

Short & Skinny



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Recommended Grades: 5-8

Subjects/Courses: Cross Curriculum

ERAC Review

DESCRIPTION

Grade seven student Mark is short and skinny and tired of being bullied and teased about it so he decides to spend the summer vacation becoming more muscular. Then he sees the new Star Wars movie and decides to make a spoof of it, so his summer is packed full of writing, filming, choreographing, and editing his movie as well as changing his physique. This graphic novel memoir for grades 5-8 deals with body image, bullying, resilience, and identity, and can be used for units on body image, graphic novels, or media arts, as well as a cross-curricular unit on ELA and digital media.

CURRICULUM FIT

Does the resource support BC curriculum? Extensively

This product supports the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum:

- Communication
- Creative Thinking
- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

Comments:

This graphic novel supports the Language Arts 5-8 Big Idea of making connections to others and the world, and the Curricular Competency of identifying the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts in texts. It also supports the ADST 6-8 module on media arts and the design process. It can also be used to discuss the Career Education 5-8 Big Idea of exploring strengths and identities, as well as the importance of family and community support for problem solving and decision making. As well, it covers the PHE Big Ideas of healthy choices, and learning about similarities and differences.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gender Roles, Identity & Sexual Orientation:	This book is set in the 1970s, and Mark's parents have traditional gender roles. He is trying hard to fit into the rigid male role of being tall and muscular.
Violence:	Mark is punched in the hallway at school, and chased on his bike by bullies.
Safety:	Mark is pursued by bullies while on his bike, has to jump a large ditch on his bike, and barely makes the landing. He and his friends use firecrackers for the explosion scenes in his movie, even though his mom told him not to. He set them off for special effects while she isn't home. Mark also sends away for products "guaranteed" to build muscles in 30 days. Some of these products include powders to drink that may or may not be safe for a child.

Social Considerations Comments:

Do the social considerations support, rather than detract from, student learning? Extensively

The social considerations depict the struggle Mark is going through, and are necessary to show his conflicts. Because it is set in the 1970s, gender roles, and what it meant to be a "man" are different than they are today. It demonstrates the culture of the time the book is set in.

GENERAL CONTENT

Content:

Is the resource engaging?	Extensively
Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade?	Extensively
Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade?	Extensively
Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings?	Extensively

Audience:

Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively
Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking?	Extensively
Is the level of detail appropriate?	Extensively
Is the content of particular interest to male students?	Extensively
Is the content of particular interest to female students?	Moderately
Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively
Are the visuals appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively

Comments:

This book shows the struggles Mark is going through, which many middle school students can relate to, such as body image, choosing a career, personal relationships, and bullying in and out of school. It is centred on a boy who loves Star Wars, so it will appeal to males (or anyone who is a Star Wars Fan).

TECHNICAL DESIGN

Does the resource make effective use of the medium?	Extensively
Is the location of illustrations appropriate?	Extensively
Is the resource easy to use?	Extensively
Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform?	Extensively
Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum?	Extensively

Comments:

This graphic novel uses several different types of graphic organizers to convey meaning and highlight different characters and events. The location of illustrations and dialogue is appropriate. It is easy to read.

PRINT NOVEL

Does the text show insight into the complexity of the human condition?	Extensively
Does the text broaden students' experiences and understanding?	Extensively
To what degree is this text stylistically rich?	Moderately

Plot description:

Mark is a seventh grade student who is determined to change the fact he is short and skinny. He is tormented by bullies and unkind remarks from classmates and friends. He is also desperate to win the affections of Lisa Gorman. When he goes to see the new Star Wars movie, he is inspired to make a spoof of it called "Star Bores". Over the summer he tries hard to become more muscular AND write, film, choreograph, and edit his movie. Although he never succeeds in building much muscle, he does develop the confidence to show his movie. This is an autobiographical story, and the author did go on to become a movie animator, but sadly never stopped being short and skinny.

Related Comments:

This book clearly shows the body image struggles that Mark is facing, which many students can make a connection to. It broadens their understanding of the processes involved in creating a movie. The dialogue is engaging and descriptive, but straightforward.

Descriptors:

Genre:

Autobiography

Literary Highlights:

Complex conflict

Rich Characterization

Type:

Graphic Novel

Visual Highlights:

Effective use of visual elements

Compelling images

Clear sequence of images

Visual convey character, emotions and attitudes

Visuals convey mood

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

Comments:

This book could be used for a unit on body image as an example of the ways boys experience body issues. This could be used for a Language Arts unit on graphic novels. It would also go well with a unit on media arts and movie creation, or a cross-curricular unit including Language Arts and digital media.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:

At intended grade level(s)