



Exploring Junior Cycle Texts

Heartstopper Volume 1 by Alice Oseman

Heartstopper Volume 1 by Alice Oseman is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Junior Cycle English Examination in 2028, 2029, and 2030.



Image courtesy of Hachette Children's Group

Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Heartstopper Volume 1* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



Scan the QR code or click here to access a Getting Started with Guide for this Text

Before You Read (Teacher Guidance)

1. Context Research

In pairs, have students research how the text went from Webcomic to Book. They could then answer the following questions in their copies: How did Heartstopper begin? Why do they think so many readers connected with it online before it became a printed novel?

2. The Graphic Novel Form

- Ask students to identify why do they think Oseman chose to tell this story as a graphic novel rather than a traditional novel? Lead a discussion or reflection on how does this form make the emotions and relationships more powerful for the reader?
- Explain to students that Alice Oseman uses the graphic novel form in Heartstopper to combine images and words in a way that makes emotions and relationships feel real and immediate.
- Following this, invite students to imagine they are a graphic novelist and create their own short scene that captures emotion through both image and text.

3. Prediction

Ask students to look carefully at the front cover and title of *Heartstopper Volume 1* by Alice Oseman and discuss the following questions.

- What do they think the story might be about?
- How do the illustrations, colours, and expressions of the characters help them predict the tone or theme of the story?
- The tagline says “Boy meets boy.” - what kind of relationship or journey do you think this might lead to?
- What feelings or ideas do they expect to be important in this story?

**Extract from Graphic Novel:**

(Oseman, A. (2019) *Heartstopper: Volume One*. P 203)

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidelines)

These prompts are designed to support close reading and personal response. They may be used orally or in writing, individually or in groups.

1. Understanding the Scene

In pairs, ask pupils to identify the main characters shown. Ask pupils to verbally describe what Nick's friends are saying about him and Charlie. Have pupils write an explanation about how Nick appears to feel in the first panel. Prompt them to support their answers with visual clues.

2. Language and Visual Techniques

- Ask pupils to consider (and annotate where possible) the effect of using black-and-white (with limited shading) in this scene?
- Prompt students to think about why the speech bubbles are placed the way they are? They should annotate their ideas about what this suggests to the reader.
- Using their annotated notes, have pupils answer the following question as an analysis paragraph: *How does Alice Oseman show emotion in this page?*



3. Diary Entry

Ask pupils to imagine that Nick is writing in his diary after this moment. Instruct them to write a short diary entry beginning with the line:

"Everyone keeps talking about me and Charlie... but they don't know how I really feel."

Pupils could describe what Nick is thinking, how he feels about Charlie, and what he believes his friends might be saying.

Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

These activities extend engagement with the extract and invite creative and personal responses. Use individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. Personal response

Lead a class discussion about the message Alice Oseman might be sending about friendship, identity, and how people are perceived by others. Following this, have students write a short personal response explaining how this theme could connect to real teenage life today.

2. Monologue

Ask students to write a short interior monologue from Nick's perspective after he comes out to Charlie. Prompt them to consider what he might be thinking or worrying about. Encourage them to use scenes for the graphic novel to back up their answers.

3. Illustrate an alternative ending

- Give pupils the following prompt: *Imagine you are the illustrator. You have been asked to design an extra page to appear after the final scene.*
- Before beginning, encourage students to plan the images and dialogue they think should be included in this page.
- Students could use a digital platform to create their page or draw it themselves

4. Critical Thinking

Give pupils the following prompt and have them write their response as a short analytical paragraph using at least one specific example from the text: *Analyse how Alice Oseman uses both visual and verbal storytelling to explore vulnerability and emotional honesty.*

5. Persuasive Speech

Help pupils to plan and write a speech persuading their school peers to approach situations with more kindness. The quote below could be provided as a stimulus or starting point.

"Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see", Mark Twain.

6. Exploring Relationships

Ask students to consider how Nick and Charlie's relationship develops. What stages do they go through, and what obstacles do they face? They should use evidence from both text and artwork to support their ideas.