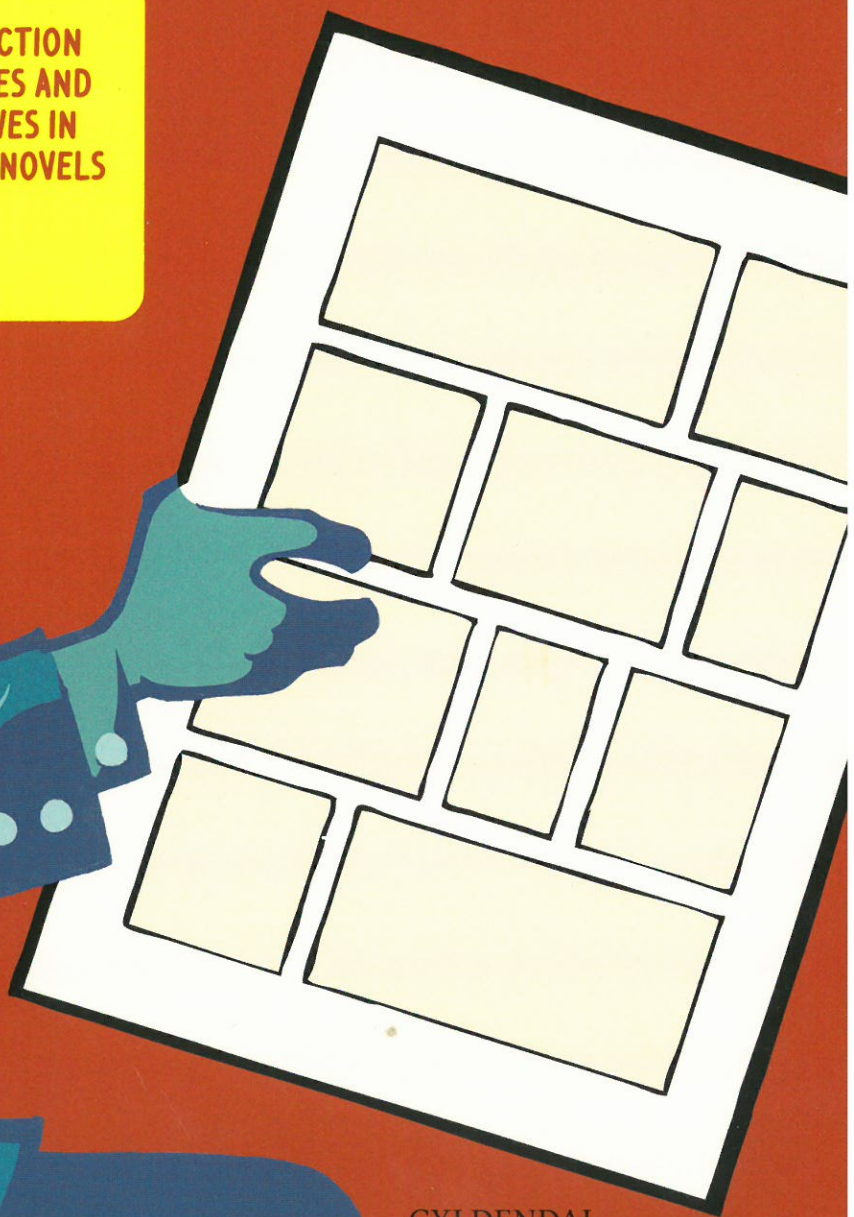


GETTING GRAPHIC

Bo Høpfner Clausen
og Jesper Kaalund

INTRODUCTION
TO THEMES AND
NARRATIVES IN
GRAPHIC NOVELS



GYLDENDAL

Forord

➔ Graphic novels har i de senere år vundet indpas i amerikanske skoler og universitetspensa, og der forskes løbende i mediets læringspotentiale. Også kunstmuseer og litteraturkritikere har taget graphic novels til sig, og danske gymnasieskoler er nu også godt i gang med at hoppe på vognen. Det udvidede tekstbegrebs indførelse i læreplanen har åbnet nye muligheder for at møde en visuelt orienteret generation på deres hjemmebane, samtidig med at de udfordres analytisk, intellektuelt og kreativt. De skal lære et nyt sprog, visual literacy, og desuden hele tiden forholde sig til det tætte samspil mellem tekst og billeder.

➔ Bogen her indledes med en introduktion til mediet og et længere teori-afsnit med en værktøjskasse, som de analytiske øvelser trækker på, og som eleverne løbende kan vende tilbage til under arbejdet med teksterne. Der spændes vidt genre- og stilmæssigt for at præsentere så mange af mediets muligheder som muligt. Genrerne omfatter fiktion, såvel som politisk journalistik og selvbiografiske tekster. Stilmæssigt er der realistiske såvel som abstrakte tekster, humoristiske såvel som alvorstunge, sort/hvide og farverige, klassiske streger og banebrydende leg med mediets mange muligheder. Den indledende teoridel og de afsluttende øvelser, som går på tværs af teksterne, giver dog eleverne mulighed for at sammenligne teksterne på mange måder. Endvidere lægges der flere steder op til en sammenligning med film, digte og konventionelle artikler, romaner og fotos. Med en fod i velkendt land kan eleverne bedre nærme sig det nye, og konsekvensen bliver også en løbende refleksion over forskellige medier og genrers muligheder og begrænsninger.

➔ Det er vores erfaring, at de unge er meget åbne og begejstrede for denne form for materialer. Den positive tendens styrkes af, at graphic novels på mange måder ligger til det pædagogiske højrebånd, så der kan laves spændende og alternative opgaver, både mundtlige og skriftlige. Didaktisk lægges der blandt andet op til forståelse gennem cooperative learning, elektroniske medier og diverse kreative øvelser, men der er selvfølgelig også god plads til klassisk tekstnær analyse, ordforrådsøvelser og andet som vil træne de faglige mål. Desuden mener vi, at graphic novels vil arte sig fortrinligt til fagligt samspil med fx billedkunst og historie, men i høj grad også med andre kreative fag og fremmedsprogsfag som fx fransk, der allerede bruger graphic novels (fx **PERSEPOLIS**) flittigt i undervisningen. Forslag til videre tværfaglighed findes bagerst i bogen.

➔ Der er indtænkt en progression i bogen på den måde, at den begynder med de grafisk lettest tilgængelige tekster og efterhånden stiger i kompleksitet. Det kan dog sagtens være didaktisk fornuftigt at læse teksterne i en anden rækkefølge afhængigt af klassens udgangspunkt og interesser. Et udgangspunkt kunne også være at begynde med en bestemt genre og så bevæge sig videre til en anden. Igen kan spørgsmålene bagerst i bogen forhåbentligt også give idéer til, hvordan man kan kombinere teksterne og se dem i forhold til hinanden, stilistisk og tematisk.

➔ Det er vores håb, at denne antologi vil være et nyttigt redskab både for kolleger, der har erfaring med graphic novels, og for kolleger, der har lyst til at prøve kræfter med noget nyt.

VI VIL GERNE RETTE EN SÆRLIG TAK TIL ELEVER OG KOLLEGER. TAK FOR INPUT OG ENGAGEMENT. TAK TIL MÅRDØN SMET FOR AT TRÆDE TIL MED IDEER OG ORIGINALE STREGER, NÅR VORES PÆDAGOGISKE FORMÅEN KOM TIL KORT. TAK TIL VORES REDAKTØR KATRINE COHEN FOR GRUNDIGHED OG KONSTRUKTIV KRITIK.

INTRODUCTION

What is a graphic novel?

inhabit befolke
utilize benytte
publisher forlag
coin a phrase
opfinde et udtryk
mature moden

➔ We all know the difference between a novel and a short story. Most of us can recognise a horror story when we read it, and we could probably agree that films featuring cowboys and Indians most often belong in the Western genre. In other words: many genres are easily recognisable and fairly well-defined. When we label stories with genres, we know what to expect.

But what would you call a long story told in drawings and speech balloons? Would you refer to it as a comic even if it was serious and not at all funny? Would you call it a cartoon even though that might make you think of Gary Larson and **TOM & JERRY**? Or would you call it something completely different?

To many people the words comics and cartoons seem to indicate that the story is somewhat simple, perhaps humorous and perhaps inhabited by superheroes. To many readers comics and cartoons sound like genres for children. Imagine you were a writer who wanted to reach out to an audience and give them a serious, perhaps even tragic, printed story utilizing drawings and speech balloons. Would you not want to use a genre name that indicated to your readers what they could expect? Would you not want to be taken seriously?

These are some of the problems that must have gone through cartoonist Will Eisner's head in the 1970s when he wanted publishers and readers to take his new comic book seriously. Consequently he coined the phrase „graphic novel“ because novels are respectable and the word „graphic“ sounds serious as well.

So what is a graphic novel? A graphic novel is basically a comic book although it is not necessarily funny. Some say it is a comic book for adults – with adult themes and a more mature way of telling the story. Dictionaries have

defined graphic novels as “a narrative series of cartoons” – in other words a series of drawings that tells a story with a beginning, a middle and an end as well as room for character development. Perhaps even a long story – like a novel. But graphic novels are different from traditional novels due to the fact that they are not necessarily fictional. As you will see, many of the excerpts in this book are from autobiographical publications and hence not „novels“ in the traditional sense.

In other words, graphic novel as a genre definition is problematic because it is vague and ambiguous. Some of them are humorous – like comics. Some are not. Some of them are fictional – like novels. Some are not. Maybe „graphic storytelling“ would be a better term because it could more easily accommodate the wide variety of topics and forms published under the heading „graphic novel“ in recent years. In these publications you will find serious topics such as epilepsy, Jack the Ripper, Palestinian refugee camps, incest and genocide and forms such as fiction, autobiography or political journalism. We will stick with the term „graphic novel“, however, because it is a generally accepted term.

narrative	fortællende
excerpt	uddrag
autobiographical	selvbiografisk
vague	uklar
ambiguous	tvetydig
accommodate	tilpasse sig
refugee camp	flygtningelejr
genocide	folkemord
emphasis	vægt, tryk
interdependent	gensidigt afhængig
misconception	misforståelse
digest	fordøje
dumbed-down	forsimplet
attention span	koncentrationsevne
mode of perception	anskuelsesform
interplay	samspil
signify	betyde

HOW DO YOU LEARN TO READ GRAPHIC NOVELS?

Graphic novels tell their stories through pictures as well as writing. At times there is more emphasis on either the words or the drawings, but in general graphic novels differ from stories with illustrations in the manner that the pictures and the text are interdependent and create a whole. If you read only the pictures OR the words, you don't get the full story.

Previously many people have confused graphic novels with superhero cartoons and comic books, and this has led to a common misconception that graphic novels are easy to read and digest – some kind of literary fast food for culturally dumbed-down teenagers with short attention spans. This is not the case. Some critics have even argued that in some ways they are harder and more complex to read than regular prose fiction. At least they require another mode of perception and a different toolbox from the one we use to analyse regular prose fiction. One of the reasons for this need for a new toolbox is found in the above-mentioned interplay between words and pictures. No other genre has this specific characteristic.

We might be used to reading between the lines, but when reading traditional stories, we are used to reading only words. In graphic novels, however, the words are only part of the message, and we also have to read and interpret the varying sizes and shapes of the lines because in graphic novels everything, apart from the words, is made up of lines. Lines are used to create backgrounds and characters, but they are also used to create movement. Three horizontal lines behind an object traditionally signify that the object is

exclamation mark udråbstegn
collision sammenstød
motion bevægelse
gain få
significant vigtig
facial expression
ansigtsudtryk
sinister uhyggelig
distort forvrænget
evoke fremkalde
conspicuous iøjnefaldende
confine lukke inde
narrative fortælling
striking slående

moving. Stars, exclamation marks and other such graphic devices may express a collision, but they may also express anger or pain. In other words, lines can express motion as well as emotion.

By reading and interpreting the lines creating the characters, we gain significant information about these characters. If the character is drawn very realistically, it will be almost like looking at a photo where facial expressions and body language can be interpreted easily. If the character is drawn in varying degrees of abstraction and simplification, the lines and shadows, and sometimes the use of colour, may also help us understand the character's emotional life. A face drawn with hard lines and lots of shadow often appears sinister or threatening. Soft lines, big eyes and lots of white often make the character appear innocent or childish. Lines, colours, drawing style, shadows and everything associated with this must be analysed and interpreted because these aspects of the story give us information that adds to the words.

In a slightly different way, backgrounds can also do the trick. If they are dark, distorted, dynamic, or even empty, it may evoke an emotional response in the reader. Last but not least the frames, or sometimes even the conspicuous lack of a frame, play a part. If there is space in the panels, it provides a sense of room to move and escape as opposed to panels that are filled right to the borders thus making us feel more confined or trapped.

ARE GRAPHIC NOVELS LIKE OTHER MEDIA?

When you start learning about graphic novels, it is very tempting to compare them to other media that you are more familiar with such as films, and familiar genres such as poetry and novels. Initially you might see graphic novels as similar to movies because the series of images might resemble a roll of film or a film in slow motion. This way of looking at the text will get you results. Think of your eye as the camera and focus on camera movements such as zoom. Also think of the image as a still image in a film. You may notice something about the composition – such as perspective or whether the image is a close-up or a long shot. You may also benefit from paying attention to the way the graphic novel is edited. Notice how the narrative changes from one scene to another or how the focus of the „camera“ changes from one character to another. You may also look for sound effects and voice-over effects like for instance the voice of the narrator. There is no escaping it; graphic novels have a definite filmic quality.

Despite similarities such as an emphasis on dialogue and the use of zoom and other visual effects, certain differences are too striking to make the comparison between graphic novels and films work, however. Perhaps the most striking difference between reading a graphic novel and watching a film is that we read

the graphic novel at our own pace whereas we watch the film at the pace the filmmaker intended. This of course means that we can allow our eyes to wander the page, a visual paragraph, at whatever pace and in whatever direction we like. Our eyes can dwell on or return to a particular panel or detail and often a page is first seen in totality. In other words, we see the last panel on the page at the same time as we see the first panel on the page – but before we actually „read“ the panels. It is like stepping back from the narrative. It enables us to see a sequence of events at one glance, but it also makes it hard to surprise us – unless the surprise comes on the next page.

In other words, some tools from film analysis may easily be applied to an analysis of a graphic novel whereas other terms are difficult to use directly. In much the same way, you may use parts of your acquired toolbox from literary analysis – graphic *novels*, remember? When analysing graphic novels, apply your knowledge about characterisation, themes, setting, symbols, etc. Also think of the effect of the narration and the point of view. Having a 1st person narrator tell you a story may *feel* different from having a 3rd person narrative point of view. It is probably more intimate and personal, but most likely also tainted by subjectivity. You may also want to analyse the language of the graphic novel (unless the panels are silent), and you can easily do this by applying the methods you traditionally use to analyse language. Do the characters or the narrator use metaphors, for instance? Do they use jargon, swear words, etc.? Can their language tell us something about their personality, background, etc.? Many tools from literary analysis may be applied to graphic novels, but unlike traditional literature, graphic novels are not only composed of language – there are also pictures. This, for instance, makes characterisation different in nature. Not only must we read the words of the narrator and character to characterise them, but we must also use our visual faculties to „read“ the body language in the pictures, to see how the characters are drawn, to analyse the use of colour, etc.

All in all, when reading graphic novels, use the analytical toolboxes you are already familiar with. Use your common sense, but be aware that the medium is composed differently from films or traditional texts. This means that you will need to supplement your toolbox, and we will give you a set of new tools and ideas for analysing graphic novels in the next chapter.

pace tempo
wander vandre
dwell hvile
enable gjøre i stand til
glance øjekast
acquired erhvervet
taint farve, plette
faculty evne

WHAT ROLE DOES THE READER PLAY?

gutter egl. „rendesten“.

Her: mellemrummet
mellem panelerne

transition overgang

lightning-shaped

formet som et lyn

fluffy blød

scrunched-up sammensnerpet

perception opfattelse

depict skildre

convey udtrykke

Critics have argued that the graphic novel is particularly good at involving the reader – perhaps even better than traditional texts and films. This is due to the fact that very important things, some would say the very magic of comics, take place *between* the panels containing the drawings. The white spaces between the panels – the so-called „gutters“ – function as the transitions from one image to the next, and it is up to the reader to interpret the type of transition. Does the next panel take place just a moment later? A long time later? Is it another location? A flashback? This leaves a lot to the reader's imagination, and you are forced to participate when the blanks are to be filled in.

The reader is also heavily involved in a graphic novel because the genre only appeals to one sense: sight. It may sound bizarre, but the fact that everything is expressed visually forces the reader to use his imagination when interpreting the image to get the full sense-picture of a situation. The image gives us a picture of what the situation and the characters look like. The objects in the image may give us information about the possible sounds and smells in the picture – flies and curly lines may express that something stinks, for instance. The shapes, sizes and outlines of words may indicate to the reader how they sound: is it loud, quiet, cold, angry, metallic? Is there an echo? The sense of feeling may be expressed by lightning-shaped lines indicating pain, fluffy lines or little clouds indicating softness, etc. And the sense of taste may be expressed in a variety of ways as well: a thought bubble with a lemon or a character's scrunched-up face may express that something is sour.

The reader is also heavily involved when it comes to the perception of time in a graphic novel. Some people will claim that graphic novels are excellent at reproducing the feeling of time passing – probably much better than conventional novels. They simply depict time very well because the graphic medium is outstanding at creating passages where time almost stands still. Slow-moving passages and empty backgrounds force you, the reader, to slow down to the degree where you can almost *feel* the mood of the story. Paradoxically, the less text there is in a panel, the longer it may take to read and interpret it. In much the same way, graphic stories are also good at expressing emptiness and loneliness because these difficult feelings are known to everybody but hard to explain in words. A picture expressing emptiness or loneliness – or a sequence of images in which nothing happens – appeals directly to the reader's imagination, and we can *feel* the emotion rather than *understand* it through words.

The fact that everything is conveyed to the reader visually underlines the necessity for close reading of the images as well as the words. On the next pages you will therefore find a set of tools enabling you to analyse graphic novels.

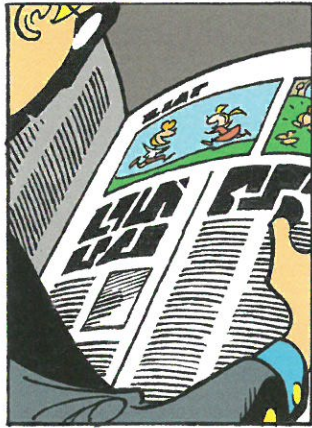


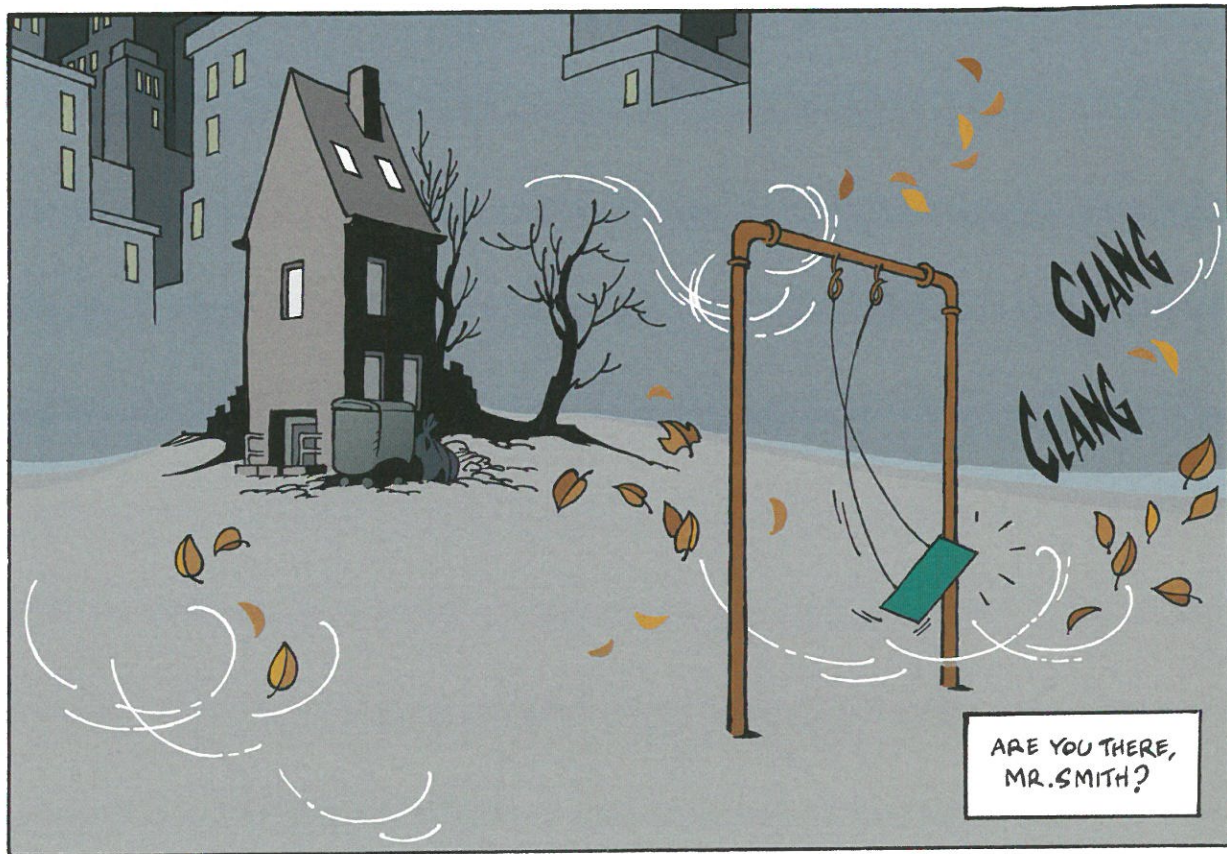
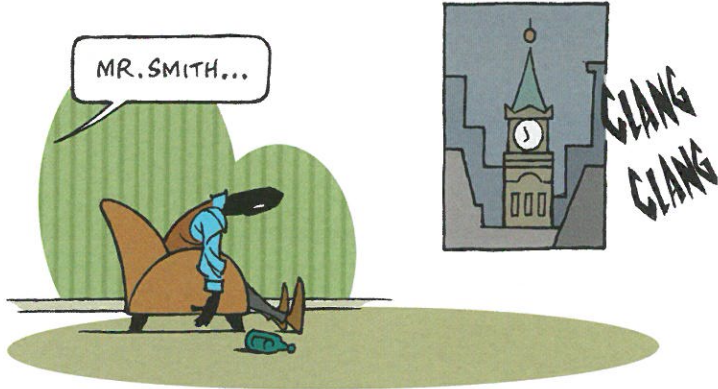
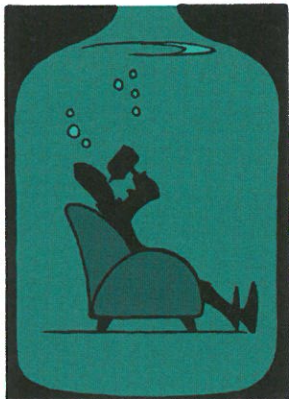
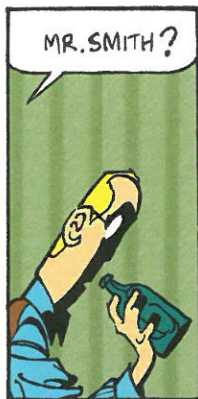
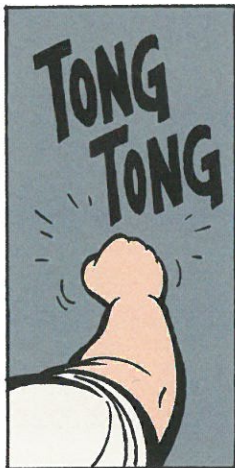
DEFINITIONS AND
HOW THEY WORK

Graphic devices and concepts

➔ Below you will find a set of graphic devices and terms that will come in handy when dealing with graphic novels. Making yourself familiar with these concepts will allow you to speak more easily, accurately and academically about graphic stories, and it will provide you with useful analytical tools, a visual literacy and most importantly, an idea of how to approach a graphic novel. On the next two pages, you will find a story which illustrates the devices and terms. Some of the graphic devices from this story will reappear individually in the toolbox.

device virkemiddel
literacy evnen til at kunne læse






HOW A PAGE WORKS


inevitably uundgåeligt
spread opslag
juxtaposition sammenstilling
consecutive efterfølgende
vertical lodret
column spalte
resemble ligne
grid gittermønster
limitless uendelig
perception of time
tidsopfattelse
contemplate betragte
tilt vippe, dreje

Usually a graphic novel is read like a conventional novel in the sense that you read from left to right, top to bottom. However, when you open a graphic novel or turn a page, you will inevitably see all the pictures at once, and it is consequently important to study and understand how the layout allows the pictures to work together.

 **SINGLE PAGE SPREAD:** A page in a graphic novel has been compared to a paragraph in a conventional novel, and we might therefore also refer to it as a **visual paragraph**. This is where you pause in your reading.

A single page spread is considered an artistic whole. On the given page you need to study contrasts, changes, juxtapositions, similarities and the overall symmetry. Sometimes a row of pictures, known as a **strip**, might stand out and form an even smaller visual paragraph or scene by means of a similarity in form or content which sets them apart from the consecutive strips. Try to think of this as stories within the story, chapters or scenes. Once you are done analysing the single page spread, you may begin to consider how the page spread relates to the neighbouring page. The two pages together are called a **double page spread**.

Many experiments have been done on the layout of the page. In Art Spiegelman's graphic stories about 9-11, **IN THE SHADOW OF NO TOWERS**, the panels have been arranged in two vertical columns resembling the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, and shadows are cast across the pages. Traditionally, however, the page is structured in the form of a **grid**. A grid is a set of straight lines that cross each other to form squares. Sometimes the grid is very regular: for instance four rows of four panels in each row (known as **4 by 4**) or three rows of three panels in each (known as **3 by 3**). In other words, the panels are arranged in rows or columns vertically as well as horizontally, and there are limitless variations of grid. Often pages are 3 by 3 or 4 by 4 with slight twists or variations. Although a grid implies straight lines, the regularity is sometimes deliberately broken.

 **PANEL:** The pictures and words in a graphic novel are arranged in frames known as panels. The panels are possibly the most important device in graphic novels as they guide our reading. A way of doing this is to vary the size, orientation and shape of the panels. Changing the panels may, for instance, change our perception of time. A very large panel might break the regularity of the layout and seem to take over the page. It will allow you to pause, really enter into a picture, contemplate and understand the importance of a given moment or aspect. A panel might also be tilted or shaped untraditionally to suggest emotional instability. In other words the shape, size and orientation of the panels are

among the writer's most important tools for guiding our attention to important actions, feelings, etc. on the page.

Panels are interesting to study and analyse one by one, but they must always be seen in relation to their neighbouring panels. We are familiar with **rhymes** from poetry. In graphic novels the term is used about panels which are similar and correspond. For instance, the first and last panels of a page might visually "rhyme" to form a structure, a loop. This underlines the fact that the page forms an artistic whole. Rhyming panels may be achieved by use of repetition of characters, props, etc., by use of contrasts, colour variations and the number and sizes of panels. Sometimes a specific panel takes on a special role on the page in that it acts as a kind of centre which the other panels can spring from. We call this an **organising panel**. Often the organising panel will stand out visually, i.e. it may have another shape, etc.

The sizes of the panels help set the **rhythms** of the story. For instance, a lot of narrow panels tend to increase the pace. A number of very detailed panels with a lot of text or elaborate backgrounds might work the other way and slow down the pace of the story. Another way of forcing the reader to slow down is to use panels without words.

correspond svare til hinanden
loop sløjfe
prop rekvisit
narrow smal
increase forøge
pace tempo
elaborate detaljeret
mute stum
linger forblive
vastness udstrakthed



A SILENT PANEL

A panel without any words is called a **silent panel** or a **mute**. Silent panels are relatively rare, and they stand out and tend to linger in the reader's mind. Images without words might strike you as a more primitive form, but it is actually a kind of narrative which requires a lot from the reader as nothing is communicated directly. The lack of words forces you to use your own experience and previous observations to fully understand the characters and the situation in the panel. This slows down your reading and puts you almost on the same level as the character or situation. Often silent panels are used to create a focus on emotions and mood. A lack of background might also be used to create focus or emphasise a mood – for instance emptiness and loneliness.

Another variation of the panel is the **open panel**, which is a panel without a border. Open panels might convey a sense of vastness or timelessness. It is

seep across overskride
accentuate betone
engaging engagerende



4TH WALL BREAK

play havoc lave ravage
defy trodse
tremendous enorm

“COMICS PLAYED
HAVOC WITH THE
LOGIC OF A+B+C+D
... DEFYING
THE ORDINARY
PROCESSES OF
THOUGHT ...
I FELT THAT
COMICS FREED
ME TO THINK AND
IMAGINE AND SEE
DIFFERENTLY.”

EDWARD SAID, AUTHOR
OF “ORIENTALISM” AND
FORMER PROFESSOR OF
ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF
COLUMBIA

a means to make the image linger in the reader's mind. Generally the panels are closed (i.e. surrounded by frames) but words or characters may still be able to break through the frame, creating so-called **4th wall breaks** in which the words or characters seep across the frame and enter the reader's space outside the frame. This is also called a **bleed**, and it often adds a sense of drama or action as the world of the graphic novel “bleeds into” your world. An even more effective device to create drama is to use a full-page drawing (usually) on the left-hand page. This device is known as a **splash page**. The author hopes to create a powerful, surprising or shocking effect when the reader turns the page.

The location of the individual panel on the page must also be considered as this is one way for the graphic novelist to accentuate particular aspects and draw attention to what she considers most important. Here you might think back on your initial reaction to the single page spread. What caught your attention first when you turned the page? How did you react?

A final aspect of the page layout that is important when analysing a graphic story is the space between two panels. This blank space is called the **gutter**. Often it is not clear how you get from one panel to the other, or rather what exactly happened in between. This is one of the ways in which graphic novels become very engaging as the reader is forced to imagine what happens in the gutters and then perform closure (see p. 19). Readers are likely to imagine this in different ways, and therefore it can be interesting to discuss the gutters in class.

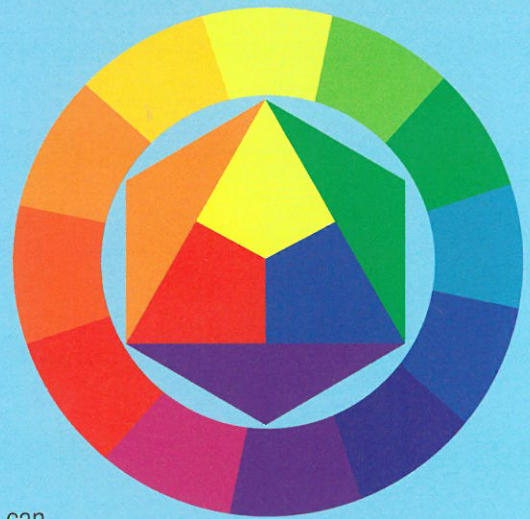
As you have most likely concluded by now, the layout is of great importance in graphic novels, and changing it consequently becomes a very powerful graphic device.

WHAT THE GRAPHIC STORY LOOKS LIKE

The way we see things in a graphic novel is of course closely connected to the layout and all the things you have just learned. Although a lot is shown directly, the reader's role and participation is still critical. There is a lot of “show, don't tell”, a lot of blanks where we rely on our imagination and analytical skills, and our way of reading and perceiving things is constantly challenged.

The first thing you notice when you open a graphic novel is most likely whether it is in colour or in black and white. This is likely to have a tremendous influence on our reading experience, and the graphic novelist must consider her use of colours carefully.

➔ **COLOUR:** Since we live in a world of colours, not black and white, colour often adds more realism, and it also conveys emotions or moods in a different way than black and white. Colours tend to make us more aware of an object or a character's shape than black and white does. Certain colours also trigger certain emotions, create effects and have connotations. We all associate the colour red with anger or love, blue with something calm or cold, etc. Dark colours conjure up a gloomy atmosphere, whereas bright hues help set a light tone. Colours can be pleasant or unpleasant to look at and can also be used to emphasise important aspects by making them stand out from their surroundings.



Colours work on their own because of our associations, but colours also interact with other colours, for instance in the creation of contrasts between cold and warm colours or between so-called complementary colours (red and green are complementary colours, and so are yellow and purple and blue and orange). Colours may be used for the sake of realism. Trees are green in the real world, so green trees in a graphic novel are realistic. Colours may also be used for symbolic or dramatic purposes, however. An angry character may be drawn with a red face, a freezing character may be completely blue. This is not realistic. It is a symbolic or dramatic choice that underlines an aspect of the character. Traditional superhero stories with lots of action were often depicted in primary colours. But any type of story may acquire dramatic effects from bright primary colours such as red, yellow and green.

However, many readers still associate these primary colours with comic book stories or superhero stories. Perhaps this is why many underground and independent graphic novelists today choose to work in black and white. Earlier the choice had partially to do with money because colour printing was expensive. Nowadays it is fairly cheap to print in colour, but black and white nevertheless remains an artistically interesting way to express stories because the lack of colour creates a different mood.

The author of a graphic story may choose black and white or colour. However, she may also choose to use a limited range of colours instead of the full spectrum. Of course, this will not be to increase the level of realism, but rather to create a certain mood or to emphasise certain aspects. Chris Ware's **JIMMY CORRIGAN – THE SMARTEST KID ON EARTH** uses a lot of bleak colours that reflect the protagonist's dull life and state of mind. Daniel Clowes's **GHOST WORLD** is in black and white – and a pale blue.

THE COLOUR WHEEL SHOWS THE PRIMARY COLOURS BLUE, RED AND YELLOW AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF SECONDARY AND TERTIARY COLOURS MIXED FROM THE PRIMARY COLOURS. TWO COLOURS PLACED DIRECTLY OPPOSITE EACH OTHER ARE CALLED COMPLEMENTARY COLOURS. THEY CREATE MAXIMUM CONTRAST AND STABILITY AT THE SAME TIME.

connotation konnotation, bibetydning
conjure up frembringe
gloomy dystert
hue nuance
complementary colour komplementærfarve
bleak trist
dull kedelig

When you read a graphic novel therefore, pay attention to the author's use of black and white or colour. The use of colour, or lack thereof, probably has an effect on the way you understand the tone of the text.

➔ **PERSPECTIVE:** The term **perspective** is used about the angle from which something is seen. Think of a video camera. Is the camera held at your **eye-level**, above your head (the so-called **bird's eye view**) or near to the ground (the so-called **worm's eye view**)? The most common angle is of course eye-level, which puts us on the same level as the characters. This angle also increases the sense of realism as this is the way we are used to seeing things. In contrast, if you see someone from a worm's eye view, that character will inevitably appear larger and more powerful, and consequently it might create more involvement in the action. If, on the other hand, you see a scene from a high angle, characters seem smaller and less powerful, but it also gives a sense of orientation and detachment as we become observers rather than participants. Among other things, perspective therefore has to do with reader involvement and power relations in a story. When reading graphic novels it is a good idea to pay close attention to shifts in perspective and consider the effect.

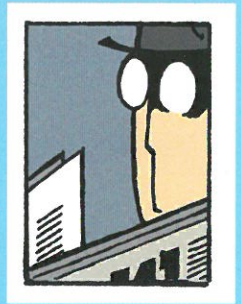


BIRD'S EYE VIEW



WORM'S EYE VIEW

It will also be worth your while to pay attention to another “camera effect”, namely **zoom**. Are we zooming in or out? Zoom is of course a close-up which captures emotions and/or puts emphasis on specific elements. The opposite of zoom is called **long shot**. A long shot puts the character or object into a context. The important thing here is the relationship to the surroundings. When using a long shot, the author is not trying to give you specific, detailed information, but she is trying to give you information about the context. This might be information about a group of characters, the setting or something/-one moving. A long shot (or frequently a splash page) is therefore often used as an **establishing shot**, which tells the reader where the story takes place. In addition to that, it might set the mood and tone of the story.



ZOOM

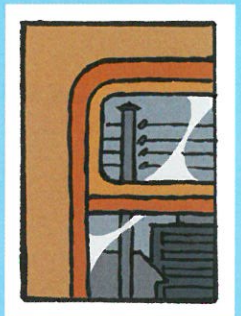
long shot totalbillede
grasp forstå
forked forgrenet
eerily uhyggeligt
swastika hagekors
dawn on gå op for
linger forblive



LONG SHOT

➔ **CLOSURE:** In the panels of graphic novels we often have a close-up of something, or we see only a part of something. Due to our experience from the real world, we are, however, able to grasp it and perceive the whole. This is what is called **closure**. As readers we fill in the blanks. A famous example of this is the large metaphoric panel in Art Spiegelman's Holocaust story **MAUS** in which the characters walk on a forked road. On closer inspection the road is actually eerily shaped like a swastika. You only see a part of it, though, and because it is only hinted at, and because it slowly dawns on you, it lingers as a horrifying shadow. A visual detail which is not immediately visible but appears when you look closely is called an **Easter egg**. The artist Don Rosa, who has created more than 90 stories about Donald Duck, often included a small Mickey Mouse head or a tiny Mickey figure in his stories. You don't notice them right off, but they are there when you look for them. These “hidden Mickeys” are examples of Easter eggs.

Closure is also essential when it comes to understanding the roles of gutters (explained on p. 16).



CLOSURE

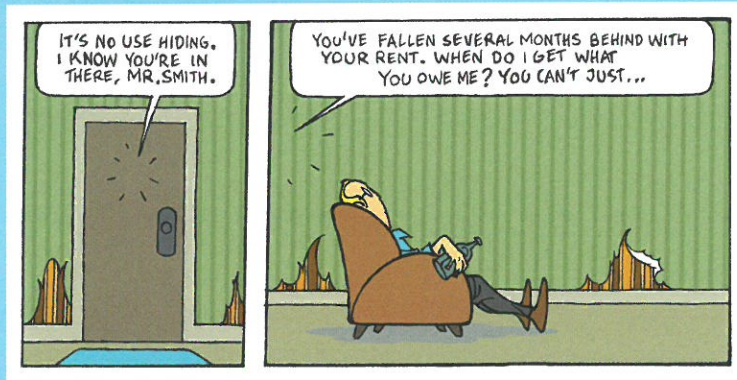


EASTER EGG

SOUND AND MOVEMENT

Graphic novels are visual, and their pictures are static. We will now take a closer look at how graphic stories, in spite of this, manage to create sound, let us listen to the voices of the characters and give an impression of movement.

SPEECH BALLOON



- font** skrifttype
- distorted** forvrænget
- vague** uklar
- pronounced** tydelig
- capitalized** med store bogstaver, majuskler
- lower case** små bogstaver, minuskler
- immediacy** umiddelbarhed
- gaze** blik
- relay** viderebringe

➔ **SPEECH BALLOON:** In order to convey a conversation, graphic novels use a circle around the words spoken by a cartoon character. This is called a speech balloon. The shape may vary to indicate whether a person is speaking, thinking (unspoken thought) or whether the sound is coming from, for instance, a radio or TV. Note also that the choice of font might play a part. The letters might be distorted, vague or pronounced, capitalized or lower case. They may even be shaped to imitate sounds. Often the font, size and shape of the letters indicate mood, characters' emotions, personality, sound level, emphasis, etc. In Spiegelman's Holocaust story, **MAUS**, the letter "s" is often made to look like the SS-logo, thus showing how the totalitarian ideology of Nazism becomes a part of everything. As in conventional literature, the author has to carefully consider the balance between dialogue and narration as they have different effects. For instance dialogue is a more indirect way of getting to know the characters. In graphic literature, speech balloons have an immediacy and a directness and are part of the scene we are witnessing. The distribution of speech balloons also helps set the rhythm of the text as they make the reader's gaze pause. However, they often relay the information faster than caption boxes.

CAPTION BOX



➔ **CAPTION BOX:** Words printed over, under or on a picture that explain something about the picture are called caption boxes. In graphic novels this often works as a kind of voice-over, the voice of the narrator. Compared to speech balloons, caption boxes create some distance to the scene and might come across as more literary, having the authority of real prose. It varies whether the words or pictures take the lead, whether they basically say the same thing, whether one elaborates on the other, or whether they relay different information or even contradict each other. See pp. 24-26 for McCloud's illustrations. The letters in caption boxes may be handwritten or in set-type. The latter is of course less personal and more mechanical but it might be used to achieve a certain effect.

elaborate uddybe
relay videregive
set-type trykte bogstaver
villain skurk
jagged hakket, takket
screeching hylende
cacophonous disharmonisk
motion bevægelse
blur sløre, udtvære

➔ **SOUND: Onomatopoeia** are words such as “buzz” that produce the sound which they refer to. Other examples closely related to the world of comics are “wham”, “bang” and “kapow”. These were frequently used in early comic books with superheroes which involved a lot of fighting between the heroes and villains. In recent and more artistically ambitious graphic novels these words are not used as much, but it remains the best way to express sound in a printed medium. Onomatopoeia are often not placed in speech balloons or caption boxes but are often more integrated in the background of the panel. As with letters in balloons and caption boxes, the size can be used to show loudness, and the shape of words and typography (“fonts”) may indicate how something sounds. For instance, sharply outlined, jagged letters may indicate screeching or cacophonous sounds. Pretty handwritten letters with soft curves might, on the other hand, suggest a pleasant sound.



ONOMATOPOEIA

➔ **MOVEMENT AND MOTION LINES:** From the very beginning, comics struggled with the problem of showing motion in a static medium. Within the panels, the solution was to use **motion lines** – or **zip-ribbons** as some call them. These could, for instance, be three horizontal lines behind a running character to indicate his speed, or lines close to his hand to show whether it is moving up or down. Another way for the artist to show speed is by blurring the moving object, or if the “camera” moves with the moving object, you can make the background blurred as Japanese cartoonists often do. Otherwise movement is mainly shown by means of a sequence of panels in which the gutter (see p. 16) represents the time that has passed.



MOTION LINES
 – OR ZIP-RIBBONS

CHARACTERS

generic generisk, ikke
specifik, arketypisk
depict skildre
trait træk
gesture håndbevægelse,
gestus
facial expression
ansigtsudtryk
amplify forstærke
opt for vælge
tube-like røragtig

➔ **CHARACTER:** As in conventional literature, graphic characters might be flat, round or generic, and the study of their developments and relationships is interesting and central. The difference between the two genres lies in the way characters are depicted and how we get to know them. As we have already seen, we might learn a lot about a character through a study of the text in speech balloons and caption boxes. But we will now turn our attention to the visual aspect.

A character in a graphic novel has a **visual design** (looks and clothing) that sets that character apart from other characters and a set of **expressive traits** – gestures, facial expressions, etc. characterising him/her. Comics and graphic novels often employ **stereotypes** in character design in order to “**amplify through simplicity**”. Sometimes less is more because eliminating details creates focus and emphasis. This effect is often reached through a level of **abstraction**. If a face is less detailed and less realistic, it allows identification more easily. Levels of abstraction and **realism** vary greatly in graphic novels, however, and a good starting point when you want to make characterisations in graphic novels is to determine to what extent the characters look like real people. How simple are they? How realistic? How abstract?

ABSTRACTION
(SIMPLIFICATION) AND
REALISM



While many graphic novelists opt for relatively realistic character designs, others use more symbolic character designs which give us an insight into the personality of their characters. In a famous scene in **ASTERIOS POLYP**, David Mazzucchelli draws the protagonist and his wife using different colours and different lines. The wife is drawn in red with soft curves, whereas the protagonist, who is an architect, is depicted in blue with hard, tube-like features that resemble his architectural designs. These features combined make him come across as cold, purely rational and completely obsessed with his work.

The study of a character's **body language**, i.e. facial expressions, body posture and gestures, is often more important than the text because a character's body language may add to, define or even contradict the words on the page. Body language is universal, and the readers' own experiences allow them to read a character's body language and interpret it. It is often interesting to look at a character's eyes or hand gestures. Are they friendly, threatening, aggressive, powerful, weak, etc.? Sometimes this is obvious, like when the author uses zoom, sometimes it is more subtle and you need to pay close attention.

The number of words in a graphic novel is of course far smaller than in a conventional novel. However, this does not mean that a graphic novel is fast to read. It is critical that you follow the pace suggested by the panels and the other factors you have just learned about. Graphic novels have a language of their own which is not purely visual but a complex interplay between words and pictures. Your visual proficiency and your awareness of graphic devices will help you stay alert and notice intriguing details and significant developments. If you are lucky, you might even find your first Easter egg. Enjoy your comic books and graphic novels, let yourself be seduced by the pictures, but reflect on your perception and emotional responses.

posture holdning
subtle subtil, raffineret
proficiency færdighed
alert opmærksom
intriguing fængslende
seduce forføre



BODY LANGUAGE

**READ ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN WORDS AND PICTURES
ON PP. 24-26.**

FIRST, WE HAVE THE **WORD SPECIFIC** COMBINATIONS, WHERE PICTURES *ILLUSTRATE*, BUT DON'T SIGNIFICANTLY ADD TO A LARGELY COMPLETE TEXT.



WE STUMBLED BACK TO THE APARTMENT SHORTLY BEFORE DAWN, *VOMITING* EVERY 20 YARDS.



JUDY GAVE ME HER KEYS AND SMILED.



THE *UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION* WAS ADOPTED BY THE *SECOND CONTINENTAL CONGRESS* IN 1787 AND PUT INTO EFFECT IN 1789.



THEN THERE ARE **PICTURE SPECIFIC** COMBINATIONS WHERE WORDS DO LITTLE MORE THAN ADD A *SOUNDTRACK* TO A VISUALLY TOLD SEQUENCE.



- mble vakle
- nit kaste op
- d (længdemål) 3 fod, dvs. ca. 1 m.
- stitution forfatning
- opt vedtage
- m-faced alvorlig
- ypop slikkepind
- w slag
- ended tiltænkt
- ige undgå



AND, OF COURSE, **DUO-SPECIFIC** PANELS IN WHICH BOTH WORDS AND PICTURES SEND ESSENTIALLY THE *SAME MESSAGE*.



GRIM-FACED, GEORGE LIFTED HIS LOLLYPOP.



BUT THE CAPTAIN'S MIGHTY BLOW *MISSES* ITS INTENDED TARGET!

BLAST! HE DODGED MY PUNCH AND I STRUCK THIS *BRICK WALL!*



HA! I DODGED YOU!

I FEEL SO SAD!



...THOUGHT AMY.

ANOTHER TYPE IS THE **ADDITIVE** COMBINATION WHERE WORDS **AMPLIFY** OR **ELABORATE** ON AN IMAGE OR **VICE VERSA**.



MY HEAD FEELS LIKE A **SMASHED PUMPKIN!**



HOW D'YA LIKE MY **NEW THREADS, BABE?**

IS THIS THE SAME **JUPITER** OF MY YOUTH?

IN **PARALLEL** COMBINATIONS, WORDS AND PICTURES SEEM TO FOLLOW VERY DIFFERENT COURSES--WITHOUT **INTERSECTING**.



"TALKED TO **BILL** YET?" "SALLY DID. **WHY?**" "THE **TEST RESULTS** CAME BACK. ALL **NEGATIVE**." "REALLY? THAT'S **GREAT!**" WELL...

PEPPER. CEREAL.

MILK. BUTTER. LIGHT BULBS.

amplify forstærke
 elaborate uddybe
 vice versa omvendt
 pumpkin græskar
 threads (her) klude,
 course bane
 intersect krydse
 cereal cornflakes (og morgenmadsprodu
 light bulb elpære
 integral integreret

STILL ANOTHER OPTION IS THE **MONTAGE** WHERE WORDS ARE TREATED AS INTEGRAL PARTS OF THE PICTURE.

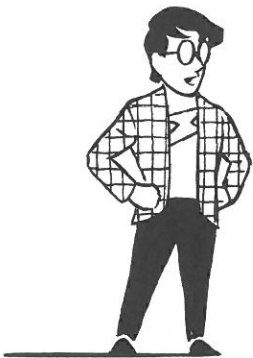


CASH FLOW PUBLISHED BOTTOM LINE ANNUAL REPORT

HAPPY!

Business
 mer offic
 Il object
 eany with
 tems and
 ned to be
 ept the
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 appeari
 ad bind.
 eceived by
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PERHAPS THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF WORD/PICTURE COMBINATION IS THE **INTER-DEPENDENT**, WHERE WORDS AND PICTURES GO **HAND IN HAND** TO CONVEY AN IDEA THAT NEITHER COULD CONVEY **ALONE**.



MEANWHILE...

DID ANYONE SEE YOU?

THIS IS ALL I NEED TO STOP HIM!

I ASK YOU, DOES THIS GUY LOOK LIKE A C.E.O. TO YOU??

"AND JUST **GUESS** WHO DROVE UP IN BOB'S TRUCK AN HOUR LATER!"

HEY, MARGE!

OH, MY GOD!

HE'S LYING.

UH-HUH.

"AFTER COLLEGE, I PURSUED A CAREER IN **HIGH FINANCE**."

HURRY UP, WILL YA?!

interdependent gensidigt afhængig
 convey formidle
 C.E.O. administrerende direktør
 pursue forfølge
 explore udforske

INTERDEPENDENT COMBINATIONS AREN'T ALWAYS AN **EQUAL BALANCE** THOUGH AND MAY FALL **ANYWHERE** ON A SCALE BETWEEN TYPES ONE AND TWO.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE MORE IS SAID WITH **WORDS**, THE MORE THE PICTURES CAN BE FREED TO GO EXPLORING AND **VICE VERSA**.

P
W

W
P

CREATIVE EXERCISE

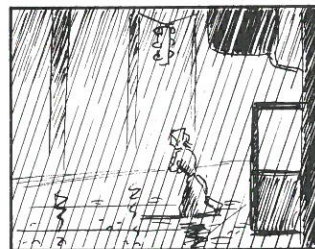
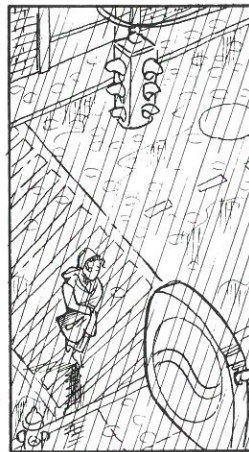
BELOW IS A SHORT STORY BY SCOTT MCCLOUD WHICH FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES IS WITHOUT ANY TEXT. YOUR TEACHER WILL GIVE YOU A COPY OF MCCLOUD'S STORY. IT IS NOW UP TO YOU TO DECIDE WHAT KIND OF STORY IT IS BY ADDING SOME TEXT. LOOK CLOSELY AT THE PANELS FOR A FEW MINUTES IN ORDER TO GET A FEEL OF THE MOOD, PLOT, ETC. ONCE YOU HAVE DONE THIS, COMPLETE THE EXERCISES ON THIS PAGE.

1 Come up with a title for the story.

2 Add speech balloons and caption boxes where you think they are necessary. You are of course allowed to use silent panels if you think they work better. Give reasons for your choices in a separate document.

3 Using McCloud's way of describing the relationship between words and pictures (pp. 24-26), determine what types you have used, e.g. duo-specific or additive.

4 Find a piece of music to act as a kind of soundtrack for the story. Consider for instance the mood and pace of the song and whether it needs to be instrumental. Give reasons for your choice.

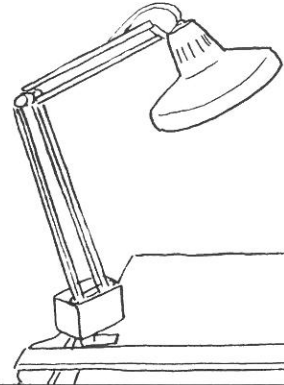


5 PRESENT YOUR STORY TO A CLASSMATE AND ELABORATE ON YOUR CHOICES. AFTERWARDS LISTEN TO YOUR CLASSMATE'S PRESENTATION. OF COURSE YOU CAN BOTH ASK QUESTIONS AND MAKE COMMENTS.

6 Now turn the page and read McCloud's own suggestions for taking the story in a number of directions. Compare his suggestions to your own.



WHEN A SCENE SHOWS YOU ALL YOU "NEED" TO KNOW, LIKE THIS ONE, THE LATITUDE FOR **SCRIPTING** GROWS ENORMOUSLY.



itude frihed, spillerum
ernal indre
ongruous "som ikke passer ind, ikke giver mening"
minate gruble over

I MAY BE ALONE LIKE THIS FOR A VERY LONG TIME.



IT COULD BECOME AN **INTERNAL MONOLOGUE.**

(INTERDEPENDENT)

PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY **INCONGRUOUS**

"MISSION CONTROL, MISSION CONTROL, DO YOU READ ME?"



(PARALLEL)

MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A BIG **ADVERTISEMENT!**



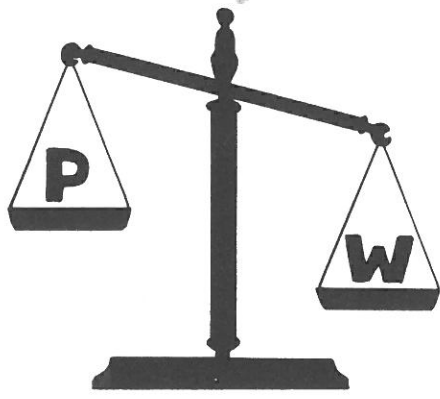
(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON **BROADER TOPICS.**



(INTERDEPENDENT)

ON THE *OTHER* HAND, IF THE **WORDS** LOCK IN THE "MEANING" OF A SEQUENCE, THEN THE *PICTURES* CAN REALLY TAKE OFF.



I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE. THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.

I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER.

lock in fastlæ
take off få fri
convenience nærbutikk
pint (ca.) halv
clerk ekspedi

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID *NO THANKS*. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE AT LAST.

I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS

I FOUND THE LAST PINT OF CHOCOLATE CHOCOLATE CHIP IN THE FREEZER

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID *NO THANKS*. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR. ALONE AT LAST

NOW, ONE COULD JUST *COMBINE* THE PICTURES FROM PAGE 157 WITH THE WORDS FROM PAGE 159 --

--BUT WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OPTIONS?

I CROSSED THE STREET TO THE CONVENIENCE STORE. THE RAIN SOAKED INTO MY BOOTS.

IF THE ARTIST WANTS TO, HE/SHE CAN NOW SHOW ONLY *FRAGMENTS* OF A SCENE.

(WORD SPECIFIC)

OR MOVE TOWARD GREATER LEVELS OF *ABSTRACTION* OR *EXPRESSION*.

THE CLERK TRIED TO PICK ME UP. I SAID *NO THANKS*. HE GAVE ME THIS CREEPY LOOK...

(AMPLIFICATION)

pression udtryk
 mplification forstærkning

PERHAPS THE ARTIST CAN GIVE US SOME IMPORTANT *EMOTIONAL* INFORMATION.

I WENT BACK TO THE APARTMENT--

(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR SHIFT AHEAD OR BACKWARDS IN TIME.

--AND FINISHED IT ALL IN AN HOUR.

ALONE AT LAST.

(WORD SPECIFIC)