



TEACHERS' NOTES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 11+; years 6 to 10

CONTENTS

1. Plot summary	1
2. About the creators	2
3. Pre-reading questions	2
4. Getting to know graphic novels	2
5. Key study topics	3
6. Further reading	6
7. Worksheets	7

KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English; Visual Literacy; Art
- **General capabilities:** Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding; Literacy; Personal and social capability

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Learn about graphic novel storytelling from the best! Australian author Tom Taylor and artist Jon Sommariva are juggernauts in the comic book world and have brought to life iconic properties including the Avengers, Spider-Man, Batman, Superman, the X-Men, the Suicide Squad, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Star Wars and more.
- Plenty of opportunities for studying multimodal texts and visual literacy. *Neverlanders* tackles familiar themes, such as found family and what it means to grow up, with plenty of fun nods to the original *Peter Pan*. But it also has tons of diabolical twists, making this gritty fairy-tale reimagining a must-read.

THEMES

- Found family trope
- Adventure
- The nature of good versus evil
- Ethical dilemmas
- Sustainability and climate change

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Neverlanders

Tom Taylor and Jon Sommariva

PLOT SUMMARY

Bee and her fellow runaways are their own found family. So when a stranger named Paco saves her life, Bee invites him to join their crew, thinking he's another lost teen. The truth is Paco's not just a lost teen, he's a Lost Boy from Neverland. And he needs Bee and the others to come back with him.

When the group is then spirited away by a foul-mouthed Tinker Bell, they discover that Neverland is not some fun-filled hideaway. It's a war zone under siege by a horde of pirates with a merciless new leader who will stop at nothing to steal the land's magic. Tink leads a fairy army that barely holds them at bay. Peter Pan is gone. And rest of the Lost Boys have been killed. Paco is all that remains ... but he hopes that this group of teens will become the new Lost Ones.

These young runaways may be Neverland's only hope – but they're about to learn that it'll take a lot more than happy thoughts to win a war.

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Tom Taylor (Author)

Tom Taylor is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning author, BAFTA-nominated screenwriter, and GLAAD Award nominee. He's written for DCeased, Suicide Squad, Spider-Man, X-Men, and more. His comics have sold over 8 million copies in the US – and over 10 million globally. He is also the co-creator, executive producer, and lead writer of the animated series *The Deep*, which is based on his graphic novels and can be seen in over 140 countries. He lives with his family in Australia, but you can visit him at tomtaylormade.com or follow him on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook @TomTaylorMade.

Jon Sommariva (Illustrator)

Jon Sommariva (also known as Red J) has been the artist for such bestselling comics as Batman, the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Star Wars, and the Avengers, and he's sold well over a million copies of his comics. He lives with his family in Australia, but you can follow him @sommariva on Instagram and @JonSommariva on Twitter.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- What other graphic novels or comic books have you read? What do you expect to see in a graphic novel? How does it differ from other ways of telling stories, such as novels or films?
- Look up some of the properties and characters the author and illustrator have brought to life in their comic books. Does their style give you an idea what to expect in this story?
- Discuss what you know about the story of *Peter Pan*. Perhaps you've read the original book *Peter and Wendy* by J.M. Barrie, or seen one of the films? What are some of the iconic elements you remember of this story – for instance: Peter Pan, the boy who never grows up; the Lost Boys; the fairy Tinkerbell; the land of Neverland; Captain Hook and his pirates.
- Now take a look at the front cover of *Neverlanders*, which completely reimagines some of those elements. Jot down any similarities or differences you see from the story you know. Do the characters look different? Who is the focus on?
- Write a short excerpt imagining what might happen in the first chapter. (This can be in comic book form!) What do you think this story will be about?

GETTING TO KNOW GRAPHIC NOVELS

What is a graphic novel?

A graphic novel uses the interplay of text and illustrations in a comic-strip format to tell a story. Instead of relying on just text to construct a narrative, it uses graphical elements such as panels, frames, speech/thought balloons, etc. in a sequential way to create and evoke a story in a reader's mind.

What is the difference between a graphic novel and a comic book?

A graphic novel is a longer, more complex piece of text that usually covers the storyline in one book, whereas a comic book is a lot shorter and tells the story over many issues and/or volumes. A graphic novel, much like any book, is an important tool for cognitive learning and is rich in visual literacy. Readers actively participate in its construction by inferring what they see from the image and linking it to the corresponding text to understand the narrative developing from panel to panel, or picture to picture.

The order and organisation of the panels, images and text on the page determine the flow and movement of the story by giving the reader cues as to what their eyes should follow next. For instance, the reader will first see the panel, then the text linked to the main image, and from there get a sense of the scene as they continue to move on to the following panels. The setting and environment in a graphic novel is established through images, likewise with character expressions, which are all conveyed visually as opposed to word descriptions in traditional straight-text novels.

Online resources

- Creating Multimodal Texts: <https://creatingmultimodaltxts.com/comics/>
- Graphic Novels in the Classroom: <http://courseweb.ischool.illinois.edu/~gray21/GraphicNovels/>
- The Truth About Graphic Novels: <https://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/v32n2/fletcherpear.pdf>
- Get Graphic (Graphical resources for teachers): <http://www.getgraphic.org/teachers.php>
- How to Teach Graphic Novels: <https://www.theguardian.com/teacher-network/2015/nov/30/how-to-teach-graphic-novels>
- A Teacher Roundtable: <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/teaching-graphic-novels/>



KEY STUDY TOPICS

Trope: Found family



'...home is us. Wherever we're together, that's home' (p. 13)

Bee: 'My family needs me.' (p. 180)

'We are the people who look after you now. Got it?' (p. 16)

The found family trope relates to a group of unrelated characters who come together to form their own community. These characters come to love and support one another, ultimately forming a familial bond.

Questions and activities

- Can you identify any other novels/movies that incorporate the found family trope? For example, *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, *Teen Titans*, *The Mandalorian*, *13 Reasons Why*. Explain how the trope is incorporated in your chosen texts.
- From reading the story, do you think family must be people we are related to? Or do you think we can find familial comfort from other people within our lives?

- How do the 'Lost Ones' support and look after one another in the story? Refer to specific examples. An example might be when all the money the kids collect on the street is distributed equally amongst everyone so they may all be well fed.
- You may like to create a character web/chart to map and link all the things our characters do for one another.
- Justin, out of concern for his friends, betrays the Neverlanders. He is ultimately forgiven. How is he redeemed? Would you have forgiven Justin too, if he were a close friend/ family member? Have you ever had a disagreement with someone that you worked through? Why do you think Justin's friends forgave him? Could it be to do with their close bond and experiences they share?
- Do you think the friends are stronger as a family or on their own? Could Neverland have been saved without everyone working together? Make sure to explain your answer.
- The Neverlanders are referred to as the 'Lost Ones', as they all do not have proper families or homes. Do you think they are really 'lost'? How is this ironic?

Themes: Action and adventure



Action and adventure play a big part in *Neverlanders*. From dangerous missions to gripping drama and exciting plot twists, the action and adventure genre keeps its readers on the edge of their seats, longing for more.

- Identify some of your favourite action-packed flicks and stories. In dot points, write down *why* you liked these and what parts of the story made it exciting and fun!
- See if you can identify any similar (or new!) moments in *Neverlanders* that elevate the action and adventure. Think about the specific narrative and literary devices used to amplify these moments (i.e. cliffhangers, red herrings, backstory, foreshadowing, etc). For instance, one example might be the use of foreshadowing to clue us in on



Justin's later decision from his early reservations about Neverland.

- What do you think might happen in future books in the series?

Intertextuality: comparing with *Peter Pan*

Neverlanders reimagines some of the elements of *Peter Pan*, and in particular it subverts many of those elements, with twists and reveals about the characters and settings.

Questions and activities

- Which characters can you identify that are inspired by the original characters, and how have they changed? Which characters were revealed to have 'changed sides' from good to bad or vice versa? Do you think people are inherently good or evil or do you think they can be shades in between?
- Paco tells us that their '*Pan's shadow could leave him. And when Peter fell his shadow was far away from him . . . unable to touch. Unable to speak.*' Later, Felix tells us that '*When your own shadow turns against you, that's a sure sign you've made some mistakes.*' (p. 199; p. 176)
- What are the connotations associated with a shadow? What do you think it may represent in terms of Pan's character?
- The adult character Robb says that '*adults can grow up too*' (p. 171). What do you think he means by this? Do you think adults can make mistakes as well and learn from kids? What else do you learn about Robb's past? Have a go at guessing what you think may have convinced this character to change his views.
- Does the new Tink meet your expectations? Why do you think the writers opted for a foul-mouthed General Tinker Bell? How does this change the tone of the story? Do you like this new version? Why?
- In the story, Neverland chooses Bee as its new leader. Why do you think this is the case? What qualities does Bee possess that makes Neverland choose her to be their new leader and protector?

Symbolism: innocence vs experience

Neverland is a place for children, where no adults may enter. It's a place where you can stay young forever, never having to grow up.

Paco tells us that that the '*Heart of Neverland stops [them] from aging*' with its various healing and magical properties (p. 61).

- Why do you think this magical world is called Neverland? What it might be a metaphor for?

- Robb later tells us '*The tree healed my hand and my heart*' (p. 172). What do you think he means by the tree healing his heart? What else might that imply Neverland does and is about, beyond physically keeping children young?
- Bee's mum says '*Sometimes adults run away from home too.*' (p. 139) While Neverland is reserved for kids, do you think our characters act as mature and (sometimes) more grown-up than the adults in the story? Find specific examples where our characters have displayed these characteristics. What do you think this says about adults in general? Do you think everyone can make mistakes no matter how old they are? Can kids be as smart as adults?
- You've probably realised the tone of *Neverlanders* is darker and grittier than that of *Peter Pan*. Why do you think the writers opted for a dystopian-esque reimagining of a beloved and light-hearted classic? Do you think this decision makes the story more exciting and grounded, with its more realistic and serious themes? Or do you prefer the original?
- What other stories have you read or seen that contrast the innocence of childhood against the experience of adulthood? Examples might include: Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights*, John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, Terry Pratchett's *Nation* or Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*.



Sustainability and climate change



'Neverland isn't for yesterday's people. It's for the lives of tomorrow.' (p. 61)

'But they worked out how to extract something from the Tree's sap. Something that boosts their strength, and powers their flying machines.' (p. 62)

'They take from the Tree, and every piece is gone forever. They don't care about our land. They will continue to take until our future is gone.' (p. 63)

Author Tom Taylor and illustrator Jon Sommariva were keen to add a element of climate change allegory to *Neverlanders*, with the main theme of the conflict being selfish adults stealing the future from the next generation by damaging Neverland's environment and upsetting the delicate balance of its climate.

When comparing Neverland and Otherland, there is a stark difference in the natural elements of these two settings. (See **Worksheet: Visual literacy** for reference.) The setting of Neverland is lush, vibrant and teeming with life. It is obvious the Lost Ones have looked after their home and preserved their land. It is devoid of pollution and waste, offering a safe and healthy haven for any present and future Neverlanders to inhabit.

The Heart of Neverland (the Tree) is a prime example. The Lost Ones have looked after this tree and, in turn, it provides healing properties for its inhabitants, while also functioning as Neverland's lifeline against evil forces.

Otherland is the opposite. There is no greenery, the skies are filled with smoke and pollution from the excessive use of ships and flying machines, and waste from bombs and weapons float on the surface of the ocean. The adults living in Otherland have a complete disregard for their environment, using it to serve their own needs. The adults want to use the Tree's powers

without thinking about how the damage they inflict will affect the Tree and Neverland.

Questions and activities

- What do you think the story is saying about the way the adults of Otherland are treating their environment and what they want to do with the Heart of Neverland? Do you think the writers might be condemning their way of living? Is it sustainable to use the Heart of Neverland to power machines?
- What could the adults of Otherland do to begin being more sustainable? Provide a list of suggestions, explaining how the adults could go about enacting your ideas.
- List examples of how the Lost Ones might look after Neverland and protect the Tree. What could happen to Neverland if the kids stopped looking after it?
- What green space, park or wildlife area is the 'Heart' of your own local area? Write a newspaper article about the importance of this place to the community, and its benefits.
- Will it take more than 'happy thoughts' to save our environment and create a more sustainable future? Do some research into some local sustainable practices and initiatives in your area. Write a brief description on what is being done and how it is helping the environment. Could you perhaps do some similar things at school? For instance, monthly clean-up days?
- Reflect on ways you could be more sustainable and environmentally responsible in your everyday life. For instance, you could make sure all the lights are turned off before you sleep, take shorter showers to conserve water, or try walking to school if it is within walking distance. Try to incorporate the things you brainstorm into your life. You might like to do with a friend to keep tabs on each other's progress.
- Discuss the techniques Paco uses to convince the others to help him protect Neverland.
- Write a persuasive speech comparing Neverland and Otherland to our world, and asking people to change and take action for a sustainable future. Use facts and research, literary techniques such as metaphor and symbolism, and persuasive techniques to make your case.
- The Tree in Neverland is an example of a 'keystone species', an organism that is essential to a particular ecosystem. Research other keystone species from around the world, and the important role they play in their ecosystem.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

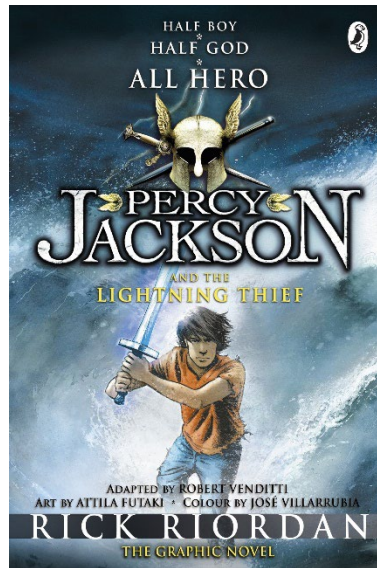


Peter Pan
by J. M. Barrie

When Peter Pan loses his shadow in the Darling children's nursery, things will never be the same again . . .

Over the rooftops of London, Peter Pan and the fairy Tinkerbell lead Wendy, Michael and John Darling to Neverland to start a new life with his gang of Lost Boys. There, they will encounter mermaids, princesses, a ticking crocodile and the fearsome Captain Hook and his terrible crew of pirates.

What will their new life be like in Neverland? If Captain Hook has his way, they won't live long enough to find out . . .

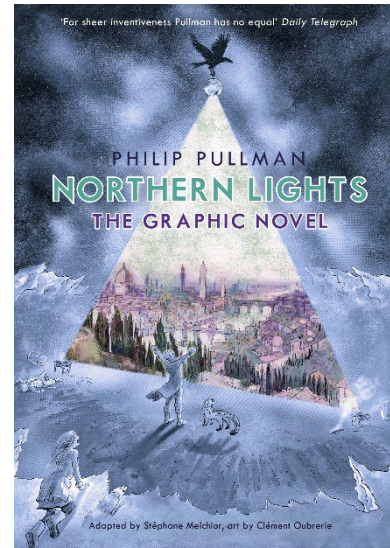


Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief: The Graphic Novel
by Rick Riordan; adapted by Robert Venditti; art by Attila Futaki; colour by José Villarrubia

See Percy Jackson in action in this explosive graphic novel retelling of *The Lightning Thief*.

Look, I didn't want to be a half-blood. I never asked to be the son of a Greek God. I was just a normal kid, going to school, playing basketball, skateboarding. The usual. Until I accidentally vaporised my maths teacher. That's when things started really going wrong. Now I spend my time fighting with swords, battling monsters with my friends, and generally trying to stay alive.

This is the one where Zeus, God of the Sky, thinks I've stolen his lightning bolt – and making Zeus angry is a very bad idea.



Northern Lights: The Graphic Novel
by Philip Pullman; adapted by Stéphane Melchior; art by Clément Oubrier

Revisit Lyra Bellacqua's adventures in this graphic novel adaptation of a masterpiece, which comes to life with incredible full-colour art.

Follow Lyra's story once again in a way you've never experienced it before, as the arrival of her fearsome uncle, Lord Asriel, draws her to the heart of a terrible struggle – a struggle born of Gobblers and stolen children, witch clans and armoured bears.

Lyra hurtles toward danger in the cold far North, never suspecting the shocking truth, that she alone is destined to win, or to lose, this more-than-mortal battle.

This edition combines all three illustrated volumes of the story, now available for the very first time in hardback.



WORKSHEET: Visual literacy

Have a go at identifying some visual techniques the author and illustrator use to juxtapose the two worlds and present them as polar opposites. Some techniques you might think about include: the salience (the part in the picture you are first drawn to), the colour scheme, line, shape, space, balance, proportion, movement, any symbolism, the composition (the positioning of the elements in the scene), vector, high/low angles, etc.

Why do you think Otherland (the adult world) is depicted in such a dark way as opposed to the bright Neverland? What do you think the writers are trying to say about the true motivations and characteristics of the adults?

Neverland vs Otherland





WORKSHEET: How to read a graphic novel

Here is some graphic novel terminology. See if you can identify an example (if there is one) of the different elements used in *Neverlanders*. Then use the sample page to test your knowledge!



Terms	Definition	Find an example
Panel	the box or segment that contains the image and text	
Frame	the border that surrounds and contains the panel	
Gutter	the space that lies between panels	
Bleed	when an image goes beyond the borders of the page	
Graphic weight	the heaviness or intensity of a line or block of shading for visual focus. The bolder the graphic weight, the greater the visual focus, making that element more salient in the scene.	
Caption	a box or section of text that gives details on the background and setting of the scene. It sits separately to speech and thought bubbles, often at the top or bottom of the panel.	
Speech bubble	this contains the dialogue spoken by different characters within a scene. It's usually enclosed in a bubble or another shape; otherwise, can stand on its own, close to the speaker.	
Thought bubble	similar to the speech bubble, this contains the internal dialogue of a character and is usually shaped like a cloud, coming from the character's head.	
Special effects sounds	words that give a sense of sound on the page (e.g. BANG! THUMP!). To heighten their impact, the words are either bolded or have a special graphical treatment to make it stand out on the page.	
Layout	the configuration of all the elements on the page; the way in which the frame, panels, speech bubbles, etc. are arranged to tell the narrative.	
Close-up	an angle that zooms into an image, like a character's face, to allow for closer view. This technique is sometimes employed to convey a feeling of intimacy between the reader and character, such as when a character reveals their thoughts or revelations.	

WORKSHEET: Storyboard your own comic!

Filmmakers and comic artists use storyboarding to plot out and visualise a scene. Have a go at writing and drawing a comic strip of the opening chapter of *Neverlanders* book 2! Think about the ending of Book 1 and what you think may happen in the following book. You could also think about things introduced in this book that you think may be more explored in the next one. Use the template below, or get inspired by some of the different page layouts in *Neverlanders* to introduce different panel shapes and layouts to add movement, action and emphasis!



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Neverlanders	Tom Taylor & Jon Sommariva	9781761049071	6+	\$22.99		
Peter Pan	J. M. Barrie	9780241430620	4+	\$16.99		
Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief: The Graphic Novel	Rick Riordan et al	9780141335391	5+	\$26.99		
Northern Lights: The Graphic Novel	Philip Pullman et al	9780857535429	5+	\$45.00		
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