

Raising a Reader!



How Comics &
Graphic Novels
Can Help
**Your Kids
Love To
Read!**

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What Graphic Novels Offer Kids

Visit a visual wonderland.

Imagine a book with scenes of vivid colors or in black and white images, whose textures you can feel escorting you through a story, a life, a world, as short bursts of text and windowed panels and panes lead you through that realm. This is the graphic novel reading experience awaiting you and your kids. It's inviting, exciting, and always engaging.

Graphic novels provide exciting reading experiences for all kinds of readers.

Graphic novels' short bursts of text (often in **Fun Fonts**) and vivid images are accessible to all kinds of readers and language learners.

For weak language learners and readers, graphic novels' concise text paired with detailed images help readers decode and comprehend the text. Reading is less daunting (with less text to decode), with concise verbiage that highlights effective language usage and vocabulary, and the images invite and engage readers.

For skilled readers, graphic novels offer a different type of reading experience while modeling concise language usage. Because the text has to be succinct, graphic novels model how to efficiently communicate stories, lines, and ideas in short, pithy text.

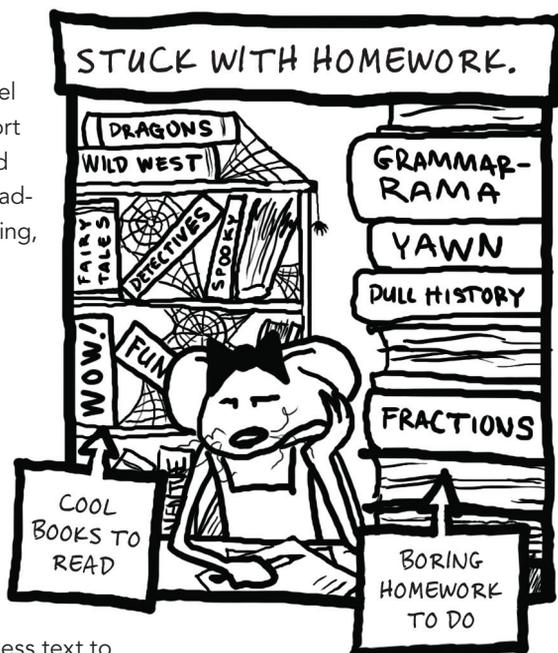
Graphic novels by their very nature draw the reader into the story.

With graphic novels, readers actively construct the story as they travel across and down the page from panel to panel, processing the text and images. Furthermore, the vivid images transport readers, making them feel like they're there in the middle of the action. This creative and interactive process makes reading engaging and often more fun.

The quality, quantity, and diversity of kids' graphic novels is simply AWESOME.

With the explosion of technology, communication, and graphic arts, graphic novel illustrations, formats, and story-telling are diverse — appealing to all types of readers. Outstanding children's and young adult graphic novels can be found in an array of genres such as fantasy, science fiction, romance, fiction, biography, and classics. Furthermore, there has been a dazzling burst of nonfiction graphic novels, making them extraordinary resources for learning about science, famous people, places, and events in and out of classrooms. These books offer a feast for the eyes and mind and are worth a closer look.

Graphic novels and suggested graphic novel reading lists for kids of various ages and grades can be found in local bookstores, comic book shops, libraries, and online. Please visit CBLDF's monthly column, "Using Graphic Novels in Education," for suggestions.*



If you can't wait for our monthly column, and your favorite librarian is out with the flu, here are a few resources to help:

Booklist

Children's Graphic Novel Core Collection (ALSC)

YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens List

Kirkus Reviews

Library Journal

Library Media Connection

School Library Journal

Voice of Youth Advocates

Good Comics for Kids @ School Library Journal

No Flying No Tights

The Graphic Classroom

Graphic Novel Reporter

Diamond Comics Bookshelf

Manga Bookshelf

Graphic Novels 101: Learning How to Navigate

When learning to read graphic novels, you have to be willing to slow down. Realize that this is a totally different reading experience. Realize that you will be reading the text and art, all while incorporating the incoming information as you build the story.

Here are the basics:

In graphic novels, the story is broken down and presented in sequential time frames called **panels** 🌀. Each panel contains text and/or images bound within a specific shape — usually a rectangle or box. The panel shape, text, font, color, and shading ALL interact to tell the story.

The **panel border** 🌀 that surrounds the panel can be as informative as the panel itself. Panel borders help your eye and mind define and focus on each story segment. For example:

- a. Dream sequences are often presented in panels whose borders consist of dotted or wavy lines.
- b. Panels conveying tremendous force or energy may have their panel borders interrupted as objects, arms, or feet protrude to show force or movement.
- c. Sometimes conversation panels are embedded in larger panels to show what is going on both within an intimate conversation while among a larger whole.

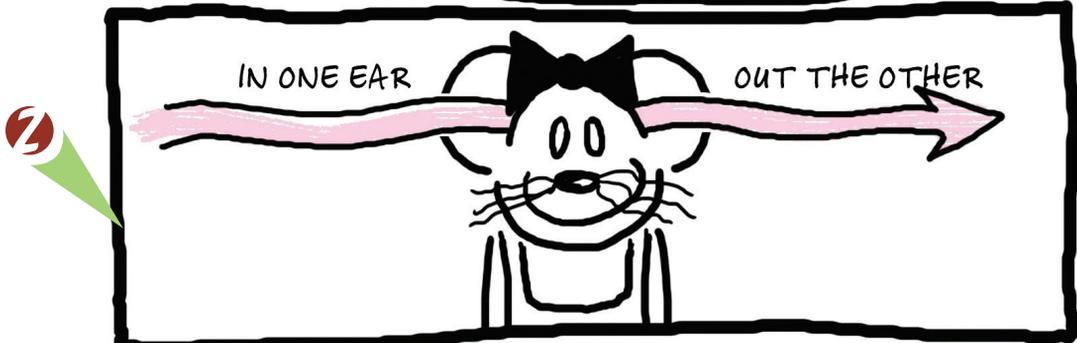
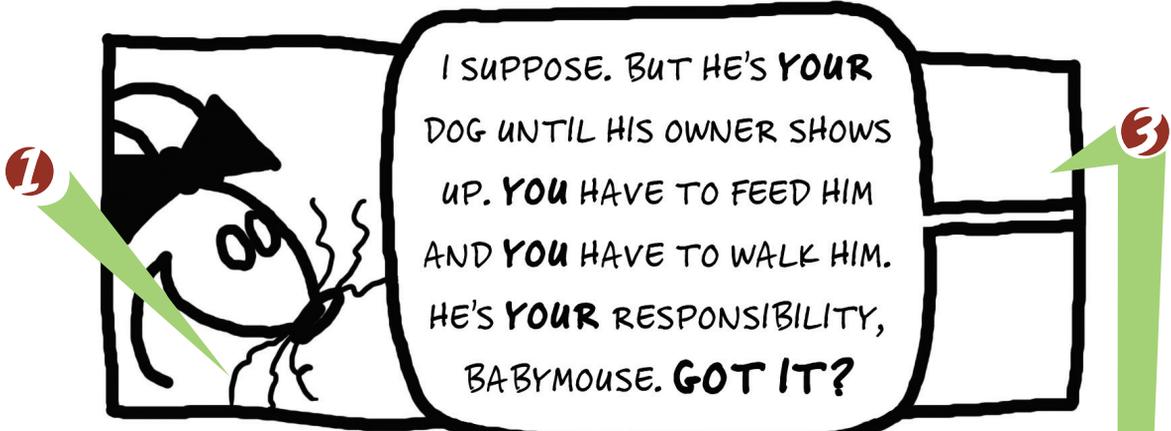
The **arrangement of the panels** 🌀 on the page also helps tell the story. Typically, panels are arranged (and read) in sequence from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page.

In the case of Japanese graphic novels, or manga, panels are arranged from right to left and top to bottom, and this reading order is sometimes preserved in the English language presentation.

There are times however, when the panel arrangement may be more novel. For example:

- a. A small panel may be embedded in a much larger panel to help relate background information along with important information the authors want you to focus upon.
- b. Sometimes the panels are arranged left to right from the top to the bottom across a two-page spread instead of one page.





This is usually done when there are many important sequences (essential to each other) that can't be broken up with the turn of a page.

- c. There are also times when the panels are arranged in different configurations — a circle for example — adding details to the story (in the case of a circular arrangement this may be done to show the continuity of the interactions).

Authors know that if the panel arrangement is too unusual, and the readers' attention is not clearly drawn to the right sequence, it slows the reading (and comprehension) down.

Therefore, creators are thoughtful when designing their pages

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Graphic Novels 101

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and panel arrangements, carefully guiding their readers' eyes and attention.

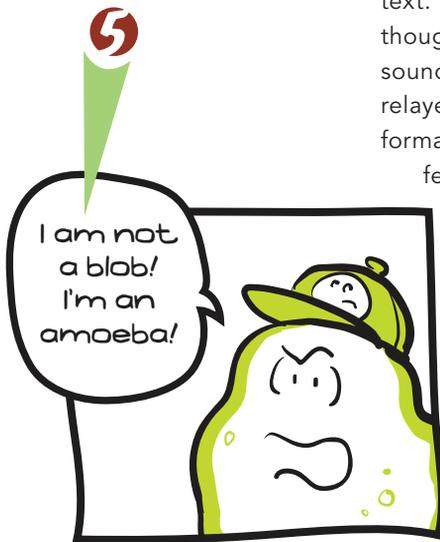
Panels are separated by spaces called **gutters** 4. The gutters provide pauses for readers to integrate information from the panel just read. Also, even though the panels are sequentially arranged, there are often jumps in time (from nanoseconds, minutes, hours, days, etc.) or jumps between characters, scenes, actions, and/or events. As a result, the gutters allow the reader to pause and integrate what is, and is not, presented by the authors and illustrators.



Balloons 5 are typically found inside panels and contain the story's succinct text. The balloons may contain thoughts, dialogue, and/or sound effects — each frequently relayed in different balloon formats. Below is a list of six different types of balloons (from

Using Content-Area Graphic Texts for Learning, Jaffe & Monnin, 2012):

- **Staging balloons** inform the readers and set the stage for changes in the plot, character perspectives, conflict and/or setting. These are often set in rectangular boxes, often using a font different from that used for dialogue.
- **Story balloons** tell the story and move it along.
- **Thought balloons** relate a character's thoughts, emotions, and motives. These are typically drawn with wavy lines or have bubbles connecting the character to the thought.
- **Dialogue balloons** contain text that the characters say aloud.
- **Sound-effect balloons** convey a sense or sound and often contain large, interesting fonts.
- **Balloon-less balloons** are panels that contain text relaying some thought, dialogue, or direction not placed in a balloon.



Creators are thoughtful when designing their pages and panel arrangements, carefully guiding their readers' eyes and attention.