

AGES  
9-12

CLASSROOM GUIDE

# GHOSTS

FROM THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SMILE*, *SISTERS*, AND *DRAMA*  
**RAINA TELGEMEIER**



Meets Common Core and Other Standards—SEE INSIDE

## Discussion Questions for *Ghosts*

1. At the beginning of *Ghosts*, Maya is the adventurous sister while Cat is the cautious one. What do they learn from each other by the end of the story?
2. In *Ghosts*, residents of Bahía de la Luna are accustomed to the appearance of spirits. What do you think about spirits? What would you do if you saw one?
3. Halloween is a time for spooky scares, while El Día de los Muertos is a celebration of deceased loved ones—and an opportunity to see them again. What do you think these holidays mean to the people who celebrate them? Do you like being scared on Halloween? Who might you like to meet on El Día de los Muertos?
4. Moving to Bahía de la Luna reminds Cat and Maya's mother of traditions she once shared with their grandmother, and she tells her daughters about them. What family traditions do you have that have been passed down from previous generations? Have you ever explained a family tradition to someone outside your family?
5. The spirits of Bahía de la Luna help both Cat and Maya think through how they feel about the dead and about the possibility of dying. What do you think meeting the spirits means to Maya? How about to Cat?
6. Take a look at scenes with very little dialogue, including when Cat is looking for Maya and Carlos (pp. 78-81) and the booming celebration of El Día de los Muertos (pp. 204-205). How do these scenes express emotions and action with just pictures and sound effects? Pick out your favorite details from these pages and explain why they caught your attention.
7. Both sisters learn from each other over the course of the story. Who else helps each sister see the world differently? Pick one of these characters and explain how they help.
8. Cat and Maya have different ways of dealing with Maya's condition. How would you describe how Maya approaches life? How about Cat? How do you think the feelings of someone who is ill are different from the person who cares for them?
9. Cat doesn't like Carlos very much at first, especially because their first adventure ends with Maya in the hospital. Eventually, Carlos asks for forgiveness and Cat starts to see him in a better light. Why do you think she can't forgive Carlos at first?



- What changes her mind?
10. Look at pages 74 and 75. How does the change in color affect the way you read these pages? What does the color shift tell you about the mood and atmosphere of the setting?
  11. Being brave is important in *Ghosts*: both proving to yourself that you can be brave and bravery as an example to others. It can be as simple as not being afraid to talk to someone, or as significant as leaping off a great height and trusting your friends to catch you. Pick a scene where you think a character is being brave and explain why you think it's a good example for the other characters (and for readers).

# Thumbnail Theater Challenge

When Raina creates a comic, she is both the writer and the illustrator. She has to think through both ways of telling the story at once. Take a look at these examples of thumbnail sketches (<http://goraina.com/2013/08/graphic-novels-the-tools-of-the-trade/>) or look at the Hourly Comic Day that Raina takes part in every year to see how comics can be unpolished and sketchlike, but still tell stories well. (<http://goraina.com/2016/02/hourly-comic-day-2016/>).

For this activity, you can choose to be a writer or an illustrator, or you can try to do both!

Artists should draw a story in four to six panels with thumbnail sketches—these can be very rough pictures created with any medium (pencil, pen, digital tools, etc.). The images can be as simple as stick figures with a few setting details if needed. Make sure to draw speech bubbles where characters might be talking and leave space for words or sound effects to be added in!

Writers should write or type a story script that will fit into four to six panels. Pay attention to the dialogue to make sure it works with the space and think about what sound effects or suggestions for the artist you might want to include. Make sure you provide information on the characters involved, notes to the artist on what and who needs to be in each panel, any sounds, and what is spoken dialogue versus internal thoughts versus narration.

Once you're finished with the thumbnails or script, swap them with your partner. If you're a student who decided to do both, team up with another writer-artist to swap scenes.

If you're receiving a script, it's your turn to illustrate based on what your partner has written. Illustrate on a new page or on the back of the script. Remember not to worry too much about making it perfect—get a sense of the characters, their movement, where they are, and the dialogue.

Writers, figure out what's happening in the illustrated scene. What might the characters be saying? Are any of the characters thinking instead of speaking? Could one of the panels work best with no dialogue? What sound effects would be written on the page, and how would they appear in the art? Write your narration, internal thoughts, or dialogue on a separate page, on the back of the page, or above/below the panels.

When you're both happy with how you've interpreted and added to your partner's piece, swap back and see what your partner did to enhance it. Work together to create a finished thumbnail sketch with pictures and words together for both of your stories, and combine what you think are the strongest parts of each person's work.



# Classroom Activities

## Story Starter

Present students with a sequence of panels starting with panels one, two, and three of page 34. After that sequence, follow the panels with blank panels and ask the students to fill in what they think happens next.



## Fill in the Blank

Hand out examples of comic sequences with the text removed and have students fill in what they think the characters might be saying. See what they can gather from the visual context, and finally reveal the actual panels with text to see how everyone's brainstormed ideas compare to what the author intended.



## Mix It Up

Give each student, or group of students, a selection of panels featuring around ten different scenes or images, with each panel on its own sheet of paper. Have each student/group move the images around like tiles in a word game to create a story using six of the given panels. Once they've recorded their story, ask them to swap out one image with one not yet used. How does that change the story?



## Onomatopoeia

Introduce the concept of onomatopoeia using the sound effects from graphic novel panels as examples. Hand out copies of pages from graphic novels that use onomatopoeia, and have the students create their own three- to four-panel comic strips using similar words.

## Graphic Novel Book Reports

Instead of writing up a traditional book report, have your students present their book reports in comics format. Encourage the students to think carefully about which scenes they will feature, what the dialogue will be, and what details are necessary to convey the important parts of the story. Students may create their own art or use online comics creators, like ReadWriteThink's Comic Creator, to illustrate their chosen scenes.

## Graphic Novel Creation

For older students, through a few basic story prompts and an investigation of how graphic novels and comics are created, each can try their hand at writing a script and then see how an artist might adapt their script.

## Mix and Match

Have students pick a number from 1–15 (corresponding to the character listing below) and from 16–37 (corresponding to the attributes listing), keeping the characters and attributes secret until students have made their selections. If you want to add another layer of complexity, ask students to pick two numbers from the list of attributes.

Once everyone has chosen, reveal to each student their character and attributes as assigned randomly by the numbers.

When everyone has their characters and attributes, present the class or small groups with one of the scenarios and have them write a story or discuss what would happen with their characters.

### Characters

1. A musical theater enthusiast
2. A singing and dancing actor
3. A natural comedian
4. A smart but demanding popular kid
5. A handsome charmer
6. A loyal friend
7. A fun troublemaker
8. A ghost hunter
9. A skeptic about all things supernatural
10. A local history nerd
11. An inventive builder
12. A tech genius
13. A talented musician
14. A new-in-town adventurer
15. A cautious but curious explorer

### Attributes

16. Loves to draw
17. Can't draw even a stick figure
18. Can perform anything
19. Has terrible stage fright
20. Has a terrible singing voice
21. Is really shy
22. Is really outgoing
23. Is easily spooked
24. Can face down any monster
25. Is charming but not sincere
26. Is both nice and honest
27. Can build anything
28. Will work hard on any project
29. Loves to read and research
30. Hates schoolwork
31. Gets angry easily
32. Is really calm all the time
33. Takes everything very seriously
34. Treats life like a wacky adventure
35. Always cracks jokes
36. Depends on logic to solve any problem
37. Prefers thinking outside the box



### Scenarios

1. It's the first night of the school play, and your player needs to go on stage for the first time with only a day to prepare. Who will save the play? How?
2. It's the first day of school and your player overhears one student being mean to another in the hallway. Would your player step in? What would they do?
3. It's the first day in a new town, and you're exploring the neighborhood. What would your player most want to find?
4. Everyone has been invited to go on a hike through the creepy woods just down the street. Who will have the most thrilling adventure?
5. In a group of friends, one person has just gotten new braces and they feel awkward and self-conscious. What would your player do to make them feel better?
6. Everyone is going to explore the house down the street that's rumored to be haunted. Would your player be first or last in line to go? Who would be able to remain inside the house the longest?
7. The town is having a big costume party that's happening in a few hours and everyone's invited, but your character doesn't have a costume yet. What would your player choose to wear?



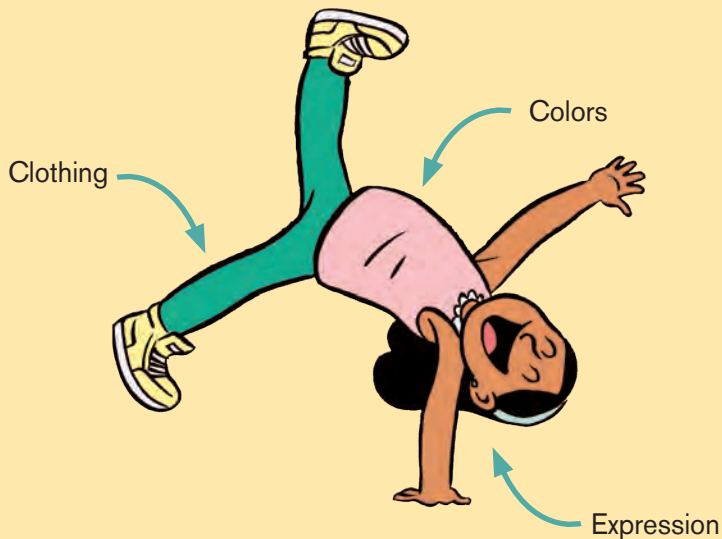


## Character Design

Using images of various characters from Raina's works, discuss the trademarks of how each character is designed: their body shape, their expressions, their clothing, and the colors used in each illustration.

As an artist, Raina has a consistent style, so how does she make each character unique?

If you were drawn in Raina's style, what might define your look? Do you have a favorite piece of clothing you frequently wear? A hairstyle? Jewelry? Would you never be without your phone?



### Draw a character of your own here!

You can base it on yourself, a friend of yours, or any character you want to create!





## Creative Costuming

When dressing up, Cat decides to celebrate her name and her heritage by dressing as La Catrina. If you had to dress up in honor of your name, what would you choose? What types of clothes and accessories remind you of your family and home? Are there any myths or folklore associated with your family background, your name, or your interests that you think would make a great costume?

**Draw a costume inspired by your name or your family.**

Be sure to point out the details!



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# Setting the Table

In *Ghosts*, Cat and Maya enjoy all sorts of delicious food and drink made by their mother and by the people of Bahía de la Luna.



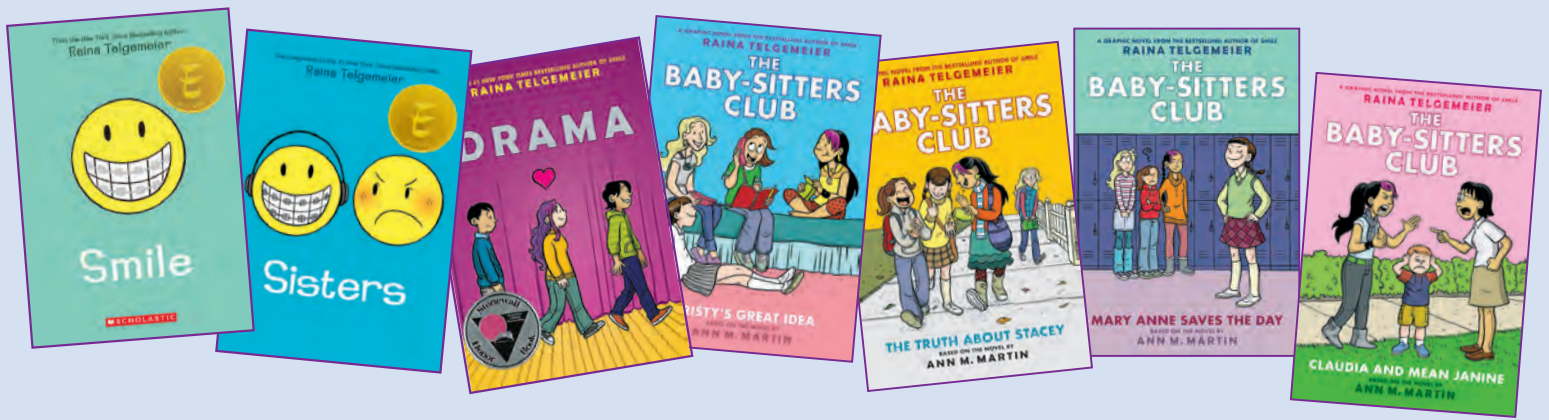
For many people, home and family are always linked to the food they love, the treats they make together, and the smells and tastes of dinner at home. What kinds of food are your favorites in your house? Does a member of your family make a specialty? What does it look like? Smell like? How would you describe it so that someone else would want to try it?

## Draw a picture of your favorite family dish.

Add notes to let people know what ingredients make it tasty and what decorations make it just how you like it.



# Discussion Questions for Raina's Graphic Novels



Raina Telgemeier charms readers everywhere with her engaging, artful comics highlighting stories about girls, growing up, and the push and pull of relationships between family and friends. Use these questions to consider what similarities and what differences her books have.

1. Raina adapted four titles in Ann M. Martin's *Baby-sitters Club* series into graphic novels, wrote her own story with *Smile* and *Sisters*, and then turned to fiction with *Drama* and now *Ghosts*. How do you think writing one's own story is different from writing another person's story?
2. When Raina adapted the *Baby-sitters Club* books into graphic novels, she had to make decisions about what the characters looked like and how to depict their surroundings. How do you think she decided what each character looked like and the outfits they wore? What their rooms looked like? Do you think it's difficult to create a picture of a character from someone else's description?
3. *Drama* is a fictional story but also draws from Raina's real-life experiences in theater during her middle- and high-school years. If you had to pick one activity you're passionate about and write a story about it, what would it be? Do you think it would be close to your own life? If you wanted to turn it into someone else's story, what story would you tell?
4. Raina's memoirs, *Smile* and *Sisters*, are both about a specific time in her life, and events that happened while she was growing up. If you had to choose a time period or event from your life to write about, what would it be? Who would you want to help you remember those times?
5. Raina's stories all feature girls as main characters. Are there any girls in your life who could be the subject of stories like the ones Raina tells? Why do you think their stories are interesting?
6. Raina tells the stories of people who may "fly below the radar": kids who are not the most popular in school, or who prefer to stay behind the scenes of a theater production instead of going on stage. Why do you think she likes to tell the stories of these kids? What do you think the advantages of being outside of the major action are, whether it's on a stage, during a game, or in everyday life?
7. Think about the people in your life. Who might have an unexpectedly interesting story? Who do you know who may not be recognized for their talents or personalities?
8. Some comics creators are only writers, or only artists, and then they work with a team of people to create a complete story. When Raina creates comics, she both writes and draws them. When you tell a story, do you think in pictures or do you feel more comfortable with words? If you wanted to tell a story, would you prefer to use pictures, words, or both?

## Common Core Standards Used in This Guide

### Fourth Grade

#### Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 4.1, 4.2, 4.3

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas – RL 4.7

#### Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.1d

### Fifth Grade

#### Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

Craft and Structure – RL 5.5, 5.6

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas – RL 5.7

#### Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 5.1a, 5.1b, 5.1c, 5.1d

### Sixth Grade

#### Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

Craft and Structure – RL 6.5

#### Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

### Seventh Grade

#### Reading Literature

Key Ideas and Details – RL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

#### Speaking and Listening

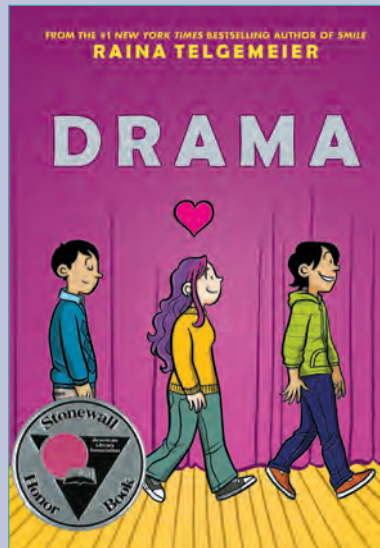
Comprehension and Collaboration – SL 7.1, 7.2, 7.3

# OTHER BOOKS BY RAINA TELGEMEIER



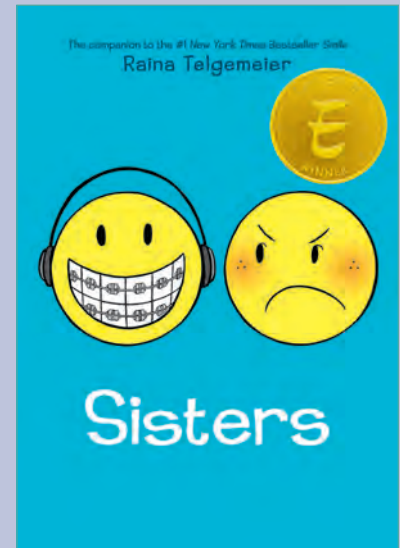
## Smile

224 pages • 5 1/2" x 8" • Ages 8–12 • Full Color  
 HC: 978-0-545-13205-3 • \$24.99  
 PB: 978-0-545-13206-0 • \$10.99  
 EBK: 978-0-545-78001-8 • \$10.99



## Drama

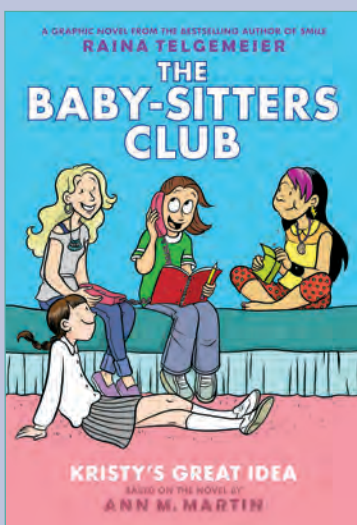
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## Sisters

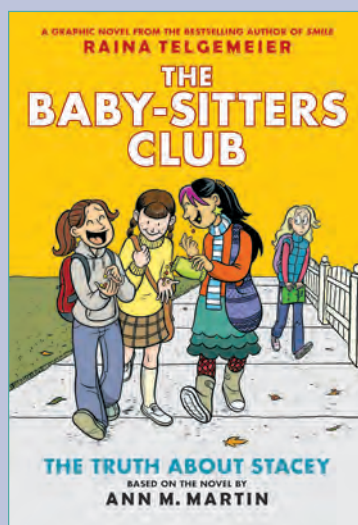
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## BY RAINA TELGEMEIER, BASED ON THE NOVELS BY ANN M. MARTIN



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 EBK: 978-0-545-82908-3 • \$10.99



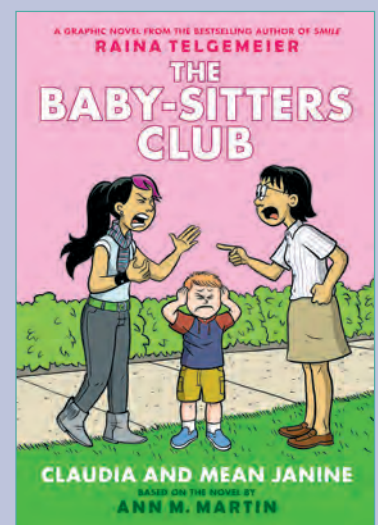
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 EBK: 978-0-545-89066-3 • \$10.99



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 PB: 978-0-545-88622-2 • \$10.99  
 EBK: 978-0-545-89068-7 • \$10.99

Each: 144–192 pages • 5 1/2" x 8" • Ages 8–12 • Full Color



Photo Credit: Cassandra Pelham

## About Raina

Raina Telgemeier is the author and illustrator of the graphic novels *Smile*, *Drama*, and *Sisters*, all #1 *New York Times* bestsellers. She also adapted and illustrated four graphic novel versions of Ann M. Martin's *Baby-sitters Club* series. Raina's accolades include two Eisner Awards, a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor, a Stonewall Honor, and many Notable lists. Raina lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## About *Ghosts*

Catrina and her family are moving to the coast of Northern California because her little sister, Maya, is sick. Cat isn't happy about leaving her friends for Bahía de la Luna, but Maya has cystic fibrosis and will benefit from the cool, salty air that blows in from the sea. As the girls explore their new home, a neighbor lets them in on a secret: There are ghosts in Bahía de la Luna. Maya is determined to meet one, but Cat wants nothing to do with them. As the time of year when ghosts reunite with their loved ones approaches, Cat must figure out how to put aside her fears for her sister's sake—and her own.



Full Color • 256 pages • 5 1/2" x 8"

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