CRASH COURSE
IN GRAPHIC NOVELS

NoveList
Empowering Librarians... Engaging Readers

Library Reads

"A snowball of and tragedy all..."
Panelists

Lynn Lobash
Assistant Director of Readers Services
New York Public Library

Patrick Holt
Adult Services Librarian
Durham County Library, NC
Panelists

Kendal Spires
Collection Development Librarian
NoveList

Halle Eisenman
Manager Content Development
NoveList
The top ten books published this month that librarians across the country love.

libraryreads.org
What is a graphic novel?

Paraphrasing cartoonist and comics educator Jessica Abel, graphic novels are basically **long works in the comics medium**, which in turn is:

![Illustration of images used in a sequence](https://dw-wp.com/resources/what-is-a-graphic-novel)
What is a graphic novel?

Abel continues: they often feature dialogue in **speech balloons**, interior monologues in **thought bubbles**, and discrete moments of time in **panels**:

Artwork from *Peanuts* for June 2, 1969, by Charles Schulz
What is a graphic novel?
...except when they’re something else entirely!

Artwork L-R: Visions by Evan M. Cohen; Vanishing Act by Roman Muradov;
Scenes from an Impending Marriage by Adrian Tomine;
Girl Town by Casey (née Carolyn) Nowak
What do people mean when they say, “graphic novel”?

- Any long, square-bound (i.e. not staple-bound) comic book,
- Comic books that were first published serially, but have been collected into a single volume
- A long, standalone story, published as a single volume and not serially
- A serious comic book for serious grownups
- Comic books of higher-than-average cultural value
- An unnecessary attempt at claiming more seriousness or cultural value
- Fiction comics, as opposed to “graphic nonfiction”, “graphic biography”, “graphic memoir”, etc.
- An industry term for a segment of the publishing market
- **Convenient shorthand for all this stuff and more, but one that regularly warrants more elaboration for the benefit of patrons and co-workers**
History of graphic novels & comics
History of graphic novels & comics

1830s-1930s

1930s-1970s
History of graphic novels & comics

1970s-1980s

1980s-today
History of graphic novels & comics
Why read graphic novels?

Visual and multimodal literacy

words + pictures

Image from *Hark! A Vagrant* (Kate Beaton)
Why read graphic novels?

Genre variety!
Why read graphic novels?

Images from *Beasts of Burden* #2 (Evan Dorkin, Jill Thompson); *Bloodlust & Bonnets* (Emily McGovern); *Fun Home* (Alison Bechdel); *March: Book Two* (John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell)
Why read graphic novels?

cool experiments with the form!

Images from *Hawkeye* #19 (Matt Fraction, David Aja, Matt Hollingsworth); web version of *His Face All Red* (Emily Carroll); *Adventure Time* #10 (Ryan North, Braden Lamb, Shelli Paroline)
Genres / Subgenres
Alternative
Fantasy, Sci-fi, & Horror
Apocalyptic & Dystopian
Crime, Mystery, & Noir
Historical & Westerns

- Berlin
- Buddha
- Indeh
- Coyote Doggirl
Romance & Erotica
Humorous & Satirical
LGBTQIA
Manga, Manhua, Manhwa

Japan

China

Korea
Franco-Belgian
Nonfiction
Trends: Translations (new and old)
Trends: Prose authors try their hand
Trends: Webcomic breakouts

ADULTHOOD IS A MYTH
A "Sarah’s Scribbles" collection

SARAH ANDERSEN

LORE OLYMPUS
CREATED BY RACHEL SMYTHE
EDITED BY BEKAH CADEN

CHECK PLEASE!
Book 1: #Hockey

"Charming, addictive, and genuinely romantic."
—RAINBO ROWELL, New York Times bestselling author of ELLENGE & PARK
Character-driven

NovelList Appeal

Action-packed

NoveList
## Illustration appeal

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<th>Tone</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Color</th>
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<td>Charming</td>
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NoveList Themes

Assemble!
No power, still super
Reboots and retcons

Creature feature
Evil animals

Being a friend
Coming out experiences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>No power, still super</td>
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<td>Good gone bad</td>
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<td>Scum and villainy</td>
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<td>Hidden heritage</td>
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<td>Vengeance is mine</td>
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<td>Rightful heir</td>
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<td>Ensemble cast</td>
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<td>Setting</td>
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<td>Home again</td>
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<td>Hidden among us</td>
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<td>Inspired by real events</td>
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<td>Boldly go</td>
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<td>Academies of magic</td>
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<td>Small town horror</td>
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<td>Inspired by real events</td>
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<td>Origin story</td>
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<td>Coming out experiences</td>
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<td>Engendering gender</td>
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<td>Chosen family</td>
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<td>To the rescue!</td>
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<td>Lost in space</td>
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<td>On the run</td>
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Awards

- Eisner Awards
- Ignatz Awards
- Harvey Awards
- Ringo Awards
- Angoulême Prix
- ALA-GNCRT Best Graphic Novels for Adults Reading List
- Excellence in Graphic Literature Awards
- Doug Wright Awards
- Dwayne McDuffie Award for Diversity in Comics
Helping Readers
Questions to ask...

- What graphic novels have you read and enjoyed?
- What do you like to read outside the GN format?
- What genres do you like?
- What TV shows and movies are in your top 5?

TIP: It’s very easy to flip through graphic novels, so you can walk a patron over to the shelves and browse a few genres & styles.
Graphic Novel Starter Pack

✔ Breadth of genres
✔ Well-reviewed
✔ Wide appeal
✔ Stand-alone graphic novel or completed series
Our Cats Are More Famous Than Us
by Ananth Hirsh and Yuko Ota

NoveList Plus Cataloging

• **Genres:** Autobiographical comics; Life stories; Webcomics

• **Story/Character Appeal:** Amusing; Feel-good; Reflective; Conversational; Engaging

• **Illustration Appeal:** Black-and-white; Bold, Charming
BTMM FDRS
by Ezra Claytan Daniels and Ben Passmore

NoveList Plus Cataloging

• **Genres:** African American fiction, Afrofuturism and Afrofantasy, Horror comics, Satirical comics

• **Themes:** Body horror

• **Story/Character Appeal:** Authentic, Culturally diverse

• **Illustration Appeal:** Colorful, Rough-edged
Monster by Naoki Urasawa

NoveList Plus Cataloging

- **Genres:** Manga, Horror comics, Mystery comics
- **Story/Character Appeal:** Compelling, Sympathetic, Well-developed

(read right-to-left!)
Dumb by Georgia Webber

NoveList Plus Cataloging

• **Genres:** Autobiographical comics; Life stories

• **Story/Character Appeal:** Hopeful; Reflective; Compelling

• **Illustration Appeal:** Minimally colored
Y, *The Last Man* by Brian K. Vaughan and Pia Guerra

**NoveList Plus Cataloging**

- **Genres:** Apocalyptic comics, Science fiction comics
- **Story/Character Appeal:** Character-driven, Fast-paced, Thought-provoking, Compelling
- **Illustration Appeal:** Detailed, Muted
Titles we’re excited about

YAY!

EEEeee!
Kendal is excited about:
Patrick is excited about:
Questions?
Thank you

Learn more at

ebscohost.com/novelist & libraryreads.org
NoveList Resources
All About Graphic Novels for Teens
by Lindsey Dunn

**What are Graphic novels?**

Graphic novels are stories in print that are told through sequential panels of illustrations. Although most graphic novels include words as part of the narrative, the primary method of storytelling is visual. What separates a graphic novel from collections of newspaper comics is that a graphic novel has one continuous story.

Although graphic novels originally received acclaim for their appeal to reluctant readers or children, today many are considered part of literary as well as non-fiction novels, with many titles even winning awards previously considered out of bounds for graphic novels.

**What happens in Graphic novels?**

Technically, graphic novels are a format, rather than a genre. Any genre or type of narrative can be told using the graphic novel format, from historical fiction to realistic fiction to fantasy to romance. In graphic novels, authors and illustrators use a combination of illustrations, speech balloons, thought bubbles, colors, and occasional narrative sections to tell one continuous story with a beginning, middle, and end.

**Top themes found in graphic novels**

Themes are popular, recurring, and recognizable plot elements found in fiction. Themes are now recognizable and displayed on title records of books in Novelist. To search for a particular theme, use the field code TH. (Example: TH-Choose one)

While graphic novels may use any of the same themes that Novelist uses in its own thematic indexes, some of the most popular are:
- No powers, still super! These heroes make use of gadgets or brain power to save the day. Rather than superpowers.
- Reboot and retcon: Same story, new decade, location, or outfit.
- Александр: Superheroes work in teams for a greater cause.
- Origin story: How it all began.
- Solemn spotlight: Soliloquies get their chance to shine.

To see all the themes, select "Search by... Themes," visible in the colored bar at the top of the page anywhere in Novelist.

**Common characteristics**

- Graphic novels epitomize the saying "show, don't tell." Authors tend to tell more of the story using character's facial expressions, actions, body language, and dialogue instead of verbal details.
- The tone and mood of graphic novels is often made clear by the artist's use of an evocative color scheme or illustration style.
- Graphic novels have dynamic visual content. They are an excellent format for telling action-packed stories. Even in more character-driven or issue-driven graphic novels, the emotional state of characters is drawn in a compelling way through illustrations.
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- Graphic novels are often told in a first-person narrative.

**Why do teens like Graphic novels?**

- Graphic novels provide a refreshingly different way to read than in traditional novels. The combination of illustrations and words challenges readers to use both parts of the brain. The reader sees what is said and shown and can infer the events that happen between the illustrations. A great many fascinating inferences of how people read graphic novels can be found in Scott McCloud's breakthrough nonfiction book, *Understanding Comics*.
- Graphic novels appeal to visual learners who enjoy art, cartoons, comic books, movies, and video-games.
- Once you learn how to read graphic novels, they are quick and easy to read.
- They can be helpful for language learners, since the illustrations provide context for the words.
- Reluctant readers are often drawn to graphic novels, since the combination of illustrations and text - with visual breaks between the comic panels - may appeal less intimidating than books with blocks of text.
- In general, they are fast-paced, visually compelling, and contain expressive characters.