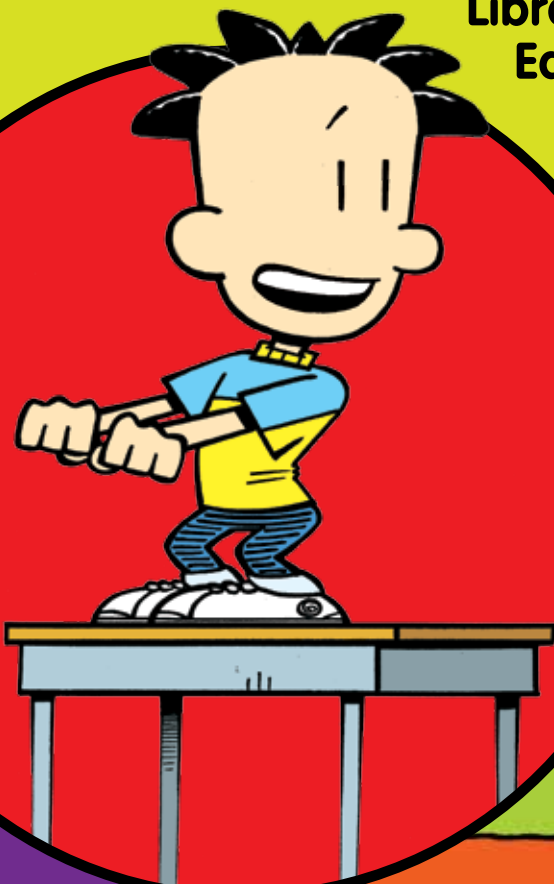


Teaching with Comics and Illustrated Novels

A Guide for Parents,
Librarians, and
Educators



Comics Come of Age

Comics have gone from “scourge of the classroom” to legitimate teaching tools. They are the focus of research studies at major universities. They win prestigious literary awards: the Pulitzer Prize (*Maus*, by Art Spiegelman), the Printz Award (*American Born Chinese*, by Gene Luen Yang) and the Geisel Award (*Benny and Penny in the Big No-No!*, by Geoffrey Hayes) with a few National Book Award finalists for good measure (*Stitches*, by David Small, and *American Born Chinese...* again). They form the centerpiece of an entire pavilion at the American Library Association’s annual conference. They even rate their very own *New York Times* best-seller list. Most important, the new Common Core State Standards (www.corestandards.org) now explicitly recommend their use in the classroom.

Comics are coming to your classroom, library, and home—if they aren’t there already—and this guide will help you make the most of them!

Comic Books, Graphic Novels, and Illustrated Novels... Oh My!

Let’s begin by defining our terms. Comic books, graphic

novels, and illustrated novels all belong to the larger medium known as “sequential art” or just plain “comics.” The term “sequential art” was originated by pioneering cartoonist Will Eisner and has been described as a series of images arranged in a sequence to convey information. This expansive definition encompasses an enormous variety of storytelling techniques, going all the way back to hieroglyphics and cave drawings.

However with the modern proliferation of the sequential art medium, definitions of its various formats have become a bit more specific:

- **Comic Strips** — Short form sequential art, often humorous and typically found in newspapers or as online “web comics.”
- **Comic Books** — Sequential art in pamphlet or magazine format.
- **Graphic Novels** — Long-form sequential art akin to a novel in length and narrative complexity. The term is applied to works of both fiction and nonfiction.
- **Illustrated Novels** — A hybrid of sequential art and prose. Differ from picture books in that the images and text are wholly interdependent rather than merely complementary. Examples include the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (by Jeff Kinney) and *Big Nate* (by Lincoln Peirce) series.

Words + Pictures = A Game Changer for the Classroom

Kids Like Them! They Really, REALLY Like Them!

When given a choice, kids—especially boys and reluctant readers—often gravitate toward the comic format over traditional text. Illustrated novels such as *Big Nate* and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* dominate the sales charts with graphic novels such as Scholastic’s *Geronimo Stilton* and *Drama* (by Raina Telgemeier)

following close behind. Comic books and graphic novels are among the most popular kids’ ebook categories as well.

This trend holds equally true in libraries. Librarians have found that **once a graphic novel collection reaches a certain critical mass, it often becomes the highest circulating collection**

in the library, with the average graphic novel out-circulating all but the most popular YA prose titles. “As a librarian you cannot get more bang for your buck than graphic novels,” says Christian Zabriskie, New York City librarian and founder of Urban Librarians Unite. “They circulate like mad, reach across generations, and drive circulation wherever they go.”

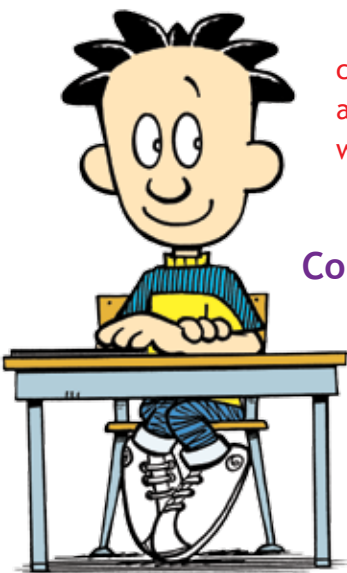
“As a librarian you cannot get more bang for your buck than graphic novels.”

CHRISTIAN ZABRISKIE, NEW YORK CITY LIBRARIAN



Desmond Pucket Makes Monster Magic, © 2013 Mark Tatulli

Text prepared by Dr. Katie Monnin, associate professor of literacy at the University of North Florida, and Josh Elder, president and founder of the educational nonprofit Reading With Pictures.



Big Nate From the Top, © 2010 Lincoln Peirce



Mighty Alice Goes Round and Round: A Cul de Sac Book, © 2013 Richard Thompson

Studies Say: “Comics Are Great!”

Kids may love comics, but is that necessarily a good thing? A relatively new but rapidly growing body of clinical research points to yes.

A 2011 engagement/ efficacy study by professors Jay Hosler (Juniata College) and K.B. Boomer (Bucknell University) found a statistically significant improvement in students’ content knowledge regarding evolution and their attitudes toward biology in general after the science graphic novel *Optical Allusions* was introduced into their classroom.

In 2012, business professors Jeremy

“Our study combats naysayers who accuse graphic works of dumbing down education.”

PROFESSOR JEREMY SHORT,
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

Short and Aaron McKenny of the University of Oklahoma found that the comic format improves content retention rates compared to traditional textbook materials. The researchers gave two groups of students two different books—one a graphic novel and the

other a traditional textbook—on the same subject. **The students using the graphic novel showed a significant improvement in content retention over the students using the traditional textbook.** “Our study combats naysayers who accuse graphic works of dumbing down education,” says Professor Short. “Not only do we find that graphic



Alice, © Richard Thompson



Jasotron, © 2012 Bill Amend



Big Nate Makes the Grade, © 2012 Lincoln Peirce

novels are on par with traditional textbooks in regard to key learning outcomes—they are actually superior in some cases!”

Reaching Reluctant Readers

While comics can improve educational outcomes for *all* students, the format has proven **especially effective in meeting the needs of struggling readers, special-needs students, and English-language learners.**

Because these students rely largely on visual literacies to build their schema for print-text reading and writing, comics are the ideal tool for developing them into better and more enthusiastic readers.

The format plays to their strengths, thereby helping level the classroom playing field in a meaningful way.

Comics Can Save Your Life

Stepping outside the classroom, we find that educational comics are all around us. From furniture assembly instructions to airplane safety manuals, comics play a largely invisible but utterly essential role in our everyday lives, especially in cases of (literal) life and death. Case in point:

From furniture assembly instructions to airplane safety manuals, comics play a largely invisible but utterly essential role in our everyday lives...

the aforementioned Will Eisner spent a substantial portion of his career working for the U.S. Army developing comic-format maintenance and safety manuals.

Military efficiency studies found that Eisner’s comics outperformed traditional manuals while countless G.I.s personally credited

Eisner and his comics for helping them make it back home alive and in one piece from warzones around the world.

Making Comics Work in Your Classroom

Comics and the Common Core

The Common Core Standards are purposefully designed to be format/medium agnostic. All classroom materials, including comics, are referred to simply as “texts,” an explicit admission that all media formats—when used properly—have their place in the twenty-first-century classroom. On this new media stage, print-text literacy and image literacy are costars, sharing the spotlight in equal measure.

“In my early years of teaching middle school, comic books were on the back reading shelf for the kids who had finished their ‘real reading,’” reminisces pedagogical expert and author Lynette Brent. “Though with a wide variety of topics from classic literature to standards-based content, today’s graphic novels aren’t ‘extra reading,’ but are instead a powerful core to best-practices teaching.”

Writing With Pictures

Literacy scholars are already calling our

era “the greatest communication revolution of all time,” surpassing even the fifteenth century, which saw the invention of the printing press. Modern technology enables images to be integrated with text in unprecedented ways, including

everything from emoticons to PowerPoint. Modern writers must be fluent in both words and images in order to effectively communicate. Working with the comic format enables students to develop visual and textual literacy proficiencies at the same time.

Content Area Education with Comics

Comics have been shown to improve reader engagement while enhancing both comprehension and retention. This holds true no matter the content area: math, science, social studies, or language arts. Comics have incredible potential as a learning multiplier for students everywhere. But that potential will only be realized with the help of parents, teachers, and librarians who understand the value of the comic format and know how to use it to its fullest potential.

“...today’s graphic novels aren’t ‘extra reading,’ but are instead a powerful core to best-practices teaching.”

LYNETTE BRENT, PEDAGOGICAL
EXPERT AND AUTHOR

RESOURCES

Manga High, by Dr. Michael Bitz (Harvard Education Press)

When Commas Meet Kryptonite, by Dr. Michael Bitz (Teacher’s College)

Dr. Bitz’s two texts give proven advice for teachers and librarians who want to implement comic books and graphic novels into the curriculum, with a special emphasis on writing and composition.

Building Literacy Connections with Graphic Novels, by Dr. James Carter (NCTE)

The first informational and educational text to solely address teaching comics and graphic novels in secondary settings; it remains highly relevant today.

Comics and Sequential Art, by Will Eisner (Poorhouse Press)

Graphic Storytelling, by Will Eisner (Poorhouse Press)

Along with coining the terms “graphic novel” and “sequential art,” Eisner also wrote these two seminal texts on comics aesthetics, pedagogy, and process.

Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art, by Scott McCloud (HarperCollins)

Presented in comic format, this is the foundational text for defining and—as the title says—understanding comics.

A Parent’s Guide to the Best Kids’ Comics: Choosing Titles Your Children Will Love, by Snow Wildsmith and Scott Robins (Krause Publications)

Two librarians review over 100 graphic novels with another 750 additional title recommendations for children from pre-kindergarten to eighth grade.

Teaching Graphic Novels, by Dr. Katie Monnin (Maupin House)

Teaching Early Reader Comics and Graphic Novels, by Dr. Katie Monnin (Maupin House)

Teaching Content Area Graphic Novels, by Dr. Katie Monnin (Maupin House)
Teaching Reading Comprehension with Graphic Texts, by Dr. Katie Monnin (Maupin House/ Capstone)

Dr. Monnin’s texts cover teaching with comic books and graphic novels in various K-12 settings. Additional resources, including copy-friendly handouts for home, classroom and library use can be found at: <http://maupinhouse.com/index.php/authors/katie-monnin.html>.

ONLINE RESOURCES

No Flying, No Tights, by Robin Brenner

www.noflyingnotights.com

A rich resource full of comic book and graphic novel reviews.

The Secret Origin of Good Readers, by Robyn A. Hill

www.night-flight.com/secretorigin/

Provides a variety of resources for anyone interested in comic books and/or graphic novels: reviews, links, articles, and downloadable lesson plans.

SANE (Sequential Art and Narrative in Education) Journal

www.sanejournal.net

Research-based resources on how to teach comics and graphic novels to K-12 students.

Reading with Pictures

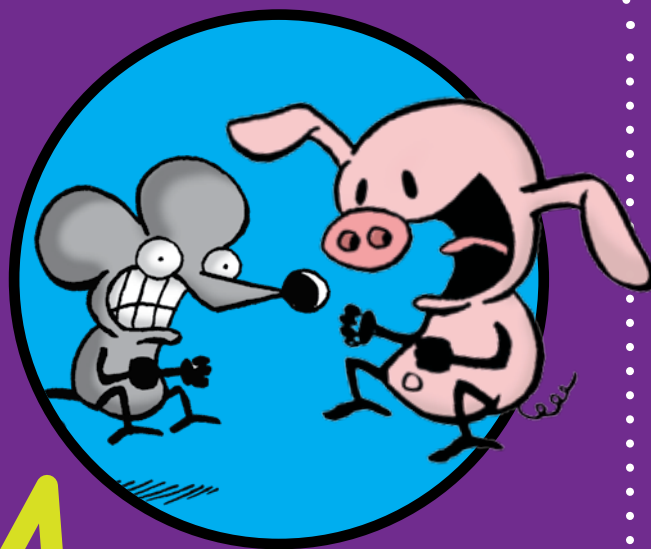
www.readingwithpictures.org

A nonprofit organization dedicated to getting comics into schools and getting school into comics. Contains resources for educators, academics and librarians—including comprehensive collections of lesson plans, research papers, recommended reading lists, and much more.



Beginning Pearls,
© 2013 Stephan Pastis





amp!

COMICS for kids

Catalog of Titles
Through Spring 2014



ampkids.com

DESMOND PUCKET

By MARK TATULLI



Meet **DESMOND PUCKET**—
professor of frightology and
master of monsters.

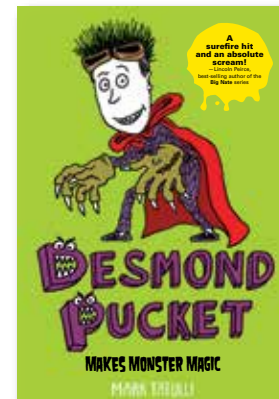
One day he will be famous for his special-effects wizardry, but for now, Desmond is just trying to make it through sixth grade at Cloverfield Memorial Junior High.

Desmond's scary monster effects—which he tests on a live (and unsuspecting) audience—have him in hot water with the school's disciplinary officer, Mr. Needles. Now Desmond has to stay prank-free or he won't be able to go on the class trip to ride the Mountain Full of Monsters. Can he do it?

Desmond Pucket Makes Monster Magic by internationally syndicated cartoonist Mark Tatulli tells the story of a kid trying to play by the rules, yet stay true to who he is. Desmond is a compelling character, full of ideas and charisma; kids will identify with his struggles and delight in his ingenious pranks. The illustrated novel format is perfect for those looking for the next book after *Big Nate*.

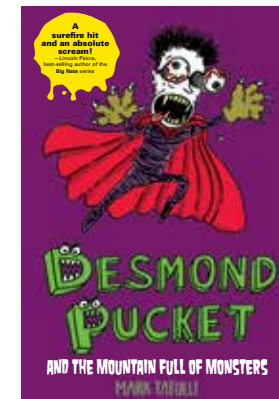
With *Desmond's Notes for Making Monster Magic*, kids can create their own special effects, including:

- Monster sound effects
- Desmond's Perfect Ghost
- Desmond's Phantom Knocker



Desmond Pucket Makes Monster Magic
ISBN: 978-1-4494-3548-6
Hardcover, 5½ x 8, 240 pages
\$13.99 USA / \$16.99 CAN

ON SALE OCTOBER 1, 2013



ON SALE APRIL 29, 2014

**Desmond Pucket and the
Mountain Full of Monsters**
ISBN: 978-1-4494-3549-3
Hardcover, 5½ x 8, 240 pages
\$13.99 USA / \$16.99 CAN

*Cover Art Not Final

Lesson Springboards:

- 1 Desmond creates monsters and special effects using anything he can find. How could you use everyday objects to make a costume of your favorite monster?
- 2 If you had a slumber party to scare, how would you do it? Draw a diagram like Desmond's to create the ultimate party fright.

Full lesson plans available
at ampkids.com

**MORE
TO EXPLORE!**

New York Times Best-Selling Series

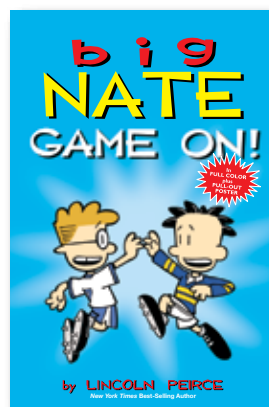
big NATE



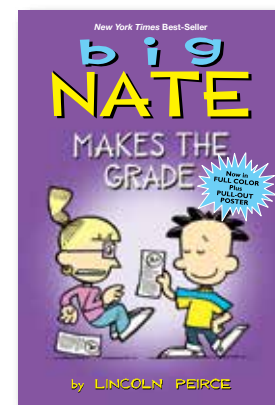
by LINCOLN PEIRCE

More stories from Big Nate, the self-described genius and sixth-grade Renaissance Man. Equipped with only a #2 pencil and the unshakable belief that he is #1, Nate fights a daily battle against overzealous teachers, undercooked cafeteria food, and all-around conventionality.

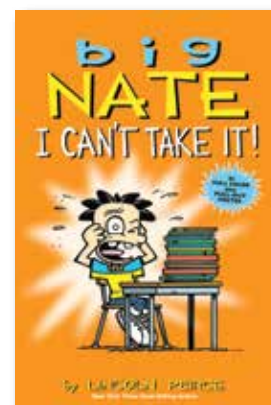
ON SALE
OCTOBER 15, 2013



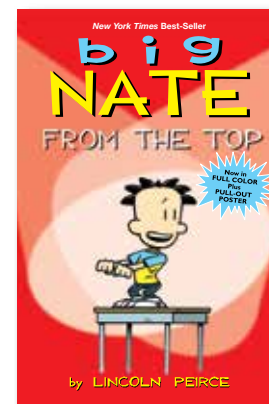
Big Nate: Game On!
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2777-1
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



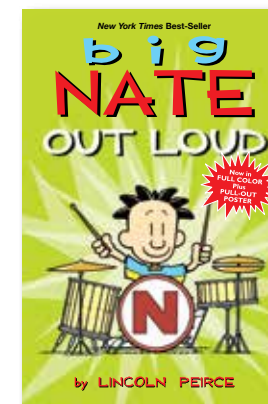
Big Nate Makes the Grade
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2566-1
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



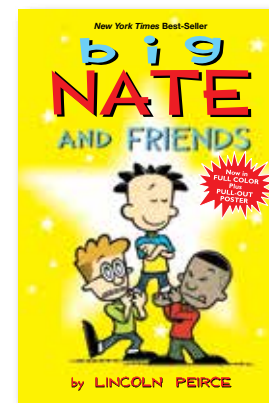
Big Nate: I Can't Take It!
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2937-9
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



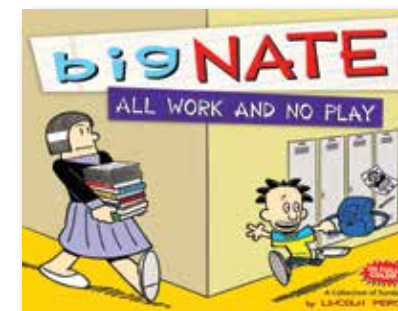
Big Nate From the Top
ISBN: 978-1-4494-0232-7
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



Big Nate Out Loud
ISBN: 978-1-4494-0718-6
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



Big Nate and Friends
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2043-7
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



Big Nate All Work and No Play
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2567-8
Paperback, 9 x 7, 144 pages
\$14.99 USA / \$16.99 CAN



Lesson Springboards:

- 1 What would be most handy to find in the clutter in Nate's locker? What would help you through a typical school day the most?
- 2 Nate loves to play sports. What are some sports words (goal, score, pass) he uses and what do they mean?

Full lesson plans available
at ampkids.com

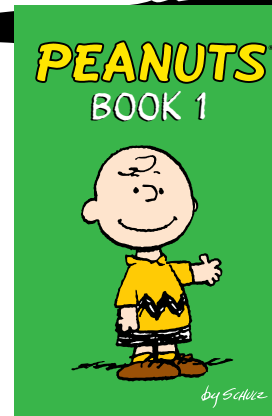
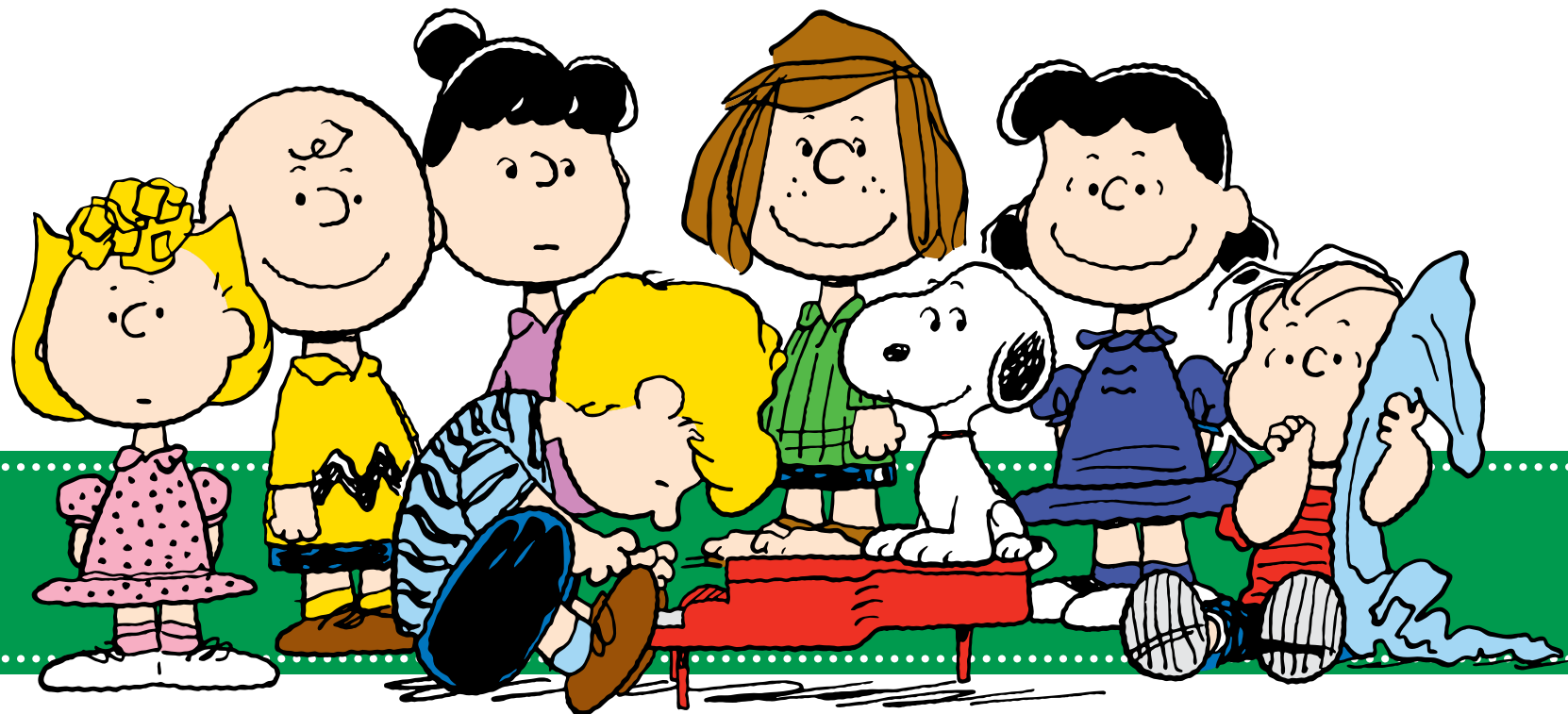
New York Times best-selling author LINCOLN PEIRCE began cartooning in the sixth grade and has been drawing the *Big Nate* comic strip for 20 years. Peirce taught high school in New York City and created several animated pilots for Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon. He lives in Portland, Maine, with his family.

JUST ANNOUNCED! PEANUTS®

Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* is one of the most timeless and beloved comic strips ever. Now AMP! helps carry on that legacy with new collections of *Peanuts* classics focused around topics sure to resonate with middle-grade readers, such as friendship, sports, pets, and, of course, unrequited love.

First published in 1950, the classic *Peanuts* strip now appears in more than 2,200 newspapers in 75 countries in 25 languages. Phrases such as "security blanket" and "good grief," which originated in the *Peanuts* world, are now part of the global vernacular, and images of Charles Schulz's classic characters—Charlie Brown kicking the football, Lucy leaning over Schroeder's piano—are now universally recognized.

Together these books will introduce a new generation of kids to the lovable cast in time for the new animated *Peanuts* movie, which hits theaters in 2015!



ON SALE SEPTEMBER 24, 2013

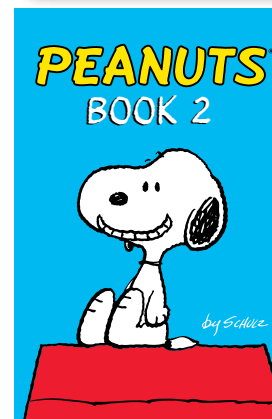
Peanuts Book One

ISBN: 978-1-4494-4970-4

Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages, full color

\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN

*Cover Art Not Final



ON SALE SEPTEMBER 2, 2014

Peanuts Book Two

ISBN: 978-1-4494-4971-1

Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages, full color

\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN

*Cover Art Not Final

CHARLES SCHULZ is a legend. He was the hand and heart behind 50 years of *Peanuts*, which featured one of the world's most beloved and recognizable cast of cartoon characters, until his death in 2000.

www.snoopy.com
PEANUTS © 2013 Peanuts Worldwide, LLC. All rights reserved.

MORE
TO EXPLORE!

A special section
features fun, facts
and projects, so kids can:

- Learn about World War II flying aces
- Write their own dialogue for *Peanuts* cartoons

Lesson Springboards:

- 1 Did you ever wonder what's inside of Snoopy's doghouse? Draw a picture of what you think it looks like.
- 2 Draw the cartoon version of yourself. Do you look like one of the *Peanuts* gang?

Full lesson plans available
at ampkids.com



Written by
Elizabeth Rusch
Illustrated by
Mike Lawrence

Muddy Max



ON SALE FEBRUARY 25, 2014

Muddy Max: The Mystery of Marsh Creek
ISBN: 978-1-4494-3561-5
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$12.99 CAN

*Cover Art Not Final

Max may be the cleanest middle-school kid in the world—his mysterious, neat-freak parents make certain of that. But when he finds himself face-down in a murky puddle, muddy from head to toe, he makes a discovery any filthy child would envy: Mud gives him super powers. With help from his friends, tech-savvy Patrick and spunky Irie, Max uses his new abilities to uncover the secrets of mud-covered Marsh Creek.

ELIZABETH RUSCH is an award-winning author of numerous fiction and nonfiction books for young readers. She teaches writing at the Attic Institute and lives in Portland, Oregon.

MIKE LAWRENCE is an award-winning illustrator whose work has been published by Dark Horse Comics. Mike also lives in Portland, Oregon with his wife, two sons, and too many pets.

A special section features fun, mud-related facts and projects, so kids can:

- Learn about all the gross stuff in mud
- Conduct hands-on soil/mud experiments
- Make a house out of mud

**MORE
TO EXPLORE!**

Lesson Springboards:

- 1 Do you wish you had a super power? Draw a picture of what your super self would look like.
- 2 Max may have super powers, but his friends have certain skills (computers, for example) that help him out of trouble. What impressive skills do your friends have? Do they come in handy?

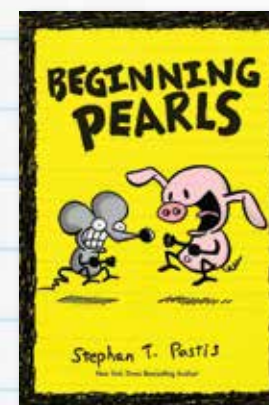
Full lesson plans available
at ampkids.com

Pearls Before Swine

by Stephan Pastis

From the
author of the
New York Times
bestseller
Timmy Failure

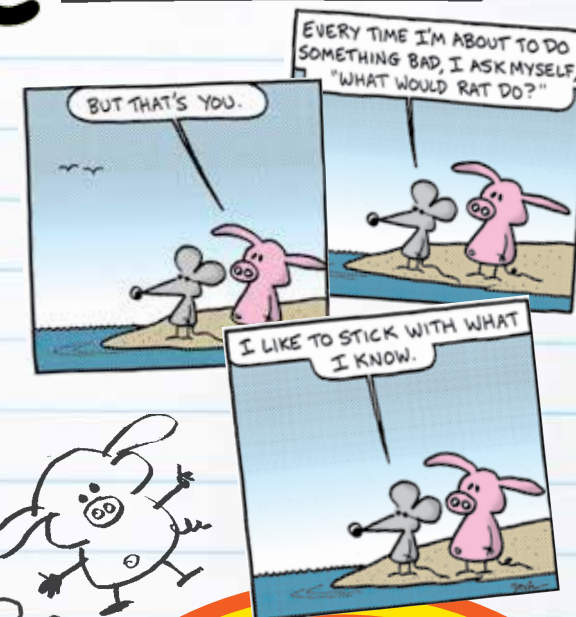
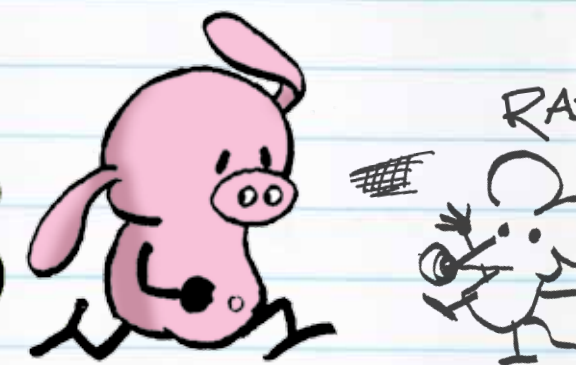
Now younger readers can enjoy the sharp wit and outlandish puns of the *New York Times* best-selling comic strip *Pearls Before Swine*! Twice named the Best Comic Strip of the Year by the National Cartoonists Society, the hilarious tale of arrogant, know-it-all Rat and naïve, slow-witted Pig is told through a collection of strips curated with the middle-grade reader in mind.



ON SALE JULY 9, 2013

Beginning Pearls
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2303-2
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN

STEPHAN PASTIS is a former lawyer who turned his doodling into a career in comics. His daily strip *Pearls Before Swine* appears in more than 600 newspapers worldwide and was twice named Best Comic Strip of the Year by the National Cartoonists Society. He currently lives in the Bay area with his wife and two children.



Lesson Springboards:

- 1 Help Zebra out by writing a letter to the Zeeba Zeeba Eata crocodiles convincing them not to eat their striped neighbor.
- 2 Which character are you most similar to? Are you smart like Goat? Loud like Rat? Carefree like the crocodiles?

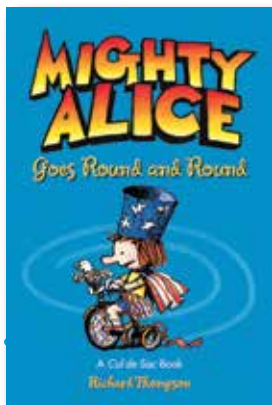
Full lesson plans available
at ampkids.com





by Richard Thompson

Award-winning cartoonist Richard Thompson's quirky world of *Cul de Sac* chronicles the absurdly wonderful adventures of the Otterloop family as their suburban life unfolds with simple joys, tiny infractions, and wonderful moments of gentle bliss. Endorsed by *Calvin and Hobbes* creator Bill Watterson, *Cul de Sac* comes to life for a new audience in this collection made just for kids.



ON SALE JULY 9, 2013

Mighty Alice Goes Round and Round: A Cul de Sac Book
ISBN: 978-1-4494-3721-3
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN

RICHARD THOMPSON is an accomplished cartoonist and illustrator. He received the National Cartoonists Society's Reuben Award for Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year in 2011, as well as the Magazine and Book Illustration Award. *Cul de Sac* also won the Harvey Award for Best Syndicated Strip in 2012. Thompson lives in Arlington, Virginia.

Lesson Springboards:

- 1 Dill is always expanding his "neighborhood watch service." What are some ways you could improve *your* neighborhood? Cleaning up trash? Helping out a neighbor?
- 2 Make a diorama of yourself. Include things like drawings and toys that represent who you are and what you enjoy.

Full lesson plans available at ampkids.com

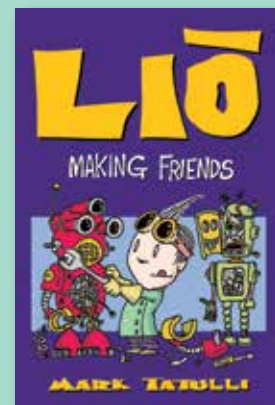
Liō

BY **MARK TATULLI**

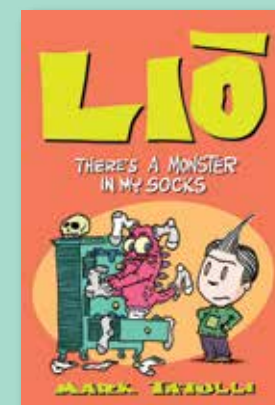
The world of Liō is filled with the extraordinary—monsters under the bed, wild reptile pets, robot inventions, weird science—but it's all commonplace for the most uncommon young man in this popular pantomime cartoon strip from the creator of *Desmond Pucket Makes Monster Magic*.



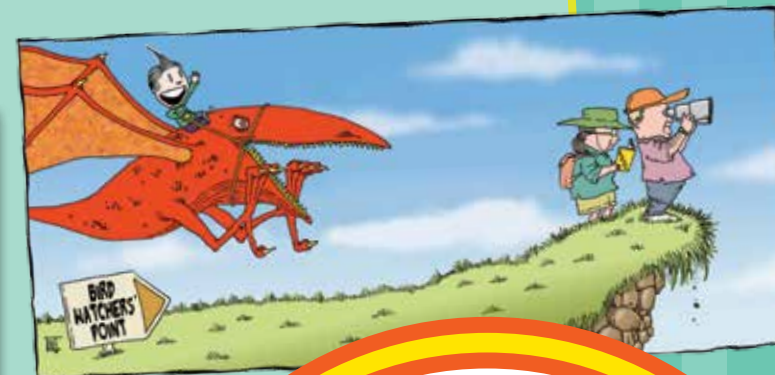
ON SALE MAY 14, 2013



Liō: Making Friends
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2558-6
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



Liō: There's a Monster in My Socks
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2304-9
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



Lesson Springboards:

- 1 How would you look if you woke up as a zombie? Would you look scary? Goofy? Gross? Draw the zombified you.
- 2 Make an everyday object like a lamp or a couch scary by drawing it as a monster. Add fangs, drool, spikes, and anything else to make it as frightening as possible.

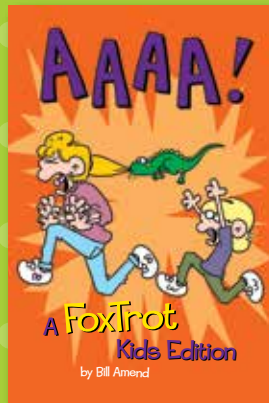
Full lesson plans available at ampkids.com

First known for his *Heart of the City* comic strip, **MARK TATULLI** began *Liō* as an outlet for his dark and twisted humor. Author of the upcoming illustrated novel *Desmond Pucket Makes Monster Magic* and winner of three Emmy Awards for his television work, the successful animator and producer lives in New Jersey with his wife and three children.

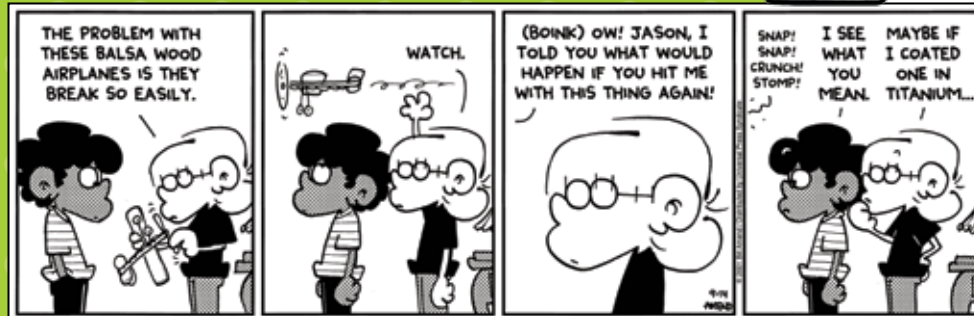
FoxTrot

by Bill Amend

Appearing in over 500 newspapers worldwide, Bill Amend's *FoxTrot* skillfully depicts suburban living at its funniest through the cavortings of the Fox family. Oldest brother Peter, boy-crazy Paige, and geeky Jason, along with parents Roger and Andy, comment on aspects of popular culture, including movies, social media, and the latest electronic innovations.



AAAA! A FoxTrot Kids Edition
ISBN: 978-1-4494-2305-6
Paperback, 6 x 9, 224 pages
\$9.99 USA / \$11.99 CAN



Lesson Springboards:

- 1 If you could have any animal as a pet, which would you choose? How would the pet fit into your family? Would it cause trouble like Quincy the iguana?
- 2 In this book Jason tries to time travel. If you could travel through time, where would you go? Past or future?

Full lesson plans available
at ampkids.com

ampkids.com

A graduate of Amherst College with a degree in physics, **BILL AMEND** worked for a brief time in the animation/film industry before creating *FoxTrot*, which was syndicated in 1998. Named Outstanding Cartoonist of the Year by the National Cartoonists Society in 2007, Bill lives in the Midwest with his wife and children.