

Modernizing Classics Education with Comics and Graphic Novels

Comics and graphic novels have consistently featured classical material, making these genres particularly relevant in exposing young people to Classics. *Classics and Comics* (Kovaks and Marshall, 2011) and its sequel *Son of Classics and Comics* (Kovaks and Marshall, 2016) analyze the ways that these modern-day genres utilize content from the classical world. Since the latter publication, classical reception in the world of comics has continued to boom, with continuations of series such as DC's Olympian *Wonder Woman*, and new series like the graphic novel adaptation of Neil Gaiman's popular *American Gods* (2017), featuring Greek divinities amongst others. Scholars themselves are beginning to take advantage of the graphic novel phenomena to promote outreach and education of their archaeological sites; notably, the recent graphic novel *Vita Romana* (2019) brings Apolline Project's current research in Aeclanum to life.

Like *Classics and Comics*, the vast majority of research regarding comics or graphic-novel use in the classroom was produced approximately a decade ago. However, even during the buzz years of this research—which produced favorable results by research, teachers, and students alike—there was never any scholarly attention on how we can use the vast amount of classical material in comics and graphic novels to enhance Classics education (in translation). If scholars themselves and teachers alike recognize the wealth of graphic novels, and we have a plethora of classical material in the genre, where are they in classrooms that teach classical literature?

This paper debunks the reasons that we are *not* using these valuable and all-too-relevant materials in the classroom and argues that they could indeed benefit Classics education in secondary schools and universities alike. First, drawing from modern learning theories, the paper

will analyze the benefits that graphic novel use can bring to classrooms; then, it will rehearse the decade-old literature and studies to prove the benefits to using them; finally, it will outline methods of integrating graphic novels in the classroom and extract relevant examples from Kovaks and Marshall's works to demonstrate the integration. The goal of this paper is to provide a pedagogical tool that modernizes classical education with the result that we might increase the appeal of Classics to young students.