

Graphic Novel Terminology Handout

Layout and Structure

- **panel:** a single drawing depicting a specific moment in a comic generally contained within a square or rectangular frame; panels are read from left to right, top to bottom. When analyzing a panel, you should pay attention to:
 - The foreground: the part closest to the viewer
 - The midground: the space between the foreground and the background
 - The background: the part furthest from the viewer
- **frame:** the edge or outlined border of a specific panel in a comic
- **gutter:** the white space between panels
- **bleed:** an image that extends to and/or beyond the edge of the page

Written Text

- **speech balloon:** a (generally) circular or oval outline within a comic panel that contains a character's dialogue and indicates who is speaking
- **thought balloon:** a (generally) cloud-like enclosed shape pointing toward the character that represents the character's internal thoughts or inner monologue
- **caption:** text often at the top or bottom of a panel, in which the narrator of a comic shares information with readers

Figures and Style

- **faces:** refers to how faces are portrayed in different ways in a graphic novel; some can be drawn as realistically as a photograph, whereas others are simpler and cartoon-like
- **graphic weight:** the shading and contrast of the images, often used to create mood; lines might be heavy, light, thick, fragile, and so on