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## Comics: Just kids' stuff or serious reading for adults?

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A few years ago, comics of any sort were a virtual no-no for most people — they were something to be read as kids, but one would grow out of them as he got older. Perhaps they'd be saved as an investment for the future (Good luck on that!).

However, after spending years languishing in the background, it seems comics have recently begun to return to the forefront of “mainstream” public consciousness.

With movies like Hellboy, Spider-Man, X-Men and Blade, as well as the impending Batman Begins, Sin City and Fantastic Four flicks to debut in the next few months, these comic properties are suddenly “hot” commodities. It's a definite sign that comics are being consumed by more than just kids.

Comics have also gained a larger attention when one looks in just about any of the bookstore chains. Just a few years ago, “graphic novels” (original stories or collections of previously published comics) were generally found alongside “gaming” products, which themselves were a small section within the “sci-fi/fantasy” section.

Now, someone can look in any bookstore (particularly Borders and Barnes & Noble) and find graphic novels have an entire section to themselves (though the majority tends



Scholastic's Bone is one of several recent examples of kids' comics proving their relevance to an adult audience. [\[Click to enlarge\]](#)

to be Japanese comics, also known as manga).

Part of the concept of comics being written off as kids' stuff was a negative connotation to comics: They were something that would not qualify as "serious reading" or "literature," and yet seemed to be something not entirely approved of by adults, and thus could be a small form of rebellion against parents. However, they're coming to be seen as much more of a "valid" reading material for all ages.

Last month, I came across Bone Vol. 1 — Out From Boneville. This volume collects the first six issues of Bone, but is now in color and published by Graphix, an imprint of Scholastic. In a manner of speaking, this volume is a sort of merging of two different worlds.

On the one side, you have a comic that has had critical praise for most of its existence, while not being a product of DC Comics or Marvel, the comic world's two biggest publishers. So Bone has a bit of a "higher" or "elite" reverence.

On the other side, it is now seeing new editions published by Scholastic, essentially endorsing it as safe for the mainstream and children: Something not generally seen with comics (with a possible exception of Carl Barks' Uncle Scrooge and other comics featuring Disney characters).

On another part of the spectrum, adults may find comics inappropriate because, after all, they're for kids, right? While many of the most well-known comics are aimed at the younger/teen crowd, there are plenty of comics out there intended for adults. DC Comics has its Vertigo imprint, which publishes stuff like Hellblazer (the comic series Constantine is based upon), The Sandman, Preacher and other ongoing series such as Y: The Last Man or Fables.

Marvel has its MAX imprint, which allows for more realistic and adult interpretations of its characters: most notably The Punisher — which really is not a kids' story — and Supreme Power (which is essentially a modern retelling of Superman and the Justice League with a "real-world" twist).

In addition to a diversity in subject material, there's been an increasing amount of "crossover" with creative talent — particularly writers — crossing between comics and television/movies. Joss Whedon (Buffy: The Vampire Slayer) is currently writing Astonishing X-Men; Jeph Loeb (Smallville) writes Superman/Batman and director Kevin Smith has worked on projects including Daredevil for Marvel and Green Arrow for DC.

In short, comics are not just for kids, nor are they just for adults. Whether you want a story of romance, or action/adventure, a good mystery or just some just plain weird concepts, you'll find comics in that genre.

But don't take my word for it. The next time you see something dealing with comics, check it out. You just may be surprised at what you find!

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