

# A Leap of Faith

## The Story of D. B. Cooper

DSGN 360 Project 2

Interactive Storytelling Website

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# Project Overview

Students were tasked with designing and coding a website for experiential storytelling. The requirements are as follows: Website coded with HTML/CSS/Skeleton, one CSS transition or animation, 700+ wordcount, and mobile responsiveness. The timetable was two weeks.

I chose to tell the story of D.B. Cooper, a daring criminal who, in 1971, hijacked a passenger jet, demanding 200,000 dollars before jumping out with the cash and a parachute, never to be seen again.

# Problem & Solution

Cooper's vertical stunt ought to be represented in a similarly vertical nature. Fortunately, the intrinsic structure of html, skeleton, and most web design in general lends itself nicely to telling a story from top to bottom, literally.

To elevate this tale from the editorial blog post level to the more ambitious status of experiential storytelling, the layout and relationships between type and image will utilize the dynamics of html and css to guide the reader from page to page seamlessly.

# Target Audience

This website will appeal to people of all ages who are interested in true crime and a slightly dramatized presentation of real unsolved mysteries. There is a new and ever-growing audience for medium-form web content on platforms such as YouTube and more niche sites like Nebula and CuriosityStream. These users enjoy watching video essays on fascinating topics with production value high above what is associated with the platforms that host them. The opportunity exists to target this audience with a more engaging and interactive method of storytelling, hence this project.

# Competition & Inspiration

## Storytelling Style

Youtube Channels like ScaryTrue, BuzzFeed Unsolved, and LEMMINO set the tone by presenting thrilling and intriguing true stories in a mini-documentary format. This style adapts long-form content to the modern, faced-paced information landscape without sacrificing informativity. *Skyjacked: The Story of D.B. Cooper* will aim to employ a similar tone to these independent creators in order to attract the target demographic.

## Visual Style

Visually, the website will take inspiration from renowned graphic designer Saul Bass, specifically his promotional print work for Hollywood during that era. Jagged, paper-cutout style imagery paired with a naturally grungy typeface harkens back to the age of early James Bond films and the image of a dapper gentleman pulling outlandish stunts in full feather. A saturated color palette again references Saul Bass and his bold and blocky movie posters, demanding the viewer's attention from across the street, or, in this case, from other websites. These visual stylings will help sell the story of D.B. Cooper as the silver-screen-worthy tale it always was.

# User Persona



**Martin Delray**

**21 year-old Male**

**\$19.30/hr wage**

*"I love stories that get me thinking,  
'what the hell actually happened?'"*

**Hobbies:** Gaming, watching YouTube, running, listening to music

**Values:** Fun, honesty, ingenuity

**Life Goals:** Graduate with a degree in cybersecurity

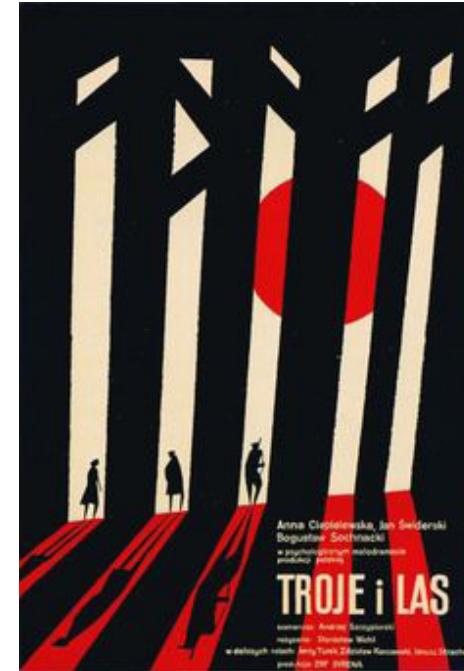
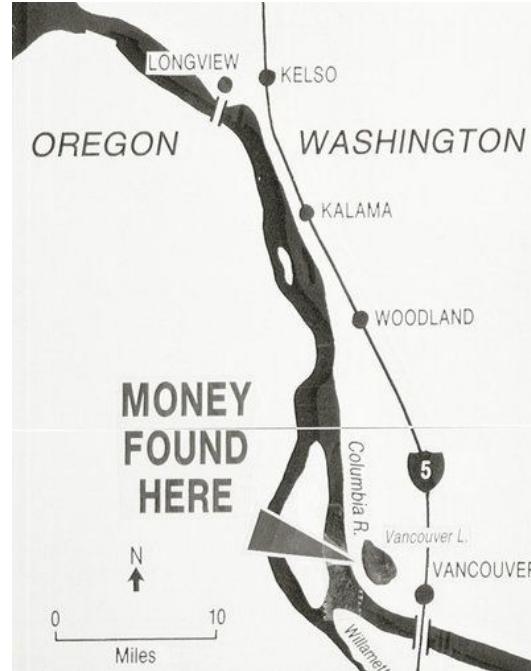
**Touchpoints:** Learn more about unsolved mysteries

**Product Expectations:** Clear organization, straightforward user flow, visually appealing

**Pain Points:** "Ugly design", Unresponsive web pages, long load times

**Media use:** Custom-built gaming PC, iPhone 13 Pro, Macbook Pro

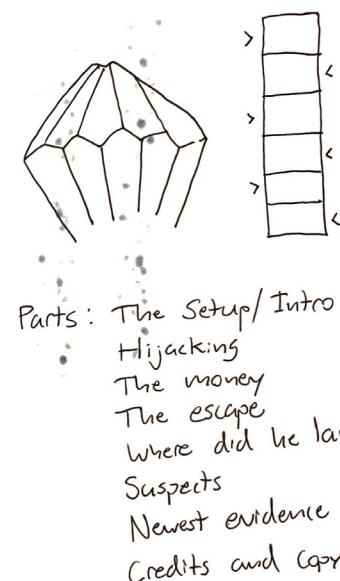
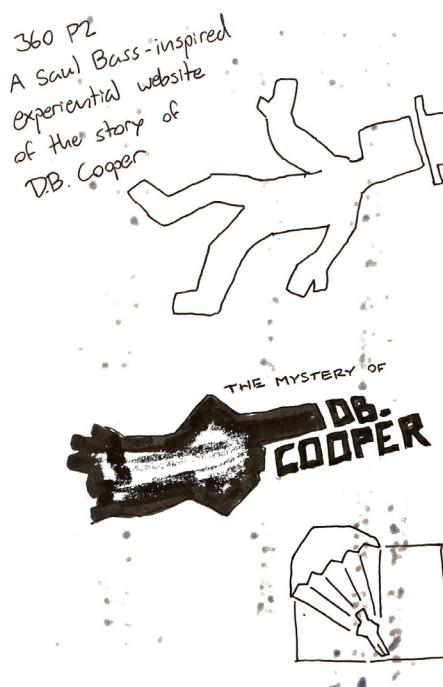
# Moodboard



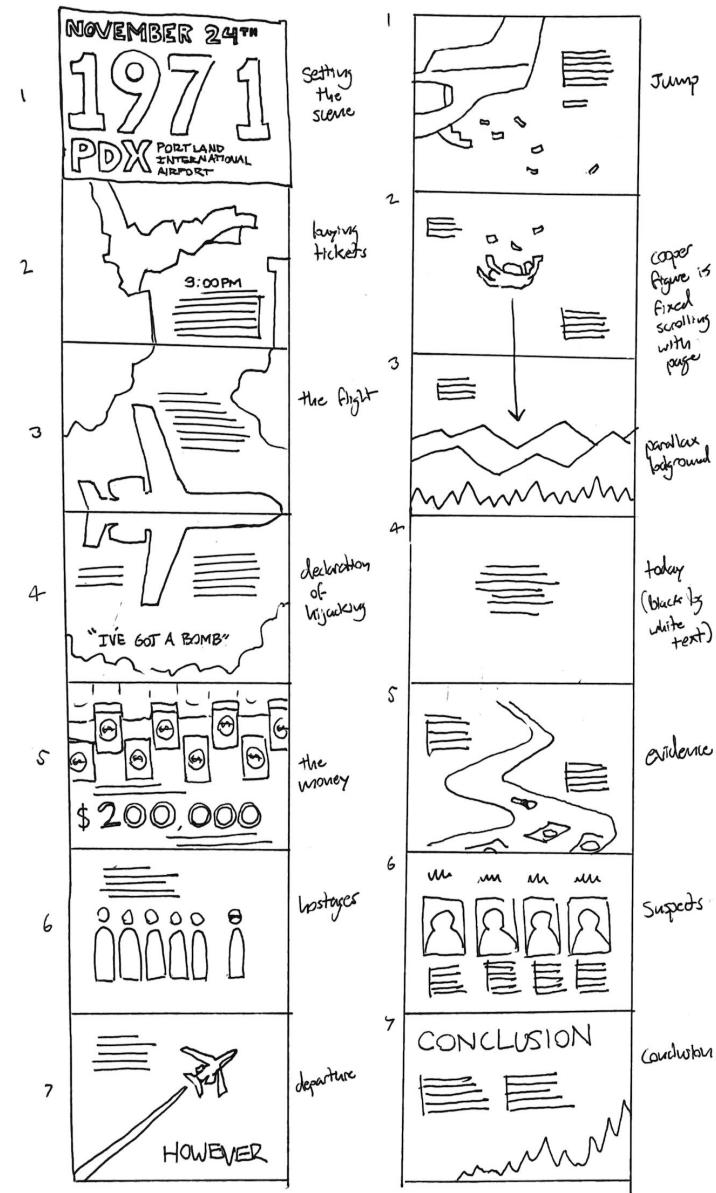
# Sketches

First, the story was segmented into "plot points". These segments represent events in the story that are essential to provide the full context. A proper sequence of events will help to add structure even before moving to the coding phase.

Conceptualizing of the accompanying graphics provided an early look at the visual style and a better understanding of the challenges posed by web content that would break the skeleton grid.



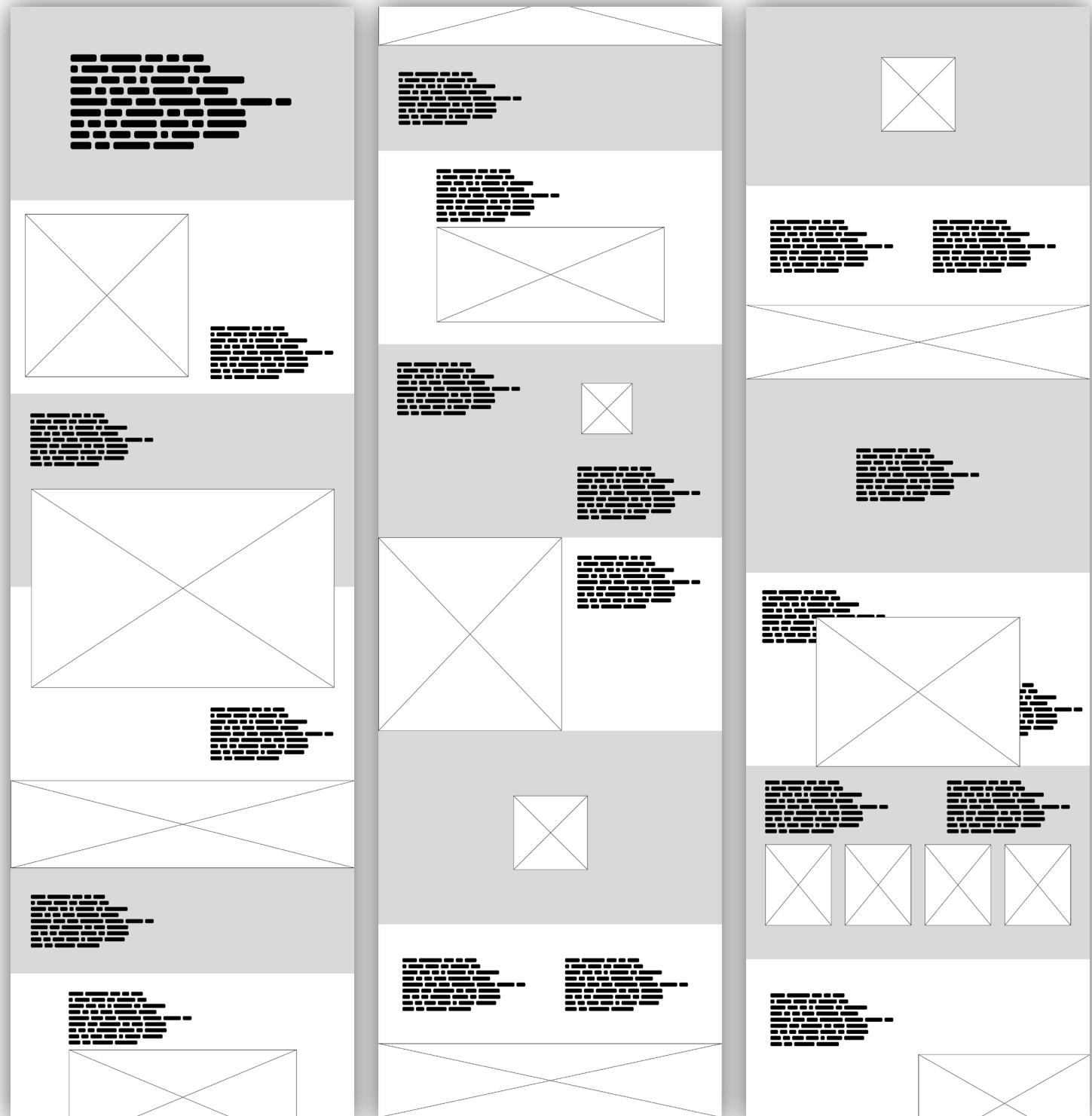
360 P2 EXPERIENTIAL STORYTELLING SITE IDEATION  
"THE LEGEND OF D.B. COOPER"



# Wireframes

Wireframing brings the sketches into a digital space. From here it is much easier to envision the website in its entirety and to see where the text and images will sit in relation to each other.

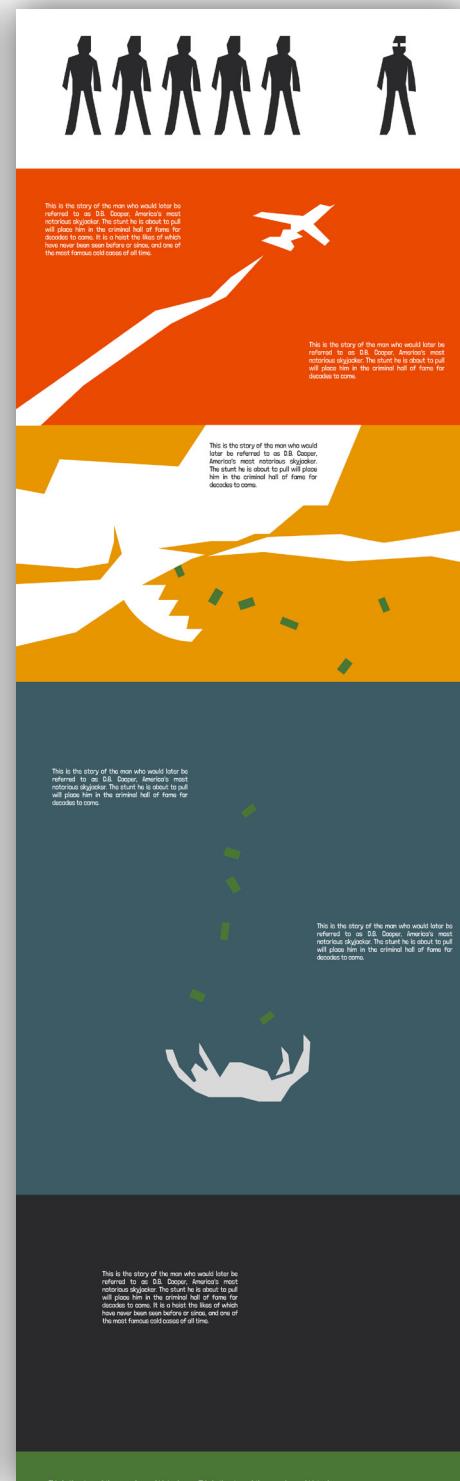
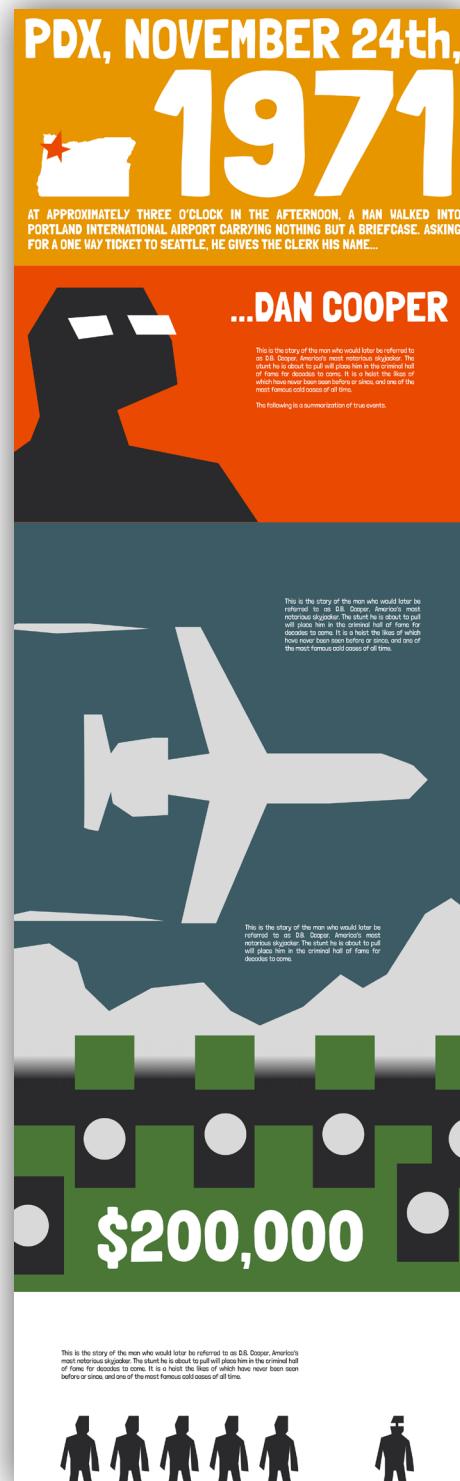
These early wireframes represent experimentation with site layout and the interaction of type and imagery. Each element had to be laid out with the code already in mind. This was done to avoid an overreach in scope, keeping the website simple and ideally contributing to faster load times.



# Lo-Fi Prototype

Type, colors, and the basic graphic style were established at this phase. Early prototyping revealed some potential future errors, namely the complex interaction between certain text and images which go against the natural structure of Skeleton.

Areas where animations and transitions could be added were identified at this stage.



# Usability Testing

The main benefit of usability testing for an experiential site as opposed to a more conventional site is ensuring that the user properly understands the concept or message the website is attempting to communicate.

Testing was conducted with multiple users to see how easily they could accomplish the following tasks:

- Navigate the website from beginning to end
- Acquire a basic understanding of the story
- Identify points of confusion or areas for improvement

Based on the feedback, it was clear that some sections would need to be trimmed or expanded upon in order to improve the flow of the website to ensure the story had the proper pacing. Minor changes such as text size and spacing would also help improve accessibility.

# Interactive Prototype

The final interactive prototype finalized the placement of type and imagery and also implemented animations.



# Interactive Prototype (Mobile)

19:02

NOVEMBER 24TH,  
1971

AT APPROXIMATELY FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON, A MAN WALKS INTO PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT CARRYING NOTHING BUT A BRIEFCASE. ASKING FOR A ONE WAY TICKET TO SEATTLE, HE GIVES THE CLERK HIS NAME...

...DAN COOPER

This is the story of the man who would later be referred to as D. B. Cooper, one of America's most infamous skyjackers. The stunt he is about to pull will place him in the criminal hall of fame for decades to come. It is a heist the likes of which have never been seen before or since, and one of the most puzzling cold cases of all time.

This is a summarization of true events.

Cooper wanted money. When the flight attendant asked why he had hijacked the plane, he stated "It's not because I have a grudge on your airline, it's just because I have a grudge". He then threatens to "do the job" unless, upon landing in Seattle, he receives \$200,000. He also asks for four parachutes...

\$200,000

He also asks for four parachutes...

When the plane landed in Reno, there was no sign of Cooper. He had taken the money and two of the parachutes and jumped from the plane into pitch darkness. Thousands of feet in the air and surrounded by frigid November winds, to say it was a daring escape would be an understatement.

And just as mysteriously as Cooper appeared, he vanished. The case would go on to torment the FBI and countless other investigators for decades. Nobody was certain someone could even survive such a feat.

Regardless, there are a plethora of propositions and theories that attempt to uncover the truth.

HERE'S WHAT WE KNOW:

In the Winter of 1980 a portion of the ransom money was discovered buried on a beach along the Columbia River. For years it was unknown whether Cooper had placed it there himself or if it had been deposited by the river from some tributary upstream.

Decades later, in 2020, scientists discovered the presence of a certain algae on the bills called diatoms which bloom in the Spring. This indicated that the money had not entered the water until months after the hijacking occurred in the Winter of 1971.

To this day, the money remains the only physical evidence of the case found outside the plane.

The FBI officially suspended the case in 2016 citing a lack of new meaningful evidence. If Cooper is still alive today, he would likely be almost ninety years old. Perhaps, somewhere deep in the misty forests of the Pacific Northwest, there is a tattered parachute hanging from an old fir, and nearly two hundred thousand dollars in dilapidated cash just waiting to be stumbled upon.

Or maybe his true identity will remain unknown forever, and the legend of America's most mysterious skyjacker will live on.

# Coded Website

Full website can be viewed at [duncanbennett02.github.io](https://duncanbennett02.github.io) under "Project 2"

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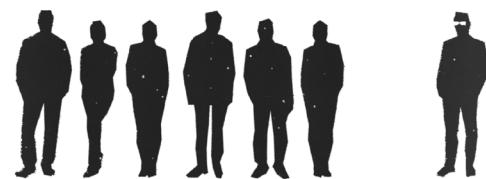


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The following is a summarization of true events.

As a show of good faith, Cooper allows all the passengers to disembark in Seattle. But when refueling causes a delay, he begins to get irritable. The pilot, co-pilot, and four flight attendants are to remain with Cooper, and he demands they take off as soon as possible.



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Cooper boards the plane, a Northwest Airlines Boeing 727, and takes a seat all the way at the back near one of the flight attendants. He lights up a cigarette (this was the seventies) and relaxes with his briefcase on his lap. For several hours the flight is uneventful.

# Conclusion

## Challenges

The most difficult phase of this assignment was, without a doubt, hardcoding the final web version. Attempting to replicate a finished design with limited knowledge of the tools needed to do so proved extremely difficult and time-consuming. Several aspects of the website's design were inherently incompatible with the structure of CSS Skeleton and required a large amount of custom overriding in order to function. Adhering to the limits of a beginner-level structural system heavily reduced the scope of the final outcome.

## Thinking Forward

Clearly a significant amount of work needs to be done in order to bring the website up to the same level of fidelity as the interactive prototype. Thankfully, code is an ever-living system. Continuous updates can be pushed to solve issues over time.

**Thank You**