

**Grade 7**  
**Visual Art**  
**Term 1**

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## Art Elements and Design Principles

Every piece of artwork contains one, some or all of the art elements and design principles. So understanding these helps you create your own drawings and paintings, as well as enabling you to discuss, describe and interpret other artwork pieces.

### What are Art Elements?



Art elements are the ‘tools’ or ingredients used to create all artwork. They include **line**, **tone**, **texture**, **shape**, **form**, **space** and **colour**.



**Line** is a continuous mark on a page or any other surface, using a drawing tool such as a pen, pencil or brush. You can use line to create an outline or pattern, movement or texture, or to express feelings. There are many different types of lines – curved, straight, thick, thin, wiggly, jagged, wavy, curly and broken.

**Tone** is the lightness or darkness of a colour. Think of all the variations that you find in a black and white photograph. Lines can be used to create tone through different shading techniques. The five main shading techniques are hatching, cross-hatching, blending, scribbling and stippling.



**Texture** is how something looks or feels. You can use line, colour or shape to create a texture. Tactile texture is how a thing feels when you rub your hand over it. Visual texture is what the object's texture looks like. Sometimes there is a difference between how something looks and how

it feels. A young gem squash looks smooth, but if you touch it, you will realise that it has a prickly surface as the fine hairs on its peel feels like pins. The surface of a painting could be textured because of a thick layer of paint (**IMPASTO**) or because of the use of other materials such as sand, newsprint or string (**COLLAGE**).



**Shape** is a 2D object or area bordered by edges or an outline. There are geometric shapes like squares, circles, triangles and rectangles. Geometric shapes remind us of human-made or mechanical objects. There are

also organic shapes that have natural edges and no specific names. These shapes remind us of the natural world in which shapes or objects are usually irregular, uneven and always changing. They are often curve-edged.



**Form** is a 3D shape that has height, width and thickness. Examples are spheres, cubes, cylinders, cones and pyramids.



**Space** is the distances or areas around, between and within the images of your picture. It is the empty place in or around a work of art. Space can be positive (white/light) or negative (black/dark).

Space is important in an artwork as it can create a mood or atmosphere. If a lot of space is shown in an artwork, it may communicate a feeling of isolation, emptiness or even freedom. Some artworks look claustrophobic, which means that little space is left as many objects have been included. Viewers may feel uncomfortable, threatened or confused when they look at these artworks. Space is also important as it creates the context of the artwork – it shows what is going on around the main subject matter.

**Colour** is created when light strikes an object and the image and light is reflected back to the eye.

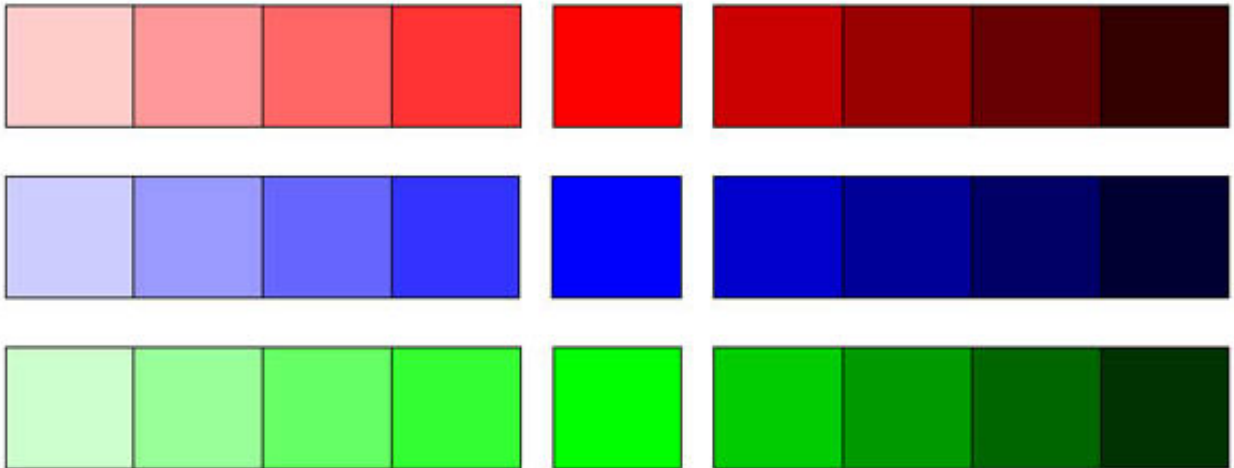
- **Primary colours** are the three basic colours which cannot be mixed. They include **red, blue** and **yellow**.
- **Secondary colours** are mixed from the primary colours. They are green=yellow and blue; orange=yellow and red; purple=red and blue.
- **Tertiary colours** are a mix of a primary colour with a secondary colour, or a mix of two secondary colours.
- **Complementary colours** are opposite each other on the colour wheel. If you put two complementary colours together, the one will make the other look brighter. They are: orange and blue; red and green; purple and yellow.
- **Analogous colours** are two primary colours and the secondary colours in-between, For example blue and yellow (the primary parents) and all the greens in-between (children).
- **Warm colours** remind you of the sun: red, orange, yellow.
- **Cool colours** remind you of water: blue, green, purple.
- **Monochromatic colour** is a single colour and its tints and shades.
- A **tint** is when you add **white** to a colour.
- A **tone** is when you add **black** to a colour.
- A **hue** is the name of a colour.
- **Intensity** is the brightness or dullness of a colour.
- **Value** is the lightness and darkness of a colour.

Colour wheel

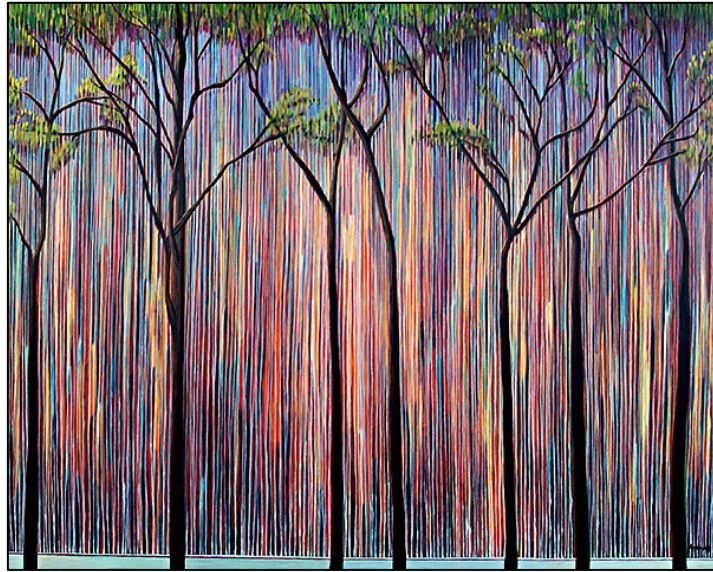


Tints

Shades

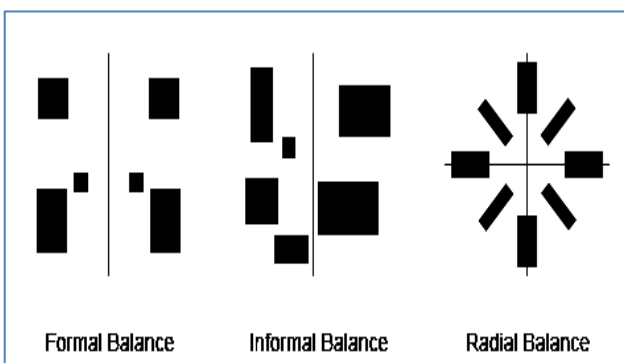


## What are Design Principles?



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Design principles are the basic units that make up any artwork. They include **balance**, **contrast**, **emphasis**, **proportion**, **pattern**, **rhythm**, **unity/harmony** and **variety**.

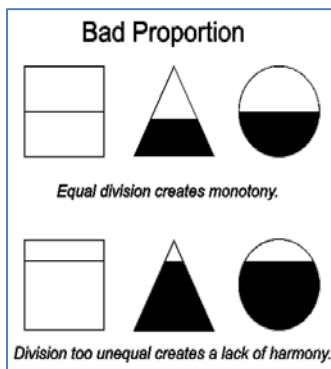
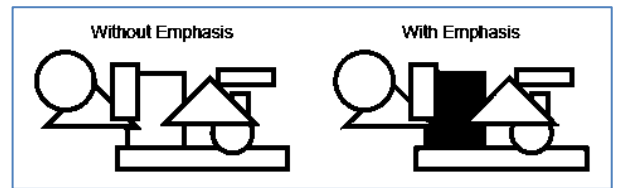


**Balance** is created in an artwork by using the art elements of line, shape and colour. An artwork can be **symmetrical** (also known as formal), where both sides are the same, or **asymmetrical** (also known as informal) where each side is different, but equal. Or an artwork can be **radial**, coming out from a central point.

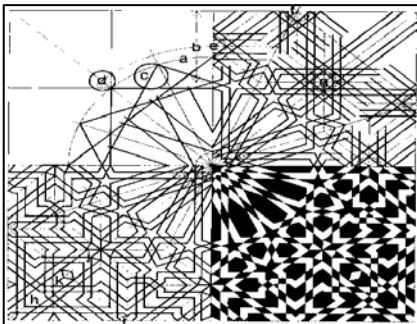
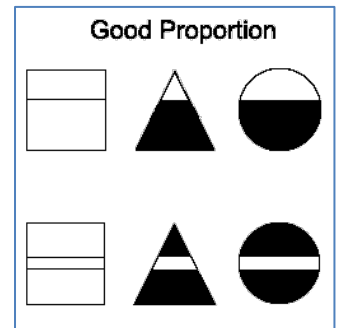


**Contrast** is used when different elements are put next to each other to make something easier to see. For example, you create contrast when you put a pale colour next to a dark colour. Contrast can describe differences in shape or form. Surface qualities or textures can be in contrast, for example rough next to smooth.

**Emphasis** is used to make certain parts of the artwork stand out so that they become the focal point or where your eye goes first. You can create the focal point in different ways, such as with contrasting shapes, forms or colours; with directional lines to lead the eye, with pattern or details to highlight areas, and with contrast of size to focus attention. By emphasising certain areas in a picture, the artist subordinates other areas. **Subordination** means to make something less important than something else. In most artworks the background is subordinated.



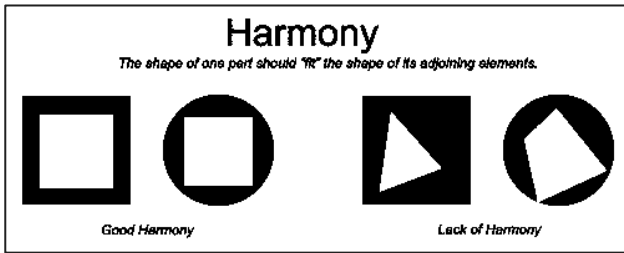
**Proportion** is about the size or position of an object compared to another. For example, an object in the foreground of a picture needs to be much larger than an object in the background. The foreground is in the front; the middle ground is in the centre; and the background is at the back.



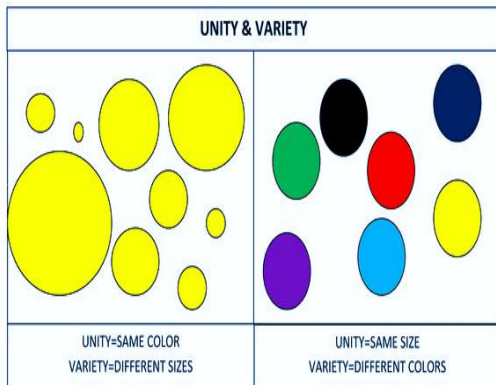
**Pattern** is lines, colours or shapes repeated over and over in a planned way.

**Rhythm** is created when you repeat art elements and create patterns (just like music). Have you ever watched a fence or a crop of mealies as you drove by? The movement of the fence poles or rows of mealies as you passed by created a visual rhythm.





**Unity/harmony** is when different parts of an artwork feel as though they fit and work together, there is a sense of unity or harmony.



**Variety** is created by making something in the artwork look different to the rest. This often makes it more interesting. Variety, contrast and harmony work together to give unity. But too much variety leads to confusion, and too little leads to boredom. For example, if an artist were to paint a bowl of apples and all the apples are exactly the same size, shape, colour and tone, the painting will be boring.

### As an artist, what do you need to observe?

The world around you is filled with many interesting things. The more closely you can look at something, observing all the details, the better your drawing and painting skills will be. Use some or all of your senses to help you observe the world around you – your eyes, ears, sense of smell, touch and your feelings. When you observe or look closely at an artwork, focus on the artwork as a whole, then start to look at the art elements and design principles. Look at details such as size, decoration and how the objects are placed together.





## Masks



Traditional African masks are made and used for rituals, marriages, deaths and initiations ceremonies. Many of the masks are worn by tribesmen and women to communicate with their ancestors. These masks are often carved from natural materials like wood. They are then painted with natural paints and dyes from nature, and decorated with beads, shells, raffia (a type of grass) and flattened metal strips. More elaborate masks are made from ivory and bronze for kings and chiefs. African masks can be a combination of animal and human forms. Many of the masks are made symmetrically.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, famous Cubist artists like Pablo Picasso and George Braque were inspired by African masks when they were brought to Europe for an exhibition. The bold use of geometric shapes and patterned lines was of great interest to them and inspired their artworks.



Romuald Hazoume is an artist from West Africa. He was born in 1962 in Republic of Benin. He turns everything he lays his hands on into a work of art. He uses rubbish that other people discard and creates masks and faces from them. These masks are art works and are displayed in galleries all over the world.



Masks have now developed into something we see most on superheroes. Masks play an important role in most superhero story as they form many functions for the superhero.

Their masks help protect their identity and often contain some gadgets which aid them in fighting crime, but most important of all is that their mask helps make them identifiable as a superhero.

By putting on the mask the hero is assuming a new identity which becomes their alter ego. This person may be completely different to the person underneath.



## Visual Literacy

Visual literacy is the ability to 'read' a visual text. This can be a painting, sculpture, drawing or even a photograph. You will learn how to use the art elements you have learnt to help you analyse visual images.

### Activity 1

Look at the Captain America comic book cover and answer the following questions.



1. Do you think this instalment of the Captain America comic series is going to be a happy story? Give a reason for your answer. (2)
2. Has the artist used full or empty space? Explain your answer. (2)
3. Why do you think the artist used light blues and black in the background? (1)

### Activity 2

Look at The Mighty Thor comic book cover and answer the following questions.

1. The artist used mainly warm colours. What emotion does this convey? (1)
2. What is the main subject of the picture? (1)
3. Do you think this story is going to have a good ending? Give a reason from the picture for your answer. (2)
4. How has the artist used empty space to help convey emotion in the picture? (1)



## Featured Artist

### **Jack Kirby**

Jack Kirby was an American comic book artist, writer, and editor, widely regarded as one of the medium's major innovators and one of its most prolific and influential creators. He was born in New York on 28 August 1917.

Along with Stan Lee, Kirby help create many of the iconic superheroes that we know and love today. This artist deserves recognition for both visionary and artistic merit; after all, without him, there'd be no Hulk, Thor, Captain America, X-Men, Fantastic Four, or Avengers—amongst others. His style became the face of Marvel (Stan Lee being the voice) in that time. Interesting is the fact that, prior to his years of affluence at Marvel, he was drafted into war a few months after D-Day, honourably discharged with some awards of recognition a few years later. So it's easy to see where those themes of unabashed patriotism and altruistic heroism would come into play.



## Art Movement

### The Art of Comic Books

Comic books began as a dime-store novelty, and since then, they have gone through countless transformations, artistic explorations, public excises, declines and revivals.

The history of comic book styles is one as dynamic as the stories they contain, shaped not only by the hands of countless writers and artists but by millions of readers across nearly a century. While there might not be any mutants or doomsday weapons in the actual history of comics, its panels are every bit as unpredictable.

### The Golden Age (1938-1950)



Characteristic of the Golden Age's idealism, superheroes were often used as a platform for instilling national pride and patriotism in the face of WWII.

The Golden Age was truly an idyllic time. There was a clear stylistic distinction between good and evil, and superheroes were nothing more than happy-go-lucky do-gooders that battled and always defeated villains motivated by money or world domination. And that's exactly why the comics of this age caught like wildfire. They fulfilled every kid's dream of gaining larger-than-life powers, effortlessly overcoming their bullies and leaping out of their colourless neighbourhoods into adventure.

Dropping literally out of the sky to kick off the Golden Age, Superman represents the comic book origin story. Newspaper comic strips (where the term 'comic' book comes from, incidentally) already existed along with radio shows featuring masked vigilantes like the Shadow. But Superman was the first super-powered muscle head to don a cape and skin-tight spandex to fight crime. Readers couldn't take their eyes off of him.

### **Art styles of the Golden Age of comics**

- Though printed in booklet form, comics did not deviate far from their newspaper ancestors, telling a straightforward story through basic sequential images.
- Cartooning was simple as publishers were not yet at the level of investing in or attracting serious artists.
- Panels were laid out in basic square grids, often full of more dialogue than imagery.



Originating during this era was one of the most memorable vigilantes along with one of the most often

## The Silver Age (1950-1971)



The comic book world of supernatural and alien powers made it an obvious target for colourful, abstract illustrations.

Not unlike the youth of its readers, the Golden Age was a time of whimsy and innocence that couldn't last forever. Fans were growing up—some of them returning home from a horrific World War—and the idea of an invincible, caped avenger casually overcoming the world's great evils became less and less convincing. These factors led to a decline in superhero stories and a rise in comic titles that would appeal to more adult sensibilities—the Silver Age of Comic Books.

Publishers explored racier genres, and by far the most successful was horror. These gruesome tales single-handedly rescued the industry from its fate as a half-remembered fad. The visual styles mimed these darker themes, mixing in surrealistic and sometimes disturbing imagery. These comic books were so effectively grisly that morality groups—already raging against comics as “junk food for the young mind”—now regarded them as the indisputable tools of the devil, despite the fact that majority of its readership was adults. The result, of forced censorship, was a growing pains era of artistic experimentation, fast and loose writing and political suppression all rolled into one.

## Art styles of the Silver Age of comics



Artist Roy Lichtenstein's pop art gem, "Drowning Girl," turns the traditional comic panel on its head by portraying only a drowning

- Comics took their inspiration from art movements of the past, most notably surrealism, to illustrate the strange worlds in which their heroes lived.
- With comics now established as a lucrative medium, cover images relied less on cheap, attention-grabbing tactics and instead became an artistic representation of the issue's themes or a protagonist's state of mind.
- Comic books found true artistic expression for the first time in the Pop Art movement, which appropriated commercial objects such as product labels, magazine ads and comics for the purpose of fine art.

### The Bronze Age (1971-1980)

As suggested by its name, the Bronze Age wasn't as lustrous as the carefree Golden Age or the experimental Silver Age. Having exhausted just about every dastardly scheme a super-villain could hatch, comics gave its heroes even tougher enemies to confront.



It all began with a story in Spider-man in which the hero's best friend suffers a drug overdose. Spider-man is helpless, and his alter ego, Peter Parker, has no choice but to take the stage, relying solely on his gifts of persuasion and empathy to save the day. The CCA opposed the inclusion of drug topics, whatever the message, but Marvel published the issue anyway with reader support. This caused the public to lose respect for the CCA and led to the end of censorship, paving the way for darker stories (more on that later).

Around this time, writer Chris Claremont revived a cancelled Silver Age series about a ragtag group of mutants called the X-men (heard of it?). Adding racially diverse, international characters to its cast, Claremont's second wave of mutants still had godly powers, but now they were reviled by the public for that very reason. Echoing the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement, prejudice against the X-men's genetic traits became the comic's most enduring theme. While the Golden Age portrayed social topics like World War in typical Golden Age fashion—unfailing virtue and easy justice—Bronze Age comics dealt with the gritty realities of urban life in ways that had no real answer. Maybe Captain America could smack Hitler in the face, but how does a superhero attack the intangible foes of bigotry and addiction?

As the stories became more focused around gritty, realistic stories, the style of the imagery morphed to match.



Pencilers dropped their cartoony style and brought realism to

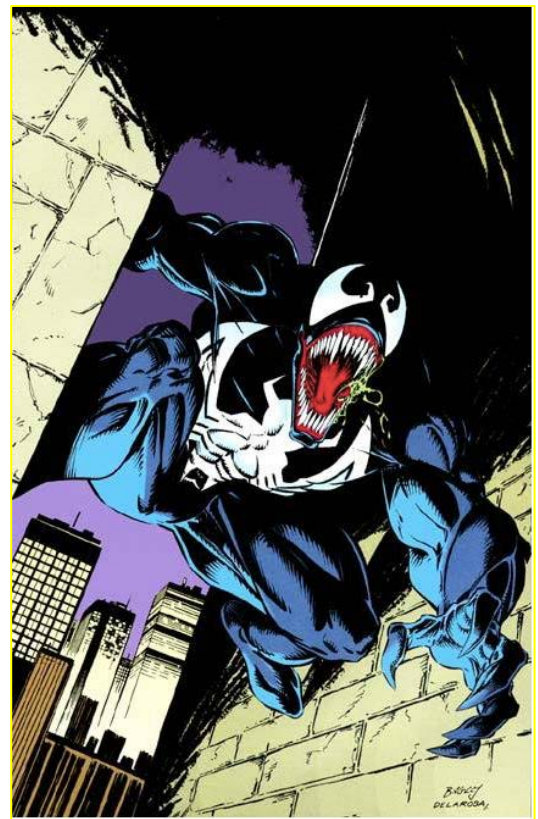
### Art styles of the Bronze Age of comic books

- Comics traded in surrealism and experimentation for photorealistic depictions of the urban landscape.
- The alter-ego side of the superhero's life is given more panel time, and sensational costumes took a backseat to depictions of everyday people.
- Depth of focus and lighting gave comics a cinematic style, heightening the reader's emotional connection.

### The Dark Age (1980-1993)

Unlike the actual Dark Ages, this era was where comic books achieved enlightenment. Until then, the Golden Age's uncomplicated right and wrong still echoed (if just subtly updated to suit the times). Here, writers threw all of it out the window and showed us that a comic book hero's world was just as gritty as the enemies he faced.

Stories like "The Dark Knight Returns" and "V for Vendetta" warned of an ominous future no amount of heroism could prevent. Writers crafted characters who were psychologically complex, often dangerously so. Alan Moore's "The Killing Joke" introduced us to a Joker who was more than a giggling jester but a frighteningly psychotic serial killer. "Watchmen" gave us heroes that were pushed to questionable actions by the very nature of the world they were trying to defend. During this age, the line between hero and villain wasn't just blurry; writers revealed that it never existed at all.



The influence of horror can be seen in Venom, with his unhinging jaw of razor teeth and body

Ironically, as the imagery in these comics was becoming darker and more stylized—playing with lighting and deep, dark, contrasting colours—the genre was thrust out of the shadows of pulp and into the light of literary awareness. The idea of a sustained comic as a single work of literature led to the publication of several graphic novels, culminating in Art

Spiegelman's "Maus," the first comic series to win a Pulitzer Prize. Comic books were finally regarded as a legitimate art form, as malleable and open to creative expression as any medium.

### Art styles of the Dark Age of comics

- Night was the prominent setting for virtually all stories of this age, leading to an art style that favoured strategic lighting and long shadows.
- Similarly, artists took their inspiration from hard-boiled noir films of the 40s and 50s, creating gloomy, dubious worlds of smoke, rain, alleyways and silhouettes.
- Silver Age horror comics influenced the Dark Age in a more psychological sense, with disturbing portraits and unnatural angles that created a perpetual sense of unease.

### The Ageless Age (1993-Present Day)

We've now reached the point in our journey across many colourful panels at which there is no definitive way to categorize the present "age." Comics have expanded into something without shape or borders—a nebulous mass of nerd wonder.

Advanced technology in film, television and video games has created an unstoppable juggernaut of adaptations, leading to an upsurge in comic book readers from all walks of life. Plus, the impact of Image Comics is still being felt, as readers continue their interest in indie books fueled by the industry's rampant commercialization. No longer restricted to publishing giants Marvel and D.C., writers are free to explore specialty publishers and niche markets, even foregoing traditional distribution channels by publishing their content on the internet.



Part space opera, part fantasy epic, part romance, *Saga's* colourful inking shuttles readers across the galaxy through abstract worlds.

One thing can be said about our current comic book age: it's a time when the superhero doesn't have to be heroic or dark or even present at all. Comic books can be as pulpy or

as serious or as just plain weird as you want them to be. Like the invincible Superman of the optimistic Golden Age, now is a time when anything is possible.

### **Art styles of the Ageless Age of comics**

- Advanced technology has led to creative illustrative techniques—everything from digital painting to 3D modelling.
- The line between film and comic is now so thin that some series are adapted into motion comics, adding voice actors and animation to the panels with no change to the art itself.
- The ubiquity of publishers has led to a wide variety of art styles. Design now varies drastically, depending on the nature of the comic and the choices of the creator (rather than the uniform “in-house” styles of the past).



Taking design inspiration (and part of its name) from George Romero’s “Night of the Living Dead,” “The Walking Dead” uses black and white to paint the epic story of humans surviving a perpetual zombie nightmare.