

Frank Viva's Sea Change

CCSS-aligned Lesson Plan & Teacher's Guide

TOON GRAPHICS FOR VISUAL READERS



Sea Change
by Frank Viva
A TOON Graphic
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TOON Graphics are comics and visual narratives that bring the text to life in a way that captures young readers' imaginations and makes them want to read on—and read more.

The very economy of comic books necessitates the use of a reader's imaginative powers. In comics, the images often imply rather than tell outright. Readers must learn to make connections between events to complete the narrative, helping them build their ability to visualize and to make “mental maps.” A comic book also gives readers a great deal of visual context that can be used to investigate the thinking behind the characters' decisions.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE ARTIST'S CHOICES

Look carefully at the artwork: it offers a subtext that at first is sensed only on a subliminal level by the reader and encourages rereading. It creates a sense

of continuity for the action, and it can tell you about the art, architecture, and clothing of a specific time period. It may present the atmosphere, landscape, and flora and fauna of another time or of another part of the world.

Facial expressions and body language reveal subtle aspects of characters' personalities beyond what can be expressed by words.

READ AND REREAD!

Readers can compare comic book artists' styles and evaluate how different authors get their point across in different ways. In investigating the author's choices, a young reader begins to gain a sense of how all literary and art forms can be used to convey the author's central ideas.

The world of TOON Books, TOON Graphics, and of comic book art is rich and varied. Making meaning out of reading with the aid of visuals may be the best way to become a lifelong reader, one who knows how to read for pleasure and for information—a reader who *LOVES* to read.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frank Viva is an award-winning artist and designer who lives in Toronto with his family. Many decades ago he spent summers in Point Aconi, Nova Scotia—and while the story in this book is entirely fictional, Frank's memories of the place inspired it. Viva's other books include the *New York Times* Best Illustrated Children's Book selection *Along a Long Road*, the Parents' Choice Award winner *A Long Way Away*, and TOON's Cybil award-winning *A Trip to the Bottom of the World*. His art has appeared in many places, including regularly on the cover of *The New Yorker*. Visit him online at vivaandco.com

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LITERACY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In addition to providing students with the tools to master verbal literacy, each TOON Graphic offers a unique focus on visual learning. The 21st Century has seen a shift where literacy has been redefined to include visual literacy. Our unique lesson plans and teacher's guides help instructors and students alike develop the vocabulary and framework necessary to discuss visual expression, structure, and meaning in the classroom.

For schools that follow the ELA Common Core, TOON Graphics lesson plans offer examples of how best to utilize our books to satisfy a full range of state standards. The Common Core's learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. They were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live. Though this book can be used in any grade, we focused this lesson plan on state standards for grades 4 and 5. Questions included in this guide fulfill the following standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Literature (RL).4-5.1-10
Students build skills in reading and comprehending literature independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Reading: Informational Text (RI).4-5.1-10
Students build skills in reading and comprehending informational texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.1
Students engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.2
Students summarize a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Speaking and Listening (SL).4-5.4
Students report on a topic or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes.

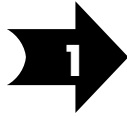
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.1
Students write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.2
Students write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY. Writing (W).4-5.7
Students conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.



- Black = potential questions for course plans
- Gray = feedback for teachers.



**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

Verbal Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting or event in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2
Determine a theme of a story from details in the text, including how the characters in a story or drama respond to challenges; summarize the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3
Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1
Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

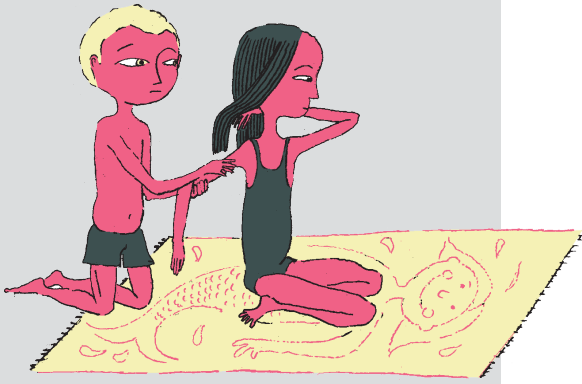
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2
Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Themes and symbols: coming of age

In *Sea Change*, Eliot's intense growth is spurred by his relocation from his suburban hometown of Lakefield to the seaside town of Point Aconi. The sea affects all aspects of life in Point Aconi, and the sea is where he has some of his most intense moments that summer. He meets several different characters who influence him and change his perspective, but the change in his environment, his relocation to the sea, is the most important factor in Eliot's journey of self-discovery.

- ◆ Talk about the role of the sea in *Sea Change*. Point out some of the sea-related words or phrases. What do they mean? Why do you think they were introduced by the author, and what can they tell us about the story?

Fathom, pirate, faded anchor tattoo, sea legs... These words stress the nautical lifestyle of Point Aconi, while creating an "exotic" mood that contrasts with Eliot's suburban hometown, Lakefield. These nautical words also reference the title of the book. *Sea Change* is about Eliot's profound transformation over the course of one summer.



◆ Which objects or items are exchanged as gifts from one character to another? Discuss the meaning of these gifts. How do they change the giver and the receiver?

Two important gifts are the mermaid towel (given by Eliot to Mary Beth on p. 93) and the diary, introduced on p. 64. The diary belonged to Great-great-grandfather Steen and was given by him to great-grandmother Minnie, then to Uncle Earl, who in turn gives it to Eliot.

The mermaid towel is a practical gift from Eliot’s mom to Eliot, meant as a gesture of her care and concern (p. 10). Eliot initially hates the towel because it is too girly. Later, Eliot gives the towel to Mary Beth in an attempt to comfort her after she confides that her father is abusive (p. 93). Eliot’s act of care and kindness marks his transformation from a kid who thinks only of himself to an adult who has sympathy for others.

The diary is passed down through generations of Eliot’s family, and symbolizes legacy and tradition. It represents the value placed on family history and identity. When Eliot receives the diary from Uncle Earl, he thinks about having his own kids some day (p. 64). The diary can also be considered a symbol of approval or affirmation, a sign of acceptance into the family. Uncle Earl considers the diary to be a treasure, and in giving it to Eliot, he shows him that he is proud of his growth over the summer. To Eliot, the gift means acceptance from an uncle whom he feels isolated from initially.

◆ Notice that books are also important symbols in the story. In Chapter 10, Eliot discovers a new place, Great-grandmother Minnie’s library. How does his new knowledge change his perspective on Uncle Earl and Point Aconi?

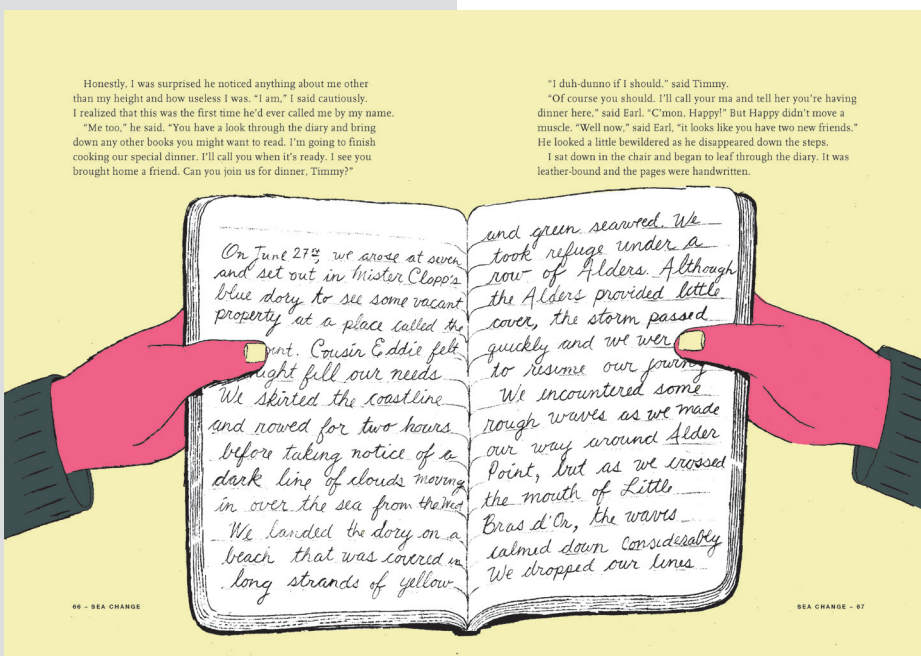
Note the author’s choice of *Treasure Island*, as a subtle yet strong suggestion that the attic library is a treasure trove itself. Great-great-grandfather Steen’s diary (which was also from the library) contains a fortune of valuable information, such as recipes, instructions, and even a cure for cancer.

The author introduces the idea that “knowledge is power” here, and Eliot’s perspective and his ways of seeing the world start to change after his visit to the library on p. 64. This development also illustrates a main concept of the book, “There is more than meets the eye.”

Other situations in Chapter 10 reinforce the sentiment that there is more to life than meets the eye. On p. 70, when Eliot and Timmy contemplate the stars, Timmy wisely says, “If we were not here, nobody would see them.”

On p. 70, Eliot’s initial impression of the lobsters (scary) and their surprising taste (delicious) support the notion that appearances can be misleading. Note that Eliot says “it smells homey” to describe the cooked lobsters. It is the first time he verbally acknowledges his attachment to Point Aconi.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3
Explain ideas or concepts in an informational text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1
Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2
Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.



Characters

- ◆ Compare Mary Beth to Eliot, the major female and male characters in *Sea Change*. Would you describe them as “traditional/typical” female or male characters? Why or why not? Is Mary Beth different from the other female characters in the book? Is Eliot different from the other male characters in the book?

Both Mary Beth and Eliot defy gender stereotypes to some extent. On p. 24, Mary Beth is described as “pretty in a way I never thought pretty could be, more hard than soft, more angular than round.” She considers herself to be “tough,” and even offers to protect Eliot from Donnie on p. 53. However, there’s a hint that she does enjoy traditionally feminine things: her fascination with the mermaid towel on p. 29, her long hair, her dress. Note that Mary Beth is the leader of the group of children, all boys. These elements create a vivid, untamed, complex, and beautiful female character. On the other hand, Eliot defies expectations of masculinity. Unlike Donnie, who represents stereotypical male toughness, Eliot is sympathetic and compassionate. He openly cares about others (especially the female members of his family), cries, offers hugs, and, by the end of the story, learns to express his vulnerability.

- ◆ Talk about Eliot’s relationship with his Uncle Earl. What does Eliot learn from his uncle?

At first, Uncle Earl seems gruff and intimidating. He and Eliot are not immediately close (on p. 42 Eliot silently refers to him as “you freaky old man”). In keeping with the perspective of traditional gender stereotypes, Uncle Earl is strong, powerful, and works as a fisherman, an occupation that is considered “manly” or “tough.” However, as evidenced by Uncle Earl’s unexpected hobby of reading (on p. 64, in the library, Eliot says “he looked so different away from the boat”) and his intimacy with Miss Gifford, the reader realizes that Uncle Earl certainly has a soft and tender side. He is an excellent example of the idea that there is “more than meets the eye.”

Uncle Earl’s character (simultaneously tough and soft, strong and tender) plays a critical role in Eliot’s transformation. On p. 101, Uncle Earl does not trivialize Eliot’s intense emotions after hearing about Mary Beth’s abuse; on the contrary, he offers Eliot a hug to express his support and concern – the kind of behavior that is not approved of in traditional gender stereotypes (men are not allowed to cry in public, men are not allowed to express their emotions.) Uncle Earl encourages Eliot to be a person who is not bound by traditional gender roles, but who is instead honest about his emotions.

- ◆ Compare Donnie and Eliot. How do they feel about each other when they first meet? How do they reach a truce in the end?

Both Donnie and Eliot are “useless lost causes” in Uncle Earl’s words (p.110).. Both feel alienated by the residents of Point Aconi, removed from their familiar places (Donnie from his father’s boat, Eliot from Lakefield), and feel lonely, unwanted, and confused.

Donnie is not a bad guy at heart, and his tension with Eliot results from the lack of understanding. Misunderstandings and lack of communication cause disputes and fights, and people tend to retreat or be defensive when they are faced with unfamiliar people and things. However as the story unfolds, Eliot gets to know Donnie, and Donnie gets to know Eliot. They finally recognize their common ground when they encounter each other

Then we unwrapped our gum and tossed it into our mouths. It tasted different from any gum I had ever had. Sort of a combination of soap and licorice, but I liked it.

"Who is Old Miss Gifford?" I asked.

"Oh, she's the teacher," said Mary Beth. "She's been teaching here since my pa was little. She knows everything about everything. Ma says she helps Point Aconi people when they're in trouble, but Pa says she just loves sticking her nose in everybody's business. She's never even been married."

"And she's against Bushwhacker Coal moving in here and buying up the properties," said Jack.

"She gub-goes on and on and on a-bub-bout that," said Timmy.

"My grandmother mentioned Bushwhacker Coal," I said.

"What do they do?"

"They're a company that strip-mines coal," said Jack. "They're the reason the pond got poisoned. Their trucks load up on the back road and rumble through here every day. That's why the road's so beat up and everything's so dusty all the time. They tried to buy our property."

"Us too," said Timmy. "But Ma says they didn't offer us enough money for it."

After that, we hung around the table chewing our gum in silence. We lingered a long time before saying goodbye to Penny and walking out into the glaring sunlight.

The scene was much worse than I could have imagined: Donnie had two tough-looking friends with him. One toothless boy grinned and waved mockingly at us from a white pickup truck.

Donnie sat on the cab and casually smoked a cigarette. The smoke twisted in the air like an agitated snake ready to strike. My heart sank when I heard him hiss at me through the smoke.



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in Chapter 14. They both reach out to Miss Gifford when they need help—and they recognize their shared humanity and vulnerability. Miss Gifford's comment, "Same as you and me, same as everybody," emphasizes the universality of their problems. Once they realize that they share similarities and they actually both want the same thing (Miss Gifford's help), they can relate to each other.

◆ Eliot pays close attention to his connections with others and cares about relationships between other people. What does this tell us about his character?

Good relationships bring people together and bind individuals to form healthy societies. Eliot cares about his peers (Mike and Teddy from Lakefield, Mary Beth and Timmy and Jack and

Eddie from Point Aconi), his relatives (his grandmother, Uncle Earl, and great-grandmother Minnie). He is often concerned with others' perceptions of him, a potential sign of insecurity. He feels safe and comfortable when people approve of him as a companion, friend, nephew and/or son. Everyone needs to have a place/position in his or her environment, and that is what forges an individual's identity within a group.

Names and nicknames—us versus them

◆ What is the name of Uncle Earl's boat? Why does he choose this particular name? At the beginning of the summer, Eliot hates his middle name and the boat. How do these two dislikes relate to each other, and how do Eliot's feelings change?

The name YNOT is 1) a play on words (Why not?), and 2) an anagram (it is Tony spelled backwards—in reference to Eliot's middle name, Anthony), It is also a sign of Uncle Earl's love for Eliot, his nephew, and a symbol of the family bond. Eliot is uncomfortable that the boat is named after him (p. 42). As he becomes more comfortable with his own identity, he comes to appreciate his ties to Point Aconi. One's name is one of the first things learned in life, key to building one's identity. At the beginning of the summer, Eliot rejects his name, and he resents his mother for sending him off to a place that is part of his family's identity, but through the course of the story he transforms into to a person who identifies with his family and its legacy.

◆ List the various words and nicknames used to refer to Eliot. What do these names tell us about the characters' relationships with Eliot? Pay extra attention to Chapter 5, when the kids meet Eliot, and Chapter 9, when Donnie meets Eliot.

Uncle Earl calls Eliot "kid" (p.35), and "Eliot boy" (p. 30). These names imply Uncle Earl's relationship with Eliot is close, familial, and somewhat paternal. There's a big age difference between them, so the nicknames Uncle Earl uses emphasize Eliot's youth.

Mary Beth calls Eliot by his full name, Eliot Dionisi, several times in the

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.6
Compare and contrast a firsthand and secondhand account of the same event or topic; describe differences in focus and the information provided.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.6
Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

book. The implied meaning changes from the beginning when they first meet (“what kind of name is that?” p.25) to p. 30, when she calls Eliot by his full name as a suggestion of friendship. Mary Beth shows no difficulties getting along with newcomers. In fact, Mary Beth embraces Eliot’s name before he does himself. This indicates that she is a friend who accepts Eliot fully, even before he accepts himself.

Notice that when Jack and Eddie first meet Eliot, they call him “Eye-talian from far away” on p. 26. However, Jack and Eddie quickly accept Eliot as one of the group and started to refer to him by his first name. Jack and Eddie are less welcoming to outsiders than Mary Beth, but we understand their feelings when they tell their older brother, Donnie, “He’s a good guy once you get to know him” (p. 53). Jack and Eddie are more flexible, open to change and to newcomers than Donnie. However they still make fun of Eliot’s heritage, and the “Eye-talian” comment is offensive.

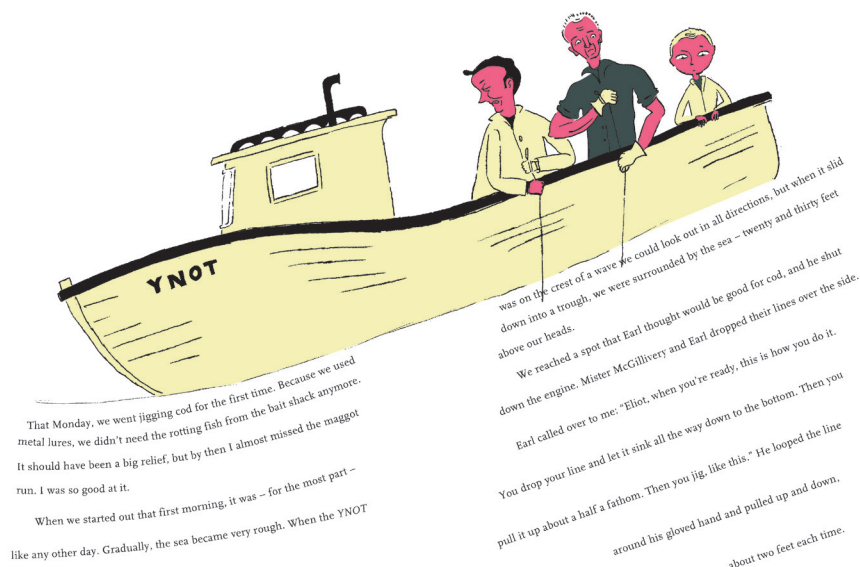
Donnie tries to degrade Eliot by calling him “Eye-talian,” “wop,” “little pisser,” and “maggot”. Note that Donnie is probably the most xenophobic character because he differentiates Eliot (“him”) from the other Point Aconi residents (“us”). He frequently stresses the fact that Eliot is an “alien,” a kid who is “new-comer from far away.” Jack and Eddie say their older brother dislikes “anyone new or different.”

◆ The idea of “us vs. them” occurs several times in the story. Talk about situations where divisions between characters are most apparent. Describe when, where, who, why, and how pronouns and words are introduced to strengthen the contrast.

One of the most obvious “us vs. them” or “me vs. you” situations happens in Chapter 1, when Eliot separates himself from his friends Mike and Teddy, listing all the things that “they’re” going to do “without me” (p. 8). The second noticeable situation is when Eliot first arrives at Point Aconi, and he separates himself from “everybody else” (p. 50). Eliot has a tendency to isolate himself and to think he is all alone. However, as Eliot makes friends throughout the story, he forms meaningful relationships and stops thinking that he is alone.

◆ Another example of “us vs. them” happens in Chapter 13, when Mary Beth, Timmy, and Eliot read *The Time Machine*. Timmy says that “Point Aconi has Morlocks and Eloi.” Do you agree? In your opinion, who are the “good guys” and who are the “bad guys” in *Sea Change*?

The comparison between Morlocks and Eloi (p. 90) is also a form of differentiation, separating the “bad guys” from the “good guys.” In Timmy’s mind, things are clearer and purer, and that’s why it is easy for him to polarize the spectrum of “good” and “bad.” In *Sea Change*, Donnie is not completely bad (“he’s having a hard time and just trying to figure things out,” says Miss Gifford, on p. 99). Mary Beth’s father, Mister McGillivery, is not completely bad either. Eliot is impressed by Mister McGillivery’s strength and hard work, saying he finally understands



why Mister McGillivery has been Uncle Earl's partner for so long. These instances don't erase the fact that Mister McGillivery abuses his own daughter, but recall the theme "things are not always what they seem."

In *Sea Change*, the only true "bad guys" are the Bushwhacker Coal people, but some may also argue that they have good intentions (creating jobs for the people in Point Aconi). Notice the name of the company indicates the nature of the company's power. If your students are more mature, you may even bring up the Gulf War and the Iraq War; some people suggested that the Bush family was behind these two wars, and the reason was because of crude oil (petroleum).

Climax: Similes and Metaphors in Chapter 12

◆ Revisit Chapter 12, noting the great white shark on p.84 and p. 86 when Eliot accidentally encounters Donnie when he's alone. How are these two instances related?

Chapter 12 is probably the most intense chapter in the book. Readers may find the situation when the great white shark follows the YNOT similar to Donnie intimidating Eliot with the gaff on p. 86 (remember: the YNOT is named after Eliot). One fisherman says, "You wanna stay away from them fellas," summing up Eliot's attitudes to both the shark and Donnie.

"Got one!" exclaimed Mister McGillivery. He pulled the codfish all the way to the surface, and put a net under it. "That's queer," he said. "The tail end is bit right off." Earl pulled the next one to the surface and it was the same thing – a good-sized cod with the tail end bitten off. "Must be dogfish getting 'em on the way up," said Mister McGillivery.

"We'd better find another spot," said Earl. He cranked the engine and took the YNOT out farther, to another one of his favorite spots.

This time, all three of us dropped lines. I caught one almost immediately and pulled it to the surface. It was the same thing – only half a cod. "I never seen the likes of it," said Mister McGillivery. Again and again the same thing happened.

"Pull in your lines," said Earl. "We'll go to another spot." I looked down into the water and I saw a giant white fish following Mister McGillivery's line up to the surface. Earl looked down and said, "Jumping Jesus, it's a great white. Stay away from the edge, Eliot." I stepped back. The shark surfaced for a second and then went back down.

"He must've followed us from the last spot," said Earl.

"Look down there, boy, chance of a lifetime," said Mister McGillivery.

We all looked over the edge and could see the shark.

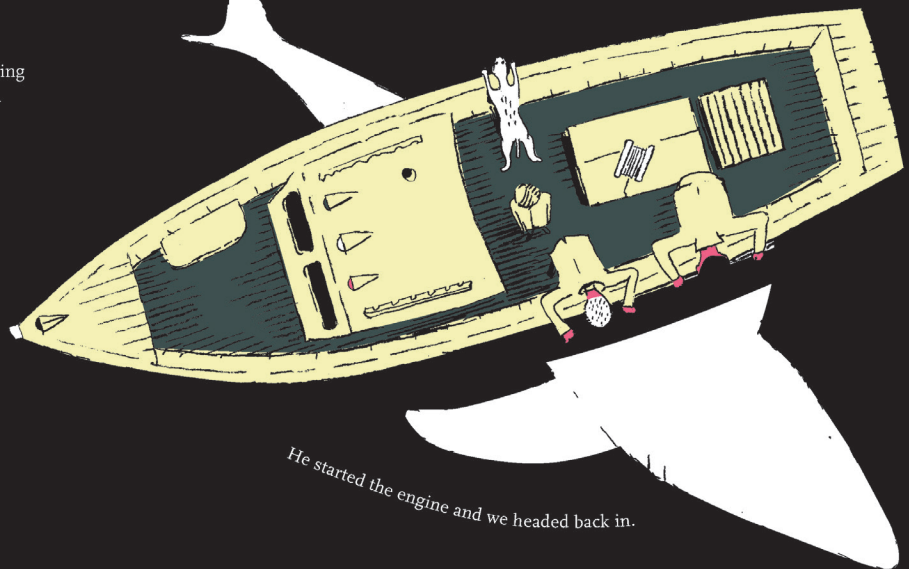
He was about five feet below the surface and was swimming

slowly under the YNOT.

Happy looked down over the transom and started to bark.

"He must be a good twenty-five-footer," said Earl.

"Well, boys, I'm afraid there'll be no catch today."



He started the engine and we headed back in.

- ◆ Note that Donnie uses the gaff as a weapon in order to threaten Eliot on the dock. When does the item “gaff” first appear in the story? And when does it next appear? In these two situations, what was the gaff used for?

The gaff first appears on p. 43 in Chapter 8, followed by the description of it, “a tool with a long wooden handle and a big hook at the end.” It appears again in Chapter 12, when Donnie uses it as a weapon to (potentially) harm people. The gaff itself is a neutral object, and it depends on the user to put it to good or bad use. Fishermen use it as a tool, but Donnie chooses to make it a weapon.

- ◆ Aside from the shark and Donnie, there are several major events in Chapter 12. Point them out and talk about them. How do you feel about Chapter 12, and why?

In Chapter 12, Eliot shows his survival instincts. In previous chapters, Eliot talks about death in a playful, hypothetical way, from “I wanted to die right then and there” on p. 10, to his imaginary obituary on p. 38. However, in Chapter 12, Eliot does not give in to fantasies about death. On p. 87 he is confronted with a specific (though ultimately imagined) threat to his safety, and he struggles for his life. Before coming to Point Aconi, his attitude is a bit apathetic and self-indulgent. On p. 83, when he thinks he feels a shark, he’s terrified, and the reader can sense his attachment to life.

In keeping with the idea of attachments, Mary Beth first kisses Eliot in Chapter 12. The theme of this chapter seems to be about love and connections: loving others, whether it be in a romantic or platonic way, is the basis for humans’ attachments to the world.

Human Nature

- ◆ Discuss “civilization” and “the wild” using examples in the book. What are the benefits of each? Focus specifically on the way food is presented in “civilized” Lakefield vs. “uncivilized” Point Aconi.

Eliot’s hometown Lakefield is a more homogeneous, civilized place, and the food Eliot references from Lakefield is traditional American comfort food: grilled cheese and ketchup. This food is processed, “fancy” food; he mentions pre-packaged bread and a sandwich with crusts cut off by his mother. The food in Point Aconi often appears first as fresh and raw, caught by hand. Notice that shortly after arriving in Point Aconi, Eliot is disgusted by the muscular tactility of Uncle Earl’s cow tongue (p. 31) but finds the lobster delicious and “homey” on p. 70. Eliot’s change in attitude toward food could have to do with the fact that he spends the summer catching fish that will be eaten. He forms a connection to the land and sea and to his own human instinct to feed himself. This parallels his discovery of his familial roots and ultimately the discovery of himself. It takes leaving the comfort of civilization to awaken Eliot’s curiosity and hunger for life.

- ◆ Eliot begins his time in Point Aconi as an outsider, and he receives some unkind treatment from certain characters, especially Donnie. However, Miss Gifford also began as an outsider in Point Aconi, and she is respected as an authority figure. In Point Aconi, certain characters are open to new things or people (Mary Beth, Timmy), and some are not (Donnie, and to some extent, Uncle Earl). Humans always seem to prefer things that have been around longer, and the idea that longevity equals goodness is prevalent throughout history. Talk to students about their own perspectives on encountering new people and experiences. Sometimes it is important to adhere to traditions, sometimes change is necessary for growth. Do your students like change? Why or why not?



2

Visual Expression

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7
Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, indentifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.5
Explain major differences between poems, drama, prose, etc. Refer to the structural elements when writing or speaking about a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.7
Analyze how visual and mulitmedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5
Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, stanzas, etc. fits together to provide the overall structure of a story.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4
Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text. (Here, art and comics vocabulary)

**The standards listed on the right are fulfilled by every question in this section. Additional standards may be listed in the gray sidebar on the left for particular units listed below.*

*Suggested color meanings:
Red/magenta = color of pain, anger, aggressiveness...etc. (pg.45)*

Yellow = color of brightness, friendly...etc. (pg.65+71)

Black = color of mystery, danger, scariness...etc. (pg.84+85)

Dark Cyan = color of trustworthly, serenity...etc. (pg.36+64)

Color and style

◆ The author uses a very limited color palette in *Sea Change*. He uses three main colors, plus white and black. Talk about his color choices and ask students: how do these limited colors create a mood for the story?

Red, yellow, and blue are the three primary colors. By combining or mixing these three colors in different ways, we can make all the colors in the rainbow, or color spectrum.

After establishing the primary colors, discuss how you can mix primary colors to create secondary colors (eg. red and yellow make orange, blue and yellow make green, etc).

When two primary colors mix to make a secondary color, the third, remaining primary color is called a complementary color. For example, when blue and yellow mix to make green, red, the unused primary color, is the complement of green. Complementary colors are thought to be eye-catching and interesting. Think of Christmas colors, red and green. These colors are satisfying to the brain/eye because they encompass the full color spectrum, all three primary colors (blue, yellow, and red).

Next, show the students the color wheel below, Fig. 1. What sort of mood does it give? This could be considered a rainbow color scheme—all the colors are present, and rainbows are generally understood to indicate wholeness and happiness.

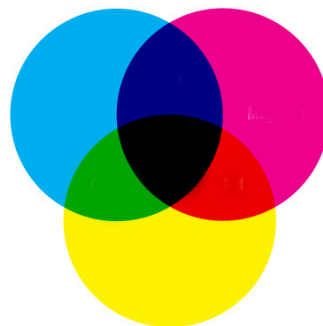


Figure 1

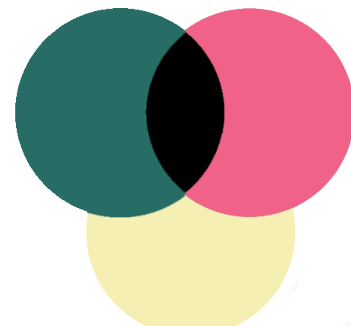


Figure 2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including those that allude to significant characters found in mythology.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.4

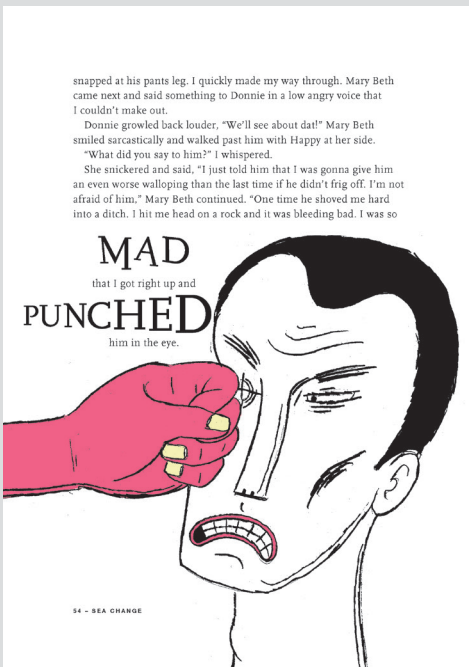
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7

Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, etc.) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7

Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating an ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently



Page 54

Then look at the color wheel that shows the colors from *Sea Change*, Fig. 2. Explain that the artist uses different versions of blue, red, and yellow to create a very different mood. The artist adds white to primary yellow to create a softer shade of yellow. He adds black and some yellow to blue to create a deep sea green. Third, he adds white and possibly some yellow to red to make a bright, warm pink. Be sure that students understand that shades of all three primary colors (yellow, blue, red) are present, but they have been altered to create a very different color scheme. One could argue that the colors in *Sea Change* are more muted to create a softer, more subtle mood. Because the full color spectrum is present, these colors are pleasing and offer a wide range of possibilities.

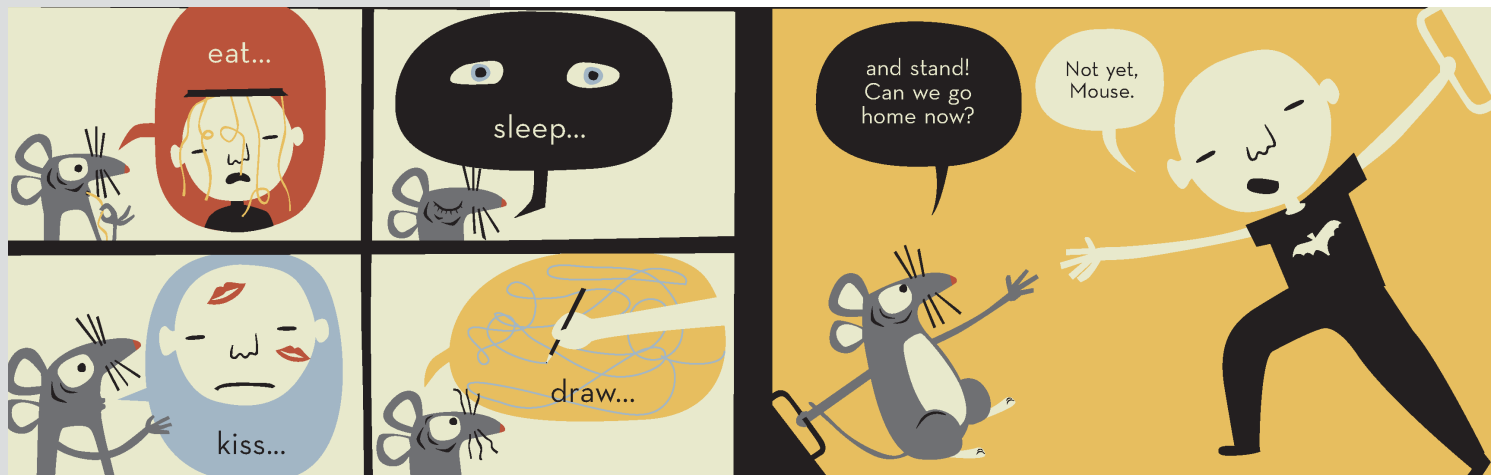
How do students feel when looking at Fig. 1 vs. Fig 2? Do students think these are good colors to represent this particular story?

◆ Every time an artist creates an image, he or she makes many decisions about how to best tell his or her story. An artist combines various visual components like color, line, and shape to create what is known as "style." Artists can change their style to reflect the kind of story they want to tell.

Compare the artwork in Frank Viva's book *A Trip to the Bottom of the World with Mouse* to the artwork in *Sea Change*. Look for similarities and differences in the artwork. Specifically, how does Viva draw characters differently? Why do you think he makes these choices for each story?

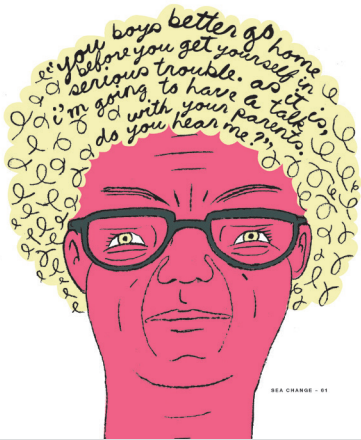
A Trip to the Bottom of the World with Mouse is about two friends' exciting journey to Antarctica. The environment around them is vast, impressive, and constantly changing. Viva uses bold shapes of color to tell his story, and keeps the characters' bodies and expressions simple. Notice he hardly uses any lines, but a few black marks are able to differentiate between two emotions: sad and impatient. *A Trip to the Bottom of the World with Mouse* was written for young readers, and the playful, simpler graphic art reflects the cohesion and fun of this adventure story.

In *Sea Change*, Viva keeps his strong sense of shape and bold color, but his light and sketchy lines are markedly different from *A Trip to the Bottom of the World with Mouse*. On p. 54, the loose lines in Donnie's face create a sense of immediacy, as if the reader is standing right there, watching Mary Beth punch him. This style is more intimate and feels like a window into Eliot's mind and memory (a sort of illustrated diary). This graphic yet impressionistic style is very fitting for this story about nuanced relationships and emotions. The subtler, more nuanced art is also better suited to older readers, whose thinking is more complex.]



Text

We all jumped into the back of Miss Gifford's truck. We had to call Happy a few times because he was still snarling at the boy with the bat, but he finally came.
Miss Gifford looked over at Dommie and his friends, and said:



Page 61

◆ Text can do much more than simply communicate the plot of the story. Text can be playfully designed, arranged, or organized to add another layer of visual meaning to the narrative. The majority of the text is in black or white. Are there words in other colors? Why are they different from the others?

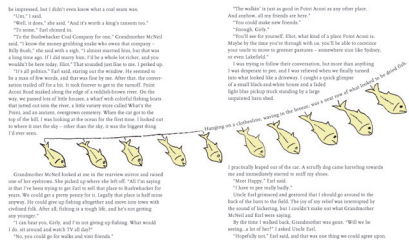
Look at “cherry soda” on p. 57. Point out that the magenta brings out the flavor of the drink. On p. 71, look at the stars and note that the yellow resembles the brightness of the stars and the warm, friendly feelings in Eliot’s heart.

◆ The majority of the text is typed. However, there are pages that show the author’s handwriting. Note they keep his organic texture, and discuss how you feel about them.

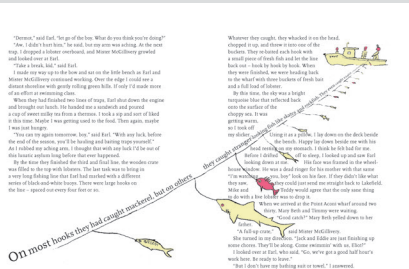
On p. 61, the vivid curly lines resemble the volume of Old Miss Gifford’s hair. On p. 66-67, the diary is handwritten. This gives an informal, natural feel. The handwriting looks more personal in comparison to the structured type above.

◆ Notice that words can be placed to create the depth or the height of the space; that is to say, words on a two-dimensional plane (paper) have the ability to break a barrier and build a three-dimensional space. Find examples in the book, and support your thoughts. (On p. 63 words are arranged to create the illusion of stairs.) Compare p. 21 and p. 46, see how the author drew these two similar scenes with a line of fish attached to a string.

P. 21 is two-dimensional and p. 46 is three-dimensional, with depth. Explain the concept of perspective: objects appear smaller as they recede in space. Larger objects in the foreground and smaller ones in the background create an illusion that causes our brain to perceive things as close or far.



Page 21



Page 46

Characters

◆ Eliot, the main character of the book, has a signature look that appears over and over throughout the story (p. 7, 29, 38, 57, 78, 93). Notice that his eyes are wide open, and his two brows seem to be making different expressions. Why do you think the author drew him that way?

Eliot is the storyteller or narrator, and the reader experiences the story through his eyes. Notice that words and phrases regarding “vision” are prominent in the book. Eliot is the “observer” of the story; he pays close attention to everything, and the plot unfolds around him.

Look at Eliot’s various expressions. At times, you could describe Eliot’s face as “confused,” “scared,” “lost,” “intrigued.” However one thing is certain: the left half of his face and the right half of his face do not have the same expression. It seems as if the author is trying to capture fleeting moments of human expression. These double faces also hint at the duality of Eliot’s character. Throughout the story he undergoes many changes and developments. His changing face indicates that he has a wide variety of experiences and feelings that are in constant flux.

Introduce Pablo Picasso and Cubism. Notice how similar Eliot’s and the Picasso woman’s face are. Discuss the spirit of Cubism (In Cubist artwork, objects are analyzed, broken up, and reassembled in an abstracted form—instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.) How





Pablo Picasso, *Marie-Thérèse, Face and Profile (Marie-Thérèse, face et profil)*, Paris, 1931

does this idea of rearranging information to find new meaning relate to one of the book's main ideas, "more than meets the eye?"

◆ Eliot mentioned his great-grandmother, Minnie Purvis, and her "stare / I'm watching you look" many times throughout the book. Look at Great-grandmother Minnie eyes on p. 23. Is there any resemblance between her eyes and Eliot's eyes?

Both Minnie's and Eliot's eyes are wide open, with a curious look, which resonates with one of the main concepts of the book, "more than meets the eye." Note that Eliot used several different adjectives to describe Minnie's eyes and her expression in the photo, from "judgmental" in Part one to "a mild smile" near the end of Part two. Perhaps the author intended for us to realize the similarities between Minnie and Eliot, that deep down, every single one of us is complex, and we should never judge a book by its cover.

Composition: sameness and differences

◆ Compare and contrast Grandmother McNeil's car on p. 18-19 with Uncle Earl's truck on p. 36-37. Share your discoveries and the details you think are important. Notice these two pages share similar compositions with a vehicle on the left, and wind/air movement on the right.

Grandmother McNeil's long, shiny, gold Pontiac and Uncle Earl's faded, light blue pick-up truck are distinctly different, which might be a clue to their different personalities, choices, and ways of life (Grandmother McNeil regrets not marrying Billy Bush; Uncle Earl still works on the boat while Grandmother McNeil tells him to quit fishing and move to "civilization"). However, both vehicles were drawn to face the right; the similarity in the composition implies the relationship between Grandmother McNeil and Uncle Earl – they are actually siblings.

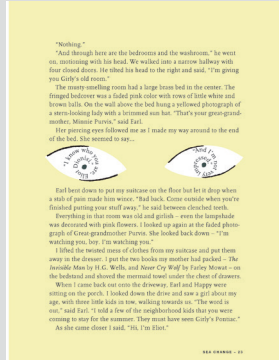
The movement of air outlined by the text arrangement (pointy and angular on p. 18-9; round and flowy on p. 36-37) also shows Grandmother McNeil and Uncle Earl's different attitudes towards life. Grandmother McNeil yells at another driver, while Uncle Earl drives along the bumpy road in silence.

◆ Compare Eliot's sad face on p. 49 with Mary Beth's frown on p. 88. What do you see? How do these two compositions make you feel? Notice the author uses the same basic elements on these two pages, but each describes a different feeling and tells a different story. Why?

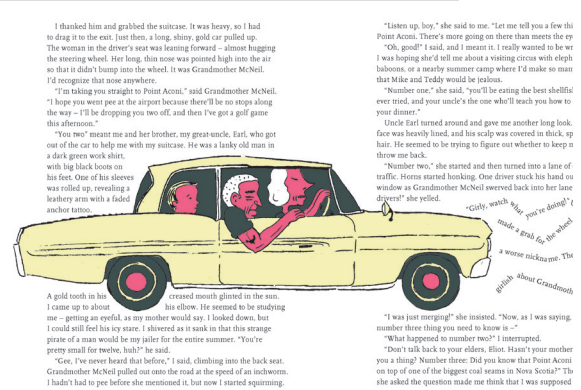
Both p. 50 and p. 88 show text arranged as human faces/expressions. On p. 50 Eliot is crying, and the lines in this page are tense and stiff, reflecting Eliot's sadness. Page 88 shows Mary Beth before she kisses Eliot. The lines in this page are curvy and soft, giving the reader a sense of anticipation or a tender feeling.

Discuss the differences in meaning. Do you think the author was trying to imply that Eliot and Mary Beth have different social/cultural gender roles? In general, throughout history, boys have been encouraged to be tough and macho, while girls have been taught to be docile and ladylike. The author challenges these social/cultural gender roles in *Sea Change*, by portraying Eliot as someone who grows to care for others and Mary Beth as a tough protector and leader.

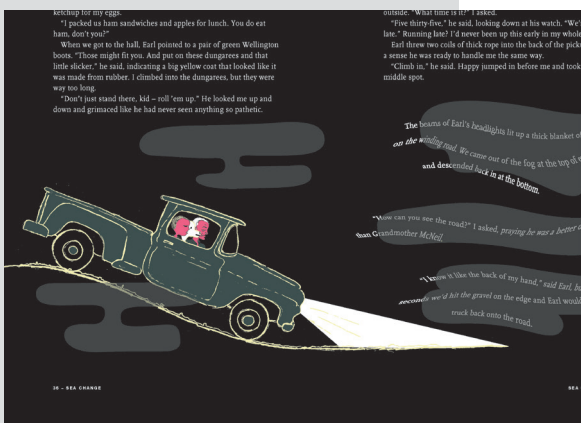
◆ On p. 115 look at the lines representing Eliot's expression. Notice that they are two curves. Compare p. 115 with p. 50 and p.



Page 23



Page 18-19



Page 36-37

I quickly wiped away a tear before it had the chance to roll down my face.
I sniffled, sucked in some air and pressed my lips together.

Page 50

She looked into my eyes as she touched my cheek with the back of her hand.
Then she kissed me on the lips.

Page 88

It took me the time to politely turn away to blow my nose and wipe my eyes. Then I looked at her and said: "I don't think so. I'm a whole person now."

I grinned at her, and she grinned back at me.

Page 115

88. What do you see?

The last "text face" hints at Eliot's emotional growth throughout the course of the story. He's softer and more tender here, indicated by the subtle curving lines.

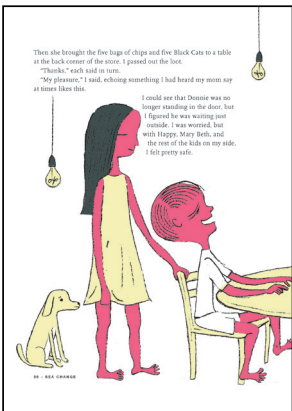
Composition: characters and their relationships

◆ Observe pp. 24, 56 and 58, and the characters on these three pages. Point out the leader of each group on pp. 24, 56, and 58? How do you know?

Mary Beth is the leader in p. 24 and p. 56, while Donnie is the leader in p. 58. They are both located at a higher level, or they look taller than the other characters. In p. 24, Mary Beth is the tallest among the siblings, and in p. 56, Mary Beth is the only one standing. In p. 58, Donnie sits on top of the truck with his hand on the other guy. There spatial arrangement of the characters clearly implies a kind of power hierarchy. It is interesting that Mary Beth is the leader of the group of kids, not because of her age but because of her gender – she's also the only girl in the group.

◆ Now, look at p. 102. Is there a leader in this group? Why or why not?

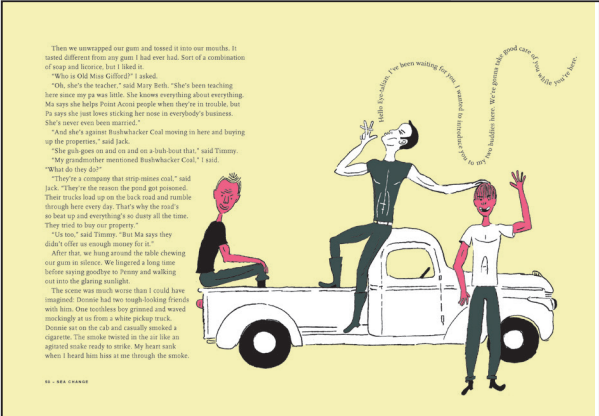
On p. 102, all the kids are hand in hand to form a circle. In a circle, you cannot tell who's a leader, as a circle has no beginning nor end. A circle also implies harmony and unity. As the kids develop their friendship and membership in the group, they are closely linked together, and the group dynamic has grown and changed throughout the story as well. Connect this visual subtext with the verbal idea of "friend" and "home" that are underscored on the final pages of the story.



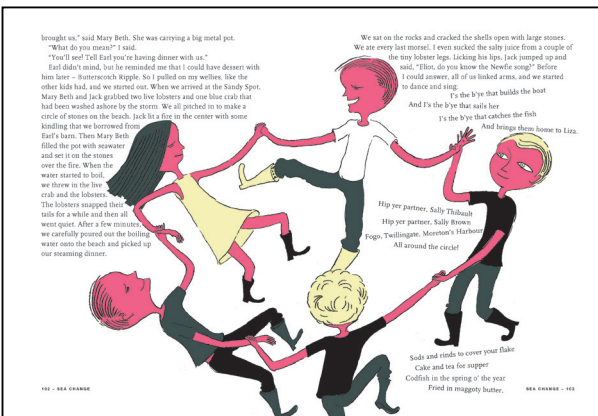
Page 56



Page 24



Page 58



Page 102



Further Research

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4-5.9

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.1

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting point of view with reasons and information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4-5.7

Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

◆ Writing: Ask students if they have ever moved to another home or gone to another school. How did they feel about the change? What specifically was difficult, and how did they overcome it? What did they do to alter their thinking or actions so that everything turned out all right in the end? Tell them to be sure to have a beginning, a middle, and an end for their compositions, and have them read their final versions to their classmates when they have finished writing and editing them. If they have difficulty choosing a situation, remind them that they all started school at some point, and that was a big change for them.

◆ Ask students if they have ever tried to help a new child adjust to his or her school. Have them write or tell the class about their experiences. What specific problems did the other child have, and what exactly did they do to try to help?

◆ The idea of parallel dimensions (referenced on p. 38 by Mr. Able, the math teacher) is one of the most crucial concepts in comics and fiction. If you or your students are interested in exploring this concept, you may find it to be a thought-provoking topic for class discussion.

A parallel universe is a hypothetical, self-contained, separate reality co-existing with one’s own reality. A specific group of parallel universes is called a “multiverse.” For example, for every decision you’ve made, there’s an alternative reality in which you did not make the choice. So, if you decided to eat an apple, there is a parallel dimension/alternative reality in which you did not eat the apple. The idea of parallel dimension is not only a theory in physics/mathematics but also an extremely important element in American superhero comics. For example there’s a parallel dimension in which Superman and Batman are the bad guys (The Justice Lords), and a parallel dimension in which the Autobot leader, Optimus Prime, is a tyrant, while the Decepticon leader, Megatron, is an innocent professor (Transformers Shattered Glass).

◆ Have children look at how the text is arranged on pp. 63, 65, 68, 71, 88, 94, and 107 and ask them to think about how it brings out the idea of the subject matter. Concrete poetry is poetry written in a shape that matches the subject of the poem. Here are some examples:

I like sneakers, leather sneakers, old, worn comfortable sneakers, any kind of sneakers. I like sneakers, leather sneakers, old, worn comfortable sneakers, any kind of sneakers. I like sneakers, leather sneakers, old, worn comfortable sneakers, any kind of sneakers.

Red, sweet as honey, bitter as blood.
Orange, fluttery as fall, still as a stone.
Yellow, loud as a trumpet, soft as a pearl.
Green, rough as a pinecone, smooth as a lake.
Blue, my color, just like the sky.
Purple, bright as the moon, dark as night.
Purple, weak as a flower, strong as a comb.

Rainbow.

- ◆ Notice the contrasts in each line of this poem except Blue.

THE BLACK
 SATIN HAT
 SAT TIGHT
 ON THE YOUNG MAN'S BALD
 HEAD. HIS
 EYES BLACK AS
 NIGHT STARED INTO
 NOTHINGNESS. IN
 FRONT OF HIM
 WERE 3
 PATHS WHERE THE
 CHILDREN HAD ROLLED
 THREE BALLS OF SNOW MUCH EARLIER THAT VERY DAY.
 PATCHES OF GREEN GRASS
 STUCK THROUGH PACKED FREEZING SNOW.
 IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS FACE
 A CROOKED CARROT POINTED TOWARD
 THE HOUSE WHERE CHILDREN SAT LOOKING
 OUT THEIR WINDOW AT THEIR NEW-FOUND
 FRIEND. HIS BUTTON MOUTH, SHAPED
 FOR HIM TO LOOK HAPPY, SEEMED TO SMILE
 AT THEM AS THEY STARTED TO BLOW
 KISSES AT THEIR WONDERFUL
 NEW SNOWMAN.

By Brenda Meier-Hans, 10/27/2014

- ◆ Have children write their own concrete poems. First they should choose a subject and then draw an outline for the poem on a piece of paper. Next they should write the poem down normally, edit it, and then copy it into their shape. Or they can lightly draw an outline and write over it, like the sneaker poem above. If they want something centered, like the snowman poem, they can use the centering function on a computer. Display the results in the classroom and discuss them. This activity can be done in pairs as well.

- ◆ Ask students to choose one character from the book and to write a description of Eliot from that character's point of view. Remind them to use specific examples from the text to support their ideas.

- ◆ Help children to come up with four or five scenes from the book to act out. Divide them into groups and give them time to write their own scripts together and to rehearse in different parts of the classroom. They can use language from the book and combine it with their own. Have a theater period when they act out their scenes.

- ◆ For research:
 Nova Scotia is one of Canada's maritime provinces. Find out what the word "maritime" means and what the names of the other maritime provinces are. What do they think they have in common? What kinds of jobs would people have who live there? What would their lives be like? What does the name "Nova Scotia" mean? How did this province get its name? Children could divide into groups to make posters about the Canadian maritime provinces, using text and images found on the Internet.

- ◆ Point Aconi is a real place. Have children do a Google search for Point Aconi Nova Scotia for homework, recording three interesting facts about this town. They should also click on "Images" to see pictures of the town and its people. What can they tell from these photos? There are also images from Sea Change!

- ◆ Have children do research on different ways of catching lobsters. There are legal restrictions that apply to the catching of lobsters in many parts of the world. Why would this be? What are some of the rules?

Restrictions have been created in order to prevent over-fishing and allow for the development of the next generation. Common restrictions include a minimum lobster size, preventing fishermen from catching "berried" females (females carrying eggs), closed seasons, and limiting catches with individual fishing quotas.

- ◆ Draw and label the different parts of a lobster. Remember that lobsters aren't red until they are cooked. What parts do lobsters have that we don't? What are they used for? What parts do we have that they don't? Why do you think this is so?

- ◆ Lobsters belong to a group of animals called arthropods, the largest animal phylum. Ask students to find out some other animals in this group. They may be surprised. What does the word "arthropod" mean? What are the characteristics of all arthropods? Here is a website students can use: <http://www.kidzone.ws/animals/arthropod1.html>

- ◆ Have each child choose an arthropod and write a brief report about it. He or she should draw, color, and label a picture of it. Give some questions as guidelines for their report: What does their arthropod look like? How big is it? How many legs does it have? Where does it live? What does it eat? What is special about it that makes it different from other arthropods? Create an arthropod bulletin board so that they can learn about the wide variety in this group of animals. Students can also make clay sculptures of their arthropods.

- ◆ Read other coming-of-age books:

The Giver, by Lois Lowry
Hatchet, by Gary Paulsen
Junonia, by Kevin Henkes
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, by Betty Smith
The Secret Garden, by Frances Hodgson Burnett
Holes, by Louis Sachar
The Harry Potter books, by J. K. Rowling
Little Women, by Louisa May Alcott
Hart's Tavern, by Elaine Kiesling Whitehouse
Because of Winn-Dixie, by Kate DiCamillo
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,
 by C. S. Lewis
In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson, by
 Betty Bao Lord

