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TUSITALA

TELLER OF TALES

Exploring graphic representations of diasporic
poetry for engaging Pasifika youth

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Design

Massey University College of Creative Arts
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ABSTRACT

While many high achievers come from the Pasifika community, current research into New Zealand secondary schools has identified a literacy gap between students from Pasifika backgrounds and those from other ethnic groups (Telford & Tuomu'a, 2013). The findings highlight the need to investigate engaging and culturally-responsive methods for strengthening the literacy outcomes of Pasifika students.

Tusitala – teller of tales aims to explore graphic narrative as a sequential storytelling method for the engagement, education and empowerment of Pasifika youth. Graphic narrative is used as an umbrella term by comic theorists to describe narrative work in the medium of graphic novels, and comics. The project is contextualised within an existing body of research into the effectiveness of graphic narratives as multimodal texts, for engaging reluctant and struggling readers. Positioned primarily as a practice-based design investigation into the potential of graphic narrative for educational outcomes, the project is further underpinned by pedagogical and sequential art theories.

As a subset of this project, poetry from Pasifika authors is highlighted for its particular role in reflecting the identity and experiences of Pasifika youth today. The resulting design investigation applies both a formal analysis of graphic narrative works and textual analysis of four poems from contemporary Pasifika poets. These poems are then synthesised into a set of large posters that draw artistic influence from both Western and Indigenous precedents. The resulting set contributes to a growing body of work that reflects Pacific diasporic identity in New Zealand.

Key words: Graphic narrative, Pasifika, diaspora, reading literacy, poetry, multimodal.

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"TUSITALA"

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(Marsh,1994, p.137)

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