

**Title:** *The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue*

**Author:** Mackenzie Lee

**Category:** LGBTQIA+

**Name and Grade:** Serena C., 10<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Date written:** June 28, 2022

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

After being kicked out of one of England's most prestigious schools, Henry Montague, "Monty," is given one year for an educational tour of Europe before he must return home and help run his father's estate. Though he hoped this year to be his last year of fun and excitement, his expectations are quickly changed after his father assigns a man to look after Monty, his best friend Percy, and his sister Felicity while traveling. Monty's father also warns that this is his last chance to accept responsibility, stop fooling around with men, and win back his favor. While in Paris, Monty, looking to cause trouble, steals a small box from a high ranking official. Later on in their trip the group is attacked by highwaymen who demand they return the stolen item. During the chaos, Monty, Percy, and Felicity are separated from everyone else, and begin their own journey. As they travel, they learn more about the box and the people who are tracking them down. In addition, Monty and Percy begin to finally reveal their long standing attraction to each other.

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

In my opinion, the most relatable character was Felicity. Felicity was an avid reader who often acted as the voice of reason. Sometimes, the book had scenes where Percy and Monty were frightened over the smallest things. For example, at one point, Felicity had a large cut on her arm and had to stitch up the wound herself. Percy and Monty were horrified by the sight of blood, even though Felicity assured them that it was not a big deal. I think that, in these instances, Felicity was the most rational of the group, which is why I found her the most relatable.

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

Since the story took place in England during the 1700s, many people in society were homophobic and viewed same sex relationships as a sin. The main message of this book is that being attracted to someone of your gender is not something that one should have to hide or feel shameful about.

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 think that the author did a good job of effectively integrating the theme into the story. Monty often thought about his love for Percy and his insecurities, and the reader was able to see the progression of his thoughts. Over the course of the novel, he went from being afraid to confess his feelings to beginning a new life with Percy.

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

Monty's first person point of view was the only perspective presented in this book. He often discussed his feelings for both men and women. I liked that the author told the story from the point of view of a bisexual person, because she showed Monty's confusion over his contrasting feelings. I think this was an important topic to write about because some people may find similarities with Monty and be able to relate to him.

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

This book reaffirmed my beliefs that LGBTQ+ people should never be ashamed of who they are. I think that Monty and Percy were both great characters to reinforce this theme, as they both struggled with

their feelings for each other for a long time. However, the book's happy ending showed that love between any two genders is possible in even the most difficult circumstances.

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

I do not think that this book needed another perspective to enhance the story. However, I do think that it would have been interesting if the author told the story from Felicity's point of view. Since there were three main characters, Felicity often ended up as an outsider among the trio. I think that it would have been a bit more entertaining to read if readers were able to see the situations from her perspective, but I do not think that it was necessary to make it a great book.

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

Yes, this book inspired me to learn more about the rights of LGBTQ+ people in England during the 1700s. I learned a lot about the topic, and I really encourage others to read this book and do independent research as well.

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

I would suggest that any reader who enjoys reading coming of age action novels should read this book. Also, I think that the book is appropriate for anybody older than 12.

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?*

*The Song of Achilles* by Madeline Miller and *The Bane Chronicles* by Cassandra Clare, Maureen Johnson, and Sarah Rees Brennan would make great additions to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography. Both books are of the LGBTQ+ genre, and explore themes similar to the ones presented in *The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue*. Particularly, *The Bane Chronicles* is interesting because the main character, Magnus Bane, is bisexual. Therefore it may be more relatable to readers who are specifically looking for books similar to *The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue*.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Zahra V., Grade 9**

**Date Reviewed: August 4th, 2023**

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

The plot of this book follows Henry "Monty" Montague, a boy born and bred to be a gentleman. However, he is one who cannot be tamed, often found gambling, drinking, and in the arms of both men and women at England's finest boarding school. As Monty embarks on a grand tour of Europe, he begins to realize the reality of his situation: a father who expects him to take over the family estate upon his return and a harboring crush on his best friend and travel companion, Percy. Ultimately, this book delves into identity and the fine lines between friendship and love.

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

Although my experiences are different from Felicity, I identified most with her because I am around her age and a younger sister who can understand the experiences that come with having an older brother. Additionally, I liked that she dreamed big about her aspirations of attending medical school because it shows that women are able to do so.

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 sexual orientation of Monty. Thus, this book mainly discusses how same-sex attraction and love is not something you need to change or "fix" about yourself.

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 protagonists and couples. 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 same-sex couples and those for it. I agree with Monty'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 era's overt racism, sexism, homophobia, and prejudice regarding illness, which I found to be incredibly eye-opening considering Percy's character is a biracial epileptic.

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 as heterosexual 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, throughout the story, we see so many instances of casual racism and homophobia that makes us realize the impact of hurtful language and how they take a huge emotional toll on the characters of the story.

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 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 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 *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan. This book is based on true events and follows Harry and Craig, two seventeen-year-olds who are about to take part in a 32-hour marathon of kissing to set a new Guinness World Record.

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Racheal X., 10<sup>th</sup> grade**

**Date Reviewed: 5/1/2024**

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

Henry "Monty" Montague, is on his Grand Tour of Europe with his best friend, Percy, who he also happens to be in love with, hopelessly, and his headstrong sister, Felicity, who wants to defy gender and societal roles to be a doctor. However, midway through the tour, Monty ignites a chain of events through his impulsive actions (petty thievery), forcing the trio to go on the run through Europe- and forcing Monty to reflect on the expectations placed on him, both from outside influences and by himself.

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

I identified the most with Felicity, as her love of medicine and learning reflect upon my own experiences. Additionally, the field I want to enter into, Mechanical Engineering, has a similarly skewed gender ratio, though less severe than the proportion of female to male doctors during her time.

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

I believe that the main message of this book was about subverting the “boxes” society subconsciously puts us into, based on upbringing, race, gender, etc., as well as how “otherness” can be an empowering part of one’s identity.

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 believe that the main message of this book was integrated almost perfectly into the story, with the characters of Felicity, Percy, and Monty acting as catalysts for conversations about gender roles, sexuality, race, and disability in the 18th century.

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 perception of pirates, especially the ones that kidnapped the trio, changed as the characters slowly uncovered the multi-faceted and complex people behind the situation. I agree with the perspective that a person shouldn’t judge based on one trait or action.

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

My beliefs about pirates in a historical fiction novel were completely changed. Before, I thought in a more stereotypical way- if the pirates weren’t the protagonists, they would have been fully evil, as most books I read up to this point had portrayed them as such.

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

I think that a perspective of a “common” person could have been added, i.e. someone from the lower or middle class to further compare their situation. This is because Monty, Felicity, and Percy are all very well off, and this could have been touched upon and compared more.

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

Yes, I wanted to learn more about the historical basis behind the pirates who eventually end up kidnapping Felicity, Monty, and Percy as I thought that they were very nuanced characters, and also about the moral codes of pirates and seafarers during the time.

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

I would recommend this book to someone who is interested in historical fiction based in the 18th century, or coming-of-age fiction with a side of LGBTQIA+ romance.

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

Red, White, and Royal Blue, written by Casey McQuinston. Similarly, it follows the story of two upper-class boys involved in politics who recently “debuted” to the world. Additionally, one of the main characters, First Son Alex, also goes through a period of self-discovery and reflection about himself, eventually starting a relationship with his British counterpart- the Crown Prince.