



LIFE·PAC®

# Art

Student Book

Unit 7



Alpha Omega Publications®

**ART I: UNIT SEVEN**  
**COMICS**  
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# COMICS

Comics is one of the most popular, yet misunderstood art forms in history. It is found in a variety of cultures, yet few really know how it was created, how it works or where it was developed. Cartooning techniques (the basis of

comics) are used in advertising, illustrations and animation. Comics is such an influential form that it's characters are seen on TV, movies, books, plays, song and as toys.

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**In the space provided below**, write what you think you will learn from this Unit, what you would like to learn, and why you are interested in this topic.

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## OBJECTIVES

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this Unit.

When you have finished this Unit, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of comics' history.
2. Draw cartoon characters.
3. List the steps of comic production.
4. Draw a comic strip or short story.

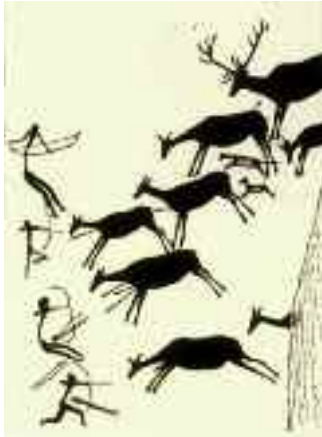
Our use of the comic strips reprinted in this Unit is not an endorsement of their content or world view. They are used solely to illustrate cartooning techniques utilized by popular artists.

**Note:** All vocabulary words in this Unit appear in **boldface** the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

## I. HISTORY

The comic strip we know today is only about 100 years old, but the art of **comics** themselves (sequential, juxtaposed images) has a rich and far-reaching history.

Comics began as ancient cave drawings which apparently told stories of a specific tribe. Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs were illustrations in sequence used to tell the history of a nation. Greek vases utilized comics in recounting myths. Second-



CAVE DRAWINGS



A GREEK VASE

© Michael Holford

century text illuminations along with stained glass images sequentially told stories from the Bible. The *Bayeux Tapestry* (230' long, 20" tall) chronologically depicted the Norman conquest of England in A.D. 1066. Mexican Codex gathered by



Giraudon/Bridgeman Art Library

A PORTION OF *THE BAYEUX TAPESTRY*

the Spanish invaders of the 1500s are sequential images telling stories of the Aztec Empire.

Artists such as William Hogarth and Rodolphe Topffer advanced the then-primitive form by adding *text* as a part of the story. These early comics were so popular that new copyright laws were created to protect them.

As print media flourished, photography had not yet been invented, so cartoons were used to illustrate (and lampoon) important events and figures. The most famous political cartoonist in



Graphic Arts Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University.

A SINGLE PANEL FROM *THE TIMES* BY WILLIAM HOGARTH (1697-1764).



Graphic Arts Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University.

A POLITICAL CARTOON BY THOMAS NAST (1840-1902).

history, Thomas Nast, and others helped initiate the modern form of the political cartoon. Benjamin Franklin himself pioneered the use of word balloons for editorial cartoons in his *Gazette*.

With the publication on February 16, 1896, of Richard Fulton Outcault's *The Yellow Kid*, publishers began experimenting with cartoons for entertainment. Over time, many newspapers began to run whole pages of nothing but comics. The **genres** expanded to carry comedic, dramatic and adventure strips in addition to the then-common social commentary.

Quality and variety within the form boomed in the newspapers, as did their popularity, which kept some from going out of business. To cash in on their popularity, pamphlets containing compilations of old strips were sold, thus inventing the comic book.



**OUTCAULT'S  
YELLOW KID**



**ACTION COMICS #1,  
SUPERMAN'S  
FIRST APPEARANCE**



**A 1950s HORROR  
COMIC**



**THE COMICS CODE SEAL**

However, the demand for new material was overwhelming, so the all-new material comic book was developed.

When *Superman*, created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, first appeared (*Action Comics #1*), he was a sensation, inspiring a multitude of other super heroes. Pushed by exceptional artists like Will Eisner (*The Spirit*) and Jack Cole (*Plastic Man*), the art form refined itself, pushing new aesthetic boundaries.

ushered in a renaissance for superhero comics. This effect is still felt today, for the majority (though not all) of comic books currently published are fantasy or science fiction adventures. However, newspaper comics largely escaped the superhero boom and were instead dominated by comedy (humor) strips. (examples throughout this Unit) As a result of being dominated by these two genres, comics generally have little respect as a legitimate art.

Comics gained some measure of legitimacy with the release of the Pulitzer prize-winning *MAUS* (1986) and *MAUS II* (1991) by Art Spiegelman which tells the autobiographical story of a son recounting the experiences of his holocaust-surviving father.



**WILL EISNER'S  
SPIRIT**



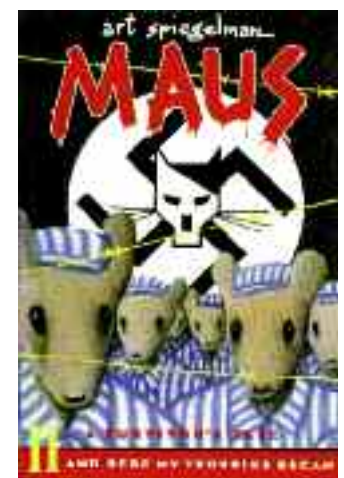
**JACK COLE'S  
PLASTIC MAN**

The abundance of graphic horror magazines published in the 1950s provoked the industry to censor itself. Under the threat of congressional censorship, publishers banded together to found the Comics Code Authority which set guidelines for content. With these new rules, overall quality and innovation suffered.

Stan Lee and Jack Kirby released the first issue of the *Fantastic Four* in November 1961, which



**FANTASTIC FOUR #1**



**MAUS II**

Animation, the close relative of comics (it uses cartooning techniques, but its images are not juxtaposed) has flourished. Almost two-thirds of

TV commercials involve some sort of animation. Animated television shows are multiplying exponentially and at the time of writing, five major

motion picture companies produce animated films. Today, animation has a larger audience and, perhaps, more respect than comics.



Review the material in this section in preparation for the Self Test. The Self Test will check your mastery of this particular section. The items missed on this Self Test will indicate specific areas where restudy is needed for mastery.

### SELF TEST 1

Answer these questions (each response 5 points).

1.01 Define comics.

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1.02 Which comic artists were responsible for initiating new copyright laws?

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1.03 Who is history's most famous political cartoonist?

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1.04 What cartoon began newspaper's development of entertainment comics? Who drew it?

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1.05 Who created *Superman*?

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1.06 What was the alliance formed in the 1950s to censor content?

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1.07 What comic began the superhero renaissance of the 1960s? Who were the creators?

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1.08 What comic won the Pulitzer Prize, finally giving the form some legitimacy? Who drew it?

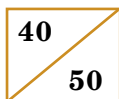
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1.09 What genre dominates comic books?

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1.10 What genre dominates comic strips?

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Score \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Check \_\_\_\_\_

Initial \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_