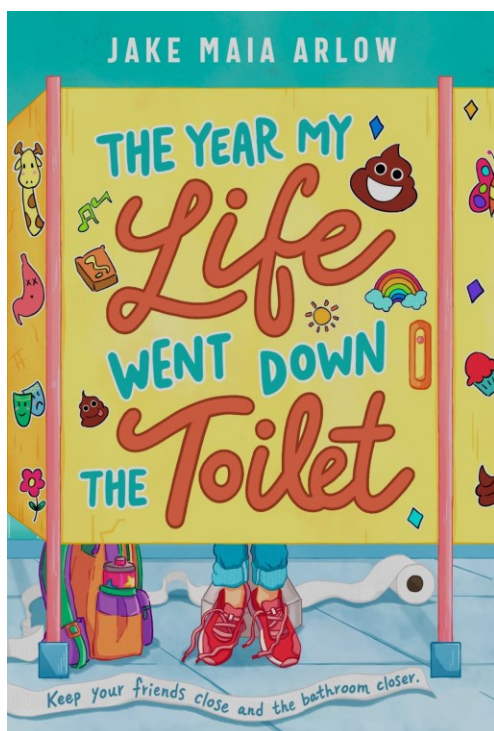


THE YEAR MY LIFE WENT DOWN THE TOILET



Juvenile

By Jake Maia Arlow

ISBN: 9780593112984

Book Summary:

A seventh-grade girl with IBS experiences life-altering events.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains inexplicit sexual activities; alternate sexualities; alternate gender ideologies; and derogatory term use.

2 /5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
2	No one would be able to tell if I was a girl or a boy or maybe something else.
15	<p>It's also the perfect position to scroll through TikTok for hours. My mom doesn't technically let me have social media, but she doesn't check my phone.</p> <p>The TikTok I'm scrolling on now isn't even my main one. This is my TikTok that no one at school follows or knows about—my secret backup account—where I watch what I actually want without the Addison's dancing videos ruining my algorithm.</p> <p>My For You page is a mix of stuff, but it's mostly videos of girls who like girls. It's kind of wild that TikTok knows I want to see those kinds of videos, because that means it knows I feel the same way.</p> <p>That I like girls, I mean. That I have crushes on them. It's not a big deal, but I don't want to tell people. Not even Leo. It's one thing to have my stomach hurting all the time and be sick or whatever the doctor's going to tell me, but I don't need my best friend to know about my random crushes too.</p> <p>But on my backup TikTok, I can be someone else entirely. I can be my full queer self, and comment on girls' TikToks, telling them they look cute or that I like their outfit, even if the outfit is just a giant thrifted sweatshirt with an embroidered prairie dog on it.</p> <p>...Saying I'm queer would mean telling Leo that I know I like girls. That I know I get crushes at all. That I want to kiss someone (eventually).</p> <p>I think that would be embarrassing even if I were straight.</p> <p>...I scroll through TikTok for a few more minutes. I'm exhausted from the day, but my brain is too focused on school and cute girls and the storm happening in my stomach for me to fall asleep.</p>
25	<p>My dad, on the other hand, is some random guy named Shelly who lives in Rancho Cucamonga, which is in California.</p> <p>...She told me that she had had something called a one-night stand, which is when you only meet someone once and then get pregnant. (Well, I don't think everyone gets pregnant from a one-night stand, but my mom did. And that's how I came into the world.)</p>
43	I wish my backup TikTok could be my main one. I wish my backup life could be my main one, the one where I watch videos of girls who are dating without needing to hide it, where Leo and I make up songs without him wanting to join drama club.
59	Now I'm just the AI Club, which is the worst group in existence because I'm just one sick kid whose entire wardrobe is made up of oversized T-shirts and whose backup TikTok is full of girls kissing.
70	"We can all say our name, what grade we're in, our pronouns if you'd like, if you have Crohn's, ulcerative colitis, or both, and our favorite animal. I'll go first. I'm Aneliza, I haven't been in middle school for a long time but technically I'm in twentieth grade because I just finished four years of graduate school, my pronouns are she/ her, and my favorite animal is a toucan."
72	"I'm Rikako," the stage manager says, starting the introductions back up again. They have their nails painted a mix of blue and green and have perfectly winged eyeliner. I could never wear something that bold, something that drew so much attention to myself. They remind me of some of the cool people I watch on TikTok, ones I know I could never be friends with in real life. Or thought I couldn't, at least. "I'm in eighth grade, they/ she, Crohn's, and my favorite animal is an Old English sheepdog, because they're cute and they're good at herding, just like me with the actors in my shows."

Page	Content
	<p>I perk up at the they/ she part. I want to talk to them about that, but I don't think I have the guts to bring it up (though I have the guts to poop my brains out). ...No way am I going to mention who I like or my thoughts about my gender.</p>
101	<p>"We should watch it!" Ethan says. "Then we can, like, tag ourselves, and say who's who." "It's on Netflix," Carl adds, grinning. "So, it's easy to watch. It's a little inappropriate, though." "I won't tell." Rikako glances around the room. "You know, as the eighth grader here." "I won't tell either," Ethan says. "You in?" he asks Mina.</p>
107	<p>I've never had a crush on someone in person before. Like, I've had crushes on girls on TikTok, but I've never liked someone I could talk to in person, someone who could show me how to roast marshmallows.</p>
132	<p>I've liked girls for so long without anyone knowing, but now there's someone who needs to know. I smile at that person, then take a deep breath and say it: "I like you too."</p>
136	<p>I don't have to hide being queer, and I don't have to hide having Crohn's, because Mina understands both.</p>
141	<p>My mom likes girls. She's queer. She's . . . like me. ...And all along my mom also likes someone, a woman someone, in the same way that I like Mina.</p>
142	<p>He's never had to create a backup TikTok to watch videos of girls kissing in secret.</p>
146	<p>What if my mom and Leo's mom will do more than just date? What if they get married?</p>
147	<p>"This girl who's in the ensemble of the show has two dads." He looks up at me. "Isn't that cool?" ..."Because she has two dads." Leo whispers the last part. "Who are gay."</p>
158	<p>I've watched way too many TikToks and YouTube videos where girls kiss. I ..."Do you think I could maybe kiss you?" I ask quietly. I live a whole eternity before she nods. She moves the IV, and I lean in. I close my eyes and the moment her lips press against mine, my body feels like it will explode. Maybe this is why I'm not a supercomputer attached to a brain; so that I can feel this. The kiss is nothing like the TikToks I've seen. It's better because it's mine. We only kiss for a couple of seconds, but her mouth is warm, and if we weren't at the hospital or if my body weren't shaking like a magnitude ten earthquake, I would want to stay here for a long, long time.</p>
160	<p>I lean in close to her. "Are we kind of like . . . girlfriends?"</p>
162	<p>MINA AND I KISSED! I KISSED MINA! AND IT WAS INCREDIBLE!</p>
165	<p>Now that I know Mina won't text back for a minute, I scroll through my backup TikTok, liking videos of other queer kids with abandon. I recognize myself in them even more; she smiles when they talk about their crushes, their descriptions of their first kiss.</p>
173	<p>But no one except for Leo knows that my mom is dating a woman.</p>
177	<p>Because one thing I absolutely positively will not be doing is telling my mom that I have a girlfriend. She doesn't know I'm queer—she barely knows anything about me other than the fact that my stomach hurts.</p>

Page	Content
190	If Peregrine goes to the queer youth center, that must mean he's, well, a queer youth. And if he's queer, then maybe he's picking up on something between me and Mina.
191	My heart pounds and my stomach churns and the idea of being alone with Mina is the scariest thing in the world, especially after her talking about how cool it is that my mom's dating a woman.
193	It's not that I'm ashamed of her, it's more that I'm ashamed of myself. It's mortifying just to be alive and have a body. For people to look at me and see a human being who has poop and feelings.
197	"I'm bi, so I can usually tell things like that."
198	And I'm glad Rikako agrees, because they're the only other person I know—aside from Mina—who's queer and has Crohn's, and seems to be handling it pretty well, all things considered.
212	"You know that the Bathroom Club knows I'm queer, right?" she asks. "I told them last year that I'm a lesbian. I like that I don't have to hide who I am."
227	"It's not a bad thing or anything. It's just that I'm queer. I like girls, mostly." Carl grins. "Oh, cool," he says. "I'm aromantic, so, like, I get it." ..."It was never a secret, but it's cool that there are a bunch of us who are queer in the group."
228	"I think I might be queer too. I mean, I don't really know, but I think some boys are cute, or whatever. And sometimes I don't even know if I'm fully a boy. But he/ him pronouns are still good." ..."Wait, are we all queer?" "I mean, I know Mina is," Carl says, laughing a little too. "She talks about it all the time." Even the mention of Mina doesn't make me stop laughing. "How come we didn't talk about this sooner? It's like we're an IBD support group and an LGBTQ club." Maybe part of the reason we all got along so well in the first place is because we subconsciously knew that we were all queer.
234	"Al, our moms are dating. They're dating each other. I know what you're going through. At least part of it."
240	The only thing that's changed is that now she's my mom's girlfriend.
244	I have Crohn's, I like girls, and my mom has a girlfriend. ...I'm sure that I'm not the only person who's queer and who has a chronic illness and who has a mom who's also queer and dating someone.
247	"When did you figure it out, though?" "That I'm bisexual?" she asks, and I want to bury myself under the blankets on the couch and never come out. It's so weird hearing my mom say that. The only people I know who are bi are Rikako and people on TikTok and YouTube. ..."I like girls too." I'm shaking now, but I keep going. "Um, yeah. That's it, I guess. I like girls. And I only like girls, or, like, people who aren't boys. I think I'm a lesbian."
248	"People already think we're the same, and now we both like girls. It's mortifying."
252	And it's not just because we all have IBD (and we're all queer).
258	He's the only person I want to talk to about everything that happened with Mina, and he doesn't even know I'm queer.

Page	Content
261	<p>"I mean, I know him and Mina met at the queer youth center, so . . ."</p> <p>"No," Leo says quickly. "Well, not that I don't want us to be. But we're not."</p> <p>"Do you have a crush on him?"</p> <p>Leo nods. "Oh my god, yes."</p>
274	<p>We play truth or dare and then talk about our favorite movies and books and games and how we wish more people in our town would come out as queer in middle school so that we weren't alone.</p>
275	<p>"And put a finger down, queer middle-schooler edition," Leo suggests.</p>

Derogatory Term	Count
Queer	43