

Jonathan Evans

ENGL 102.

Dr. Evans

2 Sept. 2018

Practice Summary and Analysis on McCloud

Research Question and Argument

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. HarperPerennial, 1994.

Summary

Scott McCloud wishes that people would take comic books seriously. He uses his text, *Understanding Comics*, to promote and demonstrate to people how comic books work and function. He starts by defining comics as: “Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or produce and aesthetic response in the viewer” (9). In other words, McCloud’s definition sets up a more complex understanding of how comics work and communicate with their audiences. McCloud’s work attempts to discuss how pictures work together in sequence and how meaning and perception influence the treatment of words and images both separately and together. In particular, he points out the history and potential impactful power of comics to convey ideas. He even gets into how the reader plays a part in relating panels to panels, as well as the types of panels and panel transitions that are used in comics. Finally, McCloud hints at future potential and highlights the impact of the past on comics, not to mention their “bending” of space and time, in shaping the ultimate ways that it serves to communicate from person and to person.

Analysis

When one attempts to go deeper into McCloud’s work, one might start by trying to answer the question McCloud very obviously presents us with himself: What is the purpose of this? What is the purpose of why McCloud is writing this book. In the opening of the work, McCloud notes that he always felt that comics had “some kind of hidden power” (3) and by the end of his work he notes that “the possibilities for comics are...endless” (212). These bookending statements are key to showing us his purpose. It’s in the title: *Understanding Comics*. Not only is his purpose to help audiences understand comics but his recounting of how they do so, where they started, and how they function form the message of McCloud: to help you understand comics. McCloud uses the written and visual forms to convey his message of what comics are, how they work, and why they are important to the audience of the reader. Now, as for who his audience might be is a broad one, but generally it would be people interested in comics or understanding them. More importantly, the medium of a graphic novel or extended comic helps show us that he wants to use the artform of comics to drive home the ultimate potential and message. This is central to his purpose as well in helping us, the audience, appreciate what comics have to offer.