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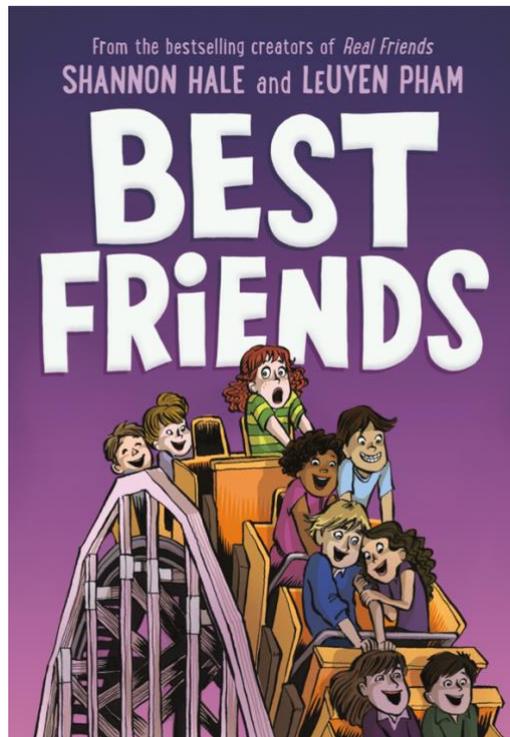
Review of *Best Friends*

Written by Shannon Hale & Illustrated by LeUyen Pham

Adult/Educator Reviewer: Jennifer Fraser

The University of Georgia, Athens, GA

Student Reviewers: Ayla Jaganjac & Micah Davis, 6th Grade



Hale, S., & Pham, L. (Illustrator). (2019). *Best friends*. New York, NY: First Second.

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Adult Review: Jennifer Fraser

At the start of 6th grade, Shannon thinks the year is going to be perfect. She is part of the popular crowd and the most popular girl in school, Jen, is her best friend. However, many challenges and new rules come with being in 6th grade. Just when Shannon thinks she understands the rules, she realizes they are changing again. Shannon has to keep up with the latest music and television to fit in. She has to decide when she can be silly and when she cannot. She has to figure out when it is okay to be friends with boys and when it is uncool. Shannon is also starting to realize the painful aspects of gossip and how drama can destroy friendships. As Shannon tries to navigate 6th grade, she wonders who her true friends really are.

As a 6th grade teacher, I chose to review this book because I knew it would be perfect for my students. I have seen so much heartache and sadness from my students dealing with friendship troubles. It is extremely difficult for middle school students to navigate the world of friendships, relationships, and popularity. This book will appeal to all middle school students, especially to female students. This book feels very relatable and realistic. It directly confronts many of the issues of middle school. It is refreshing, heartfelt, and very honest.

This book does not have too many concerns for educators, but the main character does display some signs of anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD). At many points in the story, the character will get stuck with certain worries and fears. The character worries about her house burning down, her parents dying, and other issues. The character also displays OCD in her need to touch all of her stuffed animals multiple times before she leaves her house. For students who are aware of or struggling with anxiety and OCD, this book could be helpful, or it could be problematic. The educator should keep this in mind before recommending the novel.

Student Review: Ayla Jaganjac

This book is amazing. I like how it shows a 6th grade point of view. It also shows the best way for a 6th grade student to handle conflict. This is one of the best things in the book.

How she fights through the conflict in the story in different ways makes the story fun. I like how she shows her problems in a personal story where she writes about a whole other universe. I also love how all her problems help end the story together.

Now the bad part: I do not like how at the start of a new chapter you have a question. Sometimes, it does not make sense. One time it said, “How are you feeling today?” I did not get how it is trying to give you a sneak-peek. That is the only bad part of the book. I love this book and I think that graphic novel lovers should read this.

Student Review: Micah Davis

I could relate to the story in the book because it was hard knowing all the new stuff and being able to keep up in elementary school. Also, I remember all my friends having a girlfriend but not me. This book also has a lot of details showing the characters’ personalities.

What could have been done better: The author could explain how Shannon felt when she had a connection with the story she was writing. Also, explain what types of friends were right for Shannon. Other than that, it is a very good book.

Overall, this story is outstanding. The author took a lot of time on this book and I loved it. I did not get a chance to read the first one, but this was an amazing book. I hope she writes more.