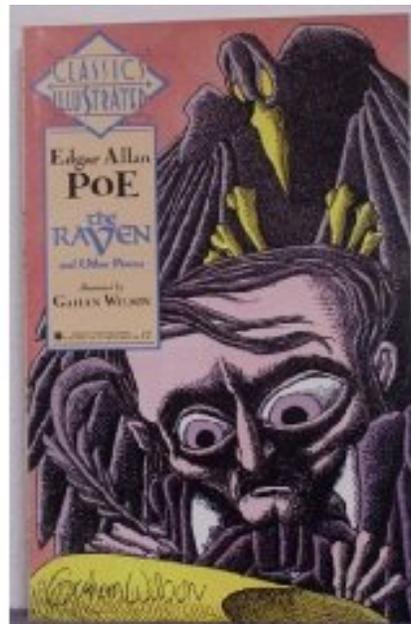
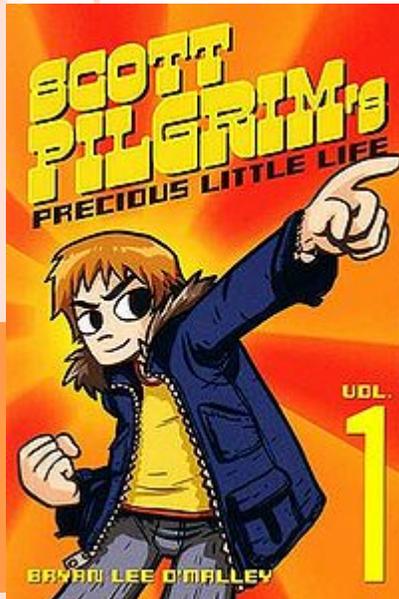


NEW MEDIA AS A UNIT OF STUDY

USING MEDIA SUCH AS COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS



By Andrew Dinh

English 112b

11-26-08

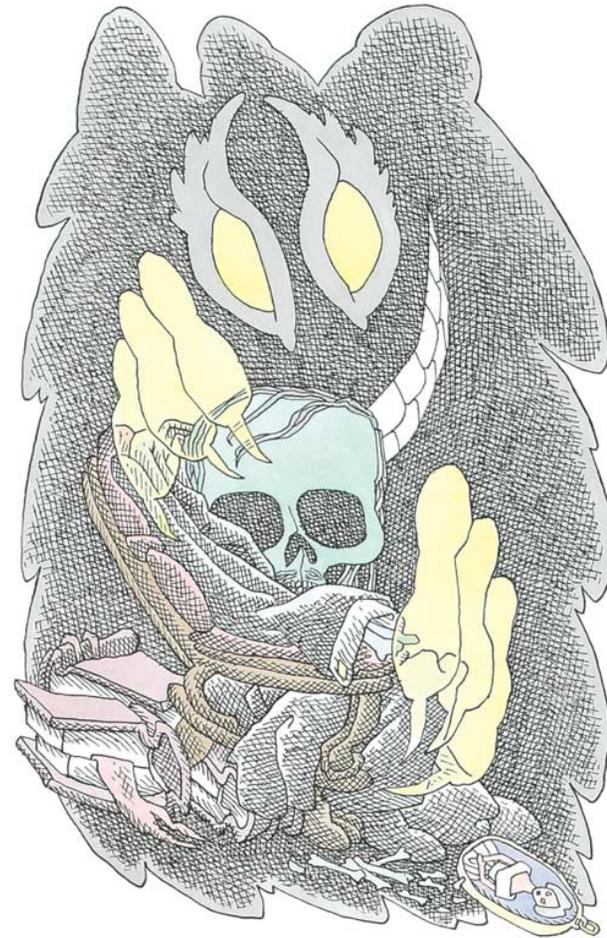
The above images are taken from www.papercutz.com,
www.marvelcomics.com, and www.onipress.com

WHY I CHOSE THIS GENRE AND CENTER PIECE:

Many adults today view graphic novels as something that diverts time and attention from literature. And thus, graphic novels are rarely used in schools due to the stigma attached to their use. In my opinion, by passing up these types of new media, teachers are wasting a precious resource to assist in the teaching of literature: enjoyment.

The average student is much more likely to enjoy a graphic novel than a novel. This is because that graphic novels remind us of how it was like to read a picture book, not only reading for content and meaning, but observing the pictures for symbols that could allude to the text.

My particular centre piece for my unit of study for a graphic novel would be *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe and illustrated by Gahan Wilson. I picked *The Raven* particularly because it doesn't tackle the usual stories of graphic novels, but blends the new graphic novel genre with something old yet familiar. Also, poetry is usually a difficult subject to teach to high school students, and I believe with the assistance of the poem in graphic novel form, I can easily make it enjoyable. And for the student, being able to enjoy something makes it easier to learn.



Picture of The Raven (character) taken from *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe and illustrated by Gahan Wilson. Picture taken from www.papercutz.com/classics/poe/poehome.html.

KICKING OFF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL UNIT

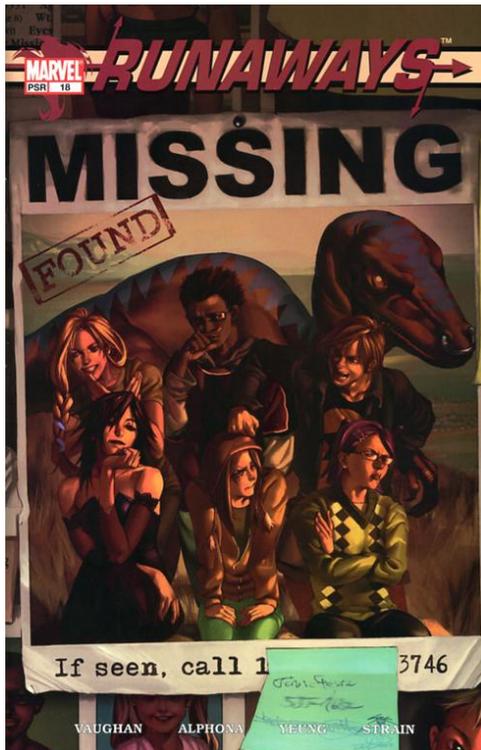
Graphic novels are usually pretty welcoming when it comes to their content and plot, but *The Raven* might be difficult for students to adapt too. I propose the following activities in order to help them:

Students who are new to the graphic novel genre will often forget to look through the illustrations for symbols that connect to the text. Having students try comics because they are short is a good idea. I recommend the following:



RUNAWAYS

Runaways series created by Brian K. Vaughan and Adrian Alphona (though the first issue would be recommended, if the student is already a fan of the series any of the following issues would work)



According to Amazon.com, 'In "Pride & Joy", six young friends discover their parents are all secretly super-powered villains! Finding strength in one another, the shocked teens run away from home and straight into the adventure of their lives - vowing to turn the tables on their evil legacy. In "Teenage Wasteland", the Runaways find a kindred spirit in a daring young stranger and welcome him into their fold. But will this dashing young man help the teenagers defeat their villainous parents... or tear them apart? Plus: who do you send to catch a group of missing, runaway teenage super-heroes?"



Both images are taken from www.marvelcomics.com

SCOTT PILGRIM

Scott Pilgrim by Brian Lee O' Malley follows the stories of the title character as he deals with real life situations in a world which doesn't follow the rules of real life (Experience points and cash are dropped every time he beats someone up). The main story revolves around Scott falling for a young woman named Ramona V. Flowers, and due to the "gaming" rules of his realistic world, he has to defeat each of her seven evil ex-boyfriends in hand to hand combat before he's allowed to date her. Using comedy and gaming culture to help students relate to the graphic novel along with charming "manga" style art allow the authors to reach multiple audiences ranging from manga lovers, gamers, and romantics.

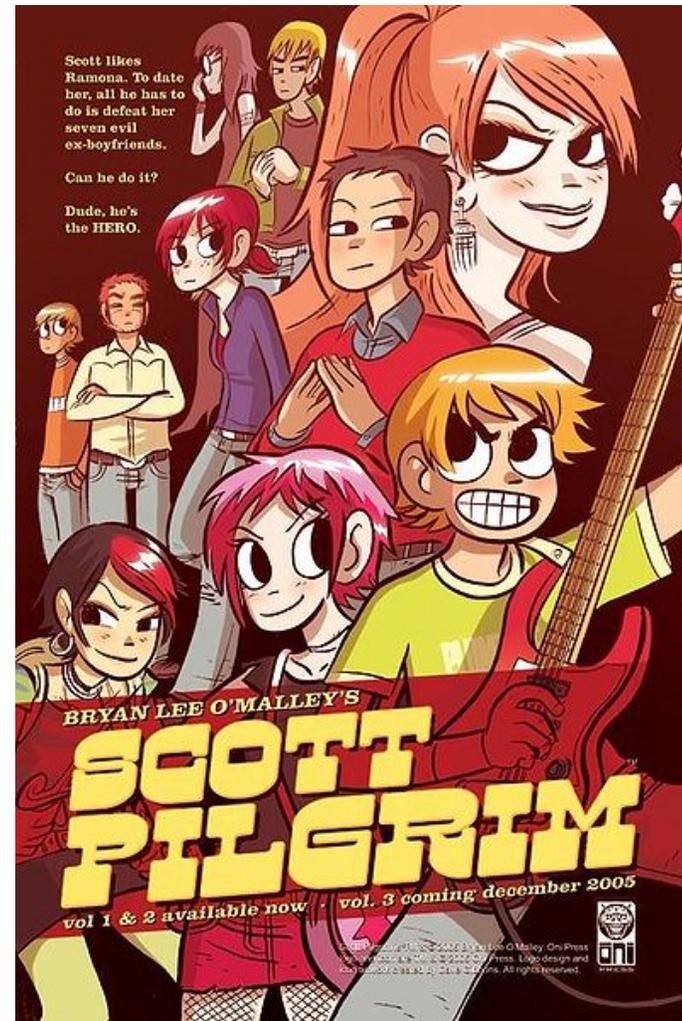


Image taken from www.onipress.com

THE WALKING DEAD

The Walking Dead created by Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore follow the story of Rick Grimes as he deals with survival and loss in a newly zombie infested world. By focusing more on the human emotional and need for survival than the zombie apocalypse, writer Robert Kirkman tries to show how unlikely heroes would deal with an even unlikelier situation. Appealing for fans of fiction and apocalypse novels.

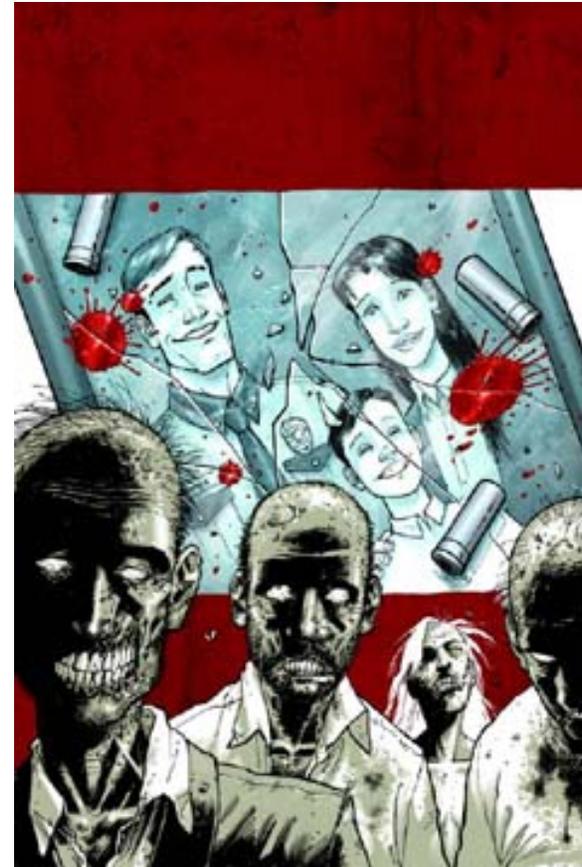


Image taken from
www.imagecomics.com



KICKING OFF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL UNIT PART 2

After a student reads one of these graphic novels, break the class up into three separate groups depending on which ones they read. From there, list several recurring themes and symbols within the graphic novels.

Some to look out for:

Gamers and musicians should look at the gaming and music references when it comes to Scott Pilgrim's band and other rival bands. (Sex Bob-omb, The Clash at Demonhead, Sonic and Knuckles, Kid Chameleon)

Love/crush themes in *Runaways* that students can relate to.

The theme of family and loss in *The Walking Dead*.



KICKING OFF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL UNIT PART 3: ESSAY PROMPTS AND DISCUSSION

Possible essay prompts and discussions:

- Discuss the similarities of these graphic novels to some of the texts usually read in class. Try to focus on character roles and archetypes along with themes. How are they similar? How are they different? Which one do you like better and why?
- Since graphic novels are discussed as “new media” can you list some pop culture references that help you understand the graphic novels better? Are these references important symbols in the story? Please explain how the pop culture references make your experience better or worse.



KICKING OFF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL UNIT PART FOUR: COMICS THAT INVOLVE POETRY



Images taken from
www.poetryfoundation.com
Please see hand out



KICKING OFF THE GRAPHIC NOVEL UNIT: PART FOUR CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Discussion:

What do you think the author's are saying? Does the message the author convey match with the illustrations?

Take a page from one of our previous graphic novels and try to write a poem concerning the plot or theme that's occurring within the page.



BACK TO THE CENTER PIECE: *THE RAVEN*

After reading *The Raven* with the students, several activities could be done before starting a final project.

For example, have a hand out of one of the pages from the book, ask the students to circle every illustration that relates directly to the text.

From there, ask the students if the colors from the illustration match the mood and tone of the text.



CENTER PIECE SHORT ESSAY IDEAS

- Watch for the expressions on the narrator and the raven, does the illustrator portray their emotion and intent well? What are these emotions and intents, and what quotes from the text support it?
- Describe the raven, does it seem otherworldly? What illustrated features make it seem so, and how does the text support it? If it seems normal, is the narrator fueled by paranoia?
- Did any of the vocabulary words from the text confuse you? Did the illustrations assist in any way?



FINAL PROJECT IDEAS FOR THE UNIT

- Pick a poem or short story from one of our previous texts, and write an essay about how it can be enhanced with a good illustrator.
- Pick an outside graphic novel and discuss how it can relate to some of previous texts. Are there similar characters and plots?
- List ten illustrations from *The Raven* that you think didn't quite match with what you believed the author's intent was.

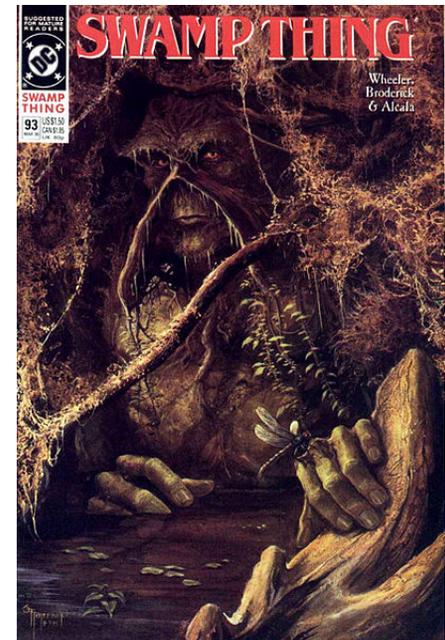
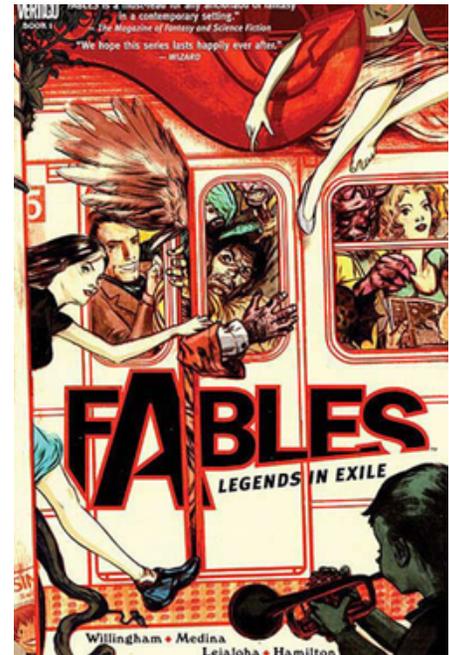


EXTENDING THE UNIT

The *Fables* series by Bill Willingham is a good extension of the unit because it follows the characters of fairy tales and folklore as they venture into the real world and deal with real life problems, such as war, racism, and adultery.

Swamp Thing created by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson discusses multiple adult themes such as environmentalism and loss of humanity, while at the same time retaining enough action and plot twists to keep a young adult reader interested.

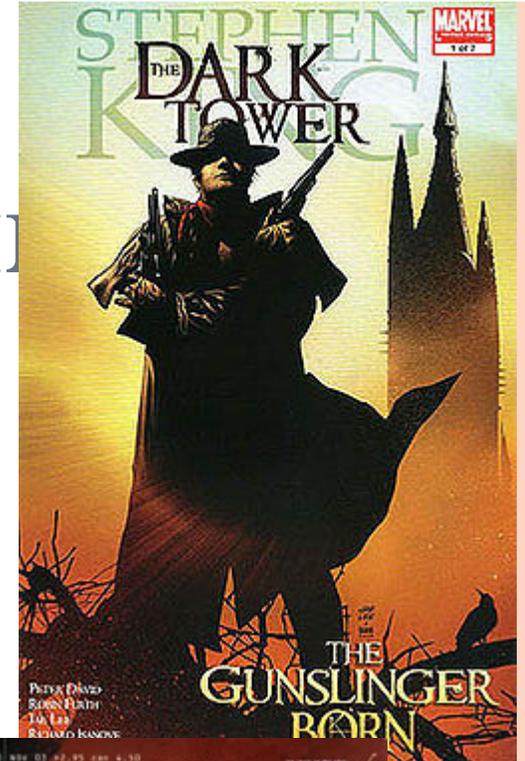
Both images are taken from www.dccomics.com and www.dccomics.com/vertigo



The following images are taken from www.dccomics.com/vertigo and www.marvelcomics.com

EXTENDING THE UNIT CONTI

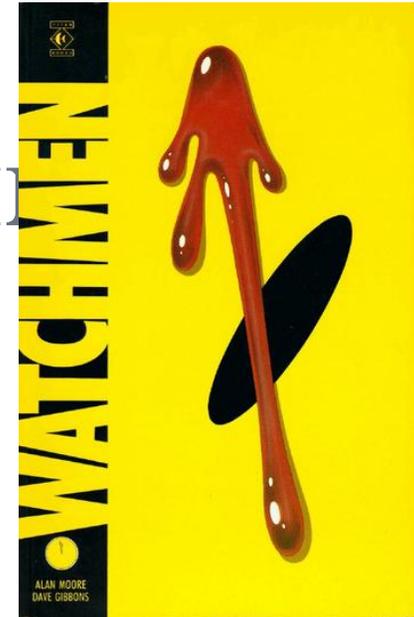
- *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger Born* is a prequel to Steven King's *Dark Tower* series, focusing on the main character Roland before the events in the first novel. Any fan of King fan would enjoy this for at least the background information if not for the art work.
- *Y: The Last Man* created by Brian K. Vaughan reflects on a young man named Yorick as he survived a Y chromosome cleansing plague. The series discusses major issues such as sexuality and human survival in the face of an world wide extinction.



Both images are taken from www.dccomics.com and www.tokypop.com

EXTENDING THE UNIT CONTINUED

- *The Watchmen* by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons gives young adult readers valuable insight into the personal lives of their super heroes along with the emotional baggage that exists under the mask.
- *Great Teacher Onizuka (GTO)* created by Tohru Fujisawa focuses on an ex-gang member as he struggles to become a teacher and make a difference in his student's lives.



WORKS CITED PAGE

- Note: I've read several of these myself, though only the first couple of the series in order to summarize for the project. The only summary I actually did receive was from amazon.com on *Runaways*.



It was not death,
for I stood up,

And all the dead
lie down.



It was not
night, for all
the bells

Put out their
tongues for noon.



It was not
frost, for on
my flesh

I felt
siroccos crawl,



Nor fire,
for just my
marbled feet

Could keep a
chancel cool.



And yet it
tasted like
them all

The figures I
have seen



Set orderly
for burial

Reminded me
of mine,



As if my
life were shaven



And fitted
to a frame

And could not breathe without a key,



And 'twas like midnight, some,

When everything
that ticked has
stopped



And space
stares all
around,

Or grisly
frosts, first
autumn morns,



Repeat the
beating ground;

But most like chaos, stopless, cool,



Without a chance, or spar,

Or even a
report of land



To justify despair.