

Literature and online college newspaper

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Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi is a graphic novel that depicts the life of a female coming to age during a time of war and violence in Iran. The editor of *The Ithacan*, an online college newspaper, criticized this work of literature as being nothing more than an “advanced comic book” and “not too challenging.” He argues that *Persepolis* and similar literary works do not encourage intellectual advancement and does not benefit college freshmen. Despite the more basic vocabulary, the side narratives, unique dialogues, and use of illustrations evoke understanding and compassion for not only the narrator, but also the underlying themes.

Generally speaking, a novel about Iranian politics and war is a topic that is hard for most young people to grasp or to find interesting because subjects such as these are very foreign to American readers. *Persepolis* assists in making this topic more relatable. By using graphics to depict the character's expressions, settings and actions it is easier for the reader to connect. For example, on page 53, Satrapi illustrates the many ways in which Iranian young people express their feelings about the violent atmosphere.

They cope with this situation by turning to family, friends and God. In addition, the author shows the children creating games and a fantasy world that compares their lives to the lives of the tortured. An example of the effectiveness of the illustrations and narrative is shown on page 116. The frame depicts soldiers amidst bombs, gunshots and smoke with multiple soldiers lying on the ground, dead. Marjane, the narrator, is standing in the upper left corner appearing helpless. Marjane is then shown exiting the frame stating that the situation could have been avoided.

This is a powerful message because it relates to the current situation in the Middle East where American soldiers and innocent civilians are killed everyday. The value of Satrapi's use of dialogue to enrich the narrative is evident on page 197. In response to overhearing her colleagues' prejudiced comments, she angrily retorts " I am Iranian and proud of it! " (197). This simple statement shows that proud of her nationality and will not tolerate negative statements applied to it. On this page she then states her comprehension of her grandmother's advice. If [she] wasn't comfortable with [herself], [she] would never be comfortable" (197). This is indicative of her self-growth and acceptance of her ethnicity. Literature comes in many forms and styles. These include novels, memoirs, plays, poetry and non-fiction. Graphic novels are just another medium in which authors can express their viewpoint and influence readers. One type of literature is not better than another; the vocabulary, sentence structure and degree of difficulty does not correlate to the book's worth.

What is more important is how it influences a reader and the thought process and intellectual stimulation that comes about. Therefore, *Persepolis* is more than an " advanced comic book". It is an engaging, enlightening piece of literature that portrays a violent time period in the Middle East that can be universally applied to other situations in the world today. Works Cited Satrapi, Marjane. *The Complete Persepolis*. Illus. Marjan Satrapi. New York: Pantheon Books, 2007. Print. " Taking Initiative: Graphic novel reading selection furthers declined reading comprehension. " *The Ithacan* 6 Mar. 2008: 1. *The Ithacan*. Web. 29 Sept. 2010. .