The Secret Origin of Good Readers!

A Resource Book

Edited by

Robyn A. Hill, Ph.D.

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was created as a companion document for
“The Secret Origin of Good Readers”
a presentation by
Robyn A. Hill, Ph.D.
Mimi Cruz
Mike Carlin
for the 2004 San Diego Comic-Con International.

Special Thanks to:
Mike Carlin
Mimi Cruz
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Jackie Estrada
Terry Moore
Bill Morrison
Trevor Nielson
Gary Sassaman
Comic-Con International
DC Comics
Night Flight Comics
Christopher and SLG Publishing
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As a literary medium, comic books have been much maligned over the years, accused of promoting violence, reinforcing stereotypical gender roles, and under representing or misrepresenting minorities. Nevertheless, the evolution of the comics industry has seen an increase in the diversity of characters and subject matter, especially over the last ten years. This positive change in the content of comic books, coupled with their attractive visual characteristics, prompts us to reexamine this medium as a tool for promoting literacy.

Comic books became part of the American cultural psyche in the 1930’s and 1940’s, spurred by the popularity of such titles as “Action Comics” starring the beloved character of “Superman”. Early examination of comic books’ influence on the reading habits of young people showed that they did not hamper reading development, but in fact provided stimulation for many students for whom reading was a challenge. However, with the publication of Seduction of the Innocent by Dr. Frederic Wertham in 1954, in which he purported that the reading of comic books led to juvenile delinquency, the image of comic books suffered almost irreparably. From that time forward, not only did the strict Comics Code Authority regulate the comics industry, but comics were also discarded as potential educational resources.

Despite rejection by scholarly sources, comic books have continued to evolve over the years and have broadened the spectrum of art, characters, and issues employed in their creation. Recent issues of Superman (still thriving after 50 years!), for example, have found the Man of Steel battling homelessness, animal abuse, drunk driving, domestic violence, and the polluting of the world’s oceans. In “Batman: The Ultimate Evil,” the Dark Knight battles those who sexually abuse and exploit children for money. “Batman: Seduction of the Gun” tackled the thorny issue of gun control. Comic books dealing with social issues, such as the ones cited previously, easily may be used as a vehicle for discussion in a wide variety of content areas. Given the positive changes that have occurred and continue to occur in the comic book industry, and bearing in mind that comic books are indeed attractive reading materials, the scholarly world has finally begun to re-examine their potential as educational tools.

"One of the things I am very grateful to my father for is that, contrary to conventional educational principles, he allowed me to read comics. I think that is how I developed a love for English and for reading."

-Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Prize Winner
In his book, Every Person a Reader (1996), Dr. Steven Krashen makes a strong case for reading comic books and for including comic books in school libraries. He argues convincingly that free voluntary reading is an effective way to foster reading improvement. He goes on to cite several studies that show that students who read for pleasure will naturally progress in the amount and level of reading that they engage in. With regard to comic books in particular, Krashen notes that “middle school boys who did more comic book reading also read more in general, read more books, and reported that they liked reading better than those who did less comic book reading.” Dr. Krashen further asserts that school libraries must augment the variety of their holdings and increase student access to high interest reading materials such as comic books and graphic novels.

“Fact: The average comic book introduces children to nearly twice as many new words as the average children’s book and more than five times as many as the average child-adult conversation.”

-(from a 1993 study published in The Journal of Child Language)

In addition to promoting more reading in general, the use of comic books within writing curricula may inspire a wider interest in a broad selection of literary genres. Modern comic book titles do not always fall neatly into a specific category, but certainly readers can find something for nearly every interest including: Science Fiction, Fantasy, Drama, Spoofs and Humor, Crime, Historical Fiction, Action, Westerns, Poetry, Horror, and Satire. Comic books may also be used to introduce students to a variety of literary devices. More advanced students may be asked to examine comic books for examples of setting, plot, character development, foreshadowing, irony, stereotyping, flashback, metaphor, symbolism, and imagery. Students may also find comic books to be a useful source for examining and comparing cultural knowledge, such as social roles and conventions, power structures, formal and informal communication styles, dress, mannerisms, values, and even stereotypes.
CONCLUSION

Although they may have been disdained or ignored in the past, comic books have continued to develop so that they are now a very sophisticated medium, in both their visual and literary qualities. For those interested in promoting literacy, comic books, when knowledgeably selected and made available to students, either through school or classroom libraries, or as part of reading and writing curricula, may help to promote literacy, increase overall language skills, and encourage further exploration into other forms of print media.

Reading comic books may help to:

1. Develop an increased interest in reading.
2. Increase literacy in the broad sense of the word.
3. Develop language skills and a rich and varied vocabulary.
4. Foster interest in a variety of literary genres.
5. Foster interest in a broad range of topics.
6. Stimulate a creative imagination.
7. Develop an appreciation of art.
8. Develop the ability to discuss and critique art and writing.
9. Increase understanding of how meaning is found in visual phenomena.
10. Enhance understanding of popular culture and other media.
RESOURCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Like any form of popular culture (movies, television, books, magazines, etc.) comic books should be chosen responsibly, according to teacher needs and school policies. There are hundreds of comic book sites on the Internet and some of the best are highlighted in the following section. If you prefer to do library research, you will find a list of reference books to get you started. Finally, you will find lists of comic book titles for elementary students, secondary students, and YOU! Your local retailer should be able to provide any additional help that you need.

"As one of only five art forms native to America: the banjo, Jazz, musical comedy, the mystery novel, and the humble comic book, comic books deserve their place in our history, our culture, and our society."

David Jay Gabriel
President
New York City Comic Book Museum
http://www.nyccomicbookmuseum.org/
INTERNET RESOURCES

NY Public Library Comic Book Resources Site
Maintained by the New York Public Library, this site contains information on Comic Book Art, Criticism, History, Creators, Authors, Artists, as well as collections of comic books and art.
www.nypl.org/research/chss/grd/resguides/comic/

History of Comics
This site emphasizes comic book art throughout the ages. There are lots of visuals, including a “Pictorial History of Sequential Art from Cave Painting to Spider-man.”
www.comic-art.com

Russell B. Nye Collection
MSU has a large comic book and comic art collection. The site contains extensive information and a comprehensive list of other libraries with similar collections.

This is…Pop!
You will find lots of links to pop culture and comics related topics, including: comic books and covers, comic artists, comic strips, comic characters, and comic book news and reviews.
http://thisispop.50megs.com/main.html

New York City Comic Book Museum
Its mission, in part, is to preserve the historical and artistic legacy of comic book culture, show its usefulness in educating and entertaining, and instill in audiences the value and joy of this rich American heritage.
Great educational resources here!
www.nyccomicbookmuseum.org

Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art
The purpose of the museum is the preservation, study collection, education, and display of comic and cartoon art.
www.moccany.org

A Brief History of Comic Books
A nice overview of comic book history, interspersed with visual examples.
www.geocities.com/SoHo/5537/hist.htm

Comic Book Gorillarama
“All simian all the time”- features gorilla covers, character bios, plus info on other primates in comics.
http://members.shaw.ca/comicbookgorillarama/cbgindex.htm
**MORE INTERNET RESOURCES**

**Ka-BOOM! A Dictionary of Comic Book Words**
This fun site features a searchable dictionary of cartoon words, such as:

- **BLOOSH**: The sound of an explosion in water.

Pick a few words and see what definitions your students can invent. All words are source referenced.

http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/200/300/kaylor/kaboom

**The Periodic Table of Comic Books**
Maintained by the Department of Chemistry at the University of Kentucky, this website allows you to click on an element to see a list of comic book pages involving that element. It also discusses how comic book characters have been influenced by chemistry.

www.uky.edu/Projects/Chemcomics

**Frederic Wertham**
For those interested in censorship and violence in the media, you may want to read these articles about Frederic Wertham and his attacks on comic books in the 1950’s. The case has many parallels with modern pundits who attempt to link juvenile delinquency to movies, television, and video games.

http://library.thinkquest.org/3177/gather/censor.html

**Friends of Lulu**
Friends of Lulu is a national nonprofit organization whose purpose is to promote and encourage female readership and participation in the comic book industry.

www.friends-lulu.org

**The Museum of Black Superheroes**
Includes history, an art gallery, and articles about minorities in comic books.

www.blacksuperhero.com

**Super Marketing Ads from ComicBooks**
See famous ads like Charles Atlas “I was a 98 pound weakling,” Sea Monkeys, and X-Ray Specs. Examine how consumer tastes have changed over the years.

www.conleyinteractive.com/comicads.htm

**Words and Pictures Museum**
Seeks to create a greater understanding of the contributions of graphic narrative in American art, popular culture and society.

www.wordsandpictures.org

**Comic Book Legal Defense Fund**
This site has a great deal of information about comic book history and censorship, including a great timeline, case studies, bibliographies, and articles.

www.cbldf.org

**Comic-Con International**
Dedicated to creating appreciation for comics forms primarily through the presentation of conventions.

www.comic-con.org

**The Museum of Black Superheroes**
Includes history, an art gallery, and articles about minorities in comic books.
### Contributor Links

Many of the talented people and organizations that made this resource book possible have their own websites. I invite you to get to know them better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mike Carlin</th>
<th>Mimi Cruz</th>
<th>Richard Jenkins</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Superman" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Night Flight" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Skyape" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.dccomics.com">www.dccomics.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.night-flight.com">www.night-flight.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.skyape.com">www.skyape.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover all of the great comic book titles under the DC masthead, especially Superman!</td>
<td>If you don't have a local comic store, shop online at Night Flight. Manager Mimi Cruz is very knowledgeable and enjoys working with educators. Email: <a href="mailto:mimi@night-flight.com">mimi@night-flight.com</a> Tel: 801.272.8343</td>
<td>&quot;Millionaire. Crime fighter. Big friggin' gorilla.&quot; He’s cool!</td>
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<tr>
<th>Batton Lash</th>
<th>Terry Moore</th>
<th>Bill Morrison</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Beware the creatures" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Strangers in Paradise" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Roswell" /></td>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.exhibitapress.com">www.exhibitapress.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.stangersinparadise.com">www.stangersinparadise.com</a></td>
<td><a href="http://www.littlegreenman.com">www.littlegreenman.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beware the creatures of the night— they have lawyers!</td>
<td>Complex characters. Complicated relationships. Incredible art work.</td>
<td>An extraterrestrial + a beautiful woman, a cowboy, and a mutated rabbit = fun adventures!</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trevor Nielsen</th>
<th>Bill Morrison</th>
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<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.unbrokentrust.org">www.unbrokentrust.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although he doesn’t have his own website (yet), Trevor’s art is featured on this web page dedicated to the protection of children.</td>
<td>All characters and artwork on this page are © and ™ 2001 of their respective artists and publishers. Used with permission. All rights reserved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following comic book retailers (and other industry professionals) are all familiar with the Secret Origin of Good Readers project and want to help you to select and obtain appropriate comic books to use in your classrooms and libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comic Book Retailer</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brave New World Comics</td>
<td>23566 Lyons Ave #103, Santa Clarita, CA 91321</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bravenewworldcomics.com">www.bravenewworldcomics.com</a></td>
<td>Adam Freeman, <a href="mailto:adam@bravenewworldcomics.com">adam@bravenewworldcomics.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comickaze &amp; AFC Studio</td>
<td>5525 Clairemont Mesa Blvd, San Diego, CA 92117-2342</td>
<td><a href="http://www.comickaze.com">www.comickaze.com</a></td>
<td>Robert Scott, <a href="mailto:theboss@comickaze.com">theboss@comickaze.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic Relief: THE Comic Bookstore</td>
<td>2138 University Ave, Berkeley, CA 94704-1026</td>
<td><a href="http://www.comicrelief.net">www.comicrelief.net</a></td>
<td>Rory D. Root, <a href="mailto:info@comicrelief.net">info@comicrelief.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comics Unlimited</td>
<td>16344 Beach Blvd, Westminster, CA 92683</td>
<td><a href="http://www.comicsunlimited.com">www.comicsunlimited.com</a></td>
<td>Nancy Trempe, <a href="mailto:comics@comicsunlimited.com">comics@comicsunlimited.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flying Colors Comics &amp; Other Cool Stuff</td>
<td>2980 Treat Blvd, Concord, CA 94518</td>
<td><a href="http://FlyingColorsComics.com">http://FlyingColorsComics.com</a></td>
<td>Joe Field, <a href="mailto:Joe@FlyingColorsComics.com">Joe@FlyingColorsComics.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi De Ho Comics &amp; Books with Pictures</td>
<td>525 Santa Monica Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90401</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hideho.com">www.hideho.com</a></td>
<td>Robert Hennessey, <a href="mailto:info@hideho.com">info@hideho.com</a></td>
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<td>Hijinx Comics</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dan Shahin, <a href="http://www.hijinxcomics.com">www.hijinxcomics.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee's Comics</td>
<td>1020-F N. Rengstorff Ave, Mountain View, CA 94043</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lcomics.com">www.lcomics.com</a></td>
<td>Lee, <a href="mailto:Lee@lcomics.com">Lee@lcomics.com</a></td>
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<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
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<td><strong>Samurai Comics</strong>&lt;br&gt;5024 7th St.&lt;br&gt;Phoenix, AZ 85014&lt;br&gt;Tel: 602-265-8886&lt;br&gt;www.samuraicomics.com&lt;br&gt;Contact: Mike Banks&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:mike@samuraicomics.com">mike@samuraicomics.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Emerald City</strong>&lt;br&gt;2475-L McMullen Booth Rd.&lt;br&gt;Clearwater, FL 33759&lt;br&gt;Tel: 727-797-0664&lt;br&gt;www.emeraldcitycomics.com&lt;br&gt;Contact: Chad Rivard&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:cowardlylion@emeraldcitycomics.com">cowardlylion@emeraldcitycomics.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Speeding Bullet Comics</strong>&lt;br&gt;614 N. Porter Ave.&lt;br&gt;Norman, OK 73071&lt;br&gt;Tel: 405-360-6866&lt;br&gt;www.speedingbulletcomics.com&lt;br&gt;Contact: Matt Price&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:sbcomics@aol.com">sbcomics@aol.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Muse Comics</strong>&lt;br&gt;2100 Stephens #107&lt;br&gt;Missoula, MT 59801&lt;br&gt;Tel: 406-543-9944&lt;br&gt;Contact: Amanda Fisher&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:Amanda@musecomics.com">Amanda@musecomics.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Titan Comics</strong>&lt;br&gt;3701 W Northwest Hwy #125&lt;br&gt;Dallas Texas 75220&lt;br&gt;Tel: 214-350-4420&lt;br&gt;www.titancomics.com&lt;br&gt;Contact: Jeremy Shorr&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:jeremy@titancomics.com">jeremy@titancomics.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Lone Star Comics and Science-Fiction, Inc.</strong>&lt;br&gt;511 E. Abram St.&lt;br&gt;Arlington, TX 76010&lt;br&gt;Tel: 817-860-7827&lt;br&gt;<a href="http://www.mycomicshop.com/">http://www.mycomicshop.com/</a>&lt;br&gt;Contact: Chris Powell&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:genmgr@lonestarcomics.com">genmgr@lonestarcomics.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Lone Star Shows</strong>&lt;br&gt;6528 FM 2609&lt;br&gt;Nacogdoches, TX 75961&lt;br&gt;Tel: 936-560-0372&lt;br&gt;Fax: 936-560-3132&lt;br&gt;www.lonestarshows.com&lt;br&gt;Contact: Lance J. Moore&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:info@lonestarshows.com">info@lonestarshows.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Lone Star Shows</strong>&lt;br&gt;6528 FM 2609&lt;br&gt;Nacogdoches, TX 75961&lt;br&gt;Tel: 936-560-0372&lt;br&gt;Fax: 936-560-3132&lt;br&gt;www.lonestarshows.com&lt;br&gt;Contact: Lance J. Moore&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:info@lonestarshows.com">info@lonestarshows.com</a></td>
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### MORE WONDERFUL RETAILERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ZanaduComics I</th>
<th>ZanaduComics II</th>
<th>Speakers Available for Schools, Libraries, Career Days, etc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1923 Third Ave.</td>
<td>1307 NE 45th</td>
<td><strong>David Seidman</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle, WA 98101</td>
<td>Seattle, WA 98105</td>
<td><em>Comics Writer and Editor</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel: 206-443-1316</td>
<td>Tel: 206-632-0989</td>
<td>645 North Westmount Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax: 206-443-0652</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suite 308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>phone: 310-652-4369</td>
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<td>fax: 310-652-4369</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>e-mail: <a href="mailto:davidseidman@earthlink.net">davidseidman@earthlink.net</a> or <a href="mailto:david_seidman@compuserve.com">david_seidman@compuserve.com</a></td>
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### Strange Adventures Comic Bookshops

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strange Adventures Comic Bookshops</th>
<th>Nova Scotia</th>
<th>Thom Zahler</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5262 Sackville Street</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Thom Zahler</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1K8</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Professional Artist</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(902) 425-2140</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thom Zahler Art Studios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toll-free 1-866-6-COMICS</td>
<td></td>
<td>29 Keewaydin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:shop@strangeadventures.com">shop@strangeadventures.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td>Timberlake, Ohio 44095</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>phone: 440.269.8653</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>fax: 440.942.1322</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><a href="http://www.thomz.com">http://www.thomz.com</a></td>
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</table>

**Contact:** Calum Johnston
librarysales@strangeadventures.com

**Contact:** Perry Plush
zanadu@zanaducomics.com

**Contact:** Mimi Cruz
mimi@night-flight.com
WHAT IS A GRAPHIC NOVEL?

The term “graphic novel” can be deceptive. People often associate the word “graphic” with “adult” or “explicit,” but the reality is much less titillating. In general, graphic novels are considered to be books that are written and illustrated in the same style as more traditional comic books, however the format is usually extended and the binding is more durable. Often, the term “graphic novel” is applied to “trade paperbacks,” which are collections of comic books or comic strips that were previously published as individual issues (i.e. Mr. Negativity and Other Tales of Supernatural Law) or dailies (Liberty Meadows: Big Book of Love), although a true graphic novel contains original, never before published material.

Like all forms of media that libraries and librarians may choose to add to their collections, trade paperbacks and graphic novels vary widely in terms of the appropriateness of their content for particular age groups and communities. Many librarians have found that it is well worth the effort to become educated about trade paperbacks and graphic novels because they often prove to comprise some of the most popular collections with astounding rates of circulation. I am pleased to be able to share some resources for anyone interested in learning more about graphic novels, so that they can be included in public, school, and classroom libraries.

I would like to thank the librarians who provided me with these terrific resources:

Allen Ellis, Professor of Library Services at Northern Kentucky University writes and edits the “Comic Books” section of “Magazines for Libraries” with a goal of providing information on comic books to librarians and other educators. He has also written a terrific article: “About Face: Comic Books in Library Literature,” which can be found in SERIALS REVIEW, vol. 26, #2, pp. 21-43.

You may also wish to visit the following website for great links to common questions and concerns regarding comic books and graphic novels in libraries:

http://ublib.buffalo.edu/libraries/units/lml/comics/pages/
Librarian extraordinaire, Michele Gorman, has published a fabulous book called *Getting Graphic! Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens* (Linworth, 2003, 1-58683-089-9)

*Getting Graphic!* is designed to meet the needs of both school and public librarians who have little or no knowledge about graphic novels. Topics addressed in the book include: a brief history of comic books and graphic novels; the value of graphic novels for developing readers; the role of graphic novels in public libraries, school libraries, and classrooms; issues and information relevant to collection development and bibliographic control of graphic novels; programming and promotion ideas; and core collections for middle school libraries, high school libraries, and public libraries serving youth populations.

As a Wired for Youth Librarian with the Austin Public Library (www.wiredforyouth.com), Michele Gorman has been instrumental in the development and creation of an award-winning program in the inner city that focuses on technology and information literacy for teens. Michele has successfully incorporated graphic novels into the library collection over the past few years, purchasing and leveling graphic novels for all of Austin Public Library, a system that serves a city of approximately 1 million people with a central library and 20 branch locations.

*Getting Graphic!* is available through Amazon.com or www.linworth.com/publishing_books.cfm

- Graphic novels offer fast-paced action, conflict, and heroic endeavors.
- Visual Learners are able to connect with graphic novels in a way that they cannot with text-only books.
- Graphic novels help young readers develop strong language arts skills including reading comprehension and vocabulary development.
- Graphic novels often address current, relevant, and often complex social issues such as nonconformity and prejudice in addition to themes that are important to young adults including coming of age, social injustice, personal triumph over adversity, and personal growth.
- Graphic novels often stimulate readers to explore other genres of literature including fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, and realistic fiction as well as non-fiction and mythology.
- Many fans of graphic novels become avid book readers.
- Graphic novels are good for the young person who reads English as a second language or who reads on a lower reading level than his or her peers because the simple sentences and visual clues allow the reader to comprehend some, if not all, of the story.
- Most importantly, graphic novels are fun and kids of all ages enjoy reading them!

© Michele Gorman 2004
For the past four years, it has been my pleasure to introduce teachers and librarians to some great “comics” people and some terrific learning resources. This is the place where I get to share some of my personal recommendations and musings...as well as requested quotes from my PowerPoint presentation.

1. **Big Guy Books**
   “Part movie thrills, part book,” these high-interest and visually stimulating stories (Time Soldiers and Spider-man) were BIG hits with my 7-year old nephew and his friends.
   www.bigguybooks.com

2. **The Adventures of Scooter McDougal**
   This engaging series was created by teachers and is so good that it has already been turned into an animated series. Rightfully called “enterbraining,” these comics successfully combine learning and fun.
   http://www.scootermcdoogal.com/

3. **Kreative Komix: Super Hero Comic Book Maker/ Fairy Tales/ American History**
   Three software programs that allow students to create their own multimedia animated comics.

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**I RECOMMEND**...

**DID YOU EVER NOTICE....**

...how many movies are based on comic strips, graphic novels, and comic books, or have comic book elements?


How many more can you think of?
Want to bring **DIVERSITY** to your classroom?

In **English** & **Spanish**!

The Scrapyard Detectives series is beautifully illustrated in full color. The stories are designed to foster reflection and discussion about identity, diversity, and hate crimes. Young readers will learn important lessons along with the characters in a way that is fun and natural, not preachy or heavy handed. If you would like copies for use in your classroom in English, Spanish, or both, visit: www.scrapyarddetectives.org or contact: Smiles For Diversity at 1-888-216-2122.

**COMIC BOOK STORIES**

Though many comic books are still printed on paper and sold in stores, there are places on the Internet where they are available virtually.

[www.storiesillustrated.com](http://www.storiesillustrated.com) is a website where you will find six titles of varying genres that can be viewed free online or purchased in a more traditional digest or “pictoral novella” format. The stories and art are detailed and vivid and they are especially engaging for teens and English Language Learners.
### MOST OFTEN REQUESTED QUOTES FROM THE SECRET ORIGIN OF GOOD READERS PRESENTATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes</th>
<th>Authors/References</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Comics have the power to move, to inspire, and to teach. Additionally, the comic-book form is the only form of entertainment that is both “right-brained” and “left-brained,” evoking cognitive and interpretive skills in readers simultaneously.”</td>
<td>- Joe Field (2000)</td>
</tr>
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<td>“This ancient form of art, or method of expression, has found its way to the widely read comic strips and books which have established an undeniable position in the popular culture of this century. It is interesting to note that Sequential Art has only recently emerged as a discernible discipline alongside film making, to which it is truly a forerunner…”</td>
<td>- Will Eisner, Artist, Author, Creator of The Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Panels, I learned, become part of the vocabulary. They become…a form of punctuation…They affect the rate of reading. They affect the psychological approach that you take to the story…”</td>
<td>- Will Eisner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Visual communication is rich, evocative, and immediate, and transcends barriers that language sometimes raises. When pictures and words are used together to communicate, the result can be much greater than either alone could produce.”</td>
<td>- Elisabeth B. Thomsen</td>
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<td>“The great sorrow of my life is never having done comics.”</td>
<td>- Pablo Picasso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The world of comic books can, in its generosity, lend plots, characters and stories to the movies, but can’t lend its inexpressible power of suggestion that lies in the permanence and immobility of a butterfly on a pin.”</td>
<td>- Federico Fellini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When the City Library added a separate graphic novel collection, circulation went up 11,000% in just one year. The numbers have continued to rise in the last six months, with circulation steadily increasing between 200% and 400% each month. According to our statistics, the graphic novels are the most popular collection in the system, beating out compact discs, magazines, and even DVDs. The graphic novel collection is, obviously, wildly popular, and is used by all ages and both sexes (which would explain the amazing numbers).”</td>
<td>- Julie Thomas Bartel, Teen and Zine Librarian, Salt Lake City Library</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Every Person a Reader (1996) by Dr. Stephen Krashen

If you ever need any scholarly justification for adding comic books to your curriculum, classroom or school library, this short but informative book will give you all the support you need. Dr. Krashen, a leader in the field of Literacy, emphasizes free and pleasure reading over wide range of text media. He is a strong advocate of comic books as a form of high interest reading material that serves to bridge the gap between visual media such as television, movies, and video games and more traditional text-based narratives.

Understanding Comics (1994) by Scott McCloud

This book is a great place to start to learn about how comic books merge visual language with written language to form multi-layered texts. Drawn in a comic book style, McCloud’s work explains the historical origin of comic books, how they are designed, composed, and read. His wonderful explanation will inspire you to further investigate the richness of comic books.

Comics and Sequential Art (1985) by Will Eisner

Will Eisner is one of the most famous comic book artists and writers. Anyone with an interest in art, literature, film, and writing will find Eisner’s explanation of “graphic story-telling” and the many uses of comic book art to be highly informative.

Comics Between the Panels (2000) by Steve Suin and Mike Richardson.

This is one of those big “coffee table” books that you should be able to find at your local library or comic book store. It is relaxing to page through the alphabetical entries that list many comic book titles, artists, creators, and writers, all complemented by full color illustrations. Whether you just want a general orientation or are looking for specific information about comic books, this volume should help.

The World Encyclopedia of Comics (1998) by Maurice Horn

Just as the title implies, this is a large reference book about comics where you can find information about creators, publishers, writers, artists, titles, and characters from all over the world. Again, whether you just want to familiarize yourself with the medium, or if you are looking for specific information, this book is a good place to start.
**Comic Book Culture: An Illustrated History** (2000) by Ron Goulart

Here is another fun “coffee table” book with over 400 eye-popping, full color illustrations. In it, you will find examples of comic book art featuring some of the most famous (and not so famous) characters and artists of from the “Golden Age” of comic books from the 1930’s through the 1940’s. If you want a feast for the eyes, along with some solid information about this period of history, check out this book.

**Educator Kristine Rodriguez recommends:**

- **Art of the Comic Book: An Aesthetic History**  
  By Robert C. Harvey

- **Cartoons and Comics in the Classroom: A Reference for Teachers and Librarians**  
  By James C. Thomas

- **Drawing Cartoons**  
  By Mark Heath

- **Encyclopedia of Comic Characters**  
  By Dennis Gifford

- **Drawing on the Funny Side of the Brain: How to Come Up With Jokes for Cartoons and Comic Strips**  
  By Christopher Hart

- **Toons! How to Draw Wild and Lively Characters for All Kinds of Cartoons**  
  By Randy Glasbergen

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**THE CARTOON ART MUSEUM**  
1017 Market Street  
San Francisco, CA  
94103

Batman © 2001 DC Comics
“First, the obvious. If you want to understand comics, you must read comics. I won’t presume to give you something like a greatest hits list…it in any comics specialty store you’ll find whatever’s new and popular, as well as a selection of collections and graphic novels…Below, I’ve listed non-comics books that I’ve found interesting, useful, or both. Each has something to say, directly or indirectly, about the visual telling of stories.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Comics and Sequential Art</strong></th>
<th><strong>Understanding Comics</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>and <strong>Graphic Story Telling</strong></td>
<td>By Scott McCloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Will Eisner</td>
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Eisner is as good an artist, in every sense of the word, as comics have had. He’s also a good teacher. I’d consider both of these books, but particularly the second one, required reading for any comic book writer.

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Reinventing Comics</strong></th>
<th><strong>Man of Two Worlds: My Life in Science Fiction and Comics</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Scott McCloud</td>
<td>By Julius Schwartz and Brian M. Thomsen</td>
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This is not so much a sequel to McCloud’s earlier book as an addition to it. The author explains how comics have come to be where they are in the first section and discusses the future in the second.

This is not about writing, but it is the story of one of the most influential and important editors comics have ever had, and so should be of uncommon interest to anyone involved in the field.
| **McLuhan for Beginners**  
By W. Terrence Gordon |
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<tr>
<td>Comics are part of that big, misunderstood monster we label “the media” and McLuhan thought more deeply about media, probably, than anyone. I find his own books hard going, but Gordon’s text- which is, coincidentally, in faux comic book form- presents his ideas clearly and concisely. It may help you to understand the unique appeal of comic books. You might want to read it in conjunction with McCloud’s <em>Understanding Comics</em>. If you’d like to try reading McLuhan himself, you might be able to find a copy of his magnum opus, <em>Understanding Media</em>.</td>
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| **The Writer’s Journey**  
By Christopher Vogler |
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<tr>
<td>Vogler takes Joseph Campbell’s ideas about mythology and applies them to screenwriting. Although ostensibly for movie fold, the book’s central theses are also pertinent to comics writers. People with a general interest in mythology will also be able to learn from it.</td>
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| **Adventures in the Screen Trade**  
By William Goldman |
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<tr>
<td>This is where I first encountered the idea of story spine. In addition to being of interest to writers, it is a wonderfully entertaining look at the movie business.</td>
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| **Hitchcock**  
By Francois Truffault |
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<tr>
<td>For 50 hours, Francois Truffault talked to Alfred Hitchcock about Hitchcock’s craft and art. This is a transcription of that conversation, with photos added. There may be no better primer on visual narrative.</td>
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| **Story**  
By Robert McKee |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another book directed at screenwriters that comics writers will find enormously useful. McKee, who is probably the world’s premier teacher of screenwriting, looks at plot, characterization, and story structure from every angle. If you’re not lucky enough to take his course, you can consider this book the next best thing. If you have take the course, the book constitutes the best class notes you can imagine.</td>
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| **Writing to Sell**  
By Scott Meredith |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Out of print, but perhaps still available from rare book venues both on and offline, this is a good, basic text for commercial storytellers.</td>
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| **Screenplay**  
By Syd Field |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field gives the best explanation of the three-act structure that I’ve ever read.</td>
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SUPER EIGHT FOR HOW TO RATE

Selecting Titles for Younger Audiences

1. **Ask your local librarian!**
   Librarians are increasingly knowledgeable about comics and graphic novels, so take advantage of their expertise.

2. **Ask your local retailer!**
   Chances are the librarians learned about comics and graphic novels from the local retailer. In some cases, those retailers are able to obtain free comics for your classroom. So, be sure to visit your local comic shop!

3. **Look for the code!**
   Though it doesn’t eliminate the need to preview, some comic books still carry the comics code authority seal, which indicates that they are suitable for “all ages.” Many manga distributors also provide codes to help with pre-selection.

4. **Don’t judge a comic book by its cover!**
   Like all media, it is important to preview what you are going to use or have in your classroom. A cover might appear to have objectionable content, but inside might be a powerful anti-violence, anti-drug, or anti-crime message. The content of most comics is much better than what kids are exposed to in a typical hour of television viewing.

5. **Look for the moral!**
   Like any other medium, try to look beyond the words and artwork to find the deeper themes, messages, and values.

6. **Look for what you loved!**
   If you were a comic book reader as a kid, you will be delighted to know that many of your favorite titles are still around.

7. **Look for what your kids love!**
   There are many comic book adaptations available of favorite cartoon shows and movies. They are a great way to move reluctant readers towards a print medium.

8. **Search the Internet!**
   There are many websites for teachers and librarians that provide summaries and reviews of comics and graphic novels.
*Like all media resources, comics books used in the classroom should be chosen responsibly.*

**Monthly Comic Books**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archie</th>
<th>Archie and Friends</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amelia Rules</td>
<td>Growing Up Enchanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Betty and Veronica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laugh</td>
<td>Jughead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bart Simpson</td>
<td>Mucha Lucha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simpsons</td>
<td>Power Puff Girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scooby Do</td>
<td>Dexter’s Laboratory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batman</td>
<td>Johnny Bravo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>Justice League Adventures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hero Bear</td>
<td>Sabrina the Teenage Witch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle Scrooge</td>
<td>Walt Disney’s Comics</td>
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**Trade Paperbacks and Graphic Novels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Astro Boy</th>
<th>Akiko</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roswell</td>
<td>Bone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monsters, Inc.</td>
<td>Superman Adventures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gon</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jimmy Neutron</td>
<td>Cine-Manga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batman Adventures: Dangerous Dames &amp; Demons</td>
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</table>
Like all media resources, comic books used in the classroom should be chosen responsibly.
Looking for something to add to YOUR personal reading repertoire? May I recommend the following graphic novels and collections:

Akira by Katsuhiro Otomo
Another Chance to Get it Right by Andrew Vachss
Asterix by Rene de Goscinny
Ballads and Sagas by Charles Vess
The Last Knight by Will Eisner
A Contract with God by Will Eisner
Enemy Ace: War Idyll by George Pratt
Whiteout by Greg Rucka
Maus: A Survivor’s Tale by Art Spiegelman
Sandman by Neil Gaiman
V for Vendetta by Alan Moore
Watchmen by Alan Moore

If you are looking for an ongoing comic book series to get you started, I would like to suggest a few titles that my colleagues and I read:

Age of Bronze
Liberty Meadows
Fables
Strangers in Paradise
Supernatural Law
Meridian
Too Much Coffee Man
Ruse
Amazing Spiderman
Powers
Sky Ape
100 Bullets
Sojourn
Queen and Country

Your local retailer will be able to help you tailor your choices to fit your specific needs as an educator, or as a novice comic book reader.

Visit http://csls.diamondcomics.com
Or call toll free 1-888-COMIC BOOK (1-888-266-4226)
Comic books have literally hundreds of potential uses in classrooms across the curriculum. The following pages contain activity ideas that can be modified for a variety of age groups and ability levels. They can be used as the foundation for an entire unit, or simply to add an extra dimension to a particular lesson.

Please use the titles and the following abbreviations for your content area(s) to quickly find ideas that are relevant to you.

- Art-----------------------------A
- ESOL---------------------------ESOL
- Foreign Languages------------FL
- Language Arts----------------LA
- Math--------------------------M
- Science-----------------------SC
- Social Studies----------------SS

Roswell characters and artwork © 2001 Bill Morrison
COMIC BOOK LITERACY

Students will become familiar with the different parts of a comic book, including the cover, title page, credits, letters page, back cover, panels, etc. Students will also be able to recognize the difference between narration boxes, thought balloons, and speech balloons.

LA ESOL FL

SYMBOLISM
Students will discuss what symbols are and why we use them. Students will then study the visual language of symbols present in comic books, including artist devices to show motion and as concrete pictographs like light bulbs over show an idea, or a string of random marks to indicate profanity.

LA ESOL FL

#@$!&%$#@!$#
#@$!&%$#@!$#

DISCRETE SKILLS WORK
Comic books may be used to help students work on discrete language arts skills, such as finding and identifying possessives, consonant blends, verbs, nouns, adjectives, special print, punctuation marks, synonyms, antonyms, compound words, quotes, made up words, slang words, rhyme, and alliteration.

LA ESOL

DISCRETE SKILLS WORK II
Comic books may be used to help students work on discrete language arts skills, such as following directions, alphabetization, prediction, summarization, picture interpretation, finding the main idea, identifying major and minor characters, classification, reading for details, and detecting mood

LA ESOL

COMIC BOOK ALPHABETS
Students will create alphabet books based on comic book characters, elements, and titles.

LA ESOL A
COMIC BOOK DICTIONARIES

LA ESOL A

MADE UP WORDS AND SOUND WORDS
Students will identify made up words and sound effects words in comic books. As an extension, students may be asked to create definitions and origins for those words, either in context or out of context.

LA ESOL

COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE
Students, particularly ESOL students, will study the use of colloquial English in comic books in order to expand their vocabulary skills and their understanding of slang and idiomatic expressions.

LA ESOL

PREDICTION
Students will read a page or several pages of a comic book story and then predict an ending. This may be accomplished through journal writing, creative writing, drawing, small group discussion, large group discussion, and/or presentation.

LA ESOL SC

Rex returned fire, desperate to get Luna back to the starcraft, but there were so many…and they were nearly out of ammo!
SEQUENCING
Students will be given cut up panels from a comic book page or pages. They must put the panels in order using contextual or visual clues from the individual panels. As an extension, students may create their own “order of events” comic book strips or pages.

LA  ESOL  M  SC  A

DICTATION
Students who have difficulty reading may be asked to look at the pictures in a comic book story and dictate a story to the teacher, a classmate, or a tape recorder.

LA  ESOL

LITERARY GENRES
Students will examine a variety of comic book titles in order to study the different genres that they may represent, including (but not limited to) drama, humor, science fiction, fantasy, action, horror, satire, and historical fiction.

LA  ESOL  FL

LITERARY DEVICES
Students will use comic books to study the many literary devices used in their creation, including (but not limited to) setting, plot, character development, mood, irony, foreshadowing, exaggeration, and flashback.

LA  ESOL

EVALUATING THE USE OF LITERARY TECHNIQUES IN COMIC BOOKS
Students will critique both the writing and the artwork in comic books in terms of the logic and credibility of plots, the appeal of characters, use of language and setting, and the use of artistic techniques to influence the readers’ perspective.

LA  ESOL

CHARACTER ANALYSIS
Students will analyze a comic book characters based on their thoughts, words, and actions, the story narration, and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

LA  ESOL
ANALYZE USE OF VOCABULARY
Students will recognize the differences in vocabulary, dialect, and register used by different comic book characters and will analyze the appropriateness and effectiveness of their use.

LA ESOL

ANALYZING AND CREATING CHARACTER NAMES
Many comic book characters have names that are taken from mythology, are a combination of words, or somehow convey a sense of the character (i.e. Cyclops, Brainiac, Richie Rich). Students may find it interesting to analyze the meanings and origins of comic book character names. As an extension activity, students would create comic book character names based on a general description, or write a description of a character based solely on the name.

LA ESOL SS

IDENTIFY AND ANALYZE THEMES
Students will learn to identify and analyze themes in comic books, including (but not limited to) bravery, loyalty, friendship, betrayal, and the traditional man vs. man (self), man vs. nature, and man vs. society.

LA ESOL SS

CRITIQUE
Students will supplement their understanding of critique by reading the letters pages of familiar comic book titles. They will then argue the merits of the letters through writing or discussion.

LA ESOL SS

WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Students will read a comic book and then compose a letter for the letters page. Students may choose to send in their letters and possibly be published in a subsequent edition of the title.

LA ESOL SS
VENN DIAGRAMS
Students will compare two comic book characters, using a Venn diagram to illustrate the differences and similarities between them.

LA  ESOL  SS  M

VENN DIAGRAMS II
Students will choose a comic book character and compare themselves to that character using a Venn diagram to illustrate the differences and similarities between them.

LA  ESOL  M

GRAPHING
Students will use comic books to generate data for graphing. (See Lesson Plan section of this packet for more details.)

LA  ESOL  SS  M

FRACTIONS
Students will be able to visualize fractions and tangibly handle fractions with cut up panels from a comic book page.

M

MEASUREMENT
Students may apply principles of geometry and spatial layout to measure the area of a given comic book page and/or identify the shapes of panels. As an extension, students may design comic book pages for different numbers and shapes of panels.

LA  ESOL  M  SC
FIVE SENSES
Students will learn about and identify the five senses using comic books. (See Lesson Plan section of this packet for more details.)

LA  ESOL  SC

COMIC BOOK STORY STARTERS
Students will use a comic book based story web to help organize their thoughts for creative writing. (See Lesson Plan section of this packet for more details.)

LA  ESOL  FL  SS

CREATING STORIES WITH FAMILIAR CHARACTERS
In this creative writing activity, students will take a familiar comic book character, such as Superman or Batman, and create an original comic book story.

LA  ESOL  FL  A  SS

ANALYZE LAYOUT OF IMAGES ON PAGE
Comic books often display an incredible variety of page design. Students studying comic books may find it interesting to analyze the layout of images on a page, critique the layout, and create their own layouts for stories or plot devices.

LA  ESOL  A

IMPACT OF VISUALS
Students will study the range and impact of visual techniques and styles used in comic books, including (but not limited to) cover design, layout, color (or lack thereof), movement, and mood.

LA  ESOL  A  SS

USE OF MEDIA IN COMIC BOOKS
In addition to the myriad styles of art used in comic books, students may find it interesting to specifically explore the many media that are employed, including (but not limited to) photography, collage, computer graphics, and many different varieties of paints, inks, and pencils.

LA  ESOL  A
LETTERING STYLES
Students look at the lettering styles in comic books and analyze how they are used and what meanings and moods they convey. As an extension, students may practice or create different lettering styles for different kinds of projects.

LA  ESOL  A

CREATING COMIC BOOKS
Students will learn how to write, design, and create their own comic books. (See Lesson Plan section of this packet for more details.)

LA  ESOL  FL  A  SS

COMIC BOOK AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Students will write and illustrate their own autobiography using what they have learned about designing and creating a comic book. These books may be laminated and used for display or added to classroom libraries.

LA  ESOL  A

HISTORICAL COMIC BOOKS
In a twist on the traditional research paper, students will study a historical person or event and present their information in the form of a comic book. Because of the comic book form, students will find that it may be more difficult to convey all aspects of the person’s life or event. Therefore, they will learn to discern the truly critical aspects of their reports and how to portray them factually. These books may be laminated and used for display or added to classroom libraries.

LA  ESOL  A  SS  FL

MYTHMAKING
Students will study the elements of modern mythmaking in comic books, especially noting the origins, powers, mission, character, flaws, and appearance of popular comic book characters.

LA  ESOL  SS
MYTH COMPARISON
Students who have studied myths from other cultures may be encouraged to compare those myths with the myths found in American comic books.

LA ESOL SS FL

SOCIAL ISSUES IN COMIC BOOKS- EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT
Comic books are a rich source of social commentary, both explicit and implicit. Examples of explicit social issues include, child abuse, homelessness, animal abuse, AIDS, pollution, drugs, and gun control. Implicit social issues may concern the role of women and minorities, power, poverty, violence, war, and the role of science and technology.

LA ESOL SS S FL

CULTURAL CRITIQUE ACROSS TITLES AND TIME
Since comic books are and have always been a rich source of both explicit and implicit social commentary, it is interesting to look at comic books from a historical perspective, as well as a cross-cultural perspective. What aspects of culture are glorified or rejected? Is there a message?

LA ESOL SS FL

ANALYZE POLITICAL ASSUMPTIONS
Students will identify, analyze, and critique the clarity, consistency, and legitimacy of political assumptions found in comic books. Are there distortions, propaganda, stereotypes, generalizations, simplifications, falsehoods, or slogans? Are there elements of social criticism. Is there a message? What ideas or ideals are taken for granted?

LA ESOL SS FL

ANALYZE ROLE OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES
Students will analyze and critique the role of women and minorities in comics across time, genre, and titles. What stereotypes, prejudice, or generalizations do you find? Are there elements of social criticism? What ideas, ideals, political and social structures are taken for granted?

LA ESOL SS
WHO IS THE ENEMY?
Social Studies students may find it interesting to study comic book villains and compare what was going on in the history of the United States when those books were published. Why and how have the villains changed over the years? What kinds of villains can we expect to see in the future?

LA ESOL SS

PORTRAYAL OF SCIENCE AND SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES
Scientific principles and the use of technology are prominently featured in comic books, especially the action and science fiction titles. For science teachers, comic books can be a rich source of classroom discussion and a great way to illustrate and brighten up lectures.

LA ESOL SS SC M

CRITIQUE OF ADVERTISING
The types of advertising present in comic books can be a rich source for classroom discussion. One can analyze current consumer tastes and advertising strategies or examine how they have changed over the years by looking at older comic books.

LA ESOL SS

ANALYSIS OF HUMOR VIS A VIS VISUAL IMAGES
Comic books often contain a great deal of humor. This humor can be analyzed in terms of the text, in terms of the visual images, and in terms of the relationship between the text and the visual images. Is this funny? Why is it funny? Would it be funny without the visual effects? Humor can also be compared from a historical perspective or from an age, gender, or race perspective.

LA ESOL SS A
SUSTAINED SILENT READING
Comic books should be encouraged as a free reading choice for sustained silent reading activities because of their high interest format. In addition, comic books should be considered a legitimate addition to school and classroom libraries. (See Forward for more information).

DISPLAY MATERIALS
Comic books and comic book characters can add color and excitement to school displays and bulletin boards. Ask your local comic book retailer about free promotional materials for your school or classroom.

With the retreat of the aliens, Power Strike would return to more pressing matters back on Earth…

Outside, seemingly from every corner of the world, dead things lurched forward, trapping the young couple in the flimsy barn.
Many thanks to
Kristine Rodriguez
Richard Jenkins
Virginia Cathrall
Mike Carlin
and Lydia Doepner
for their contributions
to this section.

"In addition to helping kids with their reading, comics also help children by improving their cognitive skills as they study the action from one panel to the next and mentally imagine what happens between the two. Dr. Robyn Hill’s fine Secret Origin of Good Readers project helps teachers and librarians bring the skill and enjoyment of reading to kids, and I heartily support it." - Jesse Leon McCann

Jesse Leon McCann has written numerous Scooby Doo titles for Scholastic Books, and is the author of several popular books for children featuring Ace Ventura, Looney Tunes, Jimmy Neutron and Batman. McCann is also an expert on the Simpsons and has written several Simpsons comic books, the new Simpsons Episode Guide and Simpsons trivia games.
OBJECTIVES: Students will learn why we use different types of graphs, how to create them, and which types of graphs are better to use depending on the type of information they are displaying.

OVERVIEW: By using comic books as a source of data or questions for date collection, students will learn how to make different types of graphs.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary, but may be modified for secondary.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Graphing paper, comic books

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Lead a discussion with the class about the different types of graphs (i.e. bar, pie, pictograph) and show them some examples. Explain to the class why we use the various types of graphs and why each type is important.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will collect data from comic books or by interviewing classmates.
2. Data that can be collected from comic books include: how many panels each character appears in, types of super powers, major and minor characters, heroes and villains.
3. Data that can be collected by interviewing classmates include: Who is your favorite comic book character? What superpower would you want to possess? If you were a superhero, what color would your costume be?

EXTENSION:

1. Have students create other ideas for data to collect and make new graphs for this information.

CLOSURE: Have the students compare the different graphs that they created using the same data. Discuss the differences and similarities found in the graphs. Which ones did they like or dislike? Why? How is the information shown differently?
OBJECTIVES: Students will explore the five senses using comic books. They will use their critical thinking skills to determine how a comic book character uses the five senses.

OVERVIEW: Students will answer questions regarding the five senses that they find in a comic book.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary, but may be modified for secondary.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: The Five Senses worksheet, comic books for each student.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Lead a discussion with the class about the five senses. As an example read a page or two of a comic book to the class and show them the pictures. “What does this character see, hear, smell, touch, and taste? How do we know this? What clues do we see?” Some of the answers may be creative because they will not be obvious.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will receive a worksheet and a comic book.
2. Students will choose a character to study for the activity.
3. Students will answer the questions on the worksheet.

EXTENSION: As a class, discuss some of the superhuman types of senses or powers that some comic book characters may have, such as X-ray vision or invisibility.

CLOSURE: Discuss why it is important to include the senses in stories or comic books that the students may create. Explain that including what the characters see, hear, smell, touch, and taste adds description and quality of detail to stories.
When you describe a comic book you use your senses. Ask yourself what scenes in a comic book look, feel, sound, taste, and smell like. Choose a story or scene in a comic book and answer the following questions about the senses of one of the characters.

1. My character sees...

________________________________________________________________________

2. My character hears...

________________________________________________________________________

3. My character tastes...

________________________________________________________________________

4. My character smells...

________________________________________________________________________

5. My character touches...

________________________________________________________________________
OBJECTIVES: Students will learn to use a story web to organize their thoughts and use their creative writing skills to write their own stories.

OVERVIEW: Using a story web and a story starter, students will write their own works of fiction.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary, but may be modified for secondary.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Worksheets

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Discuss with the class that there are steps that you must take before writing a story. Students must be able to brainstorm and organize their thought in order to create a well-written story. Draw a sample story web on the board and explain how it works and how it can help to organize one’s thoughts.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will choose a story starter.
2. Students will fill out the question bubbles on their story web worksheets.
3. Based on their worksheet, students will write their stories on a separate piece of paper.

EXTENSION:

1. Students will complete a different story starter worksheet and write a new and different story.
2. Students will illustrate their stories or put their stories into comic book form.

CLOSURE: Display students’ illustrated stories or place them in binders in the classroom library so that students may read each other’s work.
IF I HAD ONE SUPER POWER, IT WOULD BE...
NAME: _________________________

**Story Starter**

Use this story web to help you organize your ideas.

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- Why?
- How?
- When?
**Comic Book Story Starters: The Sequel**

Based on a lesson plan developed by Kristine Rodriguez. Modified and used with permission.

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will make predictions about what happened before and after the scenes depicted in the accompanying comic book panels that were specially designed for this resource book by artist Trevor Nielson. Students will use their ideas to create their own original stories.

**OVERVIEW:** Using a comic book panel as inspiration, students will write their own works of fiction.

**GRADE LEVEL:** Secondary, but may be modified for elementary.

**INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:** A comic book panel story starter

**INTRODUCING THE LESSON:** Using a sample panel story starter, ask students to make predictions about what happened before and after the depicted scene. Use the ideas generated to create a sample story outline.

**PROCEDURE:**

1. Students will choose a story starter panel.
2. Students will brainstorm ideas about what happened before and after the depicted scene.
3. Based on their ideas, students will organize and write their stories on a separate piece of paper.

**CLOSURE:**

1. Students will share their stories with a partner, in small groups, or with the class.

**EXTENSION:**

1. Students will illustrate their stories or put their stories into comic book form.
2. Students will create their own story starter panels to be used by their peers for future writing assignments.
3. Students will find and use panels from their favorite comic book as story starters.
OBJECTIVES: Students will make predictions about what happened between the scenes depicted in the accompanying comic book panels that were specially designed for this resource book by artist and writer Mike Carlin, Senior Group Editor at DC Comics. Students will fill in the panels with their own illustrations to complete the sequence.

OVERVIEW: Using a set of comic book panels as inspiration, students will illustrate their own short works of fiction.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary, but may be modified for secondary. Good for English Language Learners. No great artistic ability is necessary.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: A comic book panel story starter, such as the one provided. Panels may also be created by the teacher, by the students, or chosen from a favorite comic or graphic novel.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Using a sample panel story starter, ask students to make predictions about what happened between the depicted scenes. Use the ideas generated to draw simple illustrations to complete the story.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will choose a story starter panel.
2. Students will brainstorm ideas about what happened between the depicted scenes.
3. Based on their ideas, students will fill in the blank panels with their own original illustrations to complete the story. Students will sign their work in the space provided.

CLOSURE: Students will share their stories with a partner, in small groups, or with the class.

EXTENSION:

1. Students will create a class book with their completed panels.
2. Students will create their own story starter panels to be used by their peers for future writing assignments.
THREE PANEL STORY TELLING

Example One

Example Two:
FOUR PANEL STORY TELLING

Example One:

Example Two:
Rhyming With The Ghouly Boys

Based on a lesson plan developed by Lydia Doepner. Modified and used with permission.

“Let nothing deter you from your dreams. Let no obstacle stand in your way. Let no force push you aside...and should you ever fall, dust off your coat and rise back up.”

This is the message of The Ghouly Boys, a charming comic book for all ages. Though the first chapter, (reproduced for this lesson with the kind permission of the author, Christopher Higginson, and SLG publishing) is a bit sad, as many classic tales are, the story is ultimately uplifting and the relationship between Zombie Boy and Fat Bat is touching.

Lydia Doepner’s lesson was a great success with her second grade students, leaving them clamoring for more comics-based activities. I think your students will react the same way.

- Robyn

OBJECTIVES: Students will identify rhyming word patterns. Students will write additional rhyming words that go along with the text. Students will create their own rhyming verse using the text as an example.

OVERVIEW: Chapter One of Issue One of The Ghouly Boys is written in rhyming verse and lends itself very well to use with the youngest of readers.

GRADE LEVEL: Elementary

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Chapter One of Issue One of The Ghouly Boys on overhead transparencies (optional), pencils, paper, crayons

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Introduce the idea of rhyming patterns and ask students to listen for them. Read Chapter One out loud or use the overheads while you read so that the class can follow along.
PROCEDURE:

1. After reading, ask the children what types of patterns they recognized.
2. Reread each panel and then list the rhyming words. This portion of the lesson can be done as a whole group, small groups, cooperative groups, with parent helpers or aides, or with older students (Study Buddies).
3. Students will choose some of the sets of words to illustrate, such as “fat bat”, “black shack”, “chat with a cat.”

CLOSURE: Students share their rhyming word sets and illustrations orally or by creating a bulletin board display.

EXTENSION: Using the entire comic book, compare and contrast it with another story that has an orphan or orphans who must also overcome adversity in order to eventually find happiness, such as Pippi Longstocking, Stuart Little, The Boxcar Children, or Little Orphan Annie. A Venn Diagram works well as a graphic organizer for this activity.

CHARACTER CUT-OUTS
IMAGES & WORDS: Responding to Art in Writing

Based on a lesson plan and worksheet developed by Virginia Cathrall from the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, modified and used with permission

OBJECTIVES: Students will apply observation skills and art concepts using comic book art. In addition, students will practice creative writing.

OVERVIEW: People rarely take the time to truly look at a piece of art. For example, a typical museum visitor will spend approximately 8 to 10 seconds per object. Moreover, for many teachers, a museum visit may not be feasible. Comic books are both portable and affordable and showcase a wide variety of subject matter and styles. The covers, for example, are particularly striking. This lesson provides an opportunity to really relate to art and reflect and build on the creative process. Students will closely examine a piece of comic book art, describe it, analyze it, and then use their ideas to create an original written composition.

GRADE LEVEL: Secondary, but may be modified for all grades.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: The Images and Words worksheet and one or more examples of comic book art, such as the ©Jim Lee Batman portrait included with this lesson.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Discuss the relationship between art and writing, especially in the comic book medium. Review the concepts of Color, Light, Lines, Shape, and Form with students.

PROCEDURE:

1. Students will receive a copy of the Images & Words worksheet.
2. Students will choose a piece of comic book art that speaks to them (preferable) or be provided with a pre-selected example.
3. With as much isolation and silence as possible, students will closely examine the comic book art and complete the Images & Words worksheet.

CLOSURE: Students may share their responses in pairs, small groups, or as part of a class discussion on the experience.

EXTENSION: Students may also be asked to develop one or more ideas as a formal writing assignment. Finished assignments may then be displayed alongside the art that inspired them. This assignment may also be used in a museum setting, where additional art forms may be examined using the Images & Words format.
# Images & Words: Responding to Art in Writing

## Information on the Work of Art

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>Medium:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artist:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
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## Describe the Work of Art

Describe what you see, (i.e. two dogs, a woman with a hat, tall buildings, etc.). You may also describe colors, shapes, and lines.

## Analyze the Parts of the Work of Art

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color: Name the most important colors. Are they warm or cool, bright or subdued? Are they light or dark (value)? What colors draw your attention first?</th>
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<td>Light: What is the direction of the light? What is the light source (sun, candle, unknown)? Does the light affect any of the colors? Are the shadows hard and crisp or soft?</td>
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<td>Lines: What lines are created by the edges of objects in the art? Are they straight, curved, or jagged? Are there lines used to draw attention around the work (parallel lines, perspective lines, movement lines)?</td>
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<td>Shape and Form: What shapes are in the work of art? Are they geometric or organic? Do some of the shapes make a 3-dimensional form? What makes the shapes 3-dimensional: shading, perspective, or overlapping?</td>
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</table>
Preparation for Writing
Use what you have written in the description and analysis to give you ideas for a written work. List ideas for more than one type of writing (poem, story, monologue, essay, etc.)

Starting to Write
What will be the first words, phrases, or sentences of your composition?
SUPERNATURAL ESOL

Supernatural Law (www.exhibitapress.com) is an example of a comic book that can be used as a delightful source of linguistic, cultural, and humorous lessons for English Language Learners. The protagonists, Alanna Wolff and Jeff Byrd, are attorneys who specialize in cases involving the supernatural. The lesson ideas below illustrate the immense potential of this particular comic title, and the comic book medium in general, to provide a stimulating, context-rich way to improve language and literacy skills. An example of a fully developed lesson, including the sample pages listed below, follows.

Supernatural Law Issue #31, pp. 4 and 5

Cultural Topics

1. The U.S. Legal system
2. The courtroom and court procedures
   How do these compare to systems in other countries?
   How does the physical setting of a U.S. courtroom compare to those in other countries?

3. Casinos/Poker/Gambling
   How do these compare to games of chance in other countries?

4. Superstitions/Curses
   How do these fit into the traditions of other cultures?

Linguistic Topics

1. Plays on Words
   i.e. “Kahnthe-Gaetah-Burehke” (Can’t He Get a Break)

2. Specialized Vocabulary
   i.e. ruckus
        sarcophagus
        injunction

3. Idiomatic Expressions
   i.e. remain in check
        simmer down
        bear with me
        a keeper
        icing on the cake

4. Accents and Dialects (also spelling and pronunciation)
   i.e. The judge’s use of a southern drawl
OBJECTIVES: Students will become familiar with the U.S. court system by discussing courtroom elements and procedures described in sample pages from the comic book Supernatural Law (issue #31).

OVERVIEW: Using sample pages from Supernatural Law #31 as a starting point, students will discuss the U.S. court system, learn basic vocabulary, and complete worksheet activities with a partner.

GRADE LEVEL: Secondary or Adult- Beginning Intermediate to Advanced.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Copies of pages 4 and 5 of Supernatural Law #31 (or the entire issue), Supernatural Vocabulary worksheets.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Allow students to look at the sample comic book pages and discuss what they see. Where does the story take place? Have you ever been in a place like that? Seen one on TV or in a movie?

PROCEDURES:

1. Students will read the sample pages with a partner, jotting down questions and unfamiliar words.
2. Students will discuss the main elements of the story and identify the main characters and their roles. (As key vocabulary words are generated, write them on board.) If time permits, students will predict the outcome of the case.
3. With the teacher’s help, students will discuss basic courtroom elements and procedures and compare them to those of their home country.
4. Students will practice and reinforce key vocabulary by completing the worksheet activities with a partner.

EXTENSION: Students may wish to discuss famous court cases or cases currently in the news. The teacher may also wish to arrange a visit to a courthouse or assign roles so that students may participate in a mock trial.
SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Andoloha Mehemet (The Plaintiff) asks the Court to issue a Preliminary Injunction, enjoining Griffin Varnick et al. (The Defendant) from taking possession of, displaying, or tampering with in any way the coffin for a loan, namely, a sarcophagus of ancient lineage (the Sarcophagus) used to secure a debt owed to the Defendant by the Plaintiff.

The Plaintiff will be irremediably harmed if the Sarcophagus is damaged or destroyed. It is a unique item that has been in the care of the Plaintiff’s family for thousands of years. There is an immediate risk of such damage and/or destruction because the Defendant intends to display the Sarcophagus in the utterly inappropriate setting of his Casino, and comments sharply with the Plaintiff, no time to have the Sarcophagus properly restored, if the Court grants the Plaintiff 30 days to satisfy the Court...

Mr. Mehemet was visiting Macaliste to lecture about the life and times of Egyptian nobleman Khant...-

Yes, it was of my client to put a mummy up as collateral in a poker game...

I'm telling you, Griffin-- if Woff and Byrd are involved in this case, something spooky's gonna happen!

Look well, I'm armed, and I'm not afraid.

Afraid Mehemet has lost his family heirloom to my casino by being a lousy poker player!

Mr. Mehemet is of direct lineage to Khant-s...-

Mr. Mehemet carries a history not to be trifled with; it is best kept within the Mehemet family.

For this coffin's history includes a curse!

As long as the family retains possession of the Sarcophagus, the curse remains in check...

But who is to say what might happen if Mr. Varnick were to take possession?
MR. MEHMET RAN UP THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS IN DEBT IN MY CLIENT'S CASINO AND NOW HIS ATTORNEY IS BUGGERTITING MY CLIENT NOT COLLECT ON THAT DEBT

MR. MEHMET: MY PARTNER AND I ARE NOT BORGERS—

MR. TYLER: SIMMER DOWN . . .

MR. MEHMET: IF THERE IS INDEED A CURSE ATTACHED TO THAT MUMMY, CAN WE EXPECT YALL TO USE MAGIC AS WELL AS LAW TO DEAL WITH THE SITUATION?

MR. MEHMET'S FAMILY IN EGYPT ARE PREPARED TO PAY MR. VARNICK IN CASH TO SETTLE HIS DEBT IN EXCHANGE FOR THE SARCOPHAGUS . . .

AHH, YOUR HONOR.

THAT'S CORRECT, JUDGE SAMUDIO. AND WE HOPE TO RESOLVE THIS MATTER IN A MORE PRACTICAL MANNER.

MR. TYLER: IF YOU JUST KICKED MY LEG AS HARD AS A MULE WOULD—

MR. VARNICK: IF YOU HAD REAL LEGS—

MR. TYLER: AND IF YOU HAD REAL TEETH—

MR. VARNICK: AND IF YOU HAD REAL NECK—

MR. TYLER: AND IF YOU HAD REAL EYES—

MR. VARNICK: AND IF YOU HAD REAL HANDS—

MR. VARNICK: IT'S A CURSE— AND A CURSE IS JUST LIKE ON THE CAKE!

RAPP RAPP RAPP

MR. WOLFF: MR. BYRD, I HAVE YOUR ARGUMENT AND I'LL GET BACK TO YOU AS SOON AS I CAN—

MR. WOLFF: PLEASE RESTRAIN YOUR CLIENT . . . THANK YOU!

MR. VARNICK: OH, THAT MUMMY'S A KEEPER— AND A CURSE IS JUST LIKE ON THE CAKE!

MR. WOLFF: YOU WOULDN'T RATHER SETTLE FOR THE CASA GRIFF?
1. What do these words mean? Discuss with a partner.

2. Use the comic book pages to find an example of each, either an illustration or somewhere in the text. Show your partner.

3. Find the words in the puzzle and circle them. They can be backwards, forwards, horizontal, vertical, or diagonal.

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4. Fill in the blanks with words from the vocabulary list. Use your comic pages for clues.

Alanna Wolff and Jeff Byrd are both ____________________________. Their __________________________ is Andoheb Mehemet. Andoheb Mehemet is the __________________________ in the case. The __________________________ is Griffith Varnick. Griffith Varnick has hired an __________________________ named Mr. Tyler. Mr. Samudio is the __________________________. He sits at the __________________________ and listens to the __________________________. When he wants order in the court, he raps his __________________________.
Tag Team Comics
Based on a lesson plan developed by Richard Jenkins; modified and used with permission.

OBJECTIVES: Students will become familiar with the elements of comics. Students will create their own one-page (4 to 6 panels) comic book stories.

OVERVIEW: An introductory creative writing exercise designed to acquaint students with the creative process, the elements of comics, and the expressive potential of comics.

GRADE LEVEL: All.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Pencils, erasers, sketching or copy paper, story starter ideas.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON: Begin by showing the students examples of comic strips and comic book pages. Identify and list all of the elements of comics, especially:

1. Pictures - that show the story.
2. Panels - that contain the pictures and divide the story into segments.
3. Words - that tell the story.
4. Captions - the various shapes which identify and distinguish the different kinds of words used in comics, such as speech balloons, thought clouds, narration boxes, and sound bursts.

PROCEDURE:

1. Divide the class into teams of two. Each team should receive one sheet of paper.
2. The teammates will alternate working on their comic. Instruct the first teammate to draw four large boxes on the paper.
3. Write a story starter sentence on the board.
4. Instruct the second teammate to write this sentence at the top of the first panel.
5. Instruct the first teammate to draw a picture in the first panel. This picture should elaborate on the sentence. Encourage the students to include speech, thoughts, and sounds.
6. Instruct the students to finish the remaining three panels on their own as a team.
7. As the students draw near to their conclusions, introduce a variable that they must include. For example, students must somehow incorporate “chocolate donut” into their story.

TECHNICAL TIPS:

1. Students should be encouraged to draw characters with appropriate body gestures and facial expressions.
2. Students should be reminded to print the words clearly.
3. Students should draw the words before the caption around the words.

EXTENSION:

Students may wish to create their own individual or “solo” comics. Begin by having the students write their own complete stories. Then, instruct the students to insert the sentences from their stories into panels drawn for their “rough draft” comic. Have students add pictures, speech and thought balloons, and sounds. After revising and correcting the rough drafts, students will carefully draw a final draft, emphasizing attention to detail.

CLOSURE: Display students’ illustrated stories or place them in binders in the classroom library so that students may read each other’s work.

Richard Jenkins is a nationally published comic book creator who has worked as an Artist-in-Residence and Artist-in-Education since 1997. He has brought his love and knowledge of comic books to schools and classrooms throughout the West.

For more information about the wonderful, multi-curricular, educational experience that Richard Jenkins is able to bring to your school and your students, please contact him at (405) 524-6256 or rjhiinx@yahoo.com.

Comics ...
Caricature ...
Animation ...
... these are pervasive art forms in our world. Almost everybody has experience with an understanding of, or affinity for these media. Yet, little or no academic attention has been given to them ... until now!

© 1999 by Richard Jenkins
FEEDBACK

On behalf of my co-presenters and everyone who has contributed to this resource book, I hope that you have enjoyed our introduction to the wonderful classroom and library resources known as comic books and graphic novels. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, I would really appreciate your feedback. I am always updating and trying to improve this book, so please send me YOUR ideas for using comic books in the classroom.

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robyn@night-flight.com or rhill@nu.edu