

Unit 1.5: Comics and graphic novels

Worksheet

You will receive a small piece of paper containing information. On each piece of paper, you will **either** have a key feature from a graphic novel **or** an example of a key feature. Move around the room, sharing your information with classmates until you find the classmate who has the corresponding information. That is, if you have a key feature, you should find the classmate who has the correct corresponding example, and vice versa. At the end of the activity, you should be sitting or standing with the classmate who has the information that best matches your own.

Key feature explained	Examples from Text 1.24
Negative space: Any time you analyse a piece of visual art, it is important to comment both on what is included and what is left out. Negative space or blank space has a purpose.	The blank space in the opening panel allows readers to get into the story quickly. It creates room for Hobbes’s philosophical question as well.
Speech bubble: In comics, readers read characters’ dialogue through their speech bubbles. Thought bubbles , often depicted with cloud-like bubbles, can let the reader know what a character is thinking. Voice-over , a term often used in film, can also be used in comics with the narrator’s words appearing above or below the panel. Keep in mind that the writer does not have much space for long prose in comics.	The dialogue of this story uses speech bubbles, meaning the reader is a distant observer eavesdropping on Calvin and his imaginary friend Hobbes.
Panel: At first glance, you will notice that comics are divided into multiple frames or panels. These panels help build a sense of time and space. Some panels do not even have a frame.	This comic strip strikes a balance between square and rectangular frames. Bill Watterson uses distinct lines to give the reader a window into Calvin’s world.
Gutter: What happens between the panels? In comics, the reader actively has to ‘fill in the gap’, and make assumptions about what happens between frames or panels. This space between panels is known as the ‘gutter’. If we follow the design principle of ‘what is left out is as	What happens between the sixth and seventh panel? It seems that after Calvin and Hobbes’s violent episode (panel 6), they are not sure who hit whom first with their dart guns (panel 7). It remains a mystery for the reader as well, because we do not know what happened in between. This

important as what is included', then the gutter plays a key role in constructing meaning.	may be Bill Watterson's way of saying that war is a mystery with no clear winners.
Symbols: Like political cartoons, comics have to convey a message succinctly. Symbols are useful in communicating abstract ideas effectively.	Calvin's helmet and dart gun symbolise a young child's fascination with war. It is through these symbols and the dialogue that Bill Watterson comments critically on the purpose of war.
Emanata: This curious term refers to the dots, lines, exclamation marks, tear drops or any other drawings that can depict emotion, motion or sound.	In this comic strip, little lines appear near the muzzle of Calvin and Hobbes's dart guns, suggesting a firing noise. This is an example of emanata.
Camera angle: It may seem strange to think of camera angle when analysing a drawing, but cartoonists use angles all the time to give their readers a perspective on their characters.	In this comic strip, Bill Watterson depicts Calvin looking up. It is as if the reader looks down on Calvin as an adult might look. Hobbes is often at eye level. This is especially the case in the second to last panel.
Punchline: This feature is typical of comic strips, as they tend to build up to a single phrase or word which makes us want to laugh.	'Kind of a stupid game, isn't it?' says Calvin in the last panel. This captures the message of the comic strip as it comments critically on war itself, not just the game called 'war'.

N.B. Teachers should cut up the grid in advance of the activity.