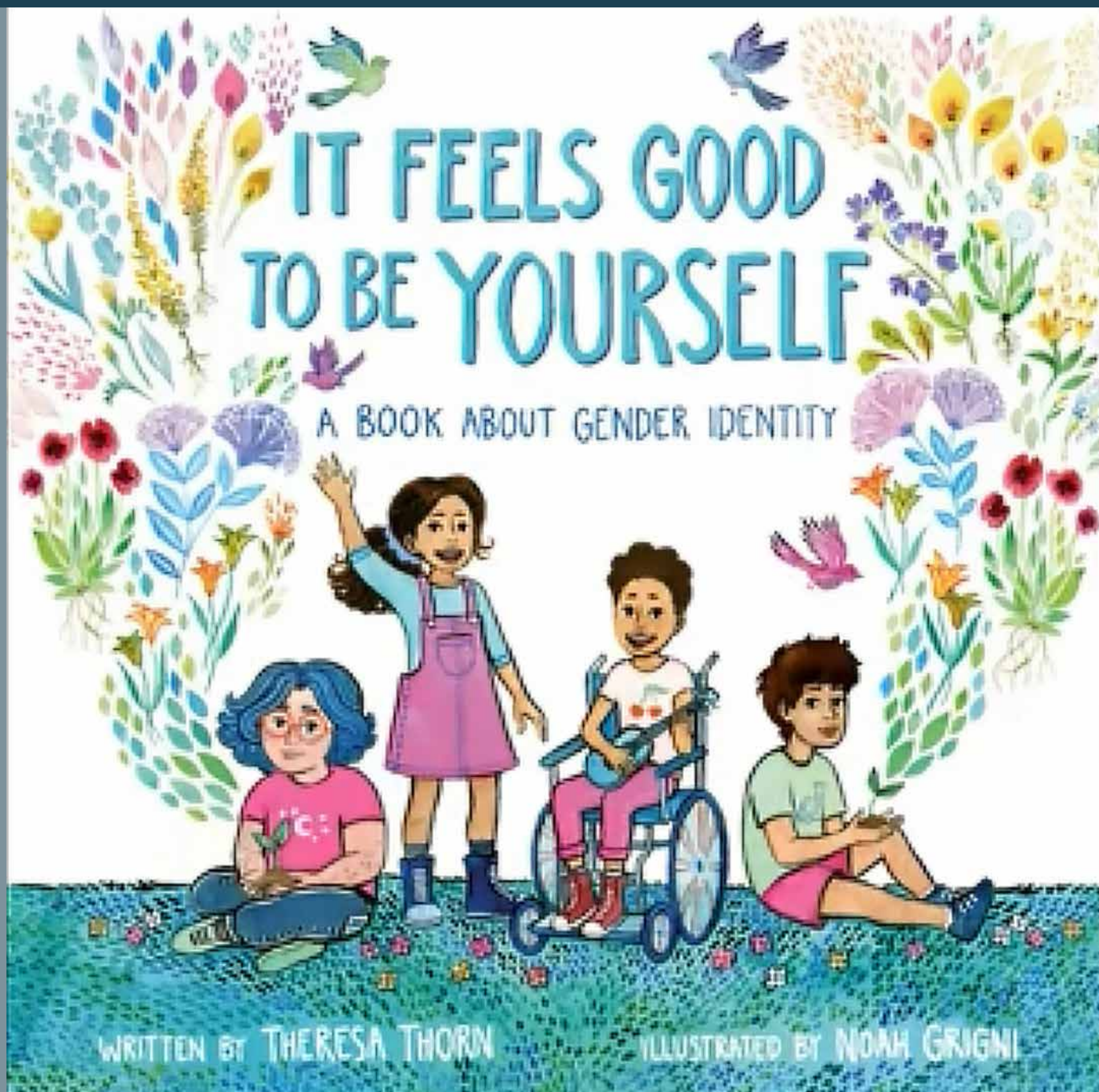




IT FEELS GOOD TO BE YOURSELF
by Theresa Thorn

She's a transgender girl.

She's a transgender girl.

That means when she was born, everyone thought she was a boy. Until she grew a little older—old enough to tell everyone that she's actually a girl.

That means when she was born, everyone thought she was a boy.

GIRL is Ruthie's gender identity.

GIRL is Ruthie's gender identity.



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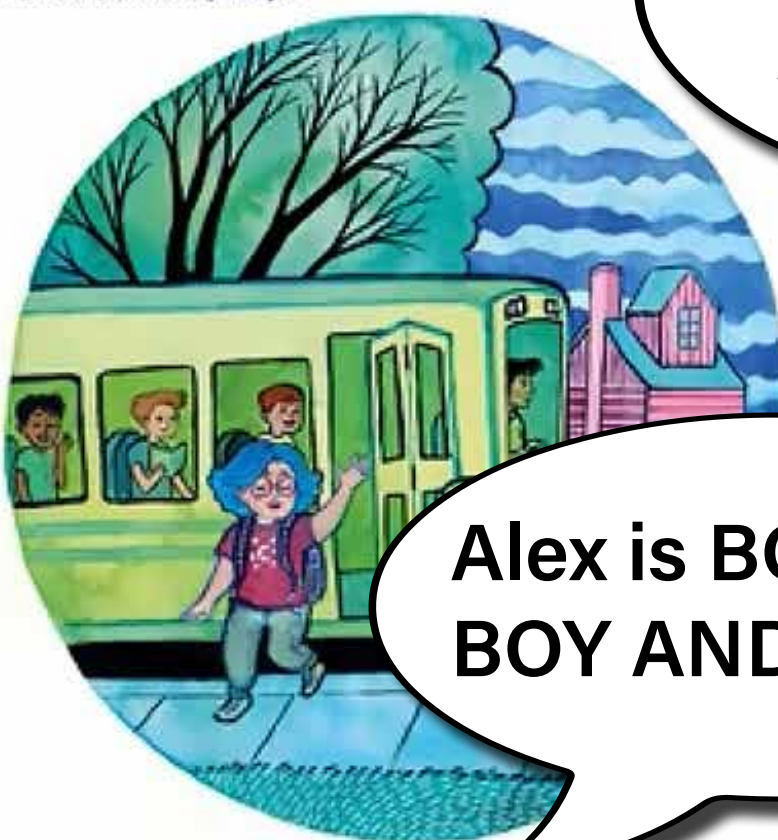
There are so many different ways to be a boy or a girl.



That means when she was born, everyone thought she was a boy.

When Alex was born, everyone thought Alex was a girl

This is Ruthie's friend ALEX.

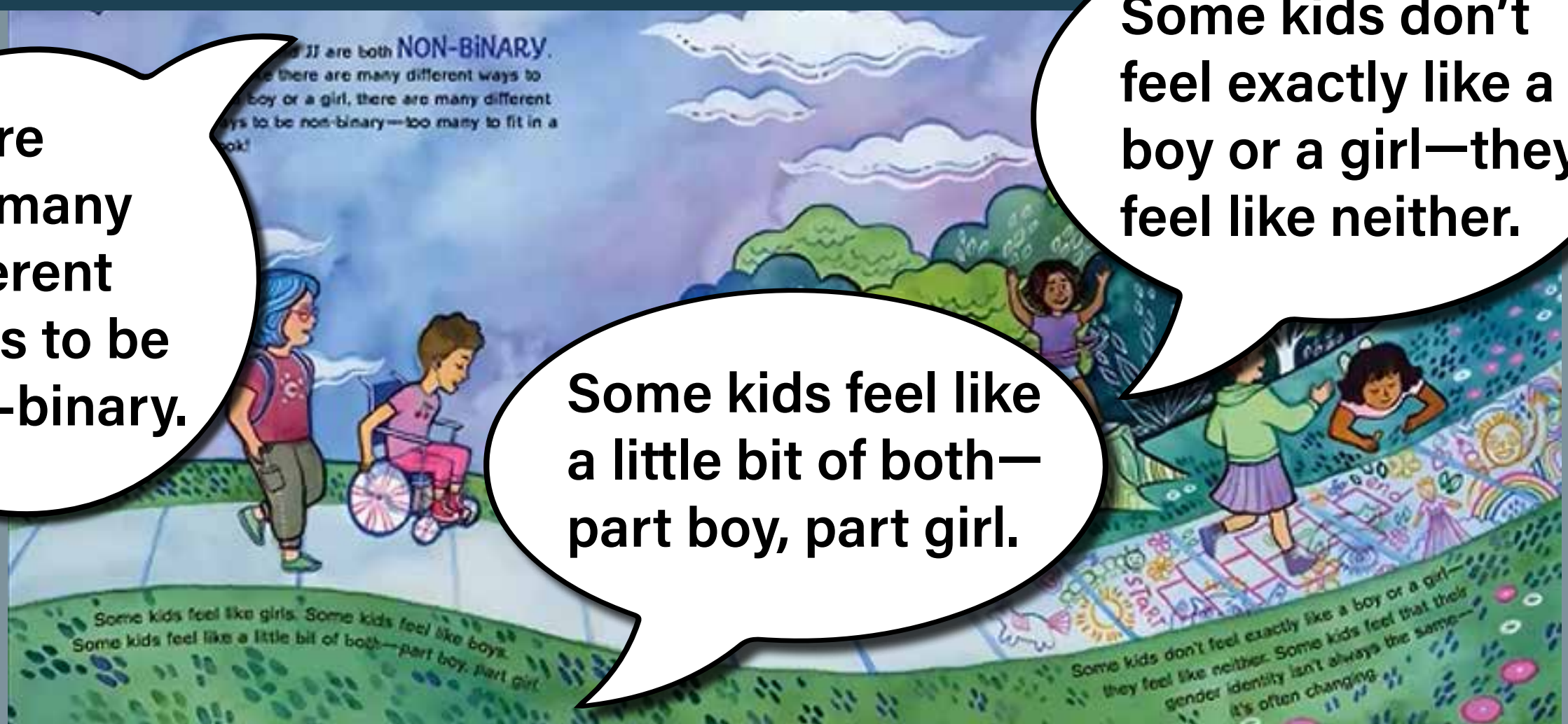
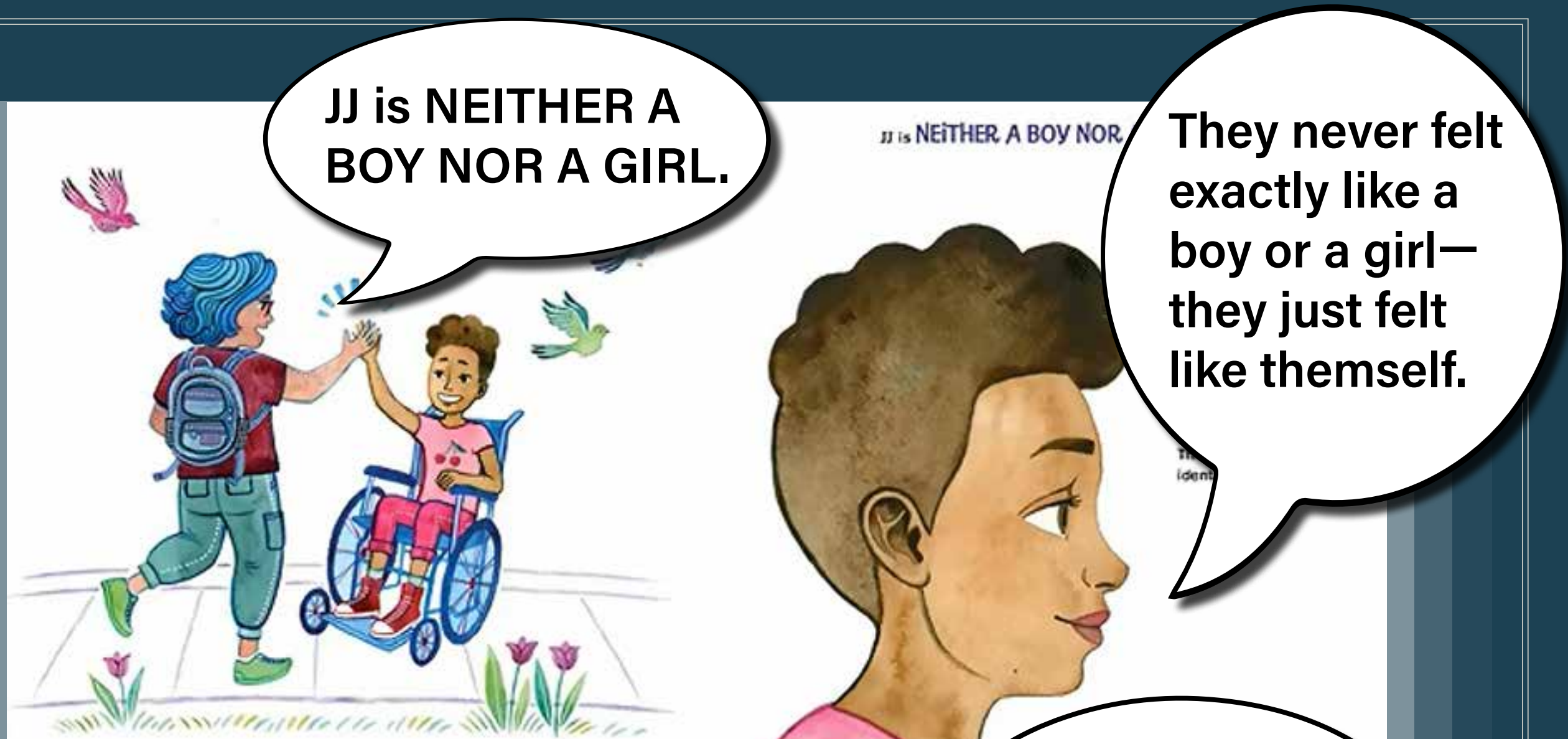


Alex is BOTH A BOY AND A GIRL.

Alex is BOTH A BOY AND A GIRL.



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Your gender identity might match what people thought you were when you were born.

Or, it might not.

When you were born... they looked at you and made a guess.

What a baby's body looks like...can be a clue.

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I know you think I'm a boy but really I feel like a girl.

Oops! Ruthie was a girl all along—they just didn't know it at first.

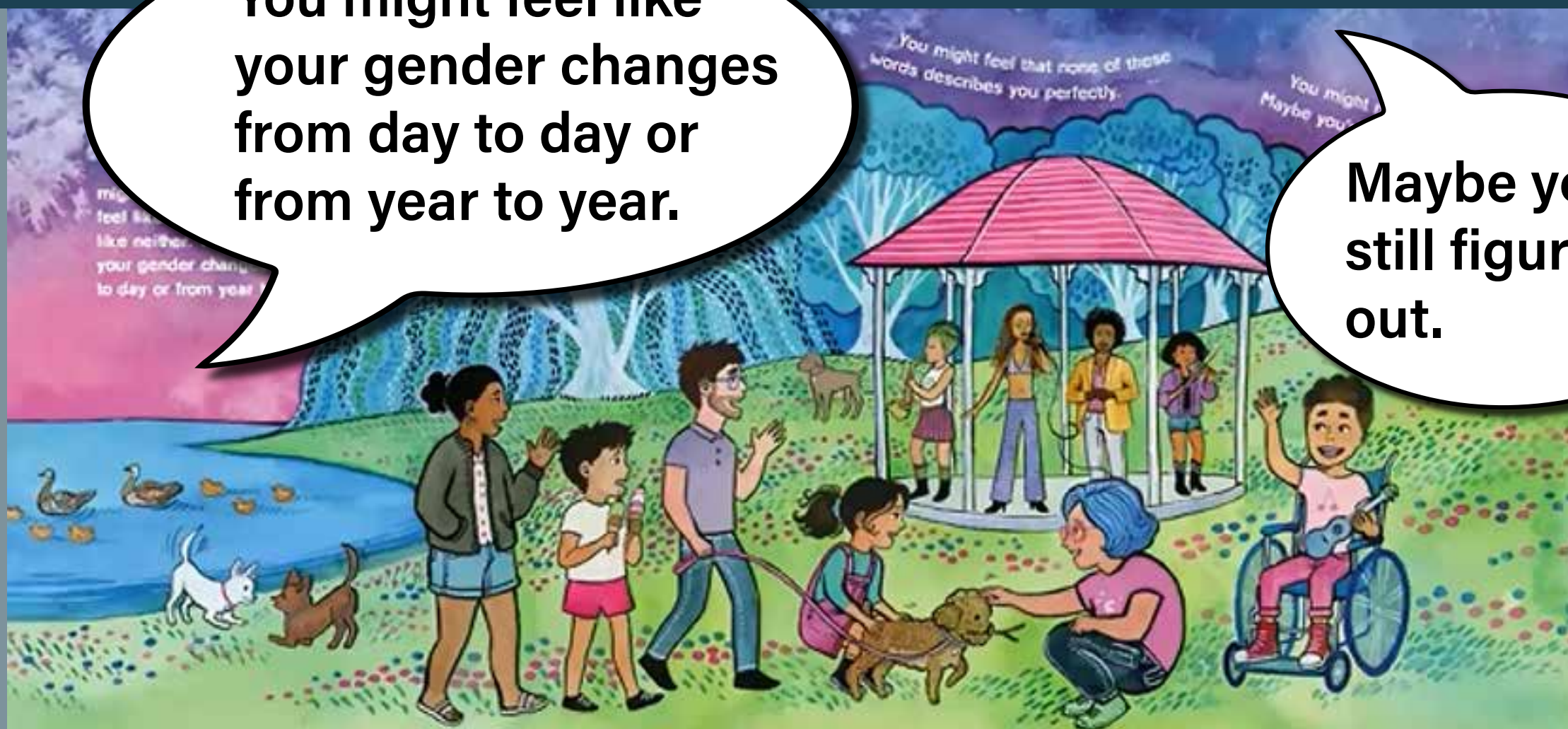
I know you think I'm a boy but really I feel like a girl.



Oops! Ruthie was a girl all along—they just didn't know it at first.

You might feel like your gender changes from day to day or from year to year.

Maybe you're still figuring it out.



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SOME HELPFUL TERMS TO KNOW



SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH: This is what is listed on a newborn baby's birth certificate. Adults involved in the baby's birth say whether the baby appears female or male.

INTERSEX: Not all people's bodies are exactly male or female. Intersex means that, from birth, someone's body doesn't match exactly what we have defined as male or female.

GENDER IDENTITY: This is who you feel like within yourself—whether you feel like a boy, a girl, some combination of boy and girl, or something else. Your gender identity is who you know yourself to be. It might match your sex assigned at birth or it might not.

GENDER EXPRESSION: This is how you choose to present yourself to the world—which clothes you wear, how you style your hair, how you walk and talk. Gender expression is how you express your gender identity. There are a never-ending number of ways to express your gender identity—too many to fit in a book!

CISGENDER: This is when your gender identity matches your sex assigned at birth.

TRANSGENDER: This is when your gender identity is different from your sex assigned at birth.

NON-BINARY: This is a way to describe many identities that fall between boy and girl or outside the binary of boy and girl. There cannot be one definition, because there is no one way to be non-binary.

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A NOTE ABOUT PRONOUNS

She/her, he/him, they/them, and ze/hir are some of the pronouns people of different gender identities may use to refer to themselves and would like others to use when talking to or about them. We can't know for sure what anyone's gender identity is just by looking at them or listening to them speak, and we can't know for sure which pronouns they use either. When we guess or assume and use the wrong words, we can really hurt people. A good first step is to listen. Someone who already knows a person well will probably use the correct pronouns when referring to that person, and we can follow their lead. It can be okay to ask about pronouns, but it is important to be sensitive. It might not be the right time or place to ask, or the person may not be ready to talk about it. If we introduce ourselves and share the pronouns we use, we can make it easier for the person we are meeting to do the same, if they feel comfortable.

SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR KIDS

The Gender Identity Workbook for Kids: A Guide to Exploring Who You Are by Kelly Storck, LCSW; illustrated by Noah Grigni

I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings; illustrated by Shelagh McNicholas

Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship by Jessica Walton; illustrated by Dougal MacPherson

From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea by Kai Cheng Thom; illustrated by Wai-Yant Li and Kai Yun Ching

Julia'n Is a Mermaid by Jessica Love

Who Are You?: The Kid's Guide to Gender Identity by Brook Pessin-Whedbee; illustrated by Naomi Bardoff



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MORE HELPFUL RESOURCES

BOOKS FOR ADULTS

Gender Born, Gender Made: Raising Healthy Gender-Nonconforming Children by Diane Ehrensaft, PhD

Raising the Transgender Child: A Complete Guide for Parents, Families, and Caregivers by Michele Angelo and Ali Bowman

DOCUMENTARY FILM

Gender Revolution: A Journey with Katie Couric

ORGANIZATIONS AND HELPLINES

Gender Spectrum
genderspectrum.org

PFLAG
pflag.org

Human Rights Campaign
hrc.org

GLAAD
glaad.org

Trans Youth Equality Foundation
transyouthequality.org

The Trevor Project
TrevorLifeline: 866-488-7386
thetrevorproject.org

Trans Lifeline
US: 877-565-8860 / Canada: 877-330-6366
translifeline.org



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

My daughter was five when she told me she wasn't the gender I'd assumed she was at birth. Actually, she told me even earlier, but she was five when I started listening.

Learning about gender diversity and my daughter has been a lesson in the value of withholding judgment. My daughter's gender identity and expression are personal and unique to her; they have very little to do with me or my opinions, assumptions, and preconceptions. I wanted to give my daughter a book in which she could see herself. A book that reflected her back without judgment. I wanted, further, to give that experience to all kids. I wanted a book that is less about accepting one child's difference and more about celebrating the amazing diversity of all children.

It is my wish that this book helps children to better understand themselves and others, and that it facilitates conversations within families. This book is for trans kids, cis kids, non-binary kids, gender-fluid kids, gender-expansive kids, questioning kids, and all kids, everywhere.

—Theresa Thorn



ILLUSTRATOR'S NOTE

I was fourteen when I came out as trans, and I'm lucky to have parents who listened and stood up for me when others failed to. My transition is not linear or binary. For me, transitioning is a fluid, lifelong process of personal discovery and self-actualization. It means staying true to all parts of myself and evolving on my own terms, as someone who is masculine, feminine, both, and neither.

I illustrated this book because it's a resource I wish I had as a kid. Language is power. Growing up in Georgia without access to words like transgender and non-binary, I struggled to define myself from a young age, and I felt isolated and unseen. I painted as a way of processing my dysphoria. Now, I'm painting to connect with my community, celebrate queer resilience, and embrace a radically inclusive future.

We need more books with trans protagonists. The trans population is as diverse as the human population, and no number of books could hold all our stories. Dear reader, it's up to you to continue this work, rewrite these definitions, share your stories, and build a future more expansive than we can imagine. You are the future we're fighting for.

—Noah

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