

**Mya Katz**  
**Animated Arts**

**Thesis Proposal**

## Concept

*Nevermoore* is an 11-minute animatic pilot episode for a hypothetical animated series, which will be fully completed and animated after I graduate. The series as a whole follows a group of teenagers that have discovered a portal to another world in the woods of their Pennsylvania-inspired small town. Following a huge falling out between the protagonist, Quinn and the antagonist, Brooke, the group uses the fantasy world to deal with their interpersonal drama, traumas, and relationships, platonic and romantic. The show will later deal with darker themes of trauma, abuse, neglect, escapism, harm, and cult mentality. Or, more simply, it's *Heathers (1988)* meets *Narnia (1950)*.

I want to utilize my time in thesis to be able to expand on my body of work. My aim one day is to be a director on an animated show and I'd like to enter the animation industry through storyboarding, which is why I'd like to make a good addition to my portfolio at the end of my time here at PNCA instead of a fully animated film. I was advised last year to create my project in the form of an animatic, rather than just boards, as future employers generally want to see animatics as well. As for the reason for wanting to build a full animatic in the first place, as opposed to only part of one, is that I want to have a solid foundation to expand on once I graduate. While I want this project to be a portfolio piece, I would also like to continue to make and fully animate this to present to the world later on and, hopefully, be able to continue it into a fully developed animated series.

## Context

Currently, my biggest inspiration for this project is a TV animated miniseries called *Over the Garden Wall* (Patrick McHale). It has a strong sense of visual aesthetics that I hope to achieve in my own work. It also successfully tells a strong (and very dark) narrative within a very short time-span, something that I also hope to achieve with *Nevermoore*. *Gravity Falls* (Alex Hirsch) and the game *Night in the Woods* (Alec Holowka, Scott Benson, Bethany Hockenberry) are both also very strong inspirations for this project, particularly the way that they both handle a mix of humor, plot progression, mystery, and darker themes. *Night in the Woods* is also a game that has interesting discussions of the themes I want to explore in my own project later on.

My thesis will primarily be focused on just the content within the first, "pilot" episode. While a full show will deal with much heavier topics and themes, this "pilot episode" will serve as an introduction to the world, characters, and relationships between characters. Because of this, I chose to focus the majority of my research on process-based research. I looked into building out a world, both in terms of writing and visuals. I utilized my artistic inspirations as well as environment research in order to build out visuals that I liked for the world. I also spent a majority of my time this semester writing out a fully-realized script that I will be working off of next semester, using my research to make my writing stronger.

## Materials, Processes, Techniques

An animatic is, essentially, an unfinished animation. It takes the storyboards you create, which are still images that depict the main beats of action instead of the more minute details, and puts them into video form, with audio, to properly show the length of the final piece. As I want to use storyboarding as my way into the industry, this is a great way to show my capabilities in that path. My project will be storyboarded in the animation program TVPaint, which also has features relating to storyboarding and animatic making. Plus, it's become a very familiar program for me here during my time at PNCA.

While this semester, I've been very focused on early pre-production materials, such as character design, script, and layout design, next semester I'll be focused more on the final product. My current plan is as follows:

- **Winter Break:** Over winter break, I want to work on getting together all of my project thumbnails.
- **End of January:** By the end of January, I'll have a completely finalized and revised script, especially since I'll be able to utilize my mentor by that point.
- **February:** February will be primarily dedicated to fully realizing my boards digitally in TVPaint and recording my audio with voice actors.
- **March:** March will be dedicated to refining my boards and converting them into the final animatic.
- **April:** The end of March, leading into April, I'll be doing final edits and compiling all of the audio for the finished project, which then brings us to my defense presentation.

## Project Description and Materials

The final version of this project will focus on the 11 minute animatic, which will be storyboarded in the program TVPaint. It will be an introduction to the world, characters, and their relationships to each other and serve as a "pilot episode" to a much larger series. With the project taking the form of an animatic, I have the freedom to make it longer than a fully animated project would, which is why I'm confident in my ability to finish all 11 minutes. During my presentations, I also will have a thesis sketchbook on display, some of my own art/concepts printed and displayed, and a mock 'pitch bible'. I would ideally like to show my full animatic projected during my defense, so that I may talk about the piece as a whole afterwards.

## Summary

*Nevermoore* is an 11-minute, digitally storyboarded animatic about a group of teenagers that find themselves in a fantasy world and go on misadventures while dealing with their interpersonal drama and relationships. It's inspired by *Over the Garden Wall*, *Gravity Falls*, and *Night in the Woods* both visually and in its humor, mystery aspect, pacing, and darker themes. The final version of my proposal presentation for my project will be based on the format for real pitch bibles used for animated series (as well as any other required information in my presentation), while the final defense presentation will mostly focus on the finished animatic.

Post-graduation, I'd love to be able to continue working on this project by fully animating and publishing it online.

**Mya Katz**  
**Animated Arts**

**Artist Statement**

Mya Katz is a queer, PDX-based artist, pursuing a degree in Animated Arts at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. Her work is primarily character-based, with a focus on storytelling through the mediums of illustration and animation. She likes to explore multiple different genres in her work to help support the emotional themes within her work. She incorporates representation into her work that she wishes she had when she was younger, hoping to give underrepresented people characters and stories that they can see themselves in.

Her senior thesis project, *Nevermoore*, is an animatic pilot episode to a much larger show. It displays themes of trauma, escapism, and the concept of revenge through a story about dealing with issues by escaping into a fantasy world. The show is set to be fully produced after her graduation in May 2025 with a full team.

**Mya Katz**  
**Animated Arts**

**Thesis Abstract**

*Nevermoore* is an 11-minute animatic pilot episode for an animated series about a group of teenagers that stumble onto a portal to another world. Here, they deal with their various dramas, traumas, and relationships, both platonic and romantic. Or more simply, it's *Heathers* meets *Narnia*.

This pilot episode is about Quinn, becoming increasingly frustrated after continuously failing in her heroic quests. After some goading from a rival, she's determined to finally capture a Goblin. Will a little help from an unlikely ally finally be what Quinn needs to become a hero?

*Nevermoore* is intended for teen to young adult audiences. It features violence, swearing, and darker themes of trauma, abuse, neglect, escapism, harm, and cult mentality. The show is also aimed toward queer audiences, and most of the primary characters are young sapphic girls.

The animatic is made digitally, primarily in the program TVPaint. Layouts are made in Adobe Photoshop and Procreate. Additional editing is done in Adobe Premiere Pro.

*Nevermoore* takes a lot of inspiration from *Narnia*, with characters from the 'modern' world going to a fantasy world. It also takes inspiration from *Heathers*, with high school bullying going too far. It explores the concept of the revenge fantasy genre, with 'fantasy' being a little more literal.

*Nevermoore* exists as an animatic as my goal is to enter the industry through storyboarding and I'd like to have a clean project to put into my portfolio for future employers. However, I do plan on fully completing the pilot after graduation. With so many recent successes in the indie animation industry, I'd like to pursue this project as another potential way into the industry.

[Final Animatic](#)

## **Mya Katz**

### **Animated Arts**

#### **Writing for Oral Presentation**

Hello! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Mya Katz, and I'm an animation major with a storyboarding focus. For my thesis, I created a roughly 9 minute animatic that serves as the pilot episode for my independently created series, *Nevermoore*.

*Nevermoore* is an animated dark fantasy series about a group of teenagers that stumble onto a portal to another world. Here, they deal with their various dramas, traumas, and relationships, both platonic and romantic. Or more simply, it's *Heathers* meets *Narnia*. This pilot episode is an introduction to the world, the characters, and their relationships. It's relatively comedic, but foreshadows some of the show's darker elements later on.

The series follows Quinn, an ex-high school mean girl who escaped her toxic relationship with the school's queen bee, Brooke, only to be turned against by her peers. She deals with anger issues and isolationist tendencies, using the fantasy world of *Nevermoore* as an outlet. Her arc in the show would be about learning to let other people into her life again and relying on others to help her. She also becomes a hero in her own right, fighting back against Brooke's cruelty at every step, especially when it starts to go too far...

The primary theme I was interested in exploring with *Nevermoore* is trauma, but also a lot of it is about the ways in which we harm each other, intentional or not. The show later down the line asks questions like 'am I morally just to harm someone who's harmed me?' and 'what kind of harm is forgivable?'

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Now, about me: I've lived in Portland for the last few years for school, but originally, I'm from a town called Yardley, Pennsylvania. We're not really known for anything except class inequality and being an important swing county when election season rolls around.

As a queer, neurodivergent girl who grew up in a fairly small town, I learned very quickly how cruel young girls can be to each other. I'm sure many people in the room can vouch for this. Young boys will call you slurs to your face, sure, but girls? They'll pretend to be nice to you as some sort of weird, inside joke with their friends. Young girls will bully you by manipulating your feelings, which is somehow worse than getting punched in the face. It sticks with you.

Between this kind of bullying and my parent's recent divorce when I was 12, I was eventually pushed away from my peers and towards finding that companionship on the internet. Anyone my age that used apps like Kik or Amino might know where this is going. I had ended up

befriending a fairly popular artist online. This person dragged me into by far the worst two years of my life, pulling me and my friends into their little cult of personality, and lashing out at anyone who spoke up about the trauma they put us through.

I was 14 years old when I finally got away from them and it led to really bad agoraphobia. This led to the start of *Nevermoore*. It was an escapist delusion I had come up with during an incredibly lonely period of my life. Once I started college, my mental health improved significantly, and I thought about that period of my life a lot more during my Freshman year.

I started to explore the concept as a story and, at the end of that year, my animation 1 final was the first time I had turned *Nevermoore* into a real project.

While the story pulls primarily from my own, lived experiences, I started drawing inspiration from other media as the project grew.

*Night in the Woods* is, like, my favorite piece of media ever, so it made sense that it's impacted both my life and my work. Coincidentally, it's *also* about a girl with anger issues living in a Pennsylvania inspired small town with a vaguely Autumnal setting. There isn't much overlap besides that, but it definitely has influenced my writing. Same as the show *Over the Garden Wall*. Last semester, I was referencing its pacing a lot while I struggled with keeping my script short. Both of these influences also mix humor with drama and horror well, which was something I wanted in my piece too.

*Dungeons and Dragons*, *Narnia*, and *The Owl House* all helped to influence the more fantasy aspects. *Narnia* and *The Owl House* both obviously inspiring the Western isekai genre of story that *Nevermoore* sits in. DnD, meanwhile, I've been playing since middle school, and has probably been my strongest inspiration within the fantasy genre.

I also took a lot of inspiration from the revenge fantasy genre. While I only watched the show after *Nevermoore* first came to be, *The Boys* (the show, not the comic) has enough similarities and influence to my project that I feel like it deserves a mention here.

I had thought that *Nevermoore* would end with my freshman year. Just a one-off project that I'd inevitably abandon. Towards the end of my junior year, though, I had locked on to the idea again for my thesis. I wanted to tell a story that was personal to me.

Over the summer, I did an independent study with Marilyn Zornado. During this, I went a little insane. Within 3 months, I fully designed and made turnarounds for all 9 characters, with 2 outfits each. This was probably foreshadowing for how I would approach my thesis. Every week, I held about a million polls on my instagram story, asking people for their opinions on colors.

Last semester, I wrote out an entire script for the thesis and began working on my thumbnail drawings in my sketchbook. *This* semester, I spent multiple hours every week working on this project– from roughs, to on-model revisions, to layouts, and everything in between, all while

taking 6 classes. I was the writer, director, storyboard artist, animatic editor, voice director, and layout artist throughout this project's length.

To prevent myself from keeling over from stress, I stuck to a pretty strict schedule. I have ADHD, so having multiple to-do lists really helps with keeping track of everything. Each week, I worked on one scene in each step of the process, focusing only on that instead of trying to do everything all at once. I also used some of the classes I was taking to be able to work on my thesis twice a week, while also getting those very needed credits (thank you, Za).

There were some things that I couldn't do, though. As much as I would love to have original music for this piece, I am... *not* a musician in the slightest. I also didn't have much time nor money to be able to hire someone else to do it for me. All the music that you're about to hear in the project are from either *Night in the Woods*, with a soundtrack by Alec Holowka or *Bee and Puppycat*, with a soundtrack by Will Wiesenfeld, Baths, and Geotic.

I also promised an 11-minute project last semester. That was always my goal, but I underestimated how long the voice acting would be, and it ended up coming out to around 9 minutes and 10 seconds long. Around my midterm review, it was also becoming increasingly clear that people who were unfamiliar with the project were confused on how the whole 'going back and forth between two worlds' thing worked. With these issues in mind, I created and added a new scene to help clarify the transition.

I think, ultimately, this project taught me to learn to not get too obsessive over the tiniest details. I spent weeks stressing about it not being long enough, until I finally came to a conclusion: Does it really matter that it's not 11 minutes? I did the work and put in a ton of effort on this project. I'm proud of how it turned out and it's going to be the start of something new and exciting in my life. I shouldn't waste my time worrying about perfection. It also taught me what long-form storyboarding and animatic making is like. In the past, all my work has been for very short-form content, so now I can say that I have experience working on longer pieces that are closer in length to television animation.

On a more... emotional level, the reason I had set out to make this project in the first place was a way of processing my own feelings towards what happened to me. Throughout this whole year, I've been revisiting difficult feelings related to some of those questions I had mentioned earlier. For the past few years, I've been mostly just living with it, but I think that *Nevermoore* has helped me to actually heal from it for the first time. It's been a healthy way to allow me to explore and express the feelings I've been ignoring since I was 14. So... Thanks Quinn.

Moving on to a less sad topic: my reasoning for making *Nevermoore* into an animatic as opposed to a fully animated film is both due to time constraints and my own personal career goals. I want to enter into the animation industry as a storyboard artist, so having a solid, well-made animatic to add to my portfolio made for the perfect final project for my time here in school. The animatic itself is primarily a portfolio piece, but for the story of *Nevermoore* itself, I have other ideas in mind.

A few years ago, I became very invested in the independent animation community. With the current state of the animation industry not having much room for new, original work and the indie animation community having so many recent successes— such as the Oscar-winning film, *Flow*, or Kiana Khansmith's *Pretty Please I Don't Want to be a Magical Girl* having 3 million views and counting on Youtube— independent work is something that's very appealing to me. It both represents a very popular genre at the moment, but also gives me the freedom to create what *I* want to create, not what a corporation wants me to. In a world where animation projects can be cancelled last minute or completely removed from any platform on the whim of an executive, indie animation is how the genre is not just surviving, but thriving.

So where is *Nevermoore* going? The future of this project is to fully animate and produce this into an actual series to be posted on Youtube. I already have multiple people volunteering to help me with completing the pilot and, once it's out there, I want to start a kickstarter, patreon, or some other form of funding in order to pay people to help me create it into a full show.

So, with all that said...would you like to see my film?

(FILM PLAYS HERE)

Can all of the voice actors from the film stand up please? (wait for applause to end)

I want to also thank Sarah and Sam for being my closet buddies this semester, Piper for being my bonded pair for the last 3 semesters, Jason for mentoring me throughout this crazy process, and the panel and all of you for coming out to join me today. Thank you!

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The art book for *Over the Garden Wall*. It provides a variety of materials from the production of the Cartoon Network miniseries. Crew commentary, concept art, and discussions of how the show got made are all included in the book. It's useful for gathering inspiration on building aesthetics for shows. It's also somewhat useful for writing plot and pacing.

Nagel, Jan. "The Pitch Bible: Just The Essentials." *Recuperado de: [https://www. awn. com/animationworld/pitch-bible-just-essentials](https://www.awn.com/animationworld/pitch-bible-just-essentials)* (2004).

An article about building a pitch bible. It includes direction for each step of the process necessary before a pitch is ready. It will be useful later down the line for building my proposal, if I decide to continue with framing my presentation based on what an actual pitch would look like.

Pullman, Phillip. *Daemon Voices: On Stories and Storytelling*. 2017. Reprint, Alfred A. Knopf, 2017.

A book of essays by Phillip Pullman, author of *His Dark Materials*. In it, he discusses many things, including worldbuilding and writing in general. Pullman is a favorite author of mine, so being able to pull from his lectures on writing will be helpful, particularly with building a script for my thesis project.

Terrace, Dana. "The Owl House." Unpublished Manuscript. Undated. Digital Copy. <https://archive.org/details/owl-house-pitch-bible/mode/2up>

An archived version of the official pitch bible for the hit Disney show, *The Owl House*. Similarly to Nagel and Braly, I wanted to focus on gathering materials for building a pitch bible. The Owl House is another one of my creative influences, so it also provides a good resource for building a fantasy world, while still keeping it rather simple.

Braly, Matt. "Amphibia." Unpublished Manuscript. Undated. Digital Copy. <https://archive.org/details/sbf0nh/mode/2up>

An archived version of the official pitch bible for the hit Disney show, *Amphibia*. Similarly to Nagel and Terrace, I wanted to focus on gathering materials for building a pitch bible. *Amphibia*, while not being one of my creative influences, does take place in a fantasy world with non-human characters. It could be useful to reference while building a fantasy world.

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