Graphic Novels

It’s More Than Just a Comic! An Introduction to the Graphic Novel
by Anita Gonzalez

FEATURE
Graphic Novels: Who Likes Them and Why
by Stergios Botzakis

“The Other Language”—Creating Comics with My Class
by Kevin D. Cordi

VIGNETTES
An Interview with Ashley Dallacqua About the Graphic Novel
by Anita Gonzalez

It Started as an Experiment...
by Rebecca Tabor Pollock

FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF
Graphic Novels for Classroom Instruction
by Anita Gonzalez

Books by McCloud, Eisner, Monnin, and Tabachnick
by Anita Gonzalez

FROM THE ORC COLLECTION
More Resources for “Graphic Novels”
In the fall of 2012, I was introduced to graphic novels in a children’s literature course taught by my doctoral advisor. After learning about the rise of the graphic novel and reading titles from our syllabus, I began to explore additional titles at the local library. A snowball effect of graphic novel exposure happened quickly, and I continued to read and learn more about this category of books. After reading several on my own and noticing the diverse teaching possibilities, I started to take a closer look at how these texts were being used in classroom curricula.

For many, the idea of using graphic novels in the classroom is a new, unexplored concept. In addition, there is little published research on effective practices related to teaching with graphic novels. This article covers foundational topics beginning with defining the graphic novel and shares the possibilities not for only using these texts for classroom instruction, but for engaging all students as well.

Defining the Graphic Novel

Will Eisner has been credited as the person who coined the term graphic novel back in the 1970s. He also used the phrase sequential art to describe A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories (1978), a graphic novel he authored and published in an attempt to reach a wider audience. Since then, many use the phrase sequential art to describe graphic novels; however, this text format is much more than just pictures in order (Carter, 2009). At present, graphic novels are one of the fastest-growing categories of books (Frey, 2010; Gallo & Weiner, 2004; Griffith, 2010). Evolving from the traditional comic book, graphic novels are gaining the respect of reviewers, librarians, museums, and academics and have been garnering literary awards (National Coalition Against Censorship, American Library Association, & Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, 2006).

Often confused with comic books, graphic novels are unique in that they have many elements of a picture book but also take on the form of a chapter book or novel with lengthy and multifaceted storylines. While they are very similar, comics are identified by their size, 28-page length, stapled spine, and magazine-like publication. The graphic novel is physically more like a book with storylines that have a beginning, middle, and end and can often stand alone (Mooney, 2002; Ward & Young, 2011). Similar to a picture book, graphic novels may contain adequate, little, or no amount of text, giving great power to the illustrations in portraying the story.

In a graphic novel, the pictures are just as important to the meaning of the story as the words (Dallacqua, 2012; Pantaleo & Bomphray, 2011; Rapp, 2012), allowing some to consider the graphic novel a more “mature” picture book. To compare the comic book and the graphic novel, McTaggart says it best by stating, “While all graphic novels are comics, not all comic books are graphic novels” (2008, p. 31).

Powerful definitions of successful graphic novels include one by Gallo and Wiener (2004), stating:

A well-done graphic novel offers the immediacy of the prose reading experience, with the pictures and the words working simultaneously, making a graphic novel not only something one reads but something one sees as well, like reading and watching a movie at the same time. (p. 115)

Baird and Jackson (2007) offer another strong definition of a winning graphic novel: “A successful graphic novel starts with a stellar story told with words and pictures that augment the story, providing insight that text alone cannot do” (p. 5). In synthesizing the literature and research, it is evident that the lines blur when attempting to define the graphic novel.

After understanding all the definitions of the graphic novel, here’s where I am now with my definition: A graphic novel is what we think of when we say a “novel,” yet told in comic illustration form with the pictures and the text working together to tell the story. Still, this is a working definition. As McCloud (1994) stated about comic books, “Our attempts to define comics are an ongoing process which won’t end anytime soon” (p. 23). His statement is relevant to defining graphic novels as well. As this new category for classroom instruction becomes more highly accepted, an exact definition and understanding of the graphic novel is likely to develop over time.
The Graphic Novel as a Category, Not a Genre

As part of defining the graphic novel, I believe in the idea of these books being accepted as a category rather than an independent genre. This is important because viewing graphic novels as an isolated genre is detrimental to integrating graphic novels throughout the whole curriculum. This type of text can be classified as biography, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, etc.—much like picture books, wordless books, or nonfiction texts.

Purposeful Instruction and Text Sets

As the graphic novel makes its way into the classroom, these texts should be viewed by teachers as a choice when creating texts sets for interdisciplinary themes or units. Integrating the graphic novel into texts sets for students to study along with other categories of books is possibly the best way to begin to use them as part of the curriculum (Butcher & Manning, 2004; Carter, 2009). With the new Common Core Standards being implemented in most states across the country, texts sets are part of the English language arts standards, along with the other content areas. Becoming more integrative in classroom instruction methods can result in a sophistication of teaching and learning. Including graphic novels as a mainstream choice for instruction will introduce opportunities for different ways of thinking and an integrative way of learning.

Ways of Reading

One of the most sophisticated instructional methods needed when incorporating graphic novels into the curriculum is teaching the “codes” of the graphic novel. In order to gain complete understanding of the format, students should be taught the “way to read” a graphic novel (Dallacqua, 2012; Gallo & Weiner, 2004; Pantaleo, 2011).

In teaching the ways of reading a graphic novel to students, Pantaleo (2011) has learned from her research that “it’s essential to ‘see,’ not merely to look” when reading a graphic novel” (p. 127). When learning how to read a graphic novel, we learn to “see” the illustrations, the words, and the action or events of the story in our minds. Once we are able to do that, then we are able to make meaning of the complex story being told.

For students to maximize their knowledge related to learning from the graphic novel, it is important to explicitly teach children the “metalinguage,” or terminology specific to reading, writing, and speaking about graphic novels (Lawn, 2012). Terminology such as panels, gutters, speech bubbles, thought balloons, and sound effect balloons are specific to graphic novels and can transfer to other domains. The definitions of these terms are fairly self-evident. But gutter deserves special mention here.

Gutter is one of the most important elements in graphic novel design. It is the space between the panels that hold the art. It is the space where the reader’s imagination is allowed to create what is not shown. The gutters are where the action and movement of the story occur in the mind (McCloud, 1994; Monnin, 2010).

It is important that these concepts and terms of the graphic novel are explicitly taught to students in order for connections to be made and comprehension to occur. Children should be guided in learning how the stories are being told. As graphic novels become more accepted as appropriate classroom texts, instructional resources continue to grow to aid in learning how to teach with graphic novels.

Literary Devices

Another part of instructional methods when teaching with graphic novels is the integration of literary devices enhanced by the art and illustration. Throughout my review of literature and recent research, I found that the authors agree on the types of literary devices that with instruction lead to literary thinking by way of the graphic novel.

The importance of literary knowledge can be heard in the voices of teachers who teach older students. Some English teachers use graphic novels to teach literary terms and techniques such as dialogue, and they also use them as a comparative tool when reading the classics (Schwarz, 2002). Other teachers see the literary value in reading a graphic novel because in addition to the traditional forms of literary devices such as characterization, setting, plot, tone, and mood, the merging of the visual elements with the text takes readers to a higher level of thinking and analysis (Rapp, 2012; Versaci, 2001).
When we ask students to read graphic novels, we are asking them to think deeply about what they have read and make conclusions based on the art, text, and background knowledge. This way of thinking transfers to students’ real lives and situations in which they must make decisions and problem-solve. “A common goal, regardless of the level we teach, is to help students read beyond the page in order to ask and answer deeper questions that the given work suggests about art, life and the intersection of the two” (Versaci, 2001, p. 64).

Student Interest and Graphic Novels

It is clear that graphic novels are of great interest to students of all ages (Crawford, 2004; Dallacqua, 2012; Edwards, 2009; Lawn, 2012; Pantaleo, 2011; Schmidt, 2011; Smetana, 2010). With many graphic novels telling stories of adventure, danger, heroism, power, and humor, these fast-paced novels often resemble art, film, and television, which may be one of the reasons young readers are attracted to the texts (Butcher & Manning, 2004; Crawford, 2004; Schwarz, 2006).

Another idea revolving around student interest is one of “light reading.” Children enjoy reading a wide variety of materials, many of which include periodicals, magazines, comics, and reference books. In each of these texts, the amount of reading is small in comparison to novels. This may be key in the idea of light reading. Crawford (2004) states, “Perhaps the most powerful way of encouraging children to read is by exposing them to light reading, a kind of reading that schools pretend does not exist and a kind of reading that many children, for economic and ideological reasons, are deprived of. I suspect that light reading is the way that nearly all of us learned to read” (p. 27).

If graphic novels have not been widely recognized as tools for reading at school, then we can likely look to libraries to be the key in providing the materials that readers are asking for. Many librarians have noted the growing requests for graphic novels, which is a direct reflection of the interest of readers (Monnin, 2010; NCAC et al., 2006). However, in terms of the reluctant teacher, Monnin (2010) states, “When teachers embrace graphic novels, comics, and cartoons, a wonderful thing happens: children are way ahead of them. Kids are eager to talk about images, their understanding is often extremely sophisticated, and they can well articulate their appreciation” (p. xiii).

For classroom teachers, engaging and motivating students in reading is a priority. The literature tells us that graphic novels are of high interest to students, motivating and engaging them once they are exposed. Once this interest occurs, academic learning is more likely to take place. The graphic novel should be looked at as a way to teach reading and literature to students. As Low (2012) notes, “It is important to note that although many readers compartmentalize graphic novels and comics into a pleasure reading column, when placed in an academic setting, they became academic” (p. 372).

In closing, I end with Schwarz’s (2006) summarization:

Graphic novels are increasing in number, quality, variety and availability. They offer a new kind of text for the classroom and they demand new reading abilities. They tend to appeal to diverse students, including reluctant readers, and they offer both great stories and informational topics. For students who no longer deal with pure word texts in their daily lives, multiple literacies are a necessity. Schools must prepare young people to think critically with and about all kinds of texts.

References


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Graphic Novels: Who Likes Them and Why
by Stergios Botzakis

Teachers often speak to me about using graphic novels with struggling students. They often assume that because graphic novels use words and pictures, they are easier books to read. Some who do not know much about what graphic novels are or what they are about also can be quick to dismiss them as juvenile or not real books because they have pictures in them. They equate graphic novels with comic books, which are frequently seen as lowly superhero or humor stories and not worth reading or regarding. In this article, I am going to write about what I have learned about graphic novels and comic books in two separate research studies. I think that what I have found can help shed some light on those texts and their potential audiences and uses.

Some years ago I interviewed twelve adults who have read and still read comic books. I was looking into what created a sense of connection to those texts and also what fostered a sense of resiliency with these readers. Knowing that many of my own middle and high school students were reluctant readers, I was looking for some clues about what compelled them to read and what they got out of reading. What I found surprised me. First off, my participants as a group did not match stereotypical images of comic book readers such as the Comic Book Guy on The Simpsons. Eleven of twelve were men, which roughly matches national demographics of comic book fans. Half of them were married, some had families, and none of them lived in their parents’ basements.

Additionally, most of them held college degrees, and almost all of them were strong readers and accomplished students. One of my participants was dyslexic, but he credited reading comic books for helping him see words in isolation and sentences in groups, which helped him figure out grammar and spelling. Plus the stories kept him coming back for more, which helped develop his reading abilities. Eventually, he went on to college and earned a bachelor’s degree in marine biology.

My participants spoke about a number of purposes reading comic books served for them, many that match reasons why others read literature or other more socially accepted texts. They read to exercise their brains, to stimulate themselves with stories, and to visit with familiar characters. They read comic books to learn about different cultures or peoples, to take part in discussions, and to reflect on their own lives. They read to keep themselves company, to pass the time, and to escape from their day-to-day life for a while.

What I learned from these readers was that comic books served many purposes for them and also that they were largely expert readers who read many different things. They just had a taste to also read texts that combined words and pictures. Today, looking at book sales and library circulations, it is clear that there has been growth in the audience for graphic novels, books that also contain art and words combined to tell stories or convey information. Some of these books have won major awards, like Art Speigelman’s Maus, which won a Pulitzer Prize, or Gene Yang’s American Born Chinese, which won the Michael L. Printz Award. Still, there is a pervading sense that reading such books might be better suited for less capable readers.

A group of high school teachers who had classes of nontraditional Advanced Placement students approached me to help them and their students by getting graphic novel adaptations of classic literary works. They assumed the graphic novels would be more readable and easier to understand. After some discussion and evaluation, we purchased class sets of adaptations of Frankenstein, Great Expectations, Beowulf, and The Metamorphosis and used them in instruction with the eleventh and twelfth grade students. I also gave the students a survey to gather data about their reading and perceptions.

We learned that about half of them had never read a graphic novel before that class. Still, most students reported liking the graphic novel format. They also reported that they preferred reading graphic novels over conventional novels at a ratio of almost two to one (see Figure 1).
Because of widespread unfamiliarity with the graphic novel format and also with the technical words needed to discuss and analyze the combination of words and images, the teachers and I had to offer formal instruction about the grammar and mechanics of graphic novels. We also had to deal with some bumps in the road because a small number of students resisted the books as uncomfortable or inferior. Nevertheless, classroom activities such as discussions and thematic analyses went on as usual. In the end, the results were mixed about how pictures helped the students understand the narratives, but overall, the students reported that graphic novels were easier to read than conventional novels (see Figure 2).

Students’ open-ended comments about reading graphic novels were almost uniformly positive, but the few dissenters were very vocal about their dislike of such books. As with many other types of reading material, there were fans, those who were neutral, and those who actively disliked certain genres or formats.

Looking back over both studies, I can say a few things about reading and teaching graphic novels. First, like other texts, graphic novels have the potential for entertaining, provoking, and engaging readers with their narratives, characters, and ideas. Second, such engagement should be supported by instruction and informed teachers who can approach the unique qualities of these texts. Third, not all the students will take to different texts or practices, but that does not mean that we still should not try. Finally, graphic novels are just as useful for performing many of the textual activities that readers and educators commonly undertake. They just may require more attention because not everyone is as familiar with their format.

I am not suggesting that graphic novels should take a primary role in a curriculum, but they do offer an alternative way of engaging with texts that many can benefit from in terms of both academics and interests. At the very least, graphic novels should be included in the types of texts we use to teach our students. They will never know what books they prefer if they do not get to experience a wide array of them.

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“The Other Language”—Creating Comics with My Class

by Kevin D. Cordi

My students can’t escape visual literacy. Whether they are viewing images of cute puppies on Facebook or playing with apps on their iPhones, they are bombarded with visual pictures. Most images are not neutral. Commercials are inviting, even demanding, a response from students. Angry Birds want the student to make them less angry. A young man needs to buy this car to earn the affection of the attractive young lady. Picture books also invite response. Some picture books have strong and subtle messages contained in them. Some present alternative ways of thinking or present cultures, ideas, and directions that are not traditional. It takes a keen eye to see how an illustrator suggests movement in picture books. However, do students know how to critically review the intent of the illustrator? And just as important, do they know enough to question or accept it?

Shelby Wolf (2003) wrote concerning picture books and illustrators:

They want to guide us in how to feel, and they use a number of pictorial elements including size, color, shape, and line as well as varying media and artistic styles to enhance the feeling. From the very first look at a book, you get a message about its content. (p. 234)

However, as Norman (2011) reminds us, although a picture is worth a thousand words, if one cannot comprehend it:

It is just a page decoration at best and a waste of space at worst. Considering how many graphics are found in textbooks and other non-fiction texts for children and adults and the amount of information they contain, it is important to understand what readers are doing when they see these graphics, how they are processing them, and whether these graphics are contributing to their overall comprehension of the text. (p. 740)

My students are preservice teachers, and the students that they are preparing to teach are also massive consumers of images. Even though as Moline (2011) states, this is our “other language,” my students and I are working to understand how this other language operates. I grew up on comic books; there was not a day that I did not have one. I hold a collection that numbers in the thousands. But in school, there was no time for comic books, comics, or graphic novels. Although I do have a background in children’s literature, more time was allocated to text than image. With the changing ways that images are being used in picture books, it is not enough.

Visual language is a language that is as complicated as writing, and our students are not prepared to critically address the images in a picture book or even the app on their phone. However, my students need to be prepared for massive amounts of images that they will see in and out of their classroom. Moline (2011) states:

We are all bilingual. Our second language, which we do not speak, but which we read and write every day, is visual. This second language goes unnoticed until we ask ourselves how we read the news (now more than ever with the aid of graphs and maps), use our smartphones (in which we navigate from one application to another by icons), or even drive to work (by means of graphics on street signs and our GPS devices). (p. 9)

I engaged my students to participate in the making and shaping of creating a comic or comic strip. In order to know something, they should do it.

Why Concentrate on Visual Literacy?

As Donmoyer (1995) reminds us, “all knowing, learning, and thinking is symbolically mediated.” Students bring meaning to texts. Joe Kincheloe and Shirley Steinberg (1996) define visual texts as “any aspect of reality that contains encoded meaning” (p. 184). As Gaudelli (2009) suggests, it is the encoded meaning that is important here. With this in mind, students can see anything as text; what is important is how they see it operate.
Why Comics? Why Use the Arts?

You might wonder why I did not have my students work in pairs or small groups on the comic strip. Basically, I wanted them to be the sole creators of their work so we could discuss their individual designs. I wanted them to create a “third space” (Stevenson & Deasy, 2005) for learning. A third space is:

. . . the place where meaning exists in art, not in the viewer alone or the piece of art itself, but somewhere in the relationship between the two where the viewer brings past knowledge, experiences, and imagination to make meaning from a work of art. Similarly, those making art enter a third space as they combine their knowledge, experiences and imagination with the materials and methods of an art form to create pieces that hold meaning and invite viewers to create meaning.

I want my students to use mentor texts and to reflect on their work from the ideas in these texts. I decided the work needed to be anchored to address a common subject. The topic was bullying. I run an antibullying website where college and school-aged students address a specific type of bullying (cyber, peer, teacher, parental) with stories. My students have also contributed to the site.

In my search for educators using comic strips in the classroom, I was hard-pressed to find many articles. I did find an article that showed how writing using comics help students with narrative writing (Nixon, 2012, p. 81), but in the area of language arts, not much was available. There were a number of articles about using graphic novels in the classroom (Fassbender, Dulaney, & Pope, 2013; Frey & Fisher, 2004; Rice, 2012; Schwarz, 2006), but many of them were on reading graphic novels, not creating them. Because comic strips and single cartoons did not have as many panels, they were easier to work with in the classroom. I wonder, is it because of the fear of using art to make the graphic comics that teachers avoid making comics? Are teachers intimidated by the thought that students can’t make them?

But I Am Not an Artist or Cartoonist

In times when as an educator feels that he or she is not qualified to be an artist and explore graphic literacy, one needs to be reminded:

Instead of giving up on integrating the arts, you can gain more confidence about your knowledge of art by making art in a context where the emphasis is not on technical perfection but on learning from the process of making art. (Donahue & Stuart, 2010, p. 11)

I don’t have any formalized training in art. In fact, it was my desire to know more about this subject that moved me into this project. Not surprisingly, where I did find information about using comics was in art education articles. One such article was written by Rachel Marie Crane Williams (2008), and she shares:

Comics and graphic novels are powerful teaching tools; reading and making comics encourages students to become more skilled at critically consuming and creating texts that examine complex concepts (Berkowitz & Packer, 2001; Frey & Fisher, 2004; Morrison, Bryan, & Chilcoat, 2002). Students and teachers can use comics to examine personal experiences in the form of narratives related to empowerment and empathy. (p. 13)

The Creation Process

I began asking students what is visual literacy. Hannah Frank said, “Reading a book and then making it come alive in my everyday life.” Reid Haller said, “Visual literacy to me is being able to read a book through the pictures.” Deborah Nase said, “I thought it was about art, but now I think it is more about how I process what I see.” I assigned them to find one academic reference (not dictionary.com) that defined visual literacy. This helped generate more conversation on the meaning of the terms.

Students ranged in experience with visual literacy. Kirstin Virgalitte said, “I used to be into comic books and would read at least a book a night. However, I found visual literature less mature,” and then said novels are more reliable, so she has stopped reading comic books. Many read graphic novels for the first time in our class. Mackenzie Buckley thought all comics were graphic novels and explained that she “wasn’t into comic books.”
In her article “The Multiple Media of Texts,” Anne Wysocki offers a general framework for serious reading, while acknowledging that the following steps are just a beginning. However, I would also advocate these are effective markers to help students begin to create using visual elements.

1. Name the visual elements in a text.
2. Name the designed relationship among those elements.
3. Consider how the elements and the relations connect with different audiences, contexts and arguments (p. 137)

First, I arranged for professional artist and colleague Professor Jessica Larva to address my class concerning the language of art and visual interpretation. She began to alleviate many of my students’ fears when she confessed that although she has a degree in drawing, she sometimes relies on drawing stick figures. She then began to draw not exquisite drawings, but enough to render what she was teaching. She graciously shared the visual elements, which included:

1. **Direction.** The flow of the eye as one observes the work
2. **Flow.** What leads the eye through a single space
3. **Parade.** Seeing the work from one panel to the next
4. **Rhythm (pace).** The movement of the comic
5. **Emphasis/focus.** The way images are accentuated, often by visual sounds and color
6. **Dramatic elements.** How lines can create more drama
7. **Motion or action.** Where the movement happens
8. **Point of view or “establishing shot.”** Aspect that sets the tone

After Professor Larva’s lesson, I explained to my students that these elements would be critical to how they would build their cartoons. Too many educators use the same criteria to assess visual work that they use in evaluating a story. We need to use the language of art to assess art. I informed my students I would expect that they turn in a clean comic but also an annotated copy that demonstrates the visual elements, one per panel.

Then, we turned to mentor visual texts.

**Mentor Texts**

We used five “texts” for mentor texts.

Katie Wood Ray (1999) shared:

> When students are taught to see how writing is done, this way of seeing opens up to them huge warehouses of possibilities for how to make writing good writing. (p. 11)

However, the form does not always have to be writing. Lynne Dorfman said in a podcast with the National Writing Project:

> Mentor texts are pieces of literature that you—both teacher and student—can return to and reread for many different purposes. They are texts to be studied and imitated. . . . Mentor texts help students to take risks and be different writers tomorrow than they are today. It helps them to try out new strategies and formats. . . . And of course, a mentor text doesn’t have to be in the form of a book—a mentor text might be a poem, a newspaper article, song lyrics, comic strips, manuals, essays, almost anything.

In choosing mentor texts, I first had students read *Dear Bully* (Hall & Jones, 2011) and read stories both from the *Dear Bully website* and from our site *Our Stories Count*. This helped ground the diverse ways we could adjust the issue of bullying in a specific context. We talked about how bullying prevention is specific and personal, and this was reflected later in their comics and comic strips.
Next, I looked for a text my students could use that had the graphic examples that Professor Larva discussed. The graphic novel *Cardboard* (2012) by Doug TenNapel stood out. Lisa Goldstein (2012), writing for *School Library Journal*, states:

Rich colors printed on glossy pages, along with dramatic cuts between panels, give the comic a cinematic feel, and the illustrations’ sharp angles and sinewy lines are striking. This action-filled adventure is not only highly entertaining, but also contains provocative points about the power of imagination.

My students began to acquire a visual language. Instead of talking about plot, we concentrated on how the images tell a story. Students spoke of visual elements such as parade, rhythm, and flow.

One student, Robin Groh, noted:

The pages are separated into sections that show a movement to the characters. Many times many stories contain only one illustration per page. By splitting the page into sections, you can allow your brain to imagine the movement of the characters as if they were real.

Comments such as Robin’s are not found about written essays or stories. Robin’s observation, like those of some of my other students, demands a visual language and eye.

Next, we turned to *The Odd Squad: Bully Bait* (2013) by Michael Fry. The visual elements are represented more in cartoon form. This book contains a story interspliced with comics drawn in. Students again spoke of the visual elements that were represented by the text and talked about how this form limited some of the action.

For our final selection before producing our own comic, I deliberately chose a hybrid graphic novel called *Heart Transplant*, written by Andrew Vachss and Frank Caruso (illustrator). This text uses a mix of mediums. It is oversized and impressionistic. Jesse Karp, writing for *Booklist*, does not see this as a graphic novel, and it’s because of this confusion, I chose the text.

Karp (2010) states:

*Heart Transplant* is not a graphic novel per se but rather has images free-floating among passages of dialogue and prose. This chiaroscuro impressionism, as if the world were being viewed through a haze of charcoal and shadow, creates powerful and evocative visuals for a ham-handed reworking of an admittedly important message: stand up for yourself. Worth adding to a collection on the strength of its design and images, or for readers who really need the message hammered home.

As a class, we had a spirited conversation about the text as a graphic novel.
The Storyboard: A First Point of Assessment

After discussing the mentor texts, students brought in five cartoons of their choosing and annotated the visual elements contained in the cartoon.

Student Diana Young chose a Shoe cartoon to analyze. She observed:

In the first panel, Senator Belfry is represented in a medium shot. We see him from his waist up standing behind a lectern of which only the top part is visible. . . . the use of text combined with the visual image of the bat on the lectern in the last panel come together to deliver a funny punch line.

Again this requires visual eye and context to express this.

The students also created a storyboard for their cartoon. Einstein said, “If I can’t picture it I can’t understand it.” The same is true for evaluating or checking on progress with visual literacy. Students must create drafts of the work. As a preliminary step, a storyboard is an effective place to start. According to Roger Essley (2008):

Storyboarding, or picture writing, is the origins of all languages . . . look at a comic strip and you’ll see picture writing in action. A storyboard is a writing format, generally a set of boxes (or rectangles, circles or other shapes) placed in a logically sequenced order. Each box or frame is a place for the writer to put information, pictures, symbols, or text. (p. 10)

Each student was required to create one. However, at this point, I informed the students not to worry about how the artwork looks, but instead focus on what meaning they are creating. We had a conversation on how to create deeper meaning based on images. We talked about the importance of letting the audience not see the entire action. I remember a few conversations where I informed the students that they did not create a comic strip that promoted reflection. Instead, they had created a poster with the message not to bully. I remember working with Sean Lanier, who presented an image of Superman that stated, “Stand up to bullying across the world” (Figure 1). We discussed how Sean had created a poster message, and instead, he should make us see his message another way (Figure 2).

Sean created something beyond an advertisement for Superman or antibullying, using the unpredictable. He added the boy. We thought we knew who wore the “S,” but it turns out to be a boy. This sends more than a slogan; instead it communicates that we can all address the problem of antibullying no matter our age. This was a point of reflection and assessment. As Tovani states, what students need is feedback, or what she calls debriefing, on something that matters:

Teachers don’t need any more numerical “data.” What they need is validation to use the data that matters most—like student work and student talk—to help figure out next steps for the learners in their educational care. (p. 12)

When talking with art teachers and professors, many of them confess that too many teachers “throw away art.” They assign art, such as creating a comic strip, and give unrealistic deadlines and accept anything as a final work. Instead, I have learned to accept art in drafts before the final product. As much as writing requires many drafts, so does creating art. This is why I provided separate folders for the students to place all their drafts in and informed them this would be part of their evaluation. I have up to 12 drafts by some students. As educators we need to work with our students at all stages of the process so the final outcome does not come as a surprise.

Profile of the Cartoons of Students

As you can see, the students did more than simply create images; they paid attention to the visual elements. For example, one student, Kristi Bope, created flow by surrounding the image of the girl with words. The students annotated the actions that they created. Students were required to present their images not only physically, but also electronically. Many students chose to use Google slides, but others chose the program Comic Life (www.pasq.com). However, I didn’t allow them to present their work using these programs until they were in the draft phases of their work. (Some of the programs let you simply copy and paste images. I wanted my students to engage in the practice of making the art before presenting it in an electronic fashion.)
Profile of Two Students’ Work

In order to demonstrate my students’ work, I have arranged for you to hear and watch Deborah Nase and Kirstin Virgalitte’s process of creating their work. Click on the links below, and you can see and hear their process of creating. These students explain the process as they create. I hope you give their ideas a look and listen.

Kirstin’s Work

- The Monster In Me Audio
  http://www.ohiorc.org/orc_documents/orc/AdLIT/InPerspective/2014-02/vignette2MonsterInMe.mp3

- The Monster In Me Artwork (PDF)

Deborah’s Work

- Artwork

Showcase the Art

It is important to showcase art and not simply ask that it be turned in. Plus the reflection and the questions from the students really demonstrate their desire to know more about the work. The students serve in the role of artist educator. In a real sense the unseen stages of learning are made visible.

Juno (2010) comments that art should be a visible process; students need to share the work. She states three ways to make art visible.

1. Collect artifacts of the process, not just the final product.
2. Guide a short reflective conversation with your students about their learning.
3. Take time to reflect on your student learning. (pp. 64–65).

What is critical is that art be seen and discussed. The same is true with the comics that my students made. After all, this is a visual assignment; why should it be not only seen but experienced with the other students?
My Students’ Assessments—and Mine

The real evaluation comes from the students.

Hannah Frank stated:

When we first started this project, in all honesty, I thought it was dumb. I didn’t understand that pictures and words or sometimes just pictures themselves could have that much of an impact. . . . When I had to come up with my own ideas, I found myself relating things in my life and using them in my pictures. And seeing other people’s examples, I saw many of the same issues represented in different ways.

Jaren Woodland said:

My understanding of visual literacy has changed dramatically from this project. Before diving into this topic with our graphic novels, my understanding of visual literacy was limited, as I thought it was confined to universal symbols and street light colors. I have learned that visual literacy does include these things but is also more than just symbols and colors that represent a universal message. Looking back to the kindergarten classroom I taught last year, there was visual literacy all around.

Deborah Nase stated:

It was difficult to strip away parts of my cartoon, but it helped me identify the parts truly needed to tell my story. The project is the essence of our textbook’s message about reading and transforming information into action.

As I weigh the words of my students, I realize that I was teaching more than creating comics and even evaluating images; I was teaching the other language, a new way to see and create meaning.

References


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*Dr. Kevin Cordi serves as an Assistant Professor at Ohio Dominican University, where he teaches Children and Young Adult Literature, Non-fiction Children’s Literature, Applied Storytelling, and Language Arts Methods. He is also the Co-Director for the Columbus Area Writing Project at The Ohio State University. For the last 28 years he has toured and taught as a professional storyteller and educator. He is the coauthor of Raising Voices: Creating Youth Storytelling Groups and Troupes and the upcoming book Playing with Stories: Story Crafting for Storytellers, Writers, Teachers, and Other Imaginative Thinkers. You can find out more at [www.kevincordi.com](http://www.kevincordi.com).*
As a university graduate student, I was introduced to graphic novels as a tool for classroom instruction. As I began to research literary devices and graphic novels for classroom instruction, I came across a piece of research by Ashley Dallacqua. Her study included fifth grade students reading graphic novels and the literary connections they made on their own combined with good teaching from their classroom teacher, Ashley herself. After further investigation, I found that Ashley was right here in Columbus, Ohio, and asked for an interview. She excitedly agreed, and we met in September to talk. Ashley’s research is important in the field of literature and literacy as the impact of the graphic novel movement is highlighted in classroom instruction. In addition, her work is informative for anyone who works with children and loves books.

About Ashley

Ashley Dallacqua is a full-time doctoral student at OSU. After receiving a bachelor’s degree in education from Otterbein University, she taught reading, writing, science, and religion to fifth graders at St. Michael’s in Worthington. She later received a master’s degree from OSU while teaching full-time, and it was her university work that led to conducting her own classroom research on the use of graphic novels with her students.

The Interview

What led you to become a “teacher-researcher”?

As a master’s student, I really enjoyed teaching and going to school at the same time. I felt like I was changing my classroom based on what I was learning.

I decided to go the thesis route because I’d always had that PhD idea in the back of my head, and I knew that a thesis was something I should attempt if doctoral studies were something I’d consider down the road. Although in my head, that was like 10 years down the road! My studies at the university went really well. I was working with Molly Blackburn and Caroline Clark—two professors and researchers at the College of Education and Human Ecology, Department of Teaching and Learning—when I was working on my thesis, and I just had a ball doing the research, and I enjoyed the writing process. When I was working on my thesis, my husband was proofreading for me, and I was on the computer looking at doctoral programs . . . just thinking about it . . . and you know, I should’ve been exhausted and just done with school but I wasn’t! And during my thesis review, both my advisors asked if pursuing a doctoral degree was something I was interested in and they suggested that this was something I could do. So, I thought I would consider it.

During that time, I started to feel as though it was time for a change. The things that I wanted to do in the classroom weren’t as supported, so it felt like everything was pointing in the direction of going back to school. I had so much support from the professors I had been working with at OSU who were just like, “Come on in!” so it felt like it was the right thing.

Your research was related to using graphic novels in the classroom. How did you get introduced to graphic novels?

It was my husband. When we were dating, I realized he was what you would call a “comic book geek.” When we were dating, he gave me Bone by Jeff Smith. And I think it was his way of testing the waters, and I was hooked by that book!

That book then started to pop up in my classroom with my students. So I bought a set for my classroom library, and the books got ripped to shreds! Literally, they couldn’t take the amount of hands on them. It was from the little reading that my husband gave me and then seeing my kids devouring the novels that made me realize there was an interest and teaching opportunities with these books.
Now that you have a great knowledge base of this type of text, do you have a favorite graphic novel?

The Arrival. I am having a long-distance love affair with the author Shaun Tan! He doesn’t know about it yet, but maybe some day he will! I have been devouring his work, and some of it is more comic style with the gutters and such. The Lost Thing is another one of his books I’m really interested in. It fits some criteria of a comic or graphic novel in the formatting, and he saw it as a storyboard for a short film he ended up making, so I think that connection is really interesting. To read about his process and how he explains the connections between the visual and the text is amazing.

Is there a graphic novel that you love teaching students more than others?

I would say probably The Arrival. I’ve taught Amelia’s School Survival Guide and Bone, but I personally enjoy The Arrival the most because I like thinking about analyzing the plot and addressing symbolism and foreshadowing through the images.

But I would venture to guess that most of my students would prefer Bone. We had a lot of fun learning with visual note-taking and reading facial expressions, so a lot of our work included the students drawing and changing visual perspectives and other things. Bone has so much silliness, which is why, though together as a class we only read the first one, I have many students who go on to read the whole series.

Is there a classroom practice or method that you think is important for classroom teachers to know or think about before they decide to bring in graphic novels in their classroom?

I have found—through my own experiences and from looking at some data with another project I’m doing with teachers and graphic novels—that there is definitely a learning curve when teaching graphic novels for the first time; and often students just need time and independence to break down what they are doing and how they are doing it.

The first time I brought Bone into the classroom, it was meant more for independent reading for prepping for a field trip to the Wexner Center, where Jeff Smith’s work was on display. I just watched my students take on the role of figuring out and understanding “This is where you start” and “This is the order that you read things.”

I would definitely start with Bone or Amelia’s School Survival Guide, and I would take a few minutes to ask students these three essential first questions:

- “What do you notice?”
- “Where do you start reading?”
- “What do you notice about color?”

This way they get comfortable and start to vocalize, so they know that reading a graphic novel is a different process. It isn’t just about reading the words; it’s about taking the text in as a whole. There are things the text is not telling us in words but is showing us in the illustrations. Instead of reading about the setting, it’s drawn for you. Instead of reading about the emotions, they are drawn for you. These are things that students might recognize automatically without knowing it, but it’s important to articulate the process so they know this is the way this works.

Also, a graphic novel lends itself to teaching art elements along with literary thinking. For example, in The Arrival, the colors change when the point of view changes; and if you’re not thinking about color, you might not be picking up on that.
Let’s switch gears a little and think about the impact texts have on students. Have you noticed any relationships develop among the students because of interest in graphic novels?

When we worked with Bone, we read it out loud every day, and I drew sticks with students’ names to choose who would read the voices of the characters in the book. So, the first relationship the students built was with the characters. Different students really took ownership over the book and became little leaders in the classroom over silly things—like they would come in to class with “polls” of preferences for quiche versus stew, which is this big silly thing in the book; and suddenly they were sitting around gathering numbers and making charts of where the kids fall in their opinions.

And there’s a little bug character in the book—his name is Ted—and kids would come in with “Ted for President” buttons on. The kids that rallied around the same characters started these silly but fun things that showed how engaged they were with the characters by creating lives for them outside the book.

In reading The Arrival, one of my teaching strategies was placing the students in small groups of two or three; they were reading the book together, and in doing so, they were helping each other. I had two girls in particular, one who was a struggling reader and one who was one of my top readers, who asked if they could go out into the hallway during independent reading time to work on the book and make observations they thought were important. The notes they took together were so impressive, and so was the support that they gave each other—the book was the thing that was the connection between them. An even more interesting story involving my students began when I ran into one of my professors at Otterbein one day, and she shared with me that she had a whole group of education majors who were very anti–graphic in general—not just with novels, but with comics and comic-like graphics in all texts. I told her, “I have a whole class of students who would beg to differ!”

My students had volunteered over spring break to read everything on the course literature list, and they came in and sat down with all these small groups of university students, and my kids walked them through all the reasons why the books belonged in classrooms. The university students didn’t know what to do with themselves! They were shocked that middle school students knew so much about the literature and that they could actually teach them about the books. My kids really were like the big kids on campus; and as we were leaving, one of my students turned to me and said, “Well, you know, I think I could get into Otterbein now; I’ve just taught a class!”

The situation put my students in the position of being professionals in my classroom, in having ownership, and they felt like they really taught the university students something in a college setting. It was unbelievable for them. Plus they got to eat pizza and sit with college kids, so it was just a really great experience for them.

When you think about the future of graphic novels in classrooms, what is the most exciting thing you look forward to hopefully seeing?

One bit of technology I think is really interesting is something that some of the comic book groups are playing with: digital comics; they kind of blur the line between comics that are still and film—creating almost movement, but not quite, as you tap the screen.

Also, I’m in class with teachers who are using these texts not just as bridges to something harder or as a way to get students’ attention, but as complex texts to analyze. As part of my research, I am working with a teacher who is using Persepolis to have critical discussions on oppression and gender binaries. The complex discussions that come out of these graphic novels are equal to those sparked by traditional literature. Finding that level of legitimacy for graphic novels is really exciting; it means not having to be questioned as much about their use—they are, in my opinion, high-quality literature, and so teachers can teach them in the classroom without having to prove their value.
Do you have any advice for the teacher who is just thinking about this type of text or considering bringing in this type of text into the classroom?

By contacting your local librarian, you can request multiple copies of titles, get them within a week, and have your students read them in groups, which I think is a positive way to introduce this type of reading. Getting to read them with others, seeing what others notice, and sharing what you notice is a good way to begin. That would be my first piece of advice—it doesn’t have to be a big investment in the beginning.

Ashley’s Publications


Bibliography


Anita Gonzalez is an ELA specialist at ORC and is also earning her doctorate at OSU in Reading and Literacy in Early and Middle Childhood.
There were no graphic novels in the school library collection! None! Knowing how the format was growing in popularity, I had to remedy this situation. After all, as a new librarian, I had to show my patrons that I understood their preferences and was sensitive to their needs. So I did a little experiment and bought a few bound comic books like Calvin and Hobbes and a few graphic novels. I went with the traditional 741.5 designation in the Dewey Decimal Classification system and placed them on the shelves among other books in art and design. Then, I watched them go.

With very little advertisement or fanfare, the books started circulating. Soon, a new issue arose: students looking for drawing and origami how-to books were reaching above the heads of those reaching for graphic novels. I had a traffic jam in the 700s! For the safety of all, the graphic novels needed a new home. I had no problem justifying the evacuation of dull, dusty, and abandoned reference materials and repurposing their shelves for the bright and colorful newcomers. I continued building the collection, and it continued to gain in popularity.

Graphic novels possess massive potential. They are a format that is becoming increasingly popular among teens, and educators are starting to utilize them in the classroom. They have the ability to gain the interest of reluctant readers, supplement other print works, and act as noteworthy pieces of literature in their own right. While graphic novels encompass a broad vocabulary of format-specific terms and are full of meaningful messages, they are often relegated to the world of children's fancy, and their presence in the school curriculum and school libraries is criticized. For these reasons, educators and librarians must inform students and other stakeholders of the value of graphic novels through policies and other formal written correspondence. Then, educators and librarians can explore the seemingly endless potential of graphic novels as an educational tool.

A strict definition of graphic novels is very tenuous. For one, graphic novels are not a genre of literature but a format; they encompass all the traditional genres and include adaptations of classic literature, mythology, and folklore; biographies; and a wide range of nonfiction topics, particularly in science and history. The actual term graphic novel gained acceptance in 1978 when Will Eisner was trying to pitch the serious nature of his book, A Contract with God, to a tradebook editor; he wanted to avoid immediate rejection of his book as a mere comic. The term appeared on the cover, and from that time forward, it has stuck to mean “book-length comics” (Arnold, 2010, p. 5). There are many reasons to bring graphic novels into the classroom. Sean Connors (2010) lists providing scaffolding for struggling readers and writers, fostering visual literacy, supporting English language learners, and motivating reluctant readers among them. He also points out that graphic novels have the “ability to foster self-reflection, initiate social change, promote tolerance, and stimulate the imagination” (p. 93).

Just because graphic novels may contain simplistic images does not mean that the novels lack rigor. For this reason, it is advisable that teachers address the issue of rigor in a formally written rationale for the inclusion of specific graphic novels in the library collection. In fact, school librarians should already have collection development policies in place that reflect specific selection criteria and sound reasons for their inclusion in the collection. A school’s request for reconsideration of materials (a formal procedure that administration and the librarian are to follow if someone challenges the presence of a specific item in the library collection) should also be current and part of the policy. Because of the visual nature of the format, objections arise to the immediacy of content, especially if it is of a mature nature.

As I mentioned earlier, graphic novels have rigor and require deeper reading. Like their text-only counterparts, graphic novels contain all the familiar literary devices. Additionally, they contain images that convey meaning through color, composition, line, font, perspective, and many more attributes, making the world of literature accessible to students with various intelligences. But to discover this, an educator needs to become a reader.

In an article for Horn Book Magazine, Hollis Margaret Rudiger (2006) presents an excellent introduction on how
to read graphic novels. She states, “No wonder grownups don’t read comics: they don’t know how. And if grownups can’t read comics, they certainly can’t be expected to value them, much less promote them among children and teens.” For even greater understanding, I personally recommend advancing to the ultimate guide to graphic novels by Scott McCloud (1993), *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. His book is written in the comics format, immersing readers in the very format they desire to better understand. It’s the first book in the Suggested Reading list at the end of this article.

Do an experiment of your own: start adding graphic novels into your library or classroom collection. Better yet, try incorporating one into a lesson. Starting small is good, but be prepared for the experiment to take off and surprise you.

**Suggested Reading**


*The Arrival* by Shaun Tan (Lothian, 2006)

*Maus* by Art Spiegelman (Pantheon, 1986)

*American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang (First Second, 2006)

*Cardboard* by Doug TenNapel (Graphix, 2012)

*Ghostopolis* by Doug Tennapel (Scholastic Graphix, 2010)

*Drama* by Raina Telgemeier (Scholastic Graphix, 2012)

*March: Book One* by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin (Top Shelf, 2013)

*Page by Paige* by Laura Lee Gulledge (Amulet, 2011)

**References**


Rebecca Tabor Pollock is a licensed school librarian for St. Matthew School in Gahanna and is currently a Central Regional Director for the Ohio Educational Library Media Association (OELMA). She is pursuing a master of arts degree in children’s and young adult literature at The Ohio State University.
For Your Bookshelf

**Graphic Novels for Classroom Instruction**

*by Anita Gonzalez*

When it comes to literature for classroom instruction, it is important to be purposeful in our selections. Below is a list of graphic novels appropriate for classroom teaching. All these books fall into one or more of the following categories: award winners, children’s notable books, or titles popular with classroom teachers. It is also important to know that graphic novels often span a wide range of grade levels because of interest and text levels. The grade levels listed for each text are just a suggestion. The best way to choose a book for students is to read it first to see if it meets their interest and reading needs. My hope is that this list will give you a good start!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4–6</th>
<th>9–10</th>
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| *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Jeff Kinney (a series)  
*A Wrinkle in Time: The Graphic Novel*, Hope Larson  
*Cardboard*, Doug TenNapel  
*Coraline: The Graphic Novel*, P. Craig Russell  
*Mouse Guard: Fall 1152*, David Petersen (a series)  
*The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, Brian Selznick  
*Bone, Vol. 1: Out from Boneville*, Jeff Smith  
*Amelia’s School Survival Guide*, Marissa Moss  
*Smile*, Raina Telgemeier  
*Anne Frank*, Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colon  
*Maus*, Art Spiegelman  
*The Gettysburg Address*, Jonathan Hennesey  
*Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes*, Neil Gaiman  
*Watchman*, Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons |
| 6–8 | 11–12 |
| *The Arrival*, Shaun Tan  
*The Storm in the Barn*, Matt Phelan  
*Mercury*, Hope Larson  
*Chiggers*, Hope Larson  
*Yummy*, Greg Neri  
*American Born Chinese*, Gene Luen Yang (Pulitzer Prize winner)  
*Ghostopolis*, Doug TenNapel | *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*, Chris Ware  
*Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*, Guy Delisle  
*Epileptic*, David Beauchard  
*Palestine*, Joe Sacco  
*Hellboy*, Mike Mignola  
*Deogratias*, Jean Philippe Stassen |

Anita Gonzalez is an ELA specialist at ORC and is also earning her doctorate at OSU in Reading and Literacy in Early and Middle Childhood.
For Your Bookshelf

Books by McCloud, Eisner, Monnin, and Tabachnick

by Anita Gonzalez


Not only is this book praised for its examination of comics; it is also highly acclaimed for the comic art itself! Pulitzer Prize winner Art Spiegelman states, “The most intelligent comics I’ve seen in a long time.” One way to learn about teaching with graphic novels is to understand comics. Scott McCloud takes his readers on a journey to understanding the elements of comics, including vocabulary, format, and art. Through comics, he shows how the synergy between pictures and words can come together to enhance storytelling and meaning while teaching us something along the way.


Katie Monnin had teachers in mind when she wrote this book specifically targeting instructional methods using graphic novels in the ELA classroom. Referencing Scott McCloud’s Understanding Comics, Monnin gives lesson ideas for popular novels, including American Born Chinese, Maus, and Chiggers. And while the title suggests high school only, each chapter includes separate sections for middle school and high school, in addition to dedicating a chapter to English language learners. One of the best features of her text is in the Appendix, which offers graphic novel lists for middle and high school.


In this great resource book, Will Eisner, often called the “father of the graphic novel,” discusses the idea of sequential art and its impact on literacy. In the Foreword, he writes, “The premise of this book is that the special nature of sequential art is deserving of serious consideration by both critic and practitioner. The modern acceleration of graphic technology and the emergence of an era greatly dependent on visual communication make this increasingly inevitable.” Covering the topics of comics as a form of reading, imagery, writing, and application, this book is a great addition for practitioners interested in using graphic novels and comics as instructional literature.


To partner with Eisner’s Comics and Sequential Art, this resource discusses the storytelling aspect of graphics and visual narrative. Using graphics, Eisner provides insight into and methods for telling a story through graphics and the idea of “images as narrative tools.” Posing questions, offering key ideas, and covering the reader and the writer, this book gives background and a look at critical thinking when reading and teaching graphic novels.
Teaching the Graphic Novel, by Stephen E. Tabachnick (Ed.) (Modern Language Association of America, New York, 2009)

A collection of 34 essays, this book offers the work of a number of authors sharing knowledge and perspective on many different topics related to teaching the graphic novel. From addressing postmodernism in the graphic novel to covering the compelling stories of the history of the graphic novel, to exploring graphic novels and film, these essays provide a wealth of information for the classroom teacher.

Anita Gonzalez is an ELA specialist at ORC and is also earning her doctorate at OSU in Reading and Literacy in Early and Middle Childhood.
From the ORC Collection

More Resources for “Graphic Novels”

Resources from the ORC Collection

Besides the numerous direct links to rich resources found in the articles in this issue, here are some additional excellent resources from the ORC collection.

**ORC #6410**
The Comic Book Show and Tell

Comic book scripting requires the writer to give the artist detailed, descriptive instructions while also crafting exciting dialogue and using rich language. In this lesson, students encounter an authentic writing experience designed to get them thinking about their choices as writers and how they can best get their mental images out of their heads and on the page. After examining sample comic books and learning about scripting techniques, page layout, and panel design, students create a script based on a prompt. Next, the students become artists when they are given the challenge of drawing a classmate’s script as close to form as possible based on the information the writer provided. Students then have an opportunity to revise their scripts for clarity, detail, and description to help a future artist better represent their visions.

**ORC #2762**
Book Report Alternative: Comic Strips and Cartoon Squares

Students often tire of responding to novels in the same ways. By creating comic strips or cartoon squares featuring characters in books, they are encouraged to think analytically about the characters, events, and themes in ways that expand their critical thinking. Focusing the significant points of the book in a few short scenes, students create comic strips using an interactive online tool. In this activity, students choose key scenes for their characters and books, find landscapes and props that fit the scenes, and compose related dialogue. These student representations of the books, with their multifaceted texts using symbols, images, texts, and metaphor, succeed in the classroom because they provide a snapshot of the students’ comprehension of the ideas in the texts. The grades selected match CORE standards. However, this lesson can be adapted for use in other grades.

**ORC #17852**
Eudora Welty’s “A Worn Path” in Graphical Representation

By rendering aspects of Eudora Welty’s “A Worn Path” into carefully considered “comic strips,” students learn to appreciate elements of characterization, setting, and plot in a manner that engages them actively in the production of meaning. The method highlights reading as the creative art it can be. The lesson includes a close read of the story focusing on character, setting, and plot with guiding questions. Students then combine text and imagery to represent a scene in a comic book panel frame. Group work follows in which students work collaboratively to create a complete aspect or sequence of events of the story. The lesson culminates with a final assessment in which students write a reflective essay on how creating the cartoon panels helped them understand and appreciate the story more. A variety of resources are listed to teach the art of cartooning as well as worksheets to facilitate comic panel development. Internet access is required to access the resources. The full text of “A Worn Path” is available online.
Each issue of *Adolescent Literacy In Perspective* highlights a topic in adolescent literacy. Here you can read teacher-written articles, see what experts in the field are saying, gain insight from students, and find resources for classroom use.

**What Is AdLIT?**

Advancing Adolescent Literacy Instruction Together (AdLIT) is designed to address the unique literacy needs of adolescent learners by promoting and supporting effective, evidence-based practices for classroom instruction and professional development activities in Ohio’s middle and secondary schools.

**About the Ohio Resource Center**

The Ohio Resource Center works to improve teaching and learning among Ohio teachers by promoting standards-based, best practices in mathematics, science, reading, and social studies for Ohio schools and universities. The Center’s resources are available primarily via the web and are coordinated with other state and regional efforts to improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness in K-12 mathematics, science, reading, and social studies. To learn more about ORC, visit the website at [www.ohiorc.org](http://www.ohiorc.org).

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