

KYLA ZHAO

Award-winning author ✉ kyla@kylazhao.com

ABOUT KYLA

By day, Kyla works in Silicon Valley's tech industry. By night, she writes novels that center women and girls of color as they navigate ambition, identity, and belonging.

Her writing has also appeared in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Tatler*. A graduate of Stanford University, Kyla holds both a BA in Psychology and an MA in Communication, Class of 2021.

WORKS

- ***May the Best Player Win*** (2024)
- *Valley Verified* (2024)
- *The Fraud Squad* (2023)



 kylazhao.com

PREVIOUS COLLABORATIONS

- **Firms & NPOs:** Twitch, Pinterest, Instacart, Figma, Qualtrics, Tencent, Oracle, Girls Future Ready, Miss Asian Global, etc.
- **Schools:** International School of San Francisco, United World College, Dulwich College, Chatsworth International, Global Indian International School, etc.
- **Bookstores, libraries, book conferences:** Bay Area Book Festival, Greater Pittsburgh Festival of Books, Virginia Children's Book Festival, etc.
- **Chess organizations:** World Chess Championship, International Chess Olympiad, International Chess Federation, etc.

SPEAKING TOPICS

- The inspirations and themes behind the book
- My writing process and tips for young storytellers
- Behind the scenes: How books are created and published
- My journey as an author balancing a full-time corporate job

FEATURED IN

- Forbes
- Good Morning America
- CBS
- ABC
- NBC
- Vogue
- Cosmopolitan
- Elle
- BuzzFeed
- Tatler

AWARDS

- *Forbes* 30 Under 30
- *Tatler* Leader of Tomorrow
- Certificate of Recognition by California State Assembly
- American Library Association's Feminist Book Project 2025
- Mathical Award Honor Book
- US National Spelling Bee book club selection

BOOK PRAISE

More available upon request

“GAME-CHANGER FOR READERS OF ALL AGES”

“This book is a game-changer for readers of all ages, regardless of whether you play chess! *May the Best Player Win* captures the thrill of competition, the weight of expectations, and the sting of naysayers. From start to finish, this book will have you cheering for May from the edge of your seat and inspired to conquer your next match in life.” —Carissa Yip, **current US Women’s Chess Champion**

“EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT WORK”

“Zhao explores gender bias as well as performance stress, and the book’s valuable life lessons will speak to anyone who’s lost their love for a pursuit... The supporting characters, both adults and peers, are well developed, and the chess games are thrilling. An emotionally intelligent work that explores socially relevant themes.” —**Kirkus Reviews**

“RIVETING STORY”

“[Zhao], who is a former competitive chess player, addresses gender bias, self-doubt, and anxiety in this riveting story.” —**The Week Junior**

“FIERCE YET TENDER”

“A fierce yet tender narrative [that is] rich in emotions and facts... A top recommendation for young readers.” —Tatiana Flores, **World Chess Champion for People with Disabilities**

“EMPOWERING, FULL OF HEART”

“Compassionate, empowering, and full of heart, *May the Best Player Win* reminds young readers that sometimes, the only limits on our potential are the ones we place on ourselves.” —Rebecca Mix, **New York Times**-bestselling author of *The Mossheart’s Promise*

“QUICKLY DRAWS YOU IN”

“*May the Best Player Win* quickly draws you in because it deals with a subject that interests and affects many people: the pressure to perform. Author Kyla Zhao handles these serious topics with humour and refreshing ease, writing pointedly, wittily and entertainingly.” —**Chessbase**

“AN INSTANT CLASSIC”

“An instant classic. I wish I read this book when I was growing up, and now that I’m a chess mom and mentor to many other kids, I am so thrilled it exists. Kyla is a wonderful writer and she paints richly detailed and emotional scenes, as she deftly handles themes that can apply to any competitive field. Gripping and fun, this is a gem of a book!” —Jennifer Shahade, **2004 and 2002 U.S. Women’s Chess Champion**

SPEAKER TESTIMONIALS

*More available
upon request*

OVERSEAS FAMILY SCHOOL

"Kyla's passion for writing and her **dynamic, interactive style** captivated our students from start to finish. Her approachable and friendly demeanor made her a **wonderful role model**, leaving a lasting impression on everyone. Her ability to **tailor her presentations to each age group** was remarkable. For younger students, she introduced complex topics like gender equality in **an age-appropriate and engaging way**, while her high school presentation delved deeper into these critical issues, **sparking thoughtful discussions**. She **inspired budding writers** by sharing her journey and providing practical insights into the writing process. We would **highly recommend Kyla Zhao to any school** looking to inspire their students to read, write, create and work towards their dream." —Vanessa McConville, Head of School

DULWICH COLLEGE SINGAPORE

"Kyla Zhao's visit was truly memorable. With an **engaging and interactive delivery** accompanied by a **beautifully designed slideshow**, she brought a special vibrancy to the event. The students were enthralled, eagerly lining up to have their copies of the book signed. Kyla answered questions with **eloquence and insight**, leaving a lasting impression on everyone. Her presence added a unique and inspiring element, and we couldn't have asked for a better guest!" —Clare Measures, Deputy Head of Junior School

HARVARD CREATIVE WRITING AND LITERATURE SOCIETY

"Kyla's **passion for writing and perseverance in advocating for the Asian community** through her stories capture the audience's attention. Listening to Kyla speak **reignited my belief in myself and encouraged me to pursue my dreams** regardless of the statistics. She is authentically herself, and her presentation showed me that no matter what, we should not give up because we all have stories inside us that, if we dare, can change the communities we're part of." —Nathalie Zender, President 2024-2025

UNITED WORLD COLLEGE SOUTH EAST ASIA

"It was wonderful to have Kyla visit our campus and share her experiences as a writer with our students. Her talks were inspirational and, what's more, **interactive and fun** for our Middle School learners who had a ball and followed up with endless questions. Kyla facilitated her sessions with ease and was a **fascinating speaker who connected brilliantly with her audience**." —Jenny Murray, Middle School Head of English

HAYWARD PUBLIC LIBRARY

"Kyla's book event was fantastic. She not only talked about her novel, but also gave **revealing insights about the writing process**, from original idea to publication. It was **entertaining and valuable for aspiring writers and readers alike**. I would highly recommend Kyla for your next literary program" —Ricardo Antoni, Librarian
