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# The Books of Wendelin Van Draanen

## EDUCATORS GUIDE

Grades  
2–7

### About the Books of Wendelin Van Draanen

If you're looking for an author who can appeal to both boys and girls with adventure, quirky characters, and action that even the most reluctant reader will love, then you simply must include the books of Wendelin Van Draanen in your classroom library. From the new Gecko and Sticky series for younger readers, to the wildly popular middle-grade mystery series Sammy Keyes, to compelling contemporary young adult novels like *Flipped* and *Runaway*, students of every age and reading level will find a character to root for and follow.

### Host a Wendelin Van Draanen Author Study

Have students read at least two books by Wendelin Van Draanen and then complete one of the following projects:

- Draw a Venn diagram comparing the two books, including the major characters, the setting, the conflict, and the resolution.
- Find your two favorite scenes in each book and discuss what makes them so effective. What can you learn as a writer by studying these scenes? How does it inspire you in your own writing? Create a "Ten Things I Learned" list by studying these scenes.
- Put together a PowerPoint presentation, poster, pamphlet, or video commercial about your favorite Van Draanen book. Be sure to pique the audience's interest without giving away the ending.
- Create a quiz based on both novels and turn in an answer key with your test.
- Write a letter to Wendelin Van Draanen about your favorite book or series. Explain what you love about it and what you think it would be like to be friends with the main character.



[www.randomhouse.com/teachers](http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers)

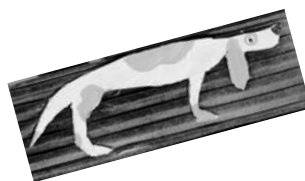
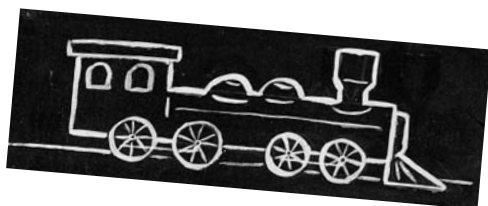
# Sammy KEYES

Mystery!



## Discussion Questions

- Who are the characters that play a role in Sammy's life? Which is your favorite? Why? How does Van Draanen develop each character for the reader?
- Describe Sammy. Would you, like Grams, want to have her as your best friend through middle school? Why or why not?
- Compare Marissa's life to Sammy's. What are the differences between them? Why does Marissa consider Sammy lucky despite the fact that Sammy lives in the Senior Highrise?
- Do you think Sammy gets herself in trouble or does trouble just find her? Do you think she's capable of staying out of a mystery? Are you?
- Find a favorite description (or exchange of dialogue) from one of the Sammy Keyes mysteries. What did you learn as a writer by studying this text? What can you apply to your next piece of writing?
- Which of the Sammy Keyes mysteries is your favorite? Why? What elements make a terrific mystery?



## Student Projects

**Reading**—Create a chart that has the following elements: a list of characters from the current Keyes mystery you're reading and a description of them, their relationship to Sammy, and the most important things to know about them.

**Writing**—Challenge the class to develop a poster, PowerPoint presentation, or blog entry about the Sammy Keyes series and why kids should read it.

**Art**—Use an old shoebox to create a 3-D piece of art inspired by the mystery in the story. Be sure to use the title somewhere on your piece and include clues to solving the mystery (but don't give away the solution).

**Music**—Pretend that Sammy Keyes is turning into a TV show and write the lyrics (and the tune if you like) for the opening theme song. Think about your own favorite shows and their theme songs for inspiration.

## Share them all with your class!

**Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief**  
PB: 978-0-679-89264-9

**Sammy Keyes and the Skeleton Man**  
PB: 978-0-375-80054-2

**Sammy Keyes and the Sisters of Mercy**  
PB: 978-0-375-80183-9

**Sammy Keyes and the Runaway Elf**  
PB: 978-0-375-80255-3

**Sammy Keyes and the Curse of Moustache Mary**  
PB: 978-0-440-41643-2

**Sammy Keyes and the Hollywood Mummy**  
PB: 978-0-440-41866-5

**Sammy Keyes and the Search for Snake Eyes**  
PB: 978-0-440-41900-6

**Sammy Keyes and the Art of Deception**  
PB: 978-0-440-41992-1  
GLB: 978-0-375-91176-7

**Sammy Keyes and the Psycho Kitty Queen**  
PB: 978-0-440-41910-5  
HC: 978-0-375-82349-7

**Sammy Keyes and the Dead Giveaway**  
PB: 978-0-440-41911-2  
HC: 978-0-375-82350-3

**Sammy Keyes and the Wild Things**  
PB: 978-0-440-42112-2  
HC: 978-0-375-83525-4  
GLB: 978-0-375-93525-1

**Sammy Keyes and the Cold Hard Cash**  
PB: 978-0-440-42113-9  
Available May 2010  
HC: 978-0-375-83526-1  
GLB: 978-0-375-93526-8

Illustrations © by Dan Yaccarino

***"I think it's very important to deliver a fair mystery, one where the reader can pick up clues and solve the puzzle at about the same time as the sleuth. If a whodunit is too obvious or impossible to deduce, that's unfair to the reader. It's the balancing act that's the challenge—giving away just enough, but not too much."***

**—Wendelin Van Draanen**

# SHREDDERMAN

**Humor!**

## Discussion Questions

- Who is Nolan Byrd? How would you describe him? What (or who, more accurately) is his problem? How does he deal with it? How would you?
- How does a school project inspire a new superhero? What does Shredderman do exactly?
- Does your school have any problems with bullying? What is the best thing to do about a bully?
- Would you like a Shredderman site for your own school? What do you think it would do for the school?
- How does the Shredderman site change throughout the books? How does Nolan change?
- Which of the books is your favorite? Why? Which character is the most interesting to you? How do we get to know the characters in a story?

## Student Projects

**Reading**—Good readers make connections between what they read and events from their own life, between the book and other books that they've read, and between themselves and the world around them. As you read the Shredderman books, write down the connections you make. Then discuss with your reading partner.

**Writing/Music**—Write a song inspired by "Lullaby for Bubba" about bullies and bullying to another familiar tune.

**Art**—Create a poster or diorama of your favorite scene in one of the books. Explain what is included in your 3-D display and why you included it in a brief journal you also turn in with the project.



Illustration © by Brian Biggs

**Share them all with your class!**

**Shredderman: Secret Identity**  
PB: 978-0-440-41912-9  
HC: 978-0-375-82351-0

**Shredderman: Attack of the Tagger**  
PB: 978-0-440-41913-6  
HC: 978-0-375-82352-7  
GLB: 978-0-375-92352-4

**Shredderman: Meet the Gecko**  
PB: 978-0-440-41914-3  
HC: 978-0-375-82353-4

**Shredderman: Enemy Spy**  
PB: 978-0-440-41915-0

# THE GECKO & STICKY

**Adventure!**

## Discussion Questions

- How do Dave (the Gecko) and Sticky become amigos? What would be the best part of having Sticky as your friend?
- Describe the Aztec wristband. How does it work? Why is it so important to the story? Which of the powers would you most like to have? Why?
- Who are the villains in the Gecko and Sticky series? What makes a good villain?
- Describe Dave and Sticky. How do we, as the reader, get to know them? Which character is your favorite? Why?
- Which of the Gecko and Sticky books is your favorite? Why? What would you tell your best friend about the series?
- Dave created his own business, Roadrunner Express. What type of business would you like to run? Why? What are the requirements for success in Dave's business? What would be in that list for you?

## Student Projects

**Reading**—Van Draanen is a master of suspenseful chapter endings. At the end of each chapter make a prediction about what you think will happen next, and why. Remember that predictions are based on evidence from the story and what you know about stories in general.

**Writing**—Create a story map or cause and effect chart for one of the Gecko and Sticky books as you read it. Study how Van Draanen creates tension and write a journal on how to use what you learned in your next piece of narrative writing.

**Science**—Create a poster or pamphlet about an unusual animal and its amazing adaptations (like the gecko's sticky fingers or the Komodo dragon's tongue).

**Art**—Create a video commercial (live or taped) or print advertisement (magazine or poster-sized) about the Gecko and Sticky series and who should read it. Explain why the series is exciting—but remember not to give too much away!

**Share them all with your class!**

**The Gecko & Sticky: Villain's Lair**   
HC: 978-0-375-84376-1  
GLB: 978-0-375-94567-0

**The Gecko & Sticky: The Greatest Power**   
HC: 978-0-375-84377-8  
GLB: 978-0-375-94568-7

**The Gecko & Sticky: Sinister Substitute**   
HC: 978-0-375-84378-5  
GLB: 978-0-375-94572-4

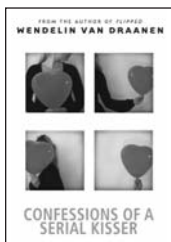
**The Gecko & Sticky: The Power Potion**   
HC: 978-0-375-84379-2  
GLB: 978-0-375-94573-1  
Available June 2010

= Also available on audio from Listening Library



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## Novels by Wendelin Van Draanen for Older Readers



### Confessions of a Serial Kisser

Evangeline's quest for the perfect kiss has more consequences than she bargained for.

Grades 7 up

PB: 978-0-375-84249-8  
HC: 978-0-375-84248-1

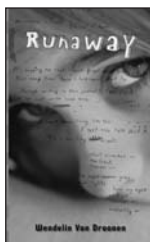


### Flipped

There are two sides to every story, and Bryce and Julianna both get the chance to tell the truth of their romance as they each see it.

Grades 5–9

PB: 978-0-375-82544-6  
HC: 978-0-375-81174-6



### Runaway

After her addicted mother dies, Holly escapes from an abusive foster family and finds life on the streets a difficult journey.

Grades 5 up

PB: 978-0-440-42109-2  
HC: 978-0-375-83522-3



### Swear to Howdy

Secrets between best friends Joey and Rusty are just part of being best friends (and boys), but when pranks go awry how long should a pact stand?

Grades 5 up

PB: 978-0-440-41943-3  
HC: 978-0-375-82505-7



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Photo courtesy of the author

## About the Author

**Wendelin Van Draanen** has been everything from a forklift driver to a high school teacher but is now enjoying life as a full-time writer. Critics and readers alike have embraced the books in the Sammy Keyes mystery series, and *Sammy Keyes and the Hotel Thief* received the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Children's Mystery. Ms. Van Draanen lives with her husband and two sons in California.

For more information about the author, visit  
[www.wendelinvandraanen.com](http://www.wendelinvandraanen.com).



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