A Curriculum Guide to

Story Thieves, Book 3: *Secret Origins*
By James Riley

About the Book

Owen and Bethany had no idea they would land in the comic book world of Jupiter City when they jumped through a strange portal. Jupiter City is teeming with heroes and villains, but most of its population is hiding from the Dark, an evil force determined to take over the city. The only hero that could have stopped the Dark, Doc Twilight, has been captured by the evil force.

Bethany and Owen, with the help of their old friends, Charm and Gwen, do their best to rescue Doc Twilight, whom they believe to be Bethany's father. Shocking revelations lead to the discovery of the true identity of Bethany's father—revelations that explain why he disappeared and how Bethany's life has been altered because of his secrets.

Prereading Activity

This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: ELA: Writing: Text Types and Purposes: (W.4–6.2) (RL.7.2).

The Dark villain attempts to justify his evil deeds by stating, "They say if you live long enough, every hero becomes a villain." Discuss this quote with students and ask them when, and if, this statement has ever proven true for them. Ask students to write and to share historic, scientific, or medical examples to support the view expressed in this statement.

Discussion Questions

These questions align with the following Common Core State Standards: ELA: Language: Conventions of Standard English: (L.4–7.1); Knowledge of Language: (L.4–7.3); ELA: Speaking & Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration: (SL.4–7.1).

1. When the book begins, who does Bethany think her father is? How do Bethany and Owen discover her father's secret identity?

2. How do Bethany and Owen find their way into a comic book world? Why can't Bethany jump out of the book with Owen?

3. What are the five rules of superhero comics? How will knowing the rules help Bethany and Owen navigate Jupiter City and interact with the people who live there?

4. Why do the shadows pursue Bethany and Owen? Who saves them from being captured by the Dark?

5. Why do Bethany and Owen jump into a Kiel Gromenfoot book? What do they discover about Kiel when they arrive?

6. How does Charm give Bethany and Owen superhero powers? What power does she give to each of them?

7. What has Bethany's friend, Gwen, created for her? Why does Gwen agree to help Bethany, knowing she will not have any powers?

8. Why does Charm continually criticize Bethany and Owen and the dimension in which they live? Why does Charm agree to help them?

9. How does Owen get trapped in another dimension? How does he put thoughts into Bethany's head? What else does Owen have the power to do?

10. How did the Dark become an evil shadow? Who was he before he became the Dark?

11. What does the Rotten Banana tell Bethany and Gwen that helps them find the Dark? Why does Charm hate the Rotten Banana?

12. How does Bethany use her superpower to help the group travel faster? In what other ways does Bethany help the group with her superpower?

13. Who is Mason Black? What role does he play in helping Bethany discover the identity of her father?

14. What does Nobody ask Mason Black to do for him? How does Mason respond?

15. What does Owen discover about Nobody and his role in Jupiter City?

16. What is Bethany's plan to beat the Dark and save Doc Twilight? How does her plan fail? Who helps save her life?

17. What are the secret origins revealed about the characters in this new installment of Story Thieves?

Writing and Research Activities

Bethany and Owen – Comparison
This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: ELA: Writing: Text Types and Purposes: (W.4–6.2) (RL.7.2); ELA: Language: Conventions of Standard English: (L.4–7.1, 2).

Bethany and Owen have formed a close friendship throughout the series. Ask students to draw a Venn diagram and to list the similarities and differences between the two characters' personalities. Working in groups of three, have students write a television interview between an interviewer and the two characters. The interview should reveal ideas from the story as well as

the different personalities of the two friends. Each group should practice and present their interviews to the class.

Portals Everywhere
This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: ELA: Writing: Text Types and Purposes: (W.4–6.3) (RL.7.3); ELA: Language: Conventions of Standard English: (L.4–7.1, 2).

In Chapter 37, Nobody tries to explain how the portals work by giving examples of portals from literature that he has attempted to close—though he doesn't really explain how he closes the portals. Ask students to select a partner and then discuss ways Nobody could close a portal. Students will have to use their imaginations and be creative, but their ideas must be in line with events that have occurred in the book. Then have students write a "How to Close a Portal" guideline to share with the class.

Summary of Events
This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: ELA: Writing: Text Types and Purposes: (W.4–7.2); ELA: Language: Conventions of Standard English: (L.4–7.1, 2).

The revelation of the truth about the characters and their secret origins is finally brought to light in this third book of the series. Ask each student to select one of the major characters and write a summary of the character's life, including how other characters' lives entwined with the chosen character's life. Then have students create a comic book collage with visual elements depicting the character's life and interactions during the series, as well as the written summary.

The Rise and Fall of Jupiter City
This activity aligns with the following Common Core State Standards: ELA: Writing: Text Types and Purposes: (W.4–7.2); ELA: Language: Conventions of Standard English: (L.4–7.1, 2); ELA: Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: (RL.4–7.3).

Throughout the book, there are descriptions of Jupiter City, both before and after the Dark took possession. Ask students to write a description of a part of the city or a building in the city before the Dark took over, and after the Dark took over. Upon completion of their written descriptions, ask students to draw the scene they described. Then post the before and after illustrations in the classroom.

Guide written by Susan Geye, Library Coordinator, Everman ISD, Everman, TX.