Superhumans:

How Teachers Use Graphic Novels to Encourage Student Engagement in Learning

A Thesis Submitted to the College of

Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Masters in Education

In the Department of Curriculum Studies

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

By

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored how teachers used graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning. A case study approach was used to achieve my two research objectives: 1) to examine current research about graphic novels and pedagogical understandings relevant to the study of graphic novels as a pedagogical resource, and 2) to identify the pedagogical understandings of four secondary language arts teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning.

Action research framed the approach used to examine the collaborative practices of four teacher participants and myself as we learned about graphic novels. Interviews, focus groups, observations, and artifact analysis all contributed to highlighting the pedagogical understandings of the participants.

The findings confirmed previous scholarship that graphic novels can be a beneficial pedagogical tool in ELA classrooms, further encouraging student engagement in learning and valuing students out of school interests. The findings also confirmed that teachers go through a unique, collaborative, and at times, individualized process of learning before teaching a new resource, but when preparing and sharing graphic novels with students preferred to frame the learning using before, during, and after comprehension strategies and activities to present their units. The findings also affirmed that resource selection and evaluation was highly influenced by the teachers prior-interests and understanding of curriculum.

The study also produced some interesting findings that suggested the need for pre-service and in-service professional development opportunities around graphic novels so that teachers can be prepared to support and growing multimodal and multiliterate population. Furthermore, and unexpectedly, the participants each developed a passion for graphic novels where they previously had none and all continue to use graphic novels in their classrooms and read them for pleasure.

Keywords: multimodal literacy, multiliteracies, graphic novels, student engagement, pedagogy

Acknowledgements

There are many people that have contributed to my graduate work. I wish to acknowledge them and extend my deep thanks and sincere gratitude to them.

I would like to thank Geraldine Balzer for working as my supervisor. For many years I learned from her brilliance and expertise as an undergraduate student, and was fortunate to develop my professional relationship with her further during my graduate studies. Thank you for your continued guidance and advice.

I would also like to thank Paul Orlowski for making himself available as a member of my committee and for sharing his time and knowledge on what it takes to achieve a successful Master's thesis.

I am forever indebted to the hard work of the staff at with the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation, without their generous research grant, and their irreplaceable time and assistance with supporting my work, this thesis would not have been possible.

Furthermore, I am fortunate to have worked with four incredible Language Arts teachers who willingly gave up their time to help me accomplish my research objectives. Through their countless hours of research, learning, preparation, collaboration, and teachings, I learned just how amazing teachers are and how lucky their students are to work with them. If these teachers are representative of the great work being done in Saskatchewan, then I am thankful to be part of such a powerful and inspirational educational force.

I must thank my mother for supporting me throughout my life and for her encouragement to pursue my post-secondary studies. Throughout my life she has taught me the value of hard

work, the importance of completing a task, and the significance of working with others; thank you for being my first, and best teacher.

Finally, this acknowledgement could not be complete without thanking my wife Wanda, and my beautiful daughter Addison. To my daughter, I am sorry I was not always there, or that I was distracted at times by the work in front of me; now that this is finished I will not let anything get in the way of your growth. And to Wanda, nothing I can do can make up for the limitless hours, and sleep, you have sacrificed so I could work on my research. You have made my work, and me, a priority for the entirety of our relationship, and for this I am truly grateful. Furthermore, through your smiles, your personality, and your constant belief in me, I have kept the determination to complete this work. I will continue to support you in whatever capacity you need; I only hope to be as supportive as you have been to me. I love you, and thank you again.

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(Moore et. Al. 1988, p. 236)

Chapter 1: Introduction: Why Go Graphic?

"I felt that there was something *lurking* in comics…something that had *never been done*. Some kind of *hidden power*."- Scott McCloud (1993, p.3)

Statement of Problem

Graphic novels were once an emerging field within Education, within genres for adult and teen literature, within provincial curricula, and within many teachers' classrooms. Yet, in the last 15 years graphic novel use has become increasingly normal in many schools and libraries across Canada. I have been reading comics since I was old enough to look at pictures and switched to graphic novels around 2002. During my time as a primary and secondary student in the eighties and nineties, the only comics I could read in school were the ones I bought myself. I

never put any thought into why there were not graphic novels or comics in the classroom, I just

accepted, like everyone else that they were for personal reading.

Prior to attending university to become a secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, I

found that the conversations I had with friends who read as voraciously as I did, were more about

Neil Gaiman's (1989) *Sandman* Anthology and Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons (1986)

Watchmen than any of the novels we were reading. Whereas I continued to read graphic novels I

did not think about them again until I began teaching high school English Language Arts (ELA)

and English as an Additional Language (EAL). What I noticed was that my teenage students

were also drawn to graphic novels. Furthermore, when I asked where my students were getting

their texts, they said we had several in our school library. Within fifteen years I had experienced

a shift from graphic novels and comics being stigmatized as light reading found in private

libraries, grocery stores, and specialty comic stores, to texts that were not only carried proudly in

the hallways by my students, but were supported by the teacher-librarian as high school

literature-something I would later learn was more common than I had realized (Jacobs, 2007).

Another difference between my school experience and my students' current school

experience is the popularity of the Internet. With the popularity of social media like Facebook,

Twitter, and Instagram, youth no longer rely on the printed word alone to create and share

thoughts and ideas with their peers; instead users must become fluent in visual and multimodal

design elements for communication and meaning making (New London Group, 1996; 2000).

However, I did not see the focus on multiliteracies within ELA classrooms.

Traditionally there has been a focus on print-based literacies in the classroom. Much of my

research focus came from my lack of understanding around why more of my teaching colleagues

were still focused on print based literacy only, when the reality of our students' reading habits

were anything but print based. More importantly when I tried talking to my colleagues about graphic novels, or attempted a conversation about multiliteracies, I was often left with the sound of my own voice. When there were comments they were often negative and focused on graphic novels not being *real* literature. So the question that stuck with me - and most likely sparked my research - was, why were my colleagues and friends not interested in talking about graphic novels? I wondered how many of them held the same popular misconceptions about the literary merit of graphic novels that are often discussed by academics writing about graphic novels (Bakis, 2012; Bucher & Manning, 2004; Carter, 2007; Frey & Fisher, 2008; Hansen, 2012; Monnin, 2010; Schwarz 2009) and the use of visual literacy and multiliteracies in education (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Jacob, 2007; Jewitt, 2008; New London Group, 2000). I took it upon myself to start learning more about what other educators were doing with graphic novels so I could start building up my own graphic novel toolbox.

As I looked into graphic novels in Education, I found that only recently has much of the graphic novel research shifted from focusing on the elements of the medium (Eisner, 2008; McCloud, 1993), how graphic novels support non-readers (Schwarz, 2002) and/or the historical or cultural importance (Weiner, 2012) to the medium's benefit on student's visual literacy and growth in multiliteracies. Furthermore, many of the scholars identified how easily graphic novels engaged students in complex literacies that connect to their personal and public lives (New London Group, 2000). What needed to be drawn out further from the scholarly writing was what pedagogical understandings teachers held on graphic novels and how graphic novels could be used in the classroom. I realized that I was still a relatively inexperienced teacher so I wanted to see how my more experienced colleagues would approach learning about and teaching graphic novels.

Therefore, I have chosen to work with three secondary ELA teachers and one secondary French Language Arts (FLA) teacher in this study. These participants were instrumental in deepening my understanding of how teachers understand and share their knowledge of graphic novels within a classroom context. There is very little research on how teachers learn about and plan lessons, and then teach graphic novels to their students. The purpose of this research was to expand on this literature.

Some of the questions I considered at an early stage included: How do teachers understand graphic novels? Do graphic novels encourage student engagement in learning? How might a teacher's prior experiences with graphic novels or multiliteracies influence their professional practice or vice versa? And when it came to planning the unit or lesson, would they rely on some of the theoretical and practical collections available to guide their teaching (Carter, 2007; Tabachnick, 2009) or would they use their own resources? Finally when it came to assessing student knowledge, how would they know how engaged the students were and how could they tell if the students furthered their subject knowledge and content from graphic novels?

I believe the questions asked above not only helped define my research objectives, but also covered many aspects that are important to the educator wanting to learn more about graphic novels and their use in class. I had two specific objectives for this study:

1. to examine current research about graphic novels and pedagogical understandings relevant to the study of graphic novels as a pedagogical resource, and
2. to identify the pedagogical understandings of four secondary language arts teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning

Purpose of Study

Secondary students studying literature participate in a complex process. In it, teachers and students interact in a variety of ways: analysis, inquiry, assessment, reflection, creation, and meaning construction. Traditionally, teacher and student interaction involved only the printed word. However, current practices in the 2013 Saskatchewan English Language Arts 30 Curriculum (SKELA30) acknowledge that literature is not simply reading and writing, but involves a good balance of listening, speaking, viewing, and representing as well. Furthermore, the Saskatchewan Curriculum acknowledges the importance of *any* and *all* types of text (film, oral storytelling, plays, graphic novels, etc.). Each text offers a way of understanding and interacting with the world more effectively or differently. In this study I have recognized the importance of using multiliteracies and visual literacy within the classroom via graphic novels. The overall goal of my research was to further comprehend the pedagogical understandings of teachers using graphic novels.

Background of Study

It was the summer of 2002 when I read my first graphic novel, Alan Moore and David Lloyd's (1989) *V For Vendetta;* I finished it in one sitting on my sister's condo balcony. I cannot remember if it was sunny or overcast outside, and I do not know if my sister was even home. What I do remember was turning each page quicker than the previous one in an attempt to quell the anxiety that built up from Moore's engrossing text. That graphic novel was a gateway to a new kind of thinking for me, the kind where I connected the exciting, and at times disturbing, images with the prosaic and complex syntax within the text. Symbols, both textual and graphic, leapt from the page like they were stickers waiting to be peeled off by an inquiring young mind. I recognized aspects of my own world and the problems I never really paid much

attention to previously- things like the hidden workings of government and the power of individual freedom. I recognized different themes on greed, control, freedom, rights, and revolution. Suddenly my world of novels and short stories was not so important; suddenly I had questions about the bigger world around me and, unlike the main character of the text, V, I did not have the answers; that day I had developed a passion for reading graphic novels.

Looking back at that memory, almost ten years later, I have to ask myself: what was it about that text that awoke my passion for reading graphic novels for pleasure and entertainment and for learning and education.

Scott McCloud (1993) in *Understanding Comics*, wrote about the *hidden power* that comics have. I wondered if my experiences that summer day were part of the same power McCloud observed. McCloud's work analyzed almost every artistic aspect of comics and graphic novels. The *hidden power* he revealed was that comics tell as much with pictures and words as a novel can with words alone. After reading McCloud I had more questions: What was it that caused me to forget a whole summer afternoon? How did something that seemed to be a comic for mature readers awaken my inner critical thinker? And as an educator I needed to know how I could use graphic novels to reach out to my high school students. Surely, if I could be so deeply moved at a young age, then the process could be repeated with them in a classroom? I found some of the answers to my questions accidentally, during a conversation with a colleague.

It was my first year as a new EAL / ELA teacher at a Saskatoon community high school. I was sharing my surprise and joy that the ELA department was using the graphic novel versions of *Macbeth* and *Romeo & Juliet* with an ELA colleague. She responded by telling me that she has never actually used them. When I asked why she did not use them she said because she did not really know how to use them properly and that she was used to the textual version of the

plays. I unleashed a verbal argument, supported from my many years as a graphic novel enthusiast and from my light research into multimodalities, visual literacy, and multiliteracies. My argument was simple: graphic novels offered students a variety of educational opportunities written texts could not. I argued that they were engaging because readers had pictures and dialogue to compliment and to further explicate the narrative like a person expects from films, videogames, and websites (Kress, 2000). I explained how it was obvious that movies, video games, and websites are popular multimodal sites with the latest generation of teens; look down the hallway of even the lowest socio-economic background high school to find students playing the latest PSP game or showing off their newest 'app.'

Ultimately, I tried to explain to my colleague how graphic novels connect students to a type of literacy that is more relevant to their lives because in a world where so much of their information is retrieved via graphics and visuals it is important to give students access to academic visual material that engages and encourages them to think critically, and, in the process, entertains them as well (New London Group, 2000). Again I asked her, how easy was it for a grade nine class to make sense of Romeo's love-struck contradictions as they struggled through a print-based copy of the play? And with Shakespearean plays being acted instead of just read, would it not make more sense to have pictures that might mimic the gestures and actions an actor would make on stage? Even better, why have the reader imagine Verona-something not overly described in the play- when they could have pictures to support the dress and look of the city and its people? Furthermore, in a textually heavy play, the English language learners (ELL) stop listening because they have no idea what is being said anymore while the reluctant-readers lose interest and get defensive because they do not want to admit they cannot follow along. While I

make broad generalizations in the previous sentence, most teachers understand the situation I have described.

She rebutted my statement by suggesting that we already try to enhance student learning by giving them more relevant and updated novels, poems, short stories, plays, etc. Whereas she was correct about the new resources our school was using and that our government was offering within the provincial curriculum, I could not help but point out that those were all still print-text based materials with the exception of the occasional video and only two graphic novels being offered in the grade nine and ten Saskatchewan Learning Renewed Curriculum (SLRC) (2010; 2011), which at the time of our conversation no one in the division, except for our school, had purchased, let alone taught. Again she referred to the posters and web-based inquiries they already do at our school. And again I reminded her that graphic novels are the perfect addition because they add to the learning, not subtract from it.

In the end, I sensed my colleague was not completely convinced about my experiences and arguments. However, I thought she might be persuaded if I could find a way to strengthen my argument. At the time of our discussion I had very few opportunities to use graphic novels in my classroom, but every time I did I was convinced there was something about them that made them a valuable resource in the classroom. How could I prove that students developed critical thinking skills just as easily reading graphic novels as they would a novel? And once I did that, how could I get other teachers to replicate my work?

I had no academic introduction to graphic novels and their use in the classroom when I eventually began experimenting with them. However I wore a mask similar to the character V (from the panel above). He wore a Guy Fawkes mask to align himself with the Gunpowder Plot of 1605- in which Fawkes tried to blow up Parliament, to represent a symbol for citizens

protesting fascist rule, and (for the sake of the plot) to hide his disfigured face. I wore a mask of

confidence to show my support of graphic novels as an enjoyable reading experience, to

highlight the importance of using new critical resources in the classroom, but also to hide my

ignorance towards the academic use of graphic novels. In Moore's (1989) text, V inspired a city,

through a series of violent acts on government officials and government buildings, to stand up

against a tyrannical government and to unite people for the common good. But where he used

violence to achieve his means, I look to academic research to achieve mine; where he inspired a

city against a government, I hope to understand graphic novels better so I can educate and inspire

my students and colleagues.

Thus, it was January of 2012 that I began my M. Ed in Curriculum Studies at the

University of Saskatchewan with only something related to graphic novels as my thesis focus.

My first graduate class was a Narrative Inquiry class. The class was structured so that I was able

to delve deeply into graphic novel research and history. The end result was a narrative inquiry

final project that confirmed my thoughts regarding graphic novels. Concurrently it opened the

doors to an emerging field of study that crosses multi-disciplines, and multiple areas of interest

for me. More importantly the initial research I uncovered, gave me fresh insight into how

graphic novels fit into almost any classroom, but also how students and teachers use them.

(Kirkman, 2008, p. 9)

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

"At the very moment in its history when the lowly comic book has at long last reached maturity

it is important to have this excellent account of its journey from 'literary fast food' to acceptable

popular literature." - Will Eisner (2003, ix)

Situating the Study

To address my objectives I examined how graphic novels are a growing area of interest

within popular culture and within academic contexts. Concurrently graphic novels are

considered multimodal texts that support engagement with multiliteracies and therefore

engagement in learning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), so learning about multiliteracies and

understanding what was meant by multimodal helped shape my understanding of graphic novels.

The theory of multiliteracies (New London Group, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), which

identifies the need to expand the concept of literacy to include the various new and different

literacies available within a global culture, became instrumental in shaping this study's

theoretical framework; whereas the New London Group (NLG) focused on student learning, I

recognized that teachers are also learners, so I focused on their learning process and pedagogical

understandings with graphic novels.

The pedagogy of multiliteracies aims "to broaden [the] understanding of literacy and

literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses" (New London

Group, 2000, p. 9). It draws attention away from traditional literacy practices and asks that

people look at the multiple and various ways people understand our diverse world. There are

two key principles identified in the pedagogy. One, that our world is globally and linguistically

diverse. And two, that meaning comes from a variety of modes that guide *what* students might

learn, *how* they might learn it and what comes from their new learning. In this study I focused

on the second principle, specifically its focus on multimodal design, and I used the NLG's

discussion around the *what* and the *how* of the pedagogy of multiliteracies, and Cope &

Kalantzis's (2009) article that re-examines the pedagogy, to guide my analysis. It was also from

the pedagogy of multiliteracies that I was able to define what is meant *by pedagogical*

understandings; I see them as what and how teachers learn and then how they apply their

learning to create and teach lessons around it.

Finally, graphic novels and comic books are multimodal by design (Jacobs, 2007) so I

felt it was necessary to explore the elements of multimodal literacy to provide the participants

with clear language to help explain their learning. In the end I was able to use much of the *what*

and the *how* of a pedagogy of multiliteracies to help analyze and interpret my data. The sections

that follow explain the important influences, theory, and ideas that have helped frame this research.

From Literacy to Multiliteracies

Since the invention of the printing press, language and literacy - the way we understand and make meaning of language –was predominantly connected with the printed and spoken word only. However, this is no longer the reality for modern students as the breadth and scope of literacy has changed (New London Group, 2000). Simply open the door to most contemporary classrooms and you will see posters, wall charts, maps, globes, computers, smart boards, etc. Go through the door into the hallway to reveal a school where students are chatting with friends while texting their parents; where students see posters line the walls as announcements can be heard, or where they can read the latest blog about their favourite band on their way to class. Finally, follow the hallway to the staff room during lunch and there will be several teachers talking, texting, or playing a game on their phones as well. What do these open doors reveal? A culture ripe with multimodalities and multiliteracies; a culture that no longer relies on the written word alone for communication and information.

The New London Group's (1996) *A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures,* began the contemporary conversation about new literacies and multiliteracies and offered ideas on reshaping literacy pedagogy within education. Multiliteracies is a term coined by the New London Group (NLG) as a response to the changing reality of meaning-making and representation within public and private society to reassess how we approach teaching and learning literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). They proposed two key principles for educators and researchers to consider when approaching literacy with students. First, we as educators must increase our awareness of the cultural and the linguistic diversity present in our globalized world,

or what they called multilingualism. And second, that "the everyday experience of meaning making" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 166) involved many modes, or the multimodal; simply put the second principle, framed within a multiliteracies classroom, looks at *what* students need to learn and *how* they might learn it to best support their own multiliteracies (again within a global context). Furthermore, the pedagogy of multiliteracies recognizes that learning is dynamic because our social world is becoming "increasingly multimodal, with linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial modes of meaning becoming increasingly integrated in everyday media and cultural practices" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 166). The pedagogy suggests that if we are to address these complex social changes we need to support shifting learners from being passive recipients of information, to "active participants" (NLG, 1996, p. 64) who are transformed simply because they must be involved in interpreting and making-meaning of their learning. I also wanted to show how my participants were active learners that underwent their own transformations throughout this process. I used the above explanations to shape my own understanding of pedagogy as being *what* teachers focus on when learning or what their learning is, and *how* they achieve this learning and ultimately apply it to their teaching.

Understanding the impact of the pedagogy of multiliteracies is important because within almost all societies the printed word is not the only modality people use. Yet, we have difficulty letting go of print-texts such as newspapers, government paper trails a mile long, and dense academic texts filled with lengthy jargon (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Jewitt, 2008). When we strengthen a student's understanding in multiliteracies and provide them access to different modalities to create their understanding, we strengthen their overall way of interacting with the world. Therefore, educators are wise to support any text that helps students navigate past what Carey Jewitt (2008) suggests are "the constraints of official standard forms of written and spoken

language" (p. 245). Jewitt is not saying that there is no place for written and spoken language, only that it does not exist within a vacuum, but rather is part of a complex system of communication where all literacies and modalities connect; and it is rapidly changing. But for many educators, it is not a surprise that learning about multiliteracies is necessary to support students today, as multiliteracies have become recognized by national and provincial education systems, many of which require teachers to incorporate them within their practice (NCTE and IRA, 1996).

Raymond Williams (1976; 1977) warns that the English literary canon has become specialized with a focus on printed texts that meets a certain standard of literary quality. He offers how:

> …in recent years *literature* and *literary*…have been increasingly challenged, on what is conventionally their own ground, by concepts of *writing* and *communication* which seek to recover the most active and general senses which the extreme specialization had seemed to exclude. (Williams, 1983, p. 187)

He further argued that this specialized definition could not be used with the literary canon because it would not allow for new formats of literature. His work on expanding the idea of a formal or proper English led to the "emergence of cultural studies" (Higgins, 2012, p. 103); this is significant because of the emphasis it places on "new modes of literacy, which go beyond, and destabilize, the powerful opposition in literary studies between 'high' and 'low' culture" (p. 104). Perhaps my colleagues who did not see the value of graphic novels being used with their students were still focused on the idea of a specialized canon in ELA, rather than Williams' emphasis on an expanding literacy and literature. Fortunately, many ruling bodies within education recognize

William's (1976; 1977; 1983) idea of literature no longer being a specialized canon focused on only printed texts, but something that includes ways to study multiliteracies.

The *Standards for the English Language Arts* suggests students in ELA should have access to a large range of texts, both "print and nonprint," and participate in different "literacy communities," some of which might include using "visual language" (NCTE and IRA, 1996, p. 3). Concurrently, the aims and goals of the Saskatchewan ELA 30 (Ministry of Education, 2013) curriculum are focused on three areas: Comprehend & Respond (CR), Compose and Create (CC), Assess & Reflect (AR). Within the CC and CR outcomes students are required to work with multiple strands of communicating and understanding (viewing, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and representing), some of which require students to understand and use multimodal ways to show their learning. Both the NCTE and IRA and the ELA curriculum discuss creating students that will go on to become active citizens and lifelong learners within their public and private lives. But how can students become active citizens if they are not shown how to work with the new literacies in our world? What the above literature suggests is that it is important for the classroom teacher to know how to use multimodal texts to support teaching multiliteracies, rather than just having students view a multimodal text with no instruction.

Overall, the pedagogy of multiliteracies asks educators and researchers to "rethink what we are teaching, and, in particular, what new learning needs literacy pedagogy might now address" (NLG, 2000, p. 10). And it was with the focus on redesigning literacy and pedagogy that I invited my participants to reflect, rethink, and revise their own pedagogy.

The 'What' of the Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

In order to respond to the question of what do students need to learn with regards to the pedagogy of multiliteracies, the NLG offers the concept of design. Design at its core involves

three elements: Available Designs, Designing, and the Redesigned. The three elements work

together to show " that meaning making is an active and dynamic process, and not something

governed by static rules" (p. 20). What is meant by a dynamic process is that the learner looks at

all the resources (texts) or available designs (grammars and genres), and begins the process of

designing or "transforming" (p. 22) the available designs (such as through reading or listening)

until a new meaning is made as the eventual result of the designing; that is known as the

redesigned (NLG, 2000). Any teacher who has participated in a before, during, and after activity

with their students should hopefully recognize the power behind the design process. Nowhere in

the process of design are teachers required to follow a rigid set of rules or structures. It is quite

the opposite because the design process supports an open and flexible discovery when

redesigning a new meaning. I used this idea of an open and flowing concept of design work

within my own research because I wanted to see what knowledge teachers had with graphic

novels, how they interacted with the new information they learned around graphic novels, and

finally what they were able to do with this new information. Closely connected to the Design

process are the design elements, or the different modes of meaning, which have guided the

language used in my research; language that has opened the discussion and deepened my

thinking around graphic novels as multimodal texts.

One of the key notions related to the idea of multiliteracies is that meaning is made (or

designed) through a complex and interconnected series of modalities of meaning, or modes for

short. Each mode is further connected to a specific "meaning-making system" (NLG, 2000, p.

26), or as the NLG phrase it "Design" (p. 25). The NLG (2000) originally proposed that there

were five different modes of meaning with the sixth being the multimodal or the mode that uses

and connects with all the other modes. Cope & Kalantzis (2009) found that the modes fit into

eight categories (Figure 2.1. Modalities of Meaning), with the multimodal encompassing all of them in different ways.

Carey Jewitt and Gunther Kress (2003) offer a simpler definition of mode: "mode is used to refer to a regularized organized set of resources for meaning making, including, image, gaze, gesture, movement, music, speech and sound effect. Modes are broadly understood to be the effect of the work of culture in shaping material into resources for representation" (p. 1). Put differently, the modes of meaning contain the cultural elements specific to understanding each mode; traditionally these cultural elements have been referred to as grammars. Whereas we have spent many centuries focusing on the linguistic mode, in actuality each mode is equally important both on its own or juxtaposed with another mode. As mentioned above students and teachers, people in general, do not make meaning in a void. Rather they experience the world through a complex system where the modes of meaning are interconnected and supportive of each other; in other words they are multimodal in nature. It was this interplay of multimodality within the pedagogy of multiliteracies that I explored so that I could understand and provide the language and information teachers needed to support their own learning process through multimodal texts like graphic novels.

All modes of meaning have become increasingly important within our society, but of all the modes connected to communication - the means by which my research has been actualized - the multimodal is the most significant because it connects all the other modes together to form unique relationships around meaning-making. The example the NLG (2000) gave around multimodal design looks at how a magazine when read and viewed in different social and cultural contexts requires very different visual elements to understand it (p. 28).

Figure 2.1. **Modalities of Meaning** (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, pp. 178-179)	
Mode	**Description**
Written language	writing (representing meaning to another) and reading (representing meaning to oneself) handwriting, the printed page, the screen
Oral language	live or recorded speech (representing meaning to another); listening (representing meaning to oneself)
Visual representation	still or moving image, sculpture, craft (representing meaning to another); view, vista, scene, perspective (representing meaning to oneself)
Audio representation	music, ambient sounds, noises, alerts (representing meaning to another); hearing, listening (representing meaning to oneself)
Tactile representation	touch, smell and taste: the representation to oneself of bodily sensations and feelings or representations to others that 'touch' one bodily. Forms of tactile representation include kinaesthesia, physical contact, skin sensations (temperature, texture, pressure), grasp, manipulable objects, artifacts, cooking and eating, aromas
Gestural representation	movements of the hands and arms, expressions of the face, eye movements and gaze, demeanours of the body, gait, clothing and fashion, hairstyle, dance, action sequences (Scollon, 2001), timing, frequency, ceremony and ritual. Here gesture is understood broadly and metaphorically as a physical act of signing (as in "a gesture to…") rather than the narrower literal meaning of hand and arm movement
Spatial representation	proximity, spacing, layout, interpersonal distance, territoriality, architecture/building, streetscape, cityscape, landscape
Representation to oneself may take the form of feelings and emotions or rehearsing action sequences in one's mind's eye	

The group goes on to confirm the importance of the Multimodal design:

> In a profound sense, all meaning making is multimodal. All written text is also a process
> of Visual Design. Desktop publishing puts a new premium on visual design and spreads
> responsibility for the visual much more broadly than was the case when writing and page
> layout were separate trades. So, a school project can and should properly be evaluated on
> the basis of visual as well as linguistic design, and their multimodal relationships. To
> give another example, spoken language is a matter of audio design as much as it is a
> matter of linguistic design understood as grammatical relationships. (p. 29)

When I went to school in the late nineties, we were only assessed on the writing we did. It didn't

matter what the assignment was, it was always given a mark based on the written component.

Yet, the NLG's quote suggests educators rethink how we assess students, considering whether or

not our assessments support the different modes of thinking. The NLG (2000) disagree with

giving marks to only the written portion of a multimodal assignment. Fortunately, it has been

my experience that schools and teachers are no longer expecting students to write their way to

graduation in their language arts classes. Many Language Arts (LA) educators consider how

visual and audio elements fit within such a project. But in Saskatchewan it is not up to teachers

alone to decide what students should be marked on and how much of it should be focused on

only written language. Rather students are encouraged to show their learning in a variety of

ways. For example the renewed Saskatchewan ELA 30 (Ministry of Education, 2013)

curriculum has moved from objectives-based to outcomes-based assessment. And while there is

much literature available around outcomes-based assessment, the shift in how we view student

learning places a stronger emphasis on the Multimodal Design over the Linguistic Design alone.

Each outcome involves a use of a wide range of modes, or what Saskatchewan teachers once called strands (viewing, representing, speaking, reading, listening, and writing).

Kress & Jewitt (2003) further highlight the importance of the multimodal when they discuss the blending of the modes within communication. They offer, "that in communication, modes rarely, if ever, occur alone" (p. 2). They list many examples of how modes work together such as in children's writing where the visual or the image is just as important as the textual writing itself. They, like the NLG, use the term multimodal when it comes to discussing the blending of the various modes that occur during communication.

When looking at multimodal ways of making meaning, the person who receives the information is responsible for how they interpret and how they design the meaning (NLG, 2000). For the NLG, the designer of meaning was the student. However, for my research I wanted to see how teachers make meaning with multimodal texts so that I could better understand why they made the planning choices they did in their unit plans. I chose the graphic novel to be the multimodal text that my teachers focused on because of my comfort with it, and because of the strong support it receives as a powerful tool for addressing and presenting the complexities of making meaning. When we better understand how multimodality works in a graphic novel, we in turn, better understand how graphic novels work. Ultimately my goal was to show reasons why educators wanted to use graphic novels in their classrooms, with multimodality possibly being one reason.

Multimodality and Graphic Novels

The multimodality of the graphic novel invites readers to learn information from multiple and different perspectives. While most readers can approach the traditional elements of literacy within a graphic novel, the inclusion of images provides further instances for meaning

making in the text. Many researchers have examined the multimodality of graphic novels, combined with the literacies of the multimodality, which is at the heart of understanding the complexities of graphic novels and in turn how we might use them to support students.

Schwarz (2002; 2009) argues that one of the best reasons to use graphic novels is that they are important multimodal tools with a strong connection to media literacy. She offers that teenagers are surrounded by many different forms of media (smart phones, websites, television, YouTube, etc.) on a daily basis and because of this immersion in a media rich environment a tool that can bridge the different forms of media is required. A graphic novel can be that tool because it involves not only visual and written language, but the complex interplay of both (NLG, 2000).

Adding to the argument that graphic novels are best to use to support multimodal texts is educator and writer Dale Jacobs (2007). Largely influenced from the NLG (2000) and their work on multiliteracies and multimodality, Jacobs views the pedagogy of multiliteracies as "a way of thinking that seeks to push literacy educators, broadly defined and at all levels of teaching, to think about literacy in ways that move beyond a focus on strictly word-based literacy" (p. 21). He affirms that: "If we think about comics as multimodal texts that involve multiple kinds of meaning making, we do not give up the benefits of word-based literacy instruction but strengthen it through the inclusion of visual and other literacies" (p. 21). Not only does Jacobs recognize the importance of word-based literacy, he advocates that it will be strengthened through multimodal practices and more specifically, through the graphic novel. But where other researchers focused on theory and multimodality in general (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; 2003; NLG, 2000) he highlights how "comics [and graphic novels] provide a complex environment for the negotiation of meaning" (p. 21). And it is this negotiation of meaning that I sought to understand better in order to help my teacher participants make sense of their own graphic novels

and how it might apply to creating an environment where multiliteracies thrive. Overall, it was Jacobs's example of how to read a graphic novel page that convinced me that the best multimodal text to use, because it connected to so many modes of meaning, was the graphic novel (Jacobs, 2007). Furthermore, his defense of how graphic novels and comics act as multimodal texts and must be read as multimodal texts, and thus a richer source of literacy than strictly print-based texts alone, helped me solidify the importance of the graphic novel for teaching multiliteracies and multimodal reading.

The complexity of graphic novels is expanded in the work of Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila (2006). Their study on Manga identified the importance of recognizing the facial expressions and body gestures of the characters. Graphic novels like Manga rely heavily on the reader's ability to understand why the character looks a certain way. Traditional novels can simply describe, in a paragraph or two, why a character behaves a certain way or feels the way they do. Whereas, in a graphic novel, if the reader cannot interpret a character's looks, actions, and expressions, then a great deal of characterization is lost, which detracts from the story. The researchers noticed, much like Jacobs (2007) suggested, how students and teachers require knowledge in gestural, spatial, and physical literacies in order to make meaning and to interact fully with the text. Their studies lead me to ask: How would a classroom teacher teach these multimodal elements?

The above discussion looked at how multimodal texts and multimodal design frameworks are more complex than the solitary linguistic design or print-based texts. And if students as designers of their own meanings have to navigate several design modes and the multimodal at once, then it is paramount that teachers learn the best way to present the information and structure learning practices around it. Yet as I examined the literature around

graphic novels there was almost nothing about how teachers learned about multimodal texts or how they were able to design units. My research is significant in that through it I provide teachers with a voice so that they can explain their own learning process with multimodal texts, specifically the graphic novel. In the pursuit of strengthening students overall multiliteracies, the NLG (2000) suggest their own framework for looking at how the pedagogy of multiliteracies could be taught and it is through this framework that I was able to better understand how my participants learned about graphic novels and then used their learning to support student engagement in learning.

The 'How' of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies

For the NLG (2000), the 'how' of the pedagogy of multiliteracies was meant to be a shift in thinking and pedagogical practice to address the need to learn multiliteracies. They suggest that this process is made up of four distinct, nonhierarchical and nonlinear processes: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. The NLG used the four areas within the context of explaining how teachers or other experts work to engage students in the learning process where they will have access to all the areas of design (or the 'what' of a pedagogy of multiliteracies).

Cope & Kalantzis (2009) have reinterpreted the four areas into the "pedagogical acts or 'knowledge processes' of *experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing and applying* (their emphasis)" (p. 184). They suggest that when a person goes through the 'how' of the pedagogy of multiliteracies they are really "weaving" (p. 184) in all directions of the pedagogical acts as they are not linear acts. Both the NLG (2000) and Cope & Kalantzis (2009) looked at how the pedagogy of multiliteracies relates to student learning experiences. I recognize that teachers are also learners that interact with, and learn about, multiliteracies in unique ways. Therefore I have

used Cope & Kalantzis' (2009) four pedagogical acts, experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying to help frame my data analysis as I present my participants' learning experiences with graphic novels. Figure 2.2 summarizes the key details of Cope & Kalantzis' four pedagogical acts as they relate to this research.

Figure 2.2. **Summary of the Four Pedagogical Acts In the 'How' of a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies** (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, pp. 184-186)	
Experiencing: People make-meaning through *experiencing the known*, or reflecting on the familiar-our prior knowledge, interests, experiences, etc., and through *experiencing the new*, or observing the unfamiliar in new information, situations, and texts.	
Conceptualizing: Specialized, disciplinary knowledge. Learners are not told about the new knowledge; they are active in creating it.	
Conceptualizing by naming: identifying similarities and differences, categorizing, and naming. "Here, learners give abstract names to things and develop concepts"(p. 185).	*Conceptualizing with theory:* Learners weave between the "experiential and the conceptual" as they become more "active concept and theory-makers" (p. 185).
Analyzing: Involves learners being "functionally analytical," which includes making inferences and using deductive reasoning, and "evaluative with respect to relationships of power," which involves looking at and evaluating " one's and other people's perspectives, interests and motives" (p. 186).	
Applying: In this section the learner applies appropriately or creatively. Appropriate application involves the learner testing their new knowledge and understandings to real world situations in order to find out how valid it is. Concurrently creative application entails applying their prior knowledge in a new setting, experience, or form so that it affects the world somehow (p. 186).	

The four acts worked as a guide to show how my teacher participants understood and applied their learning throughout this research. And as the authors offer in the article, there was

no clear-cut path to follow when it came to the pedagogy of multiliteracies, much like my own data analysis, only a weaving of the directions; but within the weaving process their was still evidence from my participants of the four pedagogical acts.

The above section considers the significance of multimodal design over other modes of design, what a common framework might look like when working on a pedagogy of multiliteracies, and why, if it is important to teach students about and through multiliteracies, it is equally as important to see how teachers as learners navigate the realm of multiliteracies. But before moving on to my methodology, I thought it was important to look at the graphic novel in order to better understand what it is, how it has been used in education, and why the graphic novel is one of the best tools to help not only student engagement in learning, but teacher engagement and learning as well. After all, learning about graphic novels is where this research, and my participants, began their journey.

What Are Graphic Novels?

Learners have access to a wide range of multimodal texts in their daily lives. These texts range from blogs, posters, websites, television and film, video games, and mobile applications. Digital technologies can be unreliable in the classroom; ask anybody who teaches in a modern education system and they will tell you that load times for programs and websites on the Internet, even in some of the wealthiest schools, are average at best. And while television and film serve a purpose within the critical literacy classroom they cannot be the sole text analyzed for a semester if only because parents and administrators would be upset once they found out that other important areas of literacy (such as print literacy) were being ignored. Furthermore the Saskatchewan ELA 30 (Ministry of Education, 2013) curriculum requires that all ten outcomes are met, and as mentioned above the outcomes require skills in the many different facets of

literacy. Now imagine if there was a text that allowed you to understand visual and multimodal aspects of the Internet, film and television, and any other area of media; who would not want access to that? Enter the graphic novel.

Each author, artist, educator, and researcher uses graphic novels differently, and like many researchers before me I had trouble finding a solid definition for graphic novels. Even the term *graphic novel* was problematic to some of its supporters as the reference to *novel* suggests that it will contain a fictional narrative and *graphic* suggests something violent, vulgar, or sexually explicit. Rather graphic novels are not always fictional, their narratives are as varied as there are literary genres, and can be less sexual and violent than primetime cable television (Brenner, 2006). Eventually, I stumbled upon Terry Thompson's (2008) *Adventures In Graphica: Using Comics and Graphic Novels to Teach Comprehension 2-6*. Thompson (2008) compiled a list (Figure 2.3) of the most popular definitions for graphic novels and the authors that defined them. He presents a variety of definitions, inviting the reader to make their own definition of graphic novel, while at the same time highlighting the complexity behind what should otherwise be a simple term.

Figure 2.3. **Thompson's (2008) Graphic Novel Definitions**

- "Sequential art in book form (Gorman, 2003, xii)

- Tell a story with words and drawings and have an identifiable beginning, middle, and end
  (Cary 2004, 10)

- Stories told in both pictorial and word form (Foster 2004, 30)

- Arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea
  (Eisner 1985, 5)

- Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey
  information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer (McCloud 1993, 8)

- "coined the term 'graphic novel' to describe a complex story told in comic book format
  in 64-179 pages." (Bucher & Manning, 2004, 67)

Scott McCloud (1993) regularly referenced in articles on graphic novels and for being one of the first artists to unveil design elements of graphic novels and comic books, spends several pages in *Understanding Comics* trying to define *sequential art* (his word for comics) only to discover that the definition keeps growing and becomes further complicated as new details are added to it.

I define a graphic novel as being a stand-alone, full-length, fictional or non-fictional text that uses visual images, written text, and the two in combination to create a narrative. Therefore, my definition of a graphic novel suggests the average graphic novel reader requires skills in not only the individual visual and linguistic design modes, but the blending of the visual and linguistic (the multimodal) to completely understand the story.

With a more concise understanding of how *graphic novels* are defined in this study*,* I will develop the brief historical context of how graphic novels have been used in education so the reader better comprehends how some teaching professionals are using them now.

Historical Context of Graphic Novels in Education

Graphic novels have a short, albeit rapid evolution. In their genesis, graphic novels grew from popular 1940s and 1950s American comics. The comics, in turn, were influenced by political cartoons of the late 1800s, and comic strips of the early 1900s (Weiner, 2003). Comics were often viewed as children's reading, adventure garbage, or collectible superhero stories for nerds; and truthfully they were often "cheap pulp material"(Schwarz, 2010, p. 71), that was far from being connected to the accepted literature taught in the 20th century classroom. This connection to the popular culture in the mid 20th century underwent some scrutiny as during the1950s comics were connected to the rise in juvenile delinquency in American society (Connors, 2010).

Much of the literature attributes the concern for comics and the eventual creation of comic censorship to Frederick Wertham's subjugation of comics in *The Seduction of the Innocent* (1954). While Wertham cited many causes for youthful rebellion during this time, of interest was his assertion that: "reading troubles in children are on the increase. An important cause of this increase is the comic book. A very large proportion of children who cannot read well habitually read comic books. They are not really readers, but gaze mostly at the pictures, picking up a word here and there" (p. 122). According to Wertham comics made children addicted to reading pictures with little hope of making any 'real' textual meaning, a preference by Wertham and his contemporaries. Furthermore Wertham suggests that youthful aggression most likely comes from the violent and sexual images within comics and in some cases may

actually lead children to kill themselves - he makes this assertion because comics were found in some of the bedrooms of teenage suicides that he researched (Weiner, 2012, p. 8). Eventually, people stopped following Wertham's thinking; however, the damage was done to comics for a few decades.

But the connection to juvenile delinquency and comics was not the only concern held by some Americans, there was also criticism on their "aesthetic value" (Connors, 2010, p. 66). Connors (2010) found that literary critics like Sterling North, a writer for the *Chicago Daily News*, considered the comic book to be "badly drawn, badly written and badly printed" (North, 1940, p. 56). Connors identified North's solution to avoiding comics was "to ensure that young readers had recourse to quality literature" (Connors, 2010, p. 66). North's comments on quality literature is exactly what Williams (1976; 1977), mentioned above, was trying to prevent – the continuation of a specialized or classic literary canon. This elitist thinking on a classical canon continued in popularity in the United States throughout WWII.

> After the war, and showing thinking similar to Williams, Dias (1946) offered:
>
> The teaching of English today is a far more complex matter than it was thirty or forty years ago. It is not that the essential character of the adolescent student has changed, or that the principles of grammar or the tenets that govern good literature have been greatly modified, but rather that the average student of the present is being molded in many ways by three potent influences: the movies, the radio, and the comic book. (Dias, 1946, p. 142)

Dias, much like Williams (1976; 1977; 1983), saw the value in expanding our understanding of literacy and literature to include more diverse areas than just reading and writing, namely in formats (film, radio, comic book) that require strengthening our multimodal literacies. However,

Dias (1946) still preferred the idea of a canon as he saw comics as being a "stepping stone" (p. 142) to quality literature, whereas Williams (1983) saw quality literature as being too specialized, and thus the problem with the canon.

Fortunately, support of comics, visual literacy, and visual narratives grew as many artists, in the 1960s, began to experiment with a new form, the *graphic novel*. It was soon after that graphic novels made their jump into classrooms. There was also small movement of teachers between the 1940s and 1960s saw the value of using comics and graphic novels to support instruction. Some teachers saw them as easy texts that engaged reluctant-readers, while others saw them as vehicles that brought readers one step closer to appreciating traditional literature (Hanson, 2012). But not everyone saw the value of graphic novels.

Misconceptions About Graphic Novels In Education

Many friends, when told that I am pursuing research in graphic novels, laugh and say: "Oh so you are learning how to teach comic books." My ELA colleagues are not far behind when we talk about graphic novels and they generally write-off my work as being "not their kind of thing," "just good for weak readers, "or "too easy for some students." At best I have received the comment, "I could use it to supplement my teaching." The skepticism my friends and colleagues share are similar to the misconceptions some researchers have faced. Much of what my colleagues said has been discussed in the literature around the misconceptions people have of graphic novels, limiting their use to the following: supporting ELLs, engaging reluctant-readers, developing students who find reading and writing difficult, supporting male literacy as book, and promoting classical texts in Literature (Brenner, 2006; Hansen, 2012; Moeller, 2011). However, I wanted to focus on the more current misconceptions as they relate to education and as they support a clearer understanding of why my participants approached their learning and selection

of graphic novels, and how they did not hold their own misconceptions around graphic novels but approached their learning openly.

One major misconception about graphic novels was that they are for children. In reality, looking back at the comic books of the 1940s and 1950s, it is easy to see that they were never created solely for children. The genre ranged from superhero comics to true crime, horror, fantasy, science fiction, etc. (Brenner, 2006). My research is situated in three high schools, with four Language arts teachers. With a variety of genres in mind I relied on my participants' professionalism and their past experiences in selecting resources when choosing their own graphic novels. Furthermore I wanted to examine how and why they chose to teach their specific graphic novels with their classes.

A second misconception, and very much connected with the first, was that graphic novels contain *graphic* content like violence and sexual images. This criticism may come from super-hero comics where action and violence are often, but not always, a factor in the narrative (Brenner, 2006). And in the cases of some mature graphic novels like *The Watchmen* or *V For Vendetta* the criticism is valid. Not all content on the Internet or in film is intended for a young audience and this is the case for some graphic novels. A graphic novel like Katherine Arnoldi's (1998) *Amazing "True" Story of a Teenage Single Mom* deals with the sensitive subjects of teen pregnancy and rape. The text is not appropriate for elementary-age children but would work well with a mature group of high school students. Kathryn Hansen (2012) recommends that teachers apply the same critical thinking skills towards picking the best graphic novel for their class as they would towards all resource selection. When I first started teaching graphic novels I used only the ones I had read. Eventually I turned to journal articles on graphic novels and chose texts based on the recommendation of others in the field. As the research progressed I was

curious to see how many of my participants shared similar experiences to mine or how many would follow Hansen's suggestion when evaluating and selecting their text.

A third misconception was that graphic novels are mainly supportive of reluctant-readers. Whereas graphic novels lend themselves well to reluctant readers, labeling graphic novels as being only for reluctant-readers stigmatizes how students and teachers perceive the text. Students who feel graphic novels are for low-level or unengaged readers might avoid reading them, and teachers who only use them to engage specific students miss opportunities to learn about the benefits of graphic novels (Hansen, 2012). In my experience, almost all of the students I have taught in courses using graphic novels have reacted well to them. Obviously there were some who did not like them, but this is the same reaction novels, short stories, poems, and plays occasionally receive in ELA classes. I still wanted to know how my participants felt about the texts and how they would present the graphic novels to their own students.

A final misconception was that graphic novels are not academic material on their own, rather they are a supplemental material. This misconception mimics the complaint of my colleague in that a graphic novel is only good if it supplements how something is taught (Connors, 2010). The argument then is whether or not graphic novels can stand on their own literary merit or if they are only as good as the literature they represent or lead someone to read. I know that graphic novels have value on their own because I have taught many different themes and elements through them. Ultimately I wondered if my participants shared my realizations, that graphic novels were just as valuable as other texts, or if they found them to be less valuable.

I embrace the graphic novel as a complex form of text that can be incorporated into the daily routine of a multiliteracies and a multimodal classroom. Furthermore I recognize its value within literature and I believe my research gives other teachers, who share my beliefs, the

opportunity to voice the benefits of graphic novels for *all* students, not just those who may need support.

As I was preparing for this research and forming my research question I read through a great deal of the literature around graphic novels both in general and within education. What I found was that there was a large focus on how students responded to graphic novels and how graphic novels supported multimodal literacy and visual literacy. But what was missing was an extensive scholarship around what teachers understood about graphic novels, how they learned more about them, how they picked their resources, how they used them in their classrooms, and what they focused on when doing so, or put differently, their pedagogical understandings with graphic novels. The section that follows looks at the specific areas that guided my research.

How Have Graphic Novels Been Used In Education?

Much of the literature on graphic novels is concerned with the complexities within them. I first noticed the complexities within graphic novels during my Bachelor of Education program. Many professors challenged my thoughts and opinions and took me out of my comfort zone. They asked me to find and create new perspectives on 'real-world' issues such as globalization, poverty, inequality, racism, sexism, etc. I began to approach the graphic novels I read leisurely, with surprisingly more criticism than I had prior. I found that many of the texts offered strong connections to the real world in the different ways they presented the story. But what was the best way to engage with the graphic novels so that they did not seem so mysterious or complex to me anymore? How could I approach graphic novels to challenge my students in the same way my professors challenged my thinking. It is here where I turn to the experts in the field. The research I draw from looks at how certain scholars and educators approach the 'complexities' in graphic novels as a way of increasing not only a student's literacy skills, but their critical

thinking skills. Some of the studies were elaborate and gave descriptive accounts on how teachers use graphic texts to engage students in multimodal practices where their literacy skills are strengthened, while others just gave titles to useful texts or showed how graphic novels fit easily within different curricula. All the texts focused on showing the benefits of using graphic novels with students. Therefore, this graphic novel research became the groundwork for the reasons why I have chosen qualitative methods using case study with teacher participants as opposed to other methods; ultimately I wanted to expand on what they had already started by seeing what my participants noticed and how they used graphic novels within educational settings.

Graphic novels have many different connections to classroom and curricular content. One of the most obvious places to find them is in humanities classes where they are used to teach about social issues. *Superman and Batman,* examples of fictional comics and graphic novels, have become so immersed in moral and ethical issues that it is not difficult to find some relation within the story to our own world. Other examples from fiction include *Persepolis* (2003) by Marjane Satrapi, a coming of age story of a young girl growing up in revolutionary 1980s Iran, or *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman (1986), which recounts World War II and the Holocaust, but uses cats and mice as Nazis and Jews. But given similar themes for their classrooms, why do some teachers use graphic novels while others use traditional texts like poems and novels? I plan to extrapolate the previous question further in the discussions with my participants.

Despite the name, graphic novels are not just fictional stories. They encapsulate all genres from history to biography to instructional guides (Bucher & Manning, 2004). Within this broad use of the text is the potential to engage students in their own interest areas and in

developing new interest areas in different texts (Schwarz, 2009). Schwarz (2009) suggests

teachers should use graphic novels with students "[b]ecause graphic novels appeal to young

people, educators can use them to offer alternatives to traditional texts and mass media and to

introduce young adults to literature that they might otherwise never encounter" (p. 68).

Therefore a social studies teacher might bring in *The Cartoon History of the Universe* (Gonick,

1997) to aid in teaching certain aspects of civilization, or *Palestine* (Sacco, 2002) and *Jerusalem:*

Chronicles From the Holy City (Delisle, 2012) in a comparison assignment to discuss the current

Israel-Palestine conflict. Even teachers of science and math benefit from graphic texts like

McLuhan For Beginners (Gordon & Willmarth, 1997) or *Dignifying Science* (Ottaviani, 2000),

which is a text about women in science (Bucher & Manning, 2004). Not to mention the

abundance of science fiction and fantasy graphic novels already on students bookshelves and in

their minds (with a little help from Hollywood making a new comic book movie every month).

The list of fiction and non-fiction graphic novels is becoming exhaustive as their popularity

grows. And, as was mentioned above, as their popularity grows educators need to spend time

learning how they can harness the potential power of the graphic novel to engage their students

(and their student's prior interests in the process), and how they can use the multimodal elements

of the graphic novel to support a multiliteracies environment.

The second aspect I explored was directly tied to the elements of *visual literacy*. In the

introduction to their book on teaching visual literacy, Frey & Fisher (2008) comment on how

visual literacy is usually one of the least explored areas of literacy and "[visual literacy) is often

in service of the other literacies" (p. 1). They confirm much of what has already been said in this

paper, simply that visual literacy gets lost in the pursuit of "teaching the formal literacies" (p. 1).

And much like the NLG (2000) saw the need to develop multiliteracies and new literacies that

take learners away from linguistic modes of communication, Frey & Fisher (2008) want to see

visual literacy supported in education and research because of its importance in developing

literacy skills in general:

> We think of visual literacy as describing the complex act of meaning making using still
>
> or moving images. As with reading comprehension, visually literate learners are able to
>
> make connections, determine importance, synthesize information, evaluate, and critique.
>
> Further, these visual literacies are interwoven with textual ones, so that their interaction
>
> forms the basis for a more complete understanding. The twenty-first century learner
>
> must master this intermediality (or multimodality) of images and text in order to interpret
>
> an increasingly digital world (p. 1).

 Graphic novels not only support visual literacy, as the authors offer, but are paramount in

supporting modern learners as they try to make sense of the world. Frey & Fisher's work

suggests that once a person has a deep understanding of the elements of visual literacy and the

different ways visual literacy can support the learner, the multimodal blending of image and text

is automatically strengthened.

Visual literacy for Connors (2012) was not so much about the complexities in graphic

novels, but rather that there was not an established 'toolkit' educators could use to show students

how to read the visual elements of a graphic novel. As my participants were all new readers,

learners, and teachers of graphic novels, Connor's work was important because it suggested a

possible approach to teaching visual literacy, and in turn teaching graphic novels. His research

identified that graphic novel readers usually developed only their print literacy reading and

thinking skills. This lack of skill development is problematic if educators are expected to

support all strands of language (reading, writing, viewing, etc.). In response to his concern, he

purports that pre-service teachers and educators can use a common vocabulary and skill-set to teach visual literacy. The end result is hopefully a better-rounded student with stronger critical thinking skills and better literacy skills around the visual aspect of texts. The area of visual literacy is expanding as more books are being written on how to use graphic novels and specifically how to get the most out of visual literacy (Carter, 2007; Frey & Fisher, 2008). Again, I predicted my research will give participants a chance to share which aspects - the visual, the textual, or both - are really important for them to teach. But where many of the above researchers and educators were concerned with the complexities of visual literacy, some found the complexities inherent in creating personal graphic narratives.

Hughes, King, Perkins, and Fuke (2011) presented two case studies on how students read and write coming-of-age graphic novels. The article highlighted the need for students to develop multimodal literacy skills in order to be successful in the 21st century workplace. According to the researchers, the best way for students to develop these skills is through reading and creating graphic novels. The students in their study, almost equally represented male and female, read a series of graphic novels and were asked to create personal graphic narratives around one of the themes in the texts they read. The results were as follows:

> In spite of the challenges, these students, who would actively resist traditional writing assignments of any length, were able to develop their own stories about their lives in meaningful ways. Rather than the work being a chore…it was evident that the students found the work to be exciting and playful. p. 610)

Their research confirmed what I already knew from my experiments with graphic novels in the classroom; graphic novels allow for different, although not necessarily better, expression of thought. But would other teachers of graphic novels share my thoughts? Furthermore I

wondered if teachers had better ways for assessing a students' multimodal knowledge than by asking them to create a graphic text? If so, what were they? And although graphic novels can be a different form of expression, do they lead to better, or at least different ways for students to develop their critical thinking factors? Because these were areas that were important to student learning with respect to the multimodal skills, they naturally became an area of interest to my research and teacher learning. Again, many of the questions asked above came up in my research or helped guide my interviews and focus groups.

Finally both Connors (2011) and Schwarz (2013) commented on the lack of research into how teachers use graphic novels. Connors (2011) argues that there has been, " little research [on] teachers' attitudes towards this form of reading material" and teachers need to be asked about "what they do with graphic novels in the classroom" (p. 75). Schwarz recognizes that "the classroom teacher has credibility no one else has, especially with his/her own students and other teachers…[t]eachers can deal with current realities and still explore new possibilities" (p. 153). In response to Connors and Schwarz it was my hope that this research and the focus on teachers using graphic novels adds to the literature addressing Connors' concern by looking at my participants' attitudes on graphic novels and their knowledge around their learning process with graphic novels.

My goal throughout the past section was to guide my readers through the literature that supports my research, showing how the pedagogy of multiliteracies helped frame how I approached analyzing and reporting my data, where the many questions that guided my study came from, and why my research is necessary within Education. Whereas there were many questions that came up throughout my inquiries into graphic novels, they could all be funneled to

one main question: how do teachers use graphic novels to encourage engagement in student

learning?
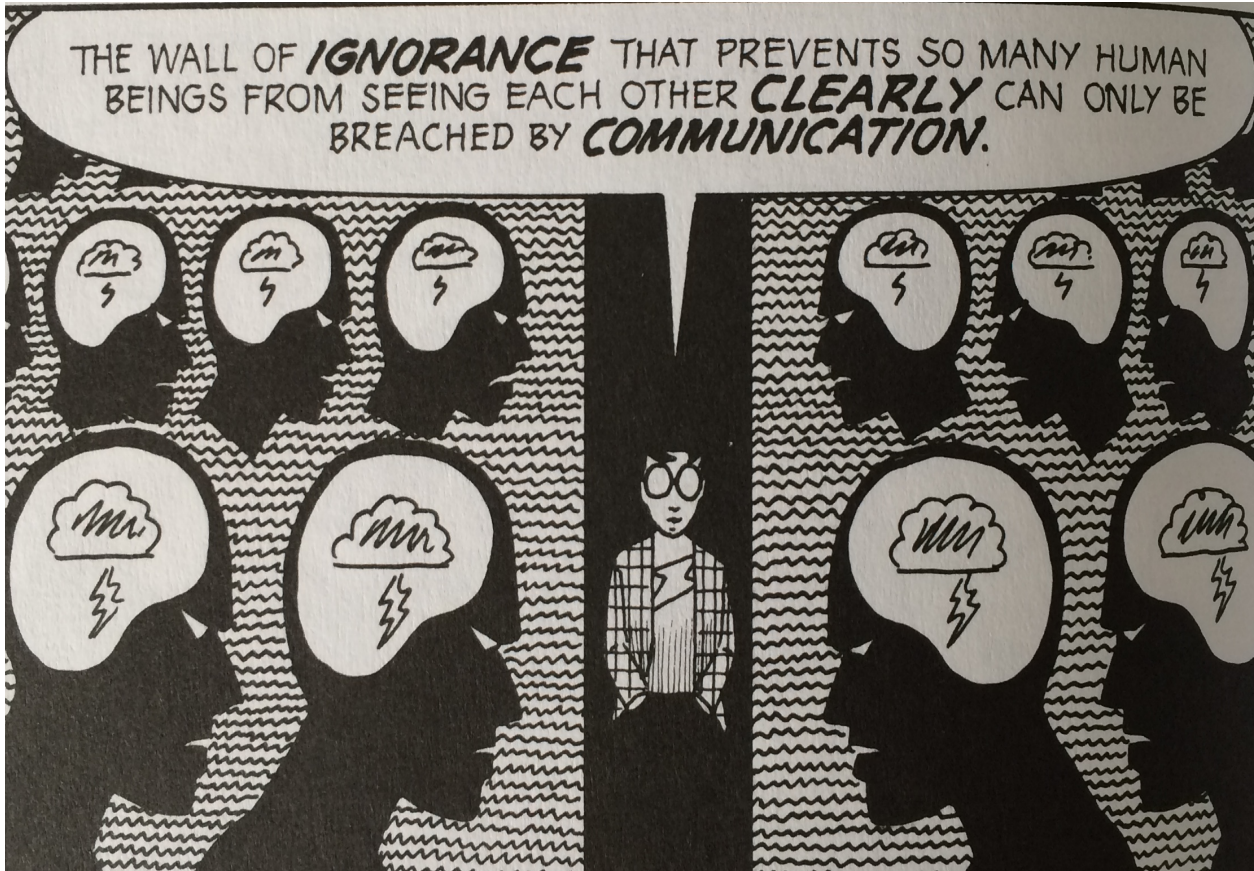
(McCloud, 1993, p. 198)

Chapter 3: Methodology

"A challenge especially to those new to qualitative research is trying to figure out what 'kind' of qualitative research study they are doing and what their 'theoretical framework' is…[h]ow one thinks about the nature of knowledge and its construction does underlie how you might approach a research project." - Sharan Merriam (2009, p. 22)

Qualitative Research

This study focused on two main objectives:

1. to offer further theoretical and pedagogical knowledge of graphic novels in the secondary Language Arts classroom;

2. to identify the practices and pedagogical understandings of four secondary Language Arts teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning.

Focusing the questions on the teacher's practice was deliberate. Whereas learning about how students approach a text and interact with resources is invaluable to furthering pedagogical practices, ultimately it is the teacher's responsibility to choose the best texts and resources, to plan and deliver lessons, and to assess student knowledge and mastery. Therefore, to explore the usage of graphic novels in the Secondary Language Arts classroom, the teacher was the focus.

Throughout the research process I felt clear on what I wanted to do in my study, but I was not clear on which methodology suited my purposes. I knew that participant involvement was instrumental in answering my research question, but I did not know the best framework to use. I also knew that this research would influence my participating teachers' pedagogical practices, as the participants had never overtly taught graphic novels. But my greatest concern was that I did not know what my participants would offer because they taught at different schools, with different resources, and may approach graphic novels in ways I did not expect. I needed a methodology that enabled me to work with and to observe teacher participants as they interacted with graphic novels and taught their students how to interpret graphic novels in their classrooms. Therefore, I found that qualitative methodologies, specifically case study and action research, best fit my research objectives.

To achieve my research goals, I worked with four secondary Language Arts teachers who were interested in learning about and using graphic novels with their students. The research involved sharing information on graphic novels with the teachers, engaging them in group discussions and interviews, and analyzing their finished unit plan.

Action Research

Because the focus of my study was on pedagogical practices with graphic novels I wanted my participants to have the freedom to develop their ideas whichever way they needed; in order to do this they required discussion and reflection time, both as individuals and within a focus group. I felt this approach was best placed within the realm of action research.

Ernie Stringer (2008) describes action research as "a naturalistic approach to research that engages teachers in reflective processes that illuminate significant features of their classroom practice" (p. 11). This naturalistic approach, or inquiry, was preferable over other methods because of its open nature. I needed an open methodology because I was dealing with teachers and I sought to understand their unique perspectives, experiences, and behaviours within different settings while remaining person specific (Stringer, 2008, p. 22). It would have been difficult to collect information if the participants had to fit within a tight, regimented framework. Furthermore, if I was to add to the existing literature around graphic novels and pedagogical practices, I wanted a methodology that highlighted the teachers classroom practices however they might emerge.

A second reason action research worked for this study was tied to Kemmis and McTaggart's (1998) definition that action research was a "form of collective, self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices" (p. 6). I agree that growth is necessary if educators are to improve their skills and practices. Because my research involved learning the processes of teachers and their reflections using graphic novels, both in-group and individual settings, the thoughts of the participants were as important as what they learned. It was my hope

that the participants would grow as educators as they learned more about how graphic novels fit within their educational practices.

A third reason, and also connected to the openness of action research, was that the process of inquiry within action research is systematic and flows easily from one stage to the next, allowing the participants ample time to reflect and to discuss. Stringer (2008) defined this as a "systematic process of inquiry" (p. 5) where participants and the researcher participate in an action research cycle. I did not know what to expect when I began interviewing so I needed to have the freedom to move as situations changed.

Stringers cycle follows a simple repeated pattern of *look-think-act* or gather data, analyze data, report findings (pp. 5-6); he goes on to say that it also serves as the starting point of the collaborative process between the researcher and the participants. His cycle provided a tested framework that supported my participant's thoughts while still valuing my own. We were able to follow the cycle throughout the research. Ultimately, the action research cycle led to the research finding.

A final reason action research was best for this study was its focus on social principles that are democratic, participatory, empowering, and life-enhancing, and because it focuses on the group rather than having the focus on one imposing, expert authority figure (Stringer, 2008, p. 27). Action research is democratic in that it keeps the research collaborative until the very end. My participants had complete control over their recordings, words, and understandings- after all it was their experience I sought. Furthermore, the participants had complete control over the planning, their reflections, their further actions and what was included in the final report. Because the research was concerned with improving teacher practice, I wanted my participants to feel empowered and to somehow enhance their life as they challenged themselves to examine

graphic novels as a group. Not only were they empowered, but also I could have never predicted how powerful the experience would be to the participants.

Case Study

This study, a modified version of Merriam's (2009) multiple case-study, examined the experiences of four secondary Language arts teachers that used graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning. I recognized that each participant was a unique individual that worked in a diverse classroom and school environment, adhering to its own culture, expectations, schedules; individual case studies of the four teachers helped me find responses to my research questions. I found that there were not only themes *within* individual cases, but *across* the various cases that needed to be accounted for which again fit within the framework of the multiple case study. As case studies offer a holistic focus and "a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance" (p. 50), multiple methods of data collection were used in this study.

Of key importance in case study research was its adaptability with methods (Merriam, 1998, p. 10). Merriam (1998) defines case study as: "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic" (p. 16). Case study was open enough that I could include as much or as little description from my participants as was relevant. My research was formed from conversations with teachers about their practices using graphic novels, how they planned and created units around graphic novels, and more specifically how they used graphic novels with their students and what they learned overall. In order to influence other teachers and scholars, I wanted a research methodology that allowed for broad descriptions of how an individual approaches a resource or why one teacher's choices may be preferable over another. Through

rich description I maintained the participants metaphors, artifacts, and language; again, case study supports such full description (Merriam, 1988, pp. 12-13).

A further reason why the case study design was appropriate was its accessibility to educational research. A case study is often employed because of the complex nature of schools as a "social unit" (Merriam, 1988, p. 32) within the real world. My participants were teachers from different schools, different cultures, and different upbringings. Concurrently, none of their students were the same. Even their classrooms were completely different from each other. Through case study I discovered the context my teachers were situated in and what contributions they made to education and graphic novels. These educators were not just teachers by trade; they were unique individuals that had lots to say about how they approached graphic novels with their students. Their uniqueness meant I needed to "get as close to the subject of interest" (Bromley, 1986, p. 23) as I could. The case study methodology let me get close to my participants so I could complete a thorough analysis of the individual, or "within-case analysis" (Merriam, 2009, p. 204), while still helping me maintain the broad view I needed to complete the analysis of the general themes from the multiple cases, or the "cross-case analysis" (p. 204).

Another benefit to case study design was that it examines a problem completely and may even lead to improving professional practice (Merriam, 1988, pp. 32-33). Such as in Alicia Decker's and Mauricio Castro's (2012) case study on war, violence, and graphic novels, the subject of how history can be taught through comics was explored from different artifacts and observations. They highlighted comic histories, the histories of the authors and the stories behind the texts they were reading. Then they presented multiple interpretations of violence and war, as offered by specific texts and authors (Decker & Castro, 2012). The authors improved teaching history by giving new ways to explore history. Through the semi-structured interviews,

focus groups, artifact analysis, general observations, much like Decker & Castro's (2012) work, my findings offered further insight into many aspects of graphic novels to help grow the knowledge within this emerging educational medium. However perfect the case study may seem for educational research, it is not without its limitations.

Some of the limitations include a lack of time and money for a solid description of the phenomenon, and the possibility of a 'too-detailed' or 'too-lengthy' account (Merriam, 1988). I was initially limited by a lack of money and felt that I would not offer sufficient description about the research. Fortunately I received funding from the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation[1] which provided me with sufficient resources and time to complete my research appropriately.

A further concern was that case study was limited to the "sensitivity of a researcher" (Riley, 1963 - taken from Merriam, 1988, p. 33) or how I needed to be aware of my own bias while still interacting with the data. As the research process unfolded, I learned to navigate the revolving role of participant, teacher, researcher, expert, and, with the support of my advisor and committee, feel confident that I was sensitive to the data analyzed.

Setting

Because of the focus of this study there was no need to have a predetermined setting or location for the length of this research. And much like the research itself the settings we chose to conduct their interviews focus groups and discussions changed depending on our time frame and the resources we needed around us. The initial and exit interviews took place in coffee shops and the participants classrooms, the focus groups were held in the McDowell room of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation building (STF), and the various professional development

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[1] The Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation is an independent charitable organization that was created by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in response to teachers' needs for greater involvement in educational research. Its goal is to support inquiry, reflection, and the communication of information and ideas that improve education.

and informal meetings we had took place in different conference room's throughout the STF or in restaurants around the city. The various sites used within this study had several common features: the locations were central, there was ample room for parking, and the indoor spaces were quiet, safe, and open which allowed for us to collaborate freely.

Participant Selection

Because of the relative infancy of graphic novel use in Saskatoon high schools there were not many teachers using them. Therefore I needed to be sure that I got the right, and the best sample of participants. Thus, purposeful sampling was used to help me "discover, understand, [and] gain insight" (Merriam, 1988, p. 48) from a certain population of participants.

I concluded, with the help of my committee – which consisted of my supervisor and one other member - that four participants would be most helpful. Having four participants allowed for a variety of dialogue in the interviews, focus groups, and informal discussions. The smaller number of participants gave everyone a chance to share their unique experiences, which ranged from 15 years to 28 years of teaching. They could also respond to each other without falling into digressions, although as the focus group discussion will reveal this was not always something that could be prevented. Concurrently, it provided multiple cases for me to analyze (Stringer, 2008, p. 67).

In February 2014, the Advisory Committee of Ethics in Behavioural Science Research at the University of Saskatchewan approved my research proposal (Appendix A). After I received approval, I was given permission by the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School board to send an email to staff in the division inviting them to participate in my research. Several weeks later I had not received any emails in response, so I began asking colleagues. I was fortunate to have two very casual yet powerful conversations with a couple of colleagues I worked with. Both

conversations happened matter-of-factly, one-on-one, during our regular school day. In both cases our discussion digressed to my research. When the conversations were done I had jokingly suggested that they join the research so I would stop bugging them about using graphic novels. Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Monroe (all participants were given pseudonyms) volunteered to work with me. I used the snowball method to find the Mrs. Somers, recommended to my by Mrs. Anderson. I spoke to Mrs. Somers and she was so enthusiastic she signed up without hesitation. I took a chance that the final participant, Mrs. Béliveau, a colleague from my previous school, would be interested because she was a passionate teacher who cared about what her students learned. I asked her if she would be willing to join, and after a little thought, and some worry in her own words that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks," she accepted.

Whereas men and women were invited to participate in this study all the participants who expressed interest happened to be female. Table 3. 1 below introduces the participants and their teaching context.

All of the participants had some basic knowledge on graphic novels, and all used a variety of pedagogical resources and strategies, but only a few had actually taught with a graphic novel and in both cases it was used to supplement the main content. Each teacher was asked to choose a graphic novel and plan a unit around it. There were no cultural, religious, gender, or age related requirements for any of the participants for this study. The only requirements listed were standard practice when it came to qualitative fieldwork:

(1) They must work as a language arts teacher; (2) They must be willing to talk about

their use of graphic novels; (3) They must be willing to share any lesson plans,

assignments, PowerPoints, photos, strategies, etc. connected to teaching graphic novels.

Table 3.1

Participant Teaching Context

Participant*	Years Teaching	Grade Taught	Class Demographics/ Socio-Economic Status	Graphic Novel Used
Mrs. Anderson	15	12	- First Nations - Various Immigrant/Refugee groups - European descent - Lower-middle Class	- *The arrival* by Shaun Tan (2006)
Mrs. Béliveau	28	9	- European Descent - Various Immigrant/Refugee groups - Upper-middle class	- *Persepolis 1* by Marjane Satrapi (2000)
Mrs. Monroe	20	9	- First Nations - Broad range of Immigrant/Refugee - European Descent - Lower-middle class	- *War brothers* : *The graphic novel* by Sharon McKay & Daniel Lafrance (2013)
Mrs. Somers	25	9**	- First Nations - Broad range of Immigrant/Refugee, - European Descent - Lower-middle class to upper-middle class	- *Lost innocence* by Brandon Mitchell & Tara Audibert (2014)

* All names are pseudonyms.

** She used her graphic novel with both an honours class and a transitions class.

Researcher Stance

As the lead researcher, I operated in many different ways during the course of the study. First, I was dubbed the resident graphic novel expert by the participants in the group as it was my initial passion with graphic novels that drew their interest to the research and it was in this role that I was later asked to provide professional development around graphic novels, and to be available for questions at random points throughout this process for the group. Second, I was a classroom teacher like the rest of them and related to them on a collegial level, which helped them trust me as I understood their challenges in the classroom and offered my own experiences using graphic novels in my classroom. Third, through conference presentations, I was able to go beyond this study and share my findings with the larger teaching community, a necessary step for my funding agency's focus of improving teacher practice throughout the province.

I do not view the lead researcher in the action research process as a separate entity from the group. When I began this research I understood that my role was to work with the group and to provide them with help whenever possible at the same time being the researcher and keeping track of everything. But as our meetings continued and as I got to know the group better I realized that my role was invaluable for all the reasons mentioned above and because, as the study progressed, I was learning more about how I understood and used graphic novels and in turn started to change the way I approach teaching them in my classroom.

Data Collection

Each participant was treated as an individual case study and the multiple cases were analyzed afterwards. The very nature of case study in qualitative analysis supports using multiple methods to collect data. Whereas I applied several different methods for collecting data during this research the primary focus was to gain what Merriam (2009) defines as a "special

kind of information" (p. 88). The *special* information I sought was best collected, at the advice

of my committee, through individual interviews and focus groups. But with the addition of the

generous funding provided we had to alter the ways I would collect data to include informal

meetings, observational notes, and artifact analysis. With so many potential sources for data I

felt overwhelmed at the thought of how I would manage the data effectively. I questioned

whether or not I had too many sources. I found relief in Stringer's (2008) comment that:

> Each of these types of information has the potential to increase the power and scope
>
> of the research process…[t]he use of multiple sources diminishes the possibility that one
>
> perspective alone will shape the course or determine the outcomes of investigation, and
>
> provides a diversity of materials from which to fashion effective solutions to the problem.
>
> This **triangulation (**his emphasis) of data adds depth and rigor to the research process
>
> (p. 55).

A discussion of triangulation and other ethical considerations will be discussed later in this

chapter. Ultimately each data collection method provided me with more in-depth data.

Furthermore I felt that I had the necessary skills to be a quality researcher/interviewer

according to Merriam's (1988) list on good interviewer skills. She suggests the interviewer have

"a tolerance for ambiguity" (p. 37), "sensitivity" (p. 38), and must "be a good communicator" (p.

39), before becoming a "careful observer" (p. 87). Her thoughts coincide with the practices of

not only a careful observer but also an effective interviewer: all skills I possess.

Before this research began I recognized the need to have a tolerance for ambiguity, as it

was not possible for me to predict what responses my participants would give, or in what

direction the study may have gone and with several different methods being followed it was

imperative that I had tolerance because the potential for ambiguity was great. This tolerance for

ambiguity helped me stay patient and follow the flow of the research as it was revealed. There were many times throughout the research where plans changed or expectations were altered and maintaining a tolerance for ambiguity helped me stay focused.

With regards to researcher sensitivity, my previous research experience, my years of teaching experience, and my time in graduate courses, have helped me establish sensitivity to the data collection process. I am friendly and outgoing, so I developed a strong rapport with my participants by asking good questions and by listening with interest to what they had to say (Merriam, 1998). And as a teacher and a graduate student, I was fully aware of the importance of clear communication. If I was not able to communicate clearly and ask good questions, my participants and the data I collected from them would suffer. Fortunately, I have always been the type of person that reads, writes, and speaks to be clear.

I incorporated the following methods of data collection: Interviews, focus groups, observations and field notes, and artifact analysis. When I presented the data I made the participants' quotes more readable by omitting pauses, repetitions, and other distracting elements.

Interviews

Interviews are conversations between two people. They are often used in educational research because they provide the descriptive and experiential information that quantitative research does not (Merriam, 2009). They play an integral part within the action research cycle, specifically in the first and second phase, *look and think*. Two semi-structured interviews, an initial interview and an exit interview, were used in this study with each participant. The first interview focused on the following issues:

- The teaching context of the participants
- Prior pedagogical practices

- Prior knowledge and understanding of graphic novels and/or comic books

- Interest in the study

- Perceived benefits to using graphic novels

- Perceived challenges\concerns of use and planning with graphic novels

The initial interview questions (Appendix B) were based on what Stringer (2008) framed as "typical [and] specific grand tour questions" (p. 58), which invited discussion and description from the participants. It was important for teachers to be able to speak openly and generally before getting into the specifics of graphic novels. As this was still the *look* stage, the initial interviews helped me get an understanding of what kind of information my participants had regarding graphic novels so that I was able to effectively plan the next steps in my research.

The initial interview was instrumental in helping me form a bond with the participants. Establishing trust with my participants was paramount. I knew that in order to get the best possible responses from them, they would have to feel comfortable and to trust me as the lead researcher and co-participant in the study.

The exit interview occurred after the initial focus group, informal meetings, and initial interviews had taken place and it focused on:

- Planning, use, and reflection of graphic novel unit

- Connections to Saskatchewan curriculum

- Student engagement

- Challenges/concerns with use

- Pros and cons to collaboration and this research

- Influence on pedagogical practices

The exit interview questions (Appendix C) focused on the *think* and *act* stages of the action research cycle. The questions highlighted the teacher's reflections and understandings of their planning and teaching of the unit. The action research cycle continued as teachers reflected on what worked overall and what needed to be changed. Concurrently, many of the questions were follow-ups to details that came from our initial interview and the informal meetings we held. Whereas the initial interview questions were more typical grand tour questions, the exit interview questions were designed to be more "specific" and "task-related" (pp. 58-59). The specificity was needed to highlight the use of the graphic novel unit and its effects on student engagement. Due to the nature of semi-structured interviews I never followed the same order of questioning for any of the case studies as each conversation developed the way it needed to, however all questions were asked.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were an equally important facet of this research because they not only added to the data but also supported democratic practices and teacher empowerment by involving all participants in a collective and interactive process (Stringer, 2008). Also, a focus group is an interview with a group of people who have "knowledge of the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 93). This research employed two focus groups, one at the beginning after the initial interviews and one at the very end of the research. Whereas the former was an opportunity to have the four participants discuss their ideas, strategies, and potential uses of graphic novels in the classroom, the latter was used to debrief the research process and to share thoughts and recommendations they had. I was interested in using focus groups in conjunction with interviews for the same reason Stringer (2008) saw value in them: "Focus groups have emerged as a useful way to engage people and processes of investigation, enabling people to share information and to

'trigger'(his emphasis) new ideas or insights" (p. 66). When planning this research it was my

hope that the positive experiences I had from various collaboration with my colleagues, would be

replicated in this research. And after the focus groups were conducted my hopes were confirmed

and many new ideas and insights were sparked during the lengthy discussions.

I followed a modified version of Stringer's (2008) list on running focus groups:

1. Set group norms.

   - Each person has a chance to speak.

   - We can speak freely and confidentially.

   - Questions are encouraged.

2. Semi-structured questions.

   - Questions were shared with each participant

3. Record the group's discussions.

   - As lead researcher I recorded all the discussions.

4. Clarification.

   - Group participants were given access to the focus group transcripts to confirm that the
     information reported is accurate.

5. Data Analysis and Action.

   - I analyzed the transcripts and decided what steps or actions were to be taken next.

Both focus groups adhered to the above procedures. I shared the steps with the participants and

gave them a chance to add, clarify, or remove any parts. No changes were made and they were

happy that I had a plan in mind.

The initial focus group (Appendix D) applied semi-structured interview questions around

these issues:

- Graphic novel examination and process for resource selection

- Approach to reading a graphic novel

- Approach to teaching a graphic novel unit

- Supports needed in unit planning

- Challenges to preparation and planning

The first focus group was structured much like the initial interview, but with the initial interview already completed, I had the benefit of shaping the focus group to incite further discussions around graphic novels and unit planning.

The second focus group came at the very end of the research process. It focused strongly in the think and act stage of the action research cycle and looked at the following issues:

- Understanding and reflecting on the research process

- Using graphic novels in the classroom

- Future research or next steps

Some of the questions asked were very similar to questions they had to answer in their exit interview, but I felt it necessary to repeat some of the more specific topic related questions again to see if having other participants in the room would help add further insight into areas they already explored. In the exit interviews the participants offered some suggestions on the next steps that could be taken with graphic novels, the overall benefits to using graphic novels, and how other teachers might get involved but there was no hypothesizing on what that might look like. However, within the focus group framework that same question in the final focus group (Appendix E) had them building on each other's ideas they were able to come up with potential for future research and use around graphic novels in education.

Observations/Field Notes

Observation is something we do naturally. But observation became a research tool when it was used in conjunction with my research objectives. Just as a person improves their interviewing skills through practice so can a person learn to be a keen observer (Merriam, 2009). To become a skilled observer, Michael Patton (2002) recommends learning to do a variety of things such as, "pay attention," write "descriptively," and take good "field notes" (pp. 260-261). The more I participated in interviews, focus groups, informal discussions and meetings, and professional development the more I improved at observing and collecting data. To Merriam (2009) this familiarity with my research question, participants, and setting brought me closer to a point where "serious data collection could begin"(p. 123).

Thanks to the funding we received we had several days of release time to meet and to plan as a collaborative group. It was during these informal meetings that I took field notes. I wanted to maintain my role as participant observer as I became an active member of the group for discussions (Merriam, 2009). There is skepticism at having the observer also be a participant, and is impossible to observe everything, but I followed a method of taking field notes that I had learned during my undergrad that let me take observational notes quickly.

Merriam (2009) suggested that, "field notes can come in many forms, but at least they include descriptions, direct quotations, and observer comments" p. 137); my field notes included everything from Miriam's list. Concurrently it was easy to reflect on the notes and add to them or clarify them as necessary. I even used the observational notes to help guide me in planning the next stages, in preparing for the professional development I gave to the group, or in developing the final interview and focus group questions. Later in the research during the data

analysis stage I was able to refer back to these notes and use them to confirm comments or thoughts that came up during discussion.

Artifact Analysis

In action research, documents, records, materials, and equipment are considered artifacts (Stringer, 2008, p. 73). To ensure triangulation, and to strengthen my data, it was vital I collected the best artifacts from my participants. The best artifacts were the ones, "pertinent to the issue investigated" (p. 73). However, Stringer (2008) warns that the most pertinent information might not be revealed until the "participant perspectives emerge" (p. 73). Because of the nature of my research objectives, it was necessary to look at the documents my participants made and used. The participants were expected to complete unit plans, and they were free to develop the unit plan whatever way they thought best. Concurrently, they were encouraged to include any assignments, lesson plans, assessment strategies, or student documents (with no features that could identify the student) that they used to teach the graphic novel. But to help remain objective when I analyzed their data, I asked them to create a reflective journal that I could include in the data; however only two of the participants completed the journal, while the other two offered a simplistic oral explanation and reflection which still helped with triangulation. I want to note the strength journals have as a primary source, which can be used, with the other data collected to add to the credibility and validity of my analysis. Journals give unabridged insight into the participant's thoughts and behaviors from their perspective.

Practical Framework

Some of the key elements of action research discuss building relationships, with the most important principles being trust and motivation (Stringer, 2008); to build trust amongst teachers

who were relative strangers, I felt a lunch together would help us get to know each other so that as we continued to meet that initial trust and motivation could be repeated and strengthened- and it was.

After we had finished eating lunch I discussed my expectations, my research question, my motivation, and my proposed tentative schedule. I invited them to share the expectations they had for this research and to make any amendments to my proposed schedule and timeline. Overall the group felt that collaboration was a positive practice but recommended having a little bit of time to plan on their own. They suggested using the majority of the release time we were given (ten days for each of us) for collaborative opportunities, interviews, and focus groups, and if it was possible, a few days to just plan, read, and reflect on their own. The collaborative days were viewed as the idea generating and discussion time, whereas the independent days were viewed as the time teachers could make their resources.

We identified possible dates to meet and most said that I should just pick some and have them decide if that would work. No one saw a journal or a mini unit as being a problem to complete but the length of unit and the format still needed to be decided at that point.

After lunch I took the participants to the Francis Morrison public library in downtown Saskatoon. At the library we went to the teen graphic novel section. Initially I didn't show them any particular titles; I just let them browse on their own. They did not hesitate and quickly went to viewing the book-shelved titles. As I watched them talk to themselves I could not help but think of my own reaction the first time I saw a comic book store in Taiwan that was literally wall-to-wall, comic books. It was both exciting and overwhelming. If this was a Hollywood movie there would have been a catchy tune in the background and the camera shots would feature close-ups of each of the four participants in a half grin and a curious, furrowed brow on

their faces; had this research been about teacher engagement in graphic novels, this would have been the ultimate example.

I shared my own graphic novel collection and some of the theoretical texts I wanted them to take a look at so they could start planning what teacher resources they might use. Mrs. Béliveau was the first to voice her amazement at the selection of texts available. She was overwhelmed at the number of potential resources she might have to go through and even commented that if she had to go through all of them her "head might explode." Mrs. Anderson was drawn to content related texts, or texts that were somehow driven by curricular themes. Mrs. Monroe stayed quiet throughout, as she seemed to be the most immersed. Mrs. Somers kept smiling and talking about all the different ways she could use the texts. Mrs. Anderson asked what texts were supported by the curriculum and which ones I knew might work with the different grade levels. I introduced them to the ones connected to the Saskatchewan curriculum and the ones I thought would be good resources. We spent the rest of the afternoon reading, reviewing, and speaking; all of the participants left excited and with a handful of graphic novels. We did not meet again until the start of the school year. What follows is a summary of procedures during that time.

Summary of Procedures

1. Each teacher was interviewed before any unit planning had begun. The interview included exploring prior knowledge and understanding of graphic novels, perceived challenges\concerns of using graphic novels in the classroom, teacher interest with the format, and their teaching context. The overall goal of the interview was to understand where participants were situated with regards to how they learnt about graphic novels or how they had used them.

2. The initial focus group with all the participants happened several weeks later. The questions were semi-structured in nature and were meant to help participants hear from each other and build off each other's ideas. The questions were focused on how the teachers approached reading and selecting graphic novels for the classroom, teaching a graphic novel unit, any potential challenges or concerns they saw.

3. After the initial focus group I had a better idea of what service supports the group needed and we were able to meet in what we called a collaborative day or an informal meeting. These were vital as they hoped to get to know each other better, but they also give us time to bounce ideas off each other. This was the first time all the participants were responsible for planning a graphic novel unit. This day involved sharing ideas on how to involve students in the before, during, and after stages of learning, and how they might begin teaching. Some teachers had read articles already so they were able to give their ideas on what might work with planning a unit. More often than not I was asked to give my opinion and share the stories on what I had done in the past. By the end of the day the group had requested that I provide a professional development around the history, elements, and educational uses of graphic novels.

4. The graphic novel professional development took an entire morning at the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation building. I provided teachers with four articles, one each, to read and present to the group:

- *The visual literacy white paper* (Bamford, 2003)

- Introduction-Carving a niche: Graphic novels in the English language arts

classroom (Carter, 2007)

- Finding space and time for the visual in K-12 literacy instruction (Hassett &

Schieble, 2007)

- *Graphic encounters: Comics and the sponsorship of multimodal literacy* (Jacobs,

2013, pp. 5-11)

Next, we went through a PowerPoint that I created explaining the history of graphic

novels, the common elements within a graphic novel, and prior educational uses.

Throughout the professional development teachers were encouraged to participate in

doing the activities, much like I would share with my students when I taught a similar

PowerPoint in class. This was presented lecture style but the participants were very

interactive throughout.

5. Several weeks later participants had an opportunity to meet again during a collaborative

day. By this time two of the participants had material to share and were more than happy

to provide for the group. There was much discussion and questioning around how

everyone planned to use their work or of the success of the work in their classroom.

6. The second interview, what I called the exit interview, took place after the participants

had taught and reflected on their unit. This interview was designed as a follow-up to the

initial interview and the 1st focus group. The focus of the interview was around the final

planning, use, and reflection of the unit, the challenges that came from the unit, student

engagement, and the pros and cons of this research process.

7. The second and final focus group happened at the end of the research process and was

    designed to have the participants share their understanding and reflection on the research

    process, on how the graphic novels were used in the classroom, and any future research

    or next steps for the group or individuals. Although some of the topics seemed similar to

    what was asked in the exit interviews, the idea behind it was to have group discussion

    and the potential for stronger ideas coming from hearing others' thoughts.

8. Throughout this process teachers were given three independent workdays, made possible

    by the funding provided for this research. At the very onset of the research the

    participants made it clear that independent days were needed to take the information and

    discussion from the collaborative days and actually have time to themselves so they could

    reflect, internalize, and make it work for their own practice.

Data Analysis

Utilizing Merriam's (2009) interpretation of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant

comparative method mixed with an open coding process or what Corbin & Strauss (2007) call

analytical coding, the various data I collected was compared with the literature and research from

many disciplines and with my own observations.

With the initial interviews and initial focus group I created codes in the margins of the

segments of data I found most meaningful to my research (Merriam, 2009). The codes

confirmed, but were not limited to, some of the categories I had in mind based on the response to

my research question. After the first round of coding some categories, or themes, began to emerge. As the research progressed I continued coding my observations, the artifacts, and the final interview and focus group. Initially, I tried keeping my codes in separate Word documents but that became very difficult to manage as I was constantly clicking between pages. Eventually, I tried a more traditional method and the codes were transferred to several bristol boards to help me create a visual of my data. Three rounds of coding with each data set were added to the bristol boards with the categories being finalized according to Merriam's (2009) criteria; they were responsive to the research question, sensitive, mutually exclusive, conceptually identical, and encompassed all relevant data (p. 186). Ultimately the categories fit within my framework of understanding pedagogy as the method of learning and the application of the method. The primary categories are found in Figure 3. 1 below.

Fig. 3.1. **Primary Categories From the Research.**		
Main Categories	Method- How and what they learned	Application- How and what they taught
Sub-Categories	- Prior experience with graphic novels - Pre-planning -Collaboration	- Application Experience - Student Engagement - Post experience/ Reflections - Collaboration

Ethical Considerations

At the onset of this research I could not predict all the possible ethical considerations that the University of Saskatchewan's Ethics Approval Board considers. To be prepared I followed Stringer (2008) suggestions around the following ethical procedures in action research:

1. **Confidentiality**: Privacy is protected by ensuring confidentiality of information.

2. **Permissions**: Permission is obtained to carry out the research from people in positions of responsibility.

3. **Informed consent:** Participants are informed of the nature of the study and provide formal consent to be included (pp. 44-47).

Protecting participant confidentiality was not a concern since I was using adult teachers from Saskatoon. However, I needed to keep their identities concealed because when a participant feels secure and safe, they are more open to sharing their honest opinion and thoughts, which added to the quality of my research. Again because my participants are adults I only needed their written consent. To avoid misleading my participants through the questions I asked, I worked with my committee to review the appropriateness of my questions. I gave my participants time to look over the questions before we started the interviews and focus groups, to ensure they were comfortable with what they were being asked. To strengthen the credibility of the research I gave the participants multiple opportunities to conduct member checks on any notes and transcripts made from our discussions and interviews. They approved all final transcripts before I added them to this paper.

Because I was working with teacher-participants I only needed to obtain permission from a few superintendents within the Greater Saskatoon Catholic School division. I provided them with a letter explaining my research and asking permission to invite teachers to participate in my research (Appendix F).

Finally there was the issue of informed consent. For the sake of communicating clearly with my participants, I included a consent form, which they all signed, explaining my research and their involvement prior to beginning the interviews, focus groups, and artifact collection.

The superintendents of the division asked me to inform the principals of the three schools the participants worked in about my research. I obtained their permission to conduct the research within the school.

(Yang, 2006, p. 194)

<u>Chapter 4: Data Analysis</u>

"The process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic. But this is not to say that

the analysis is finished when all the data have been collected. Quite the opposite. Analysis

becomes more intensive as the study progresses and once all the data are in." -

(Merriam, 2009, p. 169)

In Chapter 2 I looked at the need to further pedagogy around multiliteracies through the

use of multimodal texts and graphic novels. My intent was to show that literacy is changing and

we can no longer rely on print-based text alone if students are to be successful in a society where

technology is rapidly changing and the ways we communicate vary profoundly. Students need

different tools to relate to these new literacies and technologies. So it becomes more important

than ever that teachers learn about how to interact and teach these multiliteracies; looking at how teachers can use graphic novels to engage students in learning and strengthen their multiliteracy skills is one such way. This chapter examines how my participants learned about graphic novels, planned units around them, used them in the units with their students, and reflected on their pedagogical understandings throughout the process.

My research objective was to identify the pedagogical understandings of four secondary language arts teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning. The pedagogy of multiliteracies was a core element in framing not only how I understood graphic novels as multimodal texts, but how I learned about a possible pedagogical learning process. It was also ideal at framing this chapter as it "allow[ed] alternative starting points for learning" (Cope and Kalantzis, 2009, p. 188). I see the pedagogical process as being ongoing, with no clear starting or stopping points, so I preferred a framework that permitted my participants to decide where they wanted their learning to begin and end, and where I wanted my reporting to begin and end.

I approached my coding and data analysis chronologically. At many times throughout my data analysis I recognized that my participants were actually involved in different the pedagogical acts, already mentioned in my literature review, of experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying throughout their learning process (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). In this chapter I refer to the different pedagogical acts my participants performed. My reason for doing this was to help connect their processes to an existing pedagogical framework that has been tried and tested by many different researchers over the last few decades, namely the pedagogy of multiliteracies (NLG, 1996; 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). Concurrently it is important to remind the reader that while my data analysis was reported in a linear manner, the pedagogical

acts my learners participated in, sometimes unknowingly, are recursive. Participants often weave in and out of the different pedagogical acts within a given situation.

Furthermore, I found that the pedagogy of multiliteracies supported the action research framework because it was cyclical in nature; and if we accept that learning does not take place through steps or orders, but is holistic and ever changing, then the pedagogy was the best tool for observing and making sense of my participants pedagogical understandings.

Overview of the Study and Participants

This study took place between 2014 and 2015. Data from four separate cases were collected: the cases were three ELA teachers and one FLA teacher. The participants in the study were language arts teachers who used at least one graphic novel as a primary text in a curricular outcome supported unit. All of the participants were interviewed twice (one initial interview before they chose a graphic novel and began planning their unit and one exit interview that took place after they had taught and reflected on their unit) and participated in two focus groups (once during their learning process and once at the very end of the research process). Concurrently all interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. During the interviews and focus groups the participants shared their prior knowledge on graphic novels, their descriptions of the planning and use of graphic novels with their students, and their reflections on the process itself. Throughout the research process I organized and facilitated professional development and took observational notes whenever possible. Finally any original artifacts designed by the participants, both those used for unit planning and those that were given to their students were collected and used as data.

A multi-case study (Merriam, 2009) was created from the data collected. The following chapter looks at the backgrounds of the participant's personal and professional histories and their

pedagogical practices (the what, the why, and the how of their learning) as teachers learning about graphic novels and multiliteracies for the sake of bettering their classrooms.

Teaching Context: Participants Current Pedagogical Practices

Data analysis revealed that all of the participants had creative classrooms that were diverse learning environments complete with differentiated instruction that supported multiple intelligences and multiple literacies. For example Mrs. Anderson joked that she used any assignment or lesson that engaged her students: "I like anything where I can use them as puppets…for example, in any Shakespeare that I teach I use this old school pre-graphic novel text called Shakespeare for the Dogs." She continues:

> Well, I do a couple of things like first of all I physically engage them like with that
> activity everyone physically has a part. You come up, you have to play a little part I
> move you as puppets at first and as they get more comfortable they begin to ad lib so as
> soon as you can start to ad lib part of Hamlet from reading the little comic strip of it then
> I know you're engaged. Second is that I use questionings as we are going through: 'Ok
> so this character is doing that, so why do you think he's doing that?' 'What would be the
> motivation from before?' So their response is kind of [to] prompt me into see how
> engaged they are. And just kind of [my] past experience too like if it's an engaging
> activity, they like it and they get involved in it so.

I included her quote because it shows multiple examples of how she engages her students on a variety of levels (simple actions to more complex questions) and modes (physical, audio, written, oral, etc.). Engaging their students was a common theme for the participants as each one offered their own examples of what student engagement looked like during class.

When asked about her teaching practice Mrs. Béliveau offered:

[I]n grade eleven I do a big unit on cartooning and end up with a photography

kind of novel or story. The students really seem to like doing that particular

activity. There's a lot of base work that needs to be done, the initial teaching of

different strategies, how cartoonists do their work, (pause) we tie it into filming as well

and French films, so…we analyze films.

Again, her classroom offered a variety of resources and formats in which her students engaged with and developed their analytical skills.

And both Mrs. Monroe and Mrs. Somers offered classrooms that were as diverse in pedagogical practices as their students were diverse in personalities and culture. They mentioned that they did all of the same things as the other participants (resources and assignment variety), but Mrs. Somers added that she used literacy strategies like "rotating papers," "placemats," "or think-pair-shares" to get her students further engaged in discussion.

As the brief excerpts above were meant to highlight, all the participants showed signs of being discursive in their pedagogical practice and supportive of engaging students through a variety of resources, formats, and strategies. So when I asked them why they wanted to participate in this research I was not surprised to learn that Mrs. Monroe wanted to "develop an appreciation" of graphic novels or that Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Béliveau wanted to broaden their students "horizons" with "a new resource." And interestingly, it was only Mrs. Somers who was more curious to see how the students would react to a graphic novel than to what she would learn.

Once I had a sense of my participants' pedagogical practices and their overall desire to engage students in modern, relevant resources and assignments, I was able to look at their prior knowledge on graphic novels and how that information helped shape the benefits and challenges they saw to using them.

Prior Knowledge With Graphic Novels

From the very beginning of this research the participants underwent a variety of pedagogical acts that helped form their pedagogical understandings around graphic novels. The first act looked at the participants' experience with graphic novels (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

The NLG (2000) called this first act, situated practice, and suggested that teachers, or some other expert, would guide learners through the different activities that would support activating their prior knowledge around a topic of learning. As the pedagogy of multiliteracies was revisited ten years later, the focus was shifted from what the learner and expert can do together to what the learner does on their own; the act was renamed "experiencing" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 185). As a result experiencing happens in two major ways, the first looks at what the learner already knows on a subject or what they are able to observe or experience within new situations or texts (p. 185). The four pedagogical acts do not happen in a hierarchical or linear structure, but because of their complexity can happen at any time throughout the process. Because the experiencing act was focused on the prior and the new knowledge of participants it seemed most appropriate to start by showing my participants prior knowledge and experience in order to help understand where they are situated as learners.

I asked my participants a series of questions, during their initial interviews and initial focus group to elicit their prior knowledge, and prior interest, on graphic novels. After much coding, I created the category on participant's prior knowledge with graphic novels. I recognized that within the category there were actually two subcategories as identified by the participants, the benefits to using graphic novels, and the challenges or concerns with using them.

Prior Knowledge: Benefits of Graphic Novels

Many of the questions asked during the initial interviews were meant to establish trust and support, as I worked towards creating a strong community with the participants; they were also made broad so participants would be free to respond openly (see Appendix B). The first question I asked the participants was that they tell me everything they knew about graphic novels (to which the follow up question was in what ways might graphic novels support students in the classroom?). It was no surprise that each participant held a very different understanding of what graphic novels were and what they knew about them; in spite of this they all agreed that there were many benefits to using graphic novels.

The main objective of this research was to look at the pedagogical understandings of four Language arts teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement; in order to achieve this objective it was important to look at what participants thought the benefits were of using graphic novels as opposed to other texts to support student learning. Through this understanding I could see how teachers began to shape their understanding and learning around graphic novels. The initial stages of the learning process were instrumental in uncovering what the participants knew because what they considered beneficial ultimately determined why they wanted to use graphic novels and what they focused on when planning and teaching graphic novels.

The first benefit the participants identified about graphic novels was their visual appeal to the reader. To Mrs. Somers graphic novels were "[a]lways bright and shiny and very attractive visually" and, "I know this is a terrible way of putting it but they're like comic books for adults I think." While she clearly saw graphic novels as being more appropriate for adults, they were first and foremost visually attractive. Something about them drew people in and caught their

attention. Language arts teacher and researcher Maureen Bakis (2012) found that, "students find the aesthetic experience with visuals pleasurable (as opposed to more typical anesthetic experiences associated with common types of school-based reading)" (p. 2). She then suggests that one reason students might find reading visuals enjoyable is that it connects to their out-of-school interests. Her comments make sense if we think about how many students love spending time online looking at their friends' Facebook pages (a multimodal design that blends image, text, and audio), sending Instagram pictures, instead of text messages, playing on their phones, or playing countless hours of video games where image dominates the gameplay. So if students who loved the visual aspects of comics and graphic novels held prior interest in visuals, was it not safe to infer that my participants might too?

Such was the case for Mrs. Monroe who felt that graphic novels were "visually attractive because of the illustrations (and) the colour." Her interest in visual elements may have come from her lifelong love of children's picture books: "I'm a big advocate for children's books. I don't ever think you're ever too old to sit down and enjoy a picture book. Adults write them, why on earth couldn't adults enjoy them? Find an adult who reads to their child who doesn't enjoy reading a wonderful, beautiful storybook." But the visual appeal of graphic novels was just a small part of the overall benefits identified; more important was their potential to support visual literacy.

Rocco Versaci (2008) argued that comics and graphic novels are preferred over other visual media because "visually speaking, comics lend themselves to extensive interpretation, providing teachers with numerous opportunities to help develop visual literacy among their students" (p. 97). He goes on to say that when analyzing a text teachers are given the opportunity to ask many questions that are meant to engage students in discussion around the

different visual elements in the text that will ultimately strengthen how students make meaning of the overall story. He also makes it very clear that teaching visual literacy is equally as important as teaching any other type of literacy because to him " the act of reading the comic [or graphic novel] cuts much more closely to how our students today receive information" (p. 97). He identified the Internet as being the common place that almost all of his students frequent; this is something that most Western educators can relate to as it probably mimics their own students' lives.

My participants, like Versaci, found that another benefit to using graphic novels came from their ability to strengthen a reader's visual literacy skills. Mrs. Monroe was the first to comment on visual literacy, although not overtly: "The illustrations, you know, can pretty much be like a children's storybook. It can be a wordless picture book and still tell a story." She recognized that pictures tell a story as much as words can; this is the core of why we study visual literacy. Mrs. Béliveau echoed her thoughts when she saw how visuals helped make meaning of the "context and vocabulary" in a text. In a text that relies as much on pictures as it does printed words, being able to read the images is as important as being able to read the words, and some would argue even more important because of its connection to the world around us. Versaci (2008) discussed that the reader of a comic or graphic novel decides what pace to engage with the text, but no matter the speed they set, their eyes are required to be very active as they scan the images, gestures, and panels on a page to make meaning (pp. 96-97). While my participants may not have directly stated the importance of teaching visual literacy, they identified that the visual elements in graphic novels could not be ignored.

 Participants in this study, similar to those in other literature (Matthews, 2011; Clark, 2013), found that a further potential benefit to graphic novels might be their use as a hook or as a way to support student engagement in learning.

In his article "Back to the future: How teachers are using old favorites to hook the newest generations of reluctant adolescent readers" Thomas Grillo (2005) discussed how some teachers view graphic novels. He interviews teacher librarians who found it difficult to keep graphic novels on their bookshelves because they were popular amongst teen readers. He argues that graphic novels help teachers who are looking for alternative ways to engage their reluctant or uninterested readers. He does not play down the importance of traditional literature but he affirms, "teachers aren't replacing Shakespeare with Spiderman. But in an age where students are raised on images in movies, TV, video, and computer games, educators find comics connecting with students in a way traditional literature can't" (p. 26). Mrs. Anderson noted something similar about graphic novels being a resource that hooks students into engaging with traditional texts like Shakespeare:

> I know the kids like [graphic novels] and they get excited about them. So anything the kids get excited about, I get excited about. Um, I like how they provide a visual, especially again with Shakespeare, because I love teaching Shakespeare. Again anything that will hook them into it, so because they believe its old and boring, once you have the visual they can see it in action and they have an easier time imagining it so I think they understand it better.

Part of the experiencing pedagogical act involves weaving "between school learning and the practical out-of-school experiences of learners" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 185). Mrs. Anderson's quote above provides a good example where she blends her own prior knowledge

and experiences on Shakespeare to her out-of-school knowledge on the power visuals have with her students. She did not say that the visuals had to be connected to school learning only that the visuals, like those in a Shakespearean graphic novel, actually enliven a classic author to the point where students were reengaged in the material. And much like Grillo (2005) suggested, her thinking supports her teaching of Shakespeare, rather than replacing it. Likewise she is not taking away from the significance of Shakespeare nor is she 'dumbing it down' to make it more accessible for students. I asked Mrs. Anderson to explain in more detail how she envisioned a graphic novel, specifically one like Shakespeare, could actually hook students. She replied:

> It also gives them a mental image that they're able to associate…with the literature
>
> so it gives them a context often times as well. I think it's easier for them to take home
>
> with them especially when you're doing Shakespeare… because they have the visual it's
>
> easier to take home than if they just had the Macbeth [print] text and had to read through
>
> the language. So I think it helps them to deal with it a bit more independently because
>
> they are able to draw on more things to figure out.

 She suggests that students will not only be engaged by having images to support the content and language in a Shakespearean text, but they will also become more independent in making meaning as pictures are more interpretive in nature (Bakis, 2012). Mrs. Anderson's quote focused on her in-school experiences with students and the processes that have made them more successful - which suggests that she has strong prior knowledge around how students learn visually. It should be noted that although she felt she knew "nothing about graphic novels," she did use a graphic novel version of Macbeth with her students earlier in the year but she "just treated it like another text basically" without focusing on the "art work of it." It was unclear if she gained any overt knowledge from her prior use with the graphic text, what was clear was her

recognition that her students have some prior interest in the visual. For Mrs. Anderson, the experiencing act involved her making sense of what she already knew about students' bored reactions to Shakespeare, with her new knowledge that students actually enjoyed reading it in a graphic format.

Grillo (2005) furthered the idea of student interest in graphic novels through his interviews with teachers across the USA whose overall goal was to get students reading something they might be interested in. The teachers Grillo interviewed did not just use graphic novels, but they tried a Japanese style of cartoon, Anime, and they even included poetry slams. The result of their efforts was that they found their students to be more engaged with the material and therefore more willing to try new things. Variety and visuals seemed to be factors that interested students.

Mrs. Béliveau saw students connecting to the visual elements of graphic novels the same way they might with a films visual elements. And she thought students could be "tricked into liking something" through film. But what she saw as tricking students, I saw as connecting to their out-of-school interests simply because film and television are more common in our students lives now more than ever before (Morrison, Bryan, & Chilcoat, 2002). Mrs. Béliveau went through both stages of the experiencing act as she took what she knew on film and inferred that students might be persuaded or "tricked" into liking them.

Mrs. Monroe connected with the idea of trying to reach students through their interests as well: "[The students are] very reluctant readers so we encourage them to read anything that they have interest in, whether it is a motocross magazine or the daily Metro, and so I'm hoping that graphic novels might be [that] something." I prompted her further by asking her to explain how she thought graphic novels supported reluctant readers. She replied:

I think they're not buried in language, they're not buried in text, so [students] don't feel

defeated before they've even begun the story. The illustrations, you know, can pretty

much be like a rebus storybook. It can be a wordless picture book and still tell a story.

So I guess it would also help in terms of our EAL kids, and children that are strong visual

learners.

Mrs. Monroe offered a valid point on why students might be engaged with graphic novels: we are all visual learners from a very young age. Her personal experience and interest in picture books connected with her professional experience in using visuals with students seemed to strengthen her resolve to use graphic novels with students. Even though she did not teach young children, she was aware of the power visuals held with them. And her thoughts showed that she was working well within the experiencing stage as she was not only reflecting on her prior experiences but she was experiencing new observations as she placed her knowledge within the new situation of why graphic novels are beneficial.

Mrs. Somers also found that graphic novels supported students by hooking reluctant and non-readers. She was also engaged in the experiencing act but where many of the other participants made in-school connections she found her knowledge from a personal out-of-school experience. She shared an anecdote of how graphic novels engaged the ultimate reluctant reader in her life, her son:

Like I said my own son who wouldn't read a regular book, would read [a graphic

novel]. And I believe that reading's a benefit, so if you get them to read using

graphic novels then hey I'm all for it. So it's good for the kids who won't

read regular books because it looks too daunting because of too many words I

guess.

Her personal experience revealed the same results about graphic novels engaging reluctant readers, who are almost always male, as Michael W. Smith and Jeffrey D. Wilhelm's (2002) longitudinal study of male reading habits did. In it they found that one of the only texts male readers were interested in were graphic novels, specifically the visual elements. They highlighted, "the intense importance of the visual," and they found that some of the readers "described the reading of books and stories in strikingly visual terms" (pp. 151-52).

However beneficial graphic novels were to my participants and to their students, Connors's (2010) warned that making arguments that graphic novels support non-readers only can strengthen misconceptions around graphic novels:

> [T]hese arguments strike me as perpetuating - albeit unintentionally - a misperception that has plagued the comic book for the better of its existence. Specifically, it regards works written in the medium of comics (and graphic novels) as a less complex, less sophisticated form of reading material best used with weaker readers or struggling students (p. 65)

 My intent in presenting these particular findings was not to perpetuate, intentionally or unintentionally, the idea that graphic novels should be used with only reluctant readers. Rather, I hoped to highlight that graphic novels, as my participants and I saw them, could be used as a hook into reading and that in some instances they might work better for certain groups of readers.

The next section looks at some of the misconceptions my participants thought people had with graphic novels. However, after analysis the misconceptions actually strengthened the argument that graphic novels were not only beneficial but in some cases made them more complex.

Robin Brenner (2006) affirms that a major misconception about graphic novels is that they are for children because of their popularity amongst youth. (p. 124). However, she looks back at the comic books of the 1940s and 1950s, and offers that it was easy to see they were never created solely for children. Her main argument was that graphic novels and comics were never just for children, simply because the genre ranges from superhero comics to true crime, horror, fantasy, science fiction, etc. that were meant for mature readers (Brenner, 2006).

Mrs. Anderson's comments were similar to Brenner's. She thought that students or parents might perceive graphic novels as not really being "work" because they were too juvenile. I asked her to elaborate on why there might be this perception:

> Well because I think in the past if you're thinking of past comic books of 1970s [and] 1980s, that's what they were right, like *Archie* was just fluff, or I don't know what other comics there were…. but whatever they were like fluffy right? And they aren't hard to read and they're simple basic kind of stories, so now you're taking literature that has more depth to it and you're putting it that kind of feeling. So that's where I think the trick is, it's like 'well it can't be that hard' because it's a comic book right…Even though I know that's not what it is but I think that's what the perception is.

Her anecdote reminds us that everything we teach, every resource we use, comes with many misconceptions about that resource. In addition Mrs. Anderson identified *Archie* comics as the popular comic people might think about. At this time Mrs. Anderson was unaware of the important work within the comic book community being done by Alan Moore, Will Eisner, and Frank Miller to name but a few; their work is considered pivotal in the movement that saw comics become mature, complex texts (Weiner, 2012). Mrs. Monroe repeated the comparison to the fluffiness, or the suggested easiness of the comic. She mentioned that in her experience some

people might see graphic novels as not being "sophisticated" because there was less text or because the reading level was better suited for elementary grades. Again the idea of an implied easiness of reading is associated with comics and graphic novels. Yet in reality having to make sense of not only words and images on their own, but also working together, proves that reading a graphic novel or comic book takes more than a basic understanding of language.

Additionally, Brenner (2006) mentions, "many adults are still under the impression that the format automatically means juvenile content- but as the average age of comics reader is 30, this is certainly not true." Mrs. Anderson confirmed Brenner's findings that many people do hold misconceptions on the value of a comic:

> Well I still kind of think that some [people] think that even though you're doing Hamlet, you're doing a lesser version of it. Even though it's the exact same text as the original… My husband thought that, he's like 'You're doing a comic book of *Macbeth*?'(said with disbelief) And I was like 'no, it's not really a comic book it's the original script. '

 Mrs. Anderson's husband had no prior knowledge on graphic novels yet as Mrs. Anderson suggested, he felt they were a "lesser version" of the original *Macbeth*. So if we know that graphic novels are not just for children, but should be something used with all ages, how do we address these misconceptions?

Sean Connors (2010) examined many of the same misconceptions my participants found by looking at the historical context of comics and graphic novels. In his article, he suggests that the solution to people's general concerns or misconceptions was to, "increase awareness of [graphic novels] literary merit to gauge their potential complexity" (p. 70). By increasing the examination we give graphic novels in professional and scholarly articles we might have an easier time spreading awareness. Concurrently, he reminds us that, "good graphic novels, like

good literature, are capable of moving readers to reflect on unexamined aspects of their lives" (p. 70).

In keeping with Connors' (2010) claim, while at the same time repeating the inherent value of a graphic novel, Mrs. Somers offered almost the exact same advice when dealing with the misconception around graphic novels being too simple:

People don't give them enough credit as literature. Like I think there are definitely ones that are essentially just glossier comic books, but there are also novels out there that aren't very good literature. And I think being a graphic novel doesn't tell you anything about the quality of the writing.

Mrs. Somers' quote suggests that misconceptions are simply formed from a lack of knowledge around graphic novels. In addition she mentions that because there are such a variety of levels available, a person really needs to be aware of what type of graphic novel they are looking for because "I would say anyway that a lot of [graphic novels] have almost a, I don't know how to put it, but like a fringe element to them. Like so there's some that are kind of edgy in terms of culture." She gives the example of the Pullitzer prize-winning graphic novel *Maus* by Art Speigelman (1996) as a text that has "darker elements." She does not see it as being darker in the sense of explicit violence (Brenner, 2006), but darker in that it uses text and image in a unique way - the analogy of cats and mice (something that perhaps could only have been told through a graphic novel) - to tell the story of a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust. She sees the darker elements as being the parts of the text that a teenager sees interest in. And to her if it is a darker, fringe-like element that draws someone to read, something she sees as beneficial, than she will gladly support that; ultimately this is what makes graphic novels such powerful complex texts.

But the benefit of using graphic novels was not the only category identified in the data, there were several concerns and challenges to using graphic novels in the classroom that came up in the initial interviews.

Prior Knowledge: Initial Concerns-"How do we teach a graphic novel?"

The pedagogical act of experiencing requires looking at all the prior knowledge, experience, and information a learner brings to the learning environment (NLG, 2000). Looking at my learner's prior knowledge helped shape the design of the learning experience and was necessary for me to understand all the areas of information my participants had around graphic novels, including their concerns. There were multiple, similar concerns brought up by each participant around their lack of knowledge with the graphic novel elements and how they would present a unit on them.

In Annett's (2008) case study that examined teacher's attitudes and the ways they use graphic novels, he noticed that his six participants (English teachers from middle years, high school, and college) were concerned over their own weak skills "in the vocabulary of the graphic texts" and of their lack of knowledge with " the history of the genre"(p. 168). Furthermore, Annett found that some of the teaching colleagues of his participants were uncomfortable with using comics or graphic novels because they were not familiar with them. Thus he concluded that teachers who wanted to use graphic novels "require some techniques and strategies to analyze" the graphic novel (Annett, 2008, p. 151; Connors, 2011). Connors (2011) found similar results in a case study he conducted with English teachers at a midwestern suburban high school. He asked teachers what they thought about teaching the graphic novel. He found that:

The majority of the individuals I spoke with were reluctant to do so. Asked why this was the case, one teacher volunteered that she lacked a vocabulary that would allow her to interrogate the visual design of graphic novels, thus making it difficult for her to engage students in conversations about the rhetorical design of the text they read. Another, having taught a graphic novel in a non-honors freshman English class, recalled that, in the absence of a shared vocabulary for analyzing images he and his students struggle to deconstruct the semantic structure of individual scenes and evaluate the role it played in shaping their response as readers. (p. 76-77)

Both Connors and Annett found that teachers using graphic novels needed some support in understanding and analyzing the visual and textual elements of the texts. Accordingly my participants, required learning about the elements of graphic novels to fully engage with, and in turn, plan their texts.

Building off Annett's (2008) and Connors (2011) claim, Mrs. Anderson shared her understanding of the importance of being prepared as a teacher. She admitted that she could handle most questions or concerns from parents by being well-prepared, yet her greatest concern was that, "I'm not really very familiar with [graphic novels]. And I like doing things well, so before I'd be comfortable in teaching [them], I'd want to be prepared." Likewise, Mrs. Béliveau, possibly because of her prior use of comics in the classroom, was comfortable teaching them, but wanted to make sure that she had enough time to learn how to use a new resource. She commented:

I don't have any idea of how long it's going to take. Like normally in a novel it's going to take this long, but because there's not a lot of vocabulary, but there's lots of pages, I'm

not sure if this is going to take me a week, or three weeks; or how much to focus on

things? So it's going to be a learning process the first time through.

 Continuing with the theme of teacher preparedness, Mrs. Monroe wanted support for her

own lack of knowledge in the form of "a package that had some teacher suggestions with it or a

teacher guide with it; a better way of implementing it, rather than just picking it up and thinking

from scratch yourself for ways you can incorporate it." And finally Mrs. Somers saw her greatest

concern in how to present the material and which elements she should include (and which

elements she should remove):

> [B]ecause it's an English class rather than an art class…I mean you might
>
> analyze a little bit of the artwork in terms of tone and so on, but I would still
>
> probably be sticking to more of the words we study you know, in an English class…
>
> characterization, symbol, theme, plot and all that stuff. So I guess the
>
> challenge would be to expand my own thought process like know what else I
>
> should look for in a graphic novel, to point out to kids.

Their individual concerns ultimately came down to preparation. Each participant wanted some

structured guidance on how to use graphic novels to aid in their unit planning. I needed to find a

way to help address their concerns. Mrs. Béliveau jokingly said that the group would be okay

because they had me as an "expert" who had used and studied graphic novels. She also

commented that because we had a great group of experienced teachers, she was still not really

that worried about moving forward. Their concerns and comments were important because

through this early identification, I was able to support their growth with graphic novels by

addressing their concerns directly.

The participants did not come out and say that they needed specific help with the visual elements of a graphic novel, but their comments on not knowing enough or not being prepared enough, highlighted the need for support in general on how to approach a graphic novel. Initially, it was my hope that as professionals they would be able to solve their own concerns by reading and selecting graphic novels on their own, or with my help if they chose to use it, so that they could decide - again as designers of their own learning - what they felt was most important to discuss and to present to their students in a graphic novel. However, during the experiencing stages of their learning, many participants preferred to hear about my experiences with graphic novels rather than pursue research on their own.

The NLG (2000) proposed that the 'how' of a pedagogy of multiliteracies should not be practiced in "stages" because all the elements "may occur simultaneously," and " at different times one or the other will predominate" (p. 32). Furthermore Cope & Kalantzis (2009) recognized that the pedagogical acts within the pedagogy are continuous and learners weave "backwards and forwards across and between" (p. 184) the acts. Up until this point the participants' prior knowledge on graphic novels has been the focus. Looking at everything they know about graphic novels falls within the act of experiencing. The participants came from different schools in different teaching contexts but when it came to their learning experiences around graphic novels, they valued multiliteracies in the classroom, identified benefits to using graphic novels with students, and recognized challenges to their own learning and use with graphic novels. Because there is no clear order to how the areas within the pedagogy of multiliteracies happen, the next categories were formed from the first focus group, and subsequent collaborative meetings and professional development. At various times the

participants wove in and out of all four of the pedagogical acts, something that is common to this process, as they deepened their knowledge of graphic novels (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Interacting with Graphic Novels

After I concluded the initial interviews with my four participants, we met for our first focus group at the end of summer vacation in September of 2014. I wanted to stay within the action research framework so that my participants' growth in learning could remain open. The participants had all summer to read graphic novels and were tasked with deciding which one they wanted to use with their class. I constructed a series of questions to help guide this focus group and further highlight the participant's experiences so we could identify the best way for them to continue learning and to begin planning their graphic novel units. The initial interviews revealed that my participants shared a concern over how to approach teaching a graphic novel. It was my hope that as they began reading graphic novels over the summer they would have solutions to their own concerns. I quickly found that instead of being able to solve their own concerns over how to present a graphic novel or what elements and knowledge they needed to focus on with the graphic novel, they still had many questions about how they were going to use their resources. As we got into the discussion I found that the collaborative environment created by my participants and myself as researcher/participant supported their own pedagogical acts as they participated in experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying their knowledge on graphic novels (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Resource Selection: Participant Approaches to Reading and Evaluating Graphic Novels

The participants responded to the prearranged questions I had developed for the focus group: What graphic novels did you examine over the summer? What teacher resources did you examine over the summer? Why did you choose the resources you did? What interested you in it? As was mentioned above, a certain degree of experiencing is recommended within the pedagogy of multiliteracies. The first part of the focus group looked at the participant's prior knowledge (experiencing) around resource selection and how they approached graphic novels but it quickly shifted into how they conceptualized, analyzed, and eventually applied their learning, or how they used the other pedagogical acts.

Each participant's experience with choosing a graphic novel, with the exception of Mrs. Béliveau, who unfortunately had a limited selection of French graphic novels to choose from, and ultimately made her decision based on "the availability of resources," found the graphic novels they would teach through the means most comfortable to them; they looked to their out-of-school interests and applied them to what would work within school. Furthermore, all participants were interested in selecting resources that would fit within their respective curriculums. Mrs. Anderson chose to immerse herself in graphic novels over the summer. She visited Amazon.ca and bought "a boatload of texts," to read, compare and analyze whereas Mrs. Somers stuck to the public library and the various bookstores around Saskatoon to find her selection. Mrs. Monroe took a different approach in that she went to her sister, who completed designing a graphic novel for her master's project, for help finding text that was "uplifting" and "worth spending time on." She visited the public library like Mrs. Somers, however she also visited some local comic book stores in Saskatoon and gave a good example of experiencing the new when she was amazed at how "fantastic" their graphic novel collections were. During her

summer holiday Mrs. Béliveau ended up in a bookstore as well and found a French language copy of the graphic novel *Persepolis* that she bought to read.

It made sense for the participants to look for graphic novels in environments that interested them or were within their community, what was of interest to me was that none of the participants previewed any critical reviews or chose any text based on their reading of teacher resources (only Mrs. Somers looked at any teacher resources and she did not choose her graphic novel based on her reading of those resources). I had mentioned to them that there are many great resources available on the Internet or in teacher resource collections. For example, Kate Monnin's (2010) *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom*, apart from being one of the teacher resources my participants eventually chose to use to help plan their units, has a great cross index of graphic novels and themes for the middle-years and high school classroom (pp. 225-227). Furthermore Bakis (2012), Bucher & Manning (2004), and Schwarz (2002), offer many links and write-ups about useful graphic novel websites or resources available. And while the locations, resources, and websites available to my participants, and being used by other educators, were as diverse as the individual graphic novels they read, so were their personal reasons for choosing their texts.

Pagliaro (2014) argues that in order to choose the best graphic novel with the most literary merit, teachers should apply an evaluation rubric. In his initial findings he went through eleven award-winning graphic novels and found that they shared four common elements: "(1) *detailed settings;* (2) *form that functions,* or formatting that delivers narrative information; (3) *authentic dialogue*; and (4) *expressive* characters (whether representational or caricatured)" (p. 37). From his initial findings he was able to develop an evaluation rubric to determine the literary merit of graphic novels. The participants in my study did not have access to Pagliaro's

evaluation rubric at the time but they identified many of the same characteristics that he

identified that determine what makes a graphic novel worthwhile for the classroom.

Pagliaro (2014) suggests that to start with, a graphic novel should be read so that both

linguistic literacy and its visual literacy are equally supported; an evaluator should: **"Read text**

and images as two distinct elements. In each panel, read the text first and then read the

image" (his emphasis, p. 41). In keeping with Pagliaro's claim, Mrs. Somers and Mrs.

Anderson's comments illustrate the importance of multiple readings of the graphic novel. Mrs.

Somers responded first:

> Well I started with *Trickster*. And I was reading it just like if I was reading a book of
>
> trickster stories, at first, because I don't really read graphic novels. But then when I
>
> started to get into these graphic novels, *Lost Innocence* in particular, almost against my
>
> will I started to see the colours…so [the images] caught my eye and then I started to
>
> analyze the colour and the imagery in addition to the [printed-word] story.

In conceptualization of how she read *Lost Innocence,* Mrs. Somers eventually saw the visuals as

part of the story rather than in addition to the story but only after multiple readings. She was

practicing the pedagogical act of conceptualizing by naming (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). The act

involves having the learner draw distinctions between the similarities and differences or

categorize and name what they are learning (p. 185). Mrs. Somers was able to explain how the

graphic novel was similar to how she reads a book yet it was different because eventually the

images that were part of the text meant something to her.

Mrs. Anderson also practiced conceptualizing by naming when she mentioned that

reading the graphic novel was like trying to solve "a little mystery." It was difficult for her to

start "because I wasn't used to reading them so… I thought it would be hard to read, like the

image got in the way of the story, but soon I just kind of found myself taking it all in. And then it was after I read it and I was looking again where I began to notice things." And the more that she noticed the more she was able to solve her mystery of reading the graphic novel. Framing her learning as if it was a mystery to solve was such a strong way to conceptualize her learning that even as she was describing her experience of multiple readings with the group she noticed that the pages of her graphic novel, *War Brothers* (McKay, 2013) were either white if there was no conflict in the text, or black if there was conflict. It was as if the mystery kept expanding as new clues were unraveled.

Mrs. Monroe also approached reading her graphic novel through multiple readings. However she was very specific about how she used those multiple readings:

> I just wanted to be a reader, not a teacher. So then I've gone through it now a second time. And page by page I have jotted down different notes and different ideas of where I want to go with it and different possibilities, and points to make to the students. So the first time was to be a reader, the second time was to be a teacher.

Mrs. Monroe suggested that it was important to experience the reading first, forming her own ideas based on her experience with this new text. After she had read it, she moved into the pedagogical act of analyzing. Analyzing involves looking at a text functionally and critically. Inadvertently she analyzed her text functionally when she jotted down different notes and ideas on how she might use it. Analyzing critically involves evaluating other people's perspectives (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) so even though she was vague with what kind of points she wanted to make with students, she still suggested there was value in eventually analyzing the text as a teacher.

I found it interesting in the first two cases that the participants chose to read the graphic novels blindly, that is to say without having any experience reading graphic novels. While it was not as dangerous as operating a powerful machine for the first time, reading a new text without having any idea how to read it was dangerous in the sense that it might turn the person off from reading that type of text again. However in the case of Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Somers reading their text multiple times allowed them to pick out more ideas and characteristics of both the written and visual story. Furthermore, as Mrs. Somers and Mrs. Anderson identified in the quotes above, they really started to get into the graphic novel when the pictures and text blended together or as they became better intertextual readers (NLG, 2000).

Whereas Pagliaro suggested reading the text and image separately for each panel, my participants admitted that they all read the entire graphic novel "like a book," focusing on only "the words first," but then after multiple reading became comfortable with the images. But reading the text and images are not enough to understand a graphic novel, just as a good movie requires a soundtrack, believable characters, powerful settings, and a strong plot, so does a good graphic novel require certain elements to strengthen it.

Pagliaro (2014) argues that a teacher's initial reading on the value of a graphic novel should focus greatly on panels, style, images, color, and different artistic elements (p. 41). Mrs. Monroe, under the advice of her sister, approached reading her graphic novel a similar way. When she asked her sister how she should read a graphic novel, her sister suggested that she focus on "panel, palette, angle of shots, font, and colour." The participants already had a good idea of what panel was, but wanted some clarification between the difference of palettes and color. She suggested that palettes referred "the entire colour scheme…all [the] colours that you used," whereas colours most likely referred to how you use the colours. The second section of

Pagliaro's evaluation suggest that art and color panels and images are all extremely important as they help with the clarity and the mood of the graphic novel. My findings seemed to match his because a few of the participants were drawn to the text because of their initial impressions with the color and the artwork. For example, colour was especially important to Mrs. Anderson because when searching for a classroom text she was "drawn to colour" text only. However for Mrs. Monroe it was the lack of color and recognizing that it was important to discuss how the color and the tone contrasted throughout, that led her to choose *The Arrival* (Tan, 2007).

Next, Pagliaro (2014) suggests that during the reading of the graphic novel the reader focus on the characters (their facial expressions and gestures), the setting (how detailed it is), the dialogue, and the overall structure of the panels (p. 42). Furthermore, Tabitha Simmons (2003) suggests educators that are selecting graphic novels look for specific characteristics within the text that relate to teenagers and young adults:

> Graphic novel readers have learned to understand print, can also decode facial and body expressions, the symbolic meanings of certain images and postures, metaphors and similes, and other social and literary nuances teenagers are mastering as they move from childhood to maturity. (p. 12)

Both authors recognize the importance of looking at the multimodal and visual elements within a graphic novel, how they work together, and how they might be received from their target audience.

Again the comments from my participants seemed to support Pagliaro's and Simmons' claims. For example, both Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Béliveau mentioned how their students could relate to the characters and the setting of their texts. Mrs. Béliveau noticed that *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2003) was created in such a unique way, "you're dealing with a very serious issue… in

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a cartoon way," that it would help "attract several different types of readers and different interest areas." On the other hand, Mrs. Anderson didn't think her students would be able to relate to the setting of *War Brothers*, which takes place in Gulu, Uganda, but they were able to relate to the realistically drawn main characters in the text and to the narration as it is told entirely in the point of view of a teenage soldier. And it was a character's gestures in *Lost Innocence* that caught Mrs. Somers attention ultimately helped her make her decision to use it:

> [A]s I went through it was a little bit of an a-ha moment in terms of how much, you
> know I could see in it already. And then you mentioned laugh out loud and [there] is
> one part in here when I actually did because it connected back to something I remember
> with one of the First Nations consultant when he talked about how a lot of First Nations
> people they don't [point], it's rude to point, so they point with their lips. And then
> there's this image on page 33, and he's saying 'Do you know where my sister is?'
> and he's pointing with his lips. I went 'bwah-haha,'

During one of her multiple reading she was unconscious of the characters' gestures in her text. However, she was fortunate to have had a conversation with a division consultant that gave her insight into a cultural gesture, thus proving the realism and reliability of the characters in her text.

So after much discussion on how the participants approached reading the graphic novel, I wanted to know *why* they chose their particular graphic novel.

Pagliaro (2014) argues that a final decision on choosing a graphic novel should be made based on the combined scores from all the sections of his assessment paper and the overall content as it relates to the teacher's learning goals (p. 42). What Pagliaro suggests the teacher try was what my participants did on their own, without an evaluation rubric. Through conceptualizing and analyzing their texts, each participant saw a clear connection between their

graphic novel and its various elements, their students' interests, and the goals they were trying to reach. For example, Mrs. Béliveau saw that the narrative of a "coming of age" female protagonist amidst the broad themes of "war, death, [and] destruction" would be something to engage her diverse population. Furthermore it was an opportunity to help her students (who go to school with many Iraqi refugees) "open their eyes a little bit and help them realize, it's all about cultures right, in French, so why not study other people's cultures as well." It wasn't enough for the graphic novel to engage their personal interests; Mrs. Béliveau wanted the graphic novel to relate to what was happening in their social and school contexts as well.

Mrs. Monroe analyzed her text and found that it connected to many of her students' personal lives. She felt *The Arrival* "was everybody's story. At some point in time most of us had, you know relatives that immigrated to Canada, and their journey and their experiences and how it was very similar to what's shown in this book." Mrs. Monroe did not get into details over which specific images or scenes best connected to her students; she approached the graphic novel as a whole suggesting that most of it would be relatable to students.

Mrs. Somers felt that her text would be a "fresher look at residential schools"- something she said the students had already taken for many years - and that it "matches outcomes in both Social and English." However, Mrs. Anderson felt "overwhelmed" when she had to make a decision:

> So when I found *War Brothers*…I liked it but I was still kind of hesitant because I also
>
> liked *Ender's Game* and I also liked *Beowulf* and I also liked *Dracula.* So I just had to sit
>
> down and decide. And this worked well because it works well in ELA A30 but it also fits
>
> a theme in the B30 even though the author's Canadian.

In the end Mrs. Anderson went with *War Brothers* for no other reason then it fit the needs of her classroom and it fit the curricular outcomes she was working with. Mrs. Anderson's comments support the value of the graphic novel within education because she went from not using graphic novels, to fighting with herself on making a decision for her class.

Put within the context of a multiliteracies framework, and through the use of the different pedagogical acts, their collaborative discussions around how they approached graphic novels, and with some clarifying terms from Pagliaro (2014) on what intertextual elements needed to be focused on, the participants were beginning to show growth in the *what* aspect of a of a pedagogy of multiliteracies (NLG, 2000; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). In addition they deepened their conceptual and analytical understandings as they participated in collaborative discussions and planning.

Collaborative Planning

Near the beginning of the focus group Mrs. Anderson asked a question that shifted the focus from how they read a graphic novel onto how they would teach a graphic novel. She asked: "When you guys are going to teach it, are you teaching before you introduce the [graphic] novel, how to read a graphic novel? Or are you doing it as you read through it? Or are you not doing it at all?" Her comments lead to a powerful collaborative discussion where I shifted from researcher to teacher-expert and where I recognized another major category within this research: collaboration. What followed between the group and myself as researcher/expert, was a great example of Hendrick's (2009) collaborative action research - when different researchers (or participants) from both school and university settings come together to study "educational problems" (p. 9).

After Mrs. Anderson asked her question Mrs. Somers confirmed that she was wondering about that as well. However, Mrs. Béliveau remarked that no matter what they would have to do a bit of history teaching prior to reading, because of the subject matter of *Persepolis*. She was concerned that she would not have enough time to do any pre-teaching, before getting right into the graphic novel. From there Mrs. Anderson directed her question to me and wanted to know what I had done in the past when I taught graphic novels. I shared with the group:

If I know that the students haven't had access to it before, I treat it like I do any new

format for students. So when you teach in grade nine, for example, short stories, novels,

you, you will need to go through the elements cause you need to understand where

they are. If I'm not mistaken, you just need to know where students are, because part of

the outcomes, we're looking for in the curriculum is to match what the students know and

a lot of that connects to reading, writing, viewing, things like that. So I just try to assess

what they know about graphic novels and what I've done in the past, is I've put

[together] an anticipation guide. So I list common words you're going to find and I

shared that with you, I could share that with everyone else after, but it's just on one side,

a little column that you would check 'I know this well, I can talk about it' you know. A

circle would mean 'I've heard about it and I might be able to talk about it or define it,'

and then an X is 'I don't know this word, I have no understanding of it.' And then I have

a list of panel, and gutter.

Mrs. Monroe promptly asked me what gutter was and I explained: "Gutter is the white space between panels, which is the most important space it is argued, because it helps you with inference making." After my explanation I continued explaining how the anticipation guide gave me a diagnostic on where my students were which then turned into a scavenger hunt where

students were able to go through the graphic novel and identify different elements within it so that they could learn the language they needed in order to analyze the text later. Mrs. Béliveau wanted to confirm how long my introductory process actually took so she could gauge how long she might need. She guessed it would take about two one-hour lessons, which was exactly how long it took. Mrs. Béliveau was conceptualizing with theory as she began to build an interpretive framework to the subject specific language I was using.

My initial sharing prompted further group discussion into how participants might present their graphic novel at this early stage. Mrs. Somers shared her thoughts:

> Well what I've been thinking about doing is a two-parter, because mine is a within a unit on First Nations and Norse narratives. So the first two within the *Tricksters* book I want to use as literature and not even talk about the artwork too much with them. And then as we get towards the end- because I usually talk about pre-contact/ post contact with the kids- then I want to introduce [*Lost Innocence*]. I want to focus on the artwork and so then this is where I was hoping to do a little bit of an introduction of graphic novels before we did it. So I guess I want to do kind of both.

The collaborative nature of the discussion which started with a simple question asked by one of the participants grew into my involvement helping the participants make sense of some concerns. The collaborative environment grew, as the group got deeper into the discussion. And through collaboration they were able to analyze and conceptualize the language and elements that went into graphic novels better.

Hendricks (2009) argues that "when educators engage in dialogue about improving teaching practices, and when they work together to facilitate moving conversations about best practices into their classroom activity, professional growth is a natural outcome" (p. 75). The

comments below, taken from a dynamic discussion where the whole focus group gave advice as to how Mrs. Monroe could use her graphic novel, are good examples of Hendricks' argument:

Researcher: Okay. Any other thoughts?

Mrs. M: I'm literally taking it page by page cause I'm just mesmerized by all of it. The inspection card, so many different things that look like authentic pieces. I don't know what to say.

Mrs. A: You could spend a whole day just on that.

Mrs. M: Yeah. Nationality. The color you know…

R: And that being the inside flap of the *The Arrival?*

Mrs. M: Yeah, and he's got his own foreign alphabet and on the cover [there] is a foreign little critter -its just emphasizing that its foreign, it's unfamiliar. So I literally just want to take it page by page, there's so much to look at in each illustration.

Mrs. B: Can, can I ask a question? How are you going to [teach it], because there's no [written] text.

Mrs. M: It is divided into chapters.

Mrs. B: Do you have an idea of how you're going to proceed from one image to the next? Who's going to talk? Who's going to narrate?

Mrs. M: All of us. What do you see? What do you think is happening on this page? It will definitely be a group effort. There is some repetition, a little bit of foreshadowing on these pages. Sometimes you see these items on the following page that's not a sequence that goes throughout the book so far, but I'll guide the conversation.

Mrs. A: So it's like a guided discussion?

Mrs. M: Yeah but it will be very much (guided by me) because I'm sure there's plenty that I haven't noticed that the students will.

Mrs. B: And is it possible you get a different story every time you look at it sort of?

Mrs. M: I'm hoping because the makeup of the classroom - we've got immigrants, you know new to Canada, in there- I think it should make for some really interesting dialogue. I'm just really excited to share it.

Mrs. A: It'd be interesting if they did an activity where they added their own page.

Mrs. M: They will. I want them to select a page and write dialogue for it. That'll definitely be one activity. It would be great if everybody picked the same page, I might go that route, and just to see how different the dialogue is.

Mrs. S: That would be interesting

Mrs. A: There are lots of creative writing possibilities.

Mrs. M: Yeah.

R: So as you're guiding them through it will you be pointing out specific elements- as you said that your sister mentioned a few and you felt that those would be a good place to start - will you be pointing that out? Or will that be kind of that pre-lesson into it?

Mrs. M: It might be a bit a pre-lesson into it, I think. I don't know. It's too early for me to say definitively if I will leave it or not, but I like what you mentioned about your anticipation guide so I might put together something on the anticipation guide.

Whereas Mrs. Monroe was not ready to give a definitive answer as to what her initial planning might look like, the above discussion highlights the importance of collaboration between professionals. As the discussion grew each participant learned a bit more through the discussion. Throughout the pedagogical act of functionally analyzing, Mrs. Béliveau asked Mrs. Monroe

questions that required a deeper response. Furthermore, Mrs. Anderson added the idea to have students get "their own page" and Mrs. Monroe immediately confirmed that she was already thinking that, again solidifying her pre-planning process. Mrs. Monroe wove in and out of having to conceptualize her experience with *The Arrival*, analyze how she might use it, and finally apply her knowledge on how she might approach teaching a graphic text. Both participants may have come to the same understanding of how they would start teaching a graphic novel on their own, but it was evident that group discussion facilitated this process. The power of collaboration that supports and encourages educators to continually grow was present in the dynamic dialogue above. Ultimately, collaboration within action research not only gives the researcher, but the entire group, time to reflect, act, and evaluate their own practices (Hendricks, 2009).

Another example of how collaboration helped the group learn from and support each other was when Mrs. Béliveau shared her concern over teaching her graphic novel with students: "My concern with [*Persepolis*] is every second word they won't get." Mrs. Béliveau's concern arose after hearing how Mrs. Monroe's text did not actually have dialogue in it. However both Mrs. Monroe and Mrs. Somers were quick to offer a possible solution to Mrs. Béliveau's concern:

> Mrs. Somers: But you know just to comment as a person who's watched her children go through French immersion, that's pretty typical of any novel where there are lots of words that they read for context, right?

> Mrs. Monroe: I think that's true for any novel really you pick and choose. You use your discretion right? Your professional judgment.

Mrs. Béliveau's concern was raised, responded to, and dealt with through collaborative discussion. She did not need to do additional research or questioning to learn how to solve her problem because her fellow participants were professionals and thus ready to help. Each member of the focus group was working within the pedagogical acts they needed to both share and experience, conceptualize a new idea, analyze someone else's thoughts or ideas, or apply some of their new learning by contributing to the group.

After the discussion, when I had more time to reflect and evaluate how the action research cycle was going and how my participants learning was progressing, I realized that even though I saw my participants sharing a great deal about what they knew on graphic novels (experiencing) and how they have begun learning more about them through discussion and individual means (conceptualizing and analyzing), they still had shared a common concern over the pacing of a graphic novel unit, and just which elements should be focused on when presenting a graphic novel unit to students. As I reflected on the collaborative discussions I was able to identify my next actions: the participants needed further professional development around multiliteracies, graphic novels, and their use in the classroom (Hendricks, 2009). Through further discussion and learning about the specialized knowledge connected to graphic novels I hoped to take what they had already learnt, and already knew about graphic novels, and frame it in such a way that they were able to analyze it further.

As a response to their concerns over how to teach graphic novels I facilitated a professional development for the participants during one of our release days. The session was over three hours long and covered the basic definitions and language around graphic novels, a brief history of the comics and graphic novels, how to read a graphic novel, and how they have been used in some educational settings. Within each part of the facilitation participants had

opportunities to work as individuals, and collaboratively with each other. I did my best to

remain outside as the researcher/expert. My goal was to give them the opportunity to apply

some of their new knowledge around graphic novels so they could begin to plan their mini-units.

The session was followed with an afternoon session where I modeled how to read *The Life of*

Helen Betty Osborne by David Robertson (2008). I took careful observational notes throughout

the two sessions and after analysis uncovered two distinct categories, specifically that

collaborative structured professional learning and expert modeling, were necessary practices that

supported how participants learned about teaching graphic novels.

Structured Learning

When taking observational notes Merriam (2009) suggests looking at several factors

such as the physical setting, the participants, their activities and interactions, their conversation,

and my own behavior. Ultimately, observations should be focused around "the theoretical

framework, the problem, and the questions of interest" (p. 119). I did my best to follow

Merriam's suggestions and tried to observe my participants behaviors, their interactions, and the

pedagogical understandings they developed throughout the professional development session, in

order to better answer my research objectives.

The first collaborative session took place in the McDowell room on the 2nd floor of the

STF building. The tables were arranged around the room to form a large square with the four

participants seated around it. I started the session with an activity meant to help them understand

the term multimodal. I gave them the Swedish word *mangata* and asked them to define it. When

no one could I gave them an image of the moon's reflection on water at night. I then asked them

to define *mangata* again. This time they were closer in understanding it as they looked to the

images for context. Finally I gave them the word, the image, and its definition, the road-like

reflection of the moon in the water. From there I told them that the example I just gave connects

to the next topic I wanted them to understand, multimodal literacy. I was going to have them

guess at a definition based on my previous example, but the group wanted my definition of it.

Through conversation the definition was learned:

> Researcher: Multimodal literacy, I'd like you to start developing your own definition of it.
>
> Mrs. A: Give me a definition. I want to write one down.
>
> Mrs. S: Yeah me too.
>
> Mrs. A: Give me the [graphic novel expert] definition.
>
> R: The [graphic novel expert] definition is, it's the knowledge and understanding of
>
> communication and meaning making, how they are experienced, so that's the mode, how
>
> how they integrate, interact, and contrast within a text to convey meaning.
>
> Mrs. A: Say that again.
>
> (I repeated it)
>
> Mrs. A: So can just a print novel be multimodal?
>
> R: A print novel is monomodal, because it's one way of showing your understanding,
>
> it's one way of you experiencing it or making meaning.
>
> Mrs. A: So basically multimodal is print and image together using the different modes;
>
> that's how it's experienced through all the different [modes].
>
> R: Well multimodal could be a blog. It could be a bus advertisement.
>
> Mrs. A: But still print and image together.
>
> R: Yep, but there could be sound on the blog right.
>
> Mrs. S: Like if the kid gives a presentation in class like with a Prezi , back to be
>
> multimodal or a PowerPoint with words on it and images.

R: Yep that's multimodal. And there's probably going to be sounds and maybe a film clip in there too right. That's multimodal.

Mrs. S: Would it be multimodal without sounds and film clip though, just with the kids speaking, words on the Prezi or PowerPoint and images?

S: Yes because you have 2 modes you have printed image.

Mrs. B: So if you're reading a book report it's just one?

S: If you're reading a book report, you're using the oral mode to share the written one.

Mrs. A: So that's multimodal? Well it's not really but it's two modes.

R: The sharing makes it multimodal I would argue. The sharing makes it multimodal because you're speaking it, but it's technically on paper- a single mode.

Mrs. S: The reason I'm asking a question is I've always wondered in our curriculum outcomes, [in order] to represent, we're supposed to do visual and we're supposed to do multimodal.

R: Well visual is one mode right?

Mrs. M: Right so that's like a poster.

Mrs. G: Yep, But if there's words on it…

R: Then it's multimodal. So look at it as literacy is basically the competence or knowledge of a specific area right? It's the context, the culture, the social atmosphere-everything that's involved in that area that you need to know to be considered literate in that area. So there's a lot going on to be literate in computers, in speaking, and writing, and English, and any aspect you want.

Mrs. M: Multisensory.

R: Multisensory, I like it. Whatever makes sense to you. Multisensory that's a good way of saying it.

The conversation continued for a few minutes with each participant trying to conceptualize the new term in the best way they could. Eventually they are able to take their collective experience and knowledge and apply it to a definition of multimodal that the group liked:

Mrs. A: So essentially it's using more than one mode to understand.

R: Exactly.

Mrs. A: That's my definition.

Defining multimodal was a brief barrier to their learning. I realized that it was only a barrier because I was not clear in my own mind on how to present it differently. I was surprised at the resistance to defining a word on their own. These teachers have been working for many years and were experts within their own right when it came to literacy and the language arts. Yet none of them wanted to find a meaning on their own, all of them agreed that they preferred I give them a definition first. What I found was the first evidence that the participants preferred having someone give them their understanding, albeit with their support and clarification. After the battle with defining multimodal the session moved quicker.

The participants, in an earlier collaborative session, wanted further knowledge on graphic novels, visual literacy, and multimodal literacy so I provided them with the structured note-taking activity where they had to summarize, comment, question, and make connections to a specific article.

Each participant interacted with her article differently. For example, Mrs. Monroe and Mrs. Somers felt that the articles supported their own thinking. In addition, Mrs. Monroe loved children's stories, so it was unsurprising that when reading about visual literacy, she felt her own knowledge and beliefs about picture books were "validated." On the other hand, Mrs. Somers felt that the article about reading graphic novels as multimodal texts helped explain her own journey trying to understand not only how to read graphic novels but why they are so beneficial.

Whereas Mrs. Anderson already felt that she knew all the information in the article she read, she still appreciated the way it was organized. Finally, Mrs. Béliveau had some of the most interesting comments highlighted in her article. Throughout her article she highlighted words that were new to her or definitions that she appreciated around visual literacy. In some of the instances she seemed to display some fear or apprehension around either visual literacy or the rise of computers and technology in general. For example, beside a quote explaining how students need to become more familiar with graphic and graphic software she wrote "yikes!" However, after looking through her structured note many of the connections that she made to the article were actually connected to visual literacy or visual learning.

Although each participant read a different article, they were given time to share their summaries, thoughts, and questions about the article with the entire group so that everyone could benefit from the knowledge gained. When the articles were done they had a better sense of what visual literacy and multimodal literacy was within the context of graphic novels and why the two were important to graphic novels and students in general. Next I introduced the participants to an anticipation guide that was meant to help them learn the language around the graphic novel elements, an activity that most participants chose to use with their students during their graphic novel unit.

I presented the participants with a Graphic Novel Anticipation Guide that I had used with my own students (Appendix G). I had participants go through the anticipation guide and make a check mark if they understood and could talk about the word, an 'O' if they had heard the word and maybe knew a little bit of information about it, an 'X' if they had no idea what the word meant. As they did this I was able to formatively assess their prior knowledge by going around and looking at the papers as they marked them. Throughout the PowerPoint the

participants were encouraged to add notes using both written language and images as they

learned more about graphic novels. When I reviewed their anticipation guides after the session I

was encouraged to see that they all wrote down definitions for the words they didn't know and

when I asked them to assess their knowledge at the end of the session they had all gained a

deeper understanding of the words. However I was surprised to learn that none of the

participants actually drew visuals to support the definitions they wrote down. When reflecting

on this I realized that I never actually gave them time to draw the visuals, yet when I did this

activity with my students in the classroom they always had time to draw the visuals as I'm going

through the PowerPoint. Because of the time crunch with my participants this was not the case.

One of the first definitions we interacted with was the term *closure*. I gave Scott

McCloud's (1993) definition from *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* to help explain the

term (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. **Definition of Closure (McCloud, 1993, p. 63)**
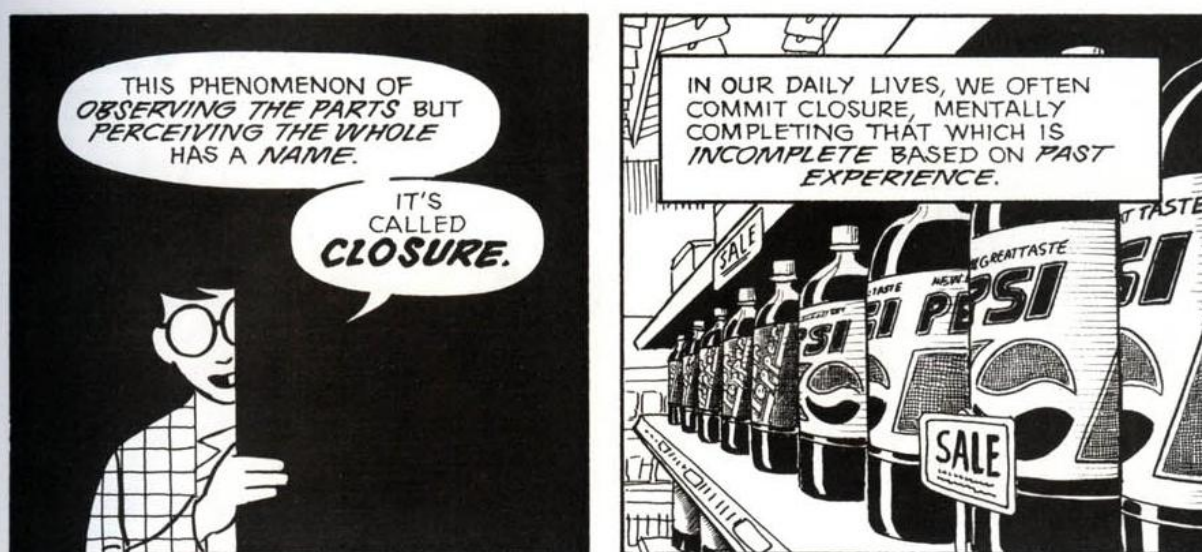
I followed the definition with a brief description of what the gutters were and how they worked. After the participants were comfortable with the definitions I invited them to view an image, also taken from Scott McCloud's text, and try to explain what's happening inside, outside, and between the panels (Figure 4.2). As they looked at the two panels the participants came up with several different ideas on what could be happening. There was consensus that one man was a victim and one was a criminal who ended up killing his victim in the next panel, hence the screaming; another interpretation that took place from reading between the panels in the gutter space was that the victim grabbed the ax from the criminal and actually attacked him.

Figure 4.2. **Making Meaning From Closure (McCloud, 1993, p. 66)**

While all the interpretations had similarities, the biggest connection between them was that the participants, much like my students, had to make inferences and read between the lines, or in this case read between the panels, in order to appropriately, and functionally analyze the text. Only when they were asked to explain their interpretations did they start analyzing more critically. And after their critical evaluation they all agreed that it was very powerful to see just how deep an analysis of two simple panels, with very few words or images, could be.

What I found was that the collaborative morning not only helped alleviate some confusion over different graphic novel elements but it also strengthened how participants learned collaboratively through structured learning (like my short professional development and my expert modeling of various literacy strategies and practices). It also confirmed how the participants conceptualized and analyzed some of the elements within graphic novels. For example, Mrs. Béliveau noted that visual literacy "should be taught" from a young age, a comment that echoed the group's earlier thoughts around benefits to graphic novels. On the other hand, Mrs. Somers, with perhaps the most profound transformation in thinking, showed the pedagogical act of applying her new knowledge on graphic novels appropriately when she wrote, "I started seeing graphic novels as a step to novels. Am now seeing them as their own genre with value!" Applying appropriately involves a learner doing something "predictable and expected in a real world way" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 186). Prior to the collaborative session Mrs. Somers had not said if she valued graphic novels. But after the session she successfully applied the new knowledge she had been learning about (conceptualizing) and trying to understand (analyzing) around graphic novel terminology until she applied it in a new experience about what graphic novels really were. This simple realization was significant because it forever changed her core perspective on graphic novels and it happened before she started planning her mini-unit which led me to believe that she might approach planning units with a bit more care.

Prior to beginning our next collaborative session where we actually went through a graphic novel together, I asked the participants what they liked or what they wanted to change about the collaborative session that we just had. All of them agreed that the presentation was useful because it helped them clarify the definitions they needed to better understand graphic

novels. Mrs. Anderson noted that the modeling of teacher PowerPoint or how I would teach the elements of the graphic novel was most useful to her because it gave her an idea of the pacing required; the other participants agreed with her thoughts. So with the support of the group, I offered a collaborative session, where I modeled how to read and analyze a graphic novel.

Modeling Reading and Analysis

Frey & Fisher (2008) argue that modeling is an important teaching method that teachers use with students because "humans are hardwired to imitate other humans"(p. 34). Through modeling I hoped to alleviate some of the concerns that came from the focus group and the structured collaborative session. What I learned was that modeling practices not only supported my participants' learning, but also challenged some of their preconceived notions around specific literacy strategies.

For this session, we were situated in the McDowell room again, but this time there was no divider splitting the room and all the windows were open to the sunny day outside. We sat around a small square table, each with a copy of the graphic novel by David Alexander Robertson and Madison Blackstone's (2008), *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne*, a notebook, and pen. I began by telling the group that if this was my class I would have to look at their maturity level and the reading ability before I decided if I would have them read the graphic novel on their own first, and then analyze it as a group, or if we would read it together as a class first and then read it a second time to analyze it. Before I could even begin modeling how I read the text, we started talking about the importance of having students read on their own first versus having everyone read it together. Most of the participants agreed that it was beneficial when students read a text on their own because they were given the power to make their own meaning.

Eventually, I began reading the first page of the text, left to right, top to bottom, caption first and then dialogue bubbles. While there were clearly examples of the participants conceptualizing their knowledge on reading the graphic novel - I could tell this through the various questions they were asking about whether I would point this out or if it's important to look at every single example on page - they were most heavily involved in critically analyzing the text. For example during my reading of the first page I was stopped by Mrs. Anderson who wanted to know just "how much I would point out" to the students. Mrs. Anderson was participating in both analyzing functionally and analyzing critically because she wanted to know about the particular elements and their connections in the text while at the same time she wanted to evaluate my perspective and understand my reasoning for reading a specific way. In response I told her that I found it easier to read the page first and ask for their analysis second. Mrs. Monroe and Mrs. Somers both agreed and said that it would get confusing if we stopped all the time to answer questions or to ask for analysis so they suggested we just continue to read the first page as a whole and then analyze it as a group after.

After reading the first page I asked the group what they noticed in any of the panels, in the page as a whole, with any of the words, etc. The initial responses were more observational as they commented on recognizing basic things like figurative language and powerful images. I wanted them to analyze at a deeper level so I suggested they take a look at the second panel and I asked them to think about how the caption was discussing the past disappearing like air swirling while the image also supported the idea by showing the girl's breath vanishing outside of the panel. My modeling of the type of analysis I expected paid off as the next set of responses were more focused on analyzing the text functionally (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Mrs. Béliveau, who was the least vocal in prior collaborations and who admitted that she needed to get her head around the vocabulary, offered the first piece of analysis. She noticed that in the very first panel caption, the simile "chewed into us like boots against the snow"(Robertson, 2008, p. 1) was supported with the image in the panel where the bottom of the characters boots actually look like teeth instead of just a rubber sole. I asked her to explain why she thought that would be significant (analyzing critically). She commented that both visual and textual learner's would benefit from the very first panel because if they didn't understand the simile through reading it, then the powerful image should help support the idea. Although Mrs. Béliveau was drawing inferences on why she thought the author made a specific choice with words and images she was still analyzing text connections and applying it to a real world situation. Mrs. Monroe was the next to notice all the images on the first page were centered and balanced; however the fifth panel was not. Again I prompted her to explain her analysis further. She thought that because of the powerful assault and aggressive language, the whole world of the character was shaken up and knocked around. Furthermore, the boys in the picture are literally knocking the girl off balance, again strengthening the idea that this character's world is being assaulted or knocked around.

We read for another hour in the same way we did with the first page. However, we never did finish reading the text because our discussion and analysis took a lot longer than anybody expected. We were so engaged in the process that none of us realized how much time had passed and that we were not actually able to get the text finished. At the time I did not think to point out that when they were teaching their own graphic novels they would need to watch the time to make sure that the analysis did not go overboard like it did in our case. But as we will find later in this chapter the pacing of analysis was more important than any of us realized.

In the end I did not have to do much modeling after the initial page. The participants agreed that having someone go through it with them to "show them the pace to set" and a potential way to analyze it, really helped them get their own "heads around" how they should approach teaching their own graphic novels. Therefore I left it up to them to begin planning their mini-units. We would meet once more collaboratively to discuss how the projects were moving along but ultimately the session involved having the teachers share their resources with each other and talk out their ideas.

Using Graphic Novels in the Classroom

The participants designed their graphic novel units to fit the needs of their classroom and to match their own schedules. Therefore, participants taught their mini-units at different times throughout the semester. After they had completed their units I held individual exit interviews with each participant to learn about their processes, their experiences, their students' experiences, their self-reflections, and any concerns or benefits that arose from their work. After analyzing the exit interviews I found several common categories and themes. What was unique about the categories was that the participants all used some sort of before, during, and after reading organization, often referred to as best practice, in their units. Furthermore all the participants involved some type of reading comprehension strategy and final assignment connected to curricular outcomes within their unit and grade level. Finally, each participant reflected on everything they had done, and assessed their own use of graphic novels. The participants' reflections revealed further benefits, challenges, and ideas connected to using graphic novels. Because of the diversity of the activities and assignments given, and also because of the variety of categories found in the analysis, I decided to divide up the analysis of the application of the

unit to match the key features that took place in the before, during, and after stages of learning, and what came after through the participant reflection.

Before Reading/Frontloading Meaning

Prior to designing their unit each participant had the opportunity to participate in several collaborative sessions where they were free to discuss their ideas, hear other participants' ideas, and test out their new learning with each other. Furthermore throughout this process the participants had been weaving in and out of different pedagogical acts within the pedagogy of multiliteracies, and now it was time to focus a bit more on the final pedagogical act which was *applying* their new knowledge in a real world situation.

Kylene Beers (2003) argues that "Dependent readers are dependent in part because of the passive reading. The challenge we face is to get them thinking about the selection and about how they will read the selection before they begin the text" (pp. 73-74). Each of my participants faced the same challenges Beers highlighted when they had to decide the best way of engaging their students before reading their chosen graphic novel. Beers continues her selection by giving examples of different before reading strategies, what she calls "frontloading meaning," that are meant to "help students engage with texts prior to reading." (p. 73). The different strategies are meant to help students:

- access their prior knowledge

- interact with portions of the text prior to reading

- practice sequencing, find cause and effect relationships, draw comparisons, make inferences, and predict

- identify vocabulary that might be a problem

- construct meaning before they begin reading the text (p. 73).

So when it came to implementing their finished unit, each participant used some form of pre-reading strategy to encourage student engagement in learning.

I began the exit interviews by asking the participants to describe how they introduced the graphic novel to their students. Mrs. Somers used an anticipation guide and a small writing assignment, with the support of a PowerPoint on the form and the elements of graphic novels, in her before stage. Whereas she had a great deal of content between the ELA 90 and Social Studies 90 curriculum to look at prior to reading *Lost Innocence,* I am only sharing how she used the graphic novel portion of her unit plan as it relates to my research objective. For her full backwards by design unit plan see Appendix H.

Mrs. Somers saw value in teaching the elements of the graphic novel first. To assess her students' prior knowledge she gave them a modified version of the Graphic Novel Anticipation Guide I used with the group at an earlier session. Beers (2003) offers that anticipation guides are meant to activate a student's prior knowledge, help them make connections to the text, and also give them a chance to be "an active participant" (p. 75) in class. Mrs. Somers presented the anticipation guide the same way I did, by using a modified version of my Graphic Novel PowerPoint. The modified PowerPoint focused on defining graphic novels (through comparison), and their various elements (panels, gutters, closure, balloons, lettering, and form). As they went through the PowerPoint, she found that her students knew a lot more than she had anticipated. In some cases they were able to get into the definitions and help each other out, and in other cases they gave Mrs. Somers new knowledge around graphic novels. She noticed:

> They had a lot of insights into the literature that I didn't see so they taught me a lot
>
> of things…especially when we were going through the anticipation guide and giving

some of the definitions of things, the kids would help out with that. And they really liked

being able to tell me what Manga was and how it worked.

I found it interesting that Mrs. Somers had already gone through the experiencing stage as it

relates to the pedagogy of multiliteracies, and had worked through the other three pedagogical

acts and was now trying to get her students to repeat the same process she did. However as she

was trying to prepare her students in the pre-reading stage, or the experiencing act of learning,

she had unknowingly found herself in the experiencing the new pedagogical act; her students

were providing her with a new way to experience the graphic novels (what had become familiar

to her) by sharing their own prior experiences and knowledge (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Whereas her initial PowerPoint was a shortened version of the one I shared with the

participants, with some newer images added, her second and third PowerPoints were different as

they were focused on specific elements that helped students understand graphic novels better.

The PowerPoints were inspired from *Teaching Graphic Novels* (Monnin, 2010) - one of

the resources we used-some of the slides I shared, and through collaborative conversations with

the other participants. The second PowerPoint she shared focused on the visual elements of a

graphic novel and what they mean within a graphic text (see Figure 4. 3). Mrs. Somers'

intention again was to provide students with the language they needed to talk about graphic

novels. Her third PowerPoint covered the different panel transitions common to graphic novels.

Figure 4.3. **Visual Elements of Form from Mrs. Somers PowerPoint**	
Visual Elements of Form in a graphic novel:	
- artistic style	- location of action, depth of field, point of view
- colour palette	- zooming in and zooming out
- lighting	- panning shot, close up, middle-distance shot, panoramic
- body language	- bug's eye view/ birds eye view

Furthermore, the PowerPoint on panel transitions was meant to help students learn how to read a graphic novel better. Mrs. Somers gave her students a comprehension assignment to see how well they understood panel transitions (something she thought was a good way to show understanding of graphic novel elements). She described the assignment (Appendix I): "In connection with the above anticipation guide, I used another one of Scott's assignments 'Your Turn' (from my structured learning session) - the students have to draw two of the six different types of panel transitions, and answer some questions about closure." The two parts of the assignment were marked separately, but fell under the same curricular outcome (CC 9.4). Her teaching of all three PowerPoints showed that she felt it was necessary to ground the students in the language of a graphic novel much like how an ELA teacher shares the structure and terms of paragraph writing before having her students write a five-paragraph essay. Like Mrs. Somers, Mrs. Béliveau wanted to assess student's prior knowledge on graphic novels while at the same time giving them the opportunity to inquire into the context of *Persepolis.*

Mrs. Béliveau introduced *Persepolis* by assessing student prior knowledge, addressing difficult words, and constructing meaning through inquiry. Her first activity came from a question sheet I designed and shared with my participants at an early collaborative session

(Appendix J). The questions in the activity were meant to help students identify their prior knowledge on graphic novels by having them make connections between graphic texts and other texts they have encountered. Also they were encouraged to go through a graphic novel and make meaning with whatever elements they noticed. After the initial activity, she gave the students a vocabulary activity as an introduction to some of the language around graphic novel elements. She explained: "Okay so initially we talked about what, what are the elements of the graphic novel and I had the students do a matching activity with vocab, with words that pertain to graphic novels and what those words would be in French." Mrs. Béliveau was the only participant who did not overtly teach the elements of the graphic novel. Instead she talked about the different elements when they came across them as they were reading the graphic novel. She also felt her students needed to understand the context and some of the history of *Persepolis* before they could completely construct meaning:

> We had to know something about the political situation because that whole novel is about that, that whole graphic novel is regarding the Iran, and Iraq, etc. So rather than me just giving them notes on what happened in 1979 onwards, I came up with some questions, we went to the library and individually the students had to find the answers online.

Lastly, she gave her students a PowerPoint on the politics of Iran in 1979. All her activities focused on giving her students some of the necessary background information they needed to be successful in reading *Persepolis*.

Mrs. Anderson chose different before reading activities with her students and focused on identifying different vocabulary that the students might find difficult and would need to know to construct meaning before they began reading *War Brothers* (Beers, 2003). When I asked Mrs.

Anderson how she introduced her unit, she gave a very clear explanation of her pre-reading process:

> The before [stage] was broken into two parts. So the first part was an introduction to graphic novels, because I wasn't sure how many had had formal experience with using graphic novels. And so we did three assignments with that. The first was a PowerPoint which introduced graphic novels. It went through the different terminology that they need to be familiar with as I spoke about it in class; so things like panel and lettering. So we went through the PowerPoint, with that they did a picture dictionary assignment. So essentially I had the terms listed on a piece of paper, they needed to provide a written definition of each of the terms as well as a visual picture to help them do that. Also part of that lesson, is they got a photo scavenger hunt. So I gave them a list of terms and they had to find examples within different graphic novels that I had gathered. I might ask them to look for a certain type of captioning, they had to take a photo with the camera, record the order of the pictures, [and] record what the picture look like. And then they handed in both the assignments and I looked through the pictures with them to receive a mark… that's the first lesson in there, which took I think [took] two periods. The second lesson focused on panels. We had a PowerPoint entitled 'Everything you want to know about panels and more.' And with that they did a panel activity. So we went through the different types of panels, I believe there's the six of them, and again they kind of did a picture dictionary. They wrote a written definition of what each panel was and provided a visual. And on the backside of the assignment they had to choose one of the six types and do an eight panel kind of composition with the written description of what they drew and how the panels represented that; so that's assignment

two. And the third assignment was an understanding graphic novels workbook. I created an informational color booklet, which went through how to analyze graphic novels, things like the type of color, the type of lettering, and the camera angle. And how it's set up as they had a reading section with examples and then I had a question booklet and the question booklet would ask them to look at the examples and answer questions, or how would they analyze this based on the use of its colour, or shading, or camera angle.

On top of looking at the different elements of form mentioned above, Mrs. Anderson also covered gestures, movements, and character's facial expressions. Her three assignments, the photo scavenger hunt (Appendix K), types of panel transitions, and understanding graphic novels booklet (Appendix L) suggested, much like Mrs. Somers did in her interview, that she thought students needed to be immersed in the language, structure, and elements of graphic novels before they could read them. Furthermore Mrs. Anderson went one step further in frontloading meaning by having students construct meaning about their topic. To do so, her students used a K-W-L to assess their knowledge and were then assigned an inquiry project that connected to their prior knowledge of the subject matter they were learning.

Where Mrs. Somers looked for prior knowledge in her students, Mrs. Anderson preferred that students were given the content she thought they needed. However dissimilar their assignments were, their intent was clear: both wanted to see what the students could comprehend and respond to when learning about graphic novels. Mrs. Monroe followed yet a different way to frontload meaning prior to reading her text.

Mrs. Monroe engaged her students in a before reading activity where they had to make comparisons and construct meaning prior to reading *The Arrival* (Beers, 2003). Unlike the other participants she did not get into the elements of a graphic novel right away because she was

using a graphic novel that did not have any words or dialogue in it, so she wanted to prepare her students on how to read a wordless text. She described her process:

> I started with the introduction of a wordless award-winning short, called *The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore.* So the kids watched that animation and had to put together how you were able to tell a story without any dialogue. That was followed up with the reading of the actual story, which has dialogue in that. So the kids were able to contrast how close they were to the author's intent of story. And then following that was the introduction into graphic novel language, so understanding the platform of it, and then we got into the actual novel *The Arrival.*

Like Mrs. Anderson's students, Mrs. Monroe's students were not assessed on their prior knowledge, but were asked to understand how stories can be told with images only. Mrs. Monroe recognized that if her students were to be successful in reading a wordless text like *The Arrival*, they would need time to discuss and to understand how a story can be created through images alone. She used an animation short to connect to students outside interests in media, and then showed the relation it had to a book by the same name. Once the students were comfortable comparing the two and recognizing what the author might have intended the story to be, she introduced them to some of the common elements of the graphic novel that they might come across when they began reading. She did this by using Mrs. Anderson's modified PowerPoint on the elements of graphic novels and assessing their comprehension of the PowerPoint through Mrs. Anderson's scavenger hunt sheet.

Sean Connors (2011) argues that teachers inexperienced in teaching graphic novels or the elements of visual literacy need an "accessible starting point" (p. 73) or a basic toolkit. Whereas my participants covered many different elements of form between themselves, Connors offers a

top-down model with preference on only three visual design elements and several sub-elements (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4. **Sean Connor's Analytical Concepts (2011, p. 81)**

Basic Shapes

Horizontal-calm, stability

Vertical-strength

Circles- unity, whole

Diagonals- action, movement

Triangle- stability, unity

Perspective

Size of Frame

Close up- establishes emotional relationship between viewer and represented subjects

Medium Shot- establishes objective relationship between viewer and represented subjects

Long shot- establishes relationship between represented figures and surrounding environment

Vertical Angle

High angle- situates reader in position of power, omniscient view point

Low angle- situates represented subjects in position of power

Left-Right Structure

Given- information that is known to be reader, taken for granted

New- information that is previously unknown to the reader

Figure 4.4 The three main categories include Basic Shapes, Perspective, and Vertical Angle. Each category includes various elements that Connor's suggests as a starting point for graphic novel analysis. The categories are reminiscent of visual arts and media literacy.

Both Connor's study and most all the participants in this study presented the elements of graphic novels (or in Connor's case the visual elements only) as a necessary support to help students make meaning of a graphic text.

Overall, the participants were influenced by the facilitated learning opportunities and the collaborative planning, as evidenced by everyone using a modified version of my PowerPoint on the elements of graphic novels (and in the case of Mrs. Béliveau had there been a PowerPoint translated to French she would have offered one, as well). Furthermore each one saw the value in practicing the pedagogy of multiliteracies, although not overtly, by creating prior experiences for their students, or as appears in the pedagogy of multiliteracies, the experiencing stage. This was the initial stage where the participants shared their completed graphic novel unit with their students and it was also the start of them testing how valid or reliable their application of their new learning was (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

During Reading/ Constructing Meaning

Just as each participant had used some type of pre-reading comprehension strategy with their students to frontload the meaning of a graphic novel, conceptualize the learning, and engage their students, they also used some type of during-reading comprehension to help their students create meaning and analyze what they were reading.

For Beers (2003) during reading strategies, or as she puts it "constructing meaning" strategies, are necessary so that dependent readers can learn that reading is an "active process" (p.

102) requiring students to pay attention to what they're doing while they are reading. She

furthers that in order for students to become stronger in constructing meaning during their

reading, teachers must help make the invisible cognitive practices that strong readers do

subconsciously, visible. Furthermore she suggests "that it is more critical for dependent readers

to talk about texts *during* (her emphasis) the reading experience than *after* it" (p. 104). Reading

strategies that she found most effective encouraged students to:

- predict what will happen next

- question what they don't understand or what is confusing in the text

- monitor their understanding of the text

- identify ways to fix up what has confused them in the text

- comment on the text or their understanding of the text

- connect with they are reading to other texts or personal experiences

- visualize the text (p. 105).

All the participants approached reading their graphic novel by incorporating several during

reading strategies.

Mrs. Monroe began the during reading process with her students by having everybody

come together and discuss the text as a whole:

> We circled the desks so there's a sense of community. Everyone had a text in front of
>
> them. And as the texts were handed out they were encouraged to flip through it, take a
>
> look at it, take their time, identifying different things in there. And then we just started,
>
> started by turning the first page and making notes of, and discussing basically what look
>
> like passport stamps or transportation passes, different things like that.

 Students were invited to discover and discuss the text almost like a mini-inquiry project. The next activity involved every student "telling the story" as they saw it in the first few panels for the first few pages. She was adamant about all students having a chance to tell the story or predict what they thought would happen based on the images and panels. She saw it as an opportunity for all students to understand that their interpretation was valued within the class. They continued to read the entire graphic novel this way, stopping occasionally for Mrs. Monroe to model a think-aloud about how she analyzed the text. They also stopped at the end of each chapter to complete a structured note that she had created for them. Whereas all of the activities and practices Mrs. Monroe used during the reading of the arrival were valuable and helped students understand the text better, it was the structured note (Appendix M) that her students completed at the end of every chapter that she found most useful with students.

      Mrs. Monroe's structured note activity involved many of the same characteristics that Beers (2003) saw as supporting students during their reading. For example the structured note asked students to identify a favorite panel, any interesting parts they found, give an explanation of the chapter they just read, and most importantly make a prediction of the chapter to come. She knew the structured note was working because of the reactions of the students. As she described: "There was lots of predicting. The kids had to make predictions of the next chapter. There was a lot of interpretation of mood, dialogue, story, trying to get meaning out of foreign pictures/objects." One example that stood out to her: "one student in particular was able to identify that some of the scenes were back in time and you could tell because of the color. So these were memories and all the memory type scenes were of a different shade or a different color." The value of the structured note as a during reading activity was found in its openness to

be used while everybody was reading the graphic novel, for the students who were able to do both reading and note-taking, or as an after reading reflection piece.

Mrs. Somers began reading *Lost Innocence* by having a group discussion with her students on the nonfiction information at the beginning of the text. Just like Mrs. Monroe she saw value in beginning with the group discussion. But where Mrs. Monroe offered a structured note to track her student's engagement during reading, Mrs. Somers used the sticky note strategy I modeled during our reading of *the Life of Helen Betty Osborne*. After discussing the nonfiction beginning to her text she asked her students to read the rest of the graphic novel on their own using sticky notes to track their thinking. She instructed her students to "use the sticky notes to record any observations they might have - about storyline or elements of the graphic novel- or any questions they might have, etc." Ultimately the sticky notes provided the students opportunities to meet any and all of the items of Beers' (2003) constructing meaning list mentioned above. Mrs. Somers preferred the sticky notes because "it kept the kids actively involved in the reading, and when we went through this together, I learned a lot about the book from the students!" As was mentioned above, keeping students actively involved during reading is necessary to take dependent readers and turn them into independent readers (Beers, 2003). From there Mrs. Somers invited her students to share their sticky note responses with the class as they read through and analyzed the text a second time.

Mrs. Anderson also had her students read the graphic novel on their own first and had them use sticky notes during their reading. Her sticky notes differed from Mrs. Somers as she was very specific about what they were to be focusing on. She explained:

> So they got a novel and some sticky notes, and they did the first reading by themselves
> and they were asked to make sticky notes on four points; so questions, predictions,

> connections, and interesting observations. So if they had a question they would write it
>
> on the sticky note, and stick it right on the page. If they had a connection to their own
>
> personal life, like 'I felt scared like this character did once.' 'Again I predict this is going
>
> to happen' or an interesting observation might be like 'wow look at all the gutters here
>
> are black when they're feeling hopeless and oh when they're feeling like they have hope
>
> they're white.'

 Mrs. Anderson's version of the sticky notes gave students many different opportunities to

construct meaning while they were reading. By giving them four different choices the students

were not limited to what they could focus on nor were they placed within the narrow constraints

of choosing only one option. After the students had read the text and completed the sticky notes

Mrs. Anderson invited them to get together for another activity before they read the graphic

novel as a whole class:

> I gave them each a piece of bristle board and they divided their bristle board into 4
>
> squares and wrote the headings; predictions, questions, connections, and interesting
>
> observations. And they organize their stickies, so they pulled them out of their books,
>
> and organized them on their bristle board and discussed them as they went. And so that's
>
> when they got to share their ideas. And some didn't notice the gutters and then they had
>
> a chance to, or they didn't know why this happened and then they had discussions
>
> amongst that.

 After the students shared their individual findings Mrs. Anderson had them read and analyze the

graphic novel a second time. During their second reading she offered some interpretations of the

text but focused mainly on what the students found when they were reading and what they

noticed the second time through.

Finally Mrs. Béliveau, in response to what her students wanted, led the reading and discussion around her text *Persepolis*. During the reading she offered comprehension questions at the end of every chapter for the students to complete and she had vocabulary lists and specialized assignments that focused on several symbolic elements of the text like "le voile"(the veil) and "la musique" (the music). However her primary method of helping students construct meaning while they read came from the comprehension strategy, the think-aloud (Beers, 2003). Beers explains the think-aloud:

> As students read, they pause occasionally to think aloud about connections they are
>
> making, images they are creating, problems with understanding that they are
>
> encountering, and ways they see of fixing those problems. This oral thinking not only
>
> helps the teacher understand why or how a student is having difficulty with the text but
>
> also allows the student to analyze how he used thinking about his reading. This type of
>
> metacognitive practice builds independence in reading. (p. 119)

During my exit interview, Mrs. Béliveau commented that she had to make some changes to her unit plan because of what she noticed in her students. She explained:

> Mostly I stuck to the plan but then as we were going I realized some were finding this
>
> quite a bit harder than I thought. Because I had initially planned to have them read on
>
> their own sometimes, or reading in pairs and share. But they were freaked out; they were
>
> too scared to try that. So I had to change and say well let's do this together and then just
>
> ask lots of questions. Do the, what did you call that, the think aloud.

Just as Beers (2003) offered, Mrs. Béliveau noticed through student responses, that her students did not understand everything so she had to adjust her teaching to help them. The other

participants used think-alouds and modeled how they read the graphic novel when they needed to highlight something with their students. On the other hand I found that Mrs. Béliveau's example of changing her unit to suit the needs of her students was a perfect example of teachers knowing not only their subject area but their students as well.

Beers (2003) wrote: "students often don't know how to do all this thinking. For too long we've told them to 'think carefully' about what they've read without showing them how to do that thinking. And showing means bringing conversation - sometimes noisy conversation- into the classroom" (p. 137). By the time they finished reading their various graphic novels each participant had held many discussions - ranging from the analytical to the incidental- with their students. Concurrently, each participant focused on a specific type of during-reading strategy to support their students. They created activities where their students had to show their thinking through writing and discussion. And if the goal was to have students think about what they are reading while they are reading it, and it was, then my participants succeeded in achieving that goal with their students. Put differently, the participants gave students an opportunity to analyze the graphic novels both functionally and analytically (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009), furthering their own multiliteracies practices. All that was left was to tie everything together by extending the students opportunities to make meaning of what they had just read.

After Reading/ Extending Meaning

Once a book is finished students do not cease to make meaning of what they have read, rather they look for ways to extend their meaning making process. Beers (2003) views after-reading activities as a way of "extending meaning" (p. 139). She offers, "after reading activities typically measure how much a student has comprehended the text. In that context,

comprehension is a product. Beers suggests a variety of activities that support students in

constructing meaning. The various after-reading strategies support students to:

- question what they don't understand or what is confusing in the text

- monitor their understanding of the text

- identify ways to fix up what has confused them in the text

- clarify what has confused them

- comment on the text or their understanding of the text

- connect what they are reading to other texts or personal experiences

- visualize the text

- compare or contrast one part of the text to another

- summarize what they have read

- identify main characters, major events, and details

- identify conflicts or main problems in texts

- see causal connections in a text

- make inferences and draw conclusions

- distinguish between fact and opinion (p. 139)

If we instead view comprehension as a process, then meaning making extends to activities that

occur once the book is read" (p. 139). Furthermore the final dimension in the *how* of a pedagogy

of multiliteracies requires that the learner apply their new knowledge in some way. While my

participants created mini-units as a way of applying their new knowledge on graphic novels,

their students were encouraged to show their new knowledge by applying it through assignments

and responses, both of which helped extend their comprehension of the text they read. Each

participant chose a different after-reading activity to help their students understand the text they

read. My analysis did not reveal a preference for a specific after-reading strategy among the participants, so what follows is a brief summary of what they did.

In Mrs. Béliveau's journey with her students she realized that *Persepolis* was a more difficult choice for a grade nine class than she expected. After her class finished reading the text she wanted to ensure that the students not only understood what they had read but were able to apply everything they learned into some type of product (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

The first way Mrs. Béliveau helped her students extend meaning after reading *Persepolis* was to have them make inferences and draw conclusions from their reading. She felt this would be a good use of their time because "[a]t the end [of the text] you're kind of left dangling [about what will happen next]." Ideally students would connect more personally to a text if they could make inferences or draw conclusions from what they've just read. Mrs. Béliveau tested her students' ability to make inferences and draw conclusions by having them "draw four panels about what would happen next." Students confirmed their inferences and conclusions in the next activity Mrs. Béliveau offered: watch the film *Persepolis* and compare it to the graphic novel they had just read. Once students had finished watching the film the class had a final discussion comparing the graphic novel to the film. The discussion focused around concerns like violence or learning about the history of Iran. To collect their understanding of the text Mrs. Béliveau had all students complete a Pros and Cons Exit Slip sharing their opinions on reading *Persepolis*. Finally she compiled a summary of their responses so that she could "get an overall sense of their opinions," which were overall positive and supportive of the text.

Upon completing *War Brothers* Mrs. Anderson gave her students a narrative writing assignment (Appendix N). In the assignment students were expected to show their understanding of the graphic novel by retelling the major events and experiences of the story

from the perspective of one of the minor characters in the text. Students were also given the formatting option of creating a written narrative or graphic text narrative. But whichever version of the narrative they chose, the original intent of the assignment was to extend what they learned from the text. Furthermore her assignment connected to many of the areas Beers recommended as supporting extending meaning after reading as students were asked to identify main characters, major events, major problems, conflict, and other major details from the text (Beers, 2003, p. 139). Mrs. Anderson was able to figure out what level of understanding the students had with the text as she formatively assessed all the narrative assignments. Some of the elements from her assignment rubric required students to show their understanding to many elements of the original text. Mrs. Monroe and Mrs. Somers also looked to extend meaning after reading with their students; however, Mrs. Somers after-reading activities provide better examples of extending meaning after reading.

After reading *Lost Innocence* Mrs. Somers assessed her students' knowledge by having them summarize the text and comment on it and their own understanding of it. Summaries are ways for students to re-tell a story by focusing on a specific group of story elements such as main characters, plot, conflict, setting, etc. (Beers, p. 152). Mrs. Somers followed a similar process to Beers' concept of retelling, but instead of making the retellings oral summaries (p. 152) she had her students respond in writing to a series of questions on reading nonfictional and fictional graphic novels (Appendix O). She described her process:

> The students needed to do the assignments on the non-fiction and fiction information page–essentially, identifying the main thesis of the nonfiction section and the elements of fiction in the main story. With my honours class, I assigned this and left it for homework. They did not seem to do very well on it on their own. So, with my co-taught students I

modeled how to do the work for them. We worked through the first portion of the assignment together and then left the last part for them to do on their own. While they still found it difficult, I think this went better than it had when the students work directly on their own.

Mrs. Somers comments show evidence that she used her students' summaries to guide her instruction, in much the same way Beers suggests retellings should be used, to strengthen comprehension (p. 155).

After the initial summaries Mrs. Somers wanted further proof on her students level of understanding but this time she wanted to see how they understood the text; furthermore she used their responses as evidence of having achieved curricular outcomes. Her final assignment included four similar pages (gutter, form, fiction, nonfiction) around the topic of multimedia literacy and the graphic novel (Appendix P). The questions she asked required the students to go beyond the basic retelling of plot or summary of the main events. Each assignment had a higher level "why" or "how" question that required students to actually explain how they understood something. Overall the student results suggested that students were able to interact with the graphic novel they had just read and provide further evaluative detail on the text and how they understood it.

In the end the students may not have shown evidence of progressing through the pedagogy of multiliteracies as well as their teacher participants, but through the participants use of before, during, and after reading strategies the students were able to strengthen their understanding of the graphic novel. Beers (2003) recognized and focused on the importance of using before, during, and after reading comprehension strategies to help move readers from being dependent to independent. Likewise the participants in this study also saw value in having

their students work through the cognitive process of understanding what they were doing with the graphic novel before during and after reading it.

In Reflection

After the final graphic novel units were taught I met with each participant individually to conduct their exit interview. Many of the questions were focused on the participant's perceptions on their unit's success and whether or not it was worthwhile for them to continue using graphic novels. The questions were formed from their responses during the initial interviews and the first focus group. The first interviews revealed that the participants saw graphic novels as engaging students differently than traditional texts, or that the content of graphic novels could be connected to curriculum outcomes. Therefore I included questions that would reveal how or if the participants' initial thoughts and questions would be answered; and in many cases their responses suggested their initial thoughts and concerns were confirmed.

Many subcategories appeared after my initial coding of their exit interviews, all of which were uncovered by the participants observation of on-task student behaviour, such as increased student engagement in reading, discussion, analysis, and increased support and awareness of student's out-of-school interests. Other subcategories were less about student engagement and more focused on how the lessons within units needed to be restructured because of concerns with reading the text out loud, the pacing of the presentation, analysis and discussion of the material, the amount of front-loading students needed for analysis of a graphic novel, or the difficulty of a text for a certain grade level. To make sense of the multiple subcategories mentioned above, I renamed and categorized the more positive, former subcategories into *Benefits to Using Graphic Novels* and the latter subcategories into *Challenges to Using Graphic Novels*. Concurrently, as

participants reflected on the benefits and challenges to using graphic novels with their students, each participant showed further evidence, as supported by the pedagogy of multiliteracies, of their own reformulated pedagogical understandings. Therefore the final subcategory in this chapter examines the participants overall thoughts on their use of graphic novels in education.

While there are dozens of potential, and actual, benefits to using graphic novels, many discussed earlier in this paper, and others discussed below, like the connection to student's out-of-school interest areas, and the support of curriculum outcomes, data analysis revealed that the benefits to using graphic novels to increase student engagement in learning could be put into three main categories: emotional engagement, behavioural engagement, and academic engagement. One way increased student engagement was revealed to the participants was through the validation of student's out-of school interests or their emotional engagement.

Benefits: Student Emotional Engagement in Learning

Emotional engagement may include, but should not be limited to "affective factors like interest, enjoyment, support, belonging, And the attitudes towards school, learning, teachers, and peers" (Harris, 2010, p. 377). Participants observed many of the emotional engagement factors during the teaching of their unit.

Mrs. Anderson commented on how graphic novels connected to students emotional engagement by engaging their personal interest. During her introduction Mrs. Anderson found her lesson went well "[b]ecause lots of them have been using graphic novels in class (she meant bringing them to class) and some of them read them on their own. So some of them were excited to use their own. I had a couple of students when we were doing the photo scavenger hunts, pull a couple of them from their backpacks." I asked her to expand on just how many students had

graphic novels or what she observed about their prior interest and use with graphic novels. She responded:

> I say maybe a third. Although all of them had some experience, like they all knew what it was. I'd say a fourth pulled it out of their backpack, a third to a half had mentioned reading or they've seen this one or done this one, or whatever for a book report kind of thing. And I found a lot of the EAL students, like I would say half, or maybe more, had had experience with graphic novels.

Mrs. Anderson's observation on her students reading habits revealed her student's prior interests and excitement in reading graphic novels. Bucher & Manning (2012) suggest, "Young adults should be encouraged to read what interests them" (p. 67). So by inviting her students to use their own graphic novels, Mrs. Anderson supported her students in reading within their interest area. She went on to give an example of how some of her students even felt an increased sense of belonging during the graphic novel unit:

> Because we were doing [the unit] they'd share with me what they already read. So that was kind of interesting because they may not have done that before and I'm always kind of interested to see what they like reading on their own. So they would share what they like to do or what they like to read and bring that forward."

By validating her students' interest areas, some of her students were more open in sharing with her because they saw value in what they were learning. Mrs. Somers noticed a similar trend in one of her students: "I asked one girl in particular who's a bright kid but never really offers answers - and I asked her afterwards like what happened how come you were so engaged and then she said 'I felt this was something I know about and I have something to offer.'" This simple, but powerful inclusion of another resource in the classroom went on to strengthen the

relationship between Mrs. Somers and her student. She added that the female student now displays such a strong sense of belonging that she often stays after class "just visiting" with Mrs. Somers. Concurrently, Mrs. Somers noticed her student's interest in graphic novels even before she began *Lost Innocence.*

For Mrs. Somers, the recognition of her students emotional engagement came early in her unit, during her presentation of the Anticipation Guide: "when we were going through the anticipation guide and giving some of the definitions of things, and the kids would help out with that. And they really liked being able to tell me what Manga was and how it worked and, you know, all those kind of things." Her observations that students had "insights into the literature [or graphic novel]" the class was covering and their excitement discussing graphic novels suggested they had some sort of prior-connection, or prior interest to graphic novels or comics; and in the case of at least a few of her students it was clear that their prior experience came from reading Manga.

Mrs. Somers' comment was significant because it aligned with many researchers' findings on youth and multimodal reading. Mrs. Somers found that her students enjoyed reading Manga on their own much like Schwartz & Rubenstein-Avila (2006) found that Manga "among youths in the United States is viewed with bewilderment and amazement" (p. 40). They even go as far as to say that there is a "hype"(p. 40) created around Manga. And a quick visit to the library at Mrs. Somers school reveals that the shelves are lined with multiple copies of popular Manga titles. One reason that her students might have been so receptive to a graphic novel they studied was that Manga, much like graphic novels, requires readers that can "negotiat[e]" (p. 41) the complex multimodalities in the text. Furthermore, her comments connect to Gene Yang's (2003) assertions on the importance comics play in children and teens lives as a way of "luring

teenagers away from their televisions and video games." He goes on to argue that over the last decade classrooms and libraries have undergone some significant changes to stock and stockpile graphic novels and comics because of the growing popularity of the formats among teens.

Mrs. Béliveau noticed how easily her class was able to relate to graphic novels because of the influence from computers and the media in their lives:

> Now obviously the drawings helped enormously as well, especially with our visual learners…I think that the students do a lot, of not necessarily graphic novels, but they're always online and they're always looking at images, so I think that there's already a lot of connectivity there for looking at the picture and figuring stuff out.

 Although she did not see her students as having strong connections to graphic novels prior to their unit on *Persepolis*, she recognized that students' lives are filled with pictures and images already (Kress, 2000; New London Group, 2000). Concurrently, Mrs. Somers found her students, who were "used to being on websites with all sorts of bells and whistles" benefitted from reading a graphic novel because it "engage[d] them on more of their senses," specifically their "sight." Just as graphic novels connected to emotional engagement in learning through student interest, they also increased student interest in reading graphic novels.

After Mrs. Monroe completed her unit on *The Arrival* she commented that students who did not normally read graphic novels wanted to read them more:

> Since you purchased these other books the kids are reading them regularly, so these are kids that typically did not have a graphic novel in their hands prior to doing this. . . kids are using them and reading them frequently now. They are actually asking for the continuation of the series *Smile*. They would like to have the next two books.

What better example of showing how students are emotionally engaged in learning then to watch them pursue new learning by continuing to read graphic novels.

While students' emotional engagement may be measured by their interest in and sense of belonging with a graphic novel, equally as important was how the students displayed engagement through their behaviours in class.

Benefits: Student Behavioural Engagement In Learning

Student behavioural engagement in learning involved the participants looking at their students' participation in class discussions and their level of analysis with the text (Harris, 2010). Active participation during discussion often looked like students paying attention or following along with discussion and reading.

During the initial reading of *The Arrival* Mrs. Monroe observed that her students "were following. They were monitoring (the reading) heads up and down looking at the board, copying, and illustrating. And then of course my teaching partner and I were walking up and down the rows while they were doing it to make sure they were on the right spot." Mrs. Anderson observed something similar in her own classroom:

Okay so typically in any English class there'll be a certain percentage of the English class who don't really enjoy English right? Or who don't really like reading or writing or anything and that's just kind of life. But I think with the graphic novel, there was increased interest. And so that was shown when I said 'let's take it out,' they took it out to read and you didn't have to prompt them and you didn't have to say 'stay on task'…[s]o that showed to me that those people who were not really interested in reading were able to focus better on this.

Mrs. Béliveau also observed her students followed along and offered an explanation on how she knew: "I would watch their faces as I was reading and if it was a disturbing, something disturbing that happened, you know you could see their faces. Some of the students really got into it and they would be upset after." But on-task behavior was not just measured by how well the students followed along with the text, it was also about participation with the discussion.

Each participant also noticed various forms of behavioural engagement when students were analyzing and discussing the texts as a class sometimes taking the form of asking questions, as Mrs. Anderson noted: "if you're interested, you're sharing with others." Mrs. Béliveau also noticed more questions being asked by her students:

> [T]hey would ask questions right as were reading if there was something didn't quite understand. They just put their hand up and asked. Or when we were working on, I had created not very many but a couple of comprehension questions at the end of each chapter, so they would work on those and if they didn't quite get a question they'd either come and ask me or talk amongst each other to, their peers you know what did this mean exactly and I didn't understand what happened in this chapter.

However, discussion was not simply about asking and answering questions. In many cases students were able to show evidence of deeper analysis as Mrs. Somers discovered with both her honours and transitions group:

> A lot of kids that normally don't offer answers were willing to do so. And they had a lot of insights into the literature that I didn't see so they taught me a lot of things. They were very excited in my honors group, the first day when we were going through it in detail. They came up with a lot of things I didn't notice in terms of form and in terms of what's part of it. And as we were talking the tone went -and I have the same kids for

period four and five- and I said to them 'so should we switch to social in period five but

they were very, very excited and they wanted to stay with the novel. And they managed

to stay very focused for about an hour and a half; that was a very in-depth,

intensive, page-by-page analysis because you don't usually do that with grade nines.

It was obvious from Mrs. Somers' observations that her students saw value in reading and then

analyzing *Lost Innocence* if they were willing to continue doing it into another period. Mrs.

Somers best summed up why we should use graphic novels to support student behavioural

engagement:

I would just say that it's a richer resource because there are more levels on which you

can analyze it. And…on some level it's more complex because you're analyzing more

than just the words at one time, you're analyzing the images, you're analyzing the color

choices, you're analyzing the angles. And so the kids recognized that and I remember

one boy talking about how this was such an important skill and how we should even do

it before we learn regular novels. A [graphic novel] engages them on more of their

senses. It's just richer and I think you're more engaged because your imagination is

more and more involved because of the use of gutters.

Ultimately the participants observed students move into the analyzing functionally and

analyzing critically stages within the pedagogy of multiliteracies, a process the participants had

experienced in their own learning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). What this proposed was that the

students, who had already gone through the experiencing and conceptualizing stage, continued

on their progression within the multiliteracies framework, and in the process strengthening their

own knowledge on how to read graphic novels and how to engage with the content of graphic

novels.

Benefits: Student Academic Engagement In Learning

To measure student academic engagement in learning the participants looked at the amount of "time spent doing schoolwork in school or at home…and [the] homework completed" (Harris, 2010). It was within this aspect of student engagement that there were glimpses of the final stage of the multiliteracies framework, applying appropriately (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Mrs. Somers had the most powerful experience when she observed her transitions students, who normally did not complete their homework, actual finish their graphic novel homework:

> [The students] were asked to do sticky notes the first time through… [and] they had to read for homework, and I think that's probably the first time that they all did their home-work that I know of. They were asked to do a minimum of five sticky notes and most of them did more than that. And the thing about the co-taught kids is often they have writing disabilities. And so extra writing is a big deal for them. And for them to do more than five sticky notes suggested that they were interested.

Mrs. Anderson also noticed that her students were academically engaged in learning because they worked cooperatively in groups to complete some of the assignments used:

> So for example [during] the scavenger hunt they were very engaged in that and they were working cooperatively to help find photo examples. Same with the creation of the panels, even if they weren't artistically inclined, they were able to, and seemed to enjoy, creating the images. And same with the workbook too, the information workbook, I gave them the opportunity to work in partners or by themselves. Most chose to work in partners and kind of bounced ideas off each other before coming to a conclusion or an answer.

And in Mrs. Béliveau's class, one of the academic expectations for her students was to have their material with them every day, however she remarked that this rarely happened. She was very excited during the graphic novel unit because, "everyone always had their book. They never forgot their books at home." Her students were prepared for class and therefore ready to learn. During the interview she mentioned how the students would be going back and forth with their "vocabulary sheets," an assignment given to them earlier, while they were reading, causing them to remain engaged in the learning at hand.

Whereas not all of the participants actually gave a great deal of homework, tests, or assignments to their students, most students were still able to show their academic engagement in learning by completing their assignments during class time or on their own for homework.

The categories above were mainly focused on the benefits found from using graphic novels, one of the final categories connected to the benefits teachers found using graphic novels was the positive inclusion of the format within education.

Graphic Novels: A Useful Tool in Education

During the exit interviews and final focus group I asked participants many questions around their experiences using graphic novels. The questions were built around how graphic novels influenced them or their practice and if they would continue using them with their students. Apart from seeing graphic novels as a great way to engage students, the participants felt they gained knowledge and saw the usefulness in using graphic novels.

I asked participants how their views on graphic novels might have changed throughout the process. Overall, none of the participants felt their views changed, only that they gained more knowledge about graphic novels. For example, Mrs. Somers did not see her views

changing because she felt she was only "just beginning" to understand graphic novels. She also

best summed up the communal feeling of the group when she said:

> Well I don't know that my views have changed because I kind of came in open-minded
>
> because I just didn't have much information. And I feel like I have still not enough
>
> information. But I was totally open to the process. And I enjoy them and I've read more
>
> of them than I had. I do allow the artwork to sometimes determine whether or not I want
>
> to read it. Which is unfortunate because I know I'm losing out on some stuff. And I
>
> guess I didn't know that before. But I mean I think they're useful in school.

Mrs. Somers elaborated in the final focus group interview what it was she had learned:

> Well, I'm not really a visual learner myself… but I understand that many of the kids are,
>
> and so this was good practice for me I guess, good mind expanding for me. But also it's
>
> a really good way to impact on those kids who are visual learners. So I guess it taught
>
> me that way. [And] I've learned a lot of new vocabulary, which I've shared with the kids.

Her comments highlighted the visual and multimodal literacies connected to graphic novels,

areas of learning that all participants saw value in. She admits that she learned the vocabulary

necessary to start working with graphic novels, but she still had much more to learn.

Finally, but again not unlike the other participants, Mrs. Monroe felt that she developed a

deeper appreciation for graphic novels:

> Mrs. Monroe: I think that there is some beautiful literature out there in graphic novels,
>
> prior to that my only real exposure to that was seeing students read Manga. And none of
>
> it ever really caught my fancy.
>
> Researcher: The Manga itself you mean?

Mrs. Monroe: Yep not a fan of it just not interested in the format, or the storytelling. It's just not my personal interest. So to come across something like *The Arrival* just really resonated with me. So that's what I was able to appreciate with graphic novels.

Mrs. Monroe began this research seeing value in images and visual texts but not really knowing anything about graphic novels. Through this process she has grown enough to differentiate between anime and graphic novels, and she can also discuss why she appreciates one over the other. Concurrently, she felt that after she had tried graphic novels, it would be easier to use them again- a comforting thought for new teachers interested in using them for the first time:

I think now that I've got one run through under my belt, I'd be more happy to try again with the grade nines again next year. I think it would work for any grade it would just be nice if resources were better known amongst teachers really. To share you know our experiences or to encourage others to try something different in their classrooms. And it does compliment the outcomes a couple times there quite nicely.

Her comments suggest the importance practice plays in using any resource or unit. Now that she has had time to actually teach a graphic novel unit she has skills and resources necessary to try it again. Even more important is that she sees how graphic novels connect to the curricular outcomes.

Some participants wanted to continue using graphic novels in their classrooms because they were another, powerful resource within their classroom. Connors (2010), although very supportive of graphic novels being used in education, warned, "At the current time, anecdotal evidence suggest that educators remain skeptical of the graphic novel's literary merit" (p. 67). He goes on to list examples of how some teachers found that graphic novels do not meet the necessary criteria to "foster self-reflection, initiate social change, promote tolerance, and

stimulate the imagination" (p. 67) (points, he later argues, graphic novels actually *do* support). This was not the case for Mrs. Monroe who "enjoyed using [them]" because "it's important to show the kids different types of literature." Mrs. Monroe was the first to suggest reusing them because of their addition as a literary resource. Nor was it the case for Mrs. Béliveau who provides more arguments for continued graphic novel use, and who proved you could teach an old dog new tricks, when she excitedly gave reasons for future use:

> Oh I think it's great! I would actually like to try to find a graphic novel per grade if I could - budget willing of course - it's going to be a slow process. Hitting multiple intelligences and trying to hit what each kid likes at some point…this is a totally different way of reading the book. And it's not just an easy book either. It's a serious subject but put into graphic novel form, the one I did anyway. So graphic novels are now going to be part of that rotation.

Mrs. Béliveau has two years of teaching left before she retires yet she is excited and willing to put in the work and time necessary to add graphic novels to her classroom. Furthermore, she shows her understanding around multiple intelligences and how she feels it is her job as an educator to support the different ones with each student; again graphic novels should be added as another resource.

Both Mrs. Somers and Mrs. Anderson saw value in the graphic novels continued use as an additional literary "tool." Mrs. Somers confirmed the inherent value she predicted in an earlier discussion that using graphic novels was beneficial in education. I asked her to elaborate on how they are useful in school and she responded by illuminating their use as a pedagogical tool:

> I think they're like anything else, they're a tool that can be used for good or for ill…so if you pick the right one for your topic and you use it appropriately in class, they're a

fabulous tool. If having the kids sit around and read 'comics' because I'm planning for the day, while I guess they're still reading but are not helping anything. So it really is about how you use them, but I can totally see them being useful in many areas. I think you could overuse them though. It's like when we started using the whole literacy strategies and our school - the way we would push them the first year - was I think everybody did 'It says, I say, And So. ' Well after you know about a month you pullout an 'It Says, I Say, And So' when the kids are all like 'oh God. ' So you can overdo anything. So if you have… every single teacher in the school suddenly using graphic novels all the time there did become a chore for the kids like anything else. So they have to be used appropriately and not overused.

Ultimately her comments highlight the importance of including graphic novels as a resource within a teacher's repertoire.

Concurrently Mrs. Anderson found that graphic novels are a useful "tool" to have in "your tool belt," and offered her reason why we should be using them in education:

Okay so what I think is that in the world right now we are saturated in multimedia, right now. So between social networking, and texting, and TV, and advertising, and all that, I think we are saturated in multimedia. And I think part of the reason we're saturated in it is because it's very effective right, people are drawn to it. Which is awesome right? So I think that's one reason to use graphic novels, people are drawn to it already so why not go to where people are already drawn right? And use that to your benefit. But my fear is that, I don't think this has to do with graphic novels in particular, if you become saturated in one resource you lessen the importance of the others.

While both participants warned that overusing graphic novels would lessen their value, much like overusing any resource might, they still saw value in meeting and supporting students in a format that supports their other literacies and interest areas; the importance of which was introduced earlier in Chapter 2 (Carter, 2007; Frey & Fisher, 2008; Griffith, 2010; Hughes et. Al., 2011; NLG, 2000).

What all the participants had in common was their desire to see graphic novels get treated like any other "tool" or resource in the classroom. Their words echo those of Maureen Bakis during an online interview with John Hogan (2011) where she discusses the importance of variety in literature classes:

> A good literature class shouldn't exclude anything that can foster reading, writing, listening, speaking, and critical thinking. A literature class devoted entirely to one type of reading or one genre is probably, in most cases, a poor idea, though it also depends on your students, the learning goals you hope to reach, your administration's demands, and other mandated requirements in your school and state. If the goal is to understand literature, then you necessarily must include multiple media forms and a variety of genre and styles in your curriculum…I think of graphic novels and other narratives in the comics medium as another great tool in the teacher's toolbox for not only literature teachers but for just about any subject area.

Both Bakis and the participants highlight the need to include graphic novels as an additional resource in our teacher's toolkits because of their usefulness to support multiple intelligences, multiliteracies, critical thinking and engagement.

However important graphic novels were to engaging students in learning, and however strong the benefits might be for teachers to be using graphic novels, the participants warned that they are not without their challenges.

Challenges to Using Graphic Novels in Education

In chapter two I discussed some of the potential challenges that educators have faced using graphic novels and, earlier in this chapter, I presented the initial concerns and challenges my participants faced with using graphic novels. But of the challenges identified earlier the ones to remain, as the exit interviews revealed, were: *the length of the unit, over analysis/pacing of text, level of difficulty of text.*

During their initial interviews all of my participants expressed a concern over how to plan and then teach a unit on graphic novels. Once they had finished teaching their units on graphic novels I found it interesting that they still had concerns over what the ideal way might be to teach a graphic novel, specifically around how long a unit should be on graphic novels. Each participant mentioned that the length of their units was a challenge to them.

In Mrs. Anderson's case teaching her unit "took forever. Much longer than I anticipated." When I asked her what her original plan was she said: "Okay so I had originally planned eleven lessons thinking it would be probably about two and a half weeks time, in my mind… one-hour periods. And it over doubled that. So we were about five weeks in doing it." Next I asked her why she thought it took so long to which she replied: "The during [reading] was the smallest portion. I think the pre-reading activities took the longest, and I think part of it was situational to the time, because I was away from class a lot, and so things slow down when you're not here." I asked her if she would teach the unit again and she said she would but with some changes. She commented on how she might use *War Brothers* next time she taught it:

> I think I would change the research [assignment] because I still think they need the
> background information. Maybe I would find a documentary on it and they do a listing
> activity with it instead, instead of it becoming a two-week project. And also to because I
> had the focus is not, I don't think the focus should be to learn everything we can about
> Africa because it's not a history or social studies class and so it kind of started to feel like
> that a little bit, especially during the presentations because they shared all this
> information again and again. And so I would just change it so it was one lesson thing
> instead of a two-week thing.

Mrs. Somers also recognized that time was a concern throughout her graphic novel unit:

> It's the actual time out of my teaching load that made it, that makes it a challenge,
> because both the English and the social studies curriculums are so jam-packed. But I
> never totally finished everything I wanted to do anyway. And this added probably
> about… ten days in English and probably 5 or 6 in social."

Even after teaching the unit and being given time to plan, she was not able to cover everything
she wanted. However, she found that she wanted to keep teaching the graphic novel, but at the
cost of cutting something else. Both Mrs. Monroe and Mrs. Béliveau also had concerns over
time but their concerns were related to external factors like "interruptions" to the teaching day
(staff retreats, sick days, etc.). However, Mrs. Béliveau admitted "I don't think it should take
that long (two weeks)" to finish *Persepolis*. But what caused Mrs. Béliveau to really slow down
her teaching came from her realization that the content of her text was "too difficult" for a grade
nine class.

Mrs. Béliveau was the only participant to experience teaching a text that was too complex for her students. I asked her to explain how teaching her unit went:

Well my hope was that using a graphic novel would be easier, more visual, more

autonomy and more independent learning. It kind of backfired because the novel I

chose, I believe, was too difficult for that grade level. Maybe five percent of the students

could have done it on their own, but honestly it just didn't lend itself very well to grade

nine. So I know that, I mean I could tell that they were really excited about doing a

graphic novel because it's pictures it's cool. You've got imagery, it's an easier read or at

least that's what they think. But then as we went I think they sort of started seeing all

this isn't as easy as I thought it would be. The concept's again, very difficult. So I sort

of had to do a little bit more conventional or traditional teaching. I hadn't thought that I

would be reading everything to them, but I ended up having to adapt again like you said

and just do it that way anyhow.

Furthermore she predicted her challenge and felt that it could have been avoided. She continued: "And to tell you the truth I knew already that it would have been suited better to grade tens. But timetable wise I couldn't, and this had to be done this semester." She referred to the timetable for this research, which we had decided, would not go past one semester. The final challenge experienced greatly by three of the participants was the amount of time they spent analyzing and discussing the graphic novels.

Mrs. Anderson identified two main aspects within the challenge of using a graphic novel. The first was how long a text analysis or discussion should take with students, and the second was how she should approach reading the graphic novel aloud. With the former challenge she had her students read the text on their own and when they were done share their observational

sticky notes in small groups. The problem came when she attempted "a second reading out loud with the students, displaying each of the pages on the smart board as I went and that was a bomb. So I kind of quit midstream. I had started by going through page by page and it was like flies dropping in a classroom." She went on to elaborate: "Yes they were done with looking at the graphic novel because they had read it on their own and they had shared in their small groups. They did not want to share it as a large group." She was affected emotionally when she stopped the reading. She went on to explain that "part of me felt dissatisfied. I'm not sure how I would structure it again next time, because there's some things I want them to notice that I'm not sure every group noticed in their discussions but at the same time I don't want to go okay everyone go to page fifteen and look at this, okay, everybody go to page thirty-five and look at this." And with the latter challenge she saw no possible solution at the time:

> And I found it very difficult to read out loud because there's different characters talking, but it was more difficult than a novel or play. Because in a play you can have assigned roles for people to read, and different characters talk. It was very difficult to read out loud because some of the characters look very similar and so they weren't sure which characters were speaking without going back and things like that. So we got about ten pages in before we moved away from that, and just had a kind of a general discussion about their views and points, and sharing of the bristle boards, instead of going through it page by page.

But Mrs. Anderson was not alone in questioning how long a reading and discussion should last with students as the same thing happened to Mrs. Monroe with her honours students:

> I had made the mistake with the honours and then didn't do with the co-taught. So the honours kids really wanted to go on. They didn't want to switch gears in the second

class, to do what we were supposed to be doing. They wanted to keep reading the book.

And so I let them but what I found I let it go a little too long. So I should have stopped

after you know another fifteen to twenty minutes…When you read it a second time and

you're going 'what do you see,' and you're examining every page, that's pretty intensive

work. So after about an hour and a half their brains are equipped out. But they were

the ones that said 'please, please, please let's continue reading.' And they read it once

before right so it's not like they didn't know what happened, cause they read it the day

before themselves.

All of the above challenges came up during my initial interviews and focus group, and I

had tried to offer possible solutions to their concerns through the graphic novel PD and the

modeling of reading *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne.* But as I would soon find out when the

participants reflected on the entire process, many of the challenges could not be avoided because

it was their first time teaching the graphic novels and I perceived, much like I was my first time

through, that everyone wanted to test the unit just to see what would happen and then they would

find their pace and place with graphic novels.

To summarize the chapter, data analysis revealed that the pedagogical understandings of

teachers who use graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning fits within the

existing framework of the participants' current practices and knowledge. Furthermore, the

participants helped highlight the importance of going through a learning process, such as the

pedagogy of multiliteracies, to make meaning of a new resource like the graphic novel, (Cope &

Kalantzis, 2009). Analysis also revealed the complexity within graphic novels and how at times

they can be beneficial in supporting student engagement in a variety of learning, while they are

not without their challenges.
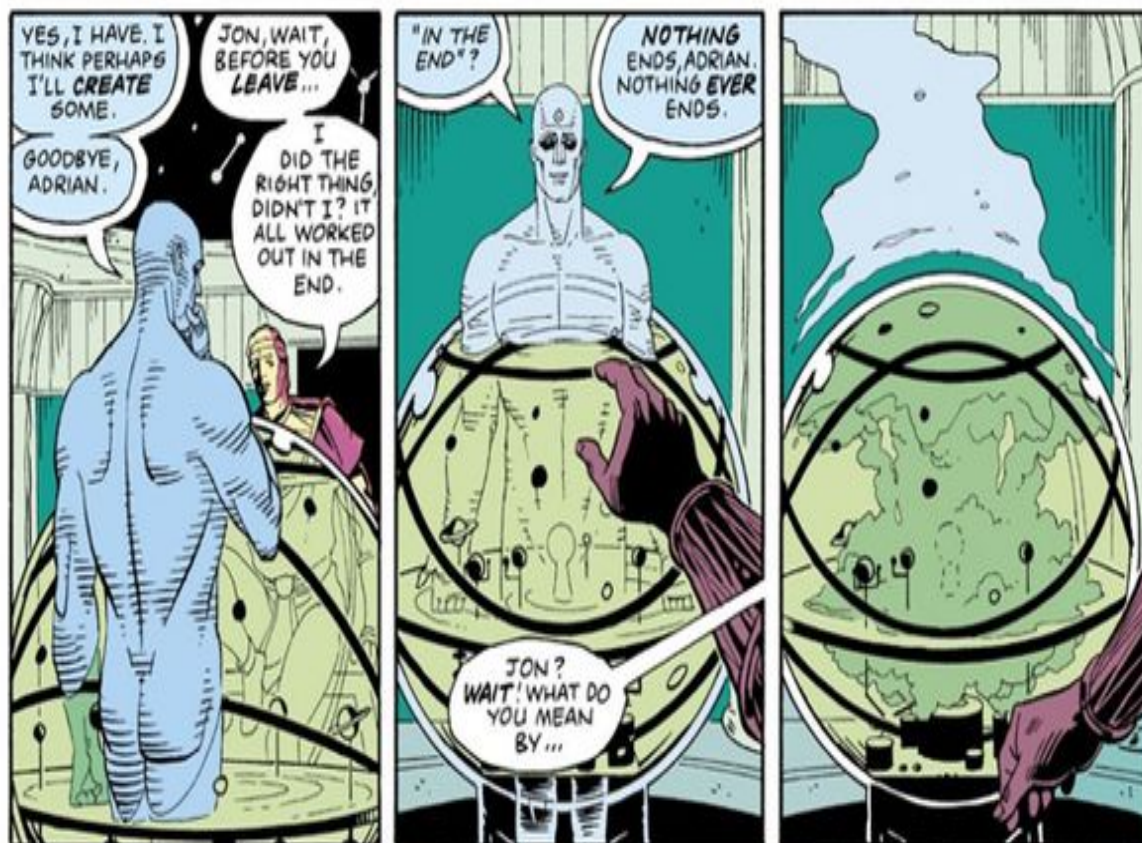
(Moore & Gibbons, 1987, p. 27)

Chapter 5: Conclusions

I had two specific objectives for this study:

1. to examine current research about graphic novels and pedagogical understandings relevant to the study of graphic novels as a pedagogical resource, and

2. to identify the pedagogical understandings of four secondary language arts teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning

The first objective was largely revealed through Chapter 2 as I looked at the relevant research around graphic novels and pedagogy. Chapter 3 expanded on connecting the research to the framework. The second objective stated was revealed in the data analysis for this study. At the beginning of this process the participants explained how they learned about graphic novels, and the potential benefits and challenges they foresaw in using them. As the process continued the

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participants, in collaboration with each other and me, identified a loose framework for how to evaluate, plan, and teach graphic novels. Also during their teaching practices, participants confirmed the outstanding benefits inherent in graphic novels, namely increased student engagement in learning and further support of visual and multimodal literacy. In the end they reflected on the successes and challenges of the process and unanimously decided to continue using graphic novels. I used the pedagogy of multiliteracies as a framework to help understand and explain what my participants were doing during the research. The qualitative nature of my study, specifically the interviews and focus groups, allowed me to better understand my participants learning process, what they learned about graphic novels, and how they learned it and applied it to their teaching contexts. In this chapter, I will discuss the major findings of my research, the limitations of the study, the implications, and thoughts for further research.

Findings in Relation to Previous Literature

The results of this study, as presented in the previous chapter, highlighted several themes connected to the pedagogical understandings of language arts teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning. The section that follows compares my findings to the existing literature. While there are many articles published around graphic novels and literacy and how the two work within education, and teacher use of graphic novels in education, few of the articles focus on the pedagogical understandings of teachers, or how, what, and why they learn about graphic novels and how they share their learning with their students (Carter, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Frey & Fischer, 2004; Hansen, 2012; NLG 2000). There are three major findings that displayed the participants before, during, and after pedagogical process of using graphic novels.

Finding 1 – Before Graphic Novel Use

There are dozens of books and articles available that explain how to read and understand a graphic novel (Bakis, 2012; Carter, 2007; Frey & Fischer, 2008; McCloud, 1993; Monnin, 2010). Many of the texts discuss how students or teachers must be introduced to graphic novels by connecting to their prior interests, looking at the vocabulary and elements of the text (Annett, 2008) or looking at major themes, like superheroes, or different genres (Carter, 2007). The process my participants went through when learning about graphic novels was no different. At the beginning of this research I did not think my participants would have much prior knowledge of graphic novels (Brenner, 2006; Hansen, 2012; Moeller, 2011). However, this was not the case for my participants. Although none of the participants had overtly taught graphic novels prior to this study, nor had they undergone any formal professional development around them at this point in the research, they still held some prior knowledge and experience on the perceived benefits and concerns with graphic novels. Concurrently, they shared their personal reasons for choosing and evaluating a graphic novel, and they uncovered the importance collaboration played in helping them learn about graphic novels.

As I looked deeper into how the participants could be so open and knowledgeable of something they had never taught I was surprised to learn just how diverse their teaching practices already were. I learned that many of the participants were already using a variety of resources and literacies within their classrooms and were already aware of the benefits to using discursive teaching practices. This information implied that any teacher who was supportive of a diverse and dynamic classroom, ripe in visual and multimodal literacies, was already prepared enough to begin using graphic novels.

Cope & Kalantzis (2009) discuss that the pedagogical act of experiencing, both past knowledge and new knowledge, as the starting point for a pedagogy of multiliteracies. What the participants' past knowledge revealed was that they felt graphic novels were beneficial because they could engage or "hook" their students through their visual appeal of the text, the inclusion of images to words, the revitalization of classic texts into a modern format, or its connection to students' prior interests. The idea that graphic novels hook students is not exclusive to this research; however, it strengthens the findings of those educators focused on the overwhelming power of graphic novels to engage both boys and girls alike (Bakis, 2012; Carter, 2007; Connors, 2010; Grillo, 2005; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Bakis (2012) reminds us that "[s]tudents find the aesthetic experience with visuals pleasurable" (p. 3) and with regards to their connection to student interests, that "[s]tudents feel respected for getting books they like to read" (p. 3). Furthermore, the participants' focus on the visual elements supports how useful the visuals can be to analyzing and making meaning of graphic novels.

Versaci (2008) discussed that when analyzing a text teachers are given the opportunity to ask many questions that are meant to engage students in discussion around the different visual elements in the text that will ultimately strengthen how students make meaning of the overall story. He also makes it very clear that teaching visual literacy is as important as teaching any other type of literacy because to him " the act of reading the comic [or graphic novel] cuts much more closely to how our students today receive information" (p. 97). And as each participant acknowledged, by connecting to visual literacy, we are actually supporting all students, rather than just our strong readers, because as Mrs. Monroe put best "we are all visual learners."

Another benefit from this finding was that none of the participants held any misconceptions about graphic novels. Throughout my reading I was prepared to find that my

participants held many of the same "common misconceptions" (Brenner, 2006, p. 124) people often hold about graphic novels (Annett, 2008; Bakis, 2012; Connors, 2010; Hansen, 2012). Some of the specific misconceptions discussed earlier in this research included how graphic novels were just for children, overly violent or sexually explicit, only about superheroes, or meant for reluctant readers (Brenner, 2006). Yet none of the participants held any of the aforementioned misconceptions; they only saw benefits around the visual nature of graphic novels. This finding suggests that people within education, in this case teachers - the main users and developers of resources- have undergone a shift in the thinking in the material they value of use within the classroom. Gone are the days of Dr. Wertham (1954) and his fear propaganda campaign against comics. Gone are the days where misconceptions dictated resource selection and curriculum (Brenner, 2006; Connors, 2010; Hansen, 2012). Not only was each participant aware of potential misconceptions that people might hold, they were all very much aware of why those reasons did not work. And if we accept Hansen's (2012) suggestion that the harshest critics of graphic novels are "teachers themselves" (p. 61) then this research is invaluable in showing how four teachers from three different high schools in the middle of Saskatchewan began to value, successfully teach, and continually advocate for the use of graphic novels. However positive the benefits were, each participant still held concerns over how long teaching a graphic novel would take and which elements they should focus on.

This finding supports McTaggart (2008) who reports that, "[f]inding the time to use graphic novels is a concern for every teacher. Teachers rarely have extra hours (or even minutes) to spare. Something must be eliminated before something new can be added" (p. 44). My participants much like McTaggart's teachers, voiced genuine concerns over planning for a resource they have never used. They also worried about how long their textual analysis should

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be when reading. Finally, they were concerned over learning the vocabulary and design elements of graphic novels and how long they should spend introducing them.

After the initial discussions around graphic novels, the participants were asked to select graphic novels and explain why they chose the texts they did. Originally, I believed the participants would choose graphic novels based on their personal interests or personal evaluative criteria, the texts appeal to students, and the texts connection to curriculum. My thinking was aligned with Griffiths (2010) who suggested teachers apply some type of formal evaluation criteria to their graphic novel selection. Rather than use a standardized form of evaluation my participants chose their texts for personal reasons, except in the case of Mrs. Béliveau who picked hers based on availability, specifically the limited availability of French graphic novels in Canada. Mrs. Somers wanted *Lost Innocence* because it "caught [her] eye" whereas Mrs. Anderson focused on the artwork because she "wanted it to be visually appealing," and Mrs. Munroe saw *The Arrival* as being "everybody's story" and that it might connect with the immigrant student population in her school. Ultimately, each participant found what she was looking for in a graphic novel.

When I began this research I understood the need to provide my participants with opportunities to discuss their learning and make sense of new ideas both in individual settings (individual interviews) and in collaborative ones (focus groups and collaborative sessions) (Hendricks, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Stringer, 2008). What I could not predict was how valuable both collaborative opportunities and my role as researcher/expert was to the participants as they looked to understand how to use graphic novels.

Cromer & Clark (2007), in their study on graphic novel use in social studies classrooms, found that reading graphic novels "requires time" (p. 579). Time to process the written and

visual modes, but also time to interpret the multimodal elements of a text. Time, specifically

being given time to collaborate and to participate in structured learning opportunities, became

instrumental in shaping my participants learning around graphic novels.

The collaborative process unveiled how each participant read her text. Everyone

admitted to reading their text multiple times and in most cases, like they were, as Mrs. Somers

put it, "reading a book;" in so much that they focused on reading the words rather than the

images. The participants were either unaware or unprepared to engage with both pictures and

words. Thus each needed time to read their chosen texts multiple times. The degree to which

the participants invested in their text almost certainly could not be repeated with the full

workload and responsibilities required of teachers during the school year; thus time is necessary

to make "meaning paths" (p. 579) in understanding graphic novels.

During collaboration the data analysis revealed that their learning was influenced from

what Hendricks (2009) called "collaborative reflection" (p. 26) - a process where participants

look to each other to increase their own knowledge. Collaborative reflection began when Mrs.

Munroe offered the terms "panel, palette, angle of shots, font, and colour" as the elements she

focused on when reading a graphic novel. Some of the words made sense to the participants, but

others like 'palette' and 'font' had to be explored. As the group defined and shared examples of

the different aspects they found throughout their multiple readings, their knowledge and analysis

of the text deepened. This was further solidified as explained by Mrs. Anderson when she

started noticing further details on the colours of her pages after hearing about Mrs. Munroe's

reading, or when Mrs. Somers identified the ways characters spoke through gestures to each

other. As I watched their faces during the collaborative reflections it was clear that each

participant, myself included, was "surprised by the insight, experiences, and suggestions given

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by their peers" (Hendricks, 2009, p. 75) - another benefit from collaborative reflection. It seemed like the more time the participants had to discuss their reading, the more they realized that they needed to know about the elements of a graphic novel if they were to understand it completely. And it should be clear that collaborative reflection is more successful when participants are given time.

Hendricks (2009) offers that "[c]*ollaboration encourages educators to engage in ongoing professional development"* (p. 75). As collaboration continued the participants showed their interest in professional development as they requested I create a graphic novel session for them so they could better understand the elements of a graphic novel and how to teach a graphic novel. Collaborative reflection was also displayed during my professional development and structured reading sessions on graphic novels. During the session the participants had difficulty understanding my use of the term multimodal. The participants, led by Mrs. Anderson, and much like they did with Mrs. Munroe earlier, needed time to test ideas and questions against not only my knowledge but the group's knowledge. As Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Munroe asked more questions and built off each other's responses, they also started testing out clarifying statements on what they thought the term could mean. Eventually everyone in the group added their own thoughts to what the definition might be until at least Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Somers were satisfied with their understanding. What that conversation showed was how the collaborative reflection amongst the participants and me was vital to helping everyone make sense of the new terminology.

When I began this research I pictured my role as being reporter/researcher more than educator/facilitator, but as the focus groups and discussion progressed the participants placed a growing demand on me to share my experiences. I did so by offering the ways I had approached

teaching a graphic novel with my students. I explained my use of an anticipation guide before reading, my sticky notes during reading, and my project after reading. The participants liked my ideas and wanted the material along with my presentation from our professional development workshop. I found it interesting that at one moment they were collaborating and creating new knowledge on their own and the next moment they wanted to be told what to do. As I explored reasons why the participants might be acting this way I recognized that they were participating in pedagogical acts within the pedagogy of multiliteracies. They became "active participants" (NLG, 1996, 64) rather than passive recipients, in deciding what was best for their learning. Furthermore, both the NLG (2000) and Cope & Kalantzis (2009) suggested that learners learn from someone else – they suggested a student learn from a teacher, whereas we had teachers learning from an expert teacher - as they go through the pedagogy until they are able to apply their newly redesigned knowledge in a different situation. The participants preferred having a practical demonstration and a structured reading around graphic novels rather than making all their resources from scratch- a thought echoing the advice on unit planning from a teaching colleague during my first year as a new teacher - who said "you don't have to reinvent the wheel." Thus the significance of working with the participants and guiding them through the experiencing act became a significant part of the study, and ultimately shaped how they would teach graphic novels in their own classes (applying their redesigned knowledge) (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Finding 2 – During Graphic Novel Use

Graphic novels are no longer an emerging trend; they are here to stay. The research around graphic novels has a long way to go, especially in looking at how teachers use the texts with their students (Carter, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 2000; Frey & Fisher, 2008).

Hansen (2012) offered, "Just as teaching poetry offers different opportunities from teaching drama or novellas, graphic novels offer distinctive teaching opportunities" (p. 62). The next finding from the research connects with Hansen's thoughts about distinct teaching opportunities, while still supporting the work already done in multiple literacies and student engagement. Two factors, or distinct teaching opportunities, arose from how the participants used graphic novels in their classrooms: the focus on teaching the visual elements of a graphic novel prior to reading a text; and the use of literacy strategies before, during, and after reading their graphic novels.

Much of the literature around graphic novels reminds us that comics and graphic novels require specialized knowledge in multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 2000), multimodal literacy (Jacobs, 2007) and visual literacy (Frey & Fischer, 2008). In an age where information has become globalized and people receive their information through diverse sources (email, blogs, tweets, etc.), it becomes paramount that teachers understand how to tap into multiple literacies (Schwarz, 2002; 2009; 2010) if they are to best reach their students. But instead of looking at how all the elements blended together (Jacobs, 2007) my participants were only focused on the unmoving single image.

This first factor echoes the importance Frey & Fischer (2008) give to how "visual images play an integral part in understanding" (p. 1). Each participant saw the value in teaching visual literacy to some degree because they wanted students to know how to read a graphic novel (Connors, 2012). For some it was just to ensure their students knew the right definitions before moving on to the text, as it was in Mrs. Béliveau's case, or to ensure that their students had a deeper, more interactive understanding of how to best approach reading a graphic novel, as it was for the other three participants. The amount of time each participant spent - all but one participant went over their planned timeframe - also strengthened the value they saw in

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discussing the visual elements of the text and ensuring their students could read and make sense of everything happening within the graphic novel (Schwartz and Rubinstein-Avila, 2006). Mrs. Munroe was the only participant not able to give her unit a significant focus, although she had planned too, because her school year and classroom expectations became too heavy and the graphic novel unit was pushed to the end of the semester.

The participants overt teaching of the visual elements within graphic novels also support Jacobs (2007) thoughts that literacy is strengthened "through the inclusion of visual and other literacies" (p. 21). Furthermore he suggests that

> By situating our thinking about comics, literacy, and education within a framework that views literacy as occurring in multiple modes, we can use comics to greater effectiveness in our teaching at all levels by helping us arm students with the critical-literacy skills they need to negotiate diverse systems of meaning making. (p. 21)

The multiple modifications and use of my PowerPoint by the participants, and the newly created elements of form PowerPoint from Mrs. Anderson, serve as evidence of the participants choosing the best elements to have their students armed with the necessary skills to navigate the graphic novel successfully. Also discussed within this finding was the resounding focus on before, during, and after reading literacy strategies.

I knew that the teachers were already aware of the benefits of using literacy strategies with students but it was surprising to see how natural it was for them to include the strategies in their graphic novel units. The Saskatchewan ELA 30 (Ministry of Education, 2013) curriculum suggests that

> An effective ELA program teaches students how to use critical and powerful learning strategies. In order to achieve the English language arts outcomes, students need to learn

and use a range of language skills and strategies. Effective language arts teachers employ a range of instructional approaches to help students move from teacher- supported and guided lessons to independent learning. This requires varied instructional methods and strategies to help students learn these language skills and strategies. Teachers model and discuss key procedural and metacognitive strategies for language learning and thinking. Students need to learn how to select and to use strategies before, during, and after viewing, listening, reading, speaking, writing, and other representing activities. (p. 26)

The participants were working within the provincial curriculum guidelines, as they broke up the learning process into distinct sections reminiscent of the pedagogy of multiliteracies. Furthermore as each teacher moved their students through the different strategies they increased their students' knowledge on graphic novels and their ability to decipher and make meaning from them.

This finding also deters people from falling for the misconceptions or the "stigmas" (Hansen, 2012, p. 60) that graphic novels are only for reluctant readers or boys. By looking at the graphic novels in a systematic fashion of before, during, and after, like a novel or poem might be presented, teachers prove to a student that if time is spent learning about them then perhaps graphic novels actually "deserve respect" (Hansen, 2012, p. 62). But the most significant factor within this research was the observation by all participants that graphic novels do encourage student engagement in learning.

Finding 3 – After Graphic Novel Use

There are many benefits to using graphic novels with students such as increasing students visual and multimodal literacies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Jacobs, 2007; NLG, 2000), appealing to students interest areas (Kress, 2003; Schwarz, 2009), and connecting to classroom curriculum

(Connors, 2008). The responses from my participants were no different than the findings of other educators; students are simply engaged in graphic novels. My participants found that the main reason their students were engaged with graphic novels was that they were already interested in them and reading them outside of the classroom. Furthermore the participants identified three specific types of engagement in learning that support current research in engagement: academic, behavioural, and emotional (Harris, 2010).

The first benefit to using graphic novels is student's emotional engagement in them. Bakis (2012) offered: "Students read graphic novels. They don't pretend to read." And small children learn to interpret the world around them from images and they often read pictures in texts before they can interpret the words (Rudiger, 2006). Furthermore, graphic novels and Manga are more common and more popular in libraries and bookstores than ever before (Griffith, 2010). Therefore it was not unusual that my participants noticed their students were already emotionally engaged with graphic novels through their prior interests and regular use of them (Bucher & Manning, 2012; Harris, 2010). However, they were surprised at how many of their students actually did read graphic novels already. And in two of the cases the participants found they learned more from their students' knowledge of graphic novels and Manga than they did through their own prior reading and preparation. Even after the graphic novel unit was finished the participants' students continued to read graphic novels and discuss what they were reading with the participants, in some cases asking their teachers and librarians to bring in more titles of genres they were interested in.

Another benefit to reading graphic novels is their ability to engage how students interact and analyze a text. In one study Hammond (2009) noticed that a class of high school seniors applied their critical analysis skills to respond to image analysis as well. And Shari Sabeti

(2012) found that his after school graphic novel reading club advanced his diverse group of students' critical thinking skills through more in depth analysis in the image, text, and interplay of both. The list could continue as the pros outweigh the cons when it comes to the potential benefits students can receive through graphic novels (Bakis, 2012). This finding supports what the educators mentioned above found because my participants also noticed their students' behavioural engagement in learning.

The first thing all the participants observed was their students "on task" behaviour when the students followed along with the reading, were able to give responses to questions, and added to the class discussions by sharing their own thoughts as they connected to the text. More importantly, everyone noticed that more students were asking questions about the text analysis than normal. This signifies not only the power of a graphic novel to engage people in deep analysis (Hammond, 2009; Sabeti, 2012) but its ability to connect with students with different literacy strengths, interest areas, and learning backgrounds (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 2000; Schwarz, 2009). The best example of this was shown when Mrs. Somers used *Lost Innocence* with her honours students and her transition students and had total engagement from both groups.

The final benefit was the academic engagement the participants noticed when using graphic novels (Harris, 2010). Bakis (2012) found that "[s]tudents must exercise more skill (reading images and text) not fewer when reading graphic novels" (p. 3). My participants found that their students furthered their skills by completing the various academic tasks required. In some cases the students were able to complete their anticipation guides on the new vocabulary, and others students were able to finish their homework, test questions, or after viewing assignments. Mrs. Béliveau even had a new experience with her grade nines as they brought

their texts and completed homework to class everyday. Other participants acknowledged similar findings with Mrs. Somers celebrating her transition students having "all finished" their homework, something previously never experienced with that group.

When I started this research I knew my students would benefit from reading graphic novels but no amount of convincing on my part would inspire teachers to use them. After my four participants learned, taught, and reflected on their growth and use of graphic novels, not one of them would argue that their students were not engaged in learning. They readily accept that graphic novels are useful tools in education and when used in conjunction with other literacies and resources, will always benefit students.

While the research process was not without its limitations, the participants left the process with more confidence and knowledge of how to use graphic novels best. They were given the time to discuss, collaborate, and learn from their peers. They were given the time to plan and test their activities. But most importantly, with the help of framing their learning process through the pedagogy of multiliteracies, we were able to learn about their pedagogical understanding; we learned why, what, and how they learned about graphic novels and then how they would share that learning to engage their students.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

This research is significant because it introduced the pedagogical understandings of high school teachers that use graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning, an area that has little research given to it (Schwarz, 2009). The initial findings revealed the importance of teachers' prior knowledge and individual preference in selecting and using a graphic novel, and the value of collaboration and access to structured, collaborative learning opportunities for

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teachers as they learn about graphic novels. Furthermore, the research revealed that through collaboration, teachers share and recreate existing literacy strategies and lessons to fit their specific classes no matter what their content and resources. Of particular importance was how the participants focused on teaching the literacy skills required to interpret graphic novels to support student engagement in learning. Thus the overall significance of this research is that we have deeper insight into how easily teachers who have never used graphic novels can incorporate them into their existing teaching practices without any major shifts in their pedagogy.

Concurrently, I used the pedagogy of multiliteracies to help frame some of the pedagogical processes my participants experienced as they were learning. The pedagogy inadvertently became a great template to recognizing future pedagogical acts in similar research because it was a structured process that helped me uncover my participants learning from beginning to end (Cope& Kalantzis, 2009; NLG, 2000)

The methodological design was instrumental in structuring how I would interact with my participants. The interviews, focus groups, and collaborative learning periods shaped the depth and breadth of my research. I was able to ask questions, and because of the openness inherent in the action research process and qualitative methods, I could expand and clarify my questions or thoughts. Furthermore, with more time being given to the process, the participant's responses led to more substantial findings, which then helped explain their pedagogical processes and provide us with more in depth knowledge on the lessons, learning, and planning process. Finally, and again because of the qualitative methodology, this research provided quality teacher-designed lessons and tasks that can be added to the literature around using graphic novels in education and shared with other education professionals.

A surprising element to this study was how most of the teachers developed a passion for graphic novels. At the onset of this research, the participants were aware of graphic novels but had never really pursued any knowledge on them. After only a few weeks working with them all four participants showed signs of deep engagement in their selected texts. I knew they were engaged because they were excitedly discussing their texts and as we continued to meet they shared more information as they learned about their texts and about graphic novels in general. By the end of the research three of the four participants showed continued interest in and passion towards graphic novels. Mrs. Béliveau is looking for other resource options so she can continue to work with graphic novels until her near retirement. Mrs. Anderson has been vocal at her school in updating her department's resources to include the newest, most highly recommended curriculum supported graphic novels. Finally Mrs. Somers took her new passion with graphic novels and convinced her ELA Consultant to buy class sets of *Lost Innocence* for every Catholic high school in the division. Her logic was that it not only supports the ELA curriculum but it also encourages students to learn more about First Nations, Metis, and Inuit peoples in Canada.

Limitations

Although the methodological design strengthened this study, it also led to a number of limitations. The recruitment process had many drawbacks. As mentioned in Chapter 3 my plan was to email all local school divisions to recruit participants. The process was hurried within my own division because of a superintendent's interest and belief in my research. However, when it came to sending information out in the neighbouring school division it took several weeks before I could even get someone to respond. In order to stay on schedule I had to forego inviting teachers in the other school divisions. With that said, finding participants within my own division was more difficult than I could have predicted as I ended up needing to have multiple

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discussions on the importance of this research in order to convince my participants. Furthermore, all my participants were female so I was not able to see if a male participant would have approached this research and learning in a similar manner.

Another limitation is related to the small number of participants. Because this study was qualitative and required significant conversations and interviews to determine the data, I needed a manageable number of participants to work with. The drawback to this was that my findings could not be generalized to the larger population of Language Arts teachers. However, a quantitative study would not have produced anywhere close to the same depth of detail and description regarding the data analysis.

A further limitation was the length of time for this study. Time was needed so participants could research, learn, collaborate, and plan their units. Furthermore it was necessary so that participants could be given a time frame to follow if the completion of this study hoped to be achieved. Although the participants co-created the research timeline with me, many had trouble following it. It was not uncommon for some of them to miss collaborative sessions because they had "nothing prepared" or "nothing to share." And only two of the participants were able to teach their units around the same time period they had originally planned, with one being a few weeks late, and the other leaving her unit to the very end of the semester and ultimately not having enough to complete her unit. It is not likely that had they been given more time they would produce different results than were shared in this study.

A final limitation was the availability of resources and the evaluation of resources. As was mentioned earlier, Mrs. Béliveau only had access to *Persepolis* and was ultimately forced to use it even though she had a feeling it would be too advanced for her students. I spent many hours on the phone and online looking for further French-language resources but was only ever

able to access *Persepolis* within Canada. And when it came time to looking for evaluations on the quality of a French-language text, I was only able to find reviews in English.

The NLG (2000), Cope & Kalantzis (2009), and many others find it important to not only support the visual mode, but all modalities. Yet the participants showed no evidence that they were aware of the complex interplay between text and image as they focused on only the visual. I was convinced that the significance I placed on multimodalities and multimodal literacy would influence the participants but they only ever seemed interested in looking at how either the images or the written text worked alone.

Implications

Professional Development: Pre-service

Young educators will be bringing many diverse skills with them to their classrooms, one of which will include abilities in multiple literacies. And if the research can be believed then many of the educators will also possess interests and skills with graphic design elements because of their interactions with media and global technologies, and with graphic novels themselves. I have heard it said, and it is true in my case and many of my colleagues, that teachers teach the way they were taught. The question is then how can professors prepare their students to add graphic novels to their teaching repertoire? Teacher educators will need to be prepared to address these growing areas of interest and find ways to tap into the unique skill sets; teaching the next generation of educators how to read the multimodal and visual elements of a graphic novel might be one way to do this. Professors will need to learn about the graphic novels if they hope to teach them. Finding out what interests the educators and uncovering reasons why they might want to, or should use them in their classrooms would be a good starting point. Moreover, educators will need time to collaborate and develop their own pedagogical practices around

multiple literacies and learn how to relate it to their students. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that all young educators will have the skills needed to read a graphic novel so there will need to be a focus given on not only how to read and analyze graphic novels, and which elements they should focus on, but they will need to learn how to evaluate which ones are most effective for their curriculum and students.

Professional Development: In-service

Unlike pre-service educators, current educators may not know anything about graphic novels. Therefore professional development in-service opportunities for current teachers need to be developed if interested teachers hope to learn about graphic novels. The in-service could be structured around helping educators see the value in using graphic novels within education and with their students. Articles and activities could be shared initially to activate educators existing knowledge on graphic novels. Next educators would need time to learn about and even experiment with the different elements of a graphic novel before they are given an opportunity to analyze a text. They could be shown or given time to develop lessons where the graphic novel is connected to curriculum outcomes. Finally teachers can work through different ways to evaluate and use graphic novels with their students. Ultimately the in-service should be about creating a collaborative community in a short period of time, where graphic novels are celebrated and understood as another valuable tool within education.

Future Research

This study uncovered several areas for future research. All of my participants were interested in using graphic novels and participated freely, but what about the teachers who are reluctant to use graphic novels? How can they be supported in seeing the value of using graphic

novels? What would their pedagogical process look like? And is it even worth helping reluctant teachers use a resource they might not see value in?

The study also revealed that at the beginning of the research my participants did not read graphic novels, but by the end of it three of the four participants fell in love with reading them and have all started collecting them and adding them to their personal and professional libraries. What my study did not reveal was why this happened. There needs to be further work looking at what it was about graphic novels or the pedagogical process, or both, that inspires teachers passion in reading them.

Finally, we looked at four teachers who were given the opportunity to bring graphic novels into their classroom. I was asked during this research if I knew how many teachers were using graphic novels already. I still do not know. What a great quantitative study it would make to look at how many Saskatchewan teachers are already using graphic novels in their classrooms. All levels from elementary to university could be reviewed. This type of study would be important because it would show where teachers are in this province when it comes to supporting multiliteracies. It would also be interesting to see how those teachers are using graphic novels. Are they simply supplementing material or do they overtly teach the multimodal and visual elements to help strengthen their learners' literacies?

Conclusion

There has been little research that looks into the pedagogical understandings of teachers using graphic novels to encourage student engagement in learning. The current study provides further understandings on the issue and adds to the missing research in the literature. The findings are consistent with some current studies on visual literacy, multimodal literacy, graphic novels, pedagogical practices, and engagement.

Using graphic novels in the classroom, like the use of any new text or resource, involves teachers incorporating new technical understandings with their current pedagogical ones. What they require is time to learn about graphic novels, time to read them, time to collaborate with colleagues and experts in the field, and time to plan. Furthermore teachers must learn about the visual and multimodal elements of the graphic novels if they are to fully understand how to analyze and make meaning from the texts. If teachers can do this, they will benefit by engaging their students at a more complex and interesting level.

Appendices

Appendix A – Behavioural Research Ethics Approval

Appendix B - Initial Interview Questions

Appendix C - Exit Interview Questions

Appendix D – Initial Focus Group Questions

Appendix E – Exit Focus Group Questions

Appendix F – Letter to School Division

Appendix G - Graphic Novel Anticipation Guide

Appendix H – Mrs. Somers Graphic Novel Mini-Unit

Appendix I – Mrs. Somers' 'Your Turn' Assignment

Appendix J – Mrs. Béliveau's Graphic Novel Prior Knowledge Activity

Appendix K - Mrs. Anderson's Photo Scavenger Hunt

Appendix L – Mrs. Anderson's Understanding Graphic Novels Booklet

Appendix M - Mrs. Monroe's Structured Note Activity

Appendix N - Mrs. Anderson's *War Brothers* Narrative Assignment

Appendix O - Mrs. Somers' Elements of Fiction Questions

Appendix P – Mrs. Somers' Final Assignment

Appendix A

Behavioural Research Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN Behavioural Research Ethics
Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR	DEPARTMENT	BEH#
Geraldine Balzer	Curriculum Studies	13-358

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CONDUCTED

STUDENT RESEARCHER(S)
Scott Allen

FUNDER(S)
INTERNALLY FUNDED

TITLE
Superhumans: How Teachers Use Graphic Novels to Encourage Critical Thinking

ORIGINAL REVIEW DATE	APPROVAL ON	APPROVAL OF:	EXPIRY DATE
06-Feb-2014	10-Feb-2014	Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review	09-Feb-2015
		Letter of Information	
		Participant Consent Form	
		Debriefing Form	
		Interview Guide	

Full Board Meeting ☐

Delegated Review ☒

CERTIFICATION
The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol or consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: *http://www.usask.ca/research/ethics_review/*

Beth Bilson, Chair
University of Saskatchewan
Behavioural Research Ethics Board

Appendix B

Questions for Initial Interview:

1) Describe the school you teach in? (the environment, society, etc.)

2) Describe the diversity of students you have in your classroom?

3) Could you tell me about a favourite assignment or lesson you used to engage your students in learning?

(Tell me about some of the ways you engage students in learning in your classroom)

4) What types of resources/texts do you already use with your students? (How do you feel about using multiple texts, resources, formats, styles, etc. in your classroom?)

5) Tell me everything you know about graphic novels? (What are their potential benefits? What misconceptions do people have of them?)

6) Why are you interested in using graphic novels? What motivated you to learn about, or to try using, graphic novels? (Tell me in detail how you plan to advance your own knowledge on graphic novels?)

7) How do you see graphic novels fitting into your curriculum?

8) In what ways might graphic novels support students in the classroom?

9) What are some questions or concerns you have about graphic novels? List some challenges you foresee with using graphic novels in your classroom?

10) What do you hope to learn from this research?

11) How would you use graphic novels in your classroom? (Describe how you would present new material (content/resources) to a class?)

Appendix C

Exit Interview Questions

1. Describe how you used the graphic novel in your class.

    1b. How did you introduce it to the class? What resources were most useful?(Elements, just had them read, etc.)

    1c. What literacy or reading strategies did you incorporate?

    1d. You began teaching this graphic novel with a planned unit. How closely were you able to implement the ideas you had originally planned? What adaptations did you make?

2. You had opportunities to work with other teachers and me in the preparation of this unit. How did that contribute to your preparation? What were the positives? Negatives?

3. What did you hope to achieve by using your graphic novel with your class?

    3b. Did the graphic novel unit support curricular outcomes? Explain.

    3c. Do you think using the graphic novel helped reach student outcomes in a better or more enjoyable way that other resources or approaches? Explain.

4. Did your graphic novel encourage engagement in student learning? How?

    4b. Describe how students reacted to your unit on graphic novels.

    4c. How was the use of a graphic novel different than the use of a more conventional text? (What are the pros and cons in using a graphic novel compared to using a standard novel or textbook in attempting to reach certain curricular outcomes?)

5. What do you think the students got out of using your chosen graphic novel?

    5b. What signs could be used to show students engaged in the learning process?

6. What were some of the challenges in using a graphic novel in your class?

    6b. What worked to solve the challenges?

    6c. What resistance did you encounter? If you encountered resistance, from what/whom? How did you respond to the resistance?

7. Would you use graphic novels again? Why?

    7b. What would you do differently next time you teach a graphic novel? Or How would you improve your unit for next time?(What would you repeat next time you teach a graphic novel?)

8. How have your views on graphic novels changed since you first started this research?

    9b. What are your thoughts/feelings on using graphic novels in education (as an educational tool?)?

9. Describe how using graphic novels has influenced your teaching practice?

10. What advice would you give to an educator thinking of using graphic novels in their own classroom?

Appendix D

Focus Group Questions

1. What graphic novels did you examine over the summer? What teacher resources did you examine over the summer?

- Why did you choose the resources you did?

- What interested you in it?

- Did you do any further research into any of the resources you read?

2. What graphic novel did you decide to use?

- Why did you choose it? And why are you interested in using it?

- What surprised you or stood out to you when you read it?

- What did you notice about the text while you were reading?

3. What elements will you focus on in your mini-unit?

-What supports will you need as you prepare your mini-unit?

- How much time will you spend on teaching the academic elements? Creative/artistic elements?

4. What challenges do you see prior to teaching the unit? During the teaching of it?

5. How does your text connect to curriculum?

6. What literacy strategies or comprehension strategies would you use with the resource?

- How will you present the text as multimodal rather than just mono modal?

7. How will you assess the student knowledge of curriculum elements after your unit?

Appendix E

Exit Focus Group Questions

Process:

- Describe how using graphic novels has influenced your teaching practice?
- You have had opportunities to have access to research, resources, paid time off, and colleagues to bounce ideas off of. How did these opportunities influence your thoughts about pedagogy involving graphic novels?
- Do you feel that you have gained anything from this research? If so, please explain
- If I was to do this research again with another group, what you recommend I keep/repeat and what would you change/get rid of from the process?

Using Graphic Novels in the Classroom:
- Do you think using the graphic novel helped reach student outcomes in a better or more enjoyable way that other resources or approaches? Explain.
- How did you assess the student knowledge of the unit that used the graphic novel?
- Was it better, worse, the same, or different than using conventional texts? Please explain.
- In your opinion, how do graphic novels encourage student engagement? Describe what that looked like in your classroom. (How did you know that the students were engaged in the learning process?)

Future Research:

-Would you like to see more ELA teachers using graphic novels in their teaching? Why?

-Do you have any ideas around how best to increase or expand the usage of graphic novels in your school or even in your school division? What might these be?

Appendix F

Letter to School Division

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN	**Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB)**

Invitation FORM

LETTER OF INVITATION: Please keep this form for your records

Dear Educator:

You are invited to participate in a study entitled**: Superhumans: How Educators Use Graphic Novels to Encourage Critical Thinking.**

The study has three objectives, described below, regarding how high school educators encourage pedagogical practices involving graphic novels to engage students in rich, valuable conversations where critical thinking is fostered:

- to examine current research in graphic novels and critical thinking relevant to the study of graphic novels as a pedagogical resource;*

- to offer further theoretical and pedagogical knowledge of graphic novels into the secondary school classroom; and

- to identify the practices and pedagogical understandings of four high school ELA teachers using graphic novels, or interested in using graphic novels, to foster critical thinking in their classrooms.

    Participation in the study is voluntary and participants' names will not be used in any papers or presentations the researchers complete on behalf of this study. A pseudonym will be used on the checklist to ensure anonymity.

As a participant you will be required to participate in two interviews and two focus groups over the course of the study. Furthermore I ask that you in collaboration with the other participants design and implement a short unit focused around using graphic novels to encourage critical thinking amongst students.

Even if you have sent in your permission form agreeing to the study, you may withdraw from the study up until one week after the interview. Withdrawal up until this point may be made by contacting the researcher by phone, e-mail, or letter, and, at that time, your interview will be excluded from the study's data and the information destroyed upon your request.

Superhumans: How Teachers Use Graphics Novels

Any raw data (audio clips and transcriptions) will be kept in a safe place for five years following completion of the research project and, when appropriate, destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality. You are welcome to request a copy of the results of this research when it is completed and the researcher would be happy to oblige. The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) at the University of Saskatchewan.

For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the Behavioral Research Ethics Board at (306) 966-2084.

Your contribution to this study will be valuable to the researcher involved as well as any researchers and community and academic organizations involved in graphic novels, visual literacy, and multimodal literacies. Furthermore you, as a collaborative participant in this research, will benefit from the opportunity to reflect and perfect your pedagogical practices.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the Consent Form and return it to the researcher along with your completed checklist. It is important to note that your name will not be used in any of the study's results.

Please keep this information letter for your records. Thank you very much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Scott Allen
Graduate Student
Curriculum Studies
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan

For further information, please contact:

 (306) ***-****

* My participants decided what they wanted to learn and how they would learn it, so they inevitably shaped the data I received. As the data analysis unfolded I began to see a variety of different themes emerge from the data and I realized that my objectives, planned prior to my data collection, had changed slightly. So I reworded and deleted some information from the three objectives mentioned above in the letter to form the final two objectives found in my completed study.

Appendix G

Graphic Novel PD Anticipation Guide

<u>In the box to the left of the word:</u>

- Place a "✓" beside each word you feel you can explain or define confidently.

- Place an "O" beside each word you feel you have heard before but cannot define.

- Place an "X" beside each word you do not feel confident defining or explaining.

	Word	Written Definition	Visual	
	comic strip			
	comic book			
	graphic novels			

Manga			
form			
lettering			
panels			

	graphic novel balloons		
	Multimodal Literacy		
	Gutters		

	Closure		

Comments:

Rubric

+ Exceptional -	+ Proficient -	+ Growing -	+ Developing	Insufficient Evidence
Accurately and insightfully identify connections and the various elements of style and explain how the elements help communicate meaning and enhance the effectiveness of the texts.	Identify connections and the various elements of style and explain how the elements help communicate meaning and enhance the effectiveness of the texts	**Partially** identify connections and the various elements of style and explain how the elements help communicate meaning and enhance the effectiveness of the texts.	**Inaccurately** identify connections and the various elements of style and explain how the elements help communicate meaning and enhance the effectiveness of the texts.	Not enough evidence present.

Appendix H

Mrs. Somers' Graphic Novel Mini-Unit

Lost Innocence by Brandon Mitchell and Tara Audibert

> **Outcomes: ELA**
> **CR 9. 2:** The student will select and use appropriate strategies to construct meaning before, during, and after
>   viewing, listening, and reading
> **CR 9. 4:** The student will view and demonstrate comprehension and evaluation of visual and multimedia texts
>   to glean ideas suitable for identified audience and purpose.
> **CR - 9. 7:** The student will read independently and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of information texts
> including expository essays, historical accounts, news articles, and scientific writing

*placement within course: complete after studying the First Nations portion of the Narratives Unit.

1. Days 1 and 2: Deals briefly with history, **treaties** and **worldview.**
   - PowerPoint entitled **Canada's First Nations Pre and Post Contact** and accompanying fill-in-the-blank student notes OR simply student handouts. (003 and 004 Canadas first nations pre and post contact)
   - This part fits very well into the Social Studies 90 curriculum, and can cover many outcomes there (including **PA9. 2** and **IN9. 4**). It is also very helpful to set context for the students within the English class.

2. Day 3 and 4 (**maybe** a bit longer): Deals briefly with **Residential Schools**.
   - Video - *Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools* (There is probably a copy in your library. If not, it is online): http://www. legacyofhope. ca/projects/where-are-the-children/video
     - Begin with a slightly modified KWL ("**before**") activity on residential schools (5-10 mins.). (005 Residential Schools before during after)
     - DVD (about 30 minutes) *Where are the Children? Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools* with a "**during**" assignment – write down words or phrases that strike you. Write down comments.
     - A quick summing up (**"after"**) – go back to questions posed before – answered or not? New Questions?
   - Work based on resources from the Treaty Kit:
     - Handouts #1– **"The Residential School System in Canada: A Backgrounder"** pages 3-6 of *100 Years of Loss: the Residential School System in Canada - Teacher's Guide* - with questions (006 Residential Schools questions). Give time for students to read and answer questions, then take them up in class.
     - Handouts #2 –also taken from *100 Years of Loss: the Residential School System in Canada -Teacher's Guide* – both questions **("Student Worksheet", p. 45)** and handouts **("Student Resource Sheet – Policies and Action Vocabulary" p.**

> **47 and "Student Resource Sheet Historical Excerpt: Sessional Reports and Papers" p. 49 and 51)** this time. Can do this individually, as group work (perhaps each group considers a different excerpt then presents to class) or as a whole class – whatever works for you.

3. Day 5 and 6 – Introduces **graphic novels**:
    *   Begin with **Graphic Novels PowerPoint** (007):
        o   Next, give out Anticipation Guide (006) for PowerPoint on Graphic novels (007).
        o   Run PowerPoint on Graphic novels. Give time to take notes and draw on anticipation guide as required.
        o   When we get to the "Your Turn" slide, hand out accompanying assignment (008 **Your Turn Closure**). Give time to work on that.
        o   Once PowerPoint is over, give time to go back to do last part of anticipation guide.
        o   Hand in anticipation guide and "Your Turn" assignment.
        o   Once it is graded, the anticipation guide becomes the student notes on Graphic Novels.
    *   Next, give **Panels PowerPoint** (009):
        o   Students can take notes.
        o   When you get to the "Your Turn" slide, provide students with the **Your Turn – Panels** assignment (010).
    *   Finally, give the **Form PowerPoint** (011):
        o   Once again, students can take notes.

4. Day 7 (maybe) – IF you have not yet covered Elements of Fiction (atmosphere, plot, characters, conflict, point of view, theme) with the students, go through that with them. If you have covered it, review it quickly at this point.

5. Day 7 or 8 – begin graphic novel *Lost Innocence*.
    *   First, read opening pages on residential schools together, discuss – refer back to info from 2 days ago. (Note colour change – history section is done in sepia tones; fictional part is brightly coloured).
    *   Next, hand out 5 sticky notes to each student.
    *   **Assignment:** Read through the rest of the story on your own. At least 5 times during this novel, write a sticky note with either a comment or a question regarding what is happening on that page. Stick it to that page. Your comments / questions may be concerning the story line itself, or some of the elements of the graphic novel (form - artwork, colour, point of view; lettering) or how they work together.

6. Day 8 or 9 – continue graphic novel (probably will take 2 days).
    *   Begin going through the story together at this point. As we get to each page, ask regarding sticky notes – anybody have a sticky note on this page? (it is amazing what the

students will spot! Pay special attention to colour, "camera angles", things such as the handshakes on pages 4 and 63. Note the numbers in the student's ears once they have their hair cut☺)

- As we reach their sticky notes and discuss them, have students move each sticky note to the handout provided for this task. (012 Graphic Novel Sticky Note Sheet)

7. Graphic Novel final assignments: Once you have completed the graphic novel, give the final assignments: Multimedia and the Graphic Novel
    - 013 Fiction Analysis
    - 014 Nonfiction Analysis
    - 015 Form Analysis
    - 016 Gutter Analysis

Appendix I

Mrs. Somers' 'Your Turn' Assignment

Name: _____

Your Turn - Closure:

Outcome **CC 9. 4** - 3. The student will understand and apply the conventions of **visual and multimedia texts,** using various visual forms such as comic strips.

Apply closure to the panels above in order to answer the questions:
What happened in the panels?

What happened in the gutter between the two panels?

This assignment will be graded according to the following rubric:

Insufficient Evidence	Developing – rarely demonstrated		Growing – inconsistently demonstrated			Proficient – consistently demonstrated			Exceptional – consistently demonstrated proficiency **in novel situations** or **at a higher level of thinking than what is expected**		
IE	D-	D	G-	G	G+	P-	P	P+	E-	E	E+
<5. 0	5. 0	5. 5	6. 0	6. 5	7. 0	7. 5	8. 0	8. 5	9. 0	9. 5	10. 0

Appendix J

Mrs. Béliveau's Graphic Novel Prior Knowledge Activity

Une introduction aux romans graphiques

En utilisant le livre que le prof vient de te donner, réponds aux questions suivantes :

1. Que vois-tu quand tu passes à travers le livre?

2. Comment est-ce que le livre est organisé?

3. Comment est-il semblable à d'autres livres que tu as déjà lus?

4. Comment est-il différent?

5. Qu'est-ce que tu aimes de ce livre? Qu'est-ce qui semble être intéressant?

6. Y a-t-il des choses que tu n'aimes pas? Pourquoi?

Appendix K

Mrs. Anderson's Photo Scavenger Hunt

Name:

The Elements of Graphic Novels Photo Scavenger Hunt

For this assignment, you will be working in groups to explore a variety of graphic novels in order to identify the different elements of graphic novels that we have studied in class.

Steps to Complete Activity:
1) Select group members. One member in your group **MUST** have use of a phone with a camera.
2) Page through the various graphic novels provided to you to find each of the elements listed below.
3) When you find an element in a novel, write down the title of the graphic novel on your sheet as well
    as the page number where it was found. Also indicate the order in which each picture was taken.
4) Take a picture of the element so you can show me later as part of your evaluation.

Element to Find	Title of Graphic Novel	Page #	Order of Picture Taken	Questions to Answer
Find an example of a panel.				Explain what panels are:
Find another example of a panel from a different graphic novel.				
Find an example of gutter.				What are gutters? What is their purpose?
Find another example of gutter that looks different from your 1st example.				
Find an example of closure.				Define the term "closure" in your own words.
Find another example of closure from a different graphic novel.				

Superhumans: How Teachers Use Graphics Novels

Element to Find	Title of Graphic Novel	Page #	Order In Which Picture Was Taken	Questions to Answer
Find an example of a speech bubble.				Explain the difference between a speech bubble and a thought bubble.
Find an example of a thought bubble.				
Find an example of a caption.				What is the purpose of captions?
Find another example of a caption from a different graphic novel.				
Find an example of a sound effect.				Why would sound effects be used in graphic novels?
Find another example of a sound effect from a different graphic novel.				
Find an example where lettering is used to create a mood or special effect.				Explain what mood/effect was created in each example.
Find another example where lettering is used to create a mood/special effect				
Find an example where form is used to create a visual effect in a graphic novel.				What visual effect is created? How?

Appendix L

Mrs. Anderson's Understanding Graphic Novels Booklet

Understanding Graphic Novels

Now that we know the terminology involved when studying graphic novels, we can begin to focus on how to read, understand, and interpret these novels.

When studying traditional novels, readers only have the written text to consider. However, when studying graphic novels, the reader must consider both the visual (the pictures & images) and textual (words) features.

Visual Features:

1) Characters' Body Language & Facial Expressions:

Readers can learn a lot about how a character is feeling by observing that character's body language and facial expressions. Different gestures and postures can communicate emotions such as happiness, sadness, confidence, defensiveness, anger, etc. They can also reveal attraction, contemplation, mood, fear, nervousness, concern, shock, or aggressiveness, etc.

Activity A: Look at the following images. State what emotion is being communicated in each? Write your answers on the provided worksheet.
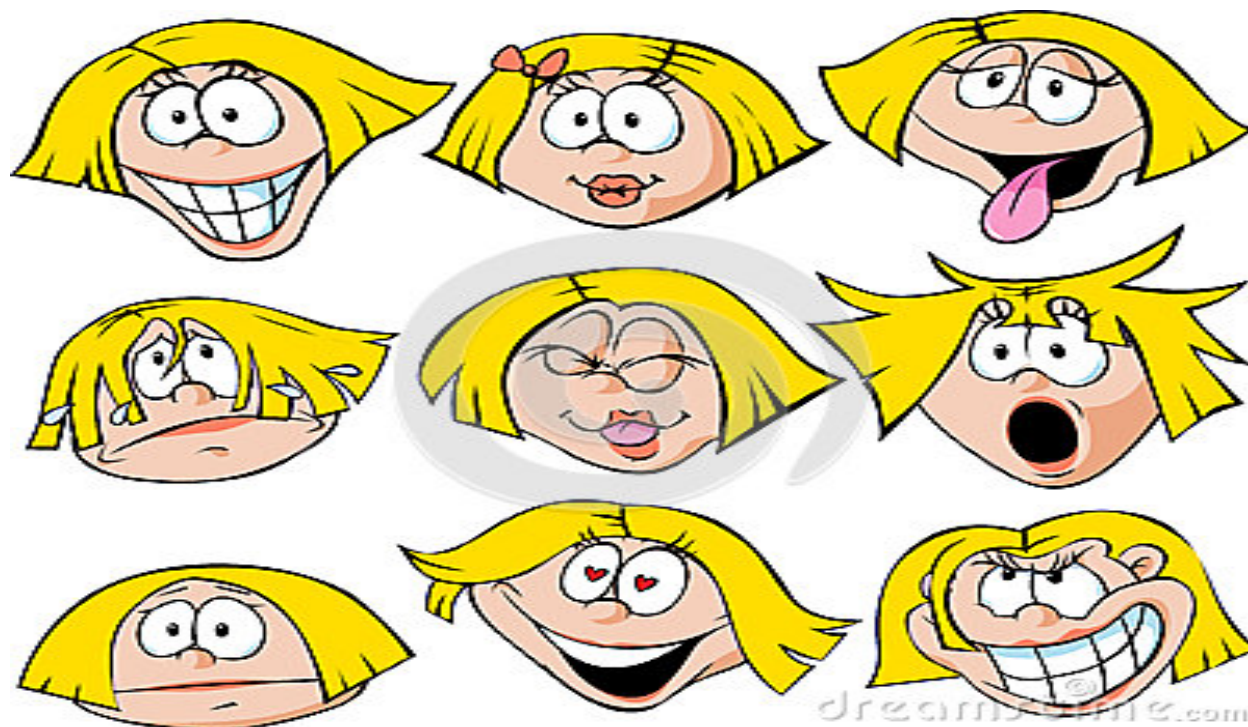
2) The Use of Colour & Shading:

Colour and shading play a crucial role in creating mood and feeling within the panels. Different colours may have different associations. Dark shading creates a mysterious atmosphere, while a brightly detailed panel reduces the element of mystery. Lighting can also indicate time of day.

Look at the chart below. What associations do the following colours have?

Color	Mental Associations	Objective Associations	Subjective Assso-ciation
Red	Hot, fire, heat, blood	Passionate, exciting, active	Intensity, rage, fierceness, danger, power, strength
Orange	Warm, metallic, autumnal	Jovial, lively, energetic, forceful	Hilarity, exuberance, satiety
Yellow	Sunlight	cheerful, inspiring, vital, celestial	High spirit, health, jealousy, sickness, decay
Green	Cool, nature, water	Quieting, refreshing, peaceful, new growth, money	Ghastliness, disease, terror, quilt, life, energy, faith
Blue	Cold, sky, water, ice	Subduing, melancholy, contemplative, sober	Gloom, fearfulness, furtiveness, sadness, trust, loyalty, sulilude
Purple	Cool, mist, darkness, shadow	Dignified, pompous, mournful, mystic, royalty	Loneliness, desperation, richness, power
White	Cool, snow	Pure, clean, frank, youthful, chastity	Brightness of spirit, normality
Black	Neutral, night, emptiness	Funeral, ominous, deadly, depressing	Negation of spirit, death, power, evil

Activity B: Using the chart above, determine the mood of the following panels by examining the colours used. What information can you gather based on the shading/lighting of the following images? Do so in your workbook.

Image #1   Image #2

Image #3

Image #4

Image #5

3) Camera Angle:
The camera angle shown in a panel determines what the readers can and cannot see and what they focus on. Sometimes the artist may **zoom in** to provide a close-up of an image. This provides more detail and often more understanding of that image. The opposite of a close up is a **long shot**. Here, the artist may zoom out so that the reader can see more of the setting and surrounding. This often helps the reader to get a sense of the scene or the bigger picture by providing more information.

Other Camera Angles: p. 20
- **Middle Distance:** tries to portray a setting and space that is halfway between a close-up and a
  panoramic view in a long shot. .
- **Bug's Eye View:** depicts the panel from the ground up.
- **Bird's Eye View:** shows the scene from above looking down.

Panning: sometimes the artist will stimulate a panning shot to generate a feeling in the readers that they are panning (turning) their head left to right.

Activity C: Determine which type of camera angle is being used in each of the following panels. Write your answer in your workbook.

Image #1   Image #2   Image # 3   Image # 4   Image#5

4) Movement:

Movement can be depicted in a number of ways. Through sound effects, following gestures & postures, the direction of drawn lines, the position of the camera angle, and sometimes even colour, movement can be communicated to the readers.

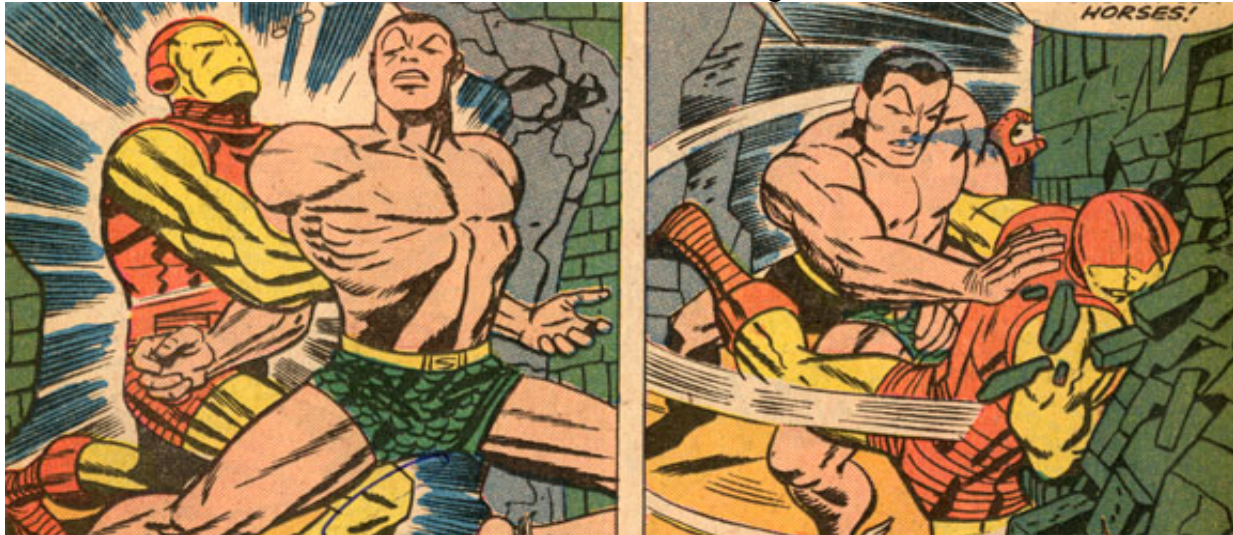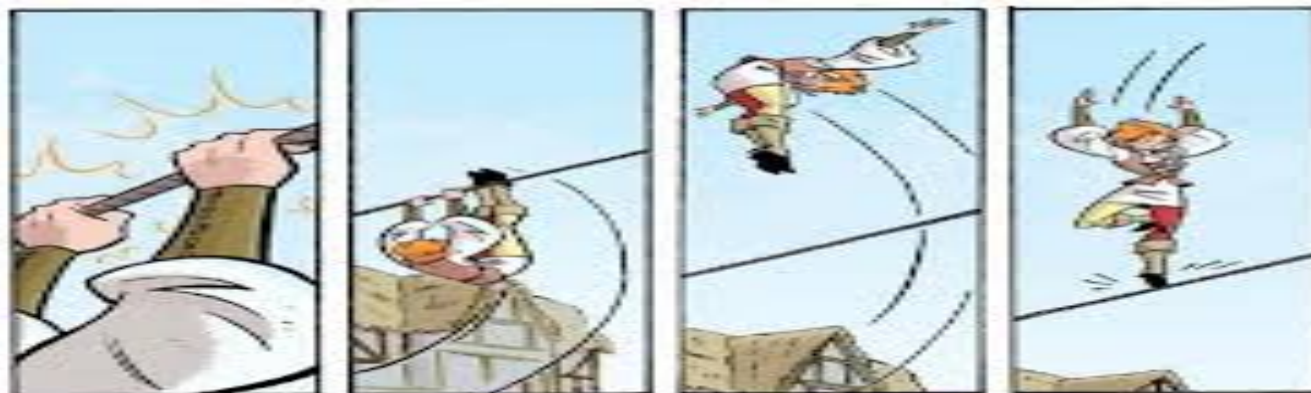Look at the following panels. How is motion indicated?

Image #1

Image #2   Image #3

Image #4

Activity D: In the space provided in your workbook, create a panel (or series of panels) that depict motion. Explain how did you created the effect of motion in your panel(s).

5) The Type of Panels:

The size and sequence of panels within a graphic novel affect the way in which the novel is understood. For example, a full page panel often makes the reader stop and take in the big picture. Whereas panels that are close together or overlap often show a quick pace of action, and floating panels might convey 2 events that are occurring at the same time.

Full Page Panel   Overlapping/ Close Panels   Floating Panels

Activity E: In the space provided in your workbook, create each of the type of panels listed above.

Textual Features:

1) Speech & Thought Balloons:

Speech and thought balloons represent the outer and inner voices of the characters in the novel as they speak, think, or dream. At times, the shape of the bubble may add emotion to the panel.

All Capital Letters

THIS IS HOW A CHARACTER SHOUTS!!!!

Small Capital Letters

THIS IS HOW A CHARACTER WHISPERS!

Using Italics

This says a character feels something intensely.

Writing Words in Bold

This means that **CERTAIN** words need to be **STRESSED.**

Changing Typeface: shows a change of understanding or emotion.

TENOCHTITLAN – SHOWS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

NO!!!

Thought Bubble

This is being said in the character's head.

2) Captions:

Captions help the readers to better understand the story. Normally appearing in a box or in open space, captions may identify the time and place where the action is taking place or provide more information necessary to understand the plot of the novel.
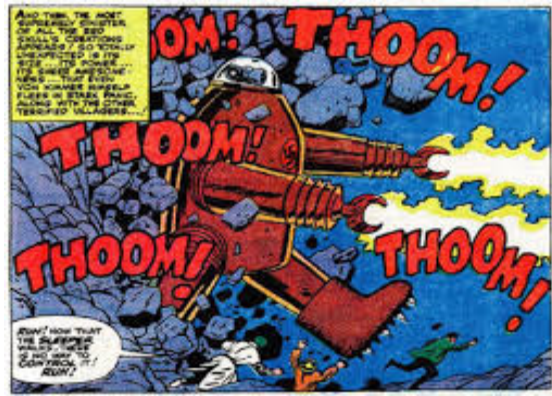
Examples:

3) Lettering:

The shape and size of lettering can have an emotional effect on the reader. Different fonts have different emotional associations.

4) Sound Effects:

Sound effects help to convey (through written words) action, sound, mood, and the nature of a panel. Most sound effects are onamotopoeias.

Examples:

Activity F: Add thought and speech balloons (paying attention to your lettering), captions, and sound effects to the panels in your workbook to create cohesive scenes. Be sure to use the information provided in this booklet to add emotion and feeling to your panel.

Name:

Understanding Graphic Novels – Workbook

Activity A: Looking at the images in the informational booklet, state what emotion is being communicated in each? Write your answers below.

1. _____
_____
2. _____
_____
3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7.

8.

9. _____

Activity B: After looking at the images provided in the informational booklet, fill in the following chart. Remember: you are to determine the mood of the panels by examining the colours used and gather information based on the shading/lighting used.

Image	Mood	Additional Information
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Activity C: Determine which type of camera angle is being used in each of the panels in your informational booklet.

Image	Camera Angle Used
1	
2	
3	
4	

5	

Activity D: In the space provided below, create a panel (or series of panels) that depict motion.

Explain how did you created the effect of motion in your panel(s):

_____
_____
_____
_____

Activity E: In the space provided below, create each of the type of panels listed in your informational booklet.

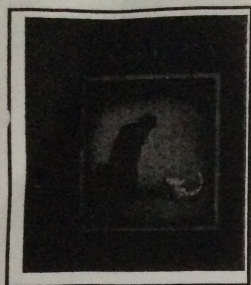| Full Page Panel	Overlapping/Close Panels	Floating Panels

Activity F: Add thought and speech balloons (paying attention to your lettering), captions, and sound effects to the panels below. Be sure to use the information provided in the textual features portion of your informational booklet.
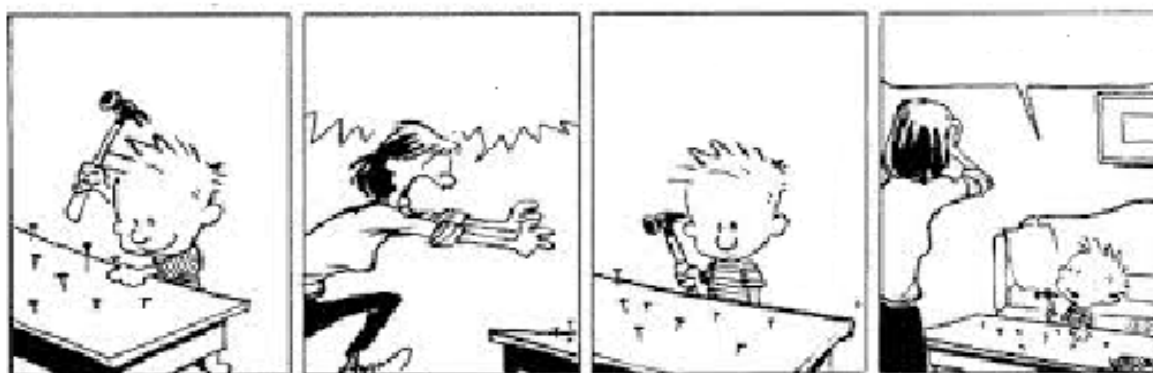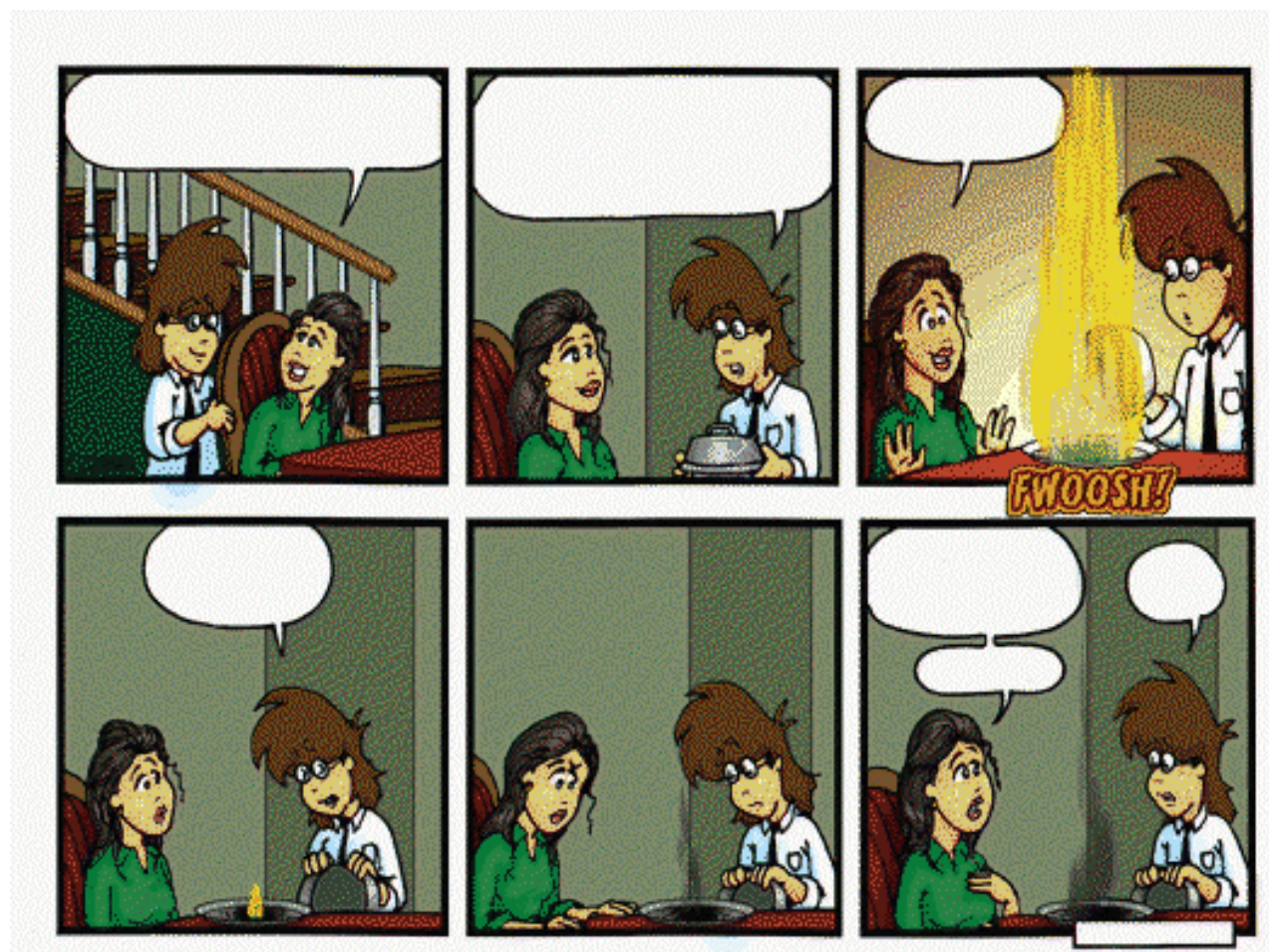
Appendix M

Mrs. Monroe's Structured Note Activity

THE ARRIVAL BY SHAUN TAN

"One of the great powers of storytelling is that [it] invites us to walk in other people's shoes for a while, but perhaps even more importantly, it invites us to contemplate our own shoes also." Shaun Tan

CHAPTER:	CHARACTERS:
FAVORITE PANEL:	INTERESTING BITS:
EXPLANATION OF CHAPTER:	PREDICTION:

CHAPTER:	CHARACTERS:
FAVORITE PANEL:	INTERESTING BITS:
EXPLANATION OF CHAPTER:	PREDICTION:

Appendix N

Mrs. Anderson's *War Brothers* Narrative Assignment

War Brothers During Reading Activity

Steps to Complete:
1) Read through the graphic novel silently. Remember to look at both the pictures and the words.
2) While reading, use the sticky notes provided to you to make observations, ask questions, or make comments.
3) Fill in the following reading chart.

Section of the Novel	Summary **What has happened in the story so far?**	Question **Write down any questions you may have about this section?**
Pages 3 – 12 		
Pages 13 – 35 		

Section of the Novel	Summary What has happened in the story so far?	Question Write down any questions you may have about this section?
Pages 36 – 132 		
Pages 133 – 165 		

Appendix O

Mrs. Somers' Fiction/Non-fiction Questions

Reading Non-fictional Graphic Novels

CR9.7 - Read independently and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of information / non-fiction texts including expository essays and historical accounts.

The first and last parts of the graphic novel we are reading are informational and non-fiction. The writing is expository and also narrative – it conveys mainly factual information about residential schools. When reading non-fiction, we need to consider the **audience** it was written for, and the main idea or **thesis** that the author was trying to convey.

1. Briefly summarize the information in **pages 1-5** of *Lost Innocence*. **What is the main idea or thesis that the creators of this graphic novel are trying to convey?**

   a. Consider the colour palette used by the creators of this novel. How does it contribute to the understanding of this main idea?

   b. Consider the images used. Pick 2 panels that contribute to the understanding of this main idea. Briefly describe the contents of each panel, and explain how each contributes.

2. Briefly summarize the information in **pages 59-64** of *Lost Innocence*. **What is the main idea or thesis that the creators of this graphic novel are trying to convey?**

   a. Consider the colour palette used by the creators of this novel. How does it contribute to the understanding of this main idea?

   b. Consider the images used. Pick 2 panels that contribute to the understanding of this main idea. Briefly describe the contents of each panel, and explain how each contributes.

3. Now that you have completed the graphic novel, and the above questions, who do you think the creators of *Lost Innocence* were targeting as their **audience**? Explain with reference to the text.

Reading Fictional Graphic Novels – Elements of Fiction

CR9.6 - Read and demonstrate comprehension and interpretation of grade-level appropriate texts including contemporary fiction, from First Nations and other cultures to develop an insightful interpretation and response.

Graphic novels are a story, like any other story. Consider the elements of fiction (see additional handout). Make a **brief** summary in your notes of each of the six elements of fiction in this story (**pages 6-58**). Identify and briefly describe at least **1 panel** that is representative of each of these six elements.

The Six Elements of Fiction

Every short story has the following elements. Sometimes, they are easily spotted and sometimes the reader must "read between the lines" to figure them out. These six elements include: atmosphere, plot, conflict, characters, point of view and theme. Please draw an image beside each of these definitions to help you remember / understand each term.

1. **Atmosphere**: **the tone or mood which the story creates within the reader** – is it scary? cheerful? mysterious? It is connected to the setting because it takes into account characters, clothing, furniture, natural surroundings, light, darkness, shadows, weather.

2. **Plot**: **the arrangement of incidents or events in a story.**

Plot Line:
   a. **Exposition** – introduces our story; includes three main things:

      1. the **setting** – the **place** and **time** at which the story occurs; includes the weather, social conditions (war, peace, poverty, wealth, etc.) and anything else about the place and time which may be important to the story.

      2. the **antecedent action** - explains what has happened before our story starts; introduces the **character(s)**

      3. the **atmosphere** – or mood

   b. **Initial / Initiating Incident** - A conflict is usually established between characters; some problem or conflict is presented. This incident starts our story.

   c. **Rising Action** - The conflict between characters develops and becomes more pronounced and more complicated.

Climax - The moment of greatest suspense or intensity

d. **Denouement**- The action leads to the resolution or final outcome. All the complications developed in the initiating incident and the rising action are sorted out or "untied".

e. **Conclusion/ Resolution/ Final Outcome** - The writer wraps up and ties up any loose ends in hopes that the reader will leave the story satisfied.

3. **Character:** the person(s) in a work of fiction.

One character is clearly central to the story with all major events having some importance to this character - he/she is the **PROTAGONIST**. The one who opposes the main character is called the **ANTAGONIST**.

The author may reveal a character in several ways: his/her physical appearance, what he/she says, thinks, feels and dreams, what he/she does or does not do, what others say about him/her and how others react to him/her.

Depending on how well the author reveals a character, the character may be considered:
   a. **Flat:** These characters are generally not very well developed by the author; we may know only one or two things about them. They do not change or grow.

   b. **Stereotyped:** This is a character type who is so well known that little has to be said about him or her. These characters are immediately recognizable because of the role they play. Examples: the nerd, the mad scientist, etc.

   c. **Round or Dynamic:** These characters are generally well described and well developed by the author. Round characters usually become enlightened, learn, grow, or deteriorate by the end of the story.

4. **Conflict:** the struggle, challenge or problem created in the story. (Without conflict there is no plot.) It is not merely limited to open arguments; rather it is any form of opposition that faces the main character.

There are two main types of conflict:
   a. **Internal** - man versus himself (a person's struggle with his or her conscience, fear, greed, anger, etc.)

   b. **External** – man versus forces outside of himself. Examples of this include: man vs. man   man vs. nature   man vs. time
              man vs. society   man vs. unknown
              man vs. supernatural

5. **Point of View:** the vantage point from which the author presents the action of the story. It is the person telling the story: the narrator. There are different types of narration:

   a. **first person** - This is a major, minor, or a silent character who tells the
      a. story as it is happening to him or her, using "I".

   b. **third person:**
      ○ **objective** - when the person telling the story is not part of the action, and tells it using the third person form (he, she). The narrator sees what is happening but does not know the thoughts or feelings of any of the characters.
      ○ **limited omniscient** – again, a person narrates in third person form. This time, however, the narrator knows the thoughts and feelings of ONE of the characters.
      ○ **omniscient** – The narrator speaks in the third person, but this time, knows everything about the characters and events and can enter the mind of any character at will.

6. **Theme:** the controlling idea or the central insight of the story. It is NOT the subject of the story, or the plot line. It is the author's underlying meaning or main idea. We can usually figure out the theme by first considering the subject of the story, then by asking ourselves what the author is trying to tell us about the subject. The theme is not tied to the specific events of the story. It is generally the author's thoughts about a topic or aspect of human nature. It may be something like: "Things are not always what they seem." or "True love endures all things."

Mrs. Somers' Final Assignment

Multimedia Literacy and the Graphic Novel - Fiction

CR9. 6 - Read and demonstrate comprehension and interpretation of grade-level appropriate texts including contemporary fiction, from First Nations and other cultures to develop an insightful interpretation and response.
CR 9. 4 - The student will demonstrate comprehension and evaluation of visual and multimedia texts. To do this the student can: evaluate common techniques used in visual and multimedia texts, and recognize the elements and principles of design in any visual or multimedia text.

We learned that in fictional graphic novels there are **two elements** which give the reader information through the panels – **content** (words, images, word and images) and **story** (plot, character, setting, conflict, rising action, climax, resolution, symbols, theme, foreshadowing, or combination story panels)

Each panel can be described by both the type of content it includes and the part of the story it enriches. Pick a **fiction panel** and describe it:

Page #: _____   Type (**content**): _____

Description:

How did the author and illustrator use this panel (**story**)?

Why do you think the creators used the panel in this way? (Consider the Critical Reading Lenses in your response.)

Insufficient Evidence	Developing		Growing			Proficient			Exceptional		
IE	D-	D	G-	G	G+	P-	P	P+	E-	E	E+
‹50	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
Student **has not** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome despite opportunity to do so.	Student has **rarely** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.		Student has **inconsistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has **consistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has consistently demonstrated proficiency in these criteria **in novel situations** or **at a higher level of thinking than what is expected.**		

Multimedia Literacy and the Graphic Novel - Nonfiction

CR - 9. 7 - The student will read, comprehend and respond to a variety of nonfiction (essays, historical accounts, news articles, etc)
CR 9. 4 - The student will demonstrate comprehension and evaluation of visual and multimedia texts. To do this the student can: evaluate common techniques used in visual and multimedia texts, and recognize the elements & principles of design in any visual or multimedia text.

Nonfiction graphic novels also exist. Informational nonfiction gives the facts in the appropriate order; the author and illustrator of a nonfiction graphic novel may gain their facts through research or personal experience. They will often use a story format to share this factual information. Therefore, a **nonfiction** graphic novel, just like a fiction graphic novel, will include **two types of panels** – content (words, images, word and images) and story (plot, character, setting, conflict, rising action, climax, resolution).

In addition, nonfiction writing has a main idea or **thesis**. Pick a **nonfiction** panel and describe it:
Page #: _____   Type (**content**): _____
Description:

How did the creators use this panel within **the story**?

What is the main idea or **thesis** of this novel? How does this panel help show or explain the thesis?

Why do you think the creators used the panel in this way? (Consider the Critical Reading Lenses in your response.)

Insufficient Evidence	Developing		Growing			Proficient			Exceptional		
IE	D-	D	G-	G	G+	P-	P	P+	E-	E	E+
<50	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
Student **has not** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome despite opportunity to do so.	Student has **rarely** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.		Student has **inconsistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has **consistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has consistently demonstrated proficiency in these criteria **in novel situations** or **at a higher level of thinking than what is expected.**		

Multimedia Literacy and the Graphic Novel - Form

CR 9. 4 - The student will demonstrate comprehension and evaluation of visual and multimedia texts. To do this the student can: evaluate common techniques used in visual and multimedia texts, and recognize the elements and principles of design in any visual or multimedia text.

Form refers to the arrangement of the visual elements of the image. This includes elements such as: artistic style, colour palette, lighting, body language and movement, location of action / depth of field / point of view (zooming in and out, panning shot, close up, middle distance and long shot, bug's eye and bird's eye view). The author and illustrator of a graphic novel use these elements of form to enrich understanding of the story they are telling. Find a panel or a page of the graphic novel we are currently studying and describe the **form** used:

Page #: _____   Type (content): _____
Description:

What elements of form are used by the creators, and how are they used?

Why do you think the creators chose to use form in this way? (Consider the Critical Reading Lenses in your response.)

Insufficient Evidence	Developing		Growing			Proficient			Exceptional		
IE	D-	D	G-	G	G+	P-	P	P+	E-	E	E+
<50	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
Student **has not** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome despite opportunity to do so.	Student has **rarely** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.		Student has **inconsistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has **consistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has consistently demonstrated proficiency in these criteria **in novel situations** or **at a higher level of thinking than what is expected.**		

Multimedia Literacy and the Graphic Novel – Gutter Analysis

CR 9. 4 - The student will demonstrate comprehension and evaluation of visual and multimedia texts. To do this the student can: evaluate common techniques used in visual and multimedia texts, and recognize the elements and principles of design in any visual or multimedia text.

Gutters are the spaces between the panels. Here, in the limbo of the gutter, the reader's imagination takes over and links panels together. The six different panel transitions or gutters that we previously discussed are: moment-to-moment, action-to-action, subject-to-subject, scene-to-scene, aspect-to-aspect, and non-sequitur. The type of gutter the author and illustrator of a graphic novel choose reveals their intention for that piece of the story. Find an example of a **gutter** from the graphic novel we are currently studying and describe it:

Page #: _____   Type: _____
Description:

How did the author and illustrator use this gutter?

Why do you think the author and illustrator chose to use the gutter this way? (Consider the Critical Reading Lenses in your response.)

Insufficient Evidence	Developing		Growing			Proficient			Exceptional		
IE	D-	D	G-	G	G+	P-	P	P+	E-	E	E+
<50	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
Student **has not** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome despite opportunity to do so.	Student has **rarely** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.		Student has **inconsistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has **consistently** demonstrated the criteria for achieving this outcome.			Student has consistently demonstrated proficiency in these criteria **in novel situations** or **at a higher level of thinking than what is expected.**		

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