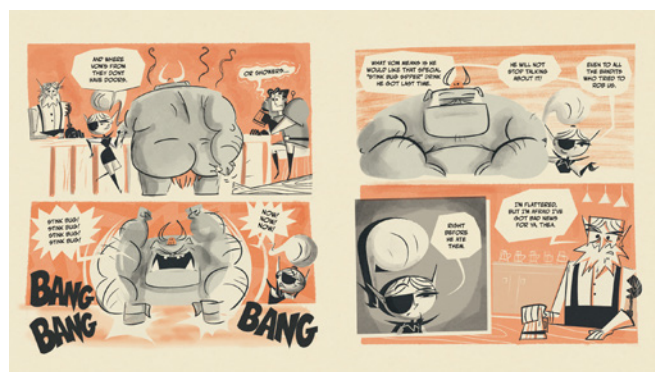


Teachers' notes for Terrible Tails: The Last Sipper



ABOUT THE BOOK

SYNOPSIS

Terrible Tails: The Last Sipper is a funny, entertaining fantasy graphic novel set in the kingdom of Austerra. When Thea and Vom discover that Vom's favourite drink – the Stink Bug Sipper – is unavailable, they set out to rid an abandoned mansion of the dark evil that has scared away the caravaners who regularly deliver the drink.

Unlikely heroes Thea, Vom and Bruce find themselves on an epic quest through dangerous forests and spooky locations. Along the way they encounter strange creatures, unexpected obstacles and a host of crazy characters. Combining adventure, humour, wordplay and fantasy with a twist, *The Last Sipper* is a fast-paced graphic novel that celebrates friendship, bravery and the power of working together.

Title: Terrible Tails: The Last Sipper

Author: Adin Milo

ISBN:

THEMES

- Friendship and teamwork
- Humour
- Adventure and quests
- Problem-solving
- Fantasy and imagination
- Unlikely heroes
- Graphic novels

AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Adin Milo is a Sydney-based art teacher and illustrator. *Terrible Tails: The Last Sipper* is his debut graphic novel, showcasing his dynamic storytelling and expressive visual style.

When he's not in the classroom or at his drawing desk, Adin enjoys life with his wife and his two beautiful children, who inspire much of his creativity and humour.

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FOR THE CLASSROOM

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE READING

Discuss:

- What do you already know about graphic novels?
- How are they different from picture books or novels with illustrations?
- Why might some stories work particularly well as graphic novels?
- What do you notice first when you look at the cover?
- What clues does the cover give about what genre this story might be? Do you think it's a funny or a serious story?
- What can you tell about the characters from the cover?

DURING AND AFTER READING

What is a graphic novel?

Graphic novels combine written text and sequential artwork to tell a story.

1. As a class, discuss the features of graphic novels. What storytelling techniques does *The Last Sipper* use that are different from those found in traditional novels or illustrated stories?
2. As you read, look for:
 - Panels
 - Gutters (the spaces between panels)
 - Speech balloons
 - Thought bubbles
 - Sound effects
 - Captions
 - Visual clues that help tell the story.
3. Find examples of each of these in the novel.

Reading pictures

Choose a page and cover the speech balloons.

- What can you tell about the characters from their facial expressions and body language?
- What emotions are shown?
- How do the illustrations help you understand the story?

Panels: Story pacing

Graphic novels use panels to control the speed of a story.

- Compare a page with many small panels with a page with one or two larger images.
- How does each affect your reading experience?

Reading the gap between panels

Unlike traditional storytelling, in graphic novels readers need to work out what happens between panels.

- Choose two panels. What action/narrative happens in the gap between them?
- How much information does the creator leave for readers to imagine?

Sound effects

Sound effects words such as BOOM, KABOOM, SLAM, GLUG become part of the artwork.

- Why are these words drawn differently from the speech balloons?
- How do the size, shape and placement of the letters affect the way you read them?

Colours

The book uses only a few colours.

- Which colours appear most often?
- How does the colour scheme help create atmosphere?
- Choose a scene and imagine it in completely different colours. How would the mood change?

Activities

1. Create a sound effect page.
2. Tell a story using only pictures.
3. Add dialogue to a silent sequence.
4. Rearrange mixed-up panels.

Language: Puns and plays on words

Authors often use puns and wordplay to make readers laugh.

- The title, *The Last Sipper*, is a play on the title of the famous painting 'The Last Supper'. Why do you think the author chose this title? How does it connect to the story?
- The story is set in the kingdom of Austerra. What might the word 'Austerra' be a play on?
- Can you find any other examples of wordplay in the novel? Make a list on the whiteboard.
 - Why are these names funny or memorable?
 - What images do they create in your mind?
 - How do they help build the fantasy world?

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FOR THE CLASSROOM

Activities

1. Invent a funny name for:
 - A tavern
 - A magical drink
 - A fantasy creature
 - A dangerous location.
2. The character of Big Mouth is literally a big mouth in more ways than one! Create your own character whose name and appearance is a play on words.

Fantasy with a twist

1. How is a fantasy story different from a realistic story? As a class, brainstorm the features of fantasy stories.
2. What characters, settings, creatures, objects and events do you expect to find in the fantasy genre? Which of these can you find in *The Last Sipper*?
3. The creator of *The Last Sipper* puts a humorous twist on a typical fantasy story.
 - How is Vom different from a typical fantasy hero?
 - Is Bruce a brave and noble knight that you might find in a fantasy story?
 - Extension: How does humour change the way you experience the fantasy world? Which fantasy conventions is the author making fun of?

Activities

1. The kingdom of Austerra is a wonderful creation by the author, full of dark woods, evil mansions and crazy characters. Based on the illustrations and the journey undertaken by Thea, Vom and Bruce, create a map of Austerra as you understand it.
2. Design your own fantasy kingdom. What will you call it? What will it look like? Think about the landscape and who might live there.

The hero's quest

In fantasy adventures, there is usually a quest that the hero must complete.

- What problem starts Thea, Vom and Bruce on their quest?
- What obstacles do the characters face? How do they overcome these obstacles?
- How does the creator of *The Last Sipper* make the quest a humorous one?

Activity

1. Create your own fantasy quest using: a hero; a goal; three obstacles; a reward. Present your quest to the rest of the class. You might like to do this as an oral presentation or as a poster presentation.

Creature compendium

Throughout the novel, we learn about the creatures that inhabit the kingdom of Austerra through humorous guidebook-style descriptions.

1. Choose a creature from the story or invent your own fantasy creature. Create an entry for an Austerra Creature Compendium. Include:
 - Creature name
 - Scientific or fantasy classification
 - Habitat
 - Appearance
 - Diet
 - Special abilities
 - Strengths and weaknesses
 - Interesting facts
 - A danger rating (1–5 stars)
 - Include an illustration or labelled diagram.
2. **Extension:** Write your creature description in a humorous style, including jokes, warnings or exaggerated facts, just as a fantasy traveller's guide might.

Characters

In graphic novels, we learn about characters through both words and illustrations. Vom, Thea and Bruce are instantly recognisable from their silhouettes alone.

- What does each character's appearance tell us about their personality?
- Which visual details help communicate who they are?
- How do their clothes, equipment and the way they look establish them as fantasy characters?
- Do any of the characters change throughout the story?
- Choose one of the main characters and create a character study. Include: appearance; personality traits; strengths and weaknesses; relationships with other characters; important actions in the story; a favourite quote.

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FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Thea, Vom and Bruce are very different from one another. Why do you think they make a successful team?
- Have you ever worked with someone who was very different from you? What did they bring to the group or partnership?
- Imagine you are forming an adventuring party to go on a special quest. What skills would you want each member to have?

Activities

1. Design your own fantasy adventurer. Think about: name; species; special abilities; strengths and weaknesses; clothing and equipment; personality; a quest. Draw your character and write a short description explaining how their appearance reflects who they are.
2. Design your own humorous adventuring party. Who will be in it? What strengths will they bring to the group?

Humour

Graphic novels use both words and pictures to create humour.

1. Find some of the moments in *The Last Sipper* that made you laugh.
 - What made them funny?
 - Was the humour created by the words, the illustrations or both?
 - Would the humour work without the illustration(s)?
2. There are many different types of humour in *The Last Sipper*. Find examples of:
 - Wordplay and puns
 - Silly misunderstandings
 - Exaggeration
 - Characters behaving unexpectedly
 - Visual jokes
3. Which type of humour makes you laugh the most?
4. Sometimes the funniest parts of *The Last Sipper* are hidden in the illustrations. Choose a page and look at:
 - Facial expressions
 - Body language
 - Background details
 - Sound effects.

5. How do the illustrations add humour to the scene? Would the joke work as well in a traditional novel?

Activities

1. Choose a serious scene from a fairy tale or a fantasy story. Rewrite it in the style of *The Last Sipper* by adding a humorous twist such as:
 - A misunderstanding
 - A crazy or ridiculous character
 - An unexpected problem
 - A funny conversation.
2. Share your rewritten scene with the class.

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Create your own page for a graphic novel

Plan a short adventure scene. Use panels, speech balloons, sound effects and captions. Think about how the layout will help tell the story.

Fantasy creatures

Many fantasy creatures are inspired by real animals. Research a real animal and use its features to create a believable fantasy creature. Explain which real-world adaptations inspired your design.

Another Terrible Tale

Write and illustrate your own *Terrible Tails* adventure.

Creating drama

1. Working in small groups, choose one of your favourite scenes or chapters from *The Last Sipper* and perform it for the class. Think about:
 - Which characters will you need?
 - How will you recreate the action and humour?
 - What sound effects can you add? Can you create the sound effects using everyday objects?
 - What music suits the scene? Will it be spooky, funny, exciting?
2. After each group's performance, discuss how the sound effects, music and acting brought the graphic novel to life.

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CURRICULUM LINKS

English

Years 3–4

- AC9E3LY02 – Use interaction skills to contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas.
- AC9E3LE02 – Discuss how language and images are used to represent characters, settings and events in literature.
- AC9E3LE03 – Discuss how texts evoke responses, including preferences and emotions.
- AC9E3LE05 – Create and share literary texts for particular purposes and audiences.
- AC9E4LE02 – Discuss how authors and illustrators create characters, settings and events.
- AC9E4LE03 – Describe how texts use language and illustrations to engage audiences.
- AC9E4LY06 – Create and edit literary and imaginative texts.

Years 5–6

- AC9E5LY02 – Use interaction skills and discussion strategies to share and evaluate ideas.
- AC9E5LE02 – Explain how language features, images and vocabulary influence interpretations of characters, settings and events.
- AC9E5LE03 – Explain how texts can reflect experiences, ideas and perspectives.
- AC9E5LE05 – Create literary texts that experiment with language features and images.
- AC9E6LE02 – Analyse how language features and visual features shape meaning and influence audiences.
- AC9E6LE03 – Analyse representations of people, places and events in literary texts.
- AC9E6LY06 – Plan, create and edit imaginative texts for different audiences and purposes.

The Arts: Visual Arts

Years 3–4

- AC9AVA4E01 – Explore where, why and how visual arts are created and presented across cultures and times.
- AC9AVA4C01 – Experiment with visual conventions, materials and techniques to create artworks.

Years 5–6

- AC9AVA6E01 – Explore ways that visual arts communicate ideas, perspectives and meaning.
- AC9AVA6C01 – Apply visual conventions and artistic techniques to create artworks.

The Arts: Drama

Years 3–4

- AC9ADR4E01 – Explore how drama is created and presented to communicate ideas and meaning.
- AC9ADR4D01 – Use performance skills and dramatic action to communicate ideas and character.

Years 5–6

- AC9ADR6E01 – Investigate how drama communicates ideas, perspectives and meaning.
- AC9ADR6D01 – Develop and perform drama using expressive skills and dramatic conventions.

Critical and Creative Thinking

- AC9HC2S03 – Generate, develop and refine ideas and possibilities.
- AC9HC4S03 – Examine and evaluate ideas, information and perspectives.
- AC9HC6S03 – Create and test possibilities to respond to challenges and opportunities.

Personal and Social Capability

- AC9PS4P01 – Describe personal strengths and challenges and how these influence learning and relationships.
- AC9PS4P02 – Explain how different people contribute to group activities and shared goals.
- AC9PS6P02 – Explain how empathy, inclusion and collaboration contribute to positive relationships.

