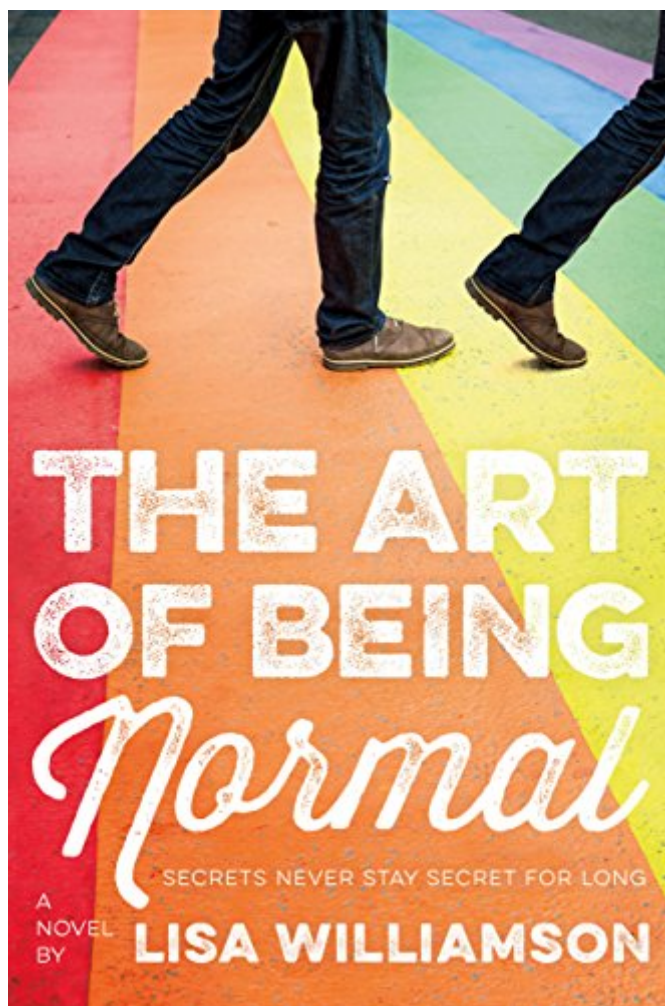


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The Art Of Being Normal: A Novel



Synopsis

David Piper has always been an outsider. His parents think he's gay. The school bully thinks he's a freak. Only his two best friends know the real truth: David wants to be a girl. On the first day at his new school Leo Denton has one goal: to be invisible. Attracting the attention of the most beautiful girl in his class is definitely not part of that plan. When Leo stands up for David in a fight, an unlikely friendship forms. But things are about to get messy. Because at Eden Park School secrets have a funny habit of not staying secret for long, and soon everyone knows that Leo used to be a girl. As David prepares to come out to his family and transition into life as a girl and Leo wrestles with figuring out how to deal with people who try to define him through his history, they find in each other the friendship and support they need to navigate life as transgender teens as well as the courage to decide for themselves what normal really means.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I may be one of the few that didn't read the synopsis of the book all the way through (you might want to stop here if you haven't either -- major spoiler ahead). I knew the book was about a boy (David) that wanted to be a girl, but it came as a complete surprise when one of the other characters

(Leo) turns out to be transgender also, with the revelation coming out when he and another girl (Alicia) are at Alicia's house in her bedroom. Alicia wants to have sex but Leo says he can't -- and when she presses him for a reason he tells her he was born a girl. There were plenty of twists elsewhere in the book to keep my attention. I thought the descriptions of the difficulties Leo encountered as a transgender were fairly realistic, although how he dealt with the "bathroom issue" after he was outed was never discussed. Near the end I thought Leo (formerly Megan) and Kate (formerly David) might become an item -- now that would have been different. They did dance together at a Christmas party, somewhat awkwardly, but that was as far as that got.

It is strange for me to read about Young People who go through Things like David does. But I must say I fell in love with these characters and their stories, and thanks to this book I will pay more attention to transexual People and I feel like I might understand them more now. What I know that I do understand is that they are just People, like all of us are. Respect. I feel like this book helped me pay more respect to People in general. Really Nice story. Very important.

It has been quite a while since I've read a novel in the GLBT genre so I thought it was about time to mix it up with *The Art of Being Normal*. What it brought to the table was a level of realism that transgendered youth face depicted really well. Identity and coming out, along with a plethora of other aspects were handled gracefully within the narrative. It was such an enjoyable read for me. Told with alternating P.O.V.s, it begins with David, the bullied outsider. I like how this character dealt with gender identity intelligently. Research. Though this is only the beginning of David's journey. It should have been noted somewhere that not all trans know they were born in the wrong body at an early age sometimes it's an evolution from something not feeling quite right before arriving at the conclusion of being transgendered (and involved diagnosis from a professional). I felt like it glazed over some important mechanics in the transgendered experience for the sake of story. Though David was a little frustrating for me at times, I was able to relate and enjoyed a different view of the world at large. Our second narrator, Leo is an all-around good guy. I enjoyed his strength and found his stand-offishness true to character. However, I guessed the plot twist involving his story from the beginning. Kind of deflated my enjoyment a little. Loved Leo. His story, his mannerisms. And it was great to see a separation in narrative styles with the switching P.O.V.s. Lis Williamson did a fantastic job with each of their voices. Begrudgingly I admit it

lacked a personal engagement from me, something intangible about the characters of David and Leo held me back from truly believing in them. I also had an issue with how they were obliged to get along – it felt forced and artificial. Effie and Alex – David’s best friends. Love the support and unadulterated no-holds-barred relationship they shared. So rare. At times their silliness destroyed the authenticity for me. But loved their sense of humour – had me laughing quite a lot. My favourite scene is when David points Effie and Alex out to Leo, and they pull faces – priceless! This story brings to light much of the pain and turmoil transgendered teens face in coming to terms with their condition/identity, some of it had tears falling from my eyes. (The feels! The feels!) The relationships in – The Art of Being Normal – are beautiful. I did want to read something other than issues regarding their gender identity. This book was all about that, and didn’t have much otherwise. I’m starting to find books are using GLBTQIA issues as a plot point or the big reveal annoying: when these are issues that are dealt with for a lifetime along with everything else. So, more everything else please. It’s all a very “nice” depiction of a transgendered experience and I use that term hesitantly because some youth experience so much more darkness and hardship. But that is too serious for what is meant to be a supportive, uplifting, and positive story about trying to live your truth. Great pacing, I completed this novel in two sittings and never found places where my attention was wandering. Great subject matter, but I found it very predictable, though, I would highly recommend this to all my friends. Proud to have – The Art of Being Normal – in my library, it has been the most grounded story that has dealt with sexual identity in such a point-blank style to date. Refreshing.

The book has an interesting theme of truth in it. Do you tell the truth or not? Leo’s mother doesn’t tell him the truth about his father. She thinks it’s better to let him live into the false truth he has created. When he finally encounters the truth about his father he is devastated. Leo does tell his girlfriend the truth he has been hiding and the outcome is likewise devastating. Truth is tricky business.

I bought this book for the school collection because some kids ask for it and I was quite surprised. Easy to read in a topic that for us is new (now has a space to be talked about). I like the atmosphere of the book, the characters were touching and easy to empathise with. Not the best

literature but a good one in a book that is written to put this subject in the run, specially to an age that are so permeable to tragedies. Important topics to have on our school shelves.

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