



# Artsy-Fartsy

*Karla Oceanak , Kendra Spanjer*

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Aldo Zelnick is not an athlete like his older brother or a rock collector like his best friend; he's just a regular kid who likes to draw. One summer Aldo's grandma, Goosy, gives him a sketchbook in which to record all of his ideas and adventures, and Aldo quickly discovers how much fun cartooning is. From petitioning for a neighborhood pool slide to his passion for slushies, Aldo illustrates his summer vacation, wacky friends, and loving family in this charming comic novel that blends text with illustrations on every page. Engaging and entertaining, the story and drawings in this book will captivate both enthusiastic and reluctant young readers. This first installment in an A-to-Z alphabet series includes a glossary of words to help kids broaden their vocabulary.

## Artsy-Fartsy Details

Date : Published (first published December 1st 2009)

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Author : Karla Oceanak , Kendra Spanjer

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Genre : Childrens, Fiction, Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Art, Realistic Fiction, Humor

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# From Reader Review Artsy-Fartsy for online ebook

## Marcie says

This comic novel is set in Colorado and won the Colorado Book Award for Juvenile Literature 2010. Although the main character is 10 the graphic novel will probably appeal more to 3rd and 4th graders. It might be great for building vocabulary and particularly teaching footnotes and glossary using the asterisk. I can't see a lot of middle schoolers getting into it, it's not irreverent enough.

OK, this is the comic novel I like (much better than some of the others), but I'm getting so disappointed at how commercial everything I read is. Is there really a Star Wars monopoly game? On page 75 Aldo's mom bought one on ebay. It just is beginning to feel that books cannot attract a readership unless they include product placement and commercial references. Am I just being jaded?

Well, no sooner do I complain and I hit page 79 with a cute illustration of Grandma "Goosy" working on her very large abstract painting with the cat's thinking balloon "I'M THE NEW JACKSON PAWLOCK!" and Jack in a hooded sweatshirt, "MY, WHAT A BIG PAINTING YOU HAVE, GOOSY." Parents and teachers will enjoy the puns and take the opportunity to teach. Although I'm often put off by books being too didactic, I like the pointedness of lines like Aldo's dad - "It's more about attitude\* than aptitude,\*" he added. 'If you believe you're going to have fun playing baseball, then you will.' Attitude, schmattitude, I thought."

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## Julie says

Aldo Zelnick is a 10-year old boy living in Colorado with his parents and his older brother. He's a bit lazy, unlike his older brother who is quite athletic. While on summer vacation, Aldo's grandmother, who everyone calls Goosy, gives him a sketchbook and encourages him to record all his "artsy-fartsy" ideas in it. Then his neighbor suggests he write in it as well. He reluctantly starts drawing and writing. Soon, Aldo discovers a love of sketching and creating cartoons. But when he leaves his sketchbook in the fort he and his friend Jack built, he suddenly finds girly drawings mixed in with his own. Now they're on a quest to figure out who tampered with his sketchbook ~ and to make sure they don't do it again!

Artsy-Fartsy by Karla Oceanak starts with a similar premise as Diary of a Wimpy Kid ~ a kid is given a journal/sketchbook and reluctantly starts writing and drawing in it. But Arsty-Fartsy is geared toward a slightly younger crowd. The author recommends the Aldo Zelnick series for ages 7-13 and this seems right to me. The characters in the book are in elementary school, rather than middle school, so the issues they're dealing with are a bit more appropriate for elementary aged kids. My son has read the first four Diary of a Wimpy Kid books, but they introduced some topics I wasn't crazy about. Artsy-Fartsy is perfect for him at age 7, and I'm excited to know he'll have the rest of the series to look forward to over the next few years.

One of the great things about this Aldo Zelnick series is the focus on vocabulary. This first book, Artsy-Fartsy includes more than 50 interesting words that begin with A, such as annihilate, apprehensive and augment. They are marked throughout the book with an \* and then there's a glossary in the back of the book that defines each one in a fun and easy-to-understand way. I love this method of introducing new vocabulary words. The next book features B words, and so on.

If you have an elementary aged kid who is interested in the Diary of a Wimpy Kid books (and may not be ready for the topics in that series), or enjoys funny, realistic stories written from the perspective of a kid, definitely have them try this Aldo Zelnick series. I think they'll like it!

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### **Barb Keltner says**

My granddaughter told me about this series, and I'm SO glad! I saw it described as "vitamin-fortified wimpy kid" series, and I agree. It's set up like the Wimpy Kid books but the main character is a little bit of a word nerd, so he sticks in interesting words along the way. In this first volume, all the "interesting words" start with an A -- and then are defined in kid terms in the back. I've never read an entire glossary before, but I read and loved this one, getting more excited about sharing it with my students and teachers as I read! I can't wait to dive into the second book in the series and then get all the others that are available for my students! BRILLIANT way to sneak in some vocabulary while the kids are chortling over the antics of the characters!

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### **Holly Sandefer says**

Aldo Zelnick is a kid in elementary school. He is an average kid, not a super star like his brother. Through this book, he discovers how much he enjoys cartooning. He illustrates his family, friends and summer vacation. This book is humorous and a good fit for the hesitant readers. Elementary students would likely connect with this character because he is an ordinary kid.

I would use this book as a free read book. The series introduces new vocabulary with a glossary of terms.

This book is appropriate for students in 3rd and 4th grade.

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### **katsok says**

This was a fun surprise I found at the bookstore. I had heard zip about this book/ series but picked it up because I can think of several of my reluctant readers who will adore this. I love that the book feels like Aldo's journal. I love that I see several of my students in him, students that need to be represented, to see themselves in a book.

Aldo is ten. His grandma, Goosy, is an artist and believes he is too. She gives him this notebook on summer vacation with the instructions to use it. Aldo's neighbor, Mr. Mot, loves words and helps Aldo see that the journal would be great with words and pictures. Then follows a mystery of who draws in his notebook when he leaves it outside unattended. Aldo and his friend make it their quest to find out who the culprit is.

I can't wait to book talk this one on Tuesday.

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### **Mary Thomas says**

This was a fun surprise that I discovered from my library's ebook collection. I loved the focus on vocabulary

(in a light and airy way) -- I feel like I learned something!

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### **Catherine says**

For boys who loved the likes of the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series and the Big Nate series, this was creative and fun. Takes place in Colorado, (the author is from Fort Collins and the book has won several awards), the main character Aldo Zelnick is a creative, artistic doodler, typical boy fort builder and kid detective. The book offers a fun way to introduce harder vocabulary words, making it a fun learning tool as well. I like this description of it "Featuring the irrepressible Aldo Zelnick, kid detective and linguist extraordinaire". Looking forward to the next one in the series.

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### **Beth says**

This is a fantastic new comic novel series featuring 10 year old Aldo Zelnick. Aldo discovers his love for drawing and writing through the guidance of his grandma Goosy and his retired English teacher neighbor Mr. Mot.

The story is endearing for grown up readers. Younger readers will easily identify with Aldo. Both young and old will laugh throughout the story.

Kendra Spanjer's illustrations effectively shift between the styles of Aldo and other young artists. Artsy Fartsy is the first novel in a 26 book series. I am eagerly awaiting the second installment of Aldo Zelnick, Bogus, expected in spring 2010!

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### **Keri Douglas says**

Very cute book that is a high interest, low level read. Aldo is a boy who enjoys drawing and encouraged by his artist grandmother who gives him a sketchbook for the summer. There is nothing in this novel that makes it inappropriate for elementary.

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### **Lisa says**

Very charming series! Books are designed to look like Aldo's actual journals, and the stories are funny and touching. Hope my students love it as much as I do- will share with all the Greg Heffley fans. I enjoyed this more than Wimpy Kid! The drawings were not my favorite-the people look rather generic or unpolished ( but not in a this-is-done-by-a-kid way that they should be). But this is an aesthetic quibble and I unreservedly recommend this series.

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## **Mary Lee says**

An excellent addition to the "comic novel" genre. Hand this book to your Wimpy Kid and Ellie McDoodle readers.

My review here: <http://readingyear.blogspot.com/2010/...>

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## **Arminzerella says**

Aldo Zelnick's grandmother gives him a sketchbook for his birthday so he can practice his drawing – she's an artist. Aldo's not sure what he should draw, or write, so he starts keeping an illustrated journal. His family and friends encourage him to keep doing what he's doing, and it gradually becomes something he wants to do. Aldo records his summer adventures (with his best friend, Jack – an aspiring rock hound/collector) and keeps the journal hidden in their fort (a pine tree in the park). Someone else finds it there and starts drawing in it, too. At first Aldo is upset, and then he's intrigued – who is the mysterious artist? He's pretty sure it's a girl, because the artist has girly handwriting (also, she drew flowers). Will Aldo and Jack be able to figure out her identity?

This is a fun and goofy illustrated novel. Aldo Zelnick is a less-annoying variation on Greg Heffley from the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series (slightly less self-absorbed, too). Aldo's artwork needs some work, but the girly illustrations are awesome. Aldo's also into words, so in this first book (series alert!), he lays it on pretty heavy with the A-words (and we can assume that B will come next!) – all defined at the end in an entertaining glossary.

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## **Shannon says**

05/12: Got this one for David for the road trip. He thought it was so-so. Bummer. I thought he'd love it.

### **Amazon Book Description:**

Aldo Zelnick is not an athlete like his older brother or a rock collector like his best friend; he's just a regular kid who likes to draw. One summer Aldo's grandma, Goosy, gives him a sketchbook in which to record all of his ideas and adventures, and Aldo quickly discovers how much fun cartooning is. From petitioning for a neighborhood pool slide to his passion for slushies, Aldo illustrates his summer vacation, wacky friends, and loving family in this charming comic novel that blends text with illustrations on every page. Engaging and entertaining, the story and drawings in this book will captivate both enthusiastic and reluctant young readers. This first installment in an A-to-Z alphabet series includes a glossary of words to help kids broaden their vocabulary.

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## **Brenda says**

Aldo Zelnick's grandmother, Goosy, gave him a sketchbook at the start of summer vacation. She suggests that he draw in it everyday. Mr. Mot, Aldo's word loving neighbor suggests he write in it everyday. Aldo follows that advice to create his first comic novel, Artsy-Fratsy. It shares the story of Aldo's summer with his

rock hound best friend, Jack, in their Colorado Spruce tree fort. Aldo loves T.V., video games and food - especially Slushies in he summer. His mother often kicks him outside for some fresh air and activity - aka as exercise which Aldo dislikes because he hates being hot and sweaty. Aldo's first journal is followed by Bogus, Cahoots and Dumbstruck. In fact Aldo has written comic novels from A to J so far. While I've only read the first four, I look forward to getting the rest. I like Aldo, his family and friends. I like thinking about what I would do in his place. I think you will like him too. The word gallery at the end of each book is a fun way to exploring different words like acrophobic, amalgam, and audacious or bogus, bodacious and brazen. Bacon Boy, Lady Lettuce and Tornado are Aldo comic strip characters. They are pretty fun too. Check out the Aldo Zelnick website to learn more about the characters, the books and the words

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### **American Mensa says**

The fiction book Artsy Fartsy is a fun, and kid friendly book for all ages. The silly characters in the book make it very enjoyable for all. My favorite part was when Aldo started to enjoy baseball! This adventurous book will take your imagination to many places! I think that ages 4-40 would enjoy this book. Artsy Fartsy will make you laugh out loud! It is humorous, and older people would enjoy the humor. It is humorous, and believe me, all of us can relate to it!

Review by Sofia H, age 11, Denver Mensa

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