

Shakespeare in Graphic Novels

Shakespeare is available in many mediums and with many variations, including graphic novels. Here are some various forms of Shakespeare available in graphic novels:

- Direct re-telling of Shakespearean plays
- Adaptations of plays
- The use of Shakespearean characters
- GNs about or featuring Shakespeare himself



Shakespeare in Graphic Novels

By Lindsay Parsons

What are graphic novels?

Graphic novels (GN for short) are essentially comics bound into a book. For many years graphic novels have been banned from classrooms because of the negative stigma that they are a ‘dumbed-down’ book. That is now changing and many teachers are incorporating GNs into their curriculum, (Méndez, 2004).

Why add Graphic Novels to your collection?

- Graphic novels appeal to a wide variety of readers
- Many different genres are available
- Graphic novels help develop literacy skills
- Provides a visual form of literature that allow readers to expand their interpretation, (Schwarz, 2006)

Benefits of Graphic Novels

- Engage reluctant readers and readers who are more visually oriented
- Faster to read, therefore teens can pick one up anytime
- Great for teens learning a new language because images provide context
- Helps expand vocabulary and understanding of storylines
- Strong appeal factor for YA audiences, (Méndez, 2004)

Contrary to some beliefs, graphic novels do not discourage reading books in text format, they actually encourage it. Graphic novels also require an expanded use of cognitive skills to understand the dialogue in the literature, (Schwarz, 2002). Therefore, providing teens with Shakespearean graphic

novels can spark an interest in Shakespeare and a broader comprehension of his work.

The American Library Association's Advice on Dealing with Challenges to Graphic Novels

Some library patrons may have issues with the use of graphic novels by their teens in the library. Libraries are intended to provide a variety of sources, perspectives, and materials. Let concerned parents know that they are responsible for monitoring what their teen is reading, (American Library Association, 2011).

Shakespeare in Manga

Japanese manga is similar to North American comics, however there is a lesser emphasis on superheroes. Manga also includes sound effects and more complex visual signals. Cultural differences can also be seen between the two types of graphic novels (Brenner, 2006).



Manga Shakespeare is a series of manga that have adapted Shakespeare's plays into shorter versions with emphasis on the main scenes with visual aid. Manga is

becoming increasingly popular, especially in North America and many teachers in both Japanese and Western cultures are now using these graphic novels in their curriculum (SelfMadeHero, 2009).

Titles available in this series include:

- *Romeo & Juliet*
- *Hamlet*
- *The Tempest*
- *Richard III*
- *Macbeth*
- *Julius Caesar*
- *As you Like it*
- *Othello*
- *Much Ado About Nothing*
- *King Lear*
- *Twelfth Night*
- *Henry VIII*
- *The Merchant of Venice*

A Midsummer Night's Dream



By William Shakespeare

Illustrations by: Kate Brown

SelfMadeHero ©2007

Current edition published in 2008 by Amulet Books

This graphic novel retells *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the aid of some beautiful, whimsical, fairy-like drawings. The first few pages were full of colour, and I was a little disappointed to see that the rest of the book resorted to black and white. Many manga books are in black and white, but I felt like it took away from the book a little after seeing what colour can do. There is a bit of a modern twist in some of the character's costumes as well.

This is a great way to start off with Shakespeare because it sticks to the plot while making the storyline easier to understand with the aid of visuals.

No Fear Shakespeare

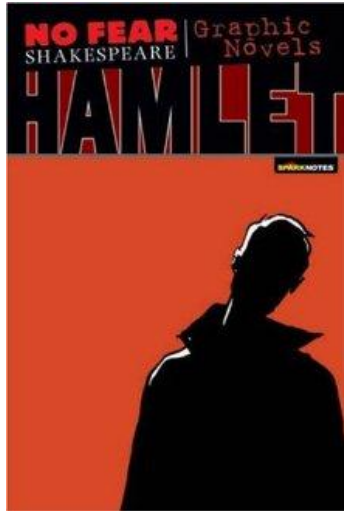
No Fear Shakespeare is a series of books that have been adapted into graphic novels. The content is also available on a website called www.sparknotes.com, which has a variety of resources for students to go for homework help.

The No Fear Shakespeare books contain the original text on one side of the page, with a modern updated version of the text on the other side. The modern text is used in the graphic novel versions (Barnes and Noble, 2011).

Titles available in the No Fear Shakespeare graphic novel series include:

- *Antony and Cleopatra*
- *As You Like It*
- *The Comedy of Errors*
- *Hamlet*
- *Henry IV, Part I*
- *Henry IV, Part II*
- *Henry V*
- *Julius Caesar*
- *King Lear*
- *Macbeth*
- *The Merchant of Venice*
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- *Much Ado About Nothing*
- *Othello*
- *Richard III*
- *Romeo & Juliet*
- *The Taming of the Shrew*
- *The Tempest*
- *Twelfth Night*

Hamlet



By William Shakespeare

Illustrations by Neil Babra

Spark Publishing ©2008

This graphic novel re-tells the tragedy of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark. One night, the ghost of Hamlet's father visits him and tells him he must avenge his death by killing the man who killed him. The man in question is Hamlet's uncle Claudius, who has taken over the throne that rightly belongs to Hamlet.

The images in this book are great, and there are lots of them too. I found this book fairly long for a graphic novel, and also thought that it contained more text than usual. The length could be a little deterring for some readers; however the abundance of text does have its advantages because there is no question as to what is going on in each

scene. The language is also easy to understand.

Classical Comics

Classical Comics takes classical literature and adapts it into graphic novel format. The storylines are accurately followed to match the original version and are available in three different texts: original text, plain text, and quick text. The original text contains the full play in Shakespeare's words with accompanying images. Plain text translates the original into a modern English, and quick text presents readers with a modern fast-read version. Previews of each version are available on the Classical Comics website:

<http://www.classicalcomics.com/index.html>



Original

Plain Text

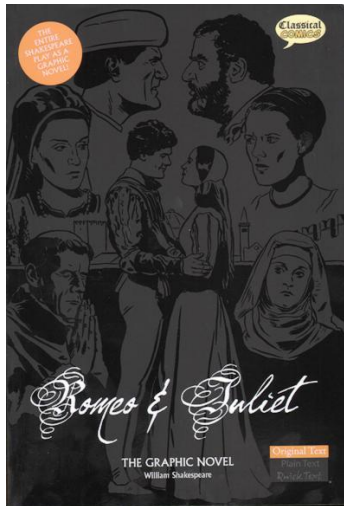
Quick Text

Titles available in the Classical Comic Series:

- *Romeo & Juliet*
- *Macbeth*
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

- *The Tempest*
- *Henry V*

Romeo & Juliet



By William Shakespeare

Illustrations by Will Voley

Classical Comics ©2009

Original Text Version

This re-telling of Shakespeare's tragic love story of two young people caught in the middle of a family feud is adapted word for word in the graphic novel. This is a great book for anyone looking to read the original version of Shakespeare because the actual text is there with the bonus of imagery to paint a picture of what is going on. If you are looking for an easier read, it is also available in plain and quick text formats. This is a perfect for readers of any

level, and the bright and colourful illustrations are great for improving storyline comprehension.

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Shakespeare in School

By Jeanna Greene

Almost without a doubt, Shakespeare is the only author that every Canadian who graduates from high school will have read at

some point in their junior high or high school career. Shakespeare is one of those historical figures who has become larger than life. Like Einstein, Shakespeare is a household name, and his genius is acknowledged by nearly everyone, regardless of whether or not they enjoy reading his work. We all know Shakespeare; we have all studied him in school. But does his prominence in modern culture and in the modern school system mean that his work is still accessible today? Not necessarily. In fact, his revered status can become a barrier in the teaching of his work. Is Shakespeare still relevant? Certainly. But creative strategies may be necessary to make his relevance apparent to 21st Century teenagers.

Sometimes the build up is a problem. Most children are aware of the genius of Shakespeare long before they first crack open one of his plays. This can lead to frustration if his words do not immediately resonate with the reader as they had been led to expect. In her book of collected essays, *Reimagining Shakespeare*, Naomi J. Miller (2003) points out, “of all the new audiences for Shakespeare, children and young adults are the most likely to be misdirected or even disappointed by their initial encounters with the Bard” (p. 2). His language takes work for modern readers, and the first taste of his