Walker Books
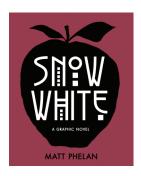# Classroom Ideas

Snow White

by Matt Phelan
ISBN: 9780763672331
ARRP: $27.99
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Outline:

The scene: New York City. The dazzling lights cast shadows that grow ever darker as the glitzy prosperity of the Roaring Twenties screeches to a halt. Enter a cast of familiar characters: a young girl, Samantha White, returning after being sent away by her cruel stepmother, the Queen of the Follies, years earlier; her father, the King of Wall Street, who survives the stock market crash only to suffer a strange and sudden death; seven street urchins, brave protectors for a girl as pure as snow; and a mysterious stock ticker that holds the stepmother in its thrall, churning out ticker tape imprinted with the wicked words "Another... More Beautiful... KILL." In a moody, cinematic new telling of a beloved fairy tale, extraordinary graphic novelist Matt Phelan captures the essence of classic film noir on the page—and draws a striking distinction between good and evil.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Matt Phelan is the author-illustrator of three previous graphic novels: the Scott O'Dell Award–winning *The Storm in the Barn, Around the World,* and *Bluffton*, which was nominated for three Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards, including Best Graphic Album. He is the author-illustrator of *Druthers* and the illustrator of many books for young readers, including *Marilyn's Monster* by Michelle Knudsen and *The Higher Power of Lucky* by Susan Patron, winner of the Newbery Medal. Matt Phelan lives in Pennsylvania.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:	Key Learning Areas:	Example of:	Themes/Ideas:
• Primary years 5-6 • Secondary years 7-8 • Ages 10+	• English • Art	• Picture book • Fiction	• Fairytales • Greed • Kindness

National Curriculum Focus:*

Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	
ACELA1502	ACELT1613	ACELT1619	ACELA1543	*Key content descriptions have been identified from the Australian National Curriculum. However, this is not an exhaustive list of National Curriculum content able to be addressed through studying this text.
ACELA1504	ACELT1614	ACELT1620	ACELT1626	
ACELT1608	ACELT1616	ACELT1621	ACELT1627	
ACELT1609	ACELT1618	ACELT1803	ACELT1628	
ACELT1795	ACELY1708	ACELT1622	ACELT1807	
ACELT1610	ACELY1709	ACELT1625	ACELT1632	
ACELT1798	ACELY1711	ACELT1805	ACELY1732	
		ACELY1804	ACELY1735	
		ACELY1724		

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Classroom Ideas

Discussion Questions and Activities:

Before Reading

Before reading the novel, have a class discussion on the story of *Snow White*. What do you know about it? Who originally wrote it? What adaptations of the story can you think of? What key elements are common across all adaptations. After reading Matt Phelan's adaptation, revisit your answer to this question. Does this adaptation include the common elements? How is this interpretation different from the original story?

"In media res" is a Latin term used for when a story starts at a mid-point or at the conclusion rather than at the beginning. Why do you think the author has used this technique with *Snow White*? How would the novel be different if it was told in chronological order (starting at "A Drop of Blood")?

In most graphic novels (and comics), there is usually a white space between the panels called the gutter. Consider the difference between large and small panels and illustrations that are not bound by a panel. What effect do panels where the illustration is overlapping the boundary have on the reader? Copy a page of the book, cut out the frames and arrange them on a piece of paper with a smaller gutter between each frame and then with a larger gutter. What difference does this make to our reading?

Take a section of one of the novels and recreate it as unillustrated prose. Think about how to convey the mood, imagery, action and dialogue in words, rather than in graphic novel style. After completing this exercise, have a class discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of each style. Which do you prefer writing? Which do you prefer reading? Why? Compare two or more prose interpretations of the same part of the novel. Discuss how two interpretations can be so different.

Much of *Snow White* is told wordlessly, with occasional dialogue and some newspaper clippings, leaving the reader to create meaning by interpreting the textual and visual clues. Why do you think Matt Phelan chose to tell the story this way? Take a chapter of the novel and describe your interpretation to the class using evidence from the text. For example in the chapter "A Young Girl Sent Away to School" you could discuss Snow's body language showing her sadness at being sent away, her small figure shown in her large bedroom could indicate loneliness, the tragedy and comedy mask on the wall of Snow's bedroom demonstates how the stepmother (an actress) has invaded Snow's life, etc.

Use the worksheet on the following page to explore and discuss the use of visual features across various scenes in *Snow White*.

The graphic novel format allows authors to employ filmic techniques in the narrative. Find examples of filmic techniques in the novel and discuss how the author has used them to enhance the narrative.

Where and when is this story set? How can you tell that using evidence from the text (rather than the blurb). Make a list of clues that show where and when the story is set, such as the fashion, stock market crash, Ziegfield's Follies, stock ticker, etc.

Explore the use of colour. Many of the pages use a limited colour palette with the occasional flash of colour to emphasise an element of the illustrations. What has Matt Phelan emphasised with colour? Why do you think he has chosen to do that? How does the colour palette contribute to the mood of the graphic novel?

Characters in narratives need to have motivation for their actions, a desire that drives their character arc. As a class, discuss the motivations of Snow White, the stepmother, the seven small men and Detective Prince. Explain your answers using evidence from the text.

Find other graphic novels or picture books that employ wordless or nearly-wordless sections. Compare them with *Snow White* and identify similarities and differences in the way each book uses the form to convey narrative. Which do you find the most effective? Why?

Writing Activities

How do you think Matt Phelan created this book? Do you think he wrote a story first, then illustrated it? Or do you think she just started drawing the illustrations? Use the following two activities to trial different methods of creating a wordless story:

Activity 1: Ask each student to write a short story (i.e. just a few simple sentences) and then swap their story with a partner. The partner can then create illustrations to tell the story without using any words. After the activity is completed, have a class discussion about if students thought this task was easy or difficult.

Activity 2: Each student draws illustrations to make a wordless story without writing a plan first. Students can then present their story to the class and explain whether they found the process easy or difficult and if their story turned out the way they originally intended.

Visual Analysis Worksheet for *Snow White*

Use this retrieval chart to compare the use of visual features across various scenes in the graphic novel

Visual Elements	Scene: _____ Page #: _____	Scene: _____ Page #: _____
Objects What objects and people can you see?		
Size What size are the objects in relation to each other?		
Setting Is a setting obvious? What is it?		
Colours (only applies to covers) What are the predominant colours used?		
Position Where are objects in relation to each other? Are they in the fore-, middle- or background?		
'Camera' angle From what angle do the pictures appear to be drawn? For example: high eye level, low, bird's eye view.		
'Shot' type What type of 'shot' has been used: close-up, medium, long, very long, etc.?		
Depth of Field What is and isn't in focus?		
Light Is the picture light or dark? Is it the same all over?		
Lines and vectors In what direction do lines in the picture lead the eye?		
Body language and clothing What facial expressions, gestures and use of space can you see? What is being worn?		