

---

# A window to the world: Graphic Novels in the Secondary English Language Classroom

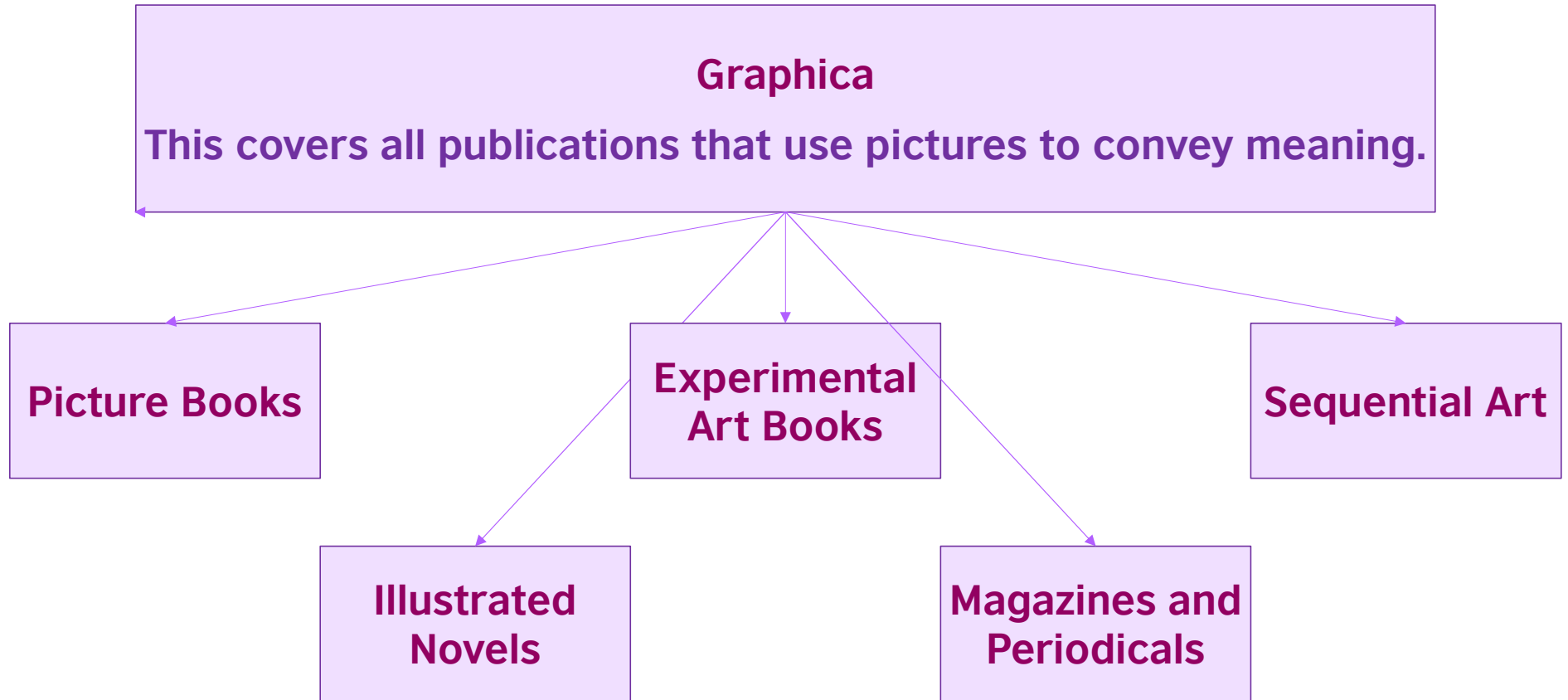
16/07/2021

---

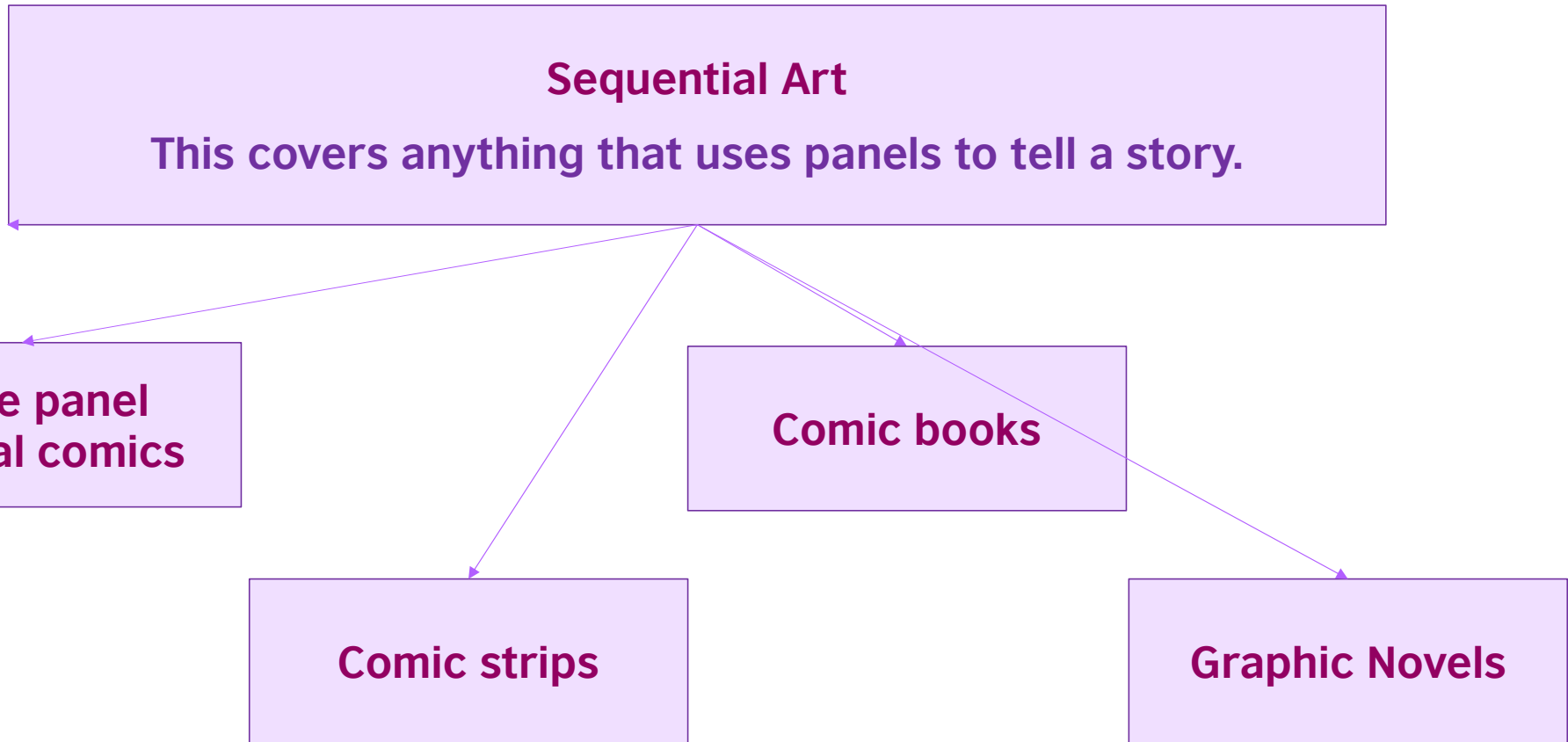
## Today we will think about....

- What is a graphic novel?
- How do we read graphic novels differently to 'normal' novels?
- What are the specific affordances and challenges of graphic novels?
- How can we go beyond using them as language input and use them to focus on global issues and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills?

# What is a graphic novel?



# What is a graphic novel?



---

## What is a graphic novel?

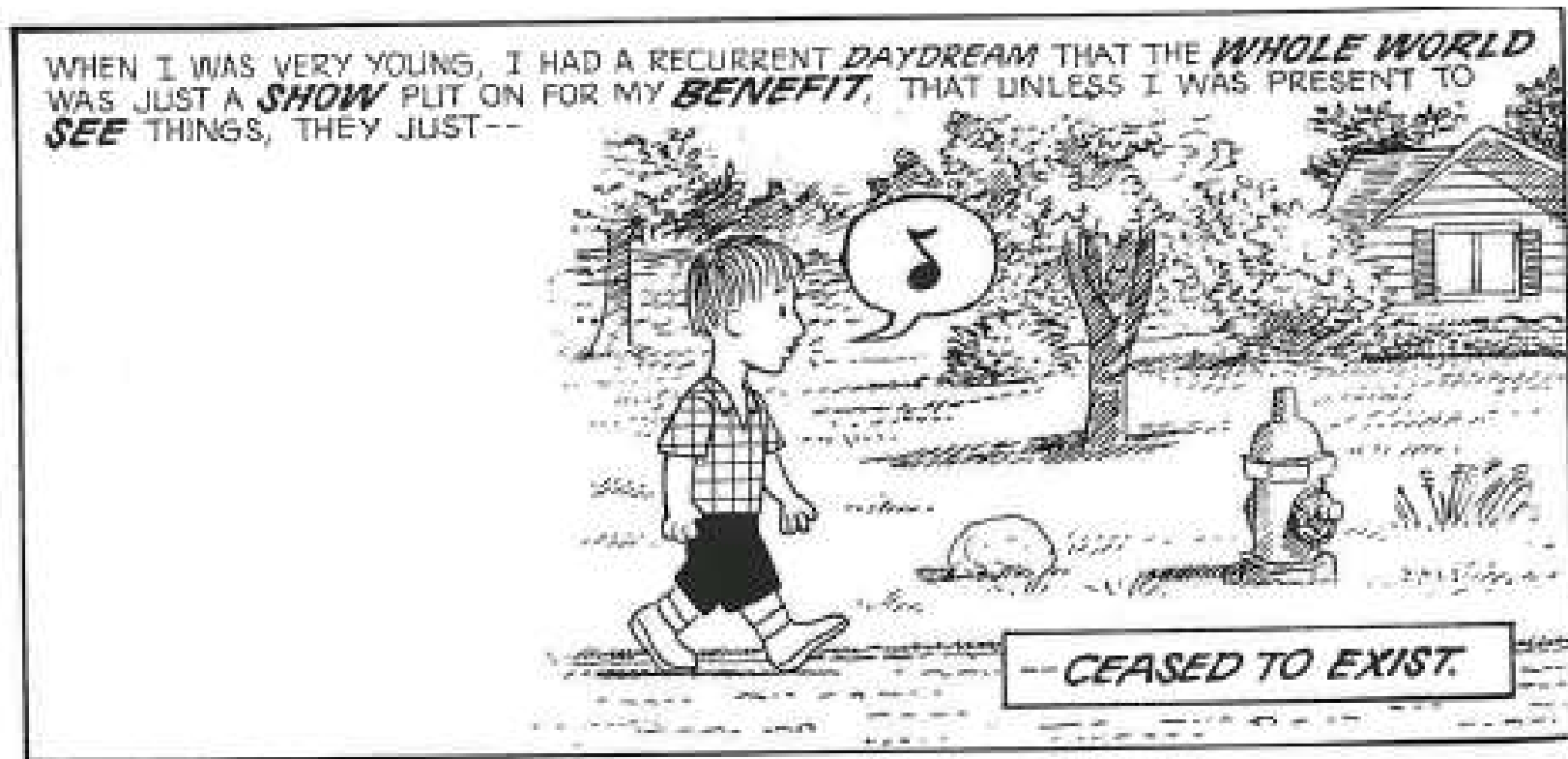
- Juxtaposed sequential art; use panels to tell the story
- Extended length, comparable to prose-only novels
- Single continuous body of work (although short story collections exist)
- Pixture-text hybridity
- Not always a novel; memoir, biography, autobiogography, historical narrative, adapted folktales, coming-of-age stories, detective stories, superhero stories.

---

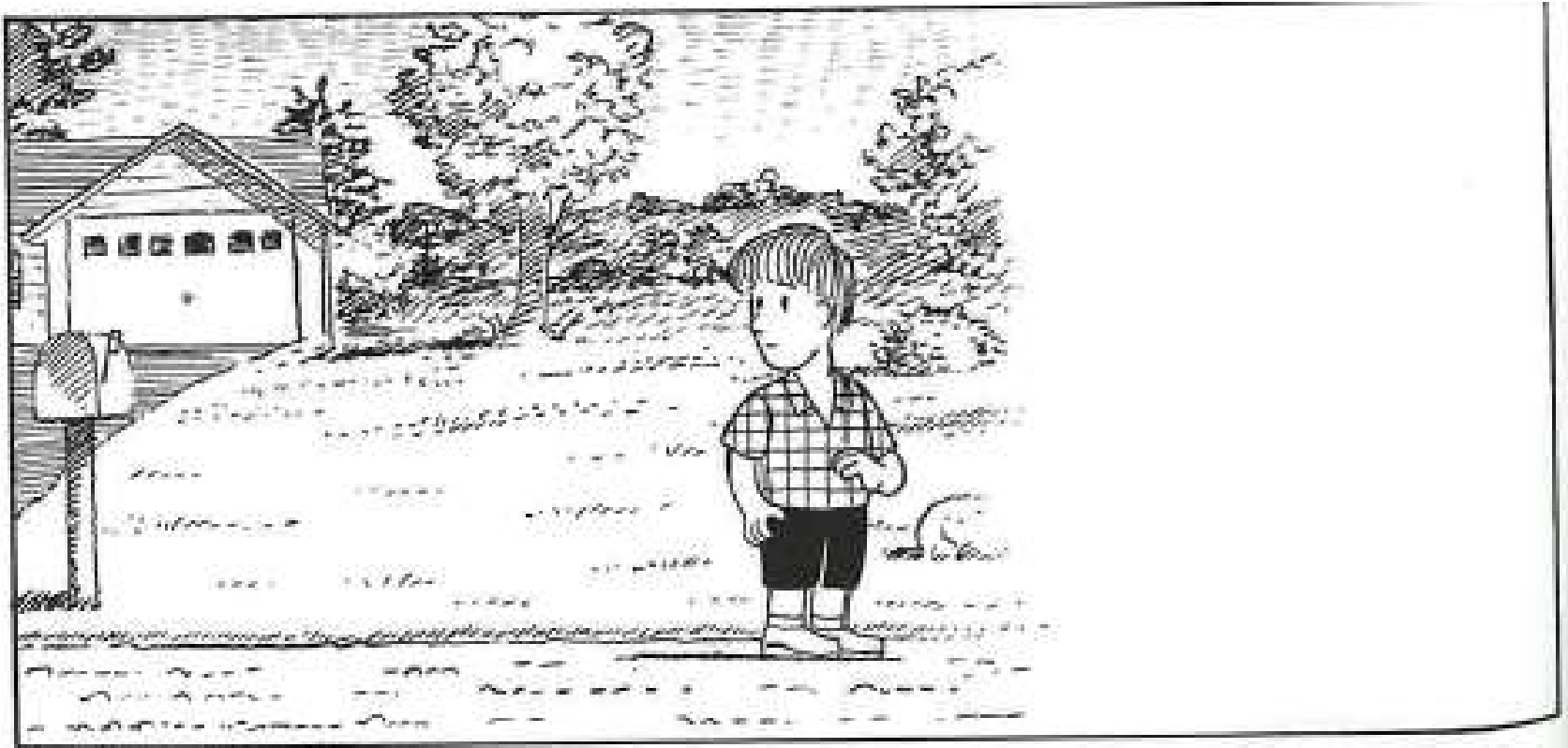
# How do we read graphic novels differently to 'normal' novels?

1. Word-specific combinations - pictures illustrate a story mainly told through text
2. Picture-specific combinations - story mainly told through images and text « add[s] a soundtrack »
3. Duo-specific panels - words and images convey same ideas/content
4. Additive combination - words « amplify or elaborate an image » (and vice versa)
5. Parallel combination - words and images tell two different stories
6. Montage - words are part of the image
7. Interdependent combination - neither words nor images are sufficient alone; only in combination do they reveal the idea

# How do we read graphic novels differently to 'normal' novels?

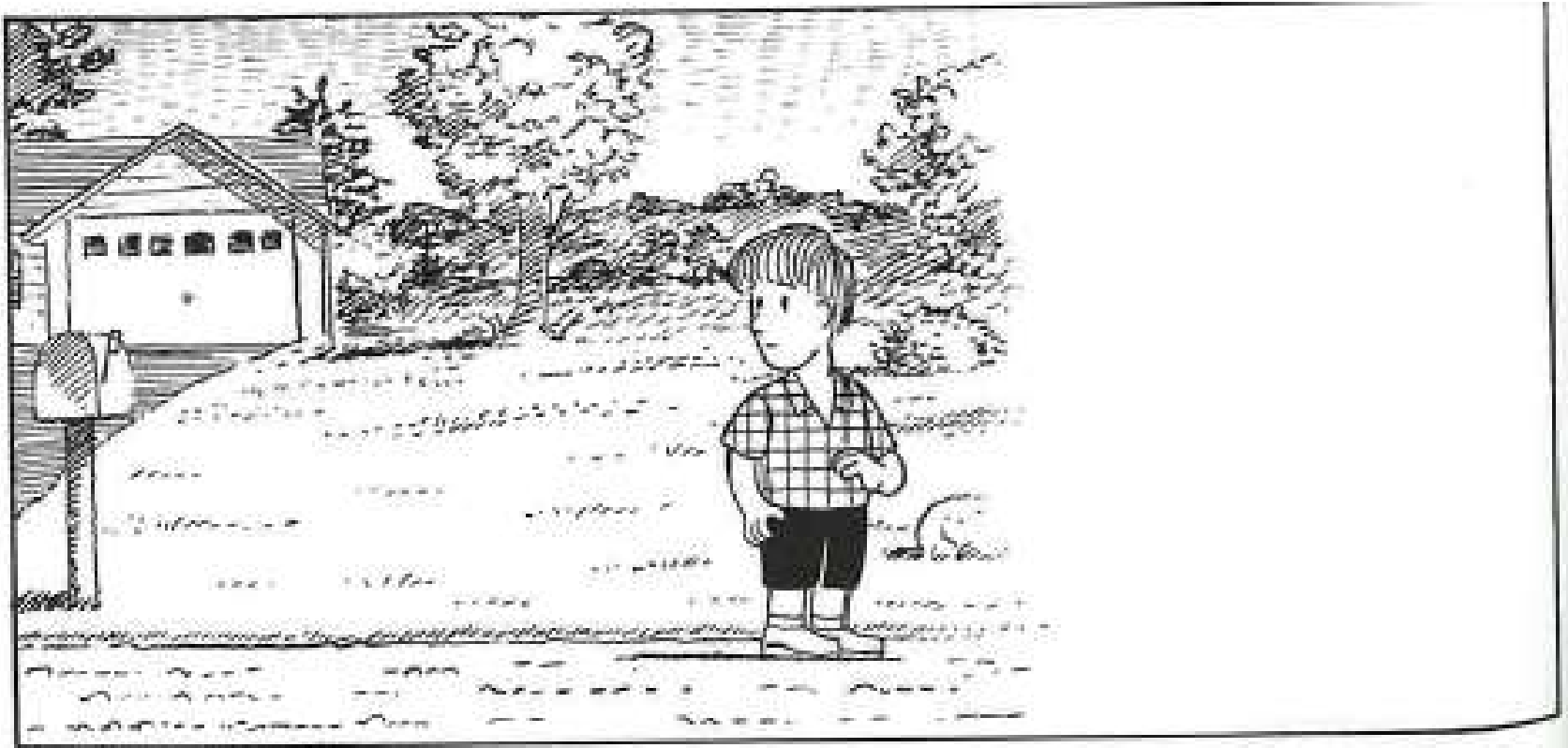


# How do we read graphic novels differently to 'normal' novels?





# How do we read graphic novels differently to 'normal' novels?



---

# How do we read graphic novels differently to 'normal' novels?

- Moment to Moment - very little closure
- Action to Action - closure is obvious, little variation
- Subject to Subject - increased degree of reader involvement to make meaningful
- Scene to Scene - often requires deductive reasoning to make the time or space jump make sense
- Aspect to Aspect - no jump in time/space, but requires reasoning to find the connection
- Non-sequitur - ???

---

# What are the specific affordances and challenges of graphic novels?

- Align with the multimodal ways that our learners are already engaged with meaning and making meaning (and will continue to need to do so)
- Provide visual assistance for more challenging texts, with multiple layers of cues to construct meaning
- Allow an added interpretive layer to analyse
- Support the development of various literary skills
- Offer more opportunities to increase the diversity to which our learners can have a window (or a sliding glass door!)

---

## What are the specific affordances and challenges of graphic novels?

- We can't assume every student will love them!
- Despite the images, they are not automatically suitable for all language and ability levels.
- Need to develop additional and specific visual literacy skills
- Can be challenging to read aloud
- May not be recognised/taken seriously by parents (and school leaders)

---

# How can we go beyond using them as language input and use them to focus on global issues and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills?

- Multimodal and visual literacy
- Connecting to global and contemporary issues familiar to learners
- Connecting to the world outside our learners' experiences

# Multimodal/Visual Literacy

## Reading the image

Copy a short section and white out the text. Ask learners to analyse the image and predict what the text might be by looking at context clues - use of colour, facial expressions, body language, background, framing, transition etc.

Compare different versions from each group/pair, then compare to the original. Who was closest? Was anyone surprised?

[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)



From Bill Zimmerman's book *Your Life in Comics*. Artwork by Tyler Page. Published by Free Spirit Publishing.

# Multimodal/Visual Literacy

## Raising awareness of the differences

Simple jigsaw reading activity - one group with chapter/section from original novel, other group with same section from the graphic adaptation. With the same questions, can both groups answer them all? Why/Why not? Where did they find the answers?

Extend by allowing learners to Compare directly, and discuss which they prefer and why.



# Multimodal/Visual Literacy

## Transition Sorting

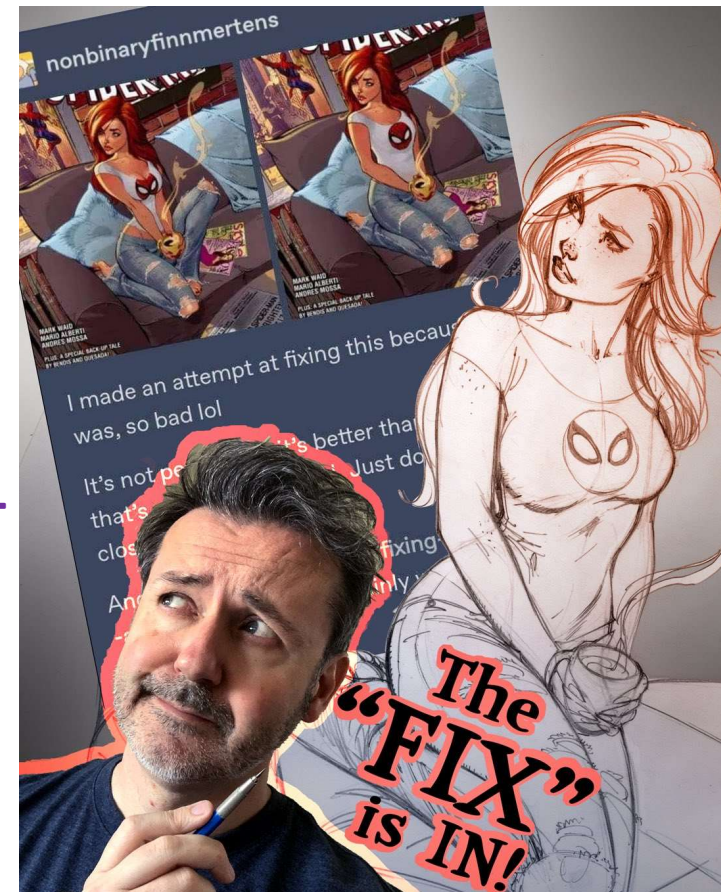
From your chosen novel, find examples of McCloud's six types of transition. Ask learners to match them to the descriptions and justify their decisions. To extend, ask learners to find further examples in the novel/come up with their own ideas, or ask learners to say why they think the author chose this type of transition and what effect it has.

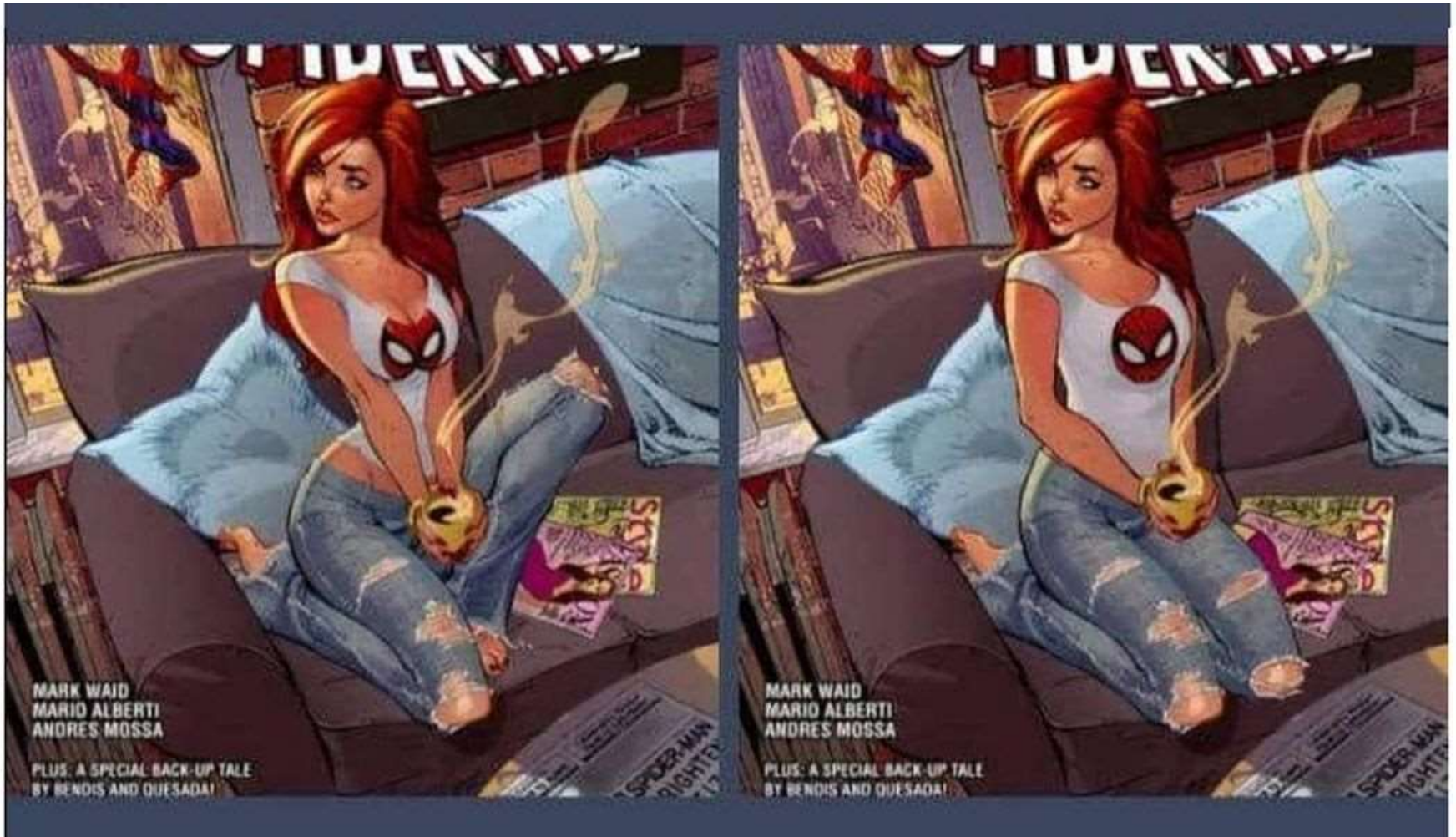


# Connecting to global and contemporary issues familiar to learners

Example: representations of the female form

Inspired by: <https://www.insider.com/j-scott-campbell-spider-man-comic-art-fixing-debate-2021-6>







nonbinaryfinnmertens Follow



I made an attempt at fixing this because it was, so bad lol

It's not perfect but it's better than it was so that's all that matters lol. Just don't look too closely at it it's fine

And uh,, may as well tag @fixing-bad-comic-art since their blog is mainly what inspired me to do this :•] yea



**Joanna Robinson**  @jowrotethis · 19h 

I can't always exactly explain the different between the male and female gaze, but I do know it when I see it.



 gumx395

- 1) pigtails aren't long enough to "pull on" anymore
- 2) her bangs are more choppy and fun rather than seductively "framing her face"
- 3) her boobs aren't half a foot off her ribcage (I'm guessing they made her wear a padded bra in Suicide Squad)
- 4) Her skimpy clothing looks more like a choice rather than the tired "women's clothes strategically ripped" trope
- 5) she's not wearing a dog collar



it looks like she dressed herself and had fun with it as opposed to it being painfully obvious a man dressed her

 profeminist

6) The camera is centered on her face not her chest.

Source: lesbian

jscottcampbellart 🧑 Over the weekend a famous cover of mine featuring MJ from Spider-Man got a LOT of attention again when it began circulating on Tumblr, Twitter and eventually on Facebook.

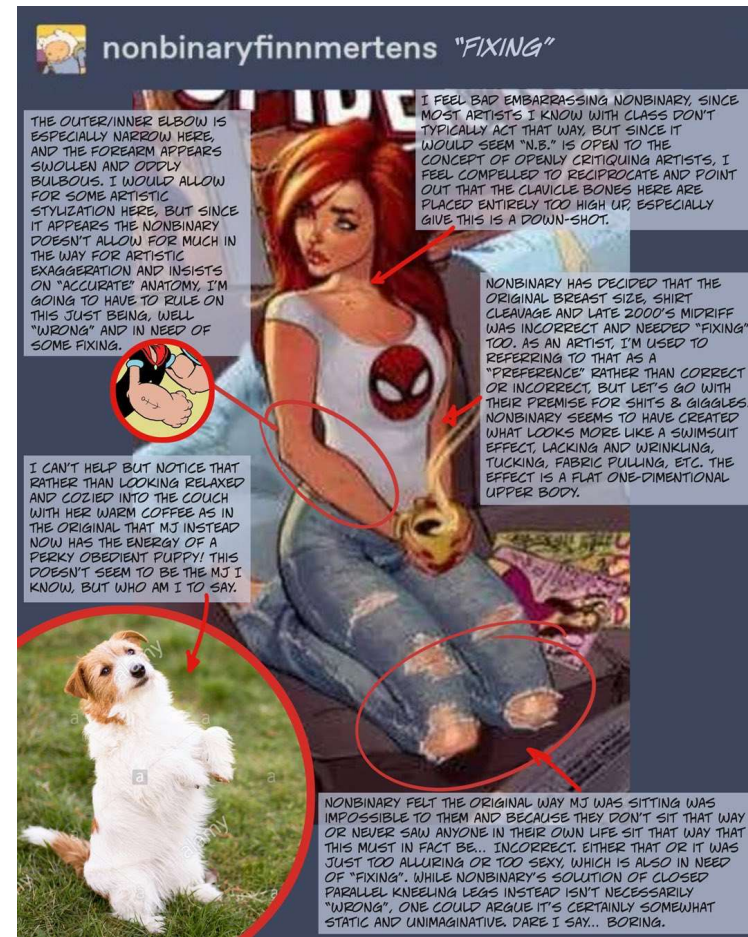
You see, someone going by the name 'nonbinaryfinnmertens' took to "fixing" the artwork as they put it, and well, that got a lotta people talkin'! Now typically I just ignore this sort of thing, but it seemed to go a bit viral with even friends and colleagues reposting it explaining that this sort of "correcting" of other well established artists is just, well... tacky, which it is. In light of this though, I decided to embrace the situation and do a little bit of "art-fixing" myself, what do ya think, seems trendy! I'm up for new things! So let's have some fun and Fix stuff! 🔄 Swipe on 🔄!

1st • We have nonbinaryfinn's initial "fixing" of my artwork. Be respectful now, as nbf clearly states, "it's not perfect" and "don't look too closely at it, it's fine". Seems nbf might feel a bit sensitive about their "art"

2nd • I take my opportunity to return the favor and generously offer my critique of nbf's "fixing". nbf didn't ask for my criticism, but that's ok! I'm just giving that way. ;)

3rd • I took time outta my busy busy schedule to redraw and "fix" all of nbf's mistakes, and there were many! I then share how their artistic vision would be improved with my "fixing". Feel free to look as closely as you want to!

Hey, maybe nonbinaryfinn is onto something, maybe unsolicited correcting no one asked for IS fun!! 😊 Hope this was educational kids!



---

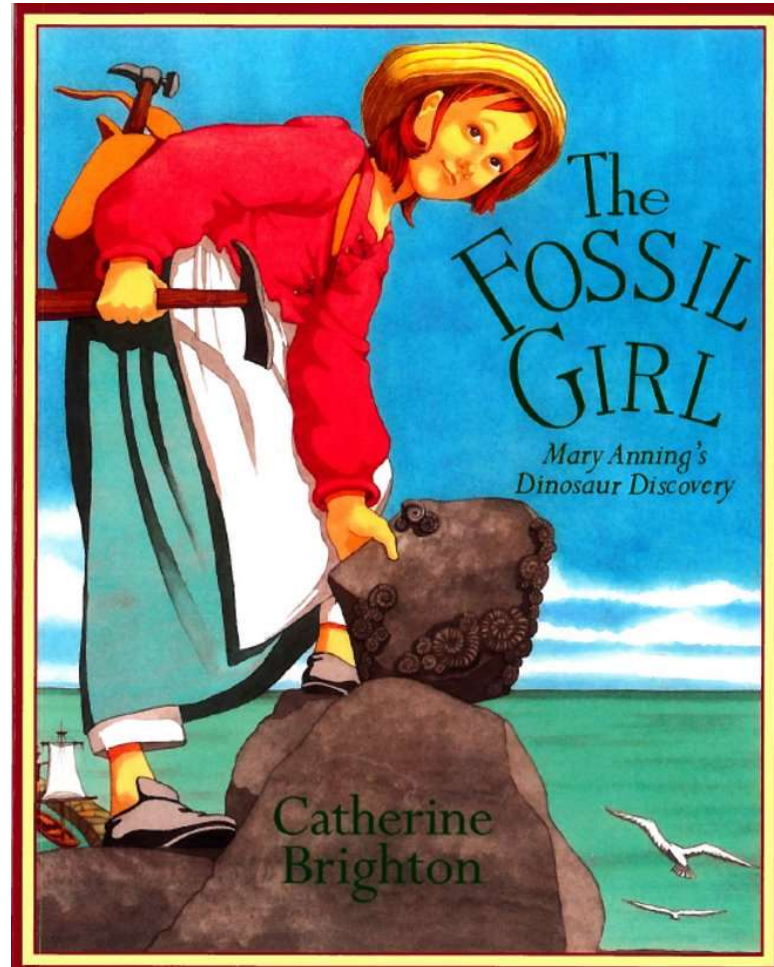
## Possible outcomes:

- **Debate about the validity of « art fixing ».**
- **Debate about whether or not the « male gaze » exists.**
- **Research project - create a list of recommended graphic novels that avoid this problem.**
- **Write to an author/illustrator of an image they find problematic, explaining the problem and trying to persuade them to change it.**
- **Design a social media awareness-raising campaign about body image issues.**

# Connecting to the world outside our learners' experiences

## Promoting empathy through drama

Drama allows learners to step into the shoes of the characters and is more effective and promoting empathy than reading alone.





When the tower was ready, Mary climbed up the rickety ladder. The platform swayed under her. It was a long, long way down.



Then she turned to face the creature.





---

## FREEZE FRAMES

This activity is a variant of the classic activity “Imaginarium” and can be used to start to build or block a full story.

- T groups learners into three or four groups and gives each group a point in the story.
- T sets up activity where learners must freeze frame the moment described as it takes place in the script and ICQs.
- Each group brainstorms how to freeze frame their moment for the others.
- When all groups are ready, they sit in ‘audience’ formation.
- T calls each group up one by one to present their freeze frame.
- As each group is nominated by the T, it creates its tableau for the other Ls.
- Ls then put tableaux in story order.

---

## SPOTLIGHT

This is a natural extension of Freeze Frames.

- Once you have elicited the correct order of tableaux in Freeze Frame, ask the group whose tableau is first to come up and recreate it.
- Ask each person in the freeze frame to think of a line they might say in this situation (created or taken from the graphic novel directly), or an action they could take (to allow for learners with less language).
- When spotlighted by the T (stand with hand over head), L delivers their line.
- Audience Ls decide the order of lines.
- Ls then deliver lines in order (possible repeat a few times to increase pace)
- It may be beneficial to repeat this a few times to increase pace and highlight that knowing your own line is not enough – you need to know the one before yours in order to know when to speak.

---

## Recommended Reading/Watching/Websites

Using Graphic Novels in the English Language Arts Classroom - William Boerman-Cornell & Jung Kim

The Graphic Novel Classroom: Powerful Teaching and Learning with Images - Maureen Bakis

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art - Scott McCloud

Adventures in Graphica: Using Comics and Graphic Novels to Teach Comprehension - Terry Thompson (<https://www.stenhouse.com/sites/default/files/public/legacy/pdfs/thompson.pdf>)

Scott McCloud's TED Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXYckRgsdjl>

<https://www.makebeliefscomix.com/printables/>

<https://blogs.slj.com/goodcomicsforkids/>

<http://teachingcomics.org/>