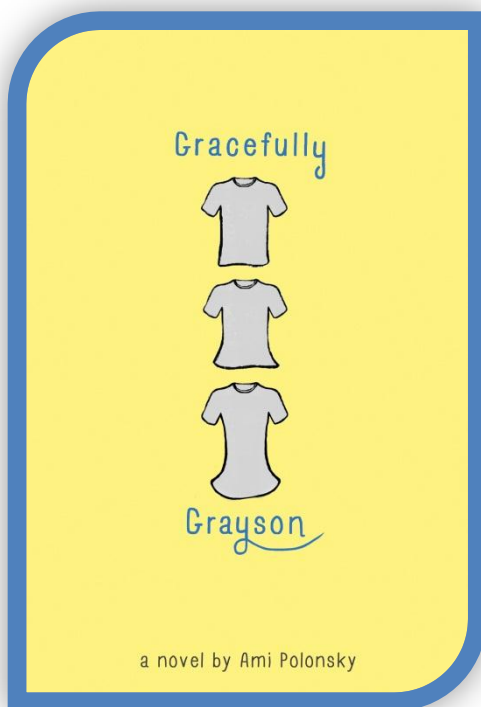




Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Division

About the Book of the Month Parent/Family Discussion Guide: This collection of featured books is from Books Matter: The Best Kid Lit on Bias, Diversity and Social Justice. The books teach about bias and prejudice, promote respect for diversity, encourage social action and reinforce themes addressed in education programs of [A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute](#), ADL's international anti-bias education and diversity training provider. For parents, guardians and family members, reading the books listed on this site with your children and integrating the concepts into your interactions with them is an excellent way to help children grapple with and learn about these important principles.



Gracefully Grayson

Ami Polonsky (Author)

ISBN: 978-1419712173

Publisher: Disney-Hyperion

Year Published: 2014

Age Range: 10–14

Pages: 256

Book Themes

Self-esteem, Bullying, Transgender Identity, Being an ally, Friendship

About the Book

What if who you are on the outside doesn't match who you are on the inside? Grayson Sender has been holding onto a secret for what seems like forever: "he" is a girl even if others don't see it. The weight of this secret is crushing, but sharing it would mean facing ridicule, scorn, rejection or worse. Despite the risks, Grayson's true self itches to break free. Will new strength from an unexpected friendship and a caring teacher's wisdom be enough to help Grayson step into the spotlight she was born to inhabit?

Conversation Starters

At this age, your child/teen is more likely to read the book on their own or you may want to read it along with her or him. Use these open-ended questions to deepen the conversation. Remember not to judge

their responses and to listen thoughtfully and engage in a give-and-take that helps them expand upon their understanding of the book and its themes.

- What was the overall message of the book?
- What character in the book do you relate to most and in what ways?
- How do you think Grayson felt throughout the book?
- Do you, or do we, know anyone who is transgender like Grayson? (See Talking Point #1 below for a definition.) What can we do to support that person?
- How do you think students would react if there was a transgender student like Grayson in your school? How do you think the school officials should respond?
- What would you do if a friend was teasing, harassing or bullying someone who is transgender?
- Why do you think Grayson's Aunt Sally and Uncle Evan had such different reactions to Grayson being in the play? Why do you think each responds the way they do?
- What are some of the ways that different characters in the book helped Grayson? Can you imagine who might be an ally in your school?
- Have you ever been brave or witnessed someone being brave in the way Sebastian described in the book? (page 234) How so?
- What usually happens in your school when someone gets teased or bullied because of their identity (race, gender identity, body size, religion, etc.) or because they are different in some way?
- What do you think schools can do to make them safer for students who are transgender or gender non-conforming?

Talking Points

Below are some important considerations to highlight in order to make this a learning opportunity for your child and your family.

1. Transgender Identity

Make sure your child/teen knows what the word **transgender** means, which is *a term for people whose gender identity differs from how they were assigned at birth (e.g., assigned boy or girl)*.

Talk with them about people you know who identify as transgender, either real people in your lives or celebrities and TV/movie characters. Sometimes young people want to know how many transgender people there are (Williams Institute estimates 700,000 in the United States identify as transgender) and why people are transgender. You can tell them that many health experts believe that being transgender is the result of a complex mixture of biology, psychology and environmental factors and it is not the same for all transgender people. It is important to help young people understand, be empathic to transgender people and the many challenges they face and consider ways to support them, especially in school. Creating a home environment where children/teens feel comfortable asking questions and wanting to learn more is very important. You may want to read a relevant article together or watch the video [Becoming Me](#) in which eight families with transgender and gender non-conforming children (ages 5–25) share their stories. You can also clarify and discuss [Terminology Related to Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Identity and Issues](#).

2. Differences and Identity-Based Bullying

We all notice differences and it is natural (and should not be discouraged or ignored) to observe and acknowledge differences. It is important that as adults, we model in words and actions that it is not okay to treat people unfairly or disrespectfully because of those differences. A great deal of bullying for teenagers, especially in school and online, involves identity-based bullying (bullying related to one's identity characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, physical appearance, religion, etc.). Don't shy away from conversations about bullying, differences and specifically transgender identity with your teen. Communicate your values and expectations that all forms of bias, bullying and discrimination are unacceptable. Identity-based bullying, particularly around sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, is pronounced in middle and high school. Therefore, be proactive in your discussions about this and convey a strong message that everyone deserves understanding, respect and fair treatment. In addition, be a role model in promoting respectful and safe online behavior.

3. Being an Ally

In the book, there are a variety of ways in which people support Grayson and engage in ally behavior, including Paige who is a supportive friend to Grayson and stands up for him when bullied, Mr. Finnegan who allows Grayson to be in the play as the female lead and Sebastian who informs the principal when Grayson is being attacked. Talk with your child/teen about the many ways to be an ally which include supporting targets, confronting the aggressor(s), informing a trusted adult, not participating in bullying and name calling, etc. Be sure to talk with your child about whether they are prepared to be an ally by reading [Are You Ready to Be An Ally?](#) and help them carefully think through their goals, what they need to be safe, what support they need and possible fallout. Model being an ally by showing your children/teens the ways in which you engage in ally behavior and potentially do something together. Identify and encourage books and other media that foster this message and when issues of bullying and bias arise, always highlight the ways people are or can be allies.

Other Books You May Like

10,000 Dresses by Marcus Ewert, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/10000-dresses.html

Totally Joe by James Howe, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/totally-joe.html

Wonder by R.J. Palacio, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/books/wonder.html

ADL Additional Resources

The following are curriculum and resources on anti-bias teaching strategies and transgender identity and issues.

Curriculum Resources

"Identity-Based Bullying," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/identity-based-bullying.html

"Unheard Voices: Stories of LGBT History," *Curriculum Connections*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/unheard-voices-stories-of-lgbt-history.html

"Transgender Identity and Issues," *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/transgender-identity-and-issues.html

“Caitlyn Jenner and the Power of Coming Out,” *Current Events Classroom*, www.adl.org/education-outreach/lesson-plans/c/caitlyn-jenner-and-the-power-of-coming-out.html .

Educational Resources

Are You Ready to Be An Ally?, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Are-You-Ready-to-Be-an-Ally.pdf

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Tips for Families, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Bullying-Prevention-and-Intervention-Tips-for-Families.pdf

Parent, Family and Caregiver Resources, www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/parent-family-and-caregivers.html

Terminology Related to Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Identity and Issues, www.adl.org/assets/pdf/education-outreach/terminology-related-to-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-identity.pdf

Children's Books

Below are links to lists of recommended anti-bias and multicultural books for the indicated category.

Bullying Awareness and Prevention, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/bullying.html

LGBTQ People and Homophobia/Heterosexism, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/lgbtq-people.html

Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming, www.adl.org/education-outreach/books-matter/LGBTQ-books.html?sublgbtq=transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-identity