Pull request author responsibilities

Childhood Cancer Data Lab x Alex's Lemonade Stand

An **author** is the person that is directly **responsible** and **accountable** for an issue

A good issue is focused

Roughly, the smallest unit of work something could be broken down into to result in a single, functional pull request that is manageable for review.

Rules of thumb for **focused pull requests**

- Represents a single task
- If multiple things are changing, they should be related
- ~400 lines or fewer

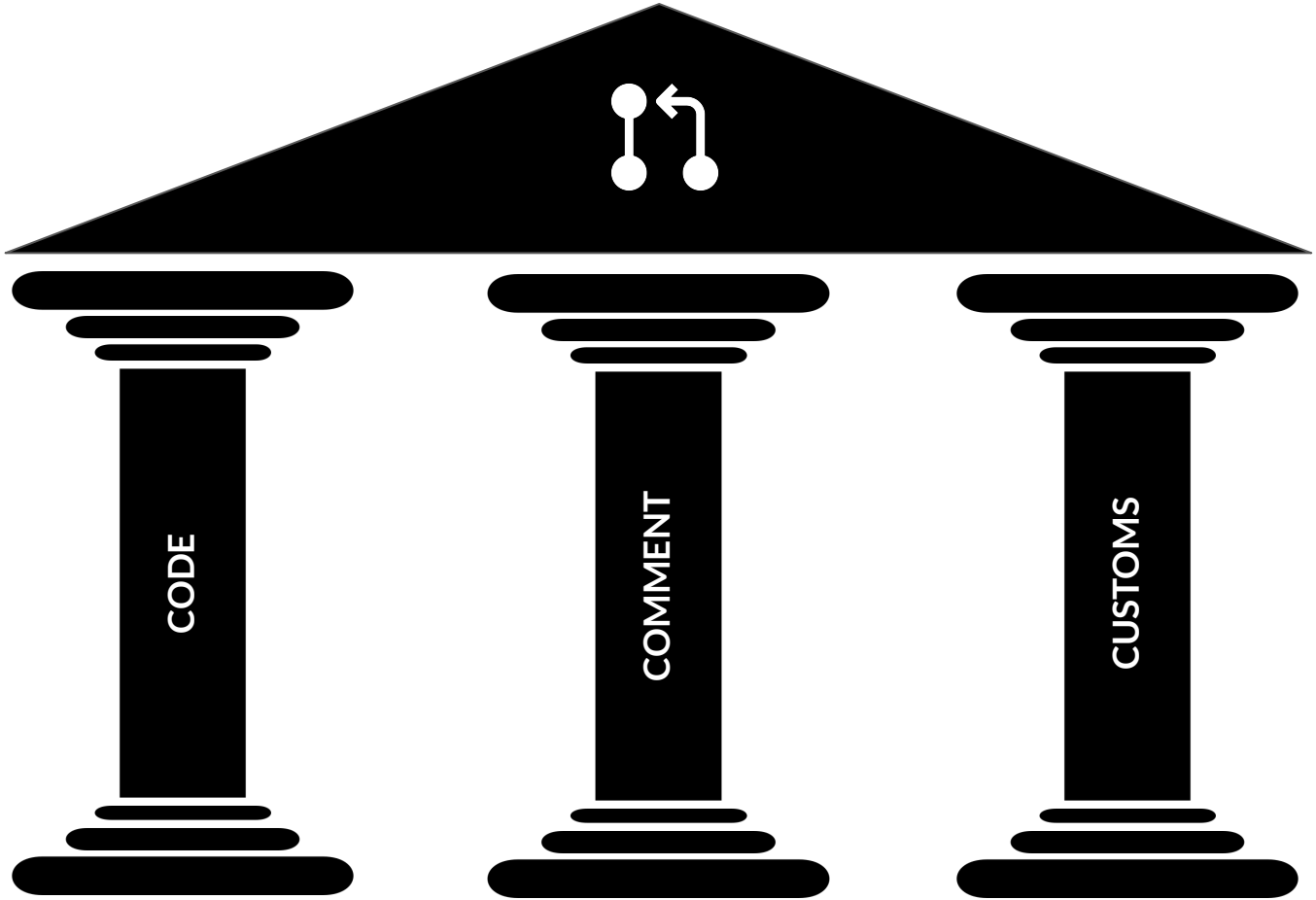
Ideas adapted from *On Empathy & Pull Requests*

Authors are responsible for **more than just code**

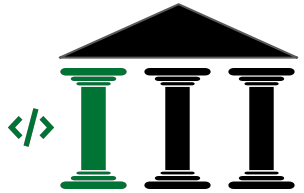
Or more than just the files changed.

They also have the following responsibilities:

- Introducing or documenting the pull request for the reviewer
- Requesting a reviewer
- Complying with other policies (e.g., connecting to the relevant issue)


CODE
COMMENT
CUSTOMS

Before you file



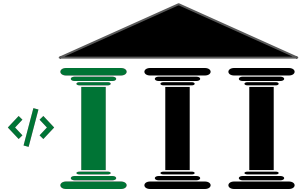
Please look at the Files Change tab on GitHub 👀

Is your pull request ***focused***?

> How many lines have changed?
>
> Did some irrelevant files sneak in somehow?

In a later session, we'll cover some techniques for taming your diffs if your Files Changed are likely to strike fear into the heart of your reviewer.

Code related responsibilities



Any files that get sent for review should be **correct** to the best of the author's knowledge and **meet the team standards**, which may include things like:

- Variable or function naming guidance is followed
- File documentation is up to date

Comment related responsibilities

- **Provide context.** PRs should have informative titles. Authors should explain what they did and why they ended up with the solution they're proposing to merge, as well as link to relevant material that was consulted.
    - Remember, your reviewer doesn't know about all of the work you've put in!
- **Structure comments to elicit substantive feedback.**
    - In our experience, reviewers have a tendency to want to jump in and comment line-by-line. But maybe you want comments on the bigger picture. Tell the reviewer what you'd like them to focus on!

Ideas adapted from *On Empathy & Pull Requests* and Parker. 2017.

Pull request templates can help with comment related responsibilities!

Customs related responsibilities

Team policy likely dictates that an author is responsible for **requesting a reviewer**.

Beyond that an author should **adhere to all team procedures, policies, or practices** for pull requests, which might include:

- Using specific branch-naming conventions
- Mentioning the relevant GitHub issue in the text of their comment
- Indicating the status of an item in an external project management system

Draft pull requests as a special case

GitHub has functionality that allows you to file a PR but indicate that it is not ready for review or merging. That's called a draft pull request!

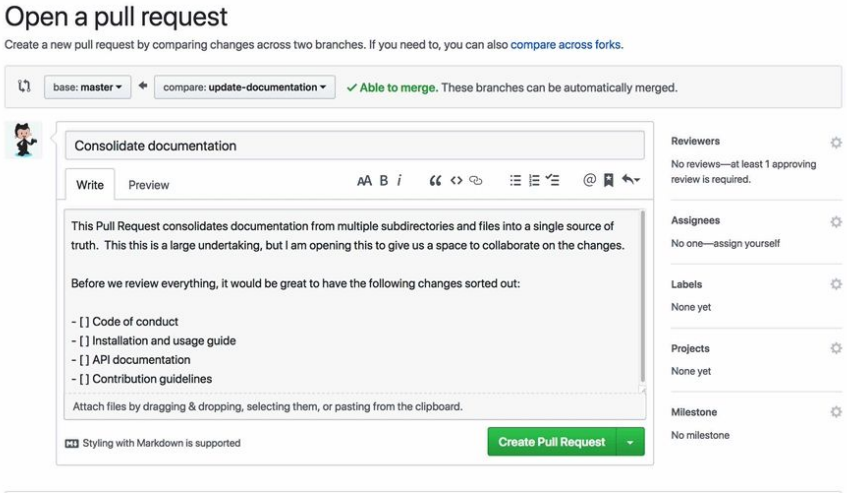
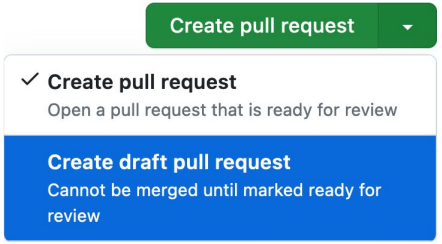


Image source: GitHub blog

Draft pull requests as a special case



Draft pull requests allow authors to get high-level feedback on a solution or results while signalling to others that the code is not “ready for primetime.”

These can come in handy when it turns out an author didn’t fully understand gotchas associated with an issue or if they get surprising results!