



OMNIBUS BOOKS

Category	Graphic novel
Title	Pilot & Huxley vs Planet Arpros
Author/Illustrator	Dan McGuinness
Extent	64pp
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Previous publications

Pilot & Huxley
(Omnibus Books, 2009)
Pilot & Huxley and the Holiday Portal
(Omnibus Books, 2010)

Teachers' Notes Pilot & Huxley vs Planet Arpros

Pilot & Huxley Book 3
Written and illustrated
by Dan McGuinness

Teachers' notes by Madeline Holmes

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About the Story

Pilot and Huxley are on their way home. Getting there, however, is proving difficult. First, they wind up in the year 3047 in the middle of a space war. What the boys need is a time machine, and as luck would have it, some nice aliens might be able to help them – if, of course, they save the universe. A really bad guy who happens to be a planet wants to destroy everything and he might just succeed. If being turned into a rabbit isn't bad enough, getting captured and finding out your parents are aliens certainly is. Pilot and Huxley can't do it alone, but luckily they have some special friends to help them. A hilarious tale about friendship and human courage.

About the Author

Adelaide comic artist Dan McGuinness started out by selling his hand-stapled booklets at comic conventions. These days he leaves the stapling to the experts, and has had three graphic novels published by Omnibus Books. Rumour has it that Dan grew up in a top- secret military facility. *Pilot & Huxley vs Planet Arpros* is the third instalment in the series, preceded by *Pilot & Huxley* and *Pilot & Huxley and the Holiday Portal*.

Author/Illustrator Inspiration

Though Dan didn't read much as a child, he did make time for everything by Roald Dahl, an author he greatly admired. He drew inspiration from childhood favourites that made him laugh to create his own story for children. On his shelf were titles like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *He-Man*, *Thundercats*, *Jabba Jaw*, *DragonBall Z*, *The Real Ghostbusters*, *Voltron*, *M.A.S.K* and *Footrot Flats*.

About the Illustrations

Dan begins his books by writing a script. The script includes the dialogue, sound effects and descriptions of how the panels will be laid out. As he writes the script (or sometimes even before he starts), he sketches new characters in lead pencil into an ideas book. His ideas book is a simple blank notebook that he keeps handy on his desk. In these early sketches he

decides what style he is going to draw the character in – for example, he wanted the characters in *Pilot & Huxley vs Planet Arpros* to have quite large heads but little bodies.

He starts by drawing each page quite roughly in lead pencil, working at A3 size so that it is easier to include the smaller details. Once Dan's happy with the pencil drawings, he places a sheet of tracing paper over each page and inks their outlines using a felt-tipped pen. The next step is to scan the outlines and colour them using Photoshop. At this point Dan also adds big colourful sound effects and his graphic designer (Clare Oakes) brings these files into InDesign. She adds the panel borders, speech bubbles and captions.

Though this is the process Dan uses, he stresses that there is no right or wrong way as every person has his or her own way of drawing and colouring.

Study Notes for Teachers

1. Comics versus the novel: critical thinking, listening and public speaking

Have a class discussion in which students list all the things they like about *Pilot & Huxley vs Planet Arpros*. Get them to consider how comics are different from novels. Do they think one form is superior to the other?

Hold a mock debate with the topic: reading comic books is more fun than reading novels. Divide students into groups of three and tell them that they have to argue for or against the stated proposition. In these groups ask the students to come up with two or three main points to support their argument and summarise their point with a tagline, which each speaker can reiterate. They could consider the key elements of a story such as plot, characters, action, setting, and decided which medium presents it to a reader's satisfaction.

The art of debating, www.canberracitytoastmasters.org.au, is a terrific source, which explains in detail the role of each speaker.

2. Life as a comic book hero: imagined worlds

Ask students to brainstorm alter egos using Pilot and Huxley and their world as a reference point. If they were comic book heroes what would they call themselves? What kind of world would they live in? Would they have a special outfit? Maybe special powers? What would

their purpose be? Would they have enemies? Who would their allies be? How about a sidekick?

With this background information students can write a comic book proposal for a publisher. Using persuasive writing, students should argue why their alter ego would make a great protagonist. They could even include character illustrations.

3. Making character cookie cutters: creative fun

First you need something to make the cutter. An aluminium-foil lasagne pan or something similar would be ideal. Use a ruler and texta to mark one-inch strips. Be careful when you cut these out, as sharp edges may cut your fingers. Set aside your aluminium-foil strips and start designing your cutter on paper. Photocopy a page from the book and enlarge this so your chosen character is the perfect cookie size. Get some tracing paper and carefully go over the outline of your character. Remember that the perimeter of your cutter can be no longer than your longest aluminium-foil strip. Take one of your aluminium-foil strips and start moulding it around your design. For curves, try using a pen or a cup. To create ninety-degree angles, try using a ruler. To close your cutter, overlap the ends and staple shut. Remember to wash and dry your cutter before trying it out on the dough!

4. *BANG!*: understanding onomatopoeia

Ask students to write down the definition of onomatopoeia: words that make the sound of an action or object. Have students read through the book and identify onomatopoeic words. Make a class list of all the ones they find. Have a discussion about which ones are the students' favourite words. Why do they think comic writers use this device? What function do these words serve? What would happen if these words weren't used? Think of synonyms for onomatopoeic words, like hard thud for bang. Go around the class and ask each student to create their own onomatopoeia word.

Once students understand the concept, have them develop a six-panel comic strip using onomatopoeia.

5. Time travel: examining human desire

Pilot and Huxley want a time travel machine to take them home. Humans have been interested in time travel for eons. Have a discussion with students about why they think time

travel holds such a strong appeal. Where would they go if they had one return trip though time? Ask students to make a list of five items they would choose to take and why.

6. Friendship: thematic concerns

Friendship is a strong theme throughout the book. Use Pilot and Huxley as a launch pad to discuss friendship and what it means to the students. What do they value in a friend? Why are friends so important? What would they do for a friend in need? You could also begin a discussion about themes, explaining that a theme is a recurring or pervading idea. Have students brainstorm all the themes in *Pilot & Huxley vs Planet Arpros*.

7. Internet resources: using the web

Visit Pilot and Huxley's website www.pilotandhuxley.com where you can find character bios, download T-shirt transfers and desktop wallpaper, and learn more about the author.