

Karinn's 5.3 Tracing Understanding

A note from Karinn: I am reading the graphic novel "Book 2: Ghost Stories" by Jeff Lemire. I chose the image on p. 129. My teacher photocopied it so I could trace a rough image. It's not as good as Jeff Lemire, but it's something to work with. Most of this page is for the What section of the "What? So What? Now What?" chart.

Lou's face is creased and lined sharply with dark lines and shadows to show his age (he is quite old), and his unhappiness, unhealthiness

Lou's eyes are wide open and alert, looking straight ahead in frame 1 and 2—like he's looking at the world again, and is out of his head/memory and in reality

close up view of Lou's face

before this, Lou has flashback to when him and Vince were kids playing ice hockey

Lou has a dark shadow attached to him, dark shadows on his face and in his environment—a seriously desolate atmosphere

close up brings me to reality at same time Lou "returns" to reality from being spaced out.

shadows make the lines on his face stand out—emphasize his old age? Wrinkles are a sign of aging

Lou is only standing up to his ankles in the river where he played hockey as a kid in the winter—in frames p. 128, 127, he was "drowning" in the same river. Shows he isn't aware of reality, is potentially unsafe—Where is Vince, his younger brother? Vince is dead—Lou is retelling a story about him and his brother.

Lou seems haunted by his past and maybe not a happy person (he just "returned" from having a memory about his younger brother Vince)

River: maybe metaphor for Lou being drowned in a childhood memory about him and his bro.

Lou- skinny and fragile

The reality is that Lou drowned in a memory, not the real river, but this is still unsafe—who looks after Lou? No one has, except him.

Forgot to draw it here, but Lou is smiling in this frame, like he enjoyed the memory even if up to his ankles in the river.

On p. 126-128—Lou talks about memory, age (having a hard time remembering things or having clarity in old age)—is going senile? Maybe, because of old age.

Graphic weight here—Lou is centered in composition of each frame (the focus of 1, 2, and 3). Could mean Lou has found focus or feels good? He is smiling in frame 2 about the nice memory about ice hockey + Vince.

Lou is "back" now, from his happy memory—Gutter tells reader that between frame 2 and 3, Lou must have exited the water, and made it back to the house in his soggy boots like nothing happened.

Only text on page—Lou is pretty deaf—are "slosh" noises here cuz Lou hears them in this moment, or to show no one else is around to hear the funny sound? Kinda sad, cuz it shows Lou's loneliness and isolation. No one else is there!

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Karinn's 5.3 Tracing Understanding (continued)

- main purpose—character and story development (Lou is the main character or narrator)
- After first memory about relationship between Lou and Vince as kids) — establishes setting, characters and relationships

So What? Granma started having Alzheimer's when I was younger

- at first she remembered me when we visited
- later, she only remembered sometimes, then eventually never (had times like Lou, where she was just somewhere else in her own mind)—made relationship tough
- hard on my mom—she couldn't talk to my grandma like a mom anymore
- hard on my granma too—illness isolated her mentally from family as her ability to communicate broke down—Lou finds it frustrating to verbally speak with others because of his deafness—he writes things down that are short and choppy—keeps his feelings of loneliness and isolation to himself.

Now What? Text draws attention to the effects of age in this image

- effects on mental state, personal relationships, and unsafe effects of isolation on elderly
- elderly need more help, love and attention than they sometimes get.

Hi Karinn,

There wasn't enough room on your diagram page to make any notes, so I will leave you a few here about this part of your work. Good work on spotting the visual metaphor of the river that occurs on p. 124-126. That is a very complex idea, but graphic novel artists use visual metaphors all the time—they are mainly identified by **abstract visual details**. Your first clue, for instance, is on p. 125 when you can see Lou's tears, despite him being "underwater" in the river. On p. 126, Lou's tears are shown as creating the hockey ice in the beginning of his memory. This is physically impossible, but it brings the reader into this flashback effectively. You have made some very solid observations about the visual details in your chosen images and how they affect the story, and it is clear you understand graphic weight, and how the gutters in graphic novels work.

One part of your work that is unclear is your idea about theme. You mentioned many small themes running throughout the book, like issues around old age and isolation, but if you had to pin down the main message or theme of the book with what you've observed and read, what would it be?

Abstract visual details are visual details that do not make sense in reality. Salvadore Dali painted scenes of wristwatches that looked as if they were melted in a hot sun—painting the watches unrealistically created abstract visual details.