

Online Tool Review – Queer Books for Teens

When looking to identify LGBTQA+ materials to include in a collection or to recommend to a reader, tools that help narrow down the selection can be incredibly useful. I came across the website, [Queer Books for Teens](#) while working on a previous assignment for our Services and Resources for Young Adults course and I was immediately impressed. It is an intuitively laid out website, with best of lists, resources for both teens and educators, and a page to recommend self-published books or books from independent publishers. For our YA Hotline issue, I chose to review this wonderful online tool, to help other library staff and the general public become aware of it and its uses.

The best aspect of Queer Books for Teens is the Find Books function. Users can find books either through the complete A to Z listing, the search function, or using one of the many filters available. A table of all the filters and their options can be found below.

Filter	Options
Gender	Cis girls Cis boys Genderqueer/Non-binary Trans girls Trans boys Gender fluid Intersex Agender
Sexual Orientation	Gay/Queer Lesbian/Queer Bisexual Heterosexual Asexual Pansexual Demisexual Gray-aseexual
Romantic Orientation	Homoromantic Bioromantic Heteroromantic Aromantic Panromantic Demiromantic Gray Romantic
Race/Ethnicity	White Black Latinx East Asian Multiracial South Asian Middle Eastern / North African

	Indigenous Pacific Islander
Religion	Christianity Judaism Islam Hinduism Atheism/Humanism Mormonism Buddhism Paganism
Genre	Contemporary Fantasy Graphic Novel Science Fiction Historical Romance Mystery/Thriller Short Stories
Location	US (United States) Fantasy World based on a western country UK (United Kingdom) Canada Fantasy World based on a non-western country Australia Europe East Asia Latin America South Asia Africa Middle East Germany Russia
Disability	Mental illness Physical disability Sensory disability Autism HIV/AIDS Brain injury/neurological disorder Chronic illness Cognitive disability Learning disability
Endings	Happy endings Happy endings: romance Unhappy ending: death Happy ending: single Unhappy ending

Unhappy ending: tragically alone

There are two other filters with single choices: Middle Grade, for middle grade level reading and Own Voices, based on the Own Voices hashtag. “#OwnVoices is a term coined by the writer Corinne Duyvis and refers to an author from a marginalized or under-represented group writing about their own experiences/from their own perspective, rather than someone from an outside perspective writing as a character from an underrepresented group” (SPL, 2021).

Users can also view a book’s trigger warnings. The creators added a page explaining their choices for use of terms relating to trigger warnings. These include warnings for topics related to trauma, as well as warnings about bigotry or hatred towards queer people in the book.

The tool also includes a separate page that explains the scope and controlled vocabulary. As well as an overall review, each filter and term are broken down into their own paragraph with their own explanation. Throughout this page, the authors added links to outside sources that define terms that may be unfamiliar to some users.

The abundance of filters, trigger warnings, and an in-depth scope and controlled vocabulary make Queer Books for Teens accessible. It is useful to teenagers and adults in the LGBTQA+ community, as well as people trying to learn more and to understand the nuances of the community.

As with every good online tool, there are many pros with a few cons. The downsides of Queer Books for Teens come from curation and upkeep. There are some books in the collection that are 15 to 20 years old. In a library’s standard weeding practices, such titles would have likely been removed by now and therefore they should either be removed from the website completely or it should be noted that the title is older and may no longer be available. In the LGBTQA+ community, new and acceptable terms are ever changing. By leaving older titles in the collection, Queer Books for Teens risks outdated and offensive terms being used in books they recommend if they do not change their practices.

Another unfortunate downside of Queer Books for Teens is users cannot search for books by publishing year. In fact, publishing year is not a factor in any entry in the collection. This was incredibly frustrating for me as a user. When I created a search string for Queer Books for Teens, I wanted to ensure the titles I was choosing were published within the last five or six years, due to the possibility of outdated or offensive language in older titles. Since publishing year is not a searchable component on the website, I had to search each title individually on a different platform (I used [Goodreads](#)). Such a small component as publishing year can make a huge difference for users.

Overall, I think Queer Books for Teens is a wonderful tool. Their mission and accessibility standards make them a valuable contribution to the LGBTQA+ community. I appreciate that this website seems to be ran voluntarily, but still manages to be updated and curated incredibly well. I found some issues with the collection and their search filters, but they are minor overall. I’m very impressed with this tool and I think it is a great online tool that is openly available to the public.

To test the Queer Books for Teens collection, I created a search string of books with happy endings using the 'endings' filter. There were 142 results. I analyzed those results and only added books that were published after 2015/2016. Below are the titles chosen, in alphabetical order by title.

Title	Author	Year	Other Notes
Always Human	Ari North	2020	
Any Way the Wind Blows	Carlin Grant	2016	
Anything Could Happen	Will Walton	2015	
Banished Sons of Poseidon	Andrew J. Peters	2015	2nd in series
Caught Inside	Jamie Deacon	2016	1st in series
Cheerleaders from Planet X	Lyssa Chiavari	2017	
Cherry	Lindsey Rosin	2016	
Coady and the Creepies	Liz Prince	2017	Graphic novel series
Come to My Window	Mia Kerick	2015	
Coming Out Catholic	Alex Dunkin	2017	
Courting Light	A. Zukowski	2018	
Dead Weight: Murder at Camp Bloom	Terry Blas and Molly Muldoon	2018	Graphic novel series
Draw the Line	Laurent Linn	2017	
Fans of the Impossible Life	Kate Scelsa	2015	
Far from the Tree	Robin Benway	2017	
Fire Song	Adam Garnet Jones	2018	
Frannie and Tru	Karen Hatstrup	2016	

George	Alex Gino	2015	A little young for YA
In Other Lands	Sarah Rees Brennan	2017	
In the Present Tense	Carrie Pack	2016	1st in the series
Jaya and Rasa	Sonia Patel	2017	
Labyrinth Lost	Zoraida Cordova	2017	1st in the series
Love: Beyond Body, Space & Time	Hope Nicholson	2016	
Lumberjanes	Faith Hicks, Kelly Thompson, multiple authors	2015	Graphic novel series
Mala & the Mask of Gold	Jaime Martin Ko Atilano	2020	
Moonshine	Jasmine Gower	2018	
Nobody's Butterfly	Claire Davis	2017	
On a Sunbeam	Tillie Walden	2018	
Operatic	Kyo Maclear & Byron Eggenschwiler	2019	
Our Bloody Pearl	D.N. Bryn	2018	
Reasons to Love a Nerd Like Me	Becky Jerams	2015	
Six of Crows	Leigh Bardugo	2015	
SLAM!	Pamela Ribon	2017	Graphic novel series
Snowsisters	Tom Wilinsky & Jen Sternick	2018	
Solve for I	A.E. Dooland	2017	

Sometimes We Tell the Truth	Kim Zarins	2016	
South of Sunshine	Dana Elmendorf	2016	
Spell on Wheels	Kate Leth, Megan Levens, Marissa Louise, etc.	2017	Graphic novel series
Taproot	Keezy Young	2017	Graphic novel
The Abyss Surrounds Us	Emily Skrutskie	2016	
The Cursed Queen	Sarah Fine	2017	2nd in the series
The Eldritch Heart	Matthew S. Cox	2018	1st in the series
The Loveless Princess	Lilian Bodley	2017	
The Sidekicks	Will Kostakis	2016	
The Raven and the Reindeer	T. Kingfisher	2016	
The Stars We Steal	Alexa Donne	2020	
The Tea Dragon Society	Katie O'Neill	2017	
True Letters from a Fictional Life	Kenneth Logan	2016	
Warrior	ed. Antonica Jones	2017	A collection of short stories
We Awaken	Calista Lynne	2016	
We Go Forward	Alison Evans	2016	
Whatever. Or how junior year became totally f\$@ked	S.J. Goslee	2016	
Year of the Guilty Soul	A.M. Leibowitz	2018	

References

Goodreads. (n.d.). Retrieved April 5, 2021, from <https://www.goodreads.com/>

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The Seattle Public Library. (2021). *General recommendations – own voices*. Retrieved April 1, 2021, from <https://seattle.bibliocommons.com/list/share/628692720/1259856807>