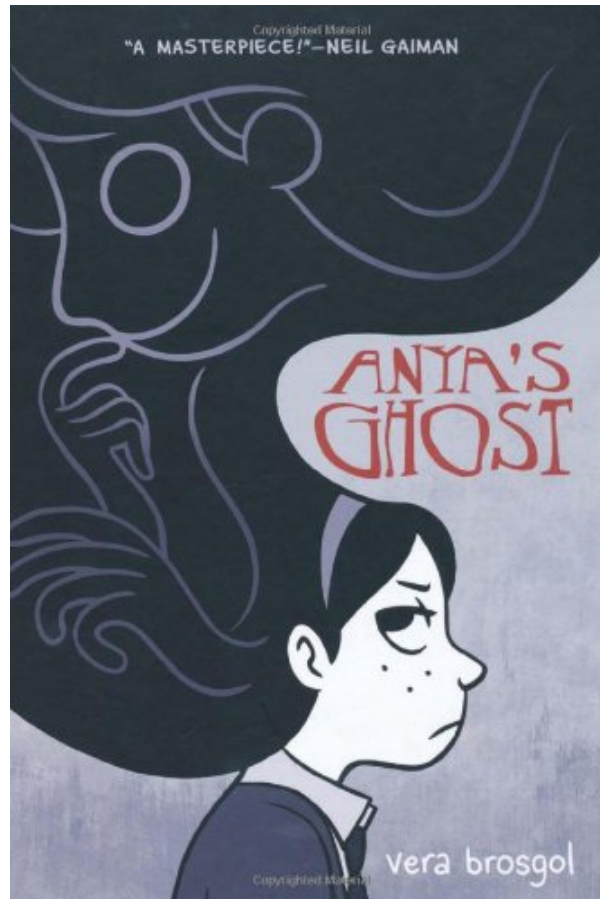
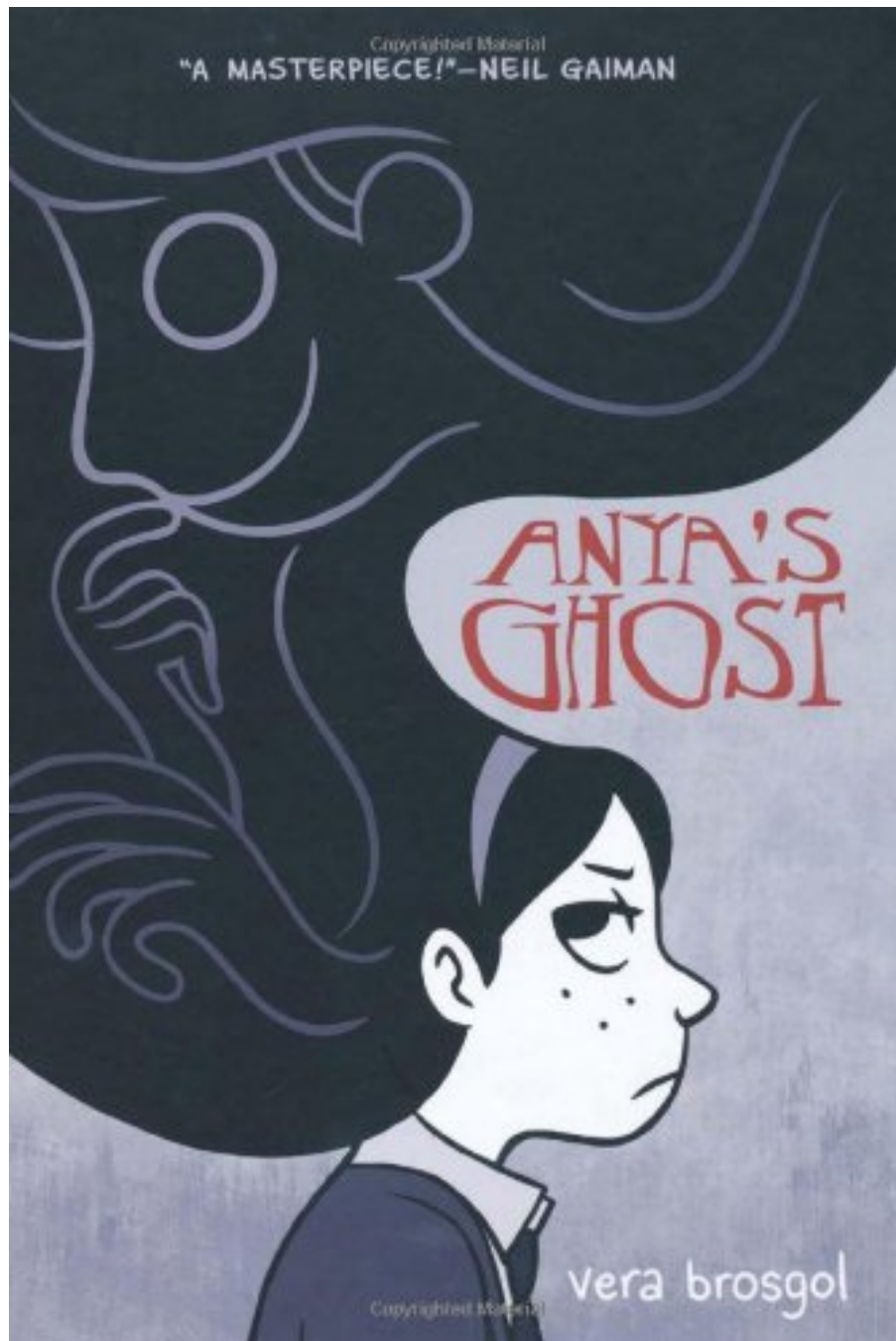


ANYA'S GHOST BY VERA BROSGOL



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Amazon.com Review

Anya could really use a friend. But her new BFF isn't kidding about the "Forever" part . . .

Of all the things Anya expected to find at the bottom of an old well, a new friend was not one of them. Especially not a new friend who's been dead for a century.

Falling down a well is bad enough, but Anya's normal life might actually be worse. She's embarrassed by her family, self-conscious about her body, and she's pretty much given up on fitting in at school. A new friend—even a ghost—is just what she needs.

Or so she thinks.

Spooky, sardonic, and secretly sincere, *Anya's Ghost* is a wonderfully entertaining debut from author/artist Vera Brosgol.

A Look Inside *Anya's Ghost*
(Click on Images to Enlarge)

Review

"*Anya's Ghost* is a masterpiece, of YA literature and of comics." ?Neil Gaiman

"Remarkable. . . with an attitude and aptitude reminiscent of Marjane Satrapi (*Persepolis*) who likewise conveyed the particulars of an immigrant adolescence, Brosgol has created a smart, funny and compassionate

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"Anya's Ghost" is a 2011 "Kirkus" Best Teen Books of the Year title.

One of "School Library Journal"'s Best Fiction Books of 2011.

One of "Horn Book"'s Best Fiction Books of 2011.

Winner of the 2012 Eisner Award for Best Publication for Young Adults (Ages 12-17)

- Sales Rank: #484614 in Books
- Brand: First Second
- Published on: 2011-06-07
- Released on: 2011-06-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.74" h x .69" w x 6.19" l, 1.32 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 224 pages

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Most helpful customer reviews

54 of 55 people found the following review helpful.

The Russian Girl

By A. Ross

This is a great graphic novel for young teens -- especially girls -- with a well-paced story and plenty to say about social anxiety, body image, friendship, and ghostbusting. Anya is a 9th or 10th-grader at a lower-tier private school (not unlike the one I went to), who is embarrassed by her immigrant past. Her family came to the US from Russia when she was five, and she has worked very hard to lose any accent, eat American foods (while not becoming plump), dress properly, and generally fit in as an American teen. However, the signs of her angst are literally posterred all over her bedroom: Belle & Sebastian, Camera Obscura, Neko Case, The Shins, Metric, etc. -- all perfectly good bands, but indicative of an underlying wistfulness. (Had she been of my generation, there surely would have been at least one Smiths and one Cure poster.)

One afternoon, she falls down a hole in the park and makes the acquaintance of a ghost from 1918 named Emily. She's been hovering over her skeleton for years, mourning the death of her fiancée in WWI, and herself at the hands of a murderer. One of Emily's bones gets into Anya's bag by accident, and when she'd rescued, Emily is able to hitch a ride to the surface. Before too long Anya and she become friends, with Anya spilling her insecurities to her new gal-pal ghost as Emily tries to help her succeed at school, fashion, and with the boy she has a crush on. Of course, as anyone who's watched a teen makeover comedy knows, there's always danger when the geeky girl tries to rebrand herself according to the conventional norms.

The final third of the book takes a rather menacing turn as Anya starts to realize that even the shiny popular kids have issues lurking just below the surface. This is all kind of John Hughes 101) type stuff (there's even a subplot involving a nerdy Russian kid whom Anya shuns but then has to turn to for help), but it's well done and the high contrast artwork brings it to life in a way that's neither too cartoony nor too realistic. Based on the brief author bio on the back, it sounds like many of the themes are autobiographical, as are many aspects of Anya's personality -- which is probably why it feels so dead on. Great stuff for girls in the 10-14 range or thereabouts, and still fairly entertaining for others.

16 of 16 people found the following review helpful.

Anya's Ghost -- Essential for Every Graphic Novel Lover

By M. Matus

Vera Brosgol's graphic novel *Anya's Ghost* is a tale of an angst-ridden, curvy teenage girl who attends Catholic school. Her family's from Russia, although her years of time in ESL have trained her to abandon her embarrassing accent in order to fit in with her peers. A fellow classmate, Dimi, is also from Russia, but his shameless love of his culture--along with his large glasses, funny haircut, and general dorkiness--earn him regular beatings at school. Anya has done everything in her power to avoid this, including refusing to eat the greasy Russian treats her mom fries up in the morning. While her brother bounces around, eagerly awaiting his delicious meal, Anya is clearly above this sort of behavior.

The story begins with Anya walking to school and encountering her boyish friend Siobhan (more specifically her only friend), who pesters Anya for cigarettes and becomes angry when she is offered none. Infuriated by this argument, Anya storms away into a nearby forest on her own. Unfortunately, an open well goes unnoticed and she falls into it. She amazingly winds up with nothing worse a sprained wrist, but now she has concerns whether she will be rescued from the bottom of the well. A skeleton is her only companion deep in the well--that is until a homely ghost named Emily greets her. Emily tells Anya she has been trapped in the well for ninety years after a gruesome murder. The reason she never tried to escape can be attributed to her pile of bones, which she can never depart from.

After being rescued, Anya reluctantly allows Emily to be her friend by wearing a small finger bone around her neck. She quickly discovers the benefits of having a ghost as a friend, however, as Emily can sneak answers from classmates' tests and peek into the locker of a handsome boy to find his schedule. As the story moves along, their relationship changes, and so does Anya. Ultimately, Anya must make a major decision regarding Emily.

Although Emily claims she had a fiancé before her death, this is rather hard to believe: the character is clearly drawn as if she's an eleven-year-old girl who has yet to reach the puberty stage. Her large and poofy bob, schoolgirl jumper, and noticeably flat chest only emphasize this. But apparently the author had a different (and confusing) idea for her age. Regardless of this minor flaw, Brosgol has drawn *Anya's Ghost* impeccably and with great care. It's not surprising she was a storyboard artist for the film *Coraline*, as the entire graphic novel could essentially serve as a storyboard for an animated film--not to mention several similarities with Gaiman's story.

Brosgol's impressive storytelling skills seamlessly weave through moments of being touching, funny, and thrilling. The genre is difficult to pinpoint, as it has elements of horror, drama, coming-of-age, comedy, and more. Anya's weight troubles, crush on the popular basketball star, and awkward attempts to blend into society may especially resonate with young women, but regardless of age or gender, this is a book that will be enjoyed by many. With hints of *Coraline*, *American Born Chinese*, and perhaps even *Persepolis*, *Anya's Ghost* is already destined to be an essential on the library of every graphic novel fan--and hopefully beyond that. *Anya's Ghost* won't take the average reader very long to read, but it's worth every single penny.

19 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

Neil Gaiman says it best "A masterpiece"

By Andy Shuping

I first started hearing about this graphic novel a couple of months ago and it immediately caught my attention. How often does Neil Gaiman lend his praise to a work? And then I started seeing the sample pages that First Second released and I was captivated by the illustrations. So needless to say I was really looking forward to reading this book (I kept trying to find someone that would let me read it an ARC because I was so excited about it.) And the book doesn't disappoint at all. It's the perfect story for young and old alike that deals with so many of the same issues that we all face--anxiety about who we are, body image, who are friends are, and growing up just a little bit.

Anya is a young teenage girl in high school who is embarrassed by where she and her family came from...Russia. She's trying hard to fit in by losing her accent, wearing the "right" clothes, going on diets, and trying to hang out with the "right" people...in other words not the nerdy Russian boy in her class. But...try as she might she doesn't fit in with the crowd that she really wants to...the popular ones. And then one day, she falls down an abandoned well in the park and meets a skeleton...and the ghost of the young girl from 1918 named Emily. Emily has been forgotten about and can't wander far from her skeleton and was just waiting for someone to come back and visit her. She keeps Anya company as she waits to be rescued, which she soon is, and one of Emily's bones hitches a ride...and Emily's ghost follows. Although there's trepidation at first Emily soon becomes Anya's confidant and helping her get the right answers on exams, making suggestions about what to wear, and help Anya get the attention of her crush. But things soon take a darker turn when it's revealed Emily isn't who she said she was and Anya must protect her family from Emily's darker nature.

This is a powerful debut full length graphic novel for Vera (she's done a couple of short stories before) and it's a wonderfully told story. It's a tightly woven tale with mystery, intrigue, and some growing up as well for all of the characters, not just Anya. It moves along at a nice pace and we get a strong sense of who the characters are and what motivates them. It's one of the best stories I've read in a while and unlike some other writers going from short features to full length, Vera doesn't suffer from having gaps in the tale or missing elements. And the illustrations are reminiscent of some old black and white horror films with juuuust the right amount of depth to them without being overly cartoony.

It's a fantastic read and I can't say enough good things about it. I highly recommend it to all and I look forward to seeing what Vera does next.

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