



LESSON CONTENT TEMPLATE

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1. Comic Course

Topic 1_____ Lesson _3

Name: Noises and words

Obectives

In this lesson, we will learn and understand the right relationship between text and images in the media, their complementarity and functionality.

The balloon symbol of chatter

Born long before but adopted and codified in comics, the balloon has become a universal symbol.

An ancient invention

The text-image association is very old, but it was not until the 15th century that the first ancestor of the balloon appeared, the 'phylactery'. Scrolls unrolled in the air that start from the characters' mouths to report direct speech.

An example can be found in Death before God, a miniature by the Master of the Hours of Rohan. A century later, satirical cartoonists such as James Gillray (1756-1815) or other authors such as Rodolphe Töpffer (1799-1846) made extensive use of phylactery.

Strangely enough, the first comic strip character, The Yellow Kid (1895), by R. F. Outcault, did not initially use balloons. After a year the use of balloons became the rule, and with the beginning of the wide spread of comics in newspapers.

In comics

The term balloon describes the graphic sign conventionally used in comics to indicate the words spoken or thought by a character. It consists of a rounded or rectangular body, and the pipette, the sign that from the body of the balloon goes to indicate the mouth or more generally the sound source.

As in theatre or cinema, the dialogue between the characters becomes the main way, together with the actions, on which the story flows. Realistic or didactic, brief or verbose, a balloon influences the narrative style of the story.

As graphic elements, it should not be forgotten that balloons must maintain a harmonious relationship. Words contribute to the overall visual impact.

A universal conversation symbol (chat)

Outside of comics, this symbol has become synonymous with 'chat' and there is no smartphone app that does not use the balloon in its logo to refer to direct and informal communication.

Before balloons, the text lived in the caption, a rectangular container the same size as the panel. Basically the voice of a narrator, which for decades was also associated with balloons, resulting incredibly verbose.

This is because for too long comics have suffered from a kind of 'inferiority complex' compared to fiction.



Form and content: different balloons, different functions

In the economy of the media no element can be present without performing a function.

List of balloon forms

The text in balloons follows the grammatical rules of the culture, but the graphic component also helps to communicate the thoughts, whispers, screams or shrieks of electronic devices.

Balloons are also constantly evolving, for example the dotted border may be replaced by a smaller font; as if a whispered word took up less sound space in the ether. In other cases the thought balloon becomes a caption, thus making the thinking character the narrator of his own story. And an electronic device, or a telephone, brings back a decidedly different and not necessarily edgy sound.

Be careful where you place them

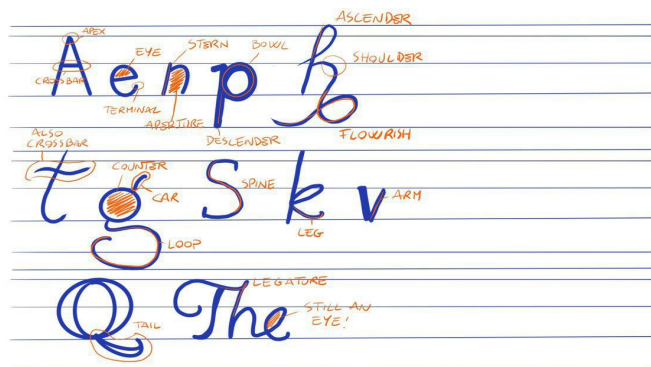
The form can be revisited, but the order is fundamental, because obviously the balloons are not placed at random. Generally they are all placed at the top, stopping at the edge of the frame, but it is not forbidden for them to wander around inside the panel. For the sake of order there are no more than three per panel, but if space permits, without running the risk of boring the reader, there can be more. Several balloons can be linked together.

Lettering

The art of lettering in comics is of great importance not only in the context of balloons but more generally for titles and homomatopoeia. Within balloons, the letters represent the tone of the character's voice, his or her timbre, the intonation. For decades the dialogues in balloons have been handwritten and often still today some authors, especially in the graphic novel territory, use handwritten dialogues in order to maintain an overall harmony. Also the words and the spelling of the words must be organic with the drawing.

Nowadays, when digital fonts are used, natural lettering is preferred, and in some cases authors digitise their own handwriting in order not to lose visual harmony. We all know the 'comic sans', which was inspired by the handwriting of comic book writers. Generally, people have always preferred to write in capital letters in balloons because they are clearer and easier to organise in space, but it is not forbidden to use cursive to suggest a more intimate tone of voice.

More generally, it is not forbidden to experiment here as well, especially if you intend the lettering as the colour of the character's voice. An android does not speak with the same tone of voice as a human, and a scary demon certainly does not have a conventional voice.



Onomatopoeia and other drawn symbols

Comics are media for the eyes, but what they don't have they suggest very well.

To complete the perception of the world

Comics physically lack sound, yet when reading in the balloons everyone "hears" the voice of the characters. The sound stimulus somehow exists as well as the other senses. The sense of smell is stimulated by representing smells with sinuous lines that give the idea of something moving in the atmosphere.

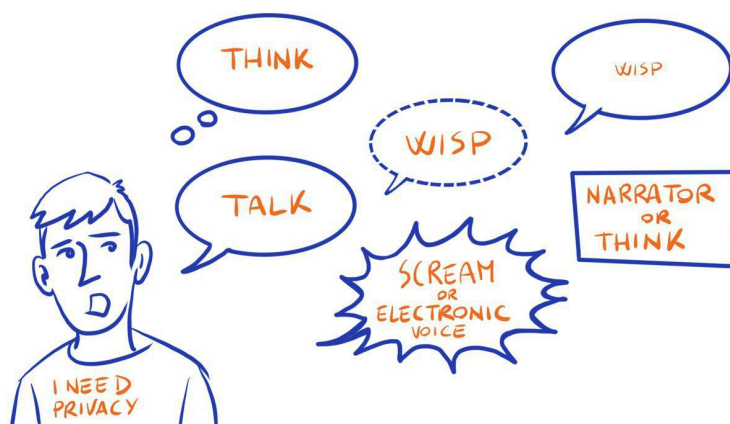
Taste is evoked through the expressions of the characters, or through the sounds made when eating, such as a good bite or the broth sucked from the spoon. And touch, especially in super hero comics, is continually evoked; just think of the thunderous sound of fists.

Onomatopoeia, invariable words or groups of words that reproduce or evoke a particular sound, such as the cry of an animal or the noise produced by an object or an action.

What effect do they have?

Onomatopoeia is somewhere between lettering and decorative, functional and evocative. They are letters, but they are also drawings. And according to the grammar of the various countries of origin, they are different. So if a rooster in English goes: Cockadoodledoo; while in France: cocoricò.

While some noises such as the "BANG" of a gun being fired are international. And because of their essentially symbolic nature, they are a real code that is easy for the comic reader to understand, unlike nationality.



Other symbols

The symbols of kinetic movement are also a code. Lines and fragmentations of the figure that give the sense of movement, attempting the miracle of animating the inanimate. But this is not the end of the graphic inventions of comics, which often border on the metaphysical.

How many times have we seen an idea become reality by lighting up next to a character's head. Or how many times have eyes become hearts. Manga has a number of very clear symbols that have become international: from embarrassment to anger, from lust to sadness.

The emoticons we use in chats are indebted to the same system of communication, halfway between the synthetic and the symbolic, the metaphysical and the humorous.

Conclusions

The symbols of kinetic movement are also a code. Lines and fragmentations of the figure give sense of movement, animating the inanimate. But this is not the end of the graphic inventions of comics, which often border on the metaphysical.