

10,000 Dresses by Marcus Ewert

"10,000 Dresses shares the story of a trans girl, Bailey, who is trying to make her dreams a reality. Each night, Bailey dreams of a different mystical dress, which she in turn asks each of her family members if they can help her find the next morning. Despite her best efforts, Bailey's family members are not willing to help her find the dress of her dreams, saying that boys can't wear dresses, and that Bailey should stop asking them such questions.

Bailey's story and eventual victory are great jumping off points for conversations about gender identity. Author Marcus Ewert paints Bailey as a sympathetic figure through her honest requests for help to simply access pieces of clothing that make her feel special. Ewert also earns credit by consistently using the correct pronouns for Bailey from the beginning — making it all the more surprising for youth hearing the story when Bailey's parents don't believe her when she reminds them that she's a girl." – Social Justice Books

A House for Everyone: A Story to Help Children Learn about Gender Identity and Gender Expression by Jo Hirst

"A very simple story that challenges gender stereotypes and shows 4 to 8 year olds that it is OK to be yourself. An engaging story that is more than just an educational tool; this book will assist parents and teachers in giving children the space to explore the full spectrum of gender diversity and will show children the many ways they can express their gender in a truly positive light." - Goodreads

All I Want Is to Be Me by Phyllis Rosenblatt

"A beautifully illustrated children's book reflecting the diverse ways that young children experience and express their gender. The book gives voice to the feelings of children who don't fit into narrow gender stereotypes, and who just want to be free to be themselves. This book is a celebration of all children being who they are, and is a positive reflection of children, wherever they experience themselves on the gender spectrum. *All I Want To Be Is Me* offers a wonderful way for all children to learn about gender diversity, embracing different ways to be, and being a true friend."

– Book Depository

Angus All Aglow by Angus All Aglow

"Angus loves all things shiny, sparkly, and attention-grabbing. This isn't limited to his apparel; he loves anything that has some extra razzle-dazzle: jewels, nature, and words. To Angus, sparkle is akin to an extra burst for the senses. Angus' "sapphire-studded scissors sizzle," and the stars above "crackle like a campfire." Angus' favorite bit of bling is his grandmother's necklace—five strands of multicolored glass beads that seem to pop. When she gives him the necklace, Angus wants to show it off to his friends at school. Undeterred by his family's mild protests, Angus wears the necklace and is immediately mocked. A kind classmate named Melody eventually helps Angus rediscover the beauty of bling by reconstructing the necklace into two friendship bracelets. Smith's story accomplishes some great things: It introduces readers to new reach-word vocabulary, and Angus' love of sparkle isn't tied directly to sexuality or gender identity, allowing it to reach the heterosexual cis boys who love a little glitz and glimmer. The message stumbles slightly because Angus' emotional well-being lives and dies by the opinions of others; he never finds the strength to trust his own beliefs. Carter's cartoonish illustrations, a combination of watercolor, gouache, and pencil, are muted, and the vibrancy described in the story is not relayed via the images. They depict Angus as biracial (his dad has brown skin, and his mom is white) and Melody as black." – Kirkus Review

Bunnybear by Andrea J. Loney

"A sweet story of friendship and acceptance. Whimsical, cheery illustrations tell the story of a bear who looks like most bears. But when he is alone, he bounces, wiggles his nose, and nibbles on strawberries. He calls himself Bunnybear. The other bears don't understand him and deem him odd. So he leaves home and eventually finds himself looking down a rabbit hole. Even though they are "tiny and fluffy and bouncy, like Bunnybear's heart," the rabbits find him as odd as the bears did and tell him to leave. Alone and bewildered—he doesn't feel like a bear, but he doesn't look like a rabbit—he is at a loss. Then he meets a rabbit. Only this rabbit is more than a rabbit: she looks like a rabbit but feels like a bear—

## VTLIB Red Clover Conference, November 2018

she is Grizzlybun! And so starts a friendship of two who look one way on the outside but feel another way on the inside. Unlike many stories of differentness in which the characters just want to fit in, here the characters are happy to be who they are—it is others who must come to accept them. The book has a strong beginning but a weak ending that peters out and turns both didactic and puzzling; still the message of being true to one's nature is one many children need to hear." – Kirkus Reviews

### From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea by Kai Cheng Thom & Kai Yun Ching

"A fantasy-inspired story of gender and identity told by trans writer Thom, Miu Lan can't decide if they are a "bird or fish," "cat or rabbit," "tree or star." They were born "when both the moon and the sun were in the sky," so their identity shifts with the games they play and the time of day. In charming, fancifully childlike illustrations pitched to a young audience, readers see the Chinese child swim, fly, prance, and run in different animal guises. Their mother constantly assures them of her love in a song repeated throughout. Of course, when Miu Lan goes to school in "a tail of peacock feathers and a coat of tiger stripes," their classmates are not so accepting. Exclusion and mild bullying commence as Miu Lan tries to figure out how to fit in, but their mother continues to reassure them, and of course the story ends with full acceptance: "i was a little jealous," one boy even admits. (The unconventional use of lowercase letters reinforces the sense of Miu Lan's fluid identity.) The story is somewhat long-winded and predictable, but the traditional arc and themes can resonate with any child who feels excluded (or excludes others) and can also open up conversations about nonbinary gender identities." – Kirkus Reviews

### I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel

"In a child's easily understood voice, 13-year-old Jazz tells her story. She explains how her parents let her play as a girl at home where her siblings accept her as her parents do. "But whenever we went out, I had to put on my boy clothes again. This made me mad!" After a new doctor explains that Jazz is transgender, she lives as a girl at school as well as at home. Jazz acknowledges that she has had problems with other kids and with school rules about boys and girls but says that she feels happy and proud as her authentic self. The pastel watercolor illustrations by Shelagh McNicholas are a bit sugary, but they fit the child's perceptions and make her life seem very normal and create an impression that this is simply another picture book and not a society-improving tract. For families with children who are transgender or gender non-conforming, this book is affirming and age appropriate. It will also serve adults who want to encourage all children to be more understanding of gender diversity. I Am Jazz belongs in every library that serves the primary grades and in every collection of materials about people who are transgender" – ALA GLBT Roundtable

### Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship by Jess Walton

"Errol and his teddy, Thomas, play together all the time, so when Thomas is sad one day, Errol wants to know if he can help. Thomas nervously tells Errol that she's actually a girl teddy, and she wishes her name was Tilly. Errol hugs her, assuring her, "What matters is that you are my friend." With Tilly feeling better, Errol calls their friend Ava to come play. On arriving, she greets Tilly by her old name, but Errol introduces Tilly. Ava tells her what a great name that is and invites her to go play. Tilly has one adjustment to make—she refashions her bow tie into a hair bow—and Ava, encouraging her to wear what she likes, takes her own hair bow off to let her long red hair go free. Life goes on as normal for Errol and Tilly, and as before, they ride Errol's bike, plant vegetables in the garden, eat lunch in the treehouse, and have tea parties when it rains. Walton gently explains Tilly's gender, which is a small ripple in the lives of children at play, and subtly pokes at gender roles with Errol's tea parties and Ava's robot building. MacPherson's illustrations are sweet, with a sketchy, contemporary style. He draws Errol and Ava skinny, with white skin and pink noses. Tilly is plump with tiny ears." – Kirkus Reviews

### Jacob's New Dress by Sarah & Ian Hoffman

"In a warmly illustrated picture book meant to comfort both boys who are gender-nonconforming and their parents, young Jacob asks his mom for a dress to wear to school. At first, Jacob's interest in wearing dresses is limited to playing dress-up. When his classmate Christopher tells him he ought to wear boys' clothes instead, Jacob's friend Emily answers with age-appropriate defenses ("Christopher, stop telling us what to do"). Jacob's mom hesitates when Jacob expresses interest in wearing a dress as school clothes, but eventually, both she and Jacob's dad agree to it. The segments with

## VTLIB Red Clover Conference, November 2018

Jacob's mom and dad seem aimed at parents as much as at children. Jacob's mom's look of concern when he first asks about the dress is poignant, and his dad's words of acceptance ("Well, it's not what I would wear, but you look great") could easily serve as a model for fathers in similar positions. What rings less true is the story's rosy end. Faced with Christopher's bullying comments and other kids' laughter, Jacob is so buoyed by his new dress that he stands up to Christopher himself, then sprints triumphantly across the playground, "his dress spreading out like wings." Hopeful and affirming, but children familiar with bullying may find the conclusion too simple." – School Library Journal

### Julián Is a Mermaid by Jessica Love

"The story begins on the front endpapers with a group of older women in a pool and a boy swimming underwater. The next spread (on the copyright and title pages) shows the child, Julián, walking to the subway with one of the women, his abuela, followed by three magnificent-looking people dressed as mermaids. Julián loves mermaids, and this encounter leads him into a daydream where he dives deep into the water, shedding clothes and transforming himself into a mermaid. Arriving home, Julián creates a makeshift mermaid outfit from household objects (including the leaves of a houseplant and window curtains) and puts on lipstick. When Abuela discovers Julián in mermaid attire, there's a very slight narrative pause: "'Oh!' Uh-oh." How will Abuela react? Happily, it's all good: Abuela gives Julián a string of beads to complete the outfit, then the two walk proudly arm in arm toward a festive parade, joining others joyfully dressed as mermaids, stingrays, and other sea creatures (à la Coney Island's Mermaid Parade). Julián's emotional journey takes on depth through the small but important details: a wary look in the mirror, a slight inward slump of the shoulders, a chin held high while marching down the street. Love uses vibrant watercolors with gouache and ink and a lively style to create scenes that splash and swirl to life on the page." – The Horn Book

### My Princess Boy by Cheryl Kilodavis

"The short text is a mother's love note to her 4-year-old son, who enjoys wearing "girly dresses," twirling like a ballerina and wearing a tiara. Noting that the lad is also lovingly accepted by his older brother, his father and playmates but not always by others, the narrator goes on to ask leading questions ("Would you laugh at him?"). Scripted responses follow ("I will not laugh at him"), appearing on translucent overlays in very large letters when certain lines of text are tapped. In the cartoon illustrations, stars pop into view and rise through pink skies as touches send balls bouncing, cause flowers to emit rapid drumbeats and make the boy (who looks considerably older than 4) and the other weirdly faceless human figures dance. An interactive counting game is shoehorned in midway through. "My Princess Boy is your Princess Boy," the narrative concludes obscurely—a sentiment hinting that parents may have been the author's intended audience all along. Utterly without subtlety, but there's little enough out there addressing the needs of transgender children that this can be comfortably overlooked." – Kirkus Reviews

### Neither by Airlie Anderson

"Once upon a time, there were two kinds: this and that": blue bunnies and yellow birds, with no other options. Until one day, an unusual egg hatches something that's a bit of both—it's a bright green creature with ears and tail like a bunny's on a body like a bird's. An animal that's both, or Neither, does not really fit in anywhere, not quite "rabbity" nor "birdy" enough. So Neither flies off for Somewhere Else and stumbles upon a friendly community with lots of other "neither" sorts. Anderson's bright gouache illustrations depict fantastic, rainbow-hued creatures that don't quite fit into any neat box, not even those of well-known mythical creatures. Wings, spots, unicorn horns, and beaks, in any combination, all are welcome in the Land of All. Overtly a celebration of nonbinary identities, this parable is well-suited for any shelf seeking positive diversity titles for preschoolers and early-elementary students. Reminiscent of other recent titles in the same vein, this stands out for its accessibility to even very young read-aloud audiences. A sweet story of acceptance for all those who are this, that, neither, either, and everything in between" – Kirkus Reviews

### One of a Kind, Like Me / Unico Como Yo by Laurin Mayeno

"A multilingual book every elementary school should own. It takes the subject of gender identity out of the public discourse, where morality and religion weigh heavily in the debate, and puts it into the personal realm of a young boy named Danny/Danielito. Teaching readers about gender expression from a child's point of view does exactly what children do best – cut right to the heart of the matter." – Social Justice Books

Pink is for Boys by Robb Perlman

“With simple text and vibrant illustrations of racially diverse children playing together, this book introduces 10 colors “for boys. And girls.” For each new color, Pearlman shares an example of where to find the color: on sports uniforms, crowns, race cars, and teddy bears. Each color is presented in simple, repetitive text on verso (alternating which gender as specified first) with a vignette on recto and then on the next, full-bleed double-page spread. Kaban’s illustrations of children dancing, running, and flying on winged unicorns add an element of liveliness to keep the repetition from turning stale. Colored type that corresponds with the name of each introduced color encourages young readers to participate in the story. Although the book shares the message that “all colors are for everyone,” the lead-up to this conclusion perpetuates the notion that gender is binary. For a book that aims at inclusiveness, this one misses the bull’s-eye.” – Kirkus Reviews

Red: A Crayon Story by Michael Hall

“Red is a crayon, and children will see his problem right away: his label reads “red,” but he’s blue. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he’s a poor performer in school, where his drawings are expected to be red. Hall (*It’s an Orange Aardvark!*) has a fine ear for dialogue, and the overly cheerful encouragement Red endures will sound familiar to any child who’s struggled to perform: “I’ll draw a red strawberry, then you draw a red strawberry,” coaches the scarlet crayon. “You can do this. Really!” But a page turn reveals two rows of strawberries, one scarlet and the other... blue. A Greek chorus of grown-up crayons lined up across a black spread makes patronizing comments: “He’s got to press harder.” “Really apply himself!” Only when Red is at his wit’s end does he meet Berry, a crayon who actually sees him. “Will you make a blue ocean for my boat?” Berry asks quietly, and that’s all it takes to change Red’s life. Stories about accepting differences abound, but this one delivers its message in an unexpectedly affecting way.”

– Children’s Book Review

Sparkle Boy by Lesléa Newman

“When older sister Jessie shows off her shimmery accessories, little brother Casey wants them, too, even if Jessie disapproves of sparkles on boys. In three repetitive vignettes featuring the siblings, Jessie appeals in turn to their mom, dad, and Abuelita to back up her claim that boys can’t have what she has. In each case, the adult hesitates but ultimately affirms that Casey may wear a skirt, nail polish, and a bracelet if he likes. In the fourth and final tale, other children at the library misgender Casey and say that “everyone will laugh at” his clothes. Of course, in the grand tradition of older siblings everywhere, Jessie decides that no one else is permitted to tease or judge her younger brother, and she paints Casey’s nails herself when they return home. Though somewhat on the wordy side, this slice-of-life story will appeal to families...” – School Library Journal

The Boy & the Bindi by Vivek Shraya

“An unnamed South Asian boy becomes fascinated with the decoration on his mother's brow, and when she explains what it means to her, he asks for one of his own. The bindi makes him feel safe, calm, sure. His white friends at the playground wonder what it is, and he has trouble explaining, but he decides he'll never be without it. He feels small and ugly sometimes, but the bindi brings beauty where there was none. Shraya uses rhyme, sometimes a bit awkwardly, to tell her tale. At the end, her protagonist imagines readers asking, "Why is it so special anyway?" More sure of himself now, the boy explains that it's like a third eye watching over him, reminding him not to hide himself away and to embrace his potential self. The bright, beautiful illustrations by Perera do the heavy lifting, symbolically infusing the boy’s cultural difference with the spiritual power it carries for the wearer. The book does not say that bindis are mainly worn by Hindu women in relation to their marital status, allowing readers familiar with the culture to imagine what it means for the boy's mother. Her decision to give one to her son opens up discussions of gender within cultural norms, including the fact that some Hindu men wear bindis for spiritual reasons unrelated to marital status.” – Kirkus Reviews

They She He Me: Free to Be! by Maya & Matthew Smith-Gonzalez

“The authors have succeeded in creating a gorgeous and much-needed picture book about pronouns and gender fluidity. Rich watercolor artwork, done in a spectrum of blue and green jewel tones, depicts a line of smiling people,

### VTLIB Red Clover Conference, November 2018

each with a different skin color and all sporting a unique style; the abundance of visual detail is sure to provoke audience participation. Minimal text complements the lush illustrations: a solid-color strip runs along the bottom of each spread and indicates the pronoun (“She,” “He,” “They,” “Ze,” etc.) of the figure above (some figures appear twice, emphasizing that people can use multiple pronouns to describe themselves). The final spread reveals a plethora of familiar faces and the word *we* sprinkled jovially throughout. A more text-heavy “Pronouns” section explains pronoun function and flexibility in language suitable for the audience. Back matter discusses gender ambiguity and inclusivity “for the grown-ups” and stresses the importance of embracing nonbinary gender terminology in the book and beyond. Librarians can use this title with both young listeners as an introduction and with older students in conversations on nuance and fluidity.” – School Library Journal

### Who Are You? The Kids Guide to Gender Identity by Brook Pessin-Whedbee

“An illustrated children's book with a straightforward introduction to gender for anyone aged 3+. It presents clear and direct language for understanding and talking about how we experience gender: our bodies, our expression and our identity. An interactive three-layered wheel included in the book is a simple, yet powerful, tool to clearly demonstrate the difference between our body, how we express ourselves through our clothes and hobbies, and our gender identity. A short page-by-page guide for adults at the back of the book further explains the key concepts and identifies useful discussion points. This is a one-of-a-kind resource for understanding and celebrating the gender diversity that surrounds us.” – Sharon the Librarian Blog