

Great Gay Teen Books

This list is from Alex Sanchez' Web Site (<http://www.alexsanchez.com/>).
(books for younger readers were eliminated)



Below is a list of some of the best gay teen novels, poetry anthologies, and nonfiction books with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender characters and themes.

Recent releases include:

Bait, Alex Sanchez, Simon & Schuster.

Diego keeps getting into trouble because of his explosive temper until he finally finds a probation officer who helps him get to the root of his anger so that he can stop running from his past. Winner, 2009 Florida Book Award and 2010 Tomas Rivera Mexican-American Children's Book Award.

Boyfriends with Girlfriends, Alex Sanchez.

After meeting online, Sergio and Lance make a date to get together in person, bringing along their respective best friends, Kimiko and Allie. The first meeting is sweetly awkward, and while the boys hit it off all right, there's a problem. Sergio is bisexual, and Lance isn't sure he can handle that or whether he even believes it is possible to be attracted to both boys and girls. Actually, there are two problems. Kimiko is a lesbian and crushes on Allie who, though she has a devoted boyfriend, is questioning and finds herself increasingly attracted to her new friend. How will these four engaging kids resolve the mixed messages their hearts are sending to their brains?

Bullied, Jeff Erno.

Closeted Bryan wonders why Christian Michaelson doesn't just try to blend in if he hates being bullied so much. Star athlete David isn't a homophobe—after all, he's not afraid of anything. Jonathan, a Christian fundamentalist, must weigh the Bible against peer pressure and what he knows is right when he discovers his childhood friend is gay. Bully victim Chase Devereaux finds an unexpected ally in a brave fellow student.

Down to the Bone, Mayra Lazara Dole, HarperTeen. "When a nun at her Catholic school confiscates and reads aloud in class a note to Laura Amores from another girl, declaring her love, the teen is kicked out of her school and her home. Soon after, Laura's devoted girlfriend yields to family pressure and accepts a marriage proposal. Abandoned, heartbroken, and confused, Laura takes refuge with another friend and struggles to find a home and identity in both the straight and the gay world. Her story isn't uncommon in the queer-teen-lit canon, but Dole's infusion of lively, spicy Cuban-American culture set against a hot Miami setting makes it rise above other titles in the genre." (School Library Journal)

Dumb Jock, Jeff Erno.

Afforded the opportunity to assist the town's high school football hero Brett Willson, Jeff embarks upon the challenge of educating the world's dumbest jock. The ensuing relationship that develops between the two young men proves far more challenging, however, than any tutoring session. Their budding friendship helps bring Jeff out of his shell and reveals a much deeper side of the dumb jock.

Hit the Road, Manny: A Manny Files Novel, Christian Burch, Simon and Schuster (sequel to The Manny Files) When Dad parks a rented RV in the Dalinger's driveway, Keats piles in with the rest of his family -- and the Manny, of course -- bound for the open road. From the big skies of farm country to the bright lights of Las Vegas, this, in typical Manny fabulousness, is an all-American adventure filled with more Glamour-dos than Glamour-don'ts. But a stopover at the manny's childhood home is making the Manny feel not so fabulous. Why can't his parents ever accept him for who he is? And Keats, at first, sees their

point. Why does the manny always have to be so interesting?

How They Met & Other Stories, David Levithan, Knopf

18 stories, all about love, and about all kinds of love. From the aching for the one you pine for, to standing up and speaking up for the one you love, to pure joy and happiness, these love stories run the gamut of that emotion that at some point has turned every one of us inside out and upside down. What is love? With this original story collection, David Levithan proves that love is a many splendored thing, a varied, complicated, addictive, wonderful thing.

I am J, Cris Beam.

Growing up, J (born as Jennifer) always thought of himself as a boy stuck in the body of a girl.

My Invented Life, Lauren Bjorkman, Henry Holt

With Roz and Eva everything becomes a contest—who can snag the best role in the school play, have the cutest boyfriend, pull off the craziest prank. Still, they're as close as sisters can be. Until Eva deletes Roz from her life like so much junk e-mail for no reason that Roz understands. She has a suspicion about Eva. In turn, Eva taunts Roz with a dare, which leads to an act of total insanity in Lauren Bjorkman's hilarious debut novel.

Mousetraps, Pat Schmetz, Carolrhoda Books

Back in grade school, Maxie and Rick were best friends. Rick would design crazy inventions, and Maxie, the artistic one, would draw them. Then something terrible happened to Rick, and he vanished from her school and her life. Years later, he shows up at Maxie's high school. In some ways he's the same person she once knew. But in other ways - frightening ones - he's very, very different.

Nothing Pink, Mark Hardy, (Front Street Books). A tender story of first love set in late-1970s Virginia. Short yet forceful, moving and heartwarming.

Love & Lies: Marisol's Story, Ellen Wittlinger, Simon and Schuster

In this long-anticipated companion novel to the Printz Honor Book *Hard Love*, which critics called "A bittersweet tale of self-expression and the struggle to achieve self-love," Ellen Wittlinger offers a novel just as emotionally honest and deeply felt.

Out of the Pocket, Bill Konigsberg, Dutton

Star quarterback Bobby Framingham, one of the most talented high school football players in California, knows he's different from his teammates. They're like brothers, but they don't know one essential thing: Bobby is gay. Can he still be one of the guys and be honest about who he is? When he's outed against his will by a student reporter, Bobby must find a way to earn back his teammates' trust and accept that his path to success might be more public, and more difficult, than he'd hoped. An affecting novel about identity that also delivers great sportswriting.

Sprout, Dale Peck.

Sprout Bradford has a secret. It's not what you think—he'll tell you he's gay. He'll tell you about his dad's drinking and his mother's death. The green fingerprints everywhere tell you when he last dyed his hair. But neither the reader nor Sprout are prepared for what happens when Sprout suddenly finds he's had a more profound effect on the lives around him than he ever thought possible.

The Vast Fields of Ordinary, Nick Burd.

The story of Dade, a gay Midwestern teenager, whose journey of self-acceptance takes place during the summer before his first year of college. Dade grapples with coming out, his parents impending divorce, and his nascent sexual relationships.

What They Always Tell Us, Martin Wilson, Random House

James and Alex have barely anything in common anymore—least of all their experiences in high school, where James is a popular senior and Alex is suddenly an outcast. But at home, there is Henry, the precocious 10-year-old across the street, who eagerly befriends them both. And when Alex takes up running, there is James's friend Nathen, who unites the brothers in moving and unexpected ways.

Will Grayson, Will Grayson, John Green & David Levithan.

Will Grayson's best friend since fifth grade, nicknamed Tiny Cooper, is bigger than life in terms of his

physical stature and his personality—the "world's largest person who is really, really gay." Tiny, while seeking the boy of his dreams, has been through the trauma of myriad short-lived romantic relationships and Will has supported him each time his heart is broken. Now, Tiny decides it's Will's turn.

Below is a bibliography, compiled with the help of James Howe, author of *The Misfits* and *Totally Joe*. Thanks, Jim!

FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Absolutely Positively Not by David LaRochelle (Scholastic, 2005)

Steve is a 16 year old with two things on his mind: sex and getting his driving license. However, he's not thinking about girls when he's thinking about sex. Could he be gay?

Alt Ed by Catherine Atkins (Penguin Putnam Books, 2003)

Participating in a special after-school counseling class with other troubled students, including a sensitive gay classmate, helps Susan, an overweight tenth grader, develop a better sense of herself.

Am I Blue? Coming Out from the Silence, edited by Marion Dane Bauer (Harper)

A collection of short stories written by 16 respected young adult authors, this is an essential book to put in the hands of any teenager dealing with his or her own sexuality or having a gay parent or friend. The stories cover the gamut of "takes" on gayness. The title story by Bruce Coville tells of a gay teenage boy who receives a gift from Melvin, his "fairy godfather": For the boy's eyes only, Melvin turns every gay person blue for a day so that the boy can see he's not alone. What the boy discovers is that there are an amazing variety of shades of blue.

The Arizona Kid, by Ron Koertge

A straight teenage boy spends the summer living with his gay uncle in Arizona while working at a horse ranch and experiencing his first love relationship. The uncle's story is a backdrop to the boy's story, but it's very well handled, and the uncle is extremely likeable. At times, the messages about being gay, while strongly positive, are a little didactic. Koertge is an interesting writer who uses humor effectively.

Ash by Malinda Lo (Little, Brown and Company, 2009)

A new telling of the Cinderella story, Ash is left with her wicked stepmother and absorbed in grief over her father's death. The king's huntress takes the place of prince charming.

Athletic Shorts, by Chris Crutcher (Dell)

A short story collection, including two wonderful stories with gay themes and characters: "A Brief Moment in the Life of Angus Bethune," which tells the story of a fat teenage boy, the brunt of jokes in school, whose divorced parents are remarried – his father to a man and his mother to a woman; and, "In the Time I Get," the story of a high school athlete who must confront his own bigotry toward a gay man who is dying of AIDS. Many of Crutcher's novels and stories are sports-related, and are incredibly deep and insightful about the lives of teens. A must-read novel is *Staying Fat* for Sarah Byrnes.

Baby Be-Bop, by Francesca Lia Block (Harper)

Dirk McDonald, a 16-year-old boy living in Los Angeles, comes to terms with being gay after he receives surreal storytelling visitations. Like most of Block's works, this book combines gritty realism with fairy-tale elements; the ultimate messages are self-acceptance and finding love and family in your own way and in your own time. Other books in this series (overlapping characters) are *Weetzie Bat*, *Witch Baby*, *Cherokee Bat* and the *Goat Guys*, and *Missing Angel Juan*. All five books have been published in one trade paperback volume called *Dangerous Angels*. A collection of short stories by Block, *Girl Goddess #9*, has a wonderful story about a teenage boy telling his girlfriend he is gay called "Winnie and Cubby," originally published in *Am I Blue?* as "Winnie and Tommy." All of this author's books are highly recommended.

Bend, Don't Shatter: Poets on the Beginning of Desire

by T. Cole Rachel (Editor), Rita D. Costello (Editor) (Soft Skull)

This anthology navigates the rocky waters of teenage sexuality and confusion with insight, clarity, and understanding. The poems were written by adults who keenly remember the turmoil and excitement of their own adolescent sexual explorations but now have the perspective and sense of self that come with growing up.

The Bermudez Triangle, by Maureen Johnson (Razorbill)

Mel, Avery, and Nina--the Bermudez Triangle--have been inseparable girlfriends since childhood. Then, the summer before senior year, while Nina is at Stanford for a leadership institute, Mel and Avery realize that their feelings for each other may be more than friendship. Johnson deftly portrays Mel's struggle to come to grips with her homosexuality, Avery's confusion and uncertainty about hers, and Nina's hurt and frustration at being left out and losing the comfort of old routines. (from Booklist)

Between Mom and Jo by Julie Anne Peters (Little Brown & Co., 2006)

Nick's life spins into turmoil when his mother and her wife announce that they are separating.

Boy Meets Boy by [David Levithan](#) (Alfred A. Knopf)

A hilarious and delightful story about one teenager's sophomore year in a kind of utopia, where tolerance reigns and shame is banished. The world in which Paul lives is utterly devoid of homophobia. It's Paul's love life that's complicated.

Damned Strong Love by Lutz Van Dijk (Henry Holt)

Intense and heartbreaking, this novel is based on the true story of a love affair between a 16-year-old Polish boy whose brother is active in the resistance and a Nazi soldier.

Deliver Us From Evie, by M.E. Kerr (Harper)

16-year-old Parr Burrman and his family face some difficult times when word spreads through their rural Missouri town that his older sister is a lesbian, and she leaves the family farm to live with the daughter of the town's banker. 18-year-old Evie Burrman is one of the most inspiring lesbian characters in young adult fiction.

The Eagle Kite, by Paula Fox (Orchard)

The father of 13-year-old Liam Cormac has AIDS, and Liam's family cannot talk about it until Liam reveals a secret he has tried to deny ever since he saw his father embracing another man at the beach. The Eagle Kite has been praised for its perceptive, transcendent prose, honest portrayal of tangled emotional issues, and palpable dramatic tension. Fox is an outstanding writer for children and young adults. This is the only book of hers that deals with gay-related issues.

Earthshine, by Theresa Nelson (Orchard)

12-year-old Slim McGranahan watches over her father, a disarmingly charismatic man, as his struggles with AIDS reaches its climax. Slim lives with her father, Mack, and Mack's devoted companion and lover, Larry. One of the book's most important contributions to literature is the way it portrays the love and tenderness among the three members of the McGranahan household.

Empress of the World, by Sara Ryan (Puffin)

Nicola Lancaster is spending eight weeks at the Siegel Institute Summer Program for Gifted Youth, a hothouse of smart, articulate, intense teenagers. She soon falls in with Katrina, Isaac, Kevin . . . and Battle, a beautiful blonde dancer, and everything Nic isn't. The two become friends-and then, startlingly, more than friends. What do you do when you think you're attracted to guys, and then you meet a girl who steals your heart?

Fade to Black by Alex Flinn (HarperCollins, 2005)

Alex Crusan faces harassment and prejudice when it is discovered that he is HIV-positive.

From the Notebooks of Melanin Sun, by Jacqueline Woodson (Scholastic)

13-year-old Melanin Sun's comfortable, quiet life is shattered when his mother reveals she has fallen in love with a woman. Adding even greater dimension to this story is the fact that Melanin and his mother are black, while the woman his mother has fallen in love with is white. Wonderfully written, as are all of Woodson's books. While only a few of the author's books deal with gay or lesbian characters, almost all deal with issues of race.

Geography Club, by [Brent Hartinger](#) (Harper)

The novel is a fastpaced, funny, and trenchant portrait of contemporary teenagers who may not learn any actual geography in their latest school club, but who learn plenty about the treacherous social terrain of a typical American high school and the even more dangerous landscape of the human heart. Also, check out the sequels, ***The Order of the Poison Oak***, and ***Split Screen***.

Getting It, by Alex Sanchez (Simon & Schuster)

It's embarrassing enough that Carlos Amoroso is fifteen and the only virgin among his friends, but he's never even really kissed a girl. The object of Carlos's desire, Roxy Rodriguez, is popular and hot--and has no idea that Carlos is alive. But watching a TV show one night gives Carlos an idea: What if he got a makeover from Sal, the guy at school everyone thinks is gay? Asking Sal to do him a favor is harder than it seems, because Carlos is worried that if any of his friends see him with Sal, they'll think that he's gay too.

The God Box, by Alex Sanchez (Simon & Schuster)

High-school senior Paul has dated Angie since middle school, and they're good together: they have a lot of the same interests, like singing in their church choir, and being active in Bible club. But when a new boy, Manuel, transfers to their school, Paul has to rethink his life. Manuel is the first openly gay teen anyone in their small town has ever met, and yet he says he's also a committed Christian. Talking to Manuel makes Paul reconsider thoughts he has kept hidden, and listening to Manuel's interpretation of Biblical passages on homosexuality causes Paul to re-evaluate everything he believed. Manuel's outspokenness triggers dramatic consequences at school, culminating in a terrifying situation that leads Paul to take a stand.

Gravel Queen, by Tea Benduhn (Simon & Schuster)

There is a carefully constructed balance between Aurin and her friends Kenney and Fred. But when Neila joins their circle, Aurin realizes that she and Neila are becoming more than friends. Tea Benduhn looks at a teen making decisions about her future while trying not to lose her past.

Hard Love, by Ellen Wittlinger (Simon & Schuster)

This very hip, very contemporary novel set in the world of homemade zines (magazines) finds 16-year-old John "Gio" Galardi, Jr., falling in love with the amazing Marisol Guzman, a self-proclaimed Puerto Rican Cuban Yankee Lesbian. The two form an unlikely friendship based on zines, alienation, and dreams of escape. John questions his own sexuality as he struggles with his unrequited love for Marisol, who has no doubts at all about who she is. *Hard Love* is an absorbing book about loss, love, trust, family, transformation, and, interestingly, authorship.

"Hello, I Lied", by M.E. Kerr (Harper)

Summering in the Hamptons on the estate of a famous rock star, 17-year-old Lang tries to decide how to tell his longtime friends that he is gay, while struggling with an unexpected infatuation with a girl from France.

Hero, by Perry Moore (Hyperion)

A gay teen hero in a high-concept fantasy marks a significant expansion of GLBTQ literature into genres that reflect teens' diverse reading interests; given the mainstream popularity of comics-inspired tales, the average, ordinary, gay teen superhero who comes out and saves the world will raise cheers from within the GLBTQ community and beyond. (from Booklist)

The House You Pass on the Way, by Jacqueline Woodson (Delacorte Press)

When 14-year-old Staggerlee, the daughter of a racially mixed marriage, spends a summer with her cousin Trout (a girl), she finds herself attracted to Trout and catches a glimpse of her possible future self. This story of questioning one's sexual identity is sensitively told and extremely moving.

If You Believe in Mermaids... Don't Tell by A.A. Philips

A deft portrayal of a pre-teen boy trying to keep secret his love of dolls, mermaids, and dressing in girl's clothes because of his father's stern wish for him to be "manly." Check out: <http://www.believeinmermaids.net>

Jack, by A.M. Homes (Random House/Vintage)

15-year-old Jack's confused feelings for his father, who left him and his mother four years earlier, are further complicated when he finds that his father is gay. Critics have described the protagonist as a doggedly funny, endearing, and attractive human being. Each of the gay characters is portrayed as an individual, and Jack's father is a multidimensional person who is trying to do his best to be a good parent.

Keeping You a Secret, by [Julie Anne Peters](#) (Little Brown)

"Not just a gay love story, this book transcends barriers, allowing readers of all persuasions to revel in its universal truths about self-knowledge, acceptance, pride, and the hardships of wrestling with the perceptions and comfort of others..." - Voice of Youth Advocates - Also, check out her novel about a transgender teen, ***Luna***, a National Book Award finalist!

Kissing Kate, by Lauren Myracle (Dutton)

Lissa thought that she and Kate, her beautiful and charismatic best friend, would always be close. Then one summer night Kate kissed Lissa-and Lissa kissed her back. With with a keen sense of humor, a flaky new friend, and a book on lucid dreams, Lissa finds the bravery to examine her own desires and discovers that falling in love can be one way of finding your footing.

Night Kites, by M.E. Kerr (Harper)

Night Kites is the first young adult novel about AIDS, written in 1985 before there was much information available about the disease. Interestingly, it is still one of the best books available. 17-year-old Erick Rudd tells the story of how his family reacts when they find out about his older brother Pete's homosexuality and debilitating illness at the same time.

Love and Sex, Ten Stories of Truth, edited by Michael Cart (Simon & Schuster)

A groundbreaking volume in which some of the finest writers for adults and teens have contributed original stories on the various aspects of love and sexuality. Three of the stories are gay-related.

The Man Without a Face, by Isabelle Holland (Harper)

A fatherless 14-year-old boy develops an unusual relationship with the man living near his summer home who helps him prepare his entrance exams to boarding school. This is a wrenching story, beautifully written. The man, who is badly scarred, reveals a secret to the boy – a secret that was completely disregarded in the otherwise excellent movie adaptation starring Mel Gibson.

The Misfits, by James Howe (Atheneum/Simon & Schuster)

Set in the seventh grade, this novel is for older elementary as well as middle school and early high school age readers. Among the four misfits of the title is Joe Bunch, who at twelve knows he's gay and figures it's up to the rest of the world to deal. Having always been somewhat outrageous, he's used to being called "faggot" and "fairy." What he isn't used to is his growing desire to have a boyfriend at a time when others around him are beginning to date. With the three other "misfits", Joe forms a political party to end name-calling in his school.

My Father's Scar, by Michael Cart (Simon & Schuster)

During his freshman year of college, as he enters into his first relationship as a gay man, Andy Logan reflects on his early years with an abusive, alcoholic father, an ineffectual mother, and a cruel grandmother in a bigoted community in the 1960s. The important theme of healing from unforgivable humiliation and pain is handled beautifully. A heartrending book.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower, by Stephen Chbosky (MTV/Pocket Books)

15-year-old Charlie talks about his life in a series of letters to an unnamed recipient. An outcast, Charlie finds refuge in a group of older teens who take him under their wing. Included in the group is a boy who is gay and having his first love relationship with a closeted fellow student. Charlie's story is wonderfully told and incredibly compelling. This book is a "crossover" book for the adult and young adult market.

On the Fringe, edited by Donald R. Gallo (Dial)

"Standing on the Roof Naked" by Frances Lantz, the story of a gender-different teenage girl, is a standout in this excellent collection by eleven critically acclaimed young adult writers dealing with the outsider experience.

Out of the Shadows, by Sue Hines (Avon)

In this first novel by Australian author Sue Hines, two teenagers struggle to maintain their friendship while hiding secrets they fear will destroy their connection. Rowanna Preston, whose mother was recently killed by a drunken driver, is living with Deb, her mother's lover. Jodie Waters, a new student, is not only in the closet about her sexual identity but also hiding her attraction to Ro. A fascinating book in that one of its main characters must come to terms not only with her feelings about her mother's sexual identity but her best friend's as well.

Parrotfish, by Ellen Wittlinger (Simon & Schuster)

Angela Katz-McNair has never felt quite right as a girl. Her whole life is leading up to the day she decides to become Grady, a guy. While coming out as transgendered feels right to Grady, he isn't prepared for the reaction he gets from everyone else. His mother is upset, his younger sister is mortified, and his best friend, Eve, won't acknowledge him in public. Why can't people just let Grady be himself?

Prejudice : Stories about Hate, Ignorance, Revelation, and Transformation, edited by Daphne Muse (Hyperion)

This is an uneven collection of stories and excerpts from longer works, but it contains two outstanding short stories:

"A Brief Moment in the Life of Angus Bethune," by Chris Crutcher (See: Athletic Shorts, above), and "X: A Fabulous Child's Story," by Lois Gould, a fable about a child whose gender is unknown. The child is simply referred to as "X".

Rainbow Boys, by Alex Sanchez (Simon and Schuster)

A love triangle between three teenage boys, each at a different stage of coming out. 17-year-old basketball player Jason Carillo has a girlfriend, but he dreams about guys. When he finally musters enough courage to attend a local meeting for gay teens, he is shocked to find two of his classmates there – the flamboyant Nelson "Nelly" Glassman (who everyone at school knows is gay) and quiet, shy Kyle Meeks, who looks too "normal" to be gay. This novel is very contemporary with its references to GSAs, safe sex, and teen support groups. Dealing frankly with the sex lives (or lack thereof) of its characters, this book will appeal to kids who want an honest look at what it is to be a gay teen today.

Rainbow High, by Alex Sanchez (Simon and Schuster)

Second book of the Rainbow trilogy. As their high school days draw to a close, three friends move toward one of life's most defining crossroads, each will be compelled to choose his own direction -- and prepare for the consequences.

Rainbow Road, by Alex Sanchez (Simon and Schuster)

Conclusion of the Rainbow trilogy. During an eye-opening post-graduation summer road trip, Jason, Kyle, and Nelson, each also embarks on a personal journey across a landscape of love, sexuality, homophobia, and above all, friendship.

Razzle, by Ellen Wittlinger (Simon & Schuster)

Razzle Penney, an oddball teen who works at the town dump, befriends Ken Baker when he and his parents first move to Cape Cod. While none of the adolescent characters are gay, there are gay secondary adult characters.

A Secret Edge by [Robin Reardon](#) (Kensington)

In many ways, Jason Peele is like any other teenager. He hits the books, hangs with his friends, flirts with girls, and omits the full truth of his life from his Aunt Audrey and Uncle Steve, who've raised him since his parents died. But there's one way that Jason is very different: when he dreams at night, it isn't about girls; it's about David Bowie. At sixteen years old, Jason is just beginning to understand that he might be gay.

So Hard to Say, by Alex Sanchez (Simon and Schuster)

Frederick is the shy new boy and Xio is the bubbly chica who lends him a pen on the first day of class. They become fast friends-but when Xio decides she wants to be more than friends, Frederick isn't so sure. He loves hanging out with Xio and her crew, but he doesn't like her *that way*.

Thinking Straight by [Robin Reardon](#) (Kensington)

Taylor Adams is shipped off to Straight to God, an institution devoted to "deprogramming" troubled teenagers of their vices—whether those vices are drugs, violence, or, in Taylor's case, other boys. Every movement is monitored, privacy is impossible, and no one is quite who they first appear to be. Here, Taylor will learn more than he ever dreamed about love, courage, rebellion, and betrayal. But the most surprising lessons will be the truths he uncovers about himself.

Totally Joe by James Howe (Simon & Schuster)

As a school assignment, a thirteen-year-old boy writes an alphabiography--life from A to Z--and explores issues of friendship, family, school, and the challenges of being a gay teenager. (An awesome sequel to James Howe's *The Misfits*.)

Unlived Affections, by George Shannon (Alyson)

At his grandmother's death, 18-year-old Willie finds a box of old letters that explain many family secrets – including the truth about the father, presumed dead, he has never known. Publishers Weekly said, "Shannon explores how two young men of different generations struggle to find their identities."

Unfinished Dreams, by Jane Breskin Zalben (Simon & Schuster)

Jason Glass, a sixth-grader, deals with his feelings of being different because of his musical talent, while contending with the revelation that his school principal and mentor, Mr. Carr, has AIDS. As some in the community turn against the much-loved principal, Jason finds his own strength – and learns to hold on to unfinished dreams. A beautifully written book appropriate to younger readers as well as older teens. (The publisher has it aged 10 and up.)

What's in a Name, by Ellen Wittlinger (Simon & Schuster)

In ten interlocking stories, the author addresses the rarely discussed issues of class and identity that inform so much of teenage life. As the citizens of Scrub Harbor struggle with whether or not to change the name of their town, the high schoolers whose stories make up *What's in a Name* struggle with their own lives and the ways in which they see themselves and are seen. In two of the stories, O'Neill and his older football-playing brother Quincy must deal with O'Neill's decision to out himself in a poem published in the school newspaper.

Also of interest:

(Note: Some titles may be out of print.)

If It Doesn't Kill You, by Margaret Bechard (Viking)

Entries from a Hot Pink Notebook, by Todd D. Brown (Pocket Books)

Dance on my Grave, by Aidan Chambers (Harper)

My Brother Has AIDS, by Deborah Davis (Atheneum/Simon & Schuster)

Dive, by Stacey Donovan (Dutton/Puffin)

When Heroes Die, by Penny Raife Durant (Aladdin/Simon & Schuster)

Crush, by Jane Fatcher (Alyson)

Desire Lines, by Jack Gantos (Farrar Straus & Giroux)

Annie on My Mind, by Nancy Garden (Farrar Straus & Giroux)

Good Moon Rising, by Nancy Garden (Farrar Straus & Giroux)

Holly's Secret, by Nancy Garden (Farrar Straus & Giroux)

Lark in the Morning, by Nancy Garden (Farrar Straus & Giroux)

The Year They Burned the Books, by Nancy Garden (Farrar Straus & Giroux)

The Drowning of Stephan Jones, by Bette Green (Bantam)

Breaking Boxes, by A.M. Jenkins (Dell Laurel-Leaf)

Blue Coyote, by Liza Ketchum (Simon & Schuster)

Twelve Days in August, by Liza Ketchum Murrow (Avon)

Love Rules, by Marilyn Reynolds (Morning Glory Press)

Empress of the World, by Sara Ryan (Viking)

Trying Hard to Hear You, by Sandra Scoppettone (Alyson)

The Blue Lawn, by William Taylor (Alyson)

Jerome, by William Taylor (Alyson)

Peter, by Kate Walker (Houghton Mifflin)

True Believer, by Virginia Euwer Wolff

YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION

Being Different : Lambda Youths Speak Out, by Larry Dane Brimner (Watts)

Writer Larry Dan Brimner explores teenage homosexuality by interviewing gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths.

Full Spectrum: A New Generation of Writing about Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Other Identities

by [David Levithan](#) (Editor), Billy Merrell (Editor) (Random House)

Original poems, essays, and stories by young adults in their teens and early 20s. The book includes a variety of writers--gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, transitioning, and questioning--on a variety of subjects: coming out, family, friendship, religion/faith, first kisses, break-ups, and many others. This one of a kind collection will, perhaps, help all readers see themselves and the world around them in ways they might never have imagined.

GLBTQ: The Survival Guide for Queer and Questioning Teens

by Kelly Huegel (Free Spirit Publishing)

A frank, sensitive non-fiction guide written for teens who are beginning to question their sexual or gender identity, those who interested in GLBT issues and rights, and those who need guidance, reassurance, or reminders that they aren't alone.

Hearing Us Out : Voices from the Gay and Lesbian Community, by Roger Sutton (Little, Brown)

Interviews with gay and lesbian teenagers and adults, this book provides varied role models and in the words of the Horn Book review, "breaks down stereotypes and gives human faces to a topic that needs yet greater visibility in young-adult literature."

Out of the Ordinary : Essays on Growing Up with Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Parents, edited by Noelle Howey and Ellen Samuels (St. Martin's Press)

A collection of essays by the grown children of lesbian, gay, and transgender parents. The essays touch on some of the most important and complicated issues facing them: dealing with a parent's sexuality while developing an identity of one's own; overcoming homophobia at school and at family or social gatherings; and defining the modern family.

Outspoken : Role Models from the Lesbian and Gay Community, by Michael Thomas Ford (Beech Tree)

The vitality and rich diversity of the lesbian and gay community are vividly reflected in this collection of interviews with eleven out lesbians and gay men. These leaders from such fields as medicine, the arts, sports, law enforcement, and religion not only offer inspiration but also speak, again and again, of the rewards of becoming the person you want to be.

The Shared Heart : Portraits and Stories Celebrating Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young People.

Photographs by Adam Mastoon (HarperCollins)

In this outstanding collection of photographs and personal narratives, forty young people share their thoughts and experiences about family, friends, culture, and coming out. Their writings reflect the soul searching, pain, and transformation they have undergone. If there's one theme that comes through loud and clear, it's the importance of coming out as a step toward liking oneself and being free. A great book to put in the hands of any teen struggling with sexual identity issues.

Transparent: Love, Family, and Living the T with Transgender Teenagers by Cris Beam (Harcourt)

When Chris Beam first moved to LA, she thought she might put in a few hours volunteering at a school for gay and transgender kids while she got herself settled. Instead, she found herself drawn deeply into the pained and powerful group of trans girls she discovered. Beam's astute reporting, sensitive writing, and passionate engagement with her characters place *Transparent* among the very best narrative nonfiction.

What if Someone I Know Is Gay? Answers to Questions about Gay and Lesbian People, by Eric Marcus (Price Stern Sloan)

Author Eric Marcus (Is It a Choice?) candidly answers real questions from real teenagers about everything from sex to religion. He pushes aside all the myths and misinformation to help kids understand what being gay is really all about. If *Am I Blue?* is the fiction must-read, this book is the nonfiction book to put in the hands of all kids, to answer questions and prompt discussion.

MEMOIRS

Queer 13 : Lesbian and Gay Writers Recall Seventh Grade, edited by Clifford Chase (Morrow)

Published for the adult market, this collection of original essays captures that time of adolescence when social and sexual development is at its raging worst.

A Boy Named Phyllis, by Frank DeCaro (Penguin)

Also published for the adult market, this hilarious memoir tells what it's like to grow up gay in suburban New Jersey. The author has a very positive self-image.

Reflections of a Rock Lobster : A Story about Growing Up Gay, by Aaron Fricke (Alyson)

Aaron Fricke made national news by taking a male date to his high school prom. Published in 1981, this

book is his story, told with insight and humor, about developing a positive gay identity in spite of the prejudice around him.

Telling Tales Out of School, edited by Kevin Jennings (Alyson)

A collection of over thirty personal memoirs, in which gays, lesbians, and bisexuals look back at their school days. Essential reading, and a great companion book to *Queer 13*, edited by the executive director of the national Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN).

Pedro and Me : Friendship, Loss, and What I Learned, a graphic novel by Judd Winick (Henry Holt)
This is a remarkable book that will speak directly to today's teenagers. Winick, who is straight, recalls his close friendship with Pedro Zamora, the HIV-positive AIDS educator who was his roommate while both appeared on MTV's *The Real World*.

MIDDLE-GRADE NOVELS

The Skull of Truth, by Bruce Coville (Pocket Books)

This book is part of a fantasy series ("A Magic Shop Book"). In this story, young Charlie Eggleston becomes the owner of a "skull of truth," which forces him to tell the truth at all times. What's interesting – and highly unusual – in this novel is the appearance of a closeted, gay uncle, a secondary character who comes out of the closet in the course of the story, forcing Charlie to deal with his feelings about his beloved uncle's homosexuality.

Alice on the Outside and ***Alice Alone*** by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (Atheneum / Simon & Schuster)

Part of the immensely popular Alice series, these two books include secondary female characters in eighth and ninth grade questioning their sexuality. While these books might qualify as young adult novels, the entire series is read voraciously by upper elementary school age girls, so is included here.

Gay characters and themes are very rare in middle-grade novels, which are usually aged from 8-12. The above books are not "about" homosexuality, but deal with it seriously and intelligently while remaining light-hearted "reads." The following books DO deal with it forthrightly.

So Hard to Say, by Alex Sanchez (Simon and Schuster)

The Lambda award-winning middle-grade novel about a 13 year-old boy coming to terms with being gay and the girl who has a crush on him.

Totally Joe by James Howe (Simon & Schuster)

The humorous and heart-warming story of a totally out, totally loveable 13 year-old.

REFERENCE

Lesbian and Gay Voices : An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Literature for Children and Young Adults, by Frances Ann Day (Greenwood Press)