

How to Read
How to Understand Israel in 60 Days or Less
by Sarah Glidden

By David Beard

(With Material from the Buffalo Public Library on Page 1)

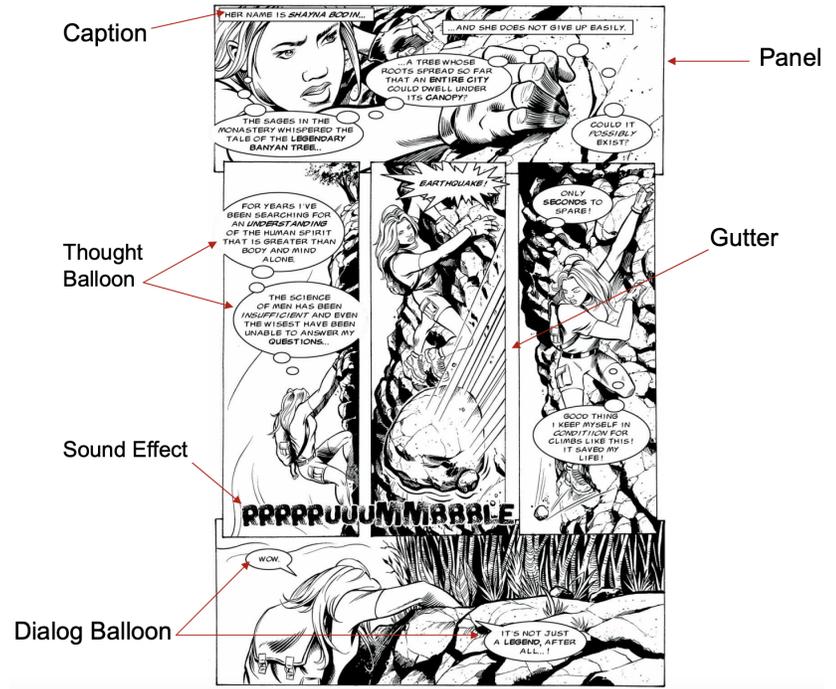
Hello, Alumni Book Club,

Comics are fun to read, but they can be a little disorienting if it has been a while since you last read one. On this page, I borrowed some hints from the Buffalo Public Library below to create a guide for us. Then, I created a guide just for us.

Anatomy of a Comic Page

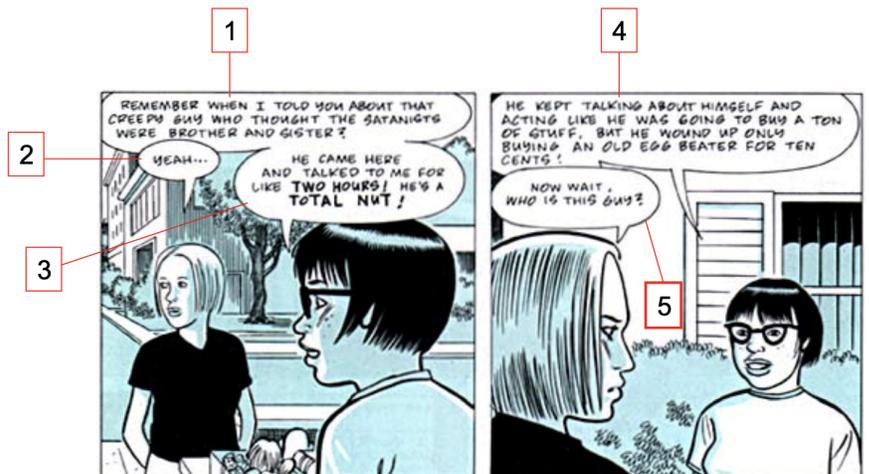
The *Pages of a Comic Book* are built from a number of different building blocks:

- **Panels**-squares or rectangles that contain a single scene
- **Gutters**-the space between panels
- **Dialogue Balloons**-the typical round shapes that contain communication between/among characters
- **Thought Balloons**-the typically cloudlike shapes that contain a character's thoughts
- **Captions**-the typically boxy shapes that contain information about a scene or character
- **Sound Effects**-the typographically exciting works that serve as visual sound clues i.e.. Wonk! Pow!



The panels are read from left to right. The balloons within the panels are read from left to right, top to bottom. So, the numbering added to the panels below will help you see the sequence.

Now, on the next pages, I want to do some close reading of what you will see in Glidden's book – close reading that will help you see the art of the book that you otherwise might miss.



Color draws our attention

Glidden is using watercolors, and you might imagine that that gives the book a washed-out appearance. And maybe it does, generally, but when she uses color to draw our attention (to a person, to a landscape), the color really pops. Our attention is drawn.

As you read, keep your eyes on the ways that color draws your attention to one part of a picture or another.



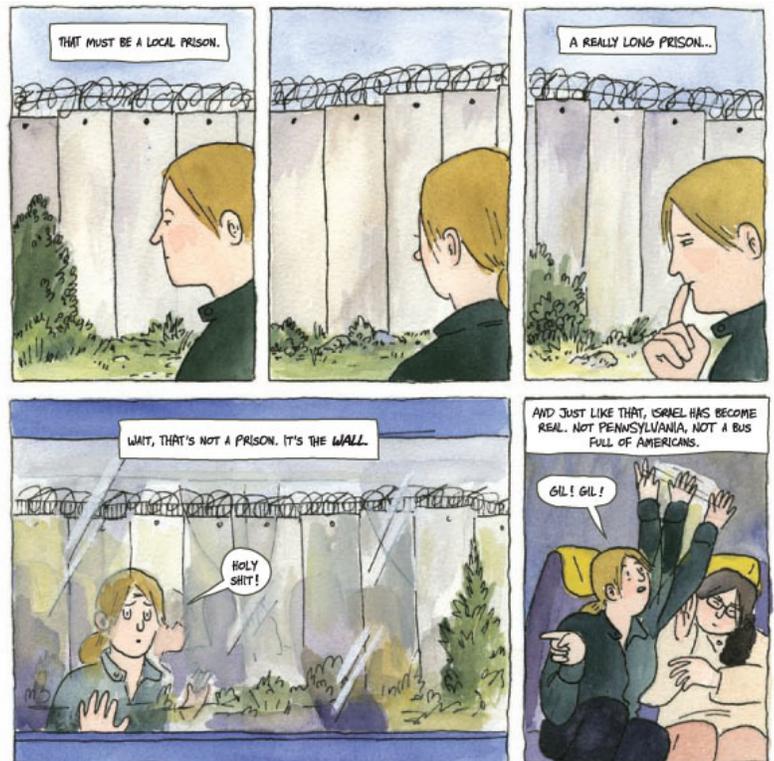
Sarah Glidden



Comics and the passing of time.

The “gutter” between panels is one of the ways that a comic shows the passing of time.

So, in the sequence to the right, as Sarah is driven past a wall, we see the wall repeating in each of three panels. This makes us think that a lot of time is passing, monotonous time, and for all that time, she is still passing the wall. So it must be a really long wall..



Comics and the Internal Life of Characters

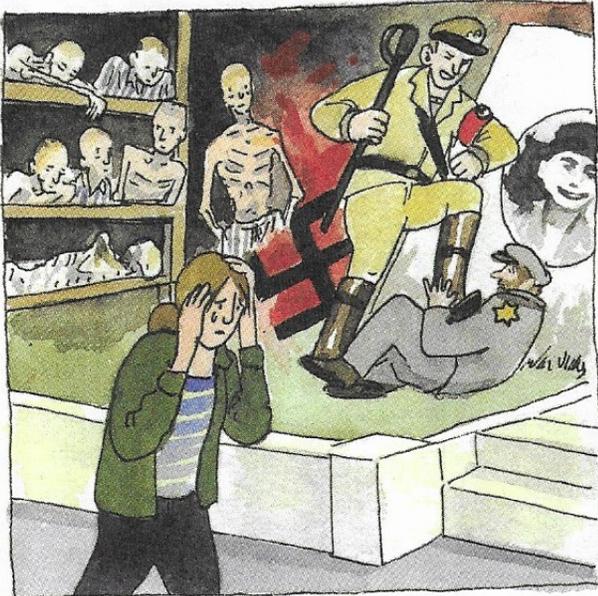
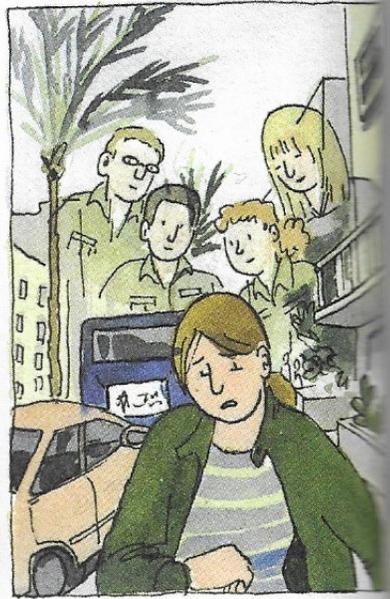
Glidden is very, very good at using art to depict the internal monologues inside Sarah's mind as she tours Israel.

Sometimes, she drifts into an entire fantasy of a mock trial, where the different opinions inside her can debate (as in the panels to the right).

Sometimes, she has momentary second thoughts, as she has a discussion with a painting (as in the panels below).

And sometimes, the art uses a montage or collage effect to show a jumble of conflicting ideas in her mind at once (next page).

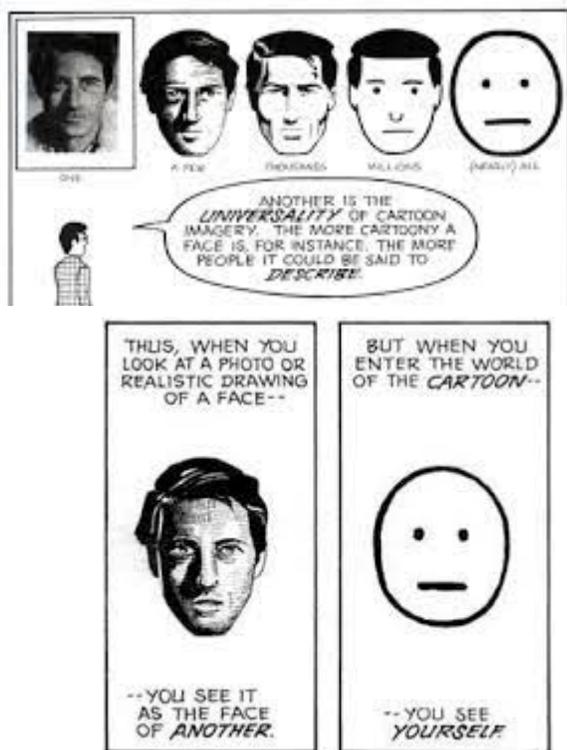




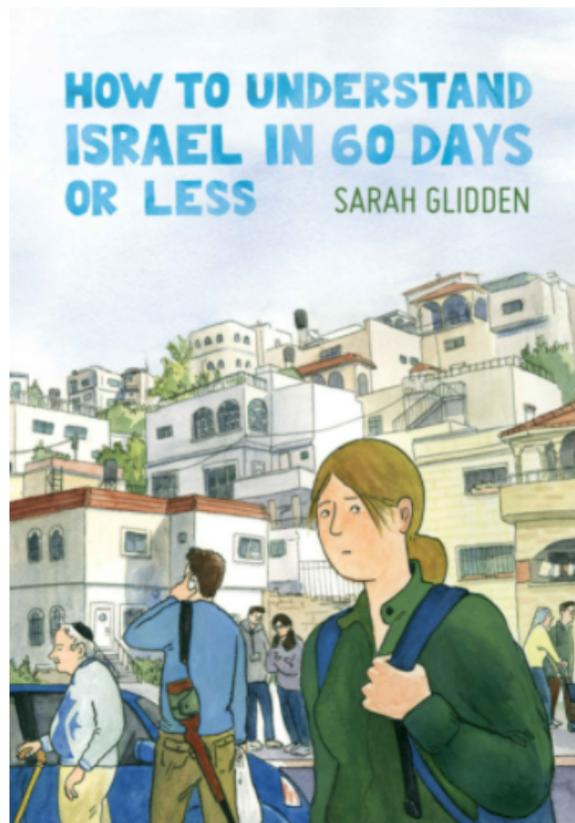
Comics and Identification

Finally, though, the most magical moment of comics is the way we come to identify with the characters.

Comics scholar Scott McCloud says that the more abstract or schematized a face is, in a comic representation, the more likely we are to identify with the character. As he notes...



In choosing to tell this story as a comic, Glidden helps us all see ourselves in her story.



When we get together to talk in December, we will talk about several things.

We will talk...

1. About the art of the comic as a means for telling a story.
2. About this particular story, and how it can help us understand Israel (and Gaza, and the West Bank, and US foreign policy, maybe).
3. About the ways that we can see ourselves in Sarah's story. (*How would we feel, if we went abroad and experienced the things she experienced?*)

As we open up the discussion, I hope we can talk about experiences we have had when we traveled and learned something about new places, about our home, and about ourselves, just like Sarah did.



Sincerely,
David Beard
Professor of Rhetoric
Department of English, Linguistics, and Writing Studies
And Lifelong Lover of Comics