

Graphic Novels - FAQs

What are graphic novels?

Michelle Gorman defines a graphic novel as “. . . an original book-length story, either fiction or nonfiction, published in comic book style . . . or a collection of stories that have been published previously as individual comic books . . .” Gorman, Michelle. *Getting Graphic!: using graphic novels to promote literacy with preteens and teens*. Worthington, OH: Linworth Publishing, 2003. (p. xii)

According to Gorman there is no widely accepted term for the graphic nonfiction, “therefore the use of the seemingly erroneous label of “novel” for all books created in a comic-style format must be understood and accepted as the status quo.” (p. xii) The criteria that we have developed for NC are categorized as Graphic Novels: Fiction, Graphic Novels: Nonfiction and Graphic Novel Multimedia.

What is manga?

Manga (mahn-guh) are serial comics originally published in Japan that usually read right to left and back to front and contain characters with exaggerated facial and body characteristics. Some genres of manga are shonen for boys, shojo for girls and kodomo for children. The Korean term for print comics is Manhwa (mahn-hwah) and the Chinese call their comics manhua.

What is anime?

Anime (ah-nee-may), originally from Japan, is the term for animated feature films, television programs and original video animation (OVA). It comes from the Japanese word animeshon, a translation of animation.

Why does DPI include *Supports NC K-12 curriculum* as one of the criteria for evaluating Graphic Novels?

Please see the following competency goals and objectives:

- Grade 2 (LA) **1.05** Use a variety of strategies and skills to read self-selected texts independently for 20 minutes daily. Self-selected texts should be consistent with the student's independent reading level.
- Grade 2 (Information skills) **2.03** Recognize the diversity of ideas and thoughts by exploring a variety of resources (print, non-print, electronic) and formats (print, non-print, graphical, audio, video, multimedia, web-based).
- Grade 8 (LA) **5.01** Increase fluency, comprehension, and insight through a meaningful and comprehensive literacy program by: reading self-selected literature and other materials of interest to the individual.

For additional examples, please see the NC SCOS at <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/>

Is “graphic novel” a genre or format?

“. . . "graphic novels" is an imprecise term used to describe a format that uses a combination of words and sequential art to convey a narrative. Graphic novels can be of any genre on any topic." Fletcher-Spear, Kristin, M. Jensen-Benjamin, & T. Copeland. "The Truth about Graphic Novels: A Format, Not a Genre." *ALAN Review*. Winter 2005.

How do I know whether or not a graphic novel is appropriate for my collection? (I understand many contain objectionable language and violence).

As with any form of literature, some graphic novels may not be appropriate for your students. This may be an excellent time to review your district's selection policy and update your school's collection development plan. Strong selection policies, along with DPI's new evaluation criteria, will help guide your decision making. Reviews can be a valuable resource. Some graphic novels contain ratings; however, it is recommended that you examine titles carefully before adding them to the collection.

Where can I find reviews?

These are a few recommended review sources:

Booklist

Horn Book

ICv2 (<http://icv2.com>)

Library Journal

Library Media Connection

Publishers' Weekly

School Library Journal

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates) - "Graphically Speaking"

Video Librarian

Additional review resources and lists can be found on vendor and library association websites.

How can I convince my colleagues/administrators/parents that graphic novels belong in the school library media center?

Educators must adapt to the needs of 21st century students and their learning styles. Adding graphic novels to your collection offers benefits to all readers. Research supports the use of graphic novels to improve literacy motivation and student achievement:

- Libraries report 25% increases in **overall** circulation after adding graphic novels to their collections. Miller, Steve. *Developing and Promoting Graphic Novel Collections*. NY: Neal-Schuman, 2005.

- Full-length graphic novels contain, on average, 168 pages and 12,400 words, while some reach as high as 20,000 words. (Miller, 2005)
- "A literary piece that calls on its reader to use both analyzing and synthesizing skills is asking more involvement, not less." Goldsmith, Francisca. *Booklist*, May 1, 1998, p. 1510.
- Comic books often serve as an intermediary, helping readers become more linguistically proficient before moving on to heavier reading. Krashen, Stephen. *The Power of Reading*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1993.

How do I catalog and shelve graphic novels?

As with any collection, access is key. A common way to catalog and shelve graphic novels is to place them in the non-fiction collection, 741.5. Graphic novels also can be placed in the fiction collection. Another option is to integrate them into the collection according to subject. According to Miller (2005, p. 52), "There is only one place for a book to be – in someone's hands, being read and enjoyed." Each school must determine the best way to organize and provide ease of access to this popular format.