



A GRAPHIC NOVEL FULL OF SPANISH, SCIENCE AND FRIENDSHIP.

## GRAPHIC NOVELS

### WHAT ARE GRAPHIC NOVELS?

Graphic novels are similar to comic books because they use sequential art to tell a story. They are unlike comic books in that they generally contain stand-alone stories with more complex plots and a continuous narrative from the first to the last page. “Graphic novel” is a format, not a genre. Graphic novels can be fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, poetry, or anything in-between. Image and text share narrative responsibility which supports a variety of readers, including English Language Learners, who will be able to acquire new vocabulary and increase English proficiency, and struggling readers who can use illustrations for contextual clues to gain meaning of the written narrative.

### WHY ARE GRAPHIC NOVELS SO POPULAR?

Rich cross-cultural influences mean that more experimental, innovative, high-quality stories in graphic novels format are available now than ever before. Graphic novels contain adventurous plots, striking visuals, character development, and laugh-out-loud storylines. These texts are also appealing to middle grade readers because they provide visual support for understanding language and story development.

### WHY USE GRAPHIC NOVELS IN THE CLASSROOM?

Middle grade readers are highly motivated to read graphic novels because they love visual media. Graphic novels assist in the teaching of literary devices as readers are actively engaged in the process of comprehending narrative structure, recognizing metaphor and symbolism, identifying perspective, exploring mood and tone, and understanding the use of puns, slang, alliteration, and inferences. Critical and visual literacy skills are also enhanced through the reading of graphic novels.

## SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE OF GRAPHIC NOVELS

THE FOLLOWING ARE A FEW TERMS AND CONCEPTS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH GRAPHIC NOVELS:

**Panels:** The panels contain a combination of image and text to create a narrative sequence.

**Frame:** The lines and borders that contain the panels.

**Gutter:** The white space between panels that transition between scenes and narrators, time and perspective.

**Font:** The font can be used to create mood or tone, suggest phrasing and intonation, or add to the visual design.

**Narrative box:** These boxes describe the scene, provide insight into the characters, or contain additional information to enhance readers’ understanding of the story.

**Speech balloons:** These vary in size, shape, and layout and reveal external dialogue between two characters or internal dialogue which is generally designated by a balloon that has a series of dots or bubbles going up to it.

## GRAPHIC NOVELS AND THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Graphic novels address the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) because they promote visual and verbal literacy and demonstrate divergent texts and text structures. Graphic novels rely on the reader to construct the story by actively integrating visual and verbal components.

To support students in responding to *Lowriders in Space* and to address the CCSS, use the following strategies that are aligned to the standards. While the strategies are listed according to a specific grade level, they can be adapted for all grade levels.

# COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR READING LITERATURE: GRADE 5

## STRATEGIES FOR LINKING THE CCSS WITH *LOWRIDERS IN SPACE*

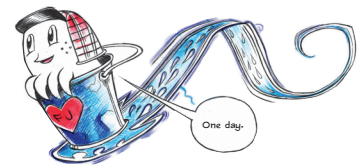
### KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 5.1-3):

- Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
  - Determine a theme of a story, drama or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.
  - Compare and contrast two or more characters or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.
1. To assist students in understanding inferences, model different behaviors and emotions such as slumping in a chair, rolling your eyes, or standing with hands on your hips. Ask students what they infer from your actions and how they knew what you were feeling. Then break the class into small groups to do their own role-playing. Afterward, create a two-column chart and list the inferences on one side and evidence on the other.
  2. Use the following sentence structure to compare and contrast two characters from *Lowriders in Space*. Have students cite evidence from the text.

- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are similar because they both: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are different because: \_\_\_\_\_



### CRAFT & STRUCTURE

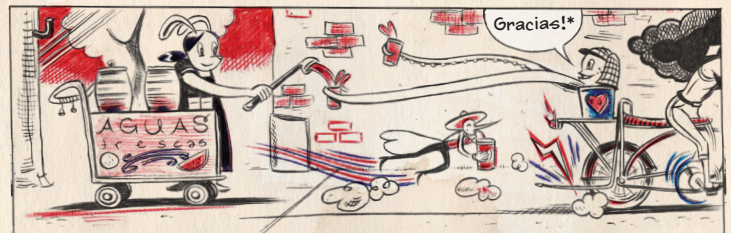
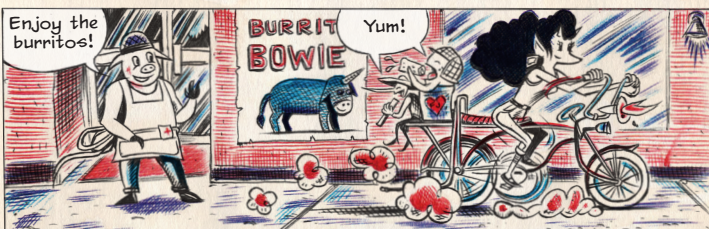
Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 5.4-6):

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.
  - Explain how a series of chapters, scenes, or stanzas fit together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama or poem.
  - Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.
1. There are Spanish words and phrases sprinkled throughout the story that might be unfamiliar to students. Have students look at the text before, after and then at the unfamiliar word to determine what the author has written. Next, students guess what the word or phrase could mean based on context and visual clues.
  2. Provide 1-2 minutes for students to engage in a quick write to answer the following questions:
    - What point of view is the story told from in *Lowriders in Space*? How would the story be different if it had been told from a first-person point or third-person point of view?
    - Use examples from the story to support your answer.

### INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 5.7. 5.9):

- Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g. graphic novel, etc.)
  - Compare and contrast stories in the same genre on their approaches to similar themes and topics.
1. Students can “question the illustrator” by discussing the visual elements in *Lowriders in Space* that contribute to the novel's meaning, tone, and action.





# COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR READING LITERATURE: GRADE 6

## STRATEGIES FOR LINKING THE CCSS WITH *LOWRIDERS IN SPACE*

### KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 6.1-3):

- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
  - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
  - Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
1. Students select one or more characters and describe that character at the beginning and then at the end of the story.
  2. Draw four circles. At four different points in the story, have students draw the character's emotions and note the page number that provides the evidence.

### CRAFT & STRUCTURE

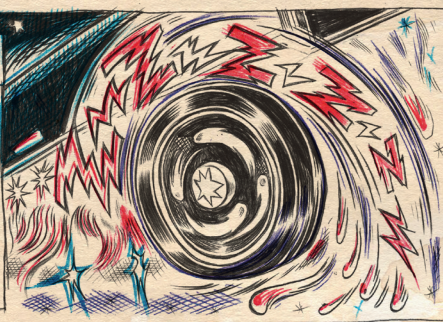
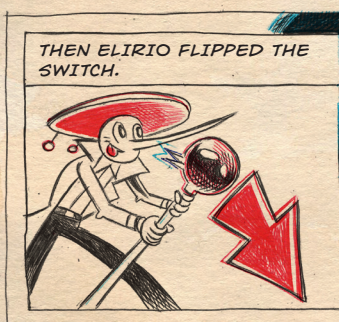
Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 6.4-6):

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.
  - Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of theme, setting or plot.
  - Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.
1. The author of *Lowriders in Space* has chosen to incorporate Spanish words and phrases into the text. Have students explore word choice and how specific choices impact meaning by demonstrating connotations and denotations. Select a sentence that reflects a character action and have students voice different ways the sentence might be said. Discuss if there is another English or Spanish word that could be substituted.
  2. Support students in recognizing the point of view of the author and illustrator by making inferences. Students select one character and tell the point of view from that character's perspective of what is happening at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

### INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 6.7, 6.9):

- Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.
  - Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.
1. Select a picture book or short story that is similar to the fantasy genre of *Lowriders in Space*. Create a chart for students to record how the two texts are alike and how they are different while indicating support from each text for their response.



# COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR READING LITERATURE: GRADE 7

## STRATEGIES FOR LINKING THE CCSS WITH *LOWRIDERS IN SPACE*

### 1. KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

*Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 7.1-3):*

- Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
  - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
  - Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g. how setting shapes the characters or plot).
1. As students read, have them ask and answer questions about the text to identify the theme. Some questions to assist in this process:
    - What images or words appear multiple times?
    - What are the major turning points in the story?
    - Does a character learn from his/her experience?
    - Does the title reveal events, conflicts, or characters in the story?
  2. Have students identify the plot, setting, character(s), conflict, point of view, and theme. Discuss how they determined the theme of the book.

### CRAFT & STRUCTURE

*Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 7.4-6):*

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases and how they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.
  - Analyze how a drama's or poem's form or structure contributes to its meaning.
  - Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
1. Generate a list of the Spanish words and phrases in *Lowriders in Space* paired with the meaning of presented in the narrative boxes. Students can create a found poem using both Spanish and English words and phrases in response to this graphic novel.
  2. As students read *Lowriders in Space*, have them select a character and record the pivotal events they encountered and how they reacted to each one. As students describe the thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the events they will make inferences about the character's perspective.

### 3. INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE & IDEAS

*Students should be able to (CCSS R.L. 7.7-9):*

- Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium.
  - Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.
1. Before reading *Lowriders in Space* engage in a book walk and point out unique formatting choices made by the author and illustrator. Use the information about the terms and concepts related to graphic novels to guide the walk and inform the discussion.





## EXTENSION STRATEGIES: CREATING CHARISMATIC CHARACTERS

Graphic novel characters are developed both through the narrative and the illustrations. Students can generate characters for their own graphic novel or to combine characters with others to collaboratively write a story. Have students consider the following:

- What is your character's name?
- Where is your character from?
- Are they the antagonist or protagonist?
- What is your character's biggest fear?
- What is your character's personal motto?
- What type of clothing does your character wear?
- What is your character's favorite music?
- Who is your character's best friend? Worst enemy?
- Does your character have unusual or super powers?
- Does your character have any sidekicks? Pets? Siblings?

As students generate dialogue for their character(s), have them consider how it might be said using the speech balloon examples below:

MY CHARACTER WOULD SAY:



MY CHARACTER WOULD SHOUT:



MY CHARACTER WOULD WHISPER:



MY CHARACTER WOULD THINK:



## GRAPHIC NOVEL LITERATURE CIRCLES

Literature Circles, comprised of small groups of 4-5 students, provide an excellent opportunity for students to discuss *Lowriders in Space* and to determine their own connections as they enhance and extend the reading experience with their peers. In order to prepare and engage in literature circles, engage the students in:

### BEFORE READING:

Conduct a quick book walk with students and take notes on what they notice about the panels, narrative boxes, and the use of Spanish language in the book. Pause and point out some of the Spanish that has an asterisk (\*) and demonstrate that there is generally an explanation of the word or phrase in the narrative box. Also, show the final pages with a glossary of both Spanish and science terms. Introduce the different terms and concepts such as panels, gutter, or perspective, that are used when discussing graphic novels.

### BEFORE READING:

As students read, have them create a list of characteristics, including aspects of their job, for one or more characters. In addition, have them generate a vocabulary notebook with a list of Spanish words and phrases that they know or have just learned in the process of reading *Lowriders in Space*. Have them pause after reading the first 20 pages and ask, "Are you able to read the book easily? How does this kind of reading compare to reading other books that aren't graphic novels?"



In addition, use the following discussion questions to facilitate the discussion:

1. What is a low rider? What is unique about this type of car?
2. When we first meet the characters, they are working at a car dealership six days a week. What do you think is the difference between working for someone rather than owning your own business? List the pro and cons of each.
3. On page 22, the announcement for the Universal Car Competition is shown. Discuss the different type of cars that can be considered. Draw or discuss what you think a “mechanically inventive, exquisitely detailed cosmic car” would look like that might win the competition.
4. Do you think the car depicted on page 37 is special enough to win? Why or why not?
5. Discuss how outer space helped them to customize their car. What were all of the elements in space that they used?
6. How did the white out help them?
7. Why do you think Lupe Impala, El Chavo Flapjack, and Elirio Malaria’s car won the competition? Where there other cars you think should have won? Why or why not? What evidence from the text can you use to support your response?
8. Read and discuss the author’s notes at the end of the book. What did you learn from this note that provided more information about *Lowriders in Space*?

**AFTER READING:**

Ask students to create a visual timeline of the story using words and images. Be sure that they incorporate some of the Spanish words and phrases into their timeline to demonstrate comprehension. Above the timeline, students use words to describe the situation while below the line, students use images to describe the situation.



\*LOW AND SLOW



## GOING GRAPHIC: CREATING YOUR OWN COMICS

One of the most logical projects for students after reading *Lowriders in Space* would be to create their own graphic novel to share with others. Have them consider the following:

### CHARACTER(S)

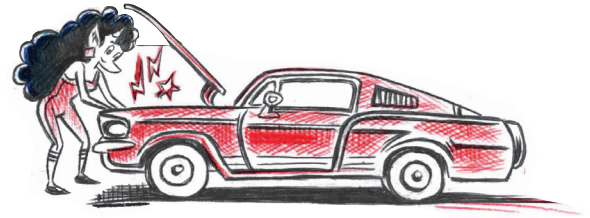
- Who will be the main character?
- What problem or conflict will this character face?
- Who or what will be the villain or antagonist?
- How will the problem or conflict be resolved?
- What colors will be used in the illustration to create mood and tone?

### SETTING

- Where is the story set?
- When is the story set—past, present, or future?

### ACTION

- What happens at the beginning?
- What is the rising action?
- What is the pivotal point in the story?
- What is the conflict?
- What is the resolution?



There are several websites that can assist students in generating their stories and graphics such as: ToonDoo.com, MakeBeliefsComix.com, Pixton.com, comicmaster.org.uk, stripgenerator.com/strip/create, readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic/ for the ReadWriteThink Comic Creator.

## LOWRIDERS in SPACE

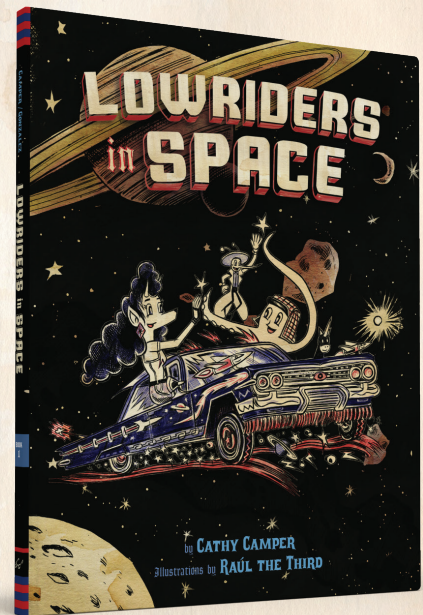
by CATHY GAMPER Illustrated by RAÚL THE THIRD

**Lupe Impala, El Chavo Flapjack, and Eli Rio Malaria love working with cars.**

You name it, they can fix it. But the team's favorite cars are cars that hip and hop, dip and drop: low riders! The stars align when a contest for the best car around offers a trunkful of cash for a prize—just what the team needs to open their own shop! But how can they turn their junker into a winner? Striking art from a debut illustrator is a riff on ballpoint-pen-and-sharpie desk-drawn doodles, and the story—full of Spanish, science, and friendship—will delight readers eager and reluctant alike. A glossary at the back provides definitions for Spanish and science terms.

**CATHY GAMPER** is the creator of *Bugs Before Time: Prehistoric Insects and Their Relatives*. Her work has also been featured in *Simple Times: Crafts for Poor People*, by Amy Sedaris, as well as in *Wired*, *Cricket*, *Cicada*, *Primavera*, *Women's Review of Books*, *Utne Reader*, and *Giant Robot*. She reviews graphic novels online for Lambda Books and is a librarian for Multnomah County Library in Portland, Oregon, where she does outreach to schools and kids in grades K-12. For more information: [www.cathycamper.com](http://www.cathycamper.com).

**RAÚL THE THIRD'S** work is drawing much acclaim, and was featured in three recent exhibits: The Community Art Initiative Artist Project and Their Families at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Close Distance at the Mills Gallery in Boston, Massachusetts, and The Artadia Award Show at the Art Institute of San Francisco, California. He teaches classes on drawing and comics for kids at The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and the Maude Morgan Visual Arts Center in Cambridge. Having grown up in Texas, he remembers Cholo kids were masters at drawing with Bic pens, which has influenced his style of drawing for this book. For more of his artwork: [www.artbyraul.com](http://www.artbyraul.com).



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