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FROM MY WORD PROCESSOR TO YOUR EARS
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Comics — not just for geeks anymore

Many of us expect to leave college well versed in classics like "Moby Dick," "The Odyssey" and "King Lear." But there is a very versatile, oft-overlooked genre that shakes up the traditional view of literature and makes for a marvelous teaching tool: graphic novels.

I'll admit the phrase "comic book" used to make me cringe. I vowed never to become one of the weekly visitors to the comic book store. I thought it was all crime-fighting superheroes, special superhero powers and people at Comic-Con dressed up as superheroes.

All right, so there are a lot of superheroes, but they make comics interesting, not to mention easily adaptable into a movie.

Many comic books are action-based, dense with dialogue and practically pre-storyboarded for the convenience of the illustrator.

The superhero obsession has become so expansive that television shows like "Heroes" have grown out of the phenomenon rather than a pre-existing character. The show even launched its own webcomic and graphic novel to satisfy viewer interest.

And not all superhero plots are BANG! POW! WHAM! action all the time. Some take a critical look at our culture through an alternative universe.

"Watchmen" is a classic dating back to 1986 about a now-defunct group of superheroes. It holds its own among more traditional literary works; Time Magazine ranked it in the 100 greatest English-language novels between 1923 and 2005. And yes, the movie is set to be released in March 2009.

Nor is the medium constrained to the realm of fiction. I took a course about graphic novels through the English department last semester and most of the novels we read were nonfiction pieces.

Art Spiegelman tackles the Holocaust in "Maus," which won a Pulitzer in 1992. Joe Sacco's "Palestine" highlights the Palestinian opinion of the conflict with Israel and Marjane Satrapi's "Persepolis" (the film adaptation of which was recently released in theaters) is the story of a girl living in Iran during the Islamic revolution.

I'm not a fan of history and usually shy away from the subject I view as memorization of dates and events, but I was intrigued by how art enhances the personal stories in these nonfiction pieces, and I learned a lot of things about politics and history that I never would have looked into before.

Teachers in Europe are trying to harness the eye-catching power of comic books for the classroom, as well.

Students in Germany, Poland and Hungary are part of a test program using comic book "The Search," a fictionalized account of the Holocaust, in their curriculum. The Netherlands is already using the book in schools.

While some people criticize the genre as inappropriate for the subject matter, it is actually very fitting. The book will get children interested in a taboo subject and, when coupled with historical data and outside references, will be a great learning tool.

In fact, comic books are a great teaching device for just about any subject. The use of both images and dialogue bring the subject alive for those of a younger age or shorter attention span. And depicting actual people (or animals, as Spiegelman does in "Maus") allows readers to relate to the characters better than a distant individual glossed over in a textbook.

Best of all, they are fun to read. Don't get me wrong: I love a good Orwell story when I'm in the mood, but pictures always seem to make the treat a little sweeter. So between skimming 30-page court decisions and analyzing Canadian poetry during this exam season, I'm reading "The Sandman" series. And, let me tell you, I can't wait for the movie.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Mason Phillips, mphil@email.unc.edu



Delayed reaction

Levine should have stopped seeing patients in 2005

We don't know whether Dr. Melvin Levine molested pubescent boys, and we don't want to convict the UNC Medical School pediatrician in the press, but he should have been asked to stop seeing patients a couple of years ago, when new allegations of abuse first surfaced in 2005.

At the time, Levine was one of the stars of the UNC Medical School. One of his books topped the best-seller chart in June 2002; Oprah Winfrey interviewed him; and Newsweek wrote about him.

His theory that terms such as attention deficit disorder and drugs such as Ritalin should be supplanted by individualized medical care made him popular with the press and the public.

He even founded his own institute, All Kinds of Minds, with Charles R. Schwab, a man who routinely ranks in the top quarter of Forbes Magazine's list of the 400 richest Americans.

The first lawsuit was filed in 1988 and dismissed that year.

No new allegations surfaced until 2005, when another suit

was filed. Then another was filed in 2006. Then a second one that same year.

And then, March 31, yet another lawsuit was filed.

After the latest suit, University officials began talking with Levine immediately, and later that week it was agreed that Levine would stop seeing patients until the allegations — which are from patients he saw when he worked for Harvard University at Children's Hospital in Boston — are resolved.

On Friday, Levine asked the state medical board to place his license on inactive status.

We think the University's response to the most recent lawsuit has been textbook.

Our society and our University choose to presume innocence rather than guilt, so it is understandable, even laudable, that one allegation in 1988 was not enough to sink a distinguished career.

But the action the University took so well this week should have been taken when the 2005 suit was filed, at the first sign that 1988 might not have

been an anomaly.

No rush to judgment should have been made, nor should one be made now. Levine should have been told politely that pending lawsuits for molestation are a serious problem and that until he resolved them they should be his sole focus.

Now the Boston lawyer who is representing the plaintiffs in the recent lawsuits, along with a colleague in Raleigh, has said more potential victims have been calling them with allegations of abuse, some of which relate to Levine's time in North Carolina, one as recent as 15 months ago.

We understand this man has his own motives, but the University needs to heed his call for an independent investigation into these allegations.

We also hope that students won't have to bear the burden of paying off any judgment against the University, but mostly we hope that the truth comes out and that if anyone was hurt at the University of the people, they get justice and whatever help they need.

Best value chancellor

UNC shouldn't have to pay a fortune for next chancellor

Like Jerry Maguire, it's likely that our next chancellor will want UNC to show him the money.

But in the face of rising chancellor salaries nationwide, UNC should try to buck the upward trend as much as possible.

Chancellor James Moeser brings home \$390,835 a year.

Surprisingly, this is only about half of what many of our peer institutions are paying their top dogs. Several universities now pay their chancellor or president more than \$700,000 a year.

Based on this fact, it is a veritable certainty that the next chancellor will have to be paid more than Moeser, but the question is just how much.

We hope the chancellor search committee takes into account

the idea that the most qualified person is not necessarily the one who will require the most money to bring to UNC.

The position of chancellor is exceptionally important because he is the face of the University, he guides the direction it takes, he has a heavy influence on the draw for high-profile faculty and he can make or break fundraising campaigns.

But we have to ask if it is really acceptable to pay a chancellor more than three times the amount the average faculty member makes — and nearly 18.5 times the salary of a housekeeper on campus — in addition to the house and the car that our chancellor receives as part of the benefits package.

We understand the unfor-

tunate truth behind the peer institution argument. The best administrators expect to be paid according to their ability and competitively with their peers.

However, we'd like to think that there are quality chancellor candidates out there who wouldn't bleed UNC's wallet in exchange for their services.

If money is the deciding factor between a candidate taking the job here versus somewhere else, perhaps that's a sign that they're not the person for the job. We are looking for the qualified person who truly wants to be the chancellor of UNC.

The new chancellor is likely to be chosen before July. We are certain that one of the many candidates being considered is quality and affordable.

J.J. Raynor
Student Body President

Tim Nichols
Speaker
Student Congress

'Racial injustice' doesn't justify affirmative action

TO THE EDITOR:

In reference to Camille Archie's letter "Affirmative action is still needed to combat injustice" on April 8, she states that, "Affirmative action is about giving individuals an opportunity to correct the years of racial injustice that still run rampant in today's society."

I'll agree that there is racial injustice still running through today's society; however, think about who committed those injustices against the individuals benefiting from affirmative action.

I am an Asian student, my parents moved here from Hong Kong, (and) I am 100 percent sure that they never committed any "racial injustices" that you are referring to. So why should my parents or I be subject to affirmative action?

Affirmative action affects everyone. Everyone makes mistakes, just learn from them; forgive and forget.

Just something to think about.

Stephen J. Fu
Graduate Student
School of Pharmacy

SPEAK OUT

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- ▶ Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
 - ▶ Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
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 - ▶ Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Two branches of student government collaborating

TO THE EDITOR:

This year will begin a new tradition of collaboration and cooperation between the legislative and executive branches. Fortunately, both branches are eager to set a new precedent by working together.

We want to make sure that any changes that we introduce to the Student Code are supported by the students and the informed experience of student government. Working with everyone involved, we decided that changes to the selection process of the student body vice president were part of a discussion that needed to go further.

We want to make sure that any changes we make to the Student Code are informed, researched and fully understood. Thus we decided that both the executive and legislative branches of student government needed to further investigate the bill in order to uncover the best solution.

We want to reassure students that this issue is being fully researched and the best decision will be made following extensive discussion. We want to make sure that all decisions we make take into account students' best interest.

At the end of the day, our mission as student government is to serve the students. We understand that the best way to do this is through collaboration.

We're really excited about a new tradition of student government that involves collaboration between these two branches, and we're very thankful that the new leadership of student government is willing to work on this together for a better Carolina.

Columnist was incorrect; season wasn't a waste

TO THE EDITOR:

Charles Dahan's column ("Sports columnists should stick to facts," April 8) was on target. Caulton Tudor is what he is, brain dead. Then you have Billy Packer at CBS announcing that "this game is over" halfway through the first 20 minutes of the game.

There are far more level-headed people in this country who see Tudor and Packer for who they are than there are those who agree with their typical off-the-cuff remarks. Lose to Kansas, yes, we did; a wasted season, no way.

We watched fine young gentleman play with energy and determination all season long. Forget the score, the wins and the losses, and look to these men for how they represented their team, their school and themselves. Not only were they unselfish on the floor and off, they were examples for us all, giving credit to everyone else and taking responsibility, personally, for everything else.

Thanks, guys, for all you do and the fine young men you are. You make us all very proud. Now if only Tudor and Packer were half the fine men you all are ... No, that is only wishful thinking.

Bruce J. Stoen
Durham

We don't have a duty to support small businesses

TO THE EDITOR:

I can understand where Nathan Nyanjom was coming from when he wrote about how small businesses need our patronage to survive ("Mom and Pop need your help everywhere," April 9).

What I don't understand is why I should help them. Yes, I know that they are trying to make a living, but so is everybody. If these businesses are selling something of value to me, then you bet I'll buy from them.

However, I won't buy from a business just because nobody else will. In fact, lack of other customers is probably a good sign that I do not want to buy from them. Not all small businesses fail because people choose to shop at large retail chains instead. In fact, most small business failure is due to various inadequacies of the business or its managers.

I would easily wager that the reason Schoolkids and Nathan's Lemonade Stand went under is that the location was wrong for the market. People don't buy beverages on suburban street corners, and people are rapidly choosing not to buy music in physical stores at all.

Lamenting the fate of the failed small business is an American pastime, but the truth is that competition makes consumers (i.e. you) better off. There is room for both when each knows who they are selling to and what they are selling. But purchasing from a small store just because it is small is not good enough reason to use up my cash. If they aren't selling what I'm buying, then they aren't selling to me.

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Business, Economics

The Daily Tar Heel

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115 years
of editorial freedom

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