

LGBTQ+ Graphic Novels & Webcomics

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Graphic novels have shifted not only how we intake information, but how writers, artists, academics, and even researchers express information. Once thought of as an illegitimate medium that didn't count as "actual reading," graphic novels and comics have come into their own and are now a staple of library collections (MacDonald, 2017). Drawn comics have the power to express big ideas and emotions in a single frame that would take pages to express with only words. The visual nature of the medium also attracts more reluctant readers, who might be intimidated by volumes of pure text.

Graphic novels have recently been utilized in academic writing as well in the 2018 release of the graphic biography *Frida Kahlo: An illustrated Life* from the University of Texas Press. Classic works of literature and fiction have also been reimagined as graphic novels, including Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird: A Graphic Novel* released by Harper Press in 2018 (Osicki, 2018). In recent years Margaret Atwood has also released multiple comics and a graphic novel version of her novel *A Handmaid's Tale* was released in March 2019. These academic and literature releases in graphic form further normalize graphic novels and comics as a legitimate and increasingly important platform of expression and information.

Webcomics are an even more accessible format of expression, since publishing content online incurs fewer costs from the artist or writer and does not require a deal with a publishing company. Webcomics give creators of all different ages and

backgrounds a global platform to share their unbridled creativity, diverse experiences, and unique stories free from the content and cost restrictions of traditional publication.

Part of the power of graphic novels, comics, and webcomics is that they present an enormous opportunity for voices and stories to be recorded which might not otherwise be heard. Genderqueer artist and writer Archie Bongiovanni's 2018 release *A Quick & Easy Guide to They/Them Pronouns* gives an accessible and visually pleasing format to an important topic (Osicki, 2018). Even the bigger mainstream comic publishers, such as Marvel, have started incorporating greater representation into their superheroes, such as an Afro-Latino Spider-Man and Iceman coming out as gay (Osicki, 2018). Crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter also allow artists and authors to publish progressive stories and anthologies that more traditional mainstream publishers may shy away from. The Kickstarter project and critically acclaimed graphic novella *Bingo Love* by Tee Franklin tells the story of two young queer Black girls who fall in love in the 1960s, are forced apart by their families and reunite 60 years later.

Graphic novels are appealing to a wide variety of audiences and can speak to a broad range of experiences and voices. The overlap of LGBTQ+ content with graphic novels and comics is a rich subject area and the availability of materials grows more robust and representative over time.

Here are some of our favourite graphic novels and webcomics with diverse and rich LGBTQ+ content and characters:

Recommended Readings

The popular graphic novel series **Lumberjanes** is fun and adventurous, featuring a group of friends at Miss Qiuzella Thistwin Penniquiquil Thistle Crumpet's Camp for hardcore lady-types and the fantastical adventures they encounter together. *Lumberjanes* is now on issue 50 and can be read in volumes 1 through 10.

Since its release in 2014, **This One Summer** has won multiple awards, including the Governor General Literary Award. Mariko Tamaki's coming-of-age story of an almost teen girl and a summer that changes her life.



Brought to you by some of the contributors to *Lumberjanes*, **Moonstruck: Magic to Brew** features mystical and fantastical LGBTQ+ characters navigating love and friendships. Julie is a werewolf and works as a barista with her best

friend and centaur, Chet and is sweet on her new girlfriend, Selena. This magical story is both whimsical and adventurous.

In **The Prince and the Dressmaker**, Prince Sebastian is under pressure from his parents to choose a bride and settle down. Sebastian would rather spend his time dressed as Lady Crystallia, in beautiful gowns created by his best friend and dressmaker, Frances. This richly illustrated story is full of heart and hope.

Bingo Love is the love story of Hazel and Mari, torn apart in the 1960s by society and families not ready for their love. Decades later, they are reunited at a bingo game and their lives change forever.

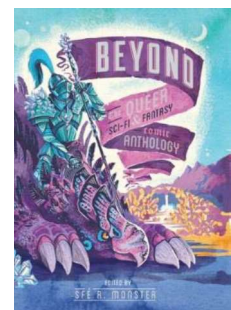


Check, Please! is a webcomic recently published into a volume, due to its immense popularity online. Eric Bittle is in his first year playing college hockey. Between practice and crushing on a teammate, he still has time to bake endless pies for his fraternity. The whole webcomic is available online and the second volume of this sweet and funny coming-of-age story is due for release in 2020. Webcomic URL:

<http://checkpleasecomic.com/>

For those interested in folklore, do not miss **The One Hundred Nights of Hero**, which tells the story of a mythical medieval city and a woman who falls in love with her maid. This story is darkly witty and beautifully illustrated.

For the sci-fi and adventure lovers, **Beyond: the Queer Sci-Fi & Fantasy Comic Anthology** is here for you. This collection of graphic stories features proudly queer characters in fantastical adventures.





What QQ is a slice-of-life autobiographical webcomic created by a deaf trans masculine genderqueer pansexual artist. With a delightful palette of ever-changing color schemes, art styles, and animated gifs, Carlisle conveys their experiences with gender identity, sexuality, deaf culture, and life in general in a way that is accessible, interesting, and incredibly informative. Webcomic URL:

<https://tapas.io/series/whatqq>



Band vs. Band is a fun, quirky, retro-style romance webcomic by Kathleen Jacques that follows two rival band leaders — Honey Hart, who leads the bubblegum pop band The Candy Hearts, and Turpentine, who leads the goth punk band The Sourballs — as they begin to fall for each other.

Webcomic URL:

<http://bvbcmix.com/bandvsband/>



Taylor C.'s webcomic **Monsterkind** tells the story of humans and monsters as they try to coexist. While not the primary focus of the comic, many characters are LGBTQ+. The comic is a fun but also serious look at addressing tensions between different groups. Webcomic URL:

<http://monsterkind.enenkay.com/>



Blue Deliquanti's **O Human Star** was started in 2012 but has since been published as a series of graphic novels as well. This queer speculative sci-fi adventure focuses on the relationships between Alistair (Al), a gay inventor who sparked the robot revolution and is

unexpectedly revived in a synthetic body 16 years after his own death, his partner Brendan, and Sulla, a robot initially designed to resemble Al who has since developed her own gender identity and personality. Together they must find out who brought Al back from the dead and why. Webcomic URL:

<http://ohumanstar.com/>



For older young adult readers interested in end-of-the-world scenarios and zombies, **No End** by authors Erli and Kromi is a postapocalyptic romance featuring an all-queer main cast as they travel across the wasteland in search of safe haven and answers to who they're meant to be.

Webcomic URL: <https://noendcomic.com/>

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