



## **NIMONA**

**By Noelle Stevenson**

### **Book Summary:**

In this debut graphic novel from rising star Noelle Stevenson, based on her web comic that won the Slate Cartoonist Studio Prize and that had over 100,000 online followers before Noelle graduated from Maryland Institute College of Art, a spunky young shapeshifter joins forces with a medieval supervillain to wreak havoc on a kingdom where the good guys are hardly as good as they seem.

### **Curriculum Areas and Key Learning Outcomes:**

English, Visual Arts, Media Arts

**Appropriate Ages:** For teens and a crossover audience.

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**Notes adapted by Jacqui Barton**

CONTENTS

Nimona tells the tale of heroes, villains, intrigue, adventure, dragons, magic, and science. It looks like a sword and sorcery yarn, but it is so much more than that. It follows the titular character, a young female shapeshifter who seeks out the land's most nefarious villain, Lord Ballister Blackheart, so she can become his sidekick and wreak some serious havoc.



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As you can see from even the brief excerpt, this book has an excellent sense of humor, timing, foreboding, and storytelling. I know it is a debut book but it seems much more an assured and mature work, where the creator has a firm handle on comics conventions.

On top of all this excellent craft, the story itself is full of much suspense, and it is subversive in the best possible ways. Almost nothing, from the vile villain to the golden boy hero Sir Ambrosius Goldenloin to Nimona to the protective Institution of Law Enforcement is as it seems. This book is full of complicated, interesting characters, unexpected plot twists, and I do not want to spoil much about the story, but I can say it was one of the most gripping and entertaining books I have read this year.

Nimona was originally published as a webcomic by Noelle Stevenson. She has drawn a few other comics, but this is her debut graphic novel. She is also known for co-writing the series *Lumberjanes* from Boom! Studios. She talks about comics and her work on *Nimona* in this interview.

All of the reviews I have read about this book have been full of praise. Tasha Robinson called it "a fleet-moving, breathless story." Ana Grilo gave it a "Perfect" rating and playfully wrote, "OH YOU BEAUTIFUL BEAUTIFUL BOOK LET ME HUG YOU FOREVER." J. Caleb Mozzocco smartly commented that "Stevenson uses the

conventions of popular fantasy, science-fiction and superhero narratives to explore the way in which society imposes labels and roles on us all." Jenn remarked that "the world Stevenson crafts is quite brilliant. Set in Renaissance times, but with the technology of modern times. Truly brilliant."

## CHARACTERS



### NIMONA

Nimona is an impulsive young shapeshifter who aspires to supervillainy and has convinced Lord Ballister Blackheart to take her on as his squire. While quick-thinking and innovative with her powers, she is disturbingly destructive and rarely gives any thought to consequences. She's trouble.



### LORD BALLISTER BLACKHEART

Ballister Blackheart was once a fierce enforcer of the law until his best friend betrayed him and blew up his right arm, after which he decided that the law was wrong. He follows his own moral code now, which occasionally involves genetically engineered dragons.



## SIR AMBROSIUS GOLDENLOIN

Goldenloin is the kingdom's darling and the figurehead of the Institution of Law Enforcement and Heroics. He is Ballister's nemesis and former best friend, and responsible for Ballister's lack of right arm - not that he'll ever admit it. He has a very high opinion of himself. He wears a codpiece.



## THE DIRECTOR

The Director is the shadowy figure at the heart of the kingdom's inner workings, and the hand behind many of its darkest dealings. As far as anyone can tell her name is actually Director. No one knows much about her, and no one really likes her, but it's not her job to be liked. She has work to do and no one had better get in her way.



## DR. MEREDITH BLITZMEYER

Enthusiastic, optimistic, and a little scatter-brained. She's traveled far and seen some things and nothing much fazes her anymore. Very excited about science. Not a witch. (Probably not a witch).

## GRAPHIC NOVEL QUESTIONS

What is a Graphic Novel?

Do you have to know how to draw to do a graphic novel?

Which comes first, art or story?

How do I get started?

What is more important, Art or Story?

## ACTIVITY

This activity is used for discussion of a novel read by the whole class. Working individually and in groups, using symbols, drawings, shapes, and colours, alongside words and quotations, students construct a graphic of their section of the novel using an online tool and on newsprint or butcher paper with crayons or markers. When all groups have completed their graphics, they will present them to the class, explaining why they chose the elements they used. Finished graphics can be displayed on a class bulletin board, on walls, or on a Web page. Finally, students will write an individual essay analysing one element of the novel.

**Literary Graffiti Interactive:** Using this online tool, students draw images about a text they are reading. They can also write a summary of the text, an explanation of their drawing, and how the drawing is significant to the text.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR



Noelle Stevenson is the New York Times bestselling author of *Nimona*, has been nominated for Harvey and Eisner Awards, and was awarded the *Slate* Cartoonist Studio Prize for Best Web Comic in 2012 for *Nimona*. A graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art, Noelle is a writer on Disney's *Wander Over Yonder*, the cowriter of *Boom! Studios' Lumberjanes*, and has written for Marvel and DC Comics. She lives in Los Angeles. In her spare time she can be found drawing superheroes and talking about bad TV on her Tumblr or on Twitter.

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