Reviews

- **Booklist** (“Alex Awards.” 15 March 2020): “Kobabe’s path to understanding eir gender and sexuality comes into beautiful focus in this graphic memoir, expressively illustrated with retro colors and simple lines. Readers will recognize a kindred spirit in Kobabe and/or gain insight into what it's like to identify outside of the cisgender/heterosexual ‘norm.’”

- **JAMA** (“Graphic Medicine: The best of 2019.” 24 Dec. 2019): “Gender Queer explains gender nonbinariness in highly personal, intimate, patient, and deliberate ways. In light of the high rate of depression and suicide by nonbinary individuals Gender Queer ... offers health professionals a valuable opportunity to understand the experiences of patients, like Kobabe, who are in our practices and waiting rooms longing to be recognized and understood.”

- **Publishers Weekly** (“Comics Reviews.” 25 Feb. 2019): “This entertaining memoir-as-guide holds crossover appeal for mature teens (with a note there's some sexually explicit content) and is sure to spark valuable discussions at home and in classrooms.”

- **Pop Culture Classroom** (17 April 2019): Ages 13+. “Be sure to keep a notebook nearby as you read because Kobabe’s resources will inspire you to take notes as well ... Kobabe gracefully and honestly tackles some of the toughest topics regarding gender and self-identity, giving educators a literary autobiography that will surely help every human being (both living now and for generations to come) better understand how gender identity and self-discovery are key to healing some of the angst and hurt that have come from countless years of misunderstandings.”

- **School Library Journal** (“Recommended Reading LGBTQIA+.” June 2019): Grades 11-up. “This is a sensitive, nuanced graphic novel that includes depictions of masturbation, sex, and painful gynecological exams, but most of the story is concerned with the smaller moments of interactions with family and friends, and how being unsure of one's gender can change the effect of even a well-meaning comment.”

- **School Library Journal** (“Middle to High School.” July 2019. Starred review): Listed in the reviews for middle grade to high school and rated as grades 9-up. “In this memoir, Kobabe chronicles eir life from the time e was very young through eir coming of age and adulthood. E describes common situations from the perspective of someone who is asexual and nonbinary: starting a new school, getting eir period, dating, attending college. The muted earth tones and calm blues match the hopeful tone and measured pacing. Matter-of-fact descriptions of gynecological exams and the use of sex toys will be enlightening for those who may not have access to this information elsewhere. VERDICT: A book to be savored rather than devoured, this memoir will resonate with teens, especially fans of Alison Bechdel's Fun Home and Mason Deaver’s I Wish You All the Best. It's also a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual as well as for those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand.”
● **School Library Journal** (“Graphic Novels.” Dec. 2019): Grades 9-up. “Featuring realistic, earth-toned cartoons, this forthright memoir earnestly examines everything from pap smears gone wrong to experiments with sex toys. Kobabe is the reassuring older sibling that many LGBTQ teens will wish they’d had.”

● **University Wire** (“LGBTQ+ Representation in Youth Literature.” 21 Oct. 2020): Included on a list compiled by Bowling Green State University professor of English Amanda McGuire Rzicznek of recommended youth literature that features LGBTQ+ characters and themes. Recommended for ages 14+. “In Maia Kobabe's (e/em/eir) autobiographical graphic novel, e discusses eir experience with discovering eir identity. With events in eir life such as having adolescent crushes, coming out to family, and facing trauma, Kobabe's graphic novel is a touching story that can be uplifting for anyone going through their journey of self-identity and discovery.”

● **USA Today** (“10 New LGBTQ books to Celebrate Pride Month.” 10 June 2019): Described as “a personal journey of self-identity and relates the experience of growing up gender nonconforming.”

**Awards**
- **Alex Award**, 2020
- **Garden State Teen Book Awards nominee**, 2021 (voting ends Dec. 31, 2021)
- **Stonewall Award Nonfiction Honor Book**, 2020

**Lists**
- **ALA Rainbow Project Book List**, 2020
- **ALA YALSA Best Books of 2020: Great Graphic Novels for Teens**, 2020
- **ALA YALSA Outstanding Books for the College Bound**, 2020
- **Chicago Public Schools Great Graphic Novels**, 2021
- **Denver Public Schools Top 100 High School Books**, 2020-21
- **Howard County Public Schools (MD) Best of the Year - High School**, 2019 (log in to Titlewave)
- **Iowa High School Battle of the Books**, 2021
- **Jefferson County (KY) Public Schools Recommended Reading Grades 9-12**, 2021 (log in to Titlewave)
- **New York Public Library’s 50 Best Books for Teens**, 2019
- **School Library Journal 17 Immersive Graphic Novels for Teens, Summer Reading 2021**
- **Texas Library Association: Maverick Graphic Novel Reading List**, 2020
Response to challenges

- **Comic Book Legal Defense Fund statement of support:** “This nuanced memoir examines nonbinary gender identity in a way that benefits both those who identify as nonbinary and those who wish to better understand nonbinary identity … Challengers have taken a scant handful of out-of-context images to falsely assert that the graphic novel is pornographic and obscene … Public schools and libraries have an obligation to support intellectual freedom and to meet the needs and interests of their entire community, including those who would like to read *Gender Queer* … Removing books such as *Gender Queer* based on the demands of the few violates the First Amendment rights of students, parents, and others in the community.”

- **“Opinion: School districts are banning my book. But queer kids need stories.”** by Maia Kobabe: “Queer youth are often forced to look outside their own homes, and outside the education system, to find information on who they are. Removing or restricting queer books in libraries and schools is like cutting a lifeline for queer youth, who might not yet even know what terms to ask Google to find out more about their own identities, bodies and health.”

- **Fairfax (VA) Review Committee Recommendation:** “The book is a well-written, scientifically based narrative of one person’s journey with gender identity that contains information and perspective that is not widely represented. This depiction includes the difficulties nonbinary and asexual individuals may face. The book has literary value in its structure, voice, and themes and has won literary awards. Students with a related experience will feel affirmed and others can gain understanding and empathy. The resources referenced in the book provide access to additional, reliable information. The book neither depicts nor describes pedophilia.”

- **North Hunterdon-Voorhees (NJ) Reconsideration Committee Recommendation:** “Kids who don’t have a resource or anyone to talk to can use this book and see someone they can relate to. The images fit into the narrative, and you understand the reasons behind the images when the book is read in its entirety. The complaints made about this book are not accurate. It is heavy content with a deep thought process and mature content. This book is about self-discovery, the challenge of explaining yourself and how you feel, and how you identify.”

- **Australia Classification Board:** “In the Board’s view, this publication can be accommodated in the Unrestricted classification as, within the context of the publication, the treatment of themes is not high in impact or offensive, and the treatment of sex and nudity is also not high in impact and is not exploitative, offensive, gratuitous or very detailed. Given the context of the publication’s narrative and its literary, artistic and educational merits, the Board does not consider that the publication contains material that offends a reasonable adult to the extent that it should be restricted. While considering that the publication should not be restricted, the Board noted that some content within this autobiographical text may offend some sections of the adult community and may not be suitable for younger readers. For this reason the Board has classified *Gender Queer* A Memoir ‘Unrestricted’ with consumer advice of ‘M – not recommended for readers under 15 years of age.’”

- **Why are schools in Maine keeping *Gender Queer* on the shelves despite challenges?** Eight school districts in the state have received challenges to *Gender Queer* since August 2022. Seven of those districts (88%) elected to keep the title on shelves and accessible to students. This case study from Book Riot examines why.

- The book has been retained in numerous other locations, including:
○ **Westport CT**: “There is nothing ‘vile’ or ‘vulgar’ about figuring out one’s identity ... This tackles ignorance in a way that enables empathy and perspective.”

○ **Urbandale IA**: “This book aligns with multiple criteria used for the selection of instructional materials, particularly criteria F: fostering respect for others and criteria H: encouraging students to make independent judgements and use critical thinking skills. This text is a former Iowa High School ‘Battle of the Books’ title. Finally, as the book is rated by the School Library Journal as grades 9+, the recommendation is for it to remain available as a library book of choice at Urbandale High School.”

○ **Downers Grove IL**: “The book isn’t intended to ‘cause sexual excitement,’ as some parents had alleged, it doesn’t include child pornography or porn of any kind, and it meets the district’s educational and social-emotional guidelines.”

○ **Topeka KS**: “The book had educational merit and would offer valuable information to students interested in the subject.”

○ **Louisville KY**: “The book has educational merit and provides students with inclusive material, including to students within the LGTBQ community ... There have been no arguments made that the decisions to retain ‘Gender Queer’ raises any safety or health concerns. To the contrary, in our experience as professional educators and school administrators, the Board finds that wholly removing access to the title due to a citizen complaint could, in and of itself, cause health and safety concerns ... The Board feels the few sexual passages in this material do not rise to the level that the average person, applying contemporary adult community standards, would find to be patently offensive.”

○ **Waltham MA**: “There is nothing pornographic in these books; they are valuable resources for our students.”

○ **Sullivan ME**: “The overarching message information ... is more valuable than any negative aspects that might come from the more controversial pieces.”

○ **Billings MT**: “Many students in the district will relate to the book ... If this book will help [students] and give them a guide, I want that in our libraries.”

○ **Lindbergh MO**: “The committee felt removal of the book would leave a vacuum in what it represents in the library — there are limited books of this type exploring the same topics of LGBT experiences. While some of the imagery is graphic, it ‘doesn’t detract from the overall story.’”

○ **Hillsborough NC**: “If you read the book and take it as a whole, it describes the author’s genuine struggle with gender identity and sexual orientation while growing up. That’s not salacious or pornographic.”

○ **Ballston Spa NY**: “To cherry pick ... does the book a disservice and I think our high school students are more than mature enough to handle this kind of content”

○ **Hudson City OH**: “Every student deserves and receives the best we have to offer and that includes learning resources designed to meet each child's individual needs ... According to our professionals, this book allows our students to relate to the [author's] struggles and helps them better understand what is happening in their own lives.”

○ **Salem OR**: “Depictions of sex are not representative of the book as a whole. This book provides an insightful and respectful viewpoint of some of our marginalized communities. It lifts voices and looks at issues with an appropriate lens.”
- **West Chester PA:** “[The book describes] coming into understanding of one’s sexuality and one’s orientation. ... Keeping it is aligned with the principle of protecting free speech as well as rights and regard for our LBGTQ+ students.”

- **Liberty Lake WA:** “It is every parent’s or guardian’s duty to monitor what their children read or check out at the library – not the government’s or the librarian’s job.”

- **Casper WY:** “Appropriate for high school libraries, with the understanding that the age range of high school students varies from approximately 14–18 years of age and that parents/guardians have ‘the right to determine the reading, viewing or listening matter for his/her own children’ ... Also considered legal decisions that stated books could not be removed from libraries because the deliberating group disliked or disagreed with the ideas contained in the books ... Considered whether the books contained pervasive vulgarity and whether the books were educationally suitable, and decided in favor by a majority vote that for some high school students the books did not contain pervasive vulgarity and were educationally suitable.”