

Mixed-Up

AUTHOR

KAMI GARCIA

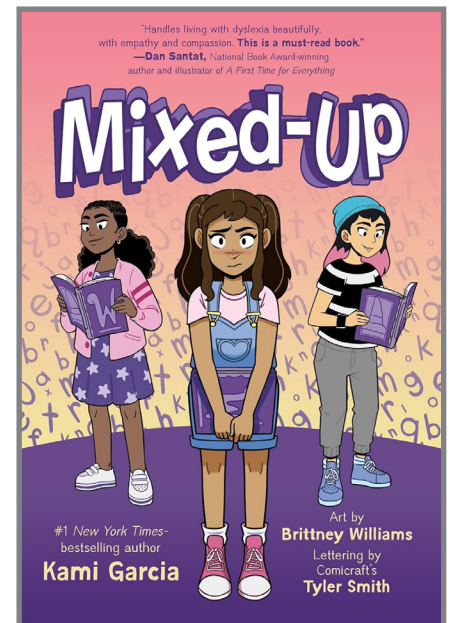
ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

Stella knows fifth grade will be the best year ever. Her closest friends, Emiko and Latasha, are in her class and they all got the teacher they wanted. Then their favourite television show, *Witchlins*, announces a new guidebook and an online game!

But when the classwork starts piling up, Stella struggles to stay on top. Why does it take her so long to read? And how can she keep up with friends in the *Witchlins* game if she can't get through the text-heavy guidebook? It takes loving teachers and her family to recognise that Stella has a learning difference, and after a dyslexia diagnosis she gets the support and tools she needs to succeed.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kami Garcia is a #1 *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Publishers Weekly*, and international bestselling author and comic book writer, and an award-winning young adult novelist. Her best-known works include *Beautiful Creatures*, *Unbreakable*, and *Teen Titans: Raven*. Kami was a teacher and reading specialist for seventeen years before co-writing her first novel.

Kami lives in Maryland with her family and their dogs, Spike and Oz.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Brittney Williams is a storyboard and comic book artist who draws a lot. In 2012, she interned at Walt Disney Animation Studios as a storyboard artist. Since then, she's worked for a variety of animation studios and publishers including DC Comics, Cartoon Network, Dreamworks TV, BOOM! Studios and Marvel Comics. As a two time GLAAD award nominee, she exists to create things for kids and the queer community.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion might be:
 - What can you see happening on the cover of this novel?
 - Who do you think the main character/s of this novel might be?
 - What can you tell about the probable protagonists of this novel based on the cover artwork?
 - Before reading more than the title, what do you think the phrase *Mixed-Up* refers to? Why do you think this?
 - Read the rest of the text on the front cover. What do you think the title refers to now? Have you changed your answer to the previous question and if so why?

- What do you hypothesise is likely to happen in this novel? Upon what are you basing these hypotheses?
- Read the text on the back cover of the novel. Do you wish to alter or replace your previous hypotheses? Why/why not, and if so in what way?
- Who are the creators of this novel listed on the front cover, and what are their roles in the creation of this story?
- Whose name is traditionally listed on the cover of a novel?
- Which of the three people listed on the cover filled a role that is not traditionally listed on the cover?
- Why do you think the third person might have been included on this book cover?
- On p 41, while Stella is looking at the graphic novels in the library, Mrs Burk tells Stella that she's sure Stella's teacher expects her to choose a real book. Stella is pretty sure that graphic novels are in fact real books, and that the 'novel' in the name means that they are indeed novels. Why do you think Mrs Burk looks down on graphic novels as a subtype of book?
 - As a class, discuss what defines a graphic novel, and the various ways that they can enhance storytelling and benefit the reader. Be sure to include the concept of a dual narrative structure in your discussion.
- Why do you think that Stella's parents, friends, and previous years' teachers had not realised that she might be dyslexic?
- Do you think Stella's teacher making an 'unfinished work' folder for her helped Stella? Or did it just make her feel overwhelmed and inadequate? Why do you think that Miss Marin decided to try this first?
- Finding reading difficult is one challenge that Stella faced—but she also faced a variety of other challenges that all followed directly from her difficulties with reading. In small groups, identify and discuss the different challenges she faced that were a result of her struggles with reading, and vote on which one you think had the greatest impact on her schoolwork, which one had the greatest impact on her self-esteem, and which one was probably the most obvious to others.
- Stella and her friends all love watching *Witchlins*, a fictional TV show. What do you know about *Witchlins* based on the text and the artwork within the novel? In small groups, think of as many different points of information about this fictional show as you can. Create a one- or two-page storyboard for a possible future episode of *Witchlins*.
- On pp 106–108, Miss Marin tells Stella that Mrs Burk was mistaken, and that a story told with pictures is just as valid a story as one told with words. Explore telling a story with picture and words using the below activity:
 - Create a 4 to 6 panel wordless short story that:
 - Sets the scene
 - Adds a complication
 - Resolves the problem.
 - On a separate piece of paper, write the same story without any clarifying illustrations.
 - Arrange everyone's (unsigned) visual narratives on a long table, or pinned to a bulletin board. Number the top left corner of each visual narrative with a unique number.
 - Arrange everyone's (unsigned) textual narratives on a separate table, or pinned to a second board. Write a one or two letter code in the top left corner of each textual narrative.
 - Individually, read the written stories, and look at the graphic stories, and try to match as many of the written narratives to their corresponding textual narratives as you can.
 - Afterwards, compare your list of probable matches to the list of actual matching picture/text sets.

As a class, discuss what you found easy, what you found difficult, and what you found enjoyable about this exercise. Discuss what made some text/artwork pairs easy to match up to each other, and what made others more challenging. What would you do differently if you had to do this same activity again in the future, and what would you do the same?
- How do you think Stella felt when all her friends at school were so excited to be reading the *Witchlins* handbook and playing the game, while she found reading the book to be too challenging? In small groups, create a list of as many words as you can, that describe Stella's feelings as she comes to realise that she is being increasingly left behind
 - Individually, write a short piece describing what Stella feels, when she feels it, and why she feels that way. Use the words your group thought of as key elements in a decorative border surrounding your written work.
- Stella had multiple opportunities during the course of the novel, where she could have let her friends or family know

that she found reading difficult, and that her difficulty reading was causing problems for her at school. Why do you think that Stella tried to hide the fact that she found reading difficult? What do you think she feared would happen if everyone knew?

- As a class, discuss the parallels between the story that Stella wrote for the young author's competition, and the story that she was living at the time she wrote it. What are the key similarities and differences between the character of Stel, and the character of Stella? What are the key differences in how they handle their situation, and the similarities in how their problems are resolved?
- Read the notes at the end of the book, and share one key fact that you learnt from them with the class. Your fact might be a personal detail about one of the creators of this novel, or it could be a tidbit about the creation process itself. Write your fact on a small piece of paper, and stick all the individual pieces of paper onto a large sheet of coloured card, creating a poster about this book and its creators.

AUTHOR OF NOTES
RAE CARLYLE