

Collecting Comics: A Thesaurus

CODES

BT – Broader Term

NT – Narrower Term

RT – Related Term

USE – The word is better known as and referred to with another word; see other definition

A

Acid-Free - A term for any materials that have had acids removed so as to prevent incidental degradation of a comic due to contact, including the paper used for printing

Album - The term for European comics which are typically a 48-page hardcover

Arrival Date - This date precedes the cover date by approximately fifteen to seventy-five days, and may vary considerably from one locale to another or from one year to another

Artist - The person who draws the comic
RT Colorist, Editor, Inker, Letterer, Penciller, Writer

Ashcan - The term for a publisher's in-house facsimile of a proposed new title

Auction - The sale of comics in which prospective buyers bid against each other until a high price is reached that only one bidder will pay

B

B&W - A short form for black and white art

Back cover - The part of the cover which does not have identification of the comic as its primary purpose

Back issue - The term for any issue of a comic but the most current

Bag - A plastic bag used to protect comics from damage
NT Mylar
RT Collecting, Preservation

Bleed - A term for art which is allowed to run to the edge of a page rather than having a border around it

Board - A tool used to keep comic books from being bent by supporting their cover

Border - The line around a panel

Bound copy - A comic that has been bound into a book

Brittleness - A severe condition of paper deterioration where paper loses its flexibility and thus chips and/or flakes easily

Browning - The level of paper deterioration one step more severe than tanning and one step before brittleness

C

Caption – The term for the text of a narrator who is speaking directly to the reader

Centerfold - The two folded pages in the center of a comic book at the terminal end of the staples

CCA – An abbreviation of Comics Code Authority

Certification - A process provided by a professional grading service that certifies a given grade for a comic and encapsulates it

CGC – An abbreviation of Comics Guaranty Company

Classic Cover - A cover considered by collectors to be highly desirable because of its subject matter, artwork, or historical importance

Collecting – Looking for and purchasing, trading, or otherwise obtaining, as well as organizing comics for pleasure or investment

Collector - One who collects comics for personal enjoyment or as an investment
BT Collecting
RT Dealer

Color Touch - A restoration process by which colored ink is used to hide color flecks, color flakes, and larger areas of missing color
BT Restoration

Colorist - An artist who paints the color guides for comics
RT Artist, Editor, Inker, Letterer, Penciller, Writer

Comic Art – The techniques and styles associated with comic books, primarily expressed in pencil and ink on paper with a strong graphic design element
BT Comic Books, Comics
RT Graphic Design

Comic Books – In North America since the early 1900's, comic books are primarily collections of stories on paper with staples for binding
BT Comics

Comic Shop - A store that specializes in comics and comic-related material
BT Comic Books, Comics
NT Dealer
RT Consignment

Comics - Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the viewer
NT Comic Books, Graphic Novel, Trade Paperback

Comics Code Authority - A voluntary organization comprised of comic book publishers formed in 1954 to review comic books before they were printed and distributed

Comics Guaranty Company – A highly reputable company that specializes in grading comics for collectors

BT Collecting, Grade
RT Collector, Condition, Restoration
UF Comics Guaranty Company

Complete Run – A term for all issues of a given title

Condition - The state of preservation of a comic book, often inaccurately used interchangeably with Grade
RT Grade

Consignment - A contract between a seller and a dealer who offers to sell the comic book in return for a portion of the received money
RT Collector, Dealer

Coupon Cut - A coupon has been neatly removed with scissors or razor blade from the interior or exterior of the comic as opposed to having been ripped out

Cover gloss - The term for the reflective quality of cover inks
BT Comic Art, Comic Books, Comics, Cover
RT Inker

Cover trimmed – The term for when a cover has been reduced in size by neatly cutting away rough or damaged edges

Coverless – The term for a comic with no cover attached. See Remainders

Crease - A fold which causes ink removal, usually resulting in a white line.

Creator Owned Comic – The term for a comic made by a person who owns the characters, any other element that is specific to the comic, and retains licensing rights

Credits – The listing of who was involved in the production of the comic

D

Dealer – The term for one who makes a living buying and selling comics, primarily employed in a comic shop
BT Comic Shop
RT Consignment

Defect - Any fault or flaw that detracts from perfection of a comic
BT Grade
RT

Die-Cut - A comic book cover with areas or edges pre-cut by a printer to a special shape or to create a desired effect

Digest – Smaller, pocket-sized comics which are usually collections of multiple issues of a title
BT Comic Book, Comics

Digital Comic - A comic created on a computer rather than by paper and ink even if it is later printed in the traditional manner
BT Comic Book, Comics

Direct Market Distribution - A method of comic book distribution in which wholesalers buy comics from their publishers directly and sell them directly to retailers

Distributor Stripes – The term for color brushed or sprayed on the edges of comic book by the distributor/wholesaler to code them for expedient exchange at the sales racks

Divider – An upright support to place between comics that are in a box to keep them from getting bent and to help organize the collection

Double Cover – The term for when two covers are stapled to the comic interior instead of the usual one which protects the interior cover from wear and damage

Duotone – A process common in the 1930's where comics were printed with black and one other color of ink

Drawer – Comic boxes in a variety of sizes that open like cabinets

RT divider, long boxes, short boxes

E

Editor – The person who coordinates all the creative and production members to make sure the comic is released on schedule

RT Artist, Colorist, Inker, Letterer, Penciller, Writer

Embossed - A comic book cover with a pattern, shape, or image pressed into the cover from the inside which creates a raised area

Encapsulate – The term for sealing certified comics in a protective plastic enclosure

BT Storage

RT Certification, Condition, Grade

Eye Appeal - The term for the overall look of a comic book when held at approximately arm's length regardless of any defects

BT Grade

RT Defect

F

Fair Condition – The term for comics which are heavily read and soiled though still complete, and have little value

Fair Market Value - The current averaged price for a comic

File Copy – The term for a high grade comic originating from the publisher's file

Fine Condition – The term for an above-average copy that shows minor wear with no significant creasing or other serious defects

Foil Cover - A comic book cover that has had a thin metallic foil hot stamped on it

Fold – A lesser defect than a crease wherein the paper has been bent but has not caused ink removal or wrinkles

Four Color Process – The term for printing with the three primary colors plus black

Foxing - The term for small orange and brown spots found on the pages and covers of comics

Front Cover – The outside of a comic book with identifying information

RT Issue Number, Publisher, Series, Title

G

Gatefold cover – A double-width fold-out cover

Gem Mint - The term for the best example of a comic that has ever been known

Giveaway – The term for a type of comic book intended to be given away as a promotional device instead of being sold

Good Condition – The term for a comic that shows substantial wear
RT reading copy

Grade - The condition that a comic book is in and which helps to determine its value

Graphic Design – The combination of words, symbols, and images to present a message or elicit a mood
RT Comic Art

Graphic Novel - A thicker, glue bound comic book that is often a collection of other comic books or a stand-alone story

Grey-Tone – The term for cover art in which pencil or charcoal underlies the normal line drawing, thus producing a richer quality
RT Line Drawn Cover, Painted Cover, and Photo Cover

Guide – The short form of Price Guide

Gutter - The space between panels

H

Hot Stamping - The process of pressing foil, prism paper and/or inks on cover stock

I

Indicia – The publishing and title information which is usually located at the bottom of the first page or the bottom of the inside front cover

Indy – A short form of independent which indicates comic books not published by the major comic companies

Inker – The artist that applies inks to pencil drawings
RT Artist, Colorist, Editor, Letter, Writer

Investment – Paying money to obtain a comic book (or comic books) that will rise in value and from which more money can be made at sale or auction

Investment Grade Copy – The term for a comic in Very Fine or better condition

Issue – The term for an individual comic book, particularly in a series

Issue Number - The term for the particular enumeration of a given title

K

Key Issue – The term for an issue containing any feature considered especially desirable by collectors

L

Lenticular Cover – The term for a comic book cover overlaid with a ridged plastic sheet such that the special artwork underneath appears to move when the cover is tilted at different angles perpendicular to the ridges

Letter Column - The feature in a comic book that prints and sometimes responds to letters written by its readers

Letterer – The artist who designs the style for and applies the letters for the text

RT Artist, Colorist, Editor, Inker, Penciller, Writer

Line Drawn Cover – The term for a cover published in the traditional way where pencil sketches are overdrawn with India ink and then colored.
RT Grey-Tone Cover, Painted Cover, and Photo Cover

Logo - The title of a comic book as it appears on the cover or title page

Long Box – Boxes to store comics in that are 27.25" x 7.5" x 10.5" that include a lid

M

Marvel chipping - A bindery defect that results in a series of chips and tears at the top, bottom, and right edges of the cover, caused when the cutting blade of an industrial paper trimmer becomes dull;
BT Defect

Mini-comic – The term for amateur comics done by a single individual, typically made by folding, cutting and stapling sheets of copied paper

Mint Condition – The term for a comic that is near perfect in every way with only subtle bindery or printing defects allowed

Mylar - An inert, very hard, space-age plastic by the DuPont Co. which is used to make high quality protective bags and sleeves for comic book storage.

N

Near Mint – The term denoting that a comic is nearly perfect, having only minor imperfections that keep it from the next higher grade

No Date – The term applied when there is no date given on the cover or indicia page

No Number - The term usually applied to first issues or one-shots where no issue number is given on the cover or indicia page

O

One Shot – The term denoting that only one issue is published of a title, or when a series is published where each issue has a different title

Open Letter – The term for letters drawn in outline, with space for color to be added

Original Condition - The term for a comic in any condition that has not been altered to increase its grading value

Over Guide – The term for when a comic book is priced at a value over Guide listing

Oxidation Shadow – The term for a darker, usually linear area at the edge of some comics stored in stacks. Some portion of the cover was not covered by the comic immediately above it, and it was exposed to the air.

P

Page - The unit of a comic that due to its visual limitations helps shape how a story is told

BT Comic Books, Comics, Storytelling
RT Artist, Inker, Letter, Penciller, Writer

Painted Cover – The term for a cover taken from an actual painting instead of a line drawing

RT Grey-Tone Cover, Line Drawn Cover, and Photo Cover

Panel – The term for an individual picture in a comic, the basic unit for storytelling

Paper Cover – A comic book cover made from the same newsprint as the interior pages

Penciller – The artist that draws the art in pencils

RT Artist, Colorist, Editor, Inker, Letterer, Writer

Perfect Binding

USE Square Bound

Photo Cover – The term for a cover that is made from a photograph instead of a line drawing or painting

RT Grey-Tone Cover, Line Drawn Cover, and Painted Cover

Poor Condition – The term comic which is degraded to the point where there is little or no collector value

Post-Code – The term for comics published after February 1955 which usually display the CCA stamp in the upper right hand corner

Pre-Code – The term for comics published before the CCA seal began appearing on covers in 1955

Preservation – Any items or methods used to prevent comics from being damaged or to protect the current condition from further decay

BT Collecting, Comic Books, Comics
NT Bag, Board, Divider, Long Box, Mylar, Short Box
RT Storage

Pressing – The term for any attempt to flatten out folds or creases

BT Restoration
RT Crease, Fold

Prestige Format – The term for a comic book which is longer than thirty-two pages and has higher quality paper and printing than is standard

Price Guide - A resource used to determine the value of a comic book
RT Guide

Provenance – The term for when the owner of a book is known and is stated for the purpose of authenticating and documenting the history of the book

Publisher - A company that underwrites the cost of producing comics and related merchandize

Pulp – The term for a cheaply produced magazine made from low grade newsprint

R

Rare – The term for when ten to twenty copies are estimated to exist
BT Grade

Rat Chew – The term for damage caused by the gnawing of rats and mice
BT Defect

Reading Copy – The term for a comic that is in fair to good condition and which general handling will not further degrade it

Reading Crease – The term for book-length, vertical front cover crease near the staples, caused by bending the cover over the staples
BT Crease, Defect
RT Fold

Remainders – The term for comic books that remain unsold at the newsstand and often have part or all the cover removed
BT Comic Books

Repair – The term for when a tear, loose staple or centerfold has been mended without changing or adding to the original finish of the book
RT Preservation

Restoration- Any attempt, whether professional or amateur, to enhance the

appearance of an aging or damaged comic book
RT Repair

Rolled Spine – The term for a condition of the spine caused by folding back pages while reading

Round Bound – The term for standard saddle stitch binding typical of most comics

Run - A group of comics of one title where most or all of the issues are present.
NT Complete Run
RT Series

Rust Stain – The term for red-brown stains caused by proximity to rusty staples
BT Defect
RT Grade

S

Saddle Stitch - The staple binding of magazines and comic books

Sale – Receiving money for goods whether privately or on the open market
BT Collecting
NT Auction

Scarce- The term when twenty to one hundred copies are estimated to exist

Seal of Approval - An emblem that was placed on the cover of all comics approved by the Comic Code Authority beginning in April-May, 1955

Self-published – Comics that are created and published by a creator, and which usually have very limited number printed

Series – The term for a comic which has multiple issues published regularly and which are consecutively numbered

Set- A grouping of comics for sale
BT Sale, collecting
RT Complete Run

Sewn Spine – The term for multiple spine perforations where binders' thread held it into a bound volume

Short Box - Boxes to store comics in that are 16½" x 9" x 12 ¾" and usually have a lid
BT Storage
RT Drawer, Long Box

Small Press – Another term for Indy comics though some would restrict it further to self-published works
RT Indy

Spine - The left-hand edge of the comic that has been folded and stapled
NT Spine Roll

Spine Roll - A condition where the left edge of the comic book curves toward the front or back, caused by folding back each page as the comic was read
BT Spine

Splash Page - A Splash Panel that takes up the entire page
BT Page, Panel
RT Splash Panel

Splash Panel - The term for the first panel of a comic book story, usually larger than other panels and usually containing the title and credits of the story

BT Panel
RT Splash Page

Square Bound – The term for pages which are glued to the cover as opposed to being stapled, resulting in a flat bound side.

Standalone – The term for a single issue that tells a complete story

Storage - The preservation of comics for later reading or for investment
NT bags, boards, dividers, long boxes, short boxes

Storyline – The narrative thread through an issue or between issues
RT Writer

Stress Lines – The term for wrinkles occurring along the cover or spine of the book
BT Defect

Subscription - Publishers and comic book stores offer purchase of comic books by mail or to be held at the store for later pick up

Symbolia – The term coined by Mort Walker for iconic representations used within comics (such as a light bulb to represent an idea)
BT Comic Books, Comics
RT Text

T

Tanning – The term for when the pages of a comic begin to change from their original color

Text – The words in a comic that help move the narrative along
BT Graphic Design, Storytelling

Tier - The row of panels on a page where move left to right in Anglo-American comics

Tijuana Bible – Pornographic comics produced in the early to mid 20th Century, usually very small and printed in black in white

Title - The name of the comic book
BT Comic Book, Comics, Indicia
NT Title Page
RT Cover, Page

Title Page – The first page of a story showing the title of the story and possibly the creative credits and indicia
BT Page, Title, Graphic Design
RT Artist, Colorist, Editor, Indicia, Inker, Letter, Penciller, Publisher, Writer

Trade Paperback – A collection of previously released comic issues with a flexible binding

Trimming – The term for cutting the pages of a comic to remove ragged edges or other defects

U

Under Guide – The term for when a comic book is priced at a value less than Guide listing

Upgrade - To obtain another copy of the same comic book in a higher grade

V

Variant Cover – The term for a different cover image used on the same issue
BT Comic Art, Comic Book, Comics, Cover
RT Graphic Design

Very Fine – The term for an excellent copy with outstanding eye appeal and limited accumulation of minor bindery/printing defects

Very Good - The term for the average used comic book
BT Grade
RT Collecting

Very Rare – The term for when one to ten copies are estimated to exist
BT Grade
RT Collecting

W

Want List - The listing of comics needed by a collector or a list of comics that a collector is interested in purchasing

Writer - The author of the story in a comic
RT Artist, Colorist, Editor, Inker, Letterer, Penciller

Thesaurus by Anthony Buchanan