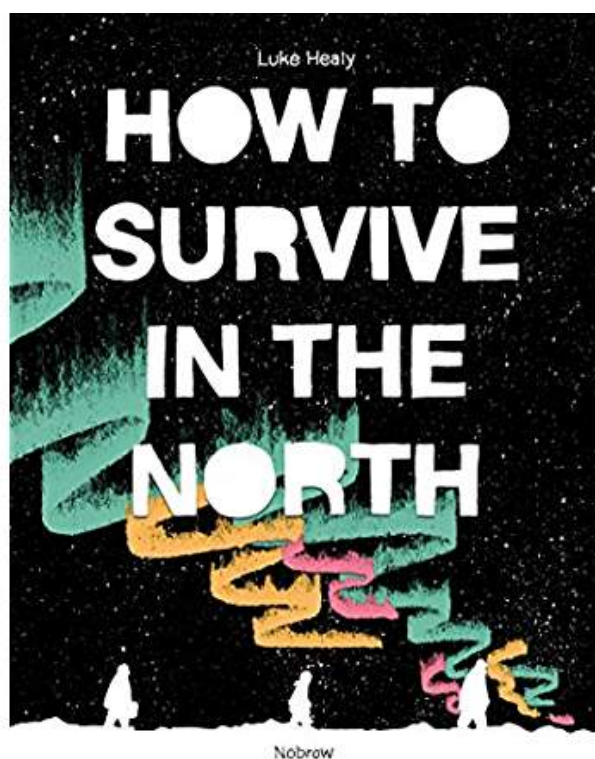


JoLLE@UGA[®]
JOURNAL OF LANGUAGE & LITERACY EDUCATION

**Review of *How to Survive in the North*
By Luke Healy**

Adult/ Educator Reviewer: Daniel Do
Del Valle ISD

Student Review: Santiago Cardona Juarez, 11th Grade



Healy, L. (2016). *How to Survive in the North*. New York, NY: Nobrow Press.

ISBN: 9781910620328

Adult Review: Daniel Do

I wasn't sure what to expect with Luke Healy's *How to Survive in the North* after reading a brief synopsis of it. Big bearded explorers in the early 20th century and a mid-life crisis are both topics that don't excite me, and so when I first picked up the graphic novel, I told myself that I'd only have to get through a few pages that night. Within the first few pages, however, I was instantly curious how the fates of three separate characters would intertwine. Before I knew it, I realized that I had finished the book in one sitting.

Within the first few pages, Healy captivates the reader by throwing us into the middle of three different crises and setting very high stakes for our main characters: the historical Inuit seamstress Ada Blackjack as she struggles to find bravery, real life ship captain Robert Bartlett who fights the odds to save his abandoned crew, and fictional professor Sully who is being investigated for unprofessional behavior. The three situations are wildly dissimilar from each other, and yet I did not have a favorite among them because they all dealt with incredibly human pitfalls: cowardice, guilt, and loneliness. Though the separate story arcs do eventually cross paths, I found that Healy was not making a point out

"Luke Healy presents historical figures as relatable humans, and though their obstacles are uncommonly grand, his characters face them with a sloppiness that we all ought to be familiar with."

of where the characters were destined to go, but instead focused on what the human spirit is capable of when faced with insurmountable odds.

I highly recommend "How to Survive in the North" to readers of any age, though middle schoolers and older would likely get the most out of it. Luke Healy presents historical figures as relatable humans, and though their obstacles are uncommonly grand, his characters face them with a sloppiness that we all ought to be familiar with. Younger readers might find the disjointed nature of the book to be confusing at first, and educators may have to preface the book by explaining that it is three separate stories. Teachers might also have to prepare to have conversations with readers about a middle-aged gay man who has a relationship with a younger student of his, but the relationship is only referenced and is never explicit. Aside from some foul language, the book never feels raunchy and would be appropriate for teenagers.

Student Review: Santiago Cardona Juarez

After reading *How to Survive in the North*, one of the most important things to know about the genre is that it is historical fiction. Though half of the characters are real, there are some that don't really exist at all. They are just plain fiction. One of them would be Sullivan Barnaby, a professor from Hanover, New Hampshire who is being investigated after having an affair with a student. Also, other characters that he meets in this story are fictional as well because the time period that they are in is 2013. As for the two other main characters

that featured in this story, they are actual historical people who survived in the Canadian Arctic and Wrangel Island expeditions from the early 1900s.

The names of these explorers are Robert Bartlett and Ada Blackjack, and they both have different stories themselves even if they are connected in the exact same year. To shorten these stories for them both, I will explain each of the characters' beginning of their struggles and not mention what happened at the end of the story. Robert Bartlett, also known as Bob (which most people call him), is the captain on an expedition with his leader named Vilhjalmur Stefansson, who is in charge of the exploration of the Canadian Arctic and Wrangel Island. But as the days go on, one of the crew members spots an island, and Stefansson wants to explore the island, and then convinced Robert to go. Eventually, over time, the ship begins to move again, after leaving some of the crew members behind for the exploration. The engine of the ship is completely damaged due to the ice. Robert orders all of his men to abandon ship. Once they get out alive they are surrounded by a sea covered with ice, and there is no one for thousands of miles to rescue the explorers. As for Ada, she is stuck on Wrangel Island, while the rest of the explorers try to call for a rescue by going across the ice to reach to Siberia. Ada's responsibility is to take care of

“Overall the drawings are simple, but the colors and backgrounds are amazing. The three stories are outstanding; this is an excellent graphic that I would recommend to anyone.”

someone after he gets injured, having no other choice but to stay on the island in the next coming months of winter.

At first glance, I thought the book was a novel, but when I got the actual copy itself with my own hands, to my surprise it was actually a graphic novel. For that, I would like to recommend it for those who love history and art. If you're not one a fan of those, at least you will still able to enjoy the book because it is easy to be read. Alongside of that there's hardly any complicated vocabulary words either, but there are some curse words in there as well. If you ever wanted to know how many days it takes to finish the book, I would say approximately 1 or 2 days at most since this book contains 193 pages. That includes the ending of both expeditions of Wrangel Island and the Canadian Arctic. As I mentioned earlier, this book is for the ones who love history and art, and I might as well graphic novel readers to the list. The two historical stories are truly remarkable, and so are the disasters they have to face in the Arctic struggling to stay alive until they can finally be rescued. As for art, the colors are fascinating in the way they depict each of the characters. Graphic novel readers will enjoy the three narrative stories; they are quite engaging and enjoyable.

Even though I am not an expert in art, what caught my attention the most for *How to Survive in the North* is the brilliant colors of the Northern Lights on the cover. I just stared at it for a while. At first, I believed that the design was made out of chalk, but as it turns out, it is not - which surprised me because of how well the colors look so astonishing from

the front cover, giving a relaxing and peaceful mind. After going through the book, I begin to realize what I should have known from the beginning: the three white silhouettes on the cover are the three main characters of the story. This is where I began to analyze each one. The first character that stands out more than anybody else in the group is carrying a briefcase: it's Sullivan Barnaby, his timeline far more different from the others. The second is Ada Blackjack in the middle of the group, and the last one is Robert Bartlett. At the beginning of the book, I couldn't identify the silhouettes until I noticed that they are identified by the colors of the Northern Lights. This was my favorite part of the book,

that the colors represent each of these characters and color codes the color of the background with their clothing as well. Green represents Sullivan since he most commonly he wears a green shirt, Ada always appears in front of the pink backgrounds of Wrangel Island, and Robert's color is yellow as he is wearing his coat during the expedition to the arctic. Overall the drawings are simple, but the colors and backgrounds are amazing. The three stories are outstanding; this is an excellent graphic that I would recommend to anyone.