PERCEPTIONS OF NEW LITERACIES
WITH THE GRAPHIC NOVEL BONE

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By
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The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of one teacher and one student as they read Jeff Smith’s graphic novel, *Bone* (2005). In order to investigate the two participants’ perceptions of reading with image literacies in this graphic novel, a qualitative multi-case study was conducted.

Thus, the teacher’s and the student’s perceptions were explored in the following responsive-interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) format: before reading the graphic novel, during reading the graphic novel, and after reading the graphic novel. To further aide in data collection the participants also each kept before-reading journals, during-reading journals, and after-reading journals.

After analyzing the data from the interviews and journals, two primary findings emerged. First, it was found that the teacher and the student in this study both read with image literacies in this particular graphic novel on multiple levels, as readers for school and as readers for self.

Finally, this study reached the following conclusions: image literacies in this graphic novel can be read on multiple levels, as readers for school and as readers for self; and, graphic novels are a valuable new media age literacy, particularly for struggling readers. The implications for research and instruction then focused on the need for more new media age literacy research with graphic novels and diverse readers, including but
not limited to struggling literacy learners, gifted literacy learners, and teachers of literacy.

If taken seriously, such implications could help broaden this study’s scope onto more participants, and onto other new media age image dominant literacies.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One day, about a year ago, I set out on a walk. iPod loud. Walking shoes on. Just trying to relax, I set out to prepare myself for the next year of my life, comprehensive exams, a job search, and a little thing called a dissertation.

An hour into my walk, I found myself in a movie theatre a couple miles from my apartment. The theatre was tucked back in the woods, and there were no cars in the parking lot. Was it open, I wondered. Did anyone work here? I felt pulled toward the theatre, almost as if gravity was no longer pushing me down but instead pushing me forward.

Two years I had lived down the street. And, in two years, I had never seen this theatre.

I opened the theatre door.

“Hello!”

“Hi,” I responded to the bow-tie wearing man behind the counter.

“Wanna see a movie? It’s hot out there!”

“Oh, yeah, well, I didn’t know you were here.”

“We get that a lot.”

“Oh, yeah.”

“So which movie will cool you off today?”

“Any cartoons? I study cartoons and image literacies.”
“Oh yeah! It’s not supposed to be in theatres anymore, coming out on DVD, you know, but we still have it.”

“Ok, whatever that is. 1 adult.”

“Down the hall, theatre number 13.”

My lucky number, I thought.

I entered the theatre and sat down. The picture started just as I realized that I was the only person in the theatre.

The theme of Walt Disney’s *Meet the Robinson’s* is “Keep Moving Forward!” It is the story of a young boy with a fierce intellect and a passionate yet innocent desire to find his place in this world. Ultimately, he desires to find his birthmother. However, through the course of the film he realizes that it is not his birthmother he is really in search of, but rather a sense of trusting in himself and his own plans for the future.

Thus, the first person I would like to acknowledge, for both personal and professional reasons, is the creator and director of this film: Stephen J. Anderson. And although I will probably neither meet nor know Mr. Anderson, I want to thank him for providing my daily motto for both this dissertation and my future endeavors. Thank you, Mr. Anderson, wherever you are.

My mother loves to tell the story of December 17, 1976. The day before, she and my father had been telephoned and told that they could expect a baby girl the next day, right before Christmas. “Merry Christmas!” I often imagine whoever made that phone call saying. My story, and how I got to today, started on December 17, 1976, for,
although my birthday is November 12, 1976, it was not until December 17th that I had a family.

I was lucky enough to grow up with a dad who was always there for me. My dad even scheduled his work around anything that had to do with my brother and myself. He ran the bases with me when I hit my first homerun in 1st grade; at that age, I was not embarrassed that he was crying while I ran. He put me on my first rollercoaster at age 3, before there were height requirements—and let me ride King’s Island’s “The Beast” about a-bazillion times that day. We still go to amusement parks together. He supported my soccer endeavors, and, I think, teared up just about each time I ever scored a goal, and, since I was not so bad at soccer, that added up to a lot. He supported me through college, probably more than he should have, and gave me the best advice of my life: “Whatever you do, make sure you work hard, AND play hard.” I listened. And still do. Always will. I’ve come this far repeating that motto in my head. Thanks, Dad.

I was also lucky enough to grow up with a mom who was also always there for me. When I got off the bus, she had always prepared my favorite snack. And, unlike many of my friends, she was at home, there to talk to and confide in whenever I needed anything. Actually, our house was the neighborhood “hot-spot,” for everyone wanted to come over and talk, or be mothered, by my mom. Well, they wanted her to entertain them too, and I was often told, “I wish my mother was home and as funny as yours. You’re so lucky!” She was especially good at making my brother and me laugh, for she is seriously, seriously, seriously, very, very funny. So, whenever we needed cheered up, it was certainly mom who could do a bit of a comedy routine, which, in some of my more fond
memories, involved taking off her glasses, brushing her hair in front of her face, putting her glasses back on, and dancing around the kitchen singing with a mop for a microphone. She made up songs on the spot, and sang about whatever was a current event in our home. When, as a young sixth grader, I was the first girl in my class to hit puberty, and sat in the bathroom crying and not knowing what to do, it was my mom who said: “Oh, I know what we could do to celebrate! Shopping! No school today. Let’s celebrate!” For a 12-year-old, my body suddenly didn’t seem so scary (remember: she had said two magic phrases “shopping” and “no school”). She always did have a way with words. Being older I can now see how brilliant her parenting was sometimes, for, on that day, she not only planned to cheer me up with some mother-daughter time, but also educated me about what had just seemed so scary and weird. Since I was a pretty good kid, I got woken up each May—on some random May day—to the words: “No school today, kiddo! We’re going to Cedar Point!” and then, bursting into song, “Ah-good-morning-ah-good-morning-to . . . . You, you, you, and only YOU!” Sometimes she added, with hair brushed in front of her face and glasses placed gently on top, mop in hand, “Kathleen-a-pah-peeah-diarrhea Monnin, time to get up!”

For all of these things, and many, many more I am forever grateful to my parents. I would not be where I am today—and in the future—without their love, support, and constant sense of joy in seeing their children happy in life. And for teaching my brother and me that one must certainly work hard and play hard to live happily.
To my committee:

Dr. Nancy Padak,

There are no words—in this language or any other—to express my gratitude. You have been a pseudo-mother, mentor, colleague, leader, friend, and support system throughout this entire journey. I only hope that someday I can pay it forward and give back to someone else what you have given to me. From my past, present, and future, as I keep moving forward, “Thank you!”

Dr. David Bruce,

Mostly, thank you for your friendship. I treasure and admire your generosity and your ability to care about your doctoral students. From the first day I met you, room 117 White Hall, you embraced me, as a scholar and a friend. You have lifted me up and provided me with both opportunities and intellectual stimulation in the field of media literacy. I am grateful to be indebted to you both as a scholar and as a friend. I hope to inspire my doctoral students the way that you inspired me.

Dr. Tricia Niesz,

“No way! Awesome!” These were the words I said to my buddy Christine as we walked in to one of our first classes together, first-year doctoral students, and saw Dr. Tricia Niesz standing at the front of the room. Studious and quiet, and very, very young, she stood at the front of the room preparing her materials. “This is going to be great. I can just feel it.” “I think you’re right,” Christine intuitively added.
When you are in Dr. Niesz’s presence you can just feel her intelligence; it almost magically floats in the air, and what I was about to find out was that she was capable of mesmerizing her students with it. Dr. Niesz is brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. So, Dr. Niesz, thank you for sharing your brilliance with me. I am forever grateful, and hope that my students will also enter the room and say things like, “No way! Awesome!” both on the first day and on the last, as your students most certainly do.

Dr. Jim Henderson: my spiritual curriculum mentor. To know you and to work with you is one of the greatest opportunities of my life. You and your work have taught me to see beyond myself and my immediate surroundings and life situation and consider diverse voices and peoples and the multitude of thoughts that can at all times peacefully coexist in this world. I hope to always remain faithful to my curriculum wisdom origins in my future wanderings.

A note of appreciation should also go to Dr. Nancy Barbour, whose Residency II course provided the planning ground for this study. Dr. Barbour, thank you for providing the first platform from which I will build my professional career in image literacy learning.

To my two participants, who made this study possible, there are no words to express my gratitude. Cliché as it is, there are seriously no words. Thank you, to both of you, is the best I can do. Maybe, someday, if I think of an actual word or phrase that can express my gratitude I will send it to you, written out (it’s much more personal that way), via overnight mail—so that you can get it right away and I can stop beating myself up for being speechless about how grateful I am to both of you.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hidden somewhere in the back of most bookstores these days you can find a section labeled “graphic novels.” And if you happen to find this section, and choose to venture down its aisle (there is usually never more than one), a curious nature in hand, you will also find something else somewhat hidden in the bookstore. Sitting in a corner or sometimes on the floor, sprawled out and immersed in a book, sits a graphic novel reader.

Every time I enter a bookstore I head straight for the graphic novels, and each time, without fail, as I round the corner or turn down the aisle to where the graphic novels have been assigned space amongst all the print-text literacies, I take a deep breath, ready to meet and talk to the next graphic novel reader that I know will be sitting there. I sit down, deep breath on its way out, and prepare to make a new literacy friend, someone whom I will shortly invite into the literacy club of graphic novels (F. Smith, 1988).

The unknowing, somewhat hesitant, and yet excited reader typically tells me the same story, and it sounds something like this: “I read these because I’m not good at reading in school.” Actually, this statement is pretty much verbatim what they tell me.

The researcher in me thinks, “Not again! Another reader lost to the perception that print-text literacies are somehow more important, more serious, more scholarly than image literacies.” And the somewhat inflated and way-too-idealistic superhero educator inside of me rustles out the wrinkles in her cape and prepares to take flight once more; “My job is not done! The reading world is not safe for all readers.”
“Are you good at reading with images?” I ask. My cape just a figment of my imagination floating around somewhere behind me.

“Well, yeah,” they usually start and then counter with the perception, “but that’s not reading.”

And with that I give my well-known crooked smile, and ask, “Re-ally?”

And through a dialogue centered on what literacy really means during a new media age my new friend and I become members of the literacy club of graphic novels.

Statement of the Problem

Because of conversations like these, which seem to happen quite too often to those of us who value and place emphasis on various types of multi-modal reading (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2007; Kress, 2003; Masterman, 1985; The New London Group, 1996; Pool, 1983), I situate the gap between in-school literacies and out-of-school literacies as a growing problem in today’s current literacy climate, a problem that is only getting worse and will continue to grow and expand if not addressed during what is being called “the new media age.”

Kress’ (2003) *Literacy in the New Media Age* claimed that during our current time and place in history we are experiencing a communication revolution similar to what occurred during the invention of the printing press, where the ways in which we communicated (read and wrote) changed globally. Today, this revolution is occurring not with the institution of a single invention, however, but instead through a surge of image literacies—via the iPod, the Internet, film and television, graphic novel, PDA, hypertext, and so on. But when we think about these different image literacies and our daily use of
them, I wonder what we picture in our minds. What are our perceptions of this more image dominant world? Where do we see ourselves interacting with these image literacies? At home? At the office? In a car? In our bedrooms? On an airplane? But, I ask, do we picture a classroom?

In short, what is our perceptual image of ourselves as we interact with image literacies during the new media age? What are we doing? Where are we? What are we thinking? And why?

Through a collection of research essays, Hull and Schultz’s (2002) *School’s Out: Bridging In-and-out-of-School Literacies* claimed that students who are considered struggling literacy learners in school contexts are actually literate and intelligent readers in their out-of-school literacy practices. But in order to better understand the significance of these findings, let us quickly back-track. The premise for Hull and Schultz’s work is grounded in a gap in the research, a gap that exposes the difference in perceptions that teachers and students have of the literacy activities that happen at school and those that happen at home. In other words, Hull and Schultz suspected (and ultimately found) that many students who were considered struggling literacy learners at school were actually highly successful literacy learners at home. And to make matters worse, since their teachers continued to consider these students to be low literacy learners at school, the students also saw themselves as lower literacy learners at school—despite their out-of-school literacy successes. During this more image dominant and visual literacy age, these perceptions between teacher and student were intriguing to Hull and Schultz, and they suggested further research on the perceptions students and teachers place on what is
considered a worthwhile and valuable literacy both at home and at school. Thus, as a result of these findings and this call for further research, Hull and Schultz called for more attention to be paid to how we construct literacy bridges between three core areas: our students, ourselves (as teachers), and our curriculum.

Hull and Schultz’s (2002) text also claimed that students all over the world (Buckingham, 2003; Freire, 1968; Kress, 2003; Masterman, 1985; The Newsom Report, 1963; Pool, 1983) are participating in literacy acts that call on them to read the current image dominant world around them. In fact, Hull and Schultz pointed out that modern students are participating in literacy activities that Buckingham (2003) specifically called “active participation and critical understanding” (p. 4) and Hobbs (1998) labeled as methods of critical media literacy and consumption and participation in a new media age. However, as Hull and Schultz further discussed, these new media age literacy activities are not typically perceived as worthy of school attention by neither curriculum mandates nor teacher perceptions and pedagogical decisions (Henderson & Kesson, 2004).

Thus, if we bring Hull and Schultz’s (2002) work together with more new media age literacy scholarship, like Kress’ (2003) work and the call for a reevaluation of literacies taught in school during this current communication revolution, and Buckingham’s (2003) research on more screen and image dominant literacies in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms, we can start to see where in-depth case studies that investigate links between the current communication revolution and new media age school literacy perceptions are essential to the future of literacy education. Although not specific to the field of literacy, some current research is being done at Indiana University
and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. At these two institutions, various individuals are at least discussing the graphic novel, its role in library science and the graphic novel term itself. In the debate over the graphic novel term, various individuals are referring to the graphic novel as a comic book for adults, which this study’s historical exploration of the graphic novel term later disproves. Thus, and in essence, there are both common misperceptions about the graphic novel itself, and, in the literacy field, a missing link in the literature that this study addresses, between a call for more research about the perceptions of in-and-out-of school literacy bridges and the need for more research on image literacies with the graphic novel in general. This research study, then, investigated the perceptions one teacher and one student had as they both interacted with an out-of-school image dominant literacy during this new media age (specifically a graphic novel).

In this new media age where image literacies are becoming more and more dominant, further research about the connections between in-school literacies and out-of school literacies is long overdue, for, if we cannot learn to better bridge this gap, we risk sending divergent and often confusing messages about the literacy activities that occur in school and those that occur outside of school. Langer (1998) would probably argue that we are creating an unnecessary and dichotomous relationship that conveys to students that there are two types of literacy activities: literacy for the self and found outside of school, and literacy for the intellectual and found in school.

Such a distinction or message is alarming to me. It seems to send off warning flares in regards to issues of social justice, due to its boundary-divisive emphasis that one literacy can only belong in one place and another literacy only belong in the other. In
regards to curricular social justice, who decides these boundaries between in-school literacies and out-of school literacies? Why do these people decide? What are they using to decide? Why are their decisions assumingly authoritative (Giroux & Simon, 1989; Henderson & Gornik, 2007)?

Instead of students perhaps leaving our classrooms feeling empowered by acts of reading and writing both in and out of school, and learning how the two worlds come together and operate simultaneously and with complementary grace, we are perhaps communicating to students that they should leave our classrooms and hide in the corners of bookstores, labeling themselves “nonreaders” when engaged in outside of school literacies (even while literally being engaged in literacy acts).

Giroux and Simon (1989) wrote that one of the most significant and positive shifts the educational world can make is, after over a century of valuing print-text literacies, to radically reposition itself and see the placement of various literacy activities as critical to the success of students in a more multi-modal, new media age. In short, they asked us to reconsider pedagogy as a place of transformation in a postmodern world, a transformation that stresses the importance of emboldening students not only to acquire knowledge, but also to be active, reflective producers and thinkers about the literacy activities that they engage in within their own time and place. Giroux and Simon pointed out the problem I have been highlighting in modern literacy schooling—a lack of connection between what literacies students perceive as valuable and interact with and are passionate about outside of school, their own historical time and place, and the literacies teachers perceive as valuable and ask students to interact with in school.
Thus, in deconstructive turn, Giroux and Simon (1989) claimed that to bridge this gap (to create a safe, “democratic state” in our classrooms), teachers should alter their post-modern thoughts on new media age student literacy. In doing so, they will empower student literacy perceptions and create socially just and democratic classroom spaces. Henderson and Kesson (2004) called such classroom spaces places where socially just pedagogical literacy practices occur in the pursuit of the democratic good life. Schools can become places where students become lifelong literacy learners who perceive the school as a site that values the literacy activities that occur both inside its walls and outside its walls. This study then, with its emphasis most particularly on one graphic novel, provides the literacy world with at least one investigation of the perceptions of one teacher and one student as they interact with a new media age literacy during this current time in literacy history, the new media age.

In inviting thought about our own and our students’ in-and-out-of school literacy perceptions with one particular graphic novel, I sought out this gap in literacy education as a striking matter worthy of serious and timely investigation. To do this, I inquired into the perceptions of the new media age literacy activities that occur when one teacher and one student, two case studies, interacted with an image dominant literacy during a new media age. In this new media age, where teachers and students are both coming to school with iPods in hand, PDAs in bookbags and pockets, and the morning, online reading of the television news or cartoons in mind, these two in-depth case studies looked at what it is like to read a more image dominant world.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine two case study participants, one teacher and one student, as they read with image literacies in a graphic novel, in hopes of exploring and gaining an understanding of how one teacher and one student perceive of this reading experience during a new media age.

Guiding Research Questions

To gain a better understanding of these perceptions of image literacies, this study primarily investigated one overarching question: “What are the literacy perceptions of one teacher and one student as they interact with Jeff Smith’s (2005) graphic novel Bone: Out from Boneville?” To best answer this question, the study broke its guiding research question in two more specific questions. These secondary questions were designed to further focus the larger, broader research question and concentrate on the specific two case studies in greater detail. The two research questions are:

- What are one teacher’s perceptions of reading image literacies with a graphic novel?
- What are one student’s perceptions of reading image literacies with a graphic novel?

Operational Definitions

The operational definitions were used to respond to these questions are listed below.

1. Graphic novel: A graphic novel is best defined by Will Eisner, who coined the term in 1978 with the publication of The Contract with God. In the mid 1970s,
W. Eisner set out to write a “comic-like” story with loftier ambitions. In short, instead of stories that are mostly plot-driven, as comics had been overwhelmingly criticized for being over 40 years, Eisner wanted to write and illustrate a story that used images to encapsulate all of the elements of canonical literature, like depth in characterization, plot, setting, theme/motif, irony, rising and falling action, and so on. With graphic novels, his aim was to capture the traditional conventions of literature. Thus, for the purpose of this study a graphic novel was considered a literary image story of narrative sequential art or image (McCloud, 1993).

2. Literacy and being literate: To be literate with a particular literacy, either print-text literacies or image literacies, means that someone is competently able to read and/or write in either literacy, and, further, is able to communicate that experience to another person. The national literacy act (National Institute for Literacy, 1991) stated that literacy “involves an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential” (p. 10).

3. Image literacy: Image literacy is a term best grounded in the thinking of Messaris (1994) and Buckingham (2003). Although Messaris saw images as dependent upon our visual senses, dominated by art such as cartooning and various other art-related media, Buckingham saw images as any media capable of communication. Thus, taken together and for the purposes of this study, the
term “image literacy” is intended to bring together an emphasis on the artwork involved with images in a graphic novel and the printed words that accompany them, a blending of two literacies—image and text—particular to the graphic novel’s purposes in literary style and convention (McCloud, 1993, 2000, 2006). To put it simply, artwork is visually sensitive, and the graphic novel genre is a means for communicating such types of visually sensitive literacy experiences alongside traditional print-text literacies, a relationship between images and words.

4. In-school literacies: In-school literacies are literacies that are stressed by and usually occur within school buildings. Traditionally this has been print-text literacy (Hull & Schultz, 2002).

5. Out-of-school literacies: Out-of-school literacies typically occur outside of a school building, such as at a home or community place. They can be motivated by elements of one’s life such as culture, race, personal appeal, or pop culture interests (Hull & Schultz, 2002) and are often related to a reader’s perception of fun or enjoyable reading experiences (Morrell, 2004). In this study, the graphic novel as a popular culture (Morrell, 2004) literary text was the out-of-school literacy under investigation.

6. Popular culture: Since graphic novels are almost always referred to currently as popular culture texts (as well as examples of out-of-school literacy, a connection that is often simultaneous, as previously noted), in this study popular culture literature is considered synonymous to out-of-school literacies
like the graphic novel (Morrell, 2004). Alvermann (1999) made this connection as well when she positioned popular culture in the classroom as an out-of-school literacy that needs integrated into our pedagogical thoughts during a new media age; she claimed that popular culture literacy pedagogy would allow us to offer a powerful act of identity labeling that would empower modern students in democratic contexts, empower them to see their popular culture worlds as valuable and worthy of school attention and instruction (further offering a chance for students’ identities from in-school and out-of-school contexts to merge).

7. Literacy bridge: A literacy bridge is a connection, link, or movement between an out-of-school literacy and an in-school literacy. An example of this could be bringing a graphic novel, which is not a traditional in-school literacy, into a classroom and pedagogically addressing the relationship and literacy potential of the graphic novel’s use of images and words together:

   Given the vast gulfs that separate, there is no better time for literacy theorists and researchers . . . to put their energies toward investigating potential relationships, collaborations, and helpful divisions of labor between schools and formal classrooms and the informal learning that flourishes in a range of settings. (Hull & Schultz, 2002, p. 53)

8. Perceptions: This refers to the stated feelings or points of view either participant offers about his or her relationship with image literacies in the graphic novel being read; the underlying message for what counts as
perception rests upon what happens as a result of the interaction, the literacy relationship, between the reader and the graphic novel and how the reader articulates this interaction in his or her own words.

Assumptions

The primary and most overarching assumption in this study was that literacy perceptions would occur and be evident, an assumption that is best addressed by the data collection and analysis decisions outlined in Chapter 3. As a qualitative case study, this study searched for “meaning in context” (Merriam, 1998, p. 38), a methodology that Merriam advised is best applicable to studies that seek to look into subjective realities such as perception.

A second assumption I made was that the interviews conducted with the teacher and the student would be truthful, and that within the two case studies the participants would each tell me what was on their minds and not hold anything back.

Limitations

A few limitations existed within this study. One, which is often cited in critiques of qualitative research, was that my subjectivity as a researcher may have influenced my findings. To safe-guard against my potential subjectivity, this study, as outlined in more detail in Chapter 3, asked the two case study participants to take part in member checks of the data, and also undertook a secondary safe-guarding measure by invoking (again, outlined in more detail in Chapter 3) inter-rater reliability in reference to the study’s findings.
My own bias and personal interest in out-of school, popular culture literacies is perhaps another limitation. Since childhood, I have always told everyone that when I grow up I want to be Peter Pan. Being a literacy scholar who works with comics, graphic novels and cartoons just might qualify me to say that I have reached this Peter Pan-ish goal.

Another limitation to this study is its number of participants and duration. The data collection only occurred during a 5-week time period and only considered two participants. As such, this short time period and small number of participants limits this study to the two case studies themselves and a 5-week time period.

Finally, this study is limited by its concentration on only one graphic novel. Numerous graphic novels could have been used in this study; however, for reasons outlined in Chapter 3, J. Smith’s *Bone* (2005) was ultimately selected. Further, this single graphic novel was chosen due to its author’s intentions to write for young adults, for there are also more adult graphic novels, which should not be confused with the graphic novel used in this study, that would not have been appropriate for this study. Thus, when referring to graphic novels in this study, this study is limiting itself to a specific graphic novel published for and marketed to young adult readers.

**Significance of the Study**

In the new media age, research on image literacies with graphic novels is critical on two fronts. It is first critical to gain a better understanding of how this current, second great communication revolution (Kress, 2003) will possibly affect our future pedagogical literacy decisions in a more image dominant literacy world. Secondly, it is critical for the
modern literacy world to begin to gain a better understanding of how students and teachers are perceiving and interacting with more image dominant literacies like the graphic novel used in this study.

Except for this study, no research has addressed the perceptions of a teacher and a student as they read a specific graphic novel. We have no research that helps to explain why some students, and sometimes even ourselves, are forced not only to find the somewhat hidden graphic novel section in the local bookstore, but also hide in the graphic novel section in order to read such new media age literacies. Thus, to inquire into the perceptions that occur when one teacher and one student interact with a specific graphic novel is to begin to gain a better understanding of the significance of this genre during the new media age.

And even though we are starting to see an upswing of publications that tells us that graphic novels are useful, practical, literary, and full of literacy potential for both emergent and successful readers (Carter, 2007; Cary, 2004; McCloud, 1993, 2000, 2006; Weiner, 2003), no study has looked at the perceptions of a teacher and a student as they read a particular graphic novel. Thus, although this literature is exciting and promising, it does not help us to understand what a student and a teacher are perceiving when they read with image literacies, and how they are or are not making connections to print-text literacies.

As I have heard at conferences and workshops time and time again, “This is all great. Exciting. I like it. I just don’t know how or if I would be allowed to use it. My administrator perceives of them (graphic novels) as juvenile or risqué.” In response to
many conversations that sound like this, and the gap in the literature regarding the perception of graphic novels and the recent publications citing the rare and seemingly exciting classroom that is actually using a graphic novel (Carter, 2007; Cary, 2004; Fox, 2005; Hobbs, 2007; Kist, 2004; McCloud, 1993; Schwartz, 2002), this study investigated the perceptions one teacher and one student have of a specific graphic novel. In doing so, perhaps with a bit of an idealistic and hopeful wind blowing through someone’s figurative-superhero-cape, the results of this study may help foster a new conversation about the literacy value of the graphic novel, ultimately causing us to rethink our placement of the graphic novel in the back corners of bookstores.

Summary

Placing value on an image literacy such as the graphic novel is crucial to living in a new media age, for if we continue to neglect this genre we do our students a great disservice during this second communication revolution; in essence, there has only been one other time in history (the 15th century invention of the printing press) when the ways in which we communicated, read and wrote, changed globally. Today’s new media age—via image-dominant literacies—is the second time in history when the ways we read, and the ways we write, are changing, again, globally. Our perception and understanding of this current literacy shift is critical to our future. In fact, the National Council of Teachers of English has dedicated two consecutive conferences to the themes “Diverse Literacies” (2007) and “Shifting Literacies” (2008). As part of this new media age literacy shift, the graphic novel, and a student’s and a teacher’s perceptions of reading with this new and diverse literacy is worthy of further and future study. Such study will better help English
Language Arts (ELA) to foster conversations about new media age literacy bridges between print-text literacies and image literacies, diverse and shifting literacies that influence modern ELA classrooms and curriculums.

In search of ways to help teachers make this communication shift with one particular diverse literacy, this study looked at the perceptions one teacher and one student had of one particular new media age emerging and popular genre with a specific graphic novel, J. Smith’s *Bone* (2005). Thus, in this chapter I have introduced the background or current problem underlying my investigation into image literacies with *Bone*, provided an overview of the research problem, stated the research questions, defined the operational terms, and stated my assumptions and limitations. Lastly, I have articulated the significance for the study itself. The following chapter presents a review of the literature pertinent to the study of perceptions of image literacies and the graphic novel used in this study.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section provides an overview of the research and theory that informs this study. Essentially, to pursue the perceptions that influence graphic novels as places of pedagogy, one must always be juggling three focal points: the graphic novel’s pedagogical placement, the historical and current perceptions the field of English Language Arts (ELA) has had in regards to what counts as “literature,” and curriculum theory in regards to in-and-out-of school literacies.

First, the field of media education is pursued; media education is the focal point for where I situate graphic novels pedagogically; thus a historical synthesis of how image literacies, such as those within the graphic novel, have become dominant in media education and ELA over time is necessary. This historical placement then allows me to later focus more directly on the context for this study, one contemporary teacher’s and one contemporary student’s perceptions of reading images with a particular graphic novel. Next, this chapter pursues a line of inquiry that helps us understand what has traditionally been viewed or counted as literature in ELA and what now, in a new media age, can be perceived of as literature or literary in ELA classrooms (and in this study). Building from this understanding of the graphic novel’s emergence and situated context within media education and ELA, and the perceptions about what has counted as literature over time, I finally address the curricular movement between in-and-out-of school literacies and the graphic novel.
Media Education and Image Literacies

I begin the historical synthesis of media education with the theorist who currently articulates the definition of media education that filters throughout this study, a definition that grounds the graphic novel used in this study in two particular ways: (a) Within the parameters of the field of media education and ELA, and (b) Within the theoretical and methodological confines of this study of one teacher’s and one student’s perceptions of reading image literacies with the graphic novel Bone (J. Smith, 2005).

Buckingham’s (2003) Media Education claimed that media are not necessarily vehicles of communication, but communications themselves. In other words, media are messages. They are not necessarily senders of messages, as certain technologies are more appropriately labeled. According to Buckingham, the terms “media” and “technology” are too often used synonymously, and, in moving forward during this new media age teachers need to make clearer distinctions between the two. Buckingham explained his approach to media education as particularly centered on redefining media during this new millennium, where media are multimodal literacies and operate on three fronts (audio, visual, and text):

Media texts often combine several “languages” or forms of communication—visual images (still or moving), audio (sound, music or speech), and written language. Media education therefore aims to develop a broad-based competence, not just in relation to print, but also in these other symbolic systems of images and sounds. This competence is frequently described as a form of literacy; and it is
argued that, in the modern world, “media literacy” is just as important for young people as the more traditional literacy of print. (p. 4)

Buckingham went on to argue that teaching media literacy in ELA, then, is the outcome or result of a sound media education program. To be competent media education and ELA scholars, within any of the given literacies of sound, image, and so on, teachers and students must develop what he and Hobbs (2007) called media literacies. These competencies call on teachers to be both active consumers of and participants with media. In teaching with graphic novels, and placing an emphasis on visual images alongside print text, we place an emphasis on image reading as a literacy skill (Buckingham, 2003; W. Eisner, 1985, 1996; Kress, 2003; The New London Group, 1996; Weiner, 2003). This emphasis on image literacies alongside print-text literacies is particularly pertinent to the reading of a graphic novel because the graphic novel is a genre where print and image work together to create literate meaning.

With Buckingham’s emphasis on media in the new media age involving various literacies of image and print, I find a place for the graphic novel as a literary media text capable of promoting literacy learning, a definitionary place that also fits in timeliness with the graphic novel’s emergence and popular attention, for Buckingham published his thoughts in 2003, the same year that the publication industry tripled its sales of graphic novels (McCloud, 2006).

With Buckingham (2003) still in mind, then, we should also begin our historical synthesis with an understanding of what it means to live today in “a new media age” where images and print-text literacies share center stage. After establishing this current
awareness and contemporary premise, through the lens of Kress’ (2003) *Literacy in the New Media Age*, we can then begin to look backward to see how media education has moved forward from being process-product and technology driven and print-text based to being multi-modal and capable of interweaving the worlds of print and image literacies together.

In essence, Kress (2003) explored multi-modalities and their versatility to connect print and image texts together into one literacy as he outlined the communication revolution currently occurring during this new media age. Overall, his theory and research suggest that a continued over-emphasis on print-text literacies is a disservice to contemporary students. According to Kress, the movement within this new media and information age—via the screen, the computer, the graphic novel, the iPod, and all other forms of multimodality—is similar to the changes in our language and the ways in which we communicated prior to the invention of the printing press. In short, we find ourselves in the midst of the information age where print-text literacies are no longer the dominant form of literate meaning making, but instead are on equal and/or shared terms with image literacies. In the new media age, images and print-text literacies work together. In this new world, “*The world told is a different world to the world shown*” (Kress, 2003, p. 1). Teachers, Kress suggested in his classroom examples of research, need to focus more on how the world is shown, for this is the new media age, where image and print-text literacies work together to influence all aspects of our lives at home and at school (through anything that has a screen, an interactive feature, web capability, animation, symbol system, transmediating potential, image literacy, and more).
With a groundwork for the graphic novel’s placement within media education and a conceptual idea of how print and image literacies share the stage in the new media age, we can now look to the history of media education and how that history aligns itself with ELA and the emergence of image literacies alongside print-text literacies in the classroom.

*1930s-1960s: Teachers Use Audio-Visual Image Literacies*

The first theoretical and pedagogical discussion on teachers’ various uses of media technology as a vehicle for image-dominant media education was Leavis and Thompson’s (1933) *Culture and Environment*. In the early 1930s, film and other early screen viewing experiences were new to the American public and were therefore thought of as a cultural phenomenon worthy of research and investigation. If we look at Leavis and Thompson’s early investigations, we can see the beginnings of how screen literacies grounded thinking for most of the media education and image literacy work that would come in the next eight decades. Essentially, even Leavis and Thompson’s title, which focused on early media as cultural (applicable to all people) and phenomenological (uniquely worthy of further thought), points to how critical they thought media literacies might be to our future lives. What Leavis and Thompson offered early media education teachers, then, was not just a manifesto on the uniqueness of these new image/screen literacies that would later translate into images literacies with graphic novels, but a parameter of thought for actually integrating screen/image literacies into 1930s classrooms. In Leavis and Thompson’s minds, teachers were living in a rare time in history, where they could actually use some of these new cultural products, like film and
other screen environments, as tools for helping students transition into this new world of image literacies. ELA middle school teachers (the focus of this study was specifically on middle school ELA education) were advised to embrace these cultural shifts and use them in their classrooms to create new, exciting, on-screen pedagogical environments for students, steps that would ultimately aid in their students’ interactions and future work within this new mass media and mass market world of screen technology. Leavis and Thompson pointed to a future that, as we now know with the graphic novel’s emergence and popularity, could be image dominant, perhaps even a future that would see print-text and image literacies sharing equal space. Leavis and Thompson’s perceptions of the future for image literacies were accurate (Buckingham, 2003; Kress, 2003; Masterman, 1985). Yet their perceptions did not take hold at the time. Most people saw their ideas as too radical (Booth, 2006; Buckingham, 2003; Sabin, 1996; Schwartz, 2002, Versaci, 2007), and, since technology was slower and more complex than the instant-access capabilities we have today, it was more difficult for them to reach a wide, motivated audience. What Leavis and Thompson did, then, was begin a conversation, which is now —more than ever—applicable to our current thinking as literacy educators, for we live in an even more image-dominant world than Leavis and Thompson did. And yet, generally, most teachers still neglect multiple literacies, such as the image literacies used within the graphic novel (Versaci, 2007). Thus, this researcher is left to not only wonder about the historical perceptions teachers must have had of Leavis and Thompson’s work, but also wonder about the modern day perceptions teachers and students must have of image
literacies more than 70 years after Leavis and Thompson published their original thoughts.

Aside from theorizing on teachers’ potential uses of media education as Leavis and Thompson did, other early screen and image literacy studies focused on media education as more of a technological screen environment in which ELA teachers could deliver pedagogical messages. In 1959, Hockett wrote a study entitled “Materials of Instruction,” which discussed the different ways in which teachers used audio-visual devices. He found that teachers used a process (mostly overhead projections of some kind) to end up with a product, student learning. His study pointed out that teachers used media as technology that could deliver a message, not necessarily be a message itself. Thus, as of Hockett’s study, media were media, a technology, a method of conveyance, not a literacy. In 1959, in Hockett’s eyes, most teachers were using media according to the process-product model, as vehicles to aid in pedagogical instruction.

Yet, despite his research findings, Hockett (1959) seemed to at least sense that media could be more than just a delivery system. He called for more media education programs and further research and monetary backing to explore the greater potential media might have in the ELA classroom. His call for further research did not go unheard and can today be seen as a groundwork for contemporary scholars, like myself, who have started to work with image literacies in one of two ways, as Leavis and Thompson did (as potential literacies) or as Hockett did (as vehicles for transmission; Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2007; Kress, 2003; The New London Group, 1996; Versaci, 2007), as technologies that deliver a message or as literacies that are the message itself.
In the 1960s some of this further research Hockett had called for started to make new claims about teachers’ perceptions of media’s potential, and many researchers were finding that teachers were moving away from a process-product relationship with media education and ELA. In 1960 Maloney submitted his analysis and research on how the arts as media could be used in the ELA classroom; his focus on the arts fits with this progression for image literacies and the graphic novel as well, for in valuing the arts as image literacies we can begin to see perceptions that value media education as not just process-product oriented, but as places for image literacies to be considered alongside print-text literacies. Maloney’s article was entitled “Stepsisters of Print: The Public Arts in the High School English Class.” A comprehensive look into media education through the arts, Maloney set out to empirically examine the attitudes that media education researchers were presenting in *The English Journal*. Studying what was published for teachers and the perceptions that those publications could have possibly fostered in the minds of teachers was a valuable turning point, for Maloney found that the publications within *The English Journal* mostly saw media education in one of two ways, as audio-visual/process-product technology (ala Hockett), or as visual and image literacies. The perception of media education as more than just a system for delivering messages, and potentially as a literacy, was starting to take shape.

At this point in our discussion, then, we need to clarify what exactly qualified as a definition for literacy in this study, and, as we can see, evolved historically in the relationship between media education and ELA. In short, media are literacies: various screen media such as film, television and computer, comics and graphic novels, iPod
audio, and so on are all literacies. Media education is not a literacy, however, but instead a means through which we study these various diverse, multi-modal literacies just mentioned. Media education is a pedagogy. Media literacy is a reading and/or writing skill.

Following on the heels of Maloney, in 1963 British researchers published *Half Our Future*, better known as the Newsom Report. In this report, researchers were charged with investigating adolescents of average or slightly less than average abilities, and they focused on young people between the ages of 13 and 16. What the Newsom Report found was that half of the students in British schools perceived of themselves as marginalized by the curriculum. Thus, at the end of the study the writers recommended that schools embrace new ways to reach these students. One of the suggestions was for media education with image-dominant literacies to play a more critical role in the curriculum, especially since those literacies were often seen as vehicles for motivating and capturing student interest. The writers did not suggest a process-product relationship with media education and image literacy, but instead called for more of a direct approach, where teachers and students could use “real world” interests and perceptions to teach reading and writing literacies. Historically, however, in the 1960s The Newsom Report’s suggestions only made a small splash in what would become a much larger pond. And as early ripple effects began to come from the Newsom Report, two topics came to the surface most quickly: the motivational value students found in bringing out-of-school literacies into school environments, and a redefinition of various ELA scholars’
perceptions of what counted as literature in a more image dominant world (Applebee, 1974; Purves & Pradl, 2003).

In the later 1960s, Freire’s (1968) Pedagogy of the Oppressed offered a social justice perspective to teachers in regards to their own pedagogical motivation for making these moves toward image literacies as in-and-out-of school literacy bridges, suggesting that their movements to value students’ meaning making potentials outside of school, to value image and print-text literacies together, were actually fostering the perception of democratic teaching and learning. His theories theoretically aligned with the Newsom Report, and both are often cited together in the media education literature as reasons for these shifts in media education’s and image literacy’s perceptual potential in the ELA classroom. Freire argued that the real world interests and knowledge of students and teachers could lead to emancipation from institutionally defined pedagogical practices, and, at the time, these institutional practices were perceived to be dominated by print-text literacy. He labeled the act of teachers initiating these movements away from institutional power problem-posing education: “Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation” (p. 75). Hence, Freire’s theories on moving beyond authoritarian power that stressed only one type of literacy, print-text literacy, and the Newsom Report’s advocacy for teachers to find more “real world,” image dominant literacies for modern students, tapped into some of the earliest reasonings and building blocks for in-and-out-of-school literacy bridges.
During the 1930s and through the 1960s researchers established a groundwork for image literacies in ELA. This early foundation began to alter ELA educators’ perceptions about the dominance and significance of print-text literacies alone, and posed the idea that new advancements in image and screen technologies might change how and what we teach about literacy in future ELA classrooms. In short, the phenomenological nature of image literacy began to take shape, and researchers added to the early literature in media education by starting to make the case that these new image literacies and technologies should be valued in the ELA classroom, and, they further claimed, had the potential to broaden not only how we viewed what counted as literacy—whether print or image—but also why we should value image literacies in our classrooms (to create socially just in-and-out-of-school literacy bridges).

The 1970s: Linking Image Literacy to the ELA Curriculum

In the 1970s, the efforts of the British researchers and Freire prompted a surge of research into media education and image literacy and their ELA classroom potentials. One aspect of this surge occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s when screen and film literacies, which are often referred to as kindred spirits of image literacies (Buckingham, 2003; Kress, 2003; Masterman, 1985; The New London Group, 1996), took on a larger cultural presence; during this time it became more commonplace to own a television in the home and to go to the movies (Fiske, 2004). As a result, screen and image literacies became focal points of popular culture attention and media education and ELA research. More attention was being paid to our perceptions of image and screen
literacies and how we can take these popular forms of entertainment into the ELA classroom.

Howell’s (1973) “Art Versus Entertainment in the Mass Media” was one of the earliest and most influential responses to this surge in screen and image literacy as a popular culture phenomenon. Specifically, Howell found that his participants, who were viewing television screens and image literacies, were perceiving and teaching a specific model of media education. His study concluded that teachers of media education were inviting students to be co-investigators of one of two types of media that they perceived as valuable to literacy education. Teachers of media education in ELA asked students to draw a differentiating line between Media of Enterprise and Media of Expression. Media of Enterprise was defined as media concerned with advertising and business purposes. Media of Expression, however, was media concerned with aesthetic experiences and intellectual scrutiny, like that of the graphic novel. In co-investigating these various types of media with their teachers, students were able to help label and define their own media perceptions. The perception of image literacy, in short, was beginning to develop a pedagogical place in regards to the teaching of reading in ELA—a necessary pedagogical step that fostered more research literature that looked at how image literacies, like those in the graphic novel in this study, could be used for literacy development in ELA classrooms.

Along the same lines, Amelio’s (1976) “Teaching Popular Movies” also began to carve out a pedagogical place for media education and image literacies as motivating factors for literacy development in ELA, not just for students but for teachers as well.
ELA teachers, Amelio claimed, desire to use popular movies. In fact, they perceive popular movies to be valuable literary and literacy texts. Yet, in their desires to use these movies, they also feel the need to align such use with the ELA curriculum. They could do this, according to his findings, by bringing a popular (or canonical) literary text together with a popular movie adaptation of that text. Ultimately, his conclusion was that ELA media educators should move forward with their perceptions of popular movies as having literacy value and begin to focus more attention on this literature-film literacy connection. His study then brought more focus to the fact that complementary methodologies for teaching film and literature alongside each other promote deeper and more meaningful literacy connections that work on two modern fronts: visual and verbal. If teachers are able to make this argument in their classroom teaching, he concluded, teachers of media education can and will make a stronger impact on the perceptions ELA students have of image and screen literacies and their shared value in a more multi-modal, modern literacy world. This argument then continued to build the case that our perceptions of image literacies were not only due for a change in a more screen-oriented 1970s world, but also applicable to our future envisioning of image literacies as pedagogical and curricular places for ELA literacy meaning-making and curriculum.

A little bit earlier than Amelio, Altschuler’s (1968) research also corresponded with and spoke to some of Amelio’s thoughts regarding these ELA curriculum connections and perceptions. Altschuler pursued an inquiry that more seriously focused on the why and the how of teachers using film as image literacy alongside classroom discussions of literature. Altschuler even cautioned teachers like herself, and exposed her own work,
perceptions, and research with media as a common vantage point for her and other media educators to start from. After exposing her own self-research, a self-effacing method that created a great deal of reader trust, she claimed that she and other image literacy advocates needed to be more careful and somewhat traditional (as opposed to radical) in their film choices. She wrote,

The users of popular media (that is, art films, comedy tapes, full-length feature entertainments) need not abandon the written word. What is needed is a reassessment of those things we have always believed could be done best by English teachers and a selection from among them of what we want to do with film. (p. 340)

Media education was a way to redefine our perceptions of the role of ELA teachers (a line of inquiry that we will see play out in greater detail again later in two places: in the literature review of perceptions of literacy in ELA, and in the interviews with both the teacher and the student in this study). Altschuler’s (1968) main idea was that prior to all the advancements and popular surges in screen and image technologies that occurred in popular culture and mass media during the late 1960s, English teachers were typically perceived of as only dealing with print-text literacies. Yet Altschuler claimed that, at the time of her writing in 1968, the research in her classroom, and what she saw in other classrooms, defined ELA teachers as continuously involved in image and print-text literacy activities simultaneously. Moreover, she claimed that her self-study and the study of other classrooms showed that since this redefinition of ELA teachers as teaching image literacies and print-text literacies began, more and more teachers had
become aware of how their present choices with literacy might influence their future work with literacy. In other words, if teachers choose too many radical literacies that push the boundaries of ELA too far, they will damage the future of media education and will risk alienating some key audiences and listeners, perhaps causing a mass retreat back to pedagogy that stresses print-text literacies alone. If teachers choose wisely, and clearly align age-appropriate media with the print-text literature they are already called upon to teach, Altschuler believed they would be more likely to solidify a foundation for media education to build upon in the future—a more solid perception of ELA teachers as multi-literate instructors who teach with print-text and screen and image literacies alongside each other.

Moving through the literature from the 1930s through 1950s and on through the 1960s and 1970s we can now see that image literacies first needed to be perceived of as a valid and valuable literacy worthy of ELA educational research and attention, research and attention that early on discussed these new image literacies as cultural phenomena worthy of classroom inquiry. From the 1930s through the 1970s we also saw the emergence of thought about the potential alignment of image literacies and media education and ELA curriculum. Following these movements in the literature, we next see the research of the 1980s start to examine how technological advancements further placed an emphasis on image literacies as part of what would eventually be termed “multi-modal” literacy learning (Buckingham, 2003; Kress, 2003; Masterman, 1985; Pool, 1983). In the 1980s, media education researchers moved onward from a phenomenological and curricular focus to discuss whether or not media education’s
foundation (the literature reviewed so far) would be strong enough to actually redefine our perceptions of the role of image literacies and the ELA teacher. This redefinition can still be considered to be ongoing today actually. One of the basic premises for this study holds that image literacies are still not foundational to the curriculum or to the modern ELA teacher’s perceptions of what counts as literacy in modern ELA classrooms. Hence, investigating a teacher’s and a student’s perceptions of a particular ELA graphic novel are critical to understanding how we can begin to value this typically out-of-school literacy as an in-school literacy during a new media age.

1980s: Redefining the Teacher’s Role Amidst the Media Education Debate

In the early 1980s, Clark (1983) took a look back on the early research with media education and image literacies and reexamined media as audio-visual distributors and then as image literacies. After looking at this history, he claimed that media technology’s role as a vehicle of transmission was not necessarily always understood by ELA teachers. Teachers were confusing media technology and media literacies. Media technology, he found, were not teachers. Teachers were teachers. And, as simple as that sounds, Clark’s point was that, as vehicles of instruction, media technology could not influence student achievement; our perception of media needed to move away from seeing media technology as vehicles of instruction and more toward media technology as teaching tools. Only teachers’ pedagogical uses of media as a literacy could influence student achievement: “The best current evidence is that media are mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement any more than the truck that delivers our groceries causes changes in our nutrition” (p. 445). To influence student
achievement, teachers needed to deconstruct what media education—media technologies and media literacies—meant to their literacy curriculum. Teachers needed to understand and implement the differences between the two.

Often cited as the most seminal work in media education and image literacy, Masterman’s (1985) *Teaching the Media* took on the debate. Masterman fell on the side of ELA teachers as multiple literacy instructors—and not simply as media technology users—who could develop and advocate for media literacies, such as image literacies, to take on a greater curricular role. He stated that ELA educators needed to advocate for media literacy on a greater scale:

>If we are convinced of the importance and necessity of media education, then we shall need to be not simply teachers of, but *advocates for* our subject, advancing its cause whenever we can within our own institutions, amongst parents and with colleagues and policy makers. Our reasoning will need to be *compelling* and *persuasive*, as well as plain and intelligible. (p. 20; emphasis in original)

For Masterman, teachers needed to both practice their theories with multiple literacies and be public advocates for their ideas. This call-to-action approach took image literacy advocacy and the perception of how teachers dealt with media to a new level; instead of simply offering some examples of what could happen with media education in the classroom, as early researchers like Amelio (1976) and Altschuler (1968) had done, Masterman advocated for social reform and public advocacy; this is perhaps the earliest and clearest linkage between image literacy and curriculum theory, which, as we shall
see, directly brings together two focal points in this study, media literacy education and curriculum theory regarding in-and-out-of-school literacies.

Masterman (1985) took the ideas of researchers like Amelio (1976) and Altschuler (1968)—to use more image literacies in the classroom—and wed them to a public persona based in curriculum reform, a public platform and goal on which to stand: To move media education and image literacies further into the forefront of our ELA teaching, teachers needed to embrace these literacies within both their public speech and classroom decisions. In pointing this out, Masterman was the first media education scholar to raise questions of social justice: “What is fair?” his philosophies ask. “Is it fair to ask our students to value only print-text literacies and only teach them the skills for reading with such literacies when the world they are living in is so media and image dominant?” To deconstruct this debate for literacy education and reach more than just an educator-audience, Masterman believed that teachers needed to begin educating not just their students, but all potential stakeholders (e.g., parents, community members, business people) about the political and social power of media and image messages. And, in deconstructive turn, the power teachers and students have at their disposal if they learn to read and interpret media and image messages:

Media education, then, is one of the few instruments which teachers and students possess for beginning to challenge the great inequalities in knowledge and power which exist between those who manufacture information in their own interests and those who consume it innocently as news or entertainment. (p. 11)
Masterman wanted teachers to adopt a more critical and public pedagogical stance with media and image literacies and to teach their students, in turn, to do the same as critical media consumers.

To influence teachers’ practices he unpacked previous media education practice and offered teachers a new term, “Conscious Industries.” Masterman (1985) wanted to communicate how influential media and image messages could be to both our conscious and our subconscious perceptions. He argued that it was critical to our future literacy world, that he imagined would be even more image and media dominant than it was in the 1980s, that we teach critical consumption of media and image messages: “The media are important shapers of our perceptions and ideas. They are Conscious Industries which provide not simply information about the world, but ways of seeing and understanding it” (p. 3-4). Unpacked, Masterman’s hope was that media education and image literacies could actually become acknowledged conscious industries in the classroom, bringing, as they do in this study, to the awareness of teachers and students that understanding image literacies would allow us to use such literacy skills to better see and understand a more and more multi-modal world (The New London Group, 1996).

Another text that took up this idea to unpack our use of media education was Pool’s (1983) Technologies of Freedom: On Free Speech in an Electronic Age. Preceding Masterman (1985) by only two years, Pool presented readers with the first labeling of screen and image literacies as multi-modal in nature, the first argument to posit that until consumers and teachers embraced the new information age—the vast array of technologies and literacies being born—they could not be truly free, active, and critical
consumers of the media images and messages that they encountered. Pool wanted people to realize, as did Masterman, that media and image literacies emerging from the information age needed to be well understood by students, for if students were not able to critique media and image messages they were essentially, and probably unknowingly, giving up their First Amendment rights to free speech and thought. Pool explained,

> It would be dire if the laws we make today governing the dominant mode of information handling in such an information society were subversive of its freedom. The onus is on us to determine whether free societies in the twenty-first century will conduct electronic communication under the conditions of freedom established for the domain of print through centuries of struggle, or whether that great achievement will become lost in a confusion about new technologies. (p. 10)

Clearly, Pool wanted teachers to understand how they could transition students away from the perception that they are passive consumers of media and image literacies and move students toward the perception that they are active, critical consumers and participants with media and image literacies. In making this argument, Pool positioned image literacies as the dominant communication method capable of equaling and perhaps surpassing print-text literacies. If image literacies are capable of this sort of literacy power, he further argued, teachers must create pedagogical access to and allow students to interact with these literacies, to converse and co-create, respond and dialog alongside them, teach students to think and create with multiple literacies, especially those involving the image. If educators simply kept teaching only print-text literacies, his theory articulates, then their neglect of image literacies will amount to what Freire and
Giroux (1989), and Pool, saw as a disenfranchisement of student literacy, a neglect of issues of democratic social justice in modern ELA classrooms. At stake, Pool’s theory implied and Freire and Giroux explained, is “the relationship among knowledge, power, and desire” (p. vii). To teach only print-text literacies is to disenfranchise students’ rights to access and use all forms of literacy represented in their real-world interests during a new media age (Shor, 1980).

In 1985, the same year as Masterman called for more critique of who produces media image messages and how we then teach students to analyze, critique, and respond to those messages, Meyrowitz found that teachers’ uses of media in the classroom, studied alongside out-of-school media exposure, distorted traditional boundaries. For example, his research revealed that students who historically had little exposure to media images were able to make clear perceptual boundary distinctions between topics such as men and women, sexuality, age, and authority. Students who had what he considered “too much” media image exposure were not able to make clear perceptions and distinctions between what he saw as necessary boundary dividing distinctions. In his implications for these findings, Meyrowitz stated that teachers needed to be more careful about media and image literacy’s ability to lift social value veils; in his mind, teachers should focus on more traditional media image exposure—traditional in the sense that boundary distinctions between the role of men and the role of women, for instance, were more divisive and clear. Logically, this goes against the grain of the more socially just image literacy thinkers already mentioned. Yet Meyrowitz’s work is still key in that it draws more awareness to the culturally significant impact media images can have on our
perceptions of what kinds of literacy belong in the classroom. Essentially, image literacies are so powerful outside of school, no matter what one’s theoretical and political standpoint might be, that students are learning lifelong perceptions from viewing them. Thus, we need to teach students to read with images, to teach them the literacy skills that will help inform their consumption and participation—their perception—with image literacies both in school and outside of school.

Given all this focus on literacy instruction with images as a matter of social justice, Owen, Silet, and Brown (1988) pursued a study that looked at how students perceived of image literacies before they were taught decoding image literacy skills, and then, again, how they looked at these same images once they were taught image literacy decoding skills. They explained their findings in three principles:

We have discovered that teaching television is a circular process which revolves around three principles. First, most students have preconceived viewing habits which lead them to believe that television is essentially “just entertainment.” Second, students must change their initial viewing habits, in order to become critical viewers. And third, if students develop active, critical viewing habits, they will come of their own accord to begin to understand the breadth and subtlety of television’s power and the serious personal and cultural consequences it has for all of us. (p. 28)

In this often-cited study, Owen et al. found evidence that teachers of media and image literacies were in fact starting to teach to and for social change. Essentially, they were starting to teach for and change the perception that media and image literacies were
passive literacies. Teachers were starting to empower students to critically think about image literacies and the power these image literacies could have on literacy learning, both personally and culturally as students moved in and out of their daily roles at home and at school.

The literature in the 1980s provided a strong and foundational grounding that built from thinking about image literacies as capable of being used in the classroom as pedagogy, studies and theories we saw develop in the 1960s and 1970s, and provided a new connection and perception that addressed using image literacies as socially just literacy pedagogy that involved the creation of in-and-out-of school literacy bridges.

**1990s: Media Education’s Surge and Expansion Toward a New Media Age**

This historical progression from audio-visual media being used to simply deliver an image-oriented message to image literacies for social change came to an intense critical turning point in the literature of the 1990s. Scholars and teachers alike became more intensely interested in media modalities and how image literacies played a large role in being one of those modalities capable of classroom use in a more and more technological and visual world that stressed both curriculum and social change. Thus, the 1990s witnessed a surge in media education and image literacy publications that centered around exploring this new connection between pedagogy and theory and the perceptions that surrounded it.

In 1992 Fehlman began the discussion by trying to break down the barriers of normalization (the idea of seeing any one thing as “normal” and something other than that as “abnormal” or “other”). His hope was that in doing so he could make accessible
and visible some ideologies and perceptions teachers of image literacies had yet to see or taken for granted. In “Making Meanings Visible: Critically Reading TV,” he reported on a study that ultimately concluded that in order to work around the idea of othering and normalization in their teaching, teachers of image literacies should be especially careful in regards to the power of image to transmit visual association and perceptions in students’ minds. Teachers should become better acquainted with modern theories of cultural identity and media production and consumption regarding perception: “If a knowledge of current theories helps to make meanings more visible, then media, like breathing, offer excellent texts with which to begin; their meanings are often as invisible—yet as important to our cultural identities—as life itself” (p. 19). He claimed that his teacher-participants with passive perceptions of media education were passive because they simply did not know better, and, therefore, were not interested in the visibility and/or invisibility status of different cultures within media representation. These teachers were simply pleased that they could use media and image literacies in their classrooms and that students seemed to enjoy the experience. Perceiving social justice and Masterman’s (1985) ideas of critical consumption and participation with screen and image literacies as critical to the future of media education were being lost.

In 1996 Hart and Benson further investigated this idea in a study that focused on why and how teachers could use media to teach beyond passive viewing experiences, and emphasize the ideas of critical consumption and cultural awareness later advocated for by Buckingham (2003). Like Fehlman (1992), Hart and Benson wanted to emphasize just how powerful images could be to the perceptions students might have while encountering
visual, culturally-based media. They presented this idea in a research essay entitled “Researching Media Education in English Classrooms in the UK,” which focused on how social justice issues with image literacies could perhaps be taught by paying attention to issues of audience. According to Hart and Benson, teachers in the mid 1990s were becoming better aware of how their own cultural situations influenced their teaching. Hart and Benson found that in order to create a more socially just classroom environment with image literacies, a teacher’s pedagogical application of any image literacy should be student-centered and responsive. If teachers can first present the image literacy, and not their own pedagogical thoughts, they can create a more socially just space in the classroom for student response and student ownership of their own perceptions.

Hobbs (1998) also took up this issue of audience awareness. In Hobbs’ mind, ELA teachers were the most likely curriculum candidates for teaching with deeper meaning-making potential with image literacy. Hobbs argued that if researchers like Hart and Benson (1996) were correct then more image literacy teachers (who were probably ELA teachers) needed to articulate to themselves and to their students that any work within media education was a literacy, particularly a media literacy and, in the case of this study, also an image literacy:

Over the years, English Journal pages have included reports from teachers who use popular films, music lyrics, advertising, magazine photographs, tabloid newspapers, cartoons, animation, and more in the process of stimulating students’ speaking, writing, viewing, reasoning, and critical thinking skills. When these texts are used to strengthen students’ reasoning, critical thinking, or
communication skills, then teachers are engaged in the practice of media literacy.

(p. 49)

Media literacy was now a new and embraced term for media education, and Hobbs continued in later publications to promote this thinking. A post-millennial publication has her outlining the various ways ELA instructors in Pennsylvania are aligning media to curriculum standards. *Reading the Media* (Hobbs, 2007) exposes the role of media literacy educators as not only working within ELA curricular parameters, but also working across disciplines and from multiple modalities that define media literacy as centered around various image literacies via film, television, and print-sources that highlight visual art and/or image design. Hobbs’ point: Images dominate and inform print-text literacy in a new media age, both in placement and in quantitative, spatial value and emphasis. This kind of theoretical and articulated labeling of ELA curriculum and media literacy, according to Alvermann (1999), allows teachers like Hobbs to use terms like “media literacy” or “image literacy” as verbal empowerment vehicles, vehicles that empower students’ meaning-making potentials in regards to socially just classroom practices. In short, when we label and share our curriculum thinking with students, we offer students a democratic sharing of power that bridges their in-and-out-of school literacy potentials.

This emphasis on media literacy as media education also resulted in the perception that during this growing new information age teachers should use the word “text” differently, for at this point in the literature the power of language started to play a key role in further positioning image literacies as part of the curriculum. The New
London Group’s (1996) work complements Hobbs’ emphasis on labeling image literacy, for they are the first thinkers (a collected group of literacy scholars from around the world) to discuss at length that image literacies are part of what we can term and perceive of as “multiliteracies:”

What we might term ‘mere literacy’ remains centered on language only, and usually on a singular national form of language at that, which is conceived as a stable system based on rules such as mastering sound-letter correspondence. This is based on the assumption that we can discern and describe correct usage. Such a view of language will characteristically translate into a more or less authoritarian kind of pedagogy. A pedagogy of multiliteracies, by contrast, focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. These differ according to culture and context, and have specific cognitive, cultural, and social effects. In some cultural contexts . . . the visual mode of representation may be much more powerful and closely related to language than “mere literacy” would ever be able to allow. Multiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes. (p. 64)

In the literature on image and media literacies that follows The New London Group’s position statement, their explanations of multiliteracies is perhaps the most often cited line of reasoning for supporting a more diverse definition of what counts as literacy education in all classrooms (not just in ELA). The New London Group’s (1996) rationale
also helps to link image literacies to in-and-out-of school literacies and an emphasis on social and cultural justice in the classroom (a link pursued in greater length in the section following this historical synthesis of ELA perceptions about what has and now counts as literature or literacy in the classroom).

Following this new rationale for valuing and labeling multiliteracies during the mid 1990s, McBrien’s (1999) research investigated how a theory of multiliteracies might actually work in the classroom. He concluded that media reliant on image literacies are perhaps more often “read” than print-text literacies, and, accordingly, teachers need to teach for this image dominant form of literacy in their classrooms, alongside all other literacies, so that students are able to comprehend and communicate with more than just the written word. Students, in his recommendation, should be multiliterate:

These days, the varieties of technological communications are probably “read” more frequently than print texts. . . . As with traditional literacy, reading is only part of the equation. Comprehension is equally important: What good is the ability to read if we cannot understand the words? Students must learn to interpret and understand media messages to make responsible decisions about their media choices. (p. 76)

His research suggested that teachers need to look back to the media education research of the 1980s and combine those philosophies with the idea that to be literate with image literacies means that we not only define them, but also value and link them to the literacy skills of comprehension and understanding. Teachers need to, in short, link students’ in-school literacies with students’ “real world,” out-of-school literacy interests and teach
students how to deconstruct media literacy messages within both realms, just as they have for so long done with print-text literacies. In doing so, ELA educators could begin to develop a critical and more modern media and image literacy education program that, as we will shortly see and McBrien alluded to, allows for more opportunity and space to bridge in- and out-of-school literacies across all grade levels and content areas during a new media age.

2000-Present Day: Multi-Modality and Media Education in a New Media Age, Image Literacies and a Communication Revolution

After the turn of the century, teachers took on McBrien’s (1999) call for social justice regarding media and image literacies, and the research of the 1980s and the 1990s combined into one pedagogical approach: media education during a new media age. Two scholars of teaching with media education during a new media age stand out most clearly. As stated earlier, Buckingham’s (2003) Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture addressed the ways in which teachers can structure their image literacy programs to highlight social justice issues. And Kress’ (2003) Literacy in the New Media Age dealt with the dominance of the image and the idea that this dominance is causing a communication revolution. Each of these works, both infused with theory and with research, suggests that to be a modern-day teacher is to concern oneself with how image literacies can liberate and enable students to become active, critical and multi-modal media consumers of the image dominant world around them. It is to concern oneself with the many different ways in which images call on us to read the world around us.
Buckingham’s (2003) work began by explaining how media and image literacies are the outcomes of media education:

Media education, then, is the process of teaching and learning about media; media literacy is the outcome—the knowledge and skills learners acquire. . . . Media education therefore aims to develop both critical understanding and active participation. It enables young people to interpret and make informed judgments as consumers of media; but it also enables them to become producers of media in their own right. Media education is about developing young people’s critical and creative abilities. (p. 4)

Along with his argument that media and image literacies are outcomes of media education programs, Buckingham also argued that there are many different modalities that present students with opportunities to read the image-dominant world: visual, print, interactive, screen, and animated texts, among others. He then applied this thinking to individual classroom settings. In these studies, he found that when teachers use media and image literacies as multi-modal texts they inevitably teach for social justice.

Kress (2003) also explored multi-modalities and their connections to media and image literacies. His work outlined the communication revolution such modalities are causing and how they are influencing current classroom literacy instruction. Most significantly, his work exposed a critical incident gap to educators—the fact that our literate world is changing the ways in which we read and write, globally, and, in exposing this gap, his hope is that educators will see the importance of bringing multiple literacies and modalities with media and image literacies into their school buildings and
classrooms. Structured similarly to Buckingham, Kress organized his text as initially theoretical, and, secondly, as a series of classroom studies and commentary.

Overall, Kress’ (2003) theory and research suggest that forcing youth and adult learners to read simply print text is a disservice to the reality of the “communication revolution” happening right now in media education. According to Kress, the movement within this information age—via the screen, the computer, the iPod, and all other forms of multimodality—is similar to the changes in our language and the ways in which we communicated prior to the invention of printing press. In short, “The world told is a different world to the world shown” (Kress, p. 1). Teachers, he suggested in his classroom examples of research, need to focus more on how the world is shown, for this is the new media age, where image literacies are dominating all aspects of our lives at home and at school (through anything that has a screen, an interactive feature, web capability, animation, symbol system, transmediating potential, and so on).

Another more recent publication that hinges on multi-modality and image literacies in the classroom is Reading the Media: Media Literacy in High School English, as mentioned above. In this text, Hobbs (2007) undertook a mixed-methods approach to studying teachers’ usages of multi-modality as image literacy in the classroom. When presenting her findings from an 11th grade classroom, Hobbs connected critical thinking and active citizenship to media and image literacy education:

As students gain the ability to comprehend news and politics by asking critical questions about media messages, they grow in knowledge and feel more empowered about their ability to understand government and politics. But they
also develop skepticism about the extent to which political leaders truly represent their interests. (p. 94)

Multi-modality, in this case, involves more than just social justice, and undertakes more of a pedagogical emphasis on learning to value all and not to “other” something/someone through normative literacy processes that stress print-text literacies over other literacies, for other, more media and image dominant literacies, are influencing our perceptions perhaps more than the printed word during this new media age. In Hobbs’ work, then, teachers who use media as multi-modal communications explore the connection between social justice and active civic participation—issues that also highlight the curriculum theory potential that image literacies embody as they come into our classrooms and complement our print-text literacy instruction, further supporting the potential for more in-and-out-of school literacy bridges and our perceptions of such bridges (theoretical examples we will discuss in greater length in the curriculum theory section of this literature review).

The link between curriculum theory and in-and-out-of school literacy and image literacies is further taken up in Jenkins’ (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. Jenkins argued that the new media age invites each of us to encounter and move within and among many different image literacies. For Jenkins, this means questioning our traditional approaches to teaching literacy as print-text dominant, and considering that our literacy instruction today should be evenly divided between print-text and image literacies. When we teach with this framework, he posited, media are now dispersed and cultural in that they allow us not only to view something, but also to
interact and to communicate with something or someone anywhere in the world. Jenkins (2006) argued that this referent changes our perceptions of ourselves as media and image consumers and shows us the place of convergence between image and print-text literacies that call on us to play with media as spectators who can read, watch and interact with what they are viewing and reading (anywhere in the world, with anyone else in the world). We can view new media, create new media, respond to new media, get a response back, and continue responding for as long as we want under the new media system. New media depends on this interaction, in fact, and this is the convergence of media literacies to media modalities in the post-millennial world that Jenkins is talking about. Teachers, he advised, must make this perceptual and cultural shift with media and image literacies in their classrooms, for to do so would be to ethically address the ultimate goals we have for literacy and education at large—to educate and help students be successful in their future jobs and literacy activities after they leave our classrooms and our schools.

The work of Morrell (2004) explored multi-modality and image literacies as critically linked to popular culture and the lives our students currently lead and will lead outside of school as literate consumers and producers of both in-school and out-of school new media age literacies. Essentially, Morrell’s text and studies show that media education informs both popular culture and modern literacies. And, as a result, he argued that we should value such popular culture literacies in schools:

I have come to understand that many youth who experience difficulty in school, have valuable literacy skills that they have developed through their participation in youth and popular culture. I argue in this book that, by building upon students’
literacy experiences with popular culture in non-school settings, teachers can make authentic and powerful connections between students’ worlds and the demands of the classroom. (p. 7)

Jenkins and Morrell’s pieces both have moved the perception of multi-modal media education into new realms and have exposed and attempted to eradicate the traditional literacy boundaries we saw beginning to disappear in the media education research of the 1990s, and that we saw Buckingham and Kress most clearly dismissing as well at the beginning of this new millennium.

Even though the literature on media education and image literacy has existed for decades, media education and image literacy as socially just places of literary potential and literacy meaning-making are now only in their infancies. In other words, in this new media age we are beginning to see two evolutions in regards to media education and image literacy: media as embedded in socially just curriculum theory and in-and-out-of school literacy bridges and media as capable of redefining what is considered literature in ELA classrooms. Yet, in sum of this post-millennial research, we can say that at this point, until this study and more studies like it (perhaps those being conducted in Wisconsin or Indiana), multi-modal media education and image literacy are considered capable, worthy, timely and necessary places of explorative pedagogy in a new media age.

Today: Image Literacy and the Graphic Novel

Since the post-millennial celebration, and picking up more in pace after the events of September 11, 2001 (for this is when visual imagery took on a whole new meaning in
American popular and media culture), the graphic novel as an image-dominant literacy has exploded in popularity. In fact, the publication industry seems to not be able to keep pace with the interest and the desire for more and more visually dominant literary stories (Weiner, 2003). But what is the “graphic novel” exactly? How do we define this genre?

As alluded to earlier, in 1978, Will Eisner’s *The Contract With God* set out, first, to coin the term “graphic novel,” and, second, to prove that graphic novels could be valuable on the same level as traditional literary texts. In order to prove this point, Eisner positioned graphic novelists and artists as not only constructors of image-based stories, but also as deconstructors of this new genre; in other words, he and other early graphic novelists made it a point to artistically create, write and illustrate graphic novels while also writing analytically about the “how-to’s” of what they were doing, the how-to’s of reading and illustrating an image-dominant story (W. Eisner, 1985, 1996). Eisner’s point was to expose how readers can make literary meaning from the text and the images together, just like they had already been doing with print-text literary stories. In the case of graphic novels, however, readers just needed to learn new decoding skills for bridging images and text together. His goal was to advocate for early creators of graphic novels to help in this educative process—to be teachers of their practice. As a result, many graphic novelists argue that the meaning-making potential for graphic novels is deeper than that of literature, and operates on two fronts: image and text. While literature rewards one type of learner, what Gardner (1983) would term “linguistic,” graphic novels reward and reach out to two specific types of learners: “verbal-linguistic” and “visual-spatial.”
McCloud (1996) furthered W. Eisner’s goals and advocacy when he then offered us a definition for today’s more modern graphic novels, which he specifically claimed are based on Eisner’s original goals and analysis for the genre. McCloud defined the graphic novel as consisting of, “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic in the viewer” (p. 9). A strong connection to literary theory is evident in McCloud’s emphasis on the aesthetic reading potential possible with graphic novels, ala Rosenblatt’s (1938) work on reader response theory and literature, and it is here that many graphic novel proponents link image stories to the study of literature, pointing out the strong relationship, if not direct correlation, between graphic novels and traditional literary texts in terms of garnering aesthetic, literary reading responses full of critical engagement, thought and literacy analysis. In the case of graphic novels, the aesthetic response is based on images and texts together. This, according to McCloud and Eisner, is the foundation of the graphic novel as its own genre. It is also the guiding and definitive genre-definition for the graphic novel that directs this study.

This definitive understanding now brings our discussion to the most recent and most well-known work with image literacies and graphic novels. Published by The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), Carter’s (2007) Building Literacy Connections With Graphic Novels: Page by Page, Panel by Panel is the first text to directly link image literacy to a media education philosophy and offer its readers numerous practical examples about how they can value image literacy in their classrooms. Unlike the research for this study, Carter’s discussion does not focus on
perceptions, however, but instead on how we can begin to see that image literacies do belong in the classroom and are perhaps worthwhile classroom literacies. To make his point, Carter provided his readers with some classroom applications for image literacies written by higher education scholars and ELA classroom teachers. As readers, then, we are left with a how-to, practical and valuable text that finds itself one of the earliest articulations and culminating points for the synthesis of media education and its relevance to the rise of the graphic novel. Thus, it is this text, with its title and content so specific to the graphic novel, that finally and literally grounds the graphic novel into the history of media education and ELA teachers’ use of media education.

Specifically, Carter (2007) and his contributors paired graphic novels with canonical literature being taught in ELA classrooms, a curricular movement similar to much of the research on earlier film literacies from the 1960s that paired popular literature with popular film adaptations of those texts. Carter even considered the infancy of graphic novel research as he not only acknowledged this parallel to early film literacies, but also called on image literacy researchers to conduct further studies on the graphic novel as not just classroom applicable, but also as a literacy genre worthy of greater theoretical and philosophical thought, all of which, he hoped, will lead to more classroom literacy practices with the graphic novel. He wrote,

More research needs to be conducted on almost every aspect of using graphic novels for enhancing literacy. . . . As yet, there is no study that thoroughly examines teachers’ beliefs and attitudes concerning graphic novels; we have no clear idea of why teachers might be hesitant to use them. More success stories are
needed, particularly via practitioner-based essays detailing use of graphic novels in actual classrooms. (pp. 20-21)

As we look back on the history of image literacies as they pertain to media education, Carter’s (2007) call for further research with the graphic novel seems fitting in terms of the growing significance image literacies have experienced in ELA over time. His call for further research and theoretical insight is also answerable. Hence, his call for further study is answerable in this study as we gain a better understanding of the literacy perceptions one teacher and one student come to as they read a specific graphic novel. As Carter pointed out, these perceptions will hopefully provide us with insight about what makes this image-dominant literacy not only applicable to our ELA classroom curriculum, but also socially just in today’s new media age classrooms where what is being termed and counted as literature is bridging itself into new, more modern perceptual and image-dominant realms.

Literature in the English Language Arts (ELA) Classroom

In the Introduction to *Is There a Text in This Class?* Stanley Fish (1980) explained the importance of interpretive communities. For Fish, interpretive communities are those that, together and democratically, decide upon the value of their particular agenda. In schools, Fish argued that this translates into the teacher and the students deciding upon the curriculum; in ELA classrooms this refers to what the students and the teacher decide can and should be counted as “literature.” Literature, he wrote, “proceeds from a collective decision as to what will count as literature, a decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers continues to abide by it” (p. 11). Under
this premise, we can then begin to look at how the teacher and the student in this study perceived of reading with images literacies in the graphic novel Bone. In investigating their contemporary perceptions of reading with image literacies, however, we must first take a look back at what has historically been defined as literature. Specifically, to better understand the perceptions the teacher and the student in this study brought to the graphic novel, we must build upon our knowledge of image literacies from a media education standpoint and question what has historically been perceived of as literature in ELA and what is now perceived of as literature in ELA. We must consider the parameters of defining and perceiving literature in light of what Kress (2003) called a communication revolution.

In order to consider the parameters of defining and perceiving literacy in light of Kress’ (2003) call to action for the future of literacy, we should first look at what Langer (1998) saw as the two most critical lenses for ELA educators both past and present in terms of perception. One perceptual lens, wrote Langer, has traditionally seen literature as social, in out-of school contexts. The other perceptual lens traditionally has seen literature as an individual, intellectual pursuit, in school contexts. In other words, literature traditionally has been perceived and then taught as having two functions, each of which begins with perception: reading literature at home or outside of school for social reasons or reading literature at school for intellectual or individual reasons. Either function, Langer posited, has historically taught students what counts as literature, and the message has been that one type of literature or literacy occurs at school while the other occurs outside of school, at home or within one’s culture.
Perhaps the best place to continue from Langer’s (1998) premise of literature as either individually or socially motivated is to discuss where what “counts” as literature found its strongest and earliest voice. In the 1890s, the Committee of Ten, a group of college educators who are often cited as setting up what would determine the basic literature curriculum in ELA for the next century, were led by Harvard President Charles W. Elliot. Under Elliot’s leadership the committee outlined two objectives for defining what counted as literature and literacy in early ELA classrooms: (a) To guide students in the thoughts of others, and, as a result, the formation of their own thoughts; and (b) To expose students to “good” literature, which Elliot bragged was a 5-foot bookshelf he kept in his office and that contained titles that all Americans should read. His recommendation was for students to read White, male writers, most of whom were already considered to be canonical. On top of this, Elliot’s leadership further called on the committee to recommend that high school students not only read the contents of his virtual bookshelf that everyone should read, but also be prepared to see the same canonical authors and texts as required reading for freshman college literature courses. In 1894 the committee went even further to define and determine what counted as literature when it worked with the National Conference on Entrance Examinations for Colleges, and became even more specific in identifying what amounted to a major focus on British, White, male writers (Applebee, 1974). ELA classroom teaching thus became identified with using canonical literature to teach skills of reading, writing, and speaking, albeit with a White, male, British focus geared for college success and college entrance.
In 1911, however, a new idea and perception of literature began to emerge with the organization of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). According to Applebee (1974), NCTE charged that high school literature curricula should not feel enslaved to college entrance or course requirements. Instead, NCTE advocated that a wide variety of reading avenues be pursued for students, avenues that looked toward cultural and identity politics teachers could pursue outside of the traditional canon, ones that put power in the teachers hands to make literary decisions pertinent to their own students (Applebee). Although significant, however, this movement away from the canon and its powerful stronghold on ELA classroom instruction in 1911 was only an infant-level step for defining what counted as literature in ELA classrooms. It would take many, many more decades for this movement away from Elliot’s bookshelf-canon to see more serious attention paid to any sort of diverse literacy outside of the printed word. At the time, NCTE’s perceptions of literature could only be seen to have a small ripple effect in influencing and defining what counted—or could be perceived of—as literature in ELA classrooms.

Yet NCTE’s initial step in articulating its issues with the five-foot bookshelf was marked by two more critical, early 20th century texts that also attempted to support NCTE’s theories and start a new discussion about what counted as literature or literacy in ELA classrooms. The first pivotal work that emerged from NCTE was Hatfield’s (1935) *An Experience Curriculum in English*, which argued that students need “experience”—or interaction—with literature. This experience took the form of what most of us now commonly know as “the project method,” which called on teachers to integrate literature
with meaningful classroom activities. At the time of its publication, however, Hatfield’s text was merely a stepping-stone for thinking outside of the canon. Only later would we see how texts such as Hatfield’s were and still are critical to providing a foundation for redefining Elliot’s vision of the five-foot bookshelf, how texts such as Hatfield’s provided a solid and historical alteration to many teachers’ perceptions of literature and how literature could be used in the classroom.

A second influential text was Dora V. Smith’s (1952) *The English Language Arts*. This text not only popularized the term “English Language Arts,” but also popularized the four domains of ELA instruction, which are still in common practice today: reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Perhaps the most significant aspect of Smith’s publication, however, was its stress on the arts as an integral component to teaching English literature. In fact, in the 1990s noted art educator Eliot Eisner (1998) picked up on and reemphasized Smith’s focus on both literature and the arts by stressing the importance of the arts as vehicles to reexamine the dominant curriculum, to alter our perceptions of what has become only one way of knowing as we have continued to stress only print-text literacies over time:

> The programs we provide in schools, what we include and what we exclude, what we emphasize and what we minimize, what we assign prime time and what we assign to the remainder, reflect the directions in which we believe children should grow. Educators help shape minds, and the curriculum we provide is one of the most important tools we use in this process. The curriculum is, in this view, a mind-altering device. (p. 13)
Taking Smith’s focus on the arts and expanding it, after over 40 more years of print-text dominance, Eisner recognized the serious impact that the new media age might have on our students’ perceptions of literature in the ELA classroom. To teach in this new media age with the inclusion of art and image literacies as equal to print-text literacies is then to activate a mind-altering curriculum that seeks to finally bring literature and the arts together, as Smith originally intended and that the title of our content area directly implicates. Yet, before we can move into the role of image literacies as arts that alter the literature curriculum, and our perception of this curriculum, we must stay focused on the fact that image literacies, at this time in our historical progression, were not yet even under consideration as a format for literary or literacy consideration in our classrooms.

In the 1940s D. Smith had been discussing our perceptions of literature at mid-century. She believed that even though teachers were interested in ELA and integration, alongside Hatfield’s (1935) vision of “experience,” what they were actually doing was continuing to emphasize literary history and literary background. In short, they were lecturing about the historical time and place of Elliot’s vision of what counted as canonical literary texts (Smith, 1952). They were still emphasizing the canon. This, claimed Applebee (1974), was primarily due to the still growing significance and power of the college entrance exams and the growing number of students going on to college as a result of the 1944 institution of the G.I. Bill (Kliebard, 2004).

The dominance of the canon was about to be challenged, however, as both high school English and college English teachers became interested in the works of Brooks and Warren (1938) and Wellek and Warren (1949). With the emergence of these authors
and their ideas, literature in ELA was about to be introduced to “The New Criticism,” a theory of reading literature that claimed that readers pay more attention to the text than anything else, particularly to in-depth analysis of language and metaphor. Due to the New Critics’ emphasis on the text itself, and not the history of the text or the canon, teachers began to perceive of and choose texts more relevant to their students, citing that content drove their choices (Purves & Pradl, 2003). Paying more attention to the text itself pushed teachers and students to more intensely consider what texts they were reading in classrooms, and teachers began to do just what NCTE had been asking them to do since 1911. More and more, they began to use texts that students could relate to, which broadened their students’ perceptions of the types of literature that could be used in the classroom, the types of texts that could count as literature as well (Purves & Pradl).

In response and in contention with the New Critics, in the late 1920s and 1930s another reading theory emerged somewhat simultaneously, but with popular recognition to come mostly during and beyond the 1960s. Reader response theory, mostly related to the work of I.A. Richards (1929) and Louise Rosenblatt (1938), influenced teachers to continue their questions of the canon. Reader response theory proposed that the reader and the text come together to create an aesthetic meaning experience (poem) particular only to the relationship between text and reader. But this theory did not seriously influence the literature being read in schools until the late 1960s, when the academic reform movement reacted to the formalism being taught in schools and advocated for our perceptions of literature to rely on a more student-centered approach (Squire & Applebee, 1968).
From the 1960s through the 1990s, this idea of the reader as imperative to the reading experience and to the interpretation of text grew more and more in scope. Research and thinking on what counted and could be perceived as literature began to pay attention to what the reader and his or her experience might bring to the meaning-making of a text, and, in valuing such a fluid and democratic experience many scholars in ELA became drawn to the idea of teaching students about different lens experiences that may influence their reading, inevitably teaching students the power of their own particular lens and the meaning-making potential one can make either through his or her own lens or that of another culture, group, or organization (Appleman, 2000). Many different lenses for reading theory evolved from reader response, and teachers could choose literary texts that fit the lens they wanted to illustrate. For instance, Marxism, queer theory, feminism, African-American theory, and New Historicism, among others, all began to influence what texts teachers choose to deem as literature, literacies, worthy of school attention (Appleman, 2000).

This emphasis on critical theory, as these different lenses were labeled over time (Appleman, 2000), continued to be taught through the 1990s and is often a focus of attention still today. Thus, it was mostly due to this focus on the lens as a vehicle for investigating all kinds of literature (as opposed to just the canon) that ELA scholars and teachers began to see serious implications for reconsidering what counted and could be perceived of as literature or literacy in the ELA classroom, movements that would later greatly influence the growing inclusion of image literacies in the ELA curriculum. Through various lens reading experiences, various critical theories, students began at this
time to see their own interests, their own cultural and individualistic out-of-school literacies and selves being valued in the ELA classroom. Perceptions of what counted as literature worthy of school attention then started to see early implications for placing value on the interests of students, creating early literacy bridges that began to link the perception of literature as an individual experience to that of a social experience.

But, before moving to the time of this study, let us continue to examine how these various theories on reading literature next led to the millennial celebration, when multimodal thinking on what counted as literature and literacy began to explode in interest, creating even more potential for bridge building between the two perceptions of literature as either a social or an individual experience. Specifically, as technologies and ways of communicating moved forward and outside of simply being print-text dominant and capable of various reading theory experiences, toward the screen, the iPod, visual imagery on popular culture television programs and movies, and many more multimodalities in general, most of which dealt with image literacies in one form or another (Kress, 2003), the way ELA teachers and scholars decided what counted as literature also began to seriously evolve in a new media age (Kress). Kress best explained this time in English Education as a communication revolution; the technologies of screen and multimodality changed the way we communicated, the ways we read, the ways we wrote, and the ways we thought in general, around the world. Hence, our perceptions of what counted and what now counts as literature and literacy in ELA changed as well.

In their essay entitled “The School Subject Literature” (2003), Purves and Pradl examined these new modalities of image and screen literacies, and they reflected on how
teaching literature has changed over time. They claimed that what teachers define as literature in their ELA classrooms is currently a hotly contested arena with political and ideological assumptions and consequences. These ideological assumptions and consequences, they wrote, revolve around two current issues, standardized tests and cultural literacies connected to students’ in-and-out-of school meaning-making (meaning-making focused primarily on the image dominant world students interact with and participate in outside of school). With these two issues in mind, post-millennial teachers who advocate for an alteration in our perceptions of ELA classroom literature, according to Purves and Pradl, must begin to make extensive and well-justified lines of reasoning for why they now want to incorporate multi-modal literacies, like image literacy, into the ELA curriculum (alongside print-text literacies), why they would want to keep teaching critical theory and all other components of ELA and yet choose to willingly add yet another dimension to their work. In short, according to Purves and Pradl, post-millennial teachers must explain why they would like our perceptions of literature to undergo the most significant evolution in ELA literature to date (Buckingham, 2003; Kress, 2003; McCloud, 2006).

In another essay, Purves and Pradl (2003) explained that teachers who choose to respond to this call are basing their answer primarily on two new media age perceptual fronts, claiming: (a) Print-text literacies are just as valid as they ever were, yet their validity is now in line with all of these new multi-modalities like image literacy; and (b) With new advancements in screen and modality there are now multiple ways we can teach reading and writing, communication at large, whether that be print-text or image
literacy (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2007; Kress, 2003). Thus, in order to define image
literacies in a multi-modal world many teachers are drawing on Gardner’s work from the
1980s, and, in doing so, claim that this change in our teaching is long overdue. They cited
Gardner’s *Frames of Mind* (1983), which argued that we should reach out to and honor
multiple literacies, and in the case of the graphic novel image literacies is one of those
literacies, with its emphasis on both “verbal-linguistic” (print text strengths) and “visual-
spatial” (multi-modal strengths) literacy learning. Hence, today we can see these changes
being honored as more and more researchers and studies, similar to this one, begin to
explore multi-modal learning in ELA classrooms. Hobbs’ (2007) most recent publication,
which outlined how image and media literacies can be used to teach ELA and media
literacy alongside each other in an 11th grade ELA classroom (as outlined in greater detail
previously in the section on the history of media education), is just one example of such
research.

As this chronicle of the history of perception of literature in ELA has shown,
literature in the ELAs has run a progressive course in the past century. From a push from
the Committee of Ten to teach with canonical, White, male, British literature, to NCTE’s
recommendation that ELA teachers move beyond the canon and toward student and
teacher interest, and then to the advent of various literary theories, we find ourselves
today not only continuing to rethink the canon and to also teach with literary theory in
mind, but also expanding our definition of literacy in general (whether print-text literacy,
multi-modal or image literacy, and even—often—a combination of both). As a result of
this historical perception of what has and now counts as literacy in ELA classrooms, we
find ourselves currently rethinking about how more image-dominant literacies, like the graphic novel, influence the perceptions that students and teachers have of new media age literacies in a more multi-modal world.

**Curriculum Theory Behind In-and-Out-of-School Literacy Bridges**

With a basis in media education as a place for image literacies and a solid understanding of what has and what now counts as literature in ELA classrooms, we can next move to a more theoretical discussion that addresses how and why the teacher and the student in this study thought about bridge building between in-and-out-of-school literacies, a theoretical underpinning for studies that generate from the results of this particular study (and similar studies) and from the philosophical and research-based need for more studies like this one. This curricular discussion focuses on the types of decisions teachers must make in order to build contemporary in-and-out-of school bridges with image literacies in modern ELA classrooms.

In *Popular Culture: Schooling and Everyday Life* (1989) Giroux and Simon offered their readers a collection of essays that reconsider pedagogy as a place of transformation in a postmodern world, a transformation that stresses the importance of emboldening students not only to acquire knowledge, but also to be active, reflective producers and thinkers of knowledge within their own time in history. In essence, Giroux and Simon pointed out a problem in modern schooling—a lack of connection between students’ lives in school and what they are passionate about outside of school, their own historical time and place, and the pedagogical practices within school that are too often divorced from such moments and spaces (Hull & Schultz, 2002). Following this problem,
Giroux and Simon then pointed out how to solve it and called on “radical educators” to re-envision the contemporary literacy curriculum.

So, what does it mean to value our students’ real world selves as places of literacy pedagogy? Most likely, today this involves beginning to place value on out-of-school literacies, which are usually synonymous with popular culture. The work of Hull and Schultz (2002), Morrell (2004), and the New London Group (1996) each pointed out that students have many diverse areas of literacy interest outside of school, folk cultures and common cultures, and that many of these areas are dismissed from schools because they involve what is considered either entertainment (and therefore assumed passive and not capable of promoting critical literacy thinking) or common (and assumed as unworthy of attention in school). These areas, in short, are popular culture literacies. Hull and Schultz wrote, “When we widen the lens of what we consider literacy and literate activities, homes, communities, and workplaces become sites for literacy use” (p. 11).

If we care about educating students to succeed in the workplace and in their own personal lives in what we now know is a new media age, we must reexamine our curriculum decisions. Historically, Kliebard (2004) claimed that our curriculum decisions are most likely to be generated from textbook companies or standardized testing influences. But this study, however, asks us to consider the transformative literacy philosophies of Hull and Schultz (2002) and in-and-out-of-school literacies and wed them to the curriculum theorizing of Giroux and Simon (1989), putting together the idea that today’s classrooms are potential places for transformative curriculum pedagogy. And one of the only obstacles in front of making this a reality for our new media age students is
the perception of what literacy really means in today’s multi-modal, image-dominant world, a world where many images and many modalities are considered popular culture texts (and not worthy of in-school consideration; Monnin, in press).

So, specifically, what might our values look like if we choose to wed these two theoretical philosophies—in-and-out-of school literacies with transformative curriculum theory? First, let us consider ourselves as teachers. Knowing our own lives and our own interactions with various popular culture ideology out of school each day, via the Internet, newspaper, magazine, video game, PC, television, film and all other common entertainment and folk ways in which we interact in the world, it is perhaps challenging to argue that out-of-school literacies do not influence our very own lives. Popular culture is everywhere, so much so that it is often overlooked as a point of political and pedagogical meaning. If we continue to ignore popular culture in our teaching, we are neglecting a sphere of intimacy that has much weight in our lives, and competes for our attention and thought just as much as our friends, families, coworkers and so on. Imagine the message such a negation sends to our students. As we know, Kress (2003) would say that neglecting this sphere of intimacy is doing modern students a serious disservice in regards to literacy, for popular culture is redefining, through media-based image literacies, the ways in which we and our students understand and communicate in a more and more familial, global media world.

Freire and Giroux (1989) further explained the significance behind being a transformative curriculum leader who brings popular culture in-and-out-of school literacies into the classroom: “there is more at stake here than simply a debate over the
content of course syllabi” (p. xi). What is at stake is how well (or, for that matter, how not so well) the curriculums we enact truly empower our students to understand all forms of communication, communications that transcend home and school cultures and are fluidly linked to identity, community, workplace, and so on. At stake, they expand, is “the relationship among knowledge, power, and desire” (p. vii). At stake is the validity of our perceptions. Henderson and Gornik (2007) argued that we must then pose transformative curriculum leadership questions. We must ask transformative questions, such as, “Who does hold the knowledge? The power? And the desire to negotiate and teach the curriculum in my new media age classroom?” When we ask transformative curriculum leadership questions we pursue what Henderson (Henderson & Kesson, 2004; Henderson & Gornik, 2007) referred to as a search for the democratic good life and Freire and Giroux (1989) referred to as a democratic state. The democratic good life or state of being, philosophically, is the spiritual person the teacher embodies as she envisions herself as a transformative curriculum leader who values students (and all other stakeholders) out-of-school selves and in-school selves, and sees both as places to negotiate curricular re-envisionment.

This type of spirituality or place of democratic morality in establishing curriculum is grounded in Henderson and Kesson’s (2004) curriculum wisdom paradigm. Curriculum wisdom is a frame of reference that organizes the curriculum problem by thinking about “students’ performances of subject matter understanding embedded in democratic self and social understanding” (p. 36). Henderson and Kesson best explained this through what they call 3S understanding, and they offered a triangle of 3S
understanding to help readers visualize this theoretical framing (see Figure 1). With this framework for organizing the problem in mind, we can begin to think about the

Figure 1. Curriculum Wisdom Problem Solving Cycle (Henderson & Kesson, 2004)

curriculum problem-solving cycle. The cycle, in this case, poses the organizing problem as the graphic novel as a curricular out-of-school and popular culture literacy tool. What filters from that organizing problem is then how one teacher and one student perceive of connecting the graphic novel to in-school, ELA subject matter understanding, self-understanding, and social/community understanding.

To enact Henderson and Kesson’s (2004) wisdom-orientation and be capable of addressing an organizing curriculum problem, transformative curriculum leaders must consider their own, personal journeys before embarking on a transformative journey for others. Henderson and Gornik (2007) wrote that this journey can best be explored through an exposure and enactment of Pinar’s (2004) currere narrative. Essentially, a currere narrative or journey is one that asks practitioners to make two moves: one, to
embrace a reflective stance of remembrance about their own personal and professional lives in the past and the present, and, two, to turn their past and present understandings of such reflections into visionary futures. In this visionary state, they allow their currere journeys to converse with the ideals they hold for democratic leadership in the future—democratic good lives and states of being for themselves and their students. These currere moves can then escalate a transformative leader’s readiness to embark on what Henderson and Gornik next labeled as a secondary step called “multi-faceted reflective inquiry,” which is “an action-oriented nature of curriculum problem solving,” where the transformative leader is ready to decide which type of reflective inquiry is most fitting for the organizing problem and its relationship to student self, subject, and social understanding.

The most appropriate reflective inquiry mode for addressing in-and-out-of school literacy bridges with the graphic novel is that of the critical mode. This study embraces the critical inquiry mode in its goal and purposes, for the critical inquiry mode challenges, according to Henderson and Gornik (2007) and Henderson and Kesson (2004), embedded habits, customs, traditions, and ways of believing and acting in the world. This best fits with the creation of literacy bridges in a new media age, and within the confines of this study, because one teacher’s and one student’s literacy perceptions of reading a specific graphic novel might challenge what has traditionally and historically been taught as literature or literacy in ELA classrooms (as we saw in the literature review on the history of media education in ELA education).
With the curricular and theoretical movements of a transformative curriculum leader in mind, and a brief, yet defined understanding of media and image literacies, combined with a historical look at what has and what now counts as literature in ELA, we can now look forward to what Henderson and Gornik (2007) called the visionary future. Specifically, we look at how the perceptions of the student and the teacher in this study inform the curricular future for addressing in-and-out-of school literacy bridges within the growing popular culture phenomenon of the graphic novel.

Summary

As I look back on the three core components of this literature review—a historical synthesis of image and media literacies, a chronicle of what did and now does count as literature or literacy in ELA classrooms, and an exposition of the connections between curriculum theory and in-and-out-of school literacies—I find myself excited to discuss the “Why?” and the “So what?” questions that have been long overdue in regards to seeing graphic novels as potential classroom pedagogy. Potential answers may arise from the results of this study.

In the following pages, this study better delves into some possible answers to such critical issues in reference to the future of literacy education. So I invite you to join me in the upcoming pages, to put on your virtual educator cape of democratic good life and social justice, and pursue what it might mean for these two case study participants to read a popular out-of-school, image dominant genre such as the graphic novel Bone.

This chapter reviewed the relevant literature pertaining to studying the perceptions of one teacher and one student as they read a graphic novel. Taken together,
each section of this literature review provides a historical and contextual background to
guide the present study, and every section offers its own, essential perspective that
informs the guiding research questions and the need for a study of this kind.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”

~ Yin, 1994, p. 13 ~

This chapter presents an overview of qualitative case study research, particularly in reference to this study’s guiding research questions (Merriam, 1998). Details concerning the purpose of the methodology, the participants, and the procedures for data collection and data analysis are offered.

Qualitative Case Studies

E. Eisner’s (1998) descriptions of qualitative case studies are probably the best reference and guiding points for beginning our discussion on why this study was best pursued qualitatively as two single case studies first considered individually and then considered together. To begin, Eisner’s work with qualitative case studies emphasizes bridging arts education (often used synonymously and in close connection to the term “image literacy”) with the content areas, such as English Language Arts (ELA). Eisner’s methodological insights are the most relevant to this study in that they are grounded in questions of arts and image-based education and the content area ELA, a purposeful creation of research bridges that connect and then analyze these worlds and how they can merge together. Eisner explained that a researcher focused on bridge-making (or, in this
case, the perception of these bridges) between ELA and the arts will ultimately choose qualitative research as his or her frame of reference due to its more fluid and open-ended methodological nature, a nature that works well with arts-based research that seeks holistic and contextual understandings, like those of individual perception, within diverse content areas.

Looking back on his career in *The Kind of Schools We Need* (1998), E. Eisner explained what he has learned about gaining better schools in a more visual and image dominant, arts-based world. He said that researchers who are interested in the arts, or image literacies in general, must choose their research methodologies wisely; thus, I chose qualitative methodology for this study because it offers the best possible answers to open-ended research questions that pursue participant perception:

What, then, have I learned for the arts that has influenced the way I think about education? I have learned that knowledge cannot be reduced to what can be said. I have learned that the process of working on a problem yields its own intrinsically valuable rewards and that these rewards are as important as the outcomes. I have learned that goals are not stable targets at which you aim, but directions toward which you travel. . . . I have learned that scientific modes of knowledge are not the only ones that inform and develop human cognition. I have learned that, as constructive activity, science as well as the fine arts are artistically created structures. (pp. 68-69)

When investigating perception, in my mind, it was challenging to think of a scientific research methodology that would allow my participants’ individual selves and feelings
about reading a graphic novel to shine through. So, with Eisner’s theoretical insights on
qualitative research as guidance for this study I then turned to the more concrete details
of qualitative methodology that would inform this study’s data collection and data
analysis.

E. Eisner’s *The Enlightened Eye* (1991) best informed my initial traveling steps,
for this text set up a frame for thinking about the beginning of a qualitative case study
about image-based literacies. At the beginning of his text, Eisner explained to educators
the value of seeing and perceiving any visual literacy:

If the visual arts teach one lesson, it’s that seeing is central to making. Seeing,
rather than mere looking, requires an enlightened eye: this is as true and as
important in understanding and improving education as in creating a painting.

(p. 1)

It was important to me that my participants’ perceptions figuratively be seen or heard—as
best as possible—through this study. Seeing rather than looking, according to Eisner and
to myself, are key to improving education during this more image-dominant, new media
age. Studies such as this one, and the many arts-based research studies conducted by
Eisner, attempt to provide places for valuing this kind of qualitative insight or perception
that Eisner values. Hence, this kind of qualitative case study research tries to provide a
window for educators to look through. Case studies, Eisner went on to say, are then the
best research methodologies for providing this sort of open-ended framing, this kind of
window-viewing experience, in regards to perception.
Fox (2005) agreed with Eisner. He even wrote more particularly that qualitative case studies are most applicable to research dealing with media and image literacies, like those within the graphic novel used in this study: “Media literacy researchers should be experts in print, as well as visual media,” and should investigate this area of research through a qualitative case study lens that looks at the perceptions of “reciprocal relationships” between all factors involved in such literacy interactions (p. 257). In this study, Fox’s thinking on reciprocal relationships relates to the relationship between images, text, and the individual reader and his or her perceptions.

E. Eisner’s (1998) thoughts best summarize the reasons why qualitative inquiry is imperative to arts and image-based educational research, and was ultimately chosen as the research methodology for this study based in perception:

The arts are paradigm cases of qualitative intelligence in action. Qualitative considerations must be employed in composing the qualities that constitute works of art. Since I believe that the qualities composed in art inform, and since I want to convey the potential of the arts as vehicles for revealing the social world, qualitative inquiry seems to me to have the appropriate ring. (p. 6, emphasis in original)

Moving from Eisner’s reasons for qualitative inquiry and arts and image-based qualitative educational research, we can next look at how Merriam (1988) contextualized qualitative case studies that seek to—hopefully—improve educational practices. In short, Merriam wrote that a researcher should engage in a qualitative case study when he or she is seeking to “improve practice,” as this study seeks to do in its broad look at the
perceptions of one teacher and one student and how those perceptions can inform the future of new media age literacy practices in ELA (p. xiii). Merriam explained the purpose behind conducting case studies such as this one:

I believe that research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education. Furthermore, most case studies in education are qualitative and hypothesis-generating, rather than quantitative and hypothesis-testing, studies. Naturalistic inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. (p. 3)

Case studies focus on the discovery, insight, and understanding that can be gained from investigating and observing “meaning in context.” These two case studies seek to use this gained discovery, insight or understanding to make contributions to the field of literacy in general (Buckingham, 2003; Kress, 2003; Hobbs, 2007; The New London Group, 1996), attempting to influence practice-based audiences, such as teachers, students, principals, and so on. Hence, since there is no other study that looks at the perceptions of teachers and students as they encounter a graphic novel, Merriam’s (1998) focus on discovery, insight and understanding are especially important in that they seem timely (perhaps even somewhat overdue) and necessary when thinking about the graphic novel’s significance and impact in out-of-school contexts (McCloud, 1993, 2000, 2006; Weiner, 2003) and the perceptions of a teacher and a student reader. In fact, we might
even see, as Merriam (1998) pointed out, some initial hypothesis generating in the two individual case studies as the participants are first considered individually and then collectively as they read a graphic novel. For these reasons—the need for an initial, broad look at the perceptual meaning in context with graphic novels and a teacher and student reader, the newness of the focus of this study to the overall literature in literacy research, and the potential for hypothesis generation in regards to in-and-out-of school bridges—this study is best served by the methodology of qualitative case study.

It is next important for me to explain how, if I wished to study “meaning in context,” I conducted my data collection and data analysis, necessary steps that informed the genesis of the original research questions themselves.

Selection of Cases

The teacher in this study is a returning teacher. She initially pursued a first career in education, teaching English Language Arts, but left the profession due to being “frustrated” with the lack of encouragement to teach what she calls “real world reading,” which upon further questioning, meant to her “literacies students are interested in and read outside of school.” Her interest in in-and-out-of school literacies is one reason why this teacher was chosen for this study. Today, 20 years after leaving the profession, she is once again returning to teaching, stating that “this is what I was always meant to do” and “there are many things to read today that aren’t in classrooms. I’m older and think we can now be ready to start using them. Now that I’m older I think I can do it [laughs].”

The student in this study was chosen because he identifies as a “stupid kid” in reference to reading and claims that it is challenging for him to read textbooks. In fact,
the student is diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome (AS) and was selected in particular because he self-identifies and is labeled at school as a struggling reader.

Since the student participant in this study is diagnosed as having AS and receives AS-related services in his school setting, a brief, summative review of AS was considered for this study.

In *Educating Children and Youth with Autism: Strategies for Effective Practice*, Simpson, Myles and LaCava (2008) offered one of the most recent explanations on Autism and the spectrum of Autism disorders. They offered an understanding of what it means to know and work with a person who has any one of the Autism spectrum disorders: “Even among difficult-to-understand disabilities, autism is the quintessential enigma. Children and youth identified as having autism, pervasive developmental disabilities, or both, present highly individualized characteristics that frequently set them apart from their typically developing and typically achieving peers” (p. 2). Kluth’s (2003) explanation of autism also adds to our frame for understanding AS: “If you know one person with autism, you know ONE person with autism” (p. 2). Simpson et al. based their definition of autism on the historically significant and original work of Kanner (1943) and listed a wide range of autistic characteristics: inability to relate normally to peers, delayed speech and language development, normal or average physical growth and development, fascination and obsession with specific objects, and repetitive and self-stimulatory behaviors and responses. AS individuals, this most recent publication stated, can have a very wide spectrum of Autism symptoms, and, sometimes, these symptoms, even though autistic, allow individuals to be what is commonly termed “highly
functional.” Highly functional AS individuals most often exhibit the following symptoms in various degrees: social interaction impairment (including body language, verbal skills, and facial expressions), stereotypical and repetitive, yet restrictive, behaviors (abnormal, patterned interests, obsessive behaviors, and self-regulation).

As an AS student, this particular student was a good fit for this study and ultimately selected because there is much discussion and speculation in the literacy field, without much research-based evidence, that graphic novels are particularly engaging for students with AS, students who are more visual readers, readers who are often labeled as struggling readers; this particular student claims he is a more visual learner, as does his teacher and his mother. As a result of his AS, this student’s IEP explains that he needs services regarding “sensory” and “verbal and nonverbal communications” in reading and in writing. These services are, in short, directly related to the theoretical commentary and speculation currently taking place within media and image literacy education. The theory—and, besides this study, yet to be conducted future research—is that image literacies with graphic novels might better address the needs of students who typically struggle with print-text literacies, helping these readers understand story more through the showing and not telling of a literary story (Buckingham, 2003; Kress, 2003; Messaris, 1994).

In sum and in reference to both case studies, Merriam (1998) and E. Eisner (1998) each wrote that it is sometimes wise to select case study participants who are “real” in their human nature as individuals but who are also part of real world contexts in schools with their own unique individual learning styles and needs, case study participants who
have their own nature and characteristics, but who also live, work, and go to school with the rest of us, in “real-world” contexts and situations. In this regard, a study, according to Eisner and Merriam, takes on a human quality within real-world contexts, while also providing a foundation for future studies to build from.

Another reason why these two participants were chosen is that they both claimed to be interested in a variety of out-of-school literacy activities that they refer to as “normal” or “average,” in reference to many of their friends and family members also engaging with these out-of-school literacies. Both participants went on to say that these out-of-school literacies are not valued in their real-world school contexts. They also each labeled various out-of-school literacies as literacies, as genres that felt were actually reading and writing activities, although not considered such at school, such as video game play, online communication, comic book reading, television, and film viewing.

When asked if these literacies were valued in school, both case study participants actually laughed and said “No.” The student said, “We read real books, and I don’t know what you mean about ‘literacy’ about video games. Computers and stuff? Those aren’t books.” He then added, “But I read them so that I get it and know what to do and stuff.”

Essentially, such thoughts help articulate the need for not only this case study, but also the selection of these two case study participants who are already wondering about in- and-out-of-school literacies and image literacies like the graphic novel.

Context and Data Collection

Since the overall guiding research question for this study looked broadly at perceptions of image literacies, this study was positioned as a particular kind of case
study, what many qualitative researchers refer to as a multi-case study (Merriam, 1998). As a multi-case study with each case at first standing alone and then, secondly, brought together (Merriam, 1998), this research ultimately positioned the reading of the graphic novel as the common denominator. To better understand the individuality that could exist for each of the two cases and then understand how each individual case informed the whole, Merriam said that a multi-case study typically relies mostly on interviews to expose the phenomenon behind the cases themselves. Hence, these two case studies were best served by an emphasis on interviews due to the small number of participants and the need to search for deep meaning in regards to individual perception, which, as discussed later in this chapter, this study addressed through Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) in-depth interviewing procedures. The analysis for this study, then, moved from investigating each individual case alone to a cross-case analysis in which both cases were considered collectively. The multi-case study approach used in this study, in other words, was best reflective of the two case study participants perceptions because it heavily relied on first looking at the participant’s individual thoughts from interviews, and in the case of this study, the addition of reflective journals, and then, second, on how those individual perceptions and thoughts worked together or in contrast to each other.

The Graphic Novel

Having these two case studies in mind, and the context for data collection, it is next important to consider the particular graphic novel used in this study. A popular graphic novel with adolescent students and their teachers, Jeff Smith’s (2005) initial publication in the series Bone, Bone: Out from Boneville was a wise choice for an image
literacy study of this kind. First, *Bone* was a wise choice because of its exposure by Scholastic Publications. A noted school book fair publication company, Scholastic picked up *Bone* in 2005 (it was originally published as a serialized comic book in the 1990s in Columbus, Ohio, by Smith himself) and began making it available at school book fairs nationwide (Carter, 2007); thus, this text is a wise choice for its established visibility and recognizability in most schools. Secondly and maybe most importantly, *Bone* is perhaps the best choice for this study because of its established reputation with both students and teachers who have read it both in and out of school contexts and attest to its literacy value as an image-based story equivalent to traditional literary texts taught in middle school ELA courses (McCloud, 2000; Weiner, 2003).

After relating information about the teacher, the student, and the graphic novel, I now discuss the data collection used in this study.

**Data Collection**

*Interviews*

Before conducting this study, each participant and I engaged in an introductory interview-discussion, in which I laid out my bias for studying graphic novel image literacies. In this discussion I stated that although I had strong opinions about the value of graphic novel image literacies, these were just opinions. Image literacies, I continued, are worthy of much, much more research, and that I intended for this study to be open to any perception of reading with image literacies. This study is only one window through which I can begin to further think about the value of image literacies and reading. Your perceptions will help me see future directions...
to explore image literacies, so the more you share your perceptions, and are not influenced by mine, the better.

Both participants were well aware of my possible bias, and they each said, before they agreed to participate in the study that they had no intention of, what Ellen claimed was, “telling me what I wanted to hear.”

In this study, the interviews were structured as follows. Each participant was interviewed individually. Each participant was also interviewed at three separate times: before reading the graphic novel, during their reading of the graphic novel, and following their reading of the graphic novel. This before-during-and-after format was critical to understanding the participants’ perceptions because it allowed me to gain a better understanding of the progressive (or lack thereof) nature behind the perceptions that influence readers’ thoughts prior to reading with image literacies, during reading with image literacies, and following reading with image literacies. Every interview was audio-taped and transcribed, and, at the end of the research study, these audio-tapes were destroyed. Pseudonyms were given to participants. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour in length.

Hatch (2002) wrote that, “qualitative interviews are special kinds of conversations or speech events that are used by researchers to explore informants’ experiences and interpretations” (p. 91). Thus, interviews were semi-structured and open-ended so as to allow the most opportunity for an organic, naturalistic conversation to unfold. Since the goal of a case study is to find meaning in context, this kind of fluid, naturalistic, and
conversational interview technique was critical to this study, for it allowed me a better look at meanings in context, phenomenological insights as they occurred.

As mentioned, the before-during-and-after interview format was critical to this study. Thus, deconstructing the specific reasons for this time frame and format is necessary. The first interview took place one week before the readers were to begin reading the graphic novel. One week was chosen because each participant stated that they felt that was enough time for them, as the teacher put it, “to not feel pressured or think about reading a graphic novel yet.” It was hoped, in other words, that the interview scheduled a week ahead of reading would relieve the participants of feeling pressured to begin reading the graphic novel immediately following the interview. The second interview took place when the readers reached mid-point in the graphic novel, Chapter 4 (out of a total of 7 chapters). This moment in reading was chosen because it was thought that the readers probably had begun to form some initial perceptions about reading with image literacies. The final interview took place one week after the readers finished the graphic novel. This time was chosen because it allowed opportunity for the readers to reflect upon the graphic novel and their reading experience with image literacies.

To allow for the participants’ perceptions to have a voice outside of the scheduled interviews, the two case study participants were also informed that they could add to or revise any of their perceptions through follow-up email exchanges or requests for further interviews at any time. (Neither participant chose to email or request a further interview.) Also, at the end of each interview, the participants were asked to take a reflective moment to consider if they wanted to say anything extra or revise any previous thoughts.
from either that particular interview or, in the case of the second and third interviews, earlier interviews. Both case study participants took advantage of this opportunity to add more thoughts and/or revise earlier statements.

The interview questions, as the most significant and primary piece of data collection in this study, were critical in that they sought reliable responses to the guiding research questions for this study. With the significance of the interviews in mind, I then chose to build in a pilot phase for the initially proposed research questions. This was done so that I could better understand how well the interview questions responded back to the guiding research questions for this study.

The pilot phase involved six current teachers, each of whom is pursuing a Master’s degree in Literacy. The teachers were reading the graphic novel being studied in this study for a graduate course they were taking entitled “Theory and Practice in the Teaching of Reading.” These teachers participated in the three-tiered interview process: before, during, and after.

These same teachers suggested, due to their own students’ and their own children’s interests in reading *Bone*, that the children and students they knew serve as pilot phase student interviewees. This suggestion was taken, and these students and children (who were all middle-level students) were the pilot phase student interviewees.

The results of the pilot phase for the teachers showed that the proposed research questions were dependable and reliable in garnering perception, specifically in reference to the guiding research questions. However, when looking over the interview transcripts I noticed there were many times that I could have asked more questions and/or probed
deeper into the meaning behind the perceptions being offered. Thus, in revision I needed to find a methodological interview format that kept these same questions while also allowing me to respond to and interact further with the participants’ perceptions as they occurred.

The results of the pilot phase for the students yielded a similar conclusion. The proposed interview questions were aimed at and capable of garnering participant perception in reference to the guiding research questions, but the depth of understanding those perceptions, and the ability and room for participants to expand upon them, needed further consideration.

The pilot phase of interview questions then informed not only how I thought about the content of the questions and their ability to garner perceptual responses, but also how I perceived of the organic fluidity of the question-and-answer period. My own perceptions of the research interview questions needed further, more specific, deeper focus, which I found in Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*. Rubin and Rubin wrote that using what they called an in-depth interviewing technique, a researcher may gain a better understanding of events or situations he or she may not have witnessed or participated in:

If what you need to find out cannot be answered simply or briefly, if you anticipate that you may need to ask people to explain their answers or give examples or describe their experiences, then you rely on in-depth interviews. Through qualitative [in-depth] interviews you can understand experiences and
reconstruct events in which you did not participate . . . [and] delve into important personal issues. (pp. 2-3)

Rubin and Rubin noted that in-depth interviews lead to more fluid, conversational questions and answers, where the researcher “gently guides a conversational partner in an extended discussion. The researcher elicits depth and detail about the research topic by following up on answers given by the interviewee during the discussion” (p. 4). The in-depth nature of Rubin and Rubin’s interview style, a more conversational nature that is open to the interviewee’s responses, influenced my stylistic approach to the actual interview questions used in the study. Thus, piloting the interview questions served a critical role in this study, allowing me to try out the questions and then refine not the questions themselves but my stylistic to the questions.

Next, I came across Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) term, “responsive interviewing,” which became influential to this study’s interviews, and, ultimately, my desire to conduct the most effective, depth-oriented interviews possible to respond to my guiding research questions:

Responsive interviewing is intended to communicate that qualitative interviewing is a dynamic and iterative process, not a set of tools to be applied mechanically. In this model, the researcher should adapt to the varying relationships between researcher and conversational partner, and change as the purpose of the interview evolves. (p. 15)

The focus of “qualitative [responsive] interviewing,” Rubin and Rubin added, “is not simply learning about a topic, but also learning what is important to those being studied”
Since this study focused on perception, learning what was important to my participants was key to answering the guiding research questions. In short, I felt as though the voice and the emphasis of the interviews should be dictated by the perspectives of those being studied. Thus, Rubin and Rubin’s interview technique of in-depth and responsive interviewing allowed me to find what I felt was a reliable and productive way to nurture and respect my participants’ perceptions about reading with image literacies in this graphic novel.

The interview questions themselves then stayed the same from the pilot phase to the actual study (see Appendix A). Yet, due to the unpredictable nature of each participant’s perceptions, the interviews in the actual study contained further questions that, even though spawned from the original questions used in both the pilot phase and the study, took the interviews in different directions. Essentially, I operated as a responsive interviewer and supported where the participants took each interview conversation, meaning I felt free to move away from the base questions when needed, but yet made sure to cover all of the questions that were originally intended (the participants were asked, as base questions, all of the questions contained in Appendix A).

For the teacher participant, each interview lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour. For the student participant, the interviews had a wide range of length. The first, before reading, interview lasted 30 minutes. The second, during reading interview, lasted 20 minutes. The last interview, after reading the graphic novel, lasted 35 minutes.
Journals

Along with interviews, Merriam (1998) and E. Eisner (1991) both stated that multi-case studies should focus on at least one other form of data collection. In this study, the teacher and the student were given a journal as a second data collection method. Each participant was told that he or she could write as many journals as he or she might like, but that it would be best to think about the time frame of the study while doing so. In other words, journal writing was advised to occur before reading the graphic novel, during the reading of the graphic novel, and after the reading of the graphic novel. Appendix B details the lists of suggested prompts for these time frames, but participants were also encouraged to simply free write or work from their own self-generated prompts as well.

The journals were intended to be a further tool that allowed me to see the perceptions that each participant was having about reading this graphic novel. As such, the journals complemented the interviews, which obviously occurred at specific times and places; the journal, more specifically, offered the two case study participants more ownership and fluidity to control and offer their image literacy perceptions and experiences when they felt inclined to do so, a critical component when trying to capture perception, for perceptions are rarely ever stationary, and are more likely to be fluid and spontaneous (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2007; Messaris, 1994; The New London Group, 1996). Essentially, the journals allowed participants to encounter and engage in spontaneous perceptions outside of the interviews. To truly capture the most realistic perceptions possible in this study, then, it was critical that as many perceptual moments
be captured as possible. It was the hope that the flexibility and immediate availability of the journal would help secure better results for capturing those perceptions, especially allowing for time, space, and opportunity to capture those perceptions as they occurred.

Each case study participant wrote three journal entries; the participants mirrored the interview structure in their journal writing, and each wrote one journal for each time frame of the study, using the time frames before, during, and after reading the graphic novel. Due to his AS diagnosis, the student participant chose to talk through his journals, and he elected to have his mother take dictation, a method he frequently uses at school for his writing as well. His mother, accustomed to this technique, stated that she writes down exactly, verbatim, what he says, and has no interest in correcting any usage, structural, or language errors she may hear: “I let him be himself,” she said. “They’re his thoughts the way he wants them.” Since I was concerned that this could perhaps be a validity issue, both the participant and his mother discussed at great length how they are accustomed to her transcribing his thoughts. His teacher further confirmed that when this particular student turns in work that has been dictated from home it appears to mirror his in-school writing voice and style. Thus, the student participant dictated three journals, each about a page in length. The teacher, on the other hand, typed her journals, and wrote from one and a half to two pages for each entry.

On a side note, the option of tape-recording journal thoughts was offered to the participants. Neither participant chose this option.
Data Analysis

Memos

For this study, I wrote what Bogdan and Biklen (1998) referred to as reflective memos. Memo writing, according to Bogdan and Biklen, is a space to “read over your data and write a one- or two-page summary of what you think is emerging” (p. 36), an attempt to develop links between what you theoretically know or think and the data. Bogdan and Biklen further explained that memo writing should occur regularly if the researcher truly wishes for it to aid in the reflexive nature of the study. This process, they continued, helps the researcher connect his or her own thoughts with larger, theoretical issues emerging from the study.

Next, this study applied Krippendorff’s (1980) work on inference to perform data analysis. Inference, he believed, is the key player in communicating the connection or response between a researcher’s guiding questions and the data collected and analyzed. Inference, in its essence, is a place where the researcher and the reader should be able to come together to follow the guiding inquiry questions and begin to see responsive answers emerging from the data in return.

In this study, I began to make inferences by reviewing the interviews and journals numerous times, until, within my reflective memo writing, I kept seeing the same categorical labels appearing over and over again. To explain this process in more detail, however, these were my steps: First, I looked at the interviews. Then I reviewed the journals. Each time I read either an interview or a journal, I wrote a reflective memo. After I had read the interviews and journals numerous times (six times), I spent a
significant amount of time reflecting and thinking about what themes were emerging from my readings of the data, ultimately showing up and being discussed in the reflective memos time and time again. When looking for emergent categories, however, I expected and was open to continuous refinement of my thoughts and reflections, including misimpressions of early, potential categories that did not hold up over time and further readings and analysis, collapsible categorization, and relabeling. Altheide (1996) wrote, “The goal is to understand the process, to see the process in the types and meanings of the documents under investigation” (p. 43). By reading the journals and interviews alongside each other numerous times, and by writing reflective memos, the data analysis eventually began to yield emergent categorical labels for the participant’s perceptions about reading with image literacies in Bone.

Krippendorff’s two terms of “recording units” and “context units” were used to label these emergent categories (pp. 58-59). Recording units are categories that emerge and have very specific boundaries; for instance, when one watches television one can label different characters on a sitcom as “male and female characters.” A context unit, on the other hand, broadens and umbrellas a recording unit category and sets larger, limited boundaries around that recording unit; for instance, a recording unit may be male or female characters and a context unit may be “characters on TV sitcoms.” Context units are still fluid, however, despite their broad and encompassing categorization. They are fluid in that they can overlap with each other and retain many different recording units underneath them. In this study, one example of a context unit, as is seen in Chapter 4, is
“reading for self,” and a recording unit underneath that context unit is “perceiving reading with image literacies as pleasurable.”

When coding the data I also invoked Altheide’s (1996) strategy of using gerunds to label my categories. Gerunds are verbal nouns that end in -ing. For instance, some categories this study could have possibly encountered might have been: stereotyping, labeling, growing, and so on. In this study, the most sensible gerund label was perceiving. The word perceiving, as a category, was frequently noted in my reflective memos to be followed by certain types of perceptive moments, which is detailed in Chapter 4.

While seeing gerunds as a way to conceptualize categories, Altheide (1996) also explained the significance of being transparent with qualitative data analysis. To be transparent, he stated, is to allow readers to relive your analysis as if they were or are with you during the process of analysis, to show readers your “hand,” as if playing a game of cards (p. 79). In case studies such as this one, it is critically important that the reader feel as though he or she can envision each case study participant, can visualize, through the researcher’s writing, the participant’s evolving perceptions, can virtually feel as though he or she is somehow living through the data collection with the researcher. When the reader aesthetically experiences this type of response through the researcher’s writing about the study, the researcher has probably created a trusting, reliable relationship between herself, the study, and the potential audience. Hence, the reader will hopefully be left with a sense of validity about what has been studied, how the research
questions, data collection, and data analysis worked together in order to respond to the overarching research questions.

**Cross-Case Analysis**

These two cases were seen as individual studies and then as a collective unit of study. To this end, I performed a cross-case analysis of how each individual case study’s emergent findings fit with or contradicted the other case study. Further, I asked a colleague who works in literacy studies to serve as a peer reviewer and analyze my cross-case analytical conclusions. The peer reviewer was given one week to read the data, the individual case study emergent categories, and then perform her own cross-case analysis. We then met to compare our analysis. Strikingly, upon our first meeting this peer reviewer and I agreed ultimately with my cross-case analysis, for she also found it striking that “the student and the teacher,” as I found as well, “were so comparable in their emergent themes.”

**Validity**

Krippendorff (1980), Altheide (1996) and Maxwell (2005) each agreed that one final key to qualitative research and data analysis is validity. Krippendorff’s text provides the best comprehensive definition for validity by stating that a study is “valid to the extent its inferences are upheld in the face of independently obtained evidence” (p. 155). All three of these scholars, in fact, agreed that inferences are valid if they are shown to be upheld, and, I might add for clarification, if what is analyzed can be shown to respond back to or answer the guiding research questions.
Maxwell (2005) provided a helpful validity checklist that I used in this study’s data analysis; and although Maxwell might not advocate for these checklist items to be addressed one-by-one in a qualitative study with more participants, I used them as individual checklist items due to the particular and specific contexts of this study’s emphasis on one teacher participant and one student participant. Two of Maxwell’s validity considerations that were used in this study are: “rich” data and respondent validation.

Rich data works well with the interviews and the journals collected in this study. In reference to the interviews particularly, the responsive interviewing style allowed me to concentrate on listening to the participants’ voices and ideas as much as possible; thus, the interviews were rich as data sources, for they were in-depth and went in directions that I could not have predicted as a researcher. The journals were also rich in that they were conducted by the two case study participants on their own time, outside of our time together, where it was hoped that they would express their thoughts and ideas as much on their own as possible, without the intrusion of the research or the research itself. In essence, rich, in this study, is related to the quality of the data over the quantity of the data.

To further ensure for validity, the research also undertook member checks or respondent validation. Merriam (2002) explained the significance behind member checks:

You take your tentative findings back to some of the participants (from whom you derived the raw data through interviews or observations) and ask whether your interpretation “rings true.” While you may have used different words, participants
should be able to recognize their experience in your interpretation or suggest some fine-tuning to better capture their perspectives. (p. 26)

After I read and reread the data and saw some early reliable categories for recording and context units, I shared these tentative findings with the two participants. For the teacher, I composed a document-type essay or table that exposed my tentative findings (please refer to Appendix C). For the student, I wrote a more conversational, brief summary that focused particularly on what he said to make a certain category emerge and be a likely finding (Appendix D). My extra effort in doing this with the student was to be as clear as possible, since he is 12 years old.

The procedure for handling the member checks occurred as follows. Participants were given handouts of Appendixes C and D to detail what I saw as emergent findings. After taking two days to think about the emergent categories, the case study participants were then asked to call or write (via email) about any changes or revisions they would like to suggest. Each participant stated that he or she had no further suggestions.

Merriam (2002) discussed peer review and inter-rater reliability as other measurements of validity. This study underwent an inter-rater, peer review process, which Merriam described as asking a peer reviewer “to scan some of the raw data and assess whether the findings are plausible based on the data” (p. 26). Having not only myself, but also two peer reviewers or raters examine the data and either confirm or suggest alterations to the findings created a greater sense of validity within this study. The peer review was conducted following the member check.
Specifically, each rater was given 20 percent of the collected data, cut out on white paper, and a handout that explained the emergent categories (see Appendix E). Each piece of data was then placed within a baggie; each baggie had a label that corresponded to the emergent category.

The inter-rater process revealed the following results for the teacher’s case study. In regards to the overall finding of reading as a teacher the inter-raters and I agreed in the following percentages: thinking about the reading relationship between images and words 89% of the time, thinking about how image literacies connect to ELA curriculum 91% of the time. In reference to the finding of the teacher’s case study and reading for self, the inter-raters and I agreed in the following percentages: thinking about the fun and/or pleasure involved with reading image literacies in a graphic novel 95% of the time, thinking about how image literacies reach out to struggling readers 92% of the time. The student’s case study findings and inter-rater process also revealed significant agreement rates. When looking at the student participant and the finding of reading for school, the inter-raters and I agreed in the following percentages: thinking about the reading relationship between images and words 88% of the time, thinking about how image literacies might work in his ELA classroom 89% of the time, and thinking about his ELA teacher’s reaction to Bone 99% of the time. In the student’s case study finding of reading for self, the inter-raters and I agreed in the following percentages: thinking about the fun and/or pleasure involved in reading image literacies with a graphic novel 95% of the time, and thinking about reading with image literacies and comprehension and struggling readers 94% of the time.
Reseacher Ethics

The data collected and the memo writing conducted during the data collection and then analysis further underwent and was guided by ethical considerations. Maxwell (2005) defined ethics as those measures we take to protect our study’s participants. Thus, an ultimate and deep respect for each participant influenced my decisions to conduct both member checks and inter-rater reliability, as previously mentioned.

Summary

With an emphasis on methodology, this chapter addressed how the data in this study were collected and then analyzed. In the upcoming chapters on findings and conclusions, I attempt to paint a clearer picture of what Lamott (1995) called the “one-inch picture frame,” a focused-picture of the perceptions the teacher and the student had of reading with image literacies in Bone. In other words, in the following chapters this one-inch picture frame will begin to show a respondent relationship between the study itself, the guiding research questions, and the impact such findings might have on the future of literacy research and the relevant topics areas outlined in Chapter 2. Most particularly, this chapter has led us to chapter 4, where the guiding research questions and the data analysis generate some findings in regards to this specific graphic novel and the participants’ perceptions of reading with image literacies.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of the two case study participants as they interacted with an image-dominant piece of literature, the graphic novel *Bone* (J. Smith, 2005). The two participants in this study were considered as individual cases, and the results of these two individual case analyses are shared in this chapter. The cases are then examined collectively, as a multi-case study. The emergent findings from the two case studies are brought together and their similarities and differences are analyzed in regards to perceptions of reading with image literacies in this particular graphic novel.

The discussion of findings is structured as follows. The general, overarching finding is discussed first, that these the two case study readers perceived of reading with images in this graphic novel on multiple levels, in different roles. Next, each case is considered individually. As individual case studies, the findings revealed that the two participants perceived of themselves as two types of readers: readers for school and readers for self. As a reader for school, the teacher found herself reading on multiple levels within her role as a teacher, and the student found himself reading on multiple levels within his role as a student. Reading for self found the teacher and the student both reading for pleasure and for success.
General Findings for Both Case Studies

The overarching finding for both case studies was that each reader found himself or herself reading with images in different roles, on multiple levels. Both readers read for school and for self, and how they perceived of these two different roles operated on multiple levels. For instance, whereas the teacher read through her lens or role as a teacher, she thought about reading with images on two levels; she thought about the reading relationship between images and words, and she thought about how this relationship could connect to her English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. She also read for herself, and in this role found herself reading for pleasure and for success.

The student, on the other hand, read through his lens as a student and thought about reading with images on three levels; he thought about the reading relationship between images and words, how image literacies could work in his ELA classroom, and about his teacher’s reaction to his reading of this graphic novel. When reading for himself, the student, similar to the teacher, also read for pleasure and for success.

The following sections offer detailed examples from the two case studies that help to articulate these findings, that the two case study participants perceived of their reading experience with image literacies in this graphic novel in multiple roles, on multiple levels: as readers for school and as readers for self.

Reading for School: Ellen’s Case Study

Reading for school meant that the teacher, Ellen, found herself reading with an individual lens that best corresponded to how she perceived of herself as an ELA teacher. Within this role, her case study revealed that she perceived of reading with image
literacies on multiple levels, perceiving the reading relationship between images and words as a comprehension technique and how, further, this relationship led to reading comprehension teaching strategies, and, related, how this relationship then led to some connections between graphic novels and her ELA curriculum.

*Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for School: The Reading Relationship Between Images and Words*

Ellen shared her perceptions about the reading relationship between images and words throughout all three interviews and in her journals. Table 1 explains this finding and its definition.

Table 1

*An Explanation for Ellen’s Case Study Finding of Reading as a Teacher and Perceiving a Reading Relationship Between Images and Words*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for School: Perceiving a reading relationship between images and words</td>
<td>Talk about how images and words work together to create meaning. Or, literally, at times reading the images and words together and communicating her reading meaning-making experience. At times, Ellen even related how her role as a teacher influenced this reading experience, and how she might think about teaching with images and words together.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
In our first interview, Ellen began to articulate what it was like for her to read images and words together previous to this study (she was speaking from her previous experiences reading children’s picture books and Selznick’s [2007] graphic novel *Hugo Cabaret*): “You’re looking at the picture, and because you are picking up on the picture, the picture is putting words into your head about what’s happening in the story.” Later in this first interview, she went on to explain this reading relationship between images and words in more detail:

You’re reading along, and then, all of a sudden, there’s 20 or so pictures. And you think that they are 20 or so pictures, but they are actually in your brain. You’re still processing the story, um, in words, but not on-the-page words. You’re looking at the picture, and because you are picking up on the picture, the picture is putting words into your head about what’s happening in the story.

Later in this same interview, Ellen again furthered her explanation about this reading relationship between images and words.

It just seems to flow, like I said. You’re just reading along, and then, all of a sudden you come across the pictures too . . . It goes from one picture, and you move to the next, and Oh! something’s slightly different than the last picture, something different here, you know, and you go to the next thing and it’s kind of like watching . . . [pause] . . . Yeah, yeah, your eyes just are moving when you are reading the actual words and it’s being processed in your brain. But your brain doesn’t stop there because there’s a picture there. It just keeps moving with the story.
After this first interview and her sharing some of these initial thoughts on her previous reading experiences with image literacies, Ellen then began her actual reading of the graphic novel *Bone*.

During our second interview, the idea of a reading relationship between images and words surfaced again. Near the beginning of our interview, I asked her how she was approaching her reading experience with *Bone*, and her response once again focused on the reading relationship between images and words:

I think that I glimpsed at the picture and then read. And then glimpsed at the picture and read. It’s kind of like when you, I don’t know, um, just like . . .

[pause] . . . One of my favorite movies is *The Pelican Brief*. I have watched that ten times, at minimum, and every time I watch it, I see something that I didn’t see before. So I think it’s the same thing with a book like this. You look at the picture, and then you keep going, but maybe I need to slow down and really look at the picture more too, and then read the words. Because I’m afraid I’m missing something if I don’t do it that way.

Following this connection between how the images and words in *Bone* worked together to remind her of watching her favorite movie, Ellen continued to talk about reading images and words together. This time, however, she began to connect the reading relationship between images and words to her literal reading of *Bone* and offered an explicit example of her perceptions about reading with images and words together:

It’s intuitive. It’s abstract. It’s all kinds of things going on. There are all kinds of thinking going on while you are reading this. What’s gonna happen next? And,
uh, you know, I didn’t expect Thorn to be a girl when I just looked at the words. I don’t know what I expected Thorn to be, but it wasn’t a girl. And who would expect Grandma Ben to be this lunatic? And she is! You can see it in the drawing more than the words. So, you know, it’s just some of the things you expect with words, you know, are expecting don’t come out that way.

Following these thoughts, Ellen then moved on to discuss what this reading relationship might be like for her students:

The pictures are there to help bridge the gap between the known and the unknown type of thing, and then if you see the picture, they [her students] see the picture, and they see what’s going on, and they form a concept in their head, and then they read what’s there then maybe it helps them to decode the word because now they have a general idea of what they’re reading about more so than just words on a plain piece of paper.

Ellen’s journal writing mirrored these thoughts about her students and her thinking as a teacher when she wrote: “the words and pictures come together to make the story. They work on their own and together.” Later in her journal she added, perhaps for further explanation: “I can use images and words together to better understand what I’m supposed to be reading. Instead of just one or the other,” to which she then added, “I could teach for better understanding, like stronger comprehension with both of these together.”

In our last interview and in her journal, Ellen shared some of her final thoughts on reading as a teacher and perceiving a reading relationship between images and words.
She focused primarily in this last interview on how images and words work together to develop the story, as story-telling devices:

It [the graphic novel] told the story through just by flipping the page, and you could look at the picture and in your mind a story was developing verbally even though there were no words sometimes on the page . . . the story is moving in your head, and the words are, maybe the words in this case are the frosting on the cake—not the pictures. Because you can look at the pictures, you see what’s going on, you see the emotion that is in the story, you see what the character is feeling, what he’s building up to and what is happening through pictures, but then you also sometimes have the text to add to your thoughts.

After so much emphasis, in all three interviews, on the reading relationship between images and words, I asked Ellen what she might say to those people who often claim that visual literacies are passive reading experiences, because the pictures or images supposedly, somehow give readers the answers:

Some people might say that the hard way is all that supposed critical thinking and that you do no critical thinking when you read a graphic novel because it’s just there for you in the images to see. If you’re looking at the pictures, you’re also interpreting what you’re looking at, and a text kind of like appears in your head.

So sometimes you do have to just look at the picture and decide what’s happening, read it, because the map hasn’t been drawn for you.

Finally, in her last journal, Ellen once again had this reading relationship between images and words in mind, and wrote, “Wondering about this images and words together.
Wonder how I could teach with it. They are like good spouses who get along but stand alone too.”

In sum, throughout her before-reading, during-reading, and after-reading interviews, Ellen repeatedly related perceptions about the reading relationship between images and words.

Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for School: Perceiving a Relationship Between Reading With Images and Words and ELA Curriculum

Reading as a teacher and seeing a reading relationship between images and words also showed that Ellen read on yet another level related to her role as a teacher. She also thought about how image literacies in this graphic novel (and, at times, other graphic novels) could connect to her ELA curriculum, as comprehension strategies. Table 2 illustrates this finding about Ellen’s perception on how image literacies can connect to her ELA curriculum (and, in a few instances, the Social Studies curriculum as well).

In our first interview, Ellen began by thinking aloud about her ELA curriculum and her desire to incorporate more visual or image literacies like the graphic novel. When I asked her what kind of reading she typically assigns in school, Ellen explained her desire to connect graphic novels to her ELA curriculum:

Well, I guess I have to work with my curriculum [laughs], but I would like to incorporate things that I think relate to the curriculum and these kinds of graphic novel stories. But maybe considered outside the curriculum and then make the relationship between the two so that it isn’t so overbearingly serious. [She later stated that she felt teaching to “the test” or “to the curriculum” could be boring.]
Table 2

Explanation for How Image Literacies, in Ellen’s Perception as a Teacher-Reader, Addressed Reading Comprehension and, Therefore, Relates to ELA Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for School:</td>
<td>Talk about how this graphic novel or image story could be used in school as an out-of-school literacy bridge that promotes reading comprehension skills and connect to ELA curriculum. Many times this talk revolved around struggling readers in particular, and Ellen literally envisioned how she could either bridge in-and-out-of school literacies for such readers with this graphic novel in her ELA curriculum or, a few times, in Social Studies curriculum as well.</td>
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But yet the whole theme of the graphic novel and the curriculum sticks together. Gives them an idea of, um, what’s the word for it? I can’t think of a good word to use, but just so that they can make a correlation in their own lives. It gives them some text potential.

Between this first interview and the during-reading interview, Ellen wrote in her journal about how graphic novels might connect to her ELA curriculum: “After speaking with you on Sunday, I immediately returned to reading Bone. I went slow and thought about how I could use this at school.”
In our second interview, Ellen took her thoughts on connecting a graphic novel to her ELA curriculum a bit further. For instance, when asked if she would assign a graphic novel, Ellen articulated this connection in more detail and related her desire to connect graphic novels to ELA curriculum and struggling readers specifically:

I would give kids who, who need to know the facts, but have a hard time learning the facts in a traditional sense some way of getting them started, getting their interest piqued in order to move into the textbook . . . I think that some kids learn by reading it, and some kids learn by watching or looking.

In this interview, Ellen sees graphic and image literacies as a way to pique the interest of students who traditionally have struggled with print-text literacies, and, specifically, she sees how images and words could possibly work together to promote reading comprehension for struggling readers.

Later in the during-reading interview, Ellen began to perceive how she literally might use Bone in her classroom and connect it to reading comprehension skills and her ELA curriculum. For example, when I asked her about what she was writing about in her journal, she stated:

Writing about the actual story, and what I think might, what I thought was going to happen. What actually did happen. Uh, the character development. How I think they [the author] are also using the whole homophone thing, for like teaching phonics. That whole thing going on. And whether I am sure that is the author’s intent to get that going, so the kids are seeing a relationship between this book they like to read and what they are learning in school, sound relationships. They
can see it too, in the relationship between pictures and the writing. Helps them understand, I think. For comprehension and so on.

Using her own reading experience as a teacher for a springboard, Ellen perceived that the author’s use of homophones could be used in her ELA curriculum, as a pedagogical place for literacy instruction for this graphic novel. She also related how the relationship between images and words could perhaps promote reading comprehension for students who benefit from seeing story meaning (and the curriculum she must teach) visually.

Ellen wrote in her journal,

I think it [*Bone*] is an integral part of any reading program, especially for students who struggle or who do not like to read. There are vocab words such as “scour” and “descendents” that are used in the story that help to build a reader’s vocabulary. And lots of phonics. I also noticed that sentence structures become more complex in the last chapter of the book. It makes me curious if this is an intentional scaffolding technique being used by the author or just a coincidence.

In her reading of [*Bone*], Ellen not only perceived a connection between image literacies and her ELA curriculum, but also wondered if the author intended for teachers, such as herself, to make such connections and to perceive such connections as facilitators of reading comprehension skills for struggling readers in particular.

During our last interview, the after-reading interview, Ellen was even more articulate about how she might connect graphic novels, like *Bone*, to her ELA curriculum; and, once again, she emphasized making this connection with struggling
readers in mind. When asked specifically to expand on a comment she made stating “graphic novels can go with English Language Arts or even Social Studies,” Ellen said, Um, a lot of times you have to, like we’ve talked about before, you have to do the in-school, out-of-school thing. In [name of struggling reader’s]’s hands the other day, this is the kid I am mostly talking about, is a graphic novel about the Boston Tea Party. Well, if they are studying the Boston Tea Party in Social Studies, which I assumed and found out they were . . . apparently he’s made a connection with it. And I’m sure he’s not the only one who’s made a connection with it. So, um, I bet we could use that in Language Arts too. I’m sure we could. Whatever teaches them and gets them to read I am all for.

In this example, Ellen saw image literacies with graphic novels as beneficial for the struggling reader’s reading comprehension, as a genre that might “connect” to struggling readers. She also thought that curricular connections could be made between such graphic novels and either the Social Studies curriculum or the ELA curriculum.

Later in this interview, Ellen spoke again of her role as a teacher and how that caused her to perceive connections between this graphic novel and the ELA curriculum. In this case, she envisioned how her reading experience with Bone could influence her teaching of characterization, and, therefore, her students’ abilities to better comprehend the different characters and their roles in this graphic novel:

Characterization would be such a good one. You know, mini, minie, and mo [pointing to her curriculum binder that is labeled “English Language Arts” on the cover and then to Bone]. They’re just all such good characters that you could use
them to connect to standards that deal with literature and characterization. This story really develops the characters. There’s no wish-washiness. It seems like, you know, the characters, their characteristics, or whatever you want to call it, stay true and develop from the beginning to the end.

When I invited her to share what she meant about truth and character development, Ellen exclaimed, “You know, they’re not flat. They’re round. Like in a classic book, something canonical. They seem real, like in good literature.” Ellen went on to discuss how motif and plot in this graphic novel could connect to both her ELA curriculum and that of the Social Studies curriculum too:

Work with the history department, social studies people could easily connect. Like the history teacher talks about time periods, and this graphic novel—some others I’ve glanced at as well—seem to have a lot of overlapping time period and literary stuff that could work together. In English I could talk more about the story. History teacher talks more on the time period.

In her journal Ellen explored this curriculum connection for ELA even more specifically, again relating her thoughts to her thinking as a teacher and the struggling readers in her ELA classroom:

It is ironic that I am doing this dissertation project with you at the same time I am doing my case study [at this time, Ellen was enrolled in a graduate level Reading Endorsement Program at Kent State University and was taking a Diagnosis and Remediation course]. When I met with my student [the one she previously identified as a struggling reader], he brought along a graphic novel . . . I asked
him about the book and also asked him if he had heard of *Bone*. He said he had read the entire series. This is a 5th grader who is barely reading at a second grade level. I think if not for this genre, he might have given up on even trying to read a library or school book. His decoding skills [with print-text literacies] are minimal. He has no fluency, and very little comprehension. Yet he has not given up on reading . . . [noted pause points written by Ellen] . . . Amazing!

For Ellen, as we have seen in these examples, reading as a teacher meant seeing connections between this graphic novel and her ELA curriculum (and, at times, the Social Studies curriculum), especially for struggling readers, and most particularly for one struggling reader with whom she was currently working.

*Reading for Self: Ellen’s Case Study*

Ellen’s case study also revealed that she was not only reading for school, but also reading for self. Her perceptions about reading for self fell into two main areas: reading for pleasure and reading for success. Within the area of reading for pleasure, her talk centered on the fun involved with reading this graphic novel, either for herself or for others, especially struggling readers. When reading for self in reference to success, Ellen’s talk revolved around struggling readers whom she confronts in her out-of-school life and her personal-familial life.

*Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for Self: Perceiving Reading With Images as Pleasurable*

From the first interview onward, and throughout her journals, Ellen talked about how reading this graphic novel, and other image-based literature she has encountered, was pleasurable. Table 3 explains this finding in more detail.
Table 3

Ellen’s Reading for Self Role Found her Reading for Pleasure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for Self:</td>
<td>In this finding, Ellen talked a lot about the pleasure she felt when reading image literacies in <em>Bone</em>, and/or, at times, the pleasure she imagined other readers, especially struggling readers might also feel while reading with image literacies in this graphic novel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceiving reading with image literacies in this graphic novel as pleasurable</td>
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Early in our before-reading interview and in her first journal entry, Ellen showed that she expected that reading this graphic novel would be pleasurable. Her first thoughts on this perception appear in her initial journal entry: “When I first looked at the cover of this book, I got the impression that this would be a fun book to read.” In our before-reading interview, Ellen complemented this journal thought when she said,

I’m not, I don’t feel like I’m going to be reading. I am just going to be there, enjoying it. I am not worried about the test. So far. I’m not worried about things because I don’t like reading it so much. I can see so much going on already [pointing to the book cover], so I don’t think I’ll feel lost.

Toward the end of this interview, Ellen explained that this sense of “seeing things going on”—when further questioned about it—created a sense of reading security that should belong in school, and that this might be one reason why she, her students, and struggling readers might think reading with graphic novels is fun outside of school:
There is something about them. Not maybe what we usually do in school, and who’s to say the all-knowing “they” has been right over time? But they just seem fun. Fun to read. Why can’t reading be fun in school? Why is that wrong?

Ellen continued to think about the pleasure or fun involved with reading graphic novels during our second interview, where she once again picked up on this line of thought. In this interview, she was even more specific about why she thought reading image literacies in this graphic novel was pleasurable. When I asked her, “So, what do you think so far?” at the beginning of our interview, she stated: “I thought it would be a fun book to read, and, uh, it’s turned out to be a really fun book to read.” When asked to expand on what that meant, she continued:

Enjoyable. Something I would read for enjoyment versus reading because I had to or I wanted to learn something. It’s just kind of like, um, uh, pleasing to read.

This book made me laugh. It’s heartwarming. You get involved with the characters. Feels good. Feels good.

Later in the same interview, Ellen continued to explain her perception of Bone as enjoyable: “It’s like I can see myself in the characters. So I want to read. That makes it fun to read, not like a textbook. But I can see where fun, in this case, could be a teaching tool.”

In her journal writing during this time between the before-reading interview and the during-reading interview, Ellen even wrote about the pleasure involved with reading image literacies in this graphic novel. In this example, she specifically relates how the fun
or pleasure that she experienced while reading could be an access point for any struggling reader, in school or outside of school:

Since I really enjoyed this book, I think other people would. I might give it to some friends, people, I don’t know, I think who have always said they are not good readers. I think they got that idea because they are picture oriented.

In the after-reading interview, again when asked in general about her reading experience, Ellen once more discussed reading with image literacies as pleasurable, and continued to relate this perception to struggling readers:

Pretty much everything I’ve said before about it being fun. It just makes the whole, um, experience a lot more pleasurable that you can experience the images, and a lot of kids that do struggle, and, again, nothing against the kids that don’t, I guess I keep bringing up the struggling thing only because that’s who I am mostly thinking of when I read. They could see the pictures, I think, in their mind and use them for context clues to get the story, what’s going on and all.

Ellen saw the pleasure she was experiencing with image literacies as not only transferable to struggling readers, but also transferable to comprehension skills that might benefit any struggling reader. She explained this perception of pleasure and its connection to struggling readers in more detail a little later in this last interview:

My friends, even some family, I know still struggle to read. I don’t know about if they are not good at it. I think it’s more like they were not good with print novels in school and think that is the only kind of reading. I have so much fun reading
this one and the other graphic novels I have looked at that I am going to suggest
them to some of my friends. My sister too.

In Ellen’s mind, when any traditionally struggling literacy learner is able to read and
experience pleasure, and is able to do so with an image-based story like *Bone*, their
reading experience should be valued, embraced, and encouraged.

As she answered my final question about her overall impressions about reading
image literacies in this graphic novel, Ellen returned to the idea of pleasure:

I think it’s a good thing. I-I think that possibly, I think that I don’t see any harm
whatsoever [earlier I had asked her about critics who say graphic novels are
juvenile in nature, and like comics]. Like I said, I have no problem with reading,
it’s [the pictures] now just extra icing on the cake. So kids are reading? They’re
looking at the pictures. It’s making it more pleasurable. For someone who is
struggling this is a really significant development—a big deal—‘cause the words
now can have meaning for them through pictures. They’re actually seeing it, and
able to envision what is going on.

After a brief pause, Ellen continued:

So many people I know could like reading because of these. I like reading more.
Maybe I’m a more visual person than I know. So so so many friends think they
are not good readers or are not able to like reading. I think they would like this.
I’d bet on it. School reading messed with their ideas of reading so it’s kind of sad.

In this last example, Ellen perceives a multi-leveled connection between image literacies
and pleasure: that image literacies are pleasurable, that this pleasure will engage
struggling readers, and that the combination of reading with images and pleasure will allow struggling readers to envision the story better than print-text literacies as successful literacy learners.

*Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for Self: Perceiving Reading With Images as Successful Reading Experiences*

Ellen perceived reading this graphic novel in reference to reading for success as well. Table 4 explains this finding.

Table 4

*Ellen’s Perception of Reading With Image Literacies as Related to Reading Success for Herself and her Daughter*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ellen’s Case Study and Reading for Self: Perceiving reading with image literacies as successful for herself and for her daughter (who has traditionally struggled with print-text literacies).</td>
<td>Talk about how Ellen, herself, felt successful while reading with image literacies in this graphic novel (and sometimes with other image-based literacies).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Also, Ellen spoke about how her daughter, who has traditionally struggled with print-text literacies, has—both now and in the past—found success in reading with image literacies outside of school.</td>
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In our first interview, and in her first journal, Ellen spoke about and wrote about how she and her daughter have felt success while reading with image literacies. She concentrated first on her daughter as a struggling reader:
My little one [daughter] was not into reading at all. And so, contrary to popular opinion . . . she would not do as well in school as my daughter who loved to read. So I knew that if I could find something that she did enjoy reading, could succeed with and so on, that hopefully it would get her hooked and move her to the next step to reading something else, and, just, you know, it would be like a domino effect. So we finally found books with more pictures and images. So she got into that whole genre of books, and once she got hooked on those it just kept going and she felt like a good reader.

When I followed her statement about her daughter by asking her if she found this feeling of success significant to her daughter’s ability to consider herself a reader, even if it was for image literacies and outside of school contexts, she said: “Absolutely! Absolutely!”

Later in this interview, Ellen related her own feelings about how she might have found more success with reading print-text literacies if there had been visual images in some of the print-text literacies she was asked to read in middle school: “I wasn’t captivated by the book The Giver in junior high. I couldn’t imagine it or see it. But, now, if I had a graphic novel of it I think I would feel more successful with it.”

In her journal, Ellen wrote,

I’m thinking about what it means to read well with pictures, like how does one do it well, like a good reader. The cover makes me feel like I will be a success with it, but I don’t know yet so much.
Ellen picked up on this idea of what it means to be a successful reader with image literacies when I brought up her comments about *The Giver* at the beginning of our during-reading interview:

In-school reading never made me feel like I did well. I didn’t feel good reading, like I was smart like I do with *Bone*. I’m a good reader. I mean, I’m a reading teacher, but when I can see it I feel so much more clear and good about my reading. This is such a good reading feeling and still a good, like deeper story, that you feel successful with it.

Ellen then explained that allowing herself to feel success with image literacies was a challenging feeling, because it was more about her valuing her out-of-school reading experiences than her in-school reading experiences.

It’s been festering in my head that I wouldn’t allow myself to read this stuff before now, like it wasn’t smart or something, but now that I do I like it and feel so good about it, like I really get it and feel like a stronger reader even. I don’t or didn’t have a lot of experience with it before now, but now I see where readers can feel so good about their reading and like good readers because there is actually so much story going on. But you see it, and it’s just as deep. I wasn’t expecting reading with images to be heavy. I was expecting it to be a lighter version of reading. It’s not and I feel like a stronger reader because I am doing the pictures and the words. Two of them.
Based on that statement, I next asked her what she thought others might think about her reading with images as a successful reading experience. In response she drew another analogy for her perceptions:

I can do it. I actually ended up well with it, very. I think that if they looked at it, and read more than the first page than they’d have to agree with me. . . . What is the difference if I, uh, I, uh, have success with doing something, like if I show somebody how to make a pie or I write it down on a piece of paper and hand it to them, and say, “Here, make a pie!” I think that some people succeed by reading it, some people or kids learn by watching it or reading it, make the pie by seeing. But when it’s all said and done, both succeed.

In her journal, Ellen again repeated this idea: “Not sure why success with reading has to be so prescribed anymore after our last interview. Why do we think of it that way? I succeeded with images. My daughter did too.” In her journal, Ellen wrote: “I am a good reader with these graphic novels. I can do it. I wonder why success with reading for some of us has to be outside of school. Seems ironic, maybe sad? to me.”

In our last interview Ellen made an analogy between reading with image literacies and success. She compared reading with images to learning to mix your own driveway pavement, versus hiring someone to do it for you; if you hire someone to do it for you, she argued, you experience little success. But if you do the job yourself and learn how to do it, you experience success. In her journal she also continued to think about image literacies and success for herself and for her daughter: “[Daughter’s name] and I are
actually both good readers with pictures. These graphic novels let us feel so good and succeed in ways I have never felt before.”

Summary: Ellen

Ellen’s case study findings, in conclusion, revealed that she read with two perceptive roles in mind, as a teacher and for herself. Within these roles, she further read on multiple levels. In reference to reading as a teacher, she perceived a reading relationship between images and words, and also perceived connections between reading comprehension, image literacies, and her ELA curriculum. When reading for herself, Ellen perceived of reading with image literacies in this graphic novel as pleasurable and as successful reading experiences, and, in both cases, considered struggling readers within those two perceptions.

Reading for School: Artemis’ Case Study

Artemis, the student, perceived his reading experiences with image literacies in Bone in a school-related role as well. His student-based reading perceptions fell into three different perceptions: thinking about the reading relationship between images and words, thinking about how image literacies could work in his ELA classroom, and thinking about his ELA teacher’s reaction to Bone.

Artemis’ Case Study and Reading for School: Perceiving a Reading Relationship Between Images and Words

Artemis’ first reading for school finding involved the reading relationship between images and words. Table 5 offers an overview of this finding.
Table 5

*Artemis’ Perception of a Reading Relationship Between Images and Words*

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<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artemis’ Case Study and Reading for School:</td>
<td>In this finding, Artemis talked about how the images and the words worked together to help him understand the story, and he often compared and/or contrasted this type of reading experience with the type of “normal” reading he does for school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceiving a Reading Relationship Between Images and Words</td>
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In our before-reading interview, Artemis first articulated his perception of a reading relationship between images and words when I asked him what he read when he was not in school: “I like graphic novels because you can actually see what they are doing. Instead of having to read, and you could be confused. You still have to read, but they are pretty cool.” Previous to this study, Artemis claimed to have read one graphic novel, Eoin Colfer’s (2007) *Artemis Fowl*. Next, I asked Artemis what he meant by claiming to be able to see what they were doing:

Like, if it’s a picture of him walking. If he’s walking, in like a squiggly line, that’s like, lead to nowhere, in a book you wouldn’t really be able to understand that.

But in graphic novels, since you can see what he’s actually doing, you would actually be able to see and know what he was doing.

Next, I asked Artemis what he meant by “in a book.” He stated, “Like in school, school books. You can’t see what they are doing.”
Later in this interview, I asked Artemis to look at the cover of Bone and tell me what he thought the story was about. As he looked over the images on the cover, he explained what he was reading or seeing:

A: Probably about someone trying to go on a quest. And something popping out, just like, attacking him because seeing as how there’s eyes in the background that you can’t see the shape of. Looks like a blob. Um, so, that’s what I think the book is going to be about. He’s going to be, like, traveling on a quest, and he’s going to meet some weird creature-thingy’s, and he’s going to have to fight some dudes.

K: Why do you think he is traveling?

A: Because he’s got a roadmap and a backpack.

Toward the end of the interview I asked Artemis what he would think about a graphic novel being used at school, as opposed to “a book,” as he sees it, and if he thought it could be educational:

Well, it might be. If it’s got words, and it kind of does. It does. Actually, it helps you learn by pictures, seeing what happens. Like, if they somehow made a graphic novel on how, um, someone discovered electricity. That would be educational.

I then asked Artemis about why he likes graphic novels, and, once again, he pointed out the reading relationship between images and words:

K: So what makes you like them? Because you already said you like them.
A: Well, probably because you can actually see what they are doing. Like I said earlier, like, you’re not confused by reading the words, and it doesn’t make sense.

K: When do you ever feel like that?

A: When they use weird words. Like, um, like, “via,” he exited the hallway. I didn’t exactly get what that meant. I had to look it up in the dictionary. But if it was a graphic novel I would be able to see. Well, he’s exiting, so that means via means through or exiting through. Graphic novels help you figure out what words mean.

K: Hmmm. I wonder what you mean by that. What does it mean to read then? Can you explain that a little more?

A: To read is to look at something and get the picture of it, see what it’s like.

Kind of.

K: So what about reading with images?

A: It means that you choose to read with images instead of with words. ‘Cause you like images better.

In his journal, Artemis explained that, “Graphic novels help me read because they show you what’s happening.”

In the during-reading interview, Artemis continued to talk about the reading relationship between images and words, and he began to compare reading a graphic novel to reading what he called a “normal book.” When we started to talk, Artemis immediately
began to share how the images and the words were both influencing his reading experience:

K: So how is your reading going?

A: Well, I am reading both really, the pictures and words. But I pay more attention to the pictures because they are, first of all, pictures and easier to understand for me, and, second of all, they kind of tell me the story better than the words. Because there’s pictures there. You don’t have to be very detailed, or you can’t, with words, and the detailed words have to be sometimes words that you don’t exactly know.

K: Why do you think that?

A: I think that it is technically “reading” ’cause reading is understanding something from picture or a word.

When I asked him what he thought about reading with images at this point he told me it was “better than normal,” to which, I responded, “What does ‘normal’ mean?” Artemis answered: “Like a normal book. ‘Cause you can actually see what’s happening. Sometimes gets really complicated, and you are like, ‘Hey! Wait! Who’s doing this?’ But in this book you can see it.”

Later in the interview Artemis explained what he thought an actual book was now that he was reading a graphic novel:

I would say it [Bone] is an actual book. It’s a thing with words and pictures that you can understand and read. Well, it can be either one. Pictures or words. Or both. Sometimes only words. Sometimes only pictures. Sometimes both.
For Artemis, a book can contain images, words, or both.

Artemis next explained in more specific detail how he perceives of the images and the words as working together: “If you don’t know what a word meant you could look at the picture and figure out what the word meant.” In his journal, Artemis wrote about a literal reading experience in which he paid close attention to what the images were telling him about the overall story: “I like the drawings because they look cool and Bone looks very simple, but all his surroundings show you detail so you think about it more. The words add to the picture in your head.”

Artemis was even more articulate and specific about the reading relationship between images and words during our after-reading interview:

K: So what do the pictures do?
A: They help illustrate it better.
K: What does it mean to illustrate something?
A: Like, to tell how it’s going on. What it’s doing. Words and pictures. Words can be pretty complicated. Like, if I say he went “in” to this, this and this, or whatever. There are several other ways of saying that. With drawing there’s only one way to draw that.
K: Really?
A: Yeah.
K: Well, what if you had a different artistic style than the illustrator or artist of a graphic novel?
A: Like, by one way of drawing it, I mean, like, you can, like, there’s only one style in which you can draw it. You can only draw him going in. That’s the only thing you can draw if you want to make him go into something. It’s specific as to what you want to show.

After he thought about how an artist’s decisions can influence the reader’s understanding of the story, Artemis went on to discuss how while reading with images he creates visual or mental pictures of words in his head:

When I read the images, I can see the words. In my head or something. Makes sense ‘cause I can see what’s going on, think about it or something . . . [5 second pause] . . . It’s like I can see it moving along, the story and get it.

In his journal, Artemis also became more philosophical about his thoughts on reading images and words together:

Sometimes I read the words. Sometimes I read the pictures. Sometimes both. I can understand more with pictures, but the words help me too. I like that they are together if I get lost, just in case I need the words. Pictures best though. I get it more that way.

At this point in our interview, Artemis was thinking about how he approaches reading with images, whether he reads the images, the words, or both together. And why? In this final interview, Artemis’ last statement about the reading relationship between images and words was: “I wish I had choices like images and words, between them, at school.”

In all three interviews, Artemis discussed the reading relationship between images and words and how his thoughts on this new reading experience compared to his reading
experiences at school. In summary, Artemis perceived of a reading relationship between images and words and was ultimately able to articulate that he wished he had a choice to read with images and words in his school reading experiences.

*Artemis’ Case Study and Reading for School: Perceiving How Image Literacies Could be Used in his ELA Classroom*

When reading as a student, Artemis’ case study also showed that he thought about how images literacies might work in his ELA classroom. Table 6 explains this finding.

Table 6

*Artemis’ Perception That Graphic Novels Could Be Used in ELA Classrooms*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artemis’ Case Study Finding and Reading for School:</strong></td>
<td>Artemis talked at length about how graphic novels are mostly read outside of school, and yet, in his reading experience, he could envision ways this could be used in his ELA classroom. <em>Bone</em> could be used in his ELA classroom instruction.</td>
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</table>

In the before-reading interview, Artemis compared his in-school reading experiences with his out-of-school, graphic novel, reading experiences. During the very first minute of the interview, when asked what he thought in general about graphic novels, Artemis stated: “I like graphic novels because you can actually see what they’re doing. Instead of having to read it in a textbook where you can’t see it and can’t get it.” Later in this interview, Artemis continued to make in-and-out-of school literacy
connections for graphic novels. This was most evident when he was asked about his perceptions on reading for school. Specifically, he explained that he calls textbooks at school “normal” reading, and when I asked him about his word choice of “normal” to define books at school, he said, “Like textbooks at school. With freaky-smiley kids in them that have, like, the weirdest, fake pictures [makes face].” After he made a face, and laughed, I asked him what he would read on his own, given free choice:

K: What, if you had a choice, what would you want to read?

A: Stories I can get. Not kids’ books, like Rose’s [his little sister, who is 6]. Not picture books. Graphic novels because they are stories, like we read in school, but with pictures and I get it.

K: What do you mean exactly?

A: If I could read a graphic novel with Mrs. [ELA teacher’s name] I could get the story. I would understand. Um, like a good grade.

Expanding upon his thoughts on textbooks in school and graphic novels as possibilities for ELA classrooms, Artemis’ before-reading journal thoughts also brought up the idea that graphic novels could possibly work in his ELA classroom: “Normal books don’t make sense. I wish we could read these in school. It might work for me.”

At the beginning of the during-reading interview, Artemis again picked up on this idea of graphic novels as potentially useful in ELA classrooms: “My teachers could use this. For character stuff. We talk about characters and why they do things, and if they are real, or not real, if we can believe them or something.” Following this comment, I asked Artemis to talk more about what he was learning from Bone:
K: What have you learned from reading this then? About characters or anything else?

A: Well, first of all, um, I don’t know if this one [*Bone*] is an educational one, but I do know that they do make educational ones [graphic novels].

K: What do you know about that? Or how is it similar or different? Or, I guess, what do you think is educational or not?

A: It’s like with *Bone* the character is really developed, like they talk about at school. Because, it’s like, he’s basically got every thought that a real person would have, and it seems like he is actually thinking what a real person would. Believable stuff. First of all, the pictures illustrate what he’s thinking and saying too. I’m excited by these characters, . . . The ones at school, school reading are BORING!

His journal thoughts during this time also showed that Artemis perceived a connection between graphic novels, like *Bone*, and ELA classroom texts:

I think we could read these in school and talk about things we talk about there. That would be better. It makes better sense to me that way to understand things like characters and stuff if I can see them.

The after-reading interview showed that Artemis continued to think about how graphic novels could be used in his ELA classroom. For instance, one of Artemis’ comments during this interview was about the texts he reads in school and how they compare to his graphic novel reading experiences:

A: All I do for school is read stinky textbooks.
K: What is a textbook in your mind?

A: Let’s see. This is on, a, um, scale of, like a textbook, it’s like a spider. And, a graphic novel is like a hippopotamus [popular Christmas song for children at time of interview, a song Artemis and his sister had been singing together while playing with Legos previous to the interview].

K: And what does it mean to be either a spider or a hippopotamus?

A: Well, graphic novels, it’s like a perfect comparison really. Graphic novels are way more easy to understand for me with pictures. If we could use that in school, well, wow, I would get reading. I could be a reader.

Following this link between being identified as a reader and/or a nonreader in reference to what teachers assign as texts in class, Artemis then explained that if graphic novels could be used in schools struggling readers might be better able to understand their reading experiences:

K: Would you want your teacher to assign something like Bone?

A: Yeah. [Laughs]

K: Why?

A: Because the more stupider kids in the classroom could read it and get it.

K: More stupider?

A: ‘Cause if you’re like, it, uh, gives context clues. Like, if you don’t know what a words means, you can look at the picture and find out.

K: So what is a context clue then?
A: Our teacher talks about it at school a ton. Like, clues that are in the sentence, really, but in the graphic novel they are, um, in the actions they show the characters doing so I can see it.

Near the end of this interview, I asked Artemis what he would want to tell teachers about graphic novels:

A: Do it! Give kids graphic novels. Because kids would be able to get it. Read them. Get like what it means and stuff. Because, really, I mean, you got the pictures and the words working for ya, so it’s easier to understand and read.

K: Do you think kids your age are reading graphic novels at school?

A: Well, yeah, I know several kids who are, but they are not reading them for class. Only at home. Sometimes sneaking in study hall.

In his journal for after-reading, Artemis echoed similar sentiments regarding in-and-out-of school literacies:

Lots of us read stuff like *Bone* in study hall. Study hall I can read what I want. Not like textbooks and weird smiley kids in them. Not real pictures that don’t mean anything to me or the book. Pictures like in *Bone* that make the story go better.

In this finding, Artemis perceived of graphic novels as applicable to in-school literacies, particularly those taught in ELA. He even went so far as to claim that if he could use graphic novels as texts in ELA he could be considered a reader.
**Artemis’ Case Study and Reading for School: Perceiving His Teacher’s Reaction to Bone**

A third finding for Artemis and reading for school involved his interaction with, and, hence perception of, his ELA teacher’s reaction to *Bone*. Table 7 explains this finding.

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<th>Finding</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Artemis’ Case Study Finding and Reading for School: Perception concerning his teacher’s reaction to <em>Bone</em></td>
<td>In this finding, Artemis relates two items: First, he discusses the interaction he had with his teacher when she noticed that he had a graphic novel at school, and, second, he offers his perceptions and reflections on this interaction.</td>
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</table>

During our before-reading interview, Artemis shared that he had taken *Bone* to school. He said he took it to school to show his friends, for, as he stated, “All the other kids had read it already. So I wanted to have it too.” When he shared that his teacher saw him with *Bone* I asked him what he meant: “Like, I showed *[Bone]* to my English teacher, and she said, ‘You should read an actual book and not a comic book.’” And I was like, ‘It is actually considered a book.’” When asked how his teacher responded and why he made the above comment when he showed it to her, he explained:

A: I just wanted to see what she would think.

K: And she thought it wasn’t an actual book?
A: Yeah, and I said, “Well, really, technically it is.” She didn’t believe me, so I just left it at that.

K: Why do you think she didn’t believe you?

A: ’Cause she’s just not used to graphic novels. Doubt she’s ever seen one before.

K: Would you say it’s an actual book?

A: I’d probably end up in the principal’s office, but I would say it’s an actual book. It’s a thing with words and pictures that you can understand, and read. Well, it can be either one though. Pictures or words. Sometimes only words. Sometimes only pictures. Sometimes both. Those are still all books because I can read them and understand a story.

In his before-reading journal, Artemis stated: “If we could read these in school, my teacher might see that they do tell stories.”

Artemis continued to think about his teacher’s reaction to Bone at our during-reading interview: “I still think my teacher doesn’t understand about graphic novels.” When asked what he meant, more particularly, he explained: “It’s like she hasn’t read one. If she read it, she might get it.” When I asked him to explain what it might mean for his teacher to “get it,” Artemis further explained:

Might understand what I mean, and the other kids. Like, why we always have them in study hall. We read this stuff and get what the story is because we can see it. If, um, we can see things, like when we watch TV, I think we like it more and want to keep reading them and stuff. Like, all the other kids already read this one
[Bone]. So if she would try it, she might get what we meant that this was really a story. With characters and other things she talks about.

In his journal, Artemis brought up his teacher again: “My teacher doesn’t understand me. She doesn’t understand the other kids. I’m not dumb. I can read. Just with pictures.”

Finally, in the after-reading interview Artemis again mentioned his teacher: “I’ve been thinking about my teacher. She doesn’t know graphic novels or Bone. Probably because she doesn’t, or when she said it wasn’t a book, ask me if she could try it. She doesn’t know. That’s not fair.” When I asked him what would have been more fair, Artemis stated: “She should try it. Then tell me if it’s a book or not. She didn’t look at all.” In his final journal Artemis again mentioned similar thoughts about his teacher: “I tried to read this in school and got in trouble from my teacher. She said it’s not reading one day.”

In sum of this first finding on reading for school, Artemis thought about how images and words work together, thought about how graphic novels can be considered potential texts in his ELA classroom reading experiences, and thought about his teacher’s reaction to Bone.

Reading for Self: Artemis’ Case Study

In Artemis’ case study, reading for self meant that his perceptions focused on how he, as an individual reader outside of school, perceived reading with image literacies. As a reader for self, Artemis’ case study generated two more specific findings, findings similar to Ellen’s reading for self role as well. First, Artemis spent a significant amount of time talking about the pleasure or fun involved with reading graphic novels, and,
second, Artemis also spent a significant amount of time talking about how he felt like a successful reader while reading *Bone*.

*Artemis’ Case Study and Reading for Self: Perceiving Reading With Images as Pleasurable*

Talking and thinking about pleasure meant that Artemis’ thoughts centered on how he was enjoying his reading experiences with image literacies in *Bone*. Table 8 explains Artemis’ case study finding of perceiving reading with images as pleasurable.

Table 8

*Artemis’ Perception of Reading With Images as Pleasurable*

<table>
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<th>Findings</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Artemis’ Case Study Finding and Reading for Self: Perceiving Reading with Images as Pleasurable</td>
<td>Artemis often spoke about his sense of pleasure regarding reading with images in this graphic novel. On top of his own sense of pleasure, Artemis spoke about his perceived sense that his peers’ also experience pleasure while reading with image literacies as well.</td>
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The before-reading interview showed that Artemis was already thinking that he might enjoy reading *Bone*. He used the word “fun” in our first interview when he discussed the first and only graphic novel he had read previous to this study, as mentioned earlier, Colfer’s (2007) *Artemis Fowl*:

K: Have you ever read stories like this before? With images?
A: Yeah, um, they are so fun. I’ve read *Artemis Fowl*, the first graphic novel I read. And I can’t wait for the second one. It’s exciting. Fun to read.

K: When we are done with this interview, I can look up the publication for Colfer’s second one, ok?

A: Yeah! Yeah! Exciting!

K: So what do you think it might be like to read this graphic novel?

A: Exciting. Fun. I think it might be good because I think I like graphic novels a lot. I get them.

Following this conversation, I asked Artemis, “What do you think a ‘good,’ to use your word, graphic novel or experience might be like? Can you explain more?” Artemis replied by stating, “Good means I like it. Um, like I understand the story, and it’s even fun.”

Later in this interview, Artemis again spoke about his perception of reading graphic novels as pleasurable or fun. In one instance, I asked him what he might think if his teacher were to assign a graphic novel at school: “Coolest teacher ever! Fun! Smart too! Because I do get them. I get the story, and it’s fun.” Artemis then went on to add, People might be more interested because it’s fun. Not me. But other kids too. Because there’s pictures. They give us an idea of what it looks like in your head, and since you get it, it’s fun. And when you asked me to read one for this stuff you are doing I thought, “Why do I like graphic novels, I think?” “What makes me like them so much?” Since they are fun, I want to read, and see what they are doing too. It’s like an ice cream sundae. Good!
In his journal Artemis also used the word “fun” to describe the pleasure he was experiencing from reading with images in this graphic novel, and, once again, he compared this pleasure to eating something sugary that he enjoys: “Graphic novels are fun, like Artemis Fowl, like eating your favorite sugary stuff.”

In the during-reading interview, Artemis began to focus on how, particularly now that he had started reading Bone, his reading experience with images in this graphic novel was pleasurable as well. Thus, in this interview, he was more particular and detailed about what and why he found image reading pleasurable. For example, when asked what he thought so far about Bone, now that he had started reading, he stated,

It’s fun because you can actually see what they are doing and get it. It’s funny because of the funny pictures too that they might draw. Instead of just reading the words, and not getting it, you can see that it’s funny. I enjoy this. Like the other one [Artemis Fowl].

When I next asked him what it felt like to “get it” he said: “I enjoy this. Understand and stuff.” Artemis then went on to explain what he had been saying to his mother about reading Bone:

It’s like I tell mom. It’s really cool. I like it. I can see what is happening, which is fun because I get it. I don’t get it sometimes with school reading. I can’t see in my head what words mean.

Toward the end of the during-reading interview, Artemis once again clearly mentioned that his reading experience with Bone was pleasurable. In this example,
however, he focused on how the images engage him from chapter to chapter and encourage him to feel a pleasure that motivates his reading experience:

K: Given where you are now, what do you think might happen in the rest of the story?

A: Seeing as how from chapter to chapter it is fun to see what he does, and it’s a series, I think it’s going to leave things at a cliffhanger or something, where I don’t know. Which is fun. I want to keep reading it.

K: What is a cliffhanger, do you think?

A: What’s gonna happen next feeling, something fun. I didn’t know that it was fun though because when our teacher talks about it at school it’s not always fun. I can’t get it or see things that way. But, um, I betcha he’s [the main character, Bone] gonna end up defeating those rat-creature-kind-of-guys. And it’s cool because it doesn’t exactly give much information on them so I want to keep reading to see.

In his journal during this time, he invoked the feeling of pleasure again, and, this time, he mostly focused his sense of pleasure on reading with images as being fun:

I like it. It is really cool because it’s fun and funny. Really funny actually. Fun because Bone jumps on top of someone, the evil creature thingie, without it knowing, and when he does something like that, it is fun and funny to see it in the pictures.

The after-reading interview showed that Artemis continued to think about reading with images as pleasurable. Early in the interview, for instance, Artemis was asked about
his perceptions of reading with images now that he had finished *Bone*. He stated, “I love this! It’s fun because it’s not a boring book. It has lots of pictures, and makes it easier for me to read and fun.” I then asked Artemis if he was able to “push his thoughts farther and explain more about” what he had just said:

It’s really cool. I like it. It’s fun. Because it’s funny too. It [pictures] makes it more funny. I mean, it’s like, words they can be funny, but with words and pictures, like if words go with it, it’s extra funny.

As mentioned earlier, Artemis compared reading with images and words in *Bone* to a popular Christmas song about a hippopotamus. He also used this comparison to explain the pleasure he felt when reading *Bone*: “Graphic novels are like a hippopotamus because they are way more fun and cool to play around with, and, like read over and over again other than a textbook. Textbooks are Bo-RING!” When asked to further consider this perception in reference to himself, Artemis said:

A: It’s just more fun to read. Plus, the more stupider kids in the classroom can get it.

K: The more stupider kids?

A: ‘Cause if you’re like, it, uh, not a textbook kid and more stupider the graphic novel gives you context clues or something. If you don’t know what a word means you can look at the picture and find out.

Although this example overlaps with Artemis’ reading for school perception of a reading relationship between images and words, the conversation and context for this comment was focused on why he found this reading experience pleasurable. Thus, again, like with
cliffhanger mentioned earlier, Artemis’ self-reading perceptions of pleasure when reading this graphic novel allowed him to transfer some of his school-learned words to his reading experiences, like cliffhanger and context clue.

Following this last dialogue in our after-reading interview, I next asked Artemis what he might say to someone who asked him what it was like to read a graphic novel: “I would probably say it’s a lot more fun than reading a book. The pictures and words combine to make it like a banana split or something.” When asked what it meant to be like a banana split, he said: “Extra-super-fun!” to which I then asked, “When something is fun to read, what does that mean to you?” Artemis answered with, “It is, you’re like enjoying it. You wanna read it more. Again and again.”

Finally, in his journal Artemis claimed that, “Graphic novels are so fun. I can understand and like the story.”

_Artemis’ Case Study and Reading for Self: Perceiving Success While Reading With Images_

When reading for self, Artemis’ case study revealed a second finding, that he was reading with image literacies for success and comprehension as a struggling reader. Table 9 explains the finding of Artemis’ reading for self and finding success as a struggling reader.

In the before-reading interview Artemis told me he was considered a struggling reader at school:

I’m a more stupid kid. This lady gets me out of class, makes me read stuff. Kind of like if I was in class. Same stuff. I just work with her and not class. They do
Table 9

Explanation for Artemis, Reading for Self and Finding Success as a Struggling Reader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artemis’ Case Study Finding and Reading for Self:</td>
<td>Artemis talks about perceiving of himself as being successful as a reader of image literacies, and notes that this is especially significant to him because he is considered a struggling reader at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceiving success with image literacies, especially as a struggling reader</td>
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</table>

this for the more stupid kids who can’t read and stuff. Well, I don’t know, we can read, sort of. Um, I guess. We just don’t read like the smart kids. They like to read. They get it.

When I followed up on his idea of “more stupid kid” and asked him to explain why he labeled himself that he talked about the amount of reading he is expected to do at school.

K: Why do you say more stupid kid?

A: ‘Cause, I read in like every class. All the teachers want me to. Math, I have to read the book. Science, read the book. All day, stupid reading.

K: Why do you think it is stupid?

A: I’m not good at it.

K: What about when you read *Artemis Fowl*? You brought that up earlier.

A: I’m good at that. I could see it. My teacher doesn’t think that it’s really reading. She would never let me read that.
In his journal during this before-reading time frame, Artemis also discussed himself as a struggling reader at school, and mentioned that when he read *Artemis Fowl* he felt like a successful reader: “I want this stuff with Katie [the dissertation study] to be like *Artemis Fowl*. I want to be good at it. Not like school reading.”

The during-reading interview further showed that Artemis continued to think about himself as a successful reader with image literacies, especially as a struggling reader. For example, when I asked him what he was thinking after starting to read, he stated: “I get it! I get it!” Following up on his ability to “get it,” I asked for some clarification:

K: What does it mean to get it?

A: I can read this. With pictures.

K: Still not really sure what you mean by that.

A: I can read this without help. By myself, and I’m not a good reader.

K: What kind of reader are you when you read this?

A: Maybe a good reader. I get it. I know that. I can tell you what happens and what I know.

Artemis then went on to discuss how he felt about his reading experience with images and being able to “get it:” “I can do good when I read this. I feel good too because I get it and maybe aren’t so stupid. Not like at school.” In his journal, Artemis furthered this idea of success with reading images literacies as a struggling reader: “School work, books make me feel stupid. I don’t feel like dumb when I read a graphic novel.”
The after-reading interview showed that Artemis continued to not only think about reading with image literacies in a graphic novel as successful for him, but also think about how this success related to his perception of himself as a struggling reader. When I asked him what he would read now that he had finished *Bone*, he claimed: “Something else that makes me feel like I am good with stories. Probably, like, uh, did the second *Artemis Fowl* come out yet?” When I answered Artemis’ question about the second *Artemis Fowl*, our conversation focused in on what it meant to Artemis to be a successful reader with graphic novels and still considered a struggling reader at school:

K: Not yet. But you could read the print-text vers—
A: [Interrupting]. I don’t want to feel stupid! Ah!
K: Whoa—I don’t understand.
A: I’m not smart. The library has that. I could get it there.
K: Why don’t you get it then?
A: I read with pictures. That’s what I can do. I can’t do school books.

Later in this interview he continued to make similar statements when I asked him about whether or not he had ever seen a graphic novel in the library at school:

Not really sure, but I think our library should have some of these books. Like, call it the ‘Stupid Kid’ section. Or picture books for dumb readers. We bring them to school. My friends have them at school. But we do it at study hall.

Finally, in his journal Artemis explained that “if I could read these at school with all the other stupid kids we could all really talk about the story I bet. The smart kids read them on study hall too, but they read the right stuff too for class.”
Summary: Artemis

For Artemis’ case study there were two overall findings, that Artemis perceived of reading with images in Bone as a reader for school and as a reader for self. When reading as a student, Artemis thought about the reading relationship between images and words, how image literacies connect to his ELA classroom curriculum, and he also thought about his teacher’s reaction to Bone. When reading for self, Artemis thought about the pleasure he was experiencing as a reader of the image literacies in Bone and about reading for success with image literacies as a struggling reader.

Cross-Case Analysis of the Two Case Studies

The overall findings that emerged as a result of the cross-case analysis were: perceiving reading with image literacies in a school-related role and perceiving reading with image literacies for one’s self. These two overall findings broke into three cross-case findings. In reference to reading image literacies in a school-related role, the two case studies revealed two specific findings: perceiving the reading relationship between images and words as related to reading comprehension, and perceiving connections between image literacies and the ELA curriculum. Within both of these reading for school findings, each participant also referenced how struggling readers could benefit from image literacies. In reference to reading with image literacies for oneself, the two case studies revealed one finding: perceiving reading with images as pleasurable and successful, and, again, each participant further noted that they felt as though this would hold true particularly for struggling readers.
Cross-Case Analysis and Reading for School: Perceiving the Reading Relationship Between Images and Words and Reading Comprehension

When I looked at each case individually, both case study participants perceived a reading relationship between the images and the words in Bone. Both case study participants saw how the images informed the words, or the words informed the images, and, in doing so, further perceived how that relationship helped them to understand the story being told in this graphic novel. Both case study participants, in other words, were able to articulate that this relationship helped them to comprehend the story.

For instance, we first saw that Ellen perceived of the pictures alone, and how they moved the storyline along from one picture to the next, with the story progressing from picture to picture. In short, she initially explained, to her surprise, that she did not stop processing the story, comprehending the story, just because of a picture—as she had expected. In fact, in one example of her perception she stated that she found that the images actually worked together to progress the story. In another example Ellen explained that in a graphic novel the pictures alone do not create story comprehension for her as a reader, but instead it is the presence of pictures and words together that allow her to comprehend the story; she even compared the words in a graphic novel to “the frosting on the cake,” an analogy that allowed her to explain that for her the story was mostly found in the pictures, but the words together with the pictures created even deeper comprehension, an analogy she saw as offering an explanation for her perception that images and words are partners in reading comprehension in graphic novels.
Similarly, Artemis’ case study revealed that when reading within his school-related role as a student, he too perceived of a reading relationship between the images and the words in *Bone*, and that this relationship aided in his comprehension. At first, Artemis, like Ellen, was theoretical in his explanation of how the images and the words helped him to comprehend the story, offering a hypothetical example of what it meant to comprehend the story while reading with images and words together; specifically, he stated that when you see a character walking in a squiggly line that goes to nowhere a reader can see that in a graphic novel. However, he continued to wonder, a reader would not be able to fully understand or comprehend that part of the story if he or she could not see it in the images and the words together. Like Ellen, Artemis also articulated how he was literally reading with images and words together in order to understand the story being told in *Bone*. This was most evident when Artemis stated that he particularly paid attention to the images over the words because the images made better sense to him as a reader of the story, allowed him to better comprehend the story. In our during-reading interview, Artemis offered what could perhaps be considered one of the most summative perception statements about reading with images and words together as comprehension tools. When asked how his reading was going, he stated:

K: So how is your reading going?

A: Well, I am reading both really, the pictures and the words. But I pay more attention to the pictures because they are, first of all, pictures and easier to understand for me, and, second of all, they kind of tell the story better than the words. Because there’s pictures there. You don’t have to be very detailed, or
K: Why do you think that?
A: I think that it is technically “reading” ’cause reading is understanding something from picture or a word.

Like Ellen, Artemis stated that he chose to primarily read the images in this graphic novel, and that, secondly, he chose to read the words. Both Artemis and Ellen found that the reading relationship between images and words in this graphic novel helped them to understand the story, and, on top of that, both participants claimed that they prioritized their image reading over their print-text reading with this graphic novel.

Cross-Case Analysis and Reading for School: Perceiving a Connection Between Image Literacies and ELA Curriculum

The cross-case analysis and reading in a school-related role also revealed another similar finding. The two participants both perceived of a connection between image literacies and the ELA curriculum. In Ellen’s case, this was defined as her perception that Bone could connect to her ELA curriculum and be a vehicle for teaching reading comprehension. In Artemis’ case, this was defined as his perception that Bone could connect to his ELA classroom reading experiences and be a tool for him, at least, to strengthen his reading comprehension. Within both of these definitions lies the overarching similarity that each participant perceived of ways for this graphic novel to be used in their ELA classrooms to teach reading comprehension.
First, in Ellen’s case study we saw that her perception of reading with image literacies as related to ELA curriculum (and to Social Studies curriculum, a difference between her case study and Artemis’) was related to her role as a teacher. She even stated, in our first interview, the before-reading interview, that she had a desire to use image literacies, like those found in the graphic novel, in her ELA curriculum, but was unsure as to how that might work. In her journal following this interview, she related an initial impression that she could in fact use this graphic novel within her ELA curriculum.

After she began reading *Bone*, Ellen stated the she thought that this graphic novel could be used in her ELA classroom, specifically with struggling readers, for reading comprehension development. She talked even more specifically about elements of reading comprehension that would help her struggling readers, like vocabulary, sentence structure, phonics skills, and so on. She even stated that she wondered if the author of *Bone* intended to reach out to struggling readers through image literacies.

In the after-reading interview, Ellen claimed that she was able to perceive of multiple, specific uses for *Bone* in her ELA curriculum. And, once again, she made comments about how struggling readers could work with the image literacies in *Bone* to better develop reading comprehension skills. Near the end of this interview, she even went as far as to mention other specific curricular concerns that she thought could be taught through the image literacies in *Bone*, singling out fluency and characterization as two of the most prominent.

Like Ellen, Artemis’ case study and reading for school also revealed a perception of how image literacies with *Bone* could connect to the ELA curriculum. Early in the first
interview, as noted earlier, Artemis articulated this perception when he explained that graphic novels helped him to comprehend the story because he could see what was going on, instead of being lost, like he admitted to being when reading textbooks for school. Later in that interview, he also stated that if he had a choice about what he could read in his ELA classroom, he would choose a graphic novel. He even went as far as to say that he would choose a graphic novel because he could “get the story,” which he explained as being able to comprehend a story due to its use of image literacies.

In the next interview, we saw Artemis further articulate, again similar to Ellen, that his reading comprehension and understanding of characterization increased when reading with image literacies in Bone. And, again like Ellen, Artemis offered his own analogy for reading with image literacies. He explained that, in his mind, an ELA curriculum that honored image literacies like those in Bone would be like a hippopotamus (a positive analogy), but that now, as it is, with a reliance on print-text literacies alone, the ELA curriculum felt to him like a spider (a negative analogy). Near the end of this last interview, and in his journal, Artemis extended these perceptions about bringing graphic novels like Bone into the ELA curriculum by stating that kids like himself, what he calls “the more stupider kids,” and what Ellen refers to as struggling readers, might benefit from an ELA curriculum that offered students’ access to image literacies. He even claimed that struggling readers like himself were actually image literacies at school, but were doing so in study hall instead of in the classroom.

In this first finding for reading for school both participants perceived of reading with image literacies in Bone within their school-related roles, Ellen as a teacher and
Artemis as a student. To summarize, their two shared perceptions were: perceiving a reading relationship between images and words, and perceiving how image literacies could connect to ELA curriculum. In both case studies, moreover, each participant further connected these perceptions to his or her thoughts on struggling readers.

Cross-Case Analysis and Reading for Self: Perceiving Reading With Image Literacies as Pleasurable and Successful, Especially for Struggling Readers

Within the finding of reading for self, both participants perceived of reading with images as pleasurable and successful reading experiences, and, on top of that, mentioned that they felt as though this would hold true particularly for struggling readers. Thus, this cross-case finding discusses them simultaneously. And, although “struggling readers” is a term we might associate with an in-school thought, each participant referenced the struggling reader in describing either herself or himself or in describing other readers whom they know in their personal or out-of-school lives. Thus, this finding is once again labeled as reading for self because the focus of these perceptions are not centered in school contexts, but instead are centered on self or on others that the participants know personally, or out of school contexts. The issue being raised is then one of purpose. The participants both perceived of reading for school as reading for someone else’s purpose, when reading for oneself to these participants meant that you read for your own purpose.

Ellen initially stated that she thought of reading with images as possibly pleasurable and successful when she mentioned at the beginning of our first interview two ideas: first, she felt like, when looking at the cover and thinking about what it might be like to read an image literacy, it looked fun, and, second, she stated that looking at the
cover also made her feel like she might be a successful reader of image literacies. During this interview, she brought these two ideas together again, as did Artemis, when she related that feeling like a successful reader reminded her of her youngest daughter’s successes as a reader of image literacies and of her own struggles with reading print-text literacies in school. This train of thought then led her to express her past and present desires to read more image-dominant stories that she felt she could be more successful with (i.e., her reference to reading *The Giver* in middle school and her reference to wanting to read more graphic novels). During the second interview Ellen even began to think beyond her own pleasure and success with this particular graphic novel (feeling like she could relax and just read, not feel like there was a test looming). She stated that she felt as though some of her friends and family, others she knows who identify as struggling readers, might find the image literacies in *Bone* pleasurable and successful reading experiences as well. She followed this thought by noting that when she felt successful with reading, she also felt pleasure in her reading experience, which she thought might also translate into her friends’ and family’s reading experiences with image literacies as well. In other words, we saw that she claimed a distinct connection between pleasure and success, and could relate this connection to her reading experience with image literacies in *Bone* and to her theories on how she perceived struggling readers might react to reading with image literacies in *Bone* as well. She even went as far as to note that image literacies were “heavy” and “deep” reading experiences for her, despite some popular literacy criticism to the contrary. Finally, the after-reading interview revealed that Ellen, like Artemis, was still pondering the ideas of pleasure and success
when reading image literacies in Bone, and once more related this connection to struggling readers. In this last interview, she stated that image literacies in Bone made reading more pleasurable and successful, and that, for someone who struggles with reading “this is a really significant development—a big deal—‘cause the words can now have meaning for them through pictures.” She explained how so many people she knows, both children and adults, “could like reading because of these [graphic novels].” In this last interview, she furthered this thought by adding that it seemed “sad” to her that graphic novels such as these, that could bring struggling readers success and pleasure, were mostly considered an out-of-school literacy.

Artemis also connected reading for self to pleasure and success, especially for struggling readers. In the before-reading interview, Artemis brought these ideas together when he mentioned that he had in fact read one graphic novel prior to this study, Colfer’s (2007) Artemis Fowl. He stated that, as a struggling reader, he experienced pleasure and success while reading Artemis Fowl; he even claimed that his initial image literacy experience left him wanting to read more graphic novels. Similar to Ellen, our second interview revealed that Artemis continued to think more about how pleasure and success with image literacies related to struggling readers, particularly himself. For example, he stated that he enjoyed and found pleasure in reading with images because he could see what was happening and feel successful at understanding the story. During this interview, he also claimed that he had shared with his mother that in-school reading was difficult for him, but, with graphic novels, in out-of-school contexts, he could understand the story and not feel like it was such a struggle to comprehend what he was reading, which he
specifically related to the use of images in Bone. He next related his success and pleasure with image literacies in Bone to the idea that he might not really be a “more stupider kid” when reading graphic novels, his term for struggling reader.

In the after-reading interview, again like Ellen, Artemis once more brought the ideas of reading success and pleasure together with struggling readers. In this final interview, he found another analogy fitting for bringing his ideas of pleasure and success together with struggling readers, stating that in graphic novel reading, “The pictures and words combine to make it like a banana split or something.” And, then, when I asked him what it meant to be like a banana split, he said: “Extra-super-fun!” In his journal for the after-reading interview Artemis explained that because he finds success with graphic novels and they “are so fun” he can “understand and like the story,” can feel successful as a reader. Finally, Artemis left our last interview explaining that kids read these in study hall because they are fun and his friends can understand the image-based stories and feel like good readers, statements strikingly similar to Ellen’s about her friends and family.

In this cross-case finding, Ellen and Artemis both found that their reading with image literacies in this graphic novel was pleasurable and successful for them, and both participants further related these perceptions as perhaps particularly important for struggling readers.

Summary

This chapter discussed the findings for Ellen’s case study and for Artemis’ case study. The findings in this study revealed that each participant read as a reader for school, Ellen as a teacher and Artemis as a student, and as a reader for self. This chapter also
discussed the cross-case analysis of the two case studies and ultimately found that, instead of differing perceptions, the two case study participants had many similar perceptions regarding their reading of the graphic novel *Bone*. 
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the perceptions of one teacher and one student as they read with image literacies in a graphic novel. This chapter, which focuses on conclusions and implications, is organized into four parts. First, I present the two conclusions garnered from the findings of this study and the threads of discussion that generated from those conclusions. Next, I discuss how the study and its conclusions generated implications for instruction and implications for research. Finally, I both summarize this chapter and offer my overall reflections on the study.

Conclusions

Two main conclusions were generated from the findings in this study. The conclusions were:

- This graphic novel was read on multiple levels by the teacher and by the student participants.
- The image literacies in Bone were perceived of as valuable new media age literacies for diverse readers: for the teacher and the student, and for struggling readers.

The remainder of this section discusses each of the conclusions in greater detail in the following manner: overall summary of conclusion and its threads for discussion and how, due to their very similar case study findings, both Ellen’s and Artemis’ perceptions
collectively led to these conclusions. Finally, I discuss how each particular conclusion extends, complements, and/or contrasts with the research discussed in Chapter 2.

**Conclusion: The Graphic Novel Bone Was Read on Multiple Levels**

*by the Teacher and the Student Participant*

Since the student and the teacher each read *Bone* as readers for school and as readers for self, I concluded that graphic novels were read on multiple levels for each participant. The first thread from this conclusion, reading for school, was evident when Ellen and Artemis both perceived of reading with image literacies in *Bone* as connected to the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum and as indicative of a reading relationship between images and words. Artemis’ case study revealed one further finding, however: his perception of his teacher’s reaction to *Bone*. Similarities between Ellen and Artemis are discussed first, followed by a discussion of Artemis’ perceptions of his teacher’s reactions.

*Reading for School*

This first overall conclusion (and its threads for discussion) both complements and extends two areas of the research literature. In the case of the participants’ perceptions of a connection between reading image literacies in *Bone* and the ELA curriculum, the results of this study complement the research literature on the history of image literacies in ELA. The results of this study also extend the research literature on what counted and what now counts as literacy in ELA. The third thread for discussion, Artemis’ perception of his teacher’s reaction to *Bone*, challenges the research literature on bridging in-and-out-of school literacies.
Image literacy and the English language arts curriculum. Ellen’s and Artemis’ case studies both showed that when perceiving of themselves as readers for school, both participants connected the image literacies in Bone to their ELA curriculum. Ellen revealed this connection when she stated that she felt as though the images helped her to comprehend the story. She articulated an interest in bringing image literacies with graphic novels like Bone into her ELA curriculum, for, she stated, she might be able to teach with image literacies just as she does with traditional, print-text literacies. Ellen then spoke about how this might specifically happen. Her thoughts centered on character development and reading comprehension and how she might align teaching about the author’s intent with certain images and word choices. She theorized that teaching about the author’s intentions with various images could increase her student’s reading comprehension skills. Ellen then specifically stated that by pointing out specific images in Bone she could draw out what the author intended for the reader to understand about characters and about the story, even though, instead of using words, the author used images. She even stated that she felt as though the author purposefully used some images to draw out certain, particular ELA curricula, including homophones and even some phonics lessons.

Artemis also spoke about a connection between reading with image literacies in Bone and the ELA curriculum. His perceptions centered on how images literacies in Bone compared to print-text literacies in ELA textbooks. He explained that in textbooks the words become confusing and challenging to his overall comprehension, but, with image literacies in Bone, he was able to use the images to better comprehend the print-text. He
also said that if he were allowed to read with image literacies at school, like those in *Bone*, he might get better grades and better understand his reading assignments in ELA. And, like Ellen, he stated that images allowed him to better understand character development. In short, Ellen and Artemis both perceived of a connection between image literacies in *Bone* and their ELA curriculum, particularly in regard to reading comprehension and character development.

Thus, one conclusion for this study was that the teacher and the student both read image literacies in *Bone* in a school-related role. This conclusion complements the research literature on the history of image literacies in ELA. The history of image literacies in ELA has taken more of a stronghold over time, more of a necessary and contemporary place in ELA instruction, especially as visual and image literacies have become a greater part of our daily and cultural reading lives (Applebee, 1974; Kress, 2003).

The connections Ellen and Artemis were able to make are even reminiscent of the earliest research literature on the history of image literacies in ELA. All the way back to the research of Leavis and Thompson (1933), who advocated for ELA educators to adopt the new and growing popular visual and image literacies of screen and film into their classrooms, Ellen’s and Artemis’ case studies once again point out the contemporary applicability of popular culture literacies in ELA curriculum. Moreover, many of the studies that followed the work of Leavis and Thompson also claimed that ELA educators should adopt the contemporary, visual and image-dominant literacies of their time. In fact, this argument was made over and over again in the research literature on the history
of image literacies discussed in Chapter 2. Some of the more prominent scholarship specifically stated the following.

During the mid 20th century, Hockett (1959) found potential for image literacies to take on a greater role than just those of audio-visual technologies, Maloney (1960) viewed the media and visual arts as step-sisters of print, the Newsom Report (1963) found that most adolescents felt marginalized by an ELA curriculum that overemphasized print-text literacies and left out more contemporary and image-dominant literacies, and Freire (1968) advocated for educators to consider the social justice involved with valuing students real-world, contemporary and popular culture literacies. During the second half of the 20th century, just like Ellen’s and Artemis’ case studies suggested in this study, research on image literacies in ELA continued to claim that more image dominant literacies could connect to the ELA curriculum. In the 1970s and 1980s, researchers like Howell (1973), Amelio (1976), Pool (1983), and Masterman (1985) each argued that contemporary ELA educators were actually teaching with specific image-dominant, popular culture literacies in mind (television, film, computer, and so on), and, in doing so, were using specific models of media and image literacy education that connected to their ELA curriculum.

The research of the 1990s further showed that many ELA educators were taking contemporary, image-dominant literacies into consideration when teaching their curriculum. In 1992 Fehlman tried to build upon the models of image and visual literacies that actually were being taught in ELA and suggested that the perceptions students have of various image literacies were quite powerful pedagogical places of popular culture and
consumerism that could relate to ELA curriculum. Hart and Benson (1996) then furthered this focus on contemporary popular culture image literacies in ELA curricula and conducted research on how some ELA teachers were teaching image literacies as critical literacy pedagogy for contemporary ELA students. That same year, the New London Group (1996) offered ELA educators some new terminology for these contemporary, popular culture literacy experiences, referring to the vast array of modern, popular culture literacies as multi-modal literacies. Two years later, Hobbs (1998) built upon this growing awareness of contemporary, multi-modal literacies to suggest that image-dominant, multi-modal literacies be thought of as media literacies and that when teaching these literacies ELA educators should teach for audience awareness.

Currently, the 1990s focus on diverse literacies and how to teach for critical image literacy awareness has led to a contemporary focus on how image literacies and multi-modalities can be considered new media age literacies (Kress, 2003). New media age literacies encapsulate the earlier ideas of the 1990s researchers—that we are living in a more multi-modal literacy world worthy of ELA pedagogy that addresses popular culture critical awareness—and further claims that in this new media age ELA educators should transition their ELA curriculum and text selection to reflect multi-modal teaching and learning with more image dominant literacies (Buckingham, 2003; Jenkins, 2006; Kress, 2003; Morrell, 2004).

The latest new media age scholars have then focused on the most popular image-dominant literacy currently being published during the new media age, the graphic novel (Carter, 2007; McCloud, 2006; Weiner, 2003), as this study does. Specifically, these
scholars have focused on how the graphic novel relates to ELA curriculum. Thus, reflecting their own contemporary time and place, Ellen and Artemis complement the history of image literacies in ELA by supporting research that advocates that there is in fact, in their perceptions, a place for more image-dominant literacies, specifically with this graphic novel, in the ELA curriculum. Thus, findings from this study complement previous research by once again pointing out that contemporary popular culture literacies with visual and image emphases, like the graphic novel, can connect to ELA curriculum.

This conclusion is also related back to the research literature on what counted and what now counts as literacy in ELA. When the two participants perceived of a connection between image literacies in Bone and the ELA curriculum they complemented the research literature on what now counts as literacy in ELA by suggesting that, in their perceptions, the graphic novel Bone can and does fit alongside the ELA curriculum and should count as a new media age ELA literacy.

To recap, starting with Eliot and the Committee of Ten (Purves & Pradl, 2003) we saw that early ELA curriculum decision-making focused on White, male, British authors, with a particular focus on what Elliot referred to as a 5-foot bookshelf he had in his office and that contained titles every American should read. Around 1911, however, NCTE began to redefine what should count as literacy in ELA by stating that ELA curriculum decisions should include the real-world literacy lives of both students and teachers and should consider the contemporary reading habits and interests of students and teachers (Appleman, 1974). It is at this early point in the literature, we can first begin to see how findings related to Ellen and Artemis complement this literature, for in both of their
school-reading roles, they each perceived of a connection between reading this graphic novel and their ELA curriculum, and how, therefore, the use of image literacies in *Bone* should count as an ELA literacy.

This growing awareness of image literacies as counting as ELA literacies and applicable to the ELA curriculum took major hold, however, during the mid 20th century, when NCTE built upon the emphasis on the author’s intentions and history and proposed that ELA educators should also think about each reader’s individual reading lens, what each reader brings to a literacy experience—how a reader’s lens influences his or her interpretation of a text (Appleman, 2000; Purves & Pradl, 2003; Richards, 1929; Rosenblatt, 1938). Ellen’s and Artemis’ case studies complement this mid-century emphasis on lenses and interpretation. As readers for school they each read with their particular role (or lens) in mind, Ellen as a teacher and Artemis as a student, and were further able, as the critical theorists argued, to relate this reading role or lens to the ELA curriculum.

It was not until the 1990s, and now even more so now in the 21st century, that ELA scholars and research (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 1998, 2007; Kress, 2003; McCloud, 1993, 2000, 2006; The New London Group, 1996) began to advocate that literacy in ELA classrooms considered not only a reader’s individual lens and his or her current time and place when thinking about what counts as literacy in ELA, but also a reader’s exposure to diverse, more modern literacies, literacies considered to be outside of or marginal to print-text literacies. A significant work of this time actually originated in the 1980s with Masterman (1985), who claimed that 1980s ELA educators should
begin to think about the potential for more media and image-dominant literacies in ELA classrooms. In the 1990s, Hobbs (1998) and the New London Group (1996) built upon Masterman’s ideas and suggested that media and image literacies could be addressed in ELA instruction by teaching modern students to be savvy, knowledgeable and critical consumers of the vast array of multi-modal literacies. Since they were able to perceive of a connection between image literacies in *Bone* and their ELA curriculum, findings from Ellen and Artemis complement the 1990s research; but, and perhaps more importantly than complementing this research, the two participants did in fact perceive of a connection between image literacies in this graphic novel and particular ELA curriculum concerns. Hence, reflective of both Hobbs’ and The New London Groups’ research on image dominant literacies and a modern applicability to ELA curriculum, Ellen and Artemis noted that three specific aspects of reading with image literacies in this graphic novel—comprehension, character development, and context clues—do, in their minds, relate back to the ELA curriculum.

Thus, the 1990s research emphases on multi-modalities and critical consumer awareness as impacting what now counts as literacy in ELA leads us to what is today being called the new media age (Kress, 2003). In this new media age, print-text literacies share the stage with image literacies, and current literacy research is suggesting that we now find ourselves as literacy consumers engaged in new media age multi-modal literacies, where our literacy lives are no longer dominated by interactions with print-text literacy alone. Our literacy lives are divided among diverse, multi-modal literacies (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2007; Jenkins, 2006; Kress, 2003). One of these new media
age literacies, the graphic novel, even has some contemporary literacy researchers suggesting that image literacies are applicable to the ELA curriculum (Covington, 2007; McCloud, 2006; Schwartz, 2002; Weiner, 2003). Thus, perceptions from the participants in this study complement the research literature on what now counts as literacy in ELA. These two case study participants did in fact perceive of a connection between image literacies and the ELA curriculum and were, on top of that, able to perceive of the image literacies in *Bone* as worthy of being counted as literacies in ELA classroom instruction.

*The reading relationship between images and word.* As they read *Bone* in a school-related role, Ellen and Artemis perceived of a reading relationship between images and words. This perception of a reading relationship between images and words extends the research literature on what now counts as literacy in ELA, which has only currently begun to articulate a connection between image literacies in graphic novels and the ELA curriculum (Covington, 2007; McCloud, 2006; Schwartz, 2002; Weiner, 2003). Thus, these two case study participants extend the current research literature on what now counts as literacy in ELA, for they were able to see how images and words work together to create literary meaning worthy of ELA attention.

Ellen focused on how the images in *Bone* were able to put words into her head; later, she claimed that images and words in *Bone* worked cooperatively—reading images put words into her head and reading words put images into her head. Thinking like a teacher, she then further explained that she was impressed with how the graphic novel *Bone* used images to progress the storyline, to progress the reader’s comprehension of the story through pictures instead of through words alone. Ellen even offered some concrete
examples of how she was reading with images and words in *Bone* and spoke about this phenomenon within the context of her teaching role. For instance, Ellen stated that the reading relationship between images and words could help students decode challenging words, and, moreover, students could also, in Ellen’s perception, deepen their comprehension of story through all of the contexts clues offered in *Bone*’s use of image literacies. Ellen summarized her perception of reading as a teacher with image literacies in this graphic novel by stating that she felt as though she could teach with image literacies because looking at images was not a passive literacy experience, but instead was a critical literacy experience in which she was an engaged and thoughtful reader of both images and words together.

Artemis also perceived a strikingly similar relationship between images and words and commented on their ability to work together to create literary meaning as well. Artemis mostly perceived this reading relationship as related to his reading for school and how he sometimes gets confused by too much print-text literacy. He claimed that when he encounters too many challenging words he can no longer visualize what he is reading in his mind. When reading *Bone*, however, Artemis claimed that he could see what was going on. The images helped him to see. Since the images helped him to create mental pictures, he said, he could better move along with the words and understand the story. In essence, he claimed to feel that if he could read with image literacies, like those in *Bone*, he could better understand what he was reading at school. Essentially, in his school-related reading role as a student, Artemis perceived of how images and words work together to create context clues that helped with his reading comprehension.
When reading in their school-related roles and perceiving a relationship between images and words, Ellen and Artemis both specifically extend the most current research literature on what now counts as literacy in ELA. As noted, Covington (2007), Schwartz (2002), McCloud (2006), and Jenkins (2006) have addressed the value of graphic novels as a complement to the literacies being taught in modern ELA classrooms; however, to this date, no study has found that readers of a particular graphic novel were able to perceive of a reading relationship between images and words, a relationship that aided in the reader’s comprehension and understanding of the story. Ellen’s and Artemis’ perceptions, then, extend this research literature by offering one initial perception of a reading relationship between images and words in the graphic novel *Bone*.

In summary, this conclusion focused on Ellen’s and Artemis’ reading for school perceptions. Since they perceived of a reading relationship between images and words and a connection between image literacies in *Bone* and the ELA curriculum, one conclusion from this study was that graphic novels could be read on multiple levels, in this case as readers for school.

*Bone and in-and-out-of school literacies.* In a third thread from this school reading role conclusion, that of Artemis’ perception of his teacher’s reaction to *Bone*, this study challenges the research literature on bridging in-and-out-of school literacies. Artemis mentioned that he took *Bone* to school to show it to his friends. His friends, he claimed, had already read *Bone*. While he had this graphic novel at school, his teacher saw him with it. And when she did, Artemis explained she told him that she did not feel as though *Bone* was an appropriate text to have at school. She even went as far as to say,
according to Artemis, that “You should read an actual book and not a comic book.” Artemis said that his perception of his teacher’s disapproval caused him to disagree with her. He stated, “It is actually considered a book.” In other words, Artemis perceived of the graphic novel *Bone* as a book, but his teacher did not share his opinion. Feeling as though he should not push the issue further, Artemis decided that he should not argue with his teacher about his opinion of *Bone*’s value as a real book. He claimed to fear that if he pushed the issue any further he might get in trouble, perhaps sent to the principal’s office. It is Artemis’ fear of getting in trouble that challenges the research literature on bridging in-and-out-of school literacies.

Hull and Schultz’s (2002) seminal work on bridging in-and-out-of school literacies suggests that if teachers were made better aware of their student’s literacy interests they might perhaps be more willing to create literacy bridges between in-and-out-of school literacies. However, for Artemis, and strictly within the confines of this study, his literacy interest in *Bone* did not seem to create a sense of curiosity from his teacher, let alone a willingness to learn more about the graphic novel *Bone* as a potential literacy bridge between in-and-out-of school literacies. Thus, Artemis’ perception of his teacher’s reaction to *Bone* challenges this research literature. As of the date of this study, no study has found that when introduced to a graphic novel that a student labels “a book” has a teacher specifically denied that label, thus denying that student’s outside-of school literacy interest as a literacy bridge worth pursuing. Thus, Artemis’ perception of his teacher’s disapproval of *Bone* hints at an interesting area for further thought on literacy.
bridges in ELA (an implication garnered from this study that is discussed in the implications for research found below).

Reading for Self

Another thread that comes from the conclusion that image literacies in Bone were read on multiple levels, with different roles in mind, was that both participants read in self-related roles. As readers for self, the participants perceived of reading with image literacies in Bone as pleasurable and as successful reading experiences. Due to this perception of reading for self and experiencing pleasure and success this study is drawn back to the research literature that discussed what counts as literacy in new media age ELA classrooms and how these two case study participants extend this research literature.

The focus of extant research has been on the perceptions of students and teachers as readers for school. Yet the results of this study ask ELA educators to think about readers who are engaged in acts of reading for self and school simultaneously. In asking ELA educators to specifically add reading for self as a consideration in ELA classrooms, this study extends the research literature on what counts as literacy in ELA classrooms. Moreover, the two participants’ reading for self roles also complement the research literature on curriculum wisdom theory, for curriculum wisdom theory advocates for educators in the content areas to consider both the self and the subject when making subject-matter decisions (Henderson & Kesson, 2004).

Reading for Pleasure

Ellen experienced pleasure with image literacies when reading Bone. In fact, she used the word “fun” numerous times to explain this perception: “When I first looked at
the cover of this book, I got the impression that this would be a fun book to read.” As she read, Ellen continued to relate a feeling of pleasure and/or fun. During one interview she even wondered why personal enjoyment could not be valued at school. Graphic novels, most particularly Bone in this study, she claimed, “just seem fun. Fun to read. Why can’t reading be fun in school? Why is that wrong?” Ellen was making a connection between reading for self, experiencing feelings of pleasure, and reading for school. Thus, her case study begins to extend the research literature on what counts as literacy in ELA by suggesting that within her role as a teacher—as one member of the ELA interpretive community (Fish, 1980)—her interpretation of what counts as literacy in ELA could benefit by placing value on self-enjoyed literacies, like the graphic novel Bone. Her case study proposes that the boundaries traditionally placed upon the literacy decisions of past interpretive ELA communities, that print-text literacies hold the most value (Fish, 1980; Kliebard, 2004; Kress, 2003; McCloud, 2006; Schwartz, 2002) might benefit from a change that takes pleasurable literacies into consideration. One’s sense of pleasure while reading in this new media age world, in other words, is a valuable add-on to the criteria that the teacher, as one member of the ELA interpretive community, might consider when determining what counts as modern ELA literacy. As we saw earlier with the work of Kliebard (2004) and Purves and Pradl (2003), ELA has traditionally (and only sometimes) used pleasure in regards to print-text literacies as a decision-making criterion. But, Ellen’s case study proposes that we add the idea of diverse, pleasurable literacies, most specifically image literacies in graphic novels like Bone, to what counts as literacy in modern ELA classrooms. Essentially, Ellen’s case study has begun a new
conversation, a new area for further thought in ELA, for image literacies and the reader’s sense of enjoyment of them has, to this date, not been an influential or documented factor in determining what counts as literacy in modern ELA classrooms. Ellen summarized this point: “I want to read. That [the graphic novel] makes it fun to read, not like a textbook. But I can see where fun, in this case, could be a teaching tool.” Interpretive communities in ELA have at their core, Fish (1980) claimed, needed to continuously think and rethink their decisions to value certain literacies over others; Ellen’s case study suggests that now, during this new media age, might be a time for more ELA educators to rethink what literacies (and for what reasons) they value in their classrooms. No study, as of this date, has investigated how interpretive ELA communities consider and determine literacy during this new media age. Hence, Ellen’s case study extends this research literature by proposing that modern ELA interpretive communities consider a reader’s own sense of pleasure with diverse literacies, particularly those with images literacies in graphic novels like *Bone*.

Artemis’ reading for self also extended the research literature on what should count as literacy in modern ELA classrooms. Like Ellen, Artemis also used the word “fun” numerous times to relate his perception of reading for self and experiencing pleasure from this graphic novel. Early in our first interview Artemis stated numerous times that he liked to read graphic novels (he had read one previous to this study) because they were “fun.” When questioned further about why he thought they were fun, he stated that graphic novels contained pictures he could understand (that he could “get,” i.e., understand the story), and consequently, he found his reading experience with image
literacies pleasurable. He also said that he felt as though his friends enjoyed graphic novel image literacies too, due to the use of pictures to tell story. Broadening the scope of who might find pleasure with image literacies to not only himself, but also his friends, Artemis then next explained that reading with image literacies was like eating some of his favorite foods. Like Ellen, he stated that he too would like to feel pleasure, like he did with Bone, when reading school-related texts as well. In this regard, his comments extended the literature on what interpretive communities in modern ELA classrooms should consider when making text decisions: “Graphic novels are like a hippopotamus because they are way more fun and cool to play around with, and, like read over and over again other than a textbook. Textbooks are Bo-RING!”

Artemis’ case study suggests that modern ELA interpretive communities could benefit from valuing pleasurable literacy experiences, like those within the graphic novel Bone. This extends Fish’s (1980) interpretive communities scholarship to include image literacies along with print-text literacies as worth of ELA classroom attention. Moreover, this finding also extends Rosenblatt’s (1938) and I. A. Richards’ (1929) thoughts on student reader response theory during this new media age by proposing that a reader can aesthetically respond to a variety of different literacies (in this case, image literacies with a graphic novel). The use of image literacies in this particular graphic novel evoked an aesthetic, pleasurable reading response for Artemis, which reminded him of his friends, his favorite food, and his lack of reading enjoyment at school with print-text literacies. Thus, his case study extends the research literature on what counts as literacy in ELA by
posing the idea that future ELA interpretive communities should consider a student’s aesthetic response to various, new media age, multi-modal texts like *Bone*.

*Reading for Success*

In their self-reading roles both participants also complemented the research literature on curriculum wisdom theory (Henderson & Kesson, 2004). Curriculum wisdom theory argues that educators in the content areas should teach for self, social and subject-matter understanding simultaneously. In this study, participants perceived of success for themselves as readers of image literacies, perceived of diverse others as having potential success with image literacies, their friends or family (social), and, further, perceived of how this focus on self and success with image literacies could relate to the ELA curriculum in general (subject).

Ellen initially demonstrated this perception when she discussed how her daughter’s success with image literacies motivated her reading of this graphic novel (both a self and a social focus). To begin, however, Ellen compared her perception of success as a reader of image literacies to her previous school experiences in reading; as a student, she felt unsuccessful with print-text literacies, because she could not see what was happening. Ellen went on to say that her daughter and some of her friends might also feel successful with image literacies in graphic novels like *Bone* and would benefit from their self perceptions of reading pleasure being valued in ELA classrooms. Essentially, Ellen’s case study shows that she linked her self-reading perception and success with image literacies to diverse others and to the ELA curriculum, thus supporting the research
literature on curriculum wisdom theory and its emphasis on teaching to self, subject, and social understandings simultaneously.

Artemis’ self-reading role and perception of success with image literacies in *Bone* supports the research on curriculum wisdom theory as well (Henderson & Kesson, 2004). In addition, Artemis’ case study and experience of success with image literacies further supports the work of Giroux and Simon’s (1989) *Popular Culture: Schooling and Everyday Life*. Giroux and Simon argued that the core subject areas, like ELA, should consider all students’ varying levels of success with diverse, popular culture literacies (and think about students as individuals and as parts of social networks). In doing so, content area educators can better acquaint themselves with those literacies that are most relevant to today’s students, to today’s students’ current times and places in modern history. And, as Hull and Schultz (2002) pointed out, our students’ current times and places in history, and the literacy experiences they have within their popular culture everyday lives, are places where we can start to bridge in-and-out-of school literacies, a point they make when they discuss the value of self, social and subject-matter understanding (terminology they do not use, but that is at the heart of their research). Artemis’ case study mostly reflected this emphasis on curriculum wisdom bridge-making, then, by linking the work of Henderson and Kesson with the research of Hull and Schultz and Giroux and Simon. In his self-reading role, Artemis perceived of a connection between reading with image literacies in *Bone* and himself (self), his friends (social), and his ELA subject-matter curriculum (subject); and, on top of this three-fold focus, he stated that his pleasure with image literacies led him toward success when
reading *Bone*. He began to make this connection clear in the first interview when he labeled himself “a more stupid kid” because he was pulled out of class for tutoring in reading during the day. After he began to read *Bone*, however, he started to bridge from a focus on himself as an emergent reader to himself alongside his peers (social network), calling himself and his peers “the more stupider kids” who had trouble reading, and, as a result, were all pulled out for tutoring. Despite this negative labeling, however, he noted that he and his friends might succeed in reading with graphic novel image literacies, like those in *Bone* and in other popular culture graphic novels, due to the use of images to tell story. Moreover, in his own perception and in his perception of his friends’ thoughts as well, he could see a place for graphic novels in the ELA curriculum. For instance, Artemis claimed that if he and his peers were assigned a graphic novel like *Bone* at school they could “get it” and understand the story, could comprehend their reading experience, like the “smart kids” do with print-text literacies. Hence, Artemis’ focus on himself, on his peers, and on their ability to understand their reading experience with image literacies complements the research literature on curriculum wisdom theory (Henderson & Kesson, 2004) by bringing together a student’s self, social, and subject matter learning. It also supports the research on using curriculum theory to bring popular culture literacies into the classroom (Giroux & Simon, 1986; Morrell, 2004). Within his current time and place, Artemis believed that the popular culture graphic novel *Bone* could be a successful literacy experience for himself and his peers, and he also believed that the images literacies in this graphic novel could connect to the ELA curriculum. As Freire and Giroux’s (1989) thoughts perhaps best articulated, and Artemis’ case study
supports, the modern lives of our current ELA students with diverse, popular culture literacies, like the graphic used in this study, are powerful places of transformative curriculum decision-making. They are powerful places that can empower ELA educators to better bridge and work between popular culture, image-dominant literacies and modern, new media age ELA curriculum.

Overall, for this conclusion, Ellen’s and Artemis’ case studies showed that the graphic novel *Bone* was capable of being read on multiple levels, as readers for school and as readers for self.

*Conclusion: The Image Literacies in Bone Were Perceived of as Valuable New Media Age Literacy Bridges for Teachers and for Students, and Particularly for Struggling Readers*

The second overall conclusion from these two case studies, both individually and collectively, was that the image literacies in *Bone* were perceived of as valuable new media age literacy bridges. This second conclusion breaks into threads for discussion. First, this study revealed that *Bone* was perceived of as a valuable new media age literacy bridge for the teacher and for the student. Second, this study revealed that both the student and the teacher perceived of image literacies in *Bone* as particularly valuable literacy bridges for struggling readers.

*The Graphic Novel Bone Was a Valuable New Media Age Literacy Bridge for the Teacher and for the Student in This Study*

The graphic novel *Bone* and its use of image literacies proved to be a valuable literacy bridge between in-and-out-of school literacies for the student and for the teacher
in this study. Specifically, since Ellen and Artemis were each able to read *Bone* in self and school-related roles their reading experiences served to show potential for the kind of literacy bridges discussed by Hull and Schultz (2002). The potential to see literacy bridges from these two case studies, in fact, offers both a complement and an extension to the research on in-and-out-of school literacies.

The findings from this study first complement the work of Hull and Schultz (2002), who claimed that content area subjects like ELA can benefit from bridging in-and-out-of school literacies that readers perceive of as having self- and school-related value. Thus, the fact that both participants read as readers for school and as readers for self complements this research literature.

The research of Hull and Schultz (2002) found that when readers read for self and for school simultaneously, educators can create literacy bridges between the two reading roles. In fact, ELA educators can generate greater motivation for readers in their ELA classrooms, readers who are living during this new media age, when they create literacy bridges that value self and school reading roles together (Jenkins, 2006; Kress, 2003; Morrell, 2004). Thus, when it was found that both of the participants in this study did in fact read for school (perceiving a reading relationship between images and words, and a connection between image literacies in *Bone* and the ELA curriculum) and also read for self (perceiving of image literacies in *Bone* as successful and pleasurable reading experiences) this study complemented the work of Hull and Schultz. And like the many various literacy focal points from Hull and Schultz that drew attention to specific, particular out-of school literacy phenomenon, this study also focused on a current,
popular, out-of school literacy phenomenon, the graphic novel. In this study’s case, then, just like Hull and Schultz’s literacy focal points, one more out-of school literacy was perceived to be a valuable literacy bridge between in-and-out-of school literacies.

The participants’ shared perceptions of self and school-related reading roles with Bone also extends the research of Hull and Schultz (2002). Hull and Schultz focused only on student participants. This research, however, focused on a teacher and a student participant, and found that both the teacher and the student perceived of reading this typically out-of school literacy in both a self- and a school-related reading role. Hence, the findings in this study extend the research of Hull and Schultz in that they offer perceptions from a teacher and a student who perceived of self and school-related value in a typically read out-of school literacy, the graphic novel Bone.

This study also extends the work on bridging in-and-out-of school literacies conducted by Morrell (2004), Giroux and Simon (1989), and Jenkins (2006). Although these scholars did not use the terminology “bridging in-and-out-of school literacies,” their research and their thoughts did in fact focus on this topic. For example, Morrell, along with Giroux and Simon, discussed bringing popular culture literacies into the classroom, creating literacy bridges between what students read outside of school and how those literacies can be valued in school. Jenkins, then, explained the convergence of out-of-school literacies with in-school literacies; his work focused on the intersection of the two, where they meet, and how that meeting place can have content area pedagogical potential. Thus, findings of this study related to participants’ perceptions of how the graphic novel Bone had both self- and school-related reading value extend the work of
Morrell and Giroux and Simon by offering one example of a popular culture, new media age literacy that has value as a literacy bridge between in-school and out-of-school reading in modern ELA classrooms. And, further, these findings also extend the work of Jenkins, for the two participants’ perceptions of self- and school-related reading roles shows that a place of convergence between the two reading roles actually does exist. In other words, this study extends Jenkins’ thoughts by suggesting that the graphic novel is one new media literacy that transcends traditional, divisive literacy boundaries, and offers a place of convergence between one’s outside-of school reading and one’s in-school reading.

In sum, the participants’ perceptions of reading for self and reading for school extended the research on creating in-and-out-of school literacy bridges. Specifically, this study extended the research of Hull and Schultz, Morrell, Giroux and Simon, and Jenkins by suggesting that the graphic novel Bone could be a valuable new media age literacy bridge.

The Teacher and the Student in This Study Saw the Graphic Novel Bone as a Valuable New Media Age Literacy Bridge for Struggling Readers

The two participants in this study saw value in this graphic novel as a literacy bridge for struggling readers. As a result of these perceptions, they extended all three areas of the research literature outlined in Chapter 2.

To begin, when each participant, in both their self and school-related reading roles, focused on how struggling readers could benefit from a literacy bridge between Bone and the ELA curriculum, they extended the research literature on the history of
image literacies in ELA and the research literature on what now counts as literacy in ELA simultaneously. First, in reference to their school reading roles, Ellen and Artemis both pointed out a connection between the ELA curriculum and this graphic novel’s use of image literacies, and stated that struggling readers might benefit the most from a literacy bridge between the print-text literacies typically read in school and image-dominant literacies like those in Bone. For example, Ellen stated that she could see this graphic novel being an “in-school, out-of school thing,” a literacy bridge, particularly valuable for struggling readers. She said that the reading relationship between images and words would be a particularly good place for ELA educators to think about focusing their literacy bridge-making. Specifically, she claimed that due to the use of visual literacies and being able to “see” the story, diverse and struggling readers would benefit from an ELA classroom that counted this graphic novel as a valuable literacy. She even stated that if a graphic novel like Bone could be used as a literacy bridge in modern ELA classrooms struggling readers could perhaps find better access to the story. In other words, as opposed to the traditional emphasis on print-text literacies—where words are the only avenue to literacy success—Bone uses images and words together, thus providing, in Ellen’s perception, two avenues of literacy access and success for struggling readers. Thus, Ellen’s school-reading perceptions extends the research literature on the history of image literacies and the research literature on what should count as literacy in modern ELA classrooms by suggesting that modern ELA classroom teachers and their struggling reader students could perhaps benefit from bringing a graphic novel like Bone into the ELA classroom.
Artemis also perceived of this graphic novel as a valuable literacy bridge in ELA for struggling readers, and, in doing so, his perceptions too extended the research literature on the history of image literacies in ELA and the research literature on what now counts as literacy in ELA. However, Artemis’ perceptions focused on himself as a struggling reader, which extends the research literature a bit differently than Ellen. Artemis claimed that he, himself, would greatly benefit from reading a graphic novel like *Bone* in his ELA classroom. He claimed that if a graphic novel like *Bone* were used in his ELA classroom he would probably experience greater story comprehension—due to the use of images to tell story. He next broadened his student-focused perception outside of himself and considered and labeled some of his friends as struggling readers who would also benefit from this graphic novel as a school valued literacy. Artemis described the value of books like *Bone* as literacy bridges for struggling readers when he went on to claim that the relationship between images and words helped him to contextualize challenging words (if he did not understand a word he could reference the image) and comprehend the story (instead of becoming lost due to too many challenging words or overwhelmed by so much text Artemis said he used images and words together to better understand the story). As a modern reader, Artemis extended the research literature on the history of image literacies in ELA by perceiving of ways in which a particular, contemporary and modern graphic novel promoted his literacy and is fitting to literacy learning during his own current time and place as an ELA student. Also, in perceiving of the graphic novel as a particularly valuable new media age literacy, his case study further
places value on the graphic novel as an image-dominant literacy that should now count in ELA as a valuable new media age literacy.

Ellen and Artemis also perceived of success and pleasure with image literacies in *Bone*, and they each related this success and pleasure to struggling readers. Ellen focused on her daughter and some of her friends as struggling readers. Artemis focused on both himself as a struggling reader and on his friends as struggling readers. Taken together, these perceptions extend the research literature on in-and-out-of school literacies (Jenkins, 2006; Morrell, 2004; Schultz & Hull, 2002). First, Artemis’ case study begins to extend the literature by supporting these researchers’ emphases on student participants who perceived of success and pleasure with typically read out-of school literacies, like Artemis’ perceptions of reading *Bone* in this study. In analyzing their findings about their student participants’ perceptions of success and pleasure with out-of-school literacies, earlier researchers concluded that more literacy bridges were needed between typically read out-of school literacies (like video games, movies, computer, hypertext, and so on) and typically read and traditional in-school, print-text literacies, a conclusion similar to the one drawn in this study. Artemis’ case study extends this research literature, however, because he proposes that the image literacies in *Bone* might be particularly beneficial for struggling readers, like himself. To date, no other study has shown a participant to label a specific graphic novel, like *Bone*, as a valuable new media age literacy bridge for a specific group of readers, in this case struggling readers.

Ellen’s case study further builds upon this research literature as well. She found success and pleasure for herself as a reader of *Bone*, and then related this success and
pleasure, as did Artemis, to struggling readers. But her case study suggests that student struggling readers are not the only ones who can find success and pleasure with a typically read out-of school literacy, like the graphic novel *Bone*. Ellen perceived of some adults, some of her friends and her daughter, as struggling readers who would benefit from reading with image literacies in *Bone* as well. In suggesting that various struggling readers might find success and pleasure with image literacies in *Bone*, Ellen’s case study extends the research literature from a focus on student readers to a focus on struggling student and adult readers.

In summary, the results of this study imply that the image literacies in this particular graphic novel might be a valuable new media age literacy bridge for student and/or adult struggling readers. Until this date, no research has dealt solely with the reading perceptions of a student and a teacher who were asked to read a specific graphic novel, and no study has been able to claim that a literacy bridge with a specific graphic novel might be valuable for various struggling readers.

Thus, both the participants’ reading for self and reading for school roles extended the research literature on bridging in-and-out-of school literacies. In particular, the two participants’ case studies suggest that various struggling readers might benefit from the use of image literacies in *Bone* as a new media age literacy bridge.

Implications

Based on the findings and the conclusions in these two case studies there are both implications for instruction and implications for research. Specifically, these implications
are focused on the future of new media age, image-dominant literacies with the graphic novel, particularly the graphic novel *Bone*, in ELA.

*Implications for Instruction*

These two case studies point to a need for ELA educators to better acquaint themselves with new media age literacies, such as the graphic novel. And, from this new knowledge, educators need to find ways to emphasize image literacies, like those in *Bone*, in their ELA classrooms. From this researcher’s point of view, this new acquaintance could be fostered in five initial steps.

First, ELA educators should get to know and learn more about the graphic novel as a new media age literacy and literary genre. ELA educators could start by investigating the history of the graphic novel, its emergence in 1978 with W. Eisner’s *The Contract With God*. In taking this first step, they could learn about how and why the term “graphic novel” was coined and used. Why did Eisner want to use the word “novel” to describe this new genre? What was his intent? ELA educators will find that Eisner intended to evoke a sense of connection and relationship with print-text literature in his word choice; he argued that the term “novel” was most fitting because this new genre adopted the styles and conventions of print-text literature—but, in Eisner’s intent, did so with images. Next, ELA educators can move beyond an acquaintance with Eisner’s theory on the literary potential for images, which can also be found in his texts *Comics and Sequential Art* (1985) and *Graphic Storytelling* (1996), and familiarize themselves with McCloud’s (1993, 2000, 2006) analysis of and explanation of Eisner’s theories and terminology.
After taking these steps, ELA educators could then read a traditional, canonical print-text literacy, like Shelley’s (1818) *Frankenstein* alongside a graphic novel adaptation of the same text (Irving, 2005). In taking these steps, ELA educators can begin to understand the practical theory behind Eisner’s original thoughts on the potential for image literacies to be literary, and come into contact with an actual graphic novel adaptation of a familiar text. Then, ELA educators could begin to examine these theories at work in their transition from print-text format to image-based formats. After reviewing a graphic novel adaptation of a familiar text like *Frankenstein* ELA educators will probably next be ready to see, despite not being an adaptation of canonical print-text piece of literature, graphic novels like *Bone*. In sum, the point of this exploration is to consider if graphic novels, whether adaptations or stand-alone texts, possess literary qualities that we can teach in ELA and are worthy of more ELA educator attention.

With this history and new experiential knowledge of the graphic novel genre in front of them, ELA educators can then begin to define and question how the graphic novel fits within the future of ELA. How might ELA teachers link image literacies with the graphic novel to the traditional ELA curriculum? This study suggests that teachers can consult the history of image literacies in ELA and bring that knowledge together with what now counts as literacy, and, according to Fish (1980), together with their students become a new media age interpretive community that defines what literacy means in today’s ELA classrooms. With their new understanding of the graphic novel in mind, ELA teachers could lead their students in an interpretive community discussion that focuses on how new media age literacies, like the graphic novel, relate to the ELA
curriculum (for instance, Artemis was able to point out that aspects of his ELA curriculum, like context clues, characterization, and comprehension, were important literary techniques taught in school and also present in his reading of *Bone*).

As an interpretive community ELA teachers and student could together ask: “How might we, as teacher and as students, respond to the graphic novel’s use of image literacies to tell a story? In short, what are our initial impressions of reading with images? And why?” Again, this study would suggest that struggling readers in ELA classrooms that ask such questions might respond with identifying comments. Like Artemis, some struggling readers might think that they could be perceived of as readers, successful readers, if allowed to read with images. However, even though this study points to this graphic novel as a valuable new media age literacy for struggling readers, from one teacher and one student’s point of view, more research is needed on the responses and perceptions of entire ELA classrooms of students, both successful and struggling readers. Thus, this question about initial responses to thinking about ELA interpretive communities considering image literacy reading with graphic novels is a rich area for future research by ELA teachers.

Another question for ELA educators to consider is: “What are some considerations and connections to print-text literacies that will help both teachers and students begin to use graphic novel image literacies in the ELA classroom?” In answering this question, ELA educators may want to think about the reading relationship between images and words, and, moreover, the value of bridging in-and-out-of school literacies—both of which are highlighted in this study from the perspectives of one teacher and one
student. Asking questions like these will help ELA educators better teach new media age students—students who are growing up in and learning to work and live in a more multi-modal world where image literacies, like those in Bone, are sharing the stage with print-text literacies. In preparing students to live in a more image-dominant world, we are better preparing them to be what Hobbs’ (2007) and Kress’ (2003) research sees as critical, active consumers of the literacy world currently around them.

After beginning to question how image literacies with the graphic novel might work in new media age ELA classrooms, and engaging their students in interpretive community discussions, ELA educators can next begin to think about how to create in-and-out-of school literacy bridges with the graphic novel. In other words, as we learned from curriculum wisdom theory (Henderson & Kesson, 2004) and from Hull and Schultz’s (2002) work, student interest outside of school should play an integral role in our curriculum decision-making. When we—as modern ELA interpretive communities—begin to value student interest and real-world literacy interests, we can begin to invite students into a new media age literacy club both at home and at school (Hull & Schultz, 2002; F. Smith, 1988). Thus, another implication garnered from this study is that in creating a new media age literacy club with graphic novels like Bone, ELA educators can reach out to and invite new media age students into ELA classrooms, which are redefining what counts as literacy due to the more multi-modal, current literacy world we live in (The New London Group, 1996). In fact, this study suggests many reasons why ELA educators should begin to create new media age literacy clubs. Some of them are as follows:
• Artemis perceived of himself as successful reader when reading with image literacies in this graphic novel. Thus, at least for this one struggling reader, image literacies are a new media age literacy that invites him into the literacy club during this more multi-modal time.

• Artemis and Ellen both perceived of reading with image literacies in graphic novels as pleasurable. Hull and Schultz’s (2002) work explained that in order to engage current readers, and teachers as well, in this more multi-modal, new media age world, ELA educators should think about creating more literacy bridges between pleasurable literacy experiences and the ELA curriculum.

For these two main reasons, one implication for ELA educators is that they begin to bridge in-and-out-of school literacies with the graphic novel and bring this typical out-of-school literacy into new media age ELA classrooms. In other words, text selection criteria should begin to change during this new media age. To make this change, we must remember that new media age literacy scholars, most notably Kress (2003), argued that new media age literacies are not replacing our traditional value on print-text, canonical ELA literacies (and literature selections). Instead, new media age scholarship is suggesting that due to our more image-dominant world, image literacies should share the stage with print-text literacies in ELA instruction. In fact, in this study, both Artemis and Ellen used school-related terminology—like cliffhanger, context clue, characterization, and reading comprehension—to bridge their self-reading roles with their school reading roles.
Another implication for future ELA educators to think about is the significance of placing more value on the use of graphic novels like *Bone* for struggling readers. Both participants in this study felt as though struggling readers would benefit from reading with image literacies in graphic novels. The implication for instruction, then, is to build upon those steps just listed, and see graphic novels like *Bone* as not just one new media age literacy that reaches out to current new media age students. This study proposes that the graphic novel *Bone* might specifically reach out to struggling readers. In short, during this new media age, where key literacy researchers like Buckingham (2003), Hobbs (2007), Kress (2003), and the New London Group (1996) are arguing that we are experiencing a second great communication revolution where print-text literacies now share the stage with more image-dominant literacies, ELA educators have the opportunity to redefine not only what counts as literacy in ELA classrooms, but also how struggling readers might benefit from this new literacy world. Further, perhaps during this new media age and with image literacies, ELA educators can also begin to reconsider what constitutes a struggling reader. If we see this new media age, where image literacies and our ability to read and write with them are key to living, working and operating in a more multi-modal world, then we must take a fresh, new look at how we define literacy success. In other words, this second great communication revolution does not just offer us new literacies to teach in our ELA classrooms. It offers ELA educators a chance to rethink the very definitions of what constitutes literacy in our modern ELA classrooms, and, as a result, how we define various levels of success with different literacies (in this study, success with image literacies with this particular graphic novel). Hence, ELA
educators would need to redefine how they assess and evaluate various types of literacy success in this new, multi-modal media age—a wide-reaching implication worthy of many more future studies and work with both the graphic novel and other new media age genres, but yet an implication strongly suggested from this study’s findings and conclusions.

Another way for educators to secure a building and growing foundation for new media age literacies like the graphic novel in ELA is for them to engage in reflection practices, such as keeping a reflective practitioner journal or being a member of a critical colleague discussion group. As we learned from the history of media literacy education and the emergence of more image dominant literacies in ELA, when new literacies are introduced into ELA they take time, care and attention to develop alongside the ELA curriculum. In other words, new literacy growth and development has historically shown us that when we ask developmental questions, attempt integration and reflect on our practices (Buckingham, 2003; Hobbs, 2007; Kress, 2003), we can better bring ELA together with literacy progress. If we reflect on image literacies as we begin to integrate them into our ELA curriculum, we will probably build a more secure foundation to grow from, a foundation that notes our successes and our areas of need and that offers individual ELA educators journal-notes that discuss the particulars of students and their reactions—successes and areas of need as well—with image literacies. With these sorts of practitioner-based insights and resources for ourselves, we can start to learn how to best tailor new media age literacies, like the graphic novel Bone, to our own students and our ELA curriculum.
Then, as more of us partake in these new media age, image literacy teaching experiences we can begin to share our reflections in practice-oriented publications within our field, journals, and online sites that advocate for the shared and growing experiences of ELA education and educators: lesson plans, unit designs, journal thoughts and reflections, specific experiences with particular students (perhaps struggling readers), and so on. Each of these areas, and I am sure other areas of interest and intrigue will be discovered as well, will help us focus and build for the future of new media age literacies in ELA.

In sum of the implications for instruction, these two case studies suggest that ELA educators consider a series of steps regarding image dominant literacy teaching with graphic novels like *Bone*. In essence, ELA educators need to first understand the new media age and its historical significance to our current time and place. Then, ELA educators can get to know the graphic novel genre as one example of a new media age genre worthy of being taught in ELA classrooms and begin to think about how they may teach with image literacies in their own ELA classrooms. And, finally, ELA educators can reflect on and share their practices in order to build a solid foundation for image literacies in the future of ELA instruction during this new media age.

**Implications for Research**

Although this study offers many implications for further research with diverse image literacies during this new media age, this section focuses primarily on implications for further research with the graphic novel specifically. These implications for research are similar to the implications for instruction, but are geared more toward how literacy
researchers can better support and facilitate the step-by-step process outlined for ELA educators above. Five main areas of further investigation are directly related to the results of this study.

First, literacy researchers need to further examine the history of ELA and the emergence, over time, of more media and image dominant literacies like the graphic novel. Such research would help to complement and expand Elliot’s original emphasis on the historical dominance of print-text literacies and detail how image literacies have become more important to ELA instruction over time, a point made by Purves and Pradl (2003) and Applebee’s (1974) historical ELA research, but a point not explored in specific depth as to image literacies alone. Hence, more historical research is needed that focuses specifically and predominantly on image literacies in ELA. This historical research could then bring modern ELA studies to this present, new media age moment in time and start to further explore how ELA during our current time and place can begin to bring print-text literacy instruction and image-dominant literacy instruction pedagogically together. Outside of a scope solely on the graphic novel, this research could also consider the historical emergence and current place for other multi-modal literacies, perhaps those that deal with sense literacies (touch, taste, smell, and so on), musical literacies, and bodily-kinesthetic literacies (such as the dancing and guitar playing video games that call on literacy knowledge about music and body movements), just to name a few. Questions like: “How exactly did we get to a multi-modal literacy present where the graphic novel is one of the current, most popularly published text formats?” “What does a contemporary classroom look like that embraces the graphic novel?” “What is the teacher
doing in such a classroom?” “What are the students doing?” “What is the end result of a focus on graphic novels?” Even more questions come to mind, for the future of the graphic novel as an area of new media age literacy exploration in ELA is new, exciting, and full of potential. More questions, like, “How—and in what ways—are graphic novels (or any other new media age literacy) being used in modern ELA classrooms?” and similar to this study, “What are students’ and teachers’ perceptions of these multi-modal literacies?” “Do students experience success or struggle with multi-modal literacies?” Each of these questions seems exciting to me as an image literacy researcher. Such classroom research questions will not only help ELA further solidify image literacies with the graphic novel in ELA instruction during the new media age, but also help ELA bridge toward a more thoughtful and useful application of graphic novel image literacies as pedagogical options that complement ELA curriculum.

Further research about the concept of in-and-out-of school literacies and the graphic novel specifically would advance our knowledge about how to build a place for image literacies with the graphic novel within ELA instruction. The participants in this study both suggested a need and a place for more image literacy instruction with the graphic novel in ELA classrooms but believed that, currently, graphic novels are mostly being read in out-of-school contexts. Thus, further research is needed on how to successfully use graphic novels as an in-and-out-of school literacy bridge that will bring image literacy thought processes into modern ELA classrooms, and still, as these two case studies showed, retain the pleasure and reading success graphic novels are creating for readers in out-of-school contexts. In reference to the creation of literacy bridges,
questions like the following are worthy of being investigated: “What do these in-and-out-of school literacy bridges with graphic novels look like in ELA classrooms that are attempting them?”, and, related, “What are the successes and areas of need that teachers and students perceive in reference to literacy bridge building with graphic novels?” Also, questions that investigate how these literacy bridges link traditional print-text literacy instruction to new media age, image literacy instruction with the graphic novel are imperative, for we need to remember that this new media age of literacy instruction is not claiming that print-text literacies are now somehow obsolete, but, instead, that print-text literacies and image literacies now share the stage in modern literacy thought. The following questions might then prove fruitful for literacy researchers: “How are ELA instructors creating literacy bridges between in-school literacies and out-of-school literacies that honor print and image literacy instruction simultaneously, particularly with the graphic novel?”

Further, examining the pedagogical theory that informs these teachers’ curricular decision-making is key to understanding how to implement such literacy bridges in the future. In other words, researchers need to start asking questions that deal with graphic novels, literacy bridges, and curricular theory all together: “What types of curriculum theory decisions are ELA educators making when they attempt to bridge in-and-out-of school literacies with the graphic novel?” This kind of question would help solidify the pedagogical place of graphic novels in the future of ELA and better inform ELA educators, building principals, students, parents and anyone else interested in learning more about how graphic novel image literacies can and do work well in modern ELA
classroom instruction, for this type of question explores how graphic novels are not just an appropriate literacy, but a literary and fitting pedagogical new media age text that complements print-text literacies.

Mentioned as a general idea above, but worthy of its own level of singular investigation and depth, various genres of the graphic novel (historical, autobiographical, poetic, mystery, and so on) are also worthy of further thought. Such research could be conducted in ELA classrooms, or, even, in various other content area classrooms, for the participants in this study both perceived of the graphic novel *Bone* as applicable to both ELA and Social Studies course content. Such research could then expand this study by taking the focus away from perceptions of image literacies in ELA and place it upon content area classrooms situations and pedagogical decision-making with image literacies in general. In other words, if the student and the teacher in this case study perceived of *Bone* as conveying relationships between images and words, as connectable to ELA curriculum, as pleasurable and successful reading experiences, researchers might ask, “How might diverse teachers and students in other ELA (and other content area) contexts perceive of a different genre of the graphic novel?" Even more specifically, “How might the teacher alone address reading with a specific genre of the graphic novel in his or her classroom?” And, related, “How might students approach their reading experience with a specific genre of a graphic novel in a certain content area?” These types of questions and investigations would greatly aid ELA and other content area educators and thinkers about how to successfully implement and think about the full potential of the graphic novel
(and perhaps other more image dominant new media age literacies) in their new media age classrooms.

Another area for future research strongly recommended from this study is with struggling readers and graphic novels. This study suggests that graphic novels and image literacies may be particularly valuable for struggling readers. However, are graphic novels and image literacies simply identifiable with struggling readers? Or, are they valuable to all kinds of new media age readers? In other words, “Do struggling readers benefit from image literacies in graphic novels in particular ways?” Or, “Do most new media age students and teachers benefit from image literacies with graphic novels?” The results of this study cause me to wonder about how our definition of reading success and reading areas of need might be influenced by having multi-modal, new media age literacies like the graphic novel in more ELA classrooms, a point brought up above in the implications for instruction as well. Is it the struggling reader who needs to be addressed, or is it our definition of literacy that needs to be addressed during this new, multi-modal media age? This question is key to understanding the value of image literacies with the graphic novel in the lives of either particular readers or groups of readers in a new media age.

Building upon this focus with image literacies and graphic novels, more future research is also needed on how other multi-modal, new media age literacies relate to different kinds of readers. In this study, we saw that the participants viewed struggling readers as benefiting from image literacies in Bone. Yet, in the future, we will need to investigate this perception and perform literacy research on all kinds of readers,
struggling, successful, and everywhere in-between, and not just with graphic novels, but with all types of new media age literacies. In the future of literacy research, in short, ELA educators and students will benefit from more research that examines how all types of readers and teachers interact with diverse multi-modal literacies. Grant it, there are many avenues to explore in this implication, but, if we are truly going to embrace this second great communication revolution, ELA researchers need to begin building and preparing for this future for all readers and all types of modern literacy in ELA classrooms. In essence, the research community can begin to build the future of new media age literacy research by placing any new media age, image-dominant literacy into the following blanks: “How are teachers teaching with __(new media age literacy here)__ in their classrooms? How are students responding to __(new media age literacy here)__? What are the teachers’ and/or students’ perceptions of reading with this particular literacy?” And, “What can we learn about new media age literacies from some of the answer to these questions about __(new media age literacy here)__?” In my future research, I will place the graphic novel in this blank, but many other new media age literacies deserve similar attention.

Summary

From these two case studies, and their cross-case analysis, there were both implications for ELA instruction and for literacy research. These implications involved not only the graphic novel itself, as one genre of new media age literacy and the focal point of this study, but also other new media age literacies, thus raising questions about what it means for our current ELA students, and ourselves as their teachers, to live during
this second great communication revolution. These questions ask us to consider what our
ELA teaching and ELA classrooms might look like when we begin to perceive of and
value image literacies, such as those in the graphic novel in this study, as sharing the
stage with print-text literacies.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Since we are living during a new media age, a second great communication
revolution, where print-text literacies are now sharing the stage with other, more multi-
modal literacies, this study attempted to address a need for more research on the
perceptions one student and one teacher might have of reading with image literacies in a
specific graphic novel.

This qualitative study then examined the perceptions of a teacher and a student as
she and he read with image literacies in a graphic novel for middle school ELA readers, J.
Smith’s Bone (2005). The case study findings were considered both individually and
together.

The findings from this study indicated that both participants read on multiple
levels, with different roles in mind. The teacher read within a school-related role, as a
teacher, and read for herself, as an individual reader interested in getting to know more
about reading with image literacies. Similarly, the student also read within his school-
related role, as a student, and for himself as an individual reader personally interested in
getting to know more about reading with image literacies. In their school-related roles,
both participants perceived of a reading relationship between images and words and a
connection between reading image literacies and the ELA curriculum. Both also
commented on the potential that they believed graphic novels had for classroom use, especially for struggling readers. The student participant, Artemis, also perceived of and thought about his teacher’s reaction to the graphic novel Bone. Within their reading-for-self roles, both participants made strong connections between reading with image literacies in a graphic novel and, again, struggling readers; they both also perceived of reading with image literacies as a successful and pleasurable reading experience.

Based upon these findings several conclusions were drawn for future literacy and ELA educators and researchers to consider. In both areas, implications existed not only for more thought, reflection, and research on the graphic novel as one new media age literacy, but also for more thought, reflection, and research on the graphic novel’s use of image literacies and struggling readers in particular. Thus, it was clear from this one study that since we are living in a new media age, where the graphic novel in particular is one image-dominant literacy currently sharing the stage with print-text literacies, both in interest and in popularity (McCloud, 2006; Weiner, 2003), we, as ELA educators and researchers, are living during a rare and exciting time for future thought and research on image literacies with the graphic novel. One very specific avenue for this future thought and research to focus could be with not only struggling readers, but also with diverse ability-level readers, in the hopes of beginning a new media age, second communication revolution conversation, that asks ELA educators to think about what is considered literacy in our classrooms, and just what it means to be successful with different genres of new media age literacies, like the graphic novel. In my future research, I will focus on the graphic novel, but I feel as though there are seeds of thought in this study that
recommend that other new media age, image-dominant genres be explored as to their impact on the future of ELA literacy as well.

From this study’s findings and conclusions I am nothing less than excited to think about exploring some of the following questions in my future research (of course, with that same figurative superhero cape flying behind me as I move along from one question to the next): “In regards to the graphic novel’s use of image literacies, who seems to benefit? Who seems not to benefit? How so or why? Do struggling readers benefit? In what ways? Do all kinds of different types of readers benefit? In what ways?” Questions based upon these overarching premises will enable me and other ELA educators and literacy researchers to better prepare modern students to live, operate, and work in this more multi-modal, new media age world, where ELA has the intriguing and imperative opportunity to help design what it may look like for image literacies and print-text literacies to literally, on an educative stage, coexist and embolden our students’ future literacy lives.
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Initially and Decided Upon Frame Research
Interview Questions for the Teacher and the Student Participant

Questions for Students Before Reading

1. “What kind of reading do you do in school?”

2. “What kind of things do you read outside of school?”

3. “Have you ever read with images before?”

4. “What do you think it will be like to read this image-based story? Why?”

5. “Have you ever seen a graphic novel before?”

6. “Have you ever read a graphic novel before?”

7. “Looking at the cover, what do you think this story might be about? Why?”

8. “If your teacher were to assign this book, what would you think? Why?”


10. “When you were asked to participate in a study about graphic novels, what did you think that meant?”

11. “Thinking about reading this graphic novel, and about your journal, what do you think you might want to write down/say initially about your upcoming reading experience with images?”

12. “Before we are done with this interview, is there anything you would like to add?”
Questions for Students During Their Reading of Bone

1. “Thinking back on our last interview, is there anything you thought about that you had said that came up, so far, in your reading of this graphic novel?”

2. What are your impressions of reading Bone?”

3. “How would you describe your reading experience of this graphic novel so far?”

4. What do you think about reading images and words together?”

5. “Are you reading the images and words together? Separate? Switching between the two?”

6. “So far, does Bone remind you of any books you have read in school?”

7. “Can you imagine what it would be like to have your teacher at school use this book at school?”

8. “Would you want your teacher to use this book at school? Why or why not?”

9. “Due to their reliance on images, some graphic novels (in the future) could receive a possible rating of PG-13 or R, similar to how movies, television or video games are often rated. Have you come across any images you felt deserved this labeling in Bone? If so, which ones?”

10. “How would you have felt if Bone had had a rating and some thought-provoking, controversial images?”

11. “If you would not mind sharing, has writing in your journal influenced your reading experience? Explain.”
12. “Given what you know right now in your reading, what do you think might happen in the rest of the story? How do you think the images might show this progression in the story?”

13. “Is there anything you would like to add, that perhaps this interview did not cover?”

Questions for Students After Reading Bone

1. “Thinking back on our last two interviews, is there anything you thought about that you said or that came up again in your thinking or reading of this graphic novel that you would like to mention? Anything you would like to add or revise?”

2. “Now that you are done reading Bone, how would you describe your reading experience?”
   a. Again, now that you are done reading, what do you think about reading images and words together?”
   b. “When you were reading, and now that you are finished, how would you describe the relationship between the images and the words in a graphic novel?”
   c. “How did this relationship influence your reading experience, if at all?”

3. Now that you are done reading, does Bone remind you of any books you have read in school?”
   a. “And can you imagine what it would be like to have your teacher at school use this book at school?”
   b. “And, now that you are done, would you want your teacher to use this book at school? Why or why not?”

4. If you could give Bone a rating, like a movie, TV or video game rating, what would you give it and why?”
5. “Do you feel as though the story in Bone related to your life in any way? If so, how?”

6. “You read the first of twelve Bone graphic novels, do you think you will read the others? Why?”

7. “Do you think you will read another graphic novel? Why or why not?”

8. “If a friend or teacher asked you to explain what it was like to read a graphic novel, what would you say?”

9. “Would you recommend Bone to a teacher? Why or why not?”

10. “Would you recommend Bone to a friend? Why or why not?”

11. “What are your overall perceptions or impressions or thoughts after finishing Bone and nearing the end of this interview?”

12. “Is there anything you would like to add to this conversation?”

Questions for Teacher Before Reading Bone

1. “What kind of reading do you typically assign in school?”

2. “What kind of reading do you do on your own outside of school?”

3. “Have you ever read an image-based story before?”

4. “How familiar are you with graphic novels?”
5. “What do you think it will be like to read this image-based story? Why?”

6. “Have you ever seen a graphic novel before?”

7. “Looking at the cover, what do you think this story might be about? Why?”

8. “If you had a student who read a lot of graphic novels and suggested that you read one, what would you do?”


10. “When you were asked to participate in a study about graphic novels, what did you think that might involve or mean?”

11. “Thinking about reading this graphic novel, and about your journal, what do you think you might want to write down/say initially about your upcoming reading experience with images?”

12. “Before we are done with this interview, is there anything you would like to add?”

Questions for Teacher During Reading of Bone

1. “Thinking back on our last interview, is there anything you thought about that you would like to add or revise or expand upon?”

2. What are your impressions, so far, of Bone?”

3. “How would you describe your reading experience of this graphic novel so far?”
4. “What do you think right now about reading images and words together?”

5. “Are you reading the images and words together? Separate? Switching between the two?”

6. “So far, does *Bone* remind you of any books you assign in school?”
   a. “Does it remind you of any books you have read on your own, outside of school?”
   b. “Have any of your colleagues ever talked about image-based reading with graphic novels?”

7. “Can you imagine what it would be like to assign this book to your students?”

8. “Can you think of any standards that might be teachable with *Bone*? If so, which ones? How might this work in your classroom?”

9. “Due to their reliance on images, some graphic novels could (in the future) receive a possible rating of PG-13 or R, similar to how movies, television or video games are often rated. Have you come across any images you felt deserved this labeling in *Bone*? If so, which ones?”
   a. “How would you have felt if *Bone* had had a rating and some thought-provoking, controversial images?”
   b. “Based on your answer to this question, would you still consider or reconsider assigning this book to students? Why or why not?”

10. “If you would not mind sharing, has writing in your journal influenced your reading experience? Explain.”

11. “Given what you know at this moment in your reading, what do you think might happen in the rest of the story? And how do you think the images will show this? Why?”
12. “Is there anything you would like to add, that perhaps this interview did not cover?”

**Questions for Teacher After Reading Bone**

1. “Thinking back on our last two interviews, is there anything you thought about that you said or that came up in your reading of this graphic novel that you would like to expand upon? Anything you would like to add or revise”

2. “Now that you are done reading *Bone*, how would you describe your reading experience?”

3. “Again, now that you are done reading, what do you think about reading images and words together? Why?”

4. “When you were reading how would you describe the relationship between the images and the words in this graphic novel?”

5. “Did this relationship influence your reading experience, if at all?”

6. “Does *Bone* remind you of any books you have ever assigned, read for school yourself, or read on your own (outside of school)?”

7. “And can you imagine what it would be like to assign this book to your students? Can you paint a picture of how you see this working?”

8. “And, now that you are done, what would you do or say if you encountered a student in your classroom reading a graphic novel (as a free choice reading selection)?”

9. If you could give *Bone* a rating, like a movie, TV or video game rating, what would you give it and why?”
10. “Do you feel as though the story in *Bone* related to your life in any way? Related to your students lives? If so for either question, how?”

11. “You read the first of twelve *Bone* graphic novels, do you think you will read the others? Why or why not?”

12. “Do you think you will read another graphic novel? Why or why not?”

13. “If a friend, student, or other teacher asked you to explain what it was like to read a graphic novel, what would you say?”

14. “Would you recommend *Bone* to a teacher? To a student? Why or why not”

15. “What are your overall perceptions or impressions or thoughts after finishing *Bone* and nearing the end of this interview?”

16. “Is there anything you would like to add to this conversation?”
Journal Prompts

Before Reading *Bone*:

- What do you think about when you hear the term “graphic novel?”
- What do you think it will be like to read with images and words together?
- Looking at the cover, what do you think the book will be about?
- Have you ever read with images before? If so, when and where?
- When you were asked to participate in this study, what did you think the study would be about or like?
- Even though you have not read this graphic novel yet, do you think that this book (or other graphic novels in general) should be assigned in school? Or offered as free choice selections? Et cetera.

During Reading of *Bone*:

- Now that you have begun reading, what do you think about the term “graphic novel?”
- What is it like so far to read with images and words together?
- Based on where you are in *Bone*, what do you think the rest of the book will be about? What will happen? Can you make any predictions?
- Do you think you would you suggest a graphic novel to a friend, student, or teacher? Why or why not?
- Does reading with images remind you of any other reading experiences you have had?
- Do you think you will read another graphic novel in the future?

After Reading *Bone*:

- Do you think you will read the next graphic novel in the *Bone* series? Why or why not?
- Looking back on your reading experience, what was it like to read with images and words together?
- Can you think of any other reading experiences you have had or are currently having that involve images and words together?
- In the future, do you think you will read another graphic novel?
- Would you recommend reading a graphic novel to someone? If so, who and why?
- As we talked about in our earlier interviews, image literacies (such as film or video games) can sometimes receive ratings labels. Do you think *Bone* should receive a rating? Why or why not?
- Or, if not *Bone*, do you think any image-based, graphic novel story should receive a rating? Again, why or why not?
APPENDIX C

TENTATIVE FINDINGS COMMUNICATED TO THE TEACHER PARTICIPANT
Below are the tentative findings for your case study. If you could please review them and let me know if you would like to offer any suggestions, revisions, additions or so on, I would greatly appreciate it.

Thank you, Katie

Emergent Findings

Research Question # 1:

*What are one teacher’s literacy perceptions of reading with the graphic novel Bone?*

Finding: The Teacher Participant Reads in Relation to Her Role at School, Reading for School

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<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about the relationship btw graphic novels and ELA curriculum</td>
<td>Talk about how graphic novels or image stories could be used in school or connect to curriculum. Many times, this talk revolved around bridging in-and-out-of school literacies and struggling readers. Sometimes literally envisioning how she could teach with an image story / graphic novel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about the reading relationship btw images and words</td>
<td>Talk about how the images and words work together. Or, literally, reading the images and communicating about that reading experience.</td>
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**Finding: The Teacher Participant Reads With Herself as the Focus, Reading for Self**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about reading with image literacies as pleasurable and / or successful reading experiences.</td>
<td>Talk about how graphic novels or image stories are enjoyable reading experiences that make the reader want to continue reading and / or read more graphic novels in the future, either for the pleasure or the success one experiences while reading with images. Talk about how graphic novel reading is motivational, exciting, and feels successful, and as a result, is something readers want to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about how image literacies particularly seem to reach out to struggling readers</td>
<td>Talk about how struggling readers, such as her students or daughter, might find (or have found) success with more image dominant genres, like the graphic novel.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

TENTATIVE FINDINGS COMMUNICATED TO THE STUDENT PARTICIPANT
Hello H_____.

How is school? I hope you are doing well. Just so you know, I am having fun reviewing our interviews and thinking about everything you said.

I am writing you this letter so that you can see what has happened after our interviews. Simply, I took your words and tried to come up with some categories for the things you talked about. So I am asking you if you would look at these categories and let me know if you would like to add anything, change anything, or if you would like to talk again about Bone for whatever reason. 😊 Also, if there is anything you do not understand in these tentative ideas, you can call me at any time.

You or your mom can call me at 216-870-8872. Or you or your mom can email me at kmonnin@kent.edu.

I look forward to seeing you soon. Have fun reading your next graphic novel. Let me know if you like it, and if you would recommend it to me as well.

Take care,

Katie

What are your perceptions of reading with a graphic novel?

Finding: Artemis reads for school as a student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about graphic novels as potential in-and-out-of school literacy bridges</td>
<td>Talk about how graphic novels are mostly read out of school contexts. Or, talk about what it might be like to read graphic novels in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about the reading relationship btw images and words</td>
<td>Talk about how the images and words work together. Or, literally, reading the images and communicating about that reading experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about his ELA teacher’s reaction to Bone</td>
<td>Talk about how his teacher reacted to seeing him with Bone and what that interaction meant to him and his ability to read (or not to read) graphic novels in the future at school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding: Artemis reads for himself

<table>
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<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thinking about the reading with image literacies as pleasurable and / or successful reading experiences</td>
<td>Talk about the fun or pleasure he or his friends experience while reading with image literacies, and the success these “nonreaders” feel when reading with image literacies over print-text literacies. This success and pleasurable is overlapping in many instances of Artemis’ talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about success with reading image literacies in regards to comprehension and struggling readers</td>
<td>Talk about how his success with reading image literacies is successful in that it helps him to better comprehend story elements, and, many times, Artemis mentions that this is particularly significant to him as a reader who has struggled or been labeled a nonreader at school.</td>
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APPENDIX E

EXPLANATORY HANDOUT ABOUT EMERGENT CATEGORIES FOR RATERS
Research Question # 1:

What are one teacher’s literacy perceptions of reading with a graphic novel?

Finding: The Teacher Participant Reads in Relation to Her Role at School, Reading for School

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<tr>
<td>Thinking about the relationship btw graphic novels and ELA curriculum</td>
<td>Talk about how graphic novels or image stories could be used in school or connect to curriculum. Many times, this talk revolved around bridging in-and-out-of school literacies and struggling readers. Sometimes literally envisioning how she could teach with an image story / graphic novel.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Thinking about the reading relationship btw images and words</td>
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Finding: The Teacher Participant Reads with Herself as the Focus, Reading for Self

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Research Question # 2:

*What are one student’s literacy perceptions of reading with a graphic novel?*

Finding: The Student Participant Reads in Relation to His Role at School, Reading for School as a Student

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<td>Thinking about his ELA teacher’s reaction to <em>Bone</em></td>
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**Finding: The Student Participant Reads in Relation Himself Outside of School, Reading for Self**

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REFERENCES


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