

Between Perfect & Real

AUTHOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Secondary
(Violence, Sexual References, Drug/alcohol references, Language)



SYNOPSIS

Dean Foster knows he's a trans guy. He's watched enough YouTube videos and done enough questioning to be sure. But everyone at his high school thinks he's a lesbian—including his girlfriend, Zoe, and his theatre director, who just cast him as a 'non-traditional' Romeo. He wonders if maybe it would be easier to wait until college to come out. But as he plays Romeo every day in rehearsals, Dean realises he wants everyone to see him as he really is now—not just on the stage, but everywhere in his life. Dean knows what he needs to do. Can playing a role help Dean be his true self?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ray Stoeve is the author of the young adult novel *Between Perfect & Real*, which was a 2021 Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection. They also contributed to the young adult anthology *Take The Mic: Fictional Stories of Everyday Resistance*. They received a 2016-2017 Made at Hugo House Fellowship and created the YA/MG Trans and Nonbinary Voices Masterlist, a database that tracks all books in those age categories written by trans authors about trans characters. When they're not writing, they can be found gardening, making art in other mediums or hiking their beloved Pacific Northwest.

STUDY NOTES

ENGLISH

- The author puts one sentence on each page on Chapter One. How does this use of white space create emphasis and meaning?
- *Between Perfect & Real* is broken up into five acts. Briefly describe what happens (the beats of action) in each Act using the following headings:
 - Prologue/Character and setting
 - Conflict
 - Rising Action
 - Falling Action
 - Denouement/Tone & Moral
- Belonging is a theme in *Between Perfect & Real*. Where or how does Dean feel a sense of belonging? Where does he feel like he doesn't belong? How does Dean's sense of belonging change over the course of the novel?
- *Between Perfect & Real* is an exploration of the barriers facing transgender people. Discuss.

- How does Blake affect Dean's coming out journey?
- How does Zoe help explore the difference between gender and sexuality? And the difference between coming out as gay and coming out as transgender?
- Dean is an aspiring actor. How does this help to explore the theme of coming out?
- 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet'. What does this famous line from *Romeo and Juliet* mean and how does it apply to Dean?
- Rewrite one of the following scenes from another character's point of view:
 - The scene where Dean's mother questions him about the bio in the school production pamphlet—from Dean's mother's point of view.
 - The scene where Dean comes out as transgender to Zoe—from Zoe's point of view.
 - The scene where Dean and Blake have a fight—from Blake's point of view.

HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Before you begin:

Definitions:

GENDER is used to describe those characteristics of women and men which are socially constructed. People are born female and male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles.

SEX the difference in biological characteristics of males and females as determined by a person's genes.

TRANSGENDER is an umbrella term and identity used to describe all kinds of people who sit outside the gender binary or whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth. Other terms include trans and transsexual.

Sources: World Health Organisation Gender Policy, 2002; Gender Questioning, Trans Melbourne Gender Project, Gay and Lesbian Health Victoria & Rainbow Network Victoria, 2010

- Allocate students a pink and a blue post-it note each.
- Read from the list of words from the chart below. As the students hear the word, ask them to hold up either the pink or the blue card or both in response to the word. Ask students to decide quickly, therefore instinctually.
- Record the responses on the board (Mostly pink. Mostly Blue. Even.)
 - Running
 - Long hair
 - Set of spanners
 - Gentle
 - Beer drinking
 - Child minding
 - Flirting
 - Crying
 - Religious leader
 - Dancing
 - Teacher
 - Cars
 - Plays piano
 - Likes to talk
 - Keeps a diary
 - Strong
 - Dancing
 - Cooking
 - Burping and farting