

Q. What is a "graphic novel"?

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A. Graphic novels have a few defining characteristics. But first and most importantly, they are long comic books. (I'll get back to the rest.)

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A. You may think you know the answer to this one, but stick with me a few minutes:

A comic book is a magazine or bound book that contains "comics" (also known as "comix").

Comics is a medium for expressing information and/or artistic ideas that is defined by







... and that's it. However,
comics also often feature
such things as



... and that's it. However,
comics also often feature
such things as



... and that's it. However,
comics also often feature
such things as

"word
balloons..."



...and sometimes,
"thought
balloons."



It's also common to have the sequential images delineated by "panels", which are surrounded by lines called "panel borders."

These techniques aren't necessary to make comics, but they are quite common. There are other common, familiar, but even more optional elements of many comics, such as certain kinds of characters, like funny animals or superheroes. But I'll get to that in a minute.

Here's how to read a comic:



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1. Just as in our written language, you read the elements of a comic starting with...



Here's how to read a comic:

Just as in our written language, you read the elements of a comic starting with...

2 ...the upper-left corner of a page, and then you read across to the right...



Here's how to read a comic:

Just as in our written language, you read the elements of a comic starting with...

...the upper-left corner of a page, and then you read across to the right...

3. ...before proceeding down to the next row...



Here's how to read a comic:

Just as in our written language, you read the elements of a comic starting with...

...the upper-left corner of a page, and then you read across to the right...

...before proceeding down to the next row...

4.
...and then the next.



Here's how to read a comic:

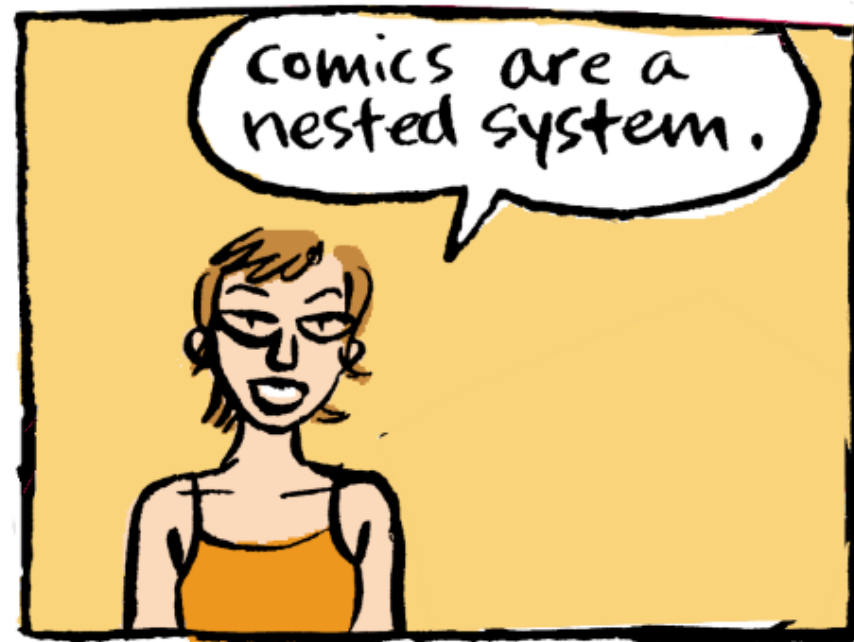
1. Just as in our written language, you read the elements of a comic starting with...

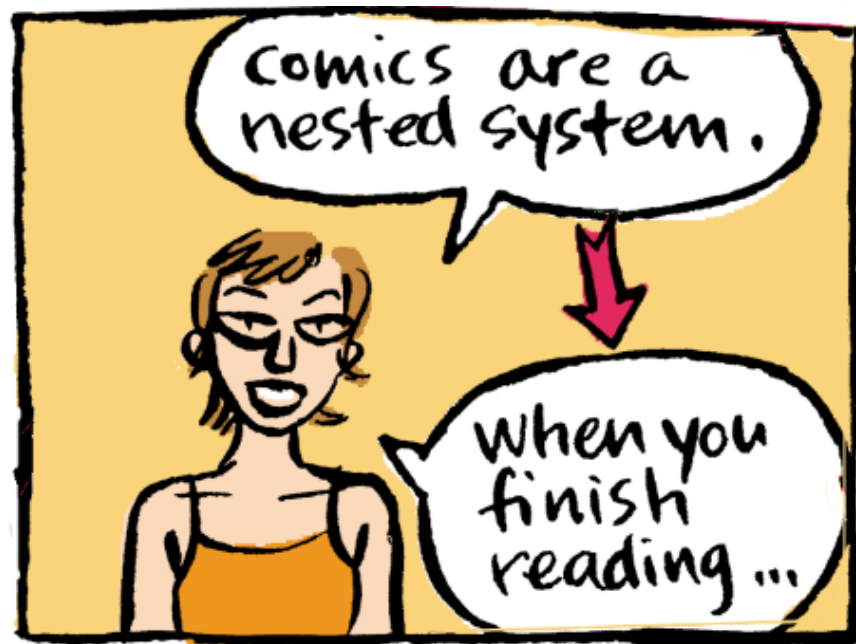
2. ...the upper-left corner of a page, and then you read across to the right...

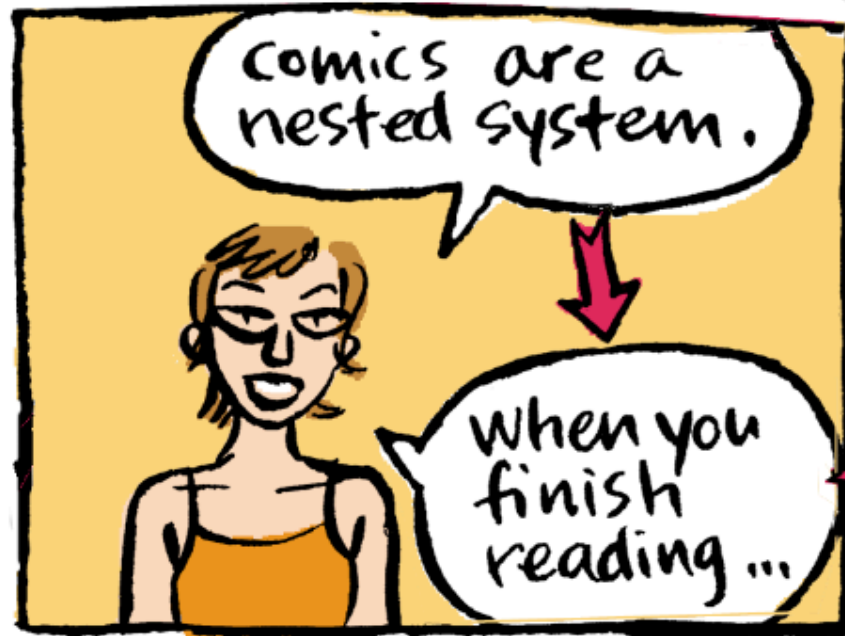
3. ...before proceeding down to the next row...

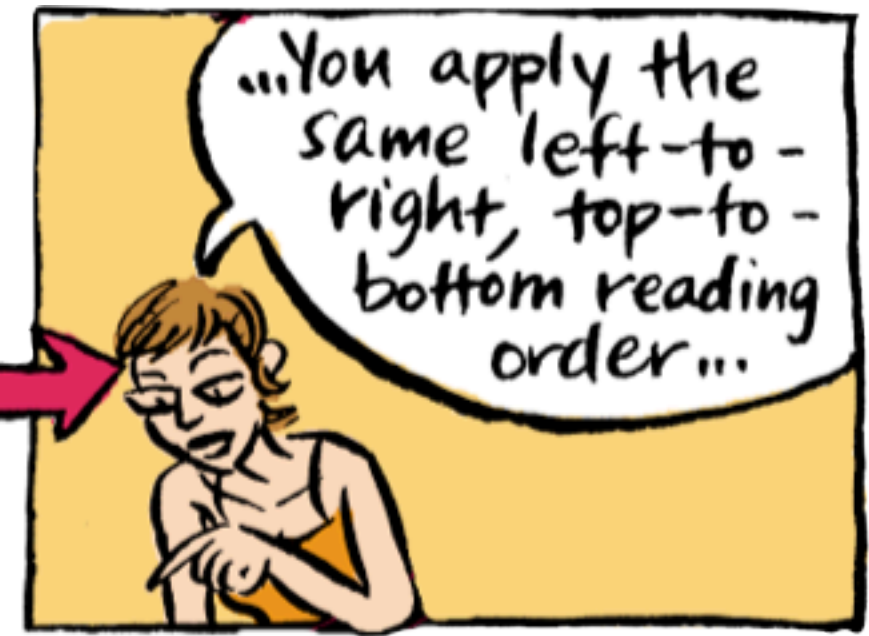
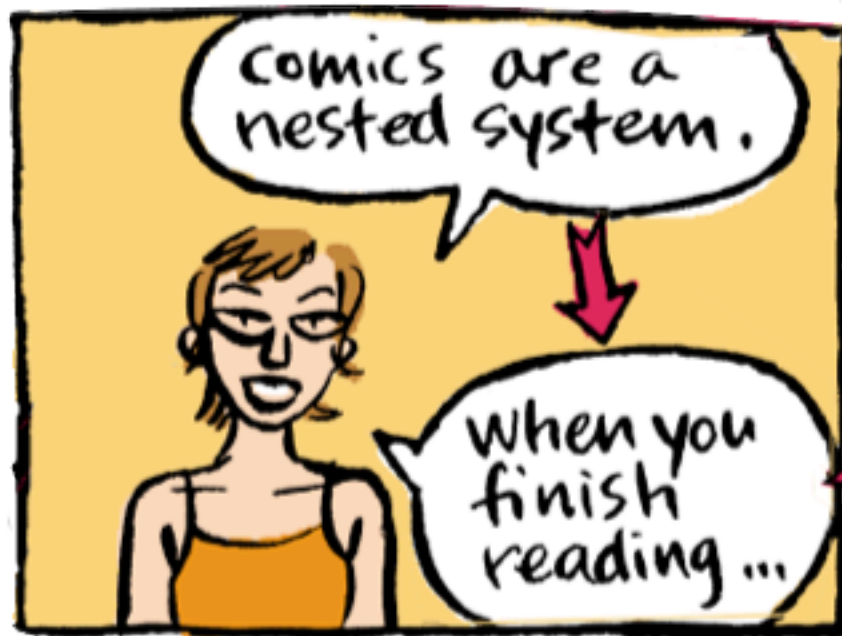
4. ...and then the next.

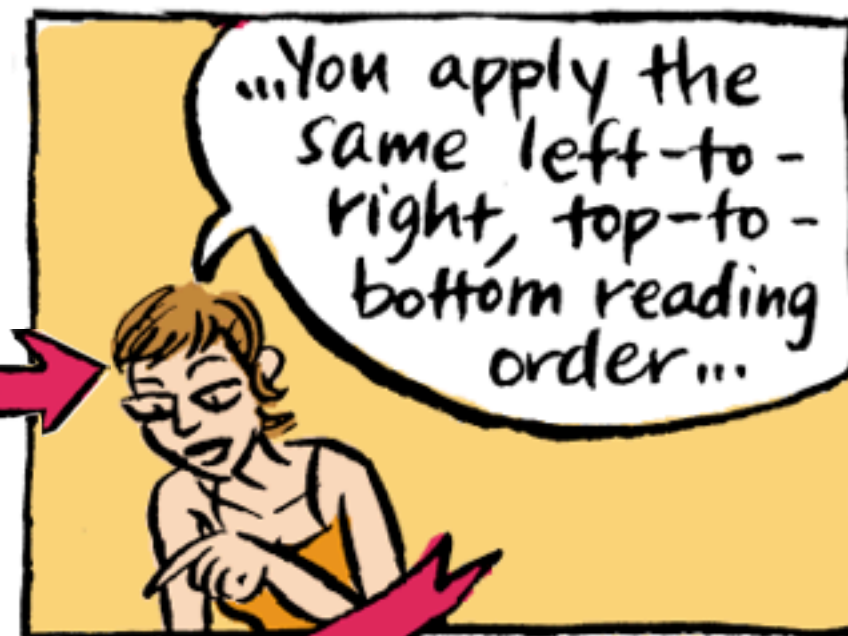
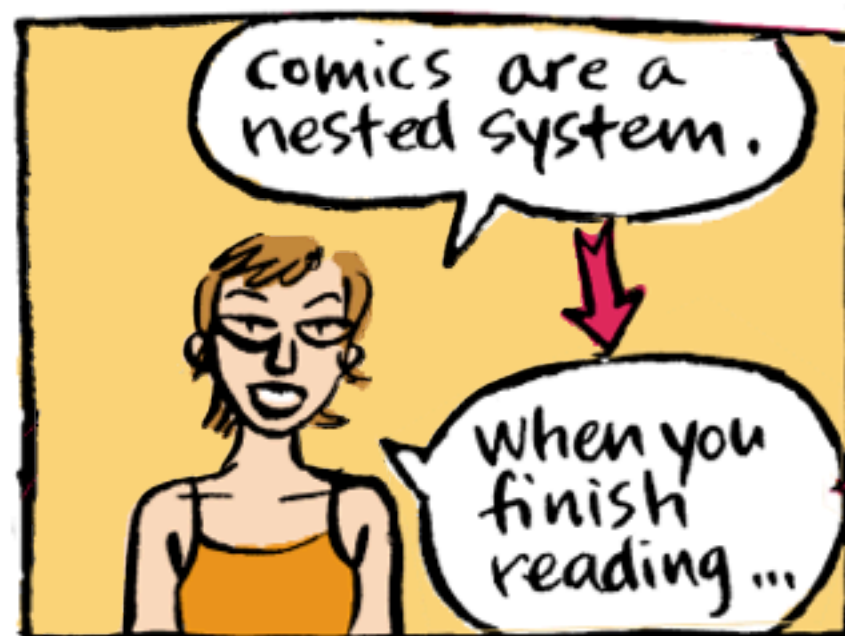


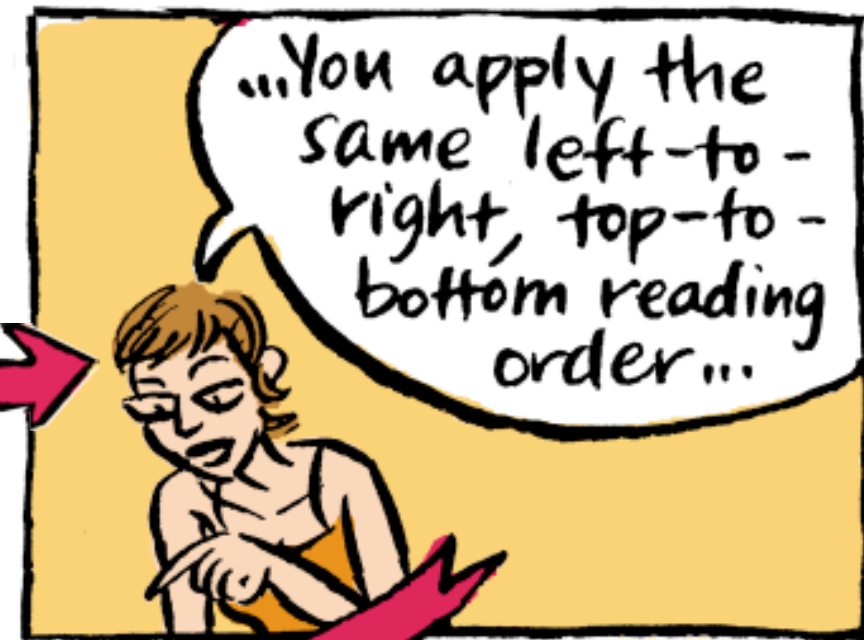
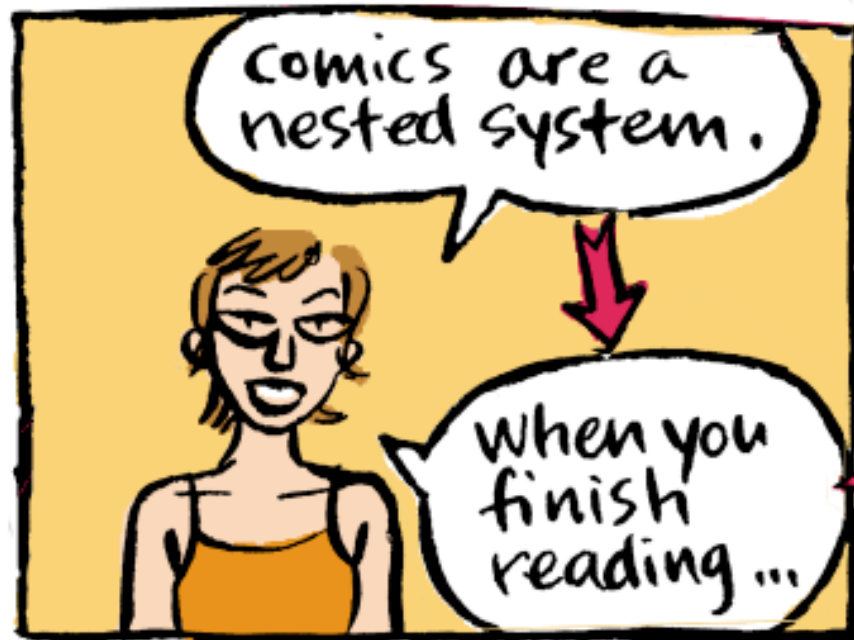


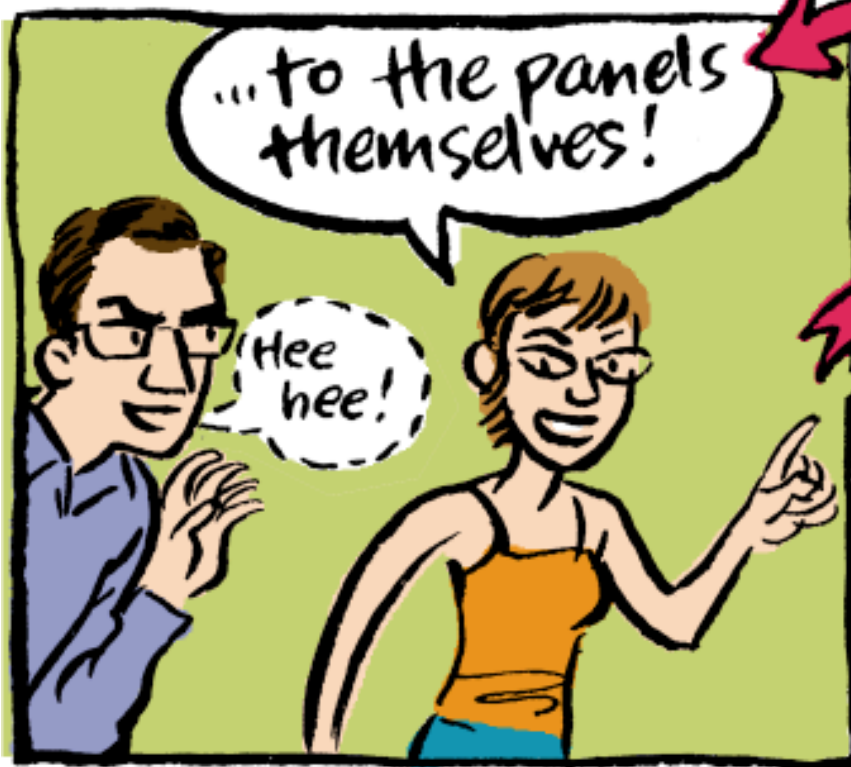
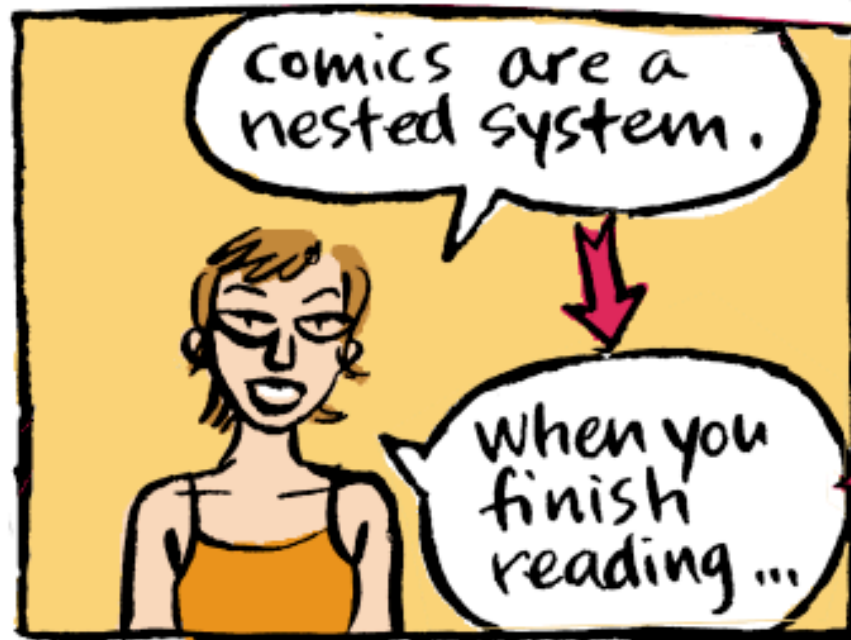


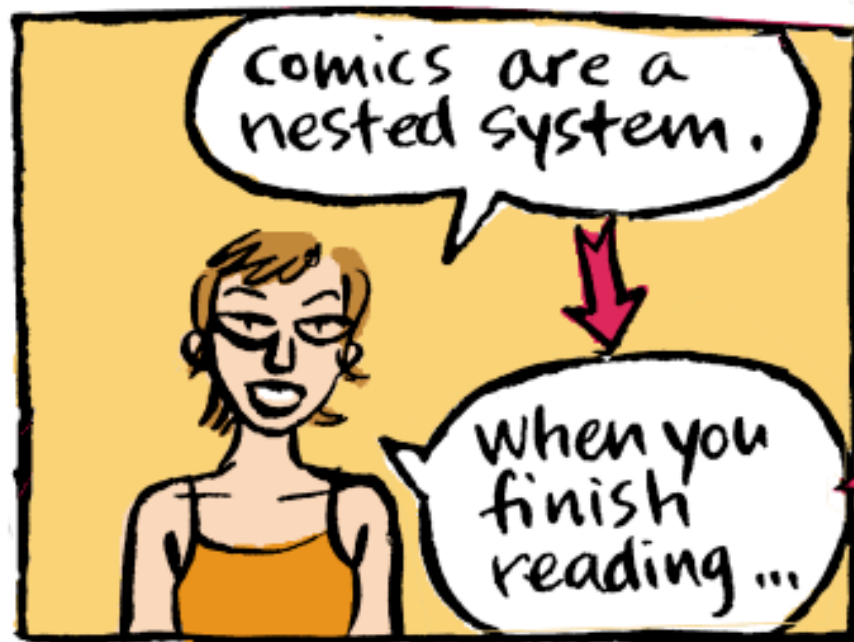














But "novel" is used less precisely. The term "graphic novel" is often applied to short-story collections as well. I don't know why.

I think "novel" is just used to mean "long book."



"Wait a minute," you may be saying, "what **ABOUT** those superheroes?"

Ahem.

OK. "Comics" is the name of a medium, like "film" or "painting."



You don't think "film" means movies about gangsters, or cowboys, do you? Film is a way to express ideas. Any ideas you want to express.

Comics is like that. It's a container for ideas.



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Not a lot of vitamins in this kind, but you get a taste for it.





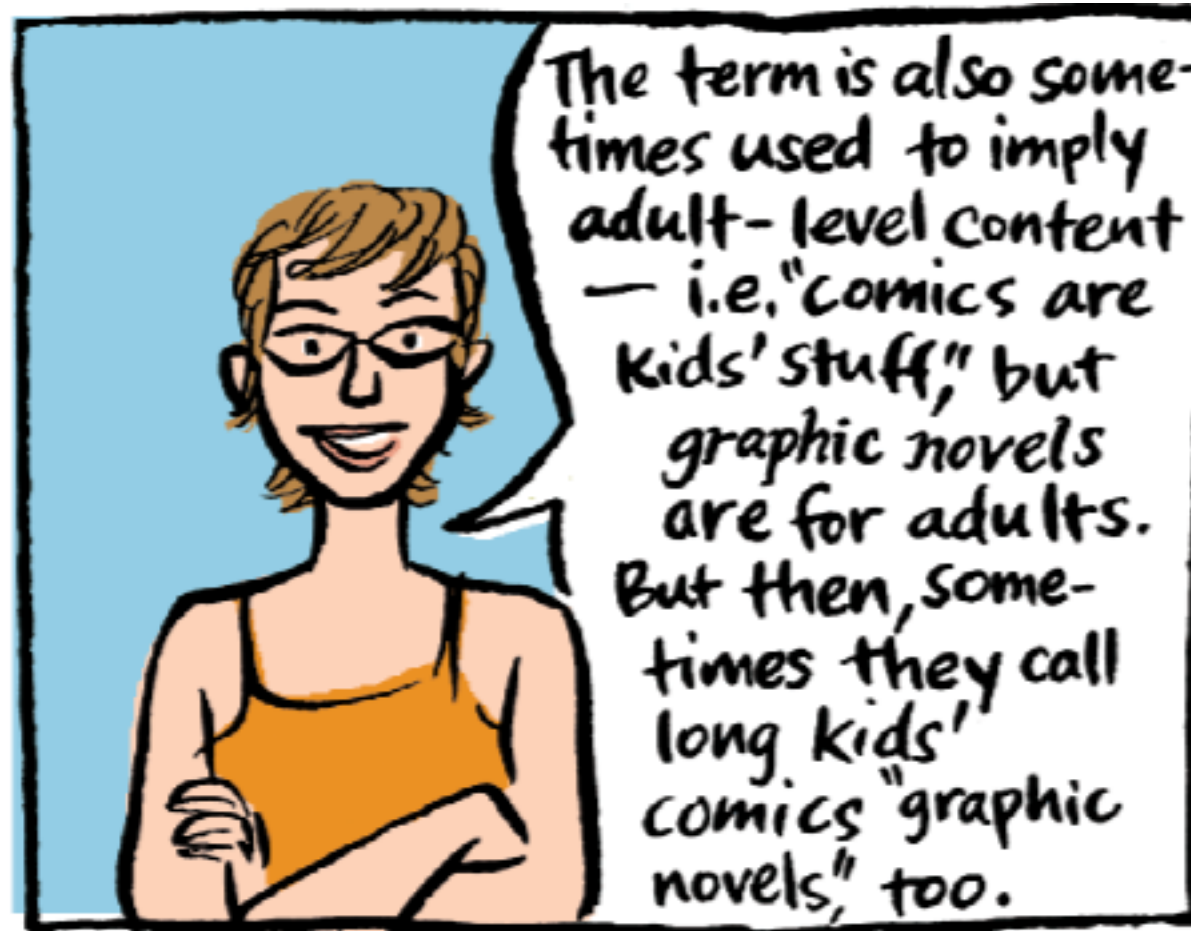
OK, so what is a "graphic novel," besides a comic book?

Well, "graphic" means "told in images," not "naughty pictures"...









The term is also sometimes used to imply adult-level content — i.e., "comics are kids' stuff," but graphic novels are for adults. But then, sometimes they call long kids' comics "graphic novels," too.



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