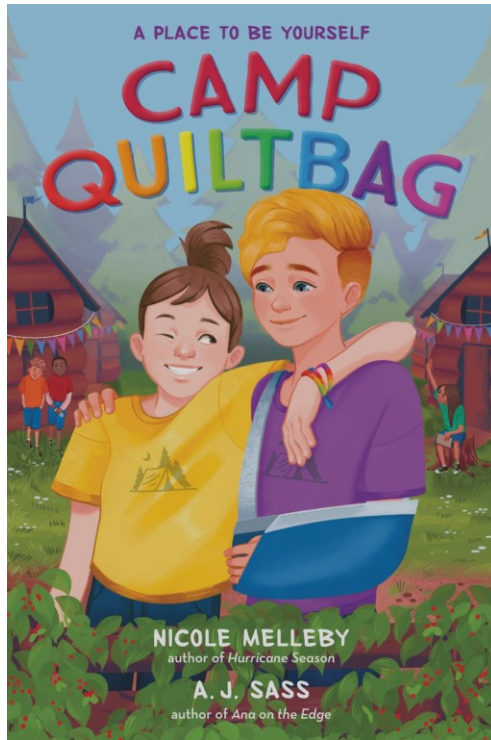


CAMP QUILT BAG



Juvenile

By A. J. Sass and Nicole Melleby

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Book Summary:

Two young girls seek to escape ridicule endured in their home community by attending a summer camp exclusively for children and teenagers with alternate sexualities and gender ideologies.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains excessive/frequent alternate gender ideologies; excessive/frequent alternate sexualities; inexplicit sexual activities; mild/infrequent profanity; derogatory terms; controversial religious commentary; and references to bullying.

2 /5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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2	Not when all the kids at school had been making fun of her for weeks for having stupidly admitted to having a crush on Stacy's mom.
3	<p>That was what Abigail was thinking about when she closed YouTube and pulled up Google and typed, How do I find LGBTQ friends?</p> <p>...She was seriously considering asking her mom to send her to a convent or something to escape being such an awkward excuse of a human in such a cruel, cruel world, when she saw it (on the third O page of the Goooooogle results): Camp QUILTBAG.</p> <p>She clicked the link.</p> <p>Camp QUILTBAG, according to its website, was a two-week camp for LGBTQ + youth in Minnesota—which was delightfully far, far away from Abigail's friends (ex-friends?) in New Jersey. The very top of the page had a quote from a former camper that said, "Camp QUILTBAG felt like more than just a summer camp, it felt like coming home."</p> <p>There were pictures of kids in rainbow-colored shirts, smiling, arms around each other. The descriptions said it had activities just like any other camp—obstacle courses, swimming, kayaking, archery—and ones specifically for LGBTQ + kids—workshops on gender identity and expression, body image and self-esteem, LGBTQ + history, and drag makeup.</p> <p>...Abigail was just . . . Abigail, and the kids in these pictures were all smiles and dyed hair and cool colorful clothes. The kids in these pictures looked totally out, and totally proud, and probably never got embarrassed.</p> <p>But it also sounded perfect because those kids probably never got embarrassed and probably were totally out and proud, and maybe Abigail could somehow learn to be, too. Maybe they'd understand her crush on Stacy's mom and Laura Dern and Teri Polo and all the other beautiful women in the world.</p>
4	<p>There was a difference between Oh, Abigail has crushes on actresses and Abigail wants to go to gay camp.</p> <p>Not to mention the fact that she wouldn't exactly be able to tell a single soul at school she'd be spending her summer at gay camp, of all things.</p>
10	<p>But e was fine. E definitely didn't need to attend Camp QUILTBAG to figure out eir identity, because e already knew it.</p> <p>...Pronouns and identity were only a small part of em.</p>
16	<p>Abigail was still unclear on the particulars, but maybe falling in love was okay here, at Camp QUILTBAG, where there were a ton of other kids who maybe also got inappropriate crushes on members of the same sex who were old enough (older, even!) to be their parents. That was why Abigail wanted to come here in the first place.</p>
19	<p>She (They? Abigail paused; she shouldn't assume anything about anyone here, and she needed to remember that) had brown skin, was dressed in feminine clothes, and had long, long hair.</p>
23	<p>"I've got a name tag here for you, and your very own aggressively yellow shirt. What size do you think? I'm guessing small, you're super teeny. And what're your pronouns?"</p> <p>...She couldn't imagine asking any of her friends back home what their pronouns were.</p>
24	<p>"There will be new name tags for y'all every morning, so you don't have to worry about memorizing everyone's pronouns, and so y'all can change your pronouns from day to day if you want. But for now, here you are, Abigail, she/ her! Go right on in."</p>

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	...Would all her bunkmates be wearing rainbow-colored socks and totally know their pronouns and sexualities and have glitter-crazy hair?
25	"I'm a lesbian!" Cassidy exclaimed, which absolutely took Abigail by surprise. ...Abigail quickly looked at the name tag they were wearing. Stick: they/ them.
31	Kai quickly scribbled eir name on the tag, along with e/ em/ eir, then stuck it to eir old gymnastics academy T-shirt.
32	"So you use neopronouns?" Juliana asked. Kai froze. "What?" "That's what those are." She nodded toward eir name tag. "I've never used them with anyone before." Kai waited for Juliana to say things e'd heard a million times: Those aren't real words. They're too hard to remember. Why can't you just pick him or her, or even they? "Is eir pronounced like air?"
36	"That's what I've heard the counselors and other campers use: zie, zem, and zir." She glanced briefly at Kai. "Also neopronouns."
37	"I came out when I was eleven, but it's my first being out as pansexual." Kai couldn't remember what pansexual meant off the top of eir head, but e also didn't want to admit it.
40	"Hey now. This is a wonderful opportunity to get a say in choosing a more inclusive name. The QUILTBAG acronym encompasses many identities, but it doesn't have a letter for every single one."
46	I'm Abigail, my pronouns are she/ her, and I'm a lesbian. ...Abigail didn't think she had ever even said the word lesbian out loud.
47	Right around the time she realized she wasn't a tomboy who loved dinosaurs, like she and everyone else had assumed, but a little queer girl who loved Jurassic Park because Laura Dern was pretty, and Abigail liked pretty women.
48	Everybody knew that good friends didn't have crushes on their best friend's mom. Everybody also now knew that Abigail was gay. Since then, Abigail had spent a lot of days in that cafeteria wishing she wasn't gay. ...Everyone knew that Abigail was gay because everyone here was queer, and she didn't have to wish otherwise anymore. That was the point of being here.
57	She was still the queer girl who crushed on people's moms.
61	"I've been sending letters asking them to change the camp's name since last fall. Literally nine months of telling them there's no letter in the QUILTBAG acronym for pansexual kids, plus a lot of others." ..."There's queer and questioning, unsure, intersex, lesbian, transgender, bisexual—" "The T is for transgender and two-spirit," Juliana cut in. "Then there's bisexual, asexual and aromantic, gay and genderqueer. But nothing for pansexual, demisexual, and so many more."
62	E wondered if the bathrooms here were separated into boys and girls like they were at eir school or if they were all gender neutral.
80	"The schedule said they're making pride bracelets outside at the Benches. I want to make one to wear the whole time we're here, so I can show off my identities."

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81	<p>"I'm going to make a nonbinary bracelet," Stick said. "Yellow, white, purple, and black." "I might just go with a rainbow," Bryn said. Abigail had no idea what she would make. Was there a lesbian flag?</p>
83	<p>"I'm transgender and pansexual. I want bracelets to show both. Will you really help me?" ..."That's okay! Pansexual is pink, yellow, and light blue. You can make that one?" Juliana said. ..."The lesbian flag has so much pink. I never wear pink."</p>
84	<p>"I just wanted to say . . . I get it. I probably won't wear my bracelet, either. I'm still a little too nervous to wear the trans flag at all." ..."I don't use he/ him pronouns back home, at school, yet. I will soon. It's still a little scary sometimes."</p>
93	<p>They performed a quick head count, then MJ, Leticia, and the Blue cabin's counselor, Sol (they/ them), led their group past the cabins, in the opposite direction of the Benches and lake. ...Instead of saying BINGO across the top, though, the card said PRIDE. ..."Keep an eye out for wildlife and other nature-y things. You'll all get a point for completing the hike, plus one lucky camper will earn an extra point for being the first to call a PRIDE bingo."</p>
104	<p>Jax wrapped his arm around Oren and Oren leaned into him. Kai's breath caught in eir throat as Jax gave Oren a kiss. ..."Not that there's anything wrong with people who like more than just boys or girls, or with having lots of different pronouns and switching names," he said. "Everyone's different."</p>
106	<p>"They should have put Mx. Nutsford on the bingo card!" Stick shouted.</p>
109	<p>"Okay. Someone needs to explain this Mx. Nutsford thing for us newbies."</p>
114	<p>She couldn't post a photo with Camp QUILTBAG written across her chest. And the other kids, they all had their bracelets, rainbows, and other flag colors on proud display.</p>
125	<p>E knew eir classmates at school a whole lot better and even then e couldn't have guessed how mean some of them would be after e changed eir name and pronouns. Oren hadn't technically answered Jax's question yesterday, about the two of them not planning to switch their pronouns. But he had said he only liked boys. Kai's hair was short and e usually preferred boyish clothes, but e wasn't a boy. E hated being misgendered as he just as much as when people called em she.</p>
126	<p>Kai: He, if someone says they only like boys (or girls, or whatever), do you think that means no exceptions like at all ever?</p>
131	<p>"It's Lena. I'malesbianandIlikeLena."</p>
132	<p>"He's a year older, actually," Kai said. "And also? He's gay." ...Jax, who didn't think twice about wrapping his arm around Oren's shoulder, or calling Oren a nickname no one else at camp used, or even kissing him. Jax, who was definitely a boy and used he, him, and his pronouns. Kai's muscles tensed. "As in, Oren likes other boys," e forced out. "And I'm not one."</p>

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147	She could imagine what Stacy and the other girls would think if she had so much as tried to make their school more LGBTQ + friendly. Not to mention the uphill battle of doing so at a Catholic school.
148	With help from MJ, she had googled her state’s representatives and the important LGBTQ + bills that may or may not be passed, and she was so proud of what she wrote that she was determined to find stamps while she was here, at camp, so she could mail them.
150	She could see the little Weavers in their rainbow shirts gathered at the Benches for Drag Queen Story Hour, she could see other campers scattered in kayaks in the lake.
153	“I’m Elliot Rage, they/ them, and I, too, have seen Whip It more times than I can count.” They winked at Hannah.
160	<p>“Bryn? Is something wrong?” Abigail asked.</p> <p>There was another pause, where Bryn said nothing, and Abigail was about to ask again—or maybe go find someone to help—when Bryn finally said softly, “I . . . got my period.”</p> <p>...“It’s okay, Bryn. I know it’s weird, but it’s totally normal. I think I’m due for mine next week. It’s okay.”</p> <p>“It’s not,” Bryn said, and Abigail realized he sounded stuffy because he was crying. “It’s not okay for me. It shouldn’t . . . I’m not . . . I hate this.”</p> <p>...Bryn was not a girl.</p> <p>Bryn hated getting his period in ways that Abigail could never understand.</p>
170	<p>Kai turned eir attention to Oren next, who had just enough time to smile at Kai before an adult with a shaved head and a name tag that said, Chef Kirstie: any pronouns, approached them.</p> <p>Chef Kirstie gestured to them, and all the campers plus their counselors got up and followed her. (Him? Them? Kai was having a hard time wrapping eir head around the idea that someone truly might not care what pronouns people used for them when e’d fought so hard to claim eir own set.)</p>
197	It was the kind of quiet that came after someone like Stacy said something about Abigail being gay.
201	In fact, when Jax asked them about their score, a kid named Lin (they/ them/ their) just laughed and explained that none of them cared about winning; they just wanted to have fun.
202	And that got Kai thinking back to the moment at the creek, when Jax had kissed Oren.
220	<p>“Hey, Stick! Did you know that the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park, they could change their gender? The scientists used frog DNA with the recovered dinosaur DNA, and even though they made all the dinosaurs girls, the dinosaurs were able to change so they could make babies.”</p> <p>...But then Stick shouted, “They’re Nonbinarysauses!” And then they started roaring.</p> <p>“Sex and gender aren’t the same things,” Cassidy said, rolling over to face Abigail.</p> <p>“Juliana can explain it better, but basically the dinosaurs technically changed their sex, not their gender. But I see where you were going with that! And, anyway, who am I to decide how the dinosaurs identified.”</p> <p>...“Like Mx. Nutsford,” Bryn chimed in. “So, they definitely could be nonbinarysauses.”</p>

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224	<p>Stacy: Are you really at gay camp what is that like omg</p>
225	<p>Why do I have to be gay? ...Why, out of all the people in the world, and the members of her family, and the students in her school and the patrons of her church, did she have to be gay? Why did she have to be the one to get made fun of for having a crush on a friend's mom, and why did she have to be the one who slunk in her seat, blushing, during religion class anytime something even remotely close to homosexuality came up during their readings?</p>
226	<p>She loved Laura Dern because she was gay, and she wanted to feel like the other kids did at this camp so much.</p>
229	<p>She couldn't imagine voluntarily going to church. Not while she was at gay camp, of all things. She realized what she had said a second after she said it and quickly added, "I mean! I just . . . hate going to church. It makes me feel bad. Doesn't it ever . . . make you feel bad? Or is Jewish church nicer to gay people?" ... "I grew up Modern Orthodox. I was really afraid to come out to my family for a while." Abigail nodded. She didn't know anything about being Modern Orthodox, but she knew about being Catholic, and how that made her scared to come out to her parents, too. "My parents were great about it, but our religious community kind of . . . wasn't. We switched temples, which is what our version of a church is called. It was hard, especially for my parents." ... "My mom told me that it's important to honor our faith, but it's impossible to fully do that unless you honor yourself and your identity first. The whole thing's a little messy, but it's all part of me, you know? Being Jewish and being gay both make me, well . . . me."</p>
231	<p>But Kai was worried that Oren couldn't like em back, because Oren was gay and Kai wasn't a boy. ... Maybe all she had to do was ask, and Oren would say, "Yes, I like boys and I like nonbinary kids, too," and she could tell Kai and e'd be happy and everything would be okay again! ... "About being gay. Like, do you only like boys or . . . ?" ... "I just mean, like, if another kid, like, a nonbinary kid? If a nonbinary kid had a crush on you? Is that something you would . . . like?" ... "A nonbinary kid has a crush on me?"</p>
241	<p>Something still really bothered em about it saying any pronouns, maybe because Kai had spent so much time online searching for the right words to describe how e felt when e was younger. ... People at school still didn't use the right pronouns a lot of the time, and that stung. Kai had even had to quit gymnastics because e hadn't seen any way around having to wear a leotard and compete on apparatuses people had decided were only for girls. But here was Chef Kirstie, walking beside em with a name tag that proudly announced people could choose any pronouns they wanted. Like those words didn't matter. ... "I'm genderfluid, so my pronouns change depending on how I'm feeling. And it can really fluctuate! Sometimes I feel like a woman for a long time, like a whole month maybe, and then I'll feel like a different gender. Then sometimes it changes daily, or even by the hour."</p>

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	<p>“That sounds complicated,” Kai said, and Chef Kirstie laughed.</p> <p>“It can be sometimes. It absolutely was when I was still figuring things out. Now, I just live from moment to moment and don’t worry about it too much. I’m not the same person I was last year or even last week. I am who I am and that constantly changes. So do my pronouns.”</p> <p>...“But that would’ve been way too much to put on this tiny little name tag, so I just let people choose whatever pronouns they think fit me best on any given day. Or I just tell them my pronouns if it feels important to me at that specific moment.”</p> <p>...But that didn’t mean e wanted people to use different pronouns every time something about em changed, either.</p> <p>...If some people’s pronouns never changed for their whole lives, it made sense that others’ might change a lot, like Chef Kirstie’s. And right now, to Kai, xie felt like it fit Kirstie best, so that’s how Kai decided e’d think of xem, unless xie told em otherwise. In a way, Kai realized as Chef Kirstie held the door open for em, Chef Kirstie was fighting for xir pronouns just as much as Kai. Xie just had a different approach, one that worked for xir identity.</p>
266	<p>Kai looked up from eir phone. It took em a beat to locate the counselor sporting a name tag that said, Finn: they/ them.</p>
267	<p>“But at its simplest form, dance is movement, a way to express your feelings without saying a word. Dance has no gender.”</p> <p>...“For example, in eighteenth-century France, ballet was initially intended only for noblemen, by decree of the king. By the nineteenth century, it was mostly performed by girls and women because it became viewed as embarrassing for men to dance. Now, of course, you see men and women onstage. The same goes for ballroom dancing, which has specific roles and steps based on whether you’re a woman or a man.”</p> <p>This, Kai understood well. The same was true for gymnastics.</p> <p>“But what if you’re neither?” Finn tilted their head. “Unfortunately, there’s no easy answer. The dance world still has a lot of work to do to create a welcoming and inclusive place for all genders.” They smiled. “Here at Camp QUILTBAG, we make our own rules. Instead of men’s and ladies’ steps and holds, we’ll call them leads and follows. And you can choose which ones you want to do with your partner no matter your gender.”</p>
275	<p>Came out. That sounded a whole lot to Kai like coming out: something so many people said you should do. Be your authentic self. Be loud and proud. Never back down.</p>
284	<p>Because Lena would know that Abigail had a crush on her and wouldn’t want to touch her at all, like Stacy and the girls at school didn’t want to touch her.</p> <p>As if they could catch lesbian cooties or something.</p>
300	<p>“Anyway, it got really hard for me to focus on gymnastics and I didn’t like how all the apparatuses I was training on were specifically for girls anyway, so I quit and started doing parkour. And all my friends there are super cool. Sometimes they mess up my pronouns, but they always correct themselves. They don’t make a big deal out of it.</p>
306	<p>There were some good suggestions—Camp Pride, Camp Everyone, Camp Equality—and then also some not so good ones, like Campy McCamp Face.</p>
308	<p>“Besides, I get it,” Leticia said with a shrug. “My mom’s hot.”</p>
314	<p>“I wasn’t much older than you when I thought maybe I was gay,” Lena said.</p> <p>...“I don’t think there were any camps like this back then. I didn’t know what a Genders</p>

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	<p>and Sexualities Alliance was, and my school certainly didn't have one. The only time I ever saw anything queer was when the local theater did a production of Rent. I felt really lonely."</p> <p>..."I'm so sorry the girls at your school are so ignorant. I hope, if anything, you've learned that there is a community here for you who won't treat you like that. That's why I founded this camp, Abigail. For queer kids to learn that they should be accepted and supported and loved. To give them a community if they don't already know that. I didn't know that when I was younger. It didn't feel safe to crush on any of the girls in my grade . . . so my first crush I ever had? The first real crush I can remember? It was on my eighth-grade English teacher."</p>
316	<p>"Because while no adult should ever take advantage of you regardless of your feelings for them, and it's important that you know it would have been absolutely not okay for my English teacher to cross any lines with me, how I felt wasn't wrong. You aren't the first queer kid with a crush on someone older than you, and you won't be the last, and anyone who makes you feel ashamed of that? They're wrong," Lena said firmly in a way that even if Abigail wanted to argue (and a small part of her still did), she wouldn't try.</p>
329	<p>"She asked if I could have a crush on a nonbinary kid."</p> <p>"Oh, right." Kai's cheeks heated up. "I guess I just thought you couldn't, because you said you're gay. And it's fine. I get that, I really do."</p> <p>..."I am gay," Oren said. "I know that for sure."</p> <p>..."I also thought I only got crushes on boys, but I guess not always."</p> <p>..."Like, there's this really cute kid at camp, and e's definitely not a boy, so I guess my definition of gay is more than just liking guys..."</p>
331	<p>"I thought . . . I mean, wait, so he's—"</p> <p>"—bisexual."</p> <p>"But he kissed you!"</p> <p>...But Kai still remembered how e had felt when e'd seen Jax lean in and kiss Oren.</p> <p>..."Jax has always been super kissy and into hugs and stuff, but I promise we're just friends. He's actually planning to come out to his girlfriend once he gets home because he really wants her to be okay with who he is."</p>
332	<p>They leaned in toward each other. Kai closed eir eyes, then felt the lightest brush of Oren's lips. The start of a kiss.</p>
342	<p>Inclusive camps that welcome queer kids didn't exist when we were kids. But it turned out to be the perfect opportunity not only for Abigail and Kai to meet, but also for us to develop other queer characters and portray many different queer identities. Camp QUILTBAG is a space where kids are allowed to have fun while being who they are. It's a place where friendships are made (also sometimes tested) and identities can be explored safely, with the support of knowledgeable adult counselors.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Piss	3
Queer	21