

Project Proposal – Public Library Graphic Novel Book Club

Program Rationale and Purpose:

By using graphic novels as entry points to other subjects the primary objective of the Graphic Novel Book Club is to promote enhanced literacy, and to foster an early love for reading. The intent of the group is to generate conversations that will encourage an expanded interest in other subjects including STEM, literature, health, and history, among possibly many others. The reason for using graphic novels as opposed to traditional books, is the visual component. Nascent readers can easily be discouraged by whole books composed of only text as the sole content. Graphic novels can build reading confidence where traditional books might fail. Graphic novels also ignite the imagination with visually engaging stories, and present complex narratives and themes that encourage further thought from the reader.

In addition to enhancing the reading and education of local children, the purpose of this program is to develop kids' social and emotional skills by creating community and critical thinking, and allowing children to express themselves and to listen patiently while others speak.

Target Audience:

The targeted age range for the Graphic Novel Book Club is children from 10 to 12 years old. The reason for this is that research shows that those are the years in the normal course of childhood development where young readers are able to fully comprehend what they are reading (Wolf, 2008, p. 138). They are also able to think more abstractly about the content they are reading. Most educators and child developmental experts agree this is generally the optimal age range to encourage boys and girls to be avid readers (Van den Broek, Tzeng, Risdien, Trabasso, & Basche, 2001).

Program Overview:

Beyond discussing the book of the month, my plan is to use volunteer subject matter experts to give lectures and/or lead discussions on the monthly subject. I also plan to utilize the Public Library's collection to encourage further research into the underlying topic of the current book. Another aim of the program is to encourage creativity while educating. I want to show these youngsters that reading can be fun.

Program Activities:

Like a traditional book club meeting, there will be three to six discussion questions. In addition to that:

- In the first meeting I will conduct a tour of the public library to get the boys and girls accustomed to our collection and facilities.
- I plan to recruit guest speakers who are willing to give a brief overview of whatever subject the monthly story covers.
- I will also ask our Friends of the Library organization for a monthly budget of \$30-\$40 to pay for juice, water, and snacks/pizza parties as an inducement to join the group.
- Some meetings will have craft activities based on the subject matter and time constraints. For example, during Halloween, I can hold a cosplay contest. I can also conduct a “design your own superhero” art event during another meeting.

Obviously, this is not a comprehensive finalized list of programming plans, instead these examples are used to demonstrate the many directions the book club can go while not straining the programming budget. To determine the titles to be used in the club, we will initially ask members of the Student Library Advisory Board (SLAB) to vote on the first title. From then on, the titles will be voted on by the members of the club.

Specified Titles of Proposed Subjects:

The educational categories and sample titles are as follows:

- **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)**
 - *Super Space Weekend* by Gaëlle Alméras: Three young friends explore the universe in a treehouse observatory.
 - *Jop and Blip Wanna Know* by Jim Benton: Two robots use logic and critical thinking to answer oddball questions like “can you hear a penguin fart on Mars?”
 - *Science Comics: Bridges: Engineering Masterpieces* by Dan Zettwoch: A group of friends travel the world to learn about the various types of bridges: beam, arch, truss, and suspension.
- **Classic Literature**
 - *Watership Down: The Graphic Novel* adapted by James Sturm: A comics adaptation of the classic story of hope and survival by

Richard Adams. Discussion can be broadened about animal rights.

- *The Call of the Wild: The Graphic Novel* adapted by Lloyd S. Wagner: This adaptation is based on the story written by Jack London. This title can be used as a jumping on point for a discussion about universal themes such as morality, redemption, and the nature of civilization.
- *Classics Illustrated* by various creators: This series of graphic novels provides the program with a virtually unlimited number of literary classic titles to choose from.

- **Health and Self Care**

- *Human Body Theater* by Maris Wicks: Every biological system of the human body takes to the stage to educate the reader on human biology.
- *Just Roll with It* by Veronica Agarwal and Lee Durfey-Lavoie: Follows a girl named Maggie as she deals with starting middle school while dealing with peer pressure, anxiety, and being OCD.
- *Allergic: A Graphic Novel* by Megan Wagner Lloyd and Michelle Mee Nutter: Tells the story of a girl whose parents are expecting another baby and the girl finding out she's allergic to her new puppy.

- **History and Biography**

- *Superman Smashes the Klan* by Gene Luen Yang: Set in 1946, this graphic novel tells the story of Asian children as they move from Chinatown to Metropolis and face off against the Klan, getting some help from Superman.
- *The Great American Dust Bowl* by Don Brown: This is a non-fiction account of the hardships of the Great Depression, the ecological disaster of the Dust Bowl, and the resilience of those who endured both grim realities of the 1930s.
- *Muhammad Ali: The Greatest of All Time!* by James Buckley Jr. and Andy Duggan: A graphic novel retelling of the career of boxing great, Muhammad Ali.

Program Evaluation

The span of time this program will cover is one 60-to-90-minute meeting per month over the course of a year. After one year, the program will be evaluated by myself, the library director, and the head of programming to determine the overall success of the program, and to determine the effectiveness of each module. From there, we will adjust the format for year two.

Metrics To Be Used

- *Attendance:* The number of attendees will be tracked with 15 being the maximum number of participants per meeting due to meeting space limitations and budget.
- *Participation:* I will track the number of attendees who participated.
- *Surveys:* Attendee's parents will be asked to take a short three question survey to gauge their child's experience on a scale of 1 to 10 on two metrics that are educational value and enjoyment of meeting activities. They will also be asked what they would like to see in future meetings.

Conclusion:

The proposed budget requested is only \$600 annually. This will average a mere \$50 per meeting for beverages, snacks, and miscellaneous expenses. The rest of the planning can be done at no cost to the library because the meetings will use volunteers, materials, and resources already owned by the library system. This proposal has minimal financial risk with tremendous potential of reward for the community. For a nominal cost, we can promote child literacy, help kids learn social skills, and enhance their critical thinking abilities. This concludes my proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

References

Van den Broek, P., Tzeng, Y., Risen, K., Trabasso, T., & Basche, P. (2001). Inferential questioning: Effects on comprehension of narrative texts as a function of grade and timing. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 521-529.

Wolf, M. (2008). *Proust and the squid: the story and science of the reading brain*. Cambridge: Icon Books.