Copyright Statement

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

This thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of this thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from their thesis.

General copyright and disclaimer

In addition to the above conditions, authors give their consent for the digital copy of their work to be used subject to the conditions specified on the Library Thesis Consent Form and Deposit Licence.
Exploring the pedagogical potential of graphic novels in developing Grade 7 students’ multiliteracy skills in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Resa Noel

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), The University of Auckland, 2014.
Abstract

This thesis explored the pedagogical potential of graphic novel texts through a case study of their use to develop Grade 7 students’ multiliteracy skills in three classrooms in one school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Pedagogical practices in these classrooms had not previously included multimodal texts like graphic novels. Therefore, I held a professional learning workshop with three teachers to develop strategies for the inclusion of graphic novels in the English language curriculum. Then, teachers used my pre-designed Teaching Unit plan to formulate lessons for instruction on graphic narrative storytelling over a school term. These involved the study of one graphic novel text followed by the construction of conventional narratives, storytelling via words only, which were then adapted into graphic narratives, storytelling via words and images, like that of a comic. Students’ and teachers’ experiences, and students’ mono- and multimodal text productions were captured through a mixed methods approach to case study research design.

A framework comprising a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy and professional learning communities inform the results. One significant finding suggests that teachers actively sought ways of overcoming the dissonance created while integrating graphic novel texts into their current practice. Consequently, those teachers were mostly able to overcome the dissonance through collaborative interactions within a professional community. The findings also suggest that students actively negotiated the diverse demands of transferring their conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on a number of multimodal resources for making meaning. Moreover, the process of graphic narrative text production validated the talents and abilities of some students whose ‘voices’ were previously silenced by conventional forms of storytelling practices in their classrooms. These findings will contribute to the wider debate on the ways in which the integration of graphic novels into classroom curriculum can problematise or enhance existing pedagogies and ways of learning.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the loving memories of my grandmother Pearl John, my grandmother Beatrice Noel, my father Ronald Noel and my grandfather Clement Noel, who all passed away at different stages of my PhD journey. I also would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, my brother, other family members and close friends for their varied and immense support throughout this journey. Thank you all for supporting my dreams.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my special thanks to my supervisors Professor Stuart McNaughton, Dr. Aaron Wilson and Dr. Libby Limbrick for their collegiality, constructive feedback and intellectual engagement that helped to shape this thesis. I would also like to thank the Woolf Fisher Research Centre, and staff of the School of Curriculum and Pedagogy at The University of Auckland, including Judine Ladbrook and Wayne Mills. I am also grateful to Mohammed Al-Ansari, Juliette Laird and Ngosi Licorish for their varying expertise during the conceptual and analysis stages of this thesis.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to my mentors Dr. Joel Warrican and Professor Morag Styles for their academic support throughout my Masters and PhD programmes. Thanks also to the Principal, staff and students at St. Stephen’s (a pseudonym) secondary school for their informed participation in this research study. Lastly, I would like to thank the Commonwealth Scholarship scheme and the staff at the International Office, including Brian Lythe, for their support during my enrolment at The University of Auckland.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ....................................................................................................................................... ii
Dedication .................................................................................................................................. iii
Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................... iv
Table of Contents ......................................................................................................................... v
List of Figures .............................................................................................................................. x
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................. xi
Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 1
  Rationale .................................................................................................................................. 1
  Personal and professional experiences. .................................................................................... 2
  Universal Access to Secondary Education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. ..................... 2
  Graphic novels and multiliteracies approach to pedagogy. .................................................... 4
  Purpose of the study .................................................................................................................. 4
  Significance of this research study. ........................................................................................... 5
  Brief description of methodology and methods. ...................................................................... 5
  Definition of terms .................................................................................................................... 6
Chapter Summary ....................................................................................................................... 6
Chapter 1: Literature Review ....................................................................................................... 7
  Graphic Novels: Culture, Pedagogy and Theory ..................................................................... 8
    What is a graphic novel? ......................................................................................................... 8
    Graphic novels and cultural legitimisation. .......................................................................... 9
    Graphic novels as popular youth literature ...................................................................... 11
    Literacy pedagogy and the benefits of studying graphic novels. .................................... 13
    The potential benefits of reading graphic novels in school. ............................................ 14
    The potential challenges of reading graphic novels in the classroom context ..................... 20
    The potential benefits of creating graphic novels in school. ............................................. 21
The potential challenges in creating graphic novels in the classroom context..........24  
Best practices for teaching graphic novels. .................................................................25  
Theoretical approaches to making meaning of graphic novels. ...............................31  
Summary: Graphic novels: culture, pedagogy and theory........................................39  
Multiliteracies and the Graphic Novel as a Multimodal Text.................................39  
Using professional communities to support multimodal learning.........................42  
Communities of practice.............................................................................................43  
Teachers’ professional learning....................................................................................48  
Chapter Summary .......................................................................................................52  
Chapter 2: Methodology ............................................................................................53  
Rationale for Mixed Methods Approach to Case Study Research............................54  
Rationale for using case study research......................................................................55  
Rationale for using mixed methods design.................................................................55  
Setting .........................................................................................................................58  
St. Stephen’s secondary school ..................................................................................58  
Rationale for selecting the research site......................................................................62  
Participants and the Role of the Researcher..............................................................63  
Teacher participants.....................................................................................................63  
Student participants.....................................................................................................64  
The role of the researcher..............................................................................................65  
Methods of Data Collection .........................................................................................66  
Surveys. .......................................................................................................................67  
Interviews. ....................................................................................................................72  
Narratives as texts/artefacts. .......................................................................................75  
Observations. ...............................................................................................................77  
Methods of Data Analysis............................................................................................77  
Surveys. .......................................................................................................................78  
Interviews. ....................................................................................................................80  
Narratives as texts/artefacts. .......................................................................................87
Analysing observation data

The Graphic Novel Intervention

Teacher professional development workshop

The graphic novel teaching unit plan

Ethical Considerations

Application to the University of Auckland’s Human Participants Ethics Committee

Gaining informed assent and consent, the right to withdraw from participation, and maintaining confidentiality and anonymity

Managing conflicts of interest

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3: Findings

Research Question One

Theme 1: students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting Amulet Book 1

Theme 2: students negotiated the diverse demands for adapting conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on varying strategies of mono- and multimodal text productions which resulted in varying outcomes

Theme 3: constructing graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics

Research Question Two

Findings from reading surveys

Findings from writing surveys

Research Question Three

Research Question Four

Theme one: positioning visual modes of representation and meaning-making challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling

Theme two: explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional narrative writing

Theme three: teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations
Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................ 157

Chapter 4: Discussion of Findings........................................................................................... 158

Research Question One ........................................................................................................ 158

Theme 1: students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting *Amulet Book 1.* ............................................................................................................................. 159

Theme 2: students negotiated the diverse demands for adapting conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on varying strategies of mono- and multimodal text productions which resulted in varying outcomes. ........................................................... 162

Theme 3: constructing graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics. ................................................................................ 164

Research Question Two ....................................................................................................... 166

Research Question Three ..................................................................................................... 167

Research Question Four ....................................................................................................... 169

Theme one: positioning visual modes of representation and meaning-making challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling. ......................... 170

Theme two: explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional narrative writing. ........................................................................................ 173

Theme three: teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations........................................................................................................ 175

Chapter Summary ................................................................................................................ 177

Conclusion ............................................................................................................................... 180

Major Findings ..................................................................................................................... 182

Theoretical Implication .......................................................................................................... 184

Limitations ............................................................................................................................ 185

Recommendations for Future Research ............................................................................... 185

References ................................................................................................................................ 187

Appendices .............................................................................................................................. 204

Appendix A: Interview Questions ........................................................................................ 204

Teachers’ interview questions. ........................................................................................... 204

Students’ interview questions. ........................................................................................... 206
List of Figures

Figure 1. A Contract with God........................................................................................................9
Figure 2. CCA code..........................................................................................................................10
Figure 3. The Flash comic featuring the CCA code at top left......................................................10
Figure 4. Macbeth: The graphic novel............................................................................................12
Figure 5. Excerpt from *Manga Math Mysteries* 1.................................................................12
Figure 6. The data collection timeline, April–June 2012............................................................66
Figure 7. Front cover of *Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper*......................................................97
Figure 8. Close-up shot of Trellis, the villain in *Amulet Book 1*.............................................102
Figure 9. Page 75 *Amulet Book 1*.............................................................................................103
Figure 10. Scene in *Amulet Book 1* depicting Silas’s death.......................................................104
Figure 11. Page 78 *Amulet Book 1 The Stonekeeper*..............................................................105
Figure 12. *Amulet Book 1*, Page 6.........................................................................................107
Figure 13. Page 3 of Nadine’s graphic narrative........................................................................111
Figure 14. Page one of Kimberly’s graphic narrative...............................................................113
Figure 15. Page one of Matthew’s graphic narrative...............................................................115
Figure 16. Page three of Alana’s graphic narrative.....................................................................117
Figure 17. Page one of Katrina’s graphic narrative....................................................................118
Figure 18. Page two of Leon’s graphic narrative.......................................................................119
Figure 19. Excerpt from graphic narrative that demonstrates an effective use of panel layout.................................................................................................................................122
Figure 20. Excerpt from graphic narrative that demonstrates an ineffective use of panel layout.................................................................................................................................123
Figure 21. One panel showing the economical use of linguistic text........................................123
Figure 22. Excerpt from graphic narrative showing effective use of arrangement of characters to show importance..................................................................................................................124
Figure 23. Total means scores for pre- and post-intervention narratives.................................131
Figure 24. Histograms showing the distribution of the total mean pre- and post-conventional writing scores across three classrooms.................................................................135
Figure 25. Desiree’s post-conventional narrative........................................................................137
Figure 26. An excerpt from Desiree’s graphic narrative............................................................137
Figure 27. Using speech bubbles to practise characterisation..................................................149
Figure 28. Classroom activity to promote learning constructing dialogue.............................149
List of Tables

Table 1. Research questions and the methods of data collection and analyses that address them. .................................................................................................................. 56
Table 2. Enrolment at St. Stephen’s secondary, 2011/2012. ......................................................... 59
Table 3. Percentage of trained and graduate teachers in secondary school, 2011/2012. ........ 60
Table 4. Question 5 of pre-intervention survey showing the items (highlighted in colour) which were added to pre-existing PIRLS 2006 reading questionnaire. .......................... 69
Table 5. Paired Samples Test, students’ attitudes to reading pre- and post-intervention......... 80
Table 6. Unit of text from a teacher interview transcript and the codes applied ....................... 82
Table 7. Category labels and accompanying codes from teachers’ data .................................... 83
Table 8. Summary of main themes interpreted from the interview data along with their descriptions. ........................................................................................................... 86
Table 9. Paired Samples Correlations, Attitudes to reading at pre- and post-intervention time-points. ........................................................................................................... 127
Table 10. Paired Samples statistics, attitude to writing at pre- and post-intervention time points. ............................................................................................................... 128
Table 11. Paired samples correlations, attitude to writing at pre- and post-intervention time-points. ........................................................................................................... 128
Table 12. Means Table for Question 9 of the post-intervention writing survey compared by classrooms: Why is it important to write a story with words and pictures? .......... 129
Table 13. Means Table for Question 10 of post-intervention writing survey compared across classrooms: Why is it not important to write a story with words and pictures? .... 130
Table 14. Paired samples test, paired differences between pre- and post-conventional writing scores. ........................................................................................................... 132
Table 15. Paired Samples Correlations, pre- and post-conventional writing scores ............... 132
Table 16. Paired samples test, paired differences between narrative elements in pre- and post-conventional writing scores. ........................................................................... 133
Table 17. Distribution across pre- and post-intervention conventional writing scores in the 5th, 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, 90th and 95th percentiles. ......................................................... 134
Table 18. Excerpt from conventional narrative score sheet showing Nadine’s scores by narrative element. ................................................................................................. 135
Introduction

In recent times, the issue of using graphic novels as a pedagogical tool has received increasing critical attention in education contexts. These contexts include after-school programmes, which focus on the creation of graphic narratives as an artistic activity and part of language development. Several researchers (Hammond, 2009; Pantaleo, 2011; Serafini, 2011) have situated the use of graphic novels in education contexts within the debate about new approaches to literacy pedagogy called multiliteracies. The multiliteracies approach to pedagogy presents the idea of connecting the changing global social environments with new understandings and ways of producing texts which were previously uncommon in the classroom context (New London Group, 1996). These “new” texts—multimodal texts—refer to the ways in which meaning can be communicated including linguistic, visual design, spatial and audio design (Kress, 2009, 2010). One of these multimodal texts is the graphic novel, a term generally thought to have been coined by Will Eisner to refer to a book-length comic (Weiner, 2003).

An increasing volume of literature has been published on the pedagogical potential of graphic novels in the classroom context. Studies illustrate how graphic novels have the potential for language learning and development of literacy for students with a range of abilities and talents (Bucher & Manning, 2004). In addition, the use of graphic novels in classroom contexts is situated within the wider issue of the importance of incorporating students’ out-of-school literacies into classroom learning (Jacobs, 2007). My thesis looks at the use of graphic novel texts in developing Grade 7 students’ multiliteracy skills in the English Language curriculum, from the perspective of three teachers and 98 student participants in three classrooms in one school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Rationale

The rationale for this present study was personal, professional and educational. In this section I outline the ways in which my personal and professional experiences, together with educational issues in the context of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the wider global context, precipitated this present study.
Personal and professional experiences.

Firstly, this present study arose from a personal interest prompted by my previous research into children’s multimodal responses to multimodal texts, such as sophisticated picture books. Two research projects, conducted at the Master’s level, explored children’s multimodal responses to a number of texts including sophisticated picture books, such as Emily Gravett’s *Meerkat Mail*. The theoretical and empirical frameworks of those studies guided the selection, planning and implementation of the topic for my doctoral research. After some time, I decided to investigate students’ multimodal responses as part of disciplinary content within the classroom setting. Thus, I used picture books in my professional teaching practice to engage reluctant Grade 9 students in reading activities. This activity formed part of a school-wide literacy campaign at my former place of employment. After reflecting on my own practice, I began to consider the ways in which multimodal texts such as picture books, might be used to engage and motivate students as well as develop their learning outcomes within specific content areas. All these experiences formed the conceptual framework for this present study.

Universal Access to Secondary Education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

In 2005, Universal Access to Secondary Education (USE), which allows lower-achieving students the opportunity to attend secondary schools, was introduced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a signatory to a number of international initiatives aimed at promoting equality, access to, and equity in education. One such initiative is the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All 2000 (Sunal & Mutua, 2007; UNESCO, 2000) which stipulates that all aspects of the quality of education must be improved and excellence must be ensured so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The USE has led to increased numbers, diversity and needs of students. The Ministry of Education (MOE) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines noted that the USE has led to students with “a greater diversity of abilities and maturities especially in terms of literacy and numeracy entering Secondary Schools… Additionally it has also identified varying problems at the Primary level… Achievement among certain vulnerable groups particularly males, children of single parents, child guardians (often females) and rural students also raises...
concern” (Browne, 2007, pp. 2-7). The MOE continues to provide learning support for struggling students, as well as professional development for teachers. However, literacy challenges in secondary school persist today.

In light of the discourse on education, which highlighted the need to expand pedagogy and learning to suit learners of varying academic abilities and maturities, the MOE has spearheaded many intervention policies and programmes to cope with the shifts in literacy outcomes in secondary schools. One such policy is the Grades 7–9 Language Arts curriculum document designed specifically “to help students who have experienced repeated failure in academics, and are performing below their age or grade level” (Warrican, 2006, p. 1). The overarching aim of that document was that those students would be able to sit certificate examinations. Interestingly, visual representation is one of the strands of that curriculum document, and comic strips are recommended for motivating underachieving students in reading activities. Visual representation is also cited within the wider context of Caribbean regional examinations. The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) cited photographs as a useful resource for stimulating and guiding writing. CXC conducts various certificate examinations including the Grade 11 (end of secondary school) English Language examination. A core component of that examination is short story writing and one of the two short story prompts is a picture. The English Language Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) General Proficiency Report (2011) recommended that teachers could “link pictures from varied sources to current topics and themes in newspapers in order to help stimulate and guide writing” (p. 3). Similarly, the CXC report (2011) and the aforementioned Grades 7–9 Language Arts curriculum acknowledge visual texts in scaffolding literacy tasks, such as reading and writing. However, the use of images in particular, or multimodal texts in general, as legitimate texts with their own language and meaning-making practices is not explored. Comparatively, secondary school English Language curriculums in other countries, such as New Zealand stipulate that teachers must guide students through critical viewing and production of multimodal texts; “English is structured around two interconnected strands, each encompassing the oral, written, and visual forms of the language… Students need to practise making meaning and creating meaning at each level of the curriculum” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 18).
Graphic novels and multiliteracies approach to pedagogy.

Secondly, the use of graphic novel texts—storytelling via words and images like that of a comic—in the classroom context, are situated within the wider discourse of a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy. This approach to pedagogy acknowledges a shift from written language as the dominant literacy practice, to other ways literacy is practiced today. The notion is that students are already functionally and critically engaged with technological, and conventional and unconventional format texts, which they do not encounter in their classrooms (New London Group, 1996). The goal is to prepare students for their social futures in evolving cultural, linguistic, social and economic environments. A multiliteracies approach to pedagogy values students’ wider social networks which consist of ‘funds of knowledge’ from which they can draw on to make meaning of out of texts (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Teachers have to develop strategies and approaches to help integrate those literacies into classroom learning.

Graphic novels are multimodal texts which require students to be able to ‘read’ images and visual design. Studies illustrate how graphic novels might have the potential to engage and motivate students in school reading (Edwards, 2008; Gavigan, 2010; Laycock, 2007) and help low-achieving readers who have difficulty visualising the text because the images help make the text comprehensible and reduce the cognitive load (Kelley, 2010; Krashen, 2004). In addition, student-generated writing employing multi-panel sequences, like that of graphic novels, have had positive outcomes for students’ writing skills (Morrison, Bryan, & Chilcoat, 2002; Smetana, Odelson, Burns, & Grisham, 2009).

Purpose of the study.

The purpose of this present study is to explore the ways in which teaching and learning through the use of graphic novel texts might develop Grade 7 students’ multiliteracy skills in three classrooms in one school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Moreover, this study explores the ways in which teaching graphic novel lessons for the first time might impact on teachers’ professional learning. The inclusion of graphic novel texts in that research context presented a paradigm shift in the English Language curriculum. Prior to the study, students did not practise meaning-making and creating meaning using visual forms of language. The study addressed the following research questions: 1) How, and how effectively do students make meaning from graphic novel texts? 2) In what ways might graphic novel texts be
associated with an improvement in students’ attitudes and beliefs towards reading and writing? 3) In what ways does an intervention using graphic novels impact students’ conventional writing? and 4) How, and how effectively does the graphic novel intervention impact teachers’ professional learning? It should be cautioned that this present study is limited to the three teacher participants’ professional learning rather than a generalisation of all teachers’ professional learning.

**Significance of this research study.**

There are several important areas in which this study makes a unique and original contribution to the field of literacy pedagogy. The literature reviewed suggests that the pedagogical uses of graphic novel texts tend to focus on the artefacts or creative outcomes of their use in educational settings. This indicates a need to understand the ways in which meaning is constructed while graphic novels are being used in the classroom, as well as the artefacts of those meaning-making processes; that is, both processes and outcomes. Additionally, we need to know more about the possible direct, measurable ways in which creating graphic novel texts might impact students’ conventional forms of narrative writing, given the high-stakes nature of assessment in schooling.

**Brief description of methodology and methods.**

This study is framed within the social constructivist paradigm which highlights that the development of language, literacy and learning cannot be understood without taking into account the influence of social interactions and cultural contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study was explorative in nature and employed a mixed methods approach to case study research design. Additionally, Stake (1995) argues that “a constructivist view encourages providing readers with good raw material for their own generalizing” (p. 102). The participants included 98 Grade 7 students, and three teachers in three English language classrooms from one school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Graphic novels had never been used before in those classrooms. In this context, I facilitated a one-day professional development workshop with the teachers to develop graphic novel lessons prior to the start of the study. Then, the three teachers used a pre-designed teaching unit plan to formulate lessons for instruction on graphic narrative storytelling over a school term. The graphic novel lessons consisted of the study of one graphic novel *Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper* (Author?, 2008) followed by explicit instruction on representing narrative elements in graphic novel form. The lessons culminated with the construction of students’ own graphic narratives. Research data in
this study was drawn from four main sources, which included surveys, semi-structured interviews, conventional and graphic narrative writing artefacts, and classroom observations. Qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for data analysis including statistical analyses, thematic analysis and content analyses. It should be noted that this thesis does not offer a critique of the teachers’ practice in relation to teaching graphic novel texts.

**Definition of terms.**

Throughout this thesis *conventional narrative* is used to refer to storytelling in the word-only form, while *graphic narrative* is used to refer to storytelling in the form of words and images written in the comic format. *Graphic novel* is used to refer to a book-length comic book (Weiner, 2003). Although, graphic narratives and graphic novels refer to the same form of storytelling via the comic format, graphic narrative refers strictly to student participants’ narrative. *Multimodal texts* refer to the ways in which meaning can be communicated, such as linguistic, visual, spatial and audio design (Kress, 2009; 2010). *Multiliteracies* is a pedagogical approach that suggests classroom pedagogy should respond to cultural, linguistic, communicative and technological diversity (New London Group, 1996). *Community of practice* is a concept used to describe a community in which members learn through participation and practice in an informal manner (Lave & Wenger, 1991). *Professional learning* is defined “as a product of both externally-provided and job-embedded activities that increase teachers’ knowledge and change their instructional practice in ways that support student learning” (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos, 2009, p.1).

**Chapter Summary**

In the introduction I summarised the research context, purpose, significance and research design of this research study. My thesis comprises six chapters, including the introductory chapter. Chapter One begins by describing the theoretical dimensions of the research and situates the present study within those dimensions. The second chapter explains the methodology and methods used for this study. Then Chapter Three presents the findings for each research question in sequence. Chapter Four presents an analysis of the findings of the research, focusing on answering each question in sequence. This chapter also draws on the various theoretical and empirical strands running through the thesis in order to account for the research findings and includes a discussion on the limitations of this study. Finally, the conclusion gives a brief summary of the findings and includes a discussion of the implications of the findings on future research in the area.
Chapter 1: Literature Review

This study is situated epistemologically and ontologically in the constructivist paradigm, which conceives of reality and knowledge as constructed and negotiated through shared social interactions in a group. Subjective notions of reality are constructed under social and cultural influence forces (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Social constructivism is consistent with this study’s main focus in exploring the interactions, processes, and outcomes related to teacher and student participants’ use of graphic novel texts in the classroom context; for instance, the ways in which participants would have appropriated, rejected or challenged their conventional practices in order to meet their needs in relation to the graphic novel lessons. Although socially mediated learning is one of the key principles, individuals can acquire concepts independently, but “even such independent learning is, in a constructivist sense, socially mediated, because it involves the tools (i.e., language, signs, symbols) that have been acquired through previous social interactions” (Schunk, 2012, p. 252). Consequently, the ways in which participants make meaning of graphic novel texts, individually and through social interactions, are an integral part of this present study.

This review frames the research problem within the context of the current scholarship on the use of graphic novel texts for teaching and learning in educational contexts. Additionally, this review frames the research problem within the constructivist paradigm, which highlights the fundamental role of shared interactions and honouring students’ history of experiences and skills in meaning-making processes in the classroom. The use of graphic novel texts in educational contexts challenges what Duffy (2010) describes as graphic novels being outside the context of discourses of educational institutions. The use of graphic novel texts in this study forms part of a growing body of research on developing pedagogical practices and curricula that draw on youth popular culture literacies. It also contributes to the wider debate on the ways in which the integration of graphic novel texts into existing curriculum, or embedding them within disciplinary content, can problematise or enhance existing pedagogies and ways of learning.

The critical points of current theoretical and research contributions in the following areas are reviewed:
(1) graphic novels in relation to youth popular culture (Griffith, 2010; McTaggart, 2008);
(2) the potential of graphic novels for teaching and learning (Bitz, 2010; Crilley, 2009; Pantaleo, 2011; Rice, 2012; Smetana et al., 2009);
(3) theoretical approaches to graphic novel texts (Brienza, 2010; Gardner & Herman, 2011; Heath & Bhagat, 2005; McCloud, 1994);
(4) framing graphic novels as multimodal texts which form part of a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1996); and
(5) the use of concepts of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) and professional learning to support multimodal teaching and learning.

In the next section, I will discuss the key tenets of the scholarship on the place of graphic novel texts in popular culture, pedagogy and literary theory.

**Graphic Novels: Culture, Pedagogy and Theory**

The overarching aim of this section is to describe and discuss key theoretical and research scholarship on graphic novels in the context of popular culture (culture), as a tool for pedagogy in the classroom context (pedagogy), and several proposed ways of making meaning out of graphic novel texts (theory). In this section I provide a definition of, and characterisation for, a graphic novel text (Eisner, 2008; McTaggart, 2008; Weiner, 2003). Also, I provide a rationale for the appeal of graphic novel texts in youth popular culture literature (McTaggart, 2008), and then describe the debate around the legitimacy of graphic novel texts as literature (Groensteen, 2000; Jacobs, 2007). Finally, I describe and discuss the potential benefits and challenges of using graphic novel texts for teaching and learning (Bitz, 2010; Gavigan, 2010; Rice, 2012; Versaci, 2008).

**What is a graphic novel?**

The term *graphic novel* is a relatively recent coinage, but is still universally agreed to be the most appropriate. Although the exact origin of the term *graphic novel* is hard to pin down, Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories* (2005), which was first published in 1978, has been lauded as the first modern graphic novel (see Figure 1 below). Eisner has been credited with coining the term *graphic novel* while trying to persuade editors
at Bantam books to publish the book-length comic (Weiner, 2003). A graphic novel usually exceeds 50 pages and is bound in soft or hard cover (McTaggart, 2008); written in comic book form which is meant to be read as one story (Weiner, 2003); and “could deal with any subject”…. “in a sensitive, adult manner” (Chinn, 2004, pp. 6,7).

Moreover, “all graphic novels are comic books, but not all comic books are graphic novels” (McTaggart, 2008). In other words, comics can be thought of as a general term under which graphic novels can fall. Furthermore, there have been several other monikers that refer to graphic novels, including graphic literature, graphic narratives (Gardner & Herman, 2011), graphica (Thompson, 2008) and comics as literature. The variation in terminology has raised questions from some researchers (Versaci, 2001) about whether graphic novels might be considered part of the established canon of literature.

**Figure 1. A Contract with God.**

Graphic novels and cultural legitimisation.

Although researchers have noted the appeal of graphic novels with readers in several contexts, graphic novels continue to struggle for cultural legitimisation. There have been negative social associations with graphic novels, including their connections to caricature (regarded as an inferior form of visual art), as well as the link between comics and childhood (Groensteen, 2000). With regard to educational contexts, Jacobs (2007) opines that the comic’s format has been seen “as a debased form of word-based literacy”, which mainly acts as a scaffold for “learning that is perceived to be more difficult, in terms of both the literate practices and content involved” (p. 20).

Historically, comics have been positioned as detrimental to youth in some contexts. In his seminal text, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1955), Wertham posited that comics—especially
“crime comics”—were dangerous for children because of their graphic portrayal of violence, sex, drug abuse, and other content of an adult nature. He attributed the increase of reading troubles in children to comic books:

A very large proportion of children who cannot read well habitually read comic books. They are not really readers, but gaze mostly at the pictures, picking up a word here and there. Among the worst readers is a very high percentage of comic-book addicts who spend very much [sic] time “reading” comic books. They are bookworms without books. (Wertham, 1955, p. 122)

Wertham’s claims sparked a United States Congressional inquiry into the comic book industry, which later led to the establishment of the Comics Code Authority (CCA) to regulate the publication of comic books within the United States. The CCA was responsible for screening comics submitted by its comic book publishing members. A comic code seal was authorised for the cover of the comic if the book passed the screening (see Figures 2 and 3 below).

Furthermore, some researchers argued that there should be criteria to evaluate graphic novels, because not all graphic novels are suitable for the classroom. Griffith (2010) developed a framework that included evaluating format, evaluating graphic novel illustration, evaluating graphic novel fiction texts, and evaluating the readability of the graphic novels; that is, the age appropriateness of the text. She also suggested that teachers should bear in mind that the age appropriateness of the graphic novel would depend on:

1. Whether the themes match the students’ developmental level.
2. Whether students would be familiar with and interested in the conflict in the graphic novel.

Figure 2. CCA code.

Figure 3. The Flash comic featuring the CCA code at top left.
3. The maturational development of the students.
4. The protagonists, who should be at least two years older than the age of the students.
   (p. 184)

Griffith also posited that there is the “need to understand how graphic novels relate to child
development and age appropriateness” (2010, p. 182).

The debate around the negative associations of comics, and by association graphic novels,
with low art (Groensteen, 2000) and detrimental effects on students’ literacy skills has left
some educators sceptical about their use in the classroom. Some English Language teachers
might not have regarded graphic novels as part of the established canon of literature, despite
the critical acclaim of graphic novels like Maus (Spiegelman, 1997), which won a Pulitzer
Special Prize Award in 1992. In the following section, I examine the ways in which graphic
novels are positioned as popular youth literature and advance the argument that graphic novels
can be considered as a legitimate tool for pedagogy.

**Graphic novels as popular youth literature.**

Graphic novels have the capacity to represent any subject and they fall into several types or
genres, much like that of literary texts. These genres include gothic horror and fantasy,
science fiction, action-adventure and literary fiction. Additionally, graphic novels have the
capacity to let genres flow into each other (Chinn, 2004). Graphic memoir is an example of a
hybrid graphic novel, which refers to an autobiography in graphic novel form (Whitlock,
2006). Marjane Satrapi’s two-volume series Persepolis (2003) is her memoir of life from
childhood to early adult years during the Iranian revolution. Another example of a graphic
memoir is Art Spiegelman’s In the Shadow of No Towers (2004) which details his experiences
during the September 11 terrorist attack in New York City. Several literary classics have been
adapted into graphic novel texts. One example is Shakespeare’s Macbeth which was adapted
into Macbeth: The graphic novel (McDonald, Shakespeare, Haward, Dobbyn, & Erskine,
2008).
Figure 4, above, is an excerpt from that graphic novel showing Act 1 Scene I of *Macbeth*, where the witches’ appearance pre-empts their later appearance in Act 1 Scene III. Graphic novels sometimes also contain sensitive, disheartening and taboo issues such as incest, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. For instance, the semi-graphic memoir, *Daddy’s Girl* (Drechsler, 2008), deals with rape and incest. Furthermore, graphic novels have been used across subject areas to teach specific content. For example, Lerner Publishing Group have created *Manga Math Mysteries 1: The Lost Key: A Mystery with Whole Numbers* (Theilbar & Pantoja, 2010) for Grades 3 to 5 as a resource to teach mathematics concepts. *Manga Math Mysteries 1* (Theilbar & Pantoja, 2010) is about a group of friends from a martial arts class who use visual clues and mathematics to solve a mystery (see Figure 5 below).

Additionally, graphic novels have the ability to cross into other mediums successfully, notably in film and television. Furthermore, they have the capacity to represent a variety of issues. Many graphic novels have been turned into multi-million dollar grossing films. For instance, *300* (Snyder, 2007), an American film adapted from Frank Miller’s graphic novel by the same
name, grossed over US$210,000,000 in the United States alone. Another example is *The Dark Knight* (2008) which grossed over US$500,000,000 at the United States box office.

Graphic novels have been gaining popularity among adolescents (Griffith, 2010; McTaggart, 2008). The reasons for the increased popularity include familiarity with the oft-featured superheroes, which have been adapted for the big screen and television shows; action-packed storylines which serve to keep students’ interest high; and visual appeal (McTaggart, 2008). Furthermore, the appeal of graphic novels has not gone unnoticed, as researchers and teachers continue to examine the potential of graphic novels as a tool for pedagogy. The use of graphic novel texts as a tool for pedagogy will be discussed in the forthcoming section.

**Literacy pedagogy and the benefits of studying graphic novels.**

In recent times, graphic novels have emerged as pedagogical tools in the context of schools. A considerable body of research reveals numerous possibilities for representation and communication for diverse students, including bilingual learners, children and adults; and in a range of educational contexts, including mainstream schools, deaf education, and after-school programmes. Studies exemplify how graphic novels and comics facilitate language learning and development of literacy for English Language Learners (Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004); engage and motivate students in school reading (Edwards, 2008; Gavigan, 2010; Laycock, 2007); engage deaf students struggling with age appropriate literacy skills (Smetana et al., 2009); and help students develop their writing and comprehension skills through comic creation (Hughes, King, Perkins, & Fuke, 2011; Morrison et al., 2002; Smetana et al., 2009; Thompson, 2008). Additionally, findings from other studies report that graphic novels help students develop visual meaning-making skills and competencies (Pantaleo, 2011); develop research (Morrison et al., 2002) and critical thinking (Prescatore, 2007) skills; and provide a scaffold for traditional texts (Seglem & Witte, 2009). Additionally, research reveals that teachers can incorporate strategies, just like teaching traditional forms of literature, when teaching graphic novels (Campbell, 2007; Gretchen, 2006; Kelley, 2010).

The research to date on the use of graphic novels and comics as a pedagogical approach, tends to highlight the potential benefits to student learning. However, we need to know more about
the disruptive or problematic potential of graphic novel texts in the classroom context. That is, we need a more balanced view of the use of graphic novel texts as a pedagogical tool, specifically for the context of English language classrooms like those in which this study was carried out. The next section contains an overview of key empirical studies and theoretical advancements, which have examined various pedagogical approaches to using graphic novels and comics in the context of English language curriculum development and design.

**The potential benefits of reading graphic novels in school.**

Research has shown the ways in which reading graphic novels holds potential benefits for students of mixed abilities at different grade levels. Studies suggest that graphic novels have the potential to facilitate language learning and development of literacy for English Language Learners (Norton & Vanderheyden, 2004), and engage and motivate boys in school reading (Gavigan, 2010; Laycock, 2007), among other potential benefits outlined at the beginning of this section. Furthermore, graphic novels have the potential to express a wide range of issues which “can spark a wide range of interdisciplinary discussions and focus students on a variety of topics, ranging from war to fantasy to memory and childhood” (Williams, 2008, p. 18) and can serve as an introduction to a specific content area (Bucher & Manning, 2004, p. 71).

In the following five sections I describe the ways in which reading graphic novels can potentially benefit students’ learning. The first section outlines the ways in which graphic novels hold the potential to expand students’ literacies, particularly students’ visual literacy skills. In the second section, I provide a discussion for the ways in which graphic novels have the potential to develop students’ knowledge of literary features. The third section deals with the potential of graphic novels to help students challenge cultural and social norms and stereotypes. The fourth section provides a discussion on ways in which graphic novels might engage and motivate students into reading. Finally, the fifth section focuses on the potential challenges of reading graphic novels in the context of classroom learning.
**Graphic novels can be characterised as legitimate forms of reading which have the potential to expand students’ literacies.**

Research has shown that graphic novels are complex texts that have immense potential for differentiating instruction through teaching multiple literacies, thereby expanding meaning-making practices in the classroom context. As reported earlier in this thesis, the comic’s format has been seen “as a debased form of word-based literacy”, which mainly acts as a scaffold for “learning that is perceived to be more difficult, in terms of both the literate practices and content involved” (Jacobs, 2007, p. 20). However, several researchers have argued that graphic novels are a legitimate form of reading with benefits that differ from traditional, word-only texts. Through the study of the comic *Polly and the Pirates*, Jacobs (2007) posited that reading *comics* involves complex, multimodal literacy, and that *comics* can be used to develop students as engaged and critical readers of multimodal texts (p. 19). He further argued that, reading multimodal texts like graphic novels is an active process through which readers draw on several resources, which affect the way texts are read: “Knowledge of linguistic, audio, visual, gestural, and spatial conventions within *comics* affects the ways in which we read and the meanings we assign to texts, just as knowledge of conventions within word-based literacy affects the ways in which those texts are read” (p. 24). Jacobs (2007) also highlighted other resources including readers’ histories, life experiences and interests.

Moreover, Hammond (2009) found that Grade 12 students were able to respond to the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* (2006), in a similar manner to traditional literary texts, including critical analysis, but adjusted their reading to include images. Additionally, students who paid little attention to images on the first reading recognised their importance after discussions and classroom lessons on the second reading. However, students’ lack of knowledge about the images during the first experience did not hinder their understanding of the text. Hammond posited that a deeper understanding of the images on the second reading highlights the importance of expanding students’ literacies through explicitly teaching visual literacy skills. Furthermore, some researchers’ theoretical propositions might explain why students respond to graphic novels in both traditional and new ways. In one key account, Hassett and Schieble (2007) posited that with texts that combine verbal and visual images, all three cueing systems—graphophonic, semantic and syntactic—are available; however there are more cues to negotiate (p. 64). For instance, graphophonic cues “are visual to the extent that readers must pay attention to the symbols of written language… directionality, letters, beginning and ending sounds, words, spaces, and punctuation” (p. 64). However, texts that combine both verbal and visual cues add another level of decoding. According to Hassett and
Schieble (2007), “Print-image relations also add an additional level of information to be ‘decoded’ through graphics, colour, size, and shape” (p. 64). They highlighted that the difference in techniques and reading patterns between reading graphic novels and prose narratives might explain why students are able to build on and extend their interpretive strategies. They recommended that literacy instruction should include the ways in which verbal and visual images work in concert.

**Graphic novels hold the potential for developing students’ knowledge of literary features, terms and elements.**

Another potential benefit of graphic novels is that they can be used as a way of helping students to understand literary conventions by connecting traditional literary features, terms and elements with graphic novel conventions. Previous studies have reported that student-generated graphic narratives help to explore storyboarding, narrative storytelling and the interplay between word and image in exciting ways (Bitz, 2010; Crilley, 2009; Smetana et al., 2009). In one important study, Dallacqua (2012), a teacher, found that often with her guidance, graphic novels scaffolded readers’ transition into literary elements. Dallacqua used graphic novels such as *The Arrival* and *Bone* to clarify Fifth Grade students’ understanding of literary elements including flashback:

> Our final novel for the year is Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993). This novel is full of symbolism, foreshadowing, and flashbacks. In *The Arrival*, these concepts are visual….In print, however, they are abstract and can be difficult for students to identify, so in 2011, I introduced *The Arrival* into my curriculum in the weeks before starting *The Giver*. We began with a mini-lesson to define symbolism, foreshadowing, and flashback. Then, in groups, students took visual notes of the storyline and of examples of symbols, foreshadowing, and flashbacks, eventually sharing them with the whole class. With some visual background knowledge from a book like *The Arrival*, students were better able to visualize the flashbacks Jonas has in *The Giver*. (p. 374)

The visual images in graphic novels provide another way for students to understand story elements. In addition, Cary (2004) posited that graphic novels can provide an introduction to language features like idioms and onomatopoeia. They also work well with many different types of readers, including adolescents, and help students with skills related to visualisations. Furthermore, Missiou and Koukoulas (2013) proposed reasons for, and ways in which, teachers could use the graphic novel *Logicomix* to teach biography as a literary genre and metafiction and intertextuality as literary techniques (p. 154).
Graphic novels have the potential to engage students in ways of challenging social and cultural norms and stereotypes.

Graphic novels can help students examine and challenge social and cultural norms or stereotypes, which in some cases might be relevant to their own lives. In this section I describe three ways in which graphic novels can help students navigate those norms and stereotypes:

1) graphic novels can help students question or challenge socially accepted norms of what texts might constitute literary merit (Versaci, 2001);

2) graphic novels can help students make connections between literature and the challenges and conflicts other people or groups of people might face (Bucher & Manning, 2004); and

3) graphic novels can help students negotiate their own identities (Gomes & Carter, 2010).

These main points, along with their relevant empirical and theoretical research findings, are discussed next.

Firstly, graphic novels can help students challenge socially accepted norms of what texts might be considered part of the literary canon. Versaci (2001) argued that teachers should be mindful of imposing their own literary judgments on their students, without providing opportunities for students to develop their own. He stated that these opportunities are increasingly vital “in the middle and high school classroom, where students first need exposure to literature before they can be in a position to argue literary merit” (p. 62). Versaci also recommended that using comic books provided students with opportunities to raise questions “about how artistic value is accorded to particular works or genres” (Versaci, 2001, p. 65). Versaci argued that providing these opportunities are important for several reasons. One reason is that students who accorded no literary value to comic books would have the opportunity to discuss and defend their opinions. He suggested that this would allow those students to critically defend their positions, as opposed to simply accepting their teachers’ own views and biases (p. 66). Another reason is that comic books can increase and diversify students’ reading repertoire and encourage students to raise questions about literary merit and canon formation (p. 66). The overarching aim in using comic books is to allow students to voice their opinions about what texts might or might not have literary merit. In the context of this study, the aim was not to explicitly question the literary merit of graphic novels. However, use of graphic novel texts in this study’s research context might be associated with Versaci’s (2001) idea of increasing and diversifying students’ reading repertoires.
Similar to Versaci (2001), Schmidt (2011) found that graphic novels engaged her students and gave them “an opportunity to reflect, evaluate, and decide how literacy has influenced them… especially [how it] helped the reluctant readers reconsider their perceptions about their education” (Schmidt, 2011, p. 107). For instance, the comparison and contrast assignment required that students read a classic text and then a graphic novel adaptation of that text. Students were then placed into reading groups for each text in which they discussed “the strengths and weaknesses of each version and then, using evidence from the text, recommended one version” (p. 105). The results were mixed as “[s]tudents who preferred the classic pointed out ideas and concepts previously learned in English classes, while the other half argued that some graphic novels had everything the classic had and were shorter” (p. 105).

Secondly, graphic novels can help students make connections between literature and the challenges and conflicts other people, or groups of people, might face. According to Bucher and Manning (2004), “graphic novels offer subject matter and viewpoints that students might not otherwise consider” (p. 71). This might include giving “new voices to minorities and people with diverse viewpoints” (p. 71) as well as offering subject matter and viewpoints that those students would not normally consider. Several graphic novels explore powerful social issues, such as Sacco’s Palestine, which emphasises the history and plight of the Palestinian people (Gallo & Weiner, 2004). In another key study, Versaci (2001) used comic books in his first year advanced college composition course “to investigate and analyze popular culture representations of life experiences, ethnic and cultural groups and historical events” (p. 61). Like Gallo and Weiner (2004), Versaci (2001) also found that graphic novels like Sacco’s Palestine have the ability to make complex socio-political issues accessible to students; “Units on contemporary and important global affairs can be especially challenging due to the level of complexity of the politics involved. In these cases, the need to humanize the conflict becomes even more crucial, and the benefits of comic books’ unique form come through clearly in several important works” (p. 64).

Thirdly, graphic novels can help students negotiate their own identities by challenging social and cultural norms and stereotypes which might be relevant to them. In one key study, Gomes and Carter (2010) researched a Ninth Grade special education class consisting of students with special needs, such as Asperger’s syndrome, who, it was argued, typically thought literally rather than abstractly. The participants shared experiences of being bullied in previous social
settings and had had difficulties socialising with others. They used *American Born Chinese* (2006), along with blog technology, to create a space in the classroom in which students dealt with issues of adolescence. As a result, Gomes and Carter found that “the text and the blog helped these adolescents consider their own identities in an inviting social space… This built motivation and sense of self. It was an authentic literacy task that provided social interaction beyond the physical walls, and it helped challenge compartmentalizing preconceptions of identity” (Gomes & Carter, 2010, p. 76).

In another important study, Sabeti (2012b) found that using graphic novels in an after-school setting provided ways of valuing students’ interpretive repertoires. Moreover, students’ autonomy was demonstrated through the use of their own interpretive strategies, which they felt did not fit with dominant strategies found in the classroom context. In Sabeti’s (2012c) paper, she used the example of an extra-curricular Graphic Novel Reading Group to explore the institutional critical reading practices that take place in English classrooms in the senior years of secondary school. The participants were students who felt alienated from the English classroom and who met in the group to discuss their reading. Drawing on Fish’s interpretive communities, she found that students were not confined to using one interpretive strategy. Some of the pupils were comfortable enough with the dominant interpretive strategy of the classroom to use it when they felt it was appropriate or helpful. However, some pupils were uncomfortable with the dominant interpretive strategy of the classroom, which appeared to be ‘work’, something specific to the classroom.

**Graphic novels hold the potential to engage and motivate students into reading.**

Several studies have investigated the potential of graphic novel texts to engage and motivate students in literacy tasks. One of this study’s research questions was to do with how the graphic novel intervention might be associated with an increase in students’ beliefs about, and attitudes towards, reading and writing. In this section I describe the findings from four key studies, which suggest mixed support for the hypothesis that reading graphic novels would increase motivation. Edwards’ (2008) quasi-experimental reading intervention tested whether reading graphic novels and *comics*, and participation in free voluntary book time, would impact positively on Seventh Graders’ intrinsic motivation, reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Although the findings were not statistically significant, there were indications that the comic’s and graphic novel’s format could increase student participants’
motivation, reading comprehension and vocabulary. Anecdotal responses in the students’ self-report logs supported the hypothesis that the intervention had a positive impact on their intrinsic motivation. One criticism is that the researcher did not provide sufficient qualitative evidence to support that claim. Edwards’ (2008) study raises some critical questions about using scientific measures to test the impact of reading graphic novels on students’ learning outcomes. First, it raises the question of whether experimental studies are sufficient in measuring students’ levels of engagement and motivation when using graphic novel texts. Second, it raises the question of the role of peer and teacher interactions in fostering students’ engagement and motivation. This present study aims to fill this gap with a mixed method approach to collecting evidence of teacher and student engagement with the graphic novel intervention.

Graphic novels can engage students of both genders in school reading and can act as a bridge between students’ in- and out-of-school literacies. Gorman (2003) recommended that graphic novels can support voluntary reading, can be integrated into the curriculum, and can be used as an “intermediary for a teen who would rather be watching television than reading a book” (p. 9). Although Gorman (2003) points out the merits of using graphic novels, Gravett (2005) argues that using graphic novels as an ‘intermediary’ is a backhanded compliment which undermines the complexity and potential of the form. In another important study, Laycock (2007) investigated whether graphic novels could engage boys in school reading as a way to bridge boys’ in-school and out-of-school literacies in a Sydney independent school. The project’s findings were mixed. On one hand, the findings indicated that the use of a graphic novel as school reading, generally improved both the quality and quantity of student engagement. On the other hand, many of those students indicated in the exit survey that they did not actually enjoy the experience.

**The potential challenges of reading graphic novels in the classroom context.**

Research has shown that reading graphic novels can be challenging for some groups of readers. As outlined in the previous section, reading graphic novels has benefits for students at different grade levels of mixed abilities. Research has also shown that graphic novels can offer support for struggling readers who have difficulty visualising text, because the images help make the text comprehensible (Krashen, 2004) and reduce
the cognitive load (Kelley, 2010). However, research has also shown that reading graphic novels can be challenging for those unaccustomed to the form (Kelley, 2010). Moreover, graphic novels do not appeal to everyone and some readers are still reluctant to read them (Versaci, 2001). Some of the reasons why some readers may be reluctant to read them include uncertainty as to how to read them, or whether they leave anything to the imagination, or if they seem to be just funny books, which might be limited in scope. Furthermore, some readers may not understand the symbols which can, among other things, denote sound (Gravett, 2005). According to Griffith (2010), reading graphic novels required different skills and knowledge from reading novels with prose only and this proves difficult for some types of readers: “My graduate students, many of whom are left-brained, linear readers, complain when they are required to read a graphic novel. Adult readers who are not used to reading a graphic format have some difficulty with sequencing, which is why these books may not be for all readers but instead for those students who know and prefer this format” (p. 185). Overall, reading graphic novels requires specialised knowledge of graphic novel conventions and design.

So far, I have described findings from important research to highlight the innumerable benefits reading graphic novels might have in the classroom context for students of different ages and mixed abilities across various subject areas. Additionally, I described the ways in which reading graphic novels might be intimidating for readers who are unaccustomed to the form. In the next section, I will examine the ways in which creating graphic novels can benefit students of mixed abilities and talents in the classroom context.

The potential benefits of creating graphic novels in school.

Teaching students to read graphic novels is not dissimilar to teaching students to read any other type of text. In addition, the links between reading/writing any other type of text is not dissimilar to the links between reading/writing graphic novels. According to Bitz (2010), “surprisingly few researchers have focused on the connections between comics creation and conventional writing instruction… perhaps the reason for the relative disconnection between comics and writing is that teachers are so much more focused on reading, and even speaking, than on writing” (p. 51). Additionally, Carter (2009) stated that a “concept that often goes
unconsidered is that *comics* and graphic novels needn’t only be integrated into the curriculum as additional reading material … writing and drawing graphic novels is an authentic composing activity” (p. 71). Furthermore, “By acknowledging that there is a process behind the production of *comics* and asking students to consider the process and even engage in it, teachers help students build crafting, composing, viewing, and visualizing skills” (Carter, 2009, p. 71).

In the following sections, I describe the ways in which creating graphic novels can benefit students. These sections include the ways in which creating graphic novels has the potential to build on and expand students’ literacies, help students negotiate their identities, and engages and motivates various types of learners. Moreover, I examine the challenges in creating graphic novel texts in the classroom context.

**Creating graphic novels potentially builds on and expands students’ literacies as well as provides an alternative pathway into literacy.**

Graphic novels can be used to hook students into authentic short story writing practices, which build on their conventional short story writing skills by extending those skills to include visual elements of storytelling. In his article about strategies for creating graphic novels in the classroom context, Crilley (2009) argued that graphic novel storytelling captures students’ attention and is a good way of teaching the fundamentals of writing and “[t]hey learn the importance of conflict, the use of dialogue to reveal character, and how crucial rewriting is to the writing process” (p. 29). Similarly, Bitz (2010) suggested that students can develop their sequencing skills because placing narrative elements into a logical sequence requires critical thinking skills. In his article about an arts-based literacy initiative for youths in an after-school programme called The Comic Book Project, Bitz (2004) found that the project “seemed to have the most marked effect on children with limited English proficiency” (p. 585).

Furthermore, Bitz posited that the students’ comic books met the requirements of some learning standards for English language arts in the context of the New York State curriculum: “An analysis of the children’s work, along with site observation reports, showed that the project did in fact help the children meet the standards, although perhaps in untraditional and unexpected ways” (2010, p. 584). One of the ways in which the students met those standards is through demonstrating critical analysis and evaluation: “Children took a critical look at their
own work and the work of their peers through class discussions and instructor-guided writing sessions. Often the analysis led to revision, another important step of the writing process” (p. 584). Additionally, the artistic-visual component helped students with limited English proficiency to “convey their intended meanings and apply the conventions of English afterward” (p. 578). This programme provided the opportunity for instructors to help students make explicit connections to the writing process.

In another key study, Smetana et al. (2009) proposed that comic creation has a positive impact on struggling students’ writing skills. Their study drew on extensive research on teaching comics, which was then implemented by teachers with varying experience reading and/or teaching comics. They identified immersing students in visual content as important to understanding specific concepts in comics. For instance, their deaf students watched the Disney film Sky High as a visual blueprint through which they could understand and discuss characterisation and hero archetypes. Another strategy involved students’ construction of their comic proposal. After each reading, students wrote a response to the books they read in their journals. Those responses provided the impetus for their comic proposal, which consisted of a two-page script of their comic book idea. In the end, students were able to use comics to foster academic language, and synthesise key concepts to create a comic book. I adapted aspects of Smetana et al.’s (2009) instructional design, including their concept of a graphic novel teaching unit plan. The full details will appear in the forthcoming methodology chapter.

Creating graphic novels can help students negotiate their personal identities.

Some researchers have explored the ways in which creating personal stories through the comic’s format can help students negotiate their personal identities. Creating those personal stories in the comic’s format can be a way of valuing and honouring students’ experiences and backgrounds. Danzak (2011), in his article on the Graphic Journeys Project, reported on the ways in which English Language learners (EL) born in the United States drew on their families’ immigration stories, writing instruction, and technology (among other things) to create their own graphic stories (p. 191). Those students were engaged in authentic writing opportunities, which led to academic language development including editing each other’s work (p. 193). Also, the learners were able to integrate their families’ voices into their personal narratives: “The interviews also enriched the students’ immigration narratives in that multiple voices could be interwoven into the texts, thus increasing the intertextuality of their
stories” (p. 193). For the final product of The Graphic Journeys project, students’ narratives were “compiled and bound into full-colour, hardcover books that were formally presented to them at a large, family event held at the school” (p. 194). One significant outcome of that exhibition was that “the published compilation of stories allowed the EL teens to acknowledge their common experiences, therefore solidifying group identities and memberships” (p. 194). In Danzak’s study, EL learners were able to draw on multiple forms of communication and interactions with their families and peers to express their personal identities through the creation of their graphic stories.

Creating graphic novels has the potential to engage and motivate various groups of students.

Several researchers have argued that creating graphic novels has the potential to engage and motivate students of mixed abilities and achievement. In Bitz’s (2004) Comic Book Project, 92% of students responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to the item “As a result of The Comic Book Project, you like to write your own stories” (p. 582), while 94% of students responded “agree” or “strongly agree” to the item “As a result of The Comic Book Project, you like to draw pictures to go with stories” (p. 582). Moreover, he reported that the students who dropped out “wished they had stuck with it after seeing their classmates’ final products” (p. 585). In this present study, one of the research questions asked whether the graphic novel intervention might be associated with an increase in students’ beliefs and attitudes towards reading and writing. In the next-subsection, I describe the possible ways in which creating graphic novels might disengage or demotivate students.

The potential challenges in creating graphic novels in the classroom context.

The process of creating graphic novel texts can be challenging in several ways. Students’ lack of confidence about their artistic capability is identified in the literature as an important barrier to graphic novel production. Bitz (2004) listed some challenges with creating comics. He wrote that students found that creating the manuscripts was the hardest part of the process, and that some participants dropped out because they felt that stage too challenging (p. 585). Additionally, Hughes et al. (2011) reported that some of their study participants were demotivated by their perceived lack of artistic competence: “When it came time to draft their own stories, some students were at first hindered by their perceived lack of artistic skills. The
found images worked fairly well, but it was time-consuming for the students to find suitable images to represent their stories” (p. 610). Moreover, it wasn’t always helpful for students to have a choice in the subject matter for their stories: “Another limitation was that some students chose to write stories which they were not particularly connected to and, as a result, they produced short sequences of panels” (p. 610). Similarly, Bitz (2004) reported that some students in his Comic Book Project had challenges in overcoming their perceived lack of artistic competence: “Many of these children were self-conscious about their abilities, particularly the seventh and eighth graders” (p. 577). To overcome that challenge:

The instructors reminded the children that some of the most interesting art is the simplest, and they showed some examples of line drawings and minimalist paintings. Some instructors decided to group children based on their interests and abilities, making sure, however, that every child was involved in both the literary and artistic components of the project.” (p. 577)

We need to know more about the ways in which creating graphic novel texts might be associated with language development and extending students’ literacies within the classroom context. In the next section I discuss the benefits and challenges of incorporating graphic novel texts into the subject curriculum from the perspective of teacher practitioners.

**Best practices for teaching graphic novels.**

In the last ten years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on the use of graphic novels as a pedagogic approach. It must be highlighted that teachers’ instructional design plans as well as their guidance during the lessons are important (Kelley, 2010; Ryan, Scott, & Walsh, 2010). Some researchers have called for the use of graphic novels as a tool for differentiating classroom instruction because students need to be able to negotiate multiple literacies, including visual literacy (Schwarz, 2007). Serafini (2009) emphasised that a “lack of pedagogical attention to visual images and visual systems of meaning presents challenges to teachers at a time when the image has begun to dominate the literate lives of their children” (p. 11). In light of the fourth research question in my study, it is important to highlight the best practices for teaching graphic novels, as well as the potential challenges of integrating graphic novels into current curricular content. In this section, I will describe the potential benefits and challenges of teaching graphic novels.
Teachers can apply strategies used when teaching verbal texts to help students when teaching graphic novels.

Several researchers have described the ways in which teachers teach graphic novels using conventional approaches to literacy pedagogy. Even teachers with very little to some training in art can teach graphic novel texts. Moreover, Bitz (2004) posited that even teachers without artistic backgrounds can teach graphic novels. This is possible with training in basic art techniques, engaging in a team teaching approach, or bringing in the expertise of an art major or professional artist. This raises a question about the importance of teaching graphic novels. Serafini (2011) explains that multimodal texts like graphic novels can be used to expand students’ perspectives for comprehending visual images. In this sub-section I describe the findings from key studies, which focus on effective strategies for teaching graphic novels.

Researchers proposed several teaching strategies that might help students become critically engaged in understanding how visual images produce meaning in the graphic novel text. Versaci (2008) posited that comics can allow teachers to pose questions that help students to understand how images produce meaning as well as help students become engaged with finding this meaning. Versaci described several assignments he developed to help students become critical, visually literate readers of comics. He recommended that the series of assignments should become increasingly challenging; for instance:

My “foundation” in this approach is an assignment I call “panel analysis,” which… asks the student to choose a single panel from a comic book and to analyze that panel… We spend time in class discussing how images signify: composition, viewing angles and distance, shading, use of text, style of drawing, size and shape of panel, and type of border… Students, using our discussion as background, apply the ideas to their chosen panel in order to uncover how the panel “works” in terms of both narrative and theme… My next assignment focuses on layout, or the arrangement of panels on a page or over a course of several pages. This feature is a key component of comics’ graphic language, and, given that layout multiplies the visual and textual information, its analysis requires a more sophisticated set of interpretive skills. (pp. 97–99)

Versaci’s (2008) work informed the design of the teacher’s professional development workshop used in this study, as explained in the methodology chapter. It was important that teachers learn the strategies for visual meaning-making first, before helping their students become critical, literate visual meaning-makers related to graphic novel conventions and codes.
Some studies emphasise the importance of monitoring students’ when reading graphic novel texts. Kelley (2010) proposed that teachers can monitor students’ comprehension by asking them to express, orally, their responses to visual images, and also to reflect on how they achieve their understanding of the text. Those strategies help to develop students’ metacognitive awareness by asking them how they achieved their understandings. Moreover, he highlighted that the active reading strategies that teachers use for conventional texts can be used for graphic novels (Kelley, 2010). Campbell (2007) reported specific ways in which teachers can use visual story elements to monitor students’ understanding of a graphic novel text. For example, graphic novels can be used to teach story elements by examining how colour contributes to setting creation. She reported that “in exploring visual literacy and color, students could color a black and white version of a graphic novel and be prepared to explain how their color choices contribute to setting creation” (Campbell, 2007, p. 11). The findings from other studies highlighted the ways in which teachers can act as mentors or guides as opposed to taking control of the classroom processes. For instance, Moore and Hinchman (2003) suggested offering choices in print materials and forms of expression, facilitating partnerships, as well as placing oneself visibly when initiating group instruction, then fade to the background when students begin assuming responsibility for their learning (p. 104).

Teachers with limited access to graphic novel texts can use excerpts in their classroom instruction. For example, Griffith (2010) recommended that teachers use parts of a graphic novel text as opposed to a class study of an entire graphic novel to connect with their instructional units.

**Teaching graphic novels as part of a structured curriculum holds the potential to assist teachers in their practice.**

Teaching graphic novels as part of a structured curriculum design has the potential to increase students’ interest in reading. The curriculum design and implementation must have objectives that consider the development of students’ interest in reading. In one important study, Schmidt (2011) explored whether graphic novels would increase her University students’ interest in reading through four short written paper assignments structured around graphic novel texts. It must be noted that Schmidt’s lesson plans included sections on objectives, materials and procedures, like that of a lesson plan used for teaching classic texts. For instance, one of the objectives of the second essay assignment, comparison-contrast, stipulated that students must find and demonstrate themes and literary devices. The findings suggested the ways in which she and her students became engaged and motivated during the classroom study. Firstly, Schmidt learned that it was important to find approaches that inspire and teach
her students. To do so, she noted that it was important for her to be open to new ideas. In the context of that study, the new idea was including graphic novels as part of curriculum design. Secondly, she found that if students have choices and “can explore topics in ways that are interesting or relevant to them, they take more initiative in their learning” (Schmidt, 2011, p. 107). Thirdly, the findings suggested that graphic novels increased some students’ interest in reading: “[s]ome students said that they had never read so many books in one semester!” (p. 105). Overall, Schmidt’s findings suggested that it is important for teachers to seek approaches that inspire and teach their students, although those new approaches might be intimidating to them (teachers) at first.

**Teachers need some level of visual literacy themselves in order to effectively teach graphic novels.**

Teachers need to possess multiple literacies including visual literacy in order to help students become critical and literate readers of graphic novel texts. According to Arizpe and Styles (2008), “With respect to classroom practice, it is clear that in order to carry out activities with multimodal texts, teachers need to be familiar with a wide range of them and have some knowledge of how they work and how they can be used with students” (p. 370). Similarly, Albers (2007) recommended that teachers learn the literacies of the visual sign systems themselves. In the literature reviewed, there are two main trends that point to the ways in which teachers gain knowledge of visual language and the kinds of knowledge they require to teach multimodal texts like graphic novels. One of the trends in the literature is the influence of University researchers on what teachers teach; that is, the objectives of the lessons related to graphic novels. For instance, Pantaleo (2011, 2012a, 2012b), in her capacity as University researcher and lead teacher, collaborated with teachers in classroom-based research projects with elementary students. In one of her studies, Pantaleo (2011) set out “to develop their [students’] understanding and appreciation of picture books and graphic novels, to extend their comprehension, interpretive, and creative skills as they discussed and responded to the literature, and to apply their learning by designing their own multimodal print texts” (p. 117). To aid in the implementation of that research project, the kinds of knowledge that teachers learned, and then taught to students, included knowledge of various metafictive devices, some illustrative techniques and art elements and compositional codes and conventions of graphic novels (p. 117).
Another trend in the literature reviewed is for teachers to research specific instructional practices related to teaching graphic novels on their own. Rice (2012) initially read a number of graphic novels and articles related to specific instructional uses of graphic novel texts, to streamline the planning process by learning how to read and select graphic novels effectively. In her words, “One use I heard about at conferences on more than one occasion called for covering the words and asking the students to try and write the dialogue using pictures…” (p. 38). Ultimately, Rice designed a teaching unit on racial stereotypes through a critical study of *American Born Chinese* (2006). It is important to limit what is learned and taught for pragmatic and pedagogical reasons. One critique of the literature reviewed is the lack of description of the specific kinds of knowledge that teachers should acquire before designing and implementing graphic novel lessons.

*The potential challenges of teaching graphic novels.*

As stated earlier, there are several best practices for teaching graphic novels (Kelley, 2010; Rice, 2012; Ryan et al., 2010). One of the most effective practices of teaching graphic novels involves explicitly tackling the difference between the visual and written stories, by discussing the different roles carried by each mode (Bearne & Wolstencroft, 2007). However some teachers might find that incorporating graphic novels into their curriculum design and implementation has its own unique challenges. The main aim of this sub-section is to address three main challenges teachers face in designing and implementing lessons on graphic novels. Firstly, teachers’ perceived lack of artistic competence might present a barrier to teaching graphic novels. Secondly, institutional and curriculum policies might present a barrier to the inclusion of graphic novels into curricular content. Thirdly, teachers might be unprepared for the potential challenges of using graphic novels, because of the lack of existing research on the potential challenges of using them.

Firstly, there are curriculum and institutional policies on literacy pedagogy that might hinder the use of graphic novel texts within some schools. James Bucky Carter (2008) highlights some possible implications for teachers who are reluctant to include comics and graphic novels in their classrooms. He argued that integrating those texts “is a step toward a realization of more democratic notions of text, literacy, and curriculum” (p. 47). He suggested several reasons for teachers’ resistance to the inclusion of comics and graphic novels in their classrooms. One reason is that the ways in which school policy interprets the literary canon might prevent visual literacy and visual materials, such as comics and graphic novels, being
included in the classroom (p. 55). To overcome the resistance to visual texts and materials in
the classroom, McTaggart (2008) suggested that teachers lobby their colleagues and principal
for support. Moreover, she recommended that the Principal’s support is mandatory in the
event of resistance from parents, staff or school board members (p. 37). Furthermore, she
cautions that teachers should choose titles carefully because not all graphic novels are
appropriate for the classroom.

Secondly, another “challenge is that many teachers may feel they lack the artistic and aesthetic
training necessary to talk with children and guide their understanding” (Sipe, 1998b, p. 66). In
one key study, Bitz (2004), reported that one main challenge some instructors faced with
making art as part of the comic’s creation process, was that they “were afraid to display their
lack of skill and knowledge in front of the students” (p. 578). To overcome that challenge,
Bitz recalled that instructors in some of the research sites used a team-teaching approach,
bringing in the expertise of a professional artist or a college art major (p. 578). In another
significant study, Pantaleo (2011) reported that with some degree of ongoing support and
collaboration with researchers, teachers were able to design and implement lessons aimed at
using multimodal texts like graphic novels.

Thirdly, it is plausible that with a lack of knowledge of existing research into the potential
challenges of graphic novels in the classroom, teachers might be unprepared for potential
challenges faced during classroom instruction. In one recent study, Rice (2012) reported on
some of the difficulties of implementing graphic novels into her instruction. In her critique of
the assumption that graphic novels provided “simplified language and visual support” (p. 40)
for students with difficulty comprehending text, Rice suggests that some graphic novels
contain content which can cause “metacognitive tension” (p. 40). One of her students
struggled to connect their background knowledge with a selected graphic novel and its original
should consider the inclusion of graphic novels in literacy methods courses and children’s
literature courses, highlighting their usefulness in teaching reading—particularly to struggling
readers, ELLs, and boys” (p. 239).

So far, the sections on the potential pedagogical implications of using graphic novels in the
classroom context have focused on their potential challenges and benefits to teaching and
learning practices. Key studies reported mainly positive outcomes related to teaching and learning using graphic novel texts. For instance, teachers can potentially integrate existing practices when teaching graphic novels (Kelley, 2010). Furthermore, one of the trends identified in the literature reviewed, was that the potential challenges students might face overlap with the potential challenges teachers might face in implementing graphic novel lessons. For instance, that students’ perceived lack of artistic competence or perception might be a barrier was similar for teachers in terms of teaching graphic novels (Bitz, 2004; Hughes & King, 2010). We need to know more about the ways in which teachers, individually or as part of a group of practitioners, engage with texts that require knowledge of visual literacies. We also need to know more about the ways in which they teach those texts in light of their ‘new’ understandings. The ways in which teachers respond to teaching multimodal texts for the first time can potentially answer questions about the ways in which using graphic novels might enhance and/or disrupt existing pedagogies and ways of learning. The forthcoming section is the last of the sections under the broad heading of graphic novels, culture, pedagogy and theory. I go on to describe some key approaches to the theorisation of graphic novel texts.

**Theoretical approaches to making meaning of graphic novels.**

In the context of theorising graphic novel texts, there has been a cross-fertilisation of theories which engage with the hybrid form of graphic narratives. The reason being is that literacies, including visual literacies, require interpretation, negotiation and meaning-making on the part of the reader (Sipe, 1998a). Graphic novel theory draws from diverse theoretical perspectives and diverse media such as film (Christiansen, 2000), semiotics concepts (McCloud, 1994), feminist criticism (Cooper-Chen, 2001), narrative theory (Gardner & Herman, 2011) and visual arts concepts (Anstey & Bull, 2009). Furthermore, these theoretical approaches have been used to support the argument that graphic novels are complex, multimodal texts which require readers to draw on a variety of resources to create meaning (Jacobs, 2007). The complexity of graphic novel texts is attributed to the interdependence of the visual and verbal systems of meaning in creating the narrative. Here I adopt the term comics as an umbrella term that includes graphic novels. What follows is a critical review of key theoretical frameworks designed to analyse graphic novel texts.
Socio-cultural and semiotic approaches to addressing the complexities of making meaning of graphic novels.

Comics have been characterised as having their own language system (Heath & Bhagat, 2005; McCloud, 1994), and by extension, social practices (Brienza, 2010). In other words, the former theory addresses the verbal and visual systems of language of the text, while the latter theory extends beyond the text to include the larger social and organisational context of its production and dissemination. Heath and Bhagat (2005) drew on a musical metaphor, describing how comics make meaning:

To understand this sequential art of comics, readers must process the meanings of the staccato rhythm of unconnected moments that come between the panels of comics—the empty space that comic artists call “the gutter”. The imagination of the reader fills the visual gaps, just as it does the verbal gaps in literary language. Abstract representations, as well as pictorial renderings of parts for the whole, enable readers to follow the sequence of actions, emotions and development of complication, because they tap into the reader’s stored experiences and competence with imagination. (p. 586)

Heath and Bhagat (2005) identified the active role of the reader in the process of reading comics. Moreover, they highlighted that the experiences brought forth are contingent upon readers’ active engagement with the comic. In his seminal text, McCloud (1994) uses theory from several fields, such as semiotics and cognitive psychology, together with examples from comics, to frame his observations. He highlighted the importance of iconography and representation in comics, as well as the role of reader’s involvement and interpretation as a ‘conscious collaborator’ (p. 65). He appropriated the concept of closure, from the field of cognitive psychology, in order to account for connecting the moments between the panels. In a recent article, Brienza (2010) proposed a ‘production of culture’ approach in which to fully understand the text. She posited that critical examination should extend beyond the text and/or the artist associated with the text, to include the larger social and organisational context of its production and dissemination.

Literacy and literary approaches to addressing the complexities of graphic novel texts.

Several literary approaches have been made to theorise graphic novel texts, such as narrative theory, which explores how narratives make meaning as texts and as an inquiry into participants’ experiences. For example, Gardner and Herman (2011) argued that the stories
told through words and images in graphic narratives may challenge existing models of story. They proposed that narrative theory may open up new ways of extending graphic novel theory. Another attempt at theorising graphic novels includes extending literacy concepts used for traditional texts. For instance, Hassett and Schieble (2007) posited that literacy instruction should include the ways in which verbal and visual images in hybrid texts, such as graphic novels, work together: “Our students encounter new forms of text that indicate new ways of reading, interpreting, interacting, and thinking in their everyday lives; yet, literacy instruction is currently dominated by traditional texts in schools” (p. 67). They proposed ways that reading strategies could be extended in light of visual texts and new literacies, and which wouldn’t compromise curricular goals (p. 62). They extended three cueing systems—graphophonic, semantic, and syntactic—to demonstrate the possibilities for interpreting and interacting with hybrid texts, such as graphic novels. For instance, traditionally, readers used semantic cues to determine what made sense: “…this means as readers decode print from left to right, they check to see whether what they are reading makes sense” (p. 65). However, when reading graphic novels, “semantic cues include the image itself as a carrier of meaning, and the image becomes a significant way to check whether one’s interpretations of the text are acceptable and consistent” (p. 60). Hassett and Schieble (2007) also highlighted that, while the aforementioned cueing system is available, “there are more cues to negotiate—some in print, some in images, some from the reader’s background and sociocultural identities” (p. 64).

**Reader response theory as an approach in addressing the complexities of making meaning of graphic novels.**

Researchers have used theoretical lenses, such as reader response theory, to account for the complexities of interpreting graphic novels and the active role of the reader in co-constructing those interpretations. Reader response theories address the reader’s experiences in constructing meaning during a reading event. The theories suggest that readers have different roles and use different strategies for different purposes while interpreting a text. Moreover, the theories suggest that readers’ responses vary according to social, cultural and historical contexts. The exchange or *transaction* between reader and text is a cognitive process, which theorists like Rosenblatt (1988) and Iser (1974) have sought to explain. Several researchers have drawn on reader response theory in conjunction with other theories to investigate students’ experiences of reading graphic novel texts (Connors, 2010; Hammond, 2009) as well as other print-based *multimodal texts*, such as sophisticated picture books (Arizpe & Styles, 2009). In this study, students’ reading experiences were documented via interviews in order to understand the ways in which students interpreted the graphic novel texts. Reader response
theories and concepts might offer some explanation for those findings. The next sub-section describes the main tenets of Rosenblatt’s (1988, 2005) transactional theory of reading and writing and Iser’s (1974) phenomenological approach to reading. Both highlight how readers actively interpret a literary text but differ in their treatment of the degree of influence of the text during the transactions. Furthermore, both have been used extensively as theoretical and interpretative frameworks in education research, particularly literacy studies.

Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading and writing an approach to addressing the complexities of making meaning of graphic novels.

Consistent with this study’s use of socio-cultural theories and approaches to teaching and learning, Rosenblatt’s (1988, 1995) transactional theory of reading and writing emphasised the importance of social context to the reading process. She rejected the notion that the text is the sole source of meaning; rather that readers possessed a reservoir of resources, including their own experiences, which play a role in the active construction of meaning (Rosenblatt, 2005). She proposed that each reader brings individual background knowledge, prior experiences with language, beliefs and context to the act of reading and writing, so the transaction differs for every reader and writer.

One difference between the reading and writing transactions, is that the former starts with a text produced by someone else, while the latter starts with someone and a blank page. There are also three similarities between both types of transactions. One, both reader and writer draw on “past linkages of signs, signifiers, and organic states in order to create new symbolizations, new linkages and new organic states” (Rosenblatt, 1988, p. 147). The reading experience becomes not just a negotiation of meaning of subjective and objective lines, but rather an organic state in which the reader and text become interconnected. Two, reader and writer choose a purpose that guides the selection and synthesis processes. Three, every reading and writing event falls along the efferent/aesthetic continuum, predominantly one or the other. The efferent stance refers to the kind of reading where the focus is on what is carried away or retained after the reading event. This is likened to a public event, where “meaning results from an abstracting-out and analytical structuring of the ideas, information, directions, conclusions to be retained, used, or acted on after the reading event” (Rosenblatt, 1988 p. 7). Alternatively in the aesthetic stance, the reader focuses on what is being lived through during the reading event. This is referred to as a private, experiential event where “the aesthetic reader experiences, savours, the qualities of the structured ideas, situations,
scenes, personalities, emotions, called forth, participating in the tensions conflicts and resolutions as they unfold” (Rosenblatt, 1988 p. 7). Moreover, Rosenblatt posits that reading and writing are interconnected, each serving as stimulus and support for the other; “the writer discovers the need to read in order to enlarge knowledge and experience, and that the reader is moved to write, record, express, and clarify ideas and feelings that flow from reading” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 147). The writing transaction, she argued, is fuelled by the individual’s constructive engagement with their actual experiential and linguistic resources. However, these, are not the sole requirement for the transaction. It is important that there is a link between the author’s personal interests and the topics chosen for writing.

Several studies on the pedagogical approaches to graphic novels and comics have been grounded in Rosenblatt’s reader response theory. In one key study, Garcia (2009) found that adolescents who enjoyed creating comics in an after-school comic book club, adopted a predominantly aesthetic stance (writing to explore the work and oneself) in the writing event. Framing her results within Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading and writing and Dewey’s view of art, Garcia posited that there is a relationship between the aesthetic stance and the artistic experience. The similarity is that the feelings of the artist and observer are similar, both resulting in feelings of self-fulfilment:

“The aesthetic experience is the part of an art experience that has to do with the encounter between the observer and the work of art, the imagining; like when the adolescent relates to comics, by reading or watching them. The closure of the experience, the counterpart, the thinking, the response, is the artistic experience, this occurs when the adolescent creates comics, when the adolescent decides to create.” (p. 47)

In other words, adolescents were actively engaged in the writing experience and the exploration of self, which produced attitudes of self-fulfilment. Garcia’s findings support Rosenblatt’s propositions, including the importance of personal engagement with the writing activity through feelings of self-fulfilment, the role of context in the transaction through an after-school programme fostering comic creation skills, and the collaborative interchange with other comic creators through sharing and learning during comic-making activities.

The role of context is another important aspect in Rosenblatt’s transactional theory of reading and writing. The role of context is also a key feature of socio-cultural approaches to language,
literacy and learning. In the school context, the teachers and students are transacting with one another; and they in turn are transacting with the school environment. The context extends to the “whole institutional, social, and cultural environment” (Rosenblatt, 1988 p. 15). The context, she argues, can affect “the individual’s attitude toward the self, toward the reading or writing activity, or toward the purpose for which it is being carried on” (Rosenblatt, 1988 p. 15). In terms of pedagogy, Rosenblatt advocated for a transactional view of reading and writing processes that is not rigid and that the students’ responses to reading, or written text, is regarded as part of a process, something for further growth. Thus, process and product become interconnected. Her suggestions included:

1) enriching the student’s linguistic or experiential reservoir and enabling them to draw freely on it;

2) reading and writing should not be treated as a separate sets of skills, or the acquisition of codes or conventions; and

3) “purposive writing and reading will enable the student to build on past experience of life and language and to practice the kinds of selective attention and synthesis that produce new structures of live meaning” (Rosenblatt, 1988 p. 15).

Another tenet of Rosenblatt’s transactional theory, is the importance of enriched dialogue and collaborative interchange about text interpretations in shaping reading and writing transactions in the classroom context. Collaborative interchange, dialogue between teacher and students and among students, can help foster “metalinguistic understanding of skills and conventions in meaningful contexts” (Rosenblatt, 1988 p. 15). She also suggested that teachers become facilitators of group interchange among students and foster metalinguistic awareness that leads to “the development of critical concepts and criteria of validity and interpretation of the text”. These include “sharing their responses”, “learning how their evocations from the same text differ”, and “returning to the text to discover their own habits of selection and synthesis” (Rosenblatt, 1988 p. 15).

Two doctoral studies on student readers’ responses to graphic novels support Rosenblatt’s propositions about the importance and role of context, enriched dialogue and collaborative interchange in reading transactions (Connors, 2010; Hammond, 2009). Hammond (2009) used a qualitative design based on reader response theory to understand whether knowledge of
graphic novel conventions affected 12th Grade students’ understanding of the graphic novel *American Born Chinese*. That study’s findings support the evidence that graphic novels can be used as part of the curriculum to improve multimodal literacy. The findings also suggested that students’ lack of knowledge did not affect their understanding of the graphic novel, since students with little or no experience reading graphic novels were able to draw on pictures and words to understand the text. Moreover, student discussions and focus group interviews further helped to develop students’ multimodal literacy. In another important study, Connors (2010) investigated the ways in which proficient readers participating in a community of readers in an after-school setting would interpret select graphic novels. Connors documented participants’ individual and group responses (whole group interviews and group discussions) to those texts. The findings suggested that those participants were able to read graphic novels regardless of their experience reading them. The findings also suggested that participants’ involvement in reading group discussions developed the ways in which they interacted with graphic novels. In her own words, “To this end four of the six reported spending more time looking at images, while a fifth suggested that he had begun to read graphic novels analytically in other settings” (p. 293). Both studies exemplify that students are able to draw on their interpretative strategies employed when reading traditional texts in order to understand graphic novels texts. However, students’ responses show a deeper awareness of, and ability to discuss, visual images and design because of structured lessons and group discussions.

**Iser’s reading response theory an approach to addressing the complexities of making meaning of graphic novels.**

Although Iser’s reader response theory accounted for textual narrative, it has also been used to account for the ways in which readers might interpret graphic novels as they negotiate the verbal and visual narrative (Danziger-Russell, 2013; Miodrag, 2013). Iser’s (1974) phenomenological approach to the reading process considered the text as an object and the readers’ actions associated with their response to it. He proposed that the text contains blanks or gaps, which prompt the reader to actively connect and fill in those gaps. The gaps in the text are the unwritten parts, which allow the reader to use their imagination. However, Iser contended that there is no true meaning of the text, but instead a subjective construction resulting “from the meeting between the written text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience…” (p. 284). Furthermore, he argued that no reader can exhaust the full potential of a text in one reading since “certain aspects of the text will assume a significance we did not attach to them on a first reading, while others will
recede into the background” (Iser, 1974, pp. 280-281). Moreover, some patterns of the text will resist the construction of meaning. The reading process is temporal, selective, varies all the time and in turn, perception and memory is re-shaped over multiple readings. Consequently, other possibilities of meaning are present since on each reading new indeterminacies are encountered. Iser acknowledged that the reading process is a “strange situation” (p. 289) in which the “reader cannot know what his participation actually entails” (p. 290). Moreover, several researchers have employed Iser’s theories of reader response as part of their theoretical framework to contextualise and elucidate the ways in which readers’ experiences may differ when reading graphic novels (Sabeti, 2012a).

Other theories used to address the complexity of graphic novel texts draw on and extend theories associated with other multimodal texts.

Although picture books and graphic novels are both multimodal texts, the differences in their forms of storytelling at times might need to be addressed differently. Nodelman (2012) argued that the panels in comics are more difficult to interpret than the pages of a picture book because there are more details to interpret. One of the reasons, he argued, is that:

[t]he convention of picture books is that the pictures are separate from the words, as in Loo Taas, occupying a related but different space; when the words in some picture books do appear superimposed on pictures, they appear over areas that are freer of details or more muted in color, thus creating an emptier background for them that sets them off from the rest of the picture and makes them easier to read. In comics, however, words appear not only outside of and near pictures, but also within pictures, superimposed over images (often already busy ones), or in the speech balloons that interrupt the pictorial space depicted while implying that it continues on behind them. (p. 437)

In other words, the visual-verbal dynamic differs between picture books and graphic novels. Comics offer more specific information than picture books, but the act of putting those separate pieces of information together is very complex. Nodelman (2012) cautioned that there might be some picture books which are structurally complicated while some comics might be structurally simpler, and vice versa (p. 438). Nonetheless, Nodelman’s article highlighted the dynamic, complex, fragmentary and open-ended nature of comics, which lends itself to a number of possible interpretations.
Summary: Graphic novels: culture, pedagogy and theory.

In the first half of this chapter, the scholarship on graphic novels was contextualised within theoretical, pedagogical and popular culture trends. In the next broad section, I framed graphic novels as multimodal texts, which form part of a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy. Then, I discussed the role of teachers’ professional communities in supporting students’ multiliteracies learning.

Multiliteracies and the Graphic Novel as a Multimodal Text

The concepts of literacy are changing in a rapidly globalised world; therefore, classroom pedagogy should respond to cultural, linguistic, communicative and technological diversity (New London Group, 1996). Thus, literacy in the conventional sense – learning to read and write in alphabetic print – is built and expanded upon to include multiple forms of communication, which includes images, speech, and other texts, alongside alphabetic print. This study is concerned with the integration of multimodal texts such as graphic novels into an existing Seventh Grade English language curriculum that previously centred mostly on print-based, monomodal texts.

In the first part of this section I describe the concept of a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy (New London Group, 1996). I examine the ways in which a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy values students’ wider social networks (Hamilton, 2000; McNaughton, 2002; Moll et al., 1992). Then, I explain the concept of multimodal texts (Kress, 2010) and frame graphic novels as multimodal texts. Afterwards, I examine a few conceptual frameworks that help teachers understand multimodal texts (e.g. Anstey & Bull, 2009; Arizpe & Styles, 2009; Doonan, 1993; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001); and theories which help explain the text-image relationship in multimodal texts such as picture books (Kress, 1997; Lewis, 2001; Sipe, 1998a). Additionally, I explore research that supports the theory that interpreting and creating multimodal texts is cognitively challenging (Vincent, 2007), and the potential challenges teachers may face when multimodal texts are integrated into the classroom (Ajayi, 2008; Ryan et al., 2010).
A pedagogy of multiliteracies promotes the use of technological, conventional and nonconventional text formats that are not ordinarily used in the classroom. This approach acknowledges a shift from written language, as the dominant literacy practice, to other ways literacy is practiced, such as hybrid print texts (New London Group, 1996). Furthermore, the approach outlines that students are already functionally and critically engaged with technological, and conventional and unconventional format texts, which they do not encounter in their classrooms (New London Group, 1996). Teachers have to develop strategies and approaches to help integrate those literacies into classroom learning. The goal is to prepare students for their social futures in evolving cultural, linguistic, social, and economic environments.

Additionally, a pedagogy of multiliteracies approach values students’ wider social networks because they consist of ‘funds of knowledge’ from which students can draw on to make meaning out of texts. Researchers urge teachers to talk to students about their personal histories, and encourage them to explore collectively the broader social context in which literacy is used (Hamilton, 2000), make connections between the worlds of home and school in order to enhance pedagogy (Hamilton, 2000; Moll et al., 1992), and build on the concepts and experiences with which culturally diverse students are familiar (McNaughton, 2002). The pedagogy of the multiliteracies approach highlights the active role of students and, by extension, their social practices in enacting the graphic novel lessons.

Multimodal texts use more than one mode – ways of human communication – so that meaning is communicated through a synchronisation of modes. That is, multimodal texts include a combination of two or more modes, such as linguistic (e.g. written language), visual (e.g. still images, colour), spatial (e.g. position of layout), and may be produced on print or electronic screen. Multimodal texts in print form include picture books, comics and magazines while those in electronic form include video and film. Graphic novels are print-based multimodal texts, which combine several modes including spatial, visual and linguistic (word) modes. Readers of multimodal texts have to simultaneously infer the message in several modes such as linguistic (word), images and comic book design conventions. Thus, interpreting multimodal texts is cognitively challenging because of complex meaning making activities (Kress, 1997).
Multimodal texts present multiple possibilities for interpreting meaning from and creating texts in the classroom context. Several researchers have conceptualised frameworks to help teachers explore multimodal texts (Anstey & Bull, 2009; Doonan, 1993). Furthermore, some theoretical frameworks help teachers and researchers explore specific modes like the visual mode. Viewers examine images and answer questions such as how an image is made, what does it represent, ideas and attitudes it communicates and how it does this, what an image is used to do and how social relations are constructed such as how the viewer is encouraged to evaluate it (Arizpe & Styles, 2009).

A few key theorists have conceptualised the text-image relationship in multimodal texts like picture books as as synergy (Sipe, 1998a), transduction (Kress, 1997) and an ecological analogy (Lewis, 2001). Sipe (1998a) suggested that the relationship between both words and pictures would be incomplete without each other, hence the words and pictures are in synergy. In his words, “[t]hey have a synergistic relationship in which the total effect depends not only on the union between text and illustrations but also on the perceived interactions or transactions between these two parts” (p. 99). Kress (1997) purported that “there is constant transition, translation, transduction between different modes in the brain, even if not necessarily visible on paper or with other media or modes” (p. 39). The processes of transition, translation and transduction refer to the ability to code and manipulate modes as one reads and writes (Kress, 1997). Lewis’s (2001) ecological analogy has been extended to explain the process of reading picture books in which the words and pictures come alive during the reading event. The words are brought to life by the pictures and vice versa (p. 55). The processes of synergy, transduction and ecological analogy highlight the interdependence of the words and images during the reading event, which is imperative for making meaning.

Furthermore, there are research studies that support the theory that creating multimodal texts is cognitively challenging. In a useful example, Vincent (2007) implemented a programme of text production in which students turned their monomodal, hand written texts into computer-mediated texts. He proposed that transferring their monomodal text to a multimodal text was difficult for those students who had difficulties with monomodal text production, and consequently were unable to mentally cross modal boundaries. Furthermore, Vincent suggested that it would be helpful if a teacher scaffolded the multimodal text production process for those students. Within the context of my study, students were required to turn their monomodal text into multimodal texts. Vincent’s study raises the question about whether my
study’s student participants who had difficulties creating monomodal narrative texts, would also have difficulties creating multimodal graphic novel texts.

However, the inclusion of multimodal texts in traditional classroom spaces challenges the practices associated with making meaning of traditional texts. A few researchers have reported on the disruptive or problematic potential of integrating multimodal texts into classroom learning (Ajayi, 2008). In one significant study, Ryan et al. (2010) identified a few challenges that teachers faced in a classroom where multimodal technological texts were in use. They found that teachers’ effectiveness was limited by their low confidence with using the technology. Also, teachers noted that they became observers as students took control of using the texts (autonomous). It appears as though those teachers who were used to being the gatekeepers of knowledge with regard to monomodal texts, became positioned as learners while their students’ expertise in manipulating technological multimodal texts outweighed their own.

**Using professional communities to support multimodal learning.**

In this study, the inclusion of graphic novel texts represents a shift in the curriculum from teaching and learning with alphabetic print, to multimodal communication. Research has shown that teachers’ collaboration can support both students’ multiliteracies learning and teachers’ professional learning and development (e.g. Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., M. Kearney, & Burden, K., 2013). *Professional learning communities and communities of practice* facilitate knowledge sharing through collaboration and social interactions in which understandings are constructed collaboratively. The ways in which teachers’ engage with graphic novel texts impacts their professional learning and the kinds of interpretative practices students used during their multiliteracies learning.

In this section, I critically review the literature on: community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991); professional learning communities (Department of Education & Training, 2005; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, I., 2007); the term multimodal text (Kress, 2010) and the concept of a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy (New London Group, 1996) to frame my
research in the roles of participatory and collaborative practices, which support multimodal teaching and learning.

### Communities of practice.

**Brief review of the literature.**

The concept *communities of practice* (*CoP*) was first posited by Lave and Wenger (1991) while they studied the process of apprenticeship as a learning model. The basic tenet was that persons learned through participation and practice in an informal manner. The notion of CoP has been thought to complement ideas from Vygotsky’s (1978) theory that social interaction plays an instrumental role in the development of cognition and Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory that behaviour is learned from the environment through a process of observational learning. A similar definition is provided by Hildreth and Kimble (2000) who explained that a CoP is “a group of professionals informally bound to one another through exposure to a common class of problems, common pursuit of solutions, and thereby themselves embodying a store of knowledge” (p. 3). Wenger’s definition will be used throughout this thesis because of its relevance and usefulness in theorising the interactions among teacher participants as they negotiated meaning throughout the research study. This section provides an overview of the focus of CoPs from Wenger’s three major published works from the period 1991 to 2002: *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Lave and Wenger, 1991); *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity* (Wenger, 1998); and *Cultivating Communities of Practice* (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Furthermore, a snapshot of the literature on the application of CoP theory in education research will be presented.

In 1991, Lave and Wenger posited that a community of practice involves a shared practice based on the interactions between novices and experts. The term CoP stemmed from the theory of *situated learning*, which is defined as learning which takes place in the same context as it is applied and (Lave & Wenger, 1991) requires social interaction and collaboration. Within the community there are novices and newcomers. Lave and Wenger (1991) described the process of socialisation as that of *legitimate peripheral participation*, whereby newcomers become experienced and full members through a process of engaged participation in the community, thereby creating their professional identity: “By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 29). To illustrate their
theory, Lave and Wenger used the example of midwives and tailors learning their skills first hand in settings where those skills were being used. The learning happened during informal interactions where novices consulted with the experts. However, one of the limitations with this explanation is that it does not account for the probable tensions between novices and experts.

Then in 1998, the focus of Wenger’s work on communities of practice shifted to the meaning making and interaction involved in completing a task within the community. Through social participation each member develops their own identity in relation to the community. Wenger identifies the structure of CoP using three interrelated terms: *joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire*. Mutual engagement represents the interaction between individuals that leads to the creation of shared meaning on issues or a problem. Joint enterprise is the process in which people are engaged and working together toward a common goal, while shared repertoire refers to the common resources and jargon that members use to negotiate meaning and facilitate learning within the group.

In 2002, the focus of Wenger’s writing changed as the concept of community of practice was applied as a managerial tool for improving company effectiveness (Wenger et al., 2002). Wenger’s writing shifted to account for the construction of individual and shared identities resulting from active, social participation in the group. According to Wenger et al’s theory (Wenger et al, 2002), there are three elements to develop in a community of practice: *domain, community and practice*. The domain refers to members in the community who are active, and have a shared and vested interest in the group and its topics, and their expertise characterises them as part of the group; while community is described as the joint activities and discussions in which members engage that help them to learn from each other. In relation to practice, each member has their own practice or role within the domain of the group but “they develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice (Wenger, 2006, p. 1-2). Communities develop their practice through a number of activities, including discussing developments, mapping knowledge and identifying gaps and problem solving (Wenger, 2006).

**Applications of Wenger’s theory of communities of practice in education research.**

A review of the literature from the past five years reveals that the applications of communities of practice in education include: pre-service teacher training (Daniel, Auhl, & Hastings, 2013;
Lotter, C., Yow, J & Thomas, P., 2014), sharing and co-learning about best practices through online communities of learning (Evans, 2015), and in-service professional development (Bleiler, 2015; Brodie, 2014; Hodson, Pamela & Jones, 2010). A brief review of a few publications relating to professional learning communities, which explicitly use Wenger’s concept of communities, will be presented next.

In-service professional learning and development through partnerships.

Some researchers describe how CoPs can be developed through partnerships with various stakeholders in education who share a particular concern or desire to solve a problem through shared interaction over a period of time. These partnerships include coaching teams comprising teacher educators and pre-service teachers (Daniel, et al, 2013; Lotter, Yow, & Thomas, 2014); partnerships between technological stewards and educators (Schuck et al., 2013); partnerships which occur through online interaction (Thanga, Hall, Murugaiah & Azmana, 2011); and partnerships among in-service educators (Bleiler, 2015; Brodie, 2014; Chen, C& ChengY, 2014; Hodson, Pamela & Jones, 2010).

According to a review of the literature, in-service professional learning can occur through partnerships between educators and technology stewards. Wenger and colleagues. (Wenger, White, & Smith, 2009) discuss the contribution that technologies can make to communities of practice. They explained the role of a technology steward (people who understand the technology needs of a community and have the technological expertise to address those needs) in cultivating a CoP. Schuck et al. (2013) provides a useful example of the role of a technological steward in an online CoP since they investigated the introduction of mobile technologies into a community consisting of university educators. Schuck et al., (2013) consider professional learning communities and community of practice to be similar. They explained that both communities are formed to investigate and learn collaboratively (p. 4). The activities of the community Schuck et al. investigated were informed by, and focused on, development of an awareness of the potential of mobile devices for learning. They assessed the appropriateness mobile devices for their contexts; constructed action plans in their community and implemented those action plans in their contexts; and trialled some teaching activities which use mobile devices (Schuck et al., 2013, p. 4). The technological steward held “expertise in supporting higher education staff to use technologies… and was thoroughly acquainted with the context and the members of the community” (p. 6). Additionally, the
steward “interacted with the PLC through online calls, chats, collaborative document sharing and a face-to-face meeting with some of the PLC members at the conclusion of the initial intervention” (p. 6). However, the establishment of the professional learning community had a few limitations. One, it was “too large and diverse to operate as a cohesive team” (p. 14). Additionally, “[n]ot all practices were shared and this quickly led to a lack of participation from the non-teacher educators. This, combined with a smorgasbord of opportunities for innovation available in mobile technologies, resulted in us finding less common ground for shared reflection” (p. 14).

An important example of professional learning communities is online communities of practice (OCoP), also known as virtual communities of practice (VCoP). OCoP or VCoP is a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) formed primarily through online interaction. In other words, the interactions take place via virtual interaction instead of face-to-face. The concept of VCoP is exemplified in the work of Siew Ming Thanga, Carol Hall, Puvaneswary Murugaiah and Hazita Azmana (2011), which utilised an action research approach in tracing the developmental process of three subject-based CoPs (namely, mathematics, science and English), and identified challenges faced by a higher education institution (HEI) project team in fostering the active participation and commitment of the teacher participants. The authors described a few challenges in the implementation of that VCoP. On one hand, the authors described an underlying assumption that online communities would offer convenience and ease of use for its members. On the other hand, they described a few unanticipated challenges. One challenge was that “teachers experienced technical problems related to computer usage” and “even after resolving technical difficulties, teacher participation did not improve as anticipated” (p. 94).

Another useful example of partnerships is Bleiler’s (2015) interpretative phenomenological analysis investigating the lived experiences of a mathematician and mathematics teacher educator as they team-taught a mathematics content and mathematics methods course for prospective secondary mathematics teachers. By way of illustration, Bleiler (2015) shows how “Dejan and Angela’s team-teaching experiences, situated across communities (within a mathematics content and a mathematics methods course), significantly influenced the instructors’ awareness of their own practices” (p. 239). Using the theory of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) to discuss one of their main findings, Bleiler posited that “It was apparent from my observations and from the instructors’ interview reflections that their perceptions of the joint enterprises in their respective communities had significantly
different foci. Angela’s central focus on the student as a mathematical learner and Dejan’s central focus on the coverage of mathematical content illustrated what they perceived to be most important in the teaching practice of their professional communities” (2005, p. 245). The participants’ were part of a joint enterprise in which they held distinct identities but were able to complete the tasks.

Pre-service teachers’ professional learning through coaching.
Recent studies have also illustrated how pre-service teachers, who actively engage in professional learning activities with experts in a community of practice, experienced professional growth (Daniel et al, 2013; Lotter et al., 2014). This is exemplified in the work of Lotter et al. (2014), which describes a professional development initiative that used practice-teaching to summer enrichment students prior to real world practice enactment during a 2 week institute: “Both the coaches and teachers participated in the inquiry pedagogy and content sessions; however, only the teachers (in groups of three to four) practice-taught the middle school students participating in a summer enrichment program” (p.6). Illustrating one significant finding, Lotter et al. (2014) reported that the participants started building a shared repertoire, which included a greater understanding of the role of the coaches that the teachers described as resulting in more collaboration with their coaches during the academic year (pp. 12-13). Another useful example is the work of Daniel et al. (2013) describing first year pre-service teachers’ engagement in a process of collaborative feedback and reflection with their peers, as they participated in a programme focused on the development of core practices of teaching. One of the major findings indicated that “In wanting to perceive themselves as a nice person, colleague and friend, the participants indicated experiencing their provision of critique to others as the antithesis to their own self-image” (p. 168). Similarly, the results from both studies (Daniel et al, 2013; Lotter et al., 2014) exemplify the usefulness of coaching / teaching teams in relation to individual professional growth. However, the results also highlight the challenges of interacting in a community.

In this section on the theory of Communities of Practice (CoP) (Lave &Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1998), I described the evolution of the theory throughout Wenger’s major publications (Lave &Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). Additionally, I explained the role that technologies can have in a CoP (Wenger et al, 2009). Furthermore, I presented an overview of publications that illustrate the practical application of Wenger’s concepts of CoP and VCoP in the field of education. Those studies illustrated the
implementation, development and challenges facing communities in various settings such as online communities and different partnership arrangements such as team teaching.

**Teachers’ professional learning.**

This section is presented in three parts. First, I examine the differences between the concepts of *teacher professional learning* and *teacher professional development*. Second, I explore some characteristics of effective teacher professional learning described in two best synthesis studies (Department of Education & Training, 2005; Timperley et al., 2007). In the final part, I discuss two articles which report effective professional development that leads to professional learning, notwithstanding a few challenges (e.g. Greenwell & Zygouris-Coe, 2012; Jones & Dexter, 2014; asters, J., Magidin de Kramer, R., O’Dwyer, L., Dash, S. & Russell, M., 2012).

Although the terms *professional learning* and *professional development* have been used interchangeably in the education field, they have been defined in the literature as distinct processes. Wei et al.(2009) theorise *professional learning* “as a product of both externally-provided and job-embedded activities that increase teachers’ knowledge and change their instructional practice in ways that support student learning” (p.1). A more expansive definition of professional learning is proposed in *Professional Learning in Effective Schools*, a paper that unpacks seven principles of highly effective learning: effective professional learning “focuses on developing the core attributes of an effective teacher. It enhances teachers’ understanding of the content they teach and equips them with a range of strategies that enable their students to learn that content. It is directed towards providing teachers with the skills to teach and assess for deep understanding and to develop students’ metacognitive skills” (Department of Education & Training, 2005, p. 4). While formal professional development “represents a subset of the range of experiences that may result in professional learning” (Wei et al, 2009, p.1). In other words, professional learning constitutes the activities that teachers engage in that can change their thinking and practice, which in turn results in changes in student outcomes, whereas, professional development constitutes formal (e.g. workshops) and informal experiences (e.g. reading professional publications) that teachers receive, which contributes to their professional development. It has been argued that professional development does not necessarily lead to professional learning (Mockler, 2013;
Wei et al., 2009), since a teacher can attend professional development, which does not result in a change in their thinking or practice.

Best synthesis studies provide rigorous reviews and analyses of relevant literature, which explicate some features of effective professional learning. Timperley et al. (2007), in their synthesis of the best evidence international and New Zealand research on teacher professional learning and development, identified seven elements which impacted positively and substantively on a range of student outcomes:

(i) providing sufficient time for extended opportunities to learn and using the time effectively;
(ii) engaging external expertise;
(iii) focusing on engaging teachers in the learning process rather than being concerned about whether they volunteered or not;
(iv) challenging problematic discourses;
(v) providing opportunities to interact in a community of professionals;
(vi) ensuring content was consistent with wider policy trends; and
(vii) in school-based initiatives, having leaders actively leading the professional learning opportunities (p. xxvi).

Furthermore, Timperley et al. (2007) posited that the content of professional development and learning is essential for bringing about change. They identified four content areas in professional learning and development core studies:

(i) discipline knowledge and the interrelationship between such fundamentals as new curricula, pedagogy, and assessment information;
(ii) knowledge of students, including their developmental progressions through particular curricula, and their culture;
(iii) linguistic and cultural resources; and
(iv) theoretical frameworks and conceptual tools (p. xxxi).

They point to the gap in the literature including the lack of description of the professional development and evidence of teacher learning and change.
In *Professional Learning in Effective Schools* (2005), professional learning teams and professional learning communities were proposed as models of professional learning. One model, professional learning communities, is particularly relevant to my study since the teacher participants engaged in professional learning activities. According to the paper, in a professional learning community, learning occurs informally through collaboration and sharing, but the community may not always be team based or presented in the school. Opportunities for teachers to learn occur in various ways in the community:

(i) teachers learn about teaching through daily conversations with their colleagues;

(ii) structured mentoring programmes are established, allowing experienced and competent practitioners to be partnered with less experienced or beginning teachers in order to promote professional dialogue and act as professional role models;

(iii) sourcing expertise from beyond the school can enrich school-based programs with knowledge, ideas and an outside perspective; and

(iv) attending seminars and workshops or participating in courses is also necessary when teachers need to learn specific knowledge and skills, such as deepening their understanding of key subject-matter concepts.

Next, I discuss two articles that report effective professional development, which leads to professional learning, notwithstanding a few challenges, which support an emphasis on the use of technology in professional learning, the potential of formal and informal activities, the need for coaching and mentoring after professional development has ended and the effectiveness of engaging external expertise (e.g. Greenwell, & Zygouris-Coe, 2012; Jones & Dexter, 2014; Masters et al., 2010). There has been an increasing focus on social learning and the role of learning communities in fostering professional learning. By way of illustration, Masters et al., (2010) investigated the effects of online professional development of fourth grade English Language Arts teachers’ knowledge and instructional practices. They described the research context as that of a dearth of high-quality teachers in all schools in the U.S., especially in schools serving disadvantaged students, which led policy makers to implement professional development aimed at improving recruitment strategies (p. 357). Teachers in the control group of the randomised sample participated in normal OPD workshops. Those workshops provided theoretical, and information and pedagogical techniques that could have been readily implemented into the classroom. The delivery of the programme was through independent readings and activities with facilitated peer-to-peer discussions. Masters et al., (2010) implied
that the OPD had a positive effect on teachers’ knowledge and a large effect on teachers’ practices. One criticism with this existing account is that it lacks examples of teachers’ learning, or use of new knowledge and skills in their classrooms. The researchers briefly stated that instructional practice data were self-reported and lacking triangulation from independent observations, but no further details were provided.

Professional development (PD) does not necessarily lead to professional learning, because teachers have to actively implement the knowledge and skills after professional development activities have ended. A small-scale study of maths and science teachers learning to integrate technology into their teaching, highlighted the importance of informal collaborations with colleagues and independent learning after formal professional development activities have ended (Jones & Dexter, 2014). However, the teacher participants in that study did not discredit the usefulness of professional development activities. Rather, they reported that “each mode of professional learning is important, useful for different learning situations, and supportive of the other modes. Considered altogether they illustrate the range of learning approaches teachers choose to use and consequently that schools may be well served to support” (p. 379). The evidence from that study suggests that professional learning does not imply the passive transmission of knowledge and skills in PD activities; rather, learning is enacted through active engagement in informal activities and formal activities after the formal PD activities have ended.

We need to know more about the impact of teacher professional learning opportunities on high school-aged students’ multimodal, graphic narrative text production. Additionally, there is little evidence about the ways in which teachers assimilate new information on graphic novels with their current understandings and pedagogic practice. A lack of research into professional learning might not be symptomatic only of graphic novel research. Timperley et al. (2007) argued that professional learning is a relatively underdeveloped area in educational research, and that there is little evidence of the relationships between the assimilation of new information and a potential change in teachers’ practice.

In summation, I argued that there is a subtle difference between professional development and professional learning because teachers’ attendance at professional development does not give rise to professional learning. Professional learning suggests that teachers must actively engage
with the professional development activities, which would then bring about some growth or change in their knowledge and practice, which in turn can positively affect student outcomes. Additionally, professional learning extends beyond formal professional development and learning communities’ activities, to informal activities such as independent learning.

**Chapter Summary**

In the first major section, ‘Graphic novels: culture, pedagogy and theory’, I presented a critical review of the literature about the current debates on graphic novels in popular culture (Chinn, 2004; Griffith, 2010; McTaggart, 2008); potential of graphic novels for teaching and learning (Bitz, 2010; Crilley, 2009; Pantaleo, 2011; Rice, 2012; Smetana et al., 2009); key theoretical approaches which might elucidate the ways in which readers interpret and create graphic novel texts (Brienza, 2010; Gardner & Herman, 2011; Heath & Bhagat, 2005; Iser, 1974; McCloud, 1994; Rosenblatt, 2005). Then, in the second major section in this chapter, ‘Multiliteracies and the graphic novel as a multimodal texts and Using professional communities to support multimodal learning’, I argued that graphic novels have been framed as multimodal texts which form part of a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy (Kress, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1996). Finally, I explored the concepts of *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002) and *professional learning* (Department of Education & Training, 2005; Timperley et al., 2007) and the ways in which professional communities can support teachers’ professional learning and students’ multiliteracies learning. There is a gap in the reviewed literature on the ways in which teachers’ professional learning opportunities impacts their teaching of multiliteracies; the challenges of integrating graphic novels into existing curriculum; and participatory, interpretive and collaborative practices of students engaging with multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, for the first time in their classrooms. In the next chapter, I describe the procedure and methods used in this investigation.
Chapter 2: Methodology

Research on using graphic novels in educational contexts suggest that they support literacy pedagogy and are a source of motivation to students in the context of secondary school English Language curricula (Pantaleo, 2011; Thompson, 2008). Other studies reported that student-generated writing employing multi-panel sequences, like those in graphic novels, have had positive outcomes for students’ writing skills (Morrison et al., 2002; Smetana et al., 2009). Furthermore, research studies have cited the ways in which graphic novel creation might fulfill English language or language arts curriculum standards, and even develop students’ literacy skills in unconventional ways (Bitz, 2004). Conversely, researchers have highlighted potential challenges in using graphic novels in the classroom context, including teachers perceiving that their lack of artistic knowledge might be a barrier to teaching graphic novels (Bitz, 2004; Sipe, 1998b). However, we need to know more about teachers’ and students’ meaning-making experiences and outcomes of the classroom processes resulting from interventions using graphic novel lessons.

The purpose of this research study was to explore the pedagogical potential of graphic novels in developing Grade 7 students’ literacy skills, in three classrooms in one secondary school, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines from April to June 2012 during one school term. Prior to this research study, graphic novels were not used in those three classrooms. A professional development workshop was held with teachers to develop strategies for the implementation of graphic novels in the English language (EL) curriculum. Then teachers used a pre-designed Teaching Unit plan to formulate lessons for instruction on graphic narrative storytelling over one school term. These involved the study of one graphic novel text, followed by the construction of graphic narratives, and storytelling via words and pictures. Students’ and teachers’ experiences and outcomes were captured through multiple data sources, which included interviews and graphic narratives. I adopted a mixed methods approach to case study research that asked the following questions:

1. How and how effectively do students make meaning of graphic novel texts?
2. In what ways does the graphic novel intervention impact students’ beliefs about and attitudes towards reading and writing?
3. In what ways does the graphic novel intervention impact students’ conventional writing?
4. How and how effectively does the graphic novel intervention impact on teachers’ professional learning?

This chapter consists of seven sections describing, discussing and justifying key components including:

1) the rationale for the mixed methods approach to case study research,

2) research setting,

3) participants and role of the researcher,

4) methods of data collection,

5) methods of data analysis,

6) the procedures which allowed for the investigation of the pedagogical potential of graphic novel texts, and

7) ethical considerations.

**Rationale for Mixed Methods Approach to Case Study Research**

This study employed a *mixed methods* approach to *case study* research to capture and interpret participants’ meaning-making experiences and outcomes. Firstly, the three time-point design of the intervention was conceptualised under the assumption that participants’ responses to *graphic novel* texts might have become either increasingly positive or negative over time. Secondly, qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analyses were chosen to capture participants’ first-time experiences with, and outcomes related to, the graphic novel intervention. The qualitative data sources included narrative texts/artefacts, observations and semi-structured interviews, while quantitative data sources included student surveys. Additionally, the qualitative methods of data analysis included thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The quantitative methods of data analysis included statistical analyses using IBM SPSS Statistics V 22.0 and a rubric assessment tool. In this section, I describe this study’s research design in detail and provide reasons for using that design.
Rationale for using case study research.

Case study design provides a way of investigating complex social interactions in real life situations, in order to understand a particular phenomenon (Stake, 1995, 1998). This study explored the ways in which three teachers and 98 student participants negotiated their responses, classroom processes and products, and social interactions in response to the graphic novel texts in the real life context of the classroom. In an attempt to understand the phenomenon of the pedagogical potential of graphic novel texts to engage and develop students’ literacies, I focused on three Grade 7 classrooms in one school, in what Stake (1995) outlines is a bound period of time—in this case that period of time was one school term. One argument against case study research is that it lacks generalisability to the wider population and the uncertainty around the length of time in which a case should be studied. However, case study research allows for rich, in-depth descriptions to illuminate participants’ meaning-making experiences and outcomes. Furthermore, this study was conceived as an instrumental case study, which provided insight into an issue or refinement of theory, which “plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (Stake, 1995, p. 88).

Rationale for using mixed methods design.

A mixed methods design, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, was appropriate for two reasons: capturing participants’ individual and shared experiences, and the numerical outcomes of the intervention. In the context of this study, mixed methods research is defined as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17); allows for the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004); and “enables the researcher to simultaneously ask confirmatory and exploratory questions and therefore verify and generate theory in the same study” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 33).

Table 1 below shows the ways in which qualitative and quantitative approaches were combined to help answer the research questions. For instance, the use of the rubric assessment tool helped to derive quantitative data from qualitative data at the analysis stage. Another example is that the quantitative and qualitative data sources were implemented sequentially during the data collection phase. The forthcoming section on methods of data collection will provide more details about the timing of implementation of data sources.
Furthermore, this study adopted a constructivist paradigm as opposed to the pragmatism paradigm, which some scholars often associate with mixed methods research. One of the debates within mixed methods research has been the role of paradigms. Some scholars have identified pragmatism as the single paradigm to support their research methodologies (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Patton, 2002; Tashakkori, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Conversely, Mertens (2010, 2015) proposed the transformative perspective as a paradigm for use in mixed methods research that focuses on social justice and human rights. Other scholars, such as Creswell and Plano (2011), argued that multiple paradigms can be used in mixed methods research, but the researcher has to decide which paradigm is most appropriate for their selected mixed methods design. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), the “multiple paradigms position (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 2000) is an interesting change in position from a perspective that has historically tied particular methods (e.g.,
QUAL) to particular paradigms (e.g., constructivism) in one-to-one correspondence” (p. 99).

It should be cautioned that my study does not adopt the “pragmatic method and system of philosophy” which mixed methods research makes use of (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Instead, a social constructivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) has been adopted to frame this case study research, in keeping with the focus on interpreting participants’ individual perspectives, and shared social interactions among participants, as well as the processes and outcomes related to those individual constructions and shared social interactions. Also, this study is qualitatively driven (participants’ experiences), with quantitative methods added to supplement the qualitative methods by including more complex answers to the research questions.

In this sub-section, I discuss two main reasons for using a mixed methods design in this study’s case study research. According to Creswell and Plano (2011), the researcher should clearly account for their decisions for using a mixed methods research design. In their view, these decisions should include describing where and how the qualitative and quantitative strands were mixed, and describing the timing of the use of qualitative and quantitative strands. Subsequently, I discuss the use of mixed methods designs in investigating the use of graphic novel texts in classroom contexts.

One reason for using a mixed methods design was to capture two aspects of the graphic novel intervention—the process of implementation and the products that participants’ produced as a result of the intervention. Drawing on Bryman’s (2008) coding scheme, which he based on the rationales for combining quantitative and qualitative methods in writings and research articles, I used mixed methods research for two main reasons—completeness and process. According to Bryman (2008), completeness referred to “the notion that the researcher can bring together a more comprehensive account of the area of enquiry in which he or she is interested if both quantitative and qualitative research are employed” (p. 91). On the other hand, process referred to when “quantitative research provides an account of structures in social life but qualitative research provides sense of process” (Bryman, 2008, p. 91). Some scholars argue that triangulation can be conceived as the mixing of quantitative and qualitative methods to study a problem in order to gain a more complete picture. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), triangulation helps to “explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint…” (p. 141). In another view, triangulation has been defined as, “checking information that has been collected...
from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data” (Mertens, 2010, p. 258). While Mertens’s (2010) definition of triangulation highlighted the “consistency of evidence across sources of data”, my study was designed under the assumption that mixing methods allowed for improved interpretations whether or not those interpretations were in agreement.

Of the studies reviewed, very few have used a mixed methods design for researching graphic novel texts in an education context. Many of the studies reviewed, employed either strictly qualitative methods (Hammond, 2009), or strictly quantitative methods (Edwards, 2008). That is not to say a mixed method design is inappropriate for researching graphic novels, but that the choice of design is dependent on the research question under study. One example is Gavigan’s (2010) study about the ways in which four struggling Eighth Grade readers responded to graphic novels during a graphic novel book club. She used an interpretative multiple-case study design, which utilised a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. She used research methods, such as survey questionnaires, to investigate the ways in which graphic novels affected the value those four students placed on reading over a three month period. Quantitative evidence of participants’ reading outcomes and experiences over a specified period of time were analysed. Similarly, my study explored participants’ experiences and outcomes related to their use of graphic novel texts over one school term.

**Setting**

This study was conducted in three classrooms in one secondary school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In this section, I describe key details of this study’s research setting and account for the reasons for selecting that setting.

**St. Stephen’s secondary school.**

A co-educational secondary school, located in the capital city of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Kingstown, served as the site of this study. The school’s administration is run by a Board of Governors; however, the Ministry of Education provides a range of support, including curriculum policy, professional development and resourcing. St. Stephen’s
secondary school is a traditional, faith-based school founded in 1964, and serves Grades 7 to 11. The student population at the time of the study was 314 (Ministry of Education, 2012). Table 2, below, shows the student population numbers according to gender. The students enrolled during the academic period September 2011 to June 2012 were described as from lower- to middle-class homes. The communities served are usually within the urban centre or just on the periphery, with close proximity to the research site.

Table 2. Enrolment at St. Stephen’s secondary, 2011/2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary School</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Stephen’s</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Extract of data for St. Stephen’s secondary from (Ministry of Education, 2012), for illustration purposes only.*

The teaching staff comprised a number of teachers with varying teaching experience and academic and professional training qualifications. At the time of the study, 19 teachers worked at St. Stephen’s secondary school (Ministry of Education, 2012). Six of those teachers attended the local Teachers’ Training College, and one was enrolled at the Training College at the time of the study. Eight of the teaching staff possessed bachelor degrees in a range of subject areas, such as Business, Mathematics, International Relations, Applied Science and Literacy. In addition, there were two teachers employed on a relief basis. Table 3, below, shows the percentage of trained and graduate teachers at St. Stephen’s secondary school in the academic year 2011/2012. In the context of the education system in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, trained refers to teachers with teaching qualifications from various accredited institutions, while graduates refers to teachers holding bachelor’s degrees. Furthermore, graduates can be trained or untrained and trained teachers may or may not hold a bachelor’s degree. Thompson, Warrican, and Leacock (2011) highlighted that the recruitment of “untrained” teachers in the English-speaking Caribbean goes back to the apprenticeship model of teaching, a relic of their British colonial past. “But unlike the pupil-teachers of the past, there is often no program of supervision and apprenticeship” (p. 79).
Table 3. Percentage of trained and graduate teachers in secondary school, 2011/2012.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary school</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
<th>No. of non-graduates</th>
<th>No. of graduates</th>
<th>Percentage of trained teachers</th>
<th>Percentage of graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>Untrained</td>
<td>Trained</td>
<td>Untrained</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Stephen’s</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Extract of data for St. Stephen’s secondary from (Ministry of Education, 2012), for illustration purposes only.

The subject areas taught at St. Stephen’s include maths, English, geography, business studies, agricultural science, integrated science, physical education and information technology. The school has a remedial reading programme as part of their Language Arts curriculum for students categorised as having difficulties with reading. This programme is conducted during school hours in a designated area on site. For 15 minutes every week, they read selected readings from their prescribed textbooks.

Another characteristic of the school is the type of time-tabling, which includes five one-hour teaching periods per day and, in Grade 7, the English language (EL) subject area is scheduled for three teaching periods weekly. The Grade 7 EL teachers agree on topics that will be taught for the school term, which are then approved by the Head of Department based mainly on syllabus requirements. The topics are chosen from three main components: composition, comprehension, and spelling and grammar. For instance, out of the three teaching periods allocated for each week, one period could be used for composition. So if narrative writing is scheduled for the term, then one period would be allocated for that topic. However, this is not rigid and depended on the outcome of every lesson. For this research study, the teachers allocated one period per week for teaching the graphic novel lessons. Over the course of the study, this may have shifted to two periods during one week, or two periods over two weeks, and other variations.

An additional characteristic of the setting is that Grade 7 students were streamed according to their achievement scores in two subject areas—mathematics and language arts. Thompson et
al. (2011), wrote that streaming, the practice of organising groups of students according to their perceived ability, is pervasive among schools in the English-speaking Caribbean: “some schools either organized internal examinations for new students, or used the results of the external examinations (most likely the Eleven-plus examination) to classify their incoming students” (p. 73). Although attempts have been made to eradicate that practice, it still exists in many schools today. The aim of this study was not to argue for or against the merit of the streaming practice, but to describe the characteristics of that particular setting. In the context of this study, incoming Grade 7 students were streamed at the beginning of the school year 2011/2012 based on their perceived ability through their achievement scores in the Common Entrance Examinations (CEE), now known as the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA). Briefly, the CEE is an examination taken by Grade 6 students in order to be placed in a secondary school. This examination has been replaced by the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA) at the time of writing this thesis.

Incoming Grade 7 students were grouped into three classrooms: B, C, and K. Classroom B was characterised as having students with the highest achievement scores in Language Arts. Classroom C was characterised as having students with the highest achievement scores in mathematics. Finally, Classroom K was characterised as having students with marginal scores or underperforming in mathematics and language arts, as well as having students who experienced failure during the previous school year and were not promoted to Grade 8. Streaming of those Grade 7 students is an important contextual factor that might affect this study’s outcomes.

The school’s administration provided the physical spaces for research related activities, such as interviews. Moreover, the administration offered to provide additional support or resources. I was provided with a desk and access to the photocopy and scanning machines in the staffroom. On average, I went to the research site three days per week, specifically when teachers taught graphic novel lessons. I also came in on other days to conduct interviews or to offer support to teachers with the planning of their lessons. However, there were some problems with the allocation of space for research related activities. For instance, the audio-visual room, which was earmarked as the space for interviews, was being renovated. This unforeseen change created some scheduling conflict. The school advised me to liaise with the computer and IT teacher to arrange times for use of the lab. He and I agreed on the times I could use the lab. Moreover, we informed the entire staff about these arrangements in order to
ensure the researcher and interviewees’ privacy. However, these arrangements sometimes proved difficult for reasons which included: (i) arranging interviews so that they did not clash with the classes held in the lab; (ii) lab often used by teachers during their spare time for research purposes; and (iii) lab sometimes used by the school administration to hold meetings.

Rationale for selecting the research site.

The main criterion for the selection of a secondary school as a research site was a location within the main urban area in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Another criterion was that the target school would consent to the inclusion of graphic novel lessons as part of their English Language curriculum during one school term. Given that the study involved the teaching of graphic novel lessons, the informed consent of the participants and the institution was imperative. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007) contends that researchers should “explain the kinds of demands the research will have on participants and the institution on a whole” (p. 55). Initially, St. Stephen’s secondary school (a pseudonym) was informed in writing about the purpose of the research and the demands it would make on the intended participants. Additionally, it was emphasised that the graphic novel intervention explored an aspect of narrative writing, and that it could be taught alongside disciplinary content. Moreover, the Head of the English department was approached via Skype communication to discuss the purpose of the research and the demands it could have on her Grade 7 English Language teacher colleagues. Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007) further contends that “hosts will have perceptions of researchers and their intentions and that these need to be positive” (p. 56). The stakeholders were assured that the study did not aim to criticise teachers’ practice. It should be highlighted that St. Stephen’s secondary was selected through purposeful sampling, since I worked there before undertaking this research study. Moreover, I worked alongside the three teacher participants who were recruited for this study. The impact of my previous employment on participants’ informed consent is discussed in the forthcoming section on ethical considerations.

In this section, I described the research site, St. Stephen’s secondary school, which included school policies such as streaming. Then, I described and justified the rationale for selecting that school as the research site. The selection was a matter of convenience and all stakeholders provided informed consent from parents / guardians or assent from students to
participate in this study. The next section describes the participants and provides a rationale for sampling participants. I also describe my active role in the research.

Participants and the Role of the Researcher

Three teachers, together with their 98 Grade 7 students, participated in this study. Of the three classrooms, 35 students were from Classroom B, 36 from Classroom C and 27 from Classroom K. Of those 98 students, a subset of nine students participated in interviews. There was an option on the consent forms for parents to give consent to their child/ward’s participation in interviews. In addition, there was an option for students to provide or decline assent to participation in interviews. From the parents and students who provided consent and assent, nine interview participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). These interviews were designed to provide more information on students’ experiences and meaning-making practices associated with the graphic novel intervention. The rest of this section provides greater detail about the participants and the ways in which they were selected.

Teacher participants.

The three Grade 7 English language teacher participants—Jason, Jayla and Samantha (all pseudonyms)—each had varying professional experience. Jason was an “untrained” teacher and the school year 2011/2012 marked his second year of teaching. He taught English language and English literature at various grade levels. As stated earlier, untrained or qualified refers to teachers who do not hold a teaching qualification. Jason has attended various professional development workshops facilitated by the Ministry of Education. Prior to taking up the teaching position at St. Stephen’s, he graduated from one of the local Community Colleges with A level qualifications in literature and other subject areas. Samantha, a trained or qualified teacher, had five years’ teaching experience at the time of the study. She taught in social studies, history and English language and literature. Jayla, a qualified teacher, had five and a half years’ teaching experience, which included a year and a half at a primary school. Jayla had completed two professional summer training workshops in reading and one workshop on differentiating instruction. At the time, she was a member of the National Reading Club in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
**Student participants.**

There were 98 Grade 7 students enrolled for the 2011/2012 school year at St. Stephen’s secondary school. As stated in the section on setting, the school streamed these students according to their subject area achievement in what was formerly known as the Common Entrance Examination. Thirty-five students (35) achieving 70% and above in English language arts were streamed into classroom B; twenty-seven (27) students achieving 70% or above in maths were streamed in classroom K; and thirty-six (36) students scoring below 70% in English language arts and maths and those repeating the grade were streamed into classroom C. The school’s overarching aim was to provide specialised help to students in each stream.

**Sampling sub-set of students for interviews.**

Nine students were purposefully selected from the total number of students who had given assent and whose parents had given consent to their participation in the interviews. Prior to the intervention, I decided to select the interview participants through *random sampling* (Creswell, 2009) from those students who had given assent and whose parents had given consent to their participation in the interviews. However, the plan was later revised at the beginning of the intervention to reflect, as much as possible, the array of achievement capabilities of the students in each of the three classrooms. To this end, the nine interview participants were selected through *purposeful sampling* of those students who had given assent and whose parents had given consent to their child/ward’s participation in the interviews. The teachers used the previous term’s summative English language grades and knowledge of students’ literacy abilities to select three students from each of their classes who best fit the descriptors; *low achieving*, *mid achieving* and *high achieving*. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) highlight the use of expert judgement in the selection method for purposive sampling, which in this context refers to those three teachers. For instance, *low achieving* students were classified as those students whose achievement scores were below the school’s passing mark of 50%. In addition, those students provided assent and their parents provided consent for their child/ward’s participation in interviews. In the event, a teacher selected a student whose assent and consent from parents were not received, then they selected another student who fit the descriptor.
The role of the researcher.

I undertook the role of active, reflective researcher because I was intimately involved in the data collection phase at St. Stephen’s school. Given the qualitative strand of this study, it is pertinent to examine myself as a researcher as well as my relationship with the research processes and outcomes. Scholars have argued that qualitative researchers ought to reflect on their effect on research processes and outcomes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexivity allows the researcher to critically reflect on the their role in producing the knowledge and on the knowledge they produce (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As stated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the decision to focus on the research was influenced by my prior professional and research experiences and interests. I used two steps to foster reflexivity in this research. First, I kept two journals: one during field work and the other post field work—both of which included recordings of self and method. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended a reflexive journal in which researchers record a variety of information about self and method on a daily basis. I did not record information on a daily basis but only as needed. Second, I have discussed in this section and in the introductory chapter the ways in which my own perspectives and experiences have shaped this study. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), the researcher brings his/her own values, experiences and perspective to the research process, so his/her subjectivity should be considered carefully.

My intimate participation in the research process extended throughout the duration of the study. I visited the research site two weeks before the end of the second term to obtain students’ assent to participation in the study. I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the research, answered any questions, and requested students’ participation. Information sheets and consent forms were given to students. I requested that they return them no later than the start date of the study. I visited the classrooms briefly each day to collect outstanding consent and assent forms. Of the 98 students, 12 did not return parents’ consent forms; one declined the use of her data; and another student transferred at that time. After the forms were collected, I created a spreadsheet highlighting the students whose data would be excluded from analyses. Balancing the roles of researcher/former colleague was challenging at times. For instance, I encouraged teacher participants to explain events in the classroom or their impressions of students as they sometimes assumed I knew to what they referred. In another example, I noted in journal and interview transcripts that students referred to me as “Miss Noel”, a form of deference paid to a teacher. It proved difficult balancing this researcher-teacher role while building rapport with students so they would offer information more
willingly. Before the start of the study, I facilitated a workshop with the teacher participants to develop the graphic novel lessons. A detailed description of the workshop will follow in a forthcoming section.

**Methods of Data Collection**

The data collection period began in April and ended in June 2012 during the second school term (see Figure 6 below). It was considered that quantitative measures would usefully supplement and extend the qualitative analysis. The data collection sources comprised a total of 18 classroom observations of approximately 14 hours, 36 interview sessions of approximately 45 minutes each, and approximately five informal planning sessions of about 20 minutes each with all teacher participants. Data were gathered from multiple sources at various time points during the school term (see Figure 6 below).

**Figure 6.** The data collection timeline, April–June 2012.

I collected multiple sources of data, which included semi-structured interviews (Yin, 2009), surveys (Tymms, 2012), students’ writing artefacts (Yin, 2009), and observations (Cohen et al., 2007). These sources were analysed using inductive and deductive approaches. Also, I
made use of statistical analyses of the survey data using IBM SPSS Statistics V 22.0; thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of interview transcripts; a rubric tool I designed specifically to measure students’ performance on conventional writing artefacts; descriptions of graphic narrative artefacts; and the descriptions of my classroom observations related to the graphic novel intervention (Angrosino, 2012). Each method has its advantages and drawbacks, which will be discussed in this section. In this section, I account for the reasons for using each data source. In addition, I describe the ways in which other studies have utilised similar data sources to investigate the use of graphic novels in educational settings.

**Surveys.**

In recent research on *comics* and *graphic novels*, survey questionnaires from several pre-existing instruments have been used to measure adolescents’ motivation to read (Gavigan, 2010); to measure whether Classics Illustrated comic books impacted on students’ attitudes towards reading in a secondary English class (Martin, 1992); to gather participants’ literacy history (Romanelli, 2009); and as pre- and post-vocabulary and comprehension tests (Edwards, 2008). For instance, the adolescent to read profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996) was used to investigate the potential impact of *graphic novels* on students’ motivation to read and/or write. Gavigan (2010) adopted the *adolescent to read profiles* to investigate the ways in which reading graphic novels affected the values struggling male adolescents placed on reading, and to investigate the ways in which reading graphic novels affected the reading self-concepts of struggling male adolescent readers.

In this present study, reading and writing surveys were used to garner information about (i) the activities which might foster literacy in the classroom and inside the home; (ii) students’ attitudes to reading and writing; and (iii) to provide feedback on the graphic novel intervention. In this sub-section, I describe and provide a rationale for the design of both reading and writing surveys. Then, I describe the advantages and drawbacks of using surveys as a method of data collection. Finally, I describe the procedure and the challenges of administering those surveys.

The design of this study’s survey questionnaires comprised pre-existing items from extensively tested research instruments, together with some questions I designed based on the
reviewed literature on the potential benefits and challenges of reading and creating graphic novel texts. There were a total of 50 questions between both writing surveys, and a total of 28 questions between both reading surveys. The format included open-ended, Likert-type responses, four point scale, multiple choice, and rank ordering matrix questions. I selected questions from two pre-existing instruments, sometimes adding items and removing items. The pre-existing instruments were: (i) PIRLS 2006 reading questionnaire (2006); and (ii) New Zealand’s National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) Writing Assessment 2006 writing questionnaire (Cooks, Flockton, & White, 2006). According to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement’s (IEA) (2012), the PIRLS 2006 student questionnaire was designed to collect information about students’ attitudes towards reading and their reading practices. The target population was Grade 4 students. The New Zealand’s NEMP’s Writing Assessment 2006 writing questionnaire was designed to evaluate what children could do and what still needed to be done in the context of New Zealand’s national standards. The target population were years 4 (ages 8–9) and year 8 (ages 12–13). Pre-existing survey instruments were used because reliability and validity have already been established. According to Hyman, Lamb, and Bulmer (2006) there are several advantages of using pre-existing questions when designing survey questionnaires, including “the methodological work on conceptualisation and measurement has been done; this can complement the questions and provide guidance as to how they can act as indicators of concepts” (p. 3).

Firstly, I adopted as well as adapted questions from PIRLS 2006 student reading questionnaire (IEA, 2006) to help answer research question two, which asked whether graphic novel texts might impact students’ beliefs about and attitudes towards reading and writing. The PIRLS 2006 reading questionnaire (IEA, 2006) was designed to measure Fourth Grade children’s attitudes towards reading, and their reading practices in home and school environments in 45 education systems worldwide. This study’s pre-intervention survey instruments comprised 14 questions from the PIRLS 2006 reading questionnaire; 10 remained the same while four were adapted. It should be highlighted that, while I added items to four questions, the scales remained the same (see Table 4). For example, I added three items to the existing nine items for question 14 of the PIRLS survey to garner more information about students’ reading practices. Furthermore, the design of this study’s post-intervention reading survey comprised three questions adapted from the PIRLS 2006 student reading questionnaire (IEA, 2006) and one rank ordering type question, which I designed.
Table 4. Question 5 of pre-intervention survey showing the items (highlighted in colour) which were added to pre-existing PIRLS 2006 reading questionnaire.

5. What do you think about reading? Tell how much you agree with each of these statements.

*Fill one box for each line.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree a lot</th>
<th>Agree a little</th>
<th>Disagree a little</th>
<th>Disagree a lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I read only if I have to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like talking about books with other people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like reading books based on movies I have watched</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I read books after I have watched movies based on the book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like reading stories in books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would be happy if someone gave me a book as a present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think reading is boring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to read well for my future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, I adapted New Zealand’s National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) Writing Assessment 2006 questionnaire (Cooks et al., 2006) to create this study’s pre- and post-writing surveys. The objective of both surveys were to obtain data about students’ home and school literacy practices as well as students’ attitudes towards writing at two time-points. The pre-intervention survey contained 25 questions which included: (i) two questions requiring demographic information; (ii) 14 questions adapted from NEMP’s writing assessment 2006 questionnaire (Cooks et al., 2006); and (iii) nine questions which I constructed to refer specifically to writing narratives. The post-intervention survey also contained 25 questions which included: (i) 13 questions adapted from New Zealand’s NEMP’s writing assessment 2006 questionnaire (Cooks et al., 2006); and (ii) the remaining 12 questions were designed by me. The questions adapted from Cooks et al. (2006) included “How much do you like writing outside of school?”, “What do you think good writers need?”, and “What do you usually write on the computer at school?” (Cooks et al., 2006). Additionally, drawing on the reviewed literature proposing reasons for students’ negative and positive responses to graphic novels, I constructed my own questions to measure students’ metacognitive awareness of learning to create graphic narratives. Those questions, which appeared in the post-intervention survey, included “Why is it not important to write a good story using words and pictures?” The
options included, “You need to be able to draw well” and “They leave nothing to the imagination”. Moreover, the culture of St. Vincent and the Grenadines was considered in the construction of the questions. For instance, the options in question 6, (Where do you get your ideas for your stories?), included ‘folk tales’ because of the high regard of oral tradition in the Vincentian culture.

The surveys were pre-tested to detect any problems that could be rectified before administering them to the study participants. I pre-tested the reading and writing surveys with two Grade 7 students, one of each gender, whose ages were the same as those of the target group. The students involved in the pre-testing process were located in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They were selected through a process of purposeful sampling of students known by me. I asked them via Skype chat to complete the surveys, one at a time, while thinking aloud. I wanted them to think about whether they felt that options were missing, or whether they were unable to understand a question, or whether they felt the surveys were too long, among other things. Shortly thereafter, the surveys were returned to me by post. After I reviewed each survey, I then decided which questions should remain the same, be revised or excluded. For instance, both students commented that letters and diaries should not be options in questions that asked about writing practices because, in their opinion, they were outdated practices. However, I decided to keep those options since letter writing is part of the Grade 7 to 9 English language curriculum in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Using survey instruments in research has several advantages and drawbacks. Tymms (2012) identifies several advantages of survey questionnaires, such as helping overcome bias, and representativeness of who returns the data. Moreover, he suggests that they are useful for exploratory work, describing populations, outcomes or controls, and providing feedback. Another advantage of using surveys is that they allow researchers to collect data from a large number of respondents (Mertens, 2010). However, there are certain drawbacks, including the possibility of a low response rate (Tymms, 2012). To overcome the possibility of a low response rate in this study, the surveys were all administered to students in their classrooms during normal class time. Another drawback of using surveys is the potential for misreporting by respondents. According to Mertens (2010), “surveys rely on individual self-reports of their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours and as such the validity of the information is contingent on the honesty of the respondent” (p. 173). To overcome, as far as possible, the possibility of error in respondents’ reporting, I reminded students that there were no right or wrong answers.
All of this study’s survey instruments were administered to the students at two separate times with the assistance of all three teacher participants. In order to protect their privacy, an identification number was written on the front of each student’s survey after I collected them.

Qualitative case study scholars suggest that researchers should provide rich descriptions of the research-related activities as they occurred in the research setting (Stake, 1995). In this paragraph I describe the process of administering those surveys to the student participants. Two sets of reading and writing surveys were completed by all Grade 7 students at two separate times during this study (see Figure 6 above). The first set of reading and writing surveys were administered to the Grade 7 students during the third week of April 2012 as part of normal classroom processes. Ninety-three percent (93%) of the total number of students completed those surveys around that time. However, the physical space in which students completed their surveys was chaotic. It was the school’s annual Fifth Form Careers day and the Grade 7 students shifted to the Grade 11 classrooms on the other side of the school. In the students’ temporary classroom space the furniture was insufficient, so some students stood up and some became restless. Two teacher participants grouped the students so that they stood or sat with their classmates. The lack of seats meant that students completed their surveys on a rotation system. Students from each classroom were allowed to sit, have the survey instructions read to them, complete the reading surveys, and then make their seats available to other students. The teachers and I kept the other students as quiet as possible while the surveys were being completed. In the meantime, students from the other two classrooms were taken to vacant tenth grade classrooms to complete their reading surveys. The time that students were given to complete their surveys was cut short because those rooms had been designated for career day sessions. Now that that space was being occupied, I shifted those students, along with those left in the eleventh grade classrooms, to the eighth grade classrooms so that their writing surveys could be completed without interruption. The seventeen (17) absentee students completed their surveys over the course of the following week. Students completed the final set of reading and writing surveys during the final week of June 2012, shortly after they had completed an examination. Ninety-five percent (95%) of students completed their final set of surveys. In retrospect, the timing may have been inappropriate and some students appeared restless and anxious to leave the classroom. The students were instructed to leave the school’s compound after the end of their examinations, so it became imperative that students complete their surveys before they left the compound.
Interviews.

The semi-structured interview method was used to elicit verbal responses from teacher and student participants’ at three separate times throughout the study. Given the mixed methods design, I used other data methods to corroborate the interview responses. Each student and teacher participant was interviewed at three separate times (see Figure 6 above). As stated earlier, the nine student participants were selected through purposeful sampling of all 98 Grade 7 students; the students’ assent, and parent/care givers’ consent, to participation in the interviews was ascertained. Each interview lasted about 35 minutes, while teachers’ interviews lasted about 45 minutes each. The teachers’ consent to participation in the interviews was embedded in their consent to participation in the study. The semi-structured approach to the interview method was chosen because I wanted information about participants’ experiences and impressions of the graphic novel intervention at three separate time-points. In addition, I wanted to be able to follow up on any interesting responses. According to Mertens (2010), with a semi-structured approach the researcher has the flexibility to ask open-ended questions to establish a relationship with the participants (p. 371). However, one drawback is that “interviewees’ responses are subject to common problems of bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation” (Yin, 2009, pp. 108-109). One of the ways in which I tried to reduce the impact of those potential challenges was by allowing students to flip through the pages of the graphic novel exemplar, Amulet Book 1, whenever they referred directly to it. I also advised students there were no right or wrong responses to the questions.

The design of the interview guides for teacher and student participants differed by content, and at times, the number of questions. There were six interview guides in total, two guides per interview. At each time-point, one teacher and one student interview guide was used. Each teacher interview guide was divided into three broad themes, including “curriculum”, “learners” and “perception of the graphic narrative unit”. The “curriculum” theme described questions related to narrative writing curricular content, which included the use of visual modes of representation. In the pre-intervention interview I asked each teacher, “Have you used visual text resources like comics in your lessons?” By the mid- and post-intervention time-points the questions related directly to teaching the graphic narrative unit; for example, “Have you been able to transfer your practice of teaching conventional short story writing to graphic narrative writing?” In addition, some questions remained the same throughout the intervention; for instance, “To what extent do you think that graphic novels can help students
become better writers?” Another set of questions, “learners”, were designed to elicit information about their students’ attitudes to, and performance in, conventional and narrative writing. These questions included “Why might a graphic novel like Amulet motivate or demotivate your students to write short stories?” and “What strategies have you found most helpful in motivating your students? Why might those strategies have been helpful?” The third theme “perception of the graphic narrative unit” was designed to get teacher participants’ impressions of using graphic novels to teach the concepts of narrative writing for the first time: “What do you think about using graphic novels in your instruction now?” (See Appendix A).

The pre-intervention student guide related to conventional narratives, the mid-intervention questions related to students’ understanding of the lessons on creating graphic novel concepts, while the post-intervention questions were about student participants’ own graphic narrative creation. The students’ interview guides comprised three broad themes, including “reading the story”, “writing short stories” and “motivation”. The questions under the theme “reading the story” were designed to get information about read or understood short stories. In the pre-intervention interview, students were asked specifically about their strategies for reading conventional print narrative texts: “What do you do when you cannot understand a story?” At the mid- and post-intervention time-points, I asked student participants about their meaning-making strategies when reading the words and images in the graphic novel text exemplar: “Please show me one of your favourite parts of the story; a) How do you know what is happening there? b) Did you notice anything interesting about the pictures?” Other questions were drawn from Arizpe and Styles’s (2009) interview questions for students interpreting visual texts: “Do you find the words or the pictures more interesting? Do they tell the same story in different ways? Would the words still be good without the pictures? Would the pictures still be good without the words?” (p. 254). The questions under the theme “writing short stories” pertained to students’ strategies for creating conventional and graphic narratives, attitudes towards the writing/creating processes, and their own evaluation of their work. In the post-intervention interviews, students orally recalled their graphic narratives, justified their choice of material, and discussed who and how other persons assisted in the production of their stories, among other things. Question prompts included, “Tell me about your story” and “Why did you choose these colours here?” Rountree, Wong and Hannah (2002) posited that it is easier to engage the students in a discussion of their work if the object is in their physical space and may yield a richness of information.
Additionally, there were unstructured questions, which probed for things such as students’ constructions of the graphic novel texts, such as “What was the most difficult part about creating your graphic story? Please tell me why?” There were also questions that probed students’ metacognitive awareness of the graphic narrative creative process, including “What advice would you give to children your age about creating their own graphic story?” Finally, the questions under the theme “motivation” related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors, which might have aided or deterred students during the intervention. These included “Tell me, does your teacher constantly encourage you to write? What does he/she do? Why do you think he/she does that?” and “What is the least enjoyable part of the lesson so far? What makes you think that?”

Before the start of all interviews, participants were asked whether they preferred audio or video recordings, were reminded of the right to withdraw from participation in the interview process at any point, and their right to deny use of interview data. At the first set of interviews, it was important to gain participants’ trust and build a rapport. Follow up questions such as “Could you give me an example?” and “Can you show me where in the text?” helped to generate more details. Another useful interview strategy was showing interest in, and empathy towards, participants’ responses (Braun & Clarke, 2013) with my own responses, such as “Yes, I know what you mean…” or “That was something I experienced as a teacher as well…”. However, I avoided, wherever possible, leading participants to align their responses with my own views. I stressed comments such as “Tell me what you think” and “You can be honest about it”. I was aware of the power relationship in which I might have been perceived as possessing expert knowledge on graphic novels, which might have intimidated some teacher participants. To overcome that challenge, I knew it was important to engage participants as experts on their own experiences and keep the flow of conversation going (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In closing the interviews, I asked participants whether there was anything else they would like to say, or if they had any questions about the research. Then, I switched off the recorder and thanked the participants for their time and willingness to share their experiences with me. Wherever possible, I listened to interview recordings and read through field notes, to devise follow up questions for later interviews. Additionally, I reflected on my own interviewing performance by listening to interview recordings. For example, I looked for instances where participants struggled to express their ideas, and then of ways of improving my skills to facilitate greater discussion. Following each interview, I listened to the tape or video recording and wrote field notes when I returned home. Then I returned to the site with additional questions or issues to follow up with interview participants.
According to Patton (2002), the period after an interview is a critical time of reflection and elaboration, which the researcher must not forgo.

There were several challenges in conducting interviews with teacher and student participants. These challenges included gaining access to rooms to conduct interviews, and scheduling times for interviews that could accommodate the interview participants. The challenges associated with gaining access to rooms proved tedious at times. The first room that the school’s administration had designated for the study’s interviews, the audio-visual room, was being renovated at the time. Then, the school suggested the use of the computer lab. However, it was often difficult to schedule times that coincided with vacant lab periods and the participants, particularly teachers’ non-teaching periods. In addition, there were times when the lab was being used for external examinations or staff meetings. At one point, the student interviews took place in a vacant classroom. At another point, the final teacher interviews took place in the staff kitchen, which is adjacent to the staffroom. Those interviews were disrupted by noise from the staffroom or other teachers requesting permission to use the kitchen space. Another challenge included scheduling interview times to avoid clashes with periods of instruction, extracurricular activities, and participants’ personal obligations.

**Narratives as texts/artefacts.**

The conventional and graphic narrative texts that students constructed, were collected to provide insight into the graphic novel intervention. According to Norum (2008) “[a]rtifacts become data through the questions posed about them and the meanings assigned to them by the researcher” (p. 24). It should be highlighted that narratives in the context of this study refer to two qualitative data sources—conventional and graphic narrative texts—which were collected to answer different questions. The narratives’ textual/artefact data had two broad uses: (i) to generate quantitative data from texts or qualitative data; and (ii) to understand students’ subjective interpretations of the narrative writing tasks. I used these artefacts to corroborate other data sources. Furthermore, the idea of using artefacts created outside or in the classroom context is not new. Some researchers have argued for schools to recognise and value students’ out-of-school meaning-making practices by using everyday objects and varying forms of knowledge from out-of-school as an entry point to re-engage students in literacy (Moll et al., 1992; Pahl, 2010). In the context of artefacts that contain visual images, Weber (2008) argued that there are several advantages to, and ways of using, visual images in
research. One proposition is that the production of images as data can act as a springboard for “further discussion, interviews, and/or analysis” and that “the very process of creating images is often a major part of the research process itself” (p. 47).

This sub-section describes two forms of narrative texts/artefacts—conventional and graphic—which were collected at two time-points. That is, one set of conventional narratives were collected at the pre- and post-intervention time-points, while one set of graphic narratives were collected only at the post-intervention phase (see Figure 6).

**Collecting conventional narratives as artefacts/texts.**

Two sets of conventional narrative artefacts/texts were collected to help determine whether the graphic novel intervention impacted students’ conventional writing between the pre- and post-intervention time-points. I had intended to generate quantitative data from this qualitative data source. At the first time-point, teacher participants instructed their students to write a conventional narrative based on “An experience I will never forget” on a sheet of ruled paper. Those students who were absent completed their conventional narratives in their classrooms at later dates. In total, 86% of the total number of Grade 7 students completed their pre-intervention conventional narrative texts. Furthermore, all 98 Grade 7 student participants were expected to complete their second conventional narrative text/artefact at the final time-point (third week of June). The teachers reported that the narrative topics emerged from discussions with the students. One of these topics was “The day in the life of a coin”. In total, 63% of students completed the second conventional writing piece.

**Collecting graphic narratives as artefacts/texts.**

One set of graphic narrative artefacts/texts were collected at the post-intervention time-point to help answer the question “How and how effectively do students make meaning of graphic novel texts?” I wanted to gain insight into students’ subjective interpretations of the graphic narrative creative process; that is, the ways in which, and how effectively, nine student participants (sub-sample) might have used graphic novel conventions to create their graphic narrative texts/artefacts. It should be highlighted that the graphic narratives were supposed to have been based on students’ post-intervention conventional narratives. In total, only 72% of students completed their graphic narrative. Moreover, there were some drawbacks to
collecting the graphic narratives, including students’ shift in focus from completing their narratives to the end-of-school term exam preparation.

**Observations.**

I adopted the role of observer to document the graphic novel lessons in the three Grade 7 classrooms. I used a semi-structured observational approach (Cohen et al., 2007) to data collection to corroborate the other data sources in the study. A *semi-structured observation* is defined by Cohen et al. (2007) as having “an agenda of issues but will gather data to illuminate these issues in a far less pre-determined or systematic manner” (p. 305). Instead of using pre-determined, piloted categories, such as that of *highly structured observations*, I decided to create an agenda to guide my observations (see Appendix B). At the pre-intervention time-point, teacher participants informed their students that I would observe their graphic novel lessons during the school term. When in the classrooms, I observed and recorded in a notebook descriptions of instructional processes related to the graphic novel lessons during approximately 18 sessions. At the end of the day, I would transfer those observations into a Word document prepared specifically for classroom observations.

My role of observer sometimes extended to direct participation in the graphic novel lessons. For instance, the teacher participants requested my input in clarifying or extending graphic novel content information. I also conducted post-observations feedback and discussions with teachers. These were informal ‘talks’ often occurring in the corridors after lessons, or in the staff room during teachers’ non-teaching periods. These discussions were aimed at improving teaching in forthcoming lessons. There are certain drawbacks to using observations as a research method, including the subjective interpretation of events which might affect the validity and reliability of the data (Angrosino, 2012). As far as possible, I focused on descriptions of the instructional processes rather than judgements on the effectiveness of the teachers’ practice.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

In this section, I describe the procedures and methodology of analysing the qualitative and quantitative sources of data collected in this study, including methodological challenges faced. These data sources included 376 reading and writing surveys, 35 interview transcripts, 146
students’ conventional narrative writing artefacts, 71 graphic narrative writing artefacts, and observation notes from approximately 18 teaching sessions of approximately 45 minutes per session. In this study’s research design, it was considered that quantitative methods (that is, surveys) would supplement the qualitative methods (that is, interviews, narrative texts/artefacts and observations).

**Surveys.**

The survey data were analysed to find out the ways in which the graphic novel intervention might have impacted students’ beliefs about and attitudes towards reading and writing from the pre-intervention to post-intervention time-points. In this sub-section, I describe the procedures undertaken during the data management phase, and the statistical analyses that were conducted. In addition, the steps taken to ensure the validity and reliability of survey results will be described throughout the sub-section.

The data management and data preparation procedures were conducted prior to data analyses. Firstly, data analysis began with a data preparation phase. I recorded descriptions for variable, variable name, and coding instructions in a data codebook. The coding instructions were codes for response categories that included zeroes and ones for data with binary response categories. Then, using the instructions in the data codebook, I entered the coded survey data into a data matrix worksheet in an Excel spreadsheet. To ensure the reliability of the data entry, an experienced, independent researcher randomly selected 20% of the cases and then reviewed them. Then, the worksheets were copied into separate IBM SPSS Statistics V 22.0 datasets. The next step was data cleaning. One challenge was deciding whether to substitute or omit missing values. It is recommended that researchers report the patterns of missing data and the statistical procedures used to manage them (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010). The percentage of missing data in relation to the entire dataset can lead to distortions, such as biased estimates (Acock, 2005). I took several steps to manage missing values, that is, unanswered items. First, I manually checked survey items against the missing values to determine whether it was an error in data entry or item non-response. Secondly, one case related to participation attrition was omitted from analyses. Thirdly, I observed a pattern of missing values for a few questions. I then averaged the missing values that fell below the 10–15% range. From the literature, it is unclear what is the cut-off point for the percentage of
missing data; some researchers suggest 5% and others 20% (Acock, 2005) before statistical analyses likely become biased.

A range of statistical analyses were conducted on the student survey data after the processes of data management and data preparation. I used a number of statistical techniques including descriptive statistics (frequencies, mean, mode, range and standard deviation) to summarise data of a single or number of variables, as well as to indicate the characteristics common to the sample. Correlational statistics (simple correlational coefficient) were used to determine the strength of the potential relationship between the scores and direct impact of the intervention. Additionally, inferential statistics ($t$ tests) were used to determine whether scores differed significantly across time-points and to compare differences between classrooms. In addition, I conducted internal consistency reliability analyses (Cronbach’s Alpha) to ensure the trustworthiness of the results. Overall, the main limitation of the statistical results was an over-representation of girls; however, this study did not set out to interrogate the results based on gender.

By way of illustration, I provide some insight into the process of survey analysis. The pre-intervention surveys were analysed separately from the post-interventions surveys, then both sets of results were compared to ascertain whether there were any statistical differences over time. I used IBM SPSS Statistics V 22.0 to generate overall means for question 5 on the pre-intervention reading survey, which asked what students thought about reading, and then compared the total mean score across pre- and post-surveys. Since question 5 contained both negatively and positively worded items, I had to reconcile those differences so that a high value indicated the same kind of response on each item. The negatively worded items which included ‘I think reading is boring’ and ‘I read only if I have to’, rated on a four-point scale (1 [Agree a lot], 2 [Agree a little], 3 [Disagree a little], 4 [Disagree a lot]), were transformed or recoded into different variables using compute variable function in IBM SPSS Statistics V 22.0. So the old variables 4 (Disagree a lot) were recoded into variable 1 (Agree a lot), variable 3 recoded into variable 2 and so on. I also labelled those reverse variables to distinguish them from the original variables, which safeguarded against confusion in the later analysis and interpretation stage. The recoded variables were merged with existing reading survey data sets, labelled accordingly, and then saved as a new dataset.
After the transformation process, a paired samples $t$ test was conducted to measure the statistical differences and significance between the total mean score for each of the two time-points (see Table 5 below). Additionally, the $t$ test generated mean scores for each item in question 5 across the pre- and post-intervention reading surveys to provide further insight into the statistical differences across the time-points. The forthcoming results chapter provides specific information about survey analyses.

Although peer debriefing is a strategy for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research (Mertens, 2010), I sought the feedback of an independent, experienced quantitative researcher to meaningfully interrogate my statistical findings and interpretations and challenge my own assumptions about the research. He probed the findings, at times providing alternative testing techniques for subsequent analyses. Given his expertise in education research, he possessed knowledge of research carried out in the classroom setting.

| Table 5. Paired Samples Test, students’ attitudes to reading pre- and post-intervention. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paired Samples Test | Paired Differences | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper |
| Pair 1 | Attitudes to Reading 1 - Attitudes to Reading 2 | -.11424 | .46461 | .05514 | -.22421 | -.00427 |

| Paired Samples Test |
|---|---|---|---|
| | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Pair 1 | Attitudes to Reading 1 - Attitudes to Reading 2 | -2.072 | 70 | .042 |

**Interviews.**

In this section I describe the thematic analysis qualitative approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to preparing and analysing the semi-structured teachers’ and students’ interview data, and the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the analyses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According
Braun and Clarke’s (2006) conceptualisation of thematic analysis contains four stages: transcription, then the formation of codes, followed by grouping those codes into categories and then inferring themes from the categories. The teachers’ interview data set and student interview data set were analysed separately. The first stage involved the process of transcribing 35 interview recordings; nine teacher and 26 student recordings. Initially, I contemplated using the services of a professional academic consultancy company to transcribe the interviews. However, I decided to transcribe them myself for two reasons. First, although transcribing data is time consuming, it is said that it brings about greater familiarity and insight into one’s data (Patton, 2002). Secondly, listening to the tapes while reading or transcribing allows the researcher to become even more immersed in the data (Patton, 2002). I listened to all the interview data twice to get a sense of the potential categories. Then, I transcribed 35 interview recordings in their entirety directly into separate Word documents. I omitted verbal utterances such as ‘erm’, ‘er’, ‘uhuh’ and maintained slang and colloquial words or wordings (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In cases where student interviewees mentioned their classmates’, names were changed to pseudonyms. Anonymity of all participants is an ethical consideration specified in participant information and consent sheets. Although there were a few instances of indecipherable speech, most of the data was transcribed.

The next stage involved the formulation of codes and categories after repeated analysis of the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the first step is familiarising oneself with the data (p. 87). So I carefully and intently (re)read each set of interview data; teacher data then student data or vice versa. The intent of the repeated reading was to identify ideas in individual transcripts followed by searching for patterns across data sets. The next procedure was generating initial codes across the entire data set and gathering data relevant to each initial code (p. 87). A code describes the main idea or summary of an excerpt of data. Saldana (2009) explains that “a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). The same codes can be applied throughout
the data but there can be variation within the same code. Saldana (2009) provides a useful example of variation within the same code: “They may all share with you their personal perceptions of school experiences, for example, but their individual value, attitude, and belief systems about education may vary greatly from being bored and disengaged to being enthusiastic and intrinsically motivated” (p.6). For this study’s interview analysis, I ascribed initial codes to the units of data in one transcript then searched for units of data dealing with the same issue across the data set. Table 6, below, illustrates an example of codes applied to a small extract of data from teacher Jason’s interview. I asked him about the ways in which he worked together with the other teacher participants to deliver the graphic novel lessons. At one point, he commented on his collaborations with Samantha. Jason shared his knowledge about how to read graphic novel texts with Samantha and then Samantha shared her experiences of teaching the graphic novel lessons.

Table 6. Unit of text from a teacher interview transcript and the codes applied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Extract</th>
<th>Codes applied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I: Have you found it useful collaborating with the other English Language teachers?</td>
<td>Filling in gaps in knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: Yes I found it especially useful with like Samantha, because she and I worked along a lot. For example, when she talked about the facial expression stuff that kind of gave me the idea about what I did inside my class.</td>
<td>Collaborative lesson planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: Was the collaboration just one way, just she helping you, did you help her with anything?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R: It goes two ways. If it had to do with content because she was unfamiliar with graphic novels, how to read it, what are familiar graphic novels, and those kinds of things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third step suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) is searching for themes. In order to identify themes, codes are reconfigured and then grouped into categories. The coding process allows the researcher to “organize and group similarly coded data into categories or “families” because they share some characteristic – the beginning of a pattern” (Saldana, 2009, p. 8). The process of coding and recoding results in more defined codes and categories. Appendix C
contains category labels and accompanying codes for students’ interview data while Appendix D contains category labels and accompanying codes for teachers’ interview data. Table 7, below, shows two examples of categories and their respective codes from the analysis of teachers’ interview data. The ‘writing transfer process’ category referred to teachers’ classroom observations of students creating their graphic narratives, while the ‘teaching strategies’ category was assigned to instances where teachers spoke about some of the strategies they used to teach the graphic novel unit.

Table 7: Category labels and accompanying codes from teachers’ data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description of code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing transfer process</td>
<td>Teachers’ classroom observations of students creating their</td>
<td>Balancing visual and verbal modes</td>
<td>Both visual and verbal elements must work together to tell the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>graphic narratives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflecting learning style</td>
<td>Graphic novels appealed to the learning needs of particular students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating mental images</td>
<td>Some students might have been able to form images in their head but were unable to put those images down on paper (whether as conventional or graphic narratives).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preferring one of the two forms of narrative</td>
<td>Some students preferred to create either the conventional or graphic narrative first.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing a blueprint</td>
<td>Conventional narrative used as a guide for creating graphic narrative and vice versa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prior creative knowledge</td>
<td>Prior experience or lack thereof either hindered or supported the graphic narrative creative process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing skills</td>
<td>Drawing skills as either limiting or liberating for students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching strategies</td>
<td>Teachers’ classroom observations of students creating their graphic narratives</td>
<td>Explicit demonstration of visual concepts</td>
<td>Teachers showed students how to create visual concepts such as characterisation and setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linking ‘new’ principles or concepts and skills to prior knowledge of principles and concepts and skills</td>
<td>Teachers built on their students’ prior knowledge of key conventional narrative writing concepts or principles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing examples of concepts or principles</td>
<td>Teachers presented material from Amulet Book 1 to help learners master new concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice (guided and independent)</td>
<td>Teachers presented new concepts and then elicited practice for desired outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers guided practice through pair and small group activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers used questions to elicit specific responses about concepts as well as to promote metacognitive awareness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 7, ‘writing transfer process’ category refers to instances in the data where teachers talked about their observations of the process in which students transferred their monomodal, conventional narratives into multimodal, graphic narratives. Teachers talked about the ways in which students tried to ‘balance the visual and verbal modes’ (code) in their multimodal, graphic narratives. According to Jayla, some of her students transferred too many words (verbal mode) from their conventional to graphic narratives: “I found that because some of them used a lot of words in their short stories. When they transferred it they got a bit muddled because they want to put the same amount and type of words in the speech bubbles”. Teachers also talked about the ways in which creating multimodal, graphic narratives provided support for some students’ monomodal, conventional narratives. Jason observed that some of his students created their graphic narratives, which they then transferred to conventional narratives. He surmised that the multimodal graphic narratives ‘provided a blueprint’ (code)
for creating their monomodal, conventional narratives: “Those who were not so strong in English were the ones who jumped at the opportunity to draw because they had a blueprint as to how they wanted to plot to work and then they went into the writing process”.

The fourth stage in Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis approach is inferring themes from the categories and then providing provisional definitions for those themes. The researcher infers patterns or trends from comparing and merging the categories. Themes are then inferred from the collation of those categories. A theme “is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection, not something that is, in itself, coded” (Saldana, 2009, p.13). Additionally, a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Furthermore, themes can come from the data or from existing theoretical models of the phenomenon under investigation. Although themes can come from existing theoretical models, I did not impose any pre-determined codes, categories or themes onto the data. I was cognisant of categories and themes from studies which investigated children’s multimodal responses to visual texts, such as picture books (Arizpe & Styles, 2009; Kiefer, 1991) but decided that the process of reducing the data into meaningful themes allows the data to speak for itself rather than imposing predetermined themes on them (Grbich, 1999). Braun and Clarke suggested that during the iterative process of reviewing the themes, attention should be paid to the possibility of new or revised codes, categories and sub-categories. While recoding and recategorising, I inferred two patterns: a few codes were included in more than one theme, and very few sub-themes. Eventually the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the teachers’ data resulted in 84 codes, which were then collated into nine categories which were grouped into three themes. While the analysis of the students’ data resulted in 51 codes, which were collated into 11 categories and further grouped into three themes. To illustrate, the category from teachers’ interview data ‘writing transfer process’ (see Table 7), helped to form a theme derived from students’ interview data, ‘Negotiating the diverse demands for adapting conventional short stories into graphic short stories’. So the instances where teachers talked about how their students negotiated the process of transferring one form of narrative to the other helped to answer the first and third research questions: 1) how and how effectively do students make meaning from graphic novel texts? and 3) In what ways does an intervention using graphic novels impact students’ conventional writing? Table 8, below, provides a synopsis of the themes derived from the teachers’ and students’ interview data along with the definitions for those themes.
Table 8. Summary of main themes interpreted from the interview data along with their descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>The graphic novel intervention represented a shift in the curriculum to give visual representation prominence through the study and production of an exemplar of a multimodal text (graphic novels).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning visual modes of representation and</td>
<td>Explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional short story writing. Existing teaching strategies for monomodal storytelling can be married with other teaching strategies from teachers’ professional repertoire to teach graphic novels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meaning-making challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub-theme:</strong> Teachers evaluating their pedagogic practice and their students’ learning</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> This sub-theme refers to teacher participants’ evaluations of their practice and their students’ learning and the ways in which those evaluations helped to refine their teaching practices during the intervention and to potentially inform their future practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations.</td>
<td>Teachers new to teaching multimodal texts (graphic novels) discuss how collaborations with stakeholders over the course of the intervention helped in assimilate ‘new’ knowledge and develop lessons on graphic novels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>The contributions of various multimodal resources (language, images, etc.) as well as their interaction and integration in making meaning from the primary graphic novel text.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting the primary graphic novel text.</td>
<td>Students new to constructing multimodal texts discuss how they moved from monomodal to multimodal text production and the challenges along the way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating the diverse demands for adapting conventional short stories into graphic short stories.</td>
<td>The contributions of other stakeholders (peers, teachers, parents) as well as the varying interaction with those stakeholders in helping students new to constructing multimodal texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sub-theme can be described as sharing the same concept as a theme, but zeros in on one specific aspect or focus of that theme. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), sub-themes are essentially themes-within-a theme. They can be useful for giving structure to a particularly large and complex theme, and also for demonstrating the hierarchy of meaning within the data” (p. 22). In this study, an example of a sub-theme is ‘Teachers evaluating their pedagogic practice and their students’ learning’ which falls under the theme ‘Explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional short story writing’. This sub-theme
focuses on teacher participants’ evaluations of their practice and their students’ learning and the ways in which those evaluations helped to refine their teaching practices during the intervention and potentially inform their future practice.

To corroborate the themes, I relied on the assistance of three independent researchers to search for any data that might contradict the themes, or instances where a theme might not have been sufficiently justified. So I engaged in the process of peer debriefing to challenge my thinking about the analysis and interpretation of the interview data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), peer debriefing “is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytical session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308). For instance, I presented eight initial themes interpreted from the teachers’ interview data to a disinterested peer from a Faculty other than my own. I discussed how I arrived at those eight themes using codes, categories and excerpts from the transcripts to support my rationale. My peer questioned whether those eight themes provided unique insight into the phenomenon. After the peer debriefing, I recoded and recategorised the data and inferred that some categories might have been sub-categories which resulted in three themes.

**Narratives as texts/ artefacts.**

Conventional and graphic narrative texts/ artefacts were analysed to provide further insight into students’ responses to the graphic novel intervention. Statistical analyses were conducted on conventional narrative texts/ artefacts to determine whether there was any statistical difference between the pre- and post-intervention time-points, while basic descriptions of graphic narrative texts/ artefacts were used to corroborate other sources of data and to help understand how and how effectively students might have communicated their stories. In this sub-section I describe the procedures for analysing both forms of texts/ artefacts. In addition, the steps taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the analyses will be described throughout the sub-section.

**Analysing conventional narrative texts/ artefacts.**

Firstly, I developed a rubric for the assessment of conventional narratives (see Appendix E). The average scores of the first set of conventional short stories and the second set of
conventional short stories were compared to assess whether there were any statistical differences between them. In order to assess each piece of conventional short story writing data, I developed a conventional short story writing rubric mainly informed by the National Grades 7–9 Language Arts curriculum (The Ministry of Education, n.d.) criteria for assessing short story writing. The conventional writing rubric contained categories for specific elements of short story writing: organisation, plot, dialogue, characters, point of view, setting, ideas and content, language features and mechanics. Four items on the assessment scheme measured the proficiency in each category: 4 = Exceptional, 3 = Acceptable, 2 = Needs improvement, and 1 = Limited or not present. Furthermore, in each category there was a description for each item. For instance, in the plot category, a piece of writing was awarded a 4 = Exceptional, if, according to the rubric, the plot was fully developed and it was easy to understand factors such as the problem and why it was a problem, if it had a gripping climax, if the solution was easy to understand and it was logical. A sample of the conventional short story writing rubric is contained in Appendix E. Each piece of conventional short story writing was assessed in each category, a score assigned and then the scores for all of the categories were tallied. The tallied scores represented a score out of 36 points. This assessment procedure was carried out on both sets of conventional short story writing pieces collected at the pre- and post-intervention time points.

The researcher’s development of an assessment tool, a subjective process, raises questions around reliability and validity of the tool (Hambleton, 2012). To overcome this limitation, the reliability and validity of the assessment tool was checked by an independent, experienced quantitative researcher on two separate occasions. We scored 36 student conventional narratives independently, then checked the consistency of the score sheets. At times, there were differences in categorical (e.g. plot, characterisation) and/or overall scores (sum total of all categorical scores), which we then tried to reach a consensus on. If there was no consensus the independent rater’s score took precedence over mine. Those challenges are not uncommon and can occur for several reasons, including differences in the strategies raters may adopt (Hambleton, 2012). I used two main methods to resolve those inconsistencies. We discussed: 1) whether the qualitative description of a category needed clarification; and 2) whether the measurement scales needed re-calibration. One useful example is the reworking of the ‘characterisation’ category to provide a specific guide for coders. In the first draft, characterisation with a rating of ‘2’ under ‘needs developing’ was described as “Some characters are fitting for the story”. The description was changed in the third draft after a
discussion between the independent researcher and me; “Characters described but not developed based on dialogue, actions, and thoughts”.

**Analysing graphic narrative texts/artefacts.**

The descriptions of graphic narrative texts helped to provide further insight into how and how effectively students made meaning from graphic novel texts. There are varying approaches to analysing multimodal texts that contain images, which are appropriated from disciplines such as art history and visual design (Karlsson, 2012). I decided to provide descriptions of what (physical properties) was created, as opposed to why (historical or cultural context), or how (production processes), to help answer the first research question, how and how effectively do students make meaning from graphic novel texts? The descriptions of what (physical properties) focused on image and word construction of the graphic narrative. One useful example is the ways in which facial expressions and text in speech balloons help with characterisation in a graphic narrative text. In this section I briefly describe one main challenge in determining a method for analysing visual images, the procedure for analysis and the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the analyses. It should be cautioned that the analyses are a means of evaluating the intervention programme and improving practice.

In general, visual data analysis might be challenging since it requires its own specific attention to issues of validity, interpretation, ethics and the relationship between the research and the researched (Reavey & Johnson, 2010). For instance, one of the ethical considerations of visual data analysis is blurring of participants’ faces in video data. In another useful example, Jewitt and Kress (2003) devised a methodology responsive to the complex nature of multimodal analysis. The study centred on the application of multimodal analysis to teaching and learning in a Year 9 Science class. They used the concept of *rhetorical framing*, interpreting how visual images communicate meaning, to generate a descriptive account of each video-taped lesson. Each mode of communication was analysed separately followed by an exploration of how each mode was used to make meaning with others. However, Jewitt and Kress (2003) acknowledged that a multimodal methodology, such as *rhetorical framing*, is subjective because it raises questions about how an individual can ascertain the exact meaning of a mode. In my study, one challenge was providing a qualitative, descriptive and rigorous account of how and how effectively the student participants communicated their narratives through the graphic narrative texts. To overcome that challenge, I created a framework comprising a rating scale to assess the end product of students’ multimodal productions, that
is, their graphic narrative texts. The learning objective was to provide insight into the ways in which, and how effectively, students used visual and verbal features of the graphic novel text type in the creation of their own graphic narratives. The framework comprised a rating scale to distinguish the level of mastery: exceptional, acceptable, developing and limited. Additionally, the performance criteria – selected elements of graphic novel texts linked to the learning objectives – are listed in one column: transitions and layout, plot, characters, dialogue, narrative point of view, setting, ideas and content and graphic novel features. The range of accomplishments provides descriptions that clarify the meaning of each criterion, at each level of mastery. Furthermore, there is a column for additional feedback (See Appendix F).

I worked with Joan (a pseudonym), an experienced, independent, qualitative researcher and visual arts educator, to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis. I purposefully sampled 25 graphic narrative texts, which represented about 18% of the entire graphic narrative data set. To remind the reader, those graphic narrative samples were the product of the transfer of conventional into graphic narrative texts. These graphic narratives provided evidence of the students’ multiliteracies learning in the following performance areas: [exceptional], [acceptable], [developing] or [limited]. Joan and I independently assessed each of the 25 graphic narrative samples using the framework to ensure the consistency of the analyses. When our analyses conflicted we deliberated until we found a common ground. Additionally, Joan provided further comments about the graphic narrative samples, which provided useful examples of the different ways visual/verbal linkage might work. What follows is an example of Joan’s comments about one graphic narrative, which was assessed as [developing]:

Good use of visual clues/cue in frame where character knocks table over and plant on floor because of excitement. Otherwise the images really needed the text to tell the story – think about using body language (facial expressions in close-up of huge smile, arms waving excitedly in air). Maybe add some thought bubbles with her imaginings about Canada. Also think about putting a visual cue for Trinidad, Canada etc so the reader knows they’re very different places. Ending felt weak – didn’t see the relatives. Cars could have been driving towards mountains etc. (personal communication, January 12, 2013)

The visual and verbal texts are interdependent. The graphic narrative in Appendix C relates to the comments above.
**Analysing observation data.**

The purpose of the observation data was to identify the ways in which teachers delivered the graphic novel lessons. Additionally, the observation data helped to corroborate findings from other data sources. As stated in the section on methods of data collection, I recorded observations of the graphic novel lessons. The format of the observation notes included: date, name of classroom, name of teacher, teachers’ strategies, teaching and learning activities, and any other notable/interesting occurrences. Additionally, I noted my own involvement in the classroom processes (see Appendix B).

I systematically identified the teaching strategies, and teaching and learning activities teachers used to teach the graphic novel lessons. I focused on two aspects of the lessons: (i) how teachers taught graphic novel narrative conventions through a guided study of a graphic novel exemplar, *Amulet Book 1*; and (ii) how teachers guided students through the creation of their own graphic narrative texts. The objective of the guided study of *Amulet Book 1* was that students should have been able to infer information from the textual and visual narrative conventions such as plot, characterisation, setting, narrative, and theme. One of the objectives of creating graphic narratives stated that students should have been able to use visual and verbal features of the graphic novel text type in the creation of their own graphic narratives (see Appendix H).

The systematic analysis revealed that teachers used various strategies to demonstrate the narrative connections (e.g. plot and characterisation) between traditional texts and graphic novel texts. Additionally, teachers chose activities that helped students to identify the differences in the ways in which narrative conventions are represented in traditional versus graphic novel texts. For instance, teacher participant Jayla presented speech in the form of a character dialogue, a feature used in drama. Then, she instructed students to draw the actors/characters and then insert their speech into speech balloons. Additionally, I inferred that most lessons moved from connecting prior and ‘new’ knowledge to questioning to demonstrating, then activities to facilitate practice (e.g. independent, collaborative) to giving feedback (e.g. teachers to students, peer to peer). Sometimes, teachers provided more opportunities for practice, repeated demonstration, or re-taught some concepts after student evaluation. Furthermore, I deduced that the observation data illustrated instances of teachers’ professional learning. For example, teachers’ transmitted their knowledge of comic terminology through speech and demonstration in their classrooms.
The Graphic Novel Intervention

In the previous sections I described the methods of data collection and data analysis for this study. There are other components that played an integral role in the design and implementation of the graphic novel intervention. In the following section, I describe three of those components, which allowed for the investigation of the pedagogical potential of graphic novel texts. These included (i) teacher learning development workshop, (ii) the graphic novel Unit plan, and (iii) the synopsis and synthesis of my classroom observations of the lessons on graphic novels.

Teacher professional development workshop.

A formal teacher professional development workshop was held prior to the start of this study’s intervention. It provided this study’s first opportunity for teacher participants to interact within a community of professionals. The workshop supported the arguments that teachers need some level of visual literacy, whether through formal or informal activities, in order to effectively teach graphic novels (e.g. Albers, 2007; Arizpe & Styles, 2008) and that teacher professional development initiatives can support students’ multiliteracies learning (e.g. Schuck et al., 2013). In this study, the purpose of the workshop was twofold:

1) the use of multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, had not been used as a tool for teaching and learning prior to the intervention, so it was imperative that teachers’ professional learning was developed through participatory activities; and

2) provide opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge and experience and to collaborate on ideas for graphic novel lessons.

I employed Bitz’s (2004) conceptual framework for a training workshop for volunteer instructors, participating in his Comic Book Project, who received training in areas such as basic art techniques. Bitz’s Comic Book Project was framed as providing an alternative pathway into literacy by supporting students in the creation of their own comics.

In this study, I facilitated one two-hour workshops with three teacher participants in March 2012, near the end of the second school term. The training workshop was divided into three main parts: (i) the ways in which visual and textual clues are used to read a graphic novel; (ii) research supporting the use of graphic novel texts as legitimate tools for teaching and learning;
and (iii) integrating a pre-designed graphic novel teaching unit into the existing English language curriculum (see Appendix I).

It began with “what is a graphic novel?” and then looked at visual and textual cues and clues used to read them. Teachers were engaged in a sequencing activity where they had to place cut-outs of graphic novel text pages in order of events. Using Versaci’s (2008) activities, I helped teacher participants become engaged with finding meaning across several panels of a selected graphic novel text. In that activity, teachers were required to reassemble separate panel cutouts into a coherent page and then to justify their choices. He recommended that “This task asks students to think critically about a complex series of images in terms of narrative, tone, and theme” (Versaci, 2008, p. 99). I extended that activity to teacher participants who were learning new content material in preparation for teaching graphic novels. In the context of this study, graphic novels had not been used in their classrooms before, so both teachers and students needed to become critical, literate visual meaning-makers, related to graphic novel conventions and codes. This activity was followed by a discussion of the visual and textual cues and clues that supported their reconstruction of the text. Teachers were encouraged to think about how visual and textual features worked together to tell the story. Then I presented McCloud’s (1994) exposition on how perception, specifically closure, helps readers to make sense of the action. At that point it was important for teachers to address any assumptions about the appropriateness of graphic novels for classroom learning. They viewed excerpts from acclaimed graphic novels, such as Persepolis, Mauls and Derogates; discussions ensued about the ability of graphic novels to address complex themes. They also discussed the varying use of images and layout to tell those stories.

The second part of the workshop introduced some educational research using graphic novels and comics in general as literacy tools. The aim was to present graphic novels as a viable tool for learning. Afterwards, a discussion supported by learning as inquiry framework revolved around useful strategies for teaching a graphic novel text. This should have been followed up by a group break-out, where teachers were expected to develop a mock lesson on any graphic novel convention supported by an excerpt from the primary text selected for the study; however this did not happen. Reasons for the exclusion of this and other activities will be discussed subsequently.
The workshop concluded with the distribution of a pre-designed teaching unit. The primary objective of the unit was for teachers to guide their students through reading a primary graphic novel text, *Amulet Book 1*. This involved explicitly teaching how characters, setting, plot, dialogue and theme are represented in a graphic novel text; how to infer information from the graphic narrative visual and textual elements; and culminating with students creating their own short graphic novel text. There was time allocated to discuss any perceived challenges of teaching the unit. The teachers then had the two-week Easter vacation to reflect on a very busy professional development session.

By the end of the workshop, teachers were enthusiastic but apprehensive about implementing the unit. Teacher Jason was most familiar with the graphic novel form because he read comics online and collected what he described as ‘serious’ graphic novels. Conversely, the other two teachers had read comics, but were not avid readers of the form. Jason’s engagement with the graphic novel content presented in the workshop put the other teachers at ease. He led the discussions on the complexity of the form and its potential to motivate students, and was positioned by the other teachers as an expert of graphic novel content knowledge. They all expressed confidence in teaching the unit but implored me to work with them on site for the duration of the study. I agreed to working on site and observing lessons for the entire study. This meant that an application for modification of the ethics application was submitted to and approved by the University of Auckland’s Research Ethics Committee. In addition, they requested that I email the presentation slides to help them assimilate the content.

The teachers’ workload at the time of the workshop might have hindered their engagement with the session. First, the time allocated was cut almost in half, from three to less than two hours. The atmosphere on site was tense as the teacher participants graded students’ scripts and collated term grades for multiple subject areas. In addition, the teacher participants were assigned ‘form teacher’ roles so preparing report books was another priority. Secondly, I read the audience (late arrival to workshop) and the non-verbal cues indicating tiredness and possibly the impression that the workshop might have been perceived as more workload. As a result, I shortened the length of the session and adapted the content to suit. Unfortunately, it meant that teachers did not have the opportunity to create a short graphic novel text. One teacher requested that I send the sessions’ materials to her via email for perusal during the
Easter break. Thirdly, teachers were unable to receive their copies of the primary graphic novel text, *Amulet Book 1*, at the end of the workshop due to shipping delays. To overcome this challenge, teachers agreed to share my copy of the text in order to become familiar with the content. In addition, the unit package included material on the text, e.g., synopsis, characterisation, themes, setting, etc. Copies of the text eventually arrived during the first week of the following term, just in time for the start of the unit.

In this section, I described the teacher professional development workshop, which supported teachers’ practices, including the development of graphic novel lessons. The next section focuses on another tool that was used to investigate the impact of the graphic novel intervention.

The graphic novel teaching unit plan.

The graphic novel teaching unit plan was another tool to investigate the impact of the graphic novel intervention. The overarching objective was using the graphic novel medium to explore storytelling concepts. The broad teaching objectives were:

1) to use visual and verbal features of the graphic novel text type in the creation of their own graphic narratives;

2) to construct their own graphic narrative that shows evidence of planning and critical thinking;

3) to make critical and creative connections to literature, media and their own lives beyond the graphic novel text; and

4) to infer information from the textual and visual narrative conventions such as plot, characterisation, setting, narrative, and theme within the graphic novel text being studied.

The teaching unit package also included resource materials to aid implementation and evaluation (see Appendix H). These included notes on various aspects of *Amulet Book 1* such as characters and suggested themes (Bodart, 2011). They also included activity sheets on drawing comics; website links for sample graphic novel lesson plans; suggestions for classroom discussions; templates for graphic narrative writing activities; and a sample graphic short story rubric. Moreover, teachers received copies of *Using graphic novels in the classroom: Grades 4–8* (Hart, 2010) and *Adventures in Graphica: Using comics and graphic*
novels to teach comprehension (Thompson, 2008), which contained content to support delivery of graphic novel lessons.

As stated in the literature review, several researchers have used graphic novel texts as a tool for helping students learn literary concepts (Dallacqua, 2012; Missiou & Koukoulas, 2013) as well as to develop students’ short story writing skills in unconventional ways (Bitz, 2010; Danzak, 2011) with positive outcomes. A key piece of literature that contributed to the conceptual framework was Smetana et al.’s (2009) study of the implementation of a class curriculum in a high school English summer class, for Grades 7 to 9 deaf students who were struggling with age-appropriate literacy skills. One of the goals was for students to recognise key literature elements, such as characterisation so lessons were created around a specific topic followed by an application activity. In the end, students created a comic book proposal that included a two-page script and a multi-page story or excerpt in comic book form. The focus on the content, particularly storytelling elements, influenced the design of this teaching unit, and eventually the graphic novel lessons. In keeping with the structure of English language classes at the research site, the graphic novel teaching unit was integrated with other disciplinary content. Using graphic novels as a tool for pedagogy formed the wider content area of short story writing. As a result, teacher participants were able to complete their planned topic designated for that school term.

Exemplar of a graphic novel text.
Several researchers have investigated students’ multimodal responses to visual print-based texts through the study of pre-determined texts to promote visual meaning-making skills and content learning (Arizpe & Styles, 2009; Pantaleo, 2011). The selection of an exemplar of an age- and content-appropriate graphic novel text was important in this study for three main reasons:

1) that text functioned as the primary graphic novel reading material;

2) the first aspect of the graphic novel intervention involved close study of the visual and verbal modes in the graphic novel texts and the ways in which those modes interact to tell the story; and

3) teachers and students were able to use that primary graphic novel text as a blueprint for their own graphic short stories.
Drawing on Griffith’s (2010) criteria for the selection of age-appropriate graphic novels for Grade 7 classrooms, I justify the selection of *Amulet Book 1* (shown in Figure 7) as the graphic novel exemplar used in this study.

![Figure 7. Front cover of Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper.](image)

Firstly, the illustrations were arranged in a way that readers could easily follow. Secondly, the text was clearly readable with clearly legible font and font size. According to Scholastic Booklist’s (2011) review, *Amulet* contained ‘action packed adventure sequences’ which were ‘propelled by uncluttered visuals’. Thirdly, the action maintains readers’ interest and motivates them to continue reading. *Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper* is the first in a series of graphic novels written by Kazu Kibuishi. Two years after the death of their father, Emily and Navin move to another town with their mother. During their first night in the house, their mother is kidnapped by a monster. Navin and Emily follow the monster down a staircase that leads to an underground world. While underground, Emily learns that the amulet she retrieved from their home contains magical powers, which she could use to rescue her mother. However, Emily is forced to decide whether to accept the amulet’s power or not. Booklist’s review explained that *Amulet* would appeal to readers because it’s “[p]art fantasy (anthropomorphized animals, elves) and part manga (transforming robots, tentacled monsters)” (“Scholastic”, 2011). Fourthly, I believed that the students would have related to the themes Those themes include coping with death, heroism and bravery, and leadership and responsibility (Bodart, 2011). *Amulet* is part of Scholastic Publishers Graphix comics and graphic novels aimed at students in Grades 4 to 7 (ages 9–12). It was shortlisted on the American Library Association (ALA) 2009 list of fiction for young adults.
Ethical Considerations

In this section, I discuss the measures undertaken to ensure the integrity of this study. These measures included an application to, and a subsequent approval from, The University of Auckland’s Human Participants Ethics Committee, managing conflicts of interest, informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, the right to withdraw from participating in the study, and taking particular care with vulnerable groups, such as the Grade 7 participants in this study.

Application to the University of Auckland’s Human Participants Ethics Committee.

My ethics application was approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee on 20 December 2011 for a period of three years. In that application, I addressed issues such as voluntary consent, informed consent and participants’ right to withdraw. See Appendix I for one sample each of a participant information sheet and a consent form. Later, I received ethics approval for changes to the research on 25 July 2012 for a period of three years, up until 11 January 2015. These amendments allowed me to administer two sets of surveys—reading and writing—which were used to gauge the students’ responses at the end time-point of the study, and to become an observer so that I could:

(i) observe the implementation of the intervention programme in the classrooms;

(ii) to participate in classroom processes as a means of supporting both teachers and students; and

(iii) to collect additional artefacts from all participants to increase the validity of the research findings.

Gaining informed assent and consent, the right to withdraw from participation, and maintaining confidentiality and anonymity.

The process of gaining informed consent and assent were secured separately, and varied by stakeholder. Firstly, the process of obtaining informed consent from the Board of Governors, Principal, and teacher participants occurred in two parts. Prior to the data collection process, I
pitched my research idea to the Principal, Board of Trustees and the teachers in the Languages Department at St. Stephen’s, via email and Skype conversations. I stressed that their participation or non-participation would be voluntary, and their employment (teachers) with the school would not be compromised by any of their decisions. Those stakeholders expressed an interest in, and willingness to, participate in the study.

After receiving verbal consent from the Board of Governors, Principal and specified teachers from the site school, I submitted my application to the University of Auckland Ethics Committee for permission to conduct the study. I received approval on 20 December 2011 for a period of three years. In that application, I addressed issues such as voluntary consent, informed consent and participants’ right to withdraw. After receiving ethics approval, the participant information sheets and consent forms for the Board of Governors were scanned and emailed, while the Parents’ Information Sheet (PIS) and Consent form (CF) for teachers were sent via mail. Those sheets and forms explicitly stated that participants’ participation or non-participation was voluntary. The signed consent forms were all scanned and returned via email.

During the pre-data collection stage, teacher participants introduced me to their respective English language learners. I read the participant information sheet (PIS) to the students while they followed on their own copies. I ensured that they fully understood the research to be undertaken. I explained or clarified information when they prompted me. Afterwards, students were instructed to take the parent/guardian PIS and CF to their homes, and return the signed consent forms to their EL teachers or me by the end of the week. Eighty-five (85) parents/guardians signed the consent form acknowledging that they understood the research purpose and its demands on their child/ward. Moreover, sixty (60) parents/guardians consented to their child/ward’s participation in the interviews.

**Managing conflicts of interest.**

My former employment at St. Stephen’s presented an ethical dilemma, specifically the politics of researcher/teacher returning to conduct research. I had to critically reflect on how that would influence teachers’ consent to participation in the study, and what they would say during interviews. I acknowledge my familiarity with the administration, staff, and students
whom I taught that were then in Grades 9 to 11. However, I had not taught the students who participated in this study. The issue of managing conflicts of interest was described in detail in the section on the role of the researcher under the participants section in this chapter.

Chapter Summary

This study was situated within the constructivist paradigm, which highlights the role of social and cultural contexts in learning and development. Using a mixed methods approach to case study research, I designed a study that explored the experiences of teacher and student participants, as well as the outcomes of the process related to the graphic novel intervention. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analyses provided a more comprehensive, in-depth account of the intervention. Moreover, methodological challenges, as well as procedures for developing and establishing reliability and validity of analytical methods, were described in detail. In the next chapter I summarise the findings of the research analysis.
Chapter 3: Findings

In this chapter, I present summaries of the findings of the analyses of qualitative and quantitative data by order of the research questions. Appendix K contains a summary of all of the research findings. I used pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.

Research Question One

To help answer the first research question, I draw on three themes derived from the thematic analysis of students’ interview data along with students’ graphic narratives where necessary. Those themes were:

(i) students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting *Amulet Book 1*;

(ii) students negotiated the diverse demands for adapting conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on varying strategies of mono- and multimodal text productions; and

(iii) constructing the graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics.

Additionally, I present exemplars of students’ graphic narratives to support the themes where necessary. Subsequently, I describe three ways in which students could potentially have communicated meaning more effectively through their graphic narrative texts. Those suggestions included: (i) the effective use of panel layout; (ii) the effective use of linguistic text; and (iii) the effective arrangement of character(s) inside panels to show importance of character(s), to give a sense of scale and sense of movement/action.

**Theme 1: students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting *Amulet Book 1*.**

There were three main trends in relation to this theme. Firstly, all of the student interviewees were able to use multimodal resources to form their basic understanding of *Amulet Book 1*. Secondly, some students were able to develop more sophisticated responses that extended beyond basic understandings. Thirdly, although all of the student interviewees were able to
form basic understandings, a few students needed the guidance of a more experienced reader of graphic novels to help form complete understandings of the text. According to Kress (2010), a text is referred to as *multimodal* when it combines two or more of five semiotic systems, which include linguistic, spatial, visual, gestural and audio. Multimodal texts include graphic novels, which can combine linguistic, visual and spatial modes of representation. Additionally, multimodal text can be communicated via different media or technologies (print, digital technology) and materiality (socially and culturally shaped meanings) that offer multiple resources and potentials for constructing meaning.

All nine of the student interviewees were able to use multimodal resources to form basic understandings of *Amulet Book 1*. Their responses included literal, visual and/or analytical responses. In the interviews at the mid-intervention time-point, all nine students were asked to identify their favourite part of the text and explain how they knew what was happening there. Alana drew on visual modes of representation to construct her response, “The details…in the eyes you could see that he is evil. Right here you could see that he could listen to every single thing because they are big and pointy. He looks like an elf”. Alana’s response suggested that she drew on knowledge of villain characters to make meaning of Trellis’ visual features (colour and shape of eyes) (Figure 8). Her response also suggested an awareness of the ways in which visual mode might provide essential information about a character’s traits. Additionally, Alana referred to the scene where Emily warns Navin about playing with some snails (see Figure 9). Alana provided an analysis of that scene that drew on visual and linguistic modes: “the children thought the snails were dangerous but actually the man is the one who was dangerous”. I posit that Alana’s response in that case is an example of irony, because she recognised that Trellis, the villain who wants Emily’s amulet, presented the real danger.

*Figure 8. Close-up shot of Trellis, the villain in Amulet Book 1.*
David also drew on visual modes to help construct his understandings of a selected part of the text. In the interview at mid-intervention time-point, I asked David for his understanding of the difference in size of Silas Charnon’s eyes in three specific panels on one page. David drew on visual modes such as colour, lines, shot framing and page layout to connect the diminishing size of Silas’s eyes with a decrease in health, “Look at his eyes. This is like three stages: this is when he is [alive], when he is still alive but about to die, and this is when he died”. It should be noted that when I asked the question, I isolated the top three panels on one page (see Figure 10). It is plausible that David might have formed his understanding in the context of knowledge of visual and linguistic modes in previous and forthcoming panels. The use of those visual modes in tandem with other modes conveys messages in graphic novel multimodal text.
Students were questioned about their understandings of a wordless page, that is, a page without linguistic modes (Figure 11 below). The amulet that Emily discovers leads her and Navin in search of their Grandfather Silas. The aim was to investigate how students formed their understandings in the absence of linguistic modes. One visual multimodal resource included one type of visual mode, the layout, which conveyed setting on page 78. Alana’s response suggested an understanding of the use of page layout to highlight the setting, “To show more details than the other pages”. Matthew’s response was based on an analysis of several elements used to create the setting, and the way in which those elements might convey a scary mood. He commented, “It takes up the whole page and it shows you how the place is made up. Scary or if someone was in there that was (speech inaudible) if it was an abandoned house”. Then, I prompted for reasons why it might appear scary. His later comments drew on colour and other visual modes, “Because it was foggy and you couldn’t see where you were stepping…Those colours make the house look old but light shows people are living there.”
Another student, Colin, based his understanding of the wordless page on the ways in which a spooky setting appears on television or movie screen; “If you watch a spooky movie you see like a fog around this house and water surrounding the house. It’s up on a rocky thing and you see this board here. Naturally when you go up the steps it would creak and then you see like most freaky stuff there are caves and this house is in a cave”. Another example of a multimodal text is film (movies) represented in the digital media, as opposed to graphic novel represented in print media (in this case). Moreover, Colin’s analytical response suggested that the wordless page served to heighten the viewer’s anticipation of the forthcoming scenes. In his words, “To get your attention, to make you understand more…Ok they are approaching this new place and they don’t know where they are going”.

Maliah’s analytical response drew on her knowledge of the narrative structure of linguistic texts. In her opinion, two pages in *Amulet Book 1* might mark distinct divisions of the text in much the same way as a chapter marks the main division in linguistic texts. Maliah suggested that the prologue, where Navin’s and Emily’s father died, marked the beginning of the first chapter, while the wordless page (Figure 11 above) marked the beginning of the second chapter, “Because they are going on to another chapter. This is just showing where they are going to so you don’t need any words. It’s like a photograph”. She further explained that “Every book has chapters and this is part two for the book. Like the starting of the book is chapter one and this shows a dark snowy place that was when her father died. This is where the grandfather will die”. Additionally, Maliah posited that death is the theme at the beginning of both ‘chapters’ in *Amulet Book 1*. Overall, Colin, Alana, Maliah and Matthew were able to
draw on myriad visual and linguistic multimodal resources to form their understandings of select parts of *Amulet Book 1*.

Similar to Maliah, Matthew, David and Alana drew on their knowledge of the narrative structure and meaning-making practices associated with other multimodal texts to inform their understandings of *Amulet Book 1*. Matthew reported on the similarities between *Amulet Book 1* and a comic book about superheroes. He opined that his experience reading that book taught him that, “The words and the pictures tell the whole story”. The visual and linguistic modes on their own carry meaning but the integration of both sets of modes provides more potential for meaning-making. In another example, David drew on his knowledge of the narrative structure of television cartoons to inform his response; “Ok in the starting or ending someone would die. Someone would get some new ability or some powers of some sort”, while Alana stated that *Amulet Book 1* reminded her of children’s book *Arthur’s Square Table*. In her words, “The way this is like action heroic that is the same way Arthur’s square table is. His mother warned him not to go into the sewer, but in this story her mother warned her to stay behind”. These three students’ comments suggest the explicit, intertextual connections they made between *Amulet Book 1* and other multimodal texts. Matthew’s response suggested that he explicitly drew on his knowledge of comics to inform his meaning-making practices, while David’s and Alana’s comments were observations of the similarities among those texts. Overall, inferring meaning from *Amulet Book 1* was not done in isolation, but the text evoked connections to other multimodal texts which may or may not have informed the students’ interpretations.

Thirdly, although all of the student interviewees were able to form basic understandings, a few students like Maliah and Leon needed the guidance of a more experienced graphic novel reader to help form complete understandings of the text. Maliah inferred that the protagonist’s father had died but was not clear about how he had died. During the interview, I guided Maliah’s attention to specific visual and linguistic modes in individual panels and across panels on the page to build on her understanding of the events on pages 6 to 11. Those pages show Emily’s father swerving the car to avoid an oncoming vehicle. However, he loses control of the vehicle, which then crashes into the guardrail. Then, the rail breaks free, sending the car crashing down the embankment and coming to rest near a tree (Figure 12).
The following is an excerpt from Maliah’s interview where she and I discussed the events specifically from page six:

   Interviewer: Do you understand how the father got down there now?

   Maliah: Yes but he says that his foot is stuck.

   Interviewer: Ok now look at this 3rd box on page 6. What’s happening there?

   Maliah: The car hit on the tree.

   Interviewer: What’s that?

   Maliah: (makes sound)

   Interviewer: What does that represent or show?

   Maliah: That the tree is breaking with the car.

   Interviewer: So we have it down here now but a wider picture where we can see it clearer. What’s going on here now?

   Maliah: She tried to get her mother and father out but her father cannot come out because something (speech inaudible) his foot is
trapped. “Emily I can’t my leg is stuck under the dashboard”.

Interviewer: So you understand now what happened there?

Maliah: Yes.

As stated in the excerpt above, I asked Maliah what had happened on page six, second row, second panel from the left (Figure 12 above). She drew on the linguistic sound resource, ‘KRRRK!’ to infer that the impact of the car hitting the tree caused the tree to start breaking. I asked, “What does that show or represent?” and Maliah responded, “That the tree is breaking with the car”. Taking page six for instance, the inferences were based on making meaning of linguistic and visual modes within individual panels, and then connecting those meanings across panels. It is plausible that the smaller panels contained greater details that the reader would have to connect across panels. This might have made the reading process even more challenging.

At the mid-intervention interviews, I inferred that some of Leon’s responses were based on his basic understandings but needed guidance to form deeper understanding of page 78 of the text where Emily and Navin discover their grandfather Silas’s house (see Figure 11). I focused on the ways in which Leon’s inferences about the visual modes, such as the use of colour might to deepen his understanding of that particular aspect of the text.

Interviewer: What can you tell me about the colours here….

Leon: It shows like if they are in a hole. You know when you have a hole not much light would be down there.

You could see the waterfall coming down and the house is on a big rock.

Interviewer: When you look at this picture, do you think that something good or bad was going to happen?

Leon: I thought something to be good at first because they got to the house and all they had to do was to go across. But after I read on I saw the bad part but nothing really happened.
Leon also inferred that multimodal visual resources, such as colour use, give the appearance that there was light streaming into an underground location which housed Silas’s house. Although this study’s intervention marked the inaugural use of graphic novel texts in those classrooms, students were able to use at least one multimodal resource independently in order to construct meaning of the texts.

**Theme 2: students negotiated the diverse demands for adapting conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on varying strategies of mono- and multimodal text productions which resulted in varying outcomes.**

Student participants drew on multimodal resources differentially when constructing their graphic narrative texts/artefacts. In keeping with the case study (Stake, 1995) design of this study, participants’ subjective experiences show how each student constructed meaning through the production of their graphic narrative texts/artefacts. Furthermore, I describe how students might have used multimodal resources to communicate their stories. I present the graphic narratives of six interview participants to show how students used multimodal resources to create their graphic narratives. Additionally, I present interview excerpts (i) to show how their knowledge of mono- and multimodal strategies for text production informed the creation of their graphic narratives; and (ii) to describe challenges such as the lack of confidence about drawing ability as well as how students overcame those challenges. It should be highlighted that six out of nine student interviewees completed both their conventional and graphic narratives. In addition, one out of those six participants constructed their graphic short stories first and then adapted it into a conventional short story. I present the findings of six students: Nadine, Kimberly, Matthew, Alana, Katrina and Leon. Firstly, I present a synopsis of their stories, then their strategies for adapting their conventional narratives into graphic narratives, and finally describe the challenges they might have encountered. Additionally, I include the responses of Colin, Maliah and Damian who did not submit their short stories to provide further insight into the challenges of the writing/creation process.
Student participant: Nadine.

The interview findings suggested that Nadine is a confident student who engaged in a wide range of literacy practices. She described reading as the most enjoyable of all her literacy practices. In the first interview, Nadine described herself as a good writer but thought that she could benefit from improved spelling. Her graphic short story called “Go Spot Go” was “about two girls playing catch with their dog and after a while one of the girls pelted the ball so hard that it ended up in another field nearby and hit a bull cow in its nose [see Figure 13 below]. The cow got angry and started chasing them”. Nadine described a systematic process in which she drew on prior experiences of constructing paragraphs in conventional narrative writing. Thus, Nadine drew on linguistic resources, specifically narrative structure, to help structure her graphic narrative. Using those experiences, she selected one paragraph from the conventional piece and then fleshed it out across a few panels in her graphic short story:

I started with the first paragraph, which is just after lunch they were playing catch. So I drew the little box of the two girls playing catch. The other part of the paragraph where the girl pelted the ball so hard this is another part here. Then the next part saying the ball hit the cow I drew the other part hitting the cow and continued doing the same for the others.

Nadine incorporated one visual mode, colour, into her short story by using it to create setting:

Interviewer: I notice that you use colour here. Why did you choose to use colour, and those colours?

Nadine: It matches the background of where it happened and the nearby field.

I: So, what do you mean by it matches the background?

Nadine: Like the starting of the story saying that one afternoon after lunch they were playing in the field so I drew the colours for the grass and made it a little in the yard so it looks like they are playing in the yard.

Furthermore, Nadine used ideas from several other multimodal resources spanning different media, including movies, television and books, to enrich her conventional and graphic narratives. She stated that her mother provided a few ideas for her graphic short story, and she also used her own imagination. Nadine was very satisfied with her story and felt happy about
the feedback from her family and a close friend who “said it looked nice”. She also stated that she enjoyed creating and sharing her story with her family and friend. Additionally, she used sound effects in the conventional short story writing for the English language term examination. However, she thought that graphic novels did not influence her decision to use sound effects because she used sound effects in her personal conventional short story writing at home.

Additionally, Nadine described some of the challenges in constructing her graphic narrative, including sequencing the events. It appears as though she had to consider what would come in the next panel and ways of making the parts more interesting, such as using colour: “Because after I finished drawing the second part with the panel you would want to know what would happen next. How you would pretty up [colour] this part, how you would make this part more interesting”. In addition, Nadine opined that the drawings were the most difficult aspect of
constructing her graphic short story; however, she expressed that she felt “good” about her graphic short story.

**Student participant: Kimberly.**

As an introduction, I briefly describe Kimberly’s multiliteracy practices within the classroom and at home. In the pre-intervention interview she commented that role-playing added an exciting element to her reading experiences at home. She described instances where she would ‘voice’ the characters’ parts although her mother disliked those oral activities. Kimberly relied on her knowledge of horror movies to create her graphic short story, but thought that she needed more time to reflect on and review her piece. She also stated that she disliked writing conventional short stories during examinations because of the limited time-frame.

The title of Kimberly’s graphic story was “In the graveyard” in which she was the main protagonist (see Figure 14 below). She described her terrifying experience of walking through a graveyard at night: “The graveyard was very haunted and there were dead people running [chasing] me down. There were a lot of skeletons, people rising out of the grave. This dead man gripped me and I was so devastated in this story because there was no one to save me”. Kimberly compared her graphic short story writing experience as “like being in the story”. She also stated that the idea of publishing was very motivating:

I: What was the most enjoyable part about writing your graphic story?

R: When I got to draw and write when I heard the word published. It was the first time I would have a book published. Miss I was shocked.

It should be stated here that none of the students received the opportunity to publish their graphic short stories.

Kimberly’s agency was demonstrated through her active and creative engagement in the graphic short story writing process. She needed time and space in which to develop her graphic short story ideas: “The first time Miss told us to write a story I couldn’t concentrate in class. I went home in my bed and imagined that I was in a graveyard”. Afterwards, she drew on her prior experiences of watching horror movies and used those as a blueprint for her
graphic short story: “I write what I saw from the movie. I watch lots of horror movies like *Graveyard* and so and I could imagine what the people were going through. I put my mind and patternise [sic] it. Then I start talking to myself and I start to write”. Kimberly described the way she used her imagination to guide the creative process: “This experience was like being in the story. I was drawing what the story said, everything…I was in the story because I could use my imagination to do the story. I wrote down the story on a piece of paper on a paper first and I read it. Every paragraph I read I could imagine and then I drew”.

![Figure 14. Page one of Kimberly’s graphic narrative.](image)

In a similar way to Nadine, Kimberly wrote her conventional short story first and then attempted the graphic short story. She drew the pictures in the graphic short story first and then filled in the verbal bits: “did the pictures first because I knew it would take a lot of time and it would take a lot of creativity and imagination to do it…” One of the challenges Kimberly experienced was the sequencing of events: “I flip back to see what is going in the story. I was going in sequence, what next, what to do now. I had to keep going back and I was getting confused, tired”.

113
Kimberly used the visual resource of colour to create the graphic short story setting as well as to encode symbolic meaning through the use of colour. Firstly, the findings suggest that Kimberly connected the story idea and setting of the story to her use of colour: “It says one dark night so in night nothing pretty colour so I chose the colour blue just to give it a little bit of creativity”. She further added that “Black, blue, and brown and white. The grave would be white; the dirt would be brown; the sky would be black; the clouds would be blue. Remember it’s a dark night so you don’t want it colourful”. Secondly, the findings suggested that Kimberly combined colour and imagery to create irony on the front cover of her graphic short story: “They would be surprised because they see the hearts and flowers and they think the story would be about fairy tales. So, when they open it up they would be shocked to see that this is about the graveyard. So when they read they would be surprised”. Kimberly reported that she would have needed an additional “two hours to do everything, colour, create and think”. Kimberly’s oral responses suggest that she needed ample time and space in which to create her graphic short story.

**Student participant: Matthew.**

In the pre-intervention interview, Matthew described himself as shy and said that he preferred the company of his family rather than friends. Additionally, he described himself as an average writer who could benefit from paying greater attention to what he read. Matthew found it difficult to write stories that weren’t based on his personal experiences. By the final interview, he described the ways in which he drew on children’s cartoon *Johnny Tess* to construct his graphic short story. The findings revealed that he valued motivation and guidance from his English language teacher during the process of creating his graphic short story. Matthew stated that he was unable to colour his narrative because of a lack of time. However, he described the ways in which he would have used colour if there has been more time.

Matthew described the strategies he employed in creating his graphic narrative. He drew on television programmes, namely children’s cartoon *Johnny Tess*, to create the storyline for his graphic short story titled *A Visit to Outer Space* (see Figure 15 below). The premise of Matthew’s story was about two children who accidentally flew into outer space in a spaceship they found in their neighbour’s yard. The spaceship then crashed on an unknown planet where there was wreckage from other spaceships. In an interesting turn of events, the two children
exited the spaceship, were chased by a monster and returned home shortly afterwards. According to Matthew:

Then he stumbled upon a monster. He so scared he stood there, the monster roared, and it started to chase him. He shouted to Johnny to start the spaceship but Johnny didn’t hear what he said. Junior shouted again, “Johnny start the spaceship there is a monster chasing me!” He started the spaceship and Junior got to it in time. When he got inside the spaceship took off. When they landed their parents were very disappointed with them because they could have gotten lost or died in space.

As opposed to the other interviewees, Matthew created his graphic narrative first and then adapted it to a conventional short story. This finding contradicted the criteria originally set out
by teachers, whereby students should have adapted their conventional short stories into
graphic short stories. He described a process in which he adapted four panels in his graphic
short story to one paragraph in his conventional short story. The findings revealed that
drawing was the most challenging aspect of creating the graphic short story. It appears as
though the process of drawing was iterative and recursive. In Matthew’s words:

I might have one problem because drawing might have to take a break and think and
afterwards start drawing again. While you are thinking you are supposed to think
about what next to draw, what will happen to the characters in the story, what will
happen in the next chapter, if they live or die.

Additionally, the findings revealed that Matthew re-constructed the panels so that readers
could follow his story more easily. His initial panels were “like a normal rectangle” that he
split into four because he thought “that was very easy”. However, his teacher suggested that
he try another approach. It appears as though the layout of the story was associated with the
readability of the story. Matthew suggested that “you might not know which panel would
come next and that might be a problem for someone”.

Although Matthew’s graphic narrative did not include colour (visual mode), Matthew
hypothesised the ways in which he would have used colour if more time was available. His
responses suggest an understanding of the ways in which visual colour modes could have
enhanced setting in his graphic narrative:

Because black represents out of space; red represents the clothes they have on; blue
still represents the clothes they have on; brown would explain the building in the back
of their father’s workshop; yellow could represent a shooting star while they were
going or the stars in the sky; green could represent the monster.

Additionally, I asked Matthew whether he used any graphic novel conventions or features
beyond his own classroom, but within the school context. He replied that he did not.
However, Matthew’s active engagement with the creative process did extend beyond the
school into his home where he practised creating graphic novel texts:

Usually when I am at home I do a graphic novel in a notebook that my mother bought
for me….I skipped those pages and started some graphic novels. The graphic novel
that I started an experience I would never forget. I wrote five: an experience I would
never forget; the day I went to the beach; the picnic; the house on the hill; and the graveyard.

Matthew’s multimodal productions in school prompted the graphic novel creations at home. It is unclear how or to what extent repeated practice creating graphic narratives at home might have impacted the graphic narrative created at the post-intervention time-point.

**Student participant: Alana.**

In the initial interview, Alana reported that she is a good writer but that using more complex words would enrich her writing. She also highlighted that she enjoyed creating comics at home. She later drew on one of her comic creations as the basis for the graphic short story. Her graphic short story, called *The Robbery*, is about a boy who gets caught in an ongoing robbery at a local bank (see Figure 16 below).

![Figure 16. Page three of Alana's graphic narrative.](image)

Additionally, there were several challenges to adapting the conventional short story to the graphic short story form. First, it appears as though combining the visual and verbal elements proved challenging: “It was kind of hard like some of the expressions, the background, figuring out which colours to use”. However, the findings revealed that she drew on her prior experiences of creating comics to overcome these difficulties “[b]y remembering what [she] had done in the other graphic novel…using the movies, some of the persons in the movies, [and] their expressions to fix it properly”. The findings also revealed that Alana found the
writing (verbal) aspect challenging, especially “Coming up with ideas, to try and remember the movie to come up with the ideas, finishing off with a big ending”. She preferred the drawing (visual) aspect of graphic short story creation, “I love drawing and I know drawing well and express my feelings”. Additionally, the findings revealed that Alana understood how colour could be used to express emotions: “Because blue is like happy and yellow is in between sad and happy and red is pain”. I asked whether she used graphic novel features outside of the lessons and she replied, “No”. However, in Alana’s case it appears as though she used graphic novel features in the graphic novel lessons and at home.

**Student participant: Katrina.**

Katrina described herself as an average writer and wanted to improve her handwriting which she felt wasn’t very good. She engaged in several literacy practices, including reading short stories at home; “Sometimes when I bored I read but when something is showing good I watch the tv sometimes”. Katrina’s graphic story called *Life as a Vagrant* is about a man who went from being homeless to living in a home with a wife and children (see Figure 17). She drew on a movie for the premise of her story.

![Figure 17. Page one of Katrina’s graphic narrative.](image)

The findings revealed that Katrina adapted the conventional short story into a graphic short story, but she could not explicitly describe the process of adaptation. She stated that, “I draw it like how the story is”. I followed up with questions like “Did you do it [graphic short story]
exactly like the one with the words only [conventional short story]?” These probing questions elicited one word answers like “Yes”. However, Katrina expressed that she felt good about her stories: “I feel like I could write more books and make pictures with it”.

**Student participant: Leon.**

Like Alana, Leon had experience creating comics prior to the study. That experience occurred in primary school among his friends, but he stopped creating them in secondary school because: “secondary school [he] has to focus until [he gets] to form two”. Also, he drew on the epic poem *Beowulf* as the premise for his graphic short story named *The King and the Prince* (see Figure 18). He opined that thinking about and creating sound effects and dialogue were the most challenging aspects of creating the graphic short story: “The drawing because you had to put in the sound effects and explain what the character is going to say”. On the other hand, Leon commented that having panels without words and selecting a limited number of characters made the creation process easier: “we had to use some empty panels without words so it was easier that way”. He created his conventional short story first and then adapted it into a graphic short story.

![Figure 18. Page two of Leon’s graphic narrative.](image)

Additionally, Leon didn’t use colouring because of a lack of access to colour materials as well as considerations about depicting one character: “Well I didn’t have colour leads but I rather do it with a pen. If I had used pencil, the head right here, this would have been different
[second page, first panel]. I had to do this one in black”. Furthermore, his English language teacher’s guidance supported the creative process: “He told us to draw, put in some panels first. He gave us four panels where we had to put in facial expressions. Then he told us to continue the story. That kind of helped with my drawing”. Finally, Leon recalled that he did not use any graphic novel features in other areas of schooling, including the then concluded English language examinations.

In the following sub-sections, I focus on the student interview participants—Colin, Damian and Maliah—who did not submit their conventional nor graphic short stories.

**Student participant: Colin.**

Colin was quite shy and hid from the teacher so that she didn’t ask him to participate in class. Colin thought that shaping his letters properly and not being lazy at times would make him a better writer. He liked short story writing but disliked writing more than four or five paragraphs. Colin’s reading repertoire at home was limited. He recalled his mother’s impression of comic books as “devilish” so he wasn’t allowed to read them. Moreover, he disliked the writing exercises during the graphic novel lessons. However, Colin stated that he enjoyed reading *Amulet Book 1* and approached me outside of class for the other books in the series. It is unclear up until the time of writing this thesis why Colin was unable to participate in the final interview, and complete both conventional and graphic narratives.

**Student participant: Damian.**

Damian thought that he was a very good writer whose skills could be strengthened by doing more writing, such as journal writing. He enjoyed writing stories and responded favourably when a more advanced writer appreciated his work. In addition, he liked to read his work to the class and was not easily deterred by his classmates’ negative comments.

Firstly, Damian stated that his teacher, Jason, instructed him to re-do the graphic narrative. However, Damian was unable to submit his graphic narrative in time due to the ongoing English language examinations. Secondly, he expressed a few reasons for not completing either conventional or graphic narratives. He wasn’t finished with the drawings even though he got some help from a classmate. Damian wanted to ensure that his classmate represented
the drawings the way he envisioned them because he wanted to produce a good narrative. He got ideas from the television series *Wrestlemania* and biblical references to *David and Goliath*. In his words: “some of the new wrestlers want to go against certain people and some people might say ‘Oh he looks skinny or she looks skinny’ and then you know they win and everybody is surprised. Then people would say ‘We shouldn’t have doubted him or we shouldn’t have doubted her’”. Damian recalled that he didn’t use any of the graphic novel features in his English language examination.

**Student participant: Maliah.**

Maliah was a shy, soft-spoken young lady who disliked being teased by her classmates. She was an avid reader and borrowed books frequently from the National Library in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. She also writes her own stories at home, which she keeps in a diary. She got the idea for a diary from reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. She used writing as an outlet whenever she got angry. In school, she got angry when she made a mistake but would eventually try to fix the error/s. She appeared to be motivated by good grades, so she works towards doing well. Maliah thought that she was a good writer because writing about personal experiences helped to simplify the process: “I think that I am a good writer because how can I get mixed up when writing is about my lifestyle”. She would often visualise pictures in her head before she started writing. Moreover, she was intrinsically motivated to write for the sake of learning.

Like Damian, Maliah was unable to complete her narratives before the start of the examination period. She recalled that the book *Cinderella*, and ideas from her own imagination, helped to shape the draft of her graphic short story. However, she found that the drawing aspect was the most difficult because of her lack of artistic ability: “I don’t know how to draw and I try to draw something with the same facial expressions”.

Next, I present findings from survey and graphic narrative data sets to provide more evidence on the ways in which and how effectively student participants created their multimodal, graphic narrative texts.
**Visual/verbal linkages in students’ graphic narratives.**

The analysis of graphic narrative texts provided evidence of students’ multimodal learning. Specifically, the analysis provided useful examples of the ways in which visual/verbal linkages might or might not work in graphic narrative texts. As stated in the methodology chapter, I analysed a sample of the graphic narrative data set using an evaluative tool to provide rich, qualitative descriptions of those narratives. I then held discussions with an independent qualitative researcher/primary school visual arts teacher to enhance, or at times challenge my analyses. It should be noted that the analysis of students’ graphic narrative texts/artefacts was not a critique of students’ artistic ability. In this section, I describe the ways in which visual/verbal linkages might or might not work in four performance areas: (i) panel layout and transitions, (ii) dialogue, (iii) narration, and (iv) characterisation.

Firstly, the haphazard layout and transitions of some of the graphic narrative texts/artefacts was ineffective for communicating meaning. Generally, the graphic narrative texts/artefacts that were the easiest to follow were those with one horizontal line from edge to edge for each row of the panels (see Figure 19 below). However, there were a few cases in which the apparent haphazard layout of the panels disrupted the flow of the narrative (see Figure 20 below).

![Figure 19](image-url) Excerpt from graphic narrative that demonstrates an effective use of panel layout.
Secondly, the overuse of verbal/visual modes and illegible handwriting rendered the communication of dialogue and narration ineffective. Illegible words, especially in speech bubbles, were difficult to understand. The independent researcher/visual arts teacher challenged my thinking about the overuse of linguistic text in speech bubbles. From our discussions, I learned that the overuse of text might have resulted because students drew the bubble first and then added the text. It would have been better to write the text neatly first then put speech bubble around it. Additionally, other graphic narratives contained too much linguistic text in the narration. The use of linguistic text should be economical, useful for linking images or telling the story (see Figure 21 below). In the context of this study, the most effective use of linguistic text was for dialogue or thoughts.
Thirdly, the effective arrangement of characters inside panels shows the importance of those character(s), gives a sense of scale, and sense of movement/action. In one example where the arrangement of characters showed their importance, the Queen ant was bigger than the other ants (see Figure 22).

![Figure 22](image.png)

*Figure 22. Excerpt from graphic narrative showing effective use of arrangement of characters to show importance.*

Moreover, Figure 20 also provided the reader/viewer with a sense of movement/action where the motion lines permeating from the shoe suggested a foul odour.

**Theme 3: constructing graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics.**

Multimodal learning was supported by collaborative engagement throughout the intervention. The collaborative engagement helped, and in some cases, hindered students’ graphic novel production and meaning-making practices. All student interview participants reported that they were motivated by positive feedback about their own graphic narratives from their teachers, friends and family members. However, it is interesting that some student participants, like Damian, were disengaged by co-constructive activities and dynamics. Firstly, teachers provided direct feedback on the specific ways that student participants could improve their graphic narrative writing. For instance, Kimberly described the way in which her teacher provided feedback about her graphic narrative: “Yes she told me to do over these and think some more. It doesn’t look appropriate so I had to write over everything. I had a friend help me out to draw the panels”. Kimberly’s response suggested that her initial graphic narrative did not effectively communicate the conventional story. Moreover, the final
sentence referring to the panels suggested that the panel layout might have hindered the effective representation of the story.

Secondly, in the group dynamic, students drew on each other’s strengths by delegating roles to their peers. A few students like Nadine sought feedback from close, trusted peers. In David’s words: “Ok I told the story, [K] did the drawings, [D] sort of helped with the work because he showed me the Kazu bit… [P] helped us to put in where to put the house”, illustrating that those who were reluctant to draw were able to contribute in other ways. However, group dynamic was problematic for Damian, who reported that it interfered with the writing task. The task involved creating an alternative ending for the primary graphic novel text. Damian reported that working in a group of eight was “weird. If you ask them what is their idea at first they didn’t want to show myself and three other people because it was a group of eight. They did their own thing and we left them alone”. His teacher observed the challenges in the group and split the group in half. Damian found a smaller group dynamic less problematic and fostered more productivity because they were able to attempt the writing task. He described how they divided the tasks among group members: “John would write, Amy would draw and I would put some of the words sometimes”.

Thirdly, eight of nine students reported that they preferred individual readings of the text rather than whole-class readings. Alana recalled the least enjoyable aspect of the lessons was whole-class readings of the text; “The part with everybody has to join together and read and they’re taking their time to read and I was finished already”. Students reported feeling immersed in the story during individual readings. Matthew recalled feeling like “no one was around…like I was in the story. I felt strange as if I was literally in the story acting it”. Kimberly stated that “This is the first book I have read where my mind was in other places in the book”. Three students became invested in reading the story and were eager to finish during one lesson. Kimberly recalled that, “When I read it, even the first page, I didn’t want to stop because my mind was into the story”. Damian persisted with reading the graphic novel text despite gaps in his understanding; “Sometimes when you just start and you cannot understand and you don’t want to stop to ask somebody”. Colin became immersed in the narrative; “It was like you were in the story, like you were actually there seeing, like you were everywhere they were. They cannot see but you can see them. You’re just in the story instead of just reading a book”. He also wanted readers of his graphic narrative “to feel like they are
in [his] story”. Also, Colin wanted to read the other books in the *Amulet* series: “I asked the teacher for book two but she did not bring it”.

**Research Question Two**

The second research question that framed this study asked, “In what ways does the graphic novel intervention impact students’ beliefs about and attitudes towards reading and writing?” Statistical analyses of data from reading and writing surveys administered at the pre- and mid-intervention time-points were used to answer this question. Several empirical studies have found that engaging students in reading graphic novels and creating graphic short stories/narratives might be associated with an increase in motivation (Gavigan, 2010). The statistical findings from my study demonstrated that the graphic novel intervention was associated with a positive change in students’ attitudes to and beliefs about reading and writing. This section contains two sub-sections: I present the findings from the reading surveys in the first sub-section, then findings from the writing surveys in the second sub-section.

**Findings from reading surveys,**

The reading surveys were completed at the pre- and post-intervention phases. The purpose was to assess whether graphic novels might be associated with any statistical difference in students’ attitudes and beliefs about reading and writing. The findings from the reading surveys suggested that an improvement in students’ attitudes to reading might be associated with their engagement with the graphic novel intervention.

A paired samples *t* test with an α of .05 was used to compare the pre- [M= 1.7574, SD=.480] and post- [M= 1.872, SD=.531] attitudes to reading scores for 71 student participants (Table 9 below). On average, the participants’ post attitude-to-reading scores were (M=.1143) higher than their pre attitude-to-reading scores. This difference was statistically significant, $t(70)=(-2.072)$, $p = .042$. Therefore, it was concluded that the graphic novel intervention did impact students’ attitudes to reading. Following the paired samples *t* test, a paired-samples correlations test was conducted to compare the correlation between the attitudes of students to reading between pre- and post-intervention time-points. These scores were moderately
correlated (Pearson’s correlations coefficient of $r = .582$). There was a mean difference ($M= .1143$) and this was statistically significant, $p = .000$.

Table 9. *Paired Samples Correlations, Attitudes to reading at pre- and post-intervention time-points.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair 1</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to Reading 1 &amp; Attitudes to Reading 2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.582</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings from writing surveys.**

The findings from the writing surveys suggested that there was no statistical significance between students’ attitudes to writing from pre- to post-intervention time-points. In other words, it was inferred that the graphic novel intervention did not impact students’ attitudes to writing. A paired samples $t$ test with an $\alpha$ of .05 was used to compare the pre- [$M= 1.8861$, $SD= .67913$] and post- [$M= 1.8481$, $SD= .80206$] attitude-to-writing scores for 79 student participants (see Table 10). On average, the participants’ post attitude-to-writing scores were lower ($M= .03797$) than their pre attitude to-writing scores. This difference was not statistically significant, $t(78)= (.478)$, $p = .634$. Subsequently, a paired-samples correlations test was conducted to compare the correlation between the attitudes of students to writing between pre- and post-intervention time-points (see Table 11). These scores were moderately correlated (Pearson’s correlations coefficient of $r = .556$). There was a mean difference ($M= .038$) and this was statistically significant, $p = .000$. Therefore, it was concluded that the graphic novel intervention did not impact students’ attitudes to writing. Similar to the reading analysis, there was a moderate correlation in students’ attitudes to writing at pre- and post-intervention time-points.
Table 10. *Paired Samples statistics, attitude to writing at pre- and post-intervention time points.*

**Paired Samples Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goodatwriting1</td>
<td>1.8861</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.67913</td>
<td>.07641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodatwriting2</td>
<td>1.8481</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.80206</td>
<td>.09024</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11. *Paired samples correlations, attitude to writing at pre- and post-intervention time-points.*

**Paired Samples Correlations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goodatwriting1 &amp; Goodatwriting2</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>.556</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, statistical analyses of the final writing survey determined which aspects of the graphic novel intervention students found most important or unimportant. I presented two questions that asked students what they thought were most important and least important about writing a good story with words and pictures. In the context of the intervention, a story with words and pictures referred to graphic novel texts. Tables 12 and 13 represent reports of mean scores for each option in the question items, the total mean scores for each option in the question and the individual and total scores compared across the three Grade 7 classrooms. These survey findings are representative of 82 out of the total 98 Grade 7 population.

Firstly, question nine asked “Why is it important to write a good story with words and pictures?” The options included “You learn a different way of writing” and “You include the most important details”. The results showed that students believed that writing a graphic narrative was important because it was a “different way of writing” (M= .60) and helped them to sequence (M= .60). However, the results show that including the most details (M= .32) was the least important aspect of the lessons.
Table 12. Means Table for Question 9 of the post-intervention writing survey compared by classrooms: Why is it important to write a story with words and pictures?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Different way of writing</th>
<th>Visualise story then write</th>
<th>Draw pictures</th>
<th>Include most important details</th>
<th>Sequence events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASB</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASC</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.464</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>.482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASK</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.482</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.499</td>
<td>.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, question 10 asked “Why is it not important to write a good story with words and pictures?” The options included “They leave nothing to the imagination” and “They take longer to write than stories with words only”. A report of the mean test scores demonstrated the total mean score for each option as well as the mean score for each option compared across the three Grade 7 classrooms. The results of the total mean scores show that students attached no importance to the graphic narrative intervention because it “take(s) longer to write” (M= .50) and “being able to draw” (M= .49).
Table 13. Means Table for Question 10 of post-intervention writing survey compared across classrooms: Why is it not important to write a story with words and pictures?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Nothing to imagination</th>
<th>Symbols hard to understand</th>
<th>Words more important than pictures</th>
<th>Take longer to write</th>
<th>Be able to draw well</th>
<th>Difficult to visualise story first</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLASB</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.431</td>
<td>.507</td>
<td>.493</td>
<td>.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASC</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>.442</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>.495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASK</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.381</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>.103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td>.416</td>
<td>.502</td>
<td>.503</td>
<td>.503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error of Mean</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.055</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Three

The third research question which framed this study asked, “In what ways does an intervention using graphic novels impact the quality of students’ conventional writing?” Two sets of conventional narrative data, that is short stories written in words only, were provided by most (n= 56) of the Grade 7 students at the pre- and post-intervention time-points. The purpose was to assess whether there were any statistical differences in the students’ conventional writing scores between the pre- to post-time-points. It was hypothesised that the second set of conventional short story scores would be higher than the first. It was also hypothesised that
participants with the lowest set of scores in the first set of writing would have higher scores in the second set of writing. A further hypothesis was that there might have been some development in the sequencing of the plot in their post-conventional stories, which might have been as a result of the scaffolding from the conflict handouts (see Appendices L, M and N). However, it is important to bear in mind that any difference between both sets of scores might not have been solely attributable to the graphic novel intervention.

The average scores of the first set of conventional short stories and the second set of conventional short stories were compared to assess whether there were any statistical differences between them. Out of 86 students (from the original 98), 84 students submitted the first set of conventional writing pieces at the first time-point. By the final time-point, 62 students submitted their second set of conventional writing pieces. It is plausible that some student participants bypassed the second set of conventional writing and completed only their graphic narratives. Consequently, only the data from students who completed both sets of conventional writing (n=56) were analysed. In the next section, I present the findings from the analyses of students’ conventional short stories to determine whether there was any statistical difference between both sets of scores.

The total average scores between pre- and post-conventional stories were compared in order to determine whether there was any statistical difference. One interesting finding was that the students’ mean post-conventional scores were statistically higher than their pre-conventional writing scores (illustrated in Figure 23).

![Figure 23. Total means scores for pre- and post-intervention narratives.](image)
A paired samples $t$ test with an $\alpha$ of .05 was used to compare the pre- ($M=18.54$, $SD=3.658$) and post- ($M=20.41$, $SD=3.939$) total writing scores from 56 student participants’ conventional short stories. Referring to Table 14 below, on average student participants’ post-conventional writing scores were $m = 1.87$ points higher than their pre-conventional scores, 95% CI [-3.097, -.653]. This difference was statistically significant at $t(55)=-3.074$, $p = .003$. It was concluded that use of the graphic novel intervention was associated with an increase in post-conventional scores. These results confirmed the hypothesis that total post-conventional short story scores would be higher than the pre-scores.

Table 14. Paired samples test, paired differences between pre- and post-conventional writing scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Total1 - Total2</td>
<td>-1.875</td>
<td>4.565</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>-3.097</td>
<td>-.653</td>
<td>-3.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>df</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analysis showed that there was a medium correlation between the total scores of pre- and post-conventional short stories, but the correlation failed to reach statistical significance. The paired samples statistics shown in Table 15 below reports a Pearson’s correlations coefficient of $r = .280$, which Cohen’s (date?) conventions considers ‘medium’. However, the correlation failed to reach statistical significance. At that point, I decided that further analysis might explain these results.

Table 15. Paired Samples Correlations, pre- and post-conventional writing scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Correlations</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Total1 &amp; Total2</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total score for the conventional short story comprised nine sub-scores. As stated earlier, the conventional short story rubric comprised nine categories, each of which represented a particular element of short story writing. These categories included plot, organisation and characterisation. Sub-scores for each of the nine categories were tallied to form the total
score. Repeated t tests of those sub-scores revealed that the overall difference in total scores was largely a result of the increase in three areas: characters, dialogue and point of view. Referring to Table 16 below, a paired samples t test with an α of .05 was used to compare the pre- and post-conventional writing sub-scores for 56 student participants. On average, participants’ post-writing dialogue [M=2.04, SD=.785] and point-of-view [M= 3.04, SD=.631] scores, were higher than their pre-dialogue [M=1.54, SD=.631] and point-of-view [M=3.75, SD= .477] scores. On average, participants’ post-dialogue scores were -.500 higher than their pre-dialogue scores, 95% CI [-.734, -.266], and participants’ post point-of-view scores were -.714 higher than their pre point-of-view scores, 95% CI [-.512, -7.071]. These differences were statistically significant: dialogue, $t(55) = (-4.282)$, $p = .000$; and point-of-view, $t(55) = -7.071$, $p = .000$. It was concluded that the graphic novel lessons might have been associated with an increase in the areas of characterisation, dialogue and point-of-view. These analyses provide evidence that the overall difference in total scores was largely a result of the increase in three areas: characterisation, dialogue and point of view.

Table 16. Paired samples test, paired differences between narrative elements in pre- and post-conventional writing scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Samples Test</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>Std. Error of Difference</th>
<th>95% CI of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair 1</td>
<td>Organisation1 - Organisation2</td>
<td>-.143</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>-.379</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>-1.211</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2</td>
<td>Plot1 - Plot2</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>.854</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>-.354</td>
<td>.104</td>
<td>-1.095</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3</td>
<td>Character1 - Characters2</td>
<td>-.304</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>-.501</td>
<td>-.106</td>
<td>-3.084</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4</td>
<td>Dialogue1 - Dialogue2</td>
<td>-.500</td>
<td>.874</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>-.734</td>
<td>-.266</td>
<td>-4.282</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5</td>
<td>Point of View1 - Point of View2</td>
<td>-.714</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>-.917</td>
<td>-.512</td>
<td>-7.071</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6</td>
<td>Setting1 - Setting2</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>.282</td>
<td>1.230</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 7</td>
<td>Ideas and Content1 - Ideas and Content2</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>-.258</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>-3.22</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8</td>
<td>Language Features1 - Language Features2</td>
<td>-.089</td>
<td>.793</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>-.302</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>-.843</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 9</td>
<td>Mechanics1 - Mechanics2</td>
<td>-.125</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>-.317</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>-1.308</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 10</td>
<td>Total1 - Total2</td>
<td>-1.875</td>
<td>4.565</td>
<td>.610</td>
<td>-3.097</td>
<td>-.653</td>
<td>-3.074</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further analysis sought to determine the distribution patterns of the total scores of the pre- and post-conventional narratives across all three classrooms (see Table 17). It was found that there was a shift in percentiles across all three classrooms, as the total post-conventional writing scores were generally higher than the total pre-conventional writing scores. However, I wanted to further examine the results of survey and texts/artefacts data for individual cases in which the post-conventional scores were lower or abnormally higher than the pre-conventional scores.

Table 17. Distribution across pre- and post-intervention conventional writing scores in the 5th, 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, 90th and 95th percentiles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentiles</th>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>25</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>75</th>
<th>90</th>
<th>95</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Average (Definition 1)</td>
<td>Total1 CLASB</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>20.50</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASC</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>12.60</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>24.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASK</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>26.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total2</td>
<td>CLASB</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASC</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>23.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASK</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>24.75</td>
<td>28.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukey’s Hinges</td>
<td>Total1 CLASB</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASC</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASK</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total2</td>
<td>CLASB</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>22.00</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASC</td>
<td>16.50</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>21.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CLASK</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>24.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analyses of results from survey data, conventional writing rubric tools and texts/artefacts sought to determine the ways in which the graphic novel intervention might have impacted conventional narratives. Two histograms were generated from the total mean scores across each classroom—one histogram represented the pre-conventional scores (Total1) and the post-conventional scores (Total2). The histograms showed outliers which might suggest a phenomenon that needs further examination (see Figure 24). I decided to investigate
the outlier marked 11 from Classroom B on the histogram showing total mean scores for post-conventional writing.

![Histograms showing the distribution of the total mean pre- and post-conventional writing scores across three classrooms.](image)

*Figure 24. Histograms showing the distribution of the total mean pre- and post-conventional writing scores across three classrooms.*

Case number 11 referred to Nadine, who was also an interview participant. Nadine is one example of a student who scored higher in the post-conventional writing. She scored 25 out of 36 for the pre-conventional writing and 31 out of 36 for the post-conventional writing. Furthermore, an excerpt from the conventional writing assessment rubric found that Nadine scored higher or the same in each category (see Table 18). For instance, she scored higher in the post-conventional narrative for character and dialogue categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 18. Excerpt from conventional narrative score sheet showing Nadine’s scores by narrative element.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conventional Writing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stated in the methodology chapter, the Grade 7 cohort in this study was streamed according to their achievement scores upon entering secondary school. Nadine was a student in Classroom B, a classroom characterised for students with the highest achievement scores for English language. Moreover, I inferred that Nadine used a systematic approach to creating both post-conventional narrative texts. Her approach involved selecting one paragraph from her post-intervention conventional narrative and fleshing it out across some panels in her graphic narrative. In her post-intervention interview she stated, “I started with the first paragraph, which is just after lunch they were playing catch. So I drew the little box of the
two girls playing catch. The other part of the paragraph where the girl pelted the ball so hard
this is another part here”. It is plausible that the graphic novel intervention might have
extended and developed some of Nadine’s narrative writing skills including plot and
organisation. However, it is also plausible that, since Nadine’s pre-conventional narrative
scored in the upper 90th percentile, her post-conventional narrative writing score was as a
result of maturation in performance over time.

Unlike Nadine, there were some students whose post-conventional narrative scores were lower
than their pre-conventional narrative scores. For example, Desiree’s (pseudonym) pre-
conventional score was 18 out of 36 points (50th percentile) while the post-conventional score
was 13 out of 36 points (5th percentile). What might have caused the decrease in scores from
one time-point to the next? I examined Desiree’s texts/artefact data for possible clues for the
decrease in scores. For instance, in the post-intervention conventional narrative rubric sheet I
noted that in Desiree’s narrative, “The plot resembles a ‘note like delivery’; bits of the plot
jotted down”. In other words, some key pieces of information about the plot are present, but
more narrative details were needed to fully establish elements, such as setting, and aspects of
plot, such as conflict (Figure 25). Desiree’s graphic narrative contained six panels which
contained linguistic and visual (e.g., colour) multimodal resources. For instance, an excerpt of
her graphic narrative (Figure 26) shows an understanding that graphic novels contain narration
and narrative boxes. In both narratives, I inferred that Desiree possessed some understanding
of narrative conventions, although some elements were underdeveloped. It is plausible that
with the demands of having to complete two narratives—conventional and graphic narrative—
Desiree used the conventional narrative as a blueprint, while focusing more on creating her
graphic narrative. An emphasis on creating her graphic narrative might have resulted in a
lower post-conventional narrative score. Desiree produced both forms of narratives/texts
demonstrating an understanding of mono- and multimodal resources, even to varying extents.
Research Question Four

Few studies have investigated both teachers’ and students’ responses to, and texts/artefacts resulting from an intervention using, graphic novels in their classrooms. The fourth research question asked about the ways in which the intervention impacted on teachers’ professional learning, in light of teaching with graphic novels for the first time. In this section, I draw on the results of the thematic analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the three teacher participants’ interview transcripts. Three broad themes were inferred from the analyses:

1) positioning visual modes of representation and meaning-making in those classrooms challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling;
2) explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional narrative writing; and

3) teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations.

I discuss each theme with supporting evidence from teachers’ interview transcripts. In addition, I provide a descriptive analysis of the classroom observations, which provides evidence of how teacher participants implemented the graphic narrative unit plan in their respective classrooms.

**Theme one: positioning visual modes of representation and meaning-making challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling.**

Prior to the start of the study, the verbal/linguistic mode was the dominant form of communication and meaning-making in the three English language classrooms. The graphic novel intervention might have represented a shift in teachers’ conceptualisations of short story writing, because the inclusion of visual modes positioned both visual and verbal/linguistic modes as important for communication and constructing meaning, hence challenging the existing discourse, which privileged the verbal/linguistic mode of communication and constructing meaning in those classrooms. This theme describes the ways in which the three teacher participants (re)conceptualised short story writing over three time-points. Their (re)conceptualisations included the ways in which they perceived the potential of each visual mode and the integration of modes (multimodal) for constructions of meaning.

Firstly, two teacher participants linked the study and production of graphic narratives to characteristics of schooling usually associated with primary schooling. Graphic novels provided an alternative approach to traditional short story writing, which then allowed for more creativity. In the context of schooling in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grade 7 marks the beginning of secondary schooling, which is thought to signal a shift to a predominantly academic focus with little room for individual creativity (Kress, 1997). However, the graphic novel intervention comprised elements of creative productions, including the use of colouring materials to construct visual modes. Two teacher participants, Jason and Samantha, described
the shift from primary to secondary schooling in physical and ideological terms. Jason maintained an interactive classroom environment, which he thought mirrored a primary school setting; “I don’t really want to make it seem like such a big transition. I try to maintain the positives from primary school which is a lot of sharing and reading aloud, a lot of interactive stuff”. Jayla, one of the teacher participants, posited that the graphic novel lessons, especially the construction of graphic narratives, allowed for more creativity in her classroom:

To them, secondary school students shouldn’t be colouring, but they want to colour because that’s still childhood… They want to, but because it’s being inhibited in secondary school… so they grabbed at the idea to colour and put out the story how they wanted.

The graphic novel lessons challenged pre-existing notions of the materials used to construct short stories. Jayla’s comment also alluded to the earlier point about challenging the existing ideology of a seemingly more academic focus in secondary schooling. Added to that, her comments suggested that her students might have wanted to use materials like crayons prior to the graphic novel lessons. The graphic novel intervention provided a conduit through which students used colouring materials to construct meaning of visual modes (colour) in the creation of their graphic narratives.

Additionally, Jason said that the graphic novel lessons provided a creative outlet for his students whose artistic talents were previously disengaged during conventional narrative writing classes:

One of my students was excited [that] he could draw because he is one of the best artist[s] in the class. So, now he had a chance to show that. Not everyone has [a chance] to show what they’re talented at in school because the subjects don’t always allow your specific talents to show.

Both Jayla and Jason’s comments highlighted the ways in which traditional approaches to short story writing marginalised and restricted some of their students’ creative talents. It appears that the graphic novel lessons provided an outlet for those students whose creative voice was silenced by traditional approaches to short story writing, which privileged the verbal form of communication and meaning-making.
The graphic novel intervention presented an opportunity to break the pattern of teaching narrative writing in the conventional form, which students were also accustomed to in the primary school curriculum. Thus, the teachers were able to teach storytelling through another medium that built on and extended their professional repertoire. Furthermore, Samantha posited that her students may have been disengaged by the repetitiveness of the traditional approaches to narrative writing; “Before when I did short story writing, after a while they got bored. They would be like ‘Miss, not this again’. But then whenever they have the book they don’t seem to see it as writing a short story, they have a different perception of it”. Samantha attributed her students’ increased engagement in short story writing to the inclusion of the visual mode: “The use of pictures got their interest immediately because they [are] now using a book where they could actually see what is going on”. Samantha’s comments suggested that her students might have associated conventional short story writing with ‘work’, while the graphic novel lessons might have been perceived as fun. In her words, “So, the graphic novel was more interesting for them. I just think they probably saw it as like something fun to do. Not really part of the syllabus per se, but something fun”. Prior to the study, the shift from primary to secondary schooling seemingly represented a shift from a more creative approach to schooling to a predominantly academic focus. However, the inclusion of graphic novel texts challenged that pre-existing ideology.

Secondly, the ways in which all three teacher participants conceptualised the role, and potential, of visual modes as having potential for communication and construction of meaning shifted over the intervention. Prior to the study, visual modes of communication, which included visual aids, were used as ancillary teaching material in their teaching practice, but they were able to conceptualise ways in which their students could actively engage the visual mode as part of their meaning-making practices. Those prompts were ancillary to or supporting learning material, and the students were not expected to respond with visual images. For instance, I asked Samantha whether she had used visual texts in her English language lessons prior to the study, to which she responded: “The most I did was have some handouts with pictures and so forth when we did nouns and they had to write the collective names for the nouns and so on”. She added; “That was very good. I thought it would have been, you know, a little simple for them but they seemed to have enjoyed it”. Jason incorporated films when teaching English literature: “From time to time I use it. I like to more or less try to get the text of a movie version of a text when I’m teaching literature especially, or something that gives them the visual of it. It helps them understand it or remember it”. Jayla commented that she used pictures and videos “[t]o enhance the lesson. For example, if
I’m giving them a story to write on, and I show them a picture and tell them to base the story on that”. To place this further in the context of schooling in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, one of the English language examinations administered by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC, 2011) includes a picture prompt which forms part of the narrative writing questions. Thus, the use of picture prompts might have been an attempt to prepare those students for their future certificate examinations.

Teacher participants posited that graphic novels (1) added another way of narrative storytelling which could have acted as a conduit for getting ideas from one’s head to paper, and (2) were useful for those students who lacked imagination and the ability to conceptualise ideas for their short stories: For example, Jason commented:

I think it’s good. It adds another element to expression, it helps persons who may not be able to have the literal ability to write, to express. So, it adds a more, a greater ease to creativity and expression more or less… Usually they have it in their head but there is no way to get it from their head into a piece of paper. So, this is the first step in getting them to increase or expand their ability to communicate or express.

Moreover, Samantha posited that the graphic novel intervention would have allowed (3) visual representation to imprint on students’ memory for a longer time; “I think it’s a very good idea because, uhmm, most of the students that we have now are visual learners, you know, and so when you incorporate that into the learning they would most likely to have remembered what you have taught them”. Meanwhile, Jason posited that (4) the visual mode would provide his students with a blueprint for writing:

I think drafting as well as when it comes to the plot and the progression, because at least there is a way to progress the way in a non-typical way and there is a way to make the plot and everything unique. You can paint a picture that you would not be able to paint with words. So, yes, it’s good because now you can have the framework and now you have a way to kind of craft the story. It makes the story more three dimensional, because you can control the mood and tone just by the visuals and the atmosphere around it, so it’s very good like that. (Jason)

By the mid- and final phases of this study, all three teacher participants conceived the visual mode as a vital part of communication and meaning within the context of the graphic novel
lessons. I suggest that their shift in thinking might have been a direct result of actively interacting with the graphic novel intervention.

Furthermore, the teacher participants suggested that graphic novel texts should become a permanent fixture in the English language curriculum, but they thought it should only be geared towards students in the lower grades as a way of exposing them to another form of storytelling. In their opinion, lower grades included Grades 7 and 8. This finding suggested that visual-verbal/linguistic texts, such as graphic novels, might be valued as part of the English language curriculum. Two teacher participants, Jason and Samantha, conceptualised the ways in which graphic novel texts could be extended to other schools. According to Samantha:

I think it should be used in all of the schools because it helps students; not only do they get to learn something new, but then they also understand a story is not just about words. They get to see it in a different view.

Moreover, teacher Jayla suggested that the inclusion of visual-verbal texts, such as graphic novels, might have some impact on her students’ social futures. She surmised that arts-based professions were unpopular and perhaps undervalued in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. However, she thought that graphic novel texts might inspire students to become authors and artists, among other things: “There are students whose talents are being underutilised because drawing is not a big thing in our country. They can use this, sell some books on the side and make some money. They can become novelists, illustrators, etc.” Additionally, the findings suggested that the use of graphic novels texts might form part of a wider debate on the lack of graphic novels produced by Caribbean nationals. In the initial interview, Jason commented on a lack of graphic novels that represented Caribbean social and cultural contexts. He opined that his students might have related better to a graphic novel containing familiar social and cultural events.

The only sad thing is that, there is no graphic novel that is Caribbean to allow them to connect socially to it, because the thing that is going to draw them most is the visuals and the plot. If it were something Caribbean then they would instantly get on with it because they know it’s local or regional that they could relate to. That is the only thing to be honest. It’s new and something that would allow them to further their expression.
This finding might have implications for literacy programme facilitators to consider the creation and publishing of graphic narratives as a way of valuing and honouring our Caribbean social and cultural contexts.

**Theme two: explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional narrative writing.**

As described in the methodology chapter, the three teacher participants guided their students through a study of a primary graphic novel text as part of the graphic novel teaching unit. The purpose of studying the text was to build schema about reading and responding to visual-verbal literacies. Subsequently, teacher participants guided their students through creating their own graphic short stories as a way of helping them become critical, reflective participants in the literacy community, responding to print text literacies and image literacies together. The findings suggested that teachers were able to draw on their knowledge of their learners and their learning styles, to help with planning, executing, and regulating classroom activities related to the graphic novel intervention. In this sub-section, I describe the ways in which teachers’ explicit instruction built on and extended their conventional short story writing practices.

All three teachers posited that while the strategies used to teach both forms of writing (conventional and graphic novel short stories) differed slightly, those strategies were already part of their professional repertoire. First, I present the strategies teachers found effective for reading graphic novel texts. In Samantha’s words:

> Short story writing with words only you would rely on previous knowledge [but graphic novel lessons required] direct reading and thinking activity, question and answer relationship where you would let them refer to the book first as a guideline and then you would give them other stuff to do”.

Samantha’s comments suggested that she used different strategies for teaching conventional and graphic narratives. It should be noted that any of the strategies cited (previous knowledge, question and answer, etc.) can be used to teach conventional narrative. However, Samantha highlighted the distinction between strategies used for teaching conventional and graphic narratives based on her subjective professional experience. All teacher participants employed the read-aloud strategy to some extent during the reading aspect of their graphic novel lessons.
Teachers reported that the dialogue in the primary graphic novel made the text interactive and useful for read-aloud, and that students found something new on each reading: “I was even shocked thinking that, okay, that when they finished reading they would be bored. But it seems as if every time you give them they find something new in it to see”. The findings suggested that studying the primary graphic novel text allowed students to “see” the story; for instance, Jayla pointed out that her students were able to “see” and interpret emotions clearly with aid of the images within the text.

The findings also suggested that the processes of creating conventional and graphic narrative texts were similar, but teachers were aware that the graphic narrative presented unique challenges because of the visual modes. In the remainder of this sub-section, I will describe the ways in which teachers drew on, and adapted, their pre-existing strategies to guide students through the writing process. Those strategies included feedback, scaffolding, and editing. Samantha described a process in which she provided feedback on her students’ conventional short story writing, then allowed them to start the drawing aspect of the graphic short story writing: “what I did was to tell them ‘Ok you need to write your story first’, give them like 10 or 15 minutes, correct it for them and then tell them start the drawing”. Scaffolding strategies were useful to explicitly support learners who lacked experience in understanding and making inferences from reading graphic novel texts and creating their own graphic narratives. For example, all teacher participants commented that they used *Amulet Book 1* as a blueprint for the writing process, that is, to show the students a model of graphic narrative rather than to simply tell them. According to Jason, the primary graphic novel text allowed his students “to look through and draw parallels from it”. But Jason and Jayla suggested that those students who lacked familiarity with graphic novels would have benefitted from reading more graphic novels besides the primary one used in this study.

All teacher participants also reported that continuously motivating their students was essential for students when they created their graphic narratives, especially those who were disengaged by the drawing aspect. This finding suggested graphic novels required more monitoring by teachers than traditional approaches to short story writing. They emphasised to the students that their graphic narratives did not have to contain sophisticated drawings; instead, as Jayla highlighted, “[t]he point is just to get the story across so that others can understand it and that it’s reader friendly”.

144
Furthermore, teachers were able to facilitate collaborative interactions among their students for both reading and writing activities. These included pairing a more skilled or experienced student with one less experienced or skilled, small group activities in which students discussed (and grasped) ideas and concepts, and classroom level interactions in which students shared, discussed, extended knowledge and took part in activities related to graphic novel lessons. For students who experienced difficulty brainstorming ideas, Jayla formulated a list of topics drawn from the entire class. She put those topics on the board and allowed students to choose one topic from that set list and then write on it. In all of the classrooms, I observed that students shared their graphic short story practice exercises with their peers or the entire class.

**The graphic novel teaching unit plan.**

This sub-section comprises the synopsis and synthesis of my classroom observations of the teachers’ implementation of the graphic novel teaching unit plan. Each teacher participant used the unit plan to guide the preparation of his or her lessons. The findings from the observation data were grouped into two broad sections: 1) the teaching of graphic novel conventions through study of the graphic novel exemplar *Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper*; and 2) creating graphic narrative texts, and are presented separately. Two literacy events—reading and writing/creating—intertwine at some points.

**Learning graphic novel conventions through study of graphic novel text, *Amulet Book 1*.**

Introductory lessons included close reading of the primary graphic novel text, *Amulet Book 1*. Teachers used familiar questioning strategies to elicit information from students during whole-class discussions: For instance, Samantha focused her classroom discussions panel-by-panel by asking questions such as, “How do you think Emily is feeling?” and “How do you know this?” Teachers Samantha and Jayla, probed students’ metacognitive awareness of the graphic novel reading process with questions such as “How did you read the text?” Teacher Samantha also directed students’ awareness of graphic novel visual features in preparation for the forthcoming lessons on creating graphic narratives, “When you do your own graphic novel you will include pictures so pay close attention to the pictures here”. They reminded students that the images in their graphic novels did not have to be as sophisticated as those in *Amulet Book 1*. This was useful for motivating students who might have been apprehensive about creating images for their own graphic novel texts. Other introductory lessons looked at
building on students’ previous knowledge and then drawing connections to the graphic novel. For instance, Jayla reviewed the elements of conventional short story writing with her students, then guided the discussion to the main difference(s) between both. The students deduced that the presence of images in graphic novels was the main difference between both forms of narratives. She then engaged the students’ metacognitive skills through a think-pair-share activity where each member of the pair shared what they learned about graphic novels with their partner.

Jason focused on sharing some background information about comics and the manga style of artwork. He emphasised that graphic novels were “sequential art that tells a story”, perhaps directing students to the importance of images in helping to tell the story. Afterwards, the other introductory lessons focused on whole-class readings of the graphic novel, where students took turns to read the parts of various characters, and others voiced the onomatopoeia devices, while Jason read text from narrative boxes. This strategy appeared useful to engage students in the reading of the text and for helping those with little experience with graphic novels grasp how they are read. In addition, Jason asked questions mainly about plot and characters during breaks in readings. However, observations of lessons revealed that some students silently read ahead of the rest of the class. Samantha had a different approach to whole-class readings. She engaged students in a panel-by-panel discussion for a few pages then allowed them to read ahead to a specified point. Afterwards, she checked their understanding by asking questions about character traits and setting, etc. Out of the three teachers, only Jason completed a whole-class reading of the entire text. In another interesting development, Jayla urged students to write their impressions of the first lesson in their classroom journals. She did not mention the journals in later graphic novel lessons and I did not have ethics approval to secure them.

Besides the graphic novel text exemplar, other texts were used to enhance classroom instruction. For example, Jayla let students view a video clip on their netbooks of Kazu Kibuishi, author of *Amulet Book 1*. He was being interviewed about the graphic novel creative process. Students discussed what they saw in the context of the process of creating a graphic novel text. Jayla also made connections between the text and the author’s own life to explain to students that they can use autobiographical information when creating their own graphic novel texts. Moreover, students viewed another video clip, *Using graphic novels in the*
classroom: ‘Shakespeare Squared’. Her intention was to show students the importance of using graphic novels in the classroom.

At first apprehensive, due in part to a lack of experience with graphic novels, Samantha became the ‘gatekeeper of knowledge’ on developing graphic novel lessons, especially at the very start of the implementation. She started the unit ahead of the other teachers. In the interviews she recalled scouring the internet for exemplars of graphic novel lessons, reading through journal articles included in the unit package, and relying on Hart’s (2010) text for useful activities. Those sources were either referenced in, or available in full text, as part of the teaching unit package discussed earlier in the training workshop section. Conversely, Jason provided support to the other teachers on how to read the text. Jason and Jayla did not adopt Samantha’s lessons wholesale, instead adapting them to suit lesson times, students, personal and professional interests.

After the introductory lessons, teachers explicitly taught students about the visual and textual representation of short story elements in *Amulet Book 1*. They relied heavily on Hart’s (2010) text for activity suggestions, and I, as the researcher, occasionally verified content information and provided feedback to students during lessons. As researcher, I was ultimately positioned as an expert of graphic novel content and actively engaged in disseminating that knowledge to students. Furthermore, in some cases I offered strategic advice to teachers during lessons. Again, this action was not to criticise teachers’ pedagogy nor alter the course of the lesson, but to offer suggestions about elements of the graphic novel text which could be highlighted to students in order to make the ongoing lesson more effective.

*Creating graphic narrative texts as a response to the graphic novel lessons.*

Students created their own graphic narratives after studying *Amulet Book 1* as a way to learn some of the concepts of graphic novel storytelling. As students prepared to create their own graphic stories, teachers provided explicit instruction on how to represent elements of short story writing in graphic novel form. For the sake of brevity, only characterisation and dialogue will be described here. The teachers connected characterisation with dialogue to showcase how (i) one enhances the other, and (ii) how both advance the plot. Samantha highlighted the importance of capturing characters’ expressions clearly, so that readers are not
confused. Moreover, she constantly reminded students that the character’s speech should not
duplicate the facial expressions. With the my recommendation, she explored how details such
as the colour of characters’ clothing can provide clues about their attributes. Subsequently,
they discussed how speech bubbles can be used to express characters’ thoughts and speech.
Students had opportunities to practise drawing characters in their workbooks, as well as using
examples from *Amulet Book 1* to support their discussions of the topic. Samantha selected
students and me to model the drawing/writing tasks. For instance, I was called on to illustrate
one speech bubble design on the chalkboard. Then, three students were selected to draw three
different facial expressions on the chalkboard. The rest of the class suggested how the
drawings could be even more effective. Samantha also provided short notes on
characterisation and speech bubbles adapted from Hart’s (2010) text.

Jason engaged in a brief silent performance to demonstrate the importance of the visual in
expressing characters’ emotions. He paced in front of the class, shoulders slumped, hands in
pockets, head bent. Then he asked students to guess his emotions and brainstorm speech
based on his behaviour. In a similar manner to Samantha, he emphasised the importance of
the speech in enhancing the expression, rather than replicating it. After scribing a brief note
and other examples of emotions on the chalkboard, students were instructed to choose four
emotions from the board and divide a sheet of paper into four squares, representing one
emotion in each square. This task also reinforced the importance of panels to contain visual
and textual information in graphic novel format.

Like the other teachers’ lessons, Jayla’s students were actively engaged in the classroom
processes. For instance, Jayla selected two students (pairs) to demonstrate the importance of
connecting characters’ responses to their speech, but bearing in mind that the speech should
not duplicate the characters’ expressions. Jayla chose one student to draw a character on the
chalkboard and another to write appropriate speech in a speech bubble. She pointed out that
they should pay closer attention to the characters’ expressions and their corresponding speech.
Afterwards, she drew two speech bubbles containing speech and selected two students to draw
characters on the board (see Figure 27 below). The rest of the class offered suggestions to
those students on how to make their drawings better.
In the following activity, Jayla provided the dialogue and then asked the students to fill in the missing piece of dialogue (see Figure 29). Then, using the completed dialogue, students were instructed to create characters and fill in the corresponding speech in speech bubbles.

```
Character 1: Can I borrow your pen?
Character 2: No way!
Character 1: This is no ordinary pen. It’s very special.
Character 1: Special!!! What’s so special about it?
Character 2:
```

After monitoring the students’ progress, Jayla highlighted a few errors to the entire class. These errors included:

(i) that there was no need to label the characters as ‘Character 1 or 2’ because characters were already represented through images;

(ii) some students drew characters one under the next as opposed to constructing panels from left to right and placing the characters and speech bubbles into each panel; and

(iii) reminding students that no quotation marks were necessary because the words placed inside the speech bubbles represented direct speech.
At the end of this lesson, some students presented their work to the entire class while others shared their work with their friends. Some were quite creative as they created character names, even using their own or those of their classmates. Generally, teachers’ feedback helped students to negotiate the demands of transferring information from one format to the next.

After the introductory graphic novel writing sessions, teachers worked with students on their short graphic novel narratives. Teacher participants emphasised that the focus was on the narrative, as opposed to sophisticated art/visual design elements. The teachers and I agreed that in the interest of time, Crilley’s (2009) guidelines should form the basis of the short graphic narrative writing task. These guidelines were as follows: dialogue including word balloons [teachers adapted this to speech balloons]; sound effects at least once; at least one wordless panel, a panel in which the story is conveyed entirely by drawing; and at least three different facial expressions in the story. Samantha incorporated additional guidelines for her students. These included: (1) minimum of 16 panels, (2) design cover page, (3) ensure setting is clear, and (4) ensure that various character emotions are used. In this class, Samantha provided guidelines as a blueprint for an authentic book-making activity.

Furthermore, students were required to construct their conventional narratives and then transfer them into graphic narratives. Students engaged in authentic writing activities such as composing conventional and graphic novel short stories, and collaboratively composing and editing each other’s work. Unfortunately, most teachers only had about four sessions to guide completion of the task. The relatively short school term coupled with preparation for final examinations affected the intensity of the final writing activities. The process of creating two pieces of writing, one that arguably was a new format for students, was quite tedious. That is not to say that constructing the conventional short story piece, although familiar, was any less challenging for them.

The analysis of students’ final writing products will not be discussed in detail here. However, there is evidence that each form of writing provided its own challenges; and the transfer from one form to the other further problematised the writing process. Out of the three teachers, Samantha held the most lessons that supported students’ creative writing tasks. She instructed her students to write a short story for homework during the previous week, after which they
would have transferred that story into its related graphic novel. However, there was some confusion, as some students constructed a graphic novel narrative instead. Both sets of students were given feedback about their writing such as: (i) ensuring conflict was well developed; (ii) developing setting with minor details like a picture frame on a wall; and (iii) distinguishing characters with details such as clothing. Students were then given an opportunity to edit their writing. Those students who only constructed a graphic novel piece were required to construct its related conventional piece. Unfortunately, those who had been previously absent then focused on constructing their conventional writing.

Conversely, Jayla ensured that her students completed their conventional writing pieces in one session. The whole class brainstormed some exciting topics for their stories, including ‘An experience I would never forget’ and ‘A day in the life of a coin/vagrant’. Each student chose a topic and was instructed to: (i) create an interesting story that would hold the readers’ attention, especially when they were transferred to graphic stories; (ii) use story elements; and (iii) use quotation marks for direct speech. Some students shared their stories with the rest of the class. They were expected to complete their graphic novel stories in the next session, however, Jayla was absent from school. I was asked to observe the class and ensure that students were working on their stories. Jayla provided feedback to some students during the class after that one. Unfortunately, I was unable to observe Jason’s class.

Overall, the writing process did not follow the ‘conventional-to-graphic novel’ trajectory. In fact, some students created their graphic novels first then their short stories. Others created one and not the other. In the final interview Jason surmised that his students who “were initially strong in English wrote first and then drew. Those who were not so strong in English were the ones who jumped at the opportunity to draw because they had a blueprint as to how they wanted the plot to work and then they went into the writing process”. Some students who did not consider themselves artists had difficulty overcoming their inhibitions about drawings. Jayla commented in the final interview that her “students thought that if it [the drawing] wasn’t perfect, then the story wouldn’t be good”. A few asked for assistance from their peers or family members. A small number did not submit graphic narratives but the reasons are unclear at the point of writing this thesis. Pragmatic issues, such as exam preparation, teacher and student absences, limited time to offer all students detailed feedback or for multiple revisions or editing, may have impacted the process and end product of the conventional and graphic narratives.
This section focused on the procedures that allowed for the investigation of the pedagogical potential of graphic novel texts which included the graphic novel teaching unit. The idea was to maintain the normal processes of schooling as much as possible, since this was the first time graphic novel texts had been used as a pedagogical tool in those classrooms.

*Sub-theme: teachers evaluating their pedagogic practice and their students’ learning.*

The sub-theme, teachers evaluating their pedagogic practice and their students’ learning, focuses on teacher participants’ evaluations of their practice and their students’ learning at the mid and end time-points of the intervention. The findings suggest that teacher participants observed and refined their practice based on their evaluations of their students’ ongoing learning, and their own growing confidence in delivering the graphic novel lessons. Additionally, teacher participants talked about the ways in which their experiences during the intervention might inform their teaching post-intervention.

One useful example is teachers’ evaluations of their students’ mono- and multimodal narrative text productions and the strategies they used to support their students’ learning. Teacher participants observed various ways in which their students negotiated the process of transferring their conventional narratives into graphic narratives. Jason drew on three significant observations to explain the phenomenon. His assertions were based on his knowledge of his students’ previous conventional, monomodal writing skills and their prior achievement scores. The first observation is that relatively high achievers engaged with the conventional narrative writing first, then drew because it provided a blueprint for their graphic narratives. The second observation was that students who were lower achievers constructed their graphic narratives first, then constructed their conventional narratives afterwards. The third observation was that some students bypassed the conventional narratives entirely and only constructed a graphic narrative piece. In Jason’s words:

> It seemed like the students that were initially strong in English wrote first and then drew. Those who were not so strong in English were the ones who jumped at the opportunity to draw because they had a blueprint as to how they wanted the plot to work and then they went into the writing process… The ones who bypassed the words only, their stories are a bit more simple, because of the fact that it initially started as a drawing and they might not have the vocabulary to fully develop and describe their
graphic novels into words. Whilst those who started off with the written form, it’s more wordy because in some cases the first form was the more intended form and the second form is more of an adaptation.

The findings from students’ graphic narratives provided evidence that some of Jason’s students did not complete either form of short story writing. The reasons for this phenomenon were unclear.

Additionally, the teachers’ evaluations suggested that the process of transferring from one form of narrative to the other was problematic for two reasons: (1) finding the balance between the visual and verbal modes to tell the whole story effectively; and (2) negotiating the rules and patterns of organising monomodal, conventional and multimodal, graphic narrative texts. Jayla highlighted the importance of reinforcing that pictures carry some of the weight of the story. In her words:

I found that because some of them used a lot of words in their short stories, when they transferred it they got a bit muddled because they want to put the same amount and type of words in the speech bubbles. I had to show them “No, you’re making it… in the graphic novel”. So, the pictures would bring out some of the story so you would have less speaking.

Furthermore, one teacher’s evaluations suggested that using homework as an opportunity to extend her students’ learning was problematic. Samantha’s students were instructed to write their conventional narratives as their homework assignments. This was in an effort to allow more time for the creation of their graphic narrative text in class. She recalled:

I gave them homework where they had to write a story. Each child had to write a story where they had an idea for a graphic novel. When they come next class now we gonna transfer that step by step. What I want them to do first is to develop the characters and then after that they can do the setting and they develop the storyline along the way.

However, Samantha reported that because some students did not complete their homework assignment, they spent less time on their graphic narratives. Interestingly, Samantha suggested that one of her students might have had someone else complete his graphic narrative for him. She reported that she had stressed the value of creating a graphic narrative to one’s own abilities. It was not clear whether that student felt a sense of incompetence with the
At the final time-point of the graphic novel intervention, teachers evaluated their own practice. In the final interviews, I prompted the teachers to think about whether they would have implemented the graphic novel lessons differently. If yes, they then stated how they would have done it. On reflection, Jason surmised that he should have allocated more time to the writing process, “Even more time drawing than the actual reading because they’re always doing reading in other subjects, connecting stories. To actually improve on one specific aspect would actually take a lot more time”. Other time related issues included the weekly school-wide general assembly, which took up an average of one instructional period. Jayla stated that ICT (information and communication technology/technologies) integration would have positively impacted her graphic novel lessons: “The next time around I’m going to let them do it in a group on the computer. The drawing was a little setback for some of them. The reason why I didn’t do it this time was because the internet was sometimes up, sometimes down. Some persons got connection because the class is very big”. Similarly, Samantha talked about the ways in which technologies could have supported her students’ learning. The irregular and limited internet connectivity was problematic: “those who could draw let them draw, those who can’t draw let them use particular websites. But then sometimes when I tell them to bring their net books, the internet is not working, and then sometimes we want to use the lab but then you have people using the lab”. Additionally, Samantha repeatedly highlighted that she needed more time to teach the teaching unit and that the main objectives in the unit could have been shorter. However, she remarked that the formal professional development training workshop and the teaching unit package supported her teaching and learning experiences; “As I said the handouts were pretty good and even the training you did first, that’s where I got my notes from”. Furthermore, student absenteeism for a few days or more affected some students’ understanding of the reading and writing processes related to the graphic novel lessons.
Theme three: teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations.

The findings suggested that teacher participants worked individually and collectively to build their understanding of how to infer meanings from the primary graphic novel text, as well as adapted their practice to suit this new material. These collaborations were iterative and occurred informally in the staffroom. They reported that exchanging ideas with each other, and then modifying them to suit their respective learners, was beneficial to the process. Within the context of these collaborations, a teacher-learner dichotomy emerged, which might have challenged existing dynamics of teachers as gatekeepers of knowledge. With the teacher-as-student dichotomy, teacher participants had to learn graphic novel materials while enacting the graphic novel lessons.

On the individual level, teachers reported that material from various sources supported their knowledge about graphic novels, which then later informed what they taught. One source was the graphic novel teaching package, which was distributed during the professional development workshop prior to the start of the study. According to Jayla, “I used the handout… There was one that spoke about using graphic novels in the classroom and I read it up… That’s what I used as a guideline when I teach the Unit”. She commented that the internet also provided additional resources: “I did some internet searches and picked up some ideas… It wasn’t too difficult after that”. Samantha also drew on the materials from the professional development workshop for several reasons such as to develop her lessons and to build her understanding of graphic novel codes and conventions of graphic novel texts:

And then when I started reading the package which was very, very helpful for me because I don’t I’m not too familiar, like I know comic books and stuff, but I’m not too familiar with how to teach it. But when I read the package it had everything in it, step by step. All you had to do was read and apply back what you read in terms of what you would have done before.

Furthermore, the iterative process of co-constructing knowledge and pedagogic practice manifested into various forms of group dynamics. First, there was the group dynamic with all three teacher participants but Samantha and Jason appeared to have distinct roles within that
group. From the outset, Jason was identified by the other teachers as a “pro” because of his extensive knowledge of graphic novels. While Samantha started teaching the graphic novel unit first, and shared her experiences with the others: “I would say I’m doing this now but I’m not sure about that and they would give different ideas...’ For Jason, it helped “to compare your work so that you can improve or change something”. The other teacher participant, Jayla, appropriated the ideas from Samantha and then planned her lessons: “She [Samantha] told me what she did in her lesson and I did some of it. I improved some of it as well to make my lesson more interesting”. Another interesting dynamic was between the three teacher participants and me. I provided teacher participants with content knowledge and highlighted strategies for teaching graphic novels that are outlined in the literature. I also worked together with a non-participant teacher on staff to replicate, in comic strip form, useful classroom activities derived from Crilley (2009) on representing conflict in comic strip form.

The third interesting dynamic was the three-way partnerships which included teacher participants-researcher-students and teacher participants-researcher-other teacher on staff. Teacher participants, researcher, and another teacher who was not a participant actively engaged in theory and practice, sharing activities and discussions. For instance, the non-participant teacher replicated Crilley’s (2009) suggestions for conflict handouts so that teacher participants would have had material for classroom activities (see Appendices L, M and N). The other iteration of the three-way partnership was the teacher participants-researcher-students in which all of the teacher participants asked me to provide ideas during lessons. My participation was not to criticise their practice but to offer suggestions, for example, about elements of the graphic novel text which could be highlighted to students in order to make the ongoing lesson more effective. The idea of working collectively is consistent with descriptions from other studies which show that collaboration among teachers (Laycock, 2007; Rice, 2012) or between teachers and researchers (Pantaleo, 2011 was beneficial to teachers who were not avid readers of graphic novels nor used them in their classrooms.

Although teacher participants reported that collaborations were useful in teaching the graphic novel unit, their contact with each other was not sustained. Samantha recalled that contact occurred “about three or four times”, due to time restrictions, “why I didn’t ask the others a lot was the time”. This finding suggested the importance of sustained contact in supporting the implementation of the graphic novel unit, particularly because it was the first time it was being used in their classrooms.
Chapter Summary

The results presented here describe how students’ active engagement in the construction of graphic narratives disrupted institutional and classroom norms. Consistent with the constructivist paradigm, these findings also suggest that social interactions within and outside of the classroom context helped students in their meaning-making practices. First, the construction of graphic narratives served to enact students’ literate and cultural identities. The students drew on their socio-cultural experiences and available multimodal resources. Second, the inclusion of visual, spatial and other graphic novel elements disrupted and transformed classroom processes as the pre-existing discourse privileged words rather than images as the main mode of writing. Third, students actively negotiated the diverse demands for transferring their conventional narratives (storytelling with words only) into graphic narratives. Their responses to this shift in learning revealed their agency through their engagement with the creative/writing processes. Moreover, some students were positioned as experts in creating graphic narrative texts and were then able to assist their peers. Additionally, students’ active engagement in the construction of graphic narratives helped to develop their voices as writers.

The results suggest that the teachers drew on the one-off teacher learning workshop, an informal community of practice and their own self-regulated learning to develop their understandings and pedagogic practice related to the graphic novel teaching unit. There were three ways in which teachers’ experiences revealed the dissonance created as they assimilated current and pre-existing understandings, practices and beliefs. Firstly, teachers simultaneously negotiated their dual roles as learners (understanding how graphic novels work) and gatekeepers of knowledge (teaching graphic novels). Secondly, there was some dissonance when teachers’ assimilated their pre-existing pedagogical practices to teach the graphic novel teaching unit. Thirdly, teachers’ conceptualisation of the affordances of graphic novel texts for meaning making was influenced by the extent to which graphic novels were positioned as of legitimate value in themselves and / or having value to develop students’ conventional reading and writing. Teachers demonstrated agency through engagement with teaching graphic novel content, independent research and collaboration among colleagues.
Chapter 4: Discussion of Findings

Graphic novels have received increasing critical attention for developing students’ multiliteracy skills in educational contexts. In light of the global shift in communication beyond print literacy to include various technologies and multimodal texts, some researchers have suggested that classroom pedagogy should accommodate the interpretation and construction of multimodal texts and technologies (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996; New London Group, 1996). In the context of this research study, multimodal print texts, such as graphic novels, had not been used prior to the intervention. Moreover, this study is situated in the context of educational research on developing students’ multiliteracy skills. The results suggest that graphic novel text has the potential to develop students’ interpretive and creative multiliteracy skills, in varying ways for various students. Moreover, using graphic novel texts as a pedagogical tool has the potential to develop teachers’ professional learning in relation to assimilating graphic novel content with current information, and in adapting their practice to suit. I draw on the work of several theorists to account for the ways in which students constructed meaning from and created meaning of graphic novel texts. To this end, I discuss the results in the context of the relevant literature, while highlighting the results that are congruent or contradictory with those selected pieces of literature.

Research Question One

The analysis of students’ multimodal responses to the graphic novel intervention suggested that they were generally able to interpret *Amulet Book 1* and then create meaning through the construction of their graphic narratives. Over the course of the intervention, a subset of nine students participated in three one-to-one interviews at three different time-points in which they were questioned about their interpretations of *Amulet Book 1*. They were also questioned about the graphic narrative texts that they created towards the end of the intervention. A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of all nine students’ interview transcripts suggested that those students were able to provide literal, visual and analytical interpretations of *Amulet Book 1*. In addition, an analysis of the findings suggested that all nine students engaged in an authentic creative experience in which they drew on a range of multimodal resources, although some reported that a lack of time hindered the completion of their graphic narratives. They also reported that their creative activities extended beyond the classroom into their homes. Students were able to draw on a range of resources including personal experiences, prior knowledge of conventional short story-writing skills and knowledge of how popular culture
print texts work. Additionally the analyses suggested that the creative process was a collaborative enterprise, which included the completion of writing tasks through group collaborations.

The findings are discussed under three major themes:

i) students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting *Amulet Book 1*;

(ii) students negotiated the diverse demands for adapting conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on varying strategies of mono- and multimodal text productions; and

(iii) constructing the graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics.

To understand the significance of these three claims, I draw on the literature relating to 1) the use of visual and verbal multimodal resources for communication, constructing meaning and creating multimodal texts; 2) the ways in which adolescents’ engagement with popular culture, and multimodal texts like graphic novels inform and shape their classroom learning; and 3) the role of students’ prior socio-cultural and linguistic experiences on their constructions of meaning.

**Theme 1: students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting *Amulet Book 1*.**

The analyses of graphic narratives and interview transcripts suggested that student participants actively drew on a range and mixture of multimodal resources differentially in order to interpret and create meaning of graphic narrative texts. Moreover, student participants used their strengths in one area (e.g. linguistic literacy) to compensate for their lack of skills and knowledge in another area (e.g. visual literacy). According to Jacobs (2007), creating multimodal texts is an active process “both for creators and for readers who by necessity engage in the active production of meaning and who use all resources available to them based on their familiarity with the comics medium and its inherent grammars, their histories, life experiences, and interest” (p. 24). In this sub-section, I draw on the work of several theorists to account for the resources that student participants drew on to interpret and create meaning of graphic novel texts.
I draw on the work of McCloud (1994), Smetana et al., (2009) and Iser (1974) to argue that reading *Amulet Book 1* required readers to actively fill in narrative gaps in each panel, between each panel and across panels to help to interpret the whole narrative. However, the inability to perceive the whole narrative on initial readings did not hinder students’ basic understandings of the narrative. In his seminal text, *comics* theorist McCloud’s (1994) concept of closure in comics is generative for thinking about how readers construct meaning by connecting or perceiving unity across panels, in spite of the narrative gaps represented by the gutters (space between panels). McCloud’s (1994) concept of closure refers to the “phenomenon of observing the parts but perceiving the whole” (p. 63). The gaps in the text are the unwritten parts, which allow the reader to use their imagination and other resources to fill them. Iser’s (1974) phenomenological approach to the reading process is useful for thinking about how the readers’ responses are not entirely subjective but are regulated by the text. The imagination, literary and experiential resources that readers draw from is dependent on what resources the literary text requires. In other words, Iser (1974) contends that the reader’s response is controlled by the text; “from the meeting between the written text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience” (p. 284). While the reader has to fill in the narrative gaps left by the gutter (McCloud, 1994) and fill in the narrative gaps in literary texts (Iser, 1974), they also have to fill in the narrative gaps left by the visual modes in graphic novel texts. According to Smetana et al. (2009), “[i]n graphic novels, pictures communicate the ideas, themes, and underlying emotions, making the genre complex. The visual nature forces readers to use what they know to create the unwritten dialogue – a story not fully conveyed by the words” (p. 230). The reader of graphic novel texts has to interpret the ways in which the visual and verbal modes work in concert inside, between each panel and across panels in order to gain more information about the narrative.

All nine students drew on multimodal resources, albeit differentially, resulting in literal, visual and analytic interpretations of *Amulet Book 1*. Moreover, all nine students were able to draw on their visual literacy when they had some confusion about the word literacy, and vice versa. This finding is consistent with Arizpe and Styles’s (2009) study on children’s responses to sophisticated picture books which found that their participants were able to make meaning of the images on literal, figurative and visual levels even though some struggled with words. For instance, the students in their study were able to analyse moods and emotions as well as articulate personal responses to picture books. While there are obvious differences between picture books and graphic novels, the two forms bear close similarities through the need for readers to interpret visual and linguistic modes, and hence the consistent finding adds weight
to the claim that students were able to interpret the graphic novel texts on multiple levels. I
draw on the work of Rosenblatt (2005) to argue that those nine students were able to draw on
and transfer their history of reading and experiences to form literal, visual and figurative
interpretations of the primary graphic novel text. Rosenblatt’s (2005) conceptualisation of
readers’ response to literary texts is generative for grasping how readers possess a reservoir of
resources, including experiences that play a role in the active construction of meaning.
Moreover, Rosenblatt (2005) posited that each reader brings individual background
knowledge, and prior experiences with language, beliefs and context to the act of reading.

While all nine students were able to elicit literal, figurative, and/or visual interpretations on
their own, there were instances where some students required some guidance in developing
their responses. The work of Leigh (2012), Hassett and Schieble (2007), Bell (1991) and
Sturm (2013) is of value for informing the discussion around the input of an experienced
graphic novel reader in developing students’ understanding of the narrative. Firstly, I draw on
the work of Leigh (2012) to argue that awareness of visual texts does not equate to
sophisticated production of visual texts. In Leigh’s (2012) qualitative study which sought to
understand how second grade students used drawing to drive writing and thinking about
writing, she found that those students benefitted from meaningful talk about how pictures
convey meaning and how to apply visual concepts and skills to their own work. Secondly, I
draw on Bell’s (1991) conceptualisation of language comprehension disorder to argue that
some students might not have been able to form sophisticated interpretations of the graphic
novel text, because of poor decoding that might have hindered their ability to perceive the
whole narrative. According to Bell (1991), Language Comprehension Disorder is “the
weakness in creating a gestalt that interferes with the connection to and interpretation of
incoming language” . Bell suggests that poor decoding may or may not be one of the
contributing factors to the inability to create imaged wholes. For instance, she suggests that
individuals with good decoding, good vocabulary and adequate background experiences may
still experience weak gestalt imagery (p. 246). For example, this might explain why Maliah
understood that the main protagonist’s father David had died, but she was unable to decipher
the exact reason for his death. Thirdly, I draw on the work of Hassett and Schieble (2007) to
argue that students may already know how to decode linguistic text but graphic novels present
another layer of information to decode, that is, the visual cues. Hassett and Schieble (2007)
posited that, with texts that combine verbal and visual images, all three cueing systems—
graphophonic, semantic and syntactic—are available; however there are additional cues to
negotiate (p. 64). For instance, children might have been taught to use graphophonic cues—
visual symbols of written language—to read from left to right. However, “reading from left to right and top to bottom is not always possible in texts that combine print and images to convey meaning” (p. 64). So, Hassett and Schieble (2007) suggested that a teacher should guide students’ understanding of the text. Lastly, I draw on the work of Sturm (2013) to argue that students’ lack of understanding of comics’ conventions or an inability to decode comics’ conventions might hinder their interpretations of graphic novel texts. Sturm (2013) posits that reading a graphic novel is a creative process that requires students to bring a multitude of experiences and developmental proficiencies in order to fill in the gaps between the panels, through a study of the children’s graphic novel *Squish*. For example, Sturm (2013) proposes that students need to possess “perceptual constancy” to understand that objects remain the same despite changes in size, shape, colour or perspective (p. 61). He suggests that readers should bring a range of knowledge to reading comics including “a knowledge of popular culture, a knowledge of comics and pictorial conventions, an understanding of space-time relationships, and an understanding that panels in sequence form a narrative just the way sentences in sequence do in word-only texts” (p. 62). Moreover, Sturm recommends that teachers help students with the decoding process in order to fill in gaps in the graphic novel texts.

**Theme 2: students negotiated the diverse demands for adapting conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on varying strategies of mono- and multimodal text productions which resulted in varying outcomes.**

In reference to this theme, I draw on the work of Walqui (2006) to make my argument that transferring conventional narratives into graphic narratives strengthened students’ knowledge of graphic novel conventions of storytelling. Additionally, I argue that transferring conventional narratives into graphic narratives strengthened students’ knowledge of traditional reading and writing practices. Student participants would have needed to read their conventional narratives deeply to transfer or ‘re-present’ their written narratives as a graphic narrative. Walqui’s (2006) concept of *re-presenting texts* is especially useful to my analysis as it allows me to think through how students learn conventions associated with graphic novel texts, by translating content across narrative genre. *Re-presenting* texts is a type of instructional scaffolding for learners “in which teachers invite students to begin the
appropriation of new language... by engaging them in activities that require the transformation of linguistic constructions they found modelled in one genre into forms used in another genre” (p. 174). To this end, Walqui’s conceptualisation of re-presenting text is generative for grasping how student participants re-presented their conventional narratives as graphic narratives or vice versa.

Additionally, I draw on the work of Maliszewski (2013) to make my argument that six students, of the nine interview participants who submitted their conventional and graphic short stories, engaged in an authentic writing practice in which they drew on multiple modes differentially and according to their prior text-making experiences. Maliszewski (2013) outlined four proposed benefits of creating comics. These were:

1) the process of creating comics mirrors the writing process and involves many other skill sets and subject areas. Simply put, writing comics makes you a better writer;

2) comic writing is purposeful and authentic and honours the voice and experiences of the creator;

3) comic writing is fun and engaging; and

4) it is a collaborative and creative process that, through the use of technology, magnifies the benefits as well (p. 234).

I connect Maliszewski’s (2013) four proposed benefits of creating comics to the argument that creating graphic narratives was an authentic, purposeful educational activity. Firstly, creating graphic short stories appeared to have been an authentic writing activity in which students were able to draw on other skill sets including conventional short story writing. For instance, the findings revealed that Nadine drew on paragraphing skills as a blueprint for adapting her conventional short story to graphic short story. In another example, Kimberly appeared mindful of the ways in which the integration of visual and linguistic modes might affect the telling of the graphic short story. She reported that creating the graphic narrative text required a constant attention to sequencing during the adaptation process. Secondly, there is evidence that the creative process honoured students’ voices and experiences. For instance, Leon drew on the epic poem Beowulf for the premise of his conventional and graphic short stories. Leon reported that he read Beowulf at home. Thirdly, there was evidence in the findings that students were engaged and motivated throughout the adaptation process. One example is Kimberly, who reported that she imagined being in her own story. It appears as though
Kimberly saw the connection between her own life and the creative process. Fourthly, creating graphic short stories appeared to have been a creative process. For instance, the evidence shows that Kimberly chose the bright colours on the cover of her graphic short story to contrast with the grim storyline.

Furthermore, the findings suggested that the ways in which students re-presented their texts as graphic narratives were differential. I argue that students understood and were able to draw on conventions from both forms of narrative texts—conventional and graphic—to adapt their conventional narratives into graphic narratives according to their knowledge, skills and pragmatic needs. I draw on the work of Kress (2010) to make my argument that students drew on multiple modes differentially, according to the ways in which they wanted to represent their graphic narratives. According to Kress (2010), people shape and combine modal resources to reflect their interests. The selection of modes can be based on the choice of resources available, the meaning potentials of those resources and why those resources were chosen. For instance, Nadine chose colour to enhance the setting in her graphic short story, while Matthew was unable to use colour due to a lack of time. However, the literal interpretations of Nadine’s and Matthew’s graphic narratives were not hindered by the presence or absence of colour. Moreover, Matthew possessed knowledge of how colour signifies meaning in graphic novel texts, although he was unable to use colour to create his graphic narrative.

**Theme 3: constructing graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics.**

The results suggested that collaborative interactions inside and outside of the classroom helped to support students through their graphic narrative creation activities. For this theme I draw on the work of Maliszewski (2013) and Walqui (2006) to support my argument that collaborative interactions mostly supported students as they constructed meaning through graphic narrative text activities. Maliszewski (2013) proposed four benefits of creating comics, including the collaborative potential of the creation of comics. Additionally, Walqui (2006) stated that part of the scaffolding process included collaborative interactions, which support the learning of new information, and also working individually to grasp new concepts, and strategies, among other things. Walqui’s (2006) emphasis on collaborative interactions, which support classroom learning, and Maliszewski’s (2013) emphasis on the potential benefit of
collaboration in the creation of comics, were especially useful to my analysis as it allowed me to think through the potential of positive collaborative interactions, which might have supported students in constructing meaning of graphic narrative texts. For instance, Alana reported that teacher Samantha instructed her to work together with a student who struggled with completing a graphic narrative creation task. Maliah reported that she played the role of a main protagonist during the whole class readings of Amulet Book 1. She also reported that she was quite shy about participating in classroom activities prior to the study. Maliah’s comments suggested that she became a more participatory member of the classroom community. In addition, the co-constructive processes extended beyond groups of students to teacher-student dynamics, as well as student-family/peer dynamics. Students drew on positive feedback and guidance from their peers, teachers and family members. For example, Matthew drew on his teacher’s suggestion that his panels were drawn incorrectly. He deduced that poorly drawn panels would have affected the reader’s interpretation of his story.

However, the results also suggested that constructing meaning of graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which group dynamics became problematic for some participants. Another finding revealed that reading the graphic novel Amulet Book 1 text aloud as a whole class garnered varying responses from participants. According to van Lier, as quoted in Walqui (2006), working alone is another aspect of the scaffolding that is available when “when internalised practices and strategies, inner speech, inner resources and experimentation are used” (p. 168). The idea of personalised scaffolding is useful for understanding why some students might have read Amulet Book 1 on their own instead of with their entire class. For example, Leon reported that he preferred solo reading because he read faster than others did in the whole class readings. Additionally, I draw on the work of Hughes et al. (2011) to explain why some students might have preferred reading on their own. In their study of the classroom-based learning of students constructing graphic narratives, Hughes et al. (2011) found that graphic novels do not lend themselves to the read-aloud strategy for two main reasons: “students who lack confidence are not eager to take on parts and read aloud with others. The process of reading the books was also hampered because the students read at different paces; one student was finished well before some others had reached the halfway point” (p. 610).

Maliszewski’s (2013) and Walqui’s (2006) concepts do not explain why some students might have found group dynamics problematic. In another scenario, Damian found it difficult to
negotiate the group dynamic during a graphic short story group practice exercise. He thought that the group of eight was too large, and that they were unable to work out the role of each member. After the group split in half, Damian and his group members were able to negotiate the creative process by assigning purposeful roles to each member according to their strengths. An explanation is inconclusive at the time of writing this thesis.

Overall, all nine student participants were able to construct literal, visual and analytic meaning for graphic narrative texts. Students were able to draw on a range of resources including personal experiences, pre-existing knowledge of conventional short story-writing skills, emerging visual literacy and knowledge of how other multimodal print texts work. Additionally, students compensated for a lack of knowledge and skills in one area by drawing on their strengths in other areas. Furthermore, students engaged with two extended opportunities to develop their interpretations. Those extended opportunities included their participation in collaborative interactions (school and home) and the guidance provided by me as researcher during the interview sessions.

**Research Question Two**

This study found that a slight increase in the positivity of students’ attitudes to reading from the pre- to post-intervention time-points might be associated with their engagement with the graphic novel intervention. This is consistent with the findings from Laycock’s (2007) study, which found strong statistical evidence that graphic novels engaged boys in school reading over the course of one school term (p. 16). Additionally the findings from teachers’ transcripts might help to explain the increase in students’ attitudes toward reading. Teacher participants reported that their students were motivated by the images in this ‘new’ text, formed new or extended interpretations of the text on repeated readings, and might have perceived the graphic novel intervention as something fun as opposed ‘work’ associated with the syllabus.

Furthermore, the results suggested that there was no increase in the positivity of students’ attitudes to writing from the pre- to post- intervention time-points. The work of Bitz (2004) and Hughes et al. (2011) is generative for grasping why there was no statistical difference between students’ attitudes to writing from pre- to post-time-points. Bitz (2004) and Hughes et al.’s (2011) work provides information on the challenges of creating graphic novels in the
classroom context and might explain why there was no statistical difference in students’ attitudes to writing. For instance, Bitz (2004) found that creating manuscripts was the hardest part of the comics’ creation project, and Hughes et al. (2011) reported that students were demotivated by their perceived lack of artistic competence. Statistical analyses from this study’s writing survey data might account for this finding. For instance, students attached no importance to writing a good story with words and images because ‘they took longer to write’ (M= .50) and ‘required students to be able to draw well’ (M= .49). However, teacher participants reported that they provided positive feedback to their entire classes, including reminders that drawings did not have to be done professionally. It is plausible that, for many students, additional support with the writing process might have been necessary.

An additional finding is that 5% of the total number of Grade 7 students (n = 98) did not complete their post-intervention conventional narratives. I draw on the work of Bitz (2004) to provide possible explanations for this finding. Bitz (2004) reported that several participants dropped out of the Comic Book Project after feeling overwhelmed by the manuscript writing process. Those participants were English learners who already struggled with verbal writing. In the context of this study, teacher participant Jason suggested that students who were already high English language achievers found the transfer process less challenging. Moreover, students who were low achievers gravitated towards graphic narrative writing because it might have been perceived as requiring less verbal information than a conventional narrative text.

**Research Question Three**

The third research question asked about the ways in which an intervention using graphic novels might impact the quality of students’ conventional writing. The graphic novel intervention might have been associated with an increase in post-conventional writing scores for 56 student participants. However, there were three anomalies within these results. Firstly, the same students who scored between the 75th and 100th percentile in the pre-conventional writing score, scored between those two percentiles for their post-conventional writing scores. In other words, their post-conventional narrative scores were similar to or higher than their pre-conventional writing scores. Moreover, there was an increase in scores for one or more narrative elements for students whose post-conventional narrative scores remained in the 75th to 100th percentile range. Secondly, there were some students whose post-conventional writing scores were lower than their pre-conventional writing scores. Thirdly, 56 out of a
potential 98 conventional short stories (approximately 57%) were submitted at the post-intervention time-point. I draw on the work of Bitz (2004, 2010), Dallacqua (2012) and an explanation advanced by one of the teacher participants, Jasonto account for these results.

Bitz’s (2004, 2010) and Jason’s theorisation of the narrative process suggests that creating a conventional text was challenging for some students who might have already struggled with conventional narrative writing prior to the intervention. Bitz’s work (2004) and Jason’s theory helped me to think about why more than one half (n=56) of a potential of 98 students submitted both their pre- and post-conventional narrative texts. Bitz (2004) stated that the manuscript process was the most challenging aspect of the Comic Book Project because participants had limited English proficiency and struggled with the ability to write words. As a result, 58 of the 733 student participants dropped out of the project (Bitz, 2004, p. 579). Bitz (2004) recorded a lower drop-out rate, so his methods might offer some explanation for the findings in my study. Perhaps, a task similar to that in Bitz’s (2004) study, which allowed students to plan their manuscripts in small, structured steps, might have been helpful for this study’s participants who struggled with the ability to write words/linguistic text.

Additionally, Jason’s advancement helped me think about why some post-conventional narrative scores were lower than the pre-conventional narrative scores. Drawing from Jason’s advancement that the first form of narrative was the more intended form, and the second form is more of an adaptation, I argue that some students’ post-conventional scores were lower because their graphic narratives were the intended form and the conventional narrative was more of the adaptation. It is plausible that those high achieving English students with high post-conventional narrative scores saw those narratives as a final product in itself. However, students whose post-conventional narrative scores were lower than their pre-conventional narrative score might have viewed the former as part of the process of planning their graphic narratives, thereby placing less emphasis on the post-conventional narratives. In Jason’s words:

It seemed like the students that were initially strong in English wrote first and then drew. Those who were not so strong in English were the ones who jumped at the opportunity to draw because they had a blueprint as to how they wanted the plot to work, and then they went into the writing process… those who started off with the
written form, it’s more wordy because in some cases the first form was the more intended form and the second form is more of an adaptation.

Jason’s attention to students’ lack of linguistic vocabulary is also valuable for informing me as to why it might have been difficult for some students to adapt their graphic narrative into conventional narrative. According to Jason:

The ones who bypassed the words only their stories are a bit more simple, because of the fact that it initially started as a drawing, and they might not have the vocabulary to fully develop and describe their graphic novels into words.

Findings from Bitz’s Comic Book Project (2010), which are similar to Jason’s theory, are also useful to my analysis, as they allow me to consider why some students opted to create their graphic narratives first. According to Bitz (2010), the artistic-visual component helped students with limited English proficiency to “convey their intended meanings and apply the conventions of English afterward” (p. 578).

Finally, I draw on Dallacqua’s work (2012) to support my argument that the graphic novel texts might have contributed to an increase in some students’ overall, and some categorical, post-conventional narrative scores. Dallacqua’s emphasis on the potential of graphic novel texts to develop students’ understanding of literary elements is especially useful to my analysis, as it allows me to think through how graphic novels offer visual representations of literary texts, which might develop students’ understanding of a particular narrative element. Dallacqua fashioned classroom lessons on reading graphic novels to help students transition into understanding literary elements. It is plausible that some student participants’ use of narrative elements were developed as they received explicit instruction on interpreting graphic novel texts.

**Research Question Four**

The fourth research question asked how and how effectively the graphic novel intervention impacted teachers’ professional learning. The results suggested that teacher participants’ professional learning extended beyond the formal, one-off professional development workshop to an informal learning community. The teachers held sustained, collaborative, self-
directed and active practices, which occurred through informal interactions in the staffroom for most of the intervention. Although the informal community halted towards the end of the intervention, I argue the social, collaborative, experience and knowledge-sharing interactions within the community helped to support teachers’ professional learning and students’ multiliteracies learning. A useful example of knowledge sharing is when Samantha required information about interpreting meaning from graphic novel texts, while Jason required information on teaching graphic novel texts to assimilate with his pedagogic practice. In this section I draw on Timperley et al.’s (2007) and the Department of Education & Training’s (2005) synthesis of the best evidence research on teacher professional learning to account for the findings which help to answer the fourth research question.

Using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), three themes were generated from the analysis of three sets of teacher participants’ interviews. These themes were:

1) positioning visual modes of representation and meaning-making in those classrooms challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling;

2) explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional narrative writing; and

3) teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations.

In the next section, I discuss each finding in sequence.

**Theme one: positioning visual modes of representation and meaning-making challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling.**

I draw on the work of Timperley et al. (2007) to support my argument that the use of graphic narrative texts challenged prevailing curriculum and institutional discourses of storytelling practices, in the context of the seventh grade English language curriculum. The prevailing discourse was that the linguistic (word) mode was the privileged form of communication and representation. As described in the introductory chapter, Warrican’s (2006) Grades 7 to 9 language arts programme curricular document suggested the use of comics to motivate
secondary school learners in reading. However, I inferred that comics were cast as a supporting tool, instead of a legitimate text for interpretation and creating meaning. I also inferred that there was a shift in teacher participants’ thinking about the potential of the visual mode interpreting and constructing multimodal, graphic narrative texts. Thus, my teacher participants were able to conceive graphic novels as having legitimate value in themselves and/or having value to develop students’ ability to interpret and create multimodal texts.

The shift in teachers’ thinking was attributed to their professional learning and teaching throughout the intervention; as well as their students’ engagement with multiliteracies learning. Timperley et al.’s (2007) emphasis on the notion of prevailing discourses, as a contextual factor of professional learning opportunities, is especially useful to my analysis as it allowed me to think about the ways in which the inclusion of graphic novel texts challenged teachers’ prevailing assumptions of the potential of visual modes for meaning-making in the context of storytelling in their Grade 7 classrooms. A shift in prevailing discourses was attributed to a positive change in teachers’ expectation that students outcomes would positively change, as well as their own growing confidence. According to Timperley et al. (2007), teachers’ prevailing discourses changed: “As they became more confident with the new strategies and saw the resulting improvement in the achievement of their students, the teachers’ discourses came to reflect their greater sense of efficacy and their new awareness of the positive impact they could have on student outcomes” (p. 142).

The shift in the teachers’ thinking was attributed to their professional learning and teaching throughout the intervention. The change in thinking was evident from the ways in which they ‘talked’ about the potential of visual mode for multimodal interpretation and production. Initially, all of the teacher participants were asked about the extent to which they included images in their instruction. They all reported that they used visual aids and popular youth texts, such as cartoons, to varying extents to support their short story writing instruction. The teacher participants talked about visual modes as supporting material used in relation to traditional approaches to short story writing. I inferred that by the mid- and post-time-points, the way teachers ‘talked’ about the potential visual modes for learning was mediated by their engagement with the graphic novel lessons. In other words, as teachers worked to assimilate new content with current content, while adjusting their current pedagogic practice to suit, they increasingly talked about the importance of visual and linguistic modes for making meaning and creating meaning in the context of graphic novel texts. However, it is inconclusive
whether or not the teachers’ increasing awareness of the potential of visual modes for making meaning, signified a substantive change in practice that would extend beyond the intervention.

Furthermore, the teachers’ thinking was positively impacted by their students’ multiliteracies learning. At the pre-intervention time-point, all teacher participants hypothesised that the use of graphic novels would engage and motivate their mostly visual learners. By the mid- and post-intervention time-points, teacher participants talked about the potential for visual modes in graphic novel texts as a legitimate form for making meaning and creating meaning in graphic novel texts. Prior to the intervention, I hypothesised that there might have been oppositional discourse to a new approach to short story writing. However, all teacher participants hypothesised that the graphic novel intervention would engage and motivate their students in the area of short story writing. I present three pieces of supporting evidence to illustrate the teachers’ changing perceptions of visual modes and graphic novel conventions for making meaning. Firstly, the inclusion of the visual mode of communication provided an outlet for those whose creative talents, such as drawing, were silenced in the conventional classroom space. In the teachers’ view it offered a form of expression for those students with difficulties creating conventional short stories that required linguistic modes of expression and representation. However, the inclusion of the visual mode became problematic for students with high achievement scores in conventional short story writing. For example, Jayla and Jason reported that some of their students struggled with the inclusion of visual elements, which resulted in wordy graphic narratives.

Additionally, all teachers conceptualised that some students’ creativity was demonstrated through their use of multiple modes during their multimodal, graphic narrative production. Prior to the intervention, students used materials such as pencils to create their conventional narratives, while students used creative materials such as crayons to create their graphic narratives. However, some students were unable to use colouring material because those materials were unavailable at the time of creating their graphic narratives. Others chose colouring or non-colouring material based on how they wanted to portray their narratives.
Theme two: explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching conventional narrative writing.

For this theme I draw on the work of Timperley et al. (2007) to argue that teachers’ professional learning was evident through the ways in which they adapted their practice in light of the new information/skills. All teacher participants were able to draw on and extend their knowledge of monomodal narrative writing instruction in order to support their multimodal, graphic novel instruction. Timperley et al. (2007) conceptualised two circumstances in which teachers assimilated new understandings with current understandings. The first circumstance is pertinent to my analysis. According to Timperley et al. (2007), “the first was when specific skills were being promoted that were readily integrated into existing practice; for example, new forms of questioning” (p. xli). In this section, I describe two ways in which teachers assimilated new understandings with pre-existing understandings and the ways in which they adapted their practice to suit.

All teacher participants assimilated their pedagogical content knowledge of teaching monomodal, conventional narrative writing to teach the multimodal, graphic novel content (e.g. Bitz, 2004; Campbell, 2007, Serafini, 2011). All teacher participants also reported that they drew on current teaching strategies, such as think-pair-share. Teachers reported that cooperative learning held the potential for students’ understandings of new content, while teachers reported that independent learning was beneficial after students grasped the new information. Additionally, all teacher participants infused their instruction with various strategies to activate and sustain students’ engagement and motivation during the graphic novel lessons. Although teachers used similar pedagogical approaches and strategies, there were some variations in the ways in which they designed and implemented their lessons. For instance, Jason started teaching the graphic novel teaching unit by offering students some background information on comics and graphic novels, while Samantha and Jayla helped their students make connections between the narrative elements in literary narratives and graphic novels. Furthermore, the teachers reviewed and refined the graphic novel lessons in light of a number of factors, including the development of their own understandings of graphic novel texts.

Secondly, teacher participants helped their students to connect their monomodal, conventional narrative writing skills and knowledge to the new graphic novel content. That is, teachers
made specific links between the narrative elements in monomodal and multimodal forms of narratives. Teacher participants Jayla and Samantha reviewed the main elements of traditional approaches to short story writing prior to enacting the graphic novel lessons. While reviewing those elements, the teachers then clarified incomplete or erroneous knowledge of traditional approaches to short story writing before introducing graphic novel content. The teachers created opportunities for making meaning in light of the verbal/linguistic and visual cues and clues in *Amulet Book 1*. There were also opportunities for students to engage with graphic narrative-related writing activities before they created their own graphic narrative text. Additionally, during the first few graphic novel lessons, the teachers guided their students to learn some codes and conventions of graphic novel texts, through guided interactions with the primary graphic novel text. There were also opportunities for all students to draft and edit their graphic narrative texts.

Furthermore, I argue that the teachers’ critical attention to, and evaluation of, students’ multiliteracies learning was an important aspect of their professional learning and development. Moreover, teachers’ reflective practices helped teachers to adapt their practice to accommodate students’ multiliteracies learning. In a useful example, Jason reflected on what might explain the variations of students’ multimodal, graphic narrative text productions. He hypothesised that the construction of graphic narratives benefitted those already skilled at drawing, or those whose learning styles may have been predominantly visual. Jason also hypothesised that some of his low performing student writers bypassed the conventional short story writing because they already had difficulties with constructing monomodal, conventional narrative texts.
**Theme three: teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations.**

I draw on the work of Timperley et al. (2007), Arizpe and Styles (2008) and Lave and Wenger (1991) to argue that all teacher participants were members of an informal professional community in which their shared interactions and collaborations supported their learning and teaching. The informal community provided an extended opportunity for professional learning beyond the formal professional development workshop. These learning opportunities included feedback from an external expert (myself), and the sharing of teaching experiences from the classroom. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptualisation of a community of practice (CoP) is useful for thinking through how teacher participants organically formed themselves into a community with the intention of working towards the shared goal of teaching the graphic novel unit plan. The CoP supported two main activities: sharing knowledge about how graphic novel texts work, and in turn assimilating that new knowledge with pre-existing knowledge; as well sharing ways of assimilating emerging knowledge with current pedagogic practice.

The analysis suggested that teachers iteratively (co)constructed, reviewed and refined their understandings in light of the growth of their own understandings, and in light of students’ outcomes over the course of the intervention. Timperley et al.’s (2007) conceptualisation of extended learning opportunities is generative for grasping how teachers drew on institutional (school) and social resources to promote the growth of teacher and student learning. Since teachers had not used graphic novels in their practice prior to the intervention, it was important that teachers obtained some level of visual literacy, an understanding of how graphic novels work and how to teach graphic novel texts. This is supported by Arizpe and Styles (2008) who posited that, “With respect to classroom practice, it is clear that in order to carry out activities with multimodal texts, teachers need to be familiar with a wide range of them and have some knowledge of how they work and how they can be used with students” (p. 370). To this end, teachers consolidated their new knowledge by sharing and learning within their CoP, as well as seeking information from social resources such as the internet. For instance, Jayla sought information on teaching graphic novels from the internet, while in another example, Samantha sought graphic novel content information from Jason, who held the most knowledge of how graphic novels work. I argue that teachers were positioned as professionals and learners while they simultaneously delivered the graphic novel lessons. This finding is
consistent with Rice’s (2012) study on using graphic novels in the classroom, in which she found that collegial support assisted teachers with teaching graphic novel texts.

Additionally, the results suggested that one teacher within the learning community was positioned as an expert on how graphic novels work at the beginning of the intervention. However, the experience and knowledge sharing practices within the community helped to develop each members’ multiliteracies learning. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptualisation of the interactions between novice and expert is useful for considering the ways in which each member contributed to the community by sharing information and experiences, so that they could learn from each other over time. For instance, Jason possessed expert content knowledge of how graphic novels work, while Samantha and Jayla were positioned as experts on how to teach graphic novel texts. In another useful example, Samantha reported that she had little to no knowledge about how graphic novel texts worked. However, through shared interactions with the other teacher participants (for example, with Jason), she was able to build her knowledge of how graphic novel texts work and assimilate that knowledge into her current understandings and practice. Samantha reported that she became more confident in teaching graphic novels by the mid-intervention time-point. She displayed her confidence and growth of knowledge by drawing on the chalkboard to demonstrate an element of graphic novel text to her students.

The contribution of an external expert played an important role in teachers’ learning community. I draw on Timperley et al.’s (2007) conceptualisation of the role of an outside, expert figure in the professional learning community. Timperley et al. (2007) surmised that “involving someone with expertise external to the immediate community was a condition associated with effectiveness and with more challenging dialogue… In effective communities, alternative perspectives introduced by external experts served to deepen teachers’ understandings” (p. 203). I provided feedback on teachers’ graphic novel lesson plans by providing alternative activities. I also provided support to individual teachers during their classroom teaching.

Finally, I argue that formal professional development activities do not necessarily lead to professional learning unless teachers actively engage with the content material to change their practice or improve their students’ outcomes. Timperley et al. (2007) suggested that teachers’
reluctance to apply new ideas and approaches reinforced the status quo or pre-existing practices. However, I argue that teacher participants challenged the status quo by engaging with new understandings and assimilating pedagogic practices. Timperley et al. (2007) stated that some teachers rejected ideas and approaches presented in professional learning workshops which led to the reinforcement of the status quo (p. 151). However, all teacher participants worked together in their learning community to construct understandings of the graphic novel unit. I should note that teachers’ interactions with the learning communities waned after the mid-intervention time-point as a result of increased school tasks related to having to teach other disciplinary content and preparing examinations.

Chapter Summary

In this study the three Grade 7 classroom sites have been conceptualised as part of a learning community in which teachers and students’ active, participatory and collaborative practices supported their multiliteracies teaching and learning over the course of the intervention.

The one-off, formal professional development workshop held at the pre-intervention time-point, teachers’ self-directed informal learning community, external expertise of this researcher, and a structured, pre-designed teaching unit kit, supported the teachers’ professional learning and in turn their students’ multiliteracies learning. The aforementioned activities provided repeat opportunities for teachers to engage in teachers’ professional learning. Timperley et al. (2007) inferred “[t]he importance of repeated opportunities for teachers to encounter, understand, translate and refine new theories and related practices was apparent in most of the core studies” (p. 154). The professional learning workshop held at the pre-intervention time-point played a pivotal role in introducing teacher participants to some of the theoretical, research and pedagogical practices related to graphic novel texts. There were also opportunities to engage with critically acclaimed graphic novel texts and to discuss the ways in which visual and verbal modes communicate information individually and collectively to tell a story. Moreover, there were opportunities to discuss the ways in which graphic novel texts could be used as a tool for learning in their respective classrooms. The teachers utilised an informal learning community, which extended opportunities for professional learning beyond the one-off, formal professional development workshop. Then teachers engaged in collaborative and self-regulated learning, which included sharing pedagogical experiences from ongoing graphic novel lessons.
As a result of the repeated opportunities for professional learning, this study’s findings suggest that there was change in teachers’ knowledge, practice and ways of thinking about the curriculum. One useful example is the change in teachers’ prevailing conceptualisations of visual modes as legitimate texts for making meaning, especially for their students who they categorised as mainly visual learners. However, I would caution against inferring that the graphic novel intervention substantively changed teachers’ practice because there is no evidence that multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, were used after this study’s data collection was completed.

The teachers taught in their classrooms but also found solutions collaboratively. They operated in an informal professional community with shared goals and met semi-regularly for professional collaboration. All teacher participants devised graphic novel lessons based on several factors, including their prior pedagogical content knowledge, prior curricular knowledge of monomodal, conventional narrative writing, and knowledge and experience sharing practices within the learning community. Moreover, teachers adopted, adapted and evaluated the graphic narrative teaching lessons in light of their students’ ongoing progress or lack of progress. The teachers theorised the impact of the intervention on student outcomes in several ways. For instance, Jason hypothesised that low English language achievers gravitated towards the construction of graphic narrative texts because it didn’t require as much linguistic text as a conventional narrative.

Students’ multiliteracies learning was supported by collaborative practices among their peers, prior linguistic and experiential experiences with multimodal texts, support from external expertise, classroom instruction on graphic novels, and to a lesser extent, the motivational support from within and outside of the classroom. Firstly, nine interview participants drew on their prior linguistic and experiential experiences to inform their interpretations of the primary graphic novel text *Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper*, and to support the creation of their multimodal, graphic narrative text. Linguistic experiences included print based and screen based multimodal texts like comics and television cartoons; and knowledge of monomodal, conventional narrative writing skills, while experiential experiences included real-life, personal experiences from outside of the classroom. Students’ interpretive and creative responses were varied. A few interview participants needed guidance from me when probed about their understandings of *Amulet Book 1*. I proposed that students required repeat opportunities with the support of a more experienced multimodal reader to figure out how text and images tell
particular events. Additionally, I posited that a few students’ lack of understanding of *Amulet Book 1* might have been caused by their inability to perceive the connectedness of the narrative across panels. Furthermore, the findings suggested that many of the students’ who were skilled monomodal, conventional narrative writers found the multimodal, graphic narrative production less problematic than those students who already struggled with monomodal, conventional writing. I proposed that multimodal text production presented additional layers of information for students to negotiate, which became very challenging for students who were already struggling, monomodal writers.

Although, students were engaged in authentic and purposeful meaning-making activities during their multiliteracies learning, there were also a few challenges along the way. Firstly, collaboration did not always result in positive outcomes, as reported by one student who thought that working with eight group members was counterproductive and a waste of time. Secondly, some participants reported that having more opportunities for negotiating their new understandings and skills would have improved their multiliteracies learning. That is not to say that participants’ did not gain multiliteracy skills during the intervention, but rather, highlights the complexity of integrating multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, into an existing curriculum for the first time. Furthermore, it should be noted that, with a small sample size, I cannot claim causality in the results nor can I claim that the results would be transferrable to other school contexts.
Conclusion

This thesis posed a question about the pedagogical potential of graphic novel texts in developing Grade 7 students’ multiliteracy skills, in three classrooms in one secondary school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In the past, pedagogical practices did not include graphic novels. As stated in the introductory chapter, the design of the Grades 7 to 9 English language curriculum in St. Vincent and the Grenadines does not include a strand on constructing meaning, and creating meaning of visual texts, such as graphic novels. There is a statement about using comics to motivate struggling learners into reading tasks (Warrican, 2006). However, I inferred that the suggestion to use comics to support reading does not support a conceptualisation of visual texts, such as graphic novels, as legitimate texts that require students and teachers to learn their systems of language or meaning-making practices. This is in contrast to the New Zealand Curriculum (2007) which explicitly states that students are required to practise constructing meaning and creating meaning “of the English language and its literature, communicated orally, visually, and in writing, for a range of purposes and audiences and in a variety of text forms” (p. 18). In addition, I have described Gee et al.’s (1996) and New London Group’s (1996) conceptualisation of the importance of a multiliteracies approach to pedagogy in light of the global shift in communication and representation, which extends beyond print literacies and conventional technologies. In their view, multimodal texts are legitimate forms of communication and representation, and thus, students ought to learn the language systems for each multimodal text.

A review of the relevant literature framed the discussion around the pedagogical potential of graphic novel texts to develop multimodal teaching and learning. Firstly, the literature on the pedagogical potential of graphic novels suggested that graphic novels have potential benefits and challenges for teaching and learning (Bitz, 2010; Crilley, 2009; Pantaleo, 2011; Rice, 2012; Smetana et al., 2009). For example, one potential benefit of teaching graphic novels is that it supports students’ learning of literary conventions. Additionally, I reviewed key theoretical approaches which elucidate the ways in which readers might interpret and create graphic novel texts (Brienza, 2010; Gardner & Herman, 2011; Heath & Bhagat, 2005; Iser, 1974; McCloud, 1994; Rosenblatt, 2005).

Secondly, I drew on Lave and Wenger’s (1991) conceptualisation of community of practice, and Timperley et al.’s (2007) and the Department of Education & Training’s (2005)
conceptualisations of professional learning to understand how teachers organically formed themselves into an informal group to share, review, and assimilate their own multimodal teaching and learning in relation to their students’ outcomes.

Thirdly, I contextualised graphic novel texts within the discussions about interpreting *multimodal* texts and the use of multimodal texts, such as graphic novels, as part of a *multiliteracies* approach to pedagogy. The *multiliteracies* approach to pedagogy presents the idea of connecting the changing global social environments with new understandings and ways of producing texts which were previously uncommon in the classroom context (New London Group, 1996). These “new” texts—*multimodal texts*—refer to the ways in which meaning can be communicated, including linguistic, visual design, spatial and audio design (Kress, 2009, 2010). Therefore, I reviewed Kress’s (2010) and Kress and van Leeuwen’s conceptualisation of *multimodality* (2006) and New London Group’s (1996) conceptualisation of *multiliteracies*, because they take into account the pedagogical potential of multiple modes of communication and representation in the classroom context.

This study was situated within the constructivist paradigm, which highlights the role of social and cultural contexts in learning and development. Using a mixed methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) approach to case study (Stake, 1995) research, I designed a study which explored teachers’ and students’ experiences during the intervention, their interpretations of graphic novel texts, and students’ artefacts/texts that were produced as evidence of their meaning-making practices. It was considered that quantitative measures would usefully supplement and extend the qualitative analysis and both sets of measures would provide a more comprehensive, in-depth account of the intervention. The quantitative data sources included reading and writing surveys, while qualitative data sources comprised interview transcripts, students’ narrative texts/artefacts, and observation notes. I also made use of statistical analyses of the survey data using IBM SPSS Statistics V 22.0; thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of interview transcripts; and a rubric tool I designed specifically to measure students’ performance on conventional writing artefacts. In addition, I designed a framework to assess and provide descriptions of students’ graphic narratives texts; and the systematic analysis my classroom observation notes on the graphic novel lessons (Angrosino, 2012). Moreover, I described procedures for developing and establishing reliability and validity of each analytical method, such as peer debriefings.
My original contributions include an intervention that supported the pedagogical uses of graphic novel texts in three Grade 7 classrooms where graphic novels had not been used prior to the intervention. Secondly, the literature reviewed suggested that the pedagogical uses of graphic novel texts tend to focus on the artefacts or creative outcomes of their use in educational settings. However, this study investigated the ways in which meaning is constructed while graphic novels are being used in the classroom, as well as the artefacts of those meaning-making processes; that is, both processes and outcomes. Thirdly, this study investigated the possible direct, measurable ways in which creating graphic novel texts might impact students’ conventional forms of narrative writing. Furthermore, this study’s results and analyses form part of a wider discourse on the use of professional learning communities to support multimodal teaching and learning.

**Major Findings**

The study sought to answer four research questions: 1) How and how effectively do students make meaning of graphic novel texts? 2) In what ways might graphic novel texts be associated with an improvement in students’ attitudes and beliefs towards reading and writing? 3) In what ways does an intervention using graphic novels impact students’ conventional writing? and 4) How and how effectively does the graphic novel intervention impact on teachers’ professional learning?

I summarise the main findings within the respective research questions. The first research question asked about the ways in which, and how effectively, student participants constructed meaning of *Amulet Book 1*. Those themes generated from the analyses of students’ interviews and their graphic narratives included:

i) students drew on multimodal resources differentially when interpreting *Amulet Book 1*;

(ii) students negotiated the diverse demands for adapting conventional narratives into graphic narratives by drawing on varying strategies of mono- and multimodal text productions; and

(iii) constructing the graphic narrative texts involved a co-constructive process in which there were differences in dynamics.
This study found that the nine student participants were able to interpret the readings of the graphic novel texts on literal, figurative and visual levels. However, some students needed guidance from a more experienced reader to help focus on the connections between the visual cues and clues in the text. In addition, the results show the dissonance created as students negotiated the diverse demands of transferring their conventional narratives into graphic narratives. Student participants were engaged in authentic writing processes, which built on and extended their literacies to include visual literacy, and those writing processes honoured students’ specific talents and abilities. Their responses to this shift in learning revealed their agency through their engagement with the writing process and with some being positioned as experts. Students’ active engagement in the construction of graphic narratives helped to develop their voices as writers of multimodal texts. Consistent with the constructivist paradigm, students drew on social interactions inside and outside their classrooms, experiences, linguistic textual histories, knowledge of how other multimodal texts work, among other resources, to support their meaning-making and creating meaning of graphic novel texts.

The second research question asked about the ways graphic novel texts might have impacted students’ beliefs about and attitudes towards reading and writing. The analyses demonstrated that the graphic novel intervention might be associated with a statistical increase in students’ positive attitudes towards reading. However, there was no statistical difference in students’ attitudes towards conventional writing from the pre- to post-intervention time-points. The third research question probed the ways in which the graphic novel intervention might have impacted students’ conventional writing. The analyses also suggested that the graphic novel intervention was associated with an increase in post conventional writing scores for 56 student participants. However, there were three variations in these results. Firstly, the same students who scored between the 75th and 100th percentile in the pre-conventional writing score, scored between those two percentiles for their post-conventional writing scores. In other words, their post-conventional narrative scores were similar to or higher than their pre-conventional writing scores. Moreover, there was an increase in scores for one or more narrative elements for students whose post-conventional narrative scores remained in the 75th to 100th percentile range. Secondly, there were some students whose post-conventional writing scores were lower than their pre-conventional writing scores. Thirdly, 56 out of a potential 98 conventional short stories (approximately 57%) were submitted at the post-intervention time-point.
The final research question asked about the ways, and the extent to which, the graphic novel intervention might have impacted teachers’ professional learning. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the analyses of three sets of teacher participants’ interviews generated three themes which included:

1) positioning visual modes of representation and meaning-making in those classrooms challenges the dominant discourses of storytelling in secondary schooling;

2) explicitly teaching graphic novels builds on and extends teaching of conventional narrative writing; and

3) teachers as learners mediating the graphic novel intervention through iterative collaborations.

The analyses suggested that teachers’ conceptualisation of the potential of visual modes for meaning-making, and creating meaning practices, within the context of narrative writing content in English language, developed over the course of the intervention. The results also provided evidence of the dissonance created as teachers simultaneously negotiated their roles as learners and gatekeepers of knowledge in the classroom. Teachers drew on their community of practice, expert external to the community of practice, self-directed learning, prior pedagogical content knowledge of narrative genre and other resources to develop their understandings of new graphic narrative content and to build on and extend their strategies for teaching conventional narratives. Teachers demonstrated agency through engagement with teaching graphic novel content, independent research and collaboration among colleagues. Overall, students and teachers were able to build on and extend their literacy and teaching practices, albeit differentially and in unconventional ways. The analyses contribute to the wider debate on the ways in which the integration of graphic novels into the curriculum can problematise or enhance existing pedagogies and ways of learning.

**Theoretical Implication**

My work adds to the literature on the best practices for teaching graphic novel texts (Kelley, 2010; Ryan et al., 2010) by suggesting that formal professional learning initiatives and extended opportunities for informal professional learning offer opportunities to build teachers’ professional knowledge and teaching practices. Furthermore, my work adds to what we know about the potential of creating graphic novel texts to build on and expand students’ literacies (Bitz, 2010; Smetana et al., 2009). The results suggested that through the study of an
exemplar of a graphic novel text, there is the potential to develop students’ interpretive and creative multiliteracy skills, in varying ways for various students.

**Limitations**

I describe two limitations of this current study. One, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to other school contexts. I should caution against the sole and direct causality of the graphic novel intervention on the results. However, the findings are generalisable to the Grade 7 student and teacher population at St. Stephen’s school. Two, this study’s results and analyses do not purport that participants gained in-depth, substantive knowledge of how to interpret or create graphic narrative texts. Rather it purports that participants were able to draw on a range of multimodal textual resources and experiences, together with emerging understandings of how graphic narrative texts work, in the approximately eight-week time frame of this study. It raises questions about whether the results would have been similar if the study was conducted over a longer period of time, or if participants had additional opportunities between the first and final time-points to engage with the graphic novel intervention.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This thesis raises interesting questions or issues for further educational research and teaching. Firstly, I purport that there is a dearth of literature on the role of professional learning and development initiatives on the implementation of teaching units for multimodal texts, such as graphic novels; even more so in the context of professional learning support for first-time teachers and learners of multimodal texts. It would be interesting to investigate the role of formal and informal teacher professional learning and development initiatives on teachers’ pedagogic practice over a sustained period of time. For instance, professional learning initiatives could occur in phases over the course of a longitudinal study. In the first phase, professional learning could aim to build teachers’ understandings of, and meaning-making practices of, specified multimodal or visual print texts, such as graphic novels or static images. Moreover, mini-professional learning sessions within that phase could support teachers as they seek to clarify, review and refine understandings in light of their students’ outcomes. The second phase of professional learning could aim to build teachers’ understandings of creating meaning of multimodal texts or visual texts. The assistance of art teachers or independent
visual artists could be sought to support teachers. It should be noted that teachers would not be required to gain expert artistic knowledge, but the awareness of and ability to guide their students’ creative activities. A professional learning initiative, such as the one I describe, could extend to primary and early childhood educators as well. Secondly, future research could examine the role of technologies in promoting the learning of multimodal systems of language. Thirdly, there is need for more research on the ways in which an intervention using multimodal texts might impact students’ conventional narrative writing.


Bryman, A. (2008). Why do researchers integrate/combine/mesh/blend/mix/merge/fuse quantitative and qualitative research? In M. M. Bergmansomething wrong with this reference - either first letter missing from second Ed or the E should be caqppitalised. (Ed.), *Advances in mixed methods research* (pp. 87-100). Los Angeles ; London: SAGE Publications.


tivesch.pdf


Harper Collins.


Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.


The Ministry of Education. (n.d.). *Teacher's guide for secondary school English grades 7-9 (Forms 1-3)* Kingstown: The Ministry of Education


Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Teachers’ interview questions.

Pre–intervention questions

1. To what extent have you used the Language Arts Grades 7– 9 curriculum to plan your lessons?
2. What do you think about the inclusion of visual representation in that curriculum?
3. How have you used the recommended visual text resources, like comics, in your lessons?
4. Tell me, what does a good short story need to have?
5. To what extent do you think visual representation can help students become better writers?
6. How would you describe your students’ performance in and attitudes towards English Language?
7. What strategies have you found most helpful when teaching short story writing?
   a. Why might those strategies have been helpful?
8. What strategies have you found useful in motivating students in your English Language classroom?
   a. Why might those strategies have been useful?
9. What do you think about using graphic novels in your instruction?
10. Why might graphic novels engage your students in writing?

Mid–intervention questions

1. To what extent have you used the guidelines in this Unit?
2. Do you find it useful collaborating with other English Language teachers in your Grade? Please tell me why...
3. Have you been able to transfer your practice of teaching conventional short story writing to graphic narrative writing? Please tell me how..
4. To what extent do you think that graphic novels can help students become better writers?
5. Why might a graphic novel like Amulet engage or disengage your students?
6. Why might a graphic novel like Amulet motivate or demotivate your students to write short stories?
7. To what extent have students been able to transfer their knowledge of conventional short story writing to these lessons?
8. What strategies have you found most useful when teaching short story writing?
   a. Why might those strategies have been helpful?
9. What strategies have you found most helpful in motivating your students?
   a. Why might those strategies have been helpful?
10. What do you think about using graphic novels in your instruction now?

Post intervention Questions
1. To what extent have you used the guidelines in this Unit?
2. Did you find it useful collaborating with other English language teachers in your grade? Please tell me why...
3. To what extent have you been able to transfer your practice of teaching conventional short story writing to this Unit?
4. Tell me, what does a good graphic short story need to have?
5. To what extent do you think that graphic novels can help students become better writers?
6. Why might a graphic novel like Amulet engage or disengage your students?
7. Why might a graphic novel like Amulet motivate or demotivate your students to write short stories?
8. What strategies have you found most useful when teaching this Unit?
   a. Why might those strategies have been helpful?
9. What strategies have you found most helpful in motivating your students?
   a. Why might those strategies have been helpful?
10. To what extent have students transferred their knowledge of conventional short story writing to graphic narrative writing?
11. Tell me, what do you think about the graphic narrative Unit now?
12. Have you considered using a graphic novel in your English Language classroom again? ... Please tell me why...
13. Do you think that only one text was suitable or appropriate for this grade level?
14. What might you change about the graphic narrative Unit?...Please tell me why...
**Students’ interview questions.**

**Pre–intervention questions**

1. Do you like programmes on TV/cartoons/film/video/comics /computer games? Which do you like best?
2. Do any of these help you with reading a story?
3. Tell me, what do you do to help you understand a story?
4. What do you do when you cannot understand a story?
5. How do you feel when you can understand a story? How does it make you feel when you cannot understand a story?
6. What do you enjoy most about writing stories in class?
7. What do you enjoy least about writing stories in class?
8. How do you plan your stories?
9. What helps you when you are writing stories?
10. What do you think you need to become better at writing stories?
11. Tell me, does your teacher constantly encourage you to write?
   a. What does he / she do to encourage you?
   b. Why do you think he / she does that?
12. When you are writing a story, who do you think will read it?
13. Do you enjoy sharing your stories with your classmates? Please tell me why...

**Mid–intervention questions**

1. Do you find the words or the pictures more interesting? Do they tell the same story in different ways? Would the pictures still be good without the words? Would the words still be good without the pictures?
2. Please show me one of your favourite parts of the story.
   a. How do you know what is happening there?
   b. Did you notice anything interesting about the pictures?
3. Do you like programmes on TV/cartoons/film/video/comics /computer games? Which do you like best?
   a. Do any of these help you with reading the story?
4. What do you do when you cannot understand Amulet?
5. How does it make you feel when you cannot understand the story?
6. Tell me, have you done any writing so far?
   a. If so, please tell me about it.
7. Have you done this sort of writing before?
a. How do you think it is similar or different to anything you have done before?

8. What is the most enjoyable part of the lessons so far? ... What makes you think that?

9. What is the least enjoyable part of the lessons so far? ... What makes you think that?

10. Tell me, does your teacher constantly encourage you to write?
    a. What does he / she do?
    b. Why do you think he / she does that?

11. Tell me, do you read *Amulet* outside of class?
    a. If yes, how often do read it?
    b. What makes you do this?

12. Does Amulet remind you of any other books? If so, which? Have you seen this book before or is it new to you?

Post–intervention questions

1. What do you think *Amulet* is about? ... What do you do to help you understand?

2. Please show me one of your favourite parts of the story...
    a. How do you understand what is happening there?
    b. Why do you think Kazu Kibuishi used these pictures there?

3. Do you find the words or the pictures more interesting? Do they tell the same story in different ways? Would the pictures still be good without the words? Would the words still be good without the pictures?

4. What part of the story was least enjoyable? ... Please show it to me
    a. Why didn’t you enjoy it?

5. Do you think that the story is different from or similar to your life? ...
    a. What makes you feel that way?

6. Tell me about your story...

7. How did you plan your story?

8. What was the most enjoyable part about writing your story?

9. What was the least enjoyable part about writing your story?

10. Tell me, did your teacher constantly encourage you to write?
    c. What did he / she do?
    d. Why do you think he / she did that?

11. Tell me, what do you think about reading books like *Amulet* in class from now on?

12. Would you suggest this book to someone your age? Please tell me why...
Appendix B: Excerpt of Classroom Observations

Classroom observations

Wednesday 2nd May 2012

Form 1K

Topic on board: Using graphic novels (in short story writing)
Objective: Inferring information from textual and visual features
Strategies: Whole class discussions, questioning, predictions, reading ahead

I arrived to the class half an hour late. Samantha [a pseudonym] stood in front the class eliciting information from the students about the panels in the prologue. The students seemed engrossed in the text and offered answers willingly and accurately. I found it interesting that Samantha discussed the story, panel by panel, and asked questions such as, "How do you think Emily is feeling?" "How do you know this?". Meanwhile she reminded the students to pay attention to the features because it would help when creating their own graphic narratives, "When you do your own graphic novel you will include pictures so pay close attention to the pictures here". She also reminded them that their narratives would not have to be as professional as the designs in Amulet. She stopped to allow the students to read ahead. Then she made connections between the conventional and graphic novel narrative features. E.g. "Do you see any elements of short story writing?" She prompted the students by asking about setting and characters. The students responded (individually) by stating the settings they noticed so far (such as Normandy??). Some students were able to give information about Emily's character while noting the changes in her character. Samantha asked students what they thought of the novel so far. One student told her to read the back cover because that's where his answer lay. The review on the back cover suggests that the book will maintain one's attention from the very beginning. When Samantha smiled and told him that she knew, he smiled and nodded in return. Notably, a male student (an interview participant) finished reading the entire book during the class time. He asked me afterwards to bring Book 2 for him.

Samantha stated that she prepared the night before by reading through the Unit package,
including some articles on using graphic novels in the classroom. She prefaced the lesson by discussing “what is a graphic novel?” and mentioned that she would photocopy the 'What is a graphic novel' handout for her students. She stated that she would delve deeper into the conventions of narrative writing during the forthcoming lesson. Samantha decided to allow the students to read ahead in parts because she noted at the beginning of the lesson that some students were unfamiliar with the graphic novel form. Finally, she would share her experiences with Jason since she was the first teacher to start the Unit.

In all, the students seemed very engrossed, particularly evident at the end of the lesson. They were reluctant to pass their books back to the teacher and begged for more time to finish reading.
## Appendix C: Category Labels and Accompanying Codes From Students’ Interview Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description of code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Performance of texts</strong></td>
<td>There were various ‘acts’ of reading which helped students to make meaning of <em>Amulet Book 1</em></td>
<td>Feeling as though in story</td>
<td>Students described the act of feeling immersed in the story to the extent they felt part of the action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling like no one is around</td>
<td>Students described the act of blocking out all distractions while they read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acting out stories at home</td>
<td>Instances where students talked about expressing the events of <em>Amulet Book 1</em> through dramatization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Whole class reading of text</td>
<td>Instances where students talked about whole class readings of <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interdependence of verbal and visual modes</strong></td>
<td>The ways in which students talked about using both visual and verbal modes to interpret and create graphic narrative texts.</td>
<td>Identifying and summarising text</td>
<td>Students indentified and summarized the most enjoyable parts of <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retelling their own stories</td>
<td>Students talked about their own graphic narratives, explaining the events panel by panel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Making connections in and between panels</td>
<td>Students tried to understand the moment-by-moment details of the story’s events by making connections in and across panels in <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inferring details from the text</td>
<td>Students used information that is explicitly stated in the text to identify the unstated meanings (e.g. use of irony).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher guides process of building meaning</td>
<td>The researcher guides students when they were doing something incorrectly or if they had any questions about <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight of meaning</td>
<td>Students opined about whether visual or verbal modes best helps them to understand the text, <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
<td>Pictures tell most of the story/ rely on pictures to understand</td>
<td>Students opined that images carried the most meaning and better helped them to understand the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Words tell most of the story/ rely on words to understand</td>
<td>Students opined that the words (e.g. words in narrative boxes, speech bubbles) best helped them to understand the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Words and pictures work to tell the story</td>
<td>Students opined that both words and images helped their understanding of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preference for words or pictures / find words or pictures more interesting</td>
<td>Students commented that either words or images captivated their interest more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior experiences, knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Students draw on prior experiences with visual texts to understand and create graphic novel texts.</td>
<td>Reminded of / used ideas from comics, movies, stories, etc</td>
<td>Students drew on prior knowledge and experiences from visual-verbal texts like comics, movies, stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prior experiences writing comics or creating illustrations to accompany text</td>
<td>Prior experiences creating comics or illustrations supported students through the creation of their graphic narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowing how to read comics is helpful</td>
<td>Prior knowledge of how to read comics helpful in comprehending <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of colour</td>
<td>This code refers to the use of colour to express ideas in graphic narratives. The choices include colour or black and white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Students drew on feedback from various stakeholders as a basis for improvement.</td>
<td>Family for feedback, positive/negative</td>
<td>Students sought feedback from family about their graphic narratives. Students perceived those responses as either negative or positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Friends for feedback; trusted friends;</td>
<td>Students sought feedback from their close, trusted friends about their graphic narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers: offer explanations of</td>
<td>Teachers: offer explanations of text, narrative, etc</td>
<td>Students drew on their teacher’s feedback</td>
<td>Students drew on their teacher’s feedback as a basis for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ responses to feedback</td>
<td>Students’ responses to feedback</td>
<td>Students recalled the ways in which they</td>
<td>Students recalled the ways in which they responded to feedback, e.g. able to improve, shy at first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students drew on their teacher’s feedback as a basis for improvement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent and collaborative</td>
<td>Independent and collaborative classroom activities which either supported or hindered</td>
<td>Negotiating group dynamics</td>
<td>Students talked about the ways they coped with working in a group. E.g. delegating tasks to based on member’s strengths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td>students’ learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Assigning grades</td>
<td>Students talked about being motivated by assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assigning grades</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students talked about being motivated by assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Positive feedback / reinforcement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students motivated by positive feedback from various stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Time was important to the processes ofinterpreting and creating graphic narratives.</td>
<td>More time needed for practice activities</td>
<td>The idea that more time needed for practice activities on creating comics etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More time needed for practice activities</td>
<td>The idea that more time needed for practice activities on creating comics etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enough time to read graphic novel</td>
<td>The idea that there was enough time for the activities related to reading <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transfer from one form to the next</strong></td>
<td>Students talked about the ways in which they transferred their conventional to graphic narrative, or vice versa.</td>
<td>Words only need more details</td>
<td>Some students believed that conventional narratives require more details than graphic narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graphic narrative needs more details</td>
<td>Some students believed that graphic narratives require more details than conventional narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drew pictures / wrote story first</td>
<td>Students either constructed their graphic narrative first and then transferred it into their conventional narrative, or vice versa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>One paragraph equals a specified number of panels</td>
<td>One method of transferring one text to the next.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Think of what to do next</td>
<td>When constructing graphic narratives, students commented that they had to think about what to put next (next panel(s)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Go back and read then move ahead</td>
<td>This code refers to the process of checking the existing panels before constructing new panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Put the story how you want</td>
<td>This code refers to the notion of being in control of the content and design of the graphic narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Express yourself</td>
<td>This code refers to the notion that constructing graphic narrative is a creative expression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Did/did not use graphic novel conventions in exams</td>
<td>The code refers to whether students used any graphic novel conventions or concepts in their summative examinations (e.g. sound effects).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out-of-school activities</strong></td>
<td>This category refers to the activities students engaged in outside of school which helped their understanding or creation of graphic novel texts.</td>
<td>Looked up information on author and text in various sources</td>
<td>The code refers to the various ways (e.g. YouTube) in which students sought information about the author of <em>Amulet Book 1</em> and other information about the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspired to create own graphic narrative</td>
<td>Inspired to create own graphic narrative</td>
<td>The code refers to being inspired to create other graphic narratives besides the one assigned in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Started / completed story at home</td>
<td>Started / completed story at home</td>
<td>Graphic and conventional narratives were either started or completed at home.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet space needed to think and create</td>
<td>Quiet space needed to think and create</td>
<td>This code refers to instances where students talked about quiet spaces at home more ideal to think and create than their classrooms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating graphic novel lessons</td>
<td>Students offer evaluative comments about <em>Amulet Book 1.</em></td>
<td>Content suitable for younger readers</td>
<td>The content of <em>Amulet Book 1</em> deemed suitable for younger readers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Words are easy</td>
<td>The idea that the words in <em>Amulet Book 1</em> are not challenging.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix D: Category Labels and Accompanying Codes From Teachers’ Interview Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description of code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing transfer process</strong></td>
<td>Teachers’ classroom observations of students creating their graphic narratives</td>
<td>Balancing visual and verbal modes</td>
<td>Both visual and verbal elements must work together to tell the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflecting learning style</td>
<td>Graphic novels appealed to the learning needs of particular students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Creating mental images</td>
<td>Some students might have been able to form images in their head but were unable to put those images down on paper (whether as conventional or graphic narratives).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preferring one of the two forms of narrative</td>
<td>Some students preferred to create either the conventional or graphic narrative first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Providing a blueprint</td>
<td>Conventional narrative used as a guide for creating graphic narrative and vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prior creative knowledge</td>
<td>Prior experience or lack thereof either hindered or supported the graphic narrative creative process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing skills</td>
<td>Drawing skills as either limiting or liberating for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching strategies</strong></td>
<td>Teachers’ classroom observations of students creating their graphic narratives</td>
<td>Explicit demonstration of visual concepts</td>
<td>Teachers showed students how to create visual concepts such as characterisation and setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking ‘new’ principles or concepts and</td>
<td>Teachers built on their students’ prior knowledge of key conventional narrative writing</td>
<td>名家教授在学生的关键概念上建立新的原理或概念。</td>
<td>principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concepts to prior knowledge of principles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and concepts and skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing examples of concepts or principles</td>
<td>Teachers presented material from Amulet Book 1 to help learners master new concepts</td>
<td>提供概念或原理的示例。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice (guided and independent)</td>
<td>Teachers presented new concepts and then elicited practice for desired outcomes.</td>
<td>指导和独立练习。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative activities</td>
<td>Teachers guided practice through pair and small group activities</td>
<td>协作活动。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Teachers used questions to elicit specific responses about concepts as well as to promote</td>
<td>提问。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>metacognitive awareness.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative form of storytelling in the</td>
<td>Teachers’ talked about graphic novels as an alternative form of storytelling and one that</td>
<td>另类形式的故事讲述在</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English secondary school classroom</td>
<td>challenged their students’ expectations of narrative writing in secondary school.</td>
<td>英语中学的教室</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>中叙事写作的期望。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift to academic focus in secondary schooling</td>
<td>Teachers’ view that the focus of secondary schooling is academic, more so about completing</td>
<td>转制为学术</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subject-specific content</td>
<td>的，更关于完成</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>学科特定的内容。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining positives from primary school</td>
<td>Perception that ‘positive’ aspects of primary schooling included creative activities</td>
<td>保持来自</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>which one teacher participant tried to maintain in his classroom even before the</td>
<td>积极方面。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>intervention.</td>
<td>的。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects don’t always allow specific talents</td>
<td>Secondary schooling might be perceived as restricting, not catering to the needs of</td>
<td>科目不总是</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to show</td>
<td>diverse learners</td>
<td>允许特定的才能展示。</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can show they are good at something</td>
<td>Graphic novel lessons might be perceived as liberating for students whose needs are not</td>
<td>学生可以展示他们在</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outside typical subject areas</td>
<td>usually met in the conventional classroom space.</td>
<td>典型的领域外的</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>需要不通常在传统的</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

216
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description of code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graphic novel Unit</td>
<td>breaking monotony of short story writing</td>
<td>Instances where teachers talked about short story being a part of both primary and secondary school curriculums so the inclusion of graphic novel storytelling breaks the monotony</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different view of short story writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instances where teachers commented that the inclusion of graphic novels provided an alternative view of storytelling to their students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic novel less restricting, allows for more creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instances where teachers spoke about the ways in which students demonstrated their creativity through graphic novel production(e.g. use of materials such as crayons, use of ‘new’ form of representation through visual mode), stark contract to conventional narrative lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put the story how they wanted</td>
<td></td>
<td>Instances where teachers stated that graphic narrative production offered some students the opportunity to fashion their stories the way they wanted to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students don’t feel like they’re being bossed around</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers observed most students active and willing participation in the graphic novel lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual aspect of storytelling as legitimate</td>
<td>The visual aspects of graphic novel storytelling as a legitimate and necessary aspect of storytelling.</td>
<td>Visual representation adds another element to expression</td>
<td>In the context of graphic novel storytelling, decoding and encoding visual elements was a necessary aspect of the reading and creating graphic narrative texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good for those without imagination to conceptualise</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students catered to the needs of those students who might have been unable to visualise print material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual representation provides blueprint for writing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conventional narrative used as a guide for creating graphic narrative and vice versa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting ideas from head to paper</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transferring mental images to concrete images on paper proved difficult for some students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words to accentuate</td>
<td>Writing rather than</td>
<td>Some students who have not mastered the construction of print texts</td>
<td>Some students who have not mastered the construction of print texts might find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>writing rather than</td>
<td>weaknesses</td>
<td>find verbal texts (words) daunting. However, those same students might</td>
<td>find verbal texts (words) daunting. However, those same students might find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>find that graphic novel texts are not as daunting as verbal texts because</td>
<td>that graphic novel texts are not as daunting as verbal texts because the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the emphasis is not solely on words.</td>
<td>emphasis is not solely on words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual representation can imprint on</td>
<td>Students’ memory for longer time</td>
<td>The idea that students might remember more of what they view than what</td>
<td>The idea that students might remember more of what they view than what they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students’ memory for longer time</td>
<td></td>
<td>they read in print texts.</td>
<td>read in print texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating their own graphic narratives help</td>
<td>Students connect what they’ve learned</td>
<td>Creating their own graphic narrative, using the writing process, helps</td>
<td>Creating their own graphic narrative, using the writing process, helps students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students connect what they’ve learned</td>
<td></td>
<td>students demonstrate their understanding of the ‘new’ concepts they have</td>
<td>demonstrate their understanding of the ‘new’ concepts they have learnt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students have to follow rules and patterns</td>
<td>To organise graphic narratives</td>
<td>Teachers’ awareness the rules and patterns specific to graphic novels.</td>
<td>Teachers’ awareness the rules and patterns specific to graphic novels. Also, this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to organise graphic narratives</td>
<td></td>
<td>Also, this code refers to teachers’ efforts to develop students’ awareness.</td>
<td>code refers to teachers’ efforts to develop students’ awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic novel lessons allow students to</td>
<td>Understand story elements better</td>
<td>The belief that students develop a deeper understanding of story elements</td>
<td>The belief that students develop a deeper understanding of story elements after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand story elements better</td>
<td></td>
<td>after the graphic novel lessons. For instance, shows how to build</td>
<td>the graphic novel lessons. For instance, shows how to build characters; portrayal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>characters; portrayal and progression of themes and plot</td>
<td>and progression of themes and plot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visals can be manipulated</td>
<td>Speed up or slow down plot</td>
<td>The use of visual elements to manipulate the intensity of events.</td>
<td>The use of visual elements to manipulate the intensity of events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource materials help build knowledge and</td>
<td>The resource materials contained within the Unit plan helped</td>
<td>Reading handouts from professional development workshops helped teachers</td>
<td>Reading handouts from professional development workshops helped teachers develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extend practice</td>
<td>to facilitate the implementation of the graphic novel lessons.</td>
<td>engages thinking about lessons</td>
<td>graphic novel lessons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reading handouts from professional development workshops builds content knowledge</td>
<td>Reading handouts from professional development workshops builds content knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The idea that the handouts from the professional development workshop</td>
<td>The idea that the handouts from the professional development workshop helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>helped deepen understanding of how graphic novels work.</td>
<td>deepen understanding of how graphic novels work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Input from researcher</td>
<td>The input of researcher to develop ‘new’ knowledge and provide feedback on practice (graphic novel lessons).</td>
<td>Input from researcher</td>
<td>The input of researcher to develop ‘new’ knowledge and provide feedback on practice (graphic novel lessons).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources of information and ideas about lesson planning and implementation useful</td>
<td>Teachers talked about resources which aided in lesson planning and implementation such as YouTube.</td>
<td>Sources of information and ideas about lesson planning and implementation useful</td>
<td>Teachers talked about resources which aided in lesson planning and implementation such as YouTube.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit plan objectives</td>
<td>The general objectives in the Unit plan guided planning of instruction.</td>
<td>Unit plan objectives</td>
<td>The general objectives in the Unit plan guided planning of instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More confident after reading handouts and independent research</td>
<td>Teachers more confident about teaching lessons on graphic novels after reading useful materials.</td>
<td>More confident after reading handouts and independent research</td>
<td>Teachers more confident about teaching lessons on graphic novels after reading useful materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation can foster or hinder students’ learning</td>
<td>The positive aspects of motivation included teachers’ strategies for motivating their students; while the negative aspects included students perceived lack of drawing skills as de-motivating.</td>
<td>Motivation can foster or hinder students’ learning</td>
<td>The positive aspects of motivation included teachers’ strategies for motivating their students; while the negative aspects included students perceived lack of drawing skills as de-motivating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual texts like graphic novels captures attention and keeps interest longer</td>
<td>The idea that graphic novels captured students’ attention and kept their interest longer than a print text (supposedly).</td>
<td>Visual texts like graphic novels captures attention and keeps interest longer</td>
<td>The idea that graphic novels captured students’ attention and kept their interest longer than a print text (supposedly).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students more hands on with materials</td>
<td>In comparison with previous lessons on conventional narratives, students more hands on with graphic novel materials.</td>
<td>Students more hands on with materials</td>
<td>In comparison with previous lessons on conventional narratives, students more hands on with graphic novel materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student talking about and sharing work inside and outside of classroom</td>
<td>Teachers observed students sharing their work inside the classroom and talking about sharing their work outside of the classroom.</td>
<td>Student talking about and sharing work inside and outside of classroom</td>
<td>Teachers observed students sharing their work inside the classroom and talking about sharing their work outside of the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared and discussed with friends and family members</td>
<td>This code refers to where teachers talked about students sharing and discussing their work with friends and family members. Also, teachers talked about sharing and discussing the lessons with their own family members.</td>
<td>Shared and discussed with friends and family members</td>
<td>This code refers to where teachers talked about students sharing and discussing their work with friends and family members. Also, teachers talked about sharing and discussing the lessons with their own family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ engagement with lessons motivating teachers</td>
<td>This code refers to where teachers talked about being motivated by their own student’s interest and active participation in the lesson.</td>
<td>Students’ engagement with lessons motivating teachers</td>
<td>This code refers to where teachers talked about being motivated by their own student’s interest and active participation in the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers engaging in creation process</td>
<td>The code refers to where teachers talked about modelling concepts, for instance, drawing elements on the chalk board.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in lessons did not dissipate after reading primary text</td>
<td>Students’ engagement in graphic novel lessons did not wane after the reading of <em>Amulet Book 1</em>.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some students motivated to create texts after reading <em>Amulet</em></td>
<td>This code refers to teachers’ observations of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult motivating those unconfident about drawing</td>
<td>This code refers to where teachers tried to motivate those students who were uncomfortable with drawing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convincing students expression more important than sophisticated drawings</td>
<td>Teachers talked about incessantly reminding students that the goal of drawing was to express ideas; rather than produce sophisticated pieces.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some students excited about drawing; eager to display skills</td>
<td>Students with artistic abilities eager to display their skills.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students eager to use crayons</td>
<td>A sign of student’s engagement was their eagerness to use crayons.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonus marks as incentive to complete writing tasks</td>
<td>Bonus marks/points (extrinsic motivation) was an incentive for students to complete their tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sharing ‘new’ knowledge beyond the context of the graphic novel intervention</strong></td>
<td>Teachers conceived that the ‘new’ knowledge could be extended beyond the graphic novel intervention (e.g. other schools, their own school).</td>
<td>New and interesting in lower school</td>
<td>Graphic novels as ideal for lower school (Grades 7 and 8) to introduce students to alternative form of storytelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of students’ graphic narratives can be assessed for visual and/or verbal expressions</td>
<td>Instances where teachers talked about the potentialities of assessing students; graphic narrative work, for future lessons.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of category</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description of code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic novels as alternative strategy for</td>
<td>Teachers conceived that graphic novel texts are useful for</td>
<td>Extending training on how to teach students to</td>
<td>Teachers talked about the possibility of sharing their ‘new’ knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching short story writing</td>
<td>scaffolding or introducing narrative concepts.</td>
<td>create graphic novels</td>
<td>with other practitioeers in other schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students talent for drawing underutilized</td>
<td>Teachers talked about the lack of opportunities in the world</td>
<td>Drawing undervalued in own country</td>
<td>Teachers conceived that artistic skills such as drawing are undervalued in St.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing undervalued in own country</td>
<td>of work for students with artistic skills.</td>
<td>Future job opportunities involving authorship,</td>
<td>Vincent and the Grenadines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future job opportunities involving</td>
<td>The idea that using the artistic skills required for creating</td>
<td>Sharing graphic novel lesson ideas with family</td>
<td>Students shared their ideas and experiences from the graphic novel lessons with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authorship, illustration, etc</td>
<td>graphic novels (print) could be a springboard for future</td>
<td>members, friends outside school etc</td>
<td>persons outside of the classroom setting, e.g. family members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on their own professional</td>
<td>Teachers proposed that students should have opportunities to</td>
<td>Should have shown more variation of visual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>practice</td>
<td>reflect on their professional practice during the graphic</td>
<td>texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>novel intervention.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Should have shown more variation of visual texts</td>
<td>More guided teaching on graphic novels; in-depth</td>
<td>Teachers suggested they should have provided more guided practice to students since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More time drawing than reading</td>
<td>repeated opportunities would have helped to deepen students’ understandings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insist on creating all narratives in class</td>
<td>In the interest of time, less time should have been allocated to the reading activities and more to the drawing activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

221
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of category</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description of code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time for collaboration</td>
<td>Lack of time hindered frequency of collaboration among teachers</td>
<td>Use of technology</td>
<td>Technology could have offered support to those students who could not draw, e.g. use of websites or software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing graphic narratives</td>
<td>Students could have perceived their graphic narratives as REAL books if they were printed, hard copies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix E: Conventional Narrative Writing Rubric

**Conventional short story writing rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4 Exceptional</th>
<th>3 Acceptable</th>
<th>2 Needs Improvement</th>
<th>1 Limited or Not present</th>
<th>Score CW1</th>
<th>Score CW2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisation</strong></td>
<td>Story has a clear beginning, middle, and end. Sequence of events is clear and can be easily followed.</td>
<td>Clearly presented beginning, middle, and end. Sequence of events is mostly clear and can be followed easily.</td>
<td>Beginning, middle, and end are suggested but not clearly presented. Sequence of events is confusing or misleading.</td>
<td>Either the beginning, middle, or end is missing. Whichever one is present is not properly presented. There is no sequence of events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plot</strong></td>
<td>Fully developed plot: It is easy to understand the problem and why it is a problem; gripping climax; solution easy to understand and logical.</td>
<td>Mostly developed plot: fairly easy to understand problem and why it is a problem; fairly gripping climax, solution is fairly logical and easy to understand.</td>
<td>Plot not completely developed / hard to follow. Conflict and climax and/or solution present but need development.</td>
<td>Some elements are present but not developed, e.g. conflict without solution.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characters</strong></td>
<td>Well developed, believable characters (i.e. in dialogue, thoughts, actions)</td>
<td>Most characters are developed.</td>
<td>Characters described but not developed based on dialogue, actions, thoughts, etc.</td>
<td>Some characters are described, others just mentioned.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogue</strong></td>
<td>Dialogue is suitable to characters, realistic.</td>
<td>Dialogue realistic and suitable in most places, matches characters and setting for the most part.</td>
<td>Little dialogue present, matches either characters or setting but not both.</td>
<td>No dialogue present.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative point of view</strong></td>
<td>Point of view maintained.</td>
<td>Point of view is clear in some cases.</td>
<td>Point of view shifts far too often.</td>
<td>Point of view changes too often.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell when and where the story took place.</td>
<td>Some vivid, descriptive words are used to tell the audience when and where the story took place.</td>
<td>The reader can figure out when and where the story took place, but the author didn’t supply much detail.</td>
<td>The reader has trouble figuring out when and where the story took place.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and content</td>
<td>The writer relates an unforgettable experience using rich details. There is a strong theme that is present throughout the story. Ideas in the story are fresh and original.</td>
<td>The writer holds the reader’s attention throughout most of the story but more details are needed. Theme carried out throughout the story for the most part.</td>
<td>The content needs more development. The details make it hard for the reader to visualise the setting etc. Some details do not relate to the story. The theme is slightly carried out throughout the story. Ideas show little to no originality.</td>
<td>The content is not developed and loses the reader’s attention. Use of no to few details which prevents the reader from visualizing anything. Theme is poorly executed and isn’t unifying throughout the story.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language features: e.g. onomatopoeia, personification, emotive language, and colloquial words.</td>
<td>Words or phrases powerfully convey the intended message and skilfully reveal characters’ looks, actions, feelings, reactions, and conversation</td>
<td>Precise, detailed words or phrases get message across and reveal characters’ looks, actions, feelings, reactions, and conversation</td>
<td>More precise and accurate words are needed to convey a clear message</td>
<td>Limited vocabulary; words may be used inappropriately or unnecessarily repeated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL __/36 __/36

Note. CW1= Conventional narrative, pre–intervention phase, CW2= Conventional narrative, post–intervention phase
Appendix F: Graphic Narrative Assessment Framework

**Graphic narrative assessment framework**

**Expected learning outcome:** The student will be able to use visual and verbal features of the graphic novel text type in the creation of their own graphic narratives.

**Criteria for success:** A minimum of 6 performance areas rated as ‘acceptable’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance areas</th>
<th>4 Exceptional</th>
<th>3 Acceptable</th>
<th>2 Developing</th>
<th>1 Limited</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Transitions and layout  
*Adapted from: Gene Yang, Comics-based instructional Unit - rubric for form* | Most panel-to-panel transitions are well planned and appropriate to the information and / or emotions conveyed. Panel order and word balloon order within panels are always clear. | Some panel-to-panel transitions are well planned and appropriate to the information and / or emotions conveyed. Panel order and word balloon order within panels are usually clear. | One or two examples of well planned panel-to-panel transitions. Panel order and word balloon order within panels are sometimes confusing. | Most panel-to-panel transitions are random and haphazard. Panel order and word balloon order within panels are consistently confusing. | |
| Plot  
*Adapted from: read-write-think comic strip narrative rubric* | It is very easy for the reader to understand the problem the main characters face and why it is a problem. The solution to the character’s problem is easy to understand, and it is logical. There are no loose ends. | It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem the main characters face and why it is a problem. The solution to the character’s problem is a little hard to understand. | It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem the main characters face but it is not clear why it is a problem. | It is not clear what the problem the main characters face. | |
<p>| • Characters | All characters are fitting for the whole story. Characters’ facial expressions are varied, | Most characters are fitting for the story. Characters’ facial expressions are mostly | Some characters are fitting for the story. The character’s facial expressions are not clear | Characters are random and don’t fit together to make a story. The facial expressions | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Relevant and effective in conveying emotions. It is easy to distinguish between characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant with some variety. It is mostly easy to distinguish between characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And lack relevance and not helpful to the story. It is difficult to distinguish between characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is an appropriate amount of dialogue to bring the characters to life. It is always clear which character is speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is too much dialogue in this story, but it is always clear which character is speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is not quite enough dialogue in this story, but it is always clear which character is speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is not clear which character is speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative point of view</td>
<td>The narrative point of view helps to create an unforgettable experience. Narration is related to the scene, and connections are easy to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The narrative point of view creates interest in the story. Narration is related to the scenes, and most connections are easy to understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The narrative point of view is usually heard. Narration is related to the scenes, but connections are less obvious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The narrative point of view is weak. Narration does not relate well to the scenes. There seems to be no connections or connections are very general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Setting is vividly realized. Selection of setting and props establishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting is clear. Selection of setting and props establishes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting is sketchy but adequate. Selection of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is no sense of setting. Selection of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong><a href="http://www.scribd.com/doc/47346032/Comic-Strip-Narrative-Rubric">http://www.scribd.com/doc/47346032/Comic-Strip-Narrative-Rubric</a></strong></td>
<td>are used to tell when and where the story took place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **• Ideas and content**  
*Adapted from Write Source  
A Book for Writing, Thinking, and Learning* | The writer relates an unforgettable experience using rich details. There is a strong theme that is present throughout the story. | The writer tells an interesting experience. More details are needed. More details are needed. There is a strong theme that is usually carried out throughout the story. | The writer needs to focus on one experience. Some details do not relate to the story. The theme is fair and is slightly carried out throughout the story. | The writer needs to focus on one experience. Details are needed. Theme is poorly executed and isn’t unifying throughout the story. |
| **• Graphic novel features**: e.g. word balloons, panels, facial expressions, sound effects, use of lines to denote motion etc. | Words, phrases, and graphic novel features powerfully convey the intended message and skilfully reveal characters’ looks, actions, feelings, reactions, and conversation | Precise, detailed words, phrases, and graphic novel features get message across and reveal characters’ looks, actions, feelings, reactions, and conversation | More precise and accurate words, phrases, and graphic novel features are needed to convey a clear message | Limited words, phrases, and graphic novel features; words, phrases, graphic novel features may be used inappropriately or unnecessarily repeated |
| **• Mechanics** | The author shows consistent accuracy in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. | The author shows general accuracy in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. | The author shows some accuracy in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. | The author shows limited accuracy in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. |

Exceptional: Performance in above the expectations stated in the outcome

Acceptable: Performance meets the expectation stated in the outcome

Developing: Performance

Limited: Performance does not meet the requirement stated in the outcome
Appendix G: Sample of Student’s Graphic Narrative
Let's go into the plane now.
OK.

Here's the plane!

Flaper!
Dood!

We at Trinidad now!

Dood! Can we?

Doo, can we?

Sleep, Canada.

Hi! Hi!

And we went home.

Do not hallucinate.
Appendix H: Graphic Novel Intervention Teachers’ Resource Package

Graphic narrative teaching unit.

Learning Outcomes:

In this Unit, students will be able to:

- Use visual and verbal features of the graphic novel text type in the creation of their own graphic narratives.
- Construct a graphic narrative that shows evidence of planning and critical thinking.
- Make critical and creative connections to literature, media and their own lives beyond the graphic novel text.
- Infer information from the textual and visual narrative conventions such as plot, characterisation, setting, narrative, and theme within the graphic novel text being studied.

Prior Knowledge:

Students should have:

- knowledge of short story features (such as plot, characterisation, setting, narrative and theme) in written narrative.
- experience writing short stories using words only.
Resource materials.

Resource materials are provided to support the implementation and/or evaluation of this Teaching Unit. These materials include:

- Brief descriptions of the author, plot, characters, setting, theme(s) specific to *Amulet Book 1: The Stonekeeper* by Kazu Kibuishi
- A list of visual features of graphic novels with relevant examples.
- Sample graphic narrative rubric
- Resources related to the use and creation of graphic novels in the classroom, e.g. research articles, sample lesson plans.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: KAZU KIBUISHI

Kazu Kibuishi is the founder and editor of the Flight Anthologies, a critically acclaimed comics series, as well as the creator of *Daisy Kutter: The Last Train*, a winner of the YALSA Best Books for Young Adults Award.

Born in Tokyo, Japan, Kazu moved to the U.S. with his mother and brother when he was a child. He graduated from Film Studies at the University of California Santa Barbara, and then moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in the entertainment industry. He currently works as a full-time comic book artist.

Kazu lives with his wife in Alhambra, California.
SUMMARY

After the tragic death of their father, Emily and Navin move with their mother to the home of her deceased great-grandfather, but the strange house proves to be dangerous. Before long, a sinister creature lures the kids’ mom through a door in the basement. Em and Navin, desperate not to lose her, follow her into an underground world inhabited by demons, robots, and talking animals.

Eventually, they enlist the help of a small mechanical rabbit named Miskit. Together with Miskit, they face the most terrifying monster of all, and Emily finally has the chance to save someone she loves.
CHARACTERS

EMILY

Twelve–year–old daughter of Karen Hayes, Emily is a natural–born leader who hasn't been the same since witnessing her father's untimely death two years ago. With the help of her brother Navin, she hopes to use the Amulet to make sure her beloved mother doesn't experience the same fate.

NAVIN

The youngest in the Hayes family, Navin loves video games, robots, and seeing Emily laugh. He tries to be easygoing and optimistic so that his sister doesn't get too bogged down about things.
MISKIT

Known by his colleagues as the "brains" of the outfit, Miskit acted as Silas Charnon's right-hand robot for many years. He sees a lot of potential in Emily for being a stonekeeper, and makes sure that she's protected on her journey to save Karen.

MORRIE

A bit on the nervous side, Morrie has a talent for stating the obvious. Unlike Cogelsey, however, Morrie has a great bedside manner, and the Charnon House crew couldn't live without him!

COGSLEY

Another of Silas's helper robots, Cogelsey is a mainstay of the Charnon crew. Miskit is known to have said of the rusty old bot: "Cogelsey can be a real pain in the butt, but he's also the most honest, hard-working robot I know."
KAREN

Karen is a kind–hearted single mom who just wants the best for her kids. Worried about how her husband's death has affected them, she decides it's best to make a fresh start in the quaint town of Norlen.

ARACHNOPODS

With eight legs, glowing eyes, and sticky tentacles, these nasty Elf King spies kidnap Karen Hayes in the hopes of seizing the Amulet for their leader.

SIILAS CHARNON

He is Emily's great–grandfather and the previous owner of the mysterious Amulet. Emily grew up hearing stories about Silas's obsession with his work and his amazing inventions, but when they finally meet, it's not at all as she expected.
BOTTLE
Bottle is a robot of few words, but lots of brawn. He spends most of his time following Cogsley around, but he's always there when you're in a fix.

TRELLIS
A shadow in the darkness, Trellis is the cryptic young elf who wants Emily's power all for himself. He chases her through the underground caves of Alledia, all the way to the slopes of Gondoa Mountain, where he gets his first taste of the amulet's power.

THE ELF KING
A mysterious dark power, The Elf King threatens all life on Alledia.
SETTING

NORLEN: Two years after Emily’s father dies, the family moves to their ancestral home in the town of Norlen, population 28,000.

CHARNON HOUSE: It is located in the parallel world of Alledia where Emily and Navin’s great grandfather, Silas Charnon, lives.

KANALIS: At the end of Book 1, Emily, Navin and the robots embark on a journey to Kanalis. While there, they hope to find an antidote for Karen’s illness.
SUGGESTED THEMES

These are only a few suggestions, there may be other themes.

Heroism: After her mother is kidnapped and taken to the parallel world of Alledia, Emily embarks on a journey to save her. While on this journey, she has to prevent her brother, Navin, from falling to his death. Also, she rescues her mother from the Arachnopods, only to have to embark on another journey to find an antidote.

Death: In the beginning, Emily and Navin’s father dies as a result of a car accident. Later, their great grandfather, Silas Charnon, dies shortly after they arrive in Kanalis.

Magic: Emily and Navin have found a stone, an amulet, in their great grandfather’s study. It contains incredible power which includes turning back time and saving their mother. Silas encourages Emily to believe in the amulet and accept her destiny as the next stonekeeper. On the other hand, Silas explained that Emily has to master the unlimited power of the amulet as it has the potential to consume her.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Students can think about Emily, the heroine. Do they normally read about heroines in fantasy / adventure fiction? What message might the reader get from this?

Students can think about the art. How appropriate is the art to the story? What panel(s) did you like best? Why? How well integrated are the words and the images? Can they exist apart, or are they interdependent? Look for a place where the drawing takes the place of the words.

Students can think about the power in the amulet. If they had unlimited power, what would they use it for?

Students can think about books, film or video games which introduce a parallel world to earth. What kinds of stories are set in parallel worlds? What makes them interesting?
Students can also discuss how in graphic novels, as in movies, readers can often deduce what happened – but was not explicitly stated – in the interval between one image and the next. Moreover, you can discuss with students the similarities and differences between these two mediums.

Students can think about the characters. Who might be their favourite or least favourite character? Why might this be so? How can they tell what a character is like? What helps them to do this?

Students can think about the story’s plot. How can they tell when something interesting is about to happen? What helps them to tell this? Who is the main character and what is his / her motivating desire or need? How is that need addressed? How is the story resolved? Do you think that the author has made the story compelling? How?

Students can analyze how information about character is derived from facial and bodily expressions, and about meaning and foreshadowing from the pictures’ composition and viewpoint.

Students can also find examples where the viewpoint of the picture is critical to the readers’ experience of the story.

Students can think about the writing. Is the dialogue well–written? Do the characters have individual, distinctive voices? Are descriptions well chosen, or do they repeat what is visible in the drawing?

Students can think about the timing. Did the story fit the length (i.e. did it feel cramped or overlong)? Where should the story be compressed or lengthened? Was the closure used in an interesting way at any particular point?

Students can compare the experiences of receiving information through written narrative, versus receiving it visually without words.

**Some of these discussion points are adapted from the National Association of Comics Arts Educators (NACAE), United States of America.**
DRAWING COMICS
A short introduction to the art of creating pictures in boxes

1. Begin by coming up with some ideas. These ideas can be complete stories or they can just be sketches of things you like to draw.

2. Prepare your comic. Create a set of panels (boxes) on a sheet of paper.

3. Create a story. Take your sketches and make them work as a story inside the panels.

4. Draw clearly. Make sure the sequence of events are clear and that when seen together they form a story.

5. Share your story. Show your comic to your friends and family!
SUGGESTIONS FOR CREATIVE WRITING

- Students can write their own alternative endings, or accounts of what happened before or after the story.

- Students can fill in an interval in the story that is not depicted, or only depicted visually.

- Students can take a prose passage from a traditional novel and then rewrite it as dialogue in a graphic novel, then create the pictures to go with it.

- Students can create their own original graphic novel, and even have them published.

SAMPLE GRAPHIC SHORT STORY RUBRIC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>All characters are fitting for the whole story.</td>
<td>Most characters are fitting for the story.</td>
<td>Some characters are fitting for the story.</td>
<td>Characters are random and don’t fit together to make a story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Setting and props relate to the action and characters in all panels.</td>
<td>Setting and props relate to the action and characters in most panels.</td>
<td>Setting and props relate to the action and characters in one panel.</td>
<td>Setting and props are not chosen or do not make sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>There is an appropriate amount of dialogue to bring the characters to life and it is always clear which character is speaking.</td>
<td>There is too much dialogue in this story, but it is always clear which characters is speaking.</td>
<td>There is not quite enough dialogue in this story, but it is always clear which characters is speaking.</td>
<td>It is not clear which character is speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling and punctuation</td>
<td>There are no spelling or punctuation errors in the final draft. Character and place names that the author invented are spelled consistently throughout.</td>
<td>There is one spelling or punctuation error in the final draft.</td>
<td>There are 2–3 spelling errors in the final draft.</td>
<td>The final draft has more than 3 spelling and punctuation errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>The story is very organized. One idea or scene follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions.</td>
<td>The story is pretty well organized. One idea or scene may seem out of place. Clear transitions are used.</td>
<td>The story is a little hard to follow. The transitions are sometimes not clear.</td>
<td>Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem/ conflict AND solution / resolution</td>
<td>It is very easy for the reader to understand the problem and the corresponding solution.</td>
<td>It is fairly easy for the reader to understand the problem and the corresponding solution.</td>
<td>It is fairly easy to understand the problem the main character faces but it is not clear why it is a problem.</td>
<td>It is not clear what the problem or solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artwork</td>
<td>The artwork is consistently readable and understandable. Characters are always distinguishable from one another. The art style closely matches the tone of the story.</td>
<td>The artwork is usually readable and understandable. Characters are usually distinguishable from one another. The art style loosely matches the tone of the story.</td>
<td>The artwork is sometimes illegible. Two of the characters look the same. The art style neither adds to nor takes away from the tone of the story.</td>
<td>The artwork is illegible. Many of the characters look the same. The art style contradicts the tone of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>The first 3–4 panels have a catchy beginning.</td>
<td>The first 3–4 panels have a weak beginning.</td>
<td>A catchy beginning was attempted in the first 3–4 panels but confusing rather than catchy.</td>
<td>No attempt was made to catch the reader’s attention in the first 3–4 panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>____/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ADDITIONAL GRAPHIC NOVEL RESOURCES**

- Scholastic Publishers offers a guide for teachers and librarians for using graphic novels with children and teenagers.

- Comic creator is a drawing and publishing tool for students to create their own comic strips. Students can choose backgrounds, characters, props, and compose dialogue. It can also be fun for teachers too!

- Some useful graphic novel lesson plans can be found here:
  http://ccb.lis.illinois.edu/Projects/childrenslit/jdbone/lesson_plans.htm

  and here:

Appendix I: Researcher’s Script for Teachers’ Professional Training Workshop

The main aim of this workshop is to introduce teachers to the use of graphic novel texts as a tool for learning in English Language classrooms. The following questions will guide this process:

1. What kinds of verbal / visual clues and cues are used to make sense of a graphic novel text?

2. In what ways are narrative conventions represented in graphic novel text?

3. In what ways can graphic novel texts be used in English Language classrooms?

4. What strategies can be used to teach a graphic novel text?

5. How can students apply their knowledge of the visual and verbal features of a graphic novel text to create a short graphic story?

Step 1 (15–20 minutes):

Sequencing activity where cut outs of graphic novel text pages are given to each participant. They will have about five minutes to place the panels in order of events. As a group we will discuss the verbal / visual cues and clues which supported their reconstruction of the narrative. Then, we will explore how perception, specifically closure, helps the reader to make sense of the action.

Step 2 (40–45 minutes):

First, I will ask the teachers about their previous conceptions about graphic novels. Then we will look at ‘What is a graphic novel?’ and some excerpts from graphic novel texts. We will discuss how the excerpts either confirmed or contradicted their impression(s) of what a graphic novel is. Afterwards, we will explore how narrative conventions are represented in these excerpts.

BREAK
Step 3 (15–20 minutes):

First, I will present some key findings from graphic novel research studies. We will discuss how these results might have been possible. Then, we will discuss the strategies that can promote thoughtful interaction with a graphic novel text.

Step 4 (40–45 minutes):

The teachers will create a sample lesson using the fourth learning outcome which focuses on inferring information from the text. They will use the prologue in *Amulet Book 1* as the primary text. Then, we will discuss how they intend to focus the inquiry, the strategies which they deem effective, and what might be the implications for further learning.

BREAK

Step 5 (45–50 minutes):

First, we will explore the benefits of creating a graphic text in developing students’ literacy skills. Then, we will engage with a short graphic story writing activity. Afterwards, teachers will discuss the strategies they used to come up with the story and the literacy skills they might have employed. Next, the teachers will share how the activity confirmed or contradicted their initial impressions. Finally, we will discuss strategies that will be useful in guiding the students through graphic text writing which included the following:

– Modelling the task

– Pair / Group Writing

– Individual Writing

– Conferencing

Step 6 (optional):

If teachers still have reservations then a writing activity involving the creation of a writing graphic text lesson plan will ensue.
Conclusion:

Teachers will share what they learned from the session. E.g. any change in perceptions, challenges or even fears. Then I will hand out the instructional Unit packages to them.

(Optional)

Follow up session to address any concerns or complications during the school Term.

Strategies for active reading (Cremin, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicting / hypothesising</th>
<th>I think what might happen is….although it might not because….</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Picturing</td>
<td>When I read that I vividly saw a picture of….in my head–did anyone else see any moment or character clearly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting / comparing</td>
<td>This reminds me of…. (other stories/films/TX or life experience) so it makes me feel….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>I wonder….why….what….whether….if…?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging emotionally / empathising</td>
<td>I’m not sure what I feel about this character, I used to think…but now I wonder if ….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding to issues</td>
<td>I wonder what the author/illustrator is trying to examine?…..I used to think he/she was exploring….but now I am less sure….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>I like…but I’m less keen on…..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noticing language / style / presentation</td>
<td>I noticed…were there words or phrases that anyone else noticed – what do you think made them leap out at you? I wonder why the author chose to present character X in this ….. way? This writing reminds me of …..style – is anyone else reminded of another writer’s work?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J: Participant Information Sheets (P.I.S.) and Consent Forms (C.F.)

Board of Trustees/ Principal participant information sheet.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES / PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Using a graphic novel as a tool to motivate students to read and write

Researcher: Ms. Resa Noel

I, Resa Noel, am a doctoral student at The University of Auckland, New Zealand doing a research study for my thesis. I previously taught in your school and would like to invite your school to take part in my study during Term 3, from April to June 2012. The study aims to increase students’ motivation for reading and writing through their engagement with visual texts, like a graphic novel, which may excite their interest more than conventional texts. A graphic novel is like a comic but is usually over 50 pages long –making it longer than a comic. In particular, I want to use a graphic novel as a vehicle to raise students’ writing competence in the area of short story writing. I ask your permission to allow three Grade 7 teachers and their classrooms to participate in this study.
Why is your school being approached?

I have designed an instructional Unit to explore whether students’ motivation for reading and writing increases through their engagement with a graphic novel. The Unit offers suggestions for using a graphic novel to raise students’ writing competence. If you agree, I would like the Grade 7 English Language teachers to teach this Unit in their English Language classes over the course of Term 3, April to June 2012. I will facilitate a one day workshop at the school prior to the commencement of the study in order to support the teachers’ understanding of this Unit in particular and the project in general.

What choice does your school have?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Whether your school decides to take part or not will not put you at any disadvantage. The teachers and students in their classroom will have to give consent and their participation is entirely voluntary.

What is your school being asked to do?

If you agree that your school will participate in this research, this will involve:

- allowing the teachers to collect a short story piece of writing from all Grade 7 students before 9th March 2012. The teachers will be expected to store these samples in a locked compartment in the staff room.
- allowing the researcher to conduct a one day workshop in March 2012 in a space designated by you on the school’s premises.
- allowing the English Language teachers to teach the Unit within their normal instructional time during Term 3, from April to June 2012.
- allowing the researcher to collect drafts of the students’ writing related to the graphic narrative Unit.
- allowing the teachers to administer and collect two set of surveys to the students: one set of reading and writing surveys at the beginning week and the end of Term 3, April 2012.
- designating a well ventilated, well lit, secure, quiet room on the school’s premises to conduct interviews with the participants.
• allowing student participants to request an adult or teacher present in the room at the
time of all interviews.
• allowing the researcher to collect lesson plans and teacher logs from the teachers.
• allowing the researcher to observe the teachers in their English Language classes
throughout the term.

I ask that your school provides assurance to students that their participation or non–
participation will not affect their relationship with the school or access to services from the
school. Further, I ask that your school provides assurance to teachers that their participation or
non–participation will not affect their employment or relationship with the school.

The writing samples are the students’ short stories which they have to complete during normal
English Language class time. These samples provide evidence of whether the use of a graphic
novel motivated them to produce better quality writing by the end of Term 3.

The teachers’ workshop will involve the dissemination of material which will support the
implementation of the Unit. Each English Language teacher will take responsibility for
allocating class time to implement the Unit. The Unit will form part of the normal instructional
time. Students who do not agree to participate in this research will still receive this instruction
in their classroom. However, their information such as writing samples and surveys will not be
used in the production of my thesis or any other published materials. Students will create a
graphic narrative as part of their response to the Unit. I will explore the meanings of and the
motivation for the creation of graphic narratives produced by nine randomly selected students
from the entire Grade 7 population.

The face–to–face student interviews will only be conducted with nine randomly selected
students whose parents have provided consent and who have assented to participation in the
study. They will be scheduled at three time points over the course of the study: at the
beginning, midway and end. Each interview will last approximately 35 minutes. These
interviews will take place outside of normal school hours on the school’s premises in a room
which your school will select.
The face–to–face teacher interviews will last approximately 45 minutes. They will be scheduled at three time points over the course of the study: at the beginning, midway and end. These interviews will take place on the school’s premises in a room designated by your school and at a time convenient to each teacher. The interview guide will include questions on how they implemented the Unit in their classroom; their beliefs about using a graphic novel in their classroom to motivate students to read and write; and their perceived impact of the Unit on the students’ motivation to read and write.

The data from the surveys seek to explore the students’ motivation for and beliefs about writing and reading. The surveys will be stored in a secure compartment in the staff room. I will then collect all the surveys but only analyse those from nine randomly selected students of the entire Grade 7 population.

The lesson plans will serve as a record of what is to be taught. On the other hand, the teacher logs will record their reflections on what has, or has not happened in relation to their planning and the students’ responses. I will perform the role of participant observer in their classrooms throughout the term. This will be my subjective interpretation of what is happening.

Please be assured that this study does not seek to critique the teachers’ professional practice. The complete data will help me to understand the impact of engaging with a graphic novel on students’ motivation and competence in writing. Further, it would shed light on the possibility of using visual texts, like a graphic novel, in the English Language classroom.

**What are the benefits and risks about participating?**

The study will support your school’s Department of English professional development needs as it aligns with the school’s aim of finding ways of raising student writing achievement.

If your school decides to take part, the school will be *free to withdraw its consent before* March 2012 without having to give any reasons to the researcher. The school’s, teachers’, and
students’ privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times during and after the study is completed. I do not foresee any risks in participating in this research.

**How will the school’s privacy and confidentiality be protected?**

All research data will be stored in a locked cabinet in a secure place at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland. All electronic data will be stored on the H drive of the University server and will be deleted after six years after the study. Paper data will be shredded after six years of the study. The school’s privacy and confidentiality will be protected at all times.

Your school, teacher and student names will not be identified throughout the production and reporting of the research. Any feedback to the school and any reports arising from this study will not identify you or other individuals taking part.

**What will happen to the information the school provides?**

Findings from your school will be used as a basis for my doctoral thesis, research reports and publications. These will be written in such a way that your school and principal will not be identifiable. Reports of exemplary practices that might identify individual teachers will be produced only with the explicit written permission of the teacher. I will give the school feedback about the project by way of a summary report. The teachers’ and students’ names will not be identified in the document, only pseudonyms will be used.

**What does your school need to do to take part?**

*If your school would like to take part,* please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to the researcher in the prepaid addressed envelope provided.

If you have questions, or would like more information about this research study, please contact me at:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Zealand details</th>
<th>St. Vincent and the Grenadines details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Resa Noel</td>
<td>Ms. Resa Noel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral Student</td>
<td>Doctoral Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Arts, Languages and Literacies</td>
<td>P.O. Box 1216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
<td>Kingstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Auckland</td>
<td>St. Vincent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Bag 92019</td>
<td>Ph: (784) 45–62434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auckland</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:resa_noel@hotmail.com">resa_noel@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ph: (09) 623 8899 ext. 48603  
Email: rnoe003@aucklanduni.ac.nz

**My supervisors are:**

Dr Libby Limbrick  
Head of Department  
School of Arts, Language & Literacies  
Faculty of Education  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92601  
Auckland  
Ph. (09) 623 8899 ext. 48445  
Email: l.limbrick@auckland.ac.nz

Professor Stuart McNaughton  
Director  
Woolf Fisher Research Centre  
Faculty of Education  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 92019  
Auckland  
Ph: (09) 373 7599 ext. 87541  
Email: s.mcnaughton@auckland.ac.nz
For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone (09) 373-7599 extn. 87830.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20 December 2011 for three (3) years, Reference Number 7751.
BOARD OF TRUSTEES / PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

Title: Using graphic novels as a tool to motivate students to read and write

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF SIX YEARS

Researcher: Ms. Resa Noel

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and have understood the nature of the research and why I have been invited to participate. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to take part in this research.

I agree that teachers’/leaders’ participation is voluntary and their decision will not affect their relationship with the school.

I understand that we may withdraw ourselves and/or any information that we have provided for this project before March 2012 without having to give any reasons.

I understand that our participation is voluntary.

I understand that the researcher will protect our privacy and confidentiality at all times and that neither the names of the students, teachers nor the school will be identified throughout the production of the research or in any publication.

I understand that data will be securely stored at the University of Auckland and will be destroyed after a period of six years.

Name (please print): ………………………………………………………………………………………………………

School: ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature: ……………………………………………………… Date: …………………………………………
Email address………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 20 December 2011 for three (3) years, Reference Number 7751.
## Appendix K: Summary of Data Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION</th>
<th>SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSES</th>
<th>EXTRACT FROM DATA ANALYSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher interviews</td>
<td>The results suggested that the teachers drew on the one-off teacher learning workshop, an informal community of practice and their own self-regulated learning to develop their understandings and pedagogic practice related to the graphic novel Teaching Unit. There were three ways in which teachers’ experiences revealed the dissonance created as they assimilated current and pre-existing understandings, practices and beliefs. Firstly, teachers simultaneously negotiated their dual roles as learners (understanding how</td>
<td>This is an extract from teacher Jason’s pre-intervention interview. In the original transcript was dated 31 July 2012, Jason commented on the use of visual representation in his classroom. The comments boxes on the right contain the codes. Full description of each code and category are in AppendixD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
graphic novels work) and gatekeepers of knowledge (teaching graphic novels). Secondly, there was some dissonance when teachers’ assimilated their pre-existing pedagogical practices to teach the graphic novel Teaching Unit. Thirdly, teachers’ conceptualisation of the affordances of graphic novel texts for meaning making was influenced by the extent to which graphic novels were positioned as of legitimate value in itself and/or having value to develop students’ conventional reading and writing. Teachers demonstrated agency through engagement with teaching graphic novel content, independent research
and collaboration among colleagues.

| Student interviews | First, the construction of graphic narratives served to enact students’ literate and cultural identities. The students drew on their socio-cultural experiences and available multimodal resources. Second, the inclusion of visual, spatial and other graphic novel elements disrupted and transformed classroom processes as the pre-existing discourse privileged words rather than images as the main mode of writing. Third, students actively negotiated the diverse demands for transferring their conventional narratives (storytelling with words only) into graphic narratives. |

The extract highlights the process of collating codes into categories. The document is dated 18 October 2013. The codes are on the right and the categories in the comment boxes on the left. Full description of each code and category are in Appendix C.
narratives. Their responses to this shift in learning revealed their agency through their engagement with the creative/writing processes. Moreover, some students were positioned as experts in creating graphic narrative texts and were then able to assist their peers. Additionally, students’ active engagement in the construction of graphic narratives helped to develop their voices as writers.

| Graphic narratives | Basic descriptions of graphic narrative texts/artefacts were used to corroborate other sources of data and to help understand how and how effectively students might have communicated their stories. Student participants drew on multimodal resources differentially |

The extract below represents the first set of descriptions of students’ graphic narrative samples from an independent researcher. I received the email on 11th January 2013.
when constructing their graphic narrative texts/artefacts. In keeping with the case study (Stake, 1995) design of this study, participants’ subjective experiences show how each student constructed meaning through the production of their graphic narrative texts/artefacts. Furthermore, students used a variety of multimodal resources to communicate their stories.
The extract above contains the independent researcher’s second set of descriptions of the students’ graphic narratives (sample). I received the second set of descriptions on 19th January 2015 in a Word document attached to an email. The name of student participant was concealed to protect his/her privacy. The following is the corresponding graphic narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional narratives</th>
<th>Statistical analyses were conducted on conventional narrative texts/artefacts to determine whether any statistical difference between the pre- and post-intervention time-points.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

An independent researcher and I scored pre- and post intervention conventional narratives using the conventional narrative rubric (Appendix E). The conventional narratives below belong to student/interview participant Nadine (a pseudonym).
The graphic novel intervention might have been associated with an increase in post-conventional writing scores for 56 student participants. However, there were three anomalies within these results. Firstly, students’ post-conventional narrative scores were similar to or higher than their pre-conventional writing scores. Secondly, there were some students whose post-conventional writing scores were lower than their pre-conventional writing scores. A little more than half (57%) of the conventional narratives were submitted at the post-conventional time point. The findings suggested that creating a conventional text was challenging for some students.

Table 19. Excerpt from conventional narrative score sheet showing Nadine’s scores by narrative element.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventional Writing</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Plot</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>Point of View</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Ideas and Content</th>
<th>Language Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
students who might have already struggled with conventional narrative writing prior to the intervention. It is plausible that those high achieving English students with high post-conventional narrative scores saw those narratives as a final product in itself. However, students whose post-conventional narrative scores were lower than their pre-conventional narrative score might have viewed the former as part of the process of planning their graphic narratives, thereby placing less emphasis on the post-conventional narratives.

An experience I will never forget

It was a bright and sunny morning when all the children were going back to school. As I was in my class, I met my friends Min and Bob and Alfonso. We all were talking about how we spent our vacation, and we all were talking about our teachers came in and left us some work.

It was time for break. I went out there were a lot of new food supply in the cafeteria. Some things that was in the shop was pasta, rice, bread and these, rolls and fifty a cent chocolate.

I did not know what to have nor did I want to. When I finish, the I went and played some games like basketball and then for those and played football. I was dead tired. I went for some water and next to outside. I saw a boat with flowers.

There were all kind of flowers rose, lily etc.

My eyes were glued up. As I was talking with my friends a boy named John say I had butter teeth and 2 till the children was laughing at me and I was shame so I ran and then in a spot outside and started to cry.

Then my teacher saw me and told me what happen and I broke down even more when I start telling her what happened. My teacher gave me cup of ice and told John. John was sad but he tell me sorry.

But my friend keep laughing me and my teacher knew them and upset. So to them and the teacher what I fell like to be laugh at and every one under stood and stop because...
One day, just after lunch, Nia and I were playing catch with our pet dog. Nia hit the ball so hard that I missed the catch and the ball hit a bull lying in a nearby field on its nose. The bull suddenly turned and looked at us. He slowly stood on his feet and started stamping one of his hooves. I could not take my eyes off the bull, pouring down my face. I turned slowly and shouted, "Run Nia, run!"

The angry bull chased us on until we got to a tree and we climbed up it. The treetop was fast the I looked just in time to see the angry bull hit his horn on the tree body of the tree. I screamed so loud that Nia screamed too. Our day came to an end; the bull hit the bull on one of his legs. Seeing the bull so immediately forget about us and chase him instead. They around
After circles before the bull got tired. Mia and I came down from the tree and cheered our dog for doing a good job. The angry bull went to the field looking very tired thanks to our dog, we ate some ice cream and I was not going to play catch in the field again once there is bull near by.
The purpose of studying the text *Amulet Book 1* was to build schema about reading and responding to visual-verbal literacies. Then, teacher participants guided their students through creating their own graphic short stories as a way of helping them become critical, reflective participants in the literacy community, responding to print text literacies and image literacies together. The findings suggested that teachers were able to draw on their knowledge of their learners’ interests, their learning styles and other needs to help with planning, executing, and regulating classroom activities related to the graphic novel intervention.

The extracts below are from three separate observations of the graphic novel lessons implemented by each of the three teacher participants. All identifiers were omitted to protect the participants’ privacy.

**Monday 7th May 2012**

**Form 1C**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic on board: No topic on board!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Strategies:** Whole-class discussions, read-aloud, questioning, predictions!

At the beginning, [Teacher name] asked the students to recall information about some of the characters. He then focused on a whole-class reading of the text. Some students volunteered while the others were instructed to follow in their texts. [Teacher name] stopped the reading occasionally to question the students about plot and characters (mainly). For instance, questions like: “Why do you think Silas’ eyes get smaller and smaller?” “How do you know that Emily has changed?” “Do you trust the Amulet, and why or why not?” I noticed that some students read ahead in their books, others stated that they had finished reading the text in the two previous classes, while others followed diligently in their texts. I noted that [Student name] made frequent connections between the text and movies. [Teacher name] participated excitedly and his answers suggested that he read ahead. Another student [Student name] finished reading the text beforehand but volunteered to read aloud.!

Comments: [Teacher name] stated that his approach is to finish the text then begin focusing on creating a graphic narrative. At times, the class seemed a bit unsettled, however, I cannot say whether it was excitement or restlessness.!
Wednesday 9th May 2012

Form 1K

Topic: On board: Using graphic novels in short story writing

Characters

Strategies: discussion, seat work, questioning

Objective: [blank]

asked the students to recall what a graphic novel is; the plot is for Amulet, what is an amulet; list of characters. Then she focused the class discussion on characters' facial expressions using selected pages. For instance, on pages 18, 19 and 25, [blank] asked, "How can you tell how the character feels without looking at the words?" She asked the students to write down the names of the characters they have encountered in the story thus far. I suggested that she focus on how lines and shapes are used to convey emotions. So she selected pages to illustrate this point to her students. The students in turn answered accurately, specifically pointing to the shape of the characters' lips and eyes. Then [blank] also connected the use of angle/distance to enhance the characters' emotions. Notably, I observed that his discussion may have bordered mood and setting. The next activity involved the students drawing facial expressions. The instructions were: "Select in your mind 5 expressions. Draw a picture of your character's face to show the expression." I suggested that she point out that panels are used to frame the images. The activity was halted so that [blank] could point this out to them. From what I saw, the student demonstrated an understanding of the use of lines and shapes to represent emotions. Also, they rushed to [blank] and me for feedback on their drawing. Time ran out and the students were asked to finish for homework. There were a few disruptions during the class; for instance, some children were summoned to the office, and time was spent bringing a few students who were absent up to speed.

Comments: Perhaps next class, [blank] could focus on how clothing and body language are used to tell characters apart. For instance, pg. 162 last two panels, Tris wears dark clothing and has sharper teeth, while Emily and Max wear children's clothing. Then, she can focus on the use of setting to show mood. The mood, along with the characters' expression adds to the action of the plot.
Monday 7th May 2012

Form 1B

Topic on board: None (topic declared to class)

Objectives:

1. View and discuss a trailer based on the graphic novel, Amulet.
2. Discuss the different images of the text.
3. Answer questions based on characters, plot, setting, and theme.

Strategies: discussions, seatwork, incorporating ICT.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher asked the students to view a video clip on YouTube using their laptops. This clip featured the author speaking about the production of Amulet. Afterwards, she asked the students to recall what they saw in the clip. Some students stated that they saw images of a house, a sword, and a skull. The teacher commented that it takes a lot of work to make a graphic novel, among other things. Then, the teacher linked some of the author's biographical information to the text so that the students can understand that you can use your own experiences when creating a graphic novel. For instance, Karen and David (couple) could represent Kibush and his wife, so he draws on his own marital status. After that, the teacher led a discussion about the images found in the text. These aspects include sound effects, speech bubbles, thought bubbles, and character expressions. She gave some examples of speech bubbles on the board and the students explained what each portrayed. She also made connections to sound effects in the text and those found in movies. The students discussed the main difference between the two mediums with regards to sound effects. Next, the discussion focused on identifying all characters, main characters, plot, and theme. The characters were explored in terms of their clothing and facial expressions. She reviewed the aspects of plot (e.g., exposition, rising action) but did not make the connection to the text. The students came up with the following themes: sadness, fear, bravery. The final activity involved the students viewing another video clip, "Using graphic novels in the classroom: Shakespeare Squared," However, time ran out and the teacher did not make the connection between that clip and the lesson.

Comments: What was the rationale for the final video clip? The teacher stated that the intention was to show the importance of using graphic novels in the classroom. However, she did not make this connection in the class.
This current study found that a slight increase in the positivity of students’ attitudes to reading from the pre- to post-intervention time-points might be associated with their engagement with the graphic novel intervention. Furthermore, the results suggested that there was no increase in the positivity of students’ attitudes to writing from the pre- to post-intervention time-points. An additional finding is that 5% of the total number of Grade 7 students (n = 98) did not complete their post-intervention conventional narratives. This finding suggested that participants were learners who already struggled with verbal writing prior to the intervention in their English Language classrooms.

The extract is a SPSS data set containing codes for the pre-intervention writing survey. For instance, ‘PREQ4C’ refers to pre-intervention question 4C. The names have been concealed to protect the student’s privacy.
Appendix L: Classroom handout and activity to teach the concept of conflict in *comics* format
Appendix M: Classroom handout and activity to teach the concept of conflict in *comics’* format
Appendix N: Classroom handout and activity to teach the concept of conflict in *comics*’ format