

Spin the Golden Light Bulb

Jackie Yeager

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Young students compete in a futuristic setting in this story that teaches useful lessons about teamwork, family, and forgiveness.

Jackie Yeager's *Spin the Golden Light Bulb* is a relatable story with valuable lessons for young readers. It imagines a future in which top elementary school students from every state are chosen to compete in a prestigious invention contest called the Piedmont Challenge.

Kia Krumpet is a kid who genuinely wants to succeed at the competition. She dreams of following in her grandmother's footsteps by earning one of the Golden Light Bulbs that come with a spot in Camp Piedmont, where chosen teams prepare for the national competition and vie for a spot in Piedmont Inventors' Prep School.

While other states' teams are comprised of winners from schools throughout the state, the entire New York team is selected from one school, earning them the nickname "The Crimson Five." If Kia and her team win, she can train to be an inventor; if not, she'll be "sorted" into a math curriculum in her hometown, where students are divided into specific tracks.

Most of the book focuses on the five students' time at Camp Piedmont and their assignments there. At times, the story gets sidetracked by young adult staples that feel unnecessary here, such as a new sport the teams play at camp, or nods to a futuristic 2071 setting that don't impact the main story much.

The majority of the story focuses on the interplay between the children, though, as they use their myriad skills to develop both a winning idea and a presentation that will impress the judges. Despite all attending the same school, the students barely know one another; this lends itself well to themes of learning to work as a team and overcoming first impressions.

At the same time, Kia learns more about her grandmother's experience with the competition, and the Crimson Five get an unexpected extra challenge to overcome from an authority figure. These plot lines make space for the audience to solve problems alongside the characters, teaching useful lessons about teamwork, family, and forgiveness.

JEFF FLEISCHER (Children's SIP 2017)

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