



**Title:** The Ship We Built  
**Author:** Lexie Bean  
**Imprint:** Dial Books  
**Publisher:** Penguin Young Readers  
**On sale date:** May 25, 2021  
**ISBN:** 9780525554851  
**Format:** Paperback  
**Age Range\*:** 10-14  
**Grade Range:** Gr 5 Up

## BOOK RESUME: THE SHIP WE BUILT

### BOOK SYNOPSIS

*The Ship We Built* is an expertly told epistolary middle grade novel about a trans boy learning to stand up for himself—especially to those he loves—and the power of finding a friend who treasures him for all that he is.

Sometimes I have trouble filling out tests when the name part feels like a test too. . . . When I write letters, I love that you have to read all of my thoughts and stories before I say any name at all. You have to make it to the very end to know.

Rowan has too many secrets to write down in the pages of a diary. And if he did, he wouldn't want anyone he knows to read them. He understands who he is and what he likes, but it's not safe for others to find out. Now the kids at school say Rowan's too different to spend time with. He's not the "right kind" of girl, and he's not the "right kind" of boy. His mom ignores him. And at night, his dad hurts him in ways he's not ready to talk about yet.

Then Rowan discovers another way to share his secrets: letters. Letters he attaches to balloons and releases into the universe, hoping someone new will read them and understand. But when he befriends a classmate who knows what it's like to be lonely and scared, even at home, Rowan realizes there might already be a person he can trust right by his side.

### REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★"Vividly and sensitively captures the struggle of being a child who just can't fit in and doesn't understand why. It is an authentic portrayal of childhood pain without an ounce of condescension. . . . While the book tackles big issues, primarily addressing being trans and queer and surviving incest as well as touching on parental incarceration, anyone who has ever been a sad or confused child will be able to see a little bit of themselves in Rowan and Sofie. . . . Everyone should read this remarkable, affecting novel."—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ "This heartfelt, emotionally raw narrative delicately and respectfully covers incredibly complex issues (homophobia, substance abuse, sexual abuse, racism) that many young people around the world face, compounded by Rowan's status as a trans boy. Bean's debut novel for young readers is as difficult as it is hopeful, beautifully captured through a 10-year-old voice. A remarkable and memorable book!"—*Booklist*, starred review

"A tender story . . . Queer and trans author Bean brings tremendous sensitivity to the tale of a young child exploring their identity and experiencing abuse. . . . A strong addition to any library collection."—*School Library Journal*

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\*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

“Lovely, timely, and necessary for both children and adults.”—*LA Review of Books*

“In this middle grade novel with tremendous crossover appeal, Bean tackles topics of abuse and grief. The story validates the pain facing young people questioning their identity and struggling with trauma, and also offers paths to healing. No matter where you are in your journey—of identity or of sorrow—Rowan will meet you there with his letters and friendship.”

—*Chicago Review of Books*

“Incredibly good; by turns raw, sweet, horrifying, tender, and hopeful.”

—Laurie Halse Anderson, NYT bestselling and award-winning author of *Speak* and *SHOUT*

“A remarkable novel about what it’s like to come of age and find yourself. . . . The perfect lifeboat for anyone adrift in the sea of becoming.”

—Celeste Lecesne, co-founder of the Trevor Project and founder of the Future Perfect Project

### **AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

- A Kirkus Reviews Best Books
- An ALA Rainbow Book List selection
- A Michigan Most Notable Books
- A Michigan MISelf in Books selection
- An Autostraddle Best Queer Books
- A BookPal OWL Shortlist selection

### **MEDIA AND RESOURCES**

- [TeachingBooks.net resources](#)

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