

# **A Curated List of SOGI-Inclusive Books for K-12 Schools**



## ***Picture Books to Discuss Family Diversity***

- **Donavan's Big Day** – Lesléa Newman (Illus. Mike Dutton) 2011  
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 and discuss whether this is still surprising to them.
- **A Family is a Family is a Family [Une famille... c'est une famille]** – Sara O'Leary (Illus. Qin Leng) 2016  
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.
- **A Plan for Pops [Une idée pour Papi]** – Heather Smith (Illus. Brooke Kerrigan) 2019  
A positive and empowering book that inspires children to learn how to handle challenges and help others. The bond between child and loving, interracial gay male grandparents is warm, palpable, and uplifting.
- **Stella Brings the Family** – Miriam B. Schiffer (Illus. Holly Clifton-Brown) 2015  
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 how her family works, including the fact that she has a whole bunch of extended family looking out for her.
- **Our Subway Baby** – Peter Mercurio (Illus. Leo Espinosa) 2020  
Muted colors and soft illustrations help to tell the story of an infant abandoned in a New York City subway station and the two men who adopted him.
- **Mama and Mommy and Me in the Middle** – Nina LaCour (Illus. Kaylani Juanita) 2022  
When a little girl's Mommy goes away for a work trip, her Mama does her best to keep them both busy. When Mommy returns, the little girl needs a minute to shake off the feelings of emptiness before things can go back to normal. This is a beautifully illustrated book that explores family, connection, absence, and reunions.

## ***Picture Books to Discuss LGBTQ+ History***

- **'Twas the Night Before Pride** – Joanna McClintick (Illus. Juana Medina) 2022  
A boldly illustrated and celebratory exploration of queer families, LGBTQ+ history—including the Stonewall riots, the fight for marriage equality, and the AIDS marches—and the excitement of Pride Parades, told through delightful rhyming text.
- **This Day in June** – Gayle E. Pitman (Illus. Kristyna Litten) 2014  
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.
- **Pride Puppy** – Robin Stevenson (Illus. Julie McLaughlin) 2021  
An alphabet book set against the backdrop of a Pride celebration, the story follows a puppy that escapes its family and causes mischief wherever it goes! Bright and playful, this book will be sure to capture the attention of many children and their families.
- **Two Grooms on a Cake** – Rob Sanders (Illus. Robbie Cathro) 2021  
Back in 1971, long before gay marriage was legal in the United States, Jack Baker and Michael McConnell got married after a long fight to obtain a marriage license, including appeals to the Minnesota Supreme Court and the Supreme Court of the United States. An informative but oft-forgotten part of history and the fight for equal rights.

## ***Picture Books to Discuss Gender Stereotypes***

- **Amazing Grace** – Mary Hoffman (Illus. Caroline Binch) 1991  
When her school decides to perform Peter Pan, Grace longs to play the lead, but her classmates point out that Peter was a boy. Besides, he wasn't black. With the support of her family, Grace learns that she can be anything she wants to be, and the results are amazing!

- **Henry Holton Takes the Ice** – Sandra Bradley (Illus. Sara Palacios) 2015  
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'm a Girl** – Yasmeen Ismail 2015  
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.
- **Jacob's Room to Choose** – Sarah Hoffman (Illus. Ian Hoffman) 2019  
From the author of **Jacob's New Dress** comes an important story about gender expression, understanding gender diverse peers, and simply allowing people to use the washroom. When Jacob and his friend Sophie are each teased about using the incorrect bathroom, their teacher finds out what happened. Jacob, Sophie, and their teacher, lead change to build understanding and respect for gender differences at their school.
- **Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress** – Christine Baldacchino (Illus. Isabelle Malenfant) 2014  
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.

### ***Picture Books to Discuss Gender Identity***

- **47,000 Beads** – Koja Adeyoha and Angel Adeyoha (Illus. Holly McGillis) 2017  
Peyton loves to dance, but she isn't comfortable wearing a dress anymore, so she loses interest in dancing at the pow wow. When she finally tells her Auntie Eyota, Peyton is able to find the help that she needs. This book is a great starting point to discuss Two Spirit identities and gender stereotypes.
- **What Are Your Words? A Book About Pronouns** – Katherine Locke (Illus. Anne Passchier) 2021  
This fun and accessible introduction to gender-inclusive pronouns follows Ari through their neighborhood as they try to find the words they feel suit them best. As Ari meets their neighbours, they learn what words other people use to describe themselves, and along the way they realize that sometimes it takes a while to figure out what words work best.
- **I Am Jazz** – Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings (Illus. Shelagh McNicholas) 2014  
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.
- **Ho'onani: Hula Warrior** – Heather Gale (Illus. Mika Song) 2019  
Ho'onani doesn't feel like a wahine (girl) or kane (boy). Instead, she feels in-between, and she's okay with that. But when Ho'onani decides she wants to learn the perform the traditional kane hula chant, she discovers that it might not be so easy to take part in an all-male tradition. Based on a true story, *Ho'onani: Hula Warrior* celebrates identity, difference, and empowerment.
- **My Maddy** - Gayle E. Pitman (Illus. Violet Tobacco) 2020  
In the middle; in between; almost but not quite: all concepts that are highlighted in this picture book about a parent who is neither male nor female, neither father nor mother. Gender norms and gender expression are thoughtfully explored through various metaphors as the child and Maddy go about their days together.
- **My Rainbow** – DeShanna Neal & Trinity Neal (Illus. Art Twink) 2020  
Autistic trans girl Trinity wants to have long hair, but growing it out is too itchy! None of the wigs in the store are quite right, so Mom makes Trinity a special rainbow wig.
- **When Aidan Became a Brother** – Kyle Lukoff (Illus. Kaylani Juanita) 2019  
When Aidan was born, everyone thought he was a girl, but as he grew older, he realized he was a trans boy. When he finds out he is going to be a big brother, he learns the most important thing about being an older sibling: how to love with his whole self.

## **Fiction Books for Intermediate / Middle Grades** (SO) sexual orientation (GI) gender identity theme

- **The Best at It** – Maulik Pancholy 2019 (SO)  
Rahul, a 7th grade Indian-American boy growing up in a small town, deals with anxiety, bullies, racial prejudice, and being different by following his grandfather's advice – find something to be the best at. As Rahul figures out who he is, his best friend Chelsea and his family are there to cheer him on, and he hopes that just maybe his crush Justin will start to notice him.
- **The Fabulous Zed Watson** – Kevin Sylvester and Basil Sylvester 2021 (SOGI)  
Zed Watson loves their big rambunctious family, monsters, and most importantly, their name (which they chose for themselves!) After Zed discovers a mystery regarding an unpublished novel by their favourite author, they embark on a road trip with a small group to follow the clues and unravel the mystery. This book is, dare I say, fabulous!
- **Melissa** [previously published as *George*] – Alex Gino 2015 (GI)  
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?
- **Hurricane Child** – Kacen Callender 2018 (SOGI)  
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.
- **Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World** – Ashley Herring Blake 2018 (SO)  
In the wake of a destructive tornado, Ivy feels invisible and ignored. What's worse, her notebook filled with secret drawings of girls holding hands has gone missing, until the drawings start to reappear with notes from an anonymous friend. A stunning, tender novel about emerging identity, which exquisitely enriches the rare category of female middle-grade characters who like girls--and children's literature at large.
- **Magnus Chase and the Gods of Asgard, Book One: The Hammer of Thor [Le Marteau de Thor]** – Rick Riordan 2016 (SOGI)  
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.
- **Obie is Man Enough** – Schuyler Bailar 2021 (GI)  
Transgender tween Obie knows that coming out will create a bit of a splash, but he is surprised when his swim coach forces him to leave the team, leaving Obie feeling alone, treading water until he can find a new place where he belongs. *Obie is Man Enough* is a sensitive and heartfelt exploration of identity, friendship, and belonging.
- **Answers in the Pages** – David Levithan 2022 (SO)  
After Donovan leaves a teacher-assigned book on the kitchen counter, he has no idea his mom will pick it up to read, much less that she will start an entire campaign to remove the book from the curriculum, all because the main characters are gay. Donovan is caught between his mom and his teacher, but he knows the book doesn't deserve to be banned. Three connected storylines work to create a bold and timely narrative about being brave and standing up for what's right.
- **Star-Crossed** – Barbara Dee 2018 (SO)  
Mattie is a reader, a socialite, and a fan of the theatre. At only thirteen, Mattie is also just figuring herself out. 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!
- **Too Bright to See** – Kyle Lukoff (2021) (GI)  
The summer before middle school, eleven-year-old Bug is not at all interested in makeup, or deciding which boys are cute, unlike her friend Moira. Bug is more interested in discovering the mystery of the ghost haunting that's haunting them. Along the way, Bug makes a big discovery—Bug is transgender.

## ***Non-Fiction Books for Middle Grades and Beyond***

- **Gay & Lesbian History for Kids: The Century-Long Struggle for LGBT Rights** – Jerome Pohlen 2015  
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: The Celebration and the Struggle** – Robin Stevenson 2020  
This book explores "Pride" beyond the parade. Like where it started or how many different ways it's celebrated around the globe? **Pride** is Canadian author, 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 [Sexe, ce drôle de mot]** – Cory Silverberg (Illus. Fiona Smyth) 2015  
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 discuss and explore their own bodies and identities.
- **Growing Up Trans: In Our Own Words** – Eds. Lindsay Herriot & Kate Fry  
A collection of poetry, art, essays, short stories, by trans young people (ages 11-18). This collection also serves as a toolkit for youth who are not trans, as well as for parent and teachers working to become more effective allies. Includes guiding questions and educational resources by experts in the fields of trans studies and education.
- **Queer Ducks (and Other Animals): The Natural World of Animal Sexuality** – Eliot Schrefer (Illus. Jules Zuckerberg) 2022  
This upper middle-grade/YA nonfiction text explores the animal world in a whole new way, using humor, comics, and accessible science to show that same-sex sexual behavior is just as perfectly natural throughout the animal kingdom as it is within humanity. Filled with comics, humorous prose, accessible scientific studies, and interviews with researchers, *Queer Ducks* is a fabulously well-researched text that will provide tween/teen (and even adult) readers with a wealth of fascinating information.

## ***Graphic Novels***

- **Beetle and the Hollowbones** – Aliza Layne 2020  
This Stonewall Honor Book follows twelve-year-old Beetle, a goblin witch, caught between her friend Blob Ghost, her ex-best-friend Kat, and stopping the horrible magic that Kat's new mentor is trying to unleash. As Beetle, Blob Ghost, and Kat try to unravel the vile scheme, they discover a whole lot about each other in the process. Grades 3-7
- **The Deep & Dark Blue** – Niki Smith 2020  
This charming novel is poignant and empathetic while also providing the excitement of a fantasy epic. The fast-paced plot keeps readers engaged with assumed identities, righting injustice, magic and self-discovery while weaving in a beautifully handled transgender narrative. Grades 4-8
- **Flamer** – Mike Curato 2020  
For Aidan Navarro, camp used to be a happy place. But in the summer between middle school and high school Aidan finds himself going through a lot of changes. He is dealing with bullies and suddenly developing feelings for a boy named Elias, and he is forced to confront some difficult truths along the way. Grades 9-12
- **Surviving the City (Vol. 1 & 2)** – Tasha Spillett (Illus. Natasha Donovan & Donovan Yaciuk) 2019/2020  
This graphic novel series follows Miikwan (Anishinaabe) and Dez (Innininew) as they navigate the challenges of growing up in an urban landscape, but when Dez goes missing, Miikwan is devastated. Grades 7-8
- **Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me** – Mariko Tamaki (Illus. Rosemary Valero-O'Connell) 2019  
Multi-award winning, funny, heart-wrenching and spirited tale of young love that asks us to consider what happens when we ditch the toxic relationships we crave to embrace the healthy ones we need. Grades 9-12
- **Spinning** – Tillie Walden 2017  
Poignant and captivating, this award winning, powerful graphic memoir, *Spinning*, captures what it's like to come of age, come out, and come to terms with leaving behind everything you've known. An honest and intimate reflection on the power and pain of teen competitive sports. Grades 9-12

## ***Fiction Books for Secondary Students***

- **Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe [Aristote et Dante découvrent les secrets de l'univers]** – Benjamin Alire Sáenz 2012  
Aristotle's brother is in prison. Dante is a know-it-all. They 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.
- **Elatsoe** – Darcie Little Badger (Illus. Rovina Cai) 2020  
Darcie Little Badger's wildly celebrated debut follows an asexual, Apache teen named Elatsoe as she uses her powers—she can see ghosts and raise the spirits of dead animals—to unravel the mystery of her cousin's recent death: what, or who, actually killed him? Combining mystery, horror, ancestral knowledge, fantasy, and beautiful illustrations, *Elatsoe* is a triumph of storytelling.
- **The City Beautiful** – Aden Polydoros 2021  
*The City Beautiful* is a Jewish historical fantasy set in Chicago, 1893. Alter Rosen sees it as a land of opportunity and dreams that he will one day have enough money to bring his family to America. But when his best friend Yakov is the latest in a string of murders targeting Jewish boys, Alter's dreams start to turn into nightmares as Yakov's dybbuk possesses him in an effort to find out who the killer is.
- **When the Moon Was Ours** – Anna-Marie McLemore 2016  
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.
- **Birthday** – Meredith Russo 2019  
Morgan and Eric are nearly inseparable, having been born on the same day, at the same time. Readers meet the two once a year, on their shared birthday, the narrative mapping how they each grow, change, and explore various aspects of gender and sexuality.
- **Black Flamingo** – Dean Atta 2020  
Michael is stuck. He never feels Greek or Black enough, or even the right kind of gay, especially when he discovers drag culture. Told in free verse by a renowned poet, this novel explores what it means to find a space to fit in.
- **Dress Codes for Small Towns** – Courtney C. Stevens 2017  
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.
- **Felix Ever After** – Kacen Callender 2020  
Award-winning author Kacen Callender brings a revelatory YA novel about transgender teen, Felix, grappling with identity and self-discovery while falling in love for the first time. Complicated feelings begin a journey of questioning and self-discovery that helps redefine his most important relationship: how he feels about himself. This is an honest and layered story about identity, falling in love, and recognizing the love you deserve.
- **Fire Song** – Adam Garnet Jones 2018  
Shane's sister has committed suicide, and he tries to share his grief with his emotionally detached girlfriend, but instead ends up turning to his best friend on the rez, David. Shane and David's relationship intensifies and begins to show signs of becoming more than a friendship. As their lives intertwine, they are forced to confront some harsh truths about themselves and their pasts. The novel features Indigenous representation.
- **Survive the Dome** – Kosoko Jackson 2022  
Jamal Lawson is an aspiring journalist and photographer who just wants to be a part of something big. When he goes to Baltimore to cover a protest about police brutality, the city activates a new safety protocol called the Dome. It surrounds the city and forces those within its boundaries to submit to a newly militarized police force. When Jamal meets a hacker named Marco (who he may or may not have feelings for), the two join forces to defy the lockdown and try to bring down the dome itself.

- **Kings, Queens and In-Betweens** – Tanya Boteju 2019  
An accessible and humorous exploration of gender and sexuality, experienced through the eyes of shy, awkward Nima Kumara-Clark, a biracial queer girl living in a small community. When a stranger invites Nima to a show one night, she finds herself drawn into a world she never expected, a world of drag kings and queens, a world of surprising possibilities, and unexpected new friendships.
- **Like a Love Story** – Abdi Nazemian 2019  
This award-winning novel follows a trio of teens as they navigate friendships, identity and heartaches amidst the hysteria and activism of 1989 New York City during the AIDS crisis. *Like a Love Story* interweaves compelling social drama and a political call to action that is at once historical and vitally relevant today.
- **More Happy Than Not** – Adam Silvera 2015  
Silvera is 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.
- **None of the Above** – I.W. Gregario 2015  
A groundbreaking story about a teenage girl who discovers she was born intersex... and what happens when her secret is revealed to the entire school. Incredibly compelling and sensitively told, *None of the Above* is a thought-provoking novel that explores what it means to be a boy, a girl, or something in between.
- **Last Night at the Telegraph Club** – Malinda Lo 2021  
Lo's highly celebrated, multi-award-winning novel follows seventeen-year-old Lily Hu as she discovers she has feelings for other girls. But America in 1954 is not a safe place for queer people, and especially for Lily due to the red-scare paranoia that threatens her family's future within the country. Lily and her girlfriend Kath must decide if they are willing to risk everything to be openly queer in a society that would rather see them gone.

### ***Non-Fiction Books for Young Adults***

- **The ABCs of LGBT+** – Ashley Mardell 2016  
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.
- **Brave Face** – Shaun David Hutchinson 2019  
Hutchinson explores growing up, sexual awakening and identity, and facing depression in this memoir covering his younger years. Surviving a suicide attempt, Hutchinson embarks on a journey of recovery and self-acceptance which he tells readers about with honesty and even humour.
- **Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition** – Katie Rain Hill 2014  
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 2014  
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 is a hit with many youth.
- **This Book is Gay** – Juno Dawson  
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.

### ***Other Recommended Online Book Lists***

[ALA Rainbow List](#) • [Two-Spirit & Indigiqueer Books](#) • [Welcoming Schools](#) • [YA Pride](#) • [I Dream Library](#)

This is not a comprehensive list of available resources, but a sample of materials that are acclaimed, timely, and varied in terms of representation—gender, sexuality, race, (dis)ability, religious affiliation, etc. 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.