

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT GRAPHIC NOVELS

What are graphic novels?

A “graphic novel” is basically a format rather than a genre (like science fiction or romance). It indicates that a book-length story has been told using a sequence of images and text (usually in boxes or bubbles). Graphic novels can be collections of comic strips (like *Calvin and Hobbes*), serialized stories (like *Ultimate Spider-Man*), or one book-length story (like *Maus*). Even though they are called graphic novels, these books can be fiction or nonfiction—ranging from tales about superheroes, mysteries, or fantasies, to history, science, or memoirs.

Why are there graphic novels in the library?

They are fun to read. They support literacy skills, both verbal and visual. They interest struggling and non-motivated readers. They interest gifted readers.

If young people read graphic novels, won't they develop a “comic-book mentality?”

Providing children and teens with a wide range of reading experiences, including picture books, novels, biographies, how-to-books, and graphic novels increases their chances of higher academic achievement.

According to Jim Trelease, the author of *The Read Aloud Handbook*, “Comics are a frequent choice of people who grow up to become fluent readers.” Indeed, Cynthia Rylant and Ray Bradbury, as well as Nobel Peace Prize winner South African Bishop Desmond Tutu, were avid comic readers as children.

Do they have “literary merit?”

Like all formats, some graphic novels have more literary merit than others. Unfortunately, titles that contain shocking images or words often get more “air time” than those which are simply “good reads.”

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* won a Pulitzer Prize for “Special Awards and Citations – Letters” in 1992. The Pulitzer committee created a special award due to the book's combination of literary and artistic merit.

Are graphic novels only for adults and older teens?

A lot of graphic novels are written for an adult audience. The graphic novel is largely an “outsider” literary form, which means that it has existed outside of mainstream books and publishing. It is often edgy and may explore themes shied away from by mainstream authors.

There is increasing array of titles available that are age appropriate for children and teens. We have listed several of them here.

We encourage you to talk with your children about what they are reading and to ask the librarian for assistance in finding the right books for you and your family.

What are Manga and Anime?

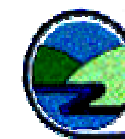
Generally, anime means Japanese animation and manga refers to printed Japanese animation, or graphic novels. Japan has a strong tradition of anime and manga, written for both adult and younger audiences. *Oh My Goddess* and *The Kindaichi Case Files* are two manga series for teens. Manga and anime have been gaining popularity in the United States for several years. Some manga series retain this orientation when they are translated and printed in the United States. This is why some books seem to open back to front. Learning to read these can be a challenge.

Do you have more questions about graphic novels?

Please ask your librarian!

GRAPHIC NOVELS

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



The Finger Lakes Library System stimulates, coordinates and strengthens library and information services in Cayuga, Cortland, Seneca, Tioga and Tompkins counties. Please visit us online at <http://www.flls.org/>.

RECOMMENDED TITLES

Here is a list of some of the graphic novels available for borrowing from your library or interlibrary loan from other libraries in the Finger Lakes Library System.

Suggested reading ages are included in brackets. These range from **E** (elementary), **M** (middle school, grades 6–8), to **H** (high school, grades 9-12). Some titles will be enjoyed across the ages, while others are more appropriate, due to theme, format, or content to a specific age group. Titles are listed in alphabetical order.

The suggested reader's ages are recommendations only. Each child and teen is different, and what is appropriate for one may be inappropriate for another. We encourage you to help guide your child or teen to the books that will best suit him or her. We are happy to make further recommendations for you and your family—just ask!

Suggested reading ages:

[E] = recommended for elementary school-aged readers

[M] = recommended for middle school-aged readers

[H] = recommended for high school-aged and more mature readers

Amelia Rules: The Whole World's Crazy. By Jimmy Gownley.

When her parents divorce and she moves to a new town, Amelia's world turns upside down. [E]

Astro City. (Series) By Kurt Busiek.

In Astro City, superheroes have the same troubles as everyone else—not enough time, and too much to do. [M, H]

Bone. (Series) By Jeff Smith.

After being run out of Boneville, the three Bone cousins find their way into a deep, forested valley filled with wonderful and terrifying creatures. [M, H]

Calvin & Hobbes. (Series) By Bill Waterson.

A modern comic classic, Calvin and his stuffed (?) tiger find lots of trouble and fun. [E, M, H]

Days Like This. By J. Torres.

Tina and her friends are on the verge of breaking into the music business. [M, H]

Electric Girl. By Michael Brennan.

Virginia, the Electric Girl, can release electricity from her body at will. But she also has a friend, Oogleoog, an invisible gremlin who is always making trouble. [M, H]

Good-bye, Chunky Rice. By Craig

Thompson.

The time has come for Chunky Rice to leave the place he knows to find the place he belongs. [H]

Herobear and the Kid. By Mike Gunkel. When his grandfather dies, Tyler inherits a broken watch and a stuffed bear... and a load of adventure. [E, M]

Little Lit: It Was a Dark and Silly Night.

Edited by Art Spiegelman.

It was a dark and silly night... Lemony Snicket, Barbara McClintock, William Joyce and others tell us what happened next. [E, M]

Oh My Goddess. (Series) By Kosuke

Fujishima.

College student Keiichi finds himself running a motorcycle club and dating the goddess, Belldandy. [M, H]

The Ultimate Spider-Man. (Series) By

Brian Bendis.

Peter Parker and the battle of good vs. evil, web-style. [M, H]

Usagi Yojimbo. (Series) By Stan Sakai.

An adaptation of samurai legend to sequential art, and a parable of sixteenth-century Japan. [M, H]

The Kindaichi Case Files. (Series) By

Yozaburo Kanari.

Kindaichi is a young Sherlock Holmes who, to the grudging relief of the police, solves crimes—from grizzly to bizarre. [H]

For mature readers:

Maus: A Survivor's Tale. By Art

Spiegelman.

This is a Pulitzer Prize winning-memoir of the author's father, Vladek, a survivor of Hitler's Europe. [H]

Persepolis. By Majane Satrapi.

The great-granddaughter of Iran's last emperor and the daughter of ardent Marxists describes growing up in Tehran in a country plagued by political upheaval. [H]