

FOR VISUAL READERS
TOON BOOKS®

The Secret of the Stone Frog

by David Nytra

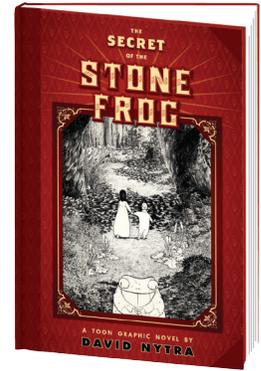
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Guided Reading Level =K

Lexile Level = GN 220

by Julia Phillips,

TOON Books' Deputy Editor



ELA COMMON CORE STANDARDS

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Ask the students to describe the characters that Alan and Leah meet. Who was the nicest? Scariest? Funniest? Have the class support their opinions with specific visual and textual examples. Then have students pick their favorite sequence of events. What can we tell from the words and images? Talk about the difference in gathering information from text versus from an illustration.

**RL.3.1,
RL.4.1**

Ask students if the book reminds them of any stories they have previously read. Bring up stories like “Hansel and Gretel”, “Alice in Wonderland” or the comic “Little Nemo”. Have students discuss the relationship between Alan and Leah.

**RL.3.2,
RL.4.2**

Describe the different personalities of Alan and Leah. How do they react to things that scare them? What happens because of their different personalities?

**RL.3.3,
RL.4.3**

Look at the buildings on pages 70-71. What are they thinking about the chase that is occurring?

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

Ask students what in the story is larger than normal. Explain how these images contribute to the strange setting of the story, and the sense that Alan and Leah do not know where they are.

**RL.3.7,
RL.4.7**

This book ends with a three-page wordless sequence, the last panel of which is a stone frog fountain. What relationship do students think the stone frog at the end has to the ones that give directions? Which does the title refer to?

Have your students investigate myths, stories and other graphic novels with similar themes. Look especially closely at the classic comic “Little Nemo” by Winsor McCay. Throughout the novel, Alan and Leah both express the desire to return home. What other novels or myths also address the theme of “returning home”? How are these different or similar?

**RL.3.9,
RL.4.9**

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

Have students look at page 22. Alan is literally “eating his words”. Then have the students look at page 33, where one character describes Alan’s speech as a “mighty roar”. Explain that the description is nonliteral, but evocative of a lion.

**RL.3.4,
RL.4.4**

Have the class find a small story within the novel. Ask students to paraphrase the story. Call attention to how each panel shows one event or action in the story, and together these panels create the story. Show how the smaller sections of the stories add up to the novel. Call students’ attention to the special features of the comics form, including panels, gutters, and speech balloons. Ask them to note moments in the story when a structural element of comics is disrupted, like on pages 19-22 or pages 70-71.

**RL.3.5,
RL.4.5**

Describe to students the “fly on the wall” point of view sometimes used in third-person narratives to record observations rather than describe feelings. Can they think of other stories that use the same “fly on the wall” approach?

**RL.3.6,
RL.4.6**

SPEAKING AND LISTENING / WRITING

Split students into small groups and assign each different dramatic sequences from the book (ex. visiting the Beekeeper). By choosing characters and reading dialogue aloud, students can create a Readers Theater. In each group, one student can serve as a narrator, describing the scenes that are wordless. All group members should contribute to the narrators’ descriptions by pointing out what details from the scenes they think are most important.

**SL.3.1,
SL.3.4,
SL.4.1,
SL.4.4**

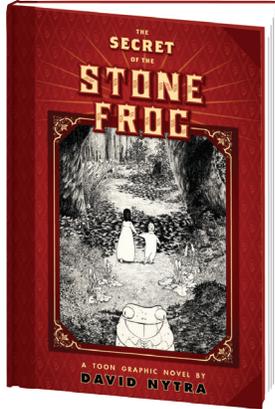
Ask students to write a short narrative describing what fantastical worlds they’ve seen in their dreams. How do their dream worlds differ from the real world? Have students exchange their narratives and comment on each others’ work. Allow them the opportunity to revise their work afterwards.

**W.3.3,
W.3.5,
W.3.8,
W.4.3,
W.4.5,
W.4.8**



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SUBMITTED BY *J.D. HO*
 AUTHOR AND CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEWER

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The Secret of the Stone Frog
 by *David Nytra*
 Hardcover: 978-1-935179-18-4

Guided Reading Lesson Plan

<p>Before Reading</p>	<p>1. Ask how many students read comic books. Do they read any long stories in comic book format? What do they enjoy about longer comic books? Are they easier to read than chapter books that are mostly text?</p> <p>2. Discuss why you think an author chooses to make a comic book instead of writing things out in chapters.</p>
<p>During Reading</p>	<p>1. Look at pages 8 and 9. Have students describe what is happening in each panel. Why do you think the left-hand page is so big and the ones on the right are smaller? Comic books often use a sequence of images to show where characters are (context), and then move in closer to look at details or the characters' expressions, a little bit like how a camera lets you take a picture of an entire birthday party, but also lets you zoom in to focus on someone's face.</p> <p>2. A clock is a common way to show time passing in the movies or on television. In what other ways can pictures show us that time is passing? Look at pages 47-50. Leah and Alan are waiting for a train. What methods does the illustrator use to indicate that they are waiting for quite some time? What are the "CLOP CLOP CLOP" sounds? What does it mean when we see more "CLOP" sounds? What is the other indication that time has passed? How many fish people are standing on the platform when Leah and Alan first arrive? How many are there by the time the train comes?</p> <p>3. The beginning of this story shows Leah and Alan waking up in a strange world. The ending shows them going to sleep in a world very much like ours. Do you think their adventures really happened? Or do you think they were a dream? Some of the things Leah and Alan encounter are ordinary, like bees, lions, cherries, and train stations. What does the illustrator do to make these things seem like a dream? Do we need words to know these things are not quite as they are in everyday life?</p>
<p>After Reading</p>	<p>1. Talk about what the comic book format adds to this story. Do you think the story would have been as good if it had been written in chapters with just an illustration here and there?</p> <p>2. Activity: Draw a short comic (one page or a 2-page spread) showing a situation or setting in a large panel, and then use smaller panels to draw the reader's attention to details, sounds, or your character's facial expression. Alternatively, in one or two pages, use panels to show the passing of time, but don't use clocks or characters talking about time.</p>

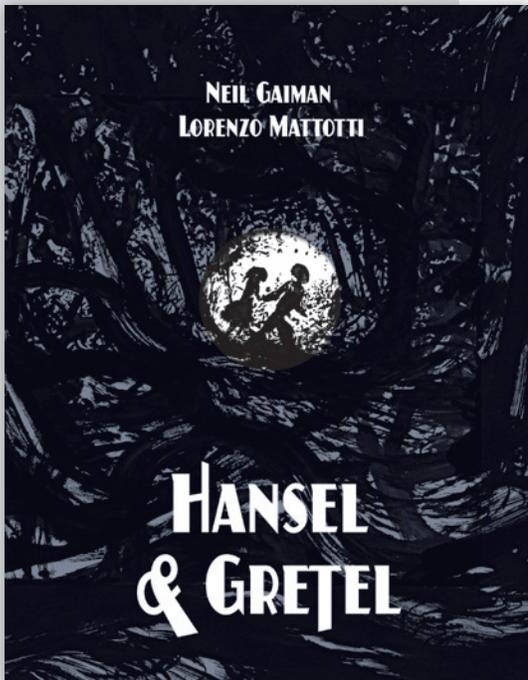




Hansel & Gretel

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



Hansel & Gretel

by Neil Gaiman

& Lorenzo Mattotti

A TOON Graphic

ISBN (Trade): 978-1-935179-62-7

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THE TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TEAM:

Hsin Yu Chao, an illustrator and comic artist in her native Taiwan, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University. Chao has worked for numerous galleries as well as for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Sasha Steinberg, who holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Vassar College and an MFA in Cartooning from the Center for Cartoon Studies, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study political art in Russia.

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make “mental maps.” A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' choices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas. The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.





LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expressions, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade, and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10
Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.4, 9
Students determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students integrate information from several texts in order to speak knowledgeably on a subject.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1
Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2
Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4
Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

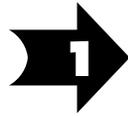
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1
Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7
Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Characters and Environment

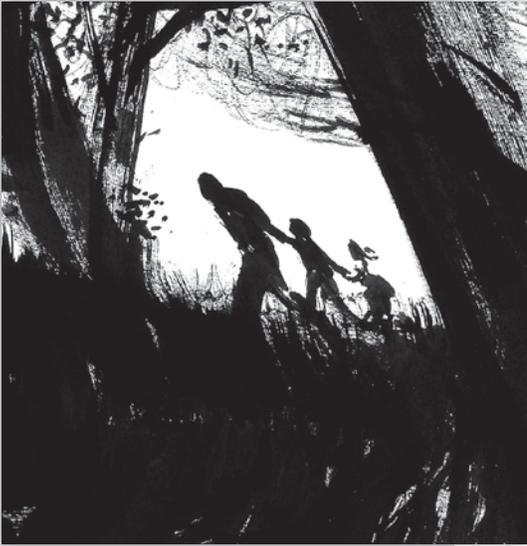


- ◆ What is happening in the outside world during the events of this story? How have the changes affected Hansel and Gretel's family?

The author describes a great and senseless war, and outlines the resulting inflation, violence, population decline, and a general change in what people accept as normal (page 12). This contributes to the parents' discussion about whether to get rid of their children.

- ◆ What other factors have created hardships in Hansel and Gretel's family?

We can guess that the parents are both still quite young, we know they have always been poor, live in an isolated area, and can't afford school.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

◆ Do you think Hansel and Gretel should be going to school?

Ask students if and how an education could improve their situation. Some teachers may wish to discuss the relationships between education, teenage pregnancy, and poverty.

◆ Describe the personalities of the main characters. Compare them. Explain the reasons why the characters have each developed their own unique personality. Can they be divided into “good people” and “bad people?”

In addition to their economic disadvantages, gender plays an important role in the author's characterizations. Some teachers may wish to introduce the ideology of Separate Spheres, which historically proscribed different spheres of work for women and men [women in the private sphere, men in the public sphere]. Ask students to analyze how this plays out in the story. What does the father teach Hansel and Gretel? What does the mother teach them? What does the old woman teach them?

◆ Why does the mother bring up the subject of abandoning the kids? Compare the different positions of each parent regarding the topic of abandonment. Why are they different? What is the mathematical reason to abandon them? Emotional reason? Ethical reason? How was the father eventually convinced to abandon the kids? Would you be convinced to do so if you were the parent? Were there any other possible solution(s) aside from abandoning kids? Describe how Hansel and Gretel handle their abandonment. What does Hansel do? What does Gretel do? Why? Whose approach would you take if you were one of the kids?

Ask students to think about the differences in gender as they are presented in this story. Introduce the stereotype of the rational male and emotional female. The mother claims to be using “logic” to support her idea (page 16). Does her logic hold up? Is the father being logical or emotional? What about moral/ethical? Look to pages 13, 16, and 20-21 for supporting passages. When it comes to Hansel and Gretel, the stereotype of rational versus emotional is more clear cut. Hansel deals with their abandonment in a rational and pragmatic way: by dropping pebbles (and later bread) (pages 17 and 24); Gretel is more emotional: sharing bread, hugging her brother (pages 25 and 29). Also compare their respective ways of acquiring knowledge. Hansel learns of their pending abandonment by directly over-hearing his parents; Gretel figures this out through

personal experience and implicit deduction. How would you describe this difference? Which is more effective: explicit or implicit observation? Are these two strategies related to gender difference (or ideas about gender difference)? Does the gendered dynamic between Hansel and Gretel change later in the story?





- ◆ Discuss the different reactions of the mother and the father when the children come back (pages 20-21). Why do they respond in different ways?

The father is motivated by love for his children and guilt. The mother cannot see past her own hunger. What happens in this story when characters make decisions motivated only by hunger? (Hansel and Gretel on page 32, the old woman on page 41, the mother on page 49)

- ◆ Why can't Hansel go to sleep after his first abandonment (page 21)?

Some teachers may wish to introduce ideas about PTSD, trauma, Dissociative anxiety, etc. Compare this event to what happens later, on page 44, when Hansel can't bring himself to let go of the bone that saved his life.

- ◆ If you were in the children's situation, would you wait for the father as Gretel does or would you try to go home like Hansel regardless of what the father had said? Why?



- ◆ Compare the way the old woman catches animals with how she treats the kids. For her, the children are no longer humans but rather animals and hence sources of food. Discuss this idea. Compare it with what happens during war and other bleak social situations. Are there similarities between what the old woman does to people and what war and famine do to people?

- ◆ Why do Hansel and Gretel receive different treatments in the old woman's house (Gretel is chained and forced to work, Hansel is pacified within a cage)? Does the old woman bully them?

The old woman plans to teach Gretel how to "grow into a woman" following her own model (page 37)—ensnaring birds and travelers, feasting on human men. She's instituting a divide between male and female labor that is not so dissimilar from that followed by the father and mother on page 9 (father provides the meat, mother is chained to the home). The old woman, like the mother, is sharp-tongued, calling the children many names and falling into fits of anger. What are some other similarities between the old woman and the mother?





- ◆ Do Hansel and Gretel grow or become more mature in the story? Do they seem more like children or adults to you during the story?

Note that Hansel is described as having “transformed” into a “plump young man” on page 44 and Gretel is described on page 37 as about to “grow into a woman.” They are definitely changed by their experience in the forest. When they return, they recognize the “familiar places where they had played, and the trees they had climbed” (page 48) as if they themselves are now long past that. And in a sense, they are. They have seen death, triumphed, and provided for themselves. They are more grown by the end of the story.

- ◆ Describe how Gretel manages to rescue herself and her brother from the old woman. (She lies, steals keys, murders a person on purpose, and then loots the house. Why does she behave this way? Was she like that at the beginning of the story?)

Has Gretel learned something from the old woman after all? Note that Hansel is saved by his sister and that Gretel manages to free herself. Compare this to the earlier part in the story where Hansel is the one carrying white pebbles, saving them from abandonment. Gretel is the older sibling, but her transformation into the “leader” may be seen as an act of gender rebellion.



- ◆ Do the children follow the original route into the forest when they were leaving? How do you know? Why does the author describe the path as “the path they had known all their lives” (page 48)?

Is the journey in and out of the woods a kind of “life journey” for Hansel and Gretel? If the forest signifies maturity and adolescence, and the house “in which they had been born” signifies birth, what does the journey home signify? Are they becoming children again, or revisiting their childhood with fresh eyes? Note that when they arrive, they “called out, not daring to come too close.”

It seems that after their experiences, home doesn’t feel like home anymore. They recognize it, but feel somewhat detached. This may be a common experience of getting older (feeling detached from things you used to love, or take for granted). Ask students if they have ever experienced this.

- ◆ Discuss the possibilities for what happened to the mother and caused her death? Why?

Note the connection to hunger and eating? What do students make of the fact that the mother dies during the same time that the old woman is murdered? Is there a connection between these two characters? (See earlier discussion)

- ◆ Was the woodcutter telling the truth about searching every day for the kids but not being able to find them? How do you know?

What would the father's reasons be for lying? If he is in fact telling the truth, why couldn't he find them? We are told that he knows the forest better than anyone. Is the old woman's house somehow hidden, or does it exist on a different plane/dimension?



- ◆ Why do Hansel and Gretel marry well? Why is it important for us to learn this? Explain why the author chose to spend a paragraph describing the food people enjoy at Hansel and Gretel's weddings.

Marriage is a traditional ending to fairy tales, because it functions as shorthand for a happy and profitable adulthood. The author here, however, gives us a rather grotesque account of the weddings, describing the fat running down the meat-eating chins of the guests (remember that "meat," for most of the story, was used in reference to human flesh). Is there a connection between being successful/affluent and being a predator (like the old woman, or perhaps any meat-eater)?

- ◆ Note the "pale moon" at the very last sentence. Why does the author bring up the pale moon at the end of the book?

This can be seen as a return to the dark/light dichotomy, but also a further complication of it. A pale moon occurs at night (which is dark) but it also casts a lot of light. Perhaps the "pale moon," a symbol of both light and dark, represents some kind of ambivalence (such as moral ambivalence [not good or evil]). In the end, after all, the children are both good and bad. They've cared (for each other, for their father), but they have also killed.



Words and Metaphors

- ◆ What do you think the concept of "hunger" means in this story? How do the characters satisfy or respond to their hunger? Do they tolerate their hunger? Why or why not? What are some verbal expressions related to "hunger" that appear in other parts of this story?

Hunger operates on many levels throughout this story. Ask students to compare the family's hunger with the hunger of the old woman (or even the hunger of the animals who eat the pieces of bread in the forest [page 28]). In addition to these literal manifestations of hunger, the author often uses words like "cut" or "chop" in reference to items and activities that are not food-related (page 8).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

◆ What does “food” mean in the story? Compare different foods that appear in the story and discuss what they mean.

There are a lot of contrasts in the food we read about. Have students compare the descriptions of sweet foods (pages 21, 29, 37) with descriptions of meat (pages 9 and 49), or compare the tasteless pale bread (page 17) of Hansel and Gretel’s home with the savory colorful candies of the old woman’s hut (page 29).

◆ When the author describes a “swollen cherry” (page 21), what does this expression make you think of?

The word swell is only used two times in this book; the other is in the expression “belly swell” (page 8). Ask students to think about how these uses could be connected. What is the connection between nourishment and family?

◆ Note that the gingerbread house is defined by its smells. The old woman, we are told, has dim eyes and poor eyesight. Are these connected?

When one of the senses is weaker, other senses often grow stronger to compensate. Teachers may additionally wish to describe how Olfaction (the sense of smell) works. It is the most primitive sense (this is why the children are “impelled” by the smell of food on page 29). There is a strong relationship between smell and taste. Olfaction is also located in the same part of our brain that effects emotions, memory, and creativity.



◆ What do you think the “forest” means in this story? What does it mean (perhaps metaphorically) to “live on the edge of the forest” as they do in the story (page 8)?

One could see the “forest” as a metaphor for the unknown in general, for adolescence and maturity, or even for the confusing modern age.

◆ Relatedly, find instances when the author uses verbal expressions that have to do with light and dark in reference to the forest. In addition to the abundance of words like “dark” and “shadows,” note that there are some surprising uses of the word “white” (white pebbles, white tree trunk [page 17]). What could the author be trying to communicate with this interplay of black and white?

This story often plays with the connection between literal darkness and the metaphorical idea of darkness as “not-knowing.” Things that are “white” or “light” in the story serve as recognizable beacons in the darkness of the forest (also the light of a fire, or of the sun).



◆ What do you think of or feel when you see shadows and darkness? What are you afraid of? What are Hansel and Gretel afraid of?

Most of Hansel and Gretel’s fears have to do with being isolated—getting lost from the human world, detached from family, abandoned by parents, etc. Have students discuss the ways that the author presents the “forest” as an embodiment of Hansel and Gretel’s fears.

◆ What might the river / stream signify (pages 24 and 45)?

This river separates a space of death from a space of safety. Ask students to compare this river with the River Styx of Greek mythology. In that tradition, the river represents a liminal space between two worlds. In other traditions (Christian), rivers are associated with re-birth and cleansing.

◆ Make note of when vibrant colors are described, as opposed to the typical black/white dark/light language. What do colors symbolize?

Note the colorful descriptions on pages 9, 32, 45. In each case, color is associated with affluence and comfort.



Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*



◆ Generally describe the artistic style of the illustrations. How do they make you feel? Look at the straight, curvy, and swirly lines. Compare them, and pay attention to where the illustrator decided to put them.

Note that the illustrator typically uses large/long strokes for backgrounds/non-human objects and adopts smaller strokes for the characters.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

◆ Note the contrast between dark spaces and white spaces in the illustrations. Compare them with the dark/white metaphors & symbols in the text. What do you think the dark and the white spaces mean in the illustrations?

Note how light spaces are used to draw attention to the characters. Hansel and Gretel are always surrounded by a light area and on page 19, the father's eye is highlighted by a field of light. Just as "white" or "light" metaphors in the story were recognizable beacons in the darkness of the forest, in the art, white spaces help us make sense of the dense and twisted forest imagery.

◆ Compare the front and back endpages (pages 2-3 & pages 54-55), along with pages 6-7. Note how similar all three are. What are the differences? What do you think the illustrator is trying to express through these three similar, yet different pages?

The front endpages have characters but with no visible roads; while the back endpages have no characters but a strong directional path/tree.) The path/trees on 6-7 faces opposite ways from the path/trees on 54-55. Those on pages 6-7 seem to point into the book and get lost, while those on the back endpages (54-55) point out of the book (and therefore out of the story).



◆ Compare the illustration of the family home on pages 10-11 with the same home on pages 50-51. Notice the similar compositions. What are the similarities and differences?

There are no characters, no cooking smoke, and no road on pages 10-11. Pages 50-51 have all these things, and also a big open space in both the sky and the foreground (with no visible forest anymore). Ask students to analyze how the two drawings make them feel.



- ◆ Compare the deep interior perspective on pages 14-15 with the one on pages 38-39. How does they make you feel?

Both images guide the reader deep inside the composition, while creating a claustrophobic, somewhat dangerous feeling to the spaces. Students may note that the center of each image (the vanishing point) represents “death” in both cases: the parents planning abandonment (pages 14-15) and the open oven (pages 38-39).



- ◆ How many characters are there on pages 18-19? How do they look? Refer to the text and compare with the picture. Does anything seem strange?

Note the hand next to the woodcutter. There is a possible fourth person in this picture. Is it the mother? Although she is not in this scene, it is her “hand,” as it were, that guides the father in his actions. This may be the one representation of the mother—hidden in shadows, just a guiding hand.

- ◆ In some pages the characters are facing left. In others, they face right. What do you think is the purpose of these different compositions?

In this book, characters face left when they are entering into the forest or a bad situation, and face right when they are escaping, or moving forward to safety.

- ◆ On pages 30-31, the characters start getting bigger and taking up more space. What do you make of the shift in representation? We also see a new building (the gingerbread house). How does it differ from Hansel and Gretel’s house? Compare them.

The characters seem to grow more mature as the story continues, and they move from the background of illustrations to the foreground. This may be connected to their increasing agency within the narrative. The gingerbread house is a huge feature of the illustrations (it serves as the background for four spreads). But it is a little hard to make sense of it. The house is abstract and it blends into the forest. It has exotic elements and ornate decorations. In all, it is markedly different from Hansel and Gretel’s family home, which meets our expectations for a “traditional” house.

◆ Look at pages 34-35. Note the contrast between slimmer lines of the window and thicker lines of the house itself. Look at the white spaces and the perspective. There's a confined feeling in this composition. Why? Did it feel confined when Hansel and Gretel were in their own home?



Hansel and Gretel's own home does not look as confining because of the flat empty expanse of the floor (pages 14-15). With its dark floor, arched ceiling, and latticed walls, the gingerbread house does not look dissimilar from the forest. At the same time, though, the gingerbread house is itself a huge cage. On pages 38-39, the bars of the cage are almost indistinguishable from the walls of the house.



◆ Describe the tension in the picture on pages 42-43. How many characters are there in the composition? How have these characters changed since from earlier representations

Note Gretel looks more like "a woman." Her bent-over pose and silhouette actually resemble the old woman in previous pages (and pushing a living creature into the oven is certainly something that they have in common). Hansel looks younger than Gretel for the first time in the book, an

indication that she is the one with a plan this time. Have students look at the old woman's feet. There is something almost inhuman about them, like a goat (or other cloven animal). This satisfies the folkloric association of goat and hooves with evil creatures.

◆ On pages 46-47 Gretel is on the back of a bird/boat while Hansel watches her from the bank of the river. What does this tell you about the dynamic shift between these two characters? Examine the differences between texture and lines on this page (straight black lines vs. white waves). Note how much white is used on this page. How does this make you feel? Look at how all the lines converge to the right in a vanishing point. How does this make you feel?



Hansel and Gretel's dynamic has shifted, and Gretel is now the leader. Some may feel that she has become a kind of adult during this journey, and is now very clearly embracing her role as the older sibling. In the image, all lines point toward the sun, and strong black shadow indicate Hansel and Gretel's movement toward "the light."



- ◆ On pages 50-51, Hansel and Gretel look like children again (especially Gretel). The woodcutter appears without his axe. Why might the artist have chosen this change in representation?

Hansel and Gretel do wish to return to their childhood innocence, despite their maturing encounter with the old woman. Their father and home represent childhood to them. Some may find it tragic that the children want to please their mother with treasures, even though she essentially sent them to their death. In this sense, we can still see a kind of naïveté in the children, or a childlike optimism at least.

- ◆ Also note that in this page, almost everything is drawn in straight thick lines. Why?

Compare this with the curvy thick lines adopted to depict the forest. The straight lines are also featured on pages 10-11 and 14-15. This allows the visual effect of the forest (and the gingerbread house) to stand in opposition. To the children, the home is “known,” so it seems more orderly, predictable, and linear.



Further Research

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.9
Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

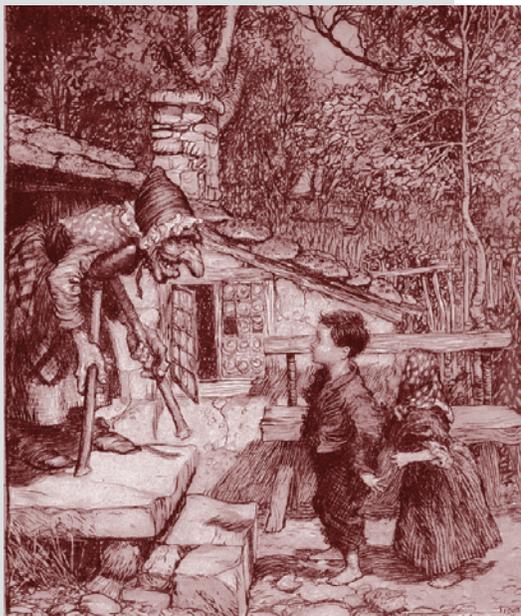
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9
Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7
Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- ◆ Find another version of the Hansel & Gretel story. Point out the similarities and differences. How does illustration style (or cinematography, if a film) effect the overall mood and style of the fable? Which version do you prefer and why?

- ◆ Try to create your own Mattotti-inspired landscape using only black ink and a brush. Pick a location of your choice and draw it using only shadows. Make sure to think about line width and style (straight lines look more orderly, curvy lines more organic and confusing). Present the drawing to the class for discussion and analysis.

- ◆ Writing Project: choose any of the questions from the Verbal or Visual Expression sections. Write a short piece explaining your answer clearly, using reasons and evidence from the text.

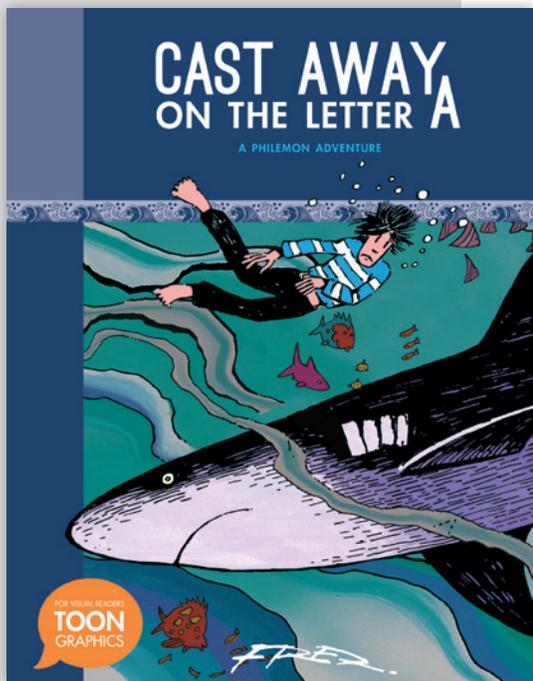
- ◆ Readers Theater: read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, try out multiple roles and be sure that you adjust your performance accordingly. Try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Have fun!



Cast Away on the Letter A

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



Cast Away on the Letter A:

A Philemon Adventure
by Fred
A TOON Graphic
ISBN: 978-1-935179-63-4

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THE TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TEAM:

Hsin Yu Chao, an illustrator and comic artist in her native Taiwan, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University. Chao has worked for numerous galleries as well as for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Sasha Steinberg, who holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Vassar College and an MFA in Cartooning from the Center for Cartoon Studies, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study political art in Russia.

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make "mental maps." A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' choices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

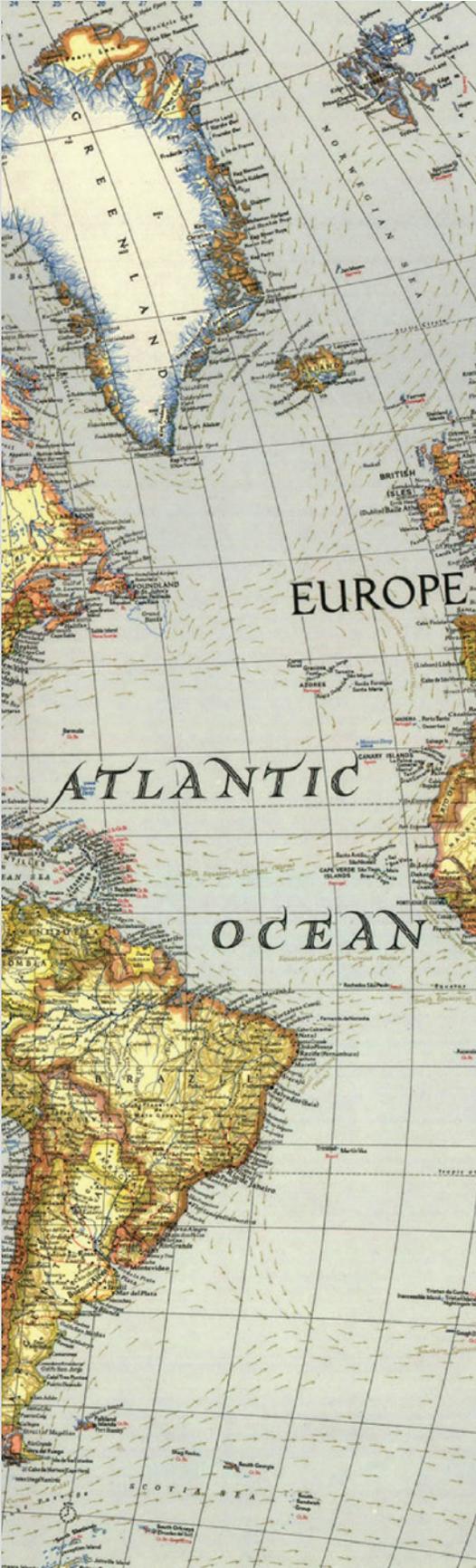
Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas.

The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.





LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expressions, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade, and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10
Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.4, 9
Students determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students integrate information from several texts in order to speak knowledgeably on a subject.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1
Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

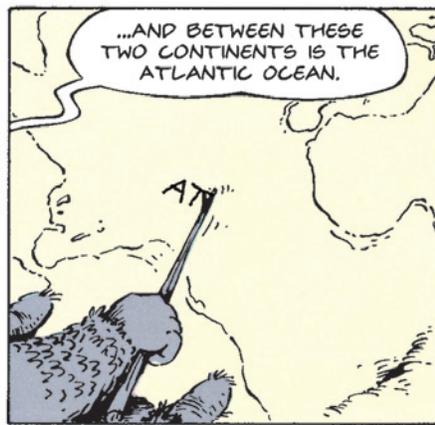
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2
Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4
Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

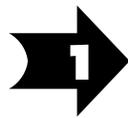
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1
Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7
Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

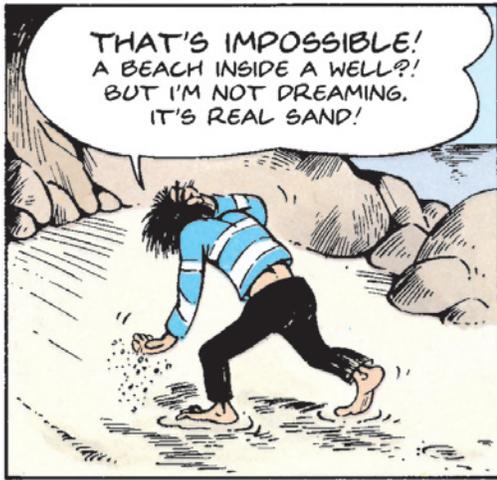
Characters



- ◆ Describe the personality of each character. Many of them fall into certain patterns of response and behavior, saying the same words again and again, or adopting the same attitudes. Why do you think they do that?

Philemon repeats “that’s impossible,” speaking mostly in the form of a question; Bartholomew repeats “you can’t say I haven’t” several times (pages 21-22), trying to sort out the logic of the island and re-define for himself what is “real”; Friday manages to see the negative in every situation, and constantly interrupts with “bah” and “phooey”; Philemon’s Father Hector is always shouting and his donkey Anatole provides classic side commentary (not unlike Friday, the other four-legged creature in the story). Ask students to use biographical information we have about these characters (along with environmental factors) to guess why they respond in these ways again and again.

Words and Metaphors



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

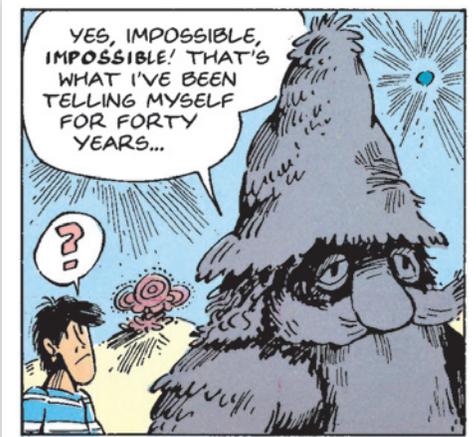
◆ What does “impossible” mean? Why is this word used so frequently in the story? In what ways is it important? Think about the phrase “seeing is believing.” Do you believe that this is true? In what ways is the idea that “seeing is believing” related to the content of the story and the reactions of the characters?

◆ What does it mean for something to be “real” or to “exist”? Explain what you usually mean when you say that something “really exists.”

Have students look at Bartholomew’s assertion on page 24 that “since this island doesn’t exist, no one can see it” and on page 29 that “on an island that doesn’t exist, anything can exist!” Ask students to try to explain this contradiction in logic. How can someone even be in a place that “doesn’t exist”?

◆ Who defines what is “possible” and what is “impossible” in this story? Are the “impossible” things truly “impossible”? Or are they just “unimaginable”? What is the difference?

Have students look at the misunderstanding that appears on page 23 (Bartholomew misunderstands what Philemon is referring to when he says “but that’s impossible”). In this story everyone has his or her own sense of what is possible, based largely on past experience.



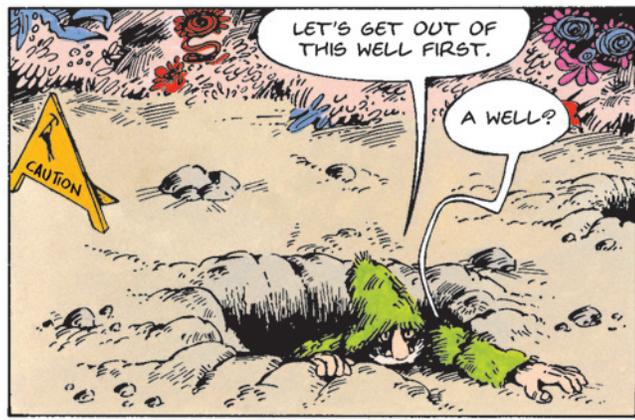
◆ Find some verbal expressions that are related to the word “impossible.” Try to explain the nuanced differences in their meanings.

See, for example: “berserk” (page 12), “dreaming” (page 18), “amazing” (page 19), “crazy” (page 19), “doesn’t exist” (page 24), “unbelievable” (page 34), “serious” (page 42).



◆ What is the role of “water” in this story? How many instances can you find when water (or something connected to water) propels the action of the story? What do you think the author wants us to see about water? Are we supposed to look at it in a new way?

Note that the entire story unfolds because Philemon's father Hector can't get water from the pump (page 11). As the story proceeds, water ferries Philemon into stranger and stranger environments, until finally, on page 41 (where it appears in a pool on the ceiling), it brings him back to the beginning. Ask students to reflect on their own feelings about water. Does it seem magical? Why might Fred, the author, have given it such importance in this story?



- ◆ What does a “well” do in the story? How would you describe the physics of the wells? How does Philemon travel through them?

Ask students to describe how gravity works in the wells (see pages 15, 29 and 41). Have students compare Philemon's two experiences in the well (at the beginning and at the end). Does the same well connect to different places in the Atlantic Ocean?

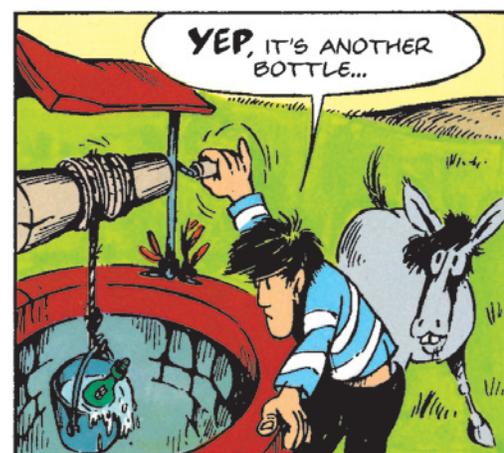
- ◆ Compare the well with other time- and space-travel devices (from literature and film). Which do you think are the most “believable,” and why?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.9
Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

In addition to fictional references, introduce students to the idea of a black hole. Do they see any similarities between black holes and Philemon's well? All of this may be an opportunity to discuss multi-universe theories (bubble universe theory, porous universe; the theory of universes with different physical constants).



- ◆ What is the function of the “bottle” in the story? What is in the bottle(s)? Why do the bottles grow on a bottle-tree? What do you think they author is trying to say through the metaphor of the “bottle”?



Throughout, bottles are a kind of life-saving device, but also a means of transportation. Along with the messages in the bottles (page 13) and the bottle tree (page 23), we are even introduced to a ship in the bottle (page 32). In the world of the islands, bottles are a way to get places, and also a form of protection (see the whirlpool incident on page 38). This tells us something about the aquatic nature of that world, where many things have adapted to thrive in water. Ask students to find other places in the story where water plays a determining role in the surreal environment (see, for example, page 28, where Bartholomew reveals that his entire house is built, in a sense, through watering).



Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*



Colors

- ◆ Make a list of the dominant colors on each page. You will notice that the colors transition consistently as the book progresses. Why do you think the author/artist did this? Do the colors match the atmosphere of the story and environment?

Page 11 is largely blue, pages 12-13 are green, pages 15-19 are light blue, page 20 introduces red, page 25 transitions to a more yellow composition, page 31 pairs this yellow with deep purple; page 36 returns to blue, and pages 40-41 transition back to lighter colors and, ultimately, “realistic shades.” Ask students to think about our cultural or personal associations with certain colors. Is there a connection between color and emotion?

- ◆ Look carefully at the color composition from pages 15-19. If you were the artist of this book, what color(s) would you choose to depict this dramatic scene? Why?

Word Balloons and Lettering

- ◆ The signature of the artist “Fred” is hidden on many pages. Try to find all of them! Why did he place his signature on these pages?

Talk about how this story was originally serialized in the French comics magazine *Pilote*. Can the students figure out where the story was originally broken into chapters? Ask them to imagine what it was like to wait for the next issue in the story. Would there have been exciting cliff-hangers?



- ◆ Look at the various kinds of word balloons in this book. Note that there are many different shapes, sizes, textures, etc. How do these different shapes and styles make you feel? How do they fit into the story? What do they tell you?



On page 11, panel 8, Philemon's father is out of the panel so his word balloon has a tail that guides reader's eyes to the edge of the page and out of the panel. On page 24, Bartholomew's unclosed word balloon indicates his endless stream of curse words. On page 29, there are cloud-shaped memory balloons that become panels.

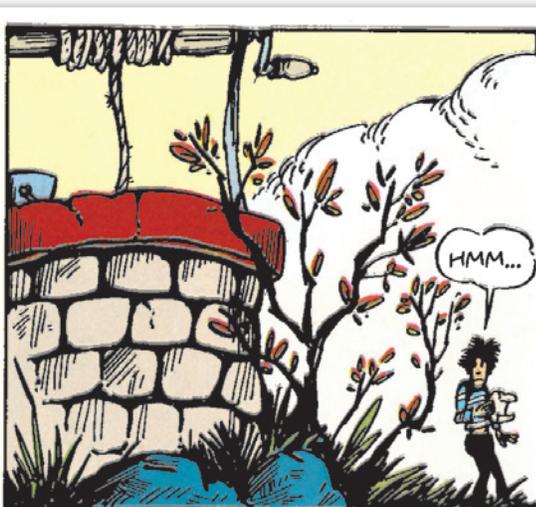
- ◆ Find some different examples of the visual expressions enclosed in the word balloons, like cursing or explanatory images. Why do you think the artist chose to present language with pictures instead of words in those instances. In what ways do the pictures resonate with the illustrations?

The best examples of this are on page 29, where the word balloons become panels, and throughout the book (pages 11-12, 15, 20-22, 24-25, 28-29, 34), where curse words are illustrated in the word balloons.

- ◆ On pages 11 and 38, there are rotated panels and upside-down word balloons. On page 29, word balloons become panels. Examine these and discuss the artistic choice. Why did the artist represent the story in this way? Note that these panels follow the same proportions, even though they have an unusual appearance.



- ◆ Look at the sound effects. Note that they vary in both size and texture. Is there any particular one you like the best? Why? Note that some sound effects are included in the word balloons, and some are imposed over the image. Do you think the characters actually say these as words? Or are they were included for some other reason? If so, why?



Composition

- ◆ Find places where the artist uses a “close-up shot” to tell the story (pages 11 and 13, for example)? Why does he do that? Where does he use far-away, distant, or “long lens shots”? Why does he use those? How do these things affect the story, and how do they make you feel as a reader?



◆ Examine the well scenes in pages 12-15. Compare the “shots” from above with the “shots” from below (page 13, panels 9 and 5). What do you think of these 2 panels? How do the different angles effect your perception of the well?

◆ Pages 16-17 are a huge single panel, or “double-page spread.” Do you think it was necessary for the artist to take up so much space for this scene? Why or why not? Where else does the artist do this? Why?

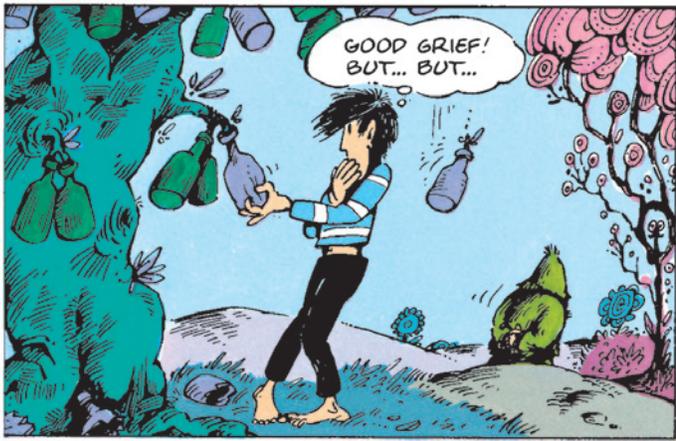
On this page, Philemon is facing right (following the left-to-right direction of the story and the book), while the shark is facing left. Perhaps “facing right” in the book signifies that the character is getting out of a situation or place while “facing left” indicates that they are entering. Are there other examples of this? (Look at page 15).



◆ Look carefully at the lines and make note of their different strokes. How does the artist utilize the width and the texture of the lines to make different expressions?

The line work of the water is soft and gentle but at the same time bold and thick; the lines of the shark are certain and solid, and the line work for Philemon is animated and clean.

◆ Look at the size of the shark in comparison to Philemon. Is this the actual size of a shark? If not, why is it so big? Is the shark drawn in a realistic way? How about the fishes? Why did the artist draw them in this way?



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

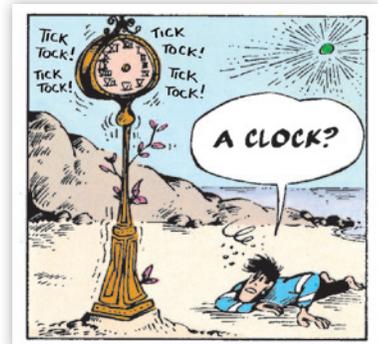
Setting

- ◆ Make note of all the strange plants in the book. What do they look like? How do they support the story?

The plants on the islands fall into one of two categories: a fusion of animals and plants, or a combination of inorganic objects with organic matter. The plants help set the stage for the action. In some cases, they contribute to the plot of the fantasy adventure; in other cases they provide unique background details that help with world-building and context clues.

- ◆ On page 19, a clock-tree appears from the ground. What is the purpose of this scene? Refer to the text as well. Why does the clock explode? What does is the role of “time” in this story?

Note that the speed of time on the A is different from time on the world where Philemon and his father live. Time is distorted, but has it been “exploded”? Ask student if they think that the clock is really “broken” after the explosion. Even though the clock-function is destroyed, it still functions as a plant, after all. But how can Philemon tell the clock is a plant? Make sure to note the punny “time-bomb” joke here!



Further Research

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9
Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7
Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6
Describe how a narrator’s or speaker’s point of view influences how events are described.

- ◆ Choose one of the major characters (Philemon, Bartholomew, Friday). Examine this character throughout the course of the book. How do they change or develop? What external forces (including other characters) contribute to these changes? Summarize your findings in a written report.

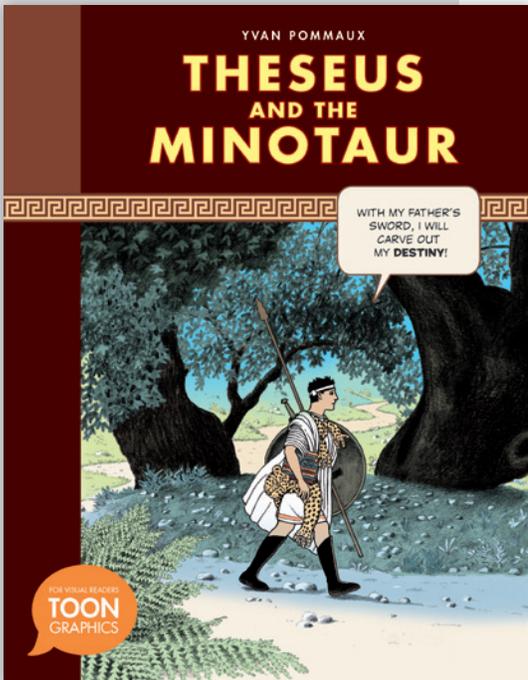
- ◆ Choose one of the entries in the index (pages 44-45) and expand on it with your own research project. Do you think that the author, Fred, is intentionally referencing these external works in the story? Why or why not? Why do authors often reference other works, or borrow ideas from other writers and artists? Does it enrich your reading experience to research these references? Explain why in a written report.



Theseus and the Minotaur

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

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by Yvan Pommaux
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THE TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TEAM:

Hsin Yu Chao, an illustrator and comic artist in her native Taiwan, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University. Chao has worked for numerous galleries as well as for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Sasha Steinberg, who holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Vassar College and an MFA in Cartooning from the Center for Cartoon Studies, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study political art in Russia.

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make “mental maps.” A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' choices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

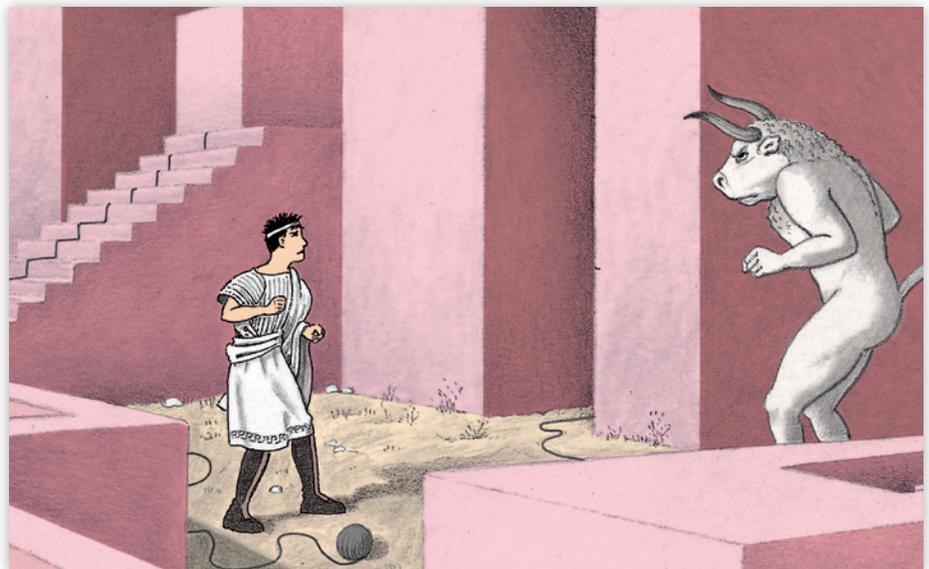
of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas.

The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.





LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expressions, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade, and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10

Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.4, 9

Students determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students integrate information from several texts in order to speak knowledgeably on a subject.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1

Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2

Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4

Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1

Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2

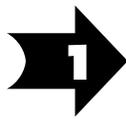
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7

Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*



Characters

- ◆ Look at the promise that Theseus makes to his mother on page 20. Does he keep his promise throughout the story?

Theseus promises to use his “brains as well as [his] sword.” Point to the battles on pages 22-23 as examples of Theseus using his brains (literally, in the case of the white bull!). When and how does Theseus fail to keep his promise?

- ◆ Theseus’s mother believes that he is the son of both King Aegeus and the god Poseidon. What evidence is given to show that Theseus is indeed the son of a god?

On page 11, we are told that Aethra “thought [Theseus] was so handsome that he must be the son of both a god and a king.” Ask students if this makes sense. Is there really a connection between beauty and power? Why might Ancient Greeks have told stories to connect the two? Is there more specific evidence that Theseus has both Aegeus and Poseidon as a father (pages 20, 30)? How would this be possible? What does that idea tell you about Ancient Greek understandings of biology?



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6
Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

◆ Which two traits does Theseus learn to value above everything else at the end of the story (page 49)? What leads him to value these so highly?

On page 49 we learn that, after the events of the story, Theseus decided to “value wisdom and humility over bravery and courage.” This, the text explains, was the beginning of “democracy” as we know it. How is Theseus’s decision to reject bravery a direct response to the events of the story? What are the positive and negative results of Theseus’s bravery throughout the story? Ask students if they agree with his ultimate decision.

◆ How do other rulers like Minos and Aegeus compare to Theseus? What are their values? What lessons do you think the Ancient Greeks could have learned from each king?

Have students look at King Minos’s decisions on pages 13 and 19 (where he decides not to sacrifice the white bull and to tax Aegeus with the lives of seven young Athenians a year.) Why does Minos make these decisions? Likewise, for Aegeus, have students examine pages 17 and 25 (where he decides to send first Androgeos and then Theseus to their deaths). What motivates these decisions? Are we supposed to respect these Kings and their ruling styles? Or are they meant to demonstrate how not to behave?

Ancient Greek World

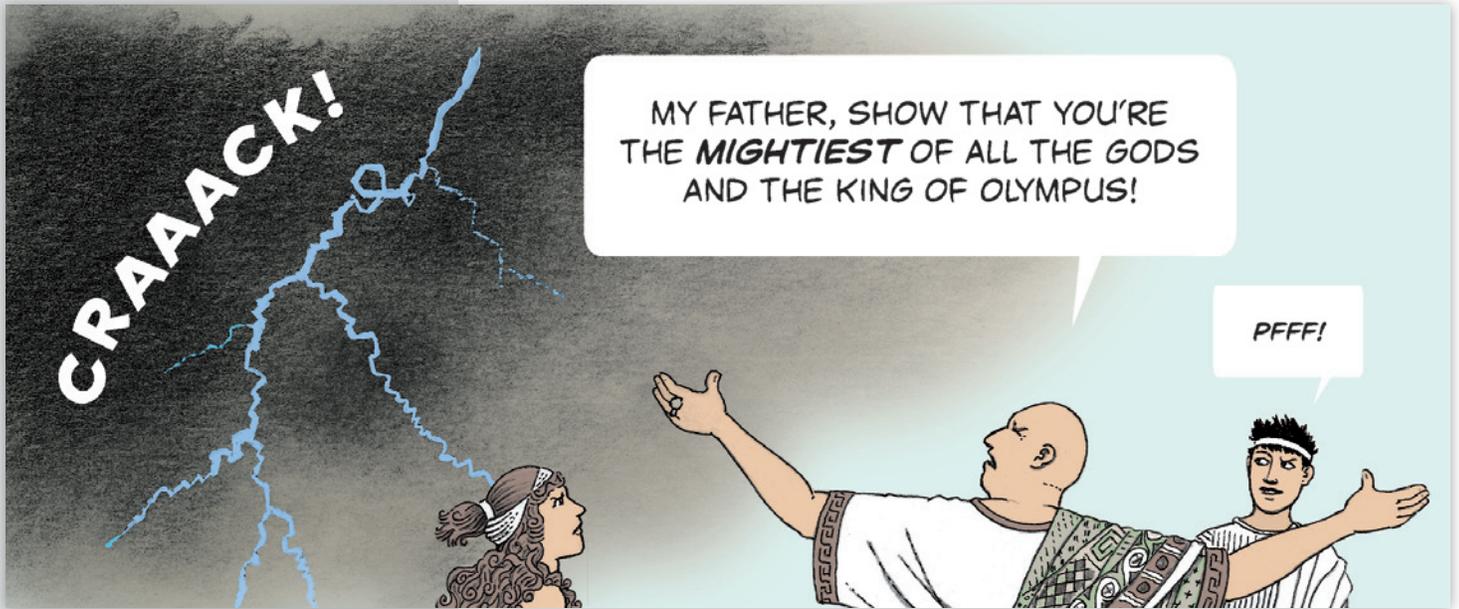
◆ What does “fate” mean? How does it affect the lives of specific characters (Minos, Ariadne, Theseus)? In what ways do characters try (and fail) to avoid their fates? What would fate have meant to the Ancient Greek world? What does it mean today?

See page 17 for a specific mention of the word “fate” (in connection with Minos). Is fate decided by the gods or does human action affect it (the idea of “sealing one’s fate”)? How do the fates of women in this story compare with the fates of men? Do Ariadne, Pasiphaë, and Aethra have a say in their fates? What happens to Pasiphaë and Aethra (the mothers) in the end of the story? Their stories are not told. What does this tell us about the roles of men and women in Greek society? How is fate connected to parentage and legacy (see the relationship between Aegeus, Poseidon, and Theseus)? Is Theseus’s fate determined by his fathers?

◆ Based on specific events and references in the story, what does the myth of Theseus tell you about the role of the “sea” in ancient Greece?

See, for example, page 10 (when Aethra is impregnated by the sea), page 13 (when Poseidon makes a sacrificial bull jump from the waves), pages 29-31 (when Theseus dives into the water and is assisted by dolphins), and page 46 (when Aegeus throws himself into what is now called “The Aegean Sea” [page 49]). What are the various mythological powers of the sea? Why might the Ancient Greeks have held these beliefs?





CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, concepts from the ancient world).

- ◆ Ask students about the relationship between the humans and the gods. Who is in charge? Which humans are obedient and which humans try to outsmart the gods? Are they successful?

See pages 10 and 13, where Poseidon is able to control the world based on his passions and rages. See also page 45, where Dionysus does the same. What do these moments tell us about the way the Ancient Greeks thought of the gods? Note that in the latter case, Theseus (unlike Minos on page 13), heeds the “great god’s” demand. Would this have been an Ancient Greek indication of a “good person”? How does it compare with today’s standards for good behavior?

- ◆ Who is responsible for the Minotaur? Why are seven young Athenians sacrificed in the labyrinth each year? How does Theseus come to meet (and defeat) the Minotaur?

Ask students to identify some of the circumstances and conflicts that set the stage for Theseus’s epic battle with the Minotaur. See pages 13-19 for the history of the Minotaur, and the back-and-forth power struggle between Minos and Aegeus that sets the stage for Theseus’ adventure. Whose “fault” is the Minotaur? Whose “fault” is the loss of Athenian lives. Students may conclude that both Minos and Aegeus are deeply responsible (with their intertwining competitiveness) for the disasters in this book. What lesson would Ancient Greeks have taken from this story of warring leaders?





Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*



Color

◆ Pay attention to the color themes throughout the book. What do you see? What colors play an important role in the book? Why do you think the artist used them?

Note the background colors of tan and blue indicate whether the action is taking place in Athens/Troezen or Crete.

◆ When does the artist use the color pink (or pinkish red)? What could this color symbolize?

Note that the colors pink/red only occur in connection with the Minotaur (and his territory: the labyrinth) or with the death of characters (page 18 - Androgeos's death, pages 19, 26, 27 - the black-sailed boat, page 22 - the bull's death, pages 33-38 - the Minotaur and his labyrinth, page 46 - King Aegeus's death). Ask students about the link between colors and emotions.

◆ See if you can find all the uses of the color black. When and where does it appear in the story? How does the color black make you feel? How might the color black be related to death or fate?

Note that the artist rarely uses black, and when he does, it is outlined or accented with a light color. The use of black seems very purposeful: King Aegeus's clothes, the night sky, the black-sailed boat, shadowy trees and leaves on page 32, and the crows. The use of black is connected to death and fate. King Aegeus is fated for sorrow and ultimate death, the black-sailed boat indicates the fate of being eaten by Minotaur, and the trees, leaves, and crows of Crete symbolize Theseus' own dangerous fate (of facing death in the labyrinth). Ask students why the color black is connected to death in so many cultures?



Visual Parallels

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

◆ Compare the verbal and visual expression of Theseus's growing up process (pages 10-12) with that of the Minotaur (pages 13-15).

There are strong visual similarities in these two stories. The composition of princess Aethra drifting in the waves (page 10) is very similar to that of the white bull emerging from the waves (page 13). Likewise, the way Theseus is held as a baby (page 11) mirrors the way the Minotaur is held (page 15).

There is a real parallel between the two characters. Both are the secret sons of the two warring kings, born in part through the passions of Poseidon. Both are used by their fathers in revenge games against each other, and come face to face in battle on pages 40-43, when the strands of their two fates finally intertwine. The parallel emphasizes the animalistic nature of human violence, which is typically described as "bravery" or "courage." It also brings out the humanity of the Minotaur; we see how human-like he is and how he was once treated like a little boy but slowly (and perhaps through force) developed into a fierce beast.



◆ Note that the Minotaur is always nude in the story while Theseus wears clothes and usually animal furs (leopard?). What do you think is the reason that they are depicted in this way?

We can attribute this difference to the typical power hierarchy between humans and animals. Because the Minotaur is a hybrid, and half-human, he is classified as lower, and less advanced than human beings, therefore nude. Theseus, by contrast, who is not only human but actually part god, gets to wear clothes, and sometimes even the skin of "lesser" creatures. Ask students where else can they find power hierarchies of clothed/nude in the history of art and storytelling. Some teachers may wish to introduce traditional western paintings, in which the clothing hierarchy is frequently applied to male/female subjects.



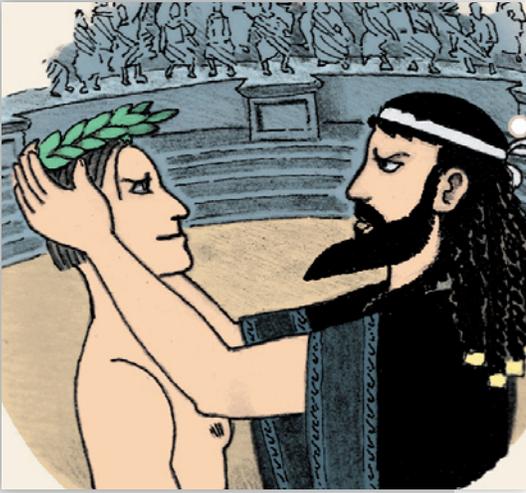
◆ In what ways does Theseus resemble King Aegeus? Are there certain things that they both do? For example, compare the panel in which King Aegeus lifts the rock (page 11, panel #01) and the panel in which Theseus lifts the rock (page 20, panel #01). What are the similarities and differences? Or, compare the panel in which King Aegeus sits in his palace (page 12, panel #02) and the panel in which Theseus sits in the same palace (page 47, panel #02).

In the case of the palace scene, the sky on page 12 is bright, but it is dark on page 47. This may reflect the thoughts and moods of the characters; King Aegeus is angry about his fate whereas Theseus feels saddened and guilty. Ask students to analyze how Theseus's experiences in this story shaped his psychology and made him different from Aegeus in both attitude and personality.

◆ Compare pages 29 (Theseus jumping off the cliff) and 46 (King Aegeus falling from the cliff) what are the similarities and differences? What do you think Theseus is feeling when he jumps off the cliff? How about King Aegeus felt?

Although the cliffs look similar, the composition is reversed. Theseus jumps left to right, indicating a forward movement, in line with the direction of the narrative. Aegeus, however, topples backwards and down, an indication of his defeat. These compositions reflect the different moods of the characters: Theseus is eager/willing to prove himself by jumping off the cliff; King Aegeus feels desperate, devastated, and full of grief.



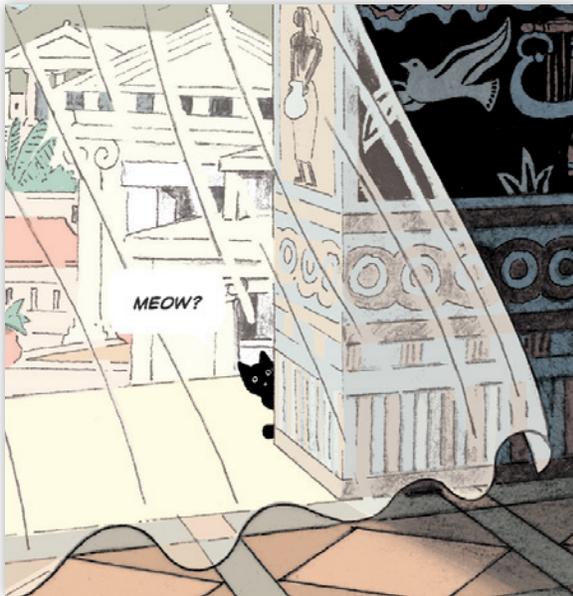


- ◆ Compare the facial expressions of Minos, Aegeus, and Androgeos on pages 17 and 18. How does Minos feel about his son, Androgeos? How does Aegeus feel about Androgeos? What are the differences?

Note that Minos and Androgeos are looking out in the same direction (page 17) whereas Aegeus and Androgeos are facing each other (pages 17 and 18). Perhaps this indicates that Minos and Androgeos have a similar viewpoint and position, but Aegeus and Androgeos do not. In both instances, Aegeus and Androgeos are actually thinking and feeling radically different things, including on page 18, where Aegeus is plotting Androgeos's death, and the young man is none the wiser!

- ◆ What do you make of the transparent curtain that hangs in King Aegeus' palace (pages 24-25) and in the scene of Theseus saying goodbye to his mother (page 20)? What might this curtain represent?

The transparent curtain appears in scenes that link Theseus to parents (especially to his father Aegeus). In some ways, it may be an allusion to a white sail (a symbol of safety that also foreshadows the accidental death of Aegeus [for which Theseus is indirectly responsible]). In other ways, it may simply represent the "safe space" of family, which is set off from the rest of the world by a kind of protective, private membrane. Be sure to note that the transparent curtain is gone on page 47 (after Aegeus' death). This supports both explanations—because Theseus is cut off from his family, and also feels exposed to the violence of the world.



- ◆ Compare the texture of the curtain with the other materials used in buildings in the book, what are the similarities and differences between those materials? Compare the palaces of Minos and Aegeus, as well as the Minotaur's labyrinth. Describe the appearance of the buildings, and analyze the ways that this corresponds with the personalities of the characters.

The palaces of Minos and Aegeus are quite similar in composition and color (pages 24 and 28), although the way in which the two leaders occupy them are quite different. Aegeus appears almost exclusively in his elaborate throne room, an indication, perhaps, of his obsession with power and inheritance. Minos, by contrast, often appears at the edge of the ocean, gazing towards Athens. This, in turn, may indicate his competitive spirit, and his quest to dominate the surrounding kingdoms. The Minotaur's labyrinth resembles a city, but is completely devoid of embellishment. It is also the only palace/city that is not located on water. The Minotaur's domain is completely cut off, unfinished, abandoned.

Composition



- ◆ Drawing on your sense of traditional Greek and Roman painting (see the front endpapers and the jars on page 26 for inspiration), do you see any similarities between the style of art throughout the book (especially pages 16-18) and actual Greek and Roman illustration? What is unique about this special style of art? How does it make you feel as a viewer? Do you like it? Why or why not?

Traditional Greek and Roman painting features characters facing to the side and many flat backgrounds. Greek and Roman art did not have a developed perspective technique. That being said, it also used sequential illustration to tell stories in many media (walls, jars, etc.), making it deeply connected to the history of comics. Students may be interested to learn about the historical development of narrative art / sequential narrative. In many ways, this book is actually designed to resemble the ancient style sequential narrative expression—horizontal panels, tiered story-telling (from top to bottom), characters in profile—yet it also has adopted more advanced techniques such as perspective, camera angles, and more realistic modern landscape renderings.

- ◆ How many enemies does Theseus fight in the story? Take a look at pages 22-23, where the illustrator utilizes different sizes of panels for Theseus' different battles. Why did the artist choose to do this?

The size of panels may be related to the power or strength of the enemy. The more difficult the enemy is to beat, the larger the panel. Ask students to compare with pages 39-43, where huge spreads are devoted to Theseus's battle with the Minotaur.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.9

Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures. (See Picasso question below)



- ◆ Look at the fight scene between Theseus and the Minotaur (pages 38-43). How does it make you feel? What techniques does the artist use to build tension? How is this scene similar to (or different from) suspenseful scenes in films or novels?

On page 38, we see Theseus walking through a narrow doorway to find the Minotaur (who appears in close-up on the facing page). This, along with the growing prevalence of the colors pink and red, slowly builds the tension and stress, guiding the audience to expect a strong enemy and a dramatic confrontation.

- ◆ Pages 42-43 display the long battle between Theseus and the Minotaur in a single image. What do you make of this image? What do you see? Does the composition remind you of anything?



Pablo Picasso's Guernica (1937)

Some students may be interested to compare this composition to Pablo Picasso's Guernica. Guernica was painted in April of 1937 in response to the bombing of Guernica, Spain (a Basque Country village) by German and Italian warplanes during the Spanish Civil War. The painting shows the violence and suffering of war and is considered to be a strong anti-war symbol. Certain visual similarities (not least of which is the white bull and the black/white/yellow/blue color palette) connect Guernica to the scene in Theseus. Ask students to think about what the two paintings are trying to communicate, and why the artist of Theseus may have looked to Picasso for inspiration.



- ◆ What do you make of Theseus’s “victory” over the Minotaur. Note his body language as he walks away from the scene of the battle on page 43. How do you think he defeated the Minotaur? Is it a “victory” in the traditional sense? Why or why not?

Throughout the storyline, the artist emphasizes a lot of similarities between Theseus and Minotaur. It’s hard to tell whether Theseus really “defeated” the Minotaur or not. In some ways, he may have helped put the Minotaur out of his lonely misery. Regardless, Theseus certainly does not feel deserving of praise (page 47). By the end, although he has saved the lives of many young Athenians, his actions have cost him several close relationships, and his death count has become quite high. Is Theseus really less of a murderer than the Minotaur? How clear are the lines of good and evil in this story?



Further Research

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, and describe how a speaker’s point of view influences the description.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- ◆ Ask students to look at the map in the back of the book (page 54) that shows Theseus’s path to Crete. How does it compare to a modern day map of that area of the world? What has changed? How would Theseus’s journey be different if he travelled from Troezen to Knossos today?

- ◆ Ask students to write two separate accounts of everything that happened between Ariadne and Theseus, one from each point of view (in the form of journal entries). How are the accounts different? Why are they different? Then, select two students to play the parts of Ariadne and Theseus. Have them act out a conversation in which they explain their respective points of view to each other.

- ◆ Have students split into groups and write/present an account of Theseus’s journey to Crete and his homecoming, as if they were news reporters updating the citizens of Athens. They should focus on chronology, and be sure to address instances of cause and effect (e.g. how Theseus’s forgetfulness leads to Aegeus’s death). Be sure to use appropriate tone when reporting each event; is it anxious, excited, tragic, or triumphant?



◆ Have students choose an aspect of Ancient Greece from Theseus and the Minotaur that interests them. Is it the characters' clothing? Greek weddings or burials? Classical architecture? Ancient ships? Have students use web and book sources to research their topic of interest and write a report to be presented in class.

◆ Readers Theater: Have students read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, have each student play multiple roles and be sure that they adjust their performance accordingly. Ask them to try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Remember to refer to the pronunciation keys at the bottom of each page.

◆ Ask students to write an alternate ending to Theseus and the Minotaur. A good place to begin may be when Ariadne gives Theseus the magical string. What would happen if Theseus did not have the string? Would he still defeat the Minotaur? Students are encouraged to follow the comics format, including paneled illustrations, speech balloons, sound effects, etc. Remind students to think about the ways they can use graphic cues to direct their reader.



◆ Ask students to imagine that they, like Daedalus, were given the task of designing a building from which no one can escape. How would they have done this in ancient times, and how would they do it today? What sort of materials would be available in each era? Have students write an essay describing their thoughts and strategies. Students may want to draw their own pictures, diagrams, and blueprints as well.

*Activities by Genevieve Bormes,
Educational Outreach Consultant.*

◆ Give each student a blank family tree and a blank timeline. Give each student in class a number, either 1 or 2. As they read in small groups, the 1s will fill out the family tree for this story together. Similarly, as they read in small groups, the 2s will fill out the timeline. Display student story-based family trees and timelines somewhere where all students can see them. Ask each group to explain their graphic organizer and their decisions. After all of the groups have shared their ideas, have the students work together on an "ultimate" class family tree and timeline.

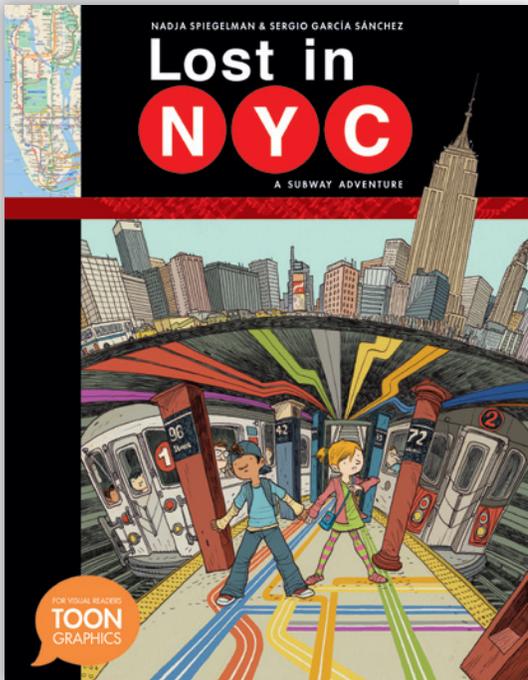
*Activity by Dr. Katie Monnin,
Associate Professor of Literacy at the University of North Florida.*



Lost in NYC: A Subway Adventure

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



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& Sergio García Sánchez
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THE TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TEAM:

Hsin Yu Chao, an illustrator and comic artist in her native Taiwan, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University. Chao has worked for numerous galleries as well as for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Sasha Steinberg, who holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Vassar College and an MFA in Cartooning from the Center for Cartoon Studies, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study political art in Russia.

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make "mental maps." A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' choices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

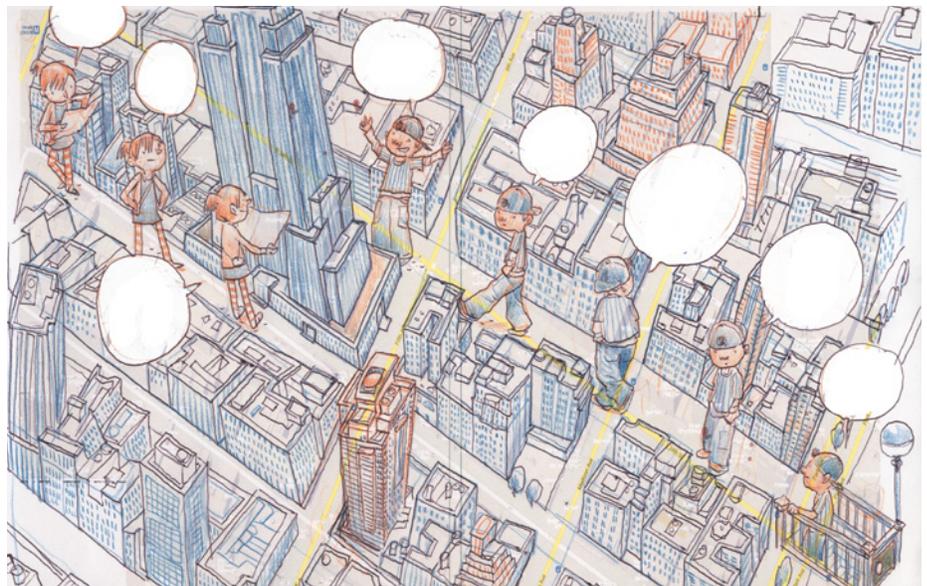
of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas.

The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.





LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expressions, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade, and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10

Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.1-10

Students build skills in reading and comprehending informational texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1

Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2

Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4

Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1

Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2

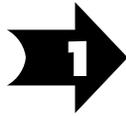
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7

Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Characters and Communication

- ◆ How would you describe Pablo and Alicia as characters? Pay special attention to the way they communicate and the things they say. How are they similar, how are they different? Explain your thoughts.

Alicia looks at things from a positive perspective. On page 7, when her classmate complains about Mondays, Alicia replies by saying, "No, it's field trip day!" Alicia also values friendships and reflects on her feelings. Note that even after she is separated from Pablo (pages 28-29) she still thinks about him and worries.

Pablo, however, tends to avoid personal topics and talking about his feelings. Note how he gets upset when they are in a challenging situation (pages 24-25) and withdraws from the conversation (he often responds with "whatever").



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6

Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6

Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.



Guide students through a discussion about how personal backgrounds can have an impact on our communication styles and personalities. As a young person who has been moved around a lot, Pablo's first impulse is to avoid getting too familiar with the city and his new classmates (page 25). Alicia may not have had such difficult experiences, so her relentless positivity may seem annoying or insensitive to Pablo. On page 25, when she insists that "everybody wants a friend," she may fail to understand the complexity of Pablo's experiences and feelings.

◆ Do the characters change over the course of the story? If so, how?

Pablo becomes more open and more expressive, beginning with his admission on page 30 that "I should have paid attention to Alicia." Following that, he asks a stranger for help (page 30), admits he is feeling lonely (page 31), expresses affection for Alicia (page 35, "there's my friend"), accepts responsibility for getting them lost (page 36), and, finally, thanks Alicia for her support (page 37). By the end, at the top of the Empire State Building, Pablo is able to feel at home in the new city, with a new friend.

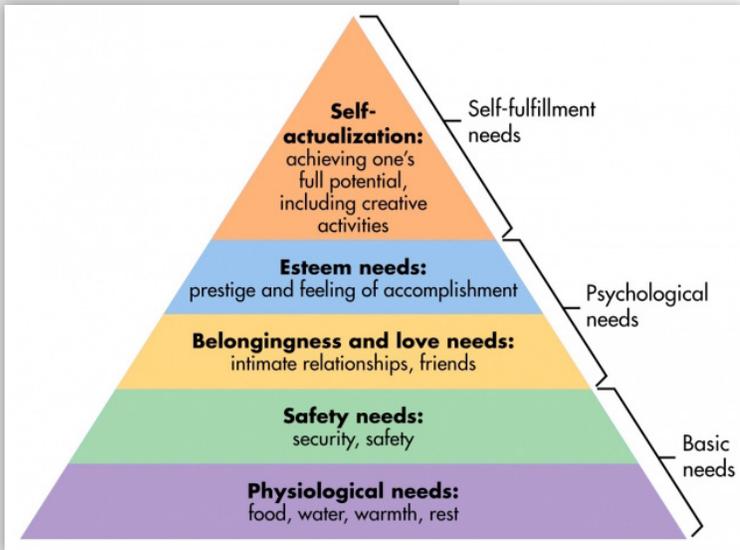
◆ Look at the scene where Pablo joins the class for the first time (page 9). Talk about the character Charlie's behavior and discuss how you would feel in Pablo's position. How does this interaction effect Pablo's behavior in the book? Have you ever encountered a teasing situation? How did/do you feel and why?

Experts agree that verbal abuse, teasing, and bullying have a prolonged effect on young people. Charlie makes fun of Pablo for having a teddy bear in his bag, and for being partnered with Alicia. But, perhaps most importantly, Charlie makes Pablo feel like an outsider, not part of the "group," not one of their "friends." It is not hard to imagine that this experience (which happens as soon as he sets foot in the classroom)

causes Pablo to put up some walls between himself and the other classmates. This is only worsened on the next spread (page 11), when Pablo makes the mistake about the "X" train, causing others to laugh at him. Ask students how they would react if they were teased. If they were Alicia, what could be done to help Pablo or to stop the teasing?



Hierarchy of Needs



Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
(pyramid representation)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7

Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, etc.) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7

Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating an ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

◆ According to Abraham Maslow's "hierarchy of needs," in order to achieve our full potential, we must first cultivate a safe environment and a community of friends. Refer to the diagram on the left. How do these ideas apply to this story? Identify some moments in this story when the characters' psychological needs are not fulfilled. What happens after those moments?

Pablo begins the story with his need for friends unfulfilled, but his confidence takes a blow as well when he makes mistakes on pages 11 (the "X" train) and 19 (when he gets on the wrong train). After these experiences, Pablo feels both lonely and embarrassed. He responds by shutting down (saying "I know that" and "whatever"), but the accumulating experiences fill him with frustration. Note on page 24 when he says "I hate this school, this trip, this partner, and this whole city!" Alicia also experiences frustration and a decrease of confidence after making the train mistake. She calls

Pablo a "dummy" and tells him it's his fault. Both characters lash out when their need for friendship and accomplishment is not fulfilled.

◆ Identify some moments in this story when Pablo and Alicia's psychological needs are fulfilled. What happens after those moments?

An important moment for Pablo in the story occurs on page 30, when he realizes that he has successfully navigated his way through the city. This increase in self-confidence helps him respect the value of Alicia's friendship, and leads him to change his attitude toward her. Reunited at the Empire State Building, each proud of their accomplishments in finding their way there, both Alicia and Pablo are filled with feelings of friendship and self-actualization in the final moments of the story.

Words and Metaphors



◆ Toward the end of the story, when Pablo finds the Empire State Building on his own after his mini-adventure in the city/subway system, he says "not so bad, me." How does this sentence make you feel? Why? Why do you think the author had Pablo say this sentence in this situation?

By saying "not so bad, me," Pablo is regaining control over his life and finding order in the chaotic world of the new city. He is able to build self-confidence through encouragement and positive reinforcement. This is the first time Pablo uses positive language and it marks a transition in his relationship with Alicia. Have students discuss what it took to get Pablo to this moment of self-confidence. It seems that he needed to prove his own self-reliance to himself. Though both Pablo's parents and Alicia were well meaning, they couldn't understand that the most helpful thing would have been to let Pablo take care of himself. Have students identify some moments when they were proud of themselves for the things they accomplished on their own. What are some positive phrases they apply to themselves to help themselves feel strong and confident?



◆ Pay attention to the adjectives used throughout the book. How often do characters use the words “express” and “local”? What do these words mean, and how are they connected to the story and its themes?

The words “express” and “local,” used in reference to the subway trains, provide the plot device that sends Alicia and Pablo out into the city alone. But these concepts also emphasize the difference between Alicia and Pablo. Note that Pablo accidentally drags Alicia and himself onto the express train, and then Alicia puts them back on the local. Alicia is a city “local”—she knows every detail and every stop of the city subway system. Pablo, by contrast, is on the “express” track, jumping from city to city, frequently skipping stops. In the end, they have the makings of a good friendship, partly because of these differences. Like the subway’s local and express tracks, Pablo and Alicia each have their own unique speeds and personalities, and both have a place in the city.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

◆ How often do the characters use the words “lonely” and “friend?” What do these words mean, and how are they connected to the story and its themes?

Alicia is the character most associated with the word “friend.” From their first meeting, she is eager to become friends with Pablo (page 9). She can’t understand that Pablo might want to be alone (pages 28-29). Pablo, by contrast, is the character most associated with the word “lonely.” On the second page (page 8), his mother worries that he will be lonely at school. Later, Alicia expresses it several times (pages 25, 27, 29), and Pablo finally articulates it himself on page 31 (“this is the loneliest...I’ve ever felt”). But, at the end of the story (page 35), it is Pablo himself using the words “friend” and “home.” Pablo, in other words, learns to see that friendship is a precious tool for surviving in a fast and confusing environment.



This speaks to the nature of New York City, which takes in many outsiders and people from different backgrounds. The city can be both inclusive (friendly) and exclusive (lonely), sometimes even at the same time.

◆ What does “friend” mean in the story? How does having friends make you feel? How do you make new friends? Is it different from the way Alicia and Pablo become friends?

Making friends means creating interpersonal connections and developing interpersonal attachments. As Pablo discovers, we almost always need to feel secure and confident in order to truly open ourselves up to others and make friends. Friends help you expand your world and enrich your life. Just as Pablo and Alicia’s different attitudes and experiences begin to work in dialogue with each other, new friends can introduce each other to a wide range of ideas.





◆ What does the word “lost” mean to you? What are some different ways that the characters are “lost” in this story?

Although the characters are literally lost in the subway system, Pablo experiences loss in other, more emotional ways as well. As someone who’s had to give up his home several times, he arrives in NYC already lost. He feels that he has no connection to other people, and no control over his life (hence all the “whatever”s). When he finds his way, he also finds the confidence he needs to turn around his attitude about New York. Ask students about moments they have been lost, both literally and emotionally, and what tools they used to find their way.

The City

◆ What does New York City mean in the story? What does it mean to you? What do you think the city meant to the author/illustrator? Note that the author is a New Yorker, while the illustrator is not from New York (he comes from Spain).

The concept of a “city” in our mind is established from our own memories and experiences, therefore it differs from one person to another. But students will likely draw on some similar descriptors: big, fast, crowded, dirty, exciting, dangerous, etc. Ask them to find moments in the book that reinforce these impressions. If your students live in New York, ask them if they recognize the city as it is portrayed in this book. If they don’t live in New York, have students describe their own city or town. How do they think it might look to an outsider? What would they show a stranger in order to help them feel comfortable there?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.6
Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe differences in focus and the information provided.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.6
Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.



◆ In the final moments of the story, Pablo declares that New York is “beginning to look a lot like home.” What does “home” mean to you? What does it stand for? What would this term mean to someone who has moved a lot?

Home is often something that we have to find for ourselves. Part of growing older is learning to build “homes” in new environments (this is something that young people have to learn the hard way if they move to a new school). A home is much more than a place, it is really the feeling of comfort and community. In some ways, it could be seen as the place that guarantees the first four levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs—it’s a place of safety and nourishment, a place of community and family, and a place where you feel happy and confident.

2

Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Word Balloons



◆ The artist utilizes a variety of styles to express the tone of sentences and words—using bold, italic, all caps, and larger sizes. Give several examples of each category, and compare them. Note that the largest font is used on pages 34-35, where Alicia and Pablo are reunited. Why do you think this might be?

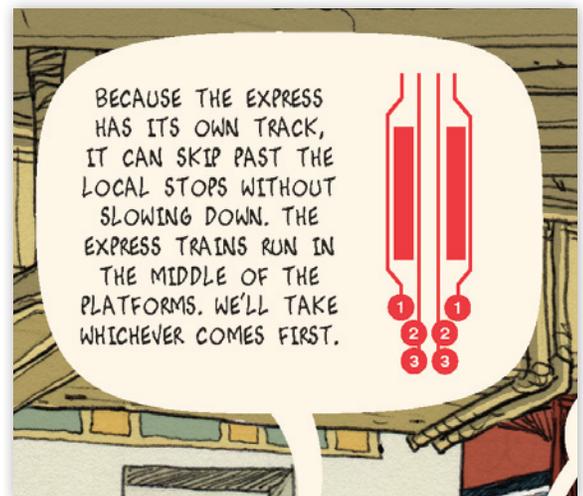
Comics lettering is integral in determining how the reader interprets the emotions of the characters. Large, or loud-looking fonts can express both happiness and frustration, so we have to use other information (context clues and facial expressions) to complete the emotional picture. The reunion on pages 34-35 is a happy one, and marks the true climax of the narrative.

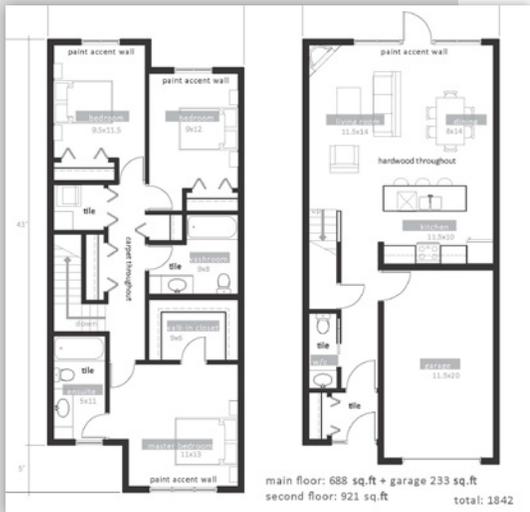
◆ Sometimes, there are more than just words in the word balloons. Look at page 16, where a diagram of the subway track is included in the first word balloon. Compare this word balloon with the overall composition of pages 16-17.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7
Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, etc.) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7
Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating an ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently

The word balloon is almost a miniature version of the 2 pages (which also show the express and local tracks). In the diagram, however, the division between local and express systems is rendered very clearly so the reader can understand the subway system construction. Ask students to compare this diagram with the cut-away illustration on page 45 (in the index). They will note that the diagram on page 16 is 2 dimensional (x and y axis, side-to-side and forward-and-backward) whereas the illustration on page 45 introduces a z axis (up-and-down).





Architectural Floor Plan

◆ Compare the diagram on page 16 to an architectural floor plan (see left). What are some similarities and differences between the two?

Explain to students how important it is for architects to first develop a floor plan or blueprint, so that they can execute the design. This was true in the construction of the subway, but it's also true for the construction of a drawing, or book. Have the students look at pages 43 and 46, where they can find earlier drafts of the artist's illustrations. How do these sketches compare with blueprints?

◆ Word balloons are both artistic and functional. Look carefully at the balloons on pages 12-13, 14-15, 26-27, 28-29, and 30-31. What do you see? Describe how the word balloons on these pages differ from one another. Pay attention to role of balloons in “guiding” the eye of the reader.

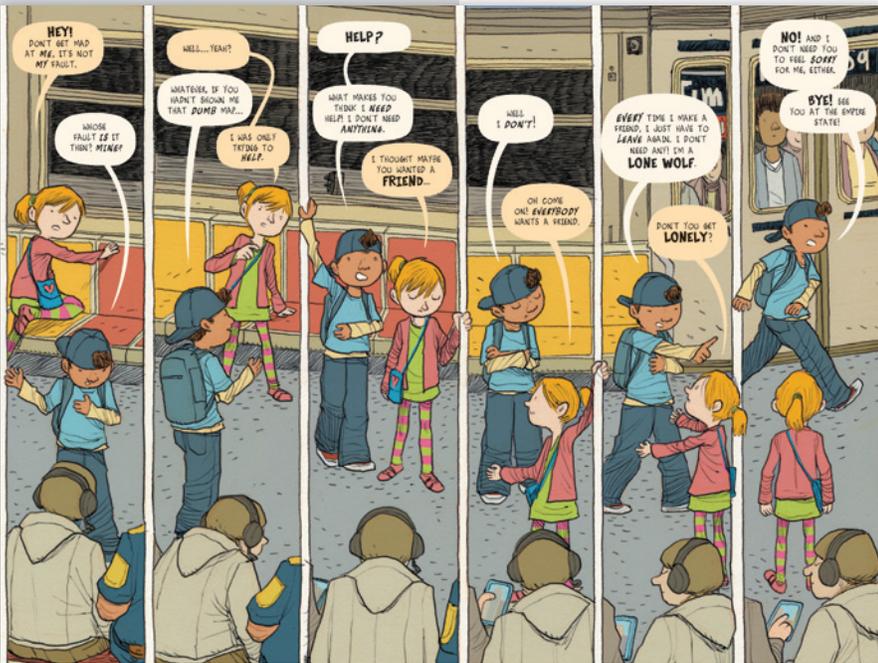
Word balloons often help guide the movement of the reader's eyes to follow the action of the story. This is especially important in this story, because the word balloons help the reader from getting lost in the dense urban landscapes, busy crowds, and quick actions of the adventure. On the aforementioned spreads, students may note that the balloons help guide the reader across physical space in a single scene (pages 12-13), through different events in time (pages 14-15), and in and out of traffic (pages 26-27, 28-29, 30-31).



Panels

◆ Note there are several kinds of panels in the book. We see, for example, loose panels without any border or outline (pages 8-9), clearly defined grids with white space (also called a “gutter”) (pages 30-31), or pull-out panels in lined boxes (pages 36-37 and pages 40-41). What do you notice about these panels—how are they similar, how are they different?

These different types of panels each play with the relationship between unconfined and confined space, openness and closure, as well as the relationship between colors. On pages 8-9, the free-handed panels give an energetic but disorganized impression (matching the emotions of the characters); on pages 30-31, the straight-cut panels resemble lines on a map, soundlessly limiting Pablo's movement among the panels (except where his body breaks into the gutter as he lands on the 6 train). Pages 36-37 and 40-41, by contrast, are designed to highlight the difference between emotional character interaction (the scenes in the panels) and background setting (the large image behind the panels).



◆ Note the unique panel design of pages 24-25. What do you see? Have students explain the dual role of the gutter/white space in the composition.

In this image, the gutters also serve the function of subway poles. If your students are from New York and are familiar with subway poles, let them talk about it. If your students are from outside of New York, compare the MTA's subway car interior with your local subway or bus interiors. By filling a dual function as dividers and as a part of the scene, these panel borders actually add 3-dimensionality and depth to the image (such as when Alicia's ponytail appears in front of it).

Color



◆ Look at the color palette of the book. Is it consistent? Does it change from scene to scene? Compare the color of the characters and backgrounds and describe any similarities and differences. Why did the artist make these choices?

The color palette of the book is mostly consistent. The background appears un-saturated (meaning it looks somewhat gray). The central characters, by contrast, are brighter, more colorful, and more-saturated, so they stand out from their environment. This is done for two reasons—first, to direct the eye to the figures and, second, to communicate the artist's interpretation of New York City as a place that may appear cold, but is actually filled with human warmth. Students may be interested to note that the colorist of this book is Lola Moral, the wife and long-time collaborator of the artist Sergio García.

◆ Take a look at the colors used for each of the subway lines. List the different shades used by the MTA system and describe how these colors make you feel (or what they make you think of). If you live in NYC, which subway line is your favorite, and why? If not, which color is your favorite, and why?

IRT:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

IND:

A B C D E F G

BMT:

J L M N Q R S Z

Colors have their own characteristics and are scientifically proven to have effects on human psychology/behavior. Colors also have their own unique cultural and social meanings. They also can be quite subjective, so while patterns may emerge, it is not uncommon for each individual to respond differently to a particular color. The study of these phenomena is called Color Psychology and has been around for hundreds of years. Students may enjoy building a chart of colors and their social meanings (such as black—death, green—envy (or “go”), red—love (or “stop”), yellow—happiness, etc.). Then have them reflect on their personal feelings about colors.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3

Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).



◆ What are the personalities of Alicia and Pablo? Do the colors of their clothing reflect their personalities? Why or why not? What is your favorite color to wear and why? Do you feel like you're free to express who you are through what you wear? Are there clothes or colors that you are not supposed to wear? Why or why not? Would you like to see those rules change?

Have students refer to their charts on colors and their social meanings. What associations do we have with the colors blue and yellow (Pablo) or pink and green (Alicia). Some students may note the gender stereotype in assigning blue and pink to these characters respectively. Engage students in a discussion of gender and color and let them share their thoughts without any judgments. Aside from gender, do the colors fit the characters' personalities?

◆ Pablo and Alicia each have their own color palette, and this palette has a subtle effect on the background. Note on pages 28-29, for example, where Alicia is the main character, how the pink color of her clothes is echoed in red umbrellas, the red Macy's logo, red lips, and a red soda ad. The yellow/orange of her hair is echoes in the taxi cabs and several rooftops. On pages 30-31, by contrast, Pablo is the main character, so a bluish color fills the spread (with blue subway seats, blue sky and green 6 train sign). What does this communicate to the reader?

The city, much like color, is quite subjective, so it is not surprising to see a different color palette for "Alicia's New York" and "Pablo's New York." Note that Alicia's New York is also very crowded (with many friends or couples—including a pair of dogs!). Alicia, as discussed, is more relationship-oriented, so her vision of the city is focused on people.

◆ The appearance of the solid blue/grey sky differs from page to page. Find every page in which the sky is visible and describe what it looks like (how it is framed and what color it appears). What is the function of the sky, visually?

The sky can be understood as a metaphor/symbol of openness, and is set in contrast to the subway (which is "closed" and "underground"). Visually, the sky allows the illustrations to "breathe," and changes our sense of the city's density. Compare pages with sky (page 30) to pages without sky (page 31). Note that the color of the sky changes as the story progresses, following a realistic progression from morning to afternoon. Students may also note that



we see a great deal of sky at the end of the book. The large sections of sky toward the end of the story do more than indicate the students' journey upward to the viewing platform of the Empire State Building. They also metaphorically reinforce the feeling of hope, confidence, and freedom that Pablo feels after his adventure in the city.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2

Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2

Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

Composition & Space



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

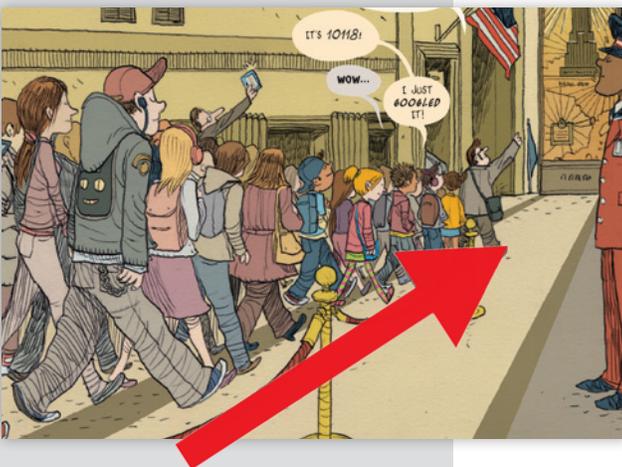
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

faces left. When Pablo faces the reader, however, it is usually a sign of one of two emotional states: retreating into himself and his feelings (page 9) or opening up to people (page 42). In real life as well, opening up and retreating into yourself can be seen as two sides of the same coin. They both require a moment of pause, some introspection, and an honest examination of feelings.



◆ Draw a diagram of the movement of characters within each page spread. Because the subway system is underground (and the Empire State Building is above ground), much of the movement may be categorized in terms of moving down or up. How does the visual movement of each page match the narrative movement of the story?

Note the downward movement on pages such as 14-15, versus the upward movement in pages such as 36-39. Although the characters are literally moving “up” at the end of the story (to the Empire State Building), the movement is metaphorical as well. Pablo is breaking up out of the confines of his attitude and reservations and is starting to realize how promising and positive his life can be. He even starts to open himself to Alicia and the idea of a “friend.” Positive attitudes are strongly connected with upward movement (at least metaphorically).



◆ In several scenes, the movement of the characters is split within a single spread. In many cases, the architecture of the subway or city helps to keep the action separate. Take a close look at your diagrams for these pages (especially pages 18-19 and 26-27). How did the artist use the background environment as a kind of division to emphasize opposite movements?

These scenes are very important, because they mark moments in the story where characters get lost, or separated from one another. The artist underscores the way in which the city itself contributes to this range in direction. Truly, anyone who has tried to find their way within the New York subway knows that the entire system is built on the idea of people moving in many different directions at the same time. Just look at the rendering on page 45 of the index!

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3

Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3

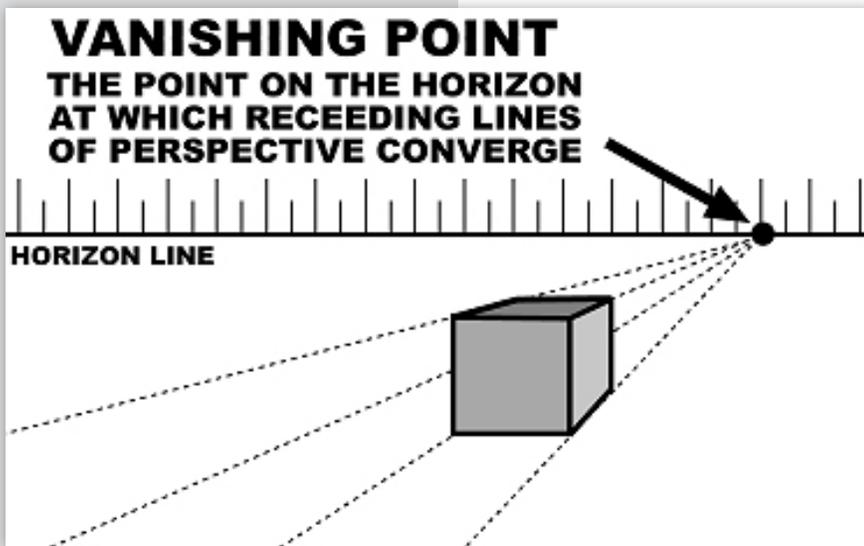
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

- ◆ There are many arrows and indicators within the visuals themselves (especially the subway signs). Why do they exist, from your point of view? How do they play a role in guiding readers and marking the progress of the story?

Students should note pages 16-19, where the arrows on the subway signs both foreshadow and explain the way in which Pablo and Alicia become separated from the group.



- ◆ Take a look at the perspective in each of the spreads, and identify the “vanishing point” of the image (see left image). Where do the characters move “in” to the vanishing point and where do they move “out” toward the reader? How does this make you feel?



Perspective Diagram

Almost every spread has elements that move both in and out. On page 8, for example, the center panel is directed “in” (the movement recedes into the “vanishing point”). In the upper and lower panels, however, the action is directed outward, toward the reader. Note that these images still have a left to right movement overall, which is necessary to guide the reader from panel to panel. An even more complex example is on pages 26-27, where both Alicia and Pablo move toward the reader, and then recede back into the vanishing point (one above ground, and the other below). In your discussion of perspective, students may be interested to note pages with unusual perspective (such as pages 32-33, with a 2-dimensional map, or 22-23 which has a downward-facing perspective).



- ◆ Take a look at the perspective and movement on pages 38-39. Do you find this page impressive? Why or why not? How does the visual composition contribute to your feelings and reflect the narrative of this part of the story?

Pages 38-39 move upwards into the vanishing point of the sky. This is one of the few pages at this angle, so it catches our eye with its unique structure. The design emphasizes upward, hopeful movement, which matches the positive attitude shift on the part of the protagonists. Potential drawing exercise: recreate pg.38+39 based on the text. As a potential drawing exercise, you can ask students to recreate this page with a different design. Are there any other elements/things they think might supplement this page? Is there anything that could be removed from the composition? Why or why not?



Time

- ◆ After the three spatial dimensions, time is considered the fourth dimension. How do you perceive the progress of time throughout the story? Come up with examples, and elaborate.

The passage of time is a deeply important part of comics story telling. Ask students to find different ways that the artist shows the passage of time. Compare pages 11, 20-21, and 34-35. On page 11, different moments in time are assigned separate panels, and the word balloons help guide us through time. On pages 20-21, the same is true, but we see two parallel and simultaneous narratives on a single spread. On pages 34-35, which, like most of the book, are drawn without panels, the key figures are drawn multiple times within the spread to indicate movement through time and space.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.5
Describe the overall structure (chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.5
Compare and contrast the overall structure (chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts (or parts of a text).

- ◆ The progress of time in the story ties in closely with the sub-story of Sergio and the Cop (see index, page 43). What is the story between these two characters? What do you see? How is their story similar to or connected with the story of Alicia and Pablo?

The narrative of Sergio and the cop is a great mirror to Alicia and Pablo, because they also begin in conflict and end in friendship. Their dynamic yet consistent appearance also functions as a helpful indicator that guides readers through the story.



- ◆ Examine pages 24-25, where each of the 7 slim panels pushes time forward bit by bit. Because the scene remains consistent, each of the panels is like a frame of a movie. What are the differences from panel to panel?

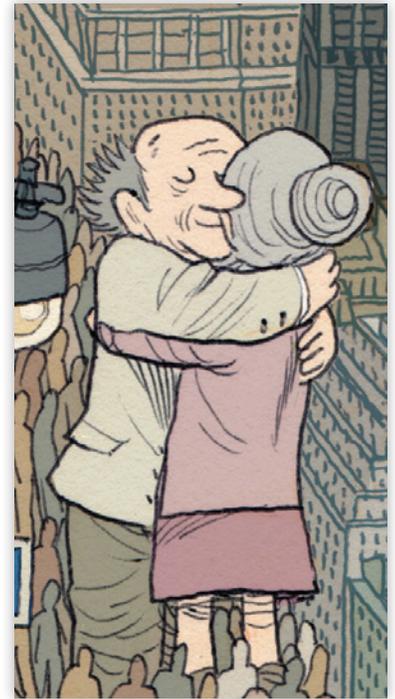


This is a potential drawing exercise or learning opportunity: let students create artworks based on the idea of different frames from a single “long shot” (you may wish to utilize a phone or camera) to record a continuous movement of their classmates and then break it down into still moments. How many frames do you need to clearly illustrate a minute in time?



◆ Are there other characters whose stories we can track throughout the book? Take a look at Charlie, the boy who mocks Pablo on page 9. What happens to this character over the course of the story? What about the old loving couple that first appear on page 22? Follow their interaction and describe their relationship. Use your imagination to make up a story for Charlie and the old couple, and share your thoughts with your classmates.

As Scott McCloud said in his TED Talk on Comics, “there’s also a balance between the visible and the invisible in comics. Comics is a kind of call and response in which the artist gives you something to see within the panels, and then gives you something to imagine between the panels.” The evolving, but somewhat hidden stories of these side characters draw attention to the very real passage of time that takes place in comics storytelling.



*Find more on Scott McCloud’s TED talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/scott_mccloud_on_comics?language=en



Symbols

◆ The teddy bear is given to Pablo by his mother on page 8. What is the significance of the teddy bear in this story? Relatedly, what is the significance of holding hands? This is something that Pablo’s mother attempts on the first page, but that Pablo resists until page 41, when it solidifies the friendship between him and Alicia. What does hand-holding mean for you? What emotions are associated with hand-holding? What emotions are associated with having a stuffed animal? How are these connected?

The teddy bear is a symbol of Pablo’s mom and her love for Pablo, and it is also a more general symbol of affection and attachment. The same can be said about hand-holding, and Pablo’s resistance to both is indicative of his anxious avoidance of attachment. Ask students to interpret Pablo’s emotional history and difficulties based on his responses toward affection. Why does Pablo want to be so independent? Encourage a variety of interpretations—early adolescent desire for independence, frustration about moving so often, feelings of insecurity, etc. This discussion will tie in well with the earlier discussion of Pablo’s character and self-confidence in the Verbal Expression section.

◆ There are many mobile devices throughout the illustrations. In some cases you can even see what is on the screens. What do they depict? Is there a specific message the illustrator wanted to express?

The shared use of mobile technology, even across a diverse group of people, indicates the commonality and shared experience between people (especially within the same city). This shared commonality is underscored by the fact that many devices display the Empire State Building on their screens. The Empire State Building is used as a symbol for freedom, unity, and friendship, which we can understand as an example of a “shared value.”





◆ From your point of view, what defines the United States and makes it unique? What makes us all “Americans?” What are the things that come to your mind when you think of United States as a country? Look at the American flags in the illustrations. Find out how many American flags are depicted in the book? What does it stand for? How do you view the American flag?

National flags are meant to represent the spirit of the country. In the case of the United States, it celebrates the unity of independent states under a single national vision. This unity through diversity can be seen in many aspects of the book. The flags are placed prominently in the book from pages 35-42, and guide the movement of the characters to the top of the Empire State Building (where friendship, or unity, blossoms between Pablo and Alicia—as well as between Sergio and the Cop). Students may be interested to connect this visual subtext with the verbal idea of “friend” and “home” that are underscored on the final pages of the story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2
Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3
Explain ideas or concepts in an informational text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

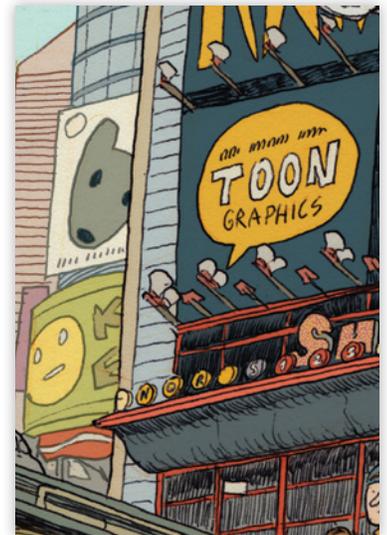
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2
Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3
Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more ideas or concepts in an informational text.

Representation of Reality

◆ How does this book represent “New York City?” Name the iconic buildings, landmarks, or famous things you think of about New York City and reflect on how, or if, they are represented in the book. What impression of New York City do you get from reading this book?

Make sure to draw attention to the iconic imagery featured in this book—the NYC taxi, news stand, and subway performer on pages 14-15; the punk guy on page 19; the Keith Haring graffiti on pages 20-21; the NYFD fire truck and Times Square signage on pages 26-27; the NYPD, Macy’s, and Yankees logos on pages 28-29; the Superman patch on page 30. This might be a good time to point out all the inside references that are visible in the background advertisements. The artist included many allusions to TOON Books & Graphics, its predecessor RAW Magazine, and Art Spiegelman’s book MAUS (first published in RAW) (pages 26-27). On page 36, you can also see one of the artist’s own famous characters (with Mickey Mouse hair) on the side of a bag.



◆ Look at the people in the illustrations. What kind of variety can you find in terms of gender, age, race, religion, and body type? From your personal experience, do you think this depiction is realistic? Why or why not? How does this depiction compare to other books or comics?



Further Research

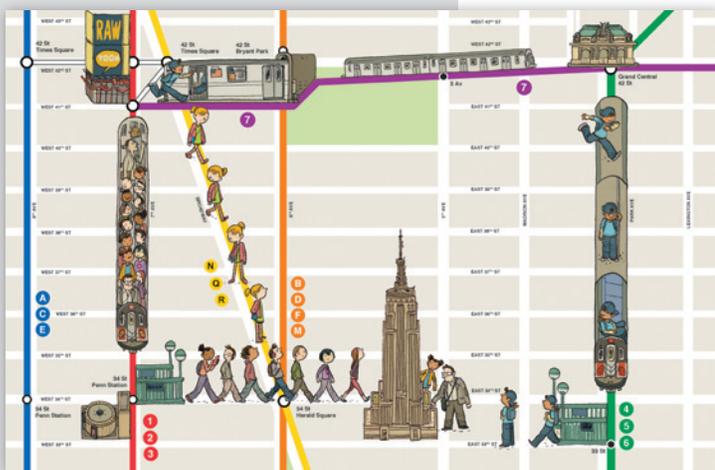
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9
Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7
Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



◆ There are a few different maps in the book. Compare them, noting the similarities and differences. How do the hand-drawn maps differ from the MTA subway map printed on the front endpages of the book? Compare the map in the book with maps of New York from different time periods, or old subway maps. Refer to the index for the history of NYC subway system. Create your own map of NYC or your hometown! Present your map to the class and explain how it is unique.

◆ Choose one or two of Alicia and Pablo's classmates that we meet in this story. Write a version of the day from their perspective. Use all information from the text that you can find about these other students. Find moments where your story "crosses paths" with the one in this book.

◆ **Writing Project:** choose any of the questions from the Verbal or Visual Expression sections. Write a short piece explaining your answer clearly, using reasons and evidence from the text.

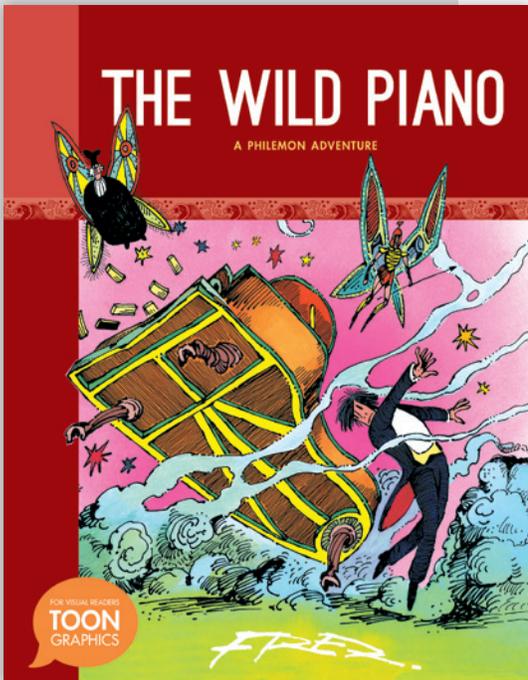
◆ **Readers Theater:** read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, try out multiple roles and be sure that you adjust your performance accordingly. Try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Have fun!



The Wild Piano

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



The Wild Piano:
A Philemon Adventure
by Fred
A TOON Graphic
ISBN: 978-1-935179-83-2

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THE TOON EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH TEAM:

Hsin Yu Chao, an illustrator and comic artist in her native Taiwan, is currently pursuing a master's degree in Arts Administration at Teachers College, Columbia University. Chao has worked for numerous galleries as well as for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Sasha Steinberg, who holds a BA in Comparative Literature from Vassar College and an MFA in Cartooning from the Center for Cartoon Studies, was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study political art in Russia.

TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make “mental maps.” A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' choices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

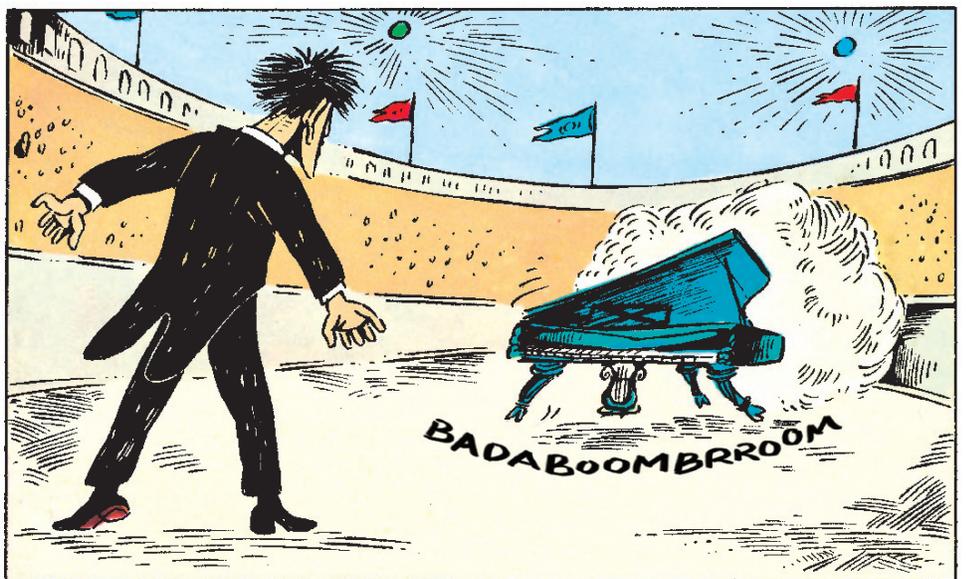
Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense of continuity for the action, and it

can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas. The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.

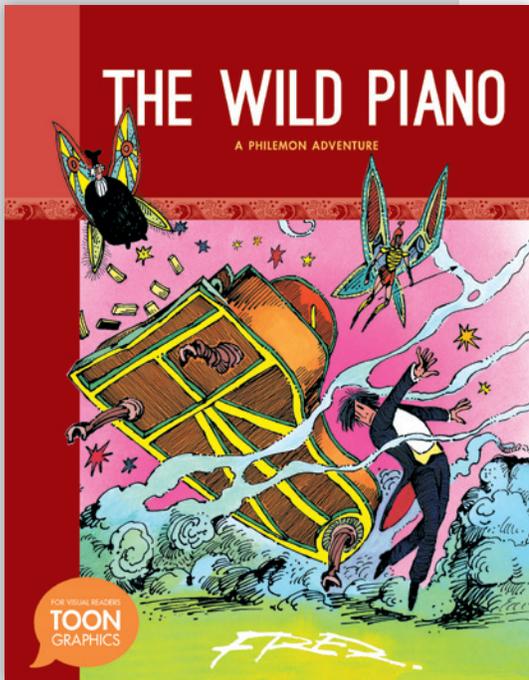




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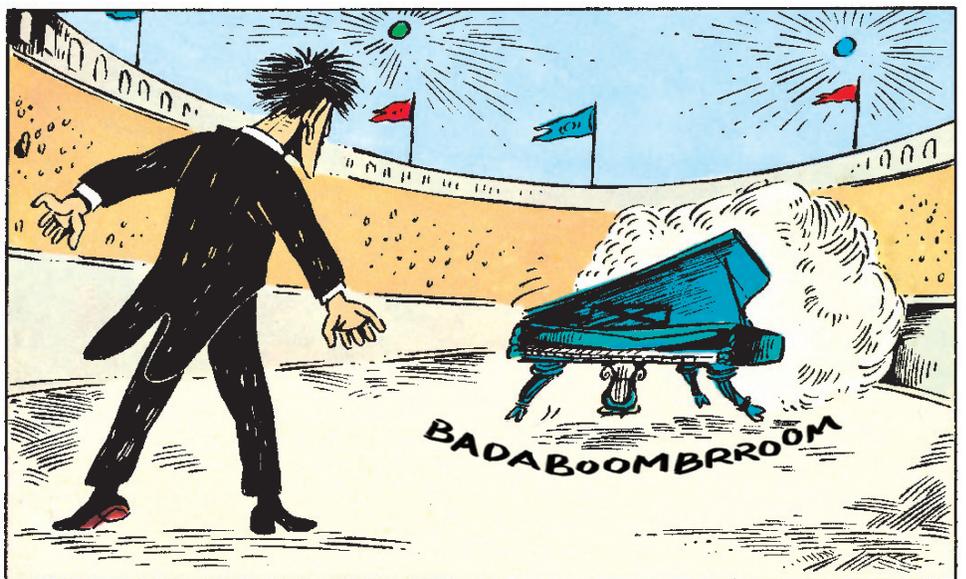
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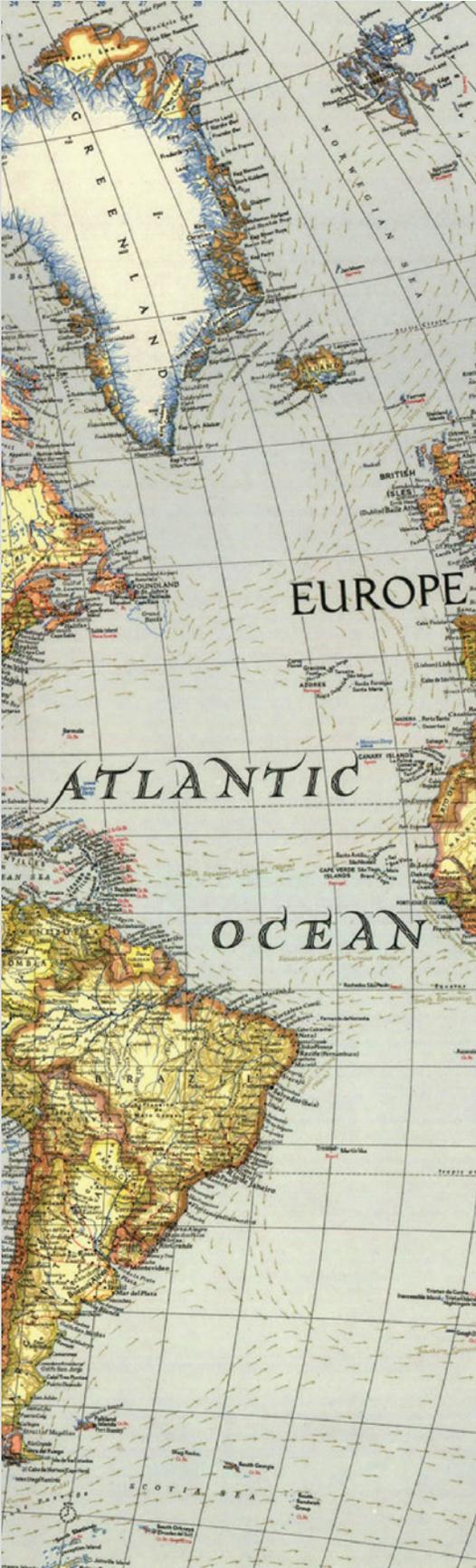
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LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expressions, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how to best utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade, and were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10
Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.4, 9
Students determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. Students integrate information from several texts in order to speak knowledgeably on a subject.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1
Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

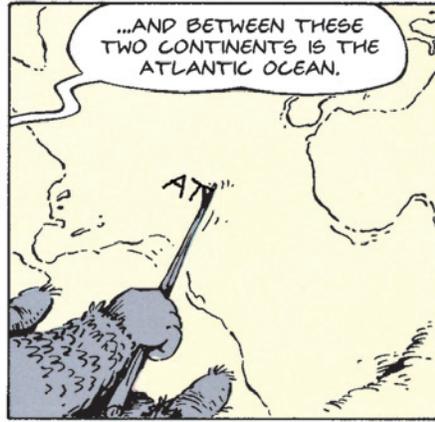
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2
Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4
Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

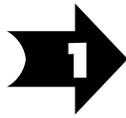
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1
Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7
Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and example in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.6
Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.

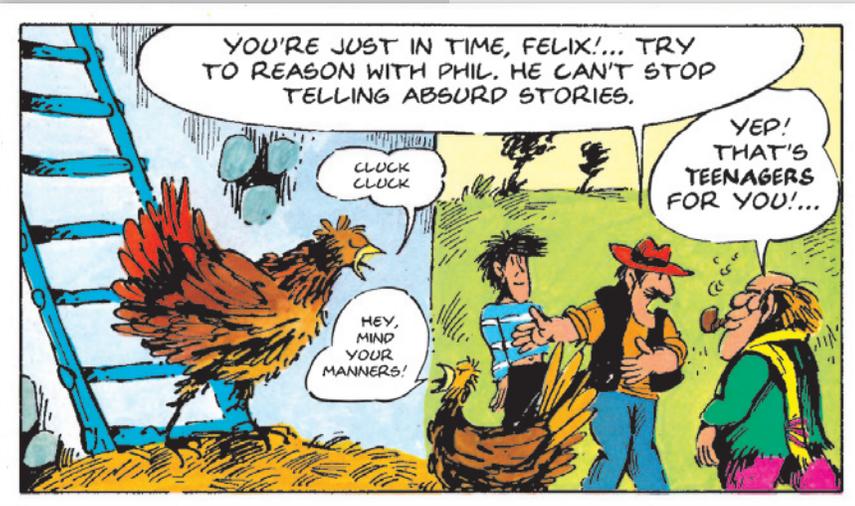
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6
Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

Characters

- ◆ How do the four central male characters (Philemon, Hector, Bartholomew, Uncle Felix) differ? What do their speech patterns tell you about their personalities?

Philemon often seems to be trying to make sense of the world. He tries to sort out the facts (“That’s strange. He never spoke about you” - page 12) and explain his point of view (“But I went there, Uncle Felix. That’s where I met Bartholomew” - page 13), despite being constantly interrupted.

Uncle Felix, a source of those interruptions, seems jolly at first (“Ha ha ha! Trips and all kinds of stuff...hee hee!” - page 12) but he quickly changes when the subject of the islands is raised. After, Felix becomes a bit withholding. He never fully answers Philemon’s questions (page 13), and sends him into danger with very little warning or explanation (page 15). Philemon’s father, Hector, by contrast, is the most straightforward. His dialogue is constantly grumpy, and we have the distinct impression that he is always screaming. When we meet Bartholomew at the end of the book, he seems dazed and confused (“mmhmm...What’s going on?” - page 33). Students may be interested in comparing this characterization with his confident persona in the previous book (*Cast Away on the Letter A: A Philemon Adventure* ISBN: 978-1-935179-63-4).



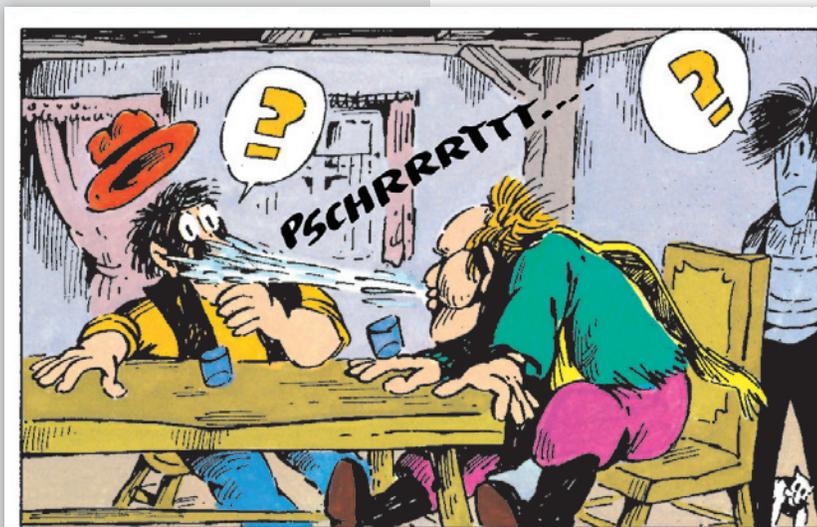
- ◆ Find all the animals in the story. How are animals represented? How do they interact with the central characters? How do they interact with the narrative of the story?

Aside from Anatole (Philemon's pet donkey), the most notable animals in the story are: the chickens on Hector's farm (page 11), the white cat inside the house (pages 12-14), and the zebra jail (pages 27-28). All of the animals are given both animal sound effects and written verbal dialogue, although it is unclear whether the humans can hear them talking or not. Philemon definitely acts as if Anatole can talk to him (pages 28 & 39), but is this

just the fantasy of a young man and his favorite pet? In many cases, the animal world seems to be a kind of parallel to the central characters. On page 11, the chickens are fighting with each other ("mind your manners!") just like Philemon and his father. On page 14, the white cat takes on the annoyed tone of Hector, after he leaves ("They're making me dizzy!").

- ◆ At the beginning of the adventure (page 11), Philemon is eager to return down the well to the mysterious islands. Why?

Philemon feels obligated to return because he was not able to take Bartholomew back with him to the farm. Bartholomew was the reason he went down the well to begin with (after he received a message in a bottle in *Cast Away on the Letter A*). Ask students how they would feel in Philemon's position. Why do they think Philemon hasn't tried going back down the well to rescue him? On page 14, it almost seems like he was too scared to go back by himself. Once he feels like he has support from his uncle, his bravery increases ("let's go!" page 14)



- ◆ On pages 12-13, we meet Uncle Felix for the first time. What do you think of his character? How is he similar to his brother Hector (Philemon's father)? How is he different?

The two brothers are depicted with similar bodies and facial features, but their personalities are very different. Felix is good-humored and talkative, whereas Hector is deeply impatient and angry. On pages 12-13, however, the two share one noticeable trait, which is that they both keep silencing Philemon (although the reasons are different). Students familiar with the first book may be surprised to meet Felix, because there was no previous mention of him. Remind the,

that the comic was originally published in serialized form in the magazine *Pilote*, so it's unlikely that the story was planned in advance. Ask students to put themselves in the position of the writer. Why would they have added a character like Felix? How is he necessary to the plot?



- ◆ Why doesn't Felix want Philemon to talk about the island of the "A" (pages 12-13)?

Felix doesn't want Philemon to talk about the island in front of Hector. We don't learn the exact reason for the secrecy. Ask students to draw some possible conclusions. Is it, for example, because Hector is very skeptical, and Felix knows that he will not believe them (which is exactly what does happen)? Is it because Felix has an entire secret life that he doesn't want his brother to know about ("I'm something of a magician" page 14)? And so on...

- ◆ Find all the moments when Philemon has misunderstandings with the characters he meets on his adventure. What do these moments have in common? If you were in Philemon's position, how would you respond?

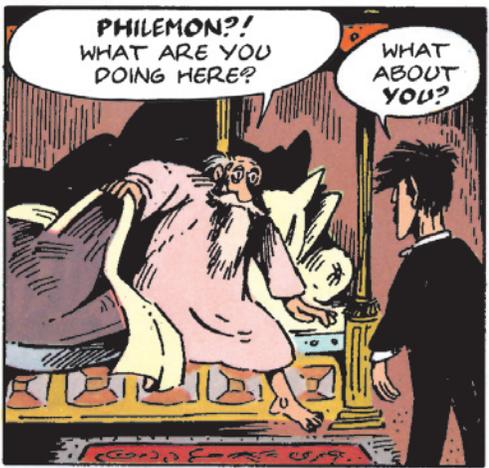
Students should pay special attention the interactions with the water hiker (pages 17-19), the courtroom of the "N" (pages 24-25), and the organizers of the "concert" (pages 29-32). In each of these cases, Philemon struggles to make sense of a world that doesn't follow traditional rules of logic. In some cases, words that make sense to Philemon have a different (or no) meaning to others (such as "drown," page 17).



- ◆ How does Philemon change over the course of the book?



Philemon becomes increasingly confident over the course of the book. We've discussed (above) his hesitation at the beginning of the book to venture back to the islands. Once he is transported there, we see this hesitation manifested as fear. In his first two interactions, he latches onto others and asks them to help him (pages 17 & 20). Once he's placed on trial, he begins to independently stand up for himself ("let me EXPLAIN!" page 24). Up until this point, he's still trying to make sense of everything, or rather, apply rules of logic and sense to a world that simply does not follow them. On page 30, facing the wild piano, he finally exclaims that it all "makes no sense. It's crazy!" After he admits this, he actually is much better off. He somewhat randomly defeats the wild piano (page 32), randomly finds Bartholomew (page 33), and randomly leads them home ("we can always try..." page 37). It isn't just his outfit that is different by the end. He seems to have gained a great deal of confidence and clarity. That being said, he still occasionally tries to apply logic where it doesn't belong ("I know the way out once we get there" page 34).

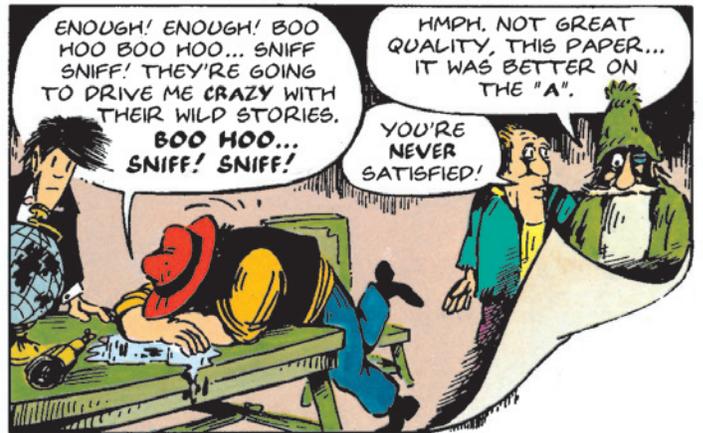


- ◆ On page 33, when Philemon finds Bartholomew, the latter is asleep in a strange bedroom (inside a labyrinth). Why is he asleep? How did he get there?

At the end of the first book, we find out that what seemed like days on the island was only a few hours on the farm. How long do you think Philemon was on the farm in between adventures? How long was Bartholomew lost in the labyrinth? Remember that Bartholomew has no way to keep track of the passage of time. In his state of endless confusion, sleep may be the only way to assert some order and to break up the monotony.

- ◆ The book ends with Philemon and Bartholomew returning to Uncle Felix's house. Hector screams and cries when they try to tell him about their adventure. Why does he respond in this way?

Hector is overwhelmed by the “impossible” stories that the people around him continue to share. He is outnumbered by characters who challenge his reality. Ask students how they feel about Hector. Do they feel sympathy for him? Do they think he is being selfish and stubborn? Do they think he is good comic relief? Do they think he’s meant to be the classic comedic “straight man” (the person in a comedy group who is intentionally not funny in order to make the humor of the other characters more hilarious and absurd)?



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

Words and Metaphors

- ◆ What does it mean for something to be “real” or to “exist”? Explain what you usually mean when you say that something “really exists.”

Some feel that “real” describes things that you can see with your own eyes. But in our “real world,” most people believe in concepts that cannot be “seen” (justice, logic, religion). Many of these are very important and have a large impact on how our society and psychologies are structured. In this story, Hector denies that the world of the islands (which he hears about constantly from his son and brother) can be real. Why is he so certain? Perhaps because the world of the islands directly contradicts foundational beliefs about the world that he knows (logic, science, geography, etc.). Ask students what they would do if they came face to face with something that contradicted their beliefs about reality. How would they respond?



◆ Take a look at the trial scene from pages 23-27. How does the tone of speech change during this scene? Look especially at the “scroll” on page 25. How would you describe the kind of language used in this document and how does it make you feel?

The trial scene directly confronts the “official language” of our world and parodies it by robbing it of traditional meaning and purpose. In the world of the islands, words like “assault and battery,” “act of rebellion,” “witness,” “defense,” etc. carry the same importance, but not the same meaning. In this case, they are simply tools of punishment, that can be applied loosely by those with power. In the case of the scroll, the author uses a very serious tone to lay out an utterly absurd and impossible history. Like many “absurdist” writers, Fred (the author) likely has negative feelings about systems of power (like the “law” or “history”) and wishes to lampoon them with silliness. Can you think of other books or films that do this (*Monty Python*, *Christopher Guest films*, *Lemony Snicket*, *Alice in Wonderland*, etc.)?

Logic and Absurdism

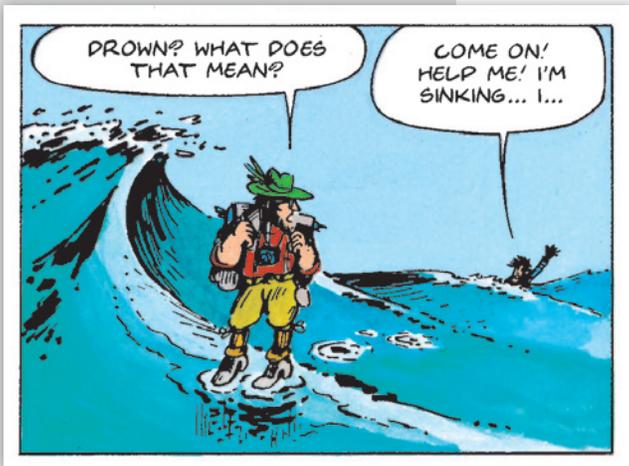
◆ List all the ways that Philemon can travel between the farm and the islands (that we know of so far). How are these places connected? What do these methods of transport have in common (if anything)?

Philemon travels to and from the islands using: the well, the spyglass and globe, and finally the wardrobe in Uncle Felix’s house. The main thing that these have in common is that they are relatively ordinary and commonplace things in our world. What are some other ordinary objects that you could imagine being secret portals to another world/dimension? Some teachers may want students to expand this into a written or oral presentation..



- ◆ What is the “logic” (if any) of the mysterious world of the letter-islands? List all the elements that depart from our own reality and try to identify what they have in common.

Although there are many departures from reality in the world of the islands, some of the most important include: the two suns (page 17), walking on water (page 17), people with wings (page 22), and a piano with bull’s legs (page 31). One of the themes of this world is adaptation. Ask students to identify all the cases in which humans, plants, and animals seem to have changed to better suit their environment (see pages 17 and 25 specifically).



- ◆ How do the people who live on the islands see the world, as compared to Philemon? Do they have different expectations (or senses of what its “normal,” “safe,” “okay”)? Why do you think that might be?

Have students take a look at pages 17-19 for an excellent example. Note that the hiker doesn’t understand what “drown” means (page 17) and he can’t understand why Philemon is frightened of the storm (page 19). Because they have different past experiences (the hiker has always seen water as a kind of safe flat surface), their world views are very different. This is paralleled in the interaction between Philemon and his father (page 13). What seems impossible to one may seem completely probably to another, simply based on experience. Ask students if they have encountered this phenomenon in their lives.

- ◆ Who defines the laws of “right” and “wrong” on the islands? Who defines those laws in our own reality?



Although we learn that certain laws were decreed from above (page 25), this happened long ago. The world of the islands (especially the letter “N”) is indeed very rule-bound (and with some very strange rules at that!), but there does not seem to be a single group of people enforcing these rules. Instead, it is the people themselves who police each other, recite the rules, and keep things in their place. Ask students if they have ever experienced this in their own lives... in school, in society, etc.. In our reality, who decides what’s “right” and “wrong” and where do those ideas come from?

- ◆ What is the role of the “absurd” in this book? What does that word mean to you? What do you think it means in art and literature? Can you think of other stories, films, or comics that are “absurd”?

In literary theory, absurdism describes a story about many many meaningless actions or events, meant as a critique of the very ideas of “good,” “bad,” “right,” “wrong,” “real,” or even “the truth.” Most absurdist pieces depict relatable central characters that are struggling to make sense of a philosophically absurd surrounding (Kafka, *Alice in Wonderland*, Nikolai Gogol, etc.). *The Philemon Adventures* are great examples of absurdist literature, and students may recognize similar themes at work in contemporary works such as *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*, *Family Guy*, *30 Rock*, and even *The Matrix*, or in the prose of Haruki Murakami, Kurt Vonnegut, and Christopher Moore.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4-5.9
Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics and patterns of events in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.



Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

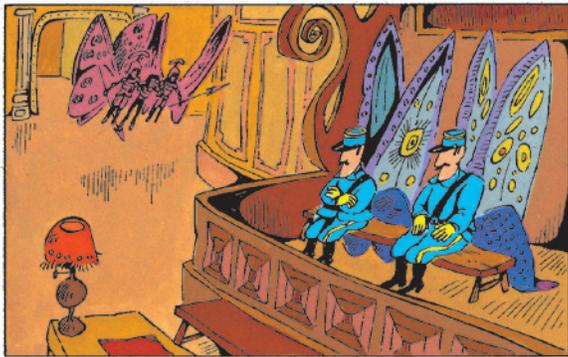
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Colors

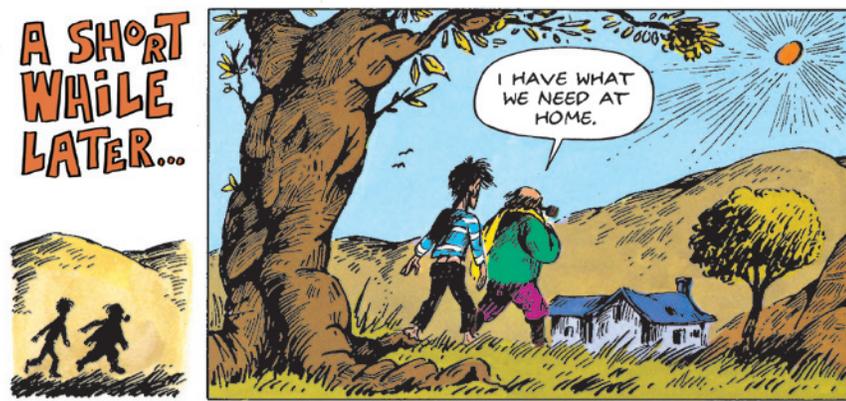


◆ Make a list of the dominant colors on each page spread. You will notice that the colors transition consistently as the book progresses. Why do you think the author/artist did this? Do the colors match the atmosphere of the story and environment?

Pages 11-14 are mostly in balanced in color (and are more “realistic” narratively). Pages 15-20 are purple and dark blue, pages 21—23 introduce brown and orange colors, pages 24-27 are extremely brown, and finally, after a brief transition back to blue, pages 30-36 are quite yellow (transitioning in the final moments to lavender before returning to “the real world”). Ask students to think about our cultural or personal associations with certain colors. Is there a connection between color and emotion? Some students may note that brown is often considered an “ugly” color, which lends the trial scene an immediate unpleasant atmosphere.

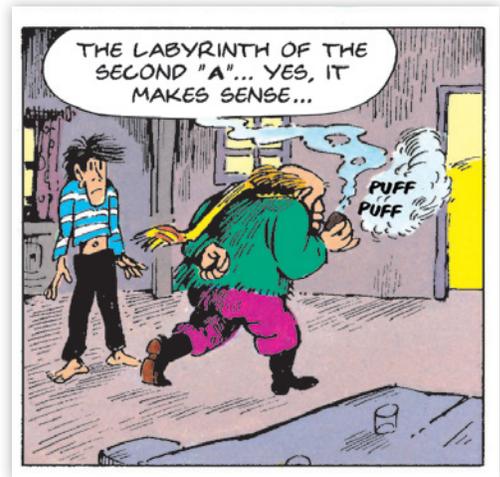
Panels, Word Balloons, and Lettering

◆ Look at the different types of panels used in the book. Find all the examples of panels (and especially panel borders) that depart from the standard format (thin black lined box). Why did the author choose a different design in these instances?



Students can find non-traditional borders on pages 14 (borderless), 16 (through a telescope), 21, 23, & 26 (borderless), 27 (a giant sound effect), 28, 29 & 37 (borderless), and 38 (pulling up the corner—see the question on this below). Each of these instances underscores a crucial transition (often the passage of time, or the movement between different realities). Visually, different-looking panels break up the story, and give readers a “interlude” from the intensity of the adventure.

- ◆ Look at the various kinds of word balloons in this book. Note that there are many different shapes, sizes, textures, etc. How do these different shapes and styles make you feel? How do they fit into the story? What do they tell you?



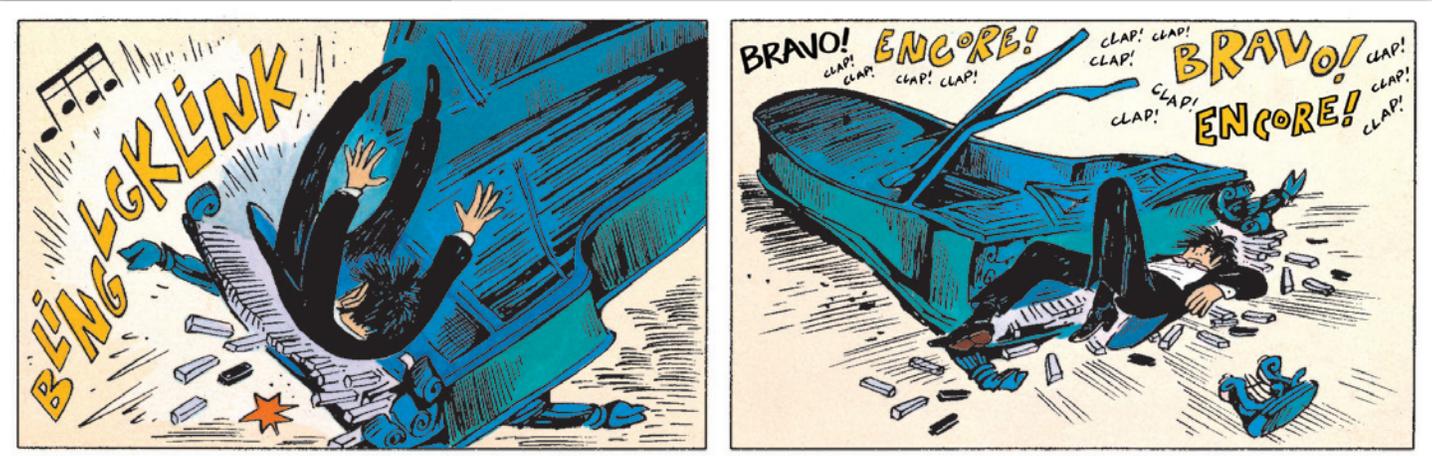
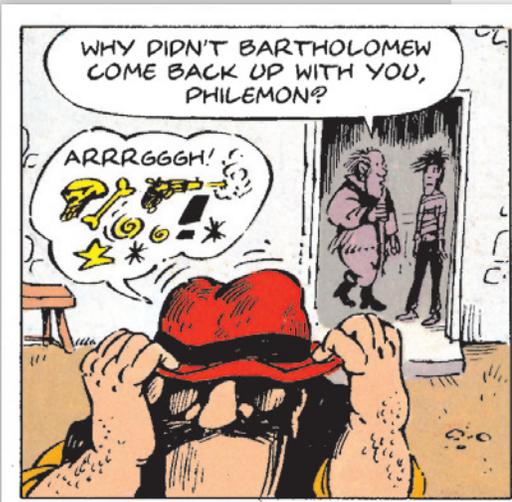
The best examples of this are on pages 11-14, where Uncle Felix's pipe smoke becomes the tail of his word balloon and on page 21 where the balloon disappears behind the rope of the hot air balloon. In addition to being rather playful, these designs help to integrate the text with the images (in a very literal way!).

- ◆ Find some different examples of the visual expressions enclosed in the word balloons, like cursing or explanatory images. Why do you think the artist chose to present language with pictures instead of words in those instances. In what ways do the pictures resonate with the illustrations?

Most of the cursing happens when Hector is speaking (pages 11-13). Students may also note the music notes that appear a character is singing (pages 18, 25). Ask students how these symbols make them feel. Are they more or less clear than what could be said in words? Do the symbols encourage the readers to use their imagination in a different way?

- ◆ Look at the sound effects. Note that they vary in both size and texture. Is there any particular one you like the best? Why? Note that some sound effects are included in the word balloons, and some are imposed over the image. Do you think the characters actually say these as words? Or are they were included for some other reason? If so, why?

Students may note that some of the sound effects represent spoken words ("Bravo" - page 32, "stop" - page 38) while others represent sounds ("pschrrttt" - page 12). These sound effects, together with the expressive question marks and stars, etc. (indicating pain or surprise), add large colorful signs that communicate to the reader that something important is happening.





◆ On page 15, the dialogue lettering gets very small when Philemon shrinks in size. How does this help to clarify the scene?

In the case of pages 15-16, the letters shrinking into nothingness help to illustrate Philemon’s physical transition (and his disappearance from the “real world.”

◆ Some cartoonists refer to expressive symbols or lines that emanate from a character’s head as “emanata.” What are some examples of “emanata” in this book, and how do you interpret them.

The best examples of this are on pages 23 (Philemon’s back), 27 (Philemon’s head), 35 (Bartholomew’s eye), and 37 (Philemon’s head). In these cases, the stars, circles, and asterisks indicate physical pain and emotional shock/confusion. Other good examples of emanata in the book include: bouncing lines (page 22), slurping lines (page 26), door slam lines (pages 36). Emanata are often used to try to communicate things that are difficult to communicate in a drawing (movement, emotion, texture).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

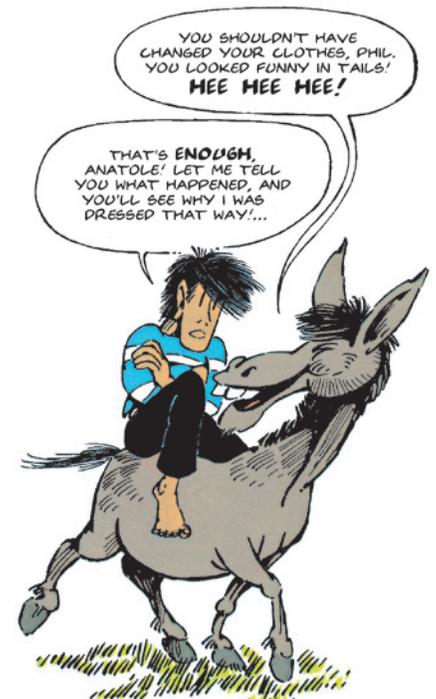
Characters

◆ Compare the faces of Hector and Uncle Felix (who are brothers). Can you find ways in which the artist highlights their relation? Look at their costumes. What do their costumes communicate about their characters?

Students may note that Felix and Hector have almost identical bodies and posture, similar face shapes, but slightly different features (and different hair). The real difference, however, lies in the way their hair and costumes are colored. Hector is shown in very “natural” colors (the same colors used on the farm itself—orange, red, blue, black). Felix, by contrast, is in very saturated and surreal colors reminiscent of the island world (the same green appears in the color of the ocean and the same violet appears in the color of the hot air balloon). These color choices mark Felix as unique and other-worldly.

◆ What does Philemon’s costuming (and the way it changes throughout the book) communicate about the character?

Philemon’s costume is very boyish and provincial. Students should note that he never wears shoes! On page 29, he is dressed in a tuxedo (with shoes) before his concert. Although this functions as a way of making fun of suits (presenting it as part of an inhumane torture, and having everyone on the farm laugh at it), it also marks Philemon’s transition to being more of a leader. Dressed in more adult clothes, Philemon saves the day at the end of the book—finding Bartholomew and bringing him home.



- ◆ Find all the “authority” figures in the book and describe their physical appearance. What do you think the author is trying to communicate with the costumes, colors, and design?

The best example of this are the costumed judge (pages 25-27) and the “Grand Judge” on the scroll (page 26). The latter appears to be some kind of prisoner wearing a clown wig. The former—with his wings, wig, hat, cloak, personal harpist, and giant train—is the epitome of excess. By costuming “authority” as a superficial buffoon, Fred pokes fun at systems of power. Ask students to identify “authorities” in their own lives. Could such characters be drawn and costumed in a way that would make their power seem ridiculous?



Setting

- ◆ On page Philemon is imprisoned inside a “zebra jail.” What do you make of the zebra jail? How does it fit within the logic of the island? What further information does it give about the environment?

The idea of a zebra jail is a whimsical joke about a zebra’s appearance (the black stripes resemble both bars and a prison uniform). It also underscores the linkage between the world of the islands and the world of paper, art, and comics. In an illustration, a zebra really is hollow, because the white does not have to be painted. Just like the letters on a map that become literal islands, the zebra jail may lead some readers to see the world of the islands as a kind of metaphor for the artistic imagination.

- ◆ At the end of the adventure, Philemon finds himself in a labyrinthine hallway full of doors. How does this scene make you feel? How does it fit in within the overall environment.

If the world of the islands is a metaphor for the artistic imagination, then the hallways beneath them represent the vast archive of creative possibility. Getting lost in the halls might be like struggling with writer’s block—overwhelmed with the endless possibilities.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

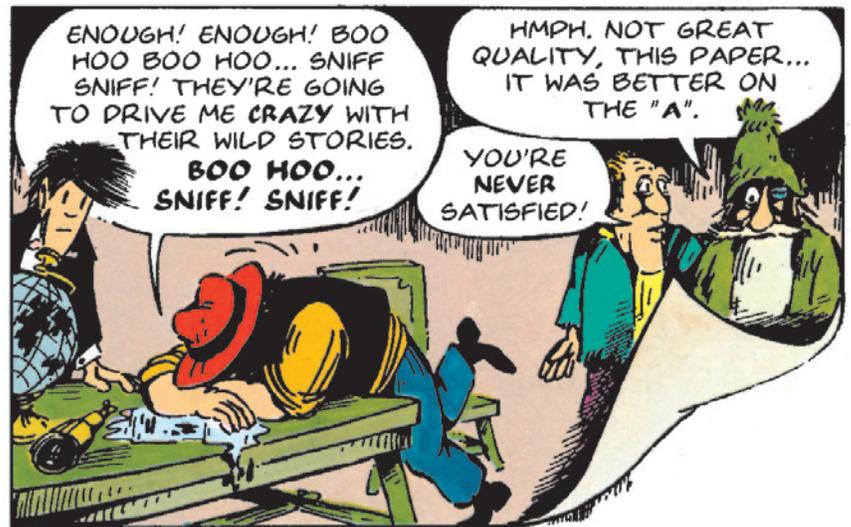
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.



◆ This book contains several different collages using old drawings and photographs. Find all instances of these. How do you interpret these moments? What further information do they give about the environment?

The best examples of these are on pages 25 and 35. In both cases, Fred adds absurd dialogue to a very serious illustration, completely changing the meaning. This accomplishes at least two important things: first, it makes fun of “traditional” or “educational” texts that might feature such historical illustrations (a classic absurdist parody of authority) and second, it stands as a testament to the comics imagination, which

uses the interplay between image and text to inscribe new meanings, challenge first impressions, and craft a dynamic story.



◆ On the final page of the story, Bartholomew comments on the paper of the book itself. How does this make you feel? Why do you think the author chose to do this?

In literary theory, scholars refer to something called “metafiction,” which occurs when a work of literature calls attention to the fact that it is an artifact—a book, a piece of fiction. Instances of metafiction can be traced as far back as *The Odyssey*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *Don Quixote*. Metafiction raises questions about the relationship between fiction and reality, and therefore perfectly complements the themes of *The Philemon Adventures*.

3

Further Research

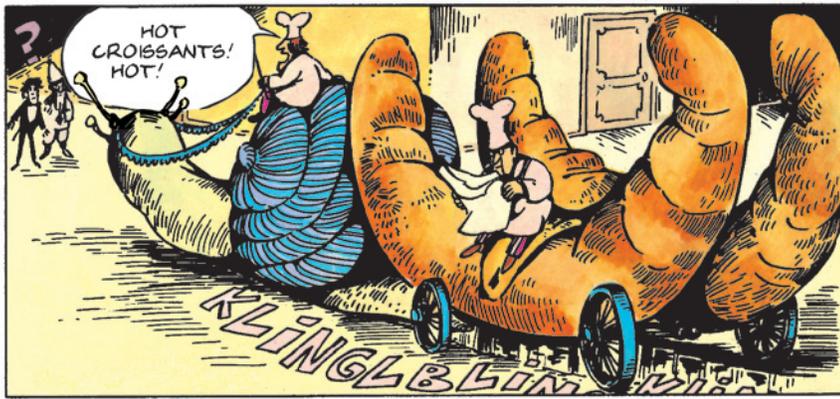
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9
Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7
Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



◆ Choose one of the characters that Philemon meets on his journey (the hiker, the balloonist, the judge, the zebra jail, the giant, the croissant delivery-man, etc.). Write a story about their life and adventures. Try to match the storytelling style of *The Wild Piano*.

◆ Writing Project: choose any of the questions from the Verbal or Visual Expression sections. Write a short piece explaining your answer clearly, using reasons and evidence from the text.

◆ Readers Theater: read various scenes aloud in class. Pay attention to their inflection. If possible, try out multiple roles and be sure that you adjust your performance accordingly. Try to incorporate visual information from the images into their performance. Have fun!

◆ Choose one of the entries in the index (pages 40-45) and expand on it with your own research project. Do you think that the author, Fred, is intentionally referencing these external works in the story? Why or why not? Why do authors often reference other works, or borrow ideas from other writers and artists? Does it enrich your reading experience to research these references? Explain why in a written report.

