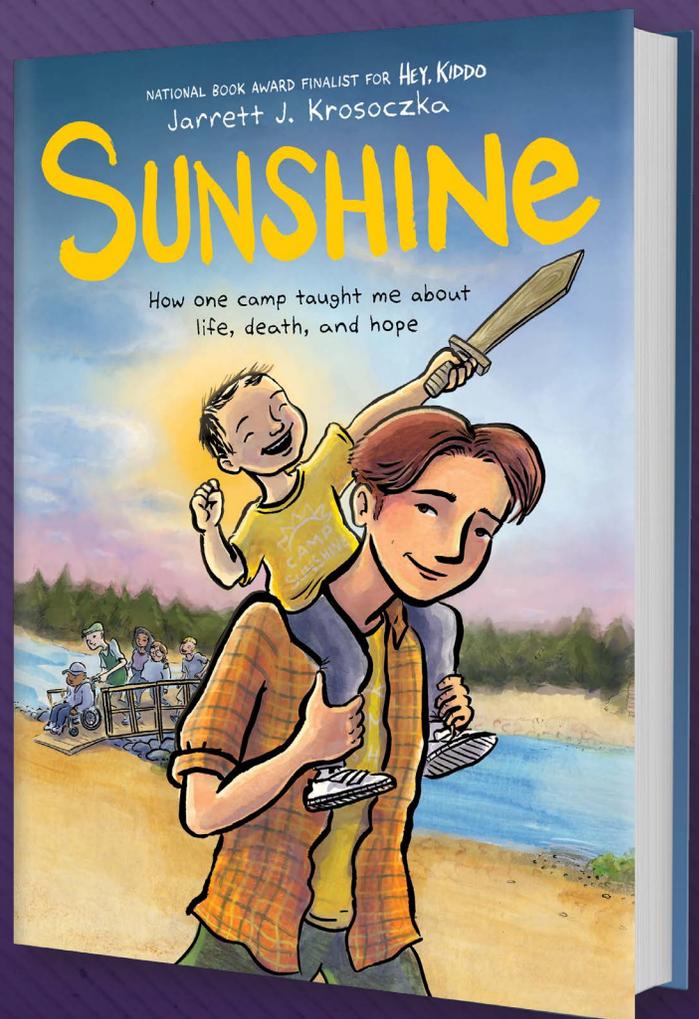
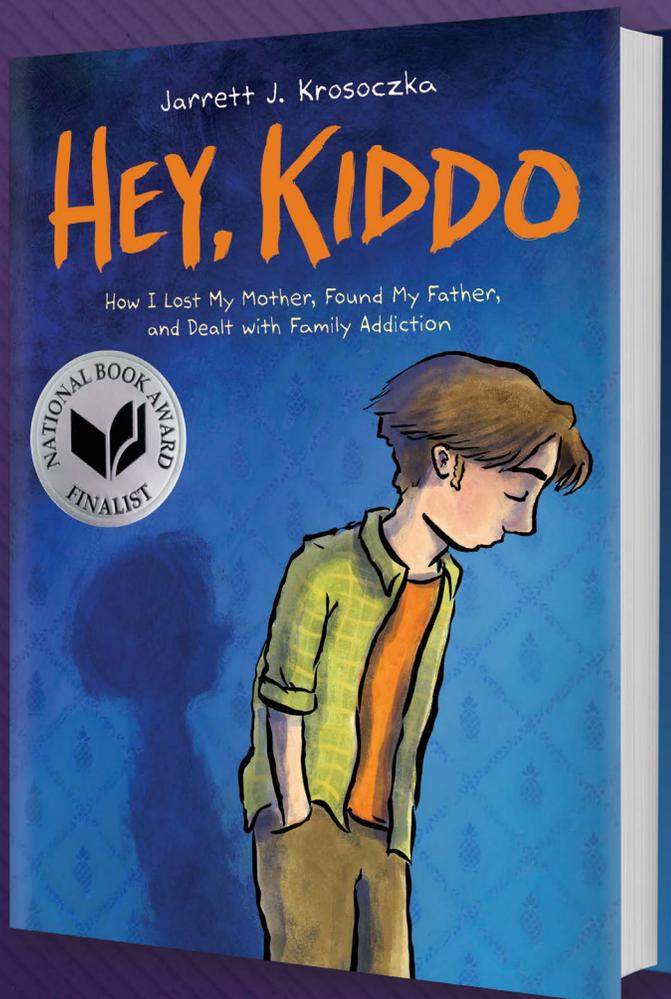


READING GUIDE

The Graphic Memoirs of Jarrett J. Krosoczka

AGES
12 & UP
GRADES
7 & UP

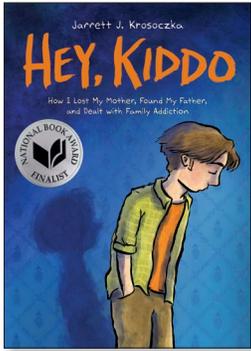


The
Power
of Story

Building Equitable
Bookshelves

 SCHOLASTIC

About HEY, KIDDO



In preschool, Jarrett Krosoczka's teacher asks him to draw his family, with a mommy and a daddy. But Jarrett's family is much more complicated than that. His mom suffers from an opioid addiction, in and out of rehab, and in and out of Jarrett's life. His father is a mystery—Jarrett doesn't know where to find him, or even what his name is. Jarrett lives with his maternal grandparents—two very loud, very loving, very opinionated people who had thought they were through with raising children until Jarrett came along. Jarrett goes through his childhood trying to make his non-normal life as normal as possible, finding a way to express himself through drawing even as so little is being said to him about what's going on. Only as a teenager can Jarrett begin to piece together the truth of his family, reckoning with his mother and tracking down his father. *Hey, Kiddo* is a profoundly important memoir about growing up in a family grappling with addiction, and finding the art that helps you survive.

Pre-Reading Activities for HEY, KIDDO

1. Before reading, analyze the book cover. What do you notice? Based on the colors and the illustration style, what kind of story do you think this is? What emotions might the figure on the cover be experiencing? What do you think the shadow might represent? What connections can you make between your theories and the book's title?
2. Before reading, quietly think about what the "average" family looks like. What do you see in your mind when you think of the word "family?" Draw or write about your initial responses to this prompt, but do not share these images until you have finished reading the book. Once you've finished reading, revisit your drawings and write a response on how your mental image of family changed or why it did not. Write a definition of the word "family," integrating concepts explored in *Hey, Kiddo*.
3. Before reading, set aside five sticky notes or bookmarks. Place these on the pages and/or panels that impact you the most as you read the book. Once you have finished the book, choose the most impactful panel or page, and share your reasons for selecting it in writing or in group discussion.
4. Read the dedication and write a reflection before continuing to read. After finishing the book, return to this reflection. What might you like to change or add to what you wrote earlier?

Discussion Questions for HEY, KIDDO

1. In chapter one, and throughout this memoir, readers get an inside look into Jarrett's family and their stories. Why do you think Jarrett began his memoir with this family lore? How do you think these stories shaped Jarrett's perception of his family members when he was growing up?
2. Consider the use of shading on p. 30–31. How does this visual change add meaning to these pages?
3. Shirley has a strong reaction to the news of Leslie's pregnancy (p. 37). What impact do you think this response will have on Jarrett's mom?
4. Jarrett describes a recurring nightmare that plagues him for years (p. 49–52). Why do you think Jarrett is having these nightmares? Cite evidence from the book to support your answer.
5. Jarrett's teacher asks her students to draw pictures of their families to "celebrate our mommies and daddies at home who take care of us" (p. 70–73). How does she respond when Jarrett says he doesn't have a mom or dad at home? Why is this scene important to the overarching story? How could she have phrased her initial question in a more inclusive way?
6. Based on the scene on p. 80–81, where do you think Jarrett's mom is? What evidence can you find in the book to support your theory?
7. Based on each character's body language and facial expressions in the three panels on p. 84, how do you think Jarrett, Shirley, and Joe are each feeling after leaving Spectrum House? Why?

Discussion Questions for *HEY, KIDDO* (continued)

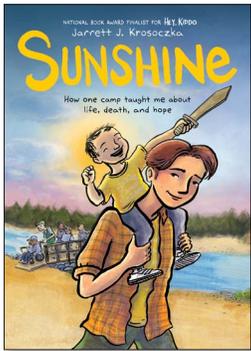
- Jarrett tells Pat why Batman is his favorite superhero even though he “doesn’t have any superpowers” (p. 102–103). What is Jarrett’s reasoning? Based on what you know of Jarrett’s life so far, why do you think young Jarrett might be drawn to this particular hero? Who is your favorite hero?
- An author visits Jarrett’s school and compliments Jarrett’s drawing of a cat (p. 106–107). How do you interpret Jarrett’s expression and body language in this scene? What impact do you think this will have on Jarrett and his future?
- Young Jarrett is very impacted by the revelation that his mother struggles with substance use disorder and has been in jail (p. 132–133). Describe the events and the feelings of those involved. How do you think this information about his mother may shape Jarrett’s actions and beliefs from this point forward?
- What leads Jarrett’s grandparents to sign him up for art classes at the Worcester Art Museum? Look at p. 141–151. What do you think is the most important lesson Jarrett learns in those classes? What can you infer about the value of arts funding in public schools from this section of the book?
- What are your thoughts on reading comics and graphic novels (such as this one)? What do you think is the value in reading Jarrett’s story as a graphic memoir as opposed to a prose book?
- Jarrett describes how creating comics gave him a sense of control over what happened, unlike “the real world” (p. 156). What do you think about this statement? What about “the real world” feels uncontrollable to Jarrett? What are some empowerment strategies you might suggest to Jarrett or a classmate who feels this way?
- Jarrett learns about his mother’s current whereabouts from the court records page of a local newspaper (p. 161). How do you interpret the scene on this page? How do you think Jarrett is feeling, and how do you think this moment shapes his relationship with his mother?
- Jarrett is given the opportunity to learn his biological father’s name (p. 166–167). How do you interpret his reaction? What do you think will happen if Jarrett decides to reach out?
- Jarrett is reluctant to invite his grandparents to the eighth grade graduation dinner (p. 172). What were his reasons for not wanting them to attend? What social norms or expectations may have influenced his thinking? After reading the dinner scene on p. 177, do you think Jarrett’s concerns were justified?
- Jarrett is picked on by upperclassmen and struggles to find his place at his new school (p. 190–191). How does he navigate this experience? What advice would you give him or a classmate in a similar situation?
- Jarrett describes how his relationship to drawing changed over time on p. 214–217. What purpose does drawing serve for him as a teenager? What do you notice when you look at some of the drawings teenage Jarrett made on p. 218–219?
- Spend several minutes looking closely at Jarrett’s drawing on p. 233. What do you think he was thinking or feeling when he created this artwork? What do you think is the significance of the objects the figure is holding, or other elements of the drawing?
- What do you think about Jarrett’s grandparents’ frankness about their inevitable deaths (p. 251)? Why do you think they take this approach with Jarrett? Do you think it shaped his outlook on his own life? Share examples from the book to support your position.
- How did you respond to Jarrett’s statement about who his mother is? Why do you think he said that (p. 274–275)?
- Jarrett’s understanding of “family” evolves over the course of the book. Consider how he describes his family on p. 296–299. How is he measuring who “counts” as family in this scene? How does it compare to earlier scenes in the book?
- Forgiveness and empathy are key themes in this book. What other themes did you observe? Provide examples from the book to support your answer.
- The Author’s Note at the end of the book provides additional context and closure for the story in *Hey, Kiddo*. Did you learn anything from the Author’s Note that changed your understanding of, or emotional response to, the story? Based on the Author’s Note, what do you think was Jarrett J. Krosoczka’s most valuable takeaway from the experience of creating this graphic memoir? What was your most valuable takeaway from the experience of reading the book?
- Think about the personal or cultural anecdotes and stories you’ve learned from the adults in your life. Why do you think these stories have been passed down? How have these stories shaped the way you think about the people in them? How have they shaped the way you think about yourself?

Activities for HEY, KIDDO

1. After reading the book, revisit the first pre-reading prompt and reflect upon how your answers might be different now. Draw a thought bubble for both the shadow and full color characters. What would they be thinking or feeling? Alternatively, draw a word balloon—what would they say to one another? Place these images (either hand-drawn or photocopied) around the room and conduct a gallery walk. Discuss the different meanings of the various reflections.
2. Teen Jarrett says, “I fill sketchbooks just to deal with life. To survive” (p. 216). Create a visual representation of what helps you “deal with life.” You can draw an entire comic, one panel, an illustration, or even symbols. You could also take pictures and put together a slide deck, possibly adding dialogue balloons, or use an online drawing tool such as Pixton or ProCreate if available.
3. Jarrett receives feedback and support from Mark Lynch, Mr. Shilale, and other teachers who provide opportunities for him to share his drawings and develop confidence as an artist. Think about an adult in your life who may have impacted you in a similar way, then write that adult a letter or email about their impact. Note: Sending the letter or email is optional!
4. What is your “cat”? Refer back to Discussion Question #9, and draw the outline of a cat. Inside the cat, write your hopes and plans for the future and list tangible steps that could be taken to achieve them. Place these illustrations around the room and conduct a gallery walk, reflecting on the dreams of your peers.
5. Conduct a character analysis of Jarrett’s mother and grandmother. Find examples of Leslie and Shirley’s interactions throughout the book and use them to analyze the relationship between the two women. Discuss how their relationship impacts the other characters in Jarrett’s family. What do you think about Jarrett’s choice to emphasize understanding and reflection (rather than assigning blame outright) when telling this story? What is the impact of this narrative choice on you as a reader, and on how you perceived each character and their choices?
6. Jarrett’s comics teacher, Mark Lynch, assigns his students to each create a mini comic for inclusion in the class zine (p. 148–9). Familiarize yourself with zines and DIY comics through research or hands-on exploration, then create your own—either individually or as a class. If creating a class zine, brainstorm themes and ideas for the content together: Subjects learned in class? Current events? Music? Book reviews? Fashion? This zine could be produced digitally or in print, depending on materials available and your preference. Consider splitting into teams or assigning roles according to your strengths or interests. Some roles could be researcher, editor, illustrator, story-boarder, writer, distribution coordinator, etc.
7. Jarrett finds a meaningful and encouraging message in a fortune cookie on his fourteenth birthday and tapes it to his drafting table (p. 154–55). Write your own short inspirational message(s) for display on your desk or elsewhere in the room for inspiration. These messages could also be displayed on lockers, bathroom mirrors, bulletin boards, or incorporated into a mural.
8. Individually or in groups, brainstorm significant moments or experiences from your own life, or from the life of a public figure whom you admire. How did you respond to that experience in the moment, and how do you, or that public figure, think about that experience now? What sights, sounds, smells, and/or emotions do you associate with that experience? What changes or growth opportunities resulted from the experience? Create a comic or write the script for a comic about that experience, incorporating the answers to the reflection questions here. If you are interested, expand this comic into a longer graphic memoir/biography!



About SUNSHINE



When Jarrett J. Krosoczka was in high school, he was part of a program that sent students to be counselors at a camp for seriously ill kids and their families. Going into it, Jarrett was worried: Wouldn't it be depressing, to be around kids facing such a serious struggle? Wouldn't it be grim? But instead of the shadow of death, Jarrett found something else at Camp Sunshine: the hope and determination that gets people through the most troubled of times. Not only was he subject to some of the usual rituals that come with being a camp counselor (wilderness challenges, spooky campfire stories, an extremely stinky mascot costume), but he also met some extraordinary kids facing extraordinary circumstances. He learned about the captivity of illness, for sure, but he also learned about the freedom a safe space can bring. In this extraordinary follow-up to the National Book Award finalist *Hey, Kiddo*, Jarrett brings readers back to Camp Sunshine so we can meet the campers and fellow counselors who changed the course of his life.

Pre-Reading Activities for SUNSHINE

1. Before reading, analyze the book cover. What questions do you have about what you will be reading? What do you think is the overall mood of the book? What do you notice about the characters who are depicted?
2. After reading the synopsis or introduction, predict what you think will happen at the camp. Why is it called Camp Sunshine?
3. Before reading, set aside five sticky notes or bookmarks. Place these on the pages and/or panels that impact you the most as you read the book. Once you have finished the book, choose the most impactful panel or page, and share your reasons for selecting it in writing or in group discussion.

Discussion Questions for SUNSHINE

1. If you have already read *Hey, Kiddo*, what connections can you make between the books? How do you think Jarrett's childhood experiences depicted in *Hey, Kiddo* might help him to prepare for Camp Sunshine?
2. Jarrett writes that his time at Camp Sunshine "forever changed the trajectory of my life" (p. 2). What kinds of experiences would you consider life-changing? What do you think Jarrett will experience in the book?
3. Jarrett notes, "I was seen as the geeky kid who could draw . . . they just didn't hand out varsity letters for drawing cartoons in the school newspaper" (p. 18). Make a list of extracurricular activities for which schools typically award varsity letters. Why are varsity letters significant at Jarrett's school, or at your school? What other activities do you think schools should award varsity letters for?
4. Jarrett is assigned to work "one-on-one" with a camper (p. 29). What do you think about his response to this assignment? How would you prepare for that responsibility if you were in Jarrett's place?
5. Mrs. Gormley says, ". . . this experience is bigger than any of you. You'll learn this again soon enough, the second you graduate high school, that it doesn't matter what group you sit with in the lunchroom" (p. 31). What did she mean by this statement? Do you agree?
6. Study the scene where Jarrett meets some of the other volunteers who will be working with teens, like him (p. 43). Describe what you think Jarrett is thinking or feeling in the third panel on that page. What clues can you find in the text and illustrations to support your interpretation?
7. Why does Eric's mom refer to him as a warrior (p. 48)? What clues can you find in the book to support your statement?
8. Study the scene on p. 60 in which Jarrett and Diego meet for the first time. How do you think each boy is feeling in this scene? How do you think their relationship will progress from this point? What visual and textual evidence supports your interpretation?
9. Jarrett and Diego connect over their mutual favorite movie and superhero: Batman (p. 65, 68–69). How does this connection impact their interactions going forward? Can you find other examples of characters using pop culture to connect with one another? What are some other ways in which the campers and volunteers at Camp Sunshine build connections?
10. What do you notice about the size and style of the lettering, or words, and the different types of word balloons used throughout the book? How does each of these elements shape how you read the book?

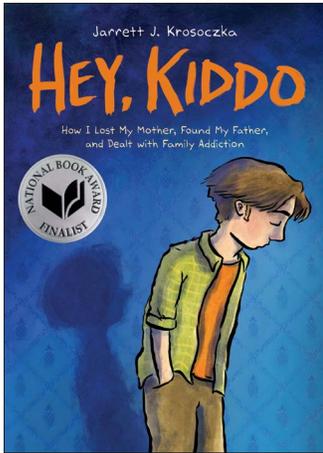
Discussion Questions for **SUNSHINE** (continued)

11. After Diego dismisses most of the activities offered at camp, Jarrett successfully captures Diego's interest by drawing pictures of his favorite characters (p. 69). What do you observe about Diego's facial expressions and body language in the scenes where he is Jarrett's "art director" (p. 68–69, 72–73)? What do these scenes reveal about Diego's personality and his opinion of Jarrett? What impact do you think this may have had on Jarrett?
12. Art has always been a vital part of Jarrett's personal life, but he also finds ways to use it in his social life. What are some of the ways that you make connections with others? What are some ways that you could use your interests, skills, and/or strengths to help someone else, or to support a cause you care about?
13. When the Holy Name student volunteers discuss their families, Jarrett says, "It was amazing to me to hear that my classmates' lives were less perfect than they'd seemed to me from the outside" (p. 80–82). Why do you think Jarrett was surprised? How does this revelation shape the relationship Jarrett has with these classmates going forward?
14. What are some of the ways in which Camp Sunshine makes activities accessible for the campers? Why is it noteworthy that the camp prioritizes accessibility? Cite examples from the book to support your answer. Think about your school or another public space like the grocery store, library, or doctor's office. How easy are these spaces to navigate and participate in? What are some ways to ensure public spaces are accessible for all users?
15. How do you interpret Diego's experience in the "team lift" scene (p. 103–105)? What might he be thinking or feeling? What visual clues support your reading?
16. Look closely at how Jarrett shaded the cheeks of the characters in this book. What differences do you notice? Why do you think Jarrett made that artistic choice?
17. Jarrett describes a recurring nightmare that appears to reflect his anxiety about Eric's cancer (p. 204–207). How do the ideas and symbols from this dream reappear later on?
18. There are several significant instances of symbolism in this book. As a group, how many symbols can you find? What do you think each of the symbols means? Cite examples from the book to support your position.
19. The Author's Note emphasizes the importance of seeking out and holding onto important relationships, and explores the perspective shift that often results from venturing outside of one's comfort zone or learning about other people's lived experiences. What other themes or messages did you find in the book and Author's Note? In your opinion, which was the most meaningful theme or message?

Activities for **SUNSHINE**

1. Many types of cancer are described and named throughout the book. As you read, make a list of these terms, then either individually or as a group, do some preliminary research about each before choosing one or more to research in more depth.
2. Do research, online and with the help of your school or community library, to find nonprofit organizations that work to support young people who have cancer. What needs might they have that you could help with, as an individual or as a larger group (your class, your school, or a larger community)? If you don't know or can't find anything on their website to answer that question, consider reaching out to ask what they need, whether it's raising money, providing direct service, or donating your time to volunteer. A few organizations to consider are:
 - Camp Sunshine campsunshine.org
 - Hole in the Wall Gang Camp holeinthewallgang.org
 - SeriousFun Network seriousfun.org
3. Listen to Billy Joel's "Lullaby," introduced on p. 150, and then annotate the song, making connections to the text. Why was this song so fitting for the camp? Discuss the power of music to inspire, entertain, and to provide coping skills, then share a song that you would choose and explain why. Choose one line or part of the song that means the most to you, and write it on a piece of paper that you can decorate in whatever style you like. Consider making a collaborative playlist featuring a song selection from each person in the group.
4. Inspired by the "wish boat" launching scene on p. 178–179, draw a boat with a large sail. Write your own wish (for yourself, others, and/or the world) on the sail. Display around the room or school and conduct a gallery walk. Leave sticky note reflections on the illustrations that you find meaningful, and brainstorm ways to make these wishes come true.

Praise for *HEY, KIDDO*



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Harvey Awards Book of the Year 2019

Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Honor 2019

New York Times Best Children's Books of 2018

Chicago Public Library Best Books of 2018

NPR Best Books of 2018

Amazon Best of the Year 2018—Graphic Novel/Comics and Young Adult

TIME Magazine Top 10 Children's & YA Books of 2018

"[The book] may sound like heavy reading, but the story is a true reflection of the seesaw of life: There are moments of hardship and conflict, but also scenes of joy."

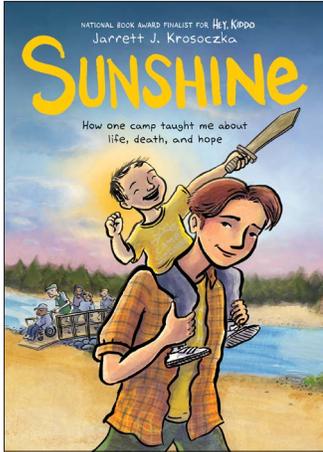
—*The New York Times*

"Powerful . . . Krosoczka movingly reveals the complicated origins of his humor and art." —*The Washington Post*

"Deeply heartfelt . . . Its National Book Award nomination for young people's literature makes it a must for any teen readers eager for their next graphic novel read." —*Paste Magazine*

- ★ "Honest, important, and timely." —*Kirkus Reviews, starred review*
- ★ "This nuanced graphic memoir portrays a whole family and tells a story of finding identity among a life's complications." —*Publishers Weekly, starred review*
- ★ "A compelling, sometimes raw look at how addiction can affect families. A must-have, this book will empower readers, especially those who feel alone in difficult situations." —*School Library Journal, starred review*
- ★ "Deeply vulnerable, moving graphic memoir." —*Booklist, starred review*
- ★ "Krosoczka has meticulously crafted a severely honest portrayal of addiction, resilient familial love, and the power of art, dedicated in part to 'every reader who recognizes this experience.'" —*The Horn Book, starred review*
- ★ "This memoir serves as an expression of the richness of [Krosoczka's] gift." —*Shelf Awareness, starred review*
- ★ "Well-chosen, keenly telling specifics delineate the ongoing travails of an emotionally hard family life." —*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, starred review*

Praise for **SUNSHINE**



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"Aimed at young adult readers though likely gratifying for all ages, *Sunshine* is earnestly told, rendered as it is in Krosoczka's steady lines and delicate washes. Some of his visuals, especially the larger, silent images, could easily pass for small paintings . . . Powerful." —**NPR.org**

"Poignant . . . With beautifully drawn panels and fine storytelling, *Sunshine* captures the challenges faced by children and adolescents dealing with serious illness and the release and fellowship provided by this special camp." —**The Buffalo News**

★ "[A] must-have graphic novel for any high school and middle school library."
—**School Library Connection, starred review**

★ "Krosoczka's illustrations—using a lively holding line colored with orange, yellow, and gray washes, and panel layouts—actively contribute to the heartfelt storytelling, effectively expressing changes in perspective, mood, and significance." —**The Horn Book, starred review**

★ "Simultaneously uplifting and devastating . . . faithfully documenting the warmth and life-changing potential of confronting grief head-on and participating in communal care."
—**Publishers Weekly, starred review**

★ "An impactful narrative . . . Krosoczka had a hard act to follow but has succeeded brilliantly with *Sunshine*; his genuine admiration for those with whom he worked and the incredible impact the experience made on him radiates from the pages . . . kind of like sunshine."
—**Shelf Awareness, starred review**

"Krosoczka's follow-up to *Hey, Kiddo* tenderly depicts his formative experiences in 1994 as a 16-year-old camp counselor at a summer camp for children with severe illnesses, who attend with their families . . . An admirable look back at a life turned toward service, optimism, and love." —**School Library Journal**

"Krosoczka's got an effortless knack for nuancing his characters, giving them a full range of strengths and flaws, and it helps that his motivation to work at the camp comes from a place of true empathy rather than pity."
—**The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books**

"Loving and true." —**Kirkus Reviews**

"It's gratifying to see the effect the camp had on the children and their families in Krosoczka's respectful and thoughtful hands."
—**Booklist**

"[A] life-affirming tale of hope amid adversity . . . Filled with tenderness, heartache and ever-earnest prose, Krosoczka's experience at Camp Sunshine serves as a much-needed reminder that the most important things in life are not things at all, but those closest to our hearts." —**Critical Blast**

About Jarrett J. Krosoczka

Jarrett J. Krosoczka, known since boyhood as "JJK," is the *New York Times* bestselling author/illustrator behind forty-five books for young readers, including his wildly popular Lunch Lady graphic novels, select volumes of the Star Wars™: Jedi Academy series, and *Hey, Kiddo*, which was a National Book Award Finalist. Krosoczka creates books with humor, heart, and deep respect for his young readers—qualities that have made his titles perennial favorites on the bookshelves of homes, libraries, and bookstores over the past twenty years.

In addition to his work in print, Krosoczka produced, directed, and performed in the full-cast audiobook adaptations of his graphic novels. The *Hey, Kiddo* audiobook garnered both Audie and Odyssey Awards for excellence in audiobook production. Krosoczka has been a guest on NPR's Fresh Air with Terry Gross, profiled in *The New York Times*, featured on Good Morning America, and delivered three TED Talks, which have accrued millions of views online. Krosoczka has garnered millions of more views online via the tutorials he has produced for YouTube and TikTok. Learn more about Jarrett and his work at StudioJJK.com.

About the Writers of This Guide

Tim Smyth is a high school social studies educator and the author of *Teaching with Comics and Graphic Novels: Fun and Engaging Strategies to Improve Close Reading and Critical Thinking in Every Classroom*. He co-wrote this guide with **Joan Smyth**, a middle school English Language Arts teacher of over 20 years who is also certified in Social Studies and Library Sciences. Find more resources and information at TeachingWithComics.com.