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Faster than a speeding bullet

The graphic novel is rapidly taking hold of pop culture, drawing over our comic book stores and redecorating our cineplexes. And as the art's popularity expands, it's appearing in an unexpected place: the classroom.

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"American Splendor has been the best film based on a graphic novel thus far," said Francis. "But the fact that these films are getting made is a good sign for the industry. They're perfect examples of how independent and graphic novels are coming into their own now."

But it doesn't stop at the bookracks and cineplexes. Since the 1992 release of Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel of the Holocaust, *Maus*, and its subsequent sequels, many of these lengthy comic books have been getting recognition as teaching tools. *Maus* is currently being taught in history classes at high schools and colleges around the country. Even at Elmhurst College, graphic novels are being assigned to students. In a political science course taught by Assistant Professor Jennifer Boyle, *Persepolis*, the third best graphic novel of the year, according to *Time Magazine*, is used to teach students about the Islamic Revolution sparked by the fall of the Shah in 1979.

Persepolis is also being used in various other teaching contexts. The National Association of Comics Art Educators (NACAE) is a non-profit

organization currently working to help facilitate the teaching of comics in higher education, according to their mission statement, and has cited the graphic novel for its educational value. The organization not only promotes the idea of using comics to educate, but its website, www.teachingcomics.org, offers links to various schools across the country that offer programs in creating graphic novels.

Comics in Education is another website that offers information on the history of comics and graphic novels in the classroom and why they can be invaluable resources for children and young adults. Alongside promotion of the new book, *Faster Than a Speeding Bullet: The Rise of the Graphic Novel*, much of its site includes information detailing the motivational, visual and permanent effects it can have in teaching various subjects, from using *Maus* for the Holocaust and Judd Winick's graphic novel, *Pedro and Me: Friendship, Loss and What I Learned*, to promote awareness of AIDS activism.

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