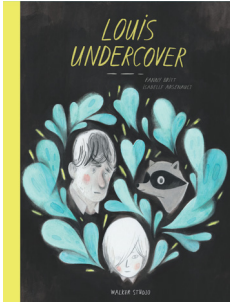




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Louis Undercover

Fanny Britt
Isabelle Arsenault
ISBN: 9781406378429
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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

In this powerful new graphic novel from Fanny Britt and Isabelle Arsenault, we meet Louis, a young boy who shuttles between his mum's home in the city and his dad's house in the country, with his little brother, Truffle who loves to sing James Brown songs. While coming to terms with the sadness and complexities of his divorced parents' relationship, Louis – with the help of his best friend, Boris – is also trying to summon up the courage to speak to his true love, Billie. Seen through the eyes of Louis, this is a beautifully illustrated, true-to-life and hopeful portrayal of a complicated but loving family, and how a wise and sensitive and brave boy still manages to find his own way forward in spite of everything.

Author/Illustrator Information:

Fanny Britt is a writer, playwright and translator. She has written a dozen plays and translated more than fifteen. She is the winner of the Governor General's Literary Award in Drama for her play *Bienveillance*.

Isabelle Arsenault is an internationally renowned children's book illustrator whose work has won many awards. Her books include *Alpha*, *Once Upon a Northern Night* and *Jane, the Fox and Me* among others.

Fanny Britt and Isabelle Arsenault first collaborated on the graphic novel *Jane, the Fox and Me*, winner of the Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Illustration and the Joe Shuster Award for Best Writer and Best Artist. It was also named a *New York Times* Best Illustrated Children's Book.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:
• Ages 14+

Key Learning Areas:
• English

Example of:
• Graphic Novel

Themes/Ideas:

- Bravery
- Family
- Alcoholism
- Mental Illness/Depression



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Discussion Questions and Activities:

Explore the use of colour. Many of the pages use a limited colour palette with the occasional flash of colour to emphasise an element of the illustrations. What does the use of yellow, light blue and inky black symbolise? What has Isabelle Arsenault emphasised with colour? Why do you think she has chosen to do that? How does the colour palette contribute to the mood of the graphic novel?

Draw a timeline of Louis's emotional journey through the novel. Mark down key moments in the story and note how Louis reacts to them. Use the timeline to discover what influence other characters have on him.

Rewrite several pages of the graphic novel as prose. Examine the location, the body language and movement of the characters and the mood to translate the graphic novel to text only.

Write a book review about *Louis Undercover*. Write about what you liked/disliked about it, draw connections with other similar books and make a recommendation as to who would like the book.

Bravery is a key theme in *Louis Undercover*. How is the idea of bravery explored? What does it mean to Louis? Why does he struggle with it?

Examine pages 82-83 and discuss why you think Louis and his mother both lying to each other. Is lying ok when it is done with good intentions?

The novel is divided into sections, the untitled introduction, the tree house, four days before school's out, etc. Why do you think Fanny Britt wrote the story in this way? What is the key plot point or theme of each section?

Examine the illustration on page 93. The illustration is a scribble of black ink and pencil, as if the illustrator were trying to destroy or hide whatever was underneath. What do you think this represents with Louis's thoughts at this point in the novel?

The title of this graphic novel has several meanings. What are your interpretations of the meanings? Write a paragraph about each interpretation.

Describe the culture of Louis's family and home. What is his relationship with his parents and brother like? How does Louis feel about his parents' separation? What do we learn throughout the story that might explain why the family culture is the way it is?

Louis experiences significant emotional changes throughout the novel. Find examples in the text that show Louis experiencing the following:

- Uncertainty (of the future)
- Fear
- Love
- Hope
- Self-doubt

Discuss the graphic novel format. What do you know about graphic novels/comics and the way they are laid out? How does *Louis Undercover* fit your description of a standard graphic novel and how does it subvert the genre? Choose a spread that you feel uses the graphic novel format in an interesting way and write a few paragraphs about why you find it interesting.

Characters in narratives need to have motivation for their actions, a desire that drives their character arc. As a class, discuss the motivations of Louis, Truffle, his father and his mother. Explain your answers using evidence from the text.

Louis's father battles with alcoholism and depression. What affect do these afflictions have on the family? Why do you think Louis's father's story is left open ended (i.e. with him entering the detox centre and Louis's mother saying not to expect anything from her)?

Helpful contacts

Depression (or any other mental wellbeing issues)

Emergency: dial 000

www.beyondblue.org.au 1300 22 4636

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

www.lifeline.org.au 13 14 11

www.kidshelpline.com.au 1800 55 1800

www.mensline.org.au 1300 78 99 78

www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au 1300 659 467

Alcohol addiction

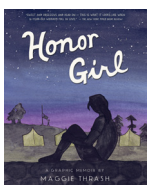
<https://au.reachout.com/articles/alcohol-addiction>

<https://drinkwise.org.au/>

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/alcoholism-at-home>

<https://aa.org.au/>

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