

EDUCATOR GUIDE

RABBIT CHASE

by Elizabeth LaPensée

illustrated by KC Oster

GENRE: Children's Fiction, Graphic Novel, Fantasy

THEMES: Indigenous Culture, Anishinaabe, Anishinaabemowin, nonbinary, gender, fantasy, sci-fi, technology, stereotypes

SUITABLE FOR: Grades 3–7, Ages 8–12

GUIDED READING LEVEL: Fountas and Pinnell V

LEXILE: 550L

COMMON CORE STANDARDS: RL.6.1.2.3.4.5.6.7.9

W.6.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,1e,2,2a,2b,2c,2d,2e,2f,3,3,3B,3C,3D,3E,4,5,6,7,8,9,9a,9b

SL6.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,2,3,4,5,6

L.6.6.1,1a,1b,1c,1D,1E,2,2a,2b,3,3a,3b,4,4a,4b,4c,4d,5,5a,5b,5c,6

SUMMARY:

Anishinaabe culture and storytelling meet *Alice in Wonderland* in this coming-of-age graphic novel that explores Indigenous and gender issues through a fresh yet familiar looking glass.

Aimée, a nonbinary Anishinaabe middle schooler, is on a class trip to offer gifts to Paayehnsag, the water spirits known to protect the land. While stories are told about the water spirits and the threat of the land being taken over for development, Aimée zones out, distracting themselves from the bullying and isolation they've experienced since expressing their nonbinary identity. When Aimée accidentally wanders off, they are transported to an alternate dimension populated by traditional Anishinaabe figures in a story inspired by *Alice in Wonderland*.

To gain the way back home, Aimée is called on to help Trickster by hunting down dark water spirits with guidance from Paayehnsag. On their journey, Aimée faces off with the land-grabbing Queen and her robotic guards and fights the dark water spirits against increasingly stacked odds. Illustrated by KC Oster with a modern take on their own Ojibwe style and cultural representation, *Rabbit Chase* is a story of self-discovery, community, and finding one's place in the world.

Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this educator guide are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select items from each part of the guided inquiry process that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Activities and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.

Before Reading the Book

These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

1. What does the term *bias* mean? What is the definition of discrimination? How do we see this demonstrated in the story, both from Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters in the story?
2. The main character, Aimée, identifies as nonbinary. Ask students to discuss what the gender binary means to them, and how some identities and expressions might not fit within the gender binary.
3. Ask students if they know the story of *Alice in Wonderland* and explain it if necessary.

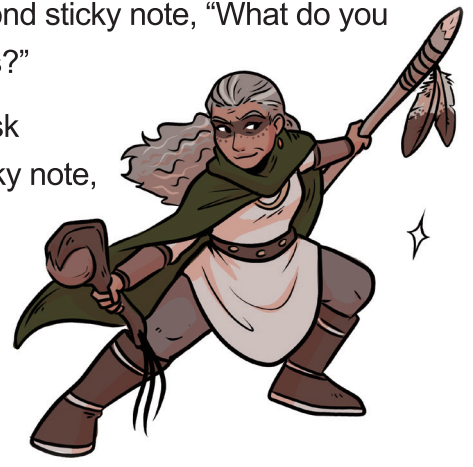
While Reading the Book

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers' reactions.

Chart paper class discussion activity:

Hand out three sticky notes and ask students to write their names on the back of each one so that the teacher knows who participated.

1. Ask students to answer the question on the front of their first sticky note, "What do you already know about Indigenous cultures and storytelling?"
2. Ask students to answer the question on the front of their second sticky note, "What do you want to know about beings in Anishinaabe culture and stories?"
3. After reading the first chapter, hand out sticky notes again. Ask students to answer the question on the front of their third sticky note, "What did you learn about Paayehnsag?"



KWL CHART: Assess what the students already know about Indigenous Peoples and cultures before engaging in this story. Fill the columns below with sticky notes and share with the class.

What do you already know?	What do you want to know?	What did you learn?

Ask students the following discussion questions:

1. What are some of the struggles Aimée has with their classmates?
2. Who is Jiibaayaaboos? What is his relationship to Nanaboozhoo? Why does he need help from Aimée?
3. What are some things you noticed in the illustrations that weren't in the text? How do the text and images work together in the book?
4. How does Aimée isolate themselves from others? Ask students why they think Aimée does this.
5. What is the first scene you notice in the story where the writer has drawn parallels to the story of *Alice in Wonderland*? What do you think are some of the similarities and differences between the two stories in these scenes?
6. How effective did you think drawing parallels to the story of *Alice in Wonderland* were in telling Aimée's story? Are there any other stories that you think might have worked better?

After Reading the Book

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.



Students will discuss the gender binary and how gender identity and expression can fall outside of this binary. Ask them to discuss how Aimée isolates themselves from their peers in the beginning of the book. What do students observe through the images and text, and why do they think Aimée might feel this way? What are their classmates like, and how might their comments be harmful? Do they think that Aimée feels more comfortable expressing their nonbinary identity by the end of the book, and what might have helped them feel that way?

1. What is the gender binary, and where have you seen examples of this (i.e. books, movies, tv, advertisements, etc.)
2. What do you think about the ways that Aimée’s teachers and classmates treat them?
3. What do we learn about Paayehnsag, and how does meeting the spirits affect Aimée?
4. Where is cultural knowledge being transferred from in the story?
5. What did you learn about Anishinaabe values?
6. What do certain characters in traditional Anishnaabe storytelling teach us?
7. What do you think leads to Aimée finally reaching out to their two classmates at the end of the book?



Extension Activities

These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the story and their own creativity.

1. Media Literacy

In viewing the panels of the graphic novels, what do the facial expressions reveal about the characters? Create a wheel of emotions the characters experience throughout the story and how those emotions are reflected in their facial expressions.

Students can re-examine the novel to assess how effective the elements of a graphic novel have been used, such as panels, gutter, speech balloons, captions, and framing in the telling of *Rabbit Chase*. Did the artist's use of foreground, background, and perspective add to the narrative?

2. Creating Empathy

Choose a supporting character from the story and create a comic that tells their story. What perspective will be represented? How does it differ from the perspective found in *Rabbit Chase*?

3. Graphic Novel Gallery

What other graphic novels have students read? What are the top qualities these favorites display? Have students bring their two top choices to class and place them on display, with a note for each novel that states what the student liked about the book.

