

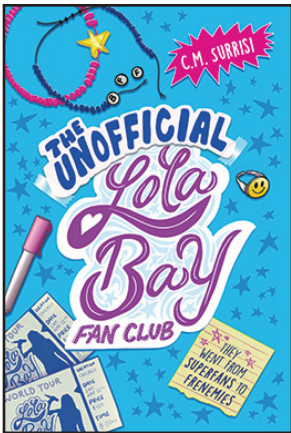


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## **New Novel Offers a Multigenerational Tool for Navigating the Middle School Years**

March 2023 – With *The Unofficial Lola Bay Fan Club* (G.P. Putnam’s Sons Books for Young Readers; publication date: April 18, 2023; Ages 10 & up), author C.M. Surrisi explores the complications of middle school in a riveting novel for young people – as well as for their parents, grandparents, and other adults who are trying to guide them through this sometimes-rocky period.

The middle school years have long brought dramatic shifts in friendships and volatile changes. But contemporary realities such as the influence of celebrity culture and social media have increased the potential perils of this life stage and allowed friendships to develop a quickly toxic edge. In Surrisi’s story, main character, Iris, bonds with older middle schooler Dana over their shared passion for pop star Lola Bay. But readers will soon share Iris’s unease over some of Dana’s manipulative actions. Readers’ uncertainty over just how far Dana might go – and how far Iris will follow her – leads to an emotionally suspenseful read.

Minnesotan Surrisi is an established children’s book writer; her book *A Side of Sabotage*, the third title in her middle-grade mystery series, was an Agatha Award finalist. Surrisi felt compelled to craft this new story to give young readers a way to relate to a character who is navigating the same challenging issues that they’re facing – as well as a way to give concerned adults a chance to reconsider their own memories of this time through the filter of the additional challenges their children and grandchildren are now facing.

Surrisi says, “A lot is pressing on middle schoolers, and they need coping skills. Stories like this are one way that kids can empathize with a character experiencing some of the same problems – and learn how mistakes, even big ones, can be corrected.”

*Publishers Weekly* calls the book, “A distinctly real-life portrait of one middle schooler finding her way in a new and ever-changing environment.” Responses from young readers who have seen advance copies of the book have been strongly positive.

Surrisi is eager to engage with readers. Visit [cmsurrisi.com](http://cmsurrisi.com) for further information and a downloadable discussion guide for book clubs, classrooms, and families.

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