



Using Graphic Texts in Secondary Classrooms: A Tale of Endurance

Author(s): Mary Rice

Source: *The English Journal*, Vol. 101, No. 5 (May 2012), pp. 37-43

Published by: National Council of Teachers of English

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23269526>

Accessed: 28-09-2017 14:50 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

National Council of Teachers of English is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The English Journal*

Using Graphic Texts in Secondary Classrooms: A Tale of Endurance

A junior high school teacher discusses benefits and some problems—including access, content, and expense—of teaching graphic novels.

I live and teach in an enormously artistic community in rural Utah. My classes of more than 35 students are full of dancers, actors, musicians, painters, sketch artists, cinematographers, and writers. In 2006, I entered the crucible of trying to use graphic novels in my classroom to promote my students' artistic sensibilities. This epic tale of adventure, replete with failure and triumph alike, is documented in this article and centers on learning about graphic texts, providing access to the texts, and designing curriculum that incorporates visual interpretation strategies.

Learning about Graphic Text

I began the work of trying to use graphic novels in my classroom by learning about the history of graphic text in general. The earliest form of these texts was called *comics* (Pedersen). The comic text type became popular and more were produced. The first comic books appeared on newsstands in the early 1930s (Emans) and circulation quickly grew to an estimated 70 million copies per month in the early 1950s (Coard).

As I moved from calling all graphic text *comics* to distinguishing between the types, I learned that no matter what I called these things, it never seemed to be the best or most current term. Some of the names include *comics*, *comix*, *sequential art*, *sequential art narrative*, *graphica*, *graphia*, *graphein*, and *graphic novels*. The multiple names that sometimes are distinct and other times are synonymous made it difficult for me to locate professional literature

about these texts. Additionally aggravating were the varying definitions. *Graphic novels*, for instance, were described to me at a conference as being comics with more complex plots. Barbara Guzzetti's definition of graphic novel also speaks to the complexity of plot. Not everyone agrees with that definition, however. Others delineate the difference according to what readers must do to make meaning from these texts (Simmons).

Much of the scholarship in comics and related text types suggested that there was a stigma against comics as lazy and even aberrant reading (e.g., Pedersen). Although I was worried about potentially salacious elements, I was actually encouraged by the proposition that graphic novels would be simple to read. I bought *American Born Chinese* (Yang) since it won the Michael Printz Award for young adult literature and it was a featured recommendation in one of the first articles I read promoting the use of graphic novels in the classroom (Haynes). As I flipped through the pages of *American Born Chinese*, my husband stopped me.

"If you are turning the pages that fast," he said, "you are not really reading it. You have to read the pictures and the text together." When I started to do as he recommended, the book took me four hours of intensive study. When I turned to the page where the Monkey King pees on the hand of Tze-Yo-Tzuh, the creator of all existence, my face tensed. I understood why the monkey had done that, but I was nervous about how students would react. When I was done, I called a friend who had lived in China to ask about the legend of the Monkey King that was profiled in the book. It became a

two-hour discussion. I also spent several more hours on YouTube looking up Yang's pop culture references. The total time I spent on this "lazy reading" was about twelve hours.

Once I realized that graphic novels were just as difficult or at times more difficult to read than traditional novels, I knew I was going to have to put in just as much or more effort to use them in class.

Looking into Instructional Uses for Graphic Novels

To help streamline my planning process, I continued to read graphic novels while looking for articles about using graphic text for instructional purposes. Since I knew a little of the history of comics and graphic novels, I decided to look for early articles about their educational use and move forward from there.

The earliest article I discovered dealing with the use of comics in the classroom was published in 1959. The author's purpose was to convince Spanish teachers to use comics printed in the target language to build skills in a second language (Vacca). The article referenced uses of comics by the United States Army to build literacy in non-English-speaking soldiers. Comics were also recommended for what he called the "slow-learners." I thought it was interesting that he said, "[s]ometimes youngsters wish to read the original text after reading a 'Classic Comic'" (391). Robert Emans performed a comparative literary analysis of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and a comic book version. Even in this new age of graphic texts, many instructional recommendations center around enriching students' understanding of canonized literature or using graphic text to bridge to traditional text (Gorman; Viadero).

Since the late 1990s, teachers have been heavily advised to teach using graphic texts (Dorrell, Curtis, and Rampal). In articles that I read where the virtues of graphia are extolled, however, the profiling of students based on literacy achievement remains a part of the narrative that began with Vacca. An article by Samantha Cleaver, for example, states that "[c]omic books can be a great way to pique reluctant readers' interest and challenge those students who are fluent in more traditional literature" (28). I also read several more recently published articles about using graphic novels with immigrant students (Boatright) and English language learners (Chun).

Since I was interested in using graphic novels for instruction, I looked for specific instructional suggestions. One use I heard about at conferences on more than one occasion called for covering the words and asking the students to try to write the dialogue using the pictures (Fisher and Frey). The literature on instructional uses of comics also suggests that one may also use graphic texts to guide students to create superhero comics or to engage in word-level tasks such as using comics to study literary devices, particularly onomatopoeia in superhero comics. There are also more integrated strategies such as using graphic novels for free voluntary reading (Edwards), examining experiences of "other" (Boatright), and using graphic texts as fodder for book club reading (Seyfried). As I read recommendations for using graphic novels, I was impressed that authors rarely reported problems in teaching graphic novels, with the exception of occasional censorship issues. However, my experiences were fraught with difficulty. For instance, I had significant problems just acquiring graphic novels. I wondered if other English teachers were experiencing similar problems and if they were solving these problems as tenuously as I was.

Providing Access to Graphic Texts in my Classroom

It is difficult to make decisions about which graphic texts to purchase without an extensive apprenticeship and lots of reading. Since graphic novels are expensive and it takes hours to carefully study a graphic novel, there is not much room for error in even preliminary selection. I thought I had found a great version of *War of the Worlds* (Edginton) once, when I realized that a word I did not understand was a phonetically altered curse word. When I attended conferences to find out which graphic texts would be suitable for my classes, they were always crowded sessions. If I stayed, I had to stand outside in the lobby and listen from the door. The handouts from these presentations often had long lists of various texts to use in class, but the lists were not annotated in a way that provided practical guidance about curricular purposes and there was no way I could read all of these texts.

When I was learning about how to read and select graphic novels effectively, I received many



Hypermasculine comics hero. © David Grigg/Photos.com

recommendations that were ultimately unhelpful. The best resources have been students who have read and enjoyed these particular texts. Also helpful are the employees in the rapidly dying, old-fashioned comic book stores. In fact, these aficionados are often the most willing to spend time discussing potential purchases with educators, and they offer some of the most generous discounts. They are also refreshingly upfront about the fact that graphic novels were not originally intended as children's media. They have told me that most graphic novels, like most comic books, are not for young audiences, although the market is shifting. I also admit to standing in the graphic novel section of the bookstore waiting for another patron to come and browse at what I am interested in, so I can ask him or her questions. That is how I learned, for example, that Frank Miller produced the best Batman comics.

Previewing graphic novels is especially important because their content may indeed spark censorship issues (Bucher and Manning). The peeing Monkey King I encountered in Yang's novel was just the tip of the iceberg. Concern about potentially objectionable content of comics has been around for some time. Robert L. Coard, using a phrase by John Mason Brown, called comics the "marijuana of the nursery" (19), an "emotional earthquake" (18), and stated that reading com-

Mary Rice

ics was to subject oneself to "poor eyesight" (18) and an "induced opiate state" (19). Aiming at the violence in comics, Coard stated that Edgar Allan Poe's stories of murder and mayhem were tame by comparison, and that lasciviousness was rampant in the advertisements in comic books, in which female characters wore "bikini underpants" (20). Herbert Read wrote that these stories of "buried bestiality, let out as fantasies" are part of a "collective neurosis," and that some comics are "crudely conceived and vulgarly presented" (5).

Although there is more tolerance for bikini underpants in contemporary society, the charge that graphic novels contain offensive content should be taken seriously. Those who have seen recent depictions of almost any female superhero or villain and even Juliet from the adaptations of *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (Shakespeare) can see why. As I tried to use these texts, part of the curriculum has had to focus on instructional conversations with young people about the symbolism used to create visual depictions of hyper-masculinity or hyper-femininity. These conversations are necessary to assist the students in uncovering and recognizing symbolism, reading pictures as art, as well as to attend to the developmental concerns of adolescents. I did not anticipate having these conversations when I decided to take up graphic novels as text. Because society is so accepting of canvassing the female body, female students constantly receive implicit and explicit messages about their bodies and what they should look like at a critical period in their development (Rodin). My female students are more likely to raise important issues about body image, indecency, and social behavior when reading these types of texts. Boys even admit concern about the chiseled men and the exaggerated chest, thigh, and groin regions of male characters.

Some obvious examples of hyper-masculine men are in graphic novel renditions of *Beowulf* (Heaney), which is a text heavily promoted to teachers (e.g., Martin). I looked at several graphic novel versions of this story to decide which to purchase for my classroom. These versions fell on a continuum from those that used epic language but were heavily violent to others that gravely misrepresented the character of Beowulf, although they were less violent. What I wanted as a teacher was a version that sampled the language of a good translation that

adhered to the original representation of plot and character that was honest about the violence while not being a slave to it. Eventually I selected several versions and explained the individual pitfalls to the students. When I used these to teach *Beowulf* in my class, however, I allowed students access to all of the versions, acknowledging that they would develop different perceptions of Beowulf based on which version they studied. It was because of these different versions presenting differing perspectives that valuable discussion grew.

Another problem I ran into occurred when a group of English language learners asked to read a graphic novel version of *Dracula* (Stoker and Mucci). During an instructional conversation with a student, I realized that he was having trouble telling me how Dracula died. As we talked, he articulated that his background knowledge had told him that a vampire is killed by driving a stake through his heart. In the graphic novel the student was reading, the weapon in Dracula's chest looked very much like a sword. In the meantime, I had selected certain passages from Bram Stoker's version to read to the students. In the original version, Quincy Morris shoves a Bowie knife into Dracula's heart and Jonathan Harker cuts off Dracula's head. This student experienced metacognitive tension as he grappled with the dissonance between his background knowledge, the graphic novel, and the original text. Do these kinds of frustrations promote literacy for young people, especially students such as this English language learner struggling to read, or do they make students feel less success with text? Graphic novels are often touted as a way to provide both simplified language and visual support for text, especially canonized text. However, this and several other experiences like it make me wonder if that is really the case. Graphic novelists are concerned with artistic interpretation of their work, and this is fine, but as a teacher, I cannot assume that the illustrations were constructed with the least bit of attention to how a student with difficulty comprehending text would interpret them.

Content issues that arise in graphic texts also complicate the quest to locate money to buy them. Since graphic texts are highly collaborative efforts and require sophisticated printing, they are expensive. I had several resources for buying traditional texts, but when I requested money from

these resources to buy graphic texts, I was refused. My strategy for dealing with this was to team up with a colleague who also wanted to use graphic texts and apply for money together. She and I were finally able to talk my school into giving us some money for buying books based on student recommendations, some of which were graphic novels. The first year we got \$2,000. The second year, we got \$1,500. All we were asked to do to retain access to this money was gather data that suggested the students were learning more by using the graphic novels. We collected data in which we compared our lists of which students chose to read which texts to their standardized reading scores. We knew that a statistical correlation was not possible, but we were able to make a strong enough case to convince our school that our use of graphic novels was promoting the literacy development of our students.

The third year, my colleague quit teaching. I wrote the proposal and gave it to her for review in her last month at the school, but in the understandable hustle and bustle of leaving the school, she did not turn it in. I have not been able to get any money from that source since. I resorted to writing smaller grants of \$50 to \$100 from local charities and have purchased graphic texts with my own money. I have spent about \$600 per year of my own income.

More recently, I was able to find a local charity that was willing to allocate large sums if I could be specific enough about what I wanted to buy. In addition to that restriction, I have to be careful that I do not buy books, including graphic texts, that are titles on my district's sacred book list. The sacred book list is a list of titles that students are supposed to read in one grade level. It is a manifestation of the widely held belief in our district that novel study is about having everyone in a grade study the same version of the same novel at the same time and that it must be a book as few of the students have read or are familiar with as possible. Graphic novel versions of texts are deemed to spoil the plot and ruin novel studies. Therefore, in our district, some sources of funding cannot be spent to buy titles on another grade's sacred list.

Another problem is keeping the graphic texts in readable condition. Many graphic texts are printed on paper that is not very durable, and they are often not bound very well. Therefore, they easily fall apart and the pages fall out. Students do not want to read books

that are not in good condition. They also do not like them if they look too institutional, with heavy bindings, cover tapings, and others things we might do to make them last longer. A graphic text that costs me \$30 will last one or two years, maximum. Graphic novel series also present additional problems because students cannot read a series if one or more of the titles goes missing. Sometimes books from a classroom library set are lost and must be replaced, as students do not always return books they borrow, and reading them causes wear and tear over time.

Designing Curriculum with Graphic Novels

Determining which graphic texts are suitable for curriculum making and then acquiring or maintaining these texts, as harrowing as it has been, was actually the easy part. Helping students understand how these texts operate and how to construct meaning from them is much more difficult.

For my first foray into teaching a graphic text, I chose *American Born Chinese* (Yang). I team-taught this unit during a combined summer school for migrant English learners and non-migrant, native English speakers who had been identified as struggling readers. We taught this text by providing background about Chinese culture, including the legend of the Monkey King. My colleague arranged for a guest speaker to talk about the importance of this legend in Chinese culture, and I found several written versions of the legend. We also talked to the students about how to read panels directionally, how to discern narrative from dialogue, and how to observe images looking for contradictions between things such as facial expressions and dialogue. We outlined mini-lessons that we hoped would support the students as they read the tri-partite plot of Yang's story, built vocabulary, and extracted issues of social importance.

We named the unit "Do you have to change to be liked?" and framed much of the class discourse to attend to that question. We also considered different ways to read the text, such as one of us reading aloud as a think-aloud lesson, the students reading with each other in small groups or partnerships, and the students reading by themselves and then coming together in small groups or as a whole class for discussion. On the day when we were scheduled to read the part where the Monkey King

pees on the hand of the creator of all existence, my colleague and I read the text with the students and then generated discussion about why he would do that. Most of the students did not get beyond the idea that animals urinate on things to mark them as their own. They did not sense the symbolic implications of the act on the rest of the story. They were, however, very mature about that scene. Unfortunately, they were less mature about the allusion to an erection in another part of the book. We had seen it in our reading, but it was subtle enough that we could not decide if it really existed, or if we were being overly sensitive.

While I wish our first experience had gone better, my colleague and I ultimately came away from this experience feeling as if the students had made reading it an inquiry into learning the stereotypes of Chinese Americans for their own amusement. We knew we needed to work harder to prepare the students to read the text critically enough to understand the author's sophisticated implications about racism against Chinese Americans and others. More positively, the following fall, several students checked out *American Born Chinese* from my classroom library, and one of these students was of Chinese and Vietnamese heritage. When he returned it, he made a point to tell me that the book had changed his life for the better.

Another noteworthy venture in my efforts to teach graphic novels large-scale was using *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (Spiegelman) with ninth graders in a unit about family relationships. I designed this unit after hearing stories from several of my students who had family members serving in the US military. I started by presenting the students with author Pat Conroy's memoir of his father, who had been a solider in the Korean War. We talked about our relationships with our own family members and how we remembered loved ones with whom we had close relationships as well as how we want siblings and other family members to remember us when we are not in daily contact with them.

A friend who had been working on a doctoral degree gave me some information that she had about reading images. This framework for the grammar of visual design came from Gunther Kress and Theo Leeuwen. In looking over the material, I determined that information could help my students look at the paneled images individually and

read them collectively. I provided an overview of their guidelines and modeled how various images employed the criteria. Then I reserved a computer lab and directed the students to websites where they could view images and apply a criterion that they had decided to specialize in. The students returned from the lab and reported to their peers. Then, I modeled the ways in which the criteria could be used when applied to the work in *Maus*. The students engaged in reading sessions where they performed the application and then moved to analysis by connecting the themes that emerged from the application of the elements of visual grammar. Doing this helped the students take up the symbolism of the animals in *Maus*. My favorite day reading with the students was when I showed them a sequence of panels in which the characters are riding on a train and the images place us (as readers) outside the train looking in at them. Then the panels smash cut to a large panel in which, suddenly, we as readers are on the train with the characters looking out at a statue. The students and I took a lot of time to talk about why the perspective change might have taken place and what happens when readers are positioned and repositioned by authors.

Another graphic text that I did not set out to teach, but ended up supporting students in reading, was *Watchmen* (Moore and Gibbons). Several honors English students read it within a common time frame and then requested space for discussing it among themselves in class. Another group of older boys who I had taught in previous years had discovered it on their own and passed around a copy. During that year, several of these former students came to visit me and wanted to ask questions about this text. They were interested in the ways in which relational patterns of the characters were communicated. They could sense that there were patterns in those interactions around sex, violence, and social disruption that were supposed to parallel and deconstruct broader thematic messages, but they lacked the background knowledge and the experience in literary analysis to merge character action and theme efficiently. I was glad that I had read it, as it made it easier to navigate their questions in ways that their parents were unlikely to be disturbed by.

Just when I thought that I was making headway on learning to teach graphic novels, manga came my way. Manga is a Japanese incarnation of comics imported to Japan from France (Toku). These texts

are touted to feature mostly young adults in real-life situations and the accompanying drawings are about conveying emotions and not necessarily action (McCloud). My students enjoyed *Naruto* (Kishimoto) so much that all 36 volumes of the series disappeared in one school year, amounting to a \$360 loss. Students also enjoyed *Fullmetal Alchemist* (Arakawa). I only bought the first twelve volumes.

A former student recommended that I add another series called *Death Note* (Ohba), of which there are ten volumes and a companion novel. Currently, this series contains the most frequently checked out books in my library. It is about a boy named Light Nagami who finds a Shinigami notebook that he can use to kill people by writing their names in it. Guiding a young person through that text would involve more than doing anticipatory sets such as "write a story about how you dealt with an enemy" or reading William Blake's "The Poison Tree" to make a classical connection. *Death Note* is the story of a fallen man. It takes equivalent instructional energy to teach with this text as it does to teach Charlotte Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, two books with similarly dark, enigmatic men.

Lingering Thoughts

I have around 200 graphic novels in my classroom at the writing of this article, and close to 80 volumes of manga. I have spent large portions of my weekend reading and selecting these texts for my classroom. I have wrestled for grant money to buy graphic novels and purchased them myself on multiple occasions. I pride myself on giving my students choices in their reading that include graphic novels and other forms of graphica, and I model reading them in the front of the classroom.

Teachers deserve to know that learning to engage with new literacies is difficult, the road is long, and the rewards may be few. Since I began, however, I have found graphic texts have engaged students' interests in reading and they have helped both sophisticated and novice readers to develop discursive skills. If I gave a workshop about using graphic novels in class, it might be called something like "Why Teaching Graphic Novels Is Exhausting, Expensive, and Potentially Professionally Perilous, but You Ought to Consider Doing It Anyway." It is my hope that a so-named presentation would draw a crowd. 

Works Cited

- Arakawa, Hiromu. *Full Metal Alchemist* (Vol. 1). San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2005. Print.
- Blake, William. *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*. 1789. New York: Dover, 1992. Print.
- Boatright, Michael D. "Graphic Journeys: Graphic Novels' Representations of Immigrant Experiences." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53.6 (2010): 468–76. Print.
- Brontë, Charlotte. *Wuthering Heights*. New York: Random, 1943. Print.
- Bucher, Katharine T., and M. Lee Manning. "Bringing Graphic Novels into a School's Curriculum." *The Clearing House* 70.2 (2004): 67–72. Print.
- Chun, Christian. "Critical Literacies and Graphic Novels for English-Language Learners: Teaching 'Maus.'" *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53.2 (2009): 144–53. Print.
- Cleaver, Samantha. "Comics and Graphic Novels." *Instructor* 117.6 (2008): 28–33. Print.
- Coard, Robert L. "The Comic Book in Perspective." *Peabody Journal of Education* 33.1 (1955): 18–22. Print.
- Conroy, Pat. "Red Hots vs. Chili Cheese Dogs at The Varsity in Atlanta." 2009. Web. 26 Jan. 2012. <http://www.patconroy.com/articles_parade.php>.
- Dorrell, Larry, Dan Curtis, and Kuldip Rampal. "Bookworms without Books? Students Reading Comic Books in the Schoolhouse." *Journal of Popular Culture* 29.2 (1995): 223–35. Print.
- Edginton, Ian. *HG Wells' War of the Worlds*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse Comics, 2006. Print.
- Edwards, Buffy. "Motivating Middle School Readers: The Graphic Novel Link." *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 25.8 (2009): 56–58. Print.
- Emans, Robert. "Treasure Island: The Classic and the Classic Comic." *The Elementary School Journal* 60.5 (1960): 253–57. Print.
- Fisher, Douglas, and Nancy Frey. "Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet in an Urban High School." *English Journal* 93.3 (2004): 19–25. Print.
- Gorman, Michelle. "Graphic Novels Rule! The Latest and Greatest for Young Kids." *School Library Journal* 54.3 (2008): 42–49. Print.
- Guzzetti, Barbara. "A Content Analysis of Forensics Comic Books and Graphic Novels: Implications for Instruction." *59th Yearbook of the National Reading Conference*. Ed. Robert Jimenez, Victoria Risko, Melanie Hundley, and Deborah Wells Rowe. Oak Creek: National Reading Conference, 2010. 90–101. Print.
- Haynes, Elizabeth. "Getting Started with Graphic Novels in School Libraries." *Library Media Connection* 27.4 (2009): 10–12. Print.
- Heaney, Seamus. *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*. New York: Norton, 2001. Print.
- Kishimoto, Masashi. *Naruto*. San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2003. Print.
- Kress, Gunther, and Theo Leeuwen. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Martin, Adam. "Graphic Novels in the Classroom." *Library Media Connection* 28.2 (2009): 30–31. Print.
- McCloud, Scott. *Making Comics: Storytelling Secrets of Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels*. New York: Harper, 2006. Print.
- Moore, Alan, and Dave Gibbons. *Watchmen*. New York: DC Comics, 1995. Print.
- Ohba, Tsugumi. *Death Note*. San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2005. Print.
- Pedersen, Michael. "Comix at 100: Still Growing." *Publisher's Weekly* 242.24 (1995): 32. Print.
- Read, Herbert. "Education through Art—A Revolutionary Policy." *Art Education* 8.7 (1955): 3–17. Print.
- Rodin, Judith. "Cultural and Psychosocial Determinants of Weight Concerns." *National Institutes of Health Technology and Assessment* 119.7 (2003): 643–45. Print.
- Seyfried, Jonathan. "Reinventing the Book Club: Graphic Novels as Educational Heavyweights." *Knowledge Quest* 36.3 (2008): 44–48. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. New York: Simon, 1994. Print.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*. New York: Holt, 2009. Print.
- Simmons, Tabitha. "Comic Books in My Library?" *PNLA Quarterly* 67.3 (2003): 12–20. Print.
- Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. New York: Pantheon, 1995. Print.
- Stoker, Bram, and Michael Mucci. *All Action Classics No. 1: Dracula*. New York: Sterling, 2008. Print.
- Toku, Masami. "What Is Manga? The Influence of Pop Culture on Adolescent Art." *Art Education* 54.2 (2001): 11–17. Print.
- Vacca, Carlos. "Comic Books as a Teaching Tool." *Hispania* 42.2 (1959): 291–92. Print.
- Viadero, Debra. "Scholars See Comics as No Laughing Matter." *Education Week* 28.21 (2009): 1–2. Print.
- Yang, Gene Luen. *American Born Chinese*. New York: Square Fish, 2006. Print.

Mary Rice, a junior high school language arts, reading support, and ESL teacher, was the 2008 Utah Bilingual Teacher of the Year. Mary is also an adjunct faculty member in the McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, with research interests in teacher identity, teacher thinking, adolescent literacy, and English learners' literacy. Her book *Adolescent Boys' Literate Identity* was published in 2011 by Emerald Press. Email her at mary.rice@nebo.edu.

READWRITETHINK CONNECTION

The ReadWriteThink.org podcast episode "An Introduction to Graphic Novels" presents some background about graphic novels and recommends fantasy epics, memoirs, biographies, and adventure thriller stories—all in graphic novel form. <http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/podcast-episodes/introduction-graphic-novels-30326.html>

Lisa Storm Fink, RWT