

Title: *Girl Mans Up*

Author: M-E Girard

Perspectives Category: LGBTQIA+

Reviewer Name and Grade: Tatjana T., 11th grade

Date Reviewed: April 10, 2023

1. The main plot of "Girl Mans Up" by M-E Girard revolves around Pen Oliveira, 16 year old gender-nonconforming teenage girl, as she navigates her identity, relationships, and societal expectations. She struggles with the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles and societal norms from her old fashioned Portugese parents and older brother, while also trying to stay true to herself.

2. I most identify with Pen Oliveira because, like her, I also struggle with societal expectations and norms. I can relate to her journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance as she grapples with her gender identity and sexual orientation.

3. The main message of this book is about self-acceptance, embracing one's true identity, and challenging societal norms and expectations. It emphasizes the importance of being true to oneself, even in the face of adversity and judgment from others. And that it's important knowing who your true friends are. Although she feels loyalty to Colby, she knows that she cannot continue being friends with him for all his womanizing behaviour and how he views friendship as an exchange of services and goods. As well as the importance of opening up, as that can lead to stronger relationships like her and her brother Johnny.

4. I believe that the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, without coming off as preachy. When she said "The thing is, I'm not a boy, but I don't want to be that girl either. I just want everyone to screw off and let me do my own thing for once." it portrays her struggle in a real and authentic manner and when other instances like this are in the book, you emphasize with her without feeling lectured.

5. One of the perspectives explored in the book that I agreed with is the importance of self-acceptance and being true to oneself, regardless of societal norms and expectations. Pen's journey of embracing her gender nonconformity and sexual orientation resonated with my own beliefs about individuality and self-expression.

6. Reading this book reaffirmed my beliefs about the importance of acceptance and understanding towards individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles or sexual orientations. It also highlighted the challenges and discrimination that gender-nonconforming individuals may face, which further strengthened my advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights.

7. While the book provides a diverse and nuanced perspective on Pen's struggles as a gender-nonconforming individual, it could benefit from including more intersectional perspectives, such as the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals who are lgbtqia, but do not present as such.
8. While after reading it I did not go on a deep dive on lgbtq history and place in the world, it did allow me to be more conscious about the impact it has on people. Giving me the ability to more openly talk with my peers on these topics.
9. I would suggest this book to teenage readers who are interested in LGBTQ+ literature, coming-of-age stories, and themes of self-acceptance, gender identity, and sexual orientation. It may also resonate with readers who are struggling with societal expectations and norms that limit their authentic expression.
10. Another book that would make a good addition to this category of perspectives biography is "The Miseducation of Cameron Post" by Emily M. Danforth, which also explores the challenges faced by a teenage girl coming to terms with her sexual orientation in a conservative environment. It delves into similar themes of self-acceptance, identity, and societal norms, providing a diverse perspective on the LGBTQ+ experience.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Zahra V., Grade 9

Date Reviewed: August 11th, 2023

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

The plot of this book follows Pen, a girl who struggles with fitting in. All Pen wants is to be the kind of girl she's always been. People want her to stop trying to be a boy and instead dress like a girl. But respect and loyalty, Pen discovers, are empty words. Old-world parents, disintegrating friendships, and strong feelings for other girls drive Pen to see the truth—that in order to be who she truly wants to be, she'll have to man up.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

Although my experiences are different from Pen, I identified most with her because I am around her age and have experienced not fitting in. While my struggles are different, they are in a way similar to the struggle of people of color and others who are different from the norm.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I believe the overarching message of this book is to accept yourself and others as who they are. For example, one of the largest themes involved the gender expression and sexual orientation of Pen. Thus, this book mainly discusses how these topics are not something you need to change or "fix" about yourself or put in a box.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

I don't think this main message of self acceptance came across as too "preachy." In fact, I found it refreshing to read such a story from a different perspective. For example, many

stories such as these center straight, cisgender protagonists. Reading this type of story allows readers to understand the nuances that come with gender and sexuality.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

The two perspectives seen in this book were those who are against gender expression and those for it. I agree with Pen's perspective because it allows people to accept themselves as who they are, not who others want them to be. Additionally, the author does not shy away from addressing the criticisms from Pen's parents or friends, which I found to be incredibly eye-opening considering Pen is exploring herself while not wanting to define herself too closely.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

This book reaffirmed my belief that members of the LGBTQIA+ community are just as worthy of finding love and being happy in their body as heterosexual and cisgender people. Reading about these different perspectives educated me on how such stories should be normalized so that readers can feel represented and relate to characters like them.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I don't think any perspective is missing from the book. In fact, I like how this book describes a variety of perspectives. For example, I liked how the author described Pen not wanting to explicitly define herself with a certain label. I found it fascinating that she found the LGBTQ lexicon carrying too much cultural baggage and too many expectations. This made me ponder about how labeling yourself can be limiting in a way, and how some people would rather not put a label on their identity.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

Yes, this book encouraged me to pursue the topic of sexual orientation in America because of how much its legitimacy has been scrutinized and questioned over the past few years. Reading this book gave me better insight on acts of transphobia and homophobia and how it impacts families, communities, and nations.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would suggest this book to teenagers of all backgrounds to show how much transphobia and homophobia affects people. I would recommend this book to people who are in 8th grade and up as it discusses mature topics that should be understood and be taken seriously.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

Another book that I think would make a good addition to this category is *Odd One Out* by Nic Stone. This book follows three stories and a road to self discovery similar to this book.