

Teaching Strategies for Graphic Novels

Tea Party: Put bits and pieces of a graphic novel on index cards. Students read their cards and listen to others during the tea party. Afterwards, students discuss various literary elements of the story-plot, character, setting, style, and theme-and record their predictions on a graphic organizer. The next day students read the section in its entirety and revisit the graphic novel to make additions and subtractions.

Sequencing: Take panels from a page in a graphic novel and cut them up so that they are out of order. Have students put them in order and justify their choices in writing.

Cloze Passage: Erase panels or word bubbles on a page in a graphic novel and have students use context clues to make sense of the story.

Predicting: This is a variation of the cloze passage. Have students predict what will happen in the next panel.

Dialogue: Erase the text in word bubbles and have students add their own dialogue. Then have them rewrite the story, including the dialogue in quotation marks.

Cumulative Story: Erase the text in word bubbles and have students add their own dialogue into the first word balloon and pass it on to the next student. That student fills in the second word balloon and passes it on. This can be a variation on the dialogue activity.

Panel Storytelling: Have students practice telling a story in three or four panels. Use websites such as the comic creator on readwritethink.org.

Summarizing: Once students become somewhat proficient in panel storytelling, the technique can be used to help them summarize information. A nine panel grid is particularly helpful.

Reader's Theater: Have students convert graphic novels to a reader's theater script or vice versa.

Literature Circles: This teaching Strategy encourages students to have a choice in what they read for class. It also forces them to take responsibility for their own learning by collaborating on the book discussion.

Writing/Drawing Collaboration: Artistic students and literary students can create a comic strip. In a graphic novel, typically one person will write the story, another will draw the art, another will add the color, and yet another will draw the letters in the word balloons.

Carousel Activity: Isolate a skill such as symbolism or onomatopoeia. Post examples on butcher paper around the room. Divide students into groups and assign each group to an example. Students respond to the example by writing on the butcher paper. Rotate each of the groups through each example for several minutes.

Silent Discussion: This is a variation of the carousel activity. Post examples on butcher paper around the room, but rather than subdividing the students in groups, they are free to move around the room, but they must do so in complete silence. The only communication takes place on the butcher paper under the examples.

ABC Book: This is an assessment tool that requires students to synthesize their knowledge into twenty-six letters of the alphabet.

Acrostic Poem: This is an assessment tool that requires students to synthesize their knowledge into an acrostic poem.

Parallel Timeline: This is an assessment tool that is particularly effective for Social Studies. Create multiple timelines and place them one under another. This is great for showing things that are happening simultaneously. (e.g. WWII Pacific theater vs. WWII European theater) or for comparison and contrast (George Washington vs. Abraham Lincoln).

A Moment in Time: Another assessment tool with social studies applications. Draw a literary (or historical) character and label the parts of the character with captions which explain their significance.

Collage: Synthesize a topic solely in terms of images. For example, A World War II collage would simply have a title, but then could include an image of Uncle Sam, an image of various battle scenes, a map, or other relevant issues.

Book Report: Assign students to read a graphic novel for a book report and have them report on the book in the form of a comic book.

This document is taken from handouts originally produced as part of the workshop: "The Best Graphic Novels for Young Adults and How to Use Them in Your Program (Grades 6-12)" Created by Jonathan Hunt for the Institute for Educational Development.