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ENGL 112B

Dr. Warner's

Newsprint by Ru Xu



(Image is taken from:

<https://www.themarysue.com/webcomic-spotlight-saint-for-rent-interview-with-writer-and-artist-ru-xu/amp/>)

Author Biography:

Ru Xu (<https://www.ruemxu.com>)

is a Chinese American novelist and graphic designer with her popular webtoon series called *Saint for Rent* that has been receiving back a huge amount of positive feedback. According to her Acknowledgments section in the graphic novel *Newsprint*, she talked about how her parents

worked hard for their children to be attending law school and med school, but they didn't protest when she wanted to go to art school. They allowed her to identify and choose what she truly wanted to do.



(Image is taken from <https://www.ruemxu.com/newsprints>)

Summary of *Newsprint*:

Blue is an orphan who lived dressed up as a boy to sell newspapers during war time. The society wanted all girls to be selling cookies yet Blue wanted to do what she truly think is right for her. During her journey, she started to meet new people who are also searching for an identity. Crow is a young boy who she befriends that is being kidnapped and turned into a war machine, she'll now try to find a way to save him.

Significant Quotes:

- “I don’t wanna take the chance that the guys won’t see me the same way anymore. But we’re all growing up, and they’re going to notice our differences sooner or later...I don’t want anything to change.”

During the very beginning of the novel, Blue admitted that she was having anxiety that one day the boys who she grew up with would distance themselves from her if they find out that she’s a girl. This quote is significant because although Blue understands that the job she is doing wasn't meant to be for her and to the world it’s unacceptable for a girl to do this job. Yet even when time is getting harder for her to hide her secret, she still wants to keep doing so because she believes in herself and what she wants to do.

- “Blue...I don’t want to be a war machine...Even if that’s what I was created to be...I want the freedom to choose!”

As Blue helped Crow escape and they flew away, he opened up to her about him wanting the freedom to choose as well. This quote is significant because just like Blue, he also has a hard time identifying himself and deciding what is his purpose in the world. And at the end, even when he was built as a war machine, he still simply wanted to decide for himself for once and become human. Showing that

- “We’ll get through this...you made a choice, and I’m gonna protect it...I promise.”

When Crow started to break down and was triggered by the missiles that were targeting him and Blue, she told him that she understood exactly how he felt and they would get through it. This quote is significant because it shows how Blue sees her past in Crow as she once also struggled with finding the right path for herself. She promised him that she’ll protect his wishes and help him become human once this is over.

Teaching with Newsprint:

- The best way to connect students to the theme of the novel is to ask about their plans for the future, questions that could keep them engaged with the concept of identifying who they want to become, and is there anything that wouldn't allow them to do so.
- Having students selecting the roles they want to read in the novel and recreates the sequences inside the classroom. This would not only keep the performers but also the audience to focus on the events happening in the book much more energetically.
- Another activity that would keep the readers engaged with the graphic novel is to draw out their future selves in 10 years and explain why they think that is how they'd eventually look. This allows the students to identify their potential future and give themselves a purpose to follow that goal.

Complexity:

- **Dale-Chall Readability Index**

Raw score 3.1723

Adjusted Score: $(3.6365 + 3.1723)$

Final Score: 6.8

Grade level: Grades 7 - 8

- **Lexile Complexity Test**

1010L - 1200L

“Upper-Level Indicators are provided for text with Lexile measures of 660L or above and are based on two factors: word frequency and sentence length. These factors have been shown to be reliable predictors of how difficult a text is to comprehend.” (Lexile)

Suggest an age range of 8-10

While the Lexile Complexity test varied on the chosen passage length and language, the Dale-Chall Readability Index was the most accurate (in my opinion) of assessing the novel. Although the dialogues are quite short between each character, the vocabulary is much more diverse with terms that more familiar to late middle school and early high school level audience.

Adolescents in the Search for Meaning:

- Chapter Four: Books about Real-Life Experiences

Blue and Crow represent an example of young adults who are lost in the world without guidance and are still hesitant with what they want to do with their futures. Social norms and family expectations also set the tone for the children to feel pressured to pursue those standards. This novel encourages readers to be themselves and always believe in their decisions even if the world doubted them.

- Chapter Five: Books about Facing Death and Loss

These young adults in *Newsprint* were born during war time and have lost their families before they even realize. As Blue lost her family and lived independently with other folks who also suffered the same fate, she understood what Crow was going through and gave him the hope that he will gain more than losing as time goes. These are the experiences that would help young readers to understand losing isn't always the end, but eventually, it will be the force that reassurance them for the better.

Why Teens Should Read This:

The novel is a buffet of nonstop actions and decision-making for the protagonist, the graphic is extremely appealing to young adults and overall a great read. Teenagers should read this book because young adults often are still in the search of finding out what their main goals in life are and whether they should invest in a certain choice or not. The protagonist Blue is a symbol of

hope and showing that it's perfectly okay to believe in yourself and choose to do what you want to rather than being molded by the social norms and expectations. While Crow was created for a purpose, he was still trying to escape and one day could finally make decisions for himself. For those who are still questioning if they should choose a certain career path to please their family expectations, to be in the same social status as their peers, the book is a message that allows you to be who you want to be and the one who decides your future, are you.

More From Ru Xu:

(Summaries are taken from the author websites)

- *Saint for Rent*

“Saint runs an inn for Time Travelers, which leaves him little time to write his trashy romance novels. Always a pit stop in the crisscrossing lives of his out-of-date friends and family, Saint wonders where his place is in a world that is quickly passing him by.

Unfortunately, he also seems to attract more... supernatural “guests,” too.”

<https://www.saintforrent.com/comic/the-cloverhouse-inn>

- *Aldric's Letter Brigade*

“Two university besties become sworn enemies as Outlaw and Sheriff!

Or not?

How long can they keep this ruse going before their tyrannical princess wises up to their scam?

It's a Robin Hood meets The Princess Bride sort of story.”

<https://www.ruemxu.com/alb>