

**Enhancing Rhetorical
Skills with Graphic
Novels in Senior English**

English IV Overview

- Companion class to AP Language, which focuses on elements of argument and composition, and rhetorical analysis skills.
- Specifically designed to prep students for college entry English classes
- At GHS, seniors take one year of:
 - English IV (one semester)
 - English Elective (one semester)

	Weeks Spent	Unit
Nonfiction	1	Introduction to Critical Thinking
	4	Introduction to Rhetoric (Identifying, analyzing, evaluating and comparing arguments)
	3	The Opinion Editorial (Utilizing the writing process through submission to the school newspaper)
	1	Visual Rhetorical Analysis (Also covers principles of graphic design to support Meaningful Life Project)
Fiction	4	Rhetorical Analysis of a Novel
	2	Rhetorical Analysis of a Graphic Novel (Includes basic elements of the genre)
	1	Write Club (Final Exam) Meaningful Life Project Due

Common Misconceptions

Perception of
“Low” Academic
Value or “Light
Reading”

Fear of Lowering
Standards and
Diluting Rigor

Lack of Serious
Themes and
Complex Ideas
Addressed

Concerns about
Visual vs. Textual
Learning

Misunderstanding
of Visual Literacy’s
Role

Why Graphic Novels?

Alignment with Standards

- Aligned with Common Core Standards, particularly in analyzing structure, tone, and multiple perspectives.
- Compliments traditional texts rather than replaces them, making the curriculum more well-rounded and versatile.

Critical Thinking and Analysis

- Like traditional novels, graphic novels address complex themes (e.g., identity, morality, and social justice) and employ symbolism, tone, and narrative perspective.
- Studying these texts helps students analyze the rhetorical choices made by the authors and illustrators and understand how visuals can enhance or contrast with textual messages.

Real World Relevance

- Graphic novels are increasingly used in professional fields, such as journalism and marketing, where visual storytelling is a powerful tool.
- Students learn how multimodal storytelling is relevant in contemporary communication and can be prepared for real-world applications.

Higher-Order Literacy Skills

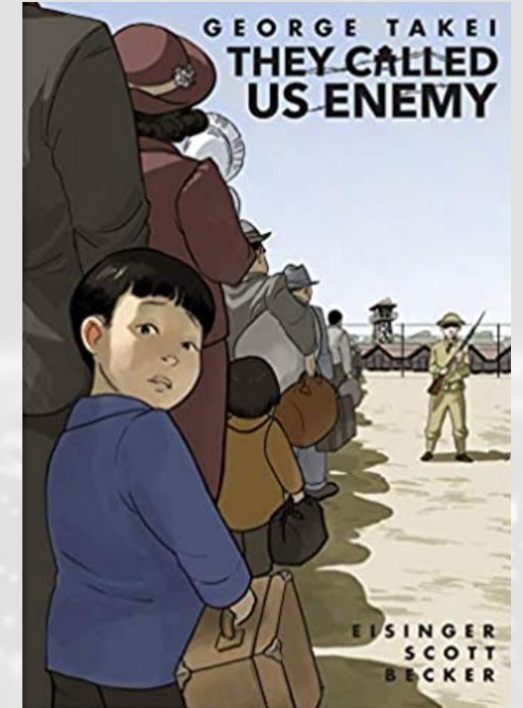
- Visual literacy skills expand a student's ability to decode and critique information presented in visual formats, making them more critical consumers of media.

English IV/Rhetoric: Contemporary Texts

They Called Us Enemy by George Takei

- Overview

- Study author's story in both textual and graphic form?
 - Students read poems written by people in Japanese Internment Camps in the US and compare those stories to Takei's
- Study how the argument changes between text and visuals.
 - Students are given blank pages from the text and must add in their own words based on the drawings. Then, they compare what they had to what is on the real pages.
- Study author's and artist's choices
- *They Called Us Enemy* focuses on first-hand account of a marginalized group
- Visual elements allow students to see why Takei and his family were seen as the enemy. They do this by analyzing the images that show the perspective of George and his family, especially around American soldiers.



- *Other books read in English IV Contemporary include George Orwell's 1984 as well as a student choice novel where they individually select a contemporary realistic fiction novel.*

English IV/Rhetoric: Contemporary Texts

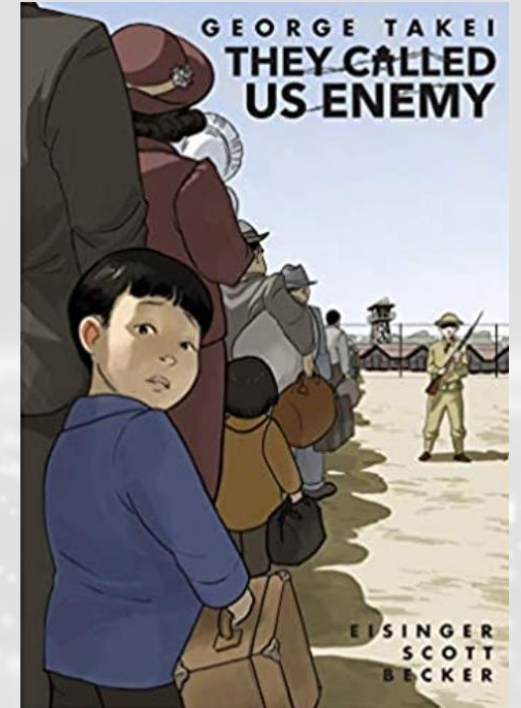
They Called Us Enemy by George Takei

- Visual Rhetoric

- Study how the use of color, shading, body language etc. convey an argument and accompanying emotions

- Exposure to Literature Options

- Graphic novels give students the opportunity to absorb information and literature through a medium that may be easier to understand and/or better fit their interests.



- *Other books read in English IV Contemporary include George Orwell's 1984 as well as a student choice novel where they individually select a contemporary realistic fiction novel.*

English IV/Rhetoric: Contemporary Texts

Class Examples

- **OPTICS Poster Study: Overview, Parts, Title, Interrelationships, Conclusion**
 - 5 Step analysis of all kinds of visuals. Focuses on making claims about the entire composition. Students are asked to provide insight into what Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* is trying to portray.
 - Then, use these skills toward the graphic novel. Students choose a page and identify the OPTICS.
- **Visual Rhetoric Socratic Seminar:**
 - Fishbowl style discussion where students come with a prepared packet with examples from the graphic novel. Some of the example questions include...
 - Why is this story most effectively told through a Graphic Memoir format? Find a graphic example from the text to support your reasoning.
 - What objects does Takei use as symbols to express their defiance?
 - The story is not told in a linear timeline. How does the graphic novel format help tell the story as the timeline bounces?



English IV/Rhetoric: World Mythology

The Odyssey by Gareth Hinds (Homer)

- Overview

- Study how argument can be crafted using only visuals
 - Odysseus leaving Calypso's island
- What does this say about the power of imagery in arguments?
 - The panels are visually more engaging and increase understanding compared to a list of events
- Study interpretation/artist's choices of original story
- *The Odyssey* is a foundational text in Greek Mythology
- Visual elements allow students to see renderings of an ancient civilization and analyze influence Ancient Greek culture has on modern Western culture

- Visual Rhetoric

- Study how the use of placement, panel design, and visual characterization establish an argument

- Exposure to Literature Options

- In a semester-long class, studying an entire Epic Poem in its original form may be time prohibitive. The graphic novel gives students the opportunity to be exposed to a historical/cultural touchstone in an efficient and meaningful way.



English IV/Rhetoric: World Mythology

Activity Examples

- **Rhetorical Analysis:**

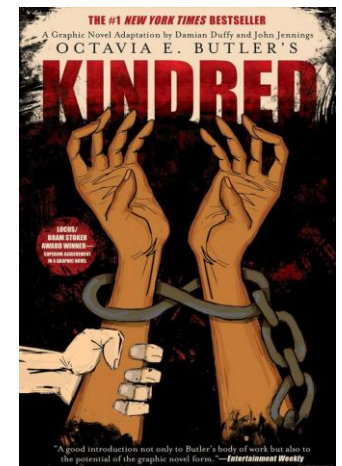
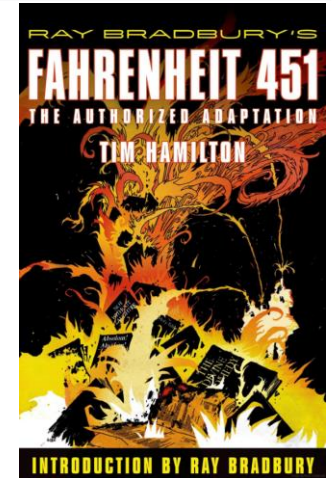
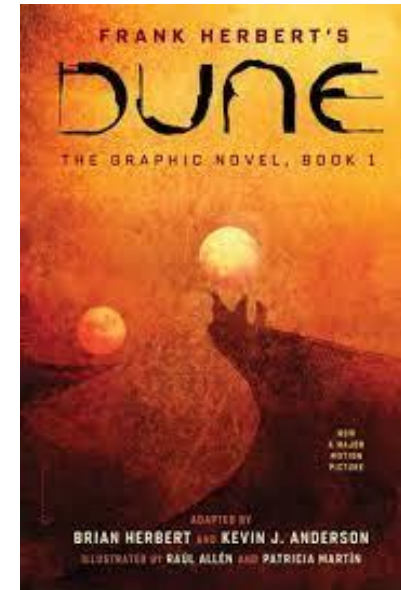
- Writing assignment that asks students to identify theme and analyze its usage/portrayal in the text
 - Provide specific textual evidence (panels, page numbers, etc.) that display the theme
 - Analyze its effectiveness and compare how its more powerfully conveyed using visual rhetoric than written rhetoric
 - Gareth Hinds' depiction of Odysseus' journey to the underworld is more immersive and powerful than simply listing details.

- **Visual Rhetoric Socratic Seminar:**

- Whole class discussion where students come with prepared notes in response to questions. Some of the questions may include:
 - How does Gareth Hinds' use of color enhance the multiple settings of the story?
 - What can you tell about the Ancient Greeks' attitude towards violence? How is it depicted on the page?
 - How do the panels with no text continue to tell the story? How does their composition make an argument/affect the reader?

English IV/Rhetoric: Science Fiction & Fantasy

- Graphic novels are used in conjunction with the original text and whenever possible, the corresponding film so students can analyze the impact of the medium on storytelling.
- We first teach the elements of the medium, then we apply the same process of rhetorical analysis to the text as we do throughout the rest of the semester.
- We want to build a library of texts to choose from so we can adapt to the needs of the students in front of us.
- Covering both Science Fiction and Fantasy in one semester is difficult so using graphic novels allows us to explore more texts in a shorter time.



Question 1

Rhetorical Situation:

This question refers to the two articles, Frank Herbert's letter, and the preface of the graphic novel



“ the mystery of life isn't a problem to solve, but a reality to experience. ”

Frank Herbert (Dune)

Author's Purpose:

- Explain how Frank Herbert's purpose writing the novel (*information from the articles*) impacted his son's purpose for creating the graphic novel (*the preface to the graphic novel*).
- Use specific evidence as support.

Okay, so there's a logical reason for using certain transitions.

BUT
What is the emotional effect, or PATHOS?

Example 1: Think about how the transition choices impact how you feel about the story...



THE NEXT STEP...

As you read *DUNE*, pay attention to **CLOSURE** and the types of transitions used in the first 8 pages.



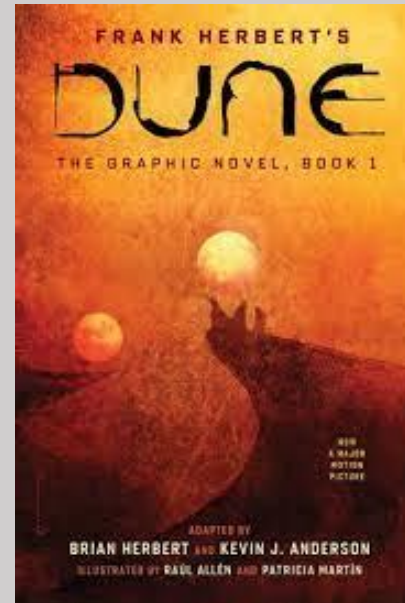
Question 2:

Media's Impact on Content

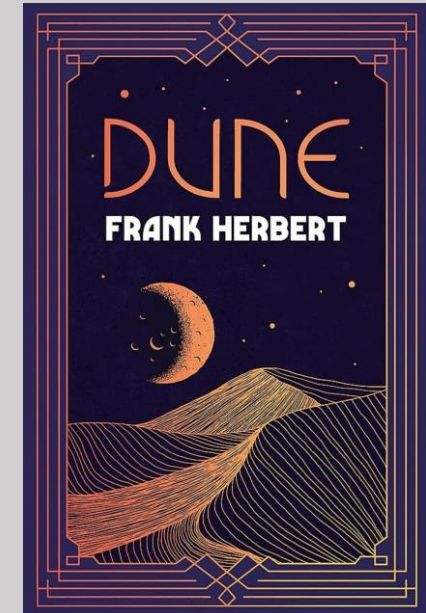
LITANY AGAINST FEAR

I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it is past gone, I will turn my inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone through, there will be nothing.

Only I will remain.



VS



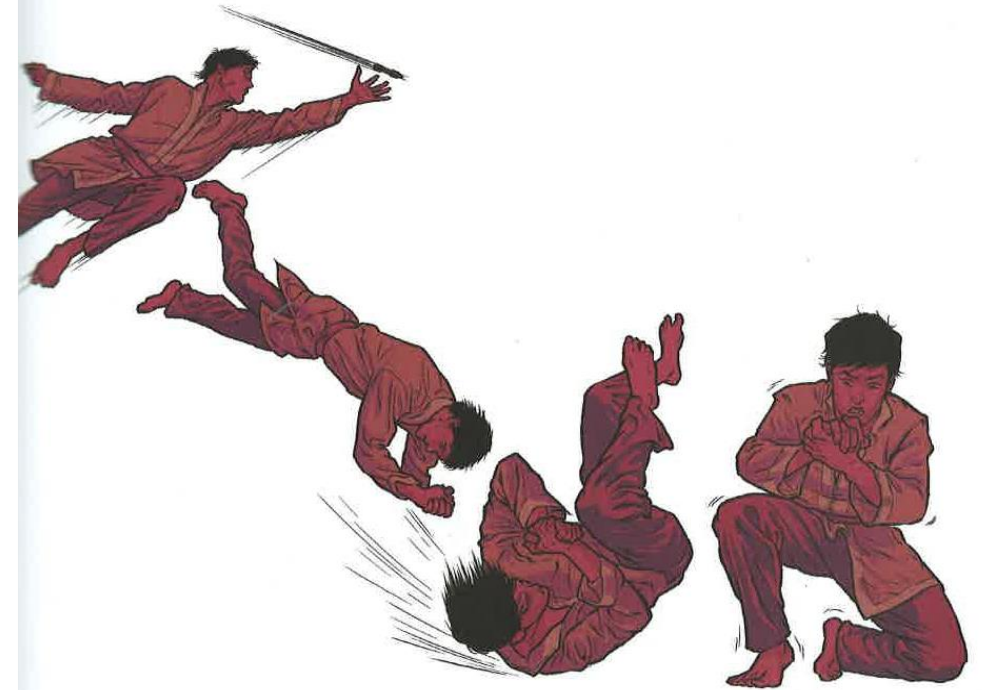
- Now that you've read chapter 1 of the novel, discuss the impact of the information the graphic novel does not include on the reader and the story.
- Use specific evidence as support.

Question 3: Elements of Rhetoric and Panel Analysis

Complete a rhetorical analysis of the design choices for this page.

- Choose at least 1 specific element of sequential art on this page and explain the visual impact.
- Analyze the page as a whole: how do the visual choices enhance this part of the story?

Elements of Sequential Art: panel, frame, gutter, bleed, foreground, midground, background, graphic weight (light vs dark, colors, pattern) faces, hands/feet, captions, speech balloons, special effect lettering,



Rhetorical Analysis: Novel vs. Graphic Novel

During Winston's time at the Ministry of Love, O'Brien makes this speech:

'Exactly. By making him suffer. Obedience is not enough. Unless he is suffering, how can you be sure that he is obeying your will and not his own? Power is in inflicting pain and humiliation. Power is in tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing.

Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating? It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined. A world of fear and treachery and torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but MORE merciless as it refines itself.

Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain. The old civilizations claimed that they were founded on love or justice. Ours is founded upon hatred. In our world there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph, and self-abasement. Everything else we shall destroy—everything.

Already we are breaking down the habits of thought which have survived from before the Revolution. We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer.

But in the future there will be no wives and no friends. Children will be taken from their mothers at birth, as one takes eggs from a hen. The sex instinct will be eradicated. Procreation will be an annual formality like the renewal of a ration card. We shall abolish the orgasm. Our neurologists are at work upon it now. There will be no loyalty, except loyalty towards the Party. There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother.

There will be no laughter, except the laugh of triumph over a defeated enemy. There will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent we shall have no more need of science. There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the process of life. All competing pleasures will be destroyed.

But always—do not forget this, Winston—always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling on an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—

for ever.

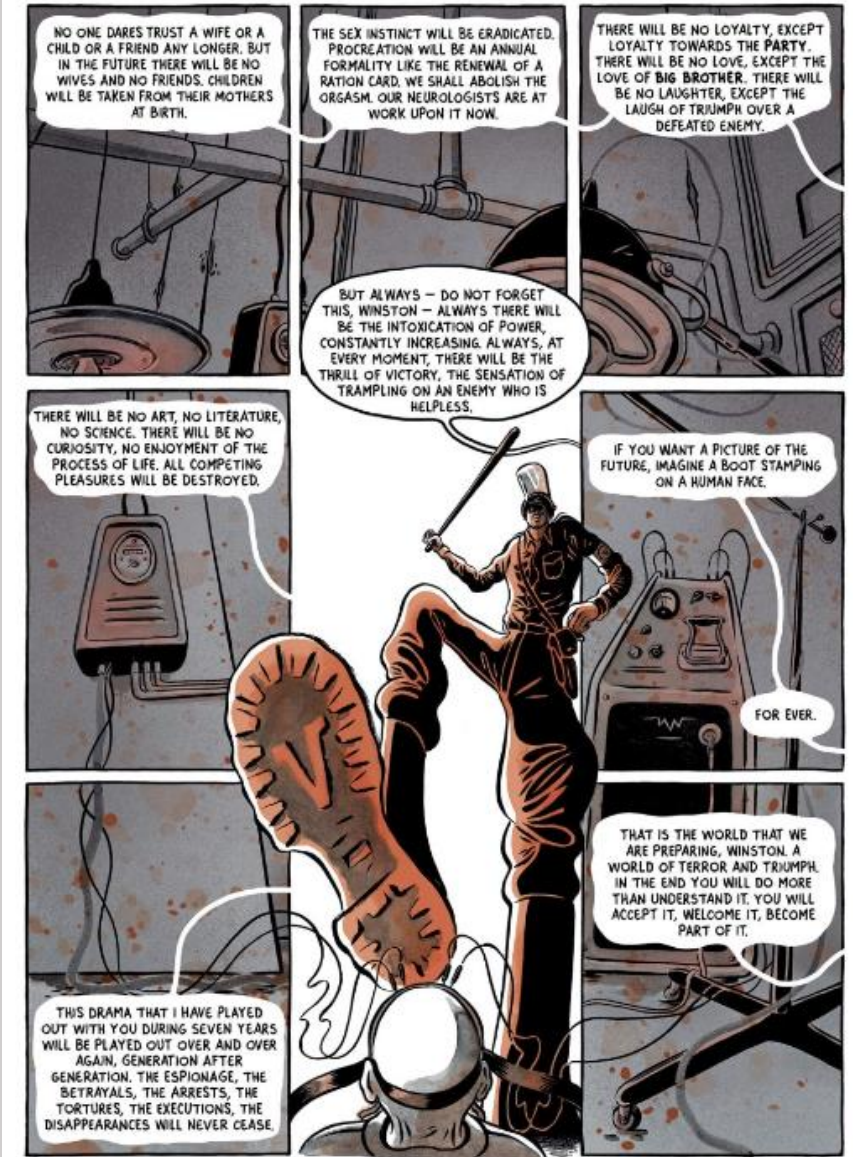


EXACTLY. OBEDIENCE IS NOT ENOUGH, UNLESS HE IS SUFFERING. HOW CAN YOU BE SURE THAT HE IS OBEYING YOUR WILL AND NOT HIS OWN? POWER IS IN INFLECTING PAIN AND HUMILIATION. POWER IS IN TEARING HUMAN MINDS TO PIECES AND PUTTING THEM TOGETHER AGAIN IN NEW SHAPES OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING. DO YOU BEGIN TO SEE, THEN, WHAT KIND OF WORLD WE ARE CREATING? IT IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF THE STUPID HEDONISTIC UTOPIAS THAT THE OLD REFORMERS IMAGINED. A WORLD OF FEAR AND TREACHERY AND TORMENT, A WORLD OF TRAMPLING AND BEING TRAMPLED UPON, A WORLD WHICH WILL GROW NOT LESS BUT MORE MERCILESS AS IT REFINES ITSELF. PROGRESS IN OUR WORLD WILL BE PROGRESS TOWARDS MORE PAIN. THE OLD CIVILIZATIONS CLAIMED THAT THEY WERE FOUNDED ON LOVE OR JUSTICE. OURS IS FOUNDED UPON HATRED.

IN OUR WORLD THERE WILL BE NO EMOTIONS EXCEPT FEAR, RAGE, TRIUMPH AND SELF-ABASEMENT. EVERYTHING ELSE WE SHALL DESTROY.

EVERYTHING.

How does presenting the same information graphically affect the story?



NO ONE DARES TRUST A WIFE OR A CHILD OR A FRIEND ANY LONGER, BUT IN THE FUTURE THERE WILL BE NO WIVES AND NO FRIENDS. CHILDREN WILL BE TAKEN FROM THEIR MOTHERS AT BIRTH.

THE SEX INSTINCT WILL BE ERADICATED. PROCREATION WILL BE AN ANNUAL FORMALITY LIKE THE RENEWAL OF A RATION CARD. WE SHALL ABOLISH THE ORGASM. OUR NEUROLOGISTS ARE AT WORK UPON IT NOW.

THERE WILL BE NO LOYALTY, EXCEPT LOYALTY TOWARDS THE PARTY. THERE WILL BE NO LOVE, EXCEPT THE LOVE OF BIG BROTHER. THERE WILL BE NO LAUGHTER, EXCEPT THE LAUGH OF TRIUMPH OVER A DEFEATED ENEMY.

BUT ALWAYS — DO NOT FORGET THIS, WINSTON — ALWAYS THERE WILL BE THE INTOXICATION OF POWER, CONSTANTLY INCREASING ALWAYS, AT EVERY MOMENT, THERE WILL BE THE THRILL OF VICTORY, THE SENSATION OF TRAMPLING ON AN ENEMY WHO IS HELPLESS.

THERE WILL BE NO ART, NO LITERATURE, NO SCIENCE. THERE WILL BE NO CURIOSITY, NO ENJOYMENT OF THE PROCESS OF LIFE. ALL COMPETING PLEASURES WILL BE DESTROYED.

IF YOU WANT A PICTURE OF THE FUTURE, IMAGINE A BOOT STAMPING ON A HUMAN FACE.

FOR EVER.

THIS DRAMA THAT I HAVE PLAYED OUT WITH YOU DURING SEVEN YEARS WILL BE PLAYED OUT OVER AND OVER AGAIN, GENERATION AFTER GENERATION. THE ESPIONAGE, THE BETRAYALS, THE ARRESTS, THE TORTURES, THE EXECUTIONS, THE DISAPPEARANCES WILL NEVER CEASE.

THAT IS THE WORLD THAT WE ARE PREPARING, WINSTON. A WORLD OF TERROR AND TRIUMPH. IN THE END YOU WILL DO MORE THAN UNDERSTAND IT, YOU WILL ACCEPT IT, WELCOME IT, BECOME PART OF IT.

**If you'd like to see Graphic Novels in action,
this is your formal invitation to come visit
English IV classes during the Graphic Novel
Unit!**