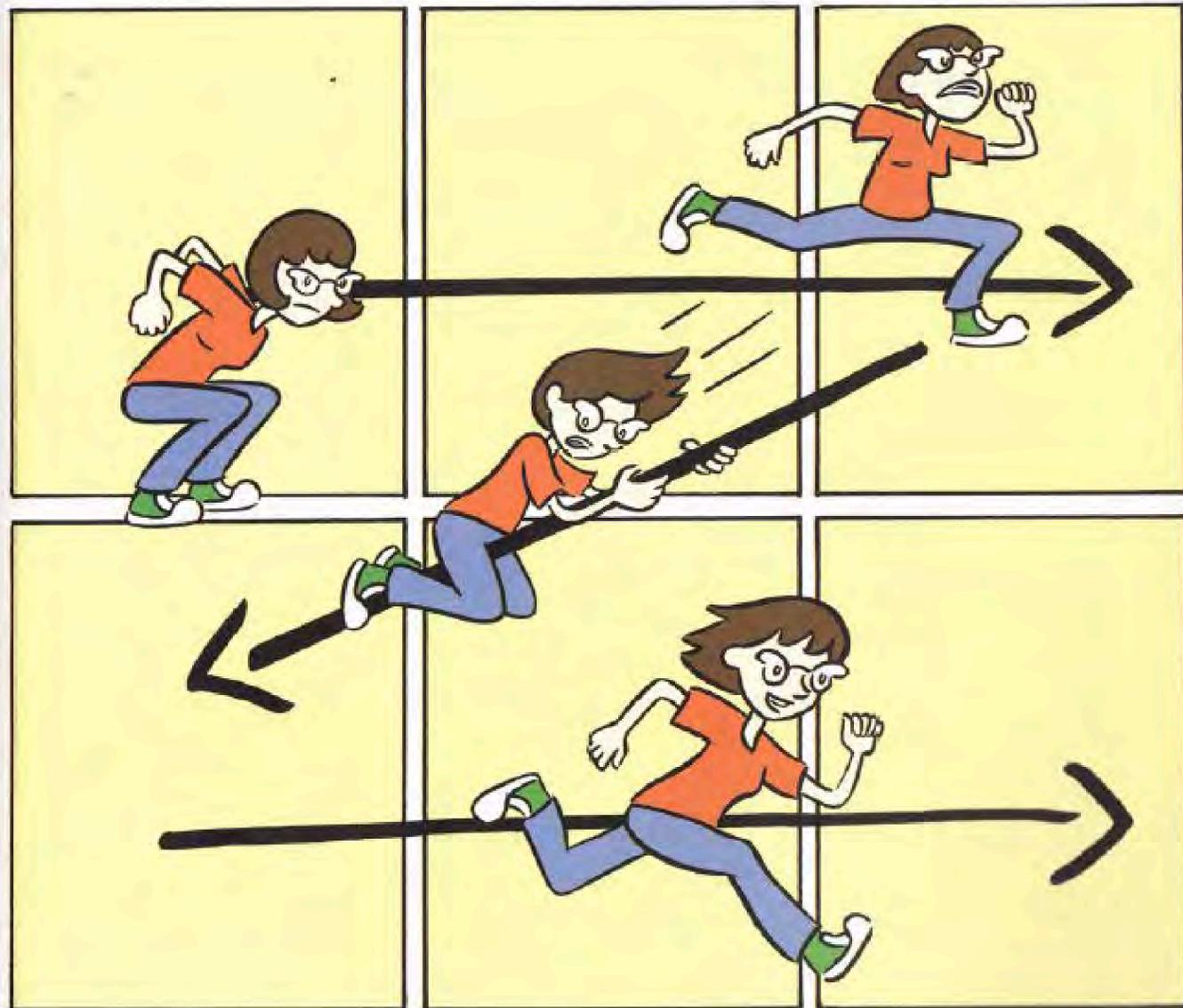


Page and Panel Composition

Professor Sara Gómez Woolley



Comics Building Blocks!

How to read and write comics!

Between the Panels: a.k.a. "The Gutter"





I MAY HAVE DRAWN AN *AXE* BEING RAISED IN THIS EXAMPLE, BUT I'M NOT THE ONE WHO LET IT *DROP* OR DECIDED HOW *HARD* THE BLOW, OR *WHO* SCREAMED, OR *WHY*.

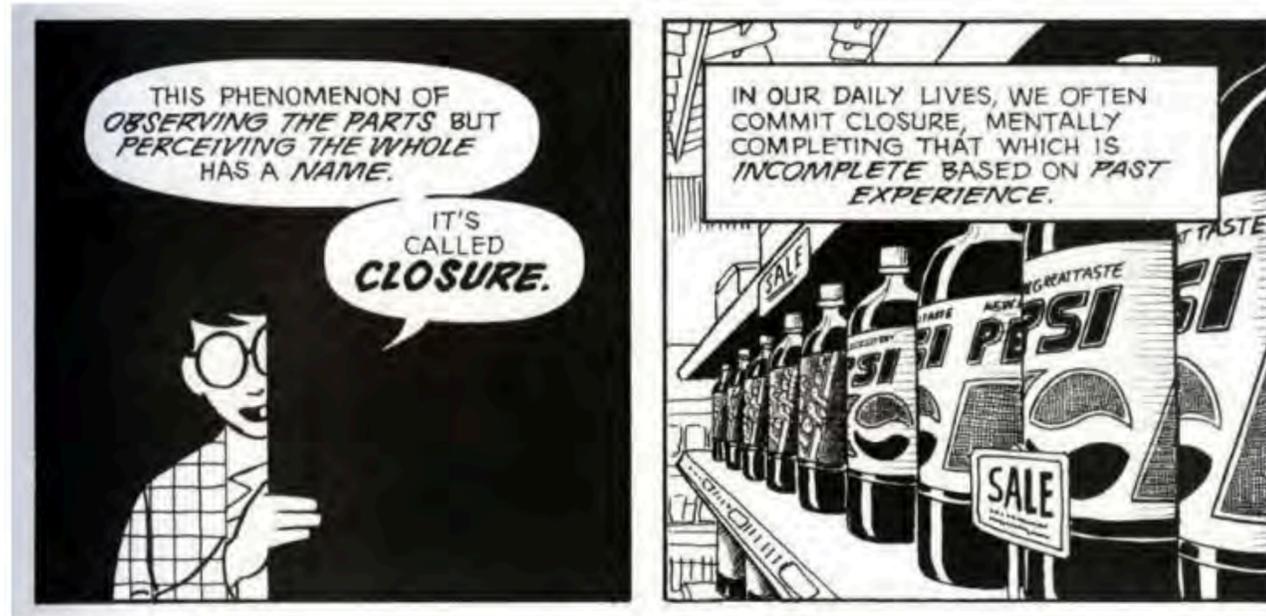


THAT, DEAR READER, WAS YOUR SPECIAL CRIME, EACH OF YOU COMMITTING IT IN YOUR OWN *STYLE*.

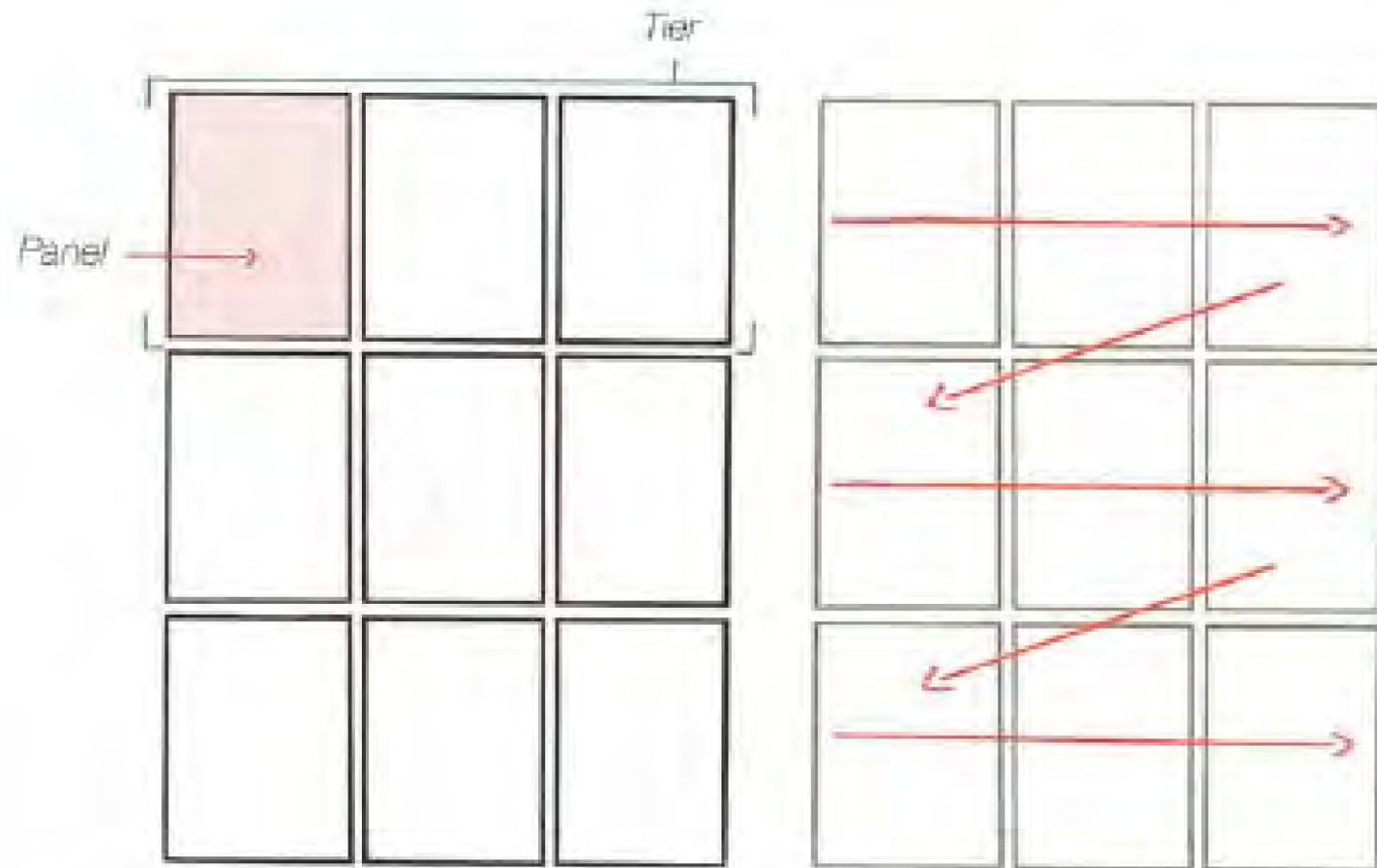


How does the reader's mind participate in storytelling?

Closure : Observing the PARTS,
but perceiving the WHOLE.



The natural way to read, a.k.a.: Directional Flow



Most comic book pages are made up of panels and tiers.

The rule of directional flow: left to right, top to bottom

Panel
Gutter
Closure
Se uence

Tier
Page
Directional Flow
" Formation"

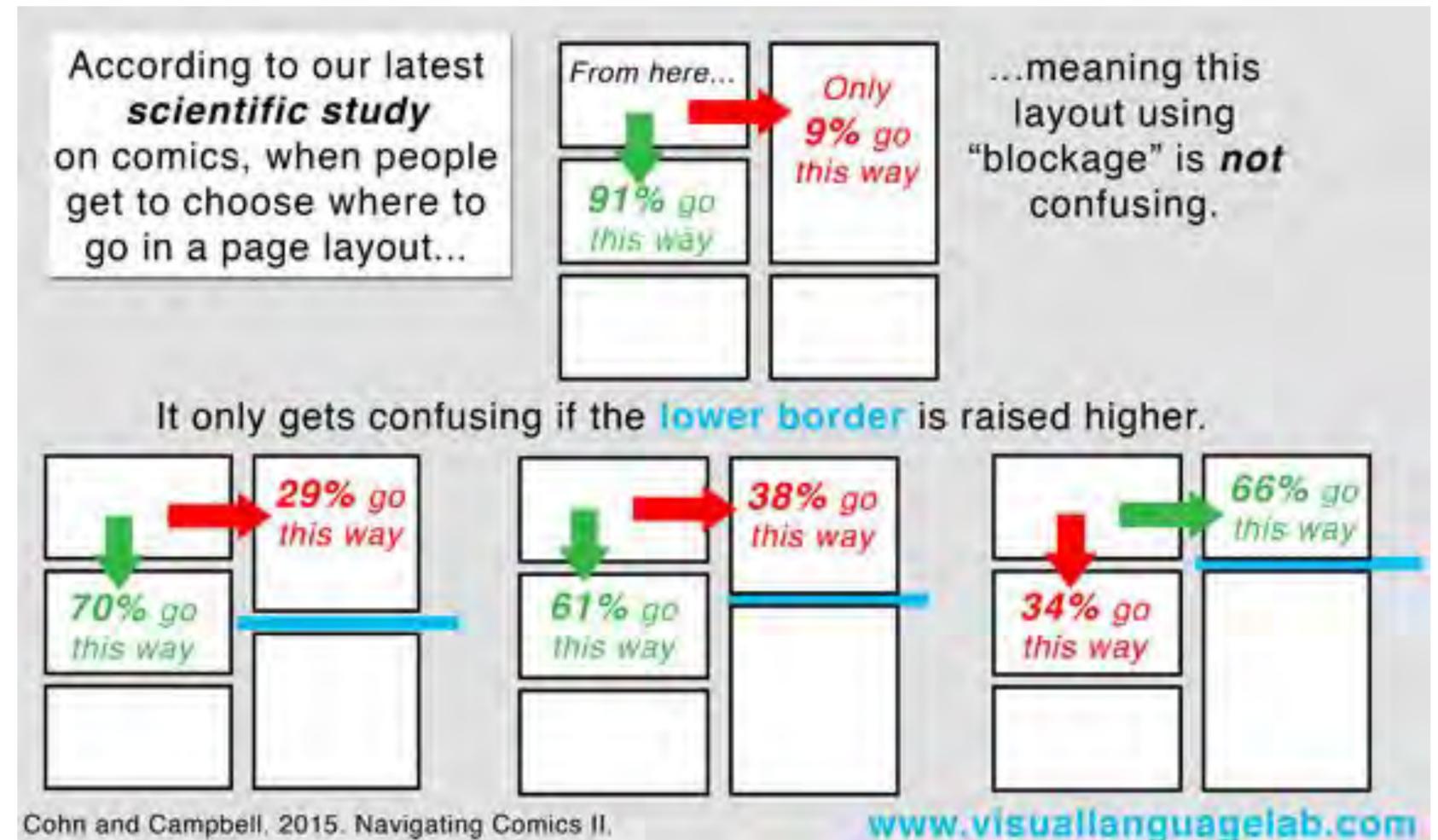
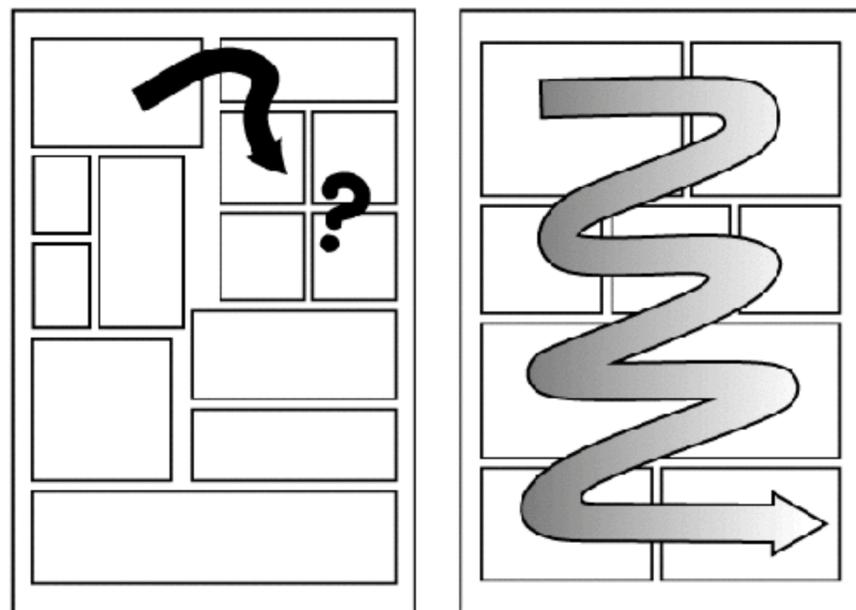


You should also maintain a left-to-right flow within your panels.

TIP: The rule o directional low is NOT to be broken lightly. It can be ARRING to read prose in one direction and images in the other.

Directional Flow & Reading Order

- Follow the natural reading order of your audience (western vs eastern)
- If you disrupt this flow you will confuse and thus lose readers

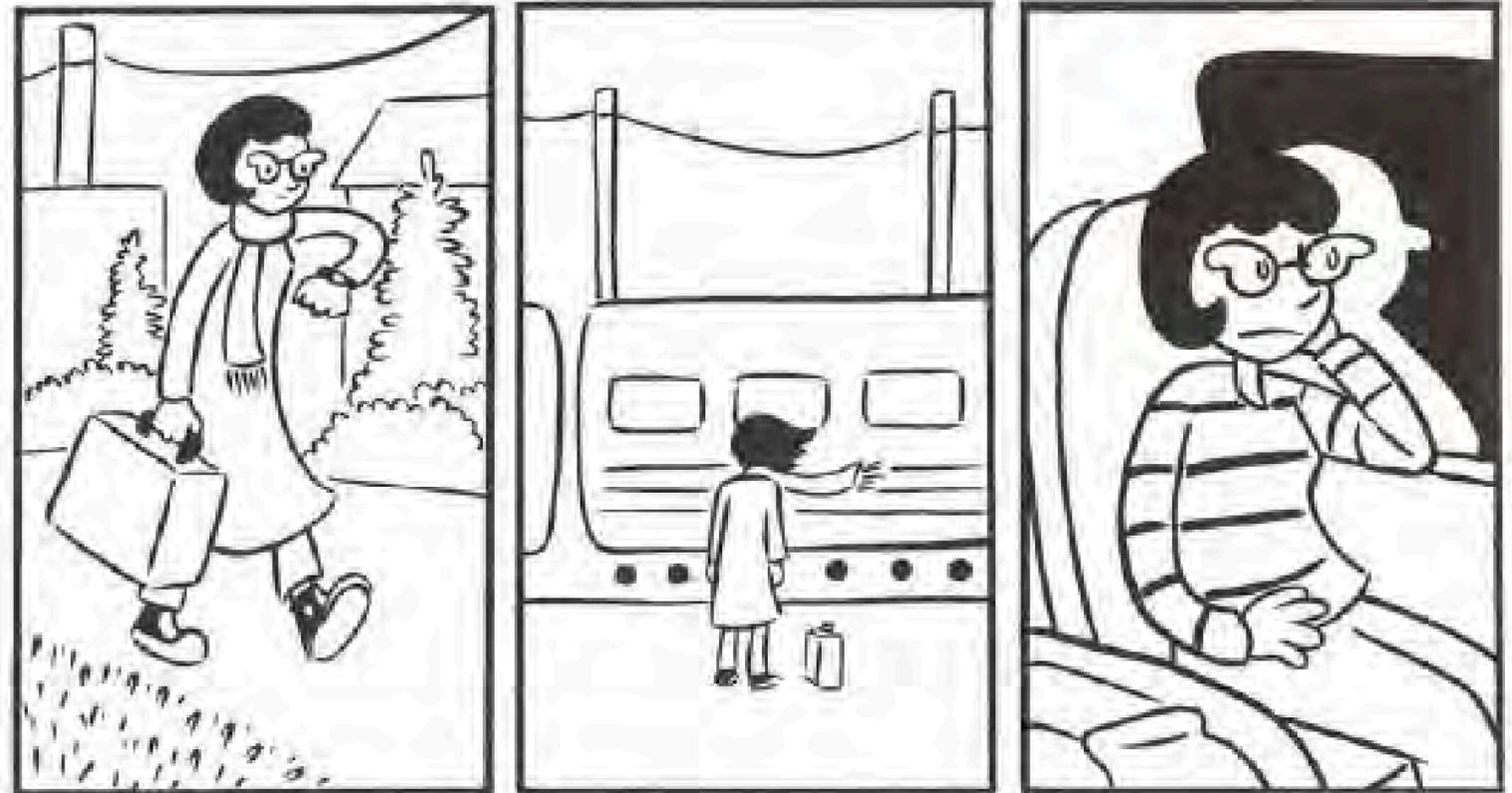


- Use the elements on the page to lead the reader through your composition



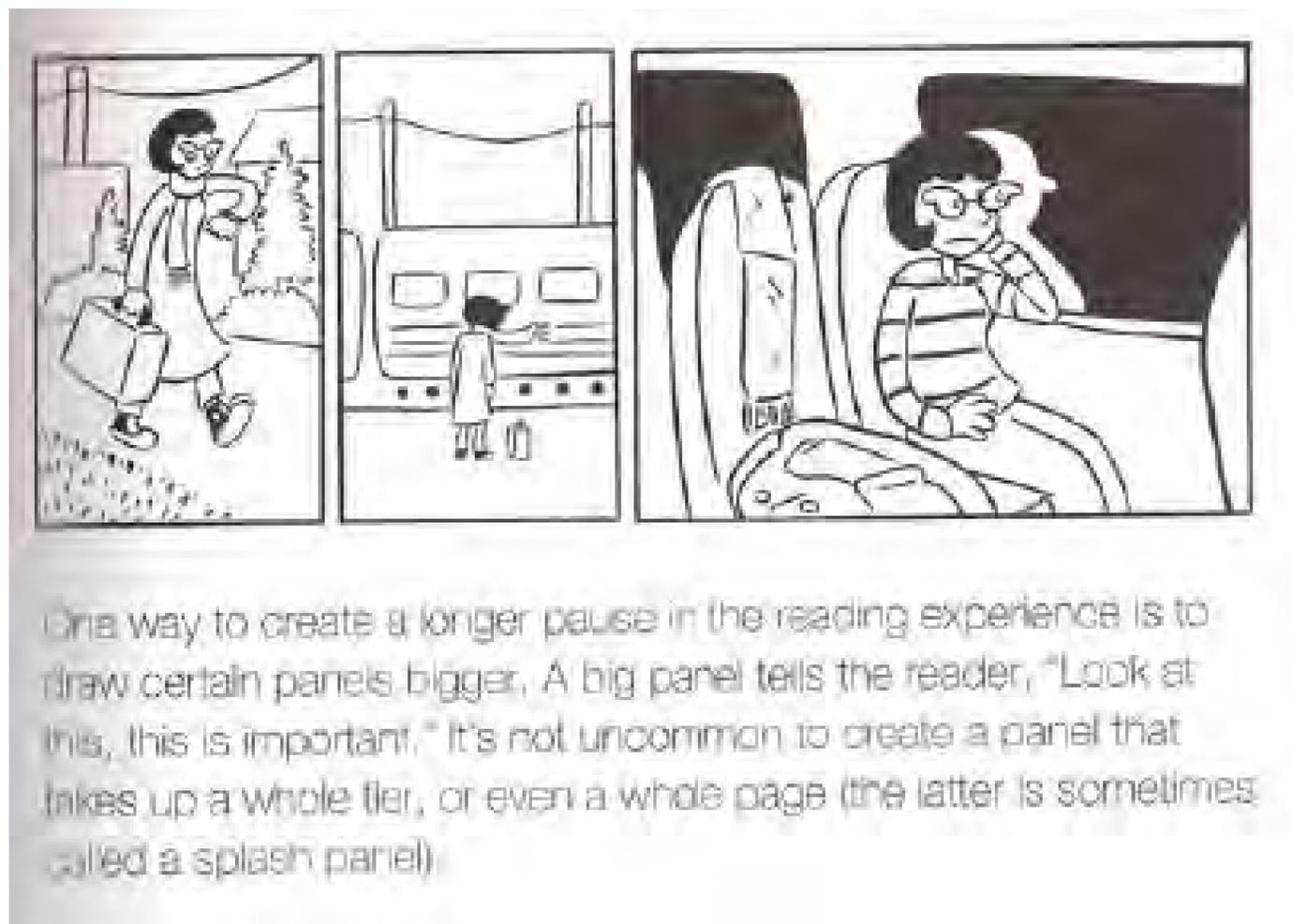
How Panel Choices Effect Reading:

In this sample comic by Robyn Chapman, consider how choice of panel effects HOW we read the story being told.

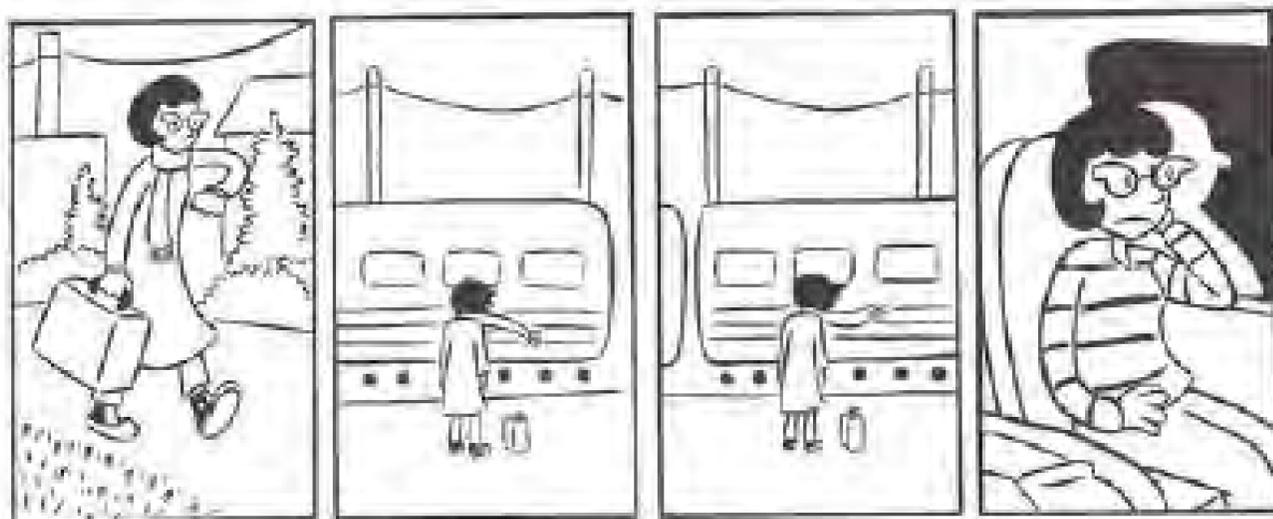


Each of these panels are the exact same size, making for a succinct and evenly paced tempo. If we play with the size and composition of our panels, we can stretch or shrink time to fit the story we're trying to tell.

What happens when one panel is drawn bigger?



What happens when one panel is repeated?



Repeating a panel will stretch a moment out. In some cases, this means copying and then pasting an identical panel onto your page (this works best when there is absolutely no change or movement in the panel). In other cases, you will have to redraw the panel, keeping the basic design but adding some small changes. This sort of panel repetition gives the comic a slow-motion effect.

What happens when one panel is border-less and drawn to the edge o the page ?

A. .A. a "Bleed"



You can even draw a panel so large that it's not contained within its border. An image that extends to the edge of a page is called a bleed. Bleeds are particularly useful when you want the reader to examine the environment you've drawn. Your world feels more open when it extends to the very edge of the paper.

What happens when one panel is silent?



Another way to make the reader linger on a panel is to make that panel silent. Text automatically imposes a certain reading pace on a panel (we read the text, we move on). A silent panel has a timeless quality that invites the reader to drink it in.

- You can vary gutter size and use borderless or “open” panels
- Use center panels as an anchor for each page



- Your panel borders don't have to be straight lines and right angles, but if you are going to mix it up do it for a specific reason that adds to the narrative and understanding of the plot

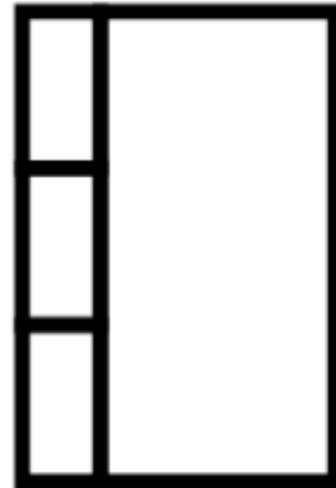
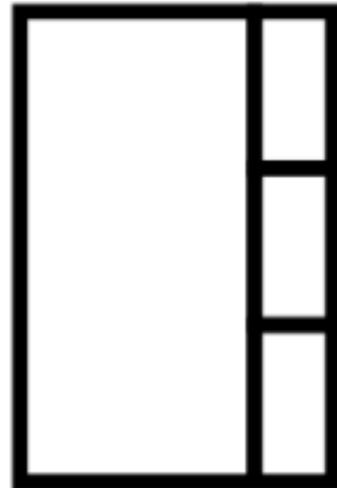
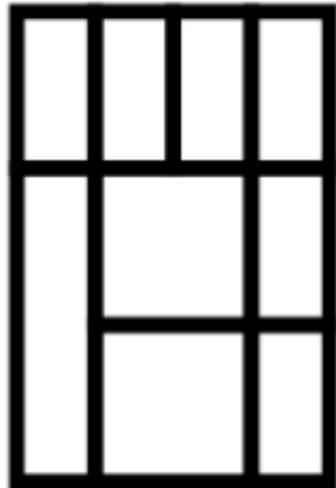
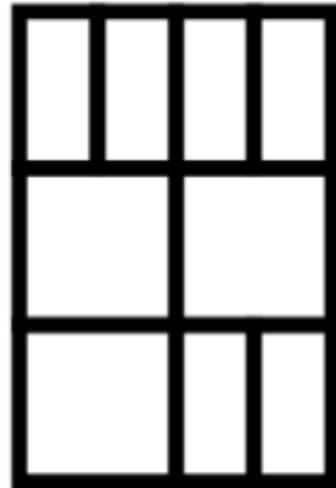
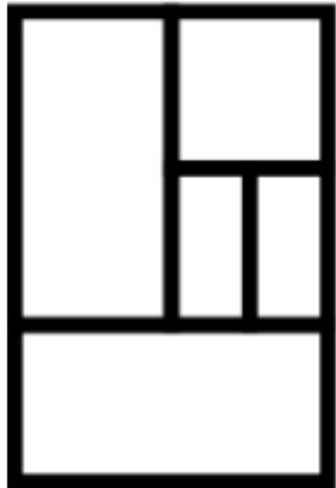
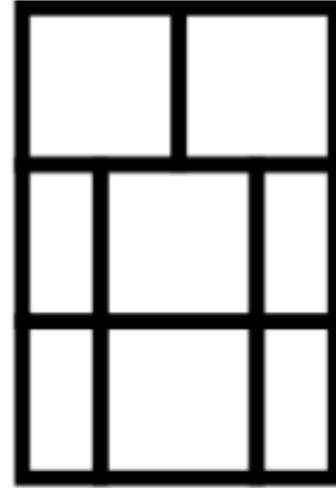
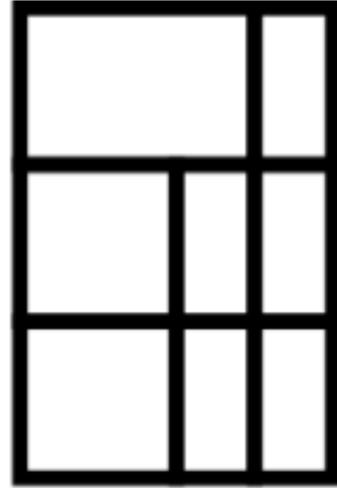
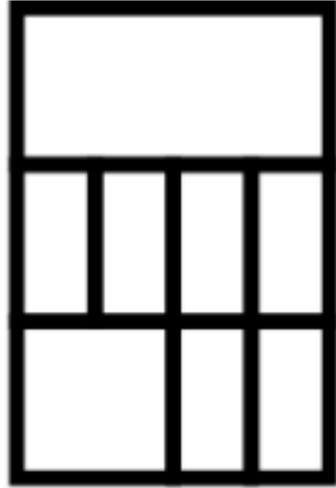
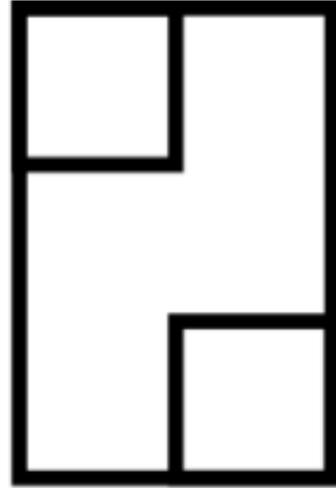
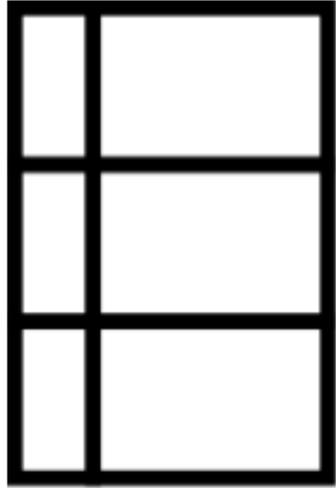


- Larger panels can slow the reader down



- Narrow panels help build tension





**Making
Comics
Scott
McCloud**

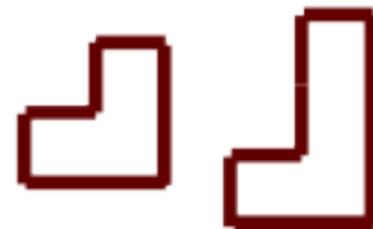
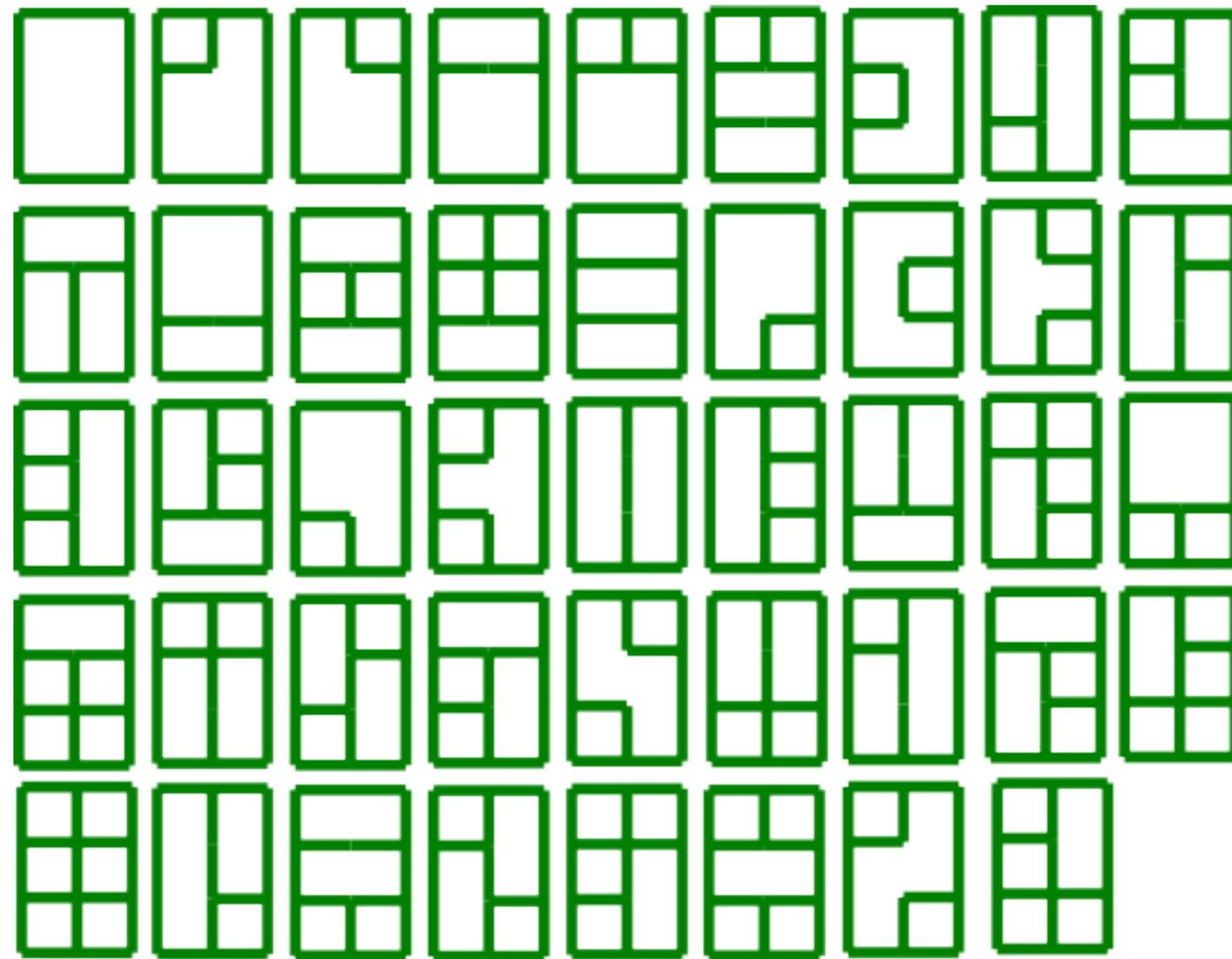
Just the Panels - Start With a Six or Nine Panel Grid

A study in panel borders:

Inspired by this [awesome post about making comics quickly](#), I took a look at some comics I own to get some sense of different kinds of panel design choices.

- **Extremely weird comic panels CAN work, but when it fails it looks painful and forced.**
- **Simple is not bad.**
- **There are actually a LOT of possible combinations**
- Specific notes:
 - Scott McCloud uses a 4x3 sliceup of the page, and it's four VERTICAL slices and three HORIZONTAL ones, which is weird because it makes the panels, on average, LESS square. This works with the particular comic really WELL though, because he draws himself in closeup, talking, a LOT.
 - DAR and Narbonic both are webcomics mashed into book format, but both worked surprisingly well as page layout in the end.
 - Blacksad is REALLY variable and the page layouts are hand-crafted on a per-page basis. No speed gains here, but perhaps a message that full custom has its place.
 - The Resonator is fairly formal but never *too* rigid with panel choices. Lots of narrow or tall panels, which works as a way to alternate between big establishing shots and dense dialog. Very tall panels for single speaker, long ones for two-person dialog or to combine a lot of text and visuals. In general, Resonator is print-native and has TINY text...
 - Ultimate X-Men is a fun read but the panel design is a disaster. Almost none of the choices of graphic design work at all. Occasionally an establishing shot hits home, but in general the layout is trying WAY too hard.
 - Watchmen. Formalism raised to the ultimate. It's precise, it's a 3x3 grid, it's piss-on-a-plate-with-no-spills precise and that's fine, for two reasons: one, everything is about time, and two, it gets the panels the hell out of the way of the story.
 - Augustus is an example of what Ultimate X-Men was trying to do, except it succeeds. Lots of variation, but on average very orderly. Kind of strikes me as the sort of thing you "have to be GOOD" to pull off well.



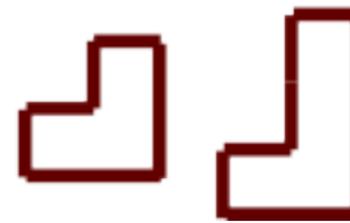
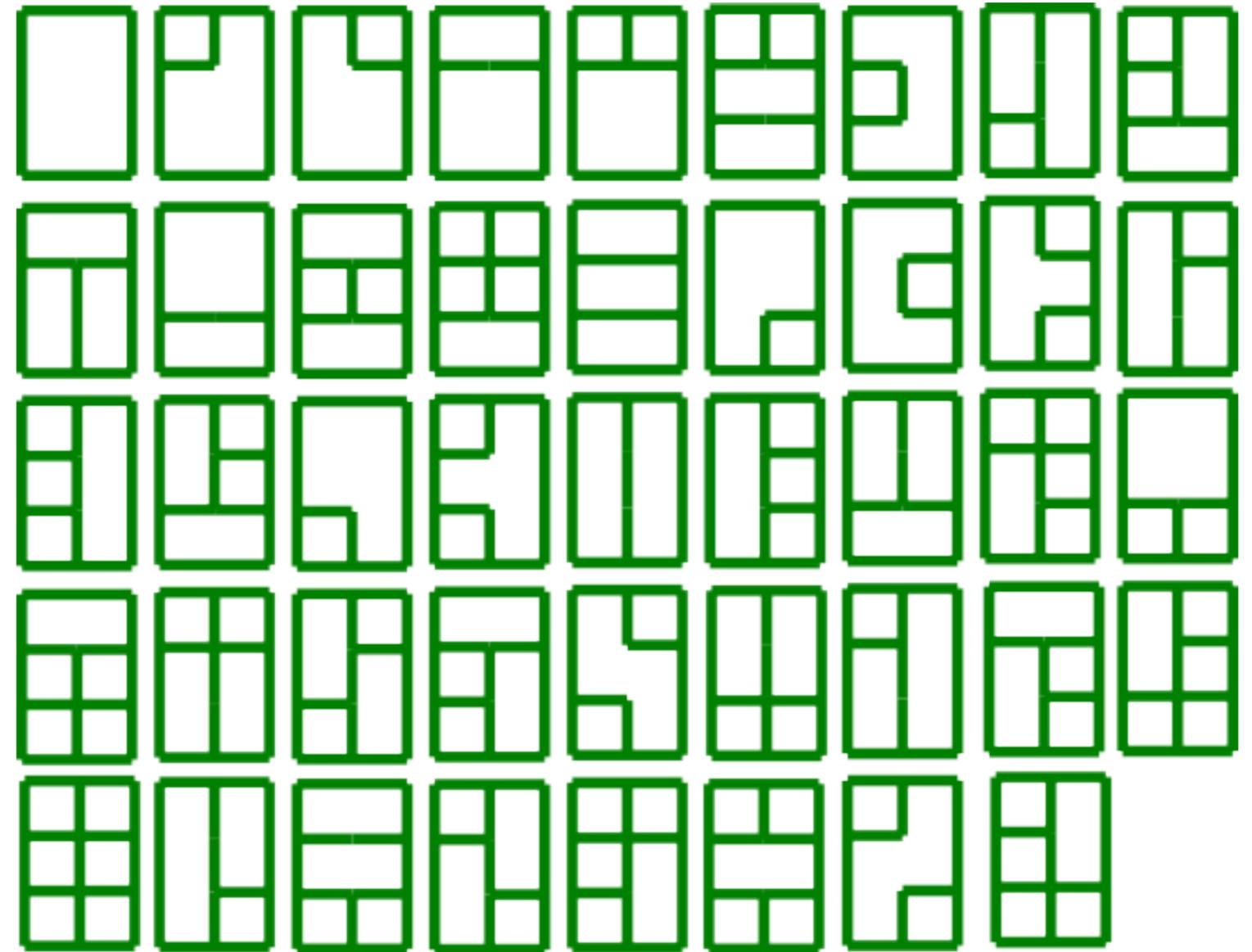


(To heck with these guys)

A study in panel borders:

Inspired by this [awesome post about making comics quickly](#), I took a look at some comics I own to get some sense of different kinds of panel design choices.

- All 2x3 panel layouts 2: The Cull
- So I decided to have a half-honest go at culling the 74 panels from the 2x3 grid down to
- **Step 1:** throw out all those “boomerang” panels because it’s relatively unlikely that they’ll work at all. POSSIBLE, but probably awkward unless you’re pretty clever.
- **Step 2:** throw out the pages that only make sense if you’re looking at “aside” panels. I can see a number of reasons these might work nicely in the right case, buuuuut, in a 2x3 grid they’ll be kind of big and awkward aside panels.
- **Step 3:** in the least objective of all the culling steps, I’ve thrown out all the layouts which are potentially confusing for left-to-right reading. A LOT of artists use exactly these layouts on a regular basis, BUT, if you’re ME, you get irritated by having to design the flow of artwork to guide readers to the correct next panel.
- This drops the total layout count to 18, which is small enough that a set of all 18 wouldn’t be a totally daunting challenge just to have some ready-made panels. As before, note that the design choices are *arbitrary* in a lot of ways, and they *limit what you can do next*, but enforcing rules like this also makes it easier and faster to make choices: this is arguably the core point of this [awesome post that is awesome](#).

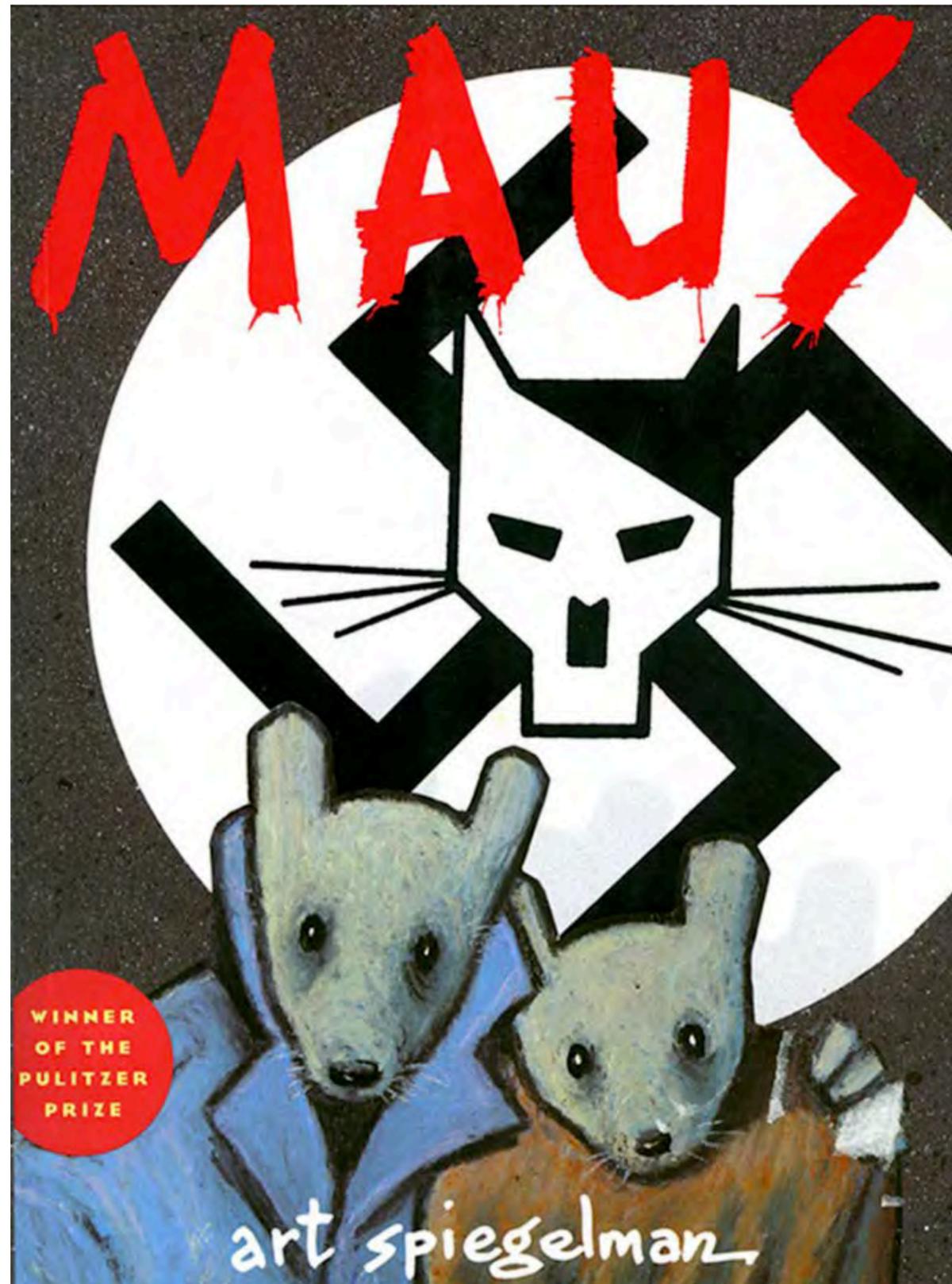


(To heck with these guys)



The Auto-Bio Comic





MAUS banned in Tennessee





Jeffrey Brown



HOMEWORK 3 | Due Week 7, March 17 Autobiographical Story, 1-2 page comic

Objective:

Write and draw a 1-2 page autobiographical comic or "how-to".

Technique:

Autobiographical comics have long been an excellent vehicle for people to tell their personal stories. Tell a simple story about something that happened to you,* or show us how to do something you know how to do really well (cooking your favorite dish, etc.).

You will write at least one or two paragraphs describing the story, which you will then break down into a rough script. Break the story into panels BEFORE you begin sketching it. Once you have your script you will create rough thumbnails to make sure the pacing is good and the story will begin and end in the space you have allotted yourself.

- What is a story that you always tell?
- Did you ever have an awkward run-in with a celebrity?
- Is there a dish or baked good that you can cook from memory?

You may NOT use more than 2 pages. Editing is IMPORTANT.

WK1 due 3/3 Outline paragraphs for your story, Write rough draft of script, Character designs, thumbnails (roughs)

WK2 due 3/10 Pencil breakdowns (precise instructions for yourself)

WK3 due 3/17 Finished page(s)

Start with an idea

And turn that idea into a script

- **ELEVATOR PITCH:** A quick, punchy paragraph – the grabber – to command attention.
- **Introduction** – a general overview, starting with a grabber
- **Story (an overview)** – A synopsis of what happens in the book and if it's a series, where it could go in subsequent storylines
- **Characters** – Main characters and villains, include sketches/portraits if possible!
- **Format and Delivery** – How many pages? Size? Full-color or B&W?

Manhunter #1 - script by Marc Andreyko

Page One-

Caption: "Downtown Los Angeles. 3 a.m."

We are in the dirty, dingy downtown of L.A. Homeless people sleep on the sidewalks and in the doorways of once-glorious art deco buildings now filthy and rundown. Some huddle around fire barrels; others watch warily as policecars and crime scene tape surround an overturned "Metahuman Transport Vehicle".

2 40-ish MALE DETECTIVES pull up to the scene and exit their unmarked car. (the 'tecs are of the "Law and Order" variety – burly, weathered guys).

Det 1(Wayne): Jesus! Shouldn't this stuff be happenin' in Gotham or Keystone?

Det 2(Davis): Aw, c'mon. At least it's not another freakin' high-speed freeway chase.

The detectives cross the tape and see a civilian car that crashed head-on into the flipped transport vehicle. In the front seat of the car, a sheet covers the body of the dead driver.

Det 1: Yeah? Well, so far, it looks *exactly* like a freeway chase.

A UNIFORMED COP (Tommy) calls the detectives towards the back of the transport.

Cop: Wayne, Davis, over here.

They cross to the transport and their eyes widen as they look inside (but we don't see inside yet).

Davis: Christ on a crutch.

Characters! Story!

- **The basics:**
 - **Who, what, when, where, why, and how of your story. Describe each in a paragraph.**
 - **For example, if we were describing Tin Tin:**
 - A who paragraph describing him as a character and a person.
 - A why paragraph about how his job as a reporter takes him around the globe with his dog Snowy and occasional buddies (Cap'n Haddock, etc).
 - A what paragraph about what (briefly) happens to him on his adventure.
 - A where about the locations he'll see.
 - A how paragraph about how you're going to tell the story (tongue-in-cheek adventure? hardboiled detective story?).



Give yourself instructions on what to draw

Who what when etc.

- Characters - who, how many, what do they look like, facial expressions, turnarounds
- Setting - where; locations and spaces, establishing shots
- Key Items - Objects that are part of the plot.
- Dialogue - lettering technique
- Panel layout - thumbnails!
- Mood or theme - atmosphere, lighting, stylistic choices
- Camera angles - how are the panels framed

SUPER-MAN

KieronGillen/Assorted Mysterious Artists

Hi

Super-man is, of course, a very different and legally separate character to Superman. Clearly, if you, the artist, choose to interpret the visuals in a manner akin to the famed father of superheroics, it is beyond my control. You artists are mysterious elfin creatures, whose raw creativity I would not dream to curtail.

Anyway! This is one page, five panels. I was playing with a few other rough ideas, some striking an elegiac poetic mood, some speaking to the fundamental morality of the character, and some just being really angry satire... but I figured that dumb is best. This is quite dumb, but hopefully includes a few fun things to play with, and should work with a different effect in many different styles. Which, I guess, is the point, right?

I tend to write heavy, but in this case I'm going to write a little looser. I always say that I'm very pro seeing your interpretation of the script rather than any attempt at holy writ.... and in this case, that's obviously doubly true. Add panels, details, whatever. Do what you do. Can't wait to see it.

Kieron



PAGE 1

1.1

Tight on a construction worker, sitting in a mechanical digger. What kind? For the sake of the story, doesn't matter - something heavy duty. Indulge your inner 5 year old who loved diggers.

Pick something from here, basically...
http://www.cat.com/en_US/products/new/equipment.html

It's probably tight enough that we can't see much of what's surrounding them. All we can see is that the worker is in distress. They're screaming, panicked. Something very wrong is happening, clearly.

Only strange thing - we may see some foliage leaking into the page.

Can be a silent panel or we can have a HELLLLLP! dialogue here. I think it'd work silent.

NO DIALOGUE

1.2

And we pull out, revealing the situation. The digger and driver are resting in the top branches of an enormous animated tree. Think Treebeard from Lord of the Rings having a really bad day, rampaging through the streets of our classical super-man urban metropolis.

And Super-Man is flying in, clearly on the way to rescuing the worker from this predicament.

If you want the back story, I see that a construction company has basically started cutting down some trees in a forest, not knowing there's some manner of Tree people there. And now the trees are angry and on the rampage. If you want you can have other trees and saplings causing havoc, but clearly isn't essential. One big mean tree is all we need.

I'd say this is the largest image on the page.

NO DIALOGUE

1.3

Super-man carrying the digger away from the tree, safely. The angry Tree reaching out with knotted branch fingers after them, failing to pull them from the sky.

NO DIALOGUE

1.4

And the Digger has been placed on the ground, the driver waving as

Super-man flies away in the background.

Key thing - We can see the digger's branding. It is a CAT digger.

(If you want, it's possible that you could frame panel 1.3 so we have the branding prominently enough in it. If so, you could lose this panel and regain space on the rest of the page. As long as it's clear it's a CAT digger, that's fine.)

NO DIALOGUE

1.5

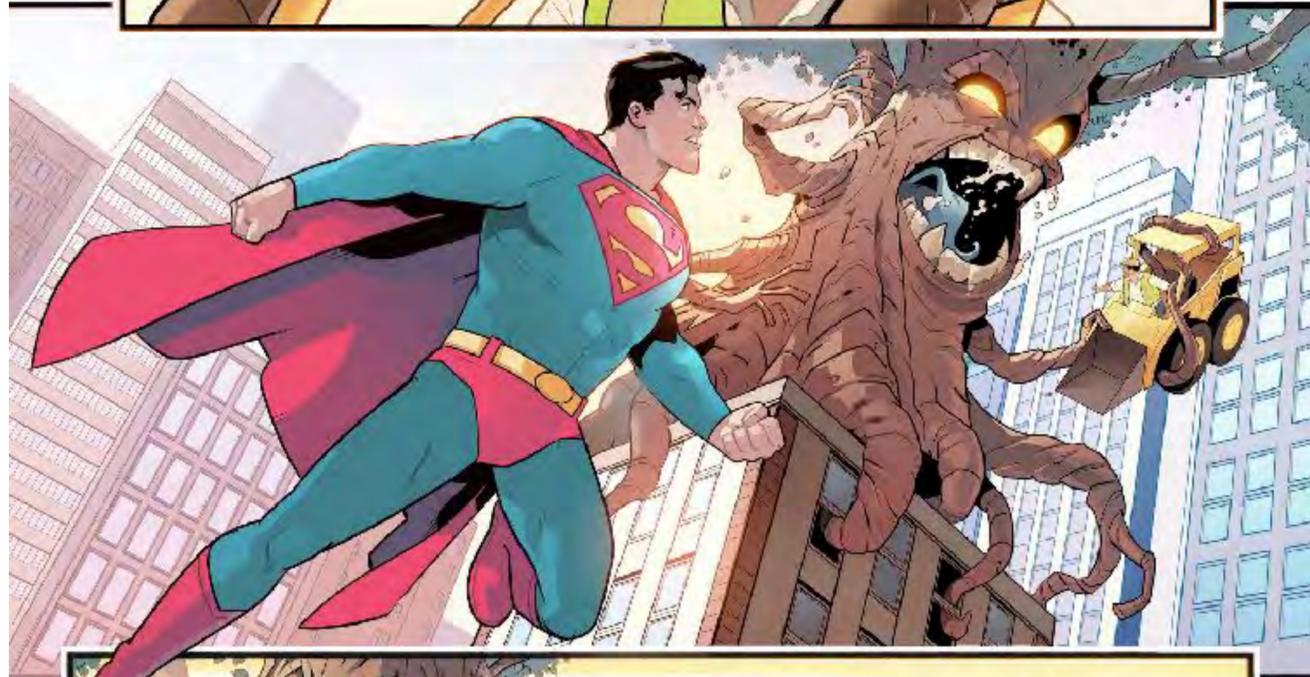
And we hard-cut elsewhere. We're in the metropolis' premier newspaper, in the editor's office. His star reporter has been pitching a story, and been told no. She looks outraged, and is clearly about to launch into a defence of the story. The Editor is cutting in, dismissively. The reporter probably looks a lot like Lois Lane and the editor probably looks a lot like Perry White. Probably.

REPORTER: BUT! IT WAS SENSATIONAL! HE--

EDITOR: SUPER-MAN SAVES CAT FROM TREE IS JUST NOT NEWS.

NOTE: Feel free to add your twitter handle and the #artcred at the bottom of the page.

//end//



@stephenbyrne86 #artcred



#ARTCRED

@KIERONGILLEN - @NELLUCNH03

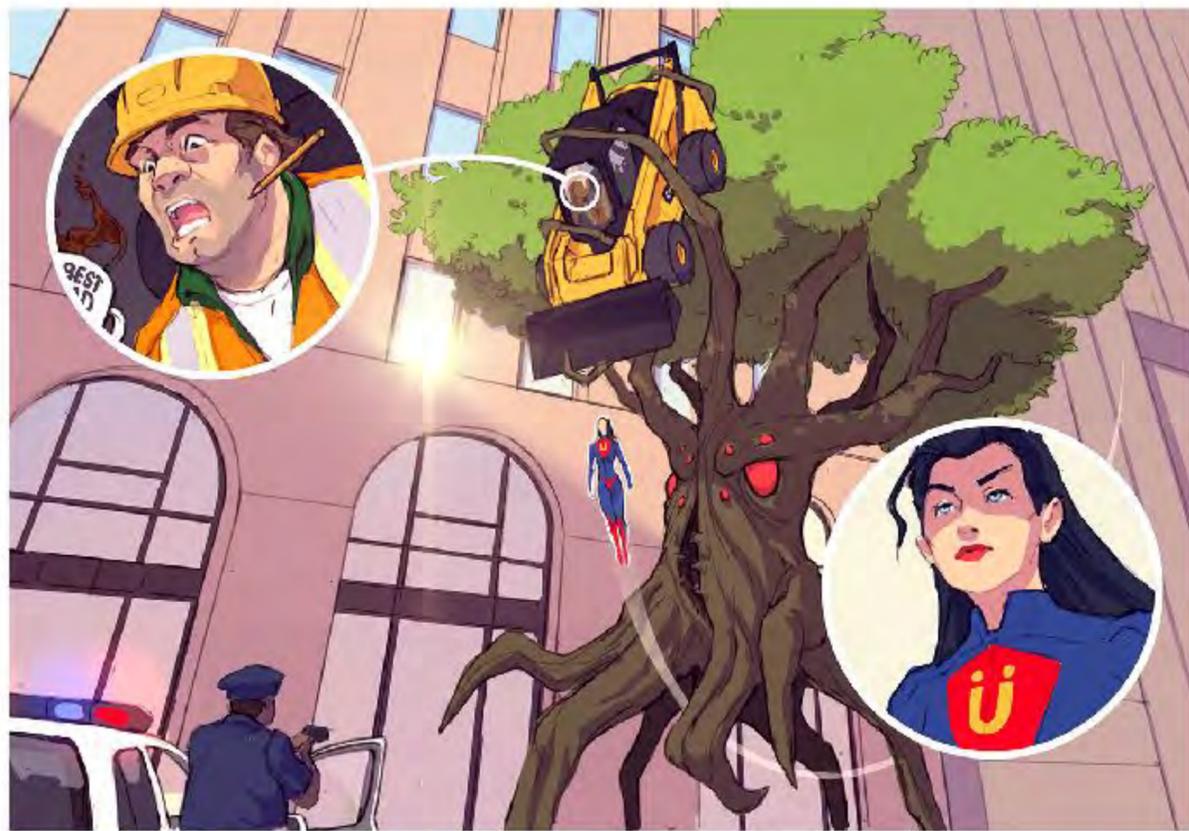


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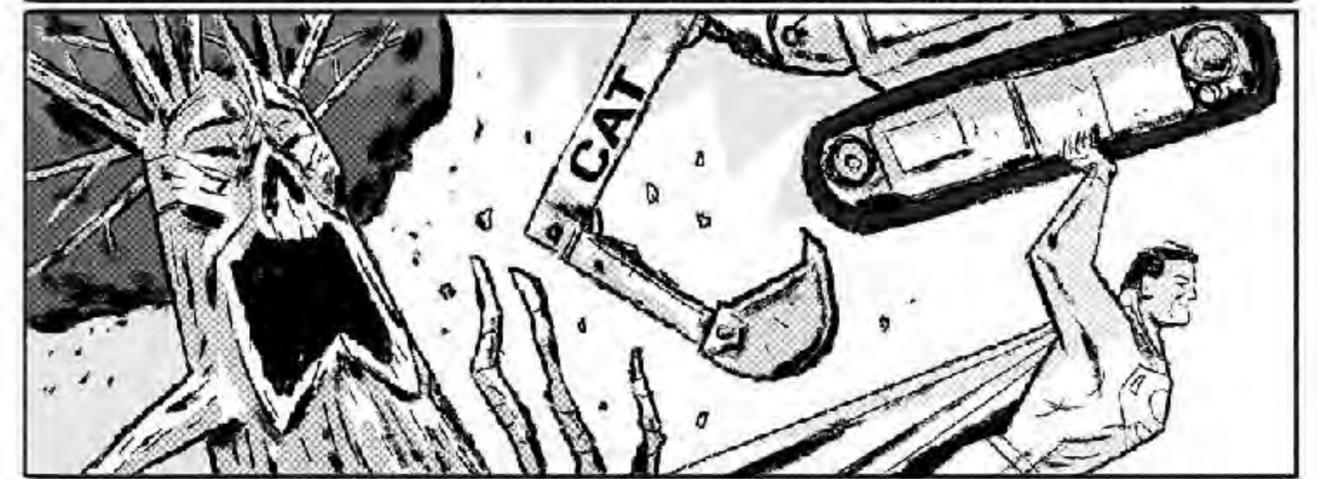
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@KierorGillen #ARTCRED
@FavouriteCrayon

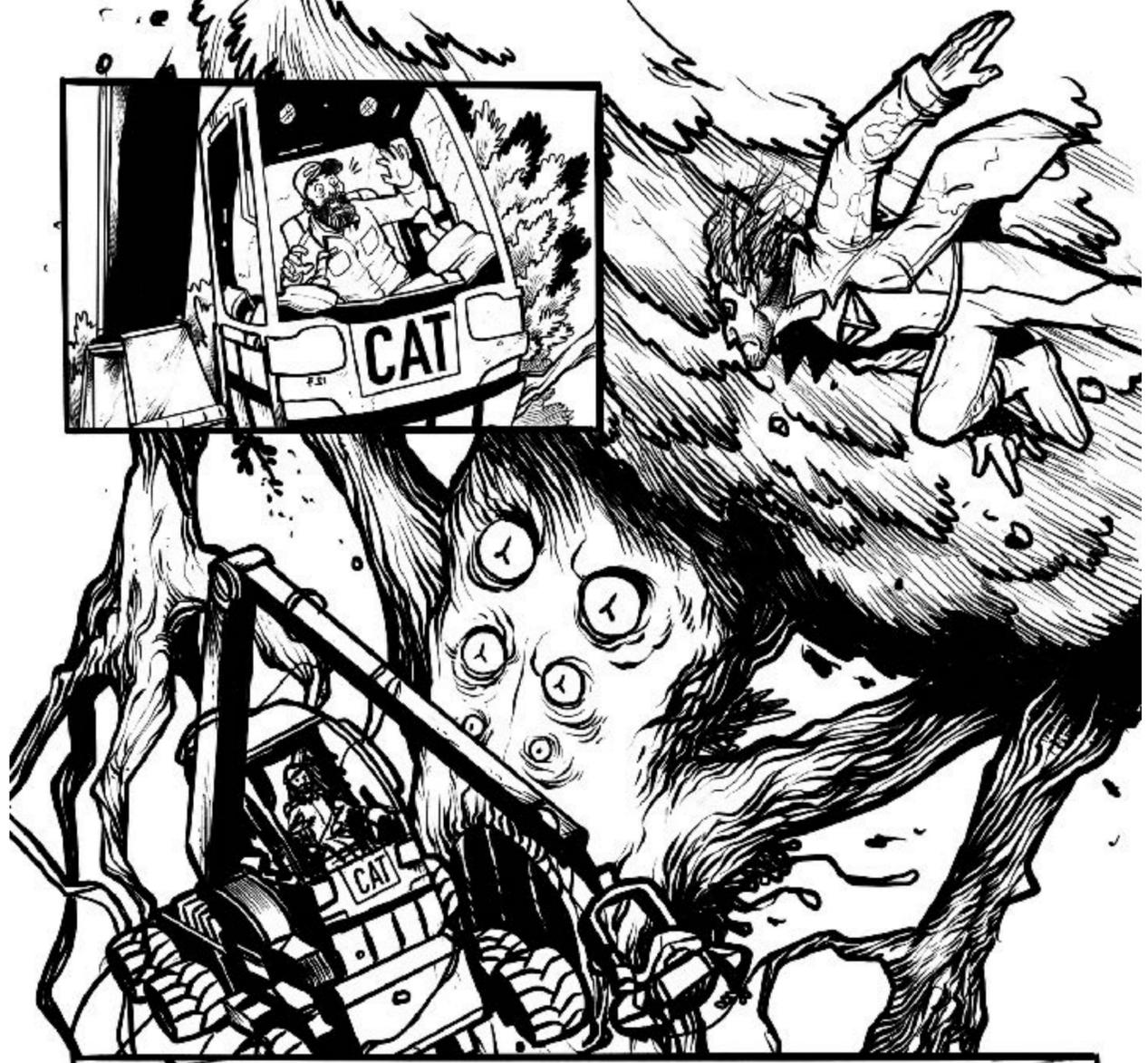


SUPER-MAN SCRIPT BY KIERON GILLEN ART BY GRAHAM CORCORAN (@GRAHAMARTWORK)





SUPER-MAN | ART BY CHRIS WISLORING | TWITTER/INSTAGRAM/IG: @CHRISWISLORING





SUPER-MAN

WRITTEN BY KIERON GILLEN

ART BY ALEX BERTRAM-POWELL



WALLY WOOD'S 22 PANELS THAT ALWAYS WORK !!

OR SOME INTERESTING WAYS TO GET SOME VARIETY INTO THOSE BORING PANELS WHERE SOME DUMB WRITER HAS A BUNCH OF LAME CHARACTERS SITTING AROUND AND TALKING FOR PAGE AFTER PAGE!



A POWERS STUDY OF WALLY WOOD'S

Wally Wood's "22 Panels That Always Work" was a rough guide by Wood to help artist during pages of heavy character dialogue. It has been a classic guide for artists both established and newbies in the industry.

"22 PANELS THAT ALWAYS WORK"

Unfortunately, the only copy available is a copy of a copy floating around, parts of it barely legible. As I was studying this page again, I decided to do this homage to Wally's greatness. We all thank you, Wally, wherever you are.

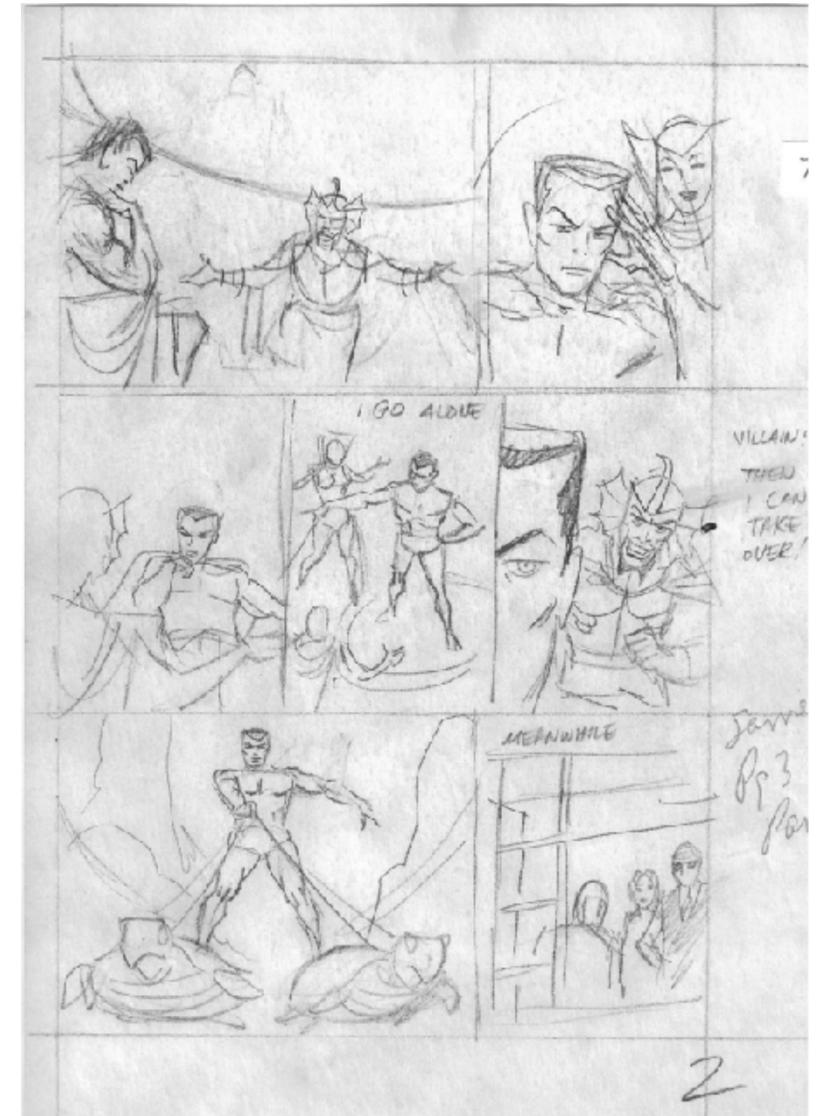
— Michael Avon Oeming



Thumbnails

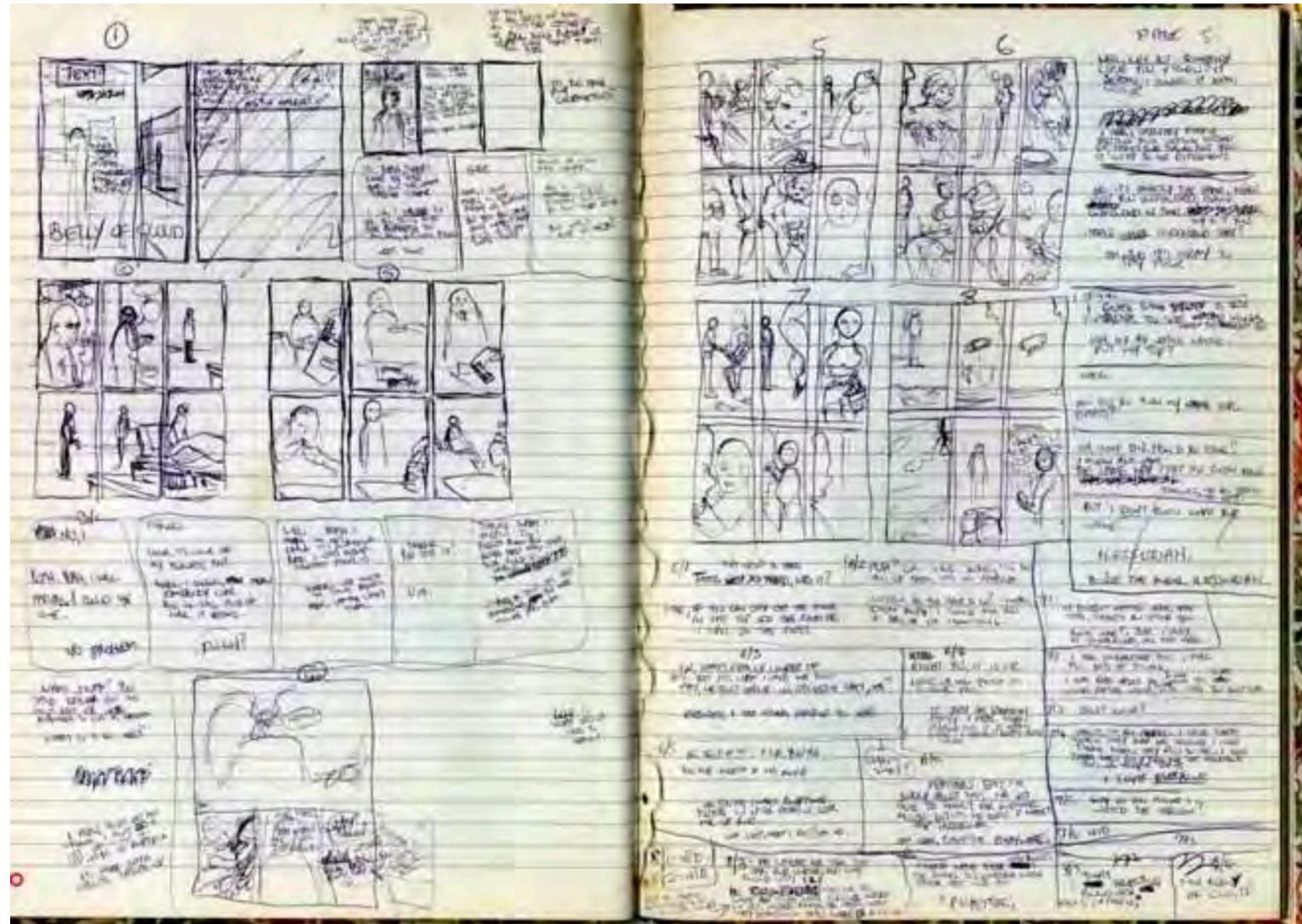
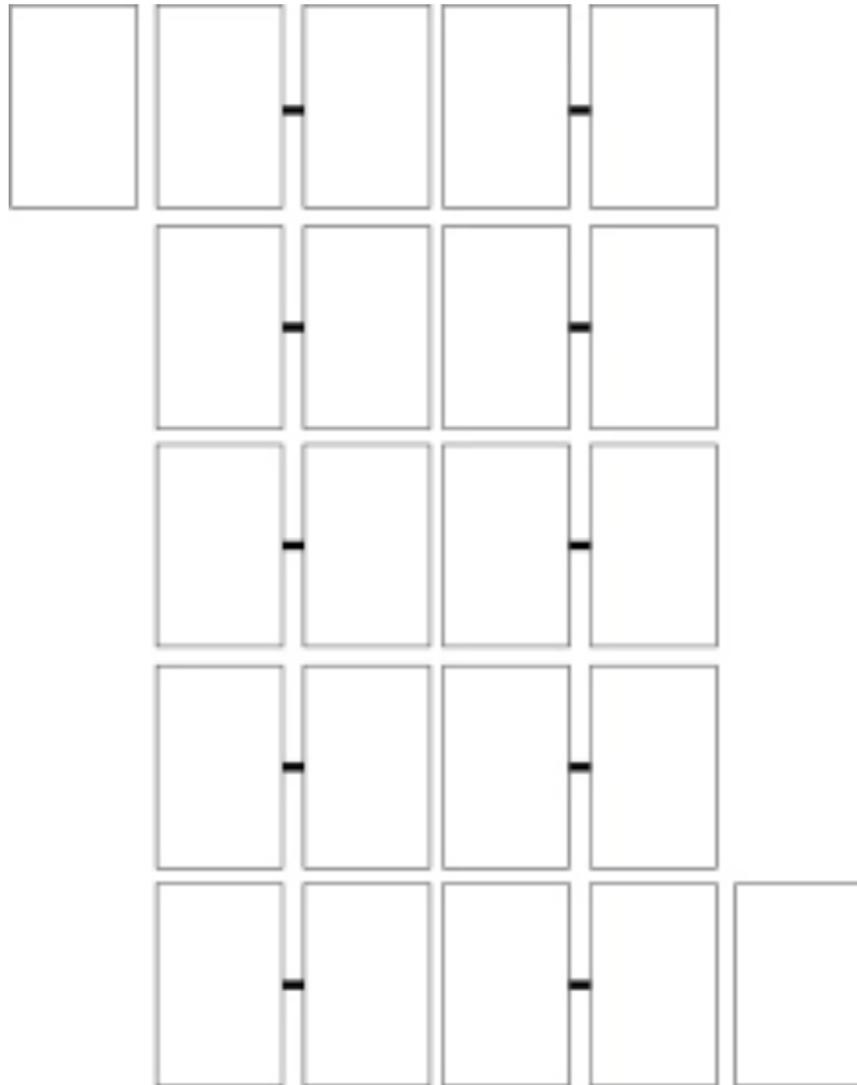
The first thing you do when you start to visualize your story

- Start with really rough page-sized thumbnails
- Then fleshed out thumbnails
- Avoid doing storyboard style thumbnails or panel-by-panel thumbnails because those are different media – you can't use a fiction novel to lay out a comic book. Storyboards and panel-by-panel don't take into account the visual narrative flow of the comic page because they break it up very differently
- Storyboards are linear and need to show A LOT more than a narrative illustrated story. In comics the action can be compressed and the reader fills in the blanks.



Thumbnails!

Work out all the problems **BEFORE** you start your final pencils



Multi-Panel Template (PSD)

[https://www.dropbox.com/s/
cuo506mmihv0uwi/
panelblanks.psd?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/cuo506mmihv0uwi/panelblanks.psd?dl=0)

