

Jeremy Peoples

Dr. Mary Warner

Young Adult Lit.

11-26-13

Annotated Bibliography: New Media

I once heard that the easiest way to make people learn something is to make them think they are learning something else. Right around the time young people enter middle school, they are reading the classics: from *The Great Gatsby* to *Romeo and Juliet*, young people are almost being forced to read these pieces of literature. It is not to say that these should not be taught, for they are classics for a reason. However, this does not mean that there is no room for other types of literature as well. In fact, other types of literature have plenty to offer young people. Graphic novels have evolved from being just extra-long comic books to being extremely rich, complex, and beautiful pieces of literature, and young adults can benefit from having a few of these pieces in their lives.

For instance, one graphic novel in particular is a fantastic depiction of the teenage experience. Craig Thompson's *Blankets* is the semi-autobiographical tale of the author's dealings with his first love, his religion, and himself. The teenage years can prove to be some of the toughest in a person's life, and to have a novel that deals with this in such a beautiful and realistic way can do one of the best things for a teen: it can make them feel not so alone. If someone knows that they are not the first one to go through such crises shows them that things will get better, that they are not so alone in the world.

Less-motivated readers, however, can also find solace in graphic novels. Some of the topics of graphic novels (e.g. demons or superheroes) can get teens to read when they are not so interested in how Holden Caulfield feels about phonies or Prince Hamlet hates his uncle. The artwork coupled with the content of graphic novels can open a wide array of doors for young people all while getting them to read something meaningful, beautiful, and, most of the time, fun! Also, there are many graphic novel versions of classic novels, Shakespeare plays, and Greek tragedies. The graphic novel could be a fantastic introduction to these pieces.

The graphic novel has been scoffed at for some time, but not until recently did it begin to be taken seriously. Graphic novels hold rich and complex stories that can capture the imagination, mind, and hearts of readers of all ages, but this may be more so for young adults. To see that they are not alone, that their problems are common, that art is dedicated to the dealings of young people may show teens and educators alike that the graphic novel can prove to be literature, and high literature at that.

Annotated Bibliography

B, David. *Epileptic*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2005. Print. We follow Pierre-François through his childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, all the while charting his complicated relationship with his brother and Jean-Christophe's losing battle with epilepsy. Illustrated with beautiful and striking black-and-white images, *Epileptic* is as astonishing, intimate, and heartbreaking as the best literary memoir.

(<http://www.amazon.com/Epileptic-David-B/dp/0375714685>)

Family issues are some of the most poignant and tough for a young person to go through. The way that David. B tells the tale of his and his family's struggle to take care of his epileptic brother is both heartbreaking and heartwarming. The young reader would feel such an emotional response as they read about the family and the disease that not just only one of them has, but, in a greater sense, all of them have. These are not typical teenage family problems, but they are familial problems nonetheless and young adults would benefit from reading such a strong story with, at times, some not-so-strong characters.

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006. Print.

Meet Alison's father, a historic preservation expert and obsessive restorer of the family's Victorian home, a third-generation funeral home director, a high school English teacher, an icily distant parent, and a closeted homosexual who, as it turns out, is involved with his male students and a family babysitter. Through narrative that is alternately heartbreaking and fiercely funny, we are drawn into a daughter's complex yearning for her father....When Alison

comes out as homosexual herself in late adolescence, the denouement is swift, graphic — and redemptive. (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/38990.Fun_Home)

Unfortunately, *Fun Home* is the only graphic novel on this list that I have not had the pleasure to read yet. I feel, however, that it would be a great read for young adults. Identity and finding one's self is a crisis that many young adults face and, from what I know of the novel, Bechdel tells her tale of identity and yearning of her father's acceptance beautifully. Though not all teens may face a sexual identity crisis, almost all can relate to the familial themes in the novel that Buchdel portrays so well.

Brown, Jeffrey. *Aeiou: Any Easy Intimacy*. Marietta, Ga: Top Shelf, 2005. Print.

...the "final chapter" of Jeffrey Brown's so-called Girlfriend Trilogy. AEIOU or Any Easy Intimacy continues to explore the subtleties of relationships explored in Clumsy and Unlikely, concentrating this time on the differences between knowing and loving someone, invoking the reader's relationship with the book as a parallel to being involved with someone. The story is told with Brown's trademark expressive drawings and juxtaposition of humor and heartache. (<http://www.topshelfcomix.com/catalog/aeiou-or-any-easy-intimacy/464>)

Any Easy Intimacy is a graphic novel that deals with loving—or, at least, trying—to love another. Romantic relationships with others can prove to be one of the most beautiful and one of the most difficult crushing experiences a young adult can have. The emotions that are involved with first dipping one's toes into the sea of love for the first time can be a biting thing. Though Brown tells of a relationship he had when he was older, the troubles,

emotions, and heartaches that he portrays transcend the barrier of age making it a fine read for young adults.

Clowes, Daniel. *Ghost World*. Seattle, Wash: Fantagraphics, 2001. Print.

Ghost World has become a cultural and generational touchstone, and continues to enthrall and inspire readers over a decade after its original release as a graphic novel...this quasi-autobiographical story (the name of one of the protagonists is famously an anagram of the author's name) follows the adventures of two teenage girls, Enid and Becky, two best friends facing the prospect of growing up, and more importantly, apart. Daniel Clowes is one of the most respected cartoonists of his generation, and Ghost World is his magnum opus. (<http://www.amazon.com/Ghost-World-Daniel-Clowes/dp/1560974273>)

Friendships, at times, can be extremely difficult to have and maintain for young adults. Daniel Clowes tells this through Enid and Becky, best friends who, whether they realize it or not, are growing further and further apart each and every day. Graduation can be an intimidating thing and, coupled with the thought of losing those one has grown closest to, it can be terrifying. Clowes recognizes this and, if young adults are fortunate to read this graphic novel, they may see that every cloud does, in fact, have a silver lining.

Millar, Mark, John Romita, Tom Palmer, Dean White, and Chris Eliopoulos. *Kick-ass*. New York, NY: Marvel Pub, 2010. Print.

Have you ever wanted to be a super hero? Dreamed of donning a mask and just heading outside to some kick-ass? Well, this is the book for you - the comic that starts where other super-hero books draw the line. Kick-Ass is realistic super heroes taken to the next level.

(<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3918010-kick-ass>)

Superhero stories have always attracted young audiences. The thing is, though, is that these superheroes have special powers. The superheroes in *Kick-Ass*, however, are just normal kids wanting to do good. Young readers can benefit from reading this novel because it deals with normal kids. No powers. Nothing special about them. The kids in the novel have to balance school life, personal relationships, and trying to save the city in which they live. This novel, though, shows something even more important to young adults: everybody, if they so choose, have ability to make a difference.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale : I : My Father Bleeds History, II: and Here My Troubles Began*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print. Maus is a haunting tale within a tale.

Vladek's harrowing story of survival is woven into the author's account of his tortured relationship with his aging father. Against the backdrop of guilt brought by survival, they stage a normal life of small arguments and unhappy visits. This astonishing retelling of our century's grisliest news is a story of survival, not only of Vladek but of the children who survive even the survivors. Maus studies the bloody pawprints of history and tracks its meaning for all of us. (<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/complete-maus-art-spiegelman/1103275791>)

Art Spiegelman's *Maus* is more than just a history lesson: it is a tale of a young man's struggle to have a relationship with his father. Again, familial issues can be some of the most agonizing in a young adult's life, but Spiegelman shows that these issues can be resolved, be put behind if both parties so choose. Pair this with the unique, interesting, and enthralling way Speigelman tells of the tales of the holocaust, and a young adult can have

not only a history lesson, not only have a tale of a man connecting with his father, but also have one of the finest pieces of literature ever penned.

Thompson, Craig. *Blankets: A Graphic Novel*. Marietta, Ga: Top Shelf, 2003. Print. At 592 pages, *Blankets* may well be the single largest graphic novel ever published without being serialized first. Wrapped in the landscape of a blustery Wisconsin winter, *Blankets* explores the sibling rivalry of two brothers growing up in the isolated country, and the budding romance of two coming-of-age lovers. A tale of security and discovery, of playfulness and tragedy, of a fall from grace and the origins of faith. A profound and utterly beautiful work from Craig Thompson. (<http://www.amazon.com/Blankets-Craig-Thompson/dp/1891830430>)

If I were to teach any graphic novel to young adults, it would be Craig Thompson's *Blankets*. Young love is very rewarding, but can also be very disheartening. Thompson's autobiographical tale has readers go through the motions of young love along with the main character. His relationship with the girl is not his only focus, however, for the main character must also deal with his relationship with God and faith. These crises prove to be a turning point in the author's life and shows young readers that times will be tough, but, ultimately, we are all better for having gone through them. *Blankets*, in my opinion, is the greatest graphic novel of all time for all of these reasons.

Thompson, Craig. *Good-bye, Chunky Rice*. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf, 1999. Print.

Mister Chunky Rice be living in the same rooming house likewise myself, only that boy be restless. Looking for something. And he puts hisself on my brother Chuck's ship and boats out to sea to find it. Only he be departin' from his bestest of all friends, his deer mouse, I mean,

mouse deer chum Dandel. Now why in a whirl would someone leave beyond a buddy? Just what be that turtle lad searchings for? I said you best read the book to find out.

(https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/37264.Good_Bye_Chunky_Rice)

Good-bye, Chunky Rice is all about change. Chunky is a turtle that must leave his partner, a field mouse named Dandel, in order for to find himself and a fresh start. New surroundings and changes can be an intimidating and frightful experience for a young adult and, by reading this tale of a young turtle experiencing the same things they might be, this story can show them that they are not all alone and, sometimes, the hardest thing and the right thing are one in the same.

Thompson, Craig. *Habibi*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2011. Print. Sprawling across an epic landscape of deserts, harems, and modern industrial clutter, HABIBI tells the tale of Dodola and Zam, refugee child slaves bound to each other by chance, by circumstance, and by the love that grows between them. At once contemporary and timeless, HABIBI gives us a love story of astounding resonance: a parable about our relationship to the natural world, the cultural divide between the first and third worlds, the common heritage of Christianity and Islam, and, most potently, the magic of storytelling. (<http://www.habibibook.com/about/>)

Habibi is more of an illustrated novel than anything else. The tale of a young woman who, through circumstance, is forced to care for a child not too much younger than herself.

Young adults could benefit from reading *Habibi* because it shows them that young adults of all ages and from all corners of earth have problems that severely affect them. Whether the problems are troubles with a girlfriend or having to struggle for food every day, *Habibi* shows that young adults are not alone. Coupled this with the beautiful art and language and one has a novel that can be taught alongside the classics.

Yang, Gene L, and Lark Pien. *American Born Chinese*. New York: First Second, 2006. Print. Jin

Wang starts at a new school where he's the only Chinese-American student. When a boy from Taiwan joins his class, Jin doesn't want to be associated with an FOB like him. Jin just wants to be an all-American boy, because he's in love with an all-American girl. Danny is an all-American boy: great at basketball, popular with the girls. But his obnoxious Chinese cousin Chin-Kee's annual visit is such a disaster that it ruins Danny's reputation at school, leaving him with no choice but to transfer somewhere he can start all over again. The Monkey King has lived for thousands of years and mastered the arts of kung fu and the heavenly disciplines. He's ready to join the ranks of the immortal gods in heaven. But there's no place in heaven for a monkey. Each of these characters cannot help himself alone, but how can they possibly help each other? They're going to have to find a way—if they want fix the disasters their lives have become. <http://www.amazon.com/American-Born-Chinese-Gene-Luen/dp/0312384483>)

American Born Chinese is a novel about identity. All three characters must try to find themselves or, rather, must find that themselves are they really needed to know in the first place. The crisis of identity can be crippling. Young adults face this challenge and, unfortunately, it is possible that they can never come to a resolving conclusion. *American Born Chinese* shows the crisis of identity through humor, magic, and beautiful storytelling. Young adults can benefit from a reading of this novel because it shows a wonderful intertwining of the stories and proves that we are all not alone on the journey to find who we really all are.

