

Educator Discussion Guide

ALL'S FAIRE IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

By Victoria Jamieson

Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2019-20
Grade 6-8

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ABOUT THE BOOK

The fearless Imogene has survived swordfights, dragons, and the daily antics of an annoying little brother, but she faces her biggest challenge yet as she tries to survive middle school.

Home-schooled Imogene (Impy) has always gone to school set in the 16th century—her parents work at the Florida Renaissance Faire. Imogene is used to learning math by running the cash register at her mother's gift shop, learning English by watching Shakespeare performances, and trading gym class for sword fighting practice. And as for history, well, history is everywhere. At the Faire, Imogene is beloved by all, from the kingdom's beautiful princess to its dastardly Lord of the Dragons (aka Imogene's dad), and her handmade medieval boots are the envy of the kingdom. Imogene is in for major culture shock in the modern world where science teachers are more evil than any dragon she has ever seen, where the only shoes that won't get you laughed at are super-expensive Sammies, and where she has to constantly find ways to win her new "friend" Mika's approval. And she can't figure out how to tell if Mika even likes her or not. Imogene also isn't sure what to make of Anita, the smartest girl in school who *loves* the Renaissance Faire and is the best swordfighter Imogene has ever met. But just when Imogene thinks she is making a friend, Anita starts telling her that they shouldn't talk at school. As she watches her classmates constantly poke fun at Anita, Imogene starts to agree.

Imogene quickly learns that one of the most important tenets of middle school is fitting in—even if it means insulting her parents for being poor or making fun of Anita alongside the other students. To fit in Imogene believes she has to keep her Renaissance Faire life an absolute secret. Can Imogene balance all of this? Does the Imogene who fits in at school reflect the kind of person that Imogene truly wants to be? This beautifully illustrated, fast-paced graphic novel will ring true for anyone who has ever felt the need to take desperate measures to fit in, and especially for anyone who has ever battled the throes of middle school.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Victoria Jamieson has lived all over the world, including Florida, California, Australia, Canada and Italy, before finally settling with family in her birth state of Pennsylvania. After visiting Disney World at age twelve, she decided to become a professional animator. Once she graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design and the University of Sydney, she decided that she wanted to be an illustrator instead. She got a job as a book designer with HarperCollins Children's books in New York and later became a full-time writer. She is the author/illustrator of several

picture books, the *Great Pet Escape* series, and two graphic novels that she based on her own experience. She was inspired to write *Roller Girl* after being a member of the Rose City Rollers roller derby team in Portland, Oregon, and she based her latest book, *All's Faire in Middle School*, on her memories of volunteering at California's Bay Area Renaissance Festival in high school.

Biographical information taken from the author's website at

victoriajamieson.com

Accessed 1 October 2018 and

Publishers Weekly interview at

publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/74579-q-a-with-victoria-jamieson.html

Accessed 1 October 2018

BOOK AWARDS for *All's Faire in Middle School*

ALA Notable book

ALSC Notable Children's Books 2018

Boston Globe Best Children's Book

Capitol Choices 2018, Ten to Fourteen

Kirkus Reviews Best Books

Little Maverick Graphic Novel Reading List pick

Los Angeles Public Library Best of 2017

New York Public Library Notable Children's Book

New York Times Notable Children's Book

Publisher's Weekly Best Books of 2017

Southern Living Best Children's Books

VOYA Top Shelf Fiction for Middle School Readers

YALSA 2018 Best Graphic Novels for Teens

PREREADING ACTIVITIES

Exploring the Renaissance Era

Ask students what they know about the Renaissance period of history. Provide them with a basic definition/overview of the time period. (According to Wikipedia: "The Renaissance was a cultural movement that profoundly affected European intellectual life in the early modern period. Beginning in Italy, and spreading to the rest of Europe by the 16th century, its influence was felt in literature, philosophy, art, music, politics, science, religion, and other aspects of intellectual inquiry. Renaissance scholars employed the humanist method in study, and searched for realism and human emotion in art." Accessed 10/19/18).

Individually or in groups have students explore the Renaissance time period and write five facts about it.

Renaissance Festivals

Ask students if they have ever been to a Renaissance Festival. Invite them to share about their experience.

Students can explore the many Renaissance Festivals in the United States by visiting <http://www.therenlist.com/all-fairs>. The Louisiana Renaissance Festival is in Hammond each fall, <http://www.larf.net/>.

Individually or in groups ask students to explore information about Renaissance Festivals and write five things that they would be interested in seeing or experiencing at a Renaissance Festival.

Saint George and the Dragon

Discuss fairy tales and legends with students. Ask them what characteristics a legend has.

Have students read the story of Saint George and the Dragon, one version is accessible at <https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/stgeorge1.html> (students can read either online or from print handouts).

Only the top 1/3rd of the webpage is about the dragon. Discuss the story with your students. Make a class chart separating story elements that might be historical fact, and those that are probably myth.

Have students explore the legend and its cultural legacy by visiting

<http://projectbritain.com/stgeorge2.html>

Display this famous Raphael image of the story: <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.28.html>

Graphic vs. Print Novels

Discuss with students the differences between print and graphic novels (for instance, how print novels are all words while graphic novels use images too; how print novels are structured in sentences and graphic novels are one panel at a time; how print novels use dialogue tags and graphics do not). Show a short clip from a movie, (for example, this clip from the 2018 *A Wrinkle in Time*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7T-mKuWjOkA>). Have students write out as much of the scene as they can remember in prose form. Then show the scene again and have students recreate the scene in graphic-novel form. Discuss the differences, elements, and pros and cons of each format.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The book's prologue makes the story appear to take place in the 16th century instead of the present day. Why do you think the author decided to start the story this way? If you hadn't known anything about the book, would you have thought that this was a work of historical fiction? Why or why not?
2. After they start to become friends at the Faire, Anita tells Impy not to talk to her at school because if kids see them together, they might start bullying Impy too. Was Anita being a good or bad friend by suggesting this? Why?
3. When she gets caught after making cruel posters of Anita and Dr. M, Impy tells her parents, "I didn't *mean* to be mean!" and thinks, "How could I explain what had happened...when I didn't really understand it myself?" (p. 171). Why did Impy make the posters? What does she mean when she says that she doesn't understand why she did it? Can you relate to her confusion? Explain.
4. After she throws Tiffany into the lake, Impy says, "Have you ever done something, then instantly regretted it?" (p. 177). What does she mean? Why do you think Impy threw Tiffany into the lake in the first place? Was it really because she was annoyed with Felix, or was it something else?
5. After Impy throws Tiffany into the lake, Felix gives her the silent treatment, and she can't figure out how to apologize to him. What advice would you give Impy in this situation? Is there anything in particular that she should say to/do for Felix to make things up to him?
6. After Impy asks to return to being homeschooled, her mom says no. "You made the decision to go to school...your actions have consequences. And you have to face them." (p. 193). Do you agree with Impy's mom? Why or why not? What would you have said if you were Impy's mom? Would you have let Impy be homeschooled again or not?
7. Cussie tells Impy that the princess is the bravest character in the story of Saint George and the Dragon because she "volunteers to get eaten by a dragon" and that "*kindness* is the truest form of bravery" (p. 203). Do you agree with Cussie? Why or why not? In what ways does the princess at the Renaissance Faire exhibit kindness? How does Imogene learn from her example?

8. Did you predict that Sasha and Imogene would become friends by the end of the book? In what ways does Sasha treat Impy differently than Mika and Emily do? What are some examples of Sasha being a good friend to Impy?
9. The last line in the book, right after Imogene finally makes peace with her brother, is Imogene saying, “Hey look. We can see the stars” (248). What do you think the stars symbolize? Why couldn’t Imogene see them before that point in the story?
10. Graphic novels provide visual cues that traditional novels do not. In *All’s Faire in Middle School*, the characters’ expressions, not just their actions, provide context clues to what they are thinking or feeling. Give some examples of where readers can tell what people are thinking about Impy by their body language and facial expressions, instead of just their dialogue.
11. Not only is this book a graphic novel, but it is also told like a fairy tale, with a page of fairy-tale narrative at the start of each chapter. Why do you think the author chose to include these pages in the book? What effect do they have on the story?
12. Imogene’s journey through middle school is compared to a brave knight’s quest. Like a knight, Imogene has to face dragons, although hers are metaphorical. What kinds of dragons does she have to face? Does she succeed in defeating them? If so, how?
13. If you were a character in the Renaissance Faire, who would you be? The hermit like Cussie? The princess like Violet? The squire like Impy? The dragon? Someone else? Why?
14. Imagine that Impy’s family didn’t work at a Renaissance Faire and instead had “normal” jobs. Do you think she would still have trouble fitting in middle school? Why or why not?
15. If you were a character in the book, who do you think your friends would be, either at middle school or the Faire? What about those characters draws you to them?

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

English/Language Arts:

- Have students create their own graphic novel-style short story (roughly 20-30 panels). Discuss the basic elements of a story, such as plot, setting, and static/dynamic characters. Stories should have a beginning, rising action, climax, and falling action. Stick figures are welcome.
- Saint George and the Dragon is not the only popular legend that has been passed down over time. Have students research a legend and write a one-to two-paragraph summary to share with the class. Have students list several details of their legend that may be rooted in fact, and several that are likely myth. The following websites can be helpful in locating legends:
<http://teacher.scholastic.com/writewit/mff/myths.htm>
<http://www.history-for-kids.com/myths-and-legends.html>
<https://www.visitbritain.com/us/en/englands-most-spine-tingling-myths-and-legends>
<https://greekgodsandgoddesses.net/myths/>

History:

- Teach students about medieval weapons and fighting by showing the videos below. Discuss which features of fighting and weaponry are recognizable today and which have changed. What technology do we have to thank the Middle Ages for today? What modern innovations did medieval knights have to do without?
<https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/heavy-cavalry-of-the-middle-ages-video>
<https://www.history.com/topics/middle-ages/weapons-of-the-middle-ages-video>
- Following the lesson plan below, divide the class into lords, knights, serfs, and one monarch. Discuss the role and duties of each during the Middle Ages. Walk the class through the

provided “day in the life during the Middle Ages” script where each student must play his or her part. After the class has completed all tasks, have them complete the included worksheet. Discuss how they felt playing their assigned roles. What did they like, and what did they envy in their classmates’ roles? Ask them which role they think was the most important in the functioning of daily life, and which was most dispensable.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_LeBqE6KPRRb3RLUFM4NHNIME0/view

- Have students explore the following website to learn about life as a knight, especially knightly codes of conduct: <https://medievaleurope.mrdonn.org/chivalry.html>. Have them write several rules and responsibilities for knights. Discuss the concept of chivalry. Then, have students write their own knights’ codes.

<https://medievaleurope.mrdonn.org/lessonplans/knights.html>

Science/Math:

- Discuss the concepts of latitude, surface angle, and surface area. Have students perform a flashlight lab to simulate the Sun’s light where they will explore how the above factors affect differences in Earth’s temperature over time and space.

<http://lessonplanspage.com/sciencecisummerlatitudeangleofsunsolarenergy612-htm/>

- Show and discuss National Geographic’s video *Our Active Sun*. Next, have students visit the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory (SOHO) Movie Theater website and, using the images provided, track and plot a sunspot over at least four days. Have students use their plots to calculate the Sun’s rotation. Discuss with students why sunspots seem to move.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/our-active-sun/>

Art:

- Have students select a medieval artistic trade from the following list: Artist, Glassblower, Sculptor, Musician, Musical Instrument Maker, or Composer. They will research their trade’s famous artists, guilds they may have joined, significance, and venues for their art. They will also explore what technology or mathematical knowledge was available at the time to assist with their trade. Conclude by having students compare their medieval trade to its modern equivalent. What has stayed the same? What has changed?

<http://lessonplanspage.com/ssrenaissanceunithandoutartist8-htm/>

- Discuss the symbolism and significance of the elements of a medieval coat of arms. Have students design their own coat of arms for a knight’s shield based on those principles.

http://www.yourchildlearns.com/heraldry_activity.htm

Vocabulary:

Atrocious

Mingle

Emboldened

Slandorous

Scoundrel

Marauders

Spectacle

Terrain

Devote

Formidable

Imbecile

Tribulations

Enlightenment

Reprimand

Schmooze

Hermit

Zen

Personage

Trinket

RELATED WEBSITES

Florida Renaissance Festival

<http://www.ren-fest.com>

Be able to better imagine Imogene's world by exploring the events and activities of the real-life Florida Renaissance Festival.

Q&A with Victoria Jamieson

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/74579-q-a-with-victoria-jamieson.html>

Read an interview about how Victoria Jamieson became a graphic novelist and how she wrote *All's Faire in Middle School*.

Medieval Life and Times

<http://www.medieval-life-and-times.info>

From castles to jousting to food, learn about the history and culture of the Middle Ages.

The Amazing Middle Ages

<http://www.historyforkids.net/middle-ages.html>

Learn about medieval life, events, people, and warfare.

How Do You Make a Graphic Novel (and, Why Do They Take So Long?)

<https://goraina.com/how>

Learn how graphic novels are made in this step-by-step video and essay by bestselling graphic novelist Raina Telgemeier.

Florence at the Dawn of the Renaissance

<http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/florence/>

Check out some famous artwork from the beginning of the Renaissance era.