

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMICS TO THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS IN HISTORY\*

*CONTRIBUIÇÕES DAS HISTÓRIAS EM QUADRINHOS NO PROCESSO DE ENSINO E APRENDIZAGEM DE HISTÓRIA*

*APORTACIONES DEL CÓMIC AL PROCESO DE ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DE LA HISTORIA*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the main contributions of the use of comics as a tool for teaching history, with a focus on their application in the school environment. This is a qualitative, bibliographical and descriptive study. The methodology involved analyzing a corpus of nineteen articles from the Google Scholar database. The data was interpreted using the Content Analysis technique. The results show contributions related to: methodological potential for teaching and learning History, understanding and (critical) interpretation of indications of the historical context, exploration of content in a playful and contextualized way, development of interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, and development of reading, comprehension, communication and representation skills.

**Keywords:** Teaching, Comic, History.

## RESUMO

Este artigo investiga as principais contribuições do uso de histórias em quadrinhos como recurso para o Ensino e aprendizagem de História. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, de cunho exploratório e descritivo. A metodologia envolveu a análise de um corpus com dezenove artigos oriundos da base de dados do Google Acadêmico. Os dados foram interpretados com auxílio da técnica da Análise de Conteúdo. Os resultados evidenciam contribuições relacionadas à(o): potencial metodológico para o ensino e aprendizagem de História, compreensão e interpretação (crítica) de indícios do contexto histórico, exploração dos conteúdos de forma lúdica e contextualizada, desenvolvimento da interdisciplinaridade, transdisciplinaridade e multidisciplinaridade, e desenvolvimento de habilidades de leitura, compreensão, comunicação e representação.

**Palavras-chave:** Ensino e aprendizagem, Histórias em quadrinhos, História.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo investiga las principales aportaciones del uso del cómic como recurso para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de la historia. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo, exploratorio y descriptivo. La metodología consistió en analizar un corpus de veintidós estudios de la base de datos Google Scholar. Los datos se interpretaron mediante la técnica de Análisis de Contenido. Los resultados muestran aportaciones relacionadas con: potencial metodológico para la enseñanza y aprendizaje de la Historia, comprensión e interpretación (crítica) de claves del contexto histórico, exploración de contenidos de forma lúdica y contextualizada, desarrollo de la interdisciplinariedad, transdisciplinariedad y multidisciplinariedad, y desarrollo de habilidades de lectura, comprensión, comunicación y representación.

**Palabras clave:** Enseñanza y aprendizaje, Cómic, Historia.

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## INTRODUCTION

The teaching of History faces numerous challenges, one of the main ones being the need to make it more meaningful for students (Pereira et al., 2020). To address this, it is essential to adopt an approach that goes beyond the mere transmission of facts, prioritizing the development of skills such as critical thinking and source analysis. The implementation of new learning methodologies offers an opportunity to bring students closer to historical reality, allowing them to apply knowledge in practical and creative ways. This contributes to a deeper and more lasting understanding of the subject (McGreal; Peters, 2016).

The National Common Curricular Base (Brasil, 1997) highlights the role of comic books in developing reading, writing, and text interpretation skills while also encouraging students' written production. The document also emphasizes the relevance of these resources in valuing cultural diversity by portraying Brazilian history and culture through characters and narratives. In this sense, comic books are presented not only as tools to foster reading but also as resources for intellectual development, making them a skill to be acquired and evaluated .

Given the above, various pedagogical practices can be developed through comic books in the teaching and learning of History. Several scholars have highlighted their benefits, pointing out that they represent a rich source of knowledge and a dynamic instrument capable of facilitating dialogue with students (Costa, 2019; Lima, 2017). Furthermore, comic books employ engaging and dynamic language, enhanced by visual and narrative resources that have the potential to attract students who struggle to engage with traditional textbook reading (Matos, 2019). They also offer the opportunity to explore different contexts and produce information on relevant social topics (Ramos, 2009), while contributing to the development of essential skills, such as integrating verbal and visual language in building historiographic narratives from an interdisciplinary perspective (Tamanini & Costa, 2020), among other equally important aspects.

Therefore, this study is justified by the potential of comic books in the teaching and learning of History. The choice of topic is also motivated by related teaching experiences and the need to promote new methodologies. In this regard, the central research question emerges: What are the main contributions of comic books to the teaching and learning of History, considering the literature from 2012 to 2022?

## COMIC BOOKS IN EDUCATION

Comic books combine two systems of graphic signs: images and written language. This phenomenon is referred to as "ultragenre" due to its multifaceted way of engaging readers and bridging historical analysis and critical literacy (Eisner, 2010). In the context of History education, comic books stand out for their ability to present historical figures and events in compelling and memorable ways (Matos, 2019).

By bringing historical characters and significant events to life, comic books enhance reader interpretation by connecting impersonal historical narratives to individual perspectives (Assumpção, 2021). They enable not just the recollection of dates and facts but also the explanation of human movement through time and space (Assumpção, 2021). Through characters and events that transcend time, students can identify with humanity's struggles, victories, and challenges.

In this scenario, comic books serve as both playful and pedagogical resources (Santos & Pereira, 2015), capable of reducing challenges such as difficulties with reading and text interpretation. They allow the creation of connections between historical events and contemporary issues. This link can make content more engaging and allow for varied interpretations of human movement through time and space (Assumpção, 2021). Establishing this connection may lead to more positive student performance in the learning process due to its dynamism and creativity (Vieira Júnior, 2019). In this context, comic books clearly contribute to the teaching and learning of History (Eisner, 2010).

Comic books offer opportunities to explore innovative educational methods. Teachers can adopt more creative and interactive classroom approaches through activities like comic book creation, image analysis, and discussions based on visual narratives (Arantes & Gomes, 2017; Pereira, 2015). As ludic tools, comic books make learning more engaging and dynamic and can be used as teaching aids to simplify the understanding of historical concepts (Vilela, 2012).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study, bibliographic in nature and qualitative in approach, focuses on comic books. To identify the main contributions of these resources, a literature review was conducted, following the structure proposed by Coelho (2022). This procedure involves a systematic review designed to increase methodological rigor in the search, collection, extraction, compilation, and analysis of a representative corpus.

The methodological path consisted of five steps: (i) identifying the research problem, (ii) selecting and employing research strategies, (iii) compiling a research corpus, (iv) exploring and analyzing the research data, and (v) identifying the research results.

After formulating the research question, we selected strategies such as identifying keywords, choosing appropriate descriptors, identifying databases with the highest concentration of relevant studies, and setting a time frame between 2012 and 2022.

The selected descriptors were: comic books, education, and History. These were used to form the search string: "ensino de história" AND "História em quadrinhos". Google Scholar was chosen for its wide access to various study types, including journal articles, theses, dissertations, open-access texts, reviews, and books. Although we also consulted the Capes Periodicals platform, it offered fewer studies on the topic and presented some duplicates.

To organize the research corpus, we used parameters aligned with the analysis objectives, resulting in a sample of 18 articles. The inclusion criteria were: discussing the contributions of comic books to History education and fitting within the selected time frame.

Table 1 presents the final studies included in the corpus, selected to ensure representativeness and relevance, reflecting a diversity of perspectives and approaches.

**Table 1. RESEARCH CORPUS**

Author/year	Title
Vilela (2012)	A utilização dos quadrinhos no ensino de História: Avanço desafios e limites
Santos e Vergueiro (2012)	Histórias em quadrinhos no processo de aprendizado: da teoria à prática
Santos e Pereira (2015)	O uso das Histórias em quadrinhos como recurso didático pedagógico nas aulas de História
Molina et al. (2016)	<i>Cinema, quadrinhos e ensino de História: a experiência com estudantes do Ensino Médio</i>
Paiva (2016)	Histórias em quadrinhos na educação: Memórias, resultados e dados
Silva et al. (2018)	Uso de HQs como metodologia no ensino de História
Lima (2017)	Ensino de História da África em Desconstrução: Renovação do Imaginário da África Através de Histórias em quadrinhos em acordo com a Lei 10.639
Santos e Cavalcante (2017)	A leitura de clássicos literários através de histórias em quadrinhos: A análise de uma experiência com a obra O Cortiço de Aluísio Azevedo, com alunos do ensino médio
Arantes e Gomes (2017)	O uso das histórias em quadrinhos no processo de ensino e aprendizagem em diferentes disciplinas na escola
Costa (2019)	Desenhos que ensinam sobre o passado: A aplicabilidade das Histórias em quadrinhos no ensino de História
Matos (2019)	HQ e ensino de História: Asterix, o Gaulês na renovação do ensino de história antiga
Tamini e Costa (2019)	As Histórias em quadrinhos HQs e o ensino de Histórias em Quadrinhos: Canudos entre textos e imagens
Costa (2019)	Desenhos que ensinam sobre o passado: A aplicabilidade das Histórias em quadrinhos no ensino de História
Vieira Júnior (2019)	Quadrinhos na prática educativa: Vivências nos anos iniciais do ensino Fundamental
Matos (2020)	Histórias em quadrinhos e ensino de História: Uma reflexão teórica metodológica
Cardozo (2020)	Histórias em quadrinhos e relações internacionais: análise das edições do Capitão América publicadas entre 2017 e 2018
Assumpção (2021)	Ensino de História, quadrinhos e a mobilização social – um estudo de caso da HQ democracia
Oliveira (2022)	Como usar as histórias em quadrinhos na sala de aula

Source: The authors

To explore and analyze the data, we employed Bardin's (2016) Content Analysis technique, which helps identify patterns, themes, meanings, and relationships within the analyzed material. The process followed three phases: (1) pre-analysis, (2) material exploration, and (3) result treatment, inference, and interpretation. The first phase included organizing the material, conducting a floating reading to identify initial studies, selecting documents, and formulating indicators.

In the exploration phase, we carried out categorization through breaking down, grouping, or regrouping text units. To build recording units and initial categories, we began with frequency analysis. Lastly, in the third phase, we treated the results through inference and interpretation, aiming to identify and understand the key messages in the collected material, with an emphasis on reflective and critical analysis.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 presents the results obtained from the analysis. Based on the categorization process, 47 initial categories and six final categories were identified. These final categories are described with the aim of outlining the main contributions of comic books to the teaching of History.

**Table 2. INITIAL AND FINAL CATEGORIES**

Initial Categories	Final Categories
Can be considered a source and classroom resource	Methodological potential for the teaching and learning of History
Facilitate interactions and exchanges of knowledge	
Promote dynamic activities and make learning more enjoyable	
Make learning enjoyable and reflective	
Provide positive performance in the teaching and learning process	
Enable new teaching strategies and the production of historical knowledge	
Allow the integration of different areas of knowledge and media	
Aid in learning the content presented in class	
Create a meaningful and enjoyable teaching environment	
Encourage students to produce their own comics about discussed historical issues	
Enable students to have positive performance in the teaching and learning process, due to their dynamism and creativity	
Allow the development of students' creativity	
Encourage students to interpret the world critically	
Enable students to relate to historical contexts	

Aid interpretation of the interlocutor, bringing a more personal narrative about the past	
Can be used as historical sources in the classroom	
Provide clues to the historical context being studied	
Promote new strategies for historical knowledge construction	Comprehension and (critical) interpretation of historical context clues
Help in understanding the historical context	
Assist in historical context interpretation through less textual classroom materials	
Encourage diverse interpretations about human movement in time and space	
Prove to be useful tools in producing historical knowledge by students	
Can be used to illustrate textual and visual information about social life and community knowledge	
Generate information related to social themes	
Can be used to develop student creativity	Exploration of content in a playful and contextualized manner
Support school topic learning through play and illustrative content	
Address topics in a given knowledge field	
Stimulate creative and playful expression	
Bring didactic content closer to students' realities	
Bring elements from the students' everyday life	
Encourage artistic expressions such as cartoons and comic strips	
Propose an interdisciplinary perspective	Development of interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary
Promote paths to plurality between Arts and History education	
Encourage dialogue across disciplines	
Promote interdisciplinarity across History, Arts, Portuguese Language, and Geography	
Combine verbal and visual language to build historiographic narratives	
Contribute to interdisciplinary vision	
Encourage dialogue across subjects to apply learned concepts	
Address different themes, even those beyond the official curriculum	
Encourage debates and classroom questioning	Development of reading, comprehension, communication, and representation skills
Encourage literary practices	
Explore literature and research in a creative and enjoyable way	
Enrich student vocabulary and interpretive ability through the elliptical nature of comic language	
Stimulate writing, imaginative reading, and improve students' reading perception	
Can be used as a transversal interdisciplinary tool	
Encourage and enhance reading experiences, helping students become better readers	

Source: Created by the authors

From these findings, this section discusses the selected categories to highlight the key contributions of comic books according to the authors. The following categories are emphasized: (i) methodological potential for teaching and learning History; (ii) comprehension and critical interpretation of historical context clues; (iii) exploration of content in a playful and contextualized manner; (iv) development of interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and

multidisciplinarity; and (v) development of reading, comprehension, communication, and representational skills.

Regarding the first category, the methodological potential for teaching and learning History, one of the main contributions is that comic books can be considered a rich resource for the classroom. They allow educators to address a wide range of topics, facilitate interaction, and promote knowledge exchange through diverse forms of dialogue (Costa, 2019; Lima, 2017), while maintaining the essential element of making learning both enjoyable and reflective (Costa, 2019; Matos, 2019).

The dynamic nature of comic books is a key advantage, as it enables teachers to address various subjects through the interpretation and use of images. This can be especially useful when a thorough understanding of historical contexts requires extensive reading (Costa, 2019).

Additionally, comic books help create an engaging and pleasant classroom environment that can facilitate the delivery of proposed content (Costa, 2019; Matos, 2019). Such an atmosphere encourages more effective dialogue between teachers and students, since positive teacher-student relationships can significantly enhance knowledge assimilation. Another noteworthy aspect is the encouragement of comic book creation by students, based on classroom themes and issues (Matos, 2019; 2020), which increases the likelihood of positive learning outcomes (Vieira Júnior, 2019; Lima, 2017).

Data suggest that comic books have the potential to enrich teaching and learning in multiple ways, including the incorporation of social issues relevant to students' daily lives (Vieira Júnior, 2019; Matos, 2019). Moreover, they are recognized for their methodological versatility, functioning both as sources (Vilela, 2012; Lima, 2017) and as tools commonly used by historians. Comic books expand the concept of historical sources and foster the creation of multiple dialogues (Lima, 2017), moving beyond a sole reliance on textbooks and memorization.

This methodological potential includes the classroom implementation of comic books. Examples highlighted by Santos and Pereira (2015) include characters such as Captain America, Black Panther, and the comic strips of Matilda, all of which offer diverse perspectives on historical events and social issues. Captain America, when read critically and analytically in the context of World War II, allows for discussions about war

propaganda, nationalism, and Cold War symbolism. These readings illustrate how pop culture supported political ideals while promoting notions such as freedom. Black Panther, associated with the civil rights movement, enables debates on colonialism, racism, and African identity. These topics align with Brazil's National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB 9.394/96), particularly Article 26-A, which mandates the teaching of Afro-Brazilian culture in schools. Meanwhile, the Matilda comic strips are useful for addressing social and political issues through critical humor and are frequently used in national exams such as the High School National Exam-ENEM (Ramos, 2009).

The second category, comprehension and critical interpretation of historical context clues, emphasizes the importance of comic books in fostering critical thinking. By encouraging students to engage in critical analysis of the world around them (Assumpção, 2021), comic books allow teachers to build on students' prior knowledge and develop their creative capacities. These resources also facilitate a closer relationship with historical knowledge. The historical content in comics presents events and characters from the past while also contextualizing historical periods, thereby providing a more detailed understanding of the social, political, and cultural environments of the time (Silva et al., 2018; Santos; Cavalcante, 2017; Vilela, 2012).

Visual narratives help students connect facts and events more clearly and critically. They promote critical reflection on the past, encourage questioning of official narratives, and explore multiple historical perspectives. This approach helps construct an impersonal and analytical historical narrative that challenges simplifications and stereotypes, contributing to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of historical events (Assumpção, 2021; Santos; Cavalcante, 2017). Additionally, by portraying everyday and cultural aspects of past societies, comics offer a richer and more accessible perspective of history, acting as effective tools for students to construct and deconstruct knowledge (Paiva, 2016; Silva et al., 2018; Cardozo, 2020).

Comic books enhance content comprehension and also improve students' interpretative skills by offering historical context clues. Even when presented in an accessible format, comics can address the historical periods during which they were created, depicting ethnic and cultural characteristics of different peoples. For example, "Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos," created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in 1963 and set during World War II, presents a narrative that emphasizes patriotism and



resistance against Axis forces, illustrating key elements of that historical period. This type of narrative can be used to present textual and visual information about the social life of past communities, thus facilitating the construction and reconstruction of knowledge (Arantes; Gomes, 2017).

When using a comic book in class, History teachers can analyze with students the behaviors of societies from different times. This practice provides contextual clues and supports the implementation of new pedagogical strategies, such as the illustration of textual and visual information about the daily lives of historical communities (Matos, 2019).

The third category emphasizes the exploration of content in a playful and contextualized manner. In this approach, comic books function as educational tools that offer an innovative and engaging method for content delivery (Molina et al., 2015; Vilela, 2012). By integrating text and images, comic books create a learning experience that transcends conventional methods, making school content more enjoyable. This integration helps establish a relaxed and pleasant learning environment and incorporates elements derived from cinema (Cardozo, 2020; Costa, 2019).

One of the main advantages of comic books in educational settings is their ability to address a wide range of themes and topics. Frequently, these narratives explore areas that go beyond the official curriculum (Tamanini & Costa, 2020). Such flexibility enables educators to present material creatively and in context, adapting visual narratives to emphasize various aspects of the subject matter, while maintaining a critical approach to content (Vilela, 2012).

Comic books stand out as valuable pedagogical resources because they allow for the practical and engaging application of academic concepts (Molina et al., 2015). By illustrating educational content, they facilitate a deeper and more lasting understanding, supporting learning in an enjoyable and effective way (Cardozo, 2020). The playful element of comic books stimulates students' imagination and encourages artistic expression through the creation of comics, caricatures, cartoons, and comic strips. This teaching method not only aids in content assimilation but also fosters critical and analytical skills, prompting students to reflect on and question the material they are learning. It also brings students closer to historical knowledge (Vilela, 2012; Matos, 2019; Costa, 2019).

In summary, the integration of comic books into educational practices transforms the learning experience by combining instruction with enjoyment. This playful and contextualized approach not only enriches the teaching process but also promotes a more interactive and stimulating learning environment. According to the data collected, comic books offer a dynamic and contextualized way of learning, encouraging the exploration of diverse themes and fostering a more interactive and enriching educational experience.

One significant benefit of this approach is its ability to link educational content to students' personal experiences, as noted by Silva et al. (2018). Through the narratives presented in comic books, it becomes possible to introduce new perspectives in the teaching and construction of historical knowledge (Arantes & Gomes, 2017; Vilela, 2012). An illustrative example is the comic book "Black Panther," created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, which portrays the king of Wakanda and his use of mineral resources to protect his people from invasions. This narrative highlights the comic's connection to the historical context of European incursions into Africa and demonstrates the richness of historical settings found in comic books. In addition to offering entertainment, this illustrated narrative serves as an important educational tool, providing insights into African history and its interactions with the broader world.

The fourth category, development of interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary, explores how comic books contribute to the interaction and integration of different fields of knowledge in order to address complex topics or issues. In this context, comic books offer an interdisciplinary perspective, creating opportunities for diverse approaches and promoting dialogue between academic disciplines. This fosters broader learning through varied forms and content (Santos & Pereira, 2015; Costa, 2019; Silva et al., 2018).

The use of comic books in teaching creates space for discussions that intersect with specific fields such as Arts, History, and Geography. By incorporating verbal and visual language into historiographical narratives, comic books support an interdisciplinary framework. This strategy expands communication between different subject areas and encourages the development of new interdisciplinary projects (Tamanini & Costa, 2020; Silva et al., 2018).

Interdisciplinarity presents a challenge in education, as it demands the exchange of theories and methodologies. It also calls for the creation of new concepts to address the complexities of various phenomena. This perspective underscores the importance of evaluating the relevance and significance of multiple knowledge areas. Such areas should be taught and promoted beyond the content defined by the official curriculum (Tamanini & Costa, 2019). Furthermore, this approach can contribute to the development of students' oral and written expression (Oliveira, 2022).

The sixth and final category, development of reading, comprehension, communication, and representation skills, demonstrates how comic books significantly enhance students' abilities in reading and interpretation. When used in the classroom, comic books help establish an environment conducive to discussion and debate, encouraging students to question and collaboratively construct knowledge (Costa, 2019). The consistent practice of reading comic books cultivates reading habits that are essential for understanding historical content and deepening acquired knowledge. This practice enriches the reading experience and helps shape students into more critical and independent readers (Mattos, 2019; Santos & Pereira, 2015; Oliveira, 2022).

The habit of reading comic books can be a powerful ally in the process of learning history. Encountering graphic narratives encourages students to investigate the contexts in which these stories unfold, thus developing a critical and historical perspective. Additionally, the specific language of comic books, often marked by ellipses and implicit meanings (Oliveira, 2022), requires readers to infer missing information. This practice strengthens vocabulary and critical thinking. Such skills are increasingly essential in a world marked by an abundance of information, where the ability to independently analyze and interpret data is crucial.

## CONCLUSION

This article has presented the main contributions of using comic books as an educational resource for teaching History, with a particular focus on their application in school settings. The study identified the potential of comic books in History education through an analysis that resulted in five key categories. Accordingly, the principal contributions of comic books to History teaching include: (i) methodological potential for teaching and learning History; (ii) critical comprehension and interpretation of historical context clues; (iii) exploration of content in a playful and contextualized manner; (iv) development of interdisciplinarity,

transdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary; and (v) enhancement of skills related to reading, comprehension, communication, and representation.

Among the categories evaluated, it is important to highlight that the use of comic books in History teaching enables an innovative approach that engages with various educational perspectives, particularly in relation to interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary, as discussed by Maingain and Fourez (2008). This educational potential not only enhances the understanding of historical content but also facilitates connections across multiple fields of knowledge.

Within an interdisciplinary framework, comic books support interaction between History and other disciplines such as Geography, Literature, and the Arts. The analysis of images and narratives found in comics can contribute to a broader understanding of historical settings. At the same time, the literary and visual elements present in comic books allow for an in-depth study of narrative techniques and cultural representations. This approach helps students develop a critical perspective on historical processes and their varied forms of expression.

Transdisciplinarity, in turn, promotes a form of education that goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. It allows comic books to be used as tools to problematize and critically engage with different aspects of reality. Based on the theoretical framework of Maingain and Fourez (2008), this approach fosters reflective learning in which students not only absorb information but also participate actively in the construction of knowledge. It encourages them to relate historical content to contemporary social, philosophical, and ethical issues.

By integrating comic books into teaching through these varied approaches, a more dynamic and meaningful learning experience becomes possible (Silva et al., 2018). This strategy not only fosters student engagement but also reinforces the importance of an educational model that values multiple forms of knowledge and expression. In this way, the use of comic books goes beyond traditional History teaching and becomes an essential resource for the development of students' critical thinking and historical awareness.

These findings underscore the importance of developing new practices, research efforts, and educational materials that support the use of comic books in the classroom. For future studies, it is crucial to examine not only the contributions of this resource but also its limitations, the challenges of its implementation in teaching, the types of content addressed, and other influencing factors. Moreover, it is essential to investigate methodologies that promote interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity, and multidisciplinary in the use of comic books for History education, thereby expanding their potential as a pedagogical tool.

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