

**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



images





images



used in



a sequence...

... 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 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 super-heroes. But I'll get to that in a minute.

Here's how to read a comic:



Here's how to read a comic:

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



## Here's how to read a comic:

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



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

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...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...

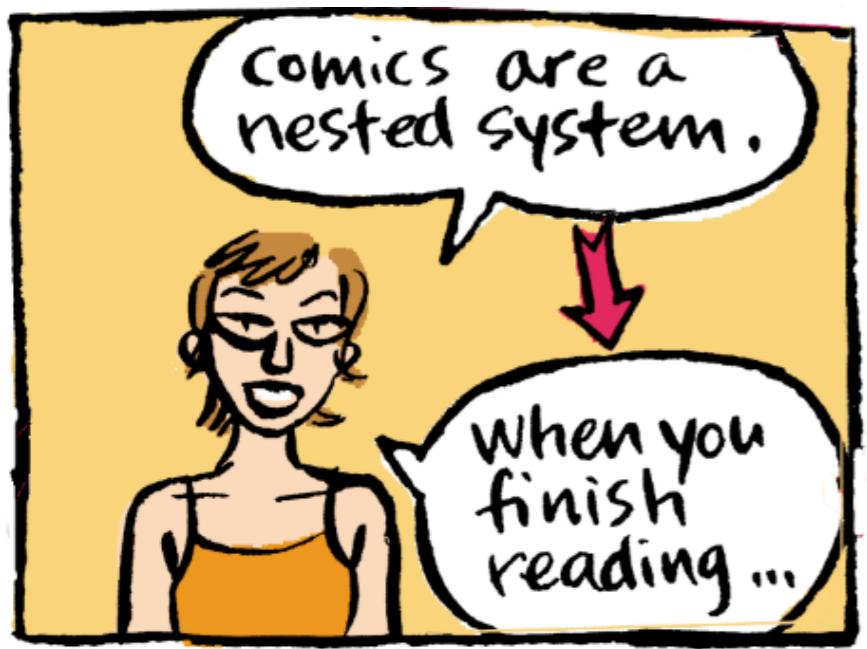
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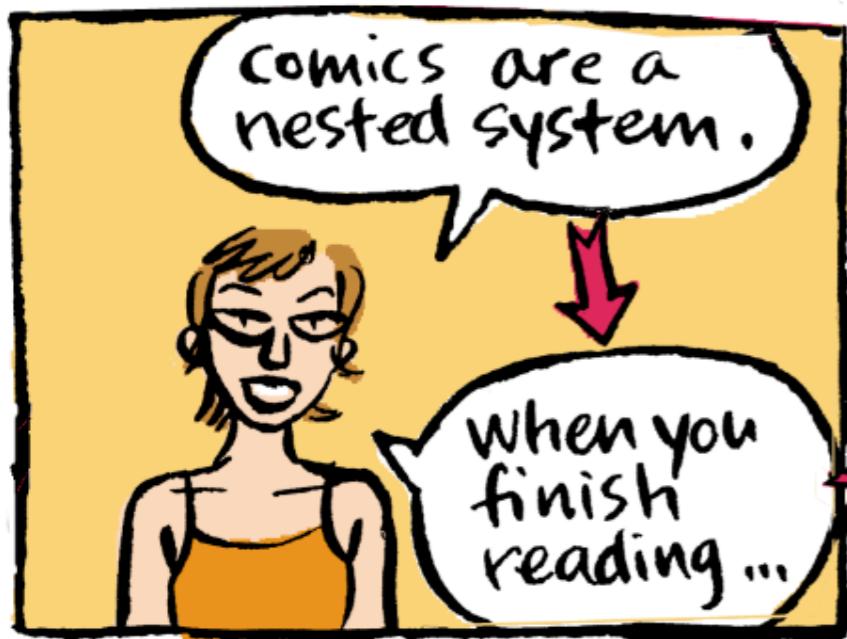
3. ...before proceeding down to the next row...

4. ...and then the next.



comics are a  
nested system.







comics are a nested system.

...when you finish reading ...

...everything within one panel...

...You apply the same left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading order...

comics are a  
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When you  
finish  
reading ...

...everything  
within one  
panel...

...You apply the  
same left-to-  
right, top-to-  
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order...

...to the panels  
themselves!



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When you  
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same left-to-  
right, top-to-  
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order ...

... to the panels  
themselves!

Hee  
hee!

You even use the  
same rule for actions  
within a  
panel.

comics are a nested system.

When you finish reading ...

... everything within one panel ...

... You apply the same left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading order ...

... to the panels themselves!

Hee hee!

You even use the same rule for actions within a panel.

BOO!

comics are a nested system.

When you finish reading ...

... everything within one panel...

... You apply the same left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading order...

... to the panels themselves!

Hee hee!

You even use the same rule for actions within a panel.

BOO!

AAAAUGH!

You think you're  
funny, huh?

Hee  
hee!



I'll deal with  
you later!

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?

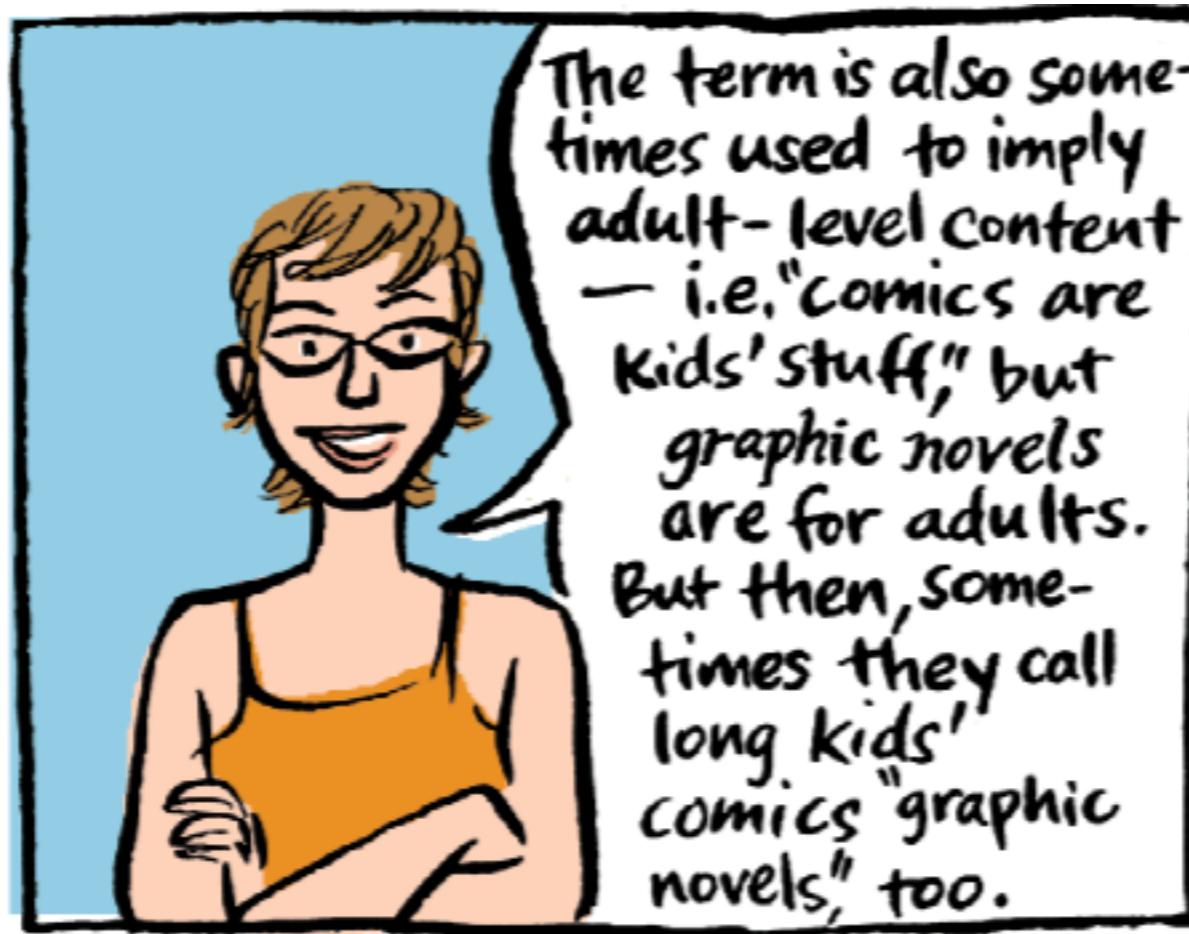
Well, "graphic" means "told in images", not "naughty pictures..."





Hardcover or  
softcover,  
graphic  
novels  
have  
enough  
pages to need  
a square  
spine...





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.



But don't worry ...

The great thing about comics is,  
you can get an idea of their  
content just by flipping them open!

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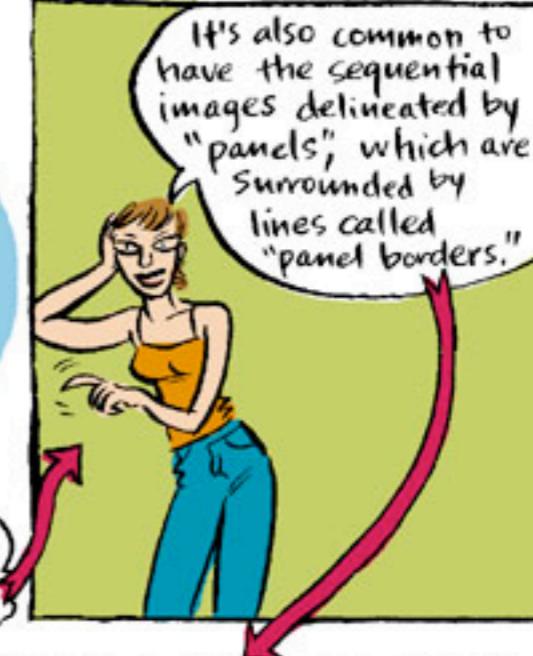
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BOO!

AAAAUGH!

Find the original strip this presentation is based on and much more at:

[www.jessicaabel.com](http://www.jessicaabel.com)

and

[www.dw-wp.com](http://www.dw-wp.com)

