

GRAPHIC NOVELS AND COMICS

ONOMATOPOEIA & CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

GRADES
6-12LEARNING
OBJECTIVES

In this guide, students will:

- Explore how onomatopoeia enhances artwork and story.
- Determine how the artist's word choices shape meaning or tone in a story.
- Combine artistic and writing skills to complete a work of art.

1. ABOUT THIS GRAPHIC NOVEL AND COMICS RESOURCE

This teacher's resource is an introduction to the process of making comic books and graphic novels. Comic books and graphic novels fuse multiple disciplines into a completed work of art. In the creation of a comic book or graphic novel, visual art and creative writing are joined. In this resource, you'll find two different artworks, with introductions to the artists and a glossary of terms related to comic books. This resource can help K–12 teachers create short, modifiable lessons for their students. The language and themes in some artworks may be most appropriate for grades 6–12.

2. ABOUT THIS COLLECTION

This collection consists of original comic book and graphic novel art created by artists and distributed by publishers. The collection offers the unique opportunity to compare the artist's draft to the final, published comic book or graphic novel. Students can see where artists added dialogue, corrected mistakes, or changed direction. Through this collection students are introduced to art, writing, and storytelling.

3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this guide, students will:

Explore how onomatopoeia enhances artwork and story.

Determine how the artist's word choices shape meaning or tone in a story.

Combine artistic and writing skills to complete a work of art.

4. PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

Using the whiteboard in your classroom draw a blank speech or thought bubble. Have one student close their eyes and stand next to the bubble, while another student writes a sentence or thought in the bubble.

Use our pre-made comic pages to have students create a comic book page or a multipage narrative.

Encourage students to visit their local or school library, check out a graphic novel or comic book and give a short oral report about the story or discuss in groups with their classmates.

5. VOCABULARY

Comic Book

A paper or digital publication that tells a story through artwork and writing.

Graphic Novel

A broadly used term that describes comic books collected in a single volume or a story or miniseries collected in a volume or multiple volumes. Graphic novels are usually longer, larger, and printed on higher quality paper than comic books.

Gutters

Refers to the margins in between panels that are typically leftover from the layout of the panels on the page.

Onomatopoeia

A visual way of showing sound in which artists match their artistic style to the sound represented. It can also refer to a word that is spelled based on how it sounds. For example, "Pow! Bam! Kaboom!"

Panel

The sectioned areas on a page where the action or story is drawn. The story advances through the artwork, events, and action in the panels.

Speech and Thought Bubbles

Sometimes also referred to as balloons, or conversation clouds. The bubbles contain the characters' dialogue and inner thoughts to tell the story.

6. OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS BECKY CLOONAN



Becky Cloonan (American, 1980–)
Flight, vol. 3, pg. 261, Ballantine Books, 2006
Pencil, ink, paper, 14 x 11 in.
Stanley School Programs Collections, GNC.15

Becky Cloonan is known for her work on the mini-series *Demo* (2004), which focused on the lives of teenagers with superpowers dealing with their extraordinary circumstances. She has been nominated for multiple Eisner awards, one of the most prestigious awards in the comic book industry. She has worked for Marvel, DC, and Dark Horse comics. In 2012 she became the first female lead artist on the main Batman title for DC.

Flight: Volume Three, Page 261 shows a Viking warrior in the middle of battle. Cloonan's drew her original **panels** in black and white. The added color in the final form significantly alters the drawing. The **onomatopoeic** KTCH, KTCH, KTCH represents arrows hitting the ground and the Viking. This page also features an ink smudge from the bottom of panel one across the **gutter** and into panel 2. It was fixed and removed from the final printing of the graphic novel when they added color.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What kinds of lines does Cloonan use to draw the battle scene? Thin or thick? Curvy or jagged? How does her choice of line affect the feeling or intensity of the drawing?

Why do you think she included a close-up of the Viking's face at the bottom of the page? What does it tell us about the Viking or the battle that we might miss in the larger drawing?

We see a Viking in battle with onomatopoeic arrows hitting the ground. What other battle sounds could be turned into onomatopoeia? Describe or draw how the sound would look.

6. OBJECT DESCRIPTIONS **CHIP ZDARSKY**



Chip Zdarsky (Canadian, 1975–)
Monster Cops, no. 1, pg. 1, Rumble Royale, 2003
Pencil, ink, paper, acrylic paint, 15 x 10 in.
Stanley School Programs Collections, GNC.9.

Steve Murray, better known by his pen-name Chip Zdarsky, helped relaunch *Archie* comics in 2015. He placed the Jughead series in a more modern and grittier setting that inspired the *Riverdale* TV series. He also created *Prison Funnies* (2001) and *Monster Cops* (2006). He has worked for Image and Marvel Comics and has won multiple Eisner awards. He lives in Toronto and writes the column “Extremely Bad Advice” for the *National Post*’s “The Ampersand Pop Culture” section.

Monster Cops, Page 1 establishes the setting of the series and introduces the main protagonists. One of Zdarsky’s artistic strengths is placing well-known characters in unfamiliar or unusual settings or jobs. In *Monster Cops*, he transforms three classic movie monster villains (Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolfman) into heroic police officers.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What do you think the story will be about based on the first page of the comic book?

What does changing Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolfman from villains into heroes do for the story? For our understanding of these classic characters?

Chip Zdarsky often takes recognizable characters and puts them into unfamiliar surroundings. With your classmates, discuss some characters you know, and put them into new surroundings or situations.

7. POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

After students have written a story and made a page during the pre-visit activities, have them complete their story by drawing it out in comic book form.

Pop artists Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, and James Rosenquist used comics as inspiration for their own artworks. Have students create an onomatopoeic-inspired work of art. Students can also research pop art and then create a work of art.

Scan your students completed artwork and have them use an editing program to make changes to the artwork. Have them add color, edit speech bubbles, or fix mistakes.

8. STATE STANDARDS

Teachers can adapt the lesson to apply to a number of state standards. We included a few standards that the lesson meets below.

VISUAL ARTS - RESPONDING

Anchor Standard 7

Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Enduring Understanding

Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.

Essential Question(s)

How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?

IOWA CORE: STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text. (RL.4.7)

Text Type and Purposes

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. (W.8.3)

9. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Drawing Words and Writing Pictures

A textbook by Jessica Abel and Matt Madden.

A comprehensive guide on everything needed to create comic books and graphic novels. This includes creative needs such as story, worlds, and artwork as well as physical objects to complete a comic book project.

Comics in the Curriculum:

<https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/comics>

An online comics gallery by Columbia University Libraries titled Comics in the Curriculum. Compares and contrasts historical works of art with comic books. Warning: mature content and themes in this gallery.

Comics Forum:

<https://comicsforum.org/>

Comics Forum places the educational value of comics as its starting point. The goal is to increase the visibility and accessibility of comics scholarship through an academic conference that brings together scholars, artists, and fans in a spirit of mutual cooperation and development. Updated frequently with postings and articles on comic books.