

## ABSTRACT

### Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy

Amanda M. Walker, Ed.D.

Mentor: Gretchen E. Schwarz, Ph.D.

In order to address the current concerns about traditional literacy skills as well as the call for a new set of skills referred to as *new literacies*, the researcher chose to investigate the use of graphic novels with a group of 14 eighth grade minority students during a four week workshop. The workshop used a gradual build-up of graphic works and literacy skills to help students understand the format and new literacies before moving on to more advanced texts and tasks. The workshop culminated in students creating their own graphic works. The findings were reported in a six student case study describing students' comments and attitudes concerning the texts and activities utilized during the workshop as well as demonstrations of literacy skills in students' work. The researcher found that graphic novels can be appealing, interesting, and motivating to middle school students while assisting them in utilizing both traditional and new literacy skills. Additionally, it seems that both students and teachers may benefit from instruction concerning all forms of graphica, the conventions of this medium, and skills that can be developed as a result of interacting with such texts.

Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy

by

Amanda M. Walker, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction

---

Larry J. Browning, Ed.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Doctor of Education

Approved by the Dissertation Committee

---

Gretchen E. Schwarz, Ph.D., Chairperson

---

Brooke E. Blevins, Ph.D.

---

Suzanne J. Nesmith, Ph.D.

---

Betty J. Conaway, Ph.D.

---

Gregory T. Garrett, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School  
August 2013

---

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Copyright © 2013 by Amanda M. Walker

All rights reserved

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables.....	vii
Acknowledgments.....	viii
 CHAPTER ONE.....	 1
Introduction.....	1
Problem.....	3
Theoretical Framework.....	9
Purpose of the Study.....	10
Research Questions.....	11
Overview of the Study.....	11
Significance of the Study.....	15
Limitations and Ethical Considerations.....	17
Definition of Terms.....	18
Summary.....	19
 CHAPTER TWO.....	 21
Review of Literature.....	21
The Current State of Literacy.....	21
New Literacies and Theoretical Framework.....	26
Graphic Novels.....	31
A Short History.....	31
Current Use of Graphic Novels.....	34
Other Research on Graphic Novels.....	39
Summary.....	44
 CHAPTER THREE.....	 45
Methodology.....	45
Research Design.....	46
Population and Sample.....	51
Data Collection.....	54
Questionnaires.....	54
Observations and Notes.....	55
Student Work.....	56
Interviews.....	57
Data analysis.....	58

Trustworthiness.....	61
Conclusion.....	62
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>63</b>
Results and Findings.....	63
Research Questions.....	64
Methodology.....	64
General Information.....	65
Student Participants.....	65
Michelle.....	65
Joe.....	66
John.....	66
Jacob.....	67
Rosa.....	67
Maria.....	68
What Prior Knowledge and Attitudes Do Students Have about Graphic Novels?.....	69
What Can Students Learn from Graphic Novels?.....	71
Which Traditional Literacies Are Developed by Using Graphic Novels?.....	73
What New Literacy Skills Can Students Develop by Using Graphic Novels?.....	76
Additional Wonderings?.....	80
What Literacy Skills Can Students Develop in Creating Graphic Novels?.....	82
Summary of Findings.....	86
<b>CHAPTER FIVE.....</b>	<b>88</b>
Summary, Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations.....	88
Summary of Study.....	88
Questions.....	90
Discussion and Implications.....	90
Limitations.....	106
Recommendations.....	108
Concluding Remarks.....	110
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>112</b>
Appendix A.....	113
Appendix B.....	114
Appendix C.....	119
Appendix D.....	120
Appendix E.....	128
Appendix F.....	129
Appendix G.....	130
Appendix H.....	131

Appendix I .....	132
Appendix J .....	133
Appendix K .....	134
Appendix L .....	136
Appendix M .....	138
Appendix N .....	139
Appendix O .....	141
Appendix P .....	142
Appendix Q .....	143
Appendix R .....	149
REFERENCES .....	151

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Workshop Activities.....	48
2	Research Questions – Assessment Tools.....	59
3	Data Analysis.....	61
4	Literacy Skills – Activities.....	72
5	Traditional Literacy Skills Rubric.....	74
6	Progress in New Literacy Skills.....	77

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have so many people who were important during this process. First off, I need to thank the Lord for giving me all of the chance meetings, opportunities, and other open doors to get to this place and for placing in my life all of the people I am about to thank. I am thankful for my committee who offered suggestions and positive feedback along the way. I am especially thankful for Dr. Schwarz who has been exceedingly patient, willing to work on things on super short timelines, and a great mentor throughout the program.

I owe a huge thanks to my family and close friends who have supported me, encouraged me, and motivated me to finish this work.

To my Momma: Thank you for immense support and encouragement along the way and for providing the perfect example of a strong, hard-working, and poised woman. I love you!

To my Daddy: Thank you for bringing normalcy to my life that sometimes seems otherwise and for giving me the best piece of advice that went something like this, “Well, if putting your all into it and having it rejected is upsetting, put in your half effort, turn it in, and be ready for the corrections. At least then it isn’t so bad.” I needed that more than you know. I love you!

The rest of my family was instrumental in providing support and love along the way as well.

To my close friends: Thank you for the food and the cards along the way. Both are quick ways to my heart! I needed all of the encouragement, cheering up, and calming down that you provided on this journey.

To my graduate student colleagues at Baylor: Thank you all for the support, the conversations, the meals, and the laughs along the way. This journey would not have been possible without each of you.

I am grateful for my little surprise blessing, Peanut: Just by being alive you have kept me on task, on schedule, and helped me persevere through things I did not think I could handle.

And to Billy: As usual, our timing was rotten, but what we have is so sweet! Special thanks go to my nephew, Ethan. I said when I started the program, “It won’t take that long, I’ll be a doctor by the time Ethan starts kindergarten.” We made it!

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The gap between the literacy skills that students are taught and the ones they need in their day-to-day lives is ever increasing. In addition to the traditional literacy skills that continue to be essential as students interact with print texts, there are emerging needs in students' other skill sets as well. As students continue to increase the time spent on the internet, playing video games, and interacting with other highly visual media, the skills they need to decode and comprehend these media also continue to grow. What can educators do to help strengthen these skills?

Although Teale, Paciga, and Hoffman (2007) stated that the federal funding allocated to improve reading instruction in the primary grades is around one billion dollars per year, students' reading problems persist. The body of research about adolescent reading deficiencies, in particular, continues to grow (Hall, 2005, 2009; Krashen, 2009; Skerrett, 2012; Teale et al., 2007), even though the programs and methods to eradicate such deficiencies seem to be ever increasing. In fact, "Approximately eight million students in grades four through twelve have difficulty reading on grade level with many older students in need of remedial assistance" (Harmon, Hedrick, Wood, & Vintinner, 2011, p. 105). Such remedial programs may come in the form of Direct Instruction System for Teaching Arithmetic and Reading (DISTAR), Phonological and Strategy Training (PHAST), Reading Recovery, Reading Apprenticeship, Read 180 Program, Plugged into Reading Program, Sheltered Instruction

Observation Protection, the Academy Reading Program, Voyager, and others (Harmon et al., 2011; Quirk, 2004). In response to scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, Paige (2012) commented, “Clearly, reading achievement at the eighth-grade level suggests that the majority of students will not be able to process adequately more advanced texts in high school thus leading to inadequate preparedness for college and career-readiness . . .” (p. 55). Why do today’s youth have this lack of skills? What can teachers do to help students overcome such difficulties?

As a teacher of remedial reading in a rural high school in central Louisiana, I gained firsthand experience in just how deep the problem runs. My first semester of teaching, I was deeply shocked by the lack of not only reading skills, but also the ambivalence of my students towards reading and school in general. I fondly recalled my summer breaks when my mom would bring home stacks of library books every other week, and I would spend the majority of the day escaping the blazing heat by curling up with a book. I would impatiently wait for my mom to come home on library day to see what treasures she had brought me. My students, however, were not only uneager to read any size books, but also unwilling. I brought in a variety of genres, topics, and levels of books to no avail. I tried everything from creating a reading corner with bean bags, a carpet, and lamps to requiring a daily reading assignment the first 30 minutes of class. However, the majority of my students resisted. It was at a workshop put on by Dr. Janet Allen that I first heard about graphic novels. She spoke about their popularity and value in the classroom and even gave each workshop participant a few to take back to the classroom. After that, I began to utilize graphic novels and comic books in my classroom

as a resource to get students excited and interested in reading. Some students were still uninterested, but some were excited and even asked for more comic books, manga, and graphic novels to fill their reading time. In the time since I left the public school classroom and rejoined the university classroom, I have had the opportunity to explore the use of graphic novels in the classroom on a much deeper level. In addition to reading research and other teachers' accounts of using graphic novels to enhance literacy interests and multiple skills, I have also used graphic novels in my own interactions with students through various afterschool and summer programs. As graphic novels continue to grow in popularity and availability, the possibilities for including them in the classroom also grow.

The increasing popularity of graphic novels demands the attention of today's educators. Students seem to be inexplicably drawn to the format of graphic novels, but can they be used to benefit students in the classroom? This study sought to discover how using graphic novels can be beneficial to learners and what literacy skills can be developed as a result of utilizing graphic novels in an educational setting.

### *Problem*

The literacy needs of today's learners are different from those of the past. Students need to possess both traditional literacy skills as well as new literacy skills. Today's students are influenced by images and visual representation in a manner that has been unparalleled. Lavin (1998) suggested that learners today are barraged regularly by visual stimulations in the form of TV, video games, advertisements, and other hyper visual media. In order to effectively assess and respond to such images, students need to develop additional skill sets, a new form of literacy. If schools are to prepare students to

be productive citizens in today's global society, they must be armed with the skills necessary to address the images and media with which they are faced today. According to Seglem and Witte (2009), "No longer are the abilities to read and write in a linear, left-to-right fashion the sole indicators of successful communications. Rather, the world is made up of visual symbols that require more complex thinking skills than traditional literacy requires" (p. 216). What it means to be literate is changing, which means that the skills students need are new ones that may have never been addressed in their educational experience. Burmark (2008) asserted, ". . . the primary literacy of the twenty-first century is visual. It is no longer enough to read and write text. Our students must learn to process both word *and* pictures" (p. 5). The author continued, "They must be able to move gracefully and fluently between text and images, between literal and figurative worlds" (p. 5). Students must be taught this new form of literacy and have experiences that will guide them to decode and comprehend the multitude of images, sounds, and sensory interactions with which they are faced on a day to day basis. The development of these skills is essential in order for students to be successful not only in the classroom, but also in their everyday lives. Seglem and Witte (2009) concurred, stating,

If educators want students to perform well in both the world and on new assessments, students need a critical understanding of print and non print texts in relationship to themselves as readers and viewers within different social, cultural, and historical contexts. (pp. 216-217)

Additionally, Gorman (2003) contended that because of their comfort and reliance upon technology, today's youth feel at ease with visual media and are more likely to read a combination of text and images, such as those in graphic novels and other forms of *graphica* (see definition of terms). Although the ultimate goal of this study was to have students read, interpret, and create graphic novels, the research began by introducing the

students to more simple forms of graphica. This decision was made following the advice of Versaci (2008), “Because visuals can be complicated or overwhelming, teaching visual literacy is a tricky operation, and teachers should move students through a series of assignments that become more and more challenging” (Versaci, 2008, p. 97).

In an ever changing world, educators must be aware of emerging student interests as well as their needs and be willing to meet such needs by adapting their pedagogy and classroom materials. Seglem and Witte (2009) asserted,

Just as classrooms and students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century look very different than those of centuries before, so too must the curriculum change. Teachers can prepare students for today’s changing world by introducing texts of all types into the learning environment. (p. 223)

As students are more commonly bombarded by images that require specific skills to decode, there is a new need for teachers to address. Seglem and Witte (2009) proposed, “By teaching students how to critically read and view all texts, not just the traditional print texts, teachers can build upon the skills needed to read and write, increasing students’ literacy levels in all areas” (p. 224). In a world that is dominated by visual images and an increasingly faster pace of living, perhaps a shift towards a medium that is soaked in images may be the most logical one for the English classroom. While the classics no doubt are still valuable in such classrooms, there is a newer medium that appeals to readers and may even help them develop new literacies that are a necessity in today’s world, as well as traditional print literacy.

Perhaps by including in the classroom a format that makes use of images that students are used to, educators can also connect to students’ interests and make learning more applicable to their lives outside of school. Carter (2009) reminded readers that,

Reading specialists and scholars speak again and again to the need for authentic reading and writing experiences, textual investigations that help bridge the gap between the school world and the lived world, between narrow notions of what it means to be literate and broad notions of what it means to actually succeed as an intelligent adult in contemporary society. (p. 72)

One way to include authentic texts is to employ texts that make use of the familiar, such as images. Graphic novels offer opportunities for students to practice the skills that are needed to work with other images they encounter on a daily basis in a nonthreatening format that seems familiar to them. Graphic novels also appeal to young adults by drawing them in quickly with images and presenting topics and conflicts that are familiar to them.

Unlike traditional books, graphic novels uniquely offer fast-paced action and conflict, through a combination of images and text, therefore making them 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)

Gorman (2003) continued that “Graphic novels address current, relevant, often complex social issues, such as nonconformity and prejudice as well as themes that are important to young people including coming of age, social injustices, and personal triumph over adversity” (p. 10). Similarly, McTaggart (2008) acceded, “The popularity of the graphic novel . . . is attributed to kids’ familiarity with the oft-featured superheroes, their passion for fantasy, action-packed story lines, visual appeal, and the attention graphic novels give to pop culture—what’s hot and what’s not” (p. 29). By attracting students with the appeal of a format that they are used to, and maintaining interest by honing in on topics that are engaging, graphic novels seem to demand the attention of both students and educators in today’s classrooms.

The use of graphic novels as a medium in the secondary classroom is an emerging phenomenon. Graphic novels cannot only motivate students to read, but require a kind of decoding that may be new to some students. It could be argued that using graphics for the reading process is a crutch that allows students to be lax in developing their reading skills; however, the skills needed to decode both an image and words requires an in depth understanding of how the two work together as well as deduction and inference skills. “Because graphic novels involve a synthesis between the words and art, they must be read and interpreted in an entirely different way” (Heffernan, 2009, p. 3). Students must incorporate both traditional and new literacy skills, such as identifying and understanding conventions of diverse media, in order to fully understand graphic novels.

Therefore, students are not only drawn to images and sequential art, but it is a medium that can be invaluable in teaching them the decoding, inference, and deductive skills needed to be literate in their everyday lives. Graphic novels

. . . offer a new kind of text for the classroom and they demand new reading abilities. . . . For students who no longer deal with pure word texts in their daily lives, multiple literacies are a necessity. Schools must prepare young people to think critically with and about all kinds of texts. (Schwarz, 2006, p. 63)

In addition to piquing students’ interest, graphic novels can be used to develop new literacy skills as well as traditional ones. The element of reading the words is only one of the many skills utilized during the *reading* of graphic novels.

Additionally, after students have grasped the basic conventions of this medium, they can utilize this knowledge to create their own works. In creating graphic novels, students utilize their writing skills in a unique way and develop their voice as authors. Carter (2007c) described a classroom in which students created their own graphica by stating, “. . . they develop a sense of writing as both telling and showing, and perhaps

equally important, as developing their own voice simultaneously in multiple planes” (p. 151). Students must consider both the impact and comprehensibility of their words, the images, and how the two work together to complete the meaning. These considerations require different knowledge and consideration from students than they might use in simply authoring a narrative. By providing students with knowledge about the conventions of the media, information about how such media are produced, in addition to allowing them the opportunity to produce their own creation, educators are enabling students to become more developed writers. Carter (2007c) asserted,

A little knowledge about how comics and graphic novels are produced provides an intrinsically entertaining means by which students learn to improve their written work, their sense of voice, and their ability to both tell and show their ideas to others. (p. 152)

Similarly, Hughes and King (2010) remarked, “The creation of graphic novels requires the use of multiliteracies on the part of the author and artist, using intertwined words and images to evoke emotions, sounds, descriptions, and conversations” (p. 74). Allowing students to not only read graphic novels, but to create their own allows them the opportunity to cultivate their composing skills and mature their writing voices. As students peruse graphic novels, which may be so popular because of their visual aspect, many of the elements of both the art and traditional texts must be taken into account.

To read and interpret graphic novels, students have to pay attention to the usual literary elements of character, plot, and dialogue, and they also have to consider visual elements such as color, shading, panel layout, perspective, and even the lettering style. (Schwarz, 2006, p. 59)

### *Theoretical Framework*

The research was guided by the premise of new literacies, which is also referred to as multimodal literacy or multiliteracies. In this study, those terms were used to refer to what Kist (2005) called the pedagogy of multiliteracies which

. . . suggests that students need to know all of the Available Designs that can be used to “write” in all contexts and that depriving students of the designs that should be available to them deprives them of a seat at the table of literacies in this increasingly multimodal society. (p. 11)

As the number of new types of texts and media that students encounter and must decode and comprehend grows, so does the list of skills needed to do so effectively. Jacobs (2007) described students’ engagement with texts on five design elements: linguistic, audio, visual, gestural, and special modes. All of these modes must be employed to make meaning of some texts and media that students encounter. Additionally, Jacobs (2007) contended that students need a high level of visual literacy in order to recognize and deconstruct the shading, use of white space, facial expressions of characters, composition, panel layout and other aspects of graphica. Visual literacy can be described as “. . . the ability to understand and use images, including the ability to think, learn and express oneself in terms of images” (Braden & Hortin 1982 as cited in Seglem & Witte, 2009, p. 217). As students continue to have more visual experiences outside of the classroom—via Facebook, YouTube, video games, movies, and other venues—their need for visual literacy grows. Graphic novels offer the opportunity for the fostering of such literacies. Hughes and King (2010) contended,

. . . the increasing availability of graphic novels provides adolescent readers with opportunities to engage with a medium that complements the literacies required by the kinds of multiple media platforms many of them are immersed in daily, such as MSN, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. MSN and Twitter require truncated words creating signs and symbols in the place of standard English;

YouTube uses visual images in the form of videos; and FaceBook (sic) allows users to mesh images, videos, words, signs, and links to external sites. (pp. 65-66)

Literacy, by definition, is changing. The skills that have been taught and utilized in the past are no longer sufficient for today's learners. In order to be successful in today's world, students need to be equipped on a new level of literacy. "One thing shared by those who teach and research new/multiple literacies, however, is the sense that 'literacy' can no longer be contained in the narrow, standardized reading test scores cherished by NCLB" (Schwarz, 2010, p. 73). In order to prepare students in this way, teachers must think outside of the box and be prepared to meet learners' needs in new ways. Graphic novels may provide a solution to these problems. Hull (2003) insisted,

In these new times, I want to suggest, a familiarity with the full range of communicative tools, modes, and media, plus an awareness of and a sensitivity to the power and importance of representation of self and others, along with the space and support to communicate critically, aesthetically, lovingly, and agentively—these are paramount for literacy now. (p. 230)

If education wishes to keep up with the interests, real life experiences, and needs of learners, then changes to the curriculum and classroom practices must be made. Simply teaching skills that may be promoted by and tested on state created assessments is not enough. Graphic novels are a unique medium that have potential for students to develop deeper and more diverse literacy skills; therefore, more research in utilizing this medium in an educational setting is required.

### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this case study was to discover if graphic novels are beneficial to students' literacy development, and in what areas of literacy. The study described the use of graphic novels for developing traditional and new literacies in secondary students at a

Central Texas middle school. The use of case study allowed the researcher to examine and describe how students interacted with the text and what methods/skills they seemed to employ while doing so. Although Carter (2008) claimed, “The research suggesting that mixing words and images (what most comics and graphic novels do skillfully) is a great way to foster comprehension and memory skills is bountiful” (p. 48), he also maintained that, “What is needed is more evidence from researchers that graphic novels improve literacy skills” (Carter, 2007a, p. 13). In order to fulfill this call for research, the following questions were asked.

#### *Research Questions*

- What prior knowledge and attitudes do students have about graphic novels?
- What can students learn from graphic novels?
  - A. How can graphic novels be used to develop traditional literacies?
  - B. How can graphic novels be used to develop new literacies?
  - C. What literacy skills can students develop in creating graphic novels?

#### *Overview of the Study*

An extracurricular program was implemented during middle school students’ elective classes, during which time they met with the teacher researcher instead of attending their regular classes. During this time period, students interacted with graphic novels and different types of graphica in order to develop multiple and traditional literacies. The program lasted approximately four weeks and was the same length as their regular class periods. This time frame allowed for an adequate introduction to the conventions of graphica and graphic novels as well as an adequate amount of time for

students to understand and utilize these conventions to begin creating their own graphic work. Hull (2003) commented,

Given the pressure to teach to state-mandated content standards and to test students' academic achievement defined as meeting those standards, and given the way in which such activities are tied to federal and state funding, teachers and schools are now very hard pressed to find space and time to think expansively about the interface of literacy, youth culture, multi-media, and identity. . . . Without denying the importance of traditional alphabetic literacies and test-certified credentials or the attractiveness of out-of-school support to help students acquire these, I want to call for alternative learning spaces centered on youth culture and new media and new literacies, both inside of schools and out. (p. 233)

Similarly, Kist (2005) stated that after-school programs are often more relaxed environments that move at a different pace and allow students to engage more deeply because of the lack of pressure that is often associated with fixed curriculum, state standards, and testing. Although working with the afterschool program was not an option due to lack of enrollment of students, the workshop time was set aside as non-classroom time, and activities were not for a grade. Students were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary and that they could drop out at any time without penalty. The research was conducted at a Central Texas middle school that has approximately 1,000 students enrolled. The school has a large minority population, which makes up between 90-95% of the student population. Access to the school was granted due to the previous relationship between the university and the school. The school is considered to be a Professional Development School, which means they have partnered with the local university to allow teaching candidates to work within the school as well as have the university provide assistance and training to their faculty and staff. Additionally, the researcher had worked within the school on multiple programs (after school tutoring, Learning English Among Friends, and through an introduction to education course) and

had a positive rapport with the current administration. Per the principal's suggestion, the instructional specialists at this Central Texas middle school were contacted in order to set up the details of the workshop and select participants. The instructional specialists on this campus all have advanced degrees, previous classroom experience, and assist other personnel in improving student achievement. The campus has three specialists who manage and analyze student data, evaluate and enhance curriculum, assist with professional development for staff, as well as provide other services to the school.

Participants were enlisted based upon their enrollment in an elective course during the workshop time, which was set by the principal based upon other factors concerning the school schedule. The students were also chosen based upon their need for literacy assistance. These students all scored on the pass/fail line of the last literacy checkpoint given by the school. Before the workshop, students met as a group with the researcher and were given basic details about the workshop as well as the option to participate or not to participate. A letter describing the workshop and permission slips were sent home with each student to be reviewed by the student and their parents or guardian (see Appendices A, B, and C). Only those students who returned the permission slips, which had been signed by both the student and a parent or guardian, were allowed to participate in the workshop.

A curriculum that was developed by the researcher (see lesson plans in Appendix D) was employed and excerpts from a variety of graphica were utilized to give students the greatest amount of exposure and comprehension of the medium before moving to more advanced graphic novels and creation of graphic works. Additionally, copies of the novel *Yummy* were provided for the group of students to read and keep for future reading.

The curriculum was developed and previously utilized by the researcher during a summer enrichment program. This program, which was voluntary, offered different enrichment courses to high school students who were enrolled in gifted and talented courses in the local school districts. Students could choose the courses in which they wished to participate and each course took place during an hour and a half session per day, lasted 10 days, for a total of 15 educational hours. Through this experience, the researcher determined that more time with students would be beneficial. The curriculum was developed by making use of a variety of research and activities that had been utilized in programs working with students and different media to enhance their literacy (Carter, 2007a; Gorman, 2003; Jacobs, 2007; Kist, 2005; McCloud, 1993; Monnin, 2010; Thompson, 2008).

Before the workshop began, the researcher worked with the instructional specialists at this Central Texas middle school to determine which students best met the criteria. Therefore, students who were available on the days of the workshop, who were in the eighth grade, who had an elective during third period, whose test scores revealed a gap in literacy skills, and who were interested in graphic novels were given preference. The researcher met with the students who were selected, explained to them the details of the workshop, and sent home an informative letter and permission slips (see Appendices A, B, and C). Throughout the workshop, students were given questionnaires (see Appendices E, F, G, and H). At the conclusion of the workshop, the researcher met with students individually to do semi-structured interviews (see Appendix I) to clarify information given on the questionnaires, ask additional information about the program, and explore their opinions of graphic novels. Interviews were conducted during the

workshop time. In addition, after the completion of the workshop, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the students' English teachers (see Appendix J).

Information gathered from the questionnaires, the interviews, and observing students' improvement on work tasks gave the researcher insight into what literacy skills were being used and developed due to interactions with *graphica* and graphic novels. For instance, evaluation 1 (see Appendix E) gave insight into students' prior knowledge about graphic novels. Additionally, evaluations two, three, and four (see Appendices F, G, and H) were designed to assist the researcher in evaluating students' metacognition and perceived skill usage and development. Interviews with participants allowed for the researcher to have students expound upon their questionnaire answers and reflect further. The data were coded and analyzed for emerging themes.

### *Significance of the Study*

This research was aimed at discovering if and how graphic novels can be utilized to enhance students' traditional and new literacy skills. If successful, methods used by the researcher could help educators to design lessons that would be beneficial to enhancing their own classroom practices. Additionally, successfully implementing graphic novels into a learning situation could create a more positive learning environment for students who are drawn to the medium. Although the use of graphic novels in the classroom is a somewhat new phenomenon to many, this is a quickly developing area of interest in the education world. Graphic novels sales in the U.S. have risen in recent years, from a \$75 million dollar industry in 2001 to a \$395 million dollar industry in 2008 with Scholastic Book Fairs selling over 4 million graphic novels between 2004-

2007 (Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011; Monnin, 2010). Given the explosion of popularity in recent years, an exploration of the possible use of graphic novels in the classroom could be beneficial to the education world. Additionally, if the body of evidence indicating the success of such a medium increases, the likelihood of its inclusion into curriculum packages and educator curriculum increases. Carter (2008) commented, “It is possible that teachers simply do not know enough about comics-related research in visualization as a literacy skill. It is also possible that many teachers don't possess a schema that connects ‘comic books’ or ‘graphic novels’ with learning” (p. 49). Therefore, educators need to be aware of possible uses in the classroom and how to prepare students to encounter such texts as well as how to utilize such texts to develop the types of literacy skills needed by learners.

Another important factor to consider is the large minority population at this Central Texas middle school. The population of the school is comprised of mostly low income, minority students. Researchers such as Snow and Biancarosa (2003) asserted that specific groups, such as African-Americans, Latinos, students who have English as a second language and students growing up in poverty tend to perform below expectations during upper level and high school years. Using 2009-2010 school data, ProPublica website states that this Central Texas middle school,

. . . is above both the state and district averages for the percentage of students eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunch. On average, 48 percent of students in Texas qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, while 92 percent of students at . . . Middle School do. At the district level, 83 percent of students qualify. (ProPublica, 2013)

Both the school’s website and the ProPublica website report the demographic makeup of being approximately 75% Hispanic, 23% African American, and 3% white with around

10% of students involved in gifted and talented programs. Data concerning students with similar demographics to the students at this Central Texas middle school suggests that there is an increased chance that learners need new methods and materials to be utilized in their classroom.

### *Limitations and Ethical Considerations*

The sample size was limited to willing participants, who were in the eighth grade, involved in an elective class during third period at this Central Texas middle school, and had literacy weaknesses according to results on the most recent computerized literacy test. This population may have been unique within the school setting and may not be representative of the school population as a whole or of other school populations.

Additionally, this non-class setting was less formal than an actual classroom setting and students' reactions may have been affected. The lack of grade assignments to their work may have positively or negatively affected student participation and effort. Although students would likely have shown more increased benefit from lengthened exposure, the program was limited to approximately four weeks and took place in the weeks following Thanksgiving break and preceding Christmas break in order to limit the amount of interruption in normal classroom schedules. This time frame allowed students to learn the basics of the medium, be exposed to a variety of samples, break down and evaluate the medium, and begin creating their own work.

The researcher brought her own biases into the workshop. As she finds graphic novels and graphica interesting and exciting, this could have influenced her judgment and views of the workshop. Also, literacy gaps that were brought to her attention in her previous teaching experiences guided her teaching style and evaluation skills. In

addition, as the researcher also fulfilled the role of teacher, there could have been some complications with her observations. As a great amount of time was spent with the subjects, some objectivity may have been lost. Peer debriefing took place in order to triangulate data and any misconstrued perceptions.

The researcher also presented each student with a graphic novel to keep after the workshop was complete. This incentive was to ensure that each student had a copy of the novel to utilize during the workshop and to thank students for their participation.

### *Definition of Terms*

1. *Comic strips*: usually a quick, often humorous story told in three to eight panes; usually available in newspapers and online.
2. *Comic books*: usually in paperback format, issues released monthly, typically have a continuing story line (Thompson, 2008).
3. *Graphica*: “A medium of literature that integrates picture and words and arranges them cumulatively to tell a story or convey information” (Thompson, 2008 p. 6). includes comic strips, comic books, manga, trade paperbacks, and graphic novels
4. *Graphic novel*: “A graphic novel is a book-length, original story told in comic book form” (Lavin, 1998, p. 33). Generally bound like a book or in hardback form and have a full-length story line (Thompson, 2008).
5. *Manga*: Japanese style comics, frequently bound much like a graphic novel, Japanese stylized illustrations are a token of this format, often texts are printed in the traditional way, so they may read from back to front and from right to left (Thompson, 2008).

6. *Multiple literacies*: includes information literacy, visual literacy, critical literacy, multimodal as well as others.
7. *Sequential art*: “Art or story displayed in a paneled sequence” (Gorman, 2003, p. 75).
8. *Trade paperbacks*: Similar to a graphic novel, but are previously printed comic book issues published as a collection (Thompson, 2008).
9. *Visual literacy*: “. . . the ability to understand and use images, including the ability to think, learn and express oneself in terms of images” (Braden & Hortin 1982, as cited in Seglem & Witte, 2009, p. 217).

### *Summary*

As graphic novels continue to grow in popularity, their potential importance in schools also develops. Due to the developments and availability of technology, students in today’s age are exposed to visual images at a rate that has been unparalleled in the past. In addition to the traditional literacy skills of the past, new literacy skills are necessary to help students decode and comprehend these image and text partnerships found throughout current media. Likewise, as students are using their time employing more graphic based entertainment (magazine ads, video games, TV, internet), many are developing an increased interest in using such texts in school. Educators not only need to prepare students to handle such texts in an informed way, but also address students’ interests by including graphic novels into the classroom. By intentionally planning to explore this format, educators can help students develop new literacy skills while developing and nurturing students’ interests in these texts and similar forms of media. In

Chapter Two, the researcher reviews the literature on graphic novels and their pedagogical use in the classroom.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Literature

In these days of measurable outcomes, state standards, and No Child Left Behind, the act of bringing comic books into a K-12 classroom is risky business. And yet, teaching is all about risk because the stakes are so high. The bottom line is teaching a child to read is not enough. (Versaci, 2008, p. 107)

Accommodating the gaps in literacy skills, evolving student interests, and changing literacy needs, graphic novels may be an excellent fit for the English classroom. In this chapter, evidence is presented concerning the problems and challenges in current literacy instruction and the needs of today's adolescent learners, a discussion of the role of new literacies are given, and the use of graphic novels to promote such literacies explored. While the amount of research in most of these areas is extensive, the use of graphic novels in the ELAR classroom is somewhat limited, thus the need for this research or similar studies.

#### *The Current State of Literacy*

The shortage in literacy skills among both primary and secondary students is no new phenomenon. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (2006) states, "Over 8 million students in grades 4-12 read below grade level, and 3,000 students with limited literacy skills drop out of high school every day" (p. 2). These weaknesses have been the driving force behind policies such as No Child Left Behind as well as countless reading assistance curricula and programs that can be found in schools across America. Harmon et al. (2011) remarked,

This interest comes at a time when alarming numbers of adolescents are challenged by the academic literacy demands prevalent in middle school and high school. These literacy demands place many at risk for achieving success in school. Such demands manifest themselves in high stakes testing that prevents graduation. The more long term impact is on quality of life after high school for students with lower than desirable literacy levels. (p. 105)

Such statements are echoed by the NCTE (2006), “Recently, however, it has become clear that many middle and high school students are increasingly under-literate, lacking the complex literacy skills they will need to be successful in an information-driven economy” (p. 2). In order to compensate for such discrepancies, a large amount of funds is spent to improve early reading. Teale et al. (2007) claimed, “Since 2002, through Reading First (RF), more than US\$4 billion (yes, that’s with a *b*) was spent to improve reading instruction in the primary grades . . .” (p. 344). These funds go towards a variety of solutions and programs throughout school districts. Such programs include: DISTAR, PHAST, Reading Recovery, Early Steps, the Reading Apprenticeship Program, Road to Reading, Wilson Reading System, The Academy of Reading Program, Voyager, READ 180 Program, Plugged into Reading Program, Sheltered Instruction Observational Protection Model, and others (Harmon et al., 2011; Murray, Munger, & Clonan, 2011; Quirk, 2004). Whether such insufficiencies are exacerbated or merely highlighted by standardized testing is a topic of debate; however, much attention, energy, and funds have gone towards solving the problem. Harmon et al. (2011) pointed out:

While there has been growing interest in the last few years to address the literacy needs of adolescents, this interest comes when alarming numbers of students are challenged by academic literacy demands in high school. Many students entering high school without passing state assessment examinations are required to take developmental reading classes. (p. 105)

Despite the efforts and funds allocated to relieve such a dearth in literacy skills, the problems still remain.

Although the number of students who show gaps in their literacy skills may be astounding, certain groups suffer more than others. The so called *achievement gap* plagues minorities and low income students across the country. Described as a discrepancy that exists between minority students and their White counterparts, the gap is evident not only in the achievement scores on standardized tests, but also manifests in dropout rates, students who do not take advantage of honors, gifted, and advanced placement classes, as well as those who are not admitted to college, graduate, and professional programs (Haycock, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Snow and Biancarosa (2007) asserted,

Certain groups—ethnic minorities, children from poor families, children attending schools in poor neighborhoods, non-native speakers of English—are very likely to have difficulty learning to read, and to show persistent poor performance through the middle- and secondary-school years. (p. 7)

Haycock (2001) concurred that, “Fewer than one-quarter of Latinos and one-fifth of African Americans can read the complicated but less specialized text that more than half of white students can read” (p. 7) and that “Only 1 in 50 Latinos and 1 in 100 African American 17-year-olds can read and gain information from specialized text—such as the science section in the newspaper (compared to about 1 in 12 whites) . . .” (p. 7).

Similarly, Snow and Biancarosa (2003) asserted that one of the main components of the achievement gap is a lack in literacy achievement. They stated, “Certain groups perform significantly below expectation at the upper elementary and high school levels; these groups include African-Americans, Latinos, students whose first/home language is not English, and youngsters living in poverty” (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003, p. 2).

Additionally, the authors link disparities in decoding, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, and critical thinking to these literacy struggles. However, the need for

developing and maintaining other aspects are pointed out as well: motivation to read and learn, comprehension strategies and abilities to self-monitor comprehension, the ability to read for multiple purposes using a variety of media, and development of their own identities as both readers as well as members of their own social and cultural group (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003).

One of the previously mentioned aspects is dire: motivation. Without motivation to read, developing strong literacy skills could be nearly impossible. Student motivation can be linked to several different aspects of students' lives and experiences.

Additionally, without motivation to read and without engagement in reading a variety of texts, students are highly unlikely to develop their identities as learners and readers. In support, Harmon et al. (2011) stated,

Various factors affect students' motivation to learn in general and in particular students' involvement in reading activities. This involves a complex interaction of needs and goals but also values, beliefs, and past experiences. These past experiences come to play in whether students have hope that if they try to read, they will be rewarded with success. (p. 117)

Although many students have the ability to read, often they choose not to do so. Layne (2009) wrote about students and adults who are *alliterate*, describing them as having the ability but not the desire to read. The author cited the National Endowment of the Arts as stating, “. . . less than one-third of thirteen-year-olds are daily readers” (Layne, 2009, p. 8) and that, “. . . 52 percent of Americans ages eighteen to twenty-four reported reading no books for pleasure in 2002 . . .” (p. 8). Likewise, the NCTE (2006) insists that without a curriculum which connects to personal experiences and helps students make connections to text, motivation and engagement will diminish. Consequently, “without a

curriculum that fosters qualities of motivation and engagement, adolescents risk becoming under-literate” (National Council of Teachers of English, 2006, p. 5).

Motivating students to read is a tricky task. Today’s students have a plethora of other pastimes vying for their attention: TV, internet, cell phones, video games, team sports, music lessons, art classes, and a multitude of other things, old and new to the adolescent world. In fact, Seyfried (2008) projected, “Trying to impart the joy of a good read to middle school students feels like pushing religion onto the perfectly content worshippers of American Idol” (p. 45). Similarly, Layne (2009) exerted, “News flash: It’s because most of the kids aren’t in love with books—they’re logged on or tuned in to some other form of entertainment and information” (p. 10). Closely connected to motivation is a lack of reading that tends to occur in middle school years and lingers into the high school years. Hugh-Hassell and Rodge (2007) stated that youth often hit a literacy wall in middle and high school that prevents them from accessing knowledge and information in texts and leads to, “. . . 70% of eighth graders in high-poverty, high-minority middle school to comprehend at ‘below basic’ levels” (p. 22).

Educators who work with students, who have not had success in academia, and specifically in literacy, have many challenges before them. In order to nurture much needed literacy skills that will in turn produce results in other courses, educators must motivate students and engage them in the curriculum. Once engaged, students must be encouraged to develop skills they will need to be successful not only in their academic careers, but also in life. What exactly are the skills they need to do that? What skills are necessary to be considered literate in the 21st century?

### *New Literacies and Theoretical Framework*

Although traditionally the definition of being literate referred to merely being able to read and write, today's learners are expected to be able to do that and much more. The 21st Century Fluency Project (2013) ventures,

It's a mistake to think that the skills that served us in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century will carry us through the age of multimedia, hypertext, blogs, and wikis. Reading, writing and mathematics have all changed from being traditional linear pursuits. Today our students need an entirely different set of skills than what served us for education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. (p. 6)

The days of only reading textbooks and newspapers and writing only essays and letters have passed for students. Norman (2012) contended, "In the twenty-first century, reading and writing printed words is not enough—one must be able to read and communicate meaning with spoken, written, and visual texts" (p. 740). This implies that merely being able to decode and comprehend written word is not sufficient in today's world. Additionally, in their article describing educational needs in the 21st century, Luterbach and Brown (2011) claimed that being literate—which they described as not only being able to read, write, and do math, but also as the ability to glean information from a variety of sources and collate information from multiple sources and critically evaluate such material—is much more involved today than in previous eras.

Additionally, the authors maintained that students should be "independent or self-directed problem solvers (i.e., critical thinkers able to use higher order thinking skills). This requires abilities to question, hypothesize, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, strategize, plan, prioritize, implement, produce, and reflect" (Luterbach & Brown, 2011, p. 18).

The New London Group asserted that individuals should use multimodal works to evaluate multiple aspects of media including: linguistic design, audio design, spatial

design, gestural design, and visual design (as cited in Chandler-Olcott, 2008). The group broke each design down further to include elements such as: colors, perspectives, gesture, architectonic meaning, music, vocabulary and metaphor, and other basics that the group believes should be taken into consideration when analyzing media. Additionally, The New London Group suggested a four-fold pedagogy, which includes: Situated Practice, which would include discourse from all aspects of students' lives as well as simulations of both public and work spaces; Overt Instruction, which would include the introduction of explicit metalanguages and the design elements of various modes of communication; Critical Framing, in which is included cultural context and significance and requires critical viewing of topics; and Transformed Practice, during which reflective practice takes place and students use multiple contexts or cultural viewpoints to make meaning. The group asserts that having such skills would produce more productive citizens that would benefit the working, public, and private lives of today's citizens (The New London Group, 1996). In summary, Chandler-Olcott (2008) stated,

To communicate and participate successfully in the world, the New London Group argued, literacy learners need facility with all these ways of thinking and representing ideas; traditional print literacy skills are not enough. Arguing that all learners do not develop such facility via existing conceptions of literacy instruction, the New London Group also offered a corresponding pedagogical framework. (pp. 66-67)

Keeping such skills in mind, teachers in today's classrooms have a much larger task ahead of them than just teaching traditional reading and writing skills. It is apparent that learners today have need for a new type of literacy. Students are expected to eventually be a part of the global market and compete for jobs against people from all around the world as well as collaborate with those from other countries, cultures, and

lifestyles. The ability to interpret and communicate in a variety of modes is essential to success.

This call for new literacies is known by many names, but they have many of the same goals. Sometimes called new or multiple literacies, the idea that students need to interact with multiple forms and modes of text and information in order to develop new literacy skills is at the heart of the movement. “One thing shared by those who teach and research new/multiple literacies, however, is the sense that ‘literacy’ can no longer be contained in the narrow, standardized reading test scores cherished by NCLB” (Schwarz, 2010, p. 73). In this search for what these new literacies are and how to best prepare students to become life-long lovers of learning, educators must decide what to prepare students for and how to best do so. One method would be to diversify the curriculum; that is to present different points of view and different media as well as teach students to glean information from a variety of modes and media. This is, in and of itself, a task. Lankshear and Knobel (2003) stated, “Different kinds of texts require ‘somewhat different backgrounds and somewhat different skills’ if they are to be read (i.e., read *meaningfully*)” (p. 2). This mindset requires teachers to not only teach students the basics of reading and comprehending written text, but the skills they need to recognize, analyze, and understand a variety of media used for communication. Similarly, Eisner (1997) affirmed,

In order to be read, a poem, an equation, a painting, a dance, a novel, or a contract each requires a distinctive form of literacy, when literacy means, as I intend it to mean, a way of conveying meaning through and recovering meaning from the form of representation in which it appears. (p. 353)

This view of literacy lays the task before many content teachers and not merely the reading or English teacher. Indeed, in order to be literate in the 21st century, students

must be well rounded and prepared to communicate on a variety of levels using a multitude of media to do so.

Furthermore, students must be exposed to curriculum that engages them, has a sense of familiarity, and portrays characters with which they can relate. Students whose viewpoint or culture is not represented in the classroom may be reluctant to consider what is being taught as important or as relevant to their lives. Daniels and Zemelman (2003) challenged,

When we rely on a single source for all of a course's content, we are teaching students to accept one view, one authority. We are saying that it is right to depend on a single voice, even on complicated, value-driven questions. (p. 39)

New literacies allow the opportunity for multiple viewpoints, multiple authors, and multiple media of information to be brought into the classroom. For example, students need to be able to recognize propaganda techniques utilized in online videos and recognize political jargon on blogs. The need to recognize and understand reputable sources both online and in print is also a valuable skill students can develop using new literacies. By embracing multiple media, a wider scope of who can be represented as well as whose voice can be heard exists. The NCTE (2006) suggests educators address students' shifting literacy demands by focusing on multiple and social literacies and valuing multicultural perspectives. In order to motivate students, the group encourages educators to, "Motivate through meaningful choice, engage students with real-world literacy practices, and support learner-centered classroom environments" (NCTE, 2006, p. 4).

For the purpose of this study, this researcher's working definition of new literacy was the ability to recognize, analyze, understand, communicate, and create with different

modes, technology, and media, including spoken, written, and visual texts from diverse authors, viewpoints, and cultures. Due to constant advancements in communication and technology, the skills involved in such literacy are constantly evolving. Some other terms that might fall under the new literacy umbrella are media literacy, visual literacy, and multiple literacies.

A large component of media literacy education is the element of creation. The National Association for Media Literacy Education (2013) promotes creation of media as part of the educational process in their core principles of media literacy education. Media creation gives students the opportunity to both exhibit new learning and practice analytical abilities. Throughout the study, the participants demonstrated an understanding of the skills they acquired by creating different media. The creations gradually progressed from adding either text or image to works to fully creating their own graphic text.

This study sought to explore multiple literacies and challenged students not only to decipher messages written in a format that they may have been unused to working with at school, but also to communicate in a way that may not have been the norm in their everyday classrooms. Throughout the study, the exploration of multiple or new literacies as they related to traditional literacies and students' communication skills were evaluated. The study sought to discover if working with nontraditional texts helped students to develop both their traditional and new literacy skills as well as if using a new medium to communicate enhanced students' traditional writing skills. The researcher also wondered if engaging students, with texts that represented their culture and an environment that is similar to their own lives, motivated them to read and engage in dialogue about a text.

Educators need to be on the look-out for text that are interesting for students, incorporate some of the new skills that are needed while also fostering the traditional ones, and bring a variety of viewpoints and cultures to the classroom. Graphic novels are a medium that incorporates a highly visual format as well as multiple view points and cultures.

### *Graphic Novels*

One alternative that may aid with literacy issues is the use of graphic novels in the classroom. Graphic novels in the United States have had an interesting development throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Graphic novels can be defined in a variety of ways. Weiner (2003) defined them as, “. . . book-length comic books that are meant to be read as one story” (p. XI). However, others give less of a definition, but more of a description: formatted like a comic book, bound like a book, printed on higher quality paper than a comic, typically longer than a comic book, a full-length story line that begins and ends in the same book, etc. (Gravett, 2005; Thompson, 2008). Many who give a history of graphic novels start with cave paintings, Egyptian hieroglyphics, or medieval tapestries (Cornog & Perper, 2009; McCloud, 1993; Witek, 1989); however, the most traceable origin of graphic novels in the U.S. is the comic book.

### *A Short History*

Comic books in America have had a complicated heritage. In his book, *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*, Weiner (2003) gave an in-depth history of the graphic novel in America from its meager beginning to its present glory. He described the journey from a single-panel cartoon by Richard F. Outcault, *The Yellow Kid*, to the emergence of comic books and the modern day graphic novels. Weiner’s

account is as follows: He traced the lineage from single panels to comic strips in the daily paper, comic books and magazines in the 1930s, stories from a variety of genre being told in comic book format, to a huge boom in the 1950s. As early as 1949, comics were being considered for use in the classroom. Hutchinson (1949) sent out classroom materials, a manual, a newsletter, and a questionnaire to 2,027 teachers across 27 states inviting them to use comics in their classrooms. Four hundred thirty-eight teachers returned the questionnaire from which the researcher discovered that at the time, “. . . the greatest availability for use of comic in instruction appears to be in the middle grades and junior high school” (Hutchinson, 1949, p. 238).

The comic book industry took a hit in 1954 when Fredric Wertham published *Seduction of the Innocent*, which implied that comic books were the root of youth rebellion and resulted in no good (Sabeti, 2012). Wertham’s ideas were echoed by George Pumphrey as both men, “. . . went as far as to argue that comics not only caused psychological harm to children who read them but also contributed to acts of moral depravity” (Sabeti, 2012, p. 1). After such accusations, the comic industry began to thin out and some of the lower quality comics fell off the map.

Despite setbacks, Weiner (2003) contended that the 1960s saw new sides of superheroes, and at the comic book convention, readers could meet actual comic writers, and artist emerged. The underground comic movement began in the 1960s and many of the characters and publications that were a result of that movement remain in comic culture today. This movement often included works that spoke against the cultural norms and gave voice to many controversial movements and artists. Some of the works gave voice to less represented groups in America and the medium is still utilized to give

attention to viewpoints and groups who might not be published by a mainstream publisher today. In the 1970s, the first “graphic novel” was produced by Will Eisner who had been a professional illustrator for many years and had, “. . . built a company that supplied businesses and the military with educational material using the comic book format” (Weiner, 2003, p. 18). Weiner even credited the U.S. military with utilizing the comic format for many years. “During World War II, the United States military had supplied the armed forces with comic books as entertainment and as evidence of homefront support, and by the end of the war many soldiers were hooked on word-and-picture storytelling” (Weiner, 2003, p. 7). The first graphic novel really to get noticed was Art Spiegelman’s (1991) *Maus II: From Mauschwitz to the Catskills*, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992 (Weiner, 2003, p. 38). Graphic novels continued to gain popularity; in fact,

Toward the end of the 1990s, public librarians embraced the graphic novel medium, their interest fueled by the readability of graphic novels and the high quality of some of these books” [and in addition], “. . . many chain and independent bookstores included graphic novel sections” in a response to their rising popularity. (Weiner, 2003, p. 55)

The popularity of the graphic novel has reached such heights that, “In 2002, graphic novel sales increased by twenty-three percent” (p. 59). Weiner (2003) concluded by saying,

Finally, graphic novels have found their way into classrooms, as teachers are realizing their usefulness as literary tools. After a study of graphic novels, researchers concluded that the average graphic novel introduced readers to twice as many words as the average children’s book. This realization has reinforced the idea that the comic’s format is a good way to impart information. (p. 61)

Not all educators are so eager to include graphic novels in the curriculum.

Perhaps it is due to some of the negative impressions from the 1950s which may have

carried over into modern times. When interviewing pre-service teachers about using graphic novels in the classroom, Clark (2013) found that although the soon-to-be-teachers thought the texts were engaging, relevant, and historically accurate, reluctance to include graphic novels in the curriculum stemmed from the idea that such texts would not be taken seriously by administration, parents, or students due to their connection to less than academic comic books. Similarly, Bucher and Manning (2004) claimed that teachers are reluctant to include graphic novels into the curriculum,

. . . solely because of the format or the erroneous impression that all graphic novels focus on supernatural horror stories or are expressions of the male power fantasy” as well as the belief that all graphic novels are limited to adventure stories. (p. 68)

### *Current Use of Graphic Novels*

The history of graphic novels highlights the ongoing popularity of the medium in both youth and adult culture. This popularity may be exactly what is needed in current curriculum. “Research has concluded that self-selected personal reading and popular culture texts develop motivation and engagement that can lead to deeper comprehension and analysis” (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011, p. 1261). If a major issue with low performing students is motivation and engagement (Harmon et al., 2011; Skerrett, 2012), texts such as graphic novels may be the key to unlocking their success. Additionally, graphic novels cover a variety of topics, genres, and tough issues. In fact, McTaggart (2008) recapped the story lines, visual aspects, timely reaction to current events and pop culture as well as social and cultural change that are present in graphic novels appeal to today’s youth. This sort of interest and variety can lead to engagement that is ideal for getting students into the learning sweet spot. Harmon et al. (2011) noted, “Interest in the content

of what they are reading, involvement in the reading material, and strategy use to facilitate comprehension of the reading also play vital roles in motivation and engagement” (p. 117).

Furthermore, interest, motivation, and engagement in an activity may be the key to student performance. Although it may seem that students are unable to utilize certain skills, perhaps they are merely reluctant to demonstrate such skills in the mode that teachers request. For instance, Skerret and Bomer (2011) described the experience of a teacher who recognized that adolescents who seemed to be very uninterested in literacy practices during school hours were, in fact, participating in rather complex tasks in their out-of-school hours. These practices, “. . . included engagement with popular culture like music, television, magazines, fanfiction, videogames, rap, tags, online chats, blogs, and zines” (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011, p. 1260). The article draws on much research that documented,

young people’s engagement in complex, high-level literacy practices at home, in after-school activities, in unofficial worlds, and on the Internet [and called teachers to recognize the] multifaceted nature of literacy in increasingly diverse in- and out-of-school contexts [as well as] to consider the pedagogical practices that enable learners to access their and others’ diversity in ways that support literacy learning and engagement in and out of school. (Skerrett & Bomer, 2011, p. 1258)

If students are willing to engage in complex literacy practices during out-of-school time, perhaps including media that they find relevant and exciting can also induce similar results in the classroom.

It seems that graphic novels may be an effective way to do such. Daniels and Zemelman (2003) commented, “If we want students to actually remember information and care about the subjects taught in school, we must change what they read” (p. 40).

Graphic novels may serve as a motivator that connects students' in-school lives to their out-of-school lives and incites them to engage in school activities that advance literacy skills.

While classroom teachers obviously cannot change students' past experiences, they can work to motivate students and get them into the practice of reading. One way to engage students is to make sure their interests and lived experiences are present in the curriculum. Skerrett (2012) stated,

Hicks argued that these young people (and their teachers) needed to see a legitimate place for their lived experiences and voices in literacy. Reading and discussing such representations, she argued, was a vital step before marginalized youth took up the unfamiliar discourses and practices of literary reading in school. (p. 65)

Students need to see that what they are being taught in the classroom will be helpful and meaningful in their lives outside of school as well as see representations of their own world as important rather than something to be ignored or not worthy of discussion. "If students do not find themselves at least somewhat reflected in the curriculum, it becomes difficult for them to relate to lessons or find much relevance in schooling" (Botzakis, 2010, p. 60). Graphic novels, which have been praised for their flexibility in the classroom (Carter, 2007b; McTaggart, 2008; Pantaleo, 2011), offer the opportunity to reach a variety of students and make their worlds visible, quite literally, in the curriculum. Titles such as, *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), *Yummy* (Neri, 2010), *Same Difference and Other Stories* (Kim, 2004), *The Complete Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2007)—which all present a minority perspective told from a young-adult outlook—allow a view into worlds that may only be familiar to a few students. Presenting this perspective of the minority could not only allow a representation of certain student's lives

to penetrate the curriculum, but could allow them to bring their *expertise* to the classroom in a way that may be new to such students.

Allowing children to bring themselves entirely into the educational arena could validate who they are and perhaps increase their genuine interest in reading, writing, and discussing their perspectives of the world while simultaneously allowing them to explore the perspectives of others. (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1999, p. 9)

The ability to interest, engage, and empower all classroom students is rare in today's world of accountability and standardized testing. It seems that the combination of the visual aspects of the medium, the fast paced story lines, and the focus on pop culture as well as the adolescent viewpoint make graphic novels a viable option for engaging and motivating teens today (Botzakis, 2010; Gorman, 2003; McTaggart, 2008; Skerrett, 2012).

However, graphic novels bring more to the table than motivation. "Their recent popularity is certainly helpful for including graphic novels in instruction, as drawing on youths' interests can be a great motivational tool for teachers engaging a reluctant reader, but they also provide substantive material for thinking and analysis" (Botzakis, 2010, p. 61). Although graphic novels can be valuable as a motivating force, they can also be used to develop literacy skills and engage students in meaningful analysis and dialogue. Furthermore, the interpretation that is required to read and comprehend graphic novels is similar to the decoding of images and texts that students must do when encountering webpages, video games, movies, ads, etc. By teaching students effective ways to interpret such media we are arming them with 21st century literacy skills. Ignoring that such skills are needed handicaps our students in their world. Such actions contribute to the ever increasing gap in skills that plagues today's students.

Experiences with different forms of graphica and graphic novels offer students the opportunity to utilize and enhance their knowledge of traditional skills such as recognizing character development, plot development, using context clues, inference, deduction, and others as well. In addition to the traditional literacy skills of decoding and comprehending, new literacy skills are engaged while reading graphic novels. For example, students are afforded the chance to learn about the conventions of this medium and practice developing skills that are gaining in importance for 21st century learners.

Pantaleo (2011) stated,

. . . the multimodality of picturebooks and graphic novels makes them ideal material to work with to develop young people’s visual literacy knowledge and abilities. Learning about graphic novel conventions and art elements, and understanding and appreciating the complexity of reading and creating graphic novels, can help students when they navigate other multimodal print and digital texts. (p.127)

Hence, using graphic novels as a classroom tool can enhance both multimodal or new literacy skills as well as traditional literacy skills. To the oft expressed concern that graphic novels are a handicap to students who rely too heavily upon the pictures and are given a watered-down version of texts, Botzakis (2010) replied, “Instead of serving as a crutch for easy reading experiences, reading graphic novels can be seen as substantial meaning making between picture and words” (p. 61). Students must decode, interpret, and understand both, text and words as well as the sometimes intricate marriage between the two in order to glean meaning from graphic novels. Indeed, Rice (2012) commented, “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” (p. 38).

It seems that graphic novels can bring motivation to the classroom by providing a peek into pop culture students crave, offering fast moving story lines and a visual aspect, and offering a view into students' lives that may be underrepresented in traditional curriculum. Additionally, graphic novels address literacy skills that may be necessary for today's learners but lacking in traditional works. In addition to new literacy skills that are addressed, traditional literacy skills may be improved by adding graphic novels to the curriculum as well. Seyfried (2008) ventured that the graphic novel has, “. . . not only saved the day for recreational reading, it has turned out to be a heavyweight in the teaching of advanced themes in literature and visual literacy” (p. 45). Although some educators continue to have concerns about using the format, graphic novels offer a unique tool for use in today's classrooms.

#### *Other Research on Graphic Novels*

Included in the range of theses and dissertations concerning the use of graphic novels are those investigating the true value of the medium to those that have used the medium to improve literacy skills. Studies have included a variety of diverse samples and have had mixed results. Several studies examined the value of the graphic novel as a classroom resource without using students. For instance, Hardy-Valley (2008) wrote a thesis for the validity of graphic novels as literature by arguing that the pictures contribute to the work as a whole and that such art also increases the work's value. “Nevertheless, the particular use of pictures in graphic novels exemplifies artistic conventions that are conceptually distinct from those of literature” (Hardy-Valley, 2008, abstract). Similarly, Whitaker (2012) worked toward discovering how the images in graphic novels enhance the story and students' reception of the story. On a curricular

level, Boerman-Cornell (2012) examined whether graphic novels might be employed in the secondary history classroom to teach identified discipline-specific reading skills within that field. Results exhibited, “. . . the GNs studied provided extensive opportunities for high school history students to engage in contextualization, sourcing, and corroboration” (Boerman-Cornell, 2012, abstract).

A number of studies used student samples and focused on engagement, motivation, and reader efficacy. Paxton (2003) conducted a study using graphic novels and other forms of graphica with eighth graders. Results showed an, “. . . increase in the amount and range of materials the participants read for pleasure. . .” (Paxton, 2003, abstract). Likewise, Gavigan (2010) used a sample comprised of four struggling eighth grade students to evaluate whether reading graphic novels would be successful. The author, “. . . concluded that reading graphic novels improved their reading engagement, and had a positive effect on their reading motivation,” and indicated “there were signs from qualitative data that pointed to evidence of moderate improvement in the participants’ reading efficacy” (Gavigan, 2010, abstract). Edwards (2008) worked with a sample of 148 seventh graders to discover if reading graphic novels and comic books during free reading time would assist in improving literacies. The researcher stated, “there were indications in the data to suggest that reading graphic novels and comic books and free voluntary reading could impact the intrinsic motivation, vocabulary, and comprehension ability of seventh graders” (Edwards, 2008, abstract).

Brown (1982), Paxton (2003), and Lamanno (2007) each used forms of graphica with students in order to advance literacy skills in students. Brown (1982) focused on engaging fourth and fifth graders in “artistic production of self-authored comic art” as a

means to stimulate literacy growth (abstract). Results of the study showed that students in this treatment group out-performed students who received traditional reading instruction. “In conclusion, it was strongly suggested that comic book art instruction can assist children in acquiring reading comprehension holistically” (Brown, 1982, abstract). While using graphic novels with adolescents who exhibited severe reading problems, Lamanno (2007) found that reading comprehension scores seemed to improve slightly, but also found an increase in incorrect responses and a decrease in oral reading scores.

Hammond (2009) kept the focus on multimodal literacy. According to those findings, “Evidence from this study supports the benefits of teaching comics conventions and reading graphic novels as part of the curriculum to improve multimodal literacy skills” (p. iii). Several studies connecting graphic novels in the classroom and visual literacy have been conducted. Gillenwater (2012) used graphic novels in secondary ELA classrooms and asserted that teaching elements of the art and visual aspect of such texts can improve students’ visual literacy. Roberts (2012) wrote about using multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, in the high school classroom to introduce and improve visual literacy. The author argued that improving visual literacy improves students’ traditional literacy and ability to read text-based works. Monnin (2008) looked at the multiple levels of image literacies when one teacher and one student read the graphic novel, *Bone*. The researcher asserted that graphic novels can be a valuable medium, especially for struggling readers. Alternative texts, such as graphic novels as a means, “to bring meaning, relevance, and critical awareness into the English classroom” were the focus of Mortimore (2009, abstract). The author argued that such texts additionally

address, “the needs of a highly visual and multimodal generation of learners” (Mortimore, 2009, abstract). Using a sixth grade sample, Chang (2011) explored how students would respond to social justice issues presented in graphic novels. The researcher commented that using graphic novels and both face-to-face as well as online responses were exemplary examples of 21st century literacy skills.

Comparable studies were conducted by Romanelli (2009) and Goss (2012). Romanelli (2009) used an adult sample to investigate what types of literacy skills are utilized when someone reads a graphic novel. The researcher reported that both visual literacy and more traditional literacies were used when interacting with graphic novels. Although utilization of a New Literacies Pedagogy was discussed in Goss’s (2012) work, the research centered on digital media rather than graphic or text based media, so the study is less relevant to this one.

Two studies addressing graphic novels and teacher/student connections were found. The results indicated that changes in curriculum and classroom practices concerning graphic novels should be made. Pflueger-Pieczynska (2011) presented graphic novels as important for, “. . . creating a bridge of mutual understanding and conversation in the new digital era” between students who are digital natives and teachers who are likely to be digital immigrants (abstract). The researcher placed importance upon texts that are highly visual and yet textual to meet the needs of both groups. Connors (2010) looked at graphic novel usage by six high school students. Connors commented about “the active role readers occupy as they transact with graphic novels” and seemed to notice “they often seemed to underestimate the knowledge they drew on as readers of multimodal texts” (abstract). The researcher suggested that educators highlight

such knowledge to graphic novel readers and focus efforts on improving such skills (Connors, 2010).

In this study, the researcher worked with eighth grade students employing graphica as a means to using graphic novels to improve literacy skills. Through interviews (see Appendices I and J) and questionnaires (see Appendices E, F, G, and H), the researcher evaluated students' attitudes concerning reading and graphic novels. Using researcher observations, student work, and interviews, the researcher assessed whether students' traditional and new literacy skills improved and which skills seemed to develop as a result of interaction with such texts. Like Hardy-Valley (2008), the researcher values graphic novels as a valid form of literature and believes that, as stated by Gillenwater (2012), Hammond (2009), Monnin (2008), Mortimer (2000), and Roberts (2012), the medium can be used to further multimodal literacy as well as enhance traditional literacy skills. The age group of the sample was similar to the sample of Edwards (2008), Gavigan (2010) and Paxton (2003), as well as the use of graphic novels and goal to evaluate reading motivation. Similar to Brown's (1982) study, the researcher used students' written and drawn graphica to assess improvements in students' literacy skills. This study brought together much of the previous research which utilized graphic works to enhance traditional and new literacy skills but also took into account the creative element in new literacies. The case studies produced give a view of students' connection to texts that are similar to their own cultures and how they interact with such texts. It was an important study because it took into account students' abilities to create their own graphic works as a way of utilizing new and traditional literacy skills and sought to connect culturally relevant graphic novels with motivation and engagement. It

sought to discover what traditional and new literacy skills are used and developed as students work with graphic texts. Previous researchers looked at parts of the same issue, but this investigator's study incorporated many previously used ideas and theories to explore a new role for graphic works in the middle school classroom.

### *Summary*

With the current level of literacy a concern in schools, many programs, curricula, and different approaches are being tested. In addition, the achievement gap puts specific attention on minority and financially disadvantaged students, who also tend to be underrepresented in traditional curriculum. Furthermore, there is a growing concern that today's students are not being adequately prepared to become global citizens in today's highly visual world in which being "literate" means much more than being able to read and write. With the potential of graphic novels to motivate reluctant students, give a face to the underrepresented, appeal to a variety of students, as well as develop both traditional and new literacy skills; perhaps educators should take a closer look at how graphic novels might be an asset in the secondary classroom. This study used graphic novels to engage minority students in a literacy workshop that introduced them to the conventions of graphic texts, had them read and evaluate a variety of graphic novels, and create their own graphic text in order to promote their traditional and new/multiple literacy skills. In Chapter Three, the researcher reviews the methodology of this study.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methodology

This study examined how graphic novels can be used in an educational setting to engage middle school students and improve their literacy skills. Literacy skills refer to both traditional skills (recognizing literary elements such as plot, character, setting, point of view; using context clues; making inferences; and developing vocabulary) as well as new literacy skills (understanding the conventions of graphica such as panels, page layout, speech bubbles, etc.; inferring from and analyzing images; cohesion of word and text; etc.). Through multiple case studies, the researcher described her perception of students' attitudes about graphic novels, her observations of the students' engagement and interaction with graphic novels, and implications for future usage of graphic novels to enhance literacy skills of middle school students. As students are constantly being exposed to new forms of texts and media via new technology developments and accessibility, the literacy skills students need to develop are also changing. New literacy skills are in demand, and students who do not develop these skills will fall behind. Students face a need to develop new literacy skills in order to meet the needs of the 21st century classroom and global marketplace. One medium that is gaining in popularity, engages students, and may help promote literacy skills is graphic novels. As this medium is somewhat new and gaining in its usage in the classroom, Carter (2007a) stated, “. . . more research needs to be conducted on almost every aspect of using graphic novels for

enhancing literacy” (p. 20). This study was aimed at utilizing graphic novels in an educational setting for literacy skill improvement.

The researcher sought to discover how graphic novels could be used in an educational setting to engage students and help expand their literacy skills. The research methodology that was used throughout the study is reported in this chapter. The categories of research design, population and sample, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness are used to describe methodology that was employed by the researcher. The research took place after the researcher received permission from both the Institutional Review Board and the cooperating campus (see Appendices K and L).

### *Research Design*

The following questions were examined throughout the course of the study:

- What prior knowledge and attitudes do students have about graphic novels?
- What can students learn from graphic novels?
  - A. How can graphic novels be used to develop traditional literacies?
  - B. How can graphic novels be used to develop new literacies?
  - C. What literacy skills can students develop in creating graphic novels?

This research lends itself best to a qualitative study design. As previously stated, the purpose of this study was to discover if utilizing graphic novels in an educational setting is beneficial to students’ literacy development, and in what areas of literacy. Additionally, the study described the use of graphic novels for developing traditional and new literacy skills in eighth grade students at a Central Texas middle school. The use of case study allowed the researcher to examine and describe how students interacted with the text and what methods/skills they seemed to employ while doing so. Each case is

defined as one student with six cases being involved in this multiple case study. The six cases make up the sample, which were compared using constant comparative analysis. The sample was taken of the larger population of the 14 participants in the workshop. The sample was selected based upon attendance and project completion.

According to Creswell (2007), case studies explore issues “through one or more cases within a bounded system . . . in which the investigator explores the bounded system . . . through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p. 73). This method is a good fit for the research at hand since the situation was bounded and multiple sources of data collection were used. Additionally, in order to describe the cases in this study, the researcher collected data from a variety of methods. Observations, questionnaires, student work, and some semi-structured interviews were used to collect data during the course of this research.

Students met as a group with the researcher during one class period, every day, for approximately four weeks. A curriculum developed by the researcher (see lesson plans in Appendix D) was utilized and excerpts from a variety of graphica were utilized to give students a great amount of access and exposure to the medium. The curriculum was created based upon activities described by Bakis (2012), Frey and Fisher (2004), Gavigan and Tomasevich (2011), Monnin (2010), and Thompson (2008). After reviewing the works, the researcher selected activities based upon age appropriateness, described success, and appropriateness for the workshop based upon time needed to complete an activity, connection to literacy skill development, and engagement for the projected group of students. The researcher then modified a few activities and organized

them in a manner that began with simple, introductory activities and led to more complex activities. Table 1 gives a basic description of activities, the literacy skills to which they were connected, and the research upon which they are based.

Table 1

*Workshop Activities*

Activity	Traditional or New Literacy Skill	Author
Conventions of Graphica	Understands Conventions	Gavigan & Tomasevich (2011); Thompson (2008)
Exploring Graphica	Understands Conventions	Thompson (2008)
Analyzing Faces	Inferring from Images	Thompson (2008)
Graphic texts with images and without words and without words with images	Inferring from Images and Cohesion of Text and Image	Bakis (2012); Gavigan & Tomasevich (2011); Monnin (2010); Thompson (2008)
Spectrum of Interpretation	Inferring from Images, Cohesion of Text and Image, Setting, Plot, Character Development, Making Inferences	Bakis (2012)
Interpretation and completion of comics without words or without images	Understands Conventions, Inferring from Images, Cohesion of Text and Images., Plot, Character Development, Setting, Context Clues, Making Inferences, Vocabulary	Gavigan & Tomasevich (2011); Monnin (2010); Thompson (2008)
Write a story for wordless graphic work <i>Hydrant</i>	Inferring from Images, Cohesion of Image and Text, Plot, Character Development, Setting, Point of View, Context Clues, Making Inferences, Vocabulary	Frey & Fisher (2004); Thompson (2008)

*(table continues)*

Activity	Traditional or New Literacy Skill	Author
Reading and analysis of excerpt from <i>Maus II</i>	Understands Conventions, Inferring from Images, Cohesion of Text and Image, Plot, Character Development, Setting, Point of View, Context Clues, Making Inferences, Vocabulary	Bakis (2012); Gavigan & Tomasevich (2011)
Media analysis (5 Big Questions)	Inferring from Images, Point of View, Making Inferences	Monnin (2010)
Character study of Calvin and Hobbes	Understands Conventions, Inferring from Images, Cohesion of Text and Image, Character Development, Setting, Point of View, Context clues, Making Inferences	Thompson (2008)
Graphic novel evaluation of <i>Yummy</i>	Understands Conventions, Inferring from Images, Cohesion of Text and Image, Plot, Character Development, Setting, Point of View, Context Clues, Making Inferences, Vocabulary	Gavigan & Tomasevich (2011)
Creation of graphic work	Understands Conventions, Inferring from Images, Cohesion of Text and Image, Plot, Character Development, Setting, Point of View, Context Clues, Making Inferences, Vocabulary	Bakis (2012); Carter (2007c), Frey & Fisher (2004); Gavigan & Tomasevich (2011)

The curriculum has been used previously by the researcher during an extracurricular summer program for secondary gifted and talented students. The program, named University for Young People (UYP) and held on the college campus during June every

summer, recruited high school students enrolled in gifted and talented classes in local school districts. The program was voluntary and offered a variety of enrichment courses in which students could choose to participate for hour and a half sessions for 10 days. The researcher used the curriculum during the 10 hour and a half sessions for a total of 15 educational hours and determined that this amount of time was adequate to make use of the curriculum. The two major graphic novels—*Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* (Neri, 2010) and *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale* (Spiegelman, 1991)—used during the summer program and the graphic novel workshop were chosen based upon the accolades given to the works.

The graphic novel workshop at the middle school lasted every weekday for approximately four weeks during a 50-minute class period. This time frame allowed for an adequate introduction to the conventions of graphica and graphic novels as well as an adequate amount of time for students to understand and utilize these conventions to begin creating their own graphic work. This workshop was conducted during the normal school day during a period when students have an elective class.

Questionnaires were developed based upon desired information needed to present an accurate picture of each student and forms used by other researchers (Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011; Thompson, 2008). Before instruction began, a student information and interests form (see Appendix M) was given to students. This form was beneficial in gathering demographic data along with basic information about students' reading interests. The first questionnaire (see Appendix E) assisted with data collection about previous knowledge concerning graphic novels as well as students' attitudes and experience with the medium. The second questionnaire (see Appendix F) addressed

students' literacy skills that are utilized while reading both a traditional and a graphic novel. Students used metacognition to determine what skills were employed while reading a graphic novel. Additionally, students assessed how the art work in the graphic novel was used to enhance the author's message. The third questionnaire (see Appendix G) asked students to assess the literacy skills they employed during the creation of their graphic novel, but due to time constraints, it was never given to students. The fourth questionnaire (see Appendix H) had students assess their learning throughout the workshop. The questionnaire asked about students' favorite and least favorite activities as well as explicitly asking what they learned during the workshop. Also, the researcher met with students individually to do semi-structured interviews (see Appendix I) about the program and their understanding of graphica. Interviews were conducted during the scheduled workshop time during one of the last days of the workshop. Interview questions were developed to help clarify and expand upon any undeveloped information given by the student during the workshop, to evaluate any potential student perceived problems with the curriculum, and to glean information about students' evaluation of graphic novels as texts helpful to learning.

Field notes from observations were recorded daily after the workshop. The researcher kept a running list of notes about student engagement, participation, and attitudes during activities. The notes were used to create more detailed descriptions of student work and literacy skill development during the analysis stage.

### *Population and Sample*

The research was conducted at a Central Texas middle school that has approximately 1,000 students. The school has a large minority population with

approximately 75% Hispanic, 23% African American, and 3% White students with 92% of those students qualifying for free or reduced lunch (ProPublica, 2013). The school's instructional coaches—who have easy access to grades, schedules, and standardized test scores—assisted the researcher in selecting students for the sample. The school had three instructional coaches, all of whom have advanced degrees and acted as administrators to ensure student success by working with teachers to improve their pedagogy as well as keeping up with testing data on students. At the principal's request, the instructional coaches pulled the most recent computerized reading test scores for all eighth grade students. The students whose scores were either slightly below or slightly above the score for passing were the large group from which the population was selected. These were the students from which the group of 14, the population, was chosen. The population of 14 was also restricted by students who returned their permission slips which were signed by both the student and a parent or guardian. The population was limited to willing participants who were in the eighth grade, enrolled in an elective class during third period during the regular school day at the Central Texas middle school, interested in graphic novels, and returned the required paper work. The students came from classes such as choir, physical education, and technology. The purposeful sample of interested eighth grade students was comprised of 14 students selected from the holistic group of students enrolled in third period electives, who showed weaknesses in their literacy skills. From this population of 14, a heterogeneous group of six was selected for the case study. The selection was based on the students who had the highest attendance rate (as they had the most exposure to the workshop) and who were in attendance for the writing and creation of the graphic work. This method of selection

was utilized in order to select a sample that had the most exposure to the workshop activities as well as produced the most samples of work to analyze. This population may have been unique within the school setting and may not be representative of the school population as a whole or of other school populations; however, the sample was a convenience sample of willing and interested eighth grade students involved in elective courses during third period and was bound by participation in the workshop and production of a final product. As described by Thomas (2003), “A convenience sample consists of those members of a population . . . that are readily available to the researcher” (p. 92).

Since the sample included students who expressed interest in graphica and graphic novels, their attitudes could have been more positive than if the entire school was used in the research. Some students may not prefer or respond to the medium, which could affect their motivation and engagement in the workshop. The fact that the workshop took place in a non-regular classroom, was attached to no grade, and was less formal than an actual classroom setting may have affected students’ reactions. The lack of grade assignment may have either positively or negatively affected students’ participation and effort. Although students would likely have shown increased benefit from lengthened exposure, the program was limited to one daily class period for approximately four weeks. This time frame allowed students to learn the basics of the medium, be exposed to a variety of samples, break down and evaluate the medium, and begin creating their own graphic work.

### *Data Collection*

Data were collected by means of researcher observations and notes, questionnaires about students' opinions and attitudes, analysis of student work, and interviews. A questionnaire (see Appendix M) seeking information about prior knowledge and attitudes about reading graphic novels was given before the study. During approximately a four week period, the researcher worked with students by offering skill engagement in the areas of multiple literacies and in topics that assisted students in understanding and gleaning the most information from graphic novels. The activities were designed to lead students from basic information (definition of terms and conventions of *graphica*), towards being able to decipher image and text pairings (utilizing inferencing skills, comprehension building, etc.), and culminated in students creating their own graphic works (utilizing information about conventions and image and text connections, as well as considering traditional literacy skills such as point of view, character development, setting, etc.). During this time, observations and samples of students work (writing samples about the experience, creation of their own *graphica*, perceived development and understanding of the texts) were recorded and checked for apparent developments of literacies as well as for students' comments about changes in attitude or concerning development of skills or understanding of graphic novels. The four types of data collection employed during this research are described below.

### *Questionnaires*

The students were given questionnaires (see Appendices E, F, G, and H) at the beginning, during, and at the conclusion of the workshop. These questionnaires sought to discover details about students' prior knowledge and attitudes about graphic novels as

well as information about their experiences over the course of the study. Questionnaires were chosen because, “they enable a researcher to collect a large quantity of data in a relatively short period of time . . . ” as well as the fact that “a wide variety of information can be gathered from respondents” utilizing one data collection tool (Thomas, 2003, p. 69). Students’ answers on the questionnaires helped the researcher determine information about students’ prior knowledge about graphic novels, how students evaluated their own cognition during reading graphic novels, their use of both traditional and new literacy skills, their understanding and enjoyment of the workshop, and what they believed they learned during the workshop.

#### *Observations and Notes*

As the graphic novel workshop took place, the researcher, who also acted as teacher, took notes concerning student participation, responses, and perceived attitudes toward the day’s activities and noted changes in these capacities throughout the study. Informal notes were written during the workshop and more detailed notes were typed out after the completion of the study. As activities were designed to progress from utilizing basic knowledge and skills to more complex ones, the researcher noted changes and development in students’ skills, participation, and comments throughout the workshop. Observation notes were used in concordance with the questionnaires, student work, and interviews to compile information in order to make evaluations about engagement, participation, and comprehension. This data were used to present an accurate portrait of each student’s knowledge, attitudes, and changes that took place throughout the study.

### *Student Work*

Examining student work aided the researcher in obtaining a representation of student ability and knowledge. This mode was employed to gain an authentic view of student abilities and to compare changes in student skills. Although this method may be a somewhat unconventional mode of collecting data, it can be useful. Thomas (2003) asserted, “While not used as frequently, materials the subjects write themselves are used as data as well” (p. 132). Student work was analyzed for level of and changes in literacy skills, students’ description of metacognition, and student perception of skills utilized during certain activities. For example, two rubrics and a checklist (see Appendices N, O, and P) were used to assess students’ use of both traditional and new literacy skills in their creation of a graphic work. The graphic work was created cooperatively, following the suggestions of Carter (2007c) and Bakis (2012). One student wrote the narrative and another student illustrated the work. Both the work that each student wrote and the one they illustrated were assessed. The checklist and rubrics were developed by evaluating literacy skills set forth in both the eighth grade Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (specifically 110.20.b.2.B, 110.20.b.3, 110.20.b.6.A, 110.20.b.6.B, 110.20.b.6.C, 110.20.b.13.A, 110.20.b.13.B, 110.20.b.13.C, 110.20.b.15, and 110.20.b.28), skills described by the NCTE (2006), as well as literacy skills mentioned by Bakis (2012), Gavigan and Tomasevich (2011), and Thompson (2008). After compiling a list of both traditional and new literacy skills addressed by these authors, the researcher created a basic 1-5 rubric with 1 representing a lack of evidence of a skill and 5 representing rich evidence of the skill apparent in student work. The work was scored using an augmentation of the Likert method. The Likert scale was augmented in that the

researcher used half points when the students' skills seemed to fall in between skill levels or evidence was on the border between two scores. All student work produced throughout the workshop was gauged using the rubrics. The checklist was developed based upon both lists of skills. It was used to assess if student created graphic work contained evidence of each skill.

### *Interviews*

Yin (2009) stated, "One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview" (p. 106). Although much information can be gained from the observations, questionnaires, and analysis of student work, "interviewing provides the researcher with greater flexibility and personal control than do questionnaires" (Thomas, 2003, p. 66). Likewise, "interviews are more efficient for collecting information about people's knowledge, personal background, and opinions" than other methods of collection, such as observation (Thomas, 2003, p. 66). The researcher used the loose-question and response guided approach, as described by Thomas (2003), when conducting interviews. Thomas (2003) stated that the purpose of the loose-question approach "is to elicit respondents' interpretation of a very general query" while during the response-guided approach, "the interviewer begins with a prepared question, then spontaneously creates follow-up queries that are logical extensions of the answers the interviewee has given to the opening question" (pp. 63-64). Both sorts of questioning were used during interviews with students and English teachers. Similarly, Merriam (1998) described interviews in which, ". . . either all of the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions" (p. 74). As Merriam (1998) suggested, the researcher used an interview guide (see Appendices I and

J), which was described as, “. . . nothing more than a list of questions you intend to ask in an interview” (p. 80). The interviews were both recorded on an electronic device and transcribed by the researcher, as “. . . verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p. 88).

### *Data Analysis*

The multiple forms of data were utilized to answer the research questions. Researcher observations and notes as well as interviews were used to add validity and clarity to data that were gathered in questionnaires and students’ work. Rubrics and a checklist assessing students’ development of literacy skills were used to analyze student work. Table 2 breaks down how the data collected served to answer the research questions.

Data analysis took place as described by Creswell (2007) by collecting and organizing the data, by coding the data according to themes that emerge, and by converting the data into a text and graphic representations. Possible themes could be connections between prior knowledge and experience with graphic novels and comprehension during the workshop, specific skills that students deemed necessary for comprehending graphica, and gradual introduction of graphica to increased comprehension in graphic novel interactions. Creswell (2007) also remarked that the three steps are, “interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project” (p. 150). This was the case as the information from the questionnaires, interviews, observations, and analysis of student work were constantly evaluated and developed into a complete picture of each of the six student’s experience. The data were sorted and

coded for emerging themes of literacy improvement. These themes were then compared for matches across the data sources and analyzed for pattern matching.

Table 2

*Research Questions – Assessment Tools*

Research Questions	Assessment Tool
What prior knowledge and attitudes do students have about graphic novels?	Student Information and Interests Form Pre Workshop Evaluation #1
What can students learn from graphic novels?	See below for breakdown
Which traditional literacies are developed by using graphic novels?	Rubric for Traditional Literacy Skills During Workshop Evaluation #2 Post Workshop Evaluation #3
Which new literacies are developed by using graphic novels?	Rubric for New Literacy Skills During Workshop Evaluation #2 Post Workshop Evaluation #3
What literacy skills can students develop in creating graphic novels?	Rubric for Traditional Literacy Skills Rubric for New Literacy Skills Post Workshop Evaluation #3 Checklist for Assessing Student Created Graphic Novels

Following the description put forth by Merriam (1998), “each case is first treated as a comprehensive case in and of itself” (p. 194) for a *with-in case* analysis and then compared to each other as *cross-case* analysis. A case was defined as one student, and six cases were described. Each case within the heterogeneous sample was individually analyzed; then the six were compared. The researcher used direct interpretation, a method described by Creswell (2007) in which, “the case study researcher looks at a single instance and draws meaning from it. . . . It is a process of pulling the data apart and

putting it back together in more meaningful ways” (p. 163). Creswell stated, “Also, the researcher establishes patterns and looks for a correspondence between two or more categories” (p. 163). Data sources (questionnaires, observations/notes, student work, interviews) were sorted by date in order to grasp a picture of the whole of the sample and then by individual case. The researcher used colored highlighting on electronic copies of observations and interview transcriptions to identify each student’s comments and developments in order to create a document containing the data for the entire sample. Additionally, a data sheet for each student containing data from questionnaires, observations, student work, and interviews was created and information from each data source was assigned its own color so that the source of the data could be easily identified. The scoring rubric for students’ final graphic work was used alongside the data sheets to add additional details about students’ literacy developments. After organizing, coding, and sorting the data using direct interpretation and pattern matching, the researcher used cross-case analysis to look for commonalities in the student’s motivation and perceived skills when reading graphic novels as well as what skills seemed to develop and what skills needed further development in the students. The researcher proceeded as described by Yin (2009), “the technique treats each individual case study as a separate study” and then by “aggregating findings across a series of individual studies” (p. 156). Similarly, Merriam (1998) asserts,

Ultimately, cross-case analysis differs little from analysis of data in a single qualitative case study. The level of analysis can result in little more than a unified description across cases; it can lead to categories, themes, or typologies that conceptualize the data from all the cases; or it can result in building substantive theory offering an integrated framework covering multiple cases. (p. 195).

Table 3 summarizes how the data were analyzed.

Table 3

*Data Analysis*

Step for Data Analysis	Data Source Used
Collecting Data	Questionnaires, Researcher Observations and Notes, Students Work, Interviews and Transcriptions
Organizing Data	Questionnaires were sorted, Observations and Notes were typed up and compiled for each case, Student Work for each case was sorted and scored by the rubrics, Interview Transcriptions were reread and sorted for each case
Coding Data	Color coding was applied to each data source and notes for each case were typed up
Identifying Themes	Emerging Themes were Identified
With-In Case Analysis	The data and codes for each case were examined and reported
Cross-Case Analysis	The data, codes, and themes for each case were compared in order to present a complete picture of the sample

*Trustworthiness*

Although the results of this study may not be generalizable, the researcher hoped to gain insight into the prior knowledge, attitudes, and skill levels some students possessed and built while interacting with graphic novels. The multiple means of gathering data helped safeguard against false information, as Yin (2009) stated, “a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence” (pp. 114-115). Additionally, Merriam (1998) noted “multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” help with triangulation (p. 204). In this study, certain aspects of the interviews acted as a triangulation method for member

checking data. Additionally, emerging themes were examined by colleagues to increase internal validity—as identified by Merriam as *peer examinations*. In addition to the researcher, the data were examined by two graduate students who also have a focus in literacy. These peers were given access to the data sets to analyze and confirm or disagree with the researcher’s proposed themes. Only agreed upon themes were presented in the findings. The peer reviewers also utilized the rubrics to assess students’ demonstration of literacy skills and to confirm reliability of the instrument. The researcher tried to provide as much information as possible about the sample and methodology as well as be aware of and honest about her own biases and preconceptions upon beginning the study.

### *Conclusion*

This chapter introduced the methodology that was employed during the research study. The research design, population and sample, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and trustworthiness were discussed. The research took place during third period class, in a Central Texas middle school during approximately four weeks during the school year. The students interacted with various forms of graphica in order to understand the medium and built up to reading and creating their own graphic works. The researcher noted through observations, questionnaires, analysis of student work, and interviews what previous knowledge and attitudes the students had toward graphic novels, what literacy skills were employed during the interactions, and what literacy skills appeared to be honed during the sessions. The researcher discusses these findings in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results and Findings

As discussed in Chapter One of this paper, concern grows over students' literacy skills. Many researchers (Haycock, 2001; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003; Teale et al., 2007) also suggested that particular groups of students are more broadly affected by such gaps than others. Specific groups include minority students, students with English as a second language, and students who are considered impoverished. In addition to gaps in traditional literacy skills, many have stated that students have need for a new set of literacy abilities (Hull, 2003; Potts, Schlichting, Pridgen, & Hatch, 2010; Seglem & Witte, 2009). Graphic novels were offered as a solution because research shows they have been successfully used with a variety of students ranging from reluctant readers, ESL students, gifted students, and even college students; sales show that graphic novels are growing in popularity; and they offer fast-paced story lines that address topics relevant to students' lives. Topics such as gang violence, teenage love, and even tragedies of the 20th and 21st century are addressed. Additionally, graphic novels seem to be a suitable option for teaching some of the new literacy needs that stem from today's more hyper-visual society. As described in previous chapters, the researcher worked with middle school students in a Central Texas school whose population was largely minority and from families of low socioeconomic status. By using a researcher-developed curriculum built from very basic visual texts to graphic novels, the researcher sought to engage students with non-traditional texts while evaluating whether or not their literacy

skills, both traditional and new, were affected. Results from the study are discussed in this chapter. The specific questions addressed follow.

### *Research Questions*

The questions the researcher addressed throughout the study were:

1. What prior knowledge and attitudes do students have about graphic novels?
2. What can students learn from graphic novels?
  - A. Which traditional literacies are developed by using graphic novels?
  - B. Which new literacies are developed by using graphic novels?
  - C. What literacy skills can students develop in creating graphic novels?

The methods used throughout the study are briefly described below.

### *Methodology*

This research was conducted at a Central Texas middle school during approximately four weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas breaks. The students met with the researcher for the length of one normal class period per day. The researcher chose the participants by meeting with school administrators and selecting students based on grade level, literacy needs, availability, and interest. The sample was comprised of eighth grade students who had shown struggles in their literacy test scores, who had an elective class during the workshop time frame, were available during those weeks, and showed an interest in the workshop. Participation was voluntary and permission slips were required. During the study, the researcher used questionnaires, observations, student work, and interviews to collect data from the participants. Data were sorted, coded, analyzed for themes, and presented as a case study.

### *General Information*

The original population of participants was made up of approximately 14 students, nine females and five males. The workshop attendance ranged from five to 14 participants daily, with the average attendance being nine students. Each student attended an average of 12 days. Absenteeism was high, possibly because of the timing during the semester, the voluntary nature of the program, and the fact that no grade was assigned to the workshop. Although these factors contributed to some students being willing to attend and participate, some students also reacted less positively to the relaxed atmosphere. They may have been less motivated to show up on time, put in their best efforts, and complete assignments that were not for a grade.

As many skills were assessed throughout the workshop based upon student participation and completion and the final project was the capstone for assessment, a smaller number of students met the qualifications to be included in the case study. The sample of six described was comprised of students who had the highest attendance and completed the final project, a student created graphic work. Six students were used as the sample, and each was described as an individual case. An analysis of the group of six as a whole is also included. A brief description of each of the six students follows. Any quotes are typed exactly as written or stated by students.

### *Student Participants*

#### *Michelle*

Michelle was a 13-year-old female in the eighth grade. She lived in the Central Texas city all of her life and listed her ethnicity as African American and Hispanic. She

claimed to like reading mystery books, magazines, and websites. On the original evaluation for the workshop, students were asked to provide any prior knowledge they held about graphic novels and comic books; the student wrote in one answer, “Not much.” The student was present 12 of the 18 workshop days. Throughout the workshop the student offered a myriad of complaints, had to be constantly reminded to stay on task, and presented a negative attitude. One day the researcher even asked the student to return to her assigned classroom because of her uncooperative attitude and complaints. Despite such negative displays during the workshop, the student commented on her final evaluation of the workshop that she did not have a least favorite activity and that she learned, “Comic books are good books to read and easier to understand.”

### *Joe*

Joe was a 14-year-old Hispanic male in the eighth grade at a Central Texas middle school. He stated that he read comic books, newspapers, and fiction. He was present for 10 of the 18 workshop days and sometimes had to be reminded to stay on task and complete assignments. On the original evaluation, the student was asked what he knew about comics and graphic novels, he replied, “Nothing why.” He later added, “They have boxes” and that “They are funny.” The student seemed to enjoy *Maus II* and commented in the final interview that it was his favorite text from the workshop.

### *John*

John was a 13-year-old Hispanic male that participated in the workshop. He was present for 15 of the 18 workshop days and missed a few days because of occupation testing through the school. John commented that he read magazines, that websites were

his favorite thing to read, and that he does the reading in school, “Sometimes because it is fun sometimes and it is boring sometimes.” When asked about the kinds of books he enjoyed, the student replied, “Has to be Interesting.” The student was very active and frequently roamed the room, had to be reminded to stay on task, and often neglected to complete assignments. When asked about his favorite activity during the workshop, the student noted, “I don’t know Because All of it was fun” and commented that he learned, “How to Read a graich noivl.”

### *Jacob*

Jacob was an eighth grader who has lived in the Central Texas town for 10 years. He is 13 years old, and listed Hispanic as his ethnicity. He was present for 11 of the 18 workshop days. The student remarked that comic books were his favorite thing to read, but when asked about school readings, the student stated, “No, they are not interesting.” The student answered most questions on evaluations with complete sentences and punctuation marks, which was not the case with other students.

### *Rosa*

Rosa identified as Mexican/Hispanic, was a 14-year-old female, was in the eighth grade, and had lived in the city for a few years. She commented that she most often reads websites and books, and she prefers mystery, romance, and comedy books. The student was present every day of the workshop, had a compliant attitude, and was very shy and quiet. She tended to complete most assignments and seemed to put effort into creating quality products during the workshop. On the final evaluation, the student wrote, “I liked everything that we did because it was different.” Additionally, she mentioned that she

learned, “How to do a comic book and learn what the author’s are telling us about the book.”

### *Maria*

Maria was a 13-year-old female, eighth grade student, who has lived in the Central Texas town her whole life. She noted that she likes comedy and romance books and reads text messages and magazines as well. The student was present for 17 of the 18 workshop days and completed most assignments. When asked what she liked most about reading graphic novels, she replied, “like the fact that it’s lots of pictures!” She also remarked, that *Yummy* was, “easier, less words and more pictures!” than other books she had read.

During the workshop, a curriculum (see Appendix D) that had been previously created and employed by the researcher was used. The curriculum developed from using very basic images and activities to having students think about works on a deeper level and even create their own graphic work. Student work, questionnaires concerning student interests and the activities (Appendix M), researcher notes, and interviews were used to glean information about students’ literacy developments. Two rubrics (see Appendices N and O) were utilized by the researcher to assess data from the various methods of collection and establish which activities allowed students to demonstrate literacy skills and possible gains. By collating the data and using the assessment tools, the researcher sought to answer the following questions.

*What Prior Knowledge and Attitudes Do Students Have about Graphic Novels?*

None of the students confirmed that they had ever read a graphic novel, but two students, Joe and Jacob, commented that they liked to read comic books. Comments made by students are reported as written by students on Evaluation #1. Comments students made about comics and graphic novels included:

Michelle: Not much.

Joe: Nothing they have boxes.

John: They are easy to read.

Jacob: They are unrealistic. They have Charlie Brown.

Rosa: They have pictures or bubbles.

Maria: Comic's have pictures!

These comments do include a few actual attributes of graphic novels and comics, but also seem to display a very limited idea of what a graphic novel or comic book is as well as demonstrate some common misconceptions about the texts. In response to a question about why comic books and graphic novels appeal to people, the students responded:

Joe: They are funny *or* they don't.

John: Because of the movies.

Jacob: They have humor. They are funny.

Rosa: They entertain them.

Maria: The pictures entertain them.

These comments also seemed to demonstrate a very limited view of what kinds of comic books and graphic novels are available today. Students seemed to be drawing from a knowledge bank that limited graphic works to comic strips or “funny papers” and super

hero comics. This allowed for a wide variety of materials to be introduced to the students and highlighted the need for such an introduction. The only stereotype of comic and graphic novel readers that was shared was that they are, “Nerds.” This seems to be a somewhat popular stereotype that is perpetuated by TV shows such as the Big Bang Theory, in which the main characters are presented as typical “nerds” and have an obsession with comic books and characters. Although comic book and graphic novel readership has grown throughout the past decade, this stereotype seems to persist. Monnin (2010) cites research stating that graphic novel sales rose from a 75 million dollar industry in 2001 to a 330 million dollar industry in 2006; but probably middle school students are not aware of the diversity that would come with such a large increase in readership. In order to address the limited exposure that students had to diverse comic books and graphic novels, a table full of a variety of graphic works ranging in topic and genre was available for students to choose from during free reading times. The works included a variety of comic books, comic strip collections, manga, and graphic novels that could be classified as comedy [such as *The Cartoon History of the Universe* (Gonick, 1994)], teen drama [such as *The Plain Janes* (Castellucci, Rugg, & Fletcher (2007), *Romeo and Juliet* the graphic version (Wiegler & Shakespeare, 2008), and *Anya’s Ghost* (Broskol, 2011)], fantasy [such as *Artemis Fowl: The Graphic Novel* (Colfer, Donkin, & Rigano, 2007) and *Yu the Great: Conquering the Flood* (Storrie & Carruthers, 2007)], social issues [such as *The Complete Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2007), *Little Rock Nine* (Poe & Lindner, 2008), and *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006)], and historical and informational texts [such as *T-Minus: The Race to the Moon* (Ottaviani, Cannon & Cannon, 2009), *World’s Most Dangerous Animals* (Brusha et al., 2012), and *Machiavelli:*

*The Prince* (Clester, 2011)]. Both fiction and nonfiction works were included. After students completed Evaluation #1, designed to evaluate students' prior knowledge, activities designed to expand new and traditional literacies were introduced. Students were introduced to the conventions of graphica and were asked to find examples in their choice of a variety of graphic works. This began the introduction to diverse works of graphica. Daily activities that continued to expose students to a variety of texts were presented at levels that required increasingly difficult tasks to help introduce students to new skills as well as help them cultivate these new abilities.

#### *What Can Students Learn from Graphic Novels?*

Based on researcher notes and student work, students were evaluated on their participation, how well they demonstrated a skill, and their comments about assignments. Evidence presented in researcher notes, student work, questionnaires, and interviews were used to develop a picture of students' skills. To analyze what students could learn from graphic novels, a list of both traditional and new literacy skills was made. From those lists, the researcher created a rubric for each (see Appendices N and O) and noted which activities promoted which skills. Table 4 lists which activities were connected to which literacies.

The rubrics were used to evaluate student work and progress throughout the workshop. As expressed in Table 4, traditional and new literacy skills can be developed by including graphic works in today's classrooms. The researcher used the two rubrics to score each student on their expression of each literacy skill. The description of traditional and new literacy skills development will follow.

Table 4

*Literacy Skills – Activities*

New Literacy Skills	Activities to Cultivate Skills
Understands Conventions of Various Media (panels, gutters, speech bubbles, narrative boxes, etc.)	Conventions of Graphica Sheet, Getting Started Exploring Graphica Activity and Sheet, Illustrating a Graphic Work
Infers from Images	Faces Activity, <i>Hydrant</i> activity, Illustrating a Graphic Work, <i>Maus</i> reading and activities, <i>Yummy</i> reading and activities, <i>Romeo and Juliette</i> with and without images
Cohesion or Contrast of Text and Image	Alien Comics, Calvin and Hobbes Comic, Illustrating a Graphic Work, <i>Romeo and Juliette</i> with and without images
Traditional Literacy Skills	Activities to Cultivate Skills
Plot	Reading and discussion of <i>Maus</i> and <i>Yummy</i>
Character Development	Reading and activities in <i>Maus</i> and <i>Yummy</i> , Character Sheet on Calvin and Hobbes, Writing their own Graphic Works
Setting	<i>Hydrant</i> discussion, <i>Yummy</i> discussion, Writing their own Graphic Works, <i>Romeo and Juliette</i> with and without images
Point of View	5 Big Questions, discussion and activities in <i>Yummy</i> , Calvin and Hobbes comic strips
Context Clues	Reading and discussing <i>Yummy</i> , <i>Maus</i> , and <i>Romeo and Juliette</i> with and without images
Making Inferences	Reading and discussing <i>Maus</i> and <i>Yummy</i> , creating their own graphic work
Vocabulary	<i>Hydrant</i> activity and discussion, reading and discussing <i>Maus</i> , writing their own graphic work

### *Which Traditional Literacies Are Developed by Using Graphic Novels?*

The traditional literacy skills were chosen based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Texas Education Agency, 2011) and a list compiled by Monnin (2010) were: identifying plot, character development, setting, point of view, context clues, making inferences, and vocabulary. Student participation and work throughout the workshop were used to evaluate if evidence of these skills was present. A rubric assessing traditional literacy skills (see Appendix N) was the main instrument used to record and evaluate evidence of such skills. The seven skills were evaluated on a 1-5 ranking with one referring to a lack of demonstration of the skill and five demonstrating a wide array of evidence in that skill. Therefore, if a student exhibited a wide array of evidence in all seven literacy skills, their score could be as high as 35. The lowest score a student could earn by exhibiting extremely limited skills in the seven literacies would be seven. The average score on the traditional literacy skills rubric was 24.33 out of 35. Students scored highest in character development; however, each student's scores were very different than the others' (see Table 5).

Michelle consistently scored 2 and 3 on most skills due to a lack of evidence in each category; her overall score was 18. Many of her assignments were not attempted or completed. Although she was able to give answers about plot, setting, etc. when asked, she rarely incorporated very complex examples of these things into her own work. For example, the setting and character in her graphic work were very basic and lacked detail. She stated that the story takes place at, "a concert" and describes her character merely as, "a musician he sang/rapped reggae." Her story and description was only four sentences long. Additionally, her character descriptions from *Yummy* lacked depth and detail.

Table 5

*Traditional Literacy Skills Rubric*

Student	Score	Most Evidence Presence	Least Evidence Present
Michelle	18	Plot and Setting	Point of View, Context Clues, and Making Inferences
Joe	27	Character Development and Setting	Point of View and Vocabulary
John	19	Making Inferences and Vocabulary	Character Development and Context Clues
Jacob	23.5	Setting and Vocabulary	Making Inferences
Rosa	28.5	Context Clues and Vocabulary	Context Clues and Vocabulary
Maria	30	Character Development, Setting, and Vocabulary	Point of View and Making Inferences

Although Joe missed many days of the workshop, he demonstrated many skills on the assignments that he completed. His lowest score was in vocabulary and was due to a lack of diverse vocabulary. Joe’s highest score was in character development that he demonstrated in his discussion of *Maus II* as well as his own graphic work. His characters were described in detail, such as having distinct ethnicity, clothing, and habits. He even assigned his main character a catch phrase. His graphic work had a plot line with rising and falling action as well as a resolution at the end of the story.

John presented the least amount of evidence concerning his traditional literacy skills—his score was 19. John had to constantly be reminded to stay on task and often neglected to complete assignments. The assignments he did complete were frequently very basic and seemed to demonstrate lack of serious attempt. Similarly, his writing was

very sloppy and he repeatedly misspelled even basic words. His highest score was in character development. His description of the character Roger in the graphic novel *Yummy* was well developed and descriptive. He noted very descriptive details about Roger's age and feelings and chose very important actions to fill in his Character Study sheet. Part of the importance of the story is to see the complexities of the characters, and the student did a good job of explaining how Roger did not want to be like his brother, that Roger realized Yummy was too young to be punished as an adult, and he expressed the emotion of the character's close connection to both the killer and the victim.

With a total score of 23.5, Jacob scored 4 in all categories except in setting in which he presented evidence scoring 5 and making inferences in which no evidence was present. Jacob missed the majority of days on which the activities evidencing inference were completed. His highest scores were mostly attributed to his demonstration of plot, character development, setting, and vocabulary in his graphic work and his illustration of another student's work. He gave a very detailed description of the physical characteristics of his character, the setting of the story, the plot of the story, and his diverse vocabulary. The student used words and phrases such as: furious, eternity, in the distance, etc.

Rosa, whose score was 28.5, presented great evidence in her ability to recognize plot, character development, and setting, but the evidence for her use of context clues and diverse vocabulary was weak. Additionally, proof of her skills in determining point of view and making inferences were lacking. She demonstrated her skills in character development not only in her own graphic work, but also in her written story which accompanied the wordless graphic work, *Hydrant*. Rosa gave the main character in

*Hydrant* a name, and she described details of the lady's life and thoughts. She notes, "As she was doing that, she was thinking about how she would like to go back to the Vista Island."

Maria's skills, which scored at 30, seemed to be relatively consistent; she scored between 3.5 and 4 in most categories. She did score a 5 in her ability to recognize and describe setting. Her skills were demonstrated in her description of the setting in *Yummy*, the setting in her own graphic work, and the setting in the graphic work that she illustrated. After a few pages of *Yummy*, the student wrote that the setting was, "horrible, violent, gangs." When asked what clues the art gave about the setting, the student responded, "make it seem dark!" Although students completed assignments to varying degrees of satisfaction and levels of literacy development, evidence that traditional literacy skills were utilized and possibly advanced did emerge.

#### *Which New Literacy Skills Can Students Develop by Using Graphic Novels?*

To gauge student progress in new literacy skills, a rubric was utilized (see Appendix O). The skills assessed were: understanding conventions of graphics (including things such as speech bubbles, panels, narrative boxes, and page layout), inferring from images, and understanding of cohesion of word and text. The three skills were evaluated on a 1-5 ranking with 1 referring to a lack of demonstration of the skill and 5 demonstrating a wide array of evidence in that skill. Therefore, if a student exhibited a wide array of evidence in all three literacy skills, their score could be as high as 15. The lowest score a student could earn by exhibiting extremely limited skills in the three literacies would be 3. The average score on the rubric was 11.75 out of 15.

Students all demonstrated at least a basic understanding of all skills in the category. The lowest score was 3 out of 5 with most scores being 4 or higher.

Table 6

*Progress in New Literacy Skills*

Student	Score	Most Evidence Presence	Least Evidence Present
Michelle	9	Inferring from Images	Cohesion of Text and Image
Joe	13	Cohesion of Text and Image	Inferring from Images
John	10.5	Cohesion of Text and Image	Understands Conventions
Jacob	11	Cohesion of Text and Image	Inferring from Images
Rosa	13.5	Understands Conventions	Inferring from Images
Maria	13.5	Cohesion of Text and Image	Understands Conventions

Michelle’s score of 9 was due to a basic demonstration of new literacy skills. The student’s tendency to not complete assignments or to complete assignments only to the basic level left a lapse in evidence of skills. For instance, in her illustration of a comic that included text but no images, the student filled in images, but the characters’ appearances changed throughout the panels. This did not demonstrate an understanding of cohesion of text and image or conventions. Likewise, her demonstration of inferring from images was evident, but limited in the Faces Activity in which she made very base level inferences from the pictures. For instance, on the faces that looked happy, her responses were, “You make me happy” or “you make me smile” or “you make me laugh” instead of explaining a deeper or more varied reason for the happy face.

Joe scored 13 despite missing many days of class. His graphic work displayed evidence of many of the new literacy skills. For example, he included elements such as speech bubbles in the graphic work that he illustrated. Additionally, the work he illustrated had cohesion of text and image and he took artistic liberties while still staying true to the author's directions. He illustrated the story in a way that made the two settings—a school and a park—clear as well as included elements such as the ice cream that the author mentioned. His demonstration of inferring from images was weak due to his missing the discussion of *Yummy* and his incomplete Faces Activity.

John failed to complete several of the assignments, had trouble staying on task, and was very talkative. He only scored 10, missed some class time during the main assignment, and did not demonstrate a full array of new literacy skills. He did, however, utilize the use of panels in his description of *Hydrant* as well as give excellent example of graphic conventions on his description sheet. Students were asked to create a conventions of graphica sheet on which was included the convention, a drawing of that convention, and a description of how it is used. The conventions were explained, and students were responsible for drawing their own examples and finding examples within a graphic work. John added accurate images to his sheet. In addition, he utilized panels when writing his story to accompany the wordless graphic work *Hydrant*. He also used a very basic story—one that was only four sentences long—to create the graphic work that he illustrated. He demonstrated cohesion of image and word to communicate the author's message even though it was a very limited story.

Jacob, who missed some of the days when skills would have been most prominently expressed, scored 11. Although the student gave good examples on his

graphica conventions sheet and used some of them during the Faces Activity, he neglected to include any on the graphic work that he illustrated. He did demonstrate some understanding of cohesion of image and text on his completion of word only and image only comics, but due to his missing several days, there was a lack of further demonstration of the inferring from images skill. The majority of demonstration of this skill took place during the reading and discussion of *Maus II* and *Yummy*. Also, during the activity involving the Calvin and Hobbes comic, students needed to infer what was happening in the images in order to create a cohesive text. He neglected to notice or respond to the fact that a stop watch was involved. This was a major factor in creating a cohesive text that took into account inferring from the images. In the graphic work that he illustrated, he made sure to include details such as the jeep, the blonde hair of the main character, and the battery that would cause the problems in the story. He also included a clock that signified it was 6:00 a.m. as the writer noted in her story.

Rosa had the highest score of 13.5 and only seemed to lack skill in the area of inferring from images. She gave excellent examples of understanding conventions on her conventions of graphica sheet as well as on her written and illustrated works. For instance, she included speech bubbles and narrative boxes in the graphic work that she illustrated. One example of her demonstration of cohesion of image and text was in her illustration of the main character in the graphic work. The character was described as a, “really old man,” and although the drawing was simplistic, Rosa added a walking cane to communicate that the character needed assistance.

Maria also scored 13.5 and utilized conventions such as speech bubbles in the graphic work that she illustrated. She followed the author’s instructions and included key

details, such as the black suit with red tie that the main character was wearing. Despite unusual details from the author, like, “roosters come out of his back,” she illustrated the work in a way that communicated the events of the story. Additionally, her ability to infer from images was demonstrated in things such as her comment that the art, “Makes it seem dark” in her analysis of *Yummy*.

### *Additional Wonderings*

Throughout the workshop, the researcher wondered if working with nontraditional texts would help students to develop both their traditional and new literacy skills. The texts that we used to develop literacy skills ranged from *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strips to an excerpt of a graphic novel *Maus*—which is told by a son and based on the story of his father who lived through the Holocaust—to the graphic novel *Yummy*, which is a story based on the tragic events leading up to the death of an 11 year old gang member in Chicago in the 1990s. I wondered if using texts in which the format and the stories were somewhat unconventional in a traditional classroom would reach students who might otherwise be ignored in the curriculum. Through interviews and questionnaires, students revealed that they enjoyed working with nontraditional texts such as graphic novels. Based on responses, students were highly motivated by the medium used in the workshop. They commented about enjoying the workshop because the books were easy to read, different, and fun.

John commented on graphic novels,

. . . they’re easier to read . . . cause the way it, like cause it has pictures for everything they say . . . and the way that like they have the word bubbles by their mouth. You can, you can see what the person looks like and what they’re saying.

Having a medium that is easier to read and connects to other areas of their lives could be very important for engagement and motivation for students with literacy difficulties. Similarly, Rosa remarked, “I liked everything we did because it was different.” Students also commented about how they liked *Yummy* because it was “real” or involved “real stuff.” When asked about the comment and about other novels, such as *Maus II*, which included real life events and people, the group seemed to point to the fact that this was more modern and less metaphorical than *Maus II*, which includes animals in the illustrations rather than humans. Since this group of students seemed to enjoy texts that were closer representations of their own culture, I began to wonder if engaging students with texts that represent their culture and an environment that is similar to their own lives would motivate them to read and engage in dialogue about texts. As mentioned previously, the school population is made up of a high minority and highly impoverished population. The researcher selected *Yummy* because the characters are all minorities, and the setting is in an impoverished neighborhood in Chicago. One student remarked that you have to understand slang to read this book properly. The book is based on events that took place in the 1990s and draws on media coverage of the tragedies that took place in that neighborhood. Four students commented that *Yummy* was their favorite text from the workshop even though there were many books to choose from and several days of free reading opportunities. The two students who did not choose *Yummy* both missed days on which major reading and activity were completed with the book.

Throughout the workshop, John made multiple references to losing a “big brother.” One comment was when he was writing about the life and death of Yummy. He commented that, “Nobody should be shot for no reason” followed by “R.I.P.

Dominique” in large letters below. It is possible that this student had lost someone to gang violence. I believe it is due to connections such as these that discussions about *Yummy* and the characters were much more in depth, and students were more engaged during the reading and discussion of *Yummy* than discussions of other works. At one point during the workshop, the Professional Communications teacher approached the researcher and told her about a conversation she had with one of the workshop participants. The teacher commented that the student brought her personal copy of the book to class and asked her to read it while the student worked on her project. The student said, “This is a really cool book, Miss. You gotta read this. You wanna read it while I work on my paper?” After half of the class period the student commented, “It’s real, Miss. It it it like gets us!” The teacher thought the conversation was unique and encouraging enough to share with the researcher and commented that this student has never seemed to show this sort of enthusiasm about a book before. Discussions over *Yummy* seemed to flow more smoothly and require less solicited comments than other works read and discussed as a group. Although *Maus* was also based on real events and involved similar art and topics, when asked about the work, students who were present for the entire reading always claimed to prefer *Yummy*. The researcher wondered if similar interest in their own cultures and lives would emerge in student created graphic works.

#### *What Literacy Skills Can Students Develop in Creating Graphic Novels?*

To evaluate this question, the researcher used the rubric of new literacy skills, the rubric of traditional literacy skills as well as a checklist to “grade” students’ final graphic work. The rubrics and the checklist were developed as a result of reviewing other

research, compiling a list of skills, and setting a 1-5 augmented Likert scale rating system. The checklist (see Appendix P) was used to check for certain literacy evidence in student created graphic works.

The checklist simply allowed for analysis of the presence of literacy elements present in the graphic work and had a notes section at the bottom. The items on the checklist were:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Common graphic novel conventions are used throughout the work (panels, speech bubbles, narrative boxes, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Diverse vocabulary is used throughout the graphic novel
- \_\_\_\_\_ Audience is appropriately addressed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Story shows evidence that text and image connection was considered
- \_\_\_\_\_ Characters develop throughout the story
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plot line (rise and fall of action, climax, resolution) is evident
- \_\_\_\_\_ A clear setting is stated in the student's written portion of the story

Student work completed throughout the workshop was evaluated for evidence of both sets of literacy skills; however, the majority of the scoring came from the final work, which is why completion of the work was one of the criteria for inclusion in the six-case sample. A few of the other assignments, such as adding images to text only comic strips, adding text to image only comic strips, and completion of written story to accompany a wordless graphic text were considered in the evaluation of development of literacy skills. The student work was instrumental in evaluating student demonstration of skills; however, lack of demonstration of such skills was not a definite indicator of lack of the skills themselves. Samples of students' work can be seen in Appendix Q.

Michelle missed a few of the days on which the students worked on their graphic work. Therefore, she spent less time on her assignment and seemed to put less effort into it. The researcher had to brainstorm with, coach, and even sit with the student in order to coax her to complete her project. Many of the elements on the checklist as well as rubric were missing from the student's graphic work.

Joe's graphic work employed many of the items from the checklist and the rubric. The student included graphic conventions in the work that he illustrated, as well as included details in the image that were written in the story. He provided a very specific description of this character for the illustrator to follow.

Although John's story contained a character description, he did not write a long enough story to develop the character, describe a setting, or have a plot line. In the story that he illustrated, there was cohesion between the author's description and the images, but most of the graphic conventions were missing. The student was also absent for a portion of the time the group worked on the assignment.

The story that Jacob wrote utilized diverse vocabulary; had a plot line which included a rise and fall of action, climax, and resolution; had a clearly described setting; and a developed character. He did not utilize graphic conventions in the story that he illustrated, but he used details provided by the author to communicate her message.

Rosa's graphic work revealed her grasp and ability to employ many new literacy skills. She used both speech bubbles and narrative boxes in her illustration of a graphic work. Her vocabulary usage was basic and her setting was described clearly. She showed evidence of understanding text and image cohesion by the details she included in her drawings which assisted in communicating the author's message. For instance, she

included a walking cane with one character to communicate he was an old man that needed assistance.

Maria used speech bubbles in her graphic work, but neglected other conventions. Some of the details of her illustration communicated the author's message, but some details were indistinct—for instance some of the elements of the drawing, such as the coloring book that plays a main part in the story line. The story she wrote was very basic and lacked character development or much of a plot. Her setting was clear and her vocabulary was basic. Additionally, her plot line was simple, and she left the story to be continued.

Also, the researcher wondered if using a new medium to communicate would enhance students' traditional writing skills. Although their vocabulary did not display any enhanced skills, such as using varied degrees of words or words that were complex for their grade level, they did give rich descriptions of the characters that the illustrator would use to create the images in their graphic work. Writing with an illustrator in mind seemed to keep the students focused on providing a visual image of the story. For instance, four of the six students provided details about the setting (place, time, etc.), five of the six students provided details about how the main character looked or dressed, and four of the six students provided other specific details about the story (color of vehicle, details about how a character was killed, flavor of ice cream, etc.). These details may have been left out if students were not considering the illustrator when writing their stories.

The researcher also began to wonder whether given the opportunity, if students would create a graphic text exemplary of their own culture and community or one more

similar to what might be seen in a traditional work of literature? Interestingly, Michelle chose a character that was one of her favorite musicians, Bob Marley. Since Michelle identified her ethnicity as African American and Hispanic, and enjoyed *Yummy*, the researcher found it fitting that she chose a minority main character. Joe's story incorporated an interesting spin off of G.I. Joe stories. He called his story "G.I. Jose" and mentioned details about his character such as, "He is Mexican with a Mexican mustache." His character also has a catch phrase of "It's Mexican Time." The story was presented in a very comedic way and involved a secondary character that had the same name as one of the students' classmates. Jacob wrote a story that seemed to incorporate many aspects of Hispanic culture. Although the researcher believes it was meant as a spoof of such culture, she was surprised to see such aspects in his work. He writes about the main character having "Mexican skin tone," listening to "Mexican music," and eating a burrito. His story also had a secondary character with the same name as one of his Hispanic classmates. In John's description of his superhero, the character was to have, "a taper fade and he has a lot of swag." This sort of language was common to John's everyday comments during the workshop. Another student, Rosa, wrote about an orange and an apple who were trying to make friends at school, but they were shy. The characters were also young teens, whose age was very similar to students in the workshop. This student was very shy and had to be coaxed to speak in class even when she had excellent answers or examples to share.

### *Summary of Findings*

In this sample of six, none of the students had ever read a graphic novel and only two students claimed to read comic books regularly. Many misconceptions about graphic

texts were communicated and very few actual facts—such as they have pictures and speech bubbles—were given on questionnaires. Students were exposed to many different forms of graphic texts and were able to discuss similar as well as unique elements of such texts. Throughout the workshop, students utilized traditional literacy skills by working with graphic texts. Identifying setting, point of view, plot, character development, as well as inference, using context clues, and working with vocabulary were fostered. Additionally, new literacy skills such as identifying conventions of various media, making inferences from images, and cohesion of text and image were exhibited and cultivated. Working with nontraditional texts spurred conversation with students and engaged them in a variety of group and individual activities. Texts that seemed to gain the most attention and inspire the most in depth work were based on true events and settings that may be more familiar to students than traditional texts. Students showed enhanced descriptions in their writings when a graphic medium was the end product. Likewise, students tended to include elements of language and culture that were familiar to them when creating their own graphic works. It seems that using graphic texts and novels in the classroom can encourage motivation and discussion as well as promote the development of both traditional and new literacy skills.

Chapter Five includes the author's discussion of the conclusions and implications drawn from the major findings which were discussed in Chapter Four. Limitations and recommendations for further research are also included.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Summary, Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine whether using graphic novels in an educational setting could be beneficial to middle school students' literacy development and in what areas. The basic premise was to use graphic works to attempt to engage students and expand their literacy skills. Previous chapters discussed the growing literacy needs of today's students and the reasoning behind the need for inclusion of such texts. This chapter focuses on the discussion and implications of such findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research.

#### *Summary of the Study*

This study took place in a Central Texas middle school which was made up of a largely minority and impoverished population. The researcher met with school administrators and selected a population of eighth graders who had scored either slightly above or slightly below the passing score on the most recent computerized literacy assessment. The group was then narrowed down by students who had an elective course during third period, which was the most convenient period to schedule the workshop according to the principal. Students who were interested in the workshop and returned the permission slips with signatures from a parent or guardian and themselves were allowed to participate. Students met with the researcher for a regular 50-minute class period on campus for approximately four weeks in between Thanksgiving and Christmas

breaks. No grade was assigned to the workshop, and students were aware that the program was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time with no penalty.

Throughout the course of the workshop, students were exposed to increasingly challenging tasks involving graphics. The tasks built from discussing conventions of graphic works to looking at images and discussing what was conveyed to interacting with graphic novels and finally creating their own graphic work. Students were given questionnaires throughout the course that evaluated their prior knowledge, their interactions with texts, and what they felt they learned during the course. Additionally, the researcher took notes of her observations of student engagement, participation, attitudes, and literacy skill demonstration throughout the workshop. On one of the last days of the workshop, interviews were conducted with each student to clarify information that they had given on questionnaires and to seek out further information about their experience in the workshop.

After the conclusion of the workshop, the researcher selected a sample of six students based upon who had the highest attendance and completed the culminating project, a graphic work. These six students were each considered a case and each case was examined individually as well as compared in a cross case analysis. Each of the six student's work was examined for demonstration of both traditional and new literacy skills and collated with their questionnaire and interview responses along with researcher observation notes to create a picture of their literacy skills. The students' individual skills in addition to the groups' skills as a whole were described in Chapter Four.

### *Questions*

The following questions were examined throughout the course of the study:

- What prior knowledge and attitudes do students have about graphic novels?
- What can students learn from graphic novels?
  - A. How can graphic novels be used to develop traditional literacies?
  - B. How can graphic novels be used to develop new literacies?
  - C. What literacy skills can students develop in creating graphic novels?

### *Discussion and Implications*

As established in Chapter Two, lack of literacy skills is a problem that is being addressed in many areas with remediation programs and measures to improve literacy (Harmon et al., 2011; National Council of Teachers of English, 2006; Teale et al., 2007). Additionally, certain groups—minorities and impoverished students mainly—are at greater risk for weaknesses in literacy skills (Haycock, 2001; Hugh-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). One of the areas of concern is that of motivation. Authors pointed to motivation as one of the key factors in helping students improve literacy skills (Harmon et al., 2011; Layne, 2009; NCTE, 2006; Seyfried, 2008; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). In addition to these concerns, is the call for new sorts of literacy in addition to the traditional skills revolving around reading and writing print-only text. Those such as The 21st Century Fluency Project (2013), Norman (2012), Luterbach and Brown (2011), and The New London Group (1996) asserted that students need to be prepared to analyze, understand, and communicate with various types of media in order to be functional in the 21st century. Some of the major findings of this study address the needs that are stated in such research. Similar to the concerns voiced in

this research are concerns and problems that exist in the middle school in which the research was conducted.

The Central Texas middle school has both a large minority population and low socioeconomic status population (ProPublica, 2013). The breakdown of the population is approximately 75% Hispanic, 23% African American, and 3% White with 92% of those students qualifying for free and reduced lunch (ProPublica, 2013). This group seems to fit the demographic described by research as having a greater risk of demonstrating weaknesses in the areas of literacy. According to the district's webpage as well as the state's webpage, the school was considered Academically Unacceptable in 2011. Due to federal mandates, the school offered after-school tutoring to students. Additionally, the researcher's previous work with the campus has been in afterschool tutoring programs, with English programs for parents, and with literacy instruction via pre-service teachers in the professional development partnership with the school. Because of the close connections between the university and the school, as well as the researcher's previous background with the school, the principal was willing to allow the researcher access to students and to use nontraditional text and activities in an attempt to boost students' literacy skills. The researcher's previous experience as a classroom teacher working with secondary students with literacy deficits, as well as her previous experiences with students from this school prepared her for the low level of traditional literacy she would encounter.

In connection to the major findings, several themes emerged from the students' work, questionnaires, interviews, and researcher observation notes. These themes seemed recurrent in the data sources. As described in Chapter Three, in addition to the

researcher, two graduate students examined materials from the study to verify emerging themes. The group of three met, went through the materials and took notes on wording or concepts that were repeated, compared notes, and agreed upon the following themes.

The four main themes that emerged while reviewing the data were:

1. Students seemed to like working with graphics because it was different and interesting.
2. Images seemed to be a huge attraction for students.
3. Students believed graphic texts are easier to understand.
4. Students communicated that these sorts of texts should be used in the classroom.

These four themes were evidenced by repeated comments and responses from students throughout the workshop. These four themes were used by the researcher to develop her conclusions and implications for the study. These themes were helpful in evaluating students' opinions of and interactions with graphic novels, but other findings emerged from the study as well. The list above, additional findings, and emerging ideas from the study were combined to create the major implications below:

1. Graphic novels appear to be motivating.
2. Graphic novels may offer marginalized students a place in the curriculum.
3. Using graphic novels can help students develop both traditional and new literacy skills.
4. Teachers know very little about graphic novels and might benefit from introductions to diverse graphic novels and classroom implementation ideas.

Through working with students and graphic works, it became apparent to the researcher that these sorts of texts were motivating to students. Students reported finding the graphic texts interesting and easier to understand, the graphics themselves were attractive, and they even commented that such texts should be used in classrooms.

Students seemed to like working with graphica because the materials were different or interesting. Many students commented that they did not usually enjoy school reading or that it was boring. When asked why people like graphic novels so much, students responded about both the images and flexibility of the format. For example, Rosa commented, “Cause they might be interesting and like they can choose their favorite and it can be like a mystery or romance or whatever they want.” Also, students’ comments seemed to suggest that they are drawn in by the format of graphic works, that they enjoy the images and conventions of such works, and that the novelty of the format and activities involving such works are attractive and engaging to them.

Similarly, students communicated that graphic texts are easier to understand. They listed factors such as the presence of images, fewer words, and simpler presentation of dialogue in their reasons. For instance, after reading *Yummy*, students were asked if reading a graphic novel was easier, harder, or the same as reading other books. Rosa stated, “It was easier because there are little and simple words.” However, students encountered words such as *disciples*, *invented*, *sensational*, *executed*, *fugitive*, etc., which are not usually categorized as little or simple. Additionally, when asked what she learned during the workshop, Michelle wrote that, “Comic Books are good books to read and easier to understand.” During the interview, the student was asked what made them

easier to understand and she replied, “Because it’s not all in one big paragraph and they have pictures.”

Possibly as a result of this interest, attraction to images, and the fact that these works seemed easier to understand, students consistently commented that they should, indeed, be used in classrooms. In fact, when asked, “Should teachers use books like these in their classrooms?” students overwhelmingly agreed that teachers should. This raises the idea that perhaps students should be allowed some input about the curriculum and texts that are used in the classrooms. Although allowing all students free reign to design the learning experience could lead to less-than-desired results, perhaps allowing them some input would enhance their engagement, motivation to learn, and bring a sense of belonging and relevance to students.

Evidently, graphic texts can be a way to reach reluctant readers because of the interesting topics, fast action, inclusion of images, and impression that they are easier to read. Researchers such as McTaggart (2008) and Botzakis (2010) commented about the fast action and exciting topics of graphic novels and the format’s ability to engage students. Correspondingly, the same seemed to be true in this research. The fast action in *Maus II* seemed to attract students, and the current issues and cultural connection of *Yummy* kept them engaged and conversing throughout the workshop. Students commented about the texts being interesting and easier to read; furthermore, students expressed how much they liked the texts.

Another conclusion reached by the researcher was that graphic novels may offer marginalized students a place in the curriculum by motivating and inviting their perspective into the classroom, which offers them a more relevant opportunity to build

their knowledge and skills. Although not a part of the original research questions, a finding that emerged was students seemed to be engaged with texts that incorporated cultures and characters that seemed familiar to them. In selecting texts for the workshop, the researcher tried to select works the students could connect to on a personal level.

*Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty* (Neri, 2010) has won many awards: American Library Association Great Graphic Novel for Teens, Coretta Scott King Honor Book, and International Reading Association Notable Book for a Global Society (Scherff, 2012). Also, all of the main characters are minorities, and it is set in an impoverished neighborhood. Based on the demographics of the middle school—approximately 97% minority and 92% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch (ProPublica, 2013)—this seemed to be a book to which the students might be able to find a personal connection. *Yummy* also offers an opportunity to discuss details about not only what the characters think, do, and say, but how others view the characters. Scherff (2012) stated that identity is an important issue in the book, “. . . not only because of the layering of identities in book (sic), but also because of how others in the story view and talk about Yummy” (p. 74). During the workshop, students offered descriptions of *Yummy* as both bully and victim, as well as offering defense of each in verbal conversations and in a written assignment.

Additionally, the students, who stated *Yummy* was their favorite text from the workshop, were asked why. Michelle responded that she liked, “Everything about it!” John responded that he liked it, “Because it was true.” Rosa stated that, “Well it was like mysterious and interesting.” Maria answered, “It was like a real story, like a true story and I like true stories.” The researcher responded, “Okay. What about *Maus*, it was

true?” and the student replied, “It was good but I didn’t like it as much as I did Yummy!” Some of these students had previously stated that school reading was boring, or they did not like it; perhaps inclusion of a text that they have more of a connection to can be more engaging and interesting for students.

Connectedly, when students created their own graphic texts, two students chose to include elements of their own culture into their works. Joe wrote a story that was a spin-off of G.I. Joe, but he used the name G.I. Jose. He described the character as having “Mexican” features and included the catch phrase, “It’s Mexican Time” to replace G.I. Joe’s phrase, “It’s go time!” Jacob’s story also included cultural elements. His character was described as having a, “Mexican skin tone” and listening to “Mexican music” while eating a burrito. Both of the main characters in his work had the names of two of his Hispanic classmates. Although both of these works took on a satirical manner, they included elements of culture that seemed similar to the students and were typical of both students’ personalities during the workshop.

In addition to appealing to reluctant readers, graphic texts can be a way to connect and include groups that tend to be underrepresented (minority, impoverished, certain religious groups, etc.) in the typical curriculum. Researchers make a compelling case for why minority students in particular need to be engaged in the curriculum, and graphic novels, especially those that include underrepresented groups, could be a way to do just that (Haycock, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Snow & Biancarosa, 2007). Additionally, Botzakis (2010) reminded educators that if the desire is to have students relate to the content and find school relevant, students must see themselves in the curriculum. Similarly, Knoester (2009) asserted,

Teaching strategies may include developing thematic units that focus on cultural minority literary figures and making available ample books and other publications featuring cultural minority characters and written by authors from many cultural backgrounds. Students of color, as well as poor and working class students of European descent, are often able to see and feel the effects of inequalities in society and in schools. Confronting and addressing inequalities can and should be an important part of an ongoing curriculum. Ignoring these matters in schools allows students of color, who are often underrepresented in books and curricular themes, to arrive at harmful conclusions about themselves, such as “I am not smart” or “School rejects me, so I reject school.” (p. 684)

As mentioned by Harmon et al. (2011), The National Council for Teachers of English (2006), Layne (2009), and Seyfriend (2008), motivation to read can be instrumental in developing students’ literacies. Helping students feel like a part of the school and a part of the curriculum will likely add to their motivation and engagement in the classroom. Although using such texts could serve as a motivator for reluctant readers, they can be just as important for others in the classroom. Including texts that present characters that are minorities or underrepresented views can be beneficial for all students. Similarly, Scherff (2012) stated,

These, in turn, can serve to disrupt the assumptions that students hold about race, culture, gender, etc. If we can push students to think about characters and identity more deeply, then perhaps those same ideas will translate into real life and make a difference in how adolescents perceive and treat others, leading to more positive identity development for everyone. (p. 78)

Therefore, it is not only the minority that can benefit from graphic texts that present unique characters and viewpoints, but all students stand to profit from inclusion of such texts into the curriculum.

It seems evident that continuing to focus on standardized testing, test preparation curriculum, and reading remediation programs may not *fix* the literacy issues of today’s students. However, including works in the curriculum that students find interesting, that engage students, that can both motivate them and address literacy skills, would be

beneficial. Graphic novels seem to be an apt tool for such a job. These texts seem to be particularly relevant in the classrooms with students who fit the demographics described by Haycock (2001), Ladson-Billings (2006), Snow and Biancarosa (2003), and others. These researchers state that minority students, who live in poverty, and who have English as their second language tend to be the ones who most often suffer from literacy weaknesses. It seems that the graphic novel format—that is the images, novelty, and appearance of being an easier read—tends to engage students and motivate them to interact with the texts. Additionally, as asserted by McTaggart (2008), the aspects of pop and diverse cultures along with the fast paced action in graphic novels can appeal to today's students. Researchers also commented that students need to see themselves in the curriculum in order to make connections and see school as relevant (Botzakis, 2010; Skerrett, 2012). Connectedly, graphic novels tend to incorporate views, voices, and cultures that are often neglected in traditional classroom texts, such as, poverty, discrimination, violence, and the viewpoints of diverse religions. Therefore, the visual format, fast pace progression of the stories, and inclusion of cultures that tend to be underrepresented in traditional curriculum can attract and motivate student, help students become involved with the text quickly, give them a more relevant connection to the story, and assist in developing their literacy skills.

Yet, as previously mentioned, despite such texts being motivating and engaging for students, included in state standards, and having been on standardized tests, they seem to be missing from the curriculum. Some of the books that students reported reading were *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (Lee, 1960) and *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967). Although these books do cover the topics of race and class, they offer a somewhat dated view of

things—they were each published over 45 years ago. Similarly, when the researcher was an educator in the public school system, such books as *Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1962) and *The Call of the Wild* (London, 1903) as well as short stories such as “The Gift of the Magi” (Henry, 1906) and “The Lady, or the Tiger” (Stockton, 1914) were used regularly in the English classroom; she has observed the same texts being used in a variety of local schools. Why is it that the curriculum and book choices seem to be immobile when technology and literacy skills that students need are constantly moving forward? There is no argument that students need to read classic works and learn to identify elements of literature in such works as well as appreciate the language and form that accompanies such works, but should students not also be introduced to and taught to decode and analyze more modern works for the same elements? After all, in their everyday lives, are students not much more likely to come into contact with works that incorporate visual and written elements? With the rise of accessibility via personal computers, TVs in public places, cell phones, and hand-held devices with data access which allow increased daily contact with visual media, such as multiple TV channels, websites, video games, and ads via billboards, etc., students have much more contact with various visual media than in years past. All of this is added to the persistent needs of students to be able to interact with and understand newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, books, and other largely print-only texts.

Additionally, using graphic novels can help students develop traditional and new literacy skills. As evidenced by reviewing students’ works and comments and attitudes documented in the researcher’s observations and notes, students utilized both traditional and new literacy skills. The rubrics used to assess such demonstrations offered proof

students had been utilizing and possibly developing skills, such as understanding conventions of various media, inferring from images, understanding cohesion and contrast of text and image, recognizing plot, setting, character development, point of view, utilizing context clues, making inferences, and vocabulary development. Students' creation of various forms of graphic works, ranging from basic to original creations, required students to understand and be able to utilize such skills. In response to the question, "What can students learn from graphic novels?" the researcher found many areas to explore. More specifically, when examining the questions of "How can graphic novels be used to develop traditional literacies?" and "How can graphic novels be used to develop new literacies?" the researcher found much evidence supporting that both traditional and new literacies can be fostered by the use of graphic works—and specifically graphic novels—with students. As reported in Chapter Four, students presented evidence towards their utilization and development of traditional literacy skills—such as identifying plot, character development, setting, point of view, using context clues, making inferences, and vocabulary development and usage—as well as new literacy skills—including, understanding conventions of various media, inferring from images, and understanding cohesion of text and image. Although no instrument was used to measure growth in such areas, such skills were utilized, encouraged, and possibly advanced by activities incorporating graphic works. Students demonstrated such skills as they discussed the text and images in graphic works, pointed out elements—such as plot, setting, character development, etc.—in graphic works, and completed either the text or image in simple graphic works. Additionally, students demonstrated use of both traditional and new literacy skills in their creations of their own graphic works. The skill

set of new literacy skills—utilization of graphical conventions, cohesion of image and text, etc.—was used in correlation with traditional literacy skills—describing a clear setting, plot, and characters—to create a comprehensive graphic work. If such texts are interesting to students and helpful in fostering literacy skills, why not include them in the curriculum? Not only are such works engaging and able to cultivate literacy skills, but use of diverse media are covered in state standards. In Texas, there are TEKS specifically for media literacy.

At the eighth grade level, the level of the students in the study, the TEKS stated, “Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sound work together in various forms to impact meaning” (Texas Education Agency, 2011). This statement calls for inclusion of media that contain images and graphics in combination with words, such as graphic novels. Yet, according to the researcher’s conversations with teachers in the local middle school, no such texts are being used. In fact one teacher commented that he had used, “some cartoonish sort of things to get the boys motivated and interested in reading” when he worked with the Texas Youth Challenge program because those students had not had much experience with reading. He commented, “Because it’s a lot easier to understand the dialogue between Spiderman and Batman, I guess than it is to understand *Wuthering Heights*.” Additionally, he stated that he had not used graphic works with his classes at the middle school. He stated, “And it would be, probably, a fairly decent tool to use because of course they’re asked to infer from a plethora of genres of, you know, literary works.” He continued, “And, um, they’re asked to, um, decipher what political cartoons mean and things of that nature. Not necessarily in English, but in social studies and in science as well.” Apparently, a

comprehension of these texts is something students are expected to have according to the state standards and they even tend to appear on standardized tests; however, they seem to still be lacking in classroom use.

Although some may argue that learning how to read a graphic novel or decipher a political cartoon may not be the most important skills, the call for 21st century literacy skills has been made by those such as The New London Group and The National Council of Teachers of English. Pantaleo (2011) comments, “Learning about graphic novel conventions and art elements, and understanding and appreciating the complexity of reading and creating graphic novels, can help students when they navigate other multimodal print and digital texts” (p. 127). As literacy needs continue to grow with the development of new technologies and modes of communication, students’ skill sets will also need to develop and grow. Inclusion of diverse texts, such as graphic novels, could cultivate such changes.

In addition to the findings concerning students, some implications concerning educators also emerged. For instance, although the researcher conducted interviews with students’ English teachers, interviews did not yield much useful information (Appendix R). Most teachers were unaware that students were participating in the workshop. The researcher did discover that students were not running to their classes for the rest of the day bragging about the workshop or the graphic novels they were reading. The only example of a teacher and student interaction about the workshop was brought to the researcher’s attention by a teacher who was not an English teacher, and the information was included in Chapter Four of this work. Additionally, most teachers communicated that they were unsure what was meant by the term “graphic novel,” they were unaware of

the variety of graphic novels available, and that they would like to have additional information about including them in the classroom.

As a result of the debriefing with the principal, the researcher was invited to do a professional development with English teachers. The researcher returned to the school for approximately an hour in the month following the completion of the workshop to discuss graphic novels with the teachers. The main goal of the professional development was to discuss graphic novels and their inclusion in the English classroom. The three main ideas were: graphic novels appeal to readers, graphic novels develop visual literacy, and graphic novels are very versatile. Research to back up each point was presented along with an article from the *Chicago Tribune* (Rado, 2012) and a list of graphic novels and their curriculum connection (Griffith, 2010). The researcher also brought many of the graphic novels from the workshop and some books on including graphic works in the classroom (Bakis, 2012; Gavigan & Tomasevich, 2011; Gorman, 2003; Thompson, 2008). Although one teacher was adamant about not using graphic novels in the classroom and commented that, “They are confusing to understand. My students need stronger reinforcement of vocabulary . . . My students need the structure of reading formal sentences,” and one teacher wrote, “I’m over all conflicted about the topic. I would be more likely to use them in addition to the chapter print novels,” many teachers seemed excited about the prospects of this format. When asked about the possibility of using them in the classroom, teachers made comments such as: “They are a great way to ‘hook’ non-readers into reading. Beneficial for visual learners.” “The students like to read things with pictures.” “Yes, because the students would most likely be engaged due to the pictures and shorter sentences.” “I think it’d be really cool to use in the classroom

. . . and FUN for the kids!” “Yes, something different for students as well as myself. I would love to see how the students respond to graphic novels.” “I think a lot of students would enjoy the change.” “The students enjoy them.”

Only two teachers commented that they currently use graphic novels in the classroom (and one commented that it was only during free reading time), and many said it was because they did not have access to any or that they needed more information on what was out there and how to use them. Teachers may need more information and training on how to incorporate such texts. This lack of knowledge and resources concerning graphic novels, as opposed to negative attitudes about including graphic novels in the curriculum, was encouraging to the researcher. Perhaps all that is needed to spur the inclusion of this valuable format in the English classroom is some training and materials. Once again, this format seemed to be motivating and engaging, able to be used to promote traditional and multiple literacy skills, as well as supported by state standards and included in standardized tests, perhaps more attention should be given to employing such a tool in the English classroom.

One other possible implication of the study is that a gradual introduction of graphica and literacy skills can be beneficial. The workshop curriculum began with a very basic introduction to graphica and connected skills and became increasingly more difficult as students demonstrated an understanding of both traditional and new literacy skills in connection to graphic works. For example, as students exhibited the ability to both pick out graphica conventions as well as the setting and character traits in basic comic strips, more complex graphic works were introduced. This seemed to allow the students to develop a comfort with the medium before bombarding them with a complex

list of skills to demonstrate or complex questioning before they understood the format. In her initial evaluation of a graphic work, Maria noted that it was, “Confusing!” but also that “It’s interesting!” and that she disliked, “Nothing!” about the work. Although *graphica* is popular, students, as well as teachers, may still need assistance in understanding the ins and outs of the medium. For instance, students and teachers may need information and skill development in understanding details about the conventions or even the cohesion or contrast between text and image in such works.

Most students responded in interviews that nothing from the workshop was confusing. However, when asked if anything from the workshop was confusing, Michelle responded, “At first, the little comic thing” as well as, “And the thing where we had to draw and pass it.” When asked why those things were confusing or unclear, the student replied, “I didn’t know which one to draw.” Comments, such as these, seem to indicate that a gradual introduction of skills benefits students and allows them to get used to a new format and developing new skills before expecting them to utilize their traditional and new literacy skills all at once. In fact, Pantaleo (2011) commented after students had created graphic novel-like books independently, “I believe it would have been worthwhile for students to complete smaller assignments that required them to practise (sic) the various conventions and features they were learning about as the study progressed” (p. 127). A similar rationale was what prompted the researcher to work gradually with students and build them up slowly. Additionally, the original intention of having students create a multiple page graphic novel independently was sacrificed in order to have students develop a more complete understanding of the format and a shorter work was created as part of a group process.

### *Limitations*

Overall, students did not seem to hold a lot of prior knowledge or attitudes about graphic novels. None of the students commented that they had ever read a graphic novel before and only two students noted they read comic books regularly. Although this left lots of room for the researcher to present accurate information about graphic texts as well as utilize materials completely new to the students, it also meant the researcher had to begin with very basic information and spend more time introducing the medium. This limited time could have been spent on more challenging assignments later in the workshop. For instance, after students completed the graphic work, they wrote the story and illustrated the story of another student, it was planned they would independently complete a graphic novel; however, time did not allow for the activities to progress to that level.

This group of students was also very different from the group with which the researcher had previously used the curriculum. The first group was made up of students enrolled in honors classes at local high schools, and the middle school sample group was made up of eighth grade students who were selected based on their low scores on recent computerized literacy assessments. This meant that more time was needed to introduce, explain, and develop students' skills with graphic works to these eighth graders.

Also, the school schedule during the workshop was not ideal for maximum attendance. During the workshop dates, there were multiple emergency drills that took away from work time. After a drill, it took more time to get students calmed down and focused on the topic. Another thing that interfered with workshop time was occupation testing and advising. Various students were required to take the test during the scheduled

workshop time and therefore had to miss days. When combined, these things meant that some students missed quite a lot of instruction or did not have adequate time to complete assignments.

It is also possible that the responses that were received were due to the voluntary nature of the program. Certain students may not have been as excited or willing to work with graphic texts. Perhaps students who had negative views about such works chose not to participate in the workshop from the beginning and different responses would occur if used with a different population and sample.

Moreover, this study was conducted with a very small number of students. As only 14 students were in attendance for the workshop, results would have likely been very different if a large group was used. Additionally, the demographic of the group was somewhat unique in makeup and may not be representative of other school populations and cultures.

One thing that may have skewed results is that students were not instructed to include literacy elements in their works specifically. Students were not given expectation or guidelines that included specific instructions or elements to include. The researcher attempted to assess students' natural use of literacy skills and did not show students the rubric or ask for specific things such as diverse vocabulary usage. Different results may have been present if students were given additional tools in a more assignment-like fashion.

A few things still linger in the mind of the researcher as she looks back on the workshop. If there had been additional time, she would have had students move on to the graphic novel that they write, illustrate, ink, and color themselves. This would have

followed a student evaluation of the work they did complete. The researcher would connect the Five Media Literacy Questions (Who is sending this message and what is their purpose; what techniques are used to attract and hold attention; what lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in this message; how might different people interpret this message differently; what is omitted from this message) students used during ad deconstructions to evaluation of other types of media, including their own work. This would hopefully make them more intentional with their following work. The types of skills students develop during such exercises often fall under the title of media literacy, and they are definitely included in the set of new literacy skills that challenge students to recognize, analyze, and communicate with multiple forms of media.

Additionally, the researcher would have liked to have given Evaluation #3 that was skipped due to time constraints as well as giving Evaluation #1 to students at the end of the workshop to compare the pre- and post-workshop ideas and knowledge about graphic works. Also, the researcher would like to ask students, “Would you pick up, buy, read one of these books in the future?” Additional questions such as this one and further explanation of other student responses were on the researcher’s mind as she wrote up Chapters 4 and 5. As many of the limitations led the researcher to question other possibilities, the next section discusses possibilities for further research.

### *Recommendations*

Further research is needed in the areas of which literacy skills are developed with graphic novels, to what extent are they developed, and how long these skills stay workable in the students’ repertoire. For instance, will students still utilize these skills in future experiences with media? Research such as this might be more easily carried out in

a classroom setting with more formal assignments and assessments. Pre- and post-exams would likely be helpful. Similarly, studies seeking information about other traditional literacy skills, such as understanding figurative language, and new literacy skills, like author's use of camera angle or color, could be evaluated.

The use of graphic novels and activities with various age groups could also be explored. Would there be an age at which students are unable to grasp such concepts or in which they would cease to be interested in such texts? Additionally, larger samples could be utilized to see if the same effects would carry over in a large group setting. Would longer exposure to such curriculum be of more benefit to students? Similarly, other sites, such as afterschool programs and extracurricular programs could be used to see if students respond more positively or negatively to an out-of-school setting that is even more informal.

Other forms of media, such as web pages and film could be used to explore whether students utilize and develop their literacy skills with those media as well. Also, could various media be more effective in developing certain skills than others? Additionally, utilizing diverse media would allow for more cross curricular connections to be made. For instance, students could use their creation and analyzing skills to evaluate and create curriculum for other subject areas. Cooperative projects between the science and English courses, for instance, could result in the creation of quality student-created materials that both reinforce learning of literacy skills and science knowledge.

The additional findings that resulted from working with teachers imply that there is much research that could be done in the area of training and professional development concerning new literacies and including graphic novels in the classroom. Not only could

current teachers benefit from professional development, additional information, and resources for utilizing graphic novels, but this sort of instruction could be done with preservice teachers as well. As students' literacy needs continue to expand, so does the need for training at the preservice level.

In the future, the researcher hopes to expand upon the additional wonderings that presented themselves during the study. The cultural connection of the curriculum, student attitudes and engagement, and representation of culture in student created work was of particular interest to the researcher. In particular, the researcher would like to examine the relationship between culture and images in more visual literature. Also, building on the work of Knoester (2009) and Scherff (2012) with the study of Gee's perspectives on identity and "Discourses" of school, home, etc. bring excellent questions about how students view themselves, school, etc. and how the curriculum can contribute to such views. Graphic novels and their tendency to include unique aspects of culture offer fodder for such studies.

### *Concluding Remarks*

The literacy needs of today's students are ever changing and growing. In order to meet students' traditional and new literacy needs, teachers must be willing to adapt their curriculum and practices. Graphic novels and other graphic works can present a distinctive tool to engage a variety of students. Graphic novels have been used successfully with a variety of age groups, with students ranging from reluctant readers, to ELL, to students in gifted programs. Furthermore, they can be motivational tools that interest and engage students who might otherwise be resistant to reading, such as children in middle school. Usable as a means of developing both traditional and new literacies,

this format has been described as interesting, engaging, and fun! Additionally, there seems to be a trend in graphic novels to include unique perspectives, topics, and views of culture. All of these elements come together to make graphic novels an excellent choice for inclusion in today's curriculum. Growing in popularity, sales, and diversity, graphic novels deserve a closer look from educators. Although there seems to be a reluctance to include them in the curriculum, the research on how they can be utilized to enhance engagement, motivation, and literacy skills is growing.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Workshop Invitation

# BAYLOR

U N I V E R S I T Y

Date: November 14, 2012

Dear Student and Parent,

Your student has been recommended to participate in a graphic novel workshop. A graphic novel is a book-length, original story told in comic book form. This workshop will take place during 4<sup>th</sup> period every day at Cesar Chavez Middle School. The workshop will take place during school days in the month of November and December. The workshop will include activities connected to comic books, comic strips, and graphic novels and will focus on helping students improve critical thinking skills and improve literacy. Participation is on a voluntary basis only.

If your student is interested in participating, please fill out the attached forms and return them as soon as possible. I plan to start the workshop after Thanksgiving break. If you have additional questions, you may contact me at (318) 880-2594 or by email at [a\\_atkinson@baylor.edu](mailto:a_atkinson@baylor.edu). Thank you for your consideration.

Amanda Atkinson  
Graduate Student  
Baylor University

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent

# BAYLOR

U N I V E R S I T Y

Date: September 19, 2012

#### **Informed Consent to participate in Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy**

This form asks for your consent to participate in an educational research study. The purpose of this study is to describe students' prior knowledge about and interaction with graphic novels. \*A graphic novel is a book-length, original story told in comic book form.

There are no physical, psychological, and/or sociological risks involved. All data collected will be completely confidential and coded to insure privacy of students and their school. All data will be disposed of upon completion of the study. Names of participants and schools will remain confidential and will not be cited in the study.

The study will last for one month during the Fall semester. The following outlines the various components you are asked to participate in within the study:

- Complete interviews concerning your student(s)'s participation in a graphic novel workshop and behaviors, attitudes, and literacy changes you observe (approximately 45 minutes after the students complete the study at your convenience during the school day or afterschool program time).
- Recommend students who may be interested in and willing to participate in the graphic novel workshop

All data will be destroyed and disposed of upon completion of the study. Print documents will be shredded and audio/electronic documents erased or deleted. Until that time, electronic data will be stored on a password protected and encrypted computer. Hardcopy data will be kept in a secured/locked storage cabinet with access availability limited to the researchers. You can drop out of the study at any time with no penalty

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (318) 880-2594 or [a\\_atkinson@baylor.edu](mailto:a_atkinson@baylor.edu).

Your signature below constitutes your consent and willingness to participate in this study. Non-participation involves no penalty and participant may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The subject's participation is voluntary, and his/her refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and that the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. Please return signed document in the enclosed envelope. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Amanda Atkinson at 318-880-2594 or [a\\_atkinson@baylor.edu](mailto:a_atkinson@baylor.edu). Inquiries regarding the nature of the

research, your rights as a subject or any other aspect of your participation can be directed to Baylor's University Committee for Protection of Human Subjects Research through the chairman Dr. David W. Schlueter, Chair Baylor IRB, Baylor University, One Bear Place # 97368, Waco, TX 76798. Dr. Schlueter may also be reached at (254) 710-6920.

I have read and understand this from and am aware of my rights as a participant, and have agreed to participate in the study based on the information provided. A copy of the signed form will be provided to the participant.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amanda Atkinson, Doctoral Candidate

# BAYLOR

U N I V E R S I T Y

Date: November 14, 2012

To Participant and Parent of participant in Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy

## **Informed Consent to participate in Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy**

You are receiving this request because your son/daughter has been invited to participate in a graphic novel workshop. A graphic novel is a book-length, original story told in comic book form. This form asks your consent for your son/daughter to participate in this educational research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of graphic novels on literacy skills. Should you be interested, additional information of my background can be provided. Your child, as a participant, will have the opportunity to participate in educational activities involving the exploration of graphic novels.

There are no known physical, psychological, and/or sociological risks involved. All data collected will be completely confidential and coded to insure privacy of both the students and their school. All data will be disposed of upon completion of the study. Names of participants and schools will remain confidential and will not be cited in the study.

The following outlines the various components your child is asked to participate in within the study. These will take place during the after school program in which your child is enrolled:

- Attend approximately four weeks of a graphic novel workshop which will take place during 4<sup>th</sup> period of each school day.
- Complete interviews (approximately 15 minutes each) with the researcher about the workshop experience.
- Complete questionnaires (approximately 15-30 minutes each) about the experience
- Participate in a pre and post peer discussion group (approximately one hour each)

All data will be held in the strictest of confidences. Upon receipt of the data the researcher (Amanda Atkinson) will code the names of the students so that research assistants never have access to specific student names. This will ensure confidentiality. All data will be destroyed and disposed of upon completion of the study. Print documents will be shredded and audio/electronic documents erased or deleted. Until that time, electronic data will be stored on a password protected and encrypted computer. Hardcopy data will be kept in a secured/locked storage cabinet with access availability limited to the researchers. Your child can drop out of the study at any time with no penalty and may receive the same services and benefits of the other students. The subject's participation is voluntary, and his/her refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and that the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. Also, there is no grade attached to their participation.

You may desire to share this information with your minor child. While only you as a parent or legal guardian are capable under the law to consent to your child's participation in this study, it is preferable that your child be made aware (consistent with your child's age and level of understanding) that they are part of a study. If you discern that your child is not comfortable with participating in the study, you may consider (as a parent or legal guardian) not consenting to your child's participation in the study.

Your signature below constitutes your consent and willingness to participate in this study. Non-participation involves no penalty and participant may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Please return signed document in the enclosed self addressed envelope. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Amanda Atkinson at (318) 880-2594 or [a\\_atkinson@baylor.edu](mailto:a_atkinson@baylor.edu). Inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject or any other aspect of your participation can be directed to Baylor's University [Committee for Protection of Human Subjects Research](#)

through the chairman Dr. David W. Schlueter, One Bear Place # 97368, Waco, TX 76798. Dr. Schlueter may also be reached at (254) 710-6920.

\_\_\_\_\_  
I have read and understand this form and am aware of my rights as the parent of a participant, and have agreed to allow my son/daughter to participate in the study based on the information provided. A copy of the signed form will be provided to the parent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amanda Atkinson, Doctoral Candidate

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
One Bear Place #97314 1311 S. 5<sup>th</sup> St.,  
WACO, TEXAS 76798-7304  
(254) 710-3113 Fax (254) 710-3160

# BAYLOR

U N I V E R S I T Y

Date: January 7, 2013

## **Informed Consent to participate in Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy**

This form asks for your consent to participant in an educational research study. The purpose of this study is to describe educators' prior knowledge about and interaction with graphic novels. \*A graphic novel is a book-length, original story told in comic book form.

There are no physical, psychological, and/or sociological risks involved. All data collected will be completely confidential and coded to insure privacy of students and their school. All data will be disposed of upon completion of the study. Names of participants and schools will remain confidential and will not be cited in the study.

The study will last for one month during the Fall semester. The following outlines the various components you are asked to participate in within the study:

- Attend one information session concerning the use of graphic novels in the middle school English classroom
- Fill out one pre and one post questionnaire about your experiences with graphic novels

All data will be destroyed and disposed of upon completion of the study. Print documents will be shredded and audio/electronic documents erased or deleted. Until that time, electronic data will be stored on a password protected and encrypted computer. Hardcopy data will be kept in a secured/locked storage cabinet with access availability limited to the researchers. You can drop out of the study at any time with no penalty

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (318) 880-2594 or [a\\_atkinson@baylor.edu](mailto:a_atkinson@baylor.edu).

Your signature below constitutes your consent and willingness to participate in this study. Non-participation involves no penalty and participant may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The subject's participation is voluntary, and his/her refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and that the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. Please return signed document in the enclosed envelope. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Amanda Atkinson at 318-880-2594 or [a\\_atkinson@baylor.edu](mailto:a_atkinson@baylor.edu). Inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject or any other aspect of your participation can be directed to Baylor's University Committee for Protection of Human Subjects Research through the chairman Dr. David W. Schlueter, Chair Baylor IRB, Baylor University, One Bear Place # 97368, Waco, TX 76798. Dr. Schlueter may also be reached at (254) 710-6920.

I have read and understand this from and am aware of my rights as a participant, and have agreed to participate in the study based on the information provided. A copy of the signed from will be provided to the participant.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Amanda Atkinson, Doctoral Candidate

## APPENDIX C

### Minor Assent to Participate

# BAYLOR

U N I V E R S I T Y

Date: November 14, 2012

#### **Minor Assent to participate Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy**

Your parent/guardian has consented for you to participate in this study. If you sign below it indicates that you want to participate in the study, but you know that you can stop being in the study any time you choose. Students involved in the study are expected to:

- Attend approximately one month of a graphic novel workshop which will be held during 4<sup>th</sup> period each day. \*A graphic novel is a book-length, original story told in comic book form.
- Complete interviews (approximately 15 minutes each) with the researcher about the workshop experience.
- Complete questionnaires (approximately 15-30 minutes each) about the experience
- Participate in a pre and post peer discussion group (approximately one hour each)

You know that the researcher can talk about the study with your parent/guardian, but will not talk about it with anyone else who is not working on the study unless you and your parent/guardian agree. All data collected will be completely confidential. The subject's participation is voluntary, and his/her refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled, and that the subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. You may drop out of the study at any time with no penalty and may receive the same services and benefits of other students. You can contact the researcher any time you have any questions at: Amanda Atkinson, (318)880-2594 or [a\\_atkinson@baylor.edu](mailto:a_atkinson@baylor.edu) Inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject or any other aspect of your participation can be directed to Baylor's University Committee for Protection of Human Subjects Research through the chairman Dr. David W. Schlueter, Chair Baylor IRB, One Bear Place # 97368, Waco, TX 76798. Dr. Schlueter may also be reached at (254) 710-6920.

---

*Signature of Child*

*Date*

I have solicited the assent of the child.

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Assent/Consent

Date

## APPENDIX D

### Lesson Plans

#### **Day 1: Introduction to Graphica**

Students fill out Student Information and Interests Form

Students fill out Pre Workshop Evaluation #1

- What do you know about comic books and graphic novels?
- Why do comics and graphic novels appeal to people?
- Are there stereotypes about comic books and graphic novels and the people who read them? If so, what are they?
- Have you ever read a graphic novel? If so, which one or ones?

**Discussion of Different Graphica:** comic strips, comic books, manga, graphic novels

**Conventions of Graphica Reference Sheet** (students complete/create as we discuss)

**Getting Started with Graphica Worksheet** (partner work)

Vocabulary and terms needed to read graphica

*Layout:* breaks the rules...generally right to left and top to bottom (with the exception of manga)

*Panels:* progression of information in the story is through panels or *frames*, which are pieces that work together to make the whole story. Usually square or rectangular and the placement, size, and action in each are important

*Directionality:* Left to right, top to bottom usually. A breakdown in meaning sometimes means you need to check directionality and try again

*Gutters:* white space between the frames often represents time, other action, requires inference

*Speech Bubbles:* used to contain speech and also can include thought bubbles and the shape can communicate what is happening; wavy for scared (Scooby Doo) or jagged for robotic voice

*Narrative Boxes:* often near the top or bottom of the first panel and communicates like the voice of a narrator for change in scene or timeline...they may also summarize information

*Lettering:* stress mood or intonation; bold is emphasized, smaller is deemphasized,

*Importance of Pictures:* The pictures work with the words to create meaning. You cannot just read the words or just look at the pictures with graphica...you need both

## **Day 2: Introduction to Graphica: The Importance of Images**

### **Exploring More Graphica**

Review Vocabulary and show examples from partner activity: layout, panels, directionality, gutters, speech bubbles, narrative boxes, lettering, importance of pictures

Give Examples of graphica: manga, comic books, comic strips, graphic novels

### **Find Examples** (partner work)

Work with your partner to find examples of each in your graphica...sticky note them

### **Facial Expressions Chart** (explains how “reading” the picture is important as well)

What phrase would you put next to each face

Describe the situation that would go with the faces and the phrase: “But I love you...”

### **Explore Images in Graphic Versions of *Artemis Fowl* and *Romeo and Juliette***

Based upon the images in *Artemis Fowl*, students explain what they can infer about the characters and the story line. By using only the images (words have been blocked out) in *Romeo and Juliette*, students must give details that can be inferred from the images about time period, story line, etc.

### **Free Reading / Exploring of Graphica**

Students are allowed to choose a graphic work from the teacher supplied table to look at and read (selections include fiction, nonfiction, multiple genres, and different sorts of graphica as well)

## **Day 3: Reading and Interpreting Graphica / Graphic Novels**

### **Quick Review of Terms and Conventions for Graphica and Introduction to Graphic Novels**

#### **Using Your Words/ Cohesion of Text and Image**

- Give students comic panels with empty speech bubbles and have them construct the dialogue. Discuss how each one is different.
- Give students a short comic strip with speech bubbles filled in but not images. Students must add the images that flow and make the comic make sense. Discuss differences.

- Give students a *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip that has images but not words and ask them to use the pictures to create a meaningful dialogue. Some clues (a stop watch, cliff, etc.) require the students to pay attention to image details in order to create a cohesive comic strip. Display and discuss after completion.

#### **Day 4: Interpreting Graphic Works: *Hydrant* and *Maus II***

##### ***Hydrant* Activity**

Students are given a copy of the wordless graphic work *Hydrant* and asked to analyze the images and create a story that matches. Afterward, the stories are read aloud and discussed. Specifically, students mention which clues in the image helped them create certain parts of the story.

##### **Illustrations and Text**

- Read a selection from *Maus*
- Discuss why the illustrations are important to communicate the author's point of view
- What can you tell about the characters?
- How do the author and illustrator use speech, expression, point of view, action and narration to help communicate their message?

##### **During Workshop Evaluation #2**

- Did you have to read this book differently than you are used to reading books? What did you have to do differently?
- Compared to other books you have read, was the graphic novel easier to understand, or harder? Why?
- What did you like about reading a graphic novel? What did you dislike?
- How does the artwork in a graphic novel reflect its topic?  
How does the artist's medium and style make it interdependent with the text?

#### **Day 5: Media Literacy**

##### **Media Literacy for different forms of media: (Whole Group)**

- Discuss 5 questions
- View a few magazine ads
- View a few forms of graphics

##### **5 Big Questions {Rene Hobbs' questions that can be used with any media}**

1. Who is sending the message and what is the author's purpose?
2. What techniques are used to attract and hold attention?
3. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented in this message?

4. How might different people interpret this message differently?
5. What is omitted from this message?

### **A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words**

- Show students a single panel from different forms of graphics and practice gleaning as much information as possible from it (**Perhaps Calvin and Hobbs and each group makes inferences and then put together to glean a meaning**) (partner Work)
- Discuss possible interpretations. Misreading, misinterpretation, reading into a text?
  1. **Can a text mean anything we want it to?**
  2. **Is authorial intent the actual meaning of the story?**
  3. **Is there one absolute and correct interpretation?**
  4. **Is meaning more fluid or more permanent?**
- **Introduce Spectrum of Meaning**

Absolute Meaning (one correct meaning)-----Relativism (text can mean anything we decide)

### **Day Six: Character Analysis and Introduction to *Yummy***

#### **Character Analysis**

Calvin and Hobbes. Students are given a copy of a variety of Calvin and Hobbes comic strips and asked to complete a Character Study Sheet (Thompson, p. 170) for each character. They are asked to glean what the character thinks, says, and does during their strip to complete the task. Discussion followed.

#### **Explore Graphic Novels and their meaning:**

Look at *Yummy* and do the Graphic Novel Evaluation Form (Gavigan and Tomasevich, 2011, p. 58)

Have students read as a group through page 15 and complete sheet (Graphic Novel Evaluation Form)

### **Day 7: Reading and Discussion of *Yummy***

#### **Read *Yummy* and Discuss (Group Reading / Discussion)**

Students will keep track of characters and illustrations, shading, wording, actions of characters

16-28 *Yummy*'s background (name, family history, life so far)

29-55 Another view of Yummy (kid, trying to fit in, needed “family”)

56-63 Is it nature or nurture...who is to blame for how Yummy turned out (he’s only 11)

65-94 The completion

### **Quick Write Response** (independent work)

Students will write for 5-10 minutes on the main idea of the book, the author’s message, the use of image, and who was at fault...would he have turned out differently in a different environment, what could have been done by teachers, the school, community leaders, or other kids to prevent such tragedy?

### **Discuss Student Responses**

## **Day 8: Character Analysis of Characters in *Yummy***

**Group discussion about the book, events, art, etc.**

### **Character Analysis**

Students are broken into small groups and complete a Character Study Sheet (Thompson, p. 170) on one of three main characters: Yummy, Roger, or Gary. Students independently fill out the sheet, writing what character thinks, does, and says. The group met together as a whole after a few minutes and completed a poster with details about their character and an image that represents that character.

### **Presentation to the Group**

Each group gives a short presentation about their character and why they selected the icon or image to represent that character.

## **Day 9: Free Reading**

**Students will pick a graphic novel and read independently** (independent work)

Students will take notes about the character, the main idea, the setting, (Graphic Novel Evaluation Form (Gavin and Tomasveich p. 58)

**Group discussion about the graphic novels following prompts from Gavin and Tomasveich, p. 60**

Students will evaluate their experience:

1. Did you have to read this book differently than you are used to? What did you have to do differently?
2. Compared to other books you have read, was the graphic novel easier to understand, or harder? Why?
3. What did you like about reading a graphic novel? What did you dislike?

4. How does the artwork in the graphic novel reflect its topic?
5. How does the artist's medium and style make the art interdependent with the text?

### **Day 10-14: Creation of Graphic Work**

#### **Creation of a Graphic Work**

Introduce vocabulary of sequential art/graphica (Carter, 2007, p. 147)

- **Writer**—the person who writes the script from which the story will emerge
- **Artist**—the person who draws the script, usually using pencil
- **Inker**—the person who goes over the artist's pencil lines with ink to make them stand out
- **Colorist**—the person who colors the inker's and artists' work, sometimes by hand and sometimes by using software
- **Letterer**—the person who puts the words in the right places and makes them clearly legible. (Might also add sound effects)
- **Editor**—the person who looks over the stories for errors as well as helps the creative team find a direction for telling stories.
- **Editor-In-Chief**—the boss...the person everyone else tries to make happy.

Discuss the process of graphica creation and the complications

They will create their own graphic work

- Consider their audience (comic fans)
- Brainstorm a main character and description of character
- Must write script and directions for illustrator/artist
- Exchange across the room with no more communication...so writers are now interpreters and artists
- You are now artist
- Return the freshly drawn pages to writers
- Once the work has been drawn, the students switch and the next person inks the work
- Once again the group switches and the last person colors the work
- Once it is completed, it is returned to the original writer
- As a writer: How well does the page match your script? Does it match your vision for the graphica? Are the colors right? Is the clothing as you imagined it? How could this work have been improved?

- As an artist: How much detail did the writer provide? How much freedom was allowed for you to interpret the script? Should the writing have been more descriptive?
- Lots of detail, description, and metacognition are involved in writing/completing graphica

### **Day 15: Review**

#### **5 Big Questions**

Review the 5 big questions

Have students create a graphic representation using their hand

Have students consider the 5 questions in relation to their graphic work

#### **5 Choices from McCloud (2006)**

Discuss McCloud's 5 choices when creating comics. Have students create another graphic organizer "hand" with these 5 choices.

- Moment
- Frame
- Image
- Word
- Flow

#### **Students Will Complete Evaluation #3 and Begin Planning the Next Work**

Have students fill out Evaluation #3

Have students considered such options for their next graphic work.

### **Day 16: Interviews and Creation for Presentation**

Interviews about the workshop will be conducted and students will create a poster with their favorite activities to be displayed and presented at a showcase, which will be attended by administrators and special guests.

### **Day 17: Graphic Novel Workshop Showcase**

Students will share about their experiences, show off their creations, and answer questions from guests about the events of the workshop.

### **Day 18: Debriefing and Celebration**

Students will have a final discussion about the workshop, fill out Post Workshop Evaluation # 4, and take down their final projects.

## Lesson Plan

### Create Your Own mini-Graphic Novel

#### **Planning for the graphic novel creation:**

- What is your purpose? To inform, entertain, take a stand on an issue?
- What techniques will you use to attract attention (framing, action, etc.)
- What lifestyles, values, and points of view will you represent in your message?
- How might different people interpret it differently?
- What is omitted from your message?
- What kind of characters will you use?

#### **Writing an outline and rough sketch of characters**

Students will write a purpose, story line outline

Students will think about their characters and fill out a character sheet on them

Students will plan how to communicate their message

#### **Begin Writing Script**

Students will write their script for their graphic novel

## APPENDIX E

### Pre Workshop Evaluation # 1 Graphic Novel Workshop

1. What do you know about comic books and graphic novels?
2. Why do comic books and graphic novels appeal to people?
3. Are there stereotypes about comic books and graphic novels and the people who read them? If so, what are they?
4. Have you ever read a graphic novel? If so, which one or ones?

## APPENDIX F

### During Workshop Evaluation #2 Graphic Novel Workshop

1. Did you have to read this book differently than you are used to reading books? What did you have to do differently?
2. Compared to other books you have read, was the graphic novel easier to understand, or harder? Why?
3. What did you like about reading a graphic novel? What did you dislike?
4. How does the artwork in a graphic novel reflect its topic?
5. How does the artist's medium and style make the art interdependent with the text?

## APPENDIX G

### After Graphic Novel Creation Evaluation #3 Graphic Novel Workshop

1. What skills did you need to create your graphic novel?
2. What did you like about creating your graphic novel? What did you dislike?
3. Does your artwork reflect your topic? Explain.
4. What skills were needed to make sure that your art and your text worked interdependently?

## APPENDIX H

### Post Workshop Completion Evaluation #4 Graphic Novel Workshop

1. What was your favorite graphic novel from this workshop? Why?
2. What was your favorite activity that you did during the workshop? Why?
3. What was your least favorite activity that you did during the workshop? Why?
4. What did you learn during this workshop?

## APPENDIX I

### Interview Protocol for Student Interviews

Can you clarify your answer on the questionnaire? Specifically, can you tell me more about\_\_\_\_\_?

Which graphic novel did you enjoy reading the most and why?

Was there a type or a specific graphic novel that you wanted to read and didn't get to?

Was there any part of the workshop that you found confusing? Explain.

Do you think teachers should use graphic novels in the classroom? Why or why not?

## APPENDIX J

### Interview Protocol for Teachers

Your student \_\_\_\_\_ was involved in a three week after school workshop dealing with graphic novels. Were you aware of that? If so, how (student spoke about it, other students mentioned it, etc.)?

Have you noticed any changes in your student \_\_\_\_\_'s reading motivation or attitude toward reading? Explain.

Have that student's literacy skills seemed to change recently? In your opinion, could it be as a result of their involvement in the workshop?

Have you seen your student interacting with graphic novels (carry one around, reading, talking about) since involvement in the workshop? Is this new behavior?

Do you use graphic novels in your classroom? Explain. Would you be willing to try using them in the classroom? Explain.

## APPENDIX K

### IRB Approval



**BAYLOR**  
UNIVERSITY

#### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

One Bear Place #97310 Waco, TX 76798-7310 • (254) 710-3763 • FAX (254) 710-7309 • WEBSITE: [www.baylor.edu/research/irb](http://www.baylor.edu/research/irb)

DATE: October 3, 2012  
TO: Amanda Atkinson  
FROM: Baylor University Institutional Review Board  
STUDY TITLE: [371104-2] Using Graphic Novels to Improve Literacy  
IRB REFERENCE #:   
SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification  
ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: October 3, 2012  
EXPIRATION DATE: October 3, 2013  
REVIEW TYPE: Full Committee Review  
REVIEW CATEGORY: Full Committee Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this research study. Baylor University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Full Committee Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact David Schlueter at (254) 710-6920 or david\_schlueter@baylor.edu. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

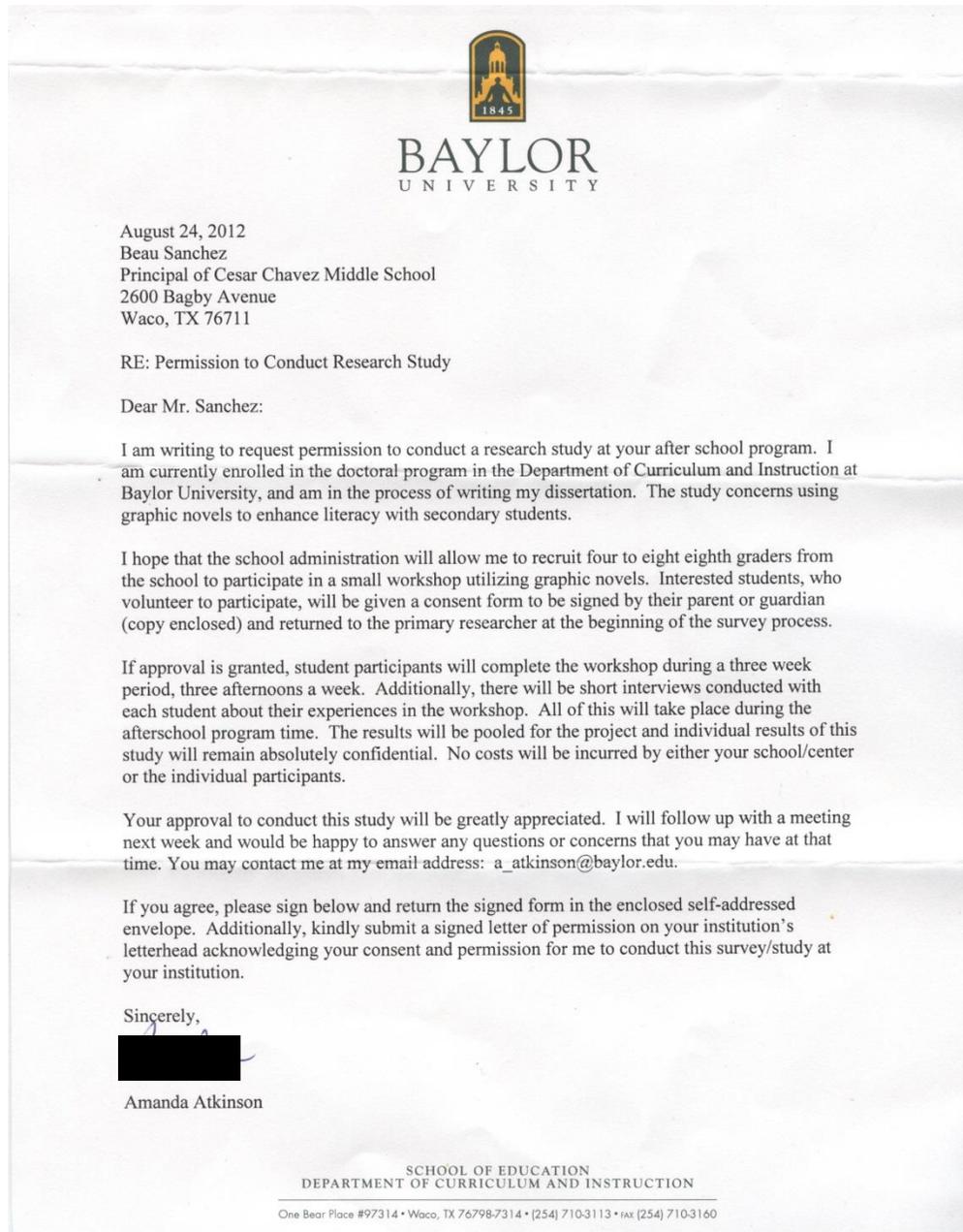
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David W. Schlueter", is written over a solid black rectangular redaction box.

David W. Schlueter, Ph.D.  
Chair, Baylor IRB

cc:

## APPENDIX L

### Campus Approval



Doctoral Candidate, C & I  
Baylor University

Enclosures

cc: Dr. Gretchen Schwarz, Baylor University

Approved by:

 Principal  8/30/12

Print your name and title here

Signature

Date

## APPENDIX M

### Student Information and Interests Form

Name:

Age:

Ethnicity:

How long have you lived in Waco?

Do you like school readings? Why or why not?

Do you like to read outside of school? Why or why not?

When you read, what is your favorite thing to read (magazines, newspaper, websites, books, comic books, other)?

What was the last book you remember reading?

Is there a specific kind of book you enjoy?

## APPENDIX N

### Rubric for Traditional Literacy Skills for Graphic Novel Workshop

Skill / Rating	5	4	3	2	1
Plot	Can identify and explain the plot in read work and includes elements of plot in own creation	Can identify and describe plot in reading selections	Can recognize plot with some prompting and assistance and can explain plot	Shows some/little evidence of understanding plot or identifying it in read or created works	Shows no evidence of understanding or identifying plot in read work or created works
Character Development	Can identify and explain developments that characters make throughout a work and uses character development in own creation	Can identify developments that characters make throughout a work but shows little character development in own work	Can recognize basic details about a character, but not changes or development in character's attitudes, behaviors, or outlooks	Shows little evidence of understanding character traits or development in read or created works	Exhibits no evidence of understanding character traits or development in read or created works
Setting	Can identify and describe setting while reading and creates a definite setting in own work	Can identify and describe setting in read works but shows basic setting description in own work	Can recognize setting in read works, but gives no detail about setting in own work	Shows little evidence of understanding setting in read or created works	Shows no evidence of understanding setting in read or created works
Point of View	Can identify the point of view in a work as well as other points of view that may exist	Can identify the point of view in work	Can describe point of view, but not identify it in a work	Shows little evidence of understanding point of view	Shows no evidence of understanding point of view

Skill / Rating	5	4	3	2	1
Context Clues	Is able to use context clues to determine unknown information such as unknown words and explain the process to others	Is able to utilize context clues to determine unknown information but may not be able to describe the process to others	Is able to use context clues with some assistance to determine unknown information	Is able to use basic context clues with assistance to determine unknown information	Shows no evidence of the ability to use context clues to determine unknown information
Making Inferences	Uses textual support to clarify unstated details and can explain the process	Uses textual support to clarify unstated details but may be unable to explain to others	Is able to make inferences using the text with assistance	Shows little evidence of being about to make an inference using the text	Shows no evidence of ability to make inferences in texts
Vocabulary	Understands lots of diverse vocabulary in read works and utilizes diverse vocabulary in own work	Understands some diverse vocabulary in read works and utilizes some divers vocabulary in own work	Recognizes adequate vocabulary in read works and utilizes adequate vocabulary in own work	Recognizes only basic vocabulary and/or utilizes only basic vocabulary in own work	Does not seem to recognize even basic vocabulary or uses minimal to no vocabulary in own work

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

## APPENDIX O

### Rubric for New Literacy Skills for Graphic Novel Workshop

	5	4	3	2	1
Understands Conventions	Can explain conventions of graphic texts (panels, page layout, speech bubble) and utilized them in own creations	Can explain conventions of graphic texts and utilizes some in own creations	Can explain conventions of graphic texts but utilizes them sparingly in own creations	Shows little evidence of understanding of conventions and has minimal utilization in own creation	Shows no evidence that understands conventions and does not utilize them in own creations
Inferring from Images	Automatically makes inferences from images and can explain to others	Can make and explain inferences from images when asked but the skill does not seem automatic	Can make and explain inferences made from images with some assistance	Shows little evidence of ability to make inferences from images	Shows no evidence of ability to make inferences from images
Cohesion of Text and Image	Understands cohesion of word and text, can give examples, and demonstrates understanding in own creation	Demonstrates an understanding of cohesion of word and text, but cohesion in own creation is weak	Seems to understand cohesion of word and text in graphic works, but does not demonstrate in own creation	Shows little evidence of understanding cohesion of word and text in graphic works	Shows no evidence of understanding cohesion of word and text in graphic works

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

## APPENDIX P

### Checklist for Assessing Student Created Graphic Novel

\_\_\_\_\_ Common graphic novel convention are used throughout the work (panels, speech bubbles, narrative boxes, etc)

\_\_\_\_\_ Diverse vocabulary is used throughout the graphic novel

\_\_\_\_\_ Audience is appropriately addressed

\_\_\_\_\_ Story shows evidence that text and image connection was considered

\_\_\_\_\_ Characters develop throughout the story

\_\_\_\_\_ Plot line (rise and fall of action, climax, resolution) is evident

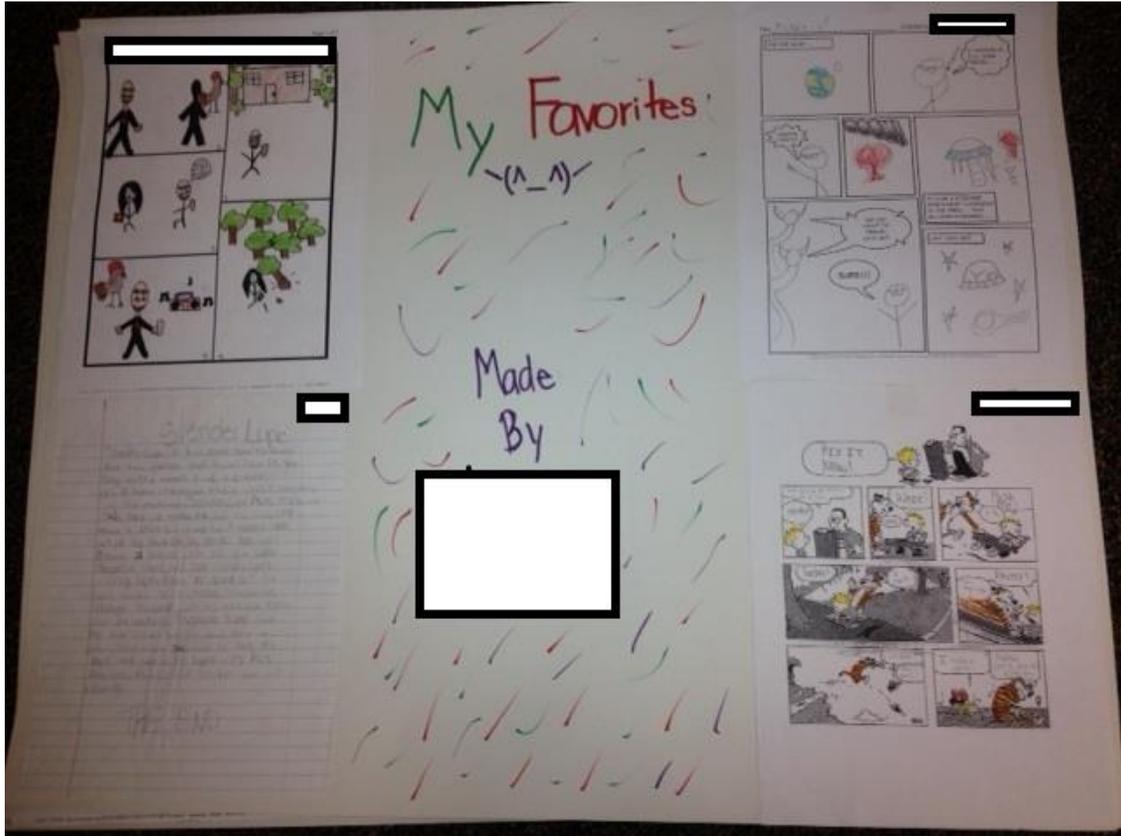
\_\_\_\_\_ A clear setting is stated in the student's written portion of the story

Student Name:

Notes:

APPENDIX Q

Students' Work



Jacob's Poster of his favorite creations



Rosa's poster of her favorite creations



Michelle's poster of her favorite creations



Maria's poster of her favorite creations



Joe's graphic work illustrated by Maria

# Roger

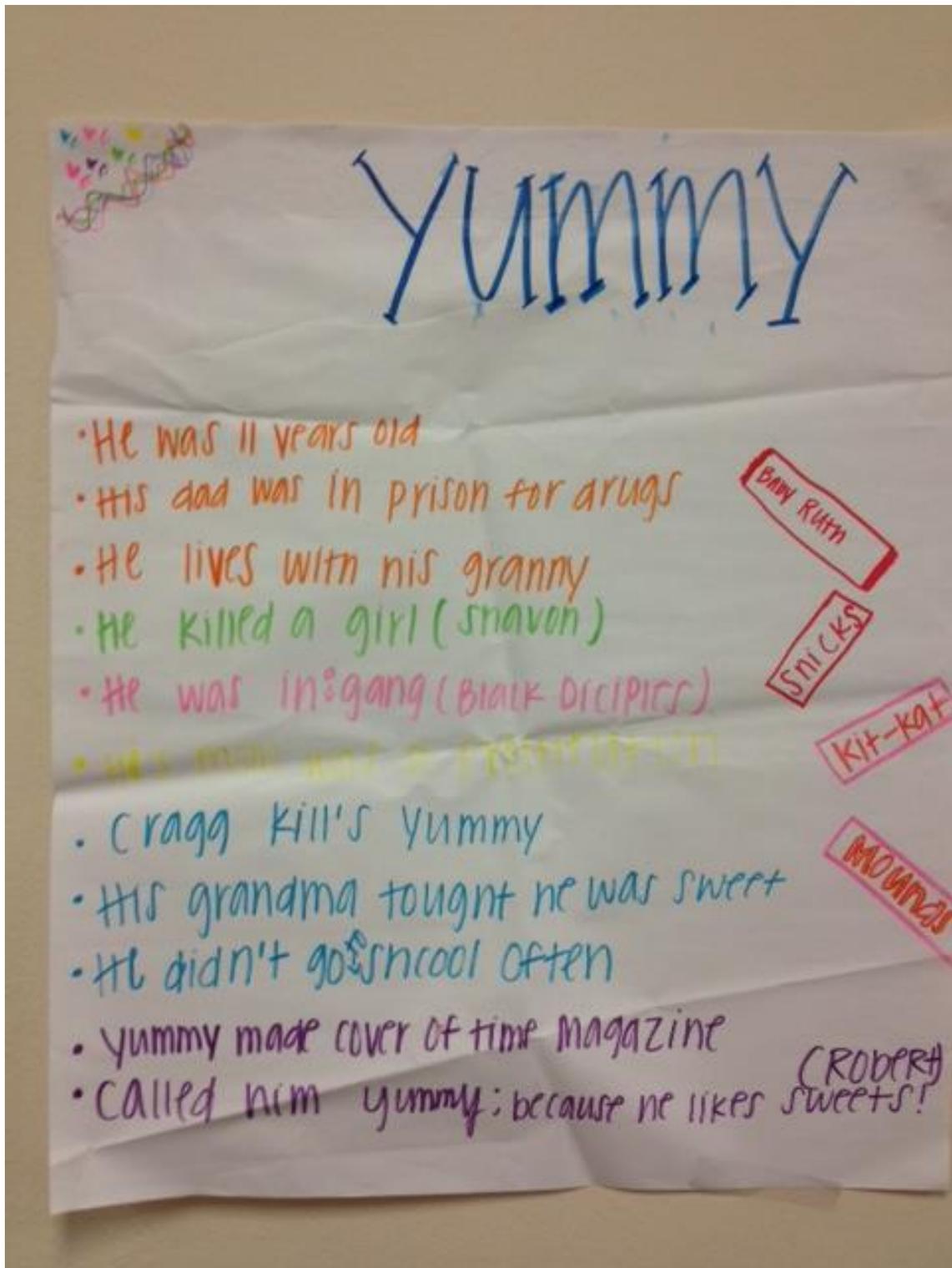


- the Narrator of the story.
- is 11 years old. And goes to school with Yummy.
- Yummy would steal his lunch money
- Roger know Shavon
- His Brother was in the black disciples.
- "Jay's" He's not like his brother.
- Roger isn't interested in the gang.
- grow up in Chi-Town
- visits Yummy's funeral & writes on Shavon's board.



Roger.

Student created poster describing a character from Yummy



Student created poster describing the character Yummy

## APPENDIX R

### Pre-Post Questionnaire for CCMS ELA Teachers

#### Graphic Novel Pre Questionnaire for CCMS ELA Teachers

Grade level that you teach:

Courses you teach:

1. Do you currently use graphic novels in your classroom? Why or why not?
2. Would you consider using a graphic novel if you found one that was age appropriate and connected to your curriculum? Why or why not?
3. What are some of the main texts you currently use in your classroom?

## Graphic Novel Post Questionnaire for CCMS ELA Teachers

1. In the material presented today, what information was new to you?
2. What, if any, information did you find most helpful?
3. Would you consider using a graphic novel in your classroom in the future?
4. Additional comments:

## REFERENCES

- Alvermann, D. E., Moon, J. S., & Hagood, M. C. (1999). *Popular culture in the classroom: Teaching and researching critical media literacy*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Bakis, M. (2012). *The graphic novel classroom: Powerful teaching and learning with images*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin
- Boerman-Cornell, W. (2012). Learning to see history: A content analysis of the affordances of graphic novels for high school teaching. *ProQuest Dissertation and Theses*, 146, 3551425.
- Botzakis, S. (2010). A book by any other name? *The ALAN Review*, 37(3), 60-64.
- Brosgol, V. (2011). *Anya's ghost*. New York, NY: First Second.
- Brown, E. H. (1982). Wholistic reading comprehension through comic book art production. *ProQuest Dissertation and Theses*, 149, AAT 8223110
- Brusha, J., Edmund, N., Greenberger, R., Kesel, B., Kupperburg, P., Rosenberg, A., & Vincenzo, D. (2012). *World's most dangerous animals*. Horsham, PA: Silver Dragon Books, Inc.
- Bucher, K. T., & Manning, M. L. (2004). Bringing graphic novels into a school's curriculum. *The Clearinghouse: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues, and Ideas*, 78(2), 67-72.
- Burmark, L. (2008). Visual literacy: What you see is what you get. In N. Frey & D. Fisher (Eds.) *Teaching visual literacy: Using comic books, graphic novels, anime, cartoons, and more to develop comprehension and thinking skills* (pp. 5-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Carter, J. B. (2007a). Introduction—Carving a niche: Graphic novels in the English language arts classroom. In J. B. Carter (Ed.) *Building literacy connection with graphic novels: Page by page, panel by panel*. (pp. 1-25). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Carter, J. B. (2007b). Transforming English with graphic novels moving toward our “Optimus Prime”. *The English Journal*, 97(2), 49-53.

- Carter, J. B. (2007c). Ultimate Spider-Man and student-generated classics: Using graphic novels and comics to produce authentic voice and detailed, authentic texts. In J. B. Carter (Ed.) *Building literacy connection with graphic novels: Page by page, panel by panel*. (pp. 145-155). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Carter, J. B. (2008). Comics, the canon, and the classroom. In N. Frey & D. Fisher (Ed.), *Teaching visual literacy: Using comic books, graphic novels, anime, cartoons, and more to develop comprehension and thinking skills* (pp. 47-60). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Carter, J. B. (2009). Going graphic: Understanding what graphic novels are—and aren't—can help teachers make the best use of this literary form. *Educational Leadership*, 66(6), 68-73.
- Castellucci, C., Rugg, J., & Fletcher, J. R. (2007). *The plain Janes*. New York, NY: Minx.
- Chandler-Olcott, K. (2008). Seeing the world through a stranger's eyes: Exploring the potential of anime in literacy classrooms. In N. Frey and D. Fisher (Ed.), *Teaching visual literacy: Using comic books, graphic novels, anime, cartoons, and more to develop comprehension and thinking skills* (pp. 61-90). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Chang, J.C. (2011). Reading between the “frames”: English language learners' and non-English language learners' responses to graphic novels. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 104, MR76496.
- Clark, S. J. (2013). “Your credibility could be shot”: Preservice teachers' thinking about nonfiction graphic novels, curriculum decision making, and professional acceptance. *The Social Studies*, 104(1), 38-45.
- Clester, S. (2011). *Machiavelli: The prince*. Mundelein, IL: Writers of the Round Table.
- Colfer, E., Donkin, A., & Rigano, G. (2007). *Artemis fowl: The graphic novel*. New York, NY: Hyperion Books for Children.
- Connors, S. P. (2010). Multimodal reading: A case study of high school students in an after-school graphic novel reading group. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 405, 896358459.
- Cornog, M., & Perper, T. (2009). Introduction: Origin stories. In M. Cornog & T. Perper (Eds.), *Graphic novels beyond the basics: Insights and issues for libraries* (pp. xv-xxix.) Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Daniels, H., & Zemelman, S. (2003). Out with textbooks, in with learning. *Educational Leadership*, 61(4), 36-40. doi:10.1002/berj.3009
- Edwards, B. (2008). Motivation and middle school readers: Graphic novels, comic books, and free voluntary reading time. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 109, 3304228.
- Eisner, E. W. (1997). Cognition and representation: A way to pursue the American dream? *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 78(5), 348-353.
- Flom, J. C. (2008). Graphic novels: A fun read. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 89, 1471463.
- Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2004). Using graphic novels, anime, and the internet in an urban high school. *The English Journal*, 93(3), 19-25.
- Gavigan, K. W., & Tomasevich, M. (2011). *Connecting comics to curriculum: Strategies for grades 6-12*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited.
- Gavigan, K. W. (2010). Examining struggling male adolescent readers' responses to graphic novels: A multiple case study of four, eighth-grade males in a graphic novel book club. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 169, 3418818.
- Gillenwater, C. (2012). Graphic novels in advanced English/language arts classrooms: A phenomenological case study. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 202, 1239246739.
- Golding, W. (1962). *Lord of the flies*. New York, NY: Coward-McCann.
- Gonick, L. (1994). *The cartoon history of the universe II: Volumes 8-13*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Gorman, M. (2003). *Getting graphic: Using graphic novels to promote literacy with preteens and teens*. Worthington, OH: Linworth.
- Goss, S. (2012). Transforming teaching and learning for the 21st century: Developing a new literacies stance in the English classroom. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 261, 3516399.
- Gravett, P. (2005). *Graphic novels: Everything you need to know*. New York, NY: Collins Design.
- Griffith, P. E. (2010). Graphic novels in the secondary classroom and school libraries. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 54(3), 181-189.
- Hall, L. A. (2005). Struggling readers and content area text: Interactions with and perceptions of comprehension, self, and success. *Research in Middle-Level Education*, 39(4), 1-19.

- Hall, L. A. (2009). Struggling reader, struggling teacher: An examination of student-teacher transactions with reading instruction and text in social studies. *Research in Teaching of English*, 43(3), 286-309.
- Hammond, H. K. (2009). Graphic novels and multimodal literacy: A reader response study. *ProQuest*, 239, 3344687.
- Hardy-Valley, M. (2008). Where do the pictures fit in the overall picture? Graphic novels as literature. *ProQuest*, 100, 304366426.
- Harmon, J. M., Hedrick, W. B., Wood, K. D., & Vintinner, J. (2011). An investigation of current secondary reading programs. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 50, 105-119. doi:10.1080/19388071003611152
- Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership*, 58(6), 6-11.
- Heffernan, A. (2009). Rethinking graphic novels in the classroom: Broadening our concepts of literature to benefit readers. *Journal of Classroom Research in Literacy*, 1, 3-7.
- Henry, O. (1906). *The four million*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page.
- Hinton, S. E. (1967). *The outsiders*. New York, NY: Viking Press.
- Hughes, J., & King, A. (2010). Dual pathways to expression and understanding: Canadian coming-of-age graphic novels. *Children's Literature in Education*, 41(1), 64-84.
- Hugh-Hassell, S., & Rodge, P. (2007). The leisure reading habits of urban adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(1), 22-33)
- Hull, G. (2003). Youth culture and digital media: New literacies for new times. *Research in Teaching of English*, 38(2), 229-233.
- Hutchinson, K. H. (1949). An experiment in the use of comics as instructional material. *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 23(4), 236-245.
- Jacobs, D. (2007). More than words: Comics as a means of teaching multiple literacies. *The English Journal*, 96(3), 19-25.
- Kim, D. K. (2004). *Same difference and other stories*. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions.
- Kist, W. (2005). *New Literacies in action: Teaching and learning in multiple media*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Knoester, M. (2009). Inquiry into urban adolescent independent reading habits: Can Gee's theory of discourses provide insight? *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 52(8), 676-685.
- Krashen, S. (2009). Anything but reading. *Knowledge Quest*, 37(5), 18-25.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the educational debt: Understanding achievement in the U.S. schools. *Educational Research*, 35(3), 3-12. doi:10.3102/0013189X035007003
- Lamanno, A. A. (2007). Exploring the use of graphic novels in the classroom: Does exposure to non-traditional texts increase the reading comprehension skills and motivation of low-functioning adolescent readers? *ProQuest*, 171, AAT 3284960.
- Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2003). *New literacies: Changing knowledge and classroom learning*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- Lavin, M. R. (1998). Comic books and graphic novels for libraries: What to buy. *Serials Review*, 24(2), 31-46.
- Layne, S. L. (2009). *Igniting a passion for reading: Successful strategies for building lifetime readers*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Lee, H. (1960). *To kill a mockingbird*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott.
- London, J. (1903). *The call of the wild*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Luterbach, K., & Brown, C. (2001). Education for the 21st century. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*, 10(2), 14-32.
- McCloud, S. (1993). *Understanding comics: The invisible art*. New York, NY: Kitchen Sink Press.
- McCloud, S. (2006). *Making comics: Storytelling secrets of comics, manga, and graphic novels*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- McTaggart, J. (2008). Graphic novels: The good, the bad, and the ugly. In N. Frey & D. Fisher (Eds.) *Teaching visual literacy: Using comic books, graphic novels, anime, cartoons, and more to develop comprehension and thinking skills* (pp. 27-46). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Monnin, K. (2008). Perceptions of new literacies with the graphic novel "Bone". *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 250, 304549720.

- Monnin, K. (2010). *Teaching graphic novels: Practical strategies for the secondary ELA classroom*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House Publishing, Inc.
- Mortimore, S. R. (2009). From picture to word to the world: A multimodal, cultural studies approach to teaching graphic novels in the English classroom. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 335, 3376937.
- Murray, M. S., Munger, K. A., & Clonan, S. M. (2011). Assessment as a strategy to increase oral reading fluency. *Interventions in School and Clinic*, 47(3), 144-151. doi:10.1177/1053451211423812
- National Council of Teachers of English. (2006, April). *NCTE principles of adolescent literacy reform*. Urbana, IL: Author. Retrieved from <http://ncte.org>
- Neri, G. (2010). *Yummy: The last days of a southside shorty*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books.
- Norman, R. R. (2012). Reading the graphics: What is the relationship between graphical reading processes and student comprehension? *Reading & Writing* 25(3), 739-774. doi:10.1007/s11145-011-9298-7
- Ottaviani, J., Cannon, Z., & Cannon, K. (2009). *T-minus: The race to the moon*. New York, NY: Aladdin.
- Paige, D. D. (2012). The importance of adolescent fluency. In T. Rasinski, C. Blachowicz, & K. Lems (Eds.), *Fluency instruction: Research-based best practices* (2nd ed.) (pp. 55-71). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Pantaleo, S. (2011). Grade 7 students reading graphic novels: 'You need to do a lot of thinking'. *English in Education*, 45(2), 113-131. doi:10.1111/j.1754-8845.2011.0109.3x
- Paxton, N. M. (2003). Rounding up reluctant readers. *ProQuest*, 130, 1416950.
- Pflueger-Pieczynska, M. (2011). The graphic novel: A frontier literary form edges toward the English classroom. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 123, 896626986
- Poe, M., & Lindner, E. (2008). *Little Rock nine*. New York, NY: Aladdin Paperbacks.
- Potts, A., Schlichting, K., Pridgen, A., & Hatch, J. (2010). Understanding new literacies for new times: Pedagogy in action. *The International Journal of Learning*, 17(8), 187-194.
- ProPublica. (2013). *The opportunity gap*. Retrieved from <http://projects.propublica.org/schools/schools/484428009345>

- Quirk, M. (2004). Do supplemental remedial reading programs address the motivational issues of struggling readers? An analysis of five popular programs. *Reading Research and Instruction, 43*(3), 1-19.
- Rado, D. (2012, December). Schools embrace graphic novels as learning tool: Some educators say comic strip-style books engage students, support development of reading skills. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-12-27/news/ct-met-graphic-novel-20121227\\_1\\_graphic-novels-comic-book-sophomore-honors-class](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-12-27/news/ct-met-graphic-novel-20121227_1_graphic-novels-comic-book-sophomore-honors-class)
- Rice, M. (2012). Using graphic texts in secondary classrooms: A tale of endurance. *English Journal, 101*(5), 37-43.
- Roberts, N. J. (2012). Toward a literate future: Pairing graphic novels and traditional texts in the high school classroom. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 55*, 1517004.
- Romanelli, M. H. (2009). Exploring the culture and cognition of outsider literacy practices in adult readers of graphic novels. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, 334*, 3372600.
- Sabeti, S. (2012). A different kind of reading: The emergent literacy practices of a school-based graphic novel club. *British Educational Research Journal*. doi:10.1002/berj.3009
- Satrapa, M. (2007). *The complete Persepolis*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Scherff, L. (2012). Exploring identity(ies) in yummy: The last days of a southside shorty. *The ALAN Review, 39*(3), 73-79.
- Schwarz, G. (2006). Expanding literacies through graphic novels. *English Journal, 95*(6), 58-64.
- Schwarz, G. (2010). Graphic novels, new literacies, and good old social justice. *The ALAN Review, 37*(3), 71-75.
- Seglem, R., & Witte, S. (2009). You gotta see it to believe it: Teaching visual literacy in the English classroom. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53*(3), 216-226.
- Seyfried, J. (2008). Reinventing the book club: Graphic novels as educational heavyweights. *Knowledge Quest, 36*(3), 44-48.
- Skerrett, A. (2012). We hatched in this class: Repositioning of identity in and beyond a reading classroom. *The High School Journal, 95*(3), 62-75.
- Skerrett, A., & Bomer, R. (2001). Borderzones in adolescents' literacy practices: Connecting out-of-school literacies to the reading curriculum. *Urban Education, 46*(6), 1256-1279. doi:10.1177/0042085911398920

- Snow, C. E., & Biancarosa, G. (2003). *Adolescent literacy and the achievement gap: What do we know and where do we go from here?* New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Spiegelman, A. (1991). *Maus II: A survivor's tale: And here my troubles begin*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books.
- Stockton, F. R. (1914). *The lady or the tiger?: And other stories*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Storrie, P. D., & Carruthers, S. (2007). *Yu the great: Conquering the flood: A Chinese legend*. Minneapolis, MN: Graphic Universe.
- Teale, W. H., Paciga, K. A., & Hoffman, J. L. (2007). Beginning reading instruction in urban schools: The curriculum gap ensures a continuing achievement gap. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(4), 344-348. doi:10.1598/RT.61.4.8
- Texas Education Agency. (2011). *Texas essential knowledge and skills*. Retrieved from [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148&menu\\_id=720&menu\\_id2=785](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148&menu_id=720&menu_id2=785)
- The 21st Century Fluency Project. (2013). *Literacy is not enough*. Retrieved from <http://tectoobox.wikispaces.com/file/view/literacy+is+not+enough.pdf>
- The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.
- Thomas, R. M. (2003). *Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods in theses and dissertations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.
- Thompson, T. (2008). *Adventures in graphica: Using comics and graphic novels to teach comprehension, 2-6*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Versaci, R. (2008). "Literary literacy" and the role of the comic book: Or, "You teach a class on what?" In N. Frey & D. Fisher (Eds.) *Teaching visual literacy: Using comic books, graphic novels, anime, cartoons, and more to develop comprehension and thinking skills* (pp. 91-112). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Waterson, B. (1990). *Weirdos from another planet: A Calvin and Hobbes collection*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel.
- Weiner, S. (2003). *Faster than a speeding bullet: The rise of the graphic novel*. New York, NY: Nanter, Beall, Minoustchine Publishing Inc.
- Wertham, F. (1954). *Seduction of the innocent: The influences of comic books on today's youth*. New York, NY: Rinehart and Company

- Whitaker, W.R. (2012). Towards a visual culture: An examination of the effect of graphic novels on the relationship between text and image. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, 85, 1510721.
- Wiegler, M. S., & Shakespeare, W. (2008). *Romeo and Juliet*. New York, NY: Sparknotes.
- Witek, J. (1989). *Comic books as history: The narrative art of Jack Jackson, Art Spiegelman, and Harvey Pekar*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Yang, G. L. (2006). *American born Chinese*. New York, NY: First Second.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.