



PICTURES WORTH READING: A Teacher's Guide to Comics



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS **TEACHING** with PRIMARY SOURCES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Free Library of Philadelphia advances literacy, guides learning, and inspires curiosity. With more than 6 million visits to its 54 locations, including the Rosenbach, and millions more online annually, the Free Library is one of Philadelphia's most widely used educational and cultural institutions. Its Print and Picture Collection (PIX) is home to diverse collections of fine art prints, photographs, drawings, and artists' books, as well as extensive research collections of Philadelphia images, both historical and modern. PIX is a free resource that is invaluable to artists, students, teachers, collectors, and all library users.

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Look Back and See Further

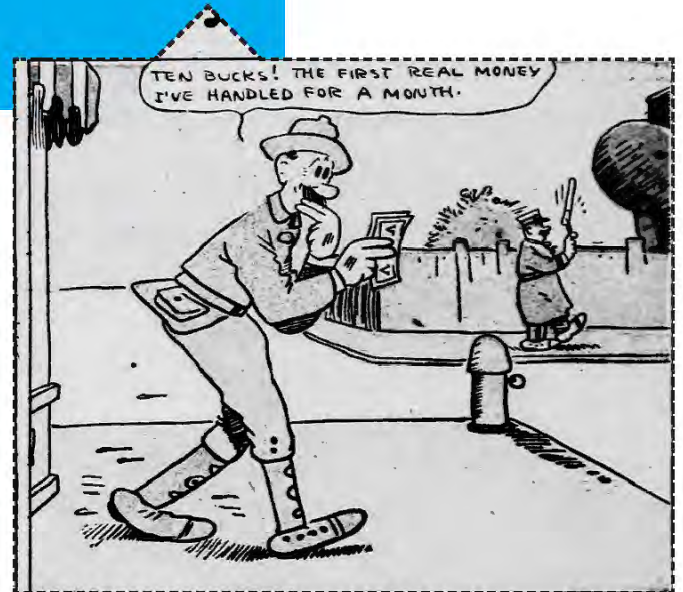
by Erin Elman

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The arts teach us to think about relationships and movements, celebrate multiple perspectives, develop aural and visual literacy skills, and consider complex forms of problem solving. The arts enable us to have experiences we can get from no other sources. The arts provide a humanistic, sociological, and aesthetic connection to our nation as it evolves. Looking back through the lens of the arts connects students to the continuum of history and provides them with a glimpse of their possible roles in the making of history. Utilizing visual literacy skills to decipher encoded messages and discover new meanings can empower our students to be more discerning consumers of information and conveyors of messages.

As both an art form and as primary sources, comics can serve as an engaging and instructive platform for inquiry. Comics can be used to engage students in critical thinking about historical context, social issues, design issues, and more. Because comics are an art form that uses a combination of text and image to tell a story, students simultaneously employ literacy of the written word and visual images when reading them. Teaching with comics as primary sources allows students to study and investigate how individuals use creative activity to celebrate and explore cultural and national identity and history both through the students' own experiences, as well as those of the witnesses of history.

The Library of Congress holds the largest collection of comics in the United States. By their very nature, comics are accessible to a broad audience and are often representative of the time and culture in which they were produced. Comics have been around for a long time. While the foundations for today's comics were laid in the early 20th century, some scholars have identified the 17,000-year-old cave paintings of Lascaux as the very first "comic." Modern comics are distributed through a myriad of means including printed comic panels and strips in periodicals and newspapers, comic book series, graphic novels, and web-published materials.



"Comics Studies" is a new, serious academic field in which scholars focus on the art and producers of comics, sequential art, and graphic narratives as they pertain to the fields of art history, history, semiotics (the study of signs and symbols), philosophy, ontology (the study of knowledge), epistemology (the study of nature, being, and reality), and aesthetics (the study of the nature of art, beauty, and taste). This popular and democratic art form clearly offers to students a great deal to analyze and learn from, as they resonate across cultures, nations, ages, genders, and races.

We at TPS-UArts are honored to be part of the Library of Congress's TPS consortium and to bring an artistic perspective to teachers, allowing them to look back and see further. We hope that teachers across grades and subjects find this guide to be a useful tool in their classrooms as they seek to guide their students to navigate the stories comics tell, and the messages they convey.

Working with Teachers

by Stormy Vogel



The Library of Congress holds a multitude of digitized primary source materials that are available on their website at www.loc.gov. The Library developed these digital resources to help students understand history by providing access to original artifacts.

Using the Library of Congress's digitized images of cartoons and comics and this guide, teachers learn how to analyze and understand the meaning behind the caricatures and animations held by the Library and their significance in US history. The September/October 2017 issue of the *Library of Congress Magazine* is a tribute to comics in US history and a great resource for teachers. Visual literacy, the ability to recognize and understand ideas conveyed through visible actions or images, is an important skill for students to develop. Visual learning experiences, such as the method of inquiry outlined on page 7 are extremely interesting and engaging, as they draw upon students' own senses and experiences, and follow the students' own curiosity. This kind of learning can be used with students of all ages.

Teachers can explore the Library of Congress's classroom resources located on the Teachers page (www.loc.gov/teachers) as well as resources posted on the TPS-UArts website (tps.uarts.edu/teacher-resources). The Library's Teachers page is a starting point to gather resources such as lesson plans, primary source sets, and interactive presentations. The Library also provides primary source-based professional development so educators can learn how to instruct other teachers about the vast resources available at the Library (see www.loc.gov/teachers/professionaldevelopment). These professional development opportunities include ready-to-present lessons (which can be used with students too), YouTube videos, webinars, and Summer Teacher Institutes. The blog, *Teaching with the Library of Congress*, (blogs.loc.gov/teachers), the *Teaching with Primary Sources Journal* (www.loc.gov/teachers/tps/journal), the LOC Twitter feed (@TeachingLC) are additional resources provided by the Library to engage learners and to help students develop critical thinking skills.

Teaching With Primary Sources

Researching Comics

by Catherine Cooney

The teacher who wants to use historic comic strips in the classroom must be prepared to face some challenges particular to this medium. Michael Cavanaugh, in his Last Word essay for the *Library of Congress Magazine* (vol. 6, no 5; available at www.loc.gov/lcm/pdf/LCM_2017_0910.pdf), writes how comic books were a “source of inspired social connection” and demonstrates many ways in which comics have provided social commentary and contributed to discourse in a democratic society. However, a look at historic American comic strips shows us that they also reinforced social divisions. The “funnies” consistently presented casual and pervasive racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia. It does not take a specialized eye to parse out the racism inherent in strips like Little Nemo, or the sexism of Blondie. Many of the themes that early comic strips presented may not be appropriate for all ages and may contain offensive words and images. Teachers are encouraged to consider the material before presenting it to their students. A disclaimer similar to that of the Library’s National Jukebox is appropriate for comics as well. “These selections are presented as part of the record of the past. They are historical documents which reflect the attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs of different times. The Library of Congress does not endorse the views expressed in these recordings, which may contain content offensive to users.” (www.loc.gov/jukebox/about/disclaimer)

Another practical issue teachers encounter when using comics is copyright. Full-resolution images are not always freely available for many strips published after 1922. That said, abundant, rich material for analysis is available through the Library of Congress, if you know where to look.

Consider these collections:

Cartoon Drawings: Swann Collection of Caricature and Cartoon

www.loc.gov/collections/cartoon-drawings-swann/about-this-collection/

The Swann Collection contains comics, caricatures, and illustrations from the United States and Europe, dating from 1780 to 1977. Of the 769 items available online, about 324 are available as full resolution images.

Small Press Expo Comic and Comic Art Web Archive

www.loc.gov/collections/small-press-expo-comic-and-comic-art-web-archive/about-this-collection/

This web archive includes the SPX Festival Website and Ignatz Award nominees and winners. Small Press Expo is a nonprofit that promotes artists and publishers of independent comics. Not all of the material in this archive is appropriate for young audiences.

Webcomics Web Archive

www.loc.gov/collections/webcomics-web-archive/about-this-collection/

Ongoing since June 2014, this archive preserves comics created especially for the Web. Not all of the material in this archive is appropriate for young audiences.

Cartoon Drawings

www.loc.gov/collections/cartoon-drawings/about-this-collection/

This large collection contains more than 10,000 original drawings, mostly produced for publication in American newspapers and magazines. While most of the items are only available to researchers at the Library of Congress, more than 600 items are available as high resolution images online.

The Sunday World Sept. 13

1896

Gilbert F. Edge, artist

Library of Congress

www.loc.gov/item/2018647559



Another avenue for comics research is *Chronicling America*, a joint project of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress (chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/). Finding comics this way allows the researcher to consider the strip in situ. Because the entire newspaper is digitized, students can consider where the strip appears on the page, the section in which it appears, and what publication ran the strip, as well as the strip itself. Images that are not available in high resolution via other Library collections may sometimes be found in the newspapers in this collection.

The *Beyond Words* project at the Library of Congress should serve to make even more comics easily available to researchers and teachers. This crowdsourcing project aims to identify and caption pictures in newspaper pages and to share that data freely. More about the project and how to get involved can be found at blogs.loc.gov/thesignal/2017/09/introducing-beyond-words/.

A TPS Analysis Tool specifically designed for analyzing political cartoons can be found at www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Political_Cartoons.pdf. While this tool can be useful for studying comic strips, it focuses on the persuasive nature of the words and images in political cartoons, which isn't always the intent of strips meant as amusements. When working with comic strips, teachers might consider using the *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing for Photographs and Prints*, and the *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Political Cartoons*, in addition to the *Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Primary Sources* we present on page 18 of this guide.

Pictures Worth Reading

by Ian Sampson

For decades, the notion that American comics were worthy of serious study was preposterous. When I was growing up in the 90's, comics were widely regarded as vaguely humorous pablum or immature fantasy. This prejudice developed in spite of comics' history of visual and narrative experimentation and cartoonists' persistent seriousness. American comics were born in print, as a sales feature of the newspapers wars at the end of the 1800s, exemplified by the infamous competition between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. That foundation in commerce defined the medium for the next century, both ensuring its broad acceptance and dooming it to low production costs, tight deadlines, and callow editors. Despite those limitations, many artists and writers consistently recognized comics as a unique and powerful storytelling medium. In 1992, Art Spiegelman was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his comics memoir *Maus*, which began a critical reassessment of the medium as a whole and ushered in the era of the "graphic novel." Spiegelman's subject matter and disregard for commercial considerations allowed him to reach a more literary audience, but he was steadfastly working in the same tradition as hundreds of suspenders-wearing, clock-punching cartoonists.

The view that comics should be children's fare for the lowest common denominator led to a wide variety of instructional comics over the years.

These manuals were considered an easier way to communicate to those who couldn't or wouldn't read "regular" books. While that may be true, this attitude overlooks the unique power of comics, namely that comics communicate through words and pictures in tandem. In the best comics, neither element can relate the whole meaning on its own, but combined, they communicate a greater whole. When students are given a comic to read, it is not simply a shortcut past prose; rather, it is teaching them to read pictures with the same weight and complexity we expect to find in words.

These reasons make comics a perfect fit for the Teaching with Primary Sources program. The Library of Congress promotes the close examination of their pictorial history of America, and it is fitting to include one of the nation's most democratic storytelling media in that effort. The comics collection at the Library of Congress represents a sampling of popular entertainment, but it also is a record of how individual cartoonists saw their world and interpreted it for the amusement or education of their readers.

I promote this broader comics literacy through the TPS-UArts class I teach every summer. For the past few years we have visited a local comic shop; however, this year we are pleased to partner with the Free Library of Philadelphia. Librarians have played an important and largely unheralded



role in preserving comics history and promoting an appreciation of comics as art objects and cultural artifacts. We are lucky to have access to the Free Library's diverse and active collection of comics, which my class will tour this year. Through exposure to this public collection, teachers will gain a better understanding of the resources available in their own communities, and by handling physical comics, they will more incisively understand the digital resources at the Library of Congress.

How to Use This Guide

FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO GET STARTED

1 Engage students with primary sources.

Draw on students' prior knowledge of the topic. Ask students to closely observe each comic.

- Who created this comic strip?
- When was it created?

Help students see key details.

- Where does your eye go first?
- What colors and shapes are used?
- Is there print as well as images?
How does the text connect to the images?

Encourage students to think about their personal response to the item.

- What feelings and thoughts does the comic trigger in you?
- What do you wonder about it?

2 Promote student inquiry.

Encourage students to speculate about each image, its creator, and its context.

- What was happening during the time period in which the comic was created?
- What was the artist's purpose in making this comic strip?
- How does the artist get their point across?
- Who was the audience for this comic strip?
- What biases or stereotypes do you see?

Ask whether this source agrees with other primary sources or with what the students already know.

- Ask students to test their assumptions about the past.
- Ask students to find other primary or secondary sources that offer support or contradictions.

3 Assess how students apply critical thinking and analysis skills to comics.

Have students summarize what they have learned.

- Ask for reasons and specific evidence to support their conclusions.
- Help students identify questions for further investigation and develop strategies for how they might answer them.

Adapted from *Using Primary Sources*, Library of Congress. www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/

THE MELTING POT

Early newspaper comics reflected life in America's big cities, including the story of immigration. Ethnically diverse casts took on the chaos of modern times and often caused readers to respond with humor or catharsis.

Thanksgiving Day in Ryan's Alley.
New York Journal and advertiser.

November 21, 1897

R.F. Outcalt, artist.

Library of Congress

www.loc.gov/item/sn83030180

[/1897-11-21/ed-1/](http://www.loc.gov/item/sn83030180/1897-11-21/ed-1/)



A CLOSER LOOK

Look closely at the panel. Where is the scene located? Describe the setting. How has the artist depicted New York of the late 19th century?

What people, animals, and objects do you see? Describe the characters you see. What groups are represented or referred to here? What biases or stereotypes do you see? What do you wonder about who is included and who is left out of this melting pot?

The artist has used words as well as pictures. How does the text connect to the images? What do you notice about the words in this panel?

When Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* started publishing a weekly color comic supplement in 1893, it was an immediate hit. This general humor section proved fertile ground for experimentation, and illustrators began to develop their standby single-panel narrative cartoons into what we now recognize as newspaper comics.

Mickey Dugan, drawn by Richard Felton Outcault for the *New York Journal*, was by no means the first comic, but he was its first star. Uncertain copyright laws saw versions of this "Yellow Kid" (so called because of the over-sized yellow nightshirt Dugan wears) appear in Pulitzer's *World* even

after Outcault had been hired away by William Randolph Hearst's *Journal*. Dugan's image was so pervasive that the circulation war between Pulitzer and Hearst would be given his name: they were the "yellow press."

Outcault based his strips on the city as he saw it: poor, multi-cultural, and vibrant. Like most of the city's immigrants, the Yellow Kid inhabited an archetypical New York City tenement. Dugan is Irish of course, and his appearance is a racist stereotype, one we no longer recognize; the button nose, beady eyes, and big ears were cartoon shorthand for "Irish." The other denizens of Hogan's Alley (or McFadden's Flats, or Ryan's Arcade, depending on the newspaper) were Italian, Dutch, German, and African American.

Thanksgiving Day in Ryan's Alley

Kin-der-Kids

The Kin-der-Kids,
1906,

Lyonel Feininger.
Image from the Smithsonian
Collection of Newspaper Comics,
Smithsonian/Abrams 1977.
Free Library of Philadelphia.
Reprinted with permission

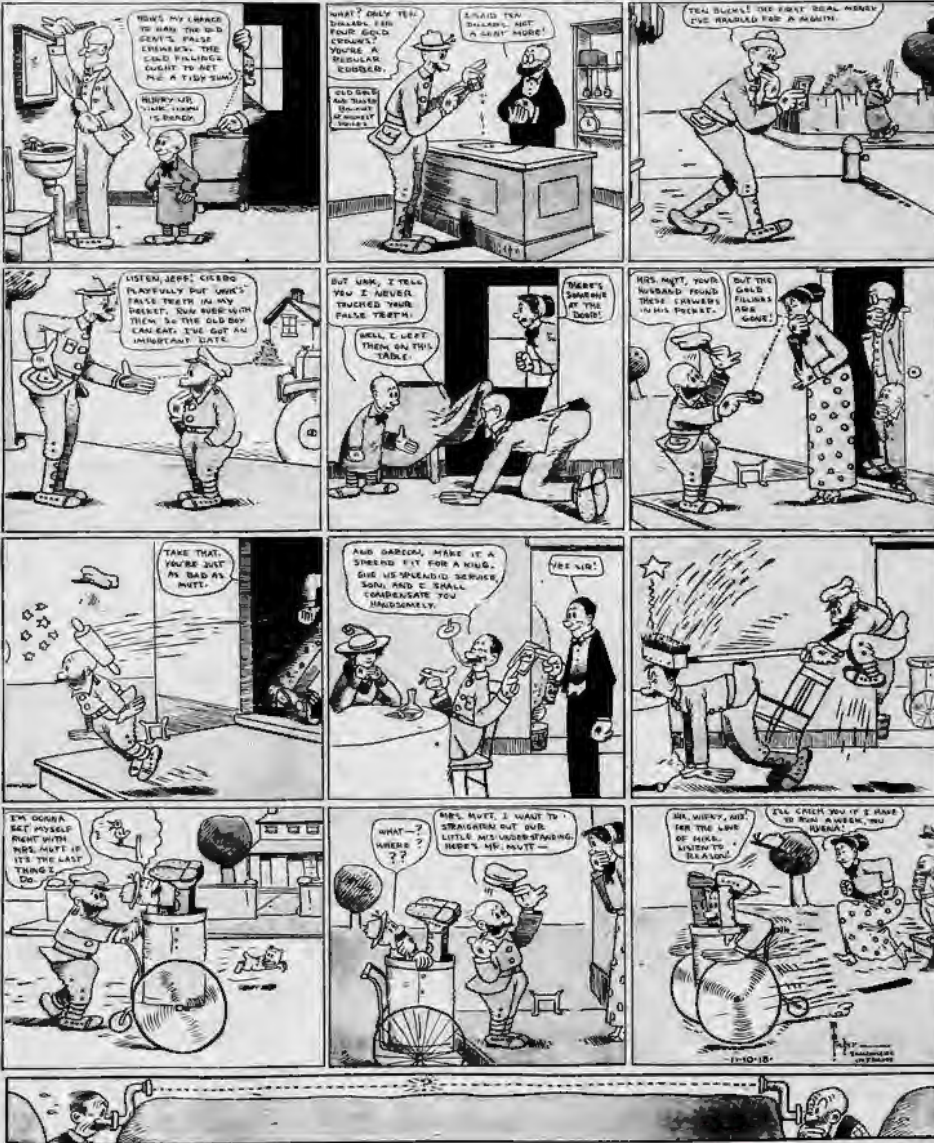
Lyonel Feininger is best known as a Cubist and German Expressionist painter whose works reside in museums. But the 50-odd pages of comics he produced are well-remembered and influential. His *Kin-der-Kids*, which ran for less than a year in the Chicago Tribune, is a gloriously dynamic adventure with an ongoing storyline, a rarity for 1907. The *Kin-der-Kids*, presumably the children of German immigrants, depart from New York with a clockwork boy, Japansky, and their dog. Their subsequent journey across the Atlantic and through Europe is a rollicking visual display, but it mirrors Feininger's own life: his German parents took him away from his hometown, New York, to study in Berlin, where he lived until the Nazis came to power.



MUTT AND JEFF—Mutt Handles Real Money

Copyright 1918 by E. C. Fisher. Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

By BUD FISHER

**Mutt and Jeff: Mutt
Handles Real Money.
Evening Star.**

November 10, 1918

Bud Fisher, artist.

Chronicling America:

Historic American

Newspapers.

chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1918-11-10/ed-1/seq-59/
**A CLOSER
LOOK**

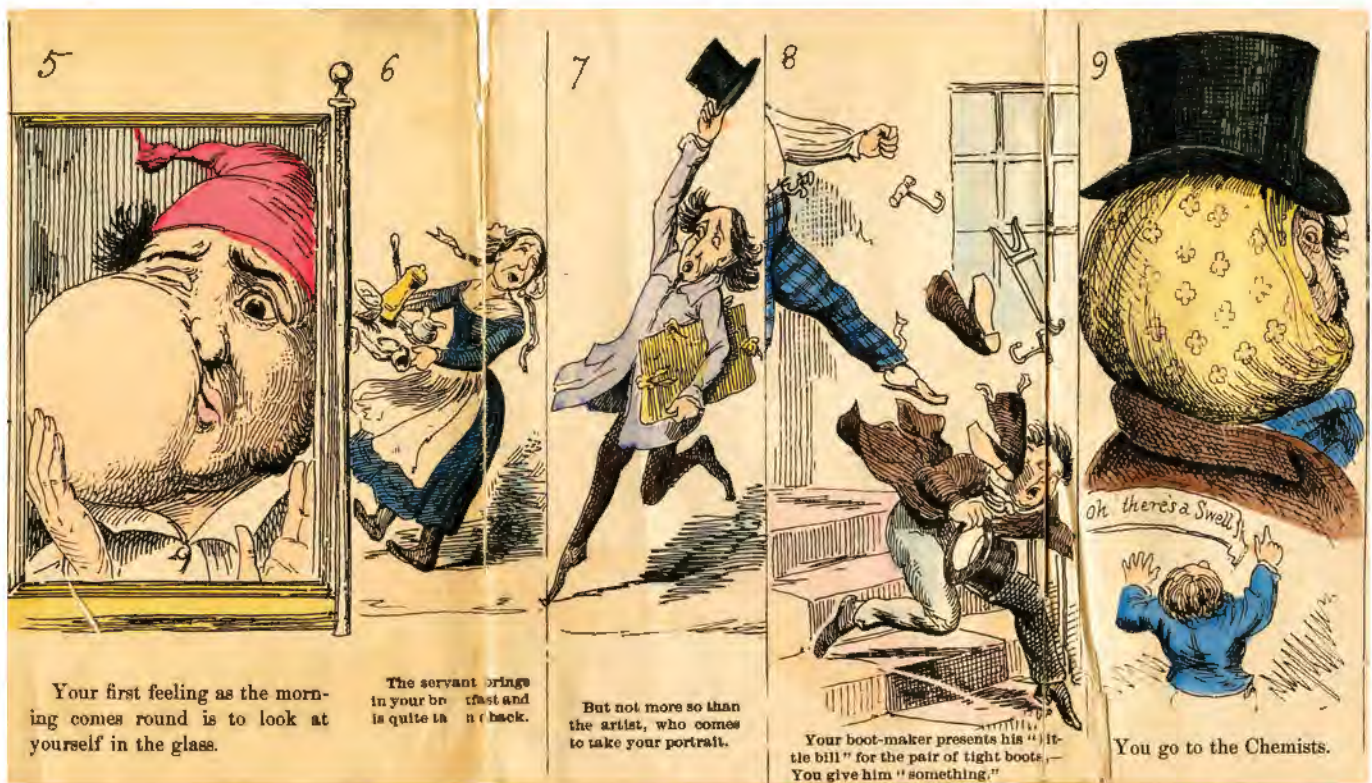
Examine the entire comic strip. Describe the characters. What are Mutt and Jeff wearing? Why would they be dressed that way? What might their clothing signify?

Notice the action in each panel. How does the artist call attention to small details? How does he indicate motion, surprise, pain, or confusion?

After reading the text and seeing how the artist depicts Mutt and Jeff, what do you wonder about their place in society? What details do you see that might tell you something about their social or economic standing?

HIGH SOCIETY, LOW CLASS

For as long as comedy has existed, audiences have thrilled to the abasement of the tramp and the comeuppance of the wealthy. At a historical remove, those dynamics provide a revealing view into the economic life of the time.



The Tooth-Ache

Mutt and Jeff

Mutt and Jeff is a historic comic strip, though not for its artistic merits. It is the first strip to regularly appear in a horizontal grid rather than a single-panel cartoon, thus making it essentially the first ongoing comic strip in American newspapers. It is also the first popular strip to be copyrighted by its creator, making cartoonist Bud Fisher a rich man. It began as a daily in the *San Francisco Chronicle* sports page in 1907, as A. Mutt's fortunes rose and fell with the real-life daily horse races. Several *Mutt and Jeff* stage shows and movies were made, and the strip ran until 1983. Fitting its origins on the sports page, *Mutt and Jeff* was a strip geared toward adults. The protagonists, perpetually broke, are always in search of an easy score. Fisher was famously more interested in money than cartooning, and he employed a number of ghost artists over the years, including George Herriman and Maurice Sendak.

The Tooth-Ache

published by J.L. Smith, 1849
Horace Mayhew and George Cruikshank.
Free Library of Philadelphia

George Cruikshank was a 19th-century British illustrator best known for his viciously funny political satire, though he also illustrated books, including works by Charles Dickens. He didn't make any comics as we think of them today, but the serial print narratives that were common in his day are a clear precursor to the comic strip. This example is an illustrated story called *The Tooth-Ache* from an 1849 edition printed and hand-colored in Philadelphia. This collaboration with Horace Mayhew, an editor for the popular humor magazine *Punch*, shows a well-to-do gentleman falling prey to a common ailment. More an indictment of 19th-century dentistry than aristocracy, *The Tooth-Ache* nevertheless records a humorous slice of upper-class life.



REPRESENTATION

The nature of cartooning and caricature lends itself to particularly cruel representations of cultural or religious differences, ethnicity, and race. But the idiosyncratic nature of the medium, and the diverse audience that enjoys it, has occasionally allowed for surprising inclusivity.

Flooye and Axel

Vic Forsythe's *Flooye and Axel* ran in the *New York Evening World*, and it was successful enough to become a film in 1915, starring Forsythe. Forsythe spent his early life in Southern California, and his work reveals an abiding interest in Western themes and landscapes. While he was quite successful in the world of New York newspapers, he gave up a lucrative career as a comic artist to return to California and focus on desert landscape painting. Family lore about the Old West—his father and uncle claimed to have been present at the O.K. Corral the day of the infamous gunfight in 1881—seem to have influenced his view of the desert as the locus of real-life “cowboy and Indians.” Many of his comics, including *Flooye and Axel*, take place in the Old West, and callow adventurers, along with stereotypes of Native Americans, were their stock in trade. *Flooye and Axel* is not formally remarkable, but it serves as an example of two common sights in the first half of the 20th century: competent, if forgettable, gag strips and casual racism.

A CLOSER LOOK

Peruse the entire strip and notice the way it is drawn. Describe the colors, composition, lines, and shading. Sometimes it helps to think in terms of either/or: is the drawing simple or complex? Are the cells busy or spare? What is the setting? How has the artist communicated the setting?

Describe the characters. How do they speak? What stereotypes do you see in their words and the ways in which they are depicted? The comic is titled *Flooye and Axel*. Who do you guess is whom? Why?

Who do you think would have been the audience for this strip? What do you wonder about the effect of the stereotyped character depictions on the readers?



**Flooy and Axel.
Axel is confused by
what he sees.**

1915. Vic Forsythe.
Library of Congress.
[www.loc.gov/
item/2009615826](http://www.loc.gov/item/2009615826)

Abie the Agent

Abie the Agent,
c. 1914-1915. Harry Hershfield.
Reprinted 1977 by Hyperion Press in
Abie the Agent: a complete compilation,
1914-1915.
Free Library of Philadelphia.

When it started running in 1914, *Abie the Agent* quietly broke new ground by becoming the first syndicated strip to star a Jewish protagonist. Religious and cultural intolerance, racism, and xenophobia were rampant on the comics' pages, but Hershfield presented a group of Jewish characters affectionately and without animus. Abe Kabibble is a car salesman for the 1914 "Complex," and he freely interacts with the diverse city as he tries to get the girl and make the sale. The jokes often rely on cultural stereotypes, but the depictions avoid common anti-Semitic features. Over its 36-year run, *Abie the Agent* was distributed widely and the strip is a notable piece of the long history of Jewish American comedy.



CITY AND THE COUNTRY

At the turn of the 20th century, America's cities sat at the crux of the process of urbanization, seeing massive growth and rapid social change. Comics emerged as a reflection, and expression, of that growth, and the stories display the tension between a rural past and an urban future.

Gasoline alley. Walt, I'm going up the canyon.

c. 1921.

Frank King, artist.
Library of Congress.

[www.loc.gov/
item/2006680164](http://www.loc.gov/item/2006680164)



A CLOSER LOOK

Describe what you see and where the action is happening. How was the country viewed by city dwellers? The title of the strip is *Gasoline Alley*. What do you wonder about the role of the automobile in people's lives in the 1920s?

What do you notice about how words are used in this strip? Take some time to compare it to the *Yellow Kid* strip. How is it similar or different?

What do you notice about this comic strip? Can you tell how the artist created it? What clues do you see? What do the clues tell you about the process of making a comic strip? What do you wonder about how comic strips are created? What changes might there be in the process today compared to when this was produced?

Gasoline Alley began in 1918 as a strip about automobile enthusiasts, but it is noted for being the first comic strip in which the characters aged in real time. To attract female readers, an orphan child named Skeezix was added to the cast in 1921. Rather than play out the stories with an eternal infant, cartoonist Frank King had Skeezix and his adopted father Walt age normally, allowing for a subtle and intimate storytelling dimension not seen in other comics of the day.

The stories quickly shifted to focus more on relationships, but the early years of the strip are a poignant record of American car culture and the growing influence of the automobile. The strip continues today, drawn by Jim Scancarelli since 1986, and distributed by Tribune Media. Despite a delay in the 70s and 80s, natural aging has continued, so you can read the continuing adventures of Walt Wallet, age 115. King is also highly regarded among cartoonists for his inventive Sunday pages.

Gasoline Alley

My Book of Hours

My Book of Hours;
167 designs engraved on wood,
1922,
Frans Masereel
Free Library of Philadelphia.
know.freelibrary.org/Record/612559

My Book of Hours (or *Passionate Journey*, in some English editions) is one of many woodcut novels produced by Flemish artist Frans Masereel. This image comes from an edition of 600 printed from the original blocks and published in the United States. The work, made for a fine arts audience, was well regarded, but it has garnered a wider audience over time as American comics fans have recognized it as an early form of the graphic novel. Masereel worked in a variety of media, but he chose woodcuts for their expressive, graphic nature. His wordless novels communicate a timeless emotional heft while providing a glimpse into the early 20th-century industrial city.



GENDER ROLES

Even as 20th-century media tell a story of social change, they reveal issues that seem intractable. The following strips demonstrate huge changes in the social roles American women were able to play, but they are also striking in their similarity to contemporary issues.

Around the clock with somebody's stenog.
"7 a.m. out of the hay,"

1933,
 A.E. Hayward.
 Library of Congress.
www.loc.gov/item/2009615881



Somebody's Stenog, created by Philadelphia artist Alfred E. Hayward in 1918, was the first syndicated comic strip starring a working woman. The action centered around young stenographer Cam O'Flage and her female coworkers at the Nuts and Bolts Manufacturing Company. By the 1930s, clerical jobs such as stenography, a role that encompassed the taking and transcribing of dictation, requiring both shorthand and high-speed typing skills, were performed primarily by women, who had the education, skills, and expectation of low wages that employers demanded. While stereotypes remain on display in *Somebody's Stenog*—Cam is always looking for a man—she is also remarkably independent. She lives with her parents but makes her own decisions. And as this strip shows, what she does in the evenings is “Nobody’s business!”

Hayward worked in Philadelphia in the early 20th century, where he would have witnessed the changing roles of women. *Somebody's Stenog* serves as a record of how women may have been perceived in public life in the years that Hayward wrote the strip. Hayward stopped drawing the strip in 1933, but the comics page he left behind was full of the kind of independent female characters he had introduced.

A CLOSER LOOK

Take some time to look over the entire comic strip. If you didn't know the date of this comic, could you guess the time period? What clues do you see?

Who do you see in this comic strip? How does the main character spend her time? What do you wonder about gender roles at the time this strip was published?

How did the artist convey a sense of time? What visual elements did he use? What formal elements? What words? Do you feel these are effective? Why or why not?

Somebody's Stenog



Patty Jo 'n' Ginger

Patty Jo 'n' Ginger,

1955,

Jackie Ormes,

from *Jackie Ormes: The First African American Woman Cartoonist* by Nancy Goldstein, University of Michigan Press, 2008. Free Library of Philadelphia. Reprinted with permission.

Jackie Ormes, the first African American syndicated cartoonist, created single-panel *Patty Jo 'n' Ginger* cartoons that ran in the Pittsburgh Courier for over 10 years. Her work is formally consistent with other contemporaneous gag strips, single-panel cartoons meant to evoke a quick laugh, but the content was notably political. In each installment, *Patty Jo* addresses a social or political ill. The rare bursts of humor invoked derive from the irony of such a young child making incisive social observations. The strip is more about representation than about being funny. Older sister Ginger, though silent, is sharply dressed in the latest fashions, and *Patty Jo* constantly questions their place in the social hierarchy. A *Patty Jo* doll was produced in the late 1940s as one of the first African American dolls not based purely on stereotypes. Ormes also created the heroine Torchy Brown, who starred in several strips of her own. This strip depicts a view of women very aware of, and capable of, critiquing current issues, a very different role than women and girls usually served in comics of this era.

"I don't want to seem touchy on the subject . . . but, that new little white tea-kettle just whistled at me!"


PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS TOOL

The Library of Congress provides teacher’s guides that help to analyze primary sources. Helping students analyze primary sources can guide them toward higher-order thinking and better critical thinking and analysis skills. The Library provides these guides for various primary source formats, including photographs and prints, books and other printed text, manuscripts, maps, political cartoons, motion pictures, sheet music and song sheets, oral histories, and sound recordings. Each analysis tool asks questions to help students construct knowledge as they form reasonable conclusions based on the evidence they see, hear, or read. Then students can connect primary sources to the context in which they were created. When viewing a comic, students should be able to answer the probing questions detailed in the sample below.

The analysis tools are not linear; teachers should encourage students to go back and forth between the columns to answer the questions.

Teachers might find that the general Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing primary sources, pictured here, is useful for analyzing comics, but they should consider elements from both the Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Photographs & Prints and the Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Political Cartoons. The Teacher’s Guide for Analyzing Political Cartoons focuses on the work’s persuasive nature, which does not always pertain to comic strips. However, it does guide students to think about symbols, allusions, and exaggeration that might be used. These elements—symbols, allusions, and exaggeration—are often the very things that make comic strips funny, even when they are not made to provide political commentary. The Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Photographs & Prints asks students to examine details, consider setting, and think about what we can learn from the image. The Analysis Tool for Students, available as a PDF on the Library of Congress Teachers website, is highly flexible and can accommodate most any medium (www.loc.gov/teachers/primary-source-analysis-tool/).

TEACHER'S GUIDE ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES



Guide students with the sample questions as they respond to the primary source. Encourage them to go back and forth between the columns; there is no correct order.

OBSERVE

Have students identify and note details.

Sample Questions:
 What do you notice first? Find something small but interesting. What do you notice that you didn't expect? What do you notice that you can't explain? What do you notice now that you didn't earlier?

REFLECT

Encourage students to generate and test hypotheses about the source.

Where do you think this came from? Why do you think somebody made this? What do you think was happening when this was made? Who do you think was the audience for this item? What tool was used to create this? Why do you think this item is important? If someone made this today, what would be different? What can you learn from examining this?

QUESTION

Have students ask questions to lead to more observations and reflections.

What do you wonder about...
 who? what? when? where? why? how?

FURTHER INVESTIGATION

Help students to identify questions appropriate for further investigation, and to develop a research strategy for finding answers.

Sample Question: What more do you want to know, and how can you find out?


A few follow-up activity ideas:

Beginning
Have students compare two related primary source items.

Intermediate
Have students expand or alter textbook explanations of history based on primary sources they study.

Advanced
Ask students to consider how a series of primary sources support or challenge information and understanding on a particular topic. Have students refine or revise conclusions based on their study of each subsequent primary source.

For more tips on using primary sources, go to
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers>

 LIBRARY OF CONGRESS loc.gov/teachers

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Image from the
Library of Congress

Common Core State
Standard – Grade 6



Thanksgiving Day in Ryan's Alley

R. F. Outcault

CCSS.ELA Literacy.SL.6.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.



Around the Clock with Somebody's Stenog

A.E. Hayward

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3.A

Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.



Gasoline Alley

“This is the Life, Skeezix!”

F. King

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.7

Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.



Floey and Axel

“Axel is Confused by what he Sees.”

V. Forsythe

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.8

Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.



Mutt and Jeff

“Mutt Handles Real Money.”

B. Fisher

CCSS - INTRODUCTION

Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds.

Single-Sheet Workshop

by Ian Sampson

When I tell students of any age they are going to make a comic book, I invariably hear two responses: “I can’t draw!” and “What should I write about? I don’t have any ideas!” Storytelling in comics relies on the successful intermarriage of words and pictures. That sounds daunting, but it actually provides an opportunity to overcome both of these typical obstacles. Good storytelling relies on clarity above all, which is most directly achieved through simplification and editing. That means that students need not draw well. The worst drawing of a car, or house, or person, or tree is usually still identifiable. I always start students with a series of speed drawings—1 minute, 30 seconds, 15 seconds—inspired by Ivan Brunetti’s excellent book *Cartooning: Philosophy and Practice*. At the end of this exercise, teachers will have demonstrated that everyone in the class can draw. The drawings may not be to a student’s liking, but they are sufficient to communicate an idea when paired with words.

The second problem is easily overcome through an understanding of the limitations of the medium. As a visual medium, comics take up more space than prose, and that space represents the passage of time. The single-sheet exercise gives students only 6–8 small pages in which to tell their story. That means their story must be edited down to 6–8 essential moments that communicate the entire idea. That is a very short story! It’s so short that it might more accurately be compared to a poem rather than a story. In a poem, the goal is not to describe a sequence of

events but to capture the essence of a moment or a feeling. I instruct students to keep a sketchbook or journal for several days leading up to making the comic. I encourage them to sketch something every day and to write down observations, however mundane. Funny or weird or sad work best! In her book *Syllabus*, Lynda Barry lays out an excellent framework for this type of activity. Finally, I ask the students to identify a single moment or interaction that speaks to them, either from their journal observations or perhaps something from their past. When asked to describe that moment in 6–8 boxes, everyone is able to do it. The results will be surprising, both in their readability and in their content.

To make the actual books, have each student follow the instructions printed here, using a blank piece of paper. This will be the book “dummy.” Use it to mark the pages so the student knows the imposition of the panels, that is, which page goes where. The final art can be drawn directly onto an 8.5” × 11” sheet of paper and photocopied. If the student has followed your dummy properly, the copies will fold into mini-comics! (Pro tip: when unfolded, the books have a hidden “inside” page—the back of the printed sheet. Great for bonus material like maps or diagrams!) Because of its ease, low cost, and narrow focus, the mini-comic remains a vital form of expression for amateurs and professionals alike, making this exercise useful at all educational levels.

Resources related to this guide are available at tps.uarts.edu/teacher-resources

1

Instruct your students to keep a journal of observations or memories for several days. Nothing is too mundane!

2

Have them choose one moment or interaction from their journal to expand on. They should sketch out how they want to depict the moment over 6-8 panels. This is an outline to help organize limited space. Keep it simple!

3

Every student makes a dummy book (see instructions on opposite page). After folding it into a book form, they should number the pages. Remind them to note which are the front and back cover.

4

Students should unfold their dummies and use them as a template to draw the comic in the correct order on a flat sheet of paper. This is best done with a lightbox or tracing paper, but if the page numbers were penciled very lightly, the story can be drawn directly on the dummy.

Important to remember: the photocopier will not print to the edge of the paper, so have them mark out a ¼” margin around the edge of the sheet. Anything drawn in this area will not print!

5

Print at least one copy for every student in the class. Have everyone fold together - it’s a party! At the end, they should trade so that each student has a copy of every other student’s comic.

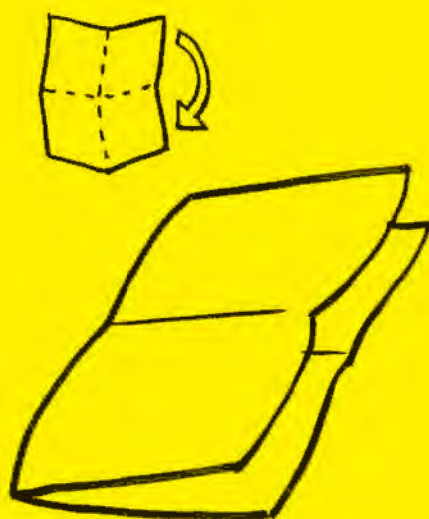
HOW TO FOLD A SINGLE-SHEET BOOK

by IAN SAMPSON
2017

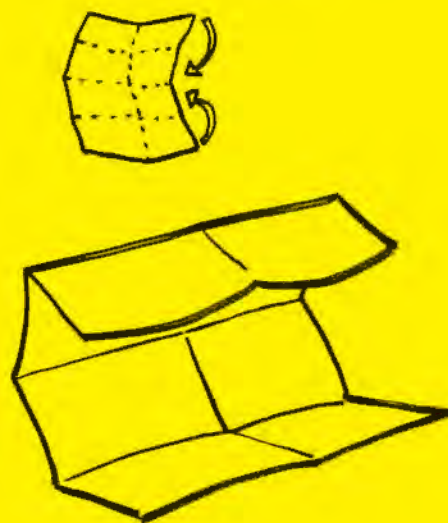
FOLD A SHEET OF PAPER LENGTHWISE LIKE A HOT DOG BUN



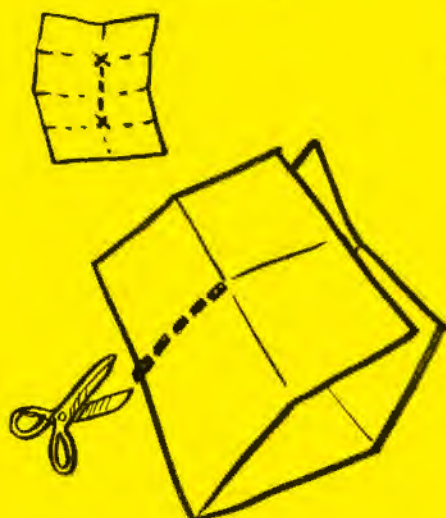
THEN FOLD IT LIKE A HAMBURGER BUN



NOW FOLD THE TWO SHORT SIDES IN TO THE MIDDLE



NOW CUT (or TEAR) ALONG MIDDLE FOLD * as shown ↓ *



PULL MIDDLE CREASES WHILE FOLDING DOWN ALONG THE "HOT DOG"



NOW COLLAPSE IT INTO A BOOK FORM & FOLD DOWN THE SPINE



THE CUT YOU MADE SHOULD OPEN INTO A DIAMOND! ✨

YOU MADE A BOOK !!

This undated image shows Hamilton Hall at the University of the Arts when the school was known as the Philadelphia College of Art. The building was originally part of the Pennsylvania Institution of the Deaf and Dumb.

Photo Credit: South (Front) Elevation - Pennsylvania Institution of the Deaf & Dumb, 320 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA.

www.loc.gov/item/pa1043/



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