



**[Like a Love Story](#) by Abdi Nazemian**

Balzer + Bray, HarperCollins, 2019

ISBN: 9780062839374 (Paperback)

\*Age Range: 13 up (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 9 up (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

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**"A book for warriors, divas, artists, queens, individuals, activists, trend setters, and anyone searching for the courage to be themselves."—Mackenzi Lee, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Gentleman's Guide to Vice and Virtue***

It's 1989 in New York City, and for three teens, the world is changing.

Reza is an Iranian boy who has just moved to the city with his mother to live with his stepfather and stepbrother. He's terrified that someone will guess the truth he can barely acknowledge about himself. Reza knows he's gay, but all he knows of gay life are the media's images of men dying of AIDS.

Judy is an aspiring fashion designer who worships her uncle Stephen, a gay man with AIDS who devotes his time to activism as a member of ACT UP. Judy has never imagined finding romance...until she falls for Reza and they start dating.

Art is Judy's best friend, their school's only out and proud teen. He'll never be who his conservative parents want him to be, so he rebels by documenting the AIDS crisis through his photographs.

As Reza and Art grow closer, Reza struggles to find a way out of his deception that won't break Judy's heart—and destroy the most meaningful friendship he's ever known.

**This is a bighearted, sprawling epic about friendship and love and the revolutionary act of living life to the fullest in the face of impossible odds.**

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

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★ "Nazemian paints a picture of late '80s queer life in New York City that's neither romanticized nor viewed as only tragic.... [His] latest will remind readers that first love is isolating and unifying, exhilarating and terrifying, and every paradox in between."

— [ALA Booklist](#) (starred review)

★ "Three characters discover their inner truths at a time that sometimes feels apocalyptic for their community and loved ones.... The intense and nuanced emotions evoked by the characters' journeys help to give this powerful novel by Nazemian a timeless relevance."

— [Publishers Weekly](#) (starred review)

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“At the height of the 1980s AIDS crisis, three teens grapple with love and friendship.... [A] truly lovely romance to cherish. Deeply moving.”

– [Kirkus Reviews](#)

– [SLJ Reviews](#)

“A love letter to queerness, self-expression, and individuality (also Madonna) that never shies away from the ever-present fear within the queer community of late 80s New York, *Like a Love Story* made me feel so full—of hope, love, courage, pride, and awe for the many people who fought for love and self-expression in the face of discrimination, cruelty, and death. A book for warriors, divas, artists, queens, individuals, activists, trend setters, and anyone searching for the courage to be themselves.”

– Mackenzi Lee, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Gentleman’s Guide to Vice and Virtue*

“*Like a Love Story* is a fresh and poignant narrative about friends, family, friends who become family, and a society that is not always compassionate to those who need it most. I love this book with my entire heart. What a gift Abdi Nazemian has given us.”

– Brandy Colbert, author of Stonewall Award winner *Little & Lion*

“A gorgeous, heart-wrenching book that explores love, loss, and forgiveness in all of their many forms. Abdi Nazemian deftly shows how we can only move forward by examining and embracing the past, and how anger and injustice can pave the way for a better and more hopeful future.”

– Robin Benway, National Book Award–winning author of *Far from the Tree*

“*Like a Love Story* brought me right back to the scene of my teen years... and it did so masterfully. This book made me sob, it made me laugh, it broke my heart and put it back together again. I absolutely loved it.”

– Bill Konigsberg, Award-Winning Author of *The Music of What Happens*

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

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- Stonewall Honor Book, 2020
- NCTE Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award, Finalist, 2020
- ALA Rainbow Book List, 2020
- YALSA Outstanding Books for the College Bound, 2020
- YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, Top Ten Titles, 2020
- New York Public Library Best Books, 2019
- Chicago Public Library Best of the Best, 2019
- Times 100 Best Young Adult Books of All Time, 2021
- Booklist, Top 10 Romance Fiction for Youth, 2019
- Colorado Blue Spruce Young Adult Book Award, 2020
- Rhode Island Teen Book Award, 2021
- White Pine Award, 2021

## MEDIA AND RESOURCES

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- [Educator’s Guide](#)
- [Teaching LGBTQ History and Activism with \*Like a Love Story\*](#)
- [Interview on ChaiNBooks](#)
- Epic Reads, [Writing a Love Letter to the LGBTQIAP+ Community](#)
- [Stay on the Page interview](#)
- [TheBody interview](#)

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## AUTHOR STATEMENT (OPTIONAL)

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I am not only an author. I am myself a parent who cares deeply about our next generation of vibrant young lives, who knows how lonely it can feel not to see yourself and your own history represented in stories. I came of age as a gay immigrant kid who moved to New York during the worst years of the AIDS crisis in this country with fear drilled into me, experiencing a tremendous amount of shame. The thought of young queer teens today feeling, as I once did, that their very existence is something to be ashamed and afraid of, breaks my heart because I know too well that shame is very hard to shake off, especially when we experience it in our formative years. Like all queer people, I've lost too many friends and loved ones to suicide and overdose. Per the Trevor Project, LGBTQ+ young people are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers, with increased disparities for youth of color. These young people need to be celebrated, not banned. The books we read, teach and celebrate tell young people what and who we value, and we need to value all the young people and teach all their histories.

*Like a Love Story* is a novel about what it felt like to grow up in those terrifying times when HIV/AIDS was devastating a community. It is a novel about a time when there were no queer books in classrooms. A time when it took the President of the United States four years to speak the name of a virus that was killing his own people because of homophobia. And yet, it is also a novel about the warmth of community, the liberating impact of art, and the power of activists like ACT UP to create change when the world has turned its back on them. In short, it's a novel that shows young people who feel alone and hopeless that even if they feel they're living under the darkest cloud, there is always hope waiting for them over the rainbow. Instead of cherry-picking passages from the book to misrepresent it, I challenge all readers to open their hearts to the book's core message, which is one of love, unity and empathy—just as my husband and I teach our children to open their hearts with love, unity and empathy to all their fellow human beings.

## \*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

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A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that 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 age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

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