



## Sex is a Funny Word: A Book about Bodies, Feelings, and YOU

By Cory Silverberg

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**2016 Winner of the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction**

**2016 ALA Stonewall Book Award, Honor Book**

**2016 Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-fiction, Nominee**

A comic book for kids that includes children and families of all makeups, orientations, and gender identities, *Sex Is a Funny Word* is an essential resource about bodies, gender, and sexuality for children ages 8 to 10 as well as their parents and caregivers. Much more than the "facts of life" or "the birds and the bees," *Sex Is a Funny Word* opens up conversations between young people and their caregivers in a way that allows adults to convey their values and beliefs while providing information about boundaries, safety, and joy.

The eagerly anticipated follow up to Lambda-nominated *What Makes a Baby*, from sex educator **Cory Silverberg** and artist **Fiona Smyth**, *Sex Is a Funny Word* reimagines "sex talk" for the twenty-first century.

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**Sex is a Funny Word: A Book about Bodies, Feelings, and YOU** By Cory Silverberg **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 2-6-Silverberg and Smyth follow up their book for younger readers, *What Makes a Baby* (Triangle Square, 2013), with this engaging introduction to gender, bodies, and relationships. A diverse cast of cartoon kids—in terms of appearance, ability, and point of view—explore the multiple meanings of the word sex with their teacher, friends, and family members. There is a heavy emphasis on the importance of thinking for oneself and developing one's own opinions. The language is conversational and accessible, as well as direct, fastidiously accurate, and entirely gender-neutral. Each section ends with conversation-provoking questions, reinforcing the suggestion that the book be read and shared in conversation with a trusted adult. What makes this volume exceptional is its introduction of the subjects of transgender identity, intersex conditions, and masturbation. The quality text is enhanced and brought to life by comics drawn with bold lines on bright, full-bleed pages. Smyth's illustrations are interactive, fun, and edifying, presenting a range of body types and diversity. Despite the title, the topic of sexual intercourse is not covered; but Silverberg prepares readers for this information by introducing concepts such as respect, trust, and joy. **VERDICT** Exciting, enlightening, and innovative, this book addresses timeless questions about sex for a new generation of kids who are increasingly aware of the broad spectrum of gender and sexual identities.-Clara Hendricks, Cambridge Public Library, MA ©(c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Review

**"Sex is a Funny Word is nothing short of revolutionary.** Cory Silverberg and Fiona Smyth's newest book is brilliant in its approach to giving caregivers and educators the tools they need to talk to kids about their bodies.... Though representation of many bodies *shouldn't* be revolutionary, most of our media – children's books included – showcases white, thin bodies in ways that are often ableist, sexist, homophobic, and trans-exclusive. In this way (and many others), Silverberg and Smyth's contribution to the dialogue *is* revolutionary: finally young people have a way to see all bodies (including their own body) represented. **Yes.**" --Kristin Russo in Buzzfeed

\*\*"Silverberg and Smyth follow up their book for younger readers, *What Makes a Baby* (Triangle Square, 2013), with this engaging introduction to gender, bodies, and relationships. A diverse cast of cartoon kids—in terms of appearance, ability, and point of view—explore the multiple meanings of the word sex with their teacher, friends, and family members. There is a heavy emphasis on the importance of thinking for oneself and developing one's own opinions. The language is conversational and accessible, as well as direct, fastidiously accurate, and entirely gender-neutral. Each section ends with conversation-provoking questions, reinforcing the suggestion that the book be read and shared in conversation with a trusted adult. What makes this volume exceptional is its introduction of the subjects of transgender identity, intersex conditions, and masturbation. The quality text is enhanced and brought to life by comics drawn with bold lines on bright, full-bleed pages. Smyth's illustrations are interactive, fun, and edifying, presenting a range of body types and diversity. Despite the title, the topic of sexual intercourse is not covered; but Silverberg prepares readers for this information by introducing concepts such as respect, trust, and joy. **VERDICT** Exciting, enlightening, and innovative, this book addresses timeless questions about sex for a new generation of kids who are increasingly aware of the broad spectrum of gender and sexual identities."—Clara Hendricks, Cambridge Public Library, MA, **SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL**, starred review

"done with great sensitivity, precision and poise ... having access to a book like this could change the life of a lot of kids." --**Feministing.com**

"Silverberg is posing big questions at a crucial time. . . . [Books like his] represent shifting ideas and the inevitable parent-kid conversations around them." --**Maclean's**

"Emphasizing the importance of trust, respect, justice, and joy—as well as open communication—it's a thoughtful and affirming exploration of relationships, gender identity, and growing sexual awareness."--**Publishers Weekly, starred review**

"Moving up in target audience from their explanation of reproduction, *What Makes a Baby* (2013), Silverberg and Smyth explore various meanings for the word "sex." In their own ways, Zai, Cooper, Mimi, and Omar respond to information in chapters about bodies, "Boys, Girls, All of Us," touch, language, and "Crushes, Love, and Relationships." With skin tones in unlikely shades (blue! purple! green!) and wildly diverse crowd scenes, chances are good that any reader can identify with someone in these pages. Refreshingly, these crowds are diverse in a way that does not appear assembled by checklist. Lively design, bright, clashing colors, cartoon-style illustrations, comic strips, and plenty of humor support the informal, inclusive approach. Each chapter ends with questions to think and talk about. The author's respect for different approaches to the subject comes through. No actual sexual activities are described except for masturbation, in the chapter that also deals with "secret touches." The gender chapter tells how gender is assigned but notes "there are more than two kinds of bodies." The character Zai doesn't identify as either boy or girl. Illustrations show body parts of kids and grown-ups (nipples, breasts, bottoms, and parts biologically specific to boys or girls) demonstrating wide variety. Puberty will be addressed in a third title. This carefully thought-out explanation may surprise but should be widely appreciated." (glossary) (Nonfiction.7-10)

—**Kirkus Reviews**

"You could send your kid to college and graduate school, and years of therapy, to learn how to lovingly come to terms with their gender and sexuality. Or you could simply read this book with them—it's that thorough, and that good." —**Kate Bornstein**, author of *My New Gender Workbook*

"*Sex Is a Funny Word* is a book that brilliantly reminds us of our shared humanity. Whether you are LGBTQIA or any other letter in the alphabet (including "U" for undecided), this book contains everything you ever wanted the kids in your life to know about sex." —**James Lecesne**, Co-founder of The Trevor Project

"This deliciously illustrated book fills a huge need for interactive sex education that parents can feel comfortable reading with their kids. It will result in some very interesting conversations. I wish the teenagers that I treat had been able to read this book with a parent when they were younger!"—**Miriam Kaufman**, MD Head, Division of Adolescent Medicine, The Hospital for Sick Children (Toronto)

"I read *Sex is a Funny Word* with my 10 year old daughter who immediately got it! She saw herself, family, and friends in the characters. It's an amazing resource and makes what could be a difficult conversation, quite easy. I wish I had this book as a child."—**Aiesha Turman**, Founder and Executive Director, The Black Girl Project

"In *Sex is a Funny Word*, Cory Silverberg and Fiona Smyth have added an important and original resource to the world of sex education for young people. Flexible in design, engaging for kids, and culturally responsive, their work represents a new generation of sex education materials. With the themes of respect, trust, joy, and justice, *Sex is a Funny Word* represents the experiences of young people across the gender

spectrum; while geared towards preadolescents, it nonetheless presents a nuanced and inclusive way for talking about this important and sometimes confusing subject."—**Joel Baum**, MS Senior Director, Professional Development and Family Services, Gender Spectrum

"Yes, it's written for 7-to-10-year-olds. But I'd like to see it on the required reading list for high school freshmen, college resident advisors, military personnel, early-childhood educators, coaches, clergy, police officers, pediatricians and parents. Did I miss anyone? ... the story begins not with body parts but with values: Respect. Trust. Joy. Justice. 'Justice is like fairness, only bigger,' Silverberg explains. 'Justice means that every person and every body matters.' "Could we have that etched over every middle-school entry door, please? And while the chisel's still warm, put it on the nation's courtrooms, too."—Anndee Hochman, Broad Street Review

"*Sex Is a Funny Word* is a wonderful resource for parents and educators who want to talk with kids about sex and sexuality in a positive, loving, inclusive, and joyful way. For people who care about social justice and want to raise our kids to be healthy, safe, and strong, this is the book we have been waiting for!"—**Eveline Shen**, Executive Director, Forward Together

"Inventive, inclusive, and inspiring *Sex is a Funny Word* is a fantastic new resource for young people to learn about sex and so much more! Brilliant in color and content, the protagonists Zai, Cooper, Mimi, and Omar provide children with the means and the encouragement to explore their feelings, to ask questions, and to be who they are. This is a book that puts diversity and justice at the center of sexuality education - exactly where it should be!"—**Al Vernacchio**, MS Ed, and author of *For Goodness Sex: Changing the Way We Talk to Teens about Sexuality, Values, and Health*

"*Sex Is a Funny Word* opens a portal to a world where gender is exactly what we say it is rather than simply the sum of our 'middle parts.' Silverberg provides the template for all of us to see the simplicity with which we can step out of today's binary gender paradigm."—**Aidan Key**, author, educator, speaker, and founder of the Gender Odyssey Conference

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#### About the Author

Raised by a children's librarian and a sex therapist, **CORY SILVERBERG** split the difference and grew up to be a sexuality educator and writer. With an academic background in education and counseling psychology, he has developed and facilitated workshops for hundreds of agencies across North America, working on a range of topics including sexuality and disability, sexual pleasure, and sexual communication. He is the coauthor of *The Ultimate Guide to Sex and Disability*, and since 2005 he has worked as the Sexuality Guide for About.com. In 2012, Silverberg developed a book project—*What Makes a Baby?*—that became the best-funded children's book on Kickstarter. He subsequently signed a three-book deal with Seven Stories Press to produce a series of inclusive children's books about gender and sexuality. Silverberg lives in New York City.

**FIONA SMYTH** is a Toronto-based painter, illustrator, and cartoonist. Her first graphic novel, *The Never Weres*, was published by Annick Press in 2011. Fiona's comic *Cheez* was published in *Exclaim!* magazine for almost ten years, and her comic *Fazooz* was in *Vice* for eight years. Fiona teaches illustration and comics at OCAD U in Toronto.

#### Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Jacqueline Gore:**

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