

GETTING TO KNOW GRAPHIC NOVELS

A GUIDE TO USING GRAPHIC NOVELS IN THE CLASSROOM



FEATURING THE
OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD
GRAPHIC NOVEL
OPPOSITE LAND!



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RECOMMENDED FOR

Middle–upper primary
(ages 8–11; years 3 to 5)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- Learning areas: English
- General capabilities: Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Visual Language
- Cross-curriculum priorities: N/A

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Learning about visual literacy
- Learning about graphic novels
- Learning about imaginative thinking and creativity

THEMES

- Friendship
- Individuality
- Bullying
- Diversity
- Courage
- Imaginative thinking

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9780143780816 (paperback); 9780143780809 (ebook)

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Illustrations by Charlotte Rose Hamlyn

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What is a graphic novel?

A graphic novel uses the interplay of text and illustrations in a comic-strip format to tell a story. Instead of relying on just text to construct a narrative, it uses graphical elements such as panels, frames, speech/thought balloons, etc. in a sequential way to create and evoke a story in a reader's mind.

What is the difference between a graphic novel and a comic book?

A graphic novel is a longer, more complex piece of text that usually covers the storyline in one book, whereas a comic book is a lot shorter and tells the story over many issues and/or volumes.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first graphic novel believed to have been published was an adaptation of a German stage play called *Lenardo and Blantine* in 1783. The 'graphic novel' was illustrated by Joseph Franz von Goetz and contained 160 frames.

Why are graphic novels important for learning?

A graphic novel, much like any book, is an important tool for cognitive learning and is rich in visual literacy. Readers actively participate in its construction by inferring what they see from the image and linking it to the corresponding text to understand the narrative developing from panel to panel, or picture to picture.

The order and organisation of the panels, images and text on the page determine the flow and movement of the story by giving the reader cues as to what their eyes should follow next. For instance, the reader will first see the panel, then the text linked to the main image, and from there get a sense of the scene as they continue to move on to the following panels. The setting and environment in a graphic novel is established through images, likewise with character expressions, which are all conveyed visually as opposed to word descriptions in traditional straight-text novels.

In this way, the more 'image-based' aesthetic of the graphic novel can make it a less intimidating read for beginner and ESL readers. Instead of having a wall of text, the story is broken up into images, with or without short pieces of text, which play a significant role in shaping the narrative. It allows readers to understand 'words through pictures'.



DID YOU KNOW?

The term 'graphic novel' gained popularity in the late 1970s, and was introduced by fan historian Richard Kyle.

Graphic novels can be considered an important bridge for greater reading development and exploration of ideas, because confidence gained from this medium could propel the reluctant reader to seek out more textually challenging books. And because graphic novels cover a range of genres from fiction (e.g. superhero stories and manga) to non-fiction, such as autobiographies, memoirs, true stories and information books (e.g. *Maus*, *Persepolis*, *Smile*, *March*, Papercutz' Dinosaur series), the breadth of topics for study and immersion stretch far and beyond.

The age of visual literacy, in which society is becoming more and more steeped in visual media through the use of technological devices like mobile phones and tablets, shows us that reading behaviour has developed to take into account the powerful role of images in meaning and interpretation. Gina Gagliano of First Second, a Pan Macmillan imprint focusing solely on graphic novels for children, comments that 'Visual literacy is an essential part of today's curriculum. Kids need to learn to interact with images because it's a large part of how we communicate today.' (<http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/71237-graphic-novels-go-back-to-school.html>)

DID YOU KNOW?

The world's largest comic book collection is housed in the Library of Congress in Washington DC in the US.

The popularity of fusion or 'hybrid' text in series like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Tom Gates*, which mixes text and illustrations to form a unified narrative, offer graphic novels a commercial platform from which to grow.

Online resources:

- **Creating Multimodal Texts:** <https://creatingmultimodaltxts.com/comics/>
- **Graphic Novels in the Classroom:** <http://courseweb.ischool.illinois.edu/~gray21/GraphicNovels/>
- **The Truth About Graphic Novels:** <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v32n2/fletcherspear.pdf>
- **Get Graphic (Graphical resources for teachers):** <http://www.getgraphic.org/teachers.php>
- **How to Teach Graphic Novels:** <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/nov/30/how-to-teach-graphic-novels>
- **A Teacher Roundtable:** <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/teaching-graphic-novels/>



HOW TO READ A GRAPHIC NOVEL

Left to right

Layout



Up to down



Frame



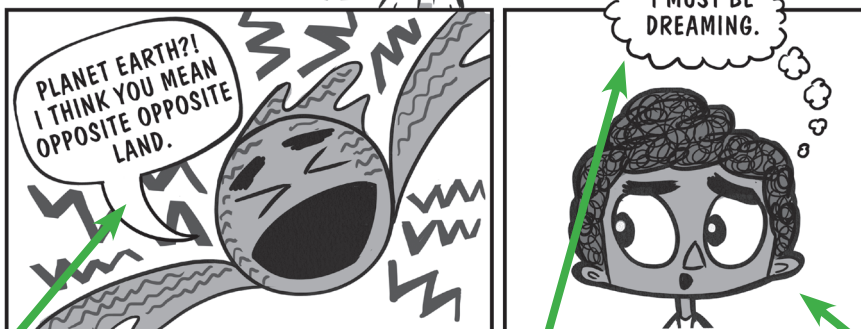
Gutter



Special effects sounds



Speech bubble



Thought bubble

Close-up



GRAPHIC NOVEL TERMS

- panel** the box or segment that contains the image and text
- frame** the border that surrounds and contains the panel
- gutter** the space that lies between panels
- bleed** when an image goes beyond the borders of the page
- graphic weight** the heaviness or intensity of a line or block of shading for visual focus. The bolder the graphic weight, the greater the visual focus, making that element more salient in the scene.
- caption** a box or section of text that gives details on the background and setting of the scene. It sits separately to speech and thought bubbles, often at the top or bottom of the panel.
- speech bubble** this contains the dialogue spoken by different characters within a scene. It's usually enclosed in a bubble or another shape; otherwise, can stand on its own, close to the speaker.
- thought bubble** similar to the speech bubble, this contains the internal dialogue of a character and is usually shaped like a cloud, coming from the character's head
- special effects sounds** words that give a sense of sound on the page (e.g. BANG! THUMP!). To heighten their impact, the words are either bolded or have a special graphical treatment to make it stand out on the page.
- layout** the configuration of all the elements on the page; the way in which the frame, panels, speech bubbles, etc. are arranged to tell the narrative
- close-up** an angle that zooms into an image, like a character's face, to allow for closer view. This technique is sometimes employed to convey a feeling of intimacy between the reader and character, such as when a character reveals their thoughts or revelations.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES – GRAPHIC NOVELS

1. Find one copy each of a picture book, novel and graphic novel. Flick through and study the pages. How is each medium different or similar to the other? Write your answers down on the chart below.

	TEXT (e.g. How does the text appear? Does it change for different parts of the story?)	LAYOUT (e.g. How are the elements on the page arranged? Is it all text or are there some images? How many pages are there?)	ILLUSTRATIONS (e.g. Do the pages have any illustrations or not?)	GRAPHICAL ELEMENTS (e.g. Are there any graphical elements for text breaks or chapter icons?)
PICTURE BOOK				
NOVEL				
GRAPHIC NOVEL				



2. Unlike the traditional novel, graphic novels rely on 'visual' sound effects, like BANG! STOMP!, which illustrate the word so that it can be graphically recognised. For example, BANG! can be drawn in big, bold letters that stand out prominently on the panel. Look at the words below and see how you can illustrate these sound effects to suit the noises they create.

SOUND	WORD AS GRAPHIC
'Shhhhh!' she hissed to the man as the movie played.	
KERBLAMMO! The factory exploded into smithereens.	
<i>Bounce! Bounce! Bounce!</i> went the ball.	



ABOUT OPPOSITE LAND

Welcome to Opposite Land – where socks wear feet, broccoli is meat, behind is ahead, and people poop from their head!

After the worst day ever, Steve discovers a strange book written upside down and back to front. That night, when its words become mysteriously clear and Steve begins to read them, she's transported to the topsy-turvy world in the book – Opposite Land. In this extraordinarily peculiar place, roads float in mid-air, people live in giant snail shells and monsters are made of pasta!

But all that will change once Emperor Never gets his way and destroys Opposite Land for good. When a flying cabbage called Sanjiv reveals that Steve is the only one who can defeat the emperor, it's up to Steve to face her fears and save the world.



Can Steve help restore Opposite Land to its former glory and find her way back home?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlotte Rose Hamlyn is a Sydney-based storyteller and an award-winning screenwriter for cartoons like *Beat Bugs*, *Blinky Bill*, *Tashi* and *Guess How Much I Love You?*. She's also a television presenter for Channel 7's art and craft show *Get Arty*, voices cartoon characters, including Marcia the Mouse in *Blinky Bill: The Movie*, and is a retired professional fairy. Earlier in her career, Charlotte made short films about spiders with human-phobias and worked for Academy Award-winning director George Miller on *Happy Feet 2*. She grew up in Adelaide, Australia, but now lives in Sydney, where she spends her time writing and drawing in a colourful house full of art, plants and lots of pencils. She likes sequins, and pineapple on pizza.



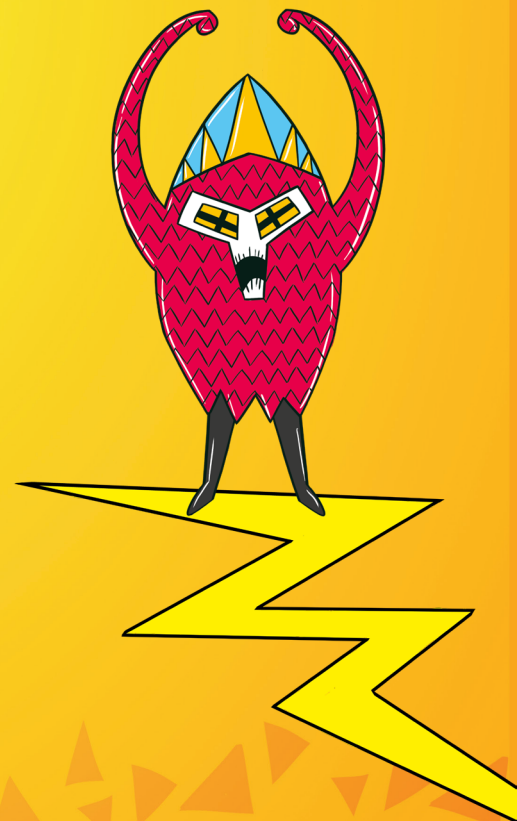
VISUAL LITERACY IN *OPPOSITE LAND*

In *Opposite Land*, the author uses the graphic-novel medium to illustrate Steve's adventure to a completely upside-down world. Each page contains a sequence of **panels**, which are framed or unframed, to show how the narrative develops and unfolds. The uniqueness of this world is characterised by the bizarre characters and environment, which are made up of various designs, patterns, lines and symbols. These patterns and lines also create a sense of **movement**, by guiding the reader's attention to the mood and action on the page. It gives them a **reading path** from which they can navigate through the other visual elements of the scene towards the main focus. For instance, in Chapter 1, the bold lines and stripy background point towards Steve as she gets trapped in her school chair – indicating not only the movement of the chair as it snaps her in, but visually conveying the unwanted attention she receives from her classmates sitting next to her.

The author also employs **visualisation** by establishing a connection between the text and image to make the meaning or sentiment stronger. We see this in the pasta monsters, where each character's costume and features are made up of their namesake, like Macaroni Medusa, who has macaroni-shaped eyeballs and nose, and a macaroni-patterned dress. Further to this, **symbols** are used as a way to identify how a character is feeling (e.g. Steve surrounded by love hearts when she eats ice-cream, her favourite food) and what they're doing (musical notes whenever the pasta monsters play their instruments).

The use of **frames**, along with the variety of shapes, lines and patterns, play a big role in communicating emotion in a more abstract way. At the start of the story, when Steve gets angry at Mum and marches into her bedroom (Chapter 1), the sequence is shattered into seven shards of action, starting with Steve grabbing the book and ending with her slamming the door to her bedroom. The jagged framing of these mini panels resonate with Steve's frustrations and visually pre-empt the smashed window on the next panel.

Another way to portray the action and energy of the scene is through the use of **sound effects**, where text is given a graphical treatment. Sound effects are visualised and are drawn according to the nature and behaviour of the word. An example is the drawn-out 'Roooar' coming from The Never in Chapter 14. It emerges from the top of the



panel and follows the shape of The Never, haunting Steve as she runs in fear. The size and appearance of the sound effect combined with the image creates a mood and atmosphere characteristic of the scene. Further to this, **breakout words** within the dialogue is bolded to help amplify the tone of speech, as well as adds more emphasis. The author also uses **rhyming verse** to showcase the whimsicality and playfulness of Opposite Land (*'Pigs can fly, and flies just fall; in fact, a fly can't fly at all'*), while also helping younger readers understand common sounds and common letters.



One of the most powerful techniques the author uses in her story is the **facial expressions** of her characters to convey different emotions in developing a relationship with the reader. We see Steve angry, sad, happy, scared and excited, and it is through these expressions that younger readers are able to get an immediate sense of, and empathise with, how our hero is feeling. By fostering this important connection between reader and character, the reader is able to immerse themselves deeper into the story, allowing them to relate to the protagonist's strengths and vulnerabilities.

THEMES

Friendship

Steve starts off her journey in Opposite Land alone but meets many interesting characters along the way who become her good friends. When the time comes to fight Emperor Never, Steve and her friends band together to overthrow him. In one scene where Steve is close to being defeated by Emperor Never's powers, Sanjiv yells out that 'She's not alone' and, with the rest of the crew, goes behind Steve to help prop her up so that she could aim her magical beam against the emperor, symbolising their need to help and support their friend. From the beginning, Sanjiv also recognised Steve's potential as the powerful princess destined to save them, when Steve herself couldn't see this in herself. Sanjiv's faith in her abilities – to be brave, clever and magical – is what allowed Steve's self-confidence to grow.

Individuality

At the end of the story, one of the main lessons Steve learns is the importance of standing up for what you believe in. Steve realises that she did wrong by Miao by rejecting her friendship in favour of the bullies' demands, evidenced by her epiphany in The Never when she announces 'I already





did the wrong thing by a new friend today. Now I'm going to do what's right.' When Steve returns to the real world, she reunites with Miao as they go to tap-dancing class together – an activity the bullies claim are for 'babies'. By befriending Miao and continuing to pursue tap-dancing, which the other students consider unpopular, Steve stays true to who she is and what she loves, regardless of anyone's thoughts about her.

Bullying

Steve becomes the target of the playground bullies at the first day of her new school, when they find out her name is 'a boy's name'. Later, Steve feels guilty for being peer-pressured into allowing herself to be called 'Stephanie', and walking away from Miao. The tension follows her at home, where Steve becomes frustrated at her mum for not getting her way. In the story, the bullying Steve experiences at school fills her with self-doubt and makes her question whether she can truly be herself.

Diversity

Opposite Land contains a motley crew of characters, like Sanjiv, a flying cabbage; Papercut, a pirate whose army, the Origarmy, are made of paper; Prince Sparkling, a prince who wears sparkly dresses; and Fairy Codmother, an upside-down mermaid who celebrates being ugly. The diversity in *Opposite Land* is expressed not just in the odd, random miscellany of the world, but through its characters who are completely different to each other in shape, size and style. In some ways, the heterogeneity of *Opposite Land* reflects the complex diversity of modern society, which is a huge melting pot of different cultures. The coming-together of everyone in a group hug after Emperor Never's defeat, with the perspective looking out from the middle of the circle, creates a sense of unity and comradeship in their shared victory despite the characters' obvious physical differences.

Courage

Before her journey to *Opposite Land*, Steve was fearful of her new school and doubted her capabilities – while Sanjiv insisted that she was the princess, Steve constantly denied this and struggled to see how she would be brave enough to live up to such expectations. But with each mission, Steve began to uncover the hero within, finding her voice to sing for the stars to direct the ship, and teaching the upside-down mermaids to be able to walk. She jumps out in front of Sanjiv to protect him from the pasta monsters and in the end confronts her fears: 'I don't



run from my fears, I stand before them and say – I’m staying right here until you go away.’ Above all things, Steve’s time in *Opposite Land* has emboldened her to face what it is that scares her, a lesson that translates back to the real world when she makes up with Miao at tap-dancing class and stays true to herself.

Imaginative thinking

Opposite Land is a place where everything is the opposite to reality and leaves plenty to the imagination. Cabbages can fly, mountains are made of ice-cream (which people poop out of their heads) and it rains from the ground. The story flips and has fun with the notion of opposites, where it seems almost anything is possible and there are no concrete rules: starfish live in the sky and give light, everyone lives in houses made of snail shells (with the snails still attached!). The plurality of opposites accommodates all types of interpretations, and in this way can be seen as a platform for children to exercise their imagination to its fullest.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES – OPPOSITE LAND

1. Match the characters to their *Opposite Land* opposites below:

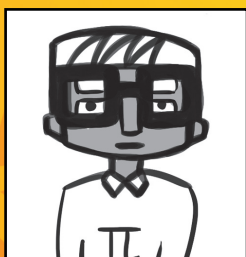
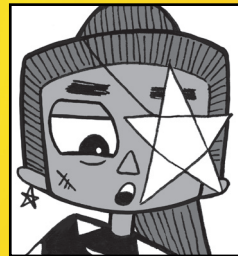
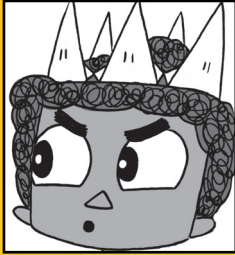
Steve and Emperor Never

Mum and Papercut the Pirate

Ms Codmother to Fairy Codmother

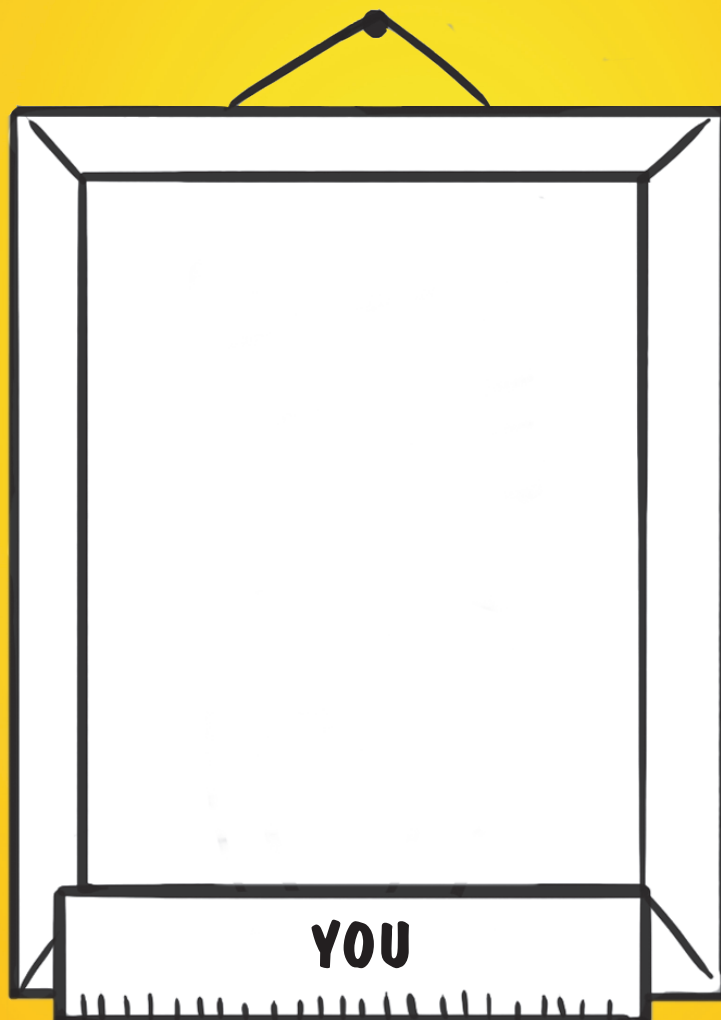
Ms Mac to Macaroni Medusa

Mr Spark to Prince Sparkling



2. In Chapter 2, open to the scene where Steve reads the words in the book and her room begins to melt and fall apart. The author uses a lot of lines and shapes to create movement on the page as Steve is spun and flipped upside down into Opposite Land. How many different lines and shapes can you identify? Make a list and share with your classmates.

3. In *Opposite Land*, Steve meets the opposite of her mother in Papercut the Pirate, and later, her own opposite, Emperor Never. Imagine you had an opposite version of you in Opposite Land. How would he or she look? Draw your 'Opposite Land' self-portrait in the frame below and take turns introducing your character to the rest of your class. What makes your character 'opposite' to you?



DRAW YOUR OWN COMIC

WITH CHARLOTTE ROSE HAMLYN

A **COMIC** IS A SERIES OF PICTURES THAT TELL A STORY. EACH PICTURE IS CALLED A **PANEL**. YOU CAN TELL A STORY WITH JUST ONE PANEL OR WITH AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.



YOU CAN ALSO ADD DIALOGUE BY WRITING IT IN A BUBBLE THAT HAS A TAIL POINTING TO THE CHARACTER SPEAKING. THESE ARE CALLED **SPEECH BUBBLES**.



THAT'S A SPEECH BUBBLE SPEAKING!

THINGS YOU'LL NEED: PAPER, A PEN OR PENCIL, A RULER AND **YOUR IMAGINATION**.

★ **STEP 1:** DRAW AT LEAST THREE BOXES. THESE WILL BE YOUR PANELS.



★ **STEP 2:** THINK OF A SIMPLE STORY YOU COULD TELL WITH THREE OR MORE PICTURES, ONE THAT HAS A BEGINNING, A MIDDLE AND AN END.

FOR EXAMPLE: IN THE FIRST PANEL BELOW, STEVE IS EXCITED TO FIND SOME ICE-CREAM AND IN THE NEXT TWO PANELS, SHE EATS THE ICE-CREAM...



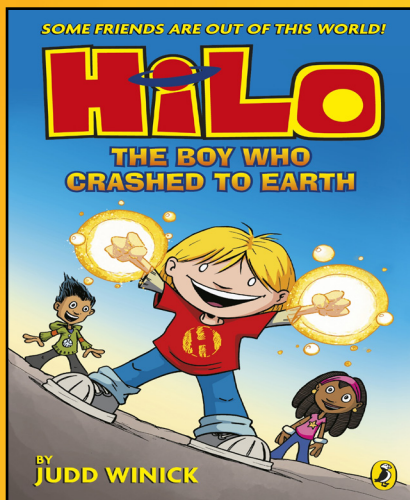
IN THE FINAL PANEL, SANJIV TELLS STEVE PEOPLE POOP ICE-CREAM... GROSS!



★ **STEP 3:** GET DRAWING!



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



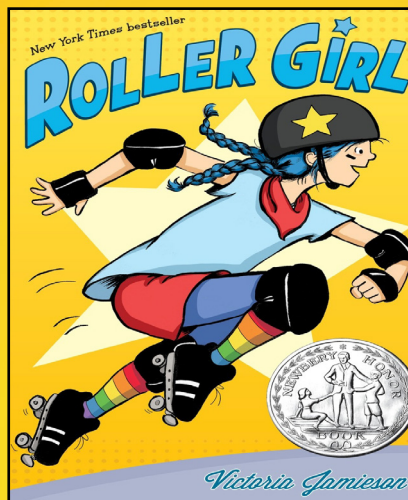
Hilo: The Boy Who Crashed to Earth

By Judd Winick

D.J. and his friend Gina are totally normal kids. Until a mysterious boy comes crashing down from the sky and nearly blows up their club house!

Hilo doesn't know where he came from, or what he's doing on Earth (or why going to school in only your underwear is a bad idea!), but he's starting to think he might not be the only alien to have crash-landed on our planet.

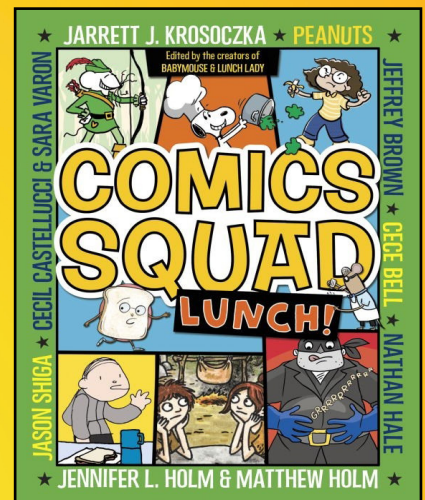
Can the trio unlock the secrets of his past? Can Hilo survive a day at school? And are D.J. and Gina ready to save the world?



Roller Girl

By Victoria Jamieson

For most of her twelve years, Astrid has done everything with her best friend, Nicole. But after Astrid falls in love with roller derby and signs up for derby camp, Nicole decides to go to dance camp instead. And so begins the most difficult summer of Astrid's life as she struggles to keep up with the older girls at camp, hang on to the friend she feels slipping away, and cautiously embark on a new friendship. As the end of summer nears and her first roller derby bout (and junior high!) draws closer, Astrid realises that maybe she is strong enough to handle the bout, a lost friendship, and middle school . . . in short, strong enough to be a roller girl.



Comics Squad series

By Various

Calling all kidz! Do you like comics? Do you like laughing till milk comes out of your nose?! Look no further – do we have the book for you! All your favorite comic characters are right here in one book, including the Peanuts gang, Babymouse and Lunch Lady. This all-star tribute to classic Sunday comics includes eight sidesplitting, action-packed stories about every kid's favorite subject – LUNCH!



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
<i>Opposite Land</i>	Charlotte Rose Hamlyn	9780143780816		\$14.99		
				TOTAL		

PLEASE NOTE THAT PRICES ARE RECOMMENDED RETAIL ONLY AND MAY HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE TIME OF PRINTING.
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