



Life is Funny by E.R. Frank

ISBN: 9781481431637 (Trade Paperback)

Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2016

*Age Range: 14+ (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 9+ (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

E. R. Frank's seminal first novel weaves together the stories of eleven teenagers in one city over seven years in this groundbreaking and "impressive debut" (*Publishers Weekly*, starred review).

Why does Gingerbread always have a smile on his face? "Because life is funny," he tells Keisha. But for her—and almost everyone else in her Brooklyn neighborhood—there doesn't seem to be much to laugh about.

China, Ebony, and Grace are best friends, but Grace's mother isn't crazy about her being friends with two girls who aren't white, and each cut Ebony makes on her wrist seems to drive them even further apart.

Just across the schoolyard there's Eric who has to raise his younger brother Mickey, even though no one expects him to amount to anything. Meanwhile, Sonia's Muslim parents expect everything of her, and it may be more than she is able to give after she suffers a shattering loss.

When Drew brings his father's Jaguar into Sam's family's auto body shop across town they seem to be from opposite sides of the tracks, but Drew's the one hiding a dark family secret. And he's not the only one.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "a realistic, lyrical novel . . . This would be a great book for readers' theater and for group discussion. Teens will open up to the yearning and the poetry in their own daily lives."

—[Booklist](#), starred review

"A savagely honest portrayal of the nature of the interconnectedness of life . . . those who embark upon this intriguing mosaic will come away rewarded and inspired by the strength and fortitude of its characters. An astounding first effort."

—[Kirkus Reviews](#)

"Frank's prose is beautifully styled, and her characters are fully formed and interesting."

—[School Library Journal](#)

Updated 10.6.25

Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing

Contact: Education.library@simonandschuster.com

“An arresting, accomplished novel.”

—*Kliatt*

★ “impressive debut . . . ultimately an uplifting book about resilience, loyalty and courage” —[Publishers Weekly](#), starred review

“Frank tackles almost every contemporary teen issue and put a new face and a fresh talking mouth on it. Which is a struggle for established YA authors, let alone a newbie. A guaranteed perfect read.” —[Reading Rants blog](#)

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- Teen People Book Club NEXT Award for YA Fiction
- 2001 ALA Quick Pick Top Ten

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Tampa Bay Times: An Interview with E.R. Frank](#)
- [E.R. Frank, author of LIFE IS FUNNY, on figuring out your pattern](#)
- [Author website](#)

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

- [Guilford County school board votes to keep Life is Funny](#)

AUTHOR STATEMENT

“If you don’t want your child to read a particular book, that’s your choice. But please don’t attempt to dictate such choices for the rest of us.”—E.R. Frank, author of the frequently challenged *America*

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.

Updated 10.6.25

Simon & Schuster Children’s Publishing
Contact: Education.library@simonandschuster.com