



Book reviewed by Elizabeth Buck,
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'The Drawing Lesson'
By Mark Crilley

Graphic novels — books of long-form prose that are illustrated in a comic style — have great appeal to a wide range of readers, from students learning to read chapter books on their own to adults looking for a shake-up in their reading routine. "The Drawing Lesson: A Graphic Novel That Teaches You How to Draw," written and illustrated by Mark Crilley, is a unique book that delivers handsomely on that appeal.

"The Drawing Lesson" accomplishes dual goals of storyline engagement and art education simultaneously as we follow a hopeful young artist named David and learn along with him as he develops drawing skills — and a friendship — in the company of Becky, his accidental drawing mentor. David's yearning to draw well and his assertions that he is terrible at drawing will ring true to many readers, young and old alike. Becky responds with the often-heard response that skill comes with practice. But this novel goes beyond such platitudes, offering specific guidance on how to practice being an artist, and incidentally inviting the reader to study alongside David.

Each chapter is purposefully designed so readers experience David's personal story and character growth, as well as specific lessons in "drawing what you see," "light and shadow," and "composition." In addition, each chapter finishes with a suggested drawing activity, inviting the reader to stretch your experience with David even further, bringing the drawing lessons into your own life — much like breaking the fourth wall in theater or movies.

Lest one think that "The Drawing Lesson" is a dry manual on how to draw, one of the endearing qualities of this book lies in the real-life, homespun quality of the storyline. The story that unfolds pulls no punches about the charms and difficulties of the dreams of youth contrasted with the responsibilities of adulthood and how those factors come into play as David and Becky grow to know each other. The dialogue is truthful, humorous, and flows with the well-drawn illustrations that capture the moments and emotions in the story.

As an engaging, honest, and hopeful story cleanly and expressively illustrated, I recommend this book not only to those interested in graphic novels or people who would like to learn more about drawing — but to all children young and old who enjoy being entertained. Choosing to read this book may offer the reader more than getting to know the characters and story — it also opens a window to see life differently every day.



The Village
School's
**Children's Book
of the Month**