



From Roots to Flourishing Literacy: Using Picture Books and Graphic Novels in the Middle and High School ESL Classroom

by Justine H. Busto, 2014 CTI Fellow
East Mecklenburg High School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
ESL, English and Language Arts Classes in Middle and High School

Keywords: ESL, Language Arts, English, Graphic Novels, Picture Books, Visual Storytelling, Immigration

Teaching Standards: See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: This curriculum unit addresses the fact that many immigrant students arrive with gaps in their education, especially in early exposure to reading. If they arrive in middle or high school, they may never be exposed to children’s picture books and reading experiences that develop a love of reading. This gap, while not measured by standardized testing, has a far-reaching impact on the literacy and life-long learning possibilities of these students and their future children. Picture books and graphic novels can help bridge this gap and give these students reading confidence and reading strategies they will need to become competent readers. Not only ESL students, but also mainstream students can benefit from the strategies outlined in this unit. One exemplary graphic novel, Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival*, is used throughout the detailed lesson activities to demonstrate the many ways that graphic novels and visual literacy can be used to increase students’ ability to analyze a text in detail, understand perspective and purpose in literature, and connect themes to other content areas such as social studies and math.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 20 students in ESL English classes for 10th and 12th grades.

I give permission for the Institute to publish my curriculum unit and synopsis in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

From Roots to Flourishing Literacy: Using Picture Books and Graphic Novels in the Middle and High School ESL Classroom

Justine H. Busto

Introduction and Rationale

In the ESL classroom, especially at middle and high school level, we welcome many students who have significant gaps in their education. Some have escaped war and violence in their home countries and missed years of schooling. Some have not had access to education because education is not encouraged for girls. Others have missed years of schooling because education is not free in many countries or they had to leave school in order to work and help support their families. Educators have an acronym for these students – SIFE, “Students with Interrupted Formal Education.” Technically, they are students who have missed 2 or more years of formal education. It’s a useful distinction when determining academic readiness, however there is at least one “gap” it does not measure – the gap that many of my ESL students demonstrate when they have never entered the rich world of children’s picture books and been swept away in the love of a book.

So many of my students were not read to as children. They didn’t have books in the home, often of any kind, but certainly not books that were specifically for children. One of my students from Honduras, 17-year-old Carlos (not his real name), told me of his amazement upon arrival at his new home in Charlotte, North Carolina. His younger brother, who had been in the US a number of years with his mother before Carlos was able to make the journey himself, had books he brought home from school and was reading, voluntarily! Carlos told me that he had never seen people reading for pleasure at home. Although he quickly became a star student, picking up verbal and written English with amazing speed, he still does not like reading. He says, “Life was more fun before books.” He’s dismayed by the barrier he perceives in the mountains of words he must climb to make it out of high school. Even in the Auto Tech class, a subject that personally interests him, there was so much reading to get through before the actual shop time that he lost interest. His experience reflects that of many of my high school ESL students, those who arrived in the middle and high school years. They see reading as a chore, a task to conquer, a test they will most likely fail. And, unfortunately, much of what they are presented with in their mainstream classrooms is dense text, with little visual support, way above their reading comprehension level. This only reinforces their dislike of reading rather than coaxing them out of their non-literate shells. In addition to the fact that their textbooks are in a new language, these books present a much greater amount of reading than many of these students have experienced, in any language. Teachers of immigrant students must be aware of the fact that some students will have

only attended school for a short time, sometimes never, before arriving. They and their parents may be illiterate or semi-literate.

In the ESL Language Development and English classes that I teach for 9th to 12th grade, I am able to introduce new immigrant students to simpler, modified texts that contain visual and language support. Our district provides us with a wealth of fiction and non-fiction texts that are adapted for ESL readers. However, even those texts at times are insufficient to address the gap that I am exploring here – the gap in the experience of immersion in picture books. A picture book is a book containing many illustrations, especially for children. It does not present a scary, impossible task of reading so many unfamiliar words. It invites the reader's eyes to wander over and explore the pages rather than following, in lock step, row after row of text. When we think about introducing young children to books, we would never start them out with novels! Why would we start a new reader of English, especially one who is non-literate in the first language, with books that present an uninviting task? In *Book Bridges for ESL Students: Using Young Adult and Children's Literature to Teach ESL*, Suzanne Reid states that picture books “can be used to facilitate learning for students of all levels and ages, but they are particularly valuable in reducing the affective blocking or nervous tension that plagues so many beginning readers.”¹ Reid gives several rationales for using carefully selected children's literature with adults and teens and provides a helpful list of books for content areas such as history, science, and math that can be used in the ESL classroom.

Picture books and graphic novels should not be considered the exclusive domain of the ESL teacher, however. Graphic novels are considered a format, not a genre. They can include non-fiction and fiction. They use sequential art, like comic books, to tell a story and contain sophisticated narratives, complex dialogues and visual cues, and often changes in directionality of reading—which makes them in some ways more challenging than traditional word texts. A lot of recent education research points convincingly to the effectiveness of visual and multimodal literature in regular and advanced level classrooms. In her book, *The Graphic Novel Classroom: Powerful Teaching and Learning with Images*, Maureen Bakis refers to a number of educational studies and lists many reasons for using graphic novels to teach literature. Among them she states that “because of the interpretive nature of pictures, graphic novels facilitate instruction on the participatory and active, constructive nature of reading.”² All students can benefit from literature and discussion about literature that encourages interaction between the reader and the text. Good readers think about how they are responding to a text, why they are responding in certain ways and how their own life experience interacts with a text. They are active readers constructing meaning from literature. Poor readers, even though they may have life experiences they could relate to the text, are often shut out from that connection by their lack of experience as active, engaged readers. Using visual storytelling elements, requiring students to grapple with “the interpretive nature of pictures” helps teach the active reading skills that students will need to become proficient

readers. These skills need development at all levels of reading, but particularly for beginning readers.

Children in literature-rich homes receive their initiation into active readership in the lap of a parent, aunt, uncle, or older sibling. They marvel at the pictures, notice patterns and shapes, wonder about the characters, and ask questions. Soon, they imitate the reading of words with help from clues in the pictures. They are immersed in the reading experience as a part of life itself. But, teens and young adults who lack this early, active reading experience with picture books need to be invited to the reading circle, too. That is why enchanting ESL students and reluctant readers with picture books is not just a frivolous, fun activity. It is a way to help them fill in a crucial gap in their reading experience. Graphic novels, with more complex and longer narratives, often about topics that are more relevant to teens and adults, can help the reluctant reader gain confidence as he or she enters the world of literature.

Another point that Bakis makes in her summary of current education research that promotes graphic novels in the classroom is that “the analysis of the relationship between content and form of graphic novels prompts critical thinking and is applicable to the analysis of other media.”³ ESL students, just like all other students, are exposed to and communicate through a rapidly evolving array of communication technologies and media. The visual input of new media and ways of communication is astoundingly complex. From web pages, blogs, YouTube videos, Instagram and on-line information sources, visual literacy is increasingly required to navigate the modern world. As Bakis points out, the relationship between content and form – the message and the medium – and the ability to interpret and critically think about images are topics and skills that graphic novels and picture books are uniquely qualified to address.

Therefore, it should not be assumed that by using visual literature, a high school teacher is dumbing down her course content. Rather, the teacher is providing access to “multimodal text . . . a single text whose decoding requires mastery of a number of different literacies.”⁴ This type of text is increasingly required in 21st century learning from the world of business to the world of education.

Background and Literacy Issues

In a typical secondary ESL classroom, students will arrive with a broad range of literacy and academic preparation. Some will have had an adequate primary school education, with exposure to content and literature on the same level as their non-ESL peers, only in a different language. They may need just a few years of ESL support to thrive in the mainstream classroom. Some are refugee students who have fled their home countries because of violence or religious persecution. They may be students who have come from poor countries where an education means sitting in a classroom of 50 students, copying text from a chalkboard. These students will need more years of ESL support. The ESL Language Arts teacher should have a wide range of books and media to address the wide

range of literacy presented in the class. Children's picture books and graphic novels should be welcomed in the middle and high school classroom to support the growth of all students. There are a number of resources for locating appropriate books, listed in the teacher's bibliography of this curriculum unit. Comics, simply defined as "sequential art" in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*⁵, as well as graphic novels (which develop techniques from comics in service of longer forms of fiction and non-fiction), and picture books all have a place in supporting gains in visual and verbal literacy. However, most teachers in secondary school are not encouraged to explore these forms of literature. Too much emphasis is placed on reading for tests, rather than developing life-long lovers of reading. If we take a realistic look at the population of students we are teaching and start from where they are on the literacy continuum, rather than where we would like them to be, we would not limit our resources to the standard high school curriculum.

The high school where I teach has a very diverse population, with students originating from 45 different countries. ESL students in my classroom this year come from Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Liberia, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Spain and Thailand. Doing a quick search on *The World Factbook* at cia.gov shows that these countries have a wide range of literacy rates. Burma's literacy rate, defined as the percentage of the population over age 14 who can read and write, is the highest at 93%. Nepal's is one of the lowest, with an overall literacy rate of 57% (71% of males over 14 can read and write, but only 47% of females over 14 can read and write).⁶ Students and families fleeing these countries are often from socio-economic groups that have lower literacy, so my rough estimate of the literacy rate in the native language of my newest students and their families is around 75%. I base this on the *World Factbook* figures and my own experience working with ESL students and their parents. Luckily, I have small classes, averaging 10 students per class at the beginning of the year (this can change as new students enroll throughout the year). I am able to give many of them the intensive literacy support and individual attention they need. However, my students also spend part of the day in mainstream classes, which can be as large as 30 students per class. I can see the stress they experience when they are required to take classes with a heavy reading and content load well beyond their level.

Keeping the backgrounds and range of literacies in a typical middle or high school ESL classroom in mind, I've designed this curriculum unit to be more about an overall approach rather than a specific, time-defined unit of lessons. In this unit I describe some techniques that can be used to integrate picture books and graphic novels into the ESL curriculum. The Lesson Activities section, however, takes a more in depth look at one particular wordless graphic novel, Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, and demonstrates numerous activities that could be used to teach that novel. Those activities could easily cover a month of instruction or be spread out over the course of a semester. Both middle and high school ESL teachers would find this curriculum unit appropriate. Mainstream

English and Language Arts teachers may also find the lessons and activities useful, especially as ways to modify for English Language Learners and reach reluctant readers of any kind.

Content Objectives

The first part of the Teaching Strategies section in this curriculum unit describes how to meet students where they are – considering their prior reading experience and their roots. These strategies help set up a classroom reading culture that is friendly to beginning and more advanced readers from many different cultures. A sample of children’s and young adult (YA) literature from different regions of the world is described in the reading list for students in the Resources section of this curriculum unit.

In language teaching and learning, there is a well-known “Silent Period”⁷ in which learners should be allowed to look and listen, and not be required to speak. Picture books and wordless books fit perfectly into this period of learning. Cristina Igoa, in her book *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child*, argues passionately for the importance of understanding the trauma and stress that immigrant students experience in starting their education in a new country.⁸ Forcing students to speak and read as quickly as possible can cause some students to withdraw and actually impedes their progress. Activities that allow students to participate in the language arts class, even when they have no or few words to express their ideas, are suggested in this unit. The ideal ESL classroom should allow students who arrive with low literacy to fill in the early reading “gap,” providing them with time to explore picture books and be enticed by beautiful images without fear of failure with words. Satisfying a new language learner’s need to hear and repeat phrases many times and encounter repeated patterns in pictures and words, well-chosen children’s literature can support comprehension in a way that more adult texts cannot. In addition, a variety of literature from around the world, depicting cultures that reflect the students’ backgrounds, should be available. Linda Pratt and Janice Beaty’s *Transcultural Children’s Literature* provides an extensive list that can be drawn upon.⁹

The second part of the Teaching Strategies section focuses on graphic novels and YA literature that blend visual elements with more words and/or more sophisticated content, building reading stamina. Using Tan’s *The Arrival* as an example, the strategies and classroom activities describe ways to help students read a text visually and draw upon metacognitive skills. Reading and creating graphs and charts will also be discussed as a way to address the need for secondary students to interpret informational text. *The Arrival*, though a wordless graphic novel, contains so many theme connections that can easily lead to further reading in the content areas of social studies and math, for example. These themes also can connect to student projects exploring the immigration experience and phases of adjustment to a new culture. This unit will show how online resources containing readings about immigration and bar graphs and pie charts illustrating immigration statistics can be linked to *The Arrival*. Many of my students are stumped when they look at bar graphs and pie charts. They have difficulty interpreting the

language of mathematics, science and social studies without the ability to visualize number relationships. *Book Bridges for ESL Students*, referenced in the teacher bibliography section of this curriculum unit, lists many children's and young adult books that can help ESL students catch up to their peers in the visual literacy required for the content areas.

The final section of Teaching Strategies discusses ways to encourage life-long reading and writing. Several options for culminating projects related to *The Arrival* are presented as examples of ways to extend visual literature into creative writing and visual art projects in the ESL classroom.

Many of my ESL students will become parents, and they often become parents at an early age. Since the reading experiences they have in school will directly influence their children, the next generation of students and readers, the time taken to foster literacy and the love of reading in its many forms is well worth the effort.

Teaching Strategies

Don't Ignore Your Students' Roots

In a poignant series of pictures within his wordless novel *The Arrival*, Shaun Tan portrays the experience of a recent immigrant to a new and strange land and his first attempts at employment. The immigrant gets a job pasting up signs on walls around the city, but he cannot read the signs he's posting. When his boss comes to survey his work, he's fired because he has pasted every sign upside down.¹⁰ Teachers of language and reading should be reminded by this story of the complex task of decoding language. Even those of us who teach new immigrants forget at times the many, many small steps we had to take along the way to literacy. Students coming from cultures where text is read from right to left, for example, may need extra help when presented with such "simple" reading as a comic strip.

English Language Learners must be given comprehensible input in the target language in order to learn.¹¹ Wordless books and picture books with very few words are a good place to start with any learner, especially those with low literacy. Holding a book in the hand, turning the pages and noticing how a book is organized, counting the pages, examining the pictures on the cover and inside the book are comprehensible activities for beginning readers that reveal a surprising amount of information. When parents read to young children, they consciously or unconsciously introduce the child to the world of books by taking the time to do some of these activities. However, teens and adults who are not literate have not received this type of welcome into the world of books--so that is where the "comprehensible input" should start.

Give some Attention to the Peritext

One of the reading skills many high school teachers take for granted is the ability to read the “peritext” of a book. Peritext includes the cover, endpapers, title page, publishing information and other forms of visual and written information not included directly in the story or text of the book. Sipe and McGuire, in their article “Picturebook Endpapers: Resources for Literary and Aesthetic Interpretation,” give examples of how peritext, in the form of the endpapers – first page and last page of a book and the pages that are glued to the front and back cover – can be used to encourage pre-reading, predicting and reflecting, even among very young readers.¹²

Asking students to “discover the cover” or do a “book look,” terms I use when introducing a book to my class, is a crucial step for orienting new readers. For low-literacy students, asking about colors and pictures on the endpapers of a book or helping them pronounce the title and discuss the pictures on the cover are good places to start. For more advanced students, pointing out the publisher’s page, helping them determine the difference between “author” and “illustrator,” reminding them to check for glossaries, contents pages and indexes are often overlooked activities that help orient novice readers. These activities need not be belabored and at some point can be dropped as students move to more independent reading. However, it is important to observe and guide students as they first approach books. I have observed students get stuck on the publisher’s page and dedication of a book, not realizing that they do not have to read, or pretend to read, every word of the peritext in order to start enjoying a book. Understanding and exploring the peritext of a book is a foundational activity that helps root new readers in the academic culture and the wider culture of general literacy. In the Activities section of this curriculum unit, I will describe several peritext reading activities using Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* that can be used in a multilevel classroom, ESL and mainstream.

Find a Way to Connect with the Students’ Backgrounds

Providing high-interest reading materials that are visually appealing and age appropriate is key to creating an inviting language arts classroom. Students from other countries are hungry for reflections of their experience and home cultures, as well as books that welcome them and help them make sense of their new school and new country. Bilingual books are a good choice, but are not available in every language. (I have English/Spanish books in my classroom library, but few or none in the other languages represented in my classroom.) So, picture books can help provide that connection. With a children’s picture book, provided that the pictures or photos are respectful of the described culture and not oversimplified stereotypes, a student can experience the relief and pleasure of seeing familiar content and context. Pratt and Beaty’s book *Transcultural Children’s Literature*¹³, described more fully in the bibliography of this curriculum unit, and web sites such as International Children’s Digital Library¹⁴ and Book Trust¹⁵ contain a wealth of resources for access to multicultural literature.

Don’t Dismiss Children’s Books in the Secondary Classroom

Age-appropriateness is something to consider, but literature developed for children in the target language should not be dismissed, even for adult learners. In my personal and professional experience, beginners in a language love to look at children's literature in the target language. Literature created to delight and entertain, with lots of pictures and repetitive phrasing, is a relief and a helpful tool, not disrespectful and babyish. However, teens vary in how they react to children's literature, so only observation on a case-by-case basis can inform the teacher as to whether a book is "appropriate" or not. A list of children's picture books that are suggested around themes appropriate to the middle and high school classroom can be found in the Resources section of this unit.

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition

We learn our first language, and any subsequent languages, by repeating patterns and phrases we encounter in the aural and written world surrounding us. Dr. Seuss books are the classic example of delightful word play, based on repeated patterns in both pictures and written text. Many English speakers learned to read with Dr. Seuss. If you were learning Gujarati, wouldn't you like a Dr. Seuss-type book to help you along? Seuss books are also well suited to the ESL classroom because they cover a range of reading abilities and complexities of content. *Hop on Pop*, great for beginners, may be too simple for more advanced ESL students, but *The Lorax*, a much more sophisticated text, could be used to help students grasp concepts such as environmentalism and interpret sophisticated phrasing, such as "No one can sing who has smog in his throat."¹⁶ One potential problem with Seuss books, though, is that he makes up many words. Students can become confused by his whimsical wording and unusual phrasing. Careful thought must go into the selection of the book that matches the level of your class. Also, Dr. Seuss is often better for reading aloud to the whole class and not independent reading. Students need to hear the words to get the pleasure of the rhymes.

In addition to Dr. Seuss, keep an eye out for the many clever, sophisticated children's books that can be mined for their wit, visual appeal, repetitive phrasing and other qualities that make them ESL friendly. The Resource section of this unit will list some of my favorites.

In the Activities section, I will use *The Arrival* as an example of how to exploit repetition in visual elements as a way to help students grasp repeated patterns and their meanings in the context of literature. ESL students who have low literacy, in English as well as in the native language, must catch up to their mainstream peers in many skill areas, such as the ability to compare and contrast, distinguish point of view and perspective, and order sequence of events. A wordless novel such as Tan's *The Arrival* is an excellent way to introduce these concepts to students who may not have the reading ability to grasp them in a word text at the high school level.

Connect Themes in Content Areas Through Visual Literacy

Many children's picture books and young adult graphic novels explore themes that are interesting and relevant to the ESL middle and high school student. Using a picture book or wordless novel to introduce a theme and build content schema before leading students into a grade-level text is an excellent way to scaffold for ESL learners. In the Activities section, I will use *The Arrival* as one example of how a wordless book can introduce the topics of migration, immigration, cultural adjustment, and cross-cultural comparison. Students can use the visual text as a springboard to build vocabulary lists, timelines, Venn diagrams and other graphic organizers. Many readings are available online that can connect with the themes in *The Arrival*. The Activities section will list some and explain ways to use them.

Reading Graphs and Charts – A Necessary Visual Literacy

Students cannot completely understand bar graphs and pie charts unless they know how to make them accurately. Many times I have noticed that my students confuse the percentage numbers illustrated on a pie chart with ordinal numbers. For example, if the pie chart shows 45% of the students at school speak Spanish, they will tell me that 45 students at school speak Spanish. Being able to read informational text and interpret graphs and charts is an essential literacy that mainstream students have mostly mastered by the time they reach high school. Reid's *Book Bridges for ESL Students*, listed in the bibliography of this curriculum unit, is a good source for books that can help ESL students catch up to their peers.

Using a graphic novel such as *The Arrival* as a source or springboard for students to make bar graphs and pie charts themselves will help them have a stronger grasp of the purpose of representing data in visual form. One example, explained in more detail in the Activities section, would be to have students make a survey of the class and a bar graph showing what items they brought with them from their native countries. (This correlates with the pictures on the opening pages of sections I and VI of *The Arrival*.) Their bar graphs could then be converted to pie charts, requiring that they convert ordinal numbers into percentages. These graphic displays of data, coming from the students themselves, are a purposeful way to introduce this essential visual literacy to ESL students.

Make it Your Own

Every elementary school teacher knows the importance of extending a student's love of a particular book or topic into a creative project. Elementary students are encouraged to extend their reading experience by making drawings or building models, for example. These opportunities for creative response to reading become crowded out by increased academic demands as students move up to high school. But, immigrant students, especially those from impoverished backgrounds, with little exposure to literature and creative arts such as painting and drawing, can benefit tremendously from reading extension projects that encourage reflection and creative response to reading

A visual novel such as Tan's *The Arrival*, designed to stimulate imagination and wonder, is a perfect source for creative art/writing projects for ESL students. The Activities section of this unit will discuss in detail how to use the opening pages of sections I and VI in *The Arrival* as a springboard for a visual art and writing project entitled "What We Brought and What We Left Behind"

Share What You Have

It is important that ESL students be encouraged to share the wealth of knowledge and experience they have with other students in school. When ESL students are made to feel that they can only receive from their new culture, as if they arrived like empty vessels to be filled, and are never asked to contribute to their new culture, they become passive learners instead of active participants. Creative art and writing projects give these students a way to express themselves and their experience with other students with whom they might not be able to have a long conversation.

The Activities section will explore ways that visual art and writing projects extending from *The Arrival* can be used to connect ESL and mainstream students, especially in Art, Social Studies, Foreign Language and Language Arts classes.

Classroom Activities

All the classroom activities in this section are based on *The Arrival*, a graphic novel by Shaun Tan. I chose this book to articulate how a teacher can use picture books and graphic novels to work with ESL students, particularly those from backgrounds of low literacy. Although there are no English words in *The Arrival*, the book is not short, at 122 pages, and not simple. It requires a good deal of reading and re-reading, careful study and close attention to detail, acceptance of ambiguity and openness to interpretation. The few words that are in the illustrations are in a made-up language, intended to show how an immigrant feels when surrounded by incomprehensible text.

It is a text that could be used with any level class, from middle school to graduate school and beyond. For this reason, I find it particularly suited to the multi-level language arts classroom typical in a high school.

One problem with teaching *The Arrival* is that it has no page numbers. It is divided into 6 chapters or sections, but within each chapter there are multiple pages, making it difficult to direct a class to specific pages. For this reason, I recommend that the pages be numbered using a pencil. (My apologies to the author and publisher. I realize there are artistic reasons around the choice to forgo page numbers, and that could be an interesting topic of discussion with the class!)

I numbered the pages in my classroom set of *The Arrival* starting with the opening page, the one after the page with a Roman numeral "I", that contains 9 pictures of objects starting with an origami bird, a clock, a hat, etc. The activities below refer to this

numbering system, so I will list the chapter number and page numbers when referencing specific pages from the book in the following activities. Ideally, each student should be able to look at their own copy of the book, but pairs of students could work with one book. It is important for students to be able to hold the book themselves and turn pages, not just view it on a document camera. The physical book is an integral part of many of the activities.

Discover the Cover

The Arrival has one of the most intriguing covers of any book, so it is a perfect example for a “Discover the Cover” activity with a class.

First, tell students that they MAY NOT open the book until you tell them to do so. To emphasize your point and make the book even more intriguing, I suggest tying a length of twine around each student’s book to keep it closed and make it look like a special delivery package. This goes perfectly with the aesthetic of the book. Also, as the students will see later, a similarly tied package figures into the first chapter of the book.

Next, tell the students that they are going to examine the cover very carefully to make guesses about what is inside. They can work with a partner to fill out the following “Discover the Cover” KWL-style Chart. Guide them with one or two examples to get them going. You might ask the class, “Why does this book look old? Is it old?” and record their responses in the first two columns. Also, you could ask “Do you see the suitcase? What do you think is in it?” Point to the suitcase and give an example guess if you have beginning students. Be sure to ask them to write the title in the first column and write a guess about the title. For higher-level classes, have students read some of the reviews that are printed on the back and look for information about the book in the reviews. For beginning English learners, you may need to provide words such as “hat”, “suit”, “animal”, “tail”, “price tag,” etc.

What I SEE on the cover...	What I GUESS about the inside of the book...	After I read the book, were any of my GUESSES ACCURATE? Explain
<i>The cover looks old. It has scratches and marks.</i>	<i>Maybe it is an old story. Maybe the book was written a long time ago.</i>	

Collect and save the “Discover the Cover” charts. Hand them out when students finish the book and have them fill in the 3rd column, evaluating how accurate their guesses were. This could lead perfectly into a reflection writing assignment for higher level students.

Reading Endpapers & Title Page

If you have tied the books closed with twine, now is the time to open this exciting package! What person doesn't like opening a mysterious parcel? Tell students that now they are only going to look at the "wrapping paper" around the story and not read the story yet. By "wrapping paper," you mean the endpapers, title and publisher's page. Show them the pages you are referring to and tell them "no peeking" at the story yet! You could tie the story pages of the book together with another twine before they receive the book. This may be necessary for low-level learners who will not comprehend instructions not to peek.

Ask the students to refer back to what they wrote on their "Discover the Cover" charts. Do the endpapers and title pages give them any more clues about the story?

This is a perfect opportunity for students to practice predicting. For higher-level learners, the publisher's page gives you the opportunity to discuss terms like publisher, author, text, illustration, printing, dedication, etc.

The endpapers of *The Arrival* contain beautiful drawings that look like old photographs of 60 different faces. These faces appear to be of people from all over the globe. The people wear many different ethnic costumes, with some in head- scarves, hats, berets, turbans or caps. They are all different ages and races. All the faces are serious, as if taken for a passport photo. Immigrant students will find some point of identification with these pictures and will often say that some of the pictures look like people from their countries. For ESL students learning how to describe people, the endpapers of *The Arrival* could be used for a descriptive writing activity. Each student picks one person on the page and writes, in as much detail as possible, a description of that person. Then, students exchange their descriptions with partners. Partners attempt to identify which person on the page is being described in the writing. Before teaching this activity, a vocabulary list similar to the one below should be provided and discussed:

Vocabulary List for Discussion of Pictures on Endpapers in *The Arrival*:

face, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, straight hair, long hair, short hair, bangs, beard, bald, mustache, glasses, braids, wrinkles, old, young, middle-aged, light skin, dark skin, turban, cap, hat, head scarf, neck scarf, pipe, earrings, stripes, pattern

One other fascinating aspect of the title pages of *The Arrival* is the fact that there are two title pages, the first in a mysterious, made-up language, and the second in English. This gives the teacher of ESL students the perfect opportunity to teach word decoding and comparative language skills. On the first title page, the title appears in symbols bearing little resemblance to the English alphabet. Under the title, the author's name

appears, and it is partially recognizable—the “S” in Shaun looks like an English “S”, the “T” in Tan is just upside down. The “a” is backwards. Students who are unfamiliar with the book will have a difficult time recognizing that this is the title and author of the book, until you turn to the next page and see the title and author in English. Since the placement of title and author on the two pages is about the same, some of the students will be able to decipher what the first page says by turning back and forth between the two pages. This type of language detective work is a necessary skill for anyone learning a language. Throughout the novel, the main character is seen puzzling over signs and using his dictionary and brain to make guesses. Middle and high school students are particularly interested in coded language, so they will be fascinated by this aspect of the novel.

Reading the Story – Chapters I and II

Once the cover and the peritext of the book have been thoroughly explored, it is time to actually read the story. The buildup to reading the story, including tying the novel shut with twine, serves to heighten anticipation and prepares students to approach this novel with attention to detail and patience to read and re-read for evidence of meaning. The latter skills—attention to detail and re-reading for evidence—are often weak or undeveloped in secondary ESL students. By using a picture book, students can be coaxed into the habit of revisiting what they have read for evidence to back up their claims. Low-level readers have a difficult time doing this with dense, word-based text. A graphic novel like Tan’s serves as a way to train students in an approach to literature that they need to develop in order to make gains in reading comprehension.

I recommend “reading” the first chapter together as a class, to model for students how to visually read this challenging novel. Opening to Chapter I, ask students to look at the nine pictures on page 1. Allow students to call out what they see on the page and help with vocabulary by writing words on the board—origami bird, clock, hat, towel, tea cup, etc. Then ask, “Who are the people in the picture? Where are they? Why do you think the author is showing us these things?” After giving students time to share their ideas, ask everyone to turn to page 2 and 3.

Page 2 shows the framed picture of the family from page 1 being wrapped up in a package and placed in a suitcase. Page 3 shows the father and mother from the picture, with both hands on the suitcase, and all the items from page 1 around them, presumably in their kitchen. These pages are an elegant example of the recursive nature of this graphic novel. The reader needs to look back and forth between pages, cycling over a series of pages several times in order to make sense of the story. Give students some time to reflect on the meaning of these pictures, and practice together the skilled reading habit of examining details, relating details from one page to prior pages, and making interpretations and guesses. Just on these three pages alone, students can make a number of observations and predictions about the story. Think aloud with the class to nudge them

toward recursive reading skills and then tell them to read on their own to page 10, the end of chapter I.

After students have read chapter I, most will be able to grasp the narrative of the father leaving his wife and daughter to go on a long journey by train. Details in the illustrations hint that the father is leaving his home in search of a better, safer life for his family. Students who have emigrated from dangerous countries will be able to relate, and all students who have traveled far from their original homes will relate to the sadness expressed in chapter I. At this point, have students write a short summary of the story so far. Providing an objective summary of a text and studying the craft of the author in determining the sequence of pictures and how the story is told are Common Core standards that students need to practice. The end of chapter I is a good place to help students with these skills as the story is fairly clear and unambiguous up to this point. Even though some students might disagree over the meaning of the shadow of the dragon-like tail on pages 5-7, most will have a fairly similar interpretation of the chapter.

Chapter II should be read first independently. Students need time to explore the pages on their own and make their own interpretations before any instruction that might lead them to a particular interpretation of the story. Chapter 2 is much longer than Chapter I, more complicated, and has many more illustrations that will puzzle students. However, the main narrative of the main character taking a ship to a very foreign land and going through the process of entry into a new country, with all the indignities of the physical exam and verbal interview will be clear. Also, immigrant students will have no trouble relating their experience of first arrival to the man's struggle with language and communication as he seeks a place to live. The poignancy and sadness when he opens his suitcase and takes out the picture of his family will not be lost on the students. Another summarizing activity, possibly with partners, would be a good activity at the end of chapter II.

Stories within the Story –Three Immigration Stories

Chapter III shows the main character leaving his new apartment in search of food and introduces two stories within the main story of other immigrants the main character meets in this strange, new land. One is an Asian woman who tells her story of persecution and escape from her home country. The main character also meets a father and son who take him to their home for a meal. There the father relates visually the story of how he and his wife escaped a dangerous situation and traveled by boat to their new home.

Chapter IV illustrates the main character's struggle to find work. In Chapter IV, the main character meets an old man working across from him on a factory assembly line who "tells," through a series of pictures, the third embedded story within the main story. In the pictures we see that the old man was once a young soldier who left his home in celebration and returned as a cripple to find his hometown deserted and destroyed by war.

How he traveled to his new country is not illustrated, but most students will not have trouble understanding why he had to emigrate.

These three stories give the language arts teacher an excellent example of the concept of stories contained within a frame story, a literary device that lends itself perfectly to the students' own life stories and experience. They all have individual stories of immigration that can be related and placed within the larger story of immigration in the United States.

Small group activities could be employed to help students read the three embedded stories in *The Arrival*. The class could be divided into 3 groups with each group taking one of the embedded stories and parsing that story for details to share with the larger group. Each group could make a one-sentence summary of each of the pictures on each page of the embedded immigration story and share their summaries with the whole class—thus practicing the crucial skills of sequencing and retelling.

Another interesting activity that could help students develop the practice of reading visually and paying attention to the details of the writer's craft would be to have students discuss the differences in the page and picture borders of the three embedded stories from each other and from the main, frame story. The page borders of the main story are all white. The borders of the embedded stories are darker, with one story (the family man's story) bordered completely in black. Also, each picture frame within the embedded stories has its own border. The borders of the individual pictures in the Asian woman's story, for example, make each picture look like old photographs. The edges of the "photos" look worn and torn. Students who are interested in art will be fascinated by Shaun Tan's illustration skill and his use of shadowing to show depth and texture here. Ask students to discuss and compare the three embedded stories from the standpoint of color, lines, texture, and picture placement. Why are some of the pictures full-page pictures and others smaller series of pictures? Lead them in a discussion of the reasons for the author's decision to make the page borders of the embedded stories different from each other. Ask them to think about why these stories were placed in the main story and why the author chose to place them where he did.

An extension activity would be to have students "write" their own immigration story as if it were a series of photographs or pictures that would be included in Tan's *Arrival*. Students who enjoy drawing and illustrating would be particularly attracted to this project. However, students who say they can't draw (sadly, most of my students) could alternatively write instructions for an artist to draw the pictures of their immigration story. In other words, they would describe how many pictures, what size pictures, what the borders would look like, and in detail what would be included in each picture to tell their immigration story. (Some students will then decide it is easier to attempt to draw than write!) Whether the students draw their own pictures or write instructions for drawing the pictures, they would have to justify in writing why they chose a particular type and color of border for each picture, why they chose small or large pictures, how

many pictures they chose to tell their story, and where in Shaun Tan’s *The Arrival* they would place their own story.

Connecting Literature to Content Areas: Social Studies and Math

The three embedded immigration stories in *The Arrival* also lend themselves well to cross-curricular connections with math and social studies. Since the three stories tell about three reasons for immigration—persecution, violence and war in the home country—this could lead to a class discussion and exploration of the reasons for immigration to the US. A number of websites contain data on recent immigration statistics, among them the websites of the United Nations Refugee Agency and the Migration Policy Institute. See the Resources section for web addresses. The Migration Policy Institute contains a pie chart showing the top ten countries of birth of immigrants in the US and breaks down immigration statistics by regions of the world, age, sex and reason for immigration.

ESL students could do a survey of reasons for immigration among the class members. Using the results of the survey, graph paper and colored pencils, students then make a simple bar graph show the class statistics. The bar graphs could be converted to pie charts, reinforcing math skills. The class pie chart could then be compared to the pie chart on the Migration Policy Institute website.

Compare and Contrast Using Graphic Organizers

Another graph activity that could spring from *The Arrival* would relate to the 9 pictures on page 1 of Chapter I and page 117, the first page of Chapter VI. Ask students to study these two pages carefully. They show household and personal items that the main character had in his home country in Chapter I and similar items that he has in his new country. Ask the class to compare and contrast these items using a chart. Below is an example of the headings and a student entry in the chart:

Describe Picture on Pg 1	Describe Picture on Pg 117	How are they similar?	How are they different?
<i>Picture 1 is an origami bird. It has 2 legs and wings.</i>	<i>Picture 1 is an origami creature. It has 4 legs and a tail.</i>	<i>Both are made of paper. I think the father made both of them for his daughter.</i>	<i>One is an animal I know. I don't know the other animal's name.</i>

After making this graphic organizer, it becomes clear that although many of the objects are similar in purpose, they look different and some seem very strange to us. By juxtaposing the two pages, the students can figure out that the common household item in

picture 2 on pg. 117 is probably a clock, and picture 6 is probably of some devices to make hot tea. Again, the recursive nature of the graphic novel requires that for full comprehension the reader must toggle back and forth between pages. Interestingly, when you figure out that picture 2 on pg. 117 is a clock, you can go back through the novel and notice more pictures of clocks that you probably passed over without noticing the first read through.

Following the graphic organizer activity, another class survey could lead to another chance to make a bar graph and pie chart. Ask students what object on pages 1 and 117 appear to be the same. They will notice that the main character's hat and the picture of his family are the only objects that are unchanged. Then ask the class to write down a list of items they brought with them from their home country to the US. Are there any objects that would be the same in your kitchen in the US and in your home country? What about clothing? Do you wear any of the same clothing that you did in your home country? Students could do a tally chart of items they and their family brought with them from the home country and then convert the tally chart to a bar graph and a pie chart representing the class data. This activity ties into the final project activity below.

Pets – Examining Cultural Differences

One of the most whimsical elements of Tan's *The Arrival* is his illustration of the amazing variety of pets that the people in the new country have. The main character is alternately scared, baffled, confused, and delighted by all the animals he encounters. Almost everyone seems to have a familiar pet that travels with him or her, sometimes in baskets, sometimes riding on shoulders or walking along on the ground. It even appears that when you rent an apartment in this strange, delightful land, a friendly house pet is included in the rent! The creature that causes much speculation on the cover of the book turns out to be a central character in chapters 2 through 6. This creature helps the main character adapt to and learn from his new country and make connections with other people in the story. It also appears to be the model for the origami creature on pg. 117.

For some immigrant students, the common practice in the US of having a house pet is strange and even repulsive. Attitudes towards pets in the home vary from country to country, so a close examination of the pictures of pets in the novel could lead to an interesting class discussion and a chance for students to do a cross-cultural analysis of attitudes towards animals in general and pets in particular.

Perspective – From Close Up to Wide Angle

Helping students gain an understanding of the important role that perspective plays in literature is another strong suit of the graphic novel. Tan's *The Arrival* is no exception. The perspective of a character versus the perspective of the reader or the author is sometimes difficult to grasp in a traditional, word-based novel. However, students can understand the concept more easily when it is presented to them in visual form first.

As an example of this, look closely at the first and last pages of chapter II, pg. 13 and 45. On pg. 13, the author wants the reader to understand that the main character is now aboard ship, heading away from his family. He is already missing them and feeling terribly alone. The series of pictures starts with a close up of the photo of his family and then pans back into successive wider and wider angles of the scene. First, we see that the man is eating soup while looking at the picture of his family, and in the next picture we see him holding his bowl of soup, gazing out his porthole. The next picture shows his porthole among other portholes on the side of the ship with shadows of other people inside them. The following picture pans further back so that we can see the side of the ship, each porthole a tiny dot of light. Finally, we see the entire ship steaming across the ocean. A similar change in “camera angle” happens on pg. 45 when we see the man looking at the same picture of his family that he has now hung on the wall of his new apartment. Our perspective again pans back, showing his new “pet” sitting on the windowsill watching him look at the picture, and then further back to the side of the building with his window among the many windows of other people living in the building. He and his pet and the picture of his family are just tiny dots in the bigger picture.

Tan is capturing visually the feeling of the main character as he goes out from the intimate world of his family into the large and strange world he must navigate in order to help his family to a better life. The one individual, large and important in his own family’s life, is but a tiny dot in the sea of humanity.

Depending on the level of the class, a number of activities could unfold from these two pages. Asking students to describe how the perspective of each picture changes, how that moves the story forward, and how that affects the emotional tone of the story, could be one way to start. If students have access to cameras, they could do a photo/writing project where they take a close up picture of an object and then move back further and further from the object to show it at a wider and wider angle. A “worm’s eye view” versus a “bird’s eye view” could be discussed. How the different perspectives of an object change the viewer’s understanding and feeling about the object could be related to how an author may choose to move perspective from first person to third person in a story, for example. For more specific details on how to teach students about perspective in visual narrative, I recommend Scott McCloud’s *Understanding Comics*, listed in the teacher’s bibliography section of this curriculum unit.

What We Brought and What We Left Behind – Art and Writing Project

After students have read the entire novel and explored some of the many possible connections to content in language arts, social studies, math, art and more, a culminating project based on personal reflections, visual art and writing would be a perfect finale.

Returning to the exploration done of pgs. 1 and 117 of *The Arrival* in the “Compare and Contrast” activity above, ask students to think again about what the main character

brought with him from his home country and what he left behind. Ask students also to compare and contrast the pictures on pg. 3 and pg. 118. These two pictures show his kitchen in the old country and the new country. They could be used as a compare/contrast essay writing prompt. Also, students could be asked to write a comparison of kitchens in their home countries and kitchens in the US.

Looking back through the novel there is a humorous passage on pg 42 when the main character first fumbles around in his new apartment kitchen and turns the wrong faucet, dousing himself in a shower of water when he simply wants water for tea. Most students will be able to identify the confusion of navigating unfamiliar household appliances in a new country. One of my students told me about her mother putting food in the dishwasher to cook because she had never seen a dishwasher before and assumed it was an oven. Students could write a reflection piece on customs or objects that seemed strange when they first arrived in the US.

A visual art and writing project I will call “What I Brought and What I left Behind” also grows out of pg. 1 and pg. 117 of *The Arrival*. Give each student two large sheets of paper and tell them to divide each paper into 9 boxes, similar to the ones on page 1 of *The Arrival*. On the first page, ask students to draw in each box something they had in their home country. These pictures could be of objects or people, or animals. They could be simple things, like a plate or a hat, or a complex idea like “war” or “freedom.” Students could use photographs or pictures from magazines to help illustrate these 9 things. On the second page, students will do the same thing, but the pictures are of things they have now in their new home in the US. Tell them that they may want to make some relationship between the two pages, as in Tan’s novel. If there are some things they have brought with them from the home country, they could include those objects on both pages.

Finally, when they have finished their two pages of pictures, each student will write a “key” to the two pages in which they write a brief description of each object or person or animal they included. They should explain why they included the objects, people, animals or ideas they depicted. These posters should be shared with the class, possibly in a gallery crawl. An interesting discussion of what things we bring and what things we leave behind when we immigrate could follow.

Sharing “What We Brought” with the Larger Community

Ask content area teachers—especially social studies, art, foreign language teachers—if your students could host a gallery crawl for their classes. If some of your students speak the target language for the foreign language class, this could be a perfect opportunity for your ESL students to shine and share a bit of their home culture. Social studies students would find the comparative culture aspect and the perspective on the immigration experience quite interesting. If you have an art teacher who is willing to collaborate, art students could work with your students on drawing, painting and presenting their posters.

Another way to share your students' work with an even wider audience would be through a free website that helps students build their own websites or blogs (wix.com or weebly.com are websites to consider). A class website of photographs and writing from your students on the theme of immigration and what immigrants bring and leave behind could be created by the class. Website building has now become something anyone can do, without coding skills, and probably some of your students can show you how!

Whatever you do to help your students share their roots and take pride in their home language and culture, as well as celebrate their new life in the US and their growing ability to read and write in a new language, will go a long way to helping them become flourishing members of society.

Appendix I: Implementing Teaching Standards

This curriculum unit addresses the following Common Core Standards for the State of North Carolina, English/Language Arts, 9th and 10th Grade Reading Standards for Literature:

Under the cluster Reading for Key Ideas and Details

Standard 2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

In close reading of Tan's *The Arrival* students will determine the central idea of the novel—immigration—and use details and examples throughout the novel to develop the theme. There are numerous activities that require students to summarize pages of the novel.

Under the cluster Craft and Structure

Standard 5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Students will have many opportunities in reading *The Arrival* to analyze Tan's choices concerning the sequence of pictures, perspectives, manipulation of time, use of line, color, texture and borders to structure the novel. Many of his illustrations are perfect examples of how confusion, mystery and loneliness are clearly conveyed through images.

Standard 6. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Compare and contrast the experiences of characters in story or drama from outside the United States with personal experience.

Shaun Tan is Australian, so his novel is a work of world literature and presents a wonderful opportunity for immigrant readers to compare and contrast their personal experience of immigration with those of the characters in the novel.

Notes

¹Suzanne Elizabeth Reid, *Book Bridges for ESL Students: Using Young Adult and Children's Literature to Teach ESL*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 35.

²Maureen Bakis, *The Graphic Novel Classroom: Powerful Teaching and Learning with Images*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2012), 3.

³Ibid., 3.

⁴Carrye Kay Syma and Robert G. Weiner, *Graphic Novels and Comics in the Classroom: Essays on the Educational Power of Sequential Art*, ([Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2013](#)), 27.

⁵Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 5.

⁶World Factbook, [cia.gov](#)

⁷Stephen D. Krashen, *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning* (Pergamon Press, 1981). First internet edition, Dec. 2002. Accessed on September 24, 2014 at <http://sdrashen.com/> , p 8.

⁸Cristina Igoa, *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child*, (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995), 38.

⁹Linda Pratt and Janice J. Beaty, *Transcultural Children's Literature*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1999).

¹⁰Shaun Tan, *The Arrival*, (Melbourne, Australia: Arthur A. Levine Books, an imprint of Scholastic, 2006).

¹¹Patsy Lightbown and Nina Spada, *How Languages Are Learned*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 37-38.

¹²L. Sipe and C. McGuire, "Picturebook Endpapers: Resources for Literary and Aesthetic Interpretation," *Children's Literature in Education* Vol 37, Issue 4, pp 291-304.

¹³Linda Pratt and Janice J. Beaty, *Transcultural Children's Literature*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1999).

¹⁴Booktrust, Inspiring a Love of Books, www.booktrust.org.uk

¹⁵International Children's Digital Library, en.childrenslibrary.org

¹⁶Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*, (Random House, 1971).

Materials for Classroom Use

Tan, Shaun, *The Arrival*. Melbourne, Australia: Arthur A. Levine Books, an imprint of Scholastic, 2006. All the classroom activities in this curriculum unit are based on this brilliant, wordless graphic novel. It will fascinate many types of readers on many levels. Shaun Tan has also written and illustrated other picture books that could be used in the classroom and a Youtube search will bring up numerous short videos and interviews with the author that could be used in teaching this curriculum unit.

graph paper, large sheets of paper, colored pencils, twine and other art supplies may be needed for some activities

Websites for statistics on immigration:

www.weareoneamerica.org

www.migrationpolicy.org

www.unhcr.org

Reading List for Students

Alexander, Lloyd and Hyman, Trina. *The Fortune Tellers*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1992. This story, set in West Africa, is a richly illustrated and entertaining tale of a young carpenter whose life changes dramatically when he visits a fortuneteller.

Andrews-Goebel, Nancy and Diaz, David. *The Pot That Juan Built*. New York: Lee & Low Books, 2002. With vibrant illustrations and photographs, this book tells the story of Juan Quezada, a Mexican potter.

Colato Lainez, Rene and Vanden Broeck, Fabricio. *My Shoes and I*. Boyds Mills Press, 2010. A young boy leaves El Salvador with his father to reunite with his mother in the US. He wears the new shoes his mother sent, but they become dirty and tattered as he crosses mountains, deserts and rivers. The shoes are a metaphor for the bright hopes that remain, even through the wear and tear of a long journey. The illustrations and heartwarming story of family reunion will appeal to many students. Plus, shoes have become a hot fashion topic for students, so this book could spark discussion and writing assignments very easily.

Macaulay, David. *Mosque*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Books, 2003. This is a beautifully illustrated book about the construction of a mosque. David Macaulay has a series of similar books about buildings that will appeal to aspiring architects and visual learners.

Say, Allen. *Tea with Milk*. New York: Walter Lorraine Books, Houghton Mifflin, 1999. Author and illustrator Allen Say tells the story of May, a Japanese girl who grew up in San Francisco. When her family moves back to Japan, she feels homesick for America. This is a beautiful book depicting the pain and upheaval of immigration.

Selznick, Brian. *The Invention of Hugo Cabret; A Novel in Words and Pictures*. New York: Scholastic Press, 2007. This magical book will appeal to girls and boys. The central character, Hugo, is an orphan who travels through the hidden passageways in a Paris train station and runs into adventure and intrigue that eventually leads him to fascinating discoveries about the history of early movies. Students who are interested in visual narrative and how still pictures and film relate will find much to discuss in this book. Selznick uses similar techniques as Shaun Tan in moving narrative through changes in picture perspective, but Selznick's book has many words in addition to drawings.

Yang, Gene Luen and Pien, Lark. *American Born Chinese*. New York: First Second, 2006. This young adult graphic novel chronicles a story of Chinese-American boyhood and how the dominant culture impacts minorities. Written in comic book style, with sophisticated plots and themes, this book will especially appeal to boys.

Bibliography for Teachers

Bakis, Maureen. *The Graphic Novel Classroom: Powerful Teaching and Learning with Images*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2012. This book has many practical and

creative ideas, grounded in research and classroom experience, for using graphic novels in the secondary classroom. A useful resource list and companion website is included.

Carter, James Bucky. *Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels: Page by Page, Panel by Panel*. Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 2007. This collection of essays contains many ideas for effectively using graphic novels, comics, and visual literacy techniques to enhance skill and engagement in reading for all levels of learners. Primarily aimed at secondary education, there are a number of useful pairings of graphic novels with text-only novels that help struggling readers and more advanced readers alike.

Gavigan, Karen W. and Tomasevich, Mindy. *Connecting Comics to Curriculum: Strategies for Grades 6-12*. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2011. This is a very useful guide to graphic novels, visual literacy, and the research that supports the use of visual literature in an academic setting. Lesson ideas and extensive reading suggestions on a broad range of themes and topics across the curriculum are included. This book also has a section on building and organizing a classroom library of graphic novels.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994. The “Bible” you need for decoding visual literature and “sequential art.” This book is very entertaining and challenging at the same time. Could be used as a classroom text in high school or university, especially for students who are motivated by art, comics and visual literacy.

Pratt, Linda and Beaty, Janice. *Transcultural Children’s Literature*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill, 1999. This book is very useful for identifying books that immigrant students can relate to. The chapters include: Books About Africa, Asia, Canada, the Caribbean, Central America, Mexico, South America, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the Middle East, the Pacific, Australia and Antarctica. Classroom applications and background information about the different regions of the world are also very helpful for ESL, language arts and social studies teachers.

Reid, Suzanne Elizabeth. *Book Bridges for ESL Students: Using Young Adult and Children’s Literature to Teach ESL*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002. This is a useful resource for any ESL teacher. The bibliography contains lists of books and resources for teaching history, math, science, and other content areas in addition to language arts to ESL students.

Syma, Carrye Kay, and Weiner, Robert. *Graphic Novels and Comics in the Classroom: Essays on the Educational Power of Sequential Art*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013. The essays in this collection are aimed more at university level teaching, but some apply to primary and secondary school. The contributors make suggestions for using specific graphic novels for such purposes as teaching global awareness, feminism, and history.

One essay addresses the adult ESL learner, but could easily apply to high school ESL students.