

“This is Me” : The Importance of Visible Lesbian Role Models in Middle-Grade Literature

As our society becomes more aware of the LGBTQ community, we are seeing an increase in the representation of queer individuals across a wide range of media. The last fifteen years has seen an explosion in queer-themed YA literature featuring protagonists whose identities range across the LGBTQ spectrum. However, while queer characters have become more prevalent in YA literature, they have remained scarce in books for younger audiences. Recently, queer novels have started to be published for middle-grade students. One of the best is Ashley Herring Blake’s 2018 novel *Ivy Aberdeen’s Letter to the World*, a coming-of-age novel about the vulnerability and strength that comes from being yourself with the people you love. It depicts Ivy’s family dealing with the aftermath of a tornado destroying her house, but it is mostly about her dealing with complicated family structures, the difficulty of a first crush, and her learning to share her thoughts and feelings with others. This book is important because it portrays the realistic feelings and experiences of a young queer girl who is realizing that she is different from many of her peers, and it features multiple strong lesbian role models. As the age at which young people “come out” as queer continues to drop, the need for positive role models and age-appropriate discussions aimed at younger audiences rises; books like *Ivy Aberdeen’s Letter to the World* are a step in the right direction.