

Lesson: Heartstopper - More Than Just a Crush!

Welcome! Today, we're diving into the wonderful world of Heartstopper by Alice Oseman. It's more than just a cute story; it's a graphic novel packed with emotion, relatable characters, and important themes. Let's explore how words and pictures work together to tell Nick and Charlie's story.

Materials Needed:

- Heartstopper Graphic Novels (Volume 1 and onwards, if available)
- Notebook or paper
- Pens or pencils
- Optional: Colored pencils or markers

Activity 1: Getting to Know Nick & Charlie

Graphic novels show us characters' feelings not just through words, but through expressions and actions. Let's look closely at Nick and Charlie.

1. **First Impressions:** Think back to when Charlie and Nick first met. Reread the first few chapters of Volume 1. How are they introduced? What are your initial thoughts about each character? How do the drawings help show their personalities right away?
2. **Changing Feelings:** Find a sequence of panels where either Nick or Charlie's feelings clearly change (like Nick's confusion, or Charlie's moments of anxiety or joy). Describe what's happening in the panels. How does Alice Oseman show these changing emotions through facial expressions, body language, or even those little animated leaves or sparks?
3. **Character Map (Optional):** Choose either Nick or Charlie. Draw a circle in the center of your paper with their name. Draw lines outwards and write down their key personality traits, their worries, their joys, and important relationships they have. Find examples in the text/images to support your points.

Activity 2: Big Themes, Gentle Touch

Heartstopper tackles some big ideas in a gentle way. Let's talk about them.

- **Friendship:** Besides the romance, friendship is huge in Heartstopper. Think about Tao, Elle, Tara, and Darcy. How are these friendships important to Nick and Charlie? Find an example of strong friendship in action.
- **Identity & Coming Out:** Nick's journey with his identity is central. How does the story show his confusion, realization, and eventually, acceptance? Why is showing this journey important?
- **Mental Health:** Charlie deals with anxiety and past bullying. How does the graphic novel portray this sensitively? How do his friends support him?
- **Love & Relationships:** Discuss what makes Nick and Charlie's relationship feel special and healthy. How do they communicate and support each other?

Discussion Prompts: Which theme resonates most with you? Why do you think Heartstopper has become so popular?

Activity 3: The Language of Graphic Novels

It's not just a book with pictures! How do the graphic elements tell the story?

- **Panels:** Look at different page layouts. How does the size and shape of panels affect the pacing? When are there big panels versus small ones?
- **Gutters:** The space BETWEEN panels is called the gutter. What happens in your imagination in that space?
- **Speech Bubbles & Text:** Notice how speech bubbles change shape. What does a jagged bubble mean? How is internal thought shown differently from spoken words?
- **Visual Motifs:** Those leaves! The sparks! What do these recurring visual cues represent? How do they add emotion beyond what the characters say?

Wrap-up & Reflection

Think about your reading experience. What did you enjoy most about exploring Heartstopper today?

Reflection Prompt: Choose a scene from Heartstopper that stuck with you. In your notebook, write a short paragraph explaining why it was meaningful to you. OR Write a short diary entry from the perspective of either Nick or Charlie about a specific event in the story.

Great job exploring Heartstopper today! You've practiced analyzing characters, identifying themes, and understanding how graphic novels tell powerful stories.