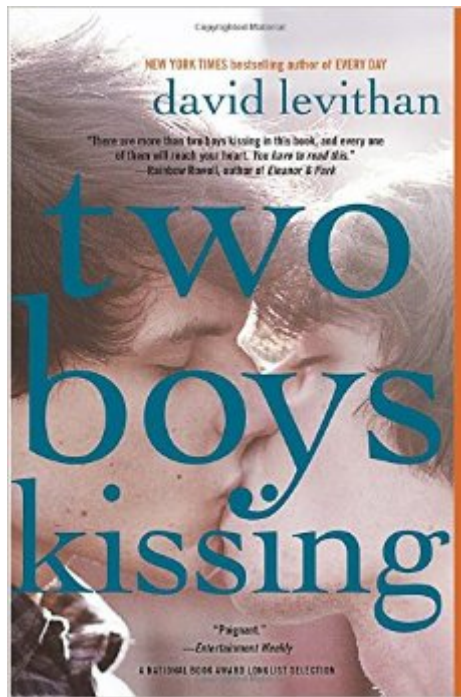


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Two Boys Kissing



Synopsis

"You have to read this." —Rainbow Rowell, bestselling author of *Eleanor & Park* In his follow-up to the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Every Day*, and David Levithan, coauthor of bestsellers *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (with John Green) and *Nick & Norah's Infinite Playlist* (with Rachel Cohn), crafts a novel that the *Los Angeles Times* calls "open, frank, and ultimately optimistic." Based on true events and narrated by a Greek Chorus of the generation of gay men lost to AIDS, *Two Boys Kissing* follows Harry and Craig, two seventeen-year-olds who are about to take part in a 32-hour marathon of kissing to set a new Guinness World Record. While the two increasingly dehydrated and sleep-deprived boys are locking lips, they become a focal point in the lives of other teens dealing with universal questions of love, identity, and belonging. Named to the National Book Award Longlist, A Lambda Literary Award Winner, A Stonewall Honor Book "An intriguing, complex narrative with an unusual point of view [and] a quality of retrospection that is rare (and refreshing) in YA literature." —The Washington Post

From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

"We were once like you, only our world wasn't like yours. You have no idea how close to death you came. A generation or two earlier, you might be here with us. We resent you. You astonish us." I have never read a GLBT book in my life. I have never had an opinion on gay people. I have never needed to. I have never really thought about gay people. I have never. So I thought it was time to read a GLBT book. I decided to see what my opinion on gay people would be. I thought what it

would be like to have an opinion. I have read *Two Boys Kissing* and I fell in love with it. It's unconditionally relevant and wistful. Hopeful and full of meaning. This is my first David Levithan book. This is my first GLBT novel. And this will not be my last. The narrative view-point of *Two Boys Kissing* is not something that I have come across before. It's the voice of hundreds of dead gay teens, who died out from AIDs. Unlike other readers who took some time to grow to love this narration, I connected with it instantly. The included quote at the top is an example of what I mean. The inclusive pronoun, 'we', made this book even more heartbreakingly beautiful than ever. There are scenes of urgency, rage and pure joy, and I could feel these emotions so vividly thanks to the narration which clearly took a large advantage. Trust me people, they don't sound like a mob of zombies. What makes *Two Boys Kissing* such an imperative read for basically everyone, is that it follows the stories of different gay teens in different relationship statuses. Craig and Harry don't care what other people think, they may not necessarily be a couple anymore but they are planning to set a new record for the longest kiss. In front of their school. Peter and Neil have been a couple for a while now, but there are terms to be met and hidden facts to be faced. There's Avery and Ryan who have only just met, and don't know what to do next. But then there's Cooper. Alone. Confused. Falling from reality. Not caring anymore. All these boys have a story worth sharing, all share their situations. All share how their friends and families deal with the new facts that; Craig, Harry, Avery, Ryan, Cooper, Neil and Peter are gay. I surprised myself, by loving every single character David Levithan placed forward, each and every single one of them felt genuine. I could feel their pain, anger, hope and love. *Two Boys Kissing* ached with its rawness. There are messages here to realise. David Levithan did not write this novel for the sake of just writing it. He wrote it to the world. He wrote it to gay males, more importantly. *Two Boys Kissing* is about falling in and out of love. Embracing and hiding from the truth. Fighting and cowering from families and friends. *Two Boys Kissing* may just be following a few days of a few people's lives, but the way it's addressed and presented is so ground shaking. All in all, *Two Boys Kissing* is phenomenal. Beautiful. And I highly recommend it. Everything about this novel was authentic and moving.

David Levithan, you have slayed me once again. *Every Day*, and, of course, *Will Grayson, Will Grayson*, which you co-wrote with John Green, have taken their place among my favorite books of all time. And while I didn't think it could be possible, I loved *Two Boys Kissing* more than those. Seriously. Seventeen-year-old former boyfriends Harry and Craig are planning to set a new Guinness World Record for continuous kissing. To do so, they'll need to kiss continuously for over 32 hours. This will take physical strength, yes, but also significant emotional fortitude and support

from many, many people, since the sight of two boys kissing at all--let alone publicly for 32+ hours--will be difficult if not downright unacceptable for some. While Harry and Craig undertake their record-setting quest, navigate their true feelings for one another, and deal with the myriad number of issues that will arise during this period, two other young couples are dealing with their own issues. Peter and Neil, who have been together for over a year, are struggling with trying to determine what their expectations of each other and their future should be, while Avery and Ryan, who just met, are struggling with issues of gender identity and all of the nerves of a blossoming relationship. Meanwhile, Tariq, a friend of Craig and Harry's, is trying to overcome his fears after being beaten up by a group of thugs, and Cooper is dealing with the aftermath of his parents' discovery of his homosexuality. All of these storylines may seem somewhat typical, but Levithan develops each with depth and empathy in a short number of pages. And what lifts this book up even further is that it is narrated by a nameless Greek chorus of men who died of AIDS. Part lamentation for what they lost, part reflection on the struggles each of the characters are going through, since they've seen it all, their words are so insightful, so moving, so dead-on in many, many ways, I literally found myself tearing up multiple times as I flew through the book. "You must understand: We were like Cooper. Or at least had moments when we were like Cooper. Just as we had moments when we were like Neil, Peter, Harry, Craig, Tariq, Avery, Ryan. We had moments when we were like each of you. This is how we understand. We wore your flaws. We wore your fears. We made your mistakes." I read this entire book in one day, and I was moved and inspired beyond my expectations. Levithan made me laugh, think, and, as I mentioned earlier, cry with his words. I can't even begin to count the number of times he so perfectly captured many of the feelings I had as a teenager struggling with my sexuality, with self-esteem, with bullying, with wondering if my parents and family and friends would ever be able to accept me for who I was. And the book was pitch-perfect in its portrayal of the rush of emotions when you first meet someone you like and realize they feel the same way, the anxiety of wondering whether there will be a second date, the beauty of a first kiss. I've said before how much I marvel at the state of YA fiction today, especially LGBT-themed fiction. I wish that Two Boys Kissing had existed when I was a teenager, because it would have been a tremendous help and comfort to me. I wish there was some way this book could be required reading for those struggling with their sexuality and with self-acceptance, as I believe it really could make a difference. Levithan doesn't create an unrealistic world where there are no problems and no struggles, but he shows how wonderful life has the potential to be, even when you don't think it can. This is honestly one of the best books I've read in some time. Thank you, David Levithan, for this experience. I feel changed for the better.

This book is about -- you guessed it -- two boys kissing. At least it is nominally. In addition to telling Harry & Craig's story it also tells us the stories of Neil & Patrick, Tariq, Avery & Ryan and Cooper. All are high-school aged LGBTQ kids. All are about to have their lives changed inexorably over the course of the 48 hours that the book covers, but not necessarily substantially. For every day changes our lives inexorably -- that's what life is all about, and that's what this book aims to teach us. The really interesting piece of this book is the narration. The narrator's voice is not singular but is a multitude of voices talking to the characters from beyond the veil, voices of gay men who died of AIDS early on in the 80's, voices the characters never get to hear. It's a first-person plural voice that I found very interesting and unique, and quite well done, too. But it's not just a gimmick; it's the thing that ties all of these disparate stories together and gives them context. The voices are from people who would have been just a few years older than I am, and they are poignant and sweet and angry and hopeful and bitter, all at once. They bring into stark focus the differences between the generations, between what life was like then and now, between life and death. And they bring into stark clarity the commonalities amongst it all. "We were once like you, only our world wasn't like yours. You have no idea how close to death you came. A generation or two earlier, you might be here with us. We resent you. You astonish us." This book is a quick and fascinating read that's full of cautious hope. I would heartily recommend it for any LGBTQ person today, young or old; it gives a glimpse of where we came from and a glimpse at where we are going to go.

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