

Seminar

Name: _____

Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*

Chapter 1: Defining Comics

1. What is McCloud's definition of comics?

Chapter 2: The Vocabulary of Comics

2. McCloud concludes that "When you look at a photo or realistic drawing of a face—you see it as the face of another. But when you enter the world of the cartoon—you see yourself" (36, panel 3-4). What does this mean in terms of the way comics works? How is this notion important in understanding comics?

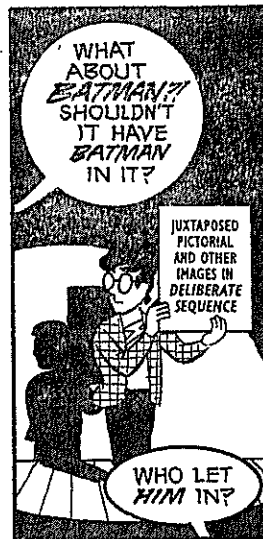
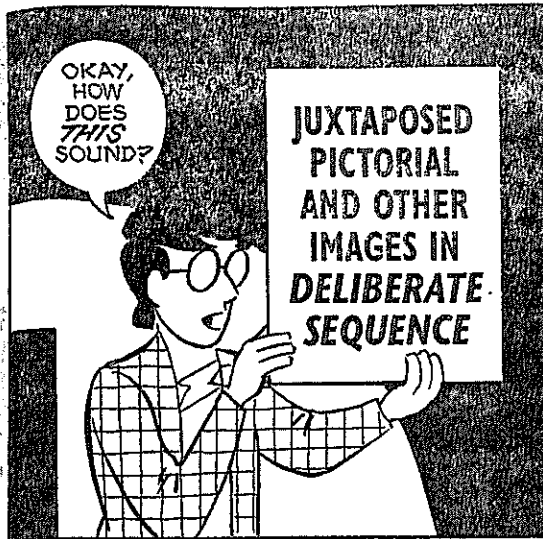
Chapter 3: Blood in the Gutter

3. What is a panel?

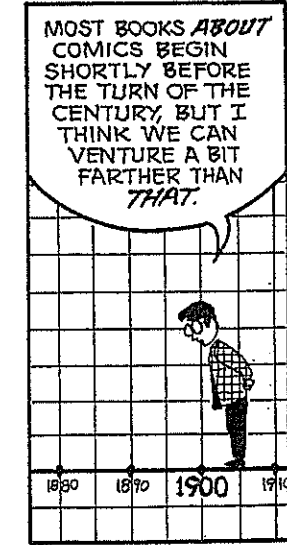
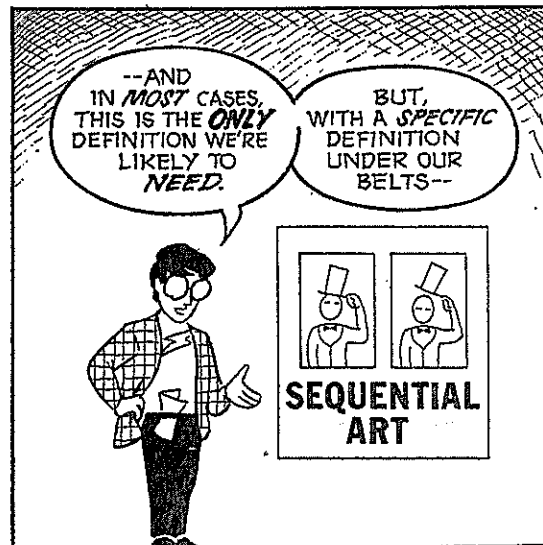
4. What is "closure"? Explain this concept in your own words. (66-68)

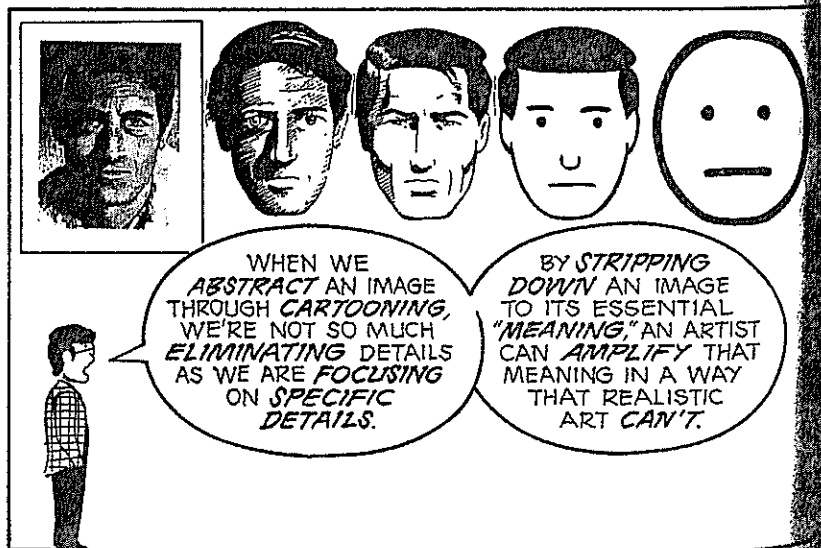
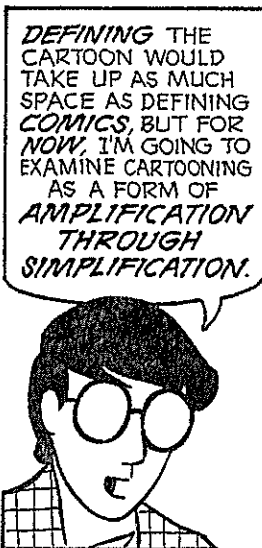
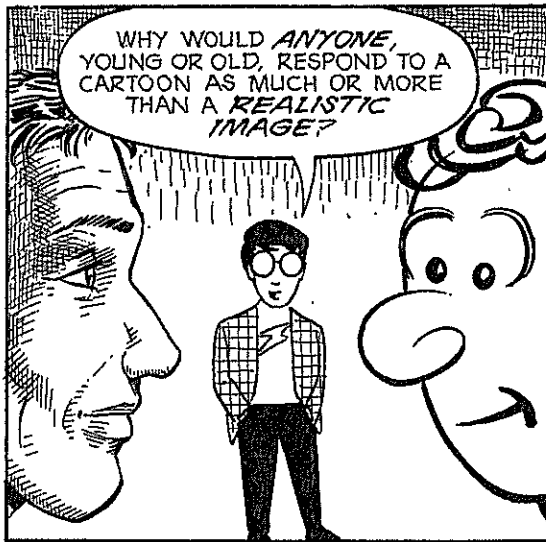
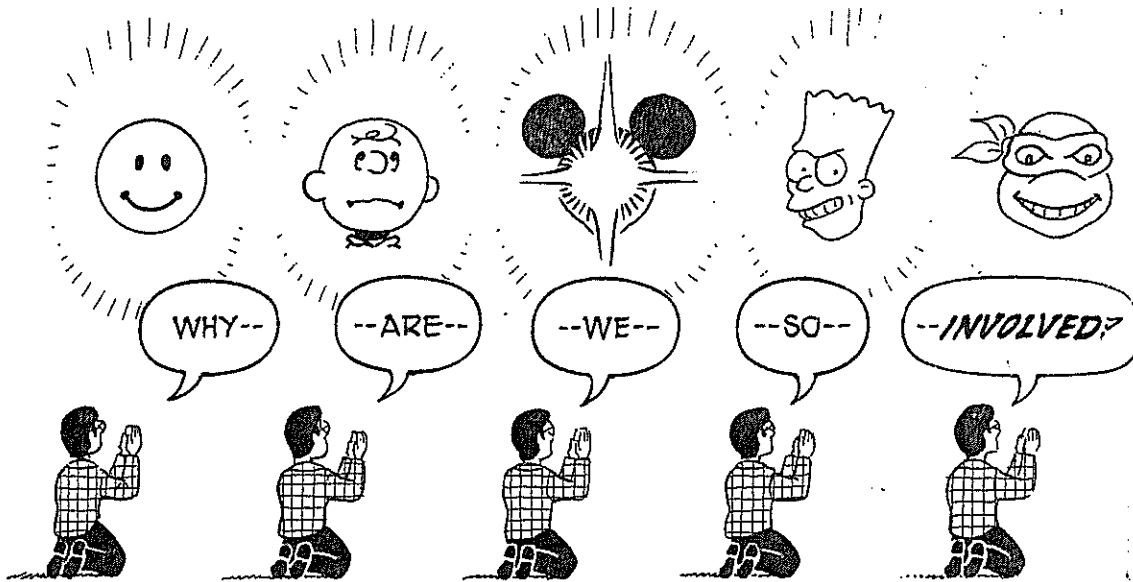
- *Draw* 1 examples of closure.

5. What is the "gutter" and what happens in the "gutter"?



com-ics (kom'iks)n. plural in form, used with a singular verb. **1.** Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer. **2.** Superheroes in tight, colorful costumes, fighting deviously villainous who want to conquer the world, in violent, sensational, often morning action sequences. **3.** Pure, badly drawn, nice and colorful, happy, and to be enjoyed by all ages. **4.** Characters of our nation's youth, coming from the past.







ONE



A FEW



THOUSANDS



MILLIONS

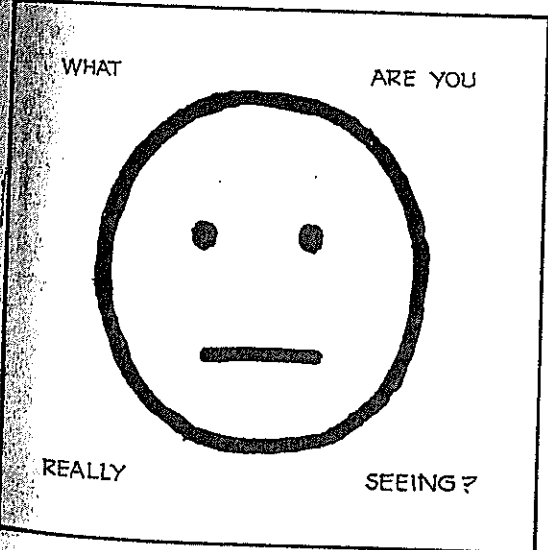
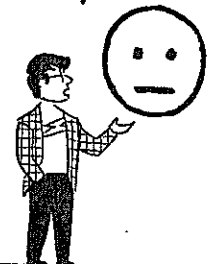


(NEARLY) ALL

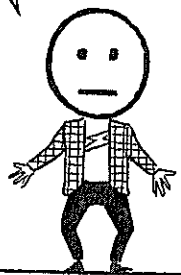
ANOTHER IS THE **UNIVERSALITY** OF CARTOON IMAGERY. THE MORE CARTOONY A FACE IS, FOR INSTANCE, THE MORE PEOPLE IT COULD BE SAID TO **DESCRIBE**.



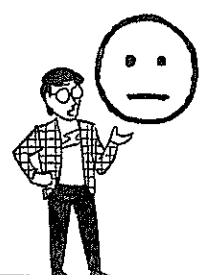
BUT I BELIEVE THERE'S SOMETHING **MORE** AT WORK IN OUR MINDS WHEN WE VIEW A CARTOON--ESPECIALLY OF A HUMAN FACE-- WHICH WARRANTS **FURTHER INVESTIGATION**.



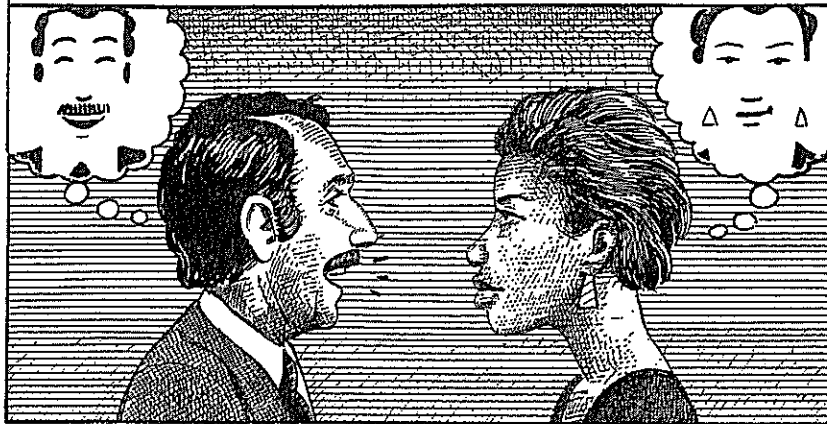
THE FACT THAT YOUR MIND IS **CAPABLE** OF TAKING A **CIRCLE, TWO DOTS** AND A **LINE** AND TURNING THEM INTO A **FACE** IS NOTHING SHORT OF **INCREDIBLE!**



BUT STILL **MORE INCREDIBLE** IS THE FACT THAT YOU CANNOT **AVOID** SEEING A FACE HERE. YOUR MIND WON'T **LET** YOU!



EACH ONE *ALSO* SUSTAINS A CONSTANT AWARENESS OF HIS OR HER *OWN* FACE, BUT *THIS* MIND-PICTURE IS NOT NEARLY SO VIVID; JUST A SKETCHY ARRANGEMENT... A SENSE OF SHAPE... A SENSE OF *GENERAL PLACEMENT*.



SOMETHING AS *SIMPLE* AND AS *BASIC*--



--AS A *CARTOON*.

THIS, WHEN YOU LOOK AT A PHOTO OR REALISTIC DRAWING OF A FACE--



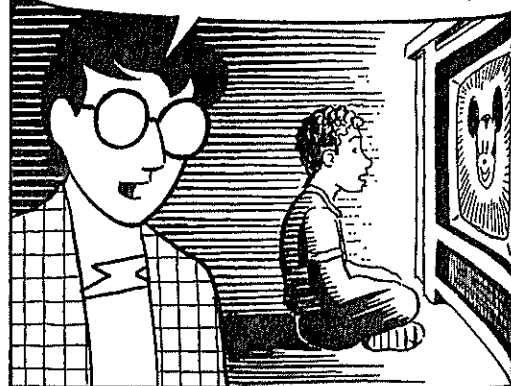
--YOU SEE IT AS THE FACE OF *ANOTHER*.

BUT WHEN YOU ENTER THE WORLD OF THE *CARTOON*--

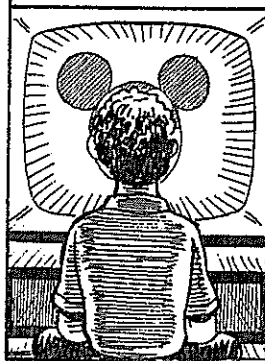


--YOU SEE *YOURSELF*.

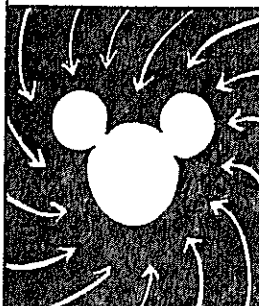
I BELIEVE THIS IS THE *PRIMARY CAUSE* OF OUR CHILDHOOD FASCINATION WITH *CARTOONS*, THOUGH OTHER FACTORS SUCH AS *UNIVERSAL IDENTIFICATION, SIMPLICITY* AND THE *CHILDLIKE FEATURES* OF MANY *CARTOON* CHARACTERS ALSO PLAY A PART.



THE *CARTOON* IS A *VACUUM* INTO WHICH OUR *IDENTITY* AND *AWARENESS* ARE *PULLED*...



...AN *EMPTY SHELL* THAT WE INHABIT WHICH *ENABLES* US TO TRAVEL IN *ANOTHER REALM*.



WE DON'T JUST *OBSERVE* THE *CARTOON*, WE *BECOME* IT!

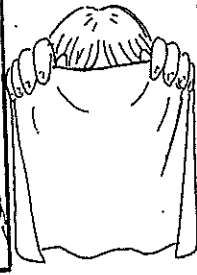
THAT'S WHY I DECIDED TO *DRAW* MYSELF IN SUCH A *SIMPLE STYLE*.



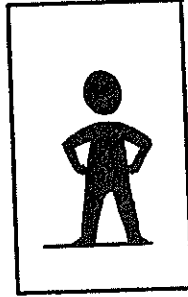
WOULD YOU HAVE *LISTENED* TO ME IF I LOOKED LIKE *THIS*??



NOTHING IS SEEN BETWEEN THE TWO PANELS, BUT EXPERIENCE TELLS YOU SOMETHING MUST BE THERE!



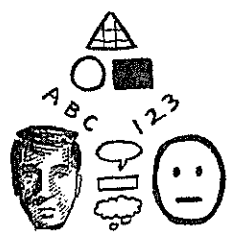
COMICS PANELS **FRACTURE** BOTH **TIME** AND **SPACE**, OFFERING A **JAGGED, STACCATO RHYTHM** OF **UNCONNECTED MOMENTS**.



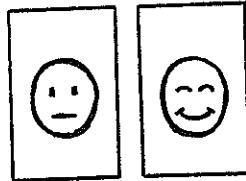
BUT CLOSURE ALLOWS US TO **CONNECT** THESE MOMENTS AND **MENTALLY CONSTRUCT** A **CONTINUOUS, UNIFIED REALITY**.

IF **VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY** IS THE **VOCABULARY** OF COMICS, **CLOSURE** IS ITS **GRAMMAR**.

AND SINCE OUR **DEFINITION** OF COMICS HINGES ON THE **ARRANGEMENT** OF ELEMENTS--



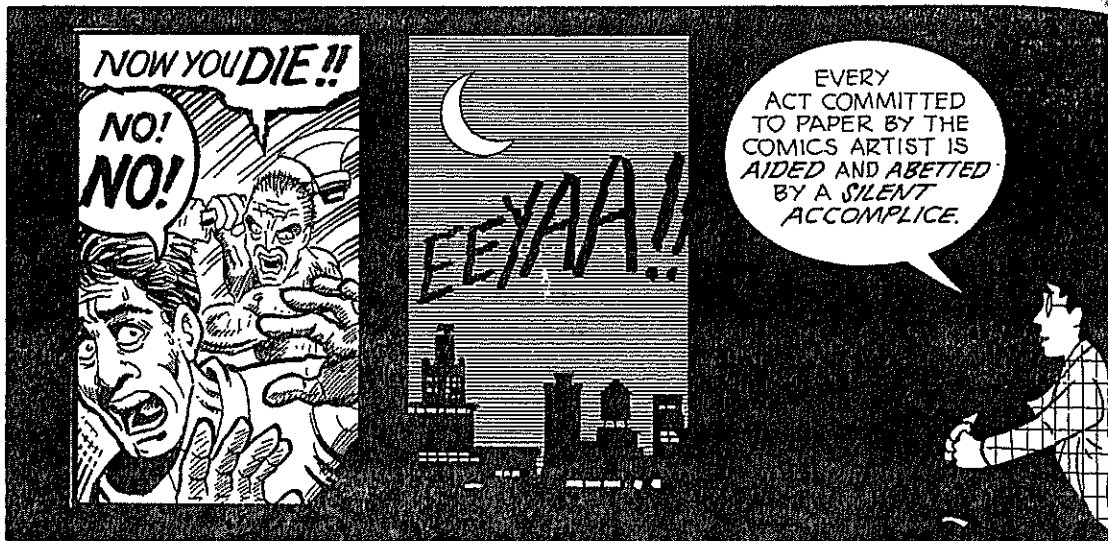
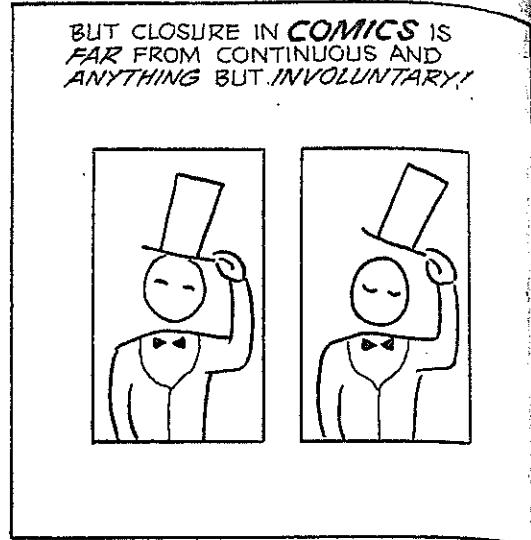
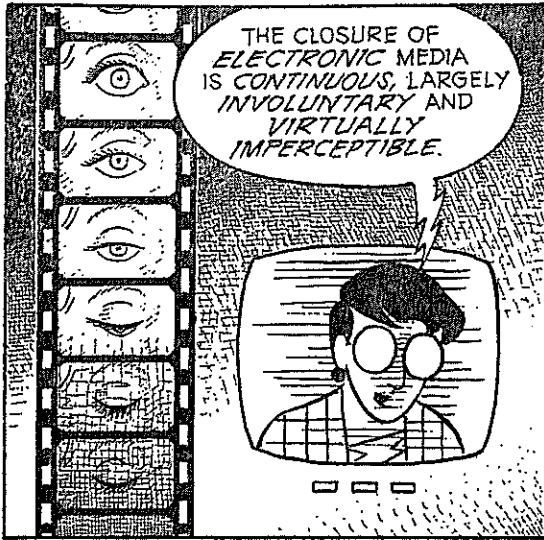
ICONOGRAPHY



CLOSURE

-- THEN, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, **COMICS IS CLOSURE!**



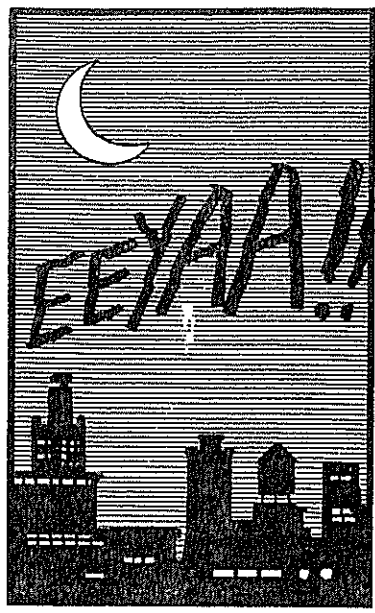


I MAY HAVE DRAWN AN AXE BEING RAISED IN THIS EXAMPLE, BUT I'M NOT THE ONE WHO LET IT DROP OR DECIDED HOW HARD THE BLOW, OR WHO SCREAMED, OR WHY.

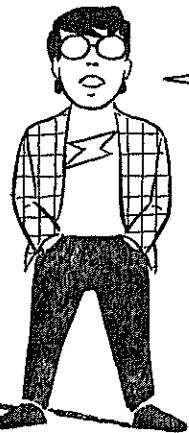


THAT, DEAR READER, WAS YOUR SPECIAL CRIME, EACH OF YOU COMMITTING IT IN YOUR OWN STYLE.





Gutter



SEE THAT SPACE *BETWEEN* THE PANELS? THAT'S WHAT COMICS AFICIONADOS HAVE NAMED "THE GUTTER!"

AND DESPITE ITS *UNCEREMONIOUS TITLE*, THE GUTTER PLAYS HOST TO MUCH OF THE *MAGIC* AND *MYSTERY* THAT ARE AT THE VERY *HEART OF COMICS!*

