

Using Graphic Novels to Promote Visual Literacy



NJTESOL/NJBE

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Overview



- Why to use graphic novels or comics
- How to read graphic novels or comics
- Practicing visual literacy
- Resources

Using Graphic Novels



- Language acquisition
- Reading for vocabulary development
- Extensive reading
- Visual support
- Spoken language
- Humor
- Entertainment
- Visual literacy

Glossary



- Graphic Novels, Comics, Comic Books, Comic Strips, One-panel Comics
- Panel
- Text Bubble / Speech Bubble

Activity #1



- You will read an article titled *10 Things to Hate about Comics*
- First, write a list of thing you either like or dislike about comics or graphic novels
- What did you write?
- Options / Adaptations when using with students:
 - Checking predictions
 - Jigsaw reading activity
 - Select a few sections
 - Vocabulary exercises
 - Students can write their own section (after reading comics)

Activity #2



- Read the excerpt from the story
 - Pay attention the process
 - What information do you get from the visuals?
 - What information do you get from the text?
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- How do your eyes move across the page?
 - How is this different (or similar to) reading text?

Nerd Stuff #1



“Because of their close connection to the world of appearance, images approximate reality: they are *concrete*. The brain simultaneously perceives all parts of the *whole* integrating the parts *synthetically* into a gestalt. The majority of images are perceived in an *all-at-once* manner.

Reading words is a different process. When the eye scans distinctive individual letters arranged in a certain linear sequence, a word with meaning emerges. The meaning of a sentence [...] progresses word by word.”

Leonard Shlain: [The Alphabet Versus the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image](#)

Visual Literacy - Activity #3



- Visual symbols and shorthand of graphic novels
- Visual symbols:
 - How would you depict:
 - ✦ A ghost or invisible person?
 - ✦ Heat or a hot day?
 - ✦ A bad smell?
 - ✦ Someone running?

Visual Literacy - Activity #4



- Left to Right? Top to Bottom?
- Why is the story presented in this way?

Visuals and Text



- How do visuals and text work together?
 - Supplement?
 - Contradict?
 - Completely independent?

Visual Literacy



- Interpreting images and reading visual language
- Understanding the audience of and purpose for images
- Being aware of the manipulative uses of images
- Making judgments about the accuracy, validity, and worth of images

Nerd Stuff #2



- “The ratio of visual image to text is increasing. [...] the chairman of the Newspaper Association of America said [...] that we are heading to a culture of ‘visual literacy’. [...] The proliferation of images means that visual literacy is now crucial for obtaining information, constructing knowledge, and building successful educational outcomes.”

Anne Bramford: The Visual Literacy White Paper

(<http://cct2.edc.org/PMA/> - visual literacy)

Visual Literacy - How?



- Scale and arrangement of the elements in the image
- Camera angle, perspective
- Color, contrast, light, shadow
- Use of lines and shapes
- Use of visual symbols, symbolism
- Motion and depth in the image
- Expressions on faces, body language
- Relationship with text

Questions to Ask



- How should I look at this?
- What choices did the artist make, and how do they affect meaning?
- What are the different elements of this image?
- What is the main idea or argument of the image?
- In what context was this image originally created?
- Is there tension or conflict in this image?
- What does the image show? (Objectively)
- What does the image mean? (Subjective)
- Is this presented as an interpretation, a factual record, or an impression?
- What is the smallest detail than shows the most?

Visual Literacy - Activity #5



- Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-1995 (Joe Sacco)
- Barefoot Gen (Keiji Nakazawa)
- Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea (Guy Delisle)

Visual Literacy - Beyond Graphic Novels



- Can show photographs related to same themes / topics read about in graphic novels and ask the same questions

Gorazde



Pyongyang



My favorite story: Babel



- What do you think this story is about?

Resources: Internet



- Grammarman Comics:
<http://www.grammarmancomic.com/>
- Scott McCloud: <http://scottmccloud.com/>
 - Comics in experimental formats (The Right Number; I Can't Stop Thinking; The Carl Stories)
 - Inventions (The Story Machine; The Infinite Canvas)
 - Google Chrome Comic
 - ✦ Explains Google Chrome

Resources: Internet



- Hypercomics: <http://e-merl.com/morecomics/hypercomics>
- Online comics: <http://comics.com>
- Make Belief Comix:
<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>
 - Students can create their own comics on the internet
 - Includes teaching tips and ideas

Resources: Books



- **Graphic Novels: Everything you Need to Know**
 - Paul Gravett
- **Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art**
 - Scott McCloud
- **Reinventing Comics**
 - Scott McCloud
- **Teaching Visual Literacy**
 - Nancy Frey & Douglas Fisher, eds.

Resources: Graphic Novels



- **Roadstrips: A Graphic Journey Across America**
 - Pete Friedrich
- **The Best American Comics 2010**
 - Neil Gaiman, Jessica Abel, Matt Madden, eds.
- **Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood**
 - Marjane Satrapi
- **Persepolis 2: The story of a Return**
 - Marjane Satrapi
- **The Sandman Series**
 - Neil Gaiman

Resources: Graphic Novels



- **Black Hole**
 - Charles Burns
- **Palestine**
 - Joe Sacco
- **Safe Area Gorazde**
 - Joe Sacco
- **American-Born Chinese**
 - Gene Luen Yang
- **Maus**
 - Art Spiegelman
- **Jimmy Corrigan**
 - Chris Ware

Resources: Graphic Novels



- **Blankets**
 - Chris Thompson
- **Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic**
 - Alison Bechdel
- **Epileptic**
 - David B.
- **Ghost World**
 - Daniel Clowes