

# Two Pages of *Amelia*, Start to Finish

To the casual reader, the origin and production of the pages of artwork in a graphic novel can seem quite opaque. Unlike most other visual art forms—a painting on a wall, a sculpture sitting in front of you—the comics medium is by its nature highly mediated, being by definition something which has been mechanically reproduced. Yet each printed line, each and every mark on each and every panel on a page, has usually been made by hand using India ink applied to sheets of bristol board with

traditional tools like watercolor brushes and dip pens. “Amelia Earhart: Drawing from History” showcases all 78 of these original pages from the forthcoming Disney/Hyperion graphic novel, *Amelia Earhart - This Broad Ocean*, written by novelist Sarah Stewart Taylor and illustrated by Winston-Salem cartoonist Ben Towle.

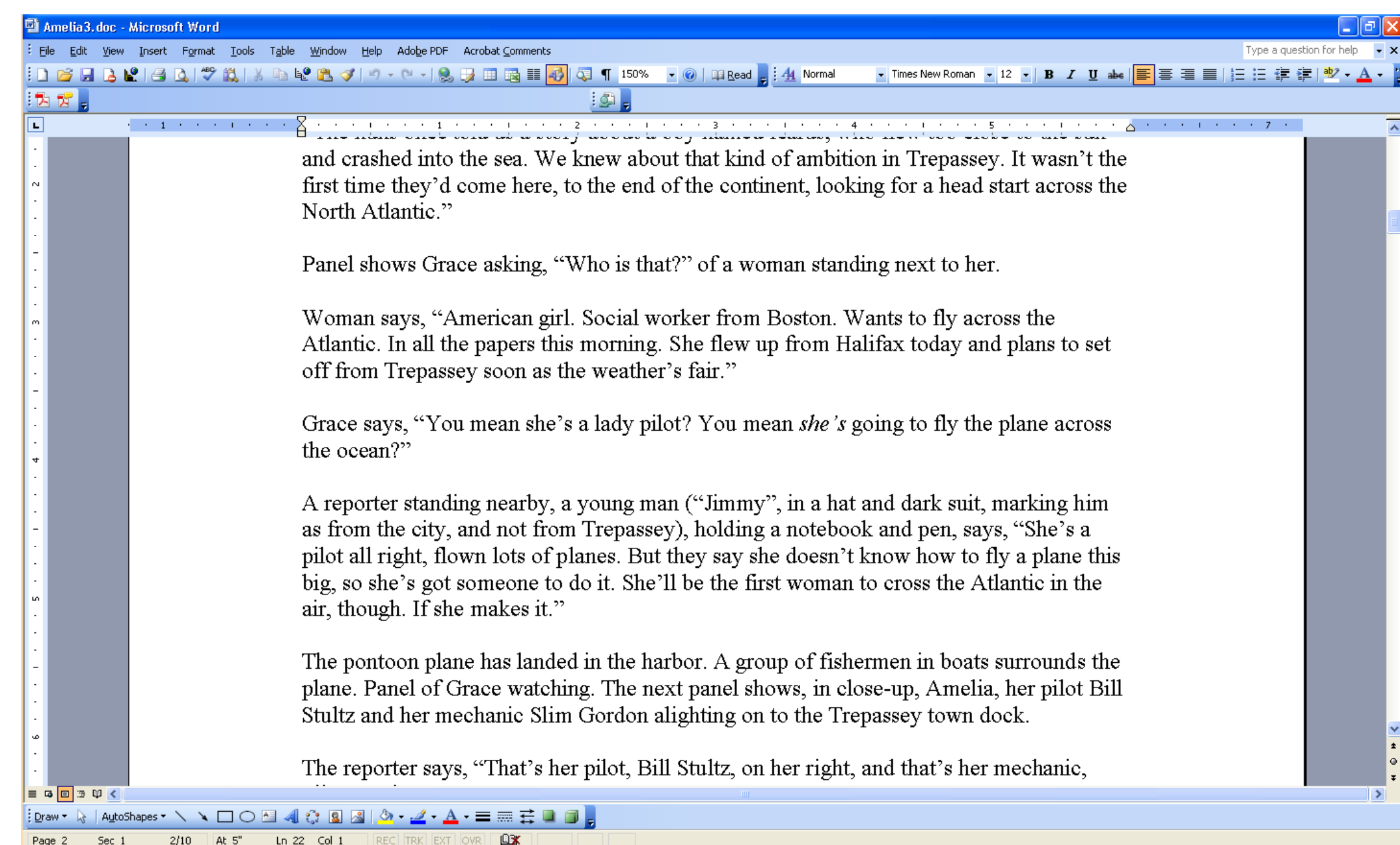
Comics–narrative combinations of words and pictures–have existed for well over a century, but only recently have they become a formi-

dable presence in mainstream book publishing. Graphic novels (long-form comics narratives) are now reviewed alongside prose works in periodicals like the *New York Times Book Review*, have been chosen as a *TIME Magazine*’s best book of the year, and have even garnered *The Guardian*’s First Book Award. Though they’re often grouped with prose novels for such purposes—and a graphic novel is, after all, indeed a book—a graphic novel is not necessarily, as are most novels, the ef-

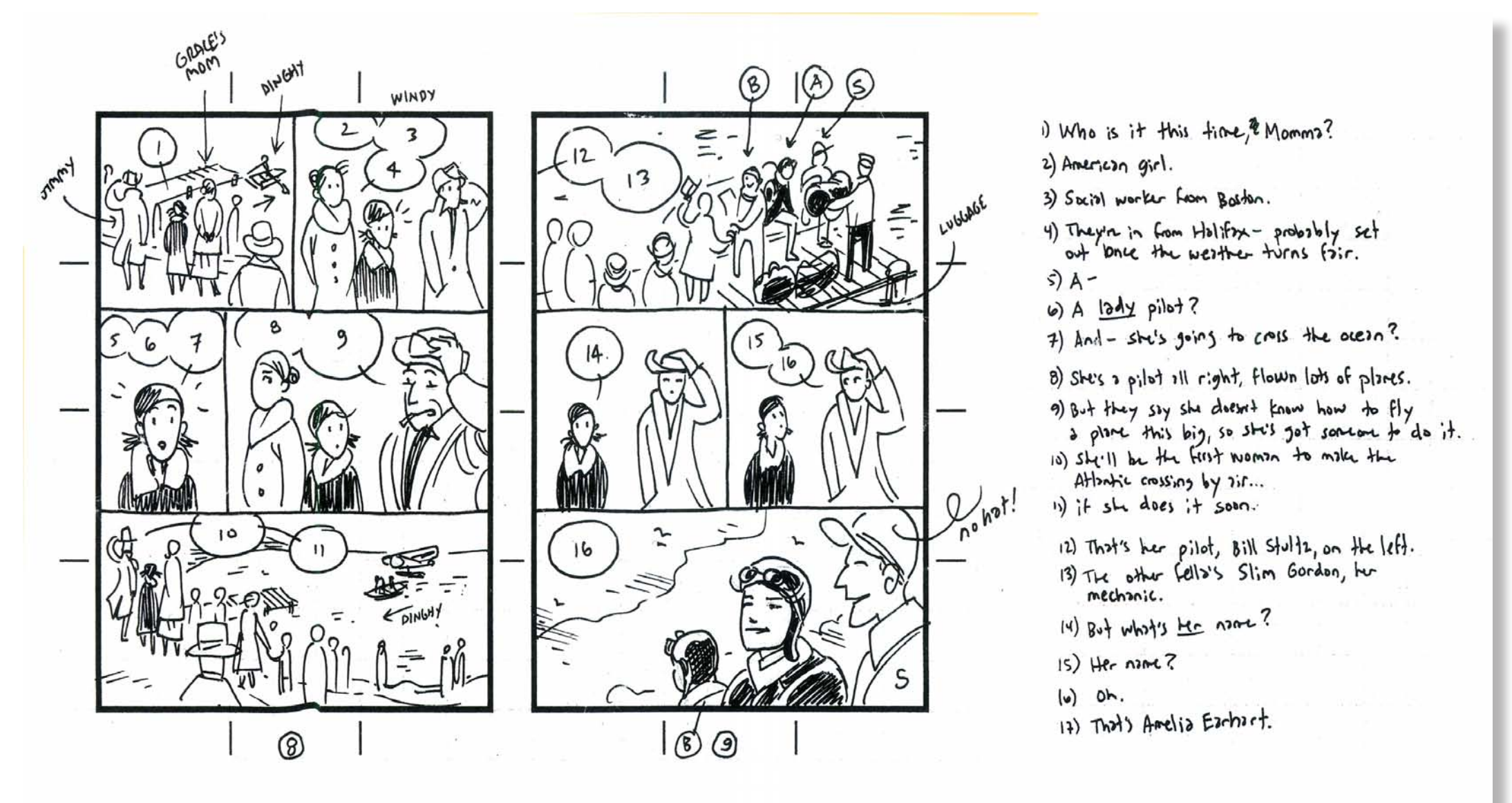
fort of a singular individual. While arguably the art form’s greatest works have been the work of one individual (Dan Clowes’s *Ghost-world*, Chris Ware’s *Jimmy Corrigan*), certainly there are other excellent works whose production owes more to a “division of labor” model (Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell’s *From Hell*, the collaborative work of Harvey Pekar and Robert Crumb).

Amelia is an example of the latter.

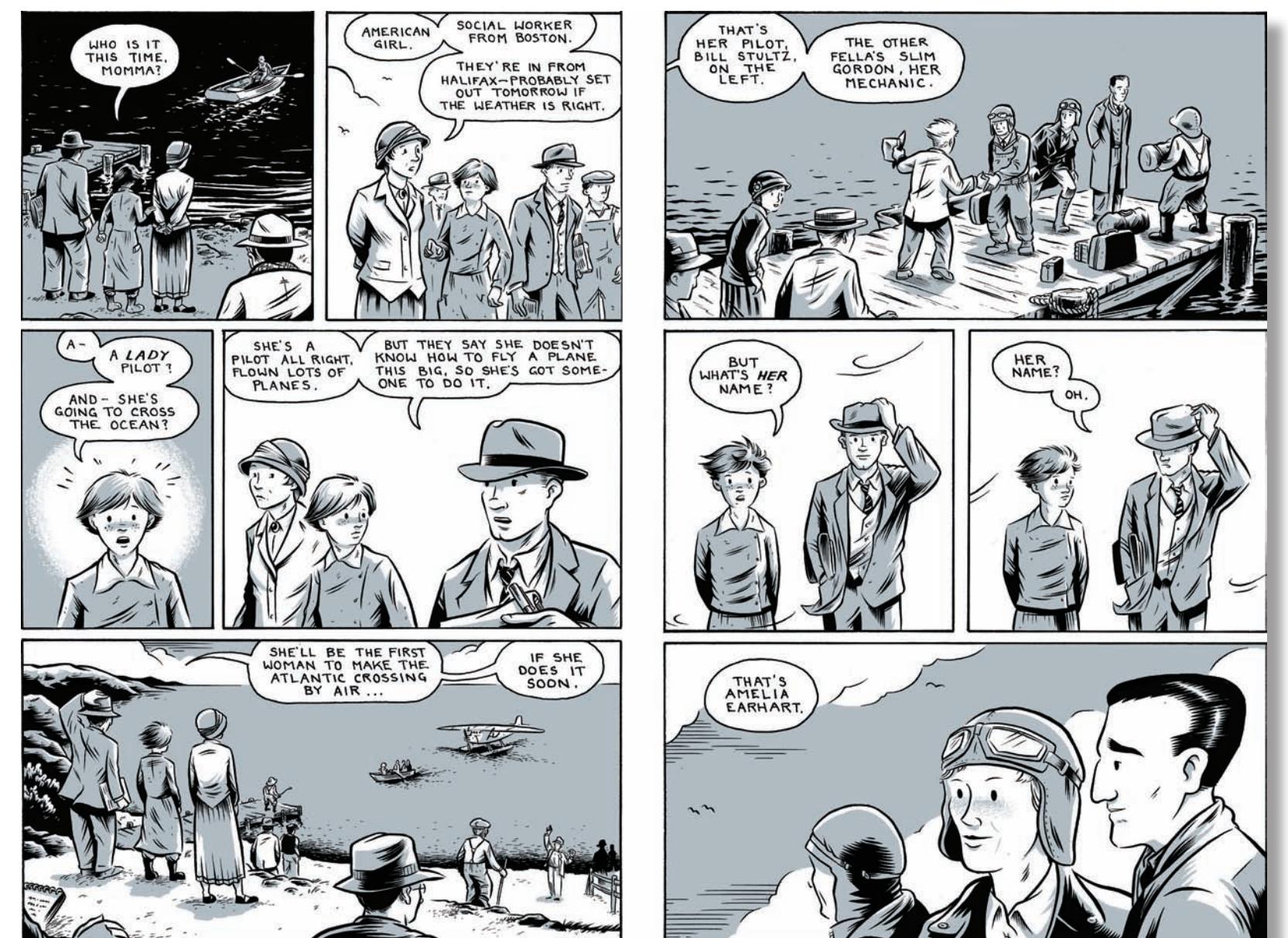
**1** The beginnings of *Amelia*—and most graphic novels that are not written and illustrated by the same person—is a script, similar in format to a film script, in this case written by novelest Sarah Stewart Taylor, author of the popular *Sweeney St. George Mysteries* (St. Martin’s Press).



**2** Then a series editor, working closely with the author and with editors at Hyperion Books, translated the script into the visual realm by producing tiny page “diagrams” known as thumbnails or breakdowns. For *Amelia* the series editor was Jason Lutes, creator of the widely-esteemed *Berlin* graphic novels (Drawn and Quarterly). These thumbnails serve to indicate to the artist basic information like the number and shape of panels on each page, where the characters are staged in each panel, and where dialog balloons should be placed.



**3** Finally, the artist, Ben Towle, renders the pages via the traditional cartoonists’ methods: they’re first drawn in pencil, hand lettered using a calligraphy nib, then inked using a #3 or #4 sable hair watercolor brush and dip pens with India ink. The artist then scans each page with a large format scanner and adds a layer of color tone in Adobe Photoshop.



You’ll find a “galley,” a pre-release promotional version of *Amelia Earhart: This Broad Ocean*, at the beginning of the exhibit with gray tones applied. In the final version of the book which will be released in February these gray tones will be appear as a muted blue.

At the end of the sequence of pages, you’ll see artwork for a two-page spread of downtown Los Angeles and two pages of panels that are clearly out of sequence. Because of the labor-intensive nature of comics, one tries to sort out all of the editorial decisions about storytelling at the thumbnail stage, but occasionally changes

have to be made at the last minute and these odd pages are the result of just such a decision: Amelia’s initial flight was given more emphasis with the use of the two page spread, but as a result panels were rearranged on the page, new panels inserted and old ones removed to restructure this scene. The final few pages of the

book were edited in this same manner and you can see these panels intermingled with the L.A. aerial sequence on these two “odds and ends” pages. The uninked pages here are from a scene from the book that was cut entirely, but give the viewer a good look at the book’s pencil art pre-inking.

Single pages of original artwork are offered for sale at \$100 each and two-page spreads for \$250 each. To purchase, contact Jack at 503.888.5930 or apercu@mail.com