

GRAPHIC NOVELS



A Module

Compiled by:

Dr. Ekawati Marhaenny Dukut, M.Hum.

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS
SOEGIJAPRANATA CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY**

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FOREWORD

In the Faculty of Language and Arts of Soegijapranata Catholic University, students majoring in Linguistics or Literature are not only required to speak English actively but also to write actively. There are a number of writing courses to be taken, but all of them are geared so their thesis writing meets the minimum academic standard.

This module, however, is created for students who want to write creatively. Not only will students have a mastery of writing good narratives, but students can develop them in accordance to the theory of writing a story that is developed into a novel with an interesting plot like that learned from the Introduction of Literature course.

As the name suggests, this Graphic Novels module aims to provide students the opportunity of creating their own graphics, too. For that purpose, students are advised to exercise their drawing skills either in free hand or by use of various electronic media and drawing softwares, such as the Adobe Flash or Coreldraw.

I would like to thank the writer of this module for her time and effort of creating such a creative writing course and module. Finally, I do hope that students do benefit from this module.

Angelika Riyandari

Dean of the Faculty of Language and Arts

SYLLABUS

Course description: This course especially prepares students to make graphic novels/ comic books, i.e. a book that more or less follows the Manga cartoon drawing of the Japanese people. Nowadays, in Indonesia, there is a tendency for some children, teenagers, and even adults to enjoy cartoon or graphic books whose characters have big expressive eyes. In order that this book can benefit a wide range of readers, the writer deliberately writes the book bilingual, thus, the explanations are in Indonesian & English. In teaching or giving a workshop, however, the writer delivers her instructions in English, in order that participants have more opportunities to practice their English actively.

Course objectives: The students using this book are expected to

- ❖ know the definition and criteria of graphic novels
- ❖ learn how to practice making narrations with a good plot , type of genre and well structured elements of theme, setting, moral teaching, characters, beginning of story, conflict/ suspense , mystery, climax, flashback/ procrastination, symbolization and resolution.
- ❖ learn how to make use/ apply a number of techniques, in order to produce a graphic comic book on their own or within a group.

Course format:

- ❖ lecture, workshop, individual writing, in-class discussions and group work

Course policies:

- ❖ Students are required to attend at least 75% of in-class time in order to participate in the Mid and Final Tests.
- ❖ 15 minutes lateness is the maximum time for attendance. Other than that a telephone call or text message on the D-day, followed by a written letter acknowledged by a parent/ guardian and Vice Dean of Academic Affairs is required to explain an absence.

Primary & Secondary Texts:

- ❖ Dukut , E. M. (2014). *Graphic Novel Module*. Semarang: Soegijapranata Catholic University.
- ❖ Dukut, E. M. (2015). *Let's Make Graphic Comic Books (Mari Membuat Buku Komik Grafis)*. Semarang: Soegijapranata Catholic University.

Course outline:

NO	TOPIC
1	Introduction: Course description, module, syllabus, target, evaluation, classroom rules, graphic novels – What is it? Why study it?
2	Definition of Manga comic, the type, history of Manga, & things needed in the making of Manga
3	How to draw eyes & facial expressions
4	How to draw hands & feet & superheroes
5	How to write comic panels & choice of typography
6	How to write a good story (Types of genre & Elements of plot: theme, setting, moral teaching, characters, beginning of story, conflict/ suspense , mystery, climax, flashback/ procrastination, symbolization and resolution).
7	Individual presentation & consultation
8	MID TEST
9	How to make comic strip & narrative
10	Drama text, paneling, coloring & text ballooning
11	Graphic Novel process, workshop 1
12	Workshop 2
13	Workshop 3
14	Individual/ group consultation
15	Graphic novel draft & editing
16	FINAL TEST

Course evaluations:

1. Class participation & task = 25%
2. Mid Test = 40%
3. Final Test project = 35%

References:

Cawelti, John	<i>Adventure, Mystery & Romance</i> , USA: The University of Chicago Press, 1977.
Dukut, Ekawati Marhaenny	<i>Let's Make Graphic Comic Books: Mari Membuat Komik Grafis</i> , Semarang: Soegijapranata Catholic University, 2015.
Ellis, Mark and Mellisa Martin Ellis	<i>Writing Graphic Novels</i> , USA: F+W Publications, 2008.
Nachbar, Jack and Kevin Lause	<i>Popular Culture: An Introductory Text</i> . Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992.
Rodman, George	<i>Mass Media in a Changing World</i> . USA: McGraw Hill, Inc., 2009.
Graphics companion	Sherlock Holmes, Superman, Naruto, Barefoot Gen, The Happy Baby Elephant, Blue's Perfect Picnic Spot, Matirete, What is Your Name, Not Allowed to Talk Aloud
Websites:	http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev/prof dev105.shtml http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/How_to_Make_a_Comic/Plot http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/How_to_Make_a_Comic/Script
Youtube:	How to Make Your Own Comic Book - Tips on Writing A Comic Book Script How to make a comic without having to be a great artist The SCRIPT TECHNIQUE (How To Make A Comic Book)

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INTRODUCTION

An expert in the history of comic books, Jim Steranko described the modern comic books as a "dream that instantly developed into a full-scale industry¹." More than just a cultural phenomenon, in America, comic books became a unique art form just like the music, jazz. Although the comics entered into popular culture far more quickly than jazz, it was never regarded as disposable art. People who found the good values of reading comics have the advantage of being considered as literate people.

In the long run, the comics managed to develop itself in the form of a graphic novel, thus, becoming a respectably academic art form of literature. The creative marriage of narrative and sequential art, where drawing and story elements blend together to make something unique, i.e. a tale told through pictures and dialogue, that is separated into single images confined by panels has become what Mark and Melissa Martin Ellis define as a GRAPHIC NOVELS².

COMICS vs GRAPHIC NOVELS

Is there a difference between comics and graphic novels? Or is it a branch of one another? As expressed above, it can be said that a **graphic novel** is a novel whose narrative is conveyed through a combination of text and art, usually in comic-strip form, but with lengthier and more complex storylines. Its layout can be designed in a 'text heavy' or 'text light' form (from many words to none at all). This versatility, henceforth, permits universal reader appeal. They are generally sold in bookstores and comic book shops, rather than in newsagents where regular comics tend to be purchased³. The heavy quality of some graphic novels can be position themselves with the non-fiction books, such as the 'how-to' manuals or autobiographies.

Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher, who are California high school teachers and the authors of *Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet in an Urban High School*, say that graphic novels -- short novels done in the medium of comics -- can be an

¹ Ellis, Mark and Melissa Martin Ellis. *The Everything Guide to Writing Graphic Novels*. U.S.A.: Adams Media, Avon MA, 2008: 1.

² *ibid.*

³ <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/resources/g/graphicnovels/intro.asp> , retrieved 1Feb 2012.

effective means of teaching struggling adolescent readers⁴ who are weak at reading between the lines – or inferencing. Picture panels from graphic novels are usually a good media to identify concepts used by an artist. It is a way out to replacing visual images with words. The panels also becomes a bridge for teaching new information about reading comprehension and writing as well. Frey and Fisher say they use graphic novel excerpts that contain no text boxes to teach dialogue writing. These wordless representations provide a foundation of a story, which gives the opportunity to instruct about the mechanics of dialogue, while utilizing a compelling story.

Frey believes there is importance in critical literacy activity -- the ability of a reader to understand his or her role in the transaction that occurs between the reader and the text. This is because most readers in the 21st century need to be able to analyze what they read and understand the motive of the author and the accuracy of the reading. Graphic novels can offer a forum for these essential reading activities.⁵

It must be noted, however, that comics and graphic novels are usually approached with caution by both libraries and schools. Their content has often been seen as controversial and somehow undermining literacy. Comics and graphic novels are not as highly appreciated as canonical novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice* or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. So, those aiming to use graphic novels in their school will have to understand this negative perspective and be able to show that the huge range of reading experience enhancement can in fact, include the diversity of comic books or graphic novels.

Although comic books have been traditionally produced by a team (writer, pencil artist, inker, colorist, and letterer), very often graphic novels go back to the older production method of newspaper strips where the graphics and story line are produced by talented writer-artists such as Milton Caniff, Will Eisner, and Hal Foster. Mark Ellis and Melissa Martin Ellis, the authors of *The Everything® Guide to Writing Graphic Novels* who outlines the process of comics' creation, from story to panel layout to finished, printed production, are also talented writer-artists who want to show how graphic novels can have a long-life of fans. Graphic novels have entered

⁴ Ellis, Mark and Melissa Martin Ellis. *The Everything Guide to Writing Graphic Novels*. U.S.A.: Adams Media, Avon MA, 2008: 3.

⁵ http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev/profdev105.shtml, retrieved 11 Feb 2012.

the mainstream and are a hot category for both established professionals and aspiring creators. From superheroes to werewolves, Hollywood is increasingly looking to adapt graphic novels into films. *V for Vendetta*, *Road to Perdition*, *A History of Violence*, *The Watchmen* - are just a few graphic novels that have enjoyed immense popularity and have been transformed into big-budget films.

HOW GRAPHIC NOVELS CAME TO BE

As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. If those thousand words are combined with an equal number of pictures, you have what the American art form, calls as the graphic novel. The comic's format of telling stories through pictures is nothing new. But using the story in sequential art is both simple yet complex because it depends a lot on the storyteller to be creative enough to engage readers' interest for a reasonable sitting.

The graphic novel became popular firstly with the outcome of a *Funny Book*⁶. The word derives from the mid-1930s when comic magazines were only reprints of newspaper funny pages.



New Fun #1 was the first American comic book with all original material.

© 1935 DC Comics, art by Lynne Anderson.

At that time, Flash Gordon and Popeye comic books were popularly read by people. The reading public loved them because of the "funnies" which can be read at no restrictions. Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, was the founder of DC Comics. It was he who put out the *New Fun* comic book in 1935. At the time, Major Wheeler-Nicholson had no idea that this single publication defined the modern comic book

⁶ Ellis, Mark and Melissa Martin Ellis. *The Everything Guide to Writing Graphic Novels*. U.S.A.: Adams Media, Avon MA, 2008: 2-8.

and created a new medium of entertainment and artistic expression. In a short time, the term *funny book* gave way to *comic book*.

COMIC BOOK SUPERHEROES

DC comics further established its influence on popular culture in 1938 when the company published the first issue of *Action Comics*, which featured the introduction of Superman. Under the creation of two teenagers from Ohio, Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel, Superman started an entirely new genre that became forever linked with comic books, i.e. the superhero.

Superman was actually created to symbolize the frustration of the poor people of the U.S.A.'s Great Depression. The character was such a powerful reflection of the times that adults as well as children followed his adventures. Unlike we can imagine, as a starting point, the pair could not interest book publishers. However, the authors made their debut when DC needed material to fill out the first issue of action comics. Superman - the Man of Steel sparked the first superhero mania. During the comic book boom or golden age of comics in the 1940s, characters in masks and capes appeared and disappeared rapidly.

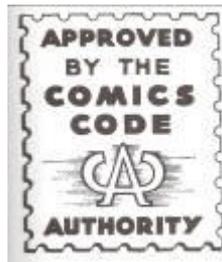
DC filled the U.S. market with their other superhero characters such as Batman and Wonder Woman. The number of monthly comic books produced by various publishers soared into up to 150 million copies per month. Many of them were cheap imitations of Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman, so only a handful survived beyond the golden age.

EMERGENT OF NEW GENRES

By the end of World War II, the market was so saturated with super folk publishers, that everything from educational comics were turned into either adventure or to romance stories. The creators were mostly young cartoonists who aspired to become newspaper strip artists, like Milton Caniff, Alex Raymond, and Hal Foster.

Unfortunately, during the late 1940s the reputation of comics sank. The low-priced, cheaply printed periodicals with garish covers were associated with low level

of literacy for children. By the early 1950s they were even accused of contributing to juvenile delinquency. As a result there was a self-censoring body named the comics code authority, whose function is to screen comic books before they reach the public. Laws were regulated in eighteen states to restrict the sale of comics. It is this code, which verifies whether or not a comic book is free of juvenile delinquency's language and art.



This condition remained with comics until the mid-to-late 1960s, when the Marvel Comics Group finally became popular with college students.

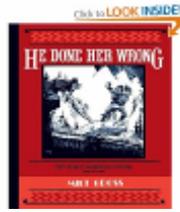
THE COMING OF AGE

By the 1990s, the term *comic book* had been replaced by **graphic novels**, when talking about a publication that contained a complete story arc and an expanded page format of at least **ninety pages**. Although the difference between the comic book and a graphic novel was primarily a matter of packaging, the term graphic novel signaled a higher-end publication, usually with better production values.

What separates graphic novels from other comics is not strictly defined. Generally a graphic novel is considered to be a self-contained story that has a beginning, middle, and end, addressing more mature themes than traditional comic books.

Graphic novels also usually have higher production values as opposed to mass-produced comics. Comic historians consider *He Done Her Wrong*, by cartoonist Milt Gross, to be the first American graphic novel. It was published in 1930, years before the debut of Superman.

Unlike the magazine format of comic books, a graphic novel is typically bound like a standard prose novel, sometimes with both softcover and hardcover editions. They are sold in bookstores as well as specialty comic book shops. They also have a much longer shelf life and remain in print longer.



<http://www.amazon.com/He-Done-Her-Wrong-American/dp/1560976942>



<http://www.amazon.com/Contract-God-Other-Tenement-Stories/dp/1563896745>

Graphic novels have been available in some shape or form for a long time. The actual term *graphic novel* wasn't popularized until 1978 when the two words appeared on the cover of the paperback edition of Will Eisner's groundbreaking *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*. Shortly after that, the term fell into common usage.

In many ways, the graphic novel is credited with the comics field, thus raising the medium's profile to a new, respectable level. Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* made the *New York Times* bestseller list and found a considerable amount of positive attention from the mainstream press.



<http://www.amazon.com/Batman 893428>

In 1987, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons's *Watchmen*, take on superheroes, and was hailed as a revolutionary step forward in the maturity of the genre. In the late 1980s, both Marvel and DC began ambitious graphic novel programs. Other publishers quickly followed with the unconventional material such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* and autobiographical works such as *American Splendor* by Harvey Pekar.

CURRENT TRENDS—MOVIE ADAPTATIONS

Unlike the standard prose novel, graphic novels aren't bound by marketplace trends. However, since the medium is primarily visual, the quality and style of the artwork and the narrative is both the package and the product.

The types of stories in graphic novels are limited only by the imaginations and artistic skills of their creators, which makes graphic novels one of the very few media with built-in cross-platform elements.

Hollywood producers are consequently attracted to graphic novels for a variety of reasons. A graphic novel is much easier to visualize as a movie than a book or even a script. A graphic novel is also already storyboarded so it becomes a potential film. Movies adapted from graphic novels over the last few years are:

- *A History of Violence* by John Wagner and Vince Locke
- *Ghost World* by Daniel Clowes
- *Road to Perdition* by Max Allan Collins and Richard Piers Rayner
- *Art School Confidential* by Daniel Clowes
- *From Hell* by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell
- *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* by Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill
- *The Rocketeer* by Dave Stevens
- *Sin City* by Frank Miller
- *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore and David Lloyd

The graphic novel has also made possible industry professionals to discuss the business and cultural facets of graphic novels, from Japanese manga to superhero comics. According to *Publishers Weekly*, retail graphic novel sales were around \$245 million in 2005, an 18 percent increase from 2004. Thus, bookstores such as

Barnes & Nobles, publishers, and mainstream cultural venues are accepting more graphic novels for their market.

GRAPHIC NOVELS WRITING

Browsing the reference section of a bookstore reveals that there are many guides available to teach writers how to tell a story in a certain way. There are books that instruct readers to write a story the **classical** way. Likewise, there are books that train readers to write a story the **modern** way. There are even books that show readers how to tell a story the **Marvel** or **DC** way. All of these books actually demonstrate one truth about the field of writing. Sean J. Jordan says,

Storytelling is an art, not a science. There is no single style, formula or way to tell a story (cited in <http://www.seanjordan.com/comic-book-writers-guide-introduction> retrieved 22 March 2011)

So, it really deals with the artistry of each writer. In the realm of comics, one of the biggest concerns many beginning writers are worried about is the form of their style.

“How do I write a script?” they wonder. “Should I use a screenplay format, a play format or a novel format? What do I need to include? What should I leave out? How dumb will I look if I do it wrong?”

The answer to all of these questions, of course, is to use a style that fits naturally for you and focus on the **story**. And yet many writers still find themselves preoccupied with scripting **technique** when their energies would be better applied towards scripting itself.

THERE IS NO CORRECT WAY TO SCRIPT A STORY

Some writers would script in a very rigid format, not unlike a screenplay, giving careful stage directions to help the artist portray a character’s movements and expressions. Other writers focus on the dialog, leaving the artist free to make decisions about a character’s actions. Some work by the “one page rule,” which states that if an entire scripted page exceeds one letter-sized page in a 12-point, mono spaced font, it is regarded too long. Others cram as much dialog as they can into a single comic page, hoping the letterer will be able to fit everything in. All of

these methods are valid, and even **common** among professionals. They are only inappropriate when they go against the scripting style a publisher or editor has requested.

STYLES ARE A PREFERENCE, NOT A LAW

Hollywood screenwriters generally use a framework known as “classical” or “three-act” structure to tell their stories. The idea is that the first act introduces the audience to a story’s characters and moves them into action, while the second act tears them down as much as possible so that, in the third act, they can overcome their obstacles and achieve their goals. This style of storytelling has been popular and established since the days of Ancient Greece, and it quite possibly dates back even further in history. It’s proven, it’s compelling, and it’s common. But it’s not the only way to tell a story, nor should it be, because the one thing that makes stories dull is when they become **predictable**.

Ultimately, a writer’s job is not to simply craft a script, but rather to craft a **world** that enchants readers every time they venture in. As you use your pages to examine and improve upon your own writing, please remember: this guide is not meant to tell you **how** or **what** you should write. It is intended, rather, to help you find those answers for yourself.

In recent years, comic books (and their heavier and more academically accepted sibling, the graphic novels) have once again captured the public imagination, thanks to a showdown of movies based on their characters such as *Spider-Man*, *X-Men*, *Ghost World*, and Academy Award winner *Road to Perdition* (Lyga, http://www.writing-world.com/free_lance/comics.shtml, 2011)⁷

In 2001, the prestigious Guardian First Novel Award was granted to a comic book. Michael Chabon won the Pulitzer for a novel about comic books. And bestselling author Brad Meltzer not only credits comics with teaching him how to write, but he also wrote a six-issue run of *Green Arrow!*

⁷ **Barry Lyga** is a writer/editor with eight years’ experience in the publishing trade. He is the winner of the 2002 Mid-Atlantic Horror Writers’ Association Short Story Contest, and his short fiction has been published in *Glimmer Train*, *The Florida Review*, *Into the Blue*, and other publications. His non-fiction has appeared in the *The Baltimore Sun* and *Byline* magazine. He’s also written comic books about everything from sword-wielding nuns to alien revolutionaries. You can reach him at

So, comics are not just for kids any more and they have definitely broken out into the larger culture. With their unique mix of static images and "anything goes" attitude, comics are a very attractive medium for writers.

WHAT COMICS WRITING IS NOT

If comics is regarded for the illiterate and thus positions itself as being a non-academic material, there is a need to clear up a couple of very popular misconceptions about comics. One is that writing comics is easy. After all, a look at a comic book page shows that most of the heavy task is done by the graphic artist, right? For example, there is no need to write "John ran across the field" when the artist has drawn John doing precisely that! This misconception goes hand-in-hand with another: namely, that all comic book writers do is write the words that go into the word balloons. Both assumptions are dead wrong. Together, they are equivalent to saying that if a prose writer were to write nothing but dialogue, she would still have written a complete story.

The fact of the matter is that as a comic book writer, is responsible for everything that goes on the page, just as if you were writing in prose. The artist is actually your partner, not your substitute. So, the duties of a comic book writer is not as easy as it looks because the writer needs to collaborate with another writer, one to whom you must give very good instructions to!

WHAT COMICS WRITING IS

Comic book writing is just as challenging, interesting, difficult, and rewarding as writing a play, a poem, a novel, or a movie. But just as those media have certain rules that proceed from their forms, so, too, do comics.

When you write a comic book, you need to think visually and then you need to communicate those visuals in such a way as to spark the artist's imagination to present them the way you see them. This is both powerful and frustrating! On the one hand, you are giving up some of your authority -- rather than "speaking" directly to the reader, you use an intermediary, who interprets your story, and whenever you use an intermediary, there's always the chance that something can be lost in the

interpretation. But like a game of "Telephone," there's also the chance that so much can be gained! A good artist will take what you imagine and make it more powerful and more accessible for your readers.

Take the example from above: "John ran across the field." If you were writing a novel or a short story, you could start with that sentence and maybe add a detail or two: "The wind whipped a tear from his eye, but he ran anyway, terrified and angry all at once." There is nothing wrong with those sentences, because any reader who reads them will immediately know what to think, feel, and imagine in this scenario. But the emotion of the scene loses some of its impact because the reader first must process the words in order to digest their content. If the same scene were being done in a comic book, it could happen wordlessly: The artist only needs to draw John racing across the field and by using a certain angle, color, shading, balance, perspective, and degree of closeness to the character, the drawing can communicate what the prose above does... immediately. Rather than *imagining* John running across the field, the reader sees it happen. The reader sees John's expression of fear and rage, the solitary tear wicking from his cheek, the strain of his muscles as he runs, and the set of his jaw. A really good artist will pull in the environment, too, giving us trampled wheat in John's wake, maybe some straw blowing around him, and maybe even ominous clouds overhead that mirror his mood.



Couldn't you just *write* all of that instead? Sure. But it would be a lot for a reader to take in and some of the immediacy of the moment would be lost. A comic book can show it all in an instant, and so that is what comics writing is all about.

HOW TO DO IT

The act of writing a comic book is unlike writing in any other media. Some have likened it to screenwriting, and while it does share many characteristics with that

medium, it is a unique form that stands on its own. When sitting down to write a comic book, a writer must be able to hold two mutually exclusive dictums in her mind at once: "Show, don't tell" *and* "Tell, don't show."

"Tell, don't show?" Yes! Even though we've all been taught over and over to write "Jane clenched her fists under the table until she thought her nails would cut into her palms" rather than "Jane was angry," you need to unlearn this when writing comics. You now have two audiences -- the artist and the reader -- and they both need different things from you. Your reader just wants a good story; and your artist needs *instructions* that will lead to that story. Don't expect your artist to divine the subtext and hidden meanings in your stories the way a reader would. Your artist is your ally; don't hold back information or try to play coy: "Jane is angry in this scene." If you like, suggest to the artist ways to get her anger across, but realize that it's your job to decide that Jane is angry; it's the *artist's* job to show it. Give clear, unambiguous instructions, along with suggestions for visuals, and your artist will not let you down.

FORMS

So, how exactly do you get these "clear, unambiguous instructions" across to your artist? There are a wide variety of forms for writing comic books, but two in particular have stood the test of time and are used by the majority of professional comic book writers: full script and plot-art-dialogue.

The **full script method** is exactly what it sounds like: the writer assumes the maximum level of control over the story and the page, writing a script that establishes how many panels per page (and sometimes how and where to place those panels), who is in each panel, what they're doing, and what they're saying. It's a more time-consuming, meticulous method, but it provides a high level of control.

In **plot-art-dialogue**, the writer gives more control over to the artist. She writes a basic plot synopsis of the story, giving an idea of pacing and movement, usually adding character descriptions and setting as appropriate. Often she adds bits of dialogue to help make the story come alive for the artist. The artist takes the plot and breaks it down into panels and pages, making decisions about pacing and structure along the way. The finished art is handed back to the writer, who then writes the

dialogue based on the flow of the pages. The legendary Stan Lee (co-creator of Spider-Man and the X-Men, among many others) used this method.

While both methods have their strengths and weaknesses, neither is inherently superior or inferior. Different artists will respond to each method in their own ways, and many writers go back and forth depending on the artist or the story in question. The following are samples of both methods:

FULL SCRIPT SAMPLE (from Andromeda Press's *Battlestar Galactica* comic book)

PAGE 1: This page is divided into five panels, with the fifth panel taking up the entire bottom half of the page and the first four arranged however works best on the top half.

Panel 1: We see Muffit from above, at an angle that makes it seem as though we must be an adult human looking down on him. He is sprawled out on the floor of Boxey's room, but at this point, all we can see is him, in semi-darkness, alone.

BOXEY (off-panel): --have to say goodnight to Muffit!

APOLLO (off-panel): You're already tucked in...

Panel 2: We're close in on Boxey's bed now. Apollo is gently pushing Boxey back into a laying position, as his son tries to sit up in bed. Clearly, Apollo is fighting the age-old foe of all parents: That one more excuse kids have to stay up past their bedtime.

APOLLO: He doesn't need you to say goodnight to him.

BOXEY: But he gets lonely without me!

APOLLO: No, he--

APOLLO: I mean, he's right over there. He, uh, he knows where you are.

Panel 3: Boxey is laying back now, but he looks defiant.

BOXEY: Then YOU say goodnight to him!

APOLLO: Boxey...

BOXEY: Da-ad!

Panel 4: Imagine that this shot is seen as if from a camera mounted on Muffit's neck, peering over his head and between his floppy ears. Apollo is looking back over his shoulder at Muffit, who is in the immediate foreground, lying on the floor within a line-of-sight of Boxey's bed. If we can see beyond Apollo at all, we would see Boxey's bed, and the reader should realize that Muffit is positioned such that Boxey is directly in his line of sight (if only Apollo weren't in the way...). Apollo has a look of resignation on his face.

APOLLO: All right. If it'll make you shut your eyes...

Panel 5: This is a large panel that takes up the entire bottom half of the page. The panel itself is presented as if through Muffit's eyes, so it's broken up into "panes" that each serve a different function for the robotic "dog." In the largest, master pane we see Apollo crouching down, his face huge and looming at us. His left hand is outstretched and vanishes out of our sight above, only the wrist visible as he pats our head. The expression on his face is one of adult obligation--he is clearly indulging his son, humoring him by petting this drone, though he would never allow this expression to be seen by Boxey. Just slightly to the left and above the master pane, a Status Pane reads: "WAITING... " Below it, the sensory readout panel reads "CONTACT: Skull perimeter."

DAGGIT CAPTION: property PressureDynes: 16

RunSub PressureDetect (PressureDynes)

PressureDetect Return Wag Tail

APOLLO: Goodnight, Muffit.

TITLE: THE CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUR DAGGIT

Notice how there are really two dialogues going on here: I am communicating to the artist and, at the same time, telling a story to the reader. The artist gets all of the information he needs to draw the story and still has some leeway to add his own personal flair and style.

PLOT-ART-DIALOGUESAMPLE (from Antarctic Press's *Magic Priest* comic book)

Okay, then... The first page should be a splash page. This is a flashback to the time of the murder of Crowe's parents. We have a tight close-up of an 8-year-old

Sebastian Crowe's face, his eyes screwed tightly shut, his lips drawn into a thin line, as he suppresses a scream. We get the impression that he has just seen (or was just about to see) something truly horrific, something bone-crunchingly, ball-shrivelling frightening. "And when he opened his eyes..."

Turn the page, and there's Crowe kneeling amidst the wreckage of the living room. Think about details: the couch is disheveled, with stuffing pulled out from the cushions and pillows tossed askew. A coffee table is tipped on end--several magazines that had been on it are now scattered about the floor nearby, some open to random pages. A vase of flowers had been on it as well, and now lies nearby, flowers sticking from it at odd angles, a water stain on the floor. There's an easy chair that has fallen backwards and a television lying, smashed, on one side. The TV had been perched atop a wooden cart, which now is turned at an odd angle and crushed partly into a wall. Crowe is kneeling in the center of all of this. There's an untouched lamp on an end table, both of which have managed to escape the tussle. From overhead, we can see a hanging light fixture. It's one of those sorts with a stained glass lampshade. The shade has been broken, and so hangs from the ceiling, jagged. Shards of stained glass lie below it on the carpet. "...it was over."

Another panel, pulling back and turning a little bit to one side. Now we can see, in silhouette, the bodies of Crowe's parents. Both are lying on their backs, still. Crowe's expression is almost passive. He's expected this. The horror is still a moment away. He's caught in a perfect moment of pre-terror. "They were dead."

Now we move in close to Crowe's face again, as his eyes widen in that initial instant of horror. "When he closed his eyes--"

Now a panel of the present, close in on the adult Crowe, who is passive and at peace, his lips drawn together in a stoic line. He is wearing his sunglasses, which blocks us from seeing his eyes. "--will see you now, Father Crowe."

Crowe turns. Now we can see that is in the antechamber to Cardinal Stark's office at the Vatican. Stark's secretary is sitting behind a desk. To her right, we can see an impressive oak door.

Crowe opens the door and enters Stark's office, which is well-appointed, with oak panelling and a fireplace. The Cardinal himself sits behind a large desk, moving

some papers around. Behind the desk is a large, arched window, with a view of a beautiful courtyard. "Ah, Crowe. Come in. Come in."

Crowe stands before the desk, ignoring the chair. "Have a seat, Crowe."

Notice how much more quickly this moves along. We've already moved deep into the story, several pages'-worth, in fact. The script begins with specific instructions in order to establish mood, but then becomes looser as it moves along. How many panels should there be as Crowe walks into the office and sits down? The script doesn't say. The pacing, the characters, and the settings are all in there, waiting for the artist to evolve them into their finished form. Bits of dialogue help to carry the artist through the story and also serve as "guideposts" so when the dialogues are put in the finished art, there are already examples of how to write detailed characters of the story. To show how writers experience making a comic script, the following is James Aric Keith's experience in graphic novels writing:

WRITING YOUR STORY FOR A GRAPHIC NOVEL (Bringing Your Graphic Novel Or Comic To Life)⁸

James Aric Keith

The problem I have seen so far in my start for my little project, is I have been a hobby novelist (never published) for a long time now. Almost 25 years, to be honest. I have never really thought about being published and mostly just write for myself. For practice, for exercise of my imagination (like I need that!), for the love of building my characters. I have also been at the same level of art for longer than I have been writing.

The problem lies in the fact, that most traditional artists see the graphic novel as a toy, a coloring book that you draw your own lines. Most writers know that it still takes the same attention to detail to create compelling character arcs and that a good plot should be woven into a graphic novel as any other written work, but they also see the comic world as a ruse.

⁸ <http://www.squidoo.com/writing-your-story-for-a-graphic-novel>, retrieved 23 March 2011.

So, walking in to the comic/ graphic novel community as an artist and a novelist, is a bad thing. Especially since I have never been serious about either hobby, because they are used to being in a pocket of their own. Several that I have met are very skeptical of people who have not created anything note worthy since high school 20 years ago.

But, I'm not here to tell you about my troubles. I'm here to help bring the best of art, writing, and comic together so you can make one of your own. With this page I will tell you the importance of story structure and why you should have everything planned out before you start.

The image shown here is the cover that I created for my novel that I am working on as a graphic novel now.



MY STANDARD FIRST STEP

FOR CREATING A STORY OF ANY KIND



Once I have an idea, it has to be cultivated. I usually use a technique by a writer known as the Snowflake Guy. His method suggests that we can use the Snowflake Method to "grow" our story the same way a snowflake's ice crystals are formed. He does this in four big steps, but it can be done in larger or smaller steps, depending on your story.

Starting with the beginning sentence. Now not your "hook" sentence. This is more of how you would describe the whole story to someone else in one short sentence.

Most of the places to post your story or even once the book is written to be published, this sentence will describe your story. See how important it is?

Your first descriptive sentence should have a sense of the plot arc but should offer no spoilers. Typically, literary agents do not even want to see character's names in this description.

"But I'm creating a graphic novel. Most of my story is visually oriented!"

Yes, but that is why it is important to have the whole frame of your story written. You could write it in a script form, especially if you are not going to be doing the artwork yourself. But you need a starting point even with a script.

Part two, actually refers to a written outline of the story. Larry Brooks is the best at this, because every story that has ever hit the big time be it literary classic, comic classic, or movie classic, has to answer Larry's questions:

"What is the conceptual hook/appeal of your story?"

What is the theme(s) of your story?

How does your story open? Is there an immediate hook? And then:

- * what is the hero doing in their life before the first plot point?
- * what stakes are established prior to the first plot point?
- * what is your character's backstory?
- * what inner demons show up here that will come to bear on the hero later in the story?
- * what is foreshadowed prior to the first plot point?

What is the first plot point in your story?

- * is it located properly within the story sequence?
- * how does it change the hero's agenda going forward?
- * what is the nature of the hero's new need/quest?
- * what is at stake relative to meeting that need?
- * what opposes the hero in meeting that need?
- * what does the antagonistic force have at stake?

- * why will the reader empathize with the hero at this point?
- * how does the hero respond to the antagonistic force?

What is the mid-point contextual shift/twist in your story?

- * how does it part the curtain of superior knowledge?
- * for the hero? and/or, for the reader?
- * how does this shift the context of the story?
- * how does this pump up dramatic tension and pace?
- * how does your hero begin to successfully attack their need/quest?
- * how does the antagonistic force respond to this attack?
- * how do the hero's inner demons come to bear on this attack?

What is the all-is-lost lull just before the second plot point?

What is the second plot point in your story?

- * how does this change or affect the hero's proactive role?

How is your hero the primary catalyst for the successful resolution of the central problem or issue in this story?

- * how does it meet the hero's need and fulfill the quest?
- * how does the hero demonstrate the conquering of inner demons?
- * how are the stakes of the story paid off?
- * what will be the reader's emotional experience as the story concludes?

And how, upon closer examination, the list envelopes all of the four elemental components of the Six Core Competencies (concept, theme, character and structure), leaving the other two (scenes and writing voice) to your brilliant execution."

Larry's awesome writing blog [is](#) a definite starting point for anyone who wishes to learn more about the craft of writing. Now that you have answered those questions, you are almost ready to begin.

THE SECOND STEP

THE ACTUAL WRITING

Now that about a week or two worth of planning is out of the way, you should be able to run through your story with ease. You already know what all of the plot points are. You should not encounter any blank page syndrome or writer's block because you already have a plan all the way to the end. And most importantly you should already have that all important connection to your characters.

So the next thing, and it has already been mentioned, is to create your character sheets. Which means you should know their back stories. Why they are like they are. Your characters could explore this in side chapters in your story. Or there could be room for a spin off sequel when this graphic novel is finished. If your story is involved enough, you should be able to think of your core characters as you friends.

I remember reading about Jerry Jenkins, the writer of the Left Behind series, saying that when he started killing off the main characters, it felt like his friends were dying, because he had lived with these people in his head for all of those years during his writing of the series.

That is where you will need to be. Will you need your characters to be memorable, that is. Or, do you want your story to stand above all of the others in your genre? Do you want your story to have enough credibility to stand on it's own with out extra fluff that will only serve to hurt it's integrity as a story? Then, you must build strong characters.

Now they all do not have to be Superman. That was not what is meant by strong. In fact, in most graphic novels these days, the main character has so many flaws, you wonder if they will ever amount to anything. But, create reasons for those flaws. Don't just say they exist because that's the way he/ she is.

In the story, *The Unbeaten Path*, William Barcho is a brilliant scientist who experimented with using electronic scanning to try to "see" other dimensions. But, he woke something that our dimension isn't supposed to even understand, much less even be able to see. That something attacked his family on a fishing trip and sank the boat. Killing all but he and his daughter Meegan. Meegan is now confined to a

wheel chair. He blames himself. Psychologically, he is completely broken. He is Obsessive Compulsive and is living in seclusion on the Nevada desert keeping himself and his daughter alive with a garden that he tends according to his Lakota upbringing in the "old" ways.

He is not a main character. Although he acts in a mentoring archetype, he actually ends up being an unwilling trickster archetype in most of the story, because of his unwillingness to confront, or allow anyone else to, the creature he unleashed.

THE DIFFERENCE IN WRITING A NOVEL AND A GRAPHIC NOVEL

A good **novel** is based on descriptives. How good you are at describing something without being too boringly fluffy, is the key to writing a good story for print.

Yet, a good **graphic novel** is not based on description. You do not need it. Narrative is for scene placement and explaining back story only. It also comes in handy to translating what someone says in another language. You will need to be able to convey your descriptions in your artwork. Body language, facial expression, action lines, and little comic tricks are all very important to create these descriptions.

So how do you approach bringing a novel/ story that is already written to a graphic novel view point? You cannot just say that a character "walks with animal abandon", you have to say to your artist to "draw it!".

So, if you are coming from a novel based story to a graphic novel – your story board is the time to think about each paragraph in your novel. What can you leave out without sacrificing the story? What has to be there to advance the plot? What has to be there to tell the story of the character, especially what actions can convey their personality without saying anything? Start sketching those panels on your storyboard!

DRAWING YOUR STORY BOARD

This actually is not that tricky. You don't even have to be a very good artist for this part. Stick figures are just fine. In fact, I don't even like to do page layouts just yet. Lay out a page in as little as 3 inch or 4 inch squares. Then read your story and draw

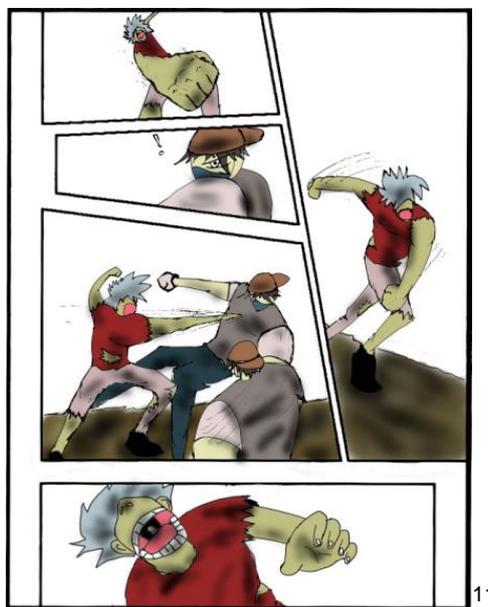
each scene panel. You can even make little notations as to which stick figure is which by labeling. This is not going to be your final artwork. Doodle to your heart's content. But this is where decisions are made.

Look over your panels when you finish your page. Are you offering enough camera angles? Should you use the top, bottom, front, back, or from the side angle?



If you want to create a mystery, usually the angle can be shot from behind someone's shoulder. If you want to create a sense of importance, then you can use a camera angle from the bottom¹⁰. As a bonus, your characters will seem to have movement.

Look over your drawings again. Are your characters too static or not? Decide whether you need to add some filler panels to set a better scene and to suggest more movements in the characters set.



⁹ http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.kcad.edu/uploads/cache/sized/uploads/Image_1-400x602.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.kcad.edu/blog/cartoonists-enthrall-kendall-students/&h=602&w=400&sz=236&tbnid=XDXuVFGmVxm13M:&tbnh=86&tbnw=57&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dcomics%2Bcamera%2Bangles%26tbnid%3Dsch%26tbo%3Du&zoom=1&q=comics+camera+angles&usg=__yHoShhfd5sQZeaDE4nCt-YxZos=&docid=9W20dAvt4_2oCM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=0gg7Ub2RHsvIrQeC1oCQAQ&ved=0CEwQ9QEwBg&dur=9897

¹⁰ Read Machiko Maeyama, p. 59-61

¹¹ http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.kcad.edu/uploads/cache/sized/uploads/Image_1-400x602.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.kcad.edu/blog/cartoonists-enthrall-kendallstudents/&h=602&w=400&sz=236&tbnid=XDXuVF

If you don't like a panel, draw a new one and tape it in to sequence over the one it is replacing, or draw an addendum sheet. At this point, we are not worried about the art. We are getting a feel for the flow of the graphic novel. So, if the theme and flow are not working well, neither will your graphic novel. Thus, you need to solidly set your scenes. Yet, the story board chosen may not be your final decision either. You may get to pencils or even inks before really having a solid feel for your flow. If you have a lot of dialogue, make sure to shift camera shots. As long as we know who is talking, you do not even have to show the characters. Draw a panel of a clock on the wall or other elements of the scene, and arrange your talk balloons accordingly.



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Perspective is also king here. Your scene has to make sense. You might know that an evil demon is hovering above the ground in front of your hero, but if he is drawn so that his feet are touching your hero's hand? The demon is now held by the feet in the hero's hand instead of the intentions you had in the first place.

It's a good idea to have a friend look over the page to objectively find inconsistencies. Or another idea is to set you pencils aside once finished and move to the next page before committing to a decision on the panels. Once finished with the next page, go back and make sure they make sense together.

GmVxm13M:&tbnh=86&tbnw=57&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dcomics%2Bcamera%2Bangles%26tbm%3Disch%26tbo%3Du&zoom=1&q=comics+camera+angles&usg=__yHoShhfr5sQZeaDE4nCt-YxZos=&docid=9W20dAvt4_2oCM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=0gg7Ub2RHsvIrQeC1oCQAQ&ved=0CEwQ9QEwBg&dur=9897

¹² http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.kcad.edu/uploads/cache/sized/uploads/Image_1-400x602.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.kcad.edu/blog/cartoonists-enthrall-kendall-students/&h=602&w=400&sz=236&tbnid=XDXuVFGmVxm13M:&tbnh=86&tbnw=57&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dcomics%2Bcamera%2Bangles%26tbm%3Disch%26tbo%3Du&zoom=1&q=comics+camera+angles&usg=__yHoShhfr5sQZeaDE4nCt-YxZos=&docid=9W20dAvt4_2oCM&hl=en&sa=X&ei=0gg7Ub2RHsvIrQeC1oCQAQ&ved=0CEwQ9QEwBg&dur=9897, retrieved 4Mar13.

A WORD ABOUT LETTERING

The use of lettering is also important in both comics and graphic novels. The fastest way to get laughed out of the comic artist community is the use of Arial, because the capital letter “I” (ice) is like a small “I” (lady).

If you are not going to use your own font for lettering your graphic novel yourself, then you will have no problem. There are certain conventions to use, such as the use of italics and bold or little marks that indicate certain vocal inflections. The free downloadable blambot fonts can be one of your choice to use.



13

They have several different styles to choose from for the genre and theme that you may want to use for expressions like these:



14

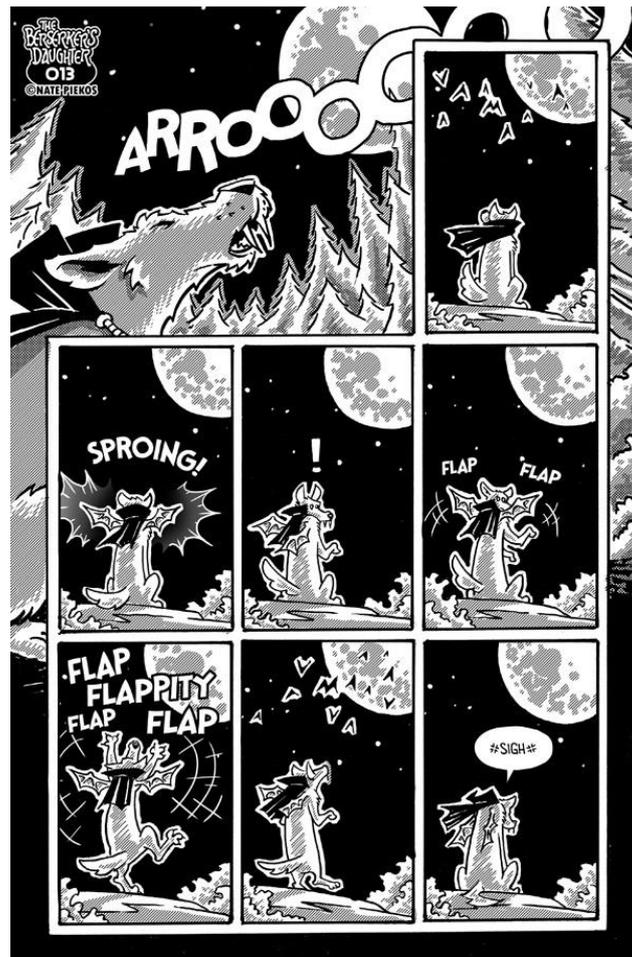


15

¹³ <http://www.blambot.com/>

¹⁴ http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://blog.slq.qld.gov.au/summerreadingclub/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Lettering.jpg&imgrefurl=http://blog.slq.qld.gov.au/summerreadingclub/tag/graphicnovel/&h=503&w=550&sz=24&tbnid=PEec8b_BaBh2bM:&tbnh=111&tbnw=121&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dgraphic%2Bnovel%2Blettering%26tm%3Disch%26tbo%3Du&zoom=1&q=graphic+novel+lettering&usg=__VgFuRhJ9NP4Fjr4nMPxLOuQfO4U=&docid=OaRVBLjJisdfm&hl=en&sa=X&ei=AAw7UfjQAsrhrAeqg4CICw&ved=0CDoQ9QEwAg&dur=575

¹⁵ http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://blog.slq.qld.gov.au/summerreadingclub/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Lettering.jpg&imgrefurl=http://blog.slq.qld.gov.au/summerreadingclub/tag/graphicnovel/&h=503&w=550&sz=24&tbnid=PEec8b_BaBh2bM:&tbnh=111&tbnw=121&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dgraphic%2Bnovel%2Blettering%26tm%3Disch%26tbo%3Du&zoom=1&q=graphic+novel+lettering&usg=__VgFuRhJ9NP4Fjr4nMPxLOuQfO4U=&docid=OaRVBLjJisdfm&hl=en&sa=X&ei=AAw7UfjQAsrhrAeqg4CICw&ved=0CDoQ9QEwAg&dur=575



HOW TO MAKE A LIVEABLE STORY?

Regardless of the kind of story you want to tell for your graphic novel, in attracting readers you need to make your story line liveable. To do so, doing research is a must! For an audience to believe in a writer's fictional world, the devil is always in the details. Connecting dozens of those details like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to form a final, cohesive picture is your goal. Assuming you know the kind of story you want to tell and the genre in which it is placed, then the research to lay the foundation to suspend the disbelief of the readership should be your first task. For example, if your novel has a science-fiction setting, you'll need grounding in basic scientific principles, especially when dealing with space travel or technology.

¹⁶ <http://www.blamobot.com/index.shtml>

USING THE INTERNET

The Internet is an important resource for writers and artists alike. You can consult online dictionaries and encyclopedias, take virtual tours of museums and research the market for your book. Check out these helpful links:

- The Comic Book Writer's Guide to Information on the Internet:

[http://members.aol.com/jayjay5000/Writers Guideindex.html](http://members.aol.com/jayjay5000/Writers%20Guideindex.html)

- Comic Book Resources Forums: <http://forums.comicbookresources.com>

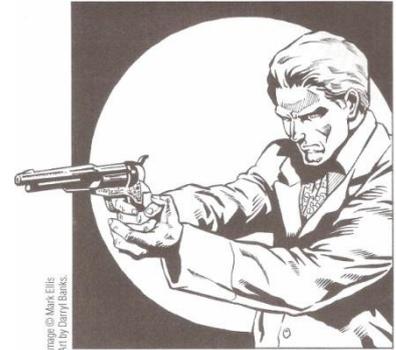
- Tools for Comics Creators:

www.hoboes.com/html/Comics/Creators

- Artbomb.net: A Graphic Novel Explosion:

www.artbomb.net/home.jsp

- Creative Markets: www.hoboes.com/html/Comics/Creators/Markets.html



THE BACKGROUND SETTING

Establishing a believable backdrop for your graphic novel is the result of research. Even fantasy stories need to be believable within context. There are always details that need to seem real, whether they're weapons or eating utensils. If, for example, you're writing a period piece set in the Old West, be sure to thoroughly research the kind of firearms in use during that time. You don't want to give Wyatt Earp an automatic pistol, unless you're writing a time-travel tale.



CHARACTER RESEARCH

If you're using a historical personage as a major character in your story, research everything about that character. In *The Road to Perdition*, the award-winning graphic novel by Max Allan Collins, Frank Nitti, the number-two man of gangster Al Capone, played a pivotal role.

Frank Nitti was also an important character in Brian DePalma's film, *The Untouchables*, the story of Eliot Ness and his investigators battling the Capone mob in 1930s Chicago. In the last few minutes of the film, the audience watched Ness pursue and kill Nitti by throwing him from a rooftop.

In reality, Nitti lived for another decade and took his own life. The storytellers decided to sacrifice the historical reality for the sake of a plot point. *The Road to Perdition* presented a much more realistically drawn Frank Nitti.



THE CURRENT MARKET

Another important area to research is the market for your graphic novel. Thoroughly explore it; look at what is popular among readers and what the publishers are producing, then gauge what trends seem to be selling better than others. Where does your property fit in today's market? Also take note of the packaging, cover design, and title logo designs.

DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT¹⁷

Every graphic novel requires an underlying concept, be it simple or complex. The concept is the basis of your story, and it is only limited by your own imagination and creative capacities. The concept may even have been done before, but if this is the case, it must be given a new twist on an old theme. It must be uniquely your own; its

¹⁷ Ellis, Mark and Melissa Martin Ellis. *The Everything Guide to Writing Graphic Novels*. U.S.A.: Adams Media, Avon MA, 2008:: 21-31

energy is what will drive the story and capture the imagination of your audience. You might even call it the heart of the novel.

THE PLOT

The plot, or the ordering of the events or actions in a story, may not be the most important element of your story, but it provides the framework on which to build your storyline as well as your characters. Plots can be driven by a conflict, such as man versus nature, man versus society, or man versus himself-or a combination of the three.

You don't need much to base a plot on conflicts or struggles. The plot of the *Star Wars* saga stems from these three basic conflicts, as does Will Eisner's *A Contract with God*.

Although the novel is semiautobiographic with Eisner drawing on his own childish experiences growing up in the Bronx, the conflicts are fundamentally the same as those *Star Wars*. In this work, plot and character tightly intertwined.

V for Vendetta, by Alan Moore and Da Lloyd, is a complex tale told from several different viewpoints. Relying heavily on symbolism, it still depicts variations of the three main conflicts. Characters, their interactions and their conflicts, should be structured to drive the toward the heart of your story.

Granted not all plots need to be about physical struggles, but since the graphic narrative form is far more visual than cerebral, you 'ill have to depend on the strength of the art work to carry the reader through your novel.

In *Lakota*, Jason Redquill grapples with coming to terms with his role as a warrior-shaman while he tries to function as a modern academic. Without his internal and external conflicts, the plot could not move forward, or could he interact with the other main characters, such as his mentor Tall Bull and the seductive Catamount. Even so, much of the conflict is presented as a series of physical confrontations.

The ultrarealistic (or slice of life) approach has worked well with such graphic novels as *Ghost World* and *Art School Confidential*, where the actual plot parameters are vaguely defined but are still influenced by aspects of man versus society and man versus himself.

Subplots can be woven throughout the story, either by the introduction of characters or secondary elements that then turn out to be of great importance to the overall plot. In *Death Hawk: The Soulworm Saga*, the search for alien artifacts turns into an unexpected quest for spiritual transformation on the part of con woman Vanessa Bouvier. In this, despite the space-opera treasure hunt, the plot depends on basic human values.

Keep in mind that although it is possible to create a graphic novel that is very light on plot and driven more by character interaction, the readers may not enjoy reading a plotless story unless your characters are very strong and memorable.

Conversely, you do not have to break your brain to come up with an original plot. Execution, how your story is presented to the reader, is the important thing. The plot may be old, but the manner in which your novel is written can make it seem fresh and new. Just don't follow a formula and make it too predictable.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The linchpins of any story are the characters. Although a plot may grow from a convincing cast, only rarely can a plot in and of itself produce convincing characters. A wonderfully innovative plot can be undercut and nullified by weak characterization, and this is especially true in a visual medium like graphic novels.

Characters in conventional prose novels should be memorable, but in graphic novels they must be larger than life, both in mannerism and appearance. They should be as unique as you can make them instead of embodying a laundry list of pop culture cliches. Ideally your cast should transcend the limitations of a single plot, even if your story and your characters are inextricably linked.

Even if your novel is about a single central character, you will still need a cast of allies and adversaries for him to interact with. For example, Bob Kane realized early on that Batman needed someone to talk to and bounce ideas off, and thus came Robin, whose introduction made Batman less fearsome but more human.

Sherlock Holmes has Dr. Watson, and in comics Superman has Lois Lane. The interaction with other people humanized both characters. Secondary players (often known as "second bananas") are important to add complexity and tone. Your hero

can say or do something and his friend/sidekick can either argue or point out something that has been overlooked. It adds a slightly different focus, which can move the plot of your story forward.

In *Death Hawk: The Sou/worm Saga*, the two primary protagonists are a twenty-fifth century salvage expert and his partner, an artificial life form named Cyke. The creature is telepathic and possesses several psychic abilities, hence his name, a pun on *psych*. Not only is he extremely intelligent, Cyke is often more knowledgeable about most things than his human partner, and he isn't above rubbing Death Hawk's nose in this fact.

Ideally you want to create characters, who seem to come to life on their own without providing a great deal of supplemental information. However, this often proves elusive, hence the preponderance of origin stories that can be found for most comic book heroes out there in the market.

In *Lakota*, Jason Redquill enters the scene complete and fully formed. The reader isn't sure of who he is, what he is, or how he came to be, even though several hints are dropped throughout the first section of the story.

Regardless of history or origin story, stereotypical characters or standard-issue imitations of well-known characters would not engender much in the way of reader interest. There is little reason for a reader to care about copies when stories about the originals are available.

Caricatures are a different matter. Since this is a visual medium, portraying characters with big heads, lantern jaws, or scarred faces is part and parcel of the form. Exaggeration is the norm, not the exception.

SETTING AND TIMELINE

Although the setting of your graphic novel is somewhat secondary to plot and characterization, it is nevertheless an integral element that has a great deal of impact on all other aspects of the book. It is the stage on which your characters play out the story, and in order for the action to be believable, the reader must buy that the setting is indeed a real place, even if it exists only in your imagination. A powerful enough setting can become a character in its own right, like Batman's Gotham City.

The advantage of anchoring your novel in a real place is that your reader will already be grounded in reality. One of the reasons for the popularity of Marvel Comics in the 1960s was the use of New York City as a setting rather than a fictitious place such as Metropolis.

Familiar Manhattan landmarks such as the Empire State Building or Radio City Music Hall added an air of verisimilitude to the adventures of Spider-Man and the Fantastic Four. Mood and atmosphere are greatly enhanced by a believable setting, particularly if your story is science fiction or has supernatural trappings. When the setting is introduced, it draws the reader into the scene and orients them as to time and geography, more so if the scene is exotic in some way. *Death Hawk: The Sou/-worm Saga* introduces the setting of the planet Sikh before any of the characters are onstage.



If you place your story in the past, to make it seem real you will have to do a great deal of research. The graphic novel *The Whisperer in Darkness*, set in 1928, required artist Don Heck to consult period reference material depicting cars, fashions, and even small details like wristwatches.

A story set in nineteenth-century Washington, D.C., certainly should not show automobiles driving up and down Pennsylvania Avenue or show the grounds of the White House ringed by protective walls—they simply were not there in that era.

Establishing a timeline is also an important element of your novel. The passage of time within the story shapes the characters and the plot. Graphic novels, being

primarily a visual medium, should have a fast, strong opening and decelerate after the setting, characters, of the plot are introduced.

You can vary the speed of the narrative when new characters and concepts come onstage, but developing scenes and building the drama depends on how your story is paced. The simplest way to deal with time is to follow action linearly from beginning to end.

You could also start the story in the middle of a conflict and then show the events that led up to the point where the story began through a series of flashbacks.

Placing the events of your story in a straightforward sequence has the advantage of showing cause and effect, going from point A to point B, but that also commits you to following what you have already established in regards to plot and character.

Conversely, by starting somewhere in the middle of the story and dropping background information in small hints, your readers draw inferences and conclusions for themselves, yet you won't necessarily be constrained to follow their interpretations. That leaves you the element of surprise, and you can maintain suspense and reader excitement by doing the unexpected.

RESEARCH METHODS

Once you decide what your graphic novel is all about, both the writer and artist will need reference materials, the groundwork of your novel. The artist will need a *clip file*, which contains photographs, artwork, and anything else pertaining to setting or props, from guns to shoes.

Some artists, like the legendary Jack Kirby and the equally legendary Jim Mooney, could draw entire armies and cities from memory. However, artists of this caliber are few and far between. Most artists collect extensive clip (or swipe) files with examples of anything that might be needed.

Many of today's comics artists like to pay homage to their own favorite artists or use certain images or models for inspiration, so they compile their own swipe files of stock character poses, facial expressions, and even perspectives. Famed paperback cover artist Robert McGuinness is credited with saying, "An artist is only as good as his clip file."

In portraying place and objects accurately, both the artist and writer must pay attention to authenticity, and that requires diligent research. Even if the setting is imaginary, you should strive to make it seem as real as possible with a degree of believable consistency in everything that appears in the novel.

For writers, finding references is a bit tougher, particularly if you're writing science fiction and want to maintain plausibility. There are several Web sites that can be consulted for science fiction research, including the Hard Science Sites for Science Fiction Author Research at www.computercrownsnest.com/directory/fdscint.php. If you believe in the world you create, more than likely your audience will as well. Good research is the foundation of your fictional universe.

GENRES GALORE¹⁸

Superheroes and the graphic novel go together like the proverbial horse and carriage. The superhero concept has been synonymous with comic books for nearly seventy years. In the 1930s and throughout the '40s, the superhero represented the best of humanity. Supervillains were rare in early comic books, but corruption in high and low places was commonplace. Evil mayors, police commissioners on the take, and Nazis were the primary adversaries of the superhero.

One of the first and longest-lived approaches in the genre was to combine superheroes into a team, like the Justice League of America and the Avengers. As time went on, the team premise turned into the superfamily, represented first by the Fantastic Four then later by the X-Men.

In *Paladin Alpha: Hellfire Trigger*, the superhero character is the last survivor of what was once a superteam of the future, the Paladins Prime. The first chapter depicts Paladin Alpha's final battle with his arch foe, Lord Rogue. Paladin Alpha is hurled back in time and becomes an amnesiac. He learns who he is and how he came to be at the same time as the reader does, discovering his link with the mysterious Quantum Gauntlet.

In *The Justice Machine: The Chimera Conspiracy*, a superteam family struggles to maintain some resemblance of normalcy while battling their opposite numbers,

¹⁸ Ellis, Mark and Melissa Martin Ellis. *The Everything Guide to Writing Graphic Novels*. U.S.A.: Adams Media, Avon MA, 2008:: 33-46

Department Z, and dealing with the return of an old foe in a new guise, the evil Darkforce. Stories about superheroes by their very nature are larger than life. They feature extreme characters, situations, and even facial expressions. Almost nothing appears in normal human scale.

Costumes that convey a sense of the characters' extraordinary abilities yet do not look ridiculous can be difficult to carry off artistically. In fight scenes featuring two opposing superteams, chaos must be suggested without the scene actually becoming chaotic. Readers should be able to follow the action without confusion.

The biggest problem facing graphic novel creators who want to work in the genre is the competition. Both DC and Marvel pump out an enormous amount of product featuring well characters like Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man. Your own unique character can be done but only by discarding the standard formula of a teenaged superhero who encounters problems juggling homework with his world- saving career. Strive for originality. Although working in the superhero genre is very appealing and a lot of fun, the realities of the competition should be seriously researched before starting your book.

THE CRIME GENRE

The crime genre is one of the most popular in the Graphic novel field. *Crime Does Not Pay*, the first of the so-called crime comics, appeared in 1942. Controversial from the beginning, but also very popular, it was imitated by many publishers with titles like *Shock Suspense Stories* and *Trapped!* Although *Crime Does Not Pay* usually featured fact-based but exaggerated accounts of criminals colliding with law enforcement, it rarely glamorized the gangsters.

By the 1990s, the crime comic was back in favor, showcased by graphic novels such as *Sin City*, *The Road to Perdition*, and *A History of Violence*. Written by John Wagner and illustrated Locke, *A History of Violence* concerns a small town restaurant owner who becomes a local hero after foiling a robbery in his cafe.

When the news report of the incident gains national attention, several members of the New York mob arrive in town to exact vengeance against the man for crossing them decades before.

Crime Does Not Pay enjoyed enormous popularity and reached its peak of sales in 1947 when it boasted a circulation of over seven million, more than the aggregate sales of all comic books sold in the direct market in 2005, according to Diamond Comic distributors.

Road to Perdition, by Max Allan Collins and Richard Piers Payner, delves much more straight-forwardly with organized crime. When the story's protagonist, a Chicago hit man, finds that his wife and a small daughter have been gunned down by a man he trusted, he and his young son set out on a path to find justice.

Sin City is much more fantasy-like, inspired by Frank Miller's fondness for film noir gangster films and 1950s paperbacks that featured hardboiled protagonists. *Sin City* itself is a fictional town in the Northwest plagued by an astronomical crime rate, serial killers, and a corrupt police force. It is like Gotham City but without Batman to act as a mitigating influence on the underworld.

Because of the adult themes of most crime stories, graphic novels are perfectly suited for portraying vicious gangsters and all manner of criminal activities. Violence, sexuality, and profanity are accepted as appropriate in this genre.

Although the crime genre is not as competitive as the superhero genre, the creators of graphic novels focusing on crime should find a unique twist and avoid the clichés of rat-faced informants and pinstriped racketeers. Still, hard-boiled tales influenced by film noir remain popular.

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

Fantasy and science fiction are often lumped together as a single genre, although there are distinct differences between the two. They are best summed up by this statement: Science fiction can possibly happen and sometimes should not, but fantasy cannot possibly happen but should. Both rely on imagination, but science fiction is rooted in some form of fact, even speculative, while in fantasy anything is possible.

There are many subgenres of science fiction to explore, from cyberpunk to postapocalyptic, although the most enduring is still space opera. That is the umbrella designation for everything from *Star Trek* to *Stargate SG1*.

Space opera deals with the exploration of alien planets or is set in a future when such things have long been established. However, there is quite a bit of cross-pollination among the science fiction subgenres. Graphic novels featuring futuristic wars, known as military sci-fi, very often borrow from the cyberpunk and psychological subgenres.

Death Hawk: The Soulworm Saga is set in the late twenty-fifth century when interstellar travel and relations with extraterrestrial races are facts of life. But unlike *Star Trek*, it presents a future that is grim and dystopian. Anyone who is respectable must work for one of the many solar-system-spanning corporations that hold the true reins of power in the Sol 9 Commonwealth.

The protagonist is a freelance salvage expert who, with his protosymbiote partner, Cyke, operates on the rim of the civilized worlds, piloting his fifty-year-old ship, the *Peregrine*. They become involved in a quest to recover artifacts from the long-dead Skril race and in the process are caught up in many intrigues.

Elements of the Indiana Jones films as well as *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* are suggested in the storyline. However, the science-fictional trappings in the graphic novel are based on actual scientific principles.

Just as there are subgenres of science fiction, there are fantasy subgenres, which allow for the crossover of horror elements and romance. Epic fantasy can be defined by J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, featuring the world of Middle Earth where folkloric creatures, from elves to trolls, interact regularly. Role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons* have made epic fantasy part of the cultural landscape.

Sword and sorcery, as exemplified by Robert E. Howard's Conan stories, combines myth and thinly veiled history with horror. As with epic fantasy, magic takes the place of science, and evil wizards, sword-wielding warriors, and beautiful sorceresses populate these stories. Fantasy is an attractive genre, since the stories can take place in any time and on any world. *Elfquest* and *A Distant Soil* are two successes in this graphic novel field.

THE HORROR GENRE

Ironically, comic books like *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, and *The Haunt of Fear* are held partially responsible for the decline of the industry in the 1950s when horror, like crime comics, fell on very hard times. It was not until 1965 and the first issue of *Creepy* that horror bounced back. When the strictures of the Comics Code were loosened, tales of vampires, werewolves, walking mummies, and zombies were once again featured in the graphic narrative.

However, since 1965 the horror genre has come a very long way from tales of vampires, werewolves, and ghosts. Although versions of Dracula and Frankenstein remain popular, many of the conventions established in those seminal works are now considered *passe*.

The elegant, cultured vampires of Anne Rice supplanted the mindless blood-lusting fiends of an earlier day. Vampires who wore ruffled shirts and played the violin became the standard version of the children of the night.

However, the approach taken in *Nosferatu: Plague of Terror* was to return to an earlier folkloric incarnation of the vampire. Based loosely on the silent film *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Terror*, it went back to the roots of vampire legend, depicting vampires as creatures of filth and disease.



In this reworking of the classic tale, Baron Graf Orlock matches wits with Sir William Longsword, a knight he has cursed with immortality who pursues him through history as Orlock perpetuates evil. Their final confrontation takes place in an abandoned church in the Bronx with an army of plague-infected rats prepared to swarm the city. Both Orlock and Longsword perish, but not before the curse of the *Nosferatu* is passed on to an innocent bystander.

Horror works well in combination with other genres, such as mystery and even fantasy, but the overall goal should be to frighten and unnerve the reader.

As an example of cross-genre storytelling, *The Whisperer in Darkness* featured the Miskatonic Project, a group of paranormal investigators facing the Great Old Ones, monsters created by legendary horror writer, H. P. Lovecraft. Functioning as a sort of Depression-era *X-Files*, the Project tracks down the extraterrestrial Mi-Go and destroys their brain-harvesting operation. The story borrows elements from science fiction as well as from hard-boiled detective yarns.

Most graphic novels in this genre tend to be bloody and violent, as well as contain sexual situations. Whatever approach you take with your horror tale, keep in mind that your ultimate goal is to frighten an audience, not gross them out.

THE ADVENTURE GENRE

This is the most wide open of all genres, since aspects of so many others can be seamlessly grafted onto it. Spies, archeologists, soldiers of fortune and femme fatales can race from one peril to another and encounter the supernatural and the science-fictional along the way. James Bond and Indiana Jones films and television series like *Lost* follow the adventure genre blueprint, regardless of the introduction of elements from other categories.

Adventure is the one genre that is always durable and never truly goes out of style. It is also flexible and allows for many different types of stories to be told. Adventure tales can take place in the future, the past, or in contemporary times.

The milestone adventure series told in the graphic narrative format is Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*. For nearly seventy years it has been held as the standard by which almost all adventure comics are judged.

Originally set in 1930s China, *Terry* established the model of resourceful explorers in exotic atmospheres with jungles, ancient temples, planes, and boats as the visual backdrops. Caniff is regarded as one of the masters of the graphic narrative. *Terry and the Pirates*, as well as his later *Steve Canyon* strip, were often imitated but never surpassed. His work provided inspiration for cartoonist, writers, and even filmmakers. His creation, Lai Choi San, the Dragon Lady, became a cultural icon.

One of the most enduring themes in all of literature is that of the explorer, the stranger in the strange and. This concept as reinvented for new audiences by Terry Collis and Bill Neveille in *Explorers*.

BIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

There are two types of biographies in the graphic novel field. One deals with the lives of public figures like Malcolm X and even NASCAR drivers.

The other is known as autobio, it details the life stories of the authors of the work and is more prevalent in today's market. Autobio became popular in the underground comics' movement of the 1960s and over the years was accepted by the mainstream. These graphic novels are usually stories of relationships, personal tragedies, and even comedy.



Autobio does not require a great deal of research, but the creators should be careful about the kind of stories they want to tell. Unless there is a very unusual twist or winkle to the tale, the audience for an angst-filled memoir of life in junior high school will be limited. The creators also should be aware of the legalities involved in using the likenesses of real people without their permission.

Biographical comics are often intended as an educational tool, since they encapsulate the lives of historical figures or events. In this form, an exceptional degree of research is necessary. Throughout the 1960s, biographical comics were a very popular genre. DC published *Bible Stories*, and Dell had an entire line that included the life stories of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Adlai Stevenson, and even the Beatles. Beginning in the 1990s, several independent publishers revived the concept with celebrity and personality comics imprints. These focused mainly on unauthorized biographies of actors and rock stars. A few companies still publish biographical com-

ics for specialized readerships, particularly for young people who belong to various religious denominations.

Although graphic novels in either the autobio or biographical forms have proven track records, the market for them is probably the most uncertain of all the genres. They should be approached carefully, after diligent research and study.

WRITING THE SCRIPT¹⁹

Writing a script for a graphic novel is a far different discipline than writing straight prose. It can be challenging, which is often a euphemism for difficult, and there are certain rules that must be followed. Writing a graphic novel requires you to think visually, and you need to communicate those visuals to an artist. The process is not as easy as you might think, but with practice you can make rapid progress.

Even if you're working as both artist and writer, when you begin to write the script, you'll need to compose the images as a series of panels and present them in a way that the reader can easily follow. Unlike a prose novelist, the graphic novel writer is removing the middle man, the reader's imagination. A novelist uses words to describe a character and a setting, Relying on the reader's imagination to conjure up mental images. Graphic novels take away all of that, showing the reader rather than telling. The fiction writer's dictum of "show, don't tell" is nowhere more in force than in comics scripting. You don't have to tell the reader what an old mansion looks like. The artist provides that from the shutters hanging askew to the bats fluttering around the belfry.

However, you should understand from the outset that you'll be using a form of visual shorthand. If you wrote a prose story, you would describe the characters' actions as a step-by-step progression. For example, in a novel you would write, "Lord Sabbath, annoyed by Bara Morcar's impertinent question, only glared in response." By employing the graphic narrative form the exposition is replaced by a single panel or a close-up of Lord Sabbath giving the off-pane Baron Morcar an icy stare.

If the artist understands the mood of a scene, there is no need for any descriptive adjectives. The panel can be wordless yet still convey all the emotional nuance of

¹⁹ Ellis, Mark and Melissa Martin Ellis. *The Everything Guide to Writing Graphic Novels*. U.S.A.: Adams Media, Avon MA, 2008: 47-58.

exposition. Since it's easier for our minds to process images than text, the old proverb about a single picture being worth a thousand words is particularly appropriate in this instance.

Visual storytelling is less an art than a technique, and it's difficult for even an accomplished scriptwriter to master. When you write, every page must continue the thread of the story, so the progression of panels shouldn't be just a series of static images. You have to keep in mind that the art itself is the catalyst for the story arc; it's the vehicle for the finished product. Keep it moving; actions speak louder than words. Every page should be a self-contained unit, almost a mini chapter within the larger work. The last panel on every page should contain a small *kicker*, something that motivates the reader to turn to the next page.

SCRIPT VERSUS BREAKDOWNS

There are several different approaches to creating the script for your graphic novel. The most common one is to use the method known as *full script*. This form works best if the writer is with an artist, dividing the labor.

A full script is laid out essentially like a screen or teleplay, with all the dialogue complete and all the action described and blocked out in panels. The writer provides both the instruction and stage direction, describing physical appearances of various characters and objects and often suggesting panel composition. Even when working alone, this technique is very helpful.

When writing a full script, you will have to break down the story structure and be very meticulous in the way it plays out through the panels on every page. You can also decide the actual layout of the page, including how many panels to include and even their size. Conveying clear instructions from the writer to the artist is very important. If you describe an angry character in the script, make sure you add enough details so the artist will get that emotion across visually. State up front if the character's teeth are bared, his fists are clenched, or whether his eyes are narrowed or wide. Provide clear descriptions and instructions.

As you can see in the sample script page of *Paladin Alpha* (*right, and opposite page*), there are a number of cinematic style directions, from medium views to close-ups and the individual visual elements in the panels that needed emphasis. The

dialogue balloons are numbered for the convenience of the letterer. The artist Matt Roberts translated the script as well as the stage directions into a well-designed and dramatically composed page.

In this technique, known in the 1960s as the Marvel Method, the writer provides the penciler with the basic plot either as a detailed synopsis or a general overview. This allows the artist to interpret the story in the way he thinks best, taking the responsibility of breaking it down into panels and pages. The writer comes in after the art penciled and provides the dialogue.

When using the Marvel Method, the writer turns over the responsibility of pacing and story structure to the artist, which can be a heavy burden even if the artist enjoys having a great deal of control over the visual elements.

Veteran Marvel artist Don Heck told interviewer Les Daniels that it took him a while to adjust to this practice: "Stan (Lee) would call me up and he'd give me the first couple of pages over the phone and the last page. I'd say, 'What about the stuff in between?' and he'd say, 'Fill it in.'" While he was working on *The Whisperer in Darkness*, Heck was asked which method he preferred, the plot-first or the full-script method. He responded, "Full script-don't make me do all the work!" However, some artists prefer the Marvel Method because it allows them to achieve their full potential, both as graphic storytellers and artists. Our preferred method is the thumbnail breakdown system. It works well for both scripter and artist. With this technique, the writer provides a rough sketch of each page, giving an idea of different perspectives ("camera" angles) and even indication where the dialogue balloons are to be placed so as to achieve the best balance between the text and the visuals.

This method can be more time consuming for the writer than even full script, but in the long run it eases the responsibility on the artist because you have already storyboarded it, controlling the pacing and even indicating different lighting effects. You can see how artist Darryl Banks followed a crude layout to create a beautiful finished page (*below and opposite page*).

FROM CONCEPT TO LAYOUT

Most writers claim they can find stories anywhere, a dictum that the scriptwriters of the *Seinfeld* TV series proved on a weekly basis. The greatest source of fiction is

life itself, even if that life is someone else's. The seeds of any kind of fiction, whether told in straight prose or the graphic narrative, are planted everywhere; therefore, you don't need to wait for inspiration before beginning to write. Often inspiration comes from engaging in the creative process itself, developing an idea into a vague concept and then into a solid premise on which to build a story.

One area of comics scripting that is no different from other forms of writing is developing your concept. Once you've settled on the basic idea for the graphic novel-the blue print, so to speak, then you should start laying the foundation.

After thinking your concept through, place it within the context of your fictional world. It must seem real to the reader, even if it's an alien or fantasy world. Reader identification is essential, because without that readers will have difficulty suspending their sense of disbelief. In this stage you should strive to make your story as coherent, clear, and strong as possible. Visualize your concept by finding pictures that best suit your story's setting and characters. You can stimulate your imagination in this way by highlighting various scenes you want to see in the completed work. However, since this is the graphic narrative form, all of your ideas and visualizations should be in service to the overarching story. Keep the concept in mind, but remember it must be adapted into a graphic dramatization. A good rule of thumb is to reserve pages with the fewest panels for action sequences. If you're working with an artist, always be conscious of how you describe action, setting, and background. Think like an artist and try to translate your concept and ideas visually.

A good way to shorten the distance between the writer and artist is to meet one another halfway. Layout the graphic novel as a storyboard, sketching what you think needs to be conveyed on every page. The storyboard layouts can be as complete or as loose as you prefer, from fairly finished sketches to stick figures.

This approach is common among screenwriters and animators. Even novelists employ the storyboard technique. It permits the artist/writer team to examine the plot points from different perspectives, find weak areas in the script, and make the necessary changes.

With this method you can pinpoint where the story's big moments should occur, even rearrange them for maximum dramatic effect. You can shift your main characters and main scenes. You can decide whether they need to expand or reduce.

Do not be afraid to alter your concept in order to have the best possible shape, and don't hesitate to add into characters and ideas you are struggling with.

DIALOGUE SAYS IT ALL

Writing real-sounding (as opposed to realistic) dialogue is probably the most essential skill you should develop before scripting your graphic novel. In the comics form, many scenes, from big to small, rely almost exclusively on dialog to solidify character and carry the plot forward.

Listen to how people talk, paying close attention to rhythm and vocabulary. Apply that to the voices of your characters. Hear them speak in your imagination, and listen for the qualities that distinguish them from one another. Reading written dialogue aloud often helps the process. However, there is a major difference between real-sounding and realistic dialogue. In the latter, people often stammer, digress, use "uh," or pepper conversation with slang and profanity. Real-sounding dialogue is not what you would hear actual people on the street say; it's a contrivance, a writer's approximation that has been streamlined and edited down for dramatic effect. The dialogue in movies is often as to the point as that in comics scripts.

In prose, the practice of writing dialogue in a dialect is frowned upon, but it has been an accepted convention in the comics form for many decades. For example, if one of your characters is a 1930s gangster from Brooklyn, he might speak in the vernacular of the time, such as "youse" for "you" and "dese" for "these".

In the graphic narrative, learning to balance the dialogue with the action is an important consideration. The pacing of a page, the rhythm of the action in the panels, must be taken into account so the dialogue accommodates it, not impedes it. Will Eisner pointed out that there is an almost mathematical relationship between the placement of word balloons and the composition of the individual panels in which they appear.

The writer and the artist should strive to suggest the illusion of a brief time lapse in a dialogue exchange between characters. In a sequence from *Lakota (below)*, artist Jim Mooney struck the perfect balance between the dialogue balloons and the composition. He altered the perspectives and matched the facial expressions to the

information being conveyed. In this way, a character was established and the plot advanced in a seamless blending of words and art.



Unfortunately, one of the perennial drawbacks of relying on dialogue to move the plot and solidify character is that the artist may find himself illustrating a series of static talking-head panels. This is an all-too-common pitfall, but the writer and artist can work around it while developing the storyboard. Scenes should be written that serve as visual counterpoints and complements to the dialogue without overwhelming the art.

TEAM BUILDING

If you look at each component of the graphic novel as a construction project, with each member of the crew assigned to a special skill area, then you'll be able to work methodically toward building a final, complete structure. But remember when you work with a team, you'll have to coordinate your efforts and be respectful of each other's strengths and expertise. If the writer and penciler collaborate closely, all other aspects of the project will fall into place much more harmoniously.

Naturally, if the scripter and penciler are the same person, it isn't hard to coordinate things to ensure everyone is on the same page, but that arrangement may present its own unique and different problems at some later stage, mainly those derived from not having the many benefits of collaboration.

The old cliché about two heads being better than one does have its merits, not the least of which is having someone to watch your back, double-check your spelling

and research, and generate ideas that you hadn't thought of, not to mention halving your workload.

THE WRITER

The story itself begins in the imagination of the writer. Regardless of the arguments and discussions over the years about whether the writer or the artist is the most important contributor, the process can't even begin without the basic idea or concept, the infrastructure upon which the graphic elements are based.

To write a graphic narrative you'll need the same skill set as any other writer—a facility with language, knowledge of grammar and the rules of punctuation, and a good imagination. You'll also need to understand the fundamentals of storytelling, and that begins with the framework.

The framework is the underlying theme that serves as the focal point of the narrative. The creators must give the reader a framework that is immediately and easily recognizable. This is one reason that superheroes have been such a mainstay in comics for so many decades. Yet commercial considerations sometimes limit the thematic range of the graphic novel.

The theme does not have to be complicated or even particularly original to grab the reader, but you must be sure it is a theme your artist feels strongly about. When putting the framework together, keep in mind the importance of character development. Be conscious of striking a balance between all of the following elements: theme, plot, setting, storytelling, characterization.

Always strive to build reader identification and empathy for your characters. Although the theme is not necessarily the major component of the finished work, the form itself is very important. The comics storyteller must think in visual terms, building the story through a series of images utilizing a type of visual shorthand similar to a screenplay.

The writer's eye and the artist's eye are equally important when working in the graphic narrative form. If, as the writer, you are going to let your imagination run wild, you also need to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the artist and tailor your ideas to showcase his strengths. For example, if you were working with

an artist who is not experienced in drawing horses, you would not want to write extensive scenes of cavalry charges. Write to your artist's strengths, not against them.

One of the axioms of fiction writing is "show, don't tell" and nowhere is this more appropriate than in the graphic narrative. Reduce the number of static talking-head scenes and avoid them altogether whenever possible.

However, in instances where the narrative must be the dominant feature of a page or a sequence, you have little choice other than to get the text do the job of carrying the story forward. In this case, particular care needs to be paid to keep the writing strong and focused.



THE ARTISTS

Whether a graphic novel is successful is often due to the penciler. If and when you wear the artist's hat, you'll find out very quickly the nature of the graphic narrative requires you to do more than just draw pretty pictures or do character sketches. The artist creates the whole world in which the story takes place. You only have seconds to get the reader's attention. In a novel or short story, the opening line or narrative hook is consciously designed to grab the interest of the reader. In a graphic novel, the artist must rely on the first visual-often a splash page-to keep the reader turning pages.

This is often achieved by presenting a powerful and memorable image combined with evocative text. More attention and care is frequently lavished on this page of a comic book or graphic novel than on any other.

Just as the writer must know grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, the comic artist must understand character design, perspective, proportion, light and dark values.



Watch for the kind of emotion that actors project when they are angry or frightened, and pay attention to how they convey these emotions without a word of dialogue being spoken. The angle of the eyebrows, the set of the mouth, facial lines – all these cues will need to be drawn by the artist so it can help readers know the thoughts of the characters

Also, perhaps most importantly for an artist is how to tell a story in a sequence of images. Although the artist has a bit more freedom than the writer to utilize caricatures rather than ultra-realistic renderings of people and places, the context must still be accepted as believable by the reader. To endow her images with atmosphere the artist may choose to use solid black masses or render the backgrounds in a minimalistic sketchy style. The range is infinite.

The penciler lays out the fictional world, the inker follows his lines, hopefully interpreting them faithfully, then the colorist brings the black and white world to life and sets the mood with her own interpretation of the original art. The letterer is an artist, too, and you'll learn more about her role in the next section of this chapter.

One of the main reasons superheroes have been essential in comics for so many decades is that, until recently, they were very difficult to believably present in other media, such as film.

The comics artists who drew them were unrestricted by the confines of realism. Jack Kirby, the undisputed King of Comics, was legendary for his powerful drawings and grand imagination, which often outstripped the ideas of his many writer-collaborators.

When working with a writer, all the artists involved in the project must translate the scripter's descriptions and words into images, but they need not mindlessly follow the letter of the script. As in the case of Jack Kirby, individual style and approach frequently enhances the script, not hinders it. Be sure to discuss your

ideas with the scripter when possible, as a radical departure from the script could conceivably cause future problems.

Certain kinds of stories are best illustrated with certain types of styles, appropriate to the theme and content. However, the skills of many artists are quite versatile, even if they prefer one genre over another.

For example, Don Heck was known for his many years of work on Marvel superhero titles, yet he felt his best work was featured in less flamboyant stories, such as the characters of *The Miskatonic Project*. The artist should focus on the kind of narrative that best suits his style, if for nothing else, so that he and the writer will share the same voice and vision.

LETTERER

What many people do not realize (until they try to do it themselves) is that lettering is really an art form. The work of the letterer not only conveys the spoken word in the form of narrative and dialogue, but it also depicts sound effects that enhance the reader's perception of what is taking place on the page. Poorly done lettering and sound effects can detract and distract, so great attention to detail is essential here.

The letterer is not only responsible for word balloons but also bursts, sound effects, and titles. She is usually a person who is very familiar with comics, highly skilled in lettering, and has some general knowledge of typography.

Hand lettering requires great skill, patience, and practice, practice, practice. Hand letterers are worthy of great respect and appreciation for their skills, not only in calligraphy but also in the artistic depiction and placement of word balloons and sound effects. Although traditionally letterers have worked directly on the original artwork, they only did so after they had thoroughly learned their art. Develop your lettering skills on practice paper and save the original artwork until you feel very confident that you can do a professional job. The following is the various kinds of lettering one can do:



COLORIST

Color plays an important role by focusing attention on important points of the narrative. It sets mood and conveys atmosphere quite effectively, too. While coloring may not be within your budget (if you are self publishing), it's still good to have some general knowledge on this topic.

As penciling and inking is an art, so is the work of the colorist, although in years past it was the work of craftsmen. Before the advent of computers, color printing used the cut-color process for separating colors into CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black). The process used by comic book companies was to color photostats of their black line drawings and use acetate overlays to represent the different CMYK colors, which were then made into negatives and burned onto printing plates for the four color process.



Three pieces of acetate were lined up on top of each other over the artwork page. Where the film was cut away from the acetate, ink would not print. Where the film remained, the camera negative would leave a blank spot and ink would print.

If this sounds complex, that's because it is. It also explains why early comic books printed on newsprint used a limited color palette, almost always solid greens, reds, blues, and yellows. The color sections of the Sunday comic strips had a wider range of colors available to them.

Dr. Martin's Dyes were the industry standard for coloring comics for decades. These watercolor inks enabled the colorist to achieve a nuanced and sophisticated effect never achievable by cut color. Most color processing in the first fifty years of comic book production was rushed if not downright crude. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, colorists began using Adobe Photoshop and other software. Now almost all comics and graphic novels are colored on computers, and a vast palette of hues, gradients, and effects are now available.

HOW TO MAKE COMICS: THE STEPS TO CREATING AND ILLUSTRATING A COMIC BOOK

Pencilers, inkers, colorists and letterers = comic ²⁰- *Alina Bradford*

It takes more than one illustrator to create a completed comic book. The penciler, inker, colorist, and letterer are all important to the process.

Many people don't realize how many different kinds of illustrators it takes to create a comic book. After the writer is done writing the story, breaking down the pages and panels, and deciding the dialog, the script is handed down to the first in a line of artists, each with a special talent that is specifically used in comics.

Pencilers

A penciler is the first illustrator the script comes to. This illustrator's job is to take the writer's directions and form them into pencil drawings.

First, the penciler does preliminary sketches to decide how the scenes will look in each panel. These sketches are very loose and are not meant to be a permanent part of the finished comic.

Stefano Camelli Illustrator and Storyboard Artist Illustratore e Storyboardista
www.stefanocamelli.com

Cari Mobil Second? Kondisi mulus,berkualitas di Bursa jual/beli mobil terbesar!
mobil.tokobagus.com

Next, the penciler does what is called "pencils". The comic characters are penciled into the panels, given details, and basically are brought to life.

²⁰ Jul 21, 2008

Last, lines are cleaned up and Xs are added to areas where the penciler wants the inker to make a section completely black.

Inkers

The script and pencil drawings are then passed on to the inker. The inker is responsible for adding ink to the drawings. They go over the drawn lines done by the penciler and add shadows, texture, and bold lines by using creative inking techniques. This is usually done with fountain pens and pots of India ink. Corrections are done with white inks.

Colorist

After the inker is done with the comic, it will go to the next illustrator, which is a colorist. Up until this point, the comic has been black and white. The colorist adds color to the comic.

Traditionally, all color was added with markers, watercolor, and colored inks. Today, a colorist can scan the black and white comic into a computer and add color with programs such as Photoshop.

Letterer

The last illustrator that the comic will go to is the letterer. The letterer adds speech balloons, captions, and sound effects. These three types of lettering are very important to the feel and look of the comic.

- Speech balloons are the words spoken by the characters that are incased by balloon shapes.
- Captions are little boxes of text that set the scene for the reader.
- Sound effects are words such as “boom,” “bam,” or “zap” that are used to show sound in a scene. Many times the words are illustrated to look the way they sound. For example, a “zap” may be drawn with zigzagging, lightning-like letters.

Lettering once was done by hand, but, much like coloring, many artists do lettering with a computer program, today.

All of these illustrators work together to create the illustrations one sees on a comic book page. This process can take three to four months, sometimes longer, but it ends up being a unique collaboration that is rarely seen in the art world.

HOW TO MAKE A COMIC BOOK: STEP BY STEP

Andrew Dewitt²¹

Overview

Comic books tell bold and exciting stories with a combination of colorful characters, speech bubbles and bright colors. Creating your own comic book is a dream that many young authors and illustrators carry within them. However, creating a comic book can be done regardless of age or skill level.

All you need is a love of storytelling, brave heroes and heroines and a fantastic adventure. Once you have put together your own comic book you can give copies to your friends to show them your unique comic book.

Step 1

Research what comic books you like. Note the style of the illustrations and what types of heroes and heroines are in these comic books. Comic books can vary widely, from futuristic space operas, to detective dramas, even to medieval adventures. Note the style of drawings and which ones seem to leap off the page at you. Strive to emulate the best parts of the comic books you love while creating your original world.

Step 2

Create the characters for your comic book. Draw a blueprint for each major character so that you can use this as a reference while drawing your comic book. Create these characters using a basic frame. Draw an oval for the head, rectangle for the chest and an upside down triangle for the pelvis. Create the legs and arms with simple lines. Layer on muscles with oblong football shapes. Major muscles like the pectorals

²¹ www.mania.com/to-make-comic-book-stepstep_article_116444.html - retrieved 12 April 2011.

and quads can be drawn with large oval shapes. Smaller muscles like biceps and triceps can be done with smaller, more-round oval shapes.

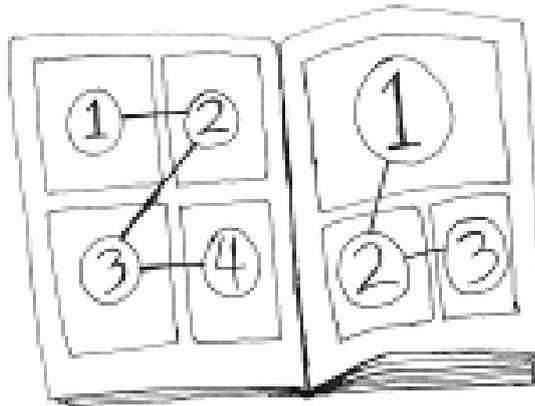


Step 3

Create the costume for your hero. Take into account what kind of hero or heroine you are creating. For instance, if your character is stealthy and lurks in shadows, then dark masks and black clothes should be used. If your character is a bold and strong hero, perhaps consider bright colors and a flashy cape.

Step 4

Lay illustrations on a comic book page. These should be on pages that are 11 inches wide and 17 inches long. This will allow you to draw larger than needed and reduce the image, which will improve the quality. Lay out your comic book panels using a "Z" format that allows a reader to follow the action from left to right, diagonally left and then right. Another way to lay out a page is to start with a large picture showing a lot of action and then continue diagonally left and to the right for smaller frames that help support the main action.



Step 5

Ink your pages using a black ink pen. This will help the illustrations remain crisp and highly detailed even when they are reduced in size. Place thicker lines of black wherever there is a shadow. Let each page dry completely and then carefully erase your pencil strokes with a kneaded eraser.

Step 6

Color each page using art markers. Make a photocopy of your inked work before coloring the comic book to preserve a black and white copy of the book. Once the comic book is completed you can take each finalized page to any copy shop and have the book bound and printed. Keep in mind that a black and white comic book will be much cheaper to print than a color comic book.

HOW TO MAKE A COMIC PLOT²²

1. Decide how you would like the style of your comic to appear. If you are not sure what to do, take a look at other comics for ideas. Examine the color schemes used, how lines and shapes are drawn, and other elements that will make it distinct.
2. Write your story. This doesn't need to be a full script or something that would read like a book. Just get your ideas down.

²² Wikibooks, open books for an open world
http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/How_to_Make_a_Comic/Plot

3. Draw your characters and settings. Practice different poses and expressions that you may use.
4. Design your layout with the various panels (boxes) that will contain your story. Sometimes doing this as a thumbnail (smaller sized) sketch will help you figure out the basics without the hassle of drawing it out at full size (possibly several times) to figure out the basics of your page design.
5. Draw a story with speech and thought bubbles. Use a web system where the text can be replaced in other languages, for translation.
6. If you would like to add color, do so using colored ink.
7. Staple together and you're done!

HOW TO MAKE A COMIC SCRIPT²³

1. Before you begin, have a plan. Do some rough sketches and layout ideas before you jump head first into your final page. You want to try to solve as many problems as possible to avoid them while they are still easy to fix.
2. Check your spelling! Have a dictionary or word processor handy if you are not sure. You may also try typing your dialogue into a word processor or other computer program that has a spell-check feature.
3. Run your ideas by another person. Sometimes a second (or third, or fourth, etc.) outside opinion can shed light on problems you didn't see, or provide suggestions that can make your comic even better. Sometimes you can get so involved in making it, it is easy to miss even the simplest things.
4. Draw what you draw best. It's much easier and relaxing than struggling with things you haven't tried drawing before. (Then again, it is important to push yourself in order to get better.)
5. You can make your comic as intricate or as simple as you please, you are the creator of it after all.
6. Get comic creating,

²³ From Wikibooks, open books for an open world
http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/How_to_Make_a_Comic/Script

7. Most importantly have fun, its no use trying to make a comic book and not enjoying the process.

You can also use these guidelines to help create a graphic novel:

Title:

Writer(s):

Artist(s):

Fiction/ Non-Fiction:

If non-fiction, what is the subject area? How well does it cover the area?

Is it genre fiction?

Is it physically well-produced and attractive?

Is the storyline imaginative, coherent and interesting?

Is the text legible or is it obscured by illustration? Is the text hard to follow? Why?

Is the language accessible and appropriate?

Does the cover art do justice to what is contained within (and vice versa)

If the images are black and white will they appeal to the target audience?

Is it printed in color?

Is the printing of high quality?

Are the illustrations of a high technical and artistic standard?

Do the illustrations merely adhere to the narrative sequence or do they provide a commentary, counterpoint, or expansion on the written word?

Do the illustrations move the story forward? Are the words and pictures interdependent?

Does the graphic novel make full and creative use of the full

range of comic strip grammar and conventions?

Are techniques from the language of film used? (such as flashbacks, establishing shots, tracking shots, close-ups, high and low angle shots, etc.)

Who is the intended audience in terms of age and gender? Are there several potential audiences?

How does the book deal with issues of race, gender and class?

If violence occurs is it gratuitous, or a necessary part of the plot?

If this book was going into a public library collection, where would it be located? Adult? Teen? Child?

How could the book be used in the classroom?

FINANCIAL RESOURCES & COMMITMENT

Eventually in every creative endeavor the topic of costs rears its ugly head. If you feel that your concept and ideas are unique enough to be commercial and that you have the enthusiasm to carry through with all the steps necessary to complete the project, there are some facts that you should consider. First, printing costs have continued to increase over the last decade, and the cost of producing your graphic novel must be evaluated realistically.

Next, you need to know a little about the pre press production to assess what a project will cost and what your profit will be. (Chapter 7 covers the various production steps involved for a graphic novel, from script to coloring.) Some creator-owned properties are produced as solo efforts, as in the case of Frank Miller, Mike Mignola, Art Spiegelman, and John Byrne, but more are produced as a collaboration between several creators, usually a writer and an artist, like Richard and Wendy Pini, or Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster.

Obviously, the fewer people involved in the project, the less the profits will have to be split, but conversely, if more people are involved, the production time and workload will be reduced as well.

If working with others, even close friends or family members, be sure to draw up an agreement in writing, before publishing, which spells out what everyone's role in the project is and what the compensation for their efforts will be. This will help avoid any disagreements at a later point. All parties to the agreement should sign it and retain a copy for their records.

If working alone, this of course will not be necessary. What will be required is a strong work ethic and a well thought out production schedule. Whether working alone or with others, a deep commitment to the novel and a strong work ethic are required to undertake a project of this complexity.

Writing, penciling, inking, coloring, and lettering a ninety-page graphic novel is not for the faint-hearted. If you feel that you are up for the challenge, here are some facts you should know:

- Research shows the average independent comic book costs anywhere from \$400 to \$800 per page to produce. This is before printing costs are factored in. A graphic novel should be at least ninety pages long.

- Have sufficient resources to carry you through, specifically six months to one year's expenses, if you're working on the book full time plus enough money to pay print production costs, promotional costs, and enough to hire a lawyer and accountant to take care of those pesky business details when setting up your business.

- Different business models apply to small, independent publishers versus big corporations. If they keep their page rates low, independent publishers make all their money on the back end of the project. Be sure any collaborators are aware of this fact from the beginning.

If you're a Renaissance man or woman and can write as well as draw, you're in luck. Your project may take longer to produce, but it will undeniably reflect your unique vision of the book and you can avoid the conflicts that sometimes arise among multiple creators. Best of all, all the profit and glory will be yours.

ATTITUDE AND DETERMINATION

If you have researched the preliminary information about the process of creating a graphic novel and the fire still burns in your heart for the project, congratulations: You may be the rare individual who has what it takes to succeed in the business of comics and publishing. If you have done your homework and considered the practical aspects of your project, you'll be well positioned to prepare yourself for the various hats you'll have to wear during the process.

FAME AND GLORY

It takes a lot of energy to keep the creative fires burning during production and the challenges you will face before you eventually see your name on the cover of your finished graphic novel. If your primary motivation for the project is the thought of celebrity and riches, this is the time to rethink your approach. But if your primary motivation is the simple burning need to tell your story, you stand a much better chance of weathering the storms that inevitably will arise.

PROPER PREPARATION

An understanding of the process and realistic planning for the project will help you navigate through the many minefields that await the novice. This is not meant as discouragement; plenty of people with a dream have achieved their goals and seen their books in print. Most of these fortunate individuals have drawn up a plan and followed it step by step. It's not rocket science, and proper preparation will get you to your goal.

IT PAYS TO BE POSITIVE

If you have done your research, gathered your resources, and checked your motivations, feel confident in proceeding with your project. Ignore naysayers and snipers of negativity. There will always be those who can't achieve their own dreams and try to squash the dreams of others. Let those words roll off your back. A positive attitude at this stage is your greatest ally; it will see you through any minor setbacks

TIME MANAGEMENT

Entering the dangerous waters of time management is the bane of all creators, writers, and artists who may not have as rigid a standard in this regard as most people. From long experience, we have a few tips and suggestions to offer in this matter. Trying to juggle and balance everyday commitments from work to family often seems like a strenuous series of gymnastic tricks. Some may be obvious, but all bear mentioning.

SCHEDULE YOURSELF

Although it is easier said than done, reserving a block of time per day or per week to work on your graphic novel is an essential first step. Treat this time as if you were at a regular job, resisting interruption wherever possible.

Some people balk at the very idea, but establishing a daily or weekly quota for yourself is one sure way of getting the job done. All too often the real world intrudes into your creativity, bringing on both frustration and conflict. This is the point where it is vital to remind yourself that you are the boss who set the quota and that you have to live up to the commitments you made to yourself and your goals.

ORGANIZATION IS YOUR FRIEND

Getting organized doesn't always come naturally to creative people. Therefore, trying to organize time, material, and mindset on a schedule isn't easy, but it must be done.

Make a list of every possible step along the way that you may need to keep track of. Laying events and deadlines out in loose chronological order really helps in planning.

Keep your time management practical, realistic and within the parameters of your personal situation at home or at work. Keep in mind that things always take a lot longer than you think they are going to. A large desk calendar work flow chart will

help keep you well organized as well as help you plan realistically and track vital deadlines.

A Rolodex or some other system for organizing contact information is vital. Microsoft Outlook and other organizational or project tracking software work quite well, too, as long as you regularly back up your computer files to a CD or flash drive. Few things are a bigger waste of time or more frustrating than losing your vital contact information.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

Set the goal you want to achieve every day you work on the graphic novel, but stay flexible-leave yourself and the project enough room to be retooled or reworked as new ideas or concepts occur to you. One of the few benefits of being your own boss is the ability to cut yourself some slack, but be sure this option doesn't become a regular habit. Striking a balance requires maturity and a sense of responsibility to yourself and others. There is a great sense of satisfaction to be gained as you see the project coming closer to fruition each day.

CONTACTS IN THE INDUSTRY

Not unlike the film industry, achieving success in the graphic novel field is often as much a matter of who you know as what you know. Making contacts in the comics arena is not necessarily a prerequisite to success, but getting to know editors and other creators can help you reach your goal, and it can keep you in the creative loop and increase your odds of success.

CONVENTIONS

Attending large comics-oriented conventions such as the Atlanta Comic Convention, MegaCon in Orlando, the Big Apple Comic Can in NYC, and the San Diego Comic Can is a great way to meet fellow creators and industry professionals. But if you are too far from a big city or your budget does not permit the expense of travel and hotels, there may be a smaller convention nearby or in your region. Web sites such as www.comicbookconventions.com/conventions.htm

and <http://comicon.com/index.htm/> are a great way of finding conventions near you.

CREATOR SIGNINGS

Scan the Internet and local papers as well as bulletin boards in bookstores and comic shops for book signings in your area. This is a great opportunity to network one-on-one and to get a chance to talk to an industry professional, who just a few short years ago may have been where you are now. Don't try to show your portfolio at this time, but if you strike up a rapport, showing a few sketches might be in order.

COMIC STRIP SAMPLES:

Adjectives

by Ms.Minihan²⁴

Teaches ESOL students about adjectives by using comic strips. See her sample below:

SCRIPT:

HELLO. TODAY WE WILL TEACH YOU ABOUT ADJECTIVES.

ADJECTIVES ARE FUN!!

YES. ADJECTIVES MAKE LANGUAGE INTERESTING.

LET'S LOOK AT SOME EXAMPLES.

I AM UGLY.

I AM BEAUTIFUL!

I AM TALL.

I AM SHORT!

²⁴ devised: Friday, 5 November 2010

I AM THIN.

I AM HEAVY.

I AM COLD.

I AM HOT.

I AM FAST.

I AM SLOW.

THE DESK IS MESSY.

THE DESK IS NEAT.

IT'S NOT DIFFICULT!

ADJECTIVES DESCRIBE NOUNS:

GOOD

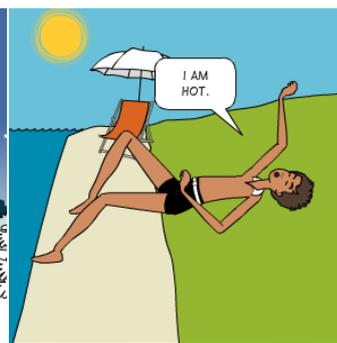
BIG

EARLY

YOUNG

COLD



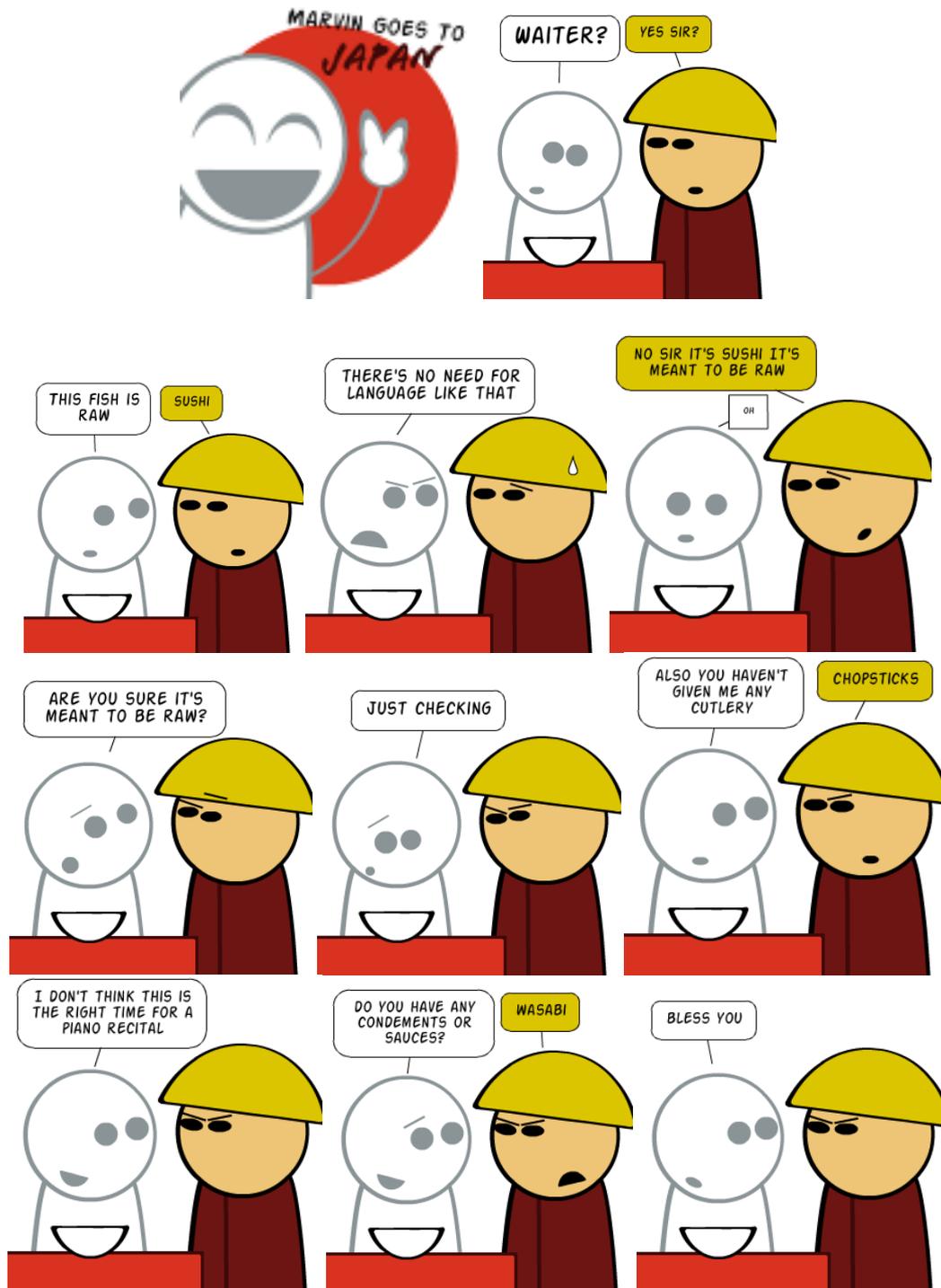


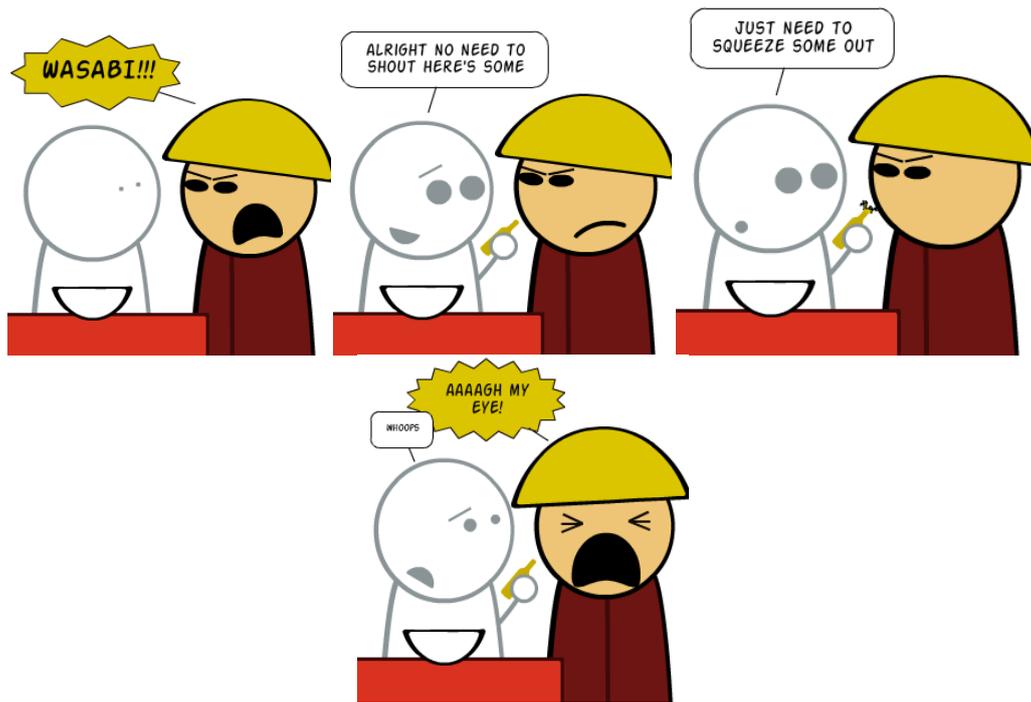
ADJECTIVES DESCRIBE NOUNS.



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MARVIN GOES TO JAPAN





<http://www.pixton.com/ph/schools/gallery/39f1mto4>, retrieved 28 February 2012

TOWARDS MAKING YOUR FINAL PROJECT:

1. Discuss in groups a topic, a theme, a moral teaching, and what age group you want your readers to be in. Consult the result of your discussion.
2. Make a story script, as though you are writing a novel. Consult the script.
3. Think about how many panels you will allocate for your comics.
4. Think about the variations of the lettering and coloring to show the emotional side of the graphics you will use. Consult your ideas.
5. Organize it all, starting from the black & white draft up to the coloring. Make sure you have proof of how you do it all in at least the Comics Life/ Corel Draw/ Photoshop program. Consult the black & white version before giving color to your graphics.
6. The grammar of your story needs to be perfect, so do find time for consultations either during or after class with your lecturer.
7. Finally, make the front and back cover. Don't forget to show the copyright page!