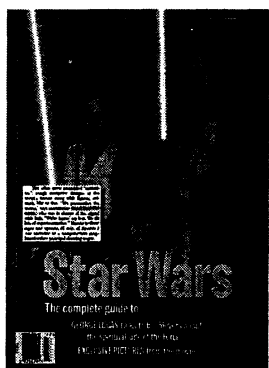


# Graphic Novels: From Fact to Fiction: Using Graphic Novels as Teaching Tools

The term graphic 'novel' is, in certain cases, a misnomer. Although many of the graphic books available on the market are, in fact, comprised of fictional subject matter, this is not always the case. Librarians and teachers alike should consider the potential benefits of both fictional and non-fictional graphic novels as a teaching tool for young adults. This format of book can be especially useful as a teaching aid for reluctant and Hi-Lo readers.

In a 2002 article, educator Gretchen E. Schwarz attests to the fact that some librarians are already strong proponents of using the graphic novel as a teaching tool.<sup>1</sup> Although understandable concerns about the possible negative impact of graphic novels on the literacy levels of young adults have been raised, Schwarz points to a body of research that has negated such worries. She notes that "graphic novels offer value, variety, and a new medium for literacy that acknowledges the impact of visuals."<sup>2</sup> Philip Crawford has also addressed the concerns about the possible impacts on young people's literacy in his article *A Novel Approach: Using Graphic Novels to Attract Reluctant Readers*. This research points out that "comic books and graphic novels are typically written at a fourth to sixth grade reading level, comparable to *Time* magazine, young adult novels, and many adult best sellers. Graphic novels strongly appeal to teens and are an invaluable tool for motivating reluctant readers."<sup>3</sup>



The point, so justly brought up by Crawford, is that, despite what grade students are technically enrolled in, not every student has the same learning style or is at the same level of reading ability or comprehension. Although this might seem to be an obvious statement, the debate about the effects of graphic novels on literacy levels shows that some librarians and teachers may be missing that point. By utilizing graphic novels in the library and the classroom,

another successful way of catering to different reading levels and styles can be introduced.

It would seem remiss of librarians and teachers to dismiss the possible positive uses of graphic novels. They can provide a fun and useful way for Hi-Lo readers, reluctant readers, and visual learners to understand subject matter that might be too complex for them in purely textual form. Two areas of study which could benefit from the inclusion of graphic novels as a curriculum option are English and history. On the following page are brief outlines of the nature of historical and literary graphic novels as well as sample lists of available titles for those subjects.



<sup>1</sup> Schwarz, G.E. (2002, November). Graphic novels for multiple literacies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 46(3). Available: [http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/lit\\_index.asp?HREF=/newliteracies/jaal/11-02\\_column/index.html](http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/lit_index.asp?HREF=/newliteracies/jaal/11-02_column/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> Schwarz, G.E. (2002, November).

<sup>3</sup> Crawford, Philip (February 2004). *A Novel Approach: Using Graphic Novels to Attract Reluctant Readers*. *Library Media Connection*. Available at: [www.linworth.com/PDF/LMC\\_Feb04\\_Crawford.pdf](http://www.linworth.com/PDF/LMC_Feb04_Crawford.pdf).