Clarion Review

Picture Books

Yazmeenka Goes Electric
Teresa Henryka Panjer
Mirror Publishing
978-1-936046-37-9
Three Stars (out of Five)

Yazmeenka longs for the red electric guitar hanging on the wall of her local music store. Her dream comes true when she unwraps her birthday gift from her parents. She is thrilled with her new guitar, but begins to neglect other parts of her life in favor of making music. With the help of her family and teachers, Yazmeenka learns how to balance work and play, and finds that her music improves as a result.

Kids will identify with the consequences of Yazmeenka's guitar obsession—her brother can't concentrate for the noise; the pets miss her daily affection; her homework and library books get lost; and the adults in her life become concerned. The large print, colorful comic-style illustrations filled with classic rock allusions, and small size of the book are just right for the elementary school-age children who are having their first experiences with time management. Adding to the book's appeal are imaginative onomatopoeia and fun imagery like Yazmeenka's frustrated brother with a "face scrunched up like a deflated football."

There are occasional spots of one-sided dialogue when Yazmeenka's parents are lecturing her, and some awkward phrasing may be a stumbling block for young readers. The writing would also benefit from another round of editing to pare down repeated words and phrases. For example, the excellent image comparing Yazmeenka's brother's face to a football loses its impact when repeated a few scenes later to describe Yazmeenka's frustration over lost homework.

Yazmeenka's dilemma is a common one, and her story provides a great starting point for discussions about balance and priorities. While the book could use more polish, families dealing with similar situations could still find it to be a helpful tool.

Carolyn Bailey