

Ideas for Teaching Graphic Novels

Sequencing: Take panels from a page in a graphic novel and cut them up so that they are out of order. Have students put them in order and justify their choices in writing.

Cloze Passage: Erase panels or word bubbles on a page in a graphic novel and have students use context clues to make sense of the story.

Dialogue: Erase the text in word bubbles and have students add their own dialogue.

Cumulative Story: Erase the text in word bubbles and have students add their own dialogue into the first word balloon and pass it on to the next student. That student fills in the second word balloon and passes it on.

Panel Storytelling: Have students practice telling a story in three or four panels. Use websites such as the comic creator on readwritethink.org.

Summarizing: Once students become somewhat proficient in panel storytelling, the technique can be used to help them summarize information. A nine panel grid is particularly helpful.

Reader's Theater: Have students convert graphic novels to a reader's theater script or vice versa.

Writing/Drawing Collaboration: In a graphic novel, typically one person will write the story, another will draw the art, another will add the color, and yet another will draw the letters in the word balloons. Artistic students and literary students can work together to create a comic.

Parallel Timeline: This is an assessment tool that is particularly effective for Social Studies. Create multiple timelines and place them one under another. This is great for showing things that are happening simultaneously. (e.g. WWII Pacific theater vs. WWII European theater) or for comparison and contrast (George Washington vs. Abraham Lincoln). Timelines such as these are used in [The 9/11 Report: a graphic adaptation](#) by Sid Jacobson

A Moment in Time: Another assessment tool with social studies applications. Draw a literary (or historical) character and label the parts of the character with captions which explain their significance.

Collage: Synthesize a topic solely in terms of images. For example, A World War II collage would simply have a title, but then could include an image of Uncle Sam, an image of various battle scenes, a map, or other relevant issues.

Ideas above are from the workshop: "The Best Graphic Novels for Young Adults and How to Use Them in Your Program (Grades 6-12)" Created by Jonathan Hunt for the Institute for Educational Development.

More Ideas for Teaching

Discussion: Are Graphic Novels literature?

Start with basic examination of what makes something “literature” ask students:

- Who decides what is considered literature?
- What about a work makes it literature?
- How do we react to “literature”?
- Does the label create a barrier between the reader and the material?
- What traditional works of literature do you like? What about them appeals to you? Why do you think they are considered literature?

Broaden the discussion to include Graphic Novels

- Can a graphic novel be considered literature?
- What is necessary for this to happen?
- Can you think of any graphic novels that you have read that could be considered literature?

Extra Step:

- Broaden the discussion again to discuss the concept of examining a widely held opinion and making an individual decision instead of going along with the “status quo.”

Everyday Superheroes Exercise:

Using the “7 Laws of Superhero Comics” work with students to identify superheroes that appear in traditional literature, history, and current events.

Students create their own graphic novel story:

- Working in groups, students brainstorm story ideas. Once a story is chosen each group member can take on a role in the creation of the graphic novel
 - Scripter
 - Thumbnail artist
 - Penciler
 - Inker
 - Colorist
 - Letterer
- Benefits of this exercise:
 - Learning teamwork & delegation of duties
 - Developing language skills (creation reinforces grammar, spelling, punctuation, and writing mechanics, sequencing, and character development)

- Creative expression