



# TEACHING CLASS ACT

Companion to the  
Newbery Medal Winner

NEW  
KID

Grades 3-7

Themes:  
Fitting In,  
Friendship,  
Race, Class,  
Family  
Dynamics,  
Bullying

## JERRY CRAFT

*New York Times* bestselling author

Art © 2020 by Jerry Craft

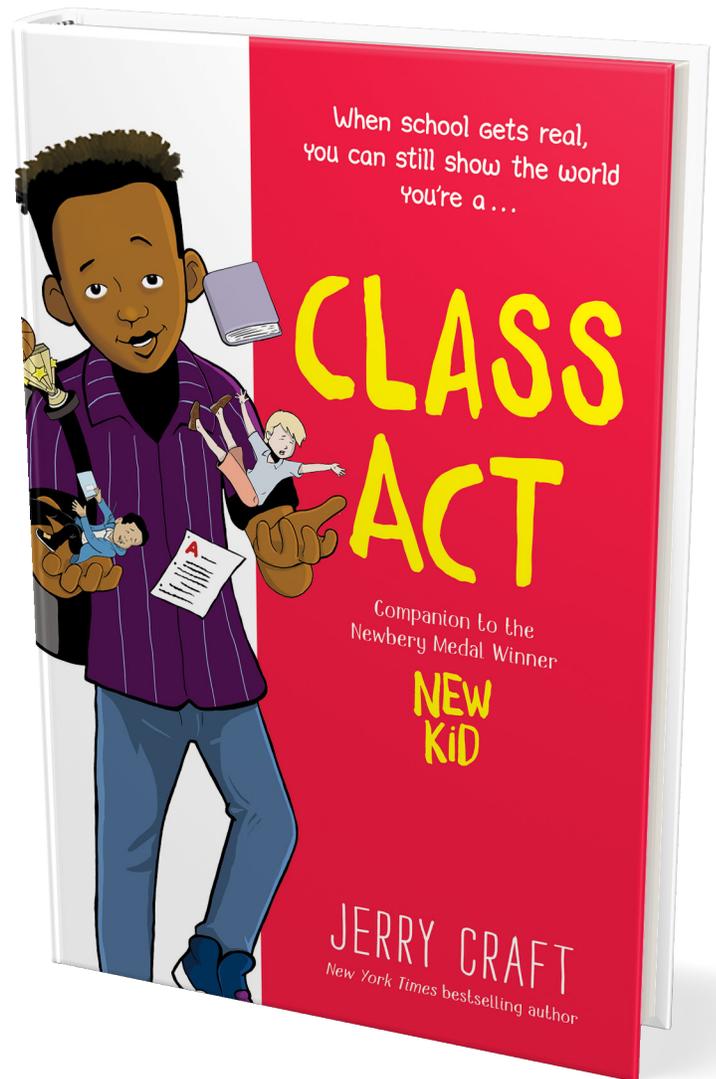
# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jerry Craft** is a *New York Times* bestselling author-illustrator who has worked on numerous picture books, graphic novels, and middle grade novels, including the Newbery Medal-winning winning graphic novel, *New Kid*. Jerry is the creator of *Mama's Boyz*, an award-winning syndicated comic strip. He has won five African American Literary Awards and is a cofounder of the Schomburg Center's Annual Black Comic Book Festival. He received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts and now lives in Connecticut. Visit him online at [www.jerrycraft.com](http://www.jerrycraft.com).



Photo by Hollis King  
Art © 2020 by Jerry Craft

Guide prepared by Anastasia Collins, MA, MLIS, librarian, youth literature scholar, and anti-oppression educator.



## ABOUT THE BOOK

A new school year has begun at Riverdale Academy Day School in the Bronx, and second form awaits Jordan and his friends. Change is in the air—changing bodies, changing comics, and changing relationships—but change and growth can shake up more than the status quo, and even the most supportive relationships can ripple and crack with tension. In this companion story to *New Kid*, the focus is on Jordan's friend Drew, who must negotiate everyday challenges of colorism, tokenization, and classism at school and at home while also navigating important questions of friendship, belonging, and being true to himself.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In this companion story, Drew gets much more of the spotlight. However, we still see plenty of Jordan, his comics, and his perspective. How do Drew and Jordan compare as characters? Jordan lists out in a comic (pp. 52-53) some of the things he has in common with Drew, as well as some ways in which they differ. What would you add to each list?
2. Sometimes the spotlight isn't so great. Consider the attention Drew gets from Ashley and Mr. Roche throughout the story. How does Drew feel about it? Why? How can seemingly positive things like compliments become negative or cross boundaries?
3. The night before school starts, what does Drew mean when he tells his grandma "I just can't be myself at [RAD]. I gotta be more (p. 8)." In what ways does Drew try to be more than himself? Is he the only one? How have you felt pressure to be more or less than yourself at school? What about at home?
4. Drew and Jordan have different reactions when Andy shows up at school still green from Halloween (pp. 71-73). What was your reaction? What might be important about empathizing with Andy's embarrassment even though he's often a bully?
5. Feeling seen is a recurring theme in this story. Drew literally feels invisible after leading the sister school tour, and Jordan feels overlooked because of his light skin. What are some other ways that characters feel like they are and aren't seen? Why is feeling seen important?
6. Just when Drew is beginning to feel weird about his relationship with Liam, he gets in a fight with childhood friends. Why does his friend Wendell get so angry? Why does Drew get so angry? How do you handle a friendship when it gets rocky?
7. Drew says that he doesn't know what his grandma means when she tells him "not to be afraid of failing, be afraid of regret (p. 173)." What do you think she means? What does her advice mean for Jordan's story? For Drew's? How have you pushed past the fear of failing?
8. "Stereotype threat" is when a person fears they are confirming a stereotype about their social group. Drew, for example, refuses to play basketball because he feels like he is expected to play just because he is Black. Why does Drew feel he must avoid conforming to a stereotype even if it means not playing a sport he loves? Where else does stereotype threat appear in the novel?
9. What finally resolves the tension in Drew and Liam's relationship? How is it different than the tension between Drew and Andy? Might there be common ground there as well?
10. Jordan spends a good part of the novel concerned about his immaturity. But this story shows that being mature is more than being tall and smelling bad after gym class. What does maturity look like for Drew? What does it look like for you?



# EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- 1. Graphic Novel At Work.** Graphic novels use both words and images to tell a story. Pick a page from *Class Act* and think about what you learn from the words alone. Then think about what you learn from the images alone. Are they giving you the same or different information? How do they work together to communicate the story?
- 2. Express Yourself.** Facial expressions and body language are rich with visual information, and in graphic novels they are essential to how we understand different characters. Can you find an example of a character's expression or body language that you think shows a significant character trait?
- 3. Design Your Own Character.** Think about how each character's look contributes to who they are and their role in the story. Now think about a character of your own to add to the story. What's their background? Are they a teacher or a student or someone outside of RAD? Do they fit in or stand out somehow? Are they bubbly and optimistic or moody and dramatic? Think carefully about how elements of your character's design (expressions, physical traits, clothing, gestures, etc.) will communicate who they are to readers.
- 4. Set The Scene.** Similar to camera angles in a movie, graphic novels use image perspective to position and engage readers in different ways to view a panel or scene. Perspectives like close-ups, bird's-eye views, and views from below all communicate information about the characters, the tension, and the emotions of a scene. Create a panel of your own school or home life scene using your choice of image perspectives.
- 5. Aaaand.....ACTION!** If *Class Act* was a movie, who would you cast to play each character? Once you've decided on a cast, create a movie trailer for the book. You can write or draw it as a storyboard. Try filming it with classmates or (if you're more like Alexandra) with puppets.



Quill Tree Books

Imprints of HarperCollinsPublishers

HarperStacks.com