS 9-12

TIME FRAME Approximately 60-75 minutes

MATERIALS Bond receipt paper rolls
Writing and coloring utensils
Double-sided tape
Straightedge
Scissors

DIRECTIONS

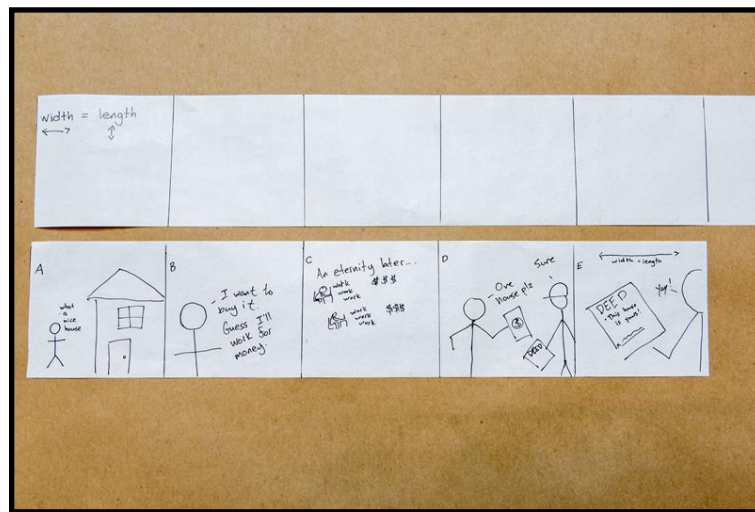
1. Discuss with the class how people can tell stories in multiple ways. Ask students: *What if stories weren't only a beginning, middle, and end?*

[5 min.]

2. Pass out materials to students. Each learner should have one receipt roll, scissors, and a straightedge.

[5 min.]

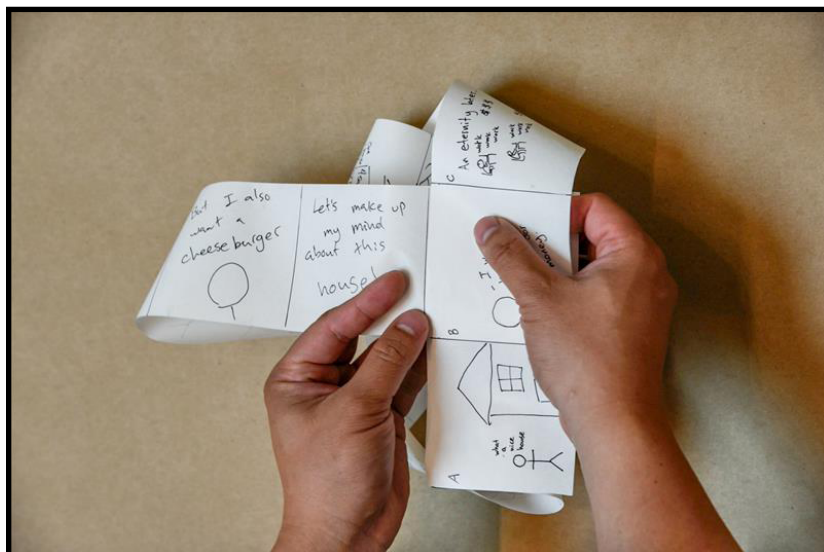
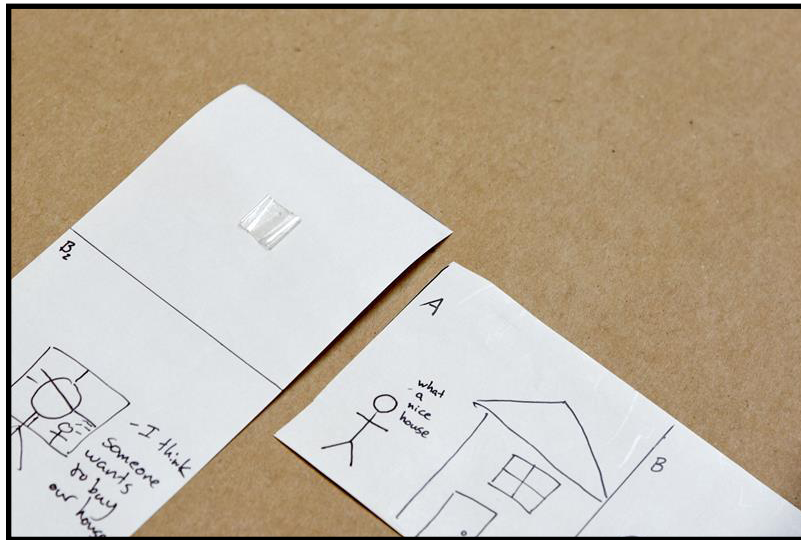
3. Inform students that they will be creating a collection of stories relating to one another. Invite students to come up with a simple comic book story comprising at least five panels. Ensure that all panels are square using a straight edge to draw lines. Let students cut out the panels and draw the comic on a receipt roll.

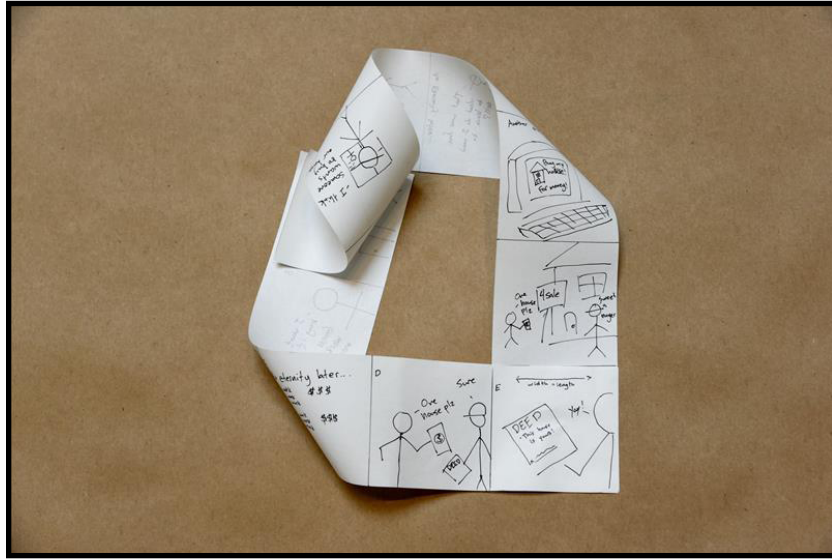


[5 min.]

4. In their groups, invite students to create a new story using the first and last panels

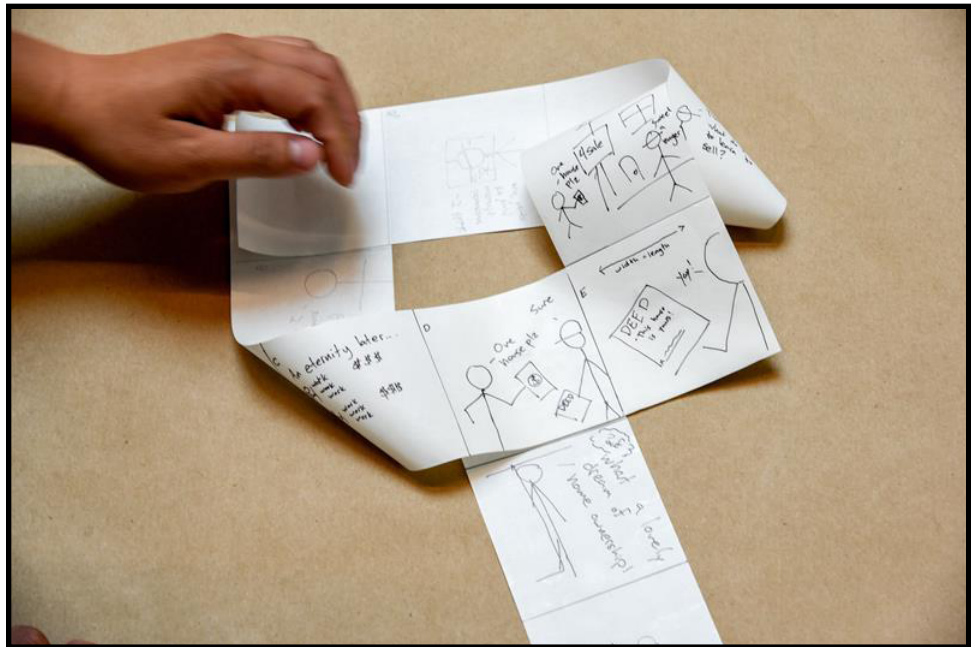
of the previous one. Instruct students to leave their first and last panels blank. Remind students to be mindful of the directionality of their comics before taping the first and last panels of their new comic underneath the old one. See the images below for guidance.

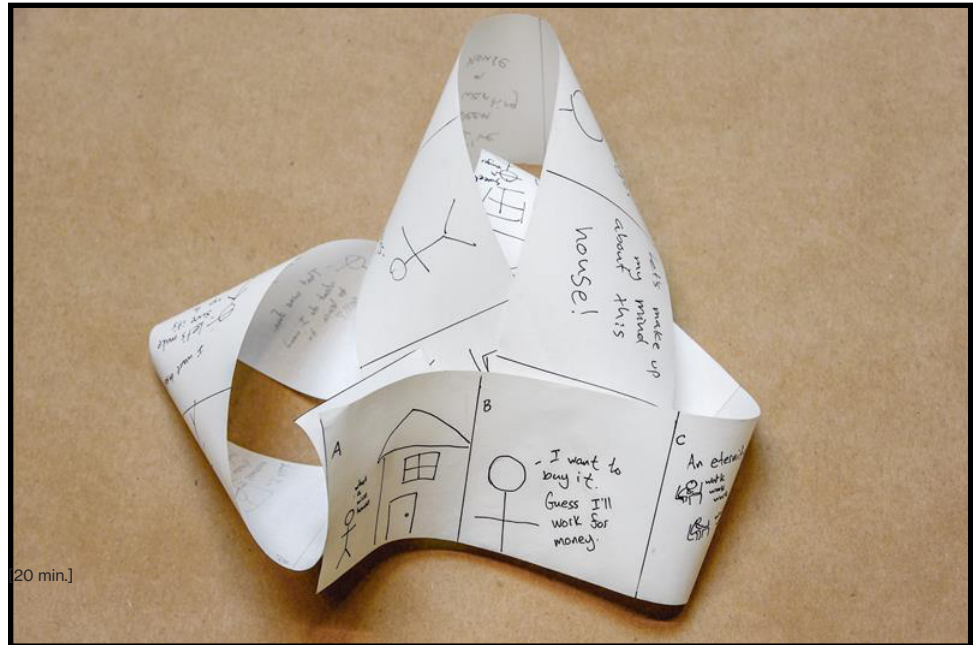




[5 min.]

5. Afterwards, invite each learner to create new stories using a different panel from any story with which to start and end. A simple three story bundle can look something like the images below.





6. As a class, read the paragraph below titled *Nonlinearity and Indigenous Storytelling*.

[2 min.]

7. After reading, return to the original discussion question in step 1: *What if stories were not only a beginning, middle, and end?*

[10 min.]

ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on participation in class discussion and completion of their comics.

A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY

The Anchorage Museum refrains from using the terms Eskimo, Indian, and Aleut and instead uses language identified by the Alaska Native language groups. Due to these words' complicated history, the Anchorage Museum does not use these terms. However, it is important to note that Indigenous communities and individuals are at different places of healing and self-identity and may use these terms.

The largest Indigenous language family in North America is the Dene language family, which is commonly identified as 'Athabaskan' – a word that is not native to any of the Indigenous languages to which it refers. Dene is a word for Indigenous peoples belonging to several cultures whose languages belong to the Dene language family with traditional homelands in Interior Alaska and into Western Canada; the word Dene means 'people' in several Dene languages.

LEARN MORE

NONLINEARITY AND INDIGENOUS STORYTELLING

The classic western tradition of a story tends to focus on a defined beginning, middle, and end. In most cases, a story is complete from start to finish. This contrasts with many Indigenous traditions of stories that do not follow this pattern. Many Indigenous stories 'begin' in the middle of a narrative, often leaving out context that may establish characters or situations. As the overall collection of stories encompasses the necessary contexts,

listening to stories repeated over a lifetime makes sure that a person eventually has a full understanding of the characters and situations in any single story.

In addition to multiple retellings, interactions between the audience, the storyteller and the story demonstrate a widespread Indigenous value of interconnectedness. By connecting events outside the narrative with one's own experience, stories take on a new layer of meaning for each audience member with each retelling. This leads to the same stories developing in complexity as they interact with other stories, other retellings, and the personal experiences of the storyteller and their audience. .

WATCH:

iUniversityprep- [Linear vs. Nonlinear Plot](#)

Jade Doleman - [Indigenous Storytelling](#)

Paint It Blak - [Why Indigenous stories matter | Paint it Blak with Emma Garlett](#)

READ:

The Hollywood Reporter - [Toronto Hidden Gem: 'Inconvenient Indian' Offers a Meditation on Circular Indigenous Storytelling](#)

School Library Journal - [How American Indian Storytelling Differs From the Western Narrative Structure](#)

Sara Kianga Judge - [Starting where you are: First Nations nonlinear storytelling](#)

Canadian Geographic – [Oral Tradition](#)