CHRISTIANE ENGEL
BABY’S FIRST WORDS

Baby’s First Words is packed with a wide range of vocabulary for little ones. The illustrations are beautiful, full of interesting details and visual textures, perfect for curious, attentive little eyes. Another great merit of Baby’s First Words is the depiction of baby’s parents as a same-sex interracial couple, allowing for conversations amongst families and normalising the multicultural world we live in. (Age 0–4)

JEANNE WILLIS illustrated by STEPHANIE LABERIS
FROCKODILE

Celebrating acceptance and being who you really are, this joyful story is about Cliff, the crocodile who wants to wear a dress. When the hyenas laugh at Cliff, he pretends he’s dressing up for a play. But no play exists! Luckily his friend Freddy comes to the rescue and creates a show for Cliff to star in. But what will his dad say when he sees him? A funny story about inclusion and supporting your friends and family. (Age 1–5)

JUSTIN RICHARDSON and PETER PARNELL illustrated by HENRY COLE
AND TANGO MAKES THREE
SIMON & SCHUSTER 2012 (PBK) 32PP £5.99 ISBN 9780857073846

Based on real events at the penguin house at the Central Park Zoo, two penguins named Roy and Silo were a little bit different from the others. But their desire for a family was the same. And with the help of a kindly zookeeper, Roy and Silo got the chance to welcome a baby penguin of their very own. A simple story of love and acceptance. (Age 2–4)

DAVINA BELL illustrated by ALLISON COLPOYS
UNDER THE LOVE UMBRELLA

From this award-winning creative duo comes a book about the wonder of ever-present love. A stunning celebration of the joy and inclusivity of love as a force that’s always with us, whoever we are and wherever we go in the big, wild world. Bright, expressive and featuring joyfully diverse illustration throughout. (Age 2–4, 5–8)
PATRICIA HEGARTY illustrated by RYAN WHEATCROFT

WE ARE FAMILY

All families are different – and yet in many ways the same! This book uses a gentle rhyming text to follow eight different families, celebrating their everyday differences as well as the similarities they share. Through illness and health, in celebration and disappointment, families stick together. Even though every family is different, the love is all the same. (Age 2–4, 5–8)

MEL ELLIOTT

THE GIRL WITH TWO DADS

Matilda is a new girl at Pearl’s school, but there’s something really different and cool about her family – she has TWO dads! Pearl is sure that Matilda’s family must be very different to her own but, as they become friends, she starts to discover that maybe Matilda’s family aren’t so different after all. A funny, heart-warming tale featuring a same-sex parent family useful in opening up discussions and encouraging children to be open minded and inclusive. (Age 3–5)

DAVID McKEE

ELMER

Elmer is different. Elmer is patchwork. He begins to think that the grey elephants are mocking him when they laugh at him, and he soon starts to wonder what it would be like to be just the same as them. When he disguises himself to ‘fit-in’, he finds that the herd have lost their sense of joy and realises that they were laughing with him. Full of colour, wisdom and pathos, little readers will love this enduring story. First published in 1989, Elmer has become an icon of happiness and celebrating difference. A modern classic. (Age 3–5)

KERSTIN BRICHZIN illustrated by IGOR KUPRIN

FELIX’S NEW SKIRT

Felix likes wearing skirts. He likes the way they feel and how he’s more comfortable in them. Everything is easier when he wears them. But when he starts school, he realises that not everyone feels the same and he must believe in himself like never before. This is a wonderful picturebook about self-acceptance and family love. (Age 5–8)
JESSICA LOVE

**JULIAN IS A MERMAID**

WALKER BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 40PP £11.99 ISBN 9781406386424

Julian and Nana spot some beautiful mermaids on their way home from the pool, which inspires the little boy to play dress-up. But what will Nana think? An incredibly beautiful picturebook with minimal text and gorgeous illustrations, this book explores what it means to be yourself and to be loved unconditionally. (Age 5–8)

---

EMMA DONOGHUE

**THE LOTTERYS PLUS ONE**

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2017 (PBK) 320PP £7.99 ISBN 9781509803200

Nine-year-old Sumac lives with her two mothers, two fathers, and six siblings – all named after trees, just like her – in a huge house called Camelottery, so called because of the lottery win that paid for it. Life in the mansion is chaotic yet predictable – until the Lotterys' ailing grandfather Iain arrives. The story itself could not be more relevant to the turbulent times the world finds itself in – the true meaning of belonging, home, tolerance, and acceptance. Offbeat, funny, wise, and deliciously different, Donoghue’s first book for children is an essential read. (Age 8–10, 10–12)

---

HOLLY GOLDBERG SLOAN and MEG WOLITZER

**TO NIGHT OWL FROM DOGFISH**


When bookish Avery and adventurous Bett’s dads fall in love, the girls are not happy about the prospect of being sisters and hatch a plan to break them up. This reverse Parent Trap is wonderfully told via the medium of emails and letters between all the characters in this story. Avery (now Night Owl) and Bett (Dogfish) sent away to camp, bond against their will and, against the odds, become the unlikeliest of friends. A heart-warming tale about all types of families and relationships. (Age 9–11)

---

TIM FEDERLE

**BETTER NATE THAN EVER**


Nate is a talented singer and an outcast in his small town in Pennsylvania where he is routinely bullied for being gay. He does however have big dreams: to escape to New York and take part in an open audition for *ET: The Musical*. Nate is an endearing and determined character, and Federle creates a voice that is both witty and naïve. Touching on themes of courage, forgiveness and self-acceptance, this is sure to appeal to any reader with an interest in musical theatre or Broadway. (Age 9–11, 12–14)
NEIL GAİMAN illustrated by CHRİS RIDDELL
THE SLEEPER AND THE SPİNDEŁ
BLOOMSBURY CHILDRENS BOOKS 2014 (HBK) 72PP £12.99 ISBN 9781408859643

On the eve of her wedding, a young queen sets out to rescue a princess from an enchantment. She casts aside her fine wedding clothes, takes her chain mail and her sword and follows her brave dwarf retainers into the tunnels under the mountain towards the sleeping kingdom. This queen will decide her own future – and the princess who needs rescuing is not quite what she seems. Twisting together the familiar and the new, this captivating and darkly funny fairy tale shows its creators at the peak of their talents. (Age 9–11, 12–14)

ALEX GİNO
GEORGE
SCHOLASTİC 2017 (PBK) 224PP £5.99 ISBN 9781407170978

George knows that she’s a girl, even if everyone else thinks she’s a boy. But she’s still afraid to tell anyone. When her teacher announces their class play will be Charlotte’s Web, George is determined to play Charlotte – even though her teacher won’t let her try out. But is George willing to reveal the truth about herself, no matter what? This is a timely, sensitive story about being true to yourself. George is a wonderfully complex character, conflicted even while certain about who she is. (Age 9–11, 12–14)

MEG GREGHAN
THE DEEPEST BREATH
LITTLE ISLAND BOOKS 2019 (PBK) 180PP €9.00 ISBN 9781912417186

Stevie is eleven and loves reading and sea creatures. There’s a girl at school that she likes. Actually, she’s a bit confused about how much she likes her. It makes her fizz inside. That’s a new feeling, one she doesn’t understand. Stevie needs to find out if girls can like girls — love them, even – but it’s hard to get any information. But maybe she can find an answer in a book. With the help of a librarian, Stevie finds stories of girls loving girls, and builds up her courage to share the truth with her mum. (Age 9–11, 12–14)

ROBIN STEVENS
DEATH IN THE SPOTLIGHT: A MURDER MOST UNLADYLIKE MYSTERY

Fresh from their adventure in Hong Kong, Hazel Wong and Daisy Wells are off to the Rue Theatre in London to face an entirely new challenge: acting. But the Detective Society is never far away from danger, and it’s clear there’s trouble afoot at the Rue. The seventh instalment in the endlessly intriguing Murder Most Unladylike series sees Daisy develop her first crush – on the mysterious Martita. (Age 9–11, 12–14)
NOELLE STEVENSON, GRACE ELLIS, SHANNON WATTERS
illustrated by BROOKE A. ALLEN
LUMBERJANES VOL. 1: BEWARE THE KITTEN HOLY

The Lumberjanes graphic novel series is about female friendship and set in a summer camp. However, undermining this so-far-so-ordinary description, it features shape-shifters, gods, mysteries and yetis. That any expletives take the form of a woman’s name, be she activist, scientist or musician, emphasises how female centred the series is. Jo, April, Mal, Molly and Ripley come from a wide range of backgrounds and the series features same-sex parents, lesbian and transgender characters. (Age 9–11, 12–14)

RIYADH KHALAF illustrated by MELISSA McFEETERS
YAY! YOU’RE GAY! NOW WHAT? A GAY BOY’S GUIDE TO LIFE

In this personal, heartfelt go-to guide for young gay men, YouTuber and presenter Riyadh Khalaf shares frank advice about everything from coming out to relationships, as well as interviews with inspirational role models, and encouragement for times when you’re feeling low. There’s a support section for family and friends written by Riyadh’s parents and lots of hilarious, embarrassing, inspiring and moving stories from gay boys around the world. (Non-fiction, Age 11–16)

KELLY McCAUGHRAIN
FLYING TIPS FOR FLIGHTLESS BIRDS

From the high wire of the Big Top to the high wire of teenage sexuality, this warm and funny story of adolescence is a delight to read. It explores family, friendship and first love with an authenticity that is both engaging and emotionally satisfying. Through the eyes of the two main characters – one through very clever use of a blog – we learn the pros and cons of being different and of managing life in the margins. (Age 12–14)

JUNO DAWSON
WHAT IS GENDER? HOW DOES IT DEFINE US? AND OTHER BIG QUESTIONS FOR KIDS
WAYLAND OCT 2017 (PBK) 48PP £9.99 ISBN 9781526300010

This is a guide to gender, sex, sexual fluidity, transgender issues, sexism, feminism and equality. While this might seem an unattainable goal, the concepts are laid out clearly and accessibly, through a mix of definitions, examples and case studies. There are eight case studies from authors, artists and sportspeople, each presenting different experiences – of being gay, a woman, transgender, intersex – and serving to reference the definitions given elsewhere, while giving a human face and experience to the terms. Recommended for young people but also parents! (Non-fiction, Age 12–14, YA)
BECKY ALBERTALLI

LEAH ON THE OFFBEAT
PENGUIN BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 368PP £7.99 ISBN 9780241331057

This sequel to Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda, is narrated by Simon’s best friend Leah, a bisexual girl who is very definite in her own sexual identity but not comfortable sharing it with others. Set a little over a year after Simon’s story, the gang find themselves facing not only graduation, but also the potential for their group to splinter apart. Leah’s voice is as breezy and effortless as Simon’s while the conflicts and problems are a little darker this time, tackling not only romance and sexuality but also class and the worry of impending change. (YA)

BECKY ALBERTALLI and ADAM SILVERA

WHAT IF IT’S US
SIMON & SCHUSTER 2018 (PBK) 368PP £7.99 ISBN 9781471176395

Arthur is in New York for an internship and is expecting a summer straight off of Broadway. Ben is broken-hearted and angry at the universe. The two meet by chance in a post office but then they are separated again, without each other’s contact details. Two bestselling and beloved YA authors combine their talents for this dual-perspective romance story. The cast is diverse in terms of race, beliefs and sexuality, this is a book in which many teenagers will be able to see themselves. It is a joy to read a book showing (mostly) positive experiences for gay teens with their family and friend groups. (YA)

ORLAGH COLLINS

ALL THE INVISIBLE THINGS
BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING 2019 (PBK) 368PP £7.00 ISBN 9781408888339

For four years Vetty Lake has been keeping her heart in hiding. Since her mum died and her family moved out of London it’s felt so much safer not to tell people how she really feels. She’s never even told anyone she’s attracted to girls as well as boys. But now Vetty’s seventeen and coming back to London she’s determined to start living out loud. A warm, witty, important story about being a young woman today, and what it’s like to find a real connection amid all the noise. (YA)

compiled by JUNO DAWSON

PROUD
STRIPES 2019 (PBK) 352PP £7.99 ISBN 9781788950602

Proud is a collection of stories, poetry and illustrations all on the theme of pride, compiled and curated by YA author Juno Dawson. It features both well-established LGBTQ+ authors and illustrators, as well as four new authors published for the first time. The stories and poems have a universal appeal as they deal with life, love, a sense of identity, of just wanting to be who you are and to live your life as yourself. The collection is fresh, funny and quite often touching. (YA)
Irreverent and chatty, yet also containing bucketloads of useful and serious information, this guide to all things gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer is a practical, reassuring and up-to-date handbook for young people and parents or teachers invested in supporting them. The book covers both the personal and political, critiquing stereotypes while exploring the truth behind some of them, and presents a consistently positive message while acknowledging the difficulties LGBTQ+ youth face. Ideal for 14+ and a must-have for all school libraries. (Non-fiction, YA)

When Katie’s estranged grandmother Mary turns up after years of absence, it is up to the seventeen-year-old to untangle the truth and lies that have affected three generations of women in her family, a task made more difficult by Mary’s dementia. This is a story about bravery and living your life for yourself and serves as a reminder that we are all ultimately ‘a work in progress’. Featuring a lesbian protagonist and an elderly woman whose spirit and story are unforgettable, this nuanced YA novel is highly recommended! (YA)

On Deena’s seventeenth birthday, the day she finally comes out to her family, her wild and mysterious sister Mandy is seen leaping from a cliff. The family is heartbroken, but not surprised. The women of the Rys family have always been troubled – ‘bad apples’, their father calls them – and Mandy is the baddest of them all. But then Deena starts to receive the letters. Letters from Mandy, claiming that their family’s blighted history is not just bad luck or bad decisions, but a curse, handed down to the Rys women through the generations. (YA)

One cold night, in a most unlikely corner of Chicago, Will Grayson crosses paths with ... Will Grayson. Two young men with the same name, running in two very different circles, suddenly find their lives going in new and unexpected directions, and culminating in epic turns-of-heart and the most fabulous musical ever to grace the high-school stage. Told in alternating voices from two award-winning authors, John Green and David Levithan, this collaborative novel features a double helping of the heart and humour. (YA)
SIMON JAMES GREEN

NOAH CAN’T EVEN


Noah Grimes is an exceedingly awkward almost-sixteen-year-old who wants more than anything else to fit in. Problem is, his mum’s Beyoncé tribute act doesn’t help matters in school, his dad disappeared years ago, and his beloved gran isn’t herself any more. He only has one friend, Harry, who has been with him through thick and thin. Why can’t he just be normal, like everyone else in school? Maybe if he struck up a relationship with lovely, kind, pretty Sophie, he’d be seen in a different light? But Noah’s plans for romance are derailed when Harry kisses him at a party. (YA)

DAVID LEVITHAN

BOY MEETS BOY

HARPERCOLLINS CHILDRENS BOOKS 2013 (PBK) 240PP £7.99 ISBN 9780007533039

This is the story of Paul, a student at a high school like no other: the cheerleaders ride Harleys, the homecoming queen used to be a guy named Daryl (she now prefers Infinite Darlene and is also the star quarterback), and the gay-straight alliance was formed to help the straight kids learn how to dance. When Paul meets Noah, he thinks he’s found the one his heart is made for. Until he blows it. This is a happy, meaningful romantic comedy about finding love, losing love, and doing what it takes to get love back in a crazy world. (YA)

JANDY NELSON

I’LL GIVE YOU THE SUN

WALKER BOOKS 2015 (PBK) 432PP £7.99 ISBN 9781406326499

Unusually structured and poetically written, I’ll Give You the Sun is a story of life, love, loss and art as twins Noah and Jude each give their perspective on the deterioration of their once close relationship over the course of three years. This is an incredibly visual, quirky and imaginative tale and the characters of Jude and Noah are so real and relatable, it is impossible to avoid being drawn into their story. A heart-breaking and heart-warming tale. (YA)

PATRICK NESS

MORE THAN THIS

WALKER BOOKS 2013 (PBK) 480PP £7.99 ISBN 9781406350487

Ness’s stark and beautiful prose introduces us to Seth, a boy who doesn’t know what will happen next, having woken up at his childhood home following a drowning at sea. Ness leavens the sometimes heavy existentialist text with some magic characterisation, especially in Tomasz, a hilariously sweet and earnest Polish boy. Thriller, sci-fi novel, a coming of age story, More Than This is difficult to define, which only adds to its appeal. The perfect novel for any teenager (or adult) pondering the big questions of life. (YA)
ALICE OSEMAN

**HEARTSTOPPER: VOLUME 1**


This graphic novel is the first in the Heartstopper series. It is about love, friendship, loyalty and mental illness. Charlie and Nick are at the same school, but they’ve never met ... until one day when they’re made to sit together. They quickly become friends, and soon Charlie is falling hard for Nick, even though he doesn’t think he has a chance. But love works in surprising ways, and Nick is more interested in Charlie than either of them realised. It encompasses all the small stories of Nick and Charlie’s lives that together make up something larger, which speaks to all of us. (YA)

MEREDITH RUSSO

**IF I WAS YOUR GIRL**

USBOURNE PUBLISHING 2016 (PBK) 304PP £7.99 ISBN 9781474923835

Amanda Hardy is the new girl at school. Like everyone else, all she wants is to make friends and fit in. But Amanda is holding back. Even from Grant, the guy she’s falling in love with. Amanda has a secret. At her old school, she used to be called Andrew. And secrets always have a way of getting out ... This is a coming of age story about family, friendship and first love. A book about loving yourself and being loved for who you really are. (YA)

ROBIN TALLEY

**PULP**


Explorations of metafiction, intertextuality and sexuality are deftly woven together in this rewarding, timely novel. Seventeen-year-old Abbey Zimit is out, proud and actively resisting Trump’s America, although the pressures of adult life are beginning to creep up on her. Her senior project on classic lesbian pulp fiction is her chief source of solace, especially her growing obsession with the mysterious author Marian Love, whose writing provides the framework for Abbey’s own foray into the genre. (YA)

LISA WILLIAMSON

**THE ART OF BEING NORMAL**


This incredible début from Lisa Williamson is witty, thought-provoking and sure to blow you away. Protagonists David and Leo devastate and inspire us with their compelling voices and authentic experiences – each chapter is a rollercoaster. This empowering exploration of the transgender experience is remarkable for its universality as much as its subject matter – exploring human nature and the desire to be one’s true self in a sensitive and entirely natural way. A must read. (YA)
children’s books ireland reading list

RAINFOREST READS

AGE RANGE 0–YA

Children’s Books Ireland produced this resource with the expert assistance of Kim Harte. We also wish to acknowledge the work of our Inis magazine and Recommended Reads Guide reviewers.

childrensbooksireland.ie

This list was published in 2019.

Follow us on social media!

Facebook: childrensbooksireland
Twitter: @KidsBooksIrel
Instagram: @kidsbooksirel