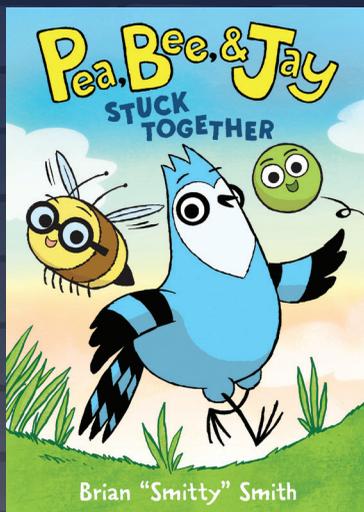
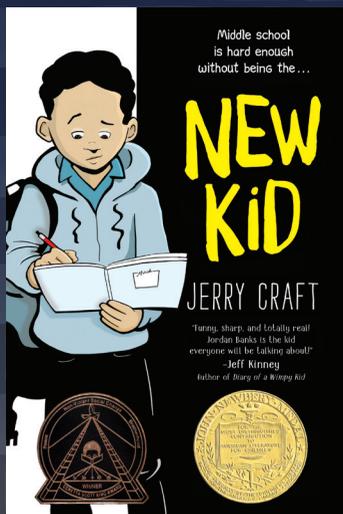


# TEACHING GRAPHIC NOVELS WITH

# HARPER alley

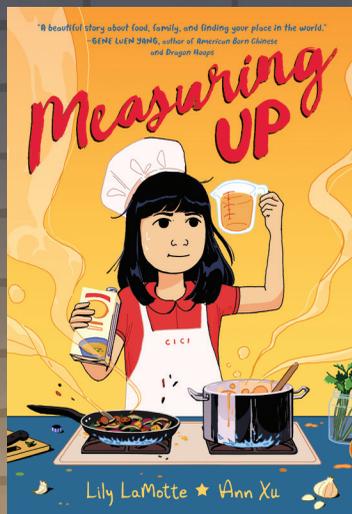
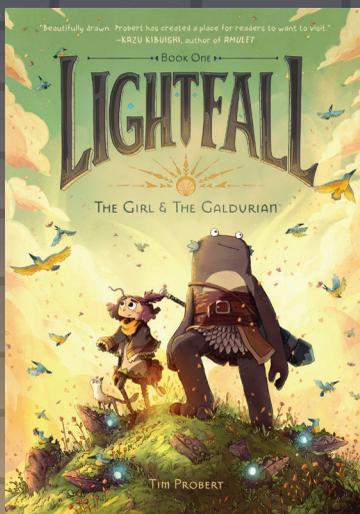
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## FEATURING:

NEW KID;  
PEA, BEE, & JAY;  
LIGHTFALL; and  
MEASURING UP

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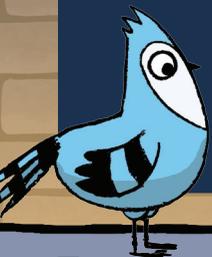
# GRAPHIC NOVELS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL LITERACY

## WHAT ARE GRAPHIC NOVELS?



Graphic novels are stories told through sequential art, a series of panels containing art and text that--when read in sequence--express narrative action. The purpose of this guide is to help you understand the power of visual literacy and how it can engage and grow your learners and readers through the use of graphic novel storytelling.

**VISUAL LITERACY:** As our world becomes more and more visually dependent, graphic novels offer young readers the tool of visual literacy. They ask readers to decode visual cues and decide what they mean. On top



of that, they offer reader engagement unlike any other format, and are the ideal medium to establish a lifelong love of reading.

## CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS:

Graphic novels are highly engaging! They compel readers to use their critical thinking skills by asking them to infer time and space from one panel to the next, and to interpret other details such as color, motion lines, and panel placement. Critical thinking skills such as these can be applied beyond graphic novels in areas such as science, politics, history, and much, much more.

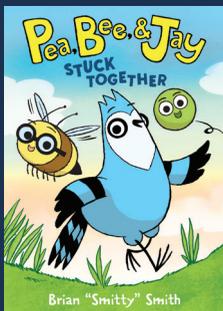


Frey, N., & Fisher, D. (2008). *Teaching Visual Literacy: Using Comic Books, Graphic Novels, Anime, Cartoons, and More to Develop Comprehension and Thinking Skills*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

Krashen, S. (2005). "The 'Decline' of Reading in America, Poverty, and Access to Books, and the Use of Comics in Encouraging Reading." *Teachers College Record*, 14.

Miller, S. (2005). *Developing and Promoting Graphic Novel Collections*. New York: Neal-Schuman.

# TEACHING GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR EARLY READERS



## PEA, BEE, & JAY by Brian "Smitty" Smith

In the first title of a series by Brian "Smitty" Smith in his children's author-illustrator debut, meet Pea, Bee, and Jay—three unlikely heroes who join forces to find their way back to the farm. **PEA, BEE, & JAY** is perfect for the youngest and newest graphic novel readers and fans of **NARWHAL AND JELLY**.

1. Pea goes on a journey that changes him. What makes him decide to go? What are some of the obstacles that he faces on the way? How does he deal with them? What surprises does he run into? How has he changed by the end? How does his mother react to his return?
2. Describe what Pea, Bee, and Jay are like, and how the three of them become friends. What causes Pea to roll off the farm? What about Bee surprised you? What is she avoiding? What makes Jay so excited about having new friends? Find facial expressions that show how much they like each other.
3. Find examples of humor in the story. Think about whether the pictures, the words, or both make it funny. When Jay sneaks up behind Pea and Bee in the last panel on p. 24, why is it funny? How about the scenes with the raspberries on pp. 36-38?
4. Talk about how lines in the pictures show movement and emotion, like the lines under Pea and those above his head in the third panel on p. 2. Look at pp. 48-49 and talk about the lines that show flying, falling, and bouncing. What do the stars show?
5. Graphic novels create sound effects with words such as **CRACK** on p. 3 and **CRASH** on p. 12. What aspects of the words give you the sense of a loud noise? Size? Font? Color? All three? Find other examples and talk about what the words look like and how that conveys sounds.

# TEACHING GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR MIDDLE GRADE



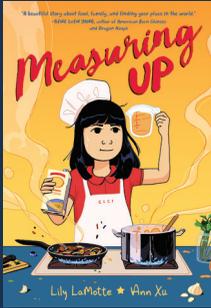
## LIGHTFALL by Tim Probert

For middle-grade readers who love sweeping worlds such as **STAR WARS** and **AMULET** comes Tim Probert's author-illustrator debut, **LIGHTFALL: THE GIRL & THE GALDURIAN**. In the first book of the Lightfall series, Bea and Cad are two unlikely friends who get swept up in a quest way above their pay grade to save their world from falling into eternal darkness.

1. During their journey together, Bea and Cad become friends. Compare their personalities and backgrounds. What do they have in common? How are they different? What are their strengths and weaknesses, and how do those matter on their journey? What helps them become friends? How does Bea change throughout the novel?
2. Light is central throughout the story. How is light important to the plot? What do you learn about light in their world? How is light part of Cad's background? What is the light that Bea carries with her? Talk about the epigraph from Helen Keller and how it relates to the story.
3. The framed panels, which vary in size, are arranged differently on different pages. Analyze the sequence from p. 104 to p. 117.

How do the size and layout of panels convey action and create drama? Compare the pace of those panels to the flow of panels for Cad's memories on pp. 123-125.
4. Pictures usually take the place of written description in graphic novels. Look at details of the house that Bea and Gramps share. Then find an outdoor scene full of details. What information do the details give you about the people and places? Is it more detail than a print novel would typically give?
5. Color in graphic novels conveys emotion, mood, and changes in setting. For example, compare the use of color on pages 43 and 44. Where else does color signal a different setting? Where does it convey mood? Analyze how color changes on p. 232. Find other examples where color and emotion are linked.

# TEACHING GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR MIDDLE GRADE



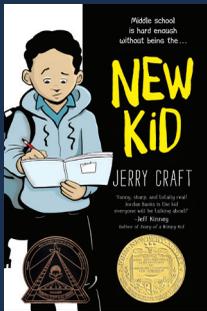
## MEASURING UP by Lily LaMotte and Ann Xu

While missing her grandmother back in Taiwan, Cici navigates the blending of her Taiwanese culture and her new American identity with heart, bravery, and cooking! For fans of **AMERICAN BORN CHINESE** and **ROLLER GIRL**, this heartwarming graphic novel proves food always has a way of bringing people together no matter the distance.

1. Describe Cici's relationship with her parents. Why are they so strict? How does it affect her social life? What are their hopes for her future? How does her vision for the future differ from theirs? When do these differences cause conflict? How is it resolved? Explain how Miranda has a similar problem.
2. In what ways is it hard for Cici to move to America? What are differences between her old and new situations? Identify times that she faces bias and ignorance about her background. How is moving to America easier than she expects? How does cooking help bridge the two worlds?
3. The deadline of A-má's birthday and the weekly contests make time a central element in the novel. How is time used to create suspense? How is the passage of time conveyed in captions, speech, and pictures? Analyze how time passes on pp. 44, 57, 160-61, and other pages, and how you know.
4. The novel uses different forms of the printed word to convey information and emotion: speech bubbles, captions, sound effects, footnotes, and labels for small pictures like ingredients. Find examples of each of these and analyze how they are used. Compare and contrast the uses to a traditional novel.
5. The varying perspective in panels conveys different emotions and information. Find close-ups of faces and compare them to panels that show entire figures. What do the facial expressions and body language show? Why use three close-ups on p. 11 or a view from above on p. 99? Analyze panels with other perspectives, too.

These questions were prepared by Kathleen Odean, former chair of the Newbery Committee and member of both Newbery and Caldecott committees.

# TEACHING GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR MIDDLE GRADE



## NEW KID by Jerry Craft

Winner of the 2020 Newbery Medal! Twelve-year-old Jordan starts his seventh-grade year at a new posh private school, where diversity is low and the struggle to fit in is real. Middle school's hard enough without all the unspoken rules and expectations that come with being the new kid! Discussing microaggressions, identity, and staying true to yourself, **NEW KID** is a must-read and must-teach!

1. When Jordan returns home on the first day of school, his friend Kirk is waiting for him, but things between the two of them get uncomfortable when Kirk sees Liam. Why do you think that happens? Later, Jordan tells his dad it was "kinda weird" (p. 50). What do you think Jordan is really feeling? How can you infer that in your reading?
2. Jordan's "Tips for Taking the Bus" (pp. 56-57) show Jordan changing his appearance over the course of his trip. Discuss the concept of "code switching". What do you notice in each frame? What is different about his clothing, body language, and the people around him? What do you think Jordan gains by code switching in this way? Can you think of a time where you felt you needed to "code switch"?
3. It takes a lot of courage for Jordan to stand up to say what really happened during the altercation between Drew and Andy in the cafeteria (Chapter 12). Why do you think Jordan saying something made others step up to report the truth, too?
4. When Ms. Rawle reads Jordan's sketchbook, she fails to understand how she is making her Black students feel unseen. Why do you think she gets defensive?
5. On Jordan's last day of school his parents comment on how different he looks, and try to figure out exactly what it is. ("Whatever it is, you look like a new kid." p. 245) Jordan doesn't see it at first, but in what ways do you think Jordan has grown and changed through the school year? In what ways does he stay the same?



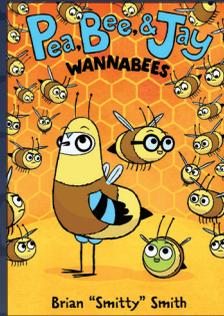
# MORE GRAPHIC NOVELS!

## EARLY READERS (Ages 6-10, Grades 1-5)



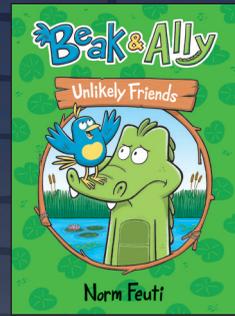
**Arlo & Pips:**  
**King of the Birds**  
by Elise Gravel

HC ISBN: 9780062982216  
\$12.99



**Pea, Bee, & Jay #2:**  
**Wannabees**  
by Brian "Smitty" Smith

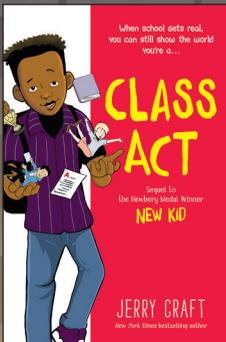
HC ISBN: 9780062981202  
\$12.99



**Beak & Ally #1:**  
**Unlikely Friends**  
by Norm Feuti

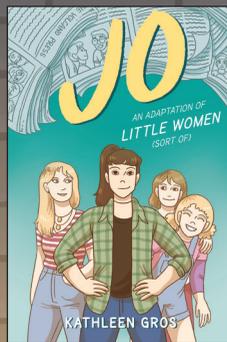
HC ISBN: 9780063021570  
\$12.99

## MIDDLE GRADE (Ages 8-12, Grades 3-7)



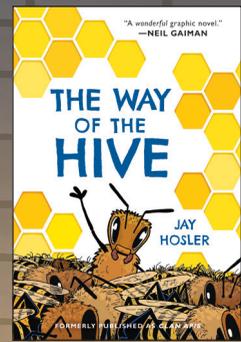
**Class Act**  
by Jerry Craft

HC ISBN: 9780062885517  
\$22.99



**Jo: An Adaptation of**  
**Little Women (Sort Of)**  
by Kathleen Gros

HC ISBN: 9780062875976  
\$22.99



**The Way of the Hive**  
by Jay Hosler

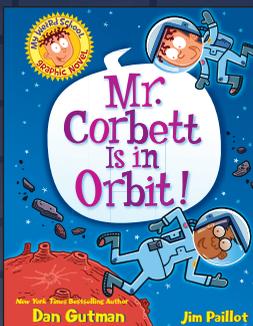
HC ISBN: 9780063007369  
\$21.99

# MORE GRAPHIC NOVELS!

## MIDDLE GRADE (Ages 8-12, Grades 3-7)



**Fantastic Tales of Nothing**  
by Alejandra Green  
and Fanny Rodriguez  
HC ISBN: 9780062839480  
\$22.99



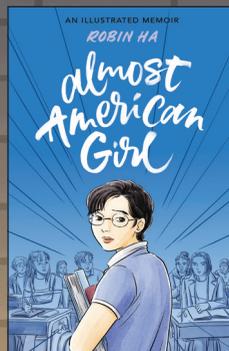
**My Weird School Graphic Novel: Mr. Corbett Is in Orbit!**  
by Dan Gutman  
HC ISBN: 9780062947628  
\$15.99



**Unsolved Case Files: Escape at 10,000 Feet**  
by Tom Sullivan  
HC ISBN: 9780062991522  
\$21.99



## TEEN (Age 13+, Grade 8 & up)



**Almost American Girl**  
by Robin Ha  
HC ISBN: 9780062685100  
\$22.99

# EXPERTS SAY:



Graphic novelists celebrate the art of storytelling by deftly employing vibrant imagery. Graphic novels are cinema. Graphic novels are about a wide variety of topics and transport young readers to a multitude of worlds—realistic or imaginary or somewhere in between.



8

**BRIAN WILSON**  
Children's Librarian  
Evanston Public Library  
Evanston, IL

Comics and graphic novels offer young readers a sense of engagement and ownership like no other format, and as any teacher will tell you, the most successful student is a student invested in his or her own education.

7

**JESSE KARP**  
Librarian  
LREI, Little Red School House and  
Elisabeth Irwin High School  
New York, NY



Graphic novels are highly engaging, compelling the readers to use their critical thinking skills to decode the illustrator's cues, tone, use of color, panel placement, and size, as well as focal points from scene to scene.



6

**TUAN NGUYEN**  
Co-founder of the  
TLA Maverick and Little Maverick  
Graphic Novel Reading List  
Flower Mound, TX

You can't teach visual literacy if you're only using prose in the classroom. That's where graphic novels come in! In addition to being compelling fiction and nonfiction stories, graphic novels help kids develop their visual literacy skills, something that is imperative in today's media-rich society.



2

**EVA VOLIN**  
Supervising Children's Librarian  
Alameda Free Library  
Alameda, CA

While the graphic novel format is ideal for those transitioning from picture books and those whose English skills are still developing, they are also ideal for ALL readers, even this rather old reader who enjoys a story well told and well illustrated.

7

**TERI LESESNE**  
Professor of Library Science  
Sam Houston State University  
Huntsville, TX



The enthusiasm and passion kids bring to reading graphic novels make comics the ideal medium to establish a lifelong love of reading.

4

**JAMES STURM**  
Co-founder and Director of  
The Center for Cartoon Studies  
White River Junction, VT



# 6 REASONS WHY STUDENTS SHOULD READ GRAPHIC NOVELS

1. They help develop visual literacy skills, which are absolutely necessary in today's media-rich society.
2. They help hook reluctant readers.
3. They encourage students to infer and think critically.
4. They are great for English language learners.
5. The American Library Association validated the format by awarding the highest honor for children's literature, the Newbery Medal.
6. They are REAL BOOKS and kids love them!

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