



GAIL SIMONE @GailSimone

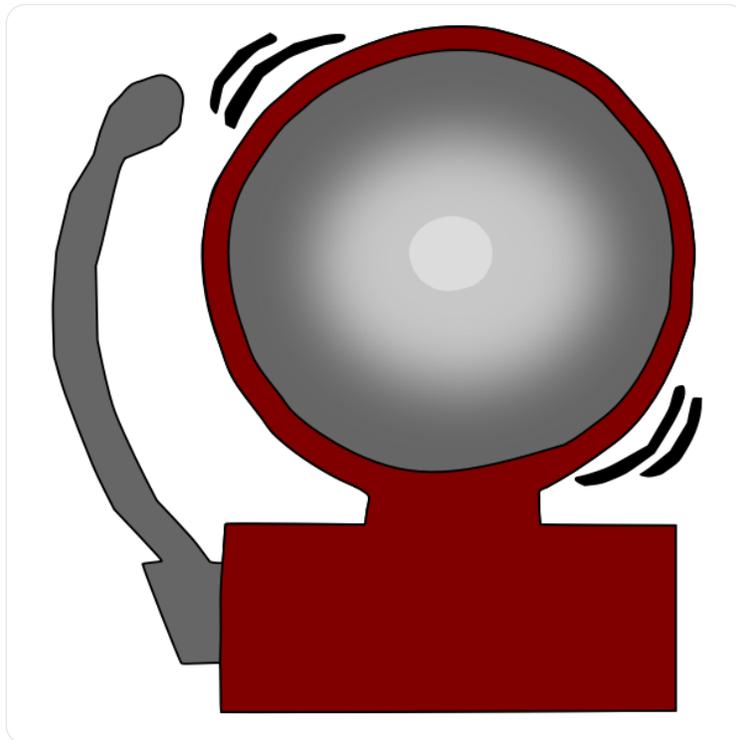
16 Mar 20 • 70 tweets • [GailSimone/status/123964362225506305](https://twitter.com/GailSimone/status/123964362225506305)



Here we go, student!

It's DAY FOUR of [#ComicsSchool!](https://twitter.com/hashtag/ComicsSchool)

CLASS IS IN SESSION!



Today, we have some cool stuff coming!

We have some guest professors, we will talk about your midterms, we will discuss some comics vocabulary...

...and more!

Stuff is going to be coming at you very fast, the time for introductions is over. Cool?

Let's go!

Now, I asked you to write a [#FirstPage](https://twitter.com/hashtag/FirstPage) with minimal guidelines. I did that on purpose, I want you to try things, then see how they might be done with lots of experience. Then I asked you to revise that first page.

Did you feel you made it better?

In most cases, you will, a revision, especially with a good, trusted Fred involved, will improve the work. Not always, but most of the time.

We're going to do the same with the [#Midterms](#), the First Half of your story.

But DON'T PANIC.

Remember, this isn't just "Here's What You Should Do."

This is part "Here Is What Might Work," and "Here Is How This Is Done In The Actual Industry."

So we are creating our OWN editorial notes, something almost every writer has to deal with in comics. Make sense?

The revisions do NOT mean starting over.

It means taking an unbiased look, asking for a Fred to take a look, and then incorporating that information into your story.

Think of it as Lego. You can replace a brick and the structure still stands.

We are simulating a very real world moment in almost all freelance comics, that we turned in the first draft, and got a few notes back.

It's part of your JOB to consider those notes. Make your case if you disagree, but don't argue JUST to argue. That helps NO ONE.

I will add that I used to be THE WORST at this, and had to learn to handle this better. Now I truly am grateful for the advice of great editors.

YOUR WORK WILL GET NOTES. It is not an affront to your talent or vision, I promise.

So your first homework today is to take a good, hard look at your first work. Don't punish yourself, don't second-guess everything. Say the dialog out loud. Have a Fred look at it.

Then use the tips presented today and do a quick revision. It might be easier than you think.

Now, I want you to take a moment, look at your [#midterms](#), and realize what you have accomplished already. It's a LOT.

Remember the Roadblock Box? With those obnoxious fears and excuses?

You are BEATING THEM.

Gold Star for EVERYONE. ✨

Seriously, I am very proud of you, and DELIGHTED at the quality of the stuff coming in. I can see growth even from the [#Springboards](#) to [#Midterms](#), and you have only been doing this for FOUR DAYS.

The industry is watching, too, I have had a TON of friends and editors chime in, and they, too, are happy to see what you are accomplishing.

Pat yourself on the back, for real, and then let's get down to business!

Remember too that the wonderful TA [@JesseNeon](#) has created a discord for this channel, which HUNDREDS of you have been using, AND he archived all the lessons so far.

Thanks, Jesse!

All right. I am going to put two page layouts in the next tweet. Tell me which one is correct.

Click on each, blow them up.



Those of you who said 'both,' are absolutely correct.

Let's take a quick look. The Batwoman spread is by one of the best artists in the biz, [@JHWilliamsIII](#). It's experimental, it's bravura, it takes guts to conceive and pull off AND the storytelling is IMMACULATE.

But that Archie page, you might not even look at it twice, you might just read it and move on.

But look again, knowing what you have learned doing your [#midterms](#).

I chose this page at random by google search.

Look at what that simple page accomplished.

It has at least two establishing shots.

It showcases EIGHT characters, all completely rendered.

It carries a snide joke, a 'reveal' as we discussed before, it moves the plot AND it varies the camera angle, all flawlessly.

Look at your list of Indisputable Truths.

Which one applies in the question above?

Everyone still with me?

Got it.

NOTHING IS WRONG IF IT WORKS.

A simple grid to a [@JHickman](#) page written in alien robot code, if it works, it's RIGHT.

Both of these layouts fill me with admiration and excitement.

The Archie one, imagine if I asked you, in your [#midterms](#), to include eight character, many with speaking roles, in two locations, with different emotional response.

Yet it's HERE, looking effortless.

While the BATWOMAN layout is simply seeing a master dancer do the ballet.

The point is, every comic you read?

Is a LESSON.

Grab any comic, think of how they made those choices.

It's a LESSON.

If any of this seems easy, I promise, I have seen people attempt that Batwoman level of complexity and fail. I have seen people muff even very simple-seeming sequentials, like those in the Archie book.

Read your comics for joy, but then read them as constructs. Okay?

NOTHING IS WRONG IF IT WORKS.

Okay, I am going to put some skin in the game and show a recent page from a story I did for [@DCComics](#), with art by the brilliant [@ColleenDoran](#).

We were asked to create a short story for an WW comic. It became a huge success, this is from the sequel.

What have we learned that we know about this first panel? What is that first panel?



It's an establishing shot, exactly. More than that, it's a pretty damn good one.

LOCATION: Boston

SITUATION: A fire

CLIFFHANGER MOMENT: Why is a child running TOWARDS a fire?

Remember when I said that establishing shots are story cheat codes?

What I mean by that is that Colleen doesn't have to reestablish that every time. Which allows panels like panel four to heighten tension. It has no background, Colleen doesn't have to draw the fire over and over.

Because we sent a handshake to the reader.

Now, [@ColleenDoran](#) is a master artist. She doesn't really NEED me as a writer, and she can throw fireworks with the best of them. She chose this pace and tone, and it absolutely elevates a simple story of trust and admiration.

But look at THIS next page...same writer, ME!

This is ALSO a Wonder Woman single page, written by me.

But it's DRAWN by George Perez!



13 PANELS.

12 SPEAKING ROLES

14 CHARACTERS (maybe, I lost count!).

Now, each of those artists could have swapped stories.

But because they are brilliant, my job is to STAY THE HELL OUT OF THEIR WAY.

And the result is, you get gorgeous pages like these.

NOTHING IS WRONG IF IT WORKS.

As a special treat, I asked faculty member [@TomKingTK](#) to speak a little bit about writing for an artist, and he gave a bit of the smartest advice I have ever heard.

PS. He was drinking in the boy's room with the upper classmen and has been punished by having to write LOBO.

"Always focus on your artist. Find out what they do best and then let them do it. Let that dictate how you tell your story. Write to make a beautiful comic, from that a compelling comic will naturally emerge."

That's from [@TomKingTK](#). And it's kind of brilliant, like his comics.

Okay. Keep all that in mind!

Now we talk about how to actually write your script!

I wanted you to write half of it without the guide ropes. Remember that these suggestions are JUST guide ropes.

NOTHING IS WRONG IF IT WORKS.

If you write a simple script and it punches hard, that's fantastic. If you write a complex one and it lingers, great.

At the end, I asked some editors for tips they give new writers. It's excellent stuff. We will get to that in a short bit.

FIRST. Your writing environment.

The important thing is to know yourself.

I need no distractions when I write. Not everyone has that luxury. There are health issues for some, both physical and mental, and environmental things to overcome.

So we work with what we have, but we also OPTIMIZE it.

Make your space as optimal as possible. And what is our Indisputable Truth about 'optimal?'

Exactly. We don't have the cabin by the lake from all the Stephen King movies with writers in them.

But we can make our space something welcoming and supportive. Banish bills and anything else that causes stress or hits your self-confidence.

If it helps to have photos of pets or friends or books around that inspire you, BY ALL MEANS do it.

Your space should be supportive, it should make you happy to sit there.

Make it as nice as you can for extended work.

Some people can write with music playing or even at conventions. I can't. Find your comfort level concentration that the circumstances allow. Enlist your family or roommates to help, if you can, ask them to understand you need time alone. Make them your allies, if you can.

Your space should reflect you. You are doing something to be proud of, and the less your workspace resembles a torture chamber, the better.

On my desk, I have a huge Godzilla statue, a Raiden statue, photos of my best friends, and more.

Good?

Believe it or not, these things give me strength even when I'm not looking at them.



Okay, now, you have DONE your springboard, you've DONE your outline.

You're ready to start.

You have a big choice here.

Full Script Or 'Marvel Method?'

These are the two main methods used by mainstream writers in comics. You may have heard of them. But briefly, FULL SCRIPT breaks down each page and panel for the artist, and included dialog. It possibly includes suggestions for layout and choreography.

That's what I use.

These things give me strength and make the process less sterile.

Put things you love in your space, things that inspire you!



The 'Marvel Method' which is a little bit misnamed since writers at all companies use one method or the other, is different.

The writer sends a plot idea, probably with rough page breakdowns. The artist draws it, the writer adds dialog, finally.

Neither method is superior. Some artists LOVE the Marvel Method because it gives them more freedom, even if it means more work for them.

It's purely a matter of preference.

Now, I am not going to break down every possible method for writing a comics script. As stated in previous lessons, everyone's is different. But as one of your exercises today, check out this resource: comicsexperience.com/scripts/

They have a LOT of methods. Pick one that makes sense to your brain, and follow it.

Chuck Dixon's scripts are lean and tight, and include all the needed information. Matt Fraction's script shows a surreal book written expertly.

So your homework today, part one.

1) Revise your first four pages in some way.

And your exercise is look at at least THREE scripts on this page:

comicsexperience.com/scripts/

You don't have to read them all, but look and see the format.

But. Remember.

Make it easy on your artist and editor. Don't make them struggle to understand.

Keep blocks of notes in short, snappy paragraphs. If they enjoy your script, they will do their best work, and it's far more humane. :)

Some terms that may come up in your script.

GRID: This is any fairly simple, even page layout. A nine panel grid is something seen in many, many pages of WATCHMEN.

GUTTERS: These are the spaces between panels.

STACK: These are horizontal rows of panels on a page.

ESTABLISHING SHOT: You know this.

AFTER-IMAGE: This is showing movement, like the Flash by showing multiple poses of the same character, to show movement.

FX or SFX: These are sound effects, like the Batman show. WHAM!

TAILLESS: This is a dialog balloon without a tail, so it's unclear who said it, often used in crowd scenes.

CAPTION: A balloon for narration or dialog that is not attributable to a character on panel.

THOT: A 'thought' balloon, less common these days, showing unspoken thoughts.

POV: Literally 'Point of view.'

This is a note to the artist, expressing where the camera should be.

Worm's Eye POV, Crane POV, Middle Distance POV, Birds Eye POV are all common.

TWO-SHOT: Just two characters, focus on their interaction.

CLOSE-UP: Can be extreme or simply a shot of someone's face.

Those will help you with the vast majority of panel descriptions.

Now, commonly in comics, BOLD and ITALICS are available for both caption and dialog.

Feel free to use them, they really spotlight where inflection goes!

Don't worry, we're getting close. I just wanted to cover some of the tools we use every day in comics. It can get a LOT more complex, but you could reproduce almost any comic with just this vocabulary I have listed.

Now. We have our space and our vocabulary.

Now we talk a little bit about style and craft.

You do not have to know every panel and every bit of dialog before you start.

But you should know a few things.

What is my story saying?

What is my protagonist's challenge or conflict?

What is the resolution, if any?

Let those questions be your GPS. It's easy to expand details that DO NOT MATTER. You can follow bit part characters down a rabbit hole forever.

What was the FIRST Universal Tool?

FOCUS.

Focus on your STORY. Your THEME.

Your THEME is the human truth your story discusses.

It needn't be preachy. It SHOULDN'T be preachy.

But there should be a point.

Let that be your trail of breadcrumbs.

Look at your [#Midterms](#).

Did you convey a character with impact?

Did you present a challenge or conflict?

Is a theme boiling underneath?

Folks, this is what writing is. You do it when you create your D&D character backstory. You do it in doodles, even.

Tell a story that means SOMETHING to you.

Superhero, robot, it doesn't matter. RECOGNIZABLE HUMAN REACTION is the goal.

None of us can fly like Superman. But we have all ridden in a vehicle that went fast, we've most of us jumped into a lake.

Take that feeling, that childlike thing...I HAVE EXPERIENCED THIS, and put it on the page.

That's writing.

YOU felt something, and you extrapolate it, you make it bigger, you fictionalize it.

Now the READER feels that same thing.

OKAY!

Here's your final assignment. And bonus: You get TWO days to do it.

FINISH YOUR STORY.

...