

SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education

Volume 1

Issue 2 *Teaching the Works of Alan Moore*

Article 1

1-1-2011

Introduction: Teaching the Works of Alan Moore

James Bucky Carter Ph.D.

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sane>

Recommended Citation

Carter, James Bucky Ph.D. (2011) "Introduction: Teaching the Works of Alan Moore," *SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education*: Vol. 1: Iss. 2, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/sane/vol1/iss2/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in SANE journal: Sequential Art Narrative in Education by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Introduction to Edition 1:2: “Teaching the Works of Alan Moore”

By James Bucky Carter, Editor

After more than forty years in and out of the comics industry, Alan Moore is a writer who continues to intrigue, even after many of his most famous works have been troped and copied and parodied by others across multiple forms and genres, from super hero yarns to television series to film adaptations.

No wonder, then, that as more folks consider comics in college and k-12 curricula, that Moore’s work is getting attention from educators. *Watchmen* has been a consistent choice for many a college-level course. I enjoy teaching it any chance I get and have done so in courses designed to explore trends and issues in the medium as well as in pedagogy-centric classes, like my graduate course “Teaching the Graphic Novel” and my undergraduate English 3327 course, which focuses on teaching media, visual literacy and hybrid/ multimodal texts in secondary schools. In Stephen E. Tabachnick’s wonderful collection *Teaching the Graphic Novel* (2009), I have written about my experience teaching *Watchmen* to a group of freshman composition students at the University of Tennessee. *V for Vendetta* seems to be a popular college-level text as well, and with the current “Occupy” movements sweeping the globe, one wonders if young people in those pasty masks have been more influenced by Moore and his character V than by the actual Guy Fawkes.

With several books written about him or profiling his career, including a new University of Mississippi Press *Conversations* book edited by Eric L. Berlatsky (2011), Gary Spencer Millidge’s *Alan Moore: Storyteller* (2011), George Khoury’s *The Extraordinary Works of Alan Moore* (2003) and the eclectic *Alan Moore: Portrait of an Extraordinary Gentleman* (2003), and surely more on the way, scholars and comics fans have suggested Moore is a force worthy of attention. As I and others have revisited and published about the potential of comics at the k-12 level, more and more teachers seem eager to bring Moore’s comics into those settings as well. Maureen Bakis, for example, who has just released *The Graphic Novel Classroom* (2011) about her experience teaching a “graphic novel curriculum” at Masconomet Regional High School in Topsfield, Massachusetts, has a chapter devoted to teaching *V for Vendetta*. Allen Porter has used that text with students at Ann Harbor, Michigan’s Skyline High School¹. John C. Weaver has taught *Watchmen* to upper-classmen at Williamsport Area High School² in Williamsport, Pennsylvania³. As more teachers learn about these educators’ success and examine the growing scholarship and research that suggests that graphic novels and

¹ <http://graphicnovelreporter.com/content/teaching-graphic-novels-literature-op-ed>

² <http://graphicnovelreporter.com/content/who-teaches-watchmen-op-ed>

³ <http://graphicnovelreporter.com/content/reteaching-watchmen-op-ed>

comics have a beneficial place in the classroom, the potential to see readings from Moore on secondary school syllabi grows.

While many of Moore's works offer potential challenges for secondary educators, in theme and content and representations of violence and sex (as I ask my pre-service teacher candidates, "Do you really think you're going to get through a reading of *Watchmen* without one blue ball joke?"), and while much of his opus probably should be considered best studied at the college-level (I have fears about reading a news story in which a sixth-grade teacher decides to integrate a scene from *Lost Girls* into his or her unit of fairy tales), that Moore's comics are getting attention from a range of teachers is a further testament to his skill as a writer and intrigue as a personality.

This edition of *SANEjournal* seeks to add to the intrigue and utility of bringing the works of Alan Moore into the classroom. Appropriately, the focus is on secondary and post-secondary settings in the articles, rationales, and review herein. Northwestern University graduate student Travis White-Schwoch pairs with his mentor David Rapp to explore how reading and teaching *Watchmen* can be an exercise in building literacy and recognizing and honing skills associated with successful reading strategies. Matthew J. Smith shares reflections, syllabus, and assignments associated with a college course devoted to many of Moore's excellent and provocative texts. Stacey Kikendall has been experimenting with using *V for Vendetta* in her 200-level expository writing course at the University of New Mexico and shares reflections on that experience. Her article dovetails nicely into a rationale for teaching *V for Vendetta* at the secondary level and beyond written by Susan Spangler. John C. Weaver was kind enough to grant permission to reprint his rationale for *Watchmen* that first appeared on the CD-Rom *Rationales for Teaching Graphic Novels* (2010), and I include a rationale for teaching the first volume of *Saga of the Swamp Thing* as well. Finally, Orion Ussner Kidder reviews one of the best scholarly texts available on Moore's work and influence, Annalisa Di Liddo's 2009 release *Alan Moore: Comics as Performance, Fiction as Scalpel*.

Enjoy. And if you happen to find yourself caught in a flux of the space-time continuum while reading, don't blame me.

Resources

- Bakis, M. (2011). *The graphic novel classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Berlatsky, E.L. (2011). *Alan Moore: Conversations*. Jackson, MS: UP Mississippi.
- Carter, J.B. (Ed.) (2010). *Rationales for teaching graphic novels*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.
- Graphic Novel Reporter. Accessed 12 November 2011 at:
<http://www.graphicnovelreporter.com>
- Khoury, G. (2003). *The extraordinary works of Alan Moore*. Raleigh, NC: TwoMorrows.
- Millidge, G.S.; Smoky Man; M, Leah., & Villarubia, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Alan Moore: Portrait of an extraordinary gentleman*. Montreal, Quebec: Abiogenesis.
- Millidge, G.S. (2011). *Alan Moore: Storyteller*. New York: Universe.
- Tabachnick, Stephen, E. (Ed.). (2009). *Teaching the graphic novel*. New York: MLA.