

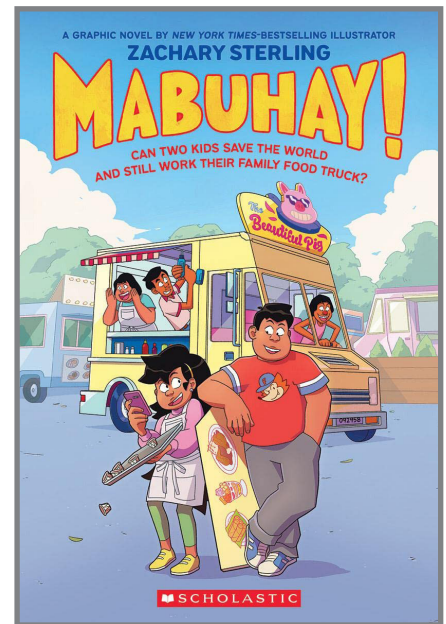
Mabuhay!

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Can two kids save the world and work their family food truck?

First-generation Filipino siblings JJ and Althea struggle to belong at school. JJ wants to fit in with the crowd, while Althea wants to be accepted as she is. But that hope seems like a long shot, for both of them. To make matters worse, they have to help their parents run the family food truck by dressing up as a dancing pig and passing out samples. Ugh! And their mum is always pointing out lessons from Filipino folklore—annoying tales they’ve heard again and again. But when witches, ogres and other creatures from those same stories threaten their family, JJ and Althea realise that the folklore may be more real than they’d suspected. Can they embrace who they really are and save their family?

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Zachary Sterling is a Filipino-American illustrator, sequential artist, writer and animation designer. Over the past several years, Zachary has worked on comics and graphic novels for young adult readers as well as animation designs for Frederator Studios and Netflix. He was born in Torrance, California, but raised in the suburbs of Portland, Oregon—the place he proudly calls home.

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 the genre of this book might be?
 - Does anyone in the class know what ‘Mabuhay’ means, or which language it is?
 - What can you see happening in the cover illustrations?
 - Who do you think might be the main character or characters of this story?
 - How old do you think the protagonists might be?
 - What can you tell about the family on the cover from the illustrations?
 - What do you think might happen in this story?
- Both Althea and JJ are expected to work in their family’s food truck business after school. Do you think that it is fair for children to be expected to work in the family business? Why/why not? Do you think that it can be fair if certain conditions are met but not if they aren’t? As a class, discuss this topic, and come up with a set of circumstances that you all agree would make it fair and reasonable for children or teenagers to work in a family business.
- When Jenna is being nasty to Althea she asks her ‘Why don’t you learn to take a joke?’ As a class, discuss the

problematic nature of questions like this in the context of bullying. Think about whether jokes are truly funny if they have a victim or target.

- In small groups, discuss Riley’s point of view surrounding Jenna’s confrontations with Althea. Riley reaches out to Althea via text message, but doesn’t call Jenna out on her bullying. Why do you think she is acting like this?
 - Rewrite the scene in the cafeteria where Jenna is bullying Althea from Riley’s point of view, being sure to share her thoughts and feelings about what is currently happening, as well as what has happened in the past, and detail her motivations for standing by and not intervening.
- Althea and JJ’s mother tells them traditional stories of misbehaving children that are intended to warn her children of the consequences of poor behaviour. This type of story is common across many different cultures, and can be found in many different mythologies. Retell a story from your culture’s mythology, or one you know well from another culture’s mythology, that contains a warning of bad consequences for poor behaviour. Does your chosen story have a moral that can be expressed in one or two sentences? Illustrate your retelling, and caption the illustration with the title of your story, and a succinct moral that expresses a warning against the poor choices the characters in your story made.
- Althea is filled with questions when she discovers her mother can do magic. As a class, discuss the questions she asks.
 - Do you think that some of Althea’s questions are funny? Which ones and why?
 - Which is the most insightful question she asks?
 - What do you think the answer to her question about the smoothie is?
 - What are some other questions that someone in her situation could ask?
- What type of help do you think Althea and JJ were expecting to get from the summoning they did with their mother? Discuss the following questions:
 - How did they feel when realised that they were stuck with Juan Tamad and Pinya as helpers?
 - Did their opinions change over the course of the novel? Why/why not?
 - If you were in JJ and Althea’s position, what type of help would you like to arrive when you summon assistance?
 - Draw a four panel comic showing what type of supernatural assistance you would most appreciate having, how you summon it, and what it can do. Include in your artwork either dialogue that reveals details of what is happening, or text boxes containing descriptions of the action.
- On p 131 JJ’s teacher says that ‘proverbs are a shorthand way to express universal truths.’ Do you agree with this definition of what a proverb is? As a class, discuss the nature of proverbs, and whether you think that JJ’s teacher is correct in his summation. What are some proverbs that you know? In small groups, consider what a proverb is, and try to think of as many different ones as you can. Create a list of all the proverbs you can think of offhand and share it with the class. Can you see any patterns in the sentiments that proverbs are expressing?
 - In pairs or small groups, think of a problematic situation that might occur in modern daily life, and invent a proverb that addresses this issue. Share your proverbs with the class.
- Which is your favourite character in the novel and why? Write a paragraph sharing your reasons for liking this character the most.
- In your opinion, which is the best fight and/or magic scene in the book? What makes this scene so good?
 - As a class, discuss your favourite scenes and the different literary techniques that the author uses to make them so gripping.
 - Consider the interaction between the visual narrative and the textual narrative, and the part that dialogue plays in understanding the action in a graphic novel.
 - Create a multi-panel fight scene of your own featuring either the characters from the novel, or characters of your own invention. Incorporate in your work at least one of the different techniques you discussed above. Write an accompanying explanation of what technique you have chosen to use and why.
- Was there anything in this story that you found surprising? If so, what was it and why were you surprised?
- On p 161 Althea asks why is she expected to pretend to be someone she isn’t, just so she can fit in. As a class, discuss the importance of being able to feel safe to be yourself, and the corollary of learning to accept others’ differences. What do you think is the most important thing we can all learn from Althea’s determination not to change for the

sake of social approval, and her willingness to flout convention? Write a brief analysis of this aspect of Althea's character, being sure to use evidence from the text to support any assertions you make.

- Write and illustrate the story of a mythical person or creature attending your school for a day.
- How do JJ and Althea feel when teachers consistently mispronounce their name? Why is it important to put in the effort to learn how to pronounce people's names correctly, and what makes the teachers' behaviour in the story so problematic when they all fail to do this?
- Mary Joy and the witches can make portals to where they want to be. If you could make portals like theirs, where would you go and what would you do when you got there?
- Write a short fiction inspired by the story that contains a flying vehicle, portals and an ordinary kid battling a dragon. Illustrate your story using the artwork in the novel as your model.
- In small groups, research and discover more about the Philippines. Where are they? What is the post-colonial history of the Philippines? What language or languages are spoken there? When were they colonised and by whom? What role have they (or has military control of them) played in global politics? Use your research to help you create a poster or slideshow featuring the Philippines and the Filipino peoples.
- Are the three old ladies evil, misunderstood, or just desperate? Create a timeline showing when they are depicted in each of these ways over the course of the novel.
- Althea likes horror movies, while JJ hugely enjoys playing games with his friend (and even with his sister sometimes.) But Althea feels isolated when her friends no longer care about what had once been a shared interest.
 - What types of games and media do you like the most? Write a brief description of your tastes in games/media/books, and illustrate it with a scene from your favourite game, movie, tv show or novel.
 - Share your work with the class, and talk with other people who like the same or similar things to you—did you know that you shared an interest with them?
 - Individually write a review of your favourite media piece.
 - As a class read everyone's reviews, and then choose a game/show/book to play/watch/read, that you haven't tried before, based on someone else's review of it.
 - Once you have finished watching, playing, or reading, write your own review of your experience with it, and display your review next to the original.
 - Include in your review details of what in the original review inspired you to try their recommendation.
- What do you think this family might do next? In small groups storyboard their next adventure.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE