



# Book of the Month

Presented by ADL's Education Department

**About the Book of the Month:** 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 educators, adult family members and other caregivers of children, reading the books listed on this site with your children and incorporating them into instruction are excellent ways to talk about these important concepts at home and in the classroom.

## Too Bright to See

Kyle Lukoff (Author)

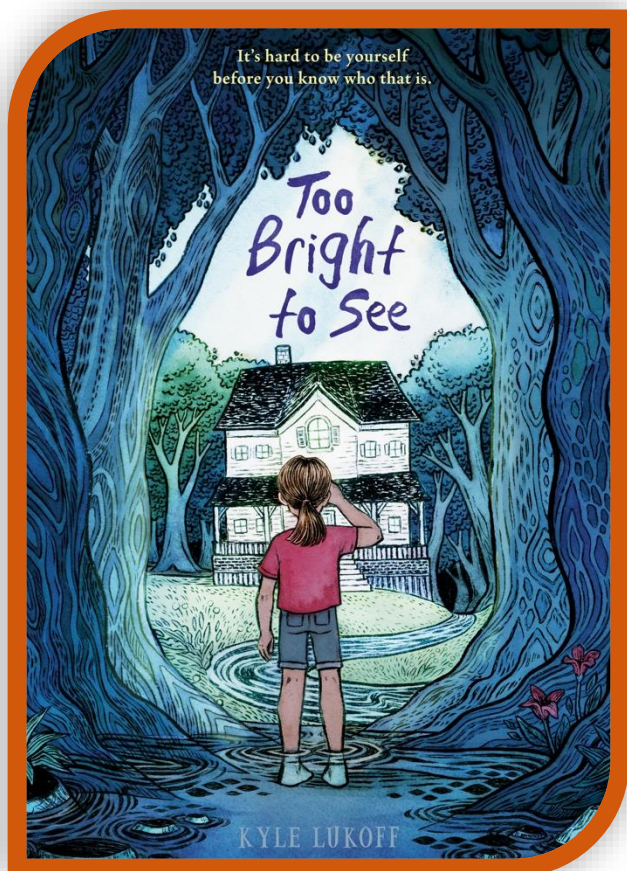
It's the summer before middle school, and eleven-year-old Bug's best friend Moira has decided the two of them need to use the next few months to prepare. For Moira, this means figuring out the right clothes to wear, learning how to apply makeup, and deciding which boys are cuter in their yearbook photos than in real life. But none of this is all that appealing to Bug, who doesn't particularly want to spend more time trying to understand what it means to be a girl. Besides, there's something more important to worry about: A ghost is haunting Bug's eerie old house in rural Vermont...and maybe haunting Bug in particular. As Bug begins to untangle the mystery of who this ghost is and what they're trying to say, an altogether different truth comes to light—Bug is transgender.

ISBN: 978-0593111154

Publisher: Dial Books

Year Published: 2021

Age Range: 9–12



## Book Themes

Acting as an Ally, Death and Grief, Identity, Transgender Identity

## Key Words

Discuss and define these words with students prior to reading the book and remind them of the meanings as they come up in the book. See also ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).

- |              |                   |                  |                |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| ■ abandon    | ■ harassed        | ■ manifest       | ■ stall        |
| ■ anxiety    | ■ hollow          | ■ memorial       | ■ supernatural |
| ■ cliquish   | ■ hospice         | ■ non-issue      | ■ sympathetic  |
| ■ come out   | ■ identity        | ■ obliterating   | ■ targeted     |
| ■ comforting | ■ illuminating    | ■ panic          | ■ transform    |
| ■ condolence | ■ impenetrable    | ■ queer          | ■ transgender  |
| ■ confront   | ■ impression      | ■ quirky         | ■ transphobic  |
| ■ distress   | ■ indifference    | ■ sabotage       | ■ unease       |
| ■ drag queen | ■ interchangeable | ■ self-conscious | ■ unstoppable  |
| ■ expensive  | ■ irrationality   | ■ silver lining  | ■ vehemently   |
| ■ grief      | ■ LGBTQ           | ■ subconscious   | ■ widow        |

## Discussion Questions

**[Note:** This main character in this book is transgender, and the story focuses on Bug's self-discovery. As you read and discuss the book, it is important to be aware that you may have students in your classroom who are transgender, non-binary or gender non-conforming, or have family members who are. Be sensitive and thoughtful about how you approach this topic and understand that students will have different reactions and emotional responses to this book and discussion. Given the absence of content in the curriculum on this topic and the disproportionate rates of bullying and bias against transgender students, it is important to educate young people on issues related to gender identity, bias and discrimination. It is also important to provide narratives that portray transgender people and their coming out in a positive way. To provide a safe learning environment for all, review your classroom guidelines or refer to ADL's [Establishing a Safe Learning Environment](#).]

If the students read the book in small groups or as a whole class, ask discussion questions throughout their reading to check comprehension and engage them on a deeper level. Some of these questions can also be used as writing prompts. When students have finished the book, choose from these questions to guide a group discussion:

- What is the book about?
- How would you characterize Bug at the beginning of the book? What do you learn about Bug as the story moves along?
- For most of the book when Bug looks in the mirror, they don't see themselves. Why do you think this happens? How is looking in the mirror different for Bug at the end of the book?
- At one point as Bug looks in the mirror, they think, "I'm always self-conscious of how hard I'm pretending." Why do you think Bug says this? Have you ever felt like you were pretending?
- How does Bug experience the death of Uncle Roderick? Describe Bug's response.
- What is Bug and Moira's relationship like? How has it changed and evolved over the years? What do you think it will be like as they enter middle school?
- Why do you think we never learned Bug's given name?

- As you read about Bug's dreams, do you think about what they mean? Do you ever try to interpret your own dreams? Why do you think the author included Bug's dreams in the story? What do they tell us about Bug's character or the plot?
- When Bug goes to the library to learn more about ghosts, what do they find out? What did you learn about ghosts that you didn't know before?
- What does the Ouija board tell Bug? What do you think this means?
- What happens at Bug's 12th birthday party sleepover and how does that relate to Bug's understanding a part of their identity, being transgender? How do Moira and the other friends respond to Bug's haircut?
- How is Bug's new hair symbolic, and how does it help Bug figure out who they are?
- What happens when Bug tells Mom that they are transgender? How does Mom respond? How did you feel as you read this scene?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before about transgender identity? What more do you want to know?
- When Bug and Mom meet with the principal of Bug's middle school, what does Mrs. Campbell tell them about how Bug will be treated at school? Why are these rules and practices important? What else do you think Bug might need to feel safe and included?
- How does Bug tell some classmates that they are transgender, and how do the classmates respond?
- What do you think the new school year will be like for Bug?
- As you read the book, what did you think the ghost was trying to communicate to Bug? Have you ever had an experience like that?
- Why do you think the author called the book *Too Bright to See*?
- Why do you think the author used a ghost story to tell the story about Bug?
- How did you feel when the book ends? What do you think will happen next? Would you have ended it differently and if so, how?
- What messages does the author communicate through the story?

## Extension Activities

Below are activities for students that can extend learning from the book.

### 1. Reader's Response Writing Activities

**Write A Ghost Story:** Elicit and explain that *Too Bright to See* takes place in the context of a ghost story that Bug is uncovering. Bug spends time in the library learning more about ghosts, and this helps them to figure out things about themselves. The ghost story moves the book's plot along and serves as a metaphor for the underlying theme in the book: accepting aspects of one's identity. Have students create their own ghost short story that uses what they've learned from the book (in addition to their own research) about ghosts. Invite them to consider a theme and message they want to convey through the ghost story. To plan the writing of the story, have students conduct research about ghosts, identify a theme and characters, outline the plot and then write their story. Engage other students in the writing process by having students conference with each other, provide feedback, revise and finalize their stories.

**Diary Entries of a Character:** Have students select one of the central characters of the book: Bug, Moira, Mom, Griffin or Uncle Roderick. Then have students write diary entries for the chosen character, writing 5–8 diary entries that the character might have kept before, during or after the book's events. Remind students that the character's thoughts and feelings are very important in a diary as well as their reaction to the day-to-day events and other activities that take place throughout the book. Invite students to focus on their character's perspective. How do they observe the events of the story? What assumptions do they make about other characters they interact with? What thoughts might they have that they wouldn't want to share? What information would they not know about other characters or events? You may choose to have students engage in prewriting discussions with a partner about their character to get some of their ideas out. After they have completed the assignment, have them share their diary entries with the class and consider creating an online collection of all the diary entries.

**Get to Know the Author:** Have students get to know Kyle Lukoff, the author of *Too Bright to See*. Explain to students that they will conduct research about Kyle Lukoff that will culminate in a project. Read aloud the short blurb about Kyle Lukoff in the back of the book. After reading, generate questions students have about the author and what more they want to know about them, including where they grew up, their inspiration for writing the book, aspects of their identity and their relevance to the book, other books they wrote, their interests and hobbies, family life, relevant quotes, etc. Possible sources for their research can include: (1) Kyle Lukoff's website (<http://www.kylelukoff.com/>), (2) their social media posts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (3) articles written about them and (4) other online research. The final culminating project of their research may include one of the following ideas: an extended "author bio" contact page, a timeline of Kyle Lukoff's life including other books he has written, a video (or audio) simulated interview between the author and a journalist (one student plays the author and another plays the interviewer).

## 2. Talk about Transgender Identity and Topics

Talk with students about what it means to be transgender. Be sensitive and thoughtful about whether you have students (or parents, family members) in your class who may be gender non-conforming or transgender. Ask students: *What does the word transgender mean?* Tell students that the prefix trans means across or beyond and relate to other words that use that prefix. Talk to students about gender, a category of identity that people have. Tell students that even though people are assigned a sex at birth, that gender is an internal sense of who one is and can't be known by just looking at someone. Remind students about how Bug came to realize they are transgender. Elicit from students and define **transgender** as a term for people whose gender identity differs from how they were assigned at birth (e.g., assigned boy or girl). In Bug's case, this means that when Bug was a baby and young child, people thought Bug was a girl because of their body but later Bug realized and told people they are actually a boy.

Ask if students know any famous people who are transgender or non-binary such as Laverne Cox, Janet Mock, Jazz Jennings, Demi Lovato, Isis King, Elliott Page, Amandla Stenberg, Caitlyn Jenner, etc. Ask students what they think some of the challenges are for people who are transgender and explain that even though transgender people have been more visible lately, they still face bias and discrimination in many aspects of their lives including higher rates of bullying, discrimination, ridicule and violence. Ask students: *When Bug and Mom met with the principal of Bug's middle school, what did the principal say about how they would support Bug (e.g., single-stall restrooms, using Bug's name and pronouns, school anti-bullying policies, etc.)?* Talk about the rules and policies some schools have put into place to make schools safer and more inclusive for transgender students and ask how they think transgender students and others feel when those rules and policies are not in

place. Talk together about what you can do as a class or school to support students who are transgender or gender non-conforming.

### 3. Acting as an Ally

Ask students: *What challenges did Bug face and what challenges might they continue to face as a transgender young person, in school, amongst their peers and in their community?* Then, talk with students about what it means to act as an ally to someone who is being bullied or the target of bias. Define **ally** as someone who helps or stands up for someone who is being bullied or the target of bias. Ask students: *Did anyone act as an ally to Bug and if so, who? Have you ever acted as an ally to someone who was targeted based on an aspect of their identity? What happened and how did you feel?* Use [6 Ways to Be an Ally](#) to explore the various ways one can act as an ally. Have students think about bias and bullying they have seen, experienced or heard about in their school. Then have them consider ways to act as an ally in one of those situations. As a culmination, have them create a short storyboard story (with words, dialogue and illustrations) of what happened and focus on the character who acts as an ally. Have students include in their storyboard what happens, the ally behavior used, and the impact it had on the person and situation.

## ADL Resources

The following are curriculum and educational resources on transgender people and topics, identity, and ally behavior.

### Curriculum Resources

Identity-Based Bullying, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/identity-based-bullying).

My Own Virtual Space, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/my-own-virtual-space](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/my-own-virtual-space).

Transgender Identity and Issues, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/transgender-identity-and-issues](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/transgender-identity-and-issues).

Who Am I? Identity Poems, [www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems](http://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/who-am-i-identity-poems).

### Websites

6 Ways to Be an Ally

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/6-ways-to-be-an-ally-en-espanol)

Some simple things a student can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. (Also in Spanish.)

Beyond the Binary: Discussing Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Identity in K-12 Schools

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/beyond-the-binary-discussing-transgender-and-gender-non](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/beyond-the-binary-discussing-transgender-and-gender-non)

To provide a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students, it is important to discuss transgender and gender non-conforming identity and issues in schools. This guide provides suggestions and resources.

Let's Get it Right: Using Correct Pronouns and Names

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/lets-get-it-right-using-correct-pronouns-and-names](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/lets-get-it-right-using-correct-pronouns-and-names)

Educator resource about using accurate pronouns and names to convey understanding and respect for all people, especially for those who are transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary.

Safe and Inclusive Schools for All

[www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all](http://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/safe-and-inclusive-schools-for-all)

Tips to foster a safe, respectful and inclusive learning environment.

### **Children's Books**

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

LGBTQ People & Homophobia/Heterosexism, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-6=1&tid\[194\]=194&tid\[195\]=195&tid\[196\]=196&tid\[197\]=197&tid\[198\]=198&tid\[199\]=199](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?childrens-lit-select-all-6=1&tid[194]=194&tid[195]=195&tid[196]=196&tid[197]=197&tid[198]=198&tid[199]=199)

LGBTQ People & Homophobia/Heterosexism: Transgender and Gender Non-Conformity Identity, [www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid\[199\]=199](http://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resources-for-educators-parents-families/childrens-literature?tid[199]=199)