



## READ THIS!

### How Graphic Novels Hook Young Minds

I was never a comic book fan as a kid, and none of my children has been either. But as Free Comic Book Day rolls around on the first Saturday in May, this is a good time to celebrate a modern offshoot of comics that my kids *do* enjoy: the graphic novel.

As graphic novels have evolved into a popular storytelling medium, our two sons have embraced them. If you're wondering about the differences between graphic novels and comic books, both combine art and text. Still, comics are typically short, serialized stories, comparable to an ongoing TV series. In contrast, graphic novels are longer, more in-depth stories in a single volume, like an original feature-length movie.

Critics argue that graphic novels detract from the reading experience by relying on pictures to help convey meaning. I see them differently, more like a gateway to bigger books. Their real value is in providing one more avenue to expose kids to more sources, ideas, books, and stories. In a way, graphic novels are almost like CliffsNotes for second graders. Young readers are just getting pictures to go along with the story.

For our family, the question of traditional versus graphic novels is not an either-or issue. We've seen our two boys graduate from picture books to graphic novels to longer, text-only books. At the moment, our youngest is enjoying a series of fantasy books called "Wings of Fire." When I recently bought him the latest paperback novel in the series, he was happy to have the new installment in whichever form came out first. He just likes the stories.

The downside of graphic novels, of course, or any medium that includes storytelling images, is that when you see the pictures, you absorb the fruits of someone else's imagination rather than dream up the characters on your own.

I remember reading the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy and creating my own mental images of the characters. But after seeing the films in a theatre, the images on the screen replaced my own. I suspect graphic novels can have the same effect.

Nevertheless, if a graphic novel is what it takes to get a child to read a book, I'd say, go with it! It may serve as a gateway to reading for kids who might not otherwise pick up a book.

We've always laid guardrails for our kids to prevent video and movies from crowding out reading. We required our older son to read Boba Fett and the Mandalorian in novel form before letting him see the TV series. He's now moving on to the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy while his younger brother's current reading adventure (which to us is amazing for a 10-year-old) is "The Hobbit." We have told him that if he finishes the book, we will watch the movie with him.

Also, learning to gain knowledge through multiple media may be valuable. I have heard you can reinforce learning from a print book by listening to the audiobook as you read. This process has worked well for me with nonfiction books on marketing, especially when the author narrated the audiobook. Hearing the author's voice as I was reading helped me commit the material to memory.

Reading and looking at images in a graphic novel isn't quite the same. But perhaps giving kids text and imagery together will reinforce their learning, too. If they learn to integrate multiple media more nimbly, they may be better equipped to navigate our increasingly complicated, multimedia world in the future!



- Andrew M. Ayers

# THE WILDEST COPYRIGHT CASE YOU'LL EVER HEAR

## *When a Monkey Picked Up a Camera, the Law Had to Catch Up*

In 2011, deep in the jungles of Sulawesi, Indonesia, a crested macaque named Naruto did something unforgettable: He picked up wildlife photographer David Slater's camera and snapped a series of self-portraits, now known around the world as the "monkey selfies." Whether it was curiosity or a mischievous instinct, those photos became a viral sensation and eventually sparked one of the weirdest legal battles in copyright history.

### **Who really took the picture?**

This legal drama didn't begin over "cute animal photos." It was about *who owns the copyright when a monkey takes the photo?* Slater, who had traveled to Indonesia and set up the camera, argued that he deserved the copyright because he engineered the situation that made the shots possible.

In 2015, the animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) filed a lawsuit on Naruto's behalf to claim copyright, arguing that the monkey should

own the rights to the photos and that any proceeds should benefit Naruto and other crested macaques. The lawsuit hinged on a bold argument: If copyright law grants protections to any "author," then why not one who *captured* the image, even if that author is furry and swings from trees?

### **Courts rule animals don't get copyrights.**

A federal judge dismissed PETA's claim, ruling that animals can't own copyrights. The U.S. Copyright Office echoed this, stating that works created by nonhumans aren't eligible for copyright protection. In 2018, the U.S. Court of Appeals cemented that view: Naruto and, by extension, other animals lack legal standing to own copyright.

### **Humans reach a compromise.**

Rather than let the legal fight drag on, Slater and PETA reached a settlement in 2017. Under it, Slater agreed to donate

25% of future revenue from the monkey selfie images to wildlife conservation groups protecting crested macaques and their habitat. This oddball case forced lawmakers and other humans to grapple with questions about how far the law should go in recognizing the rights of nonhumans.

In the end, a smiling macaque taught the world something about the limits of human law and gave us an epic selfie to remember it by.



# ARE KIDS TOO BUSY THESE DAYS?

## *The Case for Slowing Down*

In today's go-go-go culture, it's easy for kids' schedules to fill up fast. Soccer on Mondays, piano on Tuesdays, tutoring on Wednesdays. With all that, it can feel like you're setting them up for success. But when every free moment is booked, that packed calendar can do more harm than good. Overscheduling doesn't just make kids busy; it can make them feel overwhelmed.

### **Constant activity makes an impact.**

Kids who move from one activity to the next without a break often live in a constant state



of "hurry." Even if they enjoy what they're doing, the pressure to perform, be on time, and meet expectations can pile up. Over time, that stress may show up as mood swings, irritability, anxiety, or frequent meltdowns. Some kids struggle to explain how they feel, so instead of saying "I'm overwhelmed," they might complain of headaches or stomachaches or seem unusually emotional.

### **Sleep and energy take a hit.**

When practices run late, and homework stretches into the night, sleep is often the first thing sacrificed. Lack of rest can affect focus, memory, and emotional control. A child who isn't getting enough sleep may have trouble paying attention in class, managing frustration, or staying healthy. Rest is essential for growing bodies and brains!

### **Free time makes a difference.**

Unstructured time can look unproductive, but it plays a huge role in development. When kids have time to play, daydream,

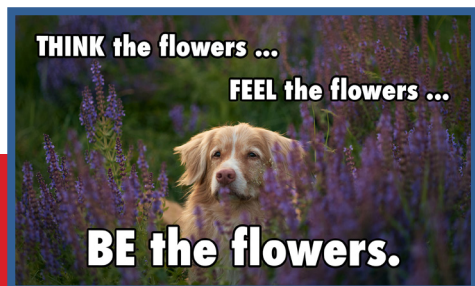
or invent their own fun, they're learning creativity, independence, and problem-solving skills. Free time allows them to decompress and process their experiences, something structured activities don't always provide. Without it, kids miss out on learning how to entertain themselves and regulate their emotions.

### **Burnout can steal the joy.**

One of the biggest ironies of overscheduling is burnout. Activities that once felt exciting can start to feel like chores. Kids may lose interest not because they dislike the activity but because they're exhausted. When everything feels mandatory, joy can fade, and that can dampen motivation and confidence.

Remember, the goal isn't to eliminate activities, it's about balance. Leaving room for rest, family time, and simple fun helps kids recharge and reconnect with what they enjoy. Sometimes, doing less allows children to grow more emotionally, socially, and mentally.

# TAKE A *BREAK*



## It's Not Nonsense After All

### THE REAL PURPOSE BEHIND ANCIENT 'ABSURD' LAWS

Long before modern ideas of rights and fairness, societies made laws that seem downright bizarre today, yet each was crafted to solve a real problem or reinforce vital cultural values at the time. When you dig into the reasons behind these ancient rules, the logic reveals practical concerns rather than pure absurdity.

#### Sparta made marriage a civic duty.

In militaristic Sparta, personal freedom took a back seat to state survival. Spartan men were expected to marry and produce soldiers; refusing to wed was frowned upon, and inveterate bachelors were fined and punished socially. Bachelors past a certain age faced ridicule and exclusion because every man who stayed single did not produce children who could then become warriors. In a society built around war readiness, strong incentives for marriage were strategic.

#### Olive trees were protected like national treasures.

In ancient Athens, an olive tree was not an ordinary plant. It was sacred, symbolic, and economically essential. Olive oil had many uses: It lit lamps, healed wounds, and was a popular item people would trade.

In the 6th century B.C.E., the Athenian lawmaker Solon made it illegal to cut down olive trees without official permission, with sometimes severe penalties for lawbreakers. Back then, preserving olive groves was literally protecting the city's future.



#### Russia taxed beards to spur modernization.

Fast-forward to 17th-century Russia, where Tsar Peter the Great was determined to drag his kingdom into the Renaissance era. Part of that meant shaving off traditional beards, which were seen as backward by Western European standards, and adopting clean-shaven faces. When the outright banning of facial hair sparked religious resistance and rebellion, Peter pivoted: Keep your beard, just pay a tax, and carry a metal token. It was a unique combination of cultural reform and fiscal strategy.

These examples remind us that what now sounds absurd often grew out of urgent needs or deeply held values. Punishing men for not marrying, olive tree preservation, and beard control may sound silly at first, but each solved a problem that mattered in its day.



### Sizzling Chinese Pepper Steak With Onions

#### Ingredients

##### Steak

- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp oyster sauce
- 1 tbsp grated fresh ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 lb beef strips (sirloin or rib eye)
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil, separated
- 1 large onion, sliced
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Steamed rice or noodles

##### Sauce

- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tbsp hoisin sauce
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp cornstarch

#### Directions

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together soy sauce, oyster sauce, ginger, garlic, and sesame oil.
2. Toss beef strips in marinade; let sit 10–15 minutes.
3. In a skillet over medium heat, heat 1 tbsp vegetable oil, then add sliced onions.
4. Sauté until soft, slightly caramelized; season with salt and pepper, remove from pan, and set aside.
5. In the same skillet, heat 2 tbsp vegetable oil over high heat.
6. Add marinated beef strips; stir-fry for 2–3 minutes until browned.
7. In a small bowl, whisk together soy sauce, hoisin sauce, rice vinegar, and cornstarch.
8. Pour sauce over beef and simmer until thickened.
9. Add sautéed onions back into pan; stir to combine.
10. Serve hot over steamed rice or noodles.

Inspired by [CookTune.com](https://www.cooktune.com)

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## Think You Know Pirates?

### These Little-Known Facts Tell a Different Story

When most people think of pirates, they imagine gruff voices shouting "Arrr!" and fun, over-the-top accents. However, did you know that in reality, pirates spoke in the accents of their home countries? English, Spanish, French, and Dutch dialects mingled aboard ships, depending on the crew. The exaggerated pirate voice we recognize today comes from a 1950 Disney film, not real history.

But wait, let's check out a few more little-known facts about pirates!

#### **Buried treasure was pretty rare.**

Thanks to books and movies, pirates are forever linked to hidden treasure and mysterious maps marked with a giant "X." However, most pirates didn't bury their loot, because gold and goods were only valuable if they were spent. Since pirate life was risky and often short, crews usually divided their plunder immediately and enjoyed it in port towns. Only a handful of pirates are known to have buried treasure at all.

#### **Pirate ships had rules and democracy.**

Despite their scary reputation, pirate crews weren't chaotic free-for-alls. Many ships operated under a formal code of conduct that laid out rules for behavior, punishments, and the division of treasure. Captains were often elected, and they voted on significant

decisions. Pirates even offered compensation for injuries. Losing a limb could earn a sailor extra shares of the loot.

#### **Female pirates were real and powerful.**

Piracy wasn't exclusively a man's world. Famous women like Anne Bonny and Mary Read fought alongside male pirates and earned respect for their bravery. Even more impressive was Zheng Yi Sao, a Chinese pirate leader who commanded a massive fleet of hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of sailors. She negotiated her retirement and lived out her days peacefully, something few pirates ever achieved.

#### **The Jolly Roger was psychological warfare.**

Pirate flags weren't just for decoration. The skull-and-crossbones design, known as the Jolly Roger, was meant to terrify enemy ships into surrendering without a fight. Some flags featured hourglasses, bleeding hearts, or skeletons, each symbol sending a clear message: Surrender quickly, or suffer the consequences.

