

Building LGBT+ inclusion through reading



**EVERY CHILD,
EVERY FAMILY**



FOREWORD

We're very proud to be adding to the Union's Breaking the Mould series of resources, which support nursery and primary phase teachers to think about what books they are using in their classrooms. Using a wider range of good literature is a really quick, exciting and effective way to promote inclusion.

This resource will help you to promote LGBT+ inclusion through reading. It's designed to help you include every child and make sure every child has ways to see their family and relatives represented positively in their school.

Order these books for your school or classroom. Share this resource with colleagues and table it on an INSET agenda. Reflect on what opportunities are being missed to talk positively about LGBT+ people, within day to day teaching, so that LGBT+ people are understood as equal, and usual and not as different, special or hidden.

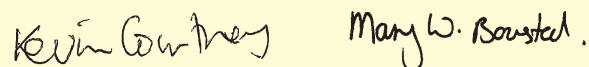
Using these books, and the teaching notes for each title, will open up straightforward ways to talk with children about different kinds of families and relationships. It will help ensure LGBT+ people aren't left out of these conversations and learning moments; aren't presented in tokenistic ways; aren't ignored or over-looked. It will help you reflect the reality of the diversity of family shapes in your classroom. It will do wonders for the self-esteem and well-being of the children in your class who live with mum or with their gran, in blended families, or who have two mums or two dads. There are so many families like these - how can we make sure we are explicitly recognising and validating them?

We haven't specified which key stage these books relate to as you should feel free to use them flexibly across age groups.

The law requires primary schools to advance LGBT+ equality but the impetus behind this area of teaching should surely be values-based. Why shouldn't every family feel valued and welcome?

It's a problem that we still need to say it; but, this resource isn't about sex education. Relationships and sex education is of course one part of the curriculum which needs to be inclusive of LGBT+ families. But this guide will help you to think about how your school can use books and reading across the whole of your curriculum, and bring to life your values of inclusion to life.

We think you will enjoy reading about these fantastic books!

Handwritten signatures of Kevin Courtney and Mary W. Boustead in black ink.

Kevin Courtney and Dr Mary Boustead

Joint General Secretaries, National Education Union

INTRODUCTION

This resource is intended to help early years and primary teachers use a range of picture books to talk about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender identities in the classroom. It follows the NEU's earlier *It's Child's Play* which looked at how gender stereotypes can be challenged through reading.

It goes without saying that schools should be talking about the full range of ethnicities, faiths, abilities and other differences that are present throughout our society and the families that we work with. Sadly, LGBT+ people are still sometimes left out of these conversations or presented in tokenistic ways that don't help to promote inclusion. Every child has the right to see their family represented positively at school and all children need to have their future sexual orientation or gender identity endorsed from an early age. If we only talk about heterosexual identities or ignore transgender people when talking to young children, we are denying future generations of LGBT+ teenagers the positive messages they need to grow up feeling happy and confident about themselves and their relationships. And, of course, every child needs to know that being LGBT+ is as valid as any other identity.

Using literature is one of the most effective ways of promoting inclusion around all forms of diversity and this resource discusses books suitable for all children from nursery to Year 6. As with many picture books, they can be returned to at intervals and the stories they contain explored more deeply as children develop and mature.

Work on LGBT+ inclusion is most effective when it takes place as part of wider conversations about all the many differences and similarities that we share. It is for this reason that we have selected books that also challenge stereotypes about gender and include a range of ethnicities, abilities and other differences in their text and illustrations. Take time to notice all the people in each story, all their differences and what they have in common. Encourage children to think about how we all share something with all the other people we know. We are all special and unique in ourselves – there is nobody who is just like us – but also nobody with whom we have nothing in common.

In order to demonstrate that it is OK to talk about different kinds of families and relationships – but also that LGBT+ people are no more or less special or unique than anyone else – it's helpful to use books that both foreground and clarify these identities alongside stories in which they feature as part of a wider narrative but where their identities are not directly relevant to it. These complementary approaches are often referred to as explicit and implicit inclusion and we have included books that present LGBT+ characters in both these ways.

Some people are still not as well represented in children's books as others. See the section on diverse families for more on this. Trans people also occur less often but talking about the gender stereotypes that constrain all of us is a good starting point for breaking down rigid ideas about what it means to be female or male. Look at some of the books included in *It's Child's Play* and use them alongside the trans-related books highlighted in this resource to open up discussions about sex and gender that can benefit all children. To this end, it is useful if teachers are clear about the difference between sex and gender and use the terms appropriately. Sex is biological and we are all assigned one at birth. Gender relates to a person's sense of identity and how it is expressed. A trans person's gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. However, many people who aren't trans also feel constrained by gender stereotypes – and this can be particularly true of LGB individuals who, by their very nature, will defy some gender norms.

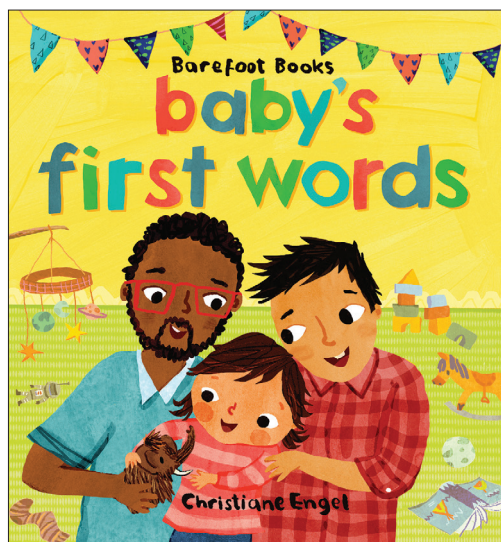
Our society is still very heterosexist – many of the messages we receive still imply that all human beings are either male or female, both in sex and in gender, and that sexual and romantic thoughts and relationships only occur between people of different sexes. It takes effort to make room to affirm other identities but small actions like thinking about the language you use (a simple example would be substituting 'our families' or 'the people who look after us' for phrases like 'mummies and daddies') helps to affirm that families come in all shapes and sizes. Also, try to avoid using language that implies that everyone will have a partner of a different sex when they grow up.

Some colleagues may still be concerned that talking about sexual orientation inevitably leads to talking about sexual activity. Remind them that we talk about heterosexuality all the time (how many fairy stories end with a wedding?) without talking about sex. Questions that children occasionally ask – such as ‘how can two men have a baby’ – are thoroughly and age-appropriately answered in the books discussed in the following pages (for example, through adoption, surrogacy or the formation of new, blended or stepfamilies). Similarly, while individual trans children may have concerns about puberty and their bodies, most pupils will be more interested to discuss social transitions – how some people may change names, pronouns and how they dress, for example. That is not to say that what are, for some adults, more challenging issues shouldn’t be confidently explored – but they are not likely to come up spontaneously when you are reading *And Tango Makes Three* or *Julian is A Mermaid*.

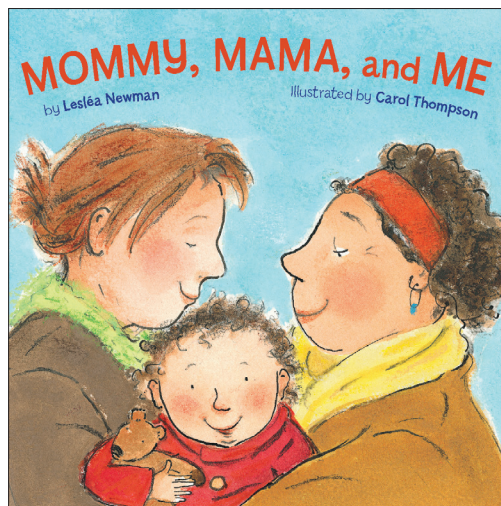
Teachers work in an increasingly challenging environment but they retain the capacity to enlighten, enrich, support and reassure every child with whom they come into contact. I hope you enjoy reading and discussing the stories in this resource and that they inspire, inform and entertain you and the children you work with.

Mark Jennett

BOARD BOOKS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN



Baby's first words: Stella Blackstone and Sunny Scribens are the authors, Christiane Engel the illustrator and Barefoot Books is the publisher.



BABY'S FIRST WORDS by Stella Blackstone, Sunny Scribens and Christiane Engel

MOMMY, MAMA AND ME / DADDY, PAPA AND ME by Lesléa Newman and Carol Thompson

Since all nurseries and schools will have children from a range of different family structures, it is important to introduce this concept with very young children. On the next page we'll look at some books that specifically address the wide diversity of family life but let's start with some that are suitable for the youngest child and that include families with two mums or two dads.

They are also good examples of what we mean by both implicit and explicit inclusion – the first title is about all sorts of things – clothes, food, games, cars, feelings etc – and also happens to include a same sex couple; the others are specifically about someone with two mums or two dads. By using both kinds of stories, we can send a message that it is fine to be interested in and to talk about all the different kinds of families that there are – but also that families are very similar in most things and that one is just as usual or special as another. Crucially, these books do not make an issue of their same sex parents – they are presented just as any other family might be in similar books.

Baby's First Words follows a busy toddler through her day as she gets up and dressed, plays, eats her lunch, has a bath and goes to bed. In between there are diversions via various feelings, modes of transport and animals. Her two Dads feature prominently in all these activities. Each page includes many useful words from 'clock' and 'grass', via 'over' and 'slow', 'happy' and 'scared' to 'oink' and even 'woolly mammoth'.

While the toddler at the centre of the story appears on the cover with both her Dads, on the first pages she is seen with just one of them. Later on in the story, her second dad arrives home and we see him giving her a bath. At the end of the book, they both put her to bed. The word 'baby' appears on the first page of the book but the word 'dad' or 'daddy' doesn't – this is an opportunity to ask who he is. Repeat this when the second dad arrives and confirm that this little girl has two fathers who both live with her.

Mommy, Mama And Me and Daddy, Papa And Me are simple, rhyming texts which both celebrate families having fun together. We see parents cuddling their babies, playing games, bathing, cooking, reading, dressing up, painting and playing music. They are great to read to or with children – and they can read them themselves as they become more confident.

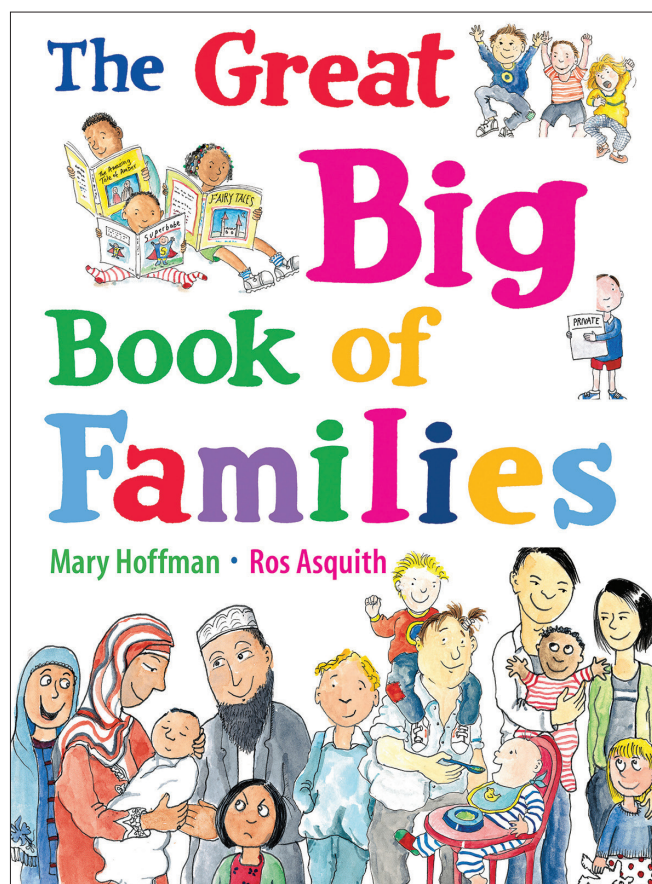
Use them alongside other books that feature different kinds of families and talk about all the things we like to do with the people who look after us.

Ask

- Do you like doing the things in the book?
- Other things?
- What are your favourites?

Make sure you use lots of books that include different family structures – different and same sex parents, single parents, children who are cared for by other family members, adopted and fostered children, extended and blended families etc – and make a point of mentioning or asking about the different families when you read them. Remember to do this with all the families – those with just a Mum and Dad too – since all families are special.

DIVERSE FAMILIES



THE FAMILY BOOK by Todd Parr

THE GREAT BIG BOOK OF FAMILIES / WELCOME TO THE FAMILY by Mary Hoffman and Ros Asquith

It is important to talk about same sex parents in the context of all the different kinds of family groups that children live in. To present them as some kind of 'special' or unusual family – or to fail to include them in wider discussions about relationships and loved ones – won't help to promote inclusion or challenge homophobia.

These books talk about all the different kinds of families that there are and what they have in common.

The Family Book is particularly suitable for nursery and KS1 but could be used almost throughout primary school. Each page contains a simple statement – 'Some families have one parent instead of two'; 'Some families like to be noisy'; 'All families like to hug each other' – accompanied by a single, vibrant image. Read as a whole, the book offers an overview of both what distinguishes some families – for example, 'Some families have two mums or two dads' – and what they have in common – 'All families are sad when they lose someone they love'. Single pages or images could be used as the basis for a class discussion or PSHE lesson.

The book can be used with little children to check that they understand about things like adoption, fostering and step parents – and that you can have just one parent or two mums or dads. Use it in conjunction with other books about families including the board books discussed on the previous pages.

Ask

- Who are all the people who look after you?
- What do all children need to feel happy and safe? The book tells us that 'all families hug each other'. What else do our families do to make us feel safe?

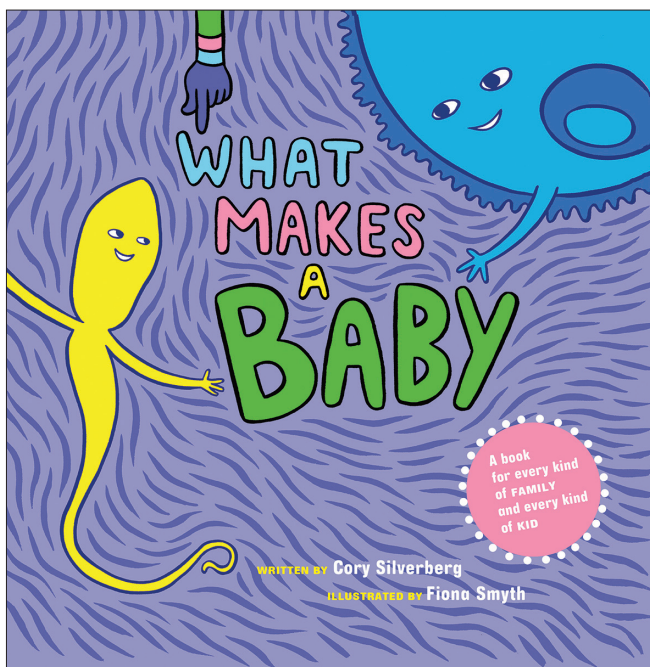
Use these discussions to remind children about all the different kinds of families you've talked about including those with two mums or two dads.

The Great Big Book Of Families extends the concept further for KS1 and 2. It starts off by making the point that 'once upon a time' most families in books looked the same (white, mum and dad, middle class etc).

Ask

- Do a lot of families in the books we read still look like the one at the beginning of this book?
- What are some of other kinds of families we know about (including those with two mums or two dads)?

The very next page introduces us to families with different and same sex parents and single parents – along with children who are cared for by their grandparents, adopted or fostered. The book goes on to look at all the different ways that families live including addressing things like 'Some people can't find anywhere to live' and 'Some parents can't get a job'.



Use the book as a starting point for talking about all the different aspects of our families and their rich histories. Make family trees – you could include fictional families from books or TV to make sure there is plenty of diversity. Find pictures from the internet or elsewhere to introduce children to family structures that they may not be familiar with yet.

Think about what parents coming into the school will see – would they be reassured that their family will be represented, whatever it is? As well as same sex parents, make sure that a range of other identities including different ethnicities, faiths and abilities are represented in your images.

With older children, ask whether we sometimes make assumptions – for example, that all parents are different sex or married, that everyone lives with two parents or that parents will always be the same ethnicity as their children.

Welcome To The Family focuses on how families are created and evolve and all the different ways that children come into the world. It can be used through most of KS1 and 2.

The first section looks at how people like to live – on their own or in groups. There are no children in this section which helps to remind us that not everyone will have or want children – or live in or with a family – and that this is OK. Not all the families here are harmonious and the challenge of ‘blending’ two families is also discussed. Often children with same sex parents may be adopted or members of step or blended families. Bisexual people are rarely represented in children’s books but talking about these sorts of families is an opportunity to remind

children that some people will have partners of different sexes in the course of their lives.

Ask

- How many parents can you have? (Clue – it can be fewer – or more – than two!)
- In what ways do families change? There may be more children, new partners – what are the possible variations? Remember that families may also change because of bereavement and be prepared to discuss this.

As well as using these books, make classroom displays about different kinds of families featuring children’s drawings and writing, book reviews, pictures from magazines or the internet.

Use the books in RSE lessons to avoid implying that only families with two different sex parents are ‘normal’ and that children with two mums or two dads (or those where children are conceived via artificial insemination, IVF or surrogacy) are not. You might want to check out **What Makes A Baby** by Cory Silverberg, an inclusive RSE resource which looks at all the different ways that babies end up with ‘the people who are waiting for them to be born’.

STORIES ABOUT CHILDREN WITH TWO MUMS OR TWO DADS (EXPLICIT INCLUSION)



AND TANGO MAKES THREE by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell

STELLA BRINGS THE FAMILY by Miriam B Schiffer and Holly Clifton-Brown

HEATHER HAS TWO MUMMIES by Lesléa Newman and Laura Cornell

As discussed in the introduction, it is helpful to use books which feature families with two mums or two dads as one of their key themes (explicit inclusion) alongside others where such families are included as characters but the story's main focus lies elsewhere (implicit inclusion). The following are three stories which are specifically about children with same sex parents.

And Tango Makes Three, like the other books here, presents same sex parents as less common but perfectly valid. Having two mums or two dads is not, in itself, a problem – although other people's ignorance of different family structures can be.

This is the true story of Roy and Silo, two chinstrap penguins who adopt (as an egg) and care for their baby daughter, Tango. What is special about this book is the way it shows us that being a good parent has nothing to do with your sex – and that most of the things that cause people to be attracted to each other are the same. As the story puts it, Roy and Silo's keeper knew that they must be in love because they behave in the same way as all the other penguin couples.

Ask

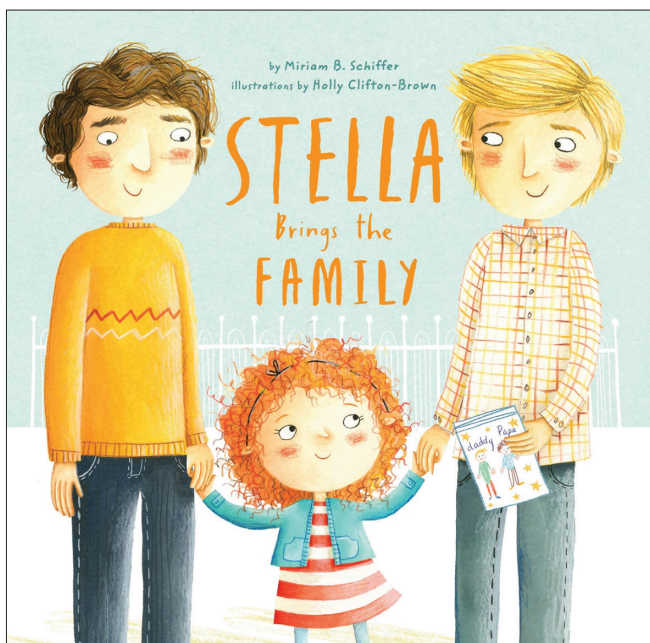
- How does Mr Gramzay (their keeper) know that Roy and Silo are in love?
- Why do you think Mr Gramzay gives them the egg?
- How do they feel when it hatches?
- Do Roy and Silo make good parents?

Think about how well they cared for the egg, how much they wanted a baby – and how they take Tango swimming and snuggle together like all the other penguin families. Remind children that Tango has been adopted by her two dads.

Talk about other animal families. Lions, elephants, apes and fish all have very different kinds of families from Tango's.

Use photographs and posters (like 'Real Families Rock' produced by Out For Our Children, <https://www.outforourchildren.org.uk/resources/>) and the books in the previous section to support your discussion of diverse families.

Heather Has Two Mummies is a fun book about starting school – and about a little girl with two mummies, a dog and a cat and whose favourite number is two. It follows on nicely from the books in the previous section as it includes many different kinds of family but in the context of a fully realised story.



Ask

- Is Heather the only child at school without a daddy?
- Do any of the children have daddies and no mummy? (Clue – check out Stacy’s drawing and her dads admiring it.)
- What other families are there in Heather’s class?
- Can we think of any that aren’t in the book?
- Remember what Ms Molly says about families (that “each family is special and the most important thing is that all the people in it love one another”) – what do we think about that? How do families show that they love one another?

Stella Brings The Family addresses the question of who a girl with two dads should bring to a Mother’s Day Party. Stella is very happy as part of her extended family but problems arise when she realises that some people still assume that every family includes a mother.

Jonathan suggests that Stella bring her whole family (cousins, grandparents and all). Her dads think it’s a great idea but Stella isn’t so sure – until other children turn up with two mums – and their grandmas.

Point out to children that Stella’s teacher, Mrs Abbott, is worn out at the end of the party and doesn’t seem to notice that Howie is going to face a similar dilemma at the forthcoming Father’s Day party – because he has two mums.

Ask

- Can we think of a better idea than celebrating Mother’s and Father’s days to make sure that children like Stella don’t feel left out?
- What about celebrating our family and everyone we love? All our favourite people? People who inspire us / look after us?
- Could it be a problem for anyone other than Stella (or Howie)? What if you live with your grandparents or older siblings, for example? What if you have more than one family?
- Wouldn’t it be great to celebrate all of our diverse families?

You could even use Stella’s story as a starting point for discussions with staff and the whole school community about how to avoid assumptions about what families look like, leaving some children feeling left out or unrepresented.

STORIES ABOUT OTHER THINGS THAT ALSO FEATURE TWO MUMS OR TWO DADS (IMPLICIT INCLUSION)

HARRIET GETS CARRIED AWAY by Jessie Sima

SPACEGIRL PUKES by Katy Wilson and Vanda Carter

SLEEPING BEAUTY by David Roberts and Lynn Roberts-Maloney

The books in this section feature same sex parents – but their relationship is not directly relevant to the story. They are simply ‘there’ in the background like many of the parents in picture books. Using these sorts of books, alongside the titles in the previous section, helps to affirm that having two mums or two dads isn’t a big deal – these families are just as ordinary – or extraordinary – as any other.

Harriet Gets Carried Away reminds us that ‘everyone feels like they don’t fit in sometimes’. But Harriet doesn’t care about fitting in – after inadvertently ending up on an ice flow with an awful lot of penguins, she is much more concerned to get back to the store where she was shopping for party hats. With the help of a friendly Orca, she is back before her dads even notice she is missing.

Ask

- Is it important to ‘fit in’? Why – or why not?
- What do we mean by fitting in? Does it mean being ‘the same’ as everyone else – or is it more about being somewhere where it’s OK to be just who you are?
- How do we make sure that everyone fits in (feels comfortable, accepted and safe) at our school?
- Maybe some of us agree with Harriet that there are more important things? Like being part of a family that loves us – whatever that family looks like.

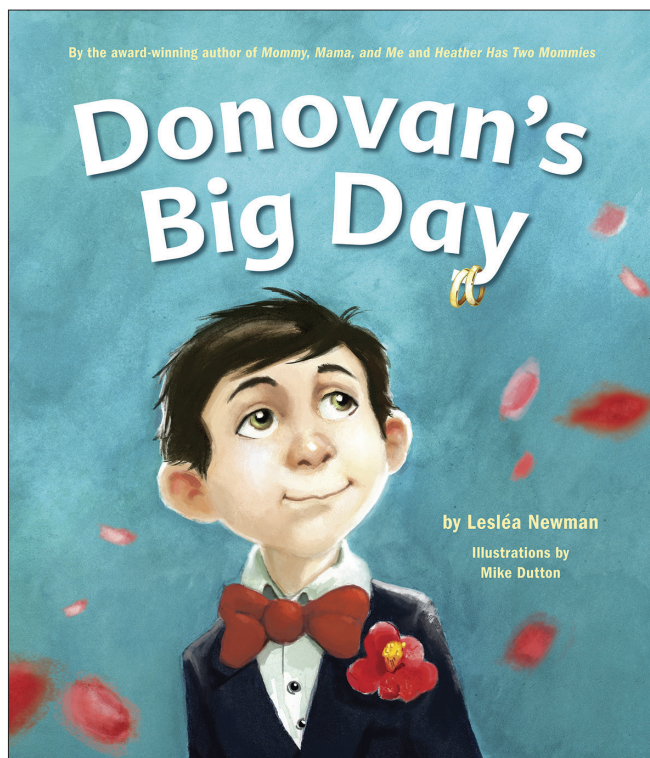
Spacegirl Pukes finds our eponymous heroine preparing for her latest space mission when disaster strikes. Struck down with a tummy bug, she is initially cared for by her two mums until they (and even Trotsky the cat) succumb. Soon everyone is violently throwing up. After further misadventures, including a last minute panic over petrol, Spacegirl heads for the stars. This is huge fun – children will love the ‘puke’ that ends up on everything from control panels to space boots. Spacegirl’s mums feature prominently doing what mums (and dads) have always done – offering lots of hugs and kisses and making sure the sick bucket is there when you need it.

Sleeping Beauty is one of several delightful retellings of traditional tales by David Roberts and Lynn Roberts-Maloney. It can be read to younger children and the illustrations are so beautiful, and the tale so engaging, that older children will be happy to read it themselves again and again.

The story as we know it is here but with some intriguing updates – instead of a princess we meet Annabel, who is fascinated by space books and robots and well equipped for the futuristic world she finds after sleeping for a thousand years. She is wakened by a young woman engaged in researching the ancient rose tree in which Annabel is concealed.

This book presents a new take on what constitutes a family and raises questions about how relationships would ‘work’ if we cast our old, heterosexist assumptions aside. As the story unfolds, we realise that there are no men in Annabel’s world at all. She is raised by her two ‘aunts’ – probably a same sex couple. Not all relationships fit into conventional definitions and friendship and love in all forms are possible between everyone. “Come on – show me the future”, says Annabel to her ‘saviour’ Zoe as the book ends.

RELATIONSHIPS AND MARRIAGES



DONOVAN'S BIG DAY by Lesléa Newman and Mike Dutton

KING AND KING by Linda De Haan and Stern Nijland

PRINCE HENRY by Oilly Pike

QUEEN MUNCH AND QUEEN NIBBLE by Carol Ann Duffy and Lydia Monks

Stories featuring two mums or two dads are useful in establishing the 'ordinariness' of these families but, of course, not all LGBT+ people have children.

Many 'traditional' children's stories feature heterosexual couples meeting and falling in love and these help to affirm that this is something that will happen to many of us when we are older. Children who grow up to be LGB frequently don't have these role models and this can, in turn, make it harder for them to accept their identities and form positive relationships in the future. It's also important that all children learn that LGB relationships develop just as others do and that what makes a positive, healthy and loving relationship is the same regardless of your sexual orientation or gender identity.

Donovan's Big Day links very nicely with the books about diverse families that we talked about earlier in the resource. The story takes us through the preparations for what we finally discover is the wedding of Donovan's two mums. Children can have fun guessing what is coming, and many will deduce that it is a wedding – but how many will predict that the people getting married are two women? You could introduce that possibility early on – alongside other questions like where might the wedding be

happening (a church, registry office, synagogue, hotel etc) – or you could wait till the end and ask if anything about the story was surprising and why. You can return to the little clue offered by the family photos on the stairs of Donovan's house.

Either way, use the story to remind children of all the different relationships that there are – people marry others of the same and different sexes, ethnicities, faiths, abilities etc – and that everyone should be able to be with the person they love. A nice touch here is that the story also places a same sex headed 'nuclear' family right at the heart of a bigger one.

King And King is another 'retold' fairy tale – this time *The Princess and the Pea* – and sees a queen deciding that her son needs to get married. She invites a splendid array of princesses to the palace. The prince doesn't like any of them – but one has a brother. The two fall in love and finally the queen can get a bit of time to herself.

Ask

- Why does the queen want her son to get married? For what other reasons do people get married?



Find pictures of different weddings – aim for a mix of genders, ethnicities, faiths, abilities etc. What do all these marriages have in common? Make sure your same sex weddings include images of ceremonies in churches and synagogues.

How might the princes' wedding differ from that of Donovan's mums? You could have great fun involving the whole class in planning the wedding of the princes. Design invitations, bake cakes – why not make some costumes and stage the whole event?

Prince Henry offers a newer angle on a similar story and takes it further – if you love someone, it asks, do you need to get married at all? Prince Henry's parents invite the suitable candidates and this time they include princes as well as princesses. In this kingdom sexual orientation – or ethnicity or ability – really isn't an issue. The problem here is that Henry's chosen partner, Thomas, isn't a prince – and royalty must marry royalty. In the end Henry's father sees that what really matters is that they love each other.

Just as in *And Tango Makes Three*, the author is very clear about the basis of Henry and Thomas's attraction – they like each other because, for example, they have so much in common. The book challenges lots of traditional fairy tale tropes – including that marriage is an end in itself. Ultimately Thomas decides that they don't need to be married – yet – because “we're already happy”.

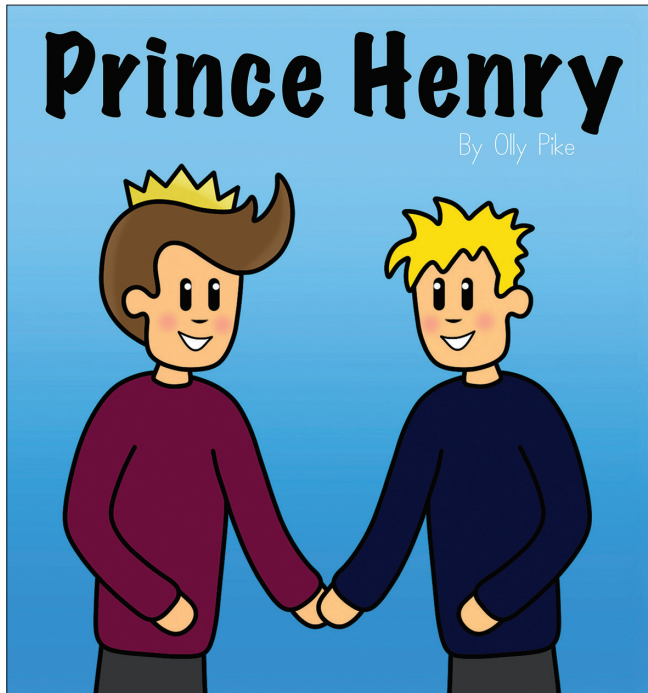
Ask

- Why does the king think Henry and Thomas shouldn't marry? Is that OK? Why not?
- Should everyone be able to marry whoever they are in love with?
- You could go on to ask whether people get married for other reasons as well and what those reasons are.
- Do all people who love each other get married?

Some people feel strongly that you should only marry people with whom you have particular things in common – your faith for example – and it is fine to feel that way. In this country it is OK for any adult to marry someone they love, whatever their identity – but nobody should be made to get married if they don't want to.

Queen Munch and Queen Nibble picks up a theme from *Prince Henry* where we see friendship becoming something more. In this case the royals have nothing in common but opposites, it seems, can attract and a romantic friendship develops – or perhaps even love.

There are plenty of opportunities here to ask what we can learn by being open to people who are different from us – and what we might miss if we're not – and to notice that you can be different but still have much in common. By the end of the book, the queens are sharing two palaces – six months together in one and six in another (a monarch, after all, has responsibilities...). Is this a marriage? It could be.



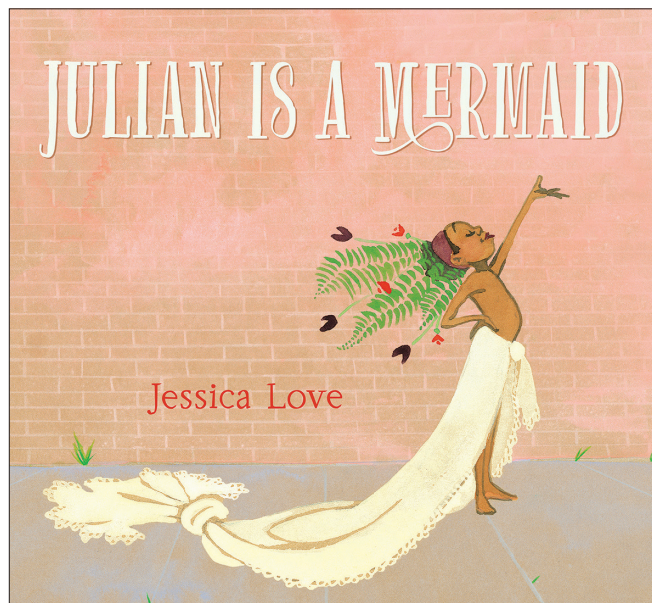
Ask

- What is the same or different about you and your best friends?
- Do you have to be just the same as someone to be friends with them? What about if you want to live with someone or get married to them?
- When Queen Munch's people first see Queen Nibble they go very quiet 'as though each and every one of them had been told off'. Why do you think that is? How might it make Queen Nibble feel?
- What are some of the things we can do to make people who are different from us feel welcome?

Look out for some suitable music and have fun dancing to the Queen Munch Tune, see if you can spot the one piece of 'real' fruit on her frock – and have a go at making beautiful raindrop necklaces like Queen Nibble.

Think about introducing older children to U A Fanthorpe's poem, 'Atlas' (easily found on the internet), written for and about her life partner, and using it as the basis for writing assignments.

EXPLORING GENDER AND TRANSGENDER IDENTITIES



JULIAN IS A MERMAID by Jessica Love

JAMIE by Oilly Pike

There are not, as yet, enough good children's picture books that include transgender characters - people whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. An excellent one is featured here along with another that addresses the gender stereotypes that constrain not just trans people but all of us whenever we find ourselves challenging the rigid rules that say only boys or girls can do this or that. As well as talking about trans identities, make sure to address these gender stereotypes through your literacy and other work. See the NEU's resource **It's Child's Play** for much more information on this.

Gender stereotypes can be particularly confining for some trans children and adults who are non-binary - meaning they do not identify as exclusively male or female. You could discuss non-binary people as part of classroom conversations about how it is OK not to be bound by stereotypical views of gender. We can all enjoy any games or books or wear any clothes that we like - regardless of our sex or gender identity - and it's OK to be a girl, a boy, to be both, or neither - whatever makes us most comfortable.

Teachers looking for other books that feature characters who are not defined by gender stereotypes could check out **Are you a Boy or Are You A Girl** by Sarah Savage and Fox Fisher in which the protagonist, Tiny, prefers not to tell other children whether they are a girl or a boy.

For further information on supporting trans and gender questioning students and creating a trans-inclusive school, see <https://neu.org.uk/advice-and->

[resources/equalities/supporting-trans-and-gender-questioning-students](#).

Julian Is A Mermaid is a beautiful picture book with minimal text that can be used with children as young as three and right up to KS2. Out with his Nana on the subway, Julian glimpses three women dressed as mermaids. (Or are they, as the text perhaps implies, actual mermaids? The book leaves much to our imaginations.) Entranced, he begins to imagine himself as a mermaid and makes a costume. At first he is not sure of Nana's reaction. In fact, she feels the outfit can be even better. Ultimately she takes him to join the other mermaids at the Coney Island Mermaid Parade.

A story about acceptance - and a celebration of women young and old - the book offers ample evidence for why any boy (or girl) might want to be a mermaid.

Ask

- What do the mermaids represent to Julian? They are beautiful certainly - but there is freedom, adventure and joy here as well.
- What does Julian feel when it looks like his Nana might not approve?
- How does her acceptance and the pride she takes in him make Julian feel?

This book is not explicitly about gender identity but is concerned with how we shouldn't be constrained by others' ideas of what is 'appropriate' for a particular gender - not to mention the importance of being accepted as you are and enjoying the diversity of others.

Jamie



Written and Illustrated by

Oly Pike

The Coney Island Mermaid Parade is held every year to celebrate the beginning of summer. Find out more about it online (there are lots of fabulous pictures!). Children could make their own costumes and have a mermaid parade to celebrate sunshine, self-expression and creativity just as the Coney Island one does. On the subject of parades, you might want to check out Gayle E Pitman's ***This Day In June***, a colourful picture book which celebrates Gay Pride.

Jamie is about someone whose true gender identity reveals itself – to them and to us – during the course of the narrative. Yet another revised fairy tale, this one updates Cinderella complete with some ‘mean’ (rather than ugly) brothers and a protagonist with no need of a Fairy Godmother. In the course of the story, Jamie realises that ‘she’ is a boy. He also goes to the ball and meets a princess who seems much more surprised by Jamie’s ability to build a car or run up a suit than about his gender identity.

Ask

- How does Jamie feel when he sees himself in the mirror after he has put on the suit and the mice have cut his hair? Why?
- What things does the princess find surprising about Jamie’s story? (Clue – it’s NOT his realisation that he is a boy!)
- What do you think Jamie means when he says to the princess “I’m not wearing a disguise”? Does he mean, he was ‘in disguise’ before – why might he say that?
- What if somebody at our school felt like Jamie and realised they were a different gender from the one that some people thought they were? What would we do? Would we accept them?

CHAPTER BOOKS



THE SECRETS OF BILLIE BRIGHT by Susie Day

GEORGE – by Alex Gino

BETTER NATE THAN EVER by Tim Federle

This resource is primarily concerned with books that can be read with children to promote discussion but it's important that they can also find chapter books that include LGBT+ characters – and of, course, these can also be read to the whole class. Here are three of the best for older readers.

The Secrets Of Billie Bright concerns a girl who has just started at Big School. As one of their first assignments, her class have to write about their No.1 hero. Most choose people like Jessica Ennis-Hill or Spider Man but Billie decides to write about her mum. The only problem is that her mum died when she was little so she doesn't know much about her – and in finding out she also learns much more about her own family.

It's a great book for anyone worried about changing schools or dealing with the problems of early adolescence – from making new friends to tying your tie so you don't look stupid. Lots to love here from the terrific description of how it feels to lose somebody – 'forgetting and having to remember again' – to the message that 'standing out is always best'. The book's many diverse characters include Billie's gay brother and his partner.

George is about someone who knows she's a girl even though many people assume she's a boy. Desperate to play the title role in the class

production of *Charlotte's Web*, George is told she can't even audition – because she's a boy. Together George and her friend Kelly hatch a plan...

As well as addressing how it feels to be someone who's gender identity is at odds with how the world sees them, the book confronts how we 'construct' gender within a society that segregates by sex and encourages people to conform to rigid gender roles – all in a way that makes sense to KS2 readers. As well as challenges, George encounters acceptance (her 'coming out' to her brother is particularly delightful) and the story is both realistic and positive about the challenges of being 'different' in a world that, it sometimes seems, would prefer us to all be the same.

Better Nate Than Ever asks if a small town boy can make his big dreams – in this case winning the lead role in *ET The Musical* – come true. It's a very funny and optimistic story about someone learning to accept their own identity. It looks at the impact of bullying – but also shows that we can move on and find people who accept us as we are. Both Nate and his relentlessly positive best friend, Libby, are outsiders in their different ways and the book is a celebration of finding your own way in the world. In particular, it deals realistically with the awkwardness of finding out about 'adult' feelings when you don't really feel prepared for them. The way that Nate declares his sexuality 'off limits' – but also dwells on it – is something that anyone can relate to. For confident year 6 readers and above.

THE BOOKS

Full details of the books included in this resource are as follows

ARE YOU A BOY OR ARE YOU A GIRL?

by Sarah Savage and Fox Fisher

ISBN 978-1785922671

BABY'S FIRST WORDS by Stella Blackstone,

Sunny Scribens and Christiane Engel

ISBN 978-1782853213

BETTER NATE THAN EVER by Tim Federle

ISBN 978-1406361537

DADDY, PAPA AND ME by Lesléa Newman and

Carol Thompson

ISBN 978-1582462622

DONOVAN'S BIG DAY by Lesléa Newman

and Mike Dutton

ISBN 978-1582463322

THE FAMILY BOOK by Todd Parr

ISBN 978-0316070409

GEORGE by Alex Gino

ISBN 978-0545812573

THE GREAT BIG BOOK OF FAMILIES by Mary

Hoffman and Ros Asquith

ISBN 978-1847805874

HARRIET GETS CARRIED AWAY by Jessie Sima

ISBN 978-1481469111

HEATHER HAS TWO MUMMIES by Lesléa Newman

and Laura Cornell

ISBN 978-1406365559

JAMIE by Olly Pike

ISBN 978-0993340734

JULIAN IS A MERMAID by Jessica Love

ISBN 978-1406380637

KING AND KING by Linda De Haan and Stern

Nijland

ISBN 978-1582460611

MOMMY, MAMA AND ME by Lesléa Newman and

Carol Thompson

ISBN 978-1582462639

PRINCE HENRY by Olly Pike

ISBN 978-0993340741

QUEEN MUNCH AND QUEEN NIBBLE by Carol Ann

Duffy and Lydia Monks

ISBN 978-1509830916

THE SECRETS OF BILLIE BRIGHT by Susie Day

ISBN 978-0141375335

SLEEPING BEAUTY by David Roberts and Lynn

Roberts-Maloney

ISBN 978-1843653394

SPACEGIRL PUKES by Katy Watson

and Vanda Carter

ISBN 978-0995658707

STELLA BRINGS THE FAMILY by Miriam B Schiffer

and Holly Clifton-Brown

ISBN 978-1452111902

AND TANGO MAKES THREE by Justin Richardson

and Peter Parnell

ISBN 978-1847381484

THIS DAY IN JUNE by Gayle E Pitman

and Kristyna Litten

ISBN 978-1433816598

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY by Mary Hoffman

and Ros Asquith

ISBN 978-1847805928

WHAT MAKES A BABY by Cory Silverberg

and Fiona Smyth

ISBN 978-1609804855

All titles are available from:

Letterbox Library (www.letterboxlibrary.com), a bookseller committed to celebrating equality, diversity and inclusion in children's books. Their titles feature people traditionally under-represented in children's literature including different faith groups, refugees and migrants, disabled children, LGBT+ people and diverse families.

Gay's The Word (www.gaystheword.co.uk), one of the World's few remaining LGBT+ specialist bookshops, stock a large range of children's books and are a great source of advice about books for children and young adults that feature LGBT+ identities.

Other resources:

The NEU's Breaking The Mould resources

(<https://neu.org.uk/equality#stereotypes>) support schools to challenge gender stereotypes in the classroom. They include ***It's Child's Play*** as mentioned above.

The Classroom

(<http://the-classroom.org.uk/>) offer lesson plans and other materials to support the discussion of LGBT+ identities in the classroom.

Acknowledgements:

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PRINCE HENRY by **Oilly Pike**

www.popnolly.com/shop

BABY'S FIRST WORDS by **Stella Blackstone,**

Sunny Scribens and Christiane Engel

www.barefootbooks.com

neu.org.uk

 [@NEUnion](https://twitter.com/NEUnion)

 [/nationaleducationunion](https://facebook.com/nationaleducationunion)

