Title of lesson: Exploring Comics as a Literary Form for Reading & Writing

Suggested grade/age: High School (could be applicable to other grades)
Approximate time needed to complete lesson: Two 65 minute class periods

Learning objective(s) and significance of lesson:
I teach at a college preparatory charter high school with a focus on agriculture and science. I use this lesson with my College in the Schools Literature class in which students can earn University of Minnesota credits for completion of the course. Students in the class are juniors and seniors in the top twenty percent of their class, and very academically driven; however, this lesson could be easily adapted for students of varying grade levels and abilities.

Exploring comics/graphic novel as a genre of literature introduces students to a new literary format. This lesson also meets multiple Minnesota State Language Arts Standards within the strands of Comprehension, Literature, Composition, Research, and Media Literacy.

At the end of the lesson, students should be able to identify the differences and similarities between the graphic form and prose form of storytelling. As they identify the similarities and differences, students will also distinguish their own process for reading novels in prose and in the graphic form. Through drawing conclusions about the benefits and disadvantages of reading prose and graphic novels, students will create their own small graphic story (comic) based on a researched historical event. In all, students will also discuss and play with the idea of bias in storytelling by exploring a topic from a single point of view as Satrapi does in her novel.

In order to encourage student success with this assignment, we brainstorm topic possibilities, review MLA documentation, identify the parts/elements of a comic, look at sample comics, and discuss how to play with format and frames.

Brief summary/outline of lesson:
(What steps do you take to implement this lesson in your classroom? Where is this lesson located in the school year or unit—beginning, middle, end? Does this lesson scaffold or build to a culminating assessment or demonstration of learning?)

After reading and discussing background information on the history of Iran, students read Marjane Satrapi’s graphic novel Persepolis. (This can also be done with a chapter or single incident from the novel, or another graphic novel text that helps demonstrate the format.) As they read, students should write ideas they have about the following questions:

1. How is reading a graphic novel similar to and different from reading a novel in standard prose form.
2. What are the advantages/benefits of reading a text in this form?
3. What are the disadvantages/drawbacks of reading a text in this form?

When students return to class, discuss these questions as an entire class. Remind students to record their classmates’ ideas.
Pass out and introduce the terms/elements of a graphic novel page. Discuss and identify how Satrapi uses the elements as well as variations on these elements in other comics students have read.

Brainstorm historical events that can be captured in a series of short snapshots as well as possible points of view from which the story of each event could be told.

Review MLA documentation for a works cited page.

Students should choose one of the historical events to place in a comic. They may work independently or with a partner, but students should:
- Create a 4-8 frame comic
- Focus on a single event
- Tell the event form a single point of view/perspective
- Include at least 5 dialogue/thought bubbles
- Include at least 3 captions
- Use a variety of elements and play with the graphic novel form

**Related Resources:**

- **www.toondoo.com** An online cartoon creating site
- “Using Graphic Novels with Children & Teens” [http://www.scholastic.com/graphix/Scholastic_BoneDiscussion.pdf](http://www.scholastic.com/graphix/Scholastic_BoneDiscussion.pdf)
- “Using Comics & Graphic Novels in the Classroom” [http://www.ncte.org/magazine/archives/122031](http://www.ncte.org/magazine/archives/122031)
- Young Adult Library Services Association “Great Graphic Novels for Teens” [http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/greatgraphicnovelsforteens/gn.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/greatgraphicnovelsforteens/gn.cfm)
- Cooperative Children’s Book Center from the University of Wisconsin Madison School of Education (A variety of articles on using graphic novels in the classroom) [http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/graphicnovels.asp#lists](http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/graphicnovels.asp#lists)

**Possible extensions or adaptations for different purposes/student needs:**

**Pre-Reading:**
- Make copies of a comic and remove the text. Students can make their own predictions
- Introduce the form and parts of a comic to help students understand how to read them

**During Reading:**
- Comprehension check
- Character analysis
- Introduce a new literary device (works well with satire in Twain and Swift)
- Monitor reading
Post-Reading:
  o Design a comic to demonstrate certain elements of composition or literature

Pre-Writing:
  o Storyboard
  o Outline with symbols

Other Content Areas
  o Step-by-step guide
  o Chapter review
  o Event summary
  o Timeline
  o New perspective on a topic

For additional information, contact Erin Moore
  erinmoore24@gmail.com