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## Wink

By Rob Harrell

### Summary

Ross Maloy just wants to fit in.

But after he is diagnosed with a rare eye cancer in Year Seven, he suddenly becomes the 'cancer kid' of his school.

Now he has to deal with eye goo, weird hats, a squinty eye and – hardest of all – disappearing friends, social media bullies, and the threat of losing his eyesight ... or worse.

Based on Rob Harrell's real-life experiences, and packed with his cartoons and illustrations, this is a heartbreaking and hilarious story of survival, and of finding the music, magic and laughter in all of life's weirdness.

### Key Learning Outcomes (Year 7 English)

ACELA1528, ACELA1529, ACELA1764, ACELT1621, ACELT1622, ACELY1721

### Themes

Overcoming adversity, Friendship, Family, Belonging, Loss

Recommended Ages: 10+

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

### Before Reading

#### Features of a comic

A comic tells a narrative through a series of panels, which form a strip when strung together. Each panel may include an image, dialogue, action and/or captions. These elements help the artist/storyteller convey a message or tell the story of a single event.

- Before engaging with the novel, ask the students to bring a comic they are familiar with to school. Working in small groups, ask the students to identify how comics use limited words, images, dialogue, action and/or captions to convey the narrative.
- In groups, have students compare their comics and list the similarities and differences between them.
- Ask each group to present their findings to the rest of the class.
- As a class, discuss the purpose of a comic in telling a story. Why might a writer/illustrator choose to create a comic rather than a short story or similar text narrative?

#### Multi-modal texts

##### Part One

A multi-modal text is any text that contains more than one mode (text type). While many multi-modal texts are digital (e.g. websites, apps or games), *Wink* is an example of a multi-modal text that is not digital, nor does it include a digital component.

Before reading the text, as a class discuss the following:

- What is a multi-modal text?
- What multi-modal texts have you engaged in?
- Why do you think an author would choose to create a multi-modal text? (Provide examples of other multi-modal texts that the students may have encountered before.)

As part of the discussion, it is important to ensure that students consider the elements that are in *Wink*, including narrative, phone/text bubbles, illustrations and comics.

##### Part Two

Ask students to read the 'Batpig' comics only. Ask them not to engage with any other element of the text including the story, chapter titles and other illustrations.

Based on the comics, ask students to predict and record what they think the novel will be about and, in particular, what themes they think *Wink* will focus on.

- Using a strategy such as "Think, Pair, Share", ask the students to share their work with another student, and then edit/adapt their own predictions.

*After reading the whole text, divide students into small groups and ask them to discuss the relationship between the comic and Ross's narrative.*

## During Reading

### Chapter titles

As students read each chapter of the text, ask them to complete the following:

- Write the chapter title at the top of a page (you may prefer to provide students with a table/matrix to record this information).
- Predict what they think is going to happen in the chapter based on the chapter title only.
- After reading the chapter, students should record:
  - **Who** – characters in the chapter.
  - **Where** – the setting/s of the chapter.
  - **What** – major events or actions that take place in the chapter.
  - **How** – language features and visual elements utilised by the author.
  - Any other important information.
- Use the information recorded in the previous exercise to create a two to three sentence summary of the chapter.

After reading the whole text, ask students to:

- Create a summary of the text based on the short sentences they have created.
- Compare their initial predictions to the short summaries they wrote in the steps above.

As a class, discuss how the use of chapter titles can help add meaning to, or detract from, a reader's engagement with a text.

## After reading

### Letter writing

#### Part One

Ross writes a series of letters to his future self. Each of those short letters focuses on his hopes for his future.

Ask the students to write a series of letters, one per week, for the remainder of the term/unit, to their future selves. The letters should be short and focus on what it is that they hope for themselves.

#### Part Two

Ask the students to write letters to two different characters in *Wink*.

In choosing a character to write to, the students should consider which character they connected to the most, and which character they connected to the least. The letters should discuss what they have learnt from the character, and what they wish for the character for their future. For example, they might write to Jimmy and tell him that he helped them learn not to judge people based on assumptions about them, and that they wish him a wonderful career in a band. They might write to Isaac and tell him how disappointed they were that he wasn't there for Ross, but glad that he helped Ross stand up to Sarah and that they hope that he and Ross can mend their friendship.

### Exploring language devices and techniques

Told from the first-person point of view, the language in *Wink* is highly descriptive. The author makes use of a variety of techniques, including metaphor, simile and hyperbole, both in written and visual form, to tell the narrative.

Ask students to choose three examples of highly descriptive language that they enjoyed reading. For each example, ask the student to:

- Write out the example.
- Identify the device or technique being used.
- Describe why they chose the example.
- Explain how this example contributed to their understanding of, or engagement with, the text.

For example:

*The calluses on the ends of my fingers are getting so tough they feel like rocks.* (p. 233)

This is an example of hyperbole.

I like this example because it helps me visualise Ross practicing his guitar. I also liked this example because it was a positive change in Ross's body and I was so glad something good was happening when he was losing his hair and covered in eye goo.

I also liked this example because it helped me see how determined Ross was, and how he could focus on something that brought him joy when he was experiencing something so difficult.

### Extension

#### A little help from my friends

Ask the class to reflect on an important event in their own lives where friendship was important. It can be anything that is of significance to them: a sporting event, a party or learning a new skill. Ask students to write down the '5 Ws' of the event: what, when, where, why, who.

Using the '5 Ws' as a starting point, ask the students to write an outline for their own comic series. Using the 'BatPig' comics as a template, ask students to plot their story over six frames. They may also like to create their own alter-ego like Batpig to help tell their story.

Students then create their comic strip. Give them the option of using an online tool such as Pixton or StoryboardThat if they aren't confident in their ability to draw their comic.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rob Harrell is the author–illustrator of the highly praised graphic novels *Monster on the Hill* and the illustrated book series *The Life of Zarf*. His fifth book, *Wink*, is a fictional story drawn from his own experiences as a child after being diagnosed with a rare eye cancer.

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