

VIMINY CROWE'S COMIC BOOK



TEACHER'S GUIDE

ALIGNS WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS



TUNDRA BOOKS



MARTHE JOCELYN & RICHARD SCRIMGER
WITH COMICS BY CLAUDIA DÁVILA

Dear Educator

Viminy Crowe's Comic Book is a collaboration amongst three creative adventurers: Marthe Jocelyn, Richard Scrimger and Claudia Dávila. Together they have built a tale told by two narrators, smoothly propelled by integrated graphic sequences.

Teachers can use the text in a number of ways, including:

- As a way to explore action, adventure and humor within literature
- As a study in graphic novels and comic books

The activity guide includes discussion questions, writing activities and prompts, to elicit a meaningful understanding of the text. Where applicable, activities have been aligned with Common Core State Standards. The activities can be used as stand alone enrichment in whole class, small group or independent studies.

About The Book

Wylde Wallace and Addy Crowe blunder into the pages of a steampunk comic book created by Addy's Uncle Viminy.

Wylde is thrilled to meet his fictional hero, gentleman-scoundrel Flynn Goster, the magnificent aviatrix Isadora Fortuna and other extraordinary characters on board the Gold Rush Express, which is carrying its thief-tempting cargo from Vancouver to Toronto in a slightly warped 1899. But Wylde is less than happy to be sharing this adventure with a bossy stick-in-the-mud like Addy—not to mention her pet rat.

Addy, on the other hand, is certain that every step taken by real world kids inside her uncle's story is an intrusion. They don't belong here. She wants out and now! She also wants that annoying Wylde to stop talking so much and start doing what she tells him to do!

Thanks to some mysterious inter-world text messages, the kids learn that Uncle Viminy is following their antics through the comic pages. Not only are they ruining the plot but they are taking his career down as well. Wylde and Addy must stop blaming each other, save the story and find their way home. But then Uncle Vim comes looking for them . . .

About The Authors



© Photo by Nicole Giusti

Marthe Jocelyn has written or made pictures for nearly thirty children's books. Her most recent books include the YA novel *What We Hide* and the picture book *Where Do You Look?* She was the 2009 recipient of the prestigious Vicky Metcalf Award for her body of work. Her middle grade novel *Mable Riley* won the inaugural TD Children's Literature Award, and her picture book *Hannah's Collections* was nominated for a Governor General's Award for Illustration.



© Photo by Marc Lappano

Richard Scrimger is the author of twenty books for children and adults. His works have been translated into many languages and critically acclaimed around the world. His first children's novel, *The Nose from Jupiter*, won the 10th Annual Mr. Christie's Book Award. His novels *From Charlie's Point of View* and *Into the Ravine* were CLA Honor Books. Richard's latest, *The Wolf And Me* and its prequel, *Ink Me*, are part of the best-selling Seven series of linked YA novels.

About The Illustrator



In a world that's becoming ever more digitized, **Claudia Dávila** remains a believer and appreciator of books you can hold in your hands. She writes, illustrates and designs books for kids of all ages, with stories and themes that encourage children to be strong, thoughtful, compassionate and responsible people.

Pre-Reading Discussion / Activities

- Introduce the elements of a comic book or graphic novel and discuss how art helps tell the story. Students can think about how they absorb information differently through words and pictures. What do they learn from seeing a character's face and clothing, for instance, as opposed to having someone described?
- Take a few pages from *Hugo Cabret* or *Jimmy Corrigan, Smartest Kid On Earth*, and lead a plot discussion. How does the artist help readers follow the story?
- Introduce how graphic writers use tools such as panel captions, speech and thought bubbles and the page-turn.
- Introduce the elements of a portal novel. Ask students to put themselves in the place of the traveler. Lead a discussion around books where the protagonist enters a different world (e.g., the Narnia books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Emerald Atlas*, the Harry Potter books, *A Connecticut Yankee*, *The Summer Tree*, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Girl Who Circumnavigated Fairyland in a Ship of Her Own Making*, etc.) focusing on the ways in which the new world is the same as ours, and the ways in which it is different.
- If you could choose a book to fall into, which would it be? And what effect might your arrival have upon the plot?
- What might happen if a character from fiction (Lyra, Tarzan, the Wicked Witch of the West, Bart Simpson) showed up in your town? How would the day change? What would happen to the story if she or he were no longer part of it?

Learning Activities

1. Invent-a-Villain

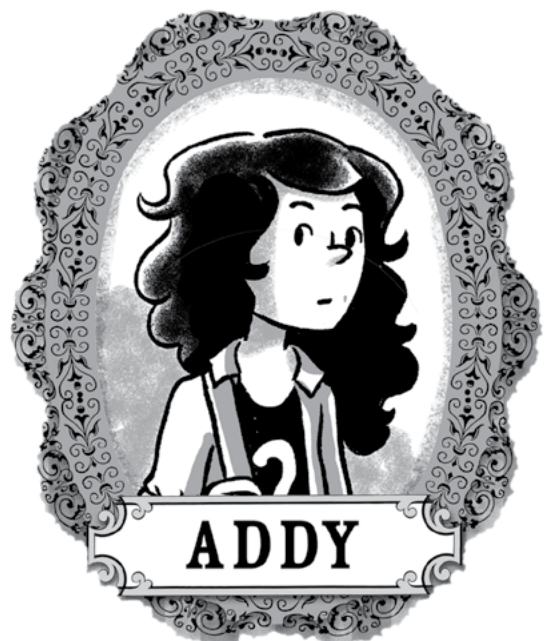
- Addy tells her Uncle Vim that his evil character, Professor Lickpenny, should have hairy nostrils, a comb-over hairstyle and rotting teeth. Write a description of a villain and think of a nasty name. Draw or paint a picture of the character you created and invent a sidekick.
- Present your character and his or her sidekick to a partner, small group or the whole class, and explain how the picture of your villain represents some of his more villainous qualities. Classmates can ask questions about your villain.

(SL.3.4, SL.4.4, SL.5.4)

2. Not-so-Super Powers

- Flynn Goster is a master of disguise and Isadora Fortuna is mistress of just about everything else, but neither of them has "super powers." What qualities do these characters possess that make them heroic in both a traditional and less traditional sense? Find evidence in the story that proves they possess these qualities.
- Ask students to select a personal strength they already possess that would lend itself well to being exaggerated in a comic book hero or heroine. Create a comic book hero or heroine based on this strength and write a short paragraph explaining the premise behind a story about this character.

(RL.3.1, RL.4.1, W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2)



Learning Activities (Continued)



3. Super Pet

- What kind of amazing talent would you bestow upon your pet if you could? Write a story about an unlikely animal that saves the day.

(W.4.3, W.5.3, W.6.3)

4. Speech Bubbles

- As a class, using a few different pieces of reproduced art, practice writing speech bubbles. Students are assigned or select a piece of art to write their own speech bubbles. Practice writing short and snappy dialogue using speech bubbles as the framework. Consider starting with one of the following openers: YOU'RE LATE! or LOOK OUT BEHIND YOU! or WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR SHIRT?

(W.3.3.b, W.4.3.b)



5. Talking vs. Thinking

- Flynn and Isadora meet each other face-to-face for the first time after a long separation. What they say out loud—in speech bubbles—differs from what they're thinking—shown in thought bubbles. That happens to most of us from time to time—and to Addy and Wylder often. Ask students to write a dialogue using bubbles that shows how talking and thinking can say very different things. Prompts could include a bully and victim in a lunchroom, a teacher and student discussing a late assignment, a kid refusing to eat something on his plate or a niece staring at her uncle's hideous Hawaiian shirt.

(W.3.3.b, W.4.3.b)

6. Astoundalicious!

- Viminy Crowe likes to talk and makes up words such as “astoundalicious” and “incrediballoo.” As a class, in small groups or in partners, brainstorm lists of yucky smells, good feelings, favorite snacks, etc., and then combine words to double the impact. Use the new words in a sentence.
- Make a dictionary of Viminy's made-up words, identify the part of speech and create a definition for each word. Add some of the new words you created above to the dictionary.

(W.3.3.b, W.4.3.b)

7. Existing in a Story

“Maybe if you existed on a page in a book, there was no sense of before or after. Your whole life was right there. Every time that page was opened, there you were. This milkshake guy had no childhood. He would never die. It was the same for anyone in any book: Winnie the Pooh or Superman or Hermione What's-her-name from Harry Potter. Every time you opened the story, there they were, eating, fighting, laughing—whatever. Every single time. Wylder didn't know if he should feel pity or envy.”

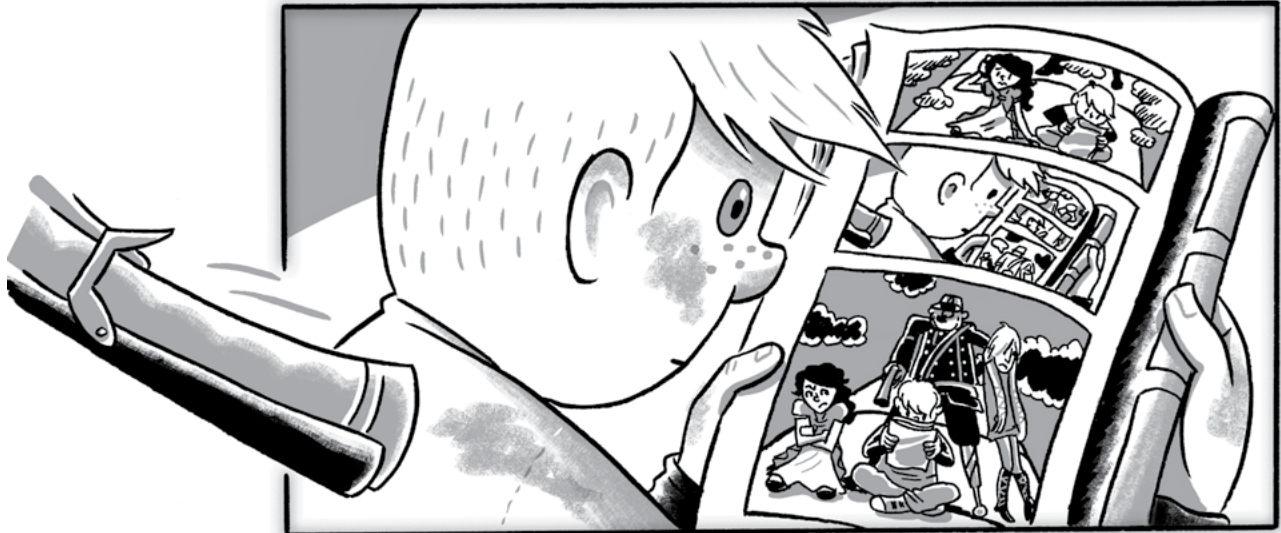
- In small groups, consider the idea that if you existed on a page in a book, your life would always be the same. Do you think this would be a good or bad thing? Would you feel pity or envy for someone who had to live in such a way?

Learning Activities (Continued)

8. Onomatopoeia

- Graphic novels and comic books often use onomatopoeia (words that make noise) to enhance the feeling of action. Find five examples of onomatopoeia in the book.
- Write a short paragraph about something that happened to you today. Re-write the paragraph, but this time include onomatopoeia.

(RL.3.4)



9. Page Bump

- Instead of a comic book, ask students to imagine they enter a TV show, a video game, a nightmare or a box of cereal. In *Viminy Crowe's Comic Book*, the kids often run into PAGE BUMPS at the end of a spread. What limits, obstacles or capabilities might impede or assist characters in a different environment?



Wrap-Up Discussion Questions

1. What do you like about reading stories told in a graphic novel or comic book format? Do you find anything more or less challenging than reading a story in a traditional novel format? In what ways might the story have been different for the reader had it been told in a different format?
2. Write a short review of the book. In your review, ensure you include the names of the main characters, a brief synopsis of the story and your opinion of the story.

(W.3.2, W.4.2, W.5.2)

Praise For *Viminy Crowe's Comic Book*

"A harmonious blend of narrative and intertwined graphic sequences finds two preteens at a comics convention closer to the action than they ever imagined ... The book's creators clearly had a grand time, filling it with fantastic steampunk creations ... This wholly imagined fantasy is well-fleshed out and keeps the pages flying with its extremely clever story within a story. As it embraces so many different genres and formats—comics, steampunk, adventure—expect this to resonate with a wide readership. A thrilling and imaginative reminder that adventure and magic can be found anywhere, especially where one least expects it ..."

– **STARRED REVIEW**, *Kirkus*

"Highly imaginative and fast-paced, the action and reaction keeps on coming and coming ensuring rapt engagement of the reader with cheers for the fortitude of this unlikely pair of friends, as good battles to overcome evil at every step of the story. The mix and match of the comic book with a story book is a unique approach to children's literature. The sheer imagination of the authors wins the attention of the reader with this page turner. Fun abounds! Highly recommended for recreational reading, genre study, discussion groups. An excellent addition to a school or classroom library."

– **Resource Links**

"... a well-paced, entertaining adventure story in which comics play an integral role. In fact, *Viminy Crowe's Comic Book* celebrates the genre in a way that hasn't been done in children's lit before: by combining the format of a novel with that of a comic strip and housing it between two hard covers for the enjoyment of youngsters everywhere. Illustrated by Claudia Davila in various black-and-white formats (from spot illustrations to a four-page comic strip), this makes for a highly entertaining summer read."

– *The Ottawa Citizen*





Links

<http://www.marthejocelyn.com/>
<https://twitter.com/scissorhouse>

<http://www.scrimger.ca/>
<https://twitter.com/richardscrimger>
<https://twitter.com/ClaudiaDrawings>

Appendix: Common Core State Standard

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.4.a** Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4.a** Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.4.a** Use context (e.g., cause/effect relationships and comparisons in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6.4.a** Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.1** Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.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.SL.3.4** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.4** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.4** Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.3.b** Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.b** Use dialogue and description to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.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.6.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.