

Sweet Valley Twins: Best Friends



AUTHORS

NICOLE ANDELFINGER AND FRANCINE PASCAL

ILLUSTRATOR

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SCIS: 5466527

ISBN: 9781760266783

RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary

SYNOPSIS

Jessica and Elizabeth have always been inseparable twins, but starting middle school means a chance for new beginnings! Elizabeth is excited to organise a school newspaper, but Jessica is more interested in joining the exclusive Unicorn Club. What will happen when the twins realise they might not be as alike as they thought?

Middle school is hard enough, but with these twins each dealing with becoming their own person—will they be able to stay friends at the same time?

Francine Pascal's beloved Sweet Valley Twins comes to life in a brand-new graphic novel that will have old and new fans delighted as they meet Jessica and Elizabeth in graphic novel form. With the lively artwork of Claudia Aguirre, Sweet Valley Twins: Best Friends is a graphic novel filled with heart, laughter and lots of twins.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Francine Pascal is the creator of several bestselling series, including Fearless and Sweet Valley High, which was also made into a television series. She has written several novels, including My First Love and Other Disasters, My Mother Was Never a Kid, and Love & Betrayal & Hold the Mayo. She is also the author of Sweet Valley Confidential: Ten Years Later. She lives in New York and the South of France.

Nicole Andelfinger was crafting stories as far back as when colouring in the squiggles on your composition book was considered cool. Since then, she's only continued to dwell in the realms of magic, monsters and myth. When not changing her hair colour or writing comics for some of her favourite characters, she works a day job best described as 'emails'. She lives in the Seattle area with her absolutely, most decidedly perfect cat.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Claudia Aguirre is a queer comic book artist and writer. GLAAD Award Nominee and Will Eisner Award nominee. Co-founder of Boudika Comics, where she self-publishes comics. Currently working for Black Mask, Oni Press, Legendary, Limerence Press and Boom! Studios.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:

- Who has read any of the Sweet Valley Twins books before?
- How do you expect the graphic novel might differ from the text-based novels?
- Why are books sometimes published as text-only novels as well as in graphic novel format?
- What information are you likely to get from the illustrations that would normally be conveyed by the text of a non-graphic novel?
- How does the text in a graphic novel compare to the text in a non-graphic novel?
- Who do you think are likely to be the main characters in this novel?
- What can you see pictured in the cover artwork, and what do you think is happening?
- What do you predict is likely to happen in this story, and why do you think this?
- When Jess criticises Lois, she tells Elizabeth that “It’s not mean if it’s true.” Elizabeth replies “That’s even meaner.” (p 6) Do you agree with Jessica or Elizabeth here? In small groups or as a class, discuss these two different viewpoints. Some things to consider in your discussion might be:
 - Why is Jessica criticising Lois?
 - Is there any benefit to anyone that comes from Jessica’s criticism?
 - Can Lois help being unathletic and always coming last?
 - How would Lois feel if Jessica said these things to her face?
 - In every game or competitive activity someone always has to come last—using Jessica’s logic should we avoid and mock them for this?
 - How does it feel when someone criticises you for something you have no control over?
 - Is it worse when someone makes fun of you for something you say, think, wear or do; or is it worse if they make fun of you for something that never happened or isn’t true?
 - Why does Elizabeth think that Jessica’s criticisms being true make her words meaner than if it was all made up?
 - What could Jessica have said or done instead, that still would have let Elizabeth know that Jessica is uninterested in being friends with Lois, while managing to not be hurtful or mean?
- Can you tell the twins apart by just looking at them at the beginning of the book when they dress in the same outfits all the time? If so, how? As a class, discuss all the different clues in the illustrations that differentiate one twin from the other in spite of their identical features and outfits. What, in your opinion, do these differences tell us about each of the two girls?
 - Why do you think the twins always dress the same as each other at the start of the novel? Would you want to always dress exactly the same as someone else? Why/why not?
- If you went to Sweet Valley Middle School, would you rather spend time with Elizabeth, or with Jessica? Why would you choose this twin over the other?
- Elizabeth and her friends are very excited about being allowed to create a class newspaper. Elizabeth spends a lot of time trying to come up with good ideas for the different columns that their newspaper might have. What columns would you like to see in a class newspaper for your year group or class? Write down a list of as many different columns that you think would be interesting to read.
- Create a class or year group, a newspaper of your own. As a class, discuss the ideas for columns that you came up with in the previous exercise, and use these suggestions to help you come up with a final master list of columns for you to include in your newspaper. In small groups, take responsibility for creating one of the columns from your list. Assign each group member a specific role in the column creation, such as interviewer, researcher, writer, proofreader/editor, photographer, graphic design, etc. Combine all the different columns into a class paper, and publish it either digitally or in print. Share your paper with friends and family so they know what is going on in your class’s daily life at school this year.
- When Jessica decides to dress differently to Elizabeth, she doesn’t let Elizabeth know she is going to do this, but instead surprises her. Why do you think that Elizabeth is deeply upset by this? How does Jess deciding to dress differently, and her decision to not tell Elizabeth in advance make Elizabeth feel? In pairs or small groups, discuss how someone surprising you with something like this would make you feel. What could Jessica have done differently to save Elizabeth from feeling so hurt—and how might Elizabeth have reacted had Jessica given her more warning?
- At the end of their first day dressed differently from each other, Elizabeth has come to realise that not looking exactly

like her sister in every way also has its good points. How does she feel now compared to when Jessica first surprised her? What are the upsides of looking different that she can now appreciate?

- How has Jessica and Elizabeth's habit of dressing identically affected their classmates over the years?
- When the Unicorn Club insists that Elizabeth's Pledge should be to play a trick on Lois, and humiliate her in public, Elizabeth refuses. Jessica is furious at Elizabeth, saying that "It's just a little joke! Everyone will laugh!" Do you agree with Jessica that it is just a joke, or with Elizabeth that it is mean? Discuss whether everyone else laughing, makes it OK to play a prank on someone else.
- When Lois and Elizabeth make the Unicorn Club victims of the same prank they played on Lois, Janet and the others don't find it funny at all. Why do you think they are so angry and upset over a prank that they designed in the first instance? Is Elizabeth and her friends' behaviour in playing the prank different from what the Unicorn Club did to Lois? Why/why not and in what way? As a class, discuss how turning the tables and imagining yourself as the victim of a joke can be a good way to tell if something is actually funny or if it is just cruel.
- What are some of the important things that Jessica and Elizabeth have learnt over the course of the novel, about themselves, each other and their friends. In small groups, discuss the important lessons that life has given them, and make a list of at least five different things learnt by characters in the novel, supporting each of your listed items with evidence from the text.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE