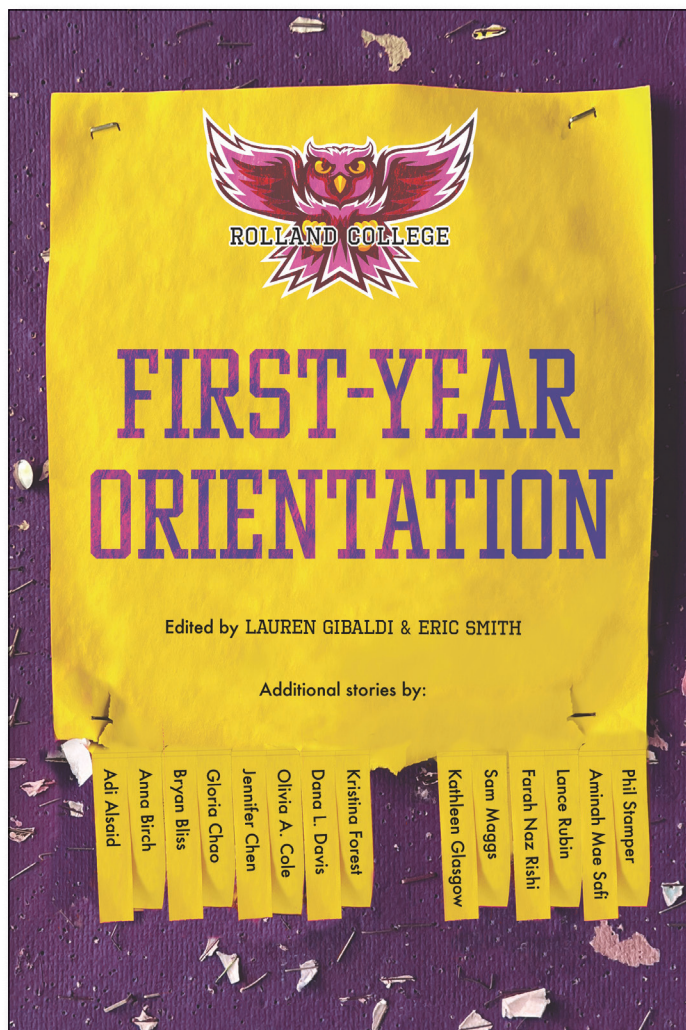


FIRST-YEAR ORIENTATION

Edited by Lauren Gibaldi and Eric Smith



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ABOUT THE BOOK

Jilly cannot believe her parents keep showing up at all of her orientation events. (Except, yes, she can totally believe that.) Isaac wants to be known as someone other than the kid who does magic and has an emotional support bunny. Lilly is stuck working at the college bookstore during orientation (but maybe new friends are closer than they appear). Hira, meanwhile, just wants to retire from ghost hunting once and for all, but a spirit in the library's romance section has other ideas.

These linked short stories about the first days of college by sixteen acclaimed authors span genres and moods—from humorous to heartfelt to ghostly—tackling with sensitivity, humor, and warmth what it feels like to begin your adult life.

Common Core Connections

This discussion guide, which can be used with large or small groups, will help students meet several of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. These include the reading literature standards for key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL), as well as the speaking and listening standards for comprehension and collaboration and for presentation of knowledge and ideas (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL). Questions can also be used in writing prompts for independent work.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. All of the kids in this book are about to embark on a new and significant part of their lives. Have you ever made a big change like that—moving or starting a new school where you didn't know anyone? How did you feel about that? Was it exciting, terrifying, or just different?
2. Many of these students consider themselves outsiders, whether it is because of their ethnicity, their hobbies, their health, or their looks. Have you ever felt like an outsider? Why? How have you handled it?
3. Several of these short stories end with a budding romance after the first day. Is this realistic? Do you think the romances will last?
4. Most of the students visit the club fair where all of the college clubs and activities are featured. There is a wide variety from which to choose: animation, Student Government Association, ghost hunting, and circus, among other clubs. Which would interest you? Is there a subject not represented that you would particularly like?
5. Picture yourself at the first day of college orientation. Would you ask your roommate and other dorm mates to follow you to the activities? Would you just follow along? Or would you hang back, not sure you wanted to go? Do you think that the way you begin the year would have to be the way you continue it?
6. If your parents presented you with Mickey or Minnie Mouse sheets on the first day of college, the way that Jilly's do in "Oyster" (page 40), how would you react?
7. Some of the characters in the book are very concerned about not being able to have their favorite foods from home. Are there foods you would miss if you didn't have access to them?
8. Since this is a book of stories about the first day of college, you may be surprised to discover that one of the stories, "In Which a Side Character Accepts a Quest" (page 77), is about someone who has chosen not to go to college. What do you think about that decision? Did you expect the character to change their mind by the end of the story?
9. In "Holding Hibiscus" (page 118), Mella has to answer a question to be allowed into the club called QuEEn (Queer Ecesis Entomophily Committee): "How do you feel about leaf blowers?" (page 124). What do you think of that question as a way to tell if a person would be a good fit for the club? How do you feel about leaf blowers?
10. Clubs or sport teams can be the most important things about your school years. The fellow members are your friends and your social life and may determine your personality. In "About-Face" (page 159), for example, Dane slides quickly into the band group, where he feels normal and comfortable, but he also wants to try being someone else. How do you balance comfort and taking a risk in your life?
11. The stories "I'm Ric Clingerman" (page 198) and "Mighty" (page 217) may change your mind about what kind of life child/teenage movie or TV stars lead. Are you surprised by any of Ric's or Ash's feelings about their acting careers?



12. Do you believe in ghosts? Have you ever seen one? What would you do if you did see one? In “Ghost Hunting for the Intrepid First Year” (page 239), we meet Hira, who, after being a ghost hunter for years, is now retired. Do you believe she really meets a ghost in the library? What does the day with Shelley the ghost do for her?
13. Ren finds her assigned dorm, Balmoral Hall, to be a real hell for her (“Balmoral Hell,” page 262). What is going on here? Do you think she will return to campus?
14. Bull has mixed feelings about playing football in college in “They Call Me Bull” (page 274). What would you do if you were in his place?
15. Is there any particular student in these stories who you think might not have a successful year? Why? Who will do really well? Why?
16. Even though each of these stories is about a different person and written by a different author, some of the stories mention characters from other stories. How do you think the authors managed that?

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Lauren Gibaldi is a public librarian and the author of *The Night We Said Yes*, *Autofocus*, and *This Tiny Perfect World*. She’s also a contributing coeditor of the YA anthology *Battle of the Bands*. Lauren Gibaldi lives in Orlando, Florida, with her husband and daughters.

Eric Smith is a literary agent and the author of *The Geek’s Guide to Dating*, *The Girl and the Grove*, *Don’t Read the Comments*, and *You Can Go Your Own Way*. He is also a coauthor of *Jagged Little Pill: The Novel* and a contributing coeditor of *Battle of the Bands*. Eric Smith lives in Philadelphia with his wife and son.

These questions were prepared by Grace K. Worcester, former youth services consultant, Vermont Department of Libraries. Having spent her entire professional life working with books and children, Grace has served on the Newbery, Caldecott, *Boston Globe–Horn Book*, and National Book Award for Young People’s Literature committees.

