USING THE GRAPHIC NOVEL TO ASSIST IN DEVELOPING VARIOUS
FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION WRITING SKILLS

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INTRODUCTION

Before the written word became the dominant manner of conveying information, cultures created pictorial representations of their lives to convey everything from their most important historical and political events, to daily occurrences. Robert Petersen points out in the first chapter of his book *Comics, Manga, and Graphic Novels: A History of Graphic Narrative*, that some graphic images even date back to Paleolithic times, and although most of these nomadic illustrations are illegible, they are taken “very seriously” by the cultures who have produced them, as well as by those who continue to study these images (2). Constantly changing and progressing over several centuries, the graphic image has recently made a resurgence in literature through the graphic novel, a genre which is ever increasing in popularity outside and inside of the university. My study is concerned with exploring the effectiveness of using the graphic novel within the composition classroom. This study uses Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* to aid first-year composition students in developing their skills for interviewing, analyzing, and writing descriptively.

One particular focus of my research is to examine how and for what purposes others within the field of education have used this genre, and then, how the selected text, *Maus*, was being used as a means to facilitate learning. While examining the areas in which the graphic novel has been previously used, I noticed some major trends. Graphic
novels have been primarily sought out for their ability to engage readers, appeal to issues relevant in the lives of adolescents, and be used in conjunction with, or as a bridge to more traditional literary texts. In regard to the use of *Maus* specifically, sources discussed the novel’s use in teaching history, helping students better understand syntactic cues, and benefitting English Language Learning (ELL) students. The overall research has certainly yielded a backbone of understanding and clarity for myself, which has helped to provide stability to my study.

After familiarizing myself with the current literature as it applies to this study, I noticed a positive correlation between the use of the graphic novel and its overall effectiveness as a tool within the classroom. In addition, it was also apparent that there was a gap in the research in terms of using the graphic novel as it applies to helping composition students develop certain writing skills. I also recognized that the research conducted in regard to using *Maus* was limited to the areas mentioned above, which shows another area where this study helps to fill a void and prove valuable within the field of composition.

Chapter I, “Developing Analytical Skills,” begins with a short history of the graphic novel and its rise to a legitimate form of literature. This history is rather important, seeing as how not too long ago graphic novels were looked down upon due to the “common perception...[of graphic novels being] juvenile, disposable trash” (Versaci 2). However, citing from Stephen Tabachnick’s article “A Comic-Book World,” which was originally published in *World Literature Today*, I show how in just a short period of time the graphic novel has come to be seen as offering “just as many fine creative
talents...and wonderful reading experiences — as any literary genre ever has” (40-41).

To conclude this chapter, similar to the second and third chapters, I will present and explore the findings of an in-class activity. The first chapter’s activity was developed specifically to help expand the student's ability to analyze, a skill students seem to struggle with the most.

Chapter II, “Strengthening Interviewing Skills,” focuses on developing stronger interviewing skills with the aid of the graphic novel — more specifically, with the aid of an in-class activity that was developed and designed to be completed with an excerpt taken from *Maus*. This chapter begins with a brief publishing history of *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale*, and then covers a few of the ways in which critics have discussed the appeal of the graphic novel to the “reluctant reader.” Once the historical and scholarly framework regarding *Maus* has been laid out, this chapter will look at the scholarship concerned with visual literacy as a way to better strengthen my claim that many students will benefit from the use of some form of a visual aid inside of the classroom. Donna Alvermann, F. Boyd, and Gay Ivey have shown in their research that, “students meet with greater success when offered a wider range of texts...that suit their individual needs” (Hughes et al. 602). The graphic novel not only provides this diversity in texts, but studies have shown that a majority of people are visual learners; therefore, graphic novels can meet common, but individual needs. After having covered these areas of scholarship, I will discuss my research findings. More specifically, I will lay out for my audience the in-class activity I developed, explain the pedagogy behind this exercise, present the results, and then draw conclusions based on my impressions.
In Chapter III, “Expanding Descriptive Writing Skills,” I will demonstrate how students can mature in their descriptive writing abilities with the assistance of the graphic novel. How rare — but lucky — an occasion do instructors find themselves so engrossed in a student’s personal narrative that we forget we are reading a first-year composition essay? This occurrence, I find, is largely due to their use of descriptive details. To begin this chapter, I will take a closer look at the various ways other instructors have used the graphic novel in their own classrooms. Having noticed that there is little scholarship surrounding the use of the graphic novel in writing courses, I will use the insight and experience I found within the articles to show how the graphic novel has seen much success in various learning environments and should be employed within the composition classroom.

Following the section concerned with the previous use of graphic novels within the classroom, I present my final in-class assignment and student responses to this activity. For this particular activity I was able to acquire the students’ rough drafts before the assignment was administered, and their polished essays after having completed the activity, which allowed me to pinpoint some specific areas of growth. These areas of growth are represented by two student examples. In both examples I discuss and illustrate the ways in which the students were able to increase the quality of their final essays by adding more descriptive details. Also throughout Chapter III, as well as in the previous two chapters, I will include and discuss the significance of the data I have collected from an anonymous survey sent out to 100 current composition students at The University of Akron.
This survey was centered around the student’s level of interest and current use of the graphic novel in their own composition classrooms. Along with the data collected from the survey, formal student interviews were held so that I could form a deeper understand of student responses to the activities, as well as to gain more insight into their views of the graphic novel. All data derived from the survey and from student interviews can be found throughout the following chapters in places where the statistics fit organically. After completing the third chapter, I am able to draw some final conclusions as to the overall effectiveness of bringing the graphic novel into the composition classroom. Spiegelman wrote, “Comics are a highly charged medium, delivering densely concentrated information in relatively few words and simplified code images,” and because of this, students are steered into believing this genre is easier to grasp (Arnold 6). Unrealized by students, they have been maturing in visual analysis for many years, and by being provided with material they are admittedly more comfortable with, the learning process is ignited in a way that hasn’t been done before.
CHAPTER I
DEVELOPING ANALYTICAL SKILLS

Sketching a Future

One of the most difficult skills for composition instructors to teach is the skill of academic analysis. Perhaps this struggle presents itself because analysis, more so than any other aspect of writing, requires the act of critical thinking. Critical thinking is the first, and arguably the most important, step to analyzing the arguments and texts instructors bring into their classrooms. Still, whether this stems from a lack of instruction, practice, or general interest, first-year composition students often are not prepared to analyze college-level material, at least not in the way most instructors expect. Furthermore, beyond simple unpreparedness, students are admittedly uncomfortable and lack the confidence needed to produce this higher level, socio-cognitive response. The difficulty many instructors have faced when teaching analysis, and the struggle students endure when performing this skill, has prompted countless textbooks, readers, articles, activities, and even blogs centered around developing analytical abilities.

What has been left out of this research however — partly due to the fact that this genre has just recently made its way into the field of academia — is the use of the graphic novel to aid in developing analytical skills in composition students. When 100 first-year
composition students at The University of Akron were surveyed, 100% of them reported that their current composition instructors were not using a graphic novel in their courses. Despite this overwhelming statistic, 68% of those same students answered “yes” to the question, “Would you be interested in having future instructors use the graphic novel as a tool for learning?” When nearly 7 out of every 10 students show an interest in the graphic novel, it leads one to wonder, is it time to take a more serious look at including this genre in our pedagogies?

Many universities around the country have said yes; and beyond that, these universities have begun to include the graphic novel in their syllabi and have developed whole courses and majors centered around the teaching, study, and design of *sequential art* — another term for the graphic novel. Therefore, I will begin this chapter with a closer look at the unexpected rise of the graphic novel to a legitimate form of literature. The rise of the graphic novel to more widely accepted medium mirrors the increased use of this genre in various learning environments; however, it is evident throughout my research that the graphic novel has been largely left out of composition teaching methods. Also within this section, I discuss a brief history of the genre, which includes an explanation of how the term “graphic novel” was established. This is done to provide readers with a more comprehensive background of the medium. Once a greater understanding of the historical framework concerning the graphic novel is discussed, I will present my methods in regard to the process of my study. Following the methodology section is an analysis of student responses and the conclusions I have drawn.
from these responses, as well as notable implications as they pertain to this portion of my research.

From Underground to Foreground

In an article first published in *World Literature Today*, Stephen Tabachnick writes “...the graphic novel has been steadily gaining in brightness among audiences both inside and outside the academy” (36). Using this genre in his own university classroom for upwards of fifteen years, Tabachnick shows his concern for this rapidly trending type of literature when he raises the question: is this a craze that “will soon pass, or does it point to a deeper, more lasting shift in our culture?” (36). In his 2003 article, “A Comic Book World,” Tabachnick attempts to answer this question when he writes, “The good news is that the graphic novel now offers just as many fine creative talents...as any literary genre ever has done” (41). And almost ten years later, what graphic novels have to offer their audiences has only continued to expand. Although Tabachnick presents more of an opinion rather than an answer, he has entered a conversation that many other scholars and journalists in the field have just recently been able to discuss openly.

There was a time in the early to mid 1980’s when the term “graphic novel” was rarely spoken on university campuses, and if it was, this phrase would be uttered in a hushed whisper. Instructors like Carol Tyler, also a professional graphic novelists, hid her interest in this genre because graphic novels and comic books were often considered “juvenile, disposable trash” (Versaci 2). Currently, however, there are numerous college
courses available to students who wish to read, study, and even create a graphic novel of their own. Recent articles like Lisa Cornwell’s “Comics No Longer a Joke in Academia,” originally published by The Associated Press, brings to light the emergence of these courses in sequential art on campuses all over the country.

Cornwell writes of the University of Alaska and the courses that began there in 2005. She also points out the classes in “comics art” at the University of Cincinnati and highlights what she contends as one of the “friendliest places in the nation for comics study,” The Ohio State University (51). At OSU one can find the recently renamed Bill Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum. Established in 1977, the Bill Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum is “the largest and most comprehensive academic research facility documenting printed cartoon art” (Allen). Cornwell includes this information to show that not only has there been an increase in courses centered around this genre, but there has been an even bigger increase in the students who enroll in these classes and the students who major in cartooning. From 2002-2007, “The number of freshman...at the School of Visual Arts in New York more than doubled,” and at the Savannah (Ga.) College of Art and Design “...almost 300 undergraduates and 50 graduate students [are] pursuing bachelor's and master’s degrees in sequential art” (Cornwell 51).

There are many reasons as to why this area of study has continued to escalate, but when Cornwell writes, “The medium is slowly being accepted by academia — thanks in large part to the growing quality of graphic novels...” (50) she hits the nail right on the head. Chris Mautner’s article for The Patriate-News, “Once Avoided Comics Welcomed in Schools,” mirrors Cornwell’s perception of the increasing caliber of the graphic novel
as being responsible for its growing use in the field. The central focus of Mautner’s article is an English Literature course taught at Dickens College by Professor David Ball. The students in Professor Ball’s classes are not “dissecting Faulkner or Joyce,” writes Mautner, “but comic books” (59).

Along with teaching students how to read for the author’s tone, specific word choice, any hidden meaning, or the representation of gender, race, or socioeconomic background throughout the text, the graphic novel can also familiarize students with concepts concerning visual rhetoric. For example, analyzing images allows for discussions that cover the way the author has portrayed the characters, the author’s use or lack of color, the way time and space work together throughout the frames, and even the typography found within graphic novels. Discussions covering topics similar or exactly like the ones just mentioned “stretch your brain in different ways,” said Ball. Also, I would argue, images can help a student pinpoint and support their interpretation of the work.

To analyze one must first understand what is occurring within the material. For the longest time, and with good reason, considering the author’s intended meaning has been deemed a frivolous and taboo endeavor in the field of Literature studies. Often audience members find themselves unequipped to draw such conclusions regarding authorial intention because authors rarely leave behind their thoughts or notes. With the combination of both images and text, the graphic novel inhabits yet another layer of complexity or difficulty when the reader attempts to interpret meaning. Often, but not always, a graphic novel has both an author and an illustrator. Many would argue that
having more material to decipher and multiple contributors would add to the obscurity of the piece, which leads to uncertainty and frustration when the time for analysis comes; however, most students have been decoding images their whole lives and feel comfortable procuring and translating meaning from these images. After composing an interpretation with confidence, students can then use that knowledge to better analyze the text as it sits alongside the images.

In one student interview I conducted, Jen, the interviewee, commented on the way the graphic images helped her to better understand what was going on, as well as helped her to gain a better understanding as to what the author was trying to reveal to his audience. Jen said:

> The pictures were conveying exactly what the [author] wanted to convey, they got the point across. Versus the text, like if you're texting, can be taken multiple ways... the tone and style can be take differently too, but when you have the pictures you know exactly what is going on.

Jen’s interview was also scattered with comments in reference to her experience with the genre, and how she would be interested (after having used an excerpt from *Maus* in the in-class activity) in working more with the graphic novel genre. When questioned about her past experiences with graphic novels she answered, “I used them in high school, but I don’t remember which ones I used. I didn’t really like them.”

After receiving this answer, I was interested in knowing more. I asked these followup questions: “So what was your initial reaction to the activity we did in class? Would you say that your views regarding the graphic novel have changed in any way? Are graphic novels something you would be interested in reading more of in the future?” Jen replied, “I liked it. It made me look at things in different ways. Now I think that they
[graphic novels] are more interesting. More interesting now having seen that one
[\textit{Maus}]...I would like to look at it more.” This student’s view toward the graphic novel
reflects the point Mautner makes when he writes, “The notion that comics might have
educational value might be surprising to those whose knowledge of the medium is limited
to the funny pages in their newspapers” (59). Once a deeper understanding of the genre is
explored and established, the antiquated view that the graphic novel is somehow not a
serious medium will hopefully cease to exist.

“Graphic Novel:” A Debated Term for a Debated Genre

The discussion around the graphic novel’s place inside of the university classroom
extends even further into a dispute of the term itself. Recently, those familiar with the
genre have struck up a conversation concerning the meaning the phrase implies.
Everyone from a journalist at \textit{Time} magazine, to Art Spiegelman, a Pulitzer Prize winning
graphic novelist, has joined in on this discussion. Andrew Arnold, in his article “The
Graphic Novel Silver Anniversary,” quotes Spiegelman in saying, “The problem with the
term ‘graphic novel’ is that it is an arguably misguided bid for respectability where
graphics are respectable and novels are respectable so you get double respectability” (6).
Even William Eisner, the term’s creator, later on in his career brings to light his
frustrations with the phrase “calling it a ‘limited term,’ and prefers ‘graphic literature’ or
a ‘graphic story’” (Arnold 6).

Still, when Eisner, one of the most distinguished graphic novelists of all time,
coined the term “graphic novel” in 1978, no one could have predicted the vast, varying,
and even lucrative field this type of literature would evolve into. “In a bid to be taken
seriously by publishers,” writes Kat Kan in her introduction to *Graphic Novels and Comic Books*, “Eisner labeled the book [*A Contract With God*] a ‘graphic novel,’ a term now used to describe *various* types of book-bound comics” (3, emphasis added). Even though the term is widely debated, “graphic novel” is consistently and synonymously used with both book-bound comics and illustrated novels. Art Spiegelman, when asked about being the father of graphic novels, responded by saying, “I definitely want a blood test” (Wertheim); but all jokes aside, Spiegelman has provided for readers and non-readers alike a definition that is not only fitting but easily accessible. He said, “[a graphic novel is] a long comic book that needs a bookmark and wants to be reread.” Spiegelman’s captivating semi-autobiographical narrative *Maus*, fits easily into this definition, which allowed for its use in the study to keep the activity youthful and to produce successful results.

A Sequential Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of using the graphic novel in first-year composition courses, specifically as a tool to help students develop their academic analytical skills. I began by seeking approval from the International Review Board (IRB). Once I had submitted the Exception Request Form, and gained the support of the IRB, eight composition instructors were randomly selected, and then asked to administer a short survey to their students. Ultimately, 100 first-year composition students at The University of Akron voluntarily took part in completing the survey. The
questions on the survey were designed to gain information regarding the student’s experiences with the graphic novel inside and outside of their composition classrooms, as well as their perspective toward the genre. A list of survey questions can be found in Appendix A, “Survey of Comp 111 and 112 Courses.”

After the results of the survey were received and recorded, I began the second part of the study. It is important to note here that while I will be using “I” throughout this chapter, during the collection and coding of student responses, I worked closely with a colleague, Heidi Thoenen. Thoenen’s influence can be seen in the sections where survey responses are discussed, as well as in Chapter I when student responses to the activity are analyzed. Stage two of this study includes an in-class activity developed to measure whether or not the blending of images with a text can yield a higher quality, more accurate analysis. A full transcription of this analytical activity can be found in Appendix B, “Assignment 2: Developing Analytical Skills.” Thirty-two first-year composition students completed the activity, and their answers were later examined for patterns. These patterns then helped to define the terms “improved,” “stayed the same,” “derived an alternate meaning,” and “inconclusive,” as they pertain to my study, and as the terms apply to student responses. After noticing several patterns throughout student responses, formal interviews were held to garner a greater understanding as to why, but more importantly how, these answers were developed.

Each student that completed the in-class activity was invited to be interviewed. Of these 32 participants, eight responded to the call, but in the end, six of the eight were interviewed. The two students that responded to the invitation but were not interviewed
had cancelled their appointments before the interview could take place. All interviews were held in a private office to ensure that the answers and the identity of the interviewees remained confidential. The information collected from these interviews not only confirmed my initial analysis of student responses, but also provided me with some interesting commentary on the benefits of the assignment, overall positive reactions to the activity, and the students’ acceptance toward using this genre in future courses. By choosing to administer a survey, complete an in-class activity, as well as to conduct formal student interviews, this study produced a more inclusive understanding of the value and student receptiveness of a genre that is just now starting to make a greater appearance on university campuses.

Frame by Frame

The analytical activity was designed and administered to 32 second-semester composition students. The activity was sectioned into two parts. Again, this activity can be found in Appendix B. The first part of the activity included only the text from page 90 in *Maus: A Survivors Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, and a series of questions to answer after having read the excerpt minus the images. Once part one had been completed, students were issued the same excerpt from page 90 with the images restored, and then were asked to answer the same questions. All student responses were later examined in private, and several patterns of improvement were noticed.
In order to code students as having improved, the student must have increased in awareness of elements within the rhetorical situation; increased in confidence in their revised responses regarding what was initially inferred from the text without the images; or, must have grown stronger in his/her ability to explain and evaluate the excerpt more accurately, including details that were more concise and concrete. Most students displayed improvements in a variety of these three areas, and some showed improvement in all three. Below I will take a detailed look at the responses from four students — Antonio, Pierre, Ruby and Rose — to demonstrate more clearly the ways in which the students developed their analytical abilities.

Antonio’s Increased Awareness of the Rhetorical Situation

Antonio was fairly openminded about the activity, as were most of the student participants, when the instructor began to explain the directions. This open mindedness, I would argue, played a large part in the students’ success with the activity. Question 1 (henceforth known as Q(#)) asked of the students to summarize the excerpt, first without the images, and then with the images. Nineteen out of the 32 students improved, but Antonio’s overall summary of the passage stayed almost exactly the same. To Antonio’s credit, however, his first summary was rather inclusive and was not in need of a detailed revision. The section of Antonio’s responses I would like to look at in more detail falls under the category of rhetorical analysis, more specifically, the tone the author is trying to set throughout the passage.

In response to Q6, the student’s overall reaction and/or comments, Antonio initially wrote: “[It is] apparent that Anja, the narrator, and their family are Jews being
sent to concentration camps. Happened sometime between the 1930s and 1940s. No real feelings present from narrator. Not a native English speaker.” When the images were added, Antonio’s response presented an interesting change. “Everyone is a mouse, except the Nazi officer,” wrote Antonio. This drastically different response was not explained as thoroughly as I would have liked, and out of this gap the need for a formal interview grew. In this interview I asked Antonio if he could shed some light on his motivation behind the change in his response to Q6. Antonio answered, “I noticed that the faces of the Jews were mice, and the faces of the Germans were cats. This says a lot, without saying anything at all, about the relationship between the two. The author was really playing up the cat-and-mouse games stereotype, but it worked.” What helped Antonio to fully comprehend the tone of the passage is the way he understood and interpreted the use of Spiegelman’s unconventional characters.

Antonio also changes his answer in Q2 from, “going to the left side was a bad thing for people,” to “[the] people who were sent to the left were in trouble” (emphasis added). The subtle difference between the two words in no way reflects the difference in the way they apply to the situation. Antonio makes mention of this in his interview when he says, “I did know what the excerpt was about. I understood Gestapo and concentration camps, but I didn’t understand the level it was on...I didn't understand how it was portrayed and how it was suppose to be view;” until the images were added. Antonio continued, “…growing up in my generation having a lot of bright images... the pictures related to me really well, and I felt like I could analyze it a lot better when I had the picture....the image really did help to advance my analysis.” The progress made toward a
more critical and confident analysis can be see in Antonio’s revised responses to Q’s 1 and 2, as well as in a number of his other revisions.

Pierre’s Individualized Interpretation of the Images

Antonio understood what Spiegelman was trying to do by portraying his characters as various animals, but there was one student who did not entirely grasp the significance behind Spiegelman’s choice. Because of Pierre’s particular interpretation, some of his revised answers produced an analysis that was quite different than his initial responses. Pierre shows this difference most vividly in his response to Q5 when he changes the tone of the passage from “tense” to “fun.” In Pierre’s initial response he writes “Tense, because the police held guns in the stadium,” but when the images were blended with the text he wrote, “Fun because they are all mice.” Even though Pierre makes a specific comment regarding the helpfulness of the images in his interview when he says, “[the images taught me] not to judge too quickly, and that I need to think about things more,” it is evident by his revised responses that the images allowed Pierre to derive an alternate meaning from the text, which minimized the significance of what was happening in the scene. Pierre does, however, elaborate more on his motives behind switching the tone of the excerpt in his interview.

Pierre was asked in his interview, “If you could change anything about the activity that you did, what would it be?” Letting out a chuckle, Pierre quickly responded, “my answers.” Despite the fact that this question was aimed more at the structure of the activity, Pierre’s creative response prompted several follow up questions. “How would you change your answers,” I asked. “I would change...well, I remember specifically I said
that ‘they were happy,’ and I would like to change that answer….It was an early morning...If there are wrong answers, I got that one wrong.” Although the student claims to have answered the question “wrong,” I’d like to consider some other possibilities. For example, what exactly was the student getting at in his interpretation? Could it be that the images simply did not provide this student with enough assistance to reach the academic analysis I was looking for? Also, how have cultural frames conditioned this student to interpret the cat-and-mouse stereotype as “fun?”

Each of the previously mentioned variables have the potential to play a large role in the way this student derived such a unique and alternate meaning from the excerpt. Along with recognizing that the images somehow worked in opposition to the type of academic analysis I had hoped the students would reach, Pierre also points out — almost as if he needed to justify his revised response — the time that the class took place. He said, “it was early morning,” and it was; the class began at 7:45 a.m. Could having to perform the difficult task of analyzing first thing in the morning have negatively impacted the student’s responses? I would argue, yes. Although an early morning is no excuse to turn in poor work, performing analytical activities later in the day to produce better results does present researchers with an interesting variable to test.

Although Pierre was the only student to interpret the tone of the excerpt in a comical way, he continued to improve in other areas. When asked to comment on the passage Pierre wrote, “This was poorly written, and more is needed to be better understood.” Here Pierre points out a problem that only presented itself after the assignment was complete, and although I will discuss this further in my implication
section, I would like to point out here an obstacle that future instructors may face by taking a small excerpt of a graphic novel out of its larger context. The excerpt used in the activity was written with the intention of the audience having both the words and the images together, and therefore much comprehension is lost with the absence of one or the other. Pierre makes note of this in his revised response to Q6 when he changes from “poorly written,” to an explanation of “...it [the excerpt] now flows better with the pictures.” Pierre’s formal interview and revised responses give some reasons as to why the passage was interpreted so widely, and he was certainly not the only student to decipher the excerpt in such a creative way. Ruby and Rose, my next student example, began their interpretation of the passage as a commentary on immigration.

Ruby and Rose’s Expanding Use of Details

When issued the activity, students were given the option of working in a group with their peers. Ruby and Rose, twins, decided that they would complete the assignment together; because of this, their answers were similar. When asked in Q2 what the claim of the excerpt was, Ruby answered, “To be able to work and get a good stamp, one had to look young...” Mirroring this, Rose writes, “The claim, I think, is that in order to be able to work...you have to be young and everybody was trying to look young in order to get the stamp.” In both responses the claims were on target for what the text had to offer. When the images were provided, however, the students were able to provide more accurate details in their responses.

Once Ruby and Rose were given the passage with the images, their initial claim that the excerpt dealt with “immigration,” evolved into a more confident and
sophisticated response that discusses the Nazi selection of the Jews and the “complete chaos,” as Rose points out, in the stadium. Not only did their summaries become more historically accurate, but their comprehension of the excerpt’s claim became more complex as well. Both students show an increase in understanding of the severity of the situation and tone when Rose writes in her second response, “...in order to do good work, you must look young,...[this] was a life and death situation.” Ruby had a comparable response, “...depending on your appearance decided if you were able to work or not, and this was a life or death decision.” Transforming from immigration to the Nazi selection, as well as detailing their second responses to include the importance of getting a stamp — a stamp that determined the value of one’s life — is a clear example of how the addition of the images allowed for these students to better understand the rhetorical situation, be more confident in their summaries, and provide more accurate and concise details.

Ruby and Rose’s revised responses were unlike their peers when they highlighted the fact that this excerpt represented a life-threatening event, and because of this I invited the students to be interviewed. I hoped the interview would supply my study with more concrete answers as to why these students revised their responses in this manner. After some preliminary questions about the activity, I asked, “How did the images influence your analysis?” Completing each other’s sentences through their answer, Ruby began by saying, “I just remember one instance with the mice, they showed their faces were depressed because they knew they were not going into a something that was terribly good at all, [and] that makes you think how it is not a good situation.” Here Rose joins in and
continues with, “It [the images] made our analysis go into more detail....It helped us be more sure of what we were writing.”

“The first time we were just kind of guessing and the second time we were able to put more detail into it,” said Ruby to complete the thought. “Ok,” I said, “So when you had the images, you added to your responses the urgency of the situation and that this situation was ‘life or death,’ can you please elaborate on what made you change your response?” Rose began, “There was a Nazi sign in the picture...you could see it on the flag,” and Ruby completed the sentence by saying, “Once we found out it was about the Holocaust, after seeing the Nazi flag...well, with the Holocaust it’s, uh, they’re separating them into different camps, and the older ones they’re just going to take away and basically let them die because they're not useful. So it [our responses] went from working or not working, to living or dying.” These statements show just some of the ways in which the images helped the students to provide a more accurate explanation, as well as the way the images granted the students more confidence while determining the claim and presenting an analysis of the excerpt.

Ilation

Of the student participants, 87% showed improvements in various areas, and although not every students developed in every area I examined, there were several developmental patterns noticed. For example, as represented through Antonio’s case study, several students did improve in their understanding and explanation of the tone.
Other student responses included revisions that moved from “curious,” to “nervous and apprehensive;” as well as from, “scared or worried about getting a stamp,” to “worried, because you needed the stamp to survive.” With the addition of the images, these students and many others were able to better understand the rhetorical situation, and then transmit that growth in understanding and confidence in their revised responses.

Almost all of the students commented on their increased confidence toward their analyses of the passage once the images were added, and this claim also shows up in their revised responses. Ten of the 32 students, even though they were not asked, specifically mentioned the images in their answers. One student changed her response from, “It is hard to answer the questions confidently because it was such a little passage,” to, “It is easier to understand the context by looking at the pictures. I can infer more than just by the text.” Another student mirrored this confidence in her response when she wrote, “The comic helped to show what the excerpt was about and it explained it better.” This student, whose revised response to every question showed improvement, made good use of the images in regard to understanding the rhetorical situation, gaining more confidence in her answers, as well as providing an overall better analysis of the excerpt’s claim.

When asked in Questions 2 and 3 to pick out the claim of the excerpt, and to include evidence from the passage that supports the claim, 20 of the 32 student were able to better present this claim in their revised responses, with more accurate and concise details. Students moved from simply stating the claim and evidence, to including actual examples and quotations from the excerpt. One student, whose claim was “those going to the left were going to a bad place, and those going to the right were going to have to
work, but would not be killed,” initially provided supporting evidence the stated, “old people and children did not get a stamp,” but with the addition of the graphic images, the student was able to pull more understanding from the text and supply quoted evidence; his revised response read, “when talking about the people going to the left, the narrator said, ‘we understood this must be very bad’.” Instead of just telling the audience the citizen who were sent to the left were in danger, the student shows us from the voice of the narrator what was happening. This student’s revised response is just one of many examples where the participants move from telling what had happened to showing what had happened, which is a sign of greater analysis.

Back to the Drawing Board

After completing this study, some areas in all three stages showed room for adjustment and improvement. Let us begin with the survey implications. After revising the survey multiple times, five questions made the final list. Most of the survey questions required a quick “yes” or “no” answer and a small explanation. Question 3, however, was rather complex. The question read: “If you have [read a graphic novel], do you enjoy reading graphic novels? If you have not, do you think you would enjoy reading a graphic novel? Why or Why not?” You can see how this poses a problem when the survey participant answers only, “yes.” There is no way to tell which of the two asked questions the “yes” belongs to. In future surveys it is important for researchers to remember not to ask more than one question per answer space. Having to judge which question the
participant’s answer was in reply to, however, was not the only obstacle I had to overcome when recording survey responses.

As I sat and recorded the survey responses, a pattern started to emerge. This pattern was subtle, but detectable nonetheless. When the participants were asked in Q2, “Have you ever read a graphic novel? If yes, which ones?” Every so often I would stumble upon an answer that read, “Yes. The Glass Castle,” or “Yes. A Long Way Gone,” both of which are not novels written in sequential art. Further down in Q5 the survey asks, “Would you be interested in having future instructors use graphic novels as a tools for learning?” A few responses I received read, “No. The ones I have read grossed me out...,” and even, “I am not sure what a graphic novel is...” These answers, and ones like them, made me realize the importance behind specifically defining the term “graphic novel” as it pertain to my study. Future researchers should also consider the impact of participants misinterpreting their study’s terms on the data collected.

Besides survey implications, the in-class activity also brought forth some areas in need of refinement. Pointed out by an audience member at this year’s University of Akron Student Innovation Symposium (The University of Akron’s annual conference on undergraduate and graduate student research) was the impact behind this study’s “test-retest” characteristics in regard to the students’ revised responses. This audience member pointed out that having the students read the passage twice may have influenced their second analyses because they were already familiar with the excerpt’s focus. He made a valid point, and to avoid this in the future I might adjust the activity to include an analysis
of two passages separate from each other. One passage originally written with only text, and a second passage written originally and intentionally with text and images.

When a graphic novel is written, the author intends for the audience to have both the text and the images at its disposal when reading and internalizing the work. In my activity, however, Part 1 was administered without the images. I can now understand how this would pose a problem for the students while analyzing. As I have mentioned previously, the absence of either words or images, when they were intended to be introduced together, can have a negative effect on student responses. One solution to this drawback is the solution I offered for the “test-retest” problem; present students with two separate works that are similar in their complexities, but completely independent from one another. Again, one passage should originally be written only with text, and a second passage written originally and intentionally with images alongside the text. Once the students have completed the two distinct assignments, those answers can then be analyzed for improvements or other changes. More work with the graphic novel inside of the composition classroom must be done in order to fully understand the impact this genre can have on developing analytical skills. Adjusting the previously mentioned areas, as well as continually revisiting and revising new problematic issues that are sure to come about as the research progresses, is the only way to ensure the most accurate results in future studies.
CHAPTER II

STRENGTHENING INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Beginning Observations

At the very start of my research I spent some time observing the students that took part in this study. I diligently took note of their behaviors in class, the students’ receptiveness toward their instructor, their attitudes toward their peers, and a number of other things I thought at the time were interesting. The students were aware of my presence, but for the most part, they paid me little to no attention. Not long into my observations, after having read and signed consent forms, the students were administered and asked to complete the first in-class activity I had developed in regard to strengthening interviewing skills. I sat in the back of the classroom watching as the instructor read the directions aloud and then asked if the students had any questions. To my surprise, there was an audible sigh of disappointment (or perhaps confusion) when the instructor told this group of students they were to work with an excerpt from *Maus.*

The students were not informed that I was the one who had designed this activity, so however surprising and somewhat disheartening their reactions were to the assignment, at least they were honest reactions. Research shows that the graphic novel is blazing a trail into the world of academia, and while instructors of various fields are unquestionably embracing this growing trend, are the students? Prompted by the
students’ initial response to the activity, as well as to answer the question of whether or not first-year composition students are excited and/or willing to explore this genre of literature, I developed the survey that is discussed further in Chapter I and can be found in Appendix A.

The results of the survey eased some of the tension I felt when the group of students responded negatively to the activity and their required use of an excerpt from a graphic novel. Although 67% of the 100 first-year composition students responded “no” to the question, “Have you ever read a graphic novel?” 68% of these same participants responded “yes” to, “Would you be interested in having future instructors use the graphic novel as a tool for learning?” With almost 70% of the students surveyed on board with bringing the graphic novel into the composition classroom, it leads me to believe that my initial observation of the students’ negative reactions do not necessarily correspond to the attitudes of a larger portion of composition students.

Having the survey data to alleviate some of the pressure, I more confidently continued my research. To come in the subsequent sections of this chapter is a discussion of my methods in regard to the in-class activity I developed, the results from analyzing student responses, as well as some impressions I was able to draw from these responses. First, however, I will take a brief look at the publishing history of *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Just as Spiegelman struggled to find a publisher for his graphic novel, the graphic novel genre has struggled to make its way into the field of academia. Despite various obstacles, however, recent articles praise the graphic novel for its appeal to the “reluctant reader.” The section following the publishing history of *Maus* is concerned with the
scholarship that discusses this attraction. With the appeal of the graphic novel under consideration, I will show how the graphic novel is a perfect tool to use inside of the academic classroom, but has surprisingly been left out of composition studies. To conclude this review of literature, I will briefly look at what scholars have defined as visual literacy and why it is so important to understand and utilize this learning tool inside of today’s classroom.

Historical and Scholarly Framework

The 1992 Pulitzer Prizing winning graphic novel *Maus* has seen both “critical and commercial” success explained Spiegelman, but the journey itself was littered with obstacles. As with most graphic novels of this time, *Maus* was first published in a series of “small booklets.” More specifically, the individual chapters of *Maus* were “hand-glued into the magazine,” *Raw*, explains Bob Thompson in his *Washington Post* article, “Drawing Power,” and published one at a time (12). *Raw*, founded by both Art Spiegelman and his wife, Francoise Mouly, was “created in large part to give cartoonists, Spiegelman included, a place [where] their work could be seen” (Thompson 12). From 1980 to 1991 *Maus* was published in serialized leaflets until, after trying for quite some time, Spiegelman made a deal with publishers at Pantheon in 1986 to compile the first six chapters into the first volume, *Maus: A Survivors Tale: My Father Bleeds History*; soon after in 1991, the second volume was also released by Pantheon and titled, *Maus: A Survivors Tale: And Here My Troubles Began.*
The struggle Spiegelman faced when trying to publish *Maus* mirrors the struggles he faced when writing the graphic novel. In the second chapter of the second volume, “Time Flies,” the audience is faced with a perplexed and somewhat guilty author as Spiegelman tries to assimilate the weight this novel bears. When Spiegelman began writing and illustrating the story of his father’s experiences with the Holocaust, he (admittedly) did not have a specific message for his audience. “I-I never thought of reducing it to a message,” Spiegelman responded to an interview question, “I mean, I wasn’t trying to CONVINCE anybody of anything. I just wanted —” he continued, but was cut off by another reporter (*Maus II*, emphasis Spiegelman’s). This could easily be misinterpreted as Spiegelman trying to avoid responsibility for his work, but Gunther Kress explains that this is simply not the case when he writes, “the complexity of text/image relations lies in the fact that images afford different ways of shaping knowledge, imagination, and design, rather than functioning simply as an illustrative feature for the written text” (Hassett 63). To be more specific, perhaps Spiegelman was allowing — and even hoping — that his audience would create its own message(s) and take from his novel the individual lessons it needed to learn, not necessarily the morals or values he wanted to teach.

The depth produced by words accompanied by images allows individualized interpretations where readers can be more creative and form an inspired connection to the material. Once a stronger bond is made with the novel, audience members and students alike will most likely be inclined to speak or write about the subject matter more confidently, and ideally, students will put forward comments and analyses of a higher
quality. But before an audience member can connect to a novel, he or she must first read. Various articles contend that the graphic novel does an overall better job of attracting the avid reader, but that they also do an even better job attracting the “reluctant reader.” This lure felt by a variety of audience members makes this genre ideal for classroom use.

Using the Graphic Novel to Engage “Reluctant” Readers

A great number of the articles I reference mention the capability of the graphic novel to appeal to what many authors have called the “reluctant reader.” In “Bold Books for Innovative Teaching: Show, Don’t Tell: Graphic Novels in the Classroom,” Don Gallo and Stephen Weiner explore the notion that, “innovative teachers have been using comics as a lure for reluctant readers since the 1970’s” (115). In accordance with this thought, James Bucky Carter, author of “Transforming English with Graphic Novels: Moving Toward Our ‘Optimus Prime’,” relates when he observes “that graphic novels attract male readers who are reluctant to read much else” (50). Further evidence of how graphic novels appeal to students who are unenthusiastic about reading is found in Dale Jacobs’ article, “More than Words: Comics as a Means of Teaching Multiple Literacies” where he explores the idea that, “the presence of graphic novels will make the library seem cool and interesting, especially among the so-called reluctant readers, mainly adolescent boys, who seem to show little interest in reading or in libraries” (20).

Gretchen Schwarz, author of “Expanding Literacies through Graphic Novels,” adds to the discussion by reminding us that graphic novels “… tend to appeal to diverse students, including reluctant readers, and they offer both great stories and informational topics” (63). As suggested from these articles, graphic novels show much promise in
helping to reach students that may not normally be interested in reading. By offering students an alternative to the more traditional forms of text offered in the college classroom, instructors may have some success in helping more students actually read what is assigned to them. In addition to the receptiveness of the students, studies have also shown that by using visual images throughout various pedagogies, one can produce a higher level of learning.

Visual Literacy

For some time now scholars and educators alike have championed the importance of visual literacy. There are multiple definitions of visual literacy, but the one I find most approachable is R.E Wileman’s definition in his article “Visual communicating.” Wileman defines visual literacy as “the ability to ‘read,’ interpret, and understand information presented in pictorial or graphic images” (114). The skill of interpreting and understanding images, especially in today’s media-crazed, social network-obsessed society, is a skill incoming composition students have spent years developing and sharpening. While instructors may have to take a small amount of time explaining how to interpret and discuss images with more sophistication, “studies show success in thinking and learning visually instead of or in addition to traditional lectures and verbal description” (Stokes 4).

Most instructors have welcomed the use of visual aids in their classrooms. The aforementioned survey gathered that 82% of the participants’ instructors were already
using visual aids to facilitate learning quite frequently inside of their classrooms. When asked to elaborate on which modes of visual learning these instructors made use of, PowerPoint was among the highest with 45% of participants saying their instructors have used this form of visual aid. Video clips and/or movies, pictures, web pages, and newspapers also frequented survey responses as forms of visual aids used in the classroom. With visual aids so wildly popular within the composition classroom already, it is puzzling as to why the graphic novel remains so underused. In the article “Finding Space and Time for the Visual in K-12 Literacy Instructions,” Dawnene D. Hassett and Melissa B. Schieble emphasize the visual society we already live in and insists that educators “update our reading cueing systems to encompass a greater scope” (67).

The graphic novel may be what educators need to update their reading materials. As our culture becomes increasingly visual, Lawrence E. Murr and James B. Williams, authors of “Half-Brained Ideas about Educations: Thinking and Learning with Both the Left and the Right Brain in a Visual Culture,” suggest that instructors not abandon their “commitment to reading and arithmetic...[but] abandon only the historical emphasis on the teaching methodology” (418). Traditionally, the priority in learning was situated with the written and spoken word, which allowed for the left hemisphere of the brain that dealt with this “type of language processing” (418) to be well practiced, and the right hemisphere severely looked over. The right hemisphere, used largely to interpret images, understand spacial relations, and process symbols, rarely had the opportunity to be put to use, but by providing opportunities for students to assimilate knowledge with their
“whole brain,” the left and right hemisphere working together, instructors will only help their students expand and strengthen their learning processes.

Rolf T. Wigand in his article “Toward a More Visual Culture Through Comics,” points out that several studies have shown “that we think in and remember in picture-like images vs. language-like propositions” (36). In Chapter III I discuss in further detail the ways in which the graphic novel has already been used to facilitate the learning of history, and in Chapter I how it has been used to aid in the teaching of language to ELL students, but no where could I find the use of this genre to assist in the teaching of writing. The absence of this medium in writing classes could be due not only to the fact that instructors have little or experience with graphic novels themselves, but also because they are unaware of how exactly to bring this type of literature into their classrooms. The purpose of this study as a whole is to test whether or not the addition of graphic images through in-class activities and assignments can help to strengthen and develop various writing skills in first-year composition students, but also to give instructors some ideas of how to make use of this learning tool within their teaching methods. The specific aim of the following section is to take a look at how the graphic novel can be used to strengthen the skill of collecting useful and detailed information. Conducting several interviews is expected of students when writing a profile essay, but learning to collect necessary information of good quality is a skill students will continue to use in every research project they perform thereafter.
Methodology

As with each portion of my study, this activity was designed for a class of twenty students. Unfortunately, as luck would have it, only twelve students were present the day the activity was administered, and of those twelve, only nine completed the activity. I am aware that the small number of students and their corresponding responses are not significant enough to draw definite conclusions, but I was able to learn a few things from the process. The in-class activity, “Assignment 1: Developing Interview Questions,” was centered around the strengthening of interviewing skills and can be found in its full context in Appendix C. Once this activity was completed and turned in, I was able to examine student responses and was left with some beneficial impressions.

After the activity was collected, I was able to sort through student responses to determine whether or not the specific skill of developing preliminary interview questions, a crucial first step to the interview process, had “improved,” “stayed the same,” or “worsened.” These terms were developed as they applied to the responses as a whole, as well as the ways in which the terms applied to this portion of my study. As no distinct pattern of improvement or otherwise was noticed in student responses, I held informal interviews with the participants, as well as a formal interview with the instructor, to better understand what had gone astray with the activity. The information collected from these interviews is discussed in subsequent sections and helps to shed light on the areas of this activity in need of improvement.
Activity and Results

The activity designed to help strengthen interviewing skills was divided into three sections. The first section simply asked of the student to write down five potential interview questions they would like to ask the person they have chosen to profile. Once students had completed section one, they were then asked in section two to read the excerpts provided for them from *Maus: A Survivor's Tale: My Father Bleeds History*. This excerpt included various frames from pages 23, 43, 73, and 105-106. The frames included in this assignment were chosen and ordered specifically to provide an intricate model of interviewing for the students. For example, in the first frame on page 43 (see fig. 1) Spiegelman writes, “I visited my father more often to get more information about his past.” In this frame Spiegelman is demonstrating the importance of conducting multiple interviews with his subject to collect more detailed information, which can later be translated to students as the vital skill of visiting researched material multiple times to form a better understanding of future essay topics. By strengthening interviewing skills, students can develop a researching skill that they can carry with them throughout the rest of their education.

Also within the excerpt, students see Spiegelman asking his subject (his father, Vladek), to “Tell me about when you get back from the P.O.W camp in 1940” (73), and “What happened to you and Anja after the big stadium selection?” (105). These sample questions ask of the interviewee to describe some aspect of his life in much detail. Instead
of asking questions that yield one word answers like, “What is your name?,” and “How old are you?,” students can use Spiegelman’s interview questions as a model for their own questions and to help with revising their initial questions as is asked of them in the third part of the activity. The third and final part of Assignment 1 asks of students in Q7 to “restructure” their initial questions in a way that provides the interviewer with a more intricate response from their subject. All three sections of this activity, along with the images from Maus, can be found in Appendix C, “Assignment 1: Developing Interview Questions.”

While all of the activity’s questions were used to emphasize various and valuable interviewing skills, the responses I was most interested in analyzing were the students’ answers to questions seven.

Question seven reads:

In Image 2 Art wrestles with Vladek about how much and what background information should be included in the novel. The background information you chose to include should only help the reader gain insight into the significance of your focus. Take a moment to reread your preliminary questions; then, restructure them so that background information does not overshadow the focus of your profile.

Ideally, the purpose behind this question was to have the students redesign their preliminary interview questions so that when interviewing their subject, they might procure a more thorough and interesting response; however, a majority of student responses do not show improvement. In fact, two-thirds of the participants either misinterpreted the question, didn't answer at all, or rewrote questions that were of less quality than their initial questions. The overall statistics for the nine participants are as follows: three (3) students misinterpreted the question, two (2) students did not attempt to
answer question seven, one (1) student’s answers worsened, one (1) student wrote, “I
would not change my questions,” one (1) student’s questions stayed the same, and one (1)
student improved.

Although the previous data was inconclusive, after reviewing student responses I
was left with some impressions. To have “improved” the student must have had
restructured his or her questions so that he or she could hypothetically receive answers of
greater depth from their interviewees. As for the opposite, when presenting questions of
less quality and detail, I labeled the students as having worsened. Other labels —
“choosing not to answer question seven,” and “student chose not to revise initial
interview questions” — were applied in situations where the student did not complete the
seventh question or when the student stated specifically that she would not change her
answer. To provide some examples of the varying responses, I will discuss four separate
students, Student A, B, C, and D. Student A’s questions worsened, Student B’s stayed the
same, Student C would not change her questions, and Student D’s answers improved.

Student A had rather strong initial questions. She wrote, “Being my twin, do you
feel like you are in my shadow?” It could be because she didn’t fully understand question
seven, or that she felt she had to change her answers in some ways, but when
restructuring her interview questions she wrote, “What do you like about being my
twin?” One can see how this would elicit a completely different answer, perhaps an
answer that is far less compelling to an audience. I wasn’t able to ask Student A why her
question changed in the way that it did, and I still wonder about the motivation behind
her revision.
Student B attempted to restructure his questions to the best of his abilities, and with a little more practice and better instruction, he may have been able to strengthen his skill of developing interview questions further, but for this activity, Student B’s questions remained the same. Changing his initial response of “What were some of your favorite things to do as a child,” to “What is your best childhood memory,” is just one example of where his questions only change in wording, but would ultimately yield a similar response from his interviewee. Catching up with Student B after class on one of the days I observed, I asked, “What prompted your questions for your subject?” With a reserved smile he said, “I really had no idea who I was going to write my essay on, so I just made up random questions. Since I didn’t know who I wanted to profile I figured the questions didn’t really matter yet.” If this activity was administered too early in the writing process the possibility of students not having a set focus for their essays could be high; however, this particular group of students were required to have chosen their interviewees before completing the assignment. Student B’s answers reflect his lack of preparation and he was not able to fully benefit from this assignment.

Unlike Student B who did not know the person he was going to interview, Student C had already chosen whom she was going to profile. Stating in class that she had “already set up an interview time,” I was excited to see the questions she developed. Unfortunately, when asked in question seven to eliminate any questions that may yield unnecessary background information, Student B wrote, “I would not restructure my questions, [sic] they are basic questions that are part of my subject’s focus.” This answer would be suitable if her questions did not include, “What is your name?” and “How old
are you.” Going into an interview with these types of questions may waste valuable time trying to gain information the interviewer most likely already has. Even after explaining to Student C how these questions might be unnecessary she remained adamant about keeping these questions on her list.

There was one student, however, who revised his interview questions quite well. Student D evolved the question, “Why didn’t you finish college?” to, “Though you express the importance of college, you never finished. Why not go back?” The small change in the tense of these two questions — from asking about the past and why his subject didn’t finish college, to bringing the questions to the present and asking why they do not go back — shows that the interviewer has a more personal interest in what is happening in the subjects life right now. In this way, the interviewer has the opportunity to discuss an issue that is current, and therefore garner information that may ultimately provide vitality to his final essay.

The previous examples encompass much of what I saw during the administration and completion of the first activity. After having collected the completed activity and interviewing the instructor, I was left with the impression that students were able to use the skills they had worked on in the assignment to help strengthen their final essays. Even though only approximately 11% of students showed signs of improvement on the actual assignment, and nearly 45% of students misinterpreted question seven or did not change their initial questions, it is easy to presume that with a little adjustment to the assignment — which I discuss further in the subsequent section — this activity could be very useful and produce a more favorable outcome.
Implications

The previously discussed activity was my first experience with hands-on, in the field research. I expected there to be some complications with the activity and even (in a small part) with the students. Admittedly, one of the biggest difficulties with this portion of my study lies in the activity itself. If you will recall the data from the “Activity and Results,” section of this chapter, you may remember that only one student actually presented an impression of improvement, but it wasn’t difficult for me to see why. Having heard multiple times throughout my own training the importance of wording instructions clearly, I learned at a most inopportune time the enormity of precise directions.

Question seven originally read “...restructure [your questions]...,” which implies to some extent to keep the questions the same, but reword them in a more appealing manner; and this was not at all what I had intended the students to do. My intentions were to have the students further develop, and essentially rewrite their questions as to gain more detailed and compelling information from their subjects. When using this activity in future courses, questions seven should be edited to read something like: “Take a moment to reread your preliminary questions; then, rewrite your questions in a way that allows the person you are profiling to provide you with a deeper, more detailed response.” I will not know for certain whether or not this change will make this activity more successful until I am able to administer it again; however, I predict it will.
Conclusion

A predominant idea expressed in the available research was the suggestion that graphic novels could be used as complements, or in conjunction with the more traditional texts used in the classroom. The following examples, and others like them, are what inspired me to bring this genre into my own teachings. James Carter mentions that one approach of embracing the graphic novel would be “to employ graphic novels as complements to traditional texts already used in the English classroom, such as pairing the Arnoldi graphic novel with a Nathaniel Hawthorne novel or *Truth: Red White and Black* with Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*” (51). Schwarz adds to this conversation by relating the story of a teacher that “…includes the graphic novel in her study of *Romeo and Juliet* (59). Mark Letcher in “Off the Shelves: Graphically Speaking: Graphic Novels with Appeal for Teens and Teachers,” also speaks on this theme when he explains that, “…teachers can and should utilize that engagement and allow graphic novels to serve as a bridge to other texts, as a forum for teaching literary terms and techniques, or as a basis for writing projects” (94).

By seeing the ways in which so many others have been able to include the graphic novel in their lessons successfully, it was easy to find places in my own instruction that this genre could be used to assist in teaching various writing skills. Even though what I had considered as the most important part of the activity didn't succeed in providing the most students with a useful skill, after interviewing the students’ instructor, I was pleased to hear that overall the activity did help when the students conducted their interviews.
“One of the students mentioned to me,” said the instructor, “he was able to record his interview, ‘like Art did in the pictures,’ and that helped him to get some really nice direct quotes in his final essay.” Although my first attempt at trying to fill the gap between using the graphic novel in various learning environments and using the graphic novel in the composition classroom was not as successful as I had hoped, there is still some promise of a future for this activity and for the genre as a whole. As I discussed in the previous section, with a slight revision of question seven, the students may be able to strengthen their question developing skills even further. Also, as seen in Chapters I and III, the other activities designed and completed with the aid of the graphic novel produced results that were even more successful than expected, which shows that the graphic novel is an effective tool for learning if used correctly.
CHAPTER III
EXPANDING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILLS

Introduction

When writing instructors design their courses in terms of sections, students often fall into the trap of attaching a particular writing skill to a certain unit. Thus, when moving from one unit to the next, many times students do not transfer the skills they have previously learned. I have seen this happen first-hand because I structure my own courses in terms of units, even though I’d like to change this in the coming semester. The students that took part in my study were familiar with this type of arrangement because their instructor had also assigned various types of essays for different sections within his own class. That being said, the focus of this chapter is to present an in-class activity developed to not only expand the skill of writing descriptively, but to remind students that they already had this tool in their toolboxes.

In this chapter I first discuss the various ways Maus has been used in a number of different learning environments. This is done to show how the graphic novel has been used to present and study various historical occurrences, aid in the teaching of a second language, and help students think more critically; but it is also done to show once again how the graphic novel has been largely left out of courses centered around writing. Once this scholarship is discussed, I present the in-class activity designed to help students...
expand their descriptive writing skills. To illustrate the ways in which students were able to refine the skill of descriptive writing, I look closely at two students’ — Student A and Student B — responses to the activity, as well as the progress that can be seen between the rough draft and polished essay stages of their writing processes.

After demonstrating how students improved their descriptive writing skills, I was able to come to a conclusion that supports my claim of the many positive benefits that can be obtained by employing the graphic novel as a tool for learning inside of the composition classroom. Following the conclusion section, I discuss my final thoughts in regard to the study as a whole. By looking at all three activities together, I remind the audience of the students’ receptiveness toward the genre and their ease in working with graphic images, as well as the overall success seen in the completed activities. Other instructors have met with similar success when using the graphic novel in their learning environments, and this success is discussed in the following section.

The Use of *Maus* in Various Learning Environments

Several articles discuss the various applications of *Maus* within a number of different courses. Christian W. Chun’s “Critical Literacies and Graphic Novels for English-Language Learners: Teaching *Maus*” illustrates the effectiveness of using the graphic novel as it applies to teaching multiliteracies to ELL students. Chun claims that *Maus* is especially useful in the ELL classroom because the graphic novel “can engage students’ attention and activate their imaginations through the author’s use of
multimodalities in presenting visually arresting narratives…” Chun goes on to write that *Maus* “can shape how students understand and retain important historical legacies and their meanings in ways history textbooks often do not” (147). The idea that *Maus* can be used to promote learning in regard to history is mirrored by Rocco Versaci in his article, “How Comic Books Can Change the Way Our Students See Literature: One Teacher’s Perspective.” Versaci writes, “[Maus] would work well in a historical unit,” and continues by claiming that *Maus* is among one of the most popular choices by educators for teaching aspects of the second World War.

Along with teaching and engaging students with the history that surrounds World War II and Jewish persecution, research also suggests that *Maus* can be used to help students investigate the issues within race relations. James Carter’s “Teaching English with Graphic Novels: Moving Toward Our ‘Optimus Prime’,” offers the example of how Barbara Brown, a high school English teacher, uses the graphic novel to, “help students examine race relations in their [own] lives” (51). Discussing a number of other graphic novels and their effectiveness inside of the classroom, Carter ends this article by asserting that “the English classroom that integrates graphic novels will be and is becoming a classroom with books that suggest the class is a place of acceptance, diversity, deep and multifaceted readings, and discussions that do not shy away from challenge” (52).

Many instructors and critics alike advocate the use of the graphic novel within certain university classrooms, but in the last decade or so, research has begun to suggest the usefulness of this genre inside high school English classes. Gretchen Schwarz, in her article “Expanding Literacies Through Graphic Novels,” argues that this medium
“expands beyond the traditional borders of literacy” (58) and is likely to interest a larger, more diverse group of students. Other research concerning *Maus* has focused on the novels use in helping students understand syntactic cues. In “Finding Space and Time for the Visual in K-12 Literacy Instruction,” Dawnene D. Hassett and Melissa B. Schieble explain that “*Maus* I contains layers of subtextual meaning that may not be possible to re-create in print alone” (66). These authors then examine a specific frame within the novel and contend that “Syntactically, the spatial arrangement of this image carries almost the entire meaning of the frame” (67). Discussions that include locating reading material that is interesting and relatable to students, as well as the techniques used in teaching students how to analyze a text, are the types of conversations being had by both high school and composition instructors; however, while many applications of *Maus* were examined, it is important to point out here that none of this research illustrates the use of the graphic novel specifically inside of the composition classroom.

There are many reasons as to why instructors might keep this genre out of their composition courses, and a main reason, I would argue, is their unfamiliarity with the form and how to use it effectively. Still, research suggests I am not alone in my enthusiasm toward using this medium as a tool for learning. The examples discussed above are just a portion of the scholarship that covers the use of the graphic novel in order to develop fresh and creative lesson plans that engage students in learning. If instructors begin to view the use of this genre in future courses as an experiment to be tested, and revised if need, then perhaps they might actually enjoy this tool and find it useful in their pedagogies.
Methodology

The motivation behind this portion of my study stemmed from peer review responses in regard to a persuasive essay assignment. After seeing multiple comments about vague and perplexing language found within the students’ rough drafts, I was able to infer that the source of these complaints came from a lack of vivid and clear details throughout the students’ essays. To improve this weakness in student writing, a third and final activity was designed and titled, “Assignment 3: Freewriting Exercise,” and can be found in Appendix D. This activity is fairly straightforward and asks the students to choose any frame from the last chapter of volume one, *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleeds History*, and then to “freewrite for 5 minutes everything you see in the image.”

Students were administered this assignment between the rough draft and final essay stages of the writing process. There were eighteen students in class the day the assignment was issued, and all eighteen students completed the activity. The information collected from student responses, the alterations made from rough drafts to polished essays, as well as interviews and conferences held with various students — which are discussed in more detail in the following sections — are used to draw the conclusion that not only can the graphic novel be used to strengthen and expand writing skills, but it can be used to remind students of the skills they already have. Consistent with John Dewey’s claim in *The Quest For Certainty* — where Dewey contends that abstract ideas need the reparative, yet complicated power of action — the third assignment shows students how
their previous abilities in writing descriptively can be revitalized by putting those once-known skills to practice.

Expanding Descriptive Writing Skills

In Chapter I of John Dewey’s *The Quest For Certainty*, “Escape From Peril,” Dewey claims that because we can only be truly certain in the abstract, it is not certainty that human beings crave, but that we crave *contingency* (8). Certainty — although comforting — is deadly. Consequences of certainty include a life that is stagnant and dogmatic; and when humans cease to evolve, death is inevitable. On the other hand, contingency allows for possible and abstract theories to be discussed without any threat of harm or disappointment. And while the discussion of various theories does hold a place in academia, putting these theories into practice can make them more lively and credible. For example, my study was once a theory, but now that the ideas has been put into practice the results have a vitality of their own.

Dewey realizes the importance of thought and does not dismiss theory, but instead, Dewey attempts — what Julie Drew, William Lyons, and Lance Svehla have called in *Soundbite Saboteurs* — to “integrate the dualisms” (149). By nesting these dualisms, or allowing both theory and action to exist together, they become a never-ending process that is both reciprocal and recursive. By creating reciprocity, one can recognize the ways in which theory and practice correspond with each other in a process that is ongoing, as well as a process that is open to feedback and willing to embrace
contingency. My theory claims that the graphic novel can be used to generate more
descriptive writing, which in turn, produces essays that are more clear and sophisticated.
The opportunity to test this claim arose one semester during an assignment where
students were asked to write an essay that pursued their audiences to one particular side
of an opposing view.

While writing a persuasive essay, students struggled in being, well, more
persuasive. Peer reviews expressed that the lack of engaging language within the essays
played a large role in turning away the reviewer’s attention. In addition to bland
language, another problem arose that included unclear wording throughout various
student arguments. Students made comments like, “What do you mean by this,” or, “This
is confusing,” on the essays of their peers. Exercises from the textbook had little to offer,
and other workshops that were included throughout the unit did little to expand the
student’s descriptive abilities, nor were they helpful in making their language more clear.
For these reasons, a freewriting exercise was developed that required the students to
describe in as much detail as possible an image of their choice. Again, this exercise was
titled, “Assignment 3: Freewriting Exercise,” and can be found in Appendix D.

By this point in the semester most students had mastered summarizing and were
growing in their abilities to analyze, but it was as if they had forgotten all about the
descriptive writing they had practiced so often in previous assignments and essays. As
discussed in the introduction, this course was set up into units, which lead students to
believe (whether they were aware of this or not) that there are various types of writing
instead of overall good practices of writing, such as vivid description. Because of this,
students needed to be reminded of the skill they already possessed. Having worked with Maus in previous assignments, students had the last chapter of volume one at their disposal. I asked students to undertake Assignment 3 (describing a panel from Maus) as they prepared to write an argumentative essay. For the activity designed to develop descriptive writing skills, students were asked to choose a frame from the last chapter and describe it in as much detail as possible. After having the opportunity to practice descriptive writing with the aid of graphic images, students were then able to apply this skill in their own argumentative essays to make them more interesting and ultimately more persuasive.

Student A’s Descriptive Development

When Student A came to me and asked if she should include an interview of a “teen mom” inside of her persuasive argument — over the importance of proper use of contraceptives in order to avoid teen or unplanned pregnancies — I was thrilled. “Yes, of course,” I answered. Having seen this student write a profile not too long ago, I assumed she would remember the importance of using vivid language to engage her audience. This assumption, however, was by no means correct. Once more, students tend not to carry certain writing skills over from one unit to another. Student A’s first draft included not one, but two, interviews written in Question/Answer form. Neglecting to set a scene, to include any necessary background inform, or find an interesting angle in which to present her interviewee, part of Student A’s essay looked like this:

Me: What were you most scared about being pregnant?
Sierra: I was scared to tell my mom, but I was more scared to tell my friend.
Me: Why?
Sierra: I was scared of what people would think of me, especially since no one gets pregnant around here at my age.

The interview continued like this for the next two pages, and although the questions Student A asked were well thought out and produced interesting responses from Sierra, the information Student A collected needed to be reformatted in order for this essay to be complete and done correctly.

Student A’s Response to Assignment 3

After finishing the in-class activity, I could tell Student A was beginning to remember the effectiveness of descriptive writing, as well as the importance of including a well thought out structure. After choosing the last frame on page 157 to complete the activity (see fig. 2), an excerpt from Student A’s response reads as follows:

It is cold. Very cold. But I can not see much from inside of the truck. There are only bars that let in little light. And I catch a brief look at the mean, angry dogs with sharp teeth and evil eyes. They look hungry. But I am too. I have heard the stories. I know what goes on here. and I do not think I will ever come back once I go through those gates that are covered in sleet and ice-sickles....

In this section of Student A’s freewrite one can find sensory details, an understanding of what the image represents, and even the tone of the passage being transferred into her own writing. Clearly the student was able to interpret the image’s meaning and then transcribe a compelling freewrite. After completing this activity successfully, Student A was able to then use this skill of writing...
descriptively to help polished the final draft of her essay. These revisions are displayed below.

Student A’s Revised Essay

After completing the activity, Student A’s essay — where initially four of the seven required pages were in Question/Answer format — moved from confusing and incomplete, to a more engaging and clear argument. Student A realized the importance of setting a scene so that her audience had a clearer picture of the people and places involved in her narrative. She was then able to apply this technique to her essay.

Student A’s revised essay read as follows:

Sitting in Sierra’s light pink bedroom, I asked my best friend, “When you got pregnant, what were you most scared of?” She hesitated and looked out the window. Eventually Sierra answered, “I was scared to tell my mom, but she had me at a young age too, so I knew she would understand. I was more scared to tell my friends. I was scared of what people would think of me, especially since no one gets pregnant around here at my age.”

This revised excerpt from Student A’s essay shows multiple places of improvement. For one, the audience now knows where they are, the color of the bedroom, as well as the relationship between the the two girls. By putting this conversation in dialogue form, Student A was able to include important background information about the interviewee, which speaks to her understanding and experience with teen pregnancy. This type of revision shows up throughout the rest of the essay, and when asked how she went about making these changes, and if the freewriting exercise helped in anyway, Student A responded, “It’s not like I couldn’t do it, I just forgot. So, yeah, the activity did help to remind me of what I can do.”
Student B’s Descriptive Development

Student B, a writer more comfortable with analysis, makes the argument in her essay that “alcoholism is a disease, rather than a choice.” Throughout her essay she summarizes and analyzes her research beautifully, but as the essay neared the end, Student B decides to include, “I can see why people would think that alcoholism is a choice. I used to think that too. It wasn’t until my mother was hospitalized that my views of this topic changed completely.” Soon after this statement, Student B moves quickly to her conclusion where she restates the points she had made in the essay, but as an audience member, I couldn’t help but be interested in her personal connection with the topic. As student B read past this section in our conference, I had to stop her and say, “There’s a story there. Why not pull it out?”

“You think?” she questioned. “I’m not good at telling stories, but I can try.”

“Just do what you did in the activity,” I assured her.

Student B’s Response to Assignment 3

Similar to Student A, as well as a majority of the students who completed this activity, Student B chose the last frame on page 157. Being one of the largest illustrations within the chapter this image provided for students a strong basis to derive descriptive writing. Student B’s freewrite included the following:

There are dogs growling and people yelling. The man is shutting the door to the truck. It is late and the sky is dark. There are more people, well, uh, cats? They have mean faces and clubs in their hands. Where is everyone going? Why are they yelling? There is writing above the gate. I do not know what it says.... There is ice on the gate. It must be cold...
Much of Students B’s freewrite includes her first impression of the image; however, she
does begin to evolve her analytical and descriptive skills by posing questions throughout
her response. By asking, “Where is everyone going?,” Student B implies that there is
movement within the image; and when she writes, “Why are they yelling,” this student
illustrates sound. After becoming more familiar with idea of creating an image for the
audience, Student B was able to then paint a picture in her revised essay by using vivid
language.

Student B’s Revised Essay

“So set a scene, give us as much detail as you can, and don’t be afraid to tell your
story,” I said to student B when she doubted her story telling abilities. And that is exactly
what Student B did. In her revised essay (shortened for length) Student B told the
audience her story:

Right after graduating high school, my mom told me she was going to
a rehabilitation center for drinking. She was stick thin, and couldn’t
even keep a glass of water down let alone a meal, so without hesitation
I thought to myself it was about time. However, she was immediately
taken to the ICU because her withdrawals were so bad. It was an
extremely long summer, ups and downs of watching her progress on
the path of getting better then taking a turn for the worse. She wouldn’t
eat, she wouldn’t walk, and soon enough, she wasn’t able to even talk.
Seeing my mother on a ventilator it hit me....Alcoholism should be
looked at as a disease and nothing less.

This revision did wonders for her argument. Although Student B’s research was
current, valuable, and presented well throughout her essay, it was this addition of the
personal narrative that rounded out the three appeals — logos (logic), ethos (credibility),
and finally, pathos (emotions). Having each appeal equally and accurately utilized
throughout the essay, Student B’s argument moved from only having research and
opinions, to be set in the context of personal experience. When I asked Student B if she benefited from the freewriting exercises she responded, “I’m better at analysis, and I still do not think I’m very good at telling stories, but I do think I’m getting better.”

Conclusion

After completing the descriptive writing activity, every student not only grew in his or her abilities to write with vivid details, but their essays became more sophisticated, which ultimately aided their persuasive arguments. One might argue that seeing improvement from a rough draft to a polished essay is inevitable, and this is a valid point. Still, as students pointed out in their interviews, Assignment 3 did help to remind and expand descriptive writing skills in those who completed this activity. Overall, eighteen out of eighteen students showed improvement in their ability to provide for their audiences more vivid details. The results to this portion of my study show yet another example of where using the graphic novel as a tool for learning inside of the composition classroom is helpful.

Final Thoughts

Based on the available research, there appears to be a strong interest in including the graphic novel in a variety of classrooms. After presenting the mostly successful results of this study, I hope more composition instructors will be open to trying a
workshop or two that includes the use of the graphic novel. Although a fair amount of obstacles were faced when administering and coding the in-class activities, the overall results proved useful. A majority of students enjoyed working with this new medium, and this was reflected in their responses. As seen in Chapter I, the statistic of 87% of students improving their analytical abilities supports my claim that the graphic novel can be a valuable tool in the composition classroom. Working inside of the classroom and directly with students made this study especially compelling. I was able to follow the students’ progress on paper, as well as being able to interview and conference with students to better understand their thought processes.

Discussed in Chapter II is the idea that with some slight revisions to Assignment 1 better results are most likely to occur. As with any pilot study revisions are needed to be made to all stages and aspects of the research in order to procure the most accurate results in later studies. In regard to the study as a whole, however, I would like to administer future activities to students who have had the opportunity to read *Maus* in its entirety. While the activities did produce effective results and demonstrated how useful the graphic novel can be to composition students, I am interested to see if the activities would yield results of a higher quality if students had read the entire novel as opposed to just excerpts.

The third activity was the most simplistic of the three assignments but produced the greatest results. Simplicity is the key when bringing the graphic novel into the composition classroom. Instructors need to trust that their students will know how to react to the images and be aware of the fact that students are increasingly more receptive
to this medium. Although receptive, it is evident by the survey administered to students that they are comparable to instructors in their inexperience with the form. Only 23% of the students surveyed have read a graphic novel, which means the other 77% of students are just as unfamiliar with the graphic novel as many instructors. The graphic novel does not insist instructors know everything about the genre in order to use it as a tool for learning, but by discovering with students how to utilize this genre effectively, instructors can create new and exciting learning environments inside of their writing courses.
LITERATURE CITED


Antonio. Personal Interview. 16 April 2012.


Jen. Personal Interview. 18 April 2012.


Pierre. Personal Interview. 13 April 2012.

Rose. Personal Interview. 20 April 2012.

Ruby. Personal Interview. 20 April 2012.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

SURVEY OF COMP 111 AND 112 COURSES

Sara Ehret
IRB #: 7245180

Survey of Comp 111 and 112 Courses

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the effectiveness of using graphic novels in the composition classroom. Below you will find a list of five questions, please answer them as honestly as possible. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to answer any particular question for any reason. You may also decide not to participate at all, but if you do, you should know that there are no known risks or benefits to you as a participant; and the results of these findings may be used as part of various conference presentations and/or possible publications. Thank you for your participation.

1. Has your instructor (or previous instructors) used visual images in the classroom to facilitate learning? If yes, what types? Give an example:

2. Have you ever read a graphic novel? If yes, which one(s)?

3. If you have, do you enjoy reading graphic novels? If you have not, do you think you would enjoy reading a graphic novel? Why or Why not?

4. Is your instructor currently using a graphic novel in your course? If so, which one?
5. Would you be interested in having future instructors use graphic novels as a tool for learning? Why or why not?

Date of IRB Approval: Monday February 27, 2012
IRB Number: 20120213
Project Expiration Date: Monday February 27, 2012
APPENDIX B

ASSIGNMENT 2: DEVELOPING ANALYTICAL SKILLS

Name: _________________

Assignment 2: Developing Analytical Skills

Directions: Part 1
Read the following passage, then answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

   Everybody came very nice dressed. They tried so that they would look young and able to work, in order to get a good stamp on their passport. When we were everybody inside, Gestapo with machine guns surrounded the stadium. ‘Line up by family at the table to register! Quickly!’ Then was a selection, with people sent either to the left, either to the right. ‘Old people, families with lots of kids, and people without work cards are all going to the left!’ We understand this must be very bad. Me and Anja came to the table where my cousin was sitting... ‘Ah, you work at the carpentry shop...go to the right.’ So we got stamped our passports and came quick to the good side of the stadium. Those they sent left, they didn’t get any stamp.

6. Summarize the excerpt in 3-5 sentences:

2. What is the claim of the excerpt?

3. What evidence is included to support that claim?

4. Write down any words you might not be familiar with. Make an educated guess using the surrounding context clues as to what the definition of that word is.

5. Describe the tone throughout the passage. What clues can you find to support your answer?

6. Overall reactions and/or comments:
Directions: Part 2
Read the excerpt* from *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* in its original form (accompanied by images), and answer questions 1-6 again.

*Excerpt will be handed out upon completion of Part 1
Assignment 2: Developing Analytical Skills — Image
APPENDIX C

ASSIGNMENT 1: DEVELOPING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name: _______________________

Assignment 1: Developing Interview Questions

**Step 1:** Create a list of 5 potential questions you would like to ask the person you have chosen (or will choose) to profile:

1. __________________________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________________________
4. __________________________________________________________________________
5. __________________________________________________________________________

**Step 2:** Read the excerpt from *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale: My Father Bleed History*

**Step 3:** Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

1. You’ll notice in Image 1 that Art writes, “I visited my father more often in order to get information about his past,” (43); do you think that it is wise to visit, interview, and observe the person you have chosen to write your profile about more than once? Why or why not?
2. In reference to Image 3: Art decided to use a tape recorder during one of his interviews with Vladek, what are your thoughts on this? Do you think that this would be beneficial? Why or why not? Would you consider using a tape recorder in your interview(s).

3. This tape recorder ensured that Art was able to get direct quotes from his subject, how will you go about transcribing direct quotes?

4. In Image 4 on page 105, Art asks Vladek, “What happened to you and Anja after the big selection at the stadium?” What do you know about the way this question was worded? What type of response results from questions like these?

5. Also on page 105, we see Art taking a walk with Vladek. This speaks to the importance of interviewing and observing your subject in a natural setting. What natural settings do you foresee yourself conducting your interview(s) in? How will you show in your final essay that you have spent a considerable amount of time with your subject?

6. It is crucial when writing a profile that you select a subject that is interesting. Do you feel that Art’s decision to profile Vladek was a good idea? How will you choose a subject that your audience will find interesting?

7. In Image 2 Art wrestles with Vladek about how much and what background information should be included in the novel. The background information you chose to include should only help the reader gain insight into the significance of your focus. Take a moment to reread your preliminary questions; then, restructure them so that background information does not overshadow the focus of your profile?

1.______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

2.______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

3.______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

8. Image 2: Vladek mentions that there is certain information he does not wish to be disclosed in the final product, this brings up the issues of proper ethics. What can you
do to make sure that you are treating your subject ethically and with respect during the interview process and as you write the final essay?

9. Have you been able to gain any new insights, after reading the excerpts from *Maus*, regarding the interview process? Please explain.
Assignment 1: Developing Interview Questions — Images
APPENDIX D

ASSIGNMENT 3: FREEWriting EXERCISE

Assignment 3: Freewriting Exercise

Name: __________________________

Directions:
In the space provided below, freewrite for 5 minutes *everything* you see in the image that you have chosen. “Set the scene” for your audience, uses as many sensory details as possible, but remember, do not stop. Sentence structure, organization, and grammar are not important in freewriting, what is important (for this assignment) is that you include as many vivid details as possible. You may want to include sensory details; for example, what do you hear, what do you smell, what do you taste, can you feel anything (physically/emotionally)? Describe this frame as if you were placed inside of that exact moment. When you are done, staple the image to this sheet and turn it back into me.

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APPENDIX E

NOTICE OF IRB APPROVAL

February 27, 2012
Sara Ethet
609 40th Street SW
Canton, Ohio 44706

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20120213 "Determining the Effectiveness of Using the Graphic Novel in the Composition Classroom"

Thank you for submitting your Exemption Request for the referenced study. Your request was approved on February 27, 2012. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☒ Exemption 3 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 1 – Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☐ Exemption 2 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 4 – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 – Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 – Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study’s design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

☒ Approved consent forms enclosed

Cc: William Thelin – Advisor/Heidi Thosman – Co PI
    Stephanie Woods – IRB Chair

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