GET GRAPHIC!

GRAPHIC NOVEL EDUCATORS’ GUIDE
INTRODUCTION
Graphic novels have grown in popularity over the past decade or two. Once a niche format, they are an increasingly important component of classroom and library collections. Adaptations of traditional texts such as *The City of Ember* and *The Golden Compass* are joining the stories of Babymouse, Hilo, Lucy & Andy, and other characters from graphic novel series. Today 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 enjoyable and informative reading experiences for a wide range of readers.

WHAT IS A GRAPHIC NOVEL?
Graphic novels are an extension of comic books. They tell stories using pictures in sequence, panels, speech balloons, text boxes, and other conventions of the comic book form. The key difference between illustrated books, picture books, and graphic novels is that graphic novels are generally longer and are not serialized the way comics are. Graphic novels 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. Because graphic novels rely heavily on illustration to propel the narrative, they can be a great primer for struggling readers.

WHY USE GRAPHIC NOVELS IN THE CLASSROOM?
Like any traditional novel, a graphic novel tells a story. The literary elements of traditional stories are present: plot, character, setting, theme, and narrative arc. Figurative language, symbolism, and other literary devices are also present. As teaching tools, graphic novels offer educators the same possibilities as traditional texts.

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 can be more readily identified and understood. Graphic novels can also be used for independent reading and as part of book talks and displays. Graphic novel adaptations of traditional texts such as *The City of Ember* and *The Golden Compass* can 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 go over the structure of the format. The discussion questions on page 4 will help your students get the most out of any graphic novel.

HEAR FROM EDUCATORS WHO LOVE GRAPHIC NOVELS
“Graphic novels are beloved by children of all ages, but they have proven to be an effective, engaging, and exciting format for my growing readers. They are complex, multilayered stories that invite readers to imagine and infer. I find time and time again that graphic novels offer the hook some young people need to fall in love with reading.”

—Aliza Werner, third-grade teacher

“Graphic novels . . . get kids excited about reading. They are the best of both worlds—text and visuals that are not picture books. Kids want to read graphic novels over and over again. Want a sight? Just watch them salivate when they hear another book in a series will be released soon.”

—Stacey Rattner, K–5 librarian
1. Color can be used in a variety of ways in graphic novels. *The City of Ember* graphic novel uses darker tones to help project a somber mood, while *The Sand Warrior* uses light colors to create an almost ethereal world. Color also plays an active role in the storytelling. The color in *Hilo* changes when he is having a flashback. Here are a few questions to consider along with readers:

- Which colors are predominant?
- What might the colors represent?
- What would happen if different colors were used?
- Why did the artist choose to use the colors they did? Describe the mood created.

4. Frames can be used to contain text and illustration and create panels.

- What types of frames are used?
- Do the frames vary throughout the narrative or remain consistent?
- Are there frames within frames? Why?
- If the frames were removed, how might the story change?
- If the art sometimes breaks the borders of the frame, what might the artist be conveying with this technique?

5. In graphic novels, speech balloons contain dialogue and text boxes contain narration. These questions are valuable when talking about the text of graphic novels:

- 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 different emotions through the text?
- Consider how the artist has differentiated dialogue and narration. What techniques have they used?

6. 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 novels. The following are some questions for discussion:

- What medium is being used? Are illustrations done with colored pencil, watercolors, ink, or something else? How does this affect the narrative? (Sometimes this information can be found on the copyright page of a book.)
- What is the style of the art? Are there elements of techniques such as pointillism, impressionism, or realism? Why do you think the artist chose this style?
THE HERO’S JOURNEY
While reading The Odyssey, have students also read Rickety Stitch and the Gelatinous Goo Book 1: The Road to Epoli.

Discuss the elements of the heroic cycle in both texts and analyze similarities, differences, and the overall effect of the texts. Then have students find a modern-day story that fits the archetype of a hero’s journey. They should consider heroes from literature, movies, newspapers, magazines, and comics.

DYSTOPIAN SOCIETIES
While reading The Giver, have students also read The City of Ember.

Discuss the ways in which the structures of power affect the main characters in each work. How are these the same or different from our society? Then have students investigate the ways in which their lives would change if they were to enter one of these dystopian societies.

STORIES ABOUT FINDING YOURSELF
While reading Wonder, have students also read The Cardboard Kingdom.

Discuss the ways in which a person’s outward appearance can differ from how they feel on the inside, and how one’s outward appearance can shape others’ perceptions of them. What is the role dress-up and make-believe play in both stories? Have students draw depictions of both their inner and outer selves. What’s different? What’s the same?
Make Your Own Graphic Novel

DRAW YOUR HEROES!

Think of who your main characters are going to be, then draw them in the boxes. Next, answer questions about them so you can get to know them better!

What is this hero’s name? ________________________
What is their favorite color? ________________________
What is their favorite food? ________________________
What is their secret talent? ________________________

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REPRODUCIBLE

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Make Your Own Graphic Novel

LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD!

Use a combination of art and words to tell your story! Fill each panel with a different scene, and make sure to include speech bubbles so we’ll know which characters are saying what.

Here are some questions you can answer to help you dream up your perfect story: Will it take place on this planet or another? Are your main characters superheroes or normal kids? What kind of adventure will they go on? Only you know the answers!

GET GRAPHIC!

Write your graphic novel’s title here!
Find the perfect graphic-novel series for your reader!

**Rickety Stitch and the Gelatinous Goo**
by Ben Costa and James Parks
Perfect for fans of Bone, Nimona, and Adventure Time, this series centers around a singing skeleton on a mission to uncover his origins with the help of his gelatinous sidekick.

**5 Worlds**
by Mark Siegel and Alexis Siegel; illustrated by Xanthe Bouma, Matt Rockefeller, and Boya Sun
5 Worlds. 3 Unlikely Heroes. 1 epic battle for the galaxy! This sci-fi/fantasy series is perfect for fans of Amulet, Star Wars, and Avatar: The Last Airbender.

**The Cardboard Kingdom**
by Chad Sell & Co.
Perfect for fans of Raina Telgemeier, Roller Girl, and Awkward, a neighborhood of kids transform ordinary cardboard into a magical way to navigate their real-world issues.

**Hilo**
by Judd Winick
Hilo is Dog Man meets Big Nate in outer space! It’s a hilarious and action-packed New York Times bestselling series!

**Babymouse**
by Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm
Meet Babymouse in this hilarious, award-winning series. Her dreams are big, her imagination is wild, and her whiskers are always a mess!

**Lucy & Andy Neanderthal**
by Jeffrey Brown
A laugh-out-loud graphic-novel series about Neanderthal siblings from the bestselling author of the Star Wars Jedi Academy series, Darth Vader and Son, and Vader’s Little Princess.
Ali-A Adventures
by Ali-A and Cavan Scott; illustrated by Aleksandar Sotirovski
Ali-A, the popular YouTube gamer, presents his very own action-packed graphic novel!

Lunch Lady
by Jarrett J. Krosoczka
Lunch Lady and her assistant, Betty, serve up more than food to the Breakfast Bunch, a group of friends who somehow 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 their crime-fighting Lunch Lady to solve the cases and rescue the school.

Team Taekwondo
by Master Taekwon Lee and Jeffrey Nodelman; illustrated by Ethen Beavers
The Team Taekwondo series combines the appeal of graphic novels and martial arts to deliver action-filled, character-building stories. Each book also includes one free lesson at any participating licensed ATA Martial Arts location.

Comics Squad
Edited by Jennifer L. Holm, Matthew Holm, and Jarrett J. Krosoczka
Three bust-your-gut-laughing graphic novel anthologies with original contributions from the most beloved names in graphic novels!

Squish
by Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm
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, they always find a solution to their problems!

Check out these graphic adaptations of some of our favorite novels:

The City of Ember
by Jeanne DuPrau; adapted by Dallas Middaugh; illustrated by Niklas Asker
Experience this beloved classic anew as artist Niklas Asker faithfully brings to life the glare of the lamps, the dinginess of the streets, and the brilliance of the first sunrise.

The Golden Compass
by Philip Pullman; adapted by Stéphane Melchior and Clément Oubrerie
The graphic novel adaptation of one of the most celebrated books of all time is now complete! This edition contains all three volumes—the entire story.