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Annotated Bibliography:

Clean Graphic Novels



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Many graphic novels and comics that are being written in the 21st century are for an adult audience. Several comics include excessive violence, over-sexualized drawings, and disturbing images. With the popularity of many comic book movies, live action shows, toys, and cartoons, many children are interested in reading graphic novels. However, it can be challenging to find comics that are appropriate for a young audience. This bibliography has the purpose of identifying fun and clean graphic novels that adults may share with children. The titles listed in this bibliography are either limited run or ongoing series, and includes titles written in the past decade.

Baltazar, A., & Aureliani, F. (2012–2013). *Superman Family Adventures* (Vols. 1–2). New York: DC Comics.

These stories take place in a universe that is more “cartoony” than the mainstream comics. Not only do they feature Superman but they also feature members of his extended family like his cousin, Supergirl, and his clone, Superboy. In addition, this series also features the various Superpets, like Krypto the Superdog, Streaky the Supercat, and Beppo the Supermonkey. These stories contain generous action but the violence is very limited. The stories in this series are cute and simple, which make them ideal for young, elementary-age readers. Fans of all ages will likely pick up on the various references to the other Superman comics, films, and television shows.

Baltazar, A., & Aureliani, F. (2009–2012, 2014–2015). *Tiny Titans* (Vols. 1–9). New York: DC Comics.

Tiny Titans is based on the successful *Teen Titans* series. It takes the teenage sidekick characters from that series and places them in elementary school. The stories in this series are humorous and brief. The font of the dialogue in this book is large which will allow for easy reading. The dialogue is also very short. Many of these stories focus on friendship and working as team. Children who are familiar with the various DC comic characters and stories will enjoy the references to the other comic storylines. These stories are best for young elementary readers.

Fontana, S., & Labat, Y. (2015–Ongoing). *DC Super Hero Girls*. New York: DC Comics.

Over the years, women in comics have been drawn in overtly sexual ways and

dress inappropriately. This is especially troubling since many of the heroines and villainesses are favorites among young girls, like Batgirl, Supergirl, Poison Ivy, and Harley Quinn. In 2015, DC created the webseries *DC Super Hero Girls*. In this series, the characters dress modestly and the content is clean. The popularity of this series has led to the creation of toys, movies, novels, and graphic novels. It is very similar to the *Secret Hero Society* since it focuses on a universe in which DC heroes and villains go to school together. Although there are male students, the focus of this series is on the female characters. These stories focus on the friendships of these young superheroines and villainesses as they learn how to depend on each other in their various adventures and misadventures. There are currently two published volumes in this series with another one scheduled for publication the summer of 2017. This series is written with an elementary audience (most likely girls) in mind.

Fridolfs, D., & Nguyen, D. (2014). *Batman Li'l Gotham* (Vols. 1-2). New York: DC Comics.

Over the years Batman has become increasingly gritty. This comic series takes place in a universe where the characters are drawn small. This is a world that incorporates many of the parts of Batman stories from different timelines and universes. The series has silly stories and various misadventures of Batman and his team. The action is very cartoony and not gratuitous. There is nothing dark to be found in this series. Teenagers will likely find it too juvenile; however, it is ideal for elementary readers.

Fridolfs, D., & Nguyen D. (2016–Ongoing). *Secret Hero Society*. New York: Scholastic Inc.

These books are set in a world where young Bruce Wayne is friends with young Clark Kent and Diana Prince. The first book focuses on Bruce's investigation into the other students and professors at his school who all are villains in the DC universe like Joker, General Zod, and Bane. Children who enjoy the DC comics as well as detective stories will enjoy these books. The second book focuses on our three heroes going to an adventure camp. These books include collections of comic panels, memos, emails, and letters. The series is ideal for readers in late elementary or early middle school.

Henderson, E., & North, R. (2015–Ongoing). *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*. New York: Marvel Worldwide Inc.

Doreen Green is not your average computer science major; in secret, she is the Unbeatable... Squirrel Girl. Yes, you read that right! She may not seem like much, but she can beat up any character in the Marvel universe. She is a clever superhero who always comes up with comical ways to outsmart her enemies or use her squirrel friends to defeat the villain without excessive violence. These are light-hearted stories that many young readers, especially female, will find hilarious. Parents will not have to worry about these stories being too edgy or dark. These will be enjoyed by most girls in middle school and high school. Currently there are several collected editions of *The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*.

Lagos, A., & Lagos, J. (2010-2011). *The Sons of Liberty* (Vols. 1-2). New York: Random House.

If you are looking for something that is a little different from your traditional DC and Marvel comics as well as something that is diverse, you may want to try *The Sons of Liberty*. This story focuses on two runaway slaves, Graham and Brody, during colonial America who encounter the wayward scientist, William Franklin, who through an unorthodox experiment empowers them with enhanced strength and mental capacity. The two boys are guided by Benjamin Lay and Benjamin Franklin. Franklin's desire is to keep the boys' power hidden in secret. However, Lay trains them in martial arts in order for them to learn how to control their powers. This is historical fiction that leans heavily toward fiction. There are many diversions from history such as William Franklin being a mad scientist and Benjamin Lay having ninja skills. However, it does teach about slavery in early America. The story is very engaging and exciting. Although the violence is not gratuitous, it is probably too graphic for elementary-age readers. These two volumes are probably best for readers in late middle school or high school.

Landis, M., & J. Krueger. (2014-2015). *Adventures of Superman* (Vols. 1-3). New York: DC Comics.

The *Adventures of Superman* is perfect for young or new readers. The individual issues do not build upon another, so readers do not need to follow complicated story arcs. Some of the individual stories are only a few pages. These comics are full of action; however, the violence is not excessive. The stories are enjoyable and a throwback to the simplicity of comics from the Golden Age.

Loveness, J., & Kesinger, B. (2016). *Groot*. New York: Marvel Worldwide Inc.

Since his appearance in the *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie, Groot has become a pop culture icon. In 2015, Marvel Comics gave everyone's favorite talking tree a limited-run series. This graphic novel includes all six issues of his series. The series tells the story of Groot and his best friend, Rocket Raccoon, taking a trip to visit earth. On the way, they have many misadventures including run-ins with space pirates, Skrulls, and the Silver Surfer. This series is full of comedy and has great action sequences. This would be ideal for late elementary to high school readers. By the time a reader gets through with this series, one will want to say, "I AM GROOT."

Parker, J. (2014-2016). *Batman '66* (Vols. 1-5). New York: DC Comics.

BAM! POW! Holy Retro, Batman, do you miss the Adam West television series from the 1960s? Well, DC has published original stories that are set in the '66 universe. All the characters are drawn in likeness to the actors who portrayed the characters in the show. The series also includes characters that were not featured in the show but were created after the show was canceled. It has all the corny jokes and bat tools that made the show a classic. It also includes references to the other Batman comics

and movies. The violence in the series is very clean and does not include blood and guts; there is only cartoon violence. The title was discontinued after 30 issues which encompass five volumes. However, there are additional crossovers into other television shows that have been published or will soon be published such as Green Hornet, Wonder Woman '77, The Man from U.N.C.L.E., and Steed and Mrs. Peel.

Tynion, J. (2017). *Batman Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Burbank, CA: DC Comics.

The ultimate comic crossover has finally arrived. A portal from the world of the ninja turtles has transported the four turtle brothers, Splinter, and Shredder and his Foot Clan to Gotham City. Even though it may sound like a ridiculous concept, the writing of this story is well crafted. Fans of both series will delight in how the characters from these two universes unite with one another. This is the most violent comic on this list, but it is not gratuitous. This series is best for readers in late middle school or high school. There are currently no plans to continue the crossover from these specific universes. However, after the success of this series, in late 2016, DC did publish a brief series directed at younger readers, which included Batman from the 90s animated series crossing over with the ninja turtles from the 2012 animated series. This will be released as a collected edition in the summer of 2017.

Young, S. (2016). *Giant Size Little Marvel Avengers vs. X-Men*. New York: Marvel Worldwide Inc.

This series was a limited run that spoofed the Avengers vs. X-Men storyline. The storyline takes place in the land of Marville, which is located on Battleworld. Battleworld includes remnants of the Marvel multiverse. The citizens of Marville are made up of the child versions of the Marvel comic book characters. This story focuses on the two club houses, the Avengers and the X-Men, fighting each other to determine which club a set of twins moving into Marville will join. The humor and action are appropriate for young readers. Older readers will likely appreciate the references that this story makes to the other Marvel universes. This is a fun series that Marvel fans will enjoy. †

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