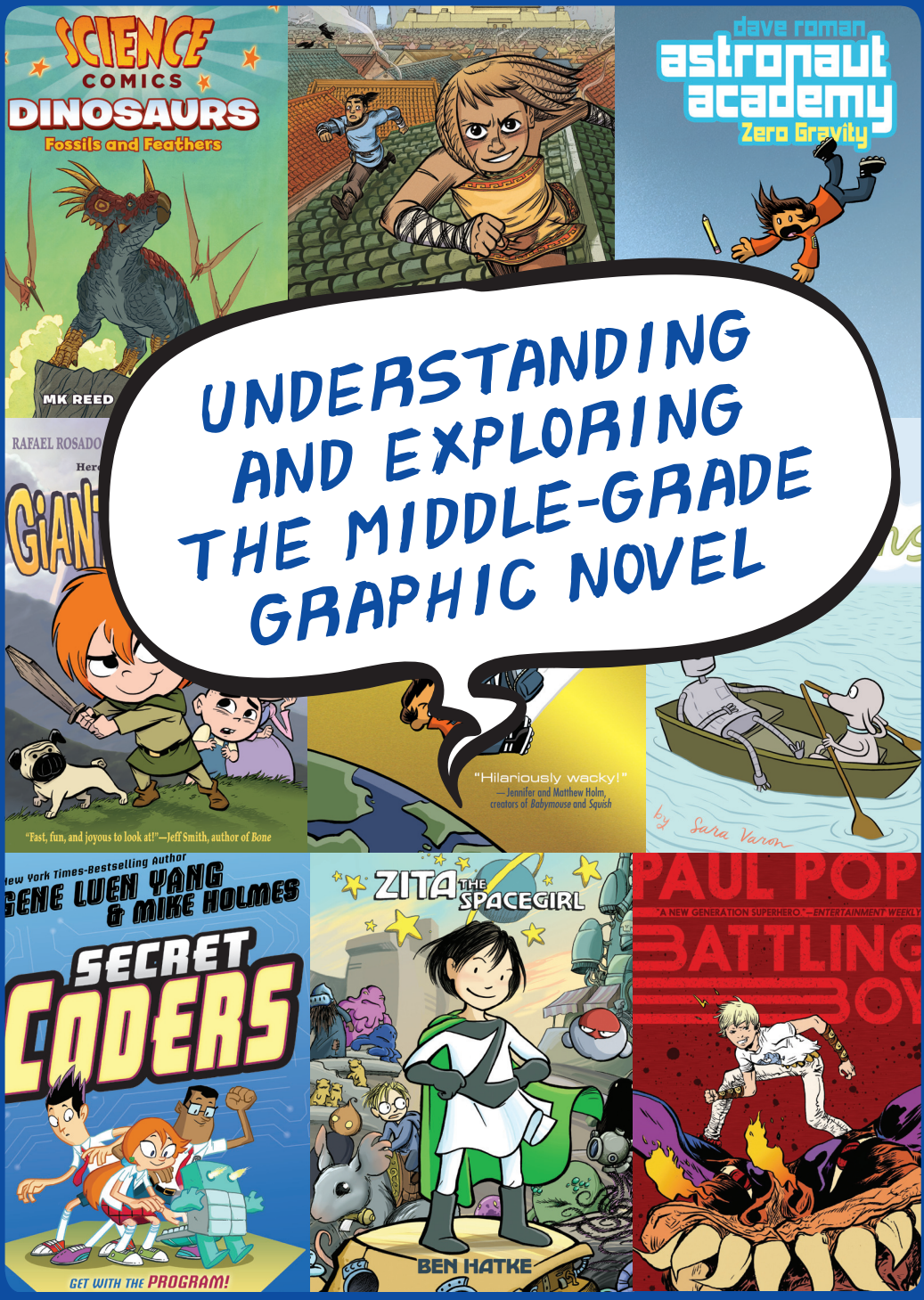


UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLORING THE MIDDLE-GRADE GRAPHIC NOVEL

Using Graphic Novels in your Classroom

A CCSS Teacher's Guide

:01 First Second

Understanding and Exploring the Middle-Grade Graphic Novel

What is a Graphic Novel?

The first thing to understand about graphic novels is that we already know a lot about them!

Graphic novels are the literary-level equivalent of print-text novels. How so? Graphic novels adopt all of the literary-level characteristics we value in high-quality and well respected print-text, traditional and literary novels. The key elements of story (character, setting, plot, theme, and much, much more) are absolutely essential and inherent to the makeup of the graphic novel. Just like traditional print-text literature aims to have intriguing characters, memorable settings, enticing plots, and poignant themes, so do graphic novels. With the same exact goals and characteristics in mind graphic novels and print-text literature are both familiar to us.

Each format also has its own unique characteristics. While we know that print-text literature aims to develop story through the use of the written word, graphic novels develop story through the combination of words and images. Equal in their pursuit of literary-level depth and complexity, in other words, each format approaches that goal with its own unique methods. Traditional novels with the written word. Graphic novels with both images and words.

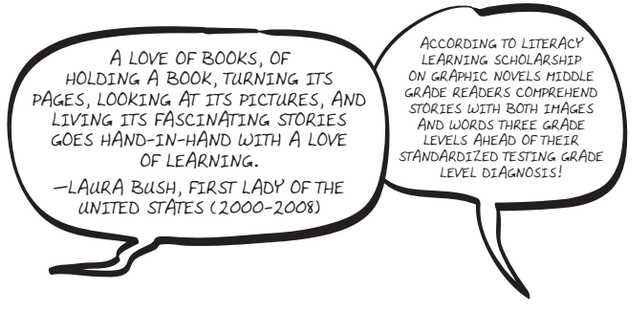
Neither one more literary or important than the other, but both strikingly similar and still uniquely different, traditional novels and graphic novels aim to develop the most in-depth, literary level stories we have ever read.

Why Is It Beneficial to Incorporate Graphic Novels in the Middle Grade Classroom?

"I was patterning the main character Aliera on my granddaughter Maddison who was then a fencer. I'd been a fencer in college many, many years earlier, but as I watched her—she was an upper middle-schooler then—I learned afresh about the fencing world."—Jane Yolen, author of the *Foiled* graphic novel series

The transition from early reader texts to young adult texts mostly happens in middle grade classrooms. As if that transition didn't place enough significance on the middle grade curriculum, modern middle grade educators and students also find themselves living during the greatest communication revolution of all time. Second to the 15th century invention of the printing press, our current communication revolution is first in seismic magnitude. As a result, middle grade educators are responsible for balancing not only how to turn early readers into young adult, lifelong readers, but also from traditional readers into contemporary readers.

In her persistent and well-respected emphasis on the benefits of reading education, First Lady of the United States Laura Bush often points out the power of both text and image to work together to tell high-quality, literary-level stories.



Middle grade educators must be hyperaware of their historical role. They must know that while the 15th century invention of the printing press called on its new generation of readers to become literate with word-based literacies, the 21st century communication revolution and its reliance on reading from screen environments (such as televisions, computers, phones, and more) calls on its new generation of readers to become simultaneously literate with both word-based literacies and image literacies. To help articulate this to middle grade readers and writers educators can ask students to imagine a shared literacy stage where words and images are co-stars. No longer the single star of the show, word-based literacies now equally share the stage with image literacies.

Graphic novels are the perfect format to teach our current communication revolution's reliance on reading and writing with both word-based and image literacies. Along with adopting all of the elements of story found in traditional, word-based novels graphic novels equally embrace both types of literacies, and therefore offer middle grade educators the most appropriate format for teaching a contemporary, shared literacy stage!

The Range of Middle Grade Graphic Novels

Have you ever taught a graphic novel?

Wait! Don't answer that!

Whether you've taught a graphic novel or not, there's no need to worry. Here are five helpful insights to help you either start teaching graphic novels or jump start your own preexisting lesson ideas . . .

1. **Art Analysis**—Similar to words in traditional novels the art work and images in a graphic novel tell the story. Alongside the words, it is absolutely essential that readers know to pay equal attention to the art and images.

2. **Text Analysis**—The text in a graphic novel, is just like the text in a traditional novel. It works along with the art and images to tell the story. The text and the artwork are co-stars of the story.

Just like reading a traditional prose novel it is important for students to understand the text in a graphic novel. Graphic novels rely on all of the same textual features found in traditional prose novels, like similes and metaphors, grammar and mechanics, tone and style, point of view and narration, and many, many more!

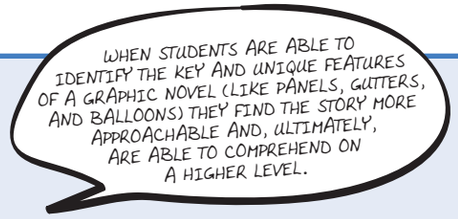
3. **Elements of Story**—Graphic novels adopt all of the elements of story found in traditional literary novels, including but not limited to deep explorations of character, setting, theme, plot and more. The key here is for readers to look for each element of story in both the words and the artwork in graphic novels.

4. **Familiar Genres**—Graphic novels can be found in all the familiar genres typical of traditional literature. History, Mystery, Biography and Autobiography, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Adventure, Coming of Age and more are just some of the typical graphic novel genres.

5. **Pair with Traditional Literature**—Because graphic novels operate on a literary level they are easily paired with traditional literature, especially when the themes or plots of the two texts are similar to each other.

With those five insights in mind, let's next specifically discuss First Second's middle grade graphic novels. First Second middle grade graphic novels offer educators an extremely wide range of teaching potential, from categorical labels and genres familiar to us (like Mystery, Science Fiction, Historical Fiction and Nonfiction, Biography and Autobiography, Creative Nonfiction and much, much, more) to content area relevancy and loaded lesson plan potential First Second graphic novels provide an ever-growing spectrum of high-quality, literary-level texts. For your middle grade teaching convenience, this teacher's guide presents recommendations for individual titles as well as a table with an extended selection of the First Second middle grade graphic novel titles not included in this teaching guide; it presents their creators, categorical labels, relevant content area connections, and brief lesson plan springboard ideas. This table can be found at the end of the teacher's guide.

Basic Graphic Novel Terminology and Definition



PANELS—The visual or visually implied boundary that contains one or more elements of story (characterization, setting, plot, theme, and more). Panels are traditionally known to appear in square and rectangular formats, but they are in no way limited to those shapes.

Panels can sometimes be an entire page, with the boundary and formatting limits being the literal page itself; they can also take all other types of shapes and sizes depending on the goal of the story at that moment. For instance, if a character is having a daydream the panel outline might be smooth and wave-like to imitate the free flow of thoughts and ideas typical of a dream.

Bottom line: Although they can take any shape (and readers should be prepared to identify those various shapes), panels are ultimately and simply understood as visual containers of one or more element(s) of story.

In this series of four panels Laika (the dog from Nick Abadzis' Laika) meets a new dog-friend. In the first panel, which doesn't have a visual boundary, Laika and her new friend meet and circle each other. In the second panel, given a boundary by the blackness contrasted with the white page, Laika and her new dog-friend grant each other a welcoming, warm dog hug. Again boundary-less, the third panel shows the two dogs hanging out and running with each other. The last panel contains a visual boundary, indicated with a black outline, and shows the dogs continuing to run together on a street corner in Moscow.

Each of these panels is focused primarily on character, Laika and her new dog-friend in particular. Focusing on both character and setting, the last panel adds the element of the two characters on a street corner in Moscow.

GUTTERS—The space between the panels. Here in the space of the gutter the reader's imagination takes over and connects two panels (and their elements of story) together in order to create a flowing and seamless storyline (see Scott McCloud's *Making Comics* for further explanation).

In regards to better teaching and visualizing the potential of the gutter in a graphic novel ask students imagine individual pieces, finding their right matches and the ultimate, revealing connection that occurs when they are placed together. The gutters in a graphic novel work exactly like puzzle pieces in order to build and ultimately reveal the entire picture.

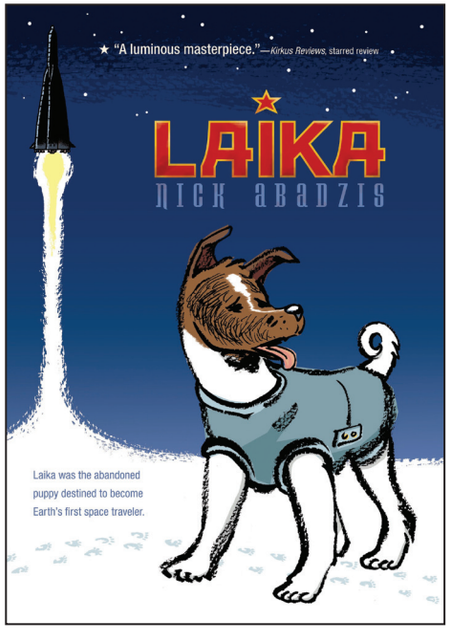
In the first panel we see one of the main characters noticing a mysterious box. As we travel through the space of the gutter and into the second panel (merging the two panels together to create a flowing storyline), we see the character get closer to and more inquisitive about the box. Next, and through two more gutters and into the third and fourth panels, we see the character look around to see if anyone is noticing her curiosity about the mysterious box. In the final gutter connection from the fourth panel and into the fifth panel we see that the character has now opened the mysterious box and found something impressive.

BALLOONS—Balloons usually contain the print-text or word-based elements of story. Whether spoken or narrated words, print-text images or sound effects, balloons convey literary elements of story that progress the storyline and enhance a reader's understanding of what is going on in each panel and / or through each gutter transitional connection. Just like panels, balloons can be contained by visual or implied boundary indicators.

There are two balloons in this example from Faith Erin Hicks' *The Nameless City Volume 1*. On the right is a boundary-bound balloon with a character's spoken words. On the left a boundary-less balloon offers readers a sound effect.

Laika

Written and Illustrated by Nick Abadzis



"Despite the title, despite the cover, this book is not about a dog . . . . It's not 'just' about the dog, at risk of stating the obvious. The story of Laika the cosmodog is the engine that makes the story go, and Kudryavka is certainly at the center of a pivotal point in history. But she's almost the silhouette, the focal point around which everything else coalesces. The story is about the people, the society that surrounds an idea and a name—*Laika*."
—Nick Abadzis

Perhaps the most famous dog in the history of the world, Laika was the first sentient being to orbit the earth. And she did so on the second ship Russia sent into orbit during the middle of The Cold War. A sensational and patriotic achievement for the Russian people Laika's orbital mission struck fear into the hearts and minds of the American people.

In Abadzis' now classic and beloved graphic novel readers will see Laika grow up from a curious and endearing puppy to a national and beloved hero. Her mark on history, however, is just the premise of this story; her mark on the hearts of readers around the world has earned this graphic novel an international reputation and heartfelt acclaim.

Major Characters: Laika / Kudryavka, Chief Designer

Kruscheve, Eisenhower, the American people, Vasili, Tatiana, Liliana, Katya, Mikhail, dog catchers, Dr. Oleg Gazenko, Yelena Dubrovsky

Major Settings and Time Period: Russia, Moscow, Kazakhstan, the Cold War in the 1950s

Major Themes: Survival, Destiny, Progress, Competition, the Cold War, Love and Loss, Nationalism and Patriotism

Discussion Questions for *Laika*:

1. As a puppy, what is life like for Laika? What is her life like after she is adopted into the Soviet Space Program?
2. Who is Laika's handler? And what is her attitude toward Laika?
3. If you had to choose one theme to represent this graphic novel to new readers, which theme would you chose and why? Your choices are: Survival, Destiny, Progress, Competition, the Cold War, Love and Loss, and Nationalism and Patriotism.

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. Draw an image of Laika as a puppy and one of her as an adult dog. After drawing her at each of those two stages of development, draw a setting behind her. Where is Laika as a puppy? Where is she as an adult dog?
2. Research the Cold War and write a list of the top ten facts you learn about this period in American and Russian history.
3. Make a table that identifies each character, his/her role, his/her point of view, his/her decisions, and his/her most-related thematic alignment.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

—standard #s correspond to the numbers used by the Common Core Standards (corestandards.org)

8th Grade: Reading Literature*
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9 Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

**** Because they encompass the ultimate goal for reading literature in grades 5–8 the most relevant Common Core Standards for 8th grade Literature are listed here.***

6th–8th Grade: History / Social Studies
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure:

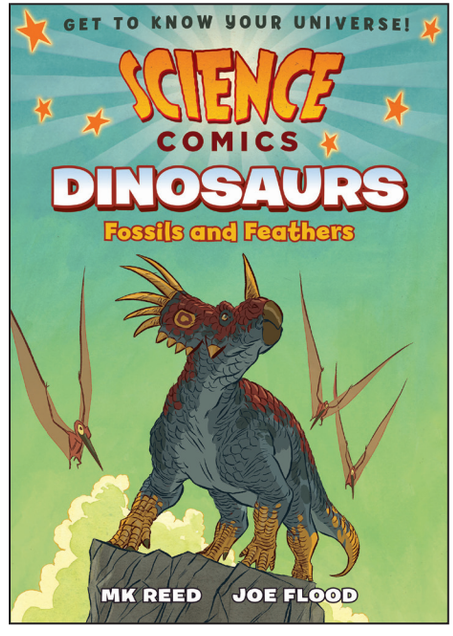
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 vIdentify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Dinosaurs: Fossils and Feathers

Written by MK Reed; Illustrated by Joe Flood



Exploring one of the most unique of the many questions regarding the existence and mysterious disappearance of the dinosaurs, MK Reed and Joe Flood's *Dinosaurs: Fossils and Feathers* follows the historical journey of the paleontologists and everyday citizens who have unearthed each and every clue to our ever-growing understanding of the dinosaurs. By focusing on those who discovered them (and the many insights that have come as a result), *Dinosaurs: Fossils and Feathers* highlights the new questions modern scientists are asking and answering each and every day. Educators will find a plethora of fascinating and suitable content area topics to explore, including curriculum ideology relevant to Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts.

Quote TK Here

Major Characters: various dinosaurs-reptiles-and-amphibians, William Smith, Mary Anning, Joseph Anning, Lord Henley, Charles Koenig, William Buckland, Reverend William Conybeare, Gideon Mantell, Richard Owen, Louis Dollo, Charles Darwin, Gregor Mendel, John Estaugh Hopkins, Joseph Leidy, Othniel Marsh, Edward Drinker Cope, Barnum Brown, Harry Seeley, Thomas Huxley, Nopcsa, Wegener, Lord Kelvin, Harrison Brown, Clair Patterson, Jack Horner, Marion Brandvold, Walter Alvarez, Luis Alvarez, Dr. Anusuya Chinsamy-Turan, Elmer Riggs

Major Settings and Time Period: Fossilized rocks or sediment around the world. For instance, Europe, North America, Africa, historic Eurasia, Mogolia, Atlantic Ocean, Pangea, Antartica.

Major Themes: Research and Discovery, Extinction, Geography, Evolution, Survival of the Fittest, Historical Progress, Habitats, Classification

Educational and Helpful Extras: glossary, various one-two page timelines

Discussion Questions for *Dinosaurs: Fossils and Feathers*:

1. In your opinion, which scientist made the most significant dinosaur discovery? Why?
2. MK Reed and Joe Flood admit that they have a favorite dinosaur. Do you remember which one? Also, which dinosaur is your favorite and for what reasons?
3. If you could become a dinosaur scientist or researcher what aspect of dinosaurs would you like to study? For motivation, think about how your contributions could add to a future edition of Reed and Flood's Science Comics, Dinosaurs graphic novel.

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. While reading keep a chronological list of each dinosaur discovery, listing names, dates, and impact on the field.
2. Choose two dinosaurs from the graphic novel and conduct further research. Write a compare and/or contrast essay on your findings.
3. Write a letter to Reed and Flood, urging them to write their next graphic novel on one particular dinosaur. Which dinosaur would you choose and why? In order to help motivate them to choose your dinosaur supply Reed and Flood with three scientific facts as well.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

—standard #s correspond to the numbers used by the Common Core Standards (corestandards.org)

8th Grade: Reading Informational Texts*
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.5 Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

**** Because they encompass the ultimate goal for reading literature in grades 5–8 the most relevant Common Core Standards for 8th grade Literature are listed here.***

Grades 6–8: Science and Technical Subjects
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.5 Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to an understanding of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.6 Analyze the author's purpose in providing an explanation, describing a procedure, or discussing an experiment in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.7 Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.8 Distinguish among facts, reasoned judgment based on research findings, and speculation in a text.

Coral Reefs: Cities of the Ocean

Written and Illustrated by Maris Wicks

Some of the most intriguing questions found within Maris Wicks' *Coral Reefs: Cities of the Ocean* are:

What exactly is a coral reef?

Who or what lives in and around a coral reef? And, better yet, why?

What is life like on and around a coral reef?

How can I help preserve the lives of the plants and animals that support, thrive upon and better balance the world as a result of their relationship with coral reefs?

Each of these questions is poignantly answered in this initial installment of First Second Book's new **Science Comics** series. Educators and students alike will not only be inspired by the answers they find within the pages of *Coral Reefs: Cities of the Ocean*, but also by the hyper-engagement called for by the amount of information found within this extremely approachable and literary-level nonfiction graphic novel.

Major Characters: narrator fish, various aquatic plants and animals, algae, coral reefs, individual coral types, sea anemones, sea pens, sea jellies, dinosaurs, humans

Major Themes: Energy, Anatomy, Characteristics, Life Cycles, Relationships, Time, Adaptation and Change, Geography, Diversity, Roles and Responsibilities, Food, Habitats, Classification

Educational and Helpful Extras: glossary, bibliography, anatomical drawings, list of additional resources

Discussion Questions for *Science Comics, Coral Reefs: Cities of the Ocean:*

1. What surprised you most about coral reefs?
2. Would you want to live in a coral reef? Why or why not? Which images (and what pages are they on?) cause you to answer yes or no?
3. How can you and your classmates help preserve coral reefs?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. Building upon Wicks' graphic novel about coral reefs start a scientifically supported fundraiser for the preservation of coral reefs. What will you do to earn profits to support coral reefs? Why? On your promotion posters be sure to include images and facts from the graphic novel.
2. Draw and label at least three key plants and/or organisms that live on or around a coral reef. Feel free to consult images and details from the graphic novel.
3. Write a creative work of fiction from the perspective of either a plant or organism living on a coral reef. Would you be a plant or an organism? Given your choice, what would you be most likely to say and to whom? What would your goal be?

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

—standard #s correspond to the numbers used by the Common Core Standards (corestandards.org)

8th Grade: Reading Informational Texts*
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.5 Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

**** Because they encompass the ultimate goal for reading literature in grades 5–8 the most relevant Common Core Standards for 8th grade Literature are listed here.***

Grades 6–8: Science and Technical Subjects
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or conclusions of a text; provide an accurate summary of the text distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.5 Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text, including how the major sections contribute to the whole and to an understanding of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.6 Analyze the author's purpose in providing an explanation, describing a procedure, or discussing an experiment in a text.

Giants Beware! and *Dragons Beware!*

Written by Jorge Aguirre; Illustrated by Rafael Rosado

From the cover onward this graphic novel has become a hit with young adults and educators. Let's start with the cover: Is our clearly well-poised heroine a boy or a girl? Does it even matter? Why or why not?

With their critical reading eye turned on teachers and young adults first find Claudette (yes, it's a her!) asking her own critical thinking questions, posing one right after another to the town's old and presumably wise sage. His stories are so boring, Claudette thinks. And she's right. They are boring. What would be better, Claudette believes, is a story about . . . well, now that she thinks about it, she would NEVER have built a wall to get rid of "The Baby-Feet-Eating Giant." Claudette would've "killed that no good baby-feet-eating monster!"

Or, better yet our Heroine wonders, is Pascal telling the story right? Teachers and students can join Claudette's quest to find the truth behind the mysterious giant who supposedly eats baby feet.

Major Settings: the interior of the town Mont Petit Pierre, and the unknown beyond the town wall built by the town's Marquis, Grim Grotto, Calaveras Island, Don Diego's Mountain Citadel, Mont Petite Pierre, Mountainside and Forrest Outside of Mont Petite Pierre, Dragon Lair

Major Characters: Pascal, Claudette, The Baby-Feet-Eating Giant, the Marquis De Mont Petit Pierre, Valiant, the Marquis' wife and Marie's mother, Sergio, Don Diego, townsmen and women, the Apple Hag, the Mad River King, the River Prince, Barry Barracuda, Minu, Augustine/Poppa, Breaker, Azra the Atrocious, Sentry Leo, Wizard Grombach, Gaston, Marie, Zubair, Prince Henri, Gargoyles, River Prince, Giants, Baby Minu, Juliet, Amelie, Dragons

Major Themes: Action and Adventure, Friendship, Loyalty, Literal and Figurative, Tall Tale, Legends and Myths, Fact and Fiction

Discussion Questions for *Giants Beware!*:

1. What kind of hero is Claudette? How do you know?
2. Who is Augustine to Claudette? In what ways is their relationship "complicated"? What does Augustine want? What does Claudette want?
3. Find three examples of courage. Why are these examples the strongest out of all other choices in the story?
4. Either mentally or physically, who is the strongest character? Why do you think so?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

Identify the defining moments in one or both of the graphic novels. Choose two to three images or words that best exemplify this/these defining moment(s) and explain each in its own paragraph.

Pair up with a younger reader and tell them about the story of the Baby-Feet-Eating Giant and/or the sword Breaker. When you are done ask them if they believe the story, and, second, if they would like for you to read (or hear you read) the rest of the graphic novel story/stories.

Draw an image of either Claudette or Augustine. You decide. Along with highlighting their facial expressions and clothing add details like accessories, hair / hat styles, weapons, modes of transportation and so on. What do you learn about each character from their visual appearances?

Find three examples of heroism and three examples of villainy in the graphic novel or series. Identify each example (a total of 6) and write a brief explanation for why you choose each one and labeled it either heroism or villainy.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

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8th Grade: Reading Literature
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

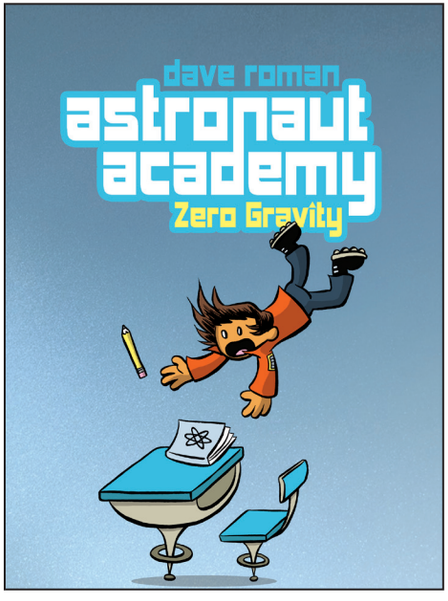
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.7 Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

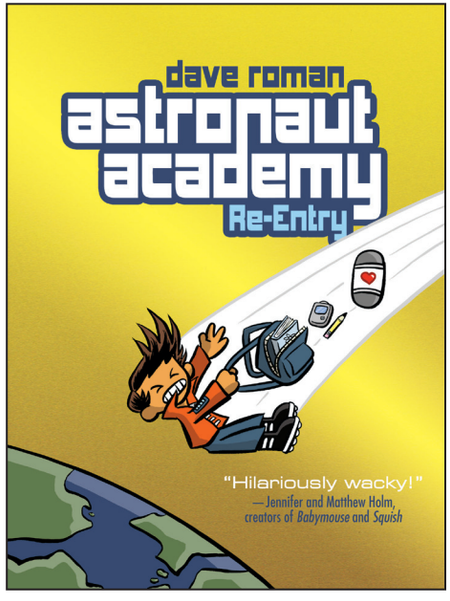
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9 Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

**** Because they encompass the ultimate goal for reading literature in grades 5–8 the most relevant Common Core Standards for 8th grade Literature are listed here.***

Astronaut Academy: Zero Gravity and *Re-Entry*

Written and Illustrated by Dave Roman





A former space hero, Hakato Soy would simply like to go to school like any other kid. But Hakata Soy is not your average, regular kid. He's also not at a regular, ordinary school. He's at Astronaut Academy, a school he will find is full of friends and foes. In other words, keeping a low profile might not be an option for our former hero. In this acclaimed graphic novel duo, Hakata Soy needs to be more than just a universal recognizable hero to the students at Astronaut Academy. He needs to be their hero.

Major Settings: Astronaut Academy

Major Characters: Hakata Soy, Principal of Astronaut Academy, Mrs. Bunn, Mr. Namagucci, Senor Panda, Doug Hiro, Mr. Taketo Sky, Miyumi San, Maribelle Mellonbelly, Gotcha Birds, Metador, Billy Lee, Marcos Stamatis, Gadget Thompson, Tak Offsky, Cybert, Mrs. Cupcake, Guidance Chancellor Bee, Scab Wellington, Monique, Martin, and Tomcat of Team Feety Pajamas, Malik Mehendale, Calico Hopps, Miyumi's grandfather

Major Themes: Good and Evil, Identity, Individualism and Community, School, Relationships, Craft and Story

Discussion Questions for *Astronauts Academy: Zero Gravity*:

1. What does Hakata Soy want at the beginning of the story? What does he want at the end of the story? Why do you think his wants change? What does he want from one graphic novel to the next graphic novel?
2. Identify a hero and a villain pairing in the series. Which character is a hero? Which character is a villain? How do you know?
3. Why is the theme Individual and Community important to this graphic novel series? Be sure to have concrete examples from the story.

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. Choose a key setting from the *Astronaut Academy* series and draw it in detail. Which details are most important? And why?

2. Team up with a peer and identify a hero and a villain pairing. One of you needs to be the hero and the other the villain. Decide who is who. Next, write a script discussing and analyzing one of the primary conflicts the two of you experience in one of the graphic novels. Be sure to clearly highlight the logical perspective of each character in your chosen scene.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

—standard #s correspond to the numbers used by the Common Core Standards (corestandards.org)

8th Grade: Reading Literature
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.7 Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9 Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

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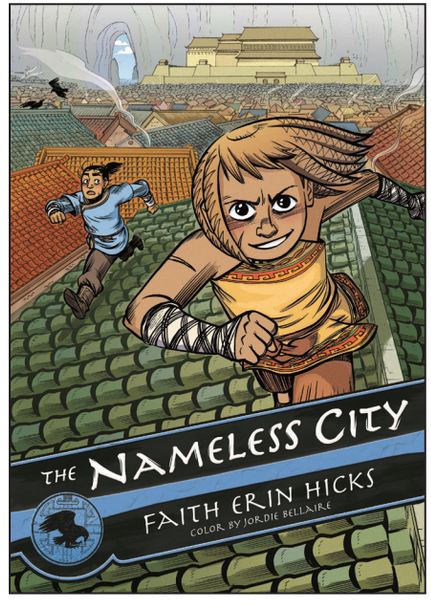
The Nameless City Series

Written and Illustrated by Faith Erin Hicks



Quote from Faith Erin Hicks TK

The Nameless City actually has a name. It has a few names, in fact. It all depends on who you ask.

Filtered through the coming of age experiences of Kaidu ("Kai"), *The Nameless City* trilogy explores the depths of loyalty one will go to identify and protect family, friends, neighbors, and even foes.

Major Settings: Daidu, Eastern Pain, the Nameless City/ DanDao/YanJing/Cambuluc,

Major Characters: Citizens of Daidu, Horse People, Yanjing, Monkh, Warrior People of the Blade Empire, Kaidu/Kai, Andren and Kata, Prince Erzi, Skral Girl/Erzi's Bodyguard/Mura, General of All Blades, Rat/Joah, Monks

Major Themes: Family, Loyalty, War and Peace, Friendship, Literacy and Learning, Fortune and Luck

Discussion Questions for *The Nameless City*:

1. Why is Kaidu's (Kai's) perspective so critical to the story?
2. In what ways do one's loyalty to family and friends compliment and conflict in the story?
3. What are the various names for the Nameless City, and who has named it such?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. Draw an outline of how you envision The Nameless City to be best represented. Label your map with a city name according to one of the city's various populations. Add details to the drawing that illustrate that group of citizens perspective on the city. Feel free to consult images from the story or the map at the end of the last graphic novel in the series in order to inform which details you choose to focus on in your map.
2. Write a letter from Kai to his father, a letter that is brutally honest and will never be sent. What does Kai want to say to his father and why?
3. Organize a town council in your classroom to debate the Nameless City's main concerns. What are the top three concerns? Assign students roles to represent each of the city's factions. Debate the top three concerns for the city in an open, town hall forum.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

—standard #s correspond to the numbers used by the Common Core Standards (corestandards.org)

8th Grade: Reading Literature
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

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Zita the Spacegirl, Legends of Zita the Spacegirl, The Return of Zita the Spacegirl

Written and Illustrated by Ben Hate

"All stories are in some way a combination of words and images. Graphic novels can be an especially potent combination of art and text that encourage middle level readers to make a variety of inferences and connections. Worlds of story open up and keep them coming back for more." —Ben Hatke, author of *Little Robot*, *Zita the Spacegirl* Series, and *Mighty Jack*

When we first meet Zita she is running away with her friend Joseph's notebooks. Both playful and dangerous Zita leads Joseph and the reader on a chase. Thinking she has found a meteoroid crater, Zita jumps right into the crater with Joseph chasing close behind.

This is not a normal meteor crater, however. Zita has found what appears to be a metallic-looking remote that seems to be begging her curiosity to push its huge red button. Joseph disagrees; in fact, he seems to be begging her not to push the red button. Independent and curious to a fault Zita just can't resist.

And that's that. Zita has pushed the button! Thus, ensues a trilogy of adventures that test Zita's resilience as a friend, a hero, and as a coming of age young adult.

Major Settings: Earth, Off World, the Rusted Wastes, Scriptorian Castle, Scriptorius, spaceships, space stations, Lumponia, Giant Space Robot

Major Characters: Zita, Joseph, Strong-strong, Piper, Pizzicato/Mouse, Screed, the Scriptorians, One, Robot Randy, Five, Eight, Dungeon-Keeper, Topper, Lumponian Ambassadors, Starhearts, Robot Zita / Imprit-o-Tron, Doom Squad, Stiltskin, Mannikin, Glissando, Ringmistress / Madrigal

Major Themes: Action-Adventure, Friendship, Loyalty, Courage, Responsibility

Discussion Questions for *Zita the Spacegirl, Legends of Zita the Spacegirl,* and *The Return of Zita the Spacegirl*:

1. What kind of friend is Zita? How do you know?
2. How does Hatke represent Good and Evil in the Zita graphic novels? Can you find two examples of both good and evil?
3. Is Zita a hero? Why or why not?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

Design a table with three columns. At the top of each column write a title of one of the Zita graphic novels. To the left of each column write a theme (five total). Finally, read each graphic novel and explain how each of those themes is evident in the story.

Who is Zita's most significant foe? Draw an image and a corresponding character profile of this foe

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

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8th Grade: Reading Literature
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.5 Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.7 Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.8 (RL.8.8 not applicable to literature)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.9 Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

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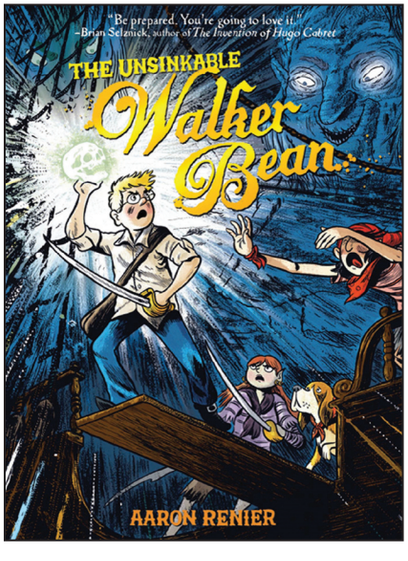
The Unsinkable Walker Bean

Written and Illustrated by Aaron Renier



The Unsinkable Walker Bean is an enchanting tale about self-discovery and familial understanding. In order to understand the mysterious hints of his dying grandfather Walker Bean must embark on a swash-buckling adventure full of obstacles, dangers, and villains galore. But will Walker Bean have the stamina, courage, and self-will to persevere in the face of sea witches, greedy pirates, and suspicious friends and foes alike?

Major Settings: Sea, Aboard Ships, Land

Major Characters: Walker Bean, an enchanted skull (it's a pirate-tale!), sea witches, pirates, William (Walker's father and his grandfather's son), Doctor Patches, Captain Bean, Admiral Bean (Walker's grandfather, Captain Bean's father), Shiv, Nettle, Perrogi, Gen, Saag, Taro

Major Themes: Journey/Quests, Family, Urban Legends and Folktales, Self-Identity, Friendship

Discussion Questions for *The Unsinkable Walker Bean*:

1. Why is Walker Bean's grandfather so important to the story?
2. If you were a character in the story who would you be? For what reasons? Be sure to relate your theories back to specific examples in the story.
3. What is the most important setting in T*he Unsinkable Walker Bean*? Why?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. Create a setting-based treasure map of Walker Bean's journey in the story.
2. Make a list of the various obstacles Walker Bean faces throughout the story. Next to each obstacle explain what Walker Bean plans to do as a result of each obstacle. Is he successful or not? How or how not?

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

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8th Grade: Reading Literature
Key Ideas and Details:

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Craft and Structure:

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Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

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Battling Boy

Written and Illustrated by Paul Pope

Can a young boy just turning thirteen really be a hero, let alone a God from another realm?

The crumbling city of Acropolis better hope so. It's the boy or nothing. With their beloved hero Haggard West recently killed in action, the monopolizing monsters that terrorize the city are winning. Not even the combat-hardened men and women of the 145th can gain any victories; their advanced, scientific weaponry doesn't have a chance against the latest monster insurgence. They've tried everything. Except trusting the boy.

Major Settings: Acropolis, the streets of Acropolis, Warehouse District, Interboro Overpass, the sky and stars, Canal Street Junction, Hidden Gilded Realm, Mayor's Mansion, rooftops of Acropolis

Major Characters: Joey, Missus Lobasch, Peter, Monster(s), Sadisto, Haggard West, Brother Rum, Grieg, Nails, Coil, Aurora, Tharalaxus, Warrior, Warrior's Wife, Warrior's Son / Battling Boy, Master Chef, Ms. Grately, Humbaba, Perithalia, Mayor of Acropolis, Acropolis Chief of Police, 145th Captain, the General

Major Themes: Heroes and Villains, Family, Coming of Age and Young Adulthood, Men and Gods, Life and Death, Battle and War, Travel,

Discussion Questions for *Battling Boy*:

1. Who is Battling Boy? When does he appear in the story? What does the author hope to establish before introducing him? Why?
2. Two different worlds are the primary settings or focal points in the story. What is special or unique about each world or setting?
3. In what ways is Coming of Age a prominent theme in the story?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

Identify three images of Battling Boy that illustrate his growing maturity in the story. Label the page number and exact panel of the image on your paper, and write an explanation for: Which stage of development each image shows, why you think so, and what details are most important to your theory.

Make a T-Chart with a peer. On one side of the T-Chart explore the Mayor and the city of Acropolis' goals for Battling Boy. On the other side of the T-Chart explore Battling Boy's goals for himself. When finished discuss your ideas with the entire class.

Write an essay comparing and/or contrasting the heroic personalities and objectives of Haggard West and Battling Boy.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

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8th Grade: Reading Literature
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Craft and Structure:

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Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

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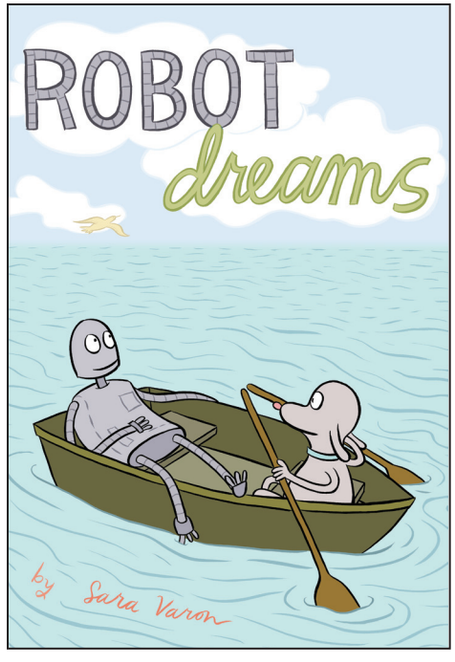
Robot Dreams

Written and Illustrated by Sara Varon



Dog is pretty certain he has the perfect friend, a new mail-order robot companion he can take anywhere. Even the beach!

The combination of water, wind, sand, and heat don't agree with Dog. Robot is not the perfect companion to take to the beach, however. He's rusted and stuck in the sand, and Dog thinks his only option is to abandon Robot and move on. But can Dog really move on?

A complex and virtually wordless graphic novel Varon's Robot Dreams elicits intense emotions about true friendship.

Major Settings: Beach, Ocean, City Streets, Parks, Snow Falls, Robot Store, Dog's House, Junkyard

Major Characters: Robot, Dog, Rabbits, Ducks, Foxes, Snowman, Flower, Penguin, Birds, Monkeys, Salesman, Raccoon

Major Themes: Friendship, Abandonment, Dreams, Loss, Redemption

Educational Extras

- Behind-the-Scenes look at artwork and story development
- An interview with creator Sara Varon
- Extra Dog and Robot story that now appears in another Varon graphic novel (Sweaterweather)

Discussion Questions for Robot Dreams:

1. How do Dog and Robot become friends?
2. In what ways are loss and redemption key themes in the story? How do the settings and the characters illustrate these two themes?
3. What happens to the friendship between Dog and Robot throughout the course of the story, from beginning to ending?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. Draw an image of either Dog or Robot. Choose a theme to pair with your character image: Friendship, Abandonment, Dreams, Loss and Redemption. Make sure your drawing depicts your character's best facial and bodily expressions of that theme.
2. If Dog and Robot could write emails to each other, what would they write and why? Write a series of at least four email exchanges back and forth.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

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8th Grade: Reading Literature
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Craft and Structure:

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Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

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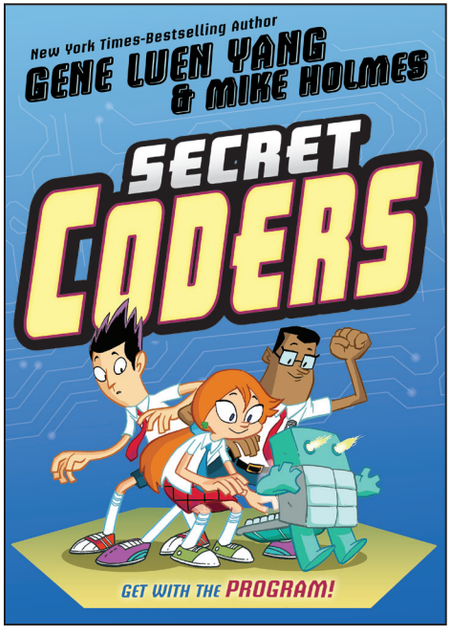
Secret Coders, Paths & Portals

Written by Gene Luen Yang; Illustrated by Mike Holmes



"Graphic novels can be a bridge between the stories our students watch and the stories our students read."
—Gene Luen Yang

Stately Academy has some secrets. The janitor hasn't always been the janitor. The principal has a suspicious smile. The rugby players enjoy being bullies. The three main characters bend the rules. And what's up with the robotic turtles? Secret Coders does more than just present some mysteries. It turns them on their head in an adventurous middle grade graphic novel sure to keep teachers and students reading at a feverous pace.

Major Settings: Stately Academy, the Bee School, Hopper's Home, Principal's Office, Mr. Bee's Janitor Grounds, Stately Academy Schoolyard

Major Characters: Josh, Eni, Hopper, Principal Dean, Mr. Bee, Turtle Robots, Ms. Hu, Rugby Players, Basketball Players, Albert Gracie, Mr. and Mrs. Wesson, Coach Sanchez

Major Themes: School, Design Code and Design Artwork, Teamwork, Secrets and Codes, Human Nature verse Technology, Past-Present

Discussion Questions for *Secret Coders: Paths & Portals*:

1. What is the number one secret in Secret Coders? Why do you label your choice number one? Do your classmates agree or disagree with your choice?
2. How does the relationship between Josh, Eni, and Hopper develop throughout the story? How is Mr. Bee important to that development?
3. What is the difference and the relationship between Stately Academy and the Bee School?

Brief Teaching Recommendations For Middle Level Educators and Readers

1. At the end of the graphic novel Hopper offers readers a lesson on angles. Identify the page numbers and significant moments in the story when angles played an important role and develop a lesson that focuses on the various angles drawn by the turtles during the course of the story, being sure to not only identify each angle, but also discuss its significance to story development.
2. Draw a map of Stately Academy and of the underground Bee School. What key features are in each setting? Make sure your drawing includes the key details that would help a new reader to the graphic novel better understand each school before reading.

Suggested Common Core Standard(s) Alignment

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8th Grade: Reading Literature
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

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Grades 6–8: Science and Technical Subjects
Key Ideas and Details:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.3 Follow precisely a multistep procedure when carrying out experiments, taking measurements, or performing technical tasks.

Craft and Structure:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of symbols, key terms, and other domain-specific words and phrases as they are used in a specific scientific or technical context relevant to grades 6-8 texts and topics.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.7 Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text with a version of that information expressed visually (e.g., in a flowchart, diagram, model, graph, or table).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.9 Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments, simulations, video, or multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.10 By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend science/technical texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Grades 6 - 8: Writing
Text Types and Purposes:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

Production and Distribution of Writing:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

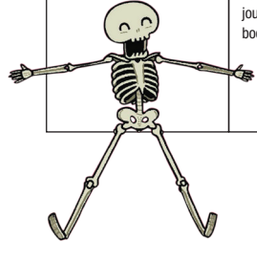
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Supplied with an explanation for why middle grade graphic novels belong in the classroom, an explanation for what constitutes a middle grade graphic novel, and a discussion on the various types of middle grade graphic novels published by First Second Books you can now teach with graphic novels in your classroom.

Dr. Katie Monnin is an Associate Professor of Literacy at the University of North Florida. She has written several books on teaching graphic novels: Teaching Graphic Novels, Teaching Early Reader Comics and Graphic Novels, Using Content Area Graphic Texts for Learning, Teaching Reading Comprehension with Graphic Texts, and Teaching New Literacies in Elementary Language Arts.

THE RANGE OF THE MIDDLE GRADE GRAPHIC NOVEL

Title & Creator(s)	Brief Summary	Categorical Labels and/or Genres	Relevant Content Area(s)	Brief, Content Area-Based Lesson Connection(s)
Adventures in Cartooning by James Sturm, Andrew Arnold, and Alexis Frederick-Frost	A tour-de-force on both reading and writing comics, *Adventures in Cartooning* offers readers a comprehensive look at the world of comics.	Reading & Writing Nonfiction Adventure Fantasy	Language Arts	1. Outline the graphic novel by highlighting each sequential step the author's advocate for in developing a comic story. 2. Write a comic story by following the author's advice.
'Storytime Comics' series edited by Chris Duffy—*w/ Nursery Rhyme Comics, Fairy Tale Comics, and Fable Comics*	A new take on traditional tales, Chris Duffy's collection of *Storytime Comics* is a fun, topsy-turvy retelling of many of your favorite traditional tales.	History Fiction Creative Writing Fantasy Adventure Classic	Language Arts Social Studies	1. Choose a story. Find the original tale. Compare and/or contrast the two. 2. After reading, write a retelling of one of the story's.
Foiled and Curses! Foiled Again by Jane Yolen & Mike Cavallaro	Elements of fantasy and heroism mix in this middle grade graphic novel focused on Aliera Carstairs and her journey to follow her heart and her mind as both an average teenage girl and a nationally-recognized, hyper-gifted fencer.	Adventure Fantasy Fiction Identity and Individualism	Language Arts	1. Using a basic stick figure prompt and draw a character sketch of Aliera Carstairs. Be sure to label each detail and explain its significance.
Primates by Jim Ottaviani & Maris Wicks	Three prominent women scientists are highlighted in this thoughtful and insightful graphic novel focused on providing middle grade readers with inspiring biographical information.	Nonfiction History	Science Language Arts Social Studies	1. Read a biography / autobiography about one of the women scientists alongside this graphic novel version. 2. Explore the historical significance of each woman's life alongside their scientific research. 3. Write an informative commercial or advertisement explaining each women's scientific contribution to someone who does not know.
Sardine in Outer Space series by Joann Sfar & Emmanuel Guibert	Sardine is an endearing girl who is about to go on the adventure of a lifetime. Clever, quirky, and laugh-out-loud funny *Sardine in Outer Space* is a page-turning, wacky adventure.	Fantasy Adventure Fiction	Language Arts Science	1. Write a new Sardine in outer space story. What would happen and how is that based on what you read in this graphic novel? 2. Explore two of the space-oriented topics encountered by Sardine and write a brief informative essay to help Sardine in her adventures.
Hidden by Loic Dauvillier & Greg Salsedo	A frame story, *Hidden* is a poetic work of nonfiction where generational teaching and learning takes center stage.	Nonfiction Identity and Individualism History Poems	Language Arts Social Studies	1. Addressed to future grandchildren, write an autobiographical letter about your life 2. Identify two of the most significant historical events discussed in the graphic novel and conduct further research on each.
Olympians series by George O'Connor	Written and illustrated by *New York Times* Bestselling Author George O'Connor this series chronicles the stories of the famed Olympians of legend.	Classics Fiction History	Language Arts Social Studies	1. Read a print-text novel about one or more of the Olympians and write a compare and/or contrast essay 2. Conduct a KWL inventory with students. What do they already Know about the Olympians? What do they Wonder about the Olympians? After reading, what have they learned about the Olympians?
Glorkian Warrior series by James Kochalka	Certain to have readers laughing and engaged this graphic novel follows the Glorkian Warrior as he sets out to complete a not-so-simple pizza delivery.	Adventure Fiction	Language Arts	1. Make a list of each of the Glorkian Warriors decisions. Next to each decision write an analysis of what happened. 2. Persuasive, Creative Writing: Taking the perspective of the pizza, what would you have wanted the Glorkian Warrior to do and why?
Last of the Sandwalkers by Jay Hosler	Believe it or not, a thriving and humanlike beetle society lives underground. And although we may know about them they may not know about us.	Fiction Science Identity and Individualism Adventure	Language Arts Science	1. Guiding Essay Question: Research the biology of the beetle and then read the graphic novel. What did you learn about beetle biology that both supports and contradicts the story about Lucy? 2. While reading keep a chart identifying each character, his/her personality traits, and his/her decisions in the story.
Human Body Theater by Maris Wicks	Starting with a skeletal outline of the storyline —pun intended!—the narrator (a literal skeleton) takes readers on a theatrical and act-by-act journey through the human body.	Nonfiction Adventure Health Science	Health Language Arts Science	1. Choose two acts of the graphic novel and list all of the facts learned as a result of each act. 2. Keep a list of each act's setting(s). Why is each setting significant? And how does each act and its setting(s) relate to the other acts? Discuss as a class.



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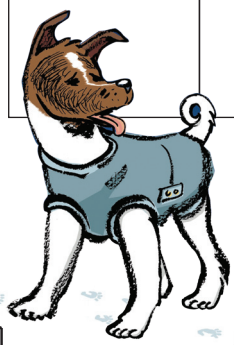
Hippopotamister by John Patrick Green	An endearing story about identity and acceptance, *Hippopotamister* centers on Hippo's search to find a role for himself outside of the zoo.	Fiction Identity and Individualism Fantasy	Language Arts Science	1. Identify a helpful zoo website and find out as much information as possible about hippopotamuses. What are their top three characteristics? Does Hippopotamister exhibit those traits? How or how not? 2. Write a character sketch of Hippopotamister, introducing him to new readers to his graphic novel.
Bera the One-Headed Troll by Eric Orchard	Bera the One-Headed Troll is on a quest. Unlike the other trolls she is determined to return the newly found human baby to it parents, no matter what obstacles may get in her way.	Adventure Fiction Identity and Individualism	Language Arts	1. Expository Essay: How is Bera an individual? According to the other characters, what makes her unique? According to Bera, what makes her unique? 2. Compose a list of the top three themes in this graphic novel and discuss their significance with a peer and then the entire class.
Mighty Jack by Ben Hatke	Jack's mom needs him to take on some mighty responsibilities. He's trying too. His sister doesn't speak, and he needs to take care of her so that his mom can make enough money to keep them in their house and not move away. But Jack's mightiness may be wrapped up in not growing up at all. It might be magical. It might. It just might.	Action Adventure Magic Fiction	Language Arts	1. Make a list of the top three things that make Jack "mighty!" 2. Draw character sketches of Jack, Maddy, and Lilly. Be sure to label their fea-tures and clothing in a way that identifies their unique character-istics, both in regards to strengths and weaknesses.
The Creepy Case Files of Margo Maloo by Drew Weing	Margot Maloo helps kids. With monsters and scary stuff. Anything adults blow off and don't seem to understand. That's her specialty.	Mystery Fiction Adventure	Language Arts	1. Design a series of case mystery profile folders. Identify each of Margo's cases, their characteristics, clues, and ultimate results. 2. If Margo Maloo had a commercial on television, what yould her commercial say and show? With classmates, compose a commercial to advertise Margo's services and past successful cases.



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