

“One Book One Community” Picks *Persepolis*
By Dorothy Hodder, Editor

Four of the five candidates for Wilmington’s next “**One Book One Community**” book virtually tied in the reader poll taken in February. Some 600 readers voted on the *Star News* website and at local bookstores, libraries, and high schools. After reviewing the ballots the committee of local librarians has selected *Persepolis*, by Marjane Satrapi, for our next area-wide discussion.

Marjane Satrapi was a child living in Iran at the time of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. *Persepolis* is the story of how she and her family were affected by those events, told in the form of a graphic novel. The black and white drawings convey the fear and confusion, as well as the humor, of a child observing an adult world gone crazy.

Graphic novels are extremely popular with teenagers and are starting to be taken seriously by literary critics, according to Youth Services Librarian **Margaret Miles**. Long accepted widely in Japan, the format first attracted serious adult readers in the West among science fiction and fantasy fans.

A literary ancestor of *Persepolis*, Margaret recalls, is *Maus*, the **Pulitzer Prize**-winning Holocaust memoir. Author Art Spiegelman depicted the horrors of his father’s experiences as a prisoner at Auschwitz in few words by drawing the Jews as mice and their Nazis guards as cats. Margaret notes that the subtle and beautifully constructed graphic novel *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang has just won the **2007 Michael Printz Award** from the Young Adult Library Services Association.

One of the goals of the “One Book One Community” committee in choosing *Persepolis*, the overwhelming favorite with Ashley High School voters, is to **involve younger readers** in the discussion. Graphic novels appeal across divides of cultures, languages, and literacy levels. “Whatever can or cannot be said about the verbal literacy of young people today, they are a generation that is **tremendously visually literate**,” Margaret said. “All the information we’re used to gathering from words, they’re used to gathering from pictures.” Older readers may have to practice different skills to master this style of reading.

“One Book One Community” discussions will be planned during **September** this year, led by faculty from UNCW and CFCC and other special guests. Unfortunately Marjane Satrapi lives in France and will not be able to attend, but UNCW will be bringing **Azar Nafisi**, author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, to campus in the fall. The incoming freshmen class will be discussing *The Kite Runner*, for another look at the effects of religious revolutions in the Islamic world.

Other candidates for “One Book One Community” were, in order of votes cast, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, by Sherman Alexie; *In the Time of the Butterflies*, by Julia Alvarez; *Never Let Me Go*, by Kazuo Ishiguro; and *The Namesake*, by Jhumpa Lahiri.

Discussion sets of these titles, and over 350 others, have been purchased by the Friends of the New Hanover County Public Library. **To make reservations for your group to borrow a set please call 798-6371.** For updates on “One Book, One Community” keep checking the website, <http://library.uncwil.edu/oboc/>