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# Honestly Ben



## Synopsis

The companion to the award-winning *Openly Straight* and earner of three starred reviews, called "remarkable...deeply satisfying and as honest as its appealing protagonist" (Booklist). Perfect for fans of David Levithan, Andrew Smith, and John Green. Ben Carver is back to normal. He's working steadily in his classes at the Natick School. He just got elected captain of the baseball team. He's even won a full scholarship to college, if he can keep up his grades. All that foolishness with Rafe Goldberg the past semester is in the past. Except...There's Hannah, the gorgeous girl from the neighboring school, who attracts him and distracts him. There's his mother, whose quiet unhappiness Ben is noticing for the first time. School is harder, the pressure higher, the scholarship almost slipping away. And there's Rafe, funny, kind, dating someone else . . . and maybe the real normal that Ben needs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In Bill Konigsberg's *Honestly Ben* we are reintroduced to many of the characters we rooted for in the

previous book. Building upon those established relationships between Rafe, Ben, and their circle of friends and family, the story gives us additional depth and insight into several already well-developed personalities. The momentum of the previous book carries the reader through deeper waters here, which to me was really representative of Ben and Rafe as people. The first book had a much more present almost physical feel being told from Rafe's point of view. This book reflected Ben's more introspective nature and as a result asked deeper questions (to me). I resonated with his struggle in regards to labels and defining his sexuality-all while trying to find his voice and identity vs what others expected him to be.

Konigsberg does something daring for his sequel to *Openly Straight* -- he switches narrative point of view. Ben, who in the earlier book is depicted through the eyes of the narrator Rafe, is now the guy whose consciousness guides the story. For those who have read *Openly Straight*, this results at times in a Rashomon-like quality. More seriously, some of the story arc feels rather more predictable this time around. The resolution feels a little questionable, but Ben is such a sympathetic character that one goes with it. Both books are well worth the read.

What a treasure this book is. A few years back, I picked up a book called "*Openly Straight*" that sounded interesting. It was a wonderful story, beautifully told. "*Openly Straight*" ended in a way that hinted the story wasn't over yet. And having just finished "*Honestly Ben*," I can say that the first book wasn't complete without this sequel. It is a story told in a wonderfully authentic voice, a story that confronts gender identity, parental rejection, the need to belong, the systemic misogyny that is a part of our everyday thinking and speech, the ways in which labels are both useful and inadequate. But most of all, it is a love story that rings absolutely genuine and true, with emotional depth and characters that are complex and compelling and beautifully, sometimes frustratingly, human. Once I picked it up, I couldn't put it down.

Like the first novel in the series, *Openly Straight*, *Honestly Ben* is fantastic! I don't want to write anything to spoil any of the story, but buy this book after reading the first one, and enjoy the story. Bill Konigsberg is a truly gifted story teller and writer.

Mr. Konigsberg has done it again, I am even more in love with the story and characters than I was prior. *Honestly Ben* takes place a little while after *Openly Straight*, except for this time, we're following Ben's perspective. Ben is the quiet, history nerd who just wants to play baseball, get good

grades and make his family proud. Well, at least that's what everyone thinks. Ben is such a great character and following along for the ride as he is both figuring himself out whom he wants to become in the future is brilliant. Along with this book touching on so many important topics including, sexuality, family dynamics, relationships, poverty, privilege, and sexism. I highly recommend!

After having read *Openly Straight*, of course I wanted Ben to end up with Rafe. I didn't know he would be this brave though. And the gay-for-Rafe label is so beautiful. I totally understand how that would feel. I love that the labels of sexuality and gender are being stretched and bend to fit a person instead of a person being stretched and bend to fit a label.

Honestly, Ben is my favorite character I've ever followed in any LGBTQ+ story. I'm a huge fan of Konigsberg's work!

I'm irrationally in love with this book. This teenage love saga is so entertaining and poignant and realistic and honest, I just adored the heck out of it. Ben has a lot of obstacles in his path and I enjoyed reading his perspective and understanding more about his psyche. His dad, though, wow...what a powerful character to read. A lot of YA literature these days gets criticized for painting a rosy picture of idealism and acceptance. This is not Ben's experience. An even more important nod to the complex realism of this book is the journey the reader goes on with Ben as he discovers that love, gender, truth, courage, war are all not black and white or either/or. It's unique and undefinable and personal. I had all the emotions with the book...but the most important one was satisfied. A worthy companion. Excellent.

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