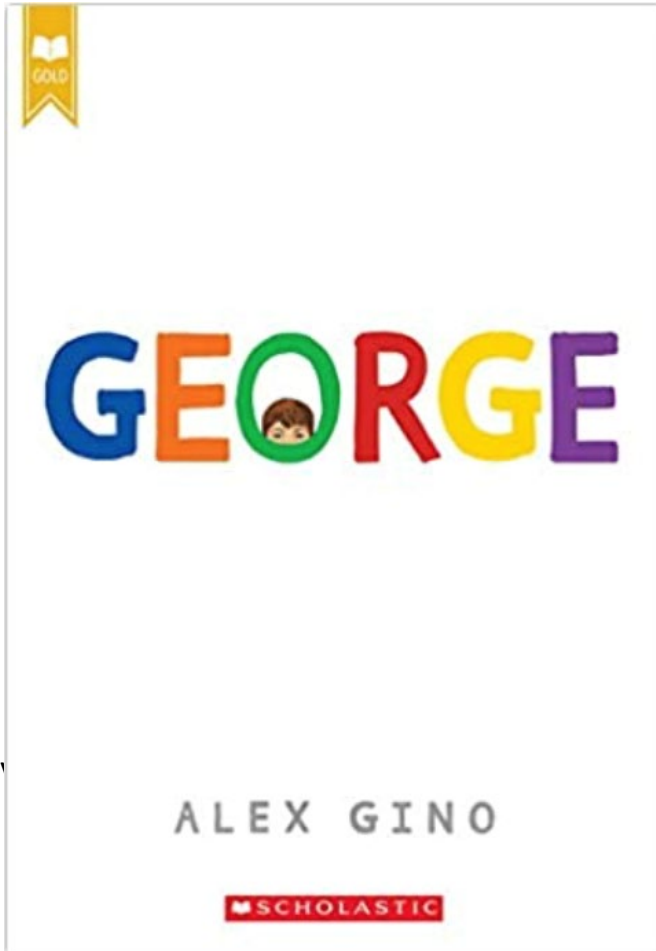


George

By Alex Gino

commonsensemedia.org



WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Parents need to know that *George* is a book about a transgender fourth-grader who increasingly learns to be herself and to tell others about her secret. Along the way, she finds many supportive advocates, but her greatest ally is her best friend, Kelly. Some kids taunt George, and she's called a freak and gets punched by a school bully. Some people, such as George's brother, assume George is gay, but she says she doesn't "know who she liked, really, boys or girls." The book deals with sexual identity, but there's no sexual activity. George's older brother mentions looking at porn and "dirty" magazines as something boys do. Young readers who don't know what the word "porn" means may be inclined to look it up. Parents and teachers can use this book to talk about a wide variety of topics, including what it means to be transgender and to how to stand up for someone being bullied. **Editor's note:** In the story, George's older brother shows George how to clear the browsing history after using Mom's computer. George then does this after searching the internet for transgender information. In the [Common Sense K-12 Digital Citizenship Curriculum](#) we advise families and educators to empower kids to think critically about the websites they visit. However, families may choose to review their kids' browsing history to make sure they're making safe choices online.

Pornography/dirty magazines (pg. 8, 140-141)

Reference to male genitals (pg. 44-45)

Gender reassignment hormones & surgery (pg. 46-47)

Hiding internet activity from parents (pg. 104-105)

Cross dressing & sharing underwear (pg. 166-167, 187)



The book was officially challenged by a KSD parent but was retained in the library for children's free use. When it was suggested that parents be notified if their child chose this book KSD librarians stated that **"a student may seek out this book, perhaps questioning his/her gender, and not yet be ready to discuss it with her/her (sic) parents. Notifying parents could potentially "out" the child."**

George was also featured during "Banned Book Week" with KSD middle school students.

Sample pages:

Mom was beautiful. She was tall, with a kind, genuine smile, and had the same bright-green eyes as George.

"Hey, Gee-gee," she said as she shut the pantry door.

When George was little and couldn't say her name properly, she used to call herself Gee-gee. Mom still called her that, even though Scott said that it sounded like a girl's name. George secretly thought the same thing.

"Have you seen your brother?" Mom asked as she rustled through the fridge for dinner options.

"He went to Randy's house."

"Hot dogs and beans it is!"

Scott hated baked beans, but both George and her mother loved them.

While Mom made dinner, George headed upstairs to take a bath. She took off her shirt while the tub filled, waiting until the last possible moment to take off her pants and underwear. She immersed her body in the warm water and tried not to think about what was between her legs, but there it was, bobbing in front of

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her. She washed her hair with lots of shampoo so that the suds would cover the surface of the water. She scrubbed her body, stood with a splash, and dried off with her fuzzy blue towel. Then she wrapped the towel around her torso, up by her armpits the way girls do, and ran a small black comb through her hair. She brushed it forward and stared at her pale, freckled face in the mirror before combing it back into its regular part down the middle.

In her room, George changed into a pair of flannel pajamas covered in tiny penguins wearing red bow ties. Mom called that dinner was ready, and George went downstairs to eat.

Mom already sat at the kitchen table, getting ready to take a bite of her hot dog, which was covered in mustard and relish. She had toasted her bun but had left George's soft and cool, just the way she liked it.

"Thanks, Mom," said George. She squirted some ketchup onto her hot dog and took a steaming, juicy bite.

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"I'm sorry I got the part of Charlotte." She twisted the toe of her sneaker into the blacktop pavement.

George shrugged.

"Are you mad at me?" Kelly asked.

"No."

"Good."

Kelly took a deep breath. "And I'm sorry I ignored you last week." She scratched her neck. "And you know what? If you think you're a girl . . ."

George braced for Kelly's next words.

"Then I think you're a girl too!" Kelly leaped onto her best friend and gave her a hug so big they both nearly toppled over. The openmouthed surprise and joy on George's face only made Kelly smile harder.

"So you're, like, transgender or something?" Kelly whispered as best she could in her excitement. "I was reading on the Internet, and there are lots of people like you. Did you know you can take hormones so that your body, you know, doesn't go all manlike?"

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"Yeah, I know." George had been reading websites about transitioning since Scott had taught her how to clear the web browser history on Mom's computer. "But you need your parents' permission."

"Your mom's pretty cool," Kelly said, her eyebrows lifted. "Maybe she'd be okay with it."

George shook her head and looked down, staring at her shoelaces. Even without closing her eyes, she could see her denim bag hanging from Mom's long finger, swinging slightly. The words *It's not cute anymore* echoed in her mind. She told Kelly about her bag of girls' magazines, and about Mom taking it.

"But that's not fair!" Kelly was indignant. "You didn't steal them! What right does she have to take them from you?"

"Sometimes transgender people don't get rights." George had read on the Internet about transgender people being treated unfairly.

"That's awful."

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