

FAMILY MEDIA/BOOKS

18 Books for Kids That Feature LGBTQ Characters

Awesome books to read with kids during Pride Month (and every month)

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Our kids are growing up in a world where expressions of gender and sexuality are much more free — and more complicated — than the world we parents grew up in. But no matter how much times change, families can still rely on the windows and mirrors of books to help make sense of our world. To help your family celebrate the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities this Pride Month, we've gathered a few age-appropriate books that portray the many and varied aspects of the LGBTQ experience.

Picture books

“Julián is a Mermaid”



https://www.amazon.com/Juli%C3%A1n-Mermaid-Jessica-Love/dp/0763690457/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20
Photo credit: Amazon

(https://www.amazon.com/Juli%C3%A1n-Mermaid-Jessica-Love/dp/0763690457/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Jessica Love

In a gentle story told more through pictures than words, young Julián dresses up like a mermaid after seeing women in fancy costumes on the subway. There is a moment of tension – how will his abuela react? But in this sweet story, his grandma adds to his costume and takes him to a parade where everyone is a mermaid “like you, mijo.” In a new sequel, “Julián at the Wedding,” Julián makes a new friend at the wedding of two women.

“And Tango Makes Three (https://www.amazon.com/Tango-Makes-Three-Justin-Richardson/dp/0689878451/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, illustrated by Henry Cole

A classic of LGBTQ children’s literature, “And Tango Makes Three” is a gentle book based on the true story of two male penguins at the Central Park Zoo who raised a young penguin from an egg. Using familiar images and concepts of love and tolerance, it weaves adoption and community into a story that celebrates a different kind of family.

“Leo and the Pink Marker (https://www.amazon.com/Leo-Pink-Marker-Mariyka-Foster/dp/1682636909/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Mariyka Foster

In this new picture book celebrating family, creativity and color reminiscent of “Harold and the Purple Crayon,” Leo uses his favorite pink marker to liven things up when Mom and Mama aren’t looking.

“Worm Loves Worm”



(https://www.amazon.com/Leo-Pink-Marker-Mariyka-Foster/dp/1682636909/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)
Photo credit: Amazon

(https://www.amazon.com/Worm-Loves-J-Austrian/dp/0062386336/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by J.J. Austrian, illustrated by Mike Curato

“Worm Loves Worm” shows that a wedding isn’t nearly as important as the love it commemorates. Parents can use it to start a conversation about same-sex marriage, wedding celebrations generally, and even as an example of how creativity, individuality and unconventionality can enhance special events.

“I Am Jazz”



(https://www.amazon.com/I-Am-Jazz-Jessica-Herthel/dp/0803741073/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)
Photo credit: Amazon

(https://www.amazon.com/I-Am-Jazz-Jessica-Herthel/dp/0803741073/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings, illustrated by Shelagh McNicholas

“I Am Jazz” is an autobiographical picture book about Jazz Jennings, who has “a girl brain but a boy body.” She tells her story as a transgender child who copes with challenges and teasing with a supportive family and good friends.

“Harper Becomes a Big Sister (https://www.amazon.com/Harper-Becomes-Sister-Seamus-Kirst/dp/1433843145/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Seamus Kirst, illustrated by Karen Bunting

Picture books that help young children prepare for the arrival of a sibling make up their own genre. In this one, Harper is excited for the arrival of her new baby brother when Dad and Daddy decide to adopt. A sequel due out in September, “Real Siblings” shows siblings Harper and Wyatt as they figure out what it means to be related by adoption.

Middle grade books

“Almost Flying



https://www.amazon.com/Almost-Flying-Jake-Maia-Arlow/dp/0593112946/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20
Photo credit: Amazon

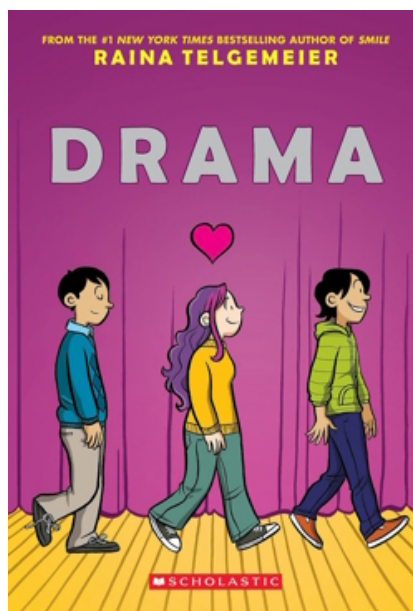
(https://www.amazon.com/Almost-Flying-Jake-Maia-Arlow/dp/0593112946/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Jake Maia Arlow

Dalia’s week-long amusement park road trip with her new stepsister turns into an emotional roller coaster when the stepsister’s girlfriend comes along and when Dalia realizes she has more-than-friend feelings for her own new bestie.

“Melissa (https://www.amazon.com/Melissa-formerly-published-as-GEORGE/dp/1338843419/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Alex Gino

When people look at fourth-grader George, they think they see a boy. But she knows she’s really a girl, and she really wants to play the famous spider Charlotte in the class play. With the help of best friend Kelly, she comes up with a plan in this book that illustrates what it means to be transgender and how to be an ally.

“Drama



(https://www.amazon.com/Drama-Graphic-Novel-Raina-Telgemeier/dp/1338801899/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)

Photo credit: Amazon

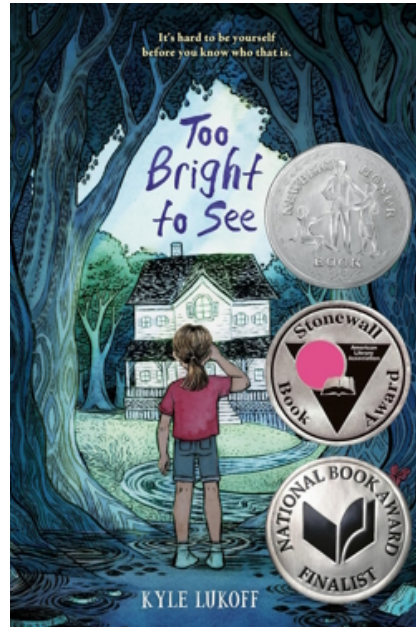
(https://www.amazon.com/Drama-Graphic-Novel-Raina-Telgemeier/dp/1338801899/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Raina Telgemeier

“Drama” is a graphic novel set backstage of a middle school musical. Humorous and relatable, the story deals with major middle school issues: teamwork, crushes and defining one’s sexuality.

“Rabbit Chase (https://www.amazon.com/Rabbit-Chase-Elizabeth-Lapensee/dp/1773216198/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Elizabeth LaPensee, illustrated by KC Oster

Another graphic novel, “Rabbit Chase” combines Anishinaabe culture with “Alice in Wonderland” to explore Indigenous and gender issues in a story about nonbinary middle schooler Aiñe, who finds themselves transported to an alternate dimension populated by traditional Anishinaabe characters.

“Too Bright to See



https://www.amazon.com/Too-Bright-See-Kyle-Lukoff/dp/0593111176/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20
Photo credit: Amazon

(https://www.amazon.com/Too-Bright-See-Kyle-Lukoff/dp/0593111176/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Kyle Lukoff

The summer before middle school, Bug’s best friend Moira starts getting serious about “girl stuff” while Bug is not so interested. Bug is much more intrigued by the ghost haunting Bug’s old house in rural Vermont ... or maybe it’s haunting Bug in particular, with a message about gender identity.

“The Beautiful Something Else (https://www.amazon.com/Beautiful-Something-Else-Ash-Otterloo/dp/1338843222/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Ash Van Otterloo

When Sparrow’s mother is sent to rehab, Sparrow goes to live in a commune with her estranged aunt. In this new environment where it’s no longer necessary to walk on eggshells, Sparrow begins to embrace their true gender identity.

Tween/young adult

“When the Angels Left the Old Country.”



https://www.amazon.com/When-Angels-Left-Old-Country-ebook/dp/B0BJPM6RP7/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20
Photo credit: Amazon

(https://www.amazon.com/When-Angels-Left-Old-Country-ebook/dp/B0BJPM6RP7/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Sacha Lamb

This queer immigrant fairytale is about individual purpose, the fluid nature of identity, and the power of love to change and endure. “When the Angels Left the Old Country” follows an angel and a demon as they leave their shtetl to follow a lost young emigrant.

“Better Nate Than Ever (https://www.amazon.com/Better-Nate-Than-Ever-Federle/dp/1534429131/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Tim Federle

This is a story of a boy with a goal: to audition for a Broadway musical. He is less certain about his sexuality (in his words, it is still “undecided”) but he’s routinely bullied for being gay and shows some interest in boys. Nate has some things to feel guilty about – lying, taking his mom’s ATM card – and his family has some serious problems to deal with, but the book keeps a charming and positive energy.

“My Mixed-Up Berry Blue Summer (https://www.amazon.com/My-Mixed-Up-Berry-Blue-Summer/dp/0547577397/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Jennifer Gennari

“My Mixed-Up Berry Blue Summer” deals with prejudice head on. June is uncomfortable with the negative attention she receives because of her mother’s engagement to her girlfriend. June gets bullied by older boys, and her family is targeted by locals. It includes some anti-gay slurs, and some townspeople who trot out offensive old stereotypes, but ultimately, June stands by her family.

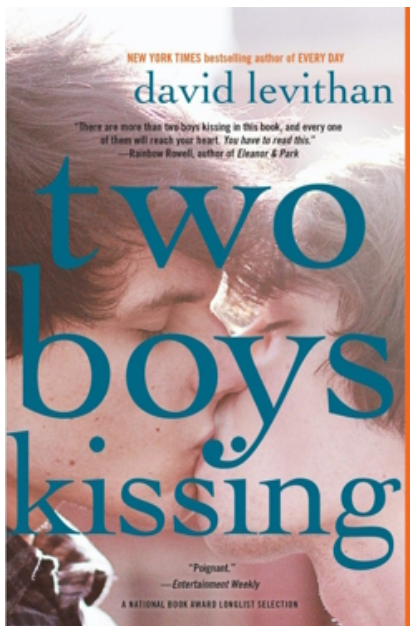
“Addie on the Inside



(https://www.amazon.com/My-Mixed-Up-Berry-Blue-Summer/dp/0547577397/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)
Photo credit: Amazon

(https://www.amazon.com/Addie-Inside-Misfits-James-Howe/dp/1416913858/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by James Howe

This poetic companion to “The Misfits” and “Totally Joe” deals with slightly offbeat kids trying to fit in. This time, it’s 13-year-old Addie, who faces turmoil and confusion as she learns how to stay true to herself in the face of middle school struggles juxtaposed with global atrocities. Addie helps organize the Gay-Straight Alliance in support of her openly gay friends and dares to hold a Day of Silence even when it’s nixed by the principal.



(https://www.amazon.com/Two-Boys-Kissing-David-Levithan/dp/0307931919/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)
Photo credit: Amazon

“Two Boys Kissing (https://www.amazon.com/Two-Boys-Kissing-David-Levithan/dp/0307931919/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by David Levithan

Full of intense feelings and narrated by the spirits of gay ancestors from previous generations, “Two Boys Kissing” weaves among the lives of several contemporary gay teens and an attempt to break the world’s record for the longest kiss.

“Blackward (https://www.amazon.com/Blackward-Lawrence-Lindell/dp/1770466789/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&tag=parentmap-20)” by Lawrence Lindell

In this graphic novel, four bookish BFFs can’t find a spot to chill and chat with other nerdy, queer punks. So, they put out a call for awkward Black folks to come down to the community center and connect. They made a space where they can be themselves, but can they pull off the Blackward Zinefest in the face of low turnout and IRL trolls?

Looking for more great Pride reading? Check out these resources:

The American Psychological Association’s Rainbow Collection (<https://go.maginationpress.org/rainbow-collection/>) publishes books for kids and teens that uplift LGBTQ voices and promote inclusive school and family values.

Each year in June, Lamda Literary (<https://lambdaliterary.org/>) presents the Lammy Awards for outstanding LGBTQ storytelling across multiple age groups and genres.

The annual Stonewall Book Awards (<https://www.ala.org/rt/rrt/award/stonewall/honored>) for exceptional merit include books for both kids and parents.

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