



Silverfin: the Graphic Novel

Charlie Higson & Kev Walker

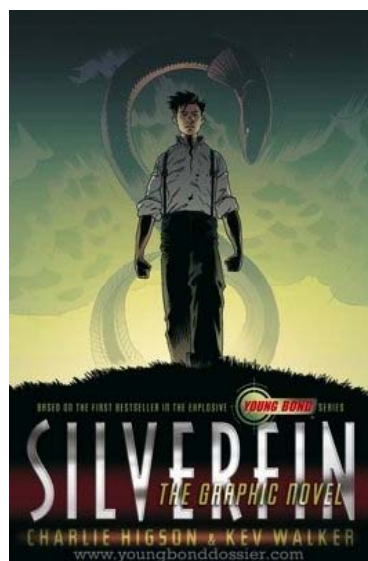
*"There's something slithering in the water at Loch Silverfin...
Something deadly. Something that must be kept secret..."*

Introduction

Before the name became a legend - before the boy became a man - James Bond was just another student beginning his first day at Eton College. Despite being nervous and shy, James manages to make an enemy within the first hour. An enemy who will follow him from the playing fields to the remote shores of Loch Silverfin, where a terrifying new breed of warfare threatens to unleash destruction on the world.

Silverfin: The Graphic Novel is an ideal text with which to introduce the graphic novel genre to a junior or middle secondary English class.

Written and adapted by Charlie Higson and Kev Walker, the book presents the first of the "Young Bond" graphic novels, adapted from the prose bestseller and chronicling the early years of Britain's most infamous spy.



Written in three parts, Charlie Higson gives young readers the chance to not only enjoy the story of a typically curious and adventurous boy but also to witness the making of the world's greatest spy, Agent 007.

Dramatic foreshadowing is evident in all aspects of the novel – the British and Scottish settings, the quirky sidekicks, the smart and surprising female, the family history of adrenalin-sports and espionage and of course James' own disregard for rules and relationships.

Kev Walker (who has also worked for *DC Comics*, *Marvel* and *Dark Horse Comics*) is a brilliant addition to the team, creating a world for young James Bond that is full of misty Lochs, rolling Scottish hills, polished College halls and underground experimental laboratories shrouded in green light and secrecy.

The characters themselves are brilliantly drawn –particularly in the eyes and face, where emotions are conveyed more powerfully than with prose.

Randolph Hellebore, the villain of this piece, is an aristocrat whose obsession with racial purity and elite power burns visibly in his fiery eyes.

Wilder Lawless (a symbolic name typical for Fleming's future heroines) is a wholesome country lass, whose innocence and courage both shine from her open, unshadowed face.

“Red” Kelly, the ruffian who befriends James on his way to Scotland, is drawn as a collection of scratchy, rough lines and shaggy red tufts, representing his less than polished personality.

Considering the man we know James will become, Higson and Walker also surprise us with a central character who is in many areas, nervous, insecure and haunted by loneliness and loss. He is a skilled but not exceptional sportsman. He seems to attract, but not be affected by pretty girls. He is independent and cagey yet displays a vulnerability and softness when relating to what family he has left.

For a mixed ability class in years 7 to 9, *Silverfin* is a brilliant way to introduce students to not only the heart-pounding legacy of James Bond but also the growing literary genre of Graphic Novels.

Plot Synopsis

The first four pages of *Silverfin* tap into a dramatic technique favoured by Crime and Detective TV shows; the “hook” incident. With no context or explanation given, we are thrust onto the shores of a forbidden Loch, shrouded in fog and muddy tones. A sign tacked roughly to a barbed wire fence reads “Trespassers will be shot”, and is surrounded by the skulls of humans and animals who have ignored the warning.

A young, mysterious boy wades into the water, casts off his first baited hook and silently waits for a bite. This moment of silence is shattered as a screeching eel-like creature rears from the water in front and pulls the boy down into a feeding frenzy of crazed monsters. The panels are awash with blood-red tones and then silence descends once more over the black waters of Silverfin Loch.



Part One – “Eton” - begins and the artistry is distinctly different. We are shown the bright sunny skies of England and the towering steeples of Eton College, where a young man named James Bond is about to begin his first day of school. Lost and unsure, he is picked from the crowd of suits and top hats by one of the Masters and shown his boarding room. An Indian youngster named Pritpal Nandra introduces himself as James’ neighbour in the boarding house and shows James to his rather dilapidated room.

Waking up late after a fitful and nervous sleep, James rushes to class and bumps into one George Hellebore – a fellow student who is arrogant, aggressive and now the self-declared nemesis of the hapless James.

We get to know little of the mysterious James from his conversations in the candle-lit boarding house and the muddy playing fields of Eton, except that he is serious, haunted and has a mean left cross.

Despite not being the overall victor, he further angers George and his father Randolph Hellebore by defeating the former in a murderous triathlon designed by Randolph to “turn boys into men”. By the time Part One is over James has shown himself to be reckless yet determined, and to have made two enemies rather than one.

In Part Two – “Scotland” - James receives a letter from his Aunt Charmian, summoning him to the family homestead at Keith for the Easter break, as his Uncle Max is unwell.

Whilst boarding the train James helps the devilish “Red” Kelly jump on board without a ticket, displaying an uncanny (and early) skill for diversion and deception. James and “Red” become unlikely companions of sorts, just in time for Red to save James from being killed by George in a vengeful scrap once it is discovered both boys are headed to the same destination.

As both boys sleep fitfully that night we are reminded by their mutual nightmares that no man – villain or hero – exists without his fears, regrets and problems.

James arrives in the rolling hills of County Keith and is picked up by his wealthy and effervescent Aunt, who drives him home where a dying Uncle Max has still managed to put on his waders and try a spot of finnock fishing.

Over dinner James is told that the town has recently been shattered by the news that a young man has gone missing – one of the “*Kelly lads*” - and that they’ve had to drag the river for the body. The boy in question is of course, the cousin of James’ friend “Red” Kelly. The Loch in question just happens to belong to one Randolph Hellebore – a wealthy American who arrived out of the blue recently, bought the property and quickly turned the place into a heavily guarded fortress.

James and Red ask permission to go camping for a few days and Uncle Max, possibly guessing the real motives behind this expedition, tells James of his days as a spy and warns him of the dangers. The boys head off nevertheless and meet two characters along the way – one Wilder Lawless (“*She’s a bit of alright!*”) and “*Meatpacker*” Mike Moran, an American spy sent to find out what motivated Randolph to abandon the weapons trade business so quickly for an abandoned lake.

The next time we see Moran will be when his body is suspiciously pulled from the Loch, infested and partially devoured by bloodthirsty eels.



Part Three – “*Silverfin*” – is where a curious spying jaunt becomes a deadly obsession for James. They sneak into the Hellebore compound along with a mysterious shipment of pigs destined for a purpose other than the provision of bacon. Hiding in some abandoned ruins on the property before nightfall, Red and James attempt to climb into the manor from an outside window. Red falls and breaks his leg, leaving James alone to continue the mission.

James’ apparent spy-instincts lead him to the dungeon – an experimental laboratory - but here his luck runs out and a fall renders him vulnerable, later to wake up strapped to an operating table with Hellebore and a bespectacled scientist standing over him.

It is revealed that whilst World War One taught other men to fear conflict, it only caused in Randolph Hellebore a desire to better prepare for it. Since he saw “*on the bloody fields of Flanders... just how easily a man could come apart*” he had devoted his life and fortune to finding ways to create “*better humans... stronger, bigger, fearless... more ruthless*” - through genetic mutation and experimentation.

His dream is to harness the power, speed and cold-blooded drive of eels into a serum that when injected into humans could create a super-race similar to the Aryan nation his idol, Hitler, envisions.

James becomes his first human test-subject – a decision that will end up costing Hellebore his life.

James' superhuman "eel-like" strength and agility helps him escape his cell, swim out through the muddy loch and run for miles to escape Hellebore and his henchmen. Red and Wilder appear at different times to assist James in his escape, but it is a most unlikely ally – George Hellebore – who returns to help James bring down his father.

Having no choice but to trust George – or more likely, his hatred for his own father – James returns to Silverfin to destroy the laboratory. The two make an efficient team as they destroy the millions of syringe stock, free the pigs, set fire to the manor and in a moment of pity – free the monstrous failed experiment of Eel-serum; Algar Hellebore.

Randolph hunts the boys to the wharf and is ready to kill both his son and James with his double-barrelled shotgun, when Algar launches at him, toppling them both into the loch where they are devoured in an enormous feeding frenzy.

James collapses as the serum wears off, and wakes up back at his family home in Keith, just in time to face the devastating news that his Uncle Max has finally succumbed to cancer.

During Reading Discussion

Introduction

1. Why do you think there are no title or information pages before the very first panels begin?
2. How is danger communicated visually on the first page?
3. Why are we never shown the eyes of the boy who is killed in this section?
4. Discuss the use of symmetry, space and colour to suggest the isolation of this solitary figure.
5. What is different about the last page in which the boy is being killed? Why is this so?
6. What visual technique is used to link this action-filled page, with the next; a quiet portrait of the manor on the edge of the Loch?

Part One: Eton

1. Describe the colours used in the title page to Part One, and the ways in which they capture the setting.
2. On the second page, how does the artist indicate to us that James is the central protagonist?
3. What is ironic about his reply to the professor?
4. Discuss the use of colour in the scenes of Eton students. Why might it be so limited?
5. Discuss the use of shadow. Light and dark when we enter James' lodgings.



6. What might the blue represent in the horizontal panels where James sleeps his first night?
7. What visual symbols are used repeatedly to represent the world of Eton College?
8. Where is the warmth coming from in the boarding house scene, and how is it visually represented?
9. Discuss the use of extreme close-ups to convey either action or emotion in Part one. Give as many examples as you can.
10. What might the reasons be for the lack of colour in the scene where James meets Randolph Hellebore?
11. Whilst doing time trials on the playing field, James is encouraged to enter the triathlon by one of his professors. Look at the way the professor is drawn. How do we know he is a good character from his visual representation?
12. What is the significance of the upward angle (low angle shots) being used when George bullies James by the lake?
13. Look at the scene where Randolph opens the games with a violent speech. What about his physical appearance suggests evil and power?
14. Discuss the different choices of panel size and shapes that have been used in Part One. Why are there so many different kinds and what is each best suited to?
15. Why are there so many close-ups of James' eyes? What tends to be communicated in these shots?

Part Two: Scotland

1. What do we learn about James' Aunt Charmian through her letter? Use quotes to support your answer.
2. Discuss the way that unimportant characters (i.e. ticket collector) are drawn differently from main characters.
3. How do we know James has a mischievous side to his personality, through his first encounter with "Red" Kelly?
4. How does the way Kelly is drawn, reflect his personality?
5. Look at the scene where George confronts James about the race he lost. How are shadows used to convey his rage?
6. Not much dialogue is provided in the part where Red saves James from George Hellebore. What exactly happens between these two boys and why are no words needed?
7. Discuss the change of colour-theme in James' flashback regarding his parents. Why were these colours chosen and what do they suggest?
8. How does the artist inspire sympathy for George Hellebore in this same scene? Be specific in your references.
9. Where do you think Charmian and Max sit in the socio-economic scale and what evidence do you have to support this?
10. Where is the family resemblance between Max and James? (*Hint: think about physical representation, personality, passions and attitudes*)
11. Discuss the use of colour to represent the circus.
12. What extra plot details are provided in this scene, that aren't always explained with dialogue?
13. What era is this story set in? Name all the evidence (visuals, speech, symbols, historic references etc).



14. Discuss the use of colour, perspective and detail (or lack of) in Uncle Max's reminiscing scene.
15. Look at the scene where James and Red meet Wilder Lawless. What are the boys' individual reactions to her? How do we know she is a trustworthy character?
16. What was the purpose of introducing the character of Mike Moran?
17. How do the author *and* artist convey the unhappiness of George Hellebore?

Part Three: Silverfin

1. How do the colours change once we are established at Silverfin?
2. How has the artist exaggerated and emphasized the macabre way in which Mike Moran died?
3. How does Randolph's response to his death differ from others', and why has this been shown to the reader?
4. How is night visually communicated? Why has night been chosen for the context of the ensuing action?
5. How is dialogue used to suggest that the man with the pigs is merely a henchman – not an important character?
6. Why does the artist always show characters covered in shadow when they first come up to James? What does this suggest about James' future life and career?
7. Look at the scene where James and Red attempt to enter the fortress by climbing a tree. How has the panel structure changed in this double spread and why is it so?
8. What do we learn about the Hellebore family and their home whilst James is wandering through it?
9. Look at the scene where James falls over in the laboratory. Discuss the use of colour and other visual techniques to convey both the setting and his state of mind.
10. Why do we only see fragments of scenes in the next double page?
11. Discuss the parallels that have been drawn between Hellebore's laboratory and a medieval torture chamber.
12. What kinds of symbolism do you notice in the frame where Randolph stands in front of his eel tank, facing away?
13. What visual symbols are used to show that James has been altered by the serum?
14. Discuss the use of colour, perspective, panel shapes and level of detail in the scene where James swims away from the fortress underwater.
15. Who calls out "*James! Keep going!*" and why is this significant?
16. What is the effect of the "sunburst" in the scene where Hellebore catches up with James in the hills?
17. Why was the character of Wilder Lawless included in this storyline? Could she have been replaced by anyone else already in the story?
18. How is George Hellebore portrayed differently when James meets him in the woods, as opposed to all his previous encounters?
19. What is poetic (or ironic) about the way Randolph Hellebore meets his end?
20. Look at the final page. Could this scene have been as effective without the rain?



Themes:



Destiny

We open the first page of *Silverfin* knowing that James will grow up to become 007. He may not know this yet but throughout the novel we can see him making decisions, displaying personality traits, developing skills and showing us aspects of his childhood that one by one, begin to mould him into his future persona.

Through very little initiative of his own he is steaming towards a foregone conclusion; becoming a boy with only one path to follow, one destiny to fulfil.

Every acquaintance or friendship he makes has significance beyond his control – those characters will appear later to either save his life or threaten it. The more he learns about his family, the more he is becoming entwined in the world of espionage and thrill-seeking.

Other people are more aware of their destinies – having created them personally (for example Randolph Hellebore's ambitions and George's arrogance) – and yet these destinies are not fulfilled. This reminds us that destiny is not the same as ambition or hope, and cannot be controlled or harnessed by any of us.

Family

Family is a constant in the plot of *Silverfin*, although it never drives the plot. It is not family relationships that are always important, but more the fact that family connections have drawn each of the main characters into the central action whether they like it or not.

It is "Red" Kelly's cousin who goes missing at Silverfin Loch, drawing Red to Scotland where he will meet James. It is George's maniacally ambitious father Randolph who traps his son into a web of conceit, superiority, deception and violence. Similarly it is James Uncle Max who first unveils the world of espionage to his nephew, not to mention a love of cars and a thirst for adventure.

Family is also an interesting factor in James' life in that he has lost his parents at so young an age. Did this set him on the path towards the thrill-seeking, recklessness and disconnectedness that typifies the life of a spy?

It is his pseudo-parents Charmian and Max who have kept James from straying into juvenile delinquency, but also stimulated in him a desire to have and do more in his life. What aspects of family kept James out of danger, and which drew him towards it?

Independence and Isolation

James Bond as a young teen is a classic example of social displacement. He meets a few boys and one girl his age, but never makes any solid friendships. He is sent to Eton College, but does not come from the Upper class world the other students do. He is thrust into the world of competitive sports where he will compete against many others, but only because Latin was "*not his strong point*".

He will risk his life to find out what happened to a missing boy, but feels no connection to the victim and hardly any for his cousin.

James can be vulnerable and soft, displaying a desire for family lost (through his flashbacks, for example) and a care for family present. However he does not remember the times he spent *with* his parents – only the day he was told they were dead.

His relationships with Aunt Charmian and Uncle Max are positive and healthy however, and he does seem to feel a connection with Max in particular, whose words inspire him at the very end.

Overall James seems to value family, but is not defined by it. He spends most times alone and was absent when his Uncle died. It is perhaps the pain he feels at losing these three family members so young, that causes him to distance himself from others in future.

Good and Evil

Being a James Bond story, this is of course yet another battle of villains and heroes. A young boy and his companions must find out what terror is being harboured under lake Silverfin, and stop an evil maniac from unleashing his dreams of a super-race onto the world.

Because this story is written not for an adult audience, both the notions of “good” and “evil” have been explored and adapted in different ways, to suit the world of the younger reader.

Randolph Hellebore for example, is not only evil because he is a murderous fanatic – but also because he is a bad father who nearly ruins his son.

George Hellebore is evil not because he commits capital crimes, but because he cheats in sporting events, bullies weaker students, takes performance-enhancing drugs and believes he is superior to the other boys.

Readers know instantly that Wilder Lawless is “good” merely by the way she is physically drawn, and Red Kelly becomes a hero not by saving the world but by saving his friend.

When James’ Uncle Max reminisces about his days as a spy, and the time he was captured (dragged from his home) by German troops, we get the distinct impression (from both text and visuals) that the German soldiers represent an evil Empire, whilst Max represents a nation of liberators.

Another interesting allusion to good and evil in this text is when Randolph Hellebore’s chief scientist and partner discusses Adolph Hitler – a contemporary figure in this story, being prior to World War Two. According to men like these, Adolph is “*an interesting man*” with “*some very modern ideas about selective breeding to create a master race*”.

In essence, he is Randolph’s political parallel. In hindsight the modern world understands Hitler to have been a somewhat paranoid and psychotic tyrant who murdered 10 million innocents to establish the world he dreamed of. He is often lauded as one example of evil manifested in flesh - therefore it is interesting to see in *Silverfin*, which characters tend to align themselves with him.

Suggested Student Activities:

Extended Prose Ending

On the very last page we see James attending the funeral of his Uncle, and through the rain, grey mood and close-ups on James’ eyes it is suggested that at this point he decides to become the spy whose famous lifestyle will define him in years to come.

Ask students to replace these six panels with a prose ending that captures and deconstructs the thought process in that moment. They could begin their writing with a sentence starter such as;

“As the rain poured down on the old willow tree and the mourners huddled beneath it, my mind was echoing with the last words I’d heard my Uncle say...”

Dramatic Foreshadowing

Charlie Higson and Kev Walker have taken pains to ensure that the Young Bond novels stand alone as exciting and complete storylines. However part of the fun in these novels chronicling the adventures of a young James Bond, is in subtly presenting people, places, decisions and events that are clearly going to turn the young man into the infamous spy we all know and love.

Have your students brainstorm, discuss and present (as a poster, an oral or a psychologist's report) any aspects of the novel that are clear precursors to the Bond novels or films based on Ian Fleming's adult 007.



Examples may include:

- Early importance of Scotland as a setting (first actor of Bond will be Scottish)
- References to James' Uncle's career in espionage
- Parents who are active, adventurous risk-takers (dying in a mountaineering accident)
- Use of "007" on James' running jersey
- Introduction of young female in the archetypal role (smart, sassy, surprising)
- James' tendency to disregard the rules and cross boundaries
- Physical fitness and wide-spread abilities
- Ability to manoeuvre amongst and relate to members of the upper class, despite not being a part of them initially.
- Temporary adoption of 'sidekicks' who will provide interest and assistance but ultimately not be a part of the final denouement.
- James quickly gains driving skills and displays a reckless but successful driving style
- James' ability to make many acquaintances but never a deep connection

Comparative Study

If there is time in class, allow students to analyse the links between the boy, the man and the legend through a comparative study of *Silverfin* and one of the earlier film texts in which Sean Connery played James Bond. Excerpts from the more recent (and M15-rated) Bond films (i.e. *Tomorrow Never Dies* or *Quantum of Solace*) may also be used to help chronicle and deconstruct the literary journey of Fleming's original character from *Silverfin* through to *Dr No*. and finally *Quantum*.

Online Game

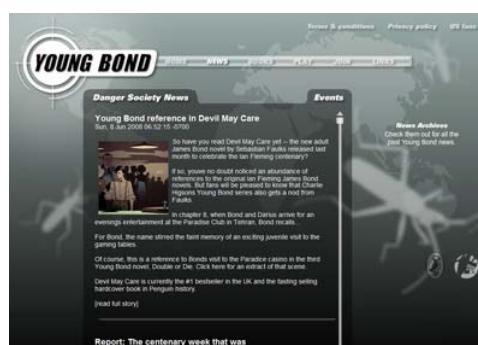
<http://www.youngbondshadowwar.com>

Europe is on the brink of being set aflame as the British Empire and the Soviet Union challenge each other for supremacy in the hidden world of spies. In *The Shadow War*, your students have the opportunity to join either the Soviet Secret Police, or the British Secret Intelligence Service, and join the fight. In class you could follow with a creative response (writing an official 'coded' mission document, researching major weaponry referenced or an annotated mission map), and many students may continue playing the game in their own time.

Paired Interview Task

Have students read the interview with author Charlie Higson at the "Young Bond" website.

<http://youngbondossier.com>



[/Young_Bond/Interview.html](#). It is a fascinating insight into the inspiration behind the Young Bond series, as well as the writer's craft itself. Students could answer a series of comprehension questions on this interview, or alternatively, plan and present a separate interview conducted between themselves and the character of young James Bond. Their questions should relate to the events and characters within *Silverfin* but could also stray slightly from the parameters (into the future, for example, or the past).

Reconstructing Text

When teaching graphic novels, we want students to understand and appreciate all the visual clues that go into an image. One way to draw their attention and analysis to features such as colour, perspective, angle, space and symbolism is to make them rely on all of these.

Photocopy or scan a page of the novel, white out the text, and photocopy again for students. They will have to use all visual clues given to them to reconstruct what might be taking place in terms of action, thoughts and dialogue. Discuss their decisions as a class. What they wrote in a dialogue box is not important – **why** they wrote it is.

Reconstructing Colour

Again, to help students understand the power and suggestive symbolism of colour, is to remove it and ask them to put it back in. Photocopy or scan a page of the novel (or an unseen text) and print in grayscale. Students must decide what colours to put back into the panels, basing their decisions on the settings, the tone of voice characters seem to be using, the mood of the scene and the personalities of the characters.

Construct a timeline

A quick activity designed to help students cement their understanding of plot development. Since stories in graphic novels are not bound by the same literary and structural rules as prose, they can often amble all over the place, interweaving sub-plots, flashbacks, other media and so on. Have students create a timeline on which the events are clearly shown in order of occurrence. They also might have sub-plots branching off and occurring on parallel lines.

Movie Adaptation

You are a Hollywood director who has been approached about the idea of creating the first in a series of Young Bond movies. They hope it will capitalize on the hype generated by the recent release of “Bond: Quantum of Solace”. You are keen to direct but you need industry sponsorship. Create a portfolio that you will use in a meeting next week to pitch the movie concept. You need to show them a list of actors suited to each role and why they will be successful, a movie poster including the ‘hook’ line, a list of locations you will need to shoot at (and accompanying travel budget), a profile of your target theatre audience and a design for merchandise that is going to reflect the sophisticated gadgetry and exciting espionage in *Silverfin*.



CD Soundtrack

Students will have to consider the thoughts and feelings of various characters, as well as the themes explored in various situations, by creating music that represents these. Ten songs must be selected for the *Silverfin* soundtrack, each being accompanied by one paragraph. In this paragraph students must explain where the song fits, why it is suitable and what aspects of the music or lyric will enhance the content of that scene. The focus here is not on students selecting their favourite contemporary songs; it is on their **justification** of their relevance to the scene, theme or character.

Plot reconstruction

A quick and simple task that helps students understand the structure of dialogue, and dialogue-driven plot. The panels of one scene are jumbled up for students to reassemble. They must use clues within the text (characters' use of tense, physical positioning, referencing one another, tone of voice etc) to decide on chronology.

Text Response Essay

After one or two lessons reminding students of the typical discursive or comparative essay structure, students can be given one of the following essay topics. Some topics may require the teaching of specific content or comparative texts.

1. "Is George Hellebore really James' "enemy"? Support your arguments with evidence from the text (quotes and examples)."
2. "Discuss the ways in which *Silverfin* establishes the character, future choices and lifestyle of the adult James Bond as portrayed in the Sean Connery film franchise"
3. "Select three scenes from *Silverfin* in which specific visual techniques have been used to enhance the events, mood and characters of the scene"
4. Can graphic novels tell a story as powerfully as a traditional novel? In your response refer to both the Graphic Novel and Prose versions of this text"

Further resources and Reading:

Teachers are encouraged to use 'Silverfin' as part of a wider unit on Graphic Novels, particularly if teaching this text in any grade level higher than 7. When it is time to branch out further into the Graphic Novel genre, the following resources can be used.

Comic Book Confidential (DVD, 1988)

Introduced by Kevin Smith (known to your students as *Silent Bob* from various MTV movies) director Ron Mann takes viewers through the controversial history of comic books from the early '30s to the late '80s, the documentary itself presented as an interesting mix of panel art, archival footage, and quirky interviews.

Maus I and II (Art Spiegelman, 1973)

Shocking the literary world by winning the Pulitzer Prize in its year of publication, *Maus* allows students to relive the trauma of the Holocaust through the eyes of metaphorical mice, relentlessly hunted by Nazi cats. Use sections only, but loan to your more capable readers who will love the fact that it represents a real and shocking era of human history.

A Contract with God (Will Eisner, 1978)

Offering a glimpse into the sad, spiritual, seedy and harrowingly real lives of those who live in one apartment building, this was the first publication to introduce itself as "A Graphic Novel" to readers, coining the term as we know it today.

The Sandman: Preludes and Nocturnes (Neil Gaiman, 1995)

One for the more sophisticated readers, this is the first in a volume of eleven in the *Sandman* library. It is a collection of dark and brooding tales, blending “modern myth and dark fantasy” in a dramatic, elegant and witty style that will appeal to students who will readily identify themselves.

Death: The Time of Your Life (Neil Gaiman, 1997)

A favourite of 14-16yr old girls with a penchant for gothic-style humour and smart, edgy narrative. Although the title seems morbid the central protagonist – Death – is actually portrayed as a seventeen year old girl who wears a top hat and quotes Mary Poppins. Her carefree zest for life (when she gets to visit earth to collect souls) and sensitivity to the departed teach us not to fear death, but to value life.

Runaways; Pride & Joy (Marvel. Written by B. K Vaughan, 2003)

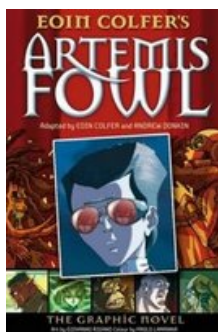
Pulled from the Premier’s Reading List of 2007, this is an easy read that tells the story of six teens, forced to band together and leave home after witnessing their parents sacrifice a young girl as part of a secret crime organisation called “The Pride”.

A Very Sammy Day (Azad, 2004)

A nice quick read for the more reluctant members of your class, who will easily get pulled into the worst day in existence for the “world’s unluckiest thief”.

Polly and the Pirates (Ted Naifeh, 2006)

Another easy introduction to Graphic Novels, and also on the Premier’s Reading List, this is a must-read for girls aged 12-15. Polly is a spoilt heiress, abducted one night by a pirate gang who claim her dead mother used to be their leader. After some cultural acclimatisation Polly becomes a swashbuckling Pirate queen with a surprisingly vicious taste for violence to accompany her blonde pigtails.



Artemis Fowl (Eoin Colfer & Andrew Donkin, 2007)

Adapted by Eoin Colfer and Andrew Donkin (*Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*), with beautiful panel art by Giovanni Rigano, this is the first of the five-book Artemis Fowl prose series to be reprinted in mesmerizing visual format.

The novel blends ‘Top Secret’ government agency profiling documents and crime surveillance photographs with its panels, challenging students to read in a variety of ways at the same time. A thoroughly enjoyable adventure. *Teachers’ notes available online from Penguin Books.*