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Graphic Novels, Comics, Manga, & Anime

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**The following reviews are the product of the class detailed in the excerpt from the syllabus. Students model their reviews after VOYA's Graphically Speaking by Kat Kan. This class is an accepted elective for the Graduate Certificate in Youth Services and Literature. More information on the certificate can be found at: <https://www.usm.edu/library-information-science/graduate-certificate-youth-services-and-literature>*

The University of Southern Mississippi
 College of Education and Psychology
 School of Library and Information Science

GRAPHIC NOVELS, COMICS, MANGA, & ANIME

LIS 670

Course Prerequisite(s): None

Number of Credit Hours: 3

Format of Course: Online, through Blackboard, in the “live” virtual classroom discussions. Students in other time zones should adjust accordingly. See calendar for weeks that classes meet and activities. Class will be held in Collaborate Live Classroom, a text-chat, audio-chat (and video capable) environment. A computer headset with microphone is required if your built-in microphone and speakers are not high quality enough to eliminate background noise. These are readily available in electronics stores or departments of major retailers.

Course Description/Overview: This course is an introduction to history and development of graphic novels, manga, comic books, and anime, and their role in libraries and information settings.

LIS 670 Catalog Description: 3 hrs. The role of libraries in meeting informational and recreational needs of library users, lifelong learning, services to special groups, and popular culture collections

Course Generally Scheduled/Offered: Periodically

Required Texts:

- McCloud, S. (1993). Understanding Comics. New York: HarperCollins.

Also everyone needs to watch two of the following animes or graphic movies (at least one should be anime):

Frank Miller's Sin City, Akira, Ghost World, Spirited Away, Howl's Moving Castle, and Dragon Ball Z Battle of the Gods.

In addition to the one text, you will need to select a book to read from the lists below for the following age categories: K to 2nd, 3rd to 5th, 6th to 8th, and 9th to 12th.

You will be presenting your selection in class. At least one book should be a Manga.

- <http://www.ala.org/alsc/compubs/booklists/grphcnvls>
- <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/great-graphic-novels#top10> (from the last 3 years—may be selected from entire list or Top 10).

Everyone should read the following and they should not be included in your 4 selections:

- Babymouse: Queen of the World! By Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm
- To Dance: A Ballerina's Graphic Novel by Sienna Cherson Siegel
- Rapunzel's Revenge by Shannon Hale and Dean Hale
- Trinity: A Graphic History of the First Atomic Bomb by Fetter-Vorm, Jonathan.
- Ultimate Comics Spider-man, V.1 by Bendis, Brian Michael and Sara Pichelli.
- Wolf Children: Ame & Yuki. By Mamoru Hosoda.

Other readings are required for class (articles and scanned chapters) are by day in the readings folder.

ALA Core Competencies (as applied to this course)	Assignments
1. Foundations of the Profession 1A. The ethics, values, and foundational principles of the library and information profession.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts on Freedom to Read and Intellectual Freedom as it applies

1B. The role of library and information professionals in the promotion of democratic principles and intellectual freedom (including freedom of expression, thought, and conscience). 1J. Effective communication techniques (verbal and written).	to youth and adults and the topic of the course.
2. Information Resources 2B. Concepts, issues, and methods related to the acquisition and disposition of resources, including evaluation, selection, purchasing, processing, storing, and deselection. 2C. Concepts, issues, and methods related to the management of various collections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts on databases, web resources and reviews • Review assignment
4. Technological Knowledge and Skills 4B. The application of information, communication, assistive, and related technology and tools consistent with professional ethics and prevailing service norms and applications. 4C. The methods of assessing and evaluating the specifications, efficacy, and cost efficiency of technology-based products and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online presentation
5. Reference and User Services 5D. Information literacy/information competence techniques and methods, numerical literacy, and statistical literacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion post on the topic
6. Research 6B. The central research findings and research literature of the field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion posts on readings • Book presentation • Critique

Goals: This course is an introduction to the topic of graphic novels, manga, comics and anime and their use in educational and library and information settings. The course will address quality and selection of materials, act as a survey of the materials, library/classroom uses of these materials, and professional discourse on the materials.

Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, students will demonstrate a basic knowledge of:

- **The wide array of literature, materials, and media available on the topic;**
Assignments & Assessments: Survey of the literature; discussion posts, presentation, review, and booktalk wiki.
 - **Critical evaluation of books, media, and online resources on the topic;**
Assignments & Assessments: Survey of the literature; discussion posts, presentation, review, and booktalk wiki.
 - **The materials useful in selecting books and materials on the topic;**
Assignments & Assessments: Survey of the literature; discussion posts, presentation, review, and booktalk wiki.
 - **What the current literature says about the topic;**
Assignments & Assessments: Readings and discussion posts
 - **The history of about the topic;**
Assignments & Assessments: In class discussion
 - **How to respond to challenges of materials & why challenges occur;**
Assignments & Assessments: Readings and discussion posts
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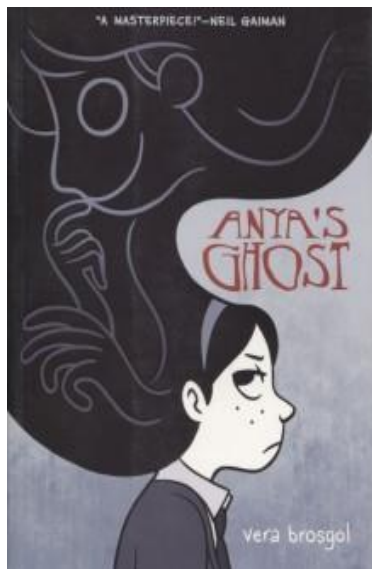
Paranormal graphic novels for teens: by Candice Benoit

Anya is a teenage girl who has a lot of issues. First of all, she is worried about being an immigrant from Russia. She worries that her accent is too strong, that she is too fat, that her mom is embarrassing, that her brother is annoying. The list goes on and on. One day, while Anya is cutting class again, she falls into a deep abandoned well in the woods. She meets the ghost of a girl who fell into the same well almost a hundred years earlier.

At first, Anya is annoyed with the ghost and wants nothing to do with her. When she finally gets rescue, she finds out that the ghost has found a way to follow her home. Emily seems friendly and eager to help Anya at first, but when Anya finds out the truth about her ghostly companion's past, things take a turn for the worse. In the end, Anya must look within herself and make some changes if she wants to make things right.

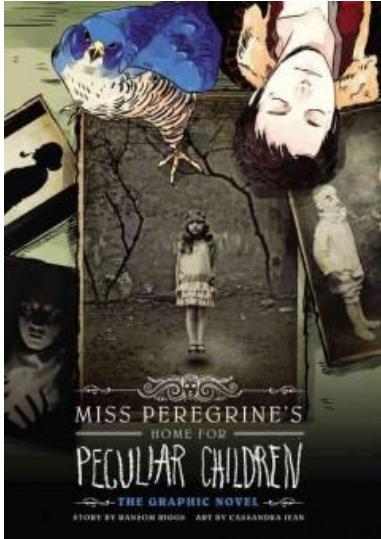
This book is a true graphic novel, not an illustrated book. It was written and illustrated by Vera Brosgol, who, like her female protagonist, is also a Russian immigrant. She is a trained artist who graduated from Sheridan College in Canada with a degree in Classical Animation, and her talent clearly shows through in her work. Brosgol's use of black and white with a tinge of violet creates the perfect backdrop for this delightfully creepy graphic novel. *Anya's Ghost* is a mystery, a comedy, and a tragedy all rolled into one. The heroine is a classic misfit, but she is also rebellious and sarcastic. These qualities make her realistic and likeable to readers. The tale itself is sardonic yet charming and is accompanied by equally

endearing artwork that is as eerie as it is beautiful. Another great aspect of the book is that the characters are well developed, and the dialogue is smart, funny, and real. The main character, Anya, begins as an angst-ridden teen, but evolves throughout the story. Although it tackles a few different themes, it never comes across as preachy or condescending. This graphic novel has been met with critical acclaim, and it is the 2012 winner of the Eisner Award for Best Publication for Young Adults, and the 2012 winner of the Harvey Awards for Best Original Graphic Publication for Younger Readers, as well as several other literary awards, and for good reason. Additionally, readers love it too, and it has a rating of 4/5 on Goodreads and Kirkus. It is an interesting and entertaining read.



Brosgol, V. (2011). *Anya's Ghost*. New York: Macmillan.

Anya's Ghost is recommended for grades 8 through 12, for both those who love graphic novels as well as readers who are not typically graphic novel fans. This book is also good for struggling or reluctant readers, as the pictures convey a lot of the story and it is an easy read. It would make a great addition to a high school library or young adult collection.



Riggs, R. & Jean, C. (Illustrator). (2013). *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children: Graphic Novel*. New York: Yen Press.

Peculiar children. A mysterious island. An abandoned orphanage. It doesn't get much creepier than that!

The story begins when tragedy affects Jacob's family, prompting him to journey to an island and explore an old abandoned orphanage where his grandfather once found shelter. Jacob learns that the island has many secrets, some of which he finds hard to believe. One of these secrets is about the monsters, one of which supposedly murdered his grandfather. As Jacob begins to learn more about the mysterious, and possibly dangerous, inhabitants of Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children, he eventually learns more about himself. Is it possible that he is a "peculiar" child as well? Although the children of the home existed long ago, they may still actually be present in the abandoned orphanage. When sixteen-year-old Jacob starts to learn more about them, he begins to befriend these peculiar beings. One day, the monsters start to turn up on the island, hunting for more victims. Jacob must find it within himself to save his new friends.

The story is weird but fascinating, and the characters are sympathetic. The book can best be described as a

haunting fantasy. There are several supernatural elements such as invisibility, controlling fire, and time travel. While some of the story takes place in contemporary time, some of it takes place in the 1940's, with World War II as a backdrop. It is an enjoyably interesting book that readers will not want to put down. *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* was written by Ransom Riggs and began as a traditional novel accompanied by found photographs. Illustrator Cassandra Jean adapted the book into a graphic novel. The new format maintains the photographs of the original work. Some of the illustrations are in black and white, and some of the illustrations are in color. The illustrations alternate depending on what is taking place in the story. This method works well to help readers transition between the different time periods. Both the photographs and the illustrations are haunting and creepy. They are a perfect complement to the story. Some critics have likened elements in the book to the Grimm fairy tales. *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children: Graphic Novel* has been well received by both literary critics and readers alike.

This book is recommended for grades 8 through 12, although many adults have enjoyed it as well. It would be a good addition to a young adult book collection, and may be good for struggling readers. This book is the first in the *Miss Peregrine's Children* series.

Hicks, F.E. (2012). *Friends With Boys*. New York: First Second.



So, this story is not about being friends with boys, as one might expect from the title. This is actually the story of Maggie McKay. She has been homeschooled for most of her educational life, but is about to start going to a public high school right in the middle of the

school year. As if that was not terrifying enough, she

also has a Victorian Era ghost following her around! Poor Maggie is the youngest in her family, and she is also the only girl in a house full of boys since her mother abruptly abandoned the family and ran off. Her three older brothers have already established themselves at school, leaving Maggie to navigate the social hierarchy of school by herself. Thankfully, she finds good friends in two fellow outcasts. As far as heroines go, Maggie is a fairly normal girl who is shy and emotionally vulnerable without being overly dramatic or full of angst.

Friends With Boys is primarily a coming-of-age story, as evidenced by the focus on identity. Throughout the course of the book, Maggie must learn to grow up, stop holding on to the past, and find a way to deal with the pain that stays behind. One reason this story is so endearingly captivating is because of the way that the plot is character driven. Additionally, the characters are well developed in that they are smart and complex. Both the major characters and secondary characters are realistically awkward and flawed. These qualities make them sympathetic for readers, allowing for an emotional investment in the story and the characters themselves. Another great thing about the characters is that they steadily evolve over time, rather than remaining static. This allows the story to move along smoothly and keep the reader interested.

This is a graphic novel that is full of humor, suspense, and plenty of heart. Overall, the book is compulsively readable, which is always an admirable quality. *Friends With Boys* was originally published as a web comic by author and illustrator Faith Erin Hicks. Like several other graphic novel artists, she studied Animation at Sheridan College in Canada. The artwork featured in this book is black, white, and gray scale. Hicks does a brilliant job of using facial expressions, gestures, and character placement to convey emotion, and readers are able to connect with the characters even on panels that do not contain any kind of text. This book has been acclaimed by critics, and is one of the Young Adult Library Association's Great Graphic Novels Top Ten for 2013.

Friends With Boys has appeal for both graphic novel fans and non-fans alike. It is recommended for grades 5 through 12, and would be a good addition for a middle school or high school library collection.





NOT YOUR FATHER'S superHero

By Tiffany White

With great power comes great responsibility.

Teenagers may think they know the story of Spider-Man which includes the story of Peter Parker, Mary Jane, Gwen, Aunt May, and Uncle Ben. Spider-Man's story is the story of "with great power comes great responsibility." This is the driving force between Peter Parker's acceptance and work as Spider-Man. This ideal continues on in the story of Miles Morales. However, this is not the story of Peter Parker as Spider-Man. This is the next Spider-Man.



In **Ultimate Comics Spider-Man**, Miles Morales is a normal teenage kid whose biggest worry is getting into a charter school determined by a neighborhood lottery. A visit to his Uncle Aaron's house and a bite from a stolen radioactive spider changes all of that. Miles suddenly can turn invisible and can climb walls. Miles shares the news of his new super powers with his best friend, Ganke. Ganke and Miles both move into the new dorms at the school as roommates to start the new year. Miles wants to just be normal after finding out that his father and Uncle Aaron both were into criminal activities before he was born and Uncle

Aaron has never stopped. Miles is afraid that he has become a mutant and does not want anyone beyond Ganke to find out because he doesn't want them to lock him up.

Miles used the reasoning that the city already had one Spider-Man and there wasn't a need for a second one. However, Miles witnesses the death of Spider-Man, aka Peter Parker. Miles feels immeasurable guilt that he could have stepped in to help save Peter Parker but instead chose to pretend that he was normal. Miles, in a move he later recognizes as in poor taste, dresses in Genke's old Spider-Man costume and goes into the city. He gets angry and is later caught by Spider-Woman who knocks him unconscious. Afterwards, Miles helps the agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. with an escaped and angered prisoner prior to being released to go home. Spider-Woman, Jessica Drew, arrives at his school to deliver a package to Miles from Nick Fury which includes his very own suit.

This graphic novel is rated T+ for Teens and up. This means that this material is good for most readers who are 13 and older. There is obviously a level of violence involved between super heroes and villains. Also, this issue portrays the death of Peter Parker as Spider-Man. Readers are able to identify with Miles Morales on a variety of levels including his fear of being found out because he is different, his desire to fit in, his reluctance to work to protect the city while Peter Parker is alive as Spider-Man. They can also identify with the guilt that he experiences from this decision after Peter Parker's death.

Always think about the **GREATER GOOD**.
To defend people who can't defend themselves.

Another story that readers may not know is the story of Ms. Marvel. Not Carol Danvers who goes on to become Captain Marvel but her fan Kamala Khan. Kamala is a sixteen year old Muslim, Pakistani-American girl who is trying to find her confidence and place in the world. In **Ms. Marvel: No Normal**, Kamala sneaks out of the house to go to a party she was forbidden from attending.

On her way home there's blue fog that covers the city and causes Kamala to become unconscious. While she is unconscious she sees Captain Marvel, Iron Man, and Captain America. They ask her who she wants to be. She comes to the conclusion that she wants to be "beautiful and awesome and butt-kicking and less complicated." She wanted to be what she thought Captain Marvel is.

Kamala got the total reboot she asked for but as Captain Marvel warned, things do not go as she expects. Becoming a superhero definitely isn't less complicated if you're suddenly changing into a blonde, Caucasian in Ms. Marvel's old costume of gloves, leotard, red sash, and thigh high boots. The first thing that Kamala learns that is although it is what she asked for she doesn't feel strong, confident, or beautiful. Kamala quickly learns she can make her body or body parts larger or smaller to suit her needs. She uses this to hide when she feels uncomfortable and to save a "friend" from drowning.

After sneaking back into the house Kamala learns that one of her best friends, Bruno, called her parents worried about her making it home from the party in the strange fog. Kamala is grounded. She tries to share what is going on with her with her best friend Nakia who doesn't understand what Kamala is trying to tell her. At school Kamala is trying to avoid Bruno and figure out what is going on with her body. She accidentally destroys the girls' locker room when she suddenly becomes huge and learns she can shift to look like her mother. After detention she stops by to make up with Bruno only to stumble upon a robbery at his



work. Bruno's brother, Vick, was trying to hold up the convenience store. She decides to try to save him as Ms. Marvel (although now she looks like Captain Marvel). Vick accidentally shoots Kamala and then runs off when Bruno is calling the police. Kamala reveals to Bruno that she is Ms. Marvel, who is healed when she shifted back to her regular self. Bruno helps Kamala avoid the police finding out who she is although now they will recognize her not just as the blonde, tall girl with powers.

Kamala tries to help Bruno find and rescue his brother as Ms. Marvel. She sneaks into the hideout where they're holding Vick in the basement. They do warn her that there are smarter kids there, like one named Doyle. Kamala immediately runs into robotic creatures kind of like spiders that shoot lasers all over the place. Downstairs Kamala attempts to rescue Vick but runs into Doyle the "head-b-boy-in-charge of the inventors ultra secret stash house." Kamala gets shot by Doyle's laser gun and has to escape without Vick. She immediately goes home where she gets caught for sneaking out again upsetting her parents. She convinces Bruno help her make her costume better using his "super snot" (biokinetic polymer) to make it stretch with her and then practices using her super powers. Deciding that "good is not a thing you are. It's a thing you **do**." Kamala becomes small overpowering and using the robotic spider-like inventions against Doyle and uses her ability to become large suddenly to get her and Vick out of the stash house. The inventor leaves a threat in a message for Ms. Marvel on the store that Bruno works for. At the end readers see the "Birdman/Inventor/Mr.Edison" who is very upset with Doyle.

This graphic novel is rated T+ for Teens and up. This means that this material is good for most readers who are 13 and older. There are concerns with violence, including the fact that Kamala gets shot by a regular gun and a laser gun. The art is really well done and the scene where Kamala is going between Ms. Marvel and Kamala for the first time is adequately strange and disturbing for the event. Parents are encouraged to look through materials if there are concerns with their children reading this material and reading with younger children.

At least once...many of us felt that our parents were the most evil people alive...



In the case of the six teens in **Runaways: The Complete Collection** they're not far off. Alex, Chase, Gertrude, Karolina, Molly, and Nico decide to spy on their parents at a fundraising meeting and some of them witness their parents murder a young woman in a ceremony for The Pride (a secret organization). After a failed

attempt to convince the police that the crime is not a prank call, they run away to Gertrude's house to look for the young girl's body as proof. Instead of the body they find a genetically altered velociraptor (named Old Lace), a tome that describes the history, mission, and future of The Pride, which has to be decoded, and holographic images of Gertrude's parents saying that they had hoped they would have been around and that Karolina's parents are to give Gertrude a decoder on her eighteenth birthday for the Tome.

The adventures begin in full force as they discover super powers—like Karolina glowing and flying—and super tools, and fight off parents, kidnapping attempts, being framed for crimes, and more.

The group decides to hide in an old cave and plan to get back at their parents. Afterwards they learn some of the history behind The Pride through the parts of the Tome Alex has decoded. They go on another supply run where they run into Cloak and Dagger (superheroes that the police chief called in) who believe their story and promise to send help. Their mole unfortunately reports the screw up to the police chief and The Pride takes care of them erasing their memories. The children learn more about the history of The Pride right before the police show up which leads to a fight that destroys the cave hideout. They decide to confront their parents at the Rite of Thunder where they go to sacrifice the soul of the sacrifice to the Gibborim.

The group discovers that Alex was the mole and that Karolina and Molly's parents were planning on killing the rest of The Pride for the six spots of immortality

offered by the Gibborim. Molly destroys the container holding the sacrificial soul which angers the Gibborim. Alex takes responsibility for the complications where the Gibborim decide to destroy him with a burst of flames and that they will kill The Pride and their children. The Pride hold off the Gibborim while the rest of the children run away in their parents machine. The Avengers later came in to clean up the mess caused by The Pride. The rest of the children were split up and put into foster homes, orphanages, boarding school, schools for mutants, and "relatives". At the end they break Old Lace out of a holding facility and run away again in Chase's parents leap frog machine.

This is T+ which Marvel considers good for 13 and up. However, do exercise caution as this graphic novel does contain violence. There is also an underlying romance between some of the characters so there is kissing in this graphic novel collection as well.

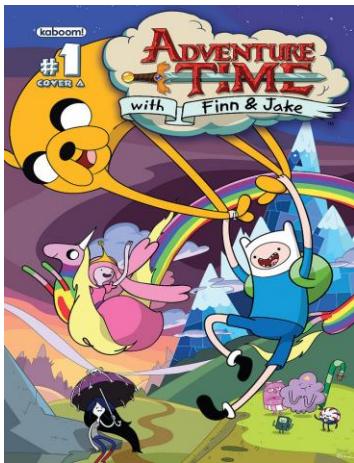
Works Discussed:

Bendis, Brian Michael. **Ultimate Comics Spider-Man, Vol. 1**. Marvel, 2012. 136 pages. \$19.99 Marvel. 978-0785157137.

Vaughan, Brian. **Runaways: The Complete Collection**. Marvel, 2014. 448 pages. \$34.99 Marvel. 97778-0785185581.

Wilson, G. Willow. **Ms. Marvel: No Normal**. Marvel, 2014. 120 pages. \$15.99 Marvel. 978-0-7851-9021-9.

Fantastical Fantasies by William Stephens



North, R. (2012).
Adventure time with Finn & Jake.
Los Angeles:
KaBoom!

The *Adventure Time* comic series written by Ryan North expands the adventures Jake the Dog and Finn the Human beyond what the hit cartoon show. *Adventure Time* airs on Cartoon Network and has developed a devoted following in both children and teens as well as among adults. In volume 1 Finn and Jake are confronted by the evil Lich who seeks to suck everything in the world into his “bag of holding” which is a sort of fourth-dimensional space that has far more room on the inside. Volume 1 ends with Jake and Finn stranded in the bag with no discernable way out wherein they meet the Desert Princess, who is also trapped within.

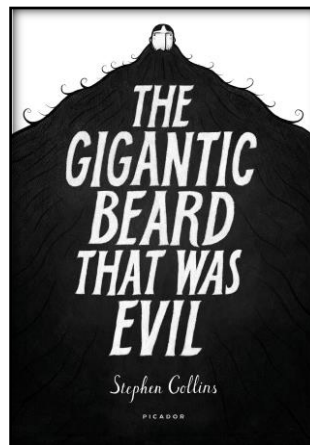
For those familiar with the show, the comic is a pitch-perfect mimic in both tone and writing. The show’s writing staff could easily have written the dialogue and the art could pass for stills from the show. The comic is filled with colorful illustrations and interesting characters. As well as easter-eggs for those of a somewhat geekier persuasion, such as the presence of the “bag of holding” a rare artifact very familiar to anyone who plays *Dungeons and Dragons*.

For those who are not familiar with the show, the comic is a still a delightful read. The artwork is colorful, attention-grabbing Comixology lists *Adventure Time* as all ages as there is no swearing or any real violence but the way Finn and Jake talk might rub some parents the wrong way.

There is no morality or lesson to be learned in this comic, Finn and Jake practice their “battle burns” or insults to be used while fighting, and while they are fighting evil they are still not necessarily making a case for themselves as righteous heroes. Not that this

at all detracts from the fun of the comic, quite the opposite in fact. *Adventure Time* is about, as the title suggests, adventures. The tone of the comic is akin to what a 6th grader would draw during lunch period, and that is a compliment. The comic knows what it wants to do, and what it wants to do is have a good time, have adventures, and make you laugh in the process.

British comic artist and writer Stephen Collins debut graphic novel, *The Gigantic Beard that was Evil* is an absurdist tale that is about exactly what the title suggests. On the island of Here, where everything is the same, Dave lives a normal life just like everyone else. Everyone is clean and tidy until the day that he lets the single, black hair that has plagued him his entire life begin to grow. Over the course of a single workday, after dealing with some alarming untidy data plots, a humungous beard begins to grow on Dave’s previously clean-shaven face. His beard becomes the talk of Here, and suddenly instead of staring out of his window at the passersby he becomes the observed as the citizenry begin forming a crowd outside his window.



Collins, S. (2014).
The gigantic beard that was evil. New York:
Picador.

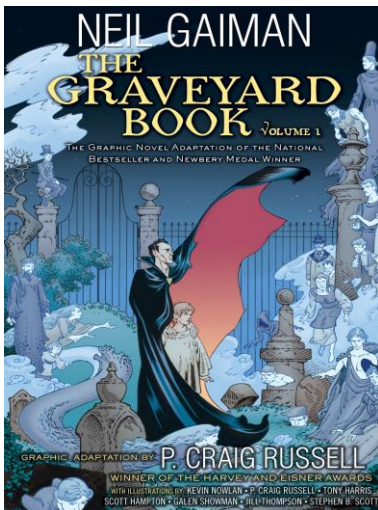
One of the most intriguing things about the graphic novel is that it is written in verse. While it does not follow a strict verse pattern it does rhyme throughout. This was something I had not seen previously in a graphic novel and fell in love with the way it read, almost as a sort of Dr. Seuss book for adults.

The story of Dave and his gigantic evil beard that cannot be cut reads like a surrealist satire of sorts. As the people of Here find out that Dave’s beard is the gateway to *There*, i.e. anywhere that isn’t Here, a place where everything is not tidy and well-kempt.

The people are frightened of this new thing that they have not seen before nor do they understand. They begin to accuse Dave of being a terrorist and want him removed so that their lives may be normal once more.

After the government has ordered all of the hairdressers, dog groomers, and gardeners to style and maintain the monstrous moustache and the great behemoth of bushy beard, they settle on tying large balloons to it to keep it aloft above the community that it threatens to overrun. The end result of this plot is that both Dave and his fantastical facial hair float away into the sky, leaving all of Here far below.

The way that the community of Here reacts to Dave's beard, the mistreatment he faces and the way that people stop and stare all can be seen in various political and social discourses in our modern world. The labeling of Dave as a "terrorist" is especially blunt when relating the story to the xenophobia that is increasingly prevalent in parts of our world. It does feel in many ways, as I wrote earlier, like a Dr. Seuss book for adults, with a poignant and necessary message hiding under layers of silliness and rhyme.



Gaiman, N. & Russell, P.C. (2014). *The graveyard book*. New York: Harper Collins.

After his family is murdered by a mysterious and violent criminal an infant crawls his way to a nearby graveyard where he is taken under the care of the ghosts who populate the hallowed ground. Such is the basic conceit of *The Graveyard Book* written by Neil Gaiman and drawn by P. Craig Russell. This graphic novel was previously a novel written by Neil Gaiman, which he later revisited in this format as he has done with several of his works. What follows this

rather gruesome opening is a fantastic and, at times, harrowing story of coming-of-age in a magical graveyard surrounded by hundreds of friendly ghosts.

The young infant who finds his way into the graveyard comes to be known as Bod, which is short for Nobody Owens (Owens being the surname of the ghostly couple who adopt him once he has entered the graveyard. In the graveyard he is looked after by a man named Silas, who may or may not be entirely human and who is the only creature in the graveyard that is allowed to come and go as needed. Silas, the Owens' as well as the other denizens of the graveyard take part in Bod's education and growth, raising him as if he were their true child.

Silas finds himself in numerous instances of trouble such as befriendng a witch who was buried in the potter's field (a field of unmarked graves for the lower class) and the time he was taken by ghouls into their underworldly abyss, each time he is rescued by Silas (or someone sent by Silas) and each time he is reprimanded. Bod grows curious of the world outside the graveyard's gates; a world that he knows he came from but does not know much about. He learns a bit from his time befriendng a human girl about his age who wanders the graveyard from time to time, until her family must move that is, but for the most part he learns the ways of the graveyard from Silas and his ghostly family.

"The man Jack" who murdered Bod's family, is still after ten years searching for the boy that got away, haunted by the fact that he did not finish the job he was hired to perform. But the man Jack is only one of the many dangers that await Bod as he continues to grow throughout his unconventional upbringing. While he is safe in the graveyard, as mortals cannot cross its gates, there is still the mysterious, ancient tomb that lurks underneath the small hill in what is the oldest grave in the graveyard.

The Graveyard Book is thoroughly a Neil Gaiman story, with elements of children's fantasy, horror and bizarre supporting characters it is a must-read for anyone who is a fan of his work, whether his novels or graphic novels. For anyone who is not a fan of his work it is an excellent place to start.