Panel to Panel Transitions in Comics

With examples from:

The Magic Fish

by Trung Le Nguyen

les of moment to moment
ges 115 and 116 of *The*

of the roses in the vase as
lrops, or even as Tién
he's holding, we can see
ns.

ransitions act to slow down
lp build tension in the story.
ering a phone call and
s died. Tién sense
mehow, the flowers are
ction to the news.

Helen speaking with her aunt in Vietnam
irst panel on the page (left) shows the
y sit next to each other. The second
ocuses on Helen as she asks a
llowing panel (bottom right) shows
onding.

m one character to another (in
ows the reader to feel like they are par

This is the first page of *The Magic Fish.* In these first three establishing panels. Th
These transitions fit within one of the five storylines, even though they don't realize it ye
choices McCloud lists. By tossing the reader into these three seemingly unconnected panels, Nguyen is
starting to establish the rules of reading this graphic novel. He never directly tells
The five choices he lists are choices of the reader how to interpret the three colors in the course of the story, but by giving
moment, frame, image, word, and none. In these establishing panels in "Chapter One: Writing with Images" in puts the photo down as he wonders w
McCloud's book *Making Comics*, he starts to explain, the reader will come to see that red signifies t
information.

Panel one is a close up of Tién's hands on a book as he sits next to his mother on
a bus. Panel two shows birds flying amongst the clouds, and panel three shows a
Here, again, is the scene where Tién's mother answers the phone to find out her
mother has died (pages 114-115). On the left (pg 114) we can see Helen reacting
to the phone rising while Tién is focused on the picture in his backpack. Over the
course of the two pages, the panels transitioning between Tién, the picture, some
stars, the conversation in the other room ("Hell?" word bubble), Tién closely
her next plane. So time has progre
two panels. Next we see another p
left), close up this time, and we ca
water spilling out of the
that time has passed again and no
her next flight in transit to her dest
us see her progress as she gets a
catches a van to bring her to her a

The mood between these two pages shifts from happy and loving (perhaps signified
by the stars which tend to come up whenever one of the character's loves
something) to uncertain and concerning. The shift from photo, to character to object

Instructions:

1. Have groups break up and discuss this. Give them time to review it at the end of class, at home, and then at the start of the next class.
2. Have them pick a page, create notes on that page, and then pick a representative from the group to share with the class.
3. Display each group's page on the screen as they come up to point out their findings.

Here again, on page 115 we can see
through a series of actions as he view
something (presumably his mom's ph
and finally enters the room where his
phone.

Here, Nguyen is using the narrative word bubbles (shown in two rectangular boxes) to add context,
explaining that things change as we go from place to place, but we, the reader,
don't yet know what is happening here makes sense just yet.

By using scene to scene transition
quickly or to transition from one sc
another.
In this scene we can see a montag
Helen's progress as she travels ho
The panels start at the top (left) wi
through the air. Panel two (middle
sitting and the words help us realiz
her next flight in transit to her dest
us see her progress as she gets a
catches a van to bring her to her a
By using scene to scene transition

PANEL TO PANEL TRANSITIONS

According to Scott McCloud* there are six basic types of panel to panel transitions found in comics:

1. Moment to Moment
2. Action to Action
3. Subject to Subject
4. Scene to Scene
5. Aspect to Aspect
6. Non Sequitur

*See Scott McCloud's book Understanding Comics pages 70-89 for information on transitions.
See Scott McCloud's book *Making Comics* pages 15-17 for information on transitions.

MOMENT TO MOMENT TRANSITIONS

Moment to Moment transitions concentrate on an <u>action</u> they progress through a series of moments.





ACTION TO ACTION TRANSITIONS

Action to action transitions occur when person or thing is portrayed in a series of actions.



SUBJECT TO SUBJECT TRANSITIONS

In a subject to subject transition we see panels change the focus from one subject to another as a scene progresses.



SCENE TO SCENE TRANSITIONS

Panel transitions from scene to scene show the reader how the story progresses through various spaces, settings and times.



ASPECT TO ASPECT TRANSITIONS

Aspect to aspect transitions move the reader's attention from one aspect of a scene or place to another in order to convey a certain tone or mood.



NON SEQUITUR TRANSITIONS

These transitions tend to be an unrelated sequence of characters, scenes, and objects. The relationship between the images is up to the reader to discern in order to find meaning or to detect mood or tone.



GROUP ACTIVITY: TRANSITIONS AND EMPATHY / IDENTIFICATION

1. Review this image from pg. 28
2. Identify the transitions
3. Discuss why Nguyen might have transitioned between the panels in these ways.
4. What do the transitions make the reader's feel?
5. What do you think Helen is feeling in the past and the present as it's represented on the page?
6. What universal message is Nguyen developing with this story and this particular page?
7. How does the use of transitions between the three storylines here help the reader empathize with Helen (an immigrant)?
8. Find another page/s in The Magic Fish where you can see Nguyen using a sequence of images in a way that helps the reader identify with Tién as he struggles with his sexuality.

