

Readers' Guide for *Nimona* by Noelle Stevenson

How did you respond to the graphic novel format in reading *Nimona*? What did you like about the story? Is there anything you would change?

How does the graphic novel in general, and *Nimona* in particular, differ from a traditional text novel? What is in a graphic novel that is *not* in a traditional text, and what is in a traditional text that is *not* in a graphic novel?

Discuss the art in *Nimona*. What elements do you see? How does the artist use the space? What colors are used, and what do they represent?

In *The Literature Teacher's Book of Lists*, Judie L.H. Strouf writes, "The comic strip [i.e., graphic novel] is a special creative form, combining art and writing. It often contains social commentary, reflects attitudes of the times, and shows humor" (105). What are some examples in *Nimona* that demonstrate these traits?

Strouf also writes, "Comics [i.e., graphic novels] are worthy of study as literature because they show human foibles; reflect the chronology of social, historical, and political attitudes; predict the future; and show changes in the ways we look at ourselves and society" (516). Talk about any or all of the following characteristics, taken from *The Literature Teacher's Book of Lists* (516-17), noting to what extent they are reflected in *Nimona*:

- Female versus male roles
- Ethnicity
- Physical prowess
- Exaggerated physical features or mental powers
- Attitude towards war
- Family values
- Political ideologies
- Virtue
- Art and imagery
- Humor
- Depiction of societal change
- Reflection of life
- Fantasy
- Identification with characters or situation
- Technology
- Manners
- Attitudes toward authority
- Slapstick
- Mistakes
- Bizarreness

Discuss the setting of *Nimona*. Where does it take place? Could this story take place somewhere else? Is the time period contemporary? Future? How do you know?

Based on your reading of chapters 1-3, what do you learn about the characters in *Nimona*? Who are they? What are the relationships that you see among the characters?

What do you think about Nimona's shapeshifting? Would you like to be able to shapeshift? What would you turn yourself into?

Look deeper into the complex character of Ballister Blackheart. He describes himself as a supervillain on page 77. What does he mean by this? Is he more "super" or more "villain"? How do Blackheart's "rules" fit into his character? Are they arbitrary, or do they make sense given his character?

How do Nimona and Blackheart fit into the "superhero" genre? What's the difference between a supervillain and a superhero?

How does Nimona's personality complement Blackheart? Give some examples from the story.

Does Nimona's character change as the artist's rendering of her hair, clothing, and body type change? If so, how?

Sir Ambrosius Goldenloin is an interesting foil for Blackheart. How are they different, and how are they similar?

Describe the relationship between Goldenloin and Blackheart. What is their back-story? What else would you like to know about these two characters? How does their back-story affect plot and character, if at all, in *Nimona*? In the end, how do Goldenloin and Blackheart reconcile their friendship?

Nimona develops into a multi-faceted character. In Chapter 10, Blackheart realizes Nimona might not be exactly who she claims to be in chapter 4. From whom does he seek information about Nimona, and what does he find out?

In her rage, Nimona shapeshifts into a powerful dual personality. What is going on in Nimona's mind? How does Blackheart try to help her? How does Nimona respond? Who do you believe is the *real* Nimona?

What is the theme of *Nimona*? That is, what is "the underlying message or purpose of the story," if there is one (Stout 56)? Give specific examples to support your claim.

Finally, can you imagine a sequel to *Nimona*? What would happen in your sequel?

Works Cited

Stout, Kathryn. *Critical Conditioning, Revised Edition*. Wilmington: Design-A-Study, 1999. Print.

Strouf, Judie L.H. *The Literature Teacher's Book of Lists*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005. Print.