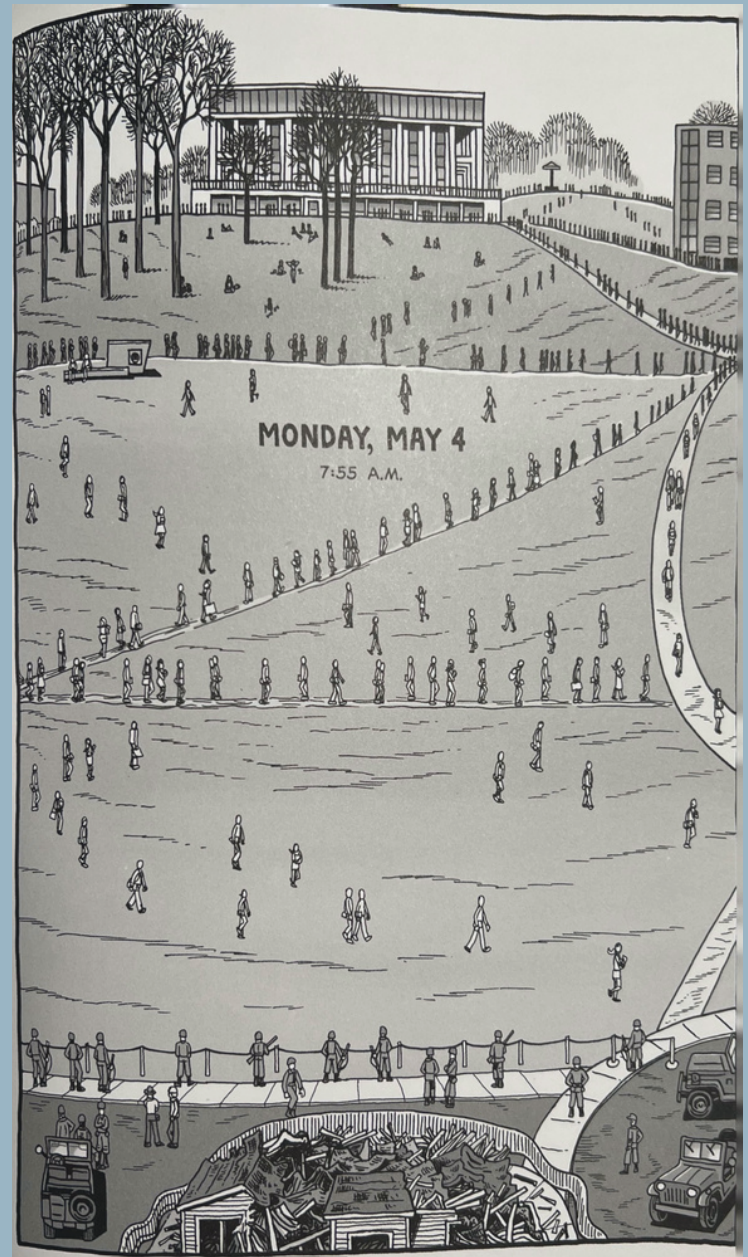
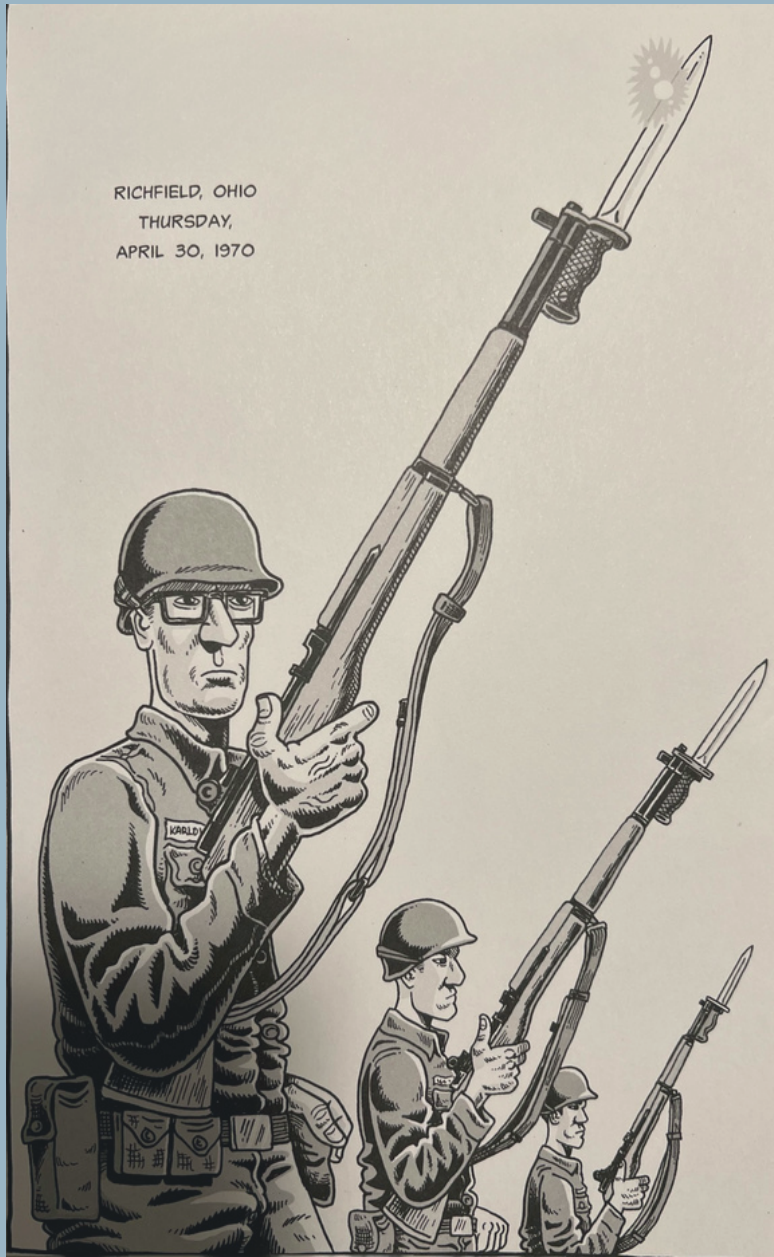


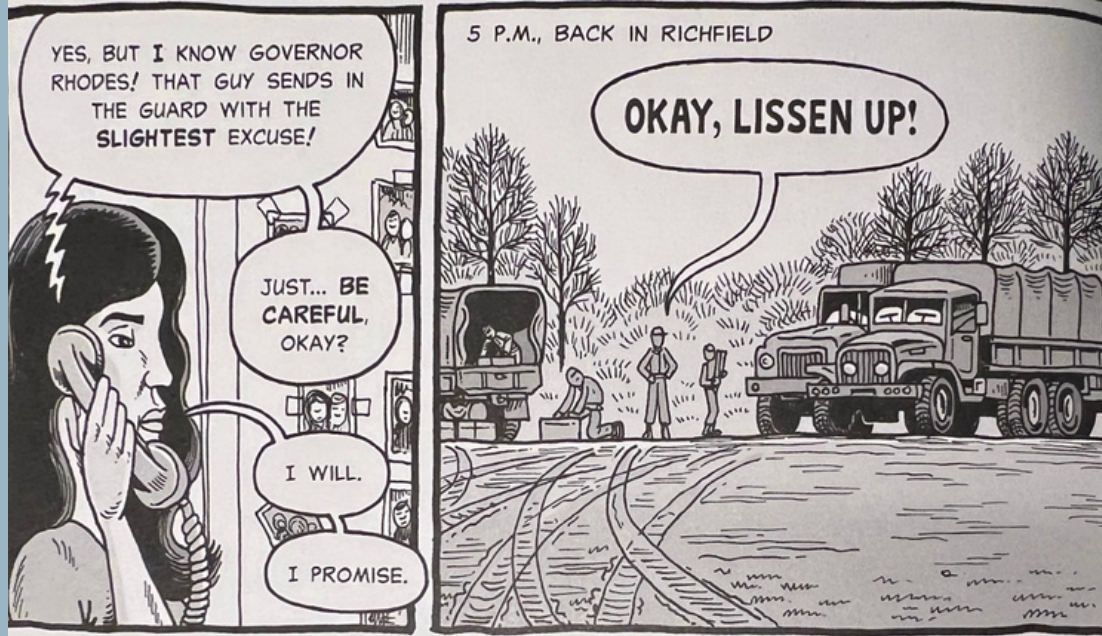
<ANALYSIS OF KENT STATE>

JAY KOH



PLOT

The novel depicts the tragic historical event that occurred on May 4, 1970, when unarmed college students protesting the Vietnam War were shot by National Guardsmen at Kent State University in Ohio. The story follows a chronological timeline, starting with labor strikes as part of the antiwar movement and progressing to the student protests and the resulting deaths over the course of 5 days. The narrative begins from a kid's perspective as he witnesses the absurd scene of armed soldiers intruding into his hometown. It is then told from multiple perspectives, following the stories of four victim students: Sandra, Allison, Jeffrey, and William, who represent different viewpoints within the political movement as well as the opposing perspectives representing law enforcement, undercover agents, and soldiers. Every day's chapter starts with one large panel depicting a scene in the beginning.



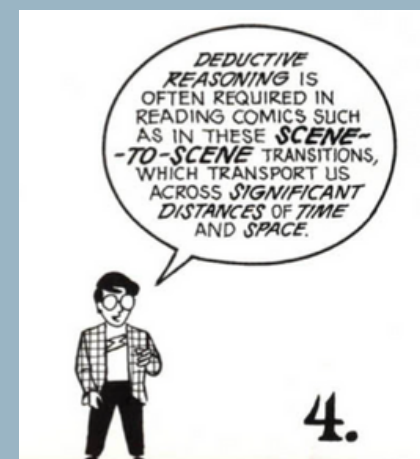
The novel employs a strong visual narrative technique, using scene-to-scene panels that jump across the spaces to cover diverse characters situated in their respective circumstances along the same timeline.

For example, while Allison is shown talking on the phone in one panel, the next panel transports the reader to another space and time with accompanying text in the corner. At times, a different character's story begins without any explanation, adding to the dynamic and immersive nature.

SCENE-TO-SCENE PANELS

CLOSURE: MULTIPLE CHARACTERS & PERSPECTIVES

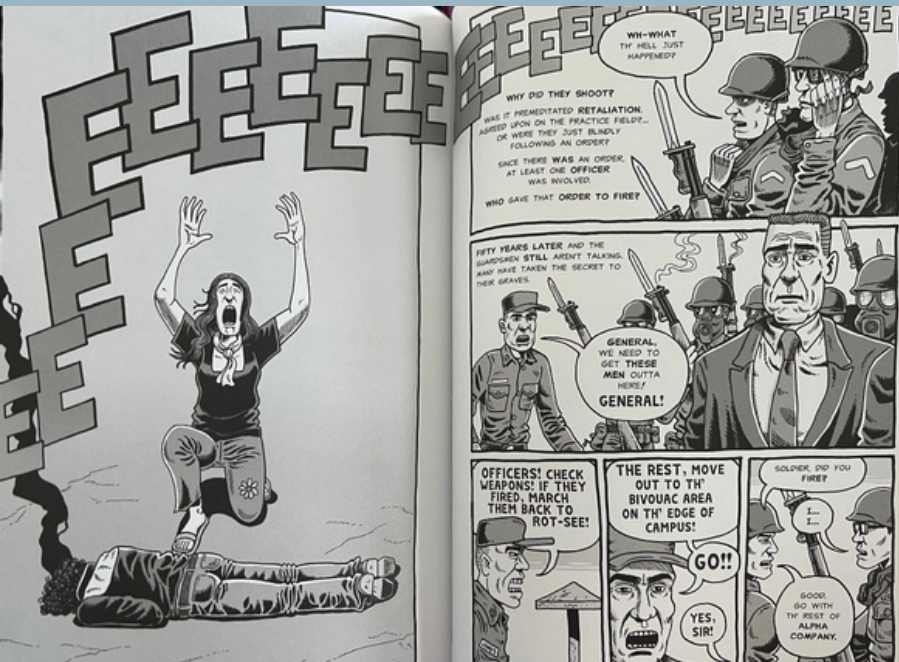
As Scott McCloud pointed out, readers need deductive reasoning. These frequent transitions between scenes and characters along the same timeline allow the readers to observe different parts of each character's story while also perceiving the overall situation. This engages the readers in interpreting the closures between panels consistently.



The use of alternate panel sizes, such as showing the situations of the four students on the day of the National Guard's entry into the school, followed by a full shot of the overall situation in a large panel next to it, gives a sense of the comprehensive situation.

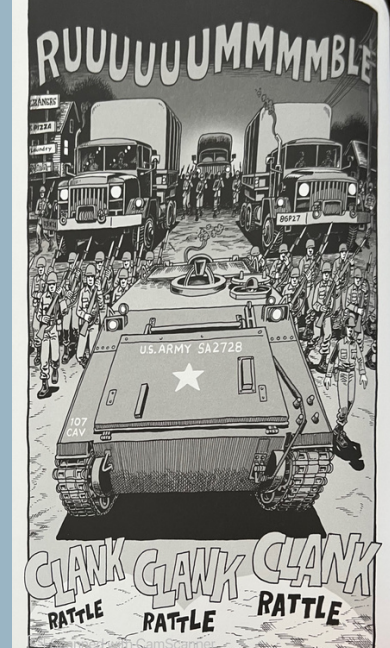


THE USE OF TEXT



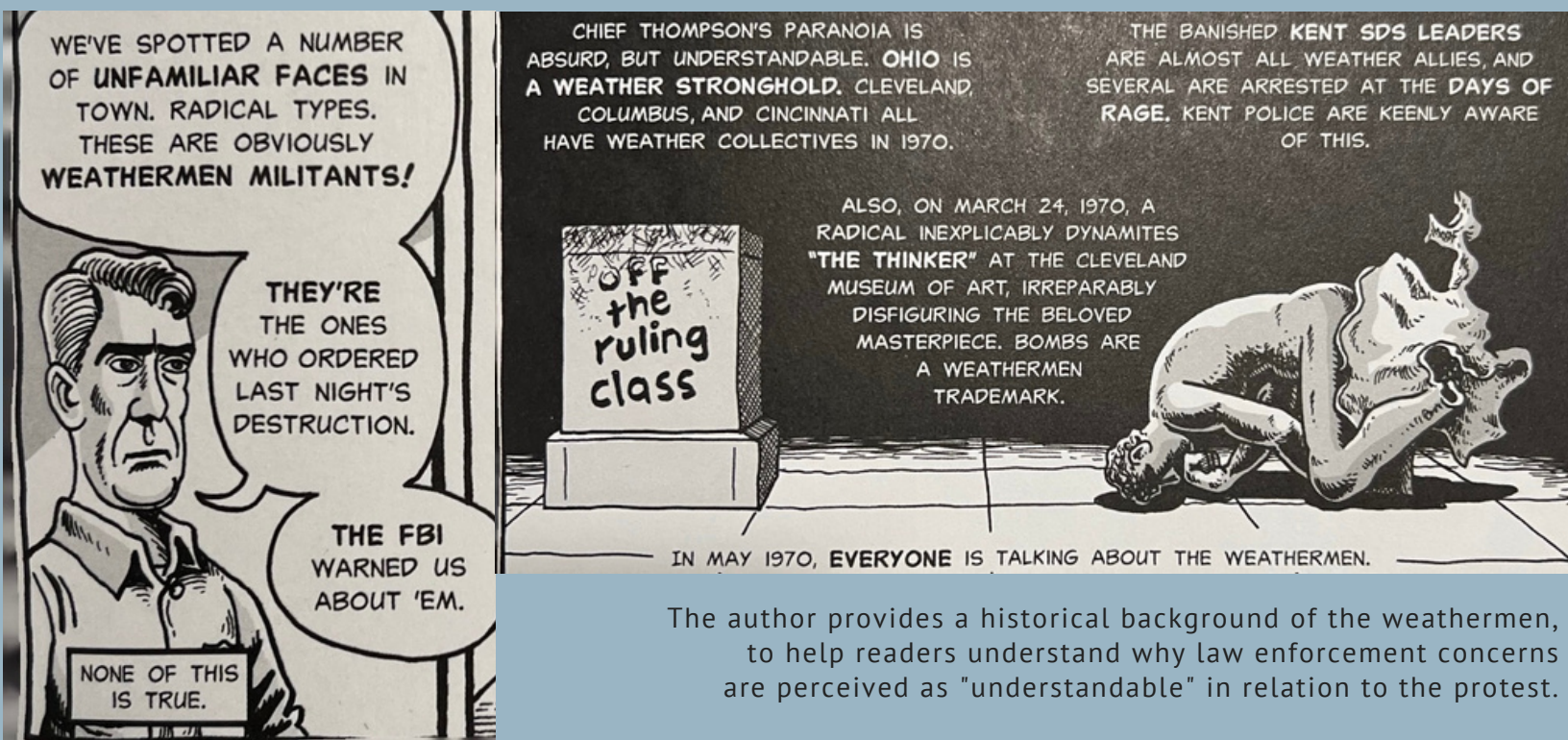
SOUND

Sound words are effectively visualized to engage the reader's senses beyond visuals, adding tension with dynamic fonts or creating a sense of space. For example, a large sound word spreading over panels implies that a character is screaming and that they are in the same space at that moment.



LANGUAGE OF REALITY: AUTHOR INVOLVEMENT

The novel employs texts outside of the main narrative or in accompanying square boxes, which are presented between or within panels. This allows all characters to freely express their subjective perspectives including the use of jokes, which are further complemented by detailed explanations or fact-checking corrections. Overall, the novel maintains a balanced tone that is casual, sarcastic, comprehensive, and accurate, successfully providing a rich, engaging context for heavy themes.



The author provides a historical background of the weathermen, to help readers understand why law enforcement concerns are perceived as "understandable" in relation to the protest.



THE USE OF ART: SIMPLIFICATION

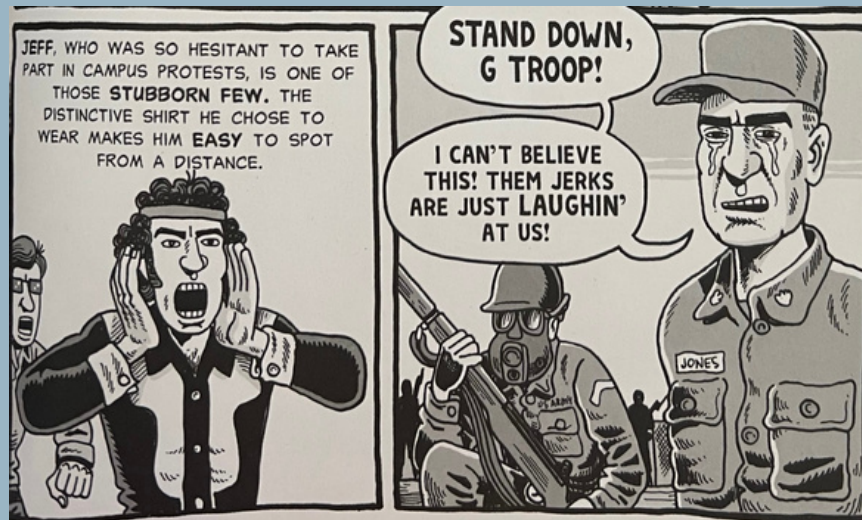
READER IDENTIFICATION

While the novel incorporates various languages and background knowledge of reality, it simplifies the visual portrayal of the entire scene by using only black and white colors and depicting diverse characters as having similar appearances. In comparison to the detailed content provided by the author, the illustrations are not highly realistic or sophisticated. This approach aligns with Scott McCloud's principle of amplification through simplification to some extent. The standardized appearances of the characters obscure clear differentiation between them, resulting in a similar level of reader identification with each character. This allows for more room for imagination and interpretation, making the readers actively involved in the content.

READER STRUGGLE

However, the standardized appearances of the characters sometimes make it difficult to identify and understand each character's story. Detailed information is sometimes given too late or too little, based on the author's assumptions of the reader's understanding, leading to confusion and the need to re-read.

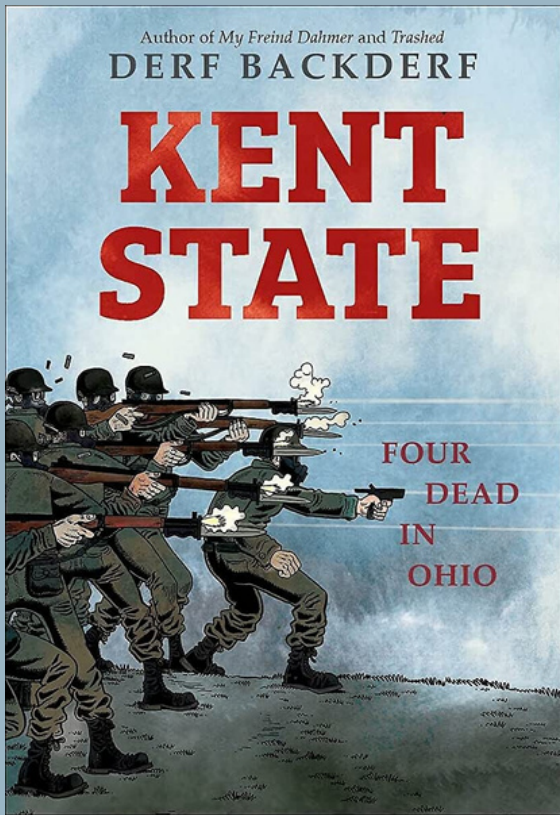
Characters sometimes express their feelings and situations too explicitly, disrupting the natural flow of the story.



Through simplification, I analyze that the novel fundamentally delivers the subject matter at a deeper level, amplifying the message that individuals should not be solely blamed, but that deeper levels of politics and ideology should be considered.

This is supported by the epilogue of the Nixon Tape, which shows his actual comment on the salutary effect of killing a few in dealing with radicals, followed by recalling the Kent State tragedy.

COMICS AS A MEDIUM



Nevertheless, the medium of comics in the novel fosters a unique understanding and insight beyond the story itself, engaging the audience in a way that no other medium can.

With a balanced approach of author involvement and reader engagement, the medium of comics effectively delivers the hard-hitting subject with a neutral tone and subjective interactivity among multiple characters in the story.

The author's extensive research and thorough fact-checking support the narrative, conveying diverse perspectives to immerse readers into the story through the techniques of comics. As a result, the medium allows for individual pacing in interpreting and exploring deeper meanings, in contrast to other visual media where automatic and electronic closure is highly processed.

CONCLUSION: TAKEAWAY

I would like to share my personal experience of being deeply immersed in a graphic novel, to the point of finishing the entire book in one sitting, despite not being familiar with the historical event or American history it depicted. This truly exemplifies the potential of the graphic novel as a medium for efficiently engaging audiences, even when tackling heavy subjects matter. Moreover, this novel resonated with me on a personal level because it reminded me of a similar historical event that took place in South Korea in 1987, where college students were shot by the national guard while protesting for democracy. Interestingly, there is also a graphic novel followed by transmedia work in the form of a film that depicts this event. What struck me was how the medium of comics approaches the story differently and conveys it to the audience. In comparison to <Kent State>, the Korean work centered around the protagonists with a relatively emotional-driven approach, realistic illustrations, and less reliance on extensive details from the author's involvement. I appreciate both works, but it was meaningful to discover the different insights the novel offered.

The impact of "Kent State" as a reader went beyond mere captivation; it sparked thoughts about the power of the medium in conveying historical events and storytelling in diverse cultural contexts. This experience made me realize that comics can be an incredible choice for delivering historical events, and it has inspired me to consider this approach when exploring popular themes of historical events in Korea's transmedia field, which I had not previously considered.