

THE ANATOMY OF A COMIC BOOK



OBJECTIVES

- **UNDERSTAND THE KEY "PIECES" (OR ANATOMY) OF A COMIC**
- **PREPARE TO USE THOSE TERMS TO MAKE OUR OWN COMICS / PANELS**
- **IDENTIFY KEY TOOLS USED IN A COMIC PANEL, AND WHAT EACH MEANS**
- **TERMS:**
 - **PANEL**
 - **WORD BALLOON / CAPTION**

WHAT ARE THE PARTS OF A COMIC?

TURN TO SOMEONE ELSE NEAR YOU AND DISCUSS

- PREPARE TO SHARE THEIR ANSWERS

DID WE GET...?

- **COVERS**
- **PAGES**
- **PANELS**
- **DIALOGUE**
- **NARRATION**

- **CHARACTERS**
- **PROPS**
- **BACKGROUND**
- **STORY**

HOW'S TRIX?

WORTH SHOPPING
AROUND FOR...

TRIX ...THE CORN CEREAL WITH...



THE TANGY TASTE OF NATURAL FRUIT!



FRUIT COLORS, TOO!



AND AS WE ALL KNOW...



TRIX ARE
FOR KIDS!



A comic strip illustration. On the left, Thor is shown from the chest up, wearing his signature white horned helmet and red cape. He has a weary or annoyed expression. In the center, a man with blue hair and a yellow jacket is holding a black camera and taking a picture of Thor. In the background, there are several other people, mostly women, looking towards the camera. A street sign on the right reads "E 52".

I HAVE FEASTED ON THE
NECTARS OF WILD FRUIT IN
THE LAND OF THE NORNS.

I HAVE DINED IN THE
EXALTED HALLS OF THE
GODLY REALMS.

THIS DAY, I AM
OFFERED A
CREAMSICLE.

I THOUGHT I WAS BIG STUFF! NOW
I'M LONESOME AND IN LOVE AND
NOBODY CARES!

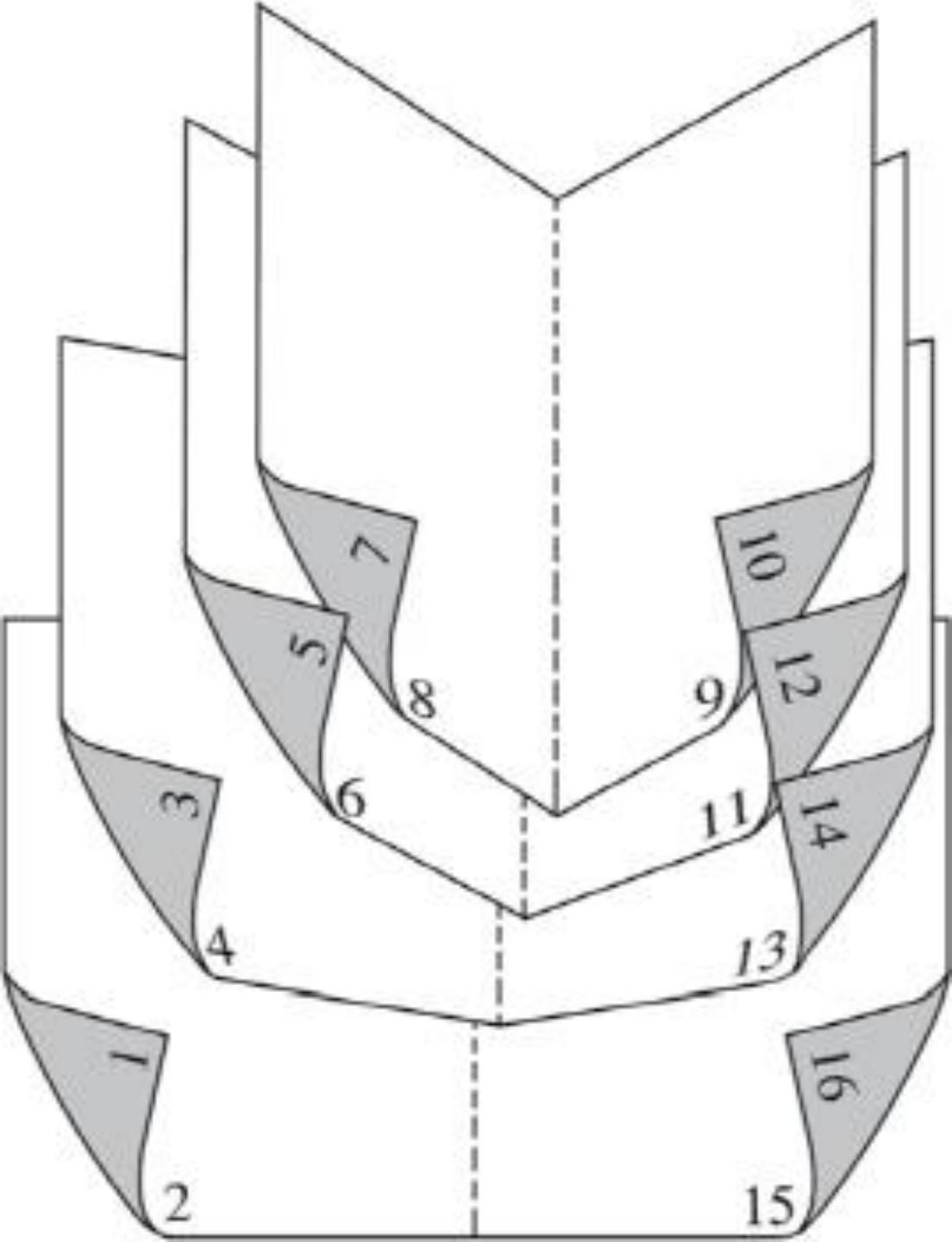


WHAT'S THE GOOD OF BEING
A **SUPERGIRL** HELPING
EVERYONE IF I CAN'T
EVEN GET A **DATE**!



PAGES

- **A PAGE IN A COMIC BOOK IS A LOT MORE RESTRICTIVE THAN MOST OTHER BOOKS. IN A NOVEL, YOU CAN JUST KEEP WRITING AND LET ALL THE PAGES RUN OVER ONTO THE NEXT PAGE, AND WHEN YOU GET TO THE END OF A CHAPTER, YOU CAN JUST LEAVE SOME WHITE SPACE AND JUMP TO THE NEXT PAGE TO KICK OFF THE NEXT CHAPTER.**
- **IN A COMIC, YOUR STORY WILL WIND UP BEING BROKEN DOWN BY PAGES THAT WILL CONTAIN SPECIFIC PANELS, DIALOGUE, CHARACTERS, ETC.**



**HOW PAGES ARE
COLLECTED INTO A
COMIC BOOK: PAGE 1
IS THE FRONT COVER
AND THE LAST PAGE IS
THE BACK COVER,
USUALLY RESERVED
FOR AN AD.**

THERE ISN'T A CRUEL OR MEAN
STREAK IN MY BODY AND I'LL
CLOBBER ANYONE WHO SAYS
THERE IS!

SLAP!





COVERS

**COMIC BOOK
COVERS CREATE
INTEREST (AND
URGENCY) WHILE
INCLUDING
ESSENTIALS SUCH AS
THE UPC SYMBOL.**

JEFF SMITH

BONE

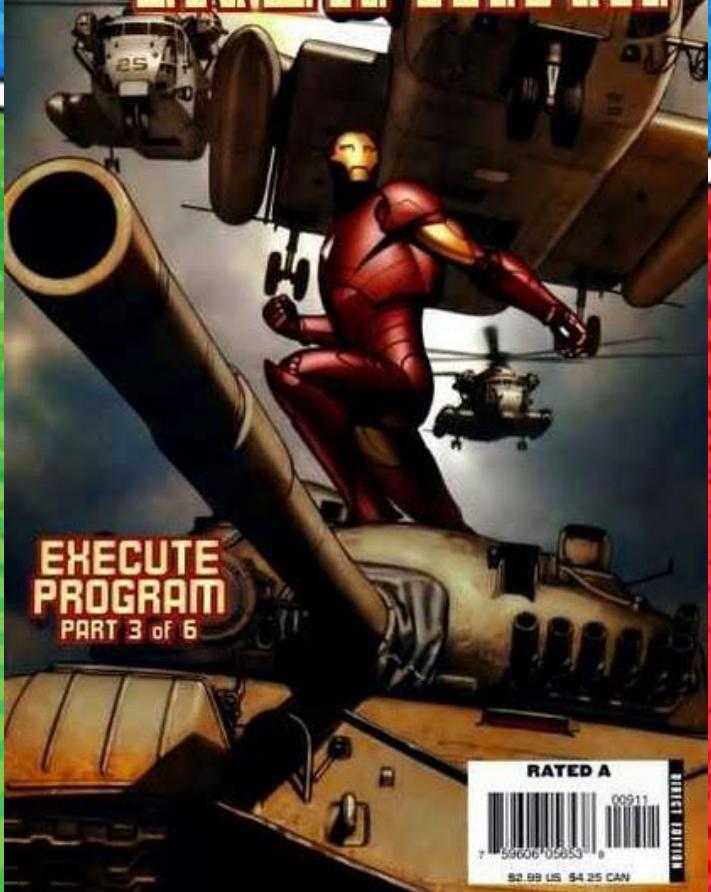


ROCK JAW MASTER OF THE EASTERN BORDER
THE COMPLETE BONE ADVENTURES 5

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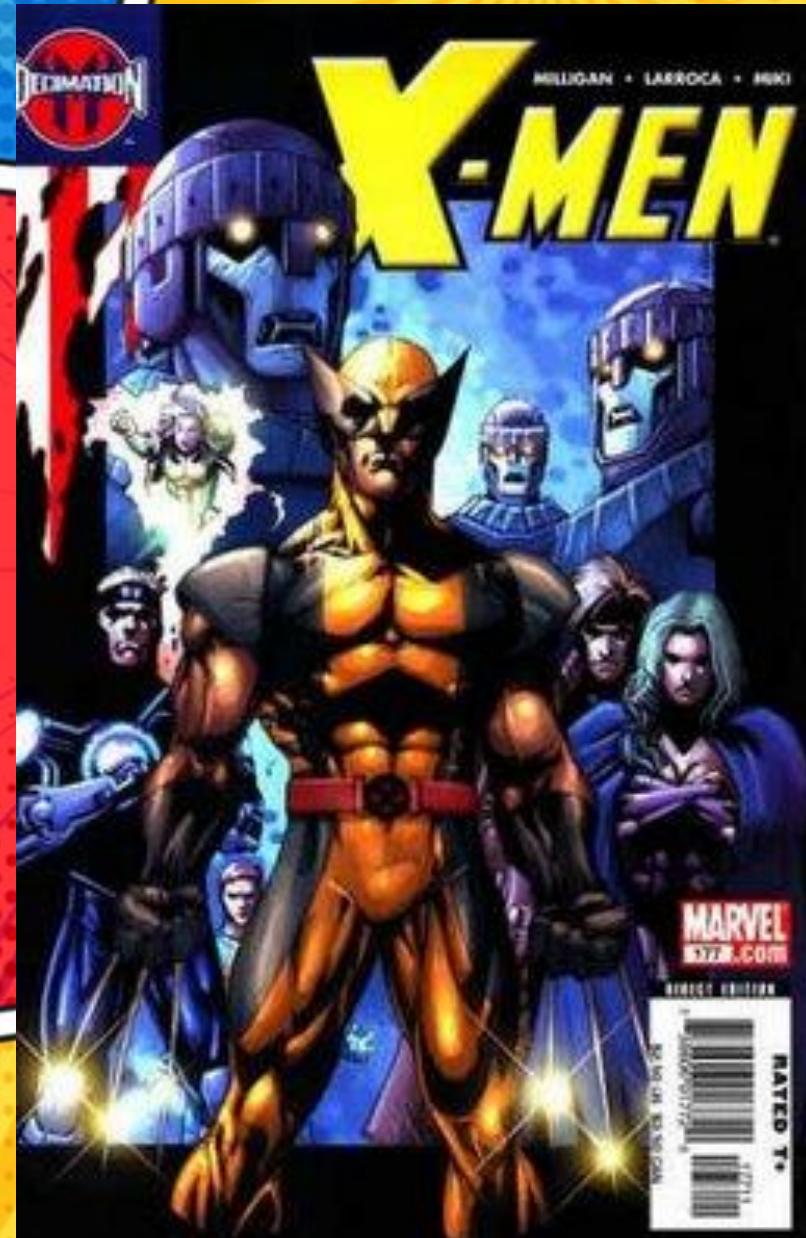
KNAUF
ZIRCHER
HANNA

THE INVINCIBLE IRON MAN



EXECUTE
PROGRAM
PART 3 of 6

RATED A



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REGULAR EDITION



RATED T+

ELITE LASS - Wielder of the cosmic power
Starburst - said power shatters to an
dependency by the mighty Honor Guardsman.
However, in return to the earth, she has
granted the power of an evil creature with
the infinite power to render her totally

POWERLESS

ROBBING YOU OF YOUR
ABILITY TO FLY IS THE
BEGINNING. ELITE LASS,
THE EQUALIZER HAS
ONLY BEGUN!



**THE 2ND OR 3RD
PAGE:
THE "SPLASH PAGE"
IS **MUCH** LIKE A
MOVIE'S OPENING
CREDITS.**

THE FABULOUS F.F. MUST SOLVE THE TERRIBLE RIDDLE OF...

"THIS MAN... THIS MONSTER!"



"Call me Shang-Chi, as my father did, when he raised me and molded my mind and my body in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. I learned many things from my father: That my name means 'The Rising and Advancing of a Spirit,' that my body could be forged into a living weapon through the discipline of kung-fu, and that it might be used for the murder of a man called Dr. Petrie."

"Since then, I have learned that my father is Dr. Fu Manchu the most insidiously evil man on earth... and that to honor him would bring nothing but dishonor to the spirit of my name."

Stan Lee
PRESENTS: **MASTER OF KUNG FU!**™

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FEATURING SUPPORTING CHARACTERS CREATED BY SAX ROMMER

THE CRYSTAL CONNECTION

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THE LAST PAGE

- **IT IS ALSO TRADITIONAL TO END THE COMIC WITH A FULL-PAGE PANEL. IN THE SAME WAY A SPLASH PANEL HOOKS THE READER INTO THE STORY, THE LAST PAGE SHOULD ENTICE THE READER TO BUY THE NEXT ISSUE. THERE IS USUALLY A PLACE RESERVED AT THE BOTTOM FOR A HORIZONTAL TEASER FOR THE NEXT ISSUE.**

PANELS

PANELS ARE YOUR WINDOWS INTO THE COMIC STORY. THEY ARE A CAPTURED MOMENT IN TIME *CTO* GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF WHAT'S GOING ON. A PANEL COULD BE REALLY SMALL, IT COULD TAKE UP MOST OF A PAGE, IT COULD TAKE UP A FULL PAGE, OR EVEN SPAN TWO PAGES. ALL OF THE INFORMATION FOR YOUR COMIC STORY WILL GENERALLY BE ARRANGED WITHIN SOME TYPE OF A PANELS.



TYPES OF PANELS

- **HORIZONTAL - A PANEL THAT IS WIDER THAN IT IS TALL.**
- **VERTICAL - A PANEL THAT IS TALLER THAN IT IS WIDE.**
- **FLASHBACK - PANELS THAT REPRESENT A SCENE FROM THE PAST...BASICALLY, A REPLAY. FLASHBACK PANELS CAN BE REPRESENTED IN DIFFERENT WAYS, BUT SOME COMMON TECHNIQUES ARE TO USE COLOR TO "FADE" THE PANEL OR TO WASH THE CONTENTS OF A PANEL WITH A SPECIFIC COLOR TO SET IT OFF FROM THE NORMAL PANELS).**

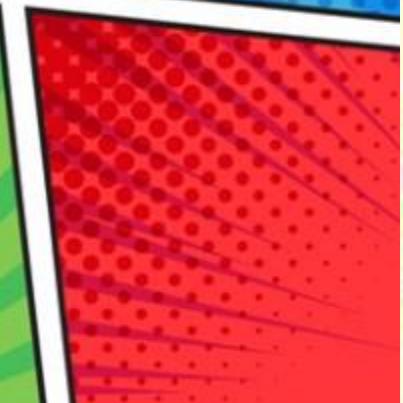
TYPES OF PANELS

- **THOUGHT** - **THIS IS A PANEL WITH A CLOUD-LIKE BORDER THAT'S USED TO CONVEY THE CONTENTS OF THAT PANEL AS A THOUGHT FROM A CHARACTER.**
- **OPEN** - **A PANEL WITH NO DISTINCT BORDER. THIS GIVES THE PANEL A FEELING OF SPACE AND OPENNESS.**
- **JAGGED** - **A PANEL WITH JAGGED LINES FOR ITS BORDER. OFTEN USED TO REPRESENT SOMETHING EXPLOSIVE OR VOLATILE.**





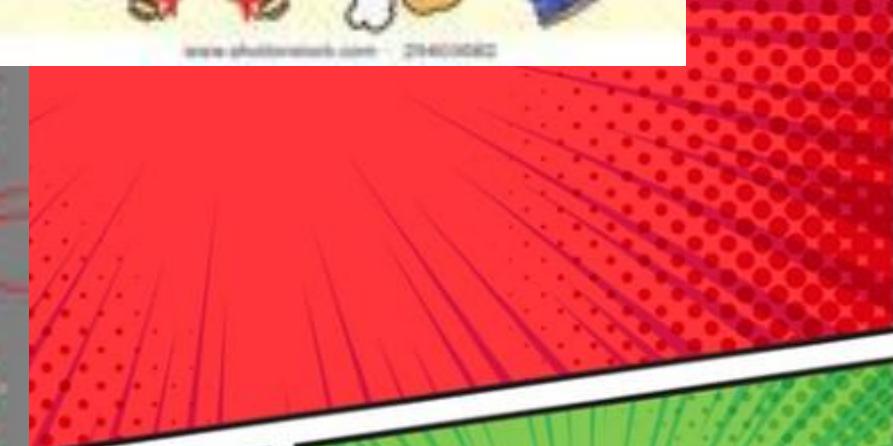
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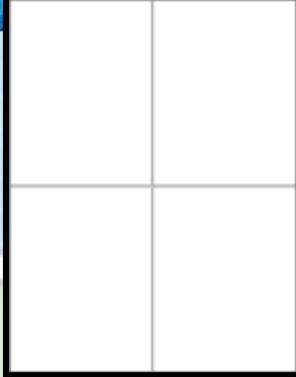
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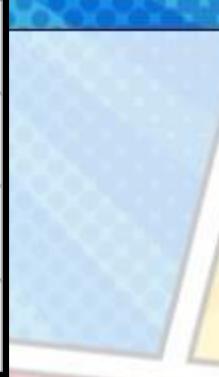




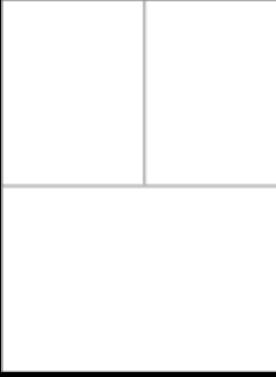
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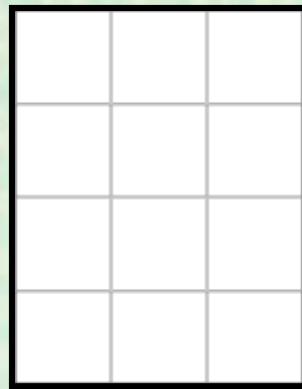
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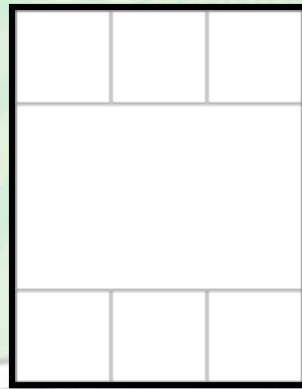
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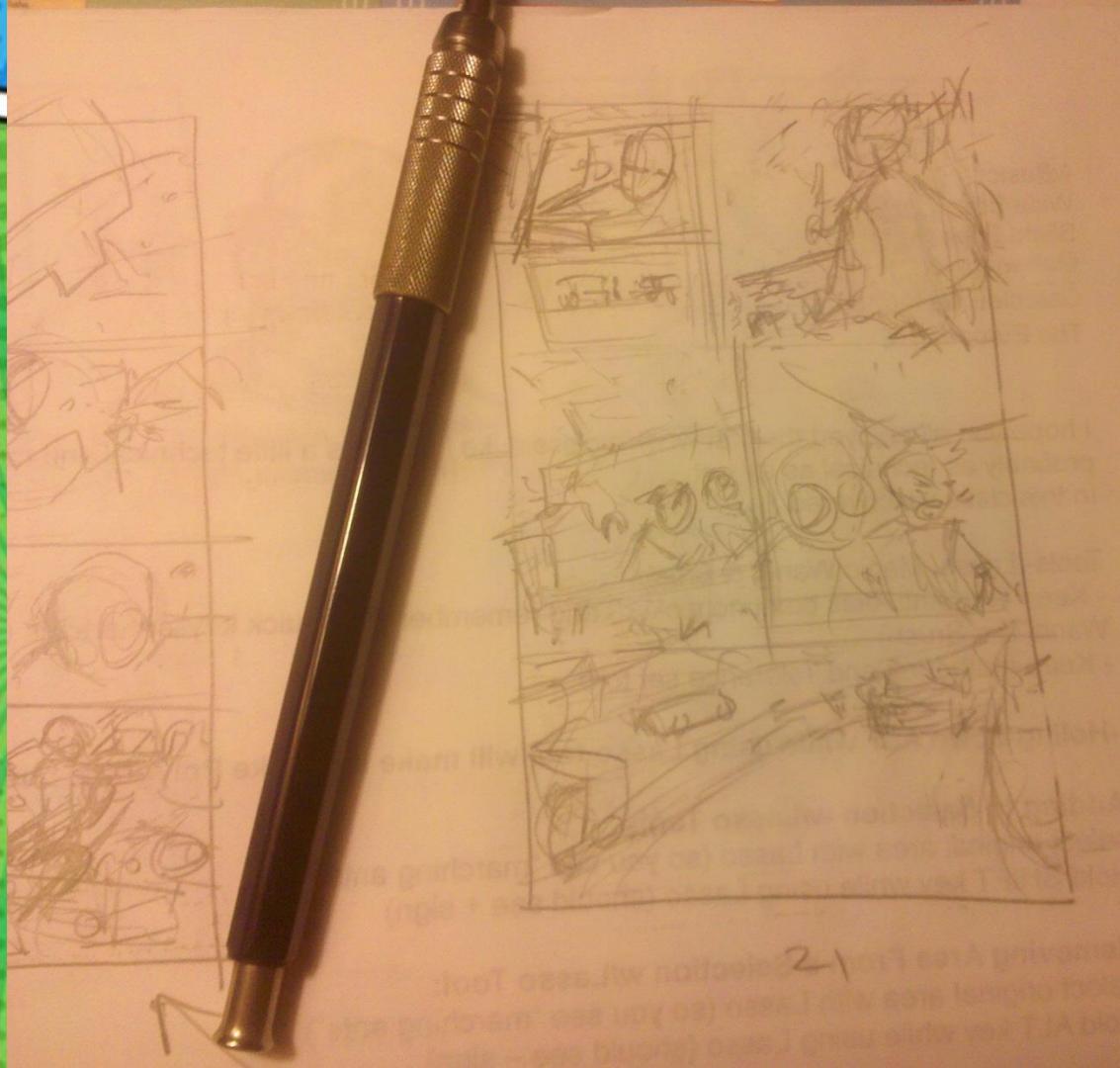
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WHICH ONE?

- SQUARES**
- BIG SQUARES**
- BIG SQUARES WITH STORY LINE**
- BIG SQUARES BIG START**
- BIG SQUARES BIG ENDING**
- BIG BEGINNING**
- BIG MIDDLE**
- BIG ENDING [LEADING TO]**
- BIG ENDING**
- 4 ROWS**





WORD BALLOONS

- **OVAL BALLOON-LIKE OBJECTS FLOATING AROUND THE PAGE THAT CONTAIN SPOKEN DIALOGUE (AND OCCASIONALLY THOUGHTS) FROM CHARACTERS OR PROPS. IT CONSISTS OF TWO PARTS--THE BALLOON HOLDS THE DIALOGUE AND THE TAIL POINTS TO THE CHARACTER OR OBJECTS SPEAKING.**

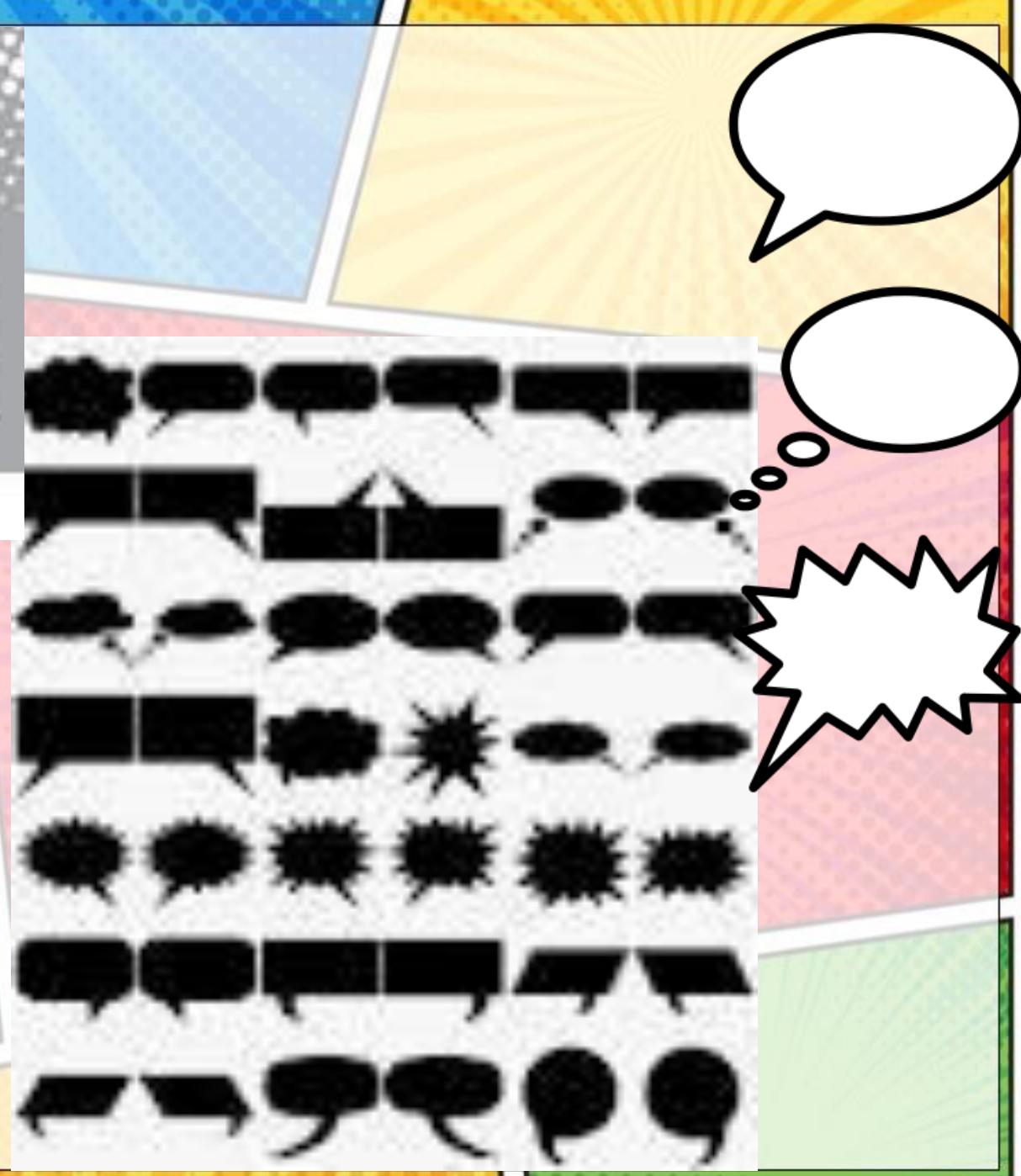
THERE'S A REAL INFORMATION EXPLOSION GOING ON, GARFIELD

SO MANY NEW THINGS TO LEARN!

YOU NO DOUBT ARE REFERRING TO THE FACT THAT THE PIZZA DELIVERY PLACE HAS A NEW PHONE NUMBER?



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TYPES OF WORD BALLOONS

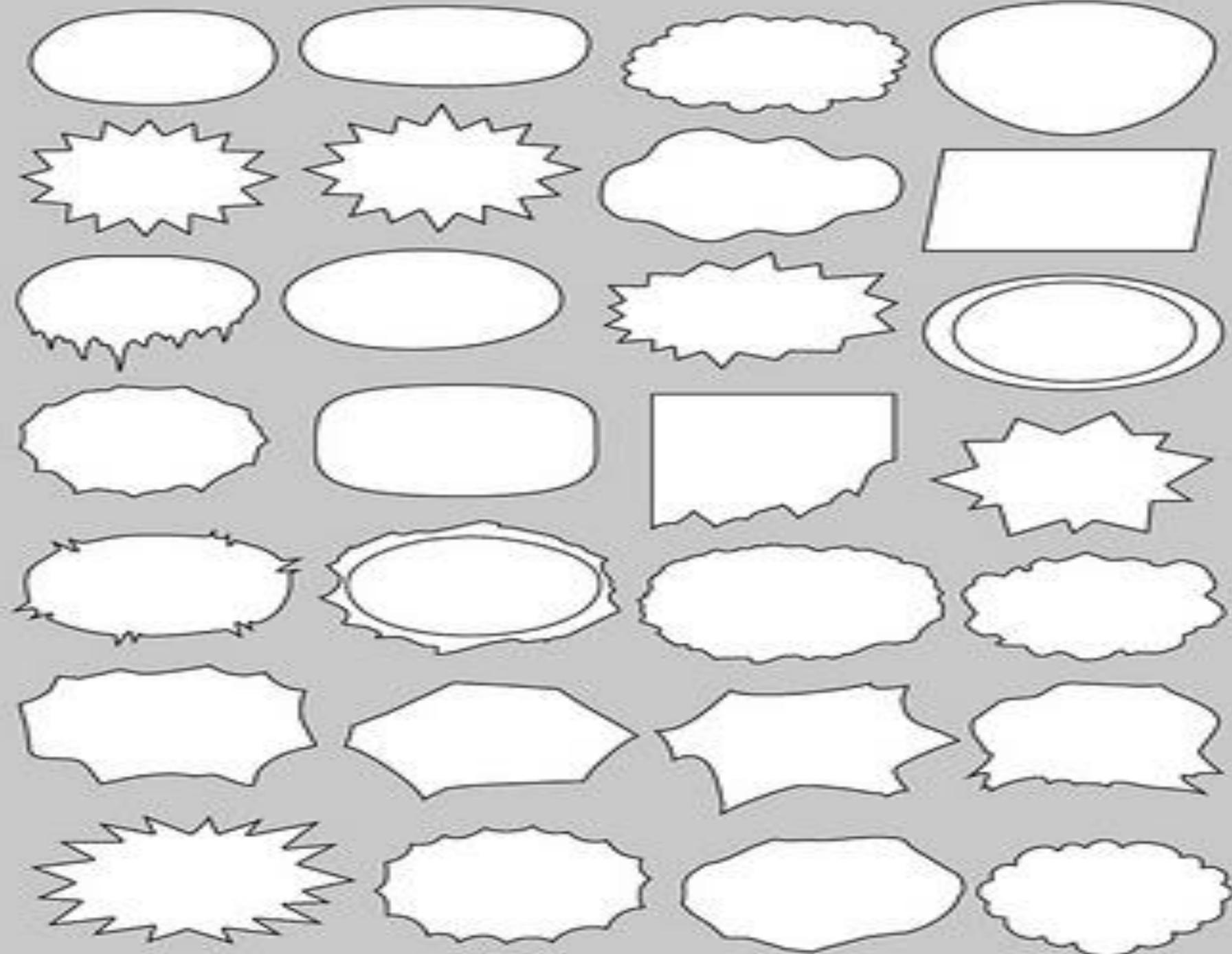
- **THOUGHT** - **A BALLOON WITH A CLOUD-LIKE OUTLINE TO IT THAT'S USED TO REPRESENT A CHARACTER'S THOUGHTS.**
- **WHISPER** - **USUALLY REPRESENTED BY A BALLOON WITH A DASHED OUTLINE TO IT.**
- **BURST** - **ONE TYPE IS FOR LOUD DIALOGUE (LIKE A SHOUT) AND IS USUALLY REPRESENTED BY OUTLINING THE BALLOON WITH JAGGED EDGES (LIKE A JAGGED PANEL). IT CAN ALSO REPRESENT A BALLOON WHOSE TAIL LOOKS LIKE IT "BURSTS" THROUGH AN OBJECT. THIS IS USED WITH DIALOGUE THAT IS SPOKEN THROUGH AN OBJECT (EXAMPLES: CHARACTER TALKING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF A CLOSED DOOR, CHARACTER SPEAKING FROM INSIDE A LOCKED TRUNK).**

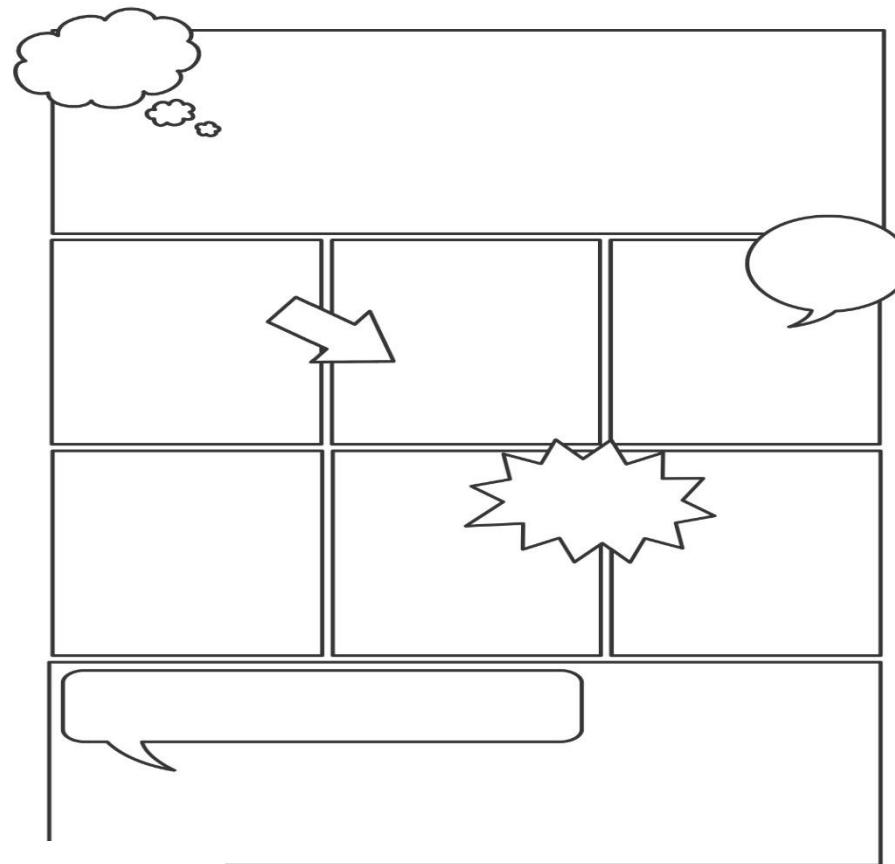
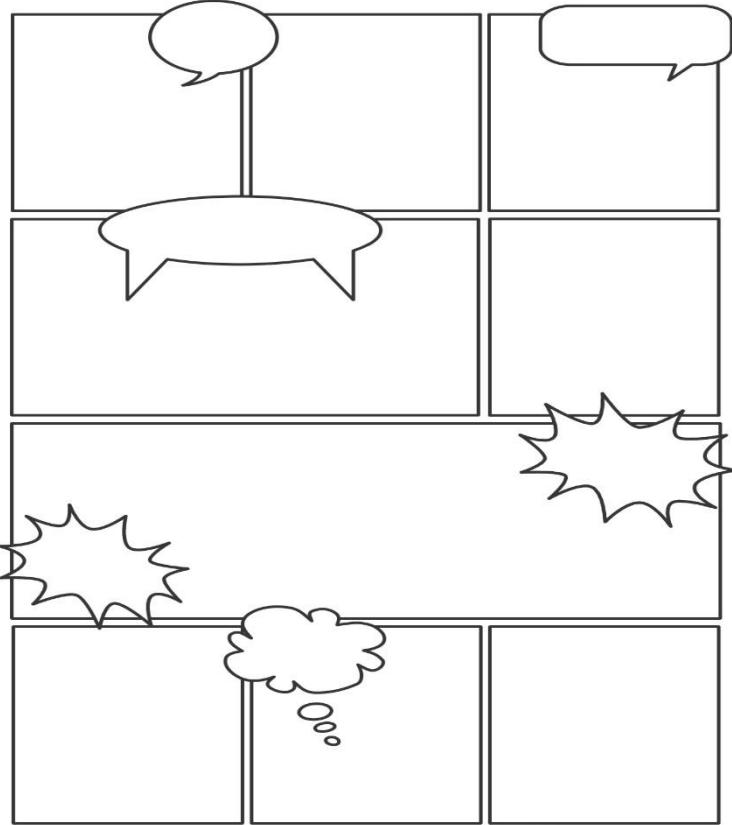
TYPES OF WORD BALLOONS

- **ELECTRIC** - **A BALLOON THAT REPRESENTS SOUND FROM A RADIO OR TELEVISION (OR COMMUNICATION FROM ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN GENERAL). USUALLY REPRESENTED WITH A LIGHTNING BOLT FOR A TAIL (AND MOST OF THE TIME, IT USES MORE OF A RECTANGULAR BALLOON TO GIVE IT MORE OF A TECHIE FEEL).**
- **WAVY** - **A BALLOON THAT REPRESENTS DIALOGUE FROM A CHARACTER IN A WEAKENED OR SICKLY STATE. IT COULD JUST BE THE TAIL REPRESENTED BY WAVY LINES, OR THE OUTLINE OF THE BALLOON COULD BE MADE WAVY TO EXPRESS AN EVEN WORSE CONDITION FOR THE CHARACTER.**

TYPES OF WORD BALLOONS

- **CONNECTED** - **TWO OR MORE BALLOONS FROM A SINGLE CHARACTER IN A PANEL THAT ARE CONNECTED VIA A TAIL. USED TO HELP EMPHASIZE A SMALL PAUSE IN THE DIALOGUE FROM THAT CHARACTER.**
- **NOT CONNECTED** - **TWO OR MORE BALLOONS FROM A SINGLE CHARACTER IN A PANEL THAT ARE NOT CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER (EACH HAS THEIR OWN SEPARATE TAILS). OFTEN USED TO EMPHASIZE A CHANGE IN SUBJECT BY THE CHARACTER.**



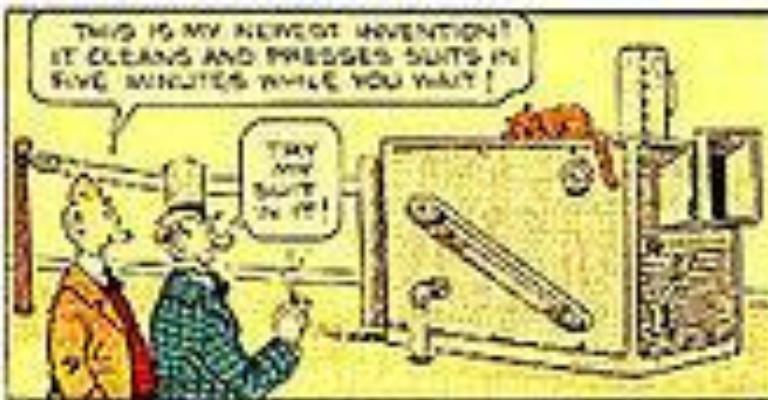


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'THE SQUIRREL CAGE'

by Grahame



TWO, PLEASE.

Now Playing
DAY



CAPTIONS

- **CAPTIONS ARE THE (MOSTLY) RECTANGULAR BOXES THAT CONTAIN NARRATION, ASSORTED DIALOGUES, AND TEXT FROM VARIOUS SOURCES LIKE COMPUTERS, NOTEBOOKS, BOOKS, AND PAPERS. THEY'RE USED IN LOTS OF DIFFERENT WAYS. FOR EXAMPLE, SOME CAPTIONS PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO THE STORY, SOME RELAY A CHARACTER'S COMMENTS FROM A DIFFERENT TIME/PLACE THAN WHAT'S PICTURED IN THE PANEL, AND SOME JUST REVEAL THE CHARACTER'S THOUGHTS.**

MEANWHILE...

WA-POW!

SO, WE
MEET AGAIN,
MY DEAR
DOCTOR!*

*SEE ISSUE 212--Ed.

MEANWHILE...

MEANWHILE...

SO, WE MEET
AGAIN, MY DEAR
DOCTOR!

"SO, WE MEET
AGAIN, MY DEAR
DOCTOR!"

*SEE ISSUE 212--Ed.

«SO, WE
MEET AGAIN,
MY DEAR
DOCTOR!»*

*TRANSLATED FROM
JAPANESE.

AND, A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...

MY FAULT--ALL MY FAULT! IF ONLY I HAD STOPPED HIM WHEN I COULD HAVE! BUT I DIDN'T--AND NOW--UNCLE BEN--IS DEAD...

AND A LEAN, SILENT FIGURE SLOWLY FADES INTO THE GATHERING DARKNESS, AWARE AT LAST THAT IN THIS WORLD, WITH GREAT POWER THERE MUST ALSO COME -- GREAT RESPONSIBILITY!



AND SO A LEGEND IS BORN AND A NEW NAME IS ADDED TO THE ROSTER OF THOSE WHO MAKE THE WORLD OF FANTASY THE MOST EXCITING REALM OF ALL!



THANKS, LOIS LANE! YOU'VE USED THAT SIZE-RAY TO SHRINK THE REAL SUPERMAN! SOON HE'LL BE A SUPER-MITE--AND I'LL TAKE HIS PLACE ON EARTH!

LOIS, I'M GETTING TINIER EVERY SECOND... I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO RETURN TO NORMAL SIZE AND FIGHT MY DOUBLE FROM KRYPTON! GOODBYE...

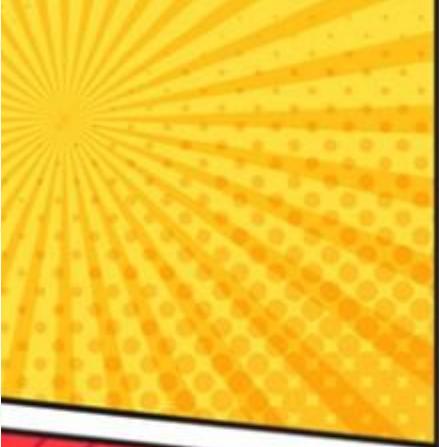
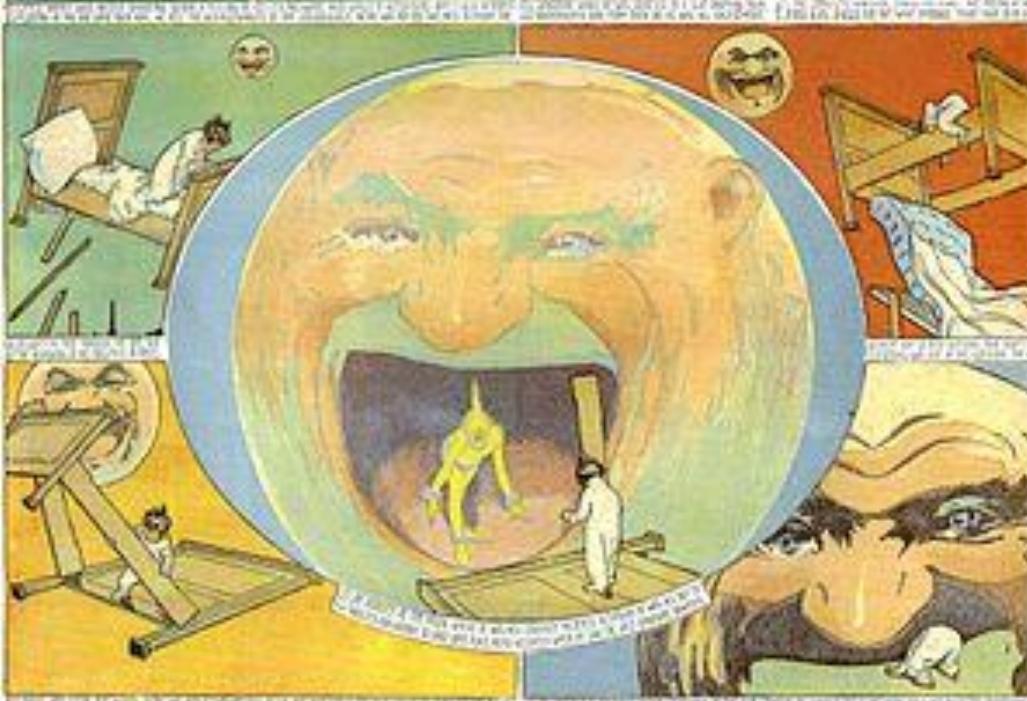
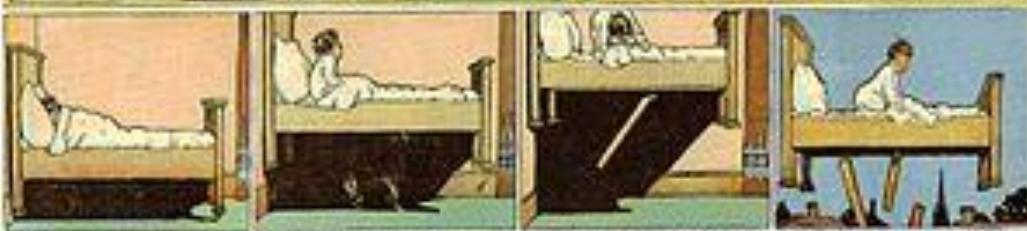
The **SHRINKING SUPERMAN!"**



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

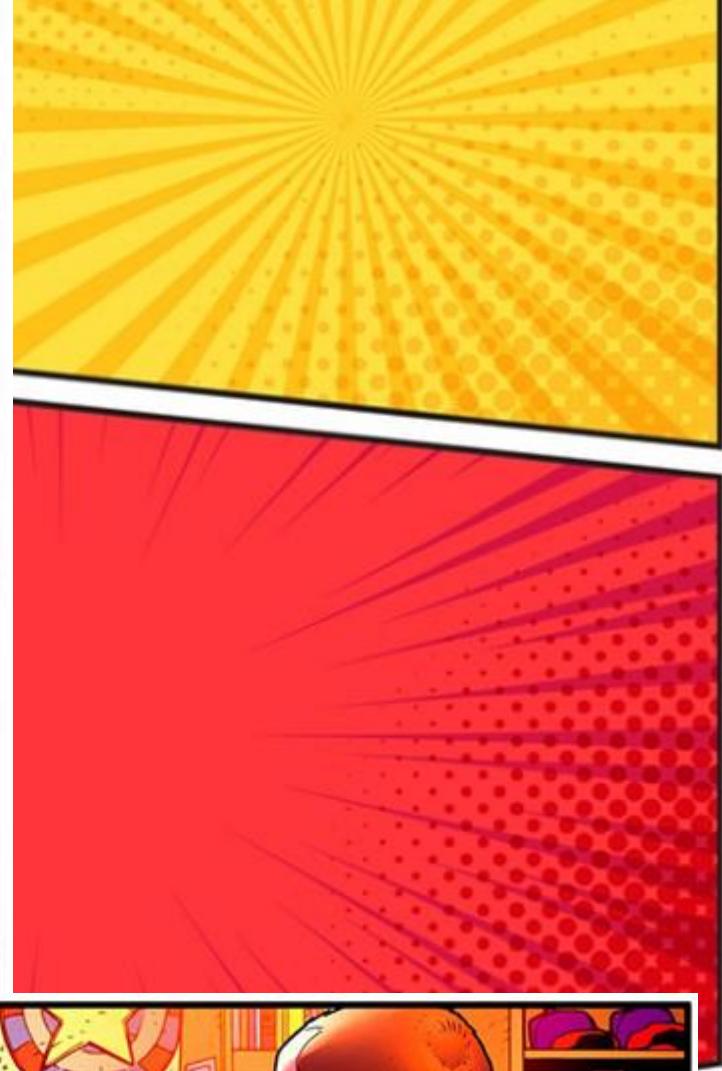
I see her make a fist, but I don't flinch. Why should I? Butler always intervenes before anyone ever lands a punch on me.





DIALOGUE

- **DIALOGUE REFERS TO THE WORDS THAT ACTUALLY FILL THE WORD BALLOONS AND CAPTIONS...THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHARACTERS OR THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE NARRATOR AND THE READER.**
- **LOUD/YELL/SHOUT - IT'S USUALLY PORTRAYED BY USING A LARGER FONT SIZE FOR THE DIALOGUE.**
- **SOFT/QUIET - IT'S USUALLY REPRESENTED BY A SMALLER FONT SIZE.**
- **EMPHASIZED WORDS - SOME WORDS NEED EMPHASIS TO CAPTURE A SIMULATED INFLECTION FOR THE CHARACTER'S "VOICE." THESE WORDS MUST VISUALLY STAND OUT AMONGST ALL THE REST OF THE DIALOGUE, SO UNDERLINING THE DIALOGUE HELPS WITH THAT.**

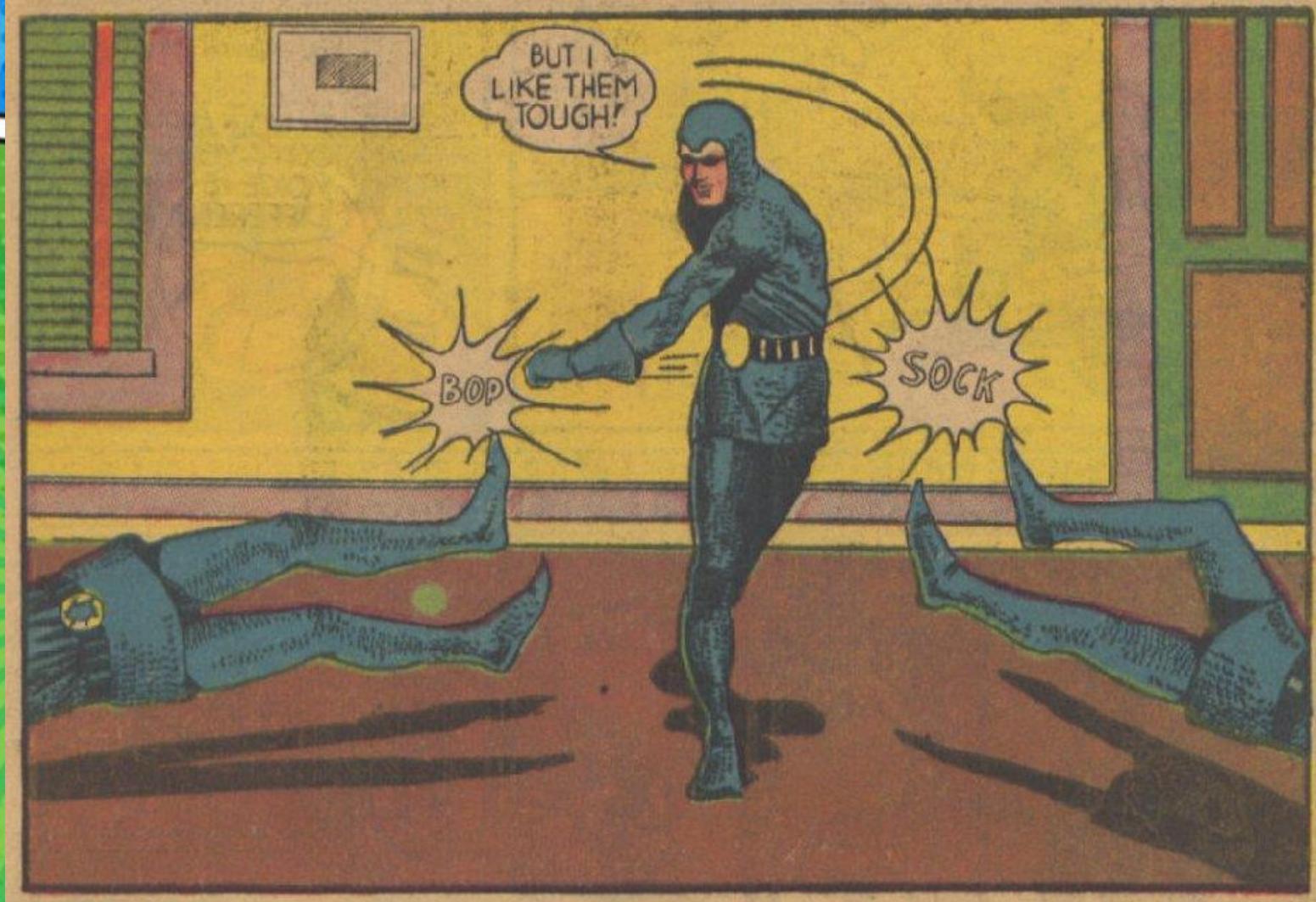




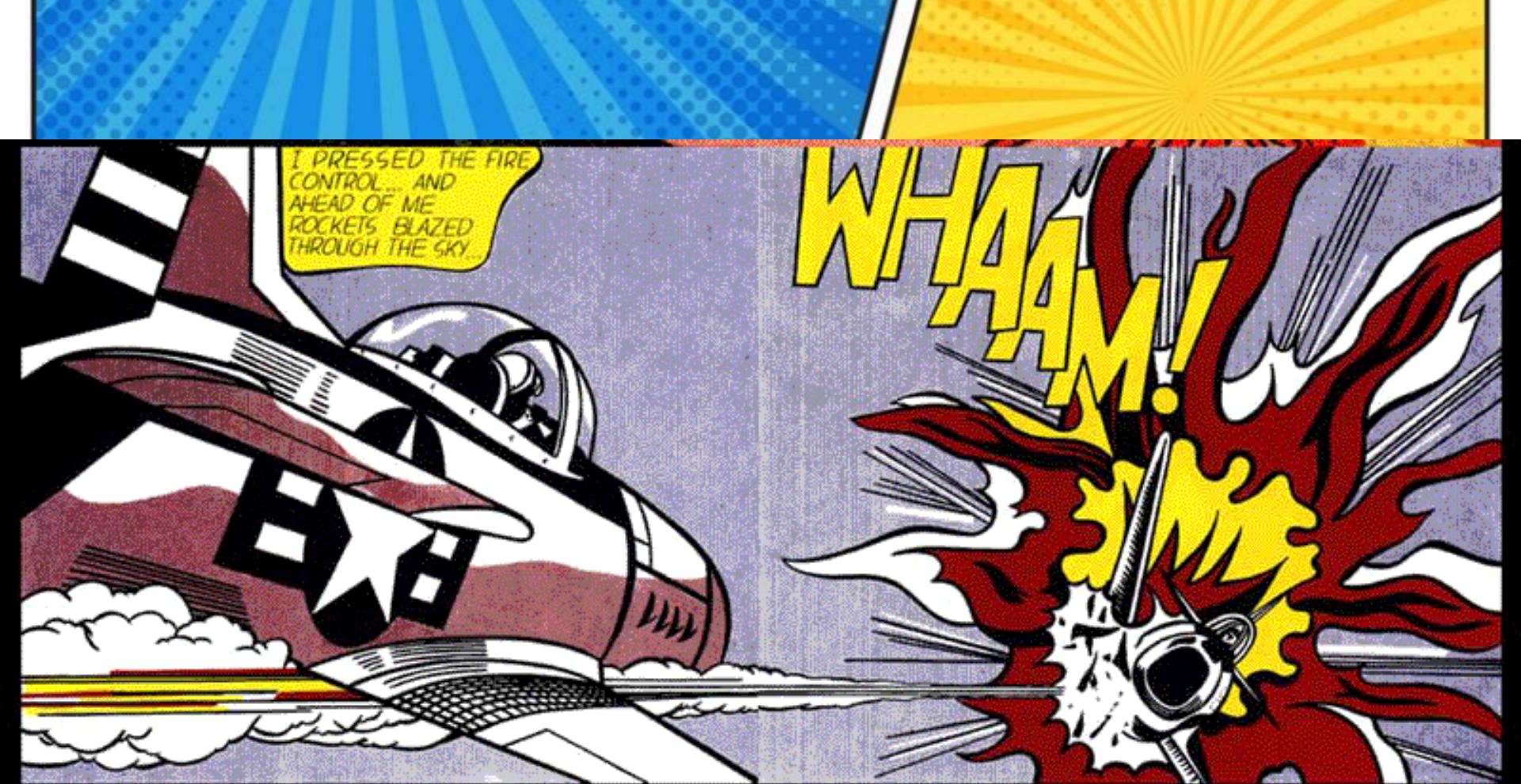
SOUND EFFECTS

- **SOUND EFFECTS REPRESENT DIFFERENT SOUNDS THROUGHOUT THE COMIC. THEY ARE USED TO HELP GIVE A LITTLE MORE DEPTH TO THE COMIC BY GIVING VISUAL CUES FOR SOUNDS THAT COULD BE HEARD IN AN ENVIRONMENT BUT AREN'T SPOKEN.**

**WHAM, KABOOM, KRAK, CHA-THOOM, BRRRAP
BRRAAP**







I PRESSED THE FIRE CONTROL... AND AHEAD OF ME ROCKETS BLAZED THROUGH THE SKY.

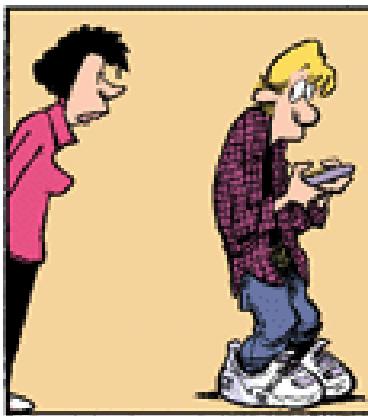






CHARACTERS

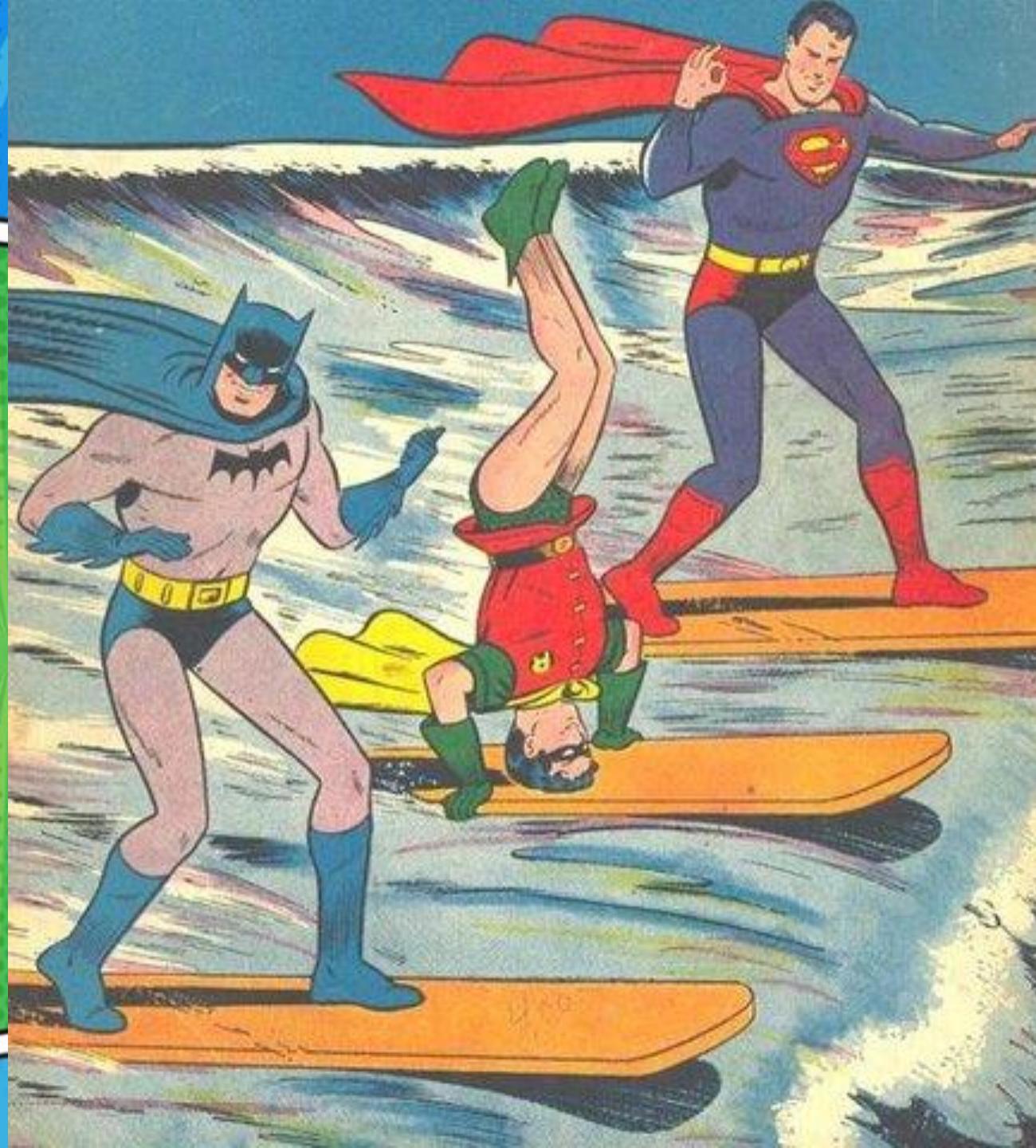
- **CHARACTERS REPRESENT THE PEOPLE, CREATURES, AND ANIMATED OBJECTS TAKING ACTION IN THE COMIC. ACTION CAN BE SITTING, TALKING, WALKING, RUNNING, FIGHTING, ETC. CHARACTERS DO STUFF..YEP, THAT'S WHAT THEY DO.**



ACTION LINES

- **ARTISTS OFTEN SHOW ACTION THROUGH LINES AND SWOOPS. LOOK AT THE ACTIONS OF "POKING" AND "PICKING UP" ON THIS COMIC BELOW.**





LOOK AT THE FOLLOWING VARIETY FOR ACTION TECHNIQUES . . .

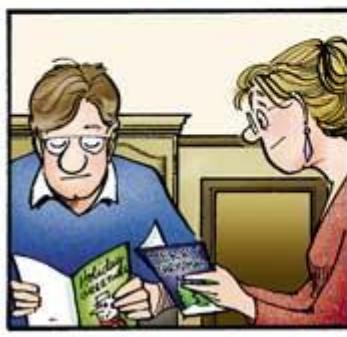


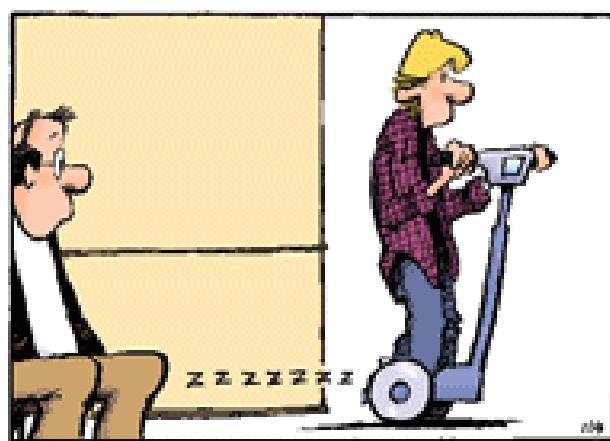
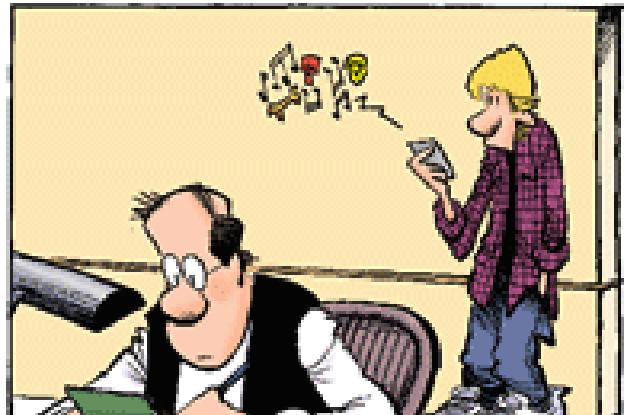
PROPS

- PROPS ARE ALL THE **DISTINCTIVE OBJECTS IN THE COMIC. THE KING'S ORNATE THRONE, THE POLICE CRUISER, THE BATTLESHIP, THE TOASTER, THE BOOK, THE PANCOR JACKHAMMER, THE TELEVISION, ETC.**

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

By LYNN JOHNSTON





FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

By Lynn Johnston



BACKGROUNDS

- **STORIES HAVE TO TAKE PLACE SOMEWHERE. THE BACKGROUNDS IN A COMIC HELP IMMERSE THE READER IN THESE DIFFERENT LOCATIONS - NEW YORK CITY, THE HIDEOUT BAR, MIDDLE EARTH, A STAR DESTROYER IN A FAR OFF GALAXY, RUN-DOWN FARM IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, ETC. TIMING CAN ALSO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH BACKGROUNDS. NEW ENGLAND IN FALL OR GREENLAND IN WINTER. ROME IN ANCIENT TIMES OR LOS ANGELES IN THE FUTURE.**
- **BACKGROUNDS ARE OFTEN MENTIONED IN CAPTIONS.**

B FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

By LYNN JOHNSTON

WE'RE HERE!

HEY, MOM - WATCH ME!

HEY! WATCH ME, WATCH ME, MOM !!
-YOU WATCHIN' ME, MA? -WATCH!

WATCH ME, MOM! - JUST WATCH THIS - WATCH
ME -OK? **WATCH ME!**

WATCH
ME

JOHN, I'M GOING TO
TAKE A LONG
WALK DOWN
THE BEACH
BY MYSELF.

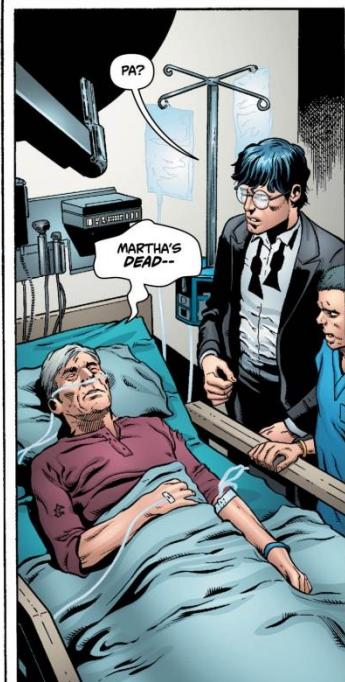
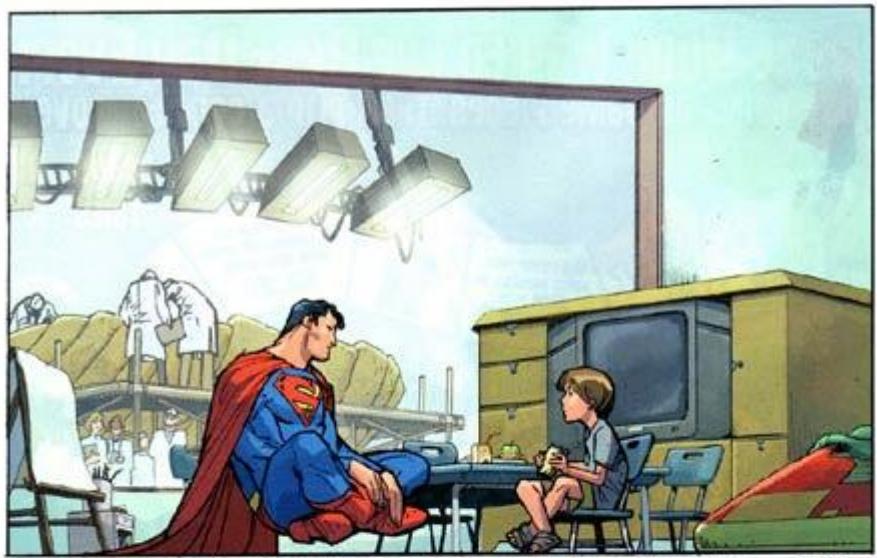
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LEAVE
ME ALONE HERE WITH THE
KIDS ARE
YOU?

WATCH
ME!

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Lynn



LIGHTING AND SPECIAL EFFECTS

- **LIGHTING**

DOES THIS PART OF THE STORY TAKE PLACE DURING THE DAY OR AT NIGHT? TWILIGHT OR DUSK? INDOORS WITH FLUORESCENT LIGHTS OR IN A CAVE LIT BY THE OCCASIONAL TORCH? LIGHTING IMPACTS THE VISUALS OF THE SCENE AS WELL AS THE MOOD OF THE STORY.

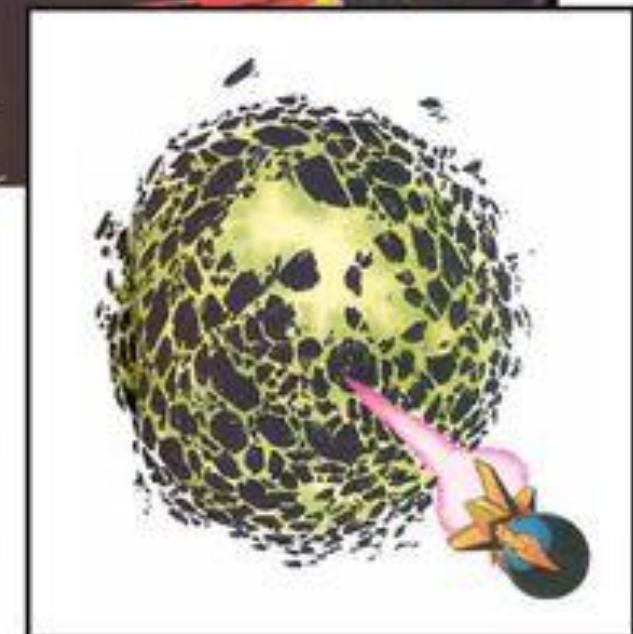
- **SPECIAL EFFECTS**

THESE ARE VISUAL EFFECTS DEPICTED ON THE PAGE. GLOWING HANDS, MAGICAL AURAS, FLAMING TENNIS BALLS, EXPLOSIONS, LIGHTNING, "KIRBY KRACKLE," ETC.

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE

By Lynn Johnston





PUT IT ALL TOGETHER. . . .

• WHEN WE TAKE A STORY, SPREAD IT OUT OVER PAGES, WITH PANELS FULL OF WORD BALLOONS, WHICH INCLUDE CAPTIONS AND DIALOGUE WITH THE CHARACTERS, PROPS, AND BACKGROUNDS (WITH SOUNDS, SPECIAL EFFECTS, AND LIGHTING) AND THEN PUT A COVER ON IT . . . WE HAVE CREATED. . . . A COMIC!

IT ALWAYS
RESURFACES, SOME-
TIME, SOMEWHERE--

--AND, IN
THE END,
THOSE WHO
BELIEVE WILL
ALWAYS WIN!

THE HOLY
HIERARCHY
IS OVERTHROWN,
GREENS!

THE RULE OF
THE PROSLEYTES
IS ENDED!

HALLELUJAH! HAIL, HULK!

HOW TO READ COMICS

- **WHERE DO I START READING?**
- **AMERICAN COMIC BOOKS* ARE READ FROM LEFT-TO-RIGHT, JUST LIKE IN PROSE! LOOK AT THE NUMBERS IN EACH PANEL IN THE BATGIRL: YEAR ONE IMAGE TO INDICATE READING ORDER.** * **WHEN READING MANGA, IT STARTS FROM TOP TO DOWN, BUT YOU BEGIN FROM RIGHT TO LEFT NOT FROM LEFT TO RIGHT; AND YOU ALSO START AT THE BACK OF THE BOOK AND READ FORWARD!**



WHAT AM I EVEN READING / LOOKING AT?

- **COMIC BOOKS INVOLVE THE USE OF STATIC IMAGERY AND DIALOGUE TO TELL A STORY. UNLIKE IN MOVIES, COMIC BOOKS MUST CREATE THE ILLUSION OF TIME AND SPACE AND MOVEMENT. IN A MOVIE, BATGIRL WOULD LEAP OUT OF THE WAY OF THE EXPLOSION AND SUCKER PUNCH ROBIN IN A SINGLE BEAT, AND THE VIEWER WOULD ONLY NEED TO SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE SPECTACLE.**

WHAT AM I EVEN READING / LOOKING AT?

- **ON A COMIC PAGE, EACH PANEL IS AN INDIVIDUAL BEAT.**
"BATGIRL LEAPS AWAY FROM EXPLOSION" --> "BATGIRL COMPOSES HERSELF WHILE ROBIN LOOKS DOWN AT HER"
--> "ROBIN CLAPS" --> "BATGIRL SUCKER PUNCHES ROBIN IN THE GUT" --> "BATGIRL CLOCKS ROBIN IN THE HEAD" --> "BATMAN LOOMS OVER BATGIRL AS ROBIN TRIES TO GET UP."
- **COMIC BOOKS ASK FOR SOME EFFORT - READERS FILL IN THE BLANKS BETWEEN PANELS. BY THE WAY, THE WHITE SPACE BETWEEN PANELS IS COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS "GUTTERS" IN COMIC BOOK LINGO.**

HOW TO READ A COMIX PAGE

This is one example of how your eye should flow down a comix page, moving from left to right, top to bottom. Follow the arrow: →



HOW TO READ BACK AND FORTH DIALOGUE

- **YOU ALWAYS START WITH LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM. LET'S LOOK AT A FEW FOR PRACTICE. . . .**







WHEN IN DOUBT...

- IF YOU ENCOUNTER A UNIQUE STYLE IN THE COMIC, AND AREN'T SURE HOW TO READ IT, JUST GIVE IT A TRY. YOUR BRAIN WILL QUICKLY TELL IF YOU ARE READING IT IN THE CORRECT ORDER (WITHIN 1-2 PANELS, AT WORST A PAGE).**

OBJECTIVES

- **UNDERSTAND THE KEY "PIECES" (OR ANATOMY) OF A COMIC**
- **PREPARE TO USE THOSE TERMS TO MAKE OUR OWN COMICS / PANELS**
- **IDENTIFY KEY TOOLS USED IN A COMIC PANEL, AND WHAT EACH MEANS**
- **TERMS:**
 - **PANEL**
 - **WORD BALLOON / CAPTION**