

MERA

tidebreaker

ACADEMIC
READING
GUIDE



CREATED BY



Mera: Tidebreaker | Danielle Paige | Stephen Byrne
9781401283391 | TP | \$16.99/\$22.99 CAN | Ages 13+ | DC Ink



OVERVIEW

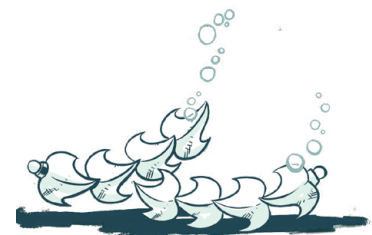
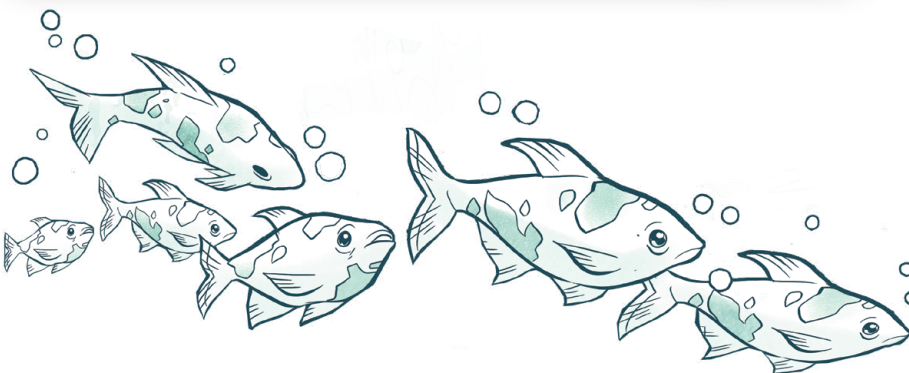


Mera is teenage royalty and heir to the throne of Xebel, a colony ruled by the other no-so-lost land under the sea, Atlantis. Her father, his court, and the entire kingdom are expecting her to marry and introduce a new king. But Mera is destined to wear a different crown...

When the Xebellian military plots to overthrow Atlantis and break free of its oppressive regime, Mera seizes the opportunity to take control of her own destiny by assassinating Arthur Curry—the long-lost prince and heir to the kingdom of Atlantis. But her mission gets sidetracked when Mera and Arthur unexpectedly fall in love. Will Arthur be the king at Mera's side, or will he die under her blade as she attempts to free her people from persecution?

An astonishing graphic novel that explores duty, love, heroism, and freedom, all through the eyes of readers' favorite undersea royalty.

From *New York Times* bestselling author Danielle Paige (*Dorothy Must Die*) and artist Stephen Byrne comes a Mera and Aquaman origin story that explores Mera's first steps on land, and her first steps as a hero or villain, forcing her to choose to follow her heart or her mission to kill.



KEY CHARACTERS



MERA is the teenage heir to the Xebellian throne and protagonist of the graphic novel. Throughout the book, she struggles to define her identity, torn between her role as dutiful princess and independent warrior, and sets out on an adventure that will change the course of the future for her and her people.



ARTHUR CURRY is the teenage heir to the Atlantean throne. Half Atlantean and half human, Arthur is unaware of his powers or heritage at the beginning of *Mera: Tidebreaker*. In fact, he has never even stepped into the ocean! But when his peaceful life is upended by Mera's arrival, he must finally face his past and all the dangers that might come with it.



LARKEN is the son of the Trench's top general and a talented young warrior who has been promised Mera's hand in marriage...much to Mera's dismay. Larken struggles throughout the book between his true feelings for Mera, his ambitions for power, and their fathers' lofty expectations for the future of Xebel.



KING RYUS is Mera's father and the ruler of Xebel. Fed up after years of Atlantean rule, he seeks to free Xebel by assassinating Atlantis' heir to the throne, Arthur Curry. In doing so, he inadvertently brings Mera and Arthur together and takes Xebel to the brink of all-out war.



QUEEN NERRISA is Mera's mother and the former queen of Xebel. She was killed in a battle with Atlanna, the queen of Atlantis, when Mera was only a child.



KEY CHARACTERS



TOM CURRY is Arthur's father. To the surface world, Tom is merely a widower who operates a lighthouse on the shore of Amnesty Bay. But in reality, he is charged with keeping the prince of Atlantis safe and away from water as a promise to Atlanna, Arthur's Atlantean mother.



QUEEN ATLANNA is Arthur Curry's mother and a member of the Atlantean royal family. When Arthur was a young child, Atlanna was forced to return to Atlantis, leaving her son behind to grow up believing she died tragically at sea.



HIKARA is a member of the Xebellian royal guard charged with protecting Mera, especially when Mera's exploits get her into trouble with Atlantean authorities.



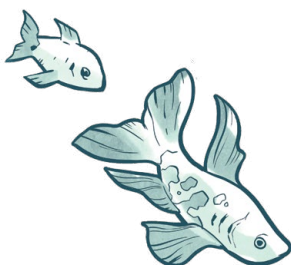
PILAN is a close friend of Mera's in Xebel and speaks with Mera using a wrist communicator throughout most of the book.



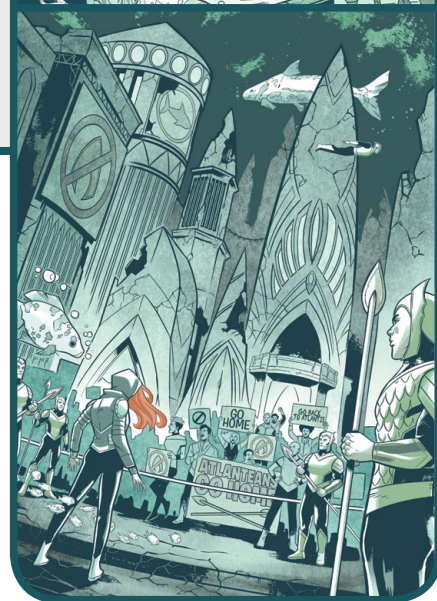
SETTINGS



ATLANTIS is introduced in *Mera: Tidebreaker* as an underwater kingdom that has taken dominion over large swaths of the ocean and the colonies within it. Except for Atlanna and Arthur Curry, the Atlanteans are largely portrayed as faceless, heartless rulers who have mistreated Xebel and its citizens for years.



XEBEL is a colony ruled by Atlantis. Once an independent kingdom full of fierce and battle-hardened warriors, Xebel has been reduced to a shadow of its former glory. But unbeknownst to the Atlanteans, the Xebellian rulers and the Trench have begun an elaborate plot to overthrow the oppressive Atlantean regime once and for all.



AMNESTY BAY is the quiet town where Tom and Arthur Curry live and operate a lighthouse. Featuring a charming boardwalk and sunlit shoreline, Amnesty Bay is a run-of-the-mill beach town...until Mera arrives and exposes Arthur's true identity, threatening the future of Amnesty Bay and all its inhabitants.



THEMES

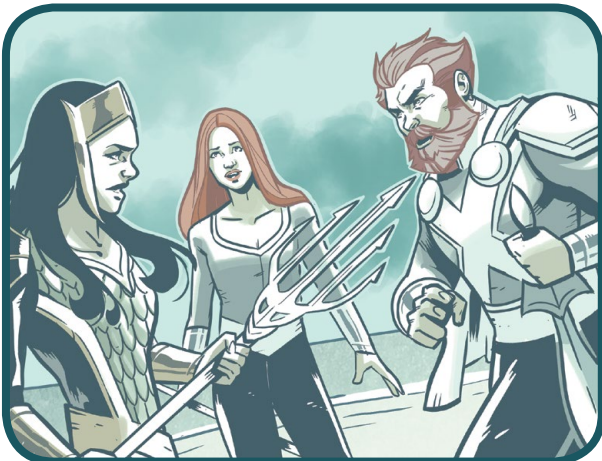


PARENT VS. CHILD

Family is what binds all of us, and no story thread is more relatable than the relationship between children and their parental figures. Like many sons and daughters, Mera and Arthur are often at odds with their parents' wishes and expectations for them. The parents go to great lengths to protect their children from harm, which ultimately leads Mera and Arthur to hide aspects of their lives and to break the expectations set upon them. The children's journeys to find their identities prove to be at odds with the identities their parents wish for them.

IDENTITY

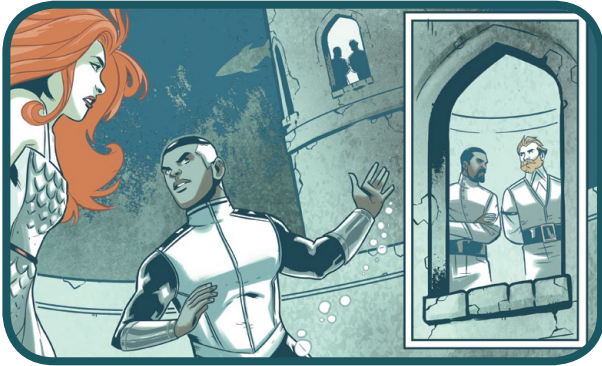
Both Mera and Arthur struggle with finding and maintaining their identities throughout the story. Mera's pride as a Xebellian contributes to her drive to seek out Arthur, and yet she struggles with her identity as a princess and daughter. Arthur's identity suddenly comes into question as he discovers that the life he had previously known is only one piece of a complex puzzle.



BIAS

Mera: Tidebreaker holds a mirror up to society, asking it to examine its biases, especially for those who feel they have enemies. Mera admits to being raised to hate Atlanteans because of their Xebellian occupation. Yet her biases are repeatedly thrown into question as she builds a relationship with Arthur. The story also illustrates how humans tend to create biases against others as a way of protecting the ones whom we hold close, creating images of others meant to demonize those who are different.

THEMES



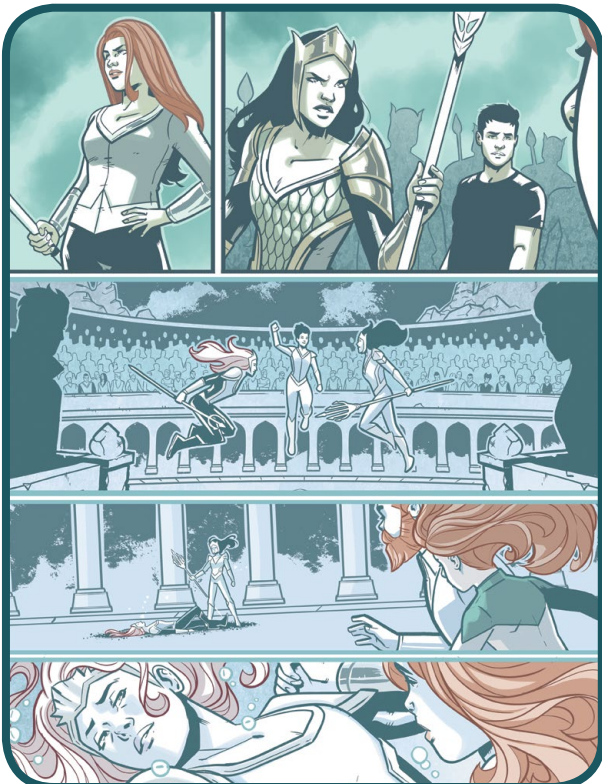
EXPECTATIONS

Throughout the book, Mera and Arthur both battle against the expectations placed upon them by others as well as themselves. Mera expects to be a fierce warrior able to accomplish any mission, which she questions more and more as the story progresses. She also struggles to fulfill the expectations of her father and the man he wants her to marry, and of her people as a whole. Arthur has expectations placed upon him by his father, his girlfriend, his community, and the mother he has just learned is still alive. Both Arthur and Mera come to the realization that in order to forge their own identities, they must break the expectations placed upon them by all parties, including themselves.



RELATIONSHIPS

Mera's relationships with those around her are the engine that drives the plot forward. Her unique relationships with her parents, her friends, her enemies, and her romantic partners have formative and transformative effects on her view of the world around her. Likewise, Arthur's relationships with his community are the basis of his loyalty toward them, as well as the struggle in forming a relationship with Mera.



HONOR AND LOYALTY

The characters in *Mera: Tidebreaker* are fiercely loyal to those they hold close, and they go to great lengths to secure the safety of the ones they love. Mera must live in the shadow of her mother, who proved her loyalty by sacrificing herself in the name of honor and the safety of her people. Still, Mera brings honor into question when it comes to assassinating a seemingly innocent adversary. She struggles to balance her sense of honor with her loyalty to her people. Similarly, Arthur takes pride in his loyalty to those around him. This takes a toll when he feels he has wronged others, such as his girlfriend, or when he feels that his community has broken their loyalty toward him.





PRE-READING IDEAS

1. Ask students to conduct research on some of the original and historical DC Comics stories focused on Aquaman and Mera. Paired in teams of two or three, students should take notes that include the title of the story, the year of the story, the story's focal points and plot, and notes about whether or not the two characters interact, and if they do, how? When students have identified at least five historical stories, ask them to present their findings on a poster that has columns for the outlined categories.
2. Show students some historical cartoons focused on Aquaman. Before watching each episode, tell students the year it aired, and then ask students to predict what they think a historical Aquaman might look like and stand for during that time period. While watching each episode, ask students to take notes on what Aquaman looks like and what he stands for in each episode. After watching a few episodes, ask students to compare and/or contrast all of their notes in three paragraphs they submit on their own: Comparisons, Contrasts, and Overlapping Comparisons and Contrasts. Finally, ask students to have a whole-class discussion on whether or not they saw any appearances by Mera, and what it might mean if they did or did not see her in any of the episodes.
3. Show students a few trailers for the *Aquaman* (2018) movie, which also include Mera. Ask them to really consider and jot down some notes about what the trailers focus on and what that might mean about the themes explored in the movie.
4. Ask students to individually look up the term “penal colony” and write a definition for it. Next, ask students to share their various definitions and keep notes on the board. After all students have shared their definitions, ask them to work in small groups to select what they think are the top three key and most important ideas to remember about penal colonies. Each small group can then share their final decisions on the top three key and most important ideas about penal colonies. Finally, ask students to think about what it might feel like to live in a penal colony, and how citizens of a penal colony might feel about their rulers.





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Throughout the story, the reader is privy to a few of Mera's inner thoughts. How do they aid in her character development? Does the reader learn anything unique through her thoughts?
2. *Mera: Tidebreaker* features a restricted and deliberate color palette. How does this aid in the storytelling throughout the book?
3. What do Mera's and Hikara's interactions tell you about their relationship? Why do you think Mera doesn't get into more trouble for destroying a part of the Atlantean embassy?
4. Hikara does some heavy foreshadowing just before Mera leaves Xebel. What can you predict will happen later in the story based on her warnings to Mera?
5. What is the significance of the name Amnesty Bay?
6. When Mera first watches television, she has a very strong reaction to the images drawn from modern shows and current events. Why do you think she has this reaction? Do you have the same reaction when you see these things on TV? Why or why not? Do you think the author is trying to make a commentary about our present-day society?
7. What are Larken's motivations for killing Arthur, and how do they compare to Mera's motivations? Is either character justified in their desire to kill Arthur?
8. While the book resolves the immediate issues at hand, many questions remain about the future relationship of Xebel and Atlantis and the futures of Mera and Arthur. Based on the interactions at the end of the story, how do you think the plot might continue? Is there a path to peace between the two societies? What sort of compromises might have to be made to achieve peace?
9. The main characters in *Mera: Tidebreaker* are written to emulate real-life teenagers through their romantic relationships, relationships to their parents, and their multiple friendships. In what ways do you think the author captured the teenage experience, and in what ways does your experience differ from those in the book?





PROJECT IDEAS

CREATE A COMIC

Even though *Mera: Tidebreaker* is over, the story can still continue with your students! Have students create a six-panel comic predicting what will happen after the graphic novel has ended. Encourage students to creatively build upon the relationships, characters, themes, settings, and other important plot elements from the original graphic novel. For further engagement, students can imitate the art style and color palette found in the book—a mix of muted reds, greens, blues, and yellows—for a richer experience and final comic.

As an alternate or additional activity, consider having students create comics featuring an important flashback they wish were featured in this graphic novel. Examples might include Atlanna leaving Arthur to return to the ocean, the battle between Atlanna and Nerrisa, Hikara's backstory as a warrior in the royal guard, Mera first discovering her powers, and many more!

DIFFERING VIEWS

Have students imagine that Arthur Curry was captured and is now on trial for his “crimes” against the Xebellian people. Split the class up into two groups, with one defending Arthur's innocence and the other seeking to prove his guilt. Encourage each group to find examples throughout the book of characters' actions as evidence to support their case, and to use this evidence to develop their arguments. As a fun additional activity, consider having select students act and/or dress up as key characters from the book to serve as character witnesses for or against Arthur Curry.

To flip the script, have students run this same activity, except imagining that Mera has been captured and put on trial by the Atlanteans for her actions in the book.

UNDERWATER CIVICS

The ruling classes of Atlantis and Xebel operate very differently. Have students discuss and analyze the text for key differences between the Atlantean and Xebellian governments. What is similar or different between the two regimes and how they are run? And what governments might they resemble in our world? Using this as their foundation, students can then stage a class-wide discussion of which society they would want to be citizens of, and why.

To expand on this activity and spur an entertaining debate, encourage students to imagine what living in these underwater societies would be like on a day-to-day basis. What kind of jobs would they have there? Where would they go for fun? What would school be like? What kind of unique benefits and dangers exist to living underwater? Students can even create a pro/con list and decide if, given the choice, they'd prefer living underwater to above the surface!





PROJECT IDEAS

MARINE LIFE

The pages of *Mera: Tidebreaker* are filled with sea-dwelling plants and animals. In this science-based project, have students create their own taxonomy of creatures and plants found in the book. Individually or in groups, students can then select one or more marine animals to briefly research, with the goal of answering the question: What “powers” do these creatures have that make them so well suited to being underwater? To add to this activity, students can share their findings and then decide which of these sea creatures they would choose as their underwater “sidekick,” like Arthur Curry has a humpback whale.

For an artistic tie-in, have students compare real-life, biologically accurate illustrations and/or photos of marine life with the illustrations in *Mera: Tidebreaker*. What differences stand out to them? Students can even do their own “life drawings” and create their detailed illustrations of marine animals or plants.

CHARACTER CHANGE

Most of the characters in *Mera: Tidebreaker* undergo some sort of transformative change throughout the story. Using a chart, describe each character at the beginning of the book, and at the end of the book. Then name any inciting incidents throughout the story that caused their change.

RELATIONSHIPS

The plot of the story is dependent on Mera’s relationships with those around her. Create a visual map or web of Mera’s relationship to each character and their relationships with one another. Then describe at least one major plot point that each relationship influences, and how it does so.

PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

Picking up where the end of the story left off, students should form two groups, one playing the role of the Xebellians and one playing the role of the Atlanteans. Taking into account the events of the story, hold negotiations to restore full peace to both societies. Consider the long history of the warring nations. What compromises will each side be willing to make in order to achieve peace while still protecting their own people?

DRAW A COMIC

Imagine that another country was occupying your home, similar to the Atlantean occupation of Xebel. Draw a comic depicting your role in the situation. Would you live with the occupation trying to retain peace, or would you plot to overthrow the occupying forces? Use a restricted color palette with colors of your choosing, and in a separate paragraph, explain your choice of colors and how they add to the mood and tone of your comic.





PROJECT IDEAS

PERSUASIVE ESSAY

Mera believes she has many reasons to kill Arthur, such as the safety of her people, revenge for her mother's death, and proving herself to be a warrior. Assume the role of Mera's friend Pitan and write a persuasive letter convincing Mera to either continue with her plans to kill Arthur or to abandon them. In your essay, list at least three reasons with supporting evidence.

ALTERNATE ENDING

Write a script for an alternate ending to the story presuming that Mera had been successful in killing Arthur. What would happen next? In composing your alternate ending, think critically about the history of Xebel and Atlantis, as well as the relationships among the various characters. How would the ending play out for Mera, her father and friends, Atlantis, and Xebel?



FURTHER PAIRINGS

- *Romeo and Juliet* (Play)
- *Beauty and the Beast* (Multiple Formats)
- *Remember the Titans* (Film)
- *Great Expectations* (Novel)
- *Night in the Woods* (Video Game)
- *Red Dead Redemption II* (Video Game)
- Historical cartoons of Aquaman
- *Aquaman* (Film, 2018)
- *The Little Mermaid* (Film)
- *Atlantis: The Lost Empire* (Film)

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