



# TEACHERS' NOTES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary  
(ages 9–11; years 4 to 6)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, The Arts, Visual Literacy
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability, Ethical Understanding, Intercultural Understanding

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Key messages about friendship, looking out for each other, independence and family dynamics, in an action-packed story.
- Great way to study how story can be told both in narrative and in illustrated form, with graphic novel sections adding depth and interest.

## THEMES

- Friendship
- Superheroes
- Loss and grief
- Resilience
- Family

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia, Nat Amoore and Mike Barry

## PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9781760897697 (paperback);  
9781760147815 (ebook);  
9780143778103 (audiobook)

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## We Run Tomorrow

Nat Amoore  
With art by Mike Barry

## PLOT SUMMARY

**You can run from your past, but the future is tomorrow . . .**

*Tonight, we're gonna kidnap our best friend. And tomorrow? We run.*

Sticks, Maki, Jed and Tommy live on the same street. But the adults around them are making decisions that could tear the four friends apart.

When they discover their favourite comic book series is being made into a blockbuster movie, they know what they have to do. Get to the audition. Get the parts. Stay together.

Bestselling author Nat Amoore joins forces with acclaimed graphic novelist Mike Barry to bring you a story of four kids – and four superheroes – who are taking their future into their own hands.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nat Amooore is a Sydney-based children's author and kidlit podcast host of *One More Page*. Her debut novel, *Secrets of a Schoolyard Millionaire*, became Australia's #1 bestselling debut Aussie children's fiction in 2019. It has now sold into the UK, US, Italy, China, Estonia and Romania. Her second book, *The Power of Positive Pranking*, released in 2020, was shortlisted for the 2021 Readings Children's Book Prize and REAL Children's Choice Book Awards, and won the Environment Award for Children's Literature. Rounding out Nat's trilogy about the kids of Watterson Primary, *The Right Way to Rock* was released in June 2021 and is a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book.

In 2021, Nat wrote a 5-part fiction podcast series called *Project ARI* for Nova Entertainment and the Australian Government as part of the #StopItAtTheStart campaign. *Project Ari* has been nominated in two categories at the Australian Podcast Awards.

Find out more about Nat at [natamooore.com](http://natamooore.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Mike Barry is a writer and illustrator from Sydney's Northern Beaches. He created, crowd-funded and self-published the first two books in his middle-grade graphic novel series, Action Tank, which have been shortlisted for multiple literary awards including the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, Russell Prize for Humour Writing for Young People, Aurealis Awards and Comic Arts Awards of Australia. The first Action Tank book was also included in the NSW Premier's Reading Challenge, and earned Mike a mentorship in the CBCA Maurice Saxby Creative Development Program.

Find out more about Mike at [mikebarrywashere.com](http://mikebarrywashere.com).



Mike and Nat – story creators and superheroes!

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Nat says:

I think all my books have a little bit of me in them, and this one is no exception. I grew up in a small town (with a dam that had bite-y bugs) and I had BIG dreams of Hollywood. I always wanted to be a movie star as a kid and I wanted to get out into the 'real world'. I also remember very clearly the lack of control I felt over my own life as a kid and how frustrating that was. I wanted so desperately to be an adult and make all my own decisions about my own life. Now that I'm an adult (sort of) I wish I didn't have so many decisions to make.

Sometimes there are things going on in your life and you can't always talk to the most obvious person about them – your family, your friends – but it's super important you find SOMEONE to talk to and not bottle it up or pretend it's not happening. I really wanted to explore that.

Although you can't choose your family, you can choose your friends and the bond of friendship can be like no other. I set out to make a super fun adventure with a group of best friends taking on the world and blend that with the world of comic book action and super hero powers. Collaborating with Mike on this book was one of the most exciting and fulfilling experiences of my writing career and I absolutely love this book. I hope you do too.

## ILLUSTRATOR'S INSPIRATION

Mike says:

One of the reasons I was excited to be part of making *We Run Tomorrow* was that I remember what it was like to not love reading.

I was a kid, and while I could definitely read, I just didn't ever really think to do it. Not for fun, not to relax, not really . . . at all. Reading just wasn't a thing that happened.

Then I discovered comics. Colourful, visual, exciting. Lightweight and easy to hold. Short and easy to finish. This was imagination without the effort. Reading that didn't feel like reading. And I was hooked.

As I grew, so did my enjoyment of reading, in all its forms. Novels, articles, essays, poems, social media posts, emails, street signs . . . and these days, if there's a good story being told, I'll be there to read it. But I've never forgotten where it all began, which is why I'll never stop loving and making comics.

What a cool experience it's been, then, to work on this amazing project. To make a book that is part novel, part comic book, all completely awesome, and to do it with one of Australia's great authors (and one of my great friends), Nat Amooore.



## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Study the cover of the book. After looking at the illustration, what do you think the story will be about?
2. The cover features two lines of characters on the cover. Why do you think this is? Look closely at the differences in the style of illustration for each set. What do you think this indicates about the story?
3. The illustration is just one element that makes up the front cover – what are some other elements that create the full cover?
4. The colours of the illustration are cool-toned and dark. What do they remind you of? Do you think the cover would look as effective if the colours were different? Why or why not?
5. What does the cover tell you about the setting of the book? Are there other things you can learn? For example, why are the main characters in motion?
6. Read the blurb on the back. Why do you think short, simple sentences were used to tell people about the story?

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

### Challenging assumptions

*We Run Tomorrow* is written in the first person. Because of this, we experience the story through Sticks's eyes.

The author deliberately avoided mentioning Sticks's real name or any gender pronouns until the end of the book, to challenge readers' assumptions.

### Questions

1. Did you realise Sticks was a girl before it was revealed that her given name was Samantha? If yes, when did you guess this, and what were the clues?
2. Does finding out Sticks is a girl change your opinion of the story? Why or why not? Do you think it matters?
3. Do you think the story would have been any different if Sticks had been a boy? What about if one or more of Tommy, Maki or Jed had been girls?
4. Sticks also makes assumptions about Tahnee when they first meet. Why does Sticks think of Tahnee as an enemy, and what makes Sticks change that opinion?

### Activities

- What other assumptions did you make about Sticks and the Lockett Squad as you were reading? Create a list of assumptions as a class. Do any of these assumptions change the way you read the story? Look for evidence in the story to prove/disprove these assumptions.
- Pick a scene from the book and rewrite it, changing the gender of Tommy, Maki or Jed.
- Plan and write your own short story where the main character's gender isn't mentioned until the end of the story, then swap your story with a classmate. Can you tell the gender of their main character before it's revealed? Do you think your understanding of their story is changed by learning their main character's gender?

### Friendship and family

*We Run Tomorrow* is a story about friends sticking together, no matter what. Sticks, Tommy, Jed and Maki are the Lockett Squad, locked together. They don't want to be separated even though the adults around them are making decisions about where they will live and what's next for their lives.

### Questions

1. Think about the friendships Sticks has with Tommy, Jed and Maki. Now think about the relationship you have with your best friend or with someone you are close to. Are there similarities? Are there differences?
2. Why do you think the Lockett Squad makes such a good team?
3. What do you think makes a good friend? As a class, create a list of qualities that a good friend possesses.
4. Reflect on a challenge you have had with a friend or friendship group. How did you overcome it?
5. To Sticks, the Lockett Squad is family. Are there people in your life that are not related to you, but are still considered as part of the family?
6. How does the relationship Sticks has with the Lockett Squad compare to the relationship she has with Bryce and their parents?
7. What do you think would have happened if they hadn't run away? Would their friendship have survived if they were separated? Why/why not?

### Activities

- Make a chart listing all the similarities and differences between the members of the Lockett Squad. Think about the roles they fill when playing





Screen Savers, when making videos for their channel and when they're on their way to the audition. What are their strengths and weaknesses?

### Superheroes

Sticks, Jed, Maki and Tommy imagine themselves as the Screen Savers, superhero characters from their favourite comic series.



### Questions

- Which of the Screen Savers superpowers would you most like to have?
  - Wiki – knows the answer to every question
  - Filter – can shapeshift into anything
  - Skydrop – can teleport from one place to another
  - Hispeed – can instantly download any skill, and has a gadget arm
- What superheroes do you know of from other stories, such as those from the Marvel or DC universes? Who is your favourite and why?
- Why do you think superhero stories are so popular?

### Activities

- Design a movie poster for the Screen Savers movie.
- Write your own superhero biography, using Nat's and Mike's biographies at the end of the book as examples! See **Worksheet: My Superhero Biography**.

- Choose a superhero to research, and create a poster or powerpoint presentation of their key features. You could include headings for:
  - Superhero name
  - Origin story (how they became a superhero)
  - Secret identity
  - Superpower
  - Special objects or weapons
  - Weaknesses
  - Nemesis or villain (who your superhero battles against)
  - Team (who else is on their team, or their sidekick if they have one).

### Loss, grief and safety

One of the catalysts for the Lockett Squad's journey to the Gold Coast is that Tommy loses his grandmother and is going to be taken from his home, but this isn't the only experience of grief in the book. Throughout the story, Sticks also grieves that her family is unable to save her from harm. With the loss of Bim, Sticks loses one of her only safe places.

### Questions

- Sticks's mum says that the Lockett Squad's wild adventure means Tommy never got time to grieve. Do you think that's true? Why is it important to make time to grieve someone we have lost?
- List the reasons why Sticks and her friends run away. Which reasons were the most important to them, and why?
- Sticks is afraid to tell people about the way her brother treats her and hits her, but through the course of the story she learns that it's important to tell someone, and that Bryce's behaviour is unacceptable. Who else could she have talked to about what she was experiencing? If someone was in a similar situation at your school or in your community, make a list of people they could talk to. (For instance, a family member, a school counsellor, a local counselling service, a teacher or principal, another trusted adult, or calling a service such as Kids Helpline.)

### Visual storytelling

There are seven graphic novel segments spread throughout the book, each illustrating a different issue of The Screen Savers comic that enhances the action of the story immediately before or after it.

Author Nat Amooore wrote a script for each section, including characters' dialogue, text for narration boxes



and occasional illustration notes. Before sending the scripts to Mike Barry, the illustrator, Nat also wrote a purpose statement for each script to indicate what she wanted each graphic novel segment to achieve in its tone and the emotions experienced by the characters.

### Questions

1. Is this the first graphic novel that you have read? If not, what are the titles of others you have read? What makes the illustrated segments of *We Run Tomorrow* stand out from those of other novels? Or what makes it similar to the others?
2. Which do you think Nat Amooore came up with first – the text for the story or the script for the graphic novel segments?
3. Look at the way the text has been designed on each page of the graphic novel segments. Do you think a deliberate decision was made about making the characters' dialogue look different to the narrative sections of text? Do you think it would be as easy to read if the same font was used throughout? What other design decisions have been made to make these segments easy to read? (For example, look at spacing around the words, the dialogue bubbles and the way illustrations interact with the other elements on the page.)

Take a look at the purpose statement and original script for *Issue 2: Returning Home* in the **Worksheet** on page 7 of these notes, then compare it to the final graphic novel section on pages 81–84 of *We Run Tomorrow*. You can also find an example of Mike's illustration process in the **Worksheet** on page 8 of these notes.

1. How did you expect the graphic novel segment to look after reading the script? Do you think it fits the purpose statement?
2. How has the text changed from the original script? Why do you think this is?
3. What extra creativity and ideas do you think Mike has brought to the scene that couldn't be shown only in script or text form? For instance, look at what decisions Mike has made in illustrating the scene and how these decisions help to convey emotion, such as:
  - Which character each panel focuses on
  - When the characters are active and where they are still
  - Whether each moment has a close-in focus or a pulled-back focus
4. Imagine if *We Run Tomorrow* had no graphic novel segments. Do you think the book would feel the same? What do you think the author would have

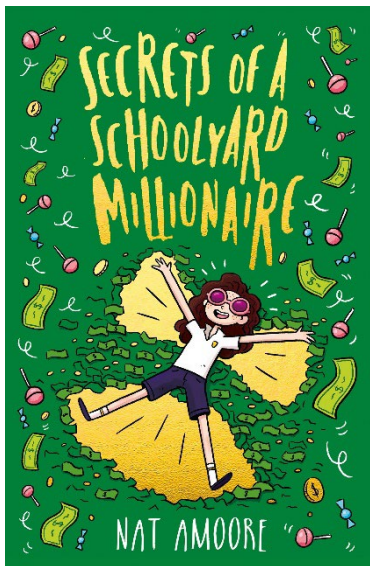
needed to do differently to hit the same emotional highs and lows if the book didn't have these segments?

### Activities

- Break into groups and discuss and list the main differences between graphic novels and regular novels. Come up with five main elements that are needed for a graphic novel to work. Share your ideas with your classmates.
- Choose a segment of the novel that isn't close to a graphic novel segment, and imagine you're going to create a graphic novel segment there. Write out the purpose statement and the kinds of things that would happen in the script from that issue of *The Screen Savers*.
- The graphic novel segments in *We Run Tomorrow* are all issues of *The Screen Savers* comic. In groups, or pairs, come up with an idea for your own comic. Work out how you would divide the work – who would write the text? Who would illustrate the story? Who is the main character? Does the character have friends? Enemies? Superpowers? Problems to solve?
- Go to the library and look at other graphic novels. Who are the protagonists of the other novels? Are they all superheroes? Are they regular kids? Can you find any graphic novels that are based on real life events? Can you find any books that combine both graphic novel segments and regular text?
- Write up an outline for a book about your own life. Where would you start the story? What events would you illustrate as graphic novel segments?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Secrets of a Schoolyard Millionaire*  
by Nat Amooore

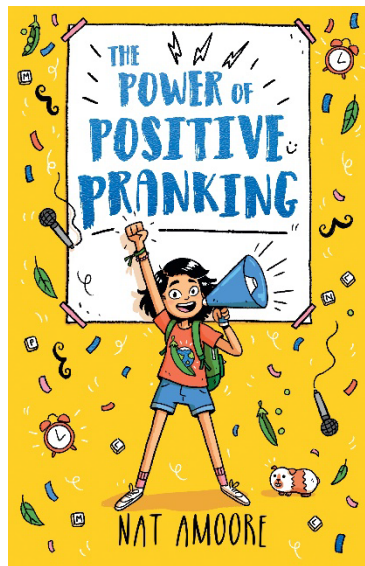
**The hilarious story of one bag of cash, two best friends and a whole lot of trouble.**

Finding a million dollars in your backyard - every kid's dream, right? That's what me and my best friend Toby thought too.

Jumping castles at school.  
Lollipops for our adoring fans.  
Wearing sunglasses indoors ('cos that's what all the millionaires do).

There's a lot you can get with a million dollars . . . including a whole lot of trouble.

Bonus tips on how to be a schoolyard millionaire inside!

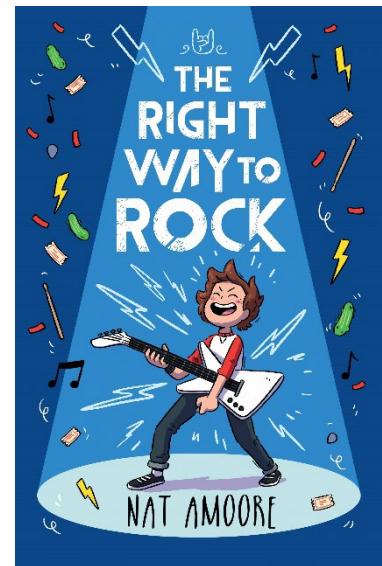


*The Power of Positive Pranking*  
by Nat Amooore

**The outrageous story of three best friends, one greedy mayor and a whole lot of pranking.**

Green Peas is our name and pranking's our game!  
A symphony of alarm clocks at assembly? Yep, that was us. A stampede of fluffy guinea pigs? It's next on our agenda.  
But for me, Cookie and Zeke, it's about more than just fun. We're determined to make a difference. And when the adults won't listen, us kids will find a way to be heard – as long as we can stay out of detention!  
No activist is too small, no prank too big... and things are about to get personal.

*Teachers' notes available.*



*The Right Way to Rock*  
by Nat Amooore

**The rockin' story of two new friends, one arts fiasco and a whole lot of music.**

Without music, the world is just blah. That's my take on life, anyway.

Mum says rock is the only music worth listening to, but I think everyone should find their own beat.

When I hear that Principal Keiren plans to cut all of the arts classes at Watterson Primary, there's no way me and my new mate Flynn are gonna let that happen. We're dragging our secret Broadway appreciation society into the spotlight.

It's time for *Watterson: The Musical!*



## WORKSHEET 1: *Issue 2: Returning Home* Script

### Purpose of Segment

---

This section should have a sombre feel, contrasting with the fun and excitement of the first section. It follows a pivotal scene and should reflect the devastation that the kids feel. Their sense of 'home' has been destroyed and they only have each other. But there is hope in that. I imagine the last scene to be quite a big panel (maybe even full page) of the four of them together looking out over a destroyed city.

### Script

---

*The Screen Savers make their way through a destroyed city, bloody and beaten post-battle.*

**NARRATIVE BOX:** Our heroes make their way through the once familiar streets of their hometown, surveying the destruction left behind by 'The Reset'.

**FILTER:** How can they have thought this amount of devastation would be worth it?

**WIKI:** Sometimes people don't think before they act.

*They pass the remains of a games arcade and pause.*

**SKYDROP:** Remember when we used to hang out here?

**HISPEED:** And you would spend all my money?

*They smile and then fall silent for a moment.*

**FILTER:** I know they wanted to annihilate the screens . . .

*Filter bends down and picks a comic off the ground, dusting it off.*

**FILTER:** But did they have to take everything else with them?

*HiSpeed puts his hand on Filter's shoulder.*

**HISPEED:** At least we still have each other.

**SKYDROP:** And that might not be all.

*SkyDrop runs off and the others follow.*

**SKYDROP:** C'mon, let's find our street.

*The Screen Savers run through the town and turn a corner to find . . .*

*Their street has been completely destroyed!*

*They run from house to house, searching for signs of life.*

**FILTER:** Mum!

**SKYDROP:** Dad!

**WIKI:** Grandma!

*HiSpeed turns to face them.*

**HISPEED:** They're all . . . gone.

*They walk to the end of the street, sitting on the edge of town, looking over a hill as the sun sets.*

*They put their arms around each other.*

**WIKI:** We still have each other.

**HISPEED:** And nothing will change that.

**SKYDROP:** Ever.

**FILTER:** Our past may have been destroyed . . .

**ALL:** But the future is tomorrow!


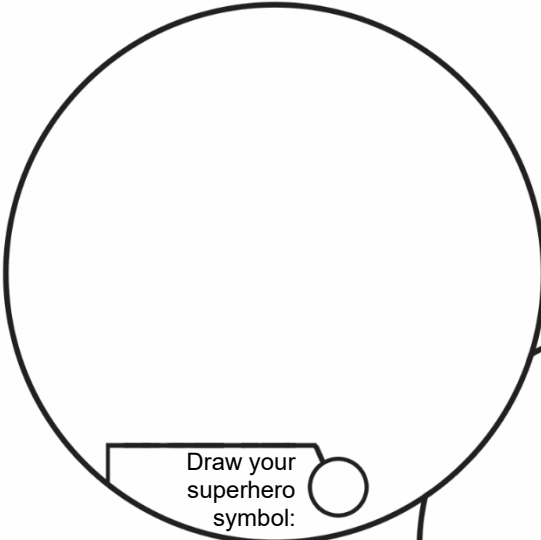
**NARRATIVE BOX:** And nothing will stop our heroes from saving that future.



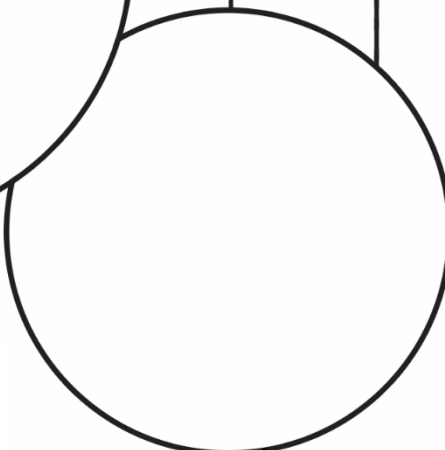
## WORKSHEET 2: My Superhero Biography

Follow Mike and Nat's examples from *We Run Tomorrow* and write your own biography of yourself as a superhero!

Your name:

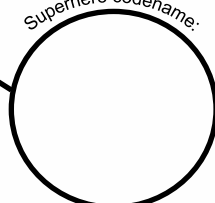


Draw your superhero symbol:



Draw your superhero costume:

Superhero codename:



**Superpowers:**

**Weaknesses:**

**First appearance:**

**Secret hideout:**

**Secret origin:**



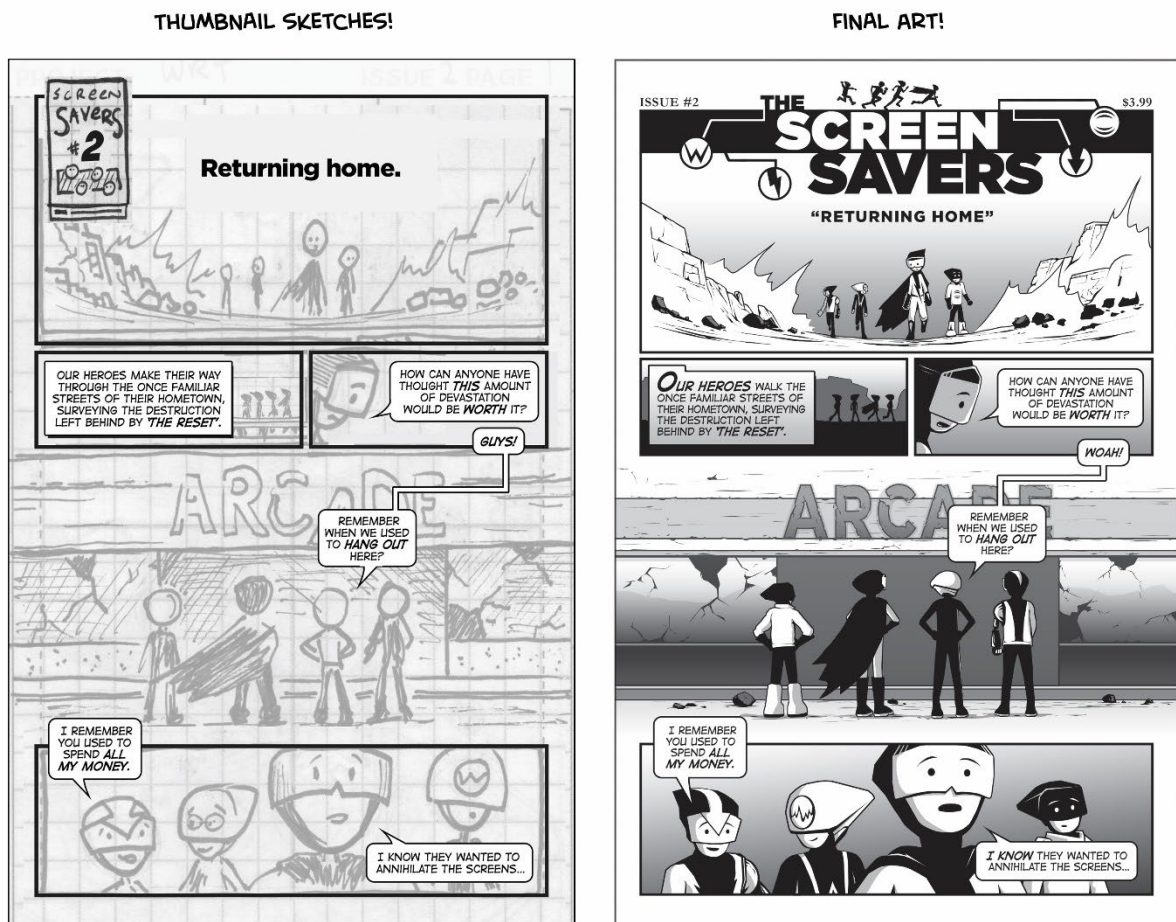
## WORKSHEET 3: Illustrating a Graphic Novel

Illustrating a graphic novel starts with thumbnail sketches that show how many panels a page will have, which text will sit where, and what scene each panel will show.

Once the thumbnail sketches are complete, the illustrator will send them to the rest of the team for feedback before moving on to final art.

This page is from Issue 2 of The Screen Savers comic. Can you see what changed between the thumbnails and the final art? The main changes were:

- A bolder title treatment that stretched across the entire top of the page to really highlight The Screen Savers (and add in the superhero silhouettes from the front cover!).
- Using a grey box with bigger, bolder letters to ensure the narration was visually different from dialogue.
- Switching up the order of the heroes shown in the last panel.



Take a look at the script in Worksheet 1. If you were illustrating this graphic novel segment, what would you have done differently? Would you have changed the illustrations in each panel? Used a different layout?

Take a sheet of paper and illustrate your own graphic novel. You could use the script from Worksheet 1, choose one of the other segments in *We Run Tomorrow* to re-imagine, or use a script you've written yourself.



## ORDER FORM

| TITLE                               | AUTHOR      | ISBN          | SCHOOL YEAR | RRP     | QTY | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------|-----|-------|
| We Run Tomorrow                     | Nat Amooore | 9781760897697 | 4-8         | \$16.99 |     |       |
| Secrets of a Schoolyard Millionaire | Nat Amooore | 9780143796374 | 4-6         | \$14.99 |     |       |
| The Power of Positive Pranking      | Nat Amooore | 9780143796381 | 4-6         | \$14.99 |     |       |
| The Right Way to Rock               | Nat Amooore | 9781760897703 | 4-6         | \$14.99 |     |       |
|                                     |             |               |             |         |     |       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |             |               |             |         |     |       |

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|---|--|

