

TURTLE IN PARADISE

NOW IN GRAPHIC NOVEL FORMAT!



From JENNIFER L. HOLM and SAVANNA GANUCHEAU

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EDUCATORS' GUIDE

TURTLE IN PARADISE

ABOUT THE BOOK

TURTLE IN PARADISE FOR A NEW GENERATION OF READERS

Jennifer L. Holm's Depression-era Key West comes to life through vibrant illustrations by rising-star artist Savanna Ganucheau. This new adaptation joins children's classics like *The Golden Compass* and *A Wrinkle in Time*, which have recently been remade into graphic novels for new and excited readers. *Turtle in Paradise* is a fantastic story filled with adventure, humor, and heart about a young girl learning to come out of her shell.

PRAISE FOR HOLM'S TURTLE IN PARADISE

- **Newbery Honor Award Winner!**
- **4 Starred Reviews!**
- **A New York Times Bestseller!**



ABOUT THE CREATORS

JENNIFER L. HOLM is the author of three Newbery Honor-winning novels, several *New York Times* bestselling series, and numerous fantastic prose and graphic novels for young readers. Jennifer's great-grandmother emigrated from the Bahamas to Key West in 1897, and this journey inspired the Newbery Honor-winning *Turtle in Paradise*.

SAVANNA GANUCHEAU is a comic artist from New Orleans, Louisiana, with a BFA in film from the University of New Orleans. She has drawn for the bestselling series *Lumberjanes* and *Adventure Time* and is the co-creator of *Bloom* with Kevin Panetta.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE AND HOW TO READ A GRAPHIC NOVEL



THE STORY OF TURTLE

Eleven-year-old Turtle is smart and tough and has seen enough of the world not to expect a Hollywood ending. After all, it's 1935 and money—and sometimes even dreams—is scarce. So, when Turtle's mother gets a job housekeeping for a lady who doesn't like kids, Turtle heads off to Florida to live with relatives. Florida is like nothing Turtle's ever seen before, though. It's full of ragtag boy cousins, family secrets to unravel, and even a little bit of fun. Before she knows what's happened, Turtle finds herself coming out of her shell. And as she does, her world opens in the most unexpected ways.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

We want to help make both the story of Turtle and the graphic novel format more accessible for your classroom. This guide seeks to explore the themes and topics of the narrative, while also showing how words and visuals combine to tell the story.

This guide can be used as a whole, or it can be broken down into sections, depending on what works best for your lesson plan. We want this guide to show the power of visual storytelling, while also having the flexibility to fit into your curriculum.

NEW TO GRAPHIC NOVELS?

We understand that not everyone is familiar with graphic novels, and that is perfectly okay! We've included a guide and glossary on page 7.

EXAMINING *TURTLE IN PARADISE* THROUGH WORDS AND ART

PREREADING ACTIVITY

- *Turtle in Paradise*, like life, is full of adventure and mystery. If you left on a journey today, where would you go? What would you bring, and who would you take with you? What would you hope to happen?

KEEP IN MIND . . .

- This story is told through a combination of words, images, and color. As you read the story, make sure to read the words, observe the illustrations, and notice the way the words and images are placed on the page. Now look at the colors. Which ones are chosen, and which are excluded? What does the color palette tell you? How does it make you feel? How does shading and blending help move the story along? Do the colors and images draw your eyes across the page?

PREREADING

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Look at the illustrations on the cover and in the first chapter. What do you see?
- What do the images tell you about the story you are about to read?
- What do the colors tell you about where the book is set and what is about to happen?

WRITING PROMPTS

- After you read the first chapter, predict what you think will happen to Turtle and her mama.
- How do the colors in the first chapter make you feel? Where have you seen colors like this before?



STORYTELLING AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The story starts with Turtle leaving her mother to go stay with family in Key West. How is Turtle welcomed to Key West and Curry Lane? How are the circumstances in Key West better than in New Jersey?
- Early in the story, Turtle meets her cousins and their friends, who have nicknames like Pork Chop, Beans, and Too Bad. Nicknames are part of the culture of Key West. What do the nicknames reveal about the characters, including Turtle herself?
- What is the Diaper Gang? Who gets to be a member and why?
- Aunt Minnie is caring for her three kids and Turtle, all while working to make money. How has the illustrator and colorist used the art to convey the frustrations in Aunt Minnie's life? See pages 18, 26–27, and 65–66.
- Look at the flashback images that accompany Turtle's description of when her mom met Archie, the traveling salesman and her future husband, on pages 6–7. How do the panels, illustrations, and speech bubbles differ from the rest of the story?
- Why does Uncle Vernon work away from home? Look at pages 121–127. How does his homecoming change the family dynamic?
- How does Turtle react to meeting Nana Philly and realizing that she has a grandmother? How do her feelings change as she spends more time with Nana Philly? What does Turtle realize about how Nana Philly treated her mother growing up?
- On pages 151–156, Aunt Minnie is bitten multiple times by a scorpion. How does the situation play out on the page? How do you know how Kermit, Beans, Buddy, and Turtle feel during this event? On pages 157–158, Aunt Minnie wakes up from being sick to find her kids fed and her home clean. How have Aunt Minnie's feelings for Turtle changed, and how have they stayed the same?
- How does Slow Poke act when Turtle is around? Does this change when Turtle's mother, Sadie Belle, is mentioned? Turtle discovers family secrets while away from her mother: her grandmother is alive and her father may not be gone. How does the uncovering of these truths change Turtle? How does it change the way Turtle sees her mother?
- How has Turtle changed since coming to Key West? What and who changes her?

WRITING PROMPTS

- Turtle's shoes, her prized possession from her time in New Jersey, are stolen from the front porch. Turtle is devastated by the news. Write about a time when you lost something and how it made you feel. Were you able to move beyond your initial reaction?
- Turtle is from New Jersey and experiences new-to-her foods like grits-and-grunts-and-gravy, bollos, conch, and turtle stew in Key West. Write about a time when you tried a new food. Use as much descriptive language as you can.
- What foods taste like home to you? Describe these foods or your favorite foods and explain why they hold a special meaning for you.

CONNECTING TO THE ART AND THE ENVIRONMENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Key West is an island with moderate to warm weather year-round. How does this setting help to develop the story? How does living on an island with tropical weather and vegetation feature in the story?
- Compare Curry Lane to Duval Street (see pages 13, 14, 68, 70 and 71). What do these differences mean in the context of the story?
- Slow Poke makes money fishing for sponges. What are they used for? Why does Slow Poke have multiple jobs?
- Look at the full spread on pages 98 and 99. What do you notice about the natural world? How do the colors influence the way you feel about Turtle's day sponge fishing with Slow Poke, especially her falling into the water? How do the illustrations support the tension of the moment?
- What does Turtle learn about the weather of Key West when she first goes to Nana Philly's house? Look at pages 102 and 103.
- The Diaper Gang heads out to find the treasure on the map. To get to the island, they take Johnny Cake's boat without permission. The kids find the treasure by accident but also find themselves stranded on the island in a small shack during a storm. How do the colors change to indicate that danger is coming? How does the conversation between the Diaper Gang change? See pages 177–197.
- On page 186, Kermit reads the waves and knows a big storm is coming. Where you live, are there clues that let you know the weather is changing? Would someone who wasn't local to the area know how to read them?
- Why are the kids afraid when water rushes into the shack? What do they do to keep from getting too scared?
- Cuba is ninety miles from the southernmost tip of Key West. How does having another country so close serve to move the story along? Why do Johnny Cakes and Slow Poke take a boat there?
- It took three people to create this story! The author writes the story, the illustrator draws images to go along with it, and the colorist adds color. On pages 240–243, Savanna Ganucheau walks us through the process to create the finished art and story on page 23. Look at the process and the finished product. How do the story, the illustrations, and the colors work together to convey Turtle's emotions?

WRITING PROMPTS

- What would you do if you found a map that led to treasure?
- Turtle and the Diaper Gang were stranded on an island during a hurricane. They sang and held hands to get through the scary situation. What do you do when you are scared?
- Think about what is outside your front door. Picture it. What do you see? What grows there? Write for ten minutes about the buildings, people, animals and bugs, and things that grow there.

THE BIG PICTURE

WRITING PROMPTS TO PROCESS THE NARRATIVE

- Pork Chop delivers tough news to Turtle and her mama: Archie has run off to Cuba with Turtle's portion of the treasure money. All seems lost. Look at pages 220–231. How does Mama feel as she hears the news about Archie? How does Turtle demonstrate her own sadness? How do the writer, illustrator, and colorist convey this through the words and art? Write about a time when you lost something important to you. What did you learn from the experience?
- What have Turtle and her mama learned about themselves and their family?
- What is a family, and who is a part of it? As Turtle discovers the environment of Key West, she also finds her family. Write about your own family, those related to you and those who you claim as family.
- Write about a time when you learned a tough truth about life. What happened, and what did you learn? Who did you talk to about what you experienced?
- What happens next for Turtle and her newfound friends and family? Write and draw the next adventure for Turtle and her friends.

A FASCINATING HISTORY!

The back matter of this book is filled with history about author Jennifer L. Holm's family and information about Key West's rich culture.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

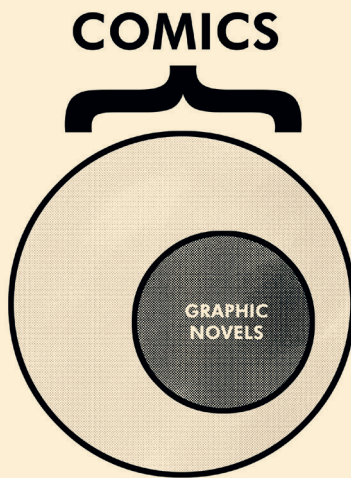
- How are the economic hardships of the characters woven into the story?
- Real events and people related to the author were the inspiration for this story. What real historical happenings are referenced? Make a list of the real places and events mentioned in the story. How did these move the story along?
- Nicknames are a part of Key West culture. Uncle Vernon talks about Turtle's nickname and why she got it. Do you think Turtle's nickname suits her? Why or why not?
- Duval Street and Curry Lane are real places. Use Google Maps to find images of these places, and compare them to the illustrations in the book. What is the same? What is different? Why?
- Why do we write about the past? What events in the story connect to things happening today?

WRITING PROMPTS

- Write about an event that happened to you or someone you know but include a person who wasn't there. What would this person say and do?
- If you know a family story but were not around to experience it yourself, take ten minutes to write down everything you know about the story.
- Where do we find and cultivate hope? Turtle starts the story in a car driven by a stranger traveling to an unknown place to stay with a family that doesn't feel like her family. How does Turtle grow hope during the story? Who helps her keep it watered?

WHAT IS A GRAPHIC NOVEL?

graphic novel *n.* [[SEE COMIC]] **1:** a book-length work in comics form; can be fiction or nonfiction; can be any genre; must be long enough to have a spine **2:** one of the coolest ways to read **3:** What you can expect from Random House Graphic.



comic *n.* **1:** a storytelling format marked by elements of panels, word balloons, text boxes; mostly sequential **2:** a medium or format, not a genre **3:** examples include newspaper comic strips, political cartoons, gag comics, pamphlet comics [[see SUPERHEROES]], mini-comics [[see ZINES]], graphic novels [[see THE FORMAT THAT KIDS AND TEENS ARE FALLING IN LOVE WITH ALL ACROSS AMERICA BECAUSE THEY'RE AMAZING]]

Panel: A single drawing (often contained within a border, often rectangular) that consists of one moment of a comics story.

Gutter: The space between comics panels; the gutter indicates a transition between two moments of the story.

Word balloon/speech balloon: Comic characters' dialogue is shown in a word balloon, often oval, with a tail that points at the speaking character's mouth.

Thought bubble: Comic characters' thoughts are shown in a thought bubble, often cloud-shaped, with small cloud puffs that form a trail between the bubble and the character's head.

Text box: Narration, especially narration not done by a character present in the panel, and captions in a comic are often depicted in a box.

Sound effect: Non-speech sounds (e.g., Crash!) in comics are frequently incorporated into the artwork rather than being depicted in balloons or boxes.

Emanata: Symbolic icons used in comics to indicate specific emotions, moods, or movement. Examples include speed lines (indicating motion), sweat drops (indicating fear, stress, or surprise), stars (indicating injury), and lots more.



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