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PIM Pedagogy: Toward a Loosely Unified Model for Teaching and Studying Comics and Graphic Novels

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PIM Pedagogy: Toward a Loosely Unified Model for Teaching and Studying Comics and Graphic Novels

Regarding the study of comics and graphic novels in secondary- and higher education settings, while some resistance to coupling the schema of “comics” with “education” may persist, stakeholders have made enough progress such that the medium is recognized – albeit sometimes ignored – as an important element across a range of fields and courses in secondary- and post-secondary education. Herein, I offer standards and techniques for constructing comics-centric classes and teaching comics. While others focus on teaching comics based in tenets of design, popular culture, linguistics, critical theory and sundry other lenses, I present foundational knowledge based first in important precepts of education studies and theory.

I address how knowledge and integration of key concepts from education studies facilitates organizing comics courses and helps instructors teach them. Teachers and students alike may find this essay helps them read, study, and communicate understandings about comics texts. Among key, established pedagogical constructs examined are backward design, Bloom’s taxonomy, the Marzano/Kendell scale, scaffolding, constructivism, and gradual release. Also, I introduce “PIM pedagogy,” a set of strategies which facilitate instructors’ and students’ transmediated understanding of the comics form via page/panel analysis, imagetext, and multimodality.

Important to note is while it seems an increasing number of teachers and professors are teaching comics and seeking to expose the “new” format to “new” audiences, our contemporaneity represents the latest wave of educators, publishers, and scholars seeking to tap into comics’ pedagogical potentials. Tilley points to Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, M.C. Gaines, and Josette Frank as among those connected to the comics industry in the 1940s who attempted to tie the medium to literacy and education. Tilley informs that National Comics’ “perseverance in guiding young people’s reading through book lists and other reading promotion features moved comic books, at least for a portion of their early history, from a format solely intended for amusement and recreation to one that promoted young people’s literary and cultural development” (“Super” 253) and details a “Superman Good Reading Project” in which that hero would recommend novels to kids.

As well, Tilley illuminates efforts to integrate comics into the English Language Arts curriculum, or to help teachers see comics as important to students’ development, at least, stemming from the mid-1930s. “Two documents [commissioned through the National Council of Teachers of English] — *An Experience Curriculum in English* ([W.W.] Hatfield, 1935) and *The English Language Arts* (Smith, 1952)— helped to establish the vision for [a] comprehensive and unifying [English Language Arts] curriculum,” she informs (“Using Comics” 13). “In Hatfield’s *Experience Curriculum* (1935), comics are treated in the recommended activities for literature instruction in the primary grades,” Tilley asserts (14), and “The place of comics in Smith’s *The English Language Arts* (1952) is somewhat more prominent” (14). Those interested in filling in gaps between the early history of comics and education and today should see more of Tilley as well as my entry on “Comics” in the *Encyclopedia of Adolescence*, but suffice it to say comics’ numerous pedagogical applications have been on the minds of stakeholders for decades, essentially since the birth of the American comic book.

The preceding paragraphs remind that comics-and-education connection-making isn’t new, per se, but, undeniably, a renaissance and proliferation of attention to comics in education exists. Now, on

to the task of explicating specific principles from education studies which can assist those seeking to maximize settings in which comics are taught, with the ultimate goal of leading to a proposed loosely unified model for teaching and reading comics by this essay's conclusion.

Backward design is among the most important constructs to consider when crafting any curriculum, but given the variance of approaches and agendas inherent in teaching comics – so numerous some contend there can be no such construct as “comic studies” as a discipline (See C. Hatfield's “Indiscipline, or the Condition of Comics Studies”) – employing backward design can help an educator focus a course. Popularized among teacher educators by Wiggins and McTighe in *Understanding by Design* and a bit of a revolution across teaching fields and levels, backward design is a three-pronged approach to developing curriculum:

1. Identify desired results.
2. Determine assessment evidence.
3. Plan learning experiences and instruction.

Essentially, one plans the course by starting where one wants to end, or wants the students to end, thinking about what learning outcomes and measures and activities in which one desires students to engage, show proficiency, or produce by the course's completion. Articulating goals and objectives throughout the backward design process (along with publishing the final articulation on the syllabus and discussing them in class early on), especially between steps 1 and 2, helps tighten curricula for comics courses for which it can be notoriously difficult to plan given myriad texts, scopes and sequences.

To that end, I use (and teach my pre-service teachers to use) specific language when stating my goals or objectives. I should note some in education see goals as broad articulations and objectives as specifics toward meeting the goal. Others may claim goals are for students while objectives are for teachers who must also consider standards – be they Common Core State Standards or better ones -- in their instruction, or vice versa, but I tend to see the words as synonymous for “what we'll accomplish in this course.” I construct my goals via the formula “Students will _X_ via/by/through _Y_” wherein X is an action and Y is the means or product that will meet that action, showing evidence the X was accomplished.

Clearly, goals for a survey course will differ from those focusing on a specific author or genre, and goals for a comics design course may differ significantly from those for a literature course. So, it is incumbent upon those teaching comics courses to accept backward design in construction, publication, and discussion of comics courses and syllabi.

A goal for an introductory graphic novels course might look like this:

“Students will formulate a working definition of the graphic novel by integrating scholarly readings, class discussions, and literature into a fully developed essay addressing a prompt asking them to do so.”

whereas a goal from a more specialized course utilizing comics but not solely about them, such my graduate-level “Literature for Youth” course, a course rich in what Hatfield, through his understanding of Lattuca, might deem synthetic interdisciplinary because it “consists of research and teaching

prompted by questions that “link’ disciplines” (n.p.), namely graphic novels, Young Adult Literature, concepts of schooling and English Language Arts pedagogy, is stated as such:

“Students will mine the intersections of adolescence, secondary education, and literary analysis through the intense study of and reflection on works of both scholarly and literary merit, specifically graphic novels in the domains of the humanities and the social sciences.”

For more help crafting goals and standards in comics courses, the use of taxonomies can prove beneficial.

Bloom’s Taxonomy is a standard by which many K12 teachers address goals and objectives, as is a newer scale created by Marzano and Kendell, which many see as a replacement to Bloom’s but which I prefer to see as a supplement. Bloom’s and Marzano and Kendell’s work has a place in the comics course. Particularly, these scales help teachers determine a wide range of objectives to be met which also should help students at varying degrees of competency have some amount of success in the course. I see backward design, goal/objective creating, and the Bloom’s as intricately tied to Vygotsky- and Bruner- informed constructivist notions of learning such as scaffolding and the zone of proximal development. Bruner states that scaffolding “refers to the steps taken to reduce the degrees of freedom in carrying out some task so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill she is in the process of acquiring” (19). Teachers scaffold -- via discussion, questions, activities and formative data gathering -- to help each student expand their zone of proximal development, an abstract but measurable space between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with help. Via scaffolding, an instructor may reduce possible freedom on the onset, but over time and as student competency grows, one gradually releases more independence back to students. Indeed, this process is called “gradual release.”

Taxonomies like the Bloom and Marzano/Kendell should key in professors to the fact that students do not all come to them prepackaged for high-level analysis of comics. Some are veteran readers; others may claim to have never read a comic. As with other types of texts, readers of comics may be at levels where they can understand, comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize or critique them. They may or may not be able to do all of those things or do some of them as well as they can do others. Some may struggle to remember basic formalist facts whereas others are able to create immediately. So, what do teachers need to do when it comes to scaffolding comics reading in their classes?

There may be those who think teachers needn’t offer any background priming on the comics form when they first ask students to read them. I like this idea of an immersion technique because it is in keeping with constructivist ideals of building knowledge through community work and discourse. The students and teacher can draw on the experiences and expertise of peers and the organic nature of exploratory hypothesis-building through this approach. While it may feel as if a professor loses some control via this means of introducing comics, the inchoate “messy work” may yield information the professor might have taken an entire semester learning about his students’ intellect, creativity, etc. otherwise. Further, the student-centered activity may help students invest personally in the course, as the course began investing in them. This constructivist prior knowledge accessing and building could be prompted by such general questions such as “What makes comics comics?” and “How do we read a graphic novel, and what elements or aspects of the medium should we attend to for a fluent reading?”

Others may feel not providing some more-formal scaffolding may be irresponsible, especially if the class contains many first-time comics readers. Connors, for example, suggests a focus on “shapes, perspective, and left-right visual structures” (“Toward a Shared” 73). Indeed, knowing the associated vocabulary of comics – page, panels, gutters, emanata, balloons, etc. – is important if one is going to ask students to analyze and create, and the taxonomies we use to help craft instruction seem to support that claim. Bloom’s suggests one must understand the vocabulary of comics before one can critique the form. Rigidity is a problem with taxonomies, of course, so they should be seen as aids rather than cures. But, examining the form’s component parts may help students who are familiar with comics to share their knowledge and take on the role of experts, breaking down traditionalist classroom dynamics. So, one needn’t worry about an approach which is either/or. Either approach implies that starting with formal elements of comics’ structure, or language, is of import.

Versaci talks about using panel analysis as a means to get students to move beyond basic understanding of comics and into deep reading. Panel analysis may represent another early-in-the-course scaffold which can bridge the constructivist concepts explored herein. Using a nine-panel grid from Hernandez’s “Flies on the Ceiling,” Versaci helps students see that comics reading needn’t always be linear, helping them to know to seek multiple entry points into a story just in case the left-to-right, top-to-bottom formula popular in many comics doesn’t hold up – or in case the action leads to a revisioning of the story. I find focusing on a single panel can help students prepare for the intellectual stamina required in reading comics. For example, I’ll often lead a first or second class with a single panel from *Maus*:

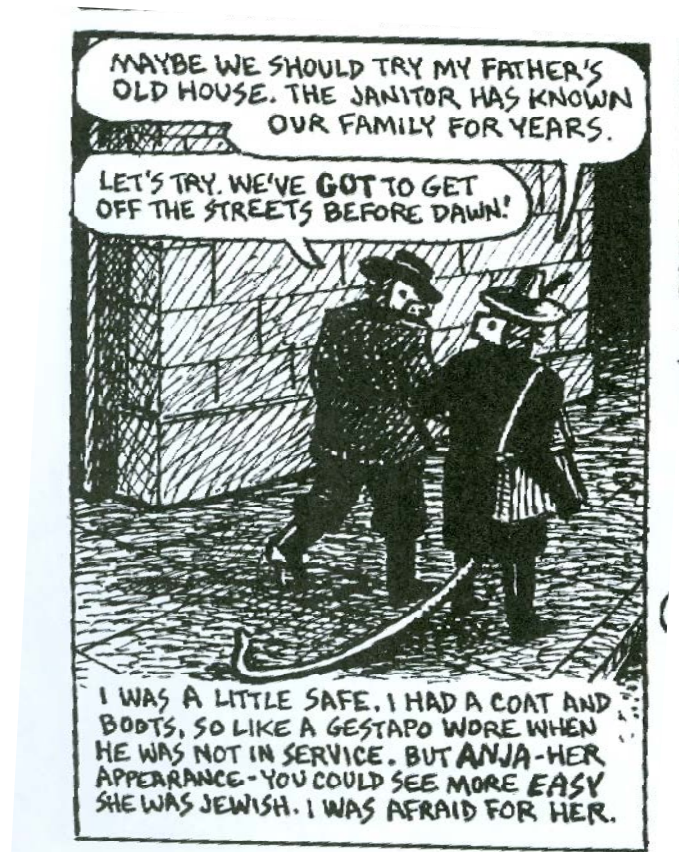


Figure 1: Page 136 of *Maus* affords a panel rich with text complexity, a strong scaffold for readers, some who may not know to look for such depth from comics.

I ask students to brainstorm on what this panel represents narratively, historically and stylistically. If no one knows the setting and basic plot of *Maus*, I'll frontload (scaffold) that information. Though, I prefer to let a knowledgeable student leader offer that information. Eventually we note the signifiers of spoken language via balloons and narration and past tense via the bottom text. We note even in one panel, comics offer a simultaneity we may observe again. Keen students note the masks, and those who have read the book before are able to explain that the masks mark the Jewish mice as passing as Polish non-Jews. With some prompting, I am able to get students to see the masks as visual representations of speech. Vladek and Anja are speaking Polish, but Vladek's linguistic mastery is greater than his wife's, and this fact is signified via the abstraction of mask-wearing (an abstraction overlaying the abstraction of real people as mice). Recognizing Anja's tail as a sign of her less-proficient passing is often a light-bulb moment and helps students see how print and image can co-scaffold, or transmediate (see Siegel). Yes, part of appropriate scaffolding of comics reading/teaching is helping students see comics as a self-scaffolding medium, one which offers comprehension assistance to those who read deeply enough to see the assistance offered and accept comics as a clever, playful, deliberate art and literature.

Panel analysis, either through a single image or a full page of panels (page analysis), ties to notions of multimodality that I feel are essential for teaching comics effectively. Rooted in the work of Cope and Kalantzis and the New London Group, a multimodal lens helps readers to examine texts through a series of interconnected modes, or designs, and asks readers to consider what "affordances" a medium offers – what it can and can't do or allows us to do. Indeed, the work Versaci does with his students via Hernandez's "Flies on the Ceiling" and I've done with *Maus* are basically activities in noting comics' affordances. New London Group scholars identify five modes, or designs, worthy of attention: the audio, spatial (including ecosystems and architecture, important distinctions if we are to give attention to comics formal elements), gestural, visual and linguistic. Clearly Versaci and I ask students to attend to these modes in panel analysis to frontload/scaffold teaching comics. Adding the language of modes of design to panel analysis can create and boost students' metacognitive awareness of what they are studying, giving them added terminology and frames to help them note their own critical thought processes.

Thankfully, scholars and educators are catching on to the power of the multimodal lens for examining comics. Dale Jacobs' work is exceptionally important in this regard. Wolfe and Kleijwegt write about how the multimodal lens helps them teach comics versions of Shakespeare. Katie Monnin pulls from New London Group writer Gunther Kress as the basis for much of her comics-and-literacy work. Leber-Cook and Cook suggest the multimodal lens deepened their appreciation of comics as teachers and scholars and afforded their adult ESL students learning opportunities. Connors finds fluent comics readers pull from available designs or modes inherently, suggesting educators might do well to embrace multimodal analysis in formal instruction and in informal reading (I reiterate the value I see in making the inherent and informal formal and coherent via direct instruction, observation, and application of modes of design, of strengthening rigor of analysis via making the cognitive but perhaps unstated metacognitive and stipulated). I suggest, as does Jacobs, that building students' skills in multimodal analysis pairs well with work from McCloud, whose *Understanding Comics* and *Making Comics* are

pivotal in many comics courses but should be braided with others work. (As Horrocks suggests, McCloud's definition of comics and system of studying them needn't be the official definition. Others exist). While McCloud's suggestion for analysis are well-established in comics studies, I suggest braiding New London Group-informed multimodal analysis with McCloud's six types of panel progressions and rudimentary imagetext theory to fully frontload/scaffold comics courses. McCloud suggests comics advance via either moment-to-moment, action-to-action, subject-to-subject, scene-to-scene, aspect-to-aspect, non-sequitur progressions between and among panels. Rudimentary elements from Mitchell's imagetext theory can offer a bridge between and across panel/page analysis and McCloudian/multimodal analysis. Mitchell illuminates two basic image-text distinctions: imagetext, in which pictorial and alphabetic language work in consonance as a form composite, logical co-scaffolds, and image/text, in which the imagistic and the alphabetic seem to cleave from one another, working in dissonance to suggest rupture or discord. Together, panel and page analysis (P), imagetext, (I) and multimodal notions of image study constitute what I refer to as "PIM pedagogy."

I have asked audiences of both practicing teachers (who hadn't read the texts) and pre-service teachers (who had) to apply these the lenses simultaneously to the images below from Brosgol's *Anya's Ghost*. I provided plot for the teachers, given their cold reading of the images. The pre-service teachers read the comic in one of my Young Adult Literature courses. Generally, both audiences suggested engaging in this tri-partite strategy helped them know how to read a comic deeply, revealed new insights into the text or prompted prediction-making/investment in the comics, and deepened their appreciation for the rigor inherent in comics-reading and comics-making (again, with plot information frontloaded as needed). For example, in the below promotional material for *Anya's Ghost*, Anya is seen smoking and ensconced in the spectral cloud of Emily. Some noted the gestural and spatial dynamics suggested a dissonant relationship. Anya seems irked while Emily seems happy; Emily's arms seem to grab for Anya; Anya is encircled, possibly as if trapped. Is the smoke of Emily bad for Anya, as is the smoke of the tobacco? The imagetext dynamics suggest a narrative with multiple perspectives and possibilities, where what is beneficial to one party may not always be beneficial to the other.



Figure 2: This promotional art for *Anya's Ghost*, available at <http://apeonthemoon.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/ft7.jpg>, affords attention via the imagetext lens.

The imagetext in the following pages is more consonant in that the text and image offer less ambiguity, and the multiple panels afford readers the ability to note how Brosgol uses formal elements of comics construction, how she utilizes various modes, how the panels progress, and how all those things work together to form meaning. Note the overlapping panels in page thirteen and how the spatial/architectural mode blends with the gestural. Jagged lines reveal Anya's emotional turmoil and inattention to her surroundings. The modes combine poignantly when Anya calls for help meagerly, the length of the panel, the shape of the balloon, and the weakening of her voice contributing to her growing hopelessness of getting out of the well into which she has distractedly fallen.



Figure 3: Pages 12, 13, and 17 from *Anya's Ghost* replete with affordances for applying PIM pedagogy.

Adequate attention to course goals and outcomes and to comics' structure are essential to building students' appreciation and understanding of the form. Introducing well-engrained, widely applicable terminology about form, function and fluidity in early classes or experiences with comics facilitates students' learning. Guided or communal panel analysis, when panels are chosen carefully, offers opportunities for illustrating the potential complexity inherent in comics' central frame, as can page analysis.

While some may point to abstract comics as potential scuttles to this work (See Molotiu; Beaty), I assert abstract comics' potency comes largely from an essential challenge to engrained notions of comics narrative normativity, so these approaches remain strong places from which to start, as challenging assumptions from earlier in a course should be part of work later in a course. Initially, panel and page analysis may focus on keying students in on the level of work it takes to read comics well but may or may not include direct interaction with formalist critical approaches. However, braiding basics

from McCloud’s panel progression theory, Mitchell’s imagetext, and multimodal theory may strengthen discourse and analysis initially and throughout a course, as they offer students structural, formal, and theoretical vocabulary. These “PIM” (panel/page analysis + imagetext + McCloud/multimodal) strategies have focused on planning and starting a comics course. Below I offer a model for evolving through classes once heavy reading begins.

Milner & Milner, authors of the ubiquitous *Bridging English* textbook, which synthesizes much of English Language Arts eupraxis, suggest four stages of reading literature. Each stage builds on the work of the preceding stage and prepares the next. The 4-step model is neither “linear nor circular” (104) but recursive as needed. This model may offer a bridge between reading comics and reading other types of literature while also offering a means of addressing the unique qualities of comics to which readers can attend and which may have been introduced via the suggested frontloading strategies.

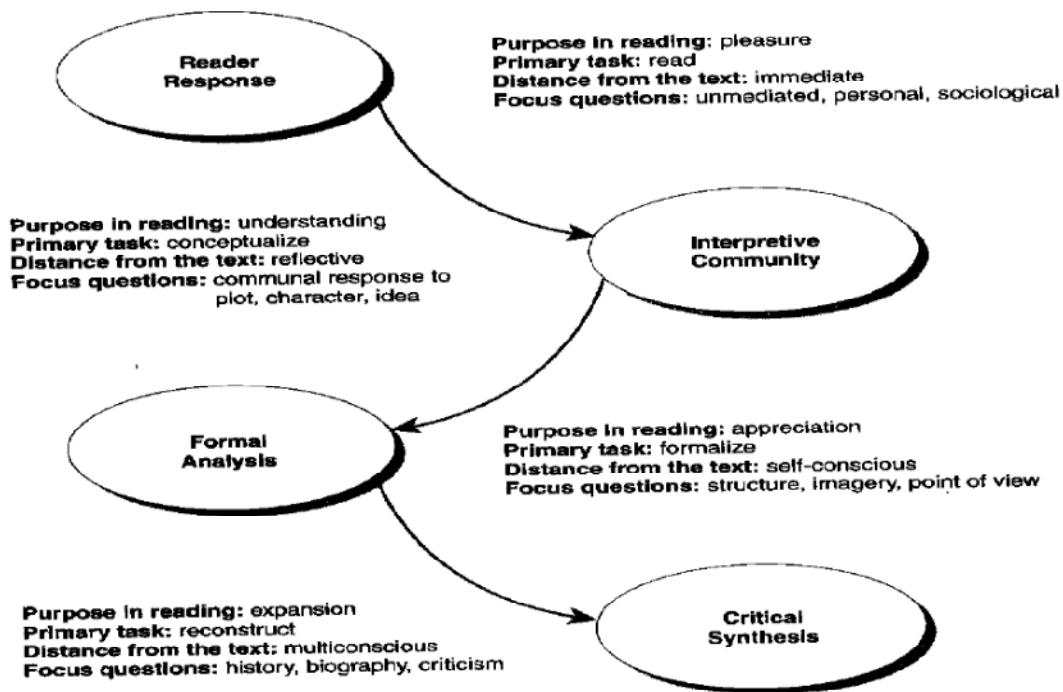


Figure 4: Milner and Milner’s four stages of reading literature, from page 104 of their *Bridging English*.

The first two modes, Reader Response and Interpretive Community, attend to basic understanding, text-to-self relationships, and general comprehension. Work in the Interpretive Community and Formal Analysis modes transitions from basic comprehension to applying text-to-text formal analysis. Formal analysis and Critical Synthesis integrate text-to-text and text-to-world notions of analysis and critique and creation. Bloom’s in bloom, so to speak. A progression through these modes – through guided questioning, written responses, Socratic discussion, or group activities – may properly scaffold a reading of any graphic novel. Further, students can build and hone their budding knowledge of comics

formalism/structuralism throughout the model. Versaci's panel analysis seems an appropriate activity, either in frontloading (scaffolding) before the sequence or in this part of the loose sequence, as does page analysis. One can argue the braiding of panel progression, imagetext and multimodal (PIM) theories already moves students into formal analysis and critical synthesis. As well, just as critical theory often builds historically from formalist to post-structuralist, applying this four-pronged loose progression affords professors opportunities to integrate new critical concepts with students who have a foundation. Again, it should be noted strategies based in this development needn't be stringent. Individuals and specific classes will find their way to these stages with adequate leadership. However, as one plans daily readings and goals per meeting, this model may facilitate both a whole course evolution and learning per session.

In summary, so far I have articulated means through which to create, begin, and evolve a course on comics and graphic novels. These means are rooted in experience in my fields of literature and education, particularly English Language Arts Pedagogy, and I hope to have addressed a concern that many other advisory texts regarding the teaching of comics are somewhat paradoxically rooted in the medium and various critical and artistic fields but not in pedagogical theory itself. Two goals remain: Considering the later part of courses and braiding together the principles and constructs explored thus far. First, a rather obvious but easily ignored component from which I feel every comics course and every student in it can benefit.

Bitz's longitudinal research finds students engaged in comics-making develop skills, strengths and understandings even their traditional academic preparation may not have developed or revealed. Having experience teaching comics to a range of students spanning from middle school to graduate school, I find tasking students with creating comics essential to their understanding of the complexity of the form, and I have asked even graduate students to do this after an exploration of the form and multiple examples. In action research in which I examined journal entries from undergraduate students in which they reflected on their growing understandings and appreciations of comics as thoughtful craft and a labor- and intellectually- intensive narrative medium, I found asking students to create their own comics was an activity which helped them respect the form and challenge lingering preconceived notions of worth and rigor. Stated simply, comics making is hard work ("What The").

Given the second-class status afforded the image in literary studies, asking students to make their own comics in those courses may be even more imperative. Professors could ask students to produce small comics to illustrate mastery of certain concepts, like those from PIM, throughout the course. To note their understanding of new critical elements of comics or the critical theories they present (Lacanian notions of othering, for example, in X-Men comics or Freudian concepts at play in Ware's *Jimmy Corrigan*) as students move through Formal Analysis and Critical Synthesis stages, students might create their own short narratives. Or, some type of comics-making could factor into end-of-the-course summative assignments. While that option may require a professor to check in periodically with students to note their plans and progress, leaving room for a major comics product toward the end of a course allows adequate time for the labor-intensive comics production process and allows students to pull from as much structural and critical knowledge of the form gleaned from the semester as possible and may allow for a purer gradual release approach. I reiterate that I see comics-making as an essential part to any and every comics course. I abide by the principle that creation is the utmost iteration of understanding and critique.

Indeed, in the revised Bloom's, creation is the last prong of the hierarchy, coming after evaluating. In the Marzano/Kendell scale, creation has a place in the "own it" domain if not in preceding domains. On both scales, creation is seen as a higher-order thinking skill. A key goal of multimodal pedagogy is facilitating students' design knowledge. Meaning making – and evidence thereof, for professors seeking to illustrate how learning objectives were met—comes from noting available designs and their affordances; engaging in the work of designing/creating; and examining and articulating the affordances of the redesigned. Through design work/creating, students illustrate understandings of current trends, issues, and thought ("situated practice," as per the parlance), critically engage with those conditions, and demonstrate "transformed practice" through a product which illustrates their understanding while offering something new to facilitate the understandings of others. For some multimodal scholars – especially those concerned with representations and power dynamics in popular media – creation/recreation, designing through redesigning, newly situating practice via transforming practice, the most powerful form of creation and communication is parody. To return to the potential for abstract comics to "go rogue" in these regards, we may see the work of abstract comics makers as seeking to move us into transformed practice and to make us aware of redesigns within comics narratology. Abstract comics parody sourced norms via elucidating tremendous understanding and critique of them. Either through parody or designing (or, to reconcile the constructs, via seeing all designing within a form as parody regardless of connotative utterances of the word), students can illustrate formal and critical proficiency as well as earn an appreciation for the craft via the making process. Some comics-creation assignments should be part of any comics course and offer means to elucidate the complexity and dexterity inherent in thinking about and producing comics. What's more, pedagogically speaking, creating is seen as paramount evidence of actual learning in various models of teaching and across educational theories.

Of course, I argue the tenets and suggestions shared herein are themselves braided. I see them as braided through constructivism. While no course or person can represent a pure constructivism – nor should they -- there are times when the most-learned member of a community (often the teacher) must lead, model, and even lecture. When lecture is situated as scaffold toward communal and individual learning, even it is a technique which fits within a constructivist model. Backward design accounting for Bloom's and Marzano/Kendell in course construction and delivery; utilizing frontloading via PIM and letting PIM be a springboard to other critical theories; progressing through the Milner & Milner model when needed; and integrating opportunities for designing and redesigning as evidence of transformed practice can blend to offer a needed but necessarily loose model of teaching comics rooted in pedagogical theory and practice.

Below is visual articulation of the model, a loose hierarchy or taxonomy, if you will, of comics study. I present it with caveats that taxonomies are similar to all systems in that none are perfect and often, once created, they seem to exist more to serve themselves than to be applied with necessary intellectual and utilitarian acumen. I admit frontloading/modeling a panel analysis before getting to any of these "stages" may help address all of them. I see the model only as progressive as it needs to be given specific students and sets of students. Certainly the model should be seen as recursive and reflexive and should allow for comics creation in its highest levels of proficiency, if not throughout.

A Taxonomy For Reading Comics?

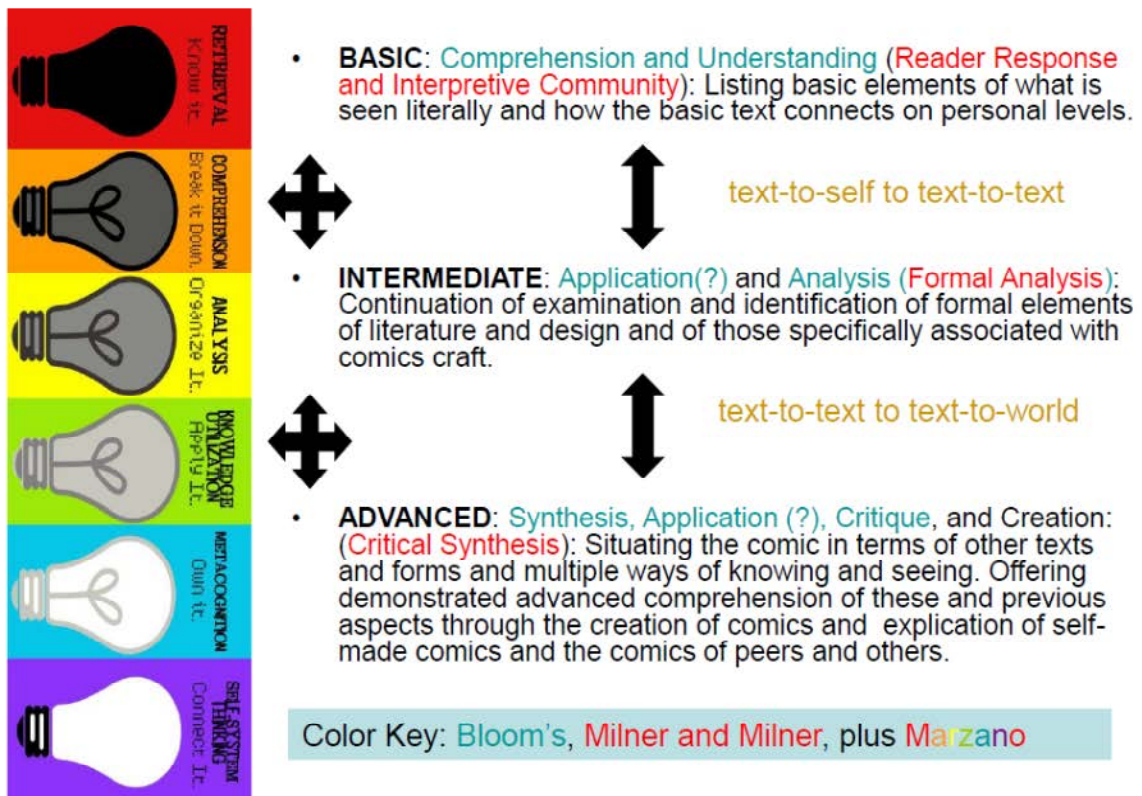


Figure 5: A taxonomy for teaching, reading, and studying comics. PIM processes may take place across the hierarchy but may need particular attention as students move from lower-order processes such as identification to higher-order processes such as critique and creation. Note “application” is placed in question. Application has been viewed as a lower-order skill, but I see it as higher-order, as always connected to the highest-order skills of analysis, critique, and creation. The Marzano scale is illustrated via the lightbulbs graphic ubiquitous online and often accompanied by the overarching tag of “Learning is much more than knowing,” as can be seen here: <http://koprowski.weebly.com/learning-tools.html>. From top to bottom, skills grow in complexity, from retrieval of learned information to owning (via creating?) and connection-making. In this manner, the Marzano/Kendell influence gels with Bloom, Milner & Milner, and PIM principles.

The taxonomy is offered to facilitate instruction rather than as something to be taught to students. While the model allows for students’ gaining metacognitive awareness of how they study and create comics, a metacognition of the taxonomy itself may not need exploring. Then again, if the model is to be improved upon – redesigned -- and stay true to my constructivist underpinnings which informed its creation, informing students of it as a model of building and informing their metacognition regarding comics seems perfectly desirable.

Regardless, it should be clear I feel to read and study comics fully and deeply, students need scaffolds. Via teaching formal elements and vocabulary of comics and design and “PIM pedagogy” to get them started, offering myriad opportunities to explore the form – as a form *and* connected to other texts in meaningful ways (such as through critical lenses, guided big questions, history, or thematic foci) – and presenting opportunities to consider, critique and create informed by multiple theories or lenses (thereby extending the value of PIM), educators can offer students pedagogically-informed comics

courses in any discipline and with any focus. In its rudimentary state, this model of teaching, reading and studying comics takes into account key concepts from education studies – perhaps making it unique among scholarly texts on understanding and teaching comics and filling a significant gap in the literature. May it inform and benefit teachers; may teachers and scholars offer iterations and improvements and compare it to other visual/textual/linguistic and transmediating systems (others of utility among those already cited might include Cohn; Siegel ; and Sipe & Panteleo). Finally, and most importantly, may the model facilitate accomplishment of the goal Wolfe and Kleijwegt mention in their study of comics adaptations of Shakespeare: May the taxonomy move students from passive receivers of multimodal texts like comics to active perceivers (30).

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