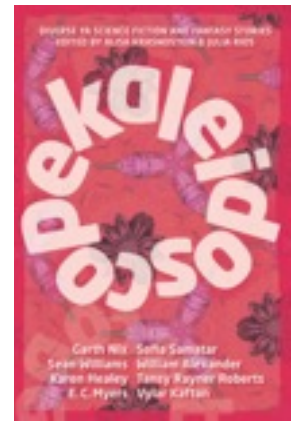




## Kaleidoscope Teaching Materials

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*Kaleidoscope* collects fun, edgy, meditative, and hopeful YA science fiction and fantasy with diverse leads. These twenty original stories tell of scary futures, magical adventures, and the joys and heartbreaks of teenage life. Each story in this book shines on its own, and together they make a shifting brilliant kaleidoscope of wonder.

### Themes:

The overarching theme of *Kaleidoscope* is the celebration of diversity. Every main character in a *Kaleidoscope* story comes from some sort of diverse background--whether they're disabled, people of colour, QUILTBAG, or something else, these characters are not the default straight, white able bodied characters who star in most mainstream media.

Some of the stories are quite dark and some are more fun and fluffy, but all of the stories explore themes relevant to young people's lives. There are questions of identity and assimilation, love and friendship, bullying and peer pressure, responsibility and independence, family and community, and general coming of age.

### Summary:

*"Cookie Cutter Superhero"* by Tansy Rayner Roberts: A young girl with a curve instead of a hand is given the opportunity to be a superhero.

*"Seventh Day of the Seventh Moon"* by Ken Liu: Yuan's girlfriend Jing is leaving to study abroad, and on their last night together they meet the legendary lovers who inspired China's Qixi festival.

*"The Legend Trap"* By Sean Williams: Three teenagers hop into a d-mat teleporter and see if they can teleport into an alternate universe, which is pretty much the same as this one but ... not. What if you only get the password to jump there but not back?

*"End of Service"* by Gabriela Lee: For as long as Aya can remember, her mother has been overseas working to support her family. Now she's dead, and Aya is struggling with the grief of losing a mother she never really knew, and the realization that the commodification of foreign workers is much bigger and creepier than she had thought.

*"Chupacabra's Song"* by Jim C. Hines: Nicola is an autistic girl who speaks to animals by weaving magical songs.

*"The Day the God Died"* by Alena McNamara: This story shows us a genderqueer/gender-questioning teen who meets a dying god.

*"Signature"* by Faith Mudge: A fun urban fantasy set in Brisbane. Priya is a wheelchair user who must find a way to save the indie bookstore where she works from the clutches of a vindictive Fate.

*"The Lovely Duckling"* by Tim Susman is about a transgender teen who wants to go to shapeshifting school to learn how to take the form of a condor.

*"Kiss and Kiss and Kiss and Tell"* by E. C. Myers: In this world there's a twist on the "fun" party game 7 Minutes in Heaven--mixing in a new drug lets players see the near future with the person they're kissing. But the drug might work differently if you're already on meds.

“*Vanilla*” by Dirk Flinthart: Kylie’s a Somali-Australian teen whose father is desperate for her to assimilate. When alien refugees arrive on Earth, Kylie starts to wonder what assimilation really means, and what are the costs?

“*Careful Magic*” by Karen Healey: Helen is an Order Queen, in a school of chaos workers. Her OCD, which compels her to complete her cantrips before she can start her school day, on top of being an Order worker, makes it hard for her to make friends. That is, until someone needs her to fix a love spell gone wrong.

“*Walkdog*” by Sofia Samatar: This story about high school bullying emerges through the “research” of a paper about local wildlife.

“*Celebration*” by Sead Eads: All is not as it seems at the gay conversion therapy camp, Celebrate Your Life, and humankind might just be being judged for our morals by what's going on there.

“*The Truth about Owls*” by Amal El-Mohtar: Owls are beautiful and powerful and potentially terrifying, which is part of why Anisa, a Lebanese-British girl who may have scary magical powers, identifies with them.

“*Krishna Blue*” by Shveta Thakrar: Krishna Blue is a different take on a vampire story--instead of eating blood, Neha eats colour.

“*Every Little Thing*” by Holly Kench features a magic user with an invisible disability, exploring the themes of friendship, love, and the frustration of not always being able to do everything you’d like to do.

“*Happy Go Lucky*” by Garth Nix: When Jean’s family is sent to live in the lowest part of society, she refuses to live a life of poverty with no hope, and risks her life to find something better. Nix's story has important things to say about asylum seeking and the end point of "stop the boats" policies.

“*Ordinary Things*” by Vylar Kaftan: Katie is going through a bad breakup, and it’s even worse because of her severe anxiety issues.

“*Double Time*” by John Chu: In this world, people can travel back four minutes into the past, which, if you're a figure skater, means you could jump back at the end of your routine to skate the whole thing next to yourself.

“*Welcome*” by William Alexander: Antonio is a Latino sailor, who navigates his ship between Earth and the moon, where his family lives in exile.

## **Study Notes:**

*Kaleidoscope* would be useful in teaching about various social issues, areas of geography and history:

- Research: spend a class or two looking at class, race, history of migrants and refugees to Australia. Read the essay provided by the author of “End of Service” about the background to her story. Break into small groups to discuss how they would feel if their parents had to (or do) work overseas, how might this be the same or different to fly in fly out (FIFO) workers. Discuss the rise of the union movement and issues relating to the commodification of workers. Have students report their findings back to the rest of the class in brief presentations.
- Sean Williams’ story “The Legend Trap” plays with the idea of what might happen if an urban myth was true. Have students share stories about any urban myths they have heard of or research Google for some famous ones. Sean Williams has a growing list for his Twinmakers world, that this story is set in here: <http://twinmakerbooks.com/tag/urban-myths/> Have students think about how and why urban legends begin and propagate. Have students write their own urban legend.

- In "Cookie Cutter Superhero", the protagonist works through her feelings about things like costumes, gender (dis)parity in superhero teams and "male gaze" problems, demonstrating the ways these sort of issues are institutionalised, but also that they can be challenged, on an individual and societal level.

There have been many articles written about this issue, by authors ranging from comic creators [<http://comicsalliance.com/superhero-comics-women-sexism/>] and critics [<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/may/03/wonder-girl-breasts-sexism-comics>] to fans [<http://chasemagnett.wordpress.com/2014/06/02/women-in-comics-a-response/>], and Internet memes such as The Hawkeye Initiative [<http://thehawkeyeinitiative.com/>] in recent years have shone a spotlight on some of the more problematic elements of gender depiction in comics. A general outcry over the way Black Widow was depicted on the original film posters for the first Avengers movie saw the studio making changes to the image, but not before fandom had come up with clever ways to visualise the concerns of the audience. [<http://wac.450f.edgecastcdn.net/80450F/comicsalliance.com/files/2012/05/ladyavengersposter.jpg> & [http://www.comicsbeat.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/avengers\\_booty\\_ass\\_emble\\_by\\_kevinbolk-d4hb4xl.jpg](http://www.comicsbeat.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/avengers_booty_ass_emble_by_kevinbolk-d4hb4xl.jpg) for example ].

After reading the story and considering some of the articles and ideas mentioned above, ask students to create their own short comic strip to illustrate the concepts being examined, making sure they think critically about the issue and illustrate it on the page. They can create their own artwork, or use an online comics creator, such as Chogger [<http://chogger.com/>], Make Beliefs Comix [<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>] or Marvel's Superhero Squad create-your-own-comic [[http://marvelkids.com/games/play/75/create\\_your\\_own\\_comic](http://marvelkids.com/games/play/75/create_your_own_comic)] (and check out how few female characters are represented there!).

- Ask students to research the short story form and then identify the different styles used in the stories in *Kaleidoscope*. Have the students discuss which styles work best for them and why, and which work best for the kind of story being told and why. What makes a story a story?
- Have the students read "Walkdog" and then discuss the issue of bullying. Get them to think about the form of the story, and how you can tell the truth even when your writing is not 100% "correct". Get them to make a list of the various roles of the teacher and the students in the story. Discuss how very much the students are on their own, and how important personal passions are. Leave the classroom and go for a walk.
- Comparative study for advanced students: Compare and contrast the stories "Vanilla" and "The Truth About Owls". How do the two stories intersect and how do they diverge?
- Comparative study for advanced students: Compare and contrast the stories "The Day the God Died", "Celebration" and "The Lovely Duckling". Why is it that very large places can seem very small, or very small places can seem very large? Is there a villain or an antagonist in the story? If so, who or what is it? How much does outside opinion form and shape personal identity?

### **Writing Style:**

The stories in *Kaleidoscope* cover a lot of different styles. There are experimental formats like research papers and phone transcripts as well as simple third person narratives, but every story is set in our contemporary world, or in a relatable future. The tone of the stories ranges from light to dark, with all shades in between. Some stories are very plot driven (like "Chupacabra's Song" by Jim C. Hines and "Celebration" by Sean Eads) while others focus more on the style of language (like "Ordinary Things" by Vylar Kaftan and "Krishna Blue" by Shveta Thakrar). The depth and range of *Kaleidoscope* stories means there is something for everyone.