BOOK 1
 Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal by G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona

1 Ms. Marvel is in many ways a classic superhero comic. Our protagonist starts off as a normal girl and then, through no fault of her own, gains incredible and dangerous superpowers and must decide how to use them. How do the illustrations and the text help us to understand Kamala’s new life? For example, when Kamala becomes tiny, her speech bubbles become smaller. Do you notice anywhere else in the issue where the illustrations help you understand the story?

2 Assimilation, or the process of adapting or adjusting to the culture of a group, is often a major part of the immigrant experience. Kamala, her brother Aamir, and many of their friends in Jersey City are first-generation Americans navigating their parents’ expectations and those of mainstream American life. Compare and contrast how Bruno, Nakia, Kamala, and Aamir all deal with the need to fit in and with the rules and restrictions of the world around them. How does gender factor in to their experience of assimilation? What about class? Are there any aspects of the characters’ experience with assimilation that you can relate to?

3 Once Kamala becomes a polymorph she stays out late trying to figure out her powers and often finds herself fighting crime. This sometimes gets her into trouble at home and at school. For example, Kamala’s gym teacher gives her detention and says she’s surprised because Kamala is usually so responsible. Has Kamala changed, become irresponsible, since getting her powers? How so? How would her family and other adults react if she told them the truth about her condition? Have there been situations where you were (mis)understood by adults and faced consequences as a result?

4 Before Kamala, there was another female superhero, Carol Danvers, called Ms. Marvel. After a while, Danvers dropped the name Ms. Marvel and chose the name Captain Marvel. Why do you think Kamala chooses to call herself Ms. Marvel? Do you think choosing her own name was an important choice for Kamala? Why or why not? Would you choose another name for Kamala? What would be your superhero name?
1 In the opening chapter, Starr and Khalil talk about rap music and listen to influential ‘90s rapper, Tupac, who (in)famously had the phrase “T.H.U.G. Life” tattooed on his stomach. Khalil explains that, for Tupac, the word “thug” was an acronym for “the hate u give.” Why do you think the author chose that phrase as the title of the novel? How do you see the concept used throughout the book? How do you see the term “thug” used today?

2 Throughout the novel, Starr talks about how she has to be one person in her neighborhood and another Starr when she’s at school. Some have called this type of posturing “code-switching,” referring to how a person might switch up their speech or mannerisms depending on the social situation they’re in. Is Starr a successful code-switcher? How about other characters in the book? How do you feel about code-switching in your own life?

3 Starr has a somewhat complicated family situation. She lives with her parents, an older brother (who has a different mother but same father) and a younger brother (who has the same mother and father). She also has a relationship with her older brother’s sister, and a police officer uncle who lives in the suburbs, and any number of community members who treat her like family. How do you see Starr defining family? Is it purely about blood relations or something else? How does this compare to how you feel about your own family?

4 Starr’s on-again, off-again relationship with her boyfriend Chris has its ups and downs. What do you make of Chris’s attempts to prove his love and loyalty to Starr? How does the fact that they are in an interracial relationship complicate and/or strengthen their bond? What do you think will happen to Chris and Starr after the end of the novel?

5 Community protests in the wake of unpopular legal verdicts are a big part of history, from the Watts protests in the 1960s, to the protest after the Rodney King verdict in 1992, to the more recent protests after the death of Mike Brown in 2015 in Ferguson, Missouri. Starr’s neighborhood erupts into disbelief, frustration, and rage after the grand jury’s decision for Khalil’s murder. How and why does the neighborhood react to the grand jury’s decision? How does Starr speak out? Why does she feel compelled to jump into the fray? How would you have reacted in a similar situation?
BOOK 3
March: Book One by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell

1. Comic books and graphic novels are often known for their vibrant colors and powerful action scenes with superheroes. However, March is painted in black and white and is an autobiography that does not necessarily include those typical elements. Why do you think Lewis, Aydin, and Powell decided to craft the story like this? How is March similar to other graphic novels or comic books you’ve encountered?

2. The action in March starts at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, then goes back and forth between the present day (the inauguration of former president Barack Obama in January 2009) and John Lewis’s early life. Why do you think the book starts where it does? Why does it move between the inauguration and Lewis’s childhood? What is significant about those particular touchstones?

3. Lewis grows up as a serious child who is part of a large, loving family. How can we trace the trajectory of his bravery? Where does it start for him in his life? What are the key moments where he takes a stand for what he believes in? Are there any moments where he changes his mind? How does this compare to your own experience of being brave?

4. There are civil rights movements happening all over the world. From the student protests in Hong Kong and South Korea, to the demonstrations in Brazil and Venezuela, to the protest movements in the United States known as the Movement for Black Lives, citizens all over the world — often young people — are organizing for their rights. Compare and contrast what you know about current movements to how Lewis and his fellow activists organized to create change. How can you participate in the organizing for your beliefs, both online and in your own community?

5. In the novel, Lewis is telling the story of his life to two young boys, Jacob and Esau, who come with their mother to Washington, D.C., from Atlanta to see the presidential inauguration. If you could write a story from the perspective of the young men listening, what would it look like? How do you think they are reacting to Lewis’s story? How might it be similar or different to their own?
1. The history of the shadowshapers is literally embedded in the murals and art that adorns Sierra’s Brooklyn community. What sort of art can you identify in your community, town, or city? How does the art reflect what is important to where you are from?

2. Sierra’s New York neighborhood is slowly changing from local “mom and pop” shops to specialty stores and high rises where she and her peers often feel unwelcome. How would you explain causes and consequences of these changes in the community? Can you identify similar shifts in your own community or places you’ve been to?

3. Is there a moment that you can pinpoint where Sierra shifts from unsure to brave? What incites this change? Or do you see as her being brave all along?

4. How do you understand abuelo Lázaro’s refusal to initiate Sierra and his desire to make the shadowshapers a “boy’s only” club, even though her grandmother was their de facto leader? Have you experienced different treatment from your family or friends based on your gender?

5. Shadowshaper has somewhat unusual heroes and villains: teenage artists, librarians, musicians, and anthropologists. What do you make of author Daniel José Older’s decision to have these sorts of people at the center of the story? How is it similar or different than other fantasy texts you’ve read?
Discussion Questions
Written by Susana M. Morris, Associate Professor of Literature, Media, and Communication, Georgia Institute of Technology

X: A Novel by Ilyashah Shabazz and Kekla Magoon (additional text)

1. Malcolm’s parents fought to live their lives with dignity and self-determination. How do his parents exemplify bravery in their own ways? How did they pass this legacy down to Malcolm and their siblings? Is this something you see in your own family?

2. Malcolm's life changes forever when he takes the bus from Lansing to Boston. What does Malcolm's bus ride from Lansing to Boston reveal about his experience? Have you ever traveled to a new place? What was your experience like?

3. After Malcolm steals the locket for Sophia he thinks about how he might be “pushing the line” since he stole something he wanted rather than something he needed, like food. What do you make of this distinction? Do you think there are ever exceptions to social taboos, such as stealing?

4. How does Malcolm reevaluate his identity once he is imprisoned? How is this change different or similar than when he identified as Malcolm Little in Lansing, or Red in Boston, or Detroit Red in New York? Have you ever reinvented yourself in new surroundings?
The Sun Is Also a Star by Nicola Yoon (additional text)

1. Natasha thinks of herself as a logical, unromantic, scientific person, while Daniel thinks of himself as more emotional and poetic. Do you think that they have the right take on their own personalities? Which character do you relate to more? Are you more logical or emotional or a bit of both?

2. Daniel says he feels like he falls in love with Natasha at second sight. Are you a believer of love at first or second sight? Why or why not?

3. Both Natasha and Daniel are under a lot of pressure from their families and society in general, pressure that requires them to be brave. How do they help support one another in standing up for themselves and what they believe in? Do you have people in your life that enable you to make braver choices? How do you play that role in other people’s lives?

4. The Sun Is Also a Star goes between narrating Natasha and Daniel’s experiences and the experiences of their parents and other people around them. What insight did you take from this narrative choice? Are there characters you wanted more or less from?

5. The Sun Is Also a Star zooms ahead to the future of several characters. What do you make of the ending of The Sun Is Also a Star? If you could write about Natasha and Daniel in the future, what do you think their lives would look like?