

Question 1. From the MESSAGE, MEDIUM, CONTEXT research strand lectures, choose a theme, movement, or selection of artists or designers that relate to your practise or interests, and construct a 2,500 – word essay. Critically assess primary themes, key writers, and relevant practitioners.

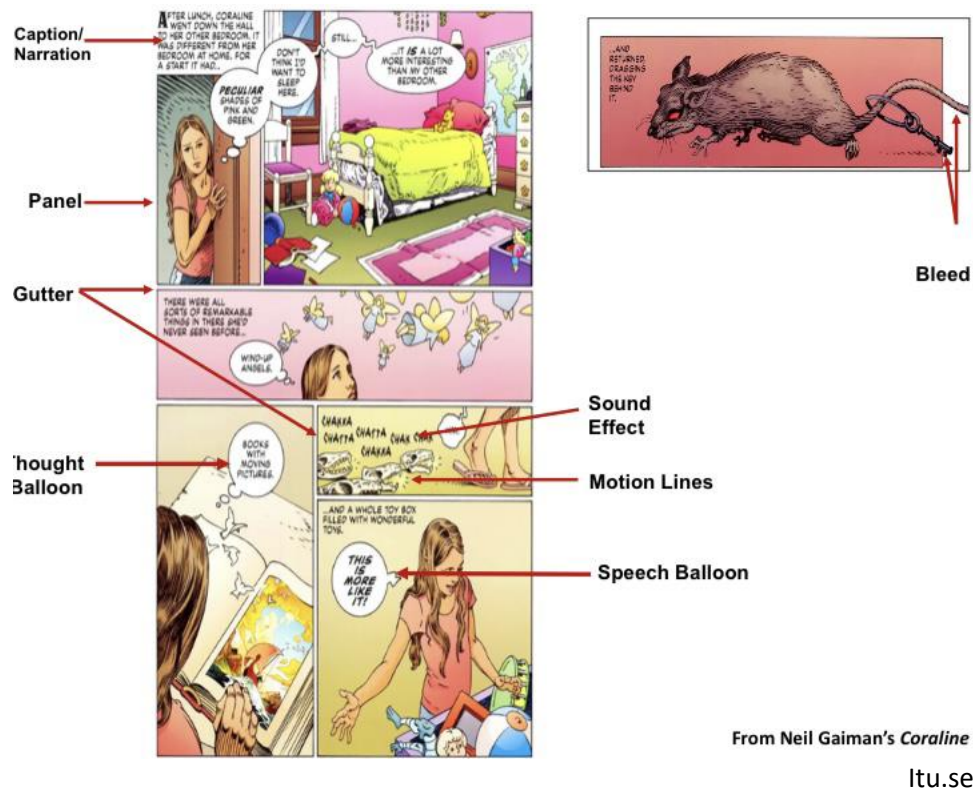
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In this essay I will be talking about what a graphic novel is, it's common themes and content and comparing 2 different graphic novel illustrators and their works. Firstly I will be talking all about what graphic novels are in their entirety. A graphic novel has more or less the same content as a comic book but instead of serialised narratives, graphic novels contain complete narratives. Graphic novels also usually consist of far more pages than a common comic book. Unlike comic books which are mostly known for focusing on superhero's – graphic novels cover a range of subjects such as autobiographies, information books, true stories, memoirs, and the classic superhero stories and manga. Graphic novels use a combination of image and text in a sequence of panels to communicate a story to the viewer. The "gutter" (the spaces between the panels) is an important part of a graphic novel, as it is up to the viewer to imagine what has happened in that space between the panel before and after it. A "bleed" is when an image goes beyond the borders of the page – this allows for more space to draw and to create the appearance of the art escaping the page. Speech bubbles in various designs are used to convey a particular tone of the text and thought bubbles are used in a simple way to show a character's inner monologue. Special effects sounds are also commonly used to give a sense of the sound on the page – words such as BANG, ZING, CRASH! Etc. Foreshortening and an exaggerated use of perspective is also commonly used to create interesting unique visuals. Tone is very important as a lot of graphic novels – particularly the manga type are strictly in black and grey, which means strong tones are used to give environments and characters life and structure. And lastly dynamic poses are used to show a character in motion e.g leaping, dancing, running.



Having analysed graphic novels as a whole we move to study notable illustrators in this area and their creations. I will in particular be comparing a Japanese manga and a classic graphic novel, looking at the creator themselves and their notable work.

The first graphic novel illustrator I will be looking at is Sui Ishida. Sui Ishida is a 33-year-old manga illustrator from Japan. Sui Ishida isn't his real name and he is completely anonymous to mainstream media, no one other than his team knows who he is or what he looks like. He is best known for his dark fantasy series Tokyo Ghoul which is about a character called Kaneki Ken who gets turned into a ghoul after meeting one. The series ran from 2011 to 2014 in Shueisha's Weekly Young Jump Magazine – which was turned into a light novel and anime series in 2014. Tokyo Ghoul was then translated into English and it went on to top The New York Times Best Seller list in 2015. Now that I have discussed Sui Ishida himself, I will now go on to analyse a few pages from the Tokyo Ghoul manga.

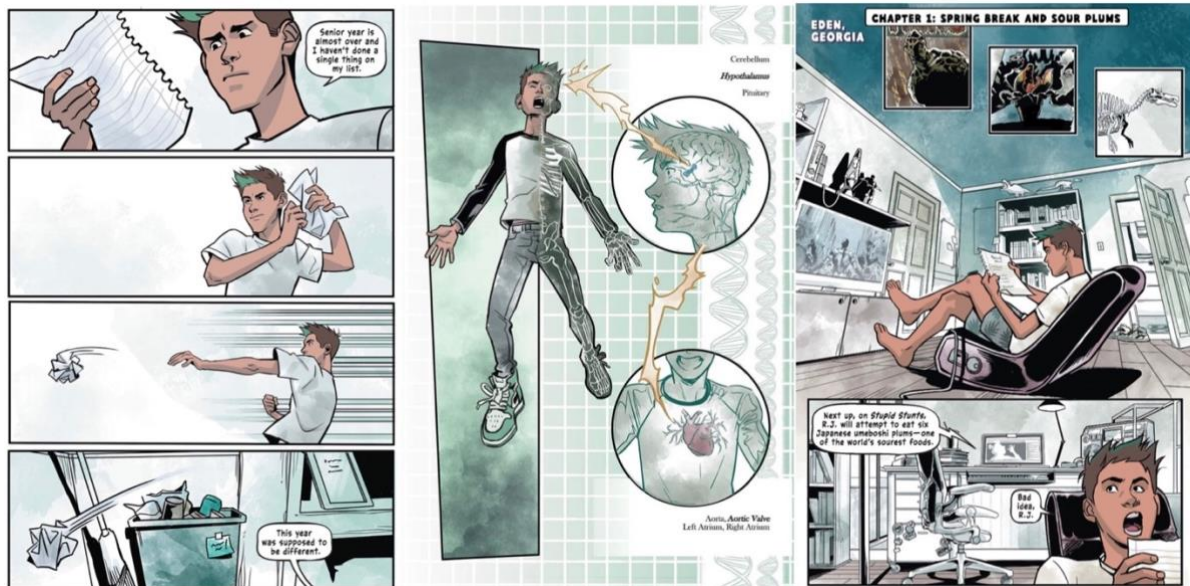
almost messy line work and harsh

shading in the pages on the left and right illuminate the story's turbulent events, whereas in the centre image the line work is much more clean and refined. This is a common theme through the manga, the harsh dark line work is used for the more intense scary scenes whereas the clean line work is used for the more calm scenes. The line work in relation to the characters in particular convey a great deal alone – the distressed frantic lines of the pages on the left and right give the characters a deranged feeling whereas the clean lines of the centre page make the characters look more youthful and naïve. This is a great indicator to the viewer of what to expect next when following the panels in the manga. Secondly I will be talking about shape and the layout. Panels themselves are their own visual language, the page layout influences how the images interact by managing their number, size, and arrangement on the page. The page on the left is a great example of using the size to put an emphasis on the content – having such a graphic frightening image cover a whole page accentuates the intensity of the scene and the character's emotions. The middle page shows how size can be used on a smaller scale to accentuate certain images while still having smaller less relevant panels on the page also. Also the shapes of the speech and sound effect bubbles are shaped in a way that shows the impact and abruptness. Thirdly I will be discussing colour, as manga is traditionally black and grey and not full colour I will be talking about the tone and depth more than anything. As we can see in the pages on the left and right, Ishida uses a range of black and grey in varying intensity to create contrast. Ishida goes into far more detail and renders the images a lot more on the action-based scenes than he does compared to the centre page's relaxed scene. This could be due to wanting to emphasise the action scenes or maybe he puts in more effort due to enjoying rendering and creating these scenes much more. Another value to analyse is texture, as Ishida's work is

abundant in texture particularly in his action scenes. The rough intense way he uses line to shade his drawings give a harsh abrasive texture - which works really well with the concentrated tonal quality. Lastly I'll discuss perspective. Ishida uses a range of interesting perspectives as can be seen in all of the pages such as front on, worms eye view, birds-eye view, profile etc. It is arguable that he has done this to make the story much more visually stimulating for the viewer as that seems to be his main goal in creating such an interesting narrative.

I will now be analysing the graphic novel creator Gabriel Picolo and his notable work and comparing them to Sui Ishida – particularly highlighting the difference between Japanese manga and regular graphic novels. Gabriel Picolo is a 26-year-old illustrator from Brazil. He is best known for his graphic novel *Raven* which was a New York Best Time Seller and USA Today bestseller. He gained popularity for his 365 Days of Doodles project which is where he sketched drawings of characters everyday for a year. The reason for this project was that he had recently quit college to pursue his art career and realised he was out of practice and used the doodle a day as a way to re-connect to art. In an interview Picolo said "I started drawing as a kid but then I came back to it when I was in high school because I was starting to follow manga, cartoons, and comics. (Knight 2020)" Here we see similarities in that both Picolo and Ishida studied and delved into manga and that they have both been on the New York Best Time Seller list. Picolo posted his fan art of Teen Titan characters re-imagined as teenagers online which gained the attention of DC comics who got in touch with him about creating a graphic novel. Likewise with Sui Ishida, Gabriel Picolo also does his art digitally majority of the time using software such as ClipStudio. Now that I have discussed Gabriel

Piccolo himself I'll now go on to analyse a few pages from the Teen Titans Beast Boy graphic novel.



Gabriel Picolo, Teen Titans Beast Boy

I have selected 3 pages from various points in the story as they show different techniques and visuals. This graphic novel is a teen fiction about a teenage boy called Garfield Logan who accepts a dare which results in him undergoing major physical changes and gaining abilities. Picolo stated in an interview “I wanted to create the same excitement I was feeling when I read and watched those characters. (Knight 2020)” Teen Titan the TV show and comics greatly inspired Picolo as he wanted to tell stories similar to the DC adaptations. It appealed to him as the heroes were young and coming into themselves and learning who they were and what type of people they wanted to be. Picolo explained, “I’m just more attracted to those kinds of stories. (Knight 2020)” Unlike Ishida who decided to deviate from his usual interests of romances and comedies to take on a new approach – Gabriel continued with the type of art he has always done and was passionate about. Alike the analysis I did with Ishidas work I will focus on the main visual elements so that any

comparisons I draw will be in order and better

structured. Firstly I will be making comparisons of the line work. Pico's line work is a lot more clean and refined in every panel compared to Ishida's line variations. I believe this is due to DC Comics influence on Pico's art style. Even beast boy's character design consists of simple bold lines. These lines help to give the character a more dynamic flowing design.

Secondly I will be talking about shape and layout. As we can see in the centre page Pico has used circular panels to create points of focus. You would never see this shape in Ishida's work and very rarely in Japanese manga at all as manga mostly uses rectangle or sharp angular panels. Alike Ishida, Pico has used larger panels to emphasise certain parts of the scene. A very important difference in layout between Japanese manga and regular graphic novels is the Japanese manga is read right to left where as regular graphic novels are read left to right – It is arguable Japanese strictly use angular panels as it makes following the narrative easier for the reader. Thirdly I'll compare the colour used. This is the biggest difference between regular graphic novels and Japanese manga as manga is usually strictly black and grey. Pico has used a palette of various shades of blue and green, which I surmise is to correlate with beast boy's hair colour and green animal forms. A notable technique Pico uses is taking advantage of the negative space. The overall palette is quite minimalist but it works well with Pico's art style. Another value to analyse that ties into well with the colour is texture. Throughout the novel Pico has used a dry brush effect to give the colour a water colour wash effect – complete opposites in terms of intensity of texture compared to Ishida's work. This is likely to spruce up the pages considering the minimal palette. And lastly I will analyse the perspective. This is an area where Japanese manga and regular graphic novels are pretty much the same – Pico has a wide range of different perspectives to keep the visuals interesting and eye catching much like Ishida's

work. In conclusion I have learnt a lot about Sui Ishida and Gabriel Pico through my research. Most importantly learnt the similarities and differences between Japanese manga and regular graphic novels. The similarities that stand out the most are perspective – both examples showed a great use of perspective to keep the narrative visually engaging for the viewer. Line – both use bold lines to emphasise shape and design but Japanese manga notably uses a larger variety of line types for example the comparison between the harsh frantic lines Ishida uses compare to the sleek bold lines Pico used. The differences that contrast the most are colour – a stark difference since Japanese manga uses only black and grey whereas regular graphic novels commonly consist of at least some colour. Texture – this is the biggest difference out of the whole comparison. Japanese manga focuses a lot more on intense heavy texture to convey a mood where as regular graphic novels rely on more muted types of texture such as the water-colour wash effect Pico used to give his illustrations a softer appearance. It is apparent that both of these artists styles have been moulded from the influences around them when they were researching and learning, Ishida's work is typical of Japanese manga and Pico's work is typical of classic action graphic novels. From the comparison, the main conclusion I have found is that in either style that a graphic novel is curated – both are equally rich in visuals and narrative. This is important as it allows people to easily explore each type and have the same possibility of enjoyment of either.

Bibliography

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Image 4: Garcia, K. and Picolo, G. (2020) *Teen Titans: Beast Boy*, DC Comics, United States

Image 5: Ishida, S. (2011) *Tokyo Ghoul*, Shueisha, Japan

Image 6: Ishida, S. (2011) *Tokyo Ghoul*, Shueisha, Japan

Image 7: Ishida, S. (2011) *Tokyo Ghoul*, Shueisha, Japan

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