Graphic Lit

World Literature Today was right on target for English teacher education students at the University of Oklahoma with its “Graphic Literature” special issue (March–April 2007). Our “teaching language” course was focused on visual literacy as one way of engaging secondary-school students in reading literature and understanding its conventions. Two students researching the potential of the graphic novel for the high school English classroom discovered the WLT issue in the midst of researching the genre and presented fascinating image-print, Power Point discussions of how, in Eddie Campbell’s phrase, “word, picture, and typography interact” in manga and the graphic novel (p. 13). One constructed her own manga, and the other drew on a computer program to insert herself in a comic of her own making. Their comments written especially for this letter follow:

“For a course this semester, I studied manga (Japanese comics) and its uses in education, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that the entire March issue of WLT was dedicated to the subject of graphic literature. As a future educator, I was particularly interested in graphic literature’s potential for engaging reluctant readers, which is a concept that is gaining popularity among teachers and librarians. There seem to be quite a few students out there who will tell you, ‘I hate reading,’ but will spend hours reading comic books, manga, or graphic novels. I appreciate WLT’s recognition of this genre that many would dismiss as ‘just comic books,’ because graphic literature has so much to offer to readers of all ages.”—Eileen Sullivan

“I was also pleased to see an entire issue of WLT dedicated to the growing genre of graphic novels. This semester I began a research paper, which will eventually turn into my thesis, focusing on how graphic novels are a valid and important genre to be considered in English/Language Arts classrooms. When students are reluctant readers, graphic novels can help bridge the gap between the visual world of television and video games, which students are comfortable with, and the verbal world of written texts. Through articles found in sources like WLT, graphic novels will continue to gain respect in all circles, not just English education.”—Stephanie Schmidt

Of particular interest to the teachers in this course were Andrew Arnold’s “Comix Poetics” for its solid grounding in the nature of the graphic novel as an art form and review of comics history as well as Rob Vollmar’s “Frédéric Boilet and the Nouvelle Manga Revolution” for its insights into the manga variation of the comics form. Again, thank you for your contribution to our understanding of comics as an art form and its unique potential as an approach for English teachers to help our kids better appreciate comics, reading, and literature in general.

Michael Angelotti
University of Oklahoma

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I recently picked up WLT from a newsstand and found myself hooked. What an interesting and informative publication. It will be most helpful in expanding my very limited literary knowledge, and I will subscribe today. Thank you for your efforts and imagination in compiling this wealth of knowledge.

Joan E. Morse
Santa Fe, New Mexico

Letters to the editor are welcome and may be e-mailed to ddcblack@ou.edu or sent care of:

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