

## Teens in Comics and Graphic Novels

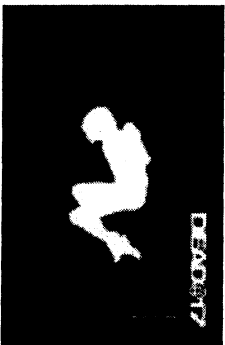


From "Zits". Copyright 2005 Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman

When you consider buying comics and graphic novels for your YA collection, think about buying titles that feature teens. Teenagers love to read about themselves, and why shouldn't they? We all seek out reading material that helps put voice to our personal thoughts and experiences. This is especially true for teens, who are in the process of developing their identities. Comics and graphic novels are like any other form of entertainment; they can guide teens through difficult times by showing other teens who have faced the same problems.

The trick, as we all know, is finding material that's appropriate for YAs without force-feeding them didactic material. It's best to be careful by reading the graphic novels before deciding if they're appropriate. You wouldn't want a seemingly innocent-looking manga like *Happy Mania*, about a young woman's angst, to wind up on the YA shelves, and later find it's full of graphic sex scenes. At the same time, I don't think teens are as crazy about *Tintin* as they were when they were ten. Or maybe they are – it's up to you to find out from your teen patrons what they like to read.

Luckily, there's been a recent explosion of comics and graphic novels written for and about teens. Adding these titles to your YA collection will show that you're a hip and happening library. (\*Note – teens may think you are lame for saying this). Your YA patrons will be so addicted to comics and graphic novels, they'll never know they're gaining valuable life lessons from reading about characters just like themselves. Here are a few popular titles about teens to help you get started:



*Dead@17* – Josh Howard  
A typical story about the end of the world and the teenage girls who have to fight evil. For older teens.

*Invincible* – Robert Kirkman

Robert Kirkman is only 26, yet he has already become the unofficial comic book voice of teens (see also *Jubilee*, below). *Invincible* is the story of Mark Grayson, the son of a superhero, who finds he has some superpowers of his own. Especially popular with teenage boys.

*Jubilee* – Robert Kirkman

A recent spin-off comic of *X-Men*, featuring the teenage mutant Jubilee. In the first issue of the series, "Fresh Princess of Bel-Air," Jubilee is shipped off to live

*Ghost World* – Dan Clowes  
The angst-filled journey of two teenage girls, turned into a hit 2000 movie. This comic has some serious die-hard fans.



with relatives in L.A. There, she has to deal with the problems of being an everyday teen who just happens to be able to generate fireworks.

*Luann* – Greg Evans

(<http://www.comics.com/comics/luann/>)

This might be a good online comic to list in your teen links. It deals with the ups and



downs of being a teenage girl, complete with getting your first period and falling in love.

*Runaways* – Brian K. Vaughan



If you haven't heard of *Runaways*, the, ahem, runaway hit, you're missing out. This comic-turned-graphic novel features six teenagers – four girls and two boys, of mixed ethnic backgrounds, who discover that their parents are evil supervillans. The teens form a partnership and run away to decide how to defeat their parents. There's plenty of suspense here: Vampires! Mutants! Aliens! A mole in their midst! Any teen who's felt that their parents are unfair should read this series and feel grateful.

*Teen Titans* – Geoff Johns  
This famous series features the teenage kids of famous DC superheroes. Also a hit TV show.



*Ultimate Spider-Man* – Brian Michael Bendis  
What would happen if Peter Parker had gained his powers when he was fifteen? This revamped Spider-Man looks at that very premise.

*Young Justice* – Brian Augustyn

I can't find any difference between the plot of these comics and *Teen Titans*, but I'm sure that diehard fans of either genre will hunt me down and flog me.



*Zits* – Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman  
National Cartoonists Society's Best Comic Strip of the Year for two years in a row. Jeremy Duncan, the hero of this comic, is a 15-year-old aspiring rock musician "riddled with angst, boredom and parents who don't understand anything." You can purchase companion volumes like "Big Honkin' Zits."

## Resources

No Flying, No Tights  
<http://www.noflyingnotights.com/>  
This is *the* resource for reviewing graphic novels for teens

"Only the Good Die Young: Teens in Comics" *LoFi Comics and Entertainment Magazine*. Issue #2, Summer 2004.

Comic Books for Young Adults  
<http://ublib.buffalo.edu/lml/comics/pages/>