<u>Statement for Need for *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* in the Classroom</u>

Literature classrooms need graphic novels to help supplement heavy texts and make reading and learning a fun and intriguing experience. Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* is a graphic novel, and it is quite malleable and couples nicely with the usage of canonical texts such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelly, Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, and/or *Beowulf* in a unit study because similar themes such as morality, a call to action, duality, and aging leaders exist. By adding this graphic novel to the mix, students have a pop culture reference that they can understand and be interested in that link back to these canonized works.

Batman: The Dark Knight Returns does include a wide variety of complex issues and themes, and it has been subject to criticism for its violence, language, and some sexual implicitness, this book would be most well suited for upper grade study, namely English III (Grade 11) and English IV (Grade 12.) By utilizing this novel with a more mature audience, hurdles such as abstract concepts, which include moral dilemmas, the ability to separate fact from fiction, and abstract themes are manageable to teach without the students becoming lost or distressed by the logic. For example, English III and IV students could debate and discuss the conflict Bruce Wayne has with his other persona, Batman, villains, other superheroes, and society along with the stance of his morality when it comes to justice by reading between the lines and beyond the text. These students, as opposed to younger grade levels, are much more likely to be able to grasp the abstract concepts, such as these, that will presented for a high learning experience.

Even though there are complicated ideas presented throughout the story, *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* is actually an easy read when it comes to language, sentence structure, and

visuals. The narration and thought pattern flows like everyday dialogue and the visuals are just as important because they share narrative responsibility with the written text. However, by adding images to the text, students have another layer to analyze and meet media standards while reading a text (See list of possible State Standards for Tennessee that could be met).

Another added benefit is that by introducing "…graphics books that focus on superheroes, mysteries and crime, real life issues, and history are aimed especially at teens who resist reading…there is enough action to satisfy a reader, but the story can also provoke deeper thought…" (Schwarz 54). Students need to be engaged in reading because it can affect their lives as a whole, according to the According to the National Endowment of the Art's report, "To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence" in 2007. In addition, according to the TDOE Report Card, Reading and Language is one of the lowest academic categories in the state of Tennessee ("TDOE Report Card – 2011"). Something needs to happen to get students to enjoy reading, and then they will spend more time doing it on their own as a enjoyable experience. I believe it is worth the effort to try something new, like graphic novels, to prove that reading can not only be exciting but also engaging by adding some pop culture into my English classroom.

<div align="center">Works Cited and Consulted</div>

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