



## Two Boys Kissing

*David Levithan*

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## **Two Boys Kissing** David Levithan

Seventeen-year-olds Craig and Harry are trying to set a new Guinness World Record for kissing.

Around them, Ryan and Avery are falling in love, Neil and Peter are falling out of love, and Cooper might be somewhere, but he is also, dangerously, nowhere.

Narrated, Greek-chorus style, by the generation of gay men lost to AIDS, this novel is a thematic companion to David Levithan's groundbreaking *Boy Meets Boy*, which celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2013.

*Two Boys Kissing* is trademark Levithan: warm, sharp and real. It is also something new and completely extraordinary.

## **Two Boys Kissing Details**

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Author : David Levithan

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# From Reader Review Two Boys Kissing for online ebook

## Elyse says

This paperback has been sitting on my shelf for years.

I didn't know it would be 'that' **\*\*amazing\*\***.

I was almost shocked by the brilliance of what David Levithan created. SO EXCEPTIONAL!!!!

This novel - based on several true stories is phenomenally 'timeless' —a young adult LGBT \*classic\*.

A tribute to the past- present - and - future!

A 'must' read to get the magnitude of this book's power on our lives!!!!

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## Bianca says

### OMG! OMG! OMG!

This book ...

How do I convey how good this book is, when I'm shouting expletives in my head- the kinds that express incredulity at having one's mind blown away. I'm also very sleep deprived, thanks to staying up late to finish it. So, bear with me.

I was browsing through 700+ books on my Kindle, to see if anything jumps at me, hoping for a book that wasn't blah. Honestly, I couldn't remember why I bought this book, especially since I had been thinking "I've about had enough of reading books about gay men ..." (to clarify, I've nothing against gay people, I just realised there are a lot of books with male gay characters and very few with lesbians and the feminist in me has an issue with it, as in not even the females in the gay community have equal representation etc. Don't mind me.)

I thought I'll just read a little bit and decide quickly if I continue or not. I was entrapped from the very beginning.

The writing is out of this world. Every single sentence. Every single phrase. Nothing is superfluous. The voice and the structure blew me away. You see, there's an omniscient narrator representing the collective of gay men who'd passed away due to AIDS. They're looking at the younger gay generation - the Internet generation - contemplating, comparing, contrasting, advising from above. You see, they'd been through a lot, they had it rougher; things have improved, after all, two boys are kissing on a high school lawn, trying to beat the world record for the longest kiss and it's quite the record - *thirty-two hours, twelve minutes and ten seconds*.

While things have improved, it's not all smooth sailing for the gay teenagers. We get an appreciation of the type of hurdles encountered via several characters' stories.

The two boys kissing used to be a couple but they broke it off choosing to be just friends. Harry Ramirez is out, his parents are very supportive. Craig Cole has not come out to his parents yet.

Then there's Tariq, a black gay teenager, who loves to dance. He was bashed one night, so he's a bit

traumatised.

Then there are the pink-haired boy, Avery, and the blue-haired boy, Ryan, who hit it off at a gay prom. Avery is a boy born in the wrong body.

The saddest and most heartwrenching story is that of Cooper, who is in the closet, spends numerous hours trawling the Internet and the sex apps, pretending to be different people - characters, messing with people. He feels empty, lonely and he loathes himself.

Levithan paints a pretty complex picture of what it is to be gay these days (well, the story is set in the 2013), especially for those living in a small town. He's gay himself so he knows what he's talking about. He also knows what the previous generations had to endure.

This is a beautifully crafted, original novel.

I'm not American, I'm not a gay teenager, I had absolutely nothing in common with anything or anyone in this novel. Great writing makes one empathise, understand and learn. Levithan accomplished to do that and more.

As far as I'm concerned *Two Boys Kissing* was PERFECT. Dare I say a masterpiece? Can we say that about a YA contemporary novel? I don't care. This is going straight to my *Favourites Shelf*.

What a novel!

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## Louisa says

I'd give this book a standing ovation if I could. Absolutely beautiful, life-affirming, and a story so needed amidst today's changing viewpoints on LGBT rights.

The cover and the title pretty much say it all. *Two Boys Kissing* runs the gamut of eight "main" characters - ex-boyfriends Craig and Harry aiming to break the Guinness World Record for longest kiss; Tariq, quasi-inspiration of the big kiss after getting beaten up by haters and staunch supporter of their challenge; steady couple Neil and Peter; pink-haired Avery born in a girl's body; blue-haired Ryan, the new boy Avery meets and boyfriend in the making; and Cooper, depressed by his identity and unable to live under the eventual weight of his family's disapproval. The reader experiences what it's like to be gay in America from several angles. It's both extremely hopeful and sad.

The writing is also as gorgeous and raw as ever, peppered with quotes like these:

*We gather the things we learned, and they don't nearly add up to fill the space of a life. You will miss the taste of Froot Loops. You will miss the sound of traffic. You will miss your back against his. You will miss him stealing the sheets.*

*Do not ignore these things.*

People could not be reading this at a better time. Who can forget the Supreme Court's DOMA decision

earlier in the year? I had the privilege of watching the D.C. Gay Pride Parade this June, and was totally overwhelmed in a fantastic way. Witnessing men openly celebrate their love for other men, women for women, etc. without fear of being lynched was truly lovely. But even as we celebrate a new age of same-sex rights, it's still worth knowing how "taboo" it is to certain people or cultures - Russia, for example, or even my own country, where almost no recognition is given to same-sex couples, and the conservative Asian mindset prevails.

David Levithan has long been one of my favourite YA authors, even when I know, subconsciously, that he writes somewhat pretentiously. *Two Boys Kissing* feels a little preachy at times, too. And it's narrated by a Greek chorus of gay men who succumbed to AIDS many years ago. I can see readers being potentially put off by these factors. Personally, I don't see how they should dissuade one from reading what will probably become a defining novel in LGBT and YA literature. D Lev. himself is a gay man who wrote *Boy Meets Boy* just ten years ago, but realising how far LGBT rights have progressed since then is a revelation unto itself.

There is always hope for a world in which one of my close friends can be open about his sexual identity without facing recrimination from his friends or family. I choose to believe it'll happen someday. If books like Levithan's could change the world, what a time to be alive.

P.S. Check out *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson* and *The Realm of Possibility* if you haven't either! Goddamn it, D Lev, you're good.

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## Debbie says

### Pogo Stick Time!!

Well, I'm bouncing high on my pogo stick again! Wowser! Is this ever fun! If it hadn't been for a couple of friends who went cuckoo over this book, I never in a million years would have picked it up.

First, it's YA. I do like some YA, but if you line up some fiction titles, I'll almost always choose the literary or contemporary books. Often the language in YA novels is just so plain. And if it's topical, it runs the risk of being a message book that's pushing its agenda in all caps.

Second, oh god do I hate the title, which sounds like it might be boy porn (it absolutely is not porn!). Why would I be interested in a book about boys kissing? I'm female and as old as a grandma.

Third, the provocative cover isn't any better. Yep, we see two boys kissing. Yep, I get it. So all three of these factors made me so, so wary. But as I said, friends just raved about it, friends who know my taste in books. So, gulp, I'll try it, but I'm not believing for a second that I'll like anything about it.

Wrong! I was mesmerized by this short book as soon as I started reading. What a masterpiece! The book is about—guess what—two boys who are standing on the lawn in front of their school, attached at the mouth, trying to break the world record for the longest kiss.

To break the record, they have to kiss for 32 hours straight, no bathroom breaks (which was the part that seemed particularly cruel to me). So believe it or not, this is a suspense novel. Will they be able to do it? I found myself almost sick to my stomach with worry, as each of them go through their personal hell in trying

to pull this off—leg pain, pee, dehydration, total fatigue, mental distress. They have a crowd that grows, including a group of protesters who I worried would wreak havoc. The event has gone viral on social media so there is a huge Internet audience.

But it's not just about the kiss. There's a Greek chorus of men who died from AIDS and who are talking to them (though of course the boys don't hear them), imparting their wisdom, comparing what life was like for gay men in the 1980s and 90s. The structure of the book is just brilliant—and unique. I would say this might be one of the few message books that totally worked for me. The message is not subtle (and preachy hardly ever works for me) but it's emotional in a way that just grabbed me and wouldn't let go.

Meanwhile, there are six other gay boys, all struggling with their sexuality. Some are still in the closet, and their stories were hard to hear. But wait, there's also the horror of attacks from homophobes, some brutal, and they were really hard to hear too. Each character is well drawn, sympathetic, and unique. I'm so excited, I'd love to say what's going on with each of them, but I'll resist so that you can dig in yourself. The dead men watch over and talk to all these characters as well.

I just wanna gush, I just do. To me this book was like a symphony. It jumped from character to character with ease, like it was zeroing in on each person playing his soulful solo in an orchestra. The Greek chorus in the background pulled the voices all together, so even though we heard them individually, we heard them as a whole too. The kissing boys were the focal point and the story always came back to them. I don't think I'm explaining this very well. Just believe me when I say this was one powerful song that I couldn't get enough of. I was on my pogo stick, weaving my way through the orchestra, smiling as I bounced.

The plot was unique as all get out, and the characters were vivid, complex, real, and so likeable. Oh, and don't let me forget to mention that the writing is fantastic. The sentences are simple, but the narrative comes across with power. Naysayers might complain that the language is a little pretentious, precious, or preachy, but to me it was absorbing and added to rather than subtracted from the story.

I have one teensy-weensy complaint, and that was that at first it was hard to keep track of the characters. It's a short book so they were introduced fast, and it took me a bit to get my bearings and remember who was who. Minor complaint, though, very minor. The getting-my-bearings part didn't last long.

This book is a must-read for any gay or trans teenager or adult. The gay men of the past make up this nurturing, wise group that is gently nudging and hugging the gays of today. There's so much insight into what it's like for a gay person, it's unbelievable. Levithan made me feel like I was walking in the characters' shoes. I was rooting for every one of them to survive and find happiness.

But for sure this book's audience is not just the gay community. It's a work of art that any lover of good literature will appreciate. Levithan is a master storyteller. This goes on my Best Reads of 2018 shelf. Highly recommended!

P.S. Thanks, Bianca, for this great recommendation!

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**Virginia Ronan ♥ Herondale ♥ says**

*"Love is so painful, how could you ever wish it on anybody?  
And love is so essential, how could you ever stand in its way?"*

Oh my! **\*deep sigh\*** How am I even supposed to write a review about this wonderful piece of literature? I'll try... Of course I'll try, but I'm pretty certain it will be more than just tough to describe my deep love for this wonderful book!

**"Two Boys Kissing"** hit me right in the heart and triggered all those horrible and amazing feels and if I'm entirely honest I still don't know how to deal with them. I usually try my very best to either hide them away or to keep them really close to my frail heart, but while I read this book I kind of failed to do both...

*"Our happiness had defiance, and our happiness had fear. Sometimes there was anonymity, and sometimes you were surrounded by friends and friends of friends. Either way, you were connected. By your desires. By your defiance. By the simple, complicated fact of who you were."*

There's something about the narration that makes it impossible to escape your emotions. It's intense, it's haunting, it's honest and it hit me so damn hard I sometimes found myself faced with the inability to take a deep and necessary breath. There is so much truth in this 196 pages book and if you're not prepared for it, it hits you like a truck and leaves you hurting on the road.

Well, I certainly wasn't ready for it and about halfway in I found myself crying and gasping without any particular reason. There would be a paragraph that resonated with me, or a situation where a character did something that brought tears to my eyes.

*"You need to love him. I don't care who you thought he was, or who you want him to be, you need to love him exactly as he is because your son is a remarkable human being. You have to understand that."*

Bless Tariq and Mr. Bellamy! I loved those two side characters so damn much!! They are such amazing and kind human beings! They deserve the world and even more!!! <333 And the narration!!! Those many gay men that came before, the generation that died of AIDS because it was so unknown and no one dared to do research. To find a cure... So many people that could have helped them, yet they were too afraid to do anything because they were scared they'd get sick as well...

*"We are rarely unanimous about anything. Some of us loved. Some of us couldn't. Some of us were loved. Some of us weren't. Some of us never understood what the fuss was about. Some of us wanted it so badly that we died trying. Some of us swear we died of heartbreak, not AIDS."*

That first generation that had to fight for everything! Either be out and live with the consequences this entailed or stay in the closet and try to live a secret life. As much as it hurts me to say this, I still think that not a lot has changed. Sure, there are people that are openly gay and live their lives, but there are still so many who live in the darkness. So many people that don't dare to show who they truly are because they are afraid their families might shun them if they knew.

Acceptance is something we all crave for. Acceptance and love... And the only people who can take that away from us are the ones who are closest to us. The ones we should trust more than anyone else, yet at the same time they are also the only ones that have the power to destroy us by simply not accepting who we are.

*"In the interest of self-preservation, it is sometimes best to keep something back, to keep something hidden. But there usually comes a moment - and Neil is hitting his now - when you don't want self-preservation to define who you are, or who your family is. Truces may stop the battles, but part of you will always feel like you're at war."*

To come out to your loved ones is still a leap of faith. Even in our “modern times”. No matter how advanced and open-minded our society has become, there are still people who would tolerate the LGBTQ+ community, maybe even support it to some degree, but still would feel more than just a little shocked and negative if their own child would come out to them.

It are people like that who make it so damn hard to love yourself for who you are. It are people like that who force you to stay in the closet. Don't preach water and drink wine! (And yes, I won't even talk about the people that still don't accept the LGBTQ+ community and are homophobic af... Just not worth it. \*shakes head\*) I think all told, there's still a lot of work ahead of us and it are books like **“Two Boys Kissing”** that can change the world. If enough people read it, if those in the closet read it, they might take heart from it and feel better about themselves. They don't have to come out, but to accept yourself with all your insecurities and flaws, with all your amazing qualities; well this is the first step to being accepted by others. Some people might even surprise you. If you don't try you'll never know. ;-)

*“Our kisses were seismic. When seen by the wrong person, they could destroy us. When shared with the right person, they had the power of confirmation, the force of destiny.”*

Share yourself with the right person and always try to be who you truly are! Even if it doesn't seem possible right now. There will come a day and you'll know when it's there. XD And even if this day never comes, know that you are accepted, that you are loved and that you are perfect just the way you are!!! <333

### **Conclusion:**

This is an amazing story and everyone should read it. Some of us will love it because it captures the LGBTQ+ community so well and others might be taught a little bit more acceptance and tolerance while reading the book. ;-)

Either way, **“Two Boys Kissing”** will cause you to think and feel!  
Don't pass up on this opportunity, embrace it! XD

Thank you for this amazing book, David! I hope many other people will read it too! =)

**HAPPY PRIDE MONTH TO YOU ALL!!! <333**

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### **Melanie says**

Loved it! I loved that the story was narrated by gay men who have passed away. It gives the story so much extra meaning.

Here are some quotes that, for me, packed a punch:

“\*\*\*\*\* fell to the ground, remembered someone telling him to curl up, to protect himself that way. They were laughing now, enjoying it, thrilled by it. He couldn't even yell for help, because the only sounds he could make were ones he'd never heard before, a wailing, guttural acknowledgement of the sudden, intense pain as they punched and they kicked, laughing their faggots at him as they broke his ribs.”

(I left the character's name out in case you haven't read the book yet.)



"The first sentence of the truth is always the hardest. Each of us had a first sentence, and most of us found the strength to say it out loud to someone who deserved to hear it. What we hoped, and what we found, was that the second sentence of the truth is always easier than the first, and the third sentence is even easier than that. Suddenly you are speaking the truth in paragraphs, in pages. The fear, the nervousness, is still there, but it is joined by a new confidence. All along, you've used the first sentence as a lock. But now you find that it's the key."

(How true in anyone's life or circumstances. Also, no one should have to be afraid to tell people who they love. Hopefully that day will come.)

"Not everything needs to be said at once. Sharing truth is not the kind of gift that comes in wrapping paper - ripped open at once and, there, you're done. No, this is a gift that must be unfolded. It is enough to start the telling. It's enough to have the beginning and feel like it's a beginning."

(Here the author is talking about first meeting a potential partner in life. I had to kind of chuckle cuz I am reminded of people you first meet, whether it's potential lovers, friends, or even strangers who give you their life story when all that's necessary is a hello, nice to meet you.....)

"One of the kids who asks to pitch in is eleven years old. His name is Max, and his dad brought him to see this. Max is a marvel to us. He will never have to come out because he will never have been kept in. Even though he has a mom and a dad, they made sure from the beginning to tell him that it didn't have to be a mom and a dad. It could be a mom and a mom, a dad and a dad, just a mom, or just a dad. When Max's early affections become clear, he didn't think twice about them. He doesn't see it as defining him. It is just a part of his definition."

"Some of our parents were always on our side. Some of our parents chose to banish us rather than see us for who we were. And some of our parents, when they found out we were sick, stopped being dragons and became dragonslayers instead. Sometimes that's what it takes - the final battle. But it should take much, much less than that."

"The minute you stop talking about individuals and start talking about a group, your judgement has a flaw in it."

(How true is that sentence in the world we live in today especially!)

I am not always a fan of YA but this one is great!!

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## Emily May says

*We think of the boys we kissed, the boys we screwed, the boys we loved, the boys who didn't love us back, the boys who were with us at the end, the boys who were with us beyond the end. Love is so painful, how could you ever wish it on anybody? And love is so essential, how could you ever stand in its way?*

### **The Good**

This kind of book is still very much needed. What the blurb doesn't tell you is that this feels like several short stories woven into one, all of them surrounding the theme of gay teenage boys coming out, having relationships with other boys, and coming to terms with who they are. The central plot of the two boys participating in a kissathon is really only one small part of this book, the rest is built around it.

There are some beautifully written passages that are brimming with genuine emotion. It was a quick read and I breezed through the individual stories of young men dealing with families who wouldn't accept them, online hookup sites, and first love.

What I like most about David Levithan and what makes me want to check out his books every time - even when some didn't work for me in the past - is his experimental style. He never writes the same style of book. He never attempts to fit in with trends that are taking over the market. He hits you with something unique and surprising, if often depressing, every single time. And once again he has delivered something strange and completely different - a chorus of narrators who are the generation of gay men that have died from AIDs.

### **The Bad**

Sadly, this is one of those cases where the style of narration just didn't work for me. The "voice" of the AIDs victims was exhausting and sometimes stopped me from fully engaging with the individual stories, especially when the novelty factor ran out. Sometimes experimental styles get it just right - as I believe Levithan did with *The Lover's Dictionary* - but this one wasn't doing it for me. I also found some of the victims' monologue to be repetitive.

### **The Ugly**

My face during some of the more emotional parts of this book.

Whatever I may say about it, this book is very relevant and some of the stories are incredibly sad and/or moving. I recommend *Two Boys Kissing* but with some hesitation. How much do you enjoy experimental writing styles that offer something completely different and totally weird? If your answer is "a lot", then this could be your next favourite book.

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## **juan carlos says**

SOY GAY Y SOY FELIZ SIÉNDOLO :)

TARDE 2 SEMANAS EN LEER ESTE LIBRO, POR QUE NO ESTABA BIEN EMOCIONALMENTE, PERO AHORA QUE LO HE ACABADO, SE QUE ERA EL LIBRO INDICADO PARA SALIR ADELANTE.

Este libro es un muestreo de voces y emociones. Un compendio de alegrías, desesperaciones y tristezas. Dos chicos besándose es una monografía y descripción perfecta de la belleza de la diversidad, la naturalidad y el amor.

DAVID LEVITHAN ES UN GENIO Y GRAN ESCRITOR.

¿PARA QUÉ LEER DOS CHICOS BESÁNDOSE?

1. El tema de la literatura juvenil, esta muy bien tratado por el escritor, usa frases coloquiales y matices reales de la vida de cualquier chico homosexual.
  2. La manera en que plasma el tema de la homofobia y la critica es creíble y muy bien sustentada.
  3. la narrativa es original, ya que es la primera novela que se narra a través de varias voces.
  4. El tema del rechazo, la aceptación de padres, es creíble y te identificas.
  5. Las frases de gritar y decir SOY GAY, en este libro te marcan profundamente.
  6. El final es esperanzador y lleno de realidad. BUSCA SIEMPRE VIVIR PARA CONOCER TU SER DEL FUTURO, gracias David Levithan, era la frase que necesitaba escuchar en este momento de mi vida.
  7. El tema del significado del amor, la confianza y el beso, es tratado por el autor de una manera gigantescamente creativa y llena de frases llegadoras.
  8. La muerte en este libro, es una idea muy bien planteada y sensibiliza al lector.
- 

## Kai says

*“Things are not magical because they've been conjured for us by some outside force. They are magical because we create them.”*

At first, I struggled to get into this and I put it down twice before it kept me reading. The most irritating thing about it and the only thing that bothered me was the first-person-plural narrative. It somehow made everything nostalgic and sentimental, which pulled me down at first. Another thing I struggled with was the many main characters!

I think the thing I liked the most about *Two Boys Kissing* is the way it ends. You do not really know what is going to happen next, but you do know that every one of these characters carries on living their life. There are so many open questions but I think this is the first time that I don't need them to be answered.

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## Melanie says

See more reviews at YA Midnight Reads

**Thank you Text Publishing Australia for sending me this copy. No compensation was given or taken to alter this review.**

We were once like you, only our world wasn't like yours. You have no idea how close to death you came. A generation or two earlier, you might be here with us.

We resent you. You astonish us.

I have never read a GLBT book in my life. I have never had an opinion on gay people. I have never needed to. I have never really thought about gay people. I have never. So I thought it was time to read a GLBT book. I decided to see what my opinion on gay people would be. I thought what it would be like to have an

opinion. I have read *Two Boys Kissing* and I fell in love with it. It's unconditionally relevant and wistful. Hopeful and full of meaning. This is my first David Levithan book. This is my first GLBT novel. And this will not be my last.

The narrative view-point of *Two Boys Kissing* is not something that I have come across before. It's the voice of hundreds of dead gay teens, who died out from AIDs. Unlike other readers who took some time to grow to love this narration, I connected with it instantly. The included quote at the top is an example of what I mean. The inclusive pronoun, 'we', made this book even more heartbreakingly beautiful than ever. There are scenes of urgency, rage and pure joy, and I could feel these emotions so vividly thanks to the narration which clearly took a large advantage. Trust me people, they don't sound like a mob of zombies.

What makes *Two Boys Kissing* such an imperative read for basically everyone, is that it follows the stories of different gay teens in different relationship statuses. Craig and Harry don't care what other people think, they may not necessarily be a couple anymore but they are planning to set a new record for the longest kiss. In front of their school. Peter and Neil have been a couple for a while now, but there are terms to be met and hidden facts to be faced. There's Avery and Ryan who have only just met, and don't know what to do next. But then there's Cooper. Alone. Confused. Falling from reality. Not caring anymore. All these boys have a story worth sharing, all share their situations. All share how their friends and families deal with the new facts that; Craig, Harry, Avery, Ryan, Cooper, Neil and Peter are gay. I surprised myself, by loving every single character David Levithan placed forward, each and every single one of them felt genuine. I could feel their pain, anger, hope and love. *Two Boys Kissing* ached with its rawness.

There are messages here to realise. David Levithan did not write this novel for the sake of just writing it. He wrote it to the world. He wrote it to gay males, more importantly. *Two Boys Kissing* is about falling in and out of love. Embracing and hiding from the truth. Fighting and cowering from families and friends. *Two Boys Kissing* may just be following a few days of a few people's lives, but the way it's addressed and presented is so ground shaking.

All in all, *Two Boys Kissing* is phenomenal. Beautiful. And I highly recommend it. Everything about this novel was authentic and moving.

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## **Nancy says**

### **Cross-posted at Shelf Inflicted and at Outlaw Reviews**

Don't let the provocative cover stop you from picking up this book. It is about two boys, Craig and Harry, who are still good friends, but no longer together, locking lips to break the world's record for the longest kiss.

*Enough time had gone by that when they started kissing again, the electricity was gone, replaced by something closer to architecture. They were kissing with a purpose, but the purpose wasn't them; it was the kiss itself. They weren't using the kiss to keep their love alive, but were using their friendship to keep the kiss alive. First for minutes. Then for hours.*

Peter and Neil are an established couple whose kisses may not be nearly as intense, but are no less

meaningful.

*Nobody is watching as Peter and Neil kiss. It is just a quick kiss as they leave the IHOP, before they head home. It is a syrupy kiss, a buttery kiss. It is a kiss with nothing to prove. They don't worry about who might see, who might pass by. They're not thinking about anyone but themselves, and even that feels like an afterthought. It is just a part of who they are together, something that they do.*

Avery, the boy with pink hair who the world thinks is a girl, and Ryan, are dealing with the anxiety that is common in all new relationships.

*It is not as simple as Ryan looking at Avery and feeling they've known each other forever. In fact, it doesn't feel like that at all. Ryan feels like he is just getting to know Avery, and that getting to know Avery isn't going to be like getting to know anyone else he's ever gotten to know.*

Cooper is not in a relationship at all. He struggles with his loneliness, spending time on his computer texting strangers and having difficulty with parents who cannot accept him as he is.

*His mind is on fire now, and it will be hours until it cools itself back into the right temperature for sleep. He is angry at his father, angry at his mother, but mostly he's come to feel that all this was inevitable, that he was born to be a boy who must sleep in his car, that there was no way he was going to make it through high school without being caught. He feels he's been soured by his own desires, squandered by his own impulses. He despises himself, and that is the flame that sets his mind on fire.*

Even though this was a fast and easy read, this is a powerful, moving, beautiful story that should be read by everyone. It deals with the past and present. It explores the lives, loves and struggles of a group of teenagers. It shows that as cruel and mean-spirited as people can be, they can also be kind, supportive and generous.

I'll admit I was reluctant to read this book because of the unusual narration. Told by the voices of men who lost their lives to AIDS, I saw my friend Mark's ghost among them, observing the lives of boys who share some similarities but in many ways are living a very different kind of life than he was.

*We did not have the Internet, but we had a network. We did not have websites, but we had sites where we wove our web. You could see it most in the cities. Even someone as young as Cooper, as young as Tariq, could find it. Piers and coffee shops. Sports in the park, and bookstores where Wilde, Whitman, and Baldwin reigned as bastard kings. These were the safe harbors, even when we feared that being too open meant we were opening ourselves to attack. Our happiness had defiance, and our happiness had fear. Sometimes there was anonymity, and*

*sometimes you were surrounded by friends and friends of friends. Either way, you were connected. By your desires. By your defiance. By the simple, complicated fact of who you were.*

Mark would have been ecstatic that gays now have the right to marry in the US, but he would have lamented the loss of all the clubs and bookstores that closed once Internet changed the world. He worked in the computer industry and would have adapted, though. He would have embraced the chat sites and discovered that his social life would be as active as it was when he was frequenting the clubs. The easy access to all kinds of books, more than the stores ever stocked, would have made him happy too. He probably would have even stopped subscribing to those porny magazines I had to pick up from all over the apartment just before my mom dropped by.

Minor complaints aside, I am sad that Mark died so young and missed so much. He was always out and proud, but even he would have appreciated how far we've come in spite of all the problems that still exist.

He would have loved this book. Even though it made me cry, it touched me deeply. It is full of love, hope and wisdom. As soon as I return the book to the library, I'm going to buy copies to push on other people.

Very highly recommended.

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## **Esil says**

What an unfortunate cover and title for this fabulously original book.

Looking at the cover, you would think this is a YA cheesy gay romance. Wrong!

Sure, there's a bit of YA gay romance. But *Two Boys Kissing* is so much more. Where to start? The narrators are the collective voice of men who died of AIDS two generations ago. From a unique omniscient perspective, they tell the contemporary story of a few LGBT teenage boys. Two of them are trying to break the world record for the longest kiss. They are kissing on the front lawn of their high school, and the narrative takes place over the many challenging hours of their kiss.

Our narrators tell us about the two boys kissing and a few other teenage boys. They dwell on how things have changed. They dwell on how it can still be really hard to be a gay teenager. These are ordinary teenagers — goofy, whip smart, looking for love, craving parental approval, scared of bullies and wishing they weren't, and wishing even more that there were no bullies...

There's a bit of humour, there's some heartbreak, there's some discomfort in trying to imagine the agony of sustaining a kiss for so long and there's lots of wisdom.

Ok. I'm failing miserably at doing justice to this beautiful original book.

But I'm gushing. My faith in the power of fiction is renewed. I was especially blown away by the beautiful collective narrative voice. I feel propelled out of a nasty fiction reading slump.

Thanks to Debbie for recommending this one and her fabulous far more articulate review.

Highly recommended!

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## Blythe says

**Actual rating is 4.5 stars --** We gather the things we learned, and they don't nearly add up to fill the space of a life. You will miss the taste of Froot Loops. You will miss the sound of traffic. You will miss your back against his. You will miss him stealing the sheets.

Do not ignore these things.

\*\* This review is not really a review concerning the book's merits so much as me rambling about how important I feel this book is for gay teens. My apologies.

*Two Boys Kissing* has officially cemented my love, appreciation, and respect for David Levithan. It has cemented my love, appreciation, and respect for him both as a person, from the standpoint of someone who is and always will be an active supporter of gay rights, and it has also cemented my love, appreciation, and respect for him as a writer, from the standpoint of a reader who is in a state of endless wonder and awe every time she picks up a novel of Levithan's.

However, as much as I found myself loving Levithan's previous novel, *Every Day*, I have to say that *Two Boys Kissing* is my absolute favorite work by him. *Two Boys Kissing* is important. *Two Boys Kissing* is gorgeous--stunning. *Two Boys Kissing* is poignant, and it's touching, and it's an utter charm. And it needs to be read.

The beginning may be rough for some readers--it was for me, however slightly. I initially found the narrative of gay men having lost their lives to AIDs at first odd, and to be honest, rather disconcerting. I found their use of "we" to note something, as well as their looking upon their lives and their deaths, irrevocably creepy at times. But as the novel progressed I grew to appreciate the originality of the narrative, and can say with absolute certainty that *Two Boys Kissing* would in no way bear the same amount of poignancy had it not been narrated by, as the synopsis put it, a Greek Chorus of the generation of gay men lost to AIDs.

Levithan tackles multiple perspectives throughout the course of *Two Boys Kissing*--some more interesting than others, some more emotional, but all utterly captivating and spellbinding. Each perspective follows a gay teenager and their daily plights being just that--a gay teen, in a world where such a thing is so deeply frowned upon by far too many. This is a problem so many gay teens face today: their struggle, seeing such contempt towards homosexuals as a whole almost every time they turn on the television, turn on the radio, go on the internet. Their hesitation to be who they are and embrace it, in fear of disappointing or even shaming their own parents, who are supposed to love them regardless. Their fear of being shunned and ignored eternally by their friends, with whom yesterday they were friendlier than ever, all for being who they are.

This is what David Levithan depicts with *Two Boys Kissing*, sometimes subtly, sometimes not. With one perspective, the fear of opening yourself up to others and welcoming yourself to love, in the fear that your partner may not accept you for who you are fully. Another perspective, depicting the fear of opening yourself up to your parents, and the everlasting fear of how they may react. And another, portraying the situation

every gay teen dreads most: your parents don't accept you for who you are. While one was lacking the depth that I feel could have made it have more of an impact, each of these perspectives is met with such beauty and emotion seeping through the pages that you can't help but feel that each of these teenagers--Harry, Craig, Cooper, Avery, Ryan, Neil, and Peter, are real people. And the fact of the matter is, they are.

The real-life parallels of these characters may not go by the names of the characters in the novel, but the undeniable fact is that people like the aforementioned characters do exist in real life, and their problems exist within each of those people, as well. Each of the problems the characters face in this novel are ones real teens, and even adults, face daily. But the thing is, they end up getting through it all, with support from friends. Support from family. Support from strangers. There will always be the haters. There will be the people who oppose what you stand for and make it a point to let you know. But then again, isn't there always? Among all of the valuable things to be understood while reading *Two Boys Kissing*, this much is true, and I feel is crucial for any gay teenagers living in the constant fear of disapproval, dereliction, or anything else: for every person to go out of their way to strike down everything you are, and everything you stand for, there will be ten people waiting there for you to help you restore the damage and build you up again. And that, in essence, is *Two Boys Kissing*.

To quote the Greek Chorus of the generation of gay men lost to AIDs that narrates this beautiful novel, please know that the above is true. Please, always keep these things in mind.

*Do not ignore these things.*

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## **Ari says**

[image error]

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## **Debra says**

"Love is so painful, how could you ever wish it on anybody? And Love is so essential, how could you ever stand in its way?"

I don't even know how to do this book justice - so I will simply say READ IT. Seriously, read it! This is a book I want to go out and tell everyone I know about!

“There is no reason that we should ever be ashamed of our bodies or ashamed of our love.”

I loved, loved, loved the narration of the book by the Greek Chorus of gay men who died of AIDS. It was simply beautiful and extremely well written. There were sections I went back and read again and again and then a third time. In this book seventeen-year-old former boyfriends, Harry and Craig attempt to beat the world record of kissing. While doing so, they face many issues and have many experiences together. All the while, other teens in this book are struggling with gender identity, acceptance, their parents learning they are gay, the relationships they have with others, and issues such as bullying and rejection. By the way, did I mention this book is based on true events? It is.

“That joy in discovering that the right person at the right time can open all the windows and unlock all the



doors.”

I opened this book and did not stop reading until the final page. I LOVED every single page of this book. Again, the writing is simply eloquent and poetic. This is a fast yet very moving book with various themes and the Author addresses the many issues his characters are facing with grace. I felt as if I were standing with the Chorus watching the events unfold. I read Leviathan before but not like this. I believe this is his swan song.

I choose to read this book for a book challenge. I had to pick a book that had been banned or had some controversy surrounding it. This book fit the controversy part. It has two teenage boys kissing on the cover and is about two seventeen-year old's attempting to get into the Guinness book of world records for kissing. This is a YA book, but some high schools have not carried this book, or have been asked not to offer it by parents. One of the concerns is the cover, the other is the fact that teens may be bullied for checking it out, and of course there is the issue of the book being about gay teens.

The Author had this to say in response:

“Even for the kids who don't feel comfortable taking it out of the library or buying it in the bookstore yet, they know it's there. They know they are represented. If you see that book in your library or in your bookstore or at your friend's house you know that there is part of you that belongs there, and is accepted. There is such power in that. I know there's worry about kids who might be ashamed of being seen with an 'out' book with an 'out' cover — but that is far outweighed by the kids who take pride in it, or find some sort of meaning through it.

As for challenges and censors: the book is called Two Boys Kissing. It is about two boys kissing. Why hide that? What good would that do? The people who are going to object to two boys kissing on the cover were going to object to the book from the moment I typed the first sentence. They can argue it all they want. They will always be wrong.”

-read more here <http://www.oif.ala.org/oif/?p=9325>

I've said it before and I will say it again, I love doing book challenges as they broaden my reading horizon and introduce me to books that I did not know existed or might not have picked up had it not been for the book challenge. So I challenge you to go out on a limb, and pick up this book, the writing is beautiful and evokes emotion.

2013 Named to the National Book Award Longlist

2014 A Lambda Literary Award Winner

2014 A Stonewall Honor Book

See more of my reviews at [www.openbookpost.com](http://www.openbookpost.com)

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**Shelby \*trains flying monkeys\* says**

This small little 196 page book packs more of a punch than some 800 page puppy squishers that I've read. Just beautiful.

**Freedom is also about what you will allow yourself to do.**

Craig and Henry: they are the two boys kissing. Going for the world's record longest kiss.

Peter and Neil: already a couple

Avery and Ryan: new to a relationship and trying to make their way

And Cooper-who feels so lost

Tariq. My favorite character in the whole book.

Just read this book.

**The first sentence of the truth is always the hardest. Each of us had a first sentence, and most of us found the strength to say it out loud to someone who deserved to hear it.**

**The phrase *rush to judgement* is a silly one. When it comes to judgement, most of us don't rush. We don't even have to leave the couch. Our judgement is so easy to reach for.**

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## **Jaidee says**

5 "poignant, wise, profound" stars !!

### **2017 Honorable Mention with High Distinction Read**

This is a YA masterpiece. I am so immensely moved by this novel. If you know a gay youth...buy this for him and kiss him and let him know that you care. If you want to understand what it means to be a gay youth read this book yourself and allow your heart to open, swell and if its like mine will explode with sadness, gladness, thankfulness and hope.

These are such genuine stories of a variety of young gay men living their lives, loving their loves and struggling against a world that at times hates them but more importantly also loves them and longs to have them participate fully in our society. Behind them there is the chorus of men that have died from Aids when in large part the world didn't care and allowed them to die. This still happens in other parts of the world but not to gay men but to women who are unable to have power over their bodies and are infected by men who refuse contraception who pass the disease onto their children. I digress but each and every one of us need the help and support of others.

I wish there was a similar book for young lesbians of color, bisexual youth with disabilities or impoverished trans youth. Perhaps there is and I hope to learn about them.

I am immensely grateful for this novel and the writing of Mr. Levithan and this book will be gifted and recommended to whomever I meet that needs affirmation or understanding.

Outstanding and beautiful !!

Uh oh here it comes...I know I know....this book inspired a small poem of my own:

KIss (inspired by David Levithan's Two Boys Kissing)

Mark Kissed Fatima (Suudlus)

Julia Kissed Roi (Bacio)

Tyrell Kissed Patrick (Poljub)

Stephanie Kissed Amanda (Busu)

I Kissed You (and melted) (Bo)

All Kisses Equal

All Kisses Wonderful

All Kisses Ridiculous

-Jaidee

Thank you for this gift of a novel Mr. Levithan !!

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### **Claudia Ramírez says**

OIGAN. ¿POR QUÉ NADIE ME INSISTIÓ MIL VECES QUE LEYERA A DAVID LEVITHAN?

Este libro es PRECIOSO. Lo amé con todo mi corazón, ¡y escuché el audiolibro narrado por el mismo autor!  
Y ay, todo fue tan bonito.

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### **Jeremy West says**

I just want to say that Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan was possibly the most beautiful book I've ever read. I can't describe to you the feelings it gives but I can tell you that it will open your eyes dramatically. This book will change you for the better after reading it. Causing you to be aware, cautious, caring, and loving to everyone around you. I seriously cannot wait to share this book with others.

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### **Lola says**

David Levithan has just become my new *coup de cœur* author. Every time I will find my heart aching for an LGBT book or a meaningful read, it's in *his* works that I will look forward to plunge myself. And there are so many books of his that I have not had the occasion to devour yet. *Yet*.

It's with a lingering sensation that I turned the last page. While this may be the kind of story that *needs* a certain conclusion to its plot (and you can feel it), I didn't want to let go of the endearing, realistic and remarkably well-developed and original characters that became so dear to me with every new page read.

I always thought that you couldn't love *every* character in a book at a same intensity level or some maybe not at all – and still think so – for they are all different and sharing various traits that may or may not appeal to you. It can also depend on the degree of connection and reliability you feel toward those characters in question. Nonetheless, it's with joy that I can announce that every character in this book felt utterly unforgettable to me and I like to think that they will not be the cause of you not enjoying the novel after all – if such thing happens. Of course, there are some that are very flawed: there is no 'perfect' being in this and that only made *Two Boys Kissing* look even more authentic. I have no negative comment to make regarding those elements.

There is one 'main' story inside this and three less prominent but still important ones that are linked in a way to the principal one. You can also see it as four short stories being connected to one another due to something they all have in common and with characters that are beautifully crafted and looking for something of most importance: love & self-discovery and acceptance.

I have to admit that I had read the blurb a while ago before starting this novel, and so had no idea who actually narrated the story. Although, throughout my read, I had these hypotheses: could they be guardian angels? A metaphor for hope, love and courage brought to life somehow? Dead relatives? At some point, I ran out of ideas and believed what prettied the writing and tone for me most, which worked well in the end. It is after reading the actual summary that I realized how I searched too far and deep when the answer was right in front of me. Nonetheless, my reading experience wasn't affected and I actually appreciated having the possibility to 'choose' my narrators. I felt the same while reading *Falling into Place* (a quite interesting book!)

This is not my first read by David Levithan, since I have devoured *Will Grayson*, *Will Grayson* sometime ago, but that is a book that he co-wrote with John Green and I was perhaps, somehow, too caught up in Green's words – because of how excited I was to be reading an LGBT book by him – to be astonished as I am now by Levithan's. Incidentally, regarding this novel, the author's note was absolutely perfect and so wonderfully honest! I feel like I am going to be amazed by this writer some more, if I continue reading his works. Which I will. For sure.

This was the loveliest of surprises I had this month - hum, that doesn't say much since I read it in December but I do mean it! - and would love for you to feel the same! If the story and plot don't end up making you react in any positive way, there are still good chances the writing and characters will. It is not a book for everyone, I agree, but it contains such...such – I am lost for words – marvellous ingredients that I cannot help but excitingly recommend it to you!

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