

## Second Reaction: Sometimes We Are What We Imagine

Buckley, Michael. *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show*. New York: Abrams, 2012

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As I read *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show* by Michael Buckley for the first time, I was struck by how engaging it was. Graphic novels had always seemed, at least in my mind, to be popular with avid readers of comics. As I began to read about Kel Gilligan, I found myself enjoying how his adventures drew me into the story. While reading, I wasn't merely a reader; I was also a part of Kel's antics and his adventures. I particularly enjoyed the extent to which the book was able to make personal connections between the reader and the main character.

I believe that this book is a phenomenal read for all ages, but I think it's particularly useful in helping young readers find joy in reading. While reading this book to my nephew, he commented on how the book was "like real life." Many books don't have characters who "speak" to the audience. He was much more engaged in this book because it was far more personal to him than text-based or traditional narratives. Young readers often have difficulty understanding voice in traditional narratives, but in *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show* the visual format emphasizes and reveals the main character's personality. Using graphic novels with young children is a great way to help students begin to process words without too much confusion. The plot is easy to understand since it is depicted in pictures

While reading the book for the second time, my nephew pointed out that you can see Kel's bottom a couple of times. Granted, it's on the page describing how Kel has used the potty on his own and also the page when he takes a bath. However, it's probably important

as a teacher to be very mindful about the images in books available in your classroom so that you can be ready for student observations and comments. Nonetheless, I enjoyed how the book was able to tell Kel's story. Creative thinking is an important skill to develop, and while this book might be considered a fun book, it does reinforce expressive storytelling and how to tell stories with enthusiasm.

Since *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show* is told as if Kel is speaking directly to the reader, it could be effectively shared as an expressive read aloud. If read dramatically and with a good story voice, the book could please and engage both children and adults.

The theme of this book is rather simple. The story is all about a boy who is telling the thrilling and daring events of his life in a very dramatic way even though they are what most of us would consider to be basic, everyday activities. It's important for young readers to engage with books, and this text allows children to do just that. Every child I know has eaten something they weren't thrilled about, dressed themselves, waited for a parent talking on the phone, taken a bath, and been afraid of the dark at some point or another in life. This book is about everyday things that children can relate to, yet it shows children that they can find fun ways to talk about the mundane.

Both of my nephews were delighted by the book and said that they absolutely loved the pictures. Throughout the book, the illustrations were creatively presented. On some pages it seemed as if the reader was looking into a video recording device. Also, its graphic nature expressed action well. The reader could tell what was going on in the book simply by looking at pictures. While reflecting on the book, I can now see how graphic novels could be a great tool in helping young readers engage with the texts that they read, and *Kel Gilligan's Daredevil Stunt Show* is no exception. This is a wonderful book that would serve as a great resource in helping young readers to grow in their love of literature.

### **About the Author**

**Andrea Puterbaugh** is a junior at Purdue University. She enjoys working with children and staying involved with activities on campus. She is on Purdue Crew and works with Spanish-speaking children who are learning English.