

## A Curriculum Guide to

### **Story Thieves: *Worlds Apart***

By James Riley

#### **About the Book**

Bethany and Owen have failed to stop Nobody, a villain who has torn the fictional and nonfictional worlds apart, effectively destroying communication between them. For Bethany, whose fictional and nonfictional selves live in these separate worlds, this is especially devastating. Sadly, everyone in the nonfictional world, including Owen, loses their imaginations; unable to picture their lives any differently, they don't notice the break. Fictional Bethany focuses on training with her father to become Twilight Girl. She loves being a superhero, but she quickly realizes that the fictional reality will fade away completely without the nonfictional world to hold it together. Soon Charm, Kiel, Kara, Dr. Verity, and Fowen join Bethany and Owen to stop the evil Nobody and save multiple realities.

#### **Prereading Activity**

The activity below particularly addresses the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (RL.7.2) (W.4-6.2).

Have students work with a partner to contemplate what life would be like without imagination. How might problem-solving or the creation of new ideas be impacted? What might people do for work or for fun? Have each pair of students choose a topic associated with contemporary living, and write a detailed paragraph explaining the impact of the absence of imagination on this topic. Example topics include movies, art, music, fashion, medicine, crime, education, communication, and transportation. Have students read their paragraphs aloud one after the other to highlight the impact of a world without imagination.

#### **Discussion Questions**

The questions below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (L.4-7.1, 2, 3) (SL.4-7.1)

For questions 15 to 19, consider the series as a whole in your answers.

1. What does the word *possibility* mean to you? How can the power of possibility be “the most powerful weapon of them all”?
2. How does the possibility ray gun destroy a superhero's power?
3. Why does Charm create the Prospect Enhancer? How does Charm's Prospect Enhancer end up being used for evil instead of good? Can you name instances in your own life where good

intentions were misinterpreted? Why might two people view the same situation or opportunity differently?

4. Why does Owen have trouble with his heart? How is his heart eventually healed?

5. What do the initials PFFIA stand for? What are the responsibilities of this organization? How does the organization carry out its mission?

6. What role does Dr. Verity play in the destruction of Quanterium? How does he control the Quanterian refugees? Why do you think he acted this way?

7. What are Dr. Verity's plans for Magisteria? How does Nobody stop this plan?

8. How does Nobody hurt Bethany's father? Why was Nobody able to use him for leverage to control fictional and nonfictional Bethany?

9. How does Owen eventually regain his imagination so that he can help plot against Nobody?

10. What is the cause of Bethany's gradual disappearance? What does she learn that will enable her to continue using her powers?

11. What does Fowen do to help Nobody? Why does he do this?

12. What secret does Owen reveal to Charm that causes her to hate and distrust him? How does he show her that he can be trusted?

13. Why is nonfictional Bethany so upset that Owen has pulled her into the fictional world? What does she do to try to save Owen from this world?

14. Think about Nobody's defeat, including the acts and choices that contributed to saving both the fictional and nonfictional worlds. What are some of Nobody's, Owen's, and Bethany's strengths and weaknesses? How did these come into play leading up to the book's climax?

15. Can you identify some of the parallels between the fictional and nonfictional worlds? What might the two worlds be symbolic of?

16. Several characters possess both fictional and nonfictional selves, and they experience a separation of self when the two worlds divide. Do you ever feel or act differently when you're alone versus with your friends, with your parents, or in class? If so, why do you think that is? Are you aware of it? Does it usually make life easier or more difficult?

17. Think about each main character's journey during the Story Thieves series. How do they learn to accept, embrace, and value the different aspects of their personalities and identities? Do you think they appreciate their true selves in ways they may not have before?

18. The author shows his readers the importance of imagination and play. How do the characters exemplify the power of imagination? How do Owen and his friends demonstrate empathy for others?

19. The characters all express creativity in a variety of forms. What is your favorite creative outlet? Do you think creativity can be modeled or learned? Have the Story Thieves characters and their creative endeavors helped to spark your imagination?

### **Extension Activities**

The activities below particularly address the following English Language Arts Common Core State Standards: (W.4-7.1, 2, 3) (L.4-7.1, 2)

#### **Foreshadowing: What Will the Future Hold?**

In chapter one, the author poses multiple questions hinting at events to come. With a partner, have students make a list of these questions and their predictions of how they might be addressed, encouraging them to use their imaginations. In small groups of eight to ten, have pairs present their findings so that multiple possibilities can be considered. Post predictions in the classroom and revisit them as a class at the novel's conclusion.

#### **Dark vs. Light**

Ask half the class to make a list of evil characters from the series and identify their motives, plans for the world, and personality traits. Ask the other half to make a list of the heroes, also identifying their motives, plans for the world, and personality traits. Then pair one student from each group to work on a poster representation of "Dark versus Light." Students should include pictorial representations of their characters, appropriate quotes from the book, and a description of each character's plan for the world. Students should use colors to represent the two sides and may choose to include other symbolic representations to convey the battle between the Dark and the Light.

#### **Author's Craft: A Visual Presentation**

In the Story Thieves series, the author creates two separate settings—one world of reality and one world of fiction—in an engaging, action-packed plot that weaves the characters and the two worlds together. Ask students to select four of their favorite passages from *Worlds Apart* or any other book in the series that they feel demonstrates the author's finesse in the following areas: (1) specific, believable settings; (2) interesting and well-defined characters; (3) impeccable pacing and story line; and (4) the universal theme of good versus evil. Have students work in small groups, focusing on one of the above topics. Students should share their selected passages and discuss before working together to prepare an Author's Craft presentation with visual display and illustrations, selected passages, and explanations of the author's technique.

#### **Consequences for Choices**

Kiel tells Bethany, "Magic has consequences. Even if you don't see them at first. Just because you *can* do something doesn't mean you should." If the word *decisions* were to be substituted

for the word *magic*, would the statement still ring true? Ask students to write about a time they personally had to make a decision that led to an unforeseen consequence. Students should state the decision they made along with the consequences and impact of that decision. Ask students to reflect on their reasoning behind the decision and whether or not they would change it based on the consequence that occurred. Have students share their writing in small groups.

### **Character Summary**

The truth about the characters and their involvement with one another is finally revealed in *Worlds Apart*. Ask each student to select one of the major characters and illustrate and label a character map that includes their relationships to other characters and how they intertwine. An example character map can be found here:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/CharacterMap.pdf>

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