

NEW KID

BY JERRY CRAFT

Graphic novelist Jerry Craft has a lot in common with Jordan Banks. Jordan is the main character in Craft's latest book, *New Kid*. In the story, Jordan is crazy about cartooning and wants to go to art school. Instead, his parents enroll him in a fancy private school known for academics, where he's one of the only students who isn't white. Craft went through something similar, and he knows what it's like to be one of the few African Americans in class. He told TFK Kid Reporter Maria Suarez that for him, the experience was like "being thrown in a cold swimming pool."

Growing up, Craft wasn't a big reader. But *New Kid*, with its imaginative drawings and relatable characters, is a book he would have liked. "A graphic novel is something between a book and a movie," he says.

—By Maria Suarez, *TIME for Kids* Kid Reporter

QUICK TIPS TO GET STARTED

When sharing any book selected with your class, it's important to be aware of the individual dynamics among your students. Whether you choose to use this book for read-aloud, book club, or guided reading, you'll want to be prepared.

- 1. Read the book.** Before introducing the book and leading your class in a discussion about it, you should be prepared. Questions will arise, and you'll want to be able to answer them.
- 2. Mark up the text.** While reading, annotate the text to help you go chapter by chapter, deciding what questions to ask and how they connect to the overall theme.
- 3. Set ground rules.** Establish a set of rules with the class to determine what strong habits of discourse should look and sound like in your classroom. Post them for the year.
- 4. Teach students how to read a graphic novel.** Graphic novels are read from left to right, from the top of the page to the bottom, like a regular book. However, you may want to read the first chapter as a class to accustom students to the organization of speech bubbles in the frames.
- 5. Invest your readers.** Remember, part of your role is to hype the book before, while, and after students read it. This will secure their investment in it and ensure their ability to think critically and answer questions about it.

ABOUT THE BOOK

- Released in February 2019
- 256 pages
- Ages 8 and up
- Lexile Level: 320L

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

JERRY CRAFT is an author and illustrator who has worked on numerous picture books, graphic novels, and middle grade novels, including *The Zero Degree Zombie Zone*, by Patrik Henry Bass. Jerry's books have been Junior Library Guild selections, and he has won five African-American Literary Awards. He is a cofounder and coproducer of the Schomburg Center's annual Black Comic Book Festival, which has drawn close to 50,000 fans since its inception in 2013. Jerry was born in Harlem, in New York City, and grew up in nearby Washington Heights.

Guiding Questions



In *New Kid*, Jordan grapples with being one of the few kids of color at a prestigious private school. The book follows him through his first year, as he learns about friendship and identity.

1. On pages 96–97, Jordan’s parents discuss “playing the game.” What does this mean? How does his mom think going to Riverdale Academy is teaching him the rules of the game? How have his parents’ experiences affected the choices they make for Jordan?
2. Jordan changes the way he presents himself at different stops on the bus. Why does he feel the need to do that? Think about a time you have had to change how you act or how you dress to feel like you fit in. How is that the same or different from Jordan’s experience?
3. *Implicit bias* refers to attitudes toward people or stereotypes that people hold without conscious knowledge. While implicit bias is not always intentional, it can still be hurtful. Find some examples of it in the book. Discuss how the biases make the main characters feel, and how they make you feel as a reader.
4. Friendship is a main theme in the story. Describe how friendships form between Jordan and other characters in the book. What do you learn about his friendships from his conversation with his grandfather in chapter 7? What does Jordan learn from this conversation?
5. Ms. Rawle calls Jordan’s sketchbook a polemic against the school (p. 219). What does that mean? Do you think that is true? Do you think Jordan should be reprimanded for the contents of his sketchbook? Explain.
6. Jordan is referred to as a new kid in both the beginning and at the end of the book (see pages 7 and 245). Explain the difference between these two meanings and how Jordan became a new kid by the end of the book.

Extension Ideas

Student Guidebook

As a graphic novel, *New Kid* is entirely illustrated, but the author also includes illustrations by the book’s main character, Jordan Banks. Have students skim the book and identify Jordan’s drawings. Ask them to discuss why these were included in the book. What do they tell us about Jordan?

Point out that several of Jordan’s sketchbook pages contain tips to understanding and maneuvering and understanding situations he’s encountered. Have the class look at pages 8–9, 40–41, and 56–57 for examples. Ask them to make a list of situations they can provide guidance on (such as *How to Survive Ms. Smith’s Fourth-Grade Class*). For each, have them write tips that will help others. Then have students choose one idea for which to create an illustrated guide. When they’ve completed this, assemble the pages into a class sketchbook, like Jordan’s. If appropriate, share with other classes or grade levels at your school.

Figurative Language About Friendship

Friendship is a prominent theme throughout *New Kid*. Author Jerry Craft includes a metaphor and a simile about friendship by Jordan’s grandfather (page 114 and page 249, respectively). Reread them as a class, and review the differences between these literary devices, if necessary.

Then have students use the reproducible “A Friend Is . . .,” on page 4 of this guide, to come up with their own simile or metaphor about friendship. Have them use the thought bubble to make a cloud of words and phrases they associate with friendship and what friends do. Then ask students to pick some of those words and phrases and think of other things that have similar qualities (such as *ice cream always cheers me up, just like a friend*). Have the class share their similes and metaphors. See if students can find examples from the text that relate to what they wrote.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____



Lasting Impressions

Fill in the chart with your impressions of each character in the book. Jot down your first impressions or the assumptions you make about each character as you are introduced to him or her. You can include what you felt or assumed and what other characters in the book think about a character.

Character	First impressions	Impressions by the end of the book	What caused the change?
Liam			
Andy			
Drew			
Alexandra			
Collin			

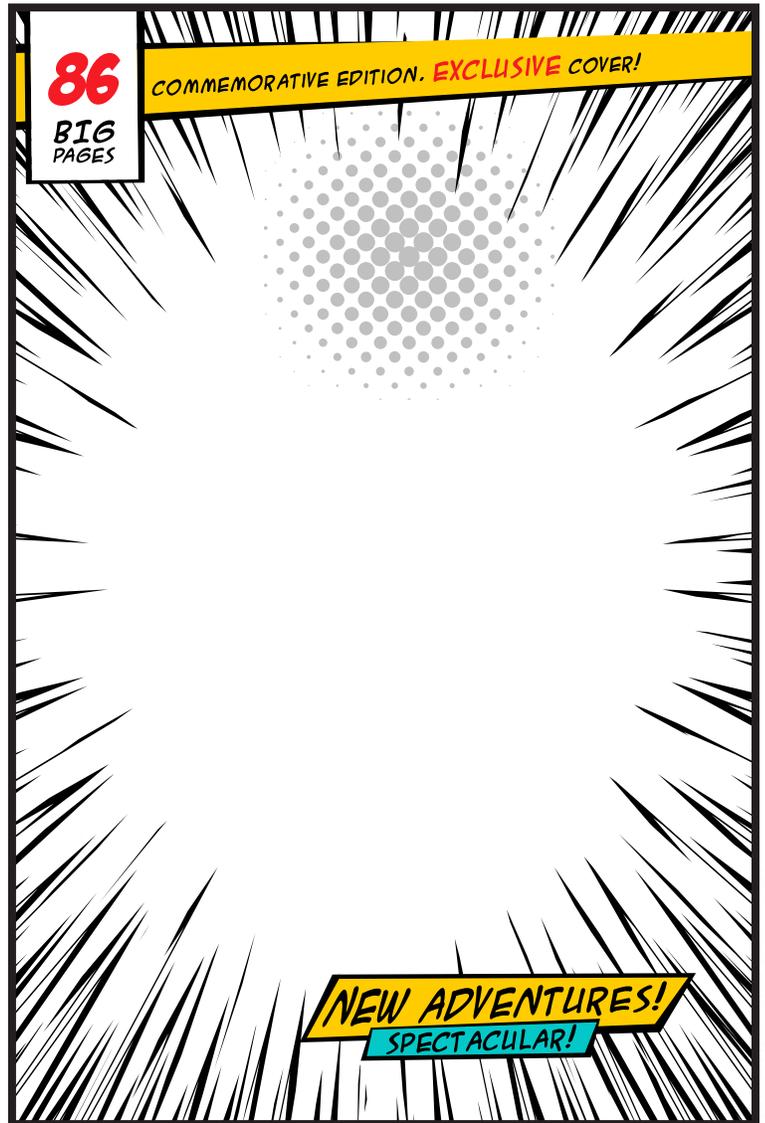
TRY IT! Think of a time you made an assumption about someone that turned out to be wrong. What caused you to misjudge the person at first? Share your experience with a partner or the class.

A Friend Is . . .

In his book *New Kid*, Jerry Craft uses similes and metaphors about friendship. Use the thought cloud to write words and phrases about friends. Then come up with your own simile or metaphor below.

Friends are...

My simile/metaphor
about friends.



ILLUSTRATE IT! Use the book cover above to draw yourself as a graphic-novel character. If there's time, create a scene using the template on the following page or on a separate piece of paper that illustrates your simile or metaphor.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

