

Teaching and Understanding Literature:

- What can the study of literature *do*, especially in relation to building empathy and historical understanding?
- How can the study of particular texts and traditions further students' abilities for engaging productively with language and literature (including producing effective writing of their own)?
- How can studying literature in secondary classrooms help prepare students for post-secondary learning success?

Why such questions matter:

“The humanities—including the study of languages, literature, history, jurisprudence, philosophy, comparative religion, ethics, and the arts—are disciplines of memory and imagination, telling us where we have been and helping us envision where we are going.”

—*The Heart of the Matter* (Report of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences to the U. S. Congress in June 2013)

Three Focus Areas of This Session

Cultivating empathy [*an affect path: respond to texts*]

Situating texts in historical [and rhetorical] context [*history as a critical reading path: analyze and evaluate*]

Using literature in post-secondary learning [*skills-based application: write, speak, listen well*]

Where This Session Fits within Institute Program as a Whole

- **February 2:** Graphic Narratives, Sarah Ruffing Robbins (TCU)
- **February 9:** Native American Literature and Culture, Renée Gokey (National Museum of the American Indian)
- **February 16:** Black Literatures, Brandon Manning (TCU)
- **February 23:** Japanese American Literature of the Internment, Grace Morizawa (National Japanese American Historical Society)
- **March 2:** Dystopian Literature, Jenny Mann (New York University)
- **March 23:** Walking Through an Open Door: Encouraging Creative Reading & Writing with Young People, Naomi Shihab Nye (Academy of American Poets)
- **March 30:** Latinx Literature and Memoir, Francisco Jiménez (Santa Clara University)
- **April 6:** Young Adult Literature, Jennifer Buehler (Saint Louis University)

Addressing the “TEKS”

<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/index.html>

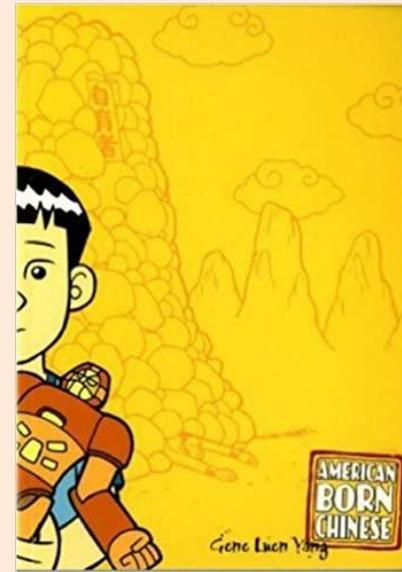
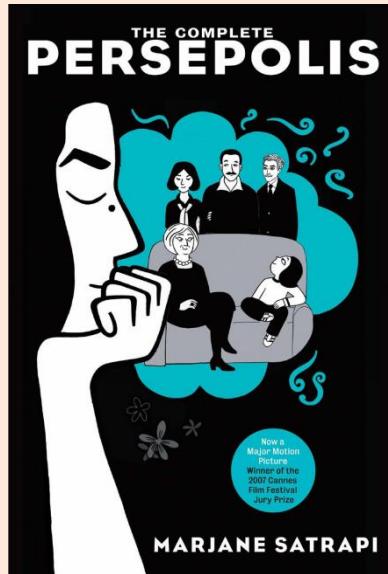
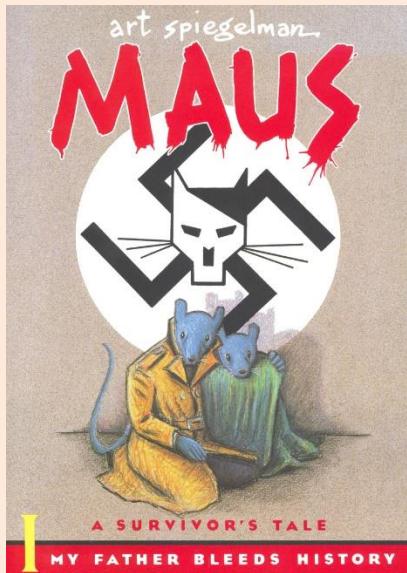
- I began by building content of this evening's presentation on graphic narratives by drawing on trends in the field and approaches from my own teaching of the genre in several different courses
- I re-visited the TEKS to identify specific skills that could be addressed via student learning activities tied to this material.
- I tweaked my presentation content.

Anchored in examples from 11th grade but also looked at other high school and middle school grades/levels:

<Http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/ch110c.html#110.38>

Graphic Narratives:

Approaching a Genre for Empathy-Building, Historical [+ Rhetorical] Understanding, + Communication Skills



Graphic Novels and Cultural Rhetoric

- a) *Some genre history:* Stages in Validation of the Graphic Novel Form as “serious Literature”
- b) Practice Reading Graphic Novels’ images by Applying Interpretive Tools from Cultural Rhetorics
- c) An example of an application writing project from my fall 2020 course on “Writing Across Cultural Differences”

Art Spiegelman Highlights

1980-1991: *MAUS* serialized in *RAW*

1986-91: *MAUS I (1986) and II in book form*

1992: Pulitzer Special Award in Letters

2004: *In the Shadow of No Towers*

2011: *The Complete MAUS/MetaMaus*

art spiegelman

MAUS

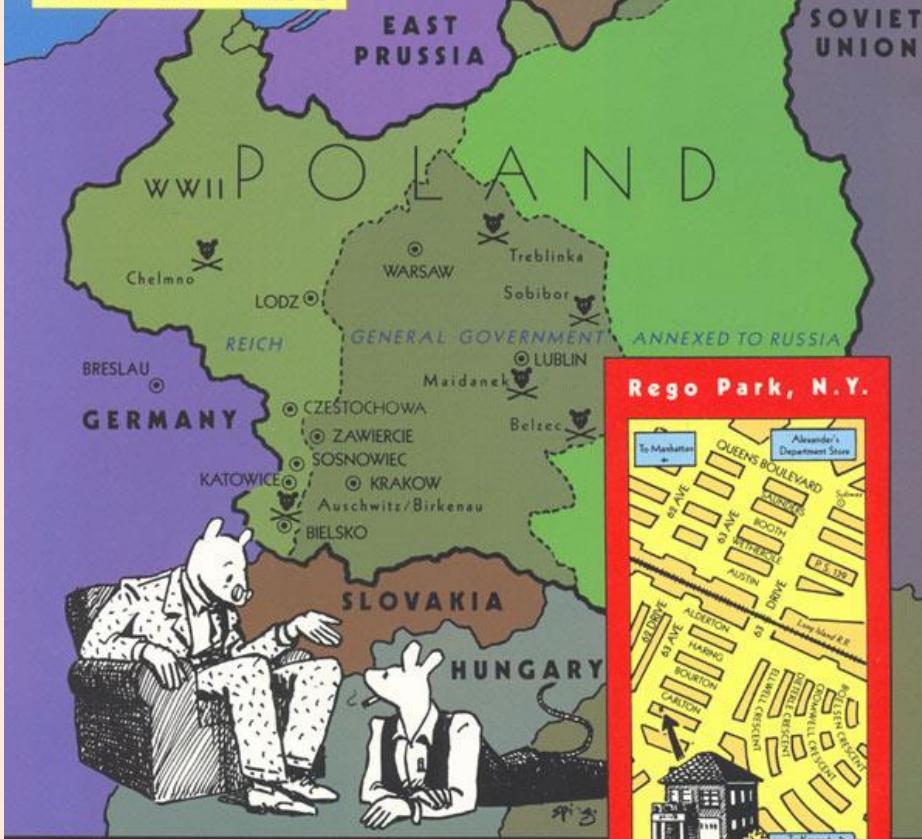


I A SURVIVOR'S TALE

I MY FATHER BLEEDS HISTORY



ISBN 0-394-74723-2



"A remarkable work, awesome in its conception and execution...at one and the same time a novel, a documentary, a memoir, and a comic book. Brilliant, just brilliant."

—Jules Feiffer

"All too infrequently, a book comes along that's as daring as it is acclaimed. [This] is such a book."

—Esquire

"A quiet triumph, moving and simple — impossible to describe accurately, and impossible to achieve in any medium but comics."

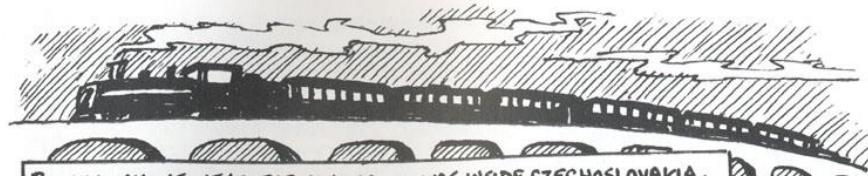
—Washington Post

"Maus compels us to bear witness in a different way: the very artificiality of its surface makes it possible to imagine the reality beneath."

—Newsweek

Rego Park, N.Y.





RIGHT AWAY, WE WENT. THE SANITARIUM WAS INSIDE CZECHOSLOVAKIA,
ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE AND BEAUTIFUL IN THE WORLD.

I REMEMBER WHEN WE WERE ALMOST
ARRIVED, WE PASSED A SMALL TOWN.



EVERYBODY-EVERY JEW FROM THE TRAIN-
GOT VERY EXCITED AND FRIGHTENED.

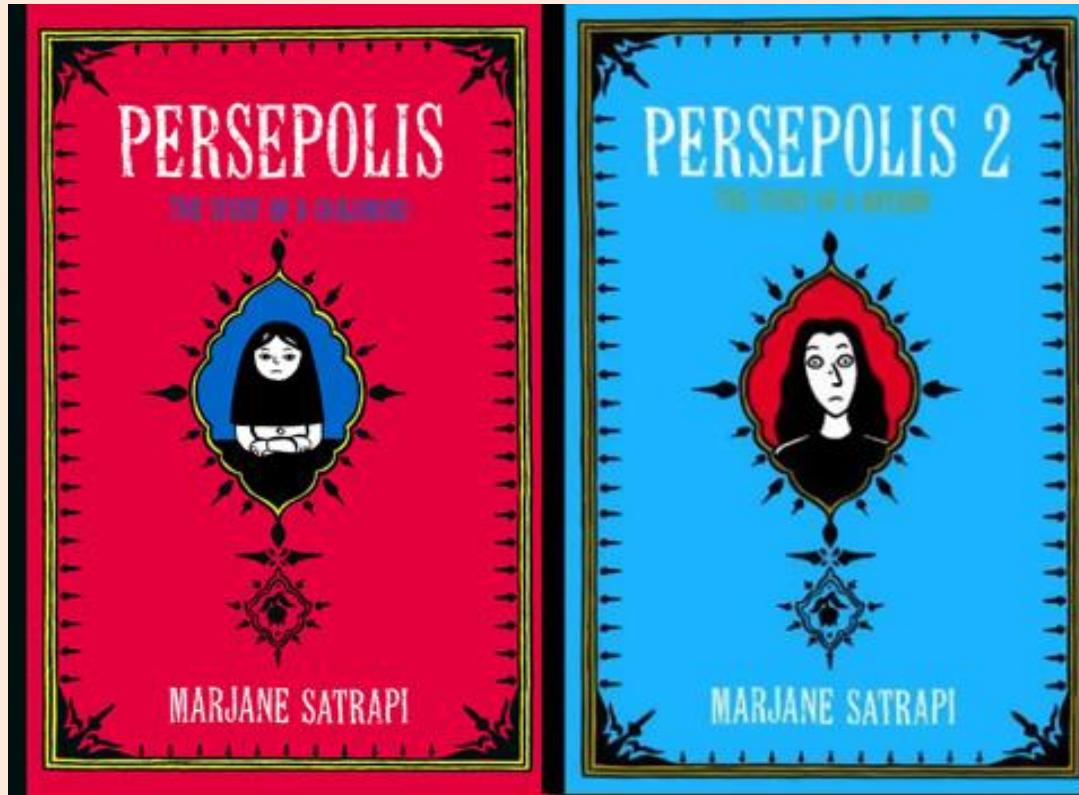


IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF
1938-BEFORE THE WAR-
HANGING HIGH IN THE
CENTER OF TOWN, IT WAS A
NAZI FLAG..



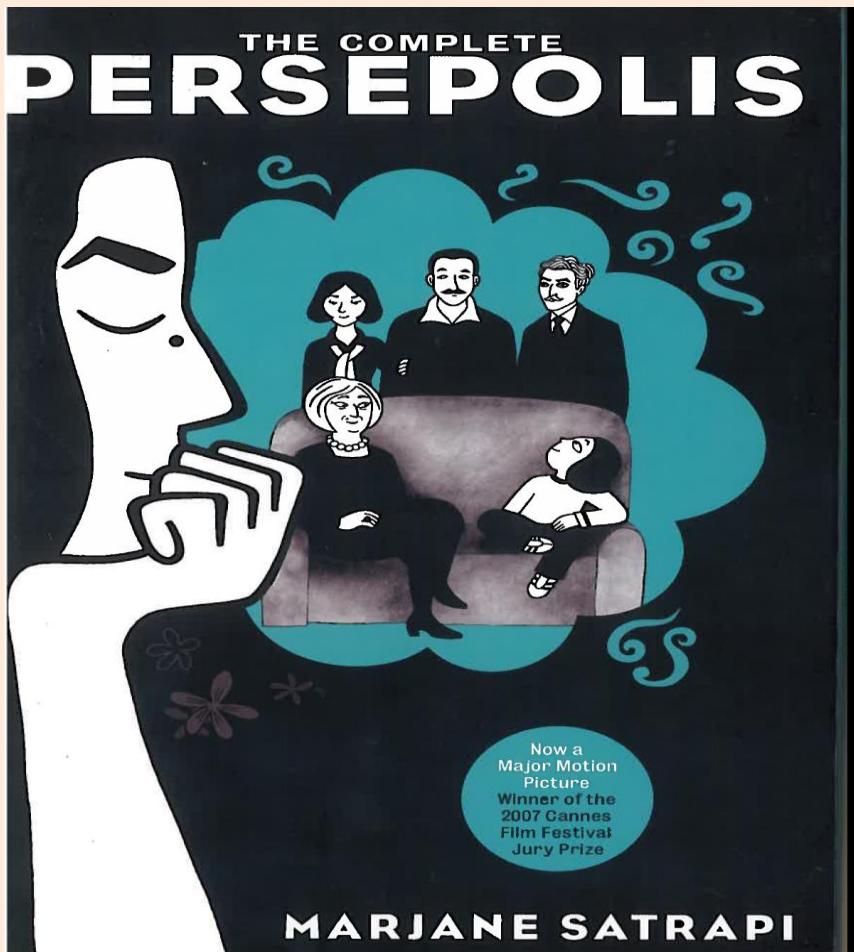
HERE WAS THE FIRST TIME
I SAW, WITH MY OWN EYES,
THE SWASTIKA.

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi (2000-2005)



Significant visual features of these two covers?
Similarities and differences you see?
Details you think might be “framing”/guiding your reading?

Reading Images



What are some ways that Satrapi uses IMAGES here to forecast for us what her narrative is about?

How might we “read” these images:
--to see why this book, like *MAUS*, has been touted for its sophisticated visual rhetoric
--to note subtle but purposeful approaches to story-telling suggested by the front cover (again, as for *MAUS*)?

Set in Tehran; Like MAUS, multi-volume



Hybridity and Genre: *Maus* and *Persepolis*

Blending the Graphic Novel with Other Forms

Memoir

Ethnic narrative

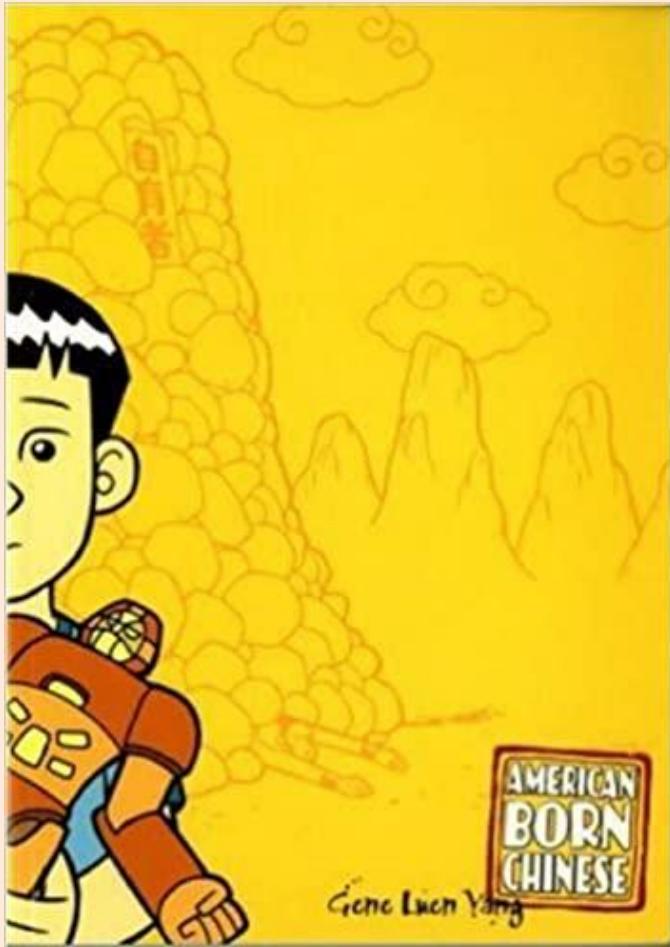
Family History

Political History & Allegory of Good and Evil

Seeking Empathy, Sharing History



American Born Chinese



Gene Luen Yang;
Winner of a 2016
MacArthur “Genius” Grant

ABC: finalist for a National
Book Award for 2006 (first graphic
narrative honored in this way)

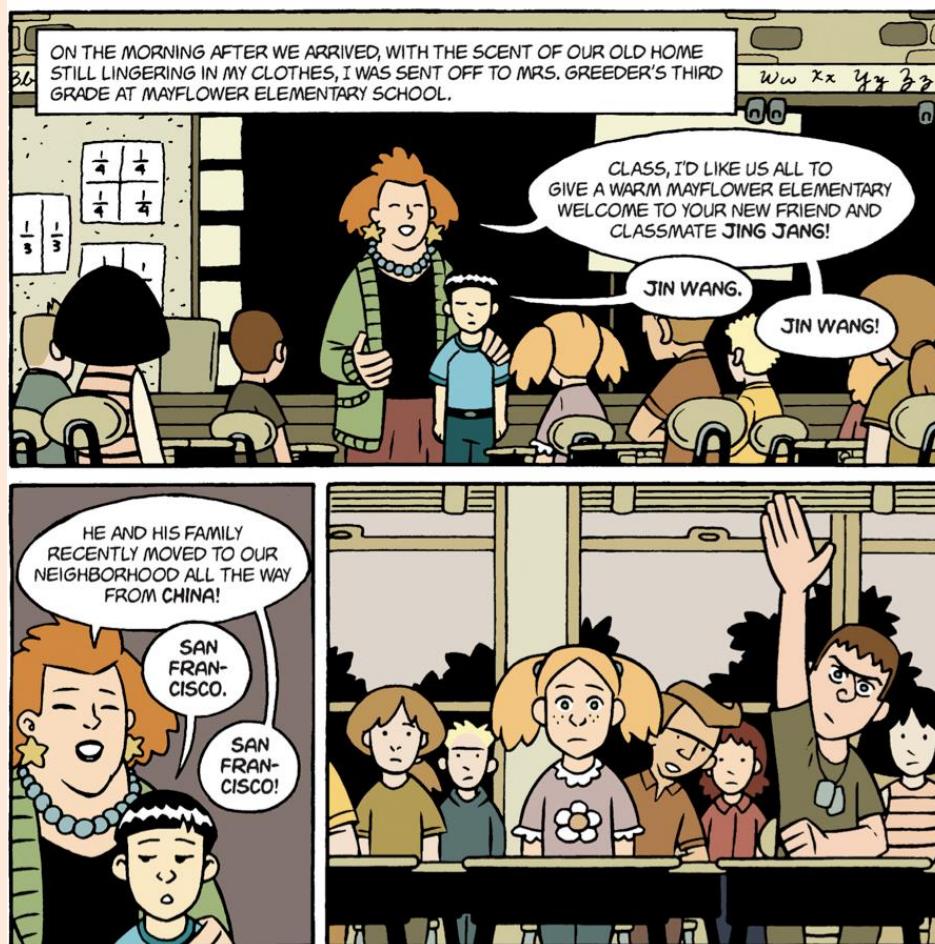
Three Strands of ABC



- Legend of the Monkey King seeking respect
- Satirical “Sit-com” of Chin-Kee
- Jin Wang’s identity challenge story

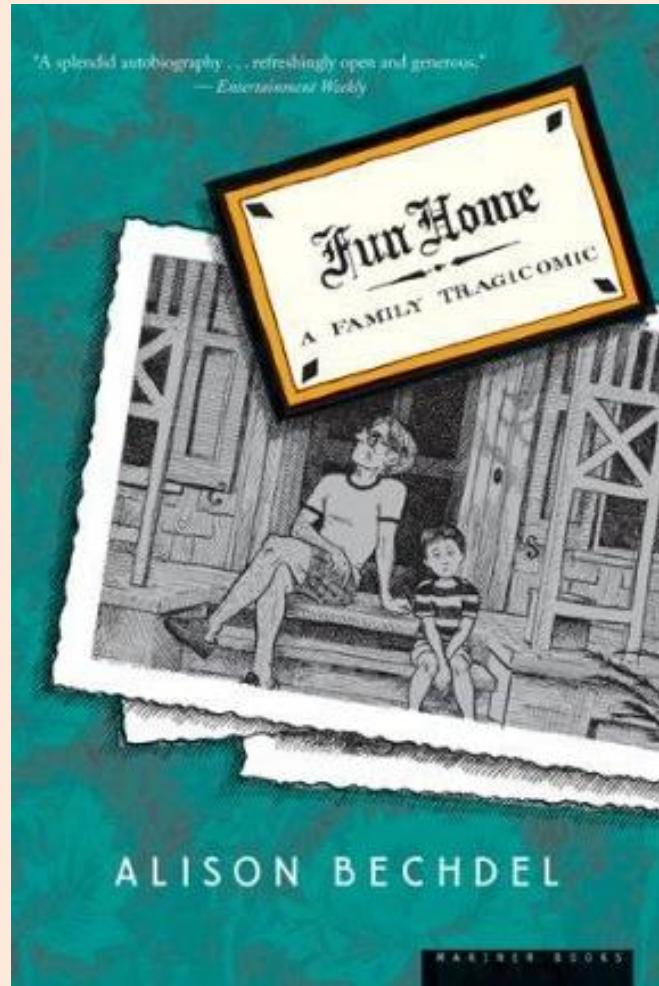
Synthesis of all three narrative strands at the close

Images from American Born Chinese

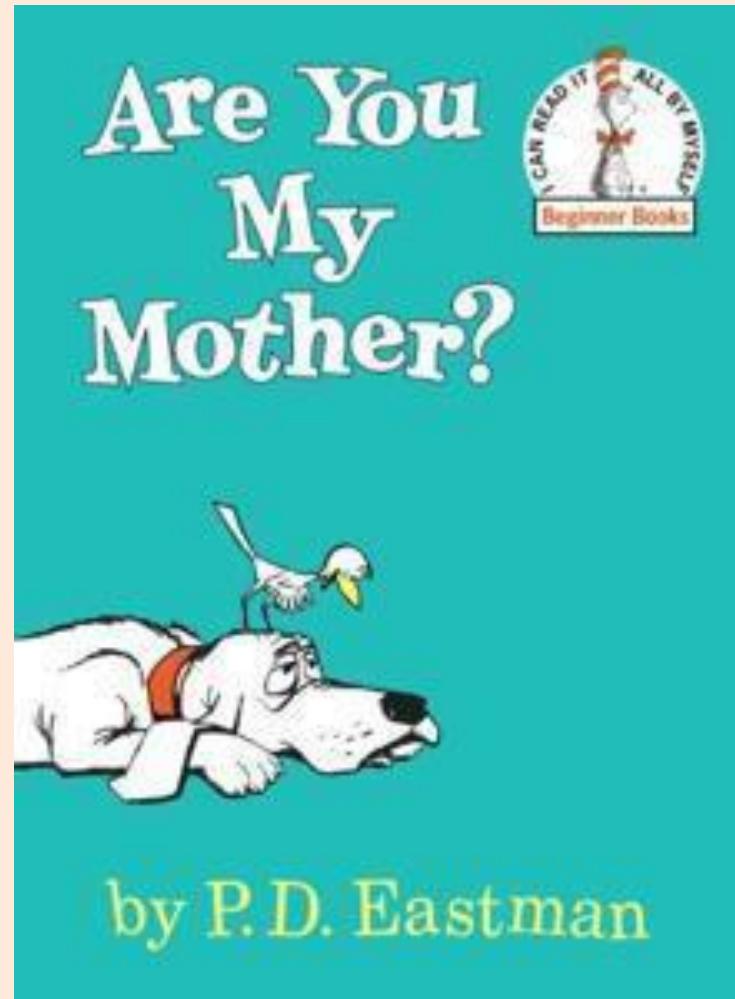
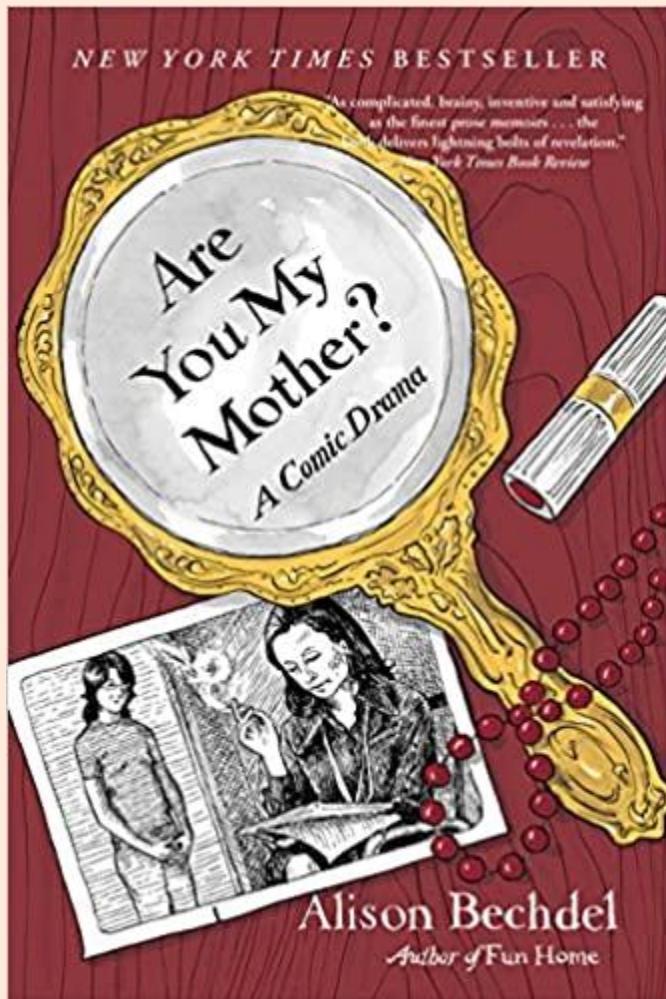


Fun Home by Alison Bechdel (2007)

Tony-winning Musical Play (2013)



Bechdel's Highly Theoretical 2012 Sequel



I'M SURE THESE THINGS ARE TRUE.

BUT THE WAY SHE SAYS THEM FEELS LIKE AN IMPLIED CRITISM, AS IF SHE'S COMPARING HER OWN SELFLESSNESS TO MY SELF-ABSORPTION.

BUT OF COURSE THAT'S JUST EVIDENCE OF MY SELF-ABSORPTION. MY MOTHER IS PROBABLY NOT THINKING ANYTHING LIKE THIS.



SHE LOOMS MUCH LARGER IN MY PSYCHE THAN I DO IN HERS. WOOLF SAYS THAT HER OWN MOTHER, WHO DIED WHEN VIRGINIA WAS THIRTEEN, OBSESSED HER UNTIL SHE WAS FORTY-FOUR.

when I was thirteen, until I was forty-four. Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*; in a great, apparently involuntary, rush, I wrote her out of another *Bleeding Heartless*.

LET'S LEAVE ASIDE THE ANNOYING RAPIDITY WITH WHICH SHE DISPATCHED THIS MASTERSPIECE. THE POINT IS, WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARD.

When it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her. I suppose that I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it to rest. But what is

I'VE BEEN IN THERAPY FOR NEARLY MY ENTIRE ADULT LIFE AND HAVE NOT LAID MY DEEPLY FELT EMOTIONS ABOUT MY MOTHER TO REST.



I JUST FEEL LIKE I'M IN MY OWN FUCKING WAY ALL THE TIME.

IT'S LIKE...LIKE I'M HOBBLED SOMEHOW.



MY PRESENTING SYMPTOM WAS SOMETHING THAT SHE WOULD LATER CALL "UNDOING."

OR NOT. I COULD BE TOTALLY MAKING THAT UP.



BUT LONG BEFORE CAROL, THERE WAS JOSELYN. I STARTED SEEING HER WHEN I WAS TWENTY-SIX.

WHEN I WAS LITTLE, I'D GET MY MOM TO PLAY THE "CRIPPLED CHILD" GAME WITH ME.



I HAD, LIKE, FLAT FEET OR SOMETHING, AND HAD TO WEAR CORRECTIVE SHOES, AND EVERY SO OFTEN IT'D GO TO THE HOSPITAL FOR A CHECKUP.



Academic Literary Analyses

Barounis, Cynthia. "Alison Bechdel and Crip-Feminist Autobiography." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2016, pp. 139-161.

Clewell, Tammy. "Beyond Psychoanalysis: Resistance and Reparative Reading in Alison Bechdel's *are You My Mother?*" *PMLA : Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 132, no. 1, 2017, pp. 51-70.

Giaimo, Genie N. "Psychological Diffusions: The Cognitive Turn in Alison Bechdel's *are You My Mother? A Comic Drama.*" *The European Journal of Life Writing*, vol. 2, 2013, pp. 35-58.

Morris, Janine. *Multimodal Literacies and Graphic Memoir: Using Alison Bechdel in the Classroom.* vol. 43, Parlor Press, Chicago, 2015.

Teaching Graphic Narratives: Book Club Approach

ILLEGAL

- Queen Spurlock
- Joshua Randle
- Libby Maack
- Brendan Hopkins
- Mya Estrada

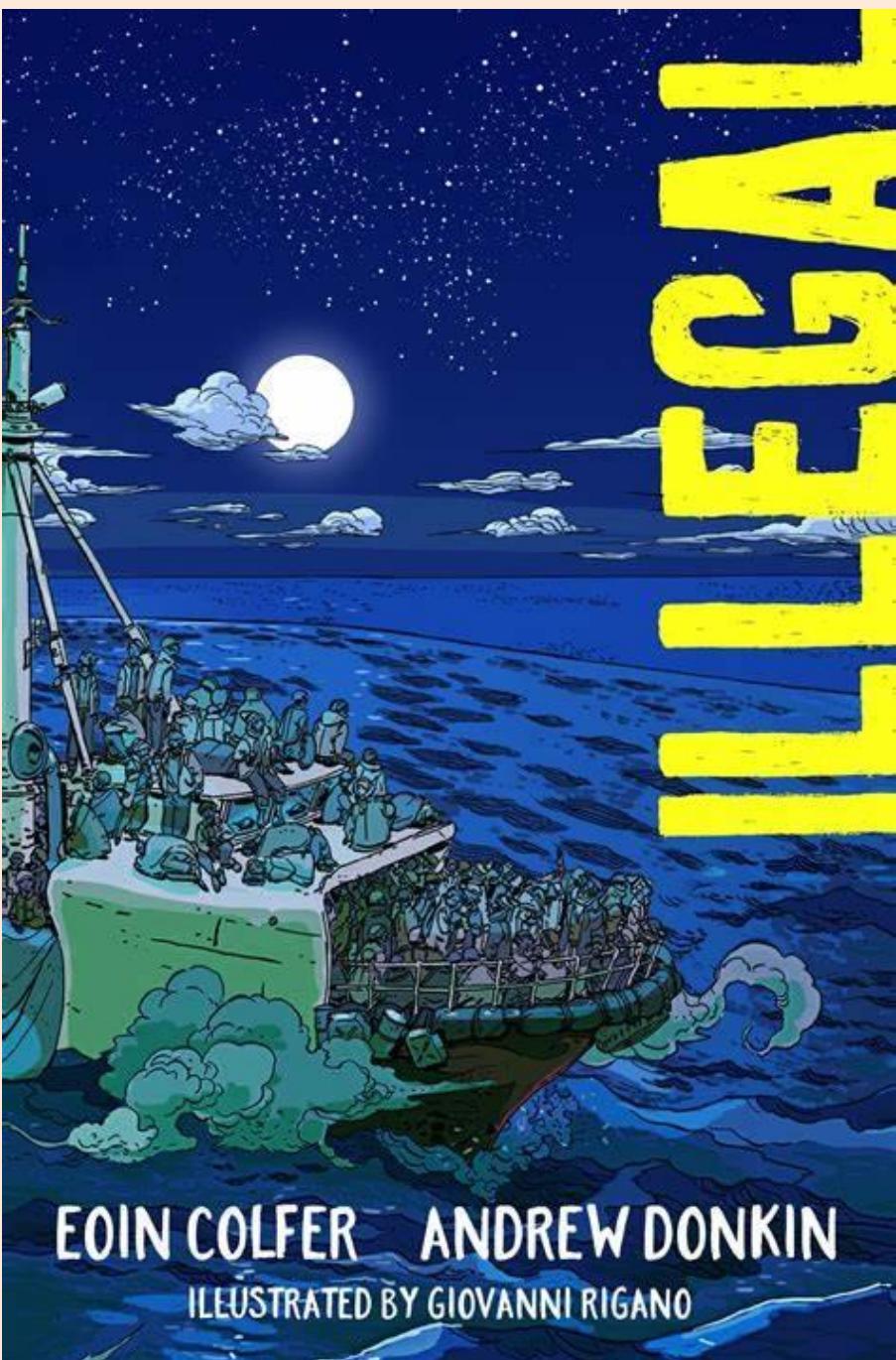
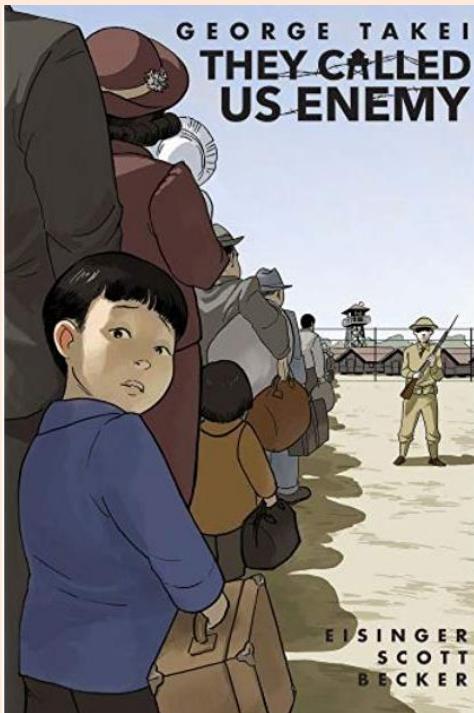
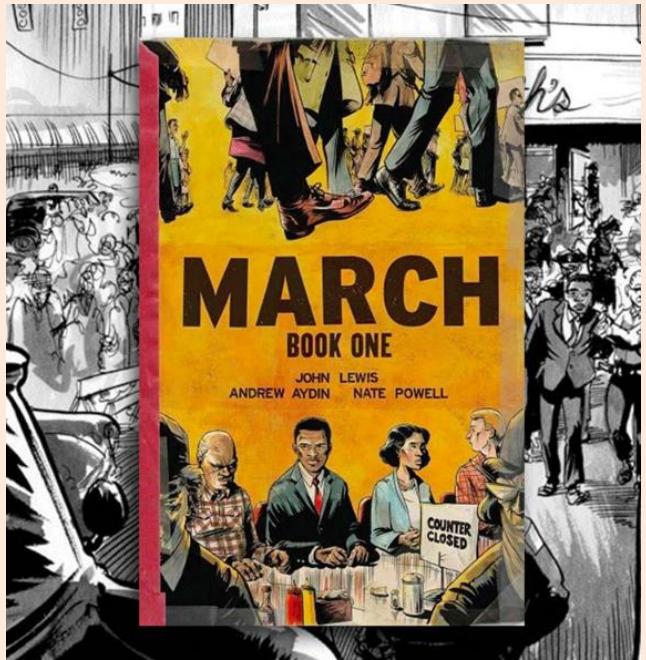
THEY CALLED US ENEMY

- Neusha Zamani
- Kelly Winegar
- Drew O'Brien
- Vivian Nguyen
- Michaela McCready

***MARCH* [be sure to get volume 1 of the 4-vol set]**

- Kenzie Veal
- Clara Neufeld
- Brianna Harkins
- Jake Eisner
- Brooke Balthrope

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Application through Writing

The goal of this project is to tell a compelling visual story that invites your audience to engage productively with cultural differences. This assignment invites you to embrace the power of image-based composition—and the challenges—by carrying out these steps:

Selecting five images and sequencing them for effective storytelling around a theme or overarching argument consistent with cultural rhetorics praxis (i.e., informed “doing” of writing informed by cultural rhetorics);

Presenting your selected images in a set-up that shows attention to the craft of design;

Considering when, where and how to use **words** in connection with our images (or not);

Choosing a title for your collection—and each image in the curated set—that signals to your audience what culture-crossing and/or culture-attentive and/or culture-spotlighting argument you are aiming to make or theme you are seeking to convey;

Note: tasks a-d above should be presented in a spatial design approximately equivalent to 2 pages of text or 5-7 PPT slides or some similar arrangement. (In other words, you should not simply create a linear sequence of images shown all on one page/background).

Reflecting, in a **companion document** that supplements the visual story, on how and why you made the choices you did (2-4 pages double-spaced).

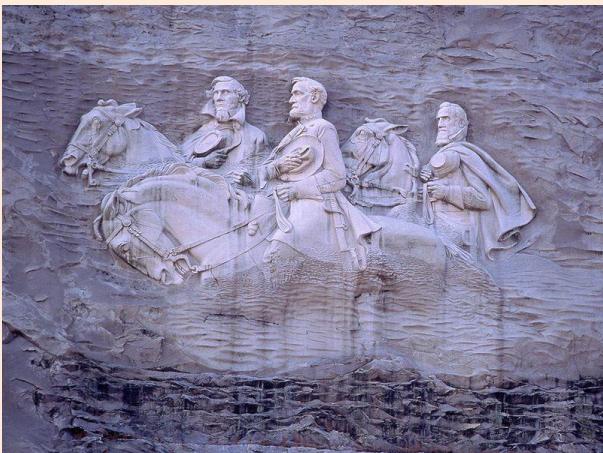
Class Activity:

Select and Interpret a Key Image

- Relate Visual to Verbal; Set in Context of Entire Composition; Consider Affect (Pathos Appeal); Analyze Historical Context [TEKS-compatible skills]
- Examples of Texts:

“The Coronavirus Unleashed Along the Amazon River”
from *The New York Times*

“Chapel Hill’s New Civil War” from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*”



In-class activity:
Consider different options for connecting,
focusing, and sequencing these images.

Breakout Groups

Historicizing graphic narrative to support
rhetorical understanding

Connecting through rhetorical craft analysis to
cultivate empathy

Composing graphic narratives and reflecting on
process