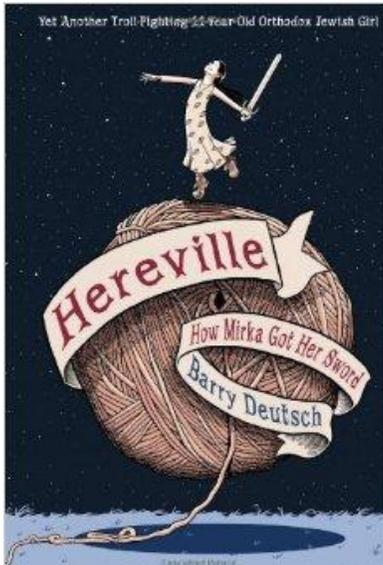


# Hereville Reading Guide



## Questions and Ideas for Consideration

- Graphic Narrative:** How does the comic style of *Hereville* affect the message and meaning of the story?
- Culture:** Do you think Barry Deutsch portrays Mirka's Jewish culture effectively? Why or why not?
- Relationships:** What does this book say about parent/child relationships, siblings, and other relationships? How does Mirka's stepmother fit into these roles?
- Heroine:** How does Mirka defy gender roles in her desire for a quest, and how is this concept complicated by her relationships, religion, and culture? Does she want to rebel, and if so, what challenges does she face in attempting to do so?
- Depiction Details:** What illustration choices does Deutsch make to purposefully present certain ideas? Consider use of line, color, perspective, framing, etc.
- Humor:** How is humor used in the story? How does this affect its message?
- Language and Audience:** Deutsch provides translations for some Jewish words his readers may not be familiar with—why? Who is the audience of this text?

## Daybook Possibilities

- Try your hand at graphic narrative art yourself by drawing a short comic of a story you've read or an experience you have had in your life.
- Visit the library and check out some of the other graphic narratives or comic books for children or teens. How is *Hereville* similar or different to these? Which draw your attention and why?
- Do a web search for other Sydney Taylor or Eisner Award winners/nominees and explore why these graphic novels were chosen for the award.
- Consider some of the design choices that Deutsch makes, such as color, use of text/dialogue, frame shape/size, and the other elements we discuss in class. How do these affect the story?
- Learn about how graphic novels are viewed and what people's perceptions of them are (possibly looking at news or web forum spaces). Do you agree or disagree?
- Compare the portrayals of the quest in *Hereville* with *The Tale of Despereaux*, *Ella Enchanted* and other children's texts that feature a heroic task or trial.
- In what context might you teach this book or other graphic novels? Do some research about classroom uses of graphic narratives and how/why teachers might use them in classroom settings.

## Suggested Critical Reading

"Comic Art, Children's Literature, and the New Comic Studies" by Charles Hatfield

"The Graphic Novel and the Age of Transition: A Survey and Analysis" by Stephen E. Tabachnick

"Decoding Comics" and "Comics as Literature?" by Hilary Chute (email me for a copy)

My personal recommendation to learn more about graphic novels is Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, a scholarly book written as a comic book.

## Background and Context

Published in 2010 and winner of the Sydney Taylor award (a National Book Award for Jewish Children's Literature), *Hereville: How Mirka Got Her Word* highlights the adventures of Mirka, an 11-year old Orthodox Jew who longs to slay dragons. A children's graphic novel, this first installment of Barry Deutsch's comic series uses humor and detail to portray a spunky heroine who is deeply immersed in her Jewish culture, but also seeks to be a sword-fighting, troll-defeating heroine.