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Putting it Graphically: Fidelity in Graphic Novel Adaptations of Classic German Literature

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Put it Graphically: Fidelity in Graphic Novel Adaptations of Classic German Literature

Do graphic novel adaptations of works in the “canon” of German literature faithfully portray the original works? Does the use of unique styles, inclusion of original text, plot representation, and color enhance or deter the faithfulness to the original?

How characters and scenes are drawn and how characters are represented are a part of the **STYLE** criterion. The way in which an image is drawn can tell readers how to feel and gives them a clue on what to expect in the future. How characters are drawn can also be mixed with how characters are represented because illustrators use style to make a point.

The source material is sometimes kept when a story is adapted to different media. In the adaptation of a book to a movie, this is seen through narration, most commonly at the beginning and the end. Comparing a book to a graphic novel, different percentages of the **ORIGINAL TEXT** are found dependent on the graphic novel.

In adaptation to different media, the plot of a story is changed to better fit the new medium (most commonly seen when a book is made into a movie). This can also happen when a work is made into a graphic novel. The criterion of **PLOT CHANGES** examines the differences in the plot between the original and the graphic novel.

Different types of media use **COLOR** in different ways, whether in excess or lack of or somewhere in between. The way color is used tells its own story and gives its own emphasis to important features in a story. The criterion of color analyzes the emphases of the author and compares the different emphases with the those of the source material.

*The graphic novel is an extended comic book, written by adults for adults, which treats important content in a serious artistic way and makes use of high-quality paper and production* (Tabachnick, 2010, p. 3). The German literary community has been very slow to accept the graphic novel as a literary genre (Blank, 2017). As the graphic novel has gained acceptance, graphic representations of classical German literature are being published alongside many original graphic works. The literary community sees two criteria regarding whether a graphic novel is of quality work: “... first, a good adaptation should be faithful to the original text if it is to be called an adaptation rather than a retelling; second the adaptation should be faithful to itself in that its visual side should have a style, which while in keeping with the intentions of the author of the original text, is itself unique” (Tabachnick, 2010, p. 4).

**CONCLUSION**: Examination of the 4 criteria reveals that the adaptors of these 4 graphic novels, part of the “German canon,” sought to remain faithful to the original works. While the graphic novels may have given extra emphasis to certain characteristics of the original novels, they still convey the same stories.