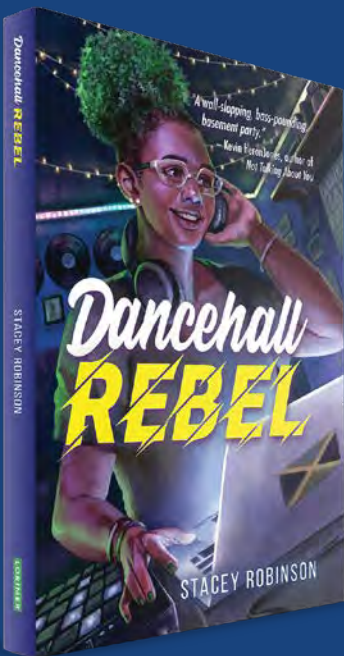
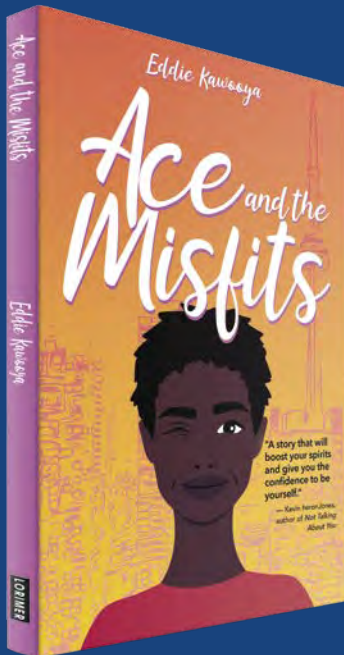
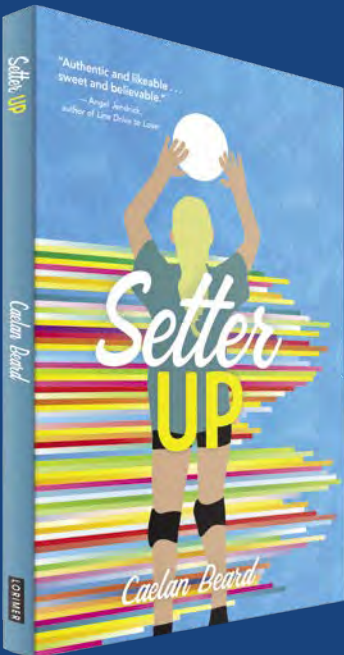
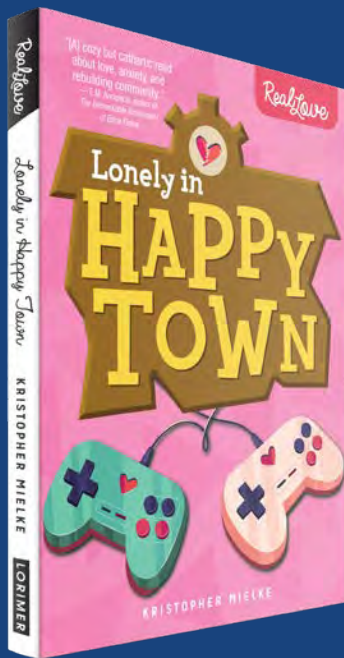
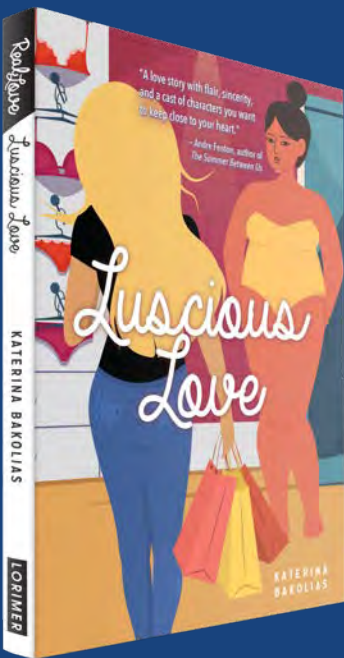


2026 Relationship Skills in stories

Books to support Social
and Emotional Learning



Relationship Skills in stories

Contents

Middle Grade

Ace & the Misfits vs The Soccer Knights	4
Ace and the Misfits	5
Love on Planet A	6
Setter Up	7

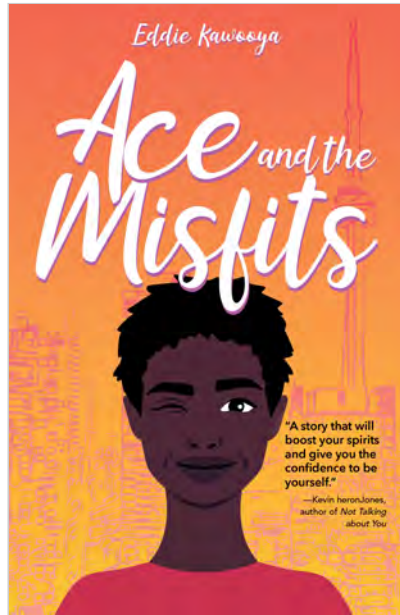
High School

Dancehall Rebel	9
Dogs Don't Break Hearts	10
Line Drive to Love	11
Lonely in Happy Town	12
Losing Hit Points	13
Luscious Love	14
No Limit on Love	15
Not Not Normal	16
One Summer in Vancouver	17
Secret Me	18
Summer with Sunil	19
The Summer Between Us	20

For more titles and information please visit
www.lorimersel.ca

Middle School

Books to support Social
and Emotional Learning



ISBN:9781459417519

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2024-02-13

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Ace and the Misfits

(by Eddie Kawooya)

A recently arrived Ugandan immigrant feels isolated and struggles with school and self-worth—until finding friendship with fellow outsiders helps him rebuild his confidence and sense of belonging.

More about the book:

In his debut novel, Eddie Kawooya presents a fish-out-of-water story of immigration and the pains and joys of integration into a new and sometimes frightening environment.

Arriving in Canada, Ace finds himself living in a basement apartment, having to integrate into a new community where he is the “African.” Struggling with his grades and his self worth, he finds ignorance and bullying at school until he falls in with a crew of international misfits who understand what he’s going through.

With their support, Ace starts to regain the confidence he lost in the move and his subsequent troubles.



EDDIE KAWOoya was born in Uganda and raised on three different continents before settling in Canada. His love for writing was inspired by his grandmother's oral stories and folklore of Uganda's ancestral past. As an immigrant to Canada, he is passionate about issues related to race, inclusion and diversity. He lives in Toronto.

Praise

“...full of charming personalities... A heartwarming journey.”

— Kirkus Reviews



ISBN:9781459420373

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2025-10-06

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Love on Planet A

(by Christina Minaki)

A disabled teen climate activist navigates a protective family and her desire to take action and have more independence, while also experiencing first love.

More about the book:

A compelling coming-of-age novel about disability, activism, and first love.

Lydia has had a passion for climate issues for as long as she can remember. After a fall at school, her well-meaning friends and family are against her getting out on the streets to protest, but Lydia is determined to challenge ableism, promote climate action, and make a statement, no matter the risks.

Love on Planet A explores friendship, first love, and fighting for change. With its authentic representation of disability, a strong-willed protagonist, and a socially conscious narrative, this novel is perfect for teen readers who are passionate about activism and making their voices heard. A must-have for libraries, schools, and bookstores looking to expand their selection of engaging, inclusive fiction.



CHRISTINA MINAKI is a librarian, social justice educator, lecturer, editor, and disability rights advocate who considers her disability to be a blessing. She holds two Master's degrees, and has loved trees since childhood. This is her third novel. She lives in Toronto.

Praise

"Christina Minaki writes with heart and insight."

— Allan Stratton, author of *The Way Back Home*



ISBN:9781459420342

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2025-10-02

Social Emotional Skill:

Relationship Skills

Ace and the Misfits vs. the Soccer Knights

(by Eddie Kawooya)

A recently arrived Ugandan immigrant is desperate to prove himself on the soccer field, at all costs, until his friends and a coach remind him of the value of team play and supporting each other.

More about the book:

When Ace, a recently arrived Ugandan immigrant, joins up with “the Misfits” — other kids at school who share the challenges of life in a new country — to play soccer, the group soon find themselves trying to qualify for a high-stakes tournament. With themes of friendship, self-worth, and finding balance in a new culture, *Ace and the Misfits vs. the Soccer Knights* explores the power and challenges in finding community through sport.

2025 Winner of Sanofka's Pen Peer Choice Favourite - Middle Grade Books

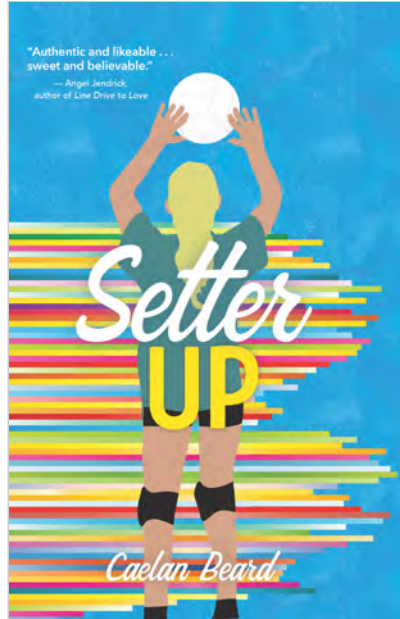


EDDIE KAWOoya was born in Uganda and raised on three different continents before settling in Canada. His love for writing was inspired by his grandmother's oral stories and folklore of Uganda's ancestral past. As an immigrant to Canada, he is passionate about issues related to race, inclusion and diversity. He lives in Toronto.

Praise

"Delights with its punchy dialogue and vibrant characters."

— Khodi Dill, author of *Welcome to the Cypher*



ISBN:9781459419971

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2025-05- 20

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Setter Up

(by Caelan Beard)

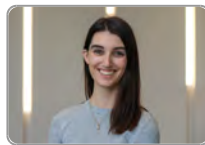
A passionate teen volleyball player confronts anti-gay attitudes at school by creating an inclusive team, learning about activism and community while finding unexpected romance.

More about the book:

A Canadian Children's Book Centre Best Book for Kids & Teens, starred selection

In a volleyball setting, this is a story of an idealistic teen who responds to the anti-gay sentiments of her classmates with a positive initiative to create a welcoming space for diverse kids who love the sport.

When the school pushes back and suggests an awkward name for the team, the group decides to establish the league on their own terms. Through this journey, they discover the realities of activism, the power of community, and the need for inclusivity. As they navigate these challenges, unexpected romance develops, adding another layer to their experience.



Caelan Beard is a freelance journalist whose work has appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, *Cabin Radio*, *The London Free Press*, *This Magazine*, *Horse Sport*, *Verge Travel*, and more. This is her first novel. She lives in southwestern Ontario.

Praise

"Authentic and likeable...sweet and believable."

— Angel Jendrick, author of *Line Drive to Love*

High School

Books to support Social
and Emotional Learning



ISBN:9781459418141

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2024-02-13

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Dancehall Rebel

(by Stacey Robinson)

A queer Caribbean Canadian teen raised on dancehall music struggles with her family's and culture's homophobia—until a new community helps her find the courage to embrace both her identity and her passion.

More about the book:

Dancehall DJ portrays a Caribbean Canadian teen challenging the ongoing legacy of homophobia in her musical and cultural community.

Denise is a Toronto teen who was raised on Jamaican dancehall music by her dad, a leading local DJ. Denise has aspirations to follow in her dad's footsteps, but there's a problem: Denise identifies as queer, and the music she loves, and her family, are often homophobic. But when she moves to Ottawa for first year university school, she finds a community of like-minded kids who love and cherish both music and diversity.



STACEY MARIE ROBINSON is an editor and music enthusiast with a background in communications. Guided by her Jamaican heritage, her creative content showcases contemporary Black Canadian life and Caribbean culture across the diaspora.

Stacey is the author of *Dancehall Rebel* and *Carnival Curves* and lives in Scarborough, Ontario.

Praise

Robinson's language and descriptions of the dual worlds Denise navigates as a first-generation Canadian are authentic ... An accessible, realistic cross-cultural coming-of-age novel about seeking a balance between tradition and change.

— Kirkus Reviews



ISBN:9781459420069

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2025-05-20

Social Emotional Skill:

Relationship Skills

Dogs Don't Break Hearts

(by 'Nathan Burgoine)

A teen recovering from an emotionally manipulative relationship finds healing through volunteering at a pet rescue—where a special dog and a kind new crush help him learn to trust and love again.

More about the book:

A Canadian Children's Book Centre Best Book for Kids & Teens, starred selection

A gentle romance about a teen, gaslit by his former boyfriend, who takes solace in volunteering at pet rescue—where he finds his life brightened both by a special dog and a promising new relationship. With the help of his loyal canine friend, he learns to trust again and open his heart to love.

This gentle romance is a journey of healing, friendship, and the transformative power of connection—both with animals and with someone who sees him for who he truly is.



'NATHAN BURGOINE is the author of the queer young adult novel *Exit Plans for Teenage Freaks* (finalist for the Prix Aurora Award for YA Novel) and queer young adult novella *Hope Echoes*, included in the collection *Three Left Turns to Nowhere*. He, his husband, and their rescued husky live in Ottawa, Ontario.

Praise

"This heartfelt story crackles with authenticity and sparkles with joy."

— Michael Thomas Ford, author of *Suicide Notes* and *Every Star That Falls*



ISBN:9781459419582

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2024-09- 11

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Line Drive to Love

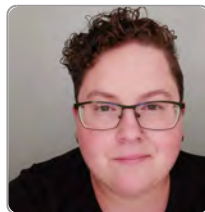
(by Angel Jendrick)

A dedicated LGBTQ+ softball player faces the emotional strain of her father's illness and a new summer romance, learning to balance love, loss, and ambition as she figures out what truly matters most.

More about the book:

Rory is a talented and dedicated softball player. The only distraction in her life is her father's decline due to ALS, but he remains her biggest supporter. But softball plans get a lot more interesting when main-lander Shanti comes to stay with her grandparents for the summer – and the two fall into a fast romance.

Between her pitching aspirations, her father's health, and trying to date Shanti, Rory's focus may be spread too thin. With pressure building on all fronts, will she choose the game or the girl? With support from Shanti and her softball team, Rory learns that sometimes you have to make tough decisions about what you care about most.

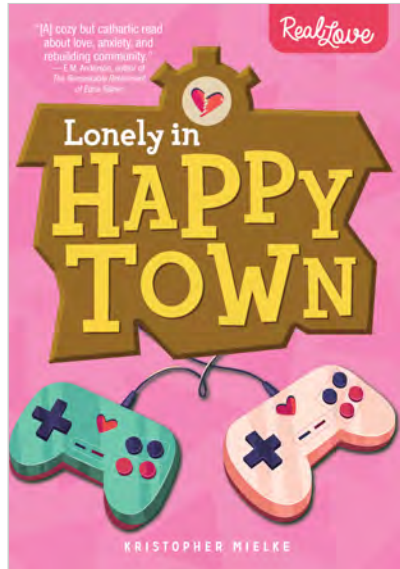


ANGEL JENDRICK is the author of gritty contemporary romances. She also dabbles in poetry, from time to time. With her wife, their three children, Ellie their energetic Lab, and a blind cat named Taz, Angel lives on Prince Edward Island.

Praise

"...realistic situations and characters seem universal. Line Drive to Love will appeal to a diverse audience.... Romantics will enjoy the relationship of Rory and Shanti, and sports fans will relate to Rory's ambition as a player as well as to the many team dynamics in the book. Highly Recommended."

— CM: Review of Materials - 5/5 Stars



ISBN:9781459420038

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2025-05- 20

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Lonely in Happy Town

(by Kristopher Mielke)

A gay teen who escapes into an online game falls for the same girl in both virtual and real life—sparking an LGBTQ+ romance that pushes him to navigate identity, reality, and what it means to truly connect.

More about the book:

A Canadian Children's Book Centre Best Book for Kids & Teens, starred selection

In Kristopher Mielke's romance set in the world of gaming, a lonely teen works nights at a convenience store, only coming alive in the game Happy Town — but he soon finds himself crushing on the same girl in both places.

Juggling the complexities of his feelings, he must confront the blurred lines between fantasy and reality while navigating his own identity. As he embarks on a journey of self-discovery, he faces the challenge of bridging the gap between his two worlds.

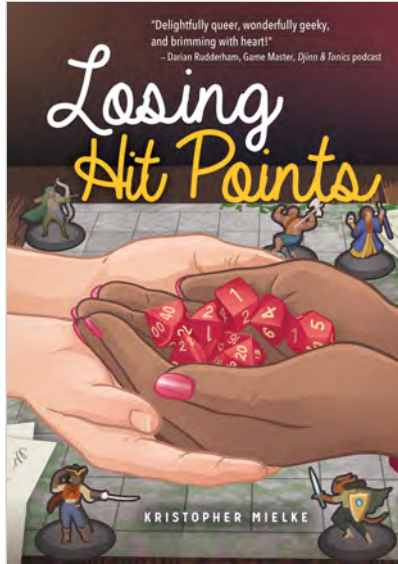


Kristopher Mielke (he/they) is the co-author of Victory Lap with Riley Alexis Wood. They love drinking too much coffee, watching long video essays about philosophy and cartoons, and writing about queer heroes and hungry monsters. They live outside of Erin, Ontario.

Praise

"This accessibly written title will draw in reluctant readers and appeal especially to gamers. Journey and their friends come across as true-to-life nerds... Will engage readers, leaving them alternately cheering and screaming at the cast."

— Kirkus Reviews



ISBN:9781459418080

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2024-02-13

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Losing Hit Points

(by Kristopher Mielke)

A trans teen finds unexpected romance and a shot at redemption during a D&D game, where reconnecting with a former friend means facing past mistakes and fighting for a second chance at love.

More about the book:

Losing Hit Points is a nerdy queer romance book set against the backdrop of a tabletop Dungeons & Dragons game. A romantic and funny story filled with goblins, adventure, and the healing power of admitting our mistakes.

Trans teen Journey has the chance to play an epic game of Dungeons & Dragons. Surprise encounters are common in D&D but what they don't expect is to reconnect with an ex-friend who they still love and have wronged in the past.



Kristopher Mielke (he/they) is the co-author of *Victory Lap* with Riley Alexis Wood. They love drinking too much coffee, watching long video essays about philosophy and cartoons, and writing about queer heroes and hungry monsters. They live outside of Erin, Ontario.

Praise

This accessibly written title will draw in reluctant readers and appeal especially to gamers. Journey and their friends come across as true-to-life nerds... Will engage readers, leaving them alternately cheering and screaming at the cast.

— Kirkus Reviews



ISBN:9781459418059

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2024-02-13

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Luscious Love

(by Katerina Bakolias)

A teen grapples with body image, low self-worth, and a toxic boss—until she finds the courage to stand up for herself, recognize her worth, and embrace the love she truly deserves.

More about the book:

This romance, set amongst Mina's first summer job, explores new love, body image and the frustrations of working in retail.

Mina is thrilled with her new job at the prestigious Luscious Lingerie Store, known for hiring only the most elegant people. Even better, she meets, Lexi who is beautiful, slender, and smart, everything Mina fails to see in herself, and they start a relationship. But when her manipulative boss asks Mina to submit a picture to a contest, highlighting their commitment to diversity in size, her insecurities creep back in.

Will Mina finally learn to accept the love she deserves, speak up about her feelings, and stand up to her boss?



Katerina Bakolias (she/her) is a queer, Greek-Canadian, playwright, and screenwriter. Recognized for her talents Katerina received the RBC Chrysalis Emerging Artist Award in 2020. She lives in Nova Scotia.

Praise

A lovely story of learning to chart your own course... Mina is a body-positive fat girl who's considering whether she might actually be pansexual. She's a delightful main character, exploring all facets of growing up and becoming one's own person.

— Kirkus Reviews



ISBN:9781459417175

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2023-04-04

Social Emotional Skill:

Relationship Skills

No Limit on Love

(by Alison Lister)

A nonbinary teen struggling with climate anxiety finds unexpected connection and love with a gender-fluid boy, as they both explore identity beyond labels and grow together.

More about the book:

Dan has an increasingly common problem: climate anxiety. After a storm devastated parts of Ottawa, it's hard to get climate change out of mind. Dan goes to help clean up at the school, but only one other person turns up: Levi, who is handsome, progressive— and shows a strong interest in Dan.

And what's more, Levi is also pondering gender fluidity and the necessity of applying any labels at all.

Dan falls just as hard for Levi, and it's clear they're going to learn and grow together on this journey as Dan embraces their nonbinary true self.



Alison Lister is an enby (non-binary) author who has been writing realistic and romantic adult LGBTQ+ fiction as Elizabeth Lister, and currently as AE Lister, for over ten years. They live in Ottawa, Ontario with their partner and two children.



ISBN:9781459419315

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2024-09- 11

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Not Not Normal

(by Peter E. Fenton)

A queer teen battling anxiety and insecurity gains confidence through a new friend and romance, helping him face bullying and embrace his true self.

More about the book:

Jordan and Nathan couldn't be more different, but when order and chaos collide, opposites attract. Jordan is a bit of an oddball at school. He likes rules, routine, old sci-fi novels, and is often the victim of his bully's torment. When new student Nathan joins the school, he wears down Jordan's walls and, with his love, empowers Jordan to stand up for himself.

Nathan's parents are going through divorce, and at a new school in a new city Jordan provides him with the stability he can't find at home. Through their friendship and eventually their romance, Jordan embraces his newfound self-confidence and proclaims his love for Nathan in front of the school. Each is just what the other needs.



PETER E. FENTON writes LGBTQ2S+ romance and mystery novels that are proudly set in Canada, including *The Woodcarver's Model* and the Declan Hunt Mysteries series. He lives in Toronto, Ontario.

Praise

"...personable characters and their relatable struggles mean that this romance for reluctant readers should find fans both within and outside its intended audience, making it a good choice for any teens who find it challenging to fit in... An engaging opposites-attract queer romance."

— Kirkus Reviews



ISBN:9781459417168

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2023-04-04

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

One Summer in Vancouver

(by Tony Correia)

A closeted teen from Toronto spends a liberating summer in Vancouver during the 1990 Gay Games, where he confronts his identity and chooses between hiding or living openly.

More about the book:

Tom, a teen struggling to understand his sexual identity, flees Toronto for a summer of freedom in Vancouver, where something exciting is about to happen: the Gay Games.

Living with his “out” Uncle Fred, Tom experiences a new world where being your true self is freeing and fun. He falls in with teen Dwayne, who falls for him, and Gina, a lesbian getting over a relationship with a popular singer. As the Games wrap, Tom has to decide whether to return home back to a closeted life and a father who doesn’t understand, or to make a new life in Vancouver.

The story plays out against the backdrop of the Games, populated with the important organizers and cultural figures who were prominent in this landmark event.



TONY CORREIA's newspaper column, "Queen's Logic", ran in *Xtra! West* for five years. He is the author of the Lorimer Real Love novels *Same Love* and *True to You*. He lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Praise

"Delightful"

— Booklist, starred review



ISBN:9781459417182

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2023-04- 04

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Secret Me

(by Angel Jendrick)

A popular, closeted, teen from Charlottetown struggles with her hidden sexuality and guilt over bullying, but a night with a nonbinary classmate helps her embrace her true self and new love.

More about the book:

Charlottetown teen Tage seems to have it all: she hangs out with the school's most popular clique and has a handsome boyfriend. She's also living a lie about her sexuality.

Wren, a nonbinary schoolmate, has been the victim of bullying by Tage's clique, which leaves Tage racked by guilt because she's always been drawn to Wren. When Tage picks up Wren during a snowstorm and they are forced to spend a night together, their true feelings emerge.

With Wren's support, Tage had to decide whether to come out to celebrate herself and her new relationship.



ANGEL JENDRICK is the author of gritty contemporary romances. She also dabbles in poetry, from time to time. With her wife, their three children, Ellie their energetic Lab, and a blind cat named Taz, Angel lives on Prince Edward Island.



ISBN:9781459419285

Imprint:Lorimer

Publication Date:2024-09-11

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

Summer with Sunil

(by Alison Lister)

A trans teen stuck on a lonely summer vacation in coastal Nova Scotia finds unexpected connection and self-discovery through a chance romance with another isolated queer youth facing an abusive family situation.

More about the book:

Sometimes love can be found in the most surprising places...

Two kids on holiday, both sure they must be the only queer people for kilometres, find each other and sparks fly.

Dominic, a trans teen, is stuck on vacation in sleepy coastal Nova Scotia with their parents, all summer, with no other company. Sunil is all alone in a rented beach house while their dad is off hanging out with his new girlfriend. A chance encounter with Sunil on the beach catches Dominic by surprise, and all of a sudden, their summer doesn't look so bleak.

What follows is a vivid, romantic story full of self-exploration and the gauzy haze of summer love.

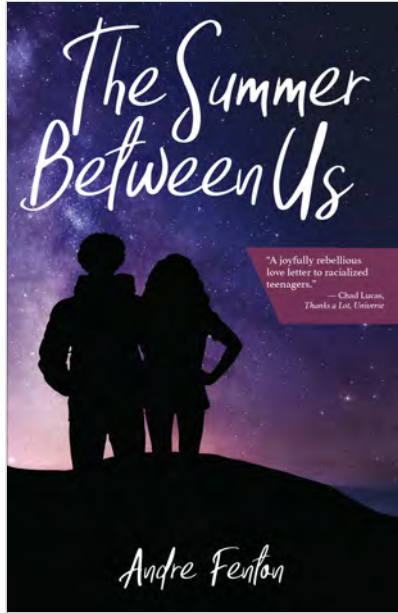


Alison Lister is an enby (non-binary) author who has been writing realistic and romantic adult LGBTQ+ fiction as Elizabeth Lister, and currently as AE Lister, for over ten years. They live in Ottawa, Ontario with their partner and two children.

Praise

"Dominic and Sunil's relationship is gentle and charming, and they are easy to root for."

— Kirkus Reviews



ISBN:9781459506817

Imprint:Formac

Publication Date:2022-04-19

Social Emotional Skill:
Relationship Skills

The Summer Between Us

(by Andre Fenton)

A biracial teen faces pressure to meet others' expectations as he graduates high school, navigates identity and family tensions, and discovers his own path and passion during a pivotal summer.

More about the book:

This coming-of-age story follows 18-year-old Adrian Carter as he graduates from high school and confronts difficult decisions about his future. As Adrian navigates the emotional highs and lows of the summer between graduation and his post-secondary future, he gains awareness of the way his Blackness impacts the way he moves through majority-white spaces and negotiates the difficulties of forging a path in life against others' expectations.

Despite his wish to follow his longtime girlfriend Mel on her cross-country trip and find common ground with his emotionally distant father, Adrian comes to understand that his own passion is grounded in a desire to support a community he's forged on his own.



ANDRE FENTON is an award-winning author, spoken word artist and arts educator. He has represented Halifax at seven national poetry festivals across Canada and has written three novels: *Worthy of Love* (2018), *ANNAKA* (2020) and *The Summer Between Us* (2022). He lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Praise

"An empowering journey of self-actualization and a look at the intimate bonds that shape a person."

— Kirkus Reviews

2026 Social Emotional Learning Catalogue

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