100 great reads for ages 0–18
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**SOPHIE BEER**

**LOVE MAKES A FAMILY**

LITTLE TIGER PRESS 2021 (BOARD) 24PP £6.99 ISBN 9781838910679

This delightful boardbook demonstrates that families are made from love and that love is found in ordinary things – bath time, bedtime stories, birthday cakes and picnics. Parents and guardians are the real heroes of this colourful story, as they fix what is broken, find what is lost and make everything better. The simple story celebrates families of various ethnicities, same-sex parents, grandparents and single parents, and the bright, bold and beautiful illustrations are bound to attract the attention of little readers. (Age 0–2)

**CHRISTIANE ENGEL**

**BABY'S FIRST WORDS**

BAREFOOT BOOKS 2019 (BOARD) 20PP £5.99 ISBN 97817828585720

*Baby’s First Words* is packed with a wide range of vocabulary for little ones. The illustrations are beautiful, full of interesting details and visual textures, perfect for curious, attentive little eyes. Another great merit of *Baby’s First Words* is the depiction of baby’s parents as a same-sex interracial couple, reflecting the diverse world we live in. (Non-fiction, Age 0–4)

**PETER BROWN**

**FRED GETS DRESSED**

TEMPLAR PUBLISHING 2021 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781787419506

Fred loves to romp around his house *au naturel* until one day he finds his parents’ closet door open, ventures inside and decides to have a try for himself: Dad’s clothes don’t fit him properly but Mum’s clothes actually fit him very well. Next he dabbles in the jewellery and make-up drawer and that’s when his parents arrive – and join in the fun! The tone throughout the story and illustrations is light-hearted and cosy, opening up a safe space for parents and children to talk about non-traditional gender roles and self-expression. (Age 0–4, 5–7)

**JESSICA SPANYOL**

**CLIVE AND HIS BABIES**

CHILD’S PLAY 2016 (BOARDBOOK) 14PP £5.99 ISBN 9781846438820

This series introduces readers to Clive, who loves to share his many collections of ‘things,’ from his hats to his bags and his dolls, with his many friends. In this book we meet Clive’s dolls (his babies). Clive nurtures and feeds them; potty trains them; plays and has fun with them, and with his friends and their babies too! In this very gentle exploration of stereotypical gender roles, we see Clive and his friends naturally imitating the caring and nurturing behaviour they see their parents and guardians offering. (Age 1–3)
JESSICA SPANYOL
**ROSA LOVES CARS**
CHILD’S PLAY 2018 (BOARDBOOK) 14PP £5.99 ISBN 9781786281258

This series introduces very young readers to Rosa – she loves to kicks balls, ride her scooter and play with her dinosaurs. But perhaps most of all, Rosa loves all kinds of vehicles, from trucks to diggers to campervans. Rosa loves playing with her collection of cars and trucks and sharing them with her friends, and they even make their own car out of a cardboard box! A colourful boardbook with simple, clear text, perfect for young children. (Age 1–3)

HEATHER DEAN BREWER illustrated by LEUYEN PHAM
**LOVE IS POWERFUL**

When Mari and her mother draw some words on cardboard, she wonders how this sign can be a message that the whole world will see. Sitting on her mother’s shoulders, Mari is overwhelmed by the crowd but understands how everyone there is united, so she chants her own message only for it to be amplified and echoed by those around her. An uplifting book, with diverse and heartwarming illustrations, on the universal power of peaceful protest, inspired by the Women’s March in NYC in 2017. (Age 2–4)

GILLIAN HIBBS
**COVERED IN ADVENTURES**

Sasha’s dads want her to get a new jumper as her old one is covered in stains. But where the grown-ups see mess, Sasha sees all the fun she’s had with her friends and family. The adventures Sasha shares with her friends are not bound by gender or ability – from building pirate ships and volcanoes, to playing football and camping, this is a glorious celebration of childhood. The illustrations are bright and joyful, and celebrate diversity in both family and friendship. (Age 2–4)

YASMEEN ISMAIL
**I’M A GIRL!**

*I’m a Girl!* is the story of a fast, loud, messy, strong and spontaneous girl who is constantly mistaken for a boy because of how she behaves and how she dresses. She’s supposed to be sugar and spice, but she doesn’t want to be quiet and nice all the time: she wants to win races, learn all about boats and play loud music. *I’m a Girl!* celebrates girls who do their own thing and don’t feel pigeon-holed by gender stereotypes. (Age 2–4)

JODIE LANCET-GRANT illustrated by LYDIA CORRY
**THE PIRATE MUMS**
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2021 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9780192777799

Billy’s parents are not like everyone else’s. His mums are always singing sea shanties, have a pet parrot and use smelly old maps instead of a sat-nav. It’s SO embarrassing. Billy wishes his family was ‘normal’. But then, a swashbuckling adventure changes everything … This is an entertaining story about appreciating the value of being unique. The quirky illustrations match the energetic story and have lots of fun details for readers to enjoy. A lively story that is perfect for reading aloud. (Age 2–4)

ISABEL OTTER illustrated by HARRIET LYNAS
**THIS LOVE**
CATERPILLAR BOOKS 2021 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 978148578548

What is love to you? *This Love* is a collection of different ‘moments’ when different people feel love. The moments, captured in rhyme, are heartwarming and the sentiment, that love is what they all have in common, is an important idea. These words and accompanying illustrations work seamlessly together to create layers to show what difference means. It touches on differences like place, race, faith, family and age. The illustrations are warm and beautiful, making this a wonderful celebration of diversity. (Age 2–4)

JUSTIN RICHARDSON and PETER PARNELL illustrated by HENRY COLE
**AND TANGO MAKES THREE**

Based on real events at the penguin house at the Central Park Zoo, this is the story of two penguins named Roy and Silo who were a little bit different from the others. But their desire for a family was the same. And with the help of a kindly zookeeper, Roy and Silo got the chance to welcome a baby penguin of their very own. A simple story of love and acceptance. (Age 2–4)

STEPHANIE STANSBIE illustrated by KATY HALFORD
**MY FRIENDS AND ME:**
**A CELEBRATION OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF FAMILIES**
LITTLE TIGER PRESS 2020 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781788817318

Some of Jamie’s friends have two moms while some have two dads. Some of them have beds in two different houses while others live on a boat. While all these families might look different, there’s some things they all have in common – they are filled with love (and the adults are bad at dancing!). With fun details on every page to amuse readers, this book is sure to entertain while celebrating family love in all its forms. (Age 2–4)
MARGARET STURTON
A FOX CALLED HERBERT
ANDERSEN PRESS 2021 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781783449330

Born a rabbit, bright young Herbert is determined to become a fox, but through his efforts meets the ire of his mother who just wants him to ‘be a good rabbit’. An impossible ask for Herbert who, throughout this charming picturebook, transforms himself into a red-dotted, pointy-eared, bushy-tailed fox. With bright, expressive illustrations, this is a positive, heartwarming story about the struggles of becoming who you’ve always wanted to be and eventually finding acceptance, expertly crafted for young children. (Age 2–4)

HARRY WOODGATE
GRANDAD’S CAMPER
ANDERSEN PRESS 2022 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781783449927

This beautiful picturebook navigates the grief associated with the loss of a grandparent through a celebration of their life, stories and adventures. Filled with love, Grandad’s Camper explores elements of the LGBTQ+ experience and family through vibrant, colourful illustrations. Truly, the core of Grandad’s Camper is a message about how the people we love always stay with us on the journey we call life. Stories like this allow us to cherish their legacy. (Age 2–4)

DAVINA BELL illustrated by ALLISON COLPOYS
UNDER THE LOVE UMBRELLA
SCRIBBLE UK 2018 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781925228977

From this award-winning creative duo comes a book about the wonder of ever-present love. Written in rhyming couplets, this is a stunning celebration of the joy and inclusivity of love as a force that’s always with us, wherever we are and wherever we go in the big, wild world. Bright, expressive and featuring joyfully diverse illustrations throughout. A gorgeous book for families to share. (Age 2–4, 5–8)

PATRICIA HEGARTY illustrated by RYAN WHEATCROFT
WE ARE FAMILY

All families are different – and yet in many ways the same! This book uses a gentle rhyming text to follow eight different families, celebrating their everyday differences as well as the similarities they share. Through illness and health, in celebration and disappointment, families stick together. Even though every family is different, the love is all the same. (Age 2–4, 5–8)

MARY MURPHY
ONLY A TREE KNOWS HOW TO BE A TREE
OTTER-BARRY BOOKS 2021 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 9781933074524

This picturebook is an exploration of the world and our place in it and how everyone and everything a child can imagine belongs and is valued, both as itself and as a part of various communities, societies and systems. This is a celebration of uniqueness and of commonality, of individuals and animals belonging together in a world that holds endless potential for wonder and kindness. This is the kind of picturebook that will lead to important conversations about identity, what it means to belong and our capacity for empathy and imagination. (Age 2–4, 5–8)

MEL ELLIOTT
THE GIRL WITH TWO DADS

Matilda is a new girl at Pearl’s school, but there’s something really cool about her family – she has TWO dads! Pearl is sure that Matilda’s family must be very different to her own but, as they become friends, she starts to discover that maybe Matilda’s family isn’t so different after all. A funny, heartwarming tale, showing how much all kinds of families have in common. (Age 3–5)

LOUISE STOWELL and ELLY BARNS illustrated by AMY PHELPS
ABC PRIDE

Inclusive at every turn, this word book does a great job of introducing the ideals and the terminology that we associate with Pride and, more impressively, does a really deft job of ensuring the normality and day-to-day-ness of this inclusivity. Each highlighted word is given with context and illustrated with vibrant illustrations that do their fair share of explaining. Our ABCs are ‘acceptance’, ‘belonging’ and ‘celebrate’, but we also take in pronouns, gender and identity. A brilliant starter book to open-up conversations. Highly recommended. (Non-fiction, Age 3–5)
CHANA EWING illustrated by PAULINA MORGAN

**AN ABC OF EQUALITY**


‘A is for Ability’, ‘B is for Belief’, ‘C is for Class’. All people have the right to be treated fairly, no matter who they are, what they look like or where they come from. *An ABC of Equality* introduces complicated concepts surrounding social justice using simple, clear language, accessible to the youngest of children. Bright, uncluttered illustrations convey a lot of the message and show a wonderfully diverse cast of characters. A great conversation starter with very young readers! (Non-fiction, Age 3–7)

BERNADETTE GREEN & ANNA ZOBEL

**WHO’S YOUR REAL MUM?**


Elvi, who is of mixed race, has two mothers, one of whom has brown skin. Her friend Nicholas asks her which woman is her real mother? She patiently explains that both are. Children of same-sex parents will identify with Elvi’s attempts to answer questions about her parents, while children of traditional family units will see that not all families look like theirs. This funny and touching book explores how all families are different yet very similar when it comes to the important things. (Age 3–7)

BOB JOHNSTON illustrated by MICHAEL EMBERLEY

**OUR BIG DAY**


Uncle David and his partner Simon have lived together with their fluffy dog, Bear, for a long time. They are due to get married. The narrator, David’s young niece, explains that, in Ireland, everyone is now allowed to marry the person they love the most. This is since the Irish public voted that men can marry men and women can marry women. There is lots to do, and Uncle David’s niece helps Uncle David and Simon prepare for their wedding. This is a celebration of love, of family and of a commitment to marriage equality. (Age 3–7)

ALICE B. McGINTY illustrated by DAVID ROBERTS

**Bathe the Cat**

CHRONICLE BOOKS 2021 (HBK) 48PP £12.99 ISBN 9781452142708

An utterly charming romping riot of a book. All busy families will recognise the chaos of family life at chore-time here. The family cat ensures that the ‘to-do list’ is continually scrambled, giving the creative team behind this book licence to run wild with stylish illustrations and clever rhyming word-play that gets funnier the more frantic the two stressed-out dads become. Designed for bedtime and reading aloud, the outrageous chaos is eventually wrangled into loving calm, and your young readers will merrily drift into sleep, worn out from all the laughing. (Age 4–7)

FELICITY BROOKS illustrated by MAR FERRERO

**ALL ABOUT FAMILIES**


An engaging book highlighting the many variations of family. *All About Families* is an informative resource to encourage awareness, understanding and connection. Blended families, same-sex parents, single-parent families, foster parents, adoptive families and much more are all featured. Brooks writes in a clear, simple style, exploring questions such as ‘What is a family for?’ ‘How can a family change?’ and topics like languages, foods and celebrations. Mar Ferrero’s bright, busy illustrations are full of activity and are a true celebration of family diversity. Ideal for every school library. (Non-fiction, Age 4–8)

JOANNE McCLEINTICK illustrated by JUANA MEDINA

**‘TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE PRIDE**

WALKER BOOKS 2022 (HBK) 32PP £12.99 ISBN 9781529506372

While the rhyming in this picturebook can feel a little forced at times, perhaps hamstrung by being modelled on the classic verse, it does however do a good job of showing the excitement of a young family preparing for the next day’s Pride parade. A book of two halves, the first is a happy family vignette followed by a well explained history of Pride, from resistance and riots to the family friendly marches we know today. The two combine to clearly illustrate the importance of why we still march. (Age 4–8)

KATE DePALMA illustrated by NELLEKE VERHOEFF

**The Bread Pet: A Sourdough Story**


Cora has been gifted some sourdough starter and instructions to keep it growing. The ‘bread pet’ quickly becomes a very active part of her inclusive home. As her kitchen becomes overwhelmed with starter and surplus loaves, her mum and mama step in to help Cora feed their multi-ethnic community. The rich diversity of Cora’s community is affectionately captured with textual illustrations, and Cora’s signature cobalt-blue hearing aids, yellow hair clips and light blue glasses add colour and vibrance to each page’s gentle and warm palette. (Age 5–8)
IAN EAGLETON and JAMES MAYHEW
NEN AND THE LONELY FISHERMAN
OWLET PRESS 2021 (PBK) 32PP £7.99 ISBN 978191339098

This is the story of the romance between a lonely fisherman named Ernest and a merman named Nen. Nen sings a sad song out across the ocean which is finally heard by Ernest. However Nen’s father, Pelagios, does not want his son venturing to the surface world and sends a storm to separate them. This is a beautiful tale that is matched by gorgeous illustrations by James Mayhew. The romance is age appropriate and poignant and the book is great for LGBTQ+ representation. (Age 5–8)

JESSICA LOVE
JULIAN IS A MERMAID
WALKER BOOKS 2019 (PBK) 40PP £7.99 ISBN 9781406386424

Julian and Nana spot some beautiful mermaids on their way home from the pool, which inspires the little boy to play dress-up. But what will Nana think? This incredibly beautiful picturebook, with minimal text and gorgeous illustrations, explores what it means to be yourself and to be loved unconditionally. A story overflowing with charm, tenderness and humour. (Age 5–8)

MARIA ISABEL SÁNCHEZ VEÑARA illustrated by SOPHIE BEER
LITTLE PEOPLE, BIG DREAMS: ELTON JOHN

Vibrantly and lavishly illustrated, this book shows young Reggie’s journey into stardom, from his humble beginnings and finding comfort in music, changing his name, dealing with sufferings despite his success, being knighted by the queen, his marriage to David and the adoption of their two sons. It shows us that despite life’s challenges, his music brings millions of people together. Other titles to note in this series include David Bowie, Prince and Dolly Parton. (Non-fiction, Age 5–8)

MARIA ISABEL SÁNCHEZ VEÑARA illustrated by CLARE OWEN
EVERY FAMILY BEGINS
NOSY CROW 2021 (HBK) 32PP £11.99 ISBN 9781788008013

This book is a perfect starting point to explain how new life can begin, including IUI, IVF, adoption and surrogacy. Using questions (‘What is a person’s sex?’) and conversational, inclusive language (‘Isn’t it amazing to be able to see a baby growing inside a person’s womb?’) as well as a glossary, this is an honest, clear and conversational, inclusive language. The book is as vibrant, colourful and wise as the subject himself. For young readers, not yet old enough to watch Drag Race, this book does a brilliant job of capturing a snapshot of Ru’s life. In early childhood Ru didn’t fit in. Playing dress-up was his favourite game. Eventually, after dropping out of school, he ends up in New York, getting married and becoming famous. Little Ru grew up to be the most influential and iconic drag queen of all time, bringing drag performance into mainstream culture. (Non-fiction, Age 5–8)

MARIA ISABEL SÁNCHEZ VEÑARA illustrated by ASHLING LINDSAY
LITTLE PEOPLE, BIG DREAMS: ALAN TURING

Open this book and discover – bit by bit – the biography of the founding father of modern computer science. Inspiring and educational, this book is a great resource for use in the classroom, as it touches on many aspects of the curriculum: threads of STEM, history and LGBTQ+ education are all seamlessly woven into the narrative. The book does well to distil Turing’s multifarious life into such a short and breathable word count, and in doing so it reinforces one clear message: dream big, little ones! (Non-fiction, Age 5–8)

MARIA ISABEL SÁNCHEZ VEÑARA illustrated by WEDNESDAY HOLMES
MAKING A BABY: AN INCLUSIVE GUIDE TO HOW EVERY FAMILY BEGINS
NOSY CROW 2021 (HBK) 32PP £11.99 ISBN 9781788008013

RACHEL GREENER illustrated by CLARE OWEN
THE ACCIDENTAL DIARY OF B.U.G.

Enter the world of Billie Upton Green, or B.U.G as she hates to be known. Reading through her diary gives the reader a Billie-eyed view on life – and it’s every bit as hilarious, eye-rolling, sassy and forthright as you’d expect from an opinionated ten-year-old! Adoption and same-sex parents are normal parts of her everyday life, as is Billie’s weariness at having to forever explain her family. Other major pluses include: its illustrated diary style, making it accessible for more reluctant readers; it’s the start of a series; and there are Biscuit Laws! (Age 7–11)
**EMMA DONOHUE** illustrated by CAROLINE HADILAKSONO

**THE LOTTERY’S PLUS ONE**
MACMILLAN CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 320PP £7.99 ISBN 9781509803200

Nine-year-old Sumac lives with her two mothers, two fathers and six siblings – all named after trees, just like her – in a huge house called Camelottery, so called because of the lottery win that paid for it. Life in the mansion is chaotic yet predictable – until the Lotterys’ ailing grandfather Iain arrives. The story itself could not be more relevant to the turbulent times the world finds itself in, exploring the true meaning of belonging, home, tolerance and acceptance.

Offbeat, funny, wise and deliciously different, Donoghue’s first book for children is an essential read. (Age 8–10, 10–12)

**ALEX GINO**

**ALICE AUSTEN LIVED HERE**
SCHOLASTIC 2022 (PBK) 176PP £6.99 ISBN 9781338733891

In New York, we meet maths enthusiast Sam and their fashion-and-style expert best friend TJ. They take on a school history challenge to find a new statue that represents the present Staten Island community. This is a truly inspirational trip for both non-binary pre-teens as they explore history. These two likeable characters are very comfortable in who they are, but as history teaches them, it wasn’t always so. Through a wonderful network of family, friends and older residents, they discover that the school challenge also brings with it all the trials and wondrousness of being a young person. (Age 8–10, 10–12)

**BENJAMIN DEAN** illustrated by SANDHYA PRABHAT

**ME, MY DAD AND THE END OF THE RAINBOW**
SIMON & SCHUSTER 2021 (PBK) 352PP £7.99 ISBN 9781471999738

Archie’s parents are acting strange and he’s sure it’s about a secret they’re keeping from him. Along with his best friends, Seb and Bell, Archie attempts to fix his family, even if it means a journey to London Pride and some broken rules along the way. Archie is a compelling character who draws you right in, and his relationships with others are described superbly. This joyful book is a celebration of family and friendship, and is full of humour and heart. (Age 9–11)

**HOLLY GOLDBERG SLOAN & MEG WOLITZER**

**TO NIGHT OWL FROM DOGFISH**

When bookish Avery and adventurous Bett’s dad fall in love, the girls are not happy about the prospect of being sisters and hatch a plan to break them up. This reverse Parent Trap is wonderfully told via the medium of emails and letters between all the characters in this story. Avery (now Night Owl) and Bett (Dogfish), sent away to camp, bond against their will and, against the odds, become the unlikeliest of friends. A heartwarming tale about all types of families and relationships. (Age 9–11)

**SARAH HAGGER-HOLT**

**PROUD OF ME**

Not-quite-twins Josh and Becky have a family that can be complicated to explain. Not only that, they are both going through very different issues, including questions about where they are from and who they are. *Proud of Me* is a warm, humane story about how even today, despite increasing acceptance in society, LGBTQI+ families can still face prejudice and misunderstandings. Not afraid to look at complicated issues but ultimately hopeful, Sarah Hagger-Holt has written a book to be proud of. (Age 9–11)

**ALICE & EMILY HAWORTH-BOOTH**

**PROTEST! HOW PEOPLE HAVE COME TOGETHER TO CHANGE THE WORLD THROUGHOUT HISTORY**

The history of peaceful protest – from the early strikes by Egyptian pyramid workers for food all the way up to Greta Thunberg and the Extinction Rebellion – is outlined in this brightly illustrated and fascinating book. *Protest!* explores the myriad ways that groups have protested creatively, including singing protests, guerrilla gardening and strikes. Packed with quirky cartoons, each chapter shows how a community came together to protest for better lives and equal rights. Young activists can even read advice on how to organise their own protest. (Non-fiction, Age 9–12)

**TIM FEDERLE**

**BETTER NATE THAN EVER**

Nate is a talented singer and an outcast in his small town in Pennsylvania where he is routinely bullied for being gay. He does, however, have big dreams: to escape to New York and take part in an open audition for *ET: The Musical*. Nate is an endearing and determined character, and Federle creates a voice that is both witty and naive. Touching on themes of courage, forgiveness and self-acceptance, this is sure to appeal to any reader with an interest in musical theatre or Broadway. (Age 9–11, 12–14)

**NEIL GAIMAN** illustrated by CHRIS RIDDELL

**THE SLEEPER AND THE SPINDLE**
BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2019 (PBK) 72PP £8.99 ISBN 9781408859650

On the eve of her wedding, a young queen sets out to rescue a princess from an enchantment. She casts aside her fine wedding clothes, takes her chain mail and her sword and follows her brave dwarf retainers into the tunnels under the mountain towards the sleeping kingdom. This queen will decide her own fate – and the princess who needs rescuing is not quite what she seems. Twisting together the familiar and the new, this captivating and darkly funny fairy tale shows its creators at the peak of their talents. (Age 9–11, 12–14)
ROBIN STEVENS
THE DEEPEST BREATH
LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2019 (PBK) €9.00 ISBN 9781912417186
Stevie is eleven and loves reading and sea creatures. There’s a girl at school that she likes. Actually, she’s a bit confused about how much she likes her. It makes her fizzle inside. That’s a new feeling, one she doesn’t understand. Stevie needs to try to find out if girls can like girls – love them, even – but it’s hard to get any information. Maybe she can find an answer in a book. With the help of a librarian, Stevie finds stories of girls loving girls and builds up her courage to share the truth with her mum. Winner of the Judges’ Special Award at the KPMG Children’s Books Ireland Awards 2020. (Age 9–11, 12–14)

NOELLE STEVENSON, GRACE ELLIS, SHANNON WATTERS
LUMBERJANES VOL. 1: BEWARE THE KITTEN HOLY
BOOM! BOX 2015 (PBK) £10.99 ISBN 9781608866878
The Lumberjanes graphic novel series is about female friendship and set in a summer camp. However, undermining this so-far-so-ordinary description, it features shape-shifters, gods, mysteries and yetis. That any expletives take the form of a woman’s name, be she activist, scientist or musician, emphasises how female centred the series is. Jo, April, Mal, Molly and Ripley come from a wide range of backgrounds and the series features same-sex parents and lesbian and transgender characters. (Age 9–11, 12–14)

ALEX GINO
RICK
SCHOLASTIC 2020 (PBK) £6.99 ISBN 9780702301827
As Rick tries to fit in at his new middle school, he realises that his best friend, Jeff, is a bully. He’s also not getting crushes like his classmates. Through his new friends at the Rainbow Spectrum club (and some insights from not-so-boring-after-all Grandpa Ray), Rick finds the courage to ask the big questions – who am I, and what kind of person do I want to be? An informative and warm look at identity and belonging, with some familiar faces from Gino’s popular début, George (now published under the title Melissa). (Age 10–12, 12–14)

SARAH HAGGER-HOLT
NOTHING EVER HAPPENS HERE
USBORNE PUBLISHING 2020 (PBK) £6.99 ISBN 9781474966238
Izzy has just managed to find her feet, and her friendship with Grace means the world. She thinks she’s ready for her next year of secondary school – until her father reveals that he’s transgender and, all of a sudden, Izzy’s family is the centre of attention. The book sensitively follows the family on their journey to a new normal as they find both intolerance and support in unexpected places. This is a beautiful story about love, family and the right to be who you are. (Age 10–12, 12–14)

RIYADH KHALAF illustrated by MELISSA MCFEETERS
YAY! YOU’RE GAY! NOW WHAT?
A GAY BOY’S GUIDE TO LIFE
In this personal, heartfelt go-to guide for young gay men, YouTuber and presenter Riyadh Khalaf shares frank advice about everything from coming out to relationships, as well as interviews with inspirational role models and encouragement for times when you’re feeling low. There’s a support section for family and friends written by Riyadh’s parents and lots of hilarious, embarrassing, inspiring and moving stories from gay boys around the world. (Non-fiction, Age 11–16)

ADIBA JAIGIRDAR
HANI AND ISHU’S GUIDE TO FAKE DATING
HODDER CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2021 (PBK) £7.99 ISBN 9781444962246
Hani and Ishu are nothing alike. They hate it when people expect them to be the same because they are both Bengali. Hani loves socialising; Ishu never stops studying. When Hani comes out to her friends they question her bisexuality. Ishu is desperate to be Head Girl, but she isn’t well-liked at school. Unexpectedly, a fake relationship is the solution to both problems. But what happens when you start to fancy your fake girlfriend? Are they actually too different to make a real relationship work? (Age 12–14)

JAMIE LAWSON illustrated by EVE LLOYD NIGHT
RAINBOW REVOLUTIONS: POWER, PRIDE AND PROTEST IN THE FIGHT FOR QUEER RIGHTS
When the police stormed the Stonewall Inn bar in New York City, the events that followed ignited the LGBTQ+ rights movement. Lawson depicts the variety of ways queer activists have spoken up and spoken out, with a dynamic account of poet Audre Lorde alongside the outrageous fun of Pride parades. Despite outlining the hardships faced by the LGBTQ+ community, hope remains. From the supportive surrogate families of the Ballroom community to the queer culture we now know as Pride, this account is insightful and inspiring. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14)
KELLY McCaughrain
FLYING TIPS FOR FLIGHTLESS BIRDS

From the high wire of the Big Top to the high wire of teenage sexuality, this warm and funny story of adolescence is a delight to read. It explores family, friendship and first love with an authenticity that is both engaging and emotionally satisfying. Through the eyes of the two main characters – one through very clever use of a blog – we learn the pros and cons of being different and of managing life in the margins. Winner of three CBI Book of the Year Awards, including the overall Book of the Year and the Children’s Choice Award. (Age 12–14)

ALICE OSEMAN
HEARTSTOPPER: VOLUME 1
ANDERSEN PRESS 2021 (PBK) 288PP £10.99 ISBN 9781444951387

This graphic novel is the first in the Heartstopper series. It is about love, friendship, loyalty and mental illness. Charlie and Nick are at the same school, but they’ve never met ... until one day when they’re made to sit together. They quickly become friends, and soon Charlie is falling hard for Nick, even though he doesn’t think he has a chance. But love works in surprising ways, and Nick is more interested in Charlie than either of them realised. This book encompasses all the small stories of Nick and Charlie’s lives that together make up something larger, which speaks to all of us. Now a major Netflix series. (Age 12–14)

REBECCA STEAD
THE LIST OF THINGS THAT WILL NOT CHANGE
WALKER BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 400PP £7.99 ISBN 9781406375657

Bea has had a lot to deal with since her parents broke up and her dad came out as gay. Her loving family and friends and a perceptive therapist have helped her through, and she now has a lot to look forward to as her family changes and expands. But will she be able to forgive herself for past mistakes? A captivating and moving novel which takes an honest look at the challenges and joys of family life and shines with love, hope and resilience. (Age 12–14)

JUNO DAWSON
WHAT IS GENDER? HOW DOES IT DEFINE US?
AND OTHER BIG QUESTIONS

This is a guide to gender, sex, sexual fluidity, transgender issues, sexism, feminism and equality. The concepts are laid out clearly and accessibly, through a mix of definitions, examples and case studies. There are eight case studies from authors, artists and sportspersons, each presenting different experiences – of being gay, a woman, transgender, intersex – and serving to reference the definitions given elsewhere, while giving a human face and experience to the terms. Recommended for young people but also parents and guardians! (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, Young Adult)

ROWAN ELLIS illustrated by JACKY SHERIDAN
HERE AND QUEER: A QUEER GIRL’S GUIDE TO LIFE

The start of the book explains terminology, the use of labels (and how this is for each individual to decide) and gender identification and concludes with several thinking points. These are various questions aimed at helping the reader to consider the information they have read, and to help them realise and articulate their feelings and beliefs. There is an excellent glossary of terms and phrases used throughout the book, as well as useful websites for further information. The text covers multiple aspects of being a queer girl in today’s world and is full of illustrations, with an informal yet dynamic layout, and uses consistently positive language throughout. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, Young Adult)

JUSTIN HANCOCK illustrated by FUCHSIA MacAREE
CAN WE TALK ABOUT CONSENT?

Often highlighted as an issue missing from school curriculums, the topic of consent is tackled in this illustrated book, aimed at young people, in an easy-to-understand way, mixing humour and serious subject matter in short and witty digestible chunks. Offering a step-by-step guide on how to understand consent when making choices such as watching a movie or ordering pizza with friends, or when it comes to hugging, kissing and sex, it also teaches techniques for saying and understanding ‘no’ and how to relate to and understand other people’s experiences. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, Young Adult)

ADIBA JAIGIRDAR
THE HENNA WARS
HODDER CHILDREN’S BOOKS 2021 (PBK) 400PP £7.99 ISBN 978144962208

Nishat, a Muslim girl who just came out to her parents, has to figure out how not to be crushed under the weight of their rejection and disapproval of her sexual identity. In the Catholic girls’ secondary school in Dublin she attends, she also has to deal with racism and homophobia and a business competition in which her culture is appropriated. On top of all of that she is falling in love with her rival. This contemporary novel is set against a backdrop of love–hate rivalry, with a good dose of unfailing sisterly support. Winner of both the Judges’ Special and the Junior Juries’ Awards at the KPMG Children’s Books Ireland Awards 2022. (Age 12–14, Young Adult)

MOLLY KNOX OSTERTAG
THE GIRL FROM THE SEA
SCHOLASTIC 2021 (PBK) 256PP £10.99 ISBN 9781338540574

A fresh graphic-novel take on the age-old magical mermaid/selkie story. When Morgan kisses the strange girl in the water who saves her from drowning, Keltie is able to join Morgan on land. As she comes to terms with her identity, first love, coming out and friendships all come into play. Clever use of illustrated group texts figure prominently, showing true-to-life teenage friend-group dynamics, and serve to highlight the collision of Morgan’s two lives – the one her friends know and her new secret one. (Age 12–14, Young Adult)
Mae Martin

A thoughtful discussion of sexuality, gender, spectrums, the binary and non-binary. Fluidity and varying experiences of LGBTQ+ people, this insightful book explains a range of terms and shares ideas on how to tackle homophobia and transphobia and, indeed, support LGBTQ+ people for allies from within or outside the community. It offers reflections on LGBTQ+ history from past to present and much more. Mae Martin’s tone is light and fun, with plenty of humour thrown in, discussing important issues for us all, as LGBTQ+ people and allies. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, Young Adult)

Richie Sadlier
Let’s Talk: About Relationships, Sex and Intimacy

Delving into topics such as sexuality, consent, sexual health and safety, and presenting them not just as issues that teenager boys will face but as things they need to be aware of as they may also impact their friends. The tone is conversational and frank, never shying away from the emotional, physical and legal consequences of impulsive behaviour. This is a book that is sorely needed, not just for teenage boys, but for their parents, guardians and teachers too. It neither condemns nor condones but seeks to offer as much information as possible to help make informed, healthy decisions. (Non-fiction, 12–14, Young Adult)

The School of Sexuality Education
Sex Ed: An Inclusive Teenage Guide to Sex and Relationships

The School of Sexuality Education is a UK-based educational facilitation organisation. With chapters that explore discrimination, gender and sexuality, the physical body, consent, relationships, sexual and reproductive health, as well as digital literacy and body image, this truly inclusive guide is framed in accessible yet comprehensive language. The tone is both light and serious, and carefully respectful of its audience. Essential reading for anyone who wants to have open and honest conversations about the things that matter when it comes to relationships, connections and positive sexual experiences. (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, Young Adult)

Becky Albertalli
Leah on the Offbeat

This sequel to Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda is narrated by Simon’s best friend, Leah, a bisexual girl who is very definite in her own sexual identity but not comfortable sharing it with others. Set a little over a year after Simon’s story, the gang find themselves facing not only graduation, but also the potential for their group to splinter apart. Leah’s voice is as breezy and effortless as Simon’s while the conflicts and problems are a little darker this time, tackling not only romance and sexuality but also class and the worry of impending change. (Age Young Adult)

Becky Albertalli and Adam Silvera
What If It’s Us

Arthur is in New York for an internship and is expecting a summer straight off Broadway. Ben is broken-hearted and angry at the universe. The two meet by chance in a post office but then they are separated again, without each other’s contact details. Two bestselling and beloved YA authors combine their talents for this dual-perspective romance story. The cast is diverse in terms of race, beliefs and sexuality, and this is a book in which many teenagers will be able to see themselves. It is a joy to read a book showing (mostly) positive experiences for gay teens with their family and friend groups. Look out for the follow-up Here’s to Us. (Age Young Adult)

Dean Atta illustrated by Anshika Khullar
The Black Flamingo

Growing up, Michael has always felt like he is never enough: not black enough, not Cypriot enough, not masculine enough, not gay enough and not able to be true to himself enough. As he embarks on his first year in university, these feelings of not belonging anywhere intensify — that is, until he meets Mizz Behaviour. In Drag Society, Michael is finally free to explore who he really is and who he is becoming. (Age Young Adult)

Kalynn Bayron
Cinderella Is Dead
Bloomsbury YA 2020 (PBK) 400PP £7.99 ISBN 9781526621979

Sophia knows she must attend the King’s Ball and secure a husband. She must be like Cinderella. Failing to do so could prove deadly. Yet, she yearns for the power of choice. She defiantly escapes and teams up with the fearless redhead Constance in a search for the truth behind Cinderella’s twisted tale. In this feminist retelling, Bayron offers a dark but ultimately hopeful new spin on a classic. Read for an inclusive and compelling tale of resistance, defying exploring oppression, unrealistic ideals and queerness. Her next title, This Poison Heart, is equally recommended. (Age Young Adult)

Edited by Shakirah Bourne and Dana Alison Levy
Allies
DK 2021 (PBK) 240PP £12.99 ISBN 9780241505953

This collection of deeply personal essays from a wide variety of young adult authors drills down into the meaning of allyship and examines practical ways to bolster those who need our support. The essays encourage readers to question their own biases concerning race, abilities and sexuality, and to use their own power and platforms to amplify the voices of others or support them. Allies acknowledges that we live in an imperfect world, but it offers hope that we can create a more equitable one. (Age Young Adult)
Ash Persaud has a brave, romantic, stupid heart. Unlucky in love, when she meets Poppy Morgan on a school trip, Ash thinks she could be the one to end all the false starts. Except starts don't get falser than dying at sixteen and waking up with a job to do. An intense blush of delighted first love, *Afterlove* sweeps Ash and readers up in the tide of the uncontrollable universe. But with love and family, there is always a reason to look to hopeful shores. (Age Young Adult)

This is a truly honest story following Felix Love, a boy who feels like he never really fits in, being Black, queer and transgender alongside attending a prestigious school and coming from a working-class family. Between receiving transphobic messages, his father struggling to accept his transition and his mother fleeing, Felix is also confronted with the complexities of gender labels. CalleNDER bravely questions definitions of gender while also challenging the reader to never assume about people’s private lives. This story is raw, open and breathtakingly real. (Age Young Adult)

Positive, frank, empathetic, kind – this is a complete guide to the social, emotional and political complexities of learning to navigate life as an LGBTQ+ person with a strong emphasis on mental health and empowerment. For those that want to learn more or are seeking a little bit of friendly guidance, this is the book for you. The writer, who amongst other things is a podcaster, reaches out to others for any areas that are outside of his own experiences. The result is a book that is respectful, inclusive, helpful and useful – with really well-thought-out sections for allies. (Non-fiction, Age Young Adult)

An isolated community fights for survival against the odds in a post-apocalyptic America. In normal conditions the surrounding water provides safety, but now, in the harsh icy conditions their protection is gone. Then Peter breaks a rule and is banished. Together with Cooper the rancher, he must face survival and discovery. Heartwarming and horrifying by turns, this is the book you never knew you needed – a thrilling, epic, apocalyptic zombie tale with a really tender love story at its heart. (Age Young Adult)

*Proud* is a collection of stories, poetry and illustrations all on the theme of pride, compiled and curated by YA author Juno Dawson. It features both well-established LGBTQ+ authors and illustrators, as well as four new authors published for the first time. The stories and poems have a universal appeal as they deal with life, love, a sense of identity, of just wanting to be who you are and to live your life as yourself. The collection is fresh, funny and quite often touching. (Age Young Adult)
WREN & ROOK 2021 (PBK) 304PP £8.99 ISBN 9781526362827

WHAT'S THE T? THE NO-NONSENSE GUIDE TO ALL THINGS TRANS AND/OR NON-BINARY FOR TEENS

JUNO DAWSON illustrated by SOOFIYA

What's the T? is a guide written primarily for trans, nonbinary and questioning teens. There is also a section for parents and guardians. Juno Dawson’s conversational style is accessible and engaging. She manages to cover a huge range of topics, including medical and legal advice, and how to access services. There is information on trans terminology, history and the gamut of hurdles and delights a transgender or nonbinary individual might face. This guide answers all the questions the reader might have, whatever their age or gender.

DAVID FICKLING BOOKS 2016 (PBK) 448PP £7.99 ISBN 9781910989029

UNBECOMING

JENNY DOWNHAM

When Katie’s estranged grandmother Mary turns up after years of absence, it is up to the seventeen-year-old to untangle the truths and lies that have affected three generations of women in her family, a task made more difficult by Mary’s dementia. This is a story about bravery and living your life for yourself and serves as a reminder that we are all ultimately ‘a work in progress’. Featuring a lesbian protagonist and an elderly woman whose spirit and story are unforgettable, this nuanced young adult novel is highly recommended!


WILL GRAYSON, WILL GRAYSON

JOHN GREEN and DAVID LEVITHAN

One cold night, in a most unlikely corner of Chicago, Will Grayson crosses paths with ... Will Grayson. Two young men with the same name, running in two very different circles, suddenly find their lives going in new and unexpected directions, culminating in epic turns-of-heart and the most fabulous musical ever to grace the high-school stage. Told in alternating voices from two award-winning authors, John Green and David Levithan, this collaborative novel features a double helping of heart and humour.

SCHOLASTIC 2017 (PBK) 320PP £8.99 ISBN 9781407179940

NOAH CAN’T EVEN

SIMON JAMES GREEN

Noah Grimes is an exceedingly awkward almost-sixteen-year-old who wants more than anything else to fit in. Problem is, his mum’s Beyoncé tribute act doesn’t help matters in school, his dad disappeared years ago and his beloved gran isn’t herself any more. He only has one friend, Harry, who has been with him through thick and thin. Why can’t he just be normal, like everyone else in school? Maybe if he struck up a relationship with lovely, kind, pretty Sophie, he’d be seen in a different light? But Noah’s plans for romance are derailed when Harry kisses him at a party. The hilarity continues in Noah Could Never.


THIS BOOK IS GAY

JUNO DAWSON

Irreverent and chatty, yet also containing bucketloads of useful and serious information, this guide to all things gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer is a practical, reassuring and up-to-date handbook for young people and parents, guardians or teachers invested in supporting them. The book covers both the personal and political, critiquing stereotypes while exploring the truth behind the difficulties LGBTQ+ youth face. A must-have for all school libraries.

SCHOLASTIC 2022 (PBK) 374PP £8.99 ISBN 9780702313677

GAY CLUB!

SIMON JAMES GREEN

Ostensibly a gloriously back-stabbing, melodramatic school election/rom-com teen drama, this is in fact a clever and heartfelt comment on the continuing struggle of queer people in society and especially in schools. An election for president of the school’s LGBTQ+ society takes a turn for the dramatic when a rival enters the race. Filled with scandals, betrayals and missteps but with heartfelt solidarity ultimately winning through, this hilarious novel is one for the upper end of young adult.


WHAT LOVE LOOKS LIKE

JARLATH GREGORY

Meet Ben, seventeen, gay and looking for love. Refreshingly honest, yet sometimes naive, Ben has everything mapped out – teacher training awaits, family life is good. His best friends, Chelsea and Soda, bring advice and life tips on the joys and perils of love in contemporary Dublin’s LGBTQ+ community with their own compelling stories. Navigating bullying, anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment and the North/South view of ‘coming out’ in Ireland, Gregory gives a realistic and optimistic picture of life for Irish teenagers exploring their sexuality.
This is a unique and elegant take on the vampire romance trope, falling victim to none of the usual clichés. Written in a lyrical verse form that has the soothing quality of a lullaby one minute and lies like a lead weight on your heart the next, this is a story of tragedy, tenderness and compelling beauty. Claudia learns Immy’s incredible secret, but being loved by a vampire was never going to be easy. The pair’s need for each other drowns out all fear and doubt, at least for now. (Age Young Adult)

This is the story of Paul, a student at a high school like no other: the cheerleaders ride Harleys, the homecoming queen used to be a guy named Daryl (she now prefers Infinite Darlene and is also the star quarterback), and the gay-straight alliance was formed to help the straight kids learn how to dance. When Paul meets Noah, he thinks he’s found the one his heart is made for. Until he blows it. This is a happy, meaningful romantic comedy about finding love, losing love and doing what it takes to get love back in a crazy world. (Age Young Adult)

Sixteen-year-old Cal Adams has just come out to his mother (it didn’t go well) and now his dad has been served a barring order for punching him. He’s mercilessly bullied at school, both physically and psychologically, and is not sure who his friends are among the sea of haters who blindly follow the ‘popular’ boy in tormenting him. Fast-paced chapters flow in Cal’s distinctive voice, describing relatable teenage experiences, but there are darker, more disquieting moments too. This is a gritty, heartbreaking and inspiring read. (Age Young Adult)

Chris is eleven when he first learns that he has inherited a condition that predisposes him to cancer. This realistic and insightful verse narrative follows Chris through his teen years to university, as he experiences preventative surgeries, the resultant scarring and chronic illness, and his emotionally distant father’s traumatic brain injury. The impact of illness on Chris’s dating life as a young gay man is sensitively handled, as he grows to accept his body. Daily life with chronic illness is especially well depicted. Winner of the 2022 KPMG Children’s Books Ireland Book of the Year Award. (Age Young Adult)

Unusually structured and poetically written, I’ll Give You the Sun is a story of life, love, loss and art as twins Noah and Jude each give their perspective on the deterioration of their once close relationship over the course of three years. This is an incredibly visual, quirky and imaginative tale, and the characters of Jude and Noah are so real and relatable, it is impossible to avoid being drawn into their story. A heartbreaking and heartwarming tale. (Age Young Adult)

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CIARA SMYTH
NOT MY PROBLEM
ANDERSEN PRESS 2021 (PBK) 276PP £8.99 ISBN 9781839130854

This coming-of-age novelexplores the struggles and relationships of Aideen, a savvy high school student with attitude (the interplay between herself and her teacher Miss Devlin is one of the book’s most appealing features). A slapstick series of incidents with her fellow students hides the serious challenges and worries Aideen faces with her troubled mother and life in general. A contemporary look at friendship, the book is filled with all the heartache, hiccups and hilarity experienced by a young girl as she faces the world. Shortlisted for the KPMG Children’s Books Ireland Awards 2022. (Age Young Adult)

CIARA SMYTH
THE FALLING IN LOVE MONTAGE
ANDERSEN PRESS 2020 (PBK) 400PP £7.99 ISBN 9781783449668

Saoirse has a lot going on. She has just finished the Leaving Cert, her mum doesn’t live at home any more and she’s on the outs with her best friend. But then she meets Ruby – fun, mischievous, fascinating Ruby. Saoirse feels she can leave all her problems behind if she just follows some rules for life. But can she keep Ruby from getting too close? Smyth deals with difficult issues deftly and realistically, with body-positive, self-assured young women working out their place in the world. Winner of the Junior Juries’ Award at the KPMG Children’s Books Ireland Awards 2021. (Age Young Adult)

PHIL STAMPER
AS FAR AS YOU’LL TAKE ME
BLOOMSBURY YA 2021 (PBK) 352PP £7.99 ISBN 9781526630728

Seventeen-year-old Marty travels to London with his oboe and a bit of savings. He’s lied to his parents to make his escape from conservative small-town Kentucky. A coming-of-age story about a young man who is figuring out how to live life on his own terms, including exploring his sexuality, without judgement from others. Marty is a multifaceted character, balancing anxiety, shyness and a lack of confidence with loyalty, kindness and a passion for music. The author has written a book that is rich and complex but still light and a joy to read. (Age Young Adult)

PHIL STAMPER
THE GRAVITY OF US
BLOOMSBURY YA 2020 (PBK) 352PP £7.99 ISBN 9781526619945

Popular live-streamer Cal moves from Brooklyn to Houston because his father is hired to be a pilot on a NASA mission to Mars. One problem: all of the astronauts and their families are filmed for a reality show! Cal is asked to adhere to a non-compete clause. There, he meets fellow astrokids Kat and Leon, who becomes Cal’s boyfriend. A reminder that hubris can get the best of everyone, to never stop questioning the powers that be and that first love is all-consuming. (Age Young Adult)

LISA WILLIAMSON
THE ART OF BEING NORMAL

This incredible début from Lisa Williamson is witty, thought-provoking and sure to blow you away. Protagonists David and Leo devastate and inspire us with their compelling voices and authentic experiences – each chapter is a rollercoaster. This empowering exploration of the transgender experience is remarkable for its universality as much as its subject matter – exploring human nature and the desire to be one’s true self in a sensitive and entirely natural way. A must read. (Age Young Adult)

LEWIS HANCOX
WELCOME TO ST. HELL: MY TRANS TEEN MISADVENTURE
SCHOLASTIC 2022 (PBK) 304PP £10.99 ISBN 9780702313905

This is a, candid and frank graphic memoir about the author’s life as a trans boy growing up uncomfortable in his body, and slowly discovering who he is. It cleverly shows us both parts of his story – a powerful, brutally honest depiction of his experience of growing up and the intensity of negotiating high school while dealing with gender dysphoria, at a time before transitioning was well understood, while remaining sympathetic towards parents who didn’t understand but whose love shines through. With adult themes, this is strongly advised for older readers. (Age Young Adult, 16+)

LUCAS ROCHA illustrated by MARINA ESMERALDO
WHERE WE GO FROM HERE
translated by LARISSA HELENA

Lucas Rocha’s LGBTQ+ novel depicts the lives of three men struggling with their connection to HIV. Ian is newly diagnosed and hiding it from family and friends. Henrique has only bad experiences after telling a romantic partner. Victor doesn’t feel he can be in a relationship with someone that has HIV. The frustrations of young adulthood and misunderstandings allow for Rocha’s novel to take the reader on a painful, humorous and, most importantly, realistic journey to acceptance. (Age Young Adult, 16+)