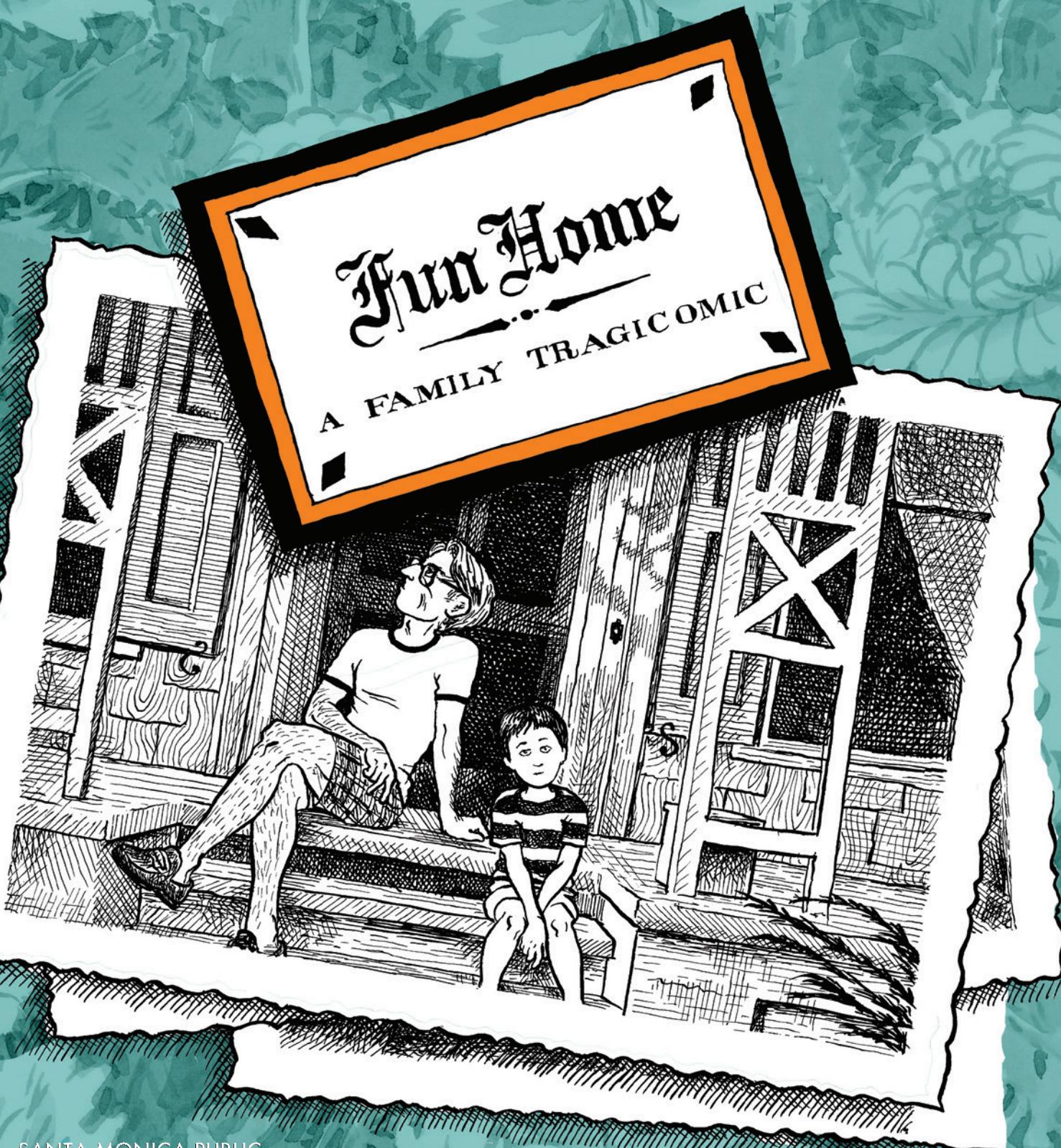


santa monica reads

JOIN A CITYWIDE BOOK CLUB

February 25 through March 30, 2017

For free public book discussion groups and other events, check the Santa Monica Reads website at smpl.org/SMReads.aspx or call 310.458.8600.



SANTA MONICA PUBLIC

LIBRARY

MEET ALISON BECHDEL



Alison Bechdel was born in 1960 in Lock Haven, a rural part of Pennsylvania, and raised with her two brothers in the nearby small town of Beech Creek, where both of her parents were high school teachers. Her father, Bruce, also operated a funeral home out of their grandparents' home, which would serve as a setting for her later autobiographical work.

Interested in illustration at an early age and graphically-influenced by comics and comic artists, Bechdel left high school early and graduated from Oberlin College in 1981 with a major in art. After graduation, she moved to New York City, working odd jobs, and in 1983 created the original bi-weekly comic strip, *Dykes to Watch Out For*, which ran in numerous alternative newspapers for 25 years. As the strip continued to grow in popularity and be anthologized in

at least twelve books, she became a full-time cartoonist. While her *Dykes to Watch Out For* strips often included elements of biography, Bechdel waited until the late 1990s to begin telling her own story. She toiled over *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* for seven years, and the graphic memoir was published in 2006 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt to wide critical and reader acclaim.

In 2011, Bechdel served as the guest editor of *Best American Comics*. The following year, she published her second graphic memoir, *Are You My Mother? A Comic Drama*. Also in 2012,

she was the Mellon Residential Fellow for Arts and Practice at the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center at the University of Chicago, and won a Guggenheim Fellowship. In 2014, Bechdel received a MacArthur "Genius Award" Fellowship. In 2015, *Fun Home* was adapted into a Tony-winning Broadway musical. Following the contentious 2016 election, Bechdel revived her *Dykes to Watch Out For* comic for a special strip that appeared in Vermont's alternative weekly newspaper *Seven Days*.

Alison Bechdel currently lives in Bolton, Vermont with her partner, Holly, and is at work on her next project.

*"By looking inwardly,
I'm trying to get outside
myself and connect
with other people."*

Alison Bechdel
"Drawn from Life"
The New Yorker
April 23, 2012



The "fun home" is the Bechdel Funeral Home, a family-owned and -operated business in Beech Creek, Pennsylvania. It is also the setting of Alison Bechdel's lauded graphic memoir of the same name, a portrait of the author and artist's youth and her complicated relationship with her enigmatic father, Bruce.

By the time she released *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* in 2006, Bechdel had staked out a strong footing in the comics industry via her independent strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*. First created in 1983, the comic ran consistently for nearly 25 years and provided Bechdel the chance to explore her interest in the intersection of the personal and the political, often giving

Welcome to FUN HOME

her a vehicle to pepper the fictional strip with biographical details from her own life. As she began to reexamine her early life in more detail, through the meticulous journals she kept as a child, she was driven more towards telling her own story and spent seven years painstakingly writing and creating *Fun Home*.

Upon its release in 2006, *Fun Home* received wide acclaim and became an instant best seller. A pioneering work, the book broke ground across many of the genres it straddled—personal memoir, comic arts, coming-of-age tale,

coming-out story, narrative nonfiction, and family drama. Bechdel packs every panel with rich detail, carefully-chosen literary allusion, nuanced humor and bittersweet truth. The end result is a finely-honed exploration of self, as the author circles her youthful story, carefully drilling down to find the core truth of her personal identity.

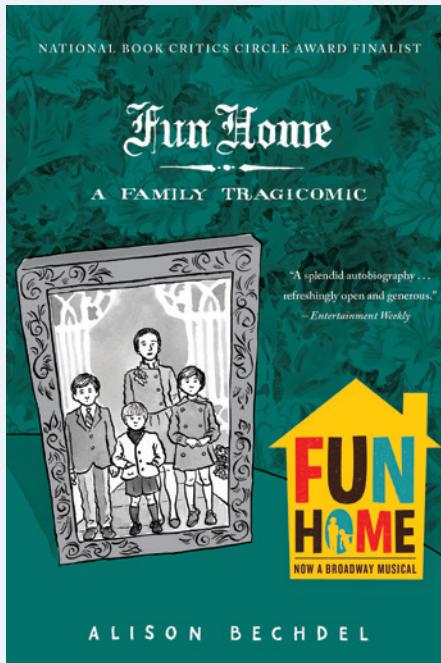
Following its publication, *Fun Home* became a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and was nominated for several other awards, including three Eisner Awards, one of which it won. In 2015, *Fun Home* was adapted into a stage musical and the Broadway production earned a dozen nominations for the 2015 Tony Awards, winning five, including Best Musical.



SO WHY DID WE SELECT A GRAPHIC MEMOIR?

The calculus for a Santa Monica Reads selection changes from year-to-year, depending on numerous factors, but at the baseline are two constant elements. First, our selections are always made from suggestions submitted by the community. Second, our selection committee members tend to like to try something “new” every year.

In 2017, Santa Monica Reads celebrates its fifteenth anniversary. To mark the occasion, we really emphasized the “new.” Not only are we reading nonfiction for the first time, but we’re reading a format that will be new to many—the graphic memoir. A subset of the imperfectly named genre known as “graphic novels,” the graphic memoir is a work of biography that employs not only words, but also pictures to tell its story. Purists and critics alike would probably narrow the descriptor down even further to “comics,” and indeed graphic memoirs are that. But whether one considers comics to be a term of praise or scorn, we’d like to posit that they deserve a deeper look.



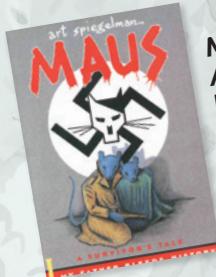
When Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home: A Family Tragcomic* was first suggested, many of our selection committee members began rooting for it right away. As librarians, we’ve watched as graphic storytelling has surged in popularity over the last couple decades and have long relished an opportunity to expose more readers to the format. Bechdel’s book is also a shining example of

the genre, intelligently written, densely layered, and packed with artistic and literary detail. One could easily read the book in one sitting, or spend hours poring over each panel and carefully-chosen word to find the hidden meanings that the author has woven into her story.

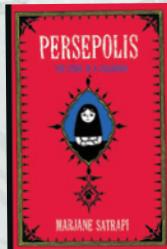
For those reluctant to try the format, or who consider it lightweight or not “true” art, we’d remind them that the written word began with images. Sequential art or storytelling began in our earliest days with cave paintings and hieroglyphics, with images substituting in where written communication had not yet been developed. Carrying on through illuminated manuscripts to the illustrated picture books that helped us all to learn to read, the combination of words and pictures can ignite the imagination and carry us to worlds never experienced or explored.

So sit back and enjoy *Fun Home*. We hope you’re as lured in by its charms as we were.

WOW!
Check out Events
on the next page!



Maus:
A Survivor's Tale
by
Art Spiegelman



The high water mark for the graphic memoir genre was set early on by this Pulitzer Prize-winning work by American cartoonist Art Spiegelman. First serialized from 1980 to 1991, *Maus* featured Spiegelman interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor. Cutting across multiple genres, the comic format allowed Spiegelman to amplify his and his father’s stories through anthropomorphized animal characters. The completed work was later anthologized into two volumes that are a must-read for anyone interested in the graphic storytelling format.

RECOMMENDED READS

Persepolis
by
Marjane Satrapi

Another of the most significant works of graphic memoir is this two-volume set by Marjane Satrapi detailing the author’s childhood in Iran, both before and during the Islamic Revolution, and her early adulthood in Austria and eventual return to Iran. First published in France to great acclaim, the graphic memoirs were later translated into several languages including English. The books were also adapted in 2007 into an Oscar-nominated animated film, co-directed by Satrapi.

Tomboy:
A Graphic Memoir
by
Liz Prince



Older teens and AP readers will likely have no trouble with *Fun Home*’s adult themes, but those looking for a more youth-friendly equivalent need look no further than Liz Prince’s charming book *Tomboy*. Chronicling the author’s awkward social adjustments from childhood to teendom, this graphic novel treads some of the same ground as *Fun Home*, as Prince navigates the gender expectations forced upon youth and ultimately finds her own comfortable place in society.

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art
by
Scott McCloud



A master of the format himself, Scott McCloud gained early acclaim with this 1993 comic-format book that treats comics and graphic storytelling as a literary art form worthy of respect. Tracking sequential art and storytelling back to the days of cave painting and moving onwards through artistic and literary history, McCloud makes a credible argument that comics should be regarded alongside the classics of every other significant art form.



SPECIAL EVENTS

An Afternoon with Alison Bechdel

Saturday, February 25 at 2:00 pm
Main Library, MLK, Jr. Auditorium
Author Alison Bechdel discusses *Fun Home* and her other work, her storytelling process, and her plans for the future. A book sale and signing follows.

Comics & the Art of Visual Communication

Sunday, February 26 at 2:00 pm
Main Library, MLK, Jr. Auditorium
American cartoonist and comics theorist Scott McCloud offers a fast-moving lecture on comics, visual communication, and how we learn through images. A book sale and signing follows.

Movie: *Persepolis* (2007)

Tuesday, February 28 at 7:00 pm
Montana Avenue Branch

Marjane Satrapi co-directed this film adaptation of her graphic memoir depicting her life growing up during and after Iran's Islamic revolution. In Farsi and French, with English subtitles. (96 min.)

Cartoon Your Story Workshop Series

Fridays, March 3, 10, 17 and 24 at 3:30 pm
Pico Branch, The Annex
Artist and onetime illustrator for *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* Carlos Nieto III leads a four-week workshop teaching attendees the basics of telling their story in a graphical format.

The Big Kids' Table: Comics Craft

Wednesday, March 8 at 6:30 pm
Main Library, Multipurpose Room
Create a unique picture frame with upcycled comic book art. All materials provided.

The Cartoon Self

Saturday, March 11 at 2:00 pm
Main Library, MLK, Jr. Auditorium
Fun Home carries on the tradition of biographical comics or graphic memoir. Join CSUN Professor Charles Hatfield for an illustrated talk about the roots and branches of this burgeoning genre.

Movie Musical: *Annie* (1982)

Tuesday, March 21 at 3:00 pm
Main Library, MLK, Jr. Auditorium
Musical based on the legendary comic strip, *Little Orphan Annie*. (127 min.)

Women to Watch Out For Panel

Saturday, March 25 at 1:00 pm
Main Library, MLK, Jr. Auditorium
Some of the top women in the comics field join us for a panel discussion.

The Bechdel Test/Women in Film

Saturday, March 25 at 3:30 pm
Main Library, MLK, Jr. Auditorium
A panel of women filmmakers discusses "The Bechdel Test" and its implications for the representation of women in film, both onscreen and behind the camera.

What's The Bechdel-Wallace Test?

In the early-2000s, online writers began measuring films, books and other fictional works against what would come to be known as "The Bechdel-Wallace Test." The measure asked three questions about the work: 1) Does it have at least two women characters, who 2) talk to each other, about 3) something other than a man?

Originally published in a 1985 *Dykes to Watch Out For* strip called "The Rule," the measure was first suggested to Bechdel by her friend Liz Wallace, who recommended it as an idea for her comic. At the root of the measure is the historically poor representation of women in media, both as characters and creators, and Bechdel and Wallace deserve credit for irreverently placing it into the zeitgeist and making it a conversation worthy of discussion.



BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Santa Monica Reads book discussions are hosted by trained discussion facilitators. Discussion participants are encouraged to share their thoughts about this year's book selection and its themes, or are welcome to simply listen in to learn more about the book.

- Barnes & Noble Booksellers | Monday, February 27 at 7:00 pm
- Fairview Branch Library | Saturday, March 4 at 2:00 pm
- Pico Branch Library | Tuesday, March 7 at 7:00 pm
- Montana Branch Library | Wednesday, March 15 at 7:00 pm
note: Alison Bechdel's *Are You My Mother?* will also be discussed at this location
- Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club | Thursday, March 16 at 6:30 pm
- Earth, Wind & Flour Restaurant | Monday, March 20 at 1:30 pm
- Ocean Park Branch Library | Saturday, March 25 at 11:00 am
- Hi De Ho Comics | Wednesday, March 29 at 6:30 pm
- Main Library, Multipurpose Room | Thursday, March 30 at 4:00 pm

PROGRAM LOCATIONS

Main Library*
601 Santa Monica Boulevard

Fairview Branch Library*
2101 Ocean Park Boulevard

Montana Avenue Branch Library*
1704 Montana Avenue

Ocean Park Branch Library*
2601 Main Street

Pico Branch Library*
2201 Pico Boulevard

Barnes & Noble Booksellers
1201 Third Street Promenade

Earth, Wind & Flour Restaurant
2222 Wilshire Boulevard

Hi De Ho Comics
1431 Lincoln Boulevard

Santa Monica Bay Woman's Club
1210 Fourth Street

*City of Santa Monica facilities are wheelchair accessible. To request a disability-related accommodation, call Library Administration at 310-458-8606 at least one week prior to event.

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