

# Reading When the World Is on Fire: Teaching with Comics and Other Multimodal Text Sets

ASHLEY K. DALLACQUA

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

*This study explores teaching and learning with a range of texts — with a focus on comics — that highlight diverse identities and voices. I asked: What happens when a range of multimodal and nontraditional texts with prominent diverse identity representations are integrated into a 10th grade ELA curriculum? Data was collected in a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse school with a 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELA teacher and six students as participants. The comics medium, combined with other media in multimodal text sets, provided opportunities to challenge normative curricula and for students to think about themselves and how they operate in their worlds.*

“Why am I teaching the same books that were taught when I was in school?” This question, common among English Language Arts (ELA) teachers (Sheahan, 2021), was part of Amanda’s (a high school ELA teacher) reflection, after shifting her curriculum to include a more diverse range of media, character, and story. Teachers’ text choices continue to be influenced by their own “inherited histories with the traditional literacy instruction centering on the Western canon,” even when they plan and prep with critical teaching practices in mind (Sheahan, 2021, p. 60). In order to support the diversity of experiences, interests, beliefs, and realities of our students, reading a wide range of texts and media is necessary. Students must read and see themselves in texts (Sims Bishop, 1990) and be invited to react to a range of media and genre. Given the culturally and linguistically diverse context in New Mexico – where this study took place - it is necessary for educators and researchers to commit to equitable literacy learning spaces that support students in these diverse reading practices. This study explores teaching and learning with a range of texts and media—with a focus on comics—that highlight diverse identities and voices.

As a researcher with teaching experience and expertise in teaching comics, I worked closely with Amanda, the classroom teacher-participant, to deliberately choose texts that visually,

culturally, racially, and linguistically told different stories from different perspectives. We had a shared interest in highlighting diverse characters, stories, and text forms as a way to approach larger societal questions and concerns as well as to emphasize more personal, intimate stories. The comics medium, combined with other media in multimodal text sets, played a vital role in this work. Our work together provided opportunities for Amanda to challenge normative curricula and for students to think about themselves and how they operate in their worlds. We found that multimodal texts like comics could act as a means for navigating those worlds.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *CRITICAL MULTIMODAL LITERACIES*

Opportunities for students of color to see and read themselves in texts (Sims Bishop, 1990) are still not regular occurrences. There is a continuing lack of diverse representations in children's literature (Short, 2018). The Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison recently reported that in 2020 only about six percent of books published for children depicted Latinx characters; about one percent depicted American Indian characters. Given the current crisis in New Mexico's education system in meeting the needs of our state's diverse students, American Indian populations particularly (Martinez, 2021; Sanchez & Blum Martinez, 2019), there is a need for more diverse representations of texts in classrooms. I am interested in the ways multimodal texts - comics in particular - can support and reflect diverse young adults.

Historically, Western canonical texts tend to take up a lot of space in teachers' past educational experiences (Sheahan, 2021). The work described here strives to turn away from the literary canon which "represents a cultural construction of knowledge centered in Whiteness that institutions deem superior and essential" (New & Miller, 2019, p. 44). Instead, the teacher-participant, Amanda, and I worked to be student-centered in our text choices and pedagogical practices, working in ways that made students, their identities, and their practices more visible. Therein, culturally relevant literature and literacy practices supported this work (Paris & Alim, 2017; Saldaña, 2019). Our goals were not built on students "perform[ing] White middle-class norms, but rather...explor[ing], honor[ing], extend[ing], and, at times, problematiz[ing] their cultural practices and investments," (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 3). Amanda considered her canonical teaching past as we chose texts and navigated new literacy practices with students.

Choosing texts thoughtfully and strategically was our first step in this work. We know that even in texts where diverse characters are represented, representation is not necessarily accurate, respectful, or complex (Davis, 2020; Reese, 2018). It becomes our responsibility, as educators, to dig into opportunities for critically engaging with texts alongside our students (Davis, 2020; Sheahan, 2016). Janks (2013), drawing on the work of Freire, emphasized that the work of reading the word and the world empowers young people to make change. This is a literacy practice that is ongoing, cyclical. Freire (1983) argued, “Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (p. 10). As we engaged with diverse texts together, the students, teacher, and I moved in and out of word and world spaces, critically thinking about our places, power, and possibilities. Our texts supported our interrogation and navigation through many word and world spaces.

In addition to the need for greater diversity in character representations, there is also a call for texts to be more diverse in form and medium. Classroom literature needs to represent the current influence of visual culture on children’s literature (Short, 2018). Reading and writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century includes a “range of readings” of complex texts, including graphic novels, comics, images, films, and websites (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010). Texts that artfully and intentionally take up multiple modes support students in making meaning, offering more opportunities for understanding, engagement, and connection with texts (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress, 2003). Modes, including color, sound, or texture, are resources for communication and for learning (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

I am particularly interested in the intersections of texts that include diverse representations of people within diverse and visual forms or media. When a range of text forms are read, analyzed, and reacted to in classrooms there are opportunities for thoughtful, aesthetic engagement; students connect deeply with texts, both personally and critically (Connors, 2013; Martínez-Roldán & Newcomer, 2011; Pantaleo & Bomphray, 2011; Pantaleo, 2013). In classroom spaces explored here, the students and teacher identify as culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse. As data were collected and analyzed for this study, I took note of the powerful opportunities to engage in multimodal forms and the ways they supported and celebrated diverse narratives.

This study also considers critical perspectives around design and composition in school. Critical composing includes, but goes beyond print-based texts, supporting students as meaning-

makers with agency and creativity (Thomsen, 2018; Wang, 2015; Wissman & Costello, 2014). Through a multiliteracies theoretical lens this broad conceptualization of reading and composing supports “...highlighting and privileging youths’ everyday language and literacy practices such that they are brought into relation with dominant texts and discourses” (Lizárraga & Gutiérrez, 2018, p. 39) while “legitimiz[ing] students’ literacy toolkits” (Lizárraga & Gutiérrez, 2018, p. 41). As students are reading the word and world, they are reading and seeing themselves. They are also writing themselves into being as they talk, share, compose, and redesign their texts. Students in this space took opportunities to challenge, question, rewrite, and rethink words and worlds, fueled by their reading of comics and other multimodal texts.

### *COMICS AS CLASSROOM TEXTS*

In this manuscript, I use the term *comics* to include shorter form and longer, full story-arc narratives (also referred to as graphic novels). I draw from McCloud (1993) to define comics (including graphic novels) as “juxtaposed pictorial and other images formatted in deliberate sequence with the use of panels and other structural devices, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response in the reader/viewer” (Dallacqua, 2018, p. 274). It is worth noting that the comics medium, in particular, supports critical and complex work. “Comics let us say things we can’t in other forms” (Sousanis; 2020; p. 92). Aesthetically, the lines, color, and structural choices made in high-quality comics can support emotional (Chute, 2017), critical (Low, 2017; Torres & Tayne, 2012), and empathetic (Chisholm et al., 2017) thinking and learning. Readers engaging with comics and other visual, multimodal texts can literally see themselves and others’ experiences in tangible and vivid ways. For example, Low (2017), while working with middle school students in a racially diverse community, found that reading comics like *Ms. Marvel* encouraged talk about representations of race, racism, and religion. Their reading and time to reflect and discuss supported students as critics. Students took opportunities to speak back to their texts and publishers and made connections to racially diverse characters they read. These students considered writing their own comics as a way to make change and be more representative of the world. Torres and Tane’s (2017) work with Latinx elementary students in an afterschool club showcases students’ comic-making as counter-stories to racism. Situated within the very real political scene of the 2016 presidential election, making comics was an act of critical hope that highlighted powerful superheroes of color. In both Low’s and Torres and Tane’s work, students had access to comics with characters that were diverse, that looked like them, and space to talk about those texts in student-centered, critical ways.

Work with comics, while becoming more prevalent in schools, is still an evolving practice for educators. Both studies described above, for example, took place within a school, but outside of a conventional classroom. Instead, critical comics work happened in school libraries and afterschool clubs. This is not to say that this work doesn't or can't occur in classroom spaces. However, comics in classrooms, as documented in much of the current scholarship, aligns with school-mandated, structured, and conventional literacy practices. We know that across disciplines, comics support learning (Brugar et al., 2018; Cook, 2017; Jiménez & Meyer, 2017). Comics invite active reading and learning for all kinds of readers (Carter, 2007; Chun, 2009). Of particular interest to my work with Amanda and her students, scholarship has shown comics can also encourage ELA literacy learning that is part of the larger expectations of school. (Chase et al., 2014; Connors, 2013; Cook, 2017; Farrell et al., 2010). But educators must do more than just offer comics in classrooms, as they require complex, specialized understandings to read (Jiménez & Meyer, 2017). This finding from Jiménez & Meyer (2017) refutes the cultural baggage (Chute, 2008) around comics as simpler reading, transitional texts, or books that are purely motivational. Making time to address the comic medium, to develop an understanding of the author choices and mechanics of comics design, and to appreciate the art of the medium is part the work of teaching comics. This pre-reading work supports a multimodal curriculum that embraces comics as complex texts.

Teachers still can be hesitant to use comics in classrooms (Clark, 2013) due to their historically negative framing or because they are unsure how to embrace the medium in an educational setting. In a recent study, DeHart (2021) found that teachers using comics considered their own experiences and assumptions about them as texts. While there was an association with comics as outside of school or hobby reading and writing, teachers used comics to create opportunities for students to learn and to see themselves in their books (DeHart, 2021). Comics are also capable of rewriting some of the narrow, but assumed or invisible paths of school and literacy (Dallacqua, 2019). I found, previously, that while teachers initially welcomed comics into their classrooms as an engagement tool, they found that reading comics supported complex, discussion-based, student-centered literacy practices. They also supported students in questioning the operations of school and how those operations were supporting them and their learning. Scholarship in this field needs to continue to show how powerful the comics medium can be in engaging, challenging, and rewriting stories that matter to students. This article strives to take up that call.

## METHODOLOGY

This research study works to challenge the status quo of ELA classrooms, particularly the types of texts that are studied and valued. To that end, I ask: *What happens when a range of multimodal and nontraditional texts with prominent diverse identity representations are integrated into a tenth-grade ELA curriculum?* This work is particularly important to the context of this study within a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse school.

This qualitative study was informed by action research (Anderson et al., 2003), in that I worked closely with the classroom teacher, who also participated as a participant in this study. As teacher and researcher, we co-planned and co-taught units that included a range of text media with diverse representations of characters at the forefront. This focus, our text choices, and the overarching research question were all framed by the classroom teacher and her own needs and goals for her classroom. As an outsider, I was invited into this classroom space to co-plan, teach, and collaborate, blurring the insider/outsider lines (Anderson et al., 2003). While I was still operating as a researcher through a university, all research and pedagogical choices during this study were made in collaboration with the classroom teacher. The resulting work and unit plans were taught across two tenth-grade ELA classes. I was a participant-observer and collected data in one of those classes.

### *CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS*

City High (pseudonym), one of the oldest high schools in the state, is an urban, public school located in the Southwest United States. Known for its Bilingual Spanish Education program, City High is racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse. 87% of students enrolled are minority students, 78% identifying as Hispanic. 64% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Amanda identifies as a Hispanic female. She has been teaching high school ELA for twelve years; seven of those have been at City High. Amanda and I connected initially when she took my Young Adult Literature course at the university. We shared a love of good literature and a critical lens for teaching. She was looking to make changes in her curriculum, and I was looking to engage with local schools. As a result, Amanda invited me to her class as a collaborator.

In addition to Amanda as a participant, six students from her class provided assent and guardian consent to participate in a small group interview and to share their work across the school year as data artifacts. All students that were part of the class I observed were invited to be participants, and seven students turned in both the consent and assent forms; six of those students were present

the day of the small group interview. See Table 1 below for students' self-identified descriptions (information is listed as students listed it in their ID form for this study).

**TABLE 1**  
*Student Participants*

STUDENT	AGE	GENDER IDENTITY	RACIAL IDENTITY	LANGUAGES
M	15	Male	Mexican American	Spanish and English
S	17	Female	White, European-American	English
C	16	Female	Hispanic	English and Spanish
I	16	Male	Hispanic	English
J	16	Male	Hispanic	English
Y	16	Male	Hispanic	Spanish and English

I identify as a white female university educator and researcher with deep commitments to supporting local teachers and students. I come to my teaching and research embracing criticality when examining texts for young people, while acknowledging my own privileges as a white woman with access to educational spaces and the benefits that offers me economically. As I approached this study, I strove to support Amanda in her goals to make change in her classroom as a collaborator. In particular, I also was able to support her work by giving access to a range to multimodal and multimedia texts, including most of the texts included in both units described here.

### *The Multimodal/Media Units*

During the school year we completed two units that drew on multimodal texts that we hoped would encourage students to read and think broadly abouts texts, representations, race, and gender. We arrived at our text choices for both units based on access to class sets (either from the school bookroom or from my university collection), with the goal to include central characters of color in each text. We also wanted to showcase a range of media. For example, we read the comic (Myers & Sims, 2015) and screenplay novel (Myers, 1999) version of *Monster* paired with the graphic novel *Yummy* (Neri, 2010) and the media series *When They See Us* (DuVernay, 2019). We used these texts to consider injustices connected with young men of color and the criminal justice system. Using a range of texts also invited students to consider medium and genre.

Our second unit included *Poet X* (Acevedo, 2018) and *Ms. Marvel: No normal* (Wilson, 2014) as anchor texts to study the hero's journey. We also included excerpts from comics and media including *#NotYourPrincess* (Leatherdale & Charelyboy, 2017), *Brazen: Rebel ladies who rocked*

*the world* (Baieu, 2018), *Will I See?* (Robertson et al., 2016), and *Deer Woman: An Anthology* (LaPensée & Alvitre, 2017). Each text focused on women of color, exemplifying many paths of heroism. Additionally, we concluded the Hero unit with a viewing of *Spider-Man: Into the Spideverse* (Persichetti et al., 2018). For both units students had access to physical copies of each of the books; media was viewed as a class, during class time.

Both units focused on a range of texts and on big ideas (unit one: justice, unit two: hero's journey), rather than a single, canonical reading. These choices were made to align with the teacher's goals for her teaching and as a way of decentering commonly taught texts, often through a mainstream, white lens (Sheahan & Dallacqua, 2020). I will discuss these choices and units in more detail in the findings section.

### ***METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION***

Informed by action research (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2003; Hubbard & Power, 2003; Sagoury & Power, 2012), data collection involved fieldwork through participant observation and was documented through fieldnotes from August to February. Field notes documented big themes and events in class, as well as planning sessions with the teacher.

In February, I completed a semi-structured, one-on-one interview with the teacher-participant and one semi-structured, focus-group interview with student participants (Glesne, 2011). Both interviews were audio and video recorded. I also collected student work associated with both units. It is important to note that not all students turned in all assignments, so student work, as data artifacts, were considered as examples, but not work that was representative of the entire class. Sixteen pieces of student work across six students were collected from participants, in total. Data collection ended in February, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***METHODS OF ANALYSIS***

Both recorded interviews were transcribed in preparation for coding. I engaged in two cycles of coding (Saldaña, 2016) and focused on my coding of interviews for the first cycle. The data was coded holistically, generating macro-level codes such as personal goals, access, relatability, and gender. A second cycle of coding followed, focusing on patterns I found looking within each and across both interviews (Saldaña, 2016). For example, I paid close attention to instances when students noted relating to a character or event in a text, as this was also noted as a goal for the teacher. Next, codes were integrated into larger conceptual categories (Hubbard and Power, 2003; Glesne, 2011) With codes in mind, generated from interviews, I reviewed and deductively coded fieldnotes



and reviewed student work. Keeping my initial research question as my focus, I returned to my codes and categories to consider specific connections to multimodal and nontraditional texts and diverse identity representations. This narrowed my focus, resulting in the findings documented here. These findings and this manuscript were member checked by Amanda.

## FINDINGS

Both teacher and student-participants reflected on the texts and practices they engaged in, found personal and important connections with these texts, and considered how these texts supported critical thought around representation, diverse identities, both in personal and global ways. In this section, as a way to frame the teaching and learning we engaged with, I start with Amanda's reflections. Comics and other multimodal texts connected to her goals for making change in her classroom, so I outline those plans and changes alongside her reflections below. Next, I shift to the student voices and draw connections back to the teacher's goals, as well as highlight the ways in which talk about their texts supported their thinking about themselves and the world. Across both sections, I highlight pedagogical choices and practices that Amanda and I drew on to support this work with diverse texts.

### *GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR A BORED ELA TEACHER*

Comics have been positioned as texts that can create change in school spaces. It was this framing that propelled Amanda and our collaborative work in her classroom space. This section focuses on what drove Amanda to make changes in her classroom, followed by her new goals and pedagogical choices (including descriptions of the new units and texts).

#### *Out with the Old*

As Amanda and I reflected on the two units using comics and other unconventional texts we worked with during the school year, Amanda referenced her own pedagogical motivations and choices often. "I just couldn't do it anymore," she shared as she thought back to teaching books like *Lord of the Flies*. These were books she has been teaching year after year, books that had been in ELA classrooms for years as part of the canon (Sheahan, 2021). Instead, after taking a Young Adult Literature course as part of her master's degree (where our paths crossed), Amanda was inspired to make changes to her curriculum. Amanda had certain texts and topics she was required to cover each year but had more freedom when planning for her sophomores. While she did not have

collaborators working at the school who wanted to join her in choosing different texts, she was not prohibited from doing so herself. But making big changes alone can be difficult, intimidating, and sometimes impossible, especially within her conventional and standardized teaching environment. She welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with me, as I supported and shared her goals and visions for her classroom.

Over the past decade, teachers have been turning to comics and other unconventional texts as a way to challenge themselves, to rewrite patterns in their own teaching, and to connect, engage, and challenge students (Dallacqua, 2019). “You can do so much with [comics],” Amanda shared after spending several months integrating them into her curriculum. Amanda, who was newer to teaching comics (but not to reading them), wanted to use comics’ cultural baggage to her advantage. She knew that comics had reputations for being fun, light reads; Amanda wanted to teach with them not just to engage her students, but to challenge them. This “sneak attack learning” with comics, as Amanda called it, could do both, while also disrupting her own “bored” rhythms of teaching and learning.

### *In with the New*

Fueled with motivation from comics and other unconventional texts and paired with a university research collaborator, Amanda focused on her own teaching goals. Amanda had shared at the beginning of the year that many of these students did not consider themselves readers, so her teaching goals started there. Instead of focusing on one text to engage all of her students, we built multimedia text sets around themes important to both Amanda and her students. With multiple texts came multiple opportunities to reach and engage. Beyond that, Amanda’s grounding goals were twofold: “to get [students] to think” and “recogniz[e] themselves” in their class texts. We collaboratively made conscious, deliberate text choices paired with a variety of ways to engage and respond. With motivations in mind, we started the year with a unit focused on the criminal justice system and its impacts on young men of color (see Table 2 for texts and descriptions). We took up a range of media and genre to get at this topic, embracing the arts, movement, drama, and open discussion alongside the texts. “I’m trying to reach them all with the way that I teach,” Amanda shared. In this, her focus was not just on one or many texts, but on the ways we would approach them in class.

**TABLE 2**  
*First Text Set*

TEXTS & BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS	MEDIA TYPE	UNIT FOCUS & GUIDING QUESTIONS
<p>Myers, W. D. (1999). <i>Monster</i>. Harper Tempest.</p> <p><i>Written as a screenplay, this novel depicts Steve's time in a juvenile detention center and his time on trial for robbery and murder. Told through his own journals and visions as a novice filmmaker, the story unfolds through Steve's perspective</i></p>	<p>Novel, Movie Script format</p>	<p><b>Unit Themes:</b></p> <p>Considering injustice, guilt, and innocence</p>
<p>Myers, W. D. &amp; Sims, G. A. (2015). <i>Monster: A Graphic Novel</i>. Harper Collins Publishing</p> <p><i>Adapted from Myers's original novel, this comic depicts Steve's time in a juvenile detention center and his time on trial for robbery and murder.</i></p>	<p>Comic</p>	<p><b>Foci:</b></p> <p>Black Lives Matter movement, Representations of young men of color, Making and supporting an argument, Considering the use of media and genre to make an argument, author choice and perspectives</p>
<p>Neri, G. (2010). <i>Yummy: the Last Days of a Southside Shorty</i>. Lee &amp; Low Books.</p> <p><i>This nonfiction comic recounts days around the death of Robert 'Yummy' Sandifer. After firing a gun that killed neighbor, Shavon, Yummy is hunted down and killed by his own gang members.</i></p>	<p>Comic</p>	<p><b>Other Resources:</b></p> <p>Innocence project [<a href="https://innocenceproject.org/">https://innocenceproject.org/</a>]</p>
<p>Skoll, J., King, J., Rosenthal, J., De Niro, R., Welsh, B., Winfrey, O., DuVernay, A., (Executive Producers). (2019). <i>When They See Us</i> [TV miniseries]. Harpo Films, Tribeca Productions, ARRAY, &amp; Participant Media.</p> <p><i>Documenting the Central Park Five's (now Exonerated Five) false accusations and imprisonment, this true crime miniseries focuses on the stories of the young teens' time on trial through their exoneration.</i></p>	<p>TV Miniseries</p>	

**TABLE 3**  
**Second Text Set**

TEXTS & BRIEF DESCRIPTIONS	MEDIA TYPE	UNIT FOCUS & GUIDING QUESTIONS
<p>Acevedo, E. (2018). <i>Poet X</i>. Harper Collins.</p> <p><i>This award-winning verse novel follows Xiomara as she navigates her strict Dominican immigrant parents and comes into her own voice.</i></p>	In Verse Novel	<p><b>Unit Theme:</b></p> <p>The Hero's Journey</p>
<p>Baieu, P. (2018). <i>Brazen: Rebel ladies who rocked the world</i>. New York, NY: FirstSecond.</p> <p><i>This comic anthology documents women across history and the world, illustrating a diversity of stories, cultures, and contributions.</i></p>	Comic	<p><b>Foci:</b></p> <p>Racial and cultural minority representation; feminism, characterization, intersectional identity representation, Plot mapping</p>
<p>LaPensée, E. &amp; Alvitre, W. (Eds). (2017). <i>Deer Woman: An Anthology</i>. Albuquerque, NM: Native Realities Publishing.</p> <p><i>This comic anthology collects empowered voices of Indigenous women sharing many stories of living and surviving with hope and resilience.</i></p>	Comic edited collection	<p><b>Other Resources:</b></p> <p><i>Hair Love</i> [short film]</p>
<p>Leatherdale, M. B. &amp; Charleyboy, L. (Eds). (2017). <i>#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women</i>. Annick Press.</p> <p><i>This collection of media - including comics, photo essays, painting, written text, poetry, and multimedia compositions - speaks to the breadth of Indigenous women voices reflecting on pasts, presents, and futures.</i></p>	Multimedia edited collection	<p><i>Afro-Latina</i> [Acevedo spoken word poetry]</p>
<p>Persichetti, B. Ramsey, P. &amp; Rothman, R. (2018). <i>Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse</i>. [Film]. Columbia Pictures, Marvel Entertainment, Sony Pictures Animation, Arad Productions, Lord Miller Productions, Pascal Pictures.</p> <p><i>Miles Morales's origin story, this animated film (based on the comic) follows Miles as he meets Spider-powered folks from other dimensions and ultimately hones his own powers and steps into the role of Spiderman.</i></p>	Animated Film	

<p>Robertson, D., Chomichuk, G., I., &amp; Leslie, E. (2016). <i>Will I see?</i> Winnipeg, Manitoba: HighWater Press.</p> <p><i>This graphic novel follows May as she collects artifacts and keepsakes left behind by missing and murdered Indigenous women, honoring and remembering their spirits.</i></p>	Comic	
<p>Wilson, G. W. (2014). <i>Ms. Marvel Vol 1: No Normal</i>. Marvel.</p> <p><i>As Kamala Kan's origin story, this volume showcases Kamala's struggle and strength as she obtains and learns her powers, while also wrestling with strict parents, school, and layers of identities as a Pakistani Muslim girl.</i></p>	Comic	

All four texts in unit one helped us complicate ideas like innocence and justice. In *Yummy* (Neri, 210), readers know that the title character did, in fact, fire a gun that killed a young girl. But they are also invited to question a larger system that made it possible for an eleven-year-old abuse victim to be gunned down by his own gang members, and to be a part of Chicago's Black Disciples in the first place. As we shifted into reading both media versions of *Monster* (Myers, 1999; Myers & Sims, 2015), students were challenged to question if the central character, Steve, is guilty or innocent, paying careful attention to the automatic prejudices associated with being a young black man. Finally, as we viewed DuVernay's (2019) *When They See Us*, students knew upfront that the young boys on trial, the Central Park Five, are innocent, but are still found guilty in court and jailed. These texts, combined, supported, and challenged students in considering the blurriness around terms of guilt and innocence. The majority of Amanda's students identified as Hispanic; they deeply related to these characters, situations, and prejudices. We considered impacts to young men of color with a critical lens and a socially just outlook, making space for larger dialogue around the need to be aware of and authentically respond to racist and unjust acts with respect and care (Hill, 2013). In class, Amanda reflected on the ability "to have [students] do more research" about organizations like the Innocence Project. "driv[ing] home the nonfiction aspect of" the texts. Thinking about nonfiction in the comic form was new and interesting for students. Another class period was devoted completely to movement and discussion, where students framed, voiced, questioned, and shifted opinions, while reading versions of *Monster*. Students shared personal stories and argued their opinions around

arrests of and acts of violence towards young black and brown men. For some students, this unit was also the first time they had read a book from cover to cover.

In our second unit, we purposely pivoted our focus to themes of heroism. In thinking about our text choices, Amanda shared that “the goal is just to keep representing them in all different ways.... I don’t want them to only see this negative aspect of minorities” in our texts. While our first unit took up the mantle of challenging larger systems and their oppression towards minority populations, these couldn’t be the only kinds of stories students were seeing themselves in. Using *Poet X* (Acevedo, 2018) and the comic *Ms. Marvel* (Wilson, 2014) as anchor texts, we mapped out a hero’s journey. Students also had access to stacks of comics and media at their table, each embracing stories that focused on women of color (see Table 3 for texts and descriptions). Reading these texts, Amanda understood that students would connect to the characters and their contexts. During her reflection with me she noted students sharing with her, “this women looks like my mom, or this woman looks like my auntie, ...or they saw themselves.” Beyond their connection, students also “got it” when it came to recognizing the many different hero stories we read, according to Amanda. “And I think they really appreciate the fact that they were getting different minority voices,” in this unit. We explored story arcs of many heroes (none of whom were white or male) before inviting students to compose their own hero story centering on themselves. It was the “relatable” stories and characters in this unit that moved students.

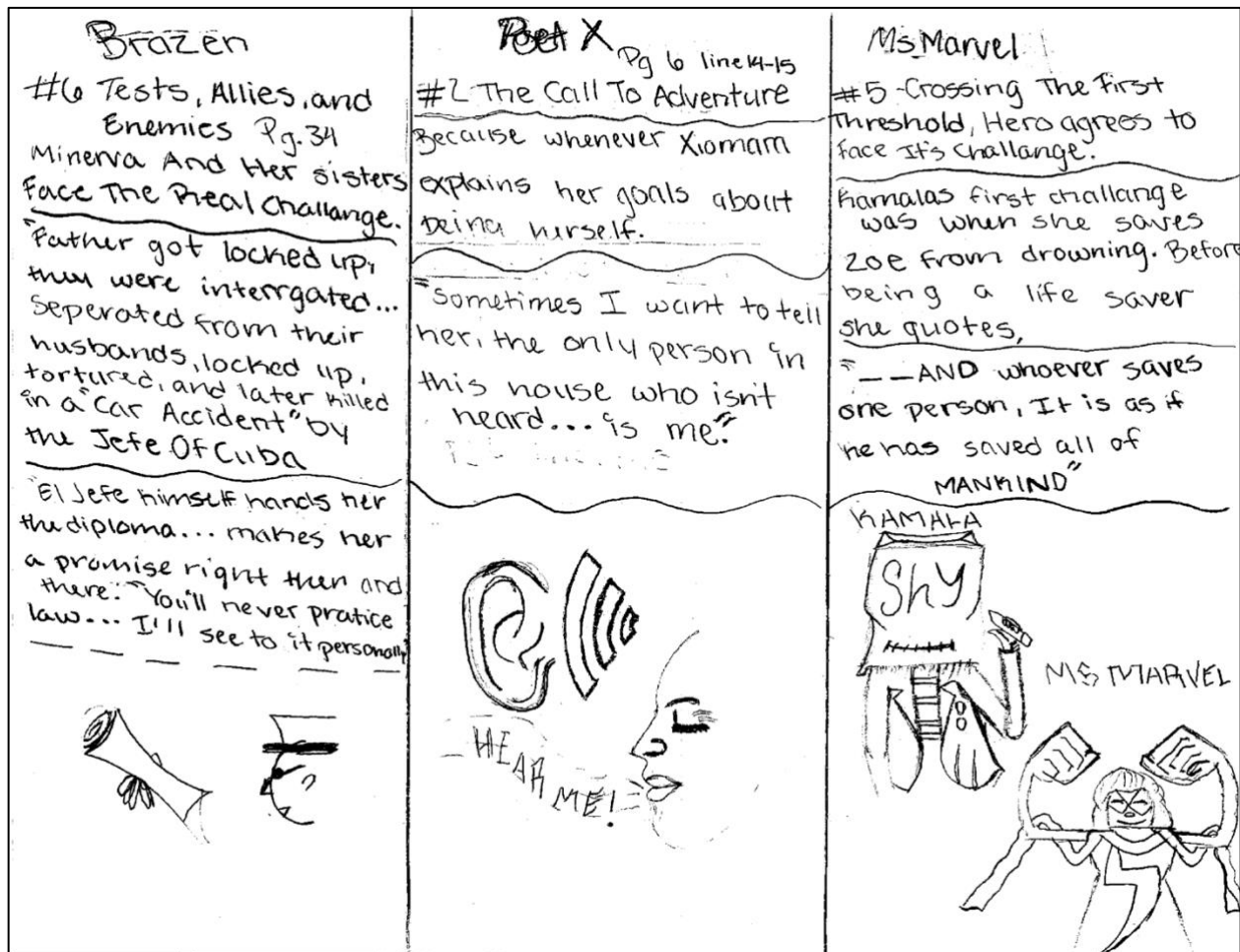
### *New Texts; New Teaching Practices*

The comic and visual forms of our texts mattered here too. As students were reading multimodal texts, we built in multimodal responses. For example, as a way for students to reflect on the readings and review the hero’s journey, we asked them to depict three points of the hero’s journey using any of the texts from the unit (See Figure 1). In this example, the student drew textual evidence and created original illustrations to make their points and show their understandings. The illustrations included under *Ms. Marvel*’s column, for instance, further demonstrate Kamala agreeing to face a challenge. Literally and figuratively, Kamala learns to appear and act as her young, brown, Muslim self as she embodies her hero identity over time. We see elements of Kamala’s identities, including her inclination to hide or disguise her face (she appears as the blond, white, and tall Captain Marvel when she first receives her powers) in the illustration. We also see her connection to the Quran in the selected quote “...and whoever saves one person, it is as if he has saved all of mankind” (Wilson, 2014, Volume 1, Issue 2). By providing opportunities for students to draw and to draw on multiple

modes and from multiple resources to respond, there were many opportunities for showing complex understandings and engagement.

The visual nature of the texts was also interesting and inviting to readers; “they’re full of color...that’s aesthetically pleasing right there,” one student shared during their interview. Students also shared that even seeing the covers out on the tables let them know they were reading something different with a “modern voice.” This modern voice is in direct opposition to the *Lord of the Flies* text that Amanda hoped to turn away from. This shift in texts provided opportunities for Amanda to make change for herself and engage herself as a teacher in ways that were refreshing. And, as you will read in the next section, this work did support students in their act of reading – reading new texts, reading themselves, and really thinking about, navigating, and reading the world (Freire, 1983).

FIGURE 1



***RELATABILITY AND EXPECTATIONS: READING WHEN THE WORLD IS ON FIRE***

Students did, indeed, notice and appreciate the diversities and relevancies of the texts in these units. Keeping in mind the new goals Amanda had for her teaching, this section highlights students' voices and their reactions to a range of representations of character and media. Students highlighted connections between the texts and themselves, the world, and their place in it.

***A Range of Representation Matters***

As I reflected with a small group of students about their experiences reading and engaging, they shared that these books were different than other things they were reading in school. In fact, as students reflected on past readings and diversity one student shared, "...the only thing that came to mind [was].... *To Kill a Mockingbird*...It feels sort of similar to these in a way, because it deals with serious topics..." That the most diverse text these students could reference easily was a canonical text with a white male savior at the center is problematic. They appreciated the seriousness of the text, its place in literature history, and that Scout pushed some gender boundaries in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. But these students deserve more than that. This was something Amanda knew, as she was working to replace texts that were so engrained in the curriculum. While none of the students felt troubled by the lack of reading diversity they had experienced (as it is how school has operated their whole lives in education), they were enthusiastic about the reading selections and choices they had during these units.

I started our focus-group interview with a discussion about our Hero Unit (we had just finished it, so it was fresh in all of our minds). As I displayed all of the books from that unit (See Tables 2 and 3), students took time to share their thoughts about reading books that were "all about women" and "a lot of them are minorities." Across these books were *many* stories and representations of being a woman, a woman of color, and heroism. During this second unit, we gave time and space for students to browse edited comic collections like *Brazen: Rebel Ladies Who Rocked the World* (Baieu, 2018) and *Deer Women* (LaPensée & Alvitre, 2017). Then we had focused in-class reading time for students to choose a text, choose stories within it, and read. These texts remained out and on tables for students to access throughout the unit. This meant students could flip through them during silent reading time, free time at the end of class, during transitions, or to reference while completing assignments. Amanda's strategy for constant book access gave opportunities for students to choose what they wanted to spend time reading while also highlighting the diversity and many intersectional identities and stories from and about women of color. Having



all of these visual stories out on display every day reminded students how many stories existed. “You’re gonna hear all of their stories,” one student shared, reflecting on how these edited collections really pulled readers in.

The students used these collections to think about representation and the ways comics and other multimodal texts reflect bigger pictures, bigger ideologies. The texts and ideas are “about more people, not just one person.” It was important for us to constantly reiterate the many lived experiences that could be used to frame heroism. And to this group, the visual medium really mattered in this larger goal of framing heroism. “I think part of it connects to the theme of being different from society, you know? Because [these books are] visually different from the norm,” one student shared when I asked about the form of the texts we were reading. For them, the modern voice, the color, the striking visuals, and the many stories reflected the world they know, live in, and are part of. These students (and the people they were reading about) are often positioned as different. In the context of these visual comics and other texts, that was something to celebrate. In this way, we were working to (re)define heroism as something that, while not the norm, exists in many places, in many ways. For example, *Will I See?* follows a young Cree woman collecting items that belonged to other Indigenous women who had gone missing as a way to remember them and shed light on their disappearances. While not a conventional superhero comic, it focuses on the heroism and bravery of walking the path of others and remembering. We read it alongside *Ms. Marvel*, where the title character dons a more conventional (though unique) superhero costume. As one student wrote after reading *Will I See?*, “Being a hero doesn’t mean you have to wear a suit.”

### *Connecting to Texts, Connecting to the World.*

As students talked about all of the books we read together, “relatable” was a word they used over and over again. This relatability supported students in a number of ways. First, it helped students connect to text and characters. Students in this group shared that they “could really understand where all the characters were coming from” and “it really invested you in it...it made you care about what was happening.” Particularly when discussing our second unit anchor texts, *Poet X* and *Ms. Marvel*, students commiserated and connected with both central characters, their struggles with their parents, their bodies, their cultural backgrounds. Both Xiomara and Kamala have gifts they are struggling to nurture, grow, and share. And students read and became invested in their stories. Students also connected the text to themselves. “We’re literally like them. We’re teenagers, and some of us are minorities, and some of us have different religions and all of that. And I think almost

everyone can relate somewhat on a strict parent level,” one student shared. They saw themselves in these texts – literally and figuratively. They saw things they were “going through every day.” Here, students weren’t just seeing their skin color, their religion, or their languages represented in texts, they were seeing their own lived experiences.

There was a relevancy and modernity to these texts - as defined by these students. In reaction to that, students also took up personal connections that they turned outward, as a way to view the world and speak back. Three times during our thirty-minute discussion, students shifted their focus between their connections to themselves and their connections to the world. For example, as students considered our first unit’s readings, they used them to think about society and a ‘system’ that is racist and oppressive, curricular themes Amanda and I had invited as topics of discussion and thinking. Reflecting on that unit, students connected personally, while also thinking about the larger ideas at play. “...We’re not fine with this system. It’s all oppressing our best friends right next to us,” one student shared. Living in black and brown bodies meant living with oppression regularly; they recognized the system that they saw working in *Yummy, Monster*, and *When They See Us*. Students related to it personally, but also saw that it was part of the larger world, outside of their own experiences. As we pivoted between the unit texts, students recognized “examples of what happened when you actually try to fight back...or not fall in” throughout the hero unit reading. As they placed the two units in conversation with each other, these texts continued to be familiar stories, but also texts that offered guidance – to speak up, to fight back in the world.

As the group continued to shift their personal connections outward to view and read the world, they noted the weight of expectations. Students were reflecting on how personal these books felt to them and the larger worries they had about the world. In these shifts from personal and inward thinking to outward world reading, students used their parents, grandparents and an older generation as a counterpoint (in similar ways that Kamala and Xiomara do in their stories).

Student S: “All the boomers not really getting it...the world is literally going to end up on fire. Have you seen Australia? ... The older generation don't seem to get it”

Student J: “And I feel like these books represent *that*, ...When you read it, you can feel it.”

The feelings of tension this group describes includes layers of seeing themselves, experiencing frustration at their lack of voice and agency as young people, along with pressure to “fix everything” going wrong out in the world. This collection of texts struck this group as representing complex, rich identities – identities they connected to. But, as one of the students said, echoing

others' sentiments, "if you want us to change stuff, then listen to us, maybe." While seeing themselves in these texts and thinking deeply about how those identities operate in the world, students noted the work left to do, their responsibilities, as well as their lack of voice and agency.

When I asked students to consider all of the books we had read together (see Tables 2 and 3), one described them as acting as "a voice for all youth." Another shared, "they have the same moral compass, and I think it's the whole moral compass for [our] generation...we feel like it's a good moral compass." As they talked and reflected, students were seeing and sharing their own experiences, but also joining those experiences to others', viewing themselves as a collective voice that wants to be heard and appreciated. One of the most important directions that compass was pointing them in was not being "ashamed of being who you are." So alongside reading, building arguments with text citations, or mapping a hero's journey plot, these students read books they connected to and felt their identities empowered by.

### **DISCUSSION: "WHEN YOU READ IT, YOU CAN FEEL IT"**

When Amanda set out to make changes in her curriculum, she leaned on new texts composed in new forms. While she had an arsenal of ELA experience and teaching ideas, she followed the texts as she approached a range of teaching practices. These choices invited other ways for her to continue to make change. She encouraged more multimodal work in class. She dug into complex and complicated topics around race, injustice, gender, and representation. And she embraced collaboration with her students and with me, "actively decenter[ing]" herself, especially when critically taking up topics of racism (Rebellino et al., 2019, p. 138). Her classroom did not revolve around a single text, around a lecturing teacher, or around a test. Her changes and choices supported a classroom that was centered on students, their interests, and their identities. Looking across interviews with both teacher and students, reactions to diverse representation in the texts was the largest overlap in their thinking.

In particular, the text choices mattered in propelling this work. The students spoke of the visual medium of comics mattering to them, confirming the engagement and motivational aspect of comics. But they also noted that the visual texts worked for *these* stories and topics. In the first unit, the texts highlighted frustrations and injustices that these students understood and experienced. Reading them offered opportunities to consider their frustrations and speak back. The follow-up unit on heroism gave opportunities to think about making positive change. They saw themselves in

these texts. The visuals drew attention and invited emotional connections. As one student shared above, “when you read it you can feel it.” Because of their form, these texts surfaced deep emotion and connection with stories of difference.

Across both units, students read and viewed a collection of voices that are often silenced. They related to this feeling, as young people and as people with minority identities. These books confirmed their feelings of being silenced and misunderstood; in a way, then, students were feeling seen and heard in this space. Reading these texts justified feelings of frustration, while centering students within something bigger. But this added to their feelings of tension in how much change is needed. Speaking out and making positive change is not easy, as we read through many examples in class. This is especially true when you don’t feel seen, heard, or respected in society – or even by your parents sometimes. But books, such as those that fall into the superhero genre, “can act as a tool for youth of color to imagine better futures and see themselves as agentive individuals” (Torres, 2019, p. 168). Students need time to think, talk, write, and respond to these tensions in order to make sense of them. But, as the students saw in their reading, there is still work to be done.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As more comics are published and invited into school spaces, there are more opportunities to challenge the canon and conventional literacy practices that do not serve all students equitably. And as more diverse comics are published and made available to students, they not only see themselves, but take opportunities to connect emotionally and then look outward and read the world. There are racist and unjust systems in place, there is silencing, there is frustration. The world continues to be on fire in many ways. One of the students in this study suggested that these books were working as moral compasses. We know books are not neutral and classrooms are not neutral spaces. Books are powerful; but they do not act alone. These comics and media operated as powerful sets. No single text was doing the work. The collections of comics and media highlighted dynamic ranges of identities and voices. These books were not just available but were part of the curriculum. Comics and media showcasing cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity counted as legitimate academic texts. Importantly, they were paired with a range of response and engagement options. Amanda welcomed her 57 students’ voices as they formed opinions and talked back. So, can texts be moral compasses? I am inclined to agree with the student who saw them that way. But to continue the metaphor, a compass really only does meaningful work if it is picked up and used. It offers

direction, but only if we choose to follow. Students need the opportunities to pick books up and to follow where they lead. For these students, the comics and other texts we read showed options for navigating difficult worlds on fire while staying true to and proud of their identities.

### NOTES OF GRATITUDE

I am so grateful for my collaboration with Amanda Manning, the stellar teacher in this focus classroom, as well as her thoughtful, brilliant students. And thank you to the special editors of this issue of *Study and Scrutiny* and my dear friend Ammarie Sheahan for generous feedback and sharing in a commitment to highlight comics in education.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, G.L., Herr, K., & Nihlen, A.S. (2007). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Corwin.
- Brugar, K. A., Roberts, K. L., Jiménez, L. M., & Meyer, C. K. (2018). More than mere motivation: Learning specific content through multimodal narratives. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 57*(2), 183–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2017.1351586>
- Carter, J. B. (Ed.). (2007). *Building literacy connections with graphic novels: Page by page, panel by panel*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Chase, M., Son, E. H., Steiner, S. (2014). Sequencing and graphic novels with primary-grade students. *The Reading Teacher, 67*(6), 435-443.
- Chisholm, J. S., Shelton, A. L., & Sheffield, C. C. (2017). Mediating emotive empathy with informational text: three students' think-aloud protocols of Gettysburg: The graphic novel. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 61*(3), 289–298. <https://doi-org.libproxy.unm.edu/10.1002/jaal.682>
- Chun, C. W. (2009). Critical literacies and graphic novels for English-language learners: Teaching Maus. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 53*(2), 144-153.
- Chute, H. (2008). Comics as literature? Reading graphic narrative. *PMLA, 123*, 452–465.
- Chute, H. (2017). *Why comics?: From underground to everywhere*. HarperCollins.
- Clark, J. S. (2013). “Your credibility could be shot”: Preservice teachers' thinking about nonfiction graphic novels, curriculum decision making, and professional acceptance. *The Social Studies, 104*, 38-45.
- Connors, S. (2013). Weaving multimodal meaning in a graphic novel reading group. *Visual Communication, 12*(1), 27-53.
- Cook, M. P. (2017). Now I “see”: The impact of graphic novels on reading comprehension in high school English classrooms. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 56*(1), 21–53.
- Dallacqua, A. K. (2018). “When I write, I picture it in my head”: Comics and graphic novels as inspiration for multimodal compositions. *Language Arts, 95*(5), 273-286.
- Dallacqua, A. K. (2019). Reading comics collaboratively and challenging literacy norms. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 59*(2), 169-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2019.1669746>

- Davis, J. (2020). (De)constructing imagination: Racial bias and counter-storytelling in young adult speculative fiction. *Study and Scrutiny*, 4(1), 11-28. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2376-5275.2020.4.1.1-28>
- DeHart, J. (2021). It's about Superman, but it's more than that: A graphic novel pedagogy in middle years classrooms. *Literacy Learning: The Middle Years*, 29(1), 47- 52.
- Farrell, M., Arizpe, E., & McAdam, J. (2010). Journeys across visual borders: Annotated spreads of *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan as a method for understanding pupils' creation of meaning through visual images. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 33(3), 198-210.
- Freire, P. (1983). The importance of the act of reading. *Journal of Education*, 163(1), 5-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002205748316500103>
- Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Pearson.
- Hill, M. L. (2013). Teaching English in the age of incarceration. *English Journal*, 102(4), 16-18.
- Hubbard, R.S., & Power, B.M. (2003). *The art of classroom inquiry: A handbook for teacher-researchers*. Heinemann.
- Janks, H. (2013). Critical literacy in teaching and research. *Education Inquiry*, 4(2), 225-242.
- Jewitt, C., & Kress, G. (2003). *Multimodal Literacy*. Peter Lang.
- Jimenez, L. M. & Meyer, C. K. (2016). First impressions matter: Navigating graphic novels utilizing linguistic, visual, and spatial resources. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 48(4), 423-447.
- Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. Routledge.
- Kress, G., & Van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Routledge.
- Lizárraga, J. R. & Gutiérrez, K. (2018). Centering nepantla literacies from the borderlands: Leveraging “in-betweenness” toward learning in the everyday, *Theory into Practice*, 57(1), 38-47.
- Low, D. E. (2017). Students contesting “colormuteness” through critical inquiries into comics. *English Journal*, 106(4), 19-28.
- Martinez, N. (2021). How Yazzie-Martinez V. NM highlights inequities in public education for Indigenous students and underscores the need for critical literacy education in M. F. Rice & A. K. Dallacqua (Eds.), *Luminous Literacies: Teachers' Stories from the Land of Enchantment* (pp. 205-221). Emerald Publishing Limited.

- Martínez-Roldán, C. M., & Newcomer, S. (2011). "Reading between the pictures": Immigrant students' interpretations of *The Arrival*. *Language Arts*, 88(3), 188-197.
- McCloud, S. (1993). *Understanding comics: The invisible art*. HarperPerennial.
- National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common Core State Standards for English language arts literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects*. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, Washington D.C.
- Pantaleo, S. (2013). Revisiting Rosenblatt's aesthetic response through *The Arrival*. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 36(3), 125-134.
- Pantaleo & Bomphray, . (2011). Exploring grade 7 students' written responses to Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*. *Changing English*, 18(2). 173-185.
- Paris, J. & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally Sustaining pedagogies. Teaching and Learning for Justice in a changing world*. Teachers College Press.
- Rebellino, R. L. R., Grice, K. M. & Murphy, C. E. (2019). Engaging with Hip-hop, resistance, and remix in All American boys and viral YouTube videos. In R. Ginsberg & W. J. Glenn (Eds.), *Engaging with multicultural YA literature in the secondary classroom* (pp. 132-141). Routledge.
- Reese, D. (2018). Critical Indigenous literacies: Selecting and using children's books about Indigenous peoples. *Language Arts*, 95(6), 389-393.
- Shagoury, R., & Power, B.M. (2012). *Living the questions: A guide for teacher-researchers* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Stenhouse.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Sage.
- Saldaña, R. (2019). On Anaya's *Bless me, Ultima* and becoming a lifelong reader, and how I nearly blew it as a teacher: An extended testimonio. *Study and Scrutiny*, 3(2), 20-30. <https://doi.org/10.15763/issn.2376-5275.2019.3.2.20-30>
- Sanchez, P., & Blum-Martinez, R. (2019). A watershed moment in the education of American Indians: A judicial strategy to mandate the state of New Mexico to meet the unique cultural and linguistic needs of American Indians in New Mexico public schools. *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 27(3), 317-355.
- Sheahan, A. (2016). Reconstructing the "other": Using YA fiction in secondary classrooms to build critical awareness. *SIGNAL Journal*, 40(1), 21-27.



- Sheahan, A. (2021). *Individual, historical, and critical contexts: Investigating the text selection practices of four New Mexican language arts teachers* in M. F. Rice & A. K. Dallacqua (Eds.), *Luminous literacies: Teachers' stories from the land of enchantment* (pp. 51-62). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Sheahan, A. & Dallacqua, A.K. (2020). Taking scissors to Shakespeare. *Journal of Language and Literacy, 16*(2), 1-13.
- Short, K. G. (2018). What's trending in children's literature and why it matters. *Language Arts, 95*(5), 287-298.
- Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing Books for the Classroom, 6*(30), ix-xi.
- Sousanis, N. (2020). Thinking in comics: All hands-on in the classroom. In S.E. Kirtley, A. Garcia, & P.E. Carlson (Eds.). *With great power comes great pedagogy: Teaching, learning and comics* (pp. 92-116). University Press of Mississippi.
- Thomsen, J. (2018). Comics, collage, and other things with crayons: The power of composing with image. *English Journal, 107*(3), 54-61.
- Torres, F. (2019). Deconstructing the superhero: Interrogating the racialization of bodies using *All-New All-Difference Avengers, Vol.1*. In R. Ginsberg & W.J. Glenn (Eds.), *Engaging with multicultural YA literature in the secondary classroom* (pp. 162-170). Routledge.
- Torres, F. L. & Tayne, K. (2017). Super heroes, villains, and politics: Elementary youth superhero narratives in an afterschool program. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique, 16*(3). 375-390.
- Wang, E. (2015). Art as meaning-making in a secondary school English classroom: A "secret compartment" book project on Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *English Journal, 104*(5), 79-87.
- Wissman, K. K. & Costello, S. (2014). Creating digital comics in response to literature: Aesthetics, aesthetic transactions, and meaning making. *Language Arts, 92*(2). 103-117.
- Worlds, M., & Miller, H. (2019). Miles Morales: Spider-Man and reimagining the canon for racial justice. *English Journal, 108*(4), 43-50.

## MULTIMODAL/NONTRADITIONAL TEXTS CITED

- Acevedo, E. (2018). *Poet X*. Harper Collins.
- Baieu, P. (2018). *Brazen: Rebel ladies who rocked the world*. First Second.
- LaPensée, E. & Alvitre, W. (Eds). (2017). *Deer woman: An anthology*. Native Realities Publishing.
- Leatherdale, M. B. & Charleyboy, L. (Eds). (2017). *#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American women*. Annick Press.
- Myers, W. D. (1999). *Monster*. Harper Tempest.
- Myers, W. D. & Sims, G. A. (2015). *Monster: A graphic novel*. Harper Collins Publishing.
- Neri, G. (2010). *Yummy: The last days of a southside shorty*. Lee & Low Books.
- Persichetti, B. Ramsey, P. & Rothman, R. (2018). *Spider-man: Into the Spider-verse*. [Film]. Columbia Pictures, Marvel Entertainment, Sony Pictures Animation, Arad Productions, Lord Miller Productions, Pascal Pictures.
- Robertson, D., Chomichuk, G., I., & Leslie, E. (2016). *Will I see?* HighWater Press.
- Skoll, J., King, J., Rosenthal, J., De Niro, R., Welsh, B., Winfrey, O., DuVernay, A., (Executive Producers). (2019). *When they see us* [TV miniseries]. Harpo Films, Tribeca Productions, ARRAY, & Participant Media.
- Wilson, G. W. (2014). *Ms. Marvel volume 1: No normal*. Marvel.

**Ashley K. Dallacqua** is an Assistant Professor in Literacy at The University of New Mexico. Her work focuses around multimodal and multimedia literacies and how these literacies are used, read, and composed in educational spaces; she focuses much of her research and teaching around the medium of comics. You can contact her at [adallacqua@unm.edu](mailto:adallacqua@unm.edu).