

## Local youngster writes and illustrates children's book



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A local nine-year-old resident is now a published author.

Amaya James released her debut children's book called Afro, No! on Oct. 31.

Featuring main characters Emmie and Afro, Afro, No! explores the sometimes complicated relationship that young black girls can have with their hair. It also touches on the beauty, uniqueness and joy that comes with the pain and challenge of getting their hair done.

'When I do my hair it's a little bit of trouble because of all the brushing, and it hurts my head. So, the inspiration was for other little kids, if they have a hard time doing their hair, that they don't feel alone,' explained James.

James initially began writing her children's book in August, and illustrated the entire book as a self-taught artist. Starting with a sketch of the book's cover she eventually digitized the artwork and slowly began to write and draw what would eventually become the 32-page story.

Speaking with the Free Press, James shared her favourite illustration from the book as well as the part she found most special to write.

'My favourite drawing is the one of baby Emmie, and girl Emmie,' said James. 'I like the part 'some days he's silky, some days he's puffed, some days he's easy and some days he's rough', its about all different hairstyles.'

A significant part of Afro, No! is the relationship between Emmie and Afro. James spoke about her decision to make Afro an active character within the story.

'Sometimes your hair is pulling and tugging and it's like its own person, doing what it wants,' said James.

Released on Oct. 31, in its first week of publication, Afro, No! reached #1 on Amazon in the Beauty category.

'It was super exciting and very overwhelming,' said James about the emotional experience.

Since publishing her debut book, James said she is now looking to continue writing stories around the characters of Emmie and Afro.

'I think 'Afro, No!' should be a series with more stories about Emmie and Afro,' said James.

When asked what she hopes other children can learn from reading Afro, No!, James said, 'I hope they learn to just be themselves, and that they're not alone.'

Afro, No! is available for purchase at Booklore in Orangeville and online at Amazon. It can also be borrowed from the Shelburne Library Hub, located at Streams Community Hub.