Great Graphic Novels for Teens
Top Ten
2012-2007

Great Graphic Novels for Teens is a list of recommended graphic novels and illustrated nonfiction for ages 12-18, prepared yearly by Young Adult Library Services Association, part of the American Library Association.

2012

ZAHRA’S PARADISE by Amir & Khalil (G F Amir)
Grades 10 & up
Set in the aftermath of Iran’s fraudulent elections of 2009, Zahra’s Paradise is the fictional story of the search for Mehdi, a young protestor who has vanished into an extrajudicial twilight zone. What’s keeping his memory from being obliterated is not the law. It is the grit and guts of his mother, who refuses to surrender her son to fate, and the tenacity of his brother, a blogger, who fuses tradition and technology to explore and explode the void in which Mehdi has vanished.

SCARLET by Bendis & Maleev (YA G Scarlet)
Grades 9 & up
A young woman runs afoul of police corruption and, with Batman-like commitment, begins exacting ruthless, bloody revenge. Having her share her deeds with the public via filmed messages and rallying a culture of support to herself touches on something that has been long missing from comic books: the voice of angry, disenfranchised youth.
**ANYA’S GHOST** by Brosgal (YA G Anya)
Grades 6 & up
Of all the things Anya expected to find at the bottom of an old well, a new friend was not one of them. Especially not a new friend who’s been dead for a century. Falling down a well is bad enough, but Anya’s normal life might actually be worse. She’s embarrassed by her family, self-conscious about her body, and she’s pretty much given up on fitting in at school. A new friend - even a ghost - is just what she needs. Or so she thinks.

**THE INFLUENCING MACHINE: BROOKE GLADSTONE ON THE MEDIA** by Gladstone, Neufeld, et. al. (G 302.23 GLA)
Grades 8 & up
The cartoon of Brooke conducts the reader through two millennia of history-from the newspapers in Caesar's Rome to the penny press of the American Revolution and the manipulations of contemporary journalism. Gladstone's manifesto debunks the notion that "The Media" is an external force, outside of our control, since we've begun directly constructing, filtering, and responding to what we watch and read.

**THOR: THE MIGHTY AVENGER VOL. 1 & 2** by Langridge, Samnee, et. al. (YA G Thor)
Grades 6 & up
Readers meet the mysterious blond-haired God of Thunder with no memory when historian Jane Foster watches him get tossed out of a Norse exhibition one day. After the gallant fellow helps her out and she takes him in, an utterly charming romance ensues, even as Thor participates in some Norse debauchery and hunts down the secrets of his past.
INFINITE KUNG FU by MacLeod (YA G Infinite)
Grades 8 & up
The Martial World is ruled by a mysterious emperor whose five armies are each headed by a cruel and highly skilled kung fu master. Lei Kung, a soldier in one of these armies, grows tired of his master's evil ways and seeks enlightenment elsewhere. However, he soon finds that he's been chosen as the one who will put an end to the emperor's tyrannical rule - personally!

A BRIDE’S STORY VOL. 1 by Mori (YA G Bride)
Grades 8 & up
Amir Halgal is a young woman from a nomadic tribe betrothed to a twelve-year-old boy eight years her junior. Coping with cultural differences, blossoming feelings for her new husband, and expectations from both her adoptive and birth families, Amir strives to find her role as she settles into a new life and a new home in a society quick to define that role for her.

AXE COP VOL. 1 by Nicolle & Nicolle (YA G Axe)
Grades 7 & up
Written by the endlessly inventive six-year-old Malachi and drawn by his thirty-year-old brother Ethan, Axe Cop joins his comrades UniBaby, Bat Warthog Man, and Dinosaur Soldier to fight bad guys and restore justice for kids - and grownups - everywhere!
**DAYBREAK** by Ralph (YA G Daybreak)
Grades 7 & up
“Daybreak” is seen through the eyes of a silent observer as he follows his protector and runs from the shadows of the imminent zombie threat.

**WANDERING SON VOL. 1** by Shimura (YA G Wandering)
Grades 6 & up
Shuichi and his new friend Yoshino have happy homes, loving families, and are well-liked by their classmates. But they share a secret that further complicates a time of life that is awkward for anyone: Shuichi is a boy who wants to be a girl, and Yoshino is a girl who wants to be a boy.

**THE ZABIME SISTERS** by Aristophane (YA G Zabime)
Grades 8 & up
Experience the first day of summer vacation with three sisters on their island home of Guadelupe.
GREEN MONK by Dayton
G  rades 9 & up
A young monk with the most powerful blade of grass EVER wanders into battle with a fierce giant.

SATURN APARTMENTS VOL. 1 by Iwaoka (YA G Saturn)
G  rades 7 & up
Mitsu takes on his late father's dangerous job as a window washer on the space ship Saturn Apartments.

BRAIN CAMP by Kim, et. al. (YA G Brain)
G  rades 7 & up
Two teens discover there is something far more sinister than nature hikes going on at their summer camp.
**CHEW VOL. 1: TASTER’S CHOICE** by Layman & Guillory (YA G Chew)
Grades 10 & up
When Tony Chu has to investigate murder, just about anything can end up down the hatch.

**YUMMY: THE LAST DAYS OF A SOUTHSIDE SHORTY** by Neri & Duburke
(JF G Yummy)
Grades 7 & up
The life, death and aftermath of an eleven-year-old gangbanger, based on a true tragedy.

**MEANWHILE: PICK ANY PATH. 3,856 STORY POSSIBILITIES** by Shiga (JF G Shiga)
Grades 4-6
Have you played any comics lately? Choose your own adventure.

**SMILE** by Telgemeier (JF G Telgemeier)
Grades 5 & up
Brace yourself: Middle School plus orthodontia equals dental drama.
**GHOSTOPOLIS** by TenNapel (YA G Ghostopolis)
Grades 7 & up
Garth Hale has gone to the other side, but he’s not dead yet.

**SET TO SEA** by Weing (YA G Weing)
Grades 8 & up
A lumbering poet discovers hardship and wisdom on the high seas.

**2010**

**THE HELM** by Hardison & Sears
Grades 9 & up
Matt Blurdy's day has gone from crap to worse. Not only did his girlfriend break his heart at work - and in front of all of the videostore patrons - but he just got fired. On the way home, Matt decides to quiet his aching heart with a brief detour to a garage sale. When an ancient-looking helmet calls to him as “the Chosen One,” exhorting him to don the mantle of the "Valhalladrim," Matt touches it with trembling fingers-and is jolted by raw magical power.
CHILDREN OF THE SEA VOL. 1 by Igarashi
Grades 6 & up
When Ruka was younger, she saw a ghost in the water at the aquarium where her dad works. Now she feels drawn toward the aquarium and the two mysterious boys she meets there, Umi and Sora. They were raised by dugongs and hear the same strange calls from the sea as she does.

PINOCCHIO: VAMPIRE SLAYER by Jensen & Higgins (YA G Pinnochio)
Grades 9 & up
After seeing Geppetto die at the hands of vampires, Pinocchio swears revenge in this darkly funny graphic novel. As the vampires plot the enslavement of mankind, only a one-puppet army stands in their way. But will a wooden boy and his endless supply of stakes - courtesy of plenty of lies and his elongating nose - be enough to save the day?

I KILL GIANTS by Kelly & Nimura (YA G Kelly)
Grades 9-12
Barbara Thorson, bullied and friendless, will not back down. She is smart, angry, won’t follow the rules, won’t let anyone close, and sees things no one else does.

If we do not have the book you’re looking for, we can have another library send it over for you!
**OMEGA THE UNKNOWN** by Lethem & Dalrymple (G F Lethem)  
Grades 7 & up  
The story of a mute, reluctant super hero from another planet, and the earthly teenager with whom he shares a strange destiny - and the legion of robots and nanoviruses that have been sent from afar to hunt the two of them down!

**BAYOU VOL. 1** by Love (G F Love)  
Grades 8 & up  
Lee Wagstaff is the daughter of a black sharecropper in the depression-era town of Charon, Mississippi. When Lily Westmoreland, her white playmate, is snatched by agents of an evil creature known as Bog, Lee's father is accused of kidnapping. Lee's only hope is to follow Lily's trail into this fantastic and frightening alternate world.

**A.D.: NEW ORLEANS AFTER THE DELUGE** by Neufeld (G 976.3 NEU)  
Grades 9 & up  
Here we meet Denise, a counselor and social worker, and a sixth-generation New Orleanian; “The Doctor,” a proud fixture of the French Quarter; Abbas and Darnell, two friends who face the storm from Abbas's family-run market; Kwame, a pastor's son just entering his senior year of high school; and the young couple Leo and Michelle, who both grew up in the city. Each is forced to confront the same wrenching decision - whether to stay or to flee.

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Gunnerkrigg Court Vol. 1: Orientation by Siddell (YA G Gunnerkrigg)
Grades 9 & up
Antimony Carver is a precocious and preternaturally self-possessed young girl starting her first year of school at gloomy Gunnerkrigg Court, a very British boarding school that has robots running around along side body-snatching demons, forest gods, and the odd mythical creature.

Pluto by Urasawa & Nagasaki
Grades 10 & up
Pluto has destroyed six out of the seven great robots of the world, and the pacifist robot Epsilon is the only one that remains. Will Epsilon, who refused to participate in the 39th Central Asian War, leave behind his war-orphaned charges to step onto the battlefield? It just might be that kindly Epsilon, who wields the power of photon energy, will be Pluto's greatest opponent of all!

Ooku: The Inner Chambers Vol. 1 by Yoshinaga
Grades 10 & up
The Edo period of an alternate Japan is ruled entirely by women. A mysterious plague has killed three out of four boys for generations, so men are carefully guarded and sheltered, while women go about the business of daily life.
LIFE SUCKS by Abel, Soria & Pleece
Grades 9 & up
"If I could be a vampire... I picture this vast network of dark, beautiful, intellectual and artistic people, living forever with only the best things," muses Goth-girl Rosa. But not true, alas - Abel and Soria's vampires are caught in the capitalist system like the living, wage slaving forever in crappy night-shift jobs for jerkwad masters, hiding from the law their need for human blood, bursting into flames at the slightest sunlight.

SAND CHRONICLES VOL. 1-3 by Ashihara
Grades 8 & up
After her parents' divorce, 12-year-old Ann and her mother move from Tokyo to the country to live with her grandmother. Shortly thereafter Ann's mother, plagued by depression and a drinking problem, kills herself. Ann finds comfort in her new friends Fuji and Daigo. By age 14, she has developed a huge crush on Daigo and become closer to Fuji, who has caught his philandering mother with another man.

ATOMIC ROBO: ATOMIC ROBO AND THE FIGHTIN' SCIENTISTS OF TESLADYNE by Clevinger & Wegener
Grades 7 & up
In 1923, Nikola Tesla's career is in its twilight... until he unveils a robot with automatic intelligence - ATOMIC ROBO! After decades of dealing with all manner of weirdness, Atomic Robo and the so-called Action Scientists of Tesladyne become the go-to defense force against the unexplained!
REAL VOLUME 1 & 2 by Inoue
Grades 7 & up
Fourteen-year-old Kiyoharu’s dreams of being a famous athlete he was one of the top sprinters in Japan are dashed when he is diagnosed with bone cancer and loses his ability to walk. Rather than give up on sports, he trains to be a basketball player, determined not to let his wheelchair get in the way.

UZUMAKI VOLUME 1 by Ito
Grades 9 & up
Kirie lives in a small coastal town in Japan where the townspeople are slowly losing their minds. Her boyfriend Shuichi says that the town is being contaminated by spirals, which are the secret shape of the world. As darkness overtakes the town, Kirie and Shuichi struggle to survive against a force beyond their control.

PITCH BLACK by Landowne & Horton
Grades 8 & up
After meeting on a subway platform in New York City, Landowne and Horton share a conversation about art and life while riding uptown and downtown. Youme listens carefully as Anthony tells his story of living on the streets after being abandoned by his adoptive family.
**JAPAN AI: A TALL GIRL’S ADVENTURES IN JAPAN** by Steinberger  
Grades 7 & up  
Aimee’s a six-foot-tall cosplaying fangirl who visits Japan, land of her favorite hobbies. There, she visits historical Kyoto, shops, dresses as a geisha, visits a hot spring, goes to Tokyo and shops some more. The cute, cartoony sketches present a travelogue by an out-of-place but observant gaijin who is keen to absorb the intricacies of a new culture.

**SKIM** by Tamaki & Tamaki (YA G Tamaki)  
Grades 10 & up  
This auspicious graphic novel debut by cousins Mariko and Jillian Tamaki tells the story of "Skim," aka Kimberly Keiko Cameron, a goth girl in an all-girls school in Toronto, circa the early ‘90s. Skim is an articulate, angsty teenager, the classic outsider yearning for some form of acceptance. She begins a fanciful romance with her English teacher, Ms. Archer, while nursing her best friend through a period of mourning.

**UMBRELLA ACADEMY: APOCALYPSE SUITE** by Way & Ba (G F Way)  
Grades 10 & up  
A mysterious alien professor in human disguise adopts seven mysterious superchildren so that they can "save the world" - first from a zombie-robot using the Eiffel Tower as a weapon, then from another fiend who turns amusement park vehicles into killer droids, and finally from one of their own.

If we do not have the book you’re looking for, we can have another library send it over for you!
CAIRO by Wilson & Perker (GN F Wilson)  
Grades 10 & up  
Shaheed, a young and confused Lebanese American, travels to Cairo both to shun his American side and to seek out his Muslim roots. He meets Ashraf, a drug smuggler who sells him a hookah stolen from Nara, Cairo's local crime boss. But it is more than simple drug paraphernalia; it's also the home for Shams, a powerful djinn with a philosophical outlook on life.

2008

LAIKA by Abadzis (YA G Laika)  
Grades 7 & up  
During the Cold War, Russia and the U.S. were entrenched in a battle to be first in space. Laika tells the tale of one special soldier in that battle, the dog who flew in Sputnik II. Former Gulag prisoner Korolev has ascended to the rank of Chief Designer, and, after the successful launch of Sputnik I, he is called upon to send a live creature into space within one month's time.

RE-GIFTERS by Carey  
Grades 7 & up  
Jen Dik Seong, or Dixie, is having trouble getting her ki focused. Normally an outstanding hapkido student, she finds that her crush on classmate Adam is affecting her ability to fight. This is not good, as the national competition is fast approaching, and her parents expect her to do well.
THE MAGICAL LIFE OF LONG TACK SAM by Fleming
Grades 9 & up
Who was Long Tack Sam? He was born in 1885. He ran away from Shangdung Province to join the circus. He was an acrobat. A magician. A comic. An impresario. A restaurateur. A theater owner. A world traveler. An East-West ambassador. A mentor to Orson Welles. He was considered the greatest act in the history of vaudeville.

BLUE BEETLE: SHELL-SHOCKED by Giffen (YA G Blue Beetle)
BLUE BEETLE: ROAD TRIP by Giffen (YA G Blue Beetle)
Grades 8 & up
A young man of Latin American descent living in El Paso, Jaime deals with the mysterious scarab that has melded with his body, manifesting as armor that gives him astonishing capabilities.

KING OF THORN VOL. 1 & 2 by Iwahara (YA G King)
Grades 9 & up
In a world petrified by the Medusa virus, a syndrome that rapidly turns its victims to stone, only 160 people are selected to be frozen until a cure can be found. Kasumi’s one, only she’s a twin, and she’s forced to leave her sister behind. As expected in stories of this sort, something goes wrong, and the frozen awake on their own, uncured, surrounded by monsters.
SIDESCROLLERS by Loux
Grades 9 & up
Brian, the genius at video games, Brad the practical joker and the lovelorn Matt work to save their friend Amber from Dick, a bully with sexual issues. But the plot is almost beside the point - the banter among the three friends and the strange things the boys decide to do is so entertaining.

AFTER SCHOOL NIGHTMARE VOLS 1-5 by Mizushiro (YA G After)
Grades 9 & up
You have just awakened to find your darkest, ugliest secret revealed to classmates who would do anything to destroy you. This is what's happened to Ichijou Mashiro, whose elite school education turns into the most horrifying experience of his life when he's enlisted by a mysterious school nurse to take an after-hours class. Only those who pass the class will graduate, and the only way for Mashiro to pass is to enter into a nightmare world...where his body and soul will be at the mercy of his worst enemies.

EMMA VOLS 1-5 by Mori (F G Emma)
Grades 9 & up
The romance of Victorian-era maid Emma and her upper-class suitor William Jones.
**THE WALL: GROWING UP BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN** by Sis (JB Sis)
Grades 4 & up
An account of Sis’s growing up in Czechoslovakia under Soviet rule.

**THE ARRIVAL** by Tan (YA G Arrival)
Grades 7 & up
A lone immigrant leaves his family and journeys to a new world, both bizarre and awesome, finding struggle and dehumanizing industry but also friendship and a new life.

**2007**

**NEXTWAVE: AGENTS OF H.A.T.E. VOL 1** by Ellis
Grades 9 & up
Action! Excitement! Explosions! The Highest Anti-Terrorism Effort, or H.A.T.E. (a subsidiary of the Beyond Corporation) put NEXTWAVE together to fight Bizarre Weapons of Mass Destruction. When NEXTWAVE discovers that H.A.T.E. and Beyond are terrorist cells themselves, and that the BWMDs were intended to kill them, they are less than pleased. In fact, they are rather angry. So they make things explode. Lots of things.
SLOTH by Hernandez & Fletcher (G F Hernandez)  
Grades 10 & up  
Disillusioned high school student Miguel lives in a typical small town, and he is filled with ennui and restlessness. He wills himself into a coma to escape and wills himself out, one year later. He resumes his normal life with his friend Romeo and girlfriend, Lita. One night, the trio venture out into their town's lemon orchards to investigate an urban legend about a goat man who can supposedly charm someone into switching lives with him. There, they find that there is some truth to the legend.

CASTLE WAITING by Medley  
Grades 9 & up  
After Sleeping Beauty leaves with the prince, the three ladies in waiting, Patience, Prudence and Plenty, stay on in the castle, a hobgoblin-infested structure that becomes a refuge for those in need: a pregnant woman fleeing her abusive husband; Sir Destrier, a horse-headed knight who wants a place to rest between adventures; Beakie, a kindly bachelor merchant; and Sister Peace, a bearded nun.

IDENTITY CRISIS by Meltzer & Morales (YA G Identity)  
Grades 10 & up  
After the tragic death of Sue Debny, the wife of the Elongated Man, the members of the Justice League of America and most of the DC superheroes are brought together to investigate. Sue’s murder is unsettling for a couple of reasons: she was a friend, and whoever committed the crime knew enough personal information to be able to sneak past security.
DEATH NOTE VOL. 1-6 by Ohba & Obata (YA G Death)
Grades 10 & up
Light Yagami is an ace student with great prospects - and he’s bored out of his mind. But all that changes when he finds the Death Note, a notebook dropped by a rogue Shinigami death god. Any human whose name is written in the notebook dies, and now Light has vowed to use the power of the Death Note to rid the world of evil.

PRIDE OF BAGHDAD by Vaughan & Henrichon (YA G Pride)
Grades 9 & up
A heartbreaking look at what it’s like to live in a war zone. Inspired by true events, this story tells of four lions that escape from the Baghdad Zoo during a bombing raid in 2003 and encounter other animals that offer unique perspectives, such as a tortoise that survived World War I. They begin to question the nature of freedom.

DEATH, JR. by Whitta & Naifeh (YA G Death)
Grades 8 & up
When a school field trip to the local museum coincides with coming-of-age angst and an overly inquisitive friend (a cute goth girl named Pandora), Junior releases something terrible on the world... and it’s up to him to fix it.
**DEMO: The Collection** by Wood & Cloonan  
Grades 9 & up  
Twelve stories of conflicted teens grappling with love, loss, and the joy of finding your own way in life.

**American Born Chinese** by Yang & Pien (YA G American)  
Grades 7 & up  
The story of three apparently unrelated characters: Jin Wang, who moves to a new neighborhood with his family only to discover that he's the only Chinese-American student at his new school; the powerful Monkey King, subject of one of the oldest and greatest Chinese fables; and Chin-Kee, a personification of the ultimate negative Chinese stereotype, who is ruining his cousin Danny’s life with his yearly visits.