

In conversation with **EMMA STEINKELLNER,** creator of *Last Day Pool Party*

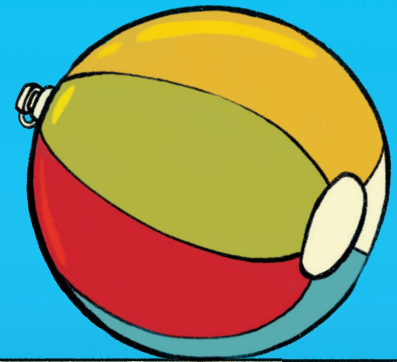


Your last few graphic novels have had elements of the fantastical about them, but *Last Day Pool Party* is a contemporary story. What inspired this shift?

I use magic and fantasy as ways to learn more about these characters. Spells are outgrowths of big emotions; a fantastical challenge highlights the normal growing-up stuff my characters must deal with. The external elements prompt my characters to think about themselves and react and change. In this book, a central event (a last-day-of-school pool party) is the "magic." That's what brings out the big emotions and highlights the various challenges of growing up.

***Last Day Pool Party* follows six very different kids on the brink of summer break. Which character do you relate to the most?**

Writing a book like this with an ensemble of main characters reminded me that no kid is one static "type." Honestly, I remember being all these kids—sensitive, clingy, avoidant, annoying, annoyed, enthusiastic, embarrassed, powerful, hurtful, vulnerable, callous, bossy, passive, caring, "don't-talk-to-me," "please-talk-to-me." And they all change a little and they all stay the same a little; that's how it works when you're fresh out of middle school, figuring out who you are. That's definitely how it worked for me.



What draws you to creating graphic novels? Why do you think so many readers gravitate to this format of storytelling?

Graphic novels are so special; they're so dear to me. I've always loved reading comics. They appealed to so many of my interests and got me into reading in a different way. Theatricality and expression, color and design, dialogue, all these components can work together to inform character and world and tell a really full story. So I love making comics for the same reason I love reading comics, and I imagine that's what draws readers to them, too.

***Last Day Pool Party* has been selected as a Library Team's Feature Read for 2026. Congratulations! Is there any special message you would like to share with readers about libraries?**

First of all, thank you, this is so cool. Libraries are a vital, incredible resource in my life. (My local library helps me grind the audiobooks that keep me entertained while I'm drawing my own books.) The more we can do to support libraries and the ways they give us all unparalleled access to reading and learning, the better off we all are.



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