

ENTER THE GHOSTLY WORLD OF
BRENNA THUMMLER'S

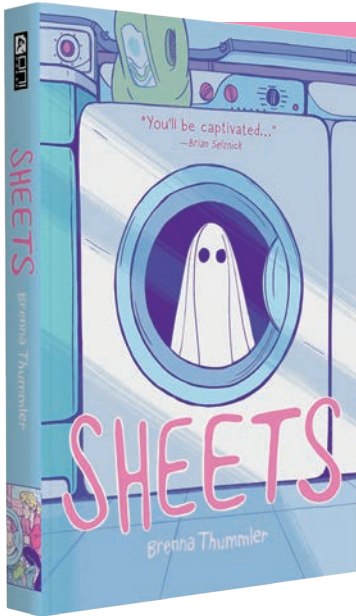
SHEETS AND DELICATES

EDUCATOR AND READER GUIDE

*Includes questions for discussion, reflection, analysis,
extension activities, and more.*

Discussion Guide Author: **JENN HAINES** is a teacher, president of ComicsPRO,
and owner of The Dragon, an award-winning comics shop.





About Sheets:

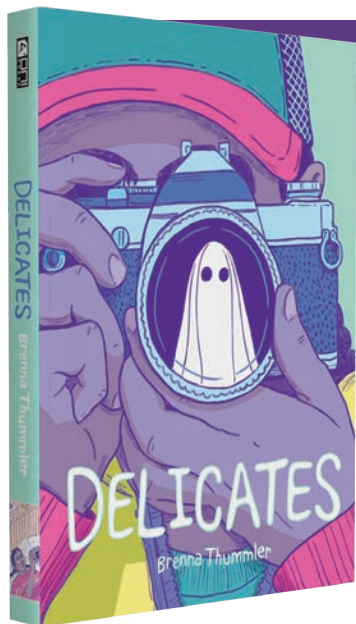
MARJORIE GLATT FEELS LIKE A GHOST. A practical thirteen-year-old in charge of the family laundry business, her daily routine features unforgiving customers, unbearable PE classes, and the fastidious Mr. Saubertuck, who is committed to destroying everything she's worked for.

Wendell is a ghost. A boy who lost his life much too young, his daily routine features ineffective death therapy, a sheet-dependent identity, and a dangerous need to seek purpose in the forbidden human world.

When their worlds collide, Marjorie is confronted by unexplainable disasters as Wendell transforms Glatt's Laundry into his midnight playground, appearing as a mere sheet during the day. While Wendell attempts to create a new afterlife for himself, he unknowingly sabotages the life that Marjorie is struggling to maintain.

Sheets illustrates the determination of a young girl to fight, even when all parts of her world seem to be conspiring against her. It proves that second chances are possible whether life feels over or actually is over. But above all, it is a story of the forgiveness and unlikely friendship that can only transpire inside a haunted laundromat.

ISBN: 978-1-941302-67-5



About Delicates:

MARJORIE GLATT'S LIFE HASN'T BEEN THE SAME ever since she discovered a group of ghosts hiding in her family's laundromat. Wendell, who died young and now must wander the earth as a ghost, soon became one of Marjorie's only friends. But when Marjorie finally starts to fit in at school, she begins to worry that if anyone learns about her secret ghost friends, she'll be labeled as a freak who sees dead people. Wendell isn't the only one pushed to the outside, though. Eliza Duncan, Marjorie's classmate at school, is constantly seen as different by Marjorie's new friends, and starts to feel like a ghost herself. Is it worth it to Marjorie to fit in if it means she excludes both Wendell and Eliza? Following the events of Brenna Thummler's first graphic novel, *Sheets*, *Delicates* tells a powerful story about what it means to fit in, and those who are left on the outside. It shows what it's like to feel invisible, and the importance of feeling seen.

ISBN: 978-1-62010-788-1

About The Creator:

BRENNA THUMMLER HAS ALWAYS KNOWN HER LIFE IS HAUNTED. Much like Marjorie Glatt, she grew up in a small Pennsylvania town, where piano practice and ghost stories were part of her daily routine. It wasn't until she attended Ringling College of Art and Design, however, that she realized her passion for storytelling (as well as her hatred of laundry). Now back in her hometown, she spends her days drawing, writing, and being suspicious of her sheets.



Photo Credit: Alec Vanderboom

  @BRENNATHUMMLER

Learning Standards

The questions and activities in this teacher guide correlate with the following Common Core English Language Arts Standards for Grades 3–6:

ELA READING:

Literature Standards for Key Ideas and Details
RL.3–6.1, **RL.5.2**; 3–6.3;
Craft and Structure **RL.3.4**; **RL.5–6.4**; **RL.5.5**; **RL.3–6.6**.

ELA READING:

Informational Texts Standards for Key Ideas and Details **RI.3–6.1**, **RI.3–6.2**;
Craft and Structure **RI.3–10.5**; **RI.3–6.6**;
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas **RI.3–6.7**.

ELA WRITING:

Standards for Research to Build and Present Knowledge
W.3–6.7, **W.3–6.8**;
Text Types and Purposes **W.3–6.1**.

ELA SPEAKING AND LISTENING:

Standards for Comprehension and Collaboration
SL.3–6.1A; **SL.4–6.1C**;
Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas **SL.3–6.4**.

Pre-Reading: Visual Literacy Strategies

It is highly recommended that you read Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*, specifically pages 60–63, which deal with closure, pages 70–72, which deal with panel transitions and 152–155, which deal with word/picture combinations. Depending on the needs of your class, you can have students learn these specific terms and use them to identify the different transition and combination styles. Alternately, you can utilize your understanding of them to guide the discussion, when examining specific panels or pages.

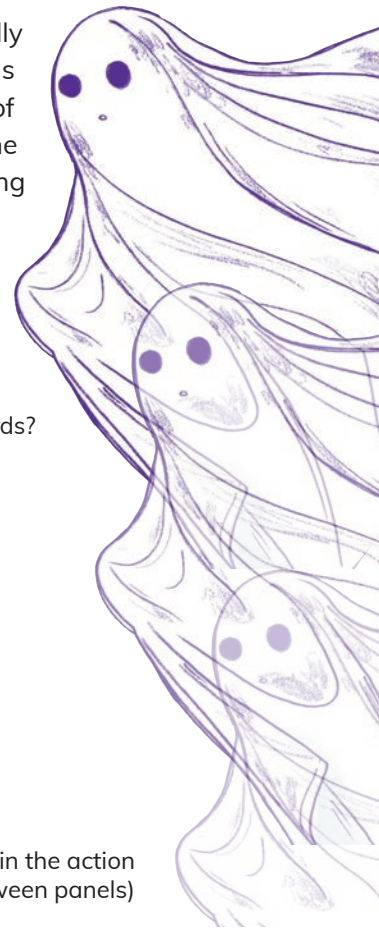
HIGHLIGHT INDIVIDUAL PANELS AND OR PAGES, AND ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What is going on in this panel or on this page?
- What is the purpose of the specific pictures in telling the story? How do they enhance the words?
- Why did the creator choose to put these words and pictures together in this way?
- How does color affect the scene?
- What do we learn about the character from the images?
- What mood is being set and how?

EXAMINE THE SPECIFIC SEQUENCE OF PANELS:

- Why did the creator put these panels in this particular order?
- What’s happening between the panels?
- A great exercise is to have students act out a short scene in the book, getting them to fill in the action occurring between the panels. This demonstrates to them that the gutter (that space between panels) is just as important as the other storytelling elements in the book.
- How does the transition between these panels indicate things like mood and character?
- How do the panel transitions affect the speed of the scene?
- Why did the creator choose this speed?

To help familiarize readers with key comics vocabulary and analytical process questions, please see the “How to Read Comics” bookmarks at the end of the guide.



Sheets Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Describe the ghost world as compared to the real world. What are the similarities? Differences?
2. What are the rules of the Land of Ghosts?
3. Describe Mr. Saubertuck. What does he value most? How do people react to Mr. Saubertuck?
4. Describe these characters using three adjectives or panels:
 - Wendell
 - Colton
 - Mr. Duncan
 - Tessi
5. What are the similarities between Marjorie and Wendell?
6. Find three scenes that focus on Marjorie's feet. Describe the scenes. Why are they being used?
7. What makes Marjorie smile? Find panels in which she seems happy and explain why she is happy. Why are these panels so rare?
8. How is color used to distinguish parts of the book? Why do you think the Brenna Thummler made this choice?
9. Some ghosts have identifying marks, like a bow or glasses. Why do you think only some have these elements and not others? Why is Wendell's mark a dirty sheet and not the lion hat? Why do you think Wendell avoids cleaning his sheet? Why does he choose to clean his sheet at the end of the book?
10. Find examples of ways that sound is created in the book. How do they impact the reader?

Sheets Panel Analysis Questions

1. On page 17, why is the speech bubble in panel three falling into the gutter?
2. Pages 24–25 have no words, but still tell us a lot. What do you learn on these pages about Marjorie? Dad? Owen?
3. Pages 64–65 are a flashback. How is this scene separated from the current time of the story? Why does Marjorie remember this scene at this point in the story?
4. Describe the scene on page 99. Why did Brenna Thummler choose these panels? What do they tell us about the characters?
5. What is the significance of Wendell's story on pages 102–106? Who is it for? Why does he tell it?
6. How does the mood change from page 117 to page 118?
7. What do you learn about Mr. Saubertuck's character on pages 159–162? Does it change your opinion of him?
8. What pushes Marjorie to finally accept Mr. Saubertuck's offer? Why was that the last straw?
9. On page 207, Wendell says, "Maybe she can't help us. But we can help her." Why does Wendell go against ghost law and help Marjorie even though she was mean to him? How do you think Wendell convinced the other ghosts to help?
10. What do you think of the ending sequence on pages 225–230? Does it fit the story and the characters? Is there another way the story could have ended?
11. What is the significance of the splash page on page 44? Pages 202–203? Page 237?

Sheets Extension Activities

READING

1. On page 38, Marjorie is stressed about a number of things, as shown through the first five panels. Have students create a panel sequence showing the things that stress them. They can use photographs or draw the panels themselves.
2. Have students read pages 5–9 and answer the following questions:
 - What do you think you know about the story so far?
 - Describe the setting.
 - Describe Marjorie. After reading the whole book, have them summarize the book and describe Marjorie again. How did their ideas change after reading the book?
3. While reading, invite students to select a character and complete the Character Traits Chart (see resources at the end of the guide). Students should identify two character traits describing the character. Remind students that character traits describe the behavior or the attitude of a person. It is who they are on the inside, their personality. Students should describe what they saw in the art that supports their character traits. Students should also use the dialogue to support their answers. Students can then organize themselves by character and share their charts.

WRITING

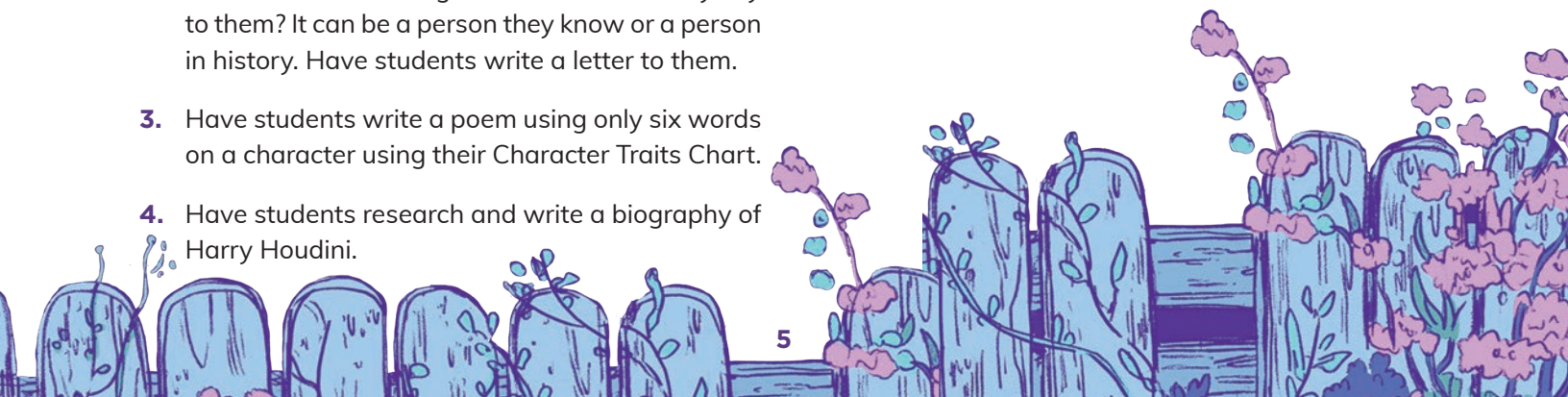
1. Have students examine one of the following pages, and write a diary entry from Marjorie's point of view: 12, 52, 66, 70–71, 82, 94, 144, 150–152, 232.
2. Marjorie asks a few times if any of the ghosts have seen her mother, hoping she could talk to her again. Ask students to consider: If they could talk to someone as a ghost, what would they say to them? It can be a person they know or a person in history. Have students write a letter to them.
3. Have students write a poem using only six words on a character using their Character Traits Chart.
4. Have students research and write a biography of Harry Houdini.

SPEAKING

1. As a class, discuss: What is the significance of the piano? What do the imperfections of the piano mean? Have students bring in an item from home that is imperfect but important. Have them break into groups and share how its imperfections make it important to them.
2. Break the class into debate teams, and debate the existence of ghosts.
3. Have a ghost party in your classroom. Ask students, "If you were a ghost in *Sheets*, what would your identifying accessory be?" Have students attend the party wearing their accessory and have them explain their choice. Alternately, have students think about what they would look like if creator Brenna Thummler were to draw them into the story as a ghost. Have them draw the image and put forth an artist's statement on why that image was chosen to represent them.

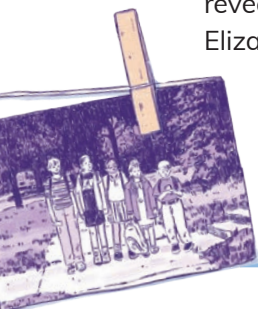
INTEGRATING

1. Compare the portrayal of ghosts in *Sheets* with the portrayal of ghosts in Raina Telgemeier's *Ghosts*. How are they the same? How are they different?
2. "Font" is the word used to describe the style of text characters. Look at the use of fonts in at least three graphic novels. How do creators use the font in their stories? How does Brenna Thummler use her font? Are there ways that font could be used more effectively in *Sheets*?
3. Rewrite a scene in the book as a prose story, e.g., pages 20–25, 44–51, 74–81. How is the story different when the pictures are not there? What is lost and gained in prose descriptions? What do you see that others don't see?



Delicates Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What makes a good friend? Why do we befriend the people we do? What are some examples of good and bad friendships in the book? Why do you think the characters choose the friends they do?
2. Why does Eliza like ghosts so much? Why does she say “Ghosts are better off” (page 219)? How does discovering their existence help her?
3. What is the relationship between Tessi and her mother? Do you think it justifies her behavior? Do you think Tessi is redeemable? Why or why not?
4. “Just because mistakes seem small and insignificant doesn’t mean they are” (pages 104–105). What is an example of this in the book? Can you think of some examples of this in real life? Small mistakes are easy to make, so how do you fix things once you realize that a mistake isn’t so small and insignificant?
5. Marjorie’s mother once said that “...photos can reveal secrets about our own stories.” How do Eliza’s photos reveal the secret of her story?
6. Examine the characters’ Halloween costumes. Why do you think these characters choose the costumes they do? Do they suit them?
 - Marjorie
 - Eliza
 - Wendell
 - Tessi
7. “Did you know there are some ghosts in the Land of the Ghosts who chose to be there? Because they were too sad in the Land of Humans?” (page 206). Do you think Wendell is correct that Eliza is suicidal? What is the evidence to support his belief?
8. In Eliza’s flashback on pages 224–229, she is celebrating Samhain. What is Samhain? How has it influenced our modern Halloween? Why is this moment significant to Eliza?
9. Tension builds and builds throughout the book. What is the climax of this tension? How is it broken for the reader? For Marjorie? Why is the break in tension important in that moment?
10. What do you think about Marjorie’s suggestion to have a sheet ghost dance? Do you think people were enjoying themselves? How can you tell?



Delicates Panel Analysis Questions

1. Page 33 ends without resolution. Do you think Marjorie gets into the pool? Why or why not? Why do you think Brenna Thummler chose to not complete this moment?
2. Describe Eliza’s room on page 36. What can you learn about her from her room?
3. On pages 70 and 212 (for example), speech bubbles are being used in unique ways. Discuss how font, size of the bubble, placement, and more create sound in comics.
4. Describe Eliza’s experience on page 71. How do the composition and layout of the panels indicate her emotions?
5. Explain panel 5 on page 156. What does it mean? Why is it there?
6. On pages 187 to 190, Eliza says she isn’t scared, but she clearly is. How is this shown in the panels? What makes this scene scary?
7. Describe panel 5 on page 207. What does it tell you about how Marjorie is feeling?
8. On page 280, what is the significance of Marjorie seeing herself in the window?
9. Brenna Thummler often uses panels where only part of the face or body is shown. Find examples of this and discuss how, when, and why they are used.
10. How does Brenna Thummler use color to create darkness? What are the different types of darkness?

Delicates Extension Activities



1. Write a diary entry set after one of the following scenes:
 - pages 96–97, from the perspective of Wendell, Eliza, or Marjorie
 - pages 211–219, from the perspective of Eliza or Tessi
 - the end of the book, about the dark room experience, from the perspective of Marjorie or Eliza
2. Marjorie says that teenagers are supposed to have a bucket list (page 90). In groups, discuss the things on your bucket list, the things you absolutely must do in your life. Create a collage of your bucket list.
3. “...photos can reveal secrets about our own stories” (page 116). Take six photos on a theme. What are the secrets of your own story? Do the photos reveal anything you didn’t expect? Why did you choose this theme? Present your photos as an art piece, along with an artist statement.
4. Ghost faces are oddly expressive, even though they are so simple. Select five ghost facial expressions and explain what they mean. How do you know that’s what they mean? Can you create your own ghost facial expressions?

Making Connections: *Sheets* and *Delicates*

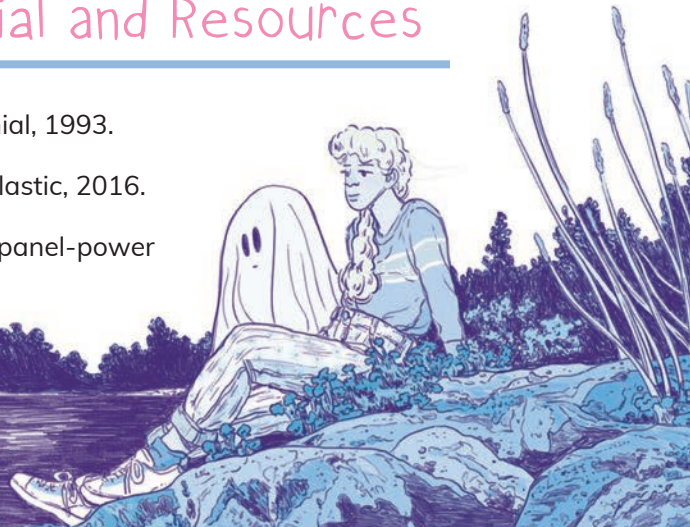
1. Read the first 21 pages of *Delicates*. What has changed since the end of *Sheets*? How has Marjorie changed? How has her dad changed? How has Wendell changed?
2. Ghosts are a major theme in the books. Are there different ways to interpret the concept of “ghosts”? How do ghosts (literal and figurative) move the plot forward and help the characters develop in both books? Is their role the same in both books?
3. Why is swimming a recurring theme in both books? What does each swimming scene reveal about Marjorie and her story?
4. What makes Marjorie happy? Does it change over time?
5. Marjorie tends to be a passive character, mostly going along with what is happening without taking control over her life. When does this change and why? How does Marjorie take control and begin to change her story?

Additional Reference Material and Resources

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993.

Telgemeier, Raina. *Ghosts*. New York: Graphix, an imprint of Scholastic, 2016.

“Panel Power: Using Comics to Make Lifelong Readers” cblidf.org/panel-power



Sheets Character Traits Chart

Page:

Example from illustration:

Page:

Quote or example from dialogue:

Trait:

Character:

Trait:

Page:

Example from illustration:

Page:

Quote or example from dialogue:



Dear Reader,

The ghosts in this story will not scare you.

They may hide in your closet, or in your hamper waiting impatiently for laundry day, but never fear. These ghosts are quite misunderstood and would be grateful for your friendship.

This story first grew from my loneliness—my own misunderstood ghost world where, without my art, I felt invisible. But it's here that I found my love for storytelling and envisioned the idiosyncrasies of a "sheet-ghost" lifestyle while folding my own bedclothes. I discovered that I could transform my solitude into something meaningful.

While this book may bring both joy and sorrow, I hope that above all, it shares a sense of bright possibility. I hope it speaks to anyone who has suffered loss, adversity, or loneliness, and encourages perseverance.

If anything, by the time you finish, you too may be waiting impatiently for laundry day.

Brenna Thummler





Lion Forge interviews Brenna Thummler, author and illustrator of *Sheets*

LION FORGE: *Sheets* is the first original graphic novel you've published. How has the creative process differed from other projects you have done?

BRENNA THUMMLER: It has been the most terrifying, and not because of the ghosts. Unlike my editorial work and my first graphic novel collaboration, *Anne of Green Gables*, I had no starting point; I had to generate my own. All decisions lay in my hands, and there were many more decisions to make. Graphic novels introduce the "time" factor that requires me to consider pacing and the contrast between compositions, actions, and moods that fluctuate within a storyline. But it's also liberating to be in total control of the characters and their lives—their triumphs and failures and relationships. You grow as a person along with them.

LF: *Sheets* is equal parts grounded and supernatural. What inspired you to write in this style? Did you find it difficult?

BT: I like possibility. It's fun to explore twists on everyday scenarios. Generally speaking, I am not a fan of fantasy unless human stories play a major role, which is how I approached *Sheets*. When your main focus is the human experience, posing "what ifs" becomes a secondary maneuver to engage the reader in something original. Although it's challenging to invent a new lifestyle and weave it into the natural world, it's just as difficult to capture a strong, relatable human story.

LF: What's one thing you'd want your readers to take away from *Sheets*?

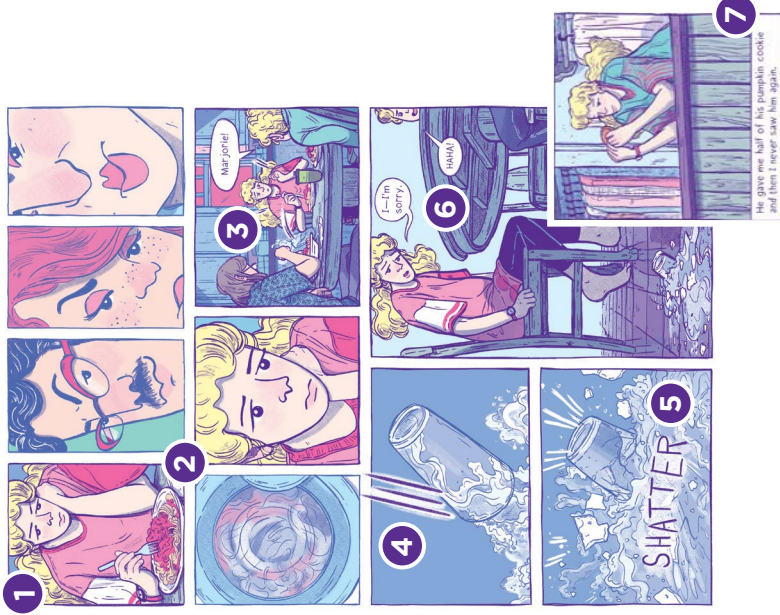
BT: Life is full of hardships, many of which you have no control over. I hope readers may identify the importance of perseverance and the value of recognizing the good in your life, or the possibility of good if you let it in. It's a story of determination and unlikely friendship, and the subsequent triumphs.

LF: Marjorie, the main character, talks about how much she hates laundry. Do you feel the same way?

BT: I can't say I'm a fan of laundry, but it eventually drags me away from my computer and forces me to take a break from work. If you pair it with an impromptu solo sing-along party, I suppose it can be moderately enjoyable. Unfortunately for Marjorie, she's responsible for laundry from all over town—no amount of bedroom karaoke could make this bearable.

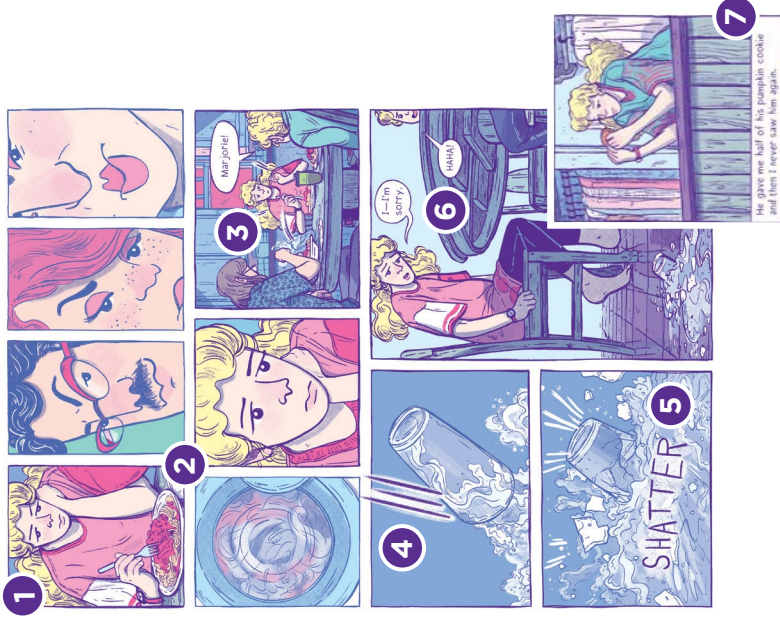


HOW TO READ COMICS



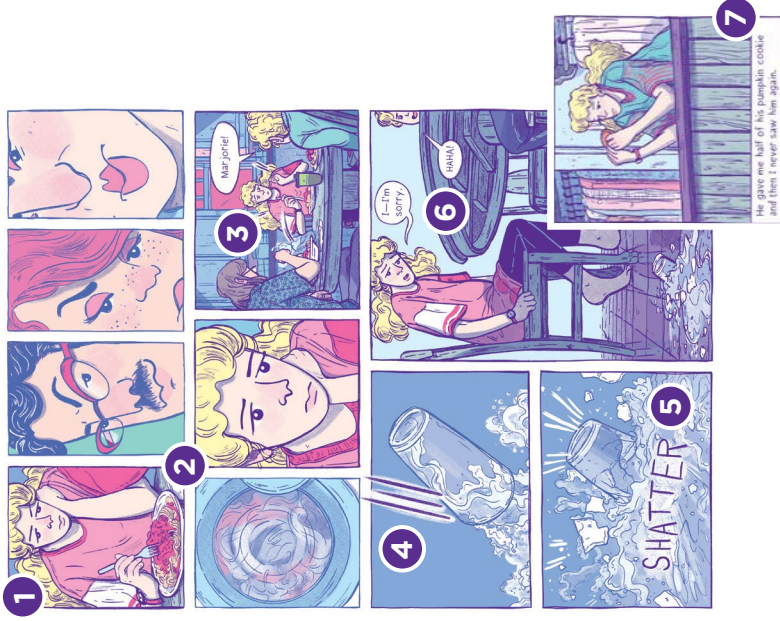
- 1 PANELS** Comics are divided into pictures called “panels.” We read panels left-to-right, top-to-bottom.
- 2 GUTTER** The space between the panels is called the “gutter.” Lots can happen here!
- 3 EMANATA** These are imaginary visual elements that tell something without words. Here, they show Marjorie’s sudden movement.
- 4 MOTION LINES** Lines that depict movement.
- 5 SOUND EFFECTS** Words that create sound as part of the picture.
- 6 BALLOON** Dialogue is presented in the form of a balloon of speech. It tells you who is talking, what they are saying, and how they are saying it.
- 7 CAPTION** A square text box that tells the reader what the character is thinking, or narrates the scene.

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TELLING A STORY WITH COMICS

Comics have their own way of telling a story by combining words and pictures. You can tell a lot about what's going on in the scene by looking at which pictures are used, what order they're used in, and how the words are used with them.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHEN READING COMICS

Looking at individual panels:

- Why use these pictures to tell the story? Why did the creator choose to put these words and pictures together?
- How does color affect the scene?
- What do we learn about the character from these images?
- What mood is being set and how?

Looking at the panel sequence:

- Why did the creator put the panels in this particular order?
- What's happening in the gutters?
- How do the panel transitions affect the speed of the scene?
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