

Title: *The Music of What Happens*

Author: Bill Konigsberg

Genre: Romantic fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Jacob G. 11th grade

Date Reviewed: April 13, 2020

In the music of what happens, Bill Konigsberg crafts an elegant and loving story about two teenage boys and their unforgettable summer together. It's June in Mesa, Arizona, and Max, a successful scholar athlete on the baseball team, is in need of a job. Through pure coincidence he meets Jordan, a scrawny kid who has a limited social circle and enjoys writing poetry, running an old and beaten-up food truck with his mother in order to pay off their mortgage. Max then gets roped into running the truck with Jordan and despite the shaky start to their adventure, the two boys soon grow closer. As their friendship continues to mature, the two boys confess to one another that they are both gay, and this introduces a different dynamic to their relationship. Their heat filled summer continues along with much complaining about the weather and some difficulty tackling their attempt at a food truck, including competing food trucks and some mechanical troubles which hinder their attempts at making a profit. Undeterred by these obstacles, Max and Jordan both introduce one another to their respective friend groups. All of their friends are not only supportive of Max and Jordan's relationship, but establish their own friendships amongst the two small groups. While their relationship as boyfriend and boyfriend expands, Max is forced to relive a traumatic experience with an older boy Kevin as a due to a chance encounter with him on the food truck. As Max struggles with his past relationships and how its consequence can affect him, the added strain on his relationship with Jordan requires him to face his emotions.

Jordan, however, is not without his own personal issues to overcome. His mother is still struggling with her gambling addiction that resulted from his father's death, and Jordan still has to learn to vocalize his emotions to his two close friends, Kayla and Pam. In the face of all of their complications, Max and Jordan are still able to push through and develop into more mature people than either of them could have ever expected.

1. *Did the plot keep you interested?*

Yes, throughout the novel the plot shifted focus from topic to topic. The author also transitioned seamlessly from each new obstacle, creating a constantly captivating storyline.

2. *Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?*

Overall the pace was slow throughout most of the story. However towards the end there were some unseen encounters that changed up the pacing and resulted in a dramatic and unforeseen ending.

3. *What grade level is this book appropriate for?*

This book would be appropriate for older grade levels such as 10th, 11th, and 12th grade due to the complex relationships.

4. *What type of reader would you recommend this book to?*

I would recommend this book to any reader who is a member of or supportive of the LGBTQ+ community. It is amazing to have a same sex relationship portrayed in such a realistic light, and the author fully embraces the flaws that make up all human relationships. I think that it is important for people to be open towards all types of relationships, and having more literature such as this can help to normalize LGBTQ+ relationships in society and break the "default" that everyone is straight

5. *What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?*

I think that teens who are considering reading this book should not hesitate. It is a relatively short novel, yet its subject matter carries a certain weight that other books simply cannot grasp. It is important for everyone to be exposed to relationships all sort and this book can be an excellent starting point to lead to a more accepting world.

Five stars: I'm really glad I read this book; it was awesome!

I give this book a 5-star rating because it was the first piece of LGBTQ+ literature I had been exposed to. Aside from the fact that every growing young adult should be exposed to all types of relationships, this book contained some very emotional moments in it that elevated it from other books I have read. When Jordan's love interest, Max, finally meets his two best female friends, Max is exposed to the nurturing and supportive relationship that Jordan has. It opens his eyes to the fact that it is okay to talk about your emotions with your friends and prompts him to do the same with his own best friends, strengthening their relationship.

The book also covers the topic of overcoming your own fears. For Jordan, he feels as if working out is something that's simply not for him and without Max he never would have even attempted to go into a gym. But with Max's support he overcomes his fear and realizes that working out can be something enjoyable. Max continually works to overcome his emotional trauma from being raped by Kevin. This is an especially difficult journey for him, but a very realistic character development throughout the story occurs due to it, and the support he receives from his mother and Jordan aid in overcoming his trauma.

Overall, the way in which Bill Konigsberg crafts his story about two young boys discovering themselves contains a very realistic subject matter especially in the current day and age. It shows that society can be more accepting of same-sex relationships, and helps to normalize them. The author does an excellent job of portraying the emotions of individuals in different scenarios as well as how they can help one another grow.