



**WORDS ARE ONLY
HALF THE STORY**

An Overview of Graphic Novels

What, exactly, are they? Graphic novels are books that are written and illustrated in the style of a comic book. They have short dialogue and framed boxes of illustration. Many of these books are a series, building in a repeat audience. Today's readers, especially reluctant ones, can use graphic novels to improve their literacy skills. They must rely on the pictures and follow the sequence in order for the story to make sense. Words are only half the story.

Graphic novels can be used in the classroom to teach the same standards as traditional literature. Point of view, setting, character, and plot are integral to graphic novels. Students can read something they'll enjoy, but learn something while reading. Here are a few strategies for using these works with your students in the classroom.

Before the Webcast

1. Read and study the novels. Complete some of the lesson plans provided.
2. Do your homework. Check out the websites in this guide.
3. Prepare questions that you might want to ask the authors or teacher librarian.
4. Prepare your equipment. Make sure you will be able to see and hear.



Teacher Support Activities by Deborah B. Ford

Deborah B. Ford is an award-winning teacher librarian with more than twenty-five years of experience as a classroom teacher and librarian in K-12 schools. She is currently the District Resource Librarian for San Diego Unified School District, supervising over 180 school libraries. Deborah's presentations have taken her across North America, inspiring educators across the country with her budget-friendly, practical ideas to enhance school library programs, using technology and collaboration. Her book, *Scary, Gross and Enlightening: Books for Boys, Grades 3-12* was released by Linworth Publishing in November 2009.



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Graphic Novel Teacher/Librarian Strategies:

- Teach students how to read the panels. Explain the parts—captions and speech balloons. Not every student will be an experienced graphic novel reader.
- Have students draw their own comic using other graphic novels as inspiration. Then they can write their own story.
- Preview all new series before displaying to students.
- Allow students who like to draw the opportunity to use their skills in their work from time to time.
- Hold a book swap. Encourage your students to swap books with each other.
- Have a cartoon day. Read the funny papers. Read comic books. Read graphic novels.
- Have students illustrate—graphic-novel style—an event they are studying in Social Studies or a concept they are studying in Science.
- Allow students to copy and draw characters from their books. That's how they learn.
- Create Super Hero bodies as part of your writing assignments. Use a digital headshot photo for each student and have them create their Super Bodies. Students must write about their Super Trait.
- Photocopy a page of comic panels. Cut them apart. Ask students to put them in order.
- Photocopy a page of comic panels. White out the text and ask students to either match the panels to the original text or create their own. Students can work separately or in pairs.
- As an alternate activity, give students the text and have them illustrate the panel.
- Use graphic novels to teach transition words.
- Use graphic novels to teach sequence.
- Use graphic novels to teach fluency with ESL students. Turn a graphic novel into a readers' theater just by reading the dialogue. Be sure to assign a narrator.



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Kibuishi, Kazu. Amulet series

Vol. One: *The Stonekeeper*

PB: 978-0-439-84681-3

Vol. Two: *The Stonekeeper's Curse*

PB: 978-0-439-84683-7

Vol. Three: *The Cloud Searchers*

PB: 978-0-545-20885-7

Vol. Four: *The Last Council*

PB: 978-0-545-20887-1

Smith, Jeff. Bone series

Out from Boneville

HC: 978-0-439-70623-0 • PB: 978-0-439-70640-7

The Great Cow Race

HC: 978-0-439-70624-7 • PB: 978-0-439-70639-1

Eyes of the Storm

HC: 978-0-439-70625-4 • PB: 978-0-439-70638-4

The Dragonslayer

HC: 978-0-439-70626-1 • PB: 978-0-439-70637-7

Rock Jaw: Master of the Eastern Border

HC: 978-0-439-70627-8 • PB: 978-0-439-70636-0

Old Man's Cave

HC: 978-0-439-70628-5 • PB: 978-0-439-70635-3

Ghost Circles

HC: 978-0-439-70629-2 • PB: 978-0-439-70634-6

Treasure Hunters

HC: 978-0-439-70630-8 • PB: 978-0-439-70633-9

Crown of Thorns

HC: 978-0-439-70631-5 • PB: 978-0-439-70632-2

Telgemeier, Raina. Smile

HC: 978-0-545-13205-3 • PB: 978-0-545-13206-0

Websites

Here are some great websites, including the webcast authors' sites, to use with graphic novel studies.

Kazu Kibuishi: boltcity.com

Jeff Smith: boneville.com

Raina Telgemeier: goraina.com

Scholastic in the Stacks: scholastic.com/kids/stacks

Teaching Books: teachingbooks.net

Get Graphic: getgraphic.org/librarians.php

Scholastic Graphix: scholastic.com/graphix

National Association of Comics Arts Educators:
teachingcomics.org

YALSA: Great Graphic Novels for Teens:
ala.org/yalsa/ggnt/

Comic Life: plasq.com/products/comiclife

SUNY Buffalo Graphic Novel Resources for Teachers
and Librarians:
library.buffalo.edu/libraries/asl/guides/graphicnovels

Using Comics with ESL Students:
iteslj.org/Techniques/Derrick-UsingComics

Comic Book Project: comicbookproject.org

Good Comics for Kids @ School Library Journal:
blog.schoollibraryjournal.com/goodcomicsforkids



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Teaching Resource Bibliography

Here are some great professional books to use with graphic novel studies.

Corwin Press—*Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills*—Corwin Press, c2008., 195p

A collection of nine essays that describe strategies for teaching visual literacy by using graphic novels, comics, anime, political cartoons, and picture books.

Fletcher-Spear, Kristen—*Library Collections for Teens: Manga and Graphic Novels*—Neal-Schuman Publishers, Voya Press, c2011., 199p

Provides information on building a manga and graphic novel collection for teens, discussing the history of American comics and graphic novels and manga, benefits of graphic novels, collection development and management, evaluating for purchase, purchasing options, mending, and programming, and offering an annotated list of recommended titles.

Ford, Deborah B—*Scary, Gross, and Enlightening Books for Boys Grades 3-12*—Libraries Unlimited, c2010., 158p

Profiles books from a variety of genres, including nonfiction, graphic novels, science-fiction, and others, aimed at boys in third through twelfth grade, and includes strategies teachers and librarians can use to promote interest in them.

Gorman, Michele—*Getting Graphic!: Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens*—Linworth Pub., c2003., 100p

Offers guidance to librarians interested in developing graphic novel collections in library media centers, featuring an overview of the history of comic books and graphic novels, discussing their value in the media center and classroom, and including content summaries and lists of recommended titles.

Herald, Nathan—*Graphic Novels for Young Readers: A Genre Guide for Ages 4-14*—Libraries Unlimited, c2011., 188p

A genre guide to graphic novel reading interests that is designed to help librarians and teachers choose titles appropriate for children and tweens.

Karp, Jesse—*Graphic Novels in Your School Library*—American Library Association, 2012., 146p

A guide for teachers and librarians to understanding what sequential art and graphic novels are, how they have evolved throughout history, and how to fit them into school libraries and classrooms. Includes annotated lists of core titles to help K-12 librarians build their collections and sample lesson plans and activities for using graphic novels in the classroom.

Libraries Unlimited—*Graphic Novels Beyond the Basics: Insights and Issues for Libraries*—Libraries Unlimited, c2009., 281p

Examines questions pertaining to graphic novels that librarians may encounter while expanding their holdings within the genre, covering topics such as superheroes; themes within Japanese manga; censorship; processing and retention; and patron or parental complaints.

Monnin, Katie—*Teaching Graphic Novels : Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom*—Maupin House Pub., c2010., 236p

Offers practical strategies and standards-based lessons for secondary teachers to use graphic novels in the classrooms to encourage literacy and reading, and provides examples from graphic novels.



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