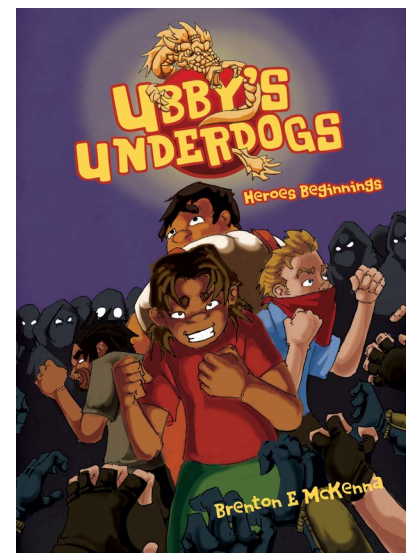


Magabala Books • Teacher Notes

Ubby's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings

Written and illustrated by Brenton E McKenna



Teacher Notes prepared by Christina Wheeler

OVERVIEW

It is the late 1940s and Broome, a small pearling town in the heart of an ancient land, is still recovering from WWII. Ubby, a smart, street-wise Aboriginal girl, is the leader of a small rag-tag gang known as the 'Underdogs.' *Ubby's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings* (Book 2) is storytelling on a remarkable scale. It continues with established characters that have links to other worlds amidst an intricate backdrop of Aboriginal and Chinese mythology.

In this second graphic novel of the Ubby's trilogy, efforts to locate Sai Fong, the Dragon Summoner, by Ubby and her gang have been halted by the ambitious Pearling Master, Paul Donappleton. Yupman, the guardian of Sai Fong, is pushed to breaking point as his past reaches out to strike and his greatest fear now sits upon the horizon. As the gang grapples with larger events, Donappleton's greed and desperation push the sleepy town to the brink. Old myths and smoky legends from an ancient scroll begin to take on a new meaning, and it becomes a race to unravel the truth for all involved. This is a gallant and thrilling tale that tests the limits of courage and friendship at all levels.

- Author's original artwork for Ubby's was purchased by Dromkeen, Australia's National Centre for Picture Book Art, and then gifted to the State Library of Victoria, where it went on display in 2014
- General appeal as well as diehard Manga fans – graphic fight sequences
- Unique – brilliantly executed second book of the Ubby's trilogy, Australia's first Indigenous graphic novel series

THEMES

- Indigenous Culture
- Chinese mythology
- Broome
- Greed
- Perseverance and Courage
- Heroes

AUDIENCE AND WRITING STYLE

Ubby's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings is the second in Brenton E McKenna's graphic novel trilogy. It interweaves Aboriginal and Chinese mythology to create an adventure for Ubby's Underdogs who use wit, courage, determination and problem-solving skills to help find their friend, Sai Fong. It integrates humour with fast-paced action. The series will appeal to an upper-primary to lower-secondary audience, as well as reluctant readers.

LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

This book and the classroom activities provided are relevant to the following areas of the Australian Curriculum:

Learning area	Year level
English	Years 5, 7, 9

The appendix highlights relevant content descriptions that relate to the text and classroom ideas provided.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

Brenton 'Ez' McKenna is a Yawuru artist and graphic novelist from Broome, WA who fell in love with comic books at a young age. He draws his inspiration from growing up in Broome and the Aboriginal and Asian influences in his own life. Brenton studied visual arts for two years at Goulburn TAFE and in 2009 was one of twenty successful applicants to be awarded a highly sought after mentorship with the Australian Society of Authors. Brenton's success and recognition as a graphic novelist has taken him across the world – in 2015 he participated in the Edinburgh International Book Festival and travelled to India with the First Nations Australian Writers Network for the Literary Commons! project.

CLASSROOM IDEAS

- Discuss the generic structure of graphic novels, including the layout, speech/thought bubbles and narration. Read the first few pages together as a class.
- Take time to read about the list of characters in *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings*. Refer back to this page as required as you read the text.
- Recap on the first book in the series, *Ubbly's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon* by reading 'The story so far...' at the start of the text. Make predictions as to what may happen in *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings*.
- Discuss the aspects of visual literacy involved when reading graphic novels. How is meaning conveyed through the use of:
 - Angle (low, mid, high)
 - Framing
 - Gaze (close-up, mid-shot, long shot)
 - Colour
 - Facial expressions/non-verbal gestures
- Create a story map that traces the plot of *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings*.
- Explain the relationship between Donappleton and his son, Scotland? Why is he a bully? What developments in this relationship can you predict?
- Analyse Yupman's character. Although his enemies try to depict him as a traitor, the illustrations and his actions help the reader to trust him. Discuss.
- On p64, Ubbly 'gives up'. Later in the text however, she explains that she just needed a sleep. She has regrouped. Discuss the theme of resilience and perseverance in *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings*. Why is Yupman concerned that Ubbly might have given up?
- The 'staircase to the moon' is a feature of *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings*. Find out more about this unique feature of Broome. Read the picture book *Staircase to the Moon* by Bronwyn Houston and view images on Google Images.
- The three sacred weapons can only be used by those worthy of their power. Discuss the personal qualities that would align the weapons with various characters. If you could create your own sacred weapons, what would they be? Which qualities would they demand in order to work?
- An ancient scroll tells of ghosts 'without family and without love'. Scotland's grandfather seems different as a ghost than as he was as a human. How is he different and what has he learnt?
- What clues is the reader given that the story is set in the 1940s?
- What makes a hero? The text says that heroes are often made in the face of adversity and that sometimes, they are 'who we least suspect' (p167). Do you agree with this? Why? Can you think of heroes from other stories who fit this suggestion (eg Bilbo Baggins)?
- Discuss the importance of Medinga to the plot of *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginning*. What role does he play?
- Make predictions about the plot and themes of the third book in this trilogy.
- Create your own characters and plot for a graphic novel. Your library may have books to help you learn how to draw cartoon characters. You can also find websites to help with drawing cartoon figures. Experiment with online graphic novel software such as <http://www.comicmaster.org.uk/>
- Research the pearling industry in Broome, especially around the time that *Ubbly's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings* was set.



- Discuss the role that women and girls – namely Ubby, her mother and Sylvania – play in *Ubby's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings*.
- Read the transcript of ABC radio interview with the author Brenton E McKenna, <http://www.abc.net.au/local/audio/2013/11/01/3882392.htm>. You could also watch the following YouTube clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fvjJ0NSFCU>. Write a reflection that shows your understanding of the author's inspiration for creating Ubby's Underdogs.
- Choose a section of *Ubby's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings* to write in prose. Include appropriate conventions such as direct speech and paragraphing.
- Read the notes at the end of *Ubby's Underdogs: Heroes Beginnings* that explains 'The Council of Magic' and 'The Black Rule'. How do these notes help to contextualise these story elements?

APPENDIX - LINKS TO THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Year	Curriculum Area
5	<p>English</p> <p><i>Literature</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify aspects of literary texts that convey details or information about particular social, cultural and historical contexts (ACELT1608) • Recognise that ideas in literary texts can be conveyed from different viewpoints, which can lead to different kinds of interpretations and responses (ACELT1610) • Create literary texts using realistic and fantasy settings and characters that draw on the worlds represented in texts students have experienced (ACELT1612) • Create literary texts that experiment with structures, ideas and stylistic features of selected authors (ACELT1798)
7	<p>English</p> <p><i>Literature</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts (ACELT1621) • Understand, interpret and discuss how language is compressed to produce a dramatic effect in film or drama, and to create layers of meaning in poetry, for example haiku, tankas, couplets, free verse and verse novels (ACELT1623)
9	<p>English</p> <p><i>Literature</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and experiment with the use and effect of extended metaphor, metonymy, allegory, icons, myths and symbolism in texts, for example poetry, short films, graphic novels, and plays on similar themes (ACELT1637)

