

Radical Fun Project: Stop Motion

Great things can happen when you combine iPads and LEGOs! Monroe County kids participated in our Radical Fun program and used these tools to create their own stop motion animation films.

Stop Motion is a magic filming technique that makes inanimate objects look like they are moving all by themselves. It's so simple, you can even make your own stop motion films at home!

What You'll Need:

- Smartphone or Tablet with Stop Motion app (We used Stop Motion Studio--it's free!)
- Something to prop your Smartphone or Tablet up
- LEGOs, Dolls, Action Figures--almost anything can be an 'actor' in your film!

What to Do:

- Prop up your smartphone or tablet so that you can take pictures without moving it. Stop Motion works best when you only move the objects you are filming.
- Place object (we used LEGOs) in front of your smartphone or tablet's camera.
- Take a photo with your Stop Motion app.
- Move the object just a *little*

bit.

- Take another photo.
- Repeat until you have as many photos as you need to complete your film's story.
- The Stop Motion app will put your photo sequence together in a rapid progression to make it appear like your objects are moving all by themselves!

Check out some of the films our Radical Fun kids made!

Posted by agalarza on
September 23, 2016

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Shadow Magic by Joshua Khan



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If you, dear reader, are ready for a scary, mysterious, and grim fantasy story about magic, necromancers, assassins, and enormous bats, *Shadow Magic* is the story for you. It manages to alter the traditional dichotomy of good and evil so often present in the

fantasy genre, creating a deeply compelling and entertaining tale. Khan's approach shifts and subverts expectations in delightful ways, illustrating that things are not, and should not be, as they seem. Because while the setting for the story is a land of sorcery, ghouls, zombies, ghosts and all of the traditional 'dark' magic, it is also a place of deep tradition, belief, and love. Children who like fantasy, scary stories, horror, zombies, and mystery will feel right at home in this spooky and fun story. Suggested for ages 10 and up.

The narrative weaves together the stories of Thorn, a boy far from home looking for his father, and Lilith Shadow, a young princess called upon to rule far too young. The perspectives and narrative style bounce between these two characters, showcasing the challenges and growth they undergo. Lilith begins as the ruler of Ghenna after the tragic death of her family and Thorn's story starts when he is sold to Tyburn, Ghenna's executioner, and taken to live in Ghenna at the palace and train as a squire. After an assassination attempt on Lilith, she and Thorn are thrown together, becoming friends. They dig into the mysteries of the castle, trace rumors about a necromancer of incredible power, discover why Lilith is forbidden from studying magic, and try to track down the would-be poisoner and Thorn's father. Along the way, they make friends in surprising places, find a gigantic, carnivorous bat named Hades,

and uncover shocking secrets about their families.

An exciting read that carves out a unique spot in the middle-grade fantasy genre, *Shadow Magic* should not be missed.

The story utilizes a dark tone and many gothic tropes, so the reader feels as though they are living in a permanent Halloween world. While this could easily become too tense, Khan's writing style and tone keep the dark moments of the story from becoming overwhelming, while not short-changing their impact. The occasional illustrations in the book also add to the effect, lending form to many of the tales more unnerving aspects. Overall, a fun romp through a delightfully dark fantasy world.

Posted by sott on July 30, 2016

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Princess Volume 1: Save Yourself



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Dragons, princesses, and

adventure oh my! Welcome to *Princeless: Save Yourself* by Jeremy Whitley, in which damsels are very much not in distress, but rather rescue themselves, shattering gender stereotypes and poking fun at genre tropes throughout.

Whitley has created a smart, incisive, and shockingly funny story that cuts deeply at the traditional conventions of fairy tales and fantasy. Whitley also manages to combat the whitewashing of the fantasy genre in this story as well, telling a diverse adventure tale involving characters of multiple ethnicities. While many stories would be bogged down by all of this stereotype smashing, Whitley's story soars, enthralling the reader and creating a dynamic story in the vein of *Brave* and *Frozen* that will appeal to both male and female readers. While there are instances of mild peril and brief bouts of comic violence, overall this story is one that will delight most readers. Suggested for children ages 9 and up who enjoy fantasy, fairy tales, humor, adventure, and characters who save themselves.

Our story begins, when the heroine, Princess Adrienne Ashe, decides she is tired of waiting to be rescued from her tower by a prince and convinces the dragon guarding her to aide in her escape. Once free, she decides to go on a quest in order to rescue her sisters, who have been squirreled away in towers of their own, accompanied by monstrous guardians. This drive fuels the story, and the subsequent three volumes in

the series, but there are many other adventures and mysteries along the way. As our young heroine works toward her goal, she makes friends with a young dwarf blacksmith, Bedelia, who forges her an actually effective suit of armor (after much debate about what counts as armor), and begins to establish a reputation as a warrior. Ever-present in the story though, are the machinations of her father, King Ashe, as he plays his own game and works to track the runaway princess down. Overall, an outstanding story that blends fantasy, fun, and adventure together into a delightful whole. The colors work together to create a vibrant story and the semi-cartoonish style keeps potentially tense moments light and adds additional humor to already comedic moments. As *Comics Alliance* said in their review, this is ?? the story Disney should've been telling for the past twenty years? and one can only hope that Whitley keeps producing these exceptional stories and showing that women can be adventurers, have pet dragons, defy stereotypes, and save themselves.

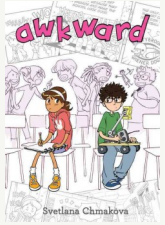
Posted by sott on May 19, 2016

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Awkward by Svetlana Chmakova



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Fans of *Sisters*, *Roller Girl*, and *El Deafo* will feel right at home in this story. A coming-of-age tale that deals realistically with bullying, anxiety, school drama, friendship, and forgiveness is hard to find, yet somehow *Awkward* author Svetlana Chmakova manages just that. This story grapples with the real trials that children face in school and avoids offering easy answers, but instead tackles overcoming anxiety to make friends, find forgiveness, and build bridges. These heavy issues are all balanced by a strong current of drama and humor throughout the story that will keep readers flying through the pages, eager to know what happens next. Suggested for children ages 9 and up who enjoy realistic stories about school.

The story begins with our heroine, Peppi, falling prey to social pressure on her first day of school and participating in the bullying of a fellow student, Jaime. The rest of the story is in many ways driven by her desire to find forgiveness and make things right. As the story progresses

throughout the school year, we watch Peppi try to reach out to Jaime and the ways in which anxiety and the social structures of school create barriers to this action.

Additionally, anxious and shy Peppi is heavily involved in the art club, while introverted Jaime is in the science club and the competition between the two clubs for a spot in the school fair forms an ever-present backdrop for the story. As these two characters find common ground with one another, their clubs seem to grow farther apart, creating issues not only for them, but also the school. Trying to balance these many issues and still have a good year in school would be hard for anyone, and watching these characters grapple with them is the crux of the story.

The artistic style is strongly reminiscent of anime and the colors create a hazy, dreamlike quality that helps draw readers into the story. Chmakova's story tackles how it feels to be introverted and anxious, but she is also tackling the issue of separation between science/math and the arts and how this creates a false dichotomy that does not fully embrace the skills and interests of students. Overall, it is amazing for how many issues Chmakova manages to bring to light and it should not be missed, a truly excellent school story for the introvert in us all.

Posted by sott on May 12, 2016

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Red's Planet by Eddie Pittman



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Fans of *Zita the Space Girl* will feel right at home in this charming graphic novel. While the bulk of the story takes place in space, featuring aliens, strange planets, and the loss of shoes, it is fundamentally a story about belonging and identity. While there are some scenes of peril that might be too much for more sensitive readers, this graphic novel tells an accessible and interesting story that will appeal to children ages 8 ? 12 who enjoy action, adventure, and science fiction. The story begins with our unnamed heroine, known only as Red, running away from her foster family only to be picked up by the police. However, before the police can take her home they are involved in a high-speed chase with a spaceship. Red ends up being mistakenly kidnapped and taken across the universe. There, she ends up in an auction hosted by an ancient creature known as the

Aquilari, who collects rare and valuable artifacts from across the universe, but before the reader can learn more the ship is attacked by space pirates and crashes onto a planet nobody, not even the aliens, is familiar with. On this seemingly desolate desert planet, Red must learn to bond with her traveling companions, avoid the tiny, disproportionately hungry wildlife, and find a way to survive.

Funny and disarming, this story is a lighthearted romp through space. The colors and illustrations are vivid and dynamic, drawing the reader through the story. Pittman has an eye for color and knows how to use the art to enhance and provide comic relief for his text. While the plotting does need to be evened out for the sequel and there are several moments where the story seems to lag, overall Pittman has crafted a story that engages readers and leaves them eager to know what happens next for our stranded heroine.

Posted by sott on May 12, 2016

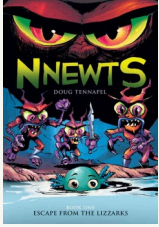
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Nnews:
Escape from
the Lizzarks
by Doug
TenNapel



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A war between amphibians and lizards, with humor, magic, and villains with mustaches. All of these elements can be found in *NNewts*, which introduces readers to a new series featuring a clash between amphibians, the Nnewts, and their scaly counterparts, the Lizzarks. Told in rich and vibrant colors, this graphic novel tells a beautiful, humorous, heart wrenching, and charming story that will appeal to children 9 and up who enjoy tales of adventure and fantasy.

The series opens on a young NNewt, Herk, whose legs are underdeveloped, which forces him to spend his days in the family pond fighting imaginary monsters, until the day the Lizzarks, commanded by the Snake Lord, attack. Herk's family is killed in the assault and he is forced to flee through underground waterways to escape. These events start Herk's epic journey as he tries to find those responsible for the death of his family. On this quest, he meets the first Nnewt, Anthigar, in his ruined, watery kingdom and learns what really happened to his legs. Herk also learns that his village was not the only Nnewt settlement and that there are darker, more sinister forces at work and somehow he is at the center of these events. Herk

must look within and master new abilities if he is to save himself, the remaining NNewts, and defeat the evil Snake Lord.

Tennapel is grappling with many issues in this story, unabashedly dealing with death, purpose, and identity, but doing so in an accessible way. The artwork heavily relies on varying shades of green, red, purple, and orange to create a vivid and dynamic story that almost leaps off the page. While this tale does feature violence, it never veers too heavily into visual details and intersperses humor throughout to lighten the mood. This series quick space, vibrant colors, and engaging story could also draw in reluctant readers as they follow Herk's quest. While there are some elements of the plot that need fleshing out, overall this story is excellent and leaves the reader eager to read book two, *NNewts: The Rise of Herk*, available now.

Posted by sott on March 11, 2016

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