

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art Book PDF Download



By:
Scott McCloud

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What people Say:

Mon

Great book, but I'm too annoyed to give it four stars.

It's amateurish, but I believe if you're aware of how great a book is while you're reading it, it's not working at its best. You can go 'oh wow that's such a clever way to illustrate this idea, and the text is so effective', but it's a bit like reading an instruction manual, and nothing personal or particularly poignant. I guess the idea is to understand the basic structure and potential of comic art, but must it be so academic and dry? The

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is a misleading title, perhaps

would suit the purpose of the book better. Majority of people (in terms of an audience that is likely to pick up a comic-related theory book) has little trouble understanding the intention of the drawing and writing - we can feel the atmosphere, be moved by the characters and thrilled by the action. Appreciating the history, concept and techniques that help build it up are, however, often overlooked. Much like film and literature, comics require a lot of conceptual and aesthetic decision to make it effective and communicative, and McCloud tries hard to evaluate the general methods that are used to convey these expressions. It would work better if he utilise more specific works rather than general 'rules', and most of them only applicable to mainstream comics. The last chapter goes on about the importance of 'understanding', and how comics can serve as a great tool of communication. Frankly it is a bit arrogant to me. No matter what your medium - ink and paper, music, written words, motion picture, performance, construction, we as the audience give ourselves far less credit when apprehending these art forms. We are subjected to arbitrary education, test and criticism that are meant to 'guide' our 'understanding' of the creator's concept and execution - how to read them, how to properly experience them, how to get the most of it like the artist 'wants' us to. I feel as though McCloud is saying, 'I'm the creator, and you are the reader. Through these lines and colour, I'm telling you what is being expressed. Do you get it? DO YOU GET IT?'. Fuck this I don't

have understand everything in order to appreciate it, have you never read Pynchon or seen anything David Lynch?

Comic art is merely another form of story telling, it is equally capable of being as representational or avant-garde as any other art form. 'Understanding comics is serious business' - why is it serious? why not just go out and say 'respecting comics is serious business'. McCloud also comments on how the merit of comics lies in its ability to convey 'individual voices' through mass production - really now? If you want personal expression, why not read a few blogs, talk to strangers in the park, speaker's corner, open mic, go to a concert, underground gig, restaurant, flickr, public toilet, open market, join whatever radical societies there are out there? It is almost ridiculous to have to remind people that comics are capable of being expressionistic, and please don't try to say your choice of material expresses something more profound, original than the others or with more efficiency. Why the fuck should it be efficient? Aren't you arguing that comics can be art too? Then why should it be readable, straightforward and commercial like everything else?

GAH I'm angry!

What McCloud is saying is that as an artist you have more control over the output. But at least for me, I don't care if you came up with the entire concept or worked in a team as long as the outcome is insightful and fun. And then he started talking about the human condition and how we can fix the world with reading more comics. YEAH. And then there are angels reading comics, statues of bullied comic readers, massive yin yang symbol! montage of great art works! The world map! Epic lightening! 'THE TRUTH WILL SHINE THROUGH!' (real quote)

That goes on for about 20 pages.

Miss Michael

I really appreciate that this book exists. It's nice that something was created to help people understand the language of comics, what they are, what they can be, what makes them special, and so forth.

That said, there are parts which are a little convoluted (Chapter 2, I'm looking at you), and there are parts that are a little dated by now (such as the chapter on color, which I think has come a long way since the early '90s, particularly due to the use of computers). But there are so many parts

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I think McCloud did a great job of including all kinds of comics, from Schultz to Spiegelman to Lee/Kirby to Otomo, without placing more value on one than another. I also liked the parallels he drew between comics and other art forms, although he emphasized visual arts far more than literature, which in some ways makes sense but I feel it neglects the fact that these are comic

. Even in Chapter 6, which was dedicated to how language and words combine to form comics, I did not notice any analysis of how comics stand up to other forms of literature. However, in the chapter dedicated to the artistic process, I thought what McCloud had to say on the subject was so perfectly universal to all art,

literature.

Overall, definitely an insightful read for anyone who enjoys "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence."

Oriana

Holy shit! I'm starting a graphic novel book club!! This is our inaugural book and I'm so excited!!!

We had our first meeting today, and in addition to saying terribly intelligent things about comics and eating mini-cupcakes and laughing at my dogs, we also picked a name for our (accidentally all-female) group: Jugs & Capes. I know you're very jealous.

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all-female) group: Jugs & Capes. I know you're very jealous.

Anyway, I was extremely impressed by this book. I can tell that Scott McCloud thinks that he is terrifically important and probably a genius, but, as often happens to me, I was willing to believe that at least he was smart enough to have earned the right to talk about all of this. So while there were a few points when I found him a bit condescending, a bit cloyingly didactic, on the whole I learned a lot about comics and how to think about them, and that was great.

I thought I was going to write about some of the things I learned, but it's late and I'm tired, and honestly one of the things he does best is really use the illustrations and the text in the best symbiotic way, enhancing and augmenting one another throughout, and so it seems like it would be reductive and dismissive for me to try to summarize his points with words alone. So read the book! And then you'll get it for yourself.

(Oh but except for one thing, which is so cool I just have to share it. He talks a lot about how the reader is complicit in the telling of a comic story, because so much happens between the panels -- in the gutter, where the reader has to invent what is going on to connect one image to another. He uses as an example a panel with an axe-wielding man chasing another guy and shouting, "Now you're going to die!" Then the next panel is the outside of a building, with only an "Aieeee!!" screaming out. Anyway [see my point, how much extra describing I have to do just to get to what he does with like two pictures?], he then says: "To kill a character between panels is to condemn him to a thousand deaths." See? Because each reader will make his/her own decision about when and how the axe falls, how much blood comes out, how many strikes are needed, the specific choreography of the death. Amazing!)

David Schaafsma

I just finished reading it for my comics/YA Graphic novels class this summer, 6/16/16. What I have to add is that I have just had a fun conversation with my class about one insightful claim McCloud makes, that the simpler and more "cartoony" a comic representation is (i.e., a smiley face), the more universal it will be, the more we will say "that's me." In fiction classes I was taught to be as specific and detailed as I could be about characters and places. McCloud says that realistic depictions

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makes, that the simpler and more "cartoony" a comic representation is (i.e., a smiley face), the more universal it will be, the more we will say "that's me." In fiction classes I was taught to be as specific and detailed as I could be about characters and places. McCloud says that realistic depictions of characters such as in superhero comics are actually less relatable than simple characters such as Charlie Brown or Nancy, or most manga. Less is more, in a way. That's like suggesting that minimalism (something like Raymond Carver's stories, or Ernest Hemingway's stories) invite readers in more because we as readers have more space to "be" the characters, to connect with them. Maybe this is less true for non-comics fiction, though. But McCloud is interesting.

Review from before: I've used this book many times to teach comics basics. It's the best book I've found for doing this, and it's in a comics format, with McCloud as the cartoony and erudite "narrator". While thoroughly practical, it's also the most philosophical and thorough and at the same time efficient guide to the craft. McCloud also wrote Making Comics, for comics artists. This book is one of the classics of comic history, one of its great books for helping you understand and appreciate comics for their potential complexity as an hybrid art form, without question. If you want to know how comics are made in all its range of possibilities, and if you want to take see why this interrelated telling of visuals and words should be taken seriously as art and literature and cultural commentary and entertainment, this is the book for you.

Ryan

it's one of the best examples i've found of someone writing so specifically about a topic that the observations and implications become absolutely universal.

think about it: hamlet is completely consumed in his little world, and the stakes are all about what will happen to denmark and only denmark. and centuries later, we still perform the play and read it and

think that that is us up there struggling with our problems, just with a different name.

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this is what mccloud achieves here: he is so fixated and clear in talking about comics that the scope of his thought travels to all corners of creativity, art, and human endeavor.

this is not only a testament to the validity of comics as an artform and mccloud's mastery of it, but also to the microscopic differences between the various supposedly discreet arts and vocabularies thereof when viewed from the vantage of a close and sensitive read of any one of them in particular.

a book that renews your faith in people's ability to communicate with (and 'understand?') each other.