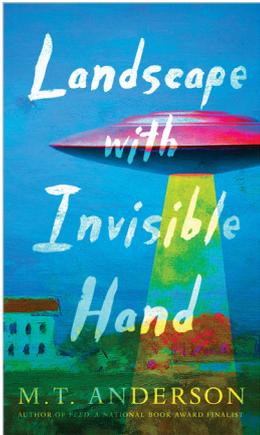




Walker Books Classroom Ideas



Landscape with Invisible Hand

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*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

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Outline:

When the vuvv first landed, it came as a surprise to aspiring artist Adam and the rest of planet Earth — but not necessarily an unwelcome one. Can it really be called an invasion when the vuvv generously offered free advanced technology and cures for every illness imaginable? As it turns out, yes. With his parents' jobs replaced by alien tech and no money for food, clean water, or the vuvv's miraculous medicine, Adam and his girlfriend, Chloe, have to get creative to survive. And since the vuvv crave anything they deem "classic" Earth culture (doo-wop music, still-life paintings of fruit, true love), recording 1950s-style dates for the vuvv to watch in a pay-per-minute format seems like a brilliant idea. But it's hard for Adam and Chloe to sell true love when they hate each other more with every passing episode. Soon enough, Adam must decide how far he's willing to go — and what he's willing to sacrifice — to give the vuvv what they want.

Author/Illustrator Information:

M. T. Anderson is the author of *Feed*, winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Prize; the National Book Award-winning *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation, Volume I: The Pox Party* and its sequel, *The Kingdom on the Waves*, both New York Times bestsellers and Michael L. Printz Honor Books; *Symphony for the City of the Dead: Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad*; and many other books for children and young adults. He lives near Boston, Massachusetts.

How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

These notes are for:

- Secondary years 8-12
- Ages 14+

Key Learning Areas:

- English

Example of:

- Fiction
- Dystopia

Themes/Ideas:

- Poverty
- Art
- Family
- Rebellion

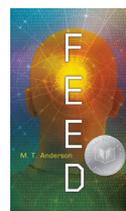


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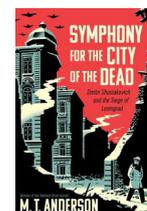
Discussion Questions and Activities:

1. The vuvv are unlike depictions of alien life in other books and popular media — how do their characteristics and impact on Earth highlight current concerns over the future of our planet and species?
2. What makes the 1950s such an interesting period for the vuvv to be obsessed with? Why do you think MT Anderson chose that era?
3. What does Adam's plight suggest to you about art in the face of hopelessness? Adam's art is a commentary on the current state of humanity, the poverty he's surrounded by, and the apathy of the vuvv. If only one or two others appreciate what he's trying to achieve, are his efforts still worthwhile?
4. Why are the chapters titled as if they were paintings? How did that affect your reading of the text?
5. Adam's mother looks at everything in terms of how likely it is to go her way — what does her constant use of percentages and odds reveal about the way she sees her world? How is it different from Adam's vision?
6. Compare the healthcare crisis in the novel to the healthcare discussions happening in America and around the globe today. As Adam notes about his chronic illness, "I've tried to get some kind of medicine to help with it — the vuvv can apparently solve this kind of thing in five minutes — but we have minimum insurance coverage. All the medicine in the world won't help you if you don't own it". How would Adam view the current state of healthcare in America and the battle over healthcare bills in the US Congress?
7. Discuss the irony of the vuvv's fascination — and demand for — "true love." How does their demand for it affect what they're getting?
8. Similarly, when there's a monetary compensation or compulsion for something, does that necessarily affect the sincerity of the results? Producing art for public consumption can be a business like anything else — what is the difference between consumers assigning value and creators assigning value?
9. In the novel, the vuvv are the ones that assign value to good and services and dictate the economy. What does that suggest to you about how arbitrarily something's worth is decided?
10. The text doesn't gloss over the reality of living with a chronic illness like Adam's. He is constantly thinking of his health and how it affects his every move. Why do you think it's rare to read about the everyday aspects of something like Merrick's disease, from the tedious to the unpleasant to the potentially life-threatening?
11. Did the novel turn out how you expected? If not, how did it differ? What did you think would happen with the art competition?
12. Adam's art stands apart because he shows Earth as it truly is since the vuvv invasion, problems and all, instead of harkening back to a glorious pre-vuvv era. Is it easier to call for a return to some kind of imagined perfect past than to acknowledge how fractured society has become and how much work must be done to move towards a better future for everyone? Why might one outlook seem more appealing? How would you try to find a common ground with someone whose outlook opposes yours?
13. Adam and Chloe end up making their own lives into a work of art online. What does this say about social media? What are the benefits and problems with having our lives online?
14. What does this book suggest about the experience of colonisation? Are there real-world examples that the vuvv colonisation of Earth reminds you of?
15. How do you interpret the novel's ending? What impression do you think MT Anderson hopes to impart on his readers?
16. The novel is a satire — how does that affect your reading and interpretation of it? Why do you think the author chose satire as the right means to unpack such questions about art, truth, and value?

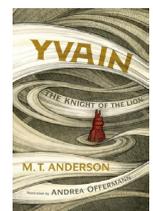
Also by M.T. Anderson



Feed
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Symphony for the City of the Dead
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Yvain: The Knight of the Lion
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