An Introduction to the Graphic Novel

Vicky Maloy
Abstract:

This is a slide show from a presentation, "An Introduction to the Graphic Novel." The presentation covered the definition of a graphic novel, how to read a graphic novel, the history of graphic novels, and suggested further readings.

Keywords:

- American Popular Culture
- Information and Library Science
- Library and Information Science
- Reading and Language
- Visual Studies
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Vicky Maloy
Academic Technology Librarian

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What is a Graphic Novel?
What is a Graphic Novel

• Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer.

Scott McCloud

*Understanding Comics* p.9
What is a Graphic Novel

- Alan Moore’s definition of graphic novel: “expensive comic book”

http://www.blather.net/articles/amoore/northampton.html
What is a Graphic Novel

• A way to express ideas

• A medium...like film or painting

• A format defined by images used in a sequence
A Graphic Novel can be:

• Action & Adventure (Here’s our superheroes & swashbucklers)

But there’s also:

• Biography, Comedy, Documentary (Non-fiction), Costume (historic) drama, Fantasy, Film noir, Horror (including zombies!), Mafia/Gangster, Mystery, Road trip, Romance, Science fiction, Vampire, War, Western, & Wuxia
A Graphic Novel = Words (sometimes) + Art (always!)
Talking about Graphic Novels: Literature

- Plot
- Characters
- Dialog
- Setting
- Audience

*The Rabbi’s Cat* by Joann Sfar
Translation © 2005 Pantheon Books
Talking about Graphic Novels:

Art

• Style
• Color
• Design
• Symbolism
• Perspective
• Lettering

The Photographer, E. Guibert & D. Lefevre © 2009, First Second
Talking about Graphic Novels: Vocabulary

- gutter
- layout
- panel
- sound representation
- speech balloon
- thought balloon
Vocabulary: Panel

- Sometimes the physical page functions as the panel.

- Occasionally the panel is only a suggestion for the artist who does not contain the art within the frame.
Vocabulary: Gutter

The space between panels.
Read *Understanding Comics* for examples on the ways the gutter defines comics.
Vocabulary: Sound Effects

Color, font, size & shape all are used to convey audio information in a visual manner.
Vocabulary: Balloons (speech & thought)

The balloon is used to express the character’s thoughts and words. The shape of the balloon varies depending on what situation is being illustrated.
And now for a little history

ONCE UPON A TIME...

LATER...

EVEN LATER THAN THAT...

TODAY!
The history of Graphic Novels

- 1954 – *Seduction of the Innocent* published; Comics Code Authority created
- 1978 – *Contract with God* by Will Eisner
- 1986 – Frank Miller writes *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*
- 1987 – Alan Moore writes *The Watchmen*
- 1992 – *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* by Art Spiegelman wins a Pulitzer Prize
Names to Know

Eisner Awards & Harvey Awards
(Formerly the Kirby Awards)

The Oscars of the Comics/Graphic Novel Industry, these organizations recognize the year’s best writers, artists, publications, inkers, stories for specific audiences...

To find good reading, try starting here.

Eisner Awards
Harvey Awards
Names to Know

Comic Book Legal Defense Fund

- Founded in 1989
- Non-profit concerned with defending free speech (through helping with legal costs)
- Members include: Creators, retailers, and readers.

http://www.cbldf.org/membership.shtml
Publishing Companies

MARVEL & DC
But wait! There’s more!
Or do it yourself.

- Independent Publishing
  
  Jeff Smith & *Bone*

- Online Publishing
  
  Brien Fies & *Mom’s Cancer*
  
  [www.momscancer.com](http://www.momscancer.com)
What next?
Further Reading:

• If you liked *Persepolis* (Iran’s revolution in 1980)
• Try *Zahara’s Paradise* (Iran’s election aftermath in 2009)

http://www.zahrasparadise.com
Further Reading:

• If you liked *Maus* (A Pulitzer Prize winning memoir about the Holocaust & its repercussions in one family)

• Try *Epileptic* (The struggle a family faces when one son is diagnosed with epilepsy.)

• Or *The Golem’s Mighty Swing* (A Jewish baseball team & American History)
Further Reading:

- If you liked *Watchmen* (A multi-layer superhero story by Alan Moore)
- Try *Batman: The Dark Night Returns* (Another superhero story for the mature reader)