

GRAPHIC NOVELS

ART
AND
TEXT
UNITE

EDUCATORS'
GUIDE



Art from *Hero: The Boy Who Challenged to Earth* © 2016 by Judd Whittick

INTRODUCTION

Graphic novels for younger readers—children and teens—have grown in popularity over the past decade or two. Once a niche format, graphic novels are becoming an important component of classroom and school library collections. Adaptations of traditional texts such as *The City of Ember* and *The Golden Compass* are joining the stories of Babymouse, Squish, Lunch Lady, and other characters from graphic novel series. In the past, the value of graphic novels was often overlooked or not understood. Now graphic novels receive some of the highest awards in the industry, including the Newbery and Printz Medals from the American Library Association. Graphic novels can provide both an enjoyable and informative reading experience for a wide range of readers.



WHAT IS A GRAPHIC NOVEL?

Simply, graphic novels are a logical extension of the comic book. They tell a story using pictures in sequence, panels, speech balloons, and other conventions of the comic book form and format. The key difference between illustrated books, picture books, and graphic novels is that graphic novels are generally longer and have a more developed narrative than picture books; additionally, they differ from illustrated chapter books because the illustrations are an integral component of the story. Graphic novels might serve as bridges between picture books and illustrated chapter books or even between chapter books and traditional novels.

WHY USE GRAPHIC NOVELS IN THE CLASSROOM?

Graphic novels can and should be used as any other form or format of reading material. Like any traditional novel, a graphic novel tells a story. The literary elements of traditional stories are present: plot, character, setting, theme, climax, etc. Figurative language, symbolism, and other literary devices are also present in many graphic novels. As a teaching tool, then, graphic novels offer educators the same array of possibilities as traditional texts. And there is a bonus of sorts: the scaffolding of illustration in addition to the text will make some abstract concepts more concrete. This may mean that concepts such as flashback, foreshadowing, and symbolism might be more readily identified and understood. But graphic novels should also be used for independent reading recommendations and as part of book talks and displays. Graphic novel adaptations of traditional texts such as *The City of Ember* and *The Golden Compass* should be offered as alternative selections for students, especially those who may not be able to access a more traditional text. Finally, graphic novels can be used to develop skills in visual literacy.



HOW TO “READ” A GRAPHIC NOVEL

Do not assume that all readers will know *how* to read a graphic novel. Educators should take some time to demonstrate the structure of the graphic novel format. Using a document camera or an ebook version of a graphic novel, educators should familiarize readers with the various components and elements of the format. Begin with the discussion below of the important elements of graphic novels.

IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GRAPHIC NOVELS

1. Color can be used in a variety of ways in graphic novels. Babymouse, Squish, and Lunch Lady do not use a traditional full-color approach; they have a more limited color palette. *The Golden Compass* and *The City of Ember* graphic novels use darker tones to help project mood and tone. Color plays an active role in the storytelling. The color in Hilo changes when he is having a flashback. The following are a few questions to consider along with readers:

- What colors are predominant?
- What might the colors represent/symbolize?
- What would happen if different colors were used?
- Does the graphic novel use a full-color process? Why or why not?
- Are the colors bold, muted, or pastel?



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IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF GRAPHIC NOVELS (continued)

2. Line is a component of the art in a graphic novel, and the direction of a line (horizontal, diagonal, vertical) can imply different things.

A diagonal line might indicate movement or loss of balance. A horizontal line could mean rest or peace or calm, while a vertical line could indicate not just height but strength. Readers should be able to determine if the direction of an illustration or a panel or even a page or more is horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. Here are a few questions to consider along with readers:

- Are lines thin or thick? Bold or sketchy?
- How does the artist use line to draw the readers' eyes in a certain direction?
- How are lines used to frame the panels or to separate the white space from the text and illustrations?



3. Composition is how the illustration is put together (composed). Size and placement are two critical components of composition, so think about these questions in your exploration with readers:

- What is in the center of the panel? In the top? The bottom? What might the placement of objects signify?
- Are some elements of the illustrations in the various panels larger than others? Why or why not?

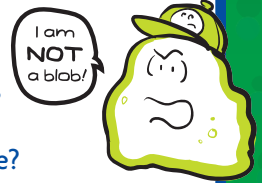
4. Frames can be used to contain text and illustration and create panels. Readers should begin to determine if the frames are created by lines or simply become boundaries where the text and illustration end.

- What type(s) of frames are used in the book?
- Do the frames vary throughout the narrative or remain consistent?
- Are there frames within frames to accentuate anything in the story?
- If the frames were removed, how might the story change?
- The art sometimes breaks the borders of the frame. What might the artist be conveying with this technique?



5. Speech balloons contain the text and dialogue of the graphic novel. Does the book separate text from the illustration, or does the text bleed into the illustrations without separation? These other questions are also valuable when talking about text, especially speech balloons:

- Does the text appear in black and white or color? Are different colors used? If so, why?
- Do the words differ in shape and size? How does the illustrator indicate emotional intensity, humor, etc., using speech balloons, colors, lines, etc.?
- Is there text in addition to speech? How is it set apart from the dialogue? Why is it necessary?



6. White space is important in graphic novels.

Events often happen in the white space. This is similar to the action that happens offstage in plays. The gutter is the space between panels. Students should think about some of the following questions about white space and gutters:

- Are the panels roughly the same size and shape? Why or why not? What could a change in shape and size signify?
- Does anything bleed into the white space or gutters? If so, why do you think the author and/or illustrator used the space for this purpose?
- Does more happen in one panel than in another?
- How does the author/illustrator move the reader from one panel to the next? Are there connections provided to the reader?

7. Media and technique/style of illustration functions in graphic novels as it does in any art.

Just as the work of Picasso and the cubists differed from the work of Monet and the impressionists, different artists use different approaches in their graphic novel work. The following are some questions for discussion:

- What media is being used? Are illustrations done with colored pencil, watercolors, tempera, etc.? Sometimes information about the media can be found on the copyright page of a book.
- What sort of illustrative style is present? Is this cartoon art? Are there elements of other techniques such as pointillism, impressionism, or realism?
- Is it possible to identify the illustrator's work in other books, series, etc.? What are the critical attributes of the work of various illustrators?

GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR THE CLASSROOM SERIES

BABYMOUSE

Jennifer L. Holm
and Matthew Holm
Grades 2-5



Babymouse lives in two worlds. In her day-to-day existence, she longs for excitement and travel. What she gets, however, are dodgeball games, a recalcitrant locker, and garbage detail at home. In her dream world, though, Babymouse assumes secret identities, solves mysteries, and generally wins the praise and adulation of her peers. Babymouse has an active imagination, one that frequently gets her into tough situations at school and at home. Somehow she manages to triumph by the end of each story and stay true to herself.

Visit RHTeachersLibrarians.com for a Babymouse educators' guide.



#1: Queen of the World!
PB: 978-0-375-83229-1
GLB: 978-0-375-93229-8



#2: Our Hero
PB: 978-0-375-83230-7
HC: 978-0-375-93230-4



#3: Beach Babe
PB: 978-0-375-83231-4
GLB: 978-0-375-93231-1



#4: Rock Star
PB: 978-0-375-83232-1
GLB: 978-0-375-93232-8



#5: Heartbreaker
PB: 978-0-375-83798-2
GLB: 978-0-375-93798-9

For a complete list of the Babymouse graphic novels, visit BabymouseBooks.com.

squish

Jennifer L. Holm
and Matthew Holm
Grades 3-7



Squish began as a minor character in *Babymouse #14: Mad Scientist* and has become the star of his own series. Despite being single-celled organisms, Squish and his friends attend school, play sports, and participate in a wide variety of activities. Though they face obstacles, there is always a solution to their problems.

Check out co-creator Matthew Holm's resources for using graphic novels in the classroom at MatthewHolm.com.



#1: Super Amoeba
PB: 978-0-375-84389-1
GLB: 978-0-375-93783-5



#2: Brave New Pond
PB: 978-0-375-84390-7
GLB: 978-0-375-93784-2



#3: The Power of the Parasite
PB: 978-0-375-84391-4
GLB: 978-0-375-93785-9



#4: Captain Disaster
PB: 978-0-375-84392-1
GLB: 978-0-375-93786-6

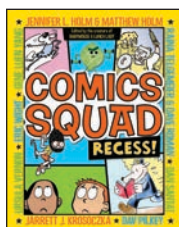


#5: Game On!
PB: 978-0-307-98299-5
GLB: 978-0-307-98300-8

For a complete list of the Squish graphic novels, visit SquishBooks.com.

COMICS SQUAD

Grades 2-5



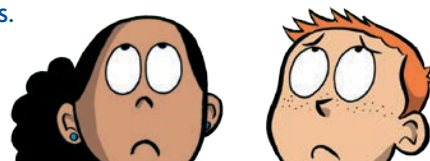
#1: Recess!
PB: 978-0-385-37003-5
HC: 978-0-385-37004-2



#2: Lunch!
PB: 978-0-553-51264-9
GLB: 978-0-553-51265-6

Several all-star graphic novel artists contributed to this collection. Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm, creators of Babymouse and Squish, are joined by Lunch Lady's Jarrett J. Krosoczka. Dav Pilkey, author of *Captain Underpants*, and Dan Santat, author of *Sidekicks*, join in the fun, along with Raina Telgemeier, author of *Smile* and *Sisters*; Gene Luen Yang, Printz Award medalist for *American Born Chinese*; Cece Bell (*El Deafo*); Jeffrey Brown (the *Jedi Academy* series); Peanuts; and Ursula Vernon (*Dragonbreath*). The stories includes ninjas, superheroes, and warring cupcakes and veggies.

For a complete list of the Comics Squad graphic novels, visit ComicSquadBooks.com.



GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR THE CLASSROOM

HILO

Judd Winick

Grades 3-7



#1: The Boy Who Crashed to Earth
HC: 978-0-385-38617-3
GLB: 978-0-385-38618-0



#2: Saving the Whole Wide World
HC: 978-0-385-38623-4
GLB: 978-0-385-38624-1

MEET HILO, D.J., and GINA!

D.J. and Gina are TOTALLY ordinary kids. But Hilo . . . isn't. Hilo is a boy who crashes to Earth. He doesn't seem to know where he came from or why he is on Earth. Thus begins the humorous adventures of a robot boy who has an important mission . . . if he could only remember what it is. Fortunately for Hilo, he has two human friends who will help. And he'll need all the help he can get when robot monsters manage to break through to Earth as well.

For a complete list of the Hilo graphic novels, visit HiloBook.com.

★ "A universally appealing tale." —Kirkus, Starred

LUNCH LADY

Jarrett J. Krosoczka

Grades 3-7



Lunch Lady and her assistant, Betty, serve up more than food to the Breakfast Bunch, a group of friends who somehow seem to become involved in all sorts of adventures at school. From substitute teachers who are really robots to evil librarians and crazed authors, it's up to the kids and crime-fighting Lunch Lady to solve the cases and rescue the school. Betty provides Lunch Lady with a variety of food- and kitchen-related gadgets to assist her in her efforts to thwart the villains.



#1: Lunch Lady and the Cyborg Substitute
PB: 978-0-375-84683-0
GLB: 978-0-375-94683-7



#2: Lunch Lady and the League of Librarians
PB: 978-0-375-84684-7
GLB: 978-0-375-94684-4



#3: Lunch Lady and the Author Visit Vendetta
PB: 978-0-375-86094-2



#4: Lunch Lady and the Summer Camp Shakedown
PB: 978-0-375-86095-9
GLB: 978-0-375-96095-6



#5: Lunch Lady and the Bake Sale Bandit
PB: 978-0-375-86729-3
GLB: 978-0-375-96729-0

For a complete list of the Lunch Lady graphic novels, visit LunchLadyBooks.com.

GRAPHIC NOVEL ADAPTATIONS

The City of Ember: The Graphic Novel

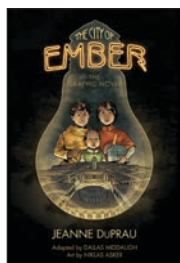
Jeanne DuPrau;

adapted by Dallas Middaugh;

illustrated by Niklas Asker

Grades 3-7

This adaptation of Jeanne DuPrau's novel transports readers to an underground city, a place where residents have lived for as long as anyone can recall. Lights help dispel the natural gloom of the city, but now the electricity is beginning to fail. The future of Ember depends on Lina and Doon, who must discover a way to decipher an ancient message that might help them save their city.



PB: 978-0-375-86793-4
HC: 978-0-375-86821-4
GLB: 978-0-375-96821-1

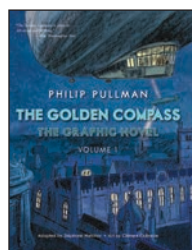
The Golden Compass: The Graphic Novel, Volume 1

Philip Pullman; adapted by Stéphane Melchoir;

art by Clément Oubrerie

Grades 5 up

The world of Philip Pullman's beloved His Dark Materials saga is brought to visual life in book 1 of a three-volume graphic adaptation of *The Golden Compass*. Lyra Belacqua is content to run wild among the scholars of Jordan College, with her dæmon familiar always by her side. But the arrival of her fearsome uncle, Lord Asriel, draws her to the heart of a terrible struggle—a struggle born of Gobblers and stolen children, and a mysterious substance known as Dust.

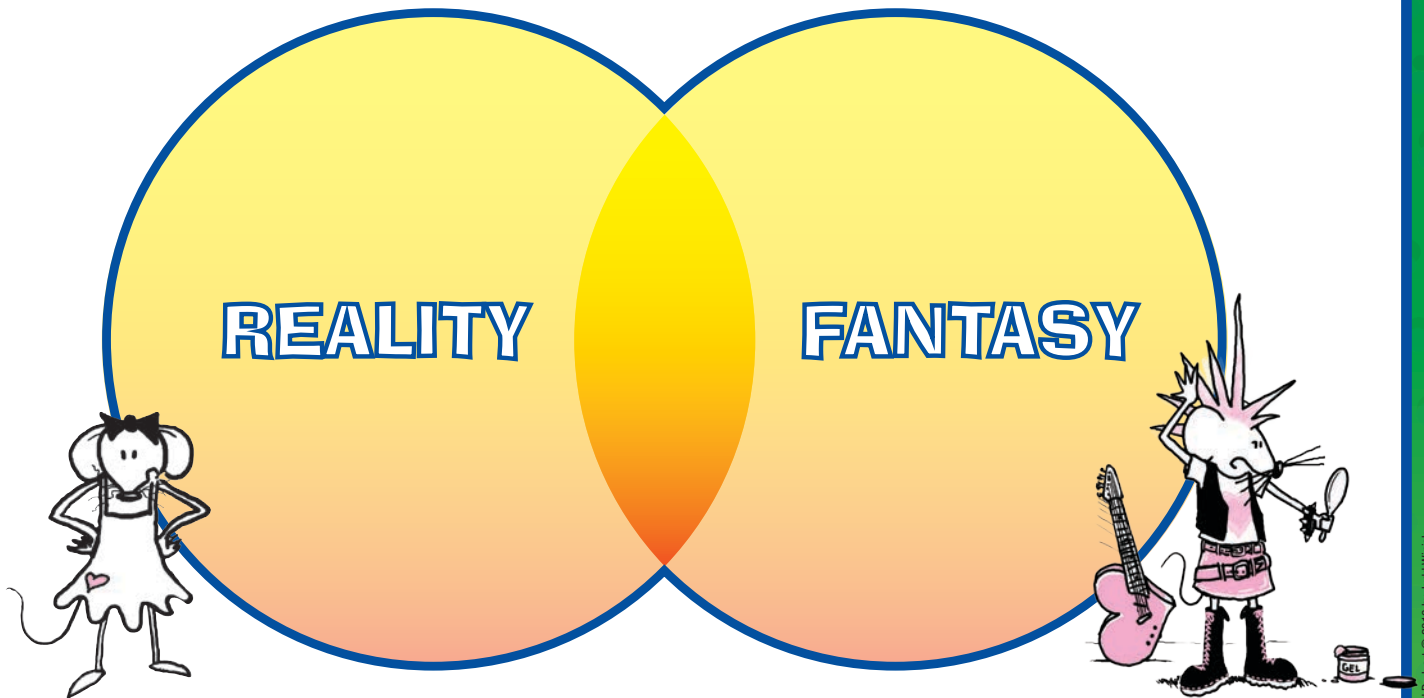


PB: 978-0-553-52372-0
HC: 978-0-553-52371-3
GLB: 978-0-553-52386-7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FEATURED GRAPHIC NOVELS



1. Babymouse leads two very different lives. Her imaginary life is always happy and fulfilling. Reality, however, is quite different. Have students create a Venn diagram that shows the differences between fantasy and reality, as well as the overlap between the two (see sample). This same chart could be used for *Comics Squad: Recess!* and *Hilo*.



2. Ask students to create a list of items various characters love and hate. Babymouse loves cupcakes; she fears her locker. What about Felicia, Wilson, and others? Lists can be shared via Padlet.com or in another format using different programs or simply on paper on the wall. What about Squish? What are the fears of Hilo? How about Lyra?

3. What other adventures might be in store for Babymouse? She has been a rock star, a derby racer, a scientist, a tycoon, and even a dragonslayer. Individually or in groups, students could create a new adventure for Babymouse and her friends. What could happen to Squish in a subsequent adventure or two? Is there something still unresolved for Lyra that might lead to another story? Is there a minor character in Lunch Lady who might be worthy of their own story? Hilo is a brand-new series, so brainstorm what might happen in the next installment. What other alien creatures might come to Earth? Could there be some friendly aliens who come to help?

Art from top: Babymouse © 2016 by Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Harm; Hilo and D. J. art © 2016 by Judd Winick

DISCUSSIONS FOR ANY GRAPHIC NOVEL

1. How is character revealed and developed through the text? Through the illustrations? Do you learn something different from text versus illustration?

2. How does the artist use color? What colors seem to be emphasized? Does color play a role in relating the mood and tone of the story?

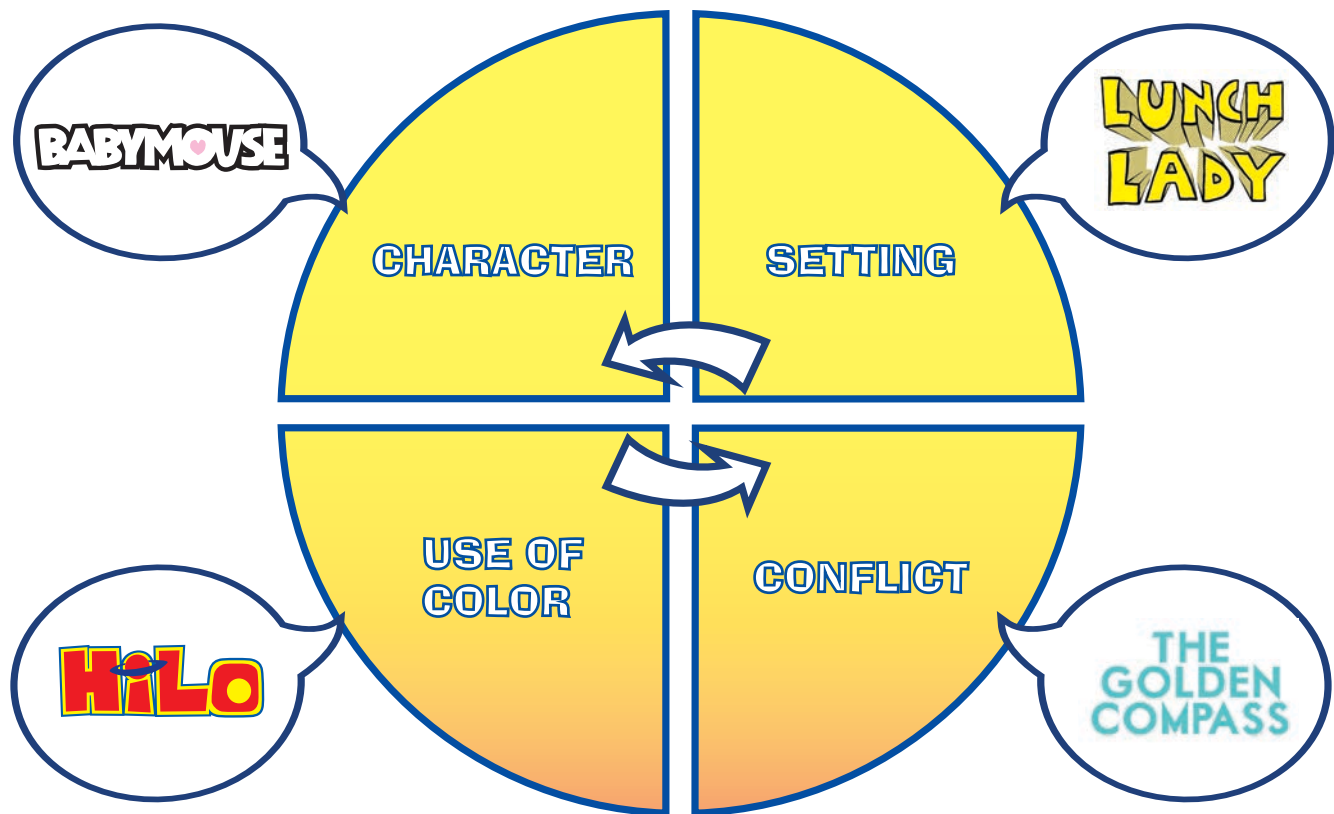
3. Which, if any, of the characters from the graphic novel series would make for an interesting spin-off? Why?

4. How is mood conveyed through the illustrations? How is it conveyed through the text? In your opinion, which is a better medium for conveying mood and tone?



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Provide students with panels from a graphic novel and ask them to put them in some sort of sequence. They need to be able to explain how they arrived at their particular sequence (for example, what clues did they use from the various panels?).
2. For the series graphic novels, break the class into groups. One group should read several of the Babymouse books, another Squish, another Lunch Lady. After each group has read and taken notes on their series, ask them to form new groups so there is a mix of readers of different series in each group. Have them compare and contrast their series. How are they alike? How are they different? The discussion could center on some of the elements of graphic novels (see pages 2–3) or other topics as needed. This same activity could be done for any two series, such as Hilo and Comics Squad.



3. These graphic novels all have elements of fantasy and/or science fiction. Ask students to create a table or chart listing the fantastic elements on one side and the realistic elements on the other.
4. In a graphic novel, the format plays a significant role in the telling of the story; while there is text, some of the story is told through the illustrations. Ask students to discuss which elements of the story are told in traditional words and which elements are relayed more in the pictures. What information is conveyed only in text? Only in the illustrations? In both the text and the illustrations?
5. Of course, a logical extension activity would be to have readers design and create their own graphic novels. Brainstorm ideas about characters, conflict, theme, action, and resolution before they begin to develop their stories.
6. Both *The City of Ember* and *The Golden Compass* have been made into movies. Compare and contrast the graphic novels with their movies. What events, characters, etc., are different from graphic novel to movie? Alternatively, how would students cast a movie from the Babymouse or Hilo or Lunch Lady or Squish books? Would it be animated, or could it be live action?

INTERNET RESOURCES



Get Graphic: The World in Words and Pictures has resources for teachers and librarians. A lengthy list of graphic novels with suggested age ranges is included along with a blog, reviews of new graphic novels, and links to other sites. getgraphic.org/whatisagraphicnovel.php

Graphic Novels: The Internet Public Library includes the history of the format, resources, and links to websites containing more information about graphic novels. ipl.org/div/graphicnovels/gnsHistBasics.html

Graphic Novels Reading List includes lists of recommended graphic novels for K–8 readers. These lists are from the Quicklists Consulting Committee of the Association for Library Service to Children of the American Library Association. ala.org/alsc/graphicnovels2014

Graphic Novels is a site from the CCBC, the Cooperative Children's Book Center. Resources for educators include print and online resources, as well as defending the use of graphic novels in the school and library. ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/graphicnovels.asp



COMMON CORE STANDARD CORRELATIONS

The use of graphic novels in a series will assist readers in identifying themes, supporting details, and central ideas. They are examining how events and individuals develop not just over one text but over the series of books.

CCRA.R.1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCRA.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Reading graphic novels requires an understanding of structure, form, and format. Point of view is scaffolded through the use of graphic novels as well.

CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Graphic novels exemplify diverse media and formats. Comparing and contrasting two different series allows readers to compare author approaches.

CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCRA.R.9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Research indicates that graphic novels are growing in popularity. They are complex but the scaffold of illustrations and text permits reading independently.

CCRA.R.10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.



Prepared by Teri S. Lesesne, a professor in the Department of Library Science at Sam Houston State University, where she teaches classes in literature for children and young adults.

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