A reader attracted by mysteries and crime stories can enjoy the graphic novel version of Raymond Chandler’s The Little Sister (1997), illustrated by Michael Lark. Using pastels with a great deal of black shadowing and sharp angles, the artist has captured the film noir feeling of Chandler’s work. The action, sharp dialogue, and strong characters keep the reader involved as the world weary detective, Philip Marlowe, tries to get to the bottom of things. The engaged reader might even be interested in further exploring the cinematic techniques used in this graphic novel or may want to read another of Chandler’s works and compare it to the film version.

Graphic novels also speak to the real world of problems that young people may face, and one outstanding example is The Tale of One Bad Rat (1995) by Bryan Talbot. This novel is dramatically and yet realistically illustrated, using dominant colors to express the moods of what is happening such as the hopeful, country greens in the last section. The story traces the journey of a teen runaway in London to the Lake Country where she confronts and deals with her father’s sexual abuse as she traces the real life history of Beatrix Potter. Talbot closes with his story of the research he did to write the novel. An easy to read but moving story, any reader could benefit from encountering The Tale of One Bad Rat which received the Eisner Award (honoring comic book creators) in 1996.

Also powerfully moving and thought provoking is 9-11: Artists Respond, Volume One (2002, from Dark Horse Comics in Milwaukee, Oregon), a collection of pieces, some a page and some four or five pages, which consider the events of September 11. Numerous artists contributed diverse pieces which capture the courage of the rescuers, the shock of children viewing, and the costs of hatred and prejudice. The titles are revealing, including “Zero Degrees of Separation,” “Arab Americans,” and “Which One Is Real?” among many others. Some of the art is in color and some is black and white; one picture shows the Empire State Building weeping over the World Trade Center. All the art is strong. The proceeds of this book and the second volume are designated for relief funds. This work will affect all readers.

One more example which might appeal to students who find their regular history texts boring and difficult is the nonfiction Still I Rise: A Cartoon History of African Americans (1997) by Roland Warn Laird, Jr., with illustrations by Elihu “Adofo” Bey. A longer work covering centuries, Still I Rise takes a potted look at the oppression of Black Americans but also their resilience and many contributions to America. The black and white drawings make this history more personal and human as well as harsh. It is not a “fun” read and not meant to be read at one sitting. Yet, it is engaging and presents American history from another point of view which many young people may welcome. There is also a short history of Blacks in comics in the Forward by Charles Johnson. Still I Rise is sure to initiate thought and discussion and fits well into the social studies curriculum.
Gretchen Schwarz is an Associate Professor in the School of Curriculum and Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University. For educators who want to know more about the medium of the graphic novel and its potential with adolescent audiences, following are five useful resources:

**For Teachers and Media Specialists Interested in Graphic Novels**


3. *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud. New York: HarperPerennial, 1993. This is a graphic novel that examines the inner workings of comics, everything from how sequencing is created to the use of color, establishing the artistic character of the comic format.


Many resources exist online, and sometimes are the *Comics Journal* which offers interviews, reviews, and so on. The graphic novel is growing in popularity and influence, more titles are being published, and it may well serve as an inducement to read for many adolescents today. Educators will be intrigued, too. Check it out!

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**Works Cited**


High Interest-Low Reading Level Books for Reluctant Readers. Encourage reading with books that combine readability with interest levels. Share. Formerly titled "Shorter Books for Taller Readers," this list from the Multnomah County Library in Oregon offers a list of 30 hi-lo books for kids in Grades 6 to 8 (reading levels for each book are cited). The library's annotated booklist for high school students reading below grade level includes fiction and nonfiction titles. Books for Reluctant Readers. Raising a reader can be hard, especially when it's so easy for kids to find a game or device to distract them. Many kids also struggle with their reading skills, so finishing a book can be a huge challenge. But the right book can help convert even the most reluctant reader into a kid who will beg for one more chapter before bedtime. Sometimes all it takes is a relatable character or story, but sometimes thinking outside the box with a comic or a graphic novel can spark a lifelong love of reading. Check out our list below, and for more sure-fire choices, take a...

Engaging story is great for reluctant readers. By Cressida Cowell. (2009). Reluctant readers Graphic novels can be a way in for students who are difficult to reach through traditional texts. Even those deemed poor readers willingly and enthusiastically gravitate toward these books. Readers who are not interested in reading or who, despite being capable of reading, prefer gaming or watching media, can be pulled into a story by the visual elements of graphic novels. Benefits to struggling readers, special-needs students, and English-language learners Graphic novels can dramatically help improve reading development for students struggling with language acquisition for v. 9 Great Books for Reluctant Readers in Middle School. By Elizabeth Babbin, EdD. Save. It can be hard to motivate middle-schoolers with reading issues to pick up a book. One way to engage them is to find books with themes they can relate to at a time when they're trying to figure out who they are. Here are nine great titles to explore with your reluctant middle school reader. The Invention of Hugo Cabret, by Brian Selznick. The lavish, enthralling illustrations in this book draw readers in right away. But they include many details that are easy to miss at first glance. The text of the story is similar. It engages readers quickly, but gives way to a complex plot as the book moves

References: