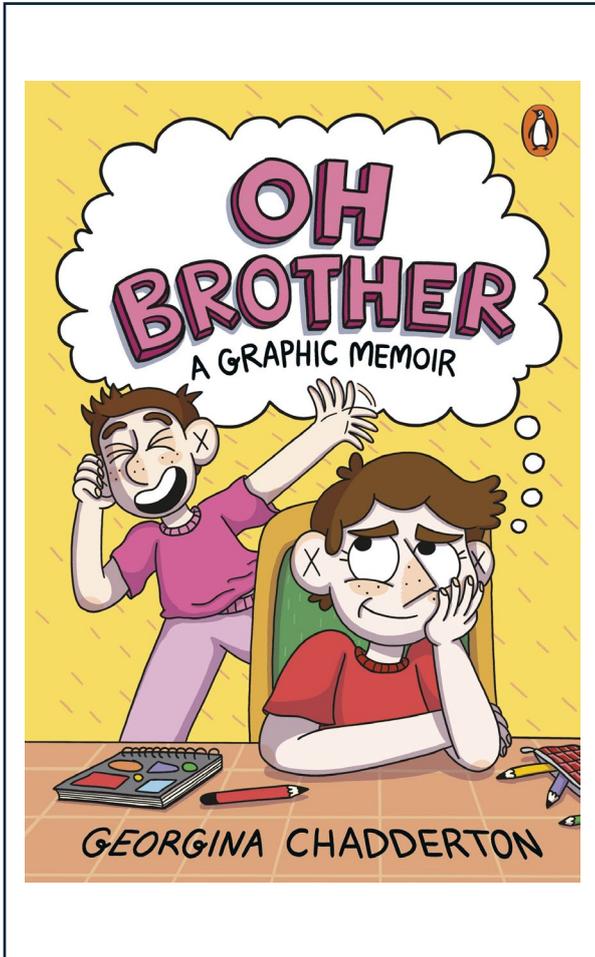




Teacher's Resources



PLOT SUMMARY

New house.

New school.

New best friend?

For a nervous kid who doesn't like change, it's a lot to deal with.

And that's before Gina's brother, Rob, gets involved.

From stealing Gina's treats to climbing on the neighbours' garage roof, Rob has a knack for causing chaos. Gina knows he doesn't mean it, but worries that his quirks might scare off her new friend, Callie. Then again, maybe Gina's own quirks are enough to drive Callie away!

This heartfelt and irresistible graphic memoir captures the complicated feelings that come from growing up with an autistic sibling who requires substantial support. It's a story about friendship, family, disability, and the power of Vegemite toast.

RECOMMENDED FOR

(ages 9 - 11; years 4 to 6)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

• Learning areas: English • General capabilities: Literacy; Critical and creative thinking; Ethical understanding

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

• Heartfelt, beautiful graphic novel about Gina and her experiences living with her brother, Rob who has autism and an intellectual disability during a pivotal time in her life. This book explores neurodiversity (specifically autism and intellectual disability), family and friends as well as personal identity.

THEMES

• Belonging and identity • Family and friends • Neurodiversity.

PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9781761046346 (paperback); 9781760148492 (ebook).

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Oh Brother

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Georgina Chadderton (she/they) is an awkward yet friendly Australian cartoonist with an undying love of eating snacks, drinking green tea, patting dogs and playing roller derby. Although Georgina has been published all over the globe, *Oh Brother* is her first full-length graphic novel. When they're not making comics, Georgina co-directs Papercuts Comics Festival, runs comics-making workshops and reads comics by their favourite comics makers (basically, it's all comics, all the time). Georgina lives on Kaurua Yerta (Adelaide) in South Australia with her partner Owen and their distressingly large collection of books. Find out more at geogrexcomics.com

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Growing up, I didn't see myself or my brother reflected in any media. There was little autistic representation in general at that time and even less that I felt represented my experiences as a sibling. I wanted to share my perspective of my relationship with Rob so that other young people currently experiencing similar things could see that they were not alone. I also wanted to help those who haven't had such experiences learn more about what it can be like, feel like they could ask questions, and gain more empathy for different family dynamics. As for why I chose comics as the medium: comics are rad! (Why, yes, I am from the early 90s.) Using words and

pictures together has always been the way I feel I'm best at communicating.

There were lots of challenging and rewarding parts to making this book, but I think one of the hardest things was learning to not take critical feedback on the book (from editors and other comics makers) personally. In fact, it's still something I struggle with, particularly when I'm writing personal stories. But even though the editing and feedback sessions were really hard and emotionally draining, I think that the book is much better for it, and that's very rewarding!

The message I wanted to get across in *Oh Brother* is that everyone's family dynamic is different; it might not always be easy but that doesn't mean it's wrong. There can be lots of different emotions and feelings around having a sibling who has high support needs. Sometimes those emotions can make you feel awful and overwhelmed, and you might not always have someone around to talk to about it. I hope this book can be a comfort and support to those with similar experiences.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

1. What are you expecting from this book based on the cover?
2. Look closely at the cover. What do you think this book will be about? Which elements on the cover make you think this?
3. Who do you think the characters on the front cover are?
4. This is a 'graphic memoir'. How would you describe a memoir? What is the difference between a memoir and a novel?
5. Do you think this is a good title for the memoir? How do you think it ties in with the story?
6. The characters on the front cover aren't looking at each other, but how has the illustrator made sure you know they are connected?
7. How do you think each of the characters on the cover are feeling? What emotion are they conveying?



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WRITING STYLE

Oh Brother is written as a comic, created by Georgina. The use of visual storytelling creates an engaging and accessible style.

Questions and activities

1. What does the comic strip format add to the story that you wouldn't otherwise get in a typical novel?
2. Graphic novels have a visual language unique to this type of storytelling. Can you find examples of this within the story?
3. How does the author convey how Gina is feeling within the story using illustration rather than words? Find two examples of this.
4. Pick a section of the story that features Callie and rewrite/redraw it from her point of view.

VISUAL LITERACY

The comic strip illustrations in this graphic novel allow for deeper understanding and meaning in the book. Georgina illustrates facial expressions, creates diagrams and uses vibrant colours throughout the novel to emphasise the accompanying text.

Gina introduces herself and Rob through drawing a diagram of each person (see pages 18–19), and labels their favourite things, distinguishable features, or if they have certain clothes they prefer to wear.

Questions and activities

1. Throughout the novel, the author leaves some panels empty of text. Why do you think this is? Can you get a deeper understanding of how Gina is feeling from her facial expressions?
2. Find a scene in the story where vibrant colours are used to enhance the emotions Gina might be feeling?
3. How has Georgina made it clear to the reader when Gina is having a memory or a flashback to her younger days? For example, how are pages 96 & 97 different compared to pages 106 & 107? Do you think this is a good technique for this type of story?

Can you think of other ways this might have been signposted for the reader?

4. Research how graphic novels or comics are created. What is usually the first step for the creator? (For example, text/line work/colouring?)
5. Create your own graphic novel or comic using the research from point 4 (above). Firstly, decide on a topic for a comic. Then create a couple of pages to present to your classmates. (You could organise a comic swap as well!) You could start by illustrating character roughs, then plotting a short scene for them to be in.
6. Create an illustration of yourself, as if you were using it to introduce yourself to others. Make sure you label hobbies, interests, favourite things, favourite clothes etc.
7. Look at the colours Georgina has used throughout the comic. What do you notice about them? Why do you think she has made the decision to use such bold and bright blocks of colour?
8. Choose a chapter of the book that you particularly liked. Write this chapter in a narrative format. Don't forget that you will have to describe many of the visual cues that Georgina has included.

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Autism and Intellectual disabilities

Gina's younger brother Rob has autism and an intellectual disability, and through this novel we get an insight into her family's life. *Oh Brother* provides an understanding of the daily life of living with someone with autism and an intellectual disability. The family have a few provisions in place to make things safe and accessible for Rob and the rest of the family.

Questions and activities

1. Is there anything new you learnt about autism or intellectual disabilities that you didn't know previously from reading *Oh Brother*? What was it?
2. Research neurodiversity. Can you write a definition of what this is? And share it with the class.
3. Can you name a few steps that Gina's parents take to make things accessible and safe for Rob and the rest of the family?



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- Gina expresses frustration at times, however her support and love for Rob really shines through. Can you name some moments in the novel where Gina shows understanding and patience, even when it may have been difficult for her?
- Do you have a sibling? What is your relationship like? Are there similarities between your relationship with your sibling and Gina's relationship with Rob? (For example, do you get annoyed when your sibling touches your stuff without asking?)

Family and friendships

Throughout the novel, we can see the support that Gina provides but also receives from her family and her best friend, Callie. Gina assists around the household, and looks after Rob, and we also see the support her parents provide her with to ensure she has her own space and time to see her friends.

Questions and activities

- In what ways do Gina's parents support her to ensure she is still able to see her friends and relax?
- Gina expresses anxiety surrounding her relationship with her friend, Callie. What does Callie say or do when Gina expresses these concerns to her? How do you think Gina felt hearing this?
- Do you think this novel provides support to parents and siblings in terms of understanding autism and intellectual disabilities, and ways to further understand the best ways to support their child/sibling?
- The author says: '... one of the hardest things was learning to not take critical feedback on the book (from editors and other comics makers) personally'. How do you think you take feedback when it is given to you? Why do you think feedback can be important? What is the difference between constructive feedback and non-constructive feedback?
- The author says that 'I wanted to share my perspective of my relationship with Rob so that other young people currently experiencing similar things could see that they were not alone.'

Do you think she's been successful in this? Who else do you think might benefit from reading this memoir?

Self-identity

An underlying theme of *Oh Brother* is self-confidence and identity. This novel takes place in a period of significant change for Gina. While starting at a new school, and moving house, Gina is also going through puberty. Throughout the novel, we can see Gina's discomfort with telling her parents about her period, her anxiety about not shaving and her anxiety about finding friends.

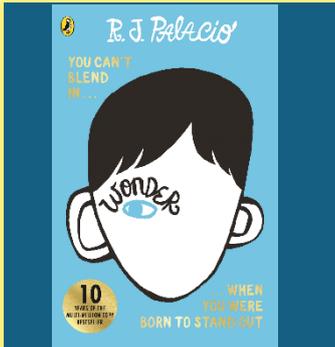
Questions and activities

- How does Gina's mother and father help her through these changes, and her image of herself?
- Can you find a few quotes from Gina and Callie that promote individuality throughout the graphic novel?
- Can you think of a moment when you experienced self-doubt or anxiety? How did you overcome these feelings? If you were in the same situation today, would you do things differently?
- How would you describe the character of Gina to a friend? What makes her stand out? Is there something about her that makes her different from other twelve- or thirteen-year-olds?
- The author says: 'Growing up, I didn't see myself or my brother reflected in any media. There was little autistic representation in general at that time and even less that I felt represented my experiences as a sibling.' Why do you think it's so important to be able to see yourself reflected in the art forms of books, tv shows or movies?
- Georgina says: 'Using words and pictures together has always been the way I feel I'm best at communicating.' How do you communicate best? Do you feel happier drawing to express yourself or by using words, writing and language? Or is it a combination of the two, like Gina?



Teacher's Resources

Further reading from Penguin Random House

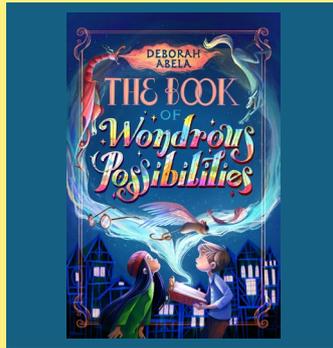


Wonder
by R. J. Palacio

Auggie wants to be an ordinary ten-year-old. He does ordinary things – eating ice cream, playing on his Xbox. He feels ordinary – inside. But ordinary kids don't make other ordinary kids run away screaming in playgrounds. Ordinary kids aren't stared at wherever they go.

Born with a terrible facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school – and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted – but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?

A funny, frank, astonishingly moving novel to read in one sitting, pass on to others, and remember long after the final page.



The Book of Wondrous Possibilities
by Deborah Abela

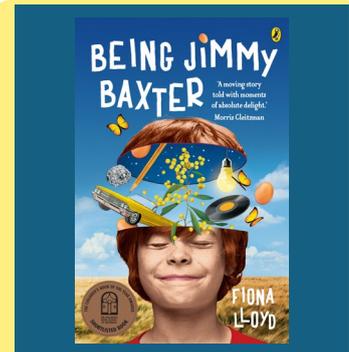
Arlo Goodman lives with his Uncle Avery in a run-down flat above their bookshop. He has no friends, except for his pet mouse, Herbert.

But when a girl called Lisette bursts into the shop and begs him to hide her from a murderer, Arlo's life changes forever.

He's swept up into an adventure involving kidnapers, car chases and a story in *The Book of Wondrous Possibilities*, where Arlo and his skymouse battle dragons.

But can Arlo find the courage to battle an even greater enemy, who threatens to destroy everything he loves?

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Being Jimmy Baxter
by Fiona Lloyd

It's not eggsactly easy being Jimmy Baxter 'cause:

- The real Jimmy's hiding inside
- Ned Kelly's giving him the evil eye
- Mum's stopped going to work and stays in bed
- There's no eggs in the fridge – or anything else.

AND there's new jobs, bad-at-school brains and a whole lot of trouble called Duke. But then . . . there's Mac.

Teachers' Resources available.



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Order form

| TITLE | AUTHOR | ISBN | SCHOOL YEAR | RRP | QTY | TOTAL |
|---|---------------------|---------------|-------------|---------|-----|-------|
| <i>Oh Brother</i> | Georgina Chadderton | 9781761046346 | 4-6 | \$19.99 | | |
| <i>Wonder</i> | R. J. Palacio | 9780552565974 | 4-6 | \$19.99 | | |
| <i>The Book of Wondrous Possibilities</i> | Deborah Abela | 9781761044021 | 4-6 | \$16.99 | | |
| <i>Being Jimmy Baxter</i> | Fiona Lloyd | 9781760148515 | 4-6 | \$16.99 | | |
| TOTAL | | | | | | |

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