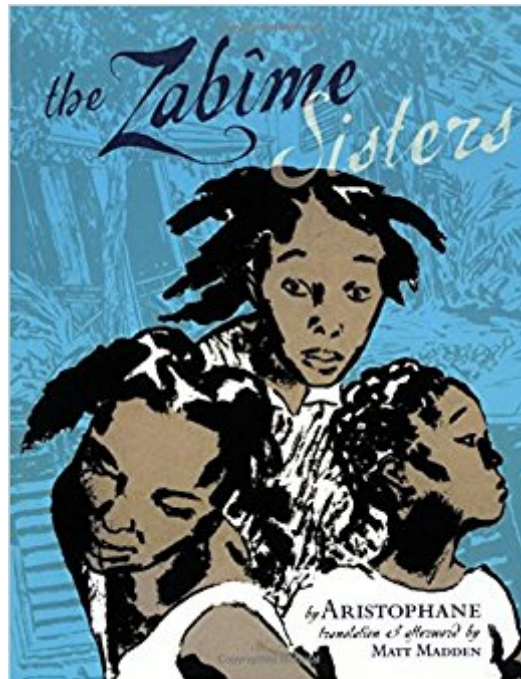




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# Zabime Sisters, The (The Zabime Sisters)



## Synopsis

On the first day of summer vacation, teenaged sisters M’Rose, Elle, and CÃ©lina step out into the tropical heat of their island home and continue their headlong tumble toward adulthood. Boys, schoolyard fights, petty thievery, and even illicit alcohol make for a heady mix, as The Zabime Sisters indulge in a little summertime freedom. The dramatic backdrop of a Caribbean island provides a study of contrasts – a world that is both lush and wild, yet strangely small and intimate – which echoes the contrasts of the sisters themselves, who are at once worldly and wonderfully naïve. Master storyteller Aristophane’s *The Zabime Sisters* takes a keen look at some of the universal experiences of children on the cusp of growing up, in the fascinating setting of Guadeloupe. Aristophane’s bold, graphic brushwork weaves a wild texture through this gentle, clear-eyed tale.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up – Madden, an admirer of French comic artist Aristophane, has translated this 1996 work. The tender and evocative narrative chronicles the first day of summer vacation on the sultry Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Opening panels move readers inside a home’s shuttered window and introduce three sleeping sisters: M’Rose, Elle, and CÃ©lina. The girls awaken and their day

unfolds with summer delights and discoveries: they catch crab at the river, steal mangoes, experiment with a stolen pipe, witness a fight between rivaling boys, suffer the intoxicating effects of rum, taunt and tease friends, and engage in constant sibling rivalry. The text is coupled with expressive images that offer glimpses into the personality of each character and allow the story to slowly unfold. The interplay among the siblings and each girl's singular response to events allow readers to establish a personal connection with each sister. The artist's dry brush technique and controlled use of line, mastery of light and shadow, interesting and unusual framing, and expressive facial close-ups are compelling. Readers will visualize both the unique and universal aspects of this day of freedom for these girls. Back matter includes an afterword and a discussion guide. Æ ª Barbara M. Moon, Suffolk Cooperative Library System, Bellport, NY Æ (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Aristophane was a French writer and artist who produced only a handful of comics works before his untimely death in 2007. The first of these to make it to the U.S. is the story of three sisters who live on the Caribbean Island of Guadelupe. We follow them on the way to see a fight between two local boys, one a notorious bully, while they engage in universal childhood pursuits that Tom Sawyer himself would have recognized: exploring the dangerous parts of the forest, stealing mangoes from the wrong orchard, sneaking a taste of rum to their own detriment. The writer proves deft at revealing the politics of childhood Æ ª the negotiations, cruelties, and kindnesses that exist between friends and especially between sisters Æ ª and the white expanses and thick, inky lines of his art readily evoke not only the proper emotions but also the sun-drenched environment. Lyrical, even literary in its tone, *The Zabime Sisters* is for developed readers looking for something off the beaten path. Includes suggested discussion questions. Grades 7-10. --Jesse Karp

Reason for Reading: The plot. I enjoy stories of childhood and the setting of Guadeloupe certainly piqued my interest. This is the story of a day in the life of the three Zabime sisters on the first day of summer vacation. Set on the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe it has a unique setting of barefoot children amongst tropical flora and fauna. The girls start their day teasing one another with the most outgoing of the three, M'Rose, pulling a prank that scares the other two. The girls meet up with a couple of boys they know and lounge around taking mangoes from an orchard owned by a mean man. Here the story also divides and starts telling us a little of what has been going on so far in the boys' day. M'Rose separates from the other two sisters as a fight between the school bully and an

unknown boy has been called at the crossroads at noon and the other two girls don't want to go, but M'Rose is just the type to want to watch a fight. The girls divide into two groups and both end up watching and participating in typical acts of childhood misbehaviour, neither satisfying them in the end. This is a poignant and candid story of childhood unlike most such stories; it is not nostalgic nor does it leave one with a sense of warmth. The author has captured that grain of malice that is inherently found in children and captures it perfectly throughout the day as it surfaces through normal interaction between children and when they find themselves in distress. While the book explores this meanness, it isn't a mean story, and likewise, while the story is set in a luscious tropical environment the themes of childhood could take place anywhere, rural or urban. I thoroughly enjoyed the book and found it to be a remarkable tale that will be unforgettable for me. The book is suggested for young adults but I think adults are going to enjoy the book on a different level, already having experienced youth and now seeing this acrimony in their own children and recognising it for the seed that a child grows out of with the proper nurturing. The art must also be mentioned as it is spectacular. It is done heavily in black ink and very expressive and realistic. Though the book is oversized, I only wish it could have been bigger as some of the panels seem too small to contain this type of art as the thickness of the black brush strokes sometimes lose the detail in other areas as they are squished into a small frame. The true beauty of the art is visible in the larger frames.

When I first flipped through "The Zabime Sisters," I wasn't quite sure what to make of it. The art is done in heavy black brushstrokes, and at first I thought it was too busy, because my eyes weren't drawn immediately to the characters. Upon reading it all the way through, however, I believe there's purpose in this: the characters are integrated with their environment both visually and metaphorically. The three sisters live in gorgeous, lush surroundings full of interesting plants and animals, but they are more caught up in their own concerns to notice. They're used to it and accept it as part of their everyday life. In fact, there are some details that are easy for the reader to miss, as well, despite the fact that they're right in front of your face. It made me feel drawn into the world of the story. The characters are drawn a bit roughly, but this added to the naturalistic feel of the artwork. They have distinct and likable personalities. Even a lot of the second characters get thorough development through the omniscient narrator (though I'm not sure how I felt about them being developed in this way). I wanted to know more about them, and almost felt like "The Zabime Sisters" was meant to be the first volume of a longer work, though sadly we'll never know if this was the case. The plot is slice-of-life, languid as the summer day on which the story is set. It's a little

slow for my tastes, but does a good job of showing what the characters and their lives are like. Overall, a strong work that will be appreciated by those who like atmospheric, character-driven comics.

This loosely connected series of graphic vignettes follows the three Zabine sisters and some of their friends around on the first day of summer vacation on the French island of Guadeloupe. First the eldest M'Rose drags her two younger sisters Celina and Elle out of bed and off to the river, scaring Ella with a story about a sinkhole. They run into some boys they know, steal some mangoes from an orchard, and then M'Rose heads off to join a bunch of other kids waiting to see some poor kid get beaten by the local bully. Meanwhile her sisters meet up with some other friends for a picnic at a kind of clubhouse. But the events aren't really that important, it's more the general tone of a lazy summer day that's being captured. The kids all seem to be in that 8-12 age range or thereabouts, and the book and art do a very nice job of capturing the age and the sense of discovery, possibility, and social distress that can accompany it. The artwork is stark black and white inkwork with no gradations or gray washes. When coupled with the artist's very naturalistic style, the result can sometimes be very visually flat, with confusing perspective and depth. A number of times, I was taken out of the book's world by the need to stop and figure out what was happening in the panel. Still, definitely worth checking out if you're someone who likes graphic storytelling that's more focused on mood than story.

This is the tale of the first day of summer for three sisters on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. It is a simple story of sisters, friends, childhood freedoms and struggles. What makes this interesting are the intricate panels which accompany each frame of the story. If a picture is worth a thousand words, this book is "War and Peace".

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