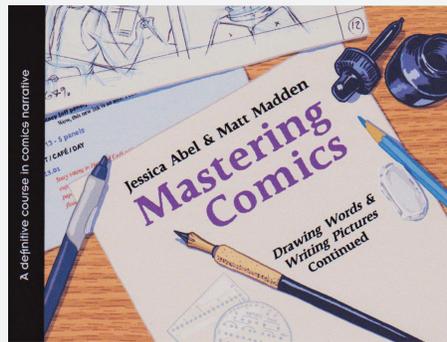


## Professional Reading

Abel, Jessica & Madden, Matt. *Mastering Comics: Drawing Words & Writing Pictures, Continued*. New York, NY: First Second, 2012.

Katie Monnin



On the side binding and front cover of Madden and Abel's *Mastering Comics*, readers of all ages will find a mighty-bold statement: "A definitive course in comics narrative!" As bold or ambitious as that may sound, their claim is 100 percent accurate. Abel and Madden have given decisive information for a wide-range audience from children to adults. Having written four books about teaching comics to children and young adults, I see the work of Abel and Madden as foundational to my work (and the work of every other comic book scholar I know). In other words, for anyone interested in learning about reading and writing comics, Abel and Madden are fundamental.

A potential partner or companion to their Eisner-nominated *Drawing Words & Writing Pictures* (2008), *Mastering Comics* continues Abel and Madden's discussion of how to write (and master!) comics by presenting their readers with an interactive, slightly more intense, and proactive resource for a variety of comic book stakeholders:

- grade school teachers (K–12);
- higher education professors of education, art, literature, and/or composition;
- students, writers, and artists of any age who seek either a passionate hobby or career in mastering comics;
- scholars of comic books;
- writers of comic books (who do not intend to draw their art, but instead give their artist visual direction); and
- any writer or artist working in either comics and/or any other visual storytelling format (like cartoons, films, webcomics, visual "apps," and more).

*Mastering Comics: Drawing Words & Writing Pictures* is structured and modeled after a 15-week collegiate semester course, and it identifies three types of artists (of any age) who want to master comics. First, they address “classroom students,” readers who are taking a course that has assigned this resource and uses a studio model of professional comic book writing and experience. “Ronins,” the modern version of those independent feudal Japanese Sumari, are next addressed. These readers can work through the course by themselves. And lastly, “nomads,” or readers purposefully working in groups, are aided with ways to collectively and collaboratively master comics.

Along with these witty self-identifying terms for readers of all ages, my personal favorite and most thoughtful aspect of *Mastering Comics* appears in its “special features.” Reader-friendly and intended to literally engage and challenge its readers to their fullest potential in regards to mastering comics, the text includes four interactive features (activities, homework, sidebars, and further reading boxes). While both the activities and homework call on the reader to practice what they have learned about mastering comics, the sidebars and further reading prompt the readers to enhance their knowledge about comics with advice and reading recommendations.

In addition to having produced one of the most practical and useful resources on comic book writing, Abel and Madden also host an interactive website that you can find at [dw-wp.com](http://dw-wp.com).

### About the Author

**Katie Monnin** is an associate professor in literacy at the University of North Florida and the author of *Teaching Graphic Novels* (2010), *Teaching Early Reader Comics and Graphic Novels* (2011), *Using Content Area Graphic Texts for Learning* (2012), *Teaching Reading Comprehension with Graphic Texts* (2013), and *Get Animated! Teaching Elementary Language Arts with 21st Century Children’s Cartoons* (late 2013).