

***March* Trilogy Discussion Board Post with Peer Comments**

My Original Post:

How does the visual aspect of *March* affect your interpretation of the graphic novel series? How might your experience as a reader be different if the book had been written in prose?

I am absolutely loving and disliking *March*. (I only dislike it because it makes me upset with how things were handled and how people were hurt just for being who they were.) The graphics and stories that John Lewis describes are emotional and powerful. I think that he provides so much on one page. With all that's going on, I see the visual comparisons between what I've seen in the recent years to what *March* is depicting. I think the visuals affect my interpretation greatly by giving me illustrations that are so lifelike and relatable to images of protesting and civil rights movements of today. I think, too, the visuals really pull me to a uncomfortable and emotionally moving spot. The images make the history come alive and makes me enraged or sad or empowered, just as it does to John and those he involves in the narrative.

If I were to read *March* as a novel, I think the power would shine through as it does with the graphic novels, though I don't believe that it would attach to me as much as the graphic novels do. There's just something about how the images stand out to me that really make me feel connected to it in some way. I don't know if its framing with him going back and forth from the present to the past, which I feel would be *extremely* difficult with a plain-text novel, or something else.

I appreciate how unapologetic some of the images are. For example, when Lewis talks about Emmett Till, there's an image on page 57 of Emmett's beaten body on the banks of the river. There are many more images I could pull, but that one stuck out to me the most. (Also, I'm only done with most of the first book.) I have read about Emmett Till and have heard stories about what had happened, but to see even an illustration about what happened is chilling. I'm glad they didn't put an actual photo because there actual photos of his face after being murdered and he is unrecognizable. It's absolutely tragic and terrifying. Although, it could've had a different impact had they done so. (Although, I think it's more respectful that they hadn't.)

I think this book has a lot of relevance today, if not stronger relevance than ever. I think teaching these books now would be a perfect pairing with *All American Boys*. It shows contrast but also so much correlation.

Peer 1:

Hi Will,

I agree that the illustrations add a lot to the March series. They literally allow the reader to visualize what is being discussed in the text. This is especially useful for a text like March, which is so dense with information. The images make it more impactful because they provide another way for readers to connect to the history. I'm glad you brought up the idea of how the illustrations impact the telling in contrast to the effect actual photographs may have. Although the civil rights movement happened over half a century ago, it is recent enough in U.S. history to have been fairly well documented. That's to say, images of the brutality exist. I think it's interesting you call the images in March unapologetic. I see your point about the inclusion of violence and death, but the fact that they are illustrations distorts the images. I can understand multiple reasons why Lewis, Aydin, and Powell may have decided to produce the series in black and white, but I think a limited color scheme including red could be extremely effective in illustrating the violence. It does make sense that they would omit this, however, because it could draw too much attention to the violent reaction to their purposefully nonviolent movement.

I'm still getting used to reading graphic novels, and I sometimes find there's just too much to look at. This is true for me in many places throughout the series because of the amount of text (both narration and dialogue) in conjunction with the images. Take page 104 in book three for example. Here there is narration, dialogue (on the phone), and visual information. The split perspective with President Johnson and Senator Humphrey on either end of the phone line and the way the dialogue dances around the page could make this difficult to follow. I did notice that the tails connecting the balloons help the reader track the conversation. The distinction between smooth and jagged tails also clarifies who is speaking versus whose image is present. There are other examples; this is just one I came across while flipping through again. In contrast, some of the moments I found most powerful were the sparsest pages. For example, book three, page 183 where the second half of the page says simply "I disagreed."

Lewis, John, and Andrew Aydin. March: Book Three. Illustrated by Nate Powell, Top Shelf, 2016.

Peer 2:

Hi William and [REDACTED],

I agree with you, William, that the trilogy is both enjoyable and disturbing to read. I really appreciate that the books were told in the graphic novel format. As you said, William, the images are emotionally evocative. They help readers see and feel what happened in a way that plain text isn't able to. I did find it intriguing, [REDACTED], that there is no color used between the covers, but, interestingly, the covers themselves are colorful. I agree with your idea that the color would have put too much emphasis on the violence in the story and would have been counterintuitive to the movement's focus on non-violence. I think, too, that it would have added an element of theatricality, as well as comic bookishness, distracting from the seriousness of the story. Also, the starkness of the black ink on white paper emphasizes the vast differences between White America and Black America. I think the black and white color scheme brings attention to the racial division in America.

I agree with you, William, that the images make history come alive. I think the power of graphic novels is that they can include a vast number of perspectives while also including historical information in a way that would be too dry in regular prose. For example, on page sixty (in book three), in addition to conversation bubbles, additional information is provided without preamble to supplement the story (such as dates, location, and background information) to help readers follow the timeline and to have a clearer idea of events. In your original post, [REDACTED], you expressed frustration about some of the text being too small to read - I totally understand what you're saying. This drove me crazy. I used a magnifying glass to read what I could. However, this added extra time when reading the books, so reading the trilogy took forever.

[REDACTED]

P.S. Thank you, William, for posting the videos on the discussion board. They are perfectly aligned with the trilogy.

Work Cited

Lewis, John, et al. March: Book Three. Top Shelf, 2016.