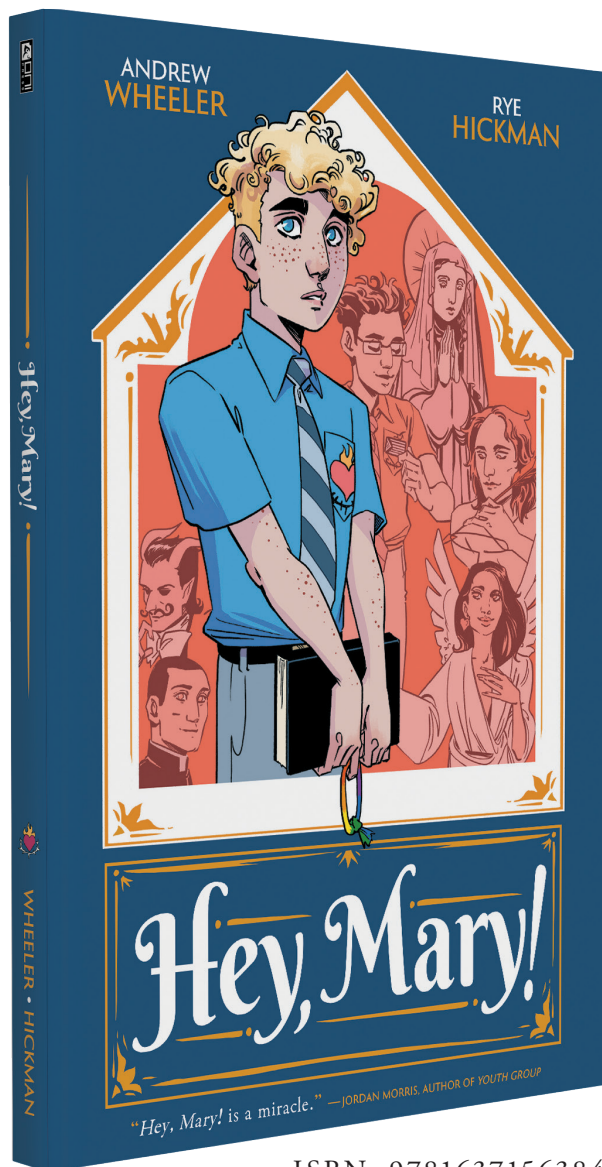


# Hey, Mary!

## EDUCATOR GUIDE

INCLUDES QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION  
AS WELL AS CLASSROOM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES



A heartfelt look at the  
intersection of religion and  
queer identity from creators

ANDREW  
WHEELER

&

RYE  
HICKMAN

**About the Book:** Mark is a good Catholic boy. He goes to church, says his prayers, and spends too much time worrying about hell. When Mark realizes he has a crush on another boy in his school, he struggles to reconcile his feelings with his faith as the weight of centuries of shame and judgment—and his fear of his parents' response—presses on his shoulders. Mark seeks advice from his priest, as well as a local drag performer, but also receives unexpected input from key figures in Catholic history and lore, including Joan of Arc, Michelangelo, St. Sebastian, and Savonarola. Ultimately, only Mark can answer the question: Is it possible for him to be both Catholic *and* gay?



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## • LEARNING STANDARDS •

The questions and activities in this teacher guide correlate with the following Common Core English Language Arts Standards ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) for **GRADES 7–8**:

### ELA READING: LITERATURE STANDARDS

#### Key Ideas and Details

RL.7-8.1, RL.7-8.2, RL.7-8.3;

#### Craft and Structure

RL.7-8.4, RL.7-8.5, RL.7-8.6;

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RL.7-8.9.

### ELA WRITING STANDARDS

#### Text Types and Purposes

W.7-8.1, W.7-8.2, W.7-8.3;

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

W.7-8.4, W.7-8.5, W.7-8.6;

#### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.7-8.7, W.7-8.8, W.7-8.9.

### ELA SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.7-8.1SL.7-8.3;

#### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.7-8.4, SL.7-8.5, SL.7-8.6.

The questions and activities in this teacher guide correlate with the following Common Core English Language Arts Standards ([www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)) for **GRADES 9–10**:

### ELA READING: LITERATURE STANDARDS

#### Key Ideas and Details

RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3;

#### Craft and Structure

RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.6;

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RL.9-10.9.

### ELA WRITING STANDARDS

#### Text Types and Purposes

W.9-10.1, W.9-10.2, W.9-10.3;

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

W.9-10.4, W.9-10.5, W.9-10.6;

#### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.9-10.7, W.9-10.8, W.9-10.9.

### ELA SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3;

#### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

SL.9-10.4, SL.9-10.5, SL.9-10.6.

## • A GENERAL APPROACH •

It is highly recommended that you read Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, specifically pages 60–63, which deal with closure, pages 70–72, which deal with panel transitions, and 152–155, which deal with word/picture combinations. Depending on the needs of your class, you can have students learn these specific terms and use them to identify the different transition and combination styles. Alternatively, you can utilize your understanding of them to guide discussion when examining specific panels or pages.

### HIGHLIGHT INDIVIDUAL PANELS AND OR PAGES, AND ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

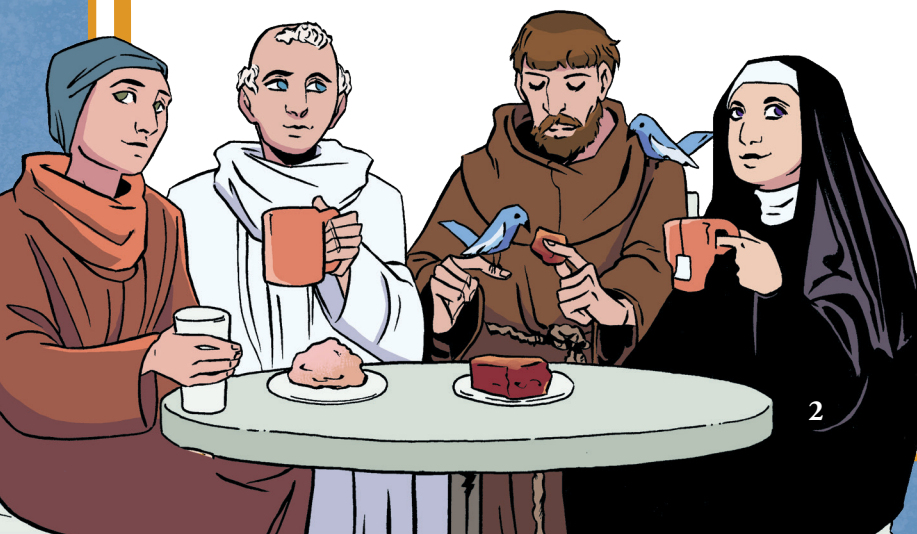
- What is going on in this panel and/or on this page?
- What is the purpose of the specific pictures in telling the story? How do they enhance the words?
- Why did the creator choose to put these words and pictures together in this way?
- How does color affect the scene?
- What do we learn about the character from the images?
- What mood is being set and how?

### EXAMINE A SPECIFIC SEQUENCE OF PANELS:

- Why did the creators put these panels in this particular order?
- What's happening between the panels? (A great exercise is to have students act out a short scene in the book, getting them to fill in the action occurring between the panels. This demonstrates to them that the gutter [that space between panels] is just as important as the other storytelling elements in the book.)
- How does the transition between these panels indicate things like mood and character?
- How do the panel transitions affect the speed of the scene?
- Why did the creator choose this speed?

### A NOTE:

The most important thing to focus on while discussing this text is to foster an environment of support and safety. Before teaching with this text, it is recommended that you read *A Quick & Easy Guide to Queer and Trans Identities* in order to provide you with the language and framework to discuss these topics. Some students may be going through their own journey on this path and it is important to make sure they feel heard and supported without feeling attacked, singled out, or pressured to reveal their identity before they are ready. Support resources should be made available for any student who needs them. Two such resources, both of which provide hotline support, are [lgbthotline.org](http://lgbthotline.org) and [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org). It may be beneficial to post these links in your classroom while studying this text or even throughout the year in order to create a safer space.





## • PRE-READING ACTIVITIES •

What does the cover tell you about the story? What can you infer about the characters from how they appear on the cover?

### GET UP AND ACT OUT PAGES 10-11:

- How much is happening between the panels (in the gutters)?
- Is the action slow or fast?
- Do different people imagine the transitions differently?

### READ CHAPTER 1 AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- Who are the main characters?
- What do you know about the characters so far?
- What is the dilemma the main characters face?

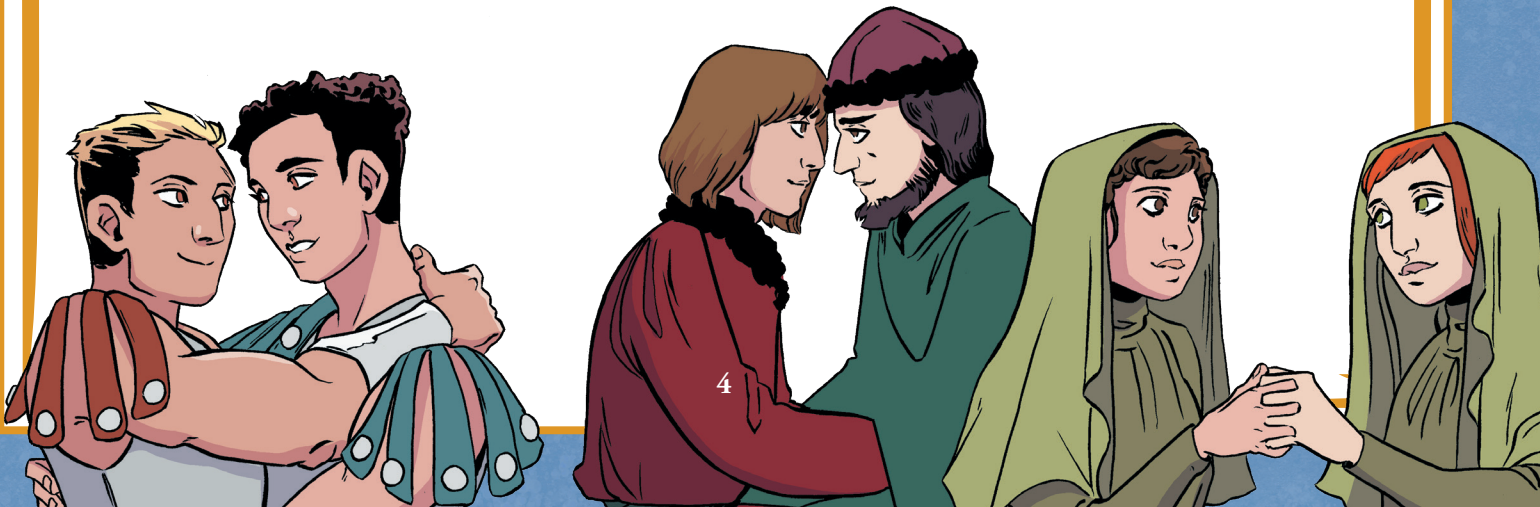
## • GENERAL DISCUSSION •

1. What do you think about the end of the book? Is it satisfying? What would you change?
2. What is the relationship between Mark and Luka? When does it change, and why? Do you feel the relationship progresses in a realistic way?
3. Why do you think it is so hard for Mark to come out or even talk about how he feels?
4. Are you surprised or not by how Mark responds to his parents after he comes out to them? Do you think he handles it the right way?
5. What is your relationship with your parents? Why is it sometimes so hard to tell them things? When is it hard and when is it easy?
6. Throughout the book, Mark struggles with anxiety on his journey to coming out, which manifests as visions. Identify these scenes. How do these scenes reinforce Mark's struggle? Do you think these depictions are realistic portrayals of how people struggle with mental health and decision-making?
7. Much of Mark's struggle centers around feeling like he is "imperfect" in some way and therefore not worthy of love, whether from his parents or the church. Reflect on Mark's reading on page 32 and Father Teo's words on page 37. Regardless of your personal beliefs, what is the point of these statements? Do you agree or disagree with them? Why does it take so long for Mark to accept these concepts?
8. Have you ever struggled with telling the truth or revealing something private? What made you choose to do so in the end?
9. On page 72, Mark says, "What happened to 'Love thy neighbor'? 'Judge not'? 'Forgive us our trespasses'?" —Do you think these ideals are gone? What causes some to toss them aside?
10. Examine the pile of items burning on page 58. Why are these things considered by some to be sinful? Do you agree or disagree?



## • PANEL ANALYSIS •

1. What emotion is being conveyed on page 11, panel 4, and what are the visual elements that indicate that emotion?
2. Describe page 23, panel 2. What is it trying to communicate to the reader?
3. Discuss the visual elements being used on page 35. Why do you think they were chosen? What emotional impact do they have?
4. Chapter headings have a unique structure, but this changes for Chapter V. What is the change, and why do you think it was made at this point?
5. What is happening on page 46? How is Mark feeling right now? What effect has talking with Jojo had on Mark at this point? How do you know, based on the images?
6. On page 48, what is Mark's reaction to seeing his dad, and how can you tell?
7. Why is the speech bubble placed where it is on page 56, panel 2?
8. Why are pages 74 and 77 splash pages? What imagery is being used? How do things like color and layout enhance what Mark and Luka are saying? What happens if you put the pages side by side?
9. Describe the panels and transitions on page 78. What is their effect?
10. Why is panel 7 on page 88 framed differently? What is the impact?
11. Describe the panel layout and combination of words and pictures being used from pages 104 through 109. What sort of devices are being used and what is their effect? What emotions are being conveyed and how?
12. What is being conveyed in panels 4 to 5 on page 113?
13. The artist, Rye Hickman, uses a wide variety of backgrounds throughout the book. Find examples of five different types of backgrounds and explain why the backgrounds are used as they are. How does the type of background affect the storytelling?
14. Pay attention to the speech bubbles. What elements change the tone and sound of the dialogue? Find some examples of unusual speech bubbles or fonts and describe the sounds they make.
15. Find examples of different facial expressions used to indicate the following emotions. What are some of the characteristics of the different expressions?
  - Happiness
  - Anger
  - Sadness
  - Embarrassment
  - Shock
  - Awkwardness
  - Disappointment





## • ACTIVITIES •

1. Write three diary entries from the point of view of Luka, after each of his fights with Mark in the book. Demonstrate the relationship between the two characters and how it changes over time.
2. Examine Mark's character development over the course of the book by choosing six to eight distinct panels that highlight how he changes. Explain why these moments are important to his character arc.
3. Reflect on your own life and consider one thing you don't want to admit to others. Think about why you don't want to admit it and how it would affect you if you did. Choose one:
  - Write a reflection expressing both sides of your inner conflict. What would make you admit this thing? What is stopping you?
  - Create your own version of pages 74 and 77, visually representing both sides of your inner conflict.
4. Research one of the following historical figures referenced in the book as being queer. Write a biography of their life, explaining why we know or suspect they were gay and how or if they were able to express that queerness in their lifetime.
  - Michaelangelo
  - Joan of Arc
  - William Shakespeare
  - Abraham Lincoln
  - Francis of Assisi
  - Hildegard of Bingen
  - Brother Pelagius of Antioch
  - Bernard of Clairvaux
5. In groups, research one of the following time periods in the history of queerness and acceptance in Western culture and present your findings to the class.
  - Ancient Greece and Rome
  - The Middle Ages and Renaissance
  - The 18th and 19th century
  - 1900 through World War II
  - Post-World War II
6. Read an autobiographical graphic novel about the LGBTQIA+ experience; for example, *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel or *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. How do the stories of these authors compare to this journey of the characters in *Hey, Mary!?* How does the genre of the story (fiction vs. nonfiction) change the content of the story?

