

Choosing Sides (Sweet Valley Twins)

AUTHORS

FRANCINE PASCAL AND NICOLE ANDELFINGER

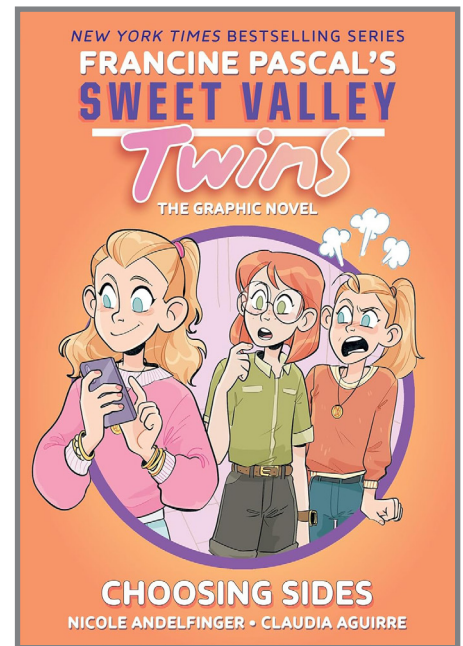
ILLUSTRATOR

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SYNOPSIS

Jessica and Elizabeth have always been inseparable twins, but starting middle school brings about a whole new set of rules! Elizabeth's best friend, Amy, can't wait to try out for the Unicorn Club's cheer squad. Elizabeth is worried. What if the Unicorns steal Amy away from her? Then, Elizabeth hears a horrible rumour: Jessica and the rest of the Unicorns don't even want Amy. In fact, they'll do anything to keep her off the squad!

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*.

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, look closely at the cover and title, and discuss:
 - What can you see happening on the cover of the story?
 - Who has read any of the other Sweet Valley Twins graphic novels?
 - What do you know about the main characters in this story?
 - What can you tell about the characters in the story from the cover artwork?
 - What does it mean when we talk about 'choosing sides'? What do you think 'choosing sides' might mean in the context of this story, and why do you think this?
- When Jessica is practising for the Booster Club tryouts, she spends quite a bit of time and effort thinking of new and

catchy cheers to encourage the school teams. In pairs or small groups, think up a rhyming cheer for your school, or your school house, to use at sports carnivals or other events.

- Watch some video footage of American College cheerleading routines or competitions. How similar is what you see in these videos to the routines that the characters in the book are practising and performing?
- As a class, discuss why you think Ms Langberg insisted that the Unicorns hold open auditions instead of just choosing their friends? Why is it so problematic when membership of a school team, such as the Boosters, is chosen based purely on popularity?
- At the start of the book, Elizabeth is fretting about having to write an article about the Booster Club tryouts. If you had a student-run school newspaper like Elizabeth's, what sort of events and activities would you like to see articles about?
 - In small groups, choose one event or activity at your school, and write a brief newspaper article about it.
 - You will want to have photographs, interview quotes, and a summary of the entire event.
 - Your article can be about a large event such as an athletics carnival, something for a single year group such as an excursion, or a class-wide event such as a specific art or science lesson or series of lessons.
 - When writing your article, remember to answer the journalists' list of 'w' questions, telling the reader 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why' and 'how'.
- Why did Bruce start a rumour that Elizabeth and Ken were dating? What did he feel that he had to gain from spreading something like this?
 - When Bruce spread a rumour that Ken and Lizzie were dating, Lizzie's reaction was to tell people the truth if they asked, but to otherwise ignore it. Jess, on the other hand, thought that Lizzie should invest a lot of time making sure that as many people as possible knew it wasn't true. Which approach to nasty rumours do you think is the more sensible and mature?
- Why do you think that Jessica cares so much about whether other people are popular? Why is she so upset that Lizzie is spending time hanging out with Ken? Do you think that this type of attitude and behaviour is acceptable or mature? Why/why not?
- Why do the Unicorns want to make sure that Amy isn't on the Boosters? What does this type of attitude say about them as people?
- When the Unicorns try to embarrass Amy by insisting that she do a cheer for Ken, they are surprised by the fact that Amy doesn't appear the least bit embarrassed, while Bruce is surprised by the fact that seeing and hearing Amy's cheer inspires Ken to ignore his nerves and play his best game. As a class, discuss how sometimes refusing to be embarrassed is the best way to handle an embarrassing situation. Include in your discussion an acknowledgement that it is not always easy to not be embarrassed, and share with each other your ideas for ways to use positive self-talk.
- Hold an all-class basketball game and cheer session. Divide your class into two halves, and have each member rotate through both cheering and playing for their side. Afterwards, discuss what it felt like to play while being cheered on actively, and which role was the most tiring.
- In the trials, the Unicorns say that anyone who drops their pom-poms will be instantly out of the running for a spot in the Booster Club. How difficult do you think it would be to not drop your pom-poms? When Amy does her final cheer, she combines throwing her pom-poms high in the air while she does a cartwheel and a flip. How tricky do you think this might be?
 - Individually, make yourself a set of pompoms, using thin strips of coloured paper, taped together at one end to create a handle.
 - As a class, hold a sudden death pompom catch-and-toss elimination competition. You don't have to do the same acrobatics as Amy did, much simpler steps, while tossing your pom-poms up and catching them after, should be challenging enough.
 - Each student should take turns leading the rest of the class in a simple cheer step, combined with a toss and catch of their pom-poms. Everyone who drops a pom-pom is instantly eliminated just like in the Booster Club tryouts.
 - After the competition, write a reflection piece on the activity, discussing what you enjoyed, what aspects you found the most challenging, and what you think could be done differently to make it a more enjoyable activity.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

RAE CARLYLE

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