

SIGNAL Journal

The Journal of the International Reading Association's Special Interest Group: Network on Young Adult Literature

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Thank you for agreeing to serve as a reviewer for *SIGNAL Journal*. As editors, our goal is to publish a balance of theoretical and practitioner-oriented articles that deepen the field's understanding of young adult literature and appeal to educators across a range of institutional contexts, disciplines and levels. Because prospective authors spend a considerable amount of time preparing their papers, we ask that you please honor their work by offering them thoughtful (and substantive) feedback. As you craft your response, we invite you to consider the following questions:

1) Does the piece demonstrate scholarly rigor?

- Does the author demonstrate a sense of familiarity with relevant scholarship?
- Is the author's argument theoretically sound?
- Does the author provide a clear and well-supported argument for claims made?

2) Does the piece contribute to the field of young adult literature and the mission of *SIGNAL Journal* by exploring, highlighting, and/or complicating theories and/or practices of young adult literature?

- Is the paper likely to ignite conversation within the profession?
- Is the paper of potential interest to education professionals across a range of institutional contexts, disciplines and levels?
- Are the implications of the paper potentially significant?

3) Does the piece demonstrate clarity of writing?

- Is the piece written in a tone that is likely to capture readers' interest?
- Is the piece organized in a way that helps readers navigate the argument made?
- Is the piece free from errors in language, punctuation, grammar, usage, etc.?

4) Does the piece reflect the call for papers?

- Does the author address issues/questions that are relevant to the theme highlighted in the call?

As you respond to the author(s), please identify strengths of their paper as well as suggestions for revision. By doing so, you will offer them valuable guidance, while also helping me to make an informed decision about the quality of their work. As editors, we will read each submission and compare our notes to those of the reviewers prior to making a final decision about the status of a manuscript. Below, please find a sample review that represents the sort of feedback that we aspire to share with authors who submit papers for possible publication in *SIGNAL Journal*.

Thank you for your service to the journal.

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SAMPLE SIGNAL JOURNAL REVIEW

Please use the following scale to evaluate this manuscript on the criteria listed below:

1 = unsatisfactory 2 = marginal 3 = fair 4 = good 5 = excellent

 2 Quality of scholarship
 4 Topic (interesting, timely, and/or important)
 3 General reader appeal
 3 Effective writing style
 3 Reflects call for issue

1) What makes this article an appropriate fit for *SIGNAL Journal*?

While claims about the value of using graphic novels in educational settings have been made for quite some time, relatively few empirical studies have asked how teachers and students take these texts up and experience them in the context of actual classrooms. This manuscript is potentially valuable if for no other reason than that it offers readers of *SIGNAL Journal* insight into the critical conversations that are possible around graphic novels.

2) In what ways do you think this manuscript significantly adds to current or emerging conversations in the field?

The authors draw on data from an empirical study to demonstrate how graphic novels like Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* lend themselves to supporting critical conversations about identity politics. Similar arguments have been made elsewhere, but they often take the form of conceptual articles. A definite strength of this manuscript is that it supports its claims using data drawn from student-led discussions.

3) Comments to the Editors (confidential):

With more work, there is a place for this manuscript in *SIGNAL Journal*. Despite the frequency of claims made for the educational merit of graphic novels, relatively few empirical studies have asked how teachers and students take them up in actual classroom settings. For this reason, the authors' work is of potential value to the field. Prior to accepting this manuscript for publication, however, I would recommend that the authors develop their literature review, which is presently scant (see our comments above). Likewise, I would encourage them to address the limitations (briefly) and implications (in detail) of their work. As a reader, I was disappointed by the conclusion of the manuscript, as it felt hurried. I got the impression that the authors were ready to be finished writing, and as a result they neglected to address the question of *why* their work is of potential theoretical or practical interest to literacy educators.

4) Comments to the Author(s) (to be shared with author(s)):

This manuscript is of potential interest to readers of *SIGNAL Journal*. Although further work is needed, the authors do a reasonably good job of grounding their work in extant scholarship on graphic novels and critical literacy (more on this later), and they illuminate the valuable role that graphic novels are capable of playing in sustaining critical conversations about complex social and political issues. As they revise their manuscript, I would encourage the authors to address the following:

- The authors could do a better job of contextualizing their study. As a reader, I found myself wondering whether the study took place in an urban or suburban setting. Likewise, I wondered whether the ethnic and gender diversity of the participants identified in the article was representative of the larger class. On a final note, I would encourage the authors to comment (even if briefly) on the limitations of their study. This discussion need not be drawn out, but it is important to at least acknowledge the issue.
- The literature review requires substantive attention. The authors acknowledge scholarship on graphic novels, but the discussion is underdeveloped. Considering that, in presenting their findings, the authors express an interest in understanding how the visual design of *Persepolis* influenced the way their participants read and interpreted the graphic novel, it would make sense for them to review scholarship on graphic novel reading. While the authors cite McCloud (1993) and Chute (2008), their work is conceptual. The authors would strengthen their manuscript by foregrounding empirical research that has asked how readers experience graphic novels.
- On page 12, the authors describe a student's response to a scene in which a Guardian of the Revolution reprimands the character Marji for running down a city street. The authors write, "Max critically read the text, images, and font, equating volume with power to control Marjane and *others not pictured*" (our emphasis). The authors miss an opportunity to make an important point here: Graphic novel reading is sometimes criticized for requiring little imagination—that is, the highly visual nature of the medium is thought to minimize the need for readers to construct their own mental images. (A participant in the authors' study made a similar point.) That said, the authors' account of Max's response to the aforementioned scene suggests that, in reading the graphic novel, he engaged in the sort of gap-filling that Iser (1978) associates with aesthetic reading. After all, he was introducing information that was not visually present in the panels he read. In this sense he was active as a reader. The authors might consider foregrounding this point, as it disrupts a stigma associated with this form of reading.
- While I generally enjoyed reading this manuscript, I was disappointed by the conclusion, as it felt hurried. I would encourage the authors to discuss the theoretical/practical implications of their research in greater detail. Specifically, how are their findings relevant to classroom teachers? When selecting graphic novels to use with students, what factors might literacy educators need to take into account? What is it about *Persepolis* that allowed it to sustain critical conversations of the sort the authors described? Are there other graphic novels the authors know of that could accomplish this, and might they recommend a few titles? These are questions the authors should consider addressing.

_____ **Accept with minor revisions:** The article is excellent across the criteria noted above, but may need minor revision and/or editing.

_____ **Conditionally accept:** The article needs some revision but is fundamentally sound. If the author is willing to make the revisions, the article should be accepted.

_____ **Revise and Resubmit:** The article has the potential to be published in *SIGNAL Journal* but needs substantive revision.

_____ **Do not accept.** The article is not suitable for publication in *SIGNAL Journal*.