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A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words: Integrating Sequential Narratives Into An English Language Learner's Curriculum

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A PICTURE *IS* WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS: INTEGRATING SEQUENTIAL
NARRATIVES INTO AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER'S CURRICULUM

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NARRATIVES INTO AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER'S CURRICULUM

By

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THESIS

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Chapter 1: Using Sequential Narratives as a Pedagogical Tool for ELL

Instruction

Introduction to Thesis: The Theory of a Question

Prior to embarking on my thesis project in the Spring of 2009, I enrolled in a comic book pedagogy course taught by Dr. James Bucky Carter at The University of Texas at El Paso. I enrolled in this course not because I was interested in comics, or even in teaching them. It was a course requirement for me at best. At the beginning of the semester I would have described myself as one of the many individuals who did not see any educational value in the teaching of comic books. Carter dissected this phenomenon in many class readings and discussions, and it was only then that I began to realize that my position on comic books and graphic novels was unfounded and lacked credibility. The truth is that I believed comic books held no educational value because I had not been exposed to the format, either voluntarily or involuntarily. By the end of the semester, Carter was successful in “converting” me, and I actually began to do some preliminary research on using comic books and graphic novels in the classroom.

In beginning my proposal for my thesis project, I wanted to explore the subject of using comics in the classroom. Assuming one has adopted comics in one’s pedagogy, can this format of literature be linked to the learning of a student struggling to learn English as second language? After becoming exposed to the remarkable literary caliber of many of these comics, I began to inquire about their educational value versus their popularity among adolescent students. If many American students are reading these texts at their leisure, why not utilize comics and graphic novels as a pedagogical tool to motivate them to read more? In terms of methodology, can educators increase literacy among English Language Learner (ELL) or English and as Second Language (ESL or L2) students by scaffolding these texts with basal readers and state-mandated

texts? After much thinking and focusing of my ideas, I came to a guiding inquiry for this thesis: Do the images, vocabulary, and contextual cues found within comics and graphic novels positively affect language comprehension and writing skills of ELL students when these texts are integrated into a tailored curriculum? Within my research I have composed an extensive literature review comprised of two major sections. The first section aims to highlight the use of comics to assist struggling readers, in particular ELL students. The second section compiles a list of comics and graphic novels I reviewed to have a better understanding of which genres of comics can help ELL students, and evaluate what grade levels these comics are appropriate for. Lastly, I also highlighted cultural and socioeconomic factors that define and challenge English Language Learners, and will illustrate how these factors connect to comic book and graphic novel pedagogy.

Aims of Chapter 1

This introductory chapter aims to do two things: 1) to provide a concise alphabetical listing of vocabulary for both comics and pedagogical terms that are important to my study, and 2) to provide a background on how comics have or have not been utilized in the classroom, specifically with ELL students.

Vocabulary

- Anime: Animated films produced mostly in Japan; including feature films, television shows, and original video animation (Brenner, 2007, p. 293).
- Canon: Body of literary or other artistic works that a given culture defines as important at a given time; that is, works perceived by culture to express significant values and to exemplify artistic excellence (International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English, 1996, p. 47).

- Cartoons: Single, stand-alone panels that offer the reader a slice of life. The panel (or frame) is the basic building block of all comics. Cartoon captions work in tandem with the drawing to “make the joke” (Cary, 2004, p. 10-11).
- Comics: Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer (McCloud, 1993, p. 9).
- Comic Books: Staple bound, serialized comic that is available monthly and should not be confused with a book-length graphic novel (Gorman, 2003, p. xii).
- Comic Strip: Comic book format that appears in newspapers and magazines, and varies in length from one to several panels. Since many do not have continuing story lines, comic strip collections are generally not considered graphic novels (Gorman, 2003, p.73).
- Critical Literacy: A clear understanding of the reasons why texts are written for specific audiences and how they achieve their purposes (Chun, 2009, p. 147).
- ELL: (English Language Learner) Describes a student wherein a language other than English is spoken at home, and whose English proficiency is not sufficient enough to permit the student to be successful in mainstream all-English instruction (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010, p. 174).
- ESL: (English as a Second Language) Describes a student who is learning another language beyond one’s primary language. The term also refers to a disciplinary approach unique to secondary schools where bilingual education is not offered. ESL has taken on a somewhat negative connotation over the decade, because “second” may imply that an ESL student is less important or competent than other students. ESL is also used interchangeably with the term ELL.

- **Graphica:** Medium of literature that integrates pictures and words and arranges them cumulatively to tell a story or convey information; often presented in comic strip, periodical, or book form; also known as comics (Thompson, 2008, p. 6).
- **Graphic Novel:** Book-length story that is written and illustrated in comic book style. It can be an original, self-contained story or it can be a collection of previously published comic books that together tell one story. It can also be an original publication that features traditional comic book characters (Gorman, 2003, p. 74).
- **L1:** Describes a student's home language, typically the first "primary" language a student has been exposed to and learned to understand and speak. L1 is sometimes referred to as primary language (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010, p. 175).
- **L2:** Describes the second language a student is learning after being exposed to his/her native or home language.
- **Manga:** Describes print comics in Japan, and includes all printed matter from three-hundred magazines printed weekly and monthly to bound versions. It is the equivalent of comic books and graphic novels in the United States (Brenner, 2007, p. 293 & 307).
- **Multilingual classroom:** Describes any classroom with at least one or more second language learner student (Cary, 2004, p. 6).
- **Multimodal texts:** Any text whose meanings are realized through more than one semiotic code (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 183).
- **SEL: (Standard English Learner)** Describes struggling readers who understand Standard English but do not speak it. They "are those students for whom Standard English is not native and whose home language differs in structure and form from standard academic English" (Los Angeles Unified School District, as qtd. in Freeman & Freeman, 2009,

p.10). This category usually includes students who are Mexican American, African American, Native American, or Hawaiian American.

- Sequential Art: Includes most newspaper comic strips, comic books, and graphic novels. Sequential Art is most often characterized by the use of panels and text bubbles (Brenner, 2007, p. 307).
- Storyboard: Describes a comic strip with panels and sketches that sequence a story's major scenes and plot turns (Cary, 2004, p. 34).
- Visual Literacy: Occurs when the visualization and the creation of visuals by students allows them to read, respond, analyze, organize, and represent the learning that is taking place (Seglem & Witte, 2009, p. 217).

Comics' Literary Appeal in the Classroom

My discussion begins with two main reasons why comics may not have much literary appeal to some educators, and thus sometimes are kept from being considered a teaching tool. For several decades, comics and other forms of sequential art were considered acceptable reading material by some educators; much opposition to comics began in the 1950's. Comics did not regain significant pedagogical attention until the 1990's (Cary, 2004; Fisher, Rothenburg, Frey, 2007; Goldsmith, 2005/2010; Gorman, 2003; McTaggart, 2008; Wright, 2001; Cornog & Byrne, 2009; Flood & Lapp 1997/1998).

The general public's lack of consideration for comics from the 1950's to the 1990's is suggested to be linked to the new-found popularity of television and the passing of the Comics Code in the mid 1950's (Thompson, 2008; Wright, 2001). The public sentiment toward comics began to take on a more negative stance in 1953, when Dr. Fredric Wertham published his anti-comic study entitled *Seduction of the Innocent*. In his book entitled *This Book Contains Graphic*

Language: Comics as Literature, Rocco Versaci (2008) remarks that Wertham concluded his study by persuading the public to believe “that comic books caused delinquency because imprisoned juvenile delinquents had read them” (Sabin, 1993, as qtd. in Versaci, 2007, p. 8). The “Kefauver Hearings” in 1954 were nationally televised U.S. Senate hearings to investigate the issue of comics’ negative effects on children, and Wertham was one of the witnesses (Versaci, 2007, p. 8). These events led to the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA) publishing a code in 1954 that “prohibited all of the visual elements and subject matter that defined horror comic books...[and] also placed severe prohibitions on anything that hinted of sex or lust” (Wright, 2001, p. 172). Over time, the passing of the Comics Code and publishers’ conformity to it led to the “mainstream juvenilization of the medium, which in turn caused the general public to equate comic books as a form suitable only for children” (Versaci, 2007, p. 8). Most likely, it was this series of events that convinced many educators and parents to conclude that comics had little positive educational value. Anti-comic crusaders were able to shift the “public opinion [so much] that teachers and scholars seemed less willing to write on the subject extensively for almost forty years” (Carter, 2010, p. 5).

With the emergence of the technological revolution beginning in the 1990’s, the emerging reader’s world had changed. This change may have influenced people’s perceptions of comics as acceptable reading material. The internet, cellular phones, digitally-enhanced video games, and media now began to occupy the visual senses of many teens and adults. The way one communicated with others had changed; thus a new discourse had been created. The age of communicating verbally and visually instantly was born. However, the importance of visual communication is actually in stark contrast with many American students’ experience in school, where print-based modes still dominate. In Gunther Kress’ and Theo van Leeuwen’s book

entitled *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (1996), the authors explain that while children are encouraged to create images to illustrate their written work, by the time they reach the secondary level the “illustrations have largely disappeared—from the children’s own texts as well as from the texts that are produced for them” (p.15). They add that as children progress in school, these visual images give way to a greater proportion of verbal, written text. This fact creates a challenge when faced with the technological revolution of 1990’s. The truth of the matter is that websites, blogs, wikis, online newspapers, periodicals, and journals, and advertisements all “involve a complex interplay of written text, images and other graphic elements, and what is more, this these elements combine together into *visual* designs, by means of layout” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 15). Furthermore, while these genres hold an important role in our technological society, the skill of producing genres of this kind “is not taught in schools” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 15).

The Internet has actually had some positive effects on comic book popularity. For example, fan discourse communities now exist where:

Readers with the most idiosyncratic reading interests have been able to find others of like mind and participate in discussions about their favorite titles and characters; similarly, with online comic book stores and auction houses, the ability of readers to obtain previously hard-to-find books has markedly increased. (Versaci, 2007, p. 11)

Perhaps inadvertently, supporters of comics and literacy seemed to bridge the gap of the “Digital Divide” for ELLs in particular. In her book, *Getting Graphic! Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens*, Michele Gorman (2003) notes that this new age has actually promoted young readers to be more “comfortable with non-text visual-media and [are] therefore

more at ease ‘reading’ the combination of words and pictures utilized in the graphic-style format to tell a story” (p. 9). More importantly Gorman’s research is a positive response to my guiding question, which suggests comics and graphic novels can and should be used as a scaffold in terms of teaching reading and writing to ELL students. Gorman explains that graphic novels should now be “considered a reading intermediary from the computer or television screen to the printed page” (p. 9).

A visual learner is defined as one “who [can] learn best from what they see, whether [it be] diagrams, schematics, illustrations, or videos” (Milner & Milner, 2008, p. 15). ELL students benefit from visual learning because of the likeliness to the old saying “a picture is worth a thousand words.” For beginning and early intermediate ELL students, the right picture at the right time may be the key to understanding a storyline (Cary, 2004; Martinez-Roldán & Newcomer, 2011; Smetana, Odelson, Burns, Grisham, 2009). Cary (2004) notes that:

...beginning second language learners rely on—and require—lots of pictures to get the story; students with L2 literacy generally require fewer pictures...[and] the fact that comprehension, especially for beginning and many intermediate students, depends not just on the quantity of pictures in a comic, but on the type of pictures. Details matter. (p. 59)

Gorman (2003) notes that ELL students may be able to connect with graphic novels using multiliteracies that do not occur with traditional text-only books. In short, Gorman explains that ELL students rely on these multiliteracies, paired with the visual messages and print found in graphic novels to process the storyline (2003, p.11).

Allan Paivio’s (2007) dual coding theory provides support for this pairing of print and images. Pavio defines dual coding theory as “the cooperative activity of two functionally

independent but interconnected systems, a nonverbal system specialized for dealing with nonlinguistic objects and events, and a verbal system specialized for dealing with language” (2007, p. 33). The most relevant findings from his research have to do with concreteness and imagery effects on learning and memory. He notes “that pictures are remembered better than concrete words by as much as a 2:1 ratio” and “imagery also reduces memory load by making it easy to combine separate components into an integrated memory representation. Using concrete materials and encouraging imagery in educational settings should therefore help learners build up the long-term memories that constitute knowledge” (2007, p. 436). Pavio concludes that language comprehension also benefits from concreteness and imagery. He remarks that “sentences are even generated more easily to object pictures than to concrete words, further implicating imagery. The direct practical implication is that language reception and production skills will develop best in concrete contexts that encourage use of imagery as a mediator” (2007, p. 436). The integration of traditional text, images, and a student’s multiliteracies creates an environment that enhances the language comprehension for ELL students and many times “provide[s] a literary experience that is not fraught with the frustration that often plagues beginning readers as they struggle to comprehend the meaning in a traditional text-only book” (Gorman, 2003, p. 11). Finally as will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three, often it is the voluntary reading of various forms of sequential art that creates a positive experience and often propels many struggling readers to keep reading.

The 1990’s also ushered in a movement among educators and librarians who searched for reasons why comics were not readily accepted in the classroom. While many educators and librarians recognized the literacy value in comics, they now had to overcome the public’s sometimes negative belief that “comics are just for kids.” Educators turned researchers also

worked to develop teaching methods to integrate these texts into the classroom, often times focusing on ELL students' needs particularly. For example, in 1997, Bonny Norton and Karen Vanderheyden (2004) of Vancouver, Canada, began a research program using comic books with readers in multilingual 5th, 6th, and 7th grade classrooms. Specifically focused on thirteen ELL students who were *Archie* comic book readers, data from their qualitative study noted twelve out of thirteen students believed that both teachers and parents were mostly ambivalent about comics. Norton and Vanderheyden concluded that the students' teachers and parents were "completely dismissive" and that while students gained "great pleasure from their *Archie* comics and [were] clearly actively engaged in meaning making," it was resisted as material for curriculum or silent reading and was "considered an unchallenging waste of time and [was] consequently not authorized by teachers and parents" (2004, p. 213 and 214). Goldsmith (2010) further illustrates this sentiment in her discussion about children being more receptive to new formats, which are in contrast to:

...adults of a certain age [who] grew up during an era when comics were frowned upon. While many of these adults are not consciously hostile toward sequential art, the format simply isn't on their radar, or if it is, the perceived wisdom continues that 'comics are for kids.' With the boom of graphic novels targeting the teen market in consumer and library forums, adults may also believe that the appeal of comics is adolescent, a judgment unlikely to pique mature adult interest. (p. 32-33)

The aim of educators, librarians, and researchers was to change the public sentiment towards comics, and advocate the pedagogical value of these texts through teaching methods that highlighted visual and critical literacies.

In his discussion of interchanging of words and images to communicate, McCloud (1993) remarks “It’s considered *normal* in this society for children to combine words and pictures, so long as they *grow out of it*” (p. 139). McCloud describes this attitude towards visual literacy that has further divided traditional text and sequential art:

Traditional thinking has long held that truly *great* works of art and literature are only possible when the two are kept at arm’s length. Words and pictures *together* are considered, at best, a diversion for the masses, at worst a product of crass commercialism. As children, our first books had pictures galore and very few words because that was “easier.” Then, as we grew, we were expected to graduate to books with much more text and only occasional pictures—and finally to arrive at “real” books—those with no pictures at all. Or perhaps, as is sadly the case these days, to no *books* at all. (1993, p. 140)

Returning to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), it is noted that while characteristics of visual literacy can be best illustrated through the technological revolution, the amount of value placed on visual communication differs from other forms of communication, like writing. They remark that “the fading out of illustrations in texts by and for children, then, is not a straight-forward disvaluation of visual communication, but a valuation which gives particular prominence to one kind of visual communication, writing, and [less] to one kind of visual literacy, the ‘old’ visual literacy” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 15-16). Kress and van Leeuwen conclude that the resistance to a new visual literacy is not based on an opposition to visual media as a whole, but it is a resistance to visual media that forms “an alternative to writing and can therefore be seen as a potential threat to the present dominance of verbal literacy among elite groups” (1996, p.16). Kress and van Leeuwen’s research suggests that new forms of multimodal literacies like comic

book pedagogy may experience this resistance because it breaks away from traditional text-only works and written responses from students. The following section of this chapter discusses text-only versus sequential narratives, and in particular, the issues concerning the significance of the literary canon.

The Importance of the Literary Canon

There now exists a conflict among educators regarding the importance the literary canon and whether particular works should be required reading for all high school students. Over the span of almost eighty years, supporters of the canon have advocated keeping the canon in high school classrooms with the belief that in order to be literate, there are select bodies of writing that must be read. Canon defenders like Fred Newton Scott, Maynard Hutchins, Mark Van Doren, Alan Bloom, and E. D. Hirsch have all adopted the rationale that the “‘best that has been thought’ has the authority of decades, even centuries, and therefore can be transmitted only by the authorities who have come to possess and understand this knowledge” (Milner & Milner, 2008, p. 224-226).

This rationale has a major flaw, especially in regards to teaching language comprehension and writing skills to ELL students. The above rationale assumes that because such works have such revered places in our common culture, their interpretation and meaning should be self-evident to all students. However, the stark truth is that most of these works were written decades ago with language very different from that of today’s students, which ultimately translates into a challenging read, and sometimes “students feel especially unqualified and uninspired to read them” (Milner & Milner, 2008, 226). Cadiero-Kaplan (2002) discusses the value and importance of integrating cultural literacy into the classroom through teachers who “have risen to this challenge by valuing student voice, linguistic diversity, cultural pluralism, and

democratic schooling while emphasizing literacy and biliteracy as processes of empowerment (p. 378). She adds that “critical teachers” can effectively integrate cultural literacy into the classroom by “valu[ing] student voices, experiences, and histories as part of the course content” and concludes that teachers should “no longer [be] dispensers of knowledge, promoting only one canon or belief, but agents of change, assisting students in seeing themselves within the larger historical, political, cultural, and economic structures where student voices exist” (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2002, p. 379). Thus, critics of the canon believe that it distances students from their authentic experience and fails to inform students about their own experiences (Milner & Milner, 2008, p. 227).

Critical literacy gained from reading canonical works can be attained from sequential art as well, through the means of both visual and critical literacy. Versaci (2008) explains how he allows his students enrolled in his composition and literature courses at Palomar College in San Marcos, California, to decide for themselves the importance of the literary canon versus sequential art. He notes that he gives them comics to read instead of established canonical classics:

because they are not typically considered ‘literary’ and therefore raise larger questions about literary merit and the canon, comic books make an ideal subject for my purposes. These works invite such questioning, especially when students must reconcile their enjoyment of reading comics with the value—and work—of reading literature. (Versaci, 2008, p. 209-210)

Many teachers may choose to advocate for the literary canon simply because it was required reading throughout their own schooling. Norton and Vanderheyden’s (2004) research on why comics have continued resistance in the classroom is loosely connected to Peter

McLaren's (1986) theory about the nature and function of rituals within the classroom. His argument states that "rituals symbolically transmit societal and cultural ideologies" and the teacher's power is derived from familiarity with classic texts and teachers' guides (p. 3). Lee Gunderson (2000) adds that the predominant view regarding the study of the "classics" and "the canon" in literature is deemed vital to the development of literacy. Gunderson warns that "this view ignores the substantial oral and written contributions of most of the cultures in the world" (2000, p. 701). In addition, James Bucky Carter (2008), a scholar and educator on the forefront of promoting sequential art in pedagogy, eloquently comments on why texts like comics and graphic novels are not valued by some as substantial bodies of work to teach reading and writing to students. He asserts that "the construct of a literary canon as it has been interpreted as a policy in schools constitutes a prime example of the racism, elitism, and classism that hinders visual literacy and visual materials such as comics and graphic novels from occupying a greater space in the classroom" (Carter, 2008, p. 55). I believe it is the unfamiliarity of comics format coupled with a lack of value for cultural and critical literacy that fuels much of the resistance for integrating comic books and graphic novels into the classroom.

Ultimately, I suggest that the literary canon translates into a sort of 'power play' by teachers in the classroom. An instructor gains a sense of power over his or her students' knowledge by only introducing them to familiar canonical texts. In support of my answer to my guiding question, it is important for America's teachers to step out of their comfort zone and consider expanding their ideas on what it means to be literate and what texts are appropriate for ELL students. In addition to considering universal themes, teachers must consider an ELL's primary language, cultural capital, and challenges prior to creating a reading and writing lesson plan or curriculum. Michael Boatright (2010) reminds us that many of America's classrooms are

comprised of immigrants. He notes that “we owe it to ourselves to study and critique immigrant experiences as they are portrayed in works of literature, especially because literature has the potential to ignite dialogue, force questions, and foster community building in an atmosphere of inquiry and reflection” (p. 469). He goes further to note that because immigration and immigration policy issues continue to make headlines, “immigrant experiences narratives may be of value to English language arts teachers interested in addressing this topic in their classrooms” (Boatright, 2010, p. 469). Lastly, in order to effectively incorporate culturally relevant sequential art into the classroom, teachers must be exposed to the value of this format. Authors Smetana, Odelson, Burns, and Grisham (2009) note that “initial teacher preparation programs should consider the inclusion of graphic novels in literacy methods courses and children’s literature courses” after reflecting on their teaching experiences in a high school English summer school class for deaf students (p. 239). The reality is that teachers need to recognize the needs of all students, especially ELLs. They must do this by striving to become familiar with new formats, including comic books and graphic novels.

Negative Connotations Linked to Comics

Another prominent factor that may affect comics entering the classroom is the negative connotations that are linked to them. Many educators and parents alike may resist sequential art in the classroom because of the violent, sexually charged images found in some comic book series, many of which have become popular amongst teens in the U.S. and across Asia. In their article entitled “Understanding the Manga Hype: Uncovering the Multimodality of Comic-Book Literacies (2006),” Adam Schwartz and Eliane Rubinstein-Avila begin by noting that many teachers and parents alike tend to undermine the value of *manga* (Japanese-style comics) and other genres of comics simply because of the societal norms already in place. This negative

assumption can be described as the phenomenon “comics are just for kids” and are juvenile (Goldsmith, 2010; Mc Cloud, 1993; Seglem and Witte, 2009) and many believe that reading comics will shorten attention spans. Additional negative assumptions may have arisen from the notion that comics, television, and video games have often been linked to contributing to students’ short attention spans, passivity, and lack of creativity and as providing distractions from educational practices (Gee, 2004; Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila, 2006). In addition, noted secondary literacy specialists Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher (2004) found that the predominance of violence and sexual images in many graphic novels created a serious drawback when trying to use graphic novels as writing prompts in a high school setting (p. 19-20).

Finally, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, it is *manga* that has been sometimes misinterpreted by American readers because of the cultural differences between Japanese and American audiences. The primary difference between American comics and *manga* is that in Japan, each comic is created for an age-specific audience. The fact is that Japan’s comic industry has developed different genres for distinct audiences. In contrast, American comic books historically have not been marketed towards specific audiences (boys and girls, men and women), whereas *manga* is categorized by gender, age, and sexual orientation (Brenner, 2007, p.30; Goldsmith, 2010, p.108). Five major genres of *manga* exist: *shojo*, for teen girls; *shonen*, for teen boys; *josei*, for grown women; *seinen*, for grown men; and, *ero* or *hentai*, erotic and pornographic *manga* intended exclusively for adults who demand this material (Brenner, 2007, p. 37-38; Gorman & Suellentrop, 2009, p. 139; Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila, 2006, p. 48). It is *ero* or *hentai* that is largely misinterpreted by the American public because of cultural differences on sex and sexuality as entertainment.

As a result of the misinterpretation of sequential art, the debate over the significance of the literary canon, and lack of value for cultural literacy by teachers and parents alike, I conclude that many educators are simply not familiar with various forms of sequential art, and thus they may migrate away from a non-traditional text that is foreign and would require additional research and preparation. In their discussion about the multimodality of *manga* comic books, Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila (2006) explain that educators who have not been socialized from a young age into the consumer culture of computers, interactive toys, email, and DVD's may find the visual grammar, storytelling, and multimodality used in comics and manga hard to comprehend and build upon to make meaning (p. 40). The reality is that I was once one of those individuals. While not an educator yet, I was a graduate student enrolled in a teacher education program, and was instantly bombarded with new technology in the form of discussion boards, blogs, wikis, and hybrid courses. While I yearned for the almost comforting feel and smell of traditional hard copy text books, I reluctantly realized that I had to embrace these new forms of multiliteracies in order to succeed as a student and as teacher.

The reasons why comics, graphic novels, and sequential art have gained acceptance into the classroom are simple but not necessarily obvious. Stephen Wiener (2003) notes four reasons for the rise in popularity of these texts: "1) the number of recent movies based on graphic novels; 2) publishing houses [are] now producing large numbers of literary graphic novels; 3) novelists [are now] break[ing] into the industry using graphica to explore serious storylines; and 4) journalists drawing attention to the growing field" (qtd. in Williams, 2008, p. 14). Renowned Pulitzer Prize winner Art Spiegelman adds that comics have recently gained their place in the literary world by stating that "bookstores all have their sections for comics or graphic

novels...universities are teaching comics. It's now part of the culture without having something to apologize for" (Fischer, 2004, p. 5E).

What remains even more significant to my research question are the instructional ramifications linked to utilizing graphics in today's classrooms. There are two important factors to consider when integrating comics into a multilingual classroom: age-appropriateness and subject matter, which will be discussed at length in chapters five and seven, respectively (Ferlazzo, 2010). In support of integrating comic books and graphic novels into the classroom, publishers are manufacturing appropriate titles geared toward adolescents, and librarians are successfully organizing and marketing this format in libraries across the nation (Thompson, 2008; Gorman, 2003). These factors help illustrate the growing acceptance of comics as a pedagogical tool for ELL students. ELL teachers should be held more accountable for integrating current forms of multimodal literacies into their curriculums. They should aim to become more motivated by stepping outside of their canonical comfort zone and exploring the possibilities of multimodal texts like comic books and graphic novels. Both teachers and librarians now have the opportunity to use comics as pedagogical tools for facilitating language comprehension and writing skills in ELL students, capitalizing on these student's multiliteracies and strengths.

Chapter 2: Comic Book and Graphic Novel Popularity Versus Its Acceptance by Publishers and Educators

A Brief History

This chapter aims to illustrate the history of comic book and graphic novel success from 1980 to present day in relation to its publishers and the educators who chose to use them. While evidence of the comic book being used as a pedagogical format dates all the way back to the early 1940's (Carter, ****DRAFT****), the focus of this chapter begins in the 1980's due to comics' success in publication and education circles soon after. It is important to chronicle the use of comic books and graphic novels by publishers and educators over this period of time to exemplify the point that comic pedagogy is in fact not a new method of teaching literacy, but rather one that has gained more interest and support by a growing audience over time.

The early 1980's was considered a re-birth for sequential art and comic books alike (Wright, 2001; Cornog & Perper, 2009). The development of a new format in comics, the graphic novel, created a new audience of readers for comics and a new literary format for teachers. In the 1980's the comic book industry also experienced a resurgence of growth due to direct marketing aimed at smaller specialty retailers. These small shops were primarily devoted exclusively to the sale of comic books and were owned and operated by comic book fans (Wright, 2001, p. 260). This was a pivotal moment for comics and publishers alike, as publishers began to recognize that fans, "as opposed to casual buyers, accounted for the transactions conducted through comic book stores" (Wright, 2001, p. 261).

Educational interest was renewed in the 1980's when the release of graphic novels with diverse genres and topics led "to a resurgence of interest in the educational value of graphica" (qtd. in Thompson, 2008, p. 136). What makes these books unique to teaching ELL students is

the combination of images and text paired with familiar themes such as fantasy, coming of age, peer pressure, and cultural differences. Multimodal texts like comic books and graphic novels have “the potential to provide opportunities for ESL students to learn about different text types in ways that enhance the expansion of interpretation of texts” (Ajayi, 2009, p. 587). Helping ELL students understand differences between print and non-print texts “as well as the visual connections that can be made between them is a practical way to connect the concrete and abstract thinking of students who struggle to make meaning from text” (Seglem & Witte, 2009, p. 217). Rather than see this dual-coding approach as the “dumbing down” method, the reality is that these texts are “an ideal medium to spark the interest of an unmotivated or reluctant reader who is often caught up in the story long before he realizes that he has invested a significant amount of time in the act of reading” (Gorman, 2003, p. 10).

Bradford Wright (2001), author of *Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America*, notes that the 1980’s also marked a time when comic book makers were motivated to focus on the superhero genre that the major comic book companies (like Marvel, and DC) favored. Wright explains that the “superhero genre became more entrenched than ever because the much-trumpeted creative incentives actually awarded commercial success, not necessarily innovation” (2001, p. 262). Wright concludes the institution of creators’ rights encouraged comic book authors “to better accommodate the tastes of young people, for whom violence, cynicism, and moral ambiguity were the cultural commodities most in demand” (2001, p. 262).

In 1985 the comic book industry experienced a reformation and became profitable for comic book creators, not just for comic publishers. Jeanette Kahn, publisher of DC Comics, transformed the company into a “creative rights company” that resulted in benefits, a royalties

plan, and an average annual income of over \$50,000 for full-time creators. This move prompted other large publishers like Marvel Comics to create similar benefits for comic book creators (Wright, 2001, p. 262). By 1986, Frank Miller, Howard Chaykin, and Alan Moore became three dominating writers of super hero comic books. Each author made a pivotal choice to create characters and story lines that focus on real life experiences, human emotions, and the examination of a character's cultural background or socio economic status. Miller explored the human side of his modernized superhero characters; he essentially created characters that experienced the same emotions as its modern reader, which included both adolescent and adult consumers (Wright, 2001, p.267, 278). Miller spearheaded a movement amongst comic book creators to “deconstruct superheroes while revitalizing them in the process” and his characters “performed unbelievable physical acts but evinced believable human traits and motivations” (Wright, 2001, p. 267). Chaykin's work tended to be a satirical caricature of 1980's America. He wrote about alternative sexual lifestyles, gang violence, international terrorism, drug use, homelessness, and corporate mergers—but all to an exaggerated degree (Wright, 2001, p. 269). Chaykin boldly boosted his personal and political views, using his comic book series as a forum. Lastly, *Watchman* by Alan Moore became one of the few sequential narratives to merit the title ‘graphic novel’ due to its complex characters and intricate plot. This is a result of a simple but groundbreaking central thesis. Moore's *Watchman* deconstructed the concept of superheroes and reflected his ambivalence towards their previous ‘larger than life’ qualities. His characters embarked on well-intentioned adventures and then tragically became “prone to paranoid moral delusions and dangerous fascist tendencies (Wright, 2001, p. 272).

Several events have contributed to the creation and use of the term graphic novel. As the term became utilized more, resurgence in comic popularity took place among American

audiences. In the early 1940's, Belgian Hergé's *Tintin* series was published and included a complete story arch recounting the adventures of a juvenile detective star (Goldsmith, 2010, p.4; McCloud, 2006). In 1964, Richard Kyle was credited with the first public use of the phrase "graphic novel" in a newsletter circulated to members of the Amateur Press Association (Chute, 2008, p. 453). In 1974, Osamu Tezuka of Japan was credited with composing an eight-volume sequential art biography of Siddhartha Gautama, otherwise known as the Buddha (Goldsmith, 2010, p.4; McCloud, 2006). Also in 1974, comic book creator Jack Katz is suggested to have been credited with a later incidence of coining the term graphic novel. In a letter correspondence with Will Eisner, Katz remarks "Here is the first book of a series of 24 books which it will take to complete the epic...What I am starting is a *graphic novel* in which every incident is illustrated" (Sims, 2010, para. 4). Ultimately in 1978, the term graphic novel was made popular by Will Eisner, who published *A Contract With God and Other Tenement Stories*, a collection of tales that included the phrase "graphic novel" on the front cover of the paperback version and was the first book that was marketed as so (Carter, 2010, p. 6; Chute, 2008, p.453). Later in the 1980's, *manga* gained popularity in America and quickly drew large audiences. It is important to note that while Eisner popularized the term graphic novel, many books with graphic novel attributes existed years before as noted above.

Beginning in the early 1990's comic books and graphic novels enjoyed continued success for various reasons: 1) the violent content and sometimes disturbing themes found in popular superhero series; 2) a growing collectors market and fan base; and 3) the introduction of graphic novels and *manga* to the U. S. market. Even so, the audience for sequential narratives was small, as comics were having to compete against technology and the Internet for a share of consumer's dollars (Wright, 2001). Despite the surge in technology, the 1990's seemed to be another turning

of tides for comic books' and its creators. From 1980 to 1991, Art Spiegelman created *RAW*, an experimental magazine that featured the prototype of his later celebrated work, *Maus* (Chute, 2008, p. 456). It is important to note that Spiegelman began promoting self-published underground comics stories and autobiographical pieces as early as 1975 and 1976. *Maus* was first published serially in *RAW* in the early 1980's, followed by two separate volumes of *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* being published and marketed as a graphic novel, the first in 1986 and the second in 1991 (Chute, 2008, p. 456; Chun, 2009, p. 147). In 1992, Spiegelman's *Maus* won the Pulitzer Prize in literature for his innovative yet realistic recount of the Jewish Holocaust through his father's memoirs. *Maus* was his biographical memoir in a comic book format that helped to legitimize the graphic novel as an art form (Gorman, 2003, p. 3).

The 1990's also became the time when more educators, media specialists, and librarians began to investigate the potential educational value of comics (Thompson, 2008, p. 136). In terms of circulation alone, the numbers prove that comic books and graphic novels are popular with many students. Michele Gorman, former librarian with the Austin Public Library and author of *Getting Graphic! Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens* (2003) remarks on a posting about circulation statistics in the Graphic Novels in Libraries Listserv (Beston, 2002) wherein "a large number of young adult librarians reported seeing a higher turnover rate for this format than for traditional books with record number circulations for certain titles in their existing collections" (2003, p. 11). In addition, Gorman also remarks on a study done by Robert G. Weiner wherein data showed a high circulation rate of graphic novels in Weiner's library collection. Specifically superhero titles, those "ten graphic novels average 28 circulations per year compared to an estimated 15 circulations per year for traditional books" (Gorman, 2003, p. 11).

Gorman goes on to explain how graphic novels have become the link for encouraging struggling and reluctant learners to read. She notes that graphic novels were now “address[ing] current, relevant, often complex social issues, such as nonconformity and prejudice,” as well as themes that were important to young people like coming of age, social injustice, and personal triumph over adversity (2003, p. 10). However, media specialists and librarians still encountered the challenge of validating the educational value for this format because of the minimal research providing evidence. In his book *Graphic Storytelling* (1996), Eisner remarks this is an ongoing challenge when addressing the question of whether comic books can successfully address “serious themes” in other subjects beyond the super hero genre. Regardless, he concludes that “the increase in the number of serious artists and writers attracted to comics as a career is testimony to the medium’s potential” (Eisner, 1996, p. 4). Remarking on the continued success of sequential narratives with readers, Eisner writes “it is my conviction that story content will be the propellant of the future of the comic book” (1996, p. 4).

Presently, several reasons exist regarding why educators choose to oppose comic use. But the most likely factor is the lack of knowledge about comic-related research and visual literacy amongst current teachers. In “Comics,” Carter (2010) defines a phenomenon he refers to as a “reciprocal novelty,” wherein teachers who want to stick with traditional notions of literacy and learning assume that comics in the classroom are new to educators, or worse, nothing more than a “fad” (p. 9). This phenomenon is best explained by noting that while an individual may be new to learning about the literary value of comics, the literary value is not newly discovered. Carter (2008) goes a step further and remarks that these teachers are in fact ignorant and that possibly “many teachers don’t possess a schema that connects ‘comic books’ or ‘graphic novels’ with learning” (p. 49). He goes on to add that the “newness” and recent development of graphic

novels versus comic books may also be a factor (Carter, 2008, p. 50). If teachers do not actively explore new methods for teaching literacy, it may leave many teachers unaware of this new medium for instruction. Another significant reason why teachers may choose to veer away from using comics in the classroom has to do with censorship challenges. Carter remarks that some “people have chosen to resign or been forced out of their positions for their use of or other’s reaction to a graphic novel” (2010, p. 9). Thus it is important for educators to explicitly define their rationale for using any form of sequential art, and make it available to both administrators and parents alike. A deeper discussion of this plus various resources available to teachers takes place in Chapter Five and in Appendix A: Resources for Reviewing Sequential Art.

In summary, the 1980’s and 1990’s represented a time of expanded accessibility and a growing fan base for comic books and graphic novels, and ultimately a resurgence in growth for the comic book industry. As comic book making became more profitable for its creators, publishers and booksellers began to recognize the potential of graphic novels and *manga* (Thompson, 2008, p. 137). This movement became integral to educators and advocates promoting the literary value in comics. As sequential art became more accessible to librarians and teachers, these advocates had more opportunities and material to promote in the classrooms. More importantly, this movement provided a new literary format for struggling readers and ELL students that they *already* found enjoyment in. Comic books and graphic novels were not only becoming more accessible to students, but were becoming more readily accepted as literary material by both publishing houses and educators.

Present Day

The millennium ushered in a new attention to comic books and graphic novels. In 2000, creators and educators alike celebrated the founding of The National Association of Comics Art

Educators (Thompson, 2008, p. 138). Then in 2002, the Young Adult Library Services Association (YASLA) sponsored a preconference at the American Library Association's Annual Conference that brought together librarians from diverse institutions to explore, celebrate, and analyze the link between graphic novels and library services (Goldsmith, 2005, p. 3). YASLA's preconference theme was "Getting Graphic @Your Library!" for Teen Read Week and allowed librarians to "both purchas[e] and promot[e] graphic novels with the endorsement and support of a national organization of professional young adult librarians" (Gorman, 2003, p. 4-5). Wright (2001) suggests that while moving into this new era, our American culture has become saturated with numerous entertainment choices and adolescent obsessions. He concludes that the exaggerated perception of life that comic books provided is no longer unique because today's technology and entertainment markets can provide all that and more in split-second time (Wright, 2001, p. 283-284). Solidly debunking Wright's theory on saturation, Gorman (2003) illustrates how comic books and graphic novels can be the strongest intermediary or scaffold to help students learn how to read. Most notably, she remarks that these texts "can be considered a reading intermediary from the computer or television screen to the printed page. Rather than encouraging illiteracy, as has been declared in the past, this format is now being recognized for its contribution to the development of both visual and verbal literacy" (Gorman, 2003, p. 9). This fact is especially important for aiding language comprehension and teaching writing skills to ELL students. Further disproving Wright's prediction that technology and today's digital environment would be the end of creativity within comics, several comic publishers and independent comic artists have Web-based, online comic books currently available for public consumption, some created solely for the internet, and some with alternative print versions (Gorman, 2003, p. 7).

From 2000 to the present day, more librarians and researchers have discovered that comic books and graphic novels serve as a tremendous learning tool for adolescent students. Librarians are now beginning to embrace graphic novels because of their ability to pull in new audiences of readers, reaching out to those who have been reluctant read, and even those who are reluctant to enter the library. As a result many assert that more educational institutions are beginning to accept it as a worthwhile medium with a great deal to offer in terms of a new literary format (Thompson, 2008; Mendez, 2004; Cart, 2006; Yang, 2003; Versaci, 2001). Specialty retailers and bookstores are beginning to take notice too. The graphic novel is responsible for much of this interest because of the new fans it creates once it captures readers' attention. It has been reported that "every couple of years there's a graphic novel so strong that it pulls in tens of thousands of new readers who haven't looked at comics in decades" (Wolk, 2000, p. 38). Lastly, retailers have become focused on who is the *potential* graphic novel reader. Wolk reports that several retailers now consider the following areas when merchandising graphica: "Are they looking for youth-market superhero stuff?" or "Is there an older, more sophisticated audience looking for titles like *Sandman* [Neil Gaiman] and film director Kevin Smith's *Daredevil*?" (Wolk, 2000, p. 43). The crucial point to be made here is that it has been a collective effort by publishers, retailers, librarians, and educators to provide encouragement and support for the reading of comic books and graphic novels for all students, including ELL students.

Chapter 3: Graphic Novels, Visual Literacy, and Critical Literacy: Best Practices for ELL Students

Graphic Novels and Multimodal Literacy: What is the Connection?

While teachers may find it apparent that their students enjoy reading comics, the question of whether teachers find them useful for increasing reading and writing skills will be answered in this chapter. This chapter aims to discuss if there is an educational value in graphic novels and to explore their use in a multilingual classroom. Furthermore, this chapter aims to illustrate how many of the best practices for instructing ELL students are similar to the goals of graphic novel pedagogy. By highlighting best practices in visual and critical literacy, this chapter provides a valid rationale for integrating sequential art into existing ELL curriculums.

There is evidence that suggests that sequential narratives provide motivation towards reading for all levels of readers. Graphic novels' combination of text and images attracts large numbers of students and provides enjoyment inside and outside of the classroom. Moreover, graphic novels enable the struggling reader (including ELL students), help to motivate the reluctant reader, and challenge the high-level learner to read more complex selections (Carter, 2007, Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004; McTaggart, 2008; Smetana, Odelson, Burns, Grisham, 2009; Chun, 2009; Ferlazzo, 2010). In particular, graphic novels can provide augmental or supplemental uses to the students' existing curriculum. In "Comics, the Canon, and the Classroom (2008)," Carter suggests that graphic novels should be given equal billing with canonical texts and discusses how these forms of sequential art can be used as secondary texts in relation to the traditional literary canon (p. 50). Moreover, as many researchers and educators are now focusing on a new generation of visual learners, they note that "graphic novels often appeal to teens['] predilection to a more visual medium, transcending apathy and the lack of

‘coolness’ sometimes associated with reading” (Gorman & Suellentrop, 2009, p. 136). In terms of visual literacy and multimodal texts, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) challenge educators to analyze multimodal texts like sequential art in an integrated way and to analyze text and images found in sequential art as interacting with and affecting one another. Kress & van Leeuwen stress that they “seek to be able to look at the whole page as an *integrated* text. Our insistence on drawing comparisons between language and visual communication stems from this objective” (1996, p. 83). Graphic novels are excellent examples of multimodal texts because many times they prioritize the reading of images just as much as the text.

Critical literacy stresses audience, purpose, and a call to action from the reader. Using rhetorical devices like ethos, pathos, and logos, critical literacy urges the reader to answer questions like: “Why has this text been written? What is the topic of this text? Who is this text addressed to?” (Wallace, 2001, p. 220). To illustrate the existence of visual and critical literacy in graphic novels, three authors’ examples are provided as follows:

- Christian W. Chun’s article “Critical Literacies and Graphic Novels for English-Language Learners: Teaching *Maus*,” (2009) suggests that what makes the “use of [Spiegelman’s] *Maus* so compelling is its intellectually engaging content realized through its visual narrative strategies of representing history” (p. 147). Chun notes that history is often a boring subject for students when presented in traditional text format. In contrast, “a graphic novel like *Maus* can engage students’ attention and activate their imagination through the author’s use of multimodalities in presenting visually arresting narratives that feature the multilayered emotions and contradictions of the characters” (2009, p. 147). Lastly, Chun notes that because *Maus* directly addresses the issues of racism and its deadly consequences, it is an ideal text to use

with ELL students “as they often face the daily discourses and practices of racism that permeate the society in which they find themselves” (2009, p. 147-148).

- Michael D. Boatright’s article “Graphic Journeys: Graphic Novels’ Representations of Immigrant Experiences,” (2010) suggests that G. L. Yang’s *American Born Chinese* addresses critical literacy through identity conflict as depicted through two characters, Jin Wang and Chin-Kee, both Asian-Americans (p. 473). In the course of the narrative, Jin finds himself attracted to a European American girl named Amelia. From that point on, Jin is convinced that the only way Amelia will like him is to recreate his image after a classmate who is also white. In the panels of the graphic novel, Yang accentuates the differences and skin color which “plays a prominent role in his protagonist’s development of an immigrant identity” (Tummala-Narra, 2001; qtd. in Boatright, 2010, p. 473) and Jin perceives that the only way he will get a date with Amelia is to alter his physical appearance. While Jin knows he cannot alter his skin color, he instead curls his straight hair to mirror the hairstyles of his white peers. Similarly, Chin-Kee represents “an overblown Chinese teenager saturated in negative stereotypes with slanted eyes, two protruding front teeth, [and] traditional Chinese attire” that easily distinguishes him from his European American peers (Boatright, 2010, p.473). Chin-Kee ultimately embarrasses his white cousin Danny, who is attempting to disassociate himself from his Chinese heritage. Boatright concludes that in both instances, the characters confront what it is to be Asian American, and urges English teachers to “critique such immigrant identity issue with their students by engaging in dialogues that trouble the unstable identity construct of a second-generation immigrant” (2010, p. 474).

- Robyn Seglem and Shelbie Witte’s article “You Gotta See It to Believe It: Teaching Visual Literacy in the English Classroom” (2009) suggests a teaching method called “Poetry Comics.” The purpose of this activity is to tackle more traditional texts like poetry by storyboarding the poetry into the form of a comic strip. Poetry comics illustrate poetry by using the poetry to create the text of the comic strip and storyboards to illustrate the text. Seglem and Witte remark that these comic strips are much more than a superficial illustration of poetry, “these poetry comics allow for students to experiment with narrator voice, setting, and literal and metaphorical meanings. Layering complex literary analysis skills with visual representations allows students to practice visualizing the texts that they read” (2009, p. 223).

Additionally, in their manual entitled *Connecting Young Adults and Libraries: A How To Do It Manual*, Michele Gorman and Tricia Suellentrop (2009) have constructed a list of reasons why it is important to integrate graphic novels into one’s personal or school library:

- Graphic novels often address current, relevant, and often complex social issues such as nonconformity and prejudice. They also address themes that are important to teens, 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 nonfiction and mythology.
- Many fans of graphic novels become avid book readers.
- 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 skills, including reading comprehension and vocabulary development.
- Graphic novels are good for the young person who reads English as a second language (ELL) or who reads on a lower reading level than his or her peers because the simple sentences and visual cues allow the reader to comprehend some, if not all, of the story. (p. 138)

The last three points apply directly to ELL students and the challenges they seek to overcome face when confronting text-only bodies of work. In his discussion of the three levels of learning, Cary (2004) notes that abstract learning without additional context on the subject can be quite challenging for ELL students:

Without more context—an object, movement, or visual clue—learning a new concept or even a new label for an old concept can be a daunting task for second language learners. (p. 23)

The reasons to promote the use of various forms of sequential narratives in the classroom are similar to those methods currently being used to aid ELL students in building cognitive skills and vocabulary.

The following is a table (Figure 1: Literacy Methods in ELL and Graphic Novel Pedagogies) that I constructed to illustrate the numerous similarities between best practices for ELL pedagogy and graphic novel pedagogy. The objective behind the table is to highlight that critical and visual literacy play a crucial role in enhancing an ELL students' language comprehension. The reasons to promote the use of various forms of sequential narratives in the classroom are similar to those methods currently being used to aid ELL students in building cognitive skills and vocabulary. Carter notes that just as graphic organizers, concept maps, and

flowcharts are used to aid ELL's in reading, sequential art should be seen in the same light (2008, p. 49). Cary also suggests that sequential narratives provide the same support and provide enjoyment through reading, and generally accelerate language development in ELLs (2004, p. 9).

Figure 1: Literacy Methods in ELL and Graphic Novel Pedagogies

<u>Best practices for teaching visual literacy and critical literacy</u>	<u>ELL Pedagogy</u>	<u>Graphic Novel Pedagogy</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the diversity of print and non-print texts, and the visual connections that can be made between them allows struggling students to make meaning from text using concrete and abstract thinking (Seglem & Witte, 2009, p. 217). 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-teaching or frontloading vocabulary found in graphic novels is important in scaffolding understanding of the text and developing language. This is critical for ELL students to be able to understand how the words have meaning within, and beyond, the text (Jewell, 2009, p. 260; Lara & Moore, 2009). 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical literacy, encourages students to question an accepted interpretation, explore power relationships, and analyze the point of view of the author, is an important aspect of instruction for ELL students (Stevens & Bean, 2007). 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graphic novels and wordless picture books serve as examples of multimodal texts that prioritize the reading of images (Martinez-Roldán & Newcomer, 2011, p. 189). 	X	X

<u>Best practices for teaching visual literacy and critical literacy</u>	<u>ELL Pedagogy</u>	<u>Graphic Novel Pedagogy</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multimodal pedagogy provides opportunities for ESL students to learn about different text types that enhance the expansion of interpretation of texts. This allows students to start with interpretations, read the typography, or examine the layout first (Ajayi, 2009, p. 587) 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic novels with substantive content hold importance to high-level ELL students, it allows them to engage in critical discussions in ways that are not always possible with only written texts, due to their scaffolding of textual meanings through visual modes of interpretation (Chun, 2009, p. 146). 	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic novels allow readers to decode facial and body expressions, the symbolic meanings of certain images and postures, metaphors and similes, and other social and literacy nuances teenagers master moving from childhood to maturity (Simmons, 2003). 	X	X

In terms of the big picture, introducing age-appropriate graphics to either a Standard English Learner (SEL) or an ELL student is beneficial because of the similarity of benefits it can provide. Promoting reading among adolescents is challenging to begin with, so why not allow students to read something they already find interest in? Granted, as mentioned in Chapter One, some comics may not be suitable for the classroom, but with the appropriate guidance, comics may spark interest in the material that is labeled “required reading” and provide a link to language comprehension.

Best Practices in ELL Instruction Using Visual and Critical Literacy

The remainder of this chapter aims to outline the best practices in instruction for ELL students using visual and critical literacy. These are suggested methods and do not encompass all best practices, but seem to be agreed upon by researchers and educators (Fisher, Rothenberg, & Frey, 2007, p. 24-26). Through additional research, I have found several commonalities in terms of facilitating language acquisition. My focus begins with a summary of the best practices for teaching language comprehension in ELL students:

- Educators should support and promote oral proficiency in students’ native language to promote literacy development in English (Spaulding, Carolino, & Amen, 2004).
- Educators need to recognize the individual differences and academic needs of each student, as a student’s age, cognitive abilities, and prior experiences influence learning (ELL Task Force, NCTE, 2006).
- Educators should teach oral proficiency in the context of vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, and syntactic skills to increase ELL students’ success in reading and writing. (August & Shanahan, Eds., 2006).

In particular, the NCTE’s “Position Paper on the Role of English Teachers in Educating English Language Learners” (2006) suggests best practices for teaching reading and writing. The

following are a notable selection of NCTE’s methods used to promote reading in ELL students.

Educators should strive to:

- Provide reading materials that are culturally relevant.
- Connect the readings with the students’ background knowledge and experiences.
- Provide opportunities for silent reading in either the students’ first language or in English.
- Read aloud frequently to allow students to become familiar with and appreciate the sounds and structures of written language.
- Teach language features such as text structure, vocabulary, and text-and sentence-level grammar to facilitate comprehension of the text.
- Relate the topic to the cultural experiences of the students.
- “Front load” comprehension via a walk through the text or a preview of the main ideas, and other strategies that prepare students for the topic of the text.

The NCTE position paper lists suggested best practices for methods to teach writing to ELL students. The following are some of the most notable suggestions for educators to:

- Encourage contributions from all students and promote peer interaction to support learning.
- Replace drills and single-response exercises with time for writing practice.
- Provide frequent meaningful opportunities for students to generate their own texts.
- Design writing assignments for a variety of audiences, purposes, and genres, and scaffold the writing instruction.
- Make comments explicit and clear (both in written response and in oral responses). Begin feedback with global comments and then move on to more local concerns when student writers are more confident with the content of their draft.
- Give more than one suggestion for change—so that students still maintain control of their writing.

Elements of NCTE's best practices for reading are evident in a study done on ELL instruction and discussion in a secondary English methods course taught by Luciana C. De Oliveira and Melanie Shoffner (2009). This study's purpose was to focus more attention on preparing pre-service teachers to meet the needs of ELL students as a group of diverse learners in a high school setting. What De Oliveira and Shoffner discovered was that being able to utilize NCTE's strategies successfully means "reinforc[ing] the need for English teachers to understand the concepts of scaffolding, comprehension, wait time, and student background knowledge" (2009, p. 97). Throughout the secondary English methods course, students and teachers presented and discussed methods that emulate the best practices. For example, prior to reading a poem to her colleagues, De Oliveira placed several printed images and words associated with the poem in front of the room to point to during reading. Further, she used body movements and gestures to demonstrate the meanings of words within the poem. This kinetic approach to reading prompted a discussion about the pre-teaching of key words, addressing difficult vocabulary in class discussion, and the teaching of context clues while reading, and the benefits and drawbacks of each one (De Oliveira & Shoffner, 2009, p. 98). Lastly, as a result of the pre-service teachers having to complete a 20-hour practicum as part of the methods course taught by de Oliveira and Shoffner, the issue of the place of students' first language in the English classroom was at the forefront of discussion. De Oliveira and Shoffner concluded that the pre-service teachers were able to "demonstrate their understanding of the importance of validating students' first language and culture in the classroom" (2009, p. 105). Thus this course focused on utilizing best practices in reading for ELL students by supporting: 1) the recognition of students' native language, 2) the recognition of students' background and culture, and 3) the use of sensory stimuli and pictorial scaffolds. This study is important to my research because it

illustrates the similarities of ELL pedagogy when compared to sequential art pedagogy. What is important to note is that both schools of thought capitalize and celebrate ELL students' native language and cultural background. Finally, both methods rely on visual literacy to promote comprehension and critical thinking.

Again in support of the best practices suggested by the NCTE, two related studies by Lydia Mays (2008) and David and Yvonne Freeman (2007) discuss the benefits of drawing on students' native language and culture to teach ELL students how to become stronger readers. In her discussion of new roles for teachers, Mays recommends that a teacher should "familiarize yourself with the culture of the community you teach in as well as the cultures of your students. Create assignments that allow children to share family and community experiences" (2008, p. 417). Further, Mays remarks that ELL students in a multilingual classroom should be given a fair assessment that gives them an equal opportunity to succeed. This authentic learning should include providing ELL students with "pictures if they are unfamiliar with a text" and allowing them to "work in groups with other students, [which] may help increase ELLs' confidence and social skills associated with test taking" (2008, p. 418). Freeman and Freeman mimic the best practices suggested by the NCTE by providing several of their own methods to teach reading and writing to ELL students. The Freemans' study aims to support ELL students' native languages and culture by creating methods that actually improve the language development of both native and second languages. Grouping students of the same language together and at times allowing them to respond in their native language, allows them to clarify concepts for each other and deepen their comprehension by transferring complex ideas and vocabulary into English (2007, p. 52-53).

Additionally in their text entitled *Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers* (2009), Freeman and Freeman provide similar suggestions that illustrate the recommendations by the NCTE for teaching writing skills to ELL students. Most noteworthy is their suggestion that collaborative work or peer interaction is important because ELL students are often more willing to interact and discuss obstacles in small groups, rather than a whole class discussion (Freeman & Freeman, 2009, p. 90). Secondly, they suggest the repeated use of the “read and retell” activity, wherein after the class has read extensively in one genre, students are asked to re-read an excerpt from the selected genre, and then are to retell the excerpt based on recollection of content and vocabulary. The developers of this strategy, Brown and Cambourne (1987), report that many of the words, phrases, and structures students used in their written retellings appeared later in the students’ other work and ultimately this process helped students gain a greater understanding of the different academic genres. This is important because the NCTE’s recommendations include creating numerous writing assignments using various types of genres and audience focus.

Lastly, in relation to the NCTE’s suggestion that drills and other exercises should be replaced for more time to practice writing, Freeman and Freeman conclude that ELL writing lessons should consist of time for self-selected reading followed by teacher-directed reading and writing activities. This is important for ELL students because it “takes considerable time, especially for older students at beginning levels of English literacy proficiency” to develop academic English (2009, p. 92). In lieu of monotonous drills, teachers should integrate visual and critical literacy activities into ELL students’ curriculums. These methods lend themselves to expository and persuasive writing, and ultimately introduce ELL students to the writing process.

Specifically, visual and critical literacies provide students with many opportunities to improve their writing using teacher feedback on multiple drafts.

The latter part of this chapter contains a brief literature review that explores strategies for implementing many of the best practices mentioned above. The purpose behind this is to give authentic examples of these best practices and to describe strategies for using these practices. My goal is to provide evidence that supports my guiding inquiry and ultimately provide current and future educators with tools on how to approach sequential art pedagogy and how to utilize this format to strengthen ELL students' reading and writing skills.

In a study focused on helping reading teachers become aware of teaching practices that provide support or constraints on ELL students' participation in a mainstream classroom (Yoon, 2007), it is apparent how different approaches can greatly affect ELL students' participation and thus their learning. Yoon (2007) describes how one teacher strove to position her ELL students as acceptable and legitimate members of learning communities, versus another teacher's choice to create a highly interactive and student-centered discourse—thus, inadvertently isolating the ELL students because American monoculturalism was promoted in the classroom. As many of the previously cited authors discussed, Yoon also suggests that showing an interest in ELL students' culture and encouraging those students to share their cultural experiences facilitate their learning in a mainstream classroom (2007, p. 224). Ultimately, Yoon's article reminds educators of the importance of the equal distribution power, and how the teachers can misuse American cultural discourse and democracy in the classroom—even with good intentions. Teachers can avoid this misuse by integrating culturally relevant comic books and graphic novels into their existing ELL curriculum. Scaffolding graphica that holds cultural significance to a required text

is the ideal way to highlight the importance of ELL students' background experiences and beliefs.

In a similar study, researchers (Harper and de Jong, 2004) suggest that the context of learning for ELL students differs from that of native speakers and has important implications for instruction in terms of age and ability, cultural background, and language comprehension (p. 158). Essentially, the article describes four misconceptions about how ELL students learn and suggests other methods for teaching them. For example, in terms of teaching writing to ELL students, Harper & de Jong (2004) explain that exposure and interaction to the English language is simply not enough, and ELL students “need explicit opportunities to practice using the new language to negotiate meaning in interactive settings” (p. 154). Teachers can do this in response to ELL students' journal writing, by rephrasing student's errors to clarify ideas, provide input on the grammatical form, or suggest a more appropriate word or phrase instead of ignoring errors entirely or correcting all writing errors directly on their journal entries (Peyton & Reed, 1990). Furthermore, Harper and de Jong dispel the misconception that all ELL students learn English in the same way and at the same rate. Thus, this serves as a reminder for teachers to view each ELL student's progress individually. There must also be an awareness that common writing errors for ELL students are issues with verb tenses, plural and possessive forms of nouns, and subject/verb agreement. The researchers suggest that teachers should recognize that many of these errors may be influenced by the student's native language, and should be approached “by an inquiring stance that seeks ways to understand how individual students' social and cultural characteristics can affect their process and progress toward academic language proficiency” (Harper & de Jong, 2004, p. 155). These two strategies strongly resonate with me because rather unknowingly, I practiced these methods as a tutor to ELL students at the University Writing Center at UT El

Paso. As part of teaching assistant appointment, once a week I would tutor students of all majors and levels, and assist them with improving their writing skills.

In a study that focused on the differences between ESL and mainstream classes in terms of their role in socializing students into the American classroom and society, Linda Harklau (1994) observed strategies that make input more comprehensible for ELL students (p. 243). Harklau notes that as one teacher spoke, she kept a small blackboard by her side, ready to draw pictures or write down unfamiliar words when needed (1994, p. 252). What is important to note here is the explicit instruction and frequent opportunities for student interaction in a teacher-led discussion. Harklau also noted that unlike most mainstream classes, which are traditionally arranged with rows of desks facing the front, this same teacher arranged her classroom so that she and her students were seated together in a circle to facilitate communication better. During instruction, the teacher called on every student and frequently asked open-ended questions (1994, p. 252). Again linking these strategies back to best practices, the purpose behind these actions is to “stress participation and to encourage self-expression in class” (Harklau, 2004, p. 252). Lastly in their English methods textbook *Bridging English*, Milner and Milner (2008) provide a reflection activity that asks instructors to explore their feelings about classroom arrangement. They urge instructors to ask themselves “Would your class design change if the assignment were, say Native American narratives, loyalty in friendship, or slang in student writing? How would the physical design match the lesson design?” (p. 5). Teacher-centered versus student-centered teaching many times depends on classroom arrangement and teachers should consider this prior to beginning an assignment or lesson.

Another useful strategy for helping ELL students learn more and faster is illustrated through the use of the gradual release of responsibility model (Fisher, Rothenberg, & Frey,

2007). The lesson often consists of a shared reading or think-aloud wherein the teacher models his or her thoughts about the text. This strategy allows the teacher to:

- build students' vocabulary
- model vocabulary learning through images, context clues, and word parts
- model fluent reading, punctuation, and intonation
- model comprehension skills. (p. 35-36)

What is important to note is the commonality of visual literacy in each one the strategies listed above. Each strategy focuses on using some sort of image or visual cue to aid ELL students' comprehension, vocabulary is introduced using authentic and student-centered methods, and cultural capital is highly regarded and highlighted. These factors of visual literacy can be found in numerous genres of comic books and graphic novels, as noted previously in Figure 1: Literacy Methods in ELL and Graphic Novel Pedagogies on page 33 and 34.

Lastly, two activities used to facilitate reading and writing in ELL students stem from the best practices suggested by NCTE. One useful strategy (Harper and de Jong, 2004) is "frontloading" with activities that highlight key words and ideas prior to a lecture or assignment (p. 157). Freeman and Freeman (2007) go a step further with this method by creating a three-step frontloading activity (preview, view, and review) that utilizes students' native language and can be useful whether or not the instructor speaks the students' languages. Freeman and Freeman suggest that the teacher provide a preview of the lesson in the students' native language, and note that a teachers' aide or even a parent can give a brief oral summary for those instructors who are not bilingual. Second, instructors should conduct the lesson in English and use strategies that make the input more comprehensible, like pictures and props. Lastly, instructors should allow students to meet in same-language groups to discuss the main ideas, and

more importantly, ask questions to clarify their understanding. The activity should conclude with the students reporting back to the instructor in English (Freeman & Freeman, 2007, p. 55).

Freeman and Freeman (2007) provide another useful activity for language comprehension that utilizes students' native language, referred to as "text sets" and a "jigsaw activity." A text set consists of a teacher providing a collection of books, magazines, and other resources connected to a central topic. Each text should vary in reading difficulty and many texts should be available in students' native language. After students have formed groups, read and discussed the texts, Freeman and Freeman suggest that students move into new groups to participate in a jigsaw activity. Each new group is composed of one student from the original groups and each student reports what information they learned from the first group, and then the teacher leads a whole-class discussion to emphasize the key ideas about the central topic (Freeman & Freeman, 2007, p. 85). These two methods are important to ELL students because they provide an uninhibited, low-stress forum for discussing various forms of texts. Specifically, text sets allow teachers to "ensure that all their students have access to the topic" and the jigsaw activity "actively engages all the students with texts they can understand"... and "[they] can learn important concepts and build academic language proficiency" (Freeman & Freeman, 2007, p. 85).

My discussion about best practices for teaching ELL students in reading and writing concludes with some notes on methods or best practices in the mainstream classroom that *do not* facilitate ELL progress. As previously mentioned, Harper and de Jong's (2004) observations of a workshop for teachers without an ELL or bilingual background disprove the misconception that all best practices for native speakers are applicable to ELL students. While many best practices are applicable to all students, some best practices for native learners are not suitable for

ELL students. Harper and de Jong (2004) suggest that the language demands of content instruction are often invisible to mainstream teachers because they are assumed rather than made explicit. An excellent example of this is the K-W-L chart, wherein it is “frequently recommended as ‘good teaching’ technique for all learners, including ELLs. The K-W-L chart assumes, however, that learners possess the language skills to participate in the various steps of the activity” (Harper & de Jong, 2004, p. 156). The demands of this activity include conceptualizing ideas and asking questions, and may imply cultural assumptions that may isolate ELL students and prohibit their participation. Lastly, De Oliveira and Shoffner’s (2009) study of ELL instructors in an English education methods course suggests that instructors should focus on how teachers use their knowledge of L1 and L2 languages rather than debating on whether teachers should address students in their L1 language. De Oliveira and Shoffner conclude that “rather than questioning whether a teacher *should* speak students’ home languages, the preservice teachers considered *how* the teacher used her knowledge of the language as well as *how* she accommodated her students through daily instruction” (2009, p. 106).

This chapter has outlined best practices in ELL instruction that use visual and critical literacy methods. It has illustrated the commonalities of visual and critical literacy found in both ELL and sequential art pedagogy and introduced several strategies for integrating these methods into an existing ELL curriculum or multilingual classroom. The following chapter will examine how many ELL best practices can be successfully executed in combination with comic book and graphic novel pedagogy.

Chapter 4: Sequential Art Pedagogy Specific to ELL Students

Selected Studies

The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the recent use of comics in the classroom with various grade levels of ELL students. Beginning with elementary programs, two significant studies by teachers turned researchers illustrate the importance of visual images combined with traditional print text.

In “Using Comic Books as Read-Alouds: Insights on Reading Instruction From an English as a Second Language Classroom,” Ranker (2007) chronicles the importance of critical media literacy through an eight month study conducted on a first-grade ESL classroom, where Spanish was primarily the students’ first language. What is important to note is that while the students spoke primarily English, the teacher allowed them to use Spanish to clarify ideas and meanings. While the school district required that she first deliver her instructions in English, she did rephrase in Spanish when a particular student didn’t understand. I have adopted a similar practice in my own freshman composition classes at the University of Texas at El Paso. While the purpose of my course is to teach composition and writing skills in English, many of my students are ELL students. With appropriate modifications made for college level students, I have modeled Ranker’s study by providing opportunities for students to gain clarity about their concerns by voicing them in their native language, Spanish. Many times after I conclude my lecture, I assign an in-class activity that builds upon the preceding lecture and major assignment. I consciously allow my students to form groups and discuss the activity in Spanish, with the understanding that this activity reinforces clarification and fosters the building of a discourse community within my classroom.

Ranker focused on the teacher's read-aloud of various comics. In particular, Ranker observed her reading from two issues of comics: *Marvel Age Hulk*, No. 4, February 2005 and *Wild Girl*, March 2005, no issue number given. She chose these comics to incorporate "critical media literacy" into her reading lessons by drawing attention to the gendered representations of the characters within the comics. As she read these and conducted writer response activities with the children, she asked the questions: "So who do you think is stronger? Do you think Wild Girl is stronger? Or do you think that Hulk is stronger?" (Ranker, 2007, p. 300). Ranker explains that she "used this as an opportunity to critically frame the students' reading of the comics by exploring stereotypical versions of strength as reflected in the comic book characters' genders" (2007, p. 299). The outcome of these activities resulted in several female students identifying the character Wild Girl as having a greater level of strength because she cared for her animals, which challenged the stereotypical versions of strength that characterizes the Hulk, as described by a larger number of male students. Ranker concludes that the teacher successfully "challenged and respected the students' reading of popular culture...as well as stereotypical representations for critical discussion" (2007, p. 300-301). These testimonials are important to me because they revisit the level of cultural capital that each student brings to the classroom regardless of sex, race, or ethnicity. Gonzalez et al. (1995) argue that teachers need to "redefin[e] the resources available for thinking and teaching through the analysis of the funds of knowledge available in local households, in the students they teach, and in the colleagues with whom they work" (p. 467). Ultimately, this scenario provides evidence to my guiding answer by using vocabulary and contextual clues to facilitate language comprehension and writing skills in ELL students.

Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom (2004) by Stephen Cary, a noted author and second language learner specialist, is an exceptional resource for ELL

teachers interested in utilizing comic books and graphic novels as reading materials. His studies offer theoretical and research grounds for using comics and detailed descriptions of activities and lesson plans for both comics and graphic novels. In a study of second and third-grade ELL students, Cary used storyboards to determine comprehension levels of teacher-told stories (2004, p. 34). For four weeks, teachers told one world folktale per week in English and students were asked to retell the story with drawings and text in storyboard form. Again, it is important to note, much like with Ranker's observation that the students were allowed to create their storyboards in English, Spanish, or both languages. Cary concluded that regardless of how much English a student knew, "all were able to use storyboarding to show their understanding of the stories" (2004, p. 35). Furthermore, this conceptual unit lesson plan became a scaffolding tool for students as they used the storyboards as "road maps" for orally retelling the folktales to others. Consequently, this also led to the students becoming scribes and editors of their own work, which provided a meaningful context to improve students' English syntax and mechanics (2004, p. 35). Cary's motive behind allowing his students to create storyboards in either English or Spanish is similar to those I mentioned at the start of this chapter. By allowing ELL students to create discourse communities in either their native or non-native languages, students will attain a stronger understanding of context in regards to the storyline or lesson at hand.

Frey and Fisher's (2004) participation in and study of a ninth-grade ELL high school class designed for struggling readers and writers in San Diego, California consisted of university teacher educators working in a partnership with a large urban high school. Ultimately, Frey and Fisher hoped to enhance literacy acquisition for youths from diverse backgrounds. Their observations document how the use of wordless texts and graphic novels encouraged ELL

students to engage in authentic writing and how to cope with the mechanics of writing.

Additionally, they used three methods to increase literary acquisition among the ELL students.

- Think-alouds were used to read comics and graphic novels while pointing out techniques the artist/author had used to convey meaning. This followed with brainstorming descriptive vocabulary that described the story's events.
- A “shades of meaning” metaphor was used to increase vocabulary and comprehension, wherein paint-chip cards donated by a home-improvement store were used to arrange a continuum of five words related to a topic. Students were directed to consult dictionaries and thesauri to complete the cards and then asked to use some of the words in their writing.
- “Triple sentence sessions” were used to teach the students to learn how to efficiently convey multiple ideas in one or two sentences. This consisted of the teacher introducing three ideas in succession for students to turn into a fluent passage. The key point was to brainstorm words and phrases that represented the idea, and then to ask the students to write complete sentences using the phrases they recalled in the brainstorm discussion. (Frey & Fisher, 2004, 20-21)

Frey and Fisher concluded that by using comics and graphic novels to address visual and critical literacies, the students were able to develop these skills and ultimately engage in authentic writing. More importantly these forms of popular culture provided the students with a visual vocabulary that facilitated learning writing skills like dialogue, tone, and mood (2004, p. 24).

My thesis focuses primarily on the use of *graphica* in the classroom, but there are two notable after-school projects worth mentioning because many students' interest in comics does not end when the bell rings. In the fall of 2002, Michael Bitz (2004) created “The Comic Book

Project.” In summary, this was an after-school program that targeted inner-city, low performing fourth through eighth grade students who were also ELL students. The students were prompted to create comic book manuscripts and storyboards, and ultimately the results were fully designed and detailed comic books originated and completed by the students. This project not only focused on building literacy skills, but also fostered artistic creation. Bitz concluded that the students “in the project asserted their thoughts and beliefs, particularly their fears and perceptions about life and occasionally dismal predictions for their own futures” (2004, p. 39). Bitz closes with reminding us that the students’ work was original and they were not coached on the content of their work; “they chose the topics and the content that they believe reflect their experiences and insights into the inner city” (2004, p. 39).

In summary, each scenario discussed above consciously highlights ELL students’ background and cultural capital as a catalyst for learning how to read and write better in English. More importantly, in every study mentioned, some form of sequential art was used as a scaffold to supplement language comprehension and writing skills in English.

Kathi Knop (2008), a library media specialist at Mission Valley Middle School in the Shawnee Mission (Kansas) district, notes that she started a graphic novel after school book club after a student request, *not* her own. She remarks that every member of the group took great pride and ownership in creating a book list and observed great levels of discretion when choosing appropriate titles for suggestion to be added to their school library. The students’ passion for these texts is clear as Knop remarks that “although they may [have] read some more ‘mature’ content on their own, they [were] amazingly protective about appropriateness here at school” (2008, p. 40). In conclusion, secondary level graphic novel book clubs provide numerous benefits to students that include:

- Building community
- Improving reading skills like fluency and comprehension
- Serving special populations of ELL students and striving readers
- And developing a lifelong love of reading.

(Knop, 2008, p. 40)

The conclusion of this chapter aims to highlight the best practices in comic pedagogy specifically aimed at ELL students, and the following is a list (Figure 2: IRA/NCTE Standards Versus Comic Pedagogy) examining the *IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts* (1996). The right side of the list highlights where comic books and graphic novels fulfill these requirements:

Figure 2: IRA/NCTE Standards Versus Comic Pedagogy

	Graphic Novels/ Comic Books
1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.	X
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.	
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).	X
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.	
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.	X
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.	X
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.	
8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.	
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.	X
10. Students whose first language is not English make use of their first language to develop competency in the English language arts and to develop understanding of content across the curriculum.	X
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.	X
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).	X
(International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, p. 3)	

If educators treat comics and graphic novels as a valuable format of literature and means of pedagogy, it will become clear that this format contains significant examples of cultural, visual and critical literacies. Graphic novels and comics also provide an increased knowledge in vocabulary and sentence structure that is crucial to increased language comprehension in ELL students.

Additional Evidence

The final portion of this chapter provides evidence for an answer to my guiding inquiry: Do the images, vocabulary, and contextual cues found within comic books and graphic novels positively affect language comprehension and writing skills of ELL students when these texts are integrated into a tailored curriculum? Furthermore, why should we as educators, librarians, and parents work to integrate comics and graphic novels into an ELL or multilingual classroom? The most obvious factor to consider is the emotional buy-in or the “fun-factor” (Cary, 2002) that all levels of students gain from reading many forms of sequential art. Cary explains that the “inherent entertainment value of comics” translates into ELL or L2 students having more self confidence and motivation (2002, p. 12). As ELL students derive enjoyment from reading comics, research suggests that “pleasure reading” connects to a student’s sense of ownership of text, helps to create a level of empowerment for the students’ when engaging in more difficult text, and that these students ultimately engage in reading more comics and more books (Cary, 2002; Carter, 2004; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004).

While reading comics for pleasure is important, the remaining factors focus on the educational benefits comic books and graphic novels possess. Comics and graphic novels are facilitators in increasing ELL students’ vocabulary and writing skills, and actually increase student morale through recognition of cultural capital and the creation of discourse communities

like after school-book clubs. Frey & Fisher's study (2004) notes that the use of Eisner's *New York: The Big City* allowed students to discuss how Eisner conveyed mood through tone and images, and later learned how to use the same techniques with words. The authors go on to note how the use of Vitorio Giardino's *A Jew in Communist Prague: Adolescence* allowed students to grasp the concept of metaphors and multiple meanings in the text vocabulary (p. 21). Seglem & Witte (2009) add that poetry comics (blending canonical text with student comic strip illustrations inspired by the text) "allow for students to experiment with narrator voice, setting, and literal and metaphorical meanings" (p. 223).

The following example illustrates how sequential art helps explain the concepts of literary devices like theme, connotations, jokes/puns, non-words, and body language and expressions. Cary describes a study of *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strips by author Bill Watterson wherein authentic examples of spoken discourse were provided like:

- Blends ("Outta my way!")
- Non-words ("uh-huh," "humph," "sheesh!")
- Contrastive stress ("This is MY room")
- Routine/ritual phrases (It's great to see you, Max!).

(Williams, 1995; qtd. in Cary, 2004, p.32)

Integrating sequential art into a L2 or ELL student's second language is important because many times these students are just as overwhelmed with spoken discourse as they are about reading and writing in another language. It is suggested that the use of comic strips and graphic novels helped students of all ages grasp "the ambiguity, vagueness and downright sloppiness of spoken English" (Williams, 1995, p. 25). Crawford adds that it is the "illustrations [that] provide valuable contextual clues to the meaning of the written narrative," and ultimately aid ELL

students in improving their language and literacy development (2004, p. 26). Norton & Vanderheyden (2004) conducted a study about elementary ELL students and the Archie comic book series wherein they remark that the “humor and entertainment value of Archie comics should not be dismissed as trivial” and “that while children learn very quickly the rules for both behavior and reading, they also learn, likewise, that rules can be broken and subverted” (p. 209). In a pilot study of an ESL high school class using Spiegelman’s *Maus* (1986), the teacher reported that the students’ enthusiasm for the graphic novel was enormous and it was noted that “the novelty of reading a graphic novel in the classroom, its unique modality of visual puns and metaphors, and its compelling narrative all combined to increase the students’ level of reading engagement” (Chun, 2009, p. 151). Lastly as mentioned earlier in this chapter, integrating comic books and graphic novels into after school programs provide a valuable tool for building discourse communities and building confidence in students. Knop (2008) remarks that graphic novel clubs provide a place for every student to belong by offering students who might not otherwise have an after school club “to meet with their friends and talk about a unique common interest” (p. 41). Furthermore, Knop concludes that students become stronger members of these discourse communities “by develop[ing] their public speaking skills and learn[ing] to capture the attention of the ‘energetic’ audience. The [students are] learning the importance of being good listeners when a fellow member is presenting” (2008, p. 41).

The final factor for integrating sequential art into an ELL or multilingual classroom focuses on students’ cultural background and personal identity. Many ELL students experience an inferiority complex when placed in a multilingual classroom wherein the objective is to learn how to read, write, and converse in the English language. Researchers have concluded that a major challenge for both primary and secondary students is gaining access to the social networks

of their L2 or non-native language, which would provide opportunities for interaction and English language development (Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004; Duff, 2002; Harklau, 1994; McTaggart, 2008). Duff notes that ELL students “must master the complex linguistic and academic content of their school subjects, plus the unfamiliar but persuasive pop-culture symbols and scripts” (2002, p. 482). I suggest that comic books and graphic novels provide ELL students with textual and visual examples of American pop culture as well as provide these students with access into discourse communities focused on the characters, story lines, and pop-culture found within these texts. Research suggests this as “graphic novels serve as an equalizer between academically achieving and struggling learners. A sense of unity develops and a spirit of camaraderie forms when kids share a common interest and a passion for what they are doing” (McTaggart, 2008, p. 34). Norton & Vanderheyden’s (2004) study involving a multilingual elementary classroom and the Archie comic books series similarly concludes that ELL students were attracted to the comics because of the humor, the action, the social relationships, and most importantly, because the visual images allowed them to conceptualize the meanings and concepts on their own. For ELL students “the comic book represents an exciting opportunity to engage with text from a position of strength rather than weakness. There is no right answer to ferret out of the text, and there are multiple cues to meaning making” (Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004, p. 218).

The final section of this chapter examines the importance of ELL students’ exposure and use of their native language and cultural backgrounds when implemented in combination with comic books and graphic novels. The following research suggests that ELL students’ native language and culture can not only motivate these struggling readers, but provide opportunities for authentic learning through the multiple literacies (Mays, 2008; Freeman & Freeman, 2007;

Marie-Crane Williams, 2008; De Oliveira & Shoffner, 2009; Frey & Fisher, 2004; Schwartz & Rubinstein-Avila, 2006; Lara & Moore, 2009).

Frey and Fisher's (2004) study of a ninth grade classroom in San Diego consisted of primarily ELL students, wherein the authors used alternative genres including graphic novels, manga, and anime to utilize students' multiple literacies and teach reading and writing skills. The study culminated in students' creating their own illustrated narratives wherein the authors realized the power of sequential art and pop culture "for engaging students in authentic writing. These forms of popular culture provided a visual vocabulary of sorts for scaffolding writing techniques, particularly dialogue, tone, and mood" (Frey & Fisher, 2004, p. 24).

Again focusing on utilizing comics to promote the use of one's native language and cultural background, Freeman and Freeman's (2007) article "Welcome" offers ten ways to support ELL students by drawing on their native languages, even if an instructor does not speak their first languages. Of the ten points, the following suggestions support the use of ELL cultural backgrounds and sequential art:

- Allow ELL students to talk in their primary languages: allow students to use the language to clarify concepts for each other as they complete their tasks in English.
- Encourage primary-language journal writing: allow students' to respond in their native language to what they learned in English, thus deepening their comprehension and promoting the transfer of complex ideas and vocabulary to English.
- Ensure that classroom environmental print represents students' primary languages: the inclusion of their language and culture in print and text choices means so much to ELL students. (Freeman & Freeman, 2007, p. 52-54).

Marie-Crane Williams (2008) remarks on a twelve-week curriculum on human rights for a secondary classroom that culminated in creating a comic strip:

One student, who was initially uncomfortable drawing, produced a powerful text that told a compelling story. His father operated a concrete company. His comic strip was based on article 23, which is related to the right to work, form unions, and work in humane and favorable conditions without discrimination and for pay that is just, fair, and equitable (United Nations, 1948). In the end, the worker (character) created a trade union and fought back. Even though this student struggled with drawing, his successful strip was meaningful and drew on his personal experience. (p. 17)

De Oliveira & Shoffner (2009) offer an interesting take in their study of revisions to a secondary English methods course to better address the academic and individual needs of ELL students. The authors note that “rather than rejection or avoidance of students’ first language and home culture, teachers should incorporate culturally responsive teaching into their pedagogy” (De Oliveira & Shoffner, 2009, p. 105). After readings and class discussion, many pre-service teachers were ultimately motivated to move beyond whether communicating with their students in their home language was right or wrong. They concluded that “rather than questioning whether a teacher *should* speak students’ home languages...[they] considered *how* the teacher used her knowledge of the language as well as *how* she accommodated her students through daily instruction” (De Oliveira & Shoffner, 2009, p.106). Finally in an interview with Lorenza Lara (2009), Lara credits the work of Jim Cummins (2000, 2007) research to contributing to his understanding the relationship between language development and cultural background. He concludes that Cummins’ research has shown the importance of “permitting students with

different cultural backgrounds to connect what they know and can do outside of school with the curriculum inside school. It involves respecting students' first languages. And it involves using culturally relevant literature to scaffold learners' understandings" (Lara & Moore, 2009, p. 173).

In summary, each study above connects back to my guiding answer. Through enabling visual and critical literacies and promoting cultural capital via recognition of one's native language, comic books and graphic novels promote and strengthen language comprehension and writing skills in multiple levels of ELL students. Furthermore, comic books and graphic novels serve as a scaffolding tool for teachers and librarians to promote reading and writing among ELL students, with hopes that this format will encourage them to read and write more independently in the future. Once an educator has acknowledged an ELL student's native language and cultural background, the focus moves to choosing the appropriate texts for various levels of ELL students. The conclusion of this chapter aims to discuss these methods and provides suggested strategies.

Appropriate Texts and Strategies for ELL Students

One of the key factors to a successful introduction of comic books and graphic novels into a multilingual classroom is preparation. In terms of preparation, I suggest that educators consider three main factors. The initial factor consists of the teacher sharing a proposed curriculum or conceptual unit lesson plan that contains one's objectives and teaching philosophy specific to a multilingual classroom that includes ELL students. This proposal would include which graphic novels or comic books would be used, a summary of each text, a detailed illustration of the lesson plan, and an explanation of how and why each text is relevant to the existing ELL curriculum. Once approved by the administration, teachers must be prepared to reformulate and shape their lesson plans based on both positive and negative feedback, and more

importantly, to re-assess the needs of their students (Carter, 2009). Jacquelyn McTaggart (2008), a former elementary teacher turned creative writing instructor and education columnist, suggests that a teacher “share your proposal with your principal *before* you initiate the program. Once the program begins you may encounter some resistance from staff, parents, or school board members” (p. 37). McTaggart urges teachers to build a strong relationship with the principal to counter any resistance and notes that “principals don’t take kindly to being blind-sided with a complaint concerning an issue they were unaware of” (2008, p. 37). Just as teachers prepare to address controversial issues in canonical texts, writing and sharing rationales about graphic novels adds to one’s ethos or credibility. Carter (2009) explains writing rationales that support and discuss how controversial material will be addressed in the classroom will “offer parents and students a chance to preview and discuss the reading choice before signing off on it [and] can provide a measure of comfort and protection to all” (p. 70).

The second factor that will contribute to one’s success is a purposeful marketing strategy. Teachers need to market their instructional units and lesson plans to all members of faculty, student body, PTA groups, school boards, and on the road at in-service programs. Again McTaggart urges teachers to market sequential art pedagogy at every opportunity because “graphic novels are relatively new, they are often regarded with skepticism. The more people you can introduce to the graphic novel and the more people who see your enthusiasm, the greater your success will be” (2008, p. 38).

The third factor to adhere to is reviewing each selected comic book or graphic novel that one intends to incorporate into their lesson plans. While it may not be easy to read every text that one hopes to use, I highly urge teachers to invest the time and effort to do so. While there are numerous websites, blogs, listservs, and publications that review comic books and graphic

novels that provide educational reviews yearly, the best reviewer of a text that is age appropriate and best suited for language proficiency *is the teacher*. Cary (2004) notes that while experienced teachers may have a good idea about what works best for beginning versus advanced ELL readers, it is at best an educated guess rather than a clear answer. Cary concludes that as teachers we cannot “always know what content, writing format, or drawing style will capture the interest of all of our students. The grade and language proficiency indicators in the reviews are therefore rough estimates, best guesses on my part” (2004, p. 159). Carter (2009) also suggests that an alternative to disqualifying a questionable text altogether is integrating a section or group of panels from a graphic novel that may not be acceptable in its entirety. He suggests that using “even one powerful panel can help establish or reinforce a major theme and be a jumping-off point for discussion and further literacy-related activities” (Carter, 2009, p.71). I suggest that a concerted effort of primary and secondary research on each proposed text will yield the best results for all levels of ELL students within a multilingual classroom. The appendices to this thesis list resources for reviewing sequential art and suggested texts for various levels of ELL students.

Chapter 5: Answering the Question: A Recap and Suggestions for Future Use

Conclusion

This chapter aims to sum up my research and provide a clear answer to my guiding inquiry: Do the images, vocabulary, and contextual cues found within comics and graphic novels positively affect language comprehension and writing skills of ELL students when these texts are integrated into a tailored curriculum? My answer is emphatically yes, through utilizing teaching methods centered on visual imagery, critical literacy, and reexamination of the literary canon, cultural capital, pioneering support by teachers and librarians, and a positive connection with today's multi-media technology.

Visual literacy plays an important role in ELL students' level of language comprehension because the correct images allow for a stronger interpretation of the storyline, context, and vocabulary than that of traditional print-only resources (Gorman, 2003; Cary, 2004; Martinez-Roldán & Sarah Newcomer, 2011; Smetana, Odelson, Burns, Grisham, 2009; Gorman & Suellentrop, 2009). What is important to note is that visual literacy capitalizes on the multiliteracies of an ELL student, uses these strengths to encourage and motivate these students to read more, and ultimately helps students create their own stories and comic books through activities like storyboarding and poetry comics (Gorman, 2003; Cary, 2004; Frey & Fisher, 2004; Seglem & Witte, 2009).

Critical literacy is equally important to ELL language comprehension and increased writing skills because of the unlimited opportunities to connect the storyline or message from a comic book or graphic novel to the student's cultural background. Comic books and graphic novels teach the importance of audience, purpose, and persuasion through visual narratives that stress issue such as historical perspectives, cultural identity conflicts, and the literal and

metaphorical interpretations of canonical texts when scaffolded with sequential art (Wallace, 2001; Chun, 2009; Boatright, 2010; Seglem & Witte, 2009; Gorman & Suellentrop, 2009).

What is most noteworthy in regards to “new literacies” like visual and critical literacies are the similarities in best practices of ELL pedagogy when compared to graphic novel pedagogy. These similarities include visual connections that are found in non-print and traditional text-only books to use concrete and abstract thinking, opportunities for pre-teaching or front loading vocabulary, and responses of critical thinking to point of view and suggested interpretations of authors. The similarities of these two texts also provide opportunities to learn about different text types that enhance interpretations of texts through typography and layout, provide scenarios to decode facial and body expressions, rhetorical devices, and examples of social nuances (Seglem & Witte, 2009; Jewell, 2009, p. 260; Lara & Moore, 2009; Stevens & Bean, 2007; Ajayi, 2009; Simmons, 2003). Allowing ELL students to read something they already find interest in and scaffolding it with material that is labeled “required reading” may result in a spark a new found interest and provide a link to language comprehension.

My rationales for promoting sequential art pedagogy with ELL students center on increasing the value of students’ native language and promoting students’ cultural backgrounds. My research illustrates the importance of allowing students to utilize their native language to better clarify and synthesize meanings in texts and classroom instruction. It is important to note that while the final product or assignment must be produced in English, conceptualizing the ideas in one’s native language is sometimes crucial to ELL students. Promoting a student’s cultural background increases student morale and provides opportunities for discourse communities to form. Not only do comic books and graphic novels provide examples of distinct cultures and traditions, they many times provide textual and visual examples of American pop culture. It is

this introduction to pop culture that helps ELL students grasp authentic examples of American spoken discourse, jokes and puns, body language, and physical expressions (Frey & Fisher, 2004; Cary, 2004; Seglem & Witte, 2009; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004; Chun, 2009; Duff, 2002; Harklau, 1994; McTaggart, 2008). Lastly, one of the most important rationales is the “fun factor” provided by comic books and graphic novels. The emotional buy-in gained by all levels of ELL students translates into more self-confidence and motivation. The hope is that while ELL students derive enjoyment from comic books and graphic novels, the same reading activity will create a sense of empowerment when challenged with more difficult text and ultimately engage students to read more (Cary, 2002; Carter, 2004; Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004).

The final section of my thesis addresses appropriate texts for ELL students and strategies for successfully introducing them. The first of the three strategies consists of a prepared proposal of one’s curriculum to the administration, parents, and student body. The key to one’s proposal is reformulation and reassessment to best meet the needs of students. Preparing a proposal provides a measure of comfort and protection to all (Carter, 2009; McTaggart, 2008). The second strategy is a purposeful marketing strategy that advertises your teaching methods and lesson plans to anybody who will listen. This includes promoting after school programs like graphic novel book clubs with cooperation from one’s school library (Carter, 2009; McTaggart, 2008). The last strategy is reviewing each selected comic book and graphic novel for appropriate age and reading levels for ELL students (Cary, 2004; Carter, 2009). While there are numerous resources for reviewing these texts, the best judge is the teacher, the individual who knows their students the best.

Lastly, this chapter concludes with two appendices as resources for educators, librarians, and parents interested in using sequential art as pedagogy for ELL students. Appendix A:

Resources for Reviewing Sequential Art, is brief list of reviewing resources and Appendix B: Suggested Texts for ELL Students, is a compilation of comic books and graphic novels that hold social and cultural relevance, organized by age appropriateness. It is my hope that the answer to my thesis's guiding question has persuaded *you* the reader to take a second look at comic books and graphic novels and consider how these texts provide motivation and support for ELL students learning to read and write in English.

Appendix A: Resources for Reviewing Sequential Art

Online Reviews

- <http://graphicnarratives.org/> The MLA Discussion Group on Comics and Graphic Narratives provides a forum for promoting academic scholarship in sequential art with calls for papers and discussion forums.
- <http://manga4kids.com/> Website devoted to manga reviews with parents in mind.
- <http://www.noflyingnotights.com> Robin E. Brenner's website that reviews all graphic novels and some manga.
- <http://www.sequentialart.com> Website run entirely by women; provides reviews of more obscure and risqué graphic novels from a feminist perspective.
- <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com> Extensive encyclopedia of manga and anime; provides in-depth reviews of the latest manga and anime.
- <http://www.comixology.com/> Provides numerous discussion groups and reviews of all genres of comic books and graphic novels.
- <http://graphicclassroom.blogspot.com/> Aimed at teachers and librarians, this site provides reviews and rates selected comic books and graphic novels.
- <http://www.comicsintheclassroom.net/> Scott Tingley's website provides teachers and creators a forum to discuss and review genres of comic books and graphic novels.
- <http://ublib.buffalo.edu./lml/comics/pages> Michael R. Lavin's website provides recommended lists of graphic novels for all ages and groups of readers.

Blogs

- <http://ensaneworld.blogspot.com/> James Bucky Carter's blog that serves comic book fans as well as educators who promote sequential art pedagogy. This site provides news on current and past publications, book reviews, and links to educational journals and review sites.
- <http://www.comicsbeat.com/> Aims to provide the most current news and information about comics, publishers, and the discourse communities that read sequential art.

Listserves

- <http://www.english.ufl.edu/comics/scholars/> Academic forum about research, criticism, and teaching as related to comic art.

- <http://www.angelfire.com/comics/gnlib/> Excellent resource for advice on how to build a comic book collection and how to use them in the classroom. List includes librarians, teachers, publishers, reviewers, and columnists.

Appendix B: Suggested Texts for ELL Students

Culturally Relevant Comic Books and Graphic Novels

Ages 10-13

Black Beauty. Written by Anna Sewell. Adapted and illustrated by June Brigman and Roy Richardson, 2005.

A graphic novel adaptation of the canonical classic set in 19th century London.

Swan. Written and illustrated by Ariyoshi Kyoko, 2004--.

A comic book series chronicling a ballet student's feelings about success and failure.

Pride of Baghdad. Written by Brian K. Vaughn. Illustrated by Niko Henrichon, 2006.

A true story of a bomb attack that occurred at Baghdad Zoo.

Yummy: Last Days of a Southside Shorty. Written by G. Neri. Illustrated by Randy DuBurke, 2010.

A retelling of a murder that occurred in Chicago in 1994, chronicling a teen's life as he becomes drawn into violence due to peer pressure.

Ages 13-15

American Born Chinese. Written and illustrated by Gene Yang, 2006.

A story about a Chinese-American teen embarrassed by his own heritage.

Fax from Sarajevo. Written and illustrated by Joe Kubert, 1998.

A true story about a family's survival of Serbian bombardment.

Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned. Written and illustrated by Judd Winick, 2000.

A true story of a character's unsuccessful battle with the HIV/AIDS illness.

Black Panther. Written by Christopher Priest and Mark Texeira, 2001.

Protagonist King T'Challa must protect not only his sovereignty but also his nation.

Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History Of Violence. Written by Geoffrey Cananda. Adapted and illustrated by Jamar Nicholas, 2010.

Canada's poignant reflection on inner-street violence, growing up in the South Bronx.

Ages 15-17

Berlin: City of Stones.

Written and illustrated by Jason Lutes, 2000.

A look at pre-World War II Germany and the plight that the citizens of the Weimar Republic faced.

The Contract with God Trilogy: Life on Dropsie Avenue. Written and illustrated by Will Eisner, 2006.

A collection featuring three of Eisner's highly praised works set in the fictionalized South Bronx community.

A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories. Written by Will Eisner, 2000.

A collection of four stories set in the 1930's about the dream of a better life during The Depression.

Deogrotias: A Tale of Rwanda. Written and illustrated by J.P. Stassen, 2006.

A tale of the Rwandan genocide between the Hutu extremists and the Tutsi minorities.

Confidential Confessions. Written and illustrated by Momochi Reiko, 2003-2005.

Explores several issues like teen sex, bullying, HIV, suicide, rape, and teen prostitution.

American Splendor: Unsung Hero. Written by Harvey Pekar. Illustrated by David Collier, 2003.

Illustrates the Vietnam War memoirs of an African American soldier.

Blankets. Written and illustrated by Craig Thompson, 2002.

An autobiography by Thompson, a coming of age story stemming from a Fundamentalist background.

Maus: A Survivor's Tale. Written and illustrated by Art Spiegelman, 1986 and 1991.

Spiegelman's true memoir of a father/son survival of the Jewish Holocaust.

Persepolis. Written and illustrated by Marjane Satrapi, 2004.

Satrapi's memoir about growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution.

Safe Area Gorzade: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-95. Written and illustrated by Joe Sacco, 2002.

Sacco's reflections on a harsh and realistic look at the cost of the Bosnian war.

King, Volume 1. Written by Ho Che Anderson, 1993.

Interpretive biography that addresses the early life and political awakening of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

X-Men: God Loves/Man Kills. Written by Chris Claremont and Brent Eric Anderson, 1994.

A social commentary that centers on the mutants' ongoing battle for equality in the face of oppression.

The Tale of One Bad Rat. Written by Bryan Talbot, 1995.

A tale of a woman's journey to recovery after years of sexual abuse by her father.

Adolf: A Tale of the Twentieth Century. Written by Osamu Tezuka, 1995.

A story of three different individuals with the same name that provides the audience with three different perspectives on World War II.

College level and Mature Audiences

Black Hole. Written and illustrated by Charles Burns, 2005.

A fictional story about a sexually transmitted disease that physically mutates teens and alters their lives.

Epileptic. Written and illustrated by David B., 2005.

David B.'s memoir about his brother's battle with epilepsy and the tragic episode of madness experienced by both brothers.

Perfect Example. Written and illustrated by John Porcellino, 2005.

A coming of age story beginning in high school and transitioning into college.

Love and Rockets. Written and illustrated by Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez, 1981-2011.

A former comic book series about a group of Chicanos growing up in California and Mexico, influenced by the punk rock movement.

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Curriculum Vitae

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