

# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



# The Inkberg Enigma

Jonathan King ISBN: 9781776572663 August 2020

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# Outline:

Miro and Zia live in Aurora, a fishing town nestled in the shadow of an ancient castle. Miro lives in his books; Zia is never without her camera. The day they meet, they uncover a secret. The fishing works, the castle, the town council: all are linked to an ill-fated 1930s Antarctic expedition. But the diary of that journey has been hidden and the sea is stirring up unusual creatures. Something has a powerful hold over the town. With Zia determined to find out more, Miro finds himself putting aside his books for a real adventure. The Inkberg Enigma is an exciting adventure with a strong filmic narrative.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Jonathan King's comics have featured online and in anthologies. King is a prominent filmmaker whose debut feature Black Sheep remains one of New Zealand's biggest-selling feature films. Its international awards include the Audience Award at the Gérardmer Fantastic Film Festival, the Silver Raven at the Brussels Fantastic Film Festival and the Sir Julius Vogel Award for Best Dramatic Presentation. King co-wrote, produced and directed a film adaptation of New Zealand children's classic Under the Mountain by Maurice Gee, starring Sam Neill, which has been released worldwide. The Inkberg Enigma is his first children's book.

### **Use These Notes:**

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

#### These notes are for:

 Primary 5-6 • Ages 10+

**Key Learning** Areas:

English

**Example of:** Graphic Novel

#### Themes/Ideas:

- Adventure
- Friendship
- Mystery



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# **Discussion Questions and Activities:**

#### **Before Reading**

Before reading *The Inkberg Enigma*, view the cover and title and identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author
- The publisher
- The blurb

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Once you've finished reading the book, revisit your answer to this question. Were your predictions correct?

#### **Exploring the Text**

Identify the orientation, complication and resolution of the story. Ask students to try to identify this structure in other books or movies. As a class, discuss how these narrative features give meaning to stories.

How does Miro change throughout the course of the book? You could consider the secrets Miro is keeping when we meet him, how Miro approaches danger, and his relationships with his dad and with Zia.

Compare and contrast the characters of Miro and Zia. Choose a moment of action or conflict in the novel (like when they're crossing the damaged bridge in the Works, spying on the group or sneaking into the Order of the Sea building) and write a few sentences on how Miro and Zia approach challenges differently. Do you identify with either of their approaches? Why/why not?

Discuss the role magic and myth play in *The Inkberg Enigma*. In what ways is the world Jonathan King has created similar or different to ours? How would the book be different if it was set in a completely fantasy world?

Books are incredibly important to Miro. Discuss why stories are so important to him as a character, and the roles books and stories play in *The Inkberg Enigma*.

Jonathan King's art style is called *ligne claire*. Research *ligne claire* and write a short paragraph about what makes this style distinctive, why you think Jonathan King might have chosen it, and some other books in this style (hint: you could start with Hergé and Tintin).

Compare the design style of the flashback pages (like Danforth's journal) with the design style of the rest of the book. How are they similar or different? Why do you think Jonathan King drew them this way?

In most graphic novels (and comics), there is usually a white space between the panels called the gutter.

Consider the difference between large and small panels, square and irregular shapes and full page illustrations. Copy a page of the book, cut out the frames and arrange them on a piece of paper with a smaller gutter between each frame and then with a larger gutter. What difference does this make to our reading?

The graphic novel format allows authors to employ filmic techniques in the narrative. Find examples of filmic techniques in the novel and discuss how the author has used them to enhance the narrative.

#### **Further Activities**

Write a short story about Miro and Zia on another adventure. Create it in a graphic novel style similar to Jonathan King's. After the comic strips are created, share them and discuss the process of this kind of writing. Was it difficult to write in such a limited space? How do the words and pictures work together?

Take a section of one of the novel and recreate it as unillustrated prose. Think about how to convey the mood, imagery, action and dialogue in words, rather than in graphic novel style. After completing this exercise, have a class discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of each style. Which do you prefer writing?

Choose several spreads from the book and perform a visual analysis by responding to the following points:

- · Objects What objects and people can you see?
- Size What size are the objects in relation to each other?
- Setting Is a setting obvious? What is it?
- Colours What are the predominant colours used?
- Position Where are objects in relation to each other? Are they in the fore-, middle- or background?
- 'Camera' angle From what angle do the pictures appear to be drawn? For example: high eye level, low, bird's eye view.
- 'Shot' type What type of 'shot' has been used: closeup, medium, long, very long, etc.?
- Depth of Field What is and isn't in focus?
- Light Is the picture light or dark? Is it the same all
- Lines and vectors In what direction do lines in the picture lead the eye?
- Body language and clothing What facial expressions, gestures and use of space can you see? What is being worn?

Visit your school or public library and collect several other graphic novels. Compare them with *The Inkberg Enigma*. How is *The Inkberg Enigma* similar or different to other graphic novels?