



TEACHER'S GUIDE



Luna

by Julie Anne Peters

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248 pages • Grades 8-12

About the Book

Regan's brother Liam can't stand the person he is during the day. Like the moon from which Liam has chosen his female name, his true self is only revealed at night. In the secrecy of his basement bedroom, Liam transforms himself into Luna, the beautiful girl he longs to be, but only with his sister, Regan's, support and silence.

Balancing Liam's secret with chemistry, baby-sitting, and interest from a boy at school—a boy she thinks she *likes*—Regan is the one who needs support and understanding. She needs a life. At home, Regan and Liam's parents are barely speaking to each other, lost in their own struggles to fulfill their familial roles.

But everything is about to change. As Liam gets closer to sharing his double life with the rest of the world, Regan is panicked that their family and friends aren't ready to welcome Luna into their lives.

Compelling and provocative, this is an unforgettable novel about a transgender teen's struggle for self-identity and acceptance.

Reviews

"Honest, heartbreaking, amazing. *Luna* makes us ask ourselves, 'What does it take to live an authentic life? What sacrifices will that entail?' To this mesmerizing drama, Julie Anne Peters brings humor, intensity, and an overwhelming sense of love and redemption. Required reading for anyone interested in living a more compassionate life."

—Jennifer Finney Boylan, author of
She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders

☆ "This novel breaks new ground in YA literature with a sensitive and poignant portrayal of a young man's determination to live his true identity and his family's struggle to accept Luna for who she really is." —*School Library Journal*

"Groundbreaking, finely tuned realism about a transsexual teen...the first of its kind—well done and essential for every library serving young adults."

—*Kirkus* starred review

About the Author

Julie Anne Peters was born in Jamestown, New York. She currently resides in Colorado with her partner of 30 years. Before becoming a writer, Ms. Peters worked as a computer systems engineer, a 5th grade teacher, and a concessionaire at a zoo.

For this book, the author conducted in-depth interviews of numerous transgender people who faced similar situations as Liam. She researched the available literature online and in her local libraries, and attended support groups to learn more about the transgender population and their journeys toward transition.

More information about the author and her books can be found on her web site:
www.JulieAnnePeters.com



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Books for Young Readers

Note to Educators

Julie Anne Peters raises many issues worthy of classroom discussion. This guide offers questions to think about regarding gender roles, identification, tolerance, and peer and family relationships. In addition, there are several activities that create opportunities for students to explore those issues and relate them to their own lives. This guide is intended to help students become more socially sensitive individuals.

Pre-Reading Activities

These questions will lay the groundwork for exploring the themes and issues in the novel, *Luna*.

Please note that LGBTQ stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning.”

Gender Roles & Identification

1. How do you feel about such gender roles/expectations? Where do they originate? How are boys and girls “supposed” to look and act in your community?
2. Do you feel there are gender expectations placed on you because you’re a girl, or a boy? What are they?
3. Does being transgender, lesbian, gay, or bisexual imply being a lesser person? How does your gender role or sexual identification affect your place in society?

Tolerance

1. Are you as accepting of LGBTQ people as you are of people from different racial, ethnic, economic, or religious backgrounds? Why or why not?
2. How would you describe your own community in terms of intolerance or tolerance of differences? Are LGBTQ people accepted and welcomed? Do you think they feel they are?
3. Why are some people perceived as “gay?” Does this mean that they are different? How? Why? How do you feel about people’s differences?

Peer and Family Relationships

1. Which of your early beliefs were formed from direct experience and which were formed from stereotypes or indirect information? Which of those early ideas do you still believe and/or act upon?
2. How do familial expectations and pressure impact people?
3. How do you think people should balance family expectations with individual needs?
4. What responsibility do you think friends and family members have when a loved one comes out to them as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person?
5. Have you ever had a friend that is different from you, racially, ethnically, economically, or religiously?
6. What can you do to educate yourself about LGBTQ issues and improve your awareness and attitude with regard to LGBTQ people?

Discussion Questions

These questions are designed to test your students’ reading knowledge and understanding of the plot and main themes of the book. Some questions simply check their comprehension, while some will induce a longer discussion. We suggest teachers, who know their students’ needs best, use these questions as a starting point in addition to their own questions.

Chapters 1 - 4

1. In the beginning of the book, Regan recalls situations where a young Liam played with “girl” toys and games. (p. 4-5, 13-14, 16-17) How did the family’s reactions in these situations affect Liam and Regan? What new situations arise in the novel that indicate their parents don’t understand Liam’s true identity?
2. Why is it Regan’s job to cook? Why is a meal cooked by Liam unacceptable to their dad? Why does their mother change her hair appointment to accommodate the family’s meal? What message does this send to Regan and Liam?
3. Why does Liam’s father pressure Liam to play soccer and try out for the baseball team? Why does Liam say he’ll try out even though he doesn’t want to? (p. 8-10)
4. What does Liam mean when he says he wants to transition? (p. 20-21)
5. Regan’s chemistry partner, new student Chris, makes her anxious. Why?

Chapters 5-9

1. Regan loves the opera *Carmen*. Why? What does the opera represent to her?
2. What happens at Regan’s sixth grade sleepover party? Why does Liam want to stay with the girls? Is it his “raging hormones,” as their father says? Why is Regan embarrassed by Liam in this particular situation? (p. 38-43)
3. While baby-sitting for the Materas, Regan realizes a connection between language and gender roles. How does language affect Liam’s self perception? (p. 50-52)
4. What do you think of David and Elise buying Cody a doll? Do you think boys playing with dolls or girls playing with cars, for example, will alter their characters as they grow up?
5. Why are the mom’s — Patrice’s — efforts to improve her quality of life ignored by her family? Why don’t they pay attention when she lands an account for her wedding business? How do Liam and Regan’s attitude about motherhood differ? (p. 58-60)
6. Regan recalls Liam’s suicide attempt, but brings him back into reality by offering him her new nightgown. What does the nightgown represent? Do you think Liam asks too much of Regan by keeping his true gender a secret? What would happen to Liam if Regan wasn’t around?
7. Why does Liam find comfort in researching the history of transgendered individuals?
8. Are Chris and Mr. Bruchac sexist? Do you agree or disagree with how Regan handles their comments? (p. 73)
9. What does Regan’s dream about Chris mean? When he asks her to the rave, does she still think he’s out of her league? Why would she think that in the first place? (p. 74)

10. What event pushes Luna to suggest dressing as herself in public? Why does Regan initially have reservations about it, but ultimately agree to help?

Chapters 10 – 14

1. When they arrive at the mall, Luna changes her mind about changing clothes. How does Teri Lynn's story bolster her? What keeps her at the mall once she's there?
2. Why did Liam lie about attending practice? (p. 101) Why does their mother not get involved in the argument until after Liam leaves? What does her comment indicate? (p. 102)
3. Why does their father talk to Regan when he isn't able to talk to Liam? Why doesn't Regan tell Liam what was said? (p. 106)
4. What is the answer to Regan's question on p. 109: "If Dad was Liam's hero, why was he so scared of him?"
5. When Regan meets Chris, why does she push him away? Is it because he admitted to wanting to use her for her chemistry smarts, or is it because she's afraid he'll meet Luna? Or something else entirely?
6. When Luna says: "No one read me. They didn't know. They didn't even blink." (p. 115) Regan knows it's not true. Why didn't Luna notice, or say she didn't?
7. From p. 117: "It's always about my brother." Is Regan resentful of Luna? Does she blame her? Why? For what?

Chapters 15 – 19

1. Why is their dad in Liam's room? Is this an invasion of Liam's privacy? What is he looking for? Why does he ask Regan if Liam is gay? Why doesn't he ask Liam? (p. 121-22)
2. Regan begins to understand the necessity and importance of Liam's surgical transition to Luna when she sees Teri Lynn's photographs. Why is this important to the story?
3. Regan likens the transitioning process to a butterfly's metamorphosis. How else is Luna like a butterfly? Does this metaphor work throughout the story, or does the metaphor fit only during the climax through to the end? (p. 126)
4. Mr. O'Neil wants to redecorate the kids' basement living space as a family project. Do you think this is a good idea? What do you think is going on in the father's head? What does each family member's reaction mean? (p. 130-132)
5. How does the memory of the parents' fight (p. 136) fit into the novel? It is ironic that Mrs. O'Neil shares similar feelings of frustration as Liam with her identity and role expectation as a woman and mother, but how are they different? How do their reactions to their situations differ? What can both family members do to feel fulfilled in life? How can other family members help them?
6. Why doesn't Aly know the truth about Liam? Why does she confide in Regan about her wish to go to the prom with Liam?
7. Describe Regan's judgment at this point in the novel. Regan is responsible and enjoys baby-sitting, yet she is willing to blow off work for a date with Chris. How does this affect your perception of her character? To what lengths should she go to protect Luna from her parents and the public?
8. What happens when Liam baby-sits at the Materas' in Regan's place? Is Regan justified in her anger?

9. Regan begins to look inward after the incident at the Materas'. Why did something bad have to happen to make her think about her own feelings?

Chapters 20 - 23

1. Imagine what Elise Matera was saying to Mrs. O'Neil on the phone. Why doesn't their mother confront Liam and Regan? (p. 176)
2. What does Liam do to make up for his sister losing her job on his account? Does it work?
3. As readers, we hear about Teri Lynn, but we don't meet her. Why? What effect does she have on Luna? (p. 184)
4. What makes Luna decide to tell Aly the truth? How does Aly react at first? How does her reaction change? Do you think Aly always knew and denied it?
5. Aly feels betrayed when she learns the truth about Liam. Does Regan think she betrayed Aly by not telling her her brother's secret?
6. How does Chris and Regan's costume and role-playing figure into the novel? Why did the author put them on the stage? Is this symbolic?
7. Why does Luna show up at school? What happens? (p. 207) Discuss the reactions of Luna, Hoyt Doucet, Chris, and Regan.
8. The author allows us to hear Regan's inner dialogue about Luna's appearance at school (p. 210-211) Do you agree with what she has to say? Identify her range of emotions. Is her perception of what happened accurate?
9. Why does Aly still give Luna a birthday present? What does it symbolize? (p. 215)

Chapters 24- 26

1. Mr. O'Neil's first reaction when Luna reveals herself is to laugh; then he becomes angry. Mrs. O'Neil sees Luna and ignores her. These patterns of behavior occur throughout the book. Do these patterns help or hinder Luna's transition?
2. Luna initially stands her ground, then retreats to the basement. Do you think Luna will come out again?
3. Finally, Regan forces a confrontation with her mother and the author reveals through a memory that Mrs. O'Neil knew all along about Luna, but chose to ignore her. Do you agree with Regan when she says: "My mother was a monster."?(p. 228)
4. Aly comes over and starts playing video games. What happens?
5. Regan is preoccupied with Luna while on a date with Chris, even though she'd looked forward to the date all week. Chris encourages her to tell him what's going on, but she is not able to trust him yet. Do you think she will be able to trust him eventually? Why does she have such a hard time trusting people?
6. Why does Luna have to change her clothes at the airport? (p. 238)
7. In the last chapter, Regan brings up every person Luna will leave behind: Mom, Aly, Dad, and herself. Does this affect Luna's determination? Do you think Luna's departure is selfish?
8. How did you feel at the end of the novel?

Essay Questions

These questions can be used as an assessment test or as essay questions. They can also be used as starter points for journal entries.

1. Are Regan and Liam's parents struggling with their gender roles, and what society expects from them? How is it different from what Liam is experiencing? Do you expect people to act or dress a certain way based on their gender? What happens when they don't?
2. Imagine yourself the opposite gender. What would be the most challenging aspect? What would be the advantages and disadvantages? If you could change genders, would you?
3. Why do you think this story was told from the point of view of Regan, Luna's sister? How would you feel if your sister or brother was transgender? Your mother or father? You?
4. Would you consider *Luna* to be a controversial book? Why or why not?
5. Being transgender is different from being gay or lesbian. Can you explain how?
6. What do you think will happen to Luna now? What about Regan? Aly? Mrs. O'Neil? What do you foresee five or ten years down the road for these characters?
7. Like Luna, many LGBTQ people have tried to hurt or kill themselves because they were afraid of being rejected by family, friends, and society in general. What can we all do to create more hospitable environments in which LGBTQ people can come out safely and without fear? How did hiding his gender variance impact both Liam and his family? How can "coming out of the closet" strengthen relationships among family members?
8. At the end of the book, Liam takes a stand on being different. How is his situation similar to characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *No-No Boy*, or *I am the Cheese*? Liam leaves an unhappy situation and ventures out into the world to find himself. Can you make a correlation to the main characters in *The Secret Life of Bees*, *My Side of the Mountain*, or *Heaven's Eyes*?

Resources

Web sites

Safe Schools Coalition: www.safeschoolscoalition.org
Resources for educators and youth about teaching tolerance

Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network: www.glsen.org

Transgender Forum Community Center: www.transgender.org
List of resources and support groups

National Transgender Advocacy Coalition: www.ntac.org
Civil rights advocated for all transgendered, intersexed, and gender variant people

Human Rights Campaign: www.hrc.org
Advocates for equality in the workplace, in schools, and in society

Advocates for Youth: www.advocatesforyouth.org
Information on reproductive and sexual health

Youth Resource.com: www.Youthresource.com
Support, community, resources, and peer-to-peer education for LGBTQ youth, 13-24

National Youth Advocacy Coalition: www.nyacyouth.org

Transgender Youth Webring: www.temenos.net • www.outproud.org
www.outminds.com

Recommended Reading

Books About Being Different

I am the Cheese
by Robert Cormier

Heaven Eyes
by David Almond

No-No Boy
by John Okada

To Kill a Mockingbird
by Harper Lee

My Side of the Mountain
by Jean Craighead George

The Secret Life of Bees
by Sue Monk Kidd

Books About LGBTQ

Revolutionary Voices: A Multicultural Queer Youth Anthology
by Amy Sonnie

Lesbian and Gay Voices: An Annotated Bibliography and Guide to Literature for Children and Young Adults
by Frances Ann Day,
foreword by Nancy Garden

Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman
by Leslie Feinberg

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Define "Normal"

ISBN 0-316-70631-0

Hardcover \$16.95 (\$24.95 in Can.) 196 pages

ISBN 0-316-73489-6

Paperback \$5.99 (\$7.99 in Can.) 208 pages

Define "Normal" has become a word-of-mouth phenomenon. This is a thoughtful, wry story about two girls — a "punk" and a "priss" — who find themselves facing each other in a peer-counseling

program, and discover that they have surprising things in common.

Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association

Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers



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www.lb-teens.com

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Keeping You a Secret

ISBN: 0-316-70275-7

Hardcover \$16.95 (\$24.95 in Can.) 256 pages

Expectations: A girl meets a guy, falls in love, gets married, has sex, not necessarily in that order. Holland Jaeger is living up to the expectations. But when she meets Cece, the course of her life is forever changed. She loves this girl — this out and proud lesbian. Holland's awakening to her own lesbianism is the key to setting her free. Can Holland

trust that the people she counts on most in her life will accept and embrace her newfound identity? Hiding the truth about their relationship may prove to be the worst mistake Holland and Cece could ever make.

Stonewall Honor Book for 2004

Amelia Bloomer recommended feminist book for youth
Borders Original Voices