



***Kiss Number 8* by Colleen AF Venable, illustrated by Ellen T. Crenshaw**

First Second, Macmillan Children's Publishing Group, 2019

ISBN: 9781596437098 (paperback), 9781250196934 (hardcover)

\*Age Range: 14-18

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

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

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Mads is pretty happy with her life. She goes to church with her family, and minor league baseball games with her dad. She goofs off with her best friend Cat, and has thus far managed to avoid getting kissed by Adam, the boy next door. It's everything she hoped high school would be . . . until all of a sudden, it's not.

Her dad is hiding something big—so big it could tear her family apart. And that's just the beginning of her problems: Mads is starting to figure out that she doesn't want to kiss Adam . . . because the only person she wants to kiss is Cat.

*Kiss Number 8*, a graphic novel from writer Colleen AF Venable and illustrator Ellen T. Crenshaw, is a layered, funny, sharp-edged story of teen sexuality and family secrets.

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

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"Venable's frequently heartbreaking recollection of the abuse and torment that people went through for being 'different' — and the fact that it still happens all too frequently — is a powerful reminder of how far we still have to go." — [New York Times](#)

★"[This is] a story of family and friendship and love in all its forms, perfect for the graphic novel format and elevated by the combined art and narrative...the characters shine, fully human and permitted to be flawed. Hope prevails. A rare blend of tender and revolutionary." — [Kirkus](#), Starred Review

"Thought-provoking... A solid addition to YA shelves." — [School Library Journal](#)

"The interest here is in comparing GLBTQ experiences across a gap of generations—it was difficult then, it can be difficult still, but there's a promise of genuine happiness that makes following the heart worthwhile." —Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

**Updated 8/20/24**

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## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

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A 2019 National Book Award for Young People’s Literature Longlist Selection  
A 2019 New York Public Library Best Books for Kids  
A 2020 Tayshas Reading List Selection  
A 2020 Maverick Graphic Novel Reading List Selection

## RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

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- From an open letter published at PEN America, in response to the removal of Kiss Number 8 and other titles from the Leander (TX) Independent School District: “We stand by our works and reject the argument that their inclusion in Leander’s book club reading lists is somehow “inappropriate.” However, we do so not only because we believe in the literary merit of our books, but because we believe in the capacity of these and all books to expand the reader’s frame of reference—challenging them to confront new ideas and allowing them to explore other perspectives. We are sending this letter to you today not simply to stand up for our own books, but to stand against censorship in our schools. We call on you to resist this misguided effort to ban books and graphic novels, and to revoke any current bans and suspensions for the dignity and equality of all.” (PEN America)
- Statement from the Vandegrift High School Banned Books Club in Leander, TX on their decision to read Kiss Number 8: “We believe that it is vital to expose students to these concepts, instead of censoring us from things that are completely common.” (The Story Exchange)
- Larry Walton, president of the Patmos Library board in Jamestown Township, MI, after residents voted to effectively defund Patmos Library due to the presence of LGBTQ+ teen and adult titles, including Kiss Number 8: “We stand behind the fact that our community is made up of a very diverse group of individuals, and we as a library cater to the diversity of our community.” (Bridge Michigan)
- Patmos Library interim director Matthew Lawrence, on the same incident: “I love my country, and I believe what is happening is going against the First Amendment. [...] The people who need the library the most can’t vote because they are children.” (Bridge Michigan)
- Jamestown resident Connor Cook, on the same incident: “No one wins in this and the people who lose first are our kids. [LGBTQ+ people] are not going anywhere, so I just hope your kids have a library.” (USA Today)

## AUTHOR STATEMENT (OPTIONAL)

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[Colleen A.F. Venable Statement on Twitter](#)

## \*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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