



Artist Profile – ‘Brenton McKenna’ page 5



Brenton McKenna

ARTIST PROFILE

Describe your style of art and how you got into it?

It's cartooning or comic art – the common term used is 'graphic art', but that's been used to encompass a lot of different art forms as well. Basically, I fell in love with comic books when I was in primary school. I had a few reading difficulties, so I didn't read too many books, but when I picked up a Ghost Rider comic, the pictures started telling me the story, which eventually, over the years, helped me to read. Now, I'm recognised as a writer as much as I am an artist.

What do you enjoy about this style of art – what's unique about it?

I love everything about it, but creating a story and characters has to take the cake – the things you can come up with are endless. Everyone's got a story and the unique thing about comic books is that it's a form of storytelling that combines art and literature.

In most of my work, I try to infuse a lot of humour and action, as well as mystery and suspense – that's the kind of storyteller I am. But our culture is one that has survived

thousands of years on stories. All our skills, beliefs and magic were stories handed down through the generations. Indigenous Australia is basically a giant tribe of good storytellers, and comic books are just a brilliant way of telling good stories.

Where did the concept for *Ubby's Underdogs* come from? How long have you been working on it?

The main character, Ubby, is loosely based on my Grandmother Alberta Dolby. In 2002, I left Broome and moved to Adelaide with my partner. That's when I started creating the story for *Ubby's Underdogs*, to sort of cope with my homesickness, rather than continuing to do the smaller horror comics I was doing at the time.

I'd been drawing cartoons and writing stories ever since I was in primary school, but *Ubby's Underdogs* is my first published graphic novel.

Do you have any tips for budding young comic artists?

I know this might sound generic and everyone's probably heard this statement a thousand times, but there's never been a more honest secret to success than never quitting and following your dreams, even when it hurts. Don't worry about how your art looks or what people think of your story. We all improve with experience and experience takes time, and time is too precious to waste on something you don't love. So love what you're doing and don't stop!

Ubby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon, \$24.95, is published by Magabala Books, www.magabala.com

DEADLY VIBE ART COMPETITION

Send us your artwork of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander role model and go in the running to win a deadly art set. The overall winner will be announced in the December 2011 issue of *Deadly Vibe*.

Mail your artwork to *Deadly Vibe My Art Competition*, PO Box 810, Darlinghurst NSW, 2010, or email a scan (or 1mb digital photo) to info@vibe.com.au

THIS MONTH'S WINNERS

Anthony Mundine by Jacob Paulson

Ubby's Underdogs: The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon is the first graphic novel of a trilogy written and illustrated by West Australian Aboriginal artist Brenton McKenna. Set in Broome during the 1940s, amid a backdrop of fictionalised Chinese and Aboriginal mythology, the book follows the adventures of Ubby, a smart, streetwise Aboriginal girl who is the leader of a small ragtag gang known as the 'Underdogs'.

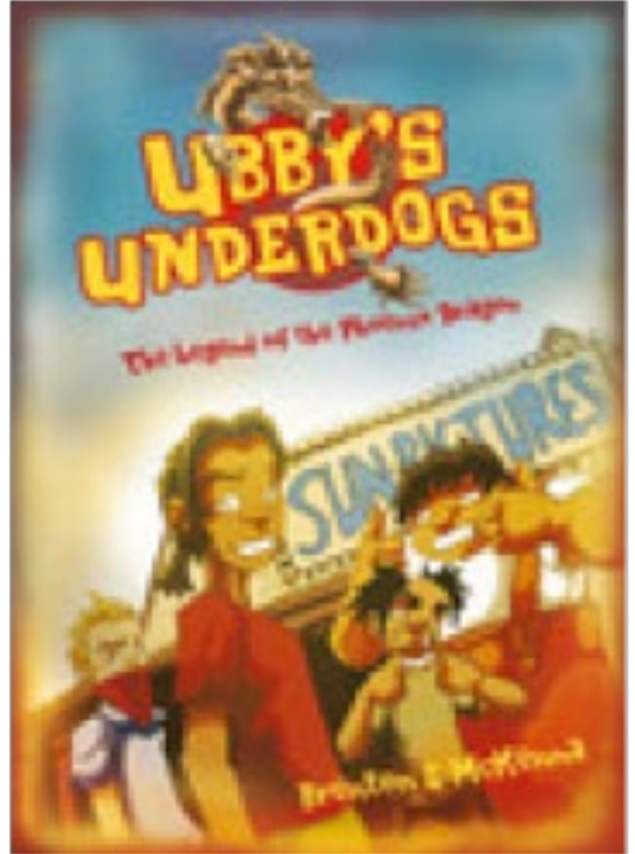


Samantha Harris by Rhiannon Wyles-Togo



Ubby's Underdogs is the first graphic novel by an Aboriginal author. Brenton McKenna is a Yawuru (Broome language group) artist and writer. He studied visual arts for two years at Goulburn TAFE and in 2009 was one of twenty successful applicants to be awarded a highly sought after mentorship with the Australian Society of Authors.

For more information and great updates about the book and Brenton, you can follow **Ubby's Underdogs** on Facebook.



READ Brenton McKenna's artist profile on page 5

ACTIVITY 1 BUILDING READING SKILLS

- skimming and scanning for information
- reading headings, sub-headings, text boxes and pictures
- reading for meaning
- making connections between the text and your world

There are three levels of comprehension questions:

Literal The answer is located in one sentence in the text.

Inferred You need to make links between text and graphics (such as photographs, illustrations, maps and tables) and what you already know.

Applied The answer is in your background knowledge, what you already know or feel.



Shade one bubble.

1. According to the text, Brenton describes his style of art as

- graphic art
- "deadly" art
- primary art
- realistic art

(literal)

2. *I love everything about this style of art, but creating a story and characters takes the cake.*

In this sentence, takes the cake means

- this style of art makes you want to steal a cake
- it is the best thing about it
- it can be very unhealthy for you
- writing is like cooking

(applied)

3. What is the relationship between the photo, drawings and the main text?

(inferred)

4. The main purpose of including the price, publisher and website for Brenton's new book is to

- provide information
- encourage people to find out more about the book and buy it
- describe the book
- explain how Brenton wrote the book

(applied)



ACTIVITY 2 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS – SPELLING

The spelling mistakes in these sentences have been underlined.

Write the correct spelling for each word in the box.

1. The common term is "graffic art".

2. Brenton loved comik books as a child.

3. He had reading difficultys in school.

4. He didn't reed too many books.

5. He's regonised as a writer and an artist.

Each sentence has one word that is incorrect.

Write the correct spelling of the word in the box.

1. What do you think is unek about your art?

2. It includes a bit of majik.

3. Comic books are brilyant.

4. He has been writing since he was young.

5. My advise is to keep working on your art.



ACTIVITY 3 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS – GRAMMAR

Shade one bubble.

1. Which word or words correctly complete this sentence?

If we working hard, we will succeed.

- keeps
- keeping
- keep
- would keep

2. Which word correctly completes this sentence?

This is Brenton's first graphic novel, he is planning to publish more.

- besides
- but
- therefore
- otherwise

3. Which word or words are **not** needed in this sentence?

You can purchase *Ubbys Underdogs* for the amount of \$24.95.

- purchase
- the amount of
- Ubbys Underdogs*
- can



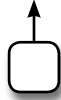
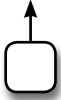
ACTIVITY 4 LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS – PUNCTUATION

Shade one bubble.

1. An apostrophe (') has been left out of this sentence.

Where does the missing apostrophe go?

Everyones probably heard these statements a thousand times.



2. Each of these sentences has the final punctuation missing.

In which sentence is a question mark (?) needed?

- I wonder how Brenton started writing
- Brenton likes to write and draw, doesn't he
- I asked Brenton which books he liked to read
- Brenton reads a lot of books, but he likes graphic novels best

3. Which punctuation correctly completes the sentence?

Brenton has started to write graphic novels he has stopped writing horror comics.

- colon (:)
- comma (,)
- semi-colon (;)
- question mark (?)



ACTIVITY 5 WRITING A RESPONSE

A book review is persuasive writing that describes a text and makes a judgement about it. Here's an example of a book review:

	<p>Australia's first Indigenous Graphic Novel www.readings.com</p>
<p>Context Historical Background</p>	<p>It is the late 1940s and the small pearling town of Broome in Western Australia is still recovering from WWII.</p>
<p>Description Characters Plot Themes</p>	<p>Ubby, a smart, street-wise Aboriginal girl, is the leader of a small rag-tag gang known as the "Underdogs". Trying to make a name for the Underdogs, she meets Sai Fong, a Chinese girl just off the boat from Shanghai. From the moment Ubby and Sai Fong meet, their worlds collide as they find themselves thrown into a series of bizarre adventures full of myths and legends and everything from ancient mechanical demons to fantastic beasts — and secrets never before exposed.</p>
<p>Evaluation Opinions about the Text</p>	<p><i>The Legend of the Phoenix Dragon</i> is the first in the <i>Ubby's Underdogs</i> trilogy. This is an epic tale that measures the limits of courage and friendship. It is storytelling on a grand scale that expertly draws in characters that have links to other worlds amidst a complex backdrop of fictionalised Aboriginal and Chinese mythology.</p>
<p>Judgement</p>	<p>Brenton's first graphic novel leaves you gasping for air and in anticipation of things to come.</p>

Write a REVIEW of your favourite book.

Think about:

- examples, elaborations and evidence from your text to support your ideas.

Remember to:

- research your topic and plan your writing
- follow the structure of a review
- give examples to support your ideas
- write in sentences
- pay attention to your spelling and punctuation
- use a new paragraph for each new idea
- choose your words carefully to convince a reader of your opinions
- check and edit your writing so that it is clear for a reader.