



# TEACHERS' NOTES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Middle to upper primary (ages 7–11; years 2 to 5)

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## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking; Visual Language

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Fun, action-packed story about best friends who love inventing, coding, games and creating together.
- Great STEM themes – lots of creative inventing.
- Learning about graphic novels and comics/visual literary

## THEMES

- Friendship
- Technology and STEM
- Pets
- Responsibility
- Identity

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

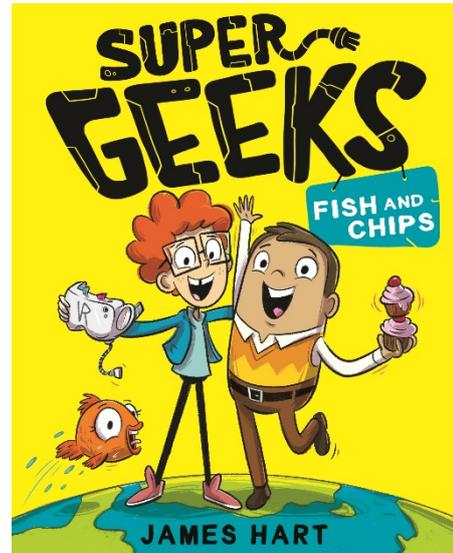
## PUBLICATION DETAILS

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## Super Geeks 1: Fish and Chips

James Hart

## PLOT SUMMARY

*The story of two best friends' quest for WORLD DOMINATION!*

Illustrator James Hart makes his authorial debut in this hilarious, action-packed graphic novel series! Perfect for fans of Real Pigeons, Diary of a Wimpy Kid and Dog Man.

Zeek and Arnie are best friends. They do everything together. They love solving problems, inventing, playing video games, coding, reading comics, cooking (mostly Arnie) and planning WORLD DOMINATION (mostly Zeek).

But when Zeek puts a microchip in Arnie's pet fish, Eleanor, things go horribly wrong . . . A super-intelligent Eleanor decides she's going to become the supreme ruler of the world.

How will Zeek and Arnie stop Eleanor's fish-bot army and prevent this power-hungry fish from achieving WORLD DOMINATION?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Hart grew up loving comics, cartoons and drawing. After finishing his studies, he turned that passion into a full-time career as an illustrator. Over the years he has worked on toy designs, animations and books for multiple clients and publishers across the world. Projects include: the popular animated series of *The Day My Butt Went Psycho*, the award-winning You Choose series, the CBCA-notable Mr Bambuckle's Remarkables series, the thrilling Mysterious World of Cosentino series, the young adventure series: D-Bot Squad and MANY titles with his favourite author Adam Wallace. In 2018, James illustrated the Premier's Reading Challenge posters in Victoria. His book series, *Cowboy and Birdbrain*, which he illustrated and co-created with Adam Wallace, was first released in 2019. When James isn't drawing he can be found being a dad and husband, watching movies and cartoons, listening to music, gardening, reading and writing.

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

James says:

The Super Geeks world grew from a lifetime of influences and ideas. I've kept multiple notebooks and sketchbooks dating back over 20 years. They are like scrambled recipe books for new creations and stories. Zeek and Arnie came into existence around 2007 when I first started drawing these two geeky kids messing around with comics, pop culture and technology. I drew them to amuse myself and as a commentary on the geeky culture around me, inspired by my friends from school when I was a kid. The characters gradually evolved and began to take on parts of my personality and later, when I became a father, my own kids began to influence Zeek and Arnie too.

Zeek and Arnie were also mixed together with other ideas and concepts I'd liked and created while growing up. Something I used to do when I was in primary school was draw underground bunkers or 'hang-outs', where I would imagine having huge TVs, millions of comics and movies and every video game in the world. That's where the idea of the underground lab in Super Geeks came from and it birthed the childhood dream of: *how amazing it would be to be my own boss of my own world and do whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted*. This became Zeek's quest for *World Domination!* Eleanor, Arnie's pet goldfish, showed up a little later. In 2012, I designed a fish character in a robot suit. His name was Steve. I really liked the idea of a fish controlling a robot and it fit well in the Super Geeks world. Steve still makes an appearance in *Fish and Chips*, but it's Eleanor who's the star, along with Zeek and Arnie, of course.

What James says about graphic novels:

I fell in love with comics the moment I could hold one in my teeny toddler hands. The first comics I owned as a kid were He-Man comics and English comics like *The Beano* and *The Dandy*. As I grew up (well, got bigger) I moved on to American superhero comics like *X-Men* and *Spider-Man* and indie comics and Japanese Manga. I read anything that I could find that was visually appealing. Mostly, I was focused on the pictures rather than the writing, and wasn't concerned if I missed issues or picked something up part way through a series. As a kid I was a bit intimidated by chapter books. The thicker the scarier. That's where comics were more inviting. Gradually, as I've got older, thick wordy books don't scare me as much and I don't need pictures to enjoy a story. But I definitely still love comics.

Comics to me have always been a bit like watching a cartoon or movie only more interactive and perhaps even better for your eyes. As the reader you can settle on a scene, or pause it in your mind, with everything still going on around the page, giving you time to really enjoy the art and the story and the moment. As the creator of the pages of a comic you can set the scene and the pace of the story. You can tell the story with the words of narration and with the dialogue of the characters or with no words and just show a character doing something in a world that you've created.

This is what I love. Making things up. Flexing my imagination muscle. Creating visual worlds and characters and putting them together in interesting and often times ridiculous situations. Being able to use words and pictures together to create a graphic novel has always been my dream. It's a lot of work, but I love the process. Working out what and who to show in a panel and from what angle and how many panels on a page is SO much fun. And that is what I believe comics for kids should be, FUN!

## PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover of the book. What do you think the story will be about based on the illustrations?
2. Take a close look at the characters on the front cover. What can you tell about the characters based on their clothing, body language and what they are holding?
3. Look at the back cover of the book? Has the cover design given you clues as to what the book will be like inside? How can you tell that the book is going to be a graphic novel/comic?



## GRAPHIC AND ILLUSTRATED NOVELS

### Questions

1. Is this the first graphic or illustrated novel that you have read? If not, what are the titles of others you have read? What makes *Fish and Chips* stand out from the other novels? Or what makes it similar to the others?
2. Which do you think James Hart came up with first – the text for the story or the illustrations? Do you think there would be a way to create one without the other?
3. Look at the way the text has been designed on each page. Do you think a deliberate decision was made about making the characters' dialogue look different to the narrative sections of text? Do you think it would be as easy to read if the same font was used throughout? What other design decisions have been made to make the story easy to read? (Eg look at spacing around the words, the dialogue bubbles and the way illustrations interact with the other elements on the page.)

### Activities

- Break into groups and discuss and list the main differences between graphic or illustrated novels and regular novels. Come up with five main elements that are needed for a graphic or illustrated novel to work. Share your ideas with your classmates.
- In groups, or pairs, come up with an idea for your own graphic or illustrated novel. Work out how you would divide the work – who would write the text? Who would illustrate the story? Who is the main character? Does the character have friends? Enemies? Superpowers? Problems to solve?
- Go to the library and look at other graphic or illustrated novels. Who are the protagonists of the other novels? Are they all superheroes? Are they regular kids? Can you find any graphic novels that are based on real life events?
- Write up an outline for a graphic or illustrated novel about your own life. Where would you start the story? What style would you use?
- Look at the map of THE LAB on pages 18-19. Draw a map of your own secret hideaway, cubby or clubhouse. What would you do differently to Zeek and Arnie? Be as detailed as you like. Don't forget to label your map.

## KEY STUDY TOPICS

### Characters

#### Questions

1. How has James Hart made the two main characters – Zeek and Arnie – different from each other? Has he done this in the illustrations as well as in the text? Find examples of each.
2. Zeek wants to be the supreme ruler of the world. Why does he want to do this? Do you think his plan was a good one? Why or why not? Can you think of other stories where characters have wanted to take over the world? Did it work in those stories?
3. Arnie has an amazing imagination, especially when it comes to invention and baking. What are some different ways the author demonstrates Arnie's creativity in the story?
4. Read the last few pages of Chapter Eight (pp174-185) again. Do you think that Zeek has learned anything about world domination by the end of the story? If so, what do you think it is?
5. Are there characters in the story who don't get as much time on the page? Do you think the author might have reasons for doing this? What could they be?

#### Activities

- Write a list of all the characters in *Fish and Chips*. What do you think would happen if you took out a particular character – would the story still work? Eg if you removed Gunther from the story, would the boys have been able to save the day in the end? What would happen if you removed the character of Baxter? Or Eleanor?
- How would the story be different if Arnie had had a different animal for a pet? Write a chapter of the story as if Arnie had a pet cat instead of a goldfish, or perhaps a pet lizard. How would the story turn out differently?

### Friendship

#### Questions

1. Think about Zeek and Arnie's friendship. Now think about the relationship you have with your best friend or with someone you are close to. Are there similarities? Are there differences?
2. Why do you think Zeek and Arnie make such a good team? Can you find places in the story when they disagree? Are there places in the story where they act in selfish ways towards each other? And are there places where they help each other?



3. Do Zeek and Arnie have a good relationship? Do you think that you have to work at friendship? What makes a good friendship? What types of things can ruin a friendship?

### Activities

- Make a chart listing all the similarities and differences between the two main character in *Fish and Chips*. Does the list look balanced or is one column longer than the other? In pairs, discuss what makes a friendship work. What are some things that can break a friendship down? Use your lists as a reference.
- At times, it might seem like Zeek isn't very nice to Arnie. What evidence can you find in the story to prove that Arnie and Zeek's relationship is a strong one?
- Find another example of a friendship within the story, apart from Zeek and Arnie. How can you tell they are friends? How does the author get this across to the reader? What sort of cues does he use to demonstrate this?
- Create a character profile for a best friend for Eleanor. Draw an illustration of this friend. Be as creative as you like. Eg would this friend be another goldfish? Or a human? Or a different animal entirely? How did they meet? Would having a best friend change Eleanor's plans for world domination?

## Technology/Invention

### Questions

1. Why does Zeek want to put the microchip in Eleanor? Do you think it was a good idea? Can you list other inventions that help us live our lives?
2. Zeek and Arnie are into lots of different things and these are listed on pages 8-12. Are you interested in any of these technologies? Do you think there are other areas of science that Zeek and Arnie would be interested in? What do you think they could be?

### Activities

- What is your favourite piece of technology? Research the history of this technology and find out what you can about the inventor/s.
- List the different inventions that Arnie and Zeek have created and are mentioned in the story. If you could invent something, what would it be?
- Look at the list of technical terms Arnie uses on page 124. Are these real computer terms? Research these words and write definitions for each one.

- Research inventions that have been created by Australians. (Eg the black box, cochlear implants.) Pick one and create a short comic strip about its creator inventing this piece of technology.

## KEY QUOTES

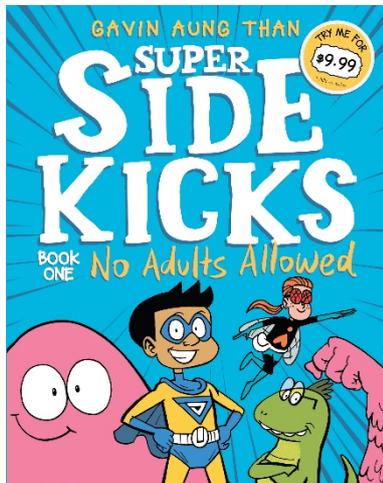
**'This was the first time Arnie and Zeek had owned up to their creation. It felt good to get it off their chests.'** (p. 126) What do you think this means? Why do you think Arnie and Zeek needed to 'own up' to what they'd done? Do you think that inventors have a responsibility for/to their creations? Can you think of real-life examples when people have had to own up to things they have created or invented when things might not have gone the way they had planned?

**'I read once that dolphins are extremely smart creatures. But we don't have a dolphin so we must use Eleanor as the next best thing.'** (p. 33) Is it true that dolphins are extremely smart? Research dolphins and find five facts to support this statement. Do you think Zeek could have found another animal for his project?

**'All the money Eleanor stole to buy the robots needed to be returned.'** (p. 187) Do you think it's realistic that Zeek and Arnie would be able to get five hundred and sixty-two billion dollars back from selling the used robot parts? Do you think that it matters that it isn't realistic? Can you find other places in the narrative when exaggeration is used to help tell the story?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Super Sidekicks 1: No Adults Allowed*  
by Gavin Aung Than

Superheroes have it easy. They don't have to clean their secret headquarters, wash the alien bloodstains out of their costumes or be responsible for taking Super Mutt out for a walk. No, they leave all that for their sidekicks like me, while they get all the credit!

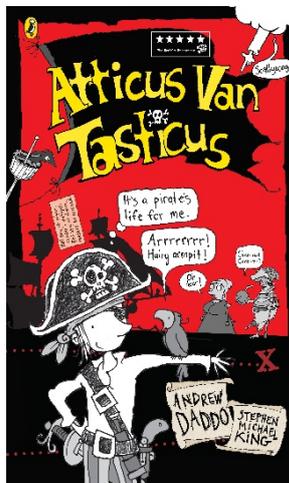
I'm Junior Justice, but you can call me JJ, and I think it's time we made our own team.

The Super Sidekicks!

Are you with me?

Being a superhero sidekick isn't as fun as you think. You do all the work, beat the bad guys and save the planet, only for your grown-up partner to get all the credit. Junior Justice is sick of it, so he and his sidekick pals, Flygirl, Dinomite and Goo, have decided to form their own super team.

*Teachers' Resources Available*



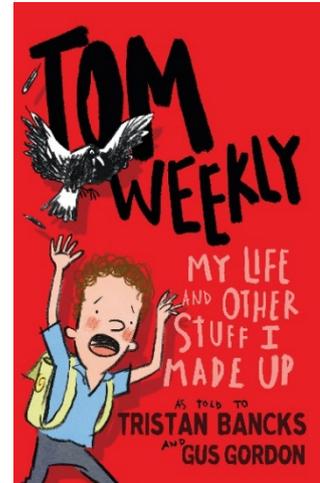
*Atticus Van Tasticus*  
by Andrew Daddo and Stephen Michael King

1750, when times were tough and teeth were rotten...

As part of an ancient family tradition, young Atticus Van Tasticus narrowly escapes a life down the coal mines – or worse, going to school – when he gets to choose the gift of a pirate ship from his Grandnan's treasure pile.

It's a choice that will change the course of history – well, OK, his story, at least. Atticus pulls together a rag-tag bunch of misfits – AHM – a tough, brilliant crew, and sets out to wreak havoc – I mean – live a piratin' life.

With little else to his name, Atticus has a taste for adventure, beauty and danger – where any minute might be your last, and your next minute could be your best (...if only they could get off the dock).



*Tom Weekly 1: My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up*  
by Tristan Banks and Gus Gordon

I'm Tom Weekly. This is a nail-biting – make that toe-biting – thrill ride through my life.

This is where I pour out whatever's inside my head. Like the time a bloodthirsty magpie was out to get me. Or when I had to eat Vegemite off my sister's big toe. And don't forget the day I ate 67 hot dogs in ten minutes. My life gets a bit weird sometimes but that's how I roll.

Top 3 reasons to read this book:

1. Cures for nits
2. Hover underpants
3. Instructions for teleporting



## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Super Geeks 1: Fish and Chips	James Hart	9781760895129	4-5	\$14.99		
Super Sidekicks 1: No Adults Allowed	Gavin Aung Than	9781760897079	4-5	\$9.99		
Atticus Van Tasticus	Andrew Daddo and Stephen Michael King	9780143796541	3-5	\$14.99		
Tom Weekly 1: My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up	Tristan Bancks and Gus Gordon	9780143790082	4-5	\$9.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

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