

10 Reasons You Should Encourage Graphic Novel Reading

 everyday-reading.com/graphic-novels

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Nearly every week, when I answer a variety of questions on [InstaStories](#), I get a question that is some variation of “How do I get my child to start reading REAL books instead of graphic novels?”

Now, I’m all for encouraging your child to read a variety of books and helping to expose them to different authors, genres, and topics.

But I strongly feel that writing off graphic novels is a mistake as a parent, especially when your child is gravitating toward those.

If you’ve been skeptical about graphic novels, here are some things to think about:

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- 1. What are your goals for your child when it comes to reading?** For me, my goal is to raise life-long readers. I don’t want my children to read when they’re in my home and then the minute they leave home never pick up a book again. I want books and reading to be a fundamental part of their life and something they absolutely love and gravitate toward. If graphic novels help them catch that love of reading and sustain a passion for picking up books, I’m ALL IN. Being clear on what you want for your child’s reading life is helpful when it comes to figuring out why you might feel negatively toward graphic novels.
- 2. Why do you feel like graphic novels aren’t “real” reading?** Often, parents feel like graphic novels aren’t “real” books – taking a minute to examine why you feel that way might help you decide if that’s a legitimate feeling or not. Is it because YOU don’t read graphic novels? Is it because your parent or teacher or librarian made comments about comic books or graphic novels not being “real” reading?

3. **Demeaning graphic novels when your child loves them undermines their view of themselves as a reader and their faith in their own taste.** Adults hate it when other adults demean their reading (think of the many people who are embarrassed by reading romance novels or cozy mysteries – it’s also usually the kinds of books that women read in higher quantities than men that are dismissed or ridiculed, but that’s a topic for a different day). Making your child feel like their reading choices and preferences are subpar or stupid is a great way to quickly make them feel like they aren’t a “real” reader or that their taste is poor. It’s also a terrific way to make sure they just don’t feel safe or comfortable reading at all – it’s better for them to just walk away from books than it is to have their choices demeaned. Imagine how you’d feel if every time you picked up a romance novel, your partner made belittling comments about how it wasn’t “real” reading or how you should really be reading more challenging books. You probably wouldn’t start plowing through Russian literature – you’d probably just stop reading entirely.
4. **The best way to get better at reading is READING.** If your child is a struggling reader or a reluctant reader, the best way for them to get better is to actually read. If they’re willing to read graphic novels, that gives them the practice they desperately need to get more fluent and more confident. And that’s an AWESOME thing.
5. **Graphic novels often contain higher level vocabulary than print-only books at the same level.** I was just noticing this the other day when I was reading Narwhal and Jelly aloud to my 4 year old – the vocabulary is pretty high for a book at that reading level! Because a graphic novel has less text to work with, they have to make every word count! Research from the University of Oregon Center on Teaching and Learning found that comic books average 53.5 rare (or more complex) words per 1,000. For reference, children’s books average 30.9 and adult books average 52.7. (You can [see that research here](#)).
6. **Graphic novels teach fundamental reading skills.** Whether you’re reading a fantasy novel or a realistic fiction title or a graphic novel, you have to be able to keep track of characters, follow a plot line and learn about a new setting. A graphic novel teaches all those skills which are critical to reading any story in any format.
7. **The images and text work together (the images don’t REPLACE the text).** Reading the text is key to a graphic novel experience – just the images alone aren’t the whole story. And because the images keep the story moving, a reader is much more incentivized to work on reading the text rather than just giving up when faced with a huge block of text and no promise that it’s worth it.
8. **Research shows that students have better comprehension with graphic novels than with traditional text.** If your child is struggling with comprehension or could use practice, graphic novels are a terrific way to boost their comprehension skills. You can [see the research on this here](#).

9. **Modern literacy requires fluency in a range of mediums.** We live in a world where information is shared in a wide variety of mediums, from videos to text to images. A child who can't process information shared visually is going to be an increasingly large disadvantage. Graphic novels are an incredible (and fun!) way to practice those skills of visual processing. (I've noticed over the past few years that this is a skill I REALLY have to work on – graphic novels are a great way for me to practice it too!).

10. **A child who is allowed to pick their own books is FAR more likely to actually finish those books.** I get complaints on a weekly basis about children who start a book but never finish it. A Scholastic study showed that 92% of young readers say they are more likely to finish a book they picked out for themselves. If your child is struggling to actually FINISH a book, try a graphic novel.

My favorite quote about graphic novels comes from Shana Frazin, a senior staff developer at the Reading and Writing Project at Teachers College, Columbia University. She says “It's not that comics are lacking in sophistication. It's that we teachers are lacking in the practice of seeing the complexity in these texts.” (That quote comes from [this article about graphic novels](#)).

I hope you'll give your child the opportunity to enjoy graphic novels, and maybe even try one yourself (I can't gush enough about [this one!](#)).