Comics have been popular reading for adolescents for a long time, and now the genre is moving beyond popular culture and into the classroom. More than ever, comics are being studied as literature. In 1987, Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* demonstrated that comics could handle the complexity of subjects like the Holocaust and personal memoir with as much sensitivity and intelligence as film or prose. Following the publication of *Maus*, many articles claimed that “comics are not just for kids anymore.” However, comics can still be for kids, and can offer them much more than action and bright colors. Grade school teachers are recognizing the benefits of using comics in the classroom to promote literacy.

Comics and graphic novels offer children and adolescents a new approach to literature. Comics are fun to read and can teach a lot. Not only does the subject matter of some comics deal with important human and societal issues, but the form of the comics themselves can promote a better understanding of the elements of literature and story-telling, such as plot structure, characterization, theme, symbolism, metaphor, mood, tone, and irony. An editorial from the *New York Times* states that “Teachers are finding it easier to teach writing, grammar and punctuation with material that students are fully invested in.” The editorial also states that comics offer a teacher the opportunity to "bring youth culture into the classroom" and show students that teachers “care about student interests and recognize the value of their contributions to the classroom community.”

Teaching comics is especially helpful for students who are struggling with reading. Nancy Frey and Douglas Fisher, co-authors of *Using Graphic Novels, Anime, and the Internet in an Urban High School*, state that graphic novels are able to "present complex material in readable text." Frey and Fisher explain that some students have the ability to understand complex issues but are not strong enough readers to be able to understand and interpret traditional texts. Comics can be a solution to this problem as many comics are easier to read than traditional texts, but still tackle complex issues. Frey and Fisher assert that "graphic novels should not replace traditional texts, but rather provide the teacher with a way of building conceptual understanding and academic vocabulary, thereby making subsequent traditional texts more comprehensible.”

Comics can also be studied as art as well as literature, and can even be taught in art classes. An interdisciplinary approach between English teachers and art teachers could be taken when teaching comics. An English teacher could focus on the literary aspects while the art teacher focuses on the artistic aspects—and both teachers could explore the interconnections between language and visual art. Studying comics can allow more artistic students to express their creativity in school.