Liana Finck’s graphic novel *Bintel Brief: Love and Longing in Old New York* is inspired by letters from the original newspaper column and her own personal memoirs. The following pages represent a small selection of Finck’s adaptations of original *Bintel Brief* letters.

Graphic novels and comics are wonderful mediums to bridge multiple literacies and scaffold student learning. Ask your students to bring these letters to life through their own illustration and graphic memoir writing. The template below may help students begin to visualize laying out their stories.

Teachers are encouraged to view the New York City Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Visual Arts, available in the Education section of our website, for more information on incorporating art in your lesson plans.
This story began for me on a visit to my grandparents' apartment when I was a kid.

My grandparents kept their home very neat. The only worn-out thing they owned was an old, yellow notebook I found on a shelf that day.

I had time to notice that it was pasted full of newspaper clippings in a foreign language—before something very unusual happened.
And that was the last I saw of the Bintel Brief for a long time.

Many years later, I was living in New York. One day, I received a mysterious package in the mail. It was from my grandmother. When I opened it, there was the notebook.

I hid it under a pile of stuff.

"Stuff"

Even so, it was hard to concentrate knowing that the strange, portentous object was nearby.

Finally, I couldn't take the tension anymore.
I tiptoed over to the notebook, and opened it. Then I stood back and waited.

Soon enough, a man climbed out! He was old-fashioned.
He was otherworldly.

I watched as he brushed himself off and looked around.

My name is Abraham Cahan.

Um... What were you doing in that notebook?

It was a long story...
"I was," he said, "the editor of a small socialist Yiddish newspaper called Der Forverts."

The year was 1906.

Within the next few years, the paper was to become very big, but at that time we still ran it from a dingy office on Duane Street, and I had to use all my wits to keep it out of the hands of pedants.

We still needed something for the back page...

Name duration, or Or a dry expose of how the factory workers are mistreated?

Our readers do not speak High German. And they already know how hard life is in the factories — because they are factory workers. As for Marxism: this is a newspaper, not a Snooperpaper!

A letter from one of your readers. I don't know what we can use it for. Maybe I should throw it out?

When I opened the letter...
We ran it in the paper followed by a short word of advice from yours truly. It was the first installment of a new feature we called "A Bintel Brief."* "A bundle of letters.

That notebook of yours is full of clippings from the early years of "A Bintel Brief." But who put them in the notebook? That, I don't know.

After a short silence, he licked his (transparent) finger in a way that reminded me...
of my grandpa.

flipped through the notebook,

and started to read.
THE BRIDEGROOM
Worthy Editor,

I was born in America and my parents gave me a good education.

I studied Yiddish and Hebrew and graduated from high school with honors. After this, I took a course in bookkeeping and got a good job.

I had many friends, and several boys proposed to me, but I wasn't ready.

Instead, I went to visit my parents' hometown in Russian Poland.

My mother's younger sister was getting married. My parents couldn't go to the wedding, so they sent me instead.

I sailed on a first-class ticket.

I was accepted warmly into all the organizations and clubs. After all, I was a citizen of the "golden land."

My aunt, my uncle, and my grandmother welcomed me with tears of joy. I stayed with them six months and lacked for nothing.

It was lively in the town.

Among the social leaders of the community was an intelligent young man, a friend of my uncle's who took me to various gatherings.

One day, he declared his love for me in a beautiful letter.

His proposal did not take me entirely by surprise. Still, it worried me. He was not the man I had imagined for myself.
My parents heard about it, and I could tell they were delighted.

He was handsome, clever, refined and a brilliant talker, but I hesitated to give him an answer.

Gradually, though, our differences began to seem trivial. I wrote to my parents and we became engaged.

A few months later, I brought him back to America with me. My parents embraced him as their own son.

He set about learning English.

Then, I introduced him to my friends...
"This greenhorn is your fiancé?" they asked.

I told them what a big role he played in his town, how everyone respected him, but they looked at me like I was crazy.

At first I thought, let them laugh. Eventually they'll change their tune, but they didn't.

In time, I was affected by their talk. I began to think, like them, that I was betrothed to some "primitive."

In short, my love for him is cooling off gradually. I'm suffering terribly because my feelings for him are changing.

In Europe, he looked like Prince Charming.

But here, he's a bumpkin from the old country.

I don't have the courage to break off my engagement.

I can't even talk to my parents about it.

He still loves me with all his heart and I just don't know what to do.

Respectfully, a worried reader.
The writer would make a grave mistake if she were to separate from her bridegroom now. She must not lose her common sense and be influenced by the foolish opinions of her friends who divide the world into "greenhorns" and real Americans.

We can assure the writer that her bridegroom will master English quickly. He will know American history and literature as well as her friends do, and be a better American than them. She should be proud of his love and laugh at those who call him a "greenhorn."