



The Lesbian Edition

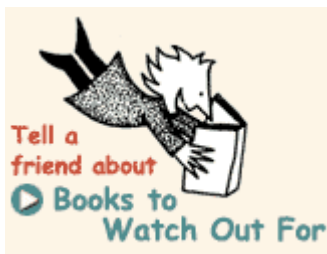
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Volume 1 Number 9

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About BTWOF

Books to Watch Out For publishes monthly e-letters celebrating books on various topics. Each issue includes new book announcements, brief reviews, commentary, news and, yes, good book gossip.

The Lesbian Edition

covers both lesbian books and the whole range of books lesbians like to read. It covers news of both the women in print movement and mainstream publishing. Written

Welcome to the Kids' Books Issue

I'm always looking for excuses to give books to kids and with so many gift-giving holidays coming up, it seemed like a good time to devote an issue to books for the kids in your life.

I've also been thinking about the blatant homophobia kids were subjected to during the elections – and how that affects them. The kids in the eleven constitutional-amendment states got the worst of it, but kids everywhere were hit, again and again, with anti-gay messages and sentiment. So this is a particularly important time to affirm to the kids that it's OK to have gay aunts, uncles, moms, dads, teachers, neighbors, and friends, and yes, it's fine if they're gay, too. And, books, in part because they last longer than TV ads, are a great way to provide that support, to initiate conversations, and to tell the kids you're a safe person to talk to about things gay.

So I asked Kathleen (KT) Horning, the Director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center, and a former Children's Books columnist for *Feminist Bookstore News*, what she'd recommend for holiday gift giving and for some of the GLBTQ-positive books she thinks are the best.

So the first article in this issue focuses on GLBTQ-positive books for kids. The second article covers more general gift suggestions for children and teens. We'll be covering GLBTQ-positive books for teens in an upcoming issue.

KT has also served on numerous children's book award juries and maintains [Purple Socks](#), a website celebrating the life and work of much-loved – and lesbian – children's book author Louise Fitzhugh. (Think *Harriet the Spy*, *Nobody's Family is Going to Change*, *Suzuki Beane* and *Bang Bang You're Dead*.) If you read any of those books growing up, check it out.

Shopper's Advisory: Feminist and GLBTQ bookstores are particularly good places to shop for these books. The big chains and online mega-store – *Surprise!* – don't seem to stock some of the important GLBTQ-positive kids' books. You can find a good list of community stores on our [links page](#). Order online or call first to confirm that the books you want are in stock.

Enjoy – and don't forget to pick up a book or two for your own inner child.

Carol

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and compiled by Carol Seajay.

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The Gay Men's Edition

announces and reviews new books by and about gay men as well as other books of interest and gay publishing news. Written and compiled by Richard Labonte.

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More Books for Women

will launch in 2005.

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Q. How does BTWOF define "a lesbian book?"

A. We think that any book that belongs to a lesbian is a lesbian book, just as any bike that belongs to a girl is "a girl's bike."

BTWOF: The Lesbian Edition

covers a wide range of books likely to be of interest to our readers as well as books with lesbian content and books by lesbian writers.

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GLBTQ-Positive Books for Children

Compiled by K. T. Horning

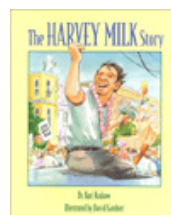
While in the past few years we've seen a notable increase in the quantity and quality of gay/lesbian books for teens, the same hasn't been true in books for younger children. This list represents the best books I've identified over the years as being of particular interest to the gay and lesbian families with whom I've worked. Some of the themes are blatantly gay; others are more subtle but represent common values in GLBTQ families— respect for individual and family differences, cultural diversity, and the importance of community.

Most of the books listed here are available through your local independent bookstore. A few of them are, unfortunately, out of print, but I've kept them on the list because they're worth seeking out at your local public library.

Being Gay

The Harvey Milk Story by Kari Krakow, illustrated by David Gardner. \$17.95. Two Lives, 2002. (ISBN 0-9674468-3-X)

An unequivocal picture book biography strikes a fair balance between Harvey Milk's personal life and his political activism. Krakow's succinct text portrays Milk as a caring individual who worked to ensure the rights of all people who lived in the San Francisco community he represented as supervisor. The shocking assassination of Milk and San Francisco Mayor George Moscone by fellow supervisor Dan White is neither glossed over nor over-dramatized, and Krakow ends on an upbeat note by writing about Harvey Milk's legacy. Illustrated with cartoon-style drawings, the book is accompanied by excellent author notes and sources for further information. (Ages 6-10)



King & King by Linda DeHaan, illustrated by Stern Nijland. \$14.95. Tricycle Press, 2002. (ISBN 1-582460-61-2)



When the queen decides it's time for her son to marry, she lines up all the suitable princesses and tells him to choose a wife. The prince isn't the least bit interested in any of them until Princess Madeleine arrives at the castle. From the moment their eyes first meet, it's love at first sight - for the prince and Princess Madeleine's brother, Prince Lee. The two marry, inherit a kingdom and, as in all good fairy tales, live happily ever after.

Their story continues with an adoption in **King & King & Family** (\$14.95. Tricycle, 2004. ISBN 1-58246-113-9). (Ages 3-7)

The Boy Who Cried Fabulous by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Peter Ferguson. \$15.95. Tricycle, 2004. (ISBN 1-58246-101-5)

Roger sees everything a bit differently from his family and his peers. To him, everything looks *fabulous* – from the clothes in the window of a men's store to the things he notices on a busy city block. Embarrassed by his exuberance, his parents try to break him of his habit of exclaiming "Fabulous!" Roger simply replaces it with the word *marvelous* and then expands his vocabulary to include adjectives such as *glorious*, *elegant*, *splendid*, and *scrumptious*. Ultimately his parents are able to see the world through his eyes and accept their son for the fabulous person he is. Newman's witty rhyming text will make this a pleasure to read aloud. (Ages 3-7)



An Enchanted Hair Tale by Alexis De Veaux, illustrated by Cheryl Hanna. Out of print. HarperCollins, 1987. (ISBN 0-06-021623-9)



It's Sudan's hair – a "fan daggles of lions and locks and lagoons" – that sets him apart from his peers. Grown-ups fear his hair and neighborhood kids tease him mercilessly: "And wherever Sudan went,/ people saw his head;/ they pointed and said/ 'He's strange. He's queer. He's different.'" Upset by their cruelty, he storms away and, far from home, stumbles upon a whole family of folks with enchanted hair



who admire him and help him celebrate his differences. De Veaux's poem deals with the necessity of leaving home to find a community of kindred spirits, an aspect of reality for most gays and lesbians that's rarely addressed, even in gay/lesbian literature for teens. (Ages 6-9)

Goose by Molly Bang. \$10.95. Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1996. (ISBN 0-590-89005-0)

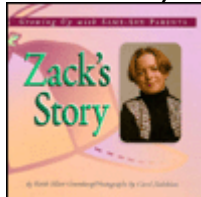
Although not specifically about gay identity, this story will certainly resonate as an allegory with anyone who has ever felt out of place at home. Three nearly wordless double-page spreads dramatically set the scene as a goose egg falls out of its nest during a violent rainstorm and rolls down a hole, into a den of woodchucks. It hatches soon thereafter and the woodchucks immediately accept their newest family member. Never cognizant of the fact that she is not a woodchuck, the gosling grows to adulthood learning to do all the things woodchucks do: digging holes, sunning by a stream and, of course, chucking wood. But she never feels completely at home in her family, and she eventually realizes that she must set off on her own to see if she can find what she is missing. The misplaced egg story has been told many times before but rarely with such gentle understatement. And never has an egg found a more unlikely foster family! Bang's restrained use of anthropomorphism adds a great deal of visual humor to the story, as she playfully depicts the absurdity of a goose living a woodchuck's life. She puts a bit of a twist on the story's conclusion as well. The goose's great moment of self-discovery is not that she is a goose but that she can fly. "She flew and flew all the way home," we are told, and we see the goose reunited with a family of very happy woodchucks. (Ages 2-7)



Gay and Lesbian Parents / Alternative Families

Nonfiction

Zack's Story: Growing Up with Same-Sex Parents by Keith Elliott Greenberg, photographs by Carol Halebian. \$21.27. Lerner, 1996. (ISBN 0-8225-2581-X)



Zack is twelve years old, but this easy photo-essay about his life with two moms will be accessible to early elementary school-aged children. Color photographs and a first-person narrative show us that day-to-day life in Zack's household is pretty much like life in any middle-class American step-family, except for the occasional trips to Provincetown and regular participation in Gay Pride parades. (Ages 6-9)

Celebrating Families by Rosmarie Hausherr. Out of print. Scholastic, 1997. (ISBN 0-590-48937-2)

No two family structures are alike in this engaging portrait of fourteen American families. Christina lives with her older brother Sherron and their grandmother. Lindsay and her sister Masha live part of the time with their mother and part of the time with their father. Joseph lives on a farm with his parents, aunt and uncle, grandparents and great-grandparents. Justin lives with his dad. Chris lives with his mom and every Sunday they go visit Chris's dad who is in prison. Alexandra and Sarah live with their lesbian moms. Each double-page spread is devoted to an individual child and his or her family, depicted in a creatively composed family portrait that uses color photographs. On the facing page a brief text describes the distinguishing characteristics of the living situation and tells one or two things that the family members enjoy doing together, using a black-and-white photograph as an illustration. No single family is presented as the norm here and all are celebrated for their strength and diversity. (Ages 4-9)



