

GEORGE



Summary of Concerns:

This book contains alternate gender ideologies and transitioning; sexuality; non-sexual nudity; and sexual activities.

GEORGE

ALEX GINO

SCHOLASTIC

Juvenile

By Alex Gino

ISBN: 978-0-545-81258-0

2/5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
16	<p>"That's my little bro! Growing up and looking at dirty magazines."</p> <p>"Oh," George said out loud. She knew what dirty magazines were. She almost laughed. The girls in the magazines she was looking at wore a lot more clothes than that, even the ones at the beach.</p>
22	<p>Ms. Udell patted George's shoulder. "Don't ever lose that, George, and I know you'll turn into a fine young man."</p> <p>The word man hit like a pile of rocks falling on George's skull. It was a hundred times worse than boy, and she couldn't breathe.</p>
23	<p>George hated the boys' bathroom. It was the worst room in the school. She hated the smell of pee and bleach, and she hated the blue tiles on the wall to remind you where you were, as if the urinals didn't make it obvious enough. The whole room was about being a boy, and when boys were in there, they liked to talk about what was between their legs.</p>
37	<p>Ms. Udell will love that you care so much about the character that you want to play her onstage, even though she's a girl and you're a boy. Plays are all about pretending, right?"</p> <p>...Playing a girl part wouldn't really be pretending, but George didn't know how to tell Kelly that.</p>
38	<p>"...Did you know that all the characters in Shakespeare's plays were played by men? Even the girl parts. Even when they had to kiss! Can you believe it?"</p> <p>..."Romeo and Juliet were both played by boys. Boys! Just think. William Shakespeare himself might have played Juliet..."</p>
49	<p>While Mom made dinner, George headed upstairs to take a bath. She took off her shirt while the tub filled, waiting until the last possible moment to take off her pants and underwear. She immersed her body in the warm water and tried not to think about what was between her legs, but there it was, bobbing in front of her.</p>
50	<p>Mom, what if I'm a girl?</p>
51	<p>George had seen an interview on television a few months ago with a beautiful woman named Tina. She had golden-brown skin, thick hair with blond highlights, and long, sparkling fingernails. The interviewer said that Tina had been born a boy, then asked her whether she'd had the surgery. The woman replied that she was a transgender woman and that what she had between her legs was nobody's business but hers and her boyfriend's.</p> <p>So George knew it could be done. A boy could become a girl. She had since read on the Internet that you could take girl hormones that would change your body, and you could get a bunch of different surgeries if you wanted them and had the money. This was called transitioning. You could even start before you were eighteen with pills called androgen blockers that stopped the boy hormones already inside you from turning your body into a man's. But for that, you needed your parents' permission.</p>
55	<p>George wanted to be pink so that people would know she was a girl...</p>
61	<p>"So you want to play a girl onstage. It's not you want to be a girl."</p>
62	<p>...she couldn't say the only words that blared through her brain: I'm a girl.</p>

Page	Content
63	<p>"Don't be. My dad says that men performing in non-traditional gender roles is good for feminism. He says it's important, as an artist, to be in touch with his feminine side."</p> <p>Last summer, George had seen that phrase in one of her own dad's magazines, and article called 10 WAYS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR FEMIMINIE SIDE. George had been excited to read it, but the article was disappointing. It talked about taking time to feel your emotions, which George did too much already. Worse, the article kept reminding the reader that finding your feminine side made you more of a man.</p>
70	<p>Ms. Udell would be so relieved that George was good that she wouldn't care that George was a girl. At least, not a regular girl.</p>
90	<p>"They're jerks," said Kelly. "You're not a girl." "What if I am?" George was startled by her own words. Kelly drew back in surprise. "What? That's ridiculous. You're a boy. I mean"- she pointed vaguely downward at George- "you have a you-know-what, right?"</p>
98	<p>"Girl problems?" Scott asked... ..."No," George said. She knew that wasn't true. Being a secret girl was a giant problem.</p>
102	<p>"And you know what? If you think you're a girl..." ..."Then I think you're a girl too!" Kelly leaped onto her best friend and gave her a hug... ..."So you're, like, transgender or something?" Kelly whispered as best she could in her excitement. "I was reading on the internet, and there are lots of people like you. Did you know you can take hormones so that your body, you know, doesn't go all manlike?" "Yeah, I know." George had been reading websites about transitioning since Scott taught her how to clear the web browser history on Mom's computer. "But you need your parents' permission." "Your mom's pretty cool," Kelly said, her eyebrows lifted. "Maybe she'd be okay with it."</p>
103	<p>"Sometimes transgender people don't get rights." George had read on the Internet about transgender people being treated unfairly.</p>
121	<p>A sign in the far corner showed a large rainbow flag flying on a black background. Below the flag, the sign said SUPPORT SAFE SPACES FOR GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER YOUTH. Reading the word transgender sent a shiver down George's spine. She wondered where she could find a safe space like that, and if there would be other girls like her there.</p>
123	<p>If she squinted at the mirror, she almost looked like a girl. For now, anyway. Today her skin was smooth, but someday testosterone would grow a terrible beard all over her face.</p>
124	<p>"I mean, being gay is one thing. Kids are coming out much earlier than when I was young. It won't be easy, but we'll deal with it. But being that kind of gay?" Mom shook her head. "That's something else entirely." "I'm not any kind of gay." At least, George didn't think she was gay. She didn't</p>

Page	Content
	<p>know who she liked, really, boys or girls. "Then why did I find all those girls' magazines in your closet?" Mom raised an eyebrow, and a curved wrinkle formed across her forehead. ... "Because I'm a girl." ... "...I changed your diapers, and I promise you, you are one hundred percent boy. Besides, you're only ten years old. You don't know how you'll feel in a few years."</p>
130	<p>"Look, do you want your mom to know you're a girl?"</p>
133	<p>"Didn't you tell her you were gay?" ... "You know I'm okay with that, right? Before Dad left, he made me promise to take care of. He said you were like that." "I'm not gay," George said. Why did everyone think she was gay? "Whatever. I don't care. My friend Matt is gay. It's no big deal." ... "I told her I think I'm a girl." ... "That's more than just being gay. No wonder she's freaking out."</p>
135	<p>"...Dude, I thought you had porn or something in there, so I took a peek. You know, just to find out what kind of stuff my little bro was into. So I figured you were gay. But I didn't think you were like that." Scott popped a corn fritter into his mouth. "So, like, do you want to" - he made a gesture with two fingers like a pair of scissors- "go all the way?" George squeezed her legs together. "Maybe someday," she said.</p>
147	<p>"You were totally like a girl." Kelly took George's hand, one of the real ones. "I mean, you totally are a girl."</p>
153	<p>"I didn't even know it was you at first. I thought it was supposed to be Kelly, but then I realized I was seeing my son onstage, and nearly everyone in the audience thought he was a girl" ... "I already told you, I'm a girl."</p>
162	<p>"You really do feel like a girl, don't you?" "Yeah, I do. Remember that time I was little, when you found me wearing your skirt as a dress?"</p>
163	<p>George knew that seeing a therapist was the first step secret girls like her took when they wanted everyone to see who they were. "And then maybe I could grow my hair out and be a girl?"</p>
171	<p>And she had never held a skirt in her hands like this before. Together, they felt magical. "I didn't even know you had any skirts," said George. "I don't wear them to school. Boys are dirty and try to look up them." "I'd never try to look up your skirt." "Of course not. You're not a boy." "Oh, right." George laughed. Even she was sometimes fooled by her body.</p>
182	<p>When they stepped out of the World of Insects, Kelly said she needed to use the bathroom. Melissa tensed. There was no way she could make it back home without going as well. She looked down at her skirt. She couldn't go into the boys' bathroom looking like this. "Melissa and I will be right back," Kelly announced, grabbing her best friend by</p>

Page	Content
	<p>the hand before she could protest, dragging her right to a door with a sign with the word LADIES and a stick figure wearing a triangle skirt.</p> <p>...She was standing in the girls' room.</p> <p>...Melissa locked herself in a stall, delighted for the privacy. She lifted her skirt to see her underwear, covered in tiny red hearts. She pulled it down, sat, and peed, just like a girl.</p>
200	<p>Q: Why did you write George?</p> <p>A: ...What I can say is that I didn't grow up with any positive representations of transgender people in books other than media. The first time I encountered the word genderqueer (meaning "neither a boy nor a girl"), I was nineteen, and I took that word and I consumed it- ate it and became it, because it was already me.</p>
201	<p>Q: How do I talk about the main character?</p> <p>A: Call her Melissa. That's the name she likes. If you slip and call her George, no big deal. Correct yourself if you think of it, and move on. Same thing for her pronouns. She is always a she. Always.</p> <p>Melissa is a transgender girl. If you are talking with someone who doesn't know what that means, you can say that she is a girl whom the world sees as a boy, or a girl who was assigned male at birth. You can also say that she is a girl, but she's the only one who knows it. Notice that all of these say first that she is a girl.</p> <p>...Phrases like feels like or identifies as aren't so great either. They sound as though who trans people are is up for debate or discussion. It's better to say "is." Generally, if it sounds weird saying it about a cis-gender (nontrans) person, it's probably not good to say about a trans person. Do you "identify as" your gender? Or is it just who you are?</p> <p>Please be aware that language for trans people is developing and changing as our community grows and matures, questions the ways that we have been talked about, and explores alternatives. And the same words don't work for everyone. For example, some trans people do consider themselves to be in the wrong body. Be open to developing and changing language.</p>
202	<p>Q: I mean, what are your pronouns?</p> <p>A: ...I use the singular they and the honorific Mx. (pronounced "mix"). For example, you might write this about me: When Mx. Gino finishes this FAQ, they will send it to their editor and get themselves a piece of chocolate.</p>
204	<p>Q: Are you a lot like Melissa?</p> <p>A: I'm not that much like Melissa. Melissa is a binary trans girl, which means that she is a girl even though she was assigned male at birth, and she will grow up to be a woman. I'm genderqueer, or nonbinary, so I'm neither a girl nor a boy. Also, Melissa is growing up with access to the Internet and information about being transgender.</p>
206	<p>Using the name a transgender person no longer uses (and that is probably connected with a gender that is not theirs) is called deadnaming, and it is extremely rude.</p>
209	<p>Q: I think I might be transgender (or gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, etc). What should I do?</p> <p>A:...If you can access the Internet, you can read up on as well as connect with other LGBTQ people.</p>

Page	Content
212	Probably the most important thing is using someone's name and pronouns. ...When you do make a mistake, apologize, correct yourself, and try not to make a big deal out of it. Please do not go on and on about how bad you feel. The trans person doesn't need to take on your guilt, and it puts them in an awkward social position where the easiest way to end the conversation is to say, "Oh, don't worry about it" or "It's okay." It's not the trans person's job to make you feel better here.
231	Geore is only one story. It is the story of a white, middle-class transgender girl growing up near New York City, written by a white, middle-class genderqueer person who grew up on Staten Island, New York.