

Some Genre Conventions

Do you want to be a great writer or composer? If so, you need to know something about the genre you're composing in; you need to know its basic qualities and agreed-upon conventions, and you need to be familiar with some examples. As Scott McCloud shows in his book *Understanding Comics*, writers and artists who work on comics use visual images and text to convey ideas, balloons to indicate dialogue, and simple but dynamic drawings and design to hold the reader's attention. Let's say you want to tell a story and convey it graphically. You don't need to be McCloud or Picasso or Art Spiegelman, but you do need to understand how artists, graphic novelists, and memoirists work with visuals and text to tell stories. It helps to have some familiarity with the genre (read a few examples!) and perhaps have one example in mind as a model. Or let's say you want to draw an annotated map of your neighborhood. It would help to know some of the established conventions of mapmakers, such as using color to represent specific geography, or symbols to identify features or places. If you're using a blog or social media to share your thoughts on specific news items, you will have more authority when you link directly to the material you're responding to. Hyperlinking is a convention of the blog genre.



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Scott McCloud, from his book *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*.