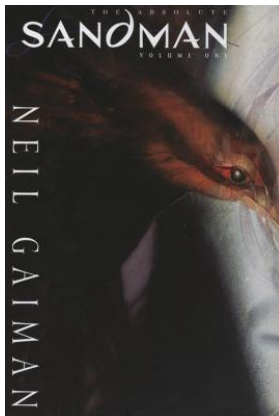
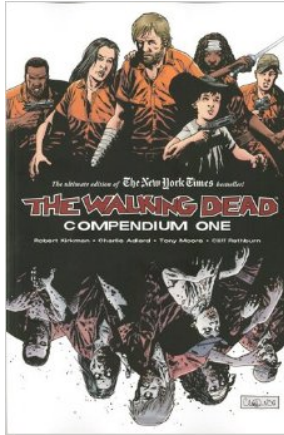


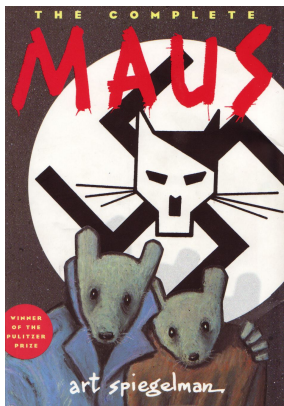
*Hawkeye: My Life as a Weapon* by Matt Fraction. This is the first annual edition of Matt Fraction's searingly *human* comic book. Hawkeye is an Avenger, but he's also just a guy. As the opening pages tell you, he's an orphan raised by carnies fighting with a stick and string from the paleolithic era, so when he says it looks bad, trust him, it looks bad. Clint's struggles include finding his place in a world where he's famous but not *famous*, the Russian Mafia is breathing down his neck, his best friend is a better version of himself (he thinks), and he's not quite sure how to be an adult. Follow it up with the next two annual editions: *Little Hits* and *L.A. Woman*.



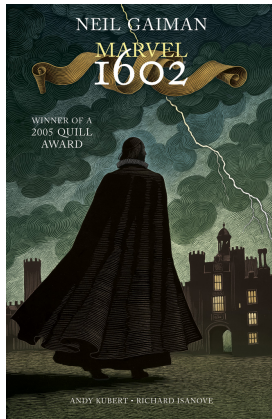
*Sandman* by Neil Gaiman. *The Los Angeles Times* calls it "The greatest epic in the history of comic books" and *Playboy* says that "THE SANDMAN is a modern myth, as well as a precis on why the stories we tell matter so much." *Sandman* follows the life of Morpheus, the Lord of Dreaming, after he escapes from captivity at the hands of a human. He travels across the globe--and beyond--to reclaim the things that were lost while he was a prisoner. His family is a collection of figures called The Endless--those without end--who make up the most fundamental and enduring aspects of the human condition.



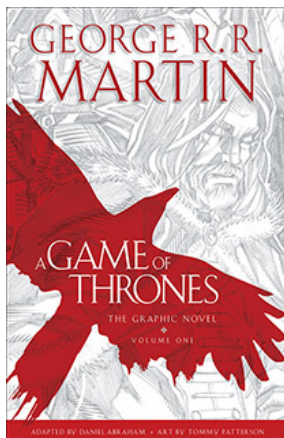
*The Walking Dead* by Robert Kirkman. This is a huge story for anybody who's a fan of science fiction, horror, and the monster genre. These stories are the basis for a hit TV show that has a massive fanbase in the high school age bracket. The stories are of those of a widely varied set of people as they try to survive in a world now filled with more flesh-eating zombies than conscious humans. The cast is diverse enough that most readers will be able to find somebody they relate to at least long enough to become hooked.



*Maus* by Art Spiegelman. *The Wall Street Journal* calls it “the most affecting and successful narrative ever done about the Holocaust” while *The New Yorker* says it’s “the first masterpiece in comic book history.” *Maus* is semi-autobiographical and tells the story of Vladek Spiegelman as he fights to survive in Germany/Poland during the Holocaust. He tells his story of loss, love, and true human heartache to his son Art, who writes it down and creates some amazing comic-style illustrations to tell the story on a whole different level. The artwork is sublime, with so many small hidden details that catch the reader's eye and add even more depth to an already deep story.



*Marvel 1602* by Neil Gaiman. This book is perfect for students who love history, who love comic books, who love superheroes. Gaiman takes some of the most beloved characters in the MARvel universe and dumps them in 1602 England where they face challenges like witch trials, different nationalities, and wondering why Stephen Strange knows more about what's happened than anyone else. The plot is wacky, engaging, and clever. *Entertainment Weekly* said that “1602 is a triumph. The Marvel universe hasn't been this engrossing in ages” and *Publishers Weekly* gave it a starred review.



*A Game of Thrones: the Graphic Novel* by George R. R. Martin. This is the absolute best way for any reader who wants to experience the story of the hit television show, but is absolutely overwhelmed by the thousand-plus page counts of the novels. Plus, it's got a lot of the “boring” exposition cut out.



*The Killing Joke* by Alan Moore. This is probably the best compilation of a Batman run ever made. This is the run that gave huge inspiration to Christopher Nolan when he was putting together *The Dark Knight*. In this, the Joker is out from Arkham Asylum and intends to try and tear down Gotham using Commissioner Gordon and his lovely daughter Barbara-- A.K.A. Batgirl.



*Watchmen* by Alan Moore. Realistically, I just want to put everything Alan Moore has ever done on this list. He's my John Green. *Watchmen* is about a set of grippingly *human* superheroes. They've got faults galore and it's almost a stretch to call them "functioning" or even "heroes". *Watchmen* won the Hugo Award. *Rolling Stone* says "*Watchmen* is peerless."