

Dear First-Year Student:

Each fall, Wheaton's January students read and write about a common reading. This year's reading is Marjane Satrapi's *Complete Persepolis*, which includes *Persepolis* volumes 1 and 2.

In part, this assignment is meant to help you prepare for the kind of work you will do at Wheaton. But it is also intended as a starting point for discussion with your advisor, your first-year seminar class, and the rest of the class of 2013.

The assignment has three parts:

First, read *The Complete Persepolis*. Bear in mind the questions below, so you can think about them as you read.

Second, please write brief answers to the questions below. These questions are designed to help you think about *Persepolis* and, ultimately, to help you to respond to the third part of the assignment, the essay.

1. What questions or ideas does Satrapi explore in *Persepolis*?
2. What techniques, literary or otherwise, does she use to explore those ideas?
3. How do Satrapi's drawings complement, illuminate or change the meaning of her prose? Identify a drawing or page that is particularly striking to you.
4. What moments in *Persepolis* seem confusing or puzzling to you?

Third, and finally, please write an essay (2-3 double-spaced pages) in response to the following question:

The editor of *Ithacan*, the Ithaca College online newspaper, objected to the choice of *Persepolis* as summer reading for Ithaca's class of 2012, writing, "Graphic novels are little more than advanced comic books."¹ Another critic of recent summer reading assignments, Charlotte Allen, argues that instead of choosing popular, "not-too-challenging" works such as *Persepolis*, colleges should make a "commitment to fostering freshmen's intellectual growth" by assigning "a literary classic or a seminal philosophical treatise such as Plato's *Republic*."²

¹ http://theithacan.org/am/publish/editorial/200803_Taking_Initiative.shtml

² http://www.mindingthecampus.com/originals/2008/07/_its_july_and_theres.html

Clearly, these writers feel that *Persepolis* (and other graphic novels) have little intellectual merit. Do you agree? Should we study *Persepolis* in college?

Write an essay in which you consider whether *Persepolis* is a valuable and appropriate reading experience for college students. Feel free to draw from or expand on your answers to questions 1-4 above. You may also compare *Persepolis* to an acknowledged “literary classic or a seminal philosophical treatise” that you are familiar with (either from your secondary school assignments or reading you have done elsewhere).

As you draft your essay, please be sure to support your ideas with evidence from *Persepolis* and any other texts you discuss, and be sure to cite these texts properly. You may use any academic citation style you wish, such as MLA, APA or Chicago. For more information on citation styles, visit:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Please send your brief answers and your essay to advising@wheatoncollege.edu no later than January 6th.

We look forward to reading your ideas.

Sincerely,

Jim Mancall
Associate Dean of Studies