ABOUT THE BOOK

In this first volume of Jason Walz's dystopian graphic novel trilogy, the kids last picked are humanity's last hope.

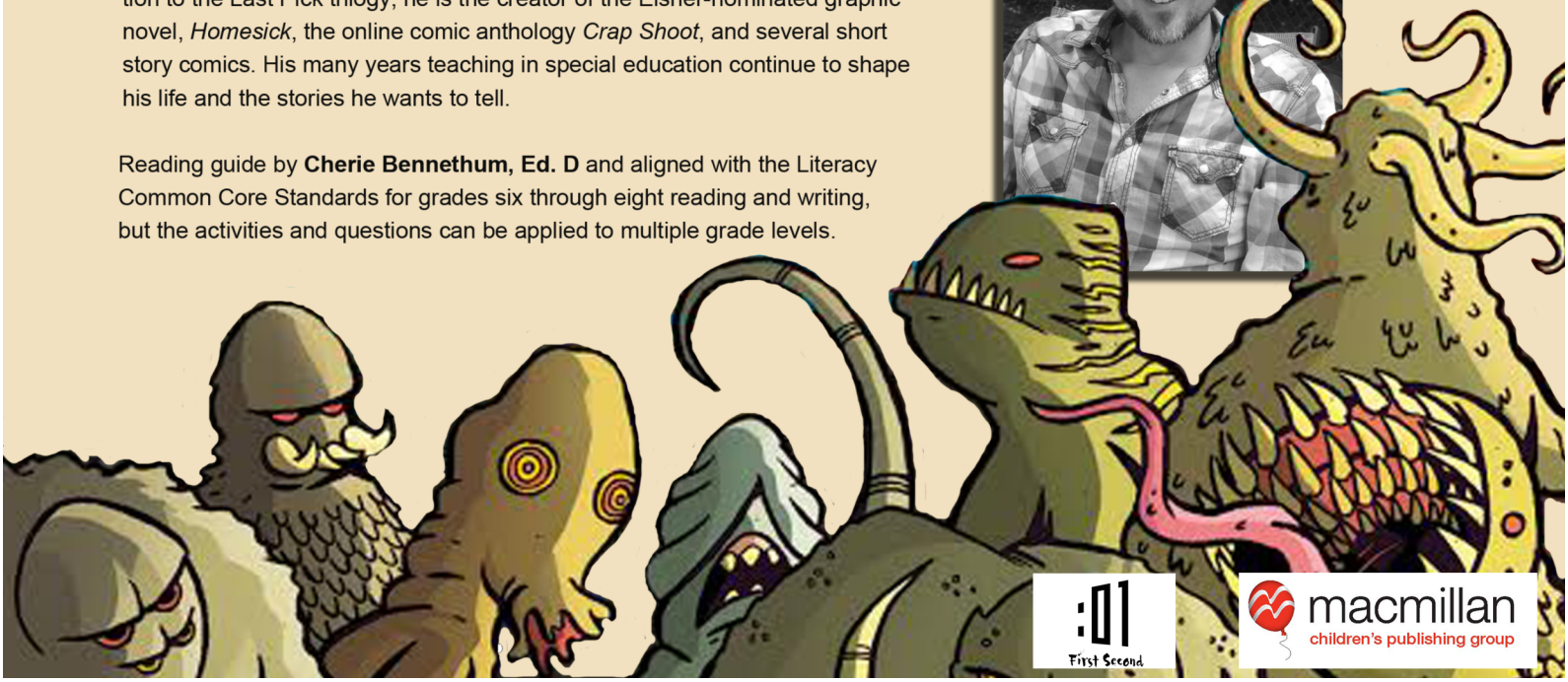
Three years ago, aliens invaded Earth and abducted everyone they deemed useful. The only ones spared were those too young, too old, or too “disabled” to be of value. Living on Earth under the aliens’ harsh authoritarian rule, humanity’s rejects do their best to survive. Their captors never considered them a threat- until now.

Twins Sam and Wyatt are ready to chuck their labels and start a revolution. It’s time for the kids last picked to step into the game.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Walz is a writer and illustrator living in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In addition to the Last Pick trilogy, he is the creator of the Eisner-nominated graphic novel, *Homesick*, the online comic anthology *Crap Shoot*, and several short story comics. His many years teaching in special education continue to shape his life and the stories he wants to tell.

Reading guide by **Cherie Bennethum, Ed. D** and aligned with the Literacy Common Core Standards for grades six through eight reading and writing, but the activities and questions can be applied to multiple grade levels.



:01 First Second

macmillan children's publishing group

KEY IDEAS AND STRUCTURE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.1 – Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2 – 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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3 – 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.

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.5 – Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.6 – Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

GRADE 6 – WRITING

Text Types and Purposes:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1 - Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1.a - Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1.b - Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1.d - Establish and maintain a formal style.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.1.e - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented.
Production and Distribution of Writing:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

GRADE 7 – READING: LITERATURE

Key Ideas and Details:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1 - Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.2 - 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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3 - Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
Craft and Structure:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6 - Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

GRADE 7 – WRITING

Text Types and Purposes:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1 - Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1.b - Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1.d - Establish and maintain a formal style.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.1.e - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
Production and Distribution of Writing:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Grade 8 – Reading: Literature

Key Ideas and Details:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1 - Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3 - Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

Grade 8 – Writing

Text Types and Purposes:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1 - Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.a - Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.b - Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.d - Establish and maintain a formal style.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.e - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

Production and Distribution of Writing:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience

Study Questions
Last Pick
Jason Walz

Cover

1. Look at the cover and make predictions about what will happen in the book. (For example, who are the kids? How old are they? When does the book take place? What is the situation?)

Chapter I

2. The author uses flashbacks to tell Wyatt and Sam's story before the invasion (pages 4-6)

   a. What is a flashback?

   b. How does the artwork on flashback pages look different than the pages telling the main story?

   c. What do flashbacks do for the reader?

   d. What do we learn about the characters from the flashback on pages 4-6?

   e. How is the relationship between Sam and Wyatt different on page 6 than page 7?

3. On page 12, what is the author showing with the dotted line?

4. On page 13, there is an example of onomatopoeia.

   a. Give a definition of onomatopoeia.

3. On page 12, what is the author showing with the dotted line?

4. On page 13, there is an example of onomatopoeia.

   a. Give a definition of onomatopoeia.

   b. Identify the example on page 13.

   c. Explain what the example is representing.

5. Look at Wyatt on pages 5-6 and then on pages 15-16.

   a. How does he react to frustration or stress?

   b. Why do you think he reacts this way?

6. On page 18 there is a wall of photos.

   a. What does this wall represent?

   b. Where or when have we seen an image like this in real life?

7. On page 21, Sam says, “Don’t call me ‘sweetie.’” Why does she say this? What does it show the reader about her character?

8. On page 27, Wyatt is trying to fix a broken communication device, but his he and his sister are having trouble communicating. What is their communication breakdown?

9. Page 30 foreshadows events to come. Define foreshadowing and explain what page 30 is foreshadowing.

10. Chapter I begins and ends with a birthday cake.

   a. Why might the author do this?

   b. How are the birthday celebrations different?

Chapter II

11. The chapter begins with another flashback on pages 33-36, and then it changes to the main story on page 37. How does the author show that pages 33-36 is a flashback?

12. What does the flashback on pages 33-36 tell the reader about the characters’ personalities? What does it show about the community of Elizabethtown?

13. One page 38, who is the guy in the wheelchair? Why would Wyatt and Sam go to him for help?

14. Despite the apocalypse and the kids’ horrible situation, page 39 reminds the reader that Sam and Wyatt are still teenagers. How does the author do this?

15. On page 41, what can we assume about the character whose feet are down the middle of the page just by looking at the faces of the others? What does the last frame show about the character?

16. Why does it matter that it is Wyatt and Sam’s 16th birthday?

17. Pages 45-46 introduces a new character, and the reader learns a lot about her on one page.

    a. What do we learn about the new character on pages 45-46?

    b. What do we learn about the current world through her comments?

18. How is Wyatt more useful than Sam at Electric City?

19. On page 60, El Sonido (The Sound) quotes David Bowie by saying, “We can be heroes, just for one day.”

    a. How is Sam being a hero?

    b. How is Wyatt being a hero?

    c. Identify any other characters who are heroic and explain their heroism.

    d. What have you done (or could do) to be a hero “just for one day”?

Chapter III

20. On page 65, how do Wyatt and Sam react differently to Danny’s insult? What does that show us about them as characters?

21. On page 67, the principal says, “They just don’t seem to know how to stop fighting.”

    a. Is that always a bad quality? Explain.

    b. What are some positive outcomes of their fighting?

22. Look at the first three frames of page 77.

    a. What does the black cloud above Sam’s head show the reader?

    b. What does Sam saying, “Deep breath. In…Out,” show the reader?

    c. What does Wyatt mean when he responds, “Hey, that’s my thing.”

23. What does page 82-83 show the reader about how the aliens regard people who are “different”?

24. Who is Bird One? Where in the book have we seen Bird One before?

25. On pages 91-95, Sam feels she has some impressive ideas to escape the alien.

    a. What is Sam’s plan to stop him?

    b. Does it work?

    c. Who has a better understanding of the situation? Why?

    d. Does a hero have to be perfect? Why or why not?

    e. Identify and describe a real-life hero who is not perfect. Explain the heroism and imperfection.

26. On page 100, Sam tells Wyatt, “There’s no going home again.” Why is this the case?

27. On pages 98-100, how did the bridge blow up?

Chapter IV

28. On page 104, the author uses the conversation between Sam and her dad to comment on communication between parents and children.

    a. What is the author showing about communication between parents and children?

    b. Do you agree that this is true? Why or why not?

29. On page 106, the author juxtaposes Sam’s past and future.

    a. What is juxtaposition?

    b. What two images are juxtaposed?

    c. Which image is the past? Which is the future?

30. On pages 107-113, Sam and Wyatt join a group of older people living in a church.

    a. What does the church symbolize?

    b. What does this scene show the reader about community?

    c. How is the communication between teenagers and adults different in this scene than in the scene with Sam talking to her dad in the field?

    d. What has changed?

31. Explain the comment on page 110, “When the aliens came, everyone from the church ran to the bars. And everyone from the bars ran to the church.” What were both groups looking for?

32. How is calling something “weird” just “an easy way for you to ignore what you don’t understand” (page 113)? Explain what this means in the book and in real life.

33. What is it that Danny thinks he won’t have to do because he helped the aliens? Is he right? (pages 116-117).

34. On page 120, with whom do you agree: Chet (“We stick our necks out, and they’re likely to get cut off”) or Charlie (“Doing nothing is so much worse”)? Explain your viewpoint.

35. Wyatt’s comments on pages 128 and 130 show some important character traits about Wyatt.

    a. What are these character traits?

    b. Taken together as a whole, what do these traits show the reader about Wyatt?

36. What is the author juxtaposing on page 129? What is the effect of this juxtaposition?

37. How is Wyatt brave on page 135?

26. On page 100, Sam tells Wyatt, “There’s no going home again.” Why is this the case?

27. On pages 98-100, how did the bridge blow up?

Chapter IV

28. On page 104, the author uses the conversation between Sam and her dad to comment on communication between parents and children.

    a. What is the author showing about communication between parents and children?

    b. Do you agree that this is true? Why or why not?

29. On page 106, the author juxtaposes Sam's past and future.

    a. What is juxtaposition?

    b. What two images are juxtaposed?

    c. Which image is the past? Which is the future?

30. On pages 107-113, Sam and Wyatt join a group of older people living in a church.

    a. What does the church symbolize?

    b. What does this scene show the reader about community?

    c. How is the communication between teenagers and adults different in this scene than in the scene with Sam talking to her dad in the field?

    d. What has changed?

31. Explain the comment on page 110, "When the aliens came, everyone from the church ran to the bars. And everyone from the bars ran to the church." What were both groups looking for?

32. How is calling something "weird" just "an easy way for you to ignore what you don't understand" (page 113)? Explain what this means in the book and in real life.

33. What is it that Danny thinks he won't have to do because he helped the aliens? Is he right? (pages 116-117).

34. On page 120, with whom do you agree: Chet ("We stick our necks out, and they're likely to get cut off") or Charlie ("Doing nothing is so much worse")? Explain your viewpoint.

35. Wyatt's comments on pages 128 and 130 show some important character traits about Wyatt.

    a. What are these character traits?

    b. Taken together as a whole, what do these traits show the reader about Wyatt?

36. What is the author juxtaposing on page 129? What is the effect of this juxtaposition?

37. How is Wyatt brave on page 135?

38. On page 136, the author shows the world the way that the Scoopers' see it. What do we learn from these frames?

39. On page 143, Chet makes a decision.

    a. What can we infer Chet does?

b. Is Chet's decision successful? Why or why not?

c. Is Chet a "good man" as Charlie says? Why or why not?

Chapter V

40. On pages 148-149, Sam and Wyatt's dad makes them three promises.

a. Which promises has he kept? How?

b. Which promises was he unable to keep? Why?

41. How have Sam and Wyatt given people hope and "something to cling to"? (page 151)

42. What does it mean to fight like you've got nothing to lose? Is this true for all of the characters? (page 153)

43. On page 173, Sam says to Wyatt, "The truth is that I think I need you more than you need me." Is this true? Explain your answer.

Chapter VI

44. On pages 179-182, the author shows Wyatt and Sam playing a game of charades that takes a serious turn. Why did the author include this flashback in the story? What is he foreshadowing?

45. In Sam's letter to Wyatt on pages 186-187, she tells him, "They don't want you, Wyatt. And their ignorance is what will keep you alive."

a. Why don't the aliens want Wyatt?

b. Why does Sam leave Wyatt behind?

c. Why is Wyatt a hero?

46. On pages 188-189, what truth about hearing her dad's voice does Sam realize?

47. On page 191, Sheriff says, "Your kind is always undone by sentimental emotions." Is this true? Are humans hurt or hindered by their emotions? Give evidence either from the book or real life to support your answer.

48. On page 97, Sam tells the people to go find Bird One if they want hope. Who is Bird One and how can Bird One bring the people hope?

49. What are the people doing on pages 211-213? Why is this significant for Wyatt?

A Secret Message for You (The Reader)

50. The author closes his message by stating, "You might be surprised to find that whatever the world sees as 'different' is exactly what the world needs more of." This could be considered a theme of the book. Please write a complete paragraph identifying and explaining a time when this has been true. You may use a personal example from your own life, or you can choose a more universal example from history or our current circumstances. Be sure to clearly state your example and use several details to explain why that was "exactly what the world needs more of."

51. Identify another theme of the book. Make sure it is a complete statement. Provide at least three pieces of evidence from the book that show why this is a theme.