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THE COMIC BOOK WAR

Novel Study Guide

By Roberta Coulter

Young Adult fiction Grades 7 and up

Curriculum Connections English Language Arts, Social Studies (History), Math



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The Comic Book War

By Jacqueline Guest

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CONTENTS

Contents	2
Introduction	4
Plot Summary	4
Message from the Author	4
Chapter Synopses	6
Chapter 1 – Out of the Darkness	6
Chapter 2 – Parallel Universes	6
Chapter 3 – Lucky Neighbours	6
Chapter 4 – End of Life as He Knew It	7
Chapter 5 – Fat Chance	7
Chapter 6 – A Big Hairy Sacrifice	7
Chapter 7 – Message from the Universe	8
Chapter 8 – Battle Begins	8
Chapter 9 – A Cousin Comes Calling	8
Chapter 10 – And the Winner Is	9
Chapter 11 – Royal Miss	9
Chapter 12 – Faster than a Speeding Bike	10
Chapter 13 – First Blood	10
Chapter 14 – Enemy Lines	11
Chapter 15 – Comic Book King	11
Chapter 16 – Bad Week	11
Chapter 17 – Unknown Worlds	12
Chapter 18 – Sukces	12
Chapter 19 – Ghosts of Grease Past	13
Chapter 20 – Never Forgotten, Never Forgiven	13
Chapter 21 – Men and Monsters	13
Chapter 22 – Storm Clouds	13
Chapter 23 – Don't Shoot the Messenger	14
Chapter 24 – A Crack in the Universe	14
Chapter 25 – Stardust Rescue	14
Chapter 26 – Action Heroes	14
Chapter 27 – Homecoming	15
Chapter Activities	17
Getting Started	17
Vocabulary	17
Introduction to Canadian Superhero Comic Books	17
After Chapter 2	20
Lesson and Discussion – Why is Charlie called crazy?	20
After Chapter 4	21
Discussion – Superstition	21

After Chapters 5/6	22
Rationing and Wartime Recipes	22
After Chapter 9	24
Questions for Comprehension and Understanding	24
After Chapter 13	25
Student Handout – How hard would you work for 3 cents?	25
After Chapter 14	26
Discussion – “Fandom”	26
After Chapter 15	27
Assignment – The Power of Advertising	27
After Chapter 16	28
Discussion - Does Charlie have to be twice as good as Robert to keep her job?	28
After Chapter 20	29
Discussion – Is Robert losing his grip on reality?	29
After Chapter 21	30
Discussion – Suicide and War Crimes	30
Research Question	30
After Chapter 22	31
Questions – Battle on the Home Front	31
Activity – Knitting Club	31
After Chapters 25, 26 & 27	32
Questions for Comprehension and Understanding	32
<i>About the Author</i>	33
Also by Jacqueline Guest	33

INTRODUCTION

Plot Summary

It's 1943 when Robert Tourond gets a message from a falling meteorite – his favourite comic book superheroes really ARE protecting his brothers, who are all overseas fighting “that Hitler.” All Robert has to do is keep buying those comic books as they come in, and he'll make sure everyone stays safe and sound.

To have enough money, he gets a job, delivering telegrams for Canadian Pacific. But so does his nemesis, a tough girl they call Crazy Charlie (though never to her face). Charlie seems to need the money as desperately as he does, but not till the end of the book does he discover why: she is determined to escape her chaotic, drunken, and unsafe home life.

It is wartime, and many of those telegrams bring news to families back home of soldiers missing in action or dead. When Charlie has to deliver a telegram to Robert's house, Robert soon discovers that although he and others on the Home Front can make a difference, he and his heroes cannot really protect his brothers.

Message from the Author

As a writer, I have done research on many different topics to make sure every detail is right in my books. For this one, however, I did take some literary licence with a few historical facts. For those readers who like having all the facts, here's what you should know.

TELEGRAPH DELIVERY

During the war, many young men were employed as telegram delivery boys, but few, if any, girls were part of this cadre. The ladies' talents were usually applied to sending and receiving the telegrams that the boys delivered. After a short period, it was decided that delivering military telegrams with their usually bad news was too hard for young people and that unenviable chore was given to adults.

POSTAL DELIVERY

In my story, Robert thinks about how irregular military mail delivery is, but letters are still arriving regularly from Robert's brothers. In actual fact, during World War II, mail from the front would have taken much longer to reach families back in Canada. However, to keep the plot rolling, I had to have those letters!

CANADIAN COMIC BOOKS

The Golden Age of Canadian Comics was from 1942 to 1946 and was a result of the War Exchange Conservation Act, which did not allow “fiction periodicals” into Canada. This included comic books. Canadian kids needed fun reading and so a purely Canadian comic book industry sprung up. It was successful while there was no competition from the US, but

once the war was over and Superman and his pals were flying across the border again, the Canadian Whites, as our comics were known, could not compete.

It was an amazing time when Nelvana of the Northern Lights, Johnny Canuck and Canada Jack kept kids cheering and, more importantly, reading!

To read more about the Tourond family's adventures, try *Belle of Batoche*, set in the 1885 North West Rebellion or *Outcasts of River Falls*, a story of life on the road allowances.

CHAPTER SYNOPSES

Chapter 1 – Out of the Darkness

While out on a bike ride north of Calgary, Robert Tourond, 15, sees a meteorite fall. When he finds and pockets it, his luck seems to change for the better.

(3-5)

Chapter 2 – Parallel Universes

At school, Robert sees Crazy Charlie Donnelly—a girl who runs everywhere and always wears jeans—having a run-in with four jocks, and he himself almost knocks her down on his way to Kreller's Drug Store, where he buys a comic. Even though the American comics like Superman, Captain Marvel, and Flash Gordon are no longer available in Canada (thanks to the War Exchange Conservation Act), Robert has a hard time passing up the many Canadian comics available. They include such titles as Iron Man, Nelvana of the Northern Lights (a female from the frozen Arctic who rides the northern lights and can make herself invisible), Johnny Canuck, and Canada Jack. The one he buys today is Captain Ice: a ruggedly handsome ace fighter pilot in a brown leather bomber jacket and flying cap with goggles. Flying the Invincible, he is able to shoot down German planes, bomb ammunition factories, and romance women of the French Resistance.

Coincidentally it seems, in this issue Ice is aided by a meteorite that temporarily blinds his opponent, allowing him to make a steep climb, then a dive to demolish a train loaded with enemy supplies.

At home, Robert finds a letter from George, one of his three brothers fighting overseas in the Second World War: George with the Royal Canadian Air Force, James with the British Home Guard, and Patrick with the Infantry in the Mediterranean. As usual, the letter looks like normal writing but is encoded so the brothers can tell each other what is really going on without their mother—or the censors—finding out. Using a cipher to translate the letter, Robert learns that, like Captain Ice, George recently had to make a steep climb in his Spitfire to avoid an enemy fighter and then a dive that almost caused him to black out. It is a weird coincidence.

(6-14)

Chapter 3 – Lucky Neighbours

Another of Robert's favourite comics finally arrives at the drugstore: Sedna of the Sea. She wears a flowing cape over an ocean-blue and seafoam-green suit with a crest of narwhales with crossed tusks. Sedna can command all the sea animals, travel along pathways of ice in the ocean currents, and make time speed up or slow down. In this issue, Sedna and her sea creatures drag mined nets to an icy fjord where the Nazis have hidden a submarine, tangling them in its propellers. Before the engines start, blowing up the sub, Sedna uses a falling star—a meteorite—to signal her creatures to clear the area. What are the odds, Robert thinks, and his meteorite seems to pulse in response.

Robert has many chores around the house, including burning the garbage in the back alley. There he runs into his neighbour, Mr. Glowinski, in his back-alley appliance repair shop, and gets him to make the meteorite into a pendant.
(15-19)

Chapter 4 – End of Life as He Knew It

It seems that, without the meteorite in his possession, Robert finally runs out of luck. His mother finds the new pants he tore the night he scrambled to find the meteorite, and he is forced to tell her about his daring evening expedition to Nose Hill. She has also found one of his stashes of comics, which she considers a frivolous and even sinful waste of money. Robert argues that he reads them over and over and so gets his money's worth, and that they tell patriotic stories that boost his morale and make him want to help the war effort. This is a tactical error, because she decides that his entire allowance should be spent on war savings certificates—government bonds that pay a small amount of interest, redeemable in seven and a half years, hopefully long after the war is over.

As he is leaving for school, he runs into Mr. Glowinski, who has finished the pendant. With its return, Robert is sure his luck will change back to good.
(20-27)

Chapter 5 – Fat Chance

At school, Robert finds out about a contest, The Great Grease Roundup, which rewards the student who collects the most fat in two weeks. The prize is a full book of 25-cent war savings stamps. Because of wartime shortages, recycled bacon grease and other fats are used to make glycerine, and eventually nitroglycerine, which is used in bombs and other explosives. The stamp book is worth \$4, which Robert hopes will be as good as money at Kreller's Drug Store so he can continue buying comics. He has tough competition though: Crazy Charlie Donnelly is related to a chef whose restaurant has lots of used oil.
(28-30)

Chapter 6 – A Big Hairy Sacrifice

Robert saves money by getting a haircut at a beauty school instead of going to the barber. In the chair, he reads the latest letter from overseas, this time from James, who recounts a tale of bee stings and asks for silk stockings to use as gifts to make up for his weakness as a dancer. He also tells of mining the entrance to a harbour to stop enemy ships. Robert is reminded of Sedna's latest adventure.

On his way home, he uses the money he's saved on the haircut to buy his very favourite comic: The Maple Leaf Kid. He is only 16, clean-cut and boyishly handsome, and while he has no superpowers, he is incredibly smart, brave and patriotic; he travels the world with his father, who works for military intelligence, solving mysteries, foiling plots and saving the free world through his brilliant use of observation and deduction. Robert also takes the time to convince Mr. Kreller to accept the full book of war savings stamps for store credit, although he hasn't even started collecting grease. (31-36)

Chapter 7 – Message from the Universe

Another letter arrives, this time from Patrick, who is in Sicily with 20,000 other Canadian soldiers preparing for a landing in fascist Italy. In an afterthought, he tells Robert about a brilliant shooting star he'd seen in the early morning of Friday, September 3—the exact time Robert saw his! Then, he reads his Maple Leaf Kid comic, about the Kid diverting a weapon into space, directly into the heart of a meteor shower, where it is blown to bits, sparking a brilliant fireball that allows the Canadian troops to capture the weapon's Nazi inventors.

Robert is struck by the realization that all three comics had a meteor in them at the same time. He rereads his brothers' letters and the corresponding comics, and finally understands that it is no coincidence: his heroes are showing him what is happening to his brothers and how they will get out of the real troubles they face in the war. He knows it sounds crazy, but he decides he has been given a special insight, a gift from the universe. His superheroes are here to help him, and to protect his brothers fighting overseas. Robert realizes he must always buy the latest editions of his heroes' adventures to help with their fight. He assigns his brother George to the protection of Captain Ice, James to Sedna, and his favourite brother, Patrick, to his favourite superhero, the Kid, arranging letters, comics and pictures into a sort of shrine.

(37-42)

Chapter 8 – Battle Begins

Robert realizes the only way he can fulfill his cosmic role and keep buying comics is to win the grease-collecting contest, and he goes out collecting on his street. But after he hauls his load to school in the morning, he finds Charlie with a red wagon piled high with tubs and buckets—14 pounds of grease to his 7, including a couple of vats from her uncle at Hamburger Heaven. Nonetheless, Robert expands his territory and carries on. Luck is with him: it seems that whenever he touches his pendant, he gets a big donation, and a couple of his classmates give their collections to him to ensure he beats Charlie. He feels guilty—it's not supposed to be a popularity contest, but then he remembers his brothers' lives depend on him winning enough money to keep buying comics. Still, every day Charlie brings in more and more grease, and Robert knows he will have to do something spectacular to win.

That night, when his grown-up cousin Katy calls to chat and plan a visit. Robert tells her about the meteorite. The Tourond family's roots are Métis, and the only disagreement Robert has with his favourite brother Patrick is that Patrick tries to hide that fact. Katy – like Robert, proud of her heritage – is determined to bring Patrick something she found at their grandmother's house in the Métis community of River Falls. Before they hang up, Robert gets an idea: he asks Katy to check if the hunters in the community have leftover grease they would be willing to donate to the cause. Katy cautions that many use grease for tallow to make candles, but she promises to ask.

(43-50)

Chapter 9 – A Cousin Comes Calling

On the day before the contest ends, Robert has collected only 38 pounds of grease to

Charlie's 50. She feels confident enough to stop collecting and to denigrate The Maple Leaf Kid. Robert is forced to defend the comic. Instead of telling her that fans who do something impressive for the war effort might be featured in the back of the comic, he decides he will contact the fan club when he wins the contest, so he will be spotlighted and his brothers will know how hard he is working to support the war effort. Charlie teases him, calling him Wonder Weed, the Maple Leaf Kid's sidekick.

That night, when Katy arrives for her visit, he shows her his meteorite and tells her its story. When they're alone, she tells Robert how worried his mother is about him, because he is withdrawn, spending a lot of time in his room reading comics. She knows he must be missing his brothers. After dinner, she shows the family her gift for Patrick: a Red River sash with an arrowhead pattern that had belonged to Katy's father. She hopes this will remind Patrick of his roots and his family's love. She is so determined because her father, whose name was also Patrick, hid the family's Métis roots from her as well (see *Outcasts of River Falls*, Katy's story.) Robert's father is reminded of the stories of the Métis struggles living on the road allowances. Robert promises to send it to Patrick with his next letter.
(51-56)

Chapter 10 – And the Winner Is

Katy has brought seven milk cans full of grease, and when Robert carries them into the school to be weighed and emptied, he's sure he has enough to beat Charlie. When the final weigh-in is held in the gymnasium in front of the whole school, however, Charlie reaches out and grabs Robert's pendant, and when the winner is announced, it is Charlie who has won, with 64 pounds—more than Robert remembered her having—to his 63—less than he had figured that morning. Sure she would not have had time to collect more grease before the morning bell, Robert suspects Charlie 'stole' his good luck when she grabbed the meteorite. He is forced to accept second place: a war savings stamp book containing only two stamps. To top it all off, when he goes up to give his thank you speech, he belches into the microphone instead. Charlie doesn't even seem excited, and Robert dislikes her more than ever. Worse, the comic book connection that keeps his brothers safe is in deadly jeopardy.
(57-64)

Chapter 11 – Royal Miss

Robert's mother—having no idea of the consequences of the loss—is thrilled with the stamp book. That weekend, the Royal Family is travelling by train through Calgary, and Robert is fascinated. He rushes through his household chores, hoping to make it to his secret hideout—the deserted water tower behind the train station—in the nick of time to witness the Royal train stop in Calgary. But when he arrives, the water tower ladder is pulled away from his grasp, and water is poured down on him. He knows from the laugh who the culprit is: Charlie. Despite his threats, she refuses to lower the ladder, and the Royal train pulls away without Robert getting to see the dignitaries.

When he gets home, he tells Mr. Glowinski about his “girl trouble,” but Mr. G makes Robert realize that Charlie won the contest fair and square, and that quite possibly the water tower

is her “secret place” too, which Robert had never considered. He accepts that he can’t smack her, but he sure doesn’t like her.
(65-70)

Chapter 12 – Faster than a Speeding Bike

Robert notices a sign in a store window for an after-school job as a telegram delivery boy at Canadian Pacific Telegraphs, but when he gets there after rushing home to change his shirt after school, he finds another bike already there, a beat-up wreck belonging to Charlie. She is dressed even more boyishly than usual, hoping to pass for a boy to get the job. Robert addresses her pointedly as Charlene and spills the beans about her being a girl, as well as pointing out that she wouldn’t be fast on the old junker bicycle outside. The telegraphist, Mr. Crabtree, has never thought of hiring a girl, and doesn’t think a girl would be fast enough, but he decides to settle the issue the old-fashioned way: a contest to see who can deliver their telegram the fastest. Robert knows the city well but, unfortunately, he is held up by a long freight train. As he arrives, he sees Charlie rounding the bend, going to the same house. She leaps the fence to get ahead of him, but both knock on the door and present their telegrams at the same time. As a result, both are hired on two-weeks probation, which might seem fair, but because they are paid per telegram delivered (3 cents each, with a bonus for remote locations), each will only make half as much as he or she otherwise would have. Charlie is very angry—having known about the job coming up, she had done everything she could to get it, including winning the fat-collecting contest for money buy the bike...and soaping the store window so no one else would see the sign.
(71-79)

Chapter 13 – First Blood

Charlie somehow manages to deliver messages faster than Robert and so is able to make more deliveries (including a long-distance one that pays a bonus \$2.50) while Robert waits in the office for the next message to come through. The first day, Robert makes only 9 cents, though he is cheered to realize that that would average 45 cents a week, which would allow him to buy his three favourite comics plus a few extra, with leftover change for more savings stamps, which would please his mother.

Robert discovers Charlie lives in the tough Bowness neighbourhood, riddled with gangs and violence and far from their high school. The two start to become friends when Robert offers her water and promises he won’t tell that she doesn’t live in the area. Charlie tells him she paid \$10 for the bike, and is angry when he tells her she was “taken for a ride” —paid too much.

When he gets home late, his parents are very proud of his work ethic and responsibility. Though his mother objects to him spending even part of his earnings on comics, his father supports him, to Robert’s surprise.
(80-85)

Chapter 14 – Enemy Lines

Between school and the delivery job, Robert is working hard, but he's not making a lot of money, mostly because of the competition from Charlie. She manages to outdo him, even on her old, heavy bike. He trails her to try to find out her secrets, but all he discovers is that she breaks several laws while weaving in and out of traffic, a practice he is guilty of as well. When he finds her reading his Maple Leaf Kid, and she calls it juvenile, he argues that "you need to know the backstory of the characters and the plotlines already explored to truly appreciate the complexity of the overarching narrative" (89). When she smiles at him, the tension between them suddenly dissipates, and they have coffee together. But when a telegram comes in at the end of their shift, she takes her turn even though the destination is close to Robert's house and far from her own. The competition between them is clearly not over. (86-91)

Chapter 15 – Comic Book King

It's payday, and Robert is disappointed with his 24 cents—he was expecting 36, but Friday's pay is not included. Charlie offers to loan him some to clear his debt (to Kreller's Drug Store, where he took a comic on the promise of later payment), but he refuses. When he points out that she has called him Rob, she reminds him that their final review is next week. But the ice is broken and they are smiling at each other. She tells him how much she needs the money—"It's my only shot"—and Robert wonders why.

Robert clears his debt at Kreller's and buys a copy of Nelvana of the Northern Lights, leaving him only 4 cents for his mother's savings-stamp fund. She is furious when she finds out about the debt—"Neither a borrower nor a lender be"—but his father defends him, saying that it is the honourable thing to do. Robert decides in future he will avoid telling his mother exactly how many telegrams he has delivered, but he feels guilty. When he goes upstairs to his room, he arranges stacks of each of his three favourite comics beside the appropriate brother's picture and decides to buy only those three comics in future. He also decides to leave a spotlight on the display so that if he wakes in the night, he will see his six heroes, both comic and brotherly. (92-97)

Chapter 16 – Bad Week

Robert tries to beat Charlie to the punch after school by changing into his uniform at work rather than at home, but when he arrives, she's already there. She got caught changing in the park and also decided to change at work. Charlie asks him about the "loan sharks" he owed money to, and it's clear that she comes from a rough neighbourhood.

The whole week sees a flood of military telegrams, informing the family when a soldier is killed or missing in action, after a big push in the European war. When they are given their telegrams, Mr. Crabtree encourages them to make sure the person receiving one is all right, that they should even go to get a neighbour to support the recipient if necessary. Charlie ends up being a lot more sensitive and supportive than Robert at delivering these military telegrams, but it's not that Robert doesn't care; he just convinces himself that these are not

death notices but wounded or missing notices so that he doesn't have to feel bad about delivering them.

At the end of the week, when Mr. Crabtree is to decide who gets the job, Charlie begs Robert not to tell Mr. Crabtree when she gets her period so that he won't get rid of her for not being able to do the job. But Robert doesn't understand what she's talking about. Mr. Crabtree decides he has enough work for both of them at the moment, and they can both stay if they can be civil to each other.

(98-107)

Chapter 17 – Unknown Worlds

All of Robert's favourite three comics are in when he stops by the drug store on his way home, and on this payday he can afford the 30 cents. When he pulls the first one from the bag, however, he is shocked to see Captain Ice—George's guardian—dangling from a parachute with blood trickling down his face, his plane crashed behind enemy lines. Robert is panic-stricken, but Sedna of the Sea and The Maple Leaf Kid both show successful operations. Reading Captain Ice, he discovers that in the end, Ice is met by the French Resistance and smuggled back to England.

Strangely, when he goes downstairs to give his mother his pay packet, he finds Air Force Squadron Leader Aberdeen talking to his parents. Robert surprises them all by asking about George's plane being shot down, and they assume he has overheard them talking. Robert also knows about the Maquis, however—part of the French Resistance—and the squadron leader admits there is a chance George has been picked up by them. Robert insists George will be okay, and when his parents don't believe him, he gets the comic and explains that the comic books and the messages written in code in letters from his brothers say the same thing about what's going on in Europe.

When his parents don't believe him, Robert is angry and goes to the water tower, where he finds Charlie. He tells her the comic books are showing him what's going on with his brothers, and she too thinks he's crazy, but she promises not to tell anyone about the messages from the universe. When he asks her why she's there, she tells him about the drinking and fighting in her home, and in the end, they are friends.

(108-117)

Chapter 18 – Sukces

When Charlie's chain breaks on her bike, Robert takes her to Mr. Glowinski's back-alley appliance repair shop. He replaces the chain, and then her worn-out tires. When Charlie says she can't afford these things, Robert pretends Mr. G owes him money, and the older man goes along with the ruse. When he explains to Mr. G later about Charlie and the bike, Mr. G says that he did the work for free because he and Robert are friends. When Robert gets home, his mom tells him that George is safe and back in England. Later, in bed, he reads his brothers' latest letters, decoding them and analyzing them in light of the applicable comic.

(118-125)

Chapter 19 – Ghosts of Grease Past

Robert gets “antsy” if he doesn’t read each comic over every day, believing the link between his brothers and their comic guardians depends on his vigilance in noticing all the details of the stories and the illustrations, committing the details to memory to ensure they are kept real.

One evening, Robert is given a telegram for his teacher, Miss Alice Pettigrew, and he dreads delivering the bad news. But when she opens it the news is “fabulous”: the tremendous success of The Great Grease Roundup is going to be spotlighted nationally in the back pages of The Maple Leaf Kid. Robert realizes the school’s success is bigger than just him winning the contest would have been, and that it may inspire similar contests across the country. When he tells Charlie, she confesses that she cheated, stealing some of the fat from his vat before the final weighing, and putting it into her own. She begs him to understand that she needed to win more than he did, but he does not.
(126-132)

Chapter 20 – Never Forgotten, Never Forgiven

Robert cannot forgive Charlie because he believes his losing the fat contest imperiled his brothers’ lives, which depend on him having enough money to buy the comics. He thinks of her as a liar, a cheat, and a thief, and no longer cares what happens to her. When the next issues of his comics come in, he is determined to study them carefully so that he can understand their hidden messages. Once again, the story lines in the comics and his brothers’ letters seem to coincide. He can almost feel the shock waves from the explosions the Maple Leaf Kid experiences in battle in Italy.

As December wears on, Robert goes to visit Mr. Glowinski; he finds him holding a gun to his head.
(133-137)

Chapter 21 – Men and Monsters

When Robert intervenes, Mr. Glowinski tells him of the fate of his wife and children in Poland under the Nazis: the men of the village had been forced to watch as the women and children were driven over with tanks. Robert offers him his meteor pendant, but Mr. G decides to make one of his own from the leftover pieces instead of taking Robert’s.
(138-141)

Chapter 22 – Storm Clouds

The December comics are late because Mr. Kreller has forgotten to put in the order on time. Mr. Glowinski shows Robert the pendant he has made, a smaller version of Robert’s. Later, Robert becomes ill and is forced to call in sick the next day, despite the slew of military telegrams waiting to be delivered. Still feverish that night, he encourages his mother to go to her Knit for Victory Club so he can read his comics alone in peace. When he goes downstairs to get more, he sees Charlie pull up to his house, not to spy on him, but to deliver a telegram.
(142-147)

Chapter 23 – Don't Shoot the Messenger

Robert refuses to believe the telegram could be for his family. Charlie insists on coming in, and sits with him on the couch, but she can't let him read it: it has to be opened by an adult. When his mother returns and the telegram is opened, they learn that Patrick, who had been sent to capture a German soldier, is missing in action. Robert and Charlie leave his parents to their grief and go up to his room. She sees the shrine to his brothers, which now includes a candle. She tells him she begged Mr. Crabtree to let her deliver the telegram because they are such good pals, and Robert finally forgives her. Robert decides this is a test of his faith in the cosmic connection among the pendant, the comics, and his brothers.
(148-152)

Chapter 24 – A Crack in the Universe

Robert salutes his heroes, quickly gets dressed, and heads for Kreller's Drug Store even though it's after closing time. The lights are still on though, and he pounds on the glass, demanding the December issue of The Maple Leaf Kid. He has forgotten to bring money, but Charlie pays the dime. They return to Robert's room; he ceremonially salutes his brothers, lights the candle, and restores the shrine before sitting down on the bed to unveil the comic. He sees the cover depicting the Kid captured by the Nazis, just as Patrick may be.
(153-157)

Chapter 25 – Stardust Rescue

In the comic, the Kid signals a Canadian armoured column driving by the secret fortress in which he is imprisoned, using a mirror he has made by rubbing the bottom of a saucer with silicon carbide to flash a message in Morse code. While awaiting rescue, he is taken to the courtyard to be shot, but the Kid still refuses to give up the secret codes even when the commandant threatens to shoot the villagers. A sudden explosion marks the entrance of the Canadian troops through the smoking gates.

Robert is astounded when the Kid notes the most common form of silicon carbide is called stardust. Robert sees the parallels between the two stories and excitedly tells Charlie that Patrick has been taken prisoner and is being held in a secret location near Ortona, and that they must get the army to send a rescue party. He knows his parents will be thrilled. Charlie, however, thinks he is out of his mind. She tries to force him to face reality, but fails; she does, however, convince him to wait until tomorrow to come up with a workable plan and tell his parents about his ideas.

Robert asks Mr. Glowinski to give Charlie a ride home because of the snow. When they reach her house, a party is in full swing, with drunks spilling out the front door. Robert is worried about Charlie, but he is more worried about how to convince his parents and the army to believe in his comic book war and save Patrick.
(158-164)

Chapter 26 – Action Heroes

Charlie stops by in the morning, and Robert gives her Patrick's old pea coat in return for

the dime he owes her. They tell his parents about Robert's theory, reminding them of what had happened with George, showing them the December Maple Leaf Kid, and telling them they must alert the military. Robert is frustrated when his father calls the story ridiculous, but patiently argues that sending a rescue party for one lost soldier would be great propaganda for the army, which his parents would understand if they knew more about what goes on behind the scenes. Robert's father explains that they are very aware of what's happening: he doesn't make crop fertilizer, he makes ammonium nitrate for bombs, and his mother's war efforts are extensive. His mother is more sympathetic, apologizing for not being more attentive, understanding that Robert has felt deserted, but says he has to face reality with them.

Robert knows arguing is useless, but he still thinks the solution is obvious, and tells Charlie his plan. He dresses up in his delivery-boy uniform and smudges his upper lip to look like a five-o'clock shadow in an effort to look older and more responsible. They go to Currie Barracks with a fake telegram for Squadron Leader Aberdeen, who had delivered the news about George. When they are admitted to his office, Robert tells him about Patrick and his theories about where he is being held. When Aberdeen asks him how he knows, Robert admits that while it's hard to believe, he has a pipeline to his brothers through comic books, and he shows him the latest issue of *The Maple Leaf Kid*. Even Charlie jumps in to support him. Aberdeen expresses his doubts, but promises to make some inquiries even though it's Christmas Eve.

On the way home, Robert thanks Charlie for her support and offers to take her to a movie: *Casablanca*, starring Humphrey Bogart. He begins to see that movies are a lot like comics. (165-174)

Chapter 27 – Homecoming

Robert is still frustrated that his parents don't believe him. Mr. Kreller tells Robert that the company that produces *Sedna*, *Ice*, and *The Maple Leaf Kid* has gone out of business and there won't be any more issues. Speechless, Robert returns home, not knowing what this will mean for his brothers, and he imagines all sorts of calamities, but when he reads his brothers' letters, everything is fine. Still, weeks go by with no news of Patrick.

Charlie invites herself to his house for her birthday, but when they arrive, Aberdeen is there. Robert is convinced this means Patrick has been freed and is safe and coming home, but the fact is he has been killed in action. Aberdeen also brings a note from Patrick, willing the Métis sash to Robert, and closing with the words "See you in the stars." Robert, dumbstruck, realizes that his comic book war was all a lie and that Patrick is dead. He bikes to the water tower, where he sobs in Charlie's arms.

Charlie tells Robert why she cheated on the fat contest and why she needed the delivery job so badly: after stabbing a lecherous friend of her parents in the arm with a fork, she is leaving home to board at the Sacred Heart Convent. Robert learns he had no idea what she has been going through, but asks her how she managed to always beat him on deliveries. She explains that after years of running all over Calgary, she knows every short cut, back alley

and vacant lot there is.

They talk about how he could have been so wrong about the comics' connection to his brothers, and Charlie explains he was so worried that he looked for any way he could to keep them safe. Robert realizes the comics have been an obsession for him, and that if he were to reread them now, the letters and the comics might have a few similarities but that's all. Charlie reminds him that in comics and in war, it's good guy versus bad guy. Robert now knows that war means death for men, sons and brothers. He still feels the magic of his meteorite, however, and he has a present for Charlie that reflects this—Mr. Glowinski has made a third pendant from the last remaining fragment of the meteorite both Robert and Patrick saw.

(175-185)

CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

Getting Started

VOCABULARY

Most people in the 1940s did not swear openly, but they did use some pretty interesting curse words, and Robert picks up a few of his own from comic books (“Wham! Kablam!” for example). As the students read, consider having them flag expressions they have never heard before, find strange, or are unsure of the meaning of.

INTRODUCTION TO CANADIAN SUPERHERO COMIC BOOKS

Comic books were the video games of much of the twentieth century, and they are still read and collected by young people throughout North America and beyond, although not to the same extent as they once were.

Most Canadians know that Superman has a connection to Canada—one of the creators was born and raised in Canada, where he was first exposed to Canadian comic strips with a touch of sci-fi in a Toronto newspaper. Very few know that Canada had a significant comic book industry during the Second World War, thanks to the War Exchange Conservation Act, which forbade the importation of non-essential goods into Canada. For the duration of the war, homegrown Canadian superheroes entirely replaced American superheroes like Superman, Captain Marvel, and Flash Gordon in the affections of Canadian young people.

This largely forgotten legacy is recently being rediscovered—there are websites, documentary films, and books being produced on the subject. This can be a real inspiration to students interested in cartooning (humorous and even political), graphic novels, art, illustration, design, and computer game development, so it's worth spending some time before beginning to read the novel on this remarkable Canadian comics renaissance and its rediscovery.

1. “Canadian Comic Strips and Books,” *CBC Rewind* with Michael Enright, Thursday, October 25, 2012 (audio, 55 minutes total, but 3:55-9:10 are of particular interest), <http://www.cbc.ca/rewind/sirius/2012/10/25/comic-books-2/> -

A fascinating comprehensive history, with interviews of famous Canadian cartoonists and publishers. Approximately 5 minutes of this audio file are particularly apropos to the World War II period.

2. *Lost Heroes: The Untold Story of Canadian Superheroes*, Middle Child Films/Farpoint Films, 2014, available for purchase by educators from McNabb-Connolly,

http://www.mcnabbconnolly.ca/titles/6239/lost_heroes (107 minutes, senior high school-adult)

Lost Heroes is a feature length documentary about forgotten Canadian comic book superheroes and their legendary creators. See <http://losthheroesmovie.com/index.php/exclusive-videos/> for very short clips from the movie on specific superheroes and the Canadian industry, and <http://losthheroesmovie.com/index.php/gallery/cover-gallery/> for a selection of comic covers. The website also offers a description of each superhero.

3. “A Brief History of Canadian Superhero Comic Books,” Youtube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ndsykMRbYM> (6:41)

The producer of the documentary (a young woman) briefly introduces Canadian comic superheroes of the World War II period including:

- Johnny Canuck, like Captain America sans superpowers
- Nelvana of the Northern Lights, a female considered the first superhero, based on Inuit legend
- The video also covers the resurgence of Canadian comics in the 1970s and present-day comics, including the current situation and issues.

4. *Nelvana of the Northern Lights* (IDW Publishing, <http://nelvanacomics.com/shop/#>)

Nelvana’s complete adventures (1941–47) with over 320-pages of artwork by her creator Adrian Dingle, collected and reprinted with an Introduction by editors Hope Nicholson and Rachel Richey, and a Foreword/Afterword by Dr. Benjamin Woo and Michael Hirsh. The editors will also be appearing at comic-cons, pop culture shows, and book festivals across Canada in 2014/15 to promote the book and Nelvana.

“Nelvana of the Northern Lights First Adventure” (online comic)

<http://nelvanacomics.com/galleries-2/issue1/>

5. “Watch Francis Manapul Draw A Canadian Hero Punching Out Hitler For The Johnny Canuck Kickstarter,” video, <http://comicsalliance.com/francis-manapul-johnny-canuck-sketch-rachel-richey-kickstarter-video/>, (3:51)

A fascinating glimpse of the cartooning process! A video of Toronto-based Detective Comics co-writer and artist Francis Manapul’s fundraiser sketch for his Johnny Canuck Kickstarter campaign. Long out of print, Johnny Canuck is one of the lost Canadian comic heroes of the World War II period.

(Read More: “Francis Manapul Sketches Johnny Canuck For Kickstarter,” <http://comicsalliance.com/francis-manapul-johnny-canuck-sketch-rachel-richey-kickstarter-video/?trackback=tsmclip>)

6. “Legends of Brok: Hope Nicholson Brings Back Brok Windsor, Canada’s Golden

Age Hunk Hero (print interview, <http://comicsalliance.com/hope-nicholson-brok-windsor-kickstarter-jon-stables-canada-golden-age/>)

An online article on Hope Nicholson's campaign to raise funds for a revival collection of a lost Canadian superhero, the square-jawed action man Brok Windsor.

After Chapter 2

LESSON AND DISCUSSION – WHY IS CHARLIE CALLED CRAZY?

If you pose this question to the class after reading chapter 2, they may remember that Charlie runs everywhere, and that unlike “decent” girls (of the time), she wears men’s jeans all the time. Students may also mention Charlie’s willingness to fight, even with groups of boys.

Running everywhere is a bit unusual even today, but in the 1940s, it would have been seen as positively odd. Running did not become a mainstream part of physical fitness until the 1970s jogging craze; in the 1940s, it featured only in school athletics programs and training for professional athletes.

Wearing jeans was not so unusual for women in the 1940s—Levi’s had started making jeans specifically for women on western ranches in the 1930s—but wearing them all the time was! In the 1940s, girls and women did not wear pants (even dress pants) to school, shopping, or social events. Many schools and workplaces forbade them, and girls were often sent home to change if they challenged the dress code. As the war progressed and more and more women replaced men in industrial jobs, pants became more common.

Charlie’s behaviour is certainly not “ladylike,” in accordance with the etiquette of the time. To see just how unusual Charlie is, show the class one or two of these Youtube videos. While hilariously outdated, they do show the culture and values of the period in relation to young people, fashion, and manners.

- “1940’s Etiquette - High School Teens Ride to School On Bus,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jiA5qVCJunA> (1:21)
- “A Date With Your Family - 1950’s American Family Values,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XEtaaW3UFZA> (9:58)
- “Proper Social Etiquette for Teenagers: ‘How Do You Do?’” (1946), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiD91wPLQZA> (13:36)
- “Teenagers Really Suffered During The 1950s,” on courtesy at parties, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OKZjUORjPsI> (10:04)

EXTENDED DISCUSSION

Nobody would bat an eyelid at a girl in jeans today. What sort of things might make a modern Charlie stand out in the same way as she does in the 1940s setting of the novel? (for example, might it be the brand of jeans, rather than the jeans themselves?) What social norms prevail today, in school and out? In what ways are they different from, or the same as, those of the novel’s setting?

After Chapter 4

DISCUSSION – SUPERSTITION

Robert is beginning to associate the meteorite pendant with luck. Is this just a superstition on Robert's part, or is there power in the natural world that we can harness?

Many cultures have a tradition of using amulets to guard against evil, from Europe to China, Africa to North and South America. The rabbit's foot, which may have originated amongst the Celts in 600 BC, continues to be recognized in North American culture as a talisman. Other symbols of luck include horseshoes, four-leafed clover and the "evil eye", which is actually a good luck charm.

Have students work in small groups to come up with lists of good-luck/ bad-luck superstitions they know of – maybe from parents or grandparents, or maybe ones they follow themselves.

- Can they identify why they or people they know believe in certain good-luck/ bad-luck objects or superstitions?
- Are the beliefs based on something that has happened to them, a strange coincidence like Robert's that invests an object with a sort of power?
- Have any of them ever had a lucky charm or ritual that they used to help shape the future? Do they still have faith in it?

EXTENSION DISCUSSION

Robert's pendant, aside from making him feel linked to his brothers, is also a link with Mr G. to show their friendship (when Robert suggests Mr G make his own from the same meteorite pieces). You could lead the students towards a discussion of the social role amulets, family-history objects, and shared superstitions have.

After Chapters 5/6

RATIONING AND WARTIME RECIPES

Students may be unfamiliar with rationing, which was introduced by the Canadian government to limit imports and to divert raw materials and food to the military, as well as to provide foodstuffs to support the British, who had been experiencing strict wartime rationing for many years. In addition to gasoline, tea, coffee, sugar and butter were rationed in Canada, but not eggs and meat, as they were in Britain. The government did, however, encourage “meatless” days.

The University of the Fraser Valley history project website (<http://app.ufv.ca/fvhistory/>) includes student investigations such as this one on WWII rationing: <http://app.ufv.ca/fvhistory/studentsites/wwII/wareffortconservation/Consumerexperiences.html>. If you have time, have students explore this page, or have them construct their own website with a local slant, with small groups responsible for investigating and writing sections on different products, with graphics.

As well, the following videos contain useful information.

- Clothing: “A Family in Wartime: Make Do and Mend,” Imperial War Museums, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Xa2dNZk-MQ> (0:00:59)
- Food: “World War II: Food Rationing (1942?),” United States government, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UXRZgVm11pA> (0:10:12)
- General: “Rationing in Britain,” Imperial War Museums, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9wNJ78S2GY> (0:09:53)
- Recipes: “Wartime Food Rations,” Breakfast Television Winnipeg, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Muo1053dneU> (0:05:00). Covers the necessity of rationing in Canada and recipes Canadians used to deal with shortages.

Activities

- Ask students to find a recipe from the WW2 period. (You can find a pdf of the IODE’s Canadian wartime cookbook at <http://wartimecanada.ca/archive-categories/eating>). They could look into how much the ingredients for that recipe would cost to source today – and try making it for a class tasting!
- The CMA’s “Food for Health in Peace and War” is also available on this website. Students could compare the recommendations for a healthy diet from this book with today’s government food guide (find it at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>).

Independent Research Project

Rationing was a much greater concern on the Home Front in Great Britain during WWII than it was in Canada. Students could study an aspect of rationing and nutrition during wartime and prepare a presentation of their research: for example, calculating a week of meals for

a family on rations; tracking the severity of rationing at different periods during the war and how families coped; looking at a week of food in their own family compared with a week of rations during the war; 'Victory gardens' to supplement rations; looking at the energy and nutrition Robert and Charlie need (and get) to do their bicycling job and comparing this with the energy that could be reasonably expected from the amount of food available to children of their age in Britain at the time...

After Chapter 9

QUESTIONS FOR COMPREHENSION AND UNDERSTANDING

1. How does Robert defend The Maple Leaf Kid?
 2. What does Robert plan to do when he wins the contest?
 3. What nickname does Charlie come up with for Robert?
 4. Why does Katy give the Métis sash to Patrick instead of Robert, who would probably appreciate it more?
-

After Chapter 13

STUDENT HANDOUT – HOW HARD WOULD YOU WORK FOR 3 CENTS?

Inflation causes the value of money to decline—when the inflation rate is high, your dollar buys less than it did last year, sometimes a lot less! A certain amount of inflation seems to be inevitable, but sometimes it gets out of hand, like when a government tries to keep a troubled economy afloat by printing more money without the gold or other assets to back it up. In Germany in the 1930s, for example, people were forced to bring wagon-loads of money to purchase groceries because the deutschmark had lost so much of its value. As inflation rises, people push for higher wages to keep up with inflation; if their wages do not keep up with the increase in the cost of living, people end up worse off even if their wage stays the same.

If you look at advertisements from the 1930s and 40s, you will be struck by how little things cost compared with today's prices, but you have to remember that people also made a lot less.

Your task:

1. Find advertisements for common goods and services in the early 1940s: restaurant meals, toys, haircuts, clothing, etc.
 2. Find employment ads from the period for jobs with wages listed.
 3. Using the Bank of Canada's inflation calculator at <http://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>, determine how much each of these would cost in today's currency.
 4. Finally, figure out how much Robert earns: What would be the equivalent value of 3 cents today? 25 cents? \$2.50? How much does he spend on comics in today's money?
-

After Chapter 14

DISCUSSION – “FANDOM”

Robert argues that “you need to know the backstory of the characters and the plotlines already explored” in the comics “to truly appreciate the complexity of the overarching narrative” (89). Charlie seems somewhat unwilling to spend the time reading comics regularly and so may never “truly appreciate” them.

Like Robert, fans of other genres argue that it is necessary to read a comic/play a video game/participate in cosplay/etc. regularly to really appreciate it. Yet critics who see them as a waste of time, with no literary or social value, are unlikely to invest the time necessary to find out how complex they are.

- Are you a fan of something that other people seem unwilling to appreciate?
 - How did you get interested?
 - Why is it difficult for other people to appreciate it?
 - Why are gamers more often boys? Is there something wrong with the games, or is gaming just not suited to girls? What about adults?
 - How would you go about convincing a skeptic to give your subject of fandom a chance? How much time do you think it would take to get a critic hooked?
-

After Chapter 15

ASSIGNMENT – THE POWER OF ADVERTISING

Chapter 15 has a lot to say about the power of slogans. Robert even makes one up: “Owe the Lord, not thy neighbour” (96), which sounds as if it could be a biblical proverb (but it isn’t!).

The quotation “Neither a borrower nor a lender be” is from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, whose character Polonius offers his children endless platitudes as advice for living, while he himself does some rather questionable things like spying on them and sucking up to the new king.

Wartime is also rife with slogans, as governments attempt to stir the people to patriotic acts of sacrifice and good behaviour. This chapter includes some of these, including “Loose lips sink ships” and “Keep on licking war savings stamps—they’re full of vitamin “V” (“V” stands for Victory, so the ad is suggesting that a dose of victory is as good for your health as real vitamins).

Robert’s mother uses these to encourage him to buy savings stamps. She makes him a piggy bank out of a quart-sealer jar decorated with a cartoon crowned lion of England, and a Canadian beaver with sword and helmet, captioned “To Victory.” She also shows him a poster depicting a sailor out of uniform; each stamp is supposed to buy another piece of his uniform, and when they have him dressed they will receive a tiny bomber to add to her poster map in the basement. She’s hoping for a whole squadron of planes. The next poster resembles the Maple Leaf Kid, and encourages kids to keep licking savings stamps because they’re full of vitamin V.

Your Task

For inspiration, look at posters from World War I and II, and even the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Civil War. Analyze them with the following questions in mind:

- What kinds of behaviour/action did the posters try to encourage/discourage?
- Did the quality and effectiveness of the advertisements, in your opinion, improve over the course of the twentieth century? In what ways?
- Which colours, images, typefaces, etc. seem most effective to you? Why?
- Did the kind of poster vary depending on the country it was produced for? Why do you think that would be?

Now, make a poster for Canada in wartime that would encourage a certain behaviour to help win a war taking place today. Choose a slogan that appeals to you. Design an effective image, using appropriate typefaces and colours. Explain your design in a short paragraph.

After Chapter 16

DISCUSSION - DOES CHARLIE HAVE TO BE TWICE AS GOOD AS ROBERT TO KEEP HER JOB?

Discussion starter for board:

"Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult."

—Charlotte Whitton, first woman mayor of a major Canadian city (Ottawa, 1951-56, 1960-64)

Women had the right to vote in Canada in the 1940s, but they did not have any employment rights. They could be fired for getting pregnant, or even just for getting married. If a man came along who could presumably do the job better, a woman was expected to step aside.

Charlie is a pretty unusual girl for her time. She is determined to do a "boy's job," and works hard to prove that she is better than Robert. At times, he is not ashamed to use her femaleness against her.

- Is Charlie right to believe she has to be twice as good as Robert to keep her job?
 - Is this still true? Are there still some jobs that are seen as boys'/ men's jobs? Does this make sense?
 - In what ways is Charlie better at her job than Robert?
 - Is Charlie really more sensitive than Robert about delivering military telegrams, or does he just handle it in a different way?
 - Does the competition from Charlie make Robert better at his job?
-

After Chapter 20

DISCUSSION – IS ROBERT LOSING HIS GRIP ON REALITY?

Some people claim they have ESP—extra-sensory perception, the ability to feel or perceive things occurring somewhere else with their loved ones or in the world generally. The belief that one has a special “sixth sense” that can pick up information about what’s going on was particularly common during wartime, when relatives claimed to have been visited by soldiers whom it later turned out had died at that very moment.

On the other hand, believing that you are receiving messages through the media—television or radio or even comics—can be a symptom of psychological illnesses whose sufferers lose contact with reality, and sometimes involve hallucinations and delusions. Robert does seem to be increasingly drawn into the comic book world, and he certainly believes his vigilance there is essential to the safety of his brothers, which logically he has no control over at all. People don’t believe him, and usually they tell him so, but until he has incontrovertible proof with the death of his brother Patrick, Robert carries on believing.

Robert is also in a very stressful situation. All three of his brothers, whom he loves, are in danger. There’s little he can realistically do to help them – he is both too young and too far away. And he’s quite isolated in his worries – his parents don’t encourage him to share his concerns, and he feels he has to keep the truths in his brothers’ letters from his mother. Not only can fiction be a temporary escape from having to think about the real world, for Robert the comic books are a way to be ‘involved’ in his brothers’ war.

Questions:

- What do you think might be the causes of Robert's belief that something extraordinary is happening?
 - If your friend told you that comic books were communicating with him, how would you react?
 - Have you ever experienced a situation where a sibling or a loved one was in potentially dangerous circumstances that no one you knew had any control over? When you weren't sure what their situation was? What was your response? What would you imagine your response to be?
-

After Chapter 21

DISCUSSION – SUICIDE AND WAR CRIMES

This is a difficult chapter, and while war crimes and suicide should be discussed, it should be undertaken with sensitivity and care.

Questions:

- Why is Mr. Glowinski driven to consider suicide?
- Should Robert have done anything to intervene besides talking to his friend Mr. G about his life?
- Can Robert's pendant help Mr. G? How do you think it could?
- What happened to Mr. G's family is what's known as a war crime today. Do you think WWII can be considered worse than other wars because of atrocities like this and the Holocaust? Or is it inevitable that wars lead to such extreme conduct?
- Why can't Robert forgive Charlie?
- Are there some actions that are simply unforgivable, in war, or between friends? Is there a basic code of conduct to which we must all adhere to remain human?

RESEARCH QUESTION

- Divide the class into small groups to research each of the following questions and present their findings to the class:

1. What is the Geneva Convention? Why was it established?
 2. What were the consequences of problems with the Geneva Convention for the world during the war?
 3. Did the Geneva Convention apply to Mr. G's family during World War II? Is there historical evidence that this kind of atrocity actually happened?
 4. How did the world address the problems with the Geneva Convention after World War II?
 5. What are the problems with the Geneva Convention today?
 6. Which countries do not adhere to the Geneva Convention today? Are there countries that seem to have agreed to it in theory but not in practice?
-

After Chapter 22

QUESTIONS – BATTLE ON THE HOME FRONT

1. What does Robert's mother contribute to the war effort on the home front?
2. What is a Knit for Victory Club? Why were they important?
3. What is the Kitchener toe?
4. Modern wars are carried out in a very different way from the warfare of WWII. Can you think of any equivalent activities that might be undertaken on the 'home front' today to support troops fighting in wars abroad?

ACTIVITY – KNITTING CLUB

Set up a knitting club challenge to learn to knit scarves, which can be donated to a charity at the end of the project. If no one on staff is a knitter, solicit parents and grandparents to provide instruction.

You can find a great deal of information on knitting for charities at www.ravelry.com. Charities that accept handmade donated items have very specific requirements in order to deal with the vast amount of goodwill from enthusiastic knitters that can sometimes be misdirected! A good project for young adult knitters might be the Red Scarf Project, run by Foster Care to Success. It provides hand-knitted red scarves to teenagers who have grown up the foster care system and who are starting college, as part of care packages of the sort that a student's family might otherwise provide. Scarves made by fashion-knowledgeable teenagers would probably be very welcome! More information is here: <http://www.ravelry.com/groups/red-scarf-project>

After Chapters 25, 26 & 27

QUESTIONS FOR COMPREHENSION AND UNDERSTANDING

1. Mr. G buys a 1929 Chevrolet International AC Sport. Which car from the period would you choose, and why?
2. What does Robert mean when he says he is “David taking on Goliath”?
3. What are the most famous movies of Jimmy Stewart, Cary Grant, Humphrey Bogart, and Ingrid Bergman that were released during WWII?
4. Why does Robert buy a football for his father?
5. Did you expect that Robert was right about Patrick? Was the news of his death a surprise to you, or did you think Robert was going to have his beliefs “splintered”? What techniques has the author used to point the reader in either of these two directions?

Creative Responses

1. Points of view

In Chapter 25, we briefly see Robert's parents dealing with the news from the telegram, we hear Charlie's explosion telling Robert his theories are 'nuts', and Mr G drives Charlie home to Bowness with Robert in the car. Choose one of these characters' points of view and write his or her thoughts about what's going on during this time. Consider what you know of the characters from the rest of the novel to inform your tone and opinions.

2. The Comic Book War – the graphic novel version

Now you have finished the novel, choose a chapter or segment that you think lends itself to graphic novelization. Create your own graphic novel page or panels of this part of the story. You can choose a style from your knowledge of today's graphic novels – for example, what would a manga Robert and Charlie look like?

3. The Comic Book War – the comic book version

Many scenes and stories from Robert's comic books are described in great detail. Having looked at comic books from the era, create your own 1940s-style comic book version of one of these scenes or stories.

4. Comic book comparisons

Study a sampling of today's graphic novels alongside comic books from the 1940s. What about the genre has changed, and what has remained the same?

About the Author

Jacqueline Guest is the author of more than a dozen novels for young readers, including two previous Coteau Books titles — *Outcasts of River Falls* and *Ghost Messages*.

Nine of Jacqueline's books have been honoured with Canadian Children's Book Centre Our Choice Awards, and in 2012 she won two American Indian Youth Literature Awards. *Ghost Messages* is a Moonbeam Gold Medal winner and was shortlisted for both the R Ross Annett Award and the 2012 Silver Birch® Award in the OLA Forest of Reading® program. *Belle of Batoche* was an Ontario Library Association Best Bet Selection and won the Edmonton Schools Best of the Best Award. Jacqueline's books have also received nominations for the Red Cedar, R. Ross Annett, Hackmatack, Golden Eagle, and Arthur Ellis Mystery Awards.

Jacqueline's works are well-known for having main characters who come from different ethnic backgrounds including First Nations, Inuit or Metis. In 2013, she was awarded the Indspire Award in recognition of her outstanding career achievement.

Alberta born and raised, Jacqueline Guest lives and writes in a cabin in the pine woods of the Rocky Mountain foothills. Robert's brothers in *The Comic Book War* are based on her father and his two brothers.

Also by Jacqueline Guest

Outcasts of River Falls

Belle of Batoche

Secret Signs

War Games

Dream Racer

Wild Ride

At Risk

Racing Fear

Lightning Rider

Soccer Star

A Goal in Sight

Rink Rivals

Rookie Season

Triple Threat

Free Throw

Hat Trick