

*"REALISTIC . . . HYSTERICAL. I COULDN'T PUT IT DOWN."
-NIC STONE, NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF DEAR MARTIN*



NOT SO PURE AND SIMPLE EDUCATORS' GUIDE

BOOK BY LAMAR GILES • GUIDE WRITTEN BY JULIA E. TORRES

SYNOPSIS

(FROM THE PUBLISHER'S WEBSITE)

Del has had a crush on Kiera Westing since kindergarten. And now, during their junior year, she's finally available. So when Kiera volunteers for an opportunity at their church, Del's right behind her. Though he quickly realizes he's inadvertently signed up for a Purity Pledge.

His dad thinks his wires are crossed, and his best friend, Qwan, doesn't believe any girl is worth the long game. But Del's not about to lose his dream girl, and that's where fellow pledger Jameer comes in. He can put in the good word. In exchange, Del just has to get answers to the Pledgers' questions...about sex ed.

With other boys circling Kiera like sharks, Del needs to make his move fast. But as he plots and plans, he neglects to ask the most important question: What does Kiera want? He can't think about that too much, though, because once he gets the girl, it'll all sort itself out. Right?

PRAISE FOR NOT SO PURE AND SIMPLE

"HYSTERICAL. I COULDN'T PUT IT DOWN."

(NIC STONE)

"I LAUGHED, I GASPED, I CHURCH GRUNTED THROUGH EVERY CHAPTER."

(TIFFANY D. JACKSON)

"HEARTFELT AND HILARIOUS ON EVERY PAGE"

(JUSTIN A. REYNOLDS)

5 STARRED REVIEWS *
AN INDIE NEXT LIST PICK

TWO-TIME EDGAR AWARD FINALIST
LAMAR GILES SPOTLIGHTS THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIETAL PRESSURE, CONFRONTS TOXIC MASCULINITY, AND EXPLORES THE COMPLEXITY OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A "REAL MAN."

"WITH TRUE-TO-LIFE CHARACTERS AND STRAIGHTFORWARD HANDLING OF SEX, INCLUDING OFTEN IGNORED ASPECTS OF MALE SEXUALITY, GILES'S THOUGHTFUL, HILARIOUS READ OFFERS A TIMELY VIEWPOINT ON RELIGION, TOXIC MASCULINITY, AND TEEN SEXUALITY."

(PUBLISHERS WEEKLY,
"AN ANTI-RACIST CHILDREN'S AND YA READING LIST")

FOR EDUCATORS

First of all, Not So Pure and Simple is the most fun to read, but as much as you'll love reading it, you will love teaching it even more. This book will give you the opportunity to hold discussions about the proverbial elephant in the room, the topic all over TikTok, and in teen text conversations—sex. Whether you have sex education class in your educational community or not, reading this book will give you the opportunity to talk, but more importantly, listen to teenagers talk about gender, sexuality, human biology, and all the societal rules that bind us together, or keep us apart. This guide has also been written to support learning, discussion, and activism around weighty topics like the #metoo movement, toxic masculinity, and the never-ending fight for LGBTQ+ equal rights and protections under the law. Whether you have biology-based sexual education classes in your community, sociology and psychology-based “Healthy Relationships” facilitated by the school counselor, or something in-between, reading this book has the potential to shift interpersonal relationships, community attitudes, and strengthen individual identities by removing so much of the mystery and mistrust that develops when teens don't learn to think or talk about sex in healthy ways. So, enjoy reading and discussing this book with young people, but encourage them to talk with the older folks too, because as much learning as we do in school, there's much unlearning that needs to happen too.

FOR STUDENTS

Not So Pure and Simple is like no book you've read in school before. It's not going to teach you the facts and then tiptoe around the good stuff. You know, the stuff everybody talks about on Snapchat, TikTok, and that Instagram account with the funky username. This book will open up space for you to think and talk openly about sex, both the biology around it and the emotional, psychological stuff that makes it all seem so complicated. You may see yourself and some of the experiences and thoughts you've had reflected in some of the characters. The adults in this book may remind you of your mom, your uncle, your minister, your counselor, your health teacher, or even...your librarian. But if reading it feels more voyeuristic, like watching a show about people who could almost be your friends or your classmates but aren't, know that this book offers you an opportunity to think about human sexuality and normalize recognizing that sex is part of the human experience. Society and social norms all over the world dictate sexual behavior and the way we see ourselves and each other. Reading this book will be an exercise in challenging your internal thoughts as well as the way those thoughts shape your actions and the way you show up in the world or behave toward others. One of the goals of this book is to normalize talking openly and honestly about gender roles, sex, and sexuality. Consider this your invitation to join the conversation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lamar Giles (LUH-MAHR JEYE-UHLS) is a well-published author and a founding member of We Need Diverse Books. Lamar's most recent novels include NOT SO PURE AND SIMPLE his first Contemporary Coming-of-Age Story (HarperTeen/HarperCollins) and THE LAST MIRROR ON THE LEFT (Versify/HMH), the sequel to his 2019 hit THE LAST LAST-DAY-OF-SUMMER.

Lamar is a two-time Edgar Award finalist in the YA category, for his debut YA thriller FAKE ID (HarperCollins, 2014), and his second YA thriller, ENDANGERED (HarperCollins, 2015). His third and fourth YA thrillers, OVERTURNED (Scholastic, 2017) and SPIN (Scholastic, 2019), as well as his middle-grade debut THE LAST LAST-DAY-OF-SUMMER received glowing New York Times reviews, and was named to multiple Best Of lists, including Time Magazine, Kirkus Reviews, and Amazon. FAKE ID has been optioned by Sony Pictures.

Lamar is the editor of the We Need Diverse Books YA short story anthology FRESH INK (Random House, 2018), and a contributor to many YA and middle-grade anthologies including THREE SIDES OF A HEART (HarperCollins, 2017), BLACK ENOUGH: STORIES OF BEING YOUNG & BLACK IN AMERICA (HarperCollins / Balzer & Bray, 2019), THE HERO NEXT DOOR (Random House, 2019), HIS HIDEOUS HEART (Flatiron Books, 2019) and SUPER PUZZLETASTIC MYSTERIES (HarperCollins, 2020). He has published several short stories for adults.

PRE-READING

As you read, the following ideas and terms will come up frequently.

MASCULINITY
FEMININITY
SEXUALITY
HETEROSEXUALITY

HOMOSEXUALITY
CONSENT
GENDER
SEX

HEALTH
RELIGION
PURITY

Use [Visuwords](#) to create visual maps of the following words. What associations (related words) appear? Choose two or three words that are connected to those you select (or are assigned) and use a [constructivist listening dyad](#) to talk to a partner about what the words mean to you and what the possible associations might be. Try to create at least one question about each of the words that are connected to these words. Keep the words on a word wall in your learning environment as you read the book so that you can return to think (and write) about them frequently.

PRE-READING JOURNAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you have a sexual education class offered at your school? If so, in what grade(s)?
- What topics are covered in the class? Do students have to have parents' permission to attend the class? Do they have to have parent permission to participate in certain parts of the class?
- If you have already taken the class, what parts weren't discussed?
- Where did you get the majority of your information about sex (*both the biological and psychological aspects*)?
- What have adults in your life shared with you about sex and human sexuality?

DURING READING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Have you ever heard of a Purity Pledge? If so, what did it entail? What was the motivation for people to commit to it?
- What can you infer about Del, Kiera, Jameer and Qwan’s involvement with the Purity Pledge and Healthy Living?

CHARACTER	WORDS/ACTIONS ABOUT THE “PURITY PLEDGE” AND/OR “HEALTHY LIVING”	MY INFERENCES
DEL		
KIERA		
QWAN		
JAMEER		

- What is the difference between abstinence education and sexual education? Review the article, [“Sex Education Programs: Definitions and Point-by-Point Comparision”](#) to inform your response.
- (40) Why do you think people have so many different names (or gestures) for sex? Why do you suppose folks don’t just call it what it is?
- What characteristics does MJ have that make Del (and Jameer) trust him enough to ask him for advice? Do you have trusted adults in your life who you could go to to talk about sex? If so, who are they? If not, how do you get information?
- “Healthy Living” and “Baby-Getters-Club” are euphemisms. Euphemisms (according to Miriam Webster who actually knows quite a bit, these days) are words that we use that are, “the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant.” Think about all the expressions and words we use for sex that are not actually calling it what it is. List as many as you can. Try to identify what they actually mean. Ex. “THOT” = That ho over there = A woman assumed to be having sex with lots of people. Use this table if it helps.

WORD/EXPRESSION	DEFINITION (CITE YOUR SOURCES)	WHAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY MEAN WHEN THEY SAY IT
PLAYER	“Usually a boy who makes you feel special. He makes you feel like you are the only girl in his life, when really you are just one in 100.” -Urbandictionary.com	People usually use this word for someone who knows how to seduce or charm potential objects of their affection.

- How does the media (including social media) reinforce unhealthy attitudes about sex and sexuality? Consider stereotypes, images you see, and/or words you hear repeatedly.
- (78) What are the “opposing curriculum” of Healthy Living and the Purity Pledge? What are the two different perspectives of the same topic? Why do you suppose they are so different?
- (84-90) How do Del and Shianne’s experiences with gossip and social pressure differ? Why do you suppose they are so different? Have you ever heard the expression “double-standard”? If so, what does it mean and how might that apply to Shianne and Del’s public reputations?
- What social norms does Pastor Newsome try to enforce?
- How might a pregnancy pact (if one existed) be seen as an act of resistance to these norms?
- (113) Many people think sex, like religion, is not a topic that should be discussed in schools because of the separation of church and state, which leads to many sexual education programs that deal with the biology of sex alone and leave the social and psychological parts out. Should sex be discussed at school? If so, do you think discussion biology alone is enough? If so, why? If not, why not?
- (136) “Almost everything you think you know about girls and women is wrong. That incorrect information can be dangerous.” What do you think MJ means about the danger of wrong ideas? Read and discuss, [“What is going on with America’s Boys?”](#) to help inform your response.
- (164) “I’d told the truth. That shouldn’t be wrong, but the truth could be a weapon depending on who used it.” What happens when Del realizes the consequences of telling the truth?

- Research the protocol in your community for course approval and/or cancellation. What happens if parents and community members don't want a particular subject or course to be taught?
- Folks often use the word “appropriate” to refer to topics that should or should not have a place in an educational environment. What are some things your school has deemed “inappropriate”? In your opinion, are they? Should they be? Use the [constructivist listening dyad](#) if you need to maintain confidentiality, then discuss with your class.
- (214) Why does Jameer feel he has to keep his sexual orientation a secret?
- What do you know about the intersections of gender, sexual orientation? Check out these sites to add to what you know: [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions](#), [How is Sexual Orientation Different from Gender Identity?](#)
- (223) What rules does your society place on when and how people can have babies? Where do you suppose these rules originated? Are there different rules for different cultural, social, or ethnic groups? How might the rules of the dominant cultural group affect those who are often marginalized? eg. A lesbian family living in a predominantly heteronormative, religious community
- (245) What way do you and your peers have of reporting the news at your school and in your community?
- (263) Why do you suppose people are so fascinated by Jaylan's show (or any show that claims to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth)?
- (267) What is an “Everytown”? What is “female oppression”? What does it mean to be a “poster-child”? What are “puritanical values”? How does each of these ideas play into the way people respond to Cressie's episode?
- (294) What sort of pressure does Del experience from his mom? Why?
- How does social or peer pressure reinforce a culture of secrecy and silence about sex?
- (318) How do peers and society respond differently to stories about sexual encounters depending on the gender identity of the person telling the story or having the story told about them?

- Do you think telling stories about sexual encounters is a harmful act of aggression or toxicity? If so, why? If not, why not?
- (333-337) What do you know about sexual assault, also known as “rape culture”? How do norms in society dismantle or uphold these beliefs and practices? How can you stand against them? Read this article to add to what you know [“16 Ways You Can Stand Against Rape Culture”](#)
- (356) Do you know anyone who has chosen to stay in an unhealthy or toxic relationship? Do you know the signs of a toxic relationship? Some are listed here Toxic Relationships: [How To Tell If You’re In a Toxic Relationship — And What To Do About It](#)
- Do you feel this information should be a part of sexual education or “Healthy Living”? Why, or why not?
- (364) Why did Del lie? What motive might he have had for doing so? How was this video an attempt to come clean? What does he reveal about gender and sexuality norms for young men? How does he attempt to dismantle them?
- Does his video work? How do you know?

POST READING: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

ESSAY/JOURNAL PROMPT

(52) How does the media (including social media) reinforce or perpetuate stereotypes and attitudes about sex and teen sexuality? Consider watching [“9 Years after ‘Pregnancy Pact’ Young Mom Reveals The Truth Behind the Notorious Scandal”](#)

WEBSITE ANNOTATION

Do a search for local or national news about [sexual education](#) in your community. Don't forget to consult the [Media Bias Chart](#) and the [CRAP](#) test to evaluate the reliability of your resources. When you've found at least three sources about the same topic, what do you notice? What do you wonder? Whose viewpoint is normalized or centered? Who is left out? Annotate one web page or several using online tools to show what you notice.

MULTIMODAL PRESENTATION

What are some norms pertaining to gender, sex, and sexuality that exist in your community that you feel need to be done away with? Ex. Boys ask girls to prom with a “promposal”. Create a multimodal presentation arguing your case. This can be a TikTok video, a series of Instagram posts, a letter to your local news outlet, a blog post, or a movie night for parents and young people in your community. Be sure to state your position, why you feel the way you do, and what should be done to create positive change for everyone. Use the rhetorical triangle if you need to but remember to tell **your** story. Just like when Del and Cressie told theirs, that's the most important part.

STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.7

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Inside the Gloucester Pregnancy Pact](#)
[Does 16 and Pregnant Prevent or Promote Teen Pregnancy?](#)
[Why Are Young People Having So Little Sex?](#)
[The Persisting ‘Rape Culture’ on Campuses](#)
[Grown by Tiffany D. Jackson](#)
[We need to talk about the social norms that fuel sexual assault](#)
[Human Sexuality and Culture: Quick Course](#)
[State Policies on Sex Education in Schools](#)
[Sex Education Laws and State Attacks](#)



This educator guide was written by Julia E. Torres who is a veteran language arts teacher and librarian on the Montbello Campus serving five schools within the Far Northeast region of Denver Public schools. As a teacher/activist committed to education as a practice of freedom, her practice is grounded in the work of empowering students to use Language Arts to fuel resistance and positive social transformation. Julia facilitates workshops and professional conversations about anti-bias/anti-racist education, social justice, and

culturally sustaining pedagogies in language arts, as well as digital literacy and librarianship. Her work has been featured in several online journals and publications including NCTE's Council Chronicle, NPR, AlJazeera's The Stream, PBS Education, KQED's MindShift, NY Times Learning Network, The Chicago Tribune, ASCD's Education Update, School Library Journal, and many more. Connect with Julia at juliaetorres.blog or on Twitter @Juliaerin80