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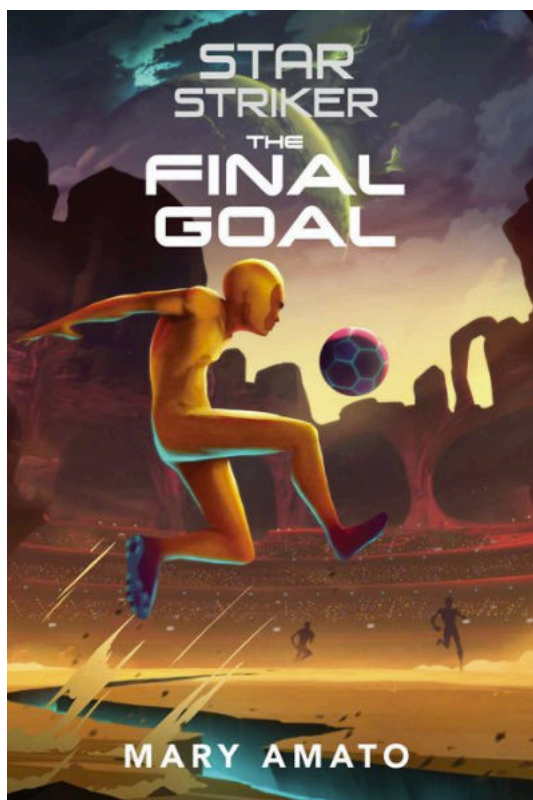
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## The Appeal of the Mentor Archetype, a guest post by Mary Amato

📅 November 15, 2023 by [Amanda MacGregor](https://teenlibrariantoolbox.com/author/amacgregor/)  
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In lots of classic stories, the main character can't succeed alone. Often, heroes need to find and put their trust in wise mentors who can give the right advice at just the right moment. Joseph Campbell called this the "meeting of the mentor" in his analysis of the hero's journey. In fantasy stories and fairy tales, this figure often has mystical powers. In realistic fiction, the mentor is ordinary in terms of power, but extraordinary in his/her/their way of voicing a necessary truth.

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As a young reader, I loved getting advice from the mentors that appeared in fiction. I wanted to live in that kind of world where a mentor would arrive and dispense a piece of wisdom or a warning that would prove to be a key in unlocking the overcoming of my obstacles. And so, whenever a mentor would appear in the course of a story I was reading, my ears would perk and I would lean in. Hungry, I'd absorb whatever advice/wisdom was being dished out. The experience felt slightly sneaky—like I was getting a cool lesson about life for free.

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Merlin in White's *The Once and Future King* was my favorite fantasy mentor character as a young reader, but the fictional mentor I loved most was the nanny nicknamed Ole Golly in Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy*. In Fitzhugh's classic story, Harriet has made huge mistakes with her peers and is wallowing in isolated self-pity when she receives a tough-love letter from Ole Golly. The advice propels Harriet out of bed and into action. As a pre-teen, I remember writing out parts of Ole Golly's letter to Harriet in my own journal. I wanted to remember those words and keep them in a place where I could find them easily whenever I needed to read them again. And I did read that letter over and over again well into my teenage years. Basically, I took Ole Golly with me to face the rapids of middle and high school.

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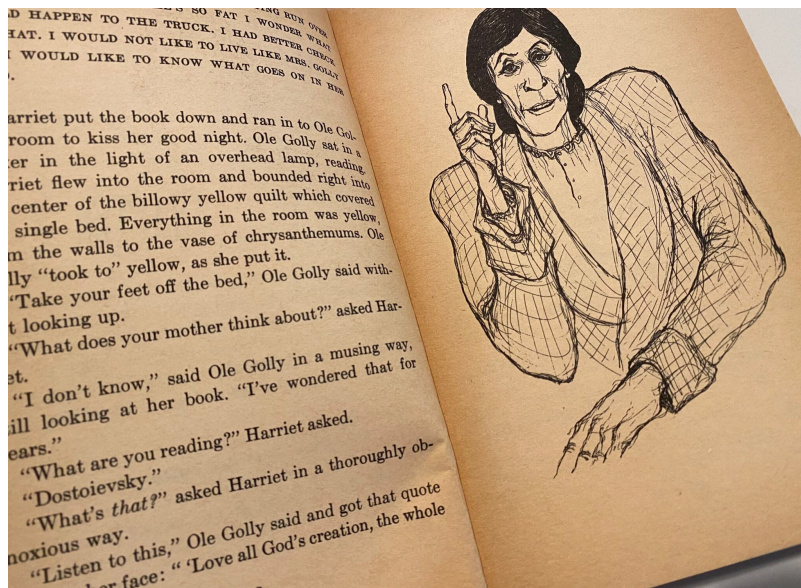
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*The author's childhood copy of **Harriet the Spy** (Dell, 1964) open to the page showing Fitzhugh's illustration of Ole Golly.*

As an author, I love tapping into the mentor archetype and have done so in a number of my books. In my latest series, ***Star Striker***, seventh grader **Albert Kinney** is definitely in need of a trusted teacher. At the start of the trilogy, he is abducted by huge-hearted aliens called Zeenods to play in a high-stakes, interplanetary soccer tournament against other aliens called Tevs whose stop-at-nothing goal is to occupy and destroy Zeeno and the Zeenod way of life. By the third book, *The Final Goal*, Albert is also besieged with typical middle-school issues: texting mishaps, peer jealousy, pressure to party, family tension, and trouble with budding romances. **Throughout the series, Albert learns from his extraordinary alien soccer coaches, but he also gains wisdom from a more ordinary source: his beloved grandmother.**

Here's an example from one of Nana's letters to Albert, which reaches him at a moment when he's feeling lost and helpless.

*We are overdue for a heart-to-heart. You've been isolating yourself. Spending time alone in your room can sometimes make you feel peaceful, but other times it just makes you feel alone. Take a walk in the park. Talk to the trees and birds. They're among the best listeners and teachers on this old planet of ours. Even if you feel alone, you're not alone.*  
Love, Nana.

Nana is an action-oriented, no-nonsense woman, like Ole Golly, and so she advises taking control by taking action. She often gives a specific suggestion for a small step Albert can take to move forward on a more positive and productive path.

Here is what Nana has to say in the second book, *Touch and Go*, when Albert confides that he is writing down all the mistakes he has made:

*Writing down what you did wrong is not a bad way to learn. But if you stop there and feel bad about it, you'll just be beating yourself up. Hold yourself accountable but be kind to yourself. Sure, write down what you did wrong. But then turn the page and write down what you did right.*

**Throughout the entire series, Nana dishes out advice that Albert needs to hear. And when Albert takes her advice, his point of view shifts. He grows.**

**Nana's advice, by the way, is also the advice I need to devour!** I'm hoping that my readers will be hungry, too, not just for the heart-pounding moments of suspense that occur when Albert dodges alien missiles or defeats alien monsters, but also for the quiet wisdom he receives from his beloved, wise, and super cool grandma.

## Meet the author

Mary Amato is the author of fiction for children and YA and is the winner of the Beehive Book Award, the Beehive Book Award, the Buckeye Children's Book Award, the Maud Hart Lovelace Award, and the Arizona Young Readers Award.

Find out more on her website: <https://www.maryamato.com> (<https://www.maryamato.com>). And connect through Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/authoramato/> (<https://www.instagram.com/authoramato/>).

You can find downloadable wisdom quotes from the Star Striker series at: <https://www.maryamato.com/wisdom-from-the-star-striker-series/> (<https://www.maryamato.com/wisdom-from-the-star-striker-series/>).

## About *The Final Goal*

In this thrilling conclusion to the Star Striker series, Albert and his team face the final round of the interplanetary soccer tournament—but with the Zeenods' freedom on the line, it's no game.

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As Albert and the Zeenods prepare for their final games in the interplanetary soccer tournament, Albert knows he should feel like he's already won. He loves soccer, and he and his teammates have survived constant danger. But instead, it's more like the ground is falling out from under him—literally.

In order to win, Albert must face his fear of drowning when he learns the game takes place on a hostile planet where fissures split the field wide open. But in order to expose the Tev's war crimes, he'll have to take on trouble much deeper than any underground river . . . all with Zeenod enemies still trying to kill him.

Will Albert and his friends be able to land a score against a team—and empire—that has taken everything from them? Or will everyone he cares about wind up the biggest losers in the galaxy?

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Action-packed, yet filled with humor and heart, the final book of Mary Amato's *Star Striker* series combines a sci-fi sports story with powerful social justice themes for a satisfying, high-stakes conclusion.

**ISBN-13: 9780823449132**

**Publisher: Holiday House**

**Publication date: 11/14/2023**

**Series: *Star Striker***

**Age Range: 8 – 12 Years**

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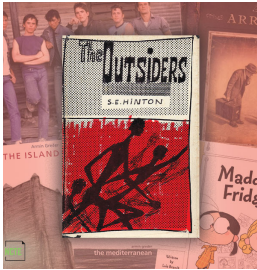
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## About Amanda MacGregor

Amanda MacGregor works in an elementary library, loves dogs, and can be found on Twitter @CiteSomething.

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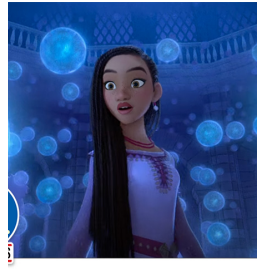
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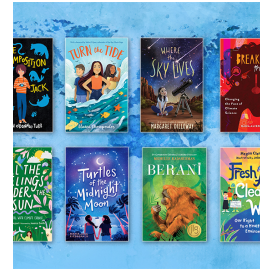
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