

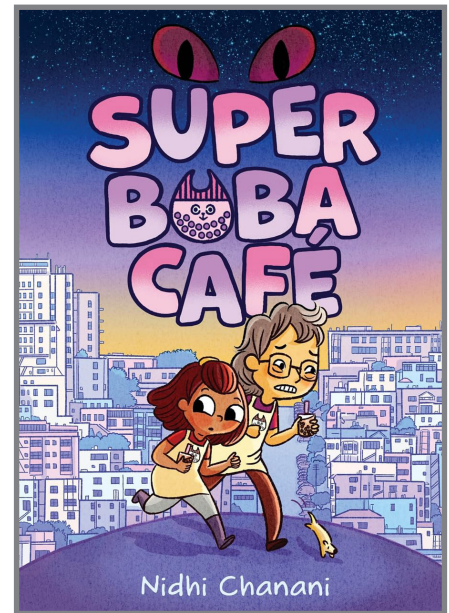
Super Boba Café

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Secondary



SYNOPSIS

In the fog-laden hills of San Francisco sits a sleepy independent boba café. Run by Jing Li and guarded by her kitty, Bao, it comfortably fades into the background. But inside the boba café, there's a secret. Jing is the keeper of the monster of San Francisco. Each day she prepares one giant boba for nine hours to feed it.

When Jing's granddaughter, Aria, comes to stay with her for the summer, she makes it her mission to turn the café around. Aria is quickly aided by Bao, who gives birth to eight perfect kittens. Aria spreads the news of the boba cat café on social media and overnight it is overrun with excited customers. Each day Nainai Li (Grandma Li) finds reasons to close the café, but the demand only increases.

When she opens, the hill monster is left hungry and small earthquakes begin to plague the city. When Aria secretly follows her nainai to the hill monster's cave, she isn't sure what awaits. Will Aria be able to reason with the monster, or will she become its new favourite meal? Or might she disturb its underground existence and cause the Big One?

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Nidhi Chanani likes to dream kind and creative dreams. She's the author of the graphic novel *Pashmina* and the bilingual board book *Shubh Ratri Dost/Good Night Friend*, as well as the illustrator of the picture book *I Will Be Fierce*. Nidhi draws and dreams in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband, child and cat.

Find more of her work at everydayloveart.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:
 - Where do you think this book is likely to be set? Why do you think this?
 - What are the people in the cover artwork doing?
 - What can you tell about the characters from the cover artwork and title combined?
 - What emotions do you think the characters on the front of the book are feeling? Why do you think this?
 - What genre do you think that this book is? Why do you think this?
 - Who do you think might be the intended audience of this novel?
 - What types of things do you predict might happen in this story?

- After reading only the first three pages of the novel, what do you now know about where and when the novel is set, who the main character is and what is happening in their life? Look closely at all the artwork on these pages for clues as to where they are and what is happening. As a class discuss your findings and hypotheses, then read pages four and five—does the information on these pages confirm or deny any of your hypotheses? Why do you think that the author has started the novel with this scene?
- What do you think might have happened before the start of the novel, to cause Aria to say ‘The best part of being in San Francisco is being far away from Jake.’? In small groups discuss the possibilities, and share your ideas with each other. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - Who is Jake?
 - What is his relationship with Aria?
 - What might he have said or done?
 - Why might Aria be so happy to be away from him?

What other evidence is there in the text to support your hypotheses?

- How does Aria feel about being introduced to Jay? Why do you think she feels this way, and how can you tell what her reaction is?
- If you ate takeaway food for every single meal, what foods would you choose? In pairs or small groups create a week long menu plan consisting only of takeaway foods that you can buy in your local area. Think about how you could keep your diet as healthy and balanced as possible, and make sure you don’t eat the same thing more than twice. Research the cost of the foods you have included in your menu plan, and calculate what it would cost for you to buy all your food this way.
- If you were presented with eight adorable kittens to name, what would you choose to call them? Think of eight different kitten names of your own, and draw and colour pictures of each kitten with their names as the captions.
- Why do you think Jake shared the photos of Aria with others online? What are some of the reasons that someone might betray someone else’s trust like this? As a class, discuss the dangers of sharing photographs with other people, and why it is important to never send private photos of ourselves to other people—even if we think they can be trusted.
- Aria gives her grandmother some good advice on p 42 about staying safe on social media. What other advice can you think of to give people to help them stay safe on social media and online? As a class, discuss the different things we can do to help protect ourselves from others online, and then in small groups or pairs, create educational posters sharing some of the ideas from your discussion. Display the posters around the school where everyone can benefit from the advice.
- Read as far as p 70, then as a class, discuss what you think Nainai’s secret might be? See if you can guess any parts of it. After writing down all the different guesses, continue reading the novel and see if anyone has guessed correctly!
- San Francisco (and all of California) experiences earthquakes fairly frequently. Even though most of them are fairly small, there have been some large and extremely damaging quakes since the city was first settled. In pairs or small groups, research the history of earthquakes in San Francisco, and choose one to explore in more depth. Prepare a report to share your research findings with the class. Your report can be in the format of a poster, slideshow presentation or an informative leaflet.
- Have there been many earthquakes near where you live? Online or in the library, research the history of earthquakes in your state or territory.
- Which different types of natural disaster have you personally experienced?
- Which type of natural disaster is your local area most at risk of experiencing, and which types are extremely unlikely? Why are some more likely than others depending on where you live?
 - Which type of natural disaster are you the most frightened of and why?
- Does the Boba Monster in the story look like you imagined it would? How and in what ways? Create a design for a Boba Monster of your own, based on your imaginings prior to seeing the Monster in the book. Paint, sculpt, or draw and colour a more detailed version of your imaginary Boba Monster, and arrange everyone’s completed artworks around the classroom.
- What is muscovado sugar, and why would Nainai use it instead of another type of sugar?

- Using the instructions in the novel, as well as an online recipe to help with quantities, make boba of your own. (If you can't find muscovado sugar, you can use raw sugar, or dark brown sugar instead.)
- What six flavours of tea would you most like to see in a boba tea café?
- As a class, visit a bubble tea shop near you. How many different flavours do they sell? Order yourself a bubble tea, and when you return to class write a review of the shop and your drink, to share with the class.
- Read the section at the end of the novel where the author shares their creation process for each scene. Use a similar three step process (thumbnail; ink; colour) to create a three panel graphic scene of your own, where two characters of your own invention visit and discuss an important site near where you live.
- What was your favourite part of the story? What is your opinion of the way that the novel ended? As a class, discuss the ending of the novel, and whether you think that there should be a sequel to further resolve the issue of the underground Monster.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE