

# **Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Gender Identity Through the Reading of Novels (Intermediate)**

## **Note:**

The interest and reading levels listed in this bibliography are those given by the publishers. If the reviewing journals gave a different interest level(s) for a title then this was indicated after the publisher's interest level. I find the interest levels given by the reviewing journals to be more accurate.

The summaries, which are also from the publishers, are to give you a quick overview of each title. Note that some of the titles fit the theme loosely and others more tightly. The titles also range from "light-hearted" to more serious in nature.

If a student needs the support of a digital copy, talk with your Learning Support Teacher, as ARC-BC is able to "rush" order digital titles they don't currently have in their collection. A very small number of the titles may also be available in an audiobook format, accessible through searching in Destiny. Your Teacher-Librarian can help you check for this.

If the LRC has 10+ copies of a title this was listed beside the title to provide you with the further flexibility of bringing in some titles to be used in a lit circle format.

*Joan Pearce, December 2020*

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Gender Identity (Intermediate)

Compiled by Joan Pearce

## Novels



### George \*LRC has 12

by Alex Gino, c2017 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 5.0)

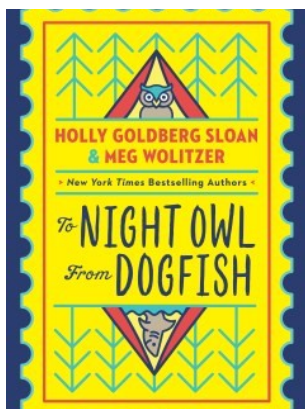
"When people look at George, they think they see a boy. But she knows she's not a boy. She knows she's a girl. George thinks she'll have to keep this a secret forever. Then her teacher announces that their class play is going to be Charlotte's Web. George really, really, REALLY wants to play Charlotte. But the teacher says she can't even try out for the part...because she's a boy." - Pub.



### The Cardboard Kingdom

by Chad Sell, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 2.4)  
(graphic novel)

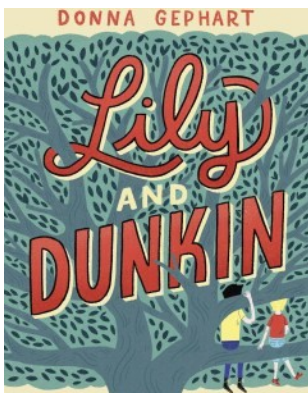
"This graphic novel follows a neighborhood of kids who transform ordinary cardboard into fantastical homemade costumes as they explore conflicts with friends, family, and their own identity." - Pub.



### To Night Owl from Dog Fish

by Holly Goldberg Sloan, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.6)

"Avery Bloom, who's bookish, intense, and afraid of many things, particularly deep water, lives in New York City. Bett Devlin, who's fearless, outgoing, and loves all animals as well as the ocean, lives in California. What they have in common is that they are both twelve years old, and are both being raised by single, gay dads. When their dads fall in love, Bett and Avery are sent, against their will, to the same sleepaway camp." - Pub.



### Lily and Duncan

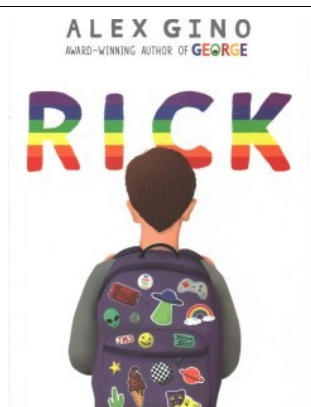
by Donna Gephart, c2016 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.3)

"Lily Jo McGrother, born Timothy McGrother, is a girl. But being a girl is not so easy when you look like a boy. Especially when you're in the eighth-grade. Norbert Dorfman, nicknamed Dunkin Dorfman, is bipolar and has just moved from the New Jersey town he's called home for the past thirteen years. This would be hard enough, but the fact that he is also hiding from a painful secret makes it even worse." - Follett

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Gender Identity (Intermediate)

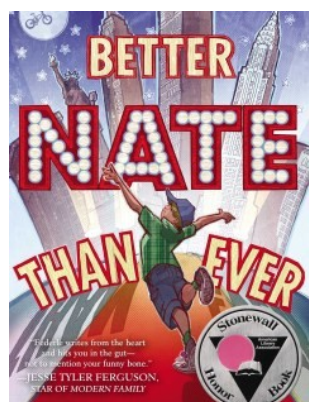
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## Novels



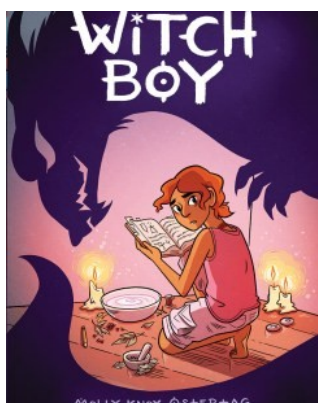
### Rick

by Alex Gino, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; \*Follows George)  
"Eleven-year-old Rick Ramsey has generally gone along with everybody, just not making waves, even though he is increasingly uncomfortable with his father's jokes about girls, and his best friend's explicit talk about sex; but now in middle school he discovers the Rainbow Spectrum club, where kids of many genders and identities can express themselves—and maybe among them he can find new friends and discover his own identity, which may just be to opt out of sex altogether" - Pub.



**Better Nate Than Ever** \*LRC has 12  
by Tim Federle, c2013 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.9)

"Nate Foster has big dreams. His whole life, he's wanted to star in a Broadway show. (Heck, he'd settle for *seeing* a Broadway show.) But how is Nate supposed to make his dreams come true when he's stuck in Jankburg, Pennsylvania, where no one (except his best pal Libby) appreciates a good show tune? With Libby's help, Nate plans a daring overnight escape to New York." - Pub.



### The Witch Boy

by Molly Ostertag, c2017 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 3.9)  
(graphic novel)

"In thirteen-year-old Aster's family, all the girls are raised to be witches, while boys grow up to be shapeshifters. Anyone who dares cross those lines is exiled. Unfortunately for Aster, he still hasn't shifted ... and he's still fascinated by witchery, no matter how forbidden it might be. When a mysterious danger threatens the other boys, Aster knows he can help—as a witch." - Follett



**The List of Things That Will Not Change**  
by Rebecca Stead, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7, 5-8)

"Despite her parents' divorce, her father's coming out as gay, and his plans to marry his boyfriend, ten-year-old Bea is reassured by her parents' unconditional love, excited about getting a stepsister, and haunted by something she did last summer at her father's lake house." - Pub.



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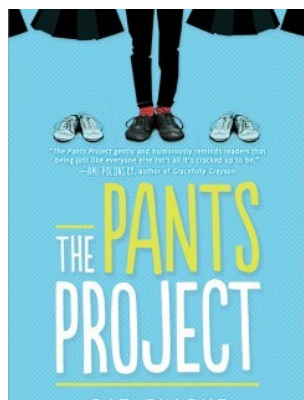
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
**Novels**



## **Hurricane Season**

by Nicole Melleby, c2020 (IL: 5-8, 5-7; RL: 5.3)

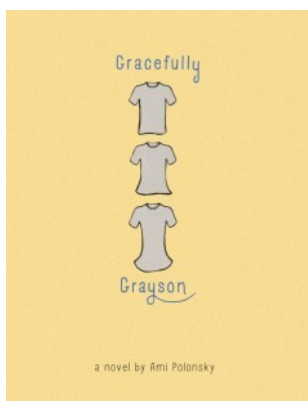
"Fig, a sixth grader, loves her dad and the home they share in a beachside town. She does not love the long months of hurricane season. Her father, a once-renowned piano player, sometimes goes looking for the music in the middle of a storm. Hurricane months bring unpredictable good and bad days. More than anything, Fig wants to see the world through her father's eyes, so she takes an art class to experience life as an artist does. Then Fig's dad shows up at school, confused and looking for her." - Pub.



## **The Pants Project** \*LRC has 12

by Cat Clarke, c2017 (IL: 5-8; 4-7; RL: 4.7)

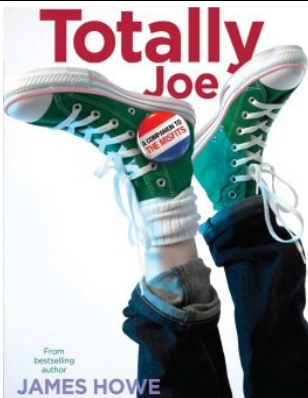
"My name is Liv (Not Olivia)... I'm not technically a girl. I'm transgender. Which is a bit like being a Transformer. Only not quite as cool because I probably won't get to save the world one day." Liv knows he was always meant to be a boy, but with his new school's terrible dress code, he can't even wear pants. Only skirts. Operation: Pants Project begins! " - Pub.



## **Gracefully Grayson**

by A. Polonsky, c2016 (IL: 3-6, 5-8, Gr. 6 up; RL: 4.6)

"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 on the inside, stuck in the wrong gender's body. 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?" - Amazon.ca



## **Totally Joe**

by James, Howe, c2005, 2007 (IL: 5-8, 6-8; RL: 4.8)

"Meet Joe Bunch. Lovable misfit and celebrity wannabe from Paintbrush Falls, New York. Like his longtime best friends Addie, Skeeze, and Bobby, Joe's been called names all his life. So when he's given the assignment to write his alphabiography—the story of his life from A to Z—Joe has his doubts. This whole thing could be serious ammunition for bullying if it falls into the wrong hands. But Joe discovers there's more to the assignment—and his life—than meets the eye ..." - Pub.

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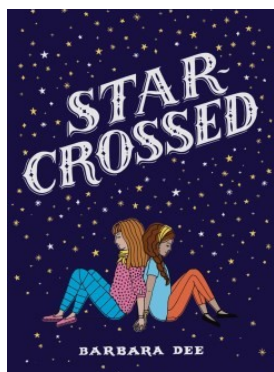
## Novels



### **Hurricane Child**

by Kacen Callender, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.3)

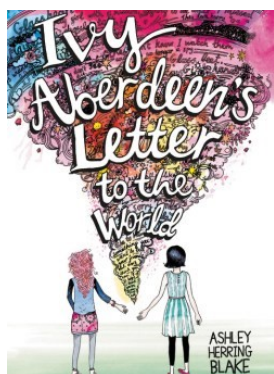
"Born on Water Island in the Virgin Islands during a hurricane, which is considered bad luck, twelve-year-old Caroline falls in love with another girl—and together they set out in a hurricane to find Caroline's missing mother." - Follett



### **Star-Crossed**

by Barbara Dee, c2017 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 4.7)

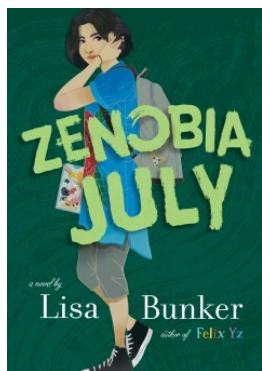
"... As the cast prepares for opening night, Mattie finds herself growing increasingly attracted to Gemma and confused, since, just days before, she had found herself crushing on a boy named Elijah. Is it possible to have a crush on both boys AND girls? If that wasn't enough to deal with, things backstage at the production are starting to rival any Shakespearean drama..." - Pub.



### **Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World** \*LRC has 12

by Ashley Herring Blake, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.9)

"In the wake of a destructive tornado, one girl develops feelings for another in this stunning, tender novel about emerging identity, perfect for fans of *The Thing About Jellyfish*. When a tornado rips through town, twelve-year-old Ivy Aberdeen's house is destroyed and her family of five is displaced. Ivy feels invisible and ignored in the aftermath..." - Pub.



### **Zenobia July**

by Lisa Bunker, c2019 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.8)

"... A bold, heartfelt story about a trans girl solving a cyber mystery and coming into her own. Zenobia July is starting a new life. She used to live in Arizona with her father; now she's in Maine with her aunts. She used to spend most of her time behind a computer screen, improving her impressive coding and hacking skills; now she's coming out of her shell..." - Pub.

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Gender Identity (Intermediate)

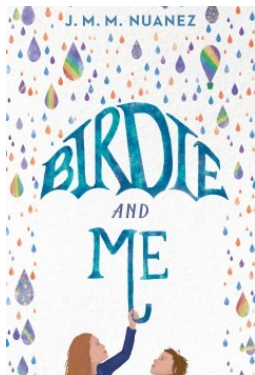
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
*Novels*



## Dear Sweet Pea

by Julie Murphy, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.1)

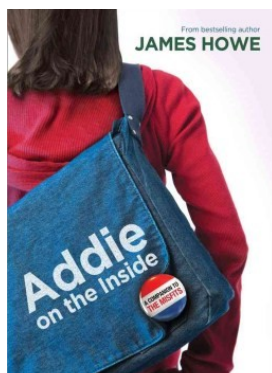
"Thirteen-year-old Patricia, widely known as Sweet Pea, navigates her parents' unconventional divorce and finds herself in the unlikely role of her town's advice columnist" - Follett



## Birdie and Me

by J. M. M. Nuñez, c2020 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 7.6)

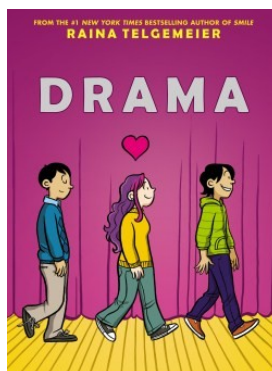
"Ever since their free-spirited mama died ten months ago, twelve-year-old Jack and her gender creative nine-year-old brother, Birdie, have been living with their fun-loving Uncle Carl, but now their conservative Uncle Patrick insists on being their guardian which forces all four of them to confront grief, prejudice, and loss, all while exploring what 'home' really means." - Follett



## Addie on the Inside

by James Howe, c2011 (IL: 5-8, 6-8; RL: 5.0)

"Outspoken thirteen-year-old Addie Carle learns about love, loss, and staying true to herself as she navigates seventh grade, enjoys a visit from her grandmother, fights with her boyfriend, and endures gossip and meanness from her former best friend." - Follett



## Drama

by Raina Telgemeier, c2012 (IL: 5-8, 6-9; RL: 2.3?)  
(graphic novel)

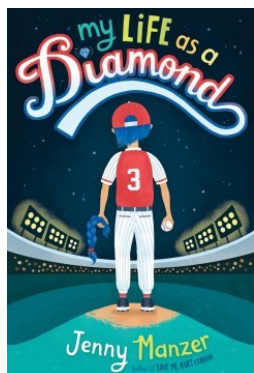
"Callie rides an emotional roller coaster while serving on the stage crew for a middle school production of Moon over Mississippi as various relationships start and end, and others never quite get going." - Follett



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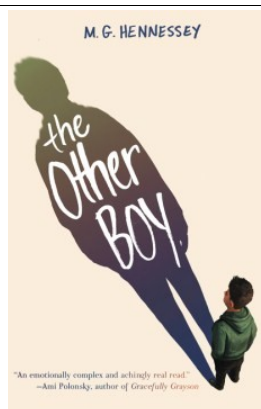
## Novels



### My Life as a Diamond

by Jenny Manzer, c 2018 (IL: 5-8, 4-8; RL: 4.5)

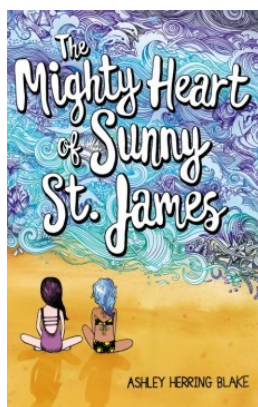
"Ten-year-old Caspar "Caz" Cadman loves baseball and has a great arm. He loves the sounds, the smells, the stats. When his family moves from Toronto to a suburb of Seattle, the first thing he does is try out for the local summer team, the Redburn Ravens. Even though Caz is thrilled when he makes the team, he worries because he has a big secret. No one knows that back in Toronto, Caz used to live life as a girl named Cassandra. And it's nobody's business. Caz will tell his new friends when he's ready..." - Pub.



### The Other Boy

by M.G. Hennessey, c2016 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.8)

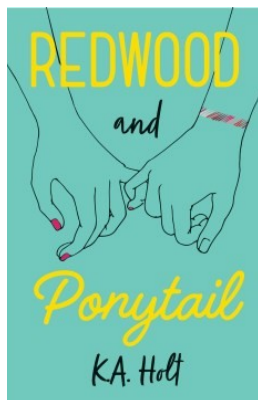
"Twelve-year-old Shane Woods is just a regular boy. He loves pitching for his baseball team, working on his graphic novel, and hanging out with his best friend, Josh. But Shane is keeping something private, something that might make a difference to his friends and teammates, to Josh, and his crush, Madeline. And when a classmate threatens to reveal his secret, Shane's whole world comes crashing down. It will take a lot of courage for Shane to ignore the hate and show the world that he's still the same boy he was before. And in the end, those who stand beside him may surprise everyone, including Shane." - Pub.



### The Mighty Heart of Sunny St. James

by Ashley Herring Blake, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.3)

"When Sunny St. James receives a new heart, she decides to set off on a "New Life Plan": 1) do awesome amazing things she could never do before; 2) find a new best friend; and 3) kiss a boy for the first time. Her "New Life Plan" seems to be racing forward, but when she meets her new best friend Quinn, Sunny questions whether she really wants to kiss a boy at all. With the re-emergence of her mother, Sunny begins a journey to becoming the new Sunny St. James." - Pub.



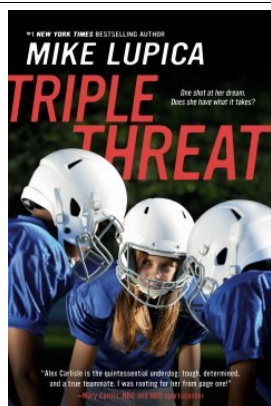
### Redwood and Ponytail

by K.A. Holt, c2019 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.4)

"Told in verse in two voices, with a chorus of fellow students, this is a story of two girls, opposites in many ways, who are drawn to each other; Kate appears to be a stereotypical cheerleader with a sleek ponytail and a perfectly polished persona, Tam is tall, athletic and frequently mistaken for a boy, but their deepening friendship inevitably changes and reveals them in ways they did not anticipate." - Follett

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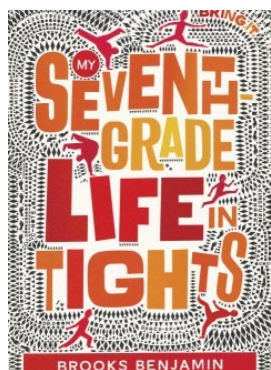
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*Novels*



## **Triple Threat**

by Mike Lupica, c2020 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.0)

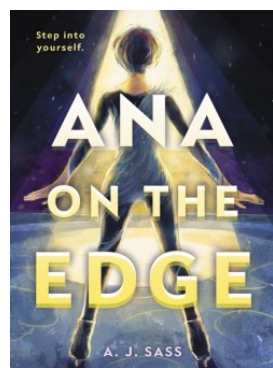
"Twelve-year-old Alex Carlisle loves football almost as much as she loves her father but when she joins the Orville Middle School football team, not all of the boys, or parents, are pleased." - Follett



## **My Seventh-Grade Life in Tights**

by Brooks Benjamin, c2016 (IL: 3-6, 5-8; RL: 4.1)

"All Dillon wants is to be a real dancer...The problem? His dad wants him to play football. And Dillon's freestyle crew, the Dizzee Freekz, says that dance studios are for sellouts. His friends want Dillon to kill it at the audition—so he can turn around and tell the studio just how wrong their rules and creativity-strangling ways are...But as Dillon's dancing improves, he wonders - what if studios aren't the enemy? And what if he actually has a shot at winning the scholarship? Dillon's life is about to get crazy...on and off the dance floor." - Pub.



## **Ana on the Edge**

by A.J. Sass, c2020 (IL: 3-6, RL: 4.7)

"Twelve-year-old figure skater Ana strives to win competitions while learning about gender identity—Ana's own and that of a new friend—and how to navigate the best path forward." - Follett



## **Thanks A Lot, Universe**

by Chad Lucas, c2021 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.8)

"Brian has always been anxious, whether at home, or in class, or on the basketball court . . . but after he and his brother are placed in foster care, Brian starts having panic attacks . . . Ezra wants to help, but he worries if he's too nice to Brian, his friends will realize that he has a crush on him . . . But when Brian and his brother run away, Ezra has no choice but to take the leap and reach out. Both boys have to decide if they're willing to risk sharing parts of themselves they'd rather hide." - Follett



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## Novels



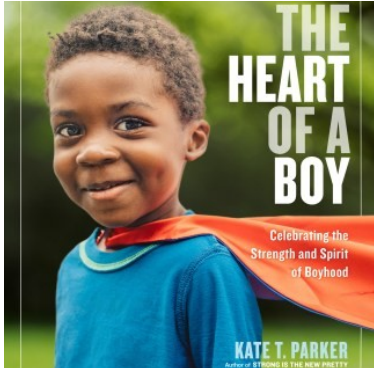
### The Best At It

by Maulik Pancholy, c2019 (IL: 5-8, 3-7, 5-7, RL: 4.0)

"Rahul Kapoor is heading into seventh grade in a small town in Indiana. The start of middle school is making him feel increasingly anxious, so his favorite person in the whole world, his grandfather, Bhai, gives him some well-meaning advice: Find one thing you're really good at and become the BEST at it...But what if he discovers he isn't the best at anything? Funny, charming, and incredibly touching, this is a story about friendship, family, and the courage it takes to live your truth." - Follett

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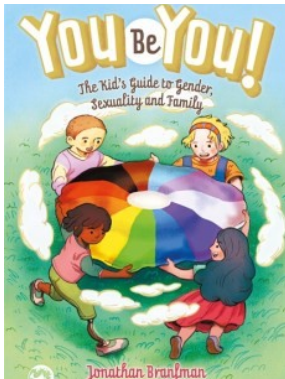
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
*Non-fiction*



## **The Heart of a Boy**

by Kate T. Parker, c2019 (IL: AD, 5-8; RL: 5.8)

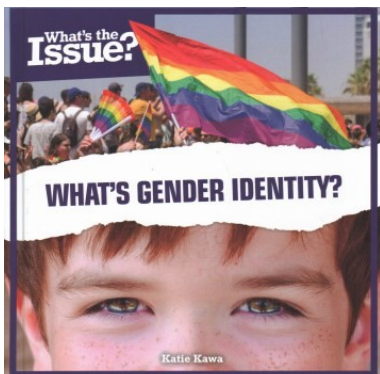
"In this empowering, deeply felt celebration of boys being--and believing in--themselves...With inspiring and joyful quotes from the boys themselves, this book spreads a heartfelt, uplifting message of openness, self-confidence, and warmth." - Pub.



## **You be You: The Kid's Guide to Gender, Sexuality and Family**

by Jonathon Branfman, c2019 (IL: 3-6, RL: 4.9)

"Throughout the book kids learn that there are many kinds of people in the world and that diversity is something to be celebrated. It covers gender, romantic orientation, discrimination, intersectionality, privilege, and how to stand up for what's right. With charming illustrations, clear explanations, and short sections that can be dipped in and out of, this book helps children think about how to create a kinder, more tolerant world." - Pub.



## **What's Gender Identity?**

by Katie Kawa, c2020 (IL: 3-6, RL: 6.2)

"Gender identity is a concept that young people are talking about in increasingly open ways, and they need resources to help them better understand this complex topic. This sensitive and age-appropriate overview of gender identity features helpful definitions and explanations, an introduction to the use of preferred pronouns, and tips for talking to both peers and adults about this topic..." - Follett