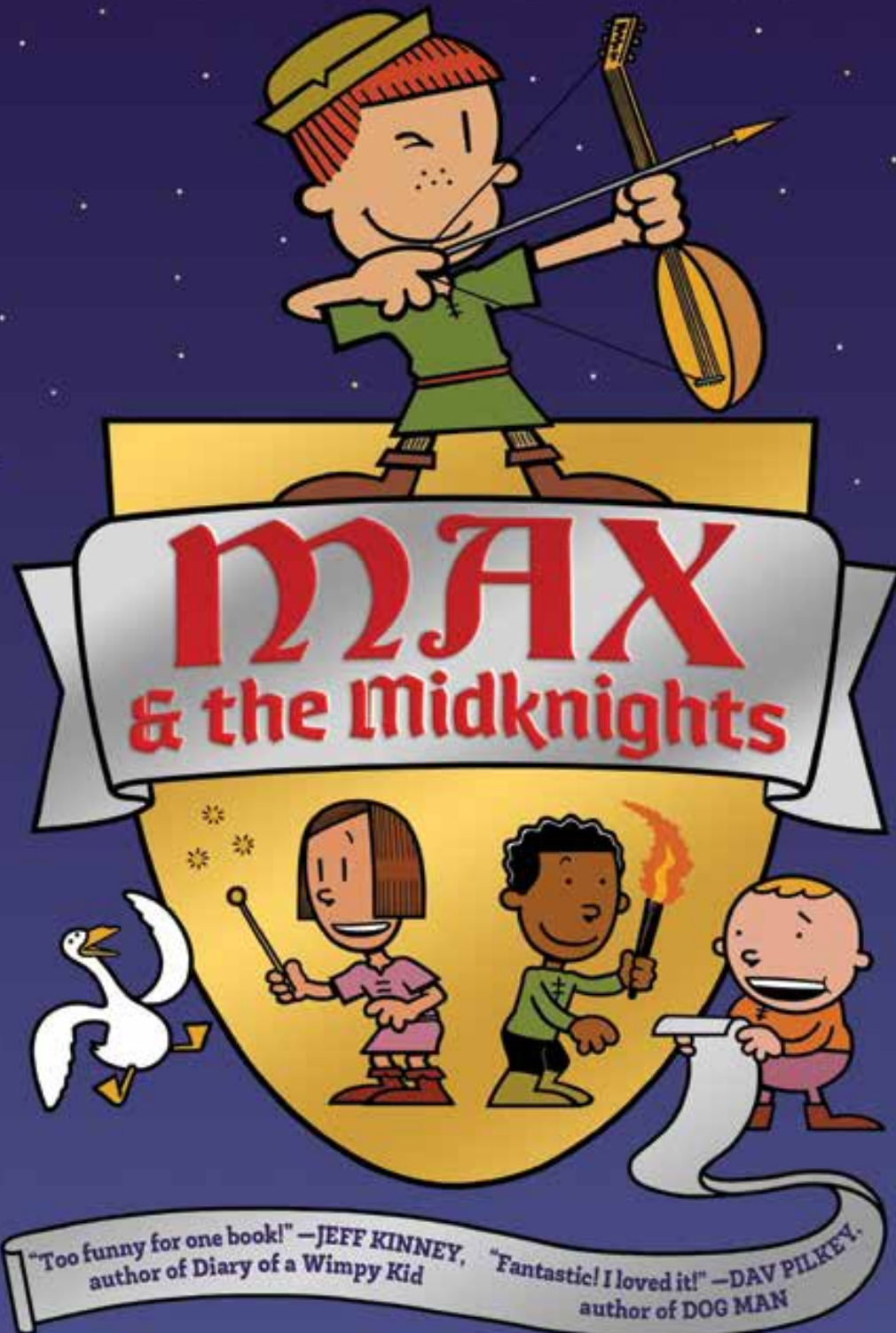


Creator of **BIG NATE**
Lincoln Peirce



EDUCATORS' GUIDE

ADVENTURE!
THRILLS! **LAUGHS!**



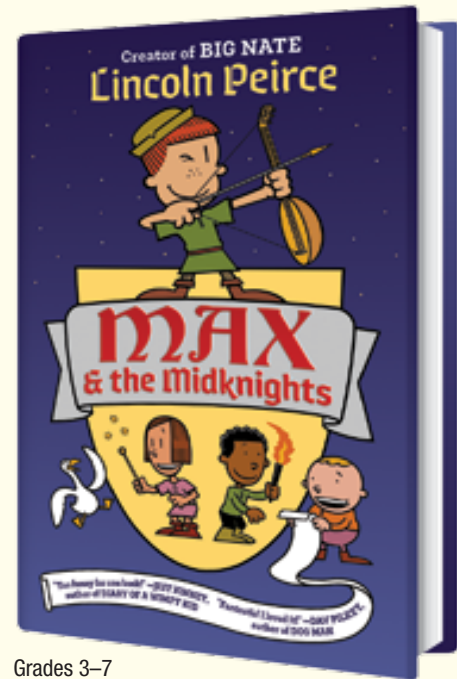
"MAX & THE MIDKNIGHTS" IS **AWESOME!**

ABOUT THE BOOK

Lincoln Peirce's illustrated novel, *Max & the Midknights*, follows a plucky band of misfits as they embark on a thrilling quest to rescue the realm of Byjovia from the oppression of an evil king. Along the way, they meet magicians, evil witches, kings, knights, and even a dragon. The Midknights' journey teaches them important lessons about the power of friendship and what defines a true leader and, in the end, helps them realize that family is made up of much more than flesh and blood.

The protagonist of *Max & the Midknights*, Max, is a rebellious kid who wants nothing more than to be a knight. But Max's uncle Budrick is a troubadour, or traveling entertainer, and expects Max to join the family business . . . much to Max's chagrin. The duo's travels take them to the city of Byjovia, where the once-happy kingdom has become a harsh, unfriendly place thanks to the cruel King Gastley and evil witch Fendra. When Budrick is kidnapped, Max joins forces with a band of brave misfits to save Uncle Budrick and restore the realm of Byjovia to its former glory.

A hilarious novel full of magic, humor, and wacky misadventures, *Max & the Midknights* combines images and prose to create a unique reading experience, while tackling important themes like gender, identity, destiny, and family in fun and refreshing ways.



Grades 3–7
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CREATOR OF THE
NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLING
BIG NATE SERIES...

THE AUTHOR, LINCOLN PEIRCE

Max & the Midknights, Lincoln's first book for Crown Books for Young Readers, originated as an unfinished spoof of sword and sorcery tales. Returning to the idea years later, Lincoln rewrote the story around Max, a ten-year-old apprentice troubadour who dreams of becoming a knight. The result is a high-spirited medieval adventure, supported by hundreds of dynamic illustrations employing the language of comics. Of the lively visual format that has become his trademark, Lincoln says, "I try to write the sort of books I would have loved reading when I was a kid."

Meet the Characters from



CAN **ANYONE**
SAVE BYJOVIA?
THE **MIDNIGHTS**
AND I ARE READY
TO TRY!



MIXED-UP MAGIC
TURNED ME FROM A
TROUBADOUR...
TO A **GOOSE!**



I'M A **WRITER**,
NOT A FIGHTER!
REMEMBER THESE
WORDS: **KNOWLEDGE**
IS POWER!



I WAS ORPHANED
AND ALONE...
UNTIL I PICKED
UP A **MAGIC**
WAND!



I **ALMOST** WENT TO THE **DUNGEON!** BUT INSTEAD I BECAME A **MIDKNIGHT!**



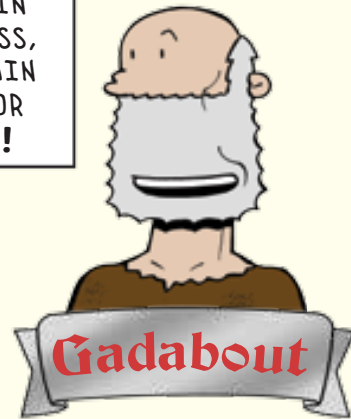
MY LIFE WAS VERY "**STABLE**"! THEN I MET THE **MIDKNIGHTS!**



I WAS ONCE THE **TRUE** RULER OF BYJOVIA! THEN I DISAPPEARED... BUT TO **WHERE?**



AFTER YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, I'M **FREE** AGAIN TO **FIGHT** FOR WHAT'S **RIGHT!**



MY BEST DAYS AS A **WIZARD** ARE BEHIND ME! OR **ARE** THEY?



THE PEOPLE OF BYJOVIA WILL BOW DOWN BEFORE **ME...** OR **ELSE!**



YOU HAVEN'T A CHANCE AGAINST THE **SORCESS** OF THE NORTH!





ESTABLISH THEMES

Gender Roles: Gender roles in the world of *Max & the Midnights* are thought of as black-and-white: girls are supposed to cook, clean, and entertain, while boys are able to become knights and magicians. Max helps upend these gender “norms” and show that girls are just as adventurous and brave as the boys.

Identity: Each of the characters struggles with who they want to become. They feel trapped by society’s expectations to follow in the footsteps of their family’s trade. As they discover their passions and talents, they also begin to figure out what makes them different from those around them, even their own family, and the kind of future they want for themselves.

Fate vs. Choice: Max and many of her friends struggle between whether their futures are determined by outside forces, such as their parents or prophecies, or if their own choices define them.

Rebellion: Fighting against the status quo shows up frequently in *Max & the Midnights*. Characters rebel against family expectations, oppressive governments, assumed gender roles, and much more as they seek to free the land of Byjovia from King Gastley.

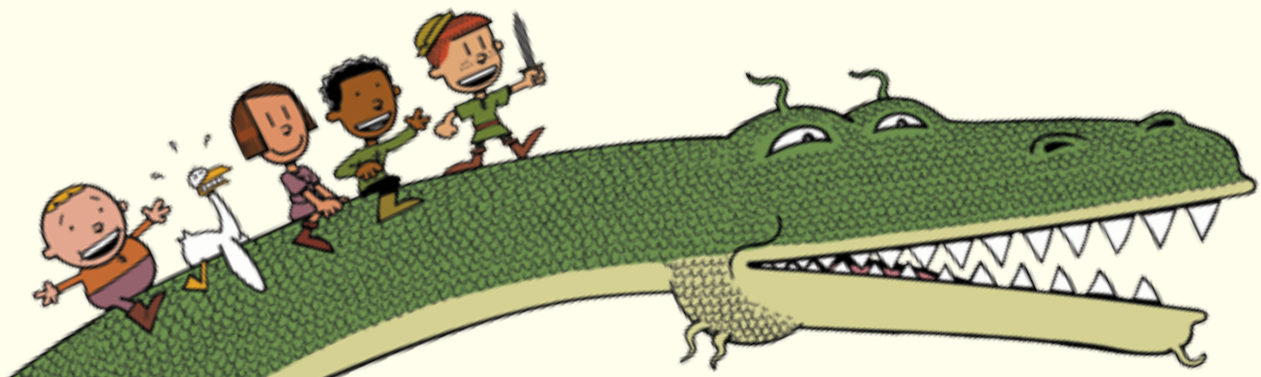
Family: Relationships in the novel are built around family, both by blood and by choice. It’s this constructed family that binds the characters together and creates tension. The characters learn that every family has its pros and cons, but that you must stay true to who you are because each family member offers something unique.

Leadership: Each character exhibits different qualities of what makes a good or bad leader. These qualities and decisions have ripples that affect everyone.

Power vs. Responsibility: While some characters seek power for power’s sake, others understand that power comes with a responsibility that must be respected for the greater good.

Oppression: The oppressive forces of King Gastley and Fendra show how people respond to pressure, and why it’s so important to rebel against oppressive leaders and societies, even when sacrifices are required.

Hope: In spite of their struggles, each of the characters shows hope for the future—in themselves, others, and the world around them. This is what drives them to create the world that they wish to see.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

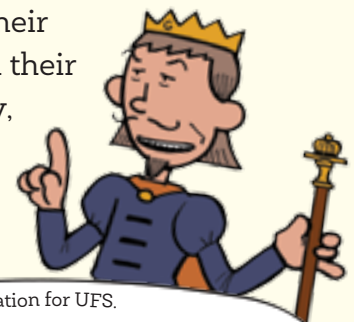


- Max and her friends struggle with the idea that their future has been predetermined by their parents, the government, or prophecies. In our society, what parts of your future are predetermined, and what parts do you get to decide for yourself? What can you change?
- Traditionally, kids are not seen as having power, especially the power to make change. What do you think prevents kids from having that power? How do the characters in *Max & the Midknights* challenge this perception? How can you challenge this perception in your life?
- At the end of Chapter 3, Max reveals that she is a girl. Why do you think the author chose to reveal this when he did? Did the reveal change how you felt about Max or the story? How does being a girl affect the way other characters perceive Max? Have you ever hidden a part of your identity because you felt people might react negatively? How did that feel?
- Throughout the book, Max expresses her dreams of becoming a knight. Part of a knight's duty is to help others, which Max does often. What do you think motivates Max to help others? What motivates you to help others in your life?
- The Midknights are a diverse group, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each Midknight? How would their adventure have been different if one of the Midknights wasn't there? Which of these characters do you connect with? Why?
- In *Max & the Midknights*, we see multiple leadership styles. What makes a good leader? What makes a bad leader? Can good leaders sometimes make bad decisions, and vice versa?
- Ultimately, the Midknights' adventure leads them to finding King Conrad. Did you know this was coming? If so, what clues did the author give that made you believe they would meet the king? What clues helped you know that the boy the Midknights rescued from the tower was actually King Conrad?
- *Max & the Midknights* is told with both words and pictures. Look at the illustrations. What elements help you understand what is going on in the story? Why do you think the author chose to switch to words (or prose) at certain parts of the story?
- In King Gastley's Byjovia, people are punished for being poor and homeless. Why do you think King Gastley enforces this rule? Do you agree or disagree with this policy? In real life, are people punished for being poor or homeless? How?



PROJECT IDEAS

- **Good vs. Bad Leaders:** *Max & the Midknights* offers many perspectives on what makes a good leader and how leaders can affect those around them. Students can create a project that compares and contrasts leaders in the real world to those in the book, noting what makes them effective or ineffective. Encourage students to be specific about choices made by these leaders to support their findings. They might find that many leaders have elements of both!
- **Foreshadowing:** In *Max & the Midknights*, many plot points are foreshadowed. Students can study foreshadowing and find specific parts of the text that give clues of what might happen later. This can be put into a graphic organizer, or on a poster, or created as an electronic presentation.
- **Character Development:** Many of the characters in *Max & the Midknights* go through significant change. Specifically, Max's story arc closely follows the model of the traditional hero's journey. Establish the defining characteristics of the hero's journey with students, and have them map out the points in the story that define Max's journey.
- **Alternate cover:** Students can use their critical thinking skills and creativity to analyze the cover of the book, then create an alternate cover. They can discuss what the published cover does and doesn't reveal about the book and how it builds intrigue. They should be prepared to explain their reasoning for the elements they chose to include on their alternate cover.
- **Reclaiming Byjovia:** Students should form groups and assign themselves roles as members of the *Midknights*, such as knight, wizard, scholar, etc. They should then formulate a plan for infiltrating and reclaiming Byjovia. How would they break the spell that is making the citizens of Byjovia hateful? How can they reinstate a kind and caring ruler? What else might they change about Byjovia? How does each member contribute to the plan using their skills and knowledge?
- **Create a Comic:** Students can draw their own comic or create a mix of comic and prose, like in *Max & the Midknights*. Their creation can detail their own hero's journey, showing their understanding of the concept.





Make Your Own Graphic Novel



LET YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD!

Use a combination of art and words to tell your story! Fill each panel with a different scene, and make sure to include speech bubbles so we'll know which characters are saying what.

Here are some questions you can answer to help you dream up your perfect story: Will it take place on this planet or another? Are your main characters superheroes or normal kids? What kind of adventure will they go on? Only you know the answers!

Write your graphic novel's title here!

