

# Styles of Comics

## A Short History of Comics

Comic strips have changed a lot since their beginnings in the twentieth century.

One definition of a comic strip is, “A series of adjacent drawn images, usually arranged horizontally, that are designed to be read as a narrative or a chronological sequence. (...) Words may be introduced within or near each image, or they may be dispensed with altogether.” This definition from the Encyclopaedia Britannica covers many kinds of storytelling based on a series of images.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the term *comic strip* in the sense of “a group of cartoons in narrative sequence” was first used in 1913. The French equivalent of the word, *bande dessinée* (literally, “drawn strip”) is older. It goes back to 1833, when the Swiss artist Rodolphe Töpffer, created *L’Histoire de M. Jabot* (*The Story of Mr. Jabot*).

Still, some people consider that comic strips date back to the British painter William Hogarth and his story told in a series of six pictures, *A Harlot’s Progress* (1731); to Hokusai’s sketches; to old European engravings that included speech bubbles; to medieval illuminations, or even to prehistoric cave paintings!

Comic strips began to take shape as we now know them in the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the United States, with a series called *The Yellow Kid* (1896). It was a mischievous, irreverent art form published in the newspaper.

Comic strips and comic books didn’t really catch on until the 1930s and ‘40s. That was when super-hero comic books, with Superman as the most iconic one, appeared in the the United States; Spirou and Tintin became the figureheads of Franco-Belgian comics, and Osamu Tezuka’s first manga appeared in Japan. At that time, comics were considered strictly for kids.

With the emergence of 1960s and ‘70s counter-culture, comics opened up to a more adult readership, and broke with the conventions of entertainment for children.

Since then, comic strips have been acquiring far greater cultural legitimacy. Embracing both fiction and non-fiction, what is sometimes known as “the ninth art,” now covers every subject, from history and auto-biography to other non-fiction genres. And thanks to digital technologies, comics as an art form are continually evolving.

With the BDnF app, we are offering you a way of taking hold of this means of expression and using it to write your own story!

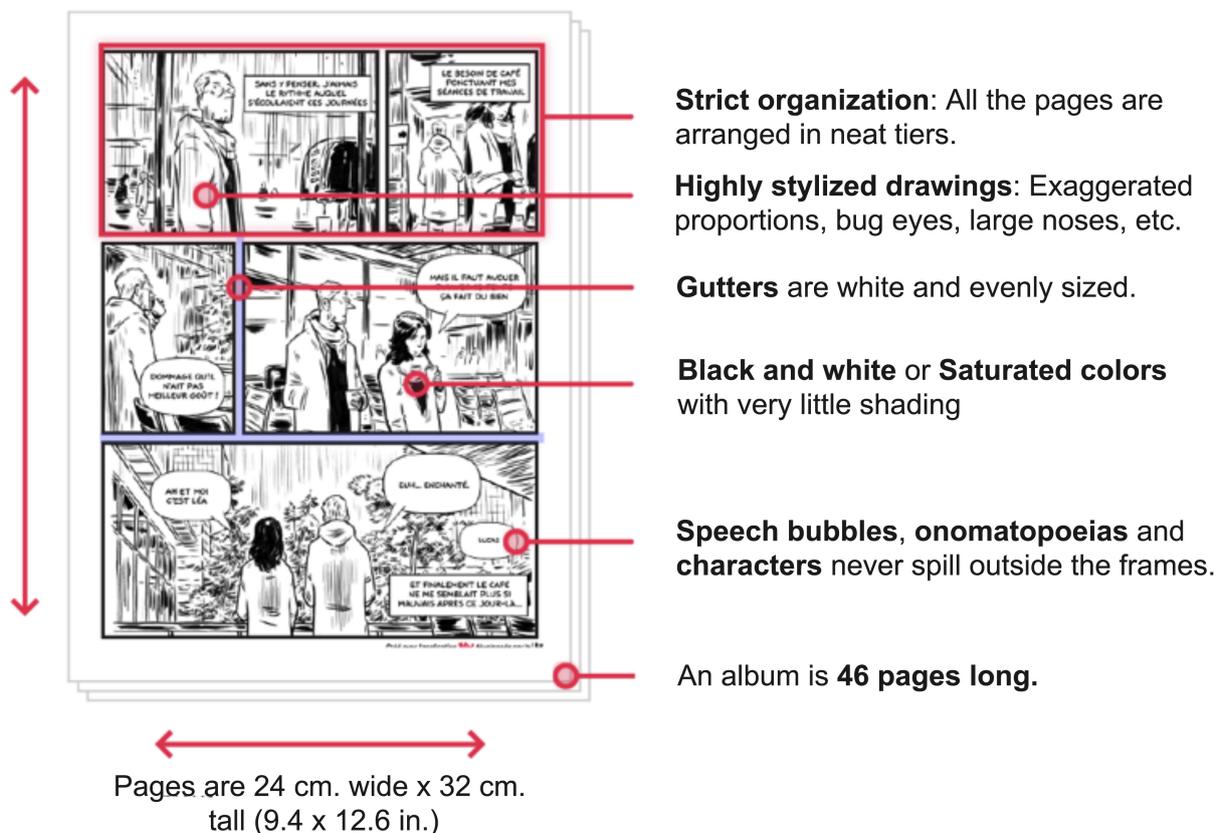
Many countries have developed their own conventions and styles of comics, depending on their cultural outlook. Here are the main ones:

# Franco-Belgian Comics

F.Y.I.

Two distinctive characteristics of Franco-Belgian comics are their artistic variety and the care taken in making the books themselves. They are usually hard-cover editions called albums (which are larger than U.S. comic books) with a compilation of stories in different genres (for kids, SF, fantasy, detective, etc.) for all ages.

## The Basic Rules



by Adrien Martin

## Major Works and Cult Classics

Asterix, Largo Winch, Seuls, Sillage, Thorgal, Blueberry, Les carnets de Cerise, Emile Bravo, Pico Bogue and more

## **Graphic Novels**

### **F.Y.I.**

Having appeared in the early 1970s in the United States and developed rapidly in the 2000s, graphic novels allowed comic-book authors and artists to shake off the conventions of genre themes and of Franco-Belgian albums and to present more personal narratives. With complete freedom in the number of pages, and drawings – often in black and white – with a more spontaneous style, graphic novels offer a more human reading experience. Typical features of their style include duo-tone printing, rectangular frames, a higher text/image ration (long captions), much higher page counts, and a drawing style that leans towards caricature.

### **Major Works and Cult Classics**

Persepolis, The Arab of the Future, Polina, Maus, My Favorite Thing Is Monsters

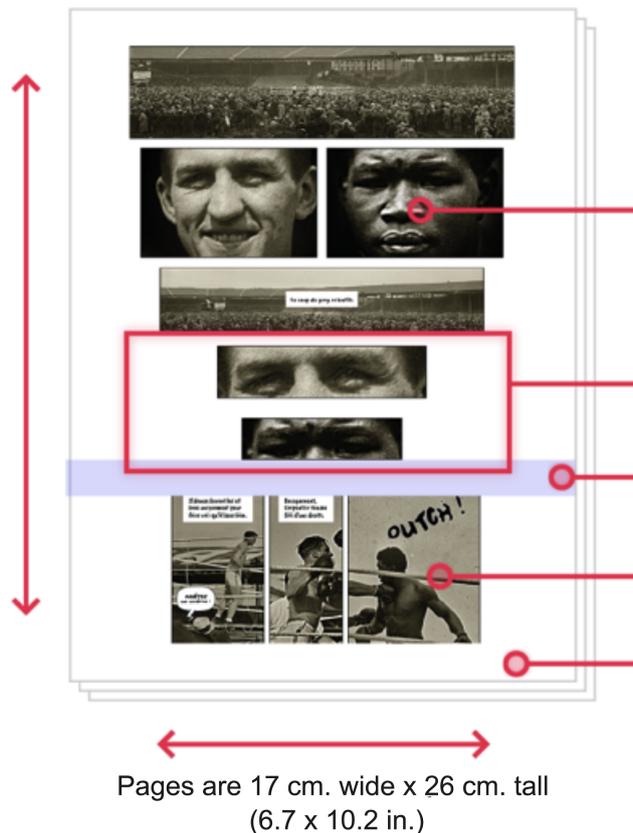
## **Super-Hero Comics**

### **F.Y.I.**

The appearance of Superman in 1938 is often seen as the birth of the super-hero genre. Two publishing houses soon led the pack, and they still dominate the market to this day: DC Comics, with Batman and Superman; and Marvel, which came to prominence in the 1960s, thanks to Spiderman and the Avengers. Nowadays, there are hundreds of super-heroes published by a range of different publishing houses.

Super heroes' continued success is due to the fact that they have evolved to stay abreast with the times, and that their adventures often reflect the mores of an era.

## The Basic Rules



**Realistic drawing style** with more or less realistic shading.

**Flexible, cinematic organization:** Frames can be tilted and dynamic.

**Gutters can be black or white,** sometimes in color, and their thickness varies.

**Speech bubbles, onomatopoeias and characters** sometimes spill outside the frames.

Comic books are **22 pages** long.

Pages are 17 cm. wide x 26 cm. tall  
(6.7 x 10.2 in.)

by Raphaël Meyssan

## Major Works and Cult Classics

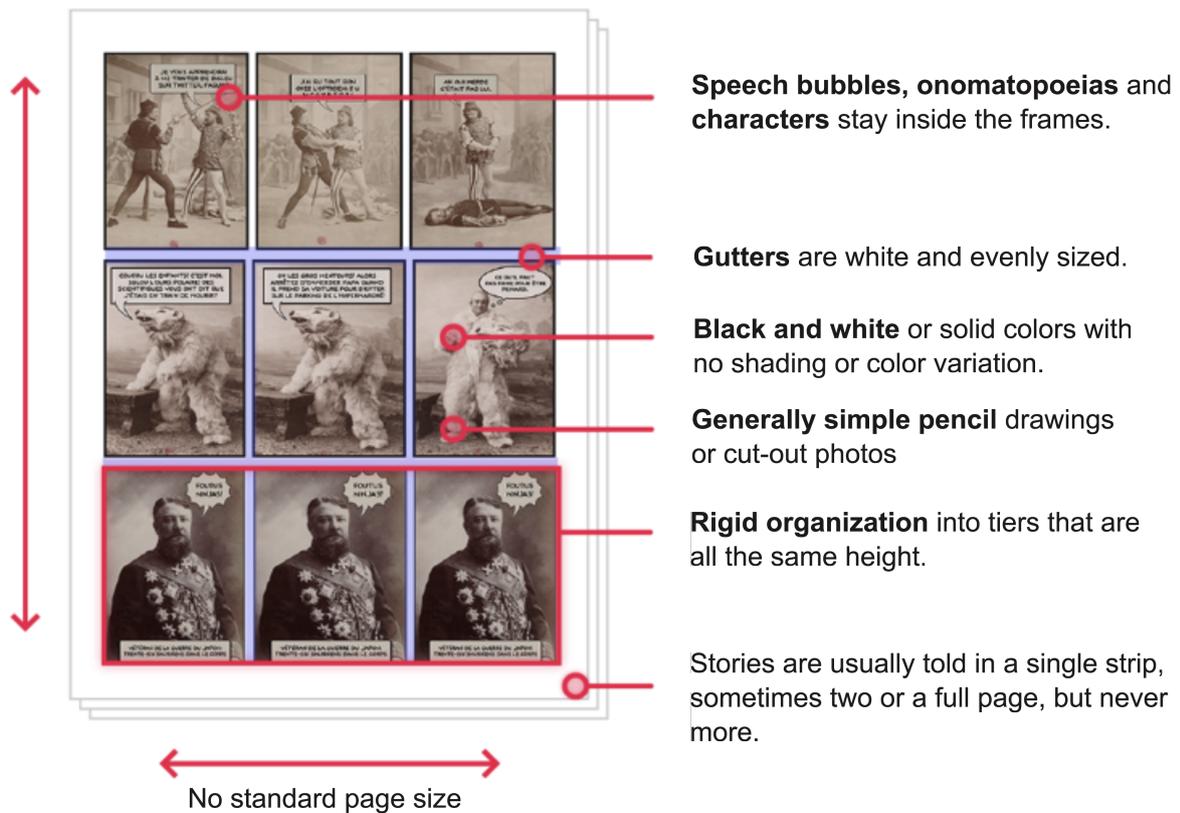
Batman, Wonder Woman, Harley Quinn, Spiderman, X-Men, The Walking Dead; Hellboy, Bone

# Comic Strips

F.Y.I.

Comic strips were born a long time ago, during the nineteenth century. *The Yellow Kid*, launched in 1890, is considered to be one of the very first. Historically, comic strips were published in newspapers and magazines, often in black and white. Nowadays, they can be found in color and on line, where they are still very popular.

## The Basic Rules



by Un Faux Graphiste : <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/unfographiste/>

## Major Works and Cult Classics

Snoopy, Garfield, Calvin and Hobbes, Dilbert, Popeye, The Katzenjammer Kids

# Manga

## F.Y.I.

Manga (the word is the same in the singular and the plural) define Japanese comics. They caught on massively after World War II. Osamu Tezuka is seen as a precursor of the modern, dynamic manga. Mangakas (manga artists) usually work in black and white, and their stories are pre-published in periodicals with very varied themes. Readership is highly segmented before coming out as paperback books. Shōnen, for example, are manga for boys; while shōjo are manga for girls; and seinen are more psychologically complex or for more mature readers.

## The Basic Rules

They are read from right to left. ←

Flexible, cinematic organization: Frames can be tilted and dynamic.

Black and white images with gray backgrounds.

Gutters are white, in varied thicknesses, or sometimes black for flashbacks.

Highly stylized drawings (large, expressive eyes; small noses; exaggerated proportions).

Speech bubbles, onomatopoeias and characters sometimes spill outside the frames.

One chapter is 20 pages long; a volume is 8 or 9

Pages are 14 cm. wide x 21 cm. tall  
(5.5 x 8.3 in.)

## Major Works and Cult Classics

One Piece; Nausicaa, Akira, Ranma 1/2, My Hero Academia, Astro Boy

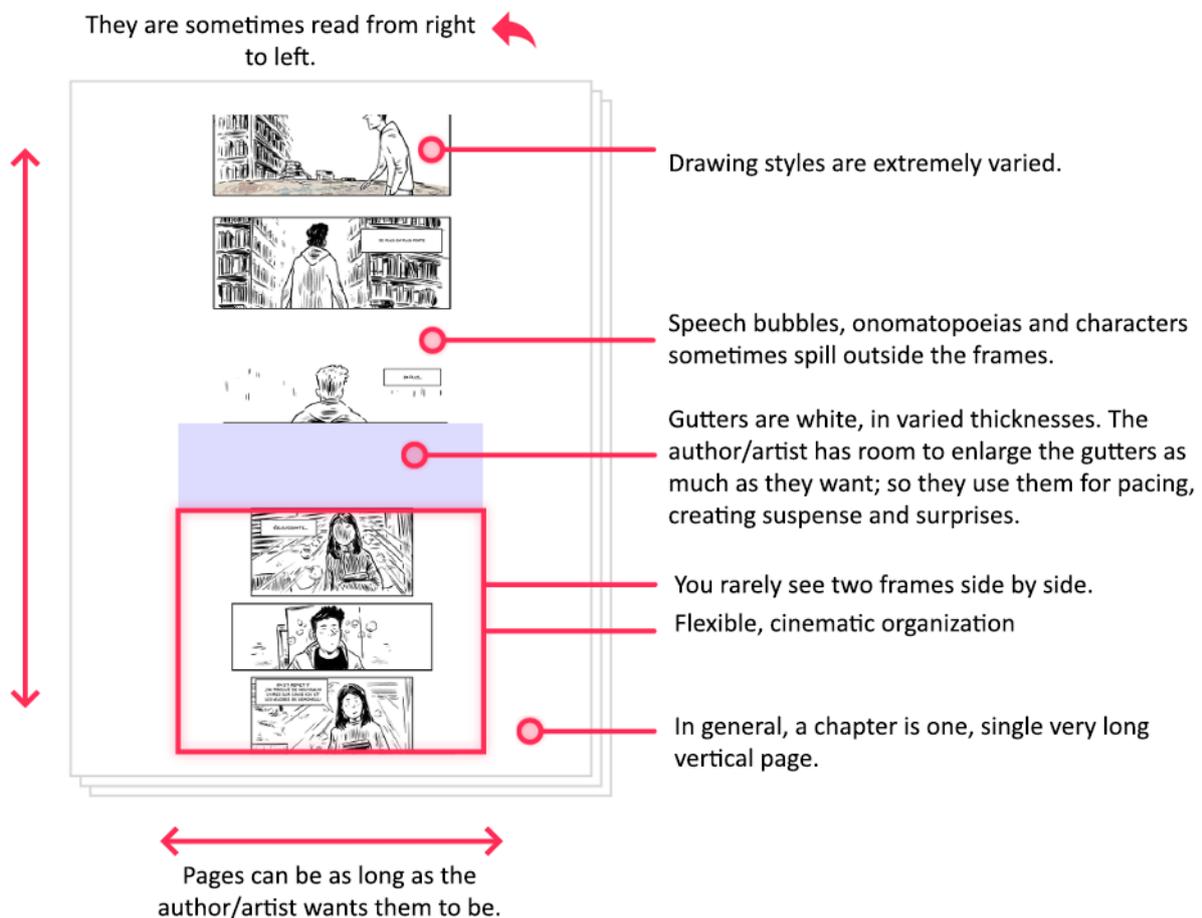
# Webtoons

F.Y.I.

Webtoons were invented in the 2000s, in South Korea. Nowadays, people all over the world create webtoons, but the Koreans are still the undisputed masters of the genre. Webtoons' most distinguishing characteristic is the length of their pages, which have been conceived for scrolling down to read on a smartphone. The "scrolling graphic novel" is a French variation on the theme; you read it by scrolling from left to right.

Webtoons play off of the codes of manga and revamp the rules and limits of comic-book page composition.

## The Basic Rules



by Adrien Martin

## Major Works and Cult Classics

Noblesse, The Gamer, Relife, Bouhland, Tower of God, Honey Blood