



# WATCH & LEARN: ARTS & LITERATURE

## ARTS & LIFESTYLE: GRAPHIC NOVELS

### HOW TO READ A GRAPHIC NOVEL (3:30 min)

#### VIDEO Script & Vocabulary (page 1 of 2/v.837)

#### ADVANCED LEVEL (C1) AND ABOVE

- ◇ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◇ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◇ Prepare for the discussion questions

Starting  
Off

*Dartmouth College Associate Professor of English, Michael Chaney, presents a survey of contemporary graphic novels.*

- 1 Read the **Video Script** below. The words in **bold** are defined in the **Vocabulary** section. Look up any new words in a dictionary.
- 2 Go to the **Your Turn** section at the end of this document. Practice using new words and expressions from the video script to prepare for your next class.
- 3 Look at the **Discussion Questions** and prepare your responses for the next class.

#### Video Script:

##### Learning to See the Social or How to Read a Graphic Novel

**Michael Chaney:** Hello, hello. So most people upon learning that I study graphic novels, which is the **highfalutin** term for comic books - a graphic novel is really just a comic book that takes itself seriously. Most people upon learning that and maybe **stifling** some ridicule or laughter, may not realize that comic books have **grown up**. In comic books it is my argument that we have unique opportunities for seeing the social and by that I mean the way that comic books often **depict** a single figure in **proximate** relationship to depictions of community. But before we get to anything so romantic and **abstruse** and **grandiose** as that most people want to know about the movies. Hey wasn't that one film "From Hell" originally a graphic novel? It was. Wasn't that one movie "A History of Violence" originally a graphic novel? Yes. Yes again. It was. It turns out that there are a lot of movies that take graphic novels as their templates. And some of us who know comics and graphic novels quite well are sometimes a bit disappointed when we see that even those scenes in the films that are the most **poignant** to see are taken directly from the comic book on which they're based. Leads us to ask: Why is it that so many films these days are based on comics? I think one answer has to be that comics provide incredible opportunities for identification. We heard a talk earlier that suggested that the human brain is ideally trained to recognize mind in faces. Comic books love to give us the doll face and **imbue** the doll face with mind because we don't just have images we also have words and the words are usually **accorded** to some kind of mind activity. However, another reason is a practical one. The problems that anyone might encounter in telling a story **pictorially** have already been solved in the graphic novel.

*Video Script continued on next page...*

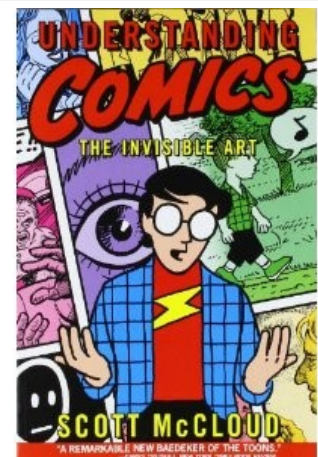
#### Discussion Questions:

- ◇ Do you like reading graphic novels (or BD)? If so, please describe some of the unique qualities of graphic novels that make them enjoyable to you.
- ◇ Graphic novels are particularly popular among many adults in France, Belgium, Japan and the U.S.. Can you think of any particular reasons why this form of art and entertainment might be particularly popular in these cultures?
- ◇ Do you believe that graphic novels should be considered an art form on par with music, novels, and film?

#### Vocabulary:

- **highfalutin** - expressed in or marked by the use of language that is elaborated or heightened by artificial or empty means; pompous
- **stifling** - cut off (as voice or breath); to withhold from circulation or expression
- **grown up** - matured; become an adult
- **depict** - to show (someone or something) in a drawing, picture, painting, photo, etc.
- **proximate** - very near; close
- **abstruse** - difficult to comprehend
- **grandiose** - impressive because of uncommon largeness, scope, effect, or grandeur
- **poignant** - deeply affecting
- **imbue** - to permeate or influence as if by dyeing
- **accord** - to be consistent or in harmony
- **pictorially** - of, relating to or consisting of pictures

*Vocabulary continued on next page...*





- ◊ Read the script and note new vocabulary
- ◊ Write three sentences using new vocabulary
- ◊ Prepare for the discussion questions

**Video Script continued...**

**Michael Chaney:** Alright, lets start with **iconic abstraction**. This is a panel from Scot McCloud's *Understanding Comics* which is a **primer** that tries to help us understand how comics make meaning; why they are "meaningful". Scot McCloud suggests that realistic depictions actually **detract** from our ability to take meaning from comics. That he wouldn't be as convincing an **avatar** if he drew himself more realistically and that it is *because* he's drawn himself like a cartoon that we tend to give him authority. This again has to do with the way we love to see, **narcissistically** perhaps, faces in just about anything. Any sort of ordinary object. The comic, though, is there to suggest that it is in the most **cartoonified** kind of face that we are able to see a reflection of the face that we might have in our **mind's eye** of ourselves. And that we are so good at projecting the face onto the two dots in the line because it is there that we find our mind's eye reflection of our self.

**Vocabulary continued...**

- **iconic abstraction** - the simplification inherent in cartooning that may reduce figures to very simple shapes
- **primer** - a short introductory book on a subject
- **detract** - diminish the importance, value, or effectiveness of something - often used with *from*
- **avatar** - an image that represents a person
- **narcissistically** - in a self-interested manner
- **cartoonified** - (not an actual word) extremely cartoon like in appearance
- **mind's eye** - human ability to visualize

**Your Turn! Using new vocabulary is the best way to learn and remember it.**

- 1 Choose three words or expressions from the video that are new to you and write a sentence using each one in the box below.
- 2 Try to use them in a context that is familiar to you to help you retain them.
- 3 Please ask for feedback on your sentences in the next lesson.

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

