

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Issue: February 1, 2016

Allie, First at Last.

Cervantes, Angela (Author)

Apr 2016. 208 p. Scholastic, hardcover, \$16.99. (9780545812238). Scholastic, e-book, \$16.99. (9780545812672).

Allie feels the weight of achievements by her family members, from her beloved great-grandfather, who won the Congressional Medal of Honor, to her two multi-award-winning older siblings and her younger sister, who has been acting in TV commercials for years. As Allie's last year at Sendak Elementary School draws to a close, she feels enormous pressure to excel at something. Meanwhile, her best friend is drifting away, and stressed-out Allie seems to be making things worse. Some sage advice and an unforeseen crisis bring her misaligned values and actions more sharply into focus, enabling her to put things right.

Cervantes, the author of *Gaby, Lost and Found* (2013), portrays Allie's Mexican American family and community with warmth and shows her dilemma with a gradually widening perspective that lets readers gain understanding along with Allie. A sprinkling of Spanish words helps maintain the story's cultural context. Throughout the clearly written, first-person narrative, the vivid scenes of fifth-grade conflicts, old and new friendships, and affectionate family life make this an accessible, appealing chapter book.

— Carolyn Phelan