



Stories by LGBTQ Autistic Authors Everyone should Read



BY ADRIANA WHITE

“Autism, like many things in life, exists across a spectrum.”

While the question of whether a person is autistic has a binary, yes or no answer, the way that autism affects an individual life can vary greatly. Autism, like many other conditions and disabilities, is complicated. For many of us on the autism spectrum, our lives are further complicated by layers of additional spectrums. Gender identity is one such spectrum, as is sexual orientation or attraction. Anecdotally, many have noticed that there seem to be “a lot of LGBTQ+ autistic people.” And now researchers are finding that autistic people are, compared to the general population, [far more likely](#) to be LGBTQ.

Working as a middle school librarian, I am often struck by how effortlessly my students talk about their identities – both who they are and who they love. But I know that there are many others who cannot be as open. Young people who are LGBTQ face far too many difficulties in life – discrimination, bullying, trauma, and more. These young people are four times more likely to die by suicide than their cisgender and heterosexual (or “cishet”) peers. The numbers are even higher for autistic people, who are [10 times more likely](#) to die by suicide than the general population. Statistics like these make me fear for the lives of our young LGBTQ autistics. I worry about all the unseen and unheard young people who are struggling to survive in a world that doesn’t quite get who they are. A world that doesn’t understand that they are just different, not broken.

“These kids need to hear stories about people like them. Their cis het peers need to hear these stories, too. The adults who work with or live with these kids need to hear these stories, and realize that it is okay for their kids to live their own unique lives.”

The LGBTQ autistic adults who felt so alone and misunderstood in their childhood – many of whom are still struggling to come to terms with who they are and how to talk openly about it – also need these stories. For far too many of us, it is literally a matter of survival.

The following list features some amazing books by LGBTQ autistic authors. Several of these books also include main characters who are autistic and LGBTQ. (Note: I have included pronouns for each author, if they have provided any online.)

Uncomfortable Labels: My Life as a Gay Autistic Trans Woman

by Laura Kate Dale

In her memoir, Dale shares her experiences with being gender-nonconfirming, gay, and autistic – taking readers on a journey from her confusing childhood to a much happier adulthood. Along the way, she talks about a wide range of topics, including mental health, addiction, suicide, sensory issues, special interests, and so much more. While some of these ideas are definitely heavy and serious topics, the overall tone of Dale’s book is a hopeful one. She writes openly about the difficulties she has experienced in her life, and shares strategies that could be useful for others. She also emphasizes the need for more autism-friendly LGBTQ spaces. Dale is also the editor of the upcoming crowdfunded anthology, *Gender Euphoria: Stories of Joy from Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex Writers*.

Monsters in My Mind

by Ada Hoffmann (she/they)

This anthology is a collection of several smaller works by Hoffmann. Many of these short stories and poems fall under the banner of “speculative fiction,” which includes genres like science-fiction, fantasy, and horror. Hoffmann describes the theme of the anthology as “being different, monstrous, or out of place, and hoping to somehow be accepted that way” – an idea that is likely to resonate with many LGBTQ and autistic readers. Hoffmann’s stories feature several characters who are autistic and queer (though they’re not always overtly labeled as such), and being able to see these characters at the center of their own stories is a fantastic experience. Hoffmann has also written two novels for adults – *The Outside* and its upcoming sequel, *The Fallen*. On her website, Hoffmann has also reviewed and ranked representations of autism in several books, as part of her [Autistic Book Party](#) series.

Dragon Pearl

by Yoon Ha Lee (he/him)

Published under the “Rick Riordan Presents” imprint, Lee’s novel mixes Korean mythology with science-fiction and fantasy, and the end result is a fascinating and fantastic read about the importance of friendships and family. *Dragon Pearl* is notable for its inclusion of queer and nonbinary characters, and for the way that it doesn’t make a big deal out of their inclusion. Lee’s book portrays a world where pronouns are included on military uniforms, and families come in a variety of shapes and sizes – and it’s all normalized and accepted without hesitation. Young readers need more books like this one in their lives. Lee has finished writing the sequel to *Dragon Pearl*, titled *Tiger Honor*, and he expects that it will be out sometime in 2022. Lee also writes novels for adults, most notably his *The Machineries of Empire* series.

Ana on the Edge

by A.J. Sass (he/they)

This wonderful middle grade novel is about ice skating and being true to yourself. Ana is rising in the ranks of the competitive – and very gender-coded – world of figure skating. After befriending Hayden, a transgender boy, and learning more about gender identity, Ana realizes that she is nonbinary. Faced with this new information, Ana must decide how to balance her identity with the expectations of her friends and family. Ana tries out different pronouns, comes out to her loved ones, and shows readers that figuring out who you are is a journey – and that you shouldn't be afraid to embark on it. Sass's next novel, *Ellen Outside the Lines*, comes out this fall, and will feature a queer, Jewish, and autistic protagonist.

Testing Pandora

by Kaia Søndersby

This novella is a prequel to the novels in Søndersby's Xandri Corelel series, *Failure to Communicate* and *Tone of Voice*. The series tells the story of Xandri, a young autistic woman who has a special talent for understanding alien life. Readers get a glimpse into Xandri's past, and see how she got her start as a special kind of diplomat and negotiator. Xandri is a Pandora, the result of a rare natural birth in a universe that, through eugenics, had previously eliminated disabilities completely. Xandri's autism is strange to many of her peers, and for all her skill in understanding alien life, Xandri still struggles to understand the other humans around her. Xandri is also bisexual, and in this prequel, meets some crew members that she will have relationships with later in the series. Søndersby has finished the third Xandri Corelel book, and hopes to see it published soon. She is also working on two additional novellas for the series.

Peta Lyre's Rating Normal

by Anna Whateley (she/her)

This Australian book hasn't come out in the US yet, but it is definitely worth seeking out. The story centers on Peta, who is autistic and also has ADHD (as does the book's author). Peta also struggles with sensory processing issues, and has to put a lot of effort into accommodating for herself. Peta has had to learn a lot of rules for how to fit in, but all of her social skills training fails to prepare her for how it feels when she falls in love with her new classmate – a girl named Sam. Peta's been taught that she has to follow the rules if she wants to be "normal," but hiding who she really is (also known as masking) has a cost. Peta must decide if rating normal is truly worth it, and which rules in life are meant to be broken. Whateley's next book, *Tearing Myself Together*, which focuses on two neurodivergent classmates of Peta's (one with EDS, the other with skin cancer), comes out in Australia in 2022.

Queens of Geek

by Jen Wilde (she/they)

This was one of the first #OwnVoices autistic books that I read, way back in my early days of library school. I had never felt so seen. This book tells the story of two protagonists: Taylor, a plus-size autistic girl who also has anxiety, and Charlie, a Chinese-Australian girl who is bisexual and has a huge crush on Alyssa (a queer Black actress/vlogger). Taylor is also dealing with her own complicated feelings for her best guy friend Jamie, and when she and Charlie arrive at the SupaCon comic convention, everything changes. The diverse representations in the story are all very well-written, and the friendship between neurodivergent Taylor and neurotypical Charlie is wonderful and sweet. Wilde writes about autism, anxiety, bisexuality, sexism, and so much more in an amazingly authentic way. Wilde has also written two additional YA books – *The Brightsiders* and *Going Off Script* – which also feature queer protagonists.

All These Authors, and So Many More

This list could have easily been twice as long! Some LGBTQ autistic authors have already been featured on Geek Club Books, such as Marieke Nijkamp and Yenn Purkis (both in my first book list) and Rivers Solomon (included in my second book list). Author and #OwnVoices originator Corinne Duyvis was interviewed back in 2016, and released a new book last year, *The Art of Saving the World*. Artist and author Rebecca Burgess recently released a graphic novel, *How to Be Ace: A Memoir of Growing Up Asexual*, and they have another book (with an autistic protagonist!) due out next year. Erin Ekins has written what will likely be an essential text for LGBTQ autistic teens – *Queerly Autistic: The Ultimate Guide for LGBTQIA+ Teens on the Spectrum* – which comes out in April 2021. The upcoming MG novel *Izzy at the End of the World* by K.A. Reynolds features a young bisexual and autistic protagonist. Nonbinary British author Lizzie Huxley-Jones edited *Stim: An Autistic Anthology*, which features work by a diverse group of autistic writers. And there are LGBTQ autistic authors like Nicole Panteleakos and Hillary Monahan, and so many more.

“All of these authors, and others like them, are writing desperately needed stories that show us that it’s okay to be different.”

Not all of these stories are specifically about being autistic or LGBTQ. They’re not all “issues” books, or books about trauma and pain. And that’s a good thing. We need a wide range of stories to represent our many different life experiences. We need adventure stories, romance, and stories about family. We need stories of joy, love, and acceptance. We need stories of hope. Seeing LGTBQ autistic characters (and authors) can mean the world to someone who is struggling to figure who they really are.

I think that hope also exists on a spectrum. Some days, we may not be able to feel it as strongly as we used to. Some days are darker than others. On days like those, I hope that you can find comfort in stories like these. I hope you read them and know that you are not alone.



By Adriana White

Adriana White is an autistic school librarian and former special education teacher. Since being diagnosed with autism in her 30s, she has set out to create more autism-friendly schools and libraries. She is also passionate about supporting #OwnVoices books by autistic authors, and thinks that every library collection should include them. Adriana has earned Master’s degrees in Education and Information Science, with specializations in Special Education and Storytelling, respectively. She can be found on Twitter at @Adriana_Edu, where she tweets about autism, libraries, and diverse books – especially books by #AutisticAuthors!