

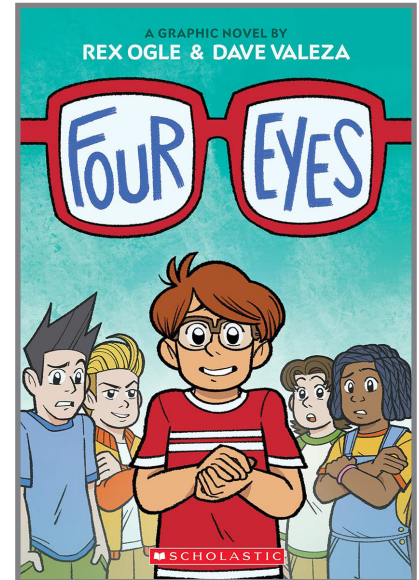
Four Eyes

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary

SYNOPSIS

Sixth grade isn't as great as Rex thought it would be. He's the only kid who hasn't had a growth spurt, and the bullies won't let him forget it. His closest friend is unreliable, at best. And there's a cute girl in his class, who may or may not like him back. With so much going on, everything is a blur—including Rex's vision! So when he discovers that he needs glasses, and his family can only afford the ugliest pair in the store, any hope Rex had of fitting in goes completely out of focus.

In this true coming-of-age story, Rex has his sights set on surviving sixth grade, but now he's got to find a way to do it with glasses, no friends, and a family that just doesn't get it!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rex Ogle is the author of *Free Lunch*, recipient of the YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults. His original graphic novel series, *Four Eyes*, is based on the highs and lows of his middle-school years growing up in Texas. Under the pen name Rey Terciero, he authored *Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy* as well as *Swan Lake: Quest for the Kingdoms*.

Before becoming a full-time writer, Rex worked as an editor in New York for many years and championed a number of licensed titles, including the *New York Times* bestsellers *Star Wars: Jedi Academy*, *Secret Hero Society: Study Hall of Justice*, and Neil Patrick Harris's *The Magic Misfits*. Rex now writes full time from his home in California. When he's not busy writing, Rex can be found hiking with his dog, playing *Mario Kart* with his friends, or reading a new favourite book.

Learn more about Rex at rexogle.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Dave Valeza grew up in Covina, California, after emigrating with his family from Manila, Philippines. Pursuing his love of drawing, Dave earned a bachelor's degree in illustration and a master's degree in sequential art. He's a passionate visual storyteller, and he especially loves drawing people, fashion and technology. In his spare time, Dave enjoys biking and doodling around Savannah, Georgia, where he lives with his husband, cat and dog.

Find out more about Dave and his work at davevaleza.com.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What do you think 'Four Eyes' means?
 - What can you see happening on the front cover?
 - Who do you think this book might be about?
 - Hypothesise as to what you think might happen in this book.
 - Read the back of the book. What does it tell you about the story?
 - What does the picture on the back cover show, and what extra information does it give you?
- How does the list of things to possibly be nervous about that Rex's mother tells Rex, affect Rex's attitude towards starting Middle School? Why do you think it does this? What does Rex start thinking and feeling when he hears this list? Why do you think this happens?
- On p 25 Rex stands up to Victor, telling him that there is nothing wrong with liking comics, sci-fi and superheroes. Why do you think Victor thinks these things are just for little kids? Do you think it is OK to mock someone for their interests? Why/why not? What does this scene tell us about Victor as a person?
- When Rex and his mother go to the optometrist, Rex is confused by the name of the practice. The optometrist is called Eye Caramba, which is a bilingual Spanish/English joke. What are the different translations of Ay Caramba, and why might the optometrist have chosen to name their practice Eye Caramba? Rex lives in Texas—why might a Spanish/English joke be considered a suitable name for a business there?
- When Rex has his eyes tested, there are a lot of different things that the optometrist does. Have you ever been to the optometrist? If so, what did they do there, and was it the same as Rex's experience? As a class discuss what it is like to visit an optometrist, and the importance of having your eyes checked regularly. Remember that Rex didn't know he was having trouble seeing until his eyesight was already quite bad!
- Rex and his mother are worried about the cost of their visit to the optometrist. Just like in the book, glasses in Australia can be quite expensive, but visiting the optometrist is 100% free as it is fully covered by medicare. Why do you think the Australian government has chosen to fund regular eye tests for everyone with a medicare card? Why might this be considered a good thing for the country as a whole, as well as for individuals? As a class, discuss this, and think about some of the possible consequences of not getting your eyes checked regularly, as well as who benefits from everyone having good eye health.
- On p 60, Drew and Rex argue about the way Victor has treated Rex. Who do you think is right? Do you think that Drew would have found it funny if it had happened to him?
 - In small groups discuss the difference between being funny and being mean. Consider in your discussion different ways to tell whether something is genuinely funny, such as whether everyone is laughing; or if it is actually an act of cruelty and there is a victim of the 'joke' (actual jokes should never have a victim).
 - Use the discussion points you came up with to help you create a poster designed to make people think about how they behave, and help them find ways of making sure that any jokes they tell are actually funny and not just being mean to someone more vulnerable.
- Write about the scene on pp 74 and 75 from the point of view of Drew. Why do you think he is behaving this way towards his friend? Re-read some of the scenes with Drew and Victor in them, and think about how Victor treats everyone he comes into contact with. Why do you think that Drew wants to be Victor's friend? Include in your work, information about how Drew feels, what he is scared of, and what he wants—share what you think is motivating him to behave this way.
- On p 97 we learn that after school Rex has to babysit his little brother, make dinner, and still find time to do his homework. This is a lot of responsibility for someone in Year 6! As a class discuss why Rex has to take on so much responsibility at home. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
 - Why does Rex's mother ask him to do this?
 - Where are Rex's mother and stepfather during this time?
 - Why does Rex's mother work in the evening instead of during the day?
 - Why does Sam finish work so late?

- How do you think Rex's mother and stepfather feel about asking him to take on such an adult responsibility at such a young age?
- Can you see any alternatives for this family? (Remember, they live in Texas, where social support systems are different from Australia and New Zealand.)
- How do you think Rex feels about having to take on so much responsibility?
- In pairs or small groups, write a news article about the difficulties Rex's family faces. Imagine it is being published in one of the newspapers popular in Texas during Rex's childhood. Use your article to advocate for changes to the social support systems, so that families like Rex's wouldn't need to depend on a Year 6 student for childcare, and could take their children to the doctor whenever they need to.
- Play a game of dodgeball—but try to make sure no-one gets their glasses broken!
- Why doesn't Rex's mother want to accept money from his Abuela (grandmother)? Re-read the scene on p 116 where Rex asks her this question, then use your understanding of the situation as a whole to help you write a short paragraph outlining how his mother feels about needing help from her mother as an adult.
- Scott and Rex are both nearsighted—which means they can see things that are nearby but anything far away is blurry. Scott tells Rex on p 130 that this is also called *myopia*. Individually, or in pairs, research what it is called if you:
 - Can't see things close to you as a child
 - Can't see things close to you as you get older
 - Have another type of poor eyesight.

Use your findings to create an information leaflet about poor eyesight.

- Design a pair of supercool glasses that you would love to wear. Your glasses could just be a fashion statement, or they might have some other (fictional) qualities like hidden cameras, amazing zoom features or even lasers that shoot from the sides of the frame. Write a detailed description of your design, and illustrate it with a fully coloured diagram of the glasses that showcases all their special features.
- How does Ford see Rex? As a class, discuss their relationship, and use this discussion to help you create a four panel comic from the point of view of Ford, that shows what he thinks of his big brother.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE