



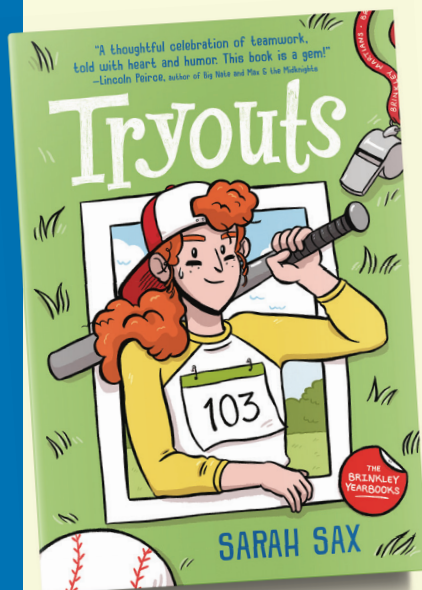
In conversation with Sarah Sax, creator of *Tryouts*



Elle Darcy

ALEXANDRA, ALSO KNOWN AS AL, HAS BEEN PLAYING BASEBALL WITH HER OLDER BROTHERS FOR AS LONG AS SHE CAN REMEMBER. WERE SPORTS A BIG PART OF YOUR LIFE GROWING UP?

Sports were in my life, but I wasn't an athlete like Al. My parents encouraged me to play organized sports as a way of making friends, so I played soccer and basketball in elementary and middle school. Baseball fandom was a part of my life though, especially with the women and girls in my orbit. I have fond memories of hanging out with my grandma, listening to the Cardinals game on the radio while working on sewing projects together.



TRYOUTS IS THE SECOND BOOK IN THE BRINKLEY YEARBOOK SERIES. FOR READERS NEW TO THE SERIES, AL'S STORY STANDS ON ITS OWN, BUT CAN FANS OF *PICTURE DAY* EXPECT TO SEE ANY OF THEIR FAVORITE CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY?

Absolutely! My goal for this series is to build a recurring cast of characters that will take turns for center stage.

In *Tryouts*, Viv and Milo come back to support Al. Sammi also returns with a bigger part, and we get to see more of Gabi. Some close readers may notice that many of the new characters in *Tryouts* were around in the background of *Picture Day*, though they didn't yet have a speaking role.

WHEN SHE DECIDES TO TRY OUT FOR THE HISTORICALLY ALL-BOYS MIDDLE SCHOOL BASEBALL TEAM, AL IS PREPARED TO FIGHT FOR HER RIGHT TO PLAY, BUT TO HER SURPRISE, THE COACH IS DELIGHTED BY HER INTEREST. WHAT MESSAGE DO YOU HOPE READERS WILL TAKE AWAY FROM AL'S DETERMINATION TO JOIN THE TEAM?

In researching this book, I watched and read many accounts of girls in similar positions to Al. I found that not all of them faced administrative pushback when trying out for a team, and I wanted to show that though it is not always offered directly, a pathway to play can exist and that you can find support systems to help you navigate it. I also wanted to explore how once past that initial barrier, the struggle to be seen as part of the team still remains. I was interested in the idea of gaining notoriety as "the first" at something and then that becoming the defining way that others perceive you. I hope readers will relate to Al as she navigates how to define herself on her own terms.

EACH OF THE BOOKS IN THE BRINKLEY YEARBOOK SERIES HIGHLIGHTS A DIFFERENT MIDDLE SCHOOL MILESTONE. WHAT IS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MIDDLE SCHOOL MOMENT?

I have such a hard time picking a most memorable moment! One unforgettable incident was when my seventh grade lab partner and I were named dissection students of the month (something I make a nod to in the opening of *Tryouts*) because of our work on our worm and frog units. This title came with the "honor" of getting a hands-on look at the pre-dissected and preserved-in-formaldehyde-for-who-knows-how-long tabby cat that my science teacher kept in a jar in the back of the classroom!!!! Ahhh!!!

