



## Let Your Kids Read Comic Books!

By Educator Barnes – May 4, 2019

For some reason, comic books are seen by some as not real reading material. Graphic novels get lumped into this category too. As a current elementary librarian and a former literacy coach and English teacher, I am here to make this clear: Reading comic books is *real* reading.

We tell children we want them to read. We even take them to the library, and then we handcuff them with restrictions. “I didn’t mean those books” or “Can’t you find a book with fewer pictures and more words?” Did you hear that? Yep, that’s the sound of a potential life-long reader’s heart shattering into pieces. Adults are killing young readers daily with restrictions. Think about it. Why would a child want to read if he or she is banned from reading what is enjoyable to him or her?

Just because there are fewer words in comic books doesn't mean the words are all simple or the plot is not complex. The length of the text does not dictate that. The only way for children to become better readers is by reading, so let them read what they desire. I would rather have children begging me to take them to the library to check out graphic novels or begging me to take them to the comic book store every weekend instead of them not reading at all.

I've seen teachers ban comic books during silent sustained reading in the classroom. As a former English teacher, I already had the power to choose the text my students read. Even when I had literature circles and students had a choice, those choices were based on the options I had made available. Even my child experienced the reading handcuffs. On Read Across America Day, one of my sons was told that he could not read a graphic novel. Teachers, we don't have to control every aspect of reading.

Of course, I practice what I preach within my own home. My twin sons are avid readers. My husband and I read a lot, and we don't restrict what they read. They read comics, graphic novels, and fiction chapter books. One of my sons wants to be a scientist so he also checks out nonfiction science books from the library. We have made it clear that reading a comic book is just as valuable as reading a chapter book.

That's why my sons are super excited about today. Today is free comic book day. At participating comic book stores, you can get a free comic book....so you already know where we will be later today. If you are handcuffing readers, stop it! If children want to read comic books, get out of the way and let them.