

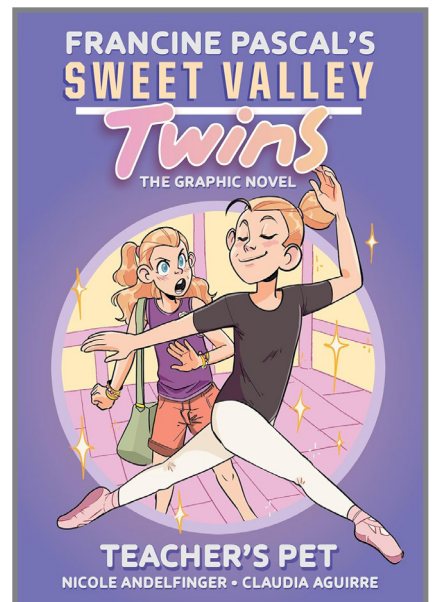
Teacher's Pet (Sweet Valley Twins)

AUTHORS

NICOLE ANDELFINGER AND FRANCINE PASCAL

ILLUSTRATOR

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SCIS: 5482687

ISBN: 9781761523915

RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Primary

SYNOPSIS

Jessica knows she's the better dancer—but their teacher only seems to have eyes for her sister Elizabeth! No matter how hard or perfectly she dances she's not getting recognised—which becomes a huge problem when it becomes clear that her sister is going to get the main role of Swanilda instead of her. Even worse, Elizabeth refuses to believe that their teacher is favouring her! With Jessica's attitude rapidly souring and Elizabeth slowly realising that Jessica might actually be right, will they be able to find a way to get Jessica her leading role?

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. Cofounder 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—either the originals or the graphic novels?
 - What can you see happening on the cover of this novel?
 - Who do you predict the main characters will be—and why do you predict this?
 - What does it mean when we say that someone is a 'Teacher's Pet'?
 - What type of teacher do you think the title is referring to? Why do you think this?

- As a class, discuss whether you think that Madame André actually is playing favourites. What evidence is there in the text that supports your assertion?
- How does Jessica feel at various points throughout the novel, and how is this reflected in her behaviour?
 - Choose three different scenes in the novel, with Jessica feeling a different emotion in each scene. Write a short list for each scene of the ways that the reader is being shown what emotion Jessica is feeling. As a class, discuss all the different scenes that everyone chose, and compare the contents of your lists with each other. Are there any commonalities between lists and scenes? As a class create a short-list of the most effective ways that the author and illustrator use to show a character's emotional state over the course of the novel.
- If you were going to create a graphic novel, what are some of the different ways that you could show what the emotional state of a character was in any given scene? As a class, think of as many different emotional reactions or states as you can, and create a class 'feelings list' based on your brainstorming session. Individually choose one of the emotional states/feelings from the list, and then use the class short-list from the previous activity to help you draw and caption an emotion-filled scene of your own featuring a fictional character of your choice. Your work should be approximately four panels in length, with dialogue appropriate to a graphic novel format.
- What was the event in the novel that surprised you the most? Why were you surprised by it, and how did the author craft the story so as to minimise the chances of a reader guessing what might happen in advance?
- Were you surprised when Elizabeth pretended that she had hurt her ankle to give Jessica the chance to dance? What were the key events leading up to this scene that, in your opinion, helped contribute to this decision of Elizabeth's? What were the things that other people both said and did that finally convinced Elizabeth that Jessica wasn't just jealous, but actually had a genuine complaint when she claimed that Madame André was playing favourites unfairly?
- How did the author and illustrator convey to the reader that Jessica might be jealous, but she also had a valid complaint? What were the instances where Elizabeth's final decision was foreshadowed? Why does this type of 'hint' make the denouement more satisfying to the reader? In small groups, discuss all the hints that you remember noticing over the course of the entire novel that led to you understanding what was really going on. Make a group list and compare your final list to those made by the other groups in your class. Who had the longest list, how many items were on it, and does everyone agree that each item on the list was an actual hint or is it only obvious in retrospect once you already know what is happening?
- Why did Elizabeth not just ask Jessica to swap places with her—why did she feel the need to pretend to everyone, including her twin, that she had hurt herself and couldn't perform the role?
- If you were going to dance in a recital, would you rather have the lead role, just like both Elizabeth and Jessica were wanting, would you prefer to be cast as an unmoving doll like Amy hoped for, or would you wish for something in between? Write a brief explanation of which role you would audition for and why, then illustrate it with a picture of you in that role.
- Elizabeth and Jessica might be identical twins who both like dancing, but they are also very different from each other in a lot of ways. In pairs or small groups, list as many of the differences they have as you can think of. Use evidence from the text to support your assertions, and share your completed list with the class.
- When we talk about someone being a teacher's pet, or a teacher playing favourites, we often focus on how unfair it is for everyone else. But in *Teacher's Pet* we can clearly see that it is not just the unfavoured students who suffer, but that it also has a negative impact on the favoured student or 'pet'. Why is it important that a teacher not play favourites or act as if they have a 'pet' student? What is the effect on the other students, and what is the negative effect on the favoured student? As a class, discuss all the negative effects Madame André's unthinking favouritism had on both Jessica and Elizabeth, and the different ways that she could have behaved to ensure that she wasn't unwittingly playing favourites amongst her students.
- Jessica always stands next to Amy, in the hopes that the difference between them will help Madame André realise that Jessica is also good at dancing, and it is not just Elizabeth who can shine. Does this work? Why/why not? What does Elizabeth think about Jessica's habit of always being next to the worst student in the class?
- Being jealous of someone else feels absolutely awful, but it is also a natural human emotion, and we all feel it sometimes. What are some things we can say to ourselves when we notice ourselves feeling jealous of someone else, that can help us cope with this negative emotion and move on in a more positive state of mind? As a class,

brainstorm and create a list of positive self-talk phrases we can all use to help ourselves overcome this negative emotional response. In small groups or pairs, choose some of the phrases brainstormed in the class discussion, and use them to help you create a poster about dealing with feeling jealous. Display your finished posters around the classroom or school, so that everyone can benefit from your hard work.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE