

**WHOSE BOOK IS IT ANYWAY?**  
MATERIAL FOR TRANS, GENDERQUEER, AND NON-BINARY YOUTH

DR. ROBERT BITTNER  
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
ROBERT@SFU.CA  
@R\_BITTNER

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**WHAT TRANS/GENDERQUEER BOOKS DO YOU KNOW?**  
**WHO DO YOU THINK—OR KNOW—IS READING THEM?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**KNOW THE BOOKS**

none of the above  
I. W. BRIGGIO

IF I WAS YOUR GIRL  
MEREDITH RUSSO

MAGIUS CHASC  
THE GOOD & EVIL  
THE HEROES OF TRUTH

DRAG TEEN  
JEFFERY SEAF

---

---

---

---


---

---


---

---


## KNOW THE BOOKS




AT THE EDGE OF THE UNIVERSE  
ALEX GINO



JAMES & JAMES  
*Frank & How*



GEORGE  
ALEX GINO



Lizard Boy  
PAT SCHMATZ

---

---

---

---

---


---

---


---

## KNOW THE BOOKS


"In fiction, a narrative has come forth that centers on a cisgender character "learning to accept" a transgender character. I call this the "acceptance" narrative - emphasis on the quotation marks. In the past decade or so, this narrative has emerged in YA literature. (*Lunaby* Julie Anne Peters, *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher, and *Jumpstart the World* by Catherine Ryan Hyde.)"



ALMOST PERFECT  
BRIAN KATCHER



JUMPSTART THE WORLD  
CATHERINE RYAN HYDE



LUNA  
JULIE ANNE PETERS

(See, [gayYA.org](http://gayYA.org))

See "The Acceptance Narrative in Trans YA," [gayYA.org](http://gayYA.org)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Acceptance Narrative

- Cisgender character encounters a trans character
- Cisgender character is transphobic and freaks out
- Cisgender character is thrown repetitively into situations with the trans character
- The cisgender character does terrible things to the trans character, feels slightly bad about it.
- The cisgender character thinks awful things about the trans character, feels slightly bad about it.
- Something horrible happens to the transgender character
- The cisgender character realizes the error of their ways and now understands that they shouldn't be mean to trans people
- Bittersweet ending where the cis character comes to love the trans character, but the trans character has to leave.
- While leaving, the transgender character typically thanks or forgives the cis character

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## KNOW THE BOOKS

"If you remove the character's trans status, this is a typical "hero's journey. Replace "presenting as true gender" with "starting the quest" and "assault" with "the final battle" and you're good to go.... The narrative is supposed to be one that anyone can relate to, on some level.... So, in theory, that's good, right? A trans character gets to be the main character in a book with this typical hero arc! Yay! Progress! Well, not so much."

(Vee, [gayYA](#))



See 5. "The Hero's Journey in Trans YA" [gayYA.org](#)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Hero's Journey

- The book begins, and the trans character is ashamed of themselves/their body.
- Character starts to come out or to express their gender (sometimes the character is already out at the beginning, sometimes not)
- This is met with some adversity and some support (at least one parent is definitely unsupportive)
- Character pushes through, meets new friends, things are starting to look better
- The character is outed, then physically and/or sexually assaulted
- Character is upset, but doesn't suffer any severe mental/emotional trauma
- Character realizes all they ever had to do was believe in themselves and the rest of the world would love/respect them
- Character looks daringly off into the hard but hopeful future

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## WHAT'S THE MAKEUP OF YOUR COMMUNITY?

### HOW DOES YOUR LIBRARY CATER TO LGBT/NON-CONFORMING POPULATIONS?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## WORDS OF WISDOM

(FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## LIBRARIANS

- "LGBT people and their families and friends *are* using your library. Period. So their voices and stories matter. And content that's helpful and easy to locate matters." (Dale McNeill)
- "First of all I would say that [you] have to buy widely in the subject. The books can be included in any and all displays and catalogued so they can be found. Multiple copies of books are needed. Also ... read the books so [you] can talk about them." (Ken Setterington)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## LIBRARIANS

- "My pitch is always this: Is this not why you got into librarianship? Was it for the money or the fame or the red carpet? Or was it because you believed that books could help kids, could be a way forward, could MEAN something? Isn't that why? So if that's why, then you have a responsibility to DO HARD THINGS and make the way for them, even if you have to fight for it, even if you have to work at it. That's why you're here, right?" (Angie Manfredi)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## SCHOLARS

- "You might just be the only adult that a young person feels safe asking for information or support (of various kinds): Take that seriously, but don't forget that it's not about you." (Dr. Erica Hatley)
- "Be the advocate who listens to understand rather than the one who listens to respond. I've found this to be the heart of serving LGBTQIA+ youth." (Jenna Nemeć-Loise)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## AUTHORS

- "Don't have a separate area for books with 'content.' That tells kids who have life experiences similar to the sequestered books that they aren't fit for regular society. It's extremely damaging." (Martha Brockenbrough)
- "In many instances, [the library] is the one non-judgmental place that opens their world beyond their scope of knowledge, and lets them know life is worth living another day." (Samantha Berger)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

- Shelving together makes sense, to me, when many people are asking everyday, often in "gayborhoods".
- Stickers (rainbow flag is a favorite) make sense if the community being served understands and values them.
- Subject headings matter a great deal when the community served uses the catalog (I got "queers--fiction" added to a catalog in the mid-1990's, as so many self-identified "queer kids" were failing to find themselves in the catalog and were complaining about it.)

(Dale McNeill)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---