

# WHAT'S THE T?: THE GUIDE TO ALL THINGS TRANS AND/OR NONBINARY



*Young Adult*

**By Juno Dawson**

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## **Book Summary:**

Instructs the reader on the idea of alternate gender ideologies.

## **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains explicit alternate gender ideologies; alternate sexualities; sexual activities; sexual nudity; profanity/derogatory terms; and controversial political, religious, and cultural commentary.

**2** /5

**Teen Guidance**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
3	Hello, it's nice to meet you. My name is Juno Dawson, I'm an author from Brighton, UK, and I am a woman. Only one of those things was true to begin with. ...Also, my parents called me James. BUT I WAS ALWAYS A WOMAN. ...You see, the doctor who oversaw my birth made a whoopsie. It really wasn't his fault. As far as he could tell from a quick scan of my body, I was a baby boy.
8	While living as a gay man, I'd been verbally abused, followed, even spat at in the street. Being trans couldn't be any worse. Or so I thought. ...Up until that point, I thought I wanted to be a girl when, in fact, I just was one. For all those years, I believed an error a doctor once told my parents.
9	That's because so often in the news, we see stories about transphobia, phony debates about trans lives, and brutal acts of violence committed against us.
12	Adolescence is a particularly turbulent time for humans because we are already a mélange of hormones regardless of whether we're cis or trans. First love, first kiss, first pube: everything feels heightened. I should know. I went through puberty twice, and let me tell you, the second time—aged thirty-two—was no more fun than the first.
14	I had to take a very long and convoluted path before I could stand before you as a grown-ass woman. But I got there in the end. These days, I'm very proud to call myself a transgender woman. Gender: woman, subgroup: trans.
18	"I was born in what doctors proclaim is a boy's body. I had no choice in the assignment of my sex at birth... My genital reconstructive surgery did not make me a girl. I was always a girl."
19	A transgender person is someone who moves from one gender identity to another.
20	Under the big, vast umbrella of transgender, some people might further define themselves as TRANSSEXUAL, NONBINARY, GENDERFLUID, GENDERQUEER, or GENDER NONCONFORMING. ...The word CISGENDER simply means a person who does agree with the gender they were given at birth.
21	Sometimes a person who was told they were a girl realizes they're really a boy. Sometimes a person who was told they were a boy realizes they're really a girl. Sometimes people realize the terms boy or girl don't make sense for them as an individual and reject (or indeed, embrace) both. The trans label encapsulates us all because we've all been brave enough to make that change.
24	"THERE ARE ONLY TWO GENDERS!" Crikey! That escalated quickly. Be careful, @twogendersXXXY. You'll break your phone. That simply isn't true. The World Health Organization defines gender as "the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy."
27	Abortion, female genital mutilation, endometriosis, ectopic pregnancies, and just regular pregnancies are highly politicized and have a bearing on how a person will navigate the PATRIARCHY. ...A patriarchy is a culture in which men hold the majority of power, therefore creating a world that best suits men. Our world—pretty much the whole world—is a patriarchy. If

Page	Content
	<p>you look at the people in power, they are mostly men. Men, even now, still have freedoms that women do not. Men’s bodies are not policed and debated like women’s are. Men still earn more money than women and are more likely to receive an education.</p>
29	<p>Being transgender in itself also affects how well a person thrives in the patriarchy. At times, I am treated specifically as a trans woman, so I get all the things cis women get plus a few salty side dishes, like online transphobia, street mockery, complications with my ID and paperwork, and so much more. Sometimes we’re perceived as freaky weirdos with no rights at all. Identifying as trans and/ or nonbinary is going to have a big impact on how well you can get by in a world run by men for men. ...Clearly, identity and gender are really, really complicated, so let’s simplify it: <b>NOT EVERYONE BORN WITH A VAGINA IS A GIRL, AND NOT EVERYONE BORN WITH A PENIS IS A BOY.</b></p>
34	<p>Of course, it all very much matters, because those three things—your sex, your gender, and your gender expression—will absolutely affect how you exist in a very sexist world that (almost universally) benefits men and boys at a systemic level.</p>
40	<p>The simple answer is that I socially and medically transitioned, and it’s literally only improved my life.</p>
43	<p>The press makes an awful lot about people who “detransition,” but they make up a minuscule percentage of trans people overall. Some studies measure “regret rates” after surgery, and other types of surgery have far higher regret rates than gender-affirming surgeries. For example, cisgender people are far more likely—statistically—to regret cosmetic surgeries (i.e., boob jobs, etc.) than trans people do their gender-affirming surgeries.</p>
44	<p>As a consenting adult, I opted for some medical interventions (not to mention paid through the nose for my nose). ...“<b>BUT SURGERIES ARE IRREVERSIBLE!</b>” Surgeries are, for the most part, irreversible but—and I’ve lost count of how many times I’ve said this—<b>TRANS YOUTH DO NOT GET SURGERIES.</b> So what we’re dealing with is adults making choices about their bodies. Is there a similar outcry over cisgender adults who get boob jobs, nose jobs, tattoos, face-lifts, and Botox? No, of course there isn’t, because the furor you’ve read about trans surgeries is written by people who hate trans people. Portraying trans people as confused or misguided simpletons who’ve been brainwashed by some almighty “trans cult” and “mutilated” themselves is one of the more hilarious myths spread about transgender people. You may have read about so-called <b>PUBERTY BLOCKERS</b>. This is a treatment designed to pause the onset of puberty. This medicine is given to cisgender children who experience very early puberty and cis women with heavy periods or endometriosis. However, in trans youth, it is sometimes prescribed at the onset of puberty to delay adult sex characteristics developing. Basically, they press Pause until adult treatment begins at sixteen. If you stop taking them, you hit Play again, and the body enters into puberty.</p>
48	<p>It’s the same reason I support organizations who ask all their employees or members to put their preferred pronouns on their email signatures. Whenever we have an archetype we defer to when we imagine a person—whether that is white, straight, male, able-bodied, or cis—it results in people who don’t conform to that archetype being marginalized.</p>

Page	Content
49	It isn't fair that our society treats straight, white, cisgender, nondisabled people as THE NORM. If people of color, LGBTQ + people, and people with disabilities can acclimatize to those labels, then you sure can handle a label that speaks only of luck and good fortune. Some people don't like "cisgender" simply because they hate trans people and want to erase us from the lexicon.
54	Knowledge is power, and I think it's wise to arm ourselves with facts and figures when ill-informed or bigoted people accuse us of "being trendy." It's frustrating though, because literally no straight or cisgender person has to go to the trouble of learning how and why they came to privilege and supremacy, but there you go.
56	First up, we must acknowledge that history is largely written by the monsters, so much of what we know about gender in the past has been informed by European colonization and the eradication of indigenous people who didn't have binary notions of gender in the first place.
58	In medieval times, Eleanor Rykener was a sex worker who presented exclusively as a woman despite seemingly being born male. By all accounts, it seems she lived fully as a woman and may also have been bisexual.
73	I am genderqueer, and to me, that means that I feel like a boy some days and like a girl some days and a mixture of both most days! You could also describe my gender as "multigender." Sometimes it's hard to explain my gender to people, because they are used to thinking of everyone as either boys or girls, but there are many of us that are neither or both. In Indian mythology, there are loads of gods, goddesses, and otherworldly beings that are depicted as trans, and they transform from one gender to another and back over time.
81	I identify as nonbinary. I got to this label because I have never felt comfortable identifying as male.
84	Planned Parenthood says, "Intersex is a general term used for a variety of situations in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the boxes of 'female' or 'male.'"
85	Finally, intersex people—as we'll discover shortly—face a lot of the same transphobic bullshit whether they're trans or not, so it's very, very important to include intersex people in conversations about LGBTQ + people and also in this book.
88	I guess I'm nonbinary because I play with my gender expression consciously. Through puberty, I grew breasts and didn't develop brow ridging or a prominent Adam's apple. I went to the doctor with a list of symptoms ranging from passing out, memory loss, and body dysphoria to major mood swings, which is identical to what any cis female would go through in menopause, and yet was told that nothing was wrong. I should have been given a proper look-over as a toddler when I came home from school saying I was a girl, but it never happened because the doctors were working from an antiquated position of understanding. ...I've wanted to remove my breast tissues and female characteristics to a point that I can be something more in the middle, angelic. I have been on different combinations of HRT and transitioned to find autonomy in my body. ...As I've progressed through my transition, cheerfully complying with white Western

Page	Content
	norms of what a woman should look like, I've started to notice that CONFORMING gets you far.
139	I am, in a way, loathe to write this section, because trans and/ or nonbinary people shouldn't have to "pass" as anything in order to make cis people feel more comfortable.
146	Binders aren't comfy, but some trans people wear a compression vest or a fitted tube top around the chest that smooshes the fat tissue down to create a flatter chest.
147	Some cis people are obsessed with scrutinizing the general crotch area of trans people, so some transmasculine people like to "pack" their underwear with a prosthetic penis. And why not? Some folk like the way it looks and feels too. Remember that cis men's willies are usually only a couple of inches long when flaccid, so you don't need a python swinging around your pants. You can get "stand-to-pee" packers too, which enable a person to pee standing up.
150	You can choose from gendered (she/ her, he/ him) or nongendered pronouns (they/ them, ze/ zir).
152	It's pretty funny that there is so much fuss when it's actually fairly easy to apply for ID. For instance, your school can just change your name on their records.
154	The uncertainty surrounding my gender identity was relentless—so much so that on one occasion, it prompted a herd of students to harass me on my way home from school, with one girl going so far as to grab my bra to see if my breasts were real. During this time, I assumed that the abuse I received was a result of my ability to "pass" as female. I was under the impression that presenting an idealistic feminine persona would erase the question of what was in between my legs. I believe that trans women can find ourselves trapped within a system that demands us to change our bodies in order to make our existence more palatable for the people around us. I felt utterly hopeless having just recently started my hormone blockers; I knew it would be years until cross-sex hormones would even be discussed. I would tuck with duct tape, and with each second, the pain would intensify, serving as a reminder that my body was not "normal." I felt hyperaware of my severe discomfort, and this was largely compounded by the fact that no other person could relate.
156	Do you want to ultimately use the girls'/ boys' locker rooms for PE, or are you happy to use a disabled bathroom? While this is probably a bit discriminatory—you are a girl/ boy if you say so—I'd have felt more comfortable with private changing, and with no official legal guidance in place regarding trans and/ or nonbinary youth, you can see why schools might opt for this policy.
158	This is why medical professionals sometimes prescribe puberty blockers (more in chapter 9)—they remove some of the anxiety surrounding the onset of puberty.
159	Not all women have periods, and some men do. Some nonbinary people have them too. This is why we campaign for menstrual product machines and disposal bins in men's restrooms and appropriate sex education in schools.
161	I work with businesses to help them become more inclusive and embrace diversity. I work on strategy and policy and report on matters such as the gender pay gap. I activate training and get people talking about sensitive topics and awareness raising. It also extends to adding stuff like gender identity boxes on data forms and having gender-neutral bathrooms.

Page	Content
162	I'm genderqueer or transmasculine, and I've been using they/ them pronouns for nearly a decade.
169	<p>The way our society is set up is inherently sexist and transphobic, but you already knew this. The world assumes you're cisgender unless you say otherwise, so unless you choose to tell the world how you feel, you're going to be misgendered from day one.</p> <p>...The world assumes everyone is cisgender. It has been set up to work best for cis people. And so...</p> <p>Menstrual products are marketed toward women.</p> <p>Assumptions are made about "women's bodies" and "men's bodies."</p> <p>Maternity services are geared toward "women" and "mothers."</p>
171	<p>Any minority group is susceptible (and of course many trans people belong to other minority groups too). Don't believe me? Pop into your local Target or drugstore. Where are the hair products for Black people?</p> <p>...I doubt cis, white, and nondisabled people even notice this is happening—all the time, every day. But people from minority groups do notice, because it leaves us feeling fundamentally misunderstood.</p>
172	For instance, in 2019, Stonewall Young Campaigner of the Year Ben Saunders convinced Always sanitary products to remove the female symbol from their packaging: a small thing that would have gone wholly unnoticed by cis people but means everything to trans men and/ or nonbinary folk.
175	<p>When hateful people are desperate to think of themselves as good people, pure of heart, it's all too easy to defer to a third party. In this case, God. "Oh, it's not that I'm transphobic. It's my faith."</p> <p>Now, some humans claim to have a direct line to gods of all faiths, and of course, some people believe various holy books are the word of God.</p>
176	I find transphobes using very, very old texts, which have been translated and changed countless times to simply support their bigotry, especially tedious. Hate me because I'm a bitch, not because you're religious.
178	These attempts to undermine trans and/ or nonbinary people are tiresome to say the absolute least. Trans people—especially trans women—may also be harassed by (mostly) men who regard them as sexual objects.
180	<p>6. DISCRIMINATION</p> <p>This is when people take their prejudices against groups and put them into action. In reality, this can take lots of different forms:</p> <p>Refusing to provide services, like letting trans people stay in hostels, hotels, or rented accommodation.</p> <p>Refusing to hire trans people or let them enroll in courses.</p> <p>Passing over trans people for bonuses or promotion.</p> <p>Barring entry to public spaces, including changing rooms or toilets.</p>
182	<p>Let's be very clear: cis men are scary. Before you start screaming #notallmen, I'll explain. Cis men can be scary, because we know from lots of data that some cis men do, sadly, assault women and girls.</p> <p>However, there is almost no data to suggest this happens in public toilets or changing facilities.</p>

Page	Content
186	<p>We know that transphobic hate crimes are on the rise in the United States and Canada, surging 20 percent in just one year. Worse still, in 2019, 331 transgender and gender-diverse people (that we know of) were unlawfully killed around the world. When you consider what a tiny fraction of the population we are, that's way too many. Most of those victims were trans women of color. Some of them were also sex workers.</p>
195	<p>If you do wish to consider the medical route, in the United States and Canada, you will generally need permission from your parent or guardian to do a hormonal or surgical transition before you are eighteen years old.</p> <p>...After a whole heap of waiting, talking, waiting, and more talking, you may be offered HORMONE BLOCKERS. This medication—more formally called gonadotropin-releasing hormone analogues—is the holy grail for many trans youth. They reduce the dysphoric terror of going through the wrong puberty and watching your body change in ways you might not want.</p> <p>Depending on what state or province you live in, you may be able to start taking blockers earlier than the age of sixteen. However, several states in the United States have introduced or are considering legislation that would prohibit medical treatment for children who may be transgender, including the use of pubertal blockers. The Endocrine Society and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health support the use of puberty blockers for kids who want to delay or prevent unwanted physical changes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved puberty blockers for children who start puberty at a young age.</p>
197	<p>Puberty blockers can be a really useful pause button while you figure things out.</p> <p>...Puberty blockers do have an impact on mental well-being and provide more positive outcomes.</p>
198	<p>Once you're sixteen or seventeen or have been on blockers for about two years, you might be started on "cross-gender" hormones if you're still keen to pursue a medical transition. So in transmasculine peeps, this would be TESTOSTERONE, and in transfeminine ones, ESTROGEN.</p>
200	<p>Some trans men and nonbinary folk use BINDERS to flatten their silhouette—although these are very uncomfortable to wear—or opt to have "top surgery" to remove the chest tissue.</p>
206	<p>I postponed my gender reassignment surgery because keeping my penis didn't discredit my womanhood. The longer I lived in my desired gender identity, the more I understood that my "transness" had always been there and always would, regardless of my genitalia.</p>
216	<p>PANSEXUAL: Very similar to bisexual, but for some, that word inherently suggests a binary (hello, bi), so "pansexual" reinforces attraction to ALL genders, including nonbinary ones.</p> <p>ASEXUAL: Asexual people, though they might have sex for lots of reasons, typically have little or no desire to have sex or sexual relationships.</p> <p>AROMANTIC: Asexual people might do all the lovey-dovey bits without the sex. Aromantic people have no desire to do the coupling up stuff but may still want sex.</p> <p>QUEER: An umbrella term used to position oneself as something other than straight or cisgender.</p>
218	<p>The illustration on this page depicts a vagina standing up with arms and a face talking to a penis with arms and a face.</p>

Page	Content
	<i>See Figure 1.</i>
224	Just because they aren't interested in exploring romantic options with you doesn't mean they won't be an amazing friend or even sexual partner.
225	However, the BIG PLUS to online dating for trans and nonbinary people is that it gives you the opportunity to explain your gender to potential partners. Disclosing your gender history can be awkward, and it's another thing that cis people just don't usually have to do.
227	Back to online dating. First things first: pretty much all the dating apps I know of insist on users being over eighteen, but that doesn't stop younger people from naughtily signing up. Anyway, you don't need to be over eighteen on social media apps such as Instagram, where a lot of introductions also take place in the old direct messages.
231	I met Juno through [the dating app] Tinder. I had been on Tinder a while, and it may just be my experience, but to me it seemed like Tinder was a hellish nightmarescape of endless selfies and painful small talk.
242	I think after a while, it picked up, and then I did become more horny. I would have to leave work early to get home for a wank!
245	<p>Some people find having their earlobe kissed or gently nibbled a huge turn-on. ...The nips are super sensitive and respond to being gently played with. Some people like them to be less gently played with, but you'll have to ask to find out. ...Some people enjoy being kissed, sucked, or licked on their genitals (ORAL SEX, GOING DOWN, or BLOW JOB). Some people enjoy penetration (SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, SHAG, SCREW). Trans women's vaginas do not self-lubricate in the way that a cis woman's vagina would, so you'll need LUBRICANT if you're planning to enter one. You can get free lubricant from sexual health clinics or buy it online. Liquid Silk is the best. You're welcome.</p> <p>The illustration on the middle of this page depicts a cartoonish drawing of two nude breasts with the nipples exposed.</p> <p><i>See Figure 2.</i></p>
246	<p>Some people have a prostate gland up their bum that feels nice when "massaged," which really means rubbed, I guess. People without prostates sometimes like having the bum area played with too because the anus has extrasensitive nerve endings. ...As a helpful pointer, you'll also definitely need lube if you're planning to put anything in a bum. Some people like penetration in the bum (ANAL SEX). ...When contemplating anal sex, some people DOUCHE, or squirt a bit of water into their back passage so that sneaky poo nugs don't get in the way of sexyfuntime.</p>
248	<p>A trans man once told me his utterly perfect response to the question "Do you have a penis?" It was, "Yes, I have a whole drawer full."</p> <p>Trans people are pretty used to our bodies being a bit of a letdown at times, but that doesn't matter because, since the dawn of humanity, we have used sex. ...The days of coyly hiding a sex toy in a box in a safe at the bottom of the ocean are long gone. You can buy sex toys online or in some stores, and they come in all shapes and sizes. Some of them vibrate, and some of them don't. Some of them are worn in a strap or harness; others are hand-held.</p>



Page	Content
255	It's almost like the patriarchy deemed the bodies of cisgender men to be paramount or something.
265	<p>If you identify as transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, or gender nonconforming, there are people in positions of power debating your rights.</p> <p>...With the rise in trans awareness (broadly a good thing) came a rise in moral panic (a wholly bad thing).</p> <p>...This "debate" was seized on by the right-wing media. They couldn't very well scrutinize the failings of our right-wing leaders, could they? That would be much too honest. And so Muslims, migrants, and transgender people became daily distractions to fill tabloid space.</p>
268	Transgender people are also protected under the EQUALITY ACT 2010. This legislation stops people who've undergone "gender reassignment" from being discriminated against by employers, organizations, and services. This essentially means that someone can't bar you from using the correct public toilets or changing rooms.
276	<p>Some random white, cisgender, straight, nondisabled man is always quick to let you know on social media that they are suffering too.</p> <p>I always say, "Of course, and I'm sorry to hear that, but you aren't suffering because you're straight, white, cisgender, and male." He isn't getting wolf whistles; he isn't being called "tr* nny" or "f* gg* t"; he can use every bathroom in every building with ease. Mental health, for instance, doesn't discriminate, but a Black trans woman has to deal with mental health issues on top of (and because of) transphobia, racism, and misogyny. I'd have thought that would be obvious.</p>
289	<p>Q. HOW DO I TRANSITION WITHOUT MY PARENTS FINDING OUT? I STILL LIVE WITH THEM, AND I KNOW MY TEACHERS/ CLASSMATES ARE ACCEPTING, BUT EVERY STEP I MAKE IN THAT DIRECTION FEELS TERRIFYING.</p> <p>The good news is you have your WHOLE LIFE to figure all this out and redefine your relationship with your parents.</p>
292	Well, I have a chihuahua, but he is unlikely to come out as gender nonconforming, because gender is a SOCIAL CONSTRUCT. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to parenting a gender-nonconforming child, because no two trans people are the same. There isn't one way to be transgender. It's worth bearing in mind that every trans and/ or nonbinary adult was a trans or nonbinary child.
296	<p>Do follow transgender adults on social media: we are out there living our lives. There are also online support groups for parents of trans youth. You are certainly not alone. Just think: you're now in the exact same position as Cher and Charlize Theron, so that's pretty cool.</p> <p>...Research shows that children have a very fixed notion of their gender from as young as three years old and also that their identity exists prior to any sort of social transition.* An earlier study showed that validating or affirming your child's gender preferences is better for their well-being than denying them.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	4
Bitch	3
Cock	1
Piss	1
Pussy	1
Queer	17
Shit	3



Figure 1



Figure 2