

We Run Tomorrow

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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SYNOPSIS

Tonight, we're gonna kidnap our best friend. And tomorrow? We run.

Sticks, Maki, Jed and Tommy live on the same street. But the adults around them are making decisions that could tear the four friends apart.

When they discover their favourite comic book series is being made into a blockbuster movie, they know what they have to do. Get to the audition. Get the parts. Stay together.

Bestselling author Nat Amore joins forces with acclaimed graphic novelist Mike Barry to bring you a story of four kids—and four superheroes—who are taking their future into their own hands.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nat Amore is a Sydney-based children's author and kidlit podcast host of *One More Page*. Her debut novel, *Secrets of a Schoolyard Millionaire*, has had great success, becoming Australia's #1 bestselling debut Aussie children's fiction in 2019.

Her second book, *The Power of Positive Pranking*, was shortlisted for the 2021 Readings Children's Book Prize and REAL Children's Choice Book Awards, and won the Environment Award for Children's Literature. Rounding out Nat's trilogy about the kids of Watterson Primary, *The Right Way to Rock* was released in June 2021 and is a Children's Book Council of Australia Notable Book.

In 2021, Nat wrote a 5-part fiction podcast series called *Project ARI* for Nova Entertainment and the Australian Government as part of the #StopItAtTheStart campaign. *Project ARI* has been nominated in two categories at the Australian Podcast Awards.

Find out more about Nat at natamoore.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Mike Barry is the author of *Action Tank*, a popular graphic novel series for kids about a boy who finds himself on the other side of the Solar System and has to get home in time for his mum's spaghetti carbonara. Mike runs 'Make your own comic' workshops for kids.

Find out more about Mike at mikebarrywashere.com.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

- Study the cover of the book. After looking at the illustration, what do you think the story will be about?
- The cover features two lines of characters on the cover. Why do you think this is? Look closely at the differences in the style of illustration for each set. What do you think this indicates about the story?
- The illustration is just one element that makes up the front cover—what are some other elements that create the full cover?
- The colours of the illustration are cool-toned and dark. What do they remind you of? Do you think the cover would look as effective if the colours were different? Why or why not?
- What does the cover tell you about the setting of the book? Are there other things you can learn? For example, why are the main characters in motion?
- Read the blurb on the back. Why do you think short, simple sentences were used to tell people about the story?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

- Did you realise Sticks was a girl before it was revealed that her given name was Samantha? If yes, when did you guess this, and what were the clues?
- Does finding out Sticks is a girl change your opinion of the story? Why or why not? Do you think it matters?
- Do you think the story would have been any different if Sticks had been a boy? What about if one or more of Tommy, Maki or Jed had been girls?
- Sticks also makes assumptions about Tahnee when they first meet. Why does Sticks think of Tahnee as an enemy, and what makes Sticks change that opinion?
- What other assumptions did you make about Sticks and the Lockett Squad as you were reading? Create a list of assumptions as a class. Do any of these assumptions change the way you read the story? Look for evidence in the story to prove/disprove these assumptions.
- Pick a scene from the book and rewrite it, changing the gender of Tommy, Maki or Jed.
- Plan and write your own short story where the main character's gender isn't mentioned until the end of the story, then swap your story with a classmate. Can you tell the gender of their main character before it's revealed? Do you think your understanding of their story is changed by learning their main character's gender?

FRIENDSHIP AND FAMILY

- Think about the friendships Sticks has with Tommy, Jed and Maki. Now think about the relationship you have with your best friend or with someone you are close to. Are there similarities? Are there differences?
- Why do you think the Lockett Squad makes such a good team?
- What do you think makes a good friend? As a class, create a list of qualities that a good friend possesses.
- Reflect on a challenge you have had with a friend or friendship group. How did you overcome it?
- To Sticks, the Lockett Squad is family. Are there people in your life that are not related to you, but are still considered as part of the family?
- How does the relationship Sticks has with the Lockett Squad compare to the relationship she has with Bryce and their parents?
- What do you think would have happened if they hadn't run away? Would their friendship have survived if they were separated? Why/why not?
- Make a chart listing all the similarities and differences between the members of the Lockett Squad. Think about the roles they fill when playing Screen Savers, when making videos for their channel and when they're on their way to the audition. What are their strengths and weaknesses?

SUPERHEROES

- Which of the Screen Savers superpowers would you most like to have?
 - Wiki – knows the answer to every question

- Filter – can shapeshift into anything
- Skydrop – can teleport from one place to another
- Hispeed – can instantly download any skill, and has a gadget arm.
- What superheroes do you know of from other stories, such as those from the Marvel or DC universes? Who is your favourite and why?
- Why do you think superhero stories are so popular?
- Design a poster for the Screen Savers movie.
- Write your own superhero biography, using Nat’s and Mike’s biographies at the end of the book as examples.
- Choose a superhero to research, and create a poster or powerpoint presentation of their key features. You could include headings for:
 - Superhero name
 - Origin story (how they became a superhero)
 - Secret identity
 - Superpower
 - Special objects or weapons
 - Weaknesses
 - Nemesis or villain (who your superhero battles against)
 - Team (who else is on their team, or their sidekick if they have one).

LOSS, GRIEF AND SAFETY

- Sticks’s mum says that the Lockett Squad’s wild adventure means Tommy never got time to grieve. Do you think that’s true? Why is it important to make time to grieve someone we have lost?
- List the reasons why Sticks and her friends run away. Which reasons were the most important to them, and why?
- Sticks is afraid to tell people about the way her brother treats her and hits her, but through the course of the story she learns that it’s important to tell someone, and that Bryce’s behaviour is unacceptable. Who else could she have talked to about what she was experiencing? If someone was in a similar situation at your school or in your community, make a list of people they could talk to. (For instance, a family member, a school counsellor, a local counselling service, a teacher or principal, another trusted adult or calling a service such as Kids Helpline.)

VISUAL STORYTELLING

- Is this the first graphic novel that you have read? If not, what are the titles of others you have read? What makes the illustrated segments of *We Run Tomorrow* stand out from those of other novels? Or what makes it similar to the others?
- Which do you think the author came up with first—the text for the story or the script for the graphic novel segments?
- Look at the way the text has been designed on each page of the graphic novel segments. Do you think a deliberate decision was made about making the characters’ dialogue look different to the narrative sections of text? Do you think it would be as easy to read if the same font was used throughout? What other design decisions have been made to make these segments easy to read? (For example, look at spacing around the words, the dialogue bubbles and the way illustrations interact with the other elements on the page.)
- Imagine if *We Run Tomorrow* had no graphic novel segments. Do you think the book would feel the same? What do you think the author would have needed to do differently to hit the same emotional highs and lows if the book didn’t have these segments?
- Break into groups and discuss and list the main differences between graphic novels and regular novels. Come up with five main elements that are needed for a graphic novel to work. Share your ideas with your classmates.
- Choose a segment of the novel that isn’t close to a graphic novel segment, and imagine you’re going to create a graphic novel segment there. Write out the purpose statement and the kinds of things that would happen in the script from that issue of *The Screen Savers*.

- The graphic novel segments in *We Run Tomorrow* are all issues of The Screen Savers comic. In groups, or pairs, come up with an idea for your own comic. Work out how you would divide the work – who would write the text? Who would illustrate the story? Who is the main character? Does the character have friends? Enemies? Superpowers? Problems to solve?
- Go to the library and look at other graphic novels. Who are the protagonists of the other novels? Are they all superheroes? Are they regular kids? Can you find any graphic novels that are based on real life events? Can you find any books that combine both graphic novel segments and regular text?
- Write up an outline for a book about your own life. Where would you start the story? What events would you illustrate as graphic novel segments?