

This toolkit was created as part of the *Superman's Cleveland: Lineage and Legacy* celebration.

Superman's Cleveland honored the 85th anniversary of the creation of Superman by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster in 1938 in their hometown.

The program was organized by the Rust Belt Humanities Lab at Ursuline College and the Ohio Center for the Book at Cleveland Public Library with support from Ohio Humanities.

Get Graphic! Toolkit

Girl Taking Over: *A Lois Lane Story*

By Sarah Kuhn and Arielle Jovellanos

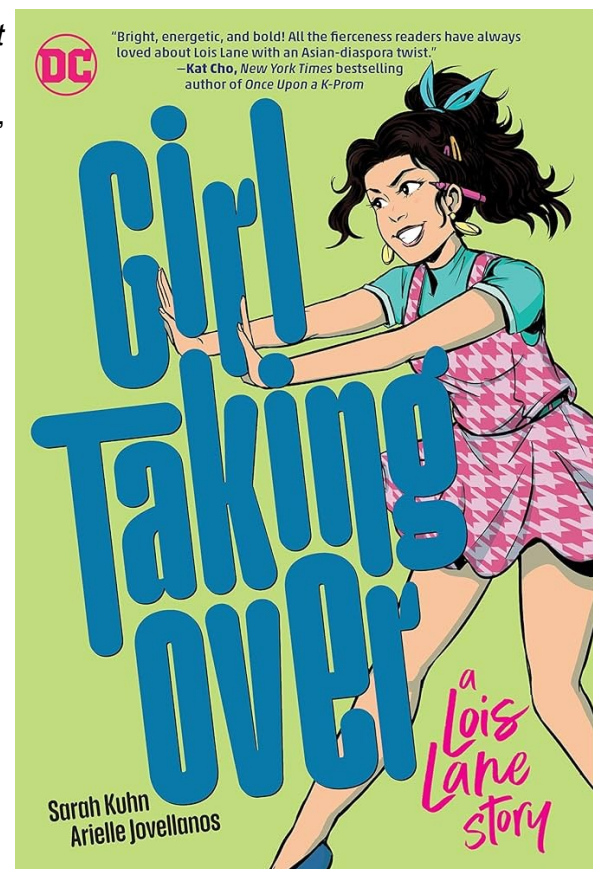
About the comic

Girl Taking Over: A Lois Lane Story is a graphic novel by Sarah Kuhn and Arielle Jovellanos which tells the story of Lois Lane, reimagined as a young Asian-American woman before she becomes the star *Daily Planet* journalist.

A story with no Superman in sight, this twenty-first century reimagining of Lois Lane's story begins with her move to Metropolis, the big city, for an internship working for Cat Grant. It's all part of her grand plan: do the big internship, finish college, become a star journalist at *The Daily Planet*, and then win a Pulitzer.

The plan, however, is quickly derailed upon moving to Metropolis. First Lois is caught off guard when she finds her new big city roommate is her former childhood best friend, a plan orchestrated in secret by their moms. Then the company at which she was set to do her internship is in the midst of a corporate takeover, and her idol Cat Grant is being removed. The problems pile up from there when she meets Triple B, her Big Bad Boss.

Lois must find a way to navigate these unplanned detours in her life. In doing so, so she learns about herself and reckons with the painful parts of her history. This origin story for Lois Lane illustrates the history of one of the most popular heroines today as she shows how journalism can be a superpower.



Who are Sarah Kuhn and Arielle Jovellanos?

Sarah Kuhn is the writer of *Girl Taking Over: A Lois Lane Story*, *Shadow of the Batgirl*, and the *Star Wars* audiobook original, *Doctor Aphra*. She is also known for the popular *Heroine Complex* novels — a series starring Asian American superheroines. Her young adult (YA) debut novel, *I Love You So Mochi* is a Japan-set romantic comedy. Her YA novel, *From Little Tokyo, With Love* — a modern fairy tale featuring a biracial Japanese American heroine — is a Junior Library Guild Selection, a nominee for the Golden Poppy Award, and Penguin Random House's *One World, One Book* title of the year.

Arielle Jovellanos is the artist of *Girl Taking Over: A Lois Lane Story*. She is the creator of *Just a Spell*, a mini comic; *Black Star*, an original sci-fi graphic novel written by Eric Anthony Glover; and *Evil Thing: A Villains Graphic Novel* adapted from Serena Valentino's bestselling novel, *Cruella De Vil*. Jovellanos' work has also appeared in *Fresh Romance*, *Aggretsuko: Meet Her Friends*, and others. She is an adjunct faculty member in the Illustration department at the Fashion Institute of Technology of the State University of New York.

Themes

There are several themes throughout the book that can help frame your discussions:

- **Asian American identity** — This comic reimagines Lois Lane as a young Asian woman, introducing many new ways to see the character and inviting discussions of the Asian American experience today.
- **Journalism** — Lois Lane remains one of the most recognizable journalist characters in popular culture. This work once again pays respect to the character as a journalist and poses questions about the future of the field in the twenty-first century.
- **Adolescence** — This is a story of personal development — growing into our strengths and understanding our limitations as well as coming to terms with the abilities and limits of those we look up to in our life. This book can be framed and/or paired with other coming-of-age stories.
- **Girls** — As the title declares, Lois is a “girl taking over,” but superhero comics and the genre in general have historically not been known for allowing women to take the lead, being described as a “boys’ club.” This graphic novel challenges the stereotypes of the genre and offers a model for its future that can jumpstart a conversation on this topic.



Figure 1. From *Girl Taking Over: A Lois Lane Story*, p.13, by Sarah Kuhn and Arielle Jovellanos. ©DC Comics

Questions for Discussion

1. So many of Lois Lane's stories are told in the context of her relationship to Clark Kent/Superman and rarely consider her life before him. What new insights into Lois, especially outside of Clark, do Kuhn and Jovellanos invite us to consider when they reimagine an origin for the future Pulitzer-prize winning journalist?
2. Kuhn and Jovellanos reimagine Lois Lane as being of Asian descent, as does the animated television series ***My Adventures with Superman***. How does this reimagining of her story open up new possibilities for the character for readers and viewers?
3. This is a story of adolescence, of growing up, coming to terms with the limitations of your heroes and the world of adults. What lessons does Lois' story teach us about growing up and finding our own strength? In what ways did the story inspire you as a reader to reflect on your own experiences?
4. While Lois Lane lives in the world of superheroes, she does not have a "big bad" like Superman until now with "Triple B." Readers know that some of the best supervillains are inversions of the hero, or at least an inversion of some element of the hero's mind, which ends up telling us something about our hero. How does this villain illuminate the character of Lois?
5. The great evil in this work is racism, which takes shape in many ways, including through the actions of the villainous boss' cultural appropriation, anti-Asian sentiment, and more. How does this comic help different readers reckon with experiences that might not be too far off from their own and yet cultivate empathy in others that have never experienced it?
6. Kuhn and Jovellanos tell a story of a very powerful character using a stereotypical "girly" design and color palette. How do they challenge our expectations of the superhero comic genre, of the depiction of power, and even the character of Lois Lane by using this style?
7. Lois Lane is one of the most recognizable characters in modern media. What insights to Lois' character can we take from this origin story that might inform how we think of other versions of her we know from television, movies, comics and other depictions?
8. This is a story about a corporate media takeover and the current trends in journalism. How does this story about Lois Lane, a character created in honor of the power of journalism, ask us to think about the current state of the field?
9. Lois and her mom have a very powerful relationship. What does that dynamic reveal about Lois' character, and how does it challenge the depiction of relationships between female characters in superhero comics?
10. Jovellanos creates fun and unique page designs, turning the phone screen, scrap books, sticky notes, and websites into panels. Discuss how her art plays with the comics form and the story.
11. Part of the journey of Lois' story is coming to terms with her relationship with her childhood friend. How does the inclusion of this help us understand her character?
12. Superman stories are about hope. Since his origins, Superman has been a symbol of hope for many people. What one word would you use to define Lois' story and her character?



Figure 2. From *Girl Taking Over: A Lois Lane Story* p.12 by Sarah Kuhn and Arielle Jovellanos. ©DC Comics

Further Supplemental Materials

Additional resources to supplement this toolkit:

- Video Interview: *Agents of Fandom: Sarah Kuhn and Arielle Jovellanos* — Comics Corner
 - Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0px9jNvWes>
- Video Interview: *A Comic Bookworm: Meet the Writer/Artist: Sarah Kuhn & Arielle Jovellanos*
 - Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa8scQDr03c>
- *School Library Journal* Interview: “Sarah Kuhn and Arielle Jovellanos on *Girl Taking Over: A Lois Lane Story*”
 - Link: <https://goodcomicsforkids.slj.com/2023/05/09/sarah-kuhn-and-arielle-jovellanos-on-girl-taking-over-a-lois-lane-story-interview/>
- Alex Chester-Iwata, *Mixed Asian Media*: “Sarah Kuhn, Creator of Super Heroines”
 - Link: <https://mixedasianmedia.com/sarah-kuhn-creator-of-super-heroines>
- Vera J. Camden and Valentino L. Zullo, *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*: “I think that fun, poppy, feminine, colorful stories can change the world”: An Interview with Sarah Kuhn”
 - Link: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/21504857.2024.2351625>

Further Reading

If you are interested in other Lois Lane stories:

- *Lois Lane: Enemy of the People* by Greg Rucka and Mike Perkins (DC Comics)
- *Superman: Lois and Clark* by Dan Jurgens and Lee Weeks (DC Comics)

If you are interested in other works by Sarah Kuhn:

- *Shadow of the Batgirl* by Sarah Kuhn and Nicole Goux (DC Comics)
- *Star Wars: Doctor Aphra* by Sarah Kuhn (Marvel)

If you are interested in other works by Arielle Jovellanos

- *Evil Thing: A Villains Graphic Novel* by Serena Valentino and Arielle Jovellanos (Disney-Hyperion)
- *Black Star* by Eric Anthony Glover and Arielle Jovellanos (Abrams Megascope)

If you are interested in other girl superhero comics for young adults

- *Supergirl: Being Super* by Mariko Tamaki and Joelle Jones (DC Comics)
- *Teen Titans: Raven* by Kami Garcia and Gabriel Picolo (DC Comics)