THIS IS A WELBECK CHILDREN'S BOOK

Published in 2020 by Welbeck Children's Books
An imprint of Welbeck Children's Limited, part of Welbeck Publishing Group
20 Mortimer Street London W1T 3JW

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-78312-550-0

Printed in Dubai

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Commissioning Editor: Bryony Davies
Art Editor: Deborah Vickers
Designer: Dani Lurie
Picture Researcher: Paul Langan
Production: Nicola Davey

With thanks to Ayo Babatope, Mohammed Barber, Alex Holdsworth, Ezra Lee Mullin, Mupela Mumba, Shelina and Dea Urovi.

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CLUES FROM THE PAST

Words such as "homosexual", "bisexual" and "transgender" are relatively recent terms, but that doesn't mean they describe anything new. LGBTQ+ people have existed throughout the ages, playing their part and making their mark in the world.

There is evidence of same-sex love in almost all ancient civilizations. The celebrated Greek conqueror Alexander the Great (356–323BCE) is widely believed to have been bisexual. The Roman emperor Hadrian (76–138CE) was so distraught when his male companion, Antinous, drowned that he named an Egyptian city Antinopolis in his memory. Sappho (c. 610–570BCE), who is considered the greatest female poet of the ancient world, wrote about her attraction to younger women. The word "lesbian" comes from the Greek island of Lesbos where Sappho was born.

LGBTQ+ themes also appear in myths. The ancient Greek god Zeus was so besotted with the Trojan prince Ganymede that he chose him to serve as his cupbearer on Mount Olympus, and he placed him amongst the stars as the constellation Aquarius. In India, ancient Hindu texts tell of gods and goddesses changing their gender and of same-sex encounters. In one Chinese myth, Emperor Ai from the Han Dynasty cut off the sleeve of his robe so he wouldn't disturb his male lover Dong Xian, who had fallen asleep on it. According to Japanese folklore, male same-sex love was introduced into the world by the gods Shinu no Hafuri and Ama no Hafuri.



IMAGES OF SAME-SEX AFFECTION WERE COMMON IN ANCIENT GREEK ART.

OUT OR NOT?

It's likely that people in the distant past didn't think about sexual identity in the same way as we do today. The issue was rarely discussed and certainly not in the language we use now – the first recorded use of the words "homosexual" and "heterosexual" wasn't until 1892, in an English translation of a German book about sexual practices called *Psychopathia Sexualis*. There are very few first-hand accounts of LGBTQ+ lives before the twentieth century, so we must always be very careful about describing the sexual identity of people who never actually "came out" or described themselves in these terms.



"SWEET MOTHER, I CANNOT WEAVE – SLENDER APHRODITE HAS OVERCOME ME WITH LONGING FOR A GIRL."

SAPPHO

ANNE LISTER

1791–1840



Living at a time when affluent women were expected to sit at home sewing or playing the piano, Anne Lister definitely didn't toe the line. She was a self-confident businesswoman, world traveller and mountaineer – and she shamelessly adored women. Lister kept a diary, often writing in code, describing her life and passions in great detail.

Lister was born in the Yorkshire town of Halifax, England. Her mother found it hard to cope with her daughter's tomboyish behaviour and sent her to boarding school. There, Lister fell passionately in love with another pupil, Eliza, with whom she shared an attic bedroom. Writing in what she thought was an unbreakable code made up of Greek and algebra symbols, she recorded her intense feelings in her diary. Lister later rejected Eliza, who was heartbroken and was eventually committed to a lunatic asylum.

In 1826, Lister inherited her uncle's estate at Shibden Hall. Dressing in unfashionable black clothes, she described herself as a "gentleman" and the locals came to know her as "Gentleman Jack". Lister became a competent businesswoman, but also an efficient seductress, recording her many conquests in great detail.

In time, Lister became besotted with a young woman called Mariana. When Mariana announced she was going to marry a wealthy widower, Lister was distraught. She gave vent to her rage in her diary: "She believed herself... over head and ears in love. Yet she sold her person to another."

> I LOVE, & ONLY LOVE, THE FAIRER SEX & THUS BELOVED BY THEM IN TURN, MY HEART REVOLTS FROM ANY OTHER LOVE THAN THEIRS.
>
> ANNE LISTER, 1821

After a string of flirtations, Lister turned her attention to an heiress called Ann Walker. Lister's feelings lacked the intensity of her passion for Mariana, but Ann had a fortune and would make an ideal "wife". Lister wanted to live with Ann at Shibden Hall like a married couple. When her proposal was accepted, Lister wrote in her diary, "I believe I shall succeed with her. If I do, I will try to make her happy."

The women's union created a scandal, but Lister was too thick-skinned to care what society thought. In 1838, the pair travelled to the Pyrenees Mountains in France, where Lister became the first person to officially climb Vignemale. The following year, they set off on a long tour of Europe. At the Black Sea in Russia, Lister developed a fever and died at the age of 49.

In the 1890s, Lister's relative, John Lister came across the diaries and partially decoded them – he was shocked at what he read. He hid them behind a wall panel – some historians believe he was gay and didn't want to draw attention to himself. Rediscovered in the 1930s, they were fully deciphered in 1988 and published as *I Know My Own Heart*.

Today Lister is an important figure and the subject of books and TV programmes. Her diaries reveal that she wasn't always a nice person. She could be controlling and selfish – but she was also completely at ease with her sexual identity. Lister knew she was different from what society expected of her, but she was unashamed of that difference. In an age when the word "lesbian" was not in use, Lister certainly had Pride.



ANNE'S HOME, SHIBDEN HALL

PERSECUTION BEFORE 1900



342CE

As Christianity flourishes in Europe, attitudes to same-sex relationships begin to harden. The late Roman Empire passes a law outlawing same-sex marriage.

529CE

The Byzantine emperor Justinian outlaws homosexuality (the Justinian Code). Homosexual acts are linked to adultery and as such are seen as sinful.

1102

The Catholic Council of London condemns homosexuality as a sin.

13TH CENTURY

Homosexuality is criminalized in much of Europe.

The great theologian St Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) makes it clear that homosexuality is an unnatural practice, since it does not lead to the birth of children.

1321

The poet Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) dies. His work *The Divine Comedy* describes the afterlife and the nine circles of hell, where those who commit sodomy are placed in the seventh circle because they have rejected the natural order of God.

1522

The Holy Roman Empire makes sodomy a crime punishable by death.

1533

The Buggery Act is passed by King Henry VIII, making sodomy a sin punishable by hanging. It becomes the basis of laws passed in British colonies, including colonial territories in America.

16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

The Spanish Inquisition is established to root out religious heresy and immoral behaviour by brutal means. Between 1570 and 1630, it holds hundreds of trials for sodomy and many people are executed.

1610

Virginia is the first US colony to make sodomy a crime, with the death penalty for offenders.

1625

Richard Cornish is hanged in Virginia. It is the first documented execution for sodomy in the American colonies.

1832

Homosexuality is criminalized in Russia, though it is rarely enforced.



1835

The last hangings for homosexuality take place in Britain.

1871

On the unification of Germany, "Paragraph 175" in the criminal code makes homosexuality between men a crime.

1885

Although the death penalty has been removed from the British penal code, the Criminal Law Amendment Act makes any homosexual activity between men a punishable crime.





SHAKING THINGS UP

Despite the horrors of Nazi oppression, the Second World War (1939–1945) offered LGBTQ+ people opportunities to meet like-minded individuals and to discover, and even embrace, who they were. Millions of men and women were thrown together in all-male or all-female environments, far away from the watchful eyes of judgemental family or neighbours. In this atmosphere, LGBTQ+ connections flourished more easily. Although homosexuality was still illegal in most countries, the authorities were more likely to turn a blind eye because their focus was on the war effort.

The war also turned gender roles upside down. With so many men away at war, women were permitted to take on roles traditionally filled by men, and in doing so they discovered a new sense of independence. In recruitment posters, women were shown looking strong and competent. And with men away from home, women relied more on each other for support, so sexual relationships were more likely to thrive.

After the war ended in 1945, life returned to normal in many ways. Men went back to their civilian jobs, women became housewives once again and the witch-hunts for LGBTQ+ people resumed. But something had changed. The sheer horror of the war had forced many people to think about society in a new way – there was a desire for a kinder, more tolerant world. Many of those who had found same-sex love were unwilling to return to their old lives, and they would play a part in the new organizations that were emerging.

> "WOULDN'T IT BE WONDERFUL IF ALL OUR LETTERS COULD BE PUBLISHED IN THE FUTURE IN A MORE ENLIGHTENED TIME. THEN ALL THE WORLD COULD SEE HOW IN LOVE WE ARE."
>
> LETTER FROM INFANTRYMAN GORDON BOWSHER TO GUNNER GILBERT BRADLEY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, DISCOVERED IN 2008



CHRISTINE JORGENSEN (1926–1989)

Born George Jorgensen Jr, Christine Jorgensen was America's first transgender celebrity. As a teenager, George felt trapped in the wrong body. After serving in the US army, they travelled to Copenhagen, Denmark, for hormone treatment and gender reassignment surgery – and returned as glamorous Christine. The American public was fascinated: "Ex-GI Becomes Blonde Beauty!" shouted one newspaper headline. Compared to the hostility that LGBTQ+ people usually received, Christine was treated with respect. She used her fame to raise trans awareness, and (in her own words) gave the sexual revolution "a good swift kick in the pants!"



WHY I HAVE PRIDE



Name
MUPELA MUMBA
Age
24
Identifies as
QUEER

Pride to me is being fearless. Being a young, black, female queer in society today is an incredible, scary and yet exciting experience, and you have to be completely fearless. Over the past few years I have been on an exploration of who I am and who I would like to be. It's difficult enough being a female in today's society – then there's being a black female in society. And then there's being a black queer female in society. That's a hard one to handle sometimes.

To be honest, from my personal experience, the LGBTQ+ community is not an easy one to navigate when you're first coming out as a person of colour. Initially, I didn't find a connection or relate to the community because people like me were rarely in the spotlight. Only a very small part of our community was acknowledged. I am lucky now that I discovered and can share in UK Black Pride. It provided me with a light of hope, telling me that I am beautiful the way I am.

In all honesty, my mother, being African, had a tough time understanding when I came out. It's not easy for parents of a traditional ethnic background to understand. Remember to love yourself even more during this stage. As a black female, coming out can be one of the most difficult stages in our lives. But we must stay strong and love ourselves harder than we ever have before.

> MY COMING OUT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE COMING OUT. IT FELT LIKE MORE LIKE I WAS ACCEPTING WHO I WAS BECOMING.

The story of black queers is an important one: we started this Pride movement, yet we don't acknowledge that, or see that enough, in today's society. I think it's important to speak about it more and show that our Pride truly does stand strong and shine.

Being a black female and queer, and coming to terms with accepting myself as that, isn't always easy. There are times I doubt myself but I know I'm still growing and I'm on a journey of self-discovery. Nothing is final: life changes, we change, we grow and evolve. Titles fade but our stories continue to develop. I have learnt that nothing has to be certain right now. What's important is to enjoy life and live the change I want to see.





The Stonewall Inn was a bar in New York's Greenwich Village where gay men, lesbians, transgender people and drag queens could relax and openly express themselves. At the time, it was very difficult for the LGBTQ+ community to do this – remember that even a man holding another man's hand in public could result in a prison sentence.

The New York police regularly raided gay bars looking for reasons to close them down. In the early hours of 28 June 1969, they raided the Stonewall Inn. The same thing had happened just three days earlier, and people were fed up with accepting this constant harassment. As usual, the police roughly pushed customers around and demanded to see their IDs. But things didn't go as planned for the police that night and events quickly got out of hand. As handcuffed customers were shoved outside and bundled into vans, a growing crowd began to throw objects at the police.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF?

José Sarria (1922–2013)
This drag performer and activist became the first openly gay American to run for political office in 1961.

Rita Mae Brown (born 1944)
An activist, feminist and author of the 1973 novel *Rubyfruit Jungle*, which shocked the world with its frank lesbian portrayal.

Ted Brown (born 1950)
An American-born British activist and member of the GLF, he founded Black Lesbians and Gays Against Media Homophobia.

Accounts vary as to what part different members of the LGBTQ+ community played, but some say that when a black lesbian called Stormé DeLarverie was thrown into a van, she yelled at bystanders to do something. Anger quickly spread and the crowd violently erupted: police vans were rocked, tyres were slashed and bottles and rocks were thrown at the police, who ended up barricading themselves into the Stonewall Inn.

The police were rescued by reinforcements that night, but it was not the end of the Stonewall uprising. For six more days and nights, people took to the streets in protest against police oppression and brutality. There was no turning back now: the LGBTQ+ community demanded equality.



SYLVIA RIVERA (1951–2002)

Sylvia Rivera, a Latin-American drag queen who helped mobilize the crowd at the Stonewall Riots, worked tirelessly for transgender rights. Sylvia had had a troubled childhood and had lived on the streets from the age of 11 until she was taken in by a group of drag queens. After the Stonewall Riots, she joined the newly formed Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and co-founded STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) with her friend Marsha P Johnson. Rivera's harsh life experiences gave her real empathy for those living on the margins of society. At the time, trans people struggled to find acceptance, even within the LGBTQ+ community.

SAY IT LOUD

The Stonewall Riots made one thing clear. Nothing could be changed without action, and LGBTQ+ activists would need to become more organized, more visible and a lot louder. In the years immediately following the riots, there was a sense of hope as a global movement took shape.

Immediately after the riots, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed in the US, calling for the sexual liberation of all people. It published a newspaper called *Come Out!* and organized meetings and demonstrations. A British branch of the GLF was formed in late 1970. It staged "gay days", festivals and protests, and attracted high-profile media attention.

Although the GLF later splintered into other groups, it set the agenda for what was needed: confrontation and direct action. Before 1970, few LGBTQ+ people had the courage to come out openly or to campaign publicly. They feared being disowned by their families, losing their jobs or being arrested. Now there was a call to find strength in numbers, to be unafraid and to take to the streets.

> "THE TIME HAS COME FOR US TO WALK IN THE SUNSHINE. WE DON'T HAVE TO ASK PERMISSION TO DO IT. HERE WE ARE!"
>
> ACTIVIST MARTHA SHELLEY, ADDRESSING A GAY POWER VIGIL IN NEW YORK, JULY 1969



JACKIE FORSTER (1926–1998)

One of the leading voices of LGBTQ+ rights in the 1970s and beyond was that of British actress and news reporter Jackie Forster. She famously came out as a lesbian at a 1969 gathering – "You're looking at a roaring dyke!" – inspiring many other LGBTQ+ people to step out of the shadows too. A founding member of the GLF, she joined the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) and took part in London's first Pride march in 1971. Forster frequently appeared on TV programmes to speak openly about her sexuality, and in 1972, helped to found *Sappho*, a lesbian magazine that ran until 1981.

NOT BAD, NOT MAD

In 1973, the Australian Medical Association changed its official view of homosexuality, no longer classing it as a mental illness or disorder. Two months later, the American Psychiatric Association followed suit. This was a landmark victory for LGBTQ+ rights and it helped to change attitudes. However, it was not until 2019 that being transgender was dropped from the World Health Organization's (WHO) list of mental disorders.