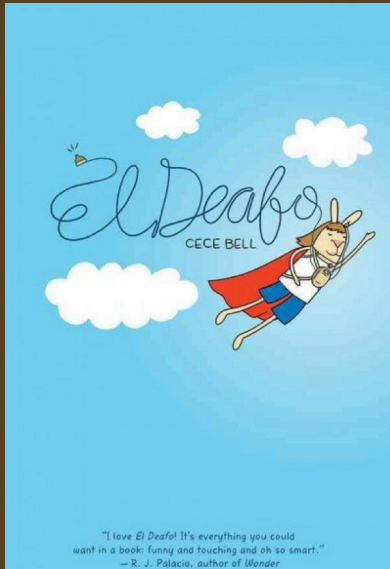


El Deafo Reading Guide



Questions and Ideas for Consideration

Graphic Narrative: How does the comic style of *El Deafo* affect the message and meaning of the story? What benefits/limitations does this medium present?

Culture/Disability: Do you think Cece Bell portrays deafness and the deaf community effectively? Why or why not?

Superhero: How does Cece defy expectation in the way it utilizes the concept of the superhero? What messages does this portray?

Depiction Details: What illustration choices does Bell make to purposefully present certain ideas? Consider use of line, color, perspective, framing, etc.

Reading/Hearing: What techniques does Bell use to portray challenges related to deafness, and how does the graphic style uniquely allow for this?

Relationships: What does this book say about parent/child relationships, siblings, and other relationships? How do these compare to the friendships portrayed?

Focus: What is this story really about? Is the focus Cece's deafness, or are there other key elements at play? How does Bell balance these?

Daybook Possibilities

- Consider the concept of graphic memoir, perhaps researching other examples. Write about how telling a personal story through pictures changes what an author can do or how a reader might perceive it.
- Visit the library and check out some of the other graphic narratives or comic books for children or teens. How is *El Deafo* similar or different to these? Which draw your attention and why?
- We've looked at several award winners this term; write about the different reasons these texts seem to be highlighted or what they offer that is noteworthy.
- Consider design choices Bell makes, such as color, use of text/dialogue, frame shape/size, and the other elements from class. How do these affect the story?
- Learn about how graphic novels are viewed and how people perceive them (possibly looking at news or web forum spaces). Do you agree or disagree?
- Check out this NPR interview with Cece Bell and write about your thoughts: <http://www.npr.org/2014/12/14/369599042/el-deafo-how-a-girl-turned-her-disability-into-a-superpower>
- In what context might you teach this book or other graphic novels? Do some research about classroom uses of graphic narratives and how/why teachers might use them in classroom settings.

Suggested Critical Reading

"Comic Art, Children's Literature, and the New Comic Studies" by Charles Hatfield

"The Graphic Novel and the Age of Transition: A Survey and Analysis" by Stephen E. Tabachnick

"Decoding Comics" by Hilary Chute

I especially recommend Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, a scholarly book written as a comic book. If you'd like to read a section, I'm happy to make copies of a chapter that interests you.

Background and Context

Published in 2015, *El Deafo* is a much acclaimed graphic novel memoir, in which Cece Bell shares the story of her childhood, including her use of a Phonic Ear hearing aid and the adventures that result. Part of a trend of growing interest in memoir in children's literature, Bell's tale using rabbit characters to explore the complexity of deafness as well as challenges of fitting in as a child. The text is a Newbery honor book and Eisner Best Publication for kids (ages 8-12).