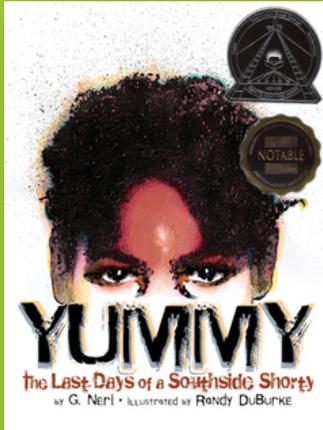


TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS



Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty

written by G. Neri

illustrated by Randy DuBurke

About the Book

Genre: Graphic Novel/Biography

***Reading Level:** Grade 4–5

Interest Level: Grades 5–12

Guided Reading: V

Accelerated Reader®

Level/Points: 3.4/1.0

Lexile™ Measure: GN510L

* Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Themes: Gang Violence, Youth Violence, Family, Conflict Resolution, City Life (Chicago), Teen Life, Coping with Death, Overcoming Obstacles, Loss of Innocence, Bullying, Poverty, Identity, Pride, Respect, Persistence/Grit, Biography/Memoir, Consequences, Chicago, African/African American Interest, Graphic Novel

SYNOPSIS

Eleven-year old Roger is trying to make sense of his classmate Robert “Yummy” Sandifer’s death, but first he has to make sense of Yummy’s life. Yummy could be as tough as a pit bull sometimes. Other times he was as sweet as the sugary treats he loved to eat. Was Yummy some sort of monster, or just another kid?

As Roger searches for the truth, he finds more and more questions. How did Yummy end up in so much trouble? Did he really kill someone? And why do all the answers seem to lead back to a gang—the same gang to which Roger’s older brother belongs?

Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty is a compelling graphic dramatization based on events that occurred in Chicago in 1994. The story reaches out to youth and presents the difficult problems they may face, including peer pressure, violence, crime, gangs, and guns. This gritty exploration of youth gang life will force readers to question their own understandings of good and bad, right and wrong.

Awards and honors include:

- **Coretta Scott King Author Award Honor**, American Library Association
- **ALA Notable Book**, American Library Association
- **Cybil Award–Best YA Graphic Novel**, The Cybils
- **“Choices,”** Cooperative Children’s Book Center
- **Notable Book for a Global Society**, International Literacy Association
- **Eisner Award Finalist–Best Teen Book**, Will Eisner Comic Industry Awards
- **Once Upon a World Children’s Book Award**, The Simon Wiesenthal Center and Museum of Tolerance Library and Archives



BACKGROUND

From the author’s introduction: Robert “Yummy” Sandifer was a real person. He was born in 1983 and lived in the Roseland area of Chicago. At just eleven years old, Yummy became a poster child for youth gang violence in the United States after a series of tragic events led to his appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine in September 1994. The essence of Yummy’s story presented in this book has been re-created based on public records, media reports, and personal accounts. A certain amount of fictionalization was necessary to fill in gaps, condense events, and represent what Yummy might have been feeling. Roger, the narrator of this story, was invented to guide us, a means of trying to make sense of the madness that hit Roseland in the summer of 1994. I invite you, like Roger, to sort through all the opinions that poured in from the community, media, and politicians, and discover the truth about Yummy. –G. Neri

From the author’s note:

“Sometimes stories get to you; this one left my stomach in knots. After three days of reporting, I still couldn’t decide which was more appalling: the child’s life or the child’s death.”—Jon D. Hull, *Time* magazine, September 1994

When Yummy’s story first broke, I was teaching in South Central Los Angeles. Some of my students came from dysfunctional homes; some had siblings or parents in jail; some had family members who had been killed in the gang wars. More than a few times, I heard announcements come over the PA system for memorial services for students who had been killed. I even worked with a teen who, when he wasn’t around gangs, acted like any sweet, innocent kid. But on the streets, he had already become a hard-core gangbanger.

I remember following Yummy’s story day by day. A couple of students had heard about it and we argued whether he was a victim or a bully. When Yummy was found dead and all the facts came out, I wasn’t sure who the bad guy was. There were no winners in this story, only losers. Even the president at the time, Bill

Clinton, talked about how the violence had to stop. Some things changed after Yummy’s murder, and some things stayed the same. The infamous projects in Chicago’s Southside were torn down. Many of the people who had lived there had to move, but the gangs just moved with them. Yummy’s murderers were tried as adults and remain in prison. The Black Disciples are still a powerful force.

So was Yummy a cold-blooded killer or a victim? The answer is not black and white. Yummy was both a bully and a victim—he deserves both our anger and our understanding. Other answers, however, may be clearer. Like the preacher at Yummy’s funeral said: make up your mind that you will not let your life end like Yummy’s. Easier said than done, no doubt. But if you can find a way to make the choice of life, then other decisions may be easier. Choose wisely. –G. Neri

Additional titles to teach about bullying and conflict resolution:

Chess Rumble written by G. Neri, illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2374>

It Doesn’t Have to Be This Way/No tiene que ser así: A Barrio Story/Una historia del barrio written by Luis Rodríguez, illustrated by Daniel Galvez

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2795>

First Day in Grapes written by L. King Perez, illustrated by Robert Casilla

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2391>



VOCABULARY

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

Content Specific

nobody'd (nobody did), ain't (are not), wit' (with), 'cept (except), cops'll (cops will), ta git (to get), an' (and), what're (what are), what'chou (what are you), why'd (why did), outta (out of), gonna (going to), 'hood (neighborhood), y'all (you all), Black Disciples, social services, Muddy Waters, Al Capone, Chi-town, untouchable, President Clinton, 'bout (about), regent, felony, pledge, manhunt, deputy, Gangster, turf, fugitive, shorty, victim, whooped, authorities, lawyer, courtroom, shoplifting, juvie, capped, homies, Oprah, thug, territory, pop, offender, homicide

Academic

impress, notorious, sensational, prostitution, abandoned, ominous, intimidated, presumed, executed, sought, caution, disappear, revenge, guidance, insult, predictable, escape, neglected, convicted, arrested, fatal, torched, reap, rival, council

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? Why might the author and illustrator want to tell a story in a graphic novel format?
2. How would you define bullying? What are some examples of bullying? What effect does bullying have on the person being bullied? On others? What should you do if you are being bullied? How might others help when a person is being bullied?
3. What do you know about gangs? Why do young people join gangs?
4. Have you ever lost someone close to you? Have you or someone you know had a loved one pass away? How did you or the other person feel?
5. As a hook for readers, consider showing students the book trailer created by author, G. Neri, posted on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/13876464>.
6. Why do you think I chose this book for us to read today?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title, *Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty*, means. Then ask them what they think this book will most likely be about and who the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?

Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, copy on the inside front cover, title page, author's introduction, illustration panels and gutters (space between the panels), text boxes, speech balloons, author's note, author's sources, and author and illustrator bios (on the inside back cover).



Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- about the life of Robert “Yummy” Sandifer
- how being in a gang affected Yummy’s life
- how Yummy’s childhood affected his life and decisions
- whether Yummy was a bully, a victim, or both
- about the influence of gang life on the youth in Chicago

Have students also read to determine how the story is structured and how the information is presented. Encourage students to consider why the author, G. Neri, would want to share this story with young people.

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

1. From whose point of view is this story told?
2. Roger lives on Normal Avenue. What does he mean when he says “normal” is different to different folks?
3. How does Yummy get his nickname?
4. Who are the Black Disciples? Who is their leader?
5. Why does Yummy join the Black Disciples? What motivates or compels him? What are the positive and negative consequences of joining?
6. How does a *shorty* like Yummy advance in the Black Disciples? How does he prove himself?
7. How does Roger react when his father warns him “not to end up like your brother”?
8. How does Yummy feel after he takes the Black Disciples pledge?
9. Why do gangs like the Black Disciples allow young children like Yummy to join? What role does laws at the time have on encouraging gangs to recruit children?
10. Who is Shavon Dean? How is she killed? Is her death an accident? How do you know?
11. What meaning is conveyed by emphasizing the word *friends* with quotations marks on page 13?
12. What does Roger’s brother, Gary, mean when he says, “Now we gotta go clean up his mess,” on page 15?
13. Describe Yummy’s home life. What struggles does he face? What problems does he have at home? What does the teddy bear tell you about him?
14. How does Yummy get scars and burns on his body?
15. Why does Yummy live with his grandmother?
16. Why does Yummy start committing crimes? What types of crimes does he commit? How many felonies does Yummy have by the time he is eleven years old?
17. On page 29–30, Yummy is picked on while in juvenile detention. How does he react?
18. Find an example of foreshadowing on page 36 and explain what event in the story it is predicting.
19. Why does Roger call the police search for Yummy a “boyhunt”?
20. Why does Yummy go into hiding? Where does he hide?
21. Why does Roger want to find out who the “real” Yummy is?
22. Who does Yummy call for help at the end of the story? Why?



★ “A much-needed look at the terrifying perils of life on the margins that will have all readers pondering the heady question of moral responsibility.”

–*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “A harrowing portrait that is no less effective given its tragic familiarity. . . . This is a graphic novel that pushes an unsightly but hard to ignore socio-political truth out into the open.”

–*Booklist*, starred review

★ “Framing the story through the eyes and voice of a fictional character, 11-year-old Roger, offers a bittersweet sense of authenticity while upholding an objective point of view.”

–*School Library Journal*, starred review

23. Why do the Black Disciples kill Yummy?
24. How does the community react to Yummy’s death? Examine the reactions in the neighborhood, across age groups, within the city of Chicago, and across the nation.
25. Why is Roger’s father angry that Yummy is featured on the cover of *Time* magazine?
26. What does Roger’s mother mean when she says, “Now let’s go home and be a family,” on page 91?
27. Why does Roger’s brother want to come home with his family at the end of the story?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6)

1. How are the illustrations in a graphic novel different from those in other illustrated books?
2. What is the purpose of the rectangular text boxes in a graphic novel? How are they important to the story? How do they affect pacing and plot development?
3. In a graphic novel, what is a gutter? What is the purpose of gutters? How do gutters help comprehension of the story?
4. How does the illustrator, Randy DuBurke, show sequence and movement on each page? How do the size and positions of the panels on each page help achieve this?
5. How does the illustrator, Randy DuBurke, convey sound? What elements or techniques does he use?
6. Compare a vertical panel sequence (e.g. page 44) to a horizontal panel sequence (e.g. page 18). What effect does this panel layout have on pacing and convey how much time has passed?
7. How does the illustrator, Randy DuBurke, use expressions and gestures to convey character traits?
8. How do perspective and the angle from which an item is shown help convey intense emotion and suspense?
9. Look at the panel sequence on page 56. What is the effect of repeating the image with different framing? How does this support and emphasize the text?
10. Find these graphic novel elements in the book: panels, gutters, text boxes, speech balloons, sound effects, and motion lines. How do these elements work together? If you remove any one of these elements, what is the effect? How does each and all of them taken together enable comprehension of the story?
11. Why do you think the author, G. Neri, and illustrator, Randy DuBurke, choose the graphic novel format to explore the life of Yummy?
12. What does this story about Yummy reveal about the larger issue of youth gang violence?



13. In the author's introduction, G. Neri writes, "Roger, the narrator in the story, was invented to guide us." Why do you think G. Neri chooses to create a fictional narrator to tell a true story?
14. Is Yummy an appropriate nickname for the main character? Why or why not? Is it ironic? Why or why not?
15. How do Yummy's parents and upbringing influence his life? Do you think Yummy's parents could have changed the course of his life? Why or why not? If so, how? Are his parents responsible for his actions and death or is he alone? Do you think parents are responsible for their children's behavior and decisions? Why or why not? If so, for how long?
16. How does Yummy cope with his feelings and events in his life?
17. Why does Yummy bully others? Are his actions justified? Why or why not?
18. Yummy has a teddy bear. What does this reveal about Yummy and his maturity level? How is this at odds with his reputation and actions?
19. Read page 35 and identify the mistake Yummy makes in taking the Disciples pledge. What does this decision show about Yummy's understanding of what he is doing?
20. What does belonging to the Black Disciples gang mean to Yummy?
21. Do the Black Disciples care about Yummy and his peers? Why or why not?
22. Why does Yummy feel the need to act tough and resort to crime and physical violence? What is he trying to gain or avoid?
23. Why doesn't Roger belong to the Black Disciples along with his brother, Gary?
24. Why do you think Roger's brother, Gary, wouldn't let Roger help "clean up" Yummy's mess and told him to stay home? What does this reveal about Gary's character?
25. Read page 20 to explore the reaction Yummy and Roger's classmates have to the news of Shavon's death. Why do they react this way? Are they young and immature, desensitized to violence, or something else?
26. Do you think Yummy takes responsibility for Shavon's death? Why or why not?
27. How do you think Yummy feels while in hiding?
28. Does Yummy trust the Black Disciples? Why or why not?
29. Does Yummy understand the severity of his crime? Why or why not? Can one ever be too young to understand his/her mistakes and be held accountable? Why or why not?
30. Is Roger a reliable or objective narrator? Why or why not?
31. Do you think Roger is empathetic towards Yummy?
32. Who knew the "real" Yummy in his life? Do you think his grandmother knew the "real" Yummy? Why or why not? Can anyone know someone fully?
33. How do Yummy's relationships with the adults in his life affect his behavior?
34. If Yummy had been caught by the police, how do you think his life might have turned out? Why?
35. Compare and contrast the neighborhood's perceptions of Yummy's character. Why do you think people had different reactions and assumptions of Yummy?
36. In addition to Shavon Dean, who are the other victims in this story? Why do you think they are victims? Can someone be a victim *and* a bully? Why or why not? How is Yummy both?
37. Compare and contrast the reactions to both Shavon and Yummy's death. Why are the reactions so different? Is this justified?
38. Why does the murders of Shavon and Yummy receive national media attention?



39. Do you think Yummy's childhood, background, or age is an excuse for his behavior? Why or why not?
40. On page 63, Roger wonders if he would have turned out like Yummy if he had grown up like him. What do you think? If Yummy had had a different childhood, do you think he would have been a different person? Why or why not?
41. What do you think Yummy would have needed in life, from his community, and from his family to be successful, healthy, and alive?
42. How does the media influence the public's perception of Yummy? Do you think the media is a positive or negative influence in this case?
43. Parents in Chicago's South Side bring their children to see Yummy in his coffin. Why do you think they do this? What do you think they hope this will accomplish?
44. Roger's parents know that Gary is part of the Black Disciples gang. Why don't his parents do anything about it? What does this show about the power/appeal of the gangs in the community?
45. Do you think Roger's brother, Gary, will be able to break away from the Black Disciples at the end of the story? Why might it be difficult? What kind of help or support does someone in Gary's position need? If someone does commit crimes as Gary may have done while a part of the Black Disciples, can the person transcend his/her past bad choices and participate with the larger community? Why or why not?
46. How does the author, G. Neri, use urban dialect with slang to create some of the characters' voices?
47. Why do you think the illustrator, Randy DuBurke, creates the images in black and white, without any other color? What effect does this palette have on the tone of the story? How might the story be different if the images were in color?

48. The author and illustrator of a graphic novel make many decisions about what to show in each panel of each page. Examine the format of the book and consider what you are seeing and what you are *not* seeing among the panels. Notice the range of perspective and angles used. When does the illustrator, Randy DuBurke, zoom in and when does he zoom out? How does this affect the mood and tone of the moment depicted? Why is some of the story told in text boxes and some in speech balloons? When are sound effects added? How do these choices affect the reader's experience and understanding of the story?

Reader's Response

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Production of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4 & 6)*

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. In the introduction to the story, author G. Neri writes, "I invite you, [the reader], to sort through all the opinions... and discover your own truth about Yummy." In an essay, describe what you think the truth is. Are there multiple truths?
2. Do you think Yummy is a good person or has some redeeming qualities? Why or why not? How do you feel about Yummy at the beginning of the story compared to at the end of the story?
3. Explain in an essay whether Yummy is responsible for all his actions. In addition consider: Is each person alone responsible for his or her actions? Is a child or a teenager alone responsible for his or her actions?



4. Yummy is both bullied and bullies others. Have you or someone you know ever been bullied or experienced bullying? Read your school's student handbook on the policy on bullying. In a letter to the principal, describe ideas on how to make the school and students safer and how the school policy can be improved.
5. In a persuasive essay, argue whether Yummy's childhood excuses his behavior and actions or not.
6. In the story, Yummy says he does not mean to kill Shavon. Have you ever done something wrong or hurt someone without meaning to? How did you feel? What did you do to resolve the situation?
7. Think of an adult or someone in your life who you look up to for guidance and advice. What makes this person a good mentor? How does this person help you? What have you learned from her or him?

ELL/ESL Teaching Strategies

*(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)*

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners:

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the book with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the text. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the book or key details. Then ask

students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.

4. Have students give a short talk about whether or not they think Yummy is a bully or a victim, or about what they think the author's message is.
5. The story contains some content-specific words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably.)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These may also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

Geography/Social Studies

*(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)*

1. Have students research the situational and risk factors that influence youth violence and present their findings in a web diagram. Who is at risk? What can be done to prevent youth violence? Check out the Center for Disease Control and Prevention



(<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/>). Based on their findings, have students write a persuasive essay arguing whether a story like Yummy could happen in their own community.

2. Ask students to research the prevalence of youth gang and gang violence in the United States. What percentage of youths are involved in gangs? Has the number of youth gangs increased or decreased? What factors makes gangs more likely in one community versus another?
3. Have students research their school's or district's policies on bullying, gangs, and/or guns. What do the policies say about parents', teachers', and administrators' roles in helping students stay safe and healthy? Have students design an argument to present to the principal, superintendent, school board, or parent organization on how the policies can be strengthened, can be improved to include student voices and actions, and can be made more accessible.
4. Ask students to research youth violence statistics in their city or community. Is youth and/or gun violence an issue in your community? What factors do you think affect the lack or presence of youth and/or gun violence here?
5. Have students research various programs that are available to students and other children in the community. What school or local enrichment programs are available? Have students choose one program and write a letter to the editor of the school or local newspaper about what makes it a quality enrichment program. How does it help and engage children and teens? If there are no or too few local enrichment programs available, have students design their own program for students or write a persuasive letter about why these programs should exist, their benefits, and what kinds of programs would be of interest to students.

English Language Arts/Writing

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Conventions of Standard English, Strand 1)

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 9)

1. Ask students to write a character analysis for Yummy. What traits best describe him? What does he think, do, and say to support the traits?
2. Have students compare and contrast Roger and Yummy's characters using a Venn diagram. How are the two youths similar and different? Based on the diagram, encourage students to explain what factors might have led to very different choices and life experiences.
3. Provide students with a panel sequence or page from the book. Have students examine the illustrations and text (word boxes and speech balloons) separately. What information do you get from the illustrations alone? From the text alone? How do the illustrations and text work together to express information?
4. Have students create a two-column list citing the reasons why a young person might become involved in a gang and the (positive and negative) consequences of joining a gang. Based on the graphic organizer, have students write an essay exploring the question of whether or not the reasons to join a gang outweigh the consequences. How do we prevent youth from joining gangs?
5. Movies, television, video games, and music often glamorize gang life. In an opinion essay, students should argue whether or not they think the media influences the way young people view gangs, violence, and guns. Does the way media portrays violence in gangs desensitize people to it? Why or why not?
6. Ask students to imagine how Yummy feels while he is in hiding and have them write a journal entry or letter to his Grandmother in Yummy's perspective. What is he thinking? How does he feel about Shavon's death? What are his hopes?



7. Have students consider an alternative ending to *Yummy* where Yummy is not killed and instead goes to jail. Write a letter to Yummy from Roger. What would Roger say to Yummy? How does Roger feel? Does Roger forgive Yummy?
8. Some of the characters in *Yummy* speak in dialect and/or use slang. Have students research what a dialect is and how it differs from an accent, slang, and standard English. Then ask students to analyze excerpts from *Yummy* and determine how dialect and slang help to express characters' traits and feelings.
9. Have students read the interview with the author, G. Neri, and illustrator, Randy DuBurke: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/>. Then encourage students to imagine they have the opportunity to interview G. Neri and Randy DuBurke. Students should design additional interview questions they would ask the creators of *Yummy* if they were on a talk show, news show, or radio show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process, Yummy the person, the illustration process, or the graphic novel format?
10. Ask students to read the *School Library Journal* article about inspiring reluctant readers featuring author G. Neri: http://www.slj.com/2014/04/diversity/how-author-g-neri-and-librarian-kimberly-defusco-changed-a-life/#_. Have students interview classmates about books they have read that inspired them, encouraged them to read, made them readers, or changed them in some way. Does this person feel reading has had a positive influence on his or her life? Using both the article and information gathered in their student interviews, encourage students to write about how books have the power to positively influence, transform, and change lives.
11. Have students read *Chess Rumble* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2374>) and compare what it alongside *Yummy* teaches about anger and making choices.

12. Middle school students may wish to submit a written piece to the annual Do the Write Thing Challenge held by the National Campaign to Stop Violence: <http://www.dtw.org/the-challenge/instructions>. Student entries address how violence has affected their lives, the causes of youth violence, and what they can do about youth violence.

Art/Media

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

1. Students can create their own comics or graphic novels based on their own lives with the Comic Creator from ReadWriteThink.org: <http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic/index.html>.
2. Provide students with an illustrated panel with no word boxes or speech balloons. Have students study the images. Then encourage students to create word boxes and speech balloons for the illustrations. Students may wish to share and compare their interpretations and responses with classmates.

Home-School Connection

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 2 and 3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strand 7)

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

1. Ask students to create portraits of people who are their personal role models through drawing, collage, or photograph. In writing, students should describe what actions and qualities they admire about this person. Students can write in prose or submit a poem or song.
2. Have students interview a parent, guardian, or adult mentor about his or her experiences with bullying. How did this person react to and handle the situation when they were bullied? What advice does he or she have for anyone being bullied or feeling alone?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

G. Neri is an award-winning writer, filmmaker, and new media producer from Los Angeles, where he also worked with inner-city youth. He is the recipient of the International Literacy Association Lee Bennett Hopkins Promising Poet Award for his free-verse novella, *Chess Rumble*, which was also recognized as an ALA Notable Children's Book. *Chess Rumble* was his debut book. Prior to becoming a writer, Neri was a filmmaker, an animator/illustrator, a digital media producer, and a founding member of *The Truth* anti-smoking campaign. Neri lives on the Gulf Coast of Florida with his wife and their daughter. Visit him on the web at www.gregneri.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Randy DuBurke has been a professional illustrator for over 20 years. He received the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent in Illustration for his first book, *The Moon Ring*. Other books for young readers include the graphic biography *Malcom X* and LEE & LOW BOOKS' *Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream*. He is a full-time artist whose work has also appeared in DC and Marvel comics, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *Mad* magazine. He is currently focused on writing and illustrating children's books and graphic novels. A native of Brooklyn, New York, DuBurke now lives in Switzerland with his wife and their two sons. Visit him on the web at www.randyduburke.com/.

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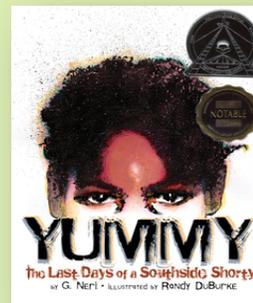
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