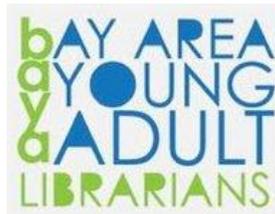


## An Annotated Bibliography for Libraries Serving Teenagers

by Jack Baur

with Carla Avitabile, Casey Gilly, Amanda Jacobs-Foust, Jessica Lee,  
Holly Nguyen, JoAnn Rees, Shawna Sherman, and Elsie Tep

Presented by BAYA



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# Introduction

It's no secret that comics (or "graphic novels," if you prefer) are hot items in the library world these days. Oh, we've known that for years, but recently publishers have been getting into the game in a big way. Too big, arguably. As publishers struggle, it seems like more and more they are turning to graphic novels as new revenue streams, to diversify existing properties, or as ways to repackage old content. With the deluge of titles coming at us, it's becoming increasingly difficult for a librarian who isn't deeply invested in their GN collection or tuned into the world of comics publishing to discern the excellent titles from the merely popular, and the quality from the... well, crap.

And *oh* there's a lot of crap out there these days...

But there's a whole lot of great stuff, too. Comics are a wonderful and unique medium, which allow any kind of story or instruction to be delivered in a way that is fun, engaging, and accessible. Just like other storytelling forms, the content can be simple and amusing, or it can be deep and challenging. It's no surprise that comics are seeing such a jump in popularity and acceptance now. The way that they merge text and image reminds young readers of the highly visual information environments they see every day, and their experience reading comics will help them develop the visual literacy skills they need to synthesize and evaluate information elsewhere. That makes it our job as librarians serving teens to ensure that the comics we provide for them are the absolute best.

That's what this guide is for: to help you start sorting the good from the bad. We at BAYA have assembled a list of more than 60 of our favorite titles for teens, with thorough annotations to help you figure out what's right for you. We have loosely divided our selections into three categories: Middle School, High School, and Older Teen. Use these age suggestions as a guide, but remember that, as in most situations, your mileage will vary. Many of the "Middle School" titles would be perfect in even an adult collection and, just because we may have placed something in the "High School" category for reasons of theme or content, that doesn't mean it wouldn't work just fine for younger readers in the right environment. As with all collection development – but particularly when you're talking comics – the best thing you can do as a selector is to get your hands dirty and see the books for yourself! Indeed, thanks to the visual nature of comics, a quick flip through a book should give you a pretty good indication of whether it's right for your collection. Besides, there are so many exciting stories out there for you that it would be an absolute shame if you missed the chance to explore them!

Jack Baur  
Teen Services Librarian, Berkeley Public Library  
President, BAYA: The Bay Area Young Adult Librarians  
October 25th, 2011

## Middle School

**Arakawa, Hiromu.**

**Full-Metal Alchemist.** VIZ Media, 2005-present. 26 volumes, ongoing.

After failing to bring their mother back to life through the power of alchemy, brothers Alphonse and Edward search for the Philosopher's Stone to restore their bodies. An action-packed *shonen manga* set in a fascinating world that resembles 19th Century Germany.



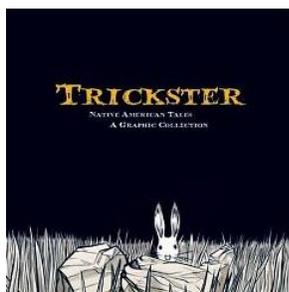
**Bendis, Brian Michael (auth.) and Michael Avon Oeming (illus.).** *Takio, vol. 1.* Icon/Marvel Comics, 2011. 96p. 9780785153269.

Adopted sisters Taki and Olivia are exposed to strange radiation, develop superpowers, and decide it's their duty to fight crime. After all, "if you can stop a bullet, you have to be a superhero. It's, like, the law." So far only one volume is available, but hopefully we'll be seeing a lot more of this fun, multicultural, all-ages series.

**Clevinger, Brian (auth.) and Scott Wegener (illus.).**

**Atomic Robo.** Red 5 Comics, 2009-present. 5 volumes, ongoing.

At the end of his life, famed inventor Nikola Tesla unveiled his greatest creation: Atomic Robo! A mechanical wonder possessing "automatic intelligence," Atomic Robo leads his team of Action Scientists across the decades to solve problems ranging from the scientific to the supernatural. Some volumes are out of print, but the stories all stand alone. This smart series plays with many different genres; the third volume, *Atomic Robo and the Shadow From Beyond Time* (2009, 152p. 9780980930252), features battles with a Lovecraftian monster!



**Dembicki, Matt (ed.)** *Trickster: Native American Tales: A Graphic Collection.* Fulcrum Press, 2010. 232 p. 9781555917241.

Over 20 artists paired with Native American storytellers to create this diverse collection of folktales centered on the universal figure of the Trickster. The result is a rich and vibrant volume of work that achieves that elusive combination of entertainment and education. A must have for collections.

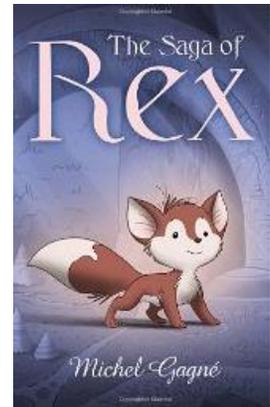
## **Fujino, Moyamu.**

**Animal Academy.** Tokyopop, 2009-2011. 7 volumes.

Neko Fukuta is mistakenly enrolled in a private high school for shape-shifting animals and must keep her identity as a human secret from her roommate and fellow classmates. The series follows Neko's adventures and experiences at the mysterious and prosperous Morimori Academy.

**Gagne, Michel. *The Saga of Rex.*** Image Comics, 2010. 200p. 9781607063223.

Originally serialized in Kazu Kibuishi's **Flight** (*Vol. 1*, 2007, 208p., 9780345496362) anthologies, the story of an intergalactic fox named Rex is collected here. Adorable Rex is plucked from his home by a mysterious spaceship and transported to the arcane world of Edernia. There he meets Aven, an enigmatic biomorph with a flying saucer. Follow Rex on his epic journey as he travels through otherworldly landscapes, faces strange perils, and makes surprising encounters. Here is a story that is in turn adventurous, heroic, tragic, romantic and wonderfully surprising.



**Hale, Dale (auth) Shannon Hale (auth). and Nathan Hale (illus.) *Rapunzel's Revenge.*** Bloomsbury, 2008. 144 p. 9781599902883.

This alternative version of the Grimm fairy tale is reset in a steampunk Wild West, where Rapunzel escapes from captivity, joins forces with an outlaw by the name of Jack (of Jack and the Beanstalk fame) and vows revenge against the woman she thought was her mother and her cruel empire. Self-reliant and capable of using her extraordinary hair to her advantage as both an asset and a weapon, Rapunzel proves to be a strong feminist heroine perfectly suited to her adventure. Followed by ***Calamity Jack*** (2010, 144p., 9781599900766).

**Johns, Geoff (auth.) with Ethank Van Sciver (illus.). *Green Lantern: Rebirth.*** DC Comics, 2010. 192p. 9781401227555.

After being dead for a decade, Hal Jordan is back! And no sooner has he returned than he has to face his mortal enemy Sinestro and the fearsome Parallax, a cosmic force of pure fear. Much better than the 2011 film!

## **Kibuishi, Kazu**

**Amulet.** Graphix, 2008-present. 4 volumes, ongoing.

After the tragic death of their father, Emily and Navin move with their mother to the home of her deceased great-grandfather, but the strange house proves to be dangerous. Before long, a sinister creature lures the kids' mom through a door in the basement. Em and Navin, desperate

not to lose her, follow her into an underground world inhabited by demons, robots, and talking animals. Eventually, they enlist the help of a pink mechanical rabbit named Miskit. Together with Miskit, they face the most terrifying monster of all, and Em finally has the chance to save someone she loves. Series starts with *The Stonekeeper* (2008, 192p., 9780439846813).

**Kishimoto, Masashi.**

**Naruto**. Viz Media, 2003-present. 53 volumes, ongoing.

Fast-paced and full of action sequences, this is the most popular *manga* in America. The story follows a group of young student ninjas as they battle evil ninjas and monsters while preparing to pass their exams. The violence is balanced by the humor and appeal of the main character. This still-growing series has spawned a TV series, card games, video games, and several movies as well as novelizations of the comics. The story starts at **Vol. 1** (2003, 192p., 9781569319000) and jumps forward several years in **Vol. 28** (2008, 200p., 9781421518640), marking a good jumping-on point, as well as a place where it might jump from Juvenile to Teen collections.



**Landridge, Roger (auth.) and Chris Samnee (illus.).**

**Thor: The Mighty Avenger**. Marvel Comics, 2010-2011. 2 volumes.

A retelling of the classic story of Thor's expulsion from Asgard and his romance with Jane Foster, this all-ages series focuses on character development and Thor's fish-out-of-water encounters on Earth with exciting and humorous results. A great choice for young fans of the 2011 film.

**Vol. 1.** 2010. 128 p. 9780785141211.

**Vol. 2.** 2011. 128 p. 9780785141228.

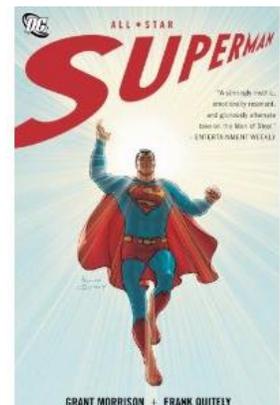
**Morrison, Grant (auth.) and Frank Quitely (illus.).**

**All-Star Superman**. DC Comics, 2007-2009. 2 volumes.

A mythic take on the Man of Steel, this work takes the form of a series of vignettes, inspired by the off-the-wall, sci-fi inflected stories of the 1960s. This is a Superman story with a lot on its mind, and is a great choice for book groups.

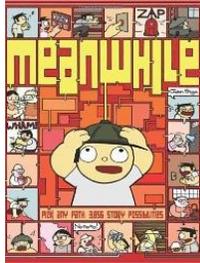
**Vol. 1.** 2007. 160p. 9781845763262.

**Vol. 2.** 2009. 160p. 9781041218377.



**Neri, G. (auth.) and Randy Duburke (illus.). *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty*.** Lee & Low Books, 2010. 96p. 9781584302674.

The true story of an 11-year-old gang member who killed a 14-year-old neighbor and spent three days on the run from police, as well as his own gang. Short enough for reluctant readers and original for its depictions of African-Americans in a graphic novel format.



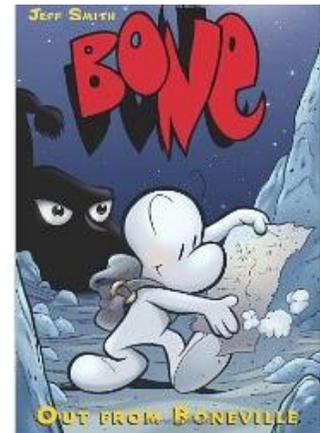
**Shiga, Jason. *Meanwhile*.** Amulet Books, 2010. 80p. 9780810984233.

An amazing and totally unique “Choose Your Own Adventure”-style comic in which the reader follows multicolored tubes to discover their destiny. Your choice of ice cream flavor leads to time travel, quantum mechanics, and possibly the destruction of humanity!

**Smith, Jeff.**

***Bone*.** Cartoon Books, 1991-2004. Reprinted in color by Graphix, 2005-2009. 9 volumes.

The three Bone cousins get lost in a pre-technological valley, spending a year there making new friends and out-running dangerous enemies. The series starts out as a fun “funny animal” book and gradually morphs into epic high fantasy. The Bones’ many adventures include crossing the local people in ***The Great Cow Race*** (2005, 144p., 9780439706391), learning about sacrifice and hardship in ***The Ghost Circles*** (2008, 180p., 9780439706346), and their climatic journey to ***The Crown of Horns*** (2009, 224p., 9780439706322).



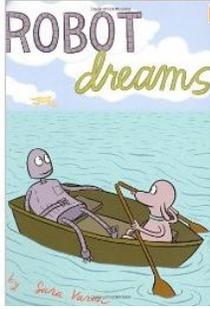
**Tan, Shaun. *The Arrival*.** Arthur A. Levine Books, 2007. 128p. 9780439895293.

This wordless graphic novel shows the life of an immigrant starting a new life for his family in a gorgeously rendered sepia-toned fantasy world. It is beautiful, compelling, surreal, and emotionally resonant.



**Telgemeier, Raina (Author, Illustrator). *Smile*.** Graphix, 2010. 244p. 9780545132060.

As if middle school isn’t complicated enough, at age 12 Telgemeier tripped while running and knocked out her two front teeth. *Smile* chronicles the years following the accident as she endures painful dental surgery, invasive headgear and the social awkwardness of middle school.



**Varon, Sara. *Robot Dreams*.** First Second, 2007. 205p. 9780329642204.

In shades of pastel, this mostly wordless graphic novel tells the story of two friends, a dog and a robot. Perfect for a wide age range, and anyone who has lost a friend and struggled to fill that void will relate to both dog and robot as they search for new friends while also dreaming of the past friendship. The sweet drawings and universal experiences give this poignant book a broad appeal.

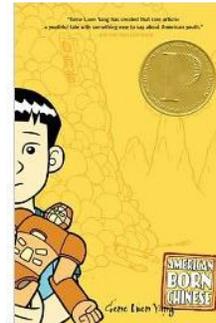
**Vaughan, Brian K. (auth.) and Joss Whedon (auth.) with various illustrators.**

**Runaways.** Marvel Comics, 2004-2009. 8 volumes.

All young people believe their parents are evil ... but what if they really are? Meet Alex, Karolina, Gert, Chase, Molly and Nico, whose lives are about to take an unexpected turn. When these six young friends discover their parents are all secretly super-powered villains, the shocked teens find strength in one another. Together, they run away from home and straight into the adventure of their lives, vowing to turn the tables on their evil legacy. There are 11 volumes total, but stick to the first 8, starting with ***Pride & Joy*** (2011 (orig. 2004), 152p., 9780785157328). There is a significant drop in quality after Whedon's volume.

**Yang, Gene Yuen. *American Born Chinese*.** Square Fish, 2008. 240p. 9780312384487.

Three story lines – one involving the Chinese folk hero the Monkey King – combine in the final chapter of this award-winning graphic novel that expertly touches on issues of self-hatred, identity and what it means to be Chinese in America. Clean, simple and crisp art work compliment this funny modern-day literary classic.



# High School

**Abouet, Marguerite (auth.) and Oubrierie Clement (illus.).**

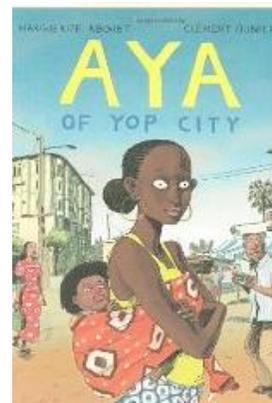
***Aya***. Drawn and Quarterly, 2007-2009. 3 volumes.

This humorous series – set in the 1970’s working class neighborhood Yop City in Abidjan, Ivory Coast – follows Aya and her friends as they navigate covert romance, scandal, and family secrets. This work is notable for its mannered, Jane Austen-esque romances as well as its presentation of the peaceful side of everyday life in Africa.

***Aya***. 2007. 132p. 9781894937900.

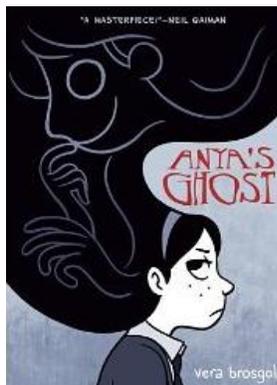
***Aya of Yop City***. 2008. 112p. 9781897299418.

***Aya: The Secrets Come Out***. 2009. 132p. 9781897299791.



**Barry, Lynda. *Picture This: The Near-Sighted Monkey Book***. Drawn and Quarterly, 2010. 204p. 9781897299647.

An off-beat, inspiring, one-of-a-kind book, *Picture This* is part light-hearted story of fighting sisters, part reflection on the power of creativity, and part activity guide for artists of all skill levels. Barry’s collage-inflected art holds it all together as she encourages us all to just keep drawing.



**Brosgol, Vera. *Anya's Ghost***. First Second, 2011. 224p. 9781596435526.

Anya is a Russian immigrant doing whatever it takes to fit in at her new American high school. Not only is she dealing with the typical pitfalls of being an awkward teenager – body image, boys, and a skinny best friend – she also has a slight problem. Another girl is competing for the slot of BFF... only she's a ghost! Anya struggles in a delightfully tense and eye-opening battle that redefines her ideas about herself and her peers. *Anya's Ghost* is visually stunning with emotive artwork and hilarious teenage details.

**CLAMP. *Clover: Omnibus Edition***. Dark Horse, 2009 (orig. 2001). 512p. 9781595821966.

An ex-soldier named Kazuhiko must escort a powerful young psychic named Sue across a dangerous futuristic world. Lyrical visuals from the acclaimed female *manga* collective anchor this experimental and surprisingly romantic sci-fi adventure that will appeal to girls as well as boys.

## CLAMP.

**xxxHolic**. Del Rey, 2004 -present. 18 volumes, ongoing.

Watanuki Kimiharo appears to be an ordinary guy, but he's able to see spirits, who are following him around and causing trouble. One day Watanuki finds himself unwillingly drawn to the shop of Yuko Ichihara, a beautiful witch. She helps him, but there's a price: he must become her servant. As the series continues, Watanuki becomes more familiar and adept with the spiritual world with each supernatural encounter. The series involves a crossing plotline with the series **Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle** (Del Ray, 2004 - 2010, 28 volumes) and **Cardcaptor Sakura** (Dark Horse, 2011, 2 "Omnibus Edition" volumes) as the CLAMP collective wanted to create a *manga* series that connected all their previous works.



**Fraction, Matt (auth.) and Salvador LaRocca (illus.). *Invincible Iron Man: The Five Nightmares***. Marvel Comics, 2009. 184p. 9780785134121.

Billionaire industrialist Tony Stark faces his biggest fear as terrorists get their hands on his Iron Man technology and create super-powered suicide bombers! As Stark grapples with his legacy as an arms developer, readers get a deep portrait of a conflicted man trying to do what is right in this chillingly relevant parable of technology run amok.

**Hickman, Jonathan (auth.) with various illustrators.**

**Fantastic Four**. Marvel Comics, 2010-2011. 4 volumes.

Fan-favorite author Jonathan Hickman focuses on family dynamics and out-there science fiction concepts as enemies from across the cosmos set their sights on Earth. This storyline concludes with the tragic death of one of the original members of the team in ***Vol. 4*** (2011, 184p., 9780785148913) and continues with new member Spider-Man under the title **FF**.

**Hino, Matsuri.**

**Vampire Knight**. Viz Media, 2007-present. 13 volumes, ongoing.

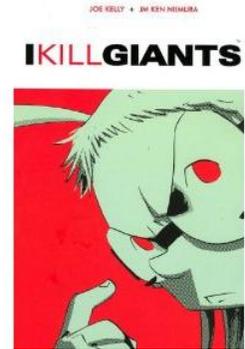
Cross Academy has two groups of students: the Day Class and the Night Class. Yuki Cross was made an orphan during a vampire attack years ago and now works as a Guardian at Cross Academy, keeping the truth about the Night Class a secret: that it is made up of vampires seeking integration into human society! An exciting and romantic *shojo manga*, perfect for *Twilight* fans.

**Johns, Geoff (auth.) and Ivan Reis (illus.). *Blackest night*.** DC Comics, 2011. 304p. 9781401229535.

Dozens of fallen superheroes and villains return as zombie-like creatures in this 2010 crossover event, which is a must-read for die-hard fans of the DC Universe. The storyline is spread across many DC titles, but the major events are encapsulated in the nine issues collected here.

**Kelly, Joe (auth.) and J.M. Ken Niimura (illus.). *I Kill Giants*.** Image Comics, 2009. 184p. 9781607060925.

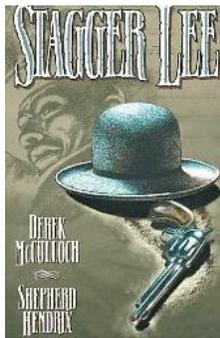
Barbara Thorson is a fifth-grade outcast and regular target of bullies. She's got few friends and big anger problems. She's also a self-proclaimed giant-hunter, and she will be ready with her trusty hammer when the giants come. Everyone thinks Barbara is nuts, but do her fantasies of heroism hide a deeper fear? A wonderful book about bravery and loss, by turns action-packed, funny, and moving.



**Mashima, Hiro.**

**Fairy Tail.** Kodansha Comics, 2008-present. 13 volumes, ongoing.

A *manga* set in a mythical world of small towns, steam engines and horse-drawn carts. Magic is mainstream, young wizards follow glossy magazines that profile popular wizard guilds and everyone has hidden magical abilities. A 17-year-old celestial wizard named Lucy Heartfilia runs away from home to join Fairy Tail, a rambunctious wizards' guild whose members are infamous for their overly destructive antics. Along the way, she meets Natsu Dragneel, a boy who is traveling the land of Fiore together with his partner Happy, a talking cat, in search of his foster parent, a dragon named Igneel who had disappeared without a trace seven years prior.



**McCulloch, Derek (auth.) and Shepherd Hendrix (illus.). *Stagger Lee*.** Image Comics, 2006. 205p. 9781582406077.

*"Stagger Lee shot Billy/ Oh, he shot that poor boy so bad..."* By tracing the evolution of the song inspired by the most famous murder myth in American history, author Derek McCulloch gives readers a fascinating look at American oral tradition, racial relations, and justice. The art by Shepherd Hendrix is appropriately sketchy and dusty. Recommended as a tie-in to classroom discussions about the history of the American south.

**Millar, Mark (auth.) and Dave Johnson (illus.). *Superman: Red Son*.** DC Comics, 2004. 160p. 9781401201913.

What if instead of growing up in Kansas to fight for "truth, justice, and the American way," the Last Kryptonian's spacecraft had crash-landed in the Soviet Union?



**Miller, Frank. *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*.** DC Comics, 2002 (orig. 1987). 224p. 9781563893414.

One of the most influential Batman stories of all time. It's been ten years since Batman has been seen in Gotham, and the city has gone to hell. When a retired Bruce Wayne decides he's had enough, he dons the cape and cowl one more time for a final confrontation with Two-Face, the Joker, and Superman himself! Deeply steeped in the politics of the 1980's, this is an essential Batman book that could also support classroom discussion of the Cold War.

### **Mori, Kaoru.**

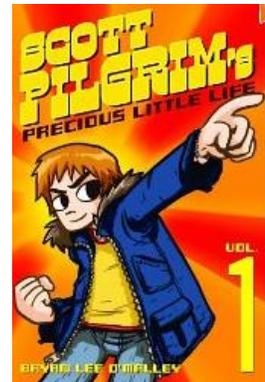
**Emma**. CMX, 2006-2009. 10 volumes.

Meticulously researched and beautifully rendered, *Emma* is a beloved, award-winning *manga* series that was adapted into an acclaimed *anime*. In Victorian-era England, a young girl is rescued from a life of destitution and raised to become a proper British maid. Emma meets William, the eldest son of a wealthy family, and immediately falls in love with him. William shares her feelings, but the strict rules of their society prevent their relationship from ever coming out in the open. Traditional class distinctions and rich, historical details provide the backdrop for this appealing romance. Rated T+ for "suggestive situations."

### **O'Malley, Bryan Lee.**

**Scott Pilgrim**. Oni Press, 2004-2010. 6 volumes.

Scott Pilgrim, is a 23-year-old Canadian slacker musician who dumps his underage girlfriend so he can date a recent American transplant named Ramona Flowers. He soon finds out that, if he wants to be her boyfriend, he must battle and defeat Ramona's seven evil exes! Space portals, super powers, 80's video game references, and an extra life all come into play in this 6 volume series, which starts with ***Scott Pilgrim's Precious Little Life*** (2004, 168p., 9781932664089).



### **Oda, Eiichiro.**

**One Piece**. VIZ Media, 1997-present. 58 volumes, ongoing.

A new *shonen* sensation in Japan, this series features Monkey D. Luffy, whose main ambition is to become a pirate. Eating the Gum-Gum Fruit gives him strange powers but also invokes the fruit's curse: anybody who consumes it can never learn to swim. Nevertheless, Monkey and his crewmate Roronoa Zoro, master of the three-sword fighting style, sail the Seven Seas of swashbuckling adventure in search of the elusive treasure "One Piece."

**Ohba, Tsugumi (auth.) and Obata, Takeshi (illus.).**

**Death Note.** VIZ Media, 2005-2007. 12 volumes.

High school student Light Yagami discovers a supernatural notebook, the "Death Note", dropped on Earth by a *shinigami* (a god of death) named Ryuk. The Death Note grants its user the ability to kill anyone whose name and face they know, by writing the name in the notebook while picturing their face. The series centers around Light's attempt to create and rule a world "cleansed of evil" using the notebook, and the efforts of an eccentric teen detective known as L to stop him. Sure to challenge readers with its ethical quandaries, this series is available as individual *manga* (**Vol. 1**, 200p. 9781421501680) or in oversized 2-in-1 "Black Editions" (**Vol. 1**, 400p., 9781421539645).

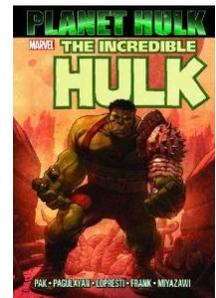
**Otomo, Katuhiro.**

**Akira.** Dark Horse Comics, 2009-2011 (orig. 2000-2002). 6 Volumes.

Post-apocalyptic Neo-Tokyo is built on the remains of what once was Tokyo. Resident delinquents Tetsuo and Kaneda are two friends whose lives of skipping school and minor crimes are changed forever when a chance meeting with a psychic child awakens similar powers in Tetsuo. With the help of some new friends Kaneda unravels a secret military plot involving incredibly strong psychic children, including one named Akira who was responsible for destroying Tokyo. Now it is a race against time as international military forces assess the situation off-shore and Kaneda's underground rebels try to prevent worldwide devastation as Tetsuo becomes stronger and more deranged.

**Pak, Greg (auth.) and Carlo Pagulayan (illus.). *Incredible Hulk: Planet Hulk.*** Marvel Comics, 2008. 416p. 9780785120124.

After being deemed too great a threat to Earth, Hulk is shot into space and lands on an alien planet where he must compete in barbaric gladiatorial combat. If you want Hulk smashing, this is the book for you! Incredibly popular at the Berkeley Public Library.



**Pak, Greg (auth.) and Carmine Di Giandomenico (illus.). *X-Men: Magneto Testament.*** Marvel Comics, 2009. 152p. 9780785126409.

In 1935, the future X-Men villain is a teenage boy fighting for survival in Nazi Germany. A mutant origin story that mixes in historical details of the Holocaust and concentration camp resistance movements, this harrowing book would be a good supplement for reluctant readers studying World War Two.

**Spiegelman, Art.**

**Maus: A Survivor’s Tale.** Pantheon Press, 1986-1991. 2 volumes.

In this Pulitzer Prize-winner, Spiegelman famously recounts his father’s experience as a holocaust survivor by presenting the horror of World War II and Hitler’s Final Solution in a world where the Jews are mice and the Germans are cats. ***My Father Bleeds History*** (1986, 160p., 9780394747231) covers his father’s life during as Hitler invades Poland and the war begins in earnest, while ***And Here My Troubles Began*** (1991, 144p., 9780679729778) focuses on his experience surviving Auschwitz. Essential.



**Satrapi, Marjane.**

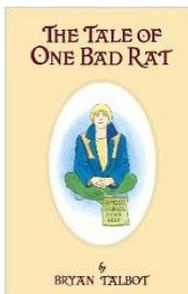
**Persepolis.** Pantheon, 2004-2005. 2 volumes.

This memoir about growing up under the Islamic Revolution, depicts teenage angst set against political upheaval. Wise, funny and heart breaking with bold illustrations that are powerfully understated in ***The Story of a Childhood*** (2004, 160p., 9780375714573). ***The Story of a Return*** (2005, 192p., 9780375714665) describes Satrapi’s homecoming after several years abroad in Europe. Nancy Pearl once said that if she could make everyone in the world read one book it would be this one.

**Takaya, Natsuki.**

**Fruits Basket.** Tokyopop, 2004 - 2009. 23 volumes.

Since her mother died in a car accident, high school student Tohru Honda has been living in a tent and supporting herself. One day, she discovers a large house inhabited by the mysterious Sohma family. The Sohmas have a strange secret: when hugged by members of the opposite sex, they turn into their Chinese Zodiac animal! They let her live with them, and in turn Tohru sets out to break the curse, meeting each of the vengeful zodiac spirits and changing the Sohmas’ lives forever. Available as softcover *manga* (**Vol. 1**, 2004, 216p. 9781591826039) or in hardcover 3-in-1 “Ultimate Editions (**Vol. 1**, 2010, 434p., 9781427806895).



**T albot, Bryan. *The Tale of One Bad Rat.*** Dark Horse, 2010 (orig. 1994). 136p. 9781595824936.

After suffering devastating sexual abuse at the hands of her father, Helen Potter runs away from home and retreats into fantasy as she begs her way across England. She eventually finds herself at a rural inn with a historical connection to her namesake, Beatrix Potter. Finally blessed with peace and

stability, she begins the slow path toward acceptance and healing. A beautiful book that presents its difficult subject matter in an accessible and sensitive way.

**Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*.** Top Shelf Productions, 2011 (orig. 2004). 592p. 9781603090964. Over the course of a snow-swept Midwest winter, a teenage boy falls in love, struggling between his desire and his faith. *Blankets* is a semi-autobiographical that is achingly honest, brilliantly realized, and gorgeously drawn. There are a couple pages of nudity, so librarians will want to use their judgment.

**Urasawa, Naoki.**

**Pluto: Urasawa x Tezuka.** Viz Media, 2009-2010. 8 volumes.

A modern *manga* master re-imagines a classic *Astro Boy* story as sci-fi noir in the spirit of *Blade Runner*. When the world's most famous and powerful robots start being destroyed one by one, Detective Gesicht is put on the case. But he had better solve the mystery quickly, because he himself is one of the robots on the hit-list! Classic science fiction themes are explored in a stunningly realized futuristic setting.



**Whedon, Joss (auth.) and John Cassaday (illus.).**

**Astonishing X-Men.** Marvel Comics, 2004-2008. 4 volumes.

The creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* delivers an accessible and character-driven take on Marvel's mightiest mutants, featuring Wolverine, Cyclops, and Kitty Pride. Whedon is just as deft with team dynamics and humorous dialogue as he is with action. Begins with ***Gifted*** (2004, 152p, 9780785115311) and ***Dangerous*** (2005, 152p, 9780785116776).



**Wood, Brian (auth.) and Becky Cloonan (illus.).**

**Demo.** DC/Vertigo. 2009-2011. 2 volumes.

Standalone vignettes about teenagers grappling with strange abilities. However, these are *not* superheroes; just normal and believable people making decisions about how to live their lives. Somewhat angsty, but beautiful nonetheless.

***Vol. 1.*** 2009. 352p. 9781401216214.

***Vol. 2.*** 2011. 160p. 9781401229955.

**Wood, Brian (auth.) and Ryan Kelly (illus.). *Local*.** Oni Press, 2008. 384p. 9781934964002.

A young woman criss-crosses the country over the course of her twenties on a personal journey to discover where she belongs. Each chapter is a standalone story that takes place in a different city that artist Kelly blesses with a palpable sense-of-place.

**Zubkavich, Jim. *Skullkickers: 1000 Opas and a Dead Body*.** Image Comics, 2011. 144p. 9781607063667

Two nameless mercenaries are mashing monsters and making a name for themselves. This fun and irreverent fantasy comic has lots of action and humor and compelling lead characters. Sure to be a hit with *World of Warcraft* fans.



## Older Teens

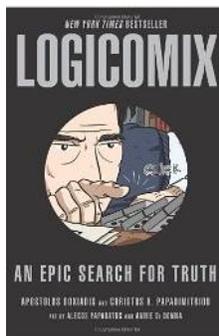
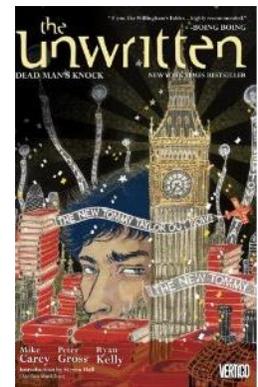
**Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*.** Mariner Books, 2006. 232p. 9780618871711.

This beautiful memoir explores the author's strained relationship with her eccentric father, and the parallels between his repressed homosexuality and her own identity as a lesbian. Bechdel's cartoony characters belie the painstaking detail she puts into the environments and artifacts of her childhood, as well as the sophistication and emotional depth of this work. *A Time Magazine* "Book of the Year."

**Carey, Mike (auth.) and Peter Gross (illus.).**

**The Unwritten**. DC/Vertigo, 2009-present. 4 volumes, ongoing.

Tom Taylor lives his life as a reluctant minor celebrity since his father, who has been missing for more than a decade, used him as the basis for the boy magician hero in the globally beloved series of *Tommy Taylor* novels. But Tom is about to learn that there may be more to truth to the books than he'd ever dreamed when he runs afoul of a sinister cabal that controls the world through the power of stories. A thrilling series full of magic, packed with literary references, and bristling with sharp critique. Contains graphic violence and language that unfortunately might keep it out of some high school libraries.



**Doxiadis, Apostolos (auth.), Papadimitriou, Christos H. (auth.), Papasatos, Alecos (illus.) and Di Donna, Annie (illus.) *Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth*.** Bloomsbury, 2009. 352 p. 9781596914520.

A remarkable mixture of mathematics and philosophy in comic book form that explores the quest for a rational foundation to mathematics and logic. The hero is philosopher Bertrand Russell, who we see as he speaks before an audience of Americans immediately after the Nazis invade Poland. We learn of Russell's achievements through flashbacks to his life and struggles, particularly his lifelong fear of mental illness, while an inventive parallel storyline about the authors of *Logicomix* as they develop the book adds dimension and perspective. Brilliantly uses comics to explain complex mathematical concepts.

**Ellis, Warren (auth.) and Darick Robertson (illus.).**

**Transmetropolitan**. DC/Vertigo, 2009-2011 (orig. 1997-2002). 10 volumes.

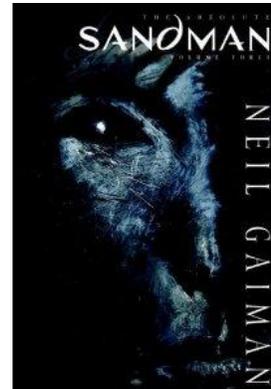
Spider Jerusalem is a gonzo journalist in a futuristic city, viciously attacking the hypocrisy and corruption in the world around him, and making plenty of enemies along the way! Crass, dark,

and full of humor, this classic series also levies sharp societal critique and will appeal to fans of Hunter S. Thompson. Starts with ***Back on the Street*** (2009, 144p., 9781401220846).

**Gaiman, Neil (auth.) and various illustrators.**

**The Sandman.** DC/Vertigo, 1991-1997. 10 volumes.

One of the most beloved and highly acclaimed comic book series of all time, *The Sandman* tells the tale of the Morpheus the King of Dreams who, after decades of imprisonment by a greedy sorcerer, must rebuild his kingdom and regain his power. Author Neil Gaiman ties numerous mythic and religious traditions from around the world into his tale. Begins with ***Preludes and Nocturnes*** (1993, 240p, 9781563890116). ***Dream Country*** (1991, 160p, 9781563890161) and ***Fables and Reflections*** (1994, 264p, 9781563891052) and are comprised of standalone shorts.



**Hill, Joe (auth.) and Gabriel Rodriguez (illus.).**

**Locke and Key.** IDW, 2008-present. 4 volumes, ongoing.

After the murder of their father, the 3 Locke kids and their mom move from San Francisco to Lovecraft, Massachusetts, and take up residence in Keyhouse, the family manor where their father grew up. There the kids discover a set of keys, each of which unlocks a door that bestows a strange ability. However, they don't realize that an evil spirit is also looking for a key - The Omega Key - which will unleash the forces of darkness. This spirit has already infiltrated their lives, and nothing will stand in its way. The series, written by Stephen King's son, boasts a brilliantly-developed supernatural world and unrelenting suspense. Starts with ***Welcome to Lovecraft*** (2008, 152p., 9781600102370).

**Ito, Junji.**

**Uzumaki: Spiral Into Horror.** Viz Media, 2007-2008. 3 volumes.

A surreal and disturbing horror *manga* about a town beset by a mysterious force that manifests itself through spirals, driving its citizens into madness.

**Vol. 1.** 2007. 208p. 9781421513898.

**Vol. 2.** 2007. 208p. 9781421513904.

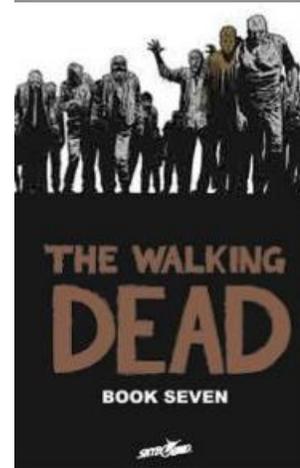
**Vol. 3.** 2008. 264p. 9781421513911.

**Kirkman, Robert (auth.), Charlie Adlard (illus.) and Tony Moore.**

**The Walking Dead**. Image Comics, 2006-present. 15 volumes, ongoing.

A harrowing, character-driven story of zombie apocalypse, notable for starting well after the rise of the zombie plague to show how – or if – humanity survives in the long run. An acclaimed series in its own right, it is also the inspiration for an excellent television show on AMC.

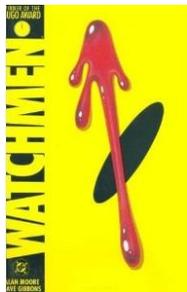
Available as 6-issue trade paperbacks (start with *Days Gone Bye*, 2006, 144p., 9781582406725), 2-in-1 *Hardcover* editions (**Vol. 1**, 2010, 304p., 9781582406190) or massive *Compendium* editions (**Vol. 1**, 2009, 1044p, 9781607060765). It should come as no surprise that this series is incredibly violent.



**Layman, John (auth.) and Rob Guillroy (illus.).**

**Chew**. Image Comics, 2009-present. 4 volumes, ongoing.

FDA Agent Tony Chu is a “cibopath,” meaning that he gets psychic impressions off of anything he eats, whether that’s black-market chicken, a clue from a crime scene, or even a nibble of corpse! This wild tale blends the mob, aliens, vampires, and more with a generous dash of offbeat humor. The series starts with *Taster’s Choice* (2009, 128p., 9781607061595).



**Moore, Alan (auth.) and Dave Gibbons (illus.). *Watchmen***. DC Comics, 1995. 408p. 9780930289232.

In an alternate-reality version of the 1980’s where superheroes changed the course of American politics and were later outlawed, the murder of a former hero exposes a conspiracy that could mean the end of the world! A masterpiece of the comics form, an insightful piece of philosophical exploration, and a harrowing adventure story.

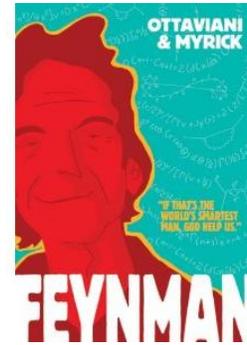
**Otsuka, Eiji (auth.) and Housui Yamazaki.**

**Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service**. Dark Horse, 2006-present. 11 volumes, ongoing.

Five Buddhist university students help the recently dead find peace and move on to their next reincarnation in this *manga* series which rides a fine line between horror and humor with consistently entertaining results. Contains lots of nudity and gore but maintains a surprisingly light tone, even as it is very darkly funny. Japanophiles will find lots of interesting information about Buddhism and Japanese funerary customs.

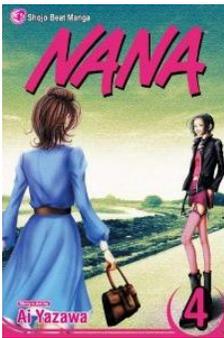
**Ottaviani, Jim (auth.) and Leland Myrick (illus.). *Feynman*.** First Second, 2011. 272p. 9781596432598.

This biography just scratches the surface of the fascinating life and ideas of physicist Richard Feynman, a Nobel laureate who was equally comfortable at strip clubs and CERN. This book will be most appreciated by readers who already have a basic grasp on theories of particle physics, 20th century history, and an awareness of Feynman's reputation. Like its subject, this graphic biography is erudite, amusing and occasionally inappropriate.



**Tomine, Adrian. *Shortcomings*.** Drawn and Quarterly, 2009. 104p. 9781897299753.

Three drifting Asian-American young adults negotiate identity politics and romance in modern-day Berkeley and New York City. Tomine's line-work and sense of timing is impeccable, while his characters and dialogue are all too real.



**Yazawa, Ai.**

**Nana.** VIZ Media, 2005 - 2010. 21 volumes.

This is the story of two 20-year-old women who share the same name. They meet and, even though they come from completely different backgrounds, become best friends. The series chronicles their friendship and their lives as each chases their dreams. Enter the world of Nana - which explodes with sex, music, fashion, gossip, and all-night parties - starting with **Vol. 1** (2005, 208p., 9781421503783). <https://plus.google.com/u/0/?hl=en&tab=oX>