

# GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR YOUNG ADULTS

**FEBRUARY 24, 2012**



Lauren  
Blanford



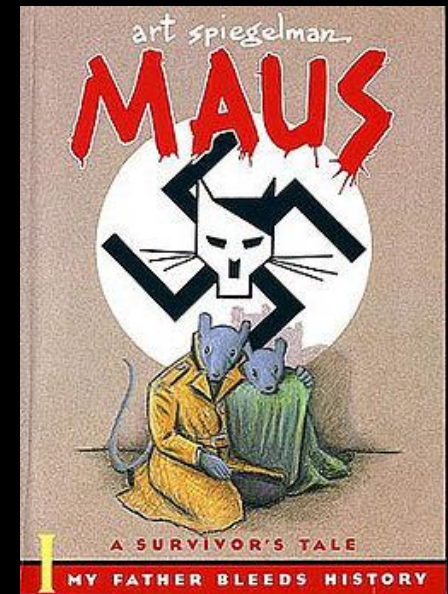
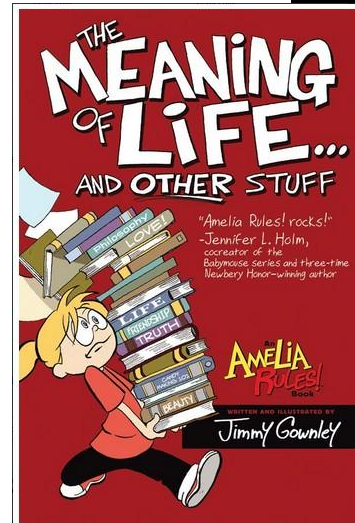
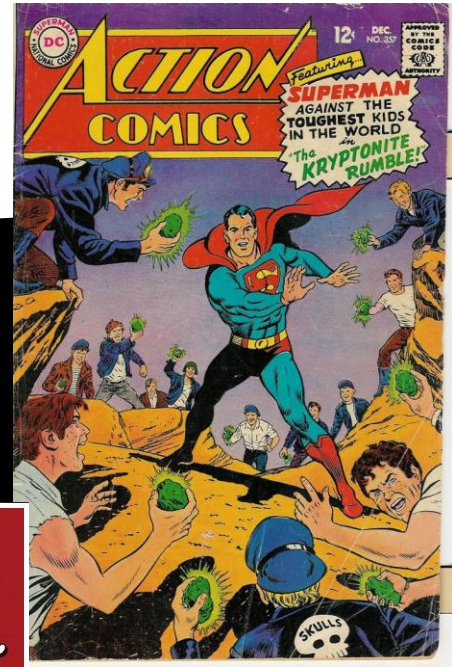
Kirsten  
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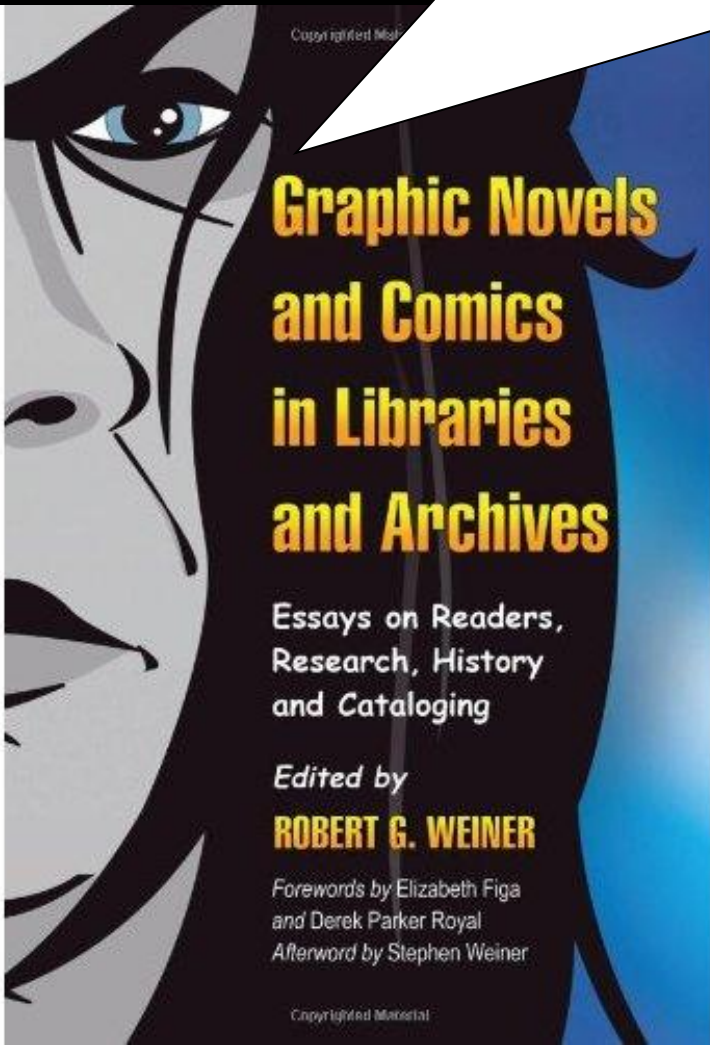
Margaret  
Janavicius

# AGENDA

- Definition
- History
- Controversy
- Advocacy
- Genres
- Awards
- Resources



# GRAPHIC NOVELS TODAY



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## Graphic Novels and Comics in Libraries and Archives

Essays on Readers,  
Research, History  
and Cataloging

Edited by

**ROBERT G. WEINER**

Forewords by Elizabeth Figa  
and Derek Parker Royal  
Afterword by Stephen Weiner

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"In a world that is going more and more with digital content, graphic novels are one of the last varieties of the printed form that are gaining in popularity as each year goes by" (R. Weiner 5).

# DEFINITION

## Q. What is a "graphic novel"?

A. Graphic novels have a few defining characteristics. But first and most importantly, they are long comic books. (I'll get back to the rest.)

## Q. What is a "comic book"?

A. You may think you know the answer to this one, but stick with me a few minutes:

A comic book is a magazine or bound book that contains "comics" (also known as "comix"). Comics is a medium for expressing information and/or artistic ideas that is defined by



- "[S]torytelling through ...sequential art"

(Goldsmith as quoted in Williams & Peterson 167)

- "[N]othing more than 'a book by a cartoonist that has a spine rather than being stapled'"

(Kannenbergs as quoted in Lanham)

What is a Graphic Novel? By Jessica Abel

<http://dw-wp.com/resources/what-is-a-graphic-novel/>

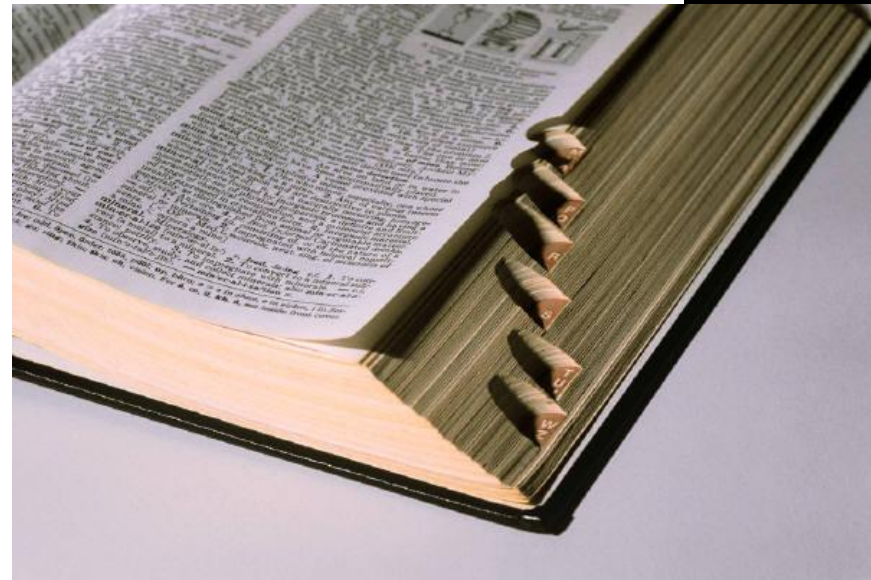
# DEFINITION

From [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

"[G]raphic novel: a fictional story that is presented in comic-strip format and published as a book"

Not accurate!

Graphic novel refers to:  
FORMAT, not content  
a MEDIUM, not a genre



# DEFINITION

Graphic novels encompass a "wide range of genres and themes ... [including] adventure, legends, fantasy, memoirs, comedy, horror, social issues, religion, and biography." (Baird & Jackson 5).



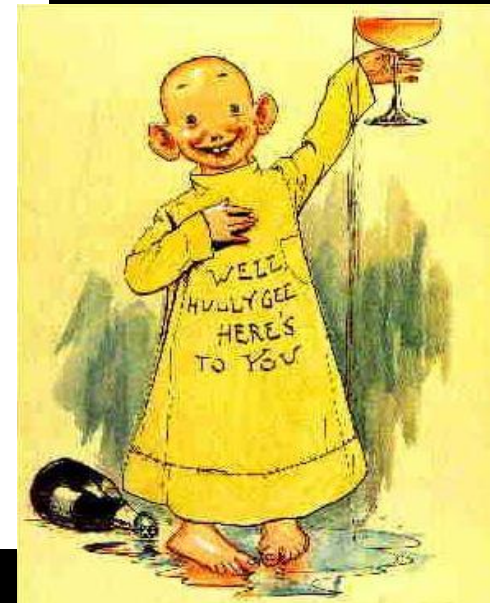
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# HISTORY

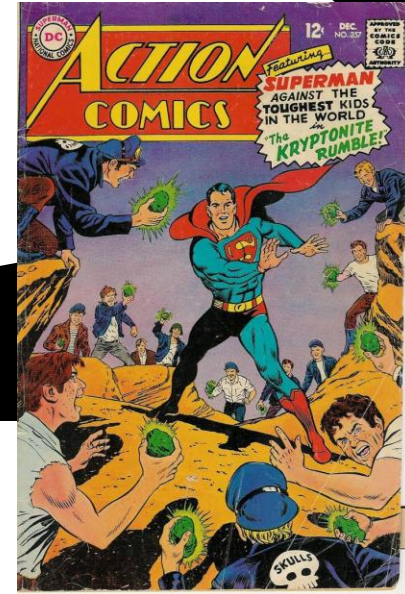
## EARLY YEARS

- History of the graphic novel is tied to the history of comics and comic books
- 1895: *The Yellow Kid* by Richard F. Outcault
  - 1st single panel cartoon to gain wide spread attention in US
  - Collected in book form in 1897



# GOLDEN AGE

1930S - 1940S



1930s: First comic books published as reprints of newspaper comics

-1934: *Famous Funnies* comic printed by Eastern Color Printing, first to use word bubbles in each panel

-Considered the first modern comic book - highly successful (size, price, color) (Fletcher-Spear & Jenson-Benjamin 6)

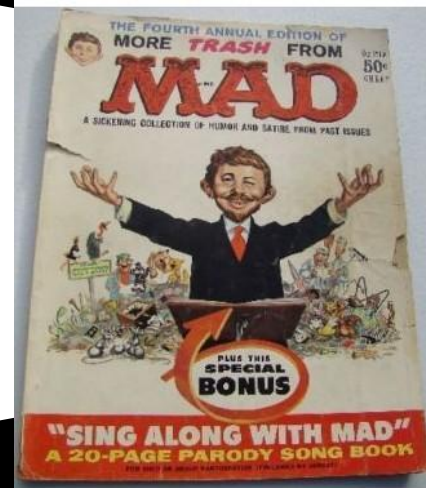
1940s: Comics explode with creation of Siegel & Shuster's *Superman* comics

-Superhero comics become popular during WWII



# ATOMIC AGE

LATE 1940S -  
EARLY 1950S



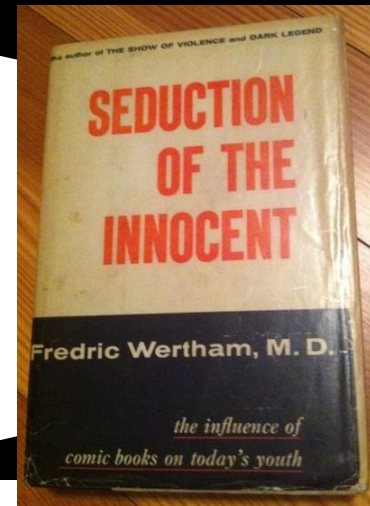
1950s: Rise of McCarthyism and growing interest in romance, funny, horror, & crime comics (mass-produced, shock value)

- *MAD Magazine* produced by EC comics with contributions from Harvey Kurtzman - "revolutionized the genre of satire comics" (Fletcher-Spear & Jensen-Benjamin 8)

- "... [Teachers' and librarians'] predominant view of comics unfavorable ... it was the librarians' responsibility to find the proper 'antidote' to the spread of comics" (Nyberg 28).

# ATOMIC AGE

## LATE 1940S - EARLY 1950S



*1954: The Seduction of the Innocent: The Influence of Comic Books on Today's Youth* by psychiatrist *Frederic Wertham*

-Leads to Senate hearings on comic books & youth

Comic Magazine Association of America forms **Comic Code Authority (CCA)** & develops the Comics Code:

- Forty-one editorial guidelines: Toned down violence, respect authority (police never wrong, marriages happy), women properly clad

# ATOMIC AGE

## LATE 1940S - EARLY 1950S

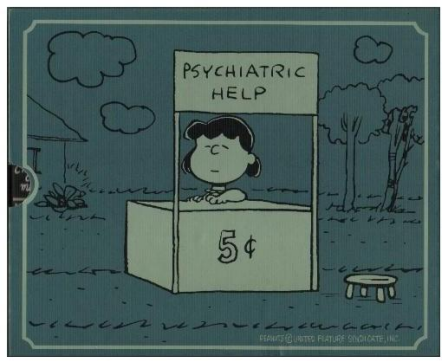
### Results of Comic Code Authority (CCA):

- Quality of comics rises (sensational comics no longer published), but comics lose social relevance
- "The furor in the professional journals over comic book reading died down ..." (Nyberg 30).



# SILVER AGE

## LATE 1950S - EARLY 1970S



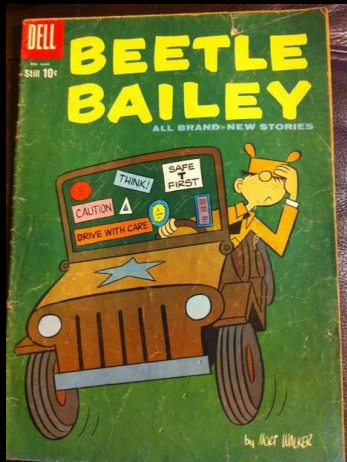
**1960s:** Revival of the superhero (DC and Marvel Comics commercial success), growth of fan base

- Rise of the underground comics mainly in San Francisco - speak to counter-culture, addressed social issues (drug, music, Vietnam, sex)

- **1968:** R. Crumb's *Zap* debuts

**1960s-1970s:** Some serial comics published in book form (*Peanuts*, *Krazy Kat*, *Beetle Bailey*)

**1970s:** Birth of the comic book store ("direct market") as result of comic book conventions



# BRONZE AGE

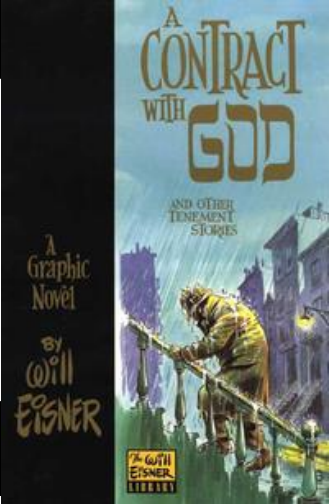
**EARLY 1970S - MID 1980S**

- Darker elements enter into comics, CCA relaxes rules on use of monsters resulting in resurgence of horror comics
- Japanese Manga starts becoming popular in America
- **1973:** *Tintin* comic book series brought to America in book form Belgium



# BRONZE AGE

**EARLY 1970S - MID 1980S**



**1978:** Will Eisner coins term "graphic novel" for his book *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories*:

- Uses "graphic novel" as a marketing term to have a greater chance at getting it published
- Written for adults who had read comics in the 1940s and who "hadn't give up on comics, but the comics field had given up on them" (S. Weiner 20)

"Hey stupid, don't tell them it is a comic or he'll hang up on you" (Eisner quoted in Arnold)

# **MODERN AGE/ DARK AGE/IRON AGE MID 1980S - PRESENT**

**Mid 1980s** : "... [P]eriod in which graphic novels broke through cultural barriers to erase the stigma associated with reading comics" (Nyberg 31).

- Seeing some articles in library journals about comics:

  - 1990: "Picture This: Graphic Novels in Libraries" in *SLJ*

- Rebirth of gritty hero: *Batman: Dark Knight Returns* 1986 (Frank Miller); *Watchmen* 1986 (Alan Moore); *Sandman* 1989 (Neil Gaiman)

- Non-superhero stories: *Bone* (Jeff Smith)

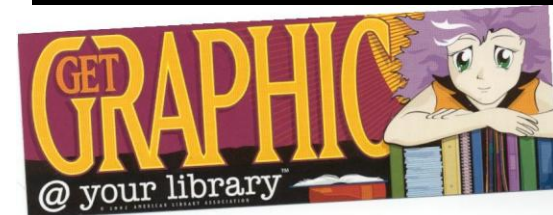
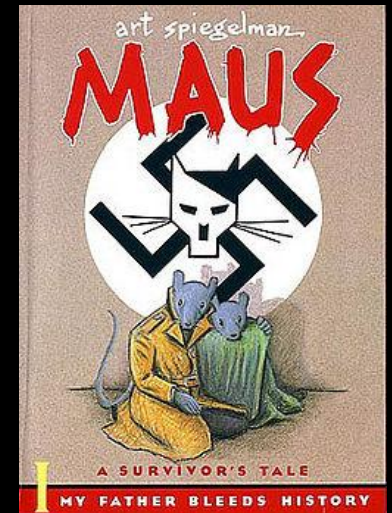
- Manga (Japanese comic book) popularity rises in the US

# MODERN AGE/ DARK AGE/IRON AGE MID 1980S - PRESENT

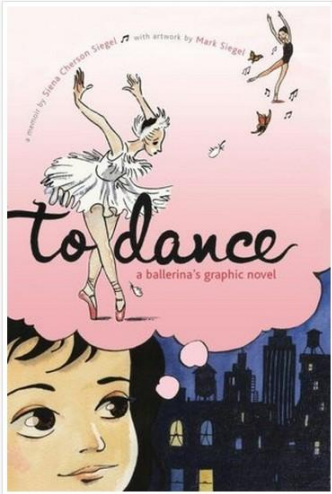
1992: Art Spiegelman wins the Pulitzer Prize for *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*

1994: Library of Congress Authority File adds graphic novels as authorized subject heading

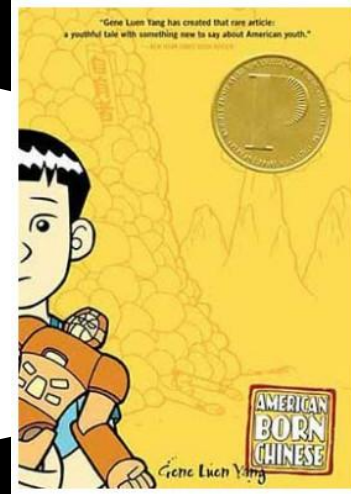
2002: YALSA sponsors "Get Graphic at Your Library" at 2002 ALA Conference







# MODERN AGE/ DARK AGE/IRON AGE MID 1980S - PRESENT



**2005:** Graphic novel reviews and columns present in several library journals for young adults, as well as articles on using GN's in classroom

- *Booklist, Library Journal, Publisher's Weekly, and School Library Journal* (Williams & Peterson 167)

**2007:** Awards for YA Graphic Novels:

- YALSA adds list of recommended books: "Great Graphic Novels for Teens"
- YALSA Printz Award for Excellence in YA Literature: *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang
- ALSC Robert E. Sibert Honor Book: *To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel* by Siena Cherson Siegel & Mark Siegel

# CONTROVERSY

## Educational Value

- Not "legitimate" reading
- Divert attention from "legitimate" reading
- Negatively impact reading skill development

"For the last half century librarians, educators, and academics have 'pooh-poohed' sequential art as a throwaway form of entertainment with little or no value" (R. Weiner 5).



# CONTROVERSY

## Content

- Themes of sex and violence
- Negative portrayal of women
- Poor grammar and slang
- Corrupt youth and threaten morality
- Psychologically damaging



## Readers

- Purchased and shared by readers
- Not a "feminine" activity
- Some young adults embarrassed to read them

# ALA POSITION

Traditionally...Libraries did not support inclusion of comics or graphic novels in collections

- Were seen as providers of "legitimate" and valuable reading material

Today...ALA actively encourages and supports inclusion of graphic novels in collections

- [YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens list](#)
- [Assistance with graphic novel challenges](#)
- [Graphic novels professional tips wiki](#)
- [Graphic novels on-line community/Connect site](#)
- [Comic Book and Graphic Novel Member Initiative Group](#)



# ADVOCACY

## Library Bill of Rights

- People like them!
- People want to read them!

## Expand Use

- Offer alternatives to traditional formats
- Serve as "hook" for reluctant readers
- Appeal to male readers
- Increase library traffic
- Expand reading in other formats



"Graphics bring young people into the library, motivate them to use the library, and keep them in the institution in both dynamic and very traditional ways" (Zabriskie 167).

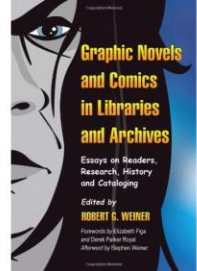
# ADVOCACY

## Enhance Learning

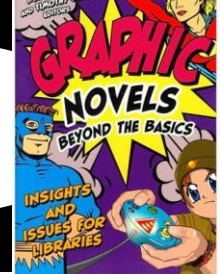
- Offer aesthetic value
- Provide a "multi-media" experience
- Enhance multiple literacies: visual literacy and spatial literacy
- Engage multiple areas of the brain
- Enrich reading experience
- Serve as a resource for language learners
- Support mental "movie" of text



TIME for Kids Flickr photo by MrSchuReads



# ADVOCACY



"More big news: comics can enhance literacy, not erode it. Generations of misguided 'wisdom'-that comics would seduce kids away from 'real' books—have been proven wrong. Research now shows that children who read comics also read more for pleasure, period...Study after study shows that people who read more for pleasure are better readers" (Cornog & Perper xxiii).

"In the last half decade, practitioners began to realize that reading comics involved more than deciphering text embedded in word balloons...The burgeoning field of comics scholarship contributed to the understanding of the grammar and language of comics, and expanded 'visual literacy' beyond film and television studies to include sequential art" (Nyberg 35).

# ADVOCACY

"The graphic novel is no longer just a format suitable to learn about. It is also starting to be used as a tool to educate." (Karp 34)

Teach: Read, explore, create!

- Enhance students' multimedia literacy skills

For Example:

- Support history education
- Discuss communication through art
- Conduct creation exercises: Tell a story, express emotion, capture an action





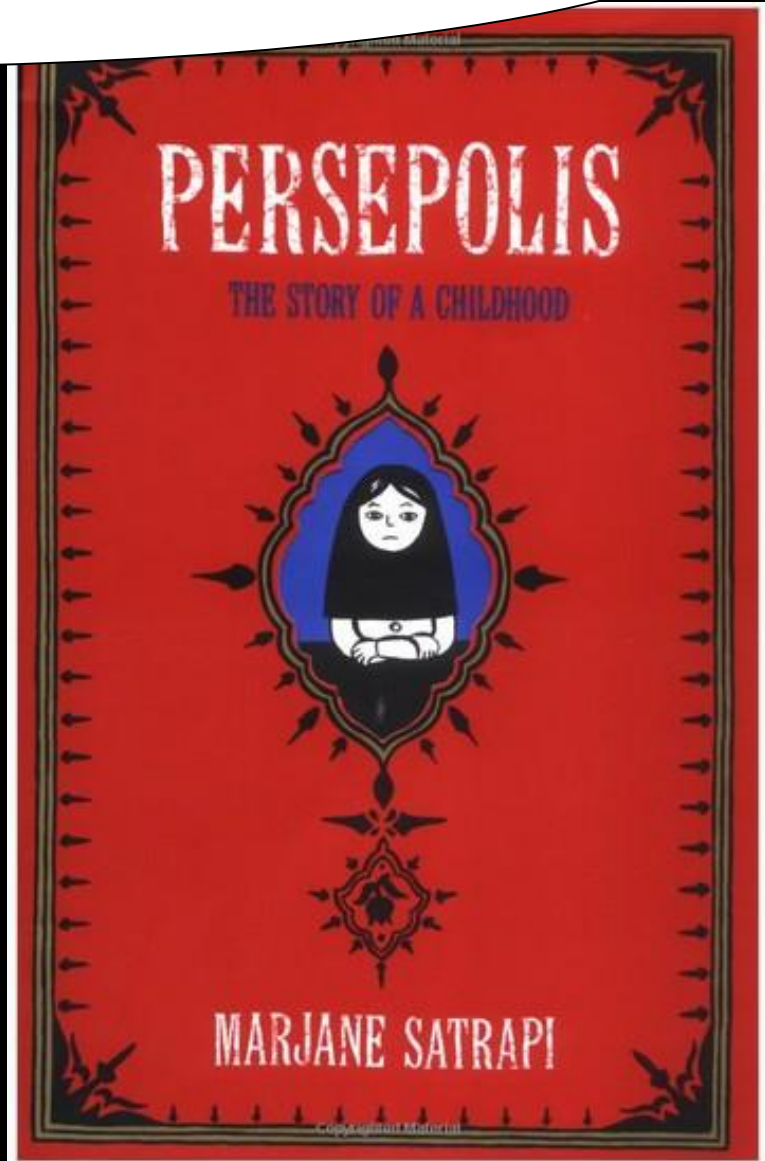
# ADVOCACY

Example:

Pictures Tell the Story:

Improving Comprehension  
With *Persepolis*

From [readwritethink.org](http://readwritethink.org)



# ADVOCACY

Panels 1 & 2: Notice author by herself in first panel but missing in second panel...what might this foreshadow?

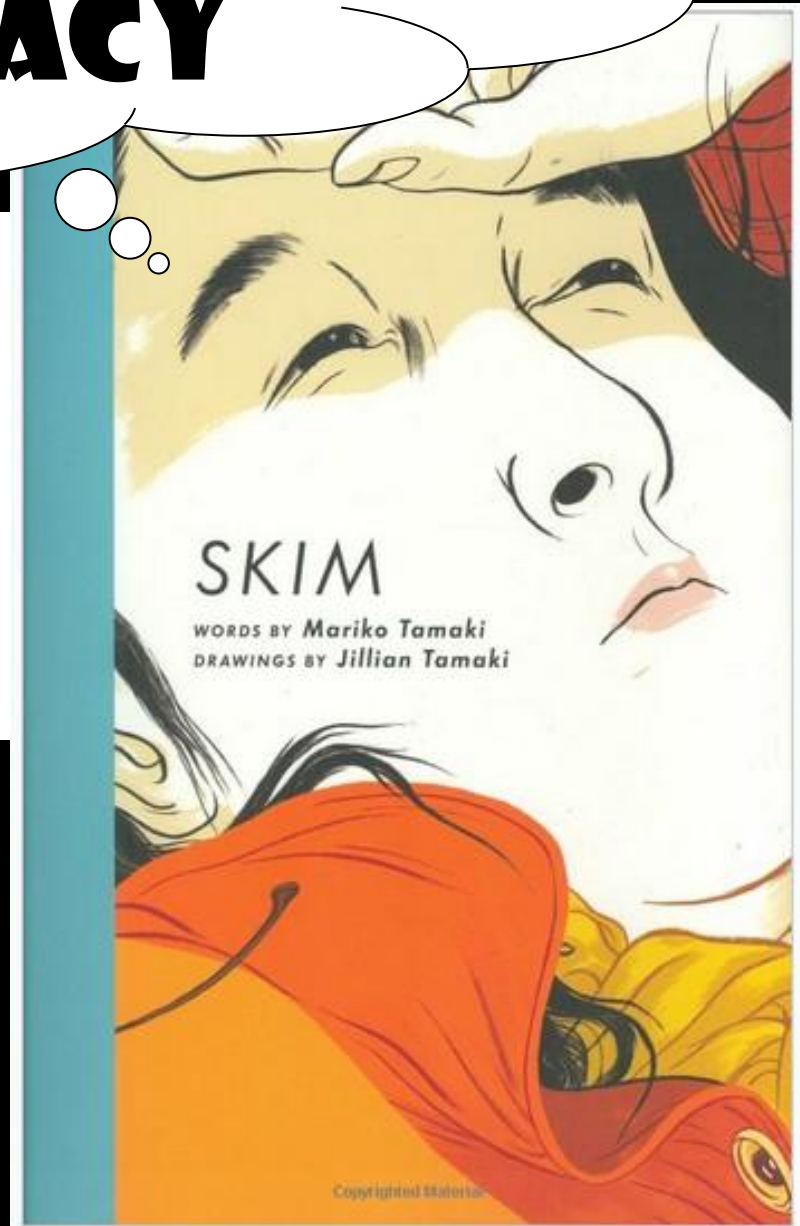
Panel 3: How does this panel differ from other panels on the page? What emotion is represented? What does this make you think might happen in the book?



# ADVOCACY

Example:

A Day In the Life  
Lesson



# WEBSITE

Home History Advocacy Recommended Novels Resources Works Cited



**Graphic Novels for Young Adults**

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