Journal of Global Literacies, Technologies, and Emerging Pedagogies
Volume 3, Issue 1, July 2015, pp. 405-421.

Teaching Artifact: "How to Read a Comic"

Nicole Neitzke[1]

California State University, Fullerton, California, USA

Instructor Commentary

This teaching artifact is one I created using the Comic Life 3 app and it was created for the purposes of teaching my students how to read a comic. This prepares them to read an assigned graphic novel for class, namely *Fables: Animal Farm*, while briefly explaining how comics act are complex multimodal texts. In particular, I draw inspiration and definitions from Scott McCloud and Dale Jacobs. The comic itself also features various assets from existing comic stories, which I cite on the last page along with my works cited. The gain from using this artifact, particularly when paired with an assigned comic or graphic novel, is that students will be able to learn fairly quickly how to read a comic if they have never read one. Even for those who have, they learn condensed vocabulary and multimodal attributes that might otherwise be difficult to teach or explain in class, or through other dense textbooks. Lastly, it is an engaging medium that encourages close-reading. The loss, however, is the stretched definition of multimodality as a whole. Naturally, print comics do not employ sound or gestures in its pages, so those modes' definitions have to be expanded. Furthermore, it is fairly limited to specific assignments involving the comic medium.

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[1] Nicole Neitzke recently received her Master's in English, along with a Professional Certificate in Teaching and Writing, at the California State University in Fullerton. Email: nicoleneitzke@csu.fullerton.edu
ISSN: 2128-1333
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SPECIAL ISSUE ON MULTIMODALITY
NEITZKE/JOGLTEP 2015 3(1), 405-421

HOW TO READ A COMIC

BY NICOLE NEITZKE

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

SO YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW TO READ A COMIC? OKAY, LET'S START WITH THE BASICS!

THIS IS A WORD BUBBLE, WHICH INDICATES THAT I'M SPEAKING.

AND THIS THING I'M INSIDE OF IS CALLED A PANEL.

OKAY, SO JUST LIKE PAGES IN A BOOK, YOU READ WORDS ON A COMIC PAGE FROM LEFT...
TO RIGHT.

EASY RIGHT? NOW HERE IS WERE THINGS CAN GET A BIT TRICKY.

FIRST YOU READ THE WORDS IN THE TOP LEFT BUBBLE, LIKE THIS ONE.
SECOND, YOU READ THE WORDS IN THE TOP RIGHT BUBBLE. JUST LIKE A PAGE, RIGHT?
THEN YOU COME BACK DOWN HERE, TO THE BOTTOM LEFT.
AND FINALLY YOU WOULD END HERE IN THE BOTTOM RIGHT CORNER.

NOW, THESE AREN'T HARD AND FAST RULES, BUT THEY ARE THE MOST COMMON.

SOMETIMES WORD BUBBLES WILL BE CONNECTED TO OTHER ONES...
... WHICH LEADS TO THE NEXT BUBBLE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO READ.
AND OTHER TIMES WORD BUBBLES CROSS PANELS AND LEAD INTO THE NEXT.

LIKE SO.

BASICALLY, READING COMICS WILL TAKE SOME PRACTICE.
AND EVEN THEN, SOME AUTHORS WILL PLAY WITH THE FORM AND TRICK YOU. SO DON'T PANIC IF YOU LOSE YOUR PLACE.

LET'S SEE, WHAT'S NEXT?

OH! RIGHT, SO THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF WORD BUBBLES.
THIS IS A THOUGHT BUBBLE, WHICH GIVES YOU SPECIAL INSIGHT TO THE CHARACTER THINKING IT.

OKAY, LET'S GET OUT OF MY HEAD NOW.
NEXT UP IS...

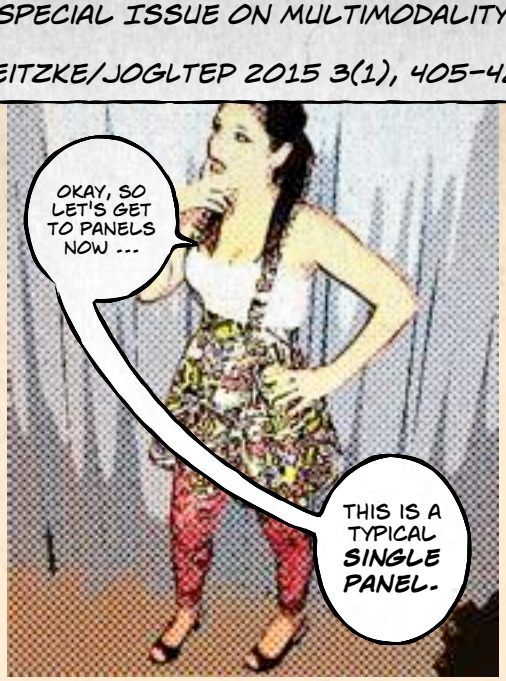
YELLING!

AHEM. FOR THIS ONE, IT INDICATES A CHARACTER'S RAGE.
HOWEVER, THIS ISN'T A FAST RULE EITHER. SOMETIMES WORDS WILL BE **BOLDED** TO INDICATE THIS, OR JUST HAVE A BUNCH OF EXCLAMATION POINTS.

IT'S ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THE FONT WITHIN A WORD BUBBLE.
SOMETIMES **BOLDED** WORDS OR ITALIC ONES ARE USED TO EMPHASIZE SOMETHING IMPORTANT, LIKE A SPECIFIC NAME OR AN EMOTION.

MEANWHILE...
THE NARRATOR DECIDES TO SPEAK!

AH!
POW



COMPARE THIS MOMENT IN AN OLD ISSUE OF SPIDER-MAN - - -

- - - TO THIS MOMENT.

WHICH ONE STANDS OUT MORE?