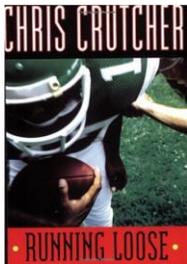


## Books on Trial: *Running Loose*



Crutcher, Chris. *Running Loose*. Toronto, ON: HarperCollins Canada, 2003. 224pp. ISBN 0-060-09491-5.

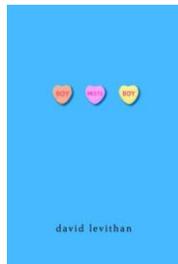
This book is about a teenage boy whose plans for the perfect year come crashing down around him. He leaves the football team in order to make a stand against the dirty plays that his coach advocates and what he perceives as racial injustice. It deals with the themes of loss, growing up, and accepting responsibility. Despite these positive themes running through the novel, it has been challenged because of its mention of sex. Of particular concern is one passage:

“He poked a hole in the bottom of the popcorn box and stuck Ol’ Norton up through...when she’d eaten down about halfway...she got a handful. Said she shrieked at first, but then she started playing with it and went crazy” (12).

While this passage may be slightly crass it is in a novel aimed at teenagers, the protagonist is in grade 12, who will certainly have heard similar stories and in fact probably worse stories. There is also a scene in this book where Louie and his girlfriend Becky go out to her cabin to have sex although nothing actually ends up happening between them (111-120).

These ideas are not anything that teenagers would not have heard before. An important aspect of this book is that Louie makes a principled decision and sticks to it despite the fact that he is given many options to take the easy way out. The sexual aspects of this book are incidental, it is a book about teenagers, teenagers think about sex, the idea of growing up and accepting responsibility is far more prominent in and meaningful to this story.

## Books on Trial: *Boy Meets Boy*



Levithan, David. *Boy Meets Boy*. New York, NY: Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2003. 192 pp. ISBN 0-375-82400-6

There is a greater openness to homosexuality in today’s society; however, there still remains some discomfort with its reality. This is evident in the reaction towards David Levithan’s young adult novel *Boy Meets Boy*, an unconventional love story between two high school boys named Paul and Noah. The book has been labelled as propaganda and criticised for promoting homosexuality among young people, and according to adversaries, it is detrimental to expose young readers to books that depict homosexuality as normal.

But why is it detrimental? It’s true that Levithan does, in fact, depict homosexuality as normal. The majority of students in Paul and Noah’s high school are gay, lesbian, or bisexual and those who are not are entirely comfortable with the situation. There is no visible division between gay and straight, but what is the harm in this? Granted, the setting is a bit extreme, but characters such as Infinite Darlene, both the school’s homecoming queen and star quarterback, simply add a bit of humour to the story.

Sexual orientation aside, *Boy Meets Boy* is about teenaged romance. Levithan doesn’t dwell on the fact that the individuals involved are both boys, which reinforces the fact that the relationship between Paul and Noah is really no different than one between a boy and a girl. This novel is a great way to help young adults realize and understand that homosexual and heterosexual relationships are really not very dissimilar at all. All young people experience the same situation and emotions, make the same mistakes, and learn the same lessons.

