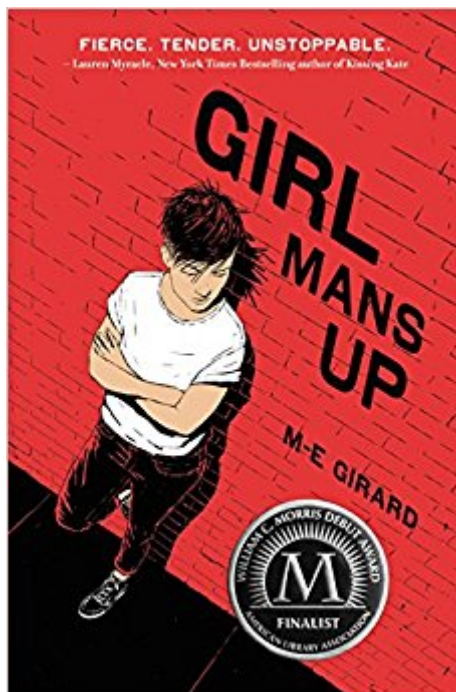


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Girl Mans Up



Synopsis

Lambda Literary Award Winner * Entertainment Weekly Best YA Book of 2016 * Children's Book Council Books Best Book of 2016 * Kirkus Reviews Best Teen Coming-of-Age Novel of 2016 and Best Teen Book of 2016 with Unforgettable Protagonists * Publishers Weekly Fall 2016 Flying Starts * William C. Morris YA Debut Award Finalist

All Pen wants is to be the kind of girl she's always been. So why does everyone have a problem with it? They think the way she looks and acts means she's trying to be a boy—that she should quit trying to be something she's not. If she dresses like a girl, and does what her folks want, it will show respect. If she takes orders and does what her friend Colby wants, it will show her loyalty. But respect and loyalty, Pen discovers, are empty words. Old-world parents, disintegrating friendships, and strong feelings for other girls drive Pen to see the truth—that in order to be who she truly wants to be, she'll have to man up. Perfect for fans of Meredith Russo, Becky Albertalli, Alex Sanchez, and Jaye Robin Brown!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up • The expression man up refers to many things. It suggests that "real men" take responsibility for their actions. Real men act bravely in the face of adversity. For Pen (short for Penelope), 16, it is a little more complicated than that. She has a difficult time knowing how to man up when she cannot even classify her own gender identity. For her, the LGBTQ lexicon carries too much cultural baggage and too many expectations. Pen does not want to define herself too closely,

especially when everything in her world seems to be crashing down around her. Her best friend Colby has recently become a terrible bully, her parents are more and more unsupportive, and her older brother has been kicked out of the house. On a positive note, her crush, Blake, has taken an interest in her. Pen tries to navigate all of this, while still figuring out who that person is staring back at her from the mirror. This is a fresh title in the growing sea of LGBTQ YA literature. Pen and her peers are neither quirky nor whimsical. They cuss, drink, smoke pot, hook up, and get into fights. There is no sugarcoating in this very real portrayal of an aspect of teen life that many experience. VERDICT Recommended for fans of YA urban fiction as well as those who prefer grittier LGBTQ lit. — Jaclyn Anderson, Madison County Library System, MS

— “A powerful book about identity, belonging, and the collision between sexuality and cultural expectations.” (Bulletin of the Center for Children, Books) — “This is a fresh title in the growing sea of LGBTQ YA literature. There is no sugarcoating in this very real portrayal of an aspect of teen life that many experience. Recommended for fans of YA urban fiction as well as those who prefer grittier LGBTQ lit.” (School Library Journal (starred review)) — “Fierce. Tender. Unstoppable.” (Lauren Myracle, New York Times bestselling author of *The Infinite Moment of Us* and co-author of *How to Be Bad*) — “Original. Courageous. Vibrant.” (Michael Cart, Columnist at ALA Booklist and Former President of Young Adult Library Services Michael Cart, Editor of *Taking Aim* and *How Beautiful the Ordinary*) — “Heartfelt. Refreshing. True.” (Ariel Schrag, author of *Potential* and *Adam*) — “I loved it. A brilliant new writer to watch.” (Malinda Lo, author of *Ash*, *Adaptation*, and *Inheritance* and co-founder of Diversity in YA) — “Respeito for Pen.” (Sara Ryan, Award winning author of *Empress of the World* and *Bad Houses*) — “Raw. Real. Irresistible.” (I.W. Gregorio, author of *None of the Above*) — “Girard explores questions of family, friendship, loyalty, and identity through the voice of Pen Oliveira, a 16-year old girl ... [She] forcefully conveys the fear Pen lives with, having experienced frequent mockery and bullying, and her courage in aspiring to a safe, loving community for herself and her friends.” (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

Not having been a teenager for almost twenty years, I can still find a lot of truth in this story. I think Pen might be the truest literary character I have ever encountered. By that I mean closest to my sense of identity. The story is just like Pen, soft and tender, and rough and tough. I love the portrayal of the mother's desperate dilemma of her own aspirations and her love for her daughter, the hard path of finding out there is more than one preordained way to do the right thing with your

kids. Highly recommended for youth and adults.

M-E Girard is a master at characterization. There are no stereotypes in this story, no cardboard cutouts. Each character--even the peripheral ones--is unique and intriguing. A few of them I wanted to slap. Some of them I wanted to hug, but each one pulled out some kind of emotion from me. Pen is a young woman struggling with all the usual teen-age problems--school, parents and relationships--but she's also struggling to keep her unique identity while others continually try to tear her down. I read this book quickly because once I started, I couldn't put it down. Highly recommended.

That feeling when you can't put a book down because it feels so tangible and real? That's the feeling I get from this book. It's easily going to be in my top ten books. I just. Everything about this book made my heart ache. In good ways. I will be recommending this to anyone looking for a good LGBT book and it's DEFINITELY going to make its way to my physical bookshelf eventually.

Sensitive, well-paced, well written. This is not a transition story; it's about embracing female masculinity while rejecting toxic masculinity and internalized misogyny. A wonderful read.

Real, timely and life-affirming.

I wasn't exactly sure what to expect when I started *Girl Mans Up*, and as the story unfolded, I kept being unsure, in a good way. Girard does an excellent job of keeping the reader guessing while also taking us deeply into family dynamics, complicated friendships, new love and navigating queerness on multiple levels. I don't play video games save for Wii ones, while Pen, the protagonist of *Girl Mans Up*, is a fierce gamer. She's pretty much considered one of the guys among her guy friends, which is how she likes it. But when she starts to realize that maybe some of her friendships aren't based on loyalty (the same concept being drilled into her at home by her tough Portuguese parents, who insist she pay *respeito* to them), but rather on not so subtle coercive tactics, she starts to question who she should ally herself with. She also falls in love after many unrequited crushes on girls, and all of these subjects, as well as abortion, are dealt with realistically. There are no stock characters here, no easy answers about gender, sex, family or love. Instead, there's a lot of tough choices, like whether to stay at home where she feels misunderstood or move in with her older brother Johnny, who she idolizes. Pen isn't a perfect character, but even when she makes mistakes,

she's likable because Girard has imbued her with so much heart. She sticks to her guns and insists on a gender presentation and identity that is her own, not what other people want to make her into or what would be supposedly "easier" for the world to understand. And while the book is not "about" abortion, its treatment of the subject as highly personal, confusing and often lonely is dealt with exquisitely here, by making it both a fact of life but not something the character contemplating it takes at all lightly.

Beautiful and thoughtful writing - true to life. Really resonated with me. Strong narrative with real characters. I love young adult books and this is one of the best.

Writing that draws you in, with characters you quickly come to care about. this story explores love, families, and gender in a brilliant way. An easy 5 stars.

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