

Drawing Stories with Neill Cameron

Phoenix Comic illustrator Neill Cameron talks drawing, dinosaurs and 'Cameron's Law' - aka 'The Principle of the Multiplication of Awesomeness'.



A uniquely brilliant thing about comics is simply that they *tell a story through drawings*. This makes the experience of reading a comic a fantastic collaboration between the creator and the reader, who has to use their own imagination to join those pictures together into a story.



There's something wonderfully immediate and universal about how this works; you can look at a series of images and you almost can't help seeing it as a story; it's something your brain just does automatically.



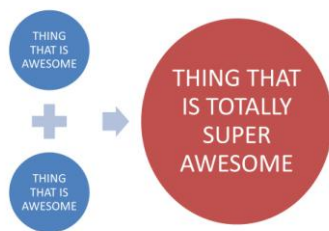
Obviously text is an important part of comics, too – from dialogue to narration to all the fun and brilliant things you can do with sound effects – but to me the most important thing is telling a story with pictures. Ideally to me you should be able to look at a page of comics and be able to basically tell what's going on without even needing to look at the words.



HOW TO CREATE A HERO

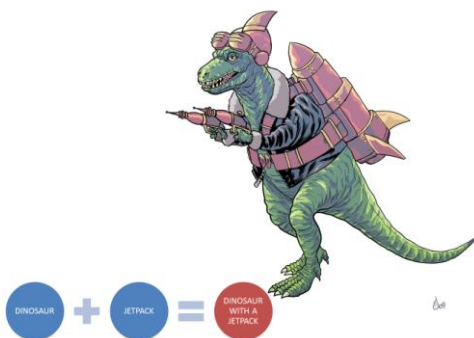
My OTHER favourite thing about comics is that anyone can make them. Seriously – anyone. You don't have to be an amazingly talented artist. You don't even need to be able to read or write! If you can draw a stick figure, you can tell a story with comics, and EVERYONE can draw a stick figure. Even two-year-olds. Even my MUM.

I've actually come up with a handy rule for creating comics characters, so if you ever find yourself getting stuck, just apply this handy rule:

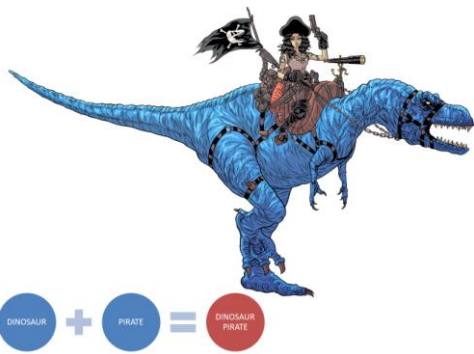


The Principle of the Multiplication of Awesomeness, or 'Cameron's Law'.

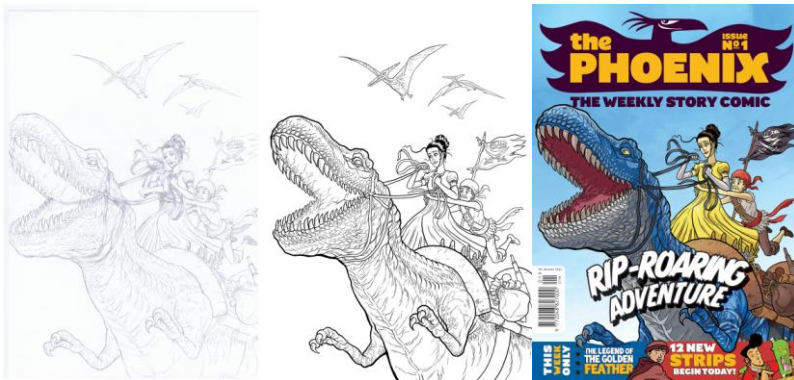
For example:



This is sort of a joke, but also sort of profoundly true. The point is that you want to create a character that is interesting, or funny, and give them different sides to their nature – sides that may be in conflict – is a great way of doing that.



I like to imagine this is what was going on in my friend and co-writer Daniel Hartwell's head when he came up with the idea for our story *The Pirates of Pangaea* in the first place. Our lead character, Sophie, is a very nice, polite and well-brought-up young English girl from the 18th century who finds herself on a strange and terrifying new continent filled with pirates, and dinosaurs, and pirates riding dinosaurs - and finds that she fits right in. And that riding a Tyrannosaurus Rex is pretty awesome fun.



This is a handy bonus side-effect of Cameron's Law, which is that it makes for things which are SUPER FUN TO DRAW! I love drawing pirates and I (deeply, deeply) love drawing dinosaurs, and in any ordinary story I would be lucky to get to draw either one of those things. But I get to spend my days drawing pirates RIDING AROUND ON dinosaurs. And let me tell you, life does not get much sweeter than that. – Neill

Don't forget you can download [this free comic-writing activity](#) for your Secondary School classroom, from beloved author Alan Gibbons. Get students writing and reading!

Neill Cameron is a professional comics writer and illustrator. He is the creator of [Mo-Bot High](#), [The Pirates of Pangaea](#) (with Daniel Hartwell) and [How To Make \(Awesome\) Comics](#), amongst other things. His work can regularly be seen in weekly children's comic [The Phoenix](#).

Neill also travels the country teaching [comics workshops](#) in schools, libraries, museums and really any public space he can get away with it.

Neill quite likes making comics.