

"What is the history of Graphic novels?"

“Graphic novels” are illustrated picture/ comic books beloved by many ages, and countries from all around the world. They explore different genres, themes and aesthetics; allowing for a visually appealing reading experience for all. The term “graphic novel” comes from “graphic” and “novel” put together, meaning text and images, to create a completed narrative and/or book.

“Graphic novel is usually taken to mean a long comic narrative for a mature audience, published in hardback or paperback and sold in bookstores, with serious literary themes and sophisticated artwork.” (Christopher Murray, Author of *Champions of the oppressed: Super-hero comics, popular culture and propaganda in America during World War II*).

The first public exposer to graphic novels began in the late 19th to the early 20th century, Britain. In a newspaper, a novel called “Punch” (17th July 1841) caught the attention, and concerns of whoever the newspaper landed in the hands of. Since this, these beloved comic books only grew, being published and then sold from newspaper stands during the 1930s.

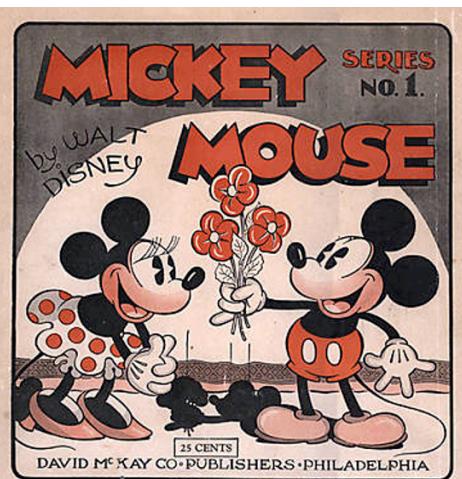
After the events of World War II, the “Golden Age” (1938 to 1956) of comics started to rise. Sales for graphic novels and comic books increased rabidly, drawing more readers in; to escape the current events of real life into funny and engaging fictional realities. A popular novel around this time consisted of comic book “Captain American” - famous super hero created by cartoonists Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, battling Adolf Hitler on the cover of the first issued book.

“The sales of comic books increased markedly during World War II. They were cheap, portable and had inspirational, patriotic stories of good triumphing over evil. The tales very much reflected the events and values of the time.” (PBS. Website, 2003 - 2014).

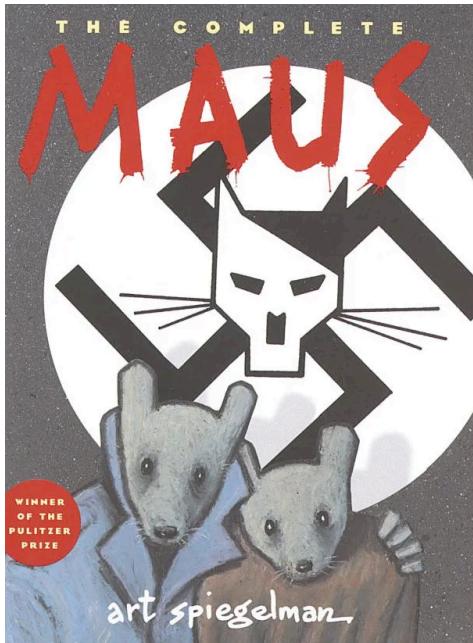
From the writers and cartoonists of “Marvel” and “DC Comics,” other well known super heroes were born at this time such as: *The Phantom* (1936), *Superman* (1938), *Batman* (1939), *Captain Marvel* (1939) *The Comet* (1940). *Spiderman*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Hulk*, and many more adored characters followed after, between the years 1940 to 1993.

Other Artists started to develop a liking for graphic novels, including Walt Disney, who had just finished his first line of comic books for his highly successful original character, “Mickey Mouse” (1933–1940.) Soon he moved onto animations, using his previous comic strips/ books as reference for his new challenges and ambitions.

Moving to the 1960s, people treated graphic novels and comic books as controversial items of entertainment, being frowned upon heavily, and occasionally being sold like drugs; on the shelves stalked up beside marinara pipes and other forms of illegal substances in local shops.



“Mickey Mouse” - Walt Disney.
(1930.)
Print: The Walt Disney
Company.



"MAUS" - Art Spiegelman.
(1980.)

Print: Pantheon Books.

1986) by Art Spiegelman won the "Pulitzer prize" in 1992 for graphic novels.

Around 1990s to early 2000s, kids and teenagers developed an interest for the once adult comic strips. Media announced child friendly super heroes specifically for them; "*Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*" (TV series 1993, and comic book published by Hamilton 1994) and "*The Incredibles*" (2004, and original movie 2018).

Over the last few years graphic novel and comic book Artists in America are now making an "average salary of \$69,510 a year for 2021" (Sapling Website, 2022.) Meanwhile in the UK, "The average salary for a Comic Artist is £36943 per year in United Kingdom." (Glassdoor Website, 2022.)

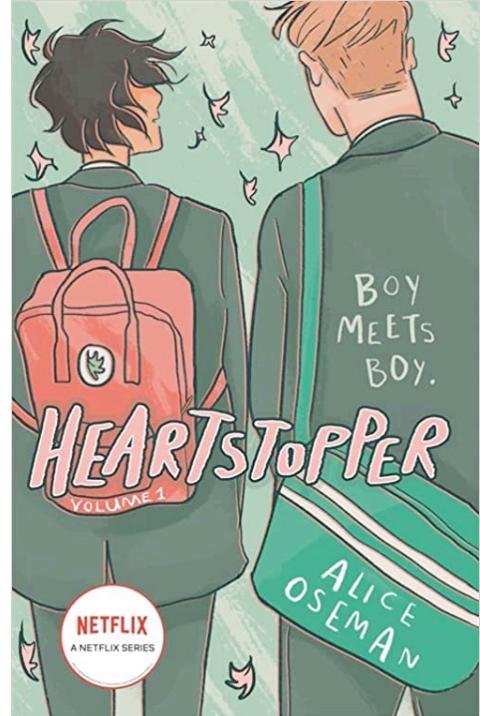
Graphic novels have developed their own category, separate from comic books. The differences between them grow more and more significant each year. Graphic novel elements include little to no text, and easy to understand images (usually illustrated by the author.) Simplified art styles are commonly used in graphic novels, while in comic books, they have a lot of action and detail packed onto each page, showering the reader with as much information as possible. Graphic novels allow the reader to interrupt the story in however way that they want, while still following along with some type of narrative.

In the 1970s, "comic strips" became influenced by historical drawings: Cave painting and Egyptian hieroglyphics were the top inspirations at this time. Comics were more accepted into society and developed an academic side to them, featuring in study and research purposes. They rose with the short story title and comedic genre.

Religious influenced books came into the market, from the 1970s to 1980s. One of the most recalled novels in 1970s was Will Eisner's "*A contract with God*" (1978). Eisner called his own work "sequential art" - He used this term to describe his serious themes and adult aimed books.

Middle to late 1980s, the popularity of "The Dark Knight returns" featuring comic book hero *Batman*, sparked a new wave of comic books published in the super hero genre.

Serious and adult themed books still sold successfully, getting applauded when "*Maus*" (1980 -



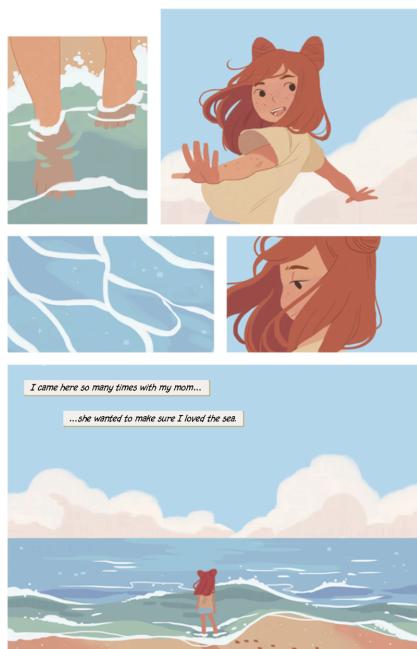
"Heartstopper" - Alice Oseman.
(2018.)

Self-published; Print: Hachette Children's Group.

“Often, a comic book cannot stand on its own as a complete narrative. It builds off what has come in issues before it. A graphic novel, on the other hand, tends to be considerably longer than an average comic’s 22 pages and tells a largely self-contained story.” (Mental Floss Website, 2019.)

Because of this, instead of religious books and connotations, graphic novels are growing to represent the LGBTQIA+ community, different ethnic groups/ communities, and overall including a wide range of different genres and story lines for all to appreciate - Making the books interesting, informative and enjoyable for all ages, rather than using them as religious and historical icons; not that there's anything wrong necessarily with that.

Author and Illustrator, Alice Oseman is a great modern example of an illustrator who represents the LGBTQIA+ community, basing her story lines around the community in her most famous ongoing graphic novel series “Heartstopper” (2018 - Now/ 2023.) Something I personally am happy for is to have this representation, and having a character to relate to in the fictional book universe. Other features such as mental health and teenaged difficulties also reside within these four, soon to be five, graphic novels.



“Aquicorn Cove” - Katie O’Neill
(2018.)
Print: Simon & Schuster.

Vaughan, and “Displacement” (2019) by Kiku Hughes - All of which have grew an inspiring audience for each book, influencing more Artists to create their own original stories.

From 2014, she has made illustrations for her own graphic novels, creating beautiful books with a warm and cozy feeling to every drawing/ book. She relies on the simplicity of her images to hold an aesthetic specifically to her, allowing for every work of art to speak for themselves; while also adding the readers’ own interpretations within the story line she has provided for them.

The feel of her work completely changes viewers perspectives on graphic novels, contrasting from the past. She focuses on fairytale genres and friendship/ family dynamics; her imagination builds her unique and original characters and worlds.

Furthermore, “Aquicorn Cove” (2018) is by far her best example of a charming, well written and thought out novel, with the distinguished features of graphic novels.

All these elements show how far graphic novels have grew over the years since the early 1900s to now. Other examples of popular modern graphic novel within the genres of teenage troubles, coming of age and friend/ family dynamics include: “Sheets” (2018) by Brenna Thummler, “Paper Girls” (2016) by Brian K.

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