

Literature in Pictures

Discussion:

Did you, or do you read comics?

What features are typical of comic books?

Non-comics readers tend to ask: „Do I look at the picture or read the words first?“ What do you think?

Is the graphic novel a brilliant way of becoming educated and entertained or is it little more than a glorified comic?

How old is the comic phenomenon?

Reading 1:

Adapted from *Maus* by Art Spiegelman _

<https://english9stein.wikispaces.com/Maus+by+Art+Spiegelman>

and <https://www.prestwickhouse.com/samples/300652.pdf>

*Read about the book **Maus** and identify the two different texts the facts were taken from:*

A - written by Art Spiegelman, the author B - written by Pantheon books, the publisher

1. Portions of *Maus I* first appeared in *Raw*, a cutting-edge “comix” journal that Art Spiegelman founded, it was published in book form in 1986.
2. *Maus* is a comic book about my parents’ life in Hitler’s Europe, which uses cats to represent Germans and mice to represent Jews.
3. After releasing *Maus II* in 1991, Spiegelman became the first person to receive a Pulitzer Prize for a book-length comic.
4. The appearance of *Maus I & II* stood the comic book form on its head, asserting that comics could be used to great effect to approach the gravest of subjects.
5. My anthropomorphized mice carry trace elements of Fips’s anti-Semitic Jew-as-rat cartoons for *Der Stürmer*, but by being particularized they are invested with personhood.
6. Other graphic artists have since used the medium to explore issues of politics and warfare, most notably Joe Sacco in *Palestine* and Marjane Satrapi in *Persepolis*.
7. In making *Maus I* found myself drawing every panel, every figure, over and over—obsessively—so as to pare it down to an essence, as if each panel was an attempt to invent a new word.
8. The two-volume *Maus*, however, remains the benchmark by which all other work in the field is measured.

Analysis:

Use specific pictures and text to support your answer to these questions:

- A. Why does Art Spiegelman use mice instead of people to portray the characters in the story? What do the mice represent?
- B. What kind of relationship does Art Spiegelman and his father, Vladek have?
- C. Art interviews Vladek about the Holocaust. How reliable do you think Vladek’s memory is?

Why?

D. What is *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*? How is this comic different from *Maus*? How is it similar?

E. Why does Art worry about the way he's portraying his father, Vladek in the book?

F. Is Vladek happy about Art's book? Why would Vladek compare Art to Walt Disney?

G. Why did Spiegelman write this book? Why did he call it *Maus*?

H. Why did Spiegelman portray his father's story as a comic strip?

Reading 2

Adapted from

<https://blogs.stockton.edu/postcolonialstudies/hybridity-and-comics/persepolis-a-postcolonial-feminist-reading/the-veil-in-persepolis/>

Identify the key terms of the following text:

The Veil in Persepolis by Stephanie Cawley

The representation of the veiled woman has become an important issue for postcolonial feminists who want to emphasize the importance of understanding localized meanings and knowledges rather than accepting the outside, Western viewpoint as the dominant truth. Although in *Persepolis* Marjane Satrapi represents the veil in a way that is consistent with a Western viewpoint of it being part of a systematic oppression of women, she also counters the representation of Middle Eastern women as passive, oppressed and monolithic by illustrating acts of overt and subtle resistance to the veil and the regime and by emphasizing the individual identities of women beneath the veil.

Identify the main idea of the text and try to paraphrase it:

Analysis:

Within this context, analyse the first page of Marjane Satrapi's book:

The first panel shows The second panel
thestyle of Satrapi's artwork forces the viewer to notice
We can read the panels as representing Marji as
At the bottom of the page
the group of girls is shown
The image of runs counter to the images

Compare your ideas with the text:

The very first page of *Persepolis* establishes the comic's resistance to the Western image of the veiled woman. The first panel shows a ten-year-old Marjane, seated, the black veil surrounding her cartoonish face. The second panel shows a group of Marjane's classmates similarly veiled, with Marjane just out of the frame to the left. Monica Chiu, in "Sequencing and Contingent Individualism in the Graphic, Postcolonial Spaces of Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Okubo's *Citizen 13660*" reads these panels as "representing Marji as both an individual girl and a member of her class". Far from the stereotypical, homogenizing representations of veiled women common to the Western media, the simplified cartoonish style of Satrapi's artwork forces the viewer to notice the subtle variations Satrapi has given each of the girls—differences in hair texture, eye shape, and expression—affirming them, as Chiu says, as individuals, but also as part of a shared experience. At the bottom of the page, in perhaps one of the most iconic images from *Persepolis*, the group of girls is shown refusing to wear their veils—some complaining it is too hot, others using their veils to play-act political or fantastical games, and others jumping rope with them. This image of even the youngest women resisting wearing the veil in a variety of creative ways runs counter to the images presented in the Western media of passive, victimized women who are oppressed and flattened into a monolithic group by wearing the veil.

Language

Choose appropriate words for conclusion of the text:

Subtle / evident markers of resistance to the universalizing nature of the veil become finally / increasingly important over the course of *Persepolis* as a way to visibly communicate political ideologies and also individual identities. **Besides / Instead of** the passive women accepting the enforced veil-wearing **usually / hardly** represented in the Western media, Satrapi represents women resisting the authority of the regime through their clothing and their bodies, and also represents them as individuals **as long as / while** still wearing their veils. The acts of resistance to the regime are perhaps so subtle—having to do with slight reconfigurations and **generalizations / details** such as wearing red socks—that they may not even be **noticeable / hidden** or understandable by an outsider without Marjane as a guide. This representation **simplifies / complicates**, if not outright displaces, the Western stereotype of the veiled Muslim woman being passively oppressed.

Writing Analysis:

*Read the following excerpt from **Castle** by Franz Kafka and discuss its possible comic adaptation:*

"You're probably surprised at our lack of hospitality," said the man, "but hospitality is not our custom here, we have no use for visitors."

Somewhat refreshed by his sleep, his perceptions somewhat quickened, K. was pleased by the man's frankness. He felt less constrained, poked with his stick here and there, approached the woman in the armchair, and noted that he was physically the biggest man in the room.

"To be sure," said K., "what use would you have for visitors? But still you need one now and then, me, for example, the Lane Surveyor."

"I don't know about that," replied the man slowly.

"If you've been asked to come you're probably needed, that's an exceptional case, but we small people stick to our tradition, and you can't blame us for that."

"No, no," said K., "I am only grateful to you and everybody here."

And taking them all by surprise he made an adroit turn and stood before the reclining woman. Out of weary blue eyes she looked at him, a transparent silk kerchief hung down to the middle of her forehead, the infant was asleep on her bosom.

"Who are you?" asked K., and disdainfully - whether contemptuous of K. or her own answer was not clear she replied: „A girl from the Castle.“