



# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING WITH GRAPHIC NOVELS

Graphic novels as a genre are on the whole more steeped in questions of identity and social emotional issues. This brochure provides some suggestions and activities for a curated selection of graphic novels that have social emotional lessons. Use these activities to not only practice visual literacy, but also to begin conversations around self awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationships.

**EDUCATORS' GUIDE**



**RHTEACHERSLIBRARIANS.COM**

# THE CASEL 5

This brochure includes graphic novel titles that address the social and emotional core competencies known as the CASEL 5.

 <b>SELF-AWARENESS</b>
 <b>SOCIAL AWARENESS</b>
 <b>RELATIONSHIP SKILLS</b>
 <b>SELF-MANAGEMENT</b>
 <b>RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING</b>

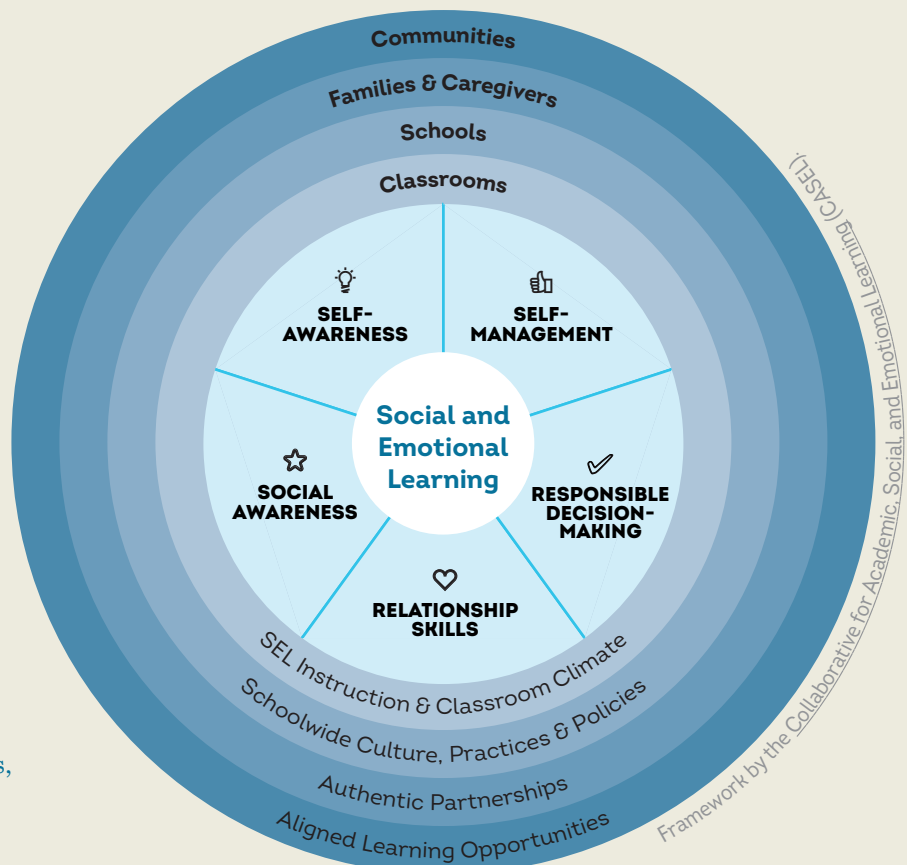
## THE CORE COMPETENCIES

These core competencies are used to establish social and emotional learning (SEL) guidelines and standards that articulate what students should know and be able to do to ensure academic success, social and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling futures. Use this brochure to find titles that relate to key competencies, and [read more about the CASEL 5 here](#).

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

—Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

We have suggested titles for each of the CASEL 5 categories, but many of these titles fit into multiple categories.





# TEACHING VISUAL LITERACY AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

At the beginning of class, show two or three panels from a graphic novel. For each panel, ask students to write about or discuss anything they observe about the character's appearance. Does the character's body language suggest anything about how the character is feeling or how they interact with the world around them?

Turning their attention to the background, ask the students to note the color scheme of the panels they are viewing. Do they think that plays into the mood of the scene? Are the colors the graphic novel artist used bright or dark? Are the characters shrouded in shadow or are the scenes fully lit? What do they think the artist was trying to convey by making these choices? How would changing the color palette change the scene's tone?

Next, look at the position of the characters. Ask students to focus on where the characters are physically placed in the panel. Are they positioned

toward the top or closer to the bottom? Perhaps they are in the center? Remind students that the artist makes choices to convey information. What might the artist be attempting to indicate by the placement of the character on the page? For example, placing the main character in the center of the panel as opposed to the corner.

Then look at where the text is placed within the panel. Is the text integrated into the image, or do they exist separately? If they are separated, do you think that enhances the image, or does it take you out of the story? Why do you think the artists may have decided to integrate or separate them?

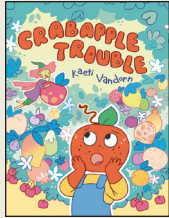
After you have discussed all the visual elements of the panels, ask students to write their thoughts about how all these stylistic choices express different emotions a character might be feeling through the panels.

## ACTIVITY FOR VISUAL LITERACY AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Direct students to create either a happy or sad image using basic shapes and colors. Give them fifteen minutes to create. When time is up, ask volunteers to share their image and have the class share how the picture makes them feel and what stylistic elements make them feel that way. After the class has shared their thoughts, the student can weigh in on why they made certain decisions and what type of image they created.

After a few people have shared their creations, have the students revise their image so that it conveys the opposite emotion, happy pictures should be made sad, and vice versa. What color and or shape changes did students make to express opposite feelings? Have students share their revisions with the class and discuss how the changes they made altered the way the work is perceived. Discuss why.

# SUGGESTED TITLES FOR LESSONS ABOUT SELF-AWARENESS



**Kaeti Vandorn**

HC: 978-1-9848-9680-3  
GLB: 978-0-593-12526-7  
EL: 978-1-9848-9681-0

A delightfully genuine story about problem-solving, having confidence in yourself, and learning that it's okay to ask for help when you need it.  
Preschool-3

**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging, Cooperation & Teamwork, Community, Emotions & Feelings



**SERIES**

**Melanie Watt**

HC: 978-0-593-30758-8  
GLB: 978-0-593-30759-5  
EL: 978-0-593-30760-1

Scaredy Squirrel does NOT like surprises. He likes a schedule and predictability, nothing unexpected. So, when a mysterious crate arrives at his nut tree, what is a squirrel to do?  
Grades 1-4

**Themes:** Self-Esteem, Humor, Animals, Adventure



**SERIES**

**Chad Sell**

HC: 978-1-9848-9470-0  
TR: 978-1-9848-9471-7  
GLB: 978-0-593-12682-0  
EL: 978-1-9848-9472-4

A group of young artists must work together when one of their creations grows a mind of its own.  
Grades 3-7

**Themes:** Self-Esteem, Art, Emotions & Feelings, Friendship, Cooperation & Teamwork

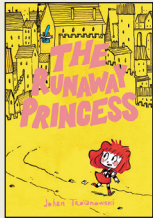


**Kathryn Ormsbee; illustrated by Molly Brooks**

HC: 978-0-593-30128-9  
TR: 978-0-593-30131-9  
GLB: 978-0-593-30129-6  
EL: 978-0-593-30130-2

Introducing an irresistibly relatable graphic novel about friendship, anxiety, and growing up.  
Grades 3-7

**Themes:** Growing Up, Friendship, School, Self-Esteem



**Johan Troianowski**

HC: 978-0-593-12416-1  
TR: 978-0-593-11840-5  
GLB: 978-0-593-11841-2  
EL: 978-0-593-11842-9

Who doesn't feel the need to run away from home every once in a while? Especially if you're a princess! Friendship, exploration, magical adventures—this charming book has it all.  
Grades 3-7

**Themes:** Adventure, Family & Relationships, Friendship



**Kay Davault**

HC: 978-0-593-30365-8  
TR: 978-0-593-30364-1  
GLB: 978-0-593-30366-5  
EL: 978-0-593-30367-2

A frog who wants to become a legendary knight finds himself on a magical journey to discover who he is.  
Grades 3-7

**Themes:** Adventure, Courage & Honor, Fairy Tales & Fables, Making Choices



**SERIES**

**Sophie Escabasse**

HC: 978-0-593-12544-1  
TR: 978-0-593-11930-3  
GLB: 978-0-593-11931-0  
EL: 978-0-593-11932-7

A charming book that captures what it means to be a friend and how growing up can be a little less scary if you throw some magic in the mix.  
Grades 3-7

**Themes:** Adopted & Orphaned Children, Family & Relationships, Intergenerational



**Blue Delliquanti**

HC: 978-0-593-12414-7  
TR: 978-0-593-12413-0  
EL: 978-0-593-12415-4

An epic sci-fi romance between two nonbinary characters that explores the complexity of human nature and what brings us together.  
Grade 7 & Up

**Themes:** Space, Love & Romance, LGBTQ, War



**Jessi Zabarsky**

HC: 978-0-593-12543-4  
TR: 978-0-593-12002-6  
GLB: 978-0-593-12003-3  
EL: 978-0-593-12004-0

A beautiful story of two young women who are so focused on proving they're meant to be together that they end up hurting each other.  
Grade 7 & Up

**Themes:** Adventure, Cooperation & Teamwork, Coming of Age, Family & Relationships, Self-Discovery



**Trung Le Nguyen**

HC: 978-0-593-12529-8  
TR: 978-1-9848-5159-8  
GLB: 978-1-9848-5160-4  
EL: 978-0-593-11842-9

This beautifully illustrated graphic novel speaks to the complexity of family and the power of stories to bring us together, even when we don't know the right words.  
Grade 7 & Up

**Themes:** Family & Relationships, Fairy Tales & Fables, LGBTQ



**Jose Pimienta**

HC: 978-0-593-12482-6  
TR: 978-0-593-12481-9  
EL: 978-0-593-12483-3

The story of a young musician who becomes fixated on freeing the soul of her grandfather from a guitar. Will she lose everything in pursuit of the perfect song?  
Grade 7 & Up

**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging, Coming of Age, Self-Discipline, Friendship, Responsibility



**Jessi Zabarsky**

HC: 978-0-593-12418-5  
TR: 978-0-593-11999-0  
GLB: 978-0-593-12000-2  
EL: 978-0-593-12001-9

Love, loss, and witches. This is a wonderful queer adventure filled with friendship, family, falling in love, and dealing with your past.  
Grade 7 & Up

**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging, Adventure, Cooperation & Teamwork, Coming of Age



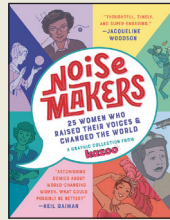
# SUGGESTED TITLES FOR LESSONS ABOUT SOCIAL AWARENESS



**Kaeti Vandorn**  
 HC: 978-1-9848-9682-7  
 EL: 978-1-9848-9683-4  
 This story teaches us that you don't have to be embarrassed to share how you feel, even if you're anxious, grumpy, or scared.  
 Preschool-3  
**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging, Adventure, Animals, Character Education, Caring



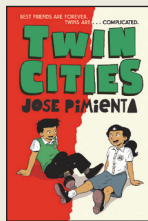
**Laura Knetzger**  
 HC: 978-1-9848-9678-0  
 GLB: 978-0-593-12535-9  
 EL: 978-1-9848-9679-7  
 Each day is new and exciting for these two tiny beetles with big feelings.  
 Grades 2-5  
**Themes:** Adventure, Animals, Friendship, Science & Nature, Making Choices



**Kazoo Magazine; edited by Erin Bried**  
 HC: 978-0-525-58017-1  
 TR: 978-0-525-58018-8  
 EL: 978-0-525-58020-1  
 This book is for everyone who is not afraid to use their voice and for those who could use a little boost.  
 Grades 3-7  
**Themes:** Biography, Nonfiction, Short Stories & Anthologies



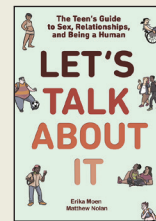
**Reimena Yee**  
 HC: 978-0-593-12532-8  
 TR: 978-1-9848-9415-1  
 GLB: 978-1-9848-9416-8  
 EL: 978-1-9848-9417-5  
 A story about growing up, childhood, and what it means to let go.  
 Grades 3-7  
**Themes:** Coming of Age, Growing Up, Horror & Ghost Stories



**Jose Pimental**  
 HC: 978-0-593-18063-1  
 TR: 978-0-593-18062-4  
 GLB: 978-0-593-18064-8  
 EL: 978-0-593-18065-5  
 Explores the importance of family and the struggles of trying to live up to standards that are impossible to meet.  
 Grades 3-7  
**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging, Coming of Age, Contemporary Issues & Social Problems, Family & Relationships, School



**R. J. Palacio**  
 HC: 978-0-525-64553-5  
 TR: 978-0-593-48778-5  
 GLB: 978-0-525-64554-2  
 EL: 978-0-525-64555-9  
 An unforgettable story of the power of kindness and unrelenting courage in a time of war.  
 Grades 3-7  
**Themes:** World War II, Intergenerational, Friendship

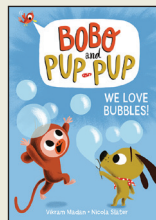


**Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan**  
 HC: 978-0-593-12531-1  
 TR: 978-1-9848-9314-7  
 GLB: 978-1-9848-9315-4  
 EL: 978-1-9848-9316-1  
 Growing up is complicated. Let's talk about it.  
 Grade 9 & Up  
**Themes:** Coming of Age, Self-Esteem, LGBTQ, Character Education, Respect, Love & Romance

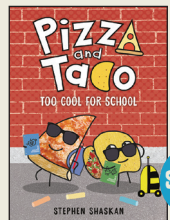
# SUGGESTED TITLES FOR LESSONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP SKILLS



**Paulina Ganucheau**  
 HC: 978-0-593-12267-9  
 EL: 978-0-593-12268-6  
 When a small lemon-shaped bird and her pumpkin dog friend are lost on their journey home, it doesn't stop them from reaching out and helping all the new friends they meet on their way!  
 Preschool-3  
**Themes:** Animals, Adventure, Friendship, Humor, Responsibility



**Vikram Madan; illustrated by Nicola Slater**  
 HC: 978-0-593-12065-1  
 GLB: 978-0-593-12066-8  
 EL: 978-0-593-12067-5  
 A hilarious new series about best friends Bobo and Pup-Pup, a monkey and a dog with very different personalities.  
 Grades K-3  
**Themes:** Animals, Cooperation & Teamwork, Friendship, Humor



**Stephen Shaskan**  
 HC: 978-0-593-37607-2  
 GLB: 978-0-593-37608-9  
 EL: 978-0-593-37609-6  
 New backpacks? Check! Besties Pizza and Taco are ready to head back to school, but are they prepared to meet the cool new kid?  
 Grades K-3  
**Themes:** Friendship, Humor, Reluctant Readers



**Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm**  
 TR: 978-0-307-93163-4  
 GLB: 978-0-375-97099-3  
 EL: 978-0-307-97546-1  
 BabyMouse joined the swim team, but are hard work and determination enough to earn her a gold medal?  
 Grades 2-5  
**Themes:** School, Humor, Reluctant Readers

# SUGGESTED TITLES FOR LESSONS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP SKILLS (CONTINUED)



SERIES

**Jarrett J. Krosoczka**  
TR: 978-0-307-98079-3  
GLB: 978-0-307-98080-9  
EL: 978-0-307-98173-8

Will the Lunch Lady's new culinary gadgets be enough to catch a sticky-fingered bandit and fix the school's security problem?

Grades 2–5

**Themes:** School, Humor



SERIES

**Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm**  
TR: 978-0-307-98308-4  
GLB: 978-0-307-98309-1  
EL: 978-0-307-98310-7

Squish's friend Pod just hasn't been himself lately. One minute he's happy dancing; the next, he's sobbing in his soup. What's going on?

Grades 2–5

**Themes:** Sports, Determination, Humor



SERIES

**Lucy Knisley**  
HC: 978-0-593-12538-0  
TR: 978-1-9848-9687-2  
GLB: 978-1-9848-9688-9  
EL: 978-1-9848-9689-6

A young girl struggles to figure out where she fits in during her first year in middle school.

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Family & Relationships, Cooperation & Teamwork, Responsibility, Coming of Age



SERIES

**Judd Winick**  
HC: 978-0-593-37966-0  
GLB: 978-0-593-37967-7  
EL: 978-0-593-37968-4

There's a new Earth! The world's timeline has been turned upside down, and now magical creatures are everywhere. Gina has to fix things fast!

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Adventure, Coming of Age, Humor, Friendship



SERIES

**Jeffrey Brown**  
HC: 978-0-385-38838-2  
GLB: 978-0-385-38838-2  
EL: 978-0-385-38839-9

Lucy and Andy are a sister and brother who get into trouble much like any sister and brother; the only difference is they live in the Stone Age!

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Humor, Family & Relationships



SERIES

**Jeffrey Brown**  
HC: 978-0-553-53435-1  
TR: 978-0-553-53438-2  
GLB: 978-0-553-53436-8  
EL: 978-0-553-53437-5

A hilarious space-themed series about a floating classroom, and the students who show human and alien kids alike have a flair for finding mischief.

Grade 3–7

**Themes:** Space, Humor, Adventure



SERIES

**Lucy Knisley**  
HC: 978-0-593-12524-3  
TR: 978-1-9848-9684-1  
GLB: 978-1-9848-9685-8  
EL: 978-1-9848-9686-5

Lucy Knisley borrows from her own experiences and childhood, bringing them to life with humor and heart in this graphic memoir.

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Cooperation & Teamwork, Responsibility, Divorce & Single Parent Families, Family & Relationships



**Jennifer L. Holm;**  
illustrated by **Savannah Ganucheau**  
HC: 978-0-593-12631-8  
TR: 978-0-593-12630-1  
GLB: 978-0-593-12632-5  
EL: 978-0-593-12633-2

The graphic novel adaptation of the Newbery Honor–winning story of a girl who comes out of her shell.

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging, Character Education, Caring, Determination, Responsibility, Coming of Age



SERIES

**Chad Sell**  
HC: 978-1-5247-1937-1  
TR: 978-1-5247-1938-8  
EL: 9781-5247-1939-5

Neighborhood kids transform ordinary cardboard into fantastical homemade costumes as they explore conflicts with friends, family, and their own identities.

Grades 4–7

**Themes:** Friendship, Self-Discovery, Bullies, Gender, Cooperation & Teamwork



SERIES

**James Parks and Ben Costa**  
HC: 978-0-399-55613-5  
EL: 978-0-399-55615-9

Ricketty Stitch is on a quest to uncover his identity and spread his (painfully bad) music far and wide.

Grade 7 & Up

**Themes:** Humor, Friendship, Adventure, Good vs. Evil



## SUGGESTED TITLES FOR LESSONS ABOUT SELF-MANAGEMENT



SERIES

**J. C. Phillipps**

HC: 978-1-9848-5054-6  
GLB: 978-1-9848-5055-3  
EL: 978-1-9848-5056-0

A sibling story about a magical trip into a land of unicorns.

Grades 2–5

**Themes:** Myths, Legends & Folklore; Animals; Family & Relationships; Adventure



**Veronica Agarwal and Lee Durfey-Lavoie**

HC: 978-0-593-12541-0  
TR: 978-1-9848-9699-5  
GLB: 978-1-9848-9700-8  
EL: 978-1-9848-9701-5

A touching middle-grade graphic novel that explores the complexity of anxiety, OCD, and learning to trust yourself and the world around you.

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Perseverance, Self-Esteem, Communication, Friendship, Making Choices



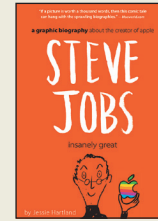
**Jade Armstrong**

HC: 978-0-593-17623-8  
TR: 978-0-593-17622-1  
EL: 978-0-593-17625-2

A contemporary graphic novel about making your dream come true—and the friends you make along the way.

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Acceptance & Belonging; Art, Music & Theater; Cooperation & Teamwork; Responsibility; Coming of Age



**Jessie Hartland**

HC: 978-0-307-98295-7  
TR: 978-0-307-98298-8  
EL: 978-0-307-98297-1

This graphic biography illuminates an entrepreneurial life in both words and images.

Grade 7 & Up

**Themes:** Biography, Leadership, Nonfiction, Science & Nature, Technology

## SUGGESTED TITLES FOR LESSONS ABOUT RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING



SERIES

**Colleen AF Venable;**  
illustrated by Stephanie Yue

HC: 978-0-593-37546-4  
TR: 978-1-9848-9566-0  
EL: 978-1-9848-9568-8

A fun and engaging story about growing up, friendship, heroes, and cats (lots of cats)!

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Adventure, Animals, Good vs. Evil, Heroes & Heroism



SERIES

**Cameron Chittock and Amanda Castillo**

HC: 978-0-593-17287-2  
TR: 978-0-593-17286-5  
GLB: 978-0-593-17288-9  
EL: 978-0-593-17289-6

Alidade has a choice: leave the Valley like she's always wanted or become a Mapmaker and save the only home she's ever known.

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Adventure, Cooperation & Teamwork, Hope, Friendship



**Rachele Aragno**

HC: 978-0-593-30124-1  
TR: 978-0-593-30123-4  
GLB: 978-0-593-30125-8  
EL: 978-0-593-30126-5

This graphic novel is for anyone who has ever wished to grow up faster or for just a little bit of magic.

Grades 3–7

**Themes:** Adventure