

Wellesley Books Interview questions

Lori Goldstein, Sources Say

Here's Lori Goldstein, answering reader questions posed to her via her social media channels about her upcoming "Election meets Gossip Girl" YA novel, SOURCES SAY.

What was your inspiration? Did any personal experiences inspire this story?

The idea for SOURCES SAY came about during a somewhat lively discussion (argument?!) with my nephews. We were talking about the pros and cons of things like Reddit and using social media as a way to get your news. With myself, his uncle, and his mother all having journalism degrees, we clearly had a strong viewpoint on this issue! But as we talked further, I became fascinated by the notion of how we now get our news—adults, but especially teens. How do we know what sources are "trust-worthy"? In this age where the president tweets about #fakenews and the line between fact and fiction seems to blur, what message are teens getting? This very issue has been making its way into school curriculums, and I wanted to add to the conversation by exploring it in fiction.

Was your experience as a journalist more like *The Red and Blue* or *The Shrieking Violet*? Were you in student government in high school?

I was not a member of student government in high school, and I'm sad and embarrassed to have to admit that I was not the most politically active or knowledgeable when I was a teen—about student government or real-world government. What I was involved in was journalism, from high school through college and beyond. And I am a *Red and Blue* old-school journalist all the way, same as the main character of Cat. And like Cat, I've had to change and learn and expand my views on what media means, the role of reporters, objectivity versus subjectivity. I certainly don't claim to have the answers to these weighty questions, but I wanted to write SOURCES SAY to be a part of and to spark those conversations. *The Shrieking Violet* is more of an *Onion* style cheeky paper, which reflects my own creative writing voice of writing with humor. *The Shrieking Violet* articles included in the novel were an absolute blast to write!

I've always wondered how authors come up with character names. How do you?

I know not all authors like it, but I love the process of coming up with character names. A character just doesn't feel real until you find the perfect name. I spend a lot of time on baby name sites! But I'm not just browsing. One of my favorite things to do is to look at the meanings behind names and to choose a name that reflects a key trait for my character. So if a character is generous or kind or selfish or ambitious, I'll find names with those meanings and chose from them. Good reason to start googling the names of my characters! I also draw from my personal life, often including the names of friends, family members, and pets. Sometimes merging names. A character in SCREEN QUEENS named Esmé Theot, for example, is named after the kids of one of my best friends (kids are Esmé and Theo!). Riley and Emmie in SOURCES SAY are named after another friend's daughters. Often I don't tell friends and – thus far – it's a fun surprise!

Were there challenging scenes or chapters to write?

One in particular at the end of the novel gave me trouble. Without giving any spoilers, it's a scene in which the two sisters, who are the heart of the novel and our two narrators, must face their strained relationship and decide the type of sisters they want to be. So much builds to this moment, plot-wise and emotionally, that I rewrote it dozens of times to hit the right tone. I think I finally reached it, but I guess that's for the readers to decide.

What was it like to write about something that's a problem buzzword (fake news?) How do current events influence your stories and your characters?

Both SCREEN QUEENS and SOURCES SAY tackle timely topics. In SCREEN QUEENS, I focus on three young women encountering sexism and obstacles as females in the world of tech. The three are part of a competition in Silicon Valley to create the next great app. The issue of encouraging more girls to enter the important areas of STEM and technology was a key part of writing the novel. And yet, at its heart, SCREEN QUEENS is a story about three young women learning to stand up for themselves—and to stand together. It's a true female empowerment story. SOURCES SAY pulls from the current political climate of fake news, media's role specifically in our political process, and the power and responsibility of political candidates. In a time when so many lines are blurred, these critical issues need to be talked about. Which puts a weight and responsibility on me as an author to present all sides of the issues, give readers fodder for those discussions to be had, but to allow conclusions and choices to be made by readers. There's an added burden to tackle these heavy and important issues in a way that makes for a fun, escapist read, as that's the genre of contemporary I'm writing in. I guess it will be up to readers to decide if I've achieved my goals!

Bio

Lori Goldstein earned her BA in journalism but eventually found her true writing passion in the world of fictional people. She's never met a beach she didn't love, a book she wouldn't read, or a strange food she wouldn't try. She is the author of SOURCES SAY (9/8/2020), which Kirkus calls "Entertaining, thought-provoking, and heartwarming"; SCREEN QUEENS, which Kirkus calls "a fun and uplifting story that celebrates female friendship and empowerment"; and the VOYA-starred young adult contemporary fantasy series BECOMING JINN. You can visit her online at www.lorigoldsteinbooks.com, @loriagoldstein on Twitter, and on Instagram @lorigoldsteinbooks.

Book description

Two exes. One election. All the drama.

For fans of Becky Albertalli and Morgan Matson comes a funny, heartfelt novel about fueding exes running for class president and the scandal that makes the previously boring school election the newest trending hashtag.

At Acedia High School outside of Boston, student council has always been nothing more than a popularity contest. Nobody pays attention. Nobody cares.

But all that changes when the Frankengirls show up. During the very first week of school, someone plasters the halls with Photoshopped images of three "perfect tens"--images of scantily clad girls made from real photos of girls at school. The student body is livid. And the two presidential candidates, Angeline Quinn and Leo Torres, jump on the opportunity to propose their solutions and secure votes. After their messy break up, Leo and Angie are fighting tooth and nail to win this thing and their constituents are mesmerized as they duke it out.

As if things couldn't be more dramatic, the school's two newspapers get involved. The Red & Blue is run by Angie's sister Cat and she prides herself on only reporting the facts. But her morals are tested when The Shrieking Violet--written by an anonymous source and based less on facts and more on fiction--blatantly endorses Leo. Rumors fly, secrets are leaked, and the previously mundane student election becomes anything but boring.

Blurbs and Review Quotes

“Alternating chapters between Angeline and Cat, this fun and provocative novel sees the sisters growing in their relationship while dealing with thorny issues of accountability, truth, enacting change, and the systemic sexism prevalent in their school. . . . Entertaining, thought-provoking, and heartwarming.” — *Kirkus Reviews*

“A timely and smart novel that examines the pernicious effects of fake news and what it means to be a feminist, and even better, a sister. Lori Goldstein knows the teenage girl’s heart.” — Stacey Lee, award-winning author of *The Downstairs Girl*

“A whip-smart, razor-sharp foray into school politics, friendship, family, and the nature of female ambition. *Sources Say* is savvy, heartfelt, and so very timely.” — Laurie Elizabeth Flynn, author of *Firsts*, *Last*, *Girl Lied To*, and *All Eyes on Her*

“If there was ever a book for our time, this is it! Scandal, drama, romance, and fake news collide in this fun, clever, fast-paced read.” — Jessica Brody, bestselling author of *The Chaos of Standing Still*, *In Some Other Life*, and *A Week of Mondays*