

Sunshine

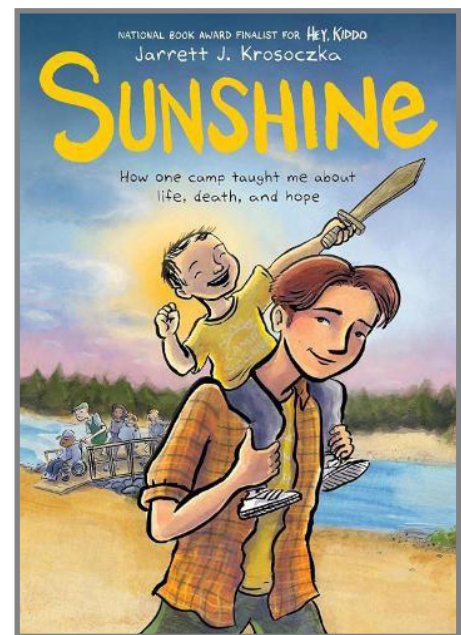
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

JARRETT J. KROSOCZKA

SCIS: 5368461

ISBN: 9781338356311

RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Secondary
(Language)



SYNOPSIS

When Jarrett J. Krosoczka was in high school, he was part of a program that sent students to be counsellors at a camp for seriously ill kids and their families. Going into it, Jarrett was worried: Wouldn't it be depressing, to be around kids facing such a serious struggle? Wouldn't it be grim?

But instead of the shadow of death, Jarrett found something else at Camp Sunshine: the hope and determination that gets people through the most troubled of times. Not only was he subject to some of the usual rituals that come with being a camp counsellor (wilderness challenges, spooky campfire stories, an extremely stinky mascot costume), but he also got a chance to meet some extraordinary kids facing extraordinary circumstances. He learned about the captivity of illness, for sure but he also learned about the freedom a safe space can bring.

Now, in his follow-up to the National Book Award finalist *Hey, Kiddo*, Jarrett brings readers back to Camp Sunshine so we can meet the campers and fellow counsellors who changed the course of his life.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Jarrett J. Krosoczka is a *New York Times* bestselling author, a two-time winner of the Children's Choice Book Award for the Third to Fourth Grade Book of the Year, an Eisner award nominee, and the author and/or illustrator of more than 30 books for young readers. His critically acclaimed graphic novel memoir *Hey, Kiddo* was a National Book Award Finalist. His work includes several picture books, select volumes of *Star Wars: Jedi Academy*, the *Lunch Lady* graphic novels, and the *Platypus Police Squad* novel series. Jarrett has given two TED Talks, both of which have been curated to the main page of TED.com and have collectively accrued more than two million views online. He is also the host of *The Book Report with JJK* on SiriusXM's Kids Place Live, a weekly segment celebrating books, authors and reading. Jarrett lives in Western Massachusetts with his wife and children, and their pugs, Ralph and Frank.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What can you see happening on the front cover of this book?
 - What does the writing on the front cover tell us about the contents of this story?
 - Has anyone read *Hey, Kiddo* by the same author? If so, what was it about and what happened in it?
 - Read the back cover of the book. What do you think that the story might be about now?
 - How do you predict reading this book might make you feel?

- What sorts of things do you envision happening in this book?
- What topics do you think that the author might address in this story?
- Read the descriptions of the six student volunteers at the start of the book. If you had to describe yourself in one or two sentences, like these teenagers have been described, how would you sum yourself up? In pairs or small groups discuss what characteristics, interests and personal quirks would best paint a brief but accurate picture of you for others to understand a little about what sort of person you are, how you act, and what your interests are.
- When Jarrett discovers that he will be helping Diego, he wonders 'What could I even offer?'. What are some things that he 'does' offer over the course of his week at camp? What are some of the things that the camping experience offers him?
- Jarrett says 'There is just something about a body of water that can bring you inner peace'. Go on a trip to a body of natural water near where you live. It might be a stream, creek, river, lake or the ocean. If you live where there is no open water around, visit another open natural site, with long sight-lines and a wide vista. Spend twenty minutes to half an hour sitting silently looking at the view, without electronics, chatting or other distractions. You might like to sketch some of what you see, or just spend the time visiting with your own thoughts. Once you return to class, write a piece reflecting on your experience, and how sitting and looking at a natural landscape without other distractions made you feel.
- What was the most difficult thing for Jarrett to cope with at camp? Why do you think that this was the hardest part for him? If you went to somewhere like Camp Sunshine, what do you think would be the most challenging part of the experience for you and why?
- Jarrett is amazed to discover that he is not the only kid on the camp counsellor team from his high school who has an unconventional home life. Why do you think that he thought he was the only one whose parents weren't there for him, and how did it affect him when he realised that he wasn't?
- Ross doubted his ability to climb the tower, but at the end he managed it. How do you think he felt afterwards? What clues are in the text and artwork that share how he was feeling? Write an account of the tower climb from the point of view of Ross, that shares both his misgivings, and his feelings of accomplishment afterwards.
- Why was a pedal boat so difficult for Jarrett to manoeuvre back to shore? Do you think that Diego chose that type of boat specifically because they are difficult, or do you think he might have had a different reason? What could his reasons for that choice have been?
- Reread the text on pp 104 and 105. As a class, discuss what it would have felt like for the kids attending Camp Sunshine to feel that they didn't stand out for once in their lives. Some things you might like to talk about during your discussion could be:
 - How does it feel when you think that you are different from everyone else and don't fit in?
 - What must it be like to not be able to join in with most of the common activities that other kids take for granted?
 - What are some of the ways we can help make people feel included and valuable when they can't manage a mainstream activity independently?
 - Can you think of any times in your life when you have felt excluded or on the outside, and when someone has helped you?
 - How does feeling different impact someone's sense of self-worth and self-confidence?
 - Camp Sunshine was created with the intent to help sick kids and their families have a chance at the types of fun that they normally missed out on. Are there any camps, events or organisations that aim to do this type of thing in your local area?
- Volunteer with a local organisation to help improve the lives of others in some way. It might be helping out at a Christmas party for children with disabilities, volunteering at a local community centre, or visiting elderly people in aged care who don't have family nearby. As a class, talk about all the different organisations and places that you can think of that aim to help others, and what sort of impact they can have for both individuals and the community they live in.
- Make up a scary campfire tale of your own. Set it in your local area, and aim to have it be both vaguely plausible, and utterly terrifying! You can present your story as a two to four page comic strip format, written out in full, or as an audio or video recording of you telling it.

- Listen to the song that the campers performed on the last night. How does it make you feel to listen to it? How do you think it made everyone feel to hear the group of teenage campers perform it?
- Write a reflection on your experience of reading *Sunshine*, and your emotional response to the different scenes in the story. Include in your piece how the story made you feel, which character's situation had the greatest emotional impact on you, and what types of things reading this book made you think about.
- Jarrett loves to draw, and during his time at camp draws pictures for both himself, and for the campers. Create an artwork inspired by *Sunshine* that you feel conveys something of the message that the story has had for you.
- Read the Author's Note, and as a class, discuss how much of the author's life has been shared with us through this book, and how much of an impact the stories he has told in it have had on your class.