



Babymouse: Our Hero and Queen of the World!

Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm

Teacher's Guide

Written By Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.

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On Teaching Babymouse

Teaching graphic novels can be challenging because the story is conveyed through pictures as well as words. Therefore, when reading a graphic novel, students must study both the visuals and the text to understand the story. In conventional texts, in contrast, the visuals simply add additional information. As a result, the visuals are not integral to the narrative. Students trained to scan text only may find the interlocking genres difficult to navigate.

Further, not all students will have read a graphic novel before and thus are likely to not understand how the pictures work with the text to tell the story. To make it easier for students to read the text and get the most from it, suggest that they follow this three step process as they read:

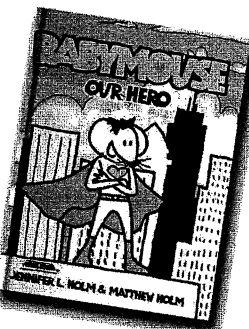
- scan the pictures on each spread (a *spread* is two facing pages);
- read the text on the spread;
- study the pictures and text together.

The last time I taught a graphic novel in a high school class, I introduced the literature by presenting the following background about this exciting genre. You may wish to share this background with your students as well.

There is nothing new or revolutionary about telling stories in pictures; indeed, from prehistoric days, people have told their stories in visual formats. This is evident in the ancient cave paintings discovered in Spain and France as well as the hieroglyphics of ancient Egypt.

In the past, the privilege of literacy was reserved for the small group of wealthy people, those who had both the learning and leisure to devote to text. Poor people learned non-verbal information through visuals such as drawings, religious paintings, and cartoons. With the rise of the vast middle class in the Industrial Age, literacy spread and text began to supplant visuals as a means of information and entertainment. Nonetheless, visuals did not disappear from text, especially in humor periodicals. One of the most outstanding examples is *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Benjamin Franklin's famous compendium of wit and wisdom.

Then came inexpensive paperback novels featuring sensational adventure and mystery stories. These novels earned the nickname "penny dreadfuls" for their low cost (ten cents) and melodramatic content. Often set in the Wild West, these books popularized men like Davy Crockett and Buffalo Bill. They also conveyed the American values of self-reliance, persistence, and hard work and furthered the "American Dream" of success.



Some historians date the beginning of graphic novels as we know them today to 1842, with the publication of Rodolphe Toffler's *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck*. Published in the weekly humor magazine *Brother Jonathan*, this novel traces the adventures of an eponymous young man and his love. The *Yellow Kid*, the first successfully merchandised comic strip, appeared in 1895. Created by Richard Outcault, the *Yellow Kid* was so popular that it increased newspaper sales. Two years later, the Hearst Syndicate published the first collected edition of *Yellow Kid* cartoons in book form. Many historians consider this best-selling collection of comics the first financially successful graphic novel.

Named for the cheap pulp paper they were printed on, the "pulp" appeared in the 1920s. These broadly-drawn sensationalized war stories, westerns, and science fiction were designed for male readers. In 1933, M.C. Gaines created the first comic book, *New Funnies*, by reprinting a series of daily comic strips. That same year, Humor Publications printed the first all original comic book, *Detective Dan*. The genre took off in 1938 with the publication of *Action Comics #1*, which marked the debut of Siegel and Schuster's iconic hero Superman.

Superman ushered in the comic industry's so-called Golden Age. This period was characterized by comic books featuring a vast array of costumed heroes, detectives, and cowboys. Comic books flourished during World War II by providing cheap escapist entertainment, especially to soldiers. By the 1950s, however, comic books took a back seat to television. A growing concern with graphic horror and crime comics also contributed to a decline in sales. In an attempt to recapture their audience, publishers toned down the lurid visuals and story lines, licensing Western and TV stars as subjects. Nonetheless, in America, comics were soon relegated to children's bookshelves. This was not the case in many other countries.

In Japan, Manga comics appeared, first as individual issues, then as graphic novels. This concept also became popular in France. In 1930, Belgian artist Herge created *Tintin*, an adventure story of a boy and his dog. The first graphic comic, *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets*, proved highly popular. All told, Herge produced 24 *Tintin* graphic comics. Other major Belgian graphic novel series include *Asterix The Gaul* by Goscinny and Uderzo and *Peyo's The Smurfs*, one of the best-known graphic novels of all time.

In America, underground comics began to appear in the mid-sixties. Self-published to avoid the strict restrictions that the comic industry had imposed on itself to attract a wider readership, the underground comics often dealt with sexual themes and drug-related culture as well as social satires on the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement.

In America, comic books had always been sold largely through "mom-and-pop" candy and convenience stores. During the late 1970s and early 80s, however, comic publishers began to sell to the

direct market, specialized stores that sold mainly comic books and related merchandise. This direct market allowed comic writers and artists to target their audiences very specifically. In 1978, Marvel Comics produced the first original mass-market trade paperback graphic novel, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *The Silver Surfer*. Later that year, Eclipse Comics issued Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy Sabre's *Sabre*, a science-fiction adventure graphic novel. Will Eisner, Wendy and Richard Pini, and Alan Moore helped bring respectability to the new marketing effort.

Art Spiegelman gave the genre a huge boost in 1991 with *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, the biographical story of his parents' experience during the Holocaust. In 1992, *Maus* was awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Dan Clowes (*Ghost World*) and Harvey Pekar (*American Splendor*) have had their graphic novels turned into motion pictures, bringing the graphic novel to the attention of a wider mainstream audience. Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* series has been especially successful.

Today, graphic novels are becoming increasingly important to comic book publishing, as sales of traditional comic books remain stagnant or even decline. The popularity of the graphic novel seems assured, especially as traditional forms of texts decline, a phenomena experienced most notably by literary novels. Graphic novels are becoming mainstream literature.

Synopsis

Overview

Babymouse: Our Hero and *Babymouse: Queen of the World* are part of a series. Both graphic novels describe the adventures of Babymouse, a young mouse with a big imagination. Readers follows her adventures at school with her best friend Wilson the Weasel and her arch-enemy, mean and catty Felicia Furrypaws.

BABYMOUSE: OUR HERO!

The alarm clock awakens Babymouse at 7:45 a.m. Although it's a beautiful day, Babymouse is unwilling to get out of bed. She hears a parent calling her name to awaken her and imagines that she is receiving a major award—the pink heart—for showing courage in the face of danger, exhibiting

great heroism, and taking out the garbage without being asked. Fireworks explode as crowds salute her. Babymouse jumps on her bed in glee.

Because she misses the bus, Babymouse has to walk to school, which seems to her to be the same as trekking through a desert. Then she imagines that she is crossing the country with some 19th century pioneers. Babymouse finally reaches the school and readers realize that she has walked only two blocks.

Babymouse sees school as a daily battle between good and evil. Her best friend Wilson is a cool weasel. Felicia Furrypaws, the perfect popular girl, stands for evil. Babymouse fights with her locker as it eats her homework and burps at her. When she cannot produce her homework, the teacher, a hippo, refuses to accept Babymouse's excuse.

Babymouse likens math class to prison. The illustrations show her being convicted and sentenced to the crime of fractions. Her daring escape plan is interrupted when the teacher asks the class to turn to page 6 in their workbooks. The teacher sends Babymouse to the board, but she is unable to solve the problem.

The rest of the day is not much better. Lunch, science, music, art, and are all a disaster. Gym is especially bad, as Babymouse has forgotten her sneakers yet again. The teacher, an alligator, intimidates her. The teacher announces that they will play dodgeball next week. In contrast to her failures in school, Babymouse recalls that she is skilled at many things. These include avoiding chores, playing, sleeping, and eating cupcakes. However, Babymouse is not good at dodgeball. In a flashback, Babymouse remembers the game where Felicia, an excellent player, slammed Babymouse with the ball over and over. Babymouse had managed to avoid dodgeball until now.

Wilson consoles Babymouse by saying that practice might help. That afternoon, Wilson practices with her. She imagines they are in the Army, enduring a grueling basic training. Babymouse imagines herself as SuperBabymouse. Despite the extra practice with Wilson, Babymouse is unable to become skilled at playing dodgeball. She worries about it for an entire week and hopes that a great natural disaster will prevent the game from taking

place. Finally, the day of the big game dawns.

Riding to school on the bus that morning, Babymouse imagines herself walking the plank on a pirate ship. She makes her last will and testament, says farewell to her locker, and eats her last meal. Ironically, the game is a tremendous success, as Babymouse whacks Felicia with the ball while scoring the winning shot. Felicia had slammed Wilson with the ball. This act of cruelty gave Babymouse the courage and determination to fight back. Everyone proclaims her a hero. Later, Felicia takes her revenge by stuffing Babymouse in her locker. Babymouse imagines the ticker-tape parade she will receive for her great dodgeball game.

BABYMOUSE: QUEEN OF THE WORLD

Babymouse awakens to face the same daily routine. She wants glamour but gets chores, especially having to deal with an annoying little brother. She expects to be Queen of the World, but everyone knows that Felicia Furrypaws is the real queen of the world. Babymouse is happy that she has her best friend Wilson the Weasel. Babymouse recalls how they have been friends from kindergarten until the present, third grade. At school, as she tries to open her locker, Babymouse imagines their epic battle has become a movie, *Babymouse vs. the Squid*.

In math class, Felicia asks Babymouse to pass a note, and Babymouse imagines that she runs a detective agency. The teacher catches Babymouse passing the note and sends her to the principal's office. Lunch is a disaster as well. Felicia announces that she is having a slumber party, and Babymouse wonders if she will be invited. She imagines herself as Cinderella, transformed by her Fairy Godweasel Wilson into a glamorous mouse.

It seems like everyone is invited to the slumber party – everyone but Babymouse, that is. The next day, Babymouse imagines that her locker has become a black hole and swallowed her invitation to the slumber party. Babymouse plots a way to get an invitation to Felicia's slumber party. Then a way appears: Felicia asks Babymouse for her book report. In exchange, Felicia invites Babymouse to her slumber party. Babymouse prepares for the big event very carefully. That night, she arrives at the party.

Babymouse is shocked that the party is so boring: all the guests do is talk. She imagines herself as Wild "Baby" Mouse in the Old West. Back to reality, Babymouse tries to curl her hair but drops the curling iron on the carpet. She flings nail polish all over the room. Felicia shows a romantic movie, but Babymouse finds it very boring. Babymouse imagines Felicia as Felicia-Stein, a horrible monster. Felicia orders Babymouse to make more popcorn. Meanwhile, Wilson is sad that Babymouse has found another best friend.

Babymouse realizes that she is already a queen because she gives orders, not takes them. She dumps the buttery popcorn on Felicia's head and trudges in the rain to Wilson's house. They have a grand time watching a horror movie and Babymouse enjoys being Queen of the World.

Timeline of Milestones in Education

- 1635** The first Latin Grammar School (the Roxbury Latin School) is established.
The first "free school" in Virginia opens.
- 1636** Harvard College, the first higher education institution in the New World, established in Cambridge, MA.
- 1642** The Massachusetts Bay School Law is passed, requiring parents to make sure their children know the principles of religion and the laws of the commonwealth.
- 1647** The Massachusetts Law of 1647 is passed, requiring that every town of at least 50 families hire a schoolmaster to teach the children to read and write, and that all towns of at least 100 families should have a Latin grammar school master who will prepare students to attend Harvard College.
- 1690** The first *New England Primer* is printed in Boston. It becomes the most widely-used schoolbook in New England.
- 1751** Franklin helps to establish the first "English Academy" in Philadelphia. The academy later becomes the University of Pennsylvania.
- 1779** Jefferson proposes a two-track educational system, with different tracks for "the laboring and the learned."
- 1785** Noah Webster writes *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*: a spelling book, a grammar book, and a reader. They become very widely used throughout the United States.
- 1817** The Connecticut Asylum at Hartford for the Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons opens. It is the first permanent school for the deaf in the U.S.
- 1821** The first public high school, Boston English High School, opens.
- 1827** Massachusetts passes a law requiring towns of more than 500 families to have a public high school open to all students.
- 1829** The New England Asylum for the Blind, now the Perkins School for the Blind, opens in MA, becoming the first school in the U.S. for children with visual disabilities.
- 1836** The first of William Holmes McGuffey's readers is published.
- 1837** Mount Holyoke Female Seminary opens. It is the first college for women in the U.S.
- 1839** The first state funded school specifically for teacher education (then known as "normal" schools) opens in Lexington, Massachusetts.
- 1848** Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feebleminded Youth, the first school of its kind in the U.S., opens.
- 1851** The New York State Asylum for Idiots opens.
- 1852** Massachusetts enacts the first mandatory school attendance law.
- 1856** The first kindergarten in the U.S. is started in Watertown, Wisconsin.
- 1857** The National Teachers Association (now the National Education Association) is founded.
- 1862** The First Morrill Act donates public lands to states, the sale of which will be used for the "endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the

- mechanic arts, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.”
- 1864** Gallaudet University, the first college specifically for deaf students, opens.
- 1881** Booker T. Washington becomes the first principal of the newly-opened normal school in Tuskegee, Alabama, now Tuskegee University.
- 1890** The Second Morrill Act is enacted, providing for the “more complete endowment and support of the colleges through the sale of public lands.” Part of this funding leads to the creation of 16 black colleges.
- 1916** The Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale becomes a widely-used individual intelligence test, and along with it, the concept of the intelligence quotient (IQ) is created.
- 1916** The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is founded.
- 1919** All states have laws providing funds for transporting children to school.
- 1926** The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) is first administered.
- 1944** The G.I. Bill signed. Nearly 8 million World War II veterans take advantage of the G.I. Bill during the seven years benefits are offered. More than two million attend colleges or universities.
- 1952** Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1952 modifies the G.I. Bill for veterans of the Korean War.
- 1954** *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, ruling that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”
- 1957** Federal troops enforce integration in Little Rock, Arkansas.
- 1963** Samuel A. Kirk uses the term “learning disability” at a Chicago conference on children with perceptual disorders. The term sticks, and in 1964, the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, now the Learning Disabilities Association of America, is formed. Today, more than one-half of all students in the U.S. who receive special education have been diagnosed as having learning disabilities.
- 1964** The Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion or national origin.
- 1965** The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed, providing federal funds to help low-income students. This results in educational programs such as Title I, Head Start, and bilingual education.
- 1966** The Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act of 1966 provides educational benefits for Vietnam veterans.
- 1971** Federal court rules that students with mental retardation are entitled to a free public education.
- 1972** Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 becomes law, prohibiting discrimination based on sex in all aspects of education.
- 1975** The Education of All Handicapped Children Act passed, requiring a free, appropriate public education, suited to the student’s individual needs, be offered in the least restrictive setting.
- 1990** The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is passed, mandating transition services and adds autism and traumatic brain injury to the eligibility list.
- 2001** No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) becomes law, holding schools accountable for student achievement levels. The Act provides penalties for schools that do not make adequate yearly progress toward meeting the goals of NCLB.
- 2004** The Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act reauthorizes and modifies IDEA.

Author Sketch

Matthew Holm and Jennifer Holm are siblings. Matthew Holm is a graphic designer and freelance writer. Jennifer is the author of several highly-acclaimed young adult novels, including the Newbery Honor Book *Our Only May Amelia*.

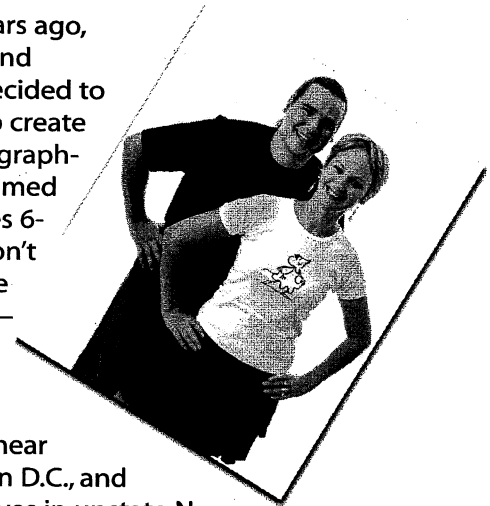
Matthew and Jennifer are part of a large family: six children, all boys except for Jennifer. Jennifer recalls doing everything her brothers did: playing softball and kickball, climbing trees, engaging in spitting contests, and swimming in the creek. Their father was a pediatrician; their mother, a pediatric nurse. The family started in California and then relocated to Whidbey Island in the Puget Sound. Next, they moved to Audubon, Pennsylvania, where Matthew and Jennifer spent most of their childhood.

Jennifer was a bookish child. She noted in an interview: "One of our neighbors said recently that his clearest memory of me as a child was watching me rake the lawn one-handed while I read a book with the other!" Both she and her brother were also interested in comics from an early age. "My brothers and I would fight over the big color funny section of the Sunday newspaper," she noted. "I still love comic books and graphic novels and I think reading them has helped make me a better writer," she concluded.

Jennifer matriculated at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where her interest in writing for publication began. After graduation, Jennifer moved to New York City where she became a broadcast producer of television commercials and music videos for clients including Nickelodeon, MTV, and American Express.

Although she enjoyed her marketing career, Jennifer felt the tug toward writing. "My father's stories of the family farm in Naselle, Washington, intrigued me," she said, "and so when a family member sent me a photocopy of a diary kept by my great aunt, Alice Amelia Holm, when she was a young girl, I got the spark. May Amelia and the Jackson family were born." Jennifer used this material as the basis of her first novel *Our Only May Amelia*. The novel's tremendous success — it was named a Newbery Honor book — allowed Jennifer to become a full-time freelance writer.

Several years ago, Matthew and Jennifer decided to team up to create a series of graphic novels aimed at girls ages 6-11. They don't live in close proximity—Jennifer lives in Fallston, Maryland, near Washington D.C., and Matthew lives in upstate New York. Nonetheless, they work together well.



Matthew explains how the series came about. "My sister has been writing young adult novels for years, and I've been a writer for *Country Living*, but I've always done cartooning on the side. Jenny was into comics, but comic books for girls are generally pretty bad. You've either got the Amazonian woman such as Wonderwoman, where she's all sexualized, or you've got the girl going gaga over a boy. When we were growing up, our grandmother's dog was called Babymouse. Jenny thought it would be a cute name for a character, and naturally enough, it would be an actual mouse, not a dog."

Jennifer and Matthew first tried to sell their concept on 2001, but publishers preferred graphic novels aimed at boys. Finally, an editor at Random House saw the potential and *Babymouse* was published. The Holms have since expanded it into a series.

Jennifer and her husband Jonathan Hamel recently collaborated on a series called *The Stink Files* about a British international cat of mystery.



“That’s great! She looks so cool!” Students are likely to have the same reaction as they identify with the underdog, Babymouse. Reviews bear out the popularity of the *Babymouse* series.

The amazon.com reviewer noted: “Readers will love Babymouse’s vivid imagination—an empty locker becomes a black hole that sucks her into space, a boring party becomes a Wild West adventure—and the clever illustrations and hilarious storyline of brother-sister team Matthew and Jennifer Holm.” *School Library Journal* critic Sadie Mattox was equally enthusiastic, noting: “In both books, the hilarious black-and-white illustrations are splashed with pink. Babymouse has a distinct voice and is a real charmer.”

Critic's Corner

Graphic novels are just now getting a toehold in school curricula. Art Spiegelman’s Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novels *Maus I* (1986) and *Maus II* (1991) paved the way because of their high quality and deadly serious subject matter, the Holocaust. Nonetheless, parents may find it difficult to accept that you are teaching “comic books” rather than classic literature. Complicating the issue is the fact that the *Babymouse* books are light entertainment rather than serious literature.

However, the *Babymouse* books provide an excellent way to engage reluctant or ill-prepared readers, especially young girls. In an interview in *The Bookseller*, Matthew Holm explained: “The novels seem to have pretty broad appeal. We show them to our friends in their 20s and 30s and they’re like,

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Mattox, Sadie. *The School Library Journal*. January, 2005.
www.jenniferholm.com (Jennifer Holm’s official website)

Other Works by the Authors

Jennifer Holm

- Our Only May Amelia*, 1999
Boston Jane, 2004
Penny from Heaven, 2006

Matthew Holm and Jennifer Holm

- Babymouse: Rock Star*, 2006
Babymouse: Beach Babe, 2006
Babymouse: Heartbreaker, 2006

Jennifer Holm and Jonathan Hamel
The Stink Files, Dossier 001, 2004
The Stink Files, Dossier 002, 2004
The Stink Files, Dossier 003, 2005

General Objectives

1. To understand the conventions of a graphic novel
2. To compare and contrast a graphic novel and a traditional text
3. To analyze the relationship between text and images in comics
4. To evaluate the literary significance of the graphic novel format
5. To decipher visual metaphors
6. To follow the story line
7. To discuss stereotypes
8. To explore the authors' use of color
9. To identify with the main characters
10. To appreciate the authors' wit

Specific Objectives

1. To distinguish Babymouse's flights of imagination from reality
2. To comment on the Holms' use of animals to represent people
3. To understand the symbolic significance of each animal
4. To identify with Babymouse
5. To decide if Babymouse is indeed heroic
6. To analyze the authors' use of humor
7. To decide what the color pink represents
8. To analyze the relationship between Babymouse and Wilson
9. To root for the underdog
10. To decide how the two graphic novels are similar

Literary/Visual Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of *Babymouse*, present the following terms and applications:

Color Scheme The *Babymouse* books are black, white, and pink. Pink is used to emphasize key points, making these elements and pages pop from the rest of the narrative. For example, in both books, hearts are colored pink. The authors use the hearts to represent Babymouse and readers come to associate this symbol with her. In addition, pink

is used to distinguish the fantasy scenes from the realistic ones. In *Babymouse Queen of the World*, page 85, for instance, readers see Babymouse on her throne. This is one of her fantasies, and the page is almost completely pink.

Directional Movement directs the reader's eye. In conventional English text, for instance, the directional movement is left to right, top to bottom. In Hebrew text, in contrast, the directional movement is right to left, top to bottom. In a graphic novel, directional movement is determined by the way the panels are ordered. This order guides the reader through the narrative. In the *Babymouse* books, the directional movement varies. Most panels are ordered horizontally from left to right, but others are arranged vertically or in a circle. The directional movement is guided by the placement of word balloons, visual alignment of text, arrows, relative size of panels, spacing of panels, frames, and other visual markers.

Humor parts of a story that are funny. Humor can be created through exaggeration, irony, sarcasm, and word play, for instance. Jennifer and Matthew Holm create humor in the *Babymouse* books chiefly through exaggeration and irony. Babymouse often exaggerates the forces arrayed against her, resulting in wild flights of fantasy. In addition, it is ironic that she wins the dodgeball game, when readers had been expecting her to lose ignominiously.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Graphic Novels

Auster and Lloyd, *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*
Gaiman, *Sandman*, volumes 1-10
Hergé, *The Adventures of Tintin*
Miller, *Dark Knight Returns*
Moore and Gibbons, *Watchmen*
Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*
Winick, *Teen Titans/Outsiders: The Insiders*

Novels

Stephanie Calmenson, *The Frog Principal*
Miriam Cohen, *Will I Have a Friend?*
Doreen Cronin, *Diary of a Spider*
Karen Hesse, *Come on Rain*
Derek Munson, *Enemy Pie*
Nikolai Popov, *Why?*
Cynthia Rylant, *The Old Woman Who Named Things*
E.B. White, *Charlotte's Web*

E.B. White, *The Trumpet of the Swan*
Jane Yolen, *Commander Toad and the Intergalactic Spy*
Jane Yolen, *Commander Toad in Space*

Internet

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my.voyager.net/sraiteri/graphicnovels.htm
Comics Links: Graphic Novels for Librarians
my.voyager.net/~sraiteri/comicslinks.htm
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Chin, *Writing and Illustrating the Graphic Novel: Everything You Need to Know to Create Great Graphic Works*
Gertler and Leiber, *The Complete Idiots Guide to Creating a Graphic Novel*
Gravett, *Manga, 60 Years of Japanese Comics*
Gravett, *Graphic Novels: Everything You Need to Know*
Weiner, *The 101 Best Graphic Novels*

Video/Films

The Adventures of Milo and Otis
Air Bud
Babe
The Bear
That Darn Cat
Free Willy
Homeward Bound: The Incredible Journey
Iron Will
Mouse Hunt
Shiloh
Shrek

Themes and Motifs

Themes

- animals
- exaggeration
- friendship
- hearts
- imagination
- lockers
- pink
- mathematics
- scale
- school

Motifs

- feeling small and insignificant
- exaggerating your feelings
- cherishing a close friend
- wanting to be part of the popular crowd
- escaping a painful reality through a vivid imagination
- fighting with your locker
- being humiliated in class
- struggling in mathematics
- being excluded from a party
- struggling in school

Meaning Study

Below are significant portions of text. Explain each in context. Page numbers pinpoint each so that you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

BABYMOUSE: OUR HERO!

1. "Babymouse! Babymouse!" (p. 13)
(Here, Babymouse imagines herself receiving the Pink Heart, a great award granted for various acts of bravery: showing courage in the face of danger, exhibiting heroism, and taking out the garbage without being asked. This event shows two of the novel's characteristic motifs: flights of imagination to escape from reality and sly humor. Babymouse, like James Thurber's iconic character Walter Mitty, escapes from painful realities by imagining herself as a great hero. And like Thurber, the Holms inject sly humor into the narrative. We see this in the juxtaposition of elevated heroism with taking out the garbage.)

2. But you only live two blocks away. (p. 24)
(Babymouse complains to her best friend Wilson the weasel that she missed the bus and thus had a really long walk to school. Wilson points out that Babymouse lives only a short distance from school. This serves as a punch line for the entire joke, set up on the previous pages.)

3. (p. 27)
(This scene, a single panel that fills the entire page, shows the authors' wild exaggeration to create humor. The scene shows a huge pink tongue emerging from Babymouse's locker, the result of the locker burping. Readers are apt to find this rude humor very entertaining.)

4. But there was one thing she wasn't good at...DODGEBALL!! (p. 42)
(This page sets up the novel's primary conflict: Babymouse vs. dodgeball. Felicia, in contrast to Babymouse, is an excellent player and had humiliated Babymouse during a previous dodgeball game. This incident has colored Babymouse's entire life. Readers not skilled at team sports are likely to share her fear as well as her desire to be part of the popular crowd by excelling at sports.)

5. Meow! The day was won! (p. 89)
(Despite Wilson's efforts to teach Babymouse how to play dodgeball, she appears to have no skill whatsoever. Thus, it is both surprising and gratifying when Babymouse grabs the ball and smacks Felicia on the head with it to avenge Felicia having hurt Wilson during the game. This incident shows the importance of friendship and the triumph of the underdog. It makes Babymouse the hero and wins her the day. Even though Felicia later locks Babymouse in her locker, Babymouse is undaunted: she imagines herself as the recipient of a ticker-tape parade, Wilson at her side.)

BABYMOUSE: QUEEN OF THE WORLD

1. Well, maybe just a few (p. 15)
(When the novel opens, Babymouse reviews all her obligations and her boring routine. She claims that with all these obligations pressing on her, she does not have a lot of expectations. As this ironic panel shows, she has very high expectations indeed: she wants to be queen of

the world. She imagines herself decked out as queen, adorned with a tiara and relieved of homework. She gets to eat ice cream for lunch and has lovely straight whiskers, too. The Holms tap into a primal dream: everyone has at one time or another imagined themselves as royalty, free and feted.)

2. Felicia Furrypaws. (p. 17)
(Unfortunately for Babymouse, the school already has a queen: Felicia Furrypaws. Felicia has everything that Babymouse covets, including respect, popularity, and straight whiskers. As a result, Babymouse yearns to be Felicia, but is willing to settle for being assistant queen.)

3. A slumber party? Babymouse wondered if she would be invited. (p. 33)
(When Felicia tenders invitations to her slumber party, Babymouse yearns to be a part of it. She imagines herself as Cinderella, transformed into her true royal self and recognized as someone special. Slumber parties, of course, are among the ultimate symbols of acceptance among pre-teen and teenage girls. Babymouse is not invited to the party, but does manage to wrangle an invitation by giving Felicia her homework, a book report.)

4. I can't wait. (p. 60)
(Babymouse is in a frenzy of anticipation. Surely the slumber party will be the most exciting day of her life. It will be a magical, wondrous evening. To her astonishment, Babymouse discovers that the slumber party is boring.)

5. Yep! Dump! (p. 88)
(When Felicia gives Babymouse an order to make more popcorn, Babymouse realizes that she does not have to take orders from Felicia. Babymouse realizes that she is already a queen. Empowered, she dumps the popcorn over Felicia and walks out of the party straight to Wilson's home. Babymouse has come to understand that Wilson is her true friend, and that she does not have to remake herself to suit others.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations and panels from the graphic novels. Unless specified, the question refers to both volumes

Interpretation

1. How does each animal symbolize the person or type that it represents?

(Babymouse is shown as a mouse because mice are small, powerless, and insignificant. This mirrors her social status at home and at school, especially because she is a young child. Further, by making her a "baby" mouse, the authors make her even more powerless. Felicia is a cat, the mouse's traditional enemy. Cats have a great advantage over mice, which the authors emphasize. The teachers are large and fearsome. The coach, for instance, is an alligator. The math teacher is a hippo. Both can easily harm a tiny mouse.)

Structure

2. Discuss the two narrative layers in the novels. *(There are two narrative threads in each book: reality and fantasy. Reality describes the actual events. Fantasy shows how Babymouse imagines these events and her escape from them.)*

Character

3. Which character did you find most admirable? Why? *(Students are apt to admire Wilson the most because he is a loyal and non-judgmental friend. For example, he helps Babymouse learn to play dodgeball and welcomes her after she leaves the slumber party, even though she had earlier rejected him.)*

Character Development

4. How does Babymouse change in *Babymouse Queen of the World*? *(At the beginning of the book, she craves acceptance by the popular girls, lead by Felicia Furrypaws. She even gives Felicia her book report to gain an invitation to Felicia's slumber party. By the end of the novel, however, Babymouse comes to realize that she does not have to defer to Felicia and her friends because her life is already*

great. She is already a queen and queens give orders rather than take them.)

Author Method

5. Describe the stereotypes in both novels. *(Babymouse is the stereotype of the beleaguered little child who craves acceptance and fears her environment. Wilson represents the loyal friend; Felicia, the queen bee. The teachers are stereotypes for the powerful and mysterious forces that oppress students.)*

Motivation

6. Why does Babymouse want to be invited to Felicia's slumber party? *(Babymouse believes that if she becomes Felicia's friend and a member of Felicia's inner circle, she will become self-assured, popular, and powerful. Babymouse comes to see that Felicia and her friends are shallow, bossy, and catty, and that she is far better off not being associated with them.)*

Language

7. Analyze the novels' unconventional punctuation and language. *(Both novels use the conventions of comic book punctuation and language, which are often not the conventions of Standard Written English. For instance, the authors use multiple exclamation points instead of just one, as is accepted in Standard Written English. The authors also use the diction common in comics, such as the words "whoosh!" (p. 53), "bleah!" (p. 5), and "blah blah!" (p. 61). Last, they use unconventional spellings, such as "creeaak" for "creak" and "rruummble" for "rumble" (both from p. 53), drawing out the letters to create humor.)*

Color

8. How is pink used in the novels? *(Pink is the primary color in the fantasy sequences, where it takes over in a giant pink wash. Thus, it serves as a marker for the fantasy sequences.)*

Text and Image

9. How are the words and pictures intertwined to tell the story? *(Generally, the words represent speech while the pictures describe the action. However, the visuals never merely echo the words. Rather, the visuals*

set the mood and create humor through exaggeration. Thus, students should conclude that the words and pictures work together to tell the story.)

Symbols

10. Analyze the different uses of the heart symbol.

(The heart is used on the simplest level to enclose the page numbers. Next, it is used to stand for Babymouse herself, as it appears on her clothing.)

Across the Curriculum

Art

1. Design a new cover for either *Babymouse* book. Use color, shape, and graphics to capture the novel's main themes.
2. Using desktop or other publishing media, construct a timeline of a typical day for Babymouse. Include at least six events.
3. Design an invitation for Felicia's slumber party.
4. Extending the animal metaphor in this novel, draw animal characters for other people whom Babymouse is likely to encounter in her daily life. These might include fire fighters, police officers, postal carriers, librarians, and shopkeepers, for instance. Avoid stereotypes.

Cinema

1. Watch a film that has a mouse as its central character, such as *American Tale*, *Stuart Little*, *Rescuers Down Under*, or *Mouse Hunt*. Compare and contrast it to the *Babymouse* books. Based on your analysis, decide if Babymouse is a realistic character.
2. Create your own short film based on *Babymouse*. Use one of the adventures in either book, adapting the dialogue and action to your new script.
3. Create a flip book by photocopying or redrawing some of the cartoons in either *Babymouse* book.
4. Imagine that you were casting a *Babymouse* movie. List the real-life actors who would play Babymouse, Wilson, and Felicia. Justify your choices.

5. Reread page 66 and explain the cinematic allusion.

Composition

1. The *Babymouse* books were designed for a young female audience. In a composition, analyze the elements that appeal to girls and those that appeal to boys. Based on your analysis, decide whether or not these books have universal appeal.
2. In *Babymouse: Queen of the World*, Babymouse obtains an invitation to Felicia's slumber party by giving Felicia her book report to hand in as her own. Write a book report on a novel or nonfiction book that you especially enjoyed.
3. In *Babymouse: Our Hero*, Babymouse lists the things that she is good at. Make two list of your skills. On the first list, describe your amusing skills, such as defying gravity, sleeping, and skating the perfect figure four. On the second list, describe your serious skills, such as helping your younger siblings get ready for school. Include at least five items on each list.
4. At the end of each novel, Babymouse emerges victorious. Rewrite the ending of either novel to show that she did not succeed.

Drama/Debate

1. Matthew Holm claims: "Babymouse is a fairly typical kid, a little bit on the bookish side." With a classmate, debate this issue. Is Babymouse like you and your friends or not?
2. With a friend, role-play a scene in which Babymouse and Felicia meet 25 years in the future. Are they friendly to each other or still bitter enemies?
3. With a friend, perform a humorous skit showing how to get your locker open. Imagine that your locker, like Babymouse's locker, is both alive and predatory.
4. Try Babymouse in a mock court on the charge of not showing her work when she does her math homework.

Geography

1. Babymouse imagines herself trekking with the pioneers. On a map, show one or more of the most popular trails the pioneers took as they headed west in the 19th century.
2. Babymouse imagines herself as Queen of the World. Find out which countries still have queens. Locate each country on a world map. Include at least three countries.

History

1. Create a webpage for graphic novels. On your webpage, define the term "graphic novel," provide examples, and explain how the *Babymouse* books are typical of the genre.
2. In *Babymouse Our Hero*, Babymouse imagines herself receiving a ticker-tape parade. Research the history of ticker-tape parades and list at least five people or groups who have been granted this honor.
3. Trace the history of the Tudors in England. Include at least two famous Tudor queens.
4. In *Babymouse Our Hero*, Babymouse becomes a hero because she scores the winning shot in the dodgeball game. Choose a real-life person who you admire and explain what makes this person a hero. Consider someone of recognized historical stature, such as a world leader.

Journalism

1. Propose your own new book in the *Babymouse* series. Using the same characters, draft a new plot.
2. Write a newspaper article about Babymouse's adventures in both books. Report the events factually, including specific details.
3. Write a review of either *Babymouse* book for the school newspaper. In your review, summarize the plot of the book without giving away the ending. Provide some background on graphic novels. Conclude with reasons why or why not people should read the book.
4. Interview a parent, guardian, or family friend about what school was like when they were your age. Consider Babymouse's feelings

about school. How has school changed over the years—or has it changed at all? Publish your reflections in the school newspaper.

Literature

1. Read "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" by James Thurber. Compare and contrast it to either *Babymouse* book.
2. Recast the novel using other animals.
3. Many people claim that graphic novels are attaining mainstream status, while other people argue that a comic book can never be considered true "literature." In an essay, chose a side in this debate and argue it, using specific examples from *Babymouse* to make your point.
4. Babymouse reads *The Red Badge of Courage* to help her summon up the courage to play dodgeball. Read the novel and explain why it would be a good choice to make her feel brave.

Mathematics

1. Babymouse finds fractions difficult. Define fractions and solve all the mathematical problems in *Babymouse Our Hero*.
2. The *Babymouse* books show the importance of athletics in American culture. Make a chart showing the five most popular spectator sports in America, from most to least important. Include statistics on the number of spectators who attend or watch each sport.
3. Design a new grading system for your school. Be ready to justify your scale.

Music

1. Write a song about one of Babymouse's fantasies. Share it with some classmates.
2. Choose a dramatic scene from either book. Then choose music that reinforces the mood. Read the scene aloud, playing the music in the background.
3. Write a theme song for a *Babymouse* television show.

Psychology

1. Analyze why Babymouse – and people like her— retreat into fantasy.
2. Explain the qualities or character traits that make someone a hero.
3. Analyze the appeal of fantasy heroes such as Superman or Batman. What role do these make-believe characters fulfill in our lives?
4. Design a gentle way to wake someone up in the morning or from a nap.
5. Explain what makes someone popular, as Felicia Furrypaws is.

Science

1. Babymouse’s gym teacher is an alligator or a crocodile. Describe the characteristics of each animal, including their size, shape, coloration, and habitat. Then explain how they are the same and different. Include sketches of each animal.
2. Babymouse’s math teacher is a hippo. Make a display that describes these animals. Include information about their weight, habitat, life span, and disposition. Based on this information, why do you think the Holms chose this animal to represent Babymouse’s math teacher?
3. Babymouse imagines that a hurricane or earthquake might save her from having to play dodgeball. Choose one of these natural events and explain its causes. Show your findings on a chart.
4. Babymouse imagines that fireworks are exploded in her honor. Find out how fireworks are made and exploded. Also include information on safety measures taken to ensure that no one in the vicinity of the blast is injured.

Speech

1. Give a lecture to the class explaining some ways that kids can make friends and fit into school.
2. Create two teams and demonstrate how to play dodgeball.
3. Read another book in the *Babymouse* series. In a speech, describe the common themes and motifs in all three books.
4. Babymouse tells her math teacher that her locker ate her homework. Create at least three new and equally ridiculous excuses for not handing in your homework. Have your classmates vote to decide which excuse is the most absurd.

Alternate Assessment

1. Examine the front cover of each *Babymouse* book. Explain what impressions the colors and art convey.
2. Predict what Babymouse’s life will be like when she is grown up.
3. Analyze the role of adults in the *Babymouse* books. What influence do they have? How do they help teach and protect their children—if at all.

Babymouse: Our Hero

Vocabulary

Complete the crossword puzzle with the following words from *Babymouse Our Hero*.

Word Box

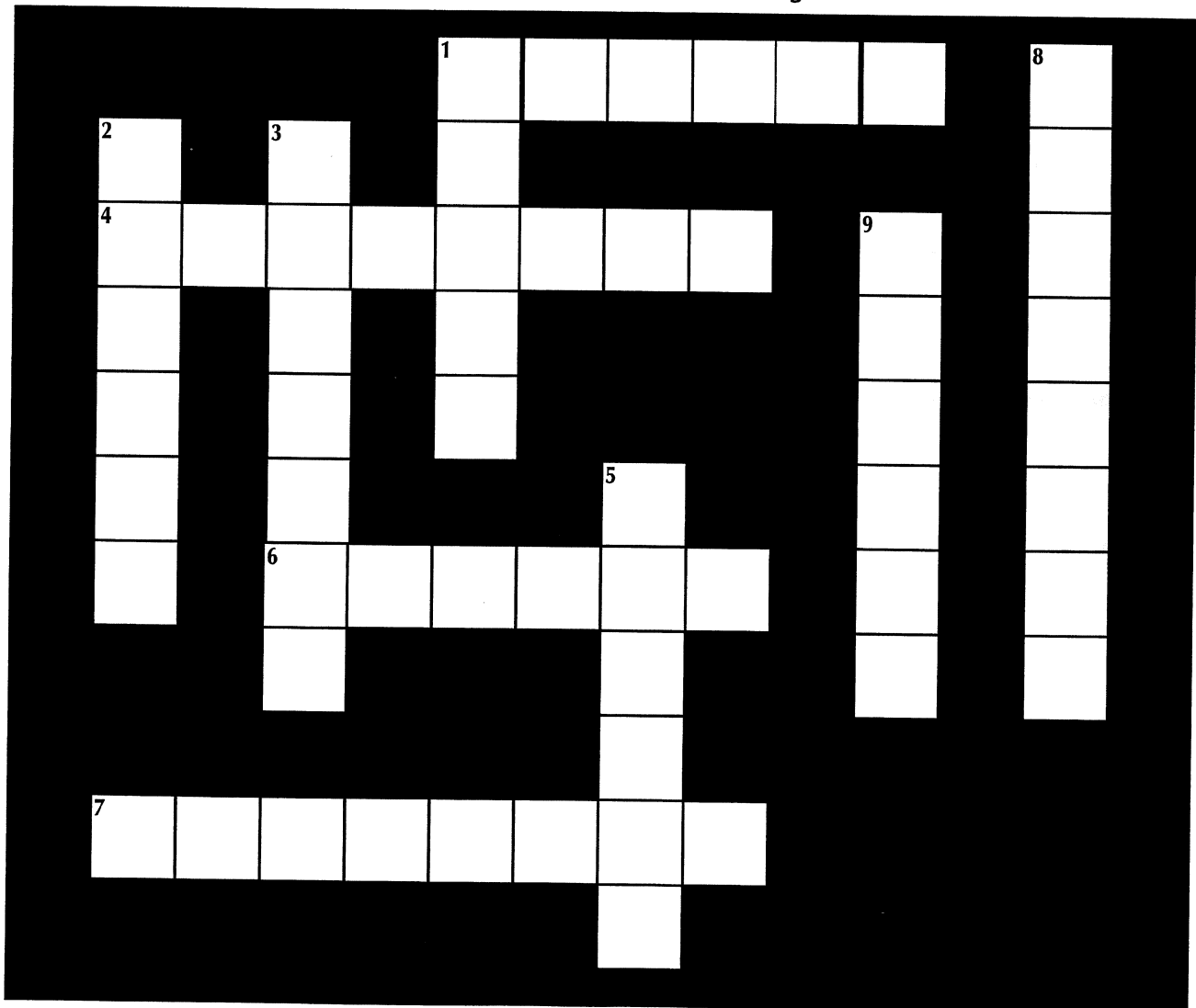
sticky	rigorous	locker	fraction	hardship
sassy	meteor	throne	drizzle	weasel

Across

1. gummy
4. suffering
6. a small metal compartment that can be locked, often found in schools
7. an expression that indicates the quotient of two quantities

Down

1. impudent, rude, disrespectful
2. chair occupied by a royal person
3. to rain down gently in fine drops
5. falling star
8. difficult, challenging
9. a mammal with a long, slender body, short legs and brown fur



Comprehension Test A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

Match each description with a name from the list. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A. Babymouse | F. Mousetropolis |
| B. Felicia Furrypaws | G. Jennifer Holm and Matthew Holm |
| C. Wilson | H. Superbabymouse |
| D. the hippo | I. "the coward" |
| E. the alligator | J. sneakers |

- ___ 1. The most popular student in school
- ___ 2. Babymouse's nickname at the dodgeball game
- ___ 3. What Babymouse often leaves at home
- ___ 4. Babymouse's town
- ___ 5. The math teacher
- ___ 6. The main character
- ___ 7. One of Babymouse's secret identities
- ___ 8. The gym teacher
- ___ 9. Babymouse's best friend
- ___ 10. The authors

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the story.

- 1. the pink heart
- 2. the locker
- 3. fractions
- 4. dodgeball
- 5. the pirate

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if a part is false.

- 1. Because she misses the bus, Babymouse has to walk to school.
- 2. She imagines that she is climbing a tall mountain.
- 3. Babymouse lives two miles from school.
- 4. Babymouse sees school as a daily battle between good and evil.
- 5. Babymouse's closest friend is a cool weasel.
- 6. Babymouse always turns in her homework.
- 7. Babymouse's favorite class is math because she is very good at math.
- 8. The math teacher sends Babymouse to the board, but she is unable to solve the problem.
- 9. Babymouse is great at avoiding chores, playing, sleeping, and eating cupcakes.
- 10. Felicia stuffs Babymouse in her locker.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Analyze how the authors use animals to represent people.
- 2. Give two examples of humor in the book.
- 3. Explain why Babymouse is a hero.
- 4. Describe an average school day for Babymouse.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Write in the word or phrase that best completes each of the following statements.

1. The _____ awakens Babymouse at 7:45 a.m.
2. Babymouse imagines that she is receiving a major award, the _____, for showing courage in the face of danger, exhibiting great heroism, and taking out the garbage without being asked.
3. Because she misses the bus, Babymouse has to walk to school, which seems to her to be the same as _____.
4. Babymouse finally reaches the school and readers realize that she has walked _____ blocks.
5. Babymouse sees school as a daily battle between _____.

Part II: Quote Identification (20 points)

Briefly explain why each quote is important in the novel.

1. "Babymouse! Babymouse!" (p. 13)
2. But there was one thing she wasn't good at...DODGEBALL!! (p. 42)
3. Ready to practice? (p. 54)
4. BABYMOUSEZILLA!! (p. 64)
5. Meow! The day was won! (p. 89)

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions or statements.

1. Name three things that Babymouse is good at.
2. Name one thing she is not good at.
3. Why does Felicia attack Babymouse during dodgeball games?
4. Why does Babymouse imagine herself walking the plank on a pirate ship?
5. Why does Babymouse imagine that she gets a ticker-tape parade?

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain the role that Wilson plays in Babymouse's life.
2. Would you like Babymouse for a friend? Why or why not?
3. Analyze why Babymouse manages to win the dodgeball game.
4. Explain the novel's theme or main idea.

BABYMOUSE: QUEEN OF THE WORLD

Vocabulary

Fill in this chart with a synonym (word that means the same) and an antonym (word that is the opposite) for each word from *Babymouse: Queen of the World*. See how many words you can list.

Word	Synonym	Antonym
1. typical	_____	_____
2. glamour	_____	_____
3. excitement	_____	_____
4. annoying	_____	_____
5. joy	_____	_____
6. stylish	_____	_____

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Choose the word or phrase that best completes each statement.

1. Babymouse wants to be Queen of the World, but everyone knows that **(Squeakgor, Felicia Furrypaws)** is the real queen of the world.
2. Babymouse is happy that she has her best friend **(Wilson the Weasel, the Squid)**.
3. Babymouse is in the **(sixth, third)** grade.
4. In math class, Babymouse is asked to pass a **(book, note)**.
5. Babymouse imagines that she runs a **(book shop, detective agency)**.
6. Felicia is having a **(slumber party, pool party)**.
7. Babymouse imagines that her locker is a **(pit of bubbly tar, black hole in space)**.
8. Babymouse gives Felicia her **(book report, favorite shoes)**.
9. Wilson's mother bakes **(cupcakes, brownies)**.
10. Babymouse has a big **(home, imagination)**.

Part II: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each person, place, or thing and explain why it is important in the novel.

1. locker
2. banana
3. slumber party
4. Dr. Weaselstein
5. popcorn

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if a part is false.

- 1. Babymouse wants glamour but gets chores.
- 2. She has six annoying older sisters.
- 3. Babymouse runs for queen of the school dance, but worries that she will not be elected.
- 4. As she tries to open her locker, Babymouse imagines their epic battle has become a movie, *Babymouse vs. the Squid*.
- 5. Felicia gives Babymouse the first invitation to the party because they are such close friends.
- 6. Babymouse imagines that the party will be a lot of fun, likely involving skydiving and snorkeling.
- 7. The party is just as much fun as Babymouse had imagined, and she has a really good time.
- 8. The girls paint their nails and watch romantic movies.
- 9. Babymouse realizes that her life is great, and she is already a queen.
- 10. Babymouse decides that she does not want to be friends with Wilson any more.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. How does Wilson affect Babymouse's life?
- 2. Describe any two fantasies that Babymouse has.
- 3. Explain the social situation in Babymouse's school.
- 4. Describe the slumber party.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Write in the term that best completes each of the following statements.

1. Babymouse wants _____ but gets chores, especially having to deal with an annoying little brother.
2. Babymouse is happy that she has her best friend Wilson the _____.
3. Babymouse recalls how they have been friends from kindergarten until the present, _____ grade.
4. At school, as she tries to open her _____, Babymouse imagines their epic battle has become a movie.
5. In _____ class, Felicia asks Babymouse to pass a note.
6. Babymouse imagines that she runs a company called a _____.
7. Babymouse imagines herself transformed into a glamorous mouse called _____.
8. At the party, Babymouse imagines herself as _____ in the Old West.
9. At the party, Babymouse makes a mess by flinging a type of cosmetic called _____ all over the room.
10. Felicia orders Babymouse to make more of a food called _____.

Part II: Quote Identification (20 points)

Briefly explain why each quote is important in the novel.

1. Well, maybe just a few (p. 15)
2. Felicia Furrypaws. (p. 17)
3. A slumber party? Babymouse wondered if she would be invited. (p. 33)
4. I can't wait. (p. 60)
5. Yep! Dump! (p. 88)

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions.

1. Why doesn't Babymouse think she will become Queen of the World?
2. What movie does Babymouse watch with Wilson?
3. Why does Babymouse want to be invited to the slumber party?
4. Who is Babymouse's Fairy Godmother?
5. How does Babymouse get an invitation to the party?

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe how Babymouse changes over the course of the novel. What lesson does she learn by the end of the novel?
2. Analyze any two fantasies Babymouse has to show how they are similar.
3. Explain the significance of the title.
4. Argue that Babymouse is or is not a typical child.

Essay Response

Lined writing area consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

Answer Key

Babymouse: Our Hero

Vocabulary

ACROSS	DOWN
1. sticky	1. sassy
4. hardship	2. throne
6. locker	3. drizzle
7. fraction	5. meteor
	8. rigorous
	9. weasel

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

1. B	6. A
2. I	7. H
3. J	8. E
4. F	9. C
5. D	10. G

Part II: Identification (20 points)

1. The pink heart is the award Babymouse imagines that she receives for courage in the face of danger, heroism, and most of all, for taking out the garbage without being asked.
2. The locker eats Babymouse's homework.
3. Babymouse cannot solve fractions. She is very upset about it.
4. Babymouse cannot play dodgeball. Wilson tries to teach her. At the novel's climax, she scores the winning shot, to everyone's astonishment.
5. The pirate stars in one of Babymouse's flights of fantasy. She likens playing dodgeball to having to walk the plank.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

1. T	6. F
2. F	7. F
3. F	8. T
4. T	9. T
5. T	10. T

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

1. alarm clock
2. pink heart
3. trekking through a desert.
4. two
5. good and evil

Part II: Quote Identification (20 points)

1. Babymouse imagines herself receiving the Pink Heart, a great award granted for various acts of bravery: showing courage in the face of danger, exhibiting heroism, and taking out the garbage without being asked. This event shows two of the novel's characteristic motifs: flight of imagination and sly humor.
2. This page sets up the novel's primary conflict: Babymouse vs. dodgeball. Felicia, in contrast, is an excellent player and had humiliated Babymouse during a previous dodgeball game. This incident has colored Babymouse's entire life.
3. Wilson selflessly tries to teach Babymouse to play dodgeball. This scene shows his friendship, patience, and compassion.
4. In this fantasy, Babymouse imagines a classic Japanese movie monster will attack the school and prevent the dodgeball game from taking place. The monster will rip open the school and stomp on the remains.
5. Despite Wilson's efforts to teach Babymouse how to play dodgeball, she appears to have no skill whatsoever. Thus, it is both surprising and delightful when Babymouse grabs the ball and smacks Felicia on the head with it to avenge Felicia having hurt Wilson during the game. This incident shows the importance of friendship and the triumph of the underdog. It makes Babymouse the hero and wins her the day.

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

1. She can defy gravity, sleep, figure skate, eat cupcakes, and be Wilson's best friend.
2. She is not good at math or playing dodgeball.
3. Felicia enjoys causing Babymouse pain and humiliating her.
4. She hopes that this way she can avoid the upcoming dodgeball game.
5. The parade is her reward for winning the dodgeball game.

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.

VOCABULARY

Word	Synonym	Antonym
1. typical:	characteristic, representative, model,	anomalous
2. glamour:	allure, style	dullness
3. excitement:	thrill	boredom
4. annoying:	irritating	soothing
5. joy:	delight	sorrow
6. stylish:	fashionable, chic	unfashionable, old-fashioned

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Felicia Furrypaws | 6. slumber party |
| 2. Wilson the Weasel | 7. black hole in space |
| 3. third | 8. Book report |
| 4. note | 9. cupcakes |
| 5. detective agency | 10. imagination |

Part II: Identification (20 points)

- Babymouse battles with her locker because the locker appears to be both alive and malignant: it swallows her homework on a regular basis, for example.
- In Babymouse's fantasy, Wilson serves as her fairy godmother. Her turns a banana into her coach; she thinks of a banana rather than a pumpkin because she had a banana for lunch.
- Felicia Furrypaws, the most popular girl in school, is having a slumber party. Babymouse wants to attend, but Felicia does not invite her. Babymouse finally obtains an invitation by giving Felicia her book report to hand in.
- Babymouse imagines Dr. Weaselstein creating a monster called Felicia-stein.
- The novel's climax occurs when Babymouse dumps popcorn on Felicia's head, leaves the slumber party, and goes to Wilson's house.

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. T | 2. F | 3. F | 4. T | 5. F |
| 6. T | 7. F | 8. T | 9. T | 10. F |

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

- | | |
|------------|----------------------|
| 1. glamour | 6. detective agency |
| 2. Weasel | 7. Cinderella |
| 3. third | 8. Wild "Baby" Mouse |
| 4. locker | 9. nail polish |
| 5. math | 10. popcorn |

Part II: Quote Identification (20 points)

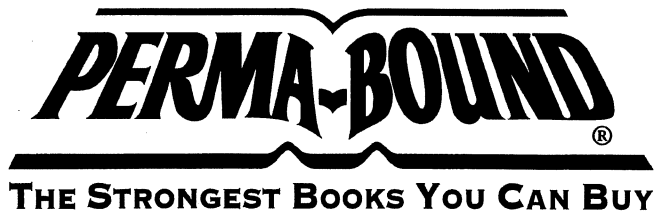
- When the novel opens, Babymouse reviews all her obligations and her boring routine. She claims that with all these obligations pressing on her, she does not have a lot of expectations. As this ironic panel shows, she has very high expectations indeed: she wants to be queen of the world.
- Unfortunately for Babymouse, the school already has a queen: Felicia Furrypaws. Felicia has everything that Babymouse covets, including respect, popularity, and straight whiskers. As a result, Babymouse yearns to be Felicia, but is willing to settle for being assistant queen.
- When Felicia tenders invitations to her slumber party, Babymouse yearns to be a part of it. She imagines herself as Cinderella, transformed into her true royal self and recognized as someone special. Slumber parties, of course, are one of the ultimate symbols of acceptance among pre-teen and teenage girls. Babymouse is not invited, but does manage to wrangle an invitation by giving Felicia her homework, a book report.
- Babymouse is in a frenzy of anticipation. Surely the slumber party will be a magical, wondrous evening. To her astonishment, Babymouse discovers that the slumber party is boring.
- When Felicia orders Babymouse to make more popcorn, Babymouse realizes that she does not have to take orders from Felicia. Empowered, she dumps the popcorn all over Felicia and walks out of the party... straight to Wilson's home. She has come to understand that Wilson is her true friend and that she does not have to remake herself to suit others.

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

- Felicia Furrypaws is already queen.
- Attack of the Giant Squid*
- Babymouse wants to be part of the popular crowd of kids. She imagines that the slumber party will be tremendous fun.
- Wilson the Weasel, her best friend
- She bribes Felicia with her book report.

Part IV: Essay (40 Points)

Answers will vary.



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