

Annotated Bibliography of Children's Books about Gender Diversity

(See section at end of bibliography of books written by kids for kids)

26 Fairmont Avenue (series). DePaola, Tomie G.P. Putnam. 1999–2009.

DePaola recounts his childhood exploits, including dressing up as Snow White for Halloween and using his mother's lipstick to dress up as his favorite actress, Mae West. Ages 5 – 8

10,000 Dresses. Ewert, Marcus. Seven Stories Press. 2008.

Every night, Bailey dreams about magical dresses: dresses made of crystals and rainbows, dresses made of flowers, dresses made of windows. . . Unfortunately, when Bailey's awake, no one wants to hear about these beautiful dreams. Then Bailey meets Laurel, an older girl who is touched and inspired by Bailey's imagination and courage, and Bailey's dreams come true! Ages 5+

The Adventures of Tulip, Birthday Wish Fairy. Bergman, S. Bear. Flamingo Rampant. 2012.

Follow Tulip as he deals with the birthday wishes of all the nine-year-olds in North America. Tulip receives a wish from a child known as David who wishes to live as Daniela. He doesn't understand how to help, so he seeks the wise counsel of the Wish Fairy Captain. Ages 3 – 8

All I Want To Be Is Me. Rothblatt, Phyliss. CreateSpace Independent Publishing. 2011.

All I Want To Be Is Me reflects 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. Visit www.alliwanttobeisme.com to learn more about how this book can be used by parents and teachers, and to hear the original song, "All I Want To Be Is Me", that goes along with the book. Ages 4+

Amazing Grace. Hoffman, Mary. Dial. 1991.

Grace loves stories, whether they're from books, movies, or the kind her grandmother tells. So when she gets a chance to play a part in Peter Pan, she knows exactly who she wants to be. Ages 4+

Are You a Boy or a Girl? Jimenez, Karleen Pendelton. Distributed by Two Lives Publishing. 2006.

Black and white photo illustrations accompany the story of a girl who follows her own interests, despite the comments of others. Ages 4 – 8

Avocado Baby. Burningham, John. HarperCollins. 1982.

The Hargraves, a kind but scrawny family, want their new baby to grow up big and strong. But the tiny genderless kiddo will hardly eat a thing. One day, Mrs. Hargraves finds an avocado in the fruit bowl, and the infant gobbles it up. But then, the strangest things begin to happen as the baby develops superhuman strength. Ages 3 - 7

Backwards Day. Bergman, S. Bear. Flamingo Rampant. 2012.

Tenalp is a world where there are seventeen seasons, including one where bubblegum falls from the sky for three days and a single day when everything - everything everywhere - is backwards. Andrea looks eagerly forward to Backwards Day every year, so she can turn into a boy for the day. But one year she doesn't turn along with everyone else. She's miserable. The very next day, however, she turns into a boy - and stays that way! When they finally figure out what's happened, the miracles of Backwards Day are fully revealed to the reader. Ages 7+

Ballerino Nate. Brubaker Bradley, Kimberly. Dial. 2006.

Nate has the heart of a dancer, and he is determined to learn ballet. Even his older brother, Ben, can't change his mind with his claims that "boys don't dance." Or can he? When Ben tells Nate that he'll have to wear pink shoes and a dress, Nate becomes awfully worried. And when he's the only boy in his ballet class, he begins to think that maybe Ben is right. Ages 4+

Be Who You Are. Carr, Jennifer. AuthorHouse. 2010.

Be Who You Are is a picture book depicting the life of a transgender girl. Nick was born in a "boy's body" but has always felt like a girl inside. Supported by family, Nick requests to be no longer called a boy or dress like a boy; "Always remember to be who you are Nick. Remember that we love you, and we are so proud of you." Ages 7+

The Boy & the Bindi. Shraya, Vivek. Arsenal Pulp Press. 2016.

In this beautifully illustrated children's picture book a five-year-old boy becomes fascinated with his mother's bindi, the red dot commonly worn by South Asian women on their forehead, and wishes to have one of his own. Rather than chastise her son, she agrees to it, allowing the boy to discover the magic of the bindi, which in turn gives him permission to be more fully himself. Ages 4 - 8

The Boy Who Cried Fabulous. Newman, Lesléa. Tricycle Press. 2007.

The only thing Roger likes better than exploring the world around him is describing it. And Roger describes most things as "fabulous"! But his parents have a different view. They want Roger to see things the way they do, so they ban "fabulous" from his vocabulary. Ages 4+

The Boy with Pink Hair. Hilton, Perez. Celebra Children's Books. 2011.

He was born that way-The Boy with Pink Hair. He had a cotton candy colored mop that no one had ever seen before . . . Life is not easy being pink. Adults stare at you, little children giggle behind your back and some kids are just mean. But when you have a best friend who appreciates your uniqueness and parents who are loving and supportive, you can do just about anything. Ages 3+

Cinder Edna. Jackson, Ellen. Harper Collins. 1998.

The famous Cinderella and her neighbor Cinder Edna each worked sunup to sundown for their wicked stepmother and stepsisters. But while Cinderella had the good fortune to be rescued by her fairy godmother, Edna was strong, self-reliant, spunky--and she lived happier ever after! Ages 3+

The Courage of the Blue Boy. Neubecker, Robert. Tricycle Press. 2006.

Blue boy and Polly, his calf, live in a land where everything, including them, is blue. They dream of seeing other places of different colors. They soon arrive in a wondrous multi-colored city. It fills them with joy until they notice once more that only they are blue. Gathering his courage, Blue decides to add his own hues to the city so it will represent all colors but enable him to remain true to self. Ages 5 - 8

Don't Kiss That Frog. Waters, Fiona (Compiled by). Kingfisher, First Edition. 2008.

Featuring the work of seven writers and three illustrators, this anthology of "princess stories with attitude" will make kids laugh as they encounter a bevy of sleepy, sporty, clumsy, brave, resourceful, and curious princesses. For kids who love tiaras, ball gowns, and happy endings--—but also sports, silly jokes, and being different. Ages 6 - 10

Elena's Serenade. Geeslin, Campbell. Atheneum Books for Young Readers. 2004.

Elena disguises herself as a boy and learns to be a glassblower like her father, finally earning his respect for her artistry. Ages 3 - 7

A Fire Engine for Ruthie. Newman, Lesléa. Clarion Books. 2004.

Nana has dolls and dress-up clothes for Ruthie to play with, but Ruthie would rather have a fire engine. Ages 2 – 5

Goblinheart. Axel, Brett and Bidlespacher, Terra. East Waterfront Press. 2012.

Using "fairy" and "goblin" in lieu of female and male, the author has created a timely allegorical fairy tale. A youngster named Julep, who lives in a forest tribe, insists on growing up to be a goblin rather than a fairy. The tribe learns to accept that Julep is a goblin at heart, eventually coming around to support the physical transition that must be made for Julep to live as a goblin. Ages 4 – 7

I am Jazz. Herthel, Jessica. Dial. 2014.

The story of a transgender child based on the real-life experience of Jazz Jennings, who has become a spokesperson for transkids everywhere. Ages 4 – 8

I Look Like a Girl. Hamanaka, Sheila. Harper Collins. 1999.

In this picture book, exuberant girls burst the confines of traditional expectations. Each child, while engaging in typical childhood activities, is imagining a life as free and wild as that of a tiger, dolphin, mustang, condor, or wolf. Ages 3 – 8

Introducing Teddy. Walton, Jessica and MacPherson, Dougal. Bloomsbury USA Childrens. 2016.

Errol and his teddy, Thomas, are best friends who do everything together. One sunny day, Errol finds that Thomas is sad, even when they are playing in their favorite ways. Errol can't figure out why, until Thomas finally tells Errol what the teddy has been afraid to say: "In my heart, I've always known that I'm a girl teddy, not a boy teddy. I wish my name was Tilly, not Thomas." And Errol says, "I don't care if you're a girl teddy or a boy teddy! What matters is that you are my friend." *Introducing Teddy* introduces the youngest readers to understanding gender identity and transition in a story about being true to yourself and being a good friend. Ages 3 – 6

It's Okay to Be Different. Parr, Todd. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. 2001.

While not specifically addressing gender issues, the book enumerates many ways in which it's okay to be different. Ages 3 – 7

Jacob's New Dress. Hoffman, Sarah, Hoffman, Ian, & Case, Chris. Albert Whitman & Company. 2014.

Jacob loves playing dress-up, when he can be anything he wants to be. Some kids at school say he can't wear "girl" clothes, but Jacob wants to wear a dress to school. Can he convince his parents to let him wear what he wants? This heartwarming story speaks to the unique challenges faced by boys who don't identify with traditional gender roles. Ages 4 – 7

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match: Marisol McDonald no combina. Brown Ph.D. Monica, & Palacios, Sara. Children's Book Press. 2013.

Marisol McDonald has flaming red hair and nut-brown skin. Polka dots and stripes are her favorite combination. She prefers peanut butter and jelly burritos in her lunch box. To Marisol, these seemingly mismatched things make perfect sense together. Other people wrinkle their nose in confusion at Marisol—can't she just choose one or the other? Try as she might, in a world where everyone tries to put this biracial, Peruvian-Scottish-American girl into a box, Marisol McDonald doesn't match. And that's just fine with her. Story told in English and Spanish. Ages 4 – 8

Max. Isadora, Rachel. MacMillan. 1984.

Max warms up for his weekly baseball game by attending his sister's ballet class. Ages 4 – 8

Mighty Jackie: The Strikeout Queen. Moss, Marissa. Simon & Schuster. 2004.

Non-fiction account of teenaged Jackie Mitchell who pitched against baseball greats Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth. Ages 4 – 8

Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress. Baldacchino, Christine. 2014.

Morris is a little boy who loves using his imagination. But most of all, Morris loves wearing the tangerine dress in his classroom's dress-up center. The children in Morris's class don't understand. Dresses, they say, are for girls. And Morris certainly isn't welcome in the spaceship some of his classmates are building. Astronauts, they say, don't wear dresses. One day when Morris feels all alone and sick from their taunts, his mother lets him stay home from school. Morris dreams of a fantastic space adventure with his cat, Moo. Inspired by his dream, Morris paints the incredible scene he saw and brings it with him to school. He builds his own spaceship, hangs his painting on the front of it and takes two of his classmates on an outer space adventure. Ages 4-7

My Princess Boy (A mom's story about a young boy who loves to dress up.) Kilodavis, Cheryl. KD Talent LLC. 2010.

My Princess Boy tells the tale of 4-year-old boy who happily expresses his authentic self by happily dressing up in dresses, and enjoying traditional girl things such as jewelry and anything pink or sparkly. This story opens a dialogue about embracing uniqueness, and teaches to accept young boys who might cross traditional gender norms. Ages 4+

Oliver Button is a Sissy. DePaola, Tomie. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1979.

Oliver prefers to read, paint, and wants to take tap-dancing lessons, and is jeered at by classmates. His father reluctantly allows the dance classes because they are a form of exercise, and Oliver goes on to wow his classmates at the school talent show, even though he doesn't win. Ages 4 – 8

One of a Kind, Like Me/Único como yo. Mayeno, Laurin. Blood Orange Press. 2016.

Tomorrow is the school parade, and Danny knows exactly what he will be: a princess. Mommy supports him 100%, and they race to the thrift store to find his costume. It's almost closing time will Danny find the costume of his dreams in time? *One of A Kind, Like Me / Único como yo* is a story about unconditional love and the beauty of individuality. Story told in English and Spanish. Ages 4 - 8

The Only Boy in Ballet Class. Gruska, Denise. Gibbs Smith. 2007.

People don't understand how wonderful dancing makes Tucker feel, and he is teased and taunted, until his dance skills lead to a stunning move on the football field. Ages 5 – 8

The Paper Bag Princess. Munsch, Robert. Annick Press. 1992.

Princess Elizabeth is slated to marry Prince Ronald when a dragon attacks the castle and kidnaps Ronald. In resourceful and humorous fashion, Elizabeth finds the dragon, outsmarts him, and rescues Ronald --- who is less than pleased at her un-princess-like appearance. Ages 4+

Pink. Rickards, Lynne. The Chicken House. 2009.

What's a penguin to think when he wakes up pink? Poor Patrick hates the idea of being different from all his friends, and sets off to Africa in search of pink flamingos that might accept a pink penguin. He soon discovers that color isn't everything. Ages 4+

Pink is Just a Color and So is Blue. Bhatia, Niki. CreateSpace Independent Publishing. 2012.

You're a boy who likes pink? Great! You like to play with dolls? Fantastic! Your best friend is a girl—and she likes to crash cars, build things, and play pirates? Awesome! Playing is about having fun, exploring and learning about the bigger world! Forget about what toys are for girls and what toys are for boys. How else would a boy decide he wants to be a chef one day? How else might a girl get the idea that she too could be a fire fighter? We are all different and like different things. What matters is that we are happy and confident. Ages 3 - 8

Pinky and Rex and the Bully. Howe, James. Atheneum Books. 1999.

Pinky is a boy who likes pink, and whose best friend is a girl. When the neighborhood bully challenges him about these things, Pinky begins to doubt himself, but is able to be true to himself and stand up to the bully with some advice from a friendly neighbor. Ages 4 – 8

Play Free. Mason, MaCall and Suarez, Max. Maxnmestudio. 2012.

Girls can wear pants, boys can wear dresses. None of that should cause any messes. Take a stroll through the life of a boy who just wants to be accepted for who he is. Walk in his shoes for a minute as he shows you his playhouse and introduces you to his friends. Soon you'll see that we're all pretty similar and being different isn't really that big of a deal. Ages 4 – 7

The Princess Knight. Funke, Cornelia. New York: Chicken House/Scholastic. 2003.

Despite the taunting of her brothers, Princess Violetta becomes a talented knight, and when her father proposes to give her hand in marriage to the knight who wins a tournament, Violetta uses her brains as well as her brawn to outwit him. Ages 4 – 7

Princess Smartypants. Cole, Babette. G.P. Putnam. 2005.

Princess Smartypants prefers to stay a "Ms." and easily dispatches all but one of her annoying suitors. Ridding herself of the final one is a bit more of a challenge. Ages 4 – 7

Pugdog. U'ren, Andrea. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 2001.

Pugdog's rather silly owner thinks she's a he, and when he finds out otherwise, he dolls Pugdog up in his idea of femininity. Pugdog hates this, preferring to roll in the mud and play rough. Then they meet a dolled-up poodle that turns out to be male. Ages 3 – 5

Red: A Crayon's Story. Hall, Michael. Greenwillow Books. 2015.

Red has a bright red label, but he is, in fact, blue. His teacher tries to help him be red (let's draw strawberries!), his mother tries to help him be red by sending him out on a play date with a yellow classmate (go draw a nice orange!), and the scissors try to help him be red by snipping his label so that he has room to breathe. But Red just can't be red, no matter how hard he tries! Finally, a new friend offers a brand-new perspective, and Red discovers what readers have known all along. He's blue! Ages 4 – 8

Roland Humphrey is Wearing a WHAT? Kiernan-Johnson, Eileen. Huntley Rahara Press. 2012.

This is the story of a little boy's quest to be his authentic self, dressed in pink and festooned with sparkles, in a world that frowns upon boys who like "girly" things. Roland sees girls at his school dress in a rainbow of hues and is confused by the "rules" limiting what boys can choose; he doesn't understand why girls can like sports and ballet, but for boys there's just one way. Written in verse. Ages 4 - 8

Rickshaw Girl. Perkins, Mitali Charlesbridge Publishing. 2008.

Ten-year-old Naima longs to earn money to help her poor Bangladeshi family, but her talent in painting traditional patterns, or alpanas, is no use. Disguised as a boy to drive her father's rickshaw, she wrecks the vehicle threatening the family's sole livelihood. Her solution is to steal away, disguised as a boy, to a repair shop and offer her services painting decorations on the rickshaws. She is surprised to find that the owner is a woman. Ages 7+

School Picture Day. Plourde, Lynn. Dutton Children's Books. 2002.

Josephina's talent in taking things apart to see how they work comes in handy on school picture day when the photographer's camera goes on the blink. Age 4 – 7

The Sissy Duckling. Fierstein, Harvey. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. 2002.

Elmer the duckling faces the derision of his schoolmates and out and out rejection by his father, but he has a mother who sticks up for him no matter what. And when he saves his father's life, Papa declares, "If Elmer is a sissy, then I wish I were a sissy too!" in a resounding moment of triumph for sissies everywhere. Ages 4 – 8

The Story of Ferdinand. Leaf, Munro. Viking Press. 1936.

Our favorite young bull prefers to sit and smell the flowers, to the concern of his mother. Ages 4 – 8

Swamp Angel. Isaacs, Anne. Dutton. 1994.

Angelica Longrider, aka Swamp Angel, can lasso a tornado, and drink an entire lake dry. She single-handedly defeats the fearsome bear known as Thundering Tarnation, wrestling him from the top of the Great Smoky Mountains to the bottom of a deep lake. Ages 5-8

The Ugly Duckling. Andersen, Hans Christian. Adapted/Illustrated by Sebastien Braun. Boxer Books. 2010.

Even the ugly duckling's mother knew there was something different about him. Ages 2 – 5

Tutus Aren't My Style. Skeers, Linda. Dial. 2010.

Emma loves lizards and pirates and cowboy boots, so when a package arrives from Uncle Leo, she doesn't know what to do with the ballerina costume inside. "I don't know how to be a ballerina," Emma says. She flops when she should float, she trips when she should twirl, and her music sounds like burping! But when she decides to make her own rules about how to be a ballerina, Emma's style prevails in her triumphant dance debut. Ages 5 – 8

Virgie Goes to School with Us Boys. Fitzgerald Howard, Elizabeth. Aladdin. 2005.

The youngest and the only girl in a family with five boys, Virgie works hard to convince everyone she is old enough, strong enough, and smart enough to attend the school set up by the Quakers for recently freed blacks in Jonesborough, TN. By summer's end, she's convinced her family that she can make the seven-mile walk to board at school each week and handle the job of "learning to be free." Ages 5+

Wandering Son, Volumes 1-6. Takako, Shimura, Fantagraphics. 2011-13.

The fifth grade. The threshold to puberty, and the beginning of the end of childhood innocence. Shuichi Nitori and his new friend Yoshino Takatsuki have happy homes, loving families, and are well liked by their classmates. But they share a secret that further complicates a time of life that is awkward for anyone: Shuichi is a boy who wants to be a girl, and Yoshino is a girl who wants to be a boy. Written and drawn by one of today's most critically acclaimed creators of manga. Ages 10+

When Kathy is Keith. Wong, Wallace. Xlibris. 2011.

A sensitive portrayal of a young girl who identifies as a boy. Ages 3 – 6

When Kayla was Kyle. Frabikant, Amy. Avid Readers Publishing. 2013.

Kyle doesn't understand why the other kids at school call him names. He looks like other boys, but doesn't feel like them. Can Kyle find the words to share his feelings about his gender - and can his parents help him to transition into the girl he was born to be? Ages 4 - 8

White Dynamite and Curly Kidd. Martin, Bill & Archambault, John. Henry Holt and Co. 1989.

As Curly prepares to ride the "meanest bull in the whole United States," he explains to his proud but worried child how he overcomes his fear: he thinks about places he'd like to see. Lucky Kidd calls encouragement to dad. The story, told in dialogue, begs to be read aloud, and challenges our assumptions about gender expressions with what may be a surprise ending. Ages 4+

Who Are You?: The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity. Pessin-Whedbee, Brook. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 2017.

This non-fiction children's book provides an introduction to gender with straightforward language for talking about how we experience gender: our body, our expression, and our identity. For use in the classroom or at home, it includes an interactive wheel and a guide for adults, explaining key concepts and identifying useful discussion points. Ages 3+

William's Doll. Zolotow, Charlotte. Harper & Row. 1972.

To the dismay of his parents, and jeering of his brother, young William wants a doll. His grandmother convinces his father that it's an acceptable toy for a boy because it will help teach him how to be a father, thus resolving the issue in an acceptably heterosexual way. Ages 3 – 7

Books Written by Kids for Kids

Truly Willa. Naylor, Willa. Createspace. 2016.

This book, written by eight year old Willa, who is a transgender girl, tells her story of growing up transgender and how she becomes an advocate in her country for other transgender children. Ages 3+

I Am a Zebra. Ellenberg, Naava & Miller, Alexa. Blurb. 2016.

A story about all the kids who we see as elephants though they know they are zebras. Beautifully emphasizes the importance of accepting others as they see themselves. Written by two high school students. Ages 3+