

# BOY MEETS BOY



## Summary of Concerns:

This book contains sexual activities; sexuality; and alternate gender ideologies.

*Young Adult*

**By David Levithan**

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**2**/5

**Teen Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

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1	<p>There isn't really a gay scene or a straight scene in our town. They got all mixed up a while back, which I think is for the best. Back when I was in second grade, the older gay kids who didn't flee to the city for entertainment would have to make their own fun. Now it's all good. Most of the straight guys try to sneak into the Queer Beer bar. Boys who love boys flirt with girls who love girls. And whether your heart is strictly ballroom or bluegrass punk, the dance floors are open to whatever you have to offer.</p>
2	<p>The Gaystafarian crowd has planted itself in the Gardening section, while the three straight members of the guy's lacrosse team are ogling a bookstore clerk from Literature.</p>
8	<p>I've always known I was gay, but it wasn't confirmed until I was in kindergarten. It was my teacher who said so. It was right there on my kindergarten report card: PAUL IS DEFINITELY GAY AND HAS VERY GOOD SENSE OF SELF. I saw it on her desk one day before naptime. And I have to admit: I might not have realized I was different if Mrs. Benchly hadn't pointed it out. I mean, I was five years old. I just assumed boys were attracted to other boys.</p>
8	<p>Imagine my surprise when I went through all the other reports and found out that not one of the other boys had been labeled DEFINITELY GAY.</p>
9	<p>"Am I definitely gay?" I asked. Mrs. Benchly looked me over and nodded. "What's gay?" I asked. "It's when a boy likes other boys," she explained. I pointed over to the painting corner, where Greg Easton was wrestling on the ground with Ted Halpern. "Is Greg gay?" I asked. "No," Mrs. Benchly answered. "At least, not yet."</p>
9	<p>"How I feel is what's right...right?" "For you, yes," Mrs. Benchly told me. "What you feel is absolutely right for you. Always remember that."</p>
9	<p>That night, I held my big news until after my favorite Nickelodeon block was over. My father was in the kitchen, doing dishes. My mother was in the den with me, reading on the couch. Quietly, I walked over to her. "GUESS WHAT!" I said. She jumped, then tried to pretend she hadn't been surprised. Since she didn't close her book- she only marked the page with her finger- I knew I didn't have much time. "What?" she asked. "I'm gay!" Parents never react the way you want them to. I thought, at the very least, my mother would take her finger out of the book. But no. Instead she turned in the direction of the kitchen and yelled to my father. "Honey...Paul's learned a new word!"</p>
11	<p>It was with Joni's help that I became the first openly gay class president in the history of Ms. Farquar's third-grade class. Joni was my campaign manager. She was the person who came up with my</p>

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	<p>campaign slogan: VOTE FOR ME...I'M GAY!</p> <p>I thought it rather oversimplified my stance on the issues (pro-recess, anti-gym), but Joni said it was sure to generate media attention. At first, she wanted the slogan to be VOTE FOR ME...I'M A GAY, but I pointed out that this could easily be misread as VOTE FOR ME...I'M A GUY, which would certainly lose me votes. So the A was struck, and the race began in earnest.</p> <p>My biggest opponent (I'm sorry to say) Ted Halpern. His first slogan was VOTE FOR ME...I'M NOT GAY, which only made him seem dull. Then he tried YOU CAN'T VOTE FOR HIM...HE'S GAY, which was pretty stupid. Finally, in the days leading up to the election, he resorted to DON'T VOTE FOR THE FAG.</p>
12	<p>In sixth grade, Cody, Joni, a lesbian and fourth grader named Laura, and I formed our elementary school's first gay-straight alliance.</p>
12	<p>Membership in the gay-straight alliance soon surpassed that of the football team (which isn't to say there wasn't overlap).</p>
13	<p>At first, I thought it was strange kind of foreplay, but then I realized that their grunts were actually insults- queer, faggot, the usual.</p>
13	<p>I had a gay food column in the local paper- "Dining OUT"- which was a modest success.</p>
15	<p>I don't know when Infinite Darlene and I first became friends. Perhaps it was back when she was still Daryl Heisenberg, but that's not very likely; few of us can remember what Daryl Heisenberg was like since Infinite Darlene consumed him so completely. He was a decent football player, but nowhere near as good as when he started wearing false eyelashes.</p> <p>Infinite Darlene doesn't have it easy. Being both star quarterback and homecoming queen has its conflicts. And sometimes it's hard for her to fit in. The other drag queens in our school rarely sit with her at lunch; they say she doesn't take good enough care of her nails, and that she looks a little too buff in a tank top. The football players are a little more accepting, although there was a spot of trouble a year ago when Chuck, second-string quarterback, fell in love with her and got depressed when she said he wasn't her type.</p>
61	<p>I lean forward to kiss him. The flowers crush between our shirts. I touch his lips, I breathe him in. I close my eyes, I open them. He is surprised, I can tell. I am surprised too. He kisses me back with a kiss like a smile.</p> <p>It's very nice.</p> <p>Actually, it's wonderful.</p> <p>"Hello," I say.</p> <p>"Hello," Noah says back.</p> <p>I hear footsteps coming down from upstairs. My parents. "Come in," I say. I hold the flowers in one hand and swing my other hand behind me. Noah takes it as he walks through the door.</p> <p>"Hello there," my parents say together as they reach the bottom of the stairs. In one glance they see the flowers, and me and Noah holding hands. They can immediately figure out that Noah is more than just a new friend.</p> <p>Page 85: I know some people think liking both guys and girls is a cop-out. Some of Infinite Darlene's biggest rivals save their deepest scorn for the people they call "dabblers." But I think they're totally full of garbage. I don't see why, if I'm wired</p>

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	<p>to like guys, someone else can't be wired to like both girls and guys.            "We could call you an ambisexual. A duosexual. A-"            "Do I really have to find a word for it?" Kyle interrupts. "Can't it just be what it is?"            "Of course," I say, even though in the bigger world I'm not so sure. The world loves stupid labels. I wish we got to choose our own.</p>
95	<p>Tony and I figure the best thing a straight boy with religious, intolerant parents can do for his love lie is tell his parents he's gay. Before Tony's parents discovered he was gay, they wouldn't let him shake hands with a girl. Now if he mentions he's doing something with a girl- any girl- they practically pimp him out the door.</p>
115	<p>"Perhaps it's time to send in the P-FLAG commandos," Jay suggests. In our town, P-FLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is as big a draw as the PTA.</p>
152	<p>They think that being gay is going to mess up my whole life.</p>
187	<p>(And now a few words from the author, approximately ten years later...): This morning I read about the Supreme Court agreeing to hear arguments against California's discriminatory Proposition 8. There have been drag queen quarterbacks and LGBT homecoming kings and queens. There have been kids who realize who they are in kindergarten, just like Paul. What seemed like fantasy in 2003 isn't fantasy at all in 2013. Which is as it should be.</p>
189	<p>(What inspired you to write Boy Meets Boy?): I come from a liberal family where my gay uncle's boyfriend was always invited to the holidays. My best friend's other best friend came from a very conservative family that forced him into marrying a girl to save his soul.</p>
189	<p>189 (And now a few words from the author, approximately ten years later...): Then it grew into a novel I wanted to find as an editor- an LGBT YA novel that showed that gay kids' lives aren't all gloom and doom, which was the only thing reflected in YA literature (with some notable exceptions).</p>
189	<p>(Was the title inspired by Boy Meets World, by any chance?): In searching for a new title, I knew one thing: I wanted it to be an "out" title. Meaning: I wanted you to know the book was gay even if you were just passing it on the shelf. Because there is such power in that.</p>
190	<p>(This is an LGBT novel with no mention of hate/intolerance/prejudice/bigotry. Why did you choose to leave these aspects out of your novel?): Oh, they're there. Even when they are absent from the page, they're there. You have to understand, this novel is as much about Tony as it is about Paul. It is as much about the reality of Tony's town as it is about the ideal of Paul's town. Which leads to the next question...</p>
191	<p>Why? Because, at the most basic level, what LGBT people are asked (absurdly) is to prove that we are as much human beings as anyone else.</p>
195	<p>As for negative reaction- I think it's made me much more aware that we have to be vigilant about preemptive censorship just as much as we are about book challenges. That is to say- we know to fight for the freedom to read when a book is pulled from the shelf, but we also have to fight for the freedom to read when someone refuses to put the book on the shelf in the first place. Boy Meets Boy has been a big target in this way because of its title- the gatekeepers who don't</p>

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	<p>want to deal with LGBT books in their collections (whether it be a bookstore or a library or a classroom) just don't put them there in the first place, thereby disenfranchising the readers- both straight and gay- who might want or need to read them. We have to insist on these books being included.</p>
199	<p>(The Quarterback and the Cheerleader: A Valentine's Day Story): Infinite Darlene is preparing for a date. She puts on a layer of makeup, topping it off with some lipstick. As usual, she's grateful for her smooth chin, that God decided to give her stubble every week or two, not every single day.</p>
199	<p>(The Quarterback and the Cheerleader: A Valentine's Day Story): While Infinite Darlene has many, many friends, she hasn't had many, many dates. She doesn't entirely know why this is. Maybe it's because she's so busy being both the homecoming queen and the star quarterback at school. Maybe it's because guys are intimidated by a 6'4" transgender superstar.</p>