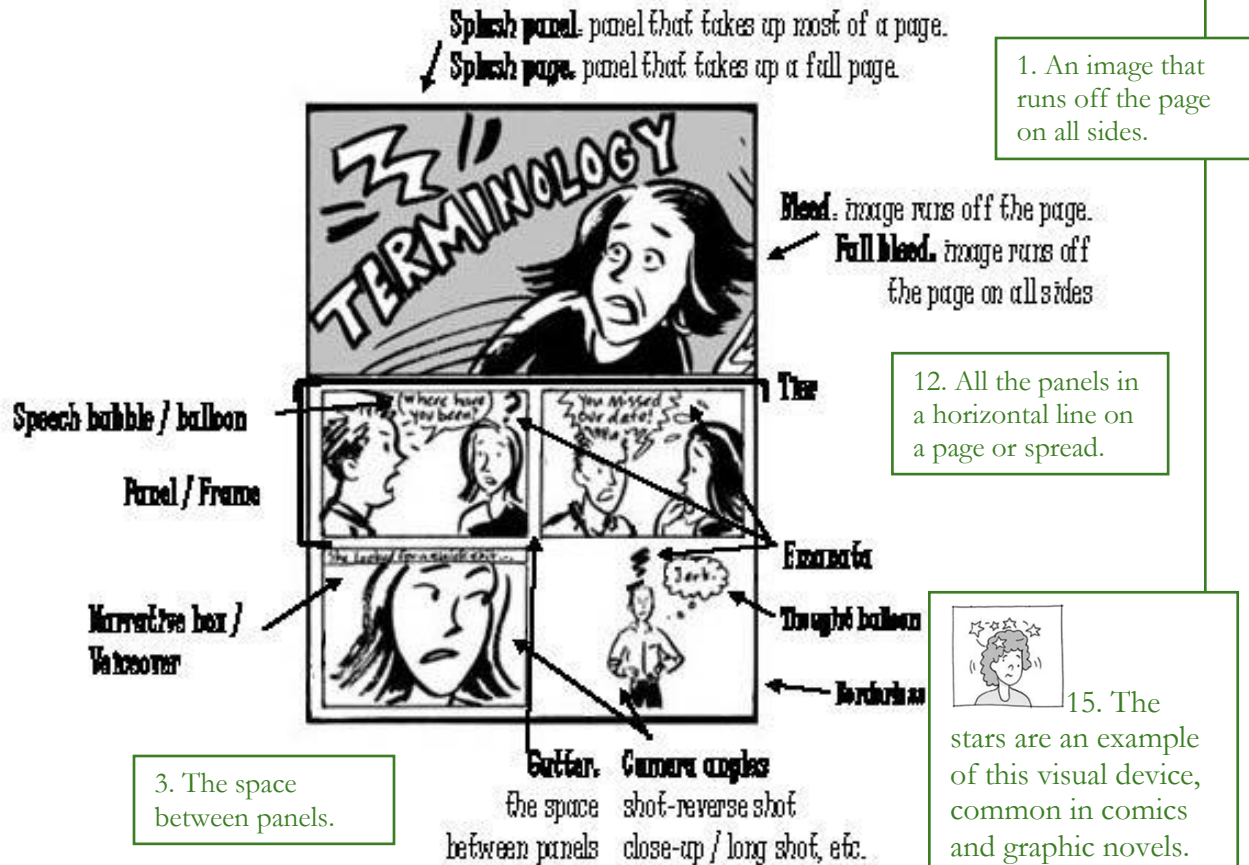


SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY



Indicia: important copyright and other legal information printed in a book, usually at the beginning

Mockup: a rough layout of pages to plan a book

Pencil: a relatively defined drawing preliminary to the final inked stage

Inks: the final stage of a comics drawing (applying ink to pencil guidelines)

Final up: the final artwork pages ready for printing

Spread: two facing pages in a printed book

Recto/Verso: pages in a spread, recto = right page, verso = left page

Printer's Spread: the layout of pages for printing (not the same as a spread in a printed book)

The: all the panels in a horizontal line on a page or spread

OK, I KNOW WHAT COMICS ARE, BUT WHAT'S A GRAPHIC NOVEL?

LONG-FORM WORKS MADE UP ONLY OF PICTURES OR PICTURES IN COMBINATION WITH TEXT HAVE EXISTED SINCE THE 19TH CENTURY. BUT THE TERM "GRAPHIC NOVEL" DIDN'T BECOME COMMON UNTIL THE LATE 1970S.

CURRENTLY, WE CALL TEXTS "GRAPHIC NOVELS" IF THEY HAVE THESE CHARACTERISTICS:

- A BOOK-LENGTH STORY
- PUBLISHED IN A SINGLE VOLUME
- TOLD WITH SEQUENTIAL IMAGE PANELS
- THE ART IS OF EQUAL OR GREATER IMPORTANCE THAN THE TEXT.

TEXTS WITH THESE CHARACTERISTICS CAN BE CONSIDERED GRAPHIC NOVELS, NO MATTER THEIR GENRE. WORKS OF FICTION, NON-FICTION, REPORTAGE, BIOGRAPHY, AND MEMOIR CAN ALL BE GRAPHIC NOVELS.

I CAN LOOK AT PICTURES, SO HOW HARD CAN READING COMICS OR GRAPHIC NOVELS BE?

IT'S NOT THAT IT'S DIFFICULT. BUT THERE'S ANOTHER WAY OF CREATING MEANING – VISUAL RHETORIC – THAT YOU NEED TO RECOGNIZE AND INTERPRET.

AND THERE'S ANOTHER LEVEL OF LITERACY – VISUAL LITERACY – THAT YOU NEED TO PRACTICE.

VISUAL RHETORIC

AT ITS MOST BASIC, THIS IS THE USE OF VISUAL IMAGES TO COMMUNICATE MEANING. BUT IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT DESIGN AND AESTHETICS. IT'S ALSO ABOUT HOW CULTURE AND MEANING ARE REFLECTED, COMMUNICATED, AND ALTERED BY IMAGES.

VISUAL LITERACY

THIS IS WHAT IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO: THE ABILITY TO DECODE, INTERPRET, ANALYZE, AND EVALUATE MATERIAL THAT COMMUNICATES WITH IMAGES AS WELL AS, OR INSTEAD OF, WORDS. THIS PROCESS COMES WITH ITS OWN VOCABULARY AND ANALYTIC PROCESSES.

2. The ability to interpret/analyze/evaluate texts that communicate with images as well as, or instead of, words.

The Subjective Frame What does it remind me of?



4. An image that uses our familiarity with a previous work to help make its point.

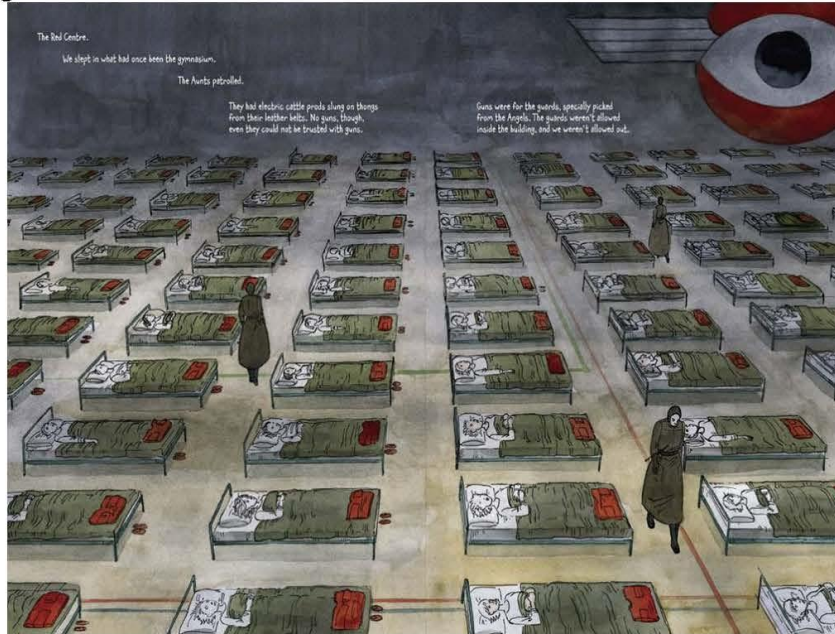
Some artists rely on our familiarity with iconic images in order to make their point. We need to consider visual allusions as well as textual allusions. This cover recalls Norman Rockwell's sense of Americana at the *Saturday Evening Post*.

The Structural Frame Salience

Salience is how well an object stands out from the background. always first drawn to salient features in an image; they are what important in understanding the composition and structure of an i

5. How well an object stands out from the background.

An element within an image can be made salient through placement, color, size, focus, distance, or any combination of these. For example, what do you notice first in the image below from *The Handmaid's Tale*?



See the strong lines drawing your eye from the bottom of the image to the top? These lines are all vertical, and very precise. There's a firm sense of regimentation coming from the lines, and they draw your eye back into the darkness. Fully $\frac{1}{4}$ of this image is the back wall of this large room, but the point at which the floor becomes the wall is pretty fuzzy, and the shading of the back wall makes it seem like we're looking through a huge window out onto a darkened landscape where this regimentation goes on forever.

The all-seeing eye is also a part of that back wall, and it too has linear features — its wings — but those are horizontal, so they distinguish themselves from the primary vertical lines in this image. And since the definition of the wall itself is blurred, the eye can appear to be just hanging in space, a large, imposing threat.

To me the most salient feature here is the flying eyeball. It's the only thing that's not essentially a rectangle or bound to a grid; it breaks the rigid linearity. It is disproportionately large, and hovers over the grid occupied by the Handmaids.

The Structural Frame Gaze

Gaze refers to the way that people in an image are looking at the viewer. It's a type of interaction that can be used to create a relationship between the viewer and the image.

6. The type of gaze when a person in an image looks directly at the viewer.

The Demand

When a person in an image looks directly at the viewer, this is a demand. A demand asks for our attention in a confrontational way. The image and the viewer create a direct connection as the image looks directly at the viewer. The viewer becomes an active participant in a relationship between the image and the interpreter.

The Offer

When a person in an image looks away from the viewer, this is an offer. An offer is a less confrontational way of engaging the viewer and usually shows that the person in the image is involved in some action. The viewer is not an active participant, but the visual equivalent of an eavesdropper.



This detail from a cover image for Brian K. Vaughan's *Saga* series illustrates both versions of the gaze. Alana, the female in the background, demands engagement with you, because you could be a threat to her child, or to husband, or to herself. But her husband, Marko, in the foreground, offers you the potential for a different kind of engagement, because he's paying attention to something else.

The Critical Frame Manipulation of the image

In our brave new world of deepfakes and AI-generated content, it's sometimes difficult to recognize when an image is being manipulated. In comics and graphic novels, those manipulations are sometimes so familiar that we miss them. Nevertheless, we still need to attempt to take note of the changes that we recognize in order to fully analyze the panel, page, or work.

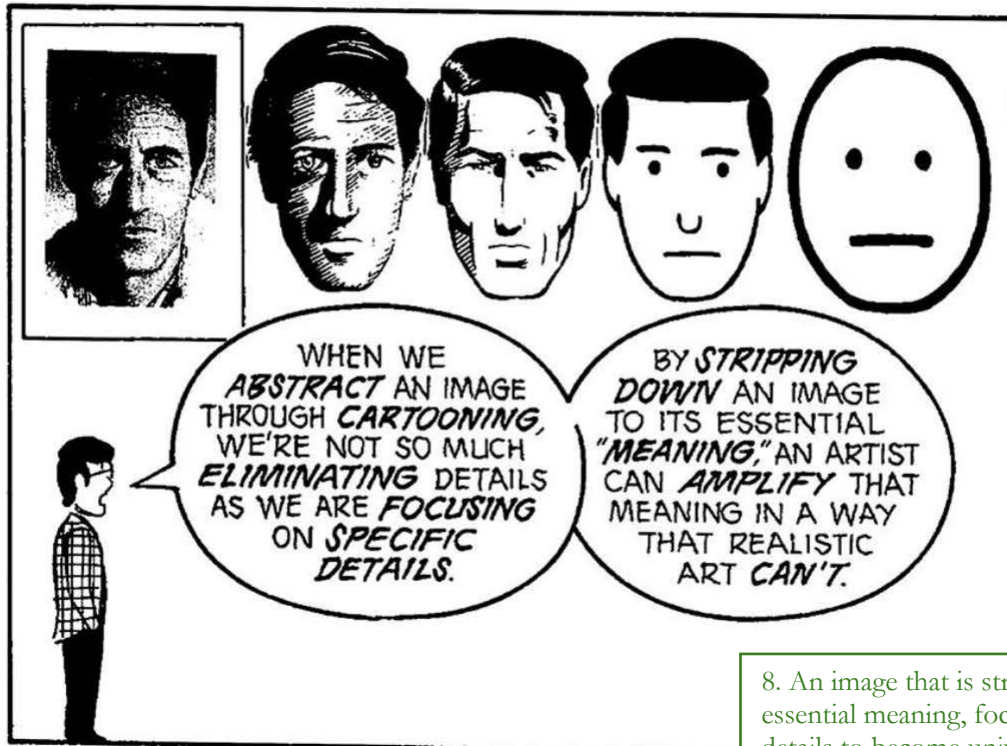
But this manipulation doesn't mean we're not seeing manipulated images daily, some of which are so culturally conditioned that we think they're accurate. **Manipulation of an image means a manipulation of our understanding, for better or worse.**

7. Manipulation of this causes a manipulation of our understanding.

As an example, think about what it must look like to summit Mount Everest, the highest mountain on Earth. I'll bet your mental image looks something like this:

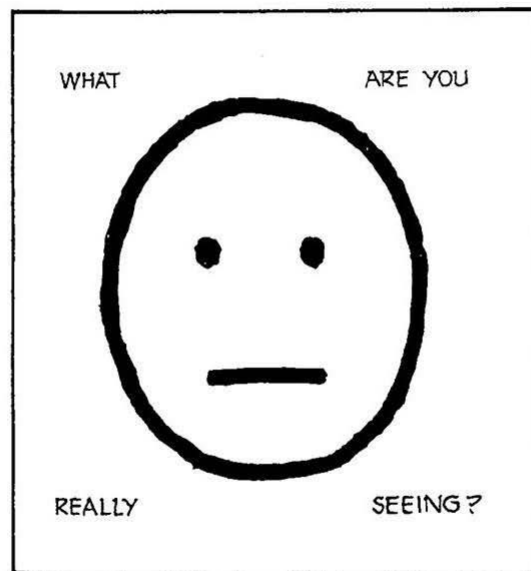


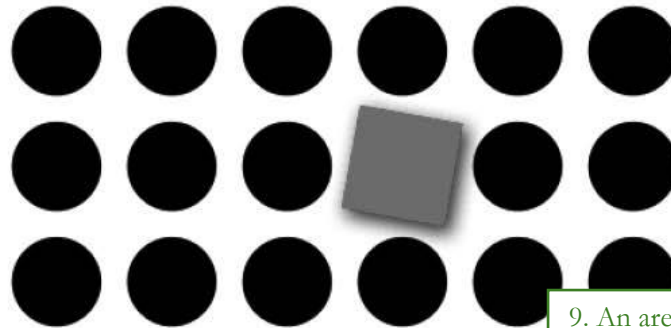
Yes, it's the rugged adventurer, pitting the indomitable human spirit against the most difficult terrain this world has to offer. They risk danger and death to prove something to themselves, to have an experience that, even if successful, will cost them a great deal, and if unsuccessful, will cost them their life.



8. An image that is stripped down to its essential meaning, focusing on specific details to become universal.

As images become less specific, they become more universal, and more relatable. We can see more of ourselves in them as they become less individual.

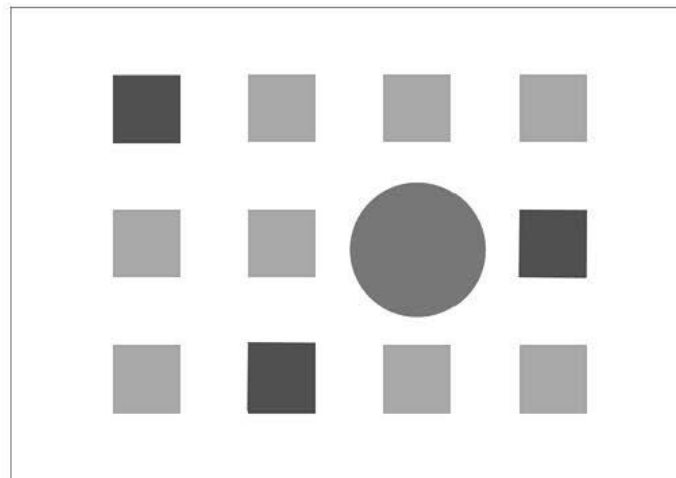




9. An area of interest, emphasis, or difference within a composition.

FOCAL POINT

Focal points are areas of interest, emphasis, or difference within a composition. They are what first captures our attention in an image.



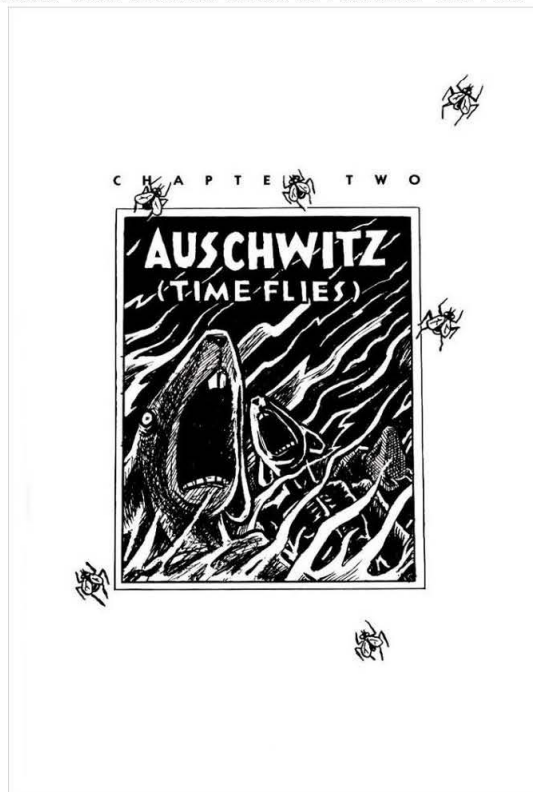
The circle and the three reddish squares are all focal points because they stand out from the other elements here. They contrast with the mass of gray squares. But the circle stands out the most (due to its color, size, and difference). So it's the dominant focal point.

The Structural Frame Vectors / Lines

Vectors are imaginary lines that direct the viewer's eyes in a particular way. They are used to connect different parts of the image and to create a path from one part to another.

10. Imaginary lines that direct the viewer's eyes in a particular way

Here's a page from *Maus* that shows what an author can do with vectors.



Notice how the image is placed on the page with a lot of white space around it. So your eye is drawn to the black rectangle in the center of the white page. But the diagonals of the flames draw your eyes up and right, while the burning bodies create a path that is still vertical but a little straighter. This leads you first to the chapter title within the image, and then outside the black rectangle itself. There you see the houseflies, always attracted to rotting meat, that look as if they've landed on the page you're looking at.

The ironic pun in the subtitle becomes obvious, as time flying leads to people dying. The soon-to-be-dead bodies in the flames will feed the flies. But the flies don't exist on that plane of the image; they look as if they exist outside the black rectangle. They exist at the same level as you, the viewer. As you move in and out of the black rectangle, the flies remind you of your own mortality, and of the common fate to be faced by you as well as those in the flames.

L. I. E.

THE THREE LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING AN IMAGE

THIS FOCUSED AND SEQUENTIAL PROCESS MOVES THROUGH THREE GRADUATED LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING CONCERNING AN IMAGE. IT BEGINS WITH YOUR OBSERVATIONAL SKILLS AND ENDS WITH AN ANALYSIS THAT MOVES WELL BEYOND THE IMAGE ITSELF.

1: LITERAL:

LOCATE, RECALL, CONNECT.

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

THE ANSWER IS IN THE IMAGE.

SUPPORT YOUR ANSWERS WITH EVIDENCE FROM THE TEXT.

2: INFERENTIAL:

INFER, INTERPRET.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS MEANS? WHY?

WHAT EVIDENCE IN THE TEXT SUPPORTS YOUR ANSWER? USE THE LITERAL INFORMATION, COMBINE IT WITH OTHER INFORMATION FROM THE IMAGE OR CONTEXT, AND THEN ANY PRIOR KNOWLEDGE YOU MIGHT HAVE TO MAKE INFERENCES BASED ON THIS

INFORMATION. THIS REQUIRES CLOSE MORE THOUGHT ABOUT HOW THE TEXT

11. The three levels of understanding an image are the literal, the inferential, and the . . .

3: EVALUATIVE/APPLIED:

EVALUATE, GENERALIZE, HYPOTHESIZE, SYNTHESIZE

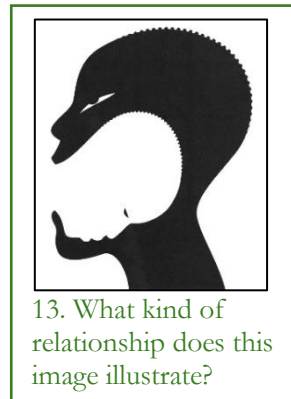
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS?

COMBINE THE LITERAL AND INFERENTIAL INFORMATION FROM THE TEXT WITH OTHER IDEAS AND KNOWLEDGE TO EXTEND YOUR THINKING BEYOND THE TEXT.



FIGURE—GROUND

Are these vases and candlesticks or two pairs of humans? We usually simplify a scene into the main object (the figure) and everything else, the background (or ground).



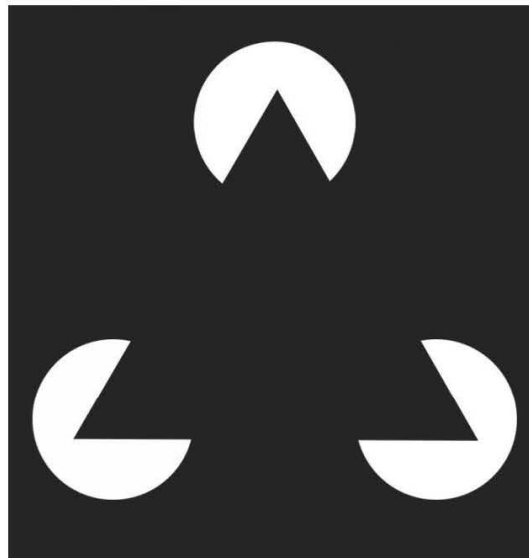
The Cultural Frame Viewer's contexts

Our own histories, experiences, and prior knowledge influence how we interpret an image. But there are also unconscious processes that happen. Gestalt psychology unpacks these. The examples below illustrate a few of its concepts and laws.

When we view an image, we perceive it in organized or configurational terms. Patterns take precedence over individual elements, and they have properties that are not inherent in the elements themselves.

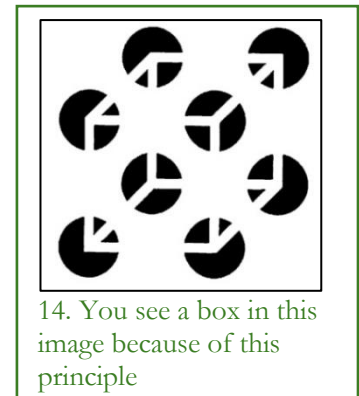
We infer information, and immediately create larger structures out of smaller ones, so we end up with a perception of the image where the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

And what we construct will be our attempt to maximize the simplicity, stability, regularity, symmetry, continuity, and unity of what we're seeing.



CLOSURE

We all “see” the triangle, but it’s not really there. Our brains impose a structure on a collection of single elements.



<p>Very wide (more background)</p>  <p>Set the scene</p>	<p>Wide (full body)</p> 	<p>Mid (1/2 body or head + shoulders)</p>  <p>Most common</p>
<p>Close up (use sparingly)</p>  <p>16. Name the shot angle used here.</p>	<p>Very close up (use rarely)</p> 	<p>Over the shoulder (OS)</p> 
 <p>Birds eye view</p>	<p>High (Looking down)</p> 	<p>(towards camera)</p> 
	<p>(use blur or action lines)</p> 	<p>Point of view (POV)</p> 

from Jessica Emmett's *How Do I Make a Comic?* Jessica Emmett Studios, 6 March 2017. www.jessica-emmett.com/downloads/how-do-i-make-comics-a-kids-guide-to-the-basics.pdf

CAMERA ANGLES



EYE LEVEL



LOW ANGLE



HIP LEVEL



17. Name the shot angle used here.



GROUND LEVEL



SHOULDER LEVEL



DUTCH ANGLE



OVERHEAD



AERIAL

18. What group of women wear brown in *The Handmaid's Tale*?

THE AUNTS

19. What is carved into the wall of Offred's closet?

**NOLITE TE BASTARDUM
CARBORUNDUM**

20. What is the password for the rebel group in Gilead?

MAYDAY

21. Where does June see Moira for the last time?

JEZEBEL'S

22. What is a televised public execution called in Gilead?

A SALVAGING

23. What is the title of Hollis Mason's autobiography?

UNDER THE HOOD

24. As a young boy, what occupation did Jon Osterman want to follow?

A WATCHMAKER

25. What former super-villain does Ozymandias kill?

MOLOCH

26. What do the smiley face, mirrored images, and the radiation sign all have in common?

**THEY'RE ALL MOTIFS FOR
CHAPTERS**

27. There are at least three examples in the final pages of *Watchmen* that show how the New York incident has created a "stronger, loving world." Name one.

- **BURGERS N' BORSCHT RESTAURANT**
- **"ONE WORLD, ONE ACCORD" POSTER**
- **"THIS IS THE TIME, THESE ARE THE FEELINGS" AD FOR MILLENIUM COLOGNE**
- **"NEW DEAL" GRAFFITI**
- **"WATCH THE SKIES" GRAFFITI**
- **NEW UTOPIA PLAYBILL READS, "Tarkovsky Season This Week: *The Sacrifice* and *Nostalgia*."**

For questions 28-33, identify the speaker of the quotation.

28. "What's dangerous in the hands of the multitudes is safe enough for those whose motives are beyond reproach." **THE COMMANDER**
29. "You go too far away and they just take you up to the Chemistry Lab and shoot you." **MOIRA**
30. "It's alright. It's Mayday. Go with them." **NICK**
31. "Because there is good and there is evil, and evil must be punished, even in the face of Armageddon." **KOVACS / RORSCHACH**
32. "It don't matter squat because inside thirty years the nukes are gonna be flyin' like maybugs. . . . And then Ozzy here is gonna be the smartest man on the cinder." **BLAKE / THE COMEDIAN**
33. "Do you seriously think I'd explain my masterstroke if there remained the slightest chance of you affecting its outcome? I did it thirty-five minutes ago." **VEIDT / OZYMANDIAS**