

Recent queer resources for New Zealand secondary schools

**Selected and annotated by
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INTRODUCTION

I am teacher librarian at a large girls' secondary school.¹ At a meeting of gltbi teachers organised by the PPTA in 2004, I offered to develop a list of books I would recommend for purchase by secondary school libraries. I feel it is particularly important that queer and questioning young people are able to read books which reflect the diversity of society, and which depict situations that they can relate to in their own lives.²

Until not so long ago, the only mention of the word "gay" in a school library catalogue was likely to be the book *Opo the gay dolphin* published in 1956³ at a time when the word "gay" had different meanings ascribed to it. If schools did have books on gay themes, they tended to be critically acclaimed⁴ books like *Dance on my grave* by Aidan Chambers, first published in 1982. It was a bold and groundbreaking book for its time. The young men fall in love, but one of the lovers is killed in a motorcycle accident. Today, this plot device is still apparent in books such as *Orpheus proud*. However, other authors are deliberately working directly against this impulse (see Benduhn's *Gravel queen*).

When I looked at catalogues of a number of the NZ schools which have library catalogues available on the internet, it was obvious that few have made an attempt to meet queer students' needs. Teachers seeking to use National Library's Curriculum Information Service to Schools in order to fill the gap will find that some of the books are available.⁵

I have limited this list to books published this century. Although this means I had to omit such well-written and popular fiction titles as *Deliver me from Evie* and *Am I blue*, I want to emphasise the vibrant and exciting new books that are now becoming available. I have not included periodical articles, as these are now readily available to all NZ schools through the provision, courtesy of the Ministry of Education and the National Library, of the full-text database, EPIC.⁶

My position in a girls' school has perhaps meant that I have privileged books for young women in comparison to books for young men. It has meant that I have omitted some adult material. While I have included Jagose's *Slow water*, I have not included *Iridescence* by Peter Wells; I did not put it in the library at the school where I work because of its adult sexual content. Likewise the marvellous *A Line of beauty* by Alan Hollinghurst, winner of the 2004 Man Booker Prize for fiction. A gay colleague at school lent it to me and we agreed that it did not belong in a school library, more for the normalised cocaine use depicted but also because of the sexual content. I am very open to having a dialogue about these issues; one person's selection policy is another person's censorship.

¹ My school management requested that I do not identify the school.

² The Safety in our schools kit, Ko te haumarua o tatau kura, developed by the Aids Foundation, Rainbow Youth and Out there! makes it clear why students in schools need to have such resources readily available and accessible. If you are unclear on this issue, download the kit at: http://www.outthere.org.nz/documents/OUT05_Resource_Kit_e.pdf

³ This has just been reprinted. It would be interesting to know how today's children 'read' it.

⁴ 'Chambers transcends the genre and tells one of the best coming-of-age love stories it has been my privilege to read. To have male feelings so well depicted is a rare treat [...] Everything in this book is superb.' *Voice of Youth Advocates*

⁵ Of the 25 items listed on their catalogue under homosexuality – fiction (children's subject heading) only 5 were published in the last five years. (I acknowledge that some are under alternative subject headings).

⁶ If your school has not signed up for this free service, see http://www.tki.org.nz/r/epic/about_e.php

A search on the Australian & NZ reference centre database, for example, quickly brings up the full text of a Metro article from October 2004 written by Peter Wells and entitled *Being gay now*.

I recommend all the books on this list; all are suitable for co-ed schools. I hope I have given sufficient information in the annotations for you to decide which will interest your students. Some I have indicated as highly recommended; these are my picks as “must-haves.” Many are award-winners as I have indicated, and fit the criteria for “established critical reputation” in the English curriculum. If you know of books that I may have overlooked that you feel should be on this list, please tell me. This is a work in progress⁷ and I invite feedback and comments. Contact me on: cee-jay@xtra.co.nz.

Information on what books are available has been gleaned from a number of sources, including reader recommendations on Amazon.com as well as the more traditional professional school library reviewing journals. My thanks to Canadian academic Dawn Thompson. The list she prepared and made available online,⁸ and her subsequent research,⁹ provided a very useful starting point. I have found the best source for these books to be Jabberwocky Children’s Bookshop,¹⁰ and I wish to extend my warm gratitude to Colleen and Julie for their efforts in sourcing the books so quickly. I highly recommend them as book suppliers for secondary schools throughout New Zealand.

FICTION

ALPHIN, Elaine Marie. *Simon says*. Harcourt, N.Y., 2005.

To me, the pain and angst expressed by the two main characters, one in pages of internal monologue and the other in a journal, is overwrought, especially since they really only have a few short interactions. Students who are good readers, though, will enjoy Charles’ struggles with who he is, and the novel’s theme of self realisation. Charles’ roommate at boarding school, Adrian, is gay, and it is he who finally helps Charles to come to terms with his experiences. Note: includes suicide of a main character. Author website: <http://members.aol.com/elainemalphin/Index.html>

ATKINS, Catherine. *Alt ed*. Speak, N.Y., 2003.

Yes, the plot premise is stereotyped. A group of six students all about to be expelled for a variety of reasons are put into an after-school class with the school counsellor where they explore their issues. The story is told from the point of view of Susan, a bullied fat girl, who eventually befriends the gay guy. But despite this, it does actually work; the student interactions are believable and the changes in their lives are realistic, as is the way that two students leave the programme. Author website: <http://www.catherineatkins.com/>

⁷ I have read all the books on this list. Some books I was not able to read in time for the list deadline (there are only so many hours in a day, and as well as school I had a major performance of *Gay and Lesbian Singers*, the choir I belong to). They will be added in subsequent updates.

⁸ http://web.mala.bc.ca/thompsnd/gay_and_lesbian_YA_fict.htm

⁹ Personal communication.

¹⁰ Jabberwocky Children’s Bookshop, 202 Dominion Rd, Mt Eden, Auckland. Ph (09) 6306827, fax (09) 6386809 email: kidsbooks@jabberwocky.co.nz website: <http://www.jabberwocky.co.nz/>

BECKETT, Bernard. *Malcolm and Juliet*. Longacre Press, Dunedin, 2004.

Malcolm decides to research teenage sex for the science fair. A teacher at Onslow College, Beckett has infused his book with hilarious comedy and a soap-opera sensibility. One of the characters, Kevin, is in love with Brian. (I totally agree with Charlotte: "But Brian's such a prick. You must be able to do better than him.") (p.113). Winner of the Young Adult fiction Award in the 2005 NZ Post Book Awards.

BENDUHN, Tea. *Gravel queen*. Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 2003.

The author states: "I wanted to write an uplifting story about teen love that had a positive outcome. When I was growing up and discovering my identity, I read a lot about the tragic consequences of following desire lines ... but did not see much evidence ... in my real, daily experience. So I wrote *Gravel queen* to show the celebratory and fun part of teen life." This first novel is, as a consequence, light and without a powerful emotional impact, therefore it does provide a good contrast to some of the other angst-ridden young adult novels.

CHAMBERS, Aidan. *Postcards from no man's land*. Dutton, N.Y., 2002.

A fascinating depiction of contemporary life in Amsterdam, along with a parallel story set at the end of WW2; the main character is Jacob. He falls for a gay man he initially mistakes for a woman. This won the Carnegie Medal and the Printz Award for literary excellence in young adult (Y.A.) literature. Highly recommended. Author website: <http://www.aidanchambers.co.uk/>

DE OLIVEIRA, Eddie. *Lucky*. Scholastic, N.Y., 2004.

I'm ambivalent about this book. I include it as the only young adult novel I have yet found that depicts a bisexual main character. Told in the first person, we see Sam's struggles with acknowledging his sexuality. De Oliveira is a young playwright (the play of the same name was written when he was 22) and this work was performed at the Edinburgh Festival. But Sam does most of his thinking when sitting innocently on the loo in public toilets, which seems a bit peculiar to me given Western culture's knowledge of this as a site of both anonymous sex and violence against gays. Still, believable dialogue and situations.

EUGENIDES, Jeffrey. *Middlesex*, Bloomsbury, London, 2002.

"I was born twice: first, as a baby girl, on a remarkably smogless Detroit day in January of 1960; and then again, as a teenage boy, in an emergency room near Petoskey, Michigan, in August of 1974." This adult book, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 2003, is stunning. Compelling, with an intelligent and credible narrative voice, it tells of Cal, a hermaphrodite, brought up initially as a girl. But it is much more than that; it skillfully bends our notions of gender. Highly recommended for senior students and staff.

FERRIS, Jean. *Eight seconds*. Puffin, N.Y., 2000.

John goes to rodeo camp. When he subsequently finds out that his roommate is gay, he is torn between being friends and self-protection. Is he himself gay? While I have no interest in the setting of this novel, I enjoyed it immensely. An American Library Association (ALA) Best Book for young adults. Highly recommended. Author website: <http://www.jeanferris.com/>

FREYMANN-WEYR, Garret. *My heartbeat*. Speak, N.Y., 2004.

Ellen loves her brother Link and his best friend James. Then someone at school asks if the two young men are a couple, which had not occurred to her before. A very intelligent depiction of the 'slipperiness' of sexual identity. A Michael L. Printz Award honor book; an ALA Best Book for young adults. Author website: <http://www.freyman-weyr.com/>

GANTOS, Jack. *Desire lines*. Random House, London, 2004.

This is very different from Gantos' previous works such as the very funny and uplifting *Joey Pigza* novels for upper primary. Walker is sixteen, and finds out that two young women in his class are having an affair. Fundamentalist Christians in his community are campaigning against homosexuals and other 'sinners.' When he is wrongly identified as gay, Walker finally 'outs' the young women, leading to tragic consequences. The attempted suicide of the lesbian lovers is clichéd, and the book, I believe, ultimately fails to convince. Very cool author website: <http://www.jackgantos.com/index.html>

GLASSER, Sophie. *I've known since I was eight*. iUniverse, N.Y., 2004.

While this is not a well-written book, the author not having heard of the phrase "show not tell," it is still a valid addition to a school collection. It depicts a girl's first relationship and the reactions from friends and school-mates, some homophobic. The mere fact that the word 'gay' is in every second sentence will be affirming for some young people.

HARTINGER, Brent. *Geography club*. Harper Collins, N.Y., 2004.

Russel meets a guy in a gay chat room who goes to the same school as he does. They agree to meet, and Kevin turns out to be one of the most popular students in school and a baseball jock. In this delightfully subversive story they set up a gay and lesbian after-school group, but to avoid homophobic schoolmates, decide to call it the Geography Club so that no-one will know their true purpose (and – sorry Geography teachers – so that no-one else will want to join!). Highly recommended.

The order of the poison oak. HarperCollins, N.Y., 2005.

In the sequel to *Geography club*, 16-year-old Russel, after coming out at school, decides to escape his homophobic school environment by working at a summer camp for young burn victims. Rather burdened by metaphor (the burn victims being likened to victims of prejudice) this nevertheless shows Hartinger's ability to honestly illustrate young people's dilemmas – for example Russel and his bisexual friend Min both fall for the same hot guy, who later tries to have unprotected sex with each of them.

Author website: <http://www.brenthartinger.com/>

HOWE, James. *The misfits*. Aladdin, N.Y., 2003.

Bobby belongs to a group who are misfits for a variety of reasons. Howe is well-known for his writing for primary school students. This book sees a more mature voice, retaining Howe's typical sense of humour. 'Tuesday morning, we get to school, and what do we find scrawled in big ugly marker on Joe's locker but the word **Fagot**. Joe [gay character] is outraged. "Don't they teach *spelling* in this school?" he goes...' (p.31) This book could be used to reinforce school programmes on put-downs. Suitable for intermediate and junior secondary. Highly recommended.

JAGOSE, Annamarie. *Slow water*. Victoria University Press, Wellington, 2003.

This fictionalised account of a true love story of the clergyman Yate and seaman, Denison, on a ship travelling to NZ in 1836 depicts shipboard life vividly. Winner of the Montana NZ Book Awards 2004 Deutz Medal. Jagose used diaries, archives and court records to research her book.

KILLINGSWORTH, Monte. *Equinox*. Henry Holt, N.Y., 2001.

Autumn, a 14-year-old girl worried about her parents' relationship, starts writing and illustrating a journal to document their special island home in Washington State in an attempt to keep the family together. Gradually, she learns that her parents have secrets: her mother has a lover, Jane, and Autumn's life is about to change. Gently and lyrically told.

KISSING Tennessee. Edited by Kathi Appelt. Harcourt, N.Y., 2000.

This collection of stories centred around the Stardust dance at the Dogwood junior high cafeteria includes a story of a young man questioning his sexuality.

KOERTGE, Ron. *The Arizona kid*. Candlewick Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2005.

I am delighted to see this classic teen novel reprinted. It's a heartwarming story of a straight sixteen-year-old, Billy, from a small town in Missouri, who stays with his gay uncle in Texas for the summer to work in a racing stables. He wants to use the experience to decide if he really wants to be a vet. Koertge has written many prize-winning books for young adults, and he depicts the teenager's insecurities with wit and compassion. The portrayal of the gay uncle moves beyond the initial somewhat stereotyped description of his looks and his interior décor. Highly recommended.

KOJA, Kathe. *Talk*. Frances Foster Books, N.Y., 2005.

Kit is secretly attracted to an out gay guy at school. He auditions for a controversial school play, and gets a lead role. Told with chapters alternating between Kit and Lindsay, his female lead in the play, along with excerpts from the script of the play which serve to underline the tension of the plot. Lindsay is, I feel, less successfully portrayed, but Kit's confusion and the plot resolution for him is convincing. One touch I like is that he is concerned about coming out to his parents because he suspects that "if they knew – my mother especially, she'd be out the next morning buying a rainbow decal and going to PFLAG meetings and wearing STRAIGHT BUT NOT NARROW T-shirts and I don't think I'm ready for that much exposure just yet." (p.26-7).

Author website: <http://www.kathekoja.com/>

LEVITHAN, David. *Boy meets boy*. Alfred A. Knopf, N.Y. 2003.

Paul lives in a community where (mostly) people are out about their sexuality and (mostly) people don't care. Paul meets the sensitive, artistic Noah, but makes the mistake of kissing his ex-boyfriend, and rumours fly. The school bookmaker has odds on whether they will get back together, or if the relationship with Noah will be successful. Paul has a supportive family and friends, and the story is told with humour. An ALA Top 10 Best Book for young adults. A Lambda literary award winner, and Blue Ribbon Award winner.

Author website: <http://www.davidlevithan.com>

LOVE and sex: Ten stories of truth. Edited by Michael Cart. Simon Aladdin, N.Y. 2003.

Ten fine authors for young adults – from Joan Bauer to Garth Nix – have written stories of love and sexuality.

LYON, George Ella. *Sonny's house of spies*. Atheneum, N.Y., 2004.

This is an interesting book, set in Alabama in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Told from young teenager Sonny's point of view, we find out the effects on the family of his father falling in love with a man and leaving them. So the queer character is absent for most of the book as Sonny learns the truth about him. In an ironic plot twist, the man delegated to keep an eye on the family was also in love with the father, and Sonny's intervention plays a role in his possible suicide. A sub-plot has Sonny discover the realities of racism.

MALLOY, Brian. *The year of ice*. St. Martin's Griffen, N.Y., 2003.

A coming-of-age story, set in a Minneapolis winter, of 17-year-old Kevin and his terrifying secret: he is gay. Plot elements also include him coping with the death of his mother – was it an accident or suicide? – and his relationship with his father. It is Malloy's first novel, and the character of Kevin's father is somewhat one-dimensional, but overall, the author depicts the emotional turmoil of the young narrator vividly. Won the Alex Award in 2003. (The ten best adult books for young adults chosen every year by the Young Adult Library Association).

MANNING, Sarra. *Pretty things*. Hodder, London, 2005.

Yet another novel narrated by different characters in alternating chapters (I have to say I am soooo over this narrative technique!). The disparate characters are brought together in a summer production of *Taming of the shrew*. Brie often has her gay friend Charlie share her bed, and decides she is in love with him. He is infatuated with straight Walker, who in turn falls for lesbian (and, it turns out ultimately, bisexual) Daisy. The four voices express their confusion and disillusion, but finally issues are resolved satisfactorily. Set in London.

MYRACLE, Lauren. *Kissing Kate*. Dutton, N.Y., 2003.

"It was one thing for someone else to be gay. It was something else entirely if it was me." Lissa, 16, has been best friends with beautiful Kate for four years. Everything changes when Kate gets drunk at a party, and she and Lissa passionately kiss. Lissa wants to talk about it, but Kate pretends that nothing happened, causing Lissa pain and confusion. This is a very popular book in our school library. Author website: <http://laurenmyracle.com/>

NECESSARY noise: *Stories about our families as they really are*. Edited by Michael Cart. Harper Collins, N.Y., 2003

Michael Cart is an expert on young adult literature as well as being an author. He has gathered a group of celebrated Y.A. authors (including Walter Dean Myers and Lois Lowry) for this book that presents families not as they *were*, but as they *are*. Blended, fractured, at risk, nuclear. Highly recommended.

NEWBERRY, Linda. *The shell house*. Definitions, London, 2003.

Linked stories of a young man in WW1 and contemporary time; both main characters question their faith and their sexuality. Shortlisted for the Carnegie medal, this is a more philosophical and literary novel than many young adult novels. Highly recommended. Author website: <http://www.lindanewbery.co.uk/>

NOT the only one: *Lesbian and gay fiction for teens*. Edited by Jane Summer. Alyson, L.A. 2004.

Twenty stories by renowned, award-winning authors for young adults; for me, the story by Brent Hartinger is worth the price of the book. This deserves to be as popular as the short story collection "Am I blue" has been in secondary schools. Highly recommended.

ON the fringe. Edited by Donald R. Gallo. Speak, N.Y. 2003.

This ALA Best Book for young adults comprises a collection of short stories by some top writers, on the theme of being an outsider. Initiated following the shootings at Columbine, authors were invited to write stories about teenagers who don't fit into the mainstream.

ONE hot second: *Stories about desire*. Edited by Cathy Young. Random 2004.

This selection of stories mainly about first love and crushes is by well-known writers of young adult fiction, and some have queer themes.

OWEN, Julia. *Beneath the surf*. Scholastic, Auckland, N.Z., 2003.

In this NZ novel for intermediate and junior secondary, a subplot concerns a lesbian character, and the possibility that the main character's mother is getting involved with her.

A PERFECT life and other stories. New House, Auckland, 2004.

This collection of stories is selected from entries in the 2003 BNZ Young Writer's Award. The title story touches on identity and acceptance of difference, with a woman coming out to her social group in small town NZ. Another is a chilling story of a young man's experience of homophobia from students and a teacher at school. All schools should have this to showcase top student writing.

PETERS, Julie Anne. *Keeping you a secret*. Little brown, N.Y. 2003.

Holland is going out with a good-looking boy and looking forward to going to college. Then she meets out-and-proud Cece, and they fall in love, developing a committed relationship. Holland is thrown out of home, and encounters anti-gay slurs at school. She gets assistance at the local Gay Resource Centre, and the book ends on a hopeful note. Author website: <http://www.JulieAnnePeters.com>

Luna. Little Brown, N.Y., 2004.

Told from the perspective of Regan, his/her younger sister, this is the story of Liam, who is on the journey of coming out as transsexual. Pulls no punches about the pain both young people go through. A National Book Award finalist.

PLUM-UCCI, Carol. *What happened to Lani Garver?* Harcourt, Orlando, Florida, 2004.

When a new kid arrives in school, he is treated with suspicion which soon escalates to violence. Claire, in remission from leukaemia, tries to help him, and finds herself torn between seeking justice and retaining her friendships. He is androgenous, gay, and, it turns out, just may be an angel. Suspenseful and unusual storytelling. An ALA Best Book for Young Adults.

RYAN, Sara. *Empress of the world*. Speak, N.Y., 2001.

Nicola goes to a college programme for gifted young people over summer, where she makes friends with a girl called Battle (sic). To her surprise, feelings develop beyond friendship and she finds herself falling in love. Told in the first person by Nicola, the narration is interspersed with excerpts of musings from her diary. Well-written, with realistic dialogue and characters. An ALA Best Book for young adults, a Lambda book award finalist and winner of the Oregon Book Award. Highly recommended. Author website: <http://www.sararyan.com/blog/>

SANCHEZ, Alex. *Rainbow boys*. Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 2003.

Three young men tell their stories of their senior year in high school. Each chapter is told in turn by one of the characters. Great dialogue and believable characters and situations. A Lambda literary award finalist and ALA Best Book for Young Adults. The author has an excellent website at <http://www.alexsanchez.com/> Highly recommended.

Rainbow High. Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 2003.

In this sequel to *Rainbow boys*, Nelson, Kyle and Jason are moving to the end of their school days. Again, the story is told in alternating chapters from each young man's point of view. I enjoyed this as much as the first in the series. Highly recommended.

So hard to say. Simon & Schuster, N.Y., 2004.

This is more junior than his other books. The main characters, Frederick and Xio, are both 13, and alternate chapters show the story from each point of view; Xio falling for him and he wondering if he is gay. There is a matter-of-fact acceptance of everyday bullying and homophobia as being the norm which, while being discomfoting, gives the novel realism. Xio is Mexican-American, and there is an unresolved sub-plot that possibly her father left the family because he is gay. Highly recommended for intermediate and junior secondary.

SHIMKO, Bonnie. *Letters in the attic*. Academy, Chicago, 2002.

Lizzy and her mother return to her mother's home town after her mother's marriage falls apart. Lizzie has always been the strong one in the relationship with her mother. Gradually she learns her mother's secret, falls in love with Eva, and learns it is possible to love and trust adults in her life. Lizzie turns 13 during the course of the story, and this would be suitable for intermediate and junior secondary. Author website: <http://bonnieshimko.com/>

TAYLOR, William. *Pebble in a pool*. Alyson, L.A. 2003.

17-year-old Paul is outraged that when a student under the influence crashes his car & kills his girlfriend, students attend the funeral, have a special assembly etc, but when a gay student is bashed to death, his killing is used by the principal as a cautionary tale. He speaks out, is disowned by his fundamentalist pastor father, finally coming out to himself and others. This does not appear to have been released in NZ, and an adult notices some inconsistencies in language ("pled" guilty for example, I suspect came from the US editor, yet Christmas is in summer, and who says "too right" these days?). Sex is discussed and depicted in a way that rings true.

The blue lawn. Harper Collins, Auckland, 2004.

Taylor's masterpiece has been reprinted as a Collins Modern New Zealand Classic. Deservedly internationally acclaimed, this should be in every NZ secondary school library. Winner in the NZ Post Children's book awards for young adult fiction.

TYM, Kate. *Living upside down*. Hodder, London, 2002.

Chloe's Mum has left her Dad for a woman. Interspersed with Chloe's comic fantasies of appearing on the Rikki Lake show, the author has a deft touch. I enjoyed this book a lot; it is refreshing to read a British author's take on the genre.

URE, Jean. *Get a life*. Orchard, London, 2001.¹¹

"The book is touching and believable for its inclusion of everyday and vulnerable moments, from Joel admitting to his own prejudices and weaknesses when an author visits his school to talk about coming out as gay, to his excitement about his first kiss with Rosa. Joel does not let the story he has to tell get in the way of recording his own personal memories, so that Ure makes clear that although the reason for telling the story may be Lars and Noah, it is still Joel's story, even if he is only an observer at times. *Get a Life!* is successfully honest and direct, achieving a balanced and true-to-life view of teenagers and homosexuality." British reviewing journal *Books for keeps* says: "An excellent starting point for class discussions about tolerance, and should be in all secondary school libraries."

Author website: <http://www.jeanure.com/>

WILD, Margaret. *Jinx*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2001.

This novel in poetry form by this outstanding Australian author includes a lesbian friend of the main character. (Note: plot contains a suicide).

¹¹ I have not been able to read this yet as it is constantly out on loan from our school library.

WITTLINGER, Ellen. *Hard love*, Simon and Schuster, London, 2004.

John knew, from her *zine*, before he met Marisol that she was a lesbian, but finds himself falling in love with her. Wittlinger is brilliant; she creates zany, self-aware, witty yet believable characters, writes great dialogue with LOL humour and packs a powerful emotional punch. As in the best YA fiction, her characters change and grow during the course of the story. Also a great resource for use with student writers. Won a Blue Ribbon Award and Lambda Literary Award. Highly recommended.

Razzle. Simon Pulse, N.Y. 2001.

Ken moves to Cape Cod and befriends Razzle, a feisty young woman who works at the town dump. He grows to the realisation that she is far more worthy of his friendship than the beautiful but shallow young woman he falls for. Has gay secondary adult characters. Highly recommended.

What's in a name. Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 2005.

Wittlinger again has produced a believable, well-written young adult novel. This time, it is structured around the plotline that the town is deciding on a name-change. In ten linked stories, ten young people in the town explore their own identity. O'Neil, inspired by Tompkins, his gay teacher, ("The school's cool about it – he's their poster-boy for liberal chic." p.27). He writes a poem about himself, and asks what is to be gained by coming out. "Once the cat's out of the bag, I'll have people whispering and looking at me funny. It's true. Even Tompkins wouldn't say it's easy. I'm fifteen. Can't I hide awhile longer?" (p.34). A YALSA Best Book for Young Adults.
Author website: <http://www.ellenwittlinger.com/>

WOLFF, Virginia Euwer. *True believer*. Faber and Faber, 2001.

A sequel to *Make lemonade*, the focus of the story moves to LaVaughn, now 15. Her two best friends join the "Cross your legs for Jesus Club" and become increasingly distant. She falls in love with Jody, a boy who has returned to the neighbourhood, and with whom she has developed a close friendship. She then must deal with her feelings when she finds out that he is gay. Written in free verse, the story shows a strong young woman. It won a National Book Award, a Golden Kite Award, Blue Ribbon Award and the Jane Adams Children's Book Award.

WYETH, Sharon Denis. *Orphea proud*. Delacorte, N.Y. 2004.

In an unusual twist, the novel is structured as the text of a performance piece of life story and poetry in a N.Y. bar. Orphea finds love with her best friend, but they are caught by her brother, who in a rage beats Orphea and forces Lissa to leave. Tragedy strikes, and Orphea has to cope with the death of her new-found lover. Author website: <http://www.sharondenniswyeth.com/>

WOODSON, Jacqueline. *Behind you*. Putnam's Son's, N.Y., 2004.

This multi-award-winning US novelist has written a story of depth and emotional impact. It tells of the experiences of those left behind after the tragic killing of a young man by police. Told in short chapters by different characters (including the dead young man) one of the characters is gay. Author website: <http://www.jacquelinewoodson.com/>

NON-FICTION

306.76

BAIRD, Vanessa. *The no-nonsense guide to sexual diversity*. New Internationalist, 2001.

One of a series of guides to issues such as globalisation and fair trade published by New Internationalist magazine, this includes chapters on historical aspects, homophobia, transgender, religion and science. The emphasis is on a global overview. Includes an appendix of a world survey of sexual minorities and the law.

GIRL 2 GIRL. Edited by Norrina Rashid and Jane Hoy. Diva Books, London, 2000.

A collection of writing from young bisexual and lesbian women across the UK telling about their experiences of coming out or falling in love. Includes interviews, graphics and a quirky attractive layout.

MARCUS, Eric. *What if someone I know is gay? Answers to questions about gay and lesbian people*. Price Stern Sloane, N.Y., 2000.

This is probably intended for straight or questioning young people of intermediate age up. All answers have a clear positive message. Unusually for this type of book, it includes information about religion ("What did Jesus have to say about sexuality? Nothing. Despite the many things some religious leaders have said against gay and lesbian people, not one of them was ever attributed to Jesus" p90). Questions about school have realistic answers about why many teachers have been closeted. The appendix includes a wide range of website resources, and though they are all US ones, the fact that there are affirming sites for Baptists, Jews, Muslims etc will be useful to students.

HUEGEL, Kelly. *GLBTQ: The survival guide for queer and questioning teens*. Free Spirit, Minneapolis, 2003.

This should be in every secondary school library. It is aimed at both queer and questioning young people and their friends. "If you are a teacher or librarian or youth worker, please read this book, and if you agree with me that it's terrific, do all you can to make it available to the young people you serve."—Nancy Garden, *Lambda Book Report*

REVOLUTIONARY voices: *A multicultural queer youth anthology*. Edited by amy sonnie. Alyson, Los Angeles, 2000.

This anthology is a compilation of poetry, art, writing, and photography and from a diverse group of queer people aged 14-26. The almost 60 contributors show conviction and courage; many identify as activists as well as queer, and a variety of identities and ethnicities are included. Predominantly US voices, each short piece is prefaced by an autobiographical note.

SNOW, Judith E. *How it feels to have a gay or lesbian parent: a book by kids for kids of all ages*. Harrington Park Press, N.Y., 2004.

Twenty-eight young people, predominantly teenagers, talk frankly and openly about how it has been for them to have a gay or lesbian parent. The book was developed from a series of one-to-one interviews, but there is no interviewer obvious here. What comes through strongly is the voices of the young people. The book is intended to provide support and validation to other young people in the same situation.

612.6

BASSO, Michael. *The underground guide to teenage sexuality: An essential handbook for today's teens and parents*. 2nd edition. Fairview, Minneapolis, 2003.

This sex education book should be in every secondary school library. It has a succinct chapter entitled "Being gay" which has, like the rest of the book, a question and answer format. My quibble is that lesbian is conflated into gay; there is no mention of lesbian in the index.

GENOBAGA, Jill. *Teen girl!: What I want to know without asking*. Signs, Victoria, Australia, 2004.

This guide for young women, written by a female doctor, covers a wide variety of topics from body image to mental health to coping with money. It includes a chapter on sexual orientation, which offers sensible advice.

HARRIS, Jordan. *Ko ia: he or she*. NZAF, Wellington, 2005.

This 17-page booklet put out by the Maori HIV prevention team of the NZ Aids Foundation gives brief profiles of a number of transgender and transsexual Maori, including Georgina Beyer and TV presenter Ramon.

MACFARLANE, Aidan and Ann McPherson. *Sex: the truth*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003.

Written by two doctors who are experts in teenage health. Their previous books include the popular *Diary of a teenage health freak*. *Sex: the truth* was developed from questions young people emailed to their website <http://teenagehealthfreak.org>. It has a short chapter entitled "Like attracted to like." While informative and offering sensible advice, it does tend to downplay the incidence of homosexuality.

The WORD. Family Planning Association, Wellington, [n.d.]

This second edition of the free sex education 32-page booklet from the FPA includes a short discussion on sexual orientation. It ties in with their website of the same name for young people. <http://www.theword.org.nz>

824

BOOCK, Paula. *On make-up and make-over*. Four Winds Press, Wellington, 2003.

This well-known lesbian writer for young adults has written a delightful essay in the Montana essay series, which muses on notions of self and other in the way we present ourselves to the world. Using examples from Michael Jackson to her experiences at the nudist end of a beach on Lesbos, Boock is charming, witty and wise. Highly recommended.

920

BONO, Chastity. *The end of innocence: A memoir*. Advocate, Los Angeles, 2002.

A memoir by the lesbian daughter of Cher & Sonny Bono.

TOPP, Jools and Lynda Topp. *The Topp twins book*. Penguin, Auckland 2003.

New Zealand's lesbian twin entertainers camp it up with photos and scripts from their comedy shows.

WELLS, Peter. *Long loop home*. Vintage, Auckland, 2001.

Peter and his brother Russell were brought up in Point Chevalier in Auckland in the 1950s and 60s. Both brothers were gay but chose to deal differently with their sexuality. In this memoir, Wells, author and film-maker, looks back on his life with intelligence and perception.

WINNICK, Judd. *Pedro & me*. Henry Holt, N.Y., 2000.

This wonderful memoir is of the author's friendship with an Aids activist, developed during their involvement in a reality TV show, and is in graphic novel format.

WRIGHT, Douglas. *Ghost dance*. Penguin, Auckland, 2004.

In his memoir, Wright, one of NZ's most famous choreographers, describes his personal struggles as an artist and the people who have inspired him. Won the New Zealand Society of Authors E H McCormick Best First Book Award for Non Fiction at the Montana New Zealand Book Awards 2005.