Award-winning work from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards

Foreword by Stan Lee

Coni Dowden

Above The City. Grade 12, Age 17. Sussex, WI. 2013 Gold Medal
Foreword by Stan Lee

It takes a lot to be a superhero, and almost as much to be a teenager. The artists whose work is presented in these pages are both.

I am honored to share with you this selection of winners from the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards’ Comic Art category. As a writer who has worked with artists all my life, I know how hard it is to produce original work and how much effort goes into sharing ideas.

These incredible teenage artists each embraced their creativity as the means to express their vision for which they earned national Scholastic Awards. The Awards recognize the amazing, creative talent of our nation’s youth, and provide enormous opportunities for scholarships, publication, and exhibition.

I hope you’ll enjoy this great selection of Award-winning Comic Art. All young artists and writers should know about the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, so please visit www.artandwriting.org and help spread the word!

About Us

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards have changed young people’s lives for more than 90 years. Started in 1923 by Scholastic founder Maurice R. Robinson, the Awards have become the nation’s highest honor and largest source of scholarships for creative teenagers. The Awards are presented by the nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers.

Students in grades 7 through 12, from public, private, or home schools, can apply in 28 categories of art and writing for their chance to earn scholarships and have their works exhibited or published. Each year, teen artists and writers participate in the Awards and gain recognition in both their local communities and at the national level. In 2013, the Alliance received more than 230,000 submissions.

To learn more about the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and to see more Award-winning work, visit www.artandwriting.org.

Meet Ellen Forney

Cartoonist and Comic Art judge

Mitchell DeGasperis

The Visitor. Grade 8, Age 13. Rockville, MD.
2013 Gold Medal

Taylor Leong

2013 Gold Medal

Whitney Ransdell

The Last Journey. Grade 12, Age 17. Cincinnati, OH. 2013 Gold Medal

Felipe Di Poi

Beeper Gonzales and the Mutant Ghoulies. Grade 12, Age 18. West Hartford, CT. 2012 Art Portfolio Gold Medal

Tatiana Dubin


Phyllis Yao

Audrey. Grade 12, Age 17. New York, NY. 2012 Gold Medal, Prismacolor Award

Coni Dowden

Above The City. Grade 12, Age 17. Sussex, WI. 2013 Gold Medal

(Back cover)
Introduction to Comic Art

At the heart of Comic Art is storytelling. It is a chance to illustrate an engaging narrative; to turn an idea on its head through the invention of plot, character, and setting; and to inspire and capture readers’ imaginations.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards encourage 7th–12th grade students across the country to share their artwork and stories for the chance to be recognized by a national audience for being unique and original. Like the spectrum of styles and formats that comics employ, the work that students submit is fantastical, dark, melancholy, humorous, subversive, and satirical, sometimes all at once.

Comic Art is one of 28 art and writing categories of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. A combination of the visual and literary, the Comic Art category invites young artists and writers to join the ranks of famed awards alumni such as cartoonists Edward Sorel (’47 winner), Marc Hempel (’75 winner), Peter Steiner (’57 winner) and novelist John Sorel (’47 winner), Marc Hempel (’75 winner), A. S. Byatt (’64 winner), Marc Hempel (’75 winner), and cartoonists John Updike (who won in 1948 for a gag cartoon).

Here’s how the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards describe the Comic Art category:

• A pictorial narrative, with or without text, that tells a story through use of multiple frames or panels.
• Examples include comic strips/books, storyboards, web comics, and selections from graphic novels.
• Works cannot be based on characters or plots that have already been published.
• Works must be more than one panel.

As with all of our categories, Comic Art is judged by standards embraced since the Awards were started in 1923:

• Blind Judging: Jurors do not know the identities of participating students.
• Freedom of Expression: No work is ever disqualified on the basis of its content.
• The Criteria: Originality, technical skill, and the emergence of a personal vision or voice.

The works in this collection are a selection of recent winning Comic Art from the Scholastic Awards, and the students who created them have sparked our curiosity. We hope they will do the same for you!

Meet Ellen Forney

Cartoonist and Scholastic Art & Writing Awards judge


EF: In comic art there is the opportunity to take a cliché and tweak it a little bit. For instance, in Marbles, we all know the light bulb over the head represents to have an idea, but the way I depicted my memory problems is to have a light bulb over my head but it was cracked. So you can take some of the symbols and twist them to make your own. Then there is the mood through the drawing. I used a lot of styles and pace designs in Marbles and...
that was really about carrying the reader through the story and taking them through the mood.

SA: What did you look for—as hallmarks of a personal voice or vision—when you were a juror in this category for the Awards?

EF: Good comic art has a balance: it’s a story and it’s not just about art. And by “story,” I don’t mean words: comics can tell a story without words, for example, but the narrative is important.

Keep doing it. Do it a lot.
Read, write and draw.
Listen to stories.

SA: Who are some the comic artists you admire most, and why?

EF: From the start, I was very influenced by Alison Bechdel. Michael Dougan is a Seattle cartoonist and I love his work. Women cartoonists: the book Twisted Sisters was an early bible of mine. It has a range of autobiographical and approachable work by Carol Tyler, Dori Seda, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, Phoebe Gloeckner. I could go on and on. I’ll add one more, Kaz, he does Underworld. He designed my tattoo and he’s in the beginning of Marbles.

SA: What advice do you have for teens who are creating comic art or experimenting with it?

EF: It’s important to look at other people’s work. I’m a Comics teacher but personally I’m self-taught. Some of that is because when I was in school there weren’t any Comics in education. But my teachers, not that I didn’t have plenty of teachers, besides my own practice, were the cartoonists that I read.

One of the things I do with my autobiography comics class at Cornish is I have them bring in comic books once a month and half of the class time is spent reading. A lot of people don’t read outside their own genre or what they see as the sets of comics that will appeal to them. For instance, there are superhero readers that have never looked at manga or an autobiographic novel. So it’s a chance to look at them and see how you might expand your own repertoire or be able to appreciate other things.

Lastly, just do it. Keep doing it. Do it a lot.
Read, write and draw. Listen to stories. There are so many different kinds of stories you can listen to in order to figure out how to create the story. The Moth and This American Life are story-podcasts. I really like them because you can think of your own pictures in your head while listening to the words.

I have my class keep a daily comic, and every day they do a comic that is at least two panels. I do that too. In the past I found that it’s difficult to keep it up if I’m doing it by myself but doing it with a group of people is really satisfying. It makes you look at your life differently and really makes you aware that there are stories all around you: little overheard conversations; anytime anything strikes you; or you trip over your boot for the millionth time—that can be a story.
Taylor Leong

Whitney Ransdell
The Last Journey. Grade 12, Age 17. Cincinnati, OH. 2013 Gold Medal
Felipe Di Poi

Beeper Gonzales and the Mutant Ghoulies. Grade 12, Age 18. West Hartford, CT.

2012 Art Portfolio Gold Medal
Tatiana Dubin

*But How?* Grade 11, Age 17. New York, NY. 2013 Gold Medal

To see Tatiana Dubin’s complete work as it was submitted, visit www.artandwriting.org/galleries

Phyllis Yao

*Audrey* Grade 12, Age 17. New York, NY. 2012 Gold Medal, Prismacolor Award
Phyllis Yao, Audrey
continued
Phyllis Yao, *Audrey*

continued

And don’t forget who you are, Audrey Chang!

You are a person, an identity. You are so special and you can’t let people push you around like that!

What is happening? Why are you becoming like this? Don’t lose yourself! Be strong!

(Shhh, let’s go away)

Yea, let’s.

Recognition • Exhibition • Publication • Scholarships

Visit [www.artandwriting.org](http://www.artandwriting.org) to learn about these and other opportunities for creative teens.

To see Phyllis Yao’s complete work as it was submitted, visit [www.artandwriting.org/galleries](http://www.artandwriting.org/galleries)