

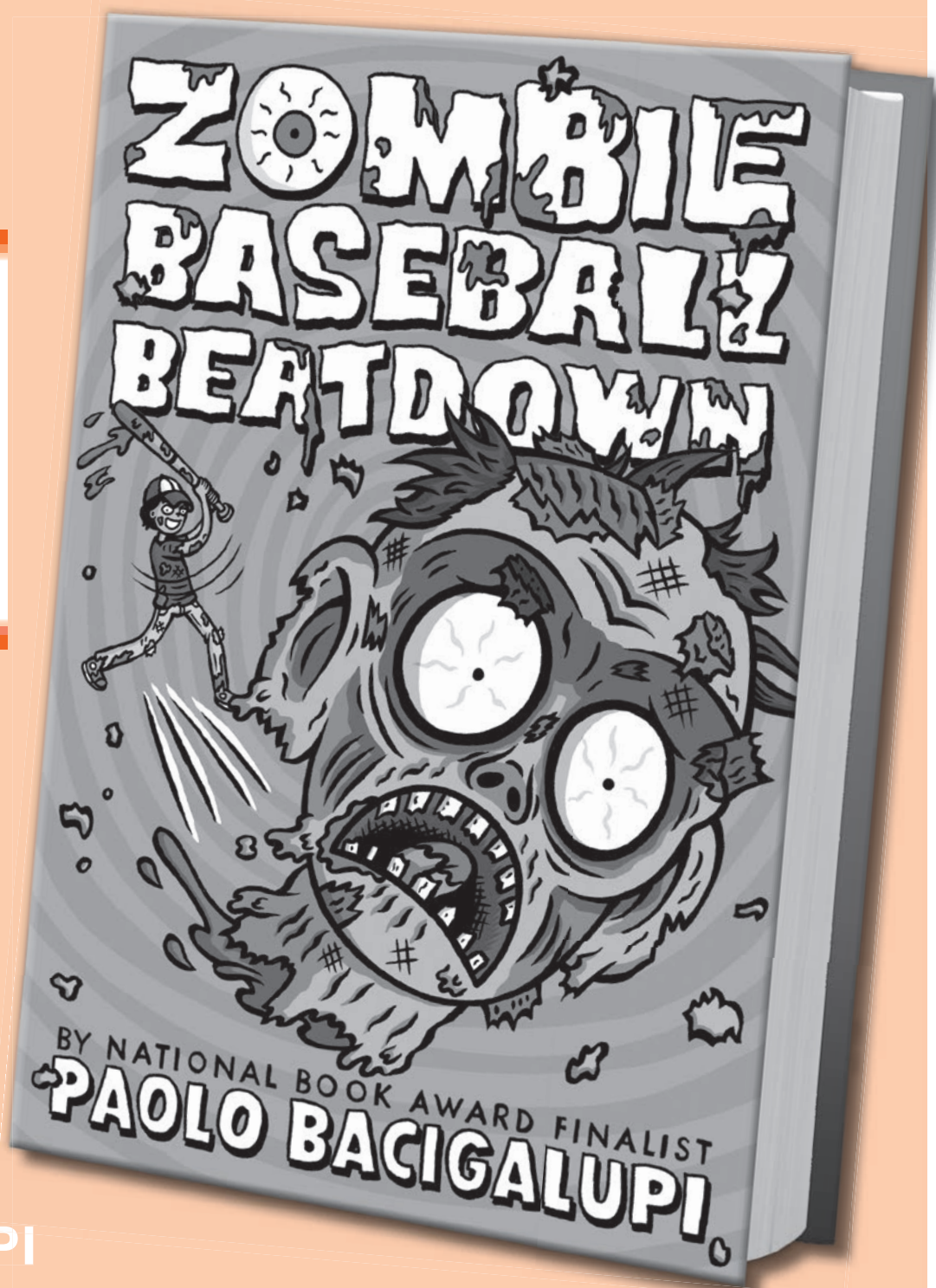
ZOMBIE BASEBALL BEATDOWN

Curriculum connections

- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Immigration
- ❖ Food Safety

Ages: 8-12

by
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EXPLORING ZOMBIE BASEBALL BEATDOWN THROUGH WRITING AND RESEARCH

The following questions may be utilized throughout the novel study as reflective writing prompts or alternatively, they can be used to as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection.

- Compare and contrast what it means to be an “American” based on the definitions given by the variety of characters in *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*.
- Joe tells Miguel and Rabi, “Like in X-Men. When the odds are against you...you really step up.” In what ways do these boys behave like the superheroes that Joe admires so greatly?
- Describe Rabi, Miguel, and Joe. Do you believe they are good friends to each other? Explain your position.
- Though the story is set in a small community in Iowa, some of the issues addressed are problems faced all over our country and even on a global scale. Given the events of the novel, what are the issues that bothered you most?
- Though Joe and Rabi are his closest friends, why do you think Miguel withholds information about the true status of his citizenship from them?
- Consider the cast of secondary characters in *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*. Who are your favorite or least favorite characters and why?
- Though it puts them in danger, why are members of Miguel’s family willing to speak up against the conditions at Milrow Meat packing plant? Given the price they pay for their choice to do so, do you think they ultimately made the right decision? Why or why not?
- In your opinion what are the biggest challenges Rabi, Miguel, and Joe each have to face? Are there any similarities between their struggles?
- Compare the parent/child relationships in the story: Rabi and his mother, Joe and his father, Sammy and his father. To what extent are the relationships of

these characters shaped by the world around them? To what extent do their relationships shape that world?

- Using the phrase, “In this story, friendship means...”, discuss the issue of friendship in *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*. Explain your choices.

CROSS CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

Before Reading	After Reading	Statements
		It is important to fight for what you believe in, regardless of the risk involved.
		It is acceptable to shy away from difficult issues in order to protect yourself.
		No matter the situation, you should always be able to count on your friends.
		You should always put others before yourself.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing an “X” sign in the box next to the statements for which they agree, and a “0” next to those for which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, the teacher reads each statement aloud and has students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

Extended Writing and Research Prompts

- One of the central themes of *Zombie Baseball Beatdown* is friendship. Ask student to journal a response to the following prompts:
 - Describe what it means to be a friend.
 - What is the value of friendship?
 - What can we learn about ourselves from our friends?

- What does Miguel learn from Rabi and Joe about himself? Use evidence from the story to support your response.

Have students post journal responses or blogs to a site such as Kidblog.com. As an extension activity, invite them to read and offer feedback to classmates.

- Throughout the course of the novel, readers are offered great insight about Rabi's experiences based on the events of *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*. Assume the role of Rabi and draft a diary entry detailing what you experienced and witnessed. To prepare, create an outline using the five W's (who, what, when, where, and why). Remember to write in first person and give special attention to sensory imagery (what you saw, smelled, heard, etc.)
- Much of the story of *Zombie Baseball Beatdown* focuses on the corruption of companies such as Milrow Meats and their use of an illegal labor force that live in fear of deportation as a means of controlling their workers. Using a variety of reference sources, have students research the role of the immigrant and migrant labor and consider:
 - What are migrant laborers? What are immigrant laborers?
 - How are these two types of workers similar and different?
 - What types of kinds of work they do?
 - Are there employment laws that specifically target them? Are there laws protect them? What are the difficulties involved?
 - What other some additional facts you found interesting?

After gathering their findings, have them create a digital presentation and share with the class.

- Throughout much of *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*, Miguel allows his best friends to believe that he is an American born citizen, as he's been instructed by his family to do. Using the library and the Internet, have students research immigration and American citizenship, being sure to consider the following:

- What are the qualifications for becoming an American citizen?
- Why are the benefits of having citizenship?
- What are the steps to becoming a citizen?
- What are the options for residents who don't have citizenship?
- Why might people choose to come to the United States as an illegal immigrant?
- What is a Coyote smuggler?
- Which government organizations oversee immigration and citizenship issues?
- What are some of the more rigid immigration laws passed by particular states?

Select your favorite web based presentation tool and share with classmates.

- In *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*, the dangerous practices of Milrow Meats have the potential to cause wide spread cases of zombeism. Using the library and the Internet, have students select and research food born illnesses and/or a contaminated food cases (examples to include, but are not limited to mad cow disease, hoof and mouth disease, outbreaks of E. coli and other bacteria and viruses). Have students be sure to consider the following:
 - What are the specific characteristics of the food born illness?
 - What are the most common ways the illness is contracted?
 - What are possible preventative measures that can be taken?
 - What government organizations focus on regulation and containment?
 - What are the protocols of investigating contamination once a case gets started?

After gathering their findings, have students create a digital presentation and share with the class.

***Zombie Baseball Beatdown* through Literary Elements Analysis**

- **Thematic Connections:** Making thematic connections: consider the following themes of *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*: Friendship, Loyalty, Bravery, and Ingenuity. Select one of the themes and find examples

from the book that helps support this theme. Create a sample Life Lesson Chart using the model at: http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson826/chart.pdf

- **Character Cube:** Using the cube template available at <http://www.innovativeclassroom.com>, ask students to create a character cube.

Provide students with a list of character traits. Students will choose five traits that describe one character from the story. List each trait on a side of the cube with a quote from the text that shows evidence of the trait. On the sixth side of the cube, students will draw a picture of the character they have chosen.

- **Advice Column:** Ask students to describe one of the problems faced by a character in *Zombie Baseball Beatdown* and write advice to him/her. Students may choose to be serious or humorous. Use the letter format common to newspaper advice columns, where the person with the problem writes for advice and the advisor writes back. Often the person seeking advice “disguises” his or her name with a descriptive name associated with the problem.
- **Character Analyst T-shirt:** Select a favorite character from *Zombie Baseball Beatdown* and create a character analysis T-shirt. Identify the literary elements used by the author to describe the character, and then

create a visual representation of the character traits. The front of the shirt must include the book title, author’s name, and the character’s name, picture and description. The right sleeve must list the character’s strength and the left sleeve should list the character’s weaknesses. List internal and external conflicts, figurative language, and the story’s climax on the back of the T-shirt.

- **Character Trait Silhouette:** Working with others, create a character trait silhouette about your favorite or least favorite character in *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*. Begin by tracing an appropriately sized member of the group onto butcher paper. The silhouette must be “life size.” The traced silhouette should reflect physical traits of the character, so modify as you draw. Next, cut out the silhouette and include 10 values from your list. These need to be the most important traits of your character. For each trait, a quote that supports the description needs to be included. Inside the silhouette, include symbols which represent your character’s interests, personality, beliefs, skills, or profession.
- **Character “To Do” List:** Remind students that like us, literary characters have tasks they need to complete. Have students select a character of their choice from *Zombie Baseball Beatdown*. Create a list of the most important tasks at hand for that character with explanations as to why those tasks are so necessary.



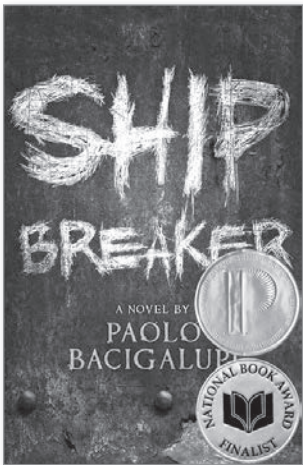
about the book



In this inventive, fast-paced novel, *New York Times* bestselling and Printz Award-winning author Paolo Bacigalupi takes on hard-hitting themes—from food safety to racism and immigration—and creates a zany, grand-slam adventure that will get kids thinking about where their food comes from.

978-0-316-22078-1

also by Paolo Bacigalupi

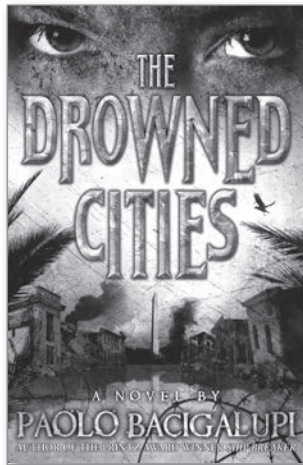


SHIP BREAKER

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Ages 15 & Up



THE DROWNED CITIES

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Ages 15 & Up

about the author



Photo © JT Thomas Photography

Paolo Bacigalupi is the author of the highly acclaimed *The Drowned Cities* and the *New York Times* bestselling *Ship Breaker*, which was also a Michael L. Printz Award winner and a National Book Award finalist. He is also the author of *The Windup Girl* and *Pump Six and Other Stories*, and is a Hugo, Nebula, Locus, Compton Crook, John W. Campbell Memorial, and Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award winner. He lives in western Colorado with his wife and son.



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