

Paper Worlds: Hands-on Assignment #2

The following assignment developed 3000-level literature students' knowledge of literary texts, narrative, and material culture through the creation and use of a moving panorama. The course, called Paper Worlds, was offered synchronously online. Hands-on making allowed students to better understand literary depictions of paper: of its scarcity, use, and re-use.

Paper Stories: Hands-On Assignment #2

For this assignment, you will create a short paper-based narrative project: a moving panorama! You can include shadow-puppet elements if you wish but that is not required. You will perform and record your piece (three minutes or less). You will pair your creative hands-on work with a written reflection about your adaptation and the role of paper in it. A portion of your project (minus the written reflection) will be shared with the class at the end of term.

Estimated time investment: Approximately 6 hours, spread over several work sessions, for the making process plus 2 to 3 additional hours for the written reflection.

Objectives: The learning objectives of this assignment are threefold. They are:

- Deepened understanding of a literary work, to be achieved through the creative adaptation and 'performance' of that work
- New knowledge of nineteenth-century paper-based performance arts and parlour entertainments
- Experience with academic writing (descriptive and reflective, not argumentative)

Grading: Your grade will be equally weighted between the hands-on and written portions of this assignment. You will not be graded on your artistic ability or theatrical skills but instead on the knowledge you show of the text you adapted, on the thought and effort you invested in your adaptation/creation, and on the content and clarity of your written reflection.

Your Process:

1. View the following examples of work by experienced paper-based storytellers (our goal is to be inspired, not intimidated, by their work; please note that some of these are musical performances, which is cool, but that is not our task):

- Katherine Fahey's "I Don't Feel Dead Yet,"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gew0PM10mqE>
Note: Fahey is a gifted crankie artist who combines moving panorama techniques with shadow puppetry. She generously shares her work online. See for example: "Francis Whitmore's Wife;" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYrNBbVqQGE>
- Nick Maione, Sarah Frank and Luke Fraser's "The Giant, The Saint, The Magpie;"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o00UAVadlrQ>

- Julia Placier, Claudia Zatta, Anna Peel, Sunny Lawrence, and Jocelyn Kurtze’s “When this World Comes to an End;” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLB5JnyIGgM>
2. Read the Moving Panorama How-To instructions (on our learning platform) and gather your materials. If you’d like to learn more about simple shadow puppetry (totally optional!), these videos might be of interest to you:
 - A tutorial with puppeteer Jenny Ellis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzRRP5mFeR0>
 - A tutorial with artist Steffen Krefth: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOInvDdMFNE>
 - A television spot/ tutorial with Kenneth Wing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHw-4UOcj40>
 3. View guest artist Charlene Van Buekenhout video on our learning platform.
 4. Select the text or scene / passage you will re-tell. Storyboard a performance of no more than 3 minutes. You can choose to share a scene or offer a summary of ANY assigned literary text from our course! Use the words of the author of the original text as your performance text. Feel free to use your own words to frame your piece if you want; you can work creatively with the original text, borrowing from, excerpting or re-ordering the original text if you want. Time yourself reading the text to work out what you can manage in 3 minutes or less (3 minutes will fly by).
 5. Create your paper-based performance and practice it a few times. Once you’re ready, film your performance using your phone or laptop. Frame the shot to show your paper theatre, not yourself. If you’re reading the text, make sure we can hear your reading on the recording. Regarding sharing the text, perhaps you feel shy reading your text? If so, you could create subtitles and play some atmospheric music as a soundtrack (this is not expected but some students might prefer this to reading).
 6. Watch your performance and write your 600-word reflection. Here are some questions to launch your reflective process; you don’t need to answer all of these questions. I offer them as prompts.
 - What guided your choice of a scene or text or passage?
 - What goals shaped your adaptation?
 - What challenges did you face in making your piece?
 - How did the malleability of paper shape your piece?
 - What obstacles did paper present? What opportunities did it provide?
 - What do you see as the strength of your creation?
 - Was there anything you noticed and/or understand differently about the source text (the work of literature) because of this task?

A few additional things to consider:

Backlit or opaque? Are you interested in illuminating your panorama? While you are free to experiment with transparent paper, such as kitchen parchment and wax paper, don't feel pressured to do so. Tape together sheets of printer paper or newspaper – or use a 'scroll' of wrapping paper.

And regarding size and scale: Select your materials with ease of use and low/no cost in mind. What do you have lying around? You could use a banker's box, a cereal box, or a shoe box. Some people even make moving panoramas (aka crankies) with matchboxes. The choice is yours. Scale matters; don't select a huge box or make a big window in your box if you don't have the paper to fill it. If you're backlighting your project, experiment with light sources (a desk lamp? a reading light? A battery-operated candle? Avoid setting anything or anyone on fire). Set up in front of a mirror or a laptop camera to get a sense of your audience's experience.

Remember: this is not a fine arts course! Use what you have at hand (that is what many 19th-century makers did) and remember our goal is not to create amazing illustrations but to understand how scrolls of paper were used historically and CONTINUE to be used to tell stories (...or to share a scene or passage from a story).

Submission format:

Submit your written reflection, illustrated by a still shot of a scene from your moving panorama show that you particularly like, AND your video to our learning platform.

Your Questions:

You're bound to have questions about this un-essay assignment. Don't hesitate to ask them. I will be happy to support you through a process that might be challenging but will also be both rewarding and informative!

