



Asking for a Friend

Written by Ronnie Riley

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Why go through the stress of making friends when you can just pretend? It works for Eden and their social anxiety... until their mom announces she's throwing them a birthday party and all their friends are invited.

Eden's "friends," Duke, Ramona, and Tabitha, are all real kids from school... but Eden's never actually spoken to them before. Now Eden will do whatever it takes to convince them to be their friends—at least until the party is over.

When things start to go better than Eden expects, and the group starts to bond, Eden finds themselves trapped in a lie that gets worse the longer they keep it up. What happens if their now sort-of-real friends discover that Eden hasn't been honest with them from the very beginning?

Author Ronnie Riley creates a world full of queer joy and all the ups and downs of true friendship.

Content/Discussion Themes

Friendship, 2SLGBTQIA+, non binary, trans, sexual attraction, social anxiety disorder, lying, forgiveness

Bertie Stewart is Perfectly Imperfect

Written by Melanie Mosher

Published by Nimbus Publishing

A heartfelt middle grade novel exploring anxiety from the TD Canadian Children's Award—shortlisted author of *A Beginner's Guide to Goodbye*.

Bertha Mae Stewart—otherwise known as Bertie—is ready for anything grade 6 can throw at her. She spends every day with her best friend Kevin, enjoys delicious cookies at her grandmother's, and has an adorable baby half-brother to dote on. But then her teacher announces a public speaking assignment, she's paired up with her worst enemy for the project, and her inside voice won't stop telling her that everything is going to go wrong.

And of course, there's that nagging little secret Bertie can't tell anyone about.

Most days, a trip to her favourite tree or a hug from Grammy are enough to make Bertie's anxiety go away for a short while. But as life grows more complicated, and Bertie pushes the noisy feelings further down, the pressure inside of her starts to build. And someday soon, she won't be able to hold it all in.

From the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award—shortlisted author of *A Beginner's Guide to Goodbye*, *Bertie Stewart is Perfectly Imperfect* is a heartfelt tale about learning to cope with anxiety amid life changes both big and small.

Content/Discussion Themes

Anxiety, mental health, life changes, previous death of a parent, friendship

Eerie Tales from the School of Screams

Written and Illustrated by Graham Annable

Published by First Second

From the director of the Oscar-nominated movie *Boxtrolls* comes a middle grade horror anthology that will leave you holding onto your blankets for dear life! Perfect for fans of *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* and *Goosebumps*!

School is tough.
School is scary.
School is EERIE.

No one knows this better than Davis and Emily. But they're not scared of school because of tough tests or merciless vice-principals. No, they're scared because their teacher wants her students to present the class with the spookiest, most chilling stories they can think of.

From the twisted mind of Graham Annable comes five horrifying stories that will scare your skeleton right out of your skin. Are you ready to stare down "The Face in the Forest"? Do you think you can handle the truth behind "The Village that Vanished?"

Lock the doors, turn on all the lights, and arm yourself with candy—you'll need all the help you can get to face these nightmares.

Content/Discussion Themes

Horror, spooky, some graphic/but not graphic scenes

Game Face

Written by Shari Green

Published by Groundwood Books

Thirteen-year-old Jonah is determined to prove that anxiety won't stop him from succeeding as his hockey team's goalie in this dynamic novel in verse.

What-ifs rattle around his brain at the worst times, like when he's in the middle of a playoff game. What if he lets his teammates down? What if he can't make it pro? And the biggest what-if of all, the one he keeps to himself — what if he's like his dad, whose life is controlled by anxiety that has only gotten worse since Jonah's mom died in a car crash?

To prove that he's not like that, Jonah is determined to succeed in the high-stress role of goalie. He and his best friend Ty have big plans for their hockey futures. But when Ty suffers a medical crisis during a pivotal game, Jonah's anxiety ramps up to new levels

It takes courage to ask for help, but Jonah starts to realize that his team goes beyond the people who lace up their skates with him every week, and maybe it's okay to look for support on and off the ice.

From the adrenaline rush of sudden-death overtime to the weight of worrying about letting your teammates — and yourself — down, this novel in verse will hook readers from the first line.

Content/Discussion Themes

Anxiety, mental health, previous death of a parent, friendship, dementia, child heart condition needing CPR and AED, bullying, learning to ask for help, anxiety strategies

Gamerville

Written and Illustrated by Johnnie Christmas

Published by HarperAlley

A video gamer's championship aspirations are dashed when his parents send him to Camp Reset, where electronics are forbidden and you're forced to socialize, eat healthy, and spend time outside. Gamerville is a timely and vulnerable exploration of the importance of human connection and what it means to run in a pack, brought to you by award-winning author Johnnie Christmas.

Max Lightning is howling at the moon—he's finally qualified for Gamerville, a championship where players compete to be top dog in the multiplayer video game Lone Wolf of Calamity Bay. But his dreams of domination are doomed when his parents send him to Camp Reset. Gone are the long nights of downing energy drinks and getting copious amounts of screen time. They've been replaced with fresh air and group activities under the hot sun—a shock to the system for a

lone wolf like Max. Can Max escape Camp Reset and level up at Gamerville, or has he finally played his last match?

Content/Discussion Themes

Role of technology, video gaming, cyberbullying, physical bullying, reconciliation

Iggy Included

Written by Deborah Kerbel

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Twelve-year-old Paige Coopersmith and her family have won a house in an essay-writing contest. Excited to leave their cramped apartment and move to a sprawling property in rural Ontario, they're more than a little surprised to find the house is old and in need of major repairs. They're even more shocked to discover that Iggy — the old dog who lives there — comes with the house. Apparently it was all in the fine print!

Due to financial stress, and with nowhere else to go, the family stays. Paige, who is scared of the large, unkempt Newfoundland dog, does her best to stay out of her way, while her parents deal with an unusual list of instructions from the previous owner.

But girl and beast soon form a special bond, when Paige, a hesitant reader, practises her reading out loud and discovers that Iggy loves to be read to.

Little does Paige know Iggy is even more special than she realizes. In fact, someone else has their eye on her, and when Iggy goes missing, it's Paige who must solve the mysteries of this unusual house and find her now beloved dog.

Content/Discussion Themes

Dog-napping, inheritance, fear of dogs, family dynamics, mystery clues

The Kodiaks: Home Ice Advantage: The Breakout Chronicles

Written by David A. Robertson

Published by Highwater Press

Hockey fans will love this action-packed middle grade novel about teamwork, overcoming adversity, and being proud of who you are and where you come from.

Everything is changing for 11-year-old Alex Robinson. After his father accepts a new job, Alex and his family move from their community to the city. For the first time in his life, he doesn't fit in.

His fellow students don't understand Indigenous culture. Even a simple show of respect to his teacher gets him in trouble.

Things begin to look up after Alex tries out for a local hockey team. Playing for the Kodiaks, Alex proves himself as one of the best, but he becomes a target because he's Indigenous. Can Alex trust his teammates and stand up to the jerks on other teams? Can he find a way to fit in and still be who he's meant to be?

Content/Discussion Themes

Racism, hockey culture, standing up for yourself, moving from reserve to city

The Legendary Mo Seto 01

Written by A.Y. Chan

Published by Aladdin (Simon & Schuster)

Twelve-year-old Modesty "Mo" Seto dreams of being a taekwondo champion. Even though her mom disapproves, Mo can always count on her dad, who is her number one fan and biggest supporter. Lately, Mo has been on a losing streak, and it doesn't help that she keeps losing to her archnemesis, Dax, who's much bigger than her. If only she were faster, stronger, not so petite. Mo can't even lean on her dad like usual with how distracted he's been lately.

When Mo learns about the chance to audition to star alongside her idol and legendary martial artist and movie star Cody Kwok, she knows this her chance to prove to her dad, to the world, and to herself that she can compete with anyone, no matter her size. Unfortunately, Dax is auditioning, too. As Mo and her nemesis progress to callbacks, someone attempts to sabotage the movie set and Mo's dad disappears—and both events seem linked to a mysterious book, the Book of Joy.

The book contains information on Xiaoxi Fu, a secret dance-like martial art developed by Mo's ancestral grandmother. Armed with these secret moves and an unexpected ally, Mo embarks on a high-octane adventure to rescue her father, save the movie, and discover an unexpected joy in being small.

Content/Discussion Themes

Martial arts, secret societies, sabotage, kidnapping, minor violence, learning that famous people aren't who they say they are, trying to please parents

Mortified

Written by Kristy Jackson

Illustrated by Rhael McGregor

Published by HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

It's nothing short of a catastrophe when someone secretly signs up Belinda Houle, the school's shyest kid, to audition for a play.

Belinda turns to Sally—her unflappable best friend and resident witch—for help. Belinda doesn't believe in magic, but if Sally says she has a spell for confidence...well, it couldn't hurt to try it. Could it?

What follows the spell is a series of disasters so disastrous they would have been funny—if only they weren't happening to Belinda! From eating dog food, to losing her hair in a straightening mishap, to wrecking a mural and ending up with globs of paint on her head, things get worse and worse for Belinda until she must face the facts: One piece of bad luck can be explained away, but this? This is a straight-up curse!

Can she break the curse before the dreamy Ricky Daniels takes notice of her crooked wig?

More importantly, can Belinda battle the very thing she hoped the spell would take away: her embarrassment?

Content/Discussion Themes

Embarrassing moments, bullying, teasing, finding a good friend, loving who you are, parental pressure

Scarewaves

Written and Illustrated by Trevor Henderson

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Internet horror superstar Trevor Henderson is famous for his ghastly creations and hair-raising creepypastas. Now he brings that talent for the terrifying to this debut middle-grade thriller.

You don't stay out after dark in Beacon Point...

The small town of Beacon Point has always been plagued by eerie local phenomena. It's a town where disappearances are common, strange creatures have been sighted with unnerving frequency, and a ghastly secret lurks in the woods.

The adults in town are oblivious to these strange occurrences. Others prefer not to talk or even think about them. But over the course of several terrifying nights, a group of kids will come face to face with the horrors hiding within their sleepy town. Guided by the mysterious radio host Alan Graves, they must follow the clues to a terrifying secret before it eats them alive.

Content/Discussion Themes

Horror, monsters, parents who ignore kids, unresolved ending, horror images