

# Please Be My Star

AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR  
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**RECOMMENDED FOR:** Lower to Mid Secondary

## SYNOPSIS

Erika knows that people find her weird and off-putting. Instead of making friends, she finds solace in talking to herself and obsessing over handsome actors and pop stars. When she starts attending a new school, her loneliness takes on a life of its own and she develops a new obsession: the cutest boy in her theatre class, Christian. For some reason, Christian is kind to her and even agrees to star in the play that she wrote for him, and Erika starts to find a creative voice that might lead to new friendship and romance. But the more time Erika spends with Christian, the more she wonders what he sees in a creep like her. Can Erika somehow write her way into the centre of her own heartfelt love story? Or does Christian have an ending of his own in mind?

## ABOUT THE CREATOR

Victoria Grace Elliott is the creator of two graphic novels, *Yummy: A History of Desserts* and *Tasty: A History of Yummy Experiments*, and *balderdash!*, a webcomic. She previously worked at Powerhouse Animation Studios. Victoria lives in Austin, Texas, with her partner and enjoys attending concerts and making collages of her favourite idols and actors in her free time.

Visit her online at [vgeportfolio.com](http://vgeportfolio.com).

## STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, look closely at the cover and title, and discuss:
  - What can you see happening in the cover artwork?
  - Who do you predict will be the main character of this story?
  - What does it mean to be a star?
  - How do you think someone can be a star for someone else?
  - What genre do you think this story is likely to be?
- In the book, the students have to write one-act plays for other students to perform. How long is a one-act play, and what can you see as being some of the biggest challenges in writing and performing one?
  - In pairs or small groups, write a one-act play of your own based on *Please Be My Star*. Perform your play for the class, and then discuss the challenges and rewards inherent in creating something like this.
- What is happening when the greyscale girl is talking to Erika? Who is she, why is she shown like this, and what affect do her words have on Erika's behaviour?
- How does Erika's dream of writing a play for Christian to perform in, compare to her first interaction with him in real

life? Why do you think that this is so challenging for Erika?

- Erika has a visual diary filled with photographs, drawings, and other items that have been glued in to create a series of collages. Her journal is focused very much on the idea of 'boys', but visual diaries or journals like this one can have any topic as a focus, or can be completely free-form and include random bits of whatever catches someone's interest at the time. Create a double-page spread as the opener of a visual diary of your own. You can choose a topic that is a special interest of yours, or you can have a wide-ranging selection of art, photographs, motifs and other images without a single clear focal idea behind them. Experiment with arranging your chosen images, and include lettering and decorated borders as part of your artwork. Once finished, you can display your artwork as a finished item, or you can use it as the first pages in a journal of your own, which you can continue to fill with other images.
- Re-read the conversation between Julie and Erika on p 50. In small groups, discuss what Julie is saying. Do you agree with her? Do you think media presentations of teenage dating are realistic, or do they create false and unattainable standards of constant teen-love?
- When we see Christian at home with his family, he speaks and thinks in Spanish, and the author includes an English translation written below the Spanish words. However, when Erika first meets his family, all the Spanish interactions are left untranslated. As a class, discuss the possible reasons behind this authorial choice. What affect does not having the English translation have on the reading experience? How is the impact of Erika meeting his family affected by this use of two languages in the text at once?
- Why are some of Erika's speech bubbles black with white writing? What do you think this is signifying? In small groups, discuss why you think some of the words are written like this, and what it indicates about Erika and what she is saying. Share your conclusions with the class, and discuss the different methods that the author used to show the reader what is happening with Erika's inner monologue and thoughts, and her state of mind when talking to others.
- Read the lyrics of the song on Christian's phone screen on p 168. How are they relevant to the story as a whole? Which characters do you think would empathise with the expression of these emotions and how would they display (or intentionally fail to display) them to others?
- Christian and Erika have both created playlists that they feel complement the play. Individually or in small groups, create a playlist of your own that you feel complements the story, then as a class, discuss and compare everyone's playlists, justifying your choices with regard to specific characters or scenes. As a class, vote on the different songs which people have included, and choose a ten-song playlist that everyone feels represents or complements the themes and concepts being explored in this story.
- Listen to all the songs that have been used as chapter titles. You can find the full list including artists' names at the end of the book.
- Look at the picture of Erika on p 172, after Christian sees the table in her bedroom. What emotion is she feeling here? How can you tell? Create a fictional character of your own who is feeling a very strong emotion, and draw a picture of them that you feel expresses this emotion. Try to show it as clearly as the picture of Erika does. Caption your drawing with the name of the emotion you are expressing.
- What is the biggest realisation that Erika comes to over the course of the whole story?
- Do you think that writing and directing *The Ocean* was a worthwhile experience for Erika? What did the whole thing teach her about herself and about others?
- Why do you think Paola was so touched by the performance of *The Ocean*?

AUTHOR OF NOTES

**RAE CARLYLE**