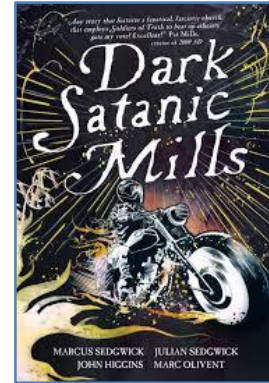


Title: **Dark Satanic Mills**
Illustrator: **John Higgins & Marc Olivent**
Authors: **Marcus & Julian Sedgwick**
Publisher: **Walker Books**



First look

- Try to ensure that each shadower is given a chance to read *Dark Satanic Mills* to themselves before working on the book with the group.
- It is a good idea to have pencils and paper available as you study this book. Readers often like to sketch their own versions of the images as they browse.
- Look closely at a few pages with range of different images and ask the group to point out to each other anything that strikes them as interesting about the artwork.
- Chat in pairs or as a group about whether they enjoyed *Dark Satanic Mills*. What did they like or dislike and why?

Look again

When reading a narrative in a graphic novel, the visual elements play as important a role as the writing. To evaluate the artistic quality of *Dark Satanic Mills*, shadowers will need to consider:

- the overall design of the book
- front and back cover
- the layout of each page
- the narrative carrying images(characters & action)
- background – setting and atmosphere
- use of comic strip conventions (e.g. thought bubbles)
- culturally familiar symbolic representation (motorbikes, religious signs etc.)
- font choices for different words

While looking through the book ask questions!:

- Are the illustrations of a high technical and artistic standard?
- Do the illustrations merely adhere to the narrative sequence or do they provide commentary/counterpoint/expansion on the written word?
- Do the illustrations move the story forward?
- Are the images of characters stereotypical or realistically individual?
- How are aspects of setting, character and plot unfolded without the use of words?



Talk about any visual aspect of the book that interests you, i.e. end papers, font choices, title page and layout. Do these 'extras' to the story contribute to the overall impact of the book? Open out the front cover to see the words of William Blake's *Jerusalem*. It is not, as many assume, a nationalistic hymn but an appeal for a better, fairer society for all.

Interpreting the text

It is always beneficial, when studying a book, to use tasks which require imaginative response to encourage students to engage fully with the text. The following suggestions may help the group of young readers to become engrossed in the book.

Discussion

We can read this story at a literal level without seeking further meanings. Or we can see both written and visual texts having subtext – that is, deeper meanings beyond the literal. The whole book could be seen as a metaphor about human nature and our role in the fate of the planet. Discuss whether this story has a moral (i.e. a lesson to be learned by the reader). Can you imagine a time when England may resemble this fictitious version of the country?

At the beginning of the story, Christy is trying to deliver a package to the editor of a newspaper called *Jerusalem*. She witnesses his murder. Why are journalists often the target for violence by fundamentalist thugs?

References to powerful texts

There are two major sources of religious quotes throughout the book; William Blake's poem known as *Jerusalem* and the Christian Bible. Can you identify which words are biblical and which by Blake? Who spoke these words and when?

*Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.
My God, my God Why hast Thou forsaken me?*

Find out more about the idealistic poet, William Blake, and his work. His poem *Jerusalem* was put to music in 1916 by Hubert Parry. If you can access YouTube, there is a good version of *Jerusalem* sung by Billy Bragg which is probably closer to Blake's intentions than the jingoistic singing heard at the Last Night of the Proms.

Drama

There are several scenes in this story that could be the starting point for a dramatic improvisation. For example:

- you could use what you learn about the True Church to stage a rally of supporters
- hold a meeting of the journalists at the Jerusalem offices before it is attacked

Art

Create your own graphic text. Draft out a short but dramatic incident. Divide it into six scenes and draw a storyboard in the order you want. Use a black pen to do your final version.

¹. These questions were taken from Mel Gibson's chapter 'The Powerful World of Graphic Texts' in Goodwin, P. (2008) *Understanding Children's Books* published by SAGE.