

FINDING & USING A COMIC FOR YOUR ASSIGNMENT: KS205

Picking a Comic

To do your assignments, you'll need to pick an essay topic from the list, then find a comic book or graphic novel related to that topic. In your essay, you'll analyze and use this comic as an example of your topic.

I'm going to pick the topic comics and trauma. But I don't have a comic yet, so I'll need to find one.

One easy way is to search Google. Here I searched for `comics trauma` and picked a blog post on the topic. I took a look, and found it mentions quite a few comics related to trauma. These include Maus, which is about the Jewish experience of the Holocaust, Palestine, about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Persepolis, a women's perspective on the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and Stitches, a memoir about childhood trauma.

You'll be writing about it, so pick one that interests you. For most topics, stick to one comic unless it's a serial where you want to analyze a storyline over multiple issues.

Locate your comic

Once you've decided on a comic, you need to locate it.

Check first to see if the Laurier Library has a copy. You can search by title in Omni, the Library catalogue. Here I'll type in Stitches.

I'm in luck--the Library does have it. You can find the location and call number in the record. Most comics are at the Waterloo campus library, but you can request delivery to the Brantford campus or get comics from other libraries in Omni. To do this, click on the record. Then look in the Get It area and click on the option there to get the request form.

The Library also has some classic comics online in the Underground and Independent Comics database. Find it by typing the title into the search box at the top of the Library page. Click on the title to connect. Once you're there, you can search for your title.

If the Laurier Library doesn't have it, try your local public library. Or, check out a local comics specialty store, like Carry On Comics in downtown Waterloo. Good online sources include Amazon and ComiXology.

Analyzing your comic

Once you've got your comic, you'll need to analyze it for your essay.

To do your analysis, you'll need to consider what it says about your topic, what themes it contains, what it emphasizes and how it makes its points. You'll need to look at the content, but also at how your comic uses the form to shape its meaning. Remember that points in a comic are made both through words and through the art, so you'll need to consider both.

Make sure you use the concepts from McCloud's Understanding Comics that you've learned in class.

Using your comic in your essay

You'll need to use this analysis of your comic in your essay. How do you do that?

Your analysis of how your comic illustrates your topic should be the main focus of your essay. You'll also use scholarly sources, but those sources don't make the argument for you. They are there to provide support and context for your own argument, based on your interpretation of your comic.

Let's look at an example using *Stitches*. One of the major themes in the book is silence and voicelessness. There are many examples of how the main character is silenced by others as a child, and the story talks about how he is physically silenced after surgery for throat cancer. The artwork also emphasizes this theme, since many of the scenes are wordless and show emotional reactions through facial expressions.

In my essay, I'd discuss how both the story and the art contributed to creating this theme of voicelessness. Then I'd use some scholarly sources to support my argument, which might in this case discuss similar themes of silence and trauma in other comics.

Questions?

If you have questions about finding a comic, contact the Library at library.wlu.ca/help/askus.

If you have questions about how to use your comic in your essay, please check with your professor.