

Top Author and Illustrator Visits



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By Alice Roche Cody

Last Wednesday, *New York Times* best-selling author and illustrator Jarrett J. Krosoczka virtually visited all three GSB divisions to give drawing demonstrations and talk about his creative process. With more than 40 titles to his name, Mr. Krosoczka authored and illustrated the popular *Lunch Lady* graphic novel series; picture books, such as *It's Tough to Lose Your Balloon*; and his graphic memoir, *Hey, Kiddo*, a National Book Award Finalist. His visit was made possible through a grant from our Parents' Association.

At the Lower School visit, Mr. Krosoczka doodled in his sketch book to show students how to change a character's emotion by changing its eyes, and at the Middle School talk, he drew sock puppets to teach how to use facial expressions and word bubbles to communicate. A Q&A session followed his presentations, and when a student asked where he gets his inspiration, he related that he draws from his own life. "I have more ideas than I can handle, that comes with age and collecting them

as you go. The hardest thing is bringing them to fruition." The main character in his *Lunch Lady* series is based off his actual lunch lady when he was a little kid, and his picture book *Naptastrophe!* is modeled after his middle child who hated taking naps. For this protagonist, he chose a bunny: "I used his ears to emote, if he's tired, his ears droop."

Hey, Kiddo is autobiographical, and through graphics, it explores how Mr. Krosoczka grew up living with his grandparents and without his mom, who spent time in both jail and rehab but always sent him drawings with her letters. That this YA title became a National Book Award Finalist made it even more popular and accessible. "The silver sticker on the cover put it into the hands of adults who had never read graphic novels," he said. "I had so many grandmas using *Hey, Kiddo* in their book clubs."

As for Mr. Krosoczka's favorite color, he likes red best, and his top color combo is deep orange and deep green. And be on the lookout for his follow-up to *Hey, Kiddo*, called *Sunshine*, a memoir about his time working at a camp for children with cancer, as well as a new graphic novel series. For parting advice, he told our students to "consume more stories and write more stories."