

Picture Books to Discuss Family Diversity

- ***All Families Are Special* – Norma Simon (Illus. Teresa Flavin)**
When a teacher's students find out that she will be a grandmother, they begin to share their own family situations in a class-wide response. A consideration of very diverse possibilities for family makeup in a given community.
- ***Donovan's Big Day* – Lesléa Newman (Illus. Mike Dutton)**
Donovan is incredibly excited to be a part of the planning and execution of a big family wedding. When readers get further into the story, they realize that Donovan's mom is getting married to another woman. Excellent choice to teach surprise endings.
- ***A Family is a Family is a Family* – Sara O'Leary (Illus. Qin Leng)**
A young girl is worried that she won't be able to explain the makeup of her family to her classmates. Each child has a different approach to how they define "family" however, some of them including same-gender couples as parents, some with single parents, some with grandparents as parents, etc.
- ***Home at Last* – Vera B. Williams (Illus. Chris Raschka)**
When a young boy is unable to sleep, he tries to crawl in between his two dads for comfort, but they keep moving him back to his own bed. Finally, after trying many different ways to console their son, the dads allow the dog to sleep in their son's bed, acting as both a comforting presence, and a pillow.
- ***One Family* – George Shannon (Illus. Blanca Gomez)**
From the imaginations of Shannon and Gomez comes a picture book that explores the many variations that can make up a family, from moms and dads, to grandparents, to uncles and aunts, to adoptive parents, and everyone in between. An imaginative and delightful book about how much families can differ and yet still remain family!
- ***The Great Big Book of Families* – Mary Hoffman (Illus. Ros Asquith)**
"What is a family? Once, it was said to be a father, mother, boy, girl, cat and dog living in a house with a garden. As times have changed, families have changed too, and now there are almost as many kinds of families as colours of the rainbow - from a mum and dad or single parent to two mums or two dads, from a mixed-race family to children with different mums and dads, from families with a disabled member to those with a mum or dad in prison."
- ***Worm Loves Worm* – J.J. Austrian (Illus. Mike Curato)**
This adorable picture book looks at what it means to fall in love. When two worms fall in love, everyone has their own idea of who should be the bride and who should be the groom, but the worms don't care... they are just in love.
- ***Stella Brings the Family* – Miriam B. Schiffer (Illus. Holly Clifton-Brown)**
On Mother's Day, Stella's teacher wants students to spend time appreciating their mothers, but Stella has two dads, so what is she supposed to do? When the information comes to light, Stella tells her class about how her family works, including the fact that she has a whole bunch of extended family looking out for her.
- ***This Day in June* – Gayle E. Pitman (Illus. Kristyna Litten)**
In June, LGBT history and culture are celebrated in many places around the world. In this particular picture book, Pitman's text and Litten's illustrations create a celebration of Pride and LGBT history in a child-friendly format that will make the subject easily accessible to many young people and their parents.
- ***Monday is One Day* – Arthur A. Levine (Illus. Julian Hector)**
No matter the day of the week, families take Monday morning as a time to get ready for the next seven days of work and expectations. Then on Tuesday, it could be blue shoes day, then after that, it's halfway day. Each day has a purpose, and this book explores each day with new children and diverse families. A sure-fire way to start the week off right!

Picture Books to Discuss Gender Stereotypes and Gender Identity

- ***Henry Holton Takes the Ice* – Sandra Bradley (Illus. Sara Palacios)**
Henry's family is obsessed with Hockey, but Henry is less than effective when he hits the ice... at least while he's holding a hockey stick. When he lets go and allows himself to move more freely, he realizes that he actually loves skating, but more as an ice dancer than a hockey player.
- ***I Am Jazz* – Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings (Illus. Shelagh McNicholas)**
A picture book based on the real-life experiences of Jazz Jennings, *I Am Jazz* explores what it is like to be born in a body that doesn't fully match a child's internalized sense of their own gender. This book provides a valuable opportunity for starting conversations with parents and children. It can be followed by viewing *Story of Jazz* a 4:25 YouTube video.
- ***I'm a Girl* – Yasmeen Ismail**
Ismail's book celebrates what it means to feel like a girl or a boy, but also confronts stereotypes and complicates easy assumptions about gender roles. When the young girl protagonist meets a boy who likes to wear dresses and play with dolls, the two new friends find a lot more in common than they first thought.
- ***Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship* – Jessica Walton (Illus. Dougal MacPherson)**
Errol and his teddy, Thomas, do everything together, but one day Errol realizes that Thomas seems a bit sadder than usual. Errol's teddy, though, doesn't want to be called Thomas anymore, but instead wants to be called Tilly. A delightful book that will open up discussions about gender and transitioning for a child audience.
- ***Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* – Christine Baldacchino (Illus. Isabelle Malenfant)**
Morris loves to play dress-up, but when he decides to wear his favourite tangerine dress to school one day, the other kids don't know how to react. Dresses are for girls, they say. Dresses are certainly not for boys, or astronauts, or any of the other things Morris dreams of being. But after spending a day home from school, he pulls himself together and confronts his peers, showing them that a dress is just another piece of clothing.
- ***Red A Crayon's Story* – Michael Hall**
Red wears a label, but one that doesn't quite fit, as readers can see from the poor crayon's attempts at drawing red objects, but having them turn out blue, like under the label. Others judge Red and try to tell the crayon what to do to fix the problem. But what if the whole situation isn't really a problem at all?
- ***Not Your Typical Dragon* – Dan Bar-el (Illus. Tim Bowers)**
Crispin is a dragon, but he's far from typical. Instead of breathing fire, he ends up spewing out bubbles, marshmallows, even teddy bears! He wonders if he'll ever be a *real* dragon, and one day, in an emergency, he finds an opportunity to show how much of a dragon he can actually be.
- ***10,000 Dresses* – Marcus Ewert (Illus. Rex Ray)**
Bailey dreams of dresses every night when she is asleep, but during the day when Bailey tells her family about her dreams, they are less than receptive, reminding her that she was actually assigned a male gender at birth. This is one of the first picture books published for children that deals with the concept of gendered pronouns.
- ***Would You Rather Be a Princess or a Dragon* – Barney Saltzberg**
Some kids want to be princesses. Others want to be dragons. But what if a child didn't have to decide? Saltzberg's prose and delightful illustrations give readers a chance to talk about gender roles and gendered expectations in society.
- ***Not all Princesses Dress in Pink* – Jane Yolen & Heidi Y. Stemple (Illus. Anne-Sophie Languetin)**
While still affirming the fun and frivolity inherent in playing princess, this book challenges certain stereotypes about girls playing rough-and-tumble games and dressing up in non-traditional "princess" outfits. The mix of rhyming text and fun illustrations create an enjoyable exploration of diversity, imagination, and sparkly crowns.

Fiction Books for Intermediate / Middle School Grades

- ***Drama* – Raina Telgemeier**
Callie is twelve years old, a musical theatre nerd, and a friend of Justin and Jesse, two thirteen-year-old twins. Everyone starts gossiping about who is dating whom and who likes whom, and suddenly sexual identities start coming out (pun intended). Telgemeier’s narrative is funny, colourful, and full of, well... drama!
- ***George* – Alex Gino**
When people see George, they see a boy. But she knows she’s not a boy, and she really wants to be seen differently. When she finds out the school is casting a production of *Charlotte’s Web*, she desperately wants to play the part of Charlotte. But will she be allowed?
- ***Gracefully Grayson* – Ami Polonsky**
Grayson is twelve, and she wants to be seen as a girl. Assigned a male gender at birth, Grayson is of course under more than a little bit of pressure from society and her school. Despite the circumstance, Grayson itches to break free, and with the help of a teacher and an unexpected friend, she finds her situation less than impossible.
- ***The Misfits* – James Howe**
A tale of youngsters and misfits, Howe’s novel follows Skeezie, Addie, Joe, and Bobby as they navigate middle school. Of course, navigating grade 7 is more of a challenge than anyone can imagine. Throughout the year, the gang learns a whole bunch of lessons about life and acceptance and bullying... and of course, being one’s self!
- ***The Other Boy* – M.G. Hennessey**
Twelve-year-old Shane is a regular boy who loves baseball and graphic novels and hanging out with his best friend. But Shane is hiding what he considers to be a very complicated secret. He may be a boy to his friends, but he was assigned a female gender at birth. How will this affect his new crush, Madeline? Or his classmates? Nobody will know until Shane can bring himself to tell his own truth.
- ***Hurricane Child* – Kheryn Callender**
Caroline is a child born during a large-scale tropical storm—a hurricane child. She feels entirely unlucky. Her friends have abandoned her (or maybe she just never had any?) and her mother left when she was young. But when she finds a new friend and comes across a mysterious lady in black, everything begins to change, including her conceptualization of gender and identity.
- ***Felix Yz* – Lisa Bunker**
Felix was three when he became fused with a fourth-dimensional, hyper-intelligent being during an experiment conducted by his father. The creature is friendly, but the fusion of the two beings isn’t entirely beneficial. If Felix wishes to achieve adulthood, the two must be separated, but there is the risk that one of them may not survive the process.
- ***Star-Crossed* – Barbara Dee**
Mattie is a reader, a socialite, and a fan of the theatre. At only thirteen, Mattie is also just figuring herself out, especially regarding who she likes and how that affection might be reciprocated. When she finds herself cast as Romeo, opposite her new crush, she’s not totally sure what will happen, but in any case, she’s excited to find out!
- ***Better Nate Than Ever* – Tim Federle (followed by 5, 6, 7, Nate)**
Nate Foster *really* wants to be on Broadway. His whole life he’s dreamed of it. When an opportunity arises for him to audition for a role in *E.T.: The Musical* he simply can’t resist. Against his parents’ wishes and in flagrant disregard of pretty much all legalities around traveling alone as a minor, Nate persists against all odds to get the role he knows he is destined for.
- ***Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard, Book Two: The Hammer of Thor* – Rick Riordan**
A particularly complex tale of gods and monsters, *Magnus Chase* brings a whole new dimension to Riordan’s delightful series. In this particular case, Thor’s hammer is missing, and it may be in enemy hands! Magnus and his friends are tasked with retrieving the hammer before the world is destroyed by giants. He is aided by his friends, of course, including a new acquaintance who may or may not be an enemy.

- ***We Are the Ants* – Shaun David Hutchinson**
Henry’s mom is chain-smoking, his brother is a college dropout with a pregnant girlfriend, and his grandmother is suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. Also, his boyfriend committed suicide the year before. Oh, and aliens have given him 144 days to decide if the world is worth saving. What could go wrong?
- ***If I Was Your Girl* – Meredith Russo**
Amanda was assigned a male gender at birth, and she was hoping to start her life anew at a new school. But when she meets a new guy, Grant, she can’t help but wonder if it’s worth losing her sense of secrecy to get together with him. Though the novel follows the plot points of a problem novel, it does so in the best possible ways!
- ***When the Moon Was Ours* – Anna-Marie McLemore**
Miel and Sam are inseparable, but they are known as strange throughout the community. Miel grows roses out of her wrist, and Sam paints moons that he later hangs in trees. But no matter how odd they may seem, the Bonner sisters are seen to be worse (considered witches). They want the roses growing from Miel’s wrist, but no matter what they desire, there are many secrets still waiting to be laid bare.
- ***I’ll Give You the Sun* – Jandy Nelson**
Though the overall premise might be seen as over-the-top to some, Jandy Nelson’s incredible writing and character building are well worth the literary journey. Jude and her twin Noah are inseparable... until they’re not. And when they stop talking, their stories have a hard time coming together. But the ending is far from predictable!
- ***Ramona Blue* – Julie Murphy**
Sexuality isn’t a solid thing, but Ramona doesn’t seem to know that. At least not until her very lesbian feelings are called into question when a childhood friend comes back into the picture. Ramona’s identity is in question, at least within her own mind, and Murphy’s book makes some gorgeous points about sexuality and desire.
- ***More Happy Than Not* – Adam Silvera**
Silvera is someone I would call a master of the queer/questioning segment of YA literature. The Leteo Institute can erase memories, and Aaron wants that solution for himself, especially since his father committed suicide. But when Thomas shows up on the scene, Aaron wonders about his relationship with his girlfriend and his own identity.
- ***Dress Codes for Small Towns* – Courtney C. Stevens**
Billie McCaffrey is trying to fit the mold of everyone in her community. She is considered “one of the guys” but she doesn’t like having any labels placed on her gender or sexuality. But when her family—particularly her father—gets involved, everyone starts to get complicated and confusing. Religion, sexuality, and gender expectations combine to create a fantastically multi-layered narrative.
- ***Two Boys Kissing* – David Levithan**
One of the most nuanced and complex novels from David Levithan, *Two Boys Kissing* explores the lives of a number of young men, surrounding the experience of two boys attempting to break the world record for longest kiss. Navigating sexuality, gender, hookups, relationships, and much more, Levithan’s narrative is a must-read.
- ***Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* – Benjamin Alire Sáenz**
Aristotle’s brother is in prison. Dante is a know-it-all. The two end up meeting one day at the swimming pool, and their lives slowly begin to intertwine. Over time, the two boys start to develop more than feelings of friendship for one another, and although their parents are supportive, the two young men still find themselves coming up against challenges in their community.
- ***Little & Lion* – Brandy Colbert**
Suzette comes back to LA after spending time at a boarding school in New England. She’s not sure if she truly wants to be back home, but she also doesn’t have much choice—her stepbrother needs her. When she finds herself falling for the same girl as her brother, Suzette is forced to deal with issues from her past that she was, until now, sure she had solved, but her brother’s depression brings a lot of things to the surface.

Non-Fiction Books for Middle Grades

- ***Gay & Lesbian History for Kids: The Century-Long Struggle for LGBT Rights* – Jerome Pohlen**
From Bayard Rustin to Alan Turing, from Harvey Milk to Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, Pohlen’s text chronicles the incredible lives of LGBT individuals throughout history. Furthermore, Pohlen’s book includes activities to get young readers thinking and allow them to find out more about LGBT people in significant events.
- ***Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community* – Robin Stevenson**
Do you know anything about Pride beyond the fact that there’s usually a parade? Do you know where it started or how many different ways it’s celebrated around the globe? *Pride* is Robin Stevenson’s contribution to an often-neglected discussion, especially among young people, but her book makes the subject accessible and relevant.
- ***Sex is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings, and YOU* – Cory Silverberg (Illus. Fiona Smyth)**
An essential comic-book style guide for children (ages 8 - 10) that looks at family makeup, gender identity, sexuality, and bodies. The book will help open up conversations with adults—parents, teachers, librarians—and will give child readers a space to explore their own bodies and identities in relation to those examined in the text.

Non-Fiction Books for Young Adults

- ***This Book is Gay* – James Dawson**
James Dawson (now Juno Dawson), is a former teacher and also an author of young adult fiction. Dawson’s book is an uncensored exploration of growing up within the LGBTQ spectrum, including personal testimonials, how-to guides, and topics ranging from sex and politics, to stereotypes, to coming out and dealing with family and peers.
- ***The ABCs of LGBT+* – Ashley Mardell**
Far more than a simple guide to coming out or defining sexual/gender identities, this book is a critical examination of stereotypes that also explores the slipperiness of categories. Mardell’s humor and wit also makes the book very accessible for a teen readership.
- ***Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition* – Katie Rain Hill (w/ Ariel Schrag)**
This memoir tells the story of Katie Rain Hill’s life up to the age of nineteen. Hill felt uncomfortable in her own skin and eventually came out as transgender. Upon meeting Arin Andrews, Hill’s life became much more public than she ever thought it would. A funny and powerful autobiographical text for young adults.
- ***Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen* – Arin Andrews (w/ Joshua Lyon)**
A companion memoir to *Rethinking Normal*, *Some Assembly Required* tells Andrews’ side of the story. After coming out as transgender at a young age, and meeting Katie Rain Hill for the first time, his life took a turn he never expected. Funny, thought-provoking, and detailed, this memoir will be a hit with young readers.
- ***Being Jazz* – Jazz Jennings**
Along with her parents, Jazz is an internationally recognized name in trans activism. Her social media presence and her memoir, have helped many parents and teens find their way forward into a new way of thinking and living.

Other Online Book Lists

[Annual ALA Rainbow List](#) [ERAC - LGBTQ](#) [BCTF - LGBTQ Resources](#) [Welcoming Schools - Books](#)

Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of available resources, but should be seen as a sample of materials that are acclaimed, timely, and varied in terms of representation—gender, sexuality, race, (dis)ability, religious affiliation, etc. The online sources provided are a space for further exploration.

This list of resources was compiled and annotated by Dr. Robert Bittner, a specialist in LGBTQ literature for children and youth. He has an MA in Children’s Literature from UBC and a PhD in Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies from SFU. Further reviews of a number of the listed texts can be found on his [blog](#).

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