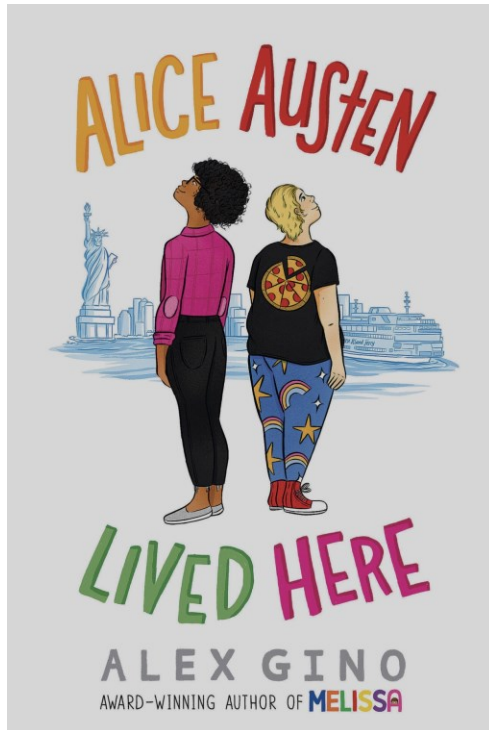


ALICE AUSTEN LIVED HERE



Juvenile

By Alex Gino

ISBN: 978-1-338-73383-9

Book Summary:

Upon researching historical figures, two seventh graders discover Alice Austen.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains alternate gender ideologies; alternate sexualities; derogatory term; and controversial racial and historical commentary.

1
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Child Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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4	<p>“Why do you keep calling them she anyway? How do you know what pronouns a statue uses?” TJ is the only person I know who’s more careful about pronouns than I am.</p> <p>“Well, she is called Lady Liberty,” I pointed out.</p> <p>“Not all ladies are women.”</p> <p>“True, they could be a nonbinary drag queen! They are wearing a tiara, after all.”</p> <p>...“No puny gender can hold me back! I am no mere man or woman. I am Mx. Liberty, and I light the way for you!”</p> <p>TJ and I were the only nonbinary kids in our grade—at least as far as we knew.</p>
7	<p>Jess was femme, Val was nonbinary, and they were both queer.</p>
10	<p>Jess had taught me that being femme wasn’t the same as being a woman. In fact, plenty of femmes weren’t women. It wasn’t even the same as being feminine. Jess said that only you can name yourself as femme and that you get to make it yours. Lots of straight women dress and act the ways some people expect women to. Sometimes they enjoy it, but sometimes they do it to fit in at work or to get dates. But if you choose to do it because it makes you feel good, and you make it queer, like by wearing a fancy dress to bake a birthday cake for your nonbinary partner, it’s femme.</p>
11	<p>Mom was pretty cool ... for a self-identified straight person. I was four when I first told her I wasn’t a boy or a girl, and she read books and watched videos and even got my pronouns right almost every time. But it was Jess and I who talked about queer culture, not to mention being fat and fabulous.</p>
20	<p>An older sister, an older brother, a younger sister, and a younger brother. One of each, heteronormative people tend to say.</p>
21	<p>After a homework check, Watras launched into a long speech about a bunch of dead rich white guys fighting over how to run the US government after the Revolutionary War. It could have been interesting if Watras wanted to explore the contradiction of saying you fought the British for freedom while having slaves work the land you stole from the Indigenous people who had been here and free for thousands of years before you, but he didn’t bring any of that up.</p>
26	<p>“I’m not doing a project on a straight white man,” said TJ.</p> <p>“Me either.”</p> <p>History was full of straight white men and even most of the people who weren’t straight pretended they were.</p>
31	<p>“History is littered with queer icons,” Jess said. “Sylvia Rivera. Bayard Rustin. Even Alexander the Great is suspected to have been intimate with men, though he wasn’t working with our modern notions of gay and straight.”</p>
32	<p>“Have you ever heard that time travel is for white men?” Val asked.</p> <p>“No,” I said.</p> <p>Val explained. “Basically, if a cishet, abled-bodied white guy goes back in time, he’s still a cishet, abled-bodied white guy. He might not blend in. He might not even speak the language, but ...”</p> <p>“All the times are good times for white guys,” Jess completed the thought.</p> <p>“Exactly.” Val continued. “But if one of us went back in time, we could be in trouble. There are plenty of times and places in America when I wouldn’t be welcome because I’m Latinx.”</p> <p>“Plus, the queer thing,” Jess said. “I mean, I might be okay, being femme and all, but</p>

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	<p>plenty of places could be bad for a nonbinary gentlequeer like Val.” Gentlequeer was a gender-free way of saying gentleman.</p> <p>...“For the white boys in your class, it’s going to be relatively simple to find someone from Staten Island’s history to connect with. But for the white girls and queer folk, especially the trans and nonbinary folk, and for all the people of color, there are additional barriers to success. They either limit themselves to the few people who managed to break through in their time or they have to add an extra layer of translation to their process.”</p> <p>...“Are you saying that this project’s going to be easier for white boys because there are so many white boys in the history books to choose from?”</p> <p>“Well, yeah.”</p>
34	DSCWM was Val’s acronym for Dead Straight Cisgender White Man. They pronounced it disk-wum.
35	“Of course! So, the person I’m thinking of isn’t trans or nonbinary, so far as we know, but she lived her entire life on Staten Island, and she had a long-term woman partner.”
38	“She was a famous lesbian poet, and she had a long-term partner, Alice B. Toklas.”
74	<p>“Did you know Alice Austen? And was she really a lesbian?”</p> <p>...“I remember Alice. I just wasn’t expecting to hear her name out of your mouths. Or this century, to be honest. And yes, she was one hundred percent a lesbian.”</p>
76	<p>“Well, I don’t know about larky, but that’s me, Les the les, in the flesh.”</p> <p>...“The first hundred times I heard Les the les, it was from kids on the playground, way before I knew what a lesbian was or that I was one.”</p>
77	<p>“Things were different back then. Everyone was expected to be straight, and if you weren’t, you certainly didn’t want anyone to know about it. I even had a boyfriend in high school, and we went to the prom together. I heard from him years later, and it turned out he was gay too.”</p> <p>...“Especially once the gay liberation movement kicked into gear in the seventies. There were women loving women everywhere! Well, comparatively, that is. It was still in the bars mostly, and you had to be careful on your way there and home. You couldn’t hold hands with your partner, or walk too close to them. And even if you were by yourself, it could be dangerous if you didn’t look like what people expected straight people to look like.”</p>
85	<p>“Watch who you’re gendering, nonbinary offspring!” “Yes, genderfluid parental figure.”</p> <p>...“Sorry. The Littles have really been into potty humor lately, and now I keep thinking about poop jokes. How about some Mx. Liberty trivia instead? I learned a good one.”</p>
87	“I can. White people have been taking credit for things by, for, and about Black people for four hundred years. It’s rock ‘n’ roll all over again.”
89	<p>“It got easier once the seventies hit and there were more androgynous clothes around. And nowadays, why, just check out the two of you!”</p> <p>...“The three-piece rule was when the police said you had to wear three pieces of clothing from the ‘correct’ gender.” Leslie made air quotes around the word correct. “If you didn’t, you could be arrested, right here in New York City.”</p> <p>...“But who can say what your correct gender is?” I asked.</p> <p>“And what if your correct gender is nonbinary?” asked TJ.</p>

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	...“Cops with batons got to say what they wanted, and nonbinary was not in their playbook.”
91	“Sylvia and Marsha P. were the cofounders of STAR—Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries,” said Leslie with reverence. “Transvestite?” I asked. As far as I knew, that was an offensive word.
93	The school code said that you weren’t supposed to refer to students by gender like that, but when we had brought it up to Watras, he had barely given a whiff of an apology followed by a lengthy explanation of his age and experience. It was worse than being called ladies and gentlemen in the first place.
96	Dan and Erik went last for the day with their report on Henry Hudson—so we were four for four on DSCWMs. They had created a pretty good clay sculpture, but their report was still about some settler guy who basically took advantage of the Lenape who were already living here.
98	Alice Austen was a lesbian, and we think it’s important for Staten Islanders to celebrate LGBTQIAP + history.
100	“How did you find out that she was a lesbian?” asked Abe. “She didn’t use that word, as far as we know, and she might have been bisexual, but if you look at her pictures and read about her life with her partner, Gertrude, you can tell she wasn’t straight, and people around her knew it,” I said.
101	“I don’t really care. I mean, I walk past statues of straight men all the time and no one asks whether it bothers me. And it kinda does. Not, like, that there are statues of straight men. But sometimes it seems like there are only statues of straight men.”
102	“My aunt’s dating a woman, and I think it would be really nice for them to see it too. I wonder if they even know about Alice Austen.”
111	“But Watras was biased against Alice Austen because she was a lesbian.” ...“He said he didn’t think the image of two pairs of women was representative of Staten Island. What’s that supposed to mean? He hates gay people.”
115	“My uncle said that he plans on voting for the best proposal,” Erik proclaimed to whoever would listen, “regardless of gender or race, no matter what anyone says. White men shouldn’t be at a disadvantage for this competition just because of statues in other places.” “He only says that because he knows it’s wrong that most statues are of white men,” said Rhyan.
121	“That’s too bad. It was a fantastic essay. I loved the personal mention. But who knows if Staten Island’s ready for such a clearly lesbian image?” ...“I hate it. I’m not brave. Or, at least, I don’t feel that way. I just don’t feel like a girl or a boy. What’s so brave about that?” Leslie smiled. “I think they mean that you’re brave for living the way you feel, instead of hiding it.”
124	“Blood may be thicker than water, but shared community and experience are thicker than both.” ...“A lot of gays and lesbians have chosen family. Not people you’re related to, but people you feel connection with.”

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149	<p>“It is a pleasure to meet you, Ms. Hansen,” said Gabe. “As a gay teacher, I can’t even imagine what it was like teaching back when you did.”</p> <p>...“And please, call me Leslie. Only straight people call me Ms. Hansen.”</p>
152	<p>While the audience clapped and the judges wrote notes, I heard Parker say to Miles behind us, “So a white guy makes a bunch of Black guys fight and he’s the one they want to make a statue of?”</p> <p>“Typical,” Miles said.</p>
154	<p>But Staten Island is a place with lots of kinds of people, straight and queer; men, women, and nonbinary folk.</p>
161	<p>After that, it was just our group. Mom, my best friend and their family, my chosen queer family, and my lesbian mentor. Evie might turn out to be part of the queer community too, and she’ll be lucky to have so much connection to her community so young. I hope I get to be one of her queer mentors. And even if she’s not queer, straight kids get to have queer mentors too, I guess.</p>
164	<p>I don’t think anything was actively hidden from me, but I’m pretty sure the language was coded and I certainly had been primed to expect heterosexuality. I hope this book helps show that queer and trans people are everywhere, come from everywhere, and have always been everywhere. If you live on a block with a dozen or more people, odds are high that not all of them are straight and cisgender.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Queer	72