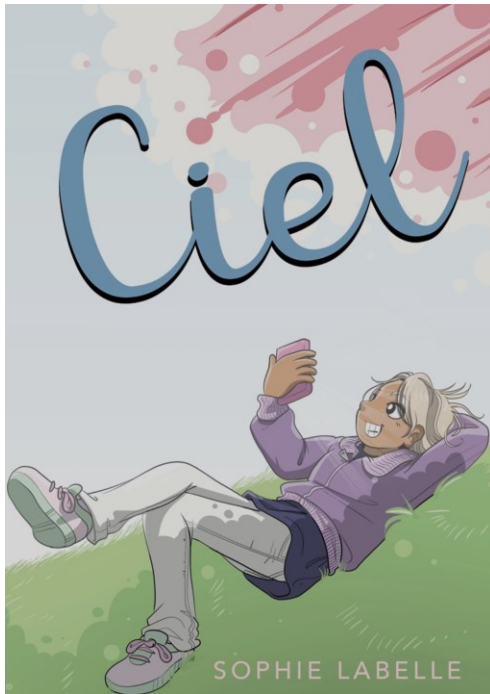


CIEL



Juvenile

By Sophie Labelle

ISBN: 9781772601374

Book Summary:

A male teenager describing himself as non-binary, utilizes YouTube to create videos to advocate for the LGBTQ community.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains explicit alternate gender ideologies; inexplicit sexual activities; alternate sexualities; derogatory term use; controversial social commentary; reference to alcohol use; and references to hate.

2 /5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
8	<p>I don't like having to explain who I am to everyone.</p> <p>You see, I'm transgender, which means I identify with another gender (whether it's boy, girl, non-binary, or any other) than the one the doctors gave me at birth when they looked at my genitals (which are nobody's business, by the way!).</p> <p>...In most societies, it's the custom to attribute a gender to newborn babies, without waiting to ask their opinion. Depending on whether they're designated a girl or a boy, their rooms are painted a certain color, and they're given certain kinds of toys to play with. Afterward, if people turned out to be wrong, and the children end up being a different gender than the one that was assigned, why would they have to justify themselves and explain the mistake to the doctors and their parents? If you ask me, trans children shouldn't have to explain anything, and adults should say they're sorry instead of bothering them.</p> <p>In my case, I'm not exactly a girl, and not really a boy. I am somewhere outside these two.</p> <p>...But what feels right is they. They can mean any gender.</p> <p>...Usually, the first thing people wonder about when they hear that I'm trans is what's in my pants.</p>
9	<p>My boyfriend, Eiríkur, isn't transgender. But he's bisexual, which means he can be interested in people of any gender, including mine, apparently.</p>
12	<p>She's transgender like me. We've known each other since kindergarten, back when, like me, people thought she was a boy.</p> <p>...Stephie transitioned at nine, and unlike me, she's 100 percent a girl.</p>
16	<p>During recess, I would get harassed by grade five guys who called me "fag" and "fairy."</p> <p>...Apparently, having trans kids makes people come together.</p> <p>..."More or less. But I'm sorry I didn't have my name changed on the teachers' lists, the way you did. I'm going to get called by a boy's name for the rest of the year."</p> <p>...Stephie's mother, Alice, is very involved in everything that has to do with trans people.</p> <p>...She's on TV all the time, and journalists consult her if they are writing something about trans issues. Though Alice isn't trans herself. It's funny how they trust non-trans more than trans people when it comes to our experiences.</p>
17	<p>"Right! Otherwise they would be guilty of being transphobic."</p> <p>..."You won't forget, right? Not a word about me being trans. We won't even bring up the subject. I'd like to be something other than that 'trans girl' this year."</p> <p>...She told me all about it last time we talked on the phone. We call each other a lot. She wants to be less visible at school and make more cisgender friends. That's the word for people who aren't trans.</p> <p>...It's harder for me to hide the fact that I'm trans, since I'm much less a girl than she is. If they see that we're always together, people could make the connection and guess that she's trans too.</p>
18	<p>At first, she wasn't so sure, since she had feelings for a girl whose name I forget—Stephie is bisexual too, like Eiríkur—but I think she was so impatient to be with someone that she would have said "Yes" to anyone.</p>
23	<p>"Maybe not, but at least I wouldn't always be afraid that people are making fun of me. And you wouldn't have to hide that you're trans."</p> <p>"It's not that I want to hide it, I just don't want it to influence the way people treat me. If one person finds out, everyone will call me 'he' for the rest of my life."</p> <p>...She knows very well I'm not comfortable in places that are for boys only, or girls only.</p>

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26	At the house, he likes to wear my dresses, and sometimes he asks me to style his hair. But only at the house, never at school. He loves to try all kinds of things, even if he continues to identify as a boy.
28	<p>“But, actually, no, it was a complete mess. I discovered that my new school doesn’t have any washrooms I can use, since they are all separated into boys and girls. I had to hold it in the whole day. But then I couldn’t stand it, and I waited until there wasn’t anyone in one of the girls’ bathrooms, and I went there. Because of that, my girlfriend who was with me and I were late for class, and that was the excuse the teacher needed to make comments about me. First she thought I was a boy, then she said that if I’d had shorter hair, she wouldn’t have thought I was a girl, not with my voice.”</p> <p>...“Well, it’s easier to ignore those things, and force everyone to fit into two different boxes, one for girls, the other for boys, and too bad for the rest. This is Ciel, from Ciel Is Bored.”</p>
30	<p>This morning, when I see the word transgender written in big letters, I drop my bag and start reading:</p> <p>A young Montreal transgender person wins gold at the Canadian junior swimming championship</p> <p>Liam Johnson, a 12-year-old athlete, has struck gold: the boy from the Rosemont district won a gold medal at the Canadian Junior Swimming Championship that took place this year in Whitehorse, Yukon. His participation made waves a few months back, as he was the first transgender person to sign up, which forced the competition’s organizing committee to review its selection process. The committee’s decision to include Liam Johnson attracted international attention, since it meant that transgender youth required no medical certificate to compete in the gender category they identified with.</p> <p>This is a triumph for young Liam, who was born with a girl’s body, but who has not undergone a sex-change operation or hormone treatments. When questioned about it, he said he intended to begin taking testosterone soon in order to masculinize his body, a procedure that is unfair to other competitors, according to some analysts.</p> <p>...The boy wins a gold medal in a national championship, and all the journalists want to talk about are his genitals?</p> <p>...And the way the article talks about the new rules for the competition, as if the committee’s decision not to discriminate against trans people was an act of great generosity.</p>
39	Some people didn’t agree with my opinions. They didn’t think teachers should have to make accommodations for trans students, and that schools shouldn’t do that either. I don’t think that’s very fair, coming from people who will never have to experience the stress about which washroom to use.
49	It’s incredible, the progress Martin has made since I’ve known him. When Stephe transitioned when she was nine, her mother was the one who supported her. Her father didn’t take it very well, especially in the beginning. He went on using he when he talked about her, until she was ten, and he realized it wasn’t just a phase. I don’t think he was trying to be mean. He was just completely disoriented by everything that was happening. He even tried to get Stephe interested in football and Formula 1! Not that there’s anything wrong with a girl liking those things. It’s just the idea of pushing someone into certain activities in hopes of changing who they are—that’s what I don’t like. If my father had done that, I would have been really angry, and thought he didn’t love me. It’s a good

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	<p>thing Stephe is so stubborn and didn't listen to her father. Little by little, he must have understood that he was making her unhappy by trying to change the person she was. ...Even before he understood I was trans, he was willing to buy me books and clothes that were considered to be "for girls." The way my mother did, when she was still with me.</p>
52	<p>I suppose the meeting is one of those activities she has to avoid if she doesn't want to be perceived as the school's "trans girl."</p>
53	<p>"Hey look here! It's the little faggot from YouTube who doesn't know with bathroom to use!" "Didn't your teacher make you feel extra special with your made-up gender?" his friend adds.</p>
54	<p>I didn't know that Stephe felt bad about not being openly trans at school.</p>
62	<p>"Okay. First, I wondered if the medication Stephe is taking is going to make her have her period." "When you say 'the medication she's taking,' do you mean the hormone blockers or the hormone treatment she's going to start in a few weeks?" "Uh... both." "There is no medication that will make someone grow a uterus." "What?" "The uterus is what causes people to menstruate." "Really?" "Really. We had a class about that last year. If you were paying attention, you heard that only people who have a uterus can menstruate. I don't have one, and as far as I know, Stephe doesn't either and neither do you." "You bet I don't," Frank assures me. "Okay, another question.... These medications, they keep you from having a beard, right?" "Among other things, yes." "Because we're the same age, and since I'm starting to grow a beard, I was wondering—" I interrupt him. "If she did have facial hair, I think she'd shave. But that's her choice." Silence on the other end of the line. I can tell he's worried. "You know, she wouldn't be any less a girl if she had a beard like a Viking, or an Adam's apple, or a low voice." "But it would be a little weird." "Why?" "People might think I was going out with a guy, or something." I can't believe my ears. I wonder what he is even doing with Stephe. "And that would be a real tragedy, right?" "That's not what I mean! Some of my friends say I'm gay because I'm going out with Stephe, and I don't care."</p>
64	<p>While my father talked with Myriam and drank whiskey (what a smell!), Leah, my brother, and I played Mario Kart, one of the only video games Virgil can beat me at, and a board game Leah brought.</p>
65	<p>A little voice inside me pipes up: It would be funny to have a beard. I could experiment, and see if I like it, and shave it if I didn't. Or do like that lady I met on Trans Pride day, back in August, who had her hair removed with a laser. They say it's really painful, and she didn't recommend it. All I would need is to stop taking hormone blockers for a few months, and presto! I'd have a little beard.</p>

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	<p>Every month, I go to the community health center in Saint Leonard for a hormone blocker injection. That’s why I don’t have facial hair, and why my voice hasn’t started to change, like Frank’s and Eiríkur’s. Unlike Stephanie, I haven’t decided whether I want to follow the hormone treatments that are supposed to come next, that will make my breasts grow and my hips widen, the things that most cisgender girls want. To be honest, that doesn’t really interest me. I only know I don’t like the idea of my voice changing and my arms getting hairy like my father’s. I have nightmares about that, so you get the picture.</p>
67	<p>Then I notice someone sent me a private message on WhatsApp. It’s Benoît Vandroogenbroeck, a boy from Quebec City I met on a secret group for young trans people. Stephanie signed me up a few months back. We don’t really know each other, Benoît and I, but he loves my YouTube channel, and he always shares and comments on everything I post.</p> <p>...It’s a video by Bettie Bobbie Barton, a trans girl of seventeen or eighteen, who lives in Guelph. She is pretty well known, and she uses her visibility to make videos criticizing trans people. Yes, I know, it doesn’t make sense, but it does make her very popular with the audience that doesn’t like trans people. People think she’s pretty with her big blue eyes, her shiny blond hair, and her Barbie body. Apparently, that gives her the right to say anything she wants. The title of her video? Gender-special Latino-Brazilian starved for attention.</p>
68	<p>Hi, everybody! Today I watched a video that made me want to puke, about a gay boy who invented a gender for himself by saying he’s neither a boy nor a girl. I guess he figures being Latino is not special enough.</p> <p>...In his video, he tells how his school has no special washroom for people who are neither boys nor girls. I think that’s funny. You really have to be mixed up to imagine that society is going to accommodate every whim that a few weird people have, when all they want is more attention!</p> <p>If you ask me, this video harms real trans people like me, who have real problems, unlike the other kind who make up a gender for themselves that doesn’t exist. I hope Ciel will go back to Brazil, and stop bothering us with his little whims, or at least cut his hair because, as you can see, it’s a real pain to look at.</p>
71	<p>On the contrary, I’m excited, too excited almost, by the idea of being in a room full of people like me, here at school, instead of only once in a while at the Montreal LGBT + Youth Group. I’m not trying to say that all LGBT + people are the same, but we’re a little like family. Though we’re all different, we have had similar experiences, and we can understand and help each other without having to explain ourselves or being afraid of rejection.</p> <p>...I didn’t know Zoe thought I was cisgender. I don’t feel like explaining to her that I’m trans, especially not with Stephanie here, who made me promise to avoid the subject.</p>
74	<p>“Can we also say the pronouns we want people to use with us?”</p> <p>“Excuse me? What pronouns?”</p> <p>“For the person’s gender. He/ him/ his, she/ her/ hers, they/ them/ theirs....”</p> <p>When I started questioning my gender, it was very important to have a choice when it came to the pronouns people used with me. I needed space to discover the person I was. Until then, I would have never dared to ask people to say “they” when they talked about me. A lot of people imagine that transitioning is like waking up one morning and changing your entire life—your appearance, your habits, your preferences. But, really, it’s allowing</p>

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	<p>yourself the freedom to explore who you are and could be. ...“Actually, it’s not about grammar. It’s a common practice in a number of LGBT + groups. We want everyone to feel respected and free to experiment, and the Alliance should be there to do just that. We can’t guess people’s genders just from their appearance.”</p>
86	<p>Liam: I didn’t know you weren’t a girl or a boy. Cool!</p>
90	<p>“We were also wondering if your parents are aware, in case we have to contact them.” “Aware of what?” “That you prefer being a girl.” “I don’t prefer being a girl. Or a boy, for that matter.” ...“You can act like I’m a girl, if it’s less complicated for you,” I add. “And my father is aware, thanks for asking.” “Oh, fine,” Mrs. Campeau says. “For your information, he can have your name changed on the attendance lists with a note from a psychologist, but for the report cards, he needs to contact the Ministry of Education.” “I’ll tell him.” “Do you want me to tell the other teachers to call you Alessandra?” I think it over a moment. “Yes, please. But say it might change again, because life is full of uncertainty.”</p>
91	<p>As for her suggestion, I’m not sure it’s worth the trouble going to see a psychologist to have my name changed. ...I remember she took it upon herself to tell me that I “walked like a girl,” and that I should change to “appear more confident.”</p>
93	<p>“It’s all right now. It’s been a while. I remember not liking my grandfather. When we were together, he’d make all kinds of remarks about how I dressed, how I walked, how I talked. He thought I was too effeminate.” “If he knew you’re a girl!” I correct Liam right away. “I’m not exactly a girl.” “Excuse me. I should know, I watched all your videos yesterday. I’ve rarely heard of people who are neither girls nor boys. Uh, when you were born, you were...” “A baby!” Liam laughs softly, and his arm brushes mine. “Now, that’s a surprise. What I mean is...” “My parents and the doctors thought I was a boy.” “I see. Sorry, I just wanted to be sure. They thought I was a girl.” “When did you transition?” “I must have been five or six. I don’t really remember.” “That’s young!” “I was lucky. My mother’s best friend is trans, so she understood right away. And since I wasn’t going to school, I never had the usual problems.”</p>
97	<p>Think fast, I tell myself. I don’t want to lie to Sylvie, but I can’t let on that Stephie is trans. She works so hard so the fewest people possible will find out. ...I don’t like to be compared to my father, not physically, even if I know that people have good intentions when they point out the resemblance. But I always feel they are remarking on the “masculine” traits I inherited from him, as if they were secretly suggesting that I look like a man.</p>

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109	All the time we were together, Eiríkur and I hardly ever kissed. I would have liked to more often. But he didn't like the idea of someone else's saliva in his mouth.

Derogatory Term	Count
Fag/Faggot	2
Queer	1