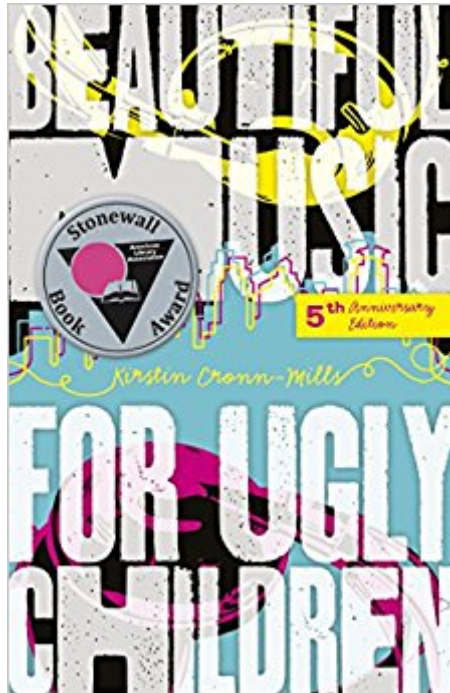




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Beautiful Music For Ugly Children



Synopsis

This is Beautiful Music for Ugly Children, on community radio 90.3, KZUK. Im Gabe. Welcome to my show." My birth name is Elizabeth, but Im a guy. Gabe. My parents think Ive gone crazy and the rest of the world is happy to agree with them, but I know Im right. Ive been a boy my whole life. When you think about it, Im like a record. Elizabeth is my A side, the song everybody knows, and Gabe is my B side not heard as often, but just as good. Its time to let my B side play. Winner of the 2014 Stonewall Book Award for Children's and Young Adult Literature. Praise: Every so often a book comes along that is so sharp, so moving, so real, and so good, you want to press it into everyones hands and say, Read this! READ THIS! Courtney Summers, author of Cracked Up to Be and This is Not a Test

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 600L (What's this?)

Paperback: 271 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 46 customer reviews

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Gr 8 Up-Elizabeth Williams knows he has always been a guy, and if he can only get through graduation in a few weeks, he can begin his new life as Gabe. He is transitioning, but his family refuses to acknowledge him, and his classmates bully him. The only person who supports him is his BFF, Paige, and, predictably, he has a crush on her but can't take a chance on ruining their friendship. Gabe is a music geek, and his ultra-cool, grandfatherly neighbor John, a former DJ, lands him a community radio show, Beautiful Music for Ugly Children. Gabe DJs as himself, and

after working up the courage to tell John, who is fine with him being a "triangle," they put together a show about A sides and B sides, which becomes popular with the Ugly Children Brigade fan club and a running theme in the book. But when Gabe has a date with one of his fans, and she recognizes him as Liz, word spreads and some fans drop out of the Facebook club, while others get violent. When John is critically hurt defending Gabe at an Ugly Children event, the offenders are arrested, John's long-lost daughter shows up, Gabe's parents have a change of heart, and Paige and Gabe may have a chance together. While this transgender coming-of-age tale wraps up a bit too quickly, the quirky relationship between Gabe and John and their shared music obsession elevates this story above the average problem novel. -Betty S. Evans, Missouri State University, Springfield

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Gabe has a secret. He is really Liz. Born a female, he is cautiously beginning his transition to male. Only his parents and his lifelong best friend, Paige, know. But when a girl at school, where he is callously called "that lesbo chick," discovers the truth and outs Gabe, things become difficult, if not downright dangerous. In the meantime, Gabe is a part-time DJ on the local community radio station, where his show, "Beautiful Music for Ugly Children," is fast becoming an underground hit. Will his fans reject him when they, too, discover the truth? What, as Gabe thinks in difficult circumstances, would Elvis do? Obviously, there are nuggets of humor in an otherwise serious story. Cronn-Mills's thoughtful book joins a small but growing body of literature that gives faces to this traditionally invisible minority. Despite a few incidents that require a willing suspension of disbelief, the story is a model of integrity, and Gabe is an always appealing character. Grades 9-12. --Michael Cart

What an excellent, inspiring read this book is. And in so many ways. Locking down everything with the poetry and ear-dance of music means the reader is in for a lyrical, thoughtful, and intelligently idealistic journey. Some people may not think there are kids out there with an eclectic and brilliantly appreciative connection to all music, but there are (I know some) and having our star of the show exhibit such depth was so wonderful and inspiring...start to finish. Oh, but this is a story about gender identity and transgender dysphoria, you say. Well, yes. But as all transgender kids will tell you, "I'm so much more than a person caught in the wrong body." The music orientation of this novel seriously makes that clear. There's a lot I'd like to write on all the issues "Beautiful Music for Ugly Children" brings up. I absolutely do not want to spoil this awesome book for anyone. I have

given it four stars and not five. I can't directly explain why except to say that I would have liked to see the understanding of maleness come out stronger in certain confrontational moments. Didn't have to be definitive or macho, but an awareness of what that piece of the puzzle necessitates is a very big deal in the world of boys. Mark my words, though, if you know people who are either interested in transgender issues or people who should be but aren't yet, this is a great starter book. I personally have to deal with the M2F side of the equation in my extended family, but I got so much out of Beautiful Music that I am going to give it to others in the family who aren't quite as able to understand these issues as they need to be. Lastly, just let me say, the writing here is superb. The storytelling first rate. Kirstin Cronn-Mills is a writer to follow. So, BUY THE BOOK and read it with gusto. You won't be sorry. If you're like me, you won't be able to put it down either.

As a trans man, I was amazed at how well the author wrote the main character. I could relate to so many of his experiences and thought patterns. This was the first chance I'd ever had to read a book whose main character was a trans man, and it was an amazing experience because the author took the time to put herself into a trans man's shoes before writing.

First off, the e-Book version was awkward on my iPhone. It looked better on my iPad. The intro of the book I liked and disliked. It is a bit slow, and full of song titles/musicians, and I reckon if you aren't a music nerd it would seem really dry. I do appreciate that as you're reading the beginning it seems the author carefully wrote it so that you couldn't tell whether or not the main character was male or female. Plot was pretty good, and I really love Gabe's connection with his radio audience. Some parts are a bit on the cheesy side, and one of the characters, Paige -- sometimes she was annoying, sometimes she was pretty cool. Overall, the book left me feeling a little sad but hopeful. What Gabe went through with this book is unfortunately a reality for some people. I was disgusted how (unfortunately true) that some people regard trans* as "it." There's also a piece at the end explaining trans* and such. @Kirstin: Cheers and good luck at the Lambda Literary Awards thingy!

It wrapped up too quickly, but I liked it all the same. Kirstin did an amazing job telling the story of an ftm transgender character. He has a love for music and radio, and a crush on a few girls. Just a guy trying to find his way in the world while trying to become who he was always supposed to be. #UCB forever ãfÃ ã Å,Ã Å ã Å§.

As a transman who came out as such at 60 I can attest to an almost eerie authenticity to Gabe's

experience. I recognized one reaction after another and one emotion after another in spite of the difference in ages. The story blended two interests for me, the love of radio broadcasting and my belated identity crisis. The characters are handled with both sensitivity and a lack of sentimentality, offering imperfect individuals who are real, not sugar coated. I am way impressed and even more so now that I know the author is not transgender. I am a novelist myself and people comment on how I can write about things I have never experienced, and I can now point to this wonderful book as an example of how the talent to get in the heads of characters, whether in the past, on another planet, or distinctly different than oneself, is a major part of a fiction writer's toolbox. And what a wonderful gift it is to have or to benefit from. Christopher Hawthorne Moss

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