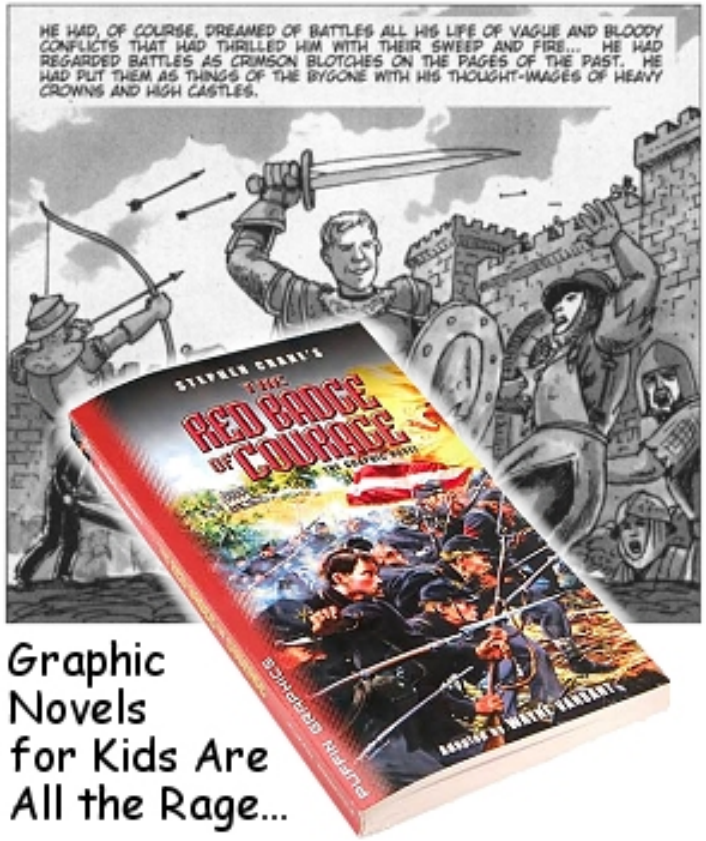
Part IV

What does the research say?

A note about labels…



A **graphic novel** is a type of book told through sequential frames of art, usually with a lengthy and complex storyline similar to those of novels. The term also encompasses comic short story anthologies, and in some cases bound collections of previously published comic-book series.

A Variety of Genres…

- Fiction
- Nonfiction
- Mystery/thriller
- Fantasy
- Memoir
- Historical Fiction
- Adventure/Action
- Superhero (Heroes Journey)
- Adaptations of traditional or classic literature

What the research says….

- **The presence of comic books in a collection increased library use 82%, with a 30% increase in the circulation of non-comic book material.** Dorrell, L., & Carroll, E. (1981). Spider-Man at the Library. *School Library Journal, 27*(10), pp. 17-19.

- **A study of "rare words per 1000," showed that comic books introduced more new words than did adult books** (53.5 vs. 52.7). Hayes, D. P. & M. G. Ahrens. (1998). Vocabulary Simplification for Children: A Case of 'Motherese'. *Journal of Child Language, 15*, pp. 395-410.

Research continued…

- **A 1992 study of more than 200,000 students from 32 countries revealed that Finland, the nation with the highest proportion of comic book reading students (nearly 60%), also had the highest literacy rate (99%), as well as the highest library usage**. Brunnell, V., & Linnakylä, P. (1994). Swedish speakers' literacy in the Finnish society. *Journal of Reading, 37*(5), pp. 368-375.

- **A 1993 study concluded that the average comic book introduced kids to twice as many words as the average children's book, and five times as many words as they were likely to be exposed to in the average child-adult conversation.** Hampson, J., & Nelson, K. (1993). The relation of maternal language to variation in rate and style of language acquisition. *Journal of Child Language, 20,* pp. 313-342.

Research continued…

- **Reading graphic novels may require more complex cognitive skills than the reading of text alone, thus appealing to highly motivated readers, creative kids, and gifted teens.** Lavin, M. R. (1998). Comic Books and Graphic Novels for Libraries: What to Buy. *Serials Review, 24*(2), 31–46.

- **In a graphic novel, readers must not only decode the words and the illustrations, but must also identify events between the visual sequences**. Simmons, T. (2003). Comic Books in My Library? *PNLA Quarterly*, 67(12), p. 20

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- **Reading comic books may help to (among others): develop an increased interest in reading, develop language skills and a rich and varied vocabulary, and foster interest in a variety of literary genres.** Hill, R. (2004). *The Secret Origin of Good Readers*. http://www.night-flight.com/secretorigin/SOGR2004.pdf

Additional research…

- Include close to 20% more rare vocabulary than a typical chapter book for children and 40% more than a typical conversation between a child and an adult (Krashen, 1993).
- Format is beneficial to ELL readers and for those who read on a lower reading level than their peers (Krashen, 1996)
- Reading light materials, such as comic books, is the way many students develop a taste for reading (Krashen, 2004)
- When given the opportunity to select reading materials, adolescent males often select graphic novels (Krashen, 2004)

Research continued…

- [Comics] are effective in language arts classes because of popularity, aid to content learning, and they don't discourage students from reading other materials (Swain, 1978)

- Comics serve as a conduit to heavier, more complex reading (Ujiie and Krashen, 1996 and Pilgreen, 1994)

- Boosted reading interests among students with disabilities (Young, 2005).

We can't ignore their popularity…

- 2006 overall estimated GN sales - $330 million (Reed Bus. Information, 2007)
- Scholastic Book Fair GN sales since 2004 – 4 million (Reed Bus. Information, 2007)
- Increased recognition in the literary world – NY Times, Christian Science Monitor, English Journal, Education Week

Popularity continued…

- Libraries report 25% increases in overall circulation after adding graphic novels to their collections (Miller, 2005)
- U.S. Military Academy at West Point requires cadets to read Persepolis before they graduate (Foroohar, 2005)

NCTE The Council Chronicle September 2005

"Using Graphic Novels and Comics in the Classroom"

"I started reading comics, and then I got into other types of fiction and literature. I stopped reading comics a little later, but I don't think I would have made the leap [to literature] if it weren't for comics… I literally went from reading **Batman to Faulkner**."

--John Lowe

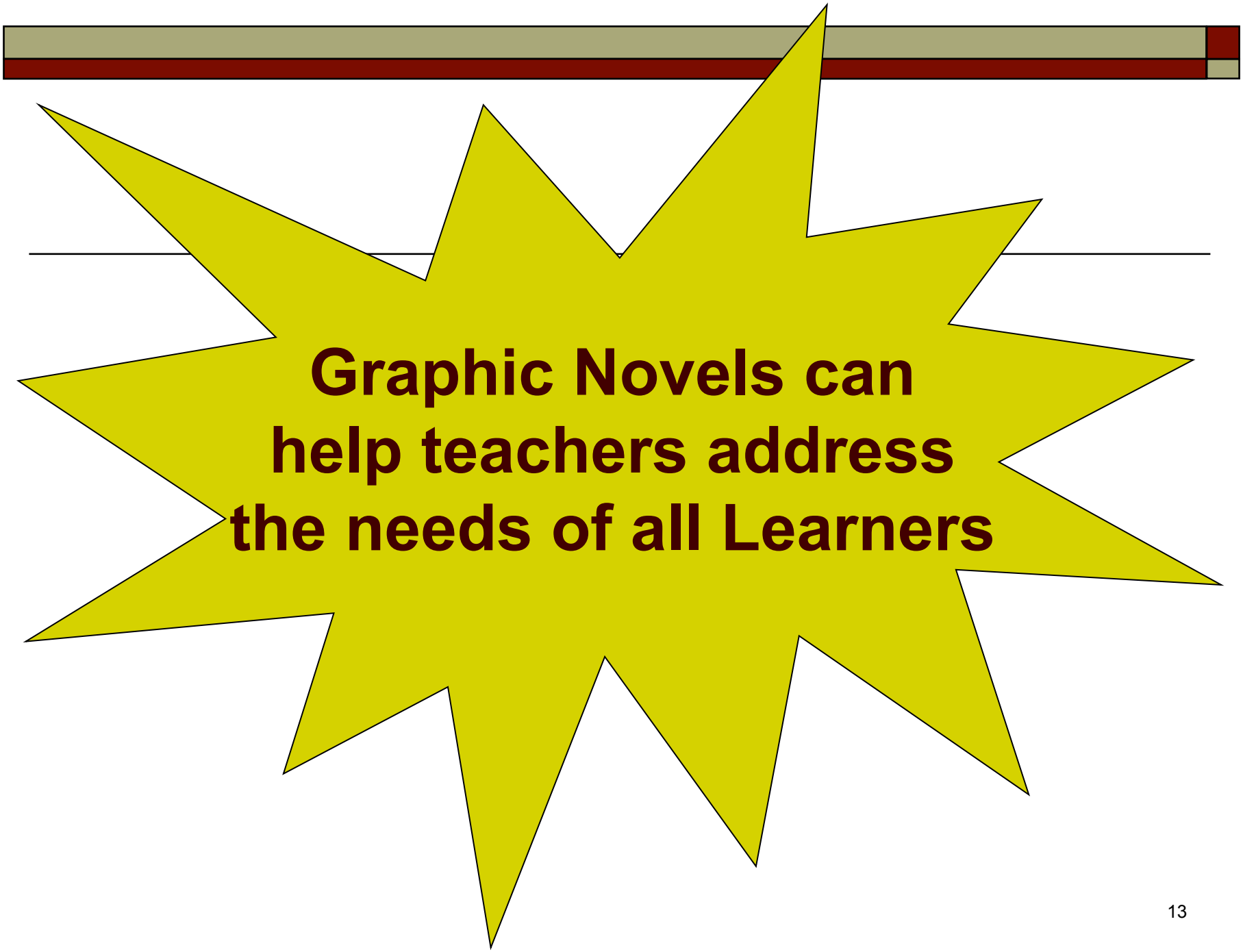
Chair of Sequential Arts Department

Savannah College of Art and Design

"Superman made me a reader. Dick and Jane tried their best, but they could not give me what The Man of Steel offered: a good reason to read… I'd become a reader– someone who read, rather than someone who *could* read – through comics, not through school."

Stephen Cary

Author, "Going Graphic: Comics at Work in the Multilingual Classroom"


Graphic Novels can
help teachers address
the needs of all Learners

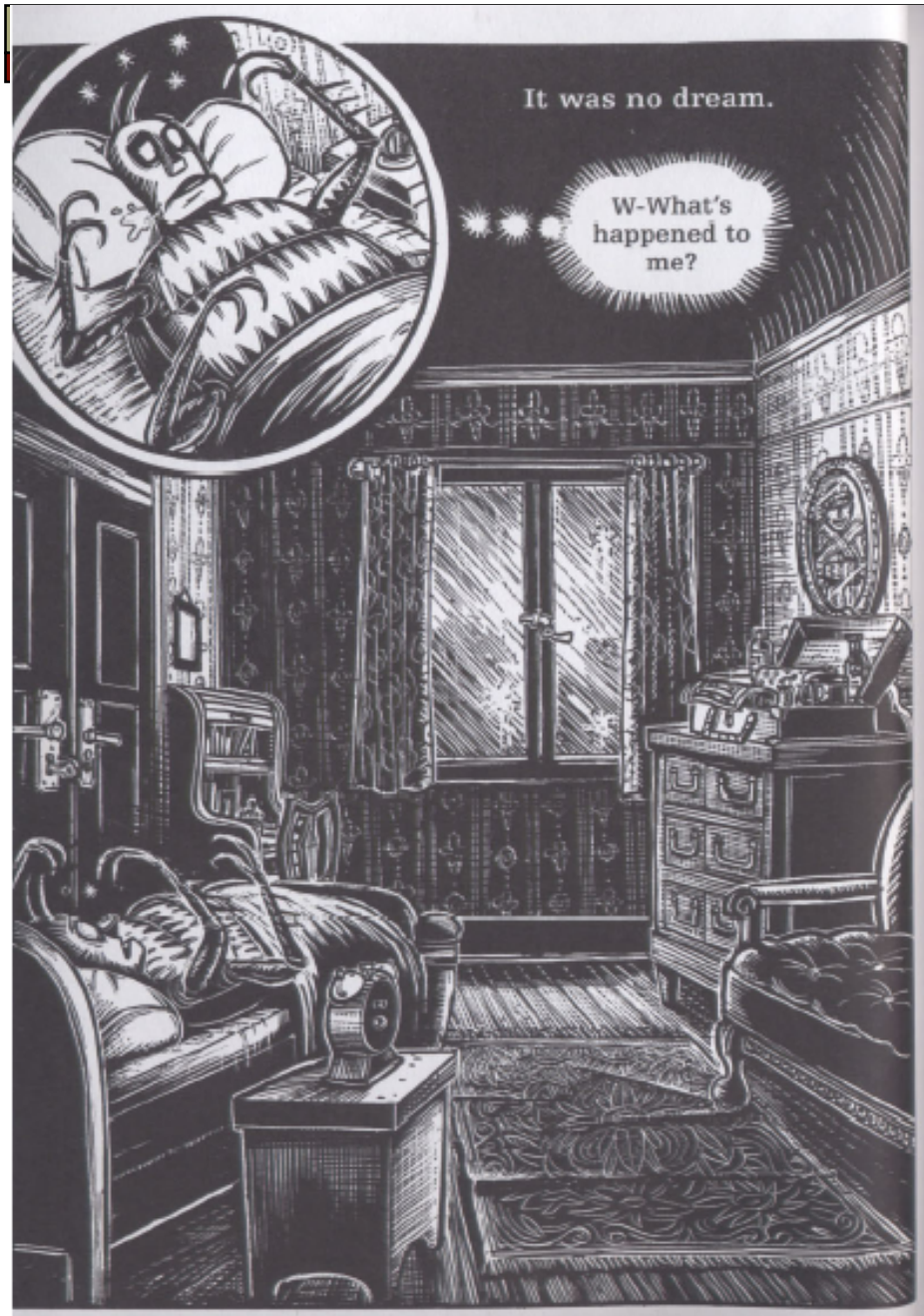
Your Turn ☺

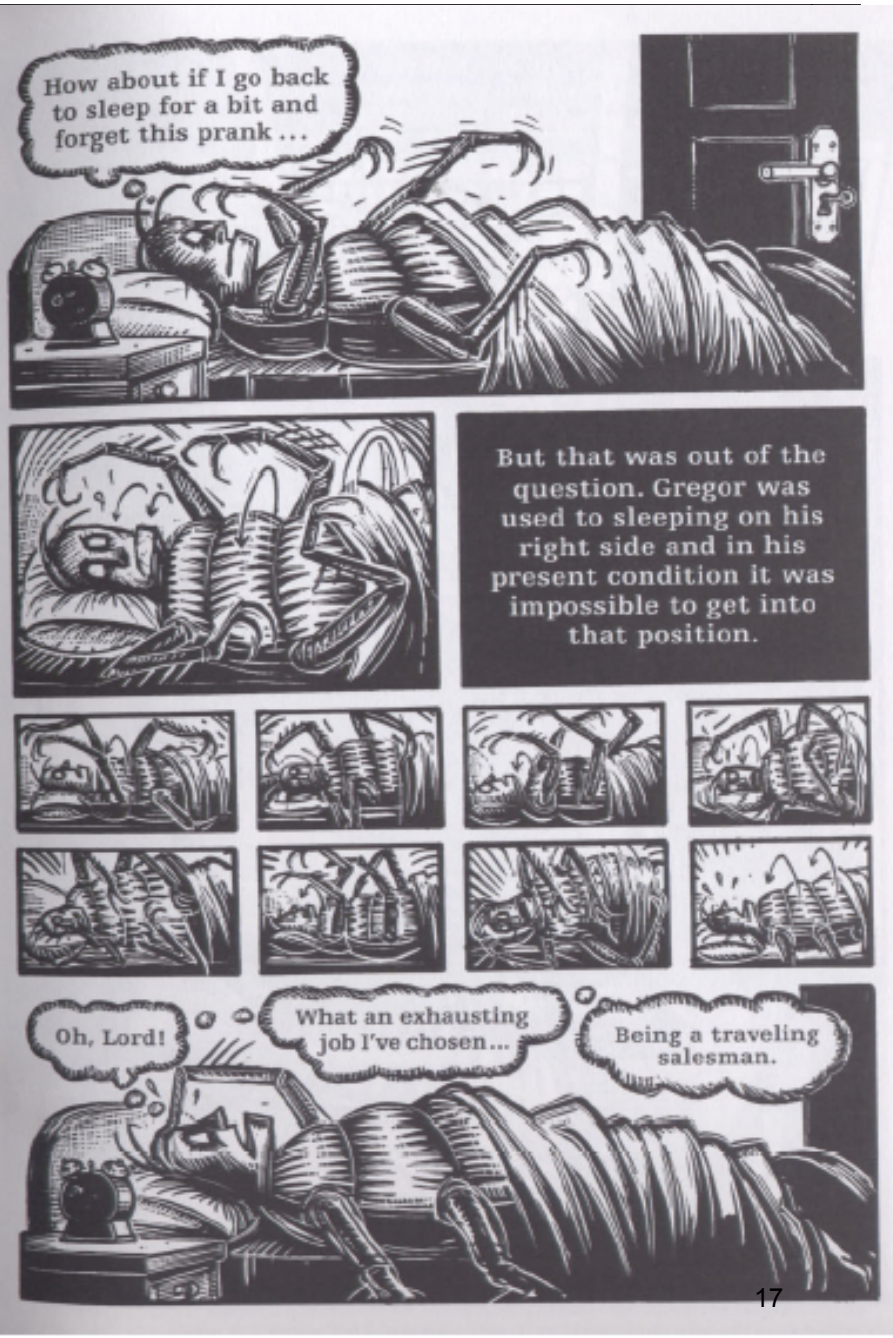
Read the excerpt from Kafka's *Metamorphosis*

- Circle words that your struggling readers might be unfamiliar with
- Underline phrases/sentences that might be too complex for your struggling readers to comprehend easily
- Put ** next to ideas or concepts that might be foreign to your students and difficult for them to visualize
- Discuss with you group how you might help your students understand this passage

Turn your paper over…

When Gregor Samsa
awoke one morning from
disturbing dreams,
he found himself
transformed…


It was no dream.
W-What's happened to me?


How about if I go back to sleep for a bit and forget this prank ...
But that was out of the question. Gregor was used to sleeping on his right side and in his present condition it was impossible to get into that position.
Oh, Lord!
What an exhausting job I've chosen...
Being a traveling salesman.

Questions for discussion:

- How was reading the graphic interpretation different than reading the text? In what ways was it similar?
- What strategies did you have to use to comprehend the graphic?
- Read the text again. In what ways has your viewing of the graphic supported your second reading of the text? Or has it?
- How might using both the graphic interpretation AND the text support your learners?