



Selecting Graphic Novels for the School or Classroom Library

Selecting graphic novels is primarily student-interest focused but be aware of the vast array of high-quality literature available in an array of genres, topics, interests, and styles. Like picture books, give equal consideration to the illustrations. Hopefully, your school has a collection policy in place. Use that as a selection instrument as well as the questions below.

Consider the following when selecting graphic novels, both individual books as well as considerations for the whole collection,

1. Audience, Age, Appropriateness

- *What is the recommended audience age for this book? (Use only professional resources.)*
- *Offensive material might be found in the illustrations so consider: What standards for images does your collection policy contain and does this book meet those standards?*
- *Overall, is this graphic novel appropriate for my library collection?*

2. Sensitive Material

- *There are multiple considerations about what may be considered offensive in a graphic novel's content: is there language, sexual content, or the book's theme/topic overall, that is offensive?*
- *A graphic novel may contain violence, so it is important to consider the context of that content: is the violence intrinsic to the story, contributing to meaningful exploration or simply included to exploit for shock value?*
- *Does the book contain violent scenes (particularly gratuitous violence) or sexual content?*
- *Does the graphic novel contain any harmful stereotypes? (e.g., homophobia, racism, sexism)*



3. Literary Merit and Content

- *What is the tone or mood of this book? Has this book won literary awards?*
- *What have reviewers written on this book? Do these reviews offer deeper literary perspectives?*
- *How does this graphic novel offer literary contributions to your school or classroom?*
- *Does the author’s voice ring true? Look for examples.*
- *Does this graphic novel offer original and/or unique perspectives on the book’s subject(s)? Look for examples.*
- *Does this graphic novel, as a multimodal text, add layered meanings to content in image and words?*

4. Student Interest

- *What is the student appeal of this graphic novel? Will students want to engage in this content?*
- *Will this book be read for personal interest or something else?*
- *Are there popular graphic novelists or graphic novel series that your students enjoy that may have additional titles to consider?*
- *Are there graphic novels on all topics your students have requested?*
- *How might this graphic novel book support English learners, new to learning English?*

5. Diverse Perspectives

- *Does the subject matter in this book contribute new ideas and perspectives to your library or classroom collection?*
- *Does this book appeal to a unique demographic of students that may have otherwise been overlooked?*
- *Does this book reflect your school’s population as well as the broader society?*
- *Does this title broaden the range of ideas and information for your students?*
- *Is this book being considered for your collection simply to “fill a void” or does it truly contribute to diverse perspectives?*
- *Have you considered the diverse interest and popularity of graphic novels?*



6. Authorship

- *What do you know about the book's author and illustrator?*
- *Are they graphic novelists of interest to the students in your school?*
- *What awards or contributions to the field has this author and/or illustrator made?*

7. Curriculum Connections

- *Are there curriculum connections beyond ELA that perhaps teachers have not considered connecting graphic novels with, such as math and science?*
- *Is there content for which this graphic novel can supplement or enhance the curriculum?*

8. Visual Literacy and Illustrations Styles.

- *What illustration style is used in this book?*
- *Do the illustrations provide vivid detail to enhance the storyline?*
- *In what graphic novel is this book published: an anthology, a collection on one theme, by one or multiple authors?*
- *Look closely at how characters are portrayed to ensure healthy and realistic depiction—for example, are women's bodies drawn realistically or are they exploited for allure?*

9. Graphic Novel Series Considerations

- *Is this book one in a series? If so, will you be committing to all books in the series? (Before committing to the purchase of an entire series, spend some previewing and inquiring from student interest surveys.)*

10. Practical Perspectives and Personal Bias

- *Do you have personal biases being addressed in your selection of graphic novels?*
- *What is it that you want your students to learn or take away from reading this graphic novel?*
- *Where did you hear about this book and how has the book been received by other professionals in the field?*



- Does the cost of the book warrant purchase, and does this book contribute to more than one of the previous selection considerations?

11. Schoolwide Interest

- Will this book contribute to the school's overall educational goals?
- Are there groups/clubs to which this book might appeal or be used?
- Are there holidays or cultural celebrations the school engages in which this book can play a part?
- What poetic forms are part of the school's curriculum? Does this book contribute to those forms?

12. Considerations for the graphic novel collection, overall.

- Is your graphic novel collection primarily humorous books? By the nature of comics, graphic novels are often humorous (thus appealing to high numbers of readers); does this book offer an alternative mood or tone to diversify the graphic novel collection?
- What trusted professional review sites have you searched for seeking high quality graphic novels?
- Does your graphic novel collection include versions of classic literature to provide alternative formats for student preference, particularly those titles read in your school?
- What content is studied in the school's ELA curriculum for which you can select graphic novels?
- Who to consult if there is pushback from parents (and even fellow teachers) for adding graphic novels to the school library or class collection?
- Have you considered variety in historical perspectives for your graphic novel collection?
- If this is a graphic novel version of classic literature, what will it add to the collection?
- What topics and themes would you like graphic novels to contribute to your collection?