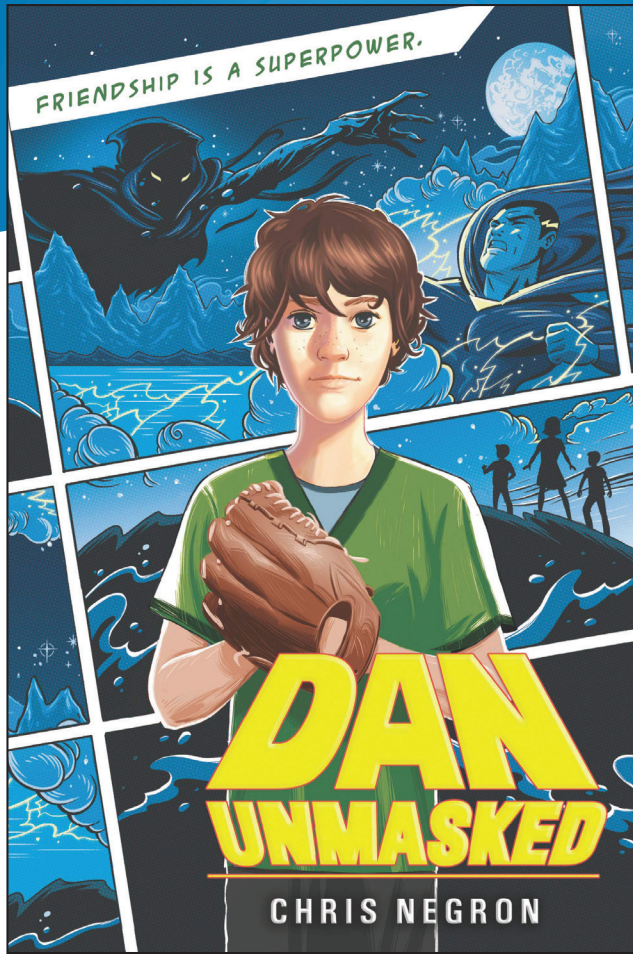


# CURRICULUM GUIDE



## DAN UNMASKED

BY CHRIS NEGRÓN

*A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection*

*A Summer/Fall 2020 Indies Introduce Pick*

**D**AN AND HIS BEST FRIEND, NATE, live for baseball and the latest installment of their favorite comic, *Captain Nexus and the Nexus Five*. Dan and Nate's team, the Mira Giants, is having a great season—thanks in large part to Nate's pitching prowess. Whether they're on the baseball

field or in Nate's basement discussing the Nexus Zone, the two friends talk constantly. They even have a secret signal to show they know what the other is thinking. Until the unthinkable happens.

After an accident at baseball practice—an accident that Dan is certain he caused—Nate has fallen into a coma. If Dan ever wants to talk to Nate again, he's got to figure out a way to wake him up. But for all the time he's spent reading about the adventures of Captain Nexus, Dan knows he's no superhero. Heroes have powers—and without Nate, all Dan has is a closet stuffed with comics and a best-friend-shaped hole in his heart. There's no way a regular kid can save the day. Right?

Chris Negrón's emotional debut is a tribute to baseball, comics, and the superpower of friendship.

**“Stirring hits every despairing low and thrilling high of a sports movie.”**

**—KIRKUS REVIEWS**

[chrisnegrón.com](http://chrisnegrón.com)

[harpercollinschildrens.com](http://harpercollinschildrens.com)

The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide are noted throughout. For more information on the Common Core, visit [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Unless otherwise noted, all discussion questions meet the following Common Core State Standards: **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1**

- 1.** Identify the point of view from which *Dan Unmasked* is told. What techniques and details does the author use to develop the point of view in the story? How would you as a reader describe the speaker's point of view in the story? **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6**
- 2.** Besides baseball, what other common interest unites the group of kids in the story? Who is responsible for introducing the group to this special pastime?
- 3.** Once a month, the group gathers for a group read of *Captain Nexus and the Nexus Five*. Describe Captain Nexus and the series in which he is featured. What rules does the group have in place to maintain the ritual of reading and discussing the latest installment?
- 4.** Describe Courtney based on her actions at the group read. How does she interact with the others? What is Dan's opinion of her at this first encounter? **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3**
- 5.** In the blink of an eye, everything changes for the Giants during an indoor baseball practice. Describe the incident and what immediately follows at the hospital. What mix of emotions does Dan feel as a result of the accident?
- 6.** Where do people in a coma go? What does Dr. Tori tell Dan about coma patients? Dan realizes that when something bad happens in a comic book, there is always a way to reverse it. How does he use this idea to construct a plan to help bring Nate out of his coma?
- 7.** Even though Dan frequently sees Ollie, his primary focus is on Ollie's big brother, Nate. To Dan, Ollie is firmly positioned in Nate's shadow. How does the accident change Dan's opinion of Ollie and their relationship?
- 8.** An important task done together with new friends often helps us see each other's hidden talents. For Ollie, Dan, and Courtney, which special skills from each of them contribute to the project they are planning to start?
- 9.** What plan do Courtney and Dan hatch to give Ollie the recognition they feel he deserves for his drawing abilities?
- 10.** Dan struggles to connect with a busy mother and an absent father and soon realizes that Courtney has her own family troubles. How do you think Dan and Courtney's challenges at home affect their friendship and their plan to help Ollie and Nate? **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3**



- 11.** Early in Dan and Courtney’s friendship, Courtney asks Dan why he loves comic books. Later, Dan poses the same type of question to his teammates about baseball. What do you think is Dan’s motivation for asking this question of his fellow Giants? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)
- 12.** Who wins the *Tall Ship Annual* contest? Who do Dan and Courtney meet as a result? Describe the scene at Courtney’s house when they hear the news.
- 13.** How are the comic book setting and characters of Captain Nexus, the Nexus Zone, and the Hollow connected to real-story characters Dan and George Sanderson? Why did the author organize the novel with these two parallel story lines? How do these connections help the reader better understand the characters in *Dan Unmasked*? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.5](#), [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.5](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.5](#)
- 14.** What does Dan discover on a shelf when he, Ollie and Courtney visit George Sanderson’s art studio for the first time? Why do you think it helps make Dan comfortable about sharing his role in Nate’s accident with Sanderson?
- 15.** What does George Sanderson reveal about his past to Dan? How does it help Dan better understand the Captain Nexus comic books and Sanderson himself?
- 16.** When Dan struggles to successfully pitch in the championship game, he flashes back to a time when he and Nate were skipping stones on the pond. Describe what happens in the two scenes: one in the present with an ineffective Dan on the pitching mound and the other from the past with a boy helping his best friend learn to skip stones across a pond. What purpose does this flashback serve in the story?
- 17.** George Sanderson and the trio struggle to collaborate on the final comic book in the Captain Nexus series. Discuss the storyline of #16. What does the story reveal about George Sanderson and the kids who help him complete the last issue?
- 18.** How did you anticipate the story would end? Did your expectation differ from what really happened? Describe the last scene in the story and your emotional reaction to the ending. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)
- 19.** Nate and Dan share a rare friendship connected by baseball, comic books, and a private bike trail behind Dan’s house. After the accident, Dan spends time at the trail and realizes that it looks like the Nexus Zone. How is this bike trail an important place of connection for Dan—to Nate, to George Sanderson, and maybe most importantly to Dan’s own dad? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)
- 20.** When he first meets Dan and Courtney, George Sanderson says, “Stories give us ways to figure things out. . . . Art, stories, they have power. Lots of it. They give us strength when we need it most.” How is Sanderson’s statement true for his own life? How is it true for Courtney, Ollie, and Dan? How is it true for you? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)
- 21.** The characters in *Dan Unmasked* face many challenges—from traumatic injury to divorce to distant parents. What themes emerge over the course of the novel? What lessons do you think the characters learn from working together? [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2](#); [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2](#)

# ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

## A KEY SCENE

After reading *Dan Unmasked*, select what you think is the most important scene in the novel. Turn this scene into a comic strip or book. Think about the action in this scene and the order of events as you plan your comic. Add speech bubbles with script that captures the dialogue between characters. Be sure to include colorful illustrations that help tell the story of the scene.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7**

## CLASSROOM GROUP READ

Dan and his baseball teammates have a ritual where they gather once a month to read the latest edition of the Captain Nexus comic book series. Host a comic book group read with your classmates. Gather multiple copies of a comic book to share or use a document camera to project one comic for all to read together. Create a set of rules for the class to follow while reading. After reading, discuss the story in depth. Who are the main characters? What themes emerge over the course of the book? What actions were surprising? How did characters change throughout the story?

## FAST RESEARCH

Dr. Tori encounters a distraught Dan at the hospital after Nate's accident. She tells Dan that he can play an important role in Nate's recovery by sharing stories—an approach called Familiar Auditory Sensory Training (FAST). Research what the FAST approach involves and how it can be used with those suffering from a major trauma. Compile your findings into a research report. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.2;**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2**

## OUR YEAR IN COMIC FORM

What great field trips, science experiments, and other school events has your class shared this year? Brainstorm a list of highlights and immortalize them in comic form. Break into small groups to script, draw, and letter each of the highlights from the brainstormed list. Compile all of the pages into one big comic book to commemorate the school year.

## INTRODUCING . . .

George Sanderson was inspired by people and events in his real life to create the characters in *Captain Nexus and the Nexus Five*. Think about the types of characters normally found in comic books—superheroes, sidekicks, evil masterminds, everyday people, and even super pets! What type of comic book character would you create? Design a baseball-style card for your new character. Include a portrait, the character's name, any superpowers (for good or for evil!), and any other vital information or statistics. Share your comic book character player cards with your classmates.

The discussion questions, activities, and worksheets in this guide were created by Leigh Courtney, Ph.D. She teaches in the Global Education program at a public school in San Diego, California. She holds both master's and doctoral degrees in education, with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Choose one of the following characters from *Dan Unmasked*: Dan, Courtney, Ollie, or George Sanderson. Think of three adjectives that could describe your selected character's traits. Then locate evidence in the text of the character's words and actions that support each adjective you chose to describe the character. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3**



**TRAIT**

**TEXT EVIDENCE**

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Sound effects are often featured in comic books to highlight the action in the stories. Try your hand at creating some sound effect words for key scenes in *Dan Unmasked*. Find three action-packed baseball scenes in the novel and write a brief description of each. Think of which sound words would complement the action in each scene. Create your sound words using bold colors, sizes, and shapes in the box next the description of each scene. **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.7**

**DESCRIPTION OF BASEBALL SCENE**

**SOUND WORD TO COMPLEMENT THE SCENE**

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NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

# YOU'RE MY HERO



The theme of what makes a hero is central to *Dan Unmasked*. Each of the main characters becomes a hero to someone else at one or more points in the novel. Describe a moment when the characters below became heroes and to whom. What makes their actions heroic? **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.2;**

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2**

**DAN** \_\_\_\_\_

**OLLIE** \_\_\_\_\_

**NATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**COURTNEY** \_\_\_\_\_

**GEORGE SANDERSON** \_\_\_\_\_

**DAN'S DAD** \_\_\_\_\_