

# EDWARD KINSELLA III

## NOTES ON IDEA GENERATION + ILLUSTRATION

**Illustration is communication.** That's your main goal as an illustrator...To make images that communicate something. You'll often hear illustrators talk about solving visual problems. That is the task of the illustrator. You start with a prompt, text, a story, etc., then your task is to figure out how to effectively communicate an idea or concept based on that text. Solutions can range from the very conceptual to simply a narrative image.

### **My method for idea generation:**

- First I go to a coffee shop. Some distraction is good and serves the work. I tend to do better work in the idea/sketch phase while sitting in a public place. This helps zero in my focus so I don't procrastinate and keeps me distracted enough to stop those little hesitations that block the flow of good ideas and good work.
- I read the text and take notes.
- I identify the main points of the text.
- I take note of key elements (setting/environment, mood, characters, hair color, clothing, etc.).
- I make word stacks from key text elements. These word stacks are done in the stream of consciousness manner. I try to let them flow without thinking too much. When your brain is relaxed the ideas flow freely.
- I look for connections within the word stacks. Do things relate? Do things go together?
- **I ask myself a series of questions:**

- Does something in my word stacks look visually similar to something else? Can one object act as a framework for another, thereby creating an interesting visual?
- Is scale is a factor? Does changing the size of figures or objects help tell the story or explain a concept better?
- What would be more effective in the image, a lot of something or a little, or maybe a singular thing?
- Could lighting play an important factor in the concept?
- Could viewpoint/camera angle play an important factor?
- Sometimes before the word stack stage I just sketch out some rough ideas to get something down on paper quickly, while the material is still fresh. Often times there is something good in those early scribbles that ends up making it to the final sketch phase.
- I ask myself “What is the visual problem that needs an illustrated explanation?”
- I ask myself “What HAS to be in this image?” ...And I make a list.
- Every complex problem has a simple/clear solution...I keep that in mind because complex problems can be discouraging. I know from experience that if I do all the foundation work and follow my steps, the simple solutions will eventually present themselves. I know from experience to trust the process.
- I try for 3 good ideas (separate ideas, not 3 versions of one idea). That’s all you need to satisfy an Art Director and it’s enough to give a good range of solutions.
- If I get stuck I take a walk (exercise reboots your brain), I take a shower, I sleep on it, or I just plain don’t think about it at all. If you lay a good foundation with the previous steps and then get away from it, your brain will keep working, and great ideas will appear...magically.

## **Notes on the process:**

- Illustration is a collaboration. It's you, the Art Director, the Editor, the material, and the audience. It's not just about you. Your challenge is to satisfy all of those people. It's not always possible, but it should be kept in mind.
- Enjoy the process. How can you make it feel less like "homework"? Are there materials that can make this more fun for you? Is there a way of doing this process that is more interesting for you/more engaging?
- If you block your stream of consciousness...this process won't work. Don't be afraid to look stupid. It's definitely okay to draw the good, the bad, and the horrifyingly ugly. Your ideation pages are just for you.
- If you can do good, clear sketches that communicate...you can do anything.
- Illustration can be whatever you want. As an illustrator YOU are in control. It's your world. You decide the style, the color palette, the simplicity or complexity. If you create quality images, no matter the style, the viewer will believe in your world and will come along for the ride.