

Did you know that graphic novels can offer a massive boost to young readers? Yes, graphic novels are *real books* and kids who read them show strong visual literacy skills and growth in vocabulary. Learn more about how graphic novels might grow your reader with the National PTA Parent's Guide Worth a Thousand Words. Here are a few great graphic novels to get your family started, with titles listed in progression for your younger to older readers!

“We Dig Worms!” by Kevin McCloskey (2015)

This publisher thoughtfully designs early readers to introduce children to the graphic format, and this author excels at bringing a touch of humor to scientific knowledge. Created on recycled paper and extolling the virtues of vermiculture, kids will giggle while they learn about wiggly worms.

“The Narwhal and Jelly” series by Ben Clanton (2016+)

A prolific and award-winning series of early reader books pairing odd couple Narwhal and Jellyfish on a string of adorable undersea adventures.

“Perditos en NYC: Una aventura en el metro” by Nadja Spiegelman and Sergio Garcia Sanchez (2015)

When Pablo gets lost during a field trip to the Empire State Building, a little boy learns his way around NYC with the help of locals and the subway system he explores. Also available in English as *Lost in NYC: A Subway Adventure*.

“Donut Feed the Squirrels” (Norma and Belly #1) by Mika Song (2020)

After the chef shoos them away, two squirrels stage an elaborate heist of a doughnut truck in this charming series starter. Terrific puns, gentle humor and inventive problem-solving make this transitional graphic novel a hole in one!

“Black Heroes of the Wild West” by James Otis Smith with an introduction by Kadir Nelson (2020)

In some areas of the Old West, up to a third of the settlers were African American, many of them stellar cowboys. A cartoonist shares three vignettes about bold Black icons in a nonfiction graphic novel with detailed research dedicated to setting the record straight.

“Zita the Spacegirl” series by Ben Hatke (2011)

An empowering interstellar adventure in which a girl undertakes an interdimensional rescue of her best friend from alien captors. This series is credited with kick-starting many a graphic novel reader's love of the format and returned recently to cross storylines with another set of characters created by Hatke, a brilliant cartoonist.

“The Cardboard Kingdom” series by Chad Sell, et al. (2018)

An eclectic group of neighborhood children bring their distinct personalities together in costumed community play. A middle grade graphic novel told through multiple authors and one unifying illustrator, this is an outstanding selection that champions creativity and problem solving along with thoughtful explorations of identity.

“Rise of the Halfling King” (Tales of the Feathered Serpent, Book One) by David Bowles and Charlene Bowles (2020)

A middle grade interpretation of a Mesoamerican myth in which readers are introduced to King Sayam and the prophecy that led to his taking the throne in Uxmal, the first in a planned series of ten titles.

“Snapdragon” by Kat Leyh (2020)

Tinges of magic and the characters’ penchant for roadkill set this pick apart from the crowd, while the thoughtful explorations of identity, marginalization, and intersectionality—told through lively illustrations and a gorgeous palette—make it a page-turner for middle grade readers.

“New Kid” by Jerry Craft (2019)

Seventh grader Jordan navigates a preppy new school at which he is one of few kids of color, a microaggression filled environment at odds with his predominantly Black neighborhood (and Jordan’s desire to be at an arts school, instead).

After you’ve enjoyed a graphic novel or two from the list, draw on the book’s design to inspire some creative play with your family:

- Download a [free template](#) and encourage your reader to write and illustrate a story of their own.
- Build on an aspect of a story you read, whether it’s digging for worms, sharing doughnuts or creating a cardboard costume together.
- Use these graphic novels to help your child find “read-alikes” or other graphic novels that they might enjoy. A librarian or bookseller will happily point out their graphic novel section and make additional recommendations based on the book you enjoyed.