

Graphic Novels ---- For Children, Too

I admit I'm late to the world of graphic novels. It wasn't until I was in graduate school that my eyes were opened to the fantastic possibilities that lay within graphic novels. Some of you might be scratching your heads when I use the term 'graphic novel', but the term is used to describe comics in book form. There are some who believe graphic novels are not real books. But I'm here to tell you - they are!

Graphic novels for children are a relatively new undertaking but authors, artists, and publishers are racing to meet the growing demand. Besides the titles that are strictly written as graphic novels – such as *Babymouse* (a story of a girl mouse and her very active, not to mention funny, imagination) - children can browse through a wide variety of titles to find a book that will match their interests. If your children love *Redwall* or *Artemis Fowl*, they can also check out the graphic novel adaptations. Maybe you want to introduce them to classics such as *Little Women* or *Treasure Island*; graphic novels can open the door. Now I don't want to overlook the classics of comics either. *Spiderman* and *Batman* are just two of the famous comic-book heroes experiencing new adventures in graphic novels. Or maybe your children love history and might enjoy exciting myths and legends such as *Jason and the Golden Fleece* or *Tristan and Isolde*. We even have nonfiction titles that include a series on forensic science. Whatever their interest is, there is a graphic novel to fulfill it! Even wordless graphic novels can be meaningful; titles such as *Robot Dreams* and *Owly* use artwork to tell beautiful and heartbreaking stories about friendship.

What's so appealing about graphic novels? They are fast-paced, heroic, suspenseful, hilarious, romantic, and thought-provoking. Sounds just like other books right? But for some people there is something even better about graphic novels: they get to see the story unfold as they read along. But it's not just about looking at pictures. Unlike picture books, the artwork in graphic novels helps move the story and is just as necessary as the text itself. Graphic novels require the same reading skills needed for reading other types of books, but if children have trouble with the text the artwork can actually improve their ability to read and help build confidence. Graphic novels also provide a view of nonverbal communication. Readers can see the characters' expressions as they deal with their emotions and innermost thoughts. This can have a strong impact for visual learners and reluctant readers.

Just like other books, there are good, bad and great graphic novels. But I encourage you to jump in and try a graphic novel...they are for all ages. And you never know - enjoyment of graphic novels may create gateways to other books. Reading a graphic novel about World War II could spark an interest in nonfiction or historical fiction. But even if your child wants to stick with graphic novels, don't worry and let them enjoy!

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