

The importance of comics, graphic novels and illustrated books



Like Bamboozle the Panda from the [Silly Squad](#), we love comics, graphic novels and books that have beautiful illustrations. In this article we will be sharing why these are important as well as fun!

Charlotte Hacking at The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) wrote that comics, graphic novels and picture books have a significant effect in building reading stamina and they can even lead to a deeper level of comprehension with children finding additional information in the illustrations.¹ They can also develop inference and sequencing skills and work particularly well for motivating those who are reluctant to read or struggle with longer passages of text. Dr Chris Murray, Head of English at the University of Dundee, says the structure of comics and graphic novels supports readers as the panels only show fragments of the story. The reader has to use their own imagination to fill in these gaps. He also states how comics can help to build confidence for emerging readers or older readers who may struggle with literacy².

As well as supporting reading skills, comics and graphic novels can lead to children reading more for pleasure.³

Books with additional illustrations such as *Tom Gates*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *How To Train Your Dragon* have proven to be incredibly popular with children. There are also massively popular comics such as *Beano* and *The Phoenix* that have children looking forward

¹ Charlotte Hacking's blog (2018) [Online] Available at: <https://clpe.org.uk/blog/2018/using-newspapers-magazines-and-comics-classroom>

² Dr Chris Murray [Online] Available at: <https://www.theschoolrun.com/comics-boost-literacy>

³ Ujji, J and Krashen, S (1993) Comic Book Reading, Reading Enjoyment, and Pleasure Reading Among Middle Class and Chapter 1 Middle School Students, [Online] Available at: <https://www.psd1.org/cms/lib4/WA01001055/centricity/domain/34/admin/comicbook.pdf>

to the next edition. These are all humorous and because of the format of panels or shorter bitesize chapters, may not seem as intimidating for some children.

Illustrations enhance a reading experience as they allow children to connect more with a character and really put themselves in a setting or scene. As well as increasing enjoyment it can lead to an increase in empathy, creative thinking and imagination. CLPE have conducted research into the power of pictures and found that primary school children who are given the chance to read and discuss picture books 'learn about sophisticated narrative structure, plot and character development in an accessible way.'⁴

We hope that like Bamboozle the Panda you will keep on enjoying the brilliant and important stories written as comic, graphic novels and illustrated books.

Have you seen the new issue of [The Phoenix](#) comic that features your Silly Squad favourites? You can read the whole comic for free on the Summer Reading Challenge [activities page](#).

Other useful sites

- [Beano](#)
- [The Phoenix](#)
- [Laura Ellen Anderson's website](#). Laura is the brilliant illustrator for this year's Silly Squad Summer Reading Challenge.

Some great resources

- If you run a Chatterbooks children's reading group, take a look at the [Comics and Superheroes](#) and [Comics and Graphic Novels](#) activity packs
- [Draw with Rob Biddulph activity pack](#)
- [InvestiGators by John Patrick Green activity pack](#)
- Check out individual publishers to see what activities and videos they may have for your favourite books. You can find some website suggestions on page 3 of our 'How reading can promote writing for pleasure [article](#)'.
- There are also great videos on illustrators [Youtube](#) channels that you may like to share and follow.

⁴ CLPE resource, Power of Pictures (2019) [Online] Available at: <https://clpe.org.uk/powerofpictures/research>