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Graphic Novels as Tools for a Modern English Classroom

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Graphic Novels as Tools for a Modern English Classroom

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of The College at Brockport, State University of New York, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

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Abstract

English teachers today often face the difficult job of providing engaging lessons to a highly diverse group of students. Teachers must teach English as a New Language students, struggling readers, and even advanced readers, sometimes in the same classroom. One way to achieve this goal is to use graphic novels in the classroom. This project reviews available literature to determine what sort of success graphic novels have seen in the classroom, why graphic novels are not used more frequently in the classroom, and how graphic novels might be best utilized in the secondary English classroom. Following the literature review is a comprehensive unit plan for Art Spiegleman’s *Maus I* in a 9-10 ELA classroom.
# Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................. 5  
  Problem Statement ................................................................. 5  
  Significance of the Problem ..................................................... 8  
  Purpose ..................................................................................... 11  
  Rationale ................................................................................... 12  
  Definition of Terms ................................................................. 14  

Chapter 2: Literature Review .......................................................... 15  
  Graphic Novels and ENL Students ............................................. 16  
  Graphic Novels and the Reluctant or Struggling Reader ................. 18  
  Graphic Novels and Challenging Reading ................................... 20  
  Perception and Acceptance of Graphic Novels ............................. 23  

Chapter 3: *Maus* Unit Plan ............................................................... 26  

Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research .... 86  
  Conclusions .............................................................................. 86  
  Recommendations .................................................................... 87  

Works Cited .................................................................................. 89
Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Statement- Modern English teachers are expected to teach an increasingly inclusive group of students, making it difficult to use the same traditional texts while still motivating students to read, therefore, graphic novels should be introduced into the classroom to more effectively meet the needs of all students.

Opinions differ as to whether students of diverse needs should be placed together in a single classroom. Is it fair to students who have academic difficulties or disabilities to be expected to work alongside students who excel and may have never struggled in a subject? Is it fair to these students who excel in a subject to be placed in a classroom with students who may need extra time and assistance on a topic that these students may already have mastered? Opponents of inclusion and mainstreaming will argue vehemently against both situations, but the reality is that more and more classrooms of this sort are being organized in schools around the country. The only question that truly remains is whether or not teachers will be prepared to meet the needs of such a wide variety of students.

One area where this issue has the potential to cause the most difficulty is in the secondary English classroom. As anyone who has set foot in an English classroom recently can probably attest, many of the same texts that were taught decades ago are still being taught in classrooms today. The argument for such a lack of change in the curriculum has long been that these texts are classics, timeless masterpieces of art to which everyone should be exposed. Students need to read and understand the in-depth symbolism in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* or the masterful wordplay in any of William Shakespeare’s dramas. At least that’s the idea. The problem with such an idea is two-fold. First, in an inclusive classroom, teaching only such incredibly complex texts without some sort of serious aid is certainly going to leave some
students behind. The other issue, of course, is that even when teachers teach such texts, many students are simply not reading them.

Inclusive classrooms have been increasingly popular in countries around the world for a number of years (Monson, Ewing & Kwoka 114). Many governments have put into place laws and guidelines to foster these practices, pushing for students with special needs to be more regularly included in classrooms with their general education peers. Though this may seem like a simple enough issue for teachers, some might argue that putting a special education teacher in the room beside a general education teacher would solve the problem, what some people forget to take into account about inclusive classrooms is that inclusivity often involves bringing gifted students into the same environment as well. At this point, teachers might be trying to teach to students who are learning disabled, students who are traditionally general education students, and students who have progressed academically beyond any of the other students in the room. This being the case, it’s easy to understand why many of the traditional texts taught in the English classroom might make this a difficult prospect.

Considering the problem of why students may not be reading for class, there is always the highly researched area of reading motivation. According to Jenna Cambria and John T. Guthrie, there are multiple facets behind the motivation that students may or may not feel towards reading. They argue that motivation is made up of three parts, a student’s interest in reading, a student’s confidence as a reader, and a student’s dedication. Each of these three parts feed into each other, so that if a student is a confident reader, for example, they are more likely to be interested in reading (Cambria & Guthrie 16). This presents a problem in a classroom where classics and traditional texts are the primary focus, particularly if the classroom is diverse and inclusive. For a student who already comes into a classroom with some kind of learning or
reading difficulty, whether these students are ELL students, IEP students, or just struggling readers, classical texts are not always the best option to incite reading motivation. First, novel length writing that was created a century ago is probably not on the top of a modern student’s interest list. Though there are certainly some students who enjoy reading the classics, at first glance these texts seem to have little relevance to the lives of modern students, and a struggling reader is not likely to need more than a first glance to begin to check out from such a book. Second, such classical texts are often highly complex in one way or another, pushing students who do not feel confident in their reading abilities to be even less motivated to try. Either the writing itself is full of difficult language and sentence structure or the themes and symbolism are highly complex, leaving a sometimes frightening first impression on many young readers. Though the complexity of a text may not greatly affect a student’s determination to succeed, if interest and confidence are lacking, the complexity and lack of relevance in traditional texts might certainly be enough to sap the motivation of many students.

All of this may still not seem to be an overly alarming trend in education, as there are plenty of alternative sources available for students to read. The discerning teacher might note that students read throughout the day. They read messages from their friends and posts on social media every day. Some of them even read the occasional news article online, and a creative teacher can probably think of plenty of ways to include such diverse forms of reading in the classroom. Using alternative forms of text in the classroom can certainly help to engage readers, but according to studies this is not enough to help students truly expand their reading skills. Suzanne Mol and Adrian Bus explore this idea in a 2011 study, in which they note that “print exposure as inferred from checklists that assess familiarity with book titles and authors or magazines appears to be an important correlate of reading comprehension and technical reading
and spelling skill development” (285). In other words, students need to be exposed to a certain amount of print in order to expand their comprehension abilities. Focusing too heavily on shorter or less complex writing might not have the same positive affect on students’ abilities as focusing on those longer, multi-faceted texts.

Students need to be exposed to texts of a certain complexity in order to grow, but in the diverse classrooms that many teachers are currently experiencing, this can be a difficult endeavor. Teachers need to understand that there are texts out there that can bridge the gap between complexity and accessibility, allowing as many students as possible to have access to a curriculum that is both engaging and meaningful. Students may not always be interested in what they read, but if they begin to understand that there are texts out there that are rich with meaning but still very readable, they may at least approach the reading with an open enough mind to give it a chance, and they may find that their interest will grow with time. Graphic novels are one way to begin to solve these problem.

**Significance of the Problem**

As previously discussed, English classrooms today are often still expected to utilize the same traditional texts that were taught in classrooms decades ago. Many of these traditional texts do very little to motivate modern readers to actually engage in the reading they are given in class. As there is a correlation between increased print exposure and increased reading comprehension (Mol & Bus 285), this suggests that students who are less motivated to read will eventually have lower reading comprehension than their more motivated counterparts. This is so dangerous because we live in a society where reading comprehension is more than an important skill. It is necessary to survive and thrive in our society. People need to be able to read and understand what they have read in just about any walk of life. If students want to succeed in college they
need to have fairly high reading comprehension skills. The same goes for the workplace. Even students who plan to go into fields that require less extensive education will probably need to be able to read and understand direction, plans, or other documents that are relevant to the job. Though not everyone agrees that the purpose of school is solely to prepare students for the workforce or college, most people would probably agree that this is at least a significant part of a student’s education. If students are not being motivated to read and engage in meaningful texts in the classroom, then they could be negatively affected in the post-secondary world.

The lack of motivation that students feel towards reading might seem like a small problem, an issue that only truly affects the teachers who are attempting to teach or even the student who chooses not to do the assigned work, but in reality, sinking reading abilities are an international issue. According to researchers, “Over the last years, in many countries worldwide, there has been a decline in the reading skills of upper secondary school students, and their ability to read and understand advanced literature” (Papadima-Sophocleous 118). Clearly this is not just an issue of lazy teenagers or bad teachers. Reading abilities throughout the world are dropping as we move through an era where the lives of today’s students are perhaps more different from their parents’ lives than in any previous generation. Students all over the world are growing up surrounded by immersive technology, living in a world that has never been more easily accessible and readily connected. It seems odd then that teachers are still expected to teach the same concepts and stories that were taught to them decades ago. Perhaps this failure to adjust to the new world we are living in is part of the problem that modern students are facing when approaching reading in the classroom. The world has changed much more quickly than the curriculum in our schools, sometimes leaving students caught in the midst.
Though the previous study detailed worldwide reading habits, a 2007 study by the National Endowment for the Arts found even more alarming information about American readers. According to their study, “Nearly half of all Americans ages 18 to 24 read no books for pleasure” (NEA 7). Not only are young people not feeling motivated to read in school, many are not feeling any motivation to read anything outside of school work. It’s true that this particular group is older than the average high school students and may have more going on in their lives that prevents reading for pleasure, but according to the same study, even middle and high school aged students have the same issue. The study cites the fact that “the percentage of 17-year-olds who read nothing at all for pleasure has doubled over a 20-year period” (NEA 7). Even younger students suffer from a lack of pleasure reading, as “less than one-third of 13-year-olds are daily readers” (NEA 7). Not only are young people today spending very little time reading for pleasure, the number of students who never read for pleasure has grown substantially in the past couple of decades. Clearly this is an issue that is related to some change in the world around us. What all of this translates to is the fact that students are simply not finding reasons to read, even to voluntarily read. If students cannot be bothered to read for their own pleasure, it seems even less likely that they will find a reason to read just because their teacher is asking them to do so.

When students are not reading for pleasure and not reading in school, their reading abilities naturally suffer. This carries over into their lives beyond school which means that as a society we have a large number of students moving on into positions that help our society function who are not entirely capable or working to the extent they are expected to. When considering reading comprehension, according to a 2006 poll of American businesses and employers, “38.4 percent of employer respondents report high school graduate entrants as “deficient.” Nearly two-thirds of respondents (62.5 percent) say Reading Comprehension is
“very important” for high school graduate entrants’ success in the workforce” (Casner-Lotto 13). Clearly, even our students who do not continue on to college still need to have adequate reading comprehension skills in order to succeed at work. Unfortunately, a large percentage of our students are not leaving school with these skills, at least according to employers. Not only are students who lack reading motivation hurting themselves while in school, they are making it difficult for themselves to get jobs, and they are contributing to the societal issue of a workforce that cannot read with enough proficiency to truly succeed at their jobs. Something needs to be done in schools, particularly in the English classroom, to make sure that this is not a continuing issue.

**Purpose**

In a time where students are already feeling disconnected from traditional reading, they are also being grouped into classrooms that are more diverse than ever. This presents quite the set of obstacles for even the most flexible of secondary English teachers. Taking a class full of students at varying academic levels with varying levels of motivation towards reading and trying to make an engaging series of lessons is no small task. Using graphic novels in the classroom is a small step towards creating a better learning environment for such students. Teachers certainly do not need to switch out every traditional text in favor of graphic novels, but even using one in place of a more traditional text might give students the interest or confidence they need to begin to feel motivation and engagement when picking up a book. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated later, graphic novels give English teachers the adaptability they need in order to meet the needs of a very wide swath of students. Graphic novels are certainly not a cure all for every issue that will arise in terms of diversity or ability, but they are an excellent place to begin.
In order to teach a graphic novel in the classroom, there is quite a lot of groundwork that needs to be covered. This may be one of the reasons that more teachers have not adopted such practices at this point. For most of their lives students have been taught to read and analyze written text, whether or not they excel at it. Many students will come into a unit on a graphic novel with very little idea how to interpret the images they are seeing or even how to properly read it. Lesson plans detailing the basics of reading and interpreting a graphic novel will be necessary in the beginning of any graphic novel unit. It is incredibly important that these plans be in place before students are expected to do any reading from a graphic novel, as they may not even know how to decide in what order to view the images and read the text. As a graphic novel unit goes on, plans need to be created to view and analyze both the visuals of the novel and the written portion, exploring how the two work together to give the reader a more effective idea of the author’s intent. Plans also need to include some activities that allow students to have a certain amount of flexibility in their responses and creations, so as to be adaptive for students at higher and lower ability levels. Such lesson plans can be fairly time consuming to create, especially for a teacher who has little or no experience with graphic novels, but if done well such plans can be an excellent way to meet the needs of almost any student in the room.

Rationale

Students today are not always exposed to the same amount of text that students were even a decade ago. As a result, students’ collective desire to read as well as their ability to read well has begun to drop. Despite this shift, students will still grow up to live and work in a world that highly values people who can read well, and that ultimately demands some level of reading ability from just about everyone. If students can be motivated to read and engage in significant texts in the classroom, they may feel more motivated to read once they are outside of school as
well. Graphic novels have the ability to engage students, an implicit sort of motivation. Engaging students in a single text may seem insignificant, but it can ultimately make a big difference in terms of their success in and out of high school.

Schools are not becoming less inclusive any time soon, nor should they have to. Using graphic novels is one form of engaging schoolwork that English teachers can use to make their classrooms more readily inclusive and more engaging for all of their students. In an increasingly visual world it also seems very rational that students should be learning how to interpret and analyze visuals alongside text. If students are going to remain immersed in technology, then they should understand the nature of the images that surround them while online. Graphic novels give teachers the ability to do all of this more readily and more effectively than they might with traditional texts.
Definition of Terms

Captions- contain information about a scene or character

Dialog Balloons- contain communication between/among characters

Engagement- When students feel interested, passionate, and involved with a topic, lesson, or activity happening in the classroom.

Graphic Novels- A novel length text written in the format of a comic. These texts differ from comics in that graphic novels usually present in-depth themes and symbolism over the course of a single, unified, book-length story.

Gutters -space between panels

Inclusive Classroom- A classroom that includes both students with special needs and students who are traditionally general education students.

Panels- squares or rectangles in a graphic novel or comic that contain a single scene

Reading Motivation- A student’s interest, confidence, and determination towards reading both inside and outside of school.

Secondary Classroom- A middle or high school classroom.

Sound Effects- visual sound clues i.e.. Wonk! Pow!

Thought Balloons- contain a character’s thoughts
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In secondary English classrooms today, too often students are coming to class feeling disengaged and uninterested. Some of these students are struggling or reluctant readers, those students who dread picking up a book or who happily inform teachers that they just do not read. Some of these students are part of the growing English as a new language (ENL) group, students who are doing the best they can reading a language in which they are not yet fully competent. Another group of these students, however, suffer from a different problem entirely. Some students come to English class with a love of reading, yet still leave the room feeling uninspired or even unchallenged. All of these are issues that need to be addressed, and that have been studied and responded to with a wide variety of essays, articles, and solutions. Still, the disconnect between students and reading remains.

If educators hope to see students become more engaged in reading and English class, there are several things we need to do. We need to identify the reasons that so many students feel so disengaged with English class or any sort of reading they are meant to take part in. Is it a lack of support from families, a need for more media friendly instruction, or simply a lack of motivation that keeps students from deeply engaging with reading? Another issue that educators need to consider is how to best address this growing disinterest in reading. How can educators change their curriculum and instruction to meet the changing needs of this generation of students? Is the literature we are expecting the technology generation to read too complex or not complex enough? Is it too old-fashioned and irrelevant? Does it need something more to draw students in?

Teachers and researchers have attempted to answer all of these questions and more with varying success. One response to this problem that some teachers have decided to implement is
the use of graphic novels in the classroom. Though graphic novels do not always seem to fit in with everyone’s idea of what should be taught in a secondary English class, perhaps that is a count in the favor of such literature. Many studies and articles have already argued for the use of graphic novels in motivating the reluctant reader and connecting with the ENL student. A few have even taken to explaining the more complex uses of a graphic novel for those students who crave a more challenging reading experience. Perhaps the task that really needs doing is finding a way to make graphic novels work for students of all levels in a classroom, the reluctant and the ready to learn.

**Graphic Novels and ENL Students**

One of the areas in which experts have readily identified the most relevance and benefit for graphic novel use is with students who are learning English as a new language. There are many reasons that researchers believe graphic novels can have positive effects on the reading motivation and skills of English as a new language learners (ENLs). One theory cites the idea that the visual aspects of graphic novels can assist ENL students with certain aspects of language acquisition. According to Phillip Crawford, “Graphic novels can also help improve language and literacy development, including second language learners; the illustrations provide valuable contextual clues to the meaning of the written narrative” (26). For students who are already struggling to understand an entirely new language, visual aids can be an effective tool to help them make sense of the words. Even if there is an unfamiliar word or two in the captions or speech bubbles of a graphic novel, students can still make sense of the words by studying the graphics accompanying the written text. This way, students can not only begin to further understand what is happening in the text, but they can increase their vocabulary acquisition in their new language.
There are even simpler reasons to believe that graphic novels can benefit ENL students. Even without worrying specifically about vocabulary acquisition, English class can be difficult for ENL students as they are expected to read written texts that are complex even for students who were born speaking English. Christian W. Chun argues, “ELL students often face formidable barriers in a written text without any accompanying visual context” (146). For a student who has only been speaking English for a few years to go into texts such as F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* or William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies* without some form of visual accompaniment is a task that would be very difficult in the least. Imagine how much more they could get out of a graphic novelization of such a work, providing significant, sequential images along with the words. This being the case, students can get just as much out of original graphic novels as well. Art Spiegelman’s *Maus*, a story detailing the experiences of Vladek Spiegelman in Nazi controlled Poland, is an often discussed example of a complex and exemplary original graphic novel. Chun specifically discusses this book and its potential for ENL students, writing, “a graphic novel like *Maus* can engage students’ attention and activate their imagination through the author’s use of multimodalities in presenting visually arresting narratives that feature the multilayered emotions and contradictions of the characters” (147). Though it may seem simple to suggest that looking at pictures of characters experiencing a story can deeply aid understanding, this is a fact that is all too often overlooked by those who oppose the use of graphic novels in the classroom. Even for ENL students who have not yet reached a point where they are learning individual words through visual context clues, the images provide a consistent means of engaging such students and drawing them into a story that might otherwise make very little sense. It is not only the written word that contributes to meaning in a text but the visual world that is created by such words.
Graphic Novels and the Reluctant or Struggling Reader

Perhaps the most frequently researched method of utilizing graphic novels in the classroom is in order to engage the reluctant reader. There are a number of articles, essays, and books that take on this subject, perhaps because in the modern classroom, beside advanced technology, traditional texts begin to seem outdated to all involved. Students come into the classroom with cell phones and other devices that would have seemed impossible a couple of decades ago, yet they are often still required to learn and read the same material their parents were. Askin H. Yildrim discusses this disconnect between the classroom and the lives of students, writing, “Students are surrounded with texts accompanied by images in every inch of their lives. Today, they are keen users of smart phones, ipads, computers and the internet, all of which have a role in reshaping the learning habits of our age” (125). Modern students cannot be expected to learn and understand the world in the exact same way as students did decades ago. Today’s students have grown up in an environment where they are constantly surrounded by rich texts; images, videos, and links always hanging in the sidebars or just a touch away. As this is the case, it’s no wonder that students are coming in to English class and feeling disengaged with reading. Graphic novels provide a reading environment that is closer than traditional novels to the rich digital environment that students know so well.

As today’s students are not always easily engaged by traditional texts, graphic novels provide a number of ways to bridge this gap. One of the simplest and perhaps most overlooked ways to integrate graphic novels is to integrate one of the many graphic novelizations of a classic text. Yildrim argues that such adaptations might be very beneficial to the reluctant reader. He writes, “Graphic novels give the opportunity to our students to get engaged in complex works of literature that would otherwise be impossible for them to read with their current proficiency
level. There are graphic versions of the works of Shakespeare, Franz Kafka and Jane Austen, whose text-only versions are almost impossible to cope with” (126). Though some teachers might argue that graphic versions of a classic are not as worthwhile as the originals, it can’t be ignored that readers who come to classics from a lower level or who are simply uninterested in the originals might find something comprehensible and worthwhile in the graphic version. This could open them up to potentially reading the original version, or to at least take on the themes and symbols of the original, even if every aspect of the book is not identical to the original.

Though not everyone agrees that graphic novels are worthwhile for use in the classroom, there are occasionally benefits to the negative attitudes some people have towards such literature. Rocco Versaci argues that the untraditional format of graphic novels can make students more willing to engage in class. He writes, “Comic books invite students to participate meaningfully in a classroom discussion precisely because most of them are not already convinced of their literary value. If asked to critically evaluate a comic book, students might be much more forthcoming with their ideas and opinions than in a discussion of a more "traditional" literary work” (66). Some students might look at literary classics as something that requires a deeper level of thought than they believe they are willing or capable of giving. They might see traditional books as intimidating, and they might not have anyone to tell them they do not need to be so. The fact that many people do not see graphic novels as part of the literary canon can work in their favor, as students might not be so intimidated by these books and may choose to take a greater part in classroom activities.

In a study based in a 5th and 6th grade environment, students who were labelled as struggling or reluctant readers engaged in an afterschool program reading with graphic novels. The researchers found that overall the program was successful. Through the study the researchers
noted, “Participants described as reluctant readers identified this work as fun. In this classroom context, particular students discovered a love of reading and a change in attitude towards accessing support to improve their reading skills” (Sloboda, Brenna, and Kosowan-Kirk 19). Of all the goals teachers might aim for while working with reluctant readers, this seems to be one of the most worthwhile possible outcomes. Seeing children who previously disliked reading learn to find a love for at least part of it is a goal that not every teacher gets to accomplish. This was such a successful program that one student was even noted for being “asked to stop reading” (19) and listen to directions, she was so engrossed with her book. This same study continued to note other positive benefits to the students’ perceptions of and feelings towards reading as they read graphic novels. Students began to look at the whole task of reading as something more than a painful obstacle, even if they still recognized it as challenging. The authors noted, “As students’ focus on the interpretation of visuals increased, word work became more of a creative problem solving activity, not just a science previously unattainable” (Sloboda, Brenna, and Kosowan-Kirk 19). Graphics allowed the students to focus on figuring out what the words meant, but with a bit of guidance they would not have had in a more traditional sort of novel. This led students to understand that reading comprehension was within their grasp if they were willing to put in some thought with the aid of visuals. Even though this study focused on a young group of students, the findings still suggest that reluctant and struggling readers can truly benefit from a little bit of work with graphic novels.

**Graphic Novels and Challenging Reading**

Though so many educators focus on the students who are most obviously lacking in the area of reading, those who are just learning English and those who read reluctantly, these are not the only students who can benefit from reading graphic novels in school. Any student can reap
the benefits of such teaching methods, including some of the highest level readers. High level readers are often in dire need of a greater challenge in the classroom, especially if they are in a general education room with students who are working below their level. Graphic novels can be so beneficial for such a classroom because they can simultaneously engage the more reluctant readers while pushing these higher level students to use new skills or delve more deeply into the skills they already have. For example, one of the primary benefits of the graphic novel for students who need a challenge is that they present their content through multiple formats. There is both a written piece and a substantial visual piece, leaving plenty of content to be analyzed and evaluated by readers. According to Christine Draper and Michelle Reidel, graphic novels provide significant content for analysis that traditional texts do not. One option is to have students choose one panel to consider. Draper and Reidel write, “Selecting one panel to analyze provides opportunities for students to carefully consider the author’s intent and/or purpose by identifying how images and text are utilized to position the reader. . . To analyze a panel, readers must not only consider what is included in the images and text but what may be missing” (6). Though this is an activity that could be achieved in some way with traditional texts, it seems less practical to ask students to analyze written word alone for missing opportunities than it is to ask students to consider two forms of text brought together and imagine what else could have been done. Students can also study more than just a single panel. Instead of just studying the structure of a sentence, students can study the structure of language when combined with the structure of the accompanying images. The combination of the two gives students not only words to consider but the way the words interact with the provided graphics to create new understandings of the text. “To further understand the power behind the illustrations, it is important to look at the layout and presentation of content in the panels. By analyzing the voices or participants that are present and
in the forefront or questioning those that are missing, students can determine the central theme the illustrator is trying to make and build context around a pivotal scene” (Draper and Reidel 6). This allows readers to not only examine the intended tone and themes of the author but also those of the illustrator, allowing them to compare the two and decide if and why they differ in their apparent messages. This adds an entire new layer to analysis of a book.

Before students can even begin to closely analyze a graphic novel, however, they must learn an entirely new set of vocabulary in order to properly discuss and evaluate such literature. Lisa Ciecierski discusses this idea, writing, “Graphic novels are much more complex than what meets the eye. Authors use different types of balloons to show dialogue, thought, sound-effects, staging, and information. Being cognizant of this as a reader is important to fully understand what type of interaction and actions are taking place” (42). It’s not enough to simply hand students a graphic novel and ask them to read it. For students who have little or no experience with comics or graphic novels, such literature might at first make very little sense. Students need to be taught everything from the proper order in which to read the panels to what a panel actually is. They need to understand the difference between character dialogue and thought, and they need to learn a variety of other terms as well. On top of this, they need to be taught how to understand the way each of the aspects of a graphic novel work together to form a coherent whole. If they do not understand that the space surrounding the graphics, called the gutter, can be just as important to the overall meaning of the novel as the images within the panels, they may be missing out on important ideas from the author or illustrator. All of this provides yet another layer of complexity for the reader who needs a challenge. Some people might argue that all of this only makes the lives of the already reluctant readers even more difficult, but according to Ciecierski, readers will not feel fatigue with this new form because, “Even though they are
engaged in sophisticated reading behaviors, they feel as if they are reading a comic book” (42).

Again, the seemingly welcome format of such books invites a variety of readers to participate. These added steps to reading and understanding a graphic novel can serve to challenge high level readers while still engaging the reluctant reader.

Not only do readers need to know the terms that are specifically associated with comics and graphic novels, they are also expected to be somewhat informed on the specifics of certain other visual art forms as well. In “Altering Perspectives: How the Implied Reader Invites Us to Rethink the Difficulty of Graphic Novels,” Sean Connors notes this distinction of graphic novels, listing some of the many visual art standards readers of graphic novels need to be familiar with. He writes, “[Graphic novels] assume familiarity on the reader’s part with artistic conventions such as perspective, shading . . . color, and so forth. Moreover, graphic novels employ cinematic conventions: long shots establish setting and mood . . . and changing camera angles convey power relationships between readers and represented characters and objects” (34). Though readers can certainly understand the general meaning and ideas from a graphic novel without being closely acquainted with film or art studies, these concepts represent yet another layer that students looking for a greater challenge can study when working with graphic novels in the classroom. Art and film can be incorporated and even studied side-by-side as students read through an original story or a detailing of historical events.

**Perception and Acceptance of Graphic Novels**

By all accounts, graphic novels are taking the world of literature by storm, and have been for a number of years. When interviewed about trends in children’s literature in particular, librarians often cite this phenomenon (S. Connors 5). Despite this fact, graphic novels are too rarely utilized in the classroom, and are even more rare in the secondary classroom than the
elementary. Perhaps this is due to the fact that not everyone thinks highly of graphic novels. According to Paula Griffith, a school librarian and English teacher, “Some teachers and librarians do not consider graphic novels to be literature. As a secondary English teacher with a background in literature, I did not consider them for classroom use until I noticed their popularity among students; however, popularity alone is not enough for inclusion in the classroom” (182). If teachers and librarians do not consider graphic novels to be valid forms of complex reading, it is no wonder that the graphic novel has not become a more prevalent form of literature in the high school setting. Secondary English classes are often heavily focused on classic literature and are notorious for ignoring anything that does not fall within the established literary canon. Unfortunately, the negative attitudes of teachers and other professionals in the field can affect more than just their own students.

As not everyone is willing to recognize or utilize graphic novels as the engaging tools they could be, many students are missing valuable resources. Though evidence suggests a number of uses for graphic novels in the classroom, some people still do not believe they are legitimate teaching tools, a fact that can have a ripple effect on those around them. In an article detailing the experiences of preservice teachers, J. Spencer Clark notes that while many preservice teachers think graphic novels are useful tools, they are afraid to use them. Clark writes, “When the preservice teachers were asked if they would use graphic novels in their future classrooms, they all said that they wanted to use them; however, they felt that they would not be able to use them because of professional constraints. The preservice teachers were worried about professional acceptance at two different levels of interest: community and school” (42). In other words, new educators were so worried about negative attitudes towards graphic novels that they believed they would not use such a potentially beneficial tool at all, even though they wanted to.
Teachers in this article were worried that parents and families would not look at graphic novels as educationally valid, but also that their fellow educators would look at their classes as easier and less valid if they decided to teach using these tools (Clark 43). Negative attitudes towards graphic novels are so prevalent in our society that they are driving teachers away from reading material that could help their students become better and more motivated readers. This is a trend that needs to change for the potential good of all involved.

Though there is much evidence suggesting the potential of graphic novels for struggling and reluctant readers, the evidence is not quite as well recognized and researched in some other areas. There are certainly some articles suggesting that graphic novels can be used as complex tools to teach even students who need a challenge. Teachers and researchers point to the fact that a knowledge of art or film history could be beneficial for such students, or even that simply knowing about the structure of a graphic novel can be a resource for students who need an extra bit of challenge. What is not so easy to find are authors actually detailing ways to go about teaching or using any of these details. It is important to begin to put together resources detailing how to best use graphic novels for a wide variety of students, not just for those who need a challenge and not just for those who dislike traditional reading, but for as many of the students in a typical classroom as possible. In an age where highly inclusive classrooms are becoming more and more common, teachers need to find ways to use resources that can reasonably relate to and engage an incredibly wide range of readers. Graphic novels might be just the resource that modern teachers need.
Chapter 3: Maus Lesson Plan

Lesson 1- The Basics of Graphic Novels

Introduction

This lesson is designed to be the start of a unit teaching 9-10 students how to read graphic novels as they work through Art Spigelman’s Maus I. Prior to the beginning of this unit, the class should have reviewed essential information regarding World War II and the Holocaust, as these events are integral to the story and characters in Maus.

Goals

Students will be able to identify essential parts of a graphic novel.

Students will be able to identify the sequence in which they should read the parts of a graphic novel.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Resources and Materials

“How To Read A Graphic Novel” Slides

A class set of Maus I books

Anticipatory Set

As a class we will talk about the term “graphic novel.” We will discuss what a graphic novel is and how it is similar to or different from a comic.

Direct Instruction

As a class, we will discuss the essential parts of a graphic novel as well as how to actually read a graphic novel. Many students may not have read a comic or graphic novel before and will be unfamiliar with the terms for various parts of a graphic novel and the actual sequence in which to read a graphic novel.

Guided Practice

Students will show their understanding of how to read a graphic novel by labelling the parts of a graphic novel and the sequence in which to read a graphic novel on a page provided.

Closure

The teacher will pass out Maus I books to the class.
Independent Practice

Students will practice the basics of reading a graphic novel by reading the prologue of *Maus I.*
Some Graphic Novel Basics

• Graphic novels use text and pictures to present information

• Graphic novels use the same format as comic books

• Graphic Novels differ from comics in that they usually contain stand-alone stories with complex plots

• For more information on graphic novels, visit: Graphic Novels in Middle & High School Classrooms
Parts of a Graphic Novel

A graphic novel consists of:

cover and inside pages
A Graphic Novel Page

Pages consist of a variety of elements

- **Panels** - squares or rectangles that contain a single scene
- **Gutters** - space between panels
- **Dialog Balloons** - contain communication between/among characters
- **Thought Balloons** - contain a character’s thoughts
- **Captions** - contain information about a scene or character
- **Sound Effects** - visual sound clues i.e.. Wonk! Pow!
How to Read a Graphic Novel Page

Graphic novels are read left to right, just like traditional texts.
Dialog Balloons

dialog balloons are read left to right or top to bottom as is appropriate.
Sometimes it can get a little more complicated…
But the basic left to right rule still applies to panels.
and dialog balloons as well
Lesson 2- Review and Maus Essentials

Goals

Students will be able to identify character traits of the primary protagonists introduced in the prologue.

Students will be able to identify one way that the graphics of the novel add to their understanding of the text.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

Resources and Materials

A class set of Maus books

Anticipatory Set

As a class we will briefly review the important graphic novel terms from the previous class period.

Direct Instruction

The teacher will pass out a worksheet to guide discussion of the prologue of Maus. As a class, students will discuss what they earned about the characters and relationships of the story so far, filling out the worksheet together as the prologue is discussed. This will serve as a model for future chapters, where students will have a similar worksheet to fill out to guide them through the chapters.

Guided Practice

Students will work on the Maus character sheet, filling in what information they have from the prologue about Artie and Vladek. This sheet will stay with them through the novel in order to help them remember the important characters and track them through the novel. We will come together as a class to collect our knowledge and make sure everyone has all of the important information.

Closure

The teacher will assign the reading that is due in two class periods. When assigning the reading, the teacher should make sure to take a few moments to preview some essential pieces of information that will help the students understand what is happening in Maus. Primarily, the sudden and frequent time jumps in the novel can be confusing if a student is not actively
expecting and trying to identify them. Briefly discussing the fact that students will be encountering two timelines and possibly explaining that the reader is seeing Artie visiting his father and getting his story, which is shown in flashbacks, might make the reading more accessible for students who are new to the graphic novel genre.

**Independent Practice**

Students will be expected to read chapter 1 of *Maus I* not for class two periods from now. (If they have class every day and this is Tuesday, chapter 1 will be due Thursday in class.) They will also be expected to complete the chapter 1 guide sheet.
1. Explain how Artie and his father interact in this story. Be specific.

2. What does the reader therefore learn about the family's relationship in this section?

3. How does the graphic text (the visual) help you understand the text? Give a specific example and explain.

4. Using your prior knowledge of the events of the Holocaust, what do you suppose Artie's dad meant in the last frame of the prologue?

Characterize Artie:

*  

*  

Characterize Vladek (Artie's Dad):

*  

*
Name                      Date

Maus I Characters

Artie Spiegelman

Traits:

Relationships:

Major Actions:

Vladek Spiegelman

Traits:

Relationships:

Major Actions:

Anja Spiegelman

Traits:

Relationships:

Major Actions:
Mala Spiegelman

Traits:

Relationships:

Major Actions:

Other characters to know:

Lucia-
Richieu-
Mr. Zylberberg-
Tosha-
Mr. Illzecki-
Haskel, Miloch, and Pesach-
Mrs. Motonowa-
Maus I: My Father Bleeds History: “The Sheik”  Name ___________________

1. Explain the relationship between Vladek (Artie's Dad) and Maia. Support with textual evidence.


4. Characterize Anja:

Lesson 3- Analyzing Images Through WWII era Propaganda

Introduction

Prior to this lesson students should already have a basic understanding of the Nazis and their goals. This lesson will expand upon that knowledge, but is focused primarily on using content that is relevant to Maus in order to practice analyzing images.

Goals

Students will be able to complete a basic analysis of an image.

Students will be able to use their image analysis to come up with an interpretation of an image.

Students will understand some of the techniques and purposes of WWII propaganda.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Resources and Materials

Maus books

Print copies of WWII propaganda

Anticipatory Set

As a class, we will discuss the meaning of the term “propaganda.” Students will brainstorm with a partner to think of examples of where they have seen or heard of propaganda being used. After a few minutes of brainstorming, students will share out with the class.

Direct Instruction

As a class, we will look over a piece of famous propaganda together. With input from the students on what parts of the image they think are important to note, the teacher will model how to begin analyzing and eventually interpreting an image. The teacher will point out important details to look at such as colors, shading, position of objects, and potential symbols in the image.

Guided Practice

Students will break into small groups to practice analyzing images through WWII propaganda. To begin, each group will be given one piece of WWII propaganda to look over together. They will be asked to answer several questions about what they observe in the image, eventually trying
to come to a conclusion about the purpose and intended meaning of the piece. After about 5-8 minutes, students will trade their piece of propaganda with another group and begin the process over again. The teacher may want to give some guidance for each piece of propaganda, such as which country developed it or any relevant translations, depending on the abilities of the class.

Closure

After each group has finished interpreting each piece of propaganda we will come together as a class to discuss the interpretations that the groups came up with. The teacher will clarify any misconceptions and through this review will remodel some of the steps of analyzing and interpreting images. To end the period, the teacher will collect the group work and remind the students to read chapter 1 of *Maus* for next class.

Independent Practice

Students will complete chapter 1 and the chapter 1 guide for the next class period.
A piece of Nazi propaganda
American WWII Propaganda
German Propaganda- “Long live Germany!”
American WWII Propaganda
Group Members _____________________________________________________________

Poster # 1 _____________________

1. What can you observe? Describe the poster as if I could not see it.

2. What are the recognizable symbols in the poster? (These could be specific images, people, colors, or things).

3. Why might these symbols be important to this specific poster?

4. Based on what you see and who created this poster, what message or idea might the creators of the poster be trying to get across?

Poster # 2 _____________________

1. What can you observe? Describe the poster as if I could not see it.

2. What are the recognizable symbols in the poster? (These could be specific images, people, colors, or things).
3. Why might these symbols be important to this specific poster?

4. Based on what you see and who created this poster, what message or idea might the creators of the poster be trying to get across?

Poster # 3 _____________________

1. What can you observe? Describe the poster as if I could not see it.

2. What are the recognizable symbols in the poster? (These could be specific images, people, colors, or things).

3. Why might these symbols be important to this specific poster?

4. Based on what you see and who created this poster, what message or idea might the creators of the poster be trying to get across?

Poster # 4 _____________________

1. What can you observe? Describe the poster as if I could not see it.
2. What are the recognizable symbols in the poster? (These could be specific images, people, colors, or things).

3. Why might these symbols be important to this specific poster?

4. Based on what you see and who created this poster, what message or idea might the creators of the poster be trying to get across?
Lesson 4- Maus I Essential Characters and Story So Far

Introduction

This lesson focuses on further cementing the characters in the minds of students, as well as beginning to understand the different time periods in which the novel takes place.

Goals

Students will be able to identify important panels within a section of a graphic novel and discuss why they are important.

Students will be able to differentiate between the two timelines in *Maus*.

Students will be able to characterize all five of the major characters in *Maus I*.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10

By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

Resources and Materials

Maus books

Anticipatory Set

Students will complete a simple bell quiz asking them to choose one panel from chapter 1 that stood out to them and explain what specifically they noticed. As they complete this activity, the teacher will come around and check the chapter 1 guide worksheet.

Direct Instruction

The teacher will guide students through a discussion of the important events and information from chapter 1 of *Maus*. The guide the students completed for homework can be a good jumping off point for discussion, as students who failed to complete it can fill it in and learn enough to keep up with future conversation, while other students can fix their own sheets or add new information. After discussing the chapter, students will also update their character sheets with new and relevant information.
After completing the discussion of chapter 1, the teacher will ask students to take out two blank sheets of paper. The class will begin to put together two timelines in order to help students both to differentiate between the two distinct story lines of *Maus*, and to help them remember what happened to which characters when. The teacher will create two timelines either on a poster at the front of the room or on a Smartboard where it can be saved, allowing it to be updated in the future. The teacher will ask students to list the important events in one timeline so far and then in the other, guiding and correcting the order of events if necessary. Students will add the events to their own personal timelines and keep these timelines until the end of the novel.

**Guided Practice**

With any time remaining to the class, students will begin reading chapter 2 of *Maus*.

**Closure**

As students read chapter 2, the teacher will pass out chapter 2 guide worksheets and will check to make sure all students have filled in their timelines.

**Independent Practice**

Students will complete chapter 2 and the chapter 2 guide for next class.
Choose one panel from chapter 1 of *Maus* that stood out to you.

Page # __________

Describe what is happening in the panel

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Why did this panel stand out to you?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Name ____________________________________________                        Date ____________

Choose one panel from chapter 1 of *Maus* that stood out to you.

Page # __________

Describe what is happening in the panel

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Why did this panel stand out to you?

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Name ____________________________________________                        Date ____________
MAUS I: My Father Bleeds History: "The Honeymoon"
Name __________________________________

Because it is a graphic novel, the reader is able to discern and understand more about the characters, the settings, the conflicts, emotions and tensions presented in the novel than if it was written in standard prose. Discuss 3 understandings, conclusions, or emotions that were enhanced by the graphic text that might have not have been able to be discerned in standard prose.

1. Page #___________
Describe the graphic in detail:
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
Discuss the effect on the reader:
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

2. page #
___________
Describe the graphic in detail:
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
Discuss the effect on the reader:
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

3. Page #

Describe the graphic in detail:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Discuss the effect on the reader:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Lesson 5- Chapters 2-3

Introduction

As the class will be approaching the midway point in *Maus*, where chapters get longer and full of many events happening in a short time, this class period will focus on continuing to cement students’ understanding of events so far, while also moving them into the more complex part of the book.

Goals

Students will be able to identify important events from chapter 2.

Students will be able to understand the events of *Maus I* so far.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10

By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

Resources and Materials

*Maus* books

Anticipatory Set

In partners, students will add three events to their young Vladek timeline and one event to their old Vladek timeline.

Direct Instruction

Remaining with their partners, students will discuss what they felt to be the two most important new events or pieces of information learned in chapter 2. After brainstorming for a few minutes, the teacher will ask a few groups to share out their decisions and explain why they were so important. This will be the jumping off point for the class discussion of chapter 2.
Guided Practice

As chapter 3 is the longest chapter yet and has quite a lot happening in a short time, students will spend the majority of the rest of the class reading the chapter and working on the chapter 3 guide sheet. The teacher will circulate to help clarify any confusing parts in the text or on the worksheet.

Closure

The teacher will remind students that chapter 3 and the guide will be due next class.

Independent Practice

Students will complete chapter 3 and the guide for next class.
Maus Chapter 3: "Prisoner of War"

Compare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vladek as a Soldier</th>
<th>Vladek as a Prisoner of War (POW)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What choices does Vladek make as a soldier?</td>
<td>What major choice does he make as a POW?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does he feel about his decisions?</td>
<td>What are the risks of this choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the outcome of his choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does he get home?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List two adjectives (descriptive words) that describe Vladek as a soldier: list two adjectives that describe Vladek as a prisoner of war:

---

Look at the graphics(images) on page 64. Describe what is happening on this page. Explain how the graphics help add to the reader's understanding of the text in this section.

When Vladek is an old man, how does he treat the people he loves? Give two examples from chapter 3.
Lesson 6- Analyzing Vladek

Goals
Students will be able to analyze the changes in a character over time.
Students will be able to write a 1st person narrative from the point of view of a protagonist in Maus.

Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3
Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

Resources and Materials
Maus books

Anticipatory Set
The students will partner up to compare their chapter 3 guides. This will lead into the direct instruction for the day.

Direct Instruction
As a class, students will work on tracking the ways Vladek has changed over time. First the class will consider how young Vladek has changed from the time he met Anja to the end of chapter 3. Then, the class will consider how old Vladek is different than young Vladek.

Guided Practice
Students will work on writing a 1st person narrative from the point of view of one of the characters in chapter 2 or chapter 3. A number of possibilities will be given to the students, but they are welcome to choose a different character or topic than is listed if there is another moment in one of these chapters that interests them.

Closure
The teacher will collect 1st person narratives from anyone who has finished them so far. The teacher will inform the students that the 1st person narratives will be due next class if they are not already completed. Finally, the teacher will pass out the chapter 4 guide which will be due along with chapter 4 in two class periods.

**Independent Practice**

Students will finish writing their 1st person narratives if they did not complete them in class. Students can begin reading chapter 4 and completing the chapter 4 guide, which will be due in two class periods.
Maus I: First Person Narratives

Directions: Here is a list of possible 1st person narratives you could create for chapter 2 or 3 of Maus. Remember the advantage of having a first person narrator rather than a third person narrator. Be sure to capture possible emotions and feelings that surround the circumstances of each of the following events.

Chapter 2
1st person narrative from the perspective of...

* Artie
* Vladek
* Anja
* Ms. Stefanska
* Anja’s father (Mr. Zyberberg)
* Anja
* Vladek

on this event:
- Vladek’s pill counting
- Anja's Communist affiliations
- her Communist affiliations
- Anja's secret papers
- Vladek's factory
- birth of Richieu
- on Vladek to war

Chapter 3

* Artie
* Vladek's dad
* Nazi solider
* Rabbi
* Polish Train Conductor
* Vladek
* Artie

on Mala's dinner
preparing the boys for war
on the Jewish POWs
on being released on Parshas Truma
on Vladek’s request and journey
on Artie's coat
on his coat

You are welcome to do one of your own choosing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Yahoo</th>
<th>Almost There</th>
<th>Not Quite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop the character's thoughts, feelings and emotions</td>
<td>Thoroughly developed expressing the thoughts and feelings of a character.</td>
<td>Expressed some thoughts and feelings of a character; some ideas may have been out of character.</td>
<td>Does not provide the thoughts and feelings of a character, or was completely out of character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; pov</td>
<td>Consistently used 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; POV throughout the piece.</td>
<td>Mostly used 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; POV.</td>
<td>Attempts to or does not use 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; pov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular Scenario</td>
<td>Focused the piece on one particular scene in the section and thoroughly explained it.</td>
<td>Focused mostly on one scenario, or mostly explained one scenario leaving it incomplete.</td>
<td>Not very focused on one scenario, or did explain one scenario effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.U.M.</td>
<td>Correct use or few isolated errors in grammar, usage and mechanics.</td>
<td>Some errors in grammar, usage and mechanics, but it does not hinder comprehension.</td>
<td>Many errors in grammar, usage and mechanics that hinders comprehension.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MAUS I: My Father Bleeds History: "The Noose Tightens"

Name ______________________________________

Answer the following in complete sentences. Be sure to answer all parts and support with textual evidence when noted.

1. When Vladek returns from the P.O.W. camp, a lot has changed in the lives of the Jewish people. Vladek, however, fares pretty well despite the circumstances. Why? Support with textual evidence.

2. Why is the "Noose Tightens" an appropriate name for this chapter? Support with examples from the text and graphics.

3. Explain the relationship between either Vladek and Mala or Vladek and Artie (circle one) in this chapter. Support with specific textual evidence.

4. How does the author use graphics or illustrations to engage the reader in the events of the story? Choose a specific illustration. Be sure to describe it in detail and explain how it engages the reader.
Lesson 7- Jewish Ghettos and *Maus*

**Introduction**

In chapter 4 Vladek’s family is moved into a Jewish ghetto. In order to get a better understanding of what is happening and what their lives might have been like in the ghettos, this class period will focus on what Jewish ghettos were like.

**Goals**

Students will be able to come to conclusions based on details in a photo.

Students will be able to identify historical details about a time period.

Students will be able to relate historical details to a piece of literature.

**Standards**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

**Resources and Materials**

Maus books

A computer with internet access

A Smartboard or projector

**Anticipatory Set**

The teacher will ask a few willing students to share their 1st person narratives. This will provide a review of some of the events of the past two chapters while easing students back into *Maus* for the day. After a few students have shared, the teacher will finish collecting 1st person narratives.

**Direct Instruction**

The teacher will pass out the *Maus I* photo viewing worksheet. Students will study the pictures on the sheet and answer the following questions. They will try to decipher what is happening in the pictures in order to get a better understanding of what life in Jewish ghettos might have been like.

**Guided Practice**

In order to get a better understanding of life in Jewish ghettos, the class will watch part of a series of videos called “Everyday Life in the Warsaw Ghetto.” After watching the videos, the teacher will discuss with the class the ways this might relate to *Maus*. The teacher will ask students for predictions about how Vladek and his family might survive in the coming months.

**Closure**
As a ticket out the door, students will write down two problems they might have had if they had been living in a Jewish ghetto.

**Independent Practice**

Students will complete chapter 4 and the chapter 4 guide for next class.
Maus I: Photo Viewing

1. Describe in detail what is happening in the picture above.

2. What details from the photo stand out to you most? Why do these details stand out?

3. Based on what we've been discussing in class, what inferences can you make about the situation in this photo?
1. Describe in detail what is happening in the picture above.

2. What details from the photo stand out to you most? Why do these details stand out?

3. Based on what we've been discussing in class, what inferences can you make about the situation in this photo?
Lesson 8- Chapter 4

Goals
Students will be able to compare the experiences of characters in *Maus* to the experiences of survivors in videos from the previous class period.
Students will be able to identify a central idea from chapter 4.

Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3
Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Resources and Materials
Poster paper
*Maus* books
Post-it notes

Anticipatory Set
Students will fill out a bell work asking them to compare the experiences of Vladek and his family to the experiences of the people in the videos we watched about life in the Jewish ghettos.

Direct Instruction
Students will each be given three post-it notes. They will be instructed to write their names in the top corner of each of the three post-it notes. There will be three posters hung around the room, each with a different question written on it. 1. Which panel/pair of panels did you find to be the most visually striking? Why? 2. Which panel/pair of panels revealed the most about a character? Which character and what did it reveal? 3. Write a central idea from this chapter. Which panel/pair of panels supports this central idea the most? Describe it/them. Students will answer each of the three questions on one post-it note each and then stick them to the appropriate poster.

Guided Practice
Students will do a galley walk of the posters, looking at the responses of other students. Then, we will attempt to answer the same questions again as a class, coming to a consensus about the best answer or two for each question.
Closure
The teacher will introduce the homework for the next class period.

Independent Practice
Students will begin reading chapter 5 for next class. Students will read from pages 95-105.
Last class we watched a series of video clips relating the experiences of several survivors of Jewish ghettos in Poland. For homework, you should have finished reading chapter 4 of *Maus* in which Vladek’s family is forced into a Jewish ghetto in Poland.

Compare and contrast the experiences of Vladek and his family with those of the survivors from the video. List two similarities or differences in their experiences.
Lesson 9- Chapter 5 Part 1

Goals
Students will be able to identify the author’s purpose for including a specific part of the text.

Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5
Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Resources and Materials
Maus books
Photocopies of “Prisoner on Hell Planet”
Blank paper
Scissors
Glue sticks

Anticipatory Set
Students will need to pick up a pair of scissors, a glue stick, a blank piece of paper, and a photocopied print out of “Prisoner from Hell Planet” as they enter the room.

Direct Instruction
Students will be asked to determine the author’s reason for including “Prisoner from Hell Planet” by choosing three panels from “Prisoner on Hell Planet” that best represent his purpose. They will cut these panels out of the photocopied portion of the text and paste them on the blank paper, commenting beside them about what is being conveyed and why each panel is significant.

Guided Practice
As a class we will come together to discuss what panels most students chose to include. Then, we will discuss what we think the author’s overall purpose for including this comic might be. Students will write what they believe to be the author’s purpose at the bottom of their page.

Closure
For whatever time remains in class, students will work on finishing up the reading for chapter 5.

Independent Practice
If students have not completed chapter 5 by the end of the period, they will complete it for homework.
Prisoner on Hell Planet: A Case History

On pages 100-103 in Maus, you will find a comic strip within the graphic novel titled Prisoner on Hell Planet. This comic was first published (not in Maus) by Art Spiegelman in 1972, which was 14 years before Maus was published. Since it was once a comic strip that stood on its own, it leads the reader to wonder why it was put into this graphic novel.

1. Choose 3 panels that you feel best represents art Spiegelman's purpose for putting this comic in Maus.

2. Cut them out and arrange them on the paper provided.

3. Note next to each graphic:
   a. What is being conveyed to the reader in each graphic?
   b. What is the significance or importance of what is being revealed to the reader?

4. After reflecting on each graphic, comment on the bottom of the page why you feel this comic was included in Maus.
Lesson 10- Irony and Chapter 5

Goals

Students will be able to identify the different types of irony.

Students will be able to identify irony in a text by analyzing both visuals and written text.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

Resources and Materials

Maus books

A whiteboard/smartboard

Anticipatory Set

At this point, a lot has happened very quickly in the last couple of chapters, and many secondary characters have started to play a slightly bigger role in the story as well. In order to try to help the students keep track of so much information, their first activity in this class will be to partner up with another student and complete a fill-in-the-blanks outline of the important events and characters of chapter 5. At the end of the activity, the class will read through the worksheet together to make sure it is correctly filled in.

Direct Instruction

The teacher will pass out the “Identifying Irony” worksheet. As a class, the teacher will review the term “irony” and the three different types of irony: situational, verbal, and dramatic. The students will fill in the definitions for each of these types of irony at the top of their papers.

Guided Practice

Students will complete the rest of the “Identifying Irony” sheet independently.

Closure

Students will hand in the “Identifying Irony” sheet as a ticket-out-the-door.

Independent Practice

Students will read the first half of chapter 6, pages 129-146 for the next class period.
Chapter 5- "Mouse Holes" Outline

1970s-80s

Events:
--Artie is woken up by a phone call from ________________, worried because Vladek is on the ____________. Art agrees to come help, but Vladek says the neighbor will help him instead.

--A week later, Artie visits. _________________ seems upset, and Mala reveals that he has just read an old comic that Artie had published years ago called ________________________________.

--In this comic, Artie finds out that his mother committed ___________________________. His father is deeply upset. He flashes back to the last time he saw his mother. She had asked him if he ________________ her and he had responded sarcastically. The comic ends with Artie in a ________________ cell.

--As they walk to the bank, Vladek suddenly has ________________ pains. Art gives him a pill that seems to help.

--At the end of the chapter, Vladek shows Art a safety deposit box where he keeps ________________ he managed to hide through the war. He wants to hide it from ________________, who has been pestering him to change his will to provide for her.

1940s

Characters to Know
Lolek- Vladek’s ________________
Tosha- Anja’s ________________, married to Wolfe
Persis- Takes ________________ away to a safer town
Haskel- Vladek calls him a ________________, both helps and betrays Vladek’s family

Events:
--Vladek and his family are forced to move to a different ____________, where they are forced to work in shops and factories.

--Persis, Wolfe’s uncle, offers to take away _________________. The family agrees and ________________ and her family go with him. Eventually, however, the German soldiers Persis had bribed are replaced. The new soldiers come to town to take more Jews to the _________________. Tosha hears this news and decided to ________________ herself and the children to avoid this fate.
--Vladek’s family decides to build a _______________ to help them hide from the _______________. One night, they find another Jew trespassing in their house. They let him go, but he turns them in and the family is found and taken away.

--While the family awaits their fate in a detention center, Vladek meets a man named _______________ who claims he can help them escape. He does help Vladek and Anja, but he does not help Anja’s _______________, who are taken away to Auschwitz.

--Haskel has friends in the police, which helps him survive the war. Vladek also finds out that Haskel had the man who betrayed Vladek’s family killed.

--There’s a rumor that a local Jew is selling _____________. Many Jews fall ill, eventually realizing that the flour in the cake was actually _____________________________.

--Haskel sets up a bunker behind a pile of _____________. Vladek and Anja hide while ____________ refuses, only to be taken away. At about the same time they learn of their son, _______________’s death.

--A plan is made to help the Jews hiding in the bunker escape, but Vladek is suspicious and he and Anja do not take part in the plan. Those who tried to escape are _____________ by the Gestapo. Vladek and Anja finally sneak out and try to blend in with the _______________ workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>camps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kombinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying Irony

Irony:
Situational:
Verbal:
Dramatic:

Below, I have identified several examples of irony from chapter 5. Look at the panel/example I identified in *Maus* and explain why it is ironic and what type of irony it is an example of. You may need to read the panels around this example to help you understand why it is ironic.

1. Pg. 108- “When things came worse in our Ghetto we said always: ‘Thank God the kids are with Persis, safe.’”

2. Pg. 111- The visuals on the top half of the page

3. Pg. 117- “Hey! This is the rat that turned my family over to the Gestapo.”
Lesson 11-Chapter 6

Goals

Students will be able to identify and explain their opinions on a text as a whole.
Students will be able to understand the overall plot and the ending of the text.

Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D
Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Resources and Materials

Maus books

Anticipatory Set

Students will be asked to partner up with one other student to fill in any remaining events/traits on their Maus I timelines and character sheets.

Direct Instruction

Students will finish reading chapter 6 in class.

Guided Practice

As a class we will fill out the final chapter guide and discuss it. As a couple of the questions are opinion based and could prompt very different feelings among students, we will take some time to discuss these questions.

Closure

The teacher will introduce the unit assessment and explain the homework for the next class.

Independent Practice

Students will look over the options for the final assessment. They will be asked to choose one of a few of central ideas that they are interested in tracking over the course of the novel or the growth of one of the characters to track through the novel. By next class, they should have chosen their top two or three choices.
Maus I- Chapter 6: "Mouse Trap"

1. Do you think Mrs. Motonowa is justified in throwing out Vladek and Anja? Explain.

2. Explain the irony of the situation on the bottom half of page 147.

3. In your opinion, is Vladek a murderer? Explain.
Lesson 12-Unit Assessment- Tracking Central Idea

Introduction
This lesson is designed to stretch across more than one class period. For most groups it will probably take about 2 ½ to 3 periods minimum to complete.

Goals
Students will be able to track the development of a central idea throughout a graphic novel.
Students will be able to track the development of a character throughout a graphic novel.

Standards
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2
Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3
Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5
Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Resources and Materials
Computers with powerpoint/internet access
Maus books
A Smartboard/projector

Anticipatory Set
The teacher will break the class into groups for the final assessment.

Direct Instruction
Students will be broken up into groups of about three students. Each group will be assigned a central idea that they will track through the novel. They will be asked to describe how the central idea relates to the novel as a whole. They will be asked to describe how the central idea relates to at least 4 of the six chapters of *Maus I*. Finally, they will be asked to choose at least one panel from each of the chapters they discuss that best illustrates the development of the central idea in that chapter. After tracking the central idea through the novel, each group will put together a powerpoint/prezi/poster, etc. to present their findings to the class.

**Guided Practice**

Groups will present their central idea/character tracking presentations to the class.

**Closure**

The teacher will hand back presentation rubrics to the students.
Maus Unit Project

In your group, you must track one of the following topics throughout Maus. You will search for this theme/character in each of the chapters and discuss how it is portrayed and what new information the reader understands from each chapter. Your topic may not occur in every single chapter, but by the end you should have information from AT LEAST 4 of the 6 main chapters in Maus. You may choose to use the prologue to add to your tracking, but due to the short length it may not count as one of your 4 chapters.

Once you have finished tracking your topic through the book, your group will create a visual presentation of some kind and present your findings to the class. This presentation could be of the digital sort (powerpoint, prezi, etc.) or it could be in print form (a poster, a timeline, etc.). In your presentation you will include the following:

1. In which chapters does your topic appear?
2. How is your topic important to each overall chapter that it appears in?
3. Which panel/pair of panels is most important to the development of your topic in each chapter?
4. How is the use of your topic in each chapter relevant to the novel as a whole?
5. Based on the development of your central idea or character, what does the author want the reader to understand about your central idea/character?

Central Idea:

You will track one of the central ideas listed below throughout Maus. In each chapter you might look for the following:

1. What events are happening that relate to the central idea?
2. What conversations are taking place that relate to the central idea?
3. What does the author ultimately want the reader to understand about the central idea from this chapter?
The Responsibility of Survivors
-The Effect of Family on Identity
-Connections Between Grief, Love, and Memory
-Guilt and Redemption
-Human Interdependence

**Character Development:**
You will track the growth of one of the characters listed below throughout *Maus*. In each chapter you might look for the following:

1. What new information do we learn about the character in this chapter?
2. How has the character changed since the last chapter?
3. Why is the character behaving differently than in previous chapters?

-Vladek Spiegelman
-Anja Zylberberg/Spiegelman
-Artie Spiegelman
Below, take notes about your central idea/character in each chapter. Use this page to organize your thoughts and important notes.

Chapter 1:

Chapter 2:

Chapter 3:

Chapter 4:

Chapter 5:

Chapter 6:
# Maus Unit Project Rubric

Student Name: ____________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic Description</strong></td>
<td>Group tracked the topic in 4 or more chapters of the novel.</td>
<td>Group tracked the topic in 3 chapters of the novel.</td>
<td>Group tracked a topic in 1-2 chapters of the novel.</td>
<td>Group did not track a topic through the novel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Panel Discussion</strong></td>
<td>Group discussed at east 4 of the most important panels related to their topic.</td>
<td>Group discussed 3 of the most important panels related to their topic.</td>
<td>Group discussed 1-2 of the most important panels related to their topic.</td>
<td>Group did not discuss any of the most important panels related to their topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visuals</strong></td>
<td>Visuals were consistently easy to read and engaging to look at.</td>
<td>Visuals were mostly easy to read and engaging to look at.</td>
<td>Visuals were rarely easy to read or engaging to look at.</td>
<td>No visuals were used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaking</strong></td>
<td>Presenter consistently spoke clearly and at an appropriate volume.</td>
<td>Presenter mostly spoke clearly and sometimes spoke too loudly or softly.</td>
<td>Presenter was difficult to understand and consistently spoke too loudly or softly.</td>
<td>Presenter did not participate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collaboration</strong></td>
<td>Students was always present and on task during class work and participated fully in the presentation.</td>
<td>Students was mostly present and on task during class work and participated fully in the presentation.</td>
<td>Student was rarely present and on task during class work and did not fully participate in the presentation.</td>
<td>Students did not take part in group work or the presentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total __________/ 15 = ____________%
Chapter 4

Conclusions

Many ELA classrooms today still focus heavily on teaching traditional classics or even on teaching only the recommended writing pieces from the Common Core State Standards. Such narrow curriculum, however, can lack many of the aspects that make reading truly engaging or even bearable for many students. Modern ELA classrooms are not the somewhat uniform spaces that they once were. Instead, such classrooms are becoming increasingly inclusive. Students with IEPs are lumped into classes with ENL students who are grouped into classes with general education and sometimes even higher ability students. All of this means that planning and implementing curriculum that is applicable and responsive to the needs of so many diverse students has become more difficult than ever. Though no curriculum will probably ever meet all of the needs of every student in such a classroom, an ELA curriculum that takes graphic novels into account is at least on the way to connecting with a wide variety of learners in a classroom.

Graphic novels have the ability to connect to groups of readers that traditional novels and informational texts cannot. In the modern classroom, many general education teachers need to find ways to make their instruction accessible for any number of students who have difficulty reading or just a general dislike for such a task. Graphic novels can be this point of connection. Their graphical nature means that they necessarily have a focus on images and less of a focus on text. For struggling or disengaged readers this can be a nonthreatening way to get them taking part in the same literary analysis that they might take part in with a traditional novel. As graphic novels involve much less text than their traditional counterparts, there is a lot of information that can be delved from the images, and from a study that takes both the images and the graphics into
account. For these students who struggle to analyze lengthy written texts, analyzing images might be a beneficial step.

The other primary benefit of graphic novels is that they do not simply cater to the lowest ability readers. Due to the fact that so much is contained in the images of graphic novels, higher ability readers can take away important practice with analysis as well. Many students have never truly studied image analysis, so this might prove to be new ground for students who are anxious to learn and use their skills. Many graphic novels are just as layered as traditional novels as well, meaning that students of a variety of ability levels could analyze one chapter and all come away with different information. Perhaps a lower level reader might look at a panel and take away information characterizing a character based on his/her expression. A mid-level reader might connect this characterization to an earlier part of the book and begin to connect it to the overall growth of the character. A more advanced reader might notice a symbol that was cleverly hidden in the picture and realize that he/she could take away something entirely different from the same panel. The possibilities are almost endless when it comes to the amount of analysis that a combination of text and graphics allows.

**Recommendations**

There is certainly still work to be done when discussing the use of graphic novels in the classroom. Though a casual search might turn up many articles that are seemingly related to the issue, many such articles are highly specialized, only truly useful for one subject area or one graphic novel. Even my own work on the subject, though perhaps somewhat useful for ELA or history classes, focuses primarily on one novel and not the study and analysis of images in general. Often one can find single lessons or maybe a two-day lesson that focus on truly studying images in the classroom, but all too often this skill is abandoned in favor of traditional texts.
Perhaps this is the fault of the Common Core State Standards, or perhaps this is simply the fault of teachers everywhere who do not feel entirely confident or feel it is necessary to teach image analysis. The problem with this thought process is simple; with just a look around most people could probably agree that we are surrounded by images today. Images are everywhere: hung on billboards by the road, in whatever forms of news we take part in, and in the technology in which we so often bury ourselves. It seems reasonable to suggest that students and teachers alike should be able to look at these images and understand their meaning and purpose. This can happen through any number of ways in the classroom. Teachers might teach general media literacy, they might teach a unit on analyzing photographs or film, or they might teach some lessons on advertisements and persuasion. Graphic novels are far from the only way to teach the analysis of images, but they may be the form that is most easily adopted in an ELA class and which can get readers of all kinds engaged and participating in reading. There are so many opportunities that graphic novels can offer to teachers and students, and taking the time to study even one of the many rich graphic novels that exist can open a new world for all involved.
Works Cited


