

Juan Renteria
English 112B
5/6/14
Bibliography

The Underrated Novel

Graphic novels get the same treatment that fictional novels once did. The Novel was once rejected from being anything other than entertainment. “This kind of text, the criticism ran, misinformed its readers about love, morals, social class, and everything that society most valued” (Hansen). Had this criticism stood, we would have dismissed great pieces of literature fiction that arguably changed in the world. I’m talking about book such as: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin, 1984, The Grapes of Wrath*, and *Tom Sawyer*, just to name a few.

When I was first assigned a graphic novel for a class, I held back from believing that graphic novels possessed any teaching value. Two years ago I was assigned *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang. This was the book that obliterated my skepticism. It was a simple book with a powerful lesson concerning Chinese stereotypes. When we discussed the book in class, not only did we dissect the textual symbolism like we would with a traditional novel, but we also deciphered meaning with in the illustrations of the book. The professor explained that the creators treat the illustrations as opportunities to add depth to the text of the book. The ability to include symbolic representation, along with critical analysis of the illustrations is something unique to graphic novels.

I have selected *American Born Chinese* as my center piece for this bibliography because it embodies all the qualities that make a graphic novel good. It offers the reader something more than a story—an opportunity to view the world differently. The illustrations are drawn with artistic purpose, and add significant meaning to the text. The book can be enjoyed by both teenagers and adults.

I have included graphic novels that deal with a troubled college student who is learning to accept her homosexuality at the same moment her father commits suicide; historical fiction novels that deal with the holocaust, and the Islamic revolution; graphic novels that deal with current world affairs such as North Korea and the Iraq war; historical graphic novels that celebrate the achievements of the African American community; and finally, an illustrative adaptation of Thoreau's *Walden*. In my short bibliography I've try to demonstrate that the versatility of graphic novels goes way beyond superheroes.

Graphic Novels:

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

When Amanda, a college student, calls home to reveal to her parents that she is a lesbian her mother tells Amanda that her father has been cheating on her with other men. A few month later Amends'' father commits suicide. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* is Amanda's journey of discovering who her mortician, and unfaithful gay father really was. This graphic novel is important because it depicts a sexually confused woman. The novel deals with serious themes in a humorous manner. It shows that a graphic novel doesn't have to have superhuman characters, but can have real people going through real life problems.

Satrapa, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. New York: Pantheon, 2007. Print.

Persepolis is the story of Satrapa's unforgettable childhood and coming of age within a large and loving family in Tehran during the Islamic Revolution; of the contradictions between private life and public life in a country plagued by political upheaval; of her high school years in Vienna facing the trials of adolescence far from her family; of her homecoming--both sweet and terrible; and, finally, of her self-imposed exile from her beloved homeland. (Source: Amazon.com). The graphic novel is important because it successfully portrays how war can affect a young child. The black and white illustrations are important because they portray how war can be narrowly viewed as right and wrong.

Yang, Gene Luen, and Lark Pien. *American Born Chinese*. New York: Square Fish, 2008. Print.

American Born Chinese depicts an immigrant's struggle to assimilate into a new country. Jin Wang is a middle school student who wants to be American, and date an American girl. In school he is made to feel different because he is Chinese, and he feels he must reject his Chinese heritage to be accepted. *American Born Chinese* teaches to embrace diversity, and no deny it. This graphic novel is important because it embraces the superhero theme while, at the same time, dealing with the very serious theme of race discrimination.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.

The story begins at the turning point for Jews living in Poland during World War I, and like a quick fist, the Nazi movement sweeps right through. The family must contend with every awful element known about the Holocaust, from documentation to separation, concentration camps, and utter loss. (Source: The Super Librarian, <http://thesuperlibrarian.wordpress.com/2010/12/09/maus/>). This is an important graphic novel because the animal depictions of the Nazis and Jews allow the reader to take an objective view of the Holocaust. The illustrations enhance the reading. It is a powerful historical fiction novel.

Thoreau, Henry David, and John Porcellino. *Thoreau at Walden*. New York: Hyperion, 2008. Print.

In this graphic masterpiece, John Porcellino uses only the words of Thoreau himself to tell the story of those two years off the beaten track. The pared-down text focuses on Thoreau's most profound ideas, and Porcellino's fresh, simple pictures bring the philosopher's sojourn at Walden to cinematic life. (Source: Amazon.com) This is an important graphic novel because it showcases the versatility of the medium. This novel contains illustrations that bring Thoreau's poetic masterpiece to life.

Delisle, Guy, and Helge Dascher. *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*. Montreal, Quebec: Drawn & Quarterly, 2007. Print.

One of the few Westerners granted access to North Korea documents his observations of the secretive society in this graphic travelogue that depicts the cultural alienation, boredom, and desires of ordinary North Koreans. (Source: NPR.com) This is an important graphic novel because it deals with contemporary concerns. It artistically illustrates the current state of North Korea.

Laird, Roland Owen., Taneshia Nash. Laird, and Elihu Bey. *Still I Rise: A Graphic History of African Americans*. New York, NY: Sterling, 2009. Print.

The entire history of Black America, told in an accessible graphic-novel form. Updated from its original version—which ended with the Million Man March—it now extends from the early days of colonial slavery right through to Barack Obama's groundbreaking presidential campaign. (Source: Google Book) This graphic novel is important because it proudly illustrates African American's success in the United States, and also demonstrates that a graphic novel can instill pride among a demographic.

Vaughan, Brian K., Niko Henrichon, and Todd Klein. *Pride of Baghdad*. New York: DC Comics, 2006. Print.

A pride of lions escapes from the Baghdad Zoo during an American bombing raid. Lost and confused, hungry but finally free, the four lions roamed the decimated streets of Baghdad in a desperate struggle for their lives. In documenting the plight of the lions, *Pride of Baghdad*, raises questions about the true meaning of liberation - can it be given, or is it earned only through self-determination and sacrifice? (Source: Amazon.com) This graphic novel uses childlike elements to portray a serious theme. It highlights how illustrations can change the dynamic of a serious text.

Movie:

Persepolis: A Film By Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud

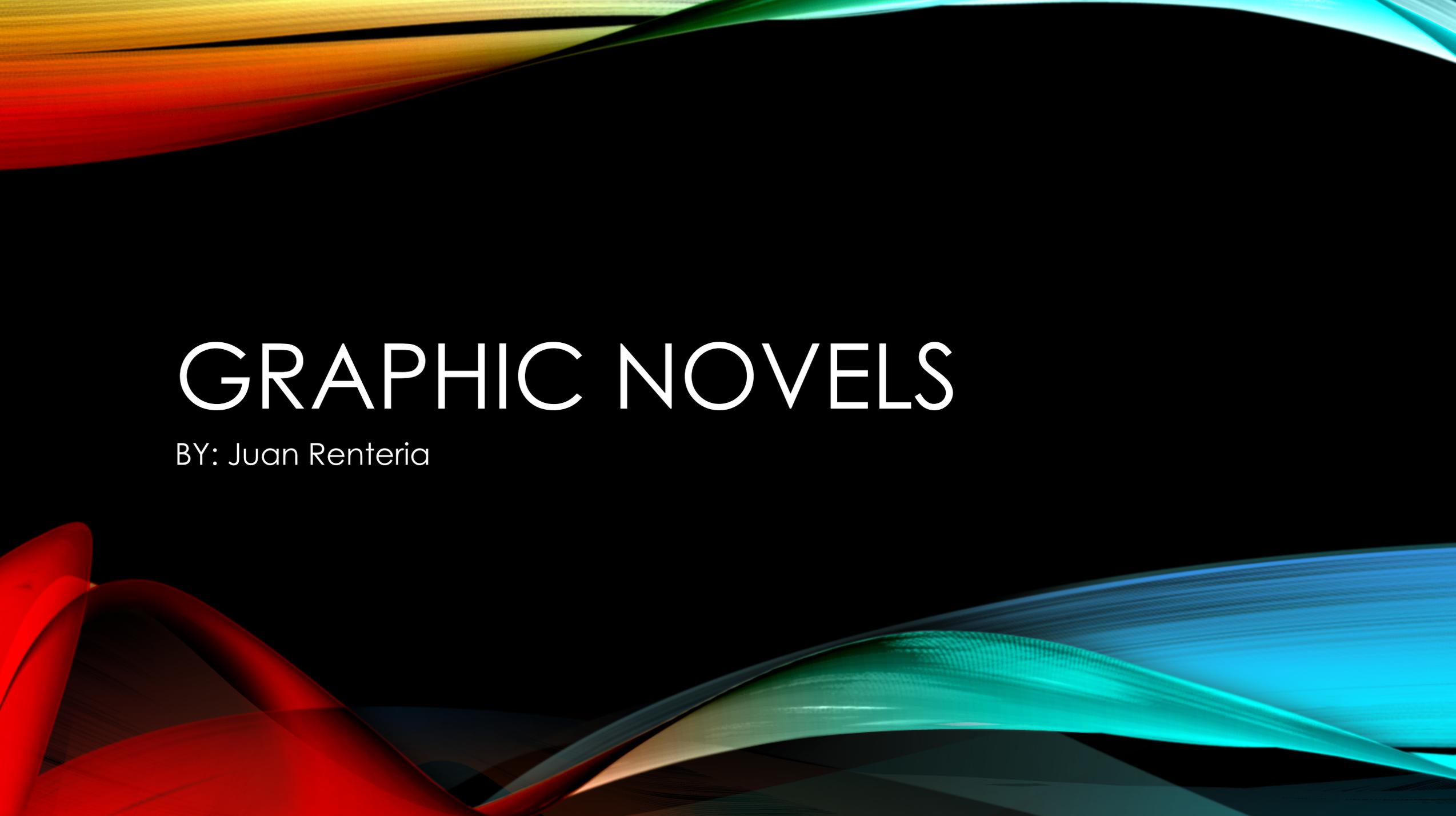
In 1970s Iran, Marjane 'Marji' Satrapi watches events through her young eyes and her idealistic family of a long dream being fulfilled of the hated Shah's defeat in the Iranian Revolution of 1979. However as Marji grows up, she witnesses firsthand how the new Iran, now ruled by Islamic fundamentalists, has become a repressive tyranny on its own. With Marji dangerously refusing to remain silent at this injustice, her parents send her abroad to Vienna to study for a better life. (Source: IMBD.com) This movie is important because it demonstrates that the success of graphic novels isn't limited to only print. The ideas of the novel translate perfectly to film.

Scholarly Article:

Hansen, Kathryn Strong, and Lisa Storm Fink R.W.T. "In Defense of Graphic Novels."

English Journal 102.2 (2012): 57-63. *ProQuest*. Web. 24 Apr. 2014.

In this scholarly article, Kathryn Strong Hansen writes about possible critiques teacher interested in using graphic novels for teaching might be confronted with. The term graphic novel can be misleading because it can refer to manga, comics, novel in picture. She suggests to educate critiques on the difference between the types, and on the myth that all comics are about superheroes. She concludes her journal on expressing the value of graphic novels. They can instill a passion for learning in who a teacher find difficult, and they can help establish basic skills with struggling students.



GRAPHIC NOVELS

BY: Juan Renteria

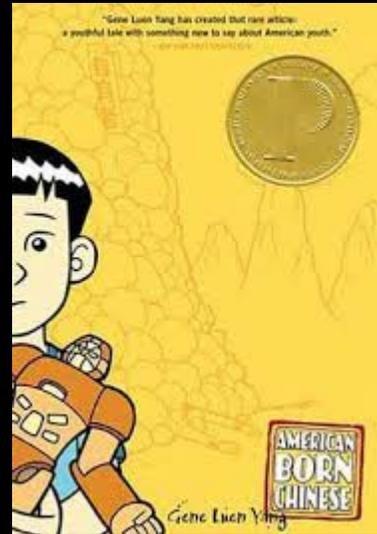
WHY I CHOSE GRAPHIC NOVELS

- After my book talk presentation I wanted to showcase the diversity and teaching potential of graphic novels
- Graphic Novels I have been assigned in class:



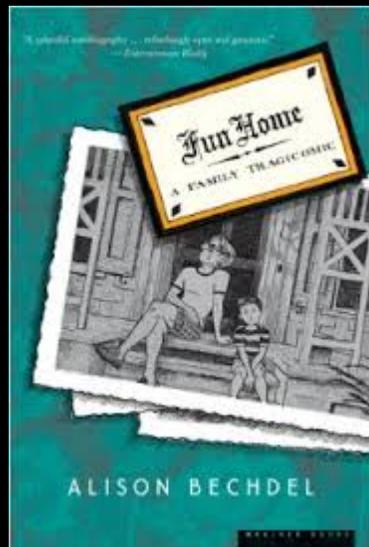
CENTERPIECE: AMERICAN BORN CHINESE

- It contains all the elements that makes a graphic novel worth teaching.
- The illustrations enhance the significance of the text.
- Serious theme that encourages growth



FUN HOME BY: ALISON BECHDEL

- Daughter in college is discovering her sexuality
- Her sexually abusive Father commits suicide
- Family owns a morgue



CRITICISM GRAPHIC NOVELS RECEIVE

- They're for "nerds" and only deal with superheroes. -That's not true! They're for everyone and deal with many different themes
- They're easy to read, so only lazy people like them. -Though they are easy, they can instill a passion for learning for a difficult student, and they can help a child develop critical thinking skills.