



The Golden Age of Comic Books 1938-1950

No. 1

10c



Step Inside the World of SUPERHEROES!
and learn how political events and social issues inspired
the work of Jewish comic book creators

SUPERHERO
MEMORABILIA

RARE
COMIC BOOKS

STUDIO COSTUMES
and MORE!

Jewish Museum of Maryland
January 27th - August 18th 2013

The Jewish Museum of Maryland

Educator's Resource Guide

Zap! Pow! Bam! The Superhero: The Golden Age of Comics, 1938-1950

The Jewish Museum of Maryland will host the travelling exhibition, Zap, Pow Bam! The Superhero: The Golden Age of Comic Books: 1938-1950 from January 27, 2013 through August 18, 2013. Most people don't think of comic books as being Jewish, but most of the artists and publishers during the Golden Age of Comic Books were Jewish, including the creators of the greatest Superhero of all time: Superman. The exhibit will include rare early comic books, superhero memorabilia, and objects belonging to the first comic book creators and publishers which included Superman, Captain Marvel and Wonder Woman. Other features of the exhibit include interactive stations like a drawing studio, a comic book nook, the "batmobile," and a telephone booth for quick costume changes.

The JMM can offer free admission and bus transportation to Maryland schools for field trips due to a generous grant from the Straus Foundation and the Henry and Ruth Blaustein Rosenberg Foundation. This opportunity is on a first come-first-serve basis through June, 2013.

We are also able to offer bus transportation and free admission to the JMM and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African-American History and Culture to learn about all kinds of heroes.... This initiative is funded by a generous grant through the Macht Foundation. This opportunity is on a first-come-first-serve basis through June, 2013.

Defining Moments: An Exhibition of Works by Bryan Collier.

Organized by the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, this rich and vibrant exhibition showcases the works of award-winning illustrator Bryan Collier, who grew up in Pocomoke, Maryland on the lower Eastern Shore. Collier, the youngest of six children, had an interest in art from an early age. "At home and at school, I was encouraged to read. I liked the stories, but I really liked the pictures." As a teenager, he began to paint the world around him—the bay, ducks, water, and marshland. He quickly began to develop a unique style of painting that incorporated both watercolors and collage.

In addition to seeing **Zap, Pow Bam**, your students can deepen their appreciation for Baltimore history by seeing our two other acclaimed exhibits:

- ***The Synagogue Speaks***: explores the historic landmark, the Lloyd Street Synagogue, and the three different congregations that worshipped in the building. Each congregation was made up of European immigrants who faced the challenge of adapting to American life while trying to maintain religious traditions rooted in the old country.
- See the newly restored mikveh (ritual bath) believed to be the oldest documented one in the United States.
- ***Voices of Lombard Street: A Century of Change in East Baltimore***: The area surrounding the Jewish Museum of Maryland was the center of immigrant life in Baltimore in the early 1900's, but today only a few remnants of its Jewish past survive. ***Voices of Lombard Street*** tells the story of this historic neighborhood from then until now.

To learn more about the JMM's education programs or to make a reservation for your class group, contact Abby Krolik, Visitor Services Coordinator at akrolik@jewishmuseummd.org or call 410.732.6400 x235.

Contact Information

The Jewish Museum of Maryland

15 Lloyd Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21202

410-732-6400

www.jewishmuseummd.org

Special thanks to the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage and The Jewish Museum of Florida, who created significant portions of this resource guide. We are grateful for their willingness to share their educational materials with us.

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WHY THIS EXHIBIT?

Young or old—nearly everyone has a comic book memory. We can all recall a time when we were able to enter a world of fantasy and escape by reading a comic book about our favorite superhero. When you are reading a comic book, you travel to an imaginary world—free of stress and full of thrills. So what does this have to do with The Jewish Museum of Maryland? This Museum is about preserving Jewish history and our most precious memories. Maybe you don't think of comic books as being Jewish, but most of the artists and publishers during the Golden Age of comic books were Jewish, including the creators of the greatest superhero of all time, Superman.

Through this exhibit, organized by the William Breen Museum of Jewish Heritage of Atlanta, Georgia, you will retrieve memories that span an era beginning prior to World War II. The comics in this exhibit reflect the WWII era and extend into the postwar period. For readers during this time period, including the soldiers on the battlefield, the comics represented a world of endless possibilities and infinite hope. It was a time of despair in America following the stock market crash of 1929. A great depression and a world war threatened to drain the American people of their confidence and their spirit. Comic books gave us heroes with incredible powers and strong values. We looked to them for inspiration and a rare brand of escapist entertainment. They delivered to us a kind of triumph and energy that was greatly needed and deeply appreciated.

Comic books have a lengthy literary foundation. Our human fascination for heroes and superheroes can be traced back to the classic tales of world mythology, the legends of gods and goddesses. A list of heroic figures might include biblical figures like Samson or David. It might include heroes in many forms, especially when we feel a connection to them. We often recognize ourselves in these characters or secretly wish that we could achieve, or at least simulate, their greatness in our own lives. We crave their power and their confidence, and we strive to emulate their noble thoughts and deeds.

Although a 20th century phenomenon, the American comic book had its roots in the 19th century. Civil War "dime novels" and elaborate western "paper pulp" tales cultivated the public's fascination with tales of bravery and daring. In 1895, newspaper comic strips satirized and poked fun at politics, local and

world events, and everyday life. Economically, comic books were a big business. They appealed to a wide base of readers, and it soon became evident that young adults and children were among them. Like all mass media, they had an impact and, most importantly, they had potential.

BALTIMORE HEROES RESOURCES

Geppi's Entertainment Museum

301 West Camden Street, Baltimore, MD 21201

www.geppismuseum.com(410) 625-7060

Pioneer Spirit: Baltimore's Heroes

In 2006, comic book and pop culture collector and entrepreneur Stephen A. Geppi, CEO of Diamond Comic Distributors, opened a museum dedicated to the celebration of American pop culture and entertainment. Now GEM has turned its sights to the very city it calls home by establishing a Hall of Fame in its "Pioneer Spirit" room. This gallery had its grand opening on March 26, 2011, and Geppi's Entertainment Museum wants visitors, pop culture collectors, and fans to be a part of the excitement—and let us know whom they'd like to see included in later updates.

This unique exhibition includes personal items donated by inductees and other memorabilia, all focused on celebrating the cultural contributions of "Charm City." "I've been called Baltimore's biggest cheerleader," said Geppi. "Now through GEM, I get to show everybody how many wonderful entertainers, leaders, and other important pop culture icons came from this wonderful city. This is about Baltimore's place in the pop culture landscape."

Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African- American History and Culture

830 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, MD 21202

www.rflewismuseum.org (443) 263-1800

Defining Moments: An Exhibition of Works by Bryan Collier.

Organized by the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, this rich and vibrant exhibition showcases the works of award-winning illustrator Bryan Collier, who grew up in Pocomoke, Maryland on the lower Eastern Shore. Collier, the youngest of six children, had an interest in art from an early age. "At home and at school, I was encouraged to read. I liked the stories, but I really liked the pictures." As a teenager, he began to paint the world around him—the bay, ducks, water, and marshland. He quickly began to develop a unique style of painting that incorporated both watercolors and collage.

HOW STUDENTS BENEFIT

Comics are multi-dimensional; they embody the power of both words and images. They can be used as a platform to teach a multitude of concepts and ideas: character development, social issues, literary conventions, ethics, values, and artistic symbolism. Comic books can also help students to develop a moral compass and critical thinking skills. This exhibit presents a unique opportunity for students to learn how traditional comic books have influenced society ever since they were first developed. Through comic books, students will be introduced to the universal themes of respect for humanity and responsible citizenship. They will meet a colorful selection of comic heroes who stand for strong values and noble causes. After absorbing the meaningful messages of comics, students will be encouraged to apply the ethics and actions of these conscientious heroes to their own lives and their own communities. Through this exposure to superheroes, young people may well consider real solutions to community and global problems of the present day. Experiencing the **Zap! Pow! Bam!** exhibit will generate a strong appreciation for the creative artists and publishers who brought these heroes to life. It will also give students an inspiration to create their own literature and artwork and to embody some of the many ideas and actions of this fascinating genre.

EDUCATIONAL THEMES AND FOCUS AREAS

Tikkun Olam (Repairing the world)

This is an essential Jewish value and initiative, but you don't have to be Jewish to cherish it. The concept suggests that we have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of the world in which we live. It suggests that we can perform *mitzvot* (fulfilling commandments or doing good deeds) as part of our daily lives. The heroes of the comics are generally characters who regard this as their purpose in life. They are seekers of justice, protectors of the weak, and they are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of society. They are role models for anyone who embraces these ideals and wishes to be a better person.

Overcoming Weaknesses and Vulnerabilities

We often find that our comic book heroes have special abilities or strengths, and yet, inevitably, they also have weaknesses. We may be able to relate to these vulnerable areas because, although we strive to be strong, we may also encounter a sense of vulnerability in our own lives. How do we overcome such obstacles? How do we use our creative talents and moral fortitude to overcome the pitfalls of life? These dramatic tales present meaningful life lessons for young readers. The stories teach determination and perseverance.

The Mirror of History

This genre is rich in historical knowledge and local color. The pages of comic books can bring historical events to life in very imaginative ways. They can involve young people in passages of our history with a sense of connectedness and immediacy. In this unit of study, teachers can use many examples of comic book stories that seem to generate directly from history. There are some stories that brought actual historic figures into their plots and settings, engaging young readers in a very compelling way.

Ethics and Values

Comic book critics may take issue with the idea that superheroes often resort to aggressive physical action or violence in their endeavors. They may be overlooking the ethical, moral decision-making that

comes into play prior to such actions. The creators of comic book heroes were profoundly aware of the powerlessness that pervaded the general population of their era. They knew that they had to create characters that actually had the power to make the world a better place. They gave their heroes the power to rescue children from a burning building. They gave them the power to stop a crime as it was being committed. They gave them the ability to stop a catastrophe looming in the distance, whether it was an evil villain, an invasion of aliens, or a hurricane. Moreover, they gave their heroes the power to make conscientious decisions. The readers of comics see heroes fighting to save others or to protect themselves. They never saw their heroes starting a fight or abusing their powers. There are valuable moral lessons to be gleaned from this genre.

Science Fiction and Science Fact

Much in these comic books deal with fantasy and legend, yet a great deal is rooted in real science. Experiments, machines, and imaginative devices are prominent in many comic books and graphic novels. We find that the writers have used science as a foundation to then go far beyond the current capabilities of science as they create super worlds or future worlds. They tempt the imagination of their readers, encouraging new ways of looking at technology. They toy with the limitations of computers and spaceships as they challenge us to evaluate our technological culture.

Vehicles for Political Messages

Like any form of literature, the comics reflect political thinking. A comic book could be pro-war or anti-war. It could have a religious or social agenda. It might intend to parody or satirize the government or a particular issue of the day. Words and images are powerful, and they have a great deal of potential to influence the minds of its readers. Comics can be, and have been, used as propaganda. They can also be used to present wholesome, responsible, worthwhile concepts as well. They can be used in a pro-active, positive way. This approach is worth exploring in the classroom.

SUGGESTED LESSON PLANS

Grades 3-5: How super is Superman?

OVERVIEW:

Comic books can be valuable tools for teaching students critical reading skills. They can learn to identify the qualities and attributes of characters in the story.

OBJECTIVES:

- Define character traits in superheroes.
- Engage in critical analysis by exploring these traits and explaining their importance.
- Introduce specific concepts represented by the actions of the characters: consideration for others, seeking justice, promoting safety.

PREPARATION (pre-visit):

- Familiarize students with traditional character development as seen in standard stories of heroic figures: Davy Crockett, John Henry, Paul Bunyan, Johnny Appleseed. Discuss characteristics of these figures. Describe the actions that display those characteristics.
- Present Superman comic for the class. Discuss the character's origin, capabilities, intentions, and values.

PREPARATION (post-visit):

- Make a list of the qualities of a superhero. Discuss the ways in which a hero is like common people. Discuss ways in which they are special.
- Use the blackboard or create a chart depicting all of the students' favorite superheroes. Have each student tell the class what they like most about their hero.
- Assign small groups of 5 or 6 to create a master list of the abilities and powers of the superheroes they know and love.
- Have the students share their group findings and discuss the creation of a superhero of their own. Let every student contribute characteristics and ideas.
- Have students nominate and vote on the name and image of the new superhero.
- Distribute a variety of comic book covers to show the style and presentation of superheroes.
- Have each student attempt to draw and create their version of the class superhero in a comic book cover format.
- Make a display of all of the covers depicting their hero.

Grades 6-8 Superman: A Hero of Modern Mythology**OVERVIEW:**

Students will be able to create many parallels between classic literature and comic books. The process of comparison will enhance their sense that comic books are a dynamic literary form.

OBJECTIVES:

- To explore the qualities and characteristics of mythological stories and legends.
- To define the attributes of a hero.
- To recognize common themes in mythology and comic books.
- To familiarize students with the concept of origin or back story.
- To identify the inherent lessons and values found within heroic tales.
- Review the story of a fictional or real life hero that your class has recently studied. Create a list of heroic traits that your hero exemplifies along with the struggles and challenges he/she overcame.

PREPARATION (pre-visit):

- Read and discuss the story of Hercules from Greek mythology. Emphasize the responsibility of his heroic tasks (the Twelve Labors).
- Tell the Biblical story of Moses. Emphasize the concept of his being cast off for his own protection. Describe his growth, his actions, and his use of power.
- Re-cap the story of the Sword in the Stone. Define the fellowship and responsibilities of the Knights of the Round Table. Discuss the code of chivalry.

ACTIVITIES (post-visit):

- Create a chart comparing the attributes of legendary and mythological heroes to those of superheroes. Emphasize areas of commonality and areas of difference. Include the themes of abandonment, destiny, duty, and emerging as a savior.

- Have students research the origin of Superman. What similarities exist between Superman and Moses? Superman and King Arthur? Superman and Hercules?
- Screen the 1978 feature film, *Superman*. Discuss Superman as a traditional myth.
- Create a storyboard of a sequence from *Superman*, the movie.

Grades 9-12 Comic Book History

OVERVIEW:

The history of comic books can provide a rich platform for addressing a wide scope of historical events and social issues. The comics reflect the events of history in a way that is designed to gain and hold the attention of young audiences. They also open up avenues for study of symbolism, satire, parody, and political commentary.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the history of immigrants coming to America during the wave of immigration in the late 19th century and in the early portion of the 20th century.
- To analyze the lifestyles and cultures represented by many ethnic groups as they assimilated into American society.
- To become familiar with key historical events around the turn of the century and through the two World Wars.
- To observe economic trends and their influence on American citizens of that era.
- To evaluate the impact of comic books as a cultural reflection of the times.

PREPARATION (pre-visit):

- View The History Channel film *Ellis Island* to establish the history of immigration to America, 1880-1920.
- Show opening scene from Barry Levinson's film *Avalon*. Discuss the feelings experienced by immigrants to this country. Have students write a short story from the perspective of an immigrant.
- Students will research the lives and accomplishments of several cartoon artists: Jerry Robinson, Will Eisner, Bob Kane, Bill Finger, William Moulton Marston, Jerry Siegel, Joe Shuster, Joe Simon, and Jack Kirby. High light the aspects of their lives that were influenced by real historical events.

ACTIVITIES (post-visit):

- Students will choose a specific comic book hero and create a project highlighting the characters, the themes, the artistic styles, and the possible impact that the comic book stories may have had on its readers. The project should include complete written explanations of these elements as well as illustrations or other artistic accompaniments.
- Students will create their own comic book heroes. Each hero should have a name, an origin, a costume, an alter-ego (dual-identity), a sidekick, and a weakness. Describe or illustrate the comic book existence of this hero and explain the hero's purposes. Divide into groups. Group One will create an origin story. Group Two will create a costume and accessories. Group Three will create a setting and time period. Group four will create a plotline with additional characters.

TIMELINE

As the dynamic events of world history unfolded in the pre-war and post-war eras, the comic book industry served as a “mirror of the times.” This timeline intends to show some of the ways in which the industry tracked and responded to political events and social issues of the day.

World History

Comic Book History

| | |
|--|--|
| | 1895 Newspaper comic strips satirized politics, and local and world events. |
| 1929 Great Depression/Stock market crash. | |
| 1933 Federal report reveals 85% of young Jewish people are unemployed. | 1933 First “Funny Book” is published. Many Jewish writers find jobs in the comics field. |
| 1938 Adolph Hitler is declared <i>Time</i> magazine’s “Man of the Year.” | 1938 Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster introduce Superman in <i>Action Comics #1</i> . |
| 1939 Murder, Inc. crime syndicate thriving in New York. | 1939 Batman, created by Bob Kane and Bill Finger, appears in <i>Detective Comics</i> . |
| | 1940 <i>Superman</i> sells 2 million copies per month. |
| | 1940 Will Eisner’s <i>Uncle Sam</i> battles Nazis a full year before America enters WWII. |
| | 1941 Will Eisner’s <i>Uncle Sam</i> depicts a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor two months before the actual attack. |
| 1941 America enters World War II. | 1941 Jack Kirby’s <i>Captain America</i> fights Nazis. |
| | 1941-1945 80% of reading material in Army camps is comic books. Many comics creators serve as heroically as their creations. |
| 1941 Women enter the workforce due to the draft and labor shortages. | 1941 DC Comics introduces Wonder Woman to embody female ideals of heroism. |
| 1945 World War II ends. | 1945 Superhero comic sales decline, DC switches to animal cartoon characters. |
| 1954 Public and Congressional objections to comic books. | 1954 Comics Code Authority is created. |

Maryland Common Core State Curriculum Framework

History/ Social Studies

Links to *Zap! Pow! Bam!* and *Maus* at the Jewish Museum of Maryland

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/ Social Studies (RH) 9-12 Grade:

- RH2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- RH3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
- RH6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- RH7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- RH9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/ Social Studies (WHST) 9-12 Grade:

- WHST3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- WHST7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- WHST8: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Bibliography of Graphic Novels

Grades K-2

The Adventures of Polo Régis Faller.(2006). Littledog Polo takes up his backpack and umbrella and sets out in his boat to explore exciting new places.

Airplane Adventure Cari Meister. (2010) Anna and Juan are going to Mexico to visit their grandmother in this introduction to the graphic novel format. Instructions for how to read a graphic novel introduce this book, and discussion questions and writing prompts are listed at its conclusion. One of the My 1st Graphic Novel series.

Benny and Penny in the Big No-No! Geoffrey Hayes. (2009) Two mice meet their new neighbor and discover that she is not as scary as they feared. First of the Benny and Penny series.

Captain Raptor and the Space Pirates Kevin O'Malley and Patrick O'Brien. (2007)
In his second action-packed adventure, Captain Raptor, a superhero and a dinosaur, arrives just in time to save his planet from space pirates. One of the Captain Raptor series.

A Day at the Fire Station Lori Mortensen. (2011) Explains the everyday life of fire fighters in the station house as well as the quick actions they take when a call comes in. A glossary and a bibliography for additional reading and internet sites are appended. One of the First Graphics: My Community series.

Hamster and Cheese Colleen Venable. (2010) Sasspants the guinea pig and his sidekick, Hamisher the hamster, get to the bottom of the case of the missing sandwiches. First of the Pet Shop Private Eye series.

Johnny Boo: The Best Little Ghost in the World! James Kochalka. (2008) Boo Power makes Johnny Boo the best, and, together with his pet ghost Squiggle, and his amazing Squiggle Power, they have the world's greatest adventures. First of the Johnny Boo series.

Korgi: Book 1 Christian Slade. (2007) Ivy and her Korgi cub, Sprout, learn some amazing things about themselves as they encounter danger and adventure in Korgi Hollow. First of the Korgi series.

Little Mouse Gets Ready Jeff Smith., (2009) Little Mouse hurries to get ready for a trip to the barn, carefully dressing himself piece by piece until his mother reminds him that mice don't wear clothes.

Luke on the Loose . by Harry Bliss, (2009) A young boy's fascination with pigeons soon erupts into a full-blown chase around Central Park.

Grades 3-5

The Adventures of Ook and Gluk, Kung-Fu Cavemen from the Future. Dav Pilkey. (2010)

Boys got into trouble even in the time of cavemen, and Ook and Gluk prove it by getting on the wrong side of Chief Goppnopper. Fortunately, the boys travel to the future, learn kung-fu, and return in time to save the day.

Adventures in Cartooning: How to Turn Your Doodles into Comics. James Sturm, Andrew Arnold, and Alexis Frederick-Frost. (2009) An amazing adventure as well as a tutorial into the basic elements of cartooning, this is fun and unique.

The Secret of the Unicorn. Hergé. (1974) Young journalist Tintin is hot on the trail of a secret hidden in a model ship in this classic. First in the Adventures of Tintin series.

Ancient Egypt: Tales of Gods and Pharaohs. Marcia Williams. (2011) Tales of Isis, Tutankhamen, and the important figures of Egyptian myth and history are given humorous treatment.

Art Panels, BAM! Speech Bubbles, POW! Writing Your Own Graphic Novel. Trisha Speed (2011). A young girl explains how to create your own graphic novel, including the tools, techniques, and conventions of the format. Some exercises are included to get started. One of the Writer's Toolbox series.

Bake Sale. Sara Varon. (2011) Cupcake runs a successful bakery with his best friend, Eggplant, but he dreams of going abroad to meet his idol, Turkish Delight, who is the most famous pastry chef in the world.

Bone: Out from Boneville. Jeff Smith. (2005) The adventure starts when cousins Fone Bone, Phoney Bone, and Smiley Bone are run out of Boneville and later get separated and lost in the wilderness, meeting monsters and making friends as they attempt to return home. First of the Bone series.

The Boxcar Children. Shannon Eric Denton. (2009) The graphic novel adaption of the ever popular Boxcar Mystery Series about Henry, Jessie, Violet, and Benny Alden. First of the Boxcar Children Graphic Novels series.

Boys of Steel: The Creators of Superman. Marc Tyler Nobleman. (2008) Part picture book, part graphic novel, this is the fascinating story of how two high school friends created a superhero that endures to this day.

Creepy Crawly Crime. Aaron Reynolds, (2009) Joey Fly and his scorpion sidekick Sammy Stingtail must solve the case of the butterfly Delilah's missing diamond pencil box in this noir-style detective story. First of the Joey Fly, Private Eye series.

Grades 6-8

9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation. Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón. (2006) This accurate and accessible version of the 9/11 Report captures its investigative thoroughness, and covers its entire scope including the Commission's final report card. Colón's stunning artwork powerfully conveys the facts, insights, and urgency of the original.

Anne Frank: The Anne Frank House Authorized Graphic Biography. Sid Jacobson and Ernie Colón. (2010) Drawing on the unique historical sites, archives, and expertise of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, this authorized biography is the complete account of the lives of Anne's parents, her first years in Frankfurt, the rise of Nazism, the family's immigration to Amsterdam, her life in the annex, and her arrest and tragic death in Bergen-Belsen.

The Arrival. Shaun Tan. (2007) A wordless but very moving story about a lonely man who has just arrived in a new city.

Coraline. Neil Gaiman. (2008) When Coraline steps through a secret door in her house, she finds a marvelous new world much better than her own. However, when her "other mother" wants to keep her there forever, she must use her wits and the help of an all-knowing cat to return to the real world in this graphic novel version of Gaiman's popular title.

The Demon of River Heights. Stefan Petrucha. (2005) Nancy Drew is joined by her best friends Bess and George to find a missing student. The graphic novels are new stories using classic characters. First of the Nancy Drew: Girl Detective series.

Foiled. Jane Yolen. (2010) Alieria is a star at fencing, but at school no one notices her—until her new lab partner Avery begins flirting with her. Alieria's mother just bought her a foil from a garage sale, and it has a strange jewel attached to the hilt. Will Alieria's first date be ruined when magical creatures try to steal her foil?

Ghostopolis. Doug TenNapel. (2010) Garth Hale is accidentally zapped to the spirit world by a washed-out ghost wrangler. Suddenly, Garth finds he has powers the ghosts don't have, and he's stuck in a world run by the evil ruler of Ghostopolis, who would use Garth's newfound abilities to rule the ghostly kingdom.

Houdini: The Handcuff King. Jason Lutes and Nick Bertozzi. (2008) In bold graphics, and drawing on respected sources, author and artist formulate a living picture of this greatest of Americans and show how time and morals shaped him and his art.

Kampung Boy. Lat. (2006) Lat, a noted Malaysian cartoonist, tells the story of the early life of a Muslim boy growing up on a rural rubber plantation during the 1950s. The sequel is Town Boy (2007).

Lewis & Clark. Nick Bertozzi. (2011) Historically accurate, this excellent example of graphic novel nonfiction begins with President Jefferson's call to explore the western region and continues beyond the conclusion of the expedition.

High-School and Older

Love Hina: Book 1. Akamatsu, Ken. TokyoPop, 2002. 198 pages. Ages 15 and up

King: A Comics Biography of Martin Luther King, Jr. Anderson, Ho Che. Fantagraphics Books, 2005. 80 pages. Ages 14 and up

A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories. Eisner, Will. DC Comics, 2000. Ages 14 and up

Fagin the Jew. Eisner, Will. Doubleday, 2003. Ages 14 and up

Last Day in Vietnam. Eisner, Will. Dark Horse Comics, 2000. Ages 14 and up

The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation. Jacobson, Sid and Ernie Colón . Hill and Wang / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006. 133 pages. Age 12 and older

Good as Lily. Kim, Derek Kirk. Illustrated by Jesse Hamm. Minx , 2007. 147 pages. Age 12 and older

Lone Wolf and Cub, Book 1: The Assassin's Road. Koike, Kazuo. Dark Horse Comics, 2000. Ages 16 and up

Fax from Sarajevo. Kubert, Joe. Dark Horse Comics, 1998. 224 pages. Ages 14 and up

Yossel: April 19, 1943. Kubert, Joe. I Books, 2003. 128 pages. Ages 14 and up

Introducing Kafka. Mairowitz, David Zane and Robert Crumb . Totem Books, 2000. 176 pages. Ages 14 and up

To Afghanistan and Back. Rall, Ted. Nantier Beall Minoustchine, 2002. 127 pages. Ages 16 and up

The Fixer: A Story from Sarajevo. Sacco, Joe. Sacco, Joe. Drawn & Quarterly Publishers, 2003. 140 pages. Ages 15 and up

Palestine. Sacco, Joe. Fantagraphics Books, 2002. 288 pages. Ages 15 and up

Safe Area Gorazde. Sacco, Joe. Fantagraphics Books, 2000. 240 pages. Ages 15 and up

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood. Satrapi, Marjane. Pantheon, 2003. 160 pages. Age 15 and older

Age of Bronze, Volume 1: A Thousand Ships. Shanower, Eric. Image Comics, 2001. 208 pages. Ages 14 and up

Sacrifice: Age of Bronze, Volume 2. Shanower, Eric. Image Comics, 2004. 224 pages. Ages 13-18

The Jungle. Sinclair, Upton and Adapted by Peter Kuper. Nantier Beall Minoustchine, 1991. 48 pages. Ages 14 and up

Maus, A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History. Spiegelman, Art. Pantheon, 1986. 160 pages. Ages 14 and up

Maus II, A Survivor's Tale: And Here My Troubles Began. Spiegelman, Art. Pantheon, 1992. 144 pages. Ages 14 and up

In the Shadow of No Towers. Spiegelman, Art. Pantheon, 2004. 42 pages. Ages 14 and up

Déogratias: A Tale of Rwanda. Stassen, Jean-Philippe. U.S. First Second, 2006. 79 pages. Age 14 and older

The Golem's Mighty Swing. Sturm, James. Drawn & Quarterly Publishers, 2002. 100 pages. Ages 15 and up

The Tale of One Bad Rat. Talbot, Bryan. Dark Horse Comics, 1995. 136 pages. Ages 15 and up

Skim. Tamaki, Mariko. Illustrated by Jillian Tamaki. Groundwood Books / House of Anansi Press, 2008. 141 pages. 14 and up

Girl Stories. Weinstein, Lauren R. Henry Holt, 2006. 237 pages. Age 14 and older

Level Up. Yang, Gene Luen. Illustrated by Thien Pham. First Second, 2011. 160 pages. Age 15 and older

ComicsOne. Yasuhiko, Yoshikazu. Joan, 2001. 180 pages. Ages 14 and up