This is my summary of some of the Key Ideas in Scott McCloud’s definitive text:

- The earliest words are in fact STYLISED PICTURES. With the invention of printing, the written word took a great leap forward but at the expense of pictures. By the early 1800s Western ART and WRITING had drifted about as far apart as was possible.

- Through the combination of words and pictures COMICS have become firmly identified with the art of STORYTELLING, and indeed words and pictures have great power to tell stories when creators fully exploit them both.

- CREATOR and READER are PARTNERS IN THE INVISIBLE, creating something out of nothing time and time again. The dance of the VISIBLE and the INVISIBLE is at the very heart of comics through the power of CLOSURE.

- CLOSURE is the phenomenon of observing the PARTS but perceiving the WHOLE. Some forms of closure are deliberate inventions of storytellers to produce SUSPENCE or to CHALLENGE audiences. In an incomplete world, we depend on closure for our very SURVIVAL.

- The CLOSURE of electronic media is continuous, largely involuntary and virtually imperceptible.

- In FILM, closure takes place continuously - 24 times per second in fact – as our minds transform a series of still pictures into a story of continuous motion.

- The language of COMICS relies heavily on ICONS – images used to represent people, places or ideas. SYMBOLS are one category of icon, and pictures are icons too.

- PICTORIAL ICONS sit somewhere on the spectrum between REALITY and ABSTRACTION. Words are totally abstract icons. That is, they bear no visual resemblance to the thing they represent.

- The UNIVERSALITY of CARTOON IMAGERY is part of its special power. The more ‘cartoony’ a face is, the more people it could be said to describe. By stripping down an image to its essential meaning, an artist can AMPLIFY that meaning in a way that realistic art cannot.

- When you look at a photo or a realistic drawing of a face, you see the face of ANOTHER, but when you enter the world of the cartoon, you see YOURSELF. The cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled. We don’t just observe the cartoon we BECOME it.
• Storytellers in all media know that a sure indicator of audience involvement is the degree to which the audience identifies with the story’s CHARACTERS

• A simple STYLE does not mean a simple STORY (see Maus for example)

• In COMICS, the GUTTER – or space between the panels – is where the human imagination takes two separate images and transforms them into a SINGLE IDEA. If VISUAL ICONOGRAPHY is the VOCABULARY of comics, closure is its GRAMMAR

• Most panel-to-panel TRANSITIONS in comics can be placed in one of six categories (read the book to find out what they are!)

• In learning to read comics, we all learn to perceive TIME spatially, for in the world of comics TIME and SPACE are one and the same thing

• From its earliest days, the modern comic has grappled with the problem of showing motion in a static medium. The commonest of these is the MOTION LINE - or ZIP RIBBONS as they are sometimes known

• SOUND in comics breaks down into two sub-sets: Word BALLOONS and SOUND EFFECTS

• MOTION in comics also breaks down into two sub-sets: PANEL-TO-PANEL CLOSURE and motion WITHIN PANELS

• Unlike other media, both PAST and FUTURE are real and visible in comics – wherever your eyes are focused is NOW but at the same time your eyes take in the surrounding landscape of past and future

• Comics are able to make EMOTIONS visible because we bring the full power of our own experiences to bear on the world our eyes report. In the end, what you GET is what you GIVE