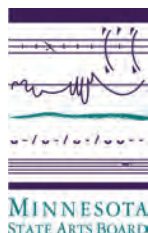


TAKE & MAKE

Graphic Memoir with Lynn Von Sien

Adult

Create a Mini-Graphic Memoir!



This program, sponsored by Arrowhead Library System, is funded in part or in whole with money from Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACFH) and is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board.

Graphic Memoir Take & Make with Lynn Von Sien

Create a Mini-Graphic Memoir!

What makes graphic memoir different from a conventional memoir is that you're essentially giving people the movie version of your story! So let's think cinematically, and narrow it down to one scene. We are going to reach down into your memory banks and pull out a comic.

1. First, we write!

Make a list of three to five favorite memories of your life so far.

Pick one that you find to be the most visually captivating, and answer the following questions:

What happened?

Were you alone or with someone?

Where were you and why were you there?

Did anyone (including yourself) or anything change that day?

When was this, and what was the season and weather like?

List any sensory information you can recall, things that you could hear, see, smell, touch, taste or sense.

Recall any dialog, inner monologue, random thoughts or observations that took place.

How did you feel? Give an emotional weather report. (No pressure, but this is the most important element IMHO!)

Also very important: What was the takeaway from this moment in time? What was the wisdom gleaned, that you could pass along to your reader?

Just for fun: Close your eyes, and imagine a scene from that day as if it were a movie. How are the shots framed? What is the lighting like? Is the editing fast and frantic, or slow and dreamlike? If you could have any song as the soundtrack, what would it be? If there were a narrator, what would they say? Open your eyes and jot things down:

Congrats! You now have plenty of material for a mini-memoir comic. So now, write out a formal script for each of the eight panels using any of the elements below.

- Description of a drawing to be made
- Narration
- Dialog or Monologue
- Thought
- Sound effect
- Arrow quip
- Footnote

You can use the space below and/or the back of this sheet for scripting. (Or, feel free to move on to drawing and wing it.) The main challenge in graphic literature is deciding what to show and what to tell. For instance, instead of saying “It was a windy autumn day” you can toss those words in favor of a leaf blowing through your panel.

2. Time to fill the panels with drawings, balloons, and words!* Stick figures are allowed! *Can you make a graphic memoir without any words and balloons at all? Yes, yes you can. This is your mini-graphic memoir, a place for storytelling as you see fit!

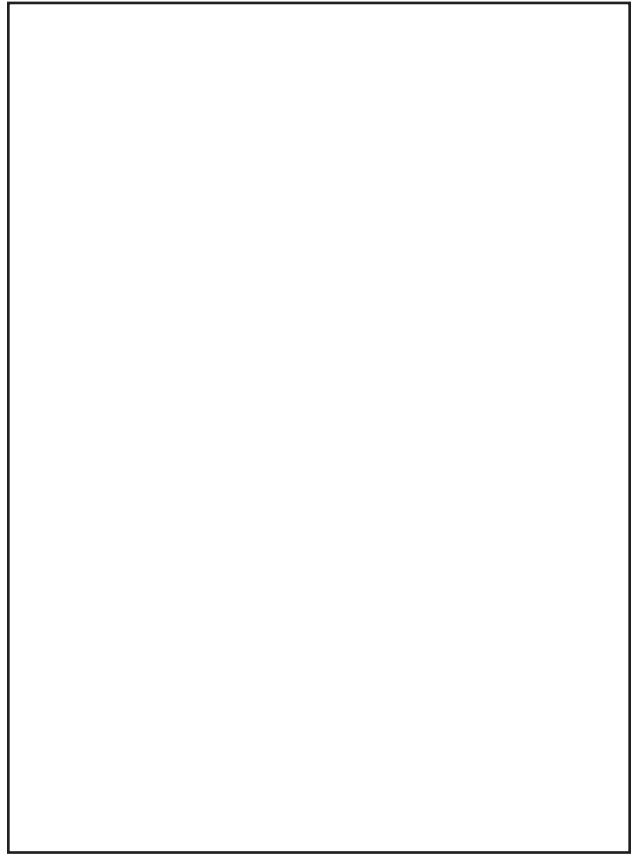
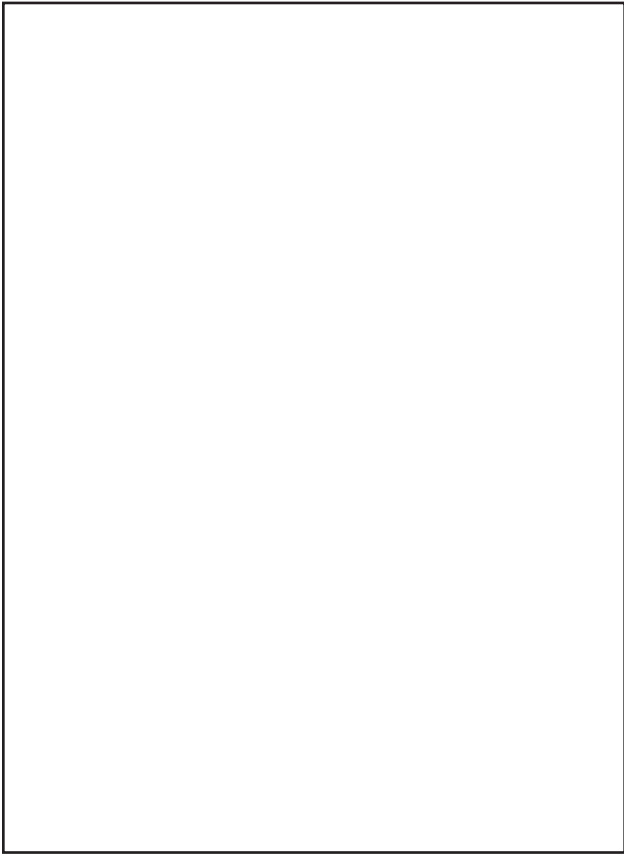
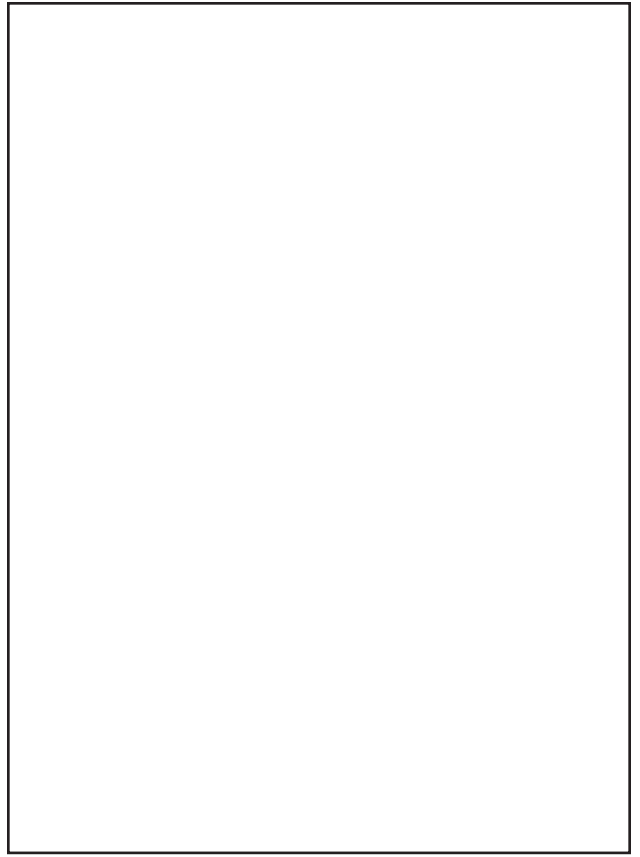
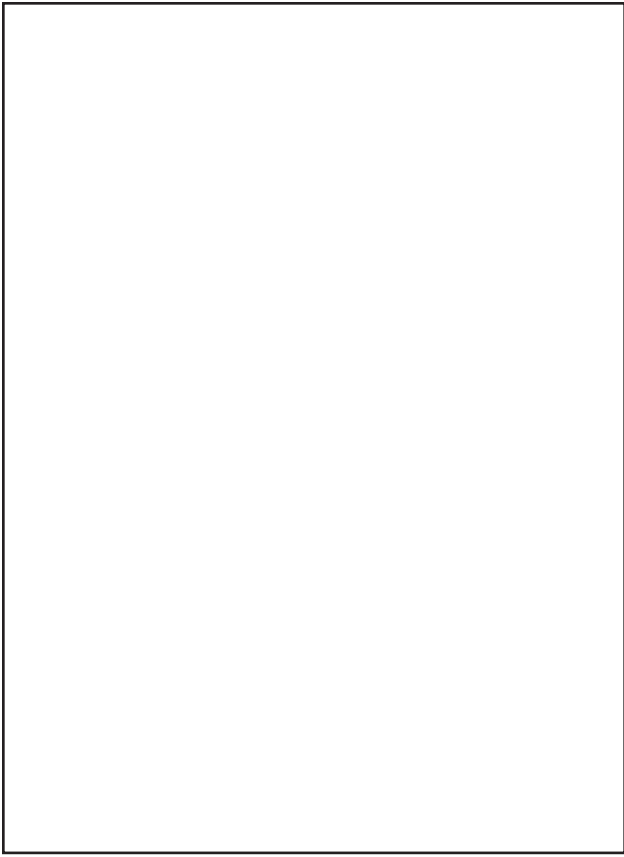
You’ll find a template on the next two pages to create your comic on. You can also use your own blank paper and get creative with the panels, or go digital with Procreate.

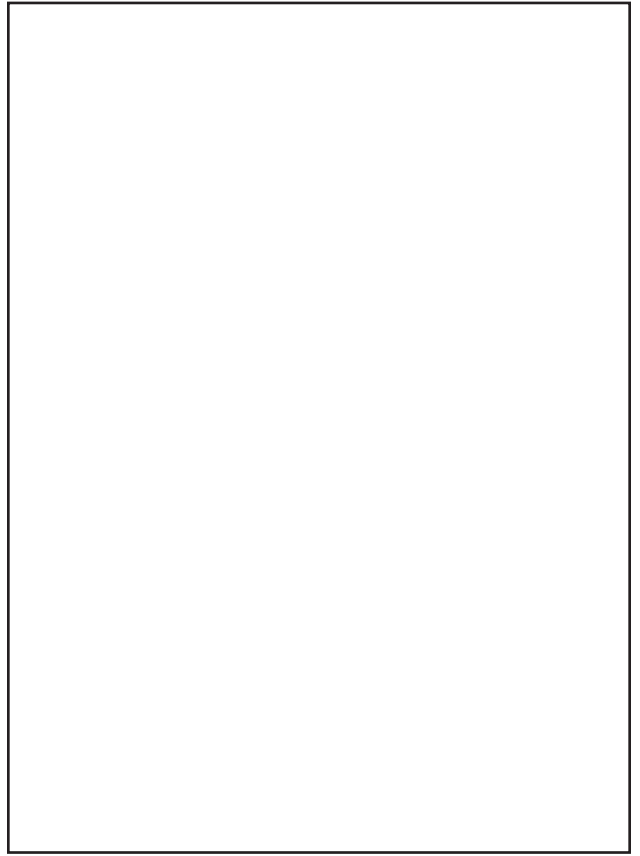
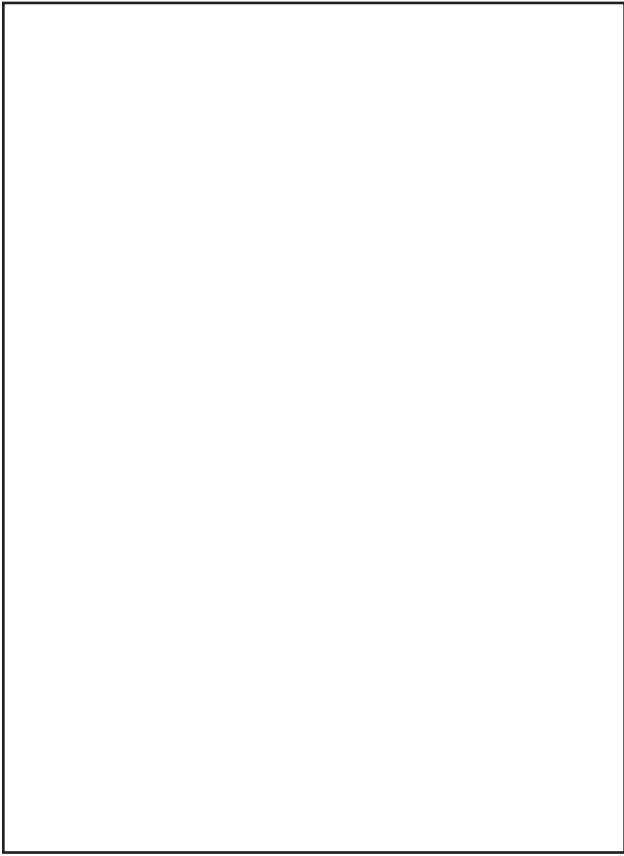
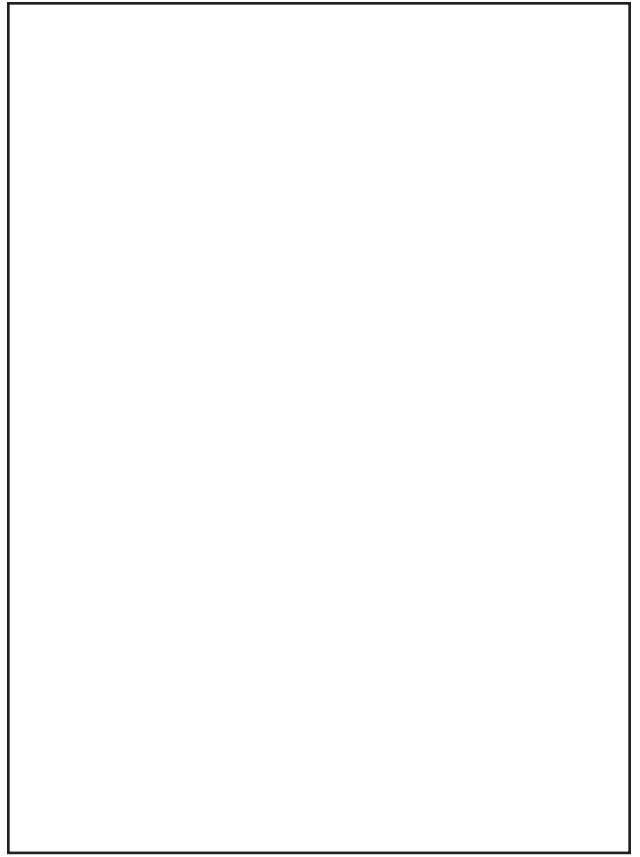
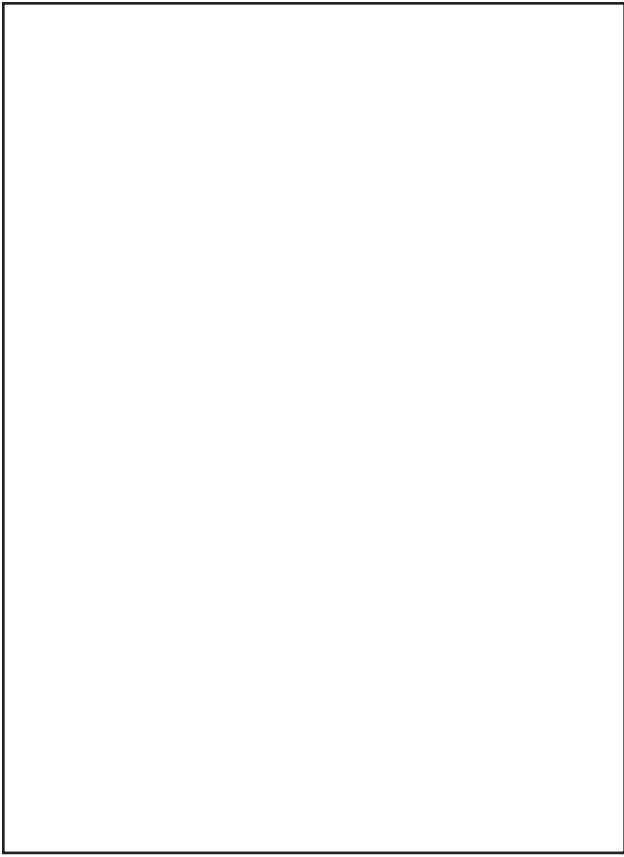
Here is a handy comics grammar guide:

<https://blamobot.com/pages/comic-book-grammar-tradition>

Instructions for using the template:

- 1. Print out the next two pages double-sided**
- 2. Cut in two following the dotted line.**
- 3. Fold both pieces hamburger orientation**
- 4. Staple together at the fold**
- 5. Draw**





A quick balloon reference:

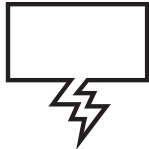
Dialog:



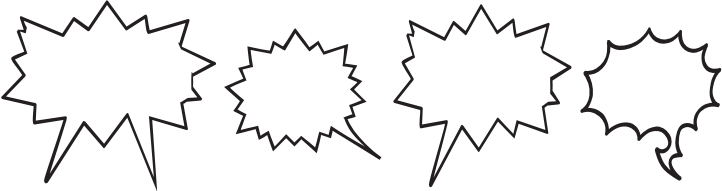
Thoughts:



Dialog coming from an object, like a TV



Exclamations and shouting:



Here is an excerpt from a mini-comic I put together in InDesign and formatted for web.

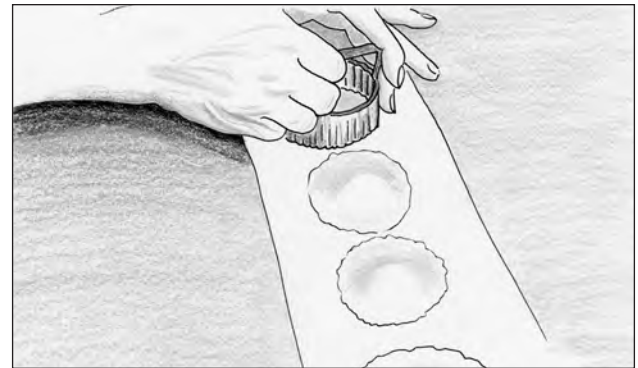
Every summer we drove from Minneapolis to Newark, New Jersey to visit my Dad's side of the family. It took 2 very long days.



There were many tranquil moments when the four of us just quietly existed together.



We'd eat ice-cold sandwiches by the side of the road. White bread, ham, mayonnaise and lettuce. It saved money.



We all looked forward to my grandma's cooking. Hand made cheese ravioli and sauce that simmered all day, filling the house with the intense aroma of fresh garlic, herbs and tomatoes stewing and thickening in a pot.

This sauce was referred to at the table as gravy. "Please pass the gravy" meant the red sauce, not some kind of brown goo.

(Always use a wooden spoon to stir the red sauce.)



How lovely to think of that smell while trapped in a hot metal box hurtling down the interstate, assaulted by the stink of cow poo or toxic sludge from Lake Erie.

The years came and went, things looked the same.

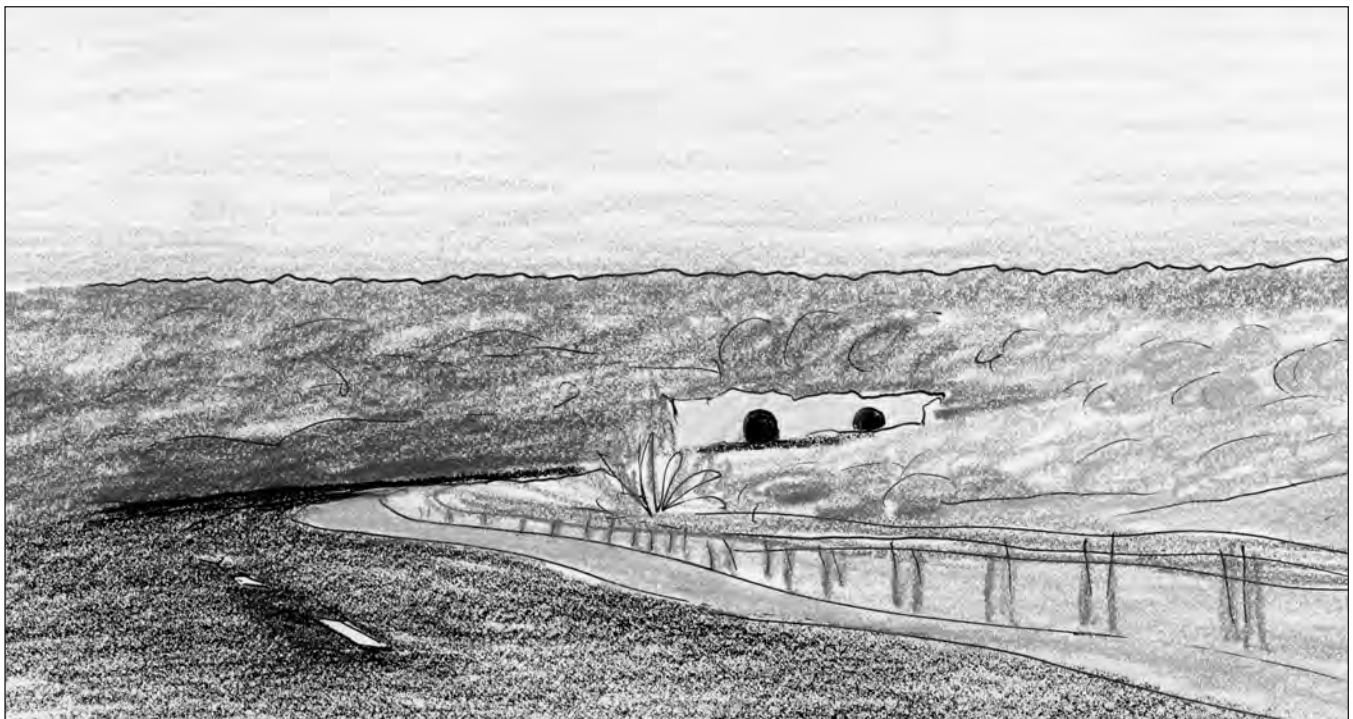
Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois ⇌



Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania ⇌



Pennsylvania is long.



Learning Resources

(Not an exhaustive list! These are what I've found the most helpful, personally)

Comics Instructional Books:

Lynda Barry

Making Comics <https://a.co/d/eCVuRDj>

Syllabus: Notes from an Accidental Professor <https://a.co/d/cUw4m2J>

What It Is <https://a.co/d/6WMTvby>

Will Eisner

Comics and Sequential Art: Principles and Practices from the Legendary Cartoonist
<https://a.co/d/47oNMBV>

Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative <https://a.co/d/blwziuH>

*Expressive Anatomy for Comics and Narrative: Principles and Practices from the
Legendary Cartoonist* <https://a.co/d/6rSEYXK>

Tom Hart

The Art of the Graphic Memoir: Tell Your Story, Change Your Life <https://a.co/d/hFIFl6F>

Scott McCloud

Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga and Graphic Novels <https://a.co/d/e90ITEy>

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art <https://a.co/d/cHPQw1L>

Reinventing Comics: The Evolution of an Art Form <https://a.co/d/69lBqJe>

Classes and Communities:

Sequential Artists Workshop <https://www.sequentialartistsworkshop.org/>

Certificate program and a la carte classes (some are free!); Free Mighty Network group, fun Zooms, and many focus groups such as The Graphic Memoir Intensive Group that require a subscription fee. This school was founded by Tom Hart, Eisner-nominated cartoonist and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Rosalie Lightning*.

The Center for Cartoon Studies <https://www.cartoonstudies.org/>

MFA and Certificate programs, a la carte workshops, and more.

Videos:

Comics and trauma: Beth Trembley on the Art for All Podcast <https://youtu.be/8xMACNnAr5M?feature=shared>

Lynda Barry https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Lynda+Barry

Sequential Artists Workshop <https://www.youtube.com/@SAWcomicsworkshop>

Alison Bechdel https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Alison+Bechdel

Free Online How-To:

jessicaabel.com/visual-scripting-using-InDesign-to-write-comics/

Writing, Memoir and Drawing

Loft.org

Breaking Ground on Your Memoir: Craft, Inspiration, and Motivation for Memoir Writers

Brooke Warner and Linda Joy Myers <https://a.co/d/2OfKFOa>

The Magic of Memoir Brooke Warner and Linda Joy Myers <https://a.co/d/4SEddz7>

The Art of Memoir Mary Karr <https://a.co/d/1NmMMf1>

Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain Betty Edwards <https://a.co/d/6ZGgdhY>

Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life Anne Lamott <https://a.co/d/5lrCw2f>

Suggested Materials

If you can make an image with it, it's fair game for creating your graphic memoir! As long as it's your original artwork. Whatever medium you choose, ask yourself if it's the best way to visually represent your narrative. Here are some basics:

Sketch paper

Graphite pencils

Erasers (having a variety is nice, I like kneadable and Pentel hi-polymer the best)

Ink pens (So many to choose from! I like Copic markers and Uni-ball Vision Elite)

Bristol Board (ideal for ink)

Smooth surface for drawing, like masonite

Lightbox (If you want to ink on fresh paper, you can trace your pencil work. Also, there is no shame in tracing!)

Long reach stapler (excellent for putting mini-comics together)

My paper of choice: Canson Drawing, 90 LB (Takes ink and colored pencil well, and it has some warmth)

Software

Procreate (Many artists work in this exclusively)

InDesign (Industry standard for layout)

Miscellaneous

Create a font out of your handwriting! <https://www.calligraphr.com/en/>

A glossary of comics terminology: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_comics_terminology)

[Glossary_of_comics_terminology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_comics_terminology)

Graphic Memoir Reading Lists - YA

<https://www.readbrightly.com/graphic-novel-memoirs-every-teen-should-read/>

<https://sno-isle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/779984877/1722259060>

<https://bookriot.com/graphic-memoirs-for-young-readers/>

<https://readingmiddlegrade.com/graphic-memoirs-for-kids/>

This is new and highly recommended by me:

Monstrous: A Transracial Adoption Story Sarah Myer <https://a.co/d/b2JP4HN>

Graphic Memoir Reading Lists - Adult

<https://bookriot.com/100-must-read-graphic-memoirs/>

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/287.Best_Memoir_Graphic_Novels

Some personal favorites, in order of how they are on my messy bookshelves:

The Good Times Are Killing Me Lynda Barry

French Milk Lucy Knesley

Carnet de Voyage Craig Thompson

Look Again Beth Trembley

Palimpsest: Documents From a Korean Adoption Lisa Wool-Rim Sjöblom

Fun Home Alison Bechdel

Are You My Mother? Alison Bechdel

Rosalie Lightning Tom Hart

We Are On Our Own Miriam Katin

Letting It Go Miriam Katin

Good Talk Mira Jacob

Chartwell Manor Glenn Head

Stitches David Small

Maus Art Spiegelman

Today is the Last Day of The Rest of Your Life Ulli Lust

Darkroom - a memoir in black and white Lila Quintero Weaver

Life? or Theater? Charlotte Salomon

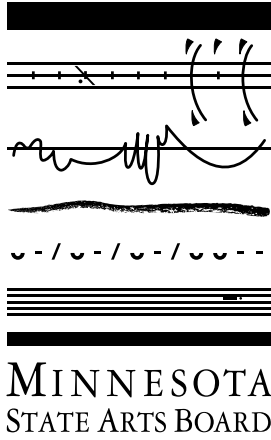
Diary of a Teenage Girl Phoebe Gloeckner

Passing for Human Liana Finck

Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant? Roz Chast

Dancing at the Pity Party Tyler Feder

Fab4 Mania Carol Tyler



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Lynn is a graphic memoirist living and working in northern Minnesota. She holds a B.S. in Design from the University of Minnesota ('87), and has been awarded an Arrowhead Regional Arts Council Grant (2021), and a Minnesota State Arts Board grant (2023). Her forthcoming graphic memoir *Snow Emergency Route* is a tragicomic account of caregiving her terminally ill adoptive mom. She has been published in [The Nib](#), [Solstice Literary Magazine](#) and several [SAW](#) anthologies. <https://www.lynnvonsien.com/>