

Graphic Novel & Anime Recommendations

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Greene County Public Library
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Recommended Books

Graphic Novels

Biography, Autobiography, and History

B, David. *Epileptic*.

Pantheon. 2005. 368p. ISBN 0-375-42318-4. \$25.

The story of B.'s young life with a brother who has epilepsy, and his family's search for a cure. Told with amazing visual inventiveness. *For adults*.

Fies, Brian. *Mom's Cancer*.

Abrams Image. 2006. 116p. ISBN 0-8109-5840-6. \$12.95.

The touching story of Fies's mother's struggle with cancer and the effects that her illness had on her family of caregivers. *Teens and adults*.

Sacco, Joe. *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-1995*.

Fantagraphics. 2002. 240p. ISBN 1560974702.

A masterful work of graphic journalism, presenting a ground-level view of the Bosnian war drawn from Sacco's visits to the area. *Older teens and adults*.

Satrapı, Marjane. *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*.

Pantheon. 2003. 160p. ISBN 0-375-42230-7. \$17.95.

Satrapı, Marjane. *Persepolis 2: The Story of a Return*.

Pantheon. 2004. 192p. ISBN 0375422889. \$17.95.

Extraordinary autobiography dealing with Satrapı's years growing up in Iran during the Islamic revolution, her later life in the West, and her return to her home. *First volume for teens and adults, second for older teens and adults*.

Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*.

Pantheon. 1996. 296p. ISBN 0679406417. \$35.

A brilliant account of Spiegelman's father's experience of the Holocaust, featuring the Nazis as cats and the Jews as mice. Won the Pulitzer Prize special award in 1992. This book contains both volumes previously published separately. Essential for every library. *Teens and adults*.

Thompson, Craig. *Blankets*.

Top Shelf. 2003. 592p. ISBN 1-891830-43-0. pap. \$29.95.

Wonderful account of Thompson's early life: his strict Catholic upbringing, and his relationships with his brother, his first love, and his art. *Adults*.

True-to-life Fiction

Eisner, Will. *The Contract With God Trilogy*.

Norton. 2005. 500p. ISBN 0-393-06105-1. \$35.

Collects three books originally published separately, dealing with life in the tenements on Dropsie Avenue in the Bronx: *A Life Force*, *Dropsie Avenue*, and the seminal 1977 *A Contract With God*, for which Eisner first used the term "graphic novel". Groundbreaking, powerful and humane work from a comics master. *Adults*.

Kubert, Joe. *Yossel: April 19, 1943*.

Ibooks. 2003. 128p. ISBN 0-7434-7516-X. \$24.95

A shattering "speculative autobiography" of what might have happened to Kubert in the Holocaust if his parents had not immigrated to the U.S. *Adults*.

Robinson, Alex. *Box Office Poison*.

Top Shelf. 2001. 608p. ISBN 1891830198. pap. \$29.95.

Great book recounting the lives of bookstore clerk and aspiring writer Sherman and his friends in New York City. Excellent relationship drama. *Adults*.

Ware, Chris. *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*.

Pantheon. 2000. 380p. ISBN 0375404538. \$35.

A sad family saga revolving around Jimmy's reunion with his long-lost father. (The title is ironic.) Ware's amazingly precise cartooning and his complex pages are amazing to behold. *Adults*.

Superheroes

Busiek, Kurt & Alex Ross. *Marvels*.

Marvel. 2001 (reprint ed.) 216p. ISBN 0785100490. pap. \$19.99.

Excellent account of the early years of Marvel's superheroes (Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, etc.) through the eyes of an ordinary man. Also available in a deluxe 10th anniversary hardcover ed. *Teens and adults*.

Busiek, Kurt & Stuart Immonen. ***Superman: Secret Identity***.

DC. 2004. 208p. ISBN 1401204511. pap. \$19.95.

In a world where Superman is just a fictional character, a teen named Clark Kent suddenly discovers he has all of Superman's powers. This book follows him through his life as he deals with issues of trust, commitment, compromise, finding a place in the world, and letting go – the same ones faced by non-super people. For anyone who feels that the genre lacks “human interest”. *Teens and adults*.

Claremont, Chris & John Byrne. ***X-Men: The Dark Phoenix Saga***.

Marvel. 2006 (reprint ed.) 183p. ISBN 0785122133. pap. \$24.99.

A well-remembered and acclaimed 1980s story of the X-Men, a group of mutants who band together to defend a world that hates and fears them, concerning the fate of Jean Grey, the Phoenix, whose immense power has corrupted her. Claremont's other early work on the X-Men (also recommended) is available in the *Marvel Masterworks: Uncanny X-Men* series. *Teens and adults*.

Eisner, Will. ***The Best of the Spirit***.

DC 2005. 192p. ISBN 1-4012-0755-3. pap. \$14.99.

Collects 22 excellent short stories by comics grand master Eisner originally published in the 1940s and starring the down-to-earth crimefighter the Spirit. A classic work filled with strong writing and visual invention. *Teens and adults*.

Miller, Frank & Lynn Varley. ***Batman: The Dark Knight Returns***.

DC. 2002 (reprint ed) 224 p. ISBN 156389341X. \$24.95.

Batman comes out of retirement to take on the Joker one last time. Along with *Watchmen* (below), this was one of the books that brought a more mature sensibility to superhero comics. Also available in a deluxe oversized hardcover “absolute” edition. *Teens and adults*.

Moore, Alan & Dave Gibbons. ***Watchmen***.

DC. 1995 (reprint ed.) 416p. ISBN 0930289234. pap. \$19.99.

Extraordinary and highly influential story by one of comics' greatest writers, originally serialized in 1986-87 and famed for bringing a more mature approach to superheroes. Also available in a deluxe oversized hardcover “absolute” edition. The only graphic novel appearing on *Time* magazine's list of “100 Best Novels from 1923 to the present”. *Older teens and adults*.

Vaughan, Brian K., Tony Harris & Tom Feister. The ***Ex Machina*** series.

Book 1: The First Hundred Days: DC/Wildstorm. 2005. 136p. ISBN 1-4012-0612-3. pap. \$9.99.

Excellent, smartly written story of a super-powered hero who hung up his helmet to become mayor of New York City. Three further volumes are available to date. *Older teens and adults*.

Waid, Mark & Alex Ross. ***Kingdom Come***.
DC. 1997. 228p. ISBN 1563893304. pap. \$14.99.

Fantastic “what if” tale of the future of the DC universe, in which Superman has retired after the death of Lois Lane, and a new generation of less principled superbeings has come of age. Featuring Batman, Wonder Woman, and scores of other heroes and villains. Wonderful painted artwork by Ross. Also available in a deluxe oversized hardcover “absolute” edition. *Teens and adults*.

There are many other good superhero GNs. DC and Marvel are collecting much of their earlier superhero work in the hardcover DC Archives and Marvel Masterworks series. Particularly important are the volumes collecting the earliest issues of *Superman*, *Batman*, and *Spider-Man*; these are some of the most influential comics ever created.

Marvel has also collected some excellent and well-remembered runs by particular creators on certain titles in their “Visionaries” series, including *Daredevil Visionaries: Frank Miller*, *Hulk Visionaries: Peter David*, and *Fantastic Four Visionaries: John Byrne*.

Other very good superhero books: Marvel’s *Runaways* (written by Brian K. Vaughan) and *Ultimate Spider-Man* (written by Brian Michael Bendis), and DC’s *Starman* (written by James Robinson). Also, virtually anything written by Mark Waid (*Fantastic Four*, *Flash*) or Kurt Busiek (*Astro City*, *Avengers*) is guaranteed good reading for superhero fans.

Fantasy and Science Fiction

Gaiman, Neil & others. The ***Sandman*** series.
Vol. 1: Preludes and Nocturnes: DC/Vertigo. 1993. 240p. ISBN 1563890119. pap. \$19.99.

A superb dark fantasy series about the Morpheus, the King of Dreams and his siblings, who are the ancient and powerful personifications of concepts; Delirium, Desire, Despair, etc. The main series runs ten volumes, which are currently being compiled into four oversized “absolute edition” hardcovers. Additional books include the illustrated novel *Sandman: The Dream Hunters*, the graphic short story collection *Sandman: Endless Nights*, and various spinoffs, including the GN series *Lucifer* (written by Mike Carey) and two GNs starring Morpheus’s cute and cheerful sister Death. *Older teens and adults*.

Gaiman, Neil & P. Craig Russell. ***Murder Mysteries***.
Dark Horse. 2002. 64p. ISBN 15697163X. \$13.95.

Master adapter Russell’s comics version of a prose short story by Gaiman. In the city of the angels, where the universe is being prepared, an angel is found dead, and Raguel, the Vengeance of the Lord, is sent by Lucifer to investigate.

Older teens and adults.

Oakley, Mark. The ***Thieves and Kings*** series.

Vol. 1: I Box Publishing. 1998. 154p. ISBN 0968102506. pap. \$18.95.

Thoroughly engrossing self-published black-and-white fantasy saga featuring a young thief, a princess, a girl apprentice learning magic, and a 10,000-year-old sorceress attempting to reclaim herself from evil, all working against the evil Lady Locumire, with comic relief provided by an unpredictable immortal wizard. Shifts between comics form and short illustrated text sections. Four further volumes are available to date. *Teens and adults.*

Pini, Wendy & Richard Pini. The ***Elfquest*** series.

Elfquest Archives Vol. 1: DC. 2003. 216p. ISBN 1401201288. \$49.99

Begun in 1978, *Elfquest* was one of the first American comics influenced by Japanese manga, and the very first graphic novel series to find success in mainstream bookstores. It begins when the Wolfriders, a tribe of elves, flee their woodland home when it is burned by humans, and discover a very different group of elves living in the city of Sorrow's End, a peaceful desert oasis. There have been many different *Elfquest* books, including some by other creators – but the books illustrated by Wendy, and others written by the Pinis, are the most important. There are several earlier editions of many of the books, but DC is now publishing excellent, revised editions of the earliest *Elfquest* stories in their hardcover Archives series, and is also publishing new stories. *Teens and adults.*

Sakai, Stan. The ***Usagi Yojimbo*** series.

Vol. 1: *The Ronin*: Fantagraphics. 1999 (reprint ed.) 152p. ISBN 0930193350. pap. \$15.95.

In a historic Japan peopled by anthropomorphic animals, Usagi is a masterless rabbit-samurai who hires himself out as a bodyguard (yojimbo). Sakai's work often delves into traditional Japanese culture, and his storytelling is excellent. 20 volumes to date; beginning with Vol. 8, the books are published by Dark Horse. *Teens and up.*

Smith, Jeff. The ***Bone*** series.

Bone Vol. 1: Out from Boneville.: Scholastic. 2005. 144p. ISBN 0439706408. pap. \$9.99

Widely loved fantasy starring the three Bone cousins, who become lost after fleeing their home and find themselves involved in a struggle between the people of the valley and the Rat Creatures led by the Hooded One. First published in black-and-white in nine volumes (and then in a huge omnibus edition collecting the entire story) – this is the first volume of Scholastic's reprinting of the series in color. *Ages 10 and up.*

Vaughan, Brian K. & others. The *Y: The Last Man* series.

Vol. 1: Unmanned: DC/Vertigo. 2003. 128p. ISBN 1-56389-980-9. pap. \$12.95

The story of what happens when all male animals (including humans) mysteriously die, except for an unemployed English major and his pet monkey. Eight volumes to date. *Adults*.

Willingham, Bill & others. The *Fables* series.

Vol.1: *Legends in Exile*: DC/Vertigo: 2003, 128p. ISBN 1-56389-942-6. pap. \$9.95.

When the Adversary conquered the lands of Fable, all of the surviving fairytale characters escaped to Earth and live there in secrecy. This is the story of their struggles there, set in the present day. Eight numbered volumes to date, plus the stand-alone *1001 Nights of Snowfall*. *Adults*.

Anthology

Flight Vol. 1.

Image. 2004. 208p. ISBN 1582403813. pap. \$19.95.

Brilliant full-color anthology of short stories by many young cartoonists, centered on the theme of flying. Showcases a great variety of styles and approaches. Two further volumes are available. *Older teens and adults*.

Japanese manga

Manga stories can be in any genre just like other comics, but they are grouped here, rather than placed in the genre categories above, for the convenience of those interested in manga specifically.

Fujishima, Kosuke. The *Oh My Goddess!* series.

Vol. 1: Dark Horse. 2005. 192p. ISBN 1593073879. pap. \$9.99.

This popular series is an example of a manga and anime genre that is a novelty in the U.S. – a romance (and comedy) written for a male audience. When college student Keiichi accidentally calls the Goddess Technical Help Line, he receives a visit from the goddess Belldandy, who grants him one wish. He wishes for a girl like her to stay with him forever, and as a result, she herself becomes his girlfriend. Dark Horse initially released this series in another format, and is now re-releasing it in the now-standard manga format – so far Vols. 1-4 and 21-24 are available in the new editions.

Koike, Kazuo & Goseki Kojima. The *Lone Wolf and Cub* series.

Vol. 1: *The Assassin's Road*: Dark Horse. 2000. 296p. ISBN 1569715025. pap. \$9.95

In 17th century Japan, when the shogun's executioner Itto Ogami is framed for treason, he escapes and becomes the assassin Lone Wolf. On his jobs, he is

always accompanied by his infant son Daigoro, whom he pushes in a baby cart. Strong writing dealing with the strict samurai code of honor, with highly accomplished and realistic art. 28 volumes total, in a small 6"x4" format. *Adults*.

Miyazaki, Hayao. The *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* series.

Vol. 1: Viz. 2004. 136p. ISBN 1591164087. pap. \$9.99.

Nausicaa is the princess of a small kingdom in a far future Earth that has been devastated by terrible wars and where humankind is in danger of being exterminated by a poisonous forest that is spreading to cover the planet. She and her people become involved in a war between two much larger powers, but Nausicaa herself, a pacifist and lover of nature, is more concerned with exploring the secrets of the forest. The only extended manga work by famed animation director Miyazaki (*Spirited Away*). Also released in a four-volume set, but this seven-volume larger-format edition is the one to get. *Teens and adults*.

Takahashi, Rumiko. The *Maison Ikkoku* series.

Vol. 1: Viz. 2003. 214p. ISBN 1591160545. pap. \$9.99.

A wonderful true-to-life romantic comedy about the relationship between a struggling student and his beautiful, older apartment manager. Funny, touching, heartfelt, and genuinely human. Fifteen volumes total. *Older teens and adults*.

Tezuka, Osamu. The *Buddha* series.

Vol. 1: *Kapilavastu*: Vertical. 2003. 400p. ISBN 1932234438. \$24.95.

Tezuka was the cartoonist who more than any other defined the shape of modern manga, and the creator of *Astro Boy* and *Kimba the White Lion*. This is the first volume of his eight-book account of the life of the Buddha. With surprising action and goofy humor, and a strong streak of Tezuka's humanist philosophy. *Older teens and adults*.

Tezuka, Osamu. *Phoenix: A Tale of the Future*.

Viz. 2004. 200p. ISBN 159116608X. pap. \$15.95.

This book is one part of the series Tezuka considered his life's work. Each of the 12 volumes (ten of which are available so far in the U.S.) is set in a different time and features different characters, but there are links between them, including the figure of the Phoenix, a bird who embodies the Spirit of the Earth. This volume is set in the far future and concerns a space patrolman who flees the authorities who want to kill his beloved alien companion, and in doing so, finds he survives a devastating war. *Teens and adults*.

Manga has proliferated in the U.S. to such a huge extent that it's nearly impossible to keep up, and there are many other manga series that are worthwhile for libraries. Among the most popular at Greene County are *Naruto*, *Rurouni Kenshin*, *Tsubaba*, *Fruits Basket*, *Dragon Ball Z*, and *Inu Yasha*.

For younger readers

Azuma, Kiyohiko. The *Yotsuba&!* series.

Vol. 1: ADV Manga. 2003. 232p. ISBN 1413903177. pap. \$9.99.

The adventures of the irrepressible six-year-old Yotsuba in the new city she and her adoptive father just moved to are hilarious and charming, full of goofiness and genuine heart. A manga series, three volumes to date.

Crilley, Mark. The *Akiko* series.

“Pocket Size” edition Vol. 1: Sirius. 2004. 192p. ISBN 1579890679. pap. \$11.95.

Fourth-grader Akiko is surprised one night when she’s visited by aliens who explain that she must come with them to the planet Smoo and lead a mission to save a prince. Humorous and fun SF adventure with a great cast. Originally released in a larger format – five volumes are now available in the “pocket size” series. Crilley has also written a series of Akiko prose novels for kids.

Gownley, Jimmy. The *Amelia Rules* series.

Vol. 1: The Whole World’s Crazy: ibooks. 2005. 176p. ISBN 1596878193. pap. \$14.95.

When nine-year-old Amelia and her recently divorced mother move in with Amelia’s aunt, Amelia makes some new friends, only to discover on the first day of school that they’re the school’s geeks – and by association, so is she. Side-splittingly hilarious, while also dealing sensitively with the problems children of divorce face. Three volumes to date.

Books for librarians about graphic novels

Gorman, Michelle. *Getting Graphic! Using Graphic Novels to Promote Literacy with Preteens and Teens*.

Linworth. 2003. 100p. ISBN 1-58683-089-9. pap. \$36.95.

Very useful book arguing for the place of graphic novels in libraries, and providing advice on collection development, GN-related programming, and use of GNs in the classroom, plus a long list of recommended titles.

Lyga, Allyson A.W. & Barry Lyga. *Graphic Novels in Your Media Center*.

Libraries Unlimited. 180p. ISBN 1-59158-142-7. pap. \$35.

Oriented towards school librarians and teachers, this book argues for the benefit young readers can derive from graphic novels. Includes an introduction to the art of reading comics, a list of recommended titles, and lesson plans using GNs.

General books about comics, manga, and graphic novels

Daniels, Les. *Marvel: Five Fabulous Decades of the World's Greatest Comics*.

Abrams. 1991. 287p. ISBN 0810938219. pap. out of print.

Daniels, Les. *DC Comics: A Celebration of the World's Favorite Comic Book Heroes*.

Watson-Guptill. 2003. 272p. ISBN 0823079198. pap. \$29.95.

Very good histories of the two largest American comic book companies.

Gravett, Paul. *Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know*.

Collins Design. 2005. 192p. ISBN 0-06-082425-5. pap. \$24.95.

Not *everything* you need to know by any means, but this is a sophisticated, excellent, and highly useful “readers advisory” book for adults covering many noteworthy graphic novels.

Gravett, Paul. *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics*.

Harper Design International. 2004. 176p. ISBN 1-85669-391-0. pap. \$24.95.

Currently the most up-to-date history of manga available, and very worthwhile.

NOTE: this is the book that the San Bernardino, California county supervisor ordered removed from the county’s public libraries because of a handful of explicit images reprinted from Japanese comics for adults.

Jones, Gerard & Will Jacobs. *The Comic Book Heroes (2nd edition)*.

Prima. 1996. 416p. ISBN 0761503935. out of print.

Excellent history of American mainstream comics from 1956 to the mid-1990s.

Jones, Gerard. *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters, and the Birth of the Comic Book*. Basic. 2004. 320p. ISBN 0-465-03656-2. \$26.

An also excellent history of the early comic book industry in the U.S., from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*.

Harper Collins. 1994 (reprint ed.) 224p. ISBN 006097625X. pap. \$22.95.

A comic about comics: a humorous, insightful, and systematic analysis of the medium written in comics form. A real delight.

Plowright, Frank (ed.). *The Slings & Arrows Comic Guide: Second Edition*.

Slings & Arrows Ltd. 2003. 784p. ISBN 0-9544589-0-7. pap. \$39.95.

Massive compendium presenting reviews of 5300 American comics series by a team of 16 reviewers. Wide-ranging, well-written, and frank – very worthwhile.

Ross, Alex & Chip Kidd. *Mythology: The DC Comics Art of Alex Ross*.

Pantheon. 2003. 288p. ISBN 0-375-42240-4, \$35.

An art book – a mightily impressive collection of Ross's lifelike painted illustrations of DC Comics characters.

Sabin, Roger. *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels: A History of Comic Art*.

Phaidon. 2001. 240p. ISBN 0714839930. \$29.95.

Published in England, a history of comics, from the comic book precursors of the late 1800s up to the mid-1990s, covering underground and alternative comics (with some explicit examples), manga, and British and American mainstream comics.

Schodt, Frederik L. *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics*.

Kodansha. 1988. 260p. ISBN 0870115721. pap. \$25.

This was the first history written in English of Japanese comics – still very useful and informative.

Schodt, Frederik L. *Dreamland Japan*.

Stone Bridge Press. 1996. 360p. ISBN 188065623X. pap. \$19.95.

A follow-up to *Manga! Manga!*, covering more recent trends, also very good.

Weiner, Stephen. *The 101 Best Graphic Novels, 2nd ed.*

NBM. 2006. 80p. ISBN 1-56163-443-3. \$15.95.

A good guide to some of the best graphic novels, with age ratings and short reviews. A revised version of Weiner's 1996 book *100 Graphic Novels for Public Libraries*.

Weiner, Stephen. *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*.

NBM. 2004. 64p. ISBN 1561633682. \$9.95.

An informative short history of the graphic novel format for newcomers to the topic.

Books about anime

Anime Interviews: The First Five Years of Animerica, Anime and Manga Monthly (1992-1997).

Viz. 1997. 192p. ISBN 1569312206. pap. \$19.95.

Collection of interviews with many prominent manga and anime creators.

Clements, Jonathan & Helen McCarthy. ***The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917, revised and expanded ed.***

Stone Bridge Press. 2006. 867p. ISBN 1933330104. pap. \$29.95.

Contains data-filled entries for over 2000 anime films and series, including many not available in the U.S., with reviews of many.

Ledoux, Trish & Doug Ranney. ***The Complete Anime Guide: Japanese Animation Film Directory and Resource Guide 2nd Ed.***

Tiger Mountain Press. 1997. 216p. ISBN 0-9649542-5-7. out of print.

This book's main feature is a comprehensive listing of anime available in the U.S. on VHS (or laserdisc!) as of 1997, with short reviews. Also includes timelines of anime on American TV and anime fandom in the U.S., and an introduction to anime genres.

McCarthy, Helen. ***Hayao Miyazaki: Master of Japanese Animation.***

Stone Bridge Press. 1999. 240p. ISBN 1880656418. pap. \$18.95.

Miyazaki is the most acclaimed living anime creator, maker of *My Neighbor Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Spirited Away* among others. This is a study and appreciation of his films.

Poitras, Gilles. ***Anime Essentials: Every Thing a Fan Needs to Know.***

Stone Bridge Press. 2000. 144p. ISBN 1880656531. pap. \$14.95.

Again, perhaps not *everything* you'll need to know, but a worthwhile introduction to anime and anime fandom by a librarian and long-time anime fan, with a list of recommended titles.

Poitras, Gilles. ***The Anime Companion: What's Japanese in Japanese Animation?***

Stone Bridge Press. 1999. 176p. ISBN 1880656329. pap. \$16.95.

Poitras, Gilles. ***The Anime Companion 2: More What's Japanese in Japanese Animation?***

Stone Bridge Press. 2005. 176p. ISBN 1880656965. pap. \$18.95.

Two volumes explaining references in anime and manga to various aspects of Japanese life and culture, including history, religion, foods, clothing and many other topics.

Recommended anime

The films of Hayao Miyazaki

Miyazaki is one of anime's most widely admired creators, and his films are essential for every anime collection.

The Castle of Cagliostro (1979) – Starring the master thief Lupin III (a very well-known character in Japan, star of many other manga and anime). After stealing a fortune in bills that turn out to be counterfeit, he sets out to rescue a princess from the castle of the counterfeiter. Great action-adventure. (unrated – 13+)

Nausicaa of the Vally of Wind (1984) – Based on Miyazaki's SF manga of the same name (see Recommended Manga above). It was made before the manga had been completed, and so features a different ending. (PG)

Castle in the Sky (1986) – A young boy saves a girl from air pirates and later learns that she may be the key to his search for the flying city of Laputa. Another excellent adventure story. (unrated – 10+)

My Neighbor Totoro (1988) – Two young girls explore the area around their new country home and meet the huge, furry and friendly Totoro, guardian of the forest. An absolutely wonderful film for young children, famous for its fluffy Catbus. (G)

Kiki's Delivery Service (1989) – The thirteen-year-old-witch Kiki, whose only magical skill is flying on a broomstick, leaves home for a year to become the resident witch in a new city and starts a delivery business. Another excellent children's film, for older kids than *Totoro*. (G)

Porco Rosso (1992) – Set after World War I in the Adriatic Sea, this film concerns a pilot who has the head of pig; the pirates he is hired to combat; the girl who designs his new plane; the woman who pines for him; and his American rival for her affection. (PG)

Princess Mononoke (1997) – The story of a prince who leaves his people to investigate the origin of the monster that cursed him, and becomes involved in a conflict between the Lady Eboshi, whose people make iron and firearms, and the gods of the forest, who are defended by San, a human girl raised by wolf-gods. A superb fantasy adventure. (This is my personal all-time favorite film, animated or otherwise.) (PG-13)

Spirited Away (2001) – When Chihiro and her family accidentally enter the realm of the spirits, Chihiro's parents are turned into pigs, and she must get a job at the bathhouse run by the fearsome witch Yubaba to have any hope of saving them. This won the 2002 Academy Award for Best Animated Feature Film. (PG)

Howl's Moving Castle (2004) – Based on the fantasy novel by Diana Wynne Jones, featuring a young girl who is cursed and becomes old, who finds employment in the home-on-legs of the wizard Howl. (PG)

Other films

Ghost in the Shell (1995) – In the near future, a female public security officer and her partner, both cyborgs, investigate a hacker breaking into people's minds, and encounter a mysterious bodiless intelligence. Smart and thoughtful science fiction dealing with questions of identity in a world where many humans are cybernetically enhanced. Based on a manga for adults by Masamune Shirow, and directed by Mamoru Oshii. There's also a related TV series, *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex*. (unrated – 17+)

Grave of the Fireflies (1988) – The tragic story of two orphaned siblings in World War II Japan who try to survive on their own. Tremendously sad and moving. Produced by Hayao Miyazaki's company Studio Ghibli and directed by Miyazaki's business partner Isao Takahata. (unrated – 13+)

Millennium Actress (2001) – As a documentary maker interviews an old and reclusive former actress about her life, they are both transported into scenes from her many films. (PG)

Whisper of the Heart (1995) – Heartwarming true-to life story of junior high student Shizuka, who finds herself drawn to a boy, a dapper anthropomorphic cat statue named the Baron, and the idea of becoming a writer. Produced by Studio Ghibli. (G)

Other anime films to consider include:

- *Akira*, the near-future science fiction film that became a cult classic when released in the U.S. in 1989.
- the Studio Ghibli films *Pom Poko* and *My Neighbors the Yamadas* (both directed by Takahata), and *The Cat Returns*.
- Satoshi Kon's films *Perfect Blue* and *Tokyo Godfathers*.
- *Metropolis* (2001), not to be confused with Fritz Lang's 1927 classic, based on a manga by Osamu Tezuka and scripted by *Akira* writer Katsuhiro Otomo.
- *Urusei Yatsura 2: Beautiful Dreamer* – the second of six films based on a manga by Rumiko Takahashi (*Inu Yasha*, *Ranma ½*); an SF comedy starring an alien princess and the human she has betrothed herself to, directed by Mamoru Oshii.
- *Arcadia of my Youth*, a 1982 space opera starring an iconic old-school anime character, Leiji Matsumoto's space pirate Captain Harlock.

TV series

Cowboy Bebop (1998) – The adventures of a group of interplanetary bounty hunters aboard the spaceship *Bebop*. A stylish SF adventure show with a great cast and an excellent jazzy music score. On six DVDs, now available in new “Remix” editions. (unrated – 15+) There’s also a spinoff movie, *Cowboy Bebop: Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door*. (rated R).

His and Her Circumstances (1998) – The comical romance between two high-achieving high school students, one a vain pretender and the other highly self-disciplined but also self-doubting. Directed by Hideaki Anno, and though very different from his previous work *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (see below), it shares that show’s focus on psychological exploration. Based on a manga available in the U.S. under the title *Kare Kano*. (unrated – 13+)

Kino’s Journey (2003) – Kino travels on a talking motorcycle through an invented world to a variety of countries, each with unique customs, cultures, and dangers. A thoughtful and reflective show. On four DVDs. (unrated – 13+)

Neon Genesis Evangelion (1995) – In a post-apocalyptic near-future Japan, several young teens must pilot giant bio-mechanical robots, the Evangelions, against attacking “angels”. Though it begins as a standard “giant robot” series, it later delves deeply into the psychology of its main characters, especially withdrawn and apathetic pilot Shinji Ikari, portraying their traumas, angst, and fears. Widely admired in the U.S. and Japan both. Originally released on eight DVDs in the U.S., it’s now available in a remastered set of seven discs. The story is concluded in the film *The End of Evangelion*. (unrated – 15+)

Serial Experiments Lain (1998) – When Japanese schoolgirl Lain receives an e-mail from a dead classmate, she begins traveling “the Wired” (the Internet) and makes amazing discoveries about it and about herself. Bizarre but amazing science fiction show, on four DVDs. (unrated – 15+)

There are many other worthwhile shows: among the most popular at Greene County are *Fullmetal Alchemist*, *Samurai Champloo*, *Fruits Basket*, *Trigun*, and *Witch Hunter Robin*. *Haibane Renmei* is another good one.

Original video animation (OVA)

Read or Die (2001) – Book-lover extraordinaire Yomiko Readman has the power to control paper – she can form it into any shape and make it hard enough to stop bullets – and she works as an agent for the British Library Special Operations Division. She’s assigned to combat a group of seemingly resurrected historical figures who are stealing documents and books (including one of hers). Great single-DVD SF action-adventure. There’s also a related TV series, *R.O.D the TV*. (unrated – 13+)

Voices of a Distant Star (2002) – Japanese teen Mikako is separated from her boyfriend Noboru when she becomes a pilot on a starship searching for aliens who attacked a human base on Mars. As she gets farther away from Earth, her text messages sent by cell phone take longer and longer to reach her boyfriend – and as her ship goes to the stars, he ages while she remains 14 years old. A 25-minute near-future science fiction story written and animated entirely by one man, Makoto Shinkai. The DVD also includes Shinkai's animated short *She and Her Cat*. Now available in a box set with a soundtrack CD and Shinkai's 2004 feature-length film *The Place Promised in Our Early Days*, also recommended. (unrated – 13+)

One more note: There are others who would make entirely different graphic novel and anime recommendations, and libraries should listen to them too, so as to have a wide-ranging and well-rounded collection. In addition to the books about graphic novels and anime I've listed, see graphic novel reviews in *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, *VOYA*, and other library review sources, and anime reviews in *Video Librarian*. The mainstream and fan press also produce many reviews in print and online. Seek ye the wisdom of others as well as my own.

Steve Raiteri
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