

BOOKNOTES

EDUCATORS GUIDE

Shredderman

Grades 2–5

Standing Up for Oneself
Bullies • Heroes
Courage • Self-Esteem

introducing Shredderman

Nolan Byrd is a great kid who feels “invisible.” With no friends and a bully named Bubba constantly hounding him, school isn’t an easy place to be. It’s a good thing that Nolan has terrific parents who support him, and a cool teacher who inspires him. Fed up with Bubba and his bullying ways, Nolan creates a Web site for his alter ego, cyber-superhero Shredderman. As Shredderman, Nolan exposes Bubba the bully, and along the way, discovers that the fight for truth and justice is bigger and more important than his own problems.

meet Nolan!



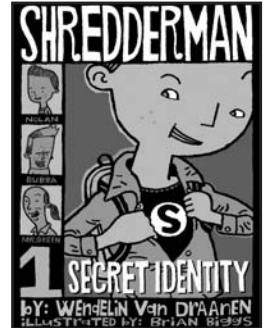
Nolan Byrd is the smartest kid in Cedar Valley Elementary School, but he’s got no friends, eats lunch alone, and lives in fear of the school bully. Then he creates **Shredderman**, a cyber-superhero who gives Nolan the courage to stand up for himself.

Shredderman: Secret Identity

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pre-reading activity

Create a semantic map around the theme: superhero. Ask students to suggest words that relate to the theme, such as *secrecy*, *strength*, or *bravery*. Next, challenge students to group the words into categories. Tell students to keep this activity in mind while reading the Shredderman series.



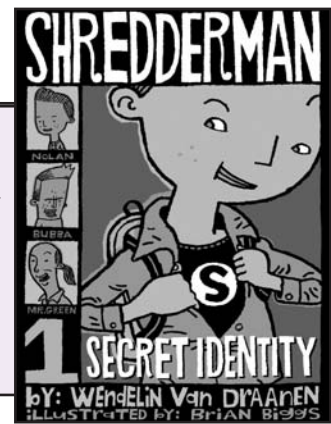
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Visit Teachers @ Random at www.randomhouse.com/teachers

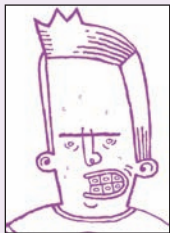
SHREDDERMAN secret identity

about the book

Nolan Byrd is a fifth grader with a big problem: Bubba Bixby. Sick of getting “pounded” and being called “nerd,” Nolan creates Shredderman, a cyber-superhero, to expose Bubba for the bully he is.



who's who!



With rocky knuckles, putrid breath, and teeth that are ready to bite, **Bubba Bixby** is the biggest, meanest bully in the fifth grade. Bubba is one slick thug who never gets caught in the act, until Shredderman exposes his nasty ways for the whole world to see.



What teacher wears sandals, drives a green van with a dolphin mural, and strums his guitar in class? **Mr. Elmo Green!** Known to his students as the “Happy Hippie,” this inspiring teacher moonlights as **the Bouncer**—Shredderman’s sidekick!

thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Nolan creates many links on his Web site to “give Bubba Bixby a little trouble.” (p. 17) Do you think that Nolan should have posted a picture of Bubba’s “big butt”? What’s the difference between standing up for oneself and exacting revenge?
2. On page 33, Nolan asks himself, “How come a bully like Bubba had friends and I didn’t?” Why do you think Bubba has friends and Nolan doesn’t?
3. Discuss how Nolan changes over the course of the book. Ask students to offer examples of how Nolan stands up for himself as a result of becoming Shredderman.
4. On page 132, Nolan witnesses Mr. Bixby being mean to his wife and son. Discuss the saying: children learn what they live. How does this saying relate to Bubba and his cruel, bullying behavior?

curriculum connections

1. Mr. Green assigns the class the project of designing a newspaper page. Place your students in small groups and challenge them to create their own newspaper page. Like Mr. Green, give students a guideline sheet that they can follow as they do the assignment.
2. Review the Superhero Semantic Map from the pre-reading activity with your class, and challenge each student to create a superhero. Students should describe their superhero in writing, create a drawing of him/her, and come up with a motto that describes the hero’s mission, such as Shredderman’s motto: “Yours in truth and justice.”
3. Start a pro-buddy/anti-bully campaign in your school. Have students create posters and public service announcements, form a student mentoring program, and spearhead a “random acts of kindness week” as a school wide program to promote friendship and decrease bullying.

vocabulary

Assertive (p. 2), *putrid* (p. 6), *meditate* (p. 13), *injustice* (p. 13), *camouflage* (p. 26), *preoccupied* (p. 29), *identity* (p. 45), *live-action* (p. 59), *data* (p. 60), *vengeful* (p. 72), *censoring* (p. 100), and *sidekick* (p. 108).

SHREDDERMAN attack of the tagger

about the book

Someone is spray-painting dumb baby faces all over Cedar Valley, and some people think Shredderman is responsible! It's up to Nolan to expose the tagger's true identity and clear Shredderman's good name.



who's who!



Dr. Ivana Voss is Cedar Valley Elementary School's not-so-kind, not-so-understanding, and very uptight principal. And since Shredderman has become the focus of the school, she's got a major ax to grind.



Eve Byrd is a computer programmer. **Steven Byrd** is a local newspaper reporter. Together they are the parents of Nolan, whose secret identity is the cyber-superhero Shredderman!

thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What is vandalism? Why is writing graffiti on public structures a form of vandalism? Why do taggers—people who paint graffiti—deface property when they know it's a crime? What are more positive ways to creatively express yourself?
2. On pages 55 and 56, Nolan recounts how his feelings were hurt by kids who wrote cruel comments in his fourth-grade yearbook. Discuss this passage and have students respond to Nolan's questions, "Why

did they have to be mean like that? Did they really think it was funny?"

3. Sometimes Nolan feels like he's invisible. Reread the last paragraph on page 91 and continue through the first three lines on page 92. Ask students to discuss situations in which they have felt invisible. Challenge students to befriend someone they don't know, invite a student who is eating lunch alone to join their table, or include a new student in a game during recess.

curriculum connections

1. Shredderman is on a quest for truth and justice. Brainstorm with your class about some societal problems of concern to students. Examples might be homelessness, the environment, or the excess stray animal population. As a class, choose one issue as a "class cause." Help students devise ways in which they can help out, such as conducting a clothing drive, organizing a neighborhood clean-up day, or sponsoring a pet-adoption event with your local animal shelter.

2. Keith Haring was a former tagger who became a well-known painter. His graffiti-inspired style became popular in the 1980s, and his work hangs in museums all over the world. Partner with the school art teacher to introduce students to the work of Keith Haring. Have students create their own art work inspired by the late artist's unique style.

3. Invite a local police officer to speak to students about vandalism in the community. Have students prepare questions for the speaker in advance of the visit.

vocabulary

Vandal (p. 22), *scour* (p. 26), *anonymous* (p. 28), *tweaked* (p. 31), *invincible* (p. 33), *indignant* (p. 72), *delinquents* (p. 94), *mortal* (p. 98), *schizophrenic* (p. 106), *Fahrenheit* (p. 119), *erratic* (p. 124), and *yakky* (p. 126).

SHREDDERMAN meet the gecko



about the book

When his favorite TV star comes to Cedar Valley, Nolan Byrd is the happiest kid/cyber-superhero in Cedar Valley, until a sleazy tabloid reporter starts hounding the celebrity. Can Shredderman reveal this slimy paparazzi photographer for “the mole” he is?

who's who!



Chase Morton, the star of *The Gecko and Sticky*, comes to Cedar Valley to shoot an episode of the show, and finds himself the target of a sleazy tabloid photographer.



He's sleazy. He's slimy. He'll play dirty to get a shot of Chase Morton, Nolan's favorite TV star. He's **Joel Bowl**, the creepy paparazzi photographer known to his victims as “**the Mole**.”

thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. On page 68, Nolan says, “But the fight for truth and justice was bigger than wanting friends. Bigger than being called Nerd. Bigger than me.” Discuss what Nolan means by this statement. What's so important about truth and justice?
2. What does Nolan mean when he says, “Inside, my dad's got the heart of a superhero.” (p. 93)
3. Reread Chapter 15, “Scared Circuitless.” Why does Bubba yell at Miss Newby and then storm out of the room. Why do you think a tough-guy like Bubba was crying?
4. On page 134, Nolan wonders if he lived with Bubba's dad, would he get meaner? And if Bubba lived with Mr. Byrd, would he get nicer? What do you think would happen if Nolan and Bubba switched dads? What do you think is the key to making Bubba a nicer boy?

curriculum connections

1. Nolan Byrd has a colorful way with words. Go back through the book and make a list of similes, metaphors, and other creative ways Nolan uses to describe people and things. For example, on page 89, Nolan says, “Bullets started shooting out of my sweat glands.” Have students illustrate one expression from the list.
2. Sticky, a kleptomaniac gecko, is the sidekick on Nolan's favorite television show. Have the class research information on geckos and other radical reptiles.
3. *The Gecko and Sticky* is shooting an episode in Old Town, the historic district of Cedar Valley. Assign each student a site or event from your town's history. Challenge students to come up with creative ways of presenting their research findings to the class.

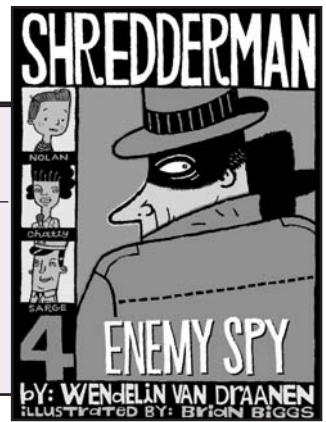
vocabulary

Diabolical (p. 14), *quarks* (p. 18), *literally* (p. 23), *hospitality* (p. 28), *loitering* (p. 48), *gastropod* (p. 54), *scurried* (p. 76), *ingot* (p. 76), *wrangler* (p. 85), *fumigate* (p. 121), *miffed* (p. 155), and *vigilante* (p. 157).

SHREDDERMAN enemy spy

about the book

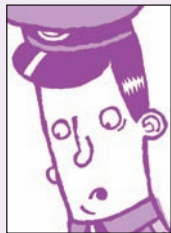
Since putting the tabloid photographer Joel “The Mole” Bowl out of business, Shredderman is a national sensation. Can Nolan keep Shredderman online long enough to uncover an international spy ring in Cedar Valley?



who's who!



Chatty Adams is a bossy, selfish television reporter who will stop at nothing to scoop a story for the national news.



Sergeant Billy Klubb is a good-natured Cedar Valley police officer who gets a secret tip about an international spy ring from the town's coolest superhero, Shredderman!

thematic connections

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Discuss what Nolan means when he says, “It’s funny how missing words can be so much louder than real words.” (p. 17)
2. Discuss a time when you felt so mad or upset that you needed to be alone. Do you think Nolan was wise to ride so far from home? What else could he have done to feel better?
3. After Nolan’s dad comes to school and discovers him eating lunch alone, why does Nolan feel worse about having no friends? Why do you think such a smart, nice kid doesn’t have any friends?
4. Nolan confronts the TV reporter Harry Kane in an attempt to help his parents. How has being Shredderman given Nolan the courage to stand up for what is right? Do you think Nolan made the right decision in revealing that he is Shredderman? Explain.

curriculum connections

1. On page 49, Nolan says, “Maybe Benjamin Franklin was never a United States president, but he definitely deserves to be on the one-hundred-dollar bill.” Research the life and contributions of this extraordinary founding father of the United States.
2. Nolan loves words and knows a *lot* of them. He’s fond of coming up with synonyms for words, such as *unkempt*, *slovenly*, and *bedraggled*. (p. 52) Instruct students on how to use a thesaurus to find synonyms for common words. Have students make a booklet with 25 words and at least three synonyms for each word. Students can illustrate each page with original artwork.
3. Have students write an epilogue to the Shredderman series.

vocabulary

Vigilantism (p. 2), *speculation* (p. 4), *tactics* (p. 5), *powwow* (p. 11), *conspicuous* (p. 11), *conventional* (p. 13), *sinister* (p. 39), *classified* (p. 56), *mirage* (p. 60), *cryptic* (p. 107), and *copasetic* (p. 149).

in her own words: Wendelin Van Draanen

Q. What inspired you to write the Shredderman series?

A. A confluence of several things: having been bullied as a child; seeing my oldest son ostracized at school; being a computer science teacher; and observing that kids find ways to bully other kids. I wanted to create something fun, fast-paced, and substantive that would help spark a love of reading.

Q. What do you like best about your character Nolan Byrd?

A. That he's a champion of the underdog. He's undaunted, creative, enthusiastic, and is such a sweet kid.

Q. What has been the best compliment you've ever received from a child about the Shredderman series?

A. The most touching comment came from a shy fourth-grade boy who approached me after a school visit and whispered, "I wish Shredderman went to our school." I leaned forward and whispered back, "He does." Then I tapped him on the chest and said, "He's right inside. You just have to let him out."

about the author



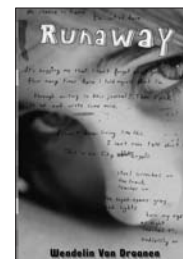
Growing up, **Wendelin Van Draanen** was a tomboy who loved to be outside chasing down adventure. She did not decide that she wanted to be an author until she was an adult. When she

tried her hand at writing a screenplay about a family tragedy, she found the process quite cathartic, and from that experience, turned to writing novels for adults. She soon stumbled upon the joys of writing for children. Van Draanen lives with her husband and two sons in California.

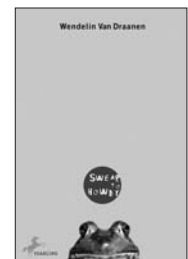
other books by Wendelin Van Draanen



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Grades 5-9



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Grades 5 up



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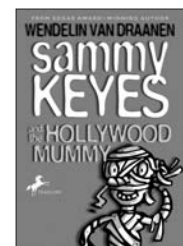
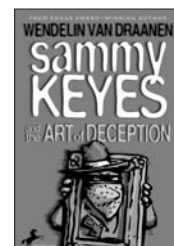
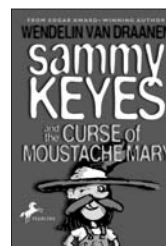
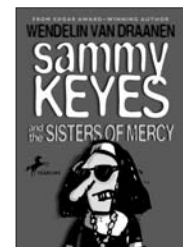
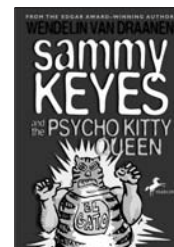
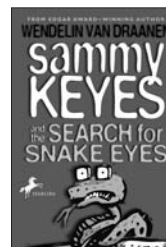
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