

THE NOVELTY OF GRAPHICS

**THE USE AND FUTURE OF GRAPHIC NOVELS
IN THE ENGLISH LITERATURE CURRICULUM IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE NETHERLANDS**

ANKE VAN DIJK (3506975)

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SUPERVISOR: DR. PAUL FRANSEN

SECOND READER: DR. EWOUT VAN DER KNAAP

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1 Abstract

Graphic novels are relatively new to the world of literature and their use in literature lessons is a topic of debate and controversy. Their benefits have been discussed and researched extensively. However, in the Netherlands graphic novels are still rarely used in literature lessons of English. This thesis strived to find out whether graphic novels could be a useful addition to the English literature lessons and what drawbacks there are to using them. In this exploratory research, teachers of English on secondary schools in the Netherlands were asked about their current use of graphic novels in their lessons, their willingness to use graphic novels and the criteria they had before considering to use graphic novels. With the found benefits and drawbacks of graphic novels in mind and taking into account the criteria teachers have, a guideline for teachers was constructed that can provide a starting point for hesitant or indeed enthusiastic teachers who are willing to use graphic novels in their literature lessons.

2 Introduction

In literary education, the focus is traditionally on a canon of classic novels, written by writers whose names are familiar across the globe. These literary works still contain elements that reverberate in today's society and contain gems of wisdom that stretch across the ages. In the Netherlands, teachers often prefer the literary curriculum they are already working with which is focused on literary-aesthetic texts and research that is tested and proven efficient, but usually ignores the change in readers' preferences and perspectives.

Moreover, students nowadays read fewer novels than they used to (Witte 37). To stimulate reading, it seems to be important that the students' preferences regarding their reading material are taken into account, as this increases motivation and keeps the students interested. Therefore, in the past century – or more specifically in the last few decades – literary education in the Netherlands has shifted its gaze from canon-centred curricula to a more student-centred approach (Verboord 40). Frederick van Gysel suggests that also taking visual media into account will increase reader pleasure and interest in literature; in his view the reluctance of teachers to become acquainted with these new media does not outweigh the benefits for students that could be achieved with a more visually based literary curriculum (31). Witte argues that student-centred approaches, cultural-historical approaches and literary-aesthetic approaches all have their merits and disadvantages and the focus should never solely be on one of them (Witte 44). As a result of this shift in perspective, the literary curricula have been adapted and now allow previously unconventional media such as film and graphic novels. The debate about literature education in the Netherlands has been raging for a while. Although this debate centres around the Dutch literary curriculum, the arguments could apply to the English literary curriculum as well. In 2008 minister Plasterk argued that it was time to reinstate the old literary curriculum, taught by an inspired teacher (NOS Journaal

10 maart 2018). Truijens agrees that students should be made to appreciate well-written literary works and that this need not lessen reading pleasure, although she agrees that the reading list could favour an update to include more modern writers as well (Truijens). Many responders also argued against the literary canon – Weijts even felt so strongly as to write “Fuck de canon” and advocated that reading should be enjoyable, not prescribed through a list of classics that are not of interest to the new generation of students (Weijts). As recently as the 22nd of June 2018, articles are being published that either argue for or against the compulsory literary curriculum and the reading list that scares off so many students when it comes to reading for pleasure (Bosman). When it comes to updating the reading list so that it will be more inclusive of the students’ interests it is important that the inclusion of a medium such as the graphic novel is thoroughly researched so both the advantages - in reading pleasure and motivation as well as the cultural relevance and other benefits – and the disadvantages can be established and considered.

Fortunately, a considerable amount of research into the use of graphic novels in the classroom has already been done. While there is research into graphic novels used in English classrooms where English is taught as a second or foreign language, most of the articles concerning graphic novels originate in the United States of America where English is taught as a first language. In the Netherlands, limited research has been done concerning graphic novels in the classroom, but most of this has focussed on the Dutch language classroom (Hardeman, Draisma). Even so, most of this research suggests a beneficial effect of the use of graphic novels in the literature lessons. Still, the graphic novel is often not included on literary reading lists and certainly not used much in literature lessons. This thesis will try to uncover, on a small scale, if and how graphic novels are used by teachers of English in the Netherlands and what the reason is for their use of graphic novels or lack thereof and what it would take for them to consider using graphic novels.

To provide an insight into the usefulness of graphic novels, the current situation regarding the use of graphic novels in literature lessons for English as a foreign language in the Netherlands and the attitude teachers have towards (teaching) graphic novels, this thesis will attempt to answer the following research question: “To what extent would English teachers in the Netherlands be interested in working with graphic novels in their literature lessons and what requirements do they have to consider working with graphic novels?”

First this thesis will survey existing research on the graphic novel in education. This will show what, in the views of researchers, the benefits of using graphic novels in literary education for English as a foreign language are, compared to traditional literature as well as a medium in its own right. The drawbacks of using graphic novels will also be described to provide some nuance and theories for why graphic novels are currently rarely in use. This theoretical background chapter will also include a definition of what is considered a graphic novel for the purposes of this thesis and views on whether graphic novels should be seen as literary or not. In the second chapter, results of a questionnaire filled in by secondary school teachers of English in the Netherlands on their current use of graphic novels will be discussed. These teachers have been asked about their current use of graphic novels, their experience and knowledge of graphic novels, their willingness to work with graphic novels, if there is material that takes their preferences and concerns into account and their requirements for doing so. The final chapter of this thesis will consist of a guideline for teachers, taking into consideration teachers’ requirements before they would deliberate making use of graphic novels. This teachers’ guideline will contain tips, lesson ideas and examples on how to start using graphic novels in the English classroom.

3 Literature review

Research done into the benefits and drawbacks of reading graphic novels in the classroom suggests that including graphic novels in the curriculum might have a positive influence on students' motivation (Schwarz; Gavigan; Ujiie & Krashen; Lamanno ; Guthrie & Humenick; Krashen; Haugaard; Ryan & Deci). Students struggling with their - second - language acquisition for a variety of reasons could benefit from reading graphic novels (Uslan; Wright and Sherman; Ujiie & Krashen; Frey & Fisher; Thompson; Öz & Efecioglu; Christensen; Simmons). Furthermore, students live in an increasingly visually-oriented world and have grown up in a visual environment. Yang suggests, among others, that the visual component of graphic novels could not only enhance students' visual literacy but could motivate them for consuming more literary material because they are comfortable with the medium (Yang; Basol & Sarigul; McGlynn; Bucher and Manning; Williams; Hammond; Gavigan;). David Fay argues that the cultural component that Witte mentions in his *Oog van de Meester*, which is that literature should teach us about culture and must allow discussion in relation to its cultural-historical background, is also abundant in graphic novels: "Sequential art also provides an up-to-date look at target language culture and society" (Fay 3; Witte). Fay argues this is because sequential art in the broad sense is an art that is mainly seen in newspapers and on the internet, which ensures it is influenced by current affairs. Although graphic novels are certainly less influenced by the changing of the times than comics in newspapers, especially when they have already been published, they often include characters from different backgrounds interacting with each other and according to Fay "they can serve as a tool for studying socio-cultural aspects of a people, allowing a teacher to design a lesson based solely on cross-cultural differences and similarities between the target language culture and the native culture" (Fay 3). Frey and Fisher argue that graphic novels are also ingrained in popular culture – in contrast to language and native culture – and in this way, present a

contemporary cultural image to the students, which will appeal to them and motivate them (24).

However, besides the upsides of using graphic novels in literary education, there are also some strong disadvantages that may discourage schools from considering graphic novels in their literary curricula. These downsides include the problem of finding suitable materials (Hammond; Frey & Fisher; Cary), the expense of providing a classroom with graphic novels, which are often considerably more expensive than regular novels (Fay; Cary) and the fear that providing students with material that is relatively easier to read will not challenge them and decrease the learning gain (Krashen; Wright and Sherman; O'English, Matthews & Lindsay)

3.1 Towards a definition of graphic novels

Before we delve further into the specifics and advantages or disadvantages of graphic novels, certain terms will have to be explained to provide the necessary clarity. The term graphic novel was first used by cartoonist Will Eisner in 1978. He described a graphic novel as a complex story told in comic book format, but longer than most comics, namely 64 to 179 pages. The *Oxford English Dictionary* simplifies this to: “a novel in comic-strip format”. (“graphic novel”). Tabitha Simmons emphasizes that in graphic novels, the visual component carries as much importance as the verbal component and both work together to convey the story to the reader. She argues that comparing picture books with graphic novels does not do justice to graphic novels in the sense that picture books use images to support the text where the images in graphic novels can convey a meaning that is beyond the textual information (Simmons 12). Bucher and Manning suggest that graphic novels are written for a “more mature audience” (Bucher and Manning 67) although they do not define “more mature” nor specify the comparison. Kelley defines graphic novels as bound books containing sequential art (Kelley 3) Sequential art is defined by Eisner as a series of panels that convey a single

story. In this definition, sequential art also encompasses comics, such as web comics, the comics found in papers and comic books, but disregards single-panel cartoons (Eisner 5). Cary finds Eisner's definition both limiting and lacking and tries to divide the term comics into four major types. Cartoons are one panel drawings, often humorous (Cary 11). Comic strips are closer to Eisner's definition. They consist of three to four panels in sequence and are the comics printed in papers (Cary 11). Comic books take this format but extend it to twenty to forty pages (Cary 11). Cary argues they are more magazines than books. Some of these contain complete stories, but many are a part of a longer series of comic books and only tell part of the story. Graphic novels – the focus of this research – are defined by Cary as “comic books’ plumper cousins” (11) since they are full-length books containing one story from start to end. Where Eisner's definition is too limiting, the definitions Kelley and Cary propose are too vague for unambiguous categorization. Any type of comic could fall in their category; is a full-length Donald Duck story also a graphic novel then? Chute proposes to use the term graphic narrative instead of graphic novels, to allow for the many non-fiction works that are seen as graphic novels such as *Maus* and *Persepolis* (Chute 453). She defines graphic narratives as “serious, imaginative works that explored social and political realities by stretching the boundaries of a historically mass medium” (Chute 456). The problem with some of the definitions above is that they suggest that there is more to a graphic novel than just being a larger-sized comic book but that there is little inkling of what that would be. Campbell mentions that when talking about graphic novels, people use four mutually exclusive definitions: that of a comic book; a definition that points to a comic book with a certain format – a graphic novel is bound in paperback or hardcover while a comic book is “merely stapled” together. As a third definition, Campbell mentions that graphic novels are “a comic-book narrative that is equivalent in form and dimensions to the prose novel” (Campbell 13). This definition, however vague it still is, is closer to the definition that this

this will adopt. As a fourth and last definition, Campbell defines the graphic novel as more than a comic book in its ambition – it wants to be more than a comic book and, in that way, is. (Campbell 13). Sanne Geerts wrote a thesis around the issue of how to define a graphic novel. Her definition embraces some of the suggestions made by Kelley, Cary and Campbell’s definitions and takes the complex history of the graphic novel into account: “Een graphic novel is een kwalitatieve strip voor volwassenen met literaire kwaliteiten en een afgeronde, complexe verhaallijn in boekformaat waarbij de auteur, die verantwoordelijk is voor het hele concept, beeld en woord op virtueuze wijze weet samen te brengen” (Geerts 78). This definition will be the base of the use of the term graphic novel in this thesis, amending it so the target audience is not solely adult – since this thesis focuses on secondary school students. Thus, the definition of the term graphic novel used in this thesis will be: A graphic novel is a qualitative comic for young adult to adult audiences with literary qualities and a well-rounded, complex storyline in book format where the author, responsible for the whole concept, combines word and images with great virtuosity. It must be noted that research may be quoted that speaks of comic books rather than graphic novels. Where this is the case in research used for this thesis, the qualities of comic books in that instance overlap with the specific qualities of graphic novels as defined above and the theory can be applied equally well to either denomination.

3.2 Graphic novels as literature

When considering using graphic novels in literary education, we must first establish that graphic novels are, indeed, literature. Eisner, who first coined the term graphic novel, writes the following: “The future of this form awaits its participants who truly believe that the application of sequential art, with its interweaving of words and pictures, could provide a dimension of communication that contributes—hopefully on a level never before attained—to the body of literature that concerns itself with the examination of human experience” (141).

Eisner clearly hopes that the worth of graphic novels in the literary sense will not be overlooked. Connors makes the claim that although graphic novels are now more widely accepted as a teaching tool, a way to scaffold reading and a means to motivate students to read, this often does not include viewing graphic novels as actual literary works (28). Dias suggests in an article from 1946 that comic books – the term graphic novel was not in use then – “may be used constructively as a stepping stone to a lasting interest in reading good literature”, but that children and adolescents should be dissuaded from reading nothing but comic books, since this could lead to a “dangerously unbalanced reading diet” (Dias 142). Although this is already a different point of view than most researchers and teachers held in that time, as they believed comic books had a uniformly negative influence on children, it still does not suggest that graphic novels can be appreciated for their own aesthetic, literary value (Connors 29-30). To suggest that this mindset is merely a thing of the past is sadly not the case. Researchers as recent as Chute and Campbell note that both teachers and researchers often still have a negative attitude towards viewing graphic novels as anything more than pleasure reading and refuse to consider their literary value (Chute 460; Campbell 207). When asked for their reasons to use traditional literature, teachers respond: “its ability to foster self-reflection, initiate social change, promote tolerance, and stimulate the imagination” (Connors 67). Connors argues that a good graphic novel is able to do exactly this and questions teachers’ continued reluctance to use graphic novels. He reasons convincingly that the main issue is the historical perception of graphic novels and that the negative attitude is merely a remnant of the disregard people used to have for graphic novels. Graphic novels can certainly inspire high-order critical thinking, they can inspire gripping discussions and can foster aesthetic appreciation and thus can be regarded as literature (Connors 67-69).

Good graphic novels, like good literature, are capable of moving readers to reflect on unexamined aspects of their lives. Not all graphic novels will, of course, but the same

might be said of much of the traditional literature on bookstore shelves. To increase awareness of their literary merit and to gauge their potential complexity, it is necessary for professional and scholarly journals such as this one [the ALAN review, red.] to call for articles that subject them to the same degree of critical scrutiny afforded traditional literature. Moreover, there is a need for reviews that acknowledge titles beyond the usual standards and that help educators keep pace with the multitude of graphic novels published each year. Finally, there is a need for a field-wide conversation that identifies the challenges involved in using graphic novels so that we might begin to address them and, in doing so, develop a sense of appreciation for their artistic merit. (Connors 69)

Michael Uslan mentions four major reasons why comic books or graphic novels belong in the classroom: 1) Reading graphic novels helps “people who have reading problems more effectively”. 2) Graphic novels can “improve grammar and increase vocabulary”. 3) Graphic novels are an easy introduction to complicated materials and 4) they are especially suited for the teaching of “attitudes and facts” (189). Although the first reason is more relevant to language teaching and reason 2 focusses on proficiency, the last two reasons are crucial to the development of literary competence. Of course, Uslan includes comic books, so his notion of what is deemed literature might not correspond with the definition in this thesis.

Graphic novels are also a popular and contemporary medium. As such, they can be seen as a bridge between students' interest and literary education, for they are considered more enjoyable while they still have literary worth (Yang “Strengths”). Graphic novels are a great way to introduce literary themes, historical themes, cultural concepts, literary writers and advanced concepts, because the use of imagery motivates students (Yang “Strengths”). Schwarz mentions that: “Some English teachers use graphic novels to teach literary terms and techniques such as dialogue, and they use works like the Victorian murder novel *The Mystery*

of *Mary Rogers* as a bridge to other classics of that period” (Schwarz 263). Students can be introduced to heavy literary works they would usually not get into, such as Kafka.

3.3 Literary requirements

If we accept that some graphic novels can indeed be literature, it is vital that the requirements the Dutch government places on literature and teaching literature in English secondary education are also taken into consideration, as well as the suggestions of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The CEFR is focused mainly on communicative skills. However, the CEFR also stresses the role of literature when teaching English as a foreign language and not only for aesthetic purposes, because “literary studies serve many more educational purposes – intellectual, moral and emotional, linguistic and cultural” (CEFR). Since ‘the Improved Educational Reforms’ of 2007, there are three learning objectives pertaining to literature which are in the requirements for English language studies in the Netherlands at secondary schools at havo and vwo levels (Meijer & Fasoglio): (1) The student can recognise and distinguish literary text types and can use literary terms when interpreting literary texts. (2) The student can give an overview of the main events of literary history and can place the studied works in this historic[sic] perspective. (3) The student can report about his/her reading experiences of at least three literary works with clear arguments. (Meijer & Fasoglio) In Dutch schools, the final exam grade consists out of two parts: 50% is determined by school regulated exams and 50% is determined by one central exam – the latter of which is the same for all Dutch schools and is based on the application of reading skills. The school regulated part of the exam has to contain a literature component at havo and vwo levels. Secondary schools are free to interpret the objectives the government has set for literature education and are free in how to include this literature part however they wish and can decide for themselves which percentage of the end grade is allocated to literature (Bloemert et al. 2016). There are no prescribed literary texts when it comes to literature

education – indeed, there is no description of what these literary texts should consist of and which texts would be suitable. While literary text types are named, it is unclear which types are specifically important. There is no definition of what makes a literary work.

While these objectives seem quite vague and perhaps even unhelpful, they do allow considerable freedom for schools to interpret the objectives however they please. For the purposes of this research, these objectives leave a great deal of room for the consideration of the use of graphic novels in the literary curriculum; they count as a literary text type and are suitable for interpretation using certain literary terms, which fulfils part of the first objective (Dallacqua 367; Eisner; Hammond; Bucher and Manning). More importantly, if accepting that graphic novels do count as literary works students will also be able to meet the third objective, if and when they are able to report on their reading experiences of these graphic novels. While the point of this argument was not to substitute all traditional literary texts with graphic novels or graphic novel adaptations, it does leave room for graphic novels to be included in the literary curriculum. How this could benefit students will be discussed in the next chapter.

4 Advantages

To establish whether graphic novels could enhance the English literature curriculum of secondary schools in the Netherlands, it is important that the advantages they offer are thoroughly researched. In this chapter, the upsides of graphic novels in the classroom will be discussed, while in the next chapter the downsides will be taken into consideration. The research on the benefits of graphic novels in teaching English education as a first language will feature in this chapter, insofar as the merits are indeed more universally applicable and also count for English as a second/foreign language. Much of the research mentioned in this chapter focusses especially on literary education in the United States of America, which is much more focussed on conveying culture, while the Dutch literary education is more

focussed on reader response and reader enjoyment. However, Leonie Hardeman finds that the factors for success in the United States and the factors for success in the Netherlands overlap a great deal; where they do not have common ground, the American factors merely add to what are considered Dutch factors of success. Therefore, she reasons, what works in the United States could reasonably also ensure successes in the Netherlands (Hardeman 4).

The first part of this chapter will focus on how graphic novels compare to traditional literature. In the former chapter, this thesis has already established that some graphic novels can be considered literary (Connors 67). This chapter will clarify how graphic novels can be used in literary education in the same capacity as traditional literature and what the additional benefits are of graphic novels in comparison with traditional literature. The second part of this chapter will focus on the definition of visual literacy, the importance of teaching students visual literacy and how graphic novels are an effective medium to make the students more familiar with visual literacy. The third part of this chapter will deal with the specific advantages that the use of graphic novels offers for struggling students or students who study English as a second or foreign language. The final part of this chapter will deal with student motivation, which is a substantial problem in the Netherlands at the moment. Secondary school students are not always motivated but literature and reading are topics that seem to be especially demotivating (Witte 38). In this final part, the importance of motivating students and the effect of using graphic novels in the classroom on student motivation will be deliberated.

4.1 Graphic novels and traditional literature

Traditional literary works – fiction, plays and poetry, the ordinary ‘novels’, including authors such as Shakespeare, Austen and Dickens but also contemporary authors like Rushdie or Jonathan Safran Foer – have had their place in the English classroom for centuries. Nearly all Dutch schools have a literary curriculum for English – although no such list is compiled or

recommended by the CEFR. These literary curricula used to lean heavily on British classics. However, many schools leave more and more room for students' own choices, which is thought to increase their motivation (Witte 38; Verboord 40). This changing of the literary curriculum is an ongoing transformation and also differs per school, since schools are free to choose their own literature reading list, if they use any at all. Many contemporary novels are now considered literary as well and are read by many students. However, in many schools, this transformation in the literary curriculum is a very slow one and it leaves very little room for other media such as graphic novels. Although the exact reasons are only to be guessed at, one can make an educated guess: teachers are unfamiliar with graphic novels, unaware or unconvinced of the benefits and often set in their ways (Cary 30, 48; Yang "Graphic" 186). After all, it is much less time-consuming to stick to the same literary curriculum than to design a new one.

Graphic novels could be a valuable addition to the curriculum. Not only for free reading – more on this in the final part of this chapter – but also when considering teaching literary terms and themes. According to Corden, reading literature can also help students develop their own narratives. The evaluation of literary devices improved the students' writing and helped them apply literary devices to their own writing (Corden 30-31). It must be noted that Corden's research dealt with children's literature- in the context of this research not literature at all- and that his target group was elementary school students, who are younger than the secondary school students target group this thesis focuses on. Corden is also quite opaque when it comes to defining the literary devices his test subjects used. While there is mention of reader-writer perspective, it is not clear which devices the children learnt and used, which makes his argument quite unconvincing. However, Hammond argues that graphic novels can be used to teach literary devices just as well as traditional verbal texts can (Hammond 164-165).

For instance, when teaching students about perspective, graphic novels can quite literally show the speakers' perspective through images. Eisner mentions that a bird's eye view or looking down could suggest detachment. When the image shows a perspective looking up, it could suggest that the speaker feels fear, smallness or insecurity. While this works in film as well, textual literature is unable to show perspective this way – it can suggest it at most (Eisner 89). This way of showing perspective can enable the reader to identify with a character, since they see what the character sees and, in this way, could experience their emotions and thoughts (Hammond 27-28).

Bucher and Manning also mention that educators can use graphic novels to teach literary terms and explicitly name dialogue, which in graphic novels is very visually apparent due to the use of speech bubbles (Bucher and Manning 68; Schwarz). Dallacqua argues that many literary devices are apparent and visual in graphic novels, which makes those literary devices much more accessible and literally visible for students who have not come across these devices before. She finds that teaching these literary devices through graphic novels provides the scaffolding needed to introduce students to difficult literary devices in verbal literary works:

As our class read print-based novels [red. text-based, i.e. non-graphic], we focused on literary devices like point of view, allusion, themes and morals, tone and mood, symbolism, and flashback and foreshadowing – concepts that were often difficult for me to teach and for my students to grasp. Prior visual knowledge from graphic novels, however, strengthened my lessons and advanced my students' understanding. I concluded that educators would profit from looking at comics as transitional, conduit material, a point of view shared by Krashen and Carter (Dallacqua 367).

Dallacqua speaks about comics and graphic novels alternately which can cause confusion, since there is quite a clear distinction between the two. However, in her article the focus of

her argument and research is on graphic novels and she seems to use the term ‘comic’ loosely to allude to the style of the medium; the combination of text and images to form meaning. Since her research talks about literary devices in graphic novels, the argument demonstrates how the use of graphic novels can contribute to achieving the first learning objective for literature in the Netherlands (Meijer & Fasoglio).

In her teacher’s guide to teaching graphic novels, Monnin even provides instructions for using graphic novels to teach foreshadowing, symbols, themes, and setting (Monnin). Dallacqua emphasises in her conclusion that while graphic novels are an ideal scaffold for students to learn literary devices, graphic novels’ merit is not merely that they provide a stepping stone towards canonical literature: “Graphic novels, like the ones used in this study, stand equally with print-based literature as complex, academically challenging, and rich with literary elements and devices” (Dallacqua 376).

4.2 Visual

A graphic novel is, in itself, a visual medium. Yang argues that graphic novels are visual and since students nowadays are immersed in visual media already, the visuality of graphic novels applies to their perception of the world. Most information that students process is visual, whether it is via television, films, series or, perhaps most importantly, internet.

According to Brocka, the fact that graphic novels are a visual medium is their main advantage (30-32). Graphic novels are a unique medium in the sense that they perfectly combine media we read, and media we watch (Yang “Graphic” 187). The graphic novel is a great asset because of its combination of text and image, especially for students who have difficulty getting into a novel because for instance the imagery or use of language does not appeal to them while they might be interested in the story. Of course, this can still count for a graphic novel as well – if a student is not interested in the images or the use of language, it will be harder to get into the story. Fortunately, since graphic novels contain both, chances are that

students could show interest in either the visual component or the textual component and become motivated to read on.

Because of its visuality, reading a graphic novel can enhance students' visual literacy. Visual literacy is defined by Avgerinou and Ericson as 'the use of visuals for the purpose of: communication; thinking; learning; constructing meaning; creative expression; aesthetic enjoyment' (Avgerinou and Ericson 284). Avgerinou and Ericson also explain why it is so important to be visually literate: "If it is accepted that the visual sense is the most dominant and consequently the most important, and we see no reason not to believe this to be so, common sense suggests that as teachers we should concentrate and exploit the visual sense through the nurturing and development of visual literacy" (287). They also mention that teachers need to pay attention to visual literacy because students live in an increasingly visual world – while this was written over 20 years ago, it rings even more true today – and students need to learn to critically consider the enormous visual input they receive on a daily basis (Avgerinou and Ericson 284). This sounds like a contradiction – if children nowadays live in a visual world, it does seem more vital to teach them via text-based media. However, it is important to bridge the gap between school and the life students experience outside school. This research paper in no way proposes to abolish all textual media and supplant them with graphic novels but it seems important to both approach the visuality of the world of the student and at the same time make sure they are provided with the tools to critically examine and evaluate the visual input they receive on a daily basis. Apart from that, graphic novels do not solely consist of images.

Since what is truly unique about graphic novels is that they are not only visual but comprise a hybrid medium that is both visual and verbal. In graphic novels, the story is told by the pictures as well as text and even takes place in the 'gutter', the space in between story panels. The images do not merely serve as support, as is the case with an illustrated text, but

actually contribute to the meaning of the novel. Because of its textual-visual hybrid form, the cognitive processes that readers go through in constructing meaning are different than for text-only works. When applying reading processes to both a visual and a textual element, it is by integrating the two forms that meaning is established (McVicker 85). As Katie Monnin argues, successful education in reading graphic novels includes attention for three angles: analysing text, images, or text and images combined (15-17). This is partly because it is increasingly important that students develop visual literacy to function in contemporary society (McVicker 88). However, attention for all three angles is important mainly because text and image are equal in graphic novels and create meaning together (McVicker 85). The reader is asked to connect both types of input, which leads to the development of “higher order thinking skills” and extends comprehension beyond the level reached by separate analysis of either word or image separately (Bloom qtd. in McVicker 85).

Another feature of graphic novels is their permanence. While graphic novels are, as argued above, a visual medium, they have the permanence attributed to verbal – or textual-media. Permanence entails the notion that the imagery is not fleeting, like in film or animation (Yang “Graphic” 188). In fleeting media, the medium determines the rapidity of the viewing process, rather than the audience or the reader. In graphic novels, the reader has the opportunity to go back and reconsider sections of the reading, which they have in common with text media. However, text media are not visual like graphic novels, which make graphic novels a unique hybrid of a medium that is both visual and permanent (Yang “Graphic” 187). Fay even argues that “sequential art presents us with a unique blend of the representational, or art itself, and the abstract, words. It captures human movement and communication on a page, in the here and now, unlike any other art form or medium” (Fay 11). Williams cites the permanence and visibility of the graphic novel as one of the reasons to use graphic novels in the classroom.

4.3 Struggling and beginning readers

Graphic novels are especially suited to teach struggling, slow, beginning or EFL readers (Uslan; Wright and Sherman; Ujiie & Krashen; Frey & Fisher; Thompson; Öz & Efecioglu; Christensen; Simmons; Williams). Although it could be reasoned that the students aimed at in this research are not novice language learners anymore, they still have not achieved native or near-native comprehension status and can definitely profit. Frey and Fisher argue that struggling readers are often the result of teachers failing to cater to multiple literacies and that having them read graphic novels would appeal to students more, especially to visually inclined students, and improve their reading (19). Although the theory surrounding multiple literacies is contestable, they found that graphic novels were ideally suited to use as scaffolding for writing prompts: “The limited amount of text would allow students to read and respond to complex messages with text that better matched their reading levels” (Frey and Fisher 20). In this research, Frey and Fisher work with mostly EFL students. They show that “using graphic novels to scaffold writing instruction helped students practice the craft of writing and gain necessary skills to become competent readers” (Frey and Fisher 23). Among other things they name improved sentence length, strong dialogue, more sophisticated word choice and sustained writing – the end assignments were all of considerable length (Frey and Fisher 24). Thompson notices that his fourth-grade students – not very proficient readers yet – are more focused and interested when they are allowed to read comics – the short sibling of graphic novels. He also mentions that it will make them better readers: “Research shows that students who read high-interest, self-selected texts for longer periods of time become stronger readers” (Thompson 11). Thompson also specifically argues that graphic novels can help students who study English as a second or even third language. He makes the point that many countries outside the United States also know comic books as a medium and that students are already familiar with this medium, which lowers the threshold for them to use it (Thompson

18). Although this familiarity helps EFL students pick up the books, reading them is especially helpful according to Thompson. “High interest and the picture support offered in comics can help encourage students who aren’t yet proficient in English to continue reading while learning vocabulary and language at the same time. These students can be frightened by the overwhelming amount of text in traditional literature. They often find that the lessened load of text in comics, combined with picture support, help make the act of making meaning much more manageable” (Thompson 19). Thompson also argues that the conversations in graphic novels are more authentic than conversations in textual media and allows foreign students to experience “everyday discourse in English as opposed to the more contrived language found in many basal readers and ELL materials” (Thompson 18). Williams’s research about the use of graphic novels as course books concludes something similar. He argues that comic books hover somewhere between written language and spoken language. It lacks many aspects of unrehearsed -spoken- language, such as pauses, false sentence starts and fillers such as ‘uh’. However, the language presented is conversational language and thus gives EFL students an insight into source language dialogue without subjecting them to the difficulties of following a conversation. Apart from that, Williams argues that comic book language is often rich in collocations used in a variety of contexts and students can familiarize themselves in an easy way with these collocations (Williams 4). The graphical permanence of graphic novels, discussed earlier in this chapter, also allows students to follow conversations better – following conversations is often quite difficult since spoken language is more difficult to grasp as it is much quicker. In graphic novels students can experience conversations and dialogue as if it was spoken language, including “culturally specific onomatopoeia, verb tenses, multiple-meaning words, and routine phrases” (Thompson 18). Krashen’s theories about input hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis also play a role here. The input hypothesis claims that second language learners acquire this language by

receiving comprehensible input and that they receive this kind of input when they are involved in genuine communicative activities (Krashen “Theory”). The affective filter deals with learner’s reluctance or anxiety in communicating in a foreign language. Cary claims that graphic novels or comics both prove a positive affect and increased comprehensible input. Students are aided by visual clues which makes them understand the source material better and thus ensures more reading comprehension and second language acquisition. Because students understand the texts better, their levels of anxiety decline which in turn provides them with a positive affect. Apart from that, students often regard graphic novels or comics as fun which lowers their affective filters as well (Cary 12,13). It is important to note that comic books or graphic novels also provide students with content that is comprehensible because of the reduced amount of text but is also authentic – not original material that has been augmented or simplified to adhere to the students’ levels (Cary 14). It must be mentioned that the argument above mainly supports using graphic novels to familiarize students with the language – not per se for their literary worth. It could be inferred that the graphic novel then is perfect as merely a stepping stone towards text-based novels, which are often still seen as the ultimate goal. However, as mentioned in the previous part of this chapter, the merit in using graphic novels in ESL or EFL classrooms goes above and beyond simply using graphic novels as examples of real discourse or as a stepping stone, since the medium has its unique features as well.

4.4 Motivation

Perhaps the most commonly stated benefit of having students read graphic novels in the English classroom is the assumption that it motivates students. Motivation, as Deci and Ryan put it, “produces” (Deci & Ryan 69). Motivating students is key in providing a positive experience and ensuring the continued motivation and interest in reading. Guthrie et al. even argue that heightened reading motivation also ensures better reading comprehension (Guthrie

et al 415). In their research, the students receiving a motivational component as well as the regular instruction, vastly outperformed the students without motivational component (Guthrie et al. 415). Students can be motivated in reading tasks mostly by providing them with interesting reading material: “when students are interested in what they read, they process the material more deeply, gain richer conceptual understandings, and engage more fully with the text” (Guthrie et al. 416). As named in the former subchapter, according to Cary, students regard graphic novels as fun, which takes away many of their inhibitions to engage with English as a language (Cary 13). A part of the popularity of graphic novels comes from the contrast it provides with more traditional textual sources – such as literary novels. Students, especially young students, regard these texts as tedious, long-winded and boring (Snowball 43). Schwarz argues that since the graphic novel is “short, has interesting pictures (some in color and some not) usually offers dialogue and action with little narration or description, and comes in paperback form; in short, it is not intimidating to a reluctant reader”. Although graphic novels nowadays are definitely not always short, the rest of her argument still stands. Schwarz also mentions that there is not a lack of genre diversity within graphic novels, since graphic novels can range from non-fiction to classical literature, romances and action novels, so students of a wide range of interests can find something to their liking (Schwarz 54). Gavigan’s research, focused on struggling and unmotivated students, argues that changing students’ attitude towards reading will motivate them to read more. To change their – often negative or indifferent – attitude towards reading, students need to be presented with engaging and stimulating materials. Gavigan finds, qualitatively and quantitatively, that presenting her students with graphic novels enhances the students’ reading engagement and reading motivation and makes them more likely to read voluntarily afterwards – not only graphic novels but other kinds of reading materials too; one of her students even voluntarily signed up for a book club afterwards (Gavigan 109). The drawback

of her research is that her case study only includes four -male- students, which makes the study quite limited and the results not necessarily applicable to a larger group of students (Gavigan 109). However, Ujiie and Krashen find in their research that students, both gifted and regular readers who read comics, tend to read more in general (Ujiie and Krashen 28). The reading of comics does not get in the way of reading regular novels and even increases reading enjoyment in general (Ujiie and Krashen 28). Gavigan emphasizes in her 2011 article that since graphic novels are viewed as non-threatening, adult male students will be more inclined to read them (Gavigan 109). The seemingly lower comprehension threshold of graphic novels, which makes them suited for struggling, beginning and EFL readers, is also a motivating factor (Frey and Fisher; Thompson). Students are more likely to understand what they are reading and will not get demotivated by material that is too difficult for them. Stokmans argues that it is essential for students to enjoy their reading. When they have frequent pleasurable reading experiences, they will be inclined to read more as a result (Stokmans 35). Those pleasurable reading experiences can be created by supplying the student with reading material that is challenging but not too difficult. When reading comprehension and/or world knowledge are insufficient, the student will not be able to comprehend the text and get a negative reading experience, which will in turn discourage them from reading the next time. However, a reading text or accompanying lesson does have to challenge the student. When a student experiences the reading or the accompanying lesson as too simple, he or she will also not be motivated to read the next time (Stokmans 40). Lamanno even found no difference in reading proficiency for students with serious reading problems when using graphic novels and explains this by observing that it is important to find material that is both challenging and not too difficult, to properly motivate students (Lamanno 111). Of course, her research would have to be repeated in order to prove the verity of her claim. Graphic novels are perhaps seen as less challenging than textual novels,

especially because of the visual clues, so the teacher will have to ensure that they are still challenging the students, for instance by critically assessing their visual-textual hybridity or content matter.

One other motivating factor of graphic novels is that they appeal to teens. Comic books and as a follow-up graphic novels are, simply put, ‘cool’ (Crawford 26). Cary argues that graphic novels and comics have this “inherent entertainment value” or “fun factor” (Cary 13). In addition, he argues that graphic novels can be seen as engaging content: “For a number of reasons – the humor, heroes, movement, pop culture themes [...] real-world language, novelty, and, perhaps above all, artwork – comics consistently engage students” (Cary 19) Of course, apart from the artwork, this also could apply to many text-based novels; fantasy, detective fiction or young adult fiction for instance. Since “the brain makes sense of the world in terms of personal learner needs [...] relevant curriculum attracts and engages it. Imposed, nonrelevant curriculum leaves it and its third- or tenth-grade owner yawning or staring out of the window” (Cary 19). Thompson shares an anecdote in his book *Adventures in Graphica: Using Comics and Graphic Novels to Teach Comprehension* which illustrates the intrinsic motivation students have when it comes to reading graphic novels. Thompson explains about a student of his, a very reluctant reader who he has been tutoring unsuccessfully for a while, until this boy spots a comic book in the classroom and from that moment on will not stop reading – even inspires other reluctant classmates to read (Thompson 1-4). Cary argues that students are automatically motivated when a teacher uses sequential art in the classroom (Cary 21). Bucher and Manning argue that the visual component of graphic novels – see earlier this chapter – draws students in because they recognize it and are comfortable with it (Bucher and Manning 68). After all, students spend their days looking at screens, browsing Snapchat, YouTube and Instagram, all highly visual social media. In short: students like comics and graphic novels since they are drawn to their

fun factor and visual components and this stimulates them to start working with them. This positive attitude makes it more likely that the students have a positive experience, which in turn will make them more likely to be enthusiastic about reading graphic novels and hopefully will also inspire them to broaden their horizon and read more in general.

5 Concerns and challenges

While the former chapter has focused on the benefits and merits of graphic novels, many teachers are still very hesitant about using graphic novels (Lapp et al. 23). Some of their hesitations have to do with the historical rejecting attitudes towards graphic novels and comics. In the early 1950s, when comics were at their most popular, they were popular entertainment but were also considered to be dangerous to young people and capable of corrupting them (Jacobs 19). In *Seduction of the Innocent*, Wertham even attributes the decline in reading in young people to their reading of comic books. He argues that since children – especially poor readers - only stare at pictures and at most pick up a word or two, they never become proficient readers (122). Wertham here neglects the effects that visuals can have on children and focuses only on their lack of reading. Although much research now disproves Wertham's claims, his mindset is still prevalent in education (Jacobs 19). More recent scholarly articles focus on the benefits of graphic novels rather than the drawbacks. It is simple to find evidence supporting graphic novels' merit. However, in order to present a nuanced view on graphic novels, it is vital that the drawbacks, real or perceived, of using graphic novels are taken into account as well as the benefits. These drawbacks will include the unfamiliarity of teachers with the materials, which results in many teachers being reluctant to use them in the classroom, since they would have to familiarize themselves with the material first. The expected detrimental effects upon students' reading motivation for text-based literature will also be taken into account, as well as the expected lack of challenge in the material and thus a decline in learning profit. Apart from that, the costs of outfitting

entire classes with graphic novels are considerable, since graphic novels overall are quite expensive due to the printing costs. Another cause of reluctance to use graphic novels in the classroom is in the appropriateness of the images; some graphic novels display considerably 'graphic', violent or sexual images which can be considered entirely unsuitable for certain ages. Not only the images warrant caution – the text could also be considered inappropriate when it contains strong language or even swear words. The difficulty of the text itself also has to challenge the student to achieve appropriate learning gain (Krashen). Sequential art can also contain a certain amount of slang – educators could be hesitant to teach students this inappropriate language (Dorrell et al 228). This thesis will now depict these concerns fully, one by one, in order to give a nuanced view of the objections raised against the usage of graphic novels in the classroom.

5.1 Unfamiliarity

A very important drawback of using graphic novels in the classroom is the issue of unfamiliarity. While this is not the case for every teacher, many of them have not used graphic novels in the classroom before. Cary argues that this is a treatment that does not just apply to graphic novels: "Teachers have questions, of course, with any new instructional material." (Cary 42). However, according to Cary, the treatment of comics and graphic novels has often been especially harsh:

"Long-standing concerns over the appropriateness and educational value of the materials have made them rare birds in the schools. Consequently, few teachers have ever seen comics 'in flight' = enthusiastically read, discussed, written about, and created by students. Moreover, few have ever seen comics-centred activities modelled or even heard comics mentioned in university teacher-prep programs or staff development workshops" (Cary 42).

The mere fact that graphic novels are often not spoken about in academic settings and that consequently new teachers are unfamiliar with the genre makes them more unlikely to use it in their classrooms. Established teachers will not have had instruction on how to use graphic novels in the classroom either (Cary 42). This does not mean that teachers will never be able to use graphic novels in the classroom purely because they lack the know-how nor does it prove that they are in no way interested in using them. However, it could provide an extra hurdle and make teachers reluctant to include graphic novels in their curriculum. The upside is that nowadays there are many books that can help teachers set up their graphic novel use in the classroom. Cary's *Going Graphic* focuses especially on English second/foreign language learners, Bakis's *The Graphic Novel Classroom: POWERful Teaching and Learning with Images* provides teachers with tips and tricks on how to promote reading comprehension, critical thinking, writing and problem solving and there are many more books that provide excellent handholds for teachers who are interested in using graphic novels. Apart from these practical books that often contain very concrete tips and plans, there are also theoretical books that delve into the literary mysteries of some of the more famous graphic novels. For instance, there is an enormous amount of academic work and criticism on *Maus*, *Watchmen*, *Persepolis*, *V for Vendetta* and many other graphic novels. Another solution might be to familiarize new teachers with graphic novels in their studies, so they will be less reluctant to use the material in class.

It is important to take into account the students' unfamiliarity with graphic novels as well as the teacher's unfamiliarity. Although Cary argues that students are often very familiar with the graphic novel or comics medium, he does concede that not all students will be familiar with how to read a comic or graphic novel, just as a teacher would not always know (58). "In fact, many teachers can't read the pictures, or better said, don't take the time to read the pictures" (58). Basol and Sarigul also emphasize that students have to be familiarized

with the medium first, before delving into the depth of the graphic novel: “With the theories on reading and literacy, reading of graphic novels should be introduced to students at [sic] first place [...] However, we also applied this strategy [Beers ‘Tea Party’ strategy, Beers 2003 94-96)] to teach some fundamental concepts of the graphic novel, such as how the balloons, panels and gutters between the panels work, and how different types of panels and balloons should be read” (Basol and Sarigul 1624). Hammond endorses their opinion with an example of her own experiences teaching graphic novels to graduate students:

Though all the graduate students enjoyed the stories, the younger students readily embraced the format while the older students struggled a bit. They tended to read the text quickly and skim over the artwork. These graphic novels sometimes left them puzzled; they had to go back to examine the pictures more carefully in order to understand and appreciate the story because they were not used to concurrently reading texts and graphics. (Hammond 8)

It is vital to recognize that some students will be unfamiliar with the medium and plan your curriculum accordingly, leaving room for introductory lessons in the graphic novel medium.

5.2 Costs and availability

The considerable costs of graphic novels certainly play a role in the reluctance of teachers to work with the materials. It is always quite expensive to outfit an entire class – or more, if you wish to have the same literary curriculum in all classes of that particular grade – with novels to read. Often, educational publishing companies focus on a certain list of well-received canonical novels. In the Netherlands, there is the Blackbirds series, a series of English novels re-published by Noordhoff Uitgeverij (“Blackbirds”). Schools and students’ parents get the opportunity to order these book collections at reduced costs and they are changed every year. These Blackbird series focus on text-based literature and do not include graphic novels. Apart from that, graphic novels are expensive to print because of the illustrations. Whether they are

full colour or not – and they often are – the images require a larger amount of ink than text-based novels would. By way of comparison, a full colour paperback graphic novel such as the graphic novel version of *Pride and Prejudice* costs €15,82 on bol.com (“Pride and Prejudice: Graphic”), while the original novel costs a mere €4,99 (“Pride and Prejudice”). To get an entire class or even school year access to these novels is remarkably costly and many schools have a tight budget as it is. Although public libraries and some school libraries often have a few graphic novels in their collection, these are not sufficient to supply a class full of students. Understandably, this would be a drawback, since it is important to provide students with those authentic materials. Cary – speaking as an American - suggests finding novels in a comics shop, where they often have second-hand graphic novels that are strongly reduced in price (52). While the Netherlands also has an abundance of comic book stores that sell second-hand copies, one can, usually, at the most find a few of the same novel; again, never enough to supply a classroom of twenty-five to thirty students. One solution could be copying the relevant chapters for your students; this would require a teacher to only purchase one copy; but if you decide on tackling the whole graphic novel, this would take an inordinate amount of copying work, paper and ink, not to mention the copyright problems involved. Fortunately, a few of the most well-known graphic novels are available online, for free. *Maus*, *Watchmen* and *Persepolis* are available as PDF’s. Printing these would solve the copying problem in terms of the amount of work, but would not be environmentally friendly, since it would still require a lot of ink and printing paper. The most inexpensive and accessible way to ensure that all students can read the same, original materials is by reading them digitally; show them with a projector in the classroom, provide them with laptops or chromebooks, or require the students to bring devices so they can read for themselves. Unfortunately, not every classroom, school, or student is equipped with the electronics needed; it is to be hoped that they will be in the future.

5.3 Appropriateness in images

A very understandable concern that many people have regarding using graphic novels in the classroom is the appropriateness of images. It is no secret that graphic novels can be quite graphic in the vein of providing vividly detailed images or descriptions of subjects that parents and teachers might not want their children/students exposed to. Hammond mentions that: “Other reasons educators may be slow in their acceptance of graphic novels may be due to mature themes in some of them. They may have difficulty locating appropriate age-level graphic novels for the classroom” (56). According to Lavin, many graphic novels and comic books are aimed at an adult audience and are often not suitable for children – in his research, he focuses on the sequential art that libraries should purchase instead of their suitability for the classroom, but the argument of appropriateness is relevant for classroom use as well as library purchases (Lavin 41). In 1945, a Comics Code of Authority was created which made sure that comics and graphic novels were appropriate for youthful audiences:

For the next forty years, all mainstream comics carried the CCA seal of approval on their covers, certifying that the books did not contain nudity, sex, excessive violence, and did not promote crime or unacceptable social values. Although the Code was revised in 1971, much of its content seems anachronistic for today’s more sophisticated youth, including strictures against excessive use of slang, portrayal of law enforcement officials in a negative light, or disparagement of marriage (Lavin 41).

Nowadays, most publishers neglect submitting their novels for approval and the seal does not carry the importance that it once did (Lavin 41). However, Lavin argues that DC and Marvel, big publishers in the comic-book world, still do submit their work and would get a PG-13 rating at most and are often appropriate for classroom use, but since these are comic books and not graphic novels by this thesis’ definition, they will often not be considered for serious

use and fall outside the scope of this thesis. Lavin mentions that nowadays, sexual images containing nudity and sex in the panel are rare, although there are still comic books and graphic novels that feature women in revealing clothing or implied sexual situations (41). Violence is often a much bigger issue since comics and graphic novels tend to show violent scenes quite graphically, with plenty of blood and gore. One could argue that upper grade students – ages 15 and up – are often familiar enough with graphic content, since they have access to the internet and thus can watch any film, show or video they like, but it is still advisable to check the content of the graphic novel for appropriateness, especially in the context of teaching. Cary argues that it is not always detrimental to have a graphic novel in the classroom that features sex or violence, just as it can be very educational to read a text-based novel that has sexual scenes or very violent paragraphs – the importance lies in how the teacher encourages the students to “critically examine issues of sexuality, sexism, or violence in society” (Cary 45). It is important to note that Cary does speak about high school or adult learner classes here. He states that he would advise against using provoking images in classes below that age (Cary 45). Lavin, Hammond and Cary suggest that it is important to research the novels before use in classroom. Lavin recommends asking the local comic book store for help (Lavin 42). Cary advises teachers to use their own discretion when choosing materials and also emphasises that it is nigh impossible to avoid offending anyone – one should avoid picking material that is outright offensive to fellow educators, parents and students, but it is possible that even after a teacher’s careful consideration, some parents may still take offense (Cary 46). Cary and many others provide lists of appropriate comics and some even sort them by age or reading difficulty to ensure that teachers can make educated choices which graphic novels to use in their classrooms (Cary 53). However, since many of these lists are compiled by researchers from the United States, it is vital that the cultural differences are taken into account.

5.4 Effect on students' motivation to read textual literature

Another concern of teachers on the topic of reading graphic novels is that students will not be motivated to read anything else than comic books or graphic novels when they enjoy doing so. Since sequential art is considered fun by many students, reading regular novels might seem a daunting task after reading graphic novels and students will not be motivated to read anything else (Cary 12). I remember my mother telling me to only get three comic books at most from the library. The other five had to be books with text, since she was afraid I would only read comics if she did not encourage me to read textual books. Since students in the Netherlands nowadays read less than they ever have before (Verboord 40) it is important to stimulate them to read as much as possible. Krashen theorizes that although it would not be detrimental for students to only read comic books or graphic novels, since their language development and overall school achievements would still be adequate, students reading just comics will never reach an advanced level of literary development and language competence. However, Krashen doubts that there are students who have such a solitary diet. Indeed, his findings show that long-term comic book readers “do as much book-reading as non-comic book readers” (Krashen “Decline”). Schwarz utters the hope that especially reluctant readers benefit from having the graphic novel as a stepping stone to get them to read: “Graphic books may re-engage them in the joys of literacy” (Schwarz 54-55). Krashen argues in his book *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research* that it is essential to get students to read more and that graphic novels can play a big role. He claims that “there is considerable evidence that comic books can and do lead to more ‘serious’ reading” (Krashen “Power”). However, he unfortunately omits to cite this evidence, which makes his claim considerably less believable. Versaci claims that graphic novels can “increase and diversify the voices that our students experience in the classroom and suggest to them that literature may take various forms” (66). Although much of the research presented above is hopeful, so far there is scarce

concrete evidence that reading graphic novels would stimulate students to read more text-based literature.

5.5 Dumbing down

Another concern of teachers hesitating to use graphic novels is the idea that graphic novels would cause a “dumbing down” of literary lessons and literature. One of the previously explained benefits of graphic novels, the fact that text is supported by imagery which enhances the possibility of understanding, can also be considered one of the drawbacks. The concern is that graphic novels will not provide students with enough of a challenge by making the text negligible since the pictures already cover most of the story. In the foreword of Monnin’s *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom* Françoise Mouly mentions that “Some may still consider comics a dumbed-down version of literature [...]” (Monnin XI). She stresses that comics, and in their wake, graphic novels, are not just suitable for beginning learners:

Conversely, a dispiritingly common view holds that the whole point of becoming literate for the child progressing from kindergarten to first and second grade is for that student to learn to leave the pictures behind. Those educators who think of pictures only as ‘crutches’ for struggling readers risk remaining blind to the rich grammar and syntax of visual communication. (Monnin XII)

Although she does stress the importance of graphic novels, she does not specify why graphic novels would not be “dumbing down” students’ literary education. It is important for children to be challenged, Krashen claims. According to Krashen’s Input hypothesis, language acquisition is most successful when the student receives input that is one factor more challenging than their current level (of linguistic competence). Comprehensible input is input that is meaningful and around the student’s level. If the input is too simple, so below or on the student’s level, the student will learn nothing new. Therefore, Krashen argues, a student

will have the most learning gain if they get input on the ' $n + 1$ ' level, n being the current level of the student (Krashen). Krashen has conducted research on comics and graphic novels himself and is a fervent supporter of using them in the classroom and stimulating students to read more comics or graphic novels. However, he does not address the concerns concerning the lack of linguistic level division of graphic novels – more than that, he offers no guide for assessing the literary level of graphic novels. Other researchers also consider the idea of comics 'dumbing-down' the student population to be backwards but do not provide evidence supporting their claim of why this is not the case. It seems that it is vital to be critical about which graphic novels to use in class, as has been suggested above, to ensure an appropriate literary level, but which graphic novels qualify for classroom usage due to an appropriate level is, due to lack of research, still in the hands of teachers' own discernment.

In conclusion, some of the concerns of using graphic novels in the classroom are easily soothed: to cure the unfamiliarity of teachers and students with the content material, there is plenty of material available that provides teachers with tips, tricks, advice and lesson ideas to inspire and stimulate them to use graphic novels in the classroom. The only concern is that this material should be available in schools and it might be beneficial to introduce upcoming teachers to graphic novels in their studies. The unfamiliarity of students with graphic novels, when taken into account when planning the lessons, should not be a hurdle. Appropriateness of content is also not necessarily an issue when the teacher takes care to check the graphic novels they want to use to see if they are suitable for use in the classroom. Cost and availability of graphic novels stays a thorny issue; for now, there seems to be no way of definitively reducing the costs of outfitting an entire classroom – or several – with graphic novels. A solution could lie in the use of electronic devices such as laptops and tablets, but it is doubtful whether this would be the more affordable option unless the students already work with such devices and the school is already equipped with the necessary digital infrastructure.

Another valid concern is the idea that students would disregard more traditional literary texts if they can read graphic novels. Among others, Krashen, Schwarz and Versaci attempt to argue that graphic novels could stimulate readers to start reading traditional texts rather than disregard them altogether but so far there seems to be no strong evidence supporting this claim. Finally, the concern of graphic novels ‘dumbing down’ students, since the images would provide such support that readers would not have to put in considerable effort to understand the text, is still a valid one. According to Krashen’s input hypothesis, it is important to challenge the students and make them work for their progress. So far there is no evidence that graphic novels would sufficiently challenge students on a linguistic level. If teachers are interested in using graphic novels in their classrooms, it is vital that they do consider these challenges.

6 Methodology

6.1 Research Methodology: Measurement Objectives

The objective of the questionnaire used was to explore three main topics: the current situation regarding the use of graphic novels, the support for the use of graphic novels in English language classes in the Netherlands and the criteria which graphic novels should meet if they are to be considered for use in the English literature lessons.

6.2 Research Methodology: Data Collection

6.2.1 Participants

The number of participants in this study was 62. The participants were secondary school teachers of English in the Netherlands. Three of the participants that filled in the questionnaire have been excluded. One of them was not a secondary school teacher of English and two participants had incomplete data.

The participants were all adults aged 21 and above. Of the participants, 15.25 % were aged 21-25, 22.03 % were aged between 26-30, 11.86% were aged between 31-35, 15.25% were aged 36-40, 11.86% were aged 41-45, 10.17% were aged 46-50, 3.39% were aged 51-55, 3.39% were aged 56-60 and 6.78% were aged 61 or above.

Of the participants, 32.26 % registered as male, while 64.52% registered as female. 3.23%, 2 participants in total, registered as other or preferred not to say their gender. The years of experience in teaching English at Dutch secondary schools was also asked from the participants. The years of experience of the participants ranged from one year of experience to 46 years of experience. See figure 1 below

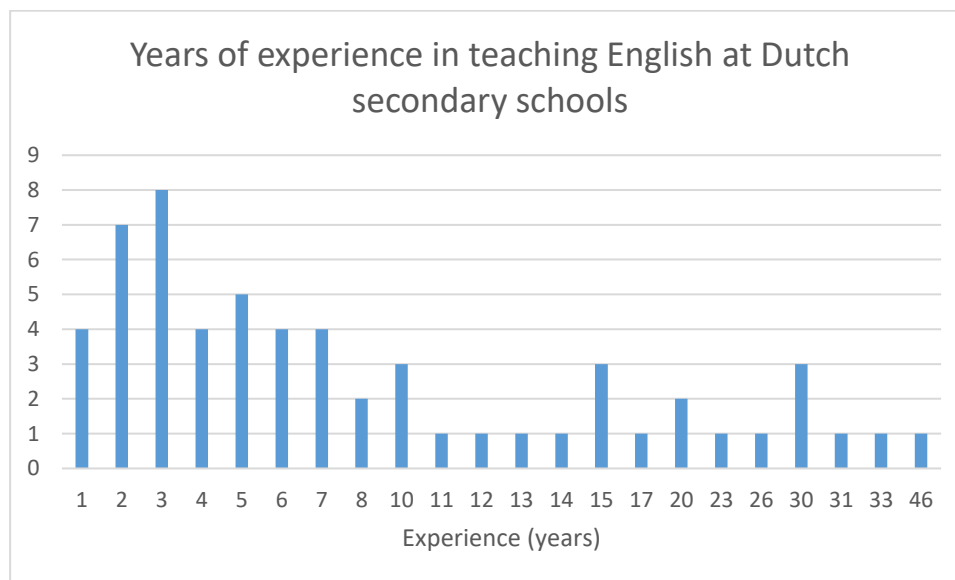


Figure 1

It can be assumed that most participants were of Dutch origin and living and teaching in the Netherlands, since the questionnaire was shared among Dutch colleagues. However, since there is no question about the respondents' nationalities and the questionnaire was also spread via social media – Facebook specifically – there is no way to know for certain which nationalities the respondents have.

Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. There was no compensation for filling in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was shared to direct colleagues of the

researcher and English teachers in the personal network of the researcher via email with the request to share the questionnaire among as many English teaching colleagues as possible. The link of the questionnaire was also spread via social media, with the request to forward it to as many English teachers at secondary schools in the Netherlands as possible. On Facebook, the questionnaire was shared by the researcher's network.

6.2.2 Material

The material used for this study consists of a seventeen-question online questionnaire. The questionnaire is a mixed method research, which makes use of both qualitative and quantitative questions. The type of mixed method research is the Concurrent Strategy, which is defined as having one data collection phase – whereas most mixed method researches have sequential data collection phases – where both quantitative and qualitative questions are posed. Morse argues that a survey design that is mostly qualitative – like the survey above – can embed some quantitative data to ‘enrich the description of the sample participants’ (120). The advantages of this kind of research are that both kinds of data can be collected simultaneously and that it offers multiple perspectives on the research problem. One of the downsides is that the two methods can show discrepancies when they are compared, also because it is difficult to define which one of the two methods has priority and how this affects the interpretation of the results (Creswell 215). Six questions were asked to assess the current situation. Four of the questions aimed to determine the existing support and willingness to use graphic novels. Four questions asked participants to name criteria for them to consider using graphic novels in their classrooms. The last three questions were used to define the demographic (age, gender and years of experience as a secondary school teacher).

Because the questionnaire did not use any standardized and verified questionnaire, the following section will describe the questionnaire in detail.

The first page of the questionnaire contained only one question: *Are you familiar with the term graphic novel?* The answering options were on a Likert scale from 1-5 , anchored on 1 being ‘not at all familiar’ and 5 representing ‘very familiar’. The next page contained 5 questions. Respondents were first shown the following definition of graphic novels: “*A graphic novel is a book length story containing sequential art - a hybrid of pictures and text- that is in form and dimensions the equivalent of a prose novel.*” After this definition, respondents were asked *‘How familiar are you with graphic novels?’*. The answering options were on a Likert scale from 1-5 , 1 being ‘not at all familiar’, 5 representing ‘very familiar’. The next question *‘Which titles of graphic novels can you name?’* was an open question with the option to add multiple titles. In the question description respondents were encouraged to name as many as they could. This question was not mandatory to proceed with the questionnaire. Two 5-point Likert scale questions asked *‘How often do you allow your students to read graphic novels during free reading?’* and *‘How often do you use graphic novels in your literary lessons?’*. The answering options were anchored on 1 representing ‘never’, 5 representing ‘always’. The last question on this page was *‘What is the reason for your current (lack of) use of graphic novels in your literary lessons?’* This was an open question. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on their answers.

The following page of the questionnaire contained four mandatory questions: two 5-point Likert scale questions and 2 open questions. For the first question, *‘How open are you to the idea of using graphic novels in your literary lessons?’*, answering options were on a Likert scale from 1-5, 1 representing ‘not at all’ and 5 representing ‘very’. Next two open questions were asked: *‘Which benefits can you name for the use of graphic novels in literary lessons?’* and *‘Which drawbacks can you name for the use of graphic novels in literary lessons?’*. For the last question, *‘Would you use graphic novels in your literary lessons is*

appropriate lesson materials are available?’, the answering options were on a Likert scale from 1-5, anchored on 1 representing ‘definitely not’ and 5 representing ‘definitely’.

On the next page of the questionnaire 4 mandatory open questions were posed: ‘*Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfil before you would consider using them in your literary lessons?*’, ‘*Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfil before you would consider using them in your literary lessons in the lower grades (1, 2, 3 havo/vwo)*’, ‘*Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfil before you would consider using them in your literary lessons in the higher grades? (4,5 havo, 4,5,6 vwo)*’, and ‘*What makes graphic novels unsuitable for use in literary education?*’

The last page of the questionnaire was used to assess demographics: age was assessed by asking respondents to tick one of the following options: 20 or below, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60, 61 or above. Gender was assessed by ticking one of the following options: female, male or prefer not to say/other. Finally, years of experience as a secondary-school teacher of English was assessed using an open question. Most respondents filled in a number. Responses that consisted of text (e.g. four instead of 4) were changed into numbers. The entire questionnaire is added as an appendix to this study (see appendix A)

As can be seen above, the quantitative questions are posed on a Likert scale, which makes the answers quantifiable which can be used for statistical analysis and also allows for more nuance due to the scaling quality of the answers available. This kind of research is in line with the preliminary investigation phase which Plomp and Nieveen name in the process of curriculum design. This research does not go as far as to design a whole new curriculum but does make suggestions to aid eventual design plans (Plomp and Nieveen 11-14). Blair et al. (20) mention that questions should be easily understood and not subject to a vastly differing interpretation. The questions above are formulated with this method in mind.

6.2.3 Validity & reliability

The questions in the questionnaire are providing answers to the research questions (see intro) and as such are valid. However, it is difficult to test validity since a number of the questions do not relate to tangible matters and are measuring attitude. As to content validity; the extent to which the questionnaire covers a representative sample of the domain is open to debate; since the response rate (59 usable responses) is fairly limited in comparison with the number of teachers of English in the Netherlands and the method of spreading the questionnaire arguably addresses a specific kind of audience, it could be reasoned that the sample is limited. However, since the questionnaire is designed to get an overall impression of the attitudes of English teachers and the reasons why they would or would not use graphic novels, the questionnaire can be called valid, even if the sample is limited. The questionnaire has concurrent validity in the sense that it is used to estimate present attitudes and does not attempt to predict a future outcome – although it does contain questions about future attitudes – such as the question about the willingness to use graphic novels. These questions are not designed to predict future use and are formulated to test attitudes and disposition towards graphic novels.

To improve reliability, the questionnaire has been spread among fellow students to eliminate subjective formulation and ambiguity. The questionnaire is added to this study -see appendix A- and can be used to replicate the experiment, hence increasing transparency and reliability (van Aken, Berends & van der Bij). However, it is impossible to enlist the exact participants of the first test since the participants were recruited via social media, the participants could fill in the test anonymously and did not need to leave contact information. Even if the questionnaire is spread in exactly the same way, there is no way to guarantee that the participants are exactly the same and, in that way, can influence the outcome since they have previous knowledge of the questionnaire.

6.2.4 Procedure

The questionnaire was constructed with help of a statistician and a psychology major and research by Creswell, Stevens, Morse and Plomp and Nieveen (Creswell 215, Morse 120-123, Plomp & Nieveen, Stevens, Blair et al.). Three main topics were decided upon: current situation, willingness to use and criteria. Since the aim of the questionnaire is to test the current situation in the use of graphic novels and to test attitudes, a choice was made to make a questionnaire that is both quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative questions were designed to investigate attitudes and get an overall impression of the disposition to use graphic novels and the criteria they would have to meet to be used. The questionnaire was sent to the supervisors of this thesis for approval. The questionnaire was tested on 5 fellow students who gave feedback on the formulation and pointed out mistakes. These mistakes were augmented and the feedback taken into account. The questionnaire was constructed in Google Forms and separated into four main parts. On the 15th of May, the link to the online questionnaire was distributed among direct colleagues and English teachers from the researcher's personal network via work email, with the request to forward it if possible. The link was also spread via social media. No reward or compensation was offered for filling in the questionnaire or for spreading it. On the 22nd of June, a reminder was sent via email and social media, asking people to fill in the questionnaire if they had not done so already. On the third of July, a final reminder was sent. The questionnaire was closed on the 19th of July with a total of 62 responses. The responses were screened and the two responses that were incomplete or nonsensical were removed. One respondent did not comply with the requirements for filling in the questionnaire since this respondent was an MBO teacher of English, not a secondary school teacher of English and consequently this response was removed too. The questionnaire was only available online, no physical copies were used. The researcher was not present when the questionnaire was filled in. The questionnaire included a

consent procedure at the start of the questionnaire, without which the questionnaire could not be filled in. There were no specific instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire. Some questions included instructions such as “You can enter multiple names, if you know more than one graphic novel, please mention them all”.

7 Results

This result section is divided into the three categories that this thesis set out to investigate: the current situation with regards to using graphic novels in English literary education, the existing support and willingness to use graphic novels and finally the criteria for using graphic novels in English literary education.

7.1 Current use of graphic novels in English literary education

Sub question: What is the current situation regarding the use of graphic novels in literature education in the English lessons on Dutch secondary schools?

When the respondents were asked how familiar they are with the term graphic novels, the majority of the respondents indicates that they are familiar with the term. The Likert scale asked respondents to rate 1 for not familiar and 5 for very familiar.

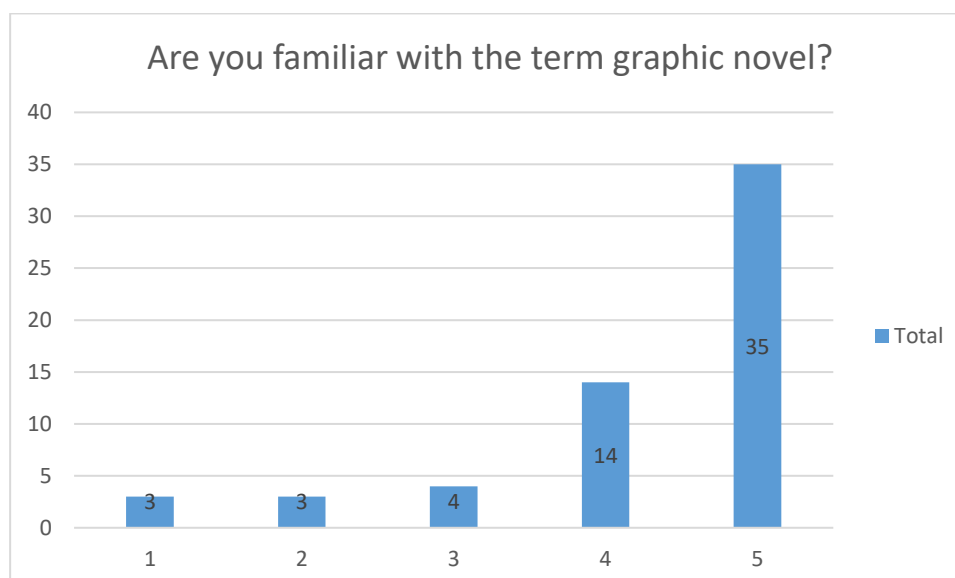


Figure 2

When the respondents were asked how familiar they were with graphic novels – so not the term, but the format itself – the responses differed slightly. There were only three respondents who are *not familiar* with graphic novels. However, people are generally more familiar with the term graphic novel than with graphic novels themselves. Overall, the majority of respondents replied that they were at least slightly familiar with graphic novels.

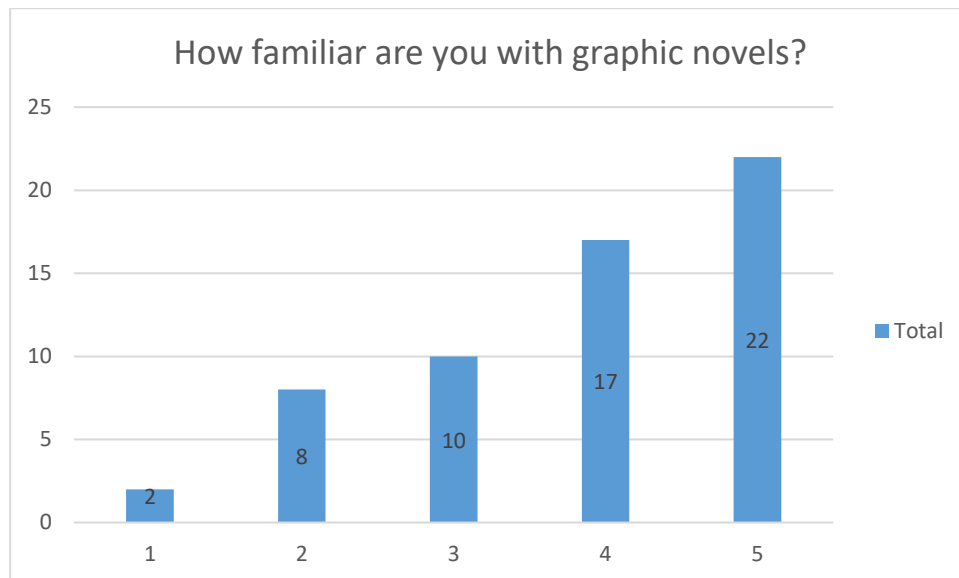


Figure 3

Because the data violated the assumption of normality and because Likert-scales were used, a Kendall's tau-b correlation was used to determine the relationship between familiarity with the term 'Graphic Novels' and familiarity with the format of graphic novels amongst the 59 respondents. A strong, positive correlation was found, which was statistically significant ($\tau_b = .542$, $p < .05$). Respondents who are familiar with the term graphic novels, are more likely to be familiar with the format graphic novel.

The respondents were also asked to name titles of graphic novels. The respondents were free to name as many or as few as they pleased, but they were encouraged to name as many as possible. First the answers were analysed based on whether distinction between graphic novels and comics (see table 1). Two-third of the respondents were able to name titles of graphic novels. About 1 in 5 respondents, however, did not provide any answers. To

test whether the ability to distinguish between graphic novels and comics had any influence on the test variables, a Kruskal Wallis H test was performed, but no significant differences were found between respondents who were and respondents who were not able to distinguish between graphic novels titles and comic titles.

Classification of titles	Frequency	Percentage
Only graphic novel titles	28	47.5%
Only comic titles	4	6.8%
Both	11	18.6%
No titles	4	6.8%
Missing	12	20.3%

Table 1

Because the scope of this research is graphic novels, we excluded comic titles in the next in-depth analysis. In general, *Maus* was named the most, for a total of 17 times. *Persepolis* was named a total of 15 times and *Watchmen* 9 times. Many respondents also replied by mentioning that they know graphic novel adaptations of existing novels or plays. 6 respondents mentioned Shakespeare adaptations and 15 respondents mentioned graphic novel adaptations in total. 5 respondents mentioned *V for Vendetta* and 5 respondents mentioned Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series. All the other graphic novels were only mentioned once or twice.

The respondents were also asked whether they allowed their students to read graphic novels during free reading – a different situation than using them in literary education. A 1 means the respondent never allows students to read graphic novels during free reading, a 5 means the respondent always allows students to read graphic novels during free reading. In the graph it is clear that most teachers do not always allow their students to read graphic

novels during free reading. 41 of the respondents replied with a 3 or lower, translatable to ‘sometimes’ and fewer.

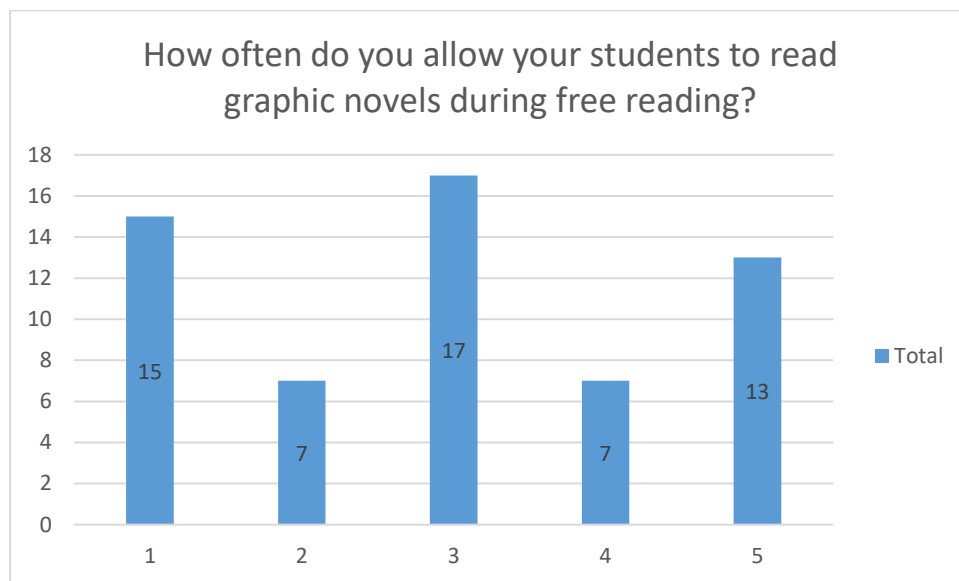


Figure 4

There is a significant correlation between respondent’s familiarity with graphic novels and their likeliness to use graphic novels during free reading ($\tau_b(57) = .338, p < .05$). This means that if a respondent knows the format, they are more inclined to let their students read graphic novels during free reading – for reference, this is different from using them in literary lessons.

When asked ‘how often do you use graphic novels in your literary lessons?’ only 4 respondents rate their graphic novel use in literary lessons a 4 or 5, which translates to ‘often’ and ‘always’. 31 respondents never use graphic novels in their literary lessons.

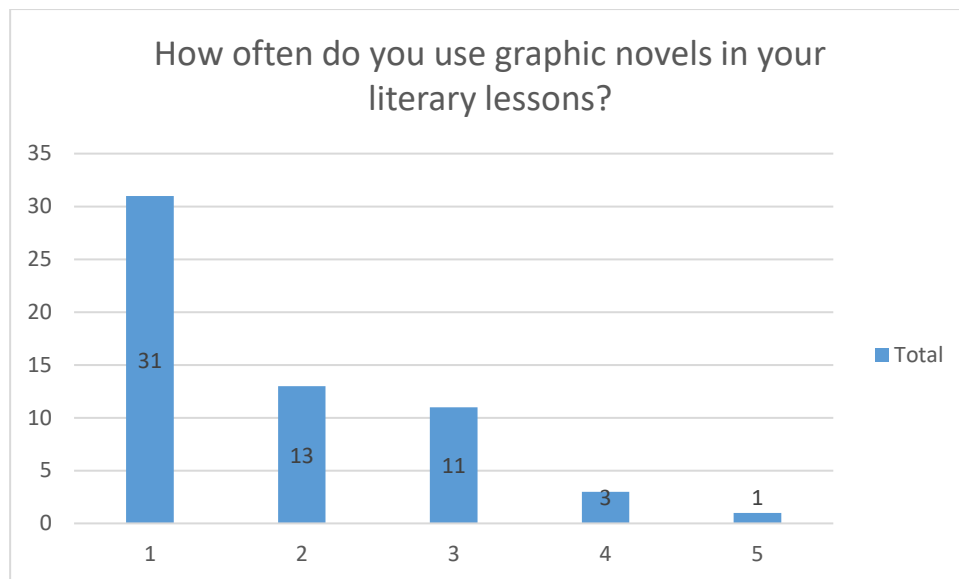


Figure 5

There is a significant correlation between how often respondents allow their students to read graphic novels during free reading and the frequency of using them in their literary lessons ($\tau_b(57) = .427, p < .05$). When respondents allow graphic novels during free reading, they are also more likely to use them in their literary lessons right now.

To better understand the current use of graphic novels in literary lessons, the respondents were asked to indicate what their reasons were for using, or not using, graphic novels in their literary lessons. Since many people indicated that they do not use graphic novels in their literary lessons at the moment, there were more reasons for not using graphic novels right now than reasons for using them. However, the most cited reason for using graphic novels was the use of adaptations to enhance the students' understanding of the original novel, to get them interested in the original or to introduce the subject of the original novel. Five respondents answered they used graphic novel adaptations of classics in this way. Four respondents replied that the multimodality and visual component of graphic novels was an important reason for using them in the classroom. Two respondents also answered that graphic novels were engaging and the students enjoyed them, and three respondents cited the benefits for struggling readers as a reason to use graphic novels in their literary lessons.

Many more respondents cited their reason for not using graphic novels – in general or right now. The most mentioned reason, by fourteen of the respondents, was that they had no knowledge of graphic novels or were not familiar with them. Twelve respondents replied that there were no graphic novels available in their school or that they could not provide a whole classroom with the materials. Twelve respondents also replied that graphic novels had no place in the curriculum at that moment. Six respondents mentioned that they did not use graphic novels because of the lack of teaching materials. Five respondents also replied they lacked time, either in the teaching curriculum or in their preparation to implement graphic novels. Six respondents answered that they considered graphic novels to be unsuitable for use in the classroom, either because of the content or the perceived lack of challenge.

7.2 Support and willingness to use graphic novels in English literary lessons

The ‘support’ section of the questionnaire strove to answer the subquestion: What is the willingness of English secondary school teachers to use graphic novels in literary education?’

The first quantitative question to teacher’s openness yielded the following result. Many respondents reply that that they were ‘very open’ on the question ‘how open are you to the idea of using graphic novels in your literary lessons?’ Only four respondents replied with a 2 or 1, translatable with ‘not really’ and ‘not at all’. 8 respondents responded with a neutral. The vast majority of the responses, 47 respondents in total, are at least slightly open to the idea of using graphic novels in their literary lessons.

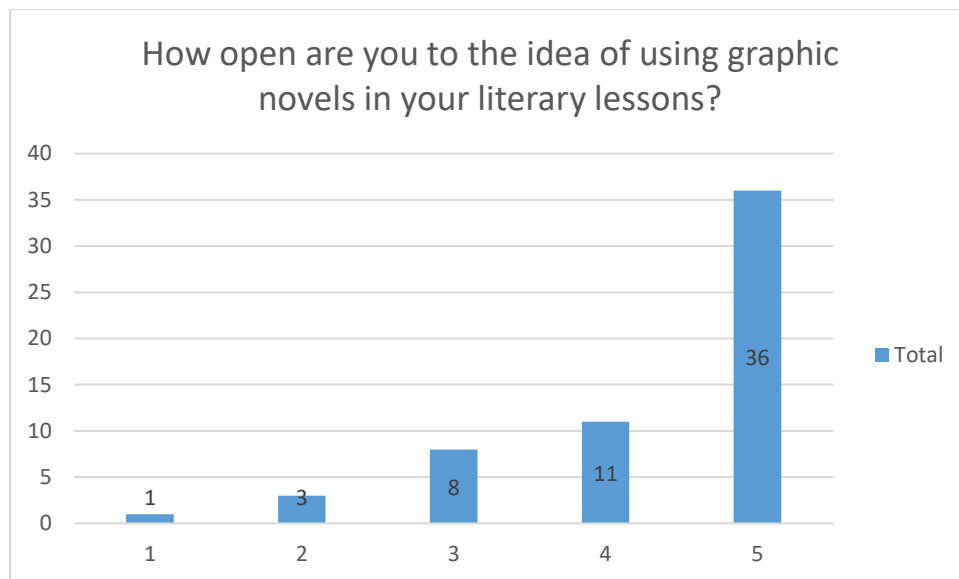


Figure 6

There is a significant correlation between respondents' familiarity with graphic novels and their openness to using graphic novels. That means that if a respondent is familiar with the format, they are more likely to be willing to use graphic novels in their literary lessons in the future. ($\tau_b(57) = .360, p < .05$)

Out of all the respondents, many would use graphic novels in their literary lessons if appropriate lesson materials are available. 50 respondents replied favourably – a 4 or 5, with 32 respondents replying 'definitely' and only one respondent replying 'definitely not'.

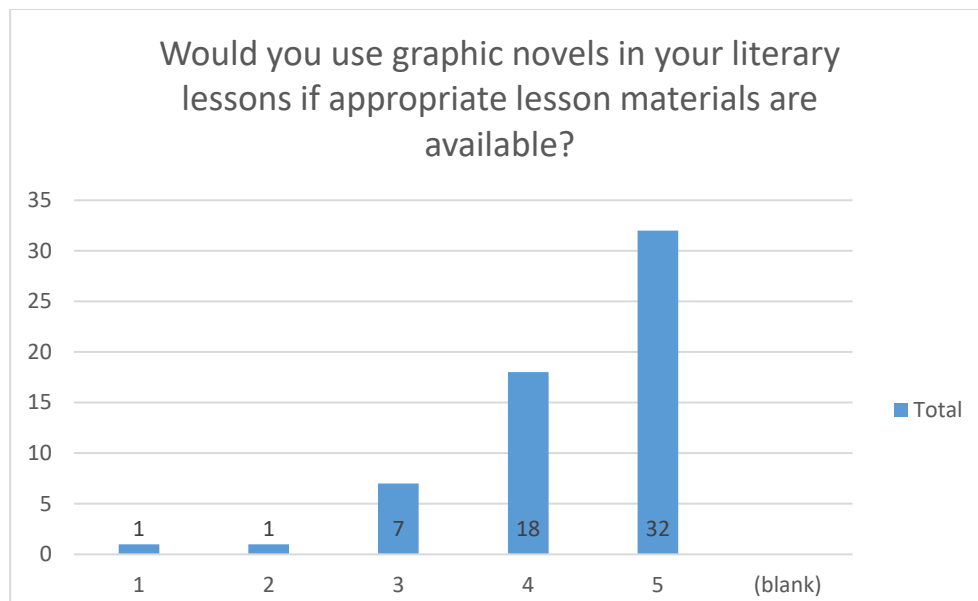


Figure 7

To better understand the willingness to use graphic novels, respondents were asked to name benefits and drawbacks of graphic novels, in order to assess their perception of graphic novels. The open question which asked the respondents for benefits they could name resulted in a variety of answers. The most common response to the question, mentioned by a total of 24 different respondents, was that graphic novels would be ‘fun’, ‘enjoyable’ or ‘motivating’ for the students. Many respondents, 14 in total, also replied that graphic novels would be a great way to have struggling or reluctant readers read more. Ten respondents also thought that reading a graphic novel version of a novel would help students get into the ‘normal’ novel. Nine respondents mentioned that graphic novels could help students visualize what they’re reading, and seven respondents replied that graphic novels would be more accessible than a normal novel. Seven respondents thought that graphic novels would provide more engagement for the students, and six respondents considered graphic novels to be beneficial as they help students achieve visual literacy. Other named benefits included the practice of literary skills, the achievement of new vocabulary, graphic novels being a different way to approach literature, studying non-verbal behaviour, providing authentic language, appealing

to visual learners, practicing reading skills and critical thinking, stimulating creativity and help students understand sequences in tenses.

When respondents were asked '*Which drawbacks can you name for the use of graphic novels in literary lessons?*' eleven of the respondents replied that reading graphic novels would not stimulate students to read text-based literary works after reading graphic novels. Seven respondents said that the accessibility of graphic novels might hinder learning, since students would be inclined to stick to graphic novels. Five respondents said that it would provide too little challenge for lazy readers. Eight respondents replied that the presence of visuals would hinder the students' imagination. Five of the respondents mentioned that they themselves had no knowledge of graphic novels, and thus would find it difficult to teach lessons with them. Five respondents in total were afraid students would not take the genre seriously and appreciate it for its worth. The relative lack of depth and lack of literary value was mentioned as a drawback by seven of the respondents. Other respondents replied that the genre would be too difficult to get into, since students lack the skills necessary to tackle the visual-text hybrid of graphic novels. Some concerns also included the cost of graphic novels, the limited teacher resources, the appropriateness of graphic novels in terms of language and violence, the sceptical opinions of parents or students, a lack of skills to read longer texts, the chance for misinterpretation and the lack of interest of some students in the format. Five respondents replied that they saw no disadvantages, with one respondent adding that there would be no disadvantages as long as graphic novels are used along with original, long literary texts in the classroom.

All quantitative variables (familiarity with term 'graphic novels'; familiarity with format 'graphic novels'; current use GN in free reading; current use GN in literary lessons; openness to use GN; use of GN if appropriate materials are available) were controlled for

gender, age and years of experience, but no significant correlations were found (see appendix B for full result of all correlations)

7.3 Criteria for graphic novels

In the next part the results of the criteria for use of graphic novels in English literary education will be discussed. Respondents were asked “*Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfil before you would consider using them in your literary lessons?*” A third of the respondents, nineteen in total, responded that the novel had to be suitable in content – it should interest the students, be relevant, relatable, age appropriate, enticing, have a clear theme or moral and spark class discussions; three respondents added that the graphic novel should stimulate critical thinking. Fifteen replies required that a novel be appropriate in terms of visual violence and sex, language and theme. Fourteen respondents mentioned that the graphic novel would have to have literary value to use them in the literary classroom, six added that the graphic novel should have relevance in the current curriculum – fit in with the theme. Twelve respondents mentioned that the graphic novel should be of an appropriate level, to stimulate the students – not too difficult, but not too easy either. Other respondents mentioned that the novels should be available and accessible, there should be enough text so the students would still be stimulated to read and not just look at the pictures, there should be a certain quality of English and of the art. Two respondents mentioned that they would require graphic novels to be affordable to furnish a whole class with them. Finally, four of the respondents mentioned that they would appreciate secondary material, both to familiarize the students and the teachers with the content and to provide task-based learning.

When asked “*Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfill before you would consider using them in your literary lessons in the lower grades? (1, 2, 3 havo/vwo)*” many of the respondents, 25 in total, find it most important for this age group that the language used in the graphic novel is on the level that the students are on at this age; not too difficult,

but not too simple; slightly challenging. 16 respondents replied that for lower grades, appropriateness in imagery and language is especially important – not too violent or sexual. 14 respondents said content is very important – it has to appeal to the students, have a good storyline and clear theme. Three respondents added that the graphic novels for lower grades should be fun. Another respondent mentioned that the graphic novels should be suitable to teach reading skills, and two respondents said that the graphic novel must include enough text. Other responses included that the novel should be appealing to the age group, not be too expensive, fit in the curriculum, be bright and colourful and create the opportunity to focus on the visuals. Two respondents mentioned that the graphic novels should prepare the students for literary works and enable focus on patterns. There were also respondents who added that the graphic novel should have a light theme, be communicative, have a link to the grammar or vocabulary the students are dealing with at that age, be authentic or accessible. Two respondents added that there would be a need for good worksheets. Two responses said that the novel should be short. One respondent mentioned that they would not use graphic novels in the lower grades at all, as it would hinder their imagination.

Next, respondents were asked “*Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfill before you would consider using them in your literary lessons in the higher grades? (4,5 havo, 4,5,6 vwo)*”. The responses for the requirements for higher grades differ somewhat from the requirements for lower grades. Only four respondents deemed graphic and textual appropriateness of importance in the case of higher grades. The most prevalent response was that the level of language should be more challenging and up to the higher grades’ standard. One respondent even added a level, CEFR C1. Other than that, twelve respondents mentioned that the content should be interesting and up to a certain standard. Eleven respondents deemed it important that the graphic novel contains literary elements or has literary value. Five respondents mentioned that the novel should be challenging, and another five mentioned

that it should spark debate and stimulate critical thinking – things that were not mentioned in the lower grades requirements. Five respondents also added that it should address issues relevant to the age group and it should have ‘social meaning’. Apart from that, the novels should have deeper layers. Other requirements that were mentioned include the need for a historical framework, complex language and visuals, ‘heavier’ themes, a fit in the curriculum, motivating vocabulary, original texts, connections to language taught previously and enough text. Two respondents required secondary task-based learning materials and material that trains the four skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Two respondents had no requirements at all, and four respondents added that they would not use graphic novels in the higher grades.

Finally, the respondents were asked “*What makes graphic novels unsuitable for use in literary education?*” Interestingly, many respondents answered this question by saying that graphic novels were not at all unsuitable for use in literary education, twelve in total. Nine respondents replied that too much violent or sexual content would render a novel unsuitable. The lack of text is also a concern, eight respondents mentioned this. Three respondents said that graphic novels were not challenging enough and one respondent mentioned that it would be dumbing down the students’ population. Three respondents mentioned that gender- and racial stereotypes would make graphic novels unsuitable. Three other respondents mentioned the lack of imagination students need to use was a hinderance. There were also two respondents who mentioned the lack of educational content as a problem, two mentioned the price, another two the use of slang and the resemblance to comic books. Other things that would make graphic novels unsuitable, all mentioned by only one respondent per answer: the lack of literary merit, the pure focus on action, the distracting nature of graphic novels, the length – whether they meant too long or too short was not specified, the lack of descriptive language, the limited vocabulary and the limited number of literary graphic novels. One

respondent mentioned that the unsuitability of graphic novels would depend on the class they were taught in, and another added that it would depend on the content, style, visuals, format, language and context of the graphic novel used.

8 Discussion

The aim of the questionnaire part of this thesis is to get a general overview of the use of graphic novels in secondary school English literature lessons to answer the research question: “To what extent would English teachers in the Netherlands be interested in working with graphic novels in their literary lessons and what requirements do they have to consider working with graphic novels.” As can be read in the results section, teachers were specifically asked for their use of graphic novels in their lessons, their willingness to use graphic novels in the future and their criteria for graphic novels to consider using them in their lessons. Though some answers were precisely what one would expect, others were more surprising. Both types of results will be discussed in the light of theory. The last part of this chapter will include the limitations of the research and suggestions for further research.

8.1 Current situation

What is the current situation regarding the use of graphic novels in literary education in the English lessons on Dutch secondary schools?

As discussed, the questionnaire yielded a few answers that can be seen as obvious, such as the fact that people are more familiar with the term graphic novel than with the format.

Another feature that emerged that is not surprising is that few people use graphic novels in their literary lessons at the moment. Lapp et al. also found in their research that not many teachers use graphic novels in their lessons currently – although it must be noted that Lapp et al targeted elementary school teachers, in the US. Hardeman, however, found in her 2014 thesis that graphic novels are rarely used in Dutch literary lessons at present (Hardeman 16-

17). When we look at current use, the questionnaire yields a few answers. When asked whether they allowed students to read graphic novels during free reading, the answers were slightly surprising in that more than half of the respondents did not allow their students to read graphic novels during free reading. In his article “Leesplezier als sleutel tot succesvol literatuuronderwijs” Verboord finds that our literary education continues to become more reader-centred, allowing room for what the reader – or in this case, student – finds pleasurable to read instead of what the teacher deems appropriate or interesting (Verboord 40). Graphic novels are often considered more fun to read (Cary 13). Schwarz argues this is because a graphic novel is “short, has interesting pictures (some in color and some not) usually offers dialogue and action with little narration or description, and comes in paperback form; in short, it is not intimidating to a reluctant reader” (54). Since there was no question regarding the reason for teachers to allow or not allow their students to read graphic novels, it is difficult to define a reason for the lack of graphic novels in free reading. It could be explained by the lack of familiarity teachers have with graphic novels, or the fact that they do not use them in their literary lessons either and thus are less likely to allow them in the classroom. Another reason could be the relative lack of graphic novels available in school libraries and classrooms in general (Cary 53) Lesesne argues that the availability of books has a great influence on the reading habits of students and that students should actively be helped by a professional when selecting their reading material, something which often does not happen if students are just required to bring an English book they picked themselves to the lesson (Lesesne 55; Ericson 27-30; Young & Brozo 324).

As mentioned, the lack of availability of graphic novels, or rather the prohibitive costs of purchasing a full classroom set, can also be seen as one of the reasons teachers do not use graphic novels in their literary lessons very often. The replies to the question whether teachers use graphic novels in their literature lessons; namely that teachers do not often use

graphic novels in their literature lessons at the moment – were to be expected according to Hardeman, who finds in her research that in the Netherlands graphic novels are often not viewed as material that is suitable for use in literary lessons, although she focuses on teachers of Dutch rather than teachers of English. Teachers are often unaware of the benefits, unfamiliar with the format and inclined to stick to the material they are used to (Yang “Graphic” 186; Cary 30, 48). Indeed, when asked to name a reason for their (lack of) current use of graphic novels, many respondents replied that they were not familiar enough with the format to be able to use it. Cary mentions this too in his book *Going Graphic* as a much-cited reason teachers are not using graphic novels in their (literature) lessons. Twelve respondents also replied that they did not have materials, which is an often-cited problem and eight more mentioned that they did not have appropriate lesson materials, which Cary also defines as existing problems. Fortunately there is a treasure trove of lesson materials that can be easily found online; which could easily solve the second problem, as long as it is made available to teachers and they are aware of its existence. Some of these lesson material sources are mentioned in the guidelines chapter of this thesis. The lack of time that the respondents mentioned, presumably to create new materials, could also partially be resolved by the materials available online, or by pooling our resources and creating new material that is made available to all who want to use it.

8.2 Willingness to use

Despite the hesitations many teachers feel when they consider using graphic novels in their literature lessons, the vast majority replied that they are at least slightly willing to use graphic novels in their lessons. This could again be a result of the rise in student-centred literary lessons that Verboord signalled (40). It is certainly in line with the rising trend in research about graphic novels and the renewed attention to their benefits and even to their literary worth (Chute 460; Campbell 207) Interestingly, while the aforementioned shift in opinions

about graphic novels is a thing of the past few decades, there is no significant relation between the age of the questionnaire's respondents and their willingness to use graphic novels. Either age has no influence on respondents' willingness to use graphic novels, which cannot be definitively concluded in this thesis – or the older respondents are especially open-minded and in tune with recent developments.

The respondents were also asked to name the benefits and drawbacks they could see with respect to using graphic novels in their lessons. The answers to that question might tell us something more about the reason for the current absence of graphic novels from the classroom and as such, could be argued to belong to the 'current' section of this chapter. However, since it also implies attitudes towards the future use of graphic novels, it is included in this section. The benefits that were named focussed mostly on the motivating factor of graphic novels; answers like 'fun', 'enjoyable' and 'motivating' were abundant. The importance of motivating students is underlined by many researchers, most notably Deci, Ryan, and Guthrie et al, who focus on motivation as a topic. The assumed benefit of graphic novels being motivating is also sustained by research on graphic novels, which demonstrates that - since students see graphic novels as fun - even more fun than 'normal' text based materials, they are more motivated to work with graphic novels (Cary; Schwarz; Snowball; Gavigan; Ujiie and Krashen; Frey and Fisher; Thompson). Another prevalent response considering benefits is the support graphic novels can provide for struggling or beginning readers. This, too, is a much-researched benefit of graphic novels as they provide visual support to accompany the verbal language, can be used as scaffolding, and they cater to multiple literacies. Consequently they are ideally suited for students who have issues with reading or students who are still learning English as a second or foreign language, which is the case in the Netherlands (Uslan; Wright and Sherman; Ujiie & Krashen; Frey & Fisher; Thompson; Öz & Efecioglu; Christensen; Simmons; Williams). Other benefits that were

named included the power of visualisation and that graphic novels would help develop visual literacy (Yang; Brocka; Avgerinou and Ericson; McVicker; Monnin; Fay). Interestingly, the benefits that were named by the respondents do correspond heavily with the benefits found in research, which means teachers of English in the Netherlands do have quite an accurate idea of why using graphic novels would be beneficial. However, they are still not used very often; for which explanations might be found in the “what is the reason for your (lack of) use of graphic novels” section of the discussion. The drawbacks the respondents mention might also have some effect on their current use. Many of the drawbacks that were mentioned allude in some way to the fear the respondents have that students will not appreciate textual materials – i.e. novels, short stories and other traditional types of literature – and that they will have trouble moving on from graphic novels, limiting their reading to graphic novels because of the aforementioned advantages. Graphic novels are fun, perhaps at first glance more fun than traditional literature, and teachers fear that students will not want to challenge themselves with more difficult textual works. Wertham argues the same in his *Seduction of the Innocent*, arguing that children who read graphic novels – or in his case, comics – will never pick up language because they only stare at the pictures (122). Although his book is from 1954 and there have been many developments and research projects since then that disprove his theories, Wertham’s attitude can still be found in remnants today, as can be seen in the responses. This concern is not entirely unwarranted; Krashen, for instance, finds that students who only read graphic novels or comics and nothing else will never get the same level of proficiency as their fellow students who do have a more varied reading diet. However, he also doubts that there are students who have such a one-sided reading habit. It has also been found that students who do read graphic novels often can use this as a stepping stone towards more textual literature (Krashen; Schwarz; Versaci). The amount of research done on the effect of graphic novels on the reading habits of students where traditional literature formats

are concerned, is still relatively limited and with the current decline in reading being a huge concern (Verboord 42) it is warranted more research on this topic.

Another concern of the respondents, tied in with the aforementioned drawbacks, was the lack of literary value of graphic novels. This, also, is a much-heard concern which supposedly makes graphic novels immediately unsuitable for literature lessons. After all, if they have no literary value they have nothing to add to literature teaching, save perhaps as a juxtapositional point, and they should not be used. Luckily, there is research that suggests that graphic novels can be seen as literary and are as such suited to usage in literature lessons (Yannicopoulou; Corden; Hammond; Eisner; Bucher and Manning; Schwarz; Dallacqua). The real issue might seem to be that respondents seem to be too unfamiliar with graphic novels to imagine how to use them in the classroom or that they do not have access to material that they can use in their literary lessons (Cary 42-43). This could be remedied by providing teachers with material that is based on sound research and usable in the classroom, or by educating teachers regarding the use of graphic novels and providing them with tools to develop their own materials. After all, a large percentage of the respondents replied that they will use graphic novels in their literature lessons if there are appropriate materials available, endorsing the need for good materials. Despite the drawbacks they mention, it does seem that there is an incentive for future use of graphic novels. The question remains, however, of who should undertake the task of actually compiling said material and who will fund said undertaking, but that is alas beyond the purview of this research.

8.3 Criteria

If our goal is to use more graphic novels in literature lessons in the future, it is important that the criteria that teachers have for using them are taken into account to introduce graphic novels successfully. The respondents were first asked to define their criteria overall and then were asked to name specific criteria for the lower grades (1-3 havo/vwo) and upper grades

(4,5 havo/vwo, 6 vwo). This last division was made because the upper and lower grades often have different requirements when it comes to literary lessons – in many schools, the focus in the lower grades is more on reading pleasure and making students familiar with reading, paired with language acquisition – a more reader-centred and language-centred approach. In the upper grades the focus is often more on literature appreciation, literary devices and interpretation and literary context – more text-centred approach and context-centred approach (Bloemert et al 180).

For the overall criteria, most respondents mentioned that the graphic novel should have suitable content in that it should be interesting for students, age appropriate and level appropriate. Another fifteen respondents added that the graphic novel should be appropriate regarding language, violence and sexual content. Hammond subscribes these criteria and mentions that especially new users of graphic novels might deem it difficult to find content that is suitable and appropriate for the intended audience. Lavin mentions that although sexual scenes are not as prevalent in graphic novels nowadays, violence is still present in many graphic novels (41). Fortunately, many lists can be found online that rate graphic novels' content and some authors and researchers, such as Cary, provide a list themselves (53). Lavin adds that local comic book store employees are often a great help when it comes to questions of suitability (42). Many respondents also demanded literary value of the graphic novels they would consider in their classrooms. Although many graphic novels are considered to have literary value nowadays, there are no academically compiled lists of graphic novels and their particular literary merits, although one can find a myriad of lists online that suggest certain graphic novels, often mentioning *Maus*, *Persepolis*, *V for Vendetta* – although the latter is quite graphic in terms of violence – and *Palestine*. When considering developing materials for the classroom, it should definitely be researched which novels are

most suitable for literature lessons. It is noteworthy that again, one of the criteria that was mentioned by the respondents was the need for appropriate lesson materials.

In making the division between the upper and lower grades, the responses as to criteria differ slightly. In the lower grades, responses focussed mostly on appropriateness in terms of images and containing enough text, on a suitable level to ensure language acquisition while reading. In the higher grades, responses focussed more on challenging language, literary merit – which was not mentioned in the lower grades, and the ability to spark critical debate. These responses are in line with the four SLO approaches mentioned in Bloemert et al. – lower grades focus more on language acquisition and reader response; upper grades focus more on the literary aspects of the text and the context of the novel (180). When asked what would render graphic novels unsuitable for the classroom, many of the answers were in line with the concerns mentioned above to appropriateness of the novels. Graphic novels are still seen as overly violent and graphic nowadays, even though many of them are perfectly suitable for classroom use. It seems important that teachers are educated about graphic novels and how to appraise suitability.

Comparing answers with SPSS to find correlations provided quite some expected answers, while some of the findings are more remarkable. Respondents who replied that they are familiar with graphic novels are more likely to allow students to read graphic novels during free reading. More importantly, they are also more likely to use graphic novels in their own literary lessons already and are more willing to use them in the future. This suggests once more that part of the hesitancy in teachers' use of graphic novels comes from their being unfamiliar with the format – after all, those with the format, seem more willing to use graphic novels. This is not very surprising, since we as humans and especially teachers are more inclined to use what we know. These findings reinforce the need to educate teachers and upcoming teachers on the use and usefulness of graphic novels and make sure appropriate

lesson materials are made available. Other than that, it is important to try and convince teachers of the opportunities offered by graphic novels in terms of creating motivation to read, and of the literary value of at least some graphic novels.

8.4 Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that this study is only an exploratory research in why teachers use or do not use graphic novels in English literary lessons in the Netherlands in high schools at havo/vwo levels. As such, the questionnaire was unstandardized and untested. Future research should focus on creating a questionnaire with operationalized constructs of openness/willingness to use graphic novels.

The participants were found via social media. Since the questionnaire included no questions regarding the living area, school, or work area of the participants, there is no clear overview of where the participants came from. The work-environment of a participant can be of influence on their responses and this was not taken into account. As the participants were asked to ask their colleagues to also fill in this questionnaire, certain schools might have submitted a disproportionate amount of responses, which could have skewed the research if this was a topic already debated amongst the participants' English department. For instance, it might be possible that teachers from a Christian grammar school in Friesland yield different responses than teachers from a large multidisciplinary school community in one of the four big cities. Future research should control for work-environment to increase generalizability of this study.

Apart from that, the method of collecting answers was mostly via done social media. This method could invite a demographic of a certain type – young people who spend time on social media – although this is not overly apparent in the age group. The participants, however, are in some way centred around the researcher, because this was the start of the questionnaire. This could have resulted in a location bias.

Another limitation of this thesis is the relatively small pool of participants. Although some conclusions can be, and have been, reached using the data provided by this pool of participants, it is difficult to generalize these conclusions and this should only be attempted with this limitation in mind. To truly say something about the use of graphic novels in the Netherlands, there should be more participants, from various parts of the country to allow for regional differences – since at the moment it is unclear how representative the sample is in geographical terms.

8.5 Broadening the scope

An elaboration on this thesis could be a worked-out approach to creating a lesson plan or lesson series in which a graphic novel is integrated in a literature curriculum, for instance centring on a theme such as the second world war. Such a project could show the added value of a graphic novel and perhaps illustrate the ability of the graphic novel to serve as a stepping stone to textual versions of literature.

Further research into the use of graphic novels in the Netherlands at other levels of schooling, such as elementary, vmbo, or tertiary education, would also be beneficial, to complete the picture of how the graphic novel is seen and used in the Netherlands. As English is not offered as a standard class at elementary level, or tertiary education, nor are literary studies at either level for that matter, these researches would be limited. However, it would be useful to see, for instance, how many tertiary teacher courses of study actually use graphic novels in their literary education subjects. Just as it would be interesting to see if comics, as an introductory method, could work well with English education at Dutch primary schools. There are many avenues currently left unexplored when it comes to use and usefulness of the graphic novel in the English classroom in the Netherlands.

While this thesis has focussed on English education, Dutch secondary schools offer many more languages, and research into the use and usefulness of graphic novels for say

Dutch language studies, or German, French or Spanish, would help corroborate research already done into the English graphic novels and sketch a fuller picture of the use and usefulness of the graphic novel in language and literary education as a whole. Furthermore, this research could help solidify the graphic novel's position as a literary work. It could even help teachers of these languages to discover literary material they might not have thought of using before.

9 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to provide an insight into the current use of graphic novels in the literary curriculum in English secondary school lessons, the willingness of teachers to use graphic novels and the requirements teachers have for working with graphic novels. The question that this thesis would like to provide an answer to is as follows: "To what extent would English teachers in the Netherlands be interested in working with graphic novels in their literary lessons and what requirements do they have to consider working with graphic novels." To answer this question, a questionnaire has been answered by teachers of English in the Netherlands, focussing on their current situation, their willingness and openness to using graphic novels and the requirements they would have of graphic novels before considering using them in their lessons.

The findings of this study are that currently, not many teachers use graphic novels in their literature lessons. The reasons for that range from unfamiliarity with the format to the unavailability of suitable lessons and the lack of time to develop these. Many teachers are willing to use graphic novels and they are often informed of the benefits graphic novels can have. To allow graphic novels to be used in the classroom, first it is important that teachers are familiar with the format. This can be remedied by including graphic novels in teacher training and courses on didactic strategies. Apart from that, there is a need for available graphic novel lessons, lesson plans and courses which take into account the requirements

teachers have for the graphic novels used: they have to be appropriate – for the age taught, in content, language, topic, visually and in literary value. Further research could provide more insight. A more extensive research into requirements teachers have would be useful, especially if this can be used to develop appropriate lesson materials. It is important that more teachers are asked what their preferences might be, so the development of new material is well founded in teacher requirements. Since there is quite some material available online, this can be a good starting point. However, none of this material is geared towards learners of English in the Netherlands and it would be valuable to have materials that take into account the limitations and particularities that English learners in the Netherlands have to face – something which should be researched more thoroughly as well. The next chapter will give insights and suggestions on how to develop this material and to show hesitant teachers a few starting point to begin using graphic novels in their lessons.

10 Guideline for teachers

Since there are limited materials available that are geared towards students of English in the Netherlands there is a need to develop new tools. Teachers indicate that they would use graphic novels if there are appropriate materials. Some of them note that they do not have enough knowledge to be able to develop their own lessons, since they have no idea which novels would be suitable, how to read graphic novels with their students and how to fully utilize the advantages the graphic novel format offers. Other than that, many teachers also indicate that they lack the time to research graphic novels and how to use them and to develop new lessons. Since every secondary school has different ideas about how to form their literary curriculum it is most useful for teachers to develop their own material, geared towards the requirements they have and the policy of the school and English section. The aim of this chapter is to give these teachers some concrete tools to develop their own lessons, keeping in mind the CEFR requirements for every level – which are the same in all of Europe

– and the final requirements defined by the ERK – or the level students should be on at the end of their school career. This chapter will contain some tips, tricks and recommendations to help teachers along that are interested in developing their own materials and perhaps convince teachers that have their reservations about using graphic novels.

10.1 Selecting a graphic novel

The first step teachers would have to take before starting to work with graphic novels in the classroom is considering which graphic novels they would like to use. This choice can be made with different perspectives in mind; maybe the novel is part of a larger reading list for a certain theme or project – for instance, postmodernism, the second world war or the cold war or topics like slavery, immigration or even writer-centred projects like projects on Shakespeare or Jane Austen – which would require a different kind of graphic novel.

Especially in lower grades, teachers will want to select graphic novels on their visual appropriateness and the proper language level to ensure that their students understand the content and are challenged enough. While I can make a – fairly limited – suggestion here, there is a great source for selecting graphic novels – the book *Graphic Novels Core Collection*, by H.W. Wilson. While this collection book is geared towards librarians to help them select graphic novels for their collections, it is a very complete guide for teachers as well, since it groups graphic novels not only by topic but also by appropriateness in terms of language level and content level. There are a few downsides to this apparent treasure trove of graphic novel recommendations: the biggest perhaps being its price and availability – even online the starting price is around 250 euro and hardcopies are only found in libraries in the United States – much too far for teachers from the Netherlands. Apart from that, the recommendations by level are made on the basis of United States school grades and thus take slightly more effort to translate into what is appropriate for our secondary school grades. Although this source of graphic novel knowledge reads and sounds extremely useful on

paper, I have not found a way to peek into its contents apart from a preview available on the Wilson website and have to rely on reviews to consider its worth. However, less expensive options are abundant on the internet. Since graphic novels have been around for a while and their merits have been known in the U.S. for quite some time, multiple lists have been made of graphic novels by content and language. Kat Kan has compiled many such lists, grouped by age and what she deems appropriate for those ages, defined by the Common Core standards which are comparable to our European Frame of Reference (Kan).

In the European Frame of Reference, there is so far no mention of graphic novels and any allusions to literature are only made in terms of the skill to process literature and write critical essays on it – more focused on the reading and writing skills than literary skills or appreciation, although a certain kind of critical thinking and analysis skills about literature of course comes into play here. (Common European Frame of Reference for Languages 6, 10, 24,) The requirements for English as an exam subject in the Netherlands are also fairly limited; the ‘eindtermen’ only mention literature thus:

Eindterm 7

De kandidaat kan beargumenteerd verslag uitbrengen van zijn leeservaringen met ten minste drie literaire werken.

Eindterm 8 (alleen vwo)

De kandidaat kan literaire tekstsoorten herkennen en onderscheiden, en literaire begrippen hanteren in de interpretatie van literaire teksten.

Eindterm 9 (alleen vwo)

De kandidaat kan een overzicht geven van de hoofdlijnen van de literatuurgeschiedenis en de gelezen literaire werken plaatsen in dit historisch perspectief. (Meijer & Fasoglio)

As long as there are no further alterations made that do take into consideration the use of graphic novels and in particular their visual aspects, many estimations by level depend on teachers' personal opinions. As such, it is still quite useful that so many lists have been compiled online; it just takes some more research to determine the language level.

10.1.1 *Maus*

One graphic novel that is substantially used in lessons all over the world and perhaps the most famous graphic novel of all, is Arthur Spiegelman's *Maus*. *Maus* was also most named by the teachers who replied to my questionnaire – see Results section. *Maus* was written on the topic of the holocaust from the perspective of the son of a Jewish holocaust survivor. The novel is drawn in black and white and has a distinctive art style, demonstrating the different kinds of peoples by giving them various animal heads. Although the subject matter is quite heavy, the relatively light art style and low language level make the novel readable for many different secondary school classes. Some reviewers consider *Maus* to be suitable for all ages if the students get enough help from the teacher, since there is no sex, blood or gore in the graphic novel and the language level is simple. However, there is also a strong argument to be made to wait until high school – the age of fourteen – since there are quite some shocking scenes in the novel – not graphically, but on an emotional and content level the material is quite heavy (Downey; Wilson).

Quite an advanced teachers' guide about *Maus* was made by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, with plenty of materials that will challenge even upper grades of VWO. The materials revolve around three topics: social studies, language arts and visual arts, drawing attention to different parts of the graphic novel (Miller). Miller also notes that it is important to introduce the subject of the holocaust to the students – although this is perhaps less necessary here in the Netherlands, where the Second World War is already a topic for history lessons in primary school.

A good source for language-based materials revolving around *Maus* was made by Becky Burr of the Brigham Young University. Her lesson plans focus on reading strategies and use activities with cloze texts, pre-reading activities and K-W-H-L strategies. These complete lesson plans can be found on <http://novelinks.org/pmwiki.php?n=Novels.Maus>.

A lesson plan that revolves primarily around in-depth reading, critical thinking and discussion was developed by Peter Trachtenberg. Trachtenberg has taught writing and literature at the New York University School of Continuing Education, the Johns Hopkins University School of Continuing Education, and the School of Visual Arts. His teacher guide to reading *Maus* is also freely available online and can be found here:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/highschool/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780394747231&view=3tg>

The guide not only allows students to read critically and develop their own ideas about the writing and the visual clues, but also includes further activities the students can partake in to immerse them in the reading and the subject matter. Prof. Harold Marcuse also compiled a website with many resources on *Maus* and its writer, including a timeline which clarifies the order of the events in the novel and their link to the events in the second world war:

<http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/classes/33d/33dTexts/maus/MausResources.htm>

10.1.2 *American Born Chinese*

American Born Chinese was written by Gene Luen Yang, an author who is not only a graphic novel writer but also an educator himself and a fervent graphic novel education promotor.

The graphic novel was nominated for a National Book Award and has won a few graphic-novel-oriented prizes. The novel revolves around the theme “what does it mean to fit in” and is especially a good fit for multicultural schools, which are found abundantly in the

Netherlands – including my school. The topic of the novel is something many students can

identify with, whether they are from a multicultural background or not; everyone has had difficulty to fit in at one time in their life. *American Born Chinese* is simple in terms of drawing – the pictures are slightly cartoonish; however, *Maus* is illustrated exclusively in black and white while this is quite a multicoloured novel. The language is fairly simple, which makes it a great novel to start the class off with or to consider for lower grades. Since Yang himself is such a strong supporter of using graphic novels in education, his own website includes a fairly large number of discussion questions and suggestions for further reading, along with complete lesson plans developed by teachers all over the world, including a few that explain the format of graphic novels to people who are unfamiliar with it – more on that later. (<http://teachingamericanbornchinese.weebly.com/>)

10.1.3 *Watchmen*

Perhaps one of the most famous graphic novels, made into quite a successful film, *Watchmen* could not be excluded from this list. *Watchmen* shows the reader an alternative universe where superheroes emerged in the twentieth century and their presence helped the United States to be victorious in the Vietnam War. The novel takes place while the United States are preparing for war with the Soviet Union, at a time where the superheroes are no longer costumed vigilantes – since that has been outlawed – but are working for the government or retired as superheroes. The retired vigilantes find one of their own murdered and investigate the case, in some cases returning from retirement and uncovering a more sinister plot. When we look at the content matter and graphic images, the novel is considerably more “grown up” than *Maus* and *American Born Chinese* and the language is also rather more advanced. Like *Maus*, *Watchmen* is an excellent book to use with regard to the time-period it takes place in; one of the topics in the novel is the cold war. Although this is a graphic novel revolving around superheroes, it is not a superhero comic; the themes and content matter is far more serious. This is also visible in the artwork and the level of language. Whereas *Maus* and

American Born Chinese are hardly violent, *Watchmen* can be quite violent, includes some very gory panels and some sexual images which make it definitely unsuitable for younger audiences, but it can be used in upper grades - it is deemed suitable for American High school, which roughly translates to 4th grade and up. The graphic content of the novel does not have to be a problem when a teacher can guide the students and help them with their reading. The images are coloured and more intricate – less playful – than the novels mentioned before and the language is more on a level suitable for upper grades students. While the images will really help the students understand the language, the graphic novel includes some pages that serve to give extra information which are purely text – some of these pages include language that might be of a level that is too difficult for students. A teacher will have to provide the necessary clarity. A great perk of reading *Watchmen* is that students can watch the film while reading the graphic novel or after. They will recognize many of the scenes and perspectives from the novel, but in the film they are made more accessible. Notably, the ending of the film is different than the ending of the graphic novel, which should be taken into account – and could easily be used to root out any students who have only seen the film but have not done their reading!

10.2 Acquiring graphic novels

Acquiring graphic novels is presented as a really simple task by many United States based researchers and educators. However, in the Netherlands we do not have the range of comic book stores that the States boasts. One of the biggest problems with purchasing graphic novels is that they are fairly expensive – thanks to the often multicoloured printing, the novels can be much more expensive than text-based novels. Even if there are some comic book stores with second-hand book sections, it is quite difficult to find enough novels to outfit an entire classroom, let alone more than one. *Maus*, *Watchmen* and *American Born Chinese*, which were mentioned above, are luckily available for free online, which gives

teachers the opportunity to compile their own readers for the students or select relevant passages. Schools that work with student-owned devices such as iPads or laptops have the advantage here, in that teachers can just provide students with the file or link and the novel can be read in class.

10.3 Introducing the graphic novel

When starting to work with the graphic novel, it is advisable to spend at least part of a lesson preparing the students for the format. Although many students may have read comics or graphic novels before, it is important to familiarize them with the format and the way it is supposed to be read. The most important step to doing that is to show them an example page and point out features to them that are present in every graphic novel and to provide the students with the jargon and vocabulary necessary to be able to describe graphic novels. A handy example page with pointers is provided the website “Teaching American Born Chinese” by Hannah McKinney. (<http://teachingamericanbornchinese.weebly.com/about-graphic-novels.html>)

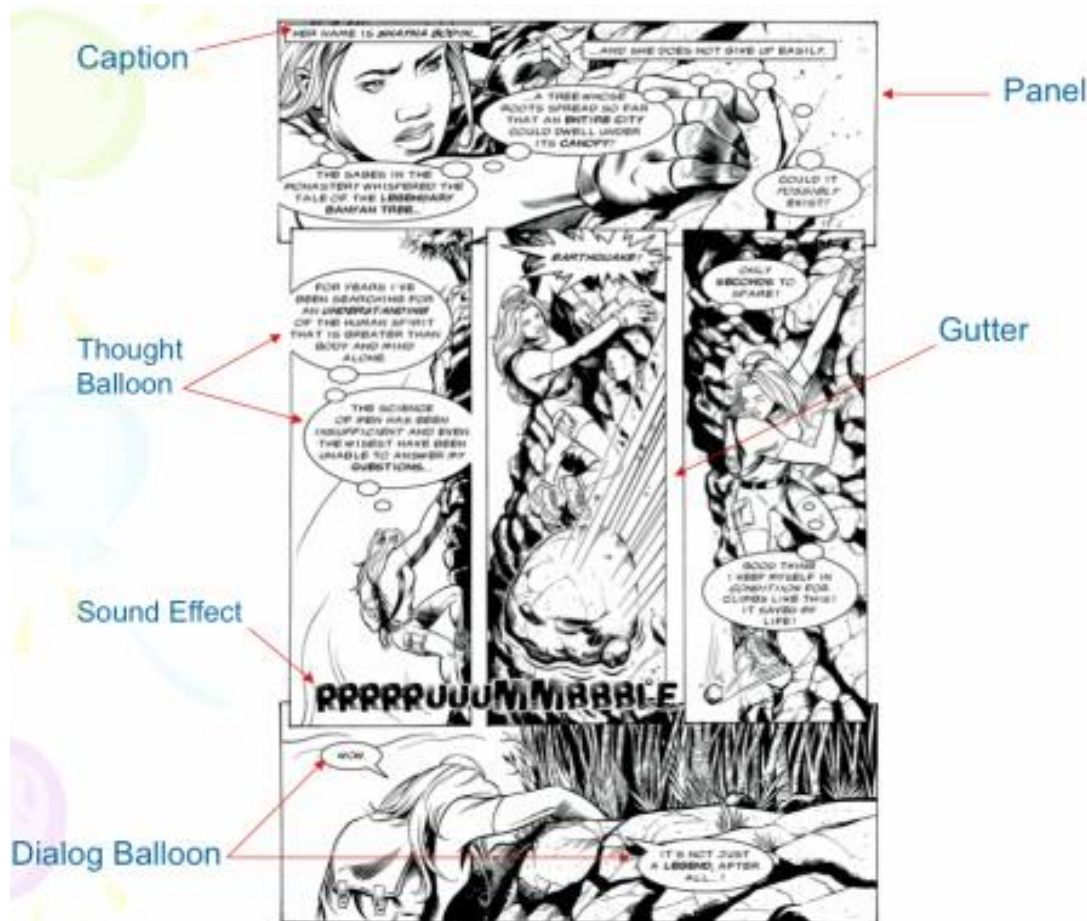


Figure 8 (McKinney)

Caption: The caption can be seen as the narrator of the story. It provides extra information that is not provided by the characters.

Panel: A panel is the picture in which one scene takes place. When you go to the next panel, you also go to the next part of the story or to a different perspective on the same scene.

Gutter: The gutter is the space in between panels. The gutter often suggests the place where something has happened in between different panels, like a cut in a film. McCloud mentions in his book *Understanding Comics* that the gutter is used as an imaginary bridge: “Here, in the limbo of the gutter, human imagination takes two separate images and transforms them into a single idea” (McCloud 66). As he elaborates: “Comics panels fracture both time and space, offering a jagged, staccato rhythm of unconnected moments. But closure [ed. the

gutter] allows us to connect these moments and mentally construct a continuous, unified reality” (McCloud 67). It is also just used to clearly separate the panels.

Thought balloon: A thought balloon always contains text and shows us the thoughts of the character.

Sound effect: A feature relatively unique to the graphic novel format. Sound effects do exactly what the words suggest: they convey sound in a visual way. They are often presented in fonts that match the idea of the sound.

Dialog Balloon: This is where the characters are speaking. While thought balloons show us information that the other characters in a panel are unaware of, the speech balloons show what the characters are saying to each other or themselves.

According to Cary, it is important to also make sure that students understand the relationship between text and art in a graphic novel. He emphasises that only watching the pictures in a graphic novel does not by any means guarantee basic comprehension – apart from wordless comics / graphic novels. On the other hand, only reading the text will ensure that you miss a large part of the story. The two work together to create meaning – a fact that some students have to be familiarized with (Cary 58, 59, 61). If some students in the classroom are more experienced comic readers – whether in their first language or in English – they might be able to help out with explaining to the rest of the class how to pay attention to both text and images.

10.4 Teaching reading comprehension using Graphic novels

One of the EFL classroom’s most important aims is to teach reading comprehension. After all, students cannot begin to deal with literary elements in a (graphic) text if they do not comprehend what they are reading. In his article “The Effects of Comic Strips in L2 Learners’ Reading Comprehension” Jun Liu summarizes the manners in which the visual

component of graphic novels can help with reading comprehension and he defines these into four categories:

- (1) Representation: Visuals repeat the text's content or substantially overlap with the text
- (2) Organization: Visuals enhance the text's coherence
- (3) Interpretation: Visuals provide the reader with more concrete information
- (4) Transformation: Visuals target critical information in the text and recode it in a more memorable form.
- (5) Decoration: Visuals are used for their aesthetic properties or to spark readers' interest in the text. (Liu 226).

In her book *Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom* Kate Monnin emphasises that most English language teachers are used to teaching reading comprehension based on text alone – after all, the word reading implies that text is involved. However, when reading a graphic novel, students should be able to read words, images and the mix of the two (Monnin 15-17) Luckily for teachers, she argues, the reading strategies we teach to our students are also applicable in the case of graphic novels; they just have to add the extra dimension of the visual component. One of the reading strategies she uses is the story map; students are asked to 'map' out the story so they understand the sequence of events and their relationships. To make a story map out of a graphic novel, not only the text needs to be mapped out, but the images need to be mapped out as well. When putting these two together to find the images-and-words meaning of the story, it could look something like this:

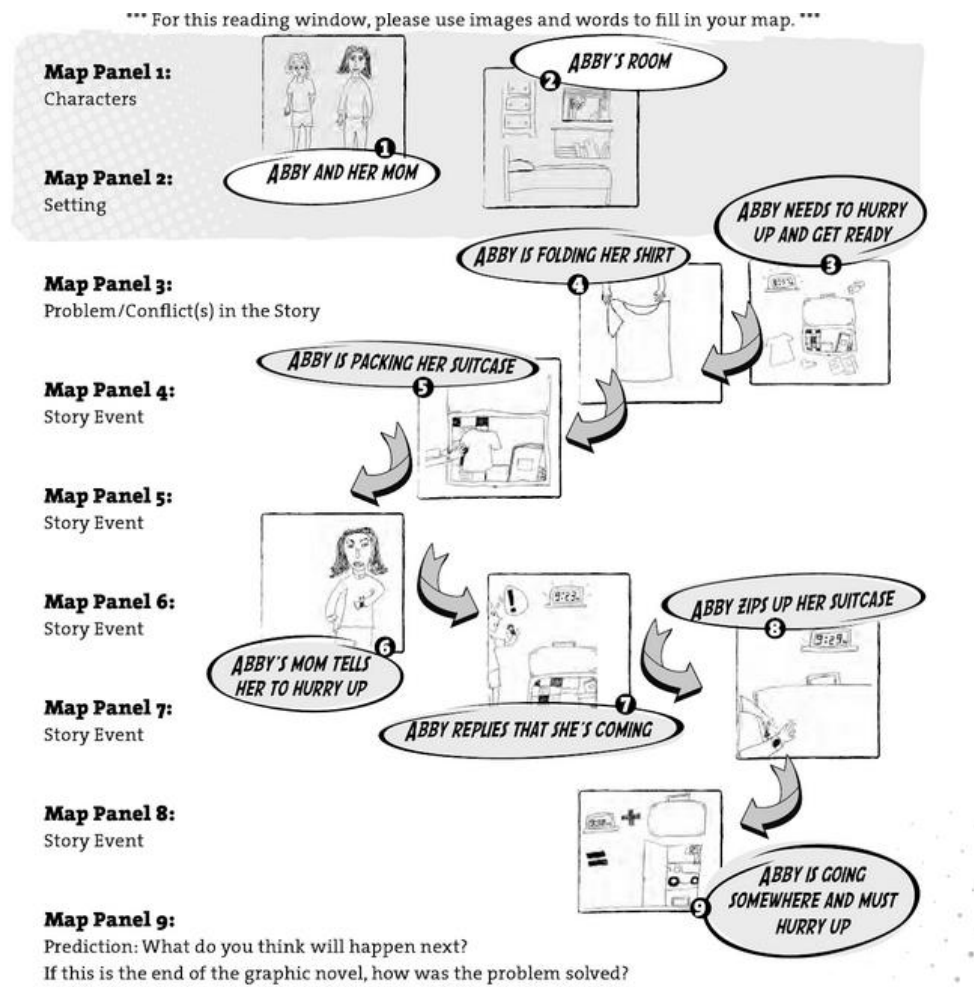


Figure 9. Source: (Monnin 23)

As can be seen above, the story mapping strategy is used to identify main elements of the story such as characters, setting and plot. Although this reading strategy is more suitable for a younger audience it can be adapted with more advanced story elements such as character traits or theme. A way to make lesson plans revolving around reading comprehension using story mapping strategies more suitable for the higher grades is to include the element of text potential. Text potential story mapping focuses on the reader as a unique being who brings his or her own culture, background, experiences, thoughts and emotions to the reading. The connections that are formed between the reader and the text are called text potentials (Monnin 24). Using text potential story mapping could help students fulfilling eindterm 7: De kandidaat kan beargumenteerd verslag uitbrengen van zijn leeservaringen met ten minste drie literaire werken (Meijer & Fasoglio). The focus will be on the reader experience. In this

reading strategy, students will not only fill in one story map, but will add another column next to the ‘normal’ story map where they map out their own associations with the story. It could look something like this:

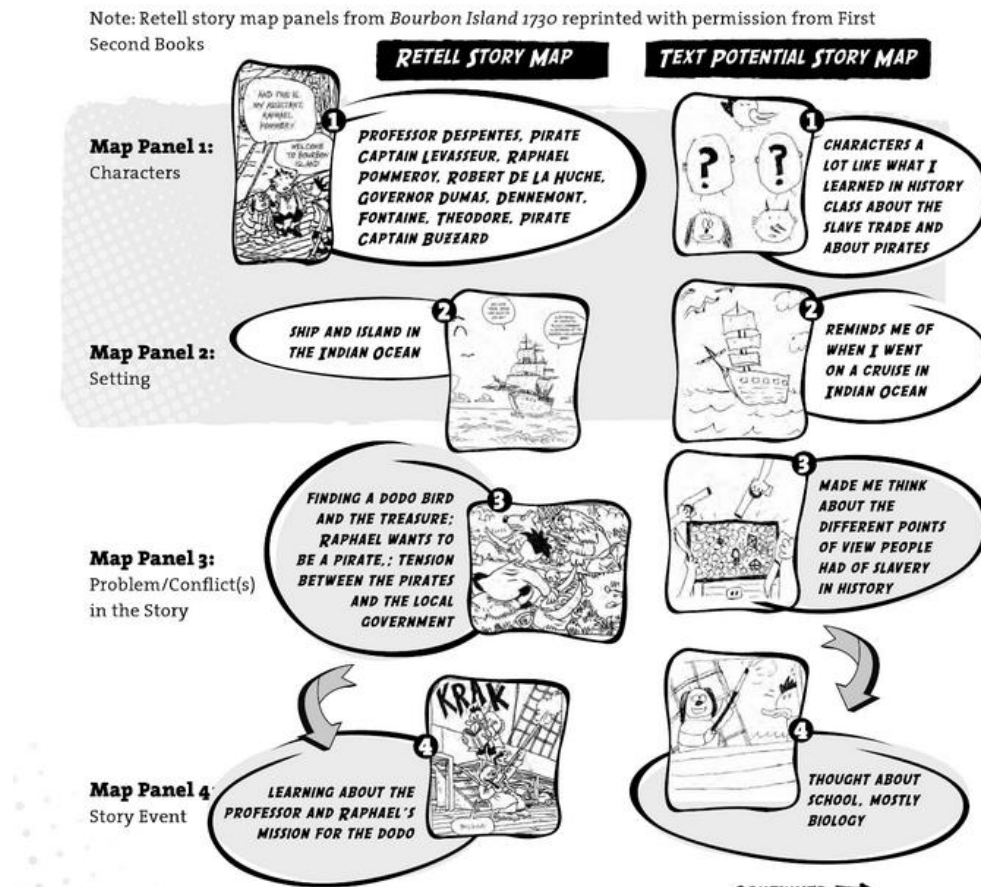


Figure 10. Source: (Monnin 34)

10.5 Teaching literary elements using Graphic novels

Graphic novels are considered to have literary value as has been argued before in this thesis. Some literary elements, such as motif, point of view and symbolism can be quite visual on their own and graphic novels can be seen as an excellent format to explain these terms to students. For instance, considering motif, there is not simply either a visual motif or a textual one, but an interplay between the two. Due to their intertwined nature, students are encouraged to connect the information offered by the text with the information offered by the pictures. Since they are already in the process of making connections, this may aid the discovery and interpretation of motifs. Motifs are, after all, recurring features, the meaning of

which is for the reader to decode. When considering *Watchmen* one of the motifs is time. Each chapter starts with a full-page picture with the chapter number and a clock. The clocks, starting at ten to twelve, draw nearer twelve o'clock each chapter. When taking into account that this graphic novel takes place during the cold war, the clock can be seen to represent the Doomsday clock, where twelve o'clock is the moment of doom. Each minute closer to twelve, the reader will anticipate disaster coming, or at the least some sort of climax around midnight. This image is reinforced by the blood seeping over the clock, in the final chapter almost covering it. Indeed, in the final chapter where the clock finally chimes twelve, the chapter opens with pictures of a city massacred. The motif of time is also reflected in the text, where characters make allusions to the impending doom and the lack of time before it occurs. For example, the character Rorschach says "there are so many deserving of retribution [...] and there is so little time" (Moore 32). This motif thus becomes apparent in both the visual and the textual element, and it is this double interpretation that makes it so effective and accessible for students.

Another returning motif in *Watchmen* is the smiley button, supposedly symbolizing the optimism people experience while in a constant fear for the end of the world. However, the smiley button is bloodied, suggesting the optimism people feel is misplaced, since doomsday is near. The reader is reminded that however optimistic we might feel, the worst can still happen. In the text, the character 'The Comedian' is the one we see wearing the button. He is an optimistic character but embraces the grim reality of the world, until he learns about the events that are about to happen at doomsday, at which point even he loses his optimistic nature: "The brutal world he'd relished would simply cease to be, its fierce and brawling denizens rushing to join the mastodon in obsolescence... in extinction" (Moore 373).

Symbolism is shown in Spiegelman's *Maus* in a very obvious manner: every nationality in the novel is represented by a kind of animal. Jews in the novel are drawn as mice, the Germans are cats and the Polish are pigs. On a surface level, the use of these recognizable animals makes it easier to spot the nationalities of the characters in the novel. Apart from that, it evokes a sense of separation; there are no mixed animals – for instance, Jews who are also Polish are still just mice, which shows a narrowminded and stereotypical judgement of people. Apart from that, these animals carry certain connotations; for instance, one could associate pigs with dirt, untrustworthiness, ruthlessness; mice can be associated with innocence and fear but also carry an undertone of vermin, of being undesirable and having to be exterminated. In a textual novel, this kind of stereotyping would be much more difficult to show to the reader and would have to be suggested through extensive descriptions and perhaps use of colloquial language, metaphors and similes.

Ashley Dallacqua suggests that graphic novels are ideally suited to teach literary elements that are difficult to teach and for students to grasp, such as: “[...] point of view, allusions, themes and morals, tone and mood, symbolism, and flashback and foreshadowing” (Dallacqua 367). In her article “Exploring Literary Devices in Graphic Novels”, Dallacqua uses *American Born Chinese* to talk about literary elements. For instance, the stereotypical Chinese character Chin-kee is used to symbolize the Chinese half of the main character. By considering this and the other characters, the students in Dallacqua's research discovered the moral of the story (347). The participants in her study showed that graphic novels can be a great way to scaffold lessons to recognizing literary elements, although Dallacqua also adds that the students needed no help from her to recognize the literary elements in the novels. Again, it is very important that students are first made comfortable with the format of graphic novels, before they start discussing their literary elements. Essentially, once students are comfortable with the format, graphic novels could be used to teach literary elements on their

own but can also be useful as a stepping stone towards reading text-based literature, a more accessible and visual introduction into the sometimes-confusing literary world. Fortunately, a treasure trove of materials is readily available that teachers can use straight away or can modify according to their classroom needs.

10.6 Cultural context and interdisciplinary use of graphic novels

When working in projects, graphic novels can provide a fun and useful addition to the existing materials. As mentioned multiple times, the use of graphic novels can motivate students greatly and provide necessary variation in types of media. When setting up a themed project, such as for instance on the second world war, it is beneficial if the students have a wide range of materials available; not only informational texts but also novels, film, audio fragments, pictures and graphic novels. This helps the students to approach the subject from multiple angles to gain a greater understanding of the subject. If possible, graphic novels can also be used in interdisciplinary projects. For instance, if students are dealing with the subject of the cold war in their history lessons, it might be useful to discuss atomic elements and nuclear bombs in their science lessons, talk about the power of media and propaganda in social science lessons and read *Watchmen* in English class – not only because it captures part of the feel and fear that was prevalent in those times, but because it shows the disastrous outcome the world has been spared from, which encourages the students to consider cause and effect. If students approach a subject from so many different sides, they are likely to gain a more complete and complex understanding of the subject matter. An example from my own teaching practice is the use of *Asterix and Obelix* comics when talking about the influence of the Roman Empire on the countries it occupied – the French teachers use *Asterix and Obelix* in their lessons and the English teachers use *Asterix and Obelix and the Britons*. Although this is a secondary school first-grade project and these comics are not literary enough to be

used in upper grades, this is a great example of how sequential media can be used in interdisciplinary projects.

Often, graphic novels show a great deal of cultural elements – perhaps because they have been an underdog for a long time or the format lends itself for cultural – and often stereotypical – expressions. Cathy Sly argues:

In recent times, readers in the Western world have shown an increasing interest in [...] a variety of indigenous, multicultural and transcultural comics and graphic novels. Publications of this type offer a forum for voices rarely heard in conventional Western children's literature. Growth in the number of graphic narratives that cross-cultural[sic] boundaries indicates that creators, publishers and readers are recognising the inherent worth of the comics medium for expressing voices and ideas that differ from those which generally dominate Western culture. (Sly n.p.)

This insight into different cultural contexts could be reason alone to use graphic novels in the classroom more. After all, in the growing global society we are gradually becoming, it is important to be aware of cultural differences and similarities. Currently, social justice is a very important social and cultural phenomenon – there is a lot of attention for equality, racism and discrimination. Other than that, reading graphic novels written from a different cultural perspective hopefully creates an understanding for what it means to be different and similar at the same time - which is a hot topic in the multicultural schools in the Netherlands.

10.7 Critical thinking and sparking discussions

A feature that was considered very important in the questionnaire presented in this thesis was the ability of novels to encourage critical thinking and spark discussions. Graphic novels are an excellent medium to engage students in debate and critical thinking, in part because of their strong cultural undertones discussed above. As Chun mentions, to get students to engage

in discussion, first they have to be engaged in the reading itself and it has already been established that graphic novels have a strong motivational factor. Chun explains that students are already used to a multimodal approach to ‘meaning making’ and that it is important to broaden our definition of literacy to include not only textual literacy, but also visual literacy, aural literacy and spatial literacy (Chun 145). When using a multimodal approach, Chun is convinced that students will be more engaged and eager to relate their own life experiences and knowledge to the reading. He adds: “And rather than seeing graphic novels as a conduit to more serious reading (Cho et al., 2005), students who read *Maus* and other substantive graphic novels are engaged in serious reading. Thus, the teaching of critical literacy can take place while students develop literacy skills through their engagement with these texts so that they will be better equipped to deal with more traditional texts” (Chun 146).

In his research, Chun uses *Maus* as an example. Note that his article is geared towards learners of English as a second language— while Dutch students are officially considered to be students of English as a foreign language, they are often quite proficient from a young age on and it could be argued that in terms of language level they are more like learners of English as a second language. *Maus* is offered as a multimodal variation on the more standard textbooks dealing with the second world war and the holocaust, which in Chun’s opinion should engage students and “activate their imagination through the authors[sic] use of multimodalities in presenting visually arresting narratives that feature the multi-layered emotions and contradictions of the characters” (Chun 147). Because *Maus* deals with racism and discrimination in its most horrible and visual form, students are encouraged to think about their own lives and the signs of discrimination and racism in our current society in relation to the text. Especially when considering the recent debate on immigration and refugees and the strong anti-muslim attitudes prevalent in Western society, the themes in *Maus* are especially suitable to inspire students to get involved in critical debate (Chun 148).

Watchmen provides an even more mature and perhaps even philosophical ground for debate; one could consider the existence of vigilantes and the morality of exercising the law while breaking it simultaneously – the superhero theme will probably be of great interest to students, since superhero films, novels and comics are quite popular. When diving deeper into the text, morality itself becomes an issue and ethics come into play. For instance, students could discuss whether it is ethically and morally defensible to sacrifice millions of lives to end all war globally. However, even when discussing one comic panel at the time, views can differ greatly – students can discuss the expression on the face of the character and its meaning and talk about whether they can identify with the character or not. The options are myriad.

10.8 Recommended reading:

If interest has been sparked and teachers are excited to begin using graphic novels in the classroom, the following resources can provide you with the necessary starting materials:

10.8.1 Teaching Graphic Novels: Practical Strategies for the Secondary ELA Classroom -

Kate Monnin

Kate Monnin's book is geared towards middle school and high school students which is roughly translatable to our secondary school students and mostly the upper grades. It contains some explanations on what graphic novels are and includes chapters on using graphic novels to teach reading comprehension, literary elements, teaching graphic novel fiction, teaching graphic novel non-fiction and teaching media literacy using graphic novels. All these chapters start with a short explanation and then use existing graphic novels to make suggestions for lesson plans. The fact that the novel includes fully-worked out lesson plans and a long list of graphic novel references makes it a great starting point.

10.8.2 Going graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom – Stephen Cary

What makes Cary's book especially useful is the fact that it is geared towards students of English as a Second or Foreign Language – a category to which Dutch students of English definitely belong. The downside of the book is that the target audience for the lesson plans are often students of lower grades – so the book is not as applicable to upper grade students. What is more, Cary does not differentiate between graphic novels and comics – including webcomics – which can confuse teachers that are just starting to use graphic novels. However, the lesson plans he proposes can be amended at will. The book includes a great section on the research behind using graphic novels and Cary addresses questions and concerns that teachers might have if they want to use graphic novels. The rest of the book contains many activities, lesson plans, examples of comics to go with the theory and the lesson plans, comic reviews and lists of other resources.

10.8.3 Understanding Comics – Scott McCloud

To start to understand more about the format of graphic novels and comics, *Understanding Comics* is a perfect starting point. Scott McCloud explains all about how comics and graphic novels work. He talks about the sequence of panels, the function of the gutter, the varieties in art style, the history of sequential art, the way time can be portrayed in graphic novels and much more. The book itself is also written as sequential art – it is not a textual book. Explaining sequential art while simultaneously showing it, this novel is a great starting point for teachers who are unfamiliar with the format, features and functions of graphic novels.

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12 Appendix A: questionnaire 'use of graphic novels in English literary education'

The Use of Graphic Novels in English Literary Education

Dear colleague,

For my MA Thesis I am conducting research into the use of graphic novels in English literary education. The aim of this survey is to determine how familiar English teachers are with graphic novels and their willingness to use graphic novels in their literary curricula, provided certain conditions are met. With the information gathered from this survey, an advice will be written on how to use graphic novels in literary education.

Answering the questions in this survey won't take longer than 5 minutes, and it is possible to fill in this survey on any electronic device. Responses are treated confidentially and anonymously.

The results of this survey will only be used for academic purposes, and will not be published elsewhere. I would like to thank you for your participation in advance.

Kind regards,
Anke van Dijk
English Teacher at Leidsche Rijn College, Utrecht.
MA student at Utrecht University

***Required**

1. If you would like to participate, please tick the following box * *

Tick all that apply.

I would like to participate, and agree to have my answers used for academic research

The Use of Graphic Novels in English Literary Education

2. Are you familiar with the term 'graphic novel' ? *

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very familiar

The Use of Graphic Novels in English Literary Education: Current Situation

A graphic novel is a book length story containing sequential art - a hybrid of pictures and text- that is in form and dimensions the equivalent of a prose novel.

3. How familiar are you with graphic novels? *

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all familiar	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very familiar

4. Which titles of graphic novels can you name?

You can enter multiple names. If you know more than one graphic novel, please mention them all.

5. How often do you allow your students to read graphic novels during free reading? * *

**"free reading" is a reading activity where students can read material of their choice
Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

6. How often do you use graphic novels in your literary lessons? *

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Never	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Always

7. What is the reason for your current (lack of) use of graphic novels in your literary lessons? *

Please elaborate why you use graphic novels in your literary lessons. If you do not use graphic novels in your literary lessons, please elaborate why you do not use graphic novels in literary lessons.

The Use of Graphic Novels in English Literary Education: Support

8. How open are you to the idea of using graphic novels in your literary lessons? *

Mark only one oval.

1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very

9. Which benefits can you name for the use of graphic novels in literary lessons? *

10. Which drawbacks can you name for the use of graphic novels in literary lessons? *

11. Would you use graphic novels in your literary lessons if appropriate lesson materials are available? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Definitely not	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Definitely

The Use of Graphic Novels in English Education: Criteria

12. Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfill before you would consider using them in your literary lessons? *

You can name multiple requirements in your answer.

13. Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfill before you would consider using them in your literary lessons in the lower grades (1, 2, 3 havo/vwo) *

You can name multiple requirements in your answer.

14. Which requirements do graphic novels have to fulfill before you would consider using them in your literary lessons in the higher grades? (4,5 havo, 4,5,6 vwo) *

You can name multiple requirements in your answer.

15. What makes graphic novels unsuitable for use in literary education? *

The Use of Graphic Novels in English Education

16. What is your age? *

Mark only one oval.

- 20 or below
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- 61 or above

17. What is your gender? *

Mark only one oval.

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say/Other

18. How many years have you been a secondary-school English teacher? *

13 Appendix B: Kendall's Tau-b correlations

Kendall's tau-b correlations		familiarity with term 'graphic novel'	familiarity with format 'graphic novel'	current use graphic novels during free reading?*	current use GN during literary lessons	openness to use GN in literary lessons	openness to use GN in literary lessons if appropriate lesson materials	age	gender	years experience
familiarity with term 'graphic novel'	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)									
familiarity with format 'graphic novel'	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.551** ,000								
current use graphic novels during free reading?*	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.415** ,000	.338** ,002							
current use GN during literary lessons	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	,080 ,489	.331** ,003	.366** ,001						
openness to use GN in literary lessons	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	,138 ,237	.338** ,003	,149 ,182	,222 ,056					
openness to use GN in literary lessons if appropriate lesson materials	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	.272* ,021	.397** ,001	.299** ,008	.268* ,022	.705** ,000				
age	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-,047 ,663	-,038 ,714	,030 ,769	-,050 ,643	-,063 ,559	-,067 ,536			
gender	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	,174 ,159	,162 ,178	-,140 ,236	-,032 ,793	,146 ,237	,061 ,625	-,004 ,974		
years experience	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed)	-,166 ,112	-,110 ,281	-,049 ,626	-,010 ,926	-,065 ,537	-,065 ,539	.635** ,000	-,045 ,682	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).



VERKLARING KENNISNEMING REGELS M.B.T. PLAGIAAT

Fraude en plagiaat

Wetenschappelijke integriteit vormt de basis van het academisch bedrijf. De Universiteit Utrecht vat iedere vorm van wetenschappelijke misleiding daarom op als een zeer ernstig vergrijp. De Universiteit Utrecht verwacht dat elke student de normen en waarden inzake wetenschappelijke integriteit kent en in acht neemt.

De belangrijkste vormen van misleiding die deze integriteit aantasten zijn fraude en plagiaat. Plagiaat is het overnemen van andermans werk zonder behoorlijke verwijzing en is een vorm van fraude. Hieronder volgt nadere uitleg wat er onder fraude en plagiaat wordt verstaan en een aantal concrete voorbeelden daarvan. Let wel: dit is geen uitputtende lijst!

Bij constatering van fraude of plagiaat kan de examencommissie van de opleiding sancties opleggen. De sterkste sanctie die de examencommissie kan opleggen is het indienen van een verzoek aan het College van Bestuur om een student van de opleiding te laten verwijderen.

Plagiaat

Plagiaat is het overnemen van stukken, gedachten, redeneringen van anderen en deze laten doorgaan voor eigen werk. Je moet altijd nauwkeurig aangeven aan wie ideeën en inzichten zijn ontleend, en voortdurend bedacht zijn op het verschil tussen citeren, parafraseren en plagiëren. Niet alleen bij het gebruik van gedrukte bronnen, maar zeker ook bij het gebruik van informatie die van het internet wordt gehaald, dien je zorgvuldig te werk te gaan bij het vermelden van de informatiebronnen.

De volgende zaken worden in elk geval als plagiaat aangemerkt:

- het knippen en plakken van tekst van digitale bronnen zoals encyclopedieën of digitale tijdschriften zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het knippen en plakken van teksten van het internet zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het overnemen van gedrukt materiaal zoals boeken, tijdschriften of encyclopedieën zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het opnemen van een vertaling van bovengenoemde teksten zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het parafraseren van bovengenoemde teksten zonder (deugdelijke) verwijzing: parafrasen moeten als zodanig gemarkeerd zijn (door de tekst uitdrukkelijk te verbinden met de oorspronkelijke auteur in tekst of noot), zodat niet de indruk wordt gewekt dat het gaat om eigen gedachtengoed van de student;
- het overnemen van beeld-, geluids- of testmateriaal van anderen zonder verwijzing en zodoende laten doorgaan voor eigen werk;
- het zonder bronvermelding opnieuw inleveren van eerder door de student gemaakt eigen werk en dit laten doorgaan voor in het kader van de cursus vervaardigd oorspronkelijk werk, tenzij dit in de cursus of door de docent uitdrukkelijk is toegestaan;
- het overnemen van werk van andere studenten en dit laten doorgaan voor eigen werk. Indien dit gebeurt met toestemming van de andere student is de laatste medeplichtig aan plagiaat;
- ook wanneer in een gezamenlijk werkstuk door een van de auteurs plagiaat wordt gepleegd, zijn de andere auteurs medeplichtig aan plagiaat, indien zij hadden kunnen of moeten weten dat de ander plagiaat pleegde;
- het indienen van werkstukken die verworven zijn van een commerciële instelling (zoals een internetsite met uittreksels of papers) of die al dan niet tegen betaling door iemand anders zijn geschreven.

De plagiaatregels gelden ook voor concepten van papers of (hoofdstukken van) scripties die voor feedback aan een docent worden toegezonden, voorzover de mogelijkheid voor het insturen van concepten en het krijgen van feedback in de cursushandleiding of scriptieregeling is vermeld.



In de Onderwijs- en Examenregeling (artikel 5.15) is vastgelegd wat de formele gang van zaken is als er een vermoeden van fraude/plagiaat is, en welke sancties er opgelegd kunnen worden.

Onwetendheid is geen excuus. Je bent verantwoordelijk voor je eigen gedrag. De Universiteit Utrecht gaat ervan uit dat je weet wat fraude en plagiaat zijn. Van haar kant zorgt de Universiteit Utrecht ervoor dat je zo vroeg mogelijk in je opleiding de principes van wetenschapsbeoefening bijgebracht krijgt en op de hoogte wordt gebracht van wat de instelling als fraude en plagiaat beschouwt, zodat je weet aan welke normen je je moeten houden.

Hierbij verklaar ik bovenstaande tekst gelezen en begrepen te hebben.

Naam: [Anke van Dijk](#)

Studentnummer: [3506975](#)

Datum en handtekening: [12-07-2018](#)

Dit formulier lever je bij je begeleider in als je start met je bacheloreindwerkstuk of je master scriptie.

Het niet indienen of ondertekenen van het formulier betekent overigens niet dat er geen sancties kunnen worden genomen als blijkt dat er sprake is van plagiaat in het werkstuk.