

Openly Straight

Bill Konigsberg

Reviewed by: Ananya Ganesh, 16

Teen Star Book Reviewer of the Be The Star You Are! Charity

www.bethestaryouare.org

Rafe is just an average kid, trying to shed the labels he'd grown up with. Nobody had a problem with Rafe being gay, but the fact that it was all he was known for made him uncomfortable and led him on a search for his own identity. Rafe transfers to an all boys private school in Massachusetts, far away from his old life. There, he joins a group of athletically inclined students and meets his closest friend, Ben, who Rafe then develops feelings for. Rafe, however, concealed his sexuality when switching schools and Ben, however, is openly straight.

I loved the way the book was written in a stream-of-consciousness style which allowed us to experience Rafe's thoughts as we go through the novel. This style really helped us learn more about Rafe without directly telling us his traits, and that kept the novel entertaining because his actions became less predictable. I also thought this book did a really nice job of touching on controversial topics in a really light hearted and creative way, which made this an easier read and not as heavy. It did so without undermining the importance of these topics which was really cool. In addition to this, I like the general acceptance of Rafe among his old community, as well the fact that the book wasn't about acceptance being gay, but about coming to terms with one's own identity outside sexuality. It was fun to read about this new take, especially because labels don't have to have positive or negative connotations, in fact, in Rafe's case it was neutral. Best of all, I loved the author's tone throughout the story. It was very entertaining and funny at times and it really made the book go by too fast. Even through heavier scenes, the author kept the audience's spirits up and avoided something being too dark to handle.

I would recommend this book to anyone who likes coming of age or coming out stories and LGBTQ+ themes. I would also recommend this to rising high schoolers. The story is brilliant and can be enjoyed across a variety of genres and audiences. This book would make a great gift for contemporary novel lovers and those who just want an LGBTQ+ story that doesn't deal with homophobia, but with self-acceptance.

Recommended Titles

There There: A Novel – Tommy Orange

Will Grayson Will Grayson – John Green

They Both Die at the End – Adam Silvera

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda – Becky Albertalli