Read to Get in the School Spirit

Aurora Ropp and Kris Wiley for The News Review

With kids headed back to school, this is a great time to read books that mirror their experiences and introduce them to new ways of considering their classmates. We recommend these titles, all of which feature students navigating their education.

**Picture Book**

There are so many cute and encouraging new titles for kids heading to school. The one I want to focus on features a classroom pet: “Scorch, Hedgehog of Doom” written by Cate Berry and illustrated by Margherita Grasso.

Scorch is a hedgehog class pet who wants to be seen as ferocious, but the students can’t help but see her as an adorable pet. Scorch tries to act ferocious yelling, punching and running only to be met with coos of cuteness.

Scorch runs as fast as possible, does a jump and lands in the snake’s cage. When the snake comes toward Scorch, will Scorch’s ferocious cuteness be enough to save her?!

This fun school story focusing on the class pet is a lighthearted start to talking about school and things that come up: behavior, how others perceive us, what to do in a sticky situation. It’s a great story that ends well to share with kids aged 3 and up.

**Junior**

The Henry series by Jenn Bailey and illustrated by Mika Song started as a picture book titled “A Friend for Henry,” which introduced our young protagonist.

The series then became early chapter books with “Henry, Like Always” and the latest, “Henry and the Something New.”

What I love most about these books is that no one labels Henry. They’re simple stories showing how Henry navigates his school days and the activities that are part of every day in the life of a student.

Henry wants a friend, so he considers several of his classmates and recognizes who is a good fit. His class is going to have a parade; Henry is apprehensive because he doesn’t like loud noises, and he’s not sure how he can participate. The class is planning a museum trip, and Henry does a lot of thinking about what he might encounter and still have a good time.

The chapters are short, and I think the books are great not only for the Henrys in our lives but for the classmates of the Henrys in our lives.

**Young Adults**

“Shut Up, This Is Serious” by Carolina Ixta features two Latinas in their senior year of high school dealing with big-time adult things – pregnancy, depression, abuse, generational poverty, split-up families – and it’s intense.

Belen narrates the story set in Oakland. Her father has taken off, and Belen’s mother and older sister seem to be so caught up in their lives that Belen feels abandoned by them and judged by her extended family. She doesn’t feel able to rely on her best friend, Leti, because Leti is pregnant by her secret Black boyfriend who will not be accepted by her parents.

Adrift, Belen starts hanging out with a college kid whose family grew up in a very different Oakland than she did. Their relationship turns physical, and all the while Belen is questioning herself.

Belen continues to spiral, and then there is a climactic event that takes her to rock bottom before her family and friends gather round to help her heal.

I recommend this book for mature teens and readers who enjoyed “I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter” by Erika L. Sanchez and Elizabeth Acevedo’s young adult books, “The Poet X,” “Clap When You Land” and “With the Fire on High.”

All of these books are available at the library. Place holds at roseburg.biblionix.com, or contact library staff at library@roseburgor.gov or 541-492-7050 for assistance.

**Youth Programming on Break**

Aurora is taking a well-deserved break from public programming. Children’s and teen programs will return in October.