Hi, I'm Moira Fitzgibbons from Marist College. And I'd like to talk about teaching Geoffrey Chaucer's the *Clerk's Tale* alongside *Sita's Ramayana*, which was written by Samhita Arni and illustrated by Moyna Chitrakar.

I'm going to be talking about two main connections between these works. The first is that both texts have a main character, Griselda in the *Clerk's Tale* and Sita in *Sita's Ramayana*, who exemplify patience and endurance. The second connection is that both works offer a kind of master class in translation, adaptation and multi-modal communication. Taken together, the two works really show what it means for an artist to encounter a literary tradition and make it their own.

*Sita’s Ramayana* was published in 2011 in the hard copy format pictured here. It retells the Hindu epic Ramayana from the perspective of the god Rama's wife, Sita. The *Canterbury Tales* was written in the late 14th century. And if you're going to use a print version, I might recommend the Broadview version pictured here. Or you could go to the Harvard Chaucer Web site and use Larry Benson's interlinear translation.

And here in this excerpt, we see Griselda doing what she does best. She has promised her lord and husband, Walter, that she will never contradict him after they are married. And she does. She fulfills this promise through a series of sadistic tests that Walter places upon her, including here the indication that he has murdered their daughter.

Similarly, Sita needs to develop strength and stamina throughout her life. Not all her troubles come from her husband, Rama. But in this case, she's enduring a literal trial by fire in response to his callous dismissal of her. So both works ask a series of questions for us, sort of are we supposed to admire these characters' uncompromising devotion or lament the fact that they need to develop those qualities or some combination of both of those things? Neither work really answers those questions, and neither one suggests that either Griselda or Sita are adequately compensated for the suffering that they endure.

We, however, get to experience the rewards of great art--specifically, artists skillfully reshaping long-told narratives. Chaucer credits the Italian poet Petrarch for the *Clerk's Tale*, Petrarch drew from Boccaccio, Boccaccio drew from popular sources and so on.

Similarly, Arni and Chitrakar put their own stamp on a narrative that has been told and retold for centuries. So in this image, you see a news story reporting about a 6th century version of the Ramayana that was discovered in 2015.

In interviews, Arni and Chitrakar have separately described how and why they decided to enter into dialogue with this tradition. What emerges is how creative an act adaptation really is.

Also, these works invite us to think about processes of textual transmission, the image on the left is from the Ellesmere manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* and is the place where Chaucer invokes Petrarch as a source. The image on the right is the same passage from Larry Benson's interlinear translation. One can see that a great deal of interpretation and decision making has to occur for the version on the right to be produced. We could also raise with students the fact that many people might have access to the *Clerk's Tale* as something that was read out loud, not just through individual silent reading. The way the text was performed might well affect what people thought about a character like Griselda.

Similarly, *Sita's Ramayana* comes to us through many acts of translation and adaptation. As pictured here and in the linked video resource, Chitrakar's illustrations adopt Patua scroll painting, a form that involves gesture and song as well as painted images. Part of Arni and Chitrakar's achievement in this book is translating that mode of art to that of the graphic novel.

Here we can see how they meet this challenge. They describe Sita's long hours of patient waiting in a dynamic way by dividing the image up into separate panels and by dividing the text up into fragments. Comparing this image to the illustrations found in Kara McShane's website

"Visualizing Chaucer" would give students the opportunity to compare the graphic novels images with those of artists who are trying to figure out how to depict a somewhat stoic character like Griselda.

So I hope these suggestions have encouraged you to think of ways that we can mix up our reading lists. I believe that *Sita’s Ramayana* belongs not just in a women's literature or global literature course, but right there on the Chaucer syllabus. It might help students think about English literatures not as a linear narrative, but as a web of adaptations and interventions. If we're going to think about Chaucer's innovations in the field of English literature, I think we would also do well to think about women, particularly brown and Black women and the interventions and reshaping that they're doing in Anglophone literatures here in the 21st century. So thanks a lot for considering these ideas and for watching the video.