

ABOUT GRAPHIC NOVELS

Did you used to read comics when you were younger? If you did, graphic novels work in about the same way! If you didn't or if you find comics and graphic novels to be more "childish" than young adult, consider reviewing some of the points below.

[Click for a PDF of this page.](#)

Home

About the Author /
Illustrator

About Graphic Novels

Background Information

List of Themes

Thematic Unit and
Resources

Discussion Questions

SO, WHAT MAKES A BOOK A **GRAPHIC** NOVEL?

THE BASICS

Graphic novels are books set up like comic books and present information textually and through illustrations. Most graphic novels center around one story, though they can be about anything. Common types include:

- Superhero

A BRIEF HISTORY

The first graphic novels evolved from early comics (which first appeared in 1895). *Funnies on Parade* was the first published comic book in 1933. Comics gained popularity as superheroes began to become common comic figures especially during World War II. Comics would largely be banned and burned by the

- Humor
- Non-fiction
- Fantasies
- Adaptations or Spin-offs
- Realistic fiction
- Personal stories
- Toon books (for age 4+ readers)

Have you read any comics or graphic novels besides 'American Born Chinese?'

- Yes to both!
- No to both.
- Comics - yes! Graphic novels - no.
- Comics - no. Graphic novels - yes!

Vote

[View Results](#) [PollDaddy.com](#)

United States government during the 1950s, but the formation of the Justice League and other superhero comics regenerated the comic book market.

It was not until 1978 that Will Eisner coined the term "graphic novel" and novels such as *Batman: The Dark Knight*, *The Watchmen*, and *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* emerged. Recognition and awards for graphic novels have continued to bring more attention to them within the public as well as in the classroom.

Compare *American Born Chinese* and other graphic novels to their comic book predecessors. What has changed in terms of style and storytelling? Personally, do you prefer one form over the other or does it depend on what you are reading? In the next 50+ years, how do you think comics and the graphic novel will evolve?

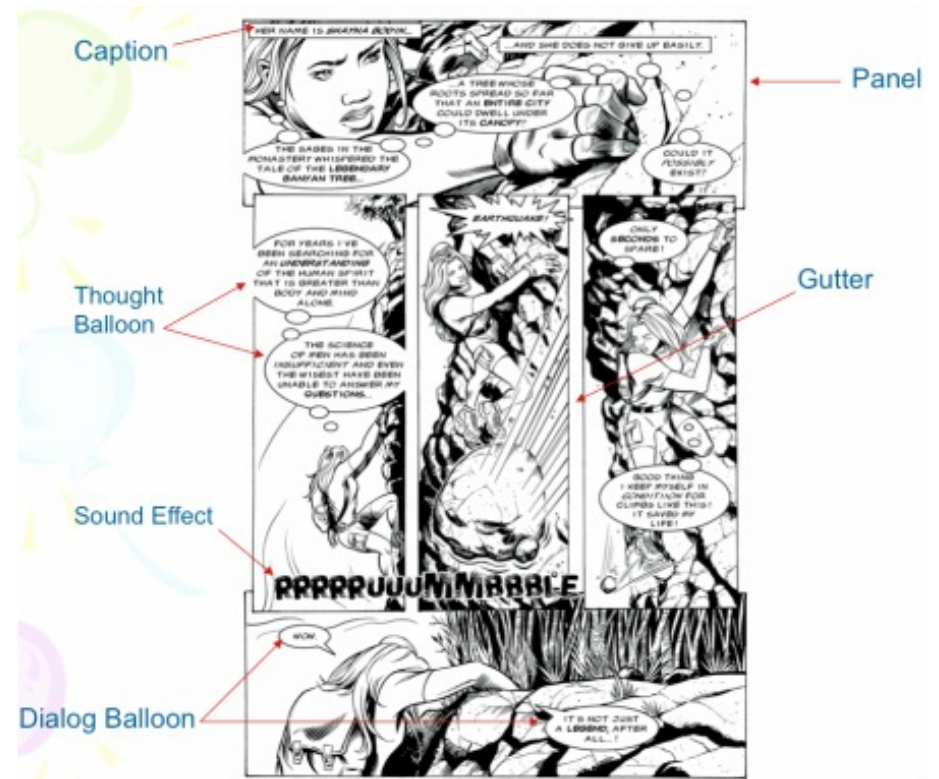
THE FORMAT OF A GRAPHIC NOVEL

Now that you know what the qualifications are for a graphic novel, how to you read a graphic novel or analyze one?

Reading a graphic novel is just like reading a comic or a book. Start on the left and finish on the right side of the page. The shape of the panels will help guide your eye to where you need to read next. For example, is a box is elongated vertically past other smaller panels, continue reading this panel before moving to the next.

The placement of white space, dialog and thought balloons, and sound effects can help you transition from panel to panel as you read.

The format of the graphic novel ultimately depends on the style of the book itself, but these basic tools always apply to all types.

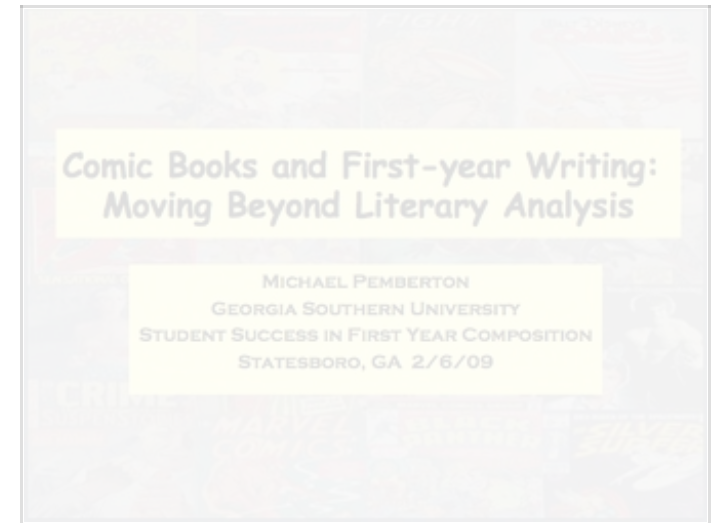


ANALYZING THE STRUCTURE

In the PowerPoint file located to the right, Michael Pemberton of Georgia Southern University breaks down the visual structure of *American Born Chinese* by noticing how visual elements change from section to section. This in turn helps indicate the themes and story structure of the book as well.

Be able to answer the following :

- What textual and graphic features signal a shift in the chapters and/or narratives?
- How are fights and action scenes typically displayed?
- How do you know the storylines are shifting?
- How do panels typically look when you are viewing something from a character's perspective? What are some of the visual changes made when a character is experiencing different emotions?



ABC, Comic Books and First-year Writing - Moving Beyond Literary Analysis
[Download File](#)

COMICS IN EDUCATION

If you are interested in incorporating graphic novels and comics into the classroom, review on of the following links to get more information.

[Comics in Education](#)

[Center for Cartoon Studies](#)

ASK YOURSELF:

- After browsing through these links, what are some of your thoughts on incorporating comic books and graphic novels into education? What are some benefits, as well as problems and possible complications?

Teaching Tools Video (2009)

- Try out Yang's interactive math lesson activity *Factoring With Mr. Yang and Mosley*. Did you find the lesson to be effective in teaching the lesson? Make some observations about the lesson.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MAKING COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS?

Yang provides advice for aspiring cartoonists in his [blog](#).

Here's what I think: You have to decide whether self-expression is more important to you or making money from your art is more important to you. They're not mutually exclusive in the long run, but they are in the beginning. If you want to make money from your art, you should go into animation. Go get an animation major at an art school and build a portfolio. Make connections through your school and go apply for jobs. (Be warned— these days, it's more difficult than it used to be.)

If you care more about self-expression, major in something practical, something that will lead to a job where you have flexible hours. I majored in computer science and was able to get a part-time job out of college that allowed me time to work on my comics. Then, use your extra time to hone your craft. Work on stories that are yours, using characters that are yours in settings that are yours so you have full control. Put them on the Web. And keep at it. For most of us, it takes about ten years before you get good enough to start making money. A few talented and/or lucky ones can get there sooner, but ten years seems to be a common story.

When I was young, I wanted to make Fantastic Four comics for Marvel. I never would've dreamed of doing graphic novels for the YA market or writing *Airbender* comics because neither the YA graphic novel market nor *Avatar: The Last Airbender* existed. Now, I've gotten to do a short story for Marvel, but I've had waaay more fun working on *Airbender* and especially on my own stuff. Let your dreams be flexible.

Finally, care more about your craft than your dreams, otherwise your dreams won't come true.



Comic Book Generators



FURTHER READING

If you like *American Born Chinese*, consider reading one of the other following other books:

Maus

by Art Spiegelman



Persepolis

by Marjane Satrapi



Other Recommendations

- *Bone* by Jeff Smith
- *Same Difference* by Derek Kirk Kim
- *The Photographer: Into War-torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders* by Emmanuel Guibert
- *The Walking Dead* series by Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore, Charlie Adlard and Cliff Rathburn
- *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan
- *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* by Scott McCloud

WORKS CITED

"Bitstrips logo." Bitstrips. 12 June 2013. <<http://www.bitstrips.com/>>. JPEG file.

"Chogger logo." Chogger. 12 June 2013. <<http://chogger.com/>>. JPEG file.

"Get Graphic: The World in Words and Pictures." Get Graphic. 12 June 2013. <www.getgraphic.org/Teachers/TEACHERpowerpoint.ppt>. PowerPoint file.

"*Maus* book cover." Wikipedia. 12 June. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maus>>. JPEG file.

"Marvel Kids logo." Marvel Kids. 12 June 2013. <<http://marvelkids.marvel.com/>>. JPEG file.

Pemberton, Michael. "American Born Chinese, Comic Books and First-year Writing - Moving Beyond Literary

Analysis." 6 February 2009. 12 June 2013. <www.westga.edu/~mmcfar/American%20Born%20Chinese.ppt>. PowerPoint file.

"*Persopolis* book cover." Comic Book Resources. 15 March 2013. 12 June 2013.<<http://robot6.comicbookresources.com/2013/03/persepolis-reportedly-removed-from-chicago-public-schools/>>. JPEG file.

"Pixton logo." Pixton. 12 June 2013. <<http://www.pixton.com/>>. JPEG file.

"Tribute to the Golden Age of Comic Books." 24 February 2012. 12 June 2013. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=pH872JzoVtc>. YouTube video.

Yang, Gene Luen. "*American Born Chinese* book cover." 2006. Gene Luen Yang official website. 12 June 2013. <<http://geneyang.com/american-born-chinese>>. JPEG file.

Yang, Gene Luen. "Panel of The Monkey King in battle." 2006. Google Books. 12 June 2013. <<http://books.google.com/books?id=nihoSwMJLGMc&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>>. JPEG file.

Create a free website with 