



# **Hear Us Out!: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present**

*Nancy Garden*

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## **Hear Us Out!: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present** Nancy Garden

What was it like being young and gay during the closeted 1950s, the exuberant beginnings of the modern gay rights movement in the 1970s, or the frightening outbreak of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s? In this unique history, Nancy Garden uses both fact and fiction to explore just what it has meant to be young and gay in America during the last fifty years. For each decade from the 1950s on, she discusses in an essay the social and political events that shaped the lives of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people during that era. Then, in two short stories, she explores the emotional experiences of young gay people coming of age during those times, giving vivid insight into what it really felt like.

*Hear Us Out!* is a comprehensive and rich account of gay life, both public and private, from one of the pioneers of young adult lesbian and gay literature.

## **Hear Us Out!: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present Details**

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Author : Nancy Garden

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# **From Reader Review Hear Us Out!: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope, 1950 to the Present for online ebook**

## **Jill says**

If you're looking for a quick overview of the history of the LGBTQQI (or any combination of those letters) rights movements in recent American history, this is a great book to begin with. From the 1950's to the present, Nancy Garden follows each decade with two short fiction pieces. I was expecting more adult information, as I did not realize this book was geared towards young adults. Despite the lower reading level, this would be a good book to have on hand for anyone involved in the gay-rights struggle.

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## **Jay says**

I was going to give this 2 stars for being more misery porn than anything else, but the irresponsibly written essay for the 80s knocks it right to 1 star. The way the author writes about HIV/AIDS has too many echoes of cishet fearmongering, especially when implying there were swaths of people knowingly and maliciously infecting others. This would be bad anywhere, but especially when the target audience is young and/or ignorant of LGBT culture and history.

Beyond that, most of the stories aren't all that well-written and are *extremely* grim. There's overt, often abusive and/or violent, homophobia in every story, as well as: one homophobic rape, one murder, multiple physical assaults, multiple suicides, and so on in a litany of suffering.

LGBT history is undoubtedly fraught, but I didn't find the unrelenting brutality of these stories all that cathartic or informative, just depressing. For most of these stories, the "hope" is "maybe one day is being out won't mean losing *everything* of your life before."

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## **Anita says**

This was a great book, and I'd highly recommend it for teen (or older) readers, straight or otherwise. Although many teachers may be skittish about tackling the topic of being gay, this book presents it in matter-of-fact essays combined with stories that bring the personal point of view home. Being heavy on facts should help keep book-burning parents at bay.

With a stroll through the decades from the "you're sick and need treatment" '50s to the civil rights empowerment blitz of the '60s to the freedom of the '70s, AIDS devastation of the '80s and, finally, more recent attempts at straight-gay alliances and increasing media representations of everyday gay life, a portrait of the history of gay rights in America is drawn in easy-to-soak-up scenarios.

Remember: The suicide rate is still incredibly high among gay teens in 2009, so books like this could be one way to help them cope as they seek emotional and social support. They'll even get a historical perspective and learn some legal facts that just might come in handy.

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### **Melissa Dwyer says**

Originally rated E by Lea Blumenfeld

I think that some middle school students need to read this, but only with the approval of the librarian. It shouldn't be put out for general middle school consumption. Very well written. Not graphic. Since the highest rate of suicide among teens is among gay teens, I feel that this is an essential addition to each high school library. The angst felt by the teens in the stories is so well depicted that it is almost palpable. Important for straights to read also.

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### **Janine Gallo says**

Great concept for a book, poor execution. The writing was choppy and really took away from the content & historical significance.

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### **Priya Bhakta says**

A mix of stories of varying quality, highlighting the changes in opinions and political landscape towards LGBT matters throughout the years.

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### **Janice says**

I really liked the essays at the beginning of each time period (yes, shocking that me - the most un-historically interested person in the world is saying this) - They helped set the stage for what the time period was like for GLBTQ teens. My heart cried out for many of the characters. I thought many of the stories would have made excellent novels. :)

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### **Deb says**

An important book, but kind of plodding to get through.

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### **Thea says**

This book is so important and inspiring! I really enjoyed. I actually found my forensics piece in this book.

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### **Jill Guccini says**

Thought this was a really accessible way for youth to learn about queer history, in a neat format. Full review up on the Leslibrary tomorrow.

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### **Julia says**

This book was a mixed bag. A collection of essays, separated by decade, each followed by a couple of short stories to highlight the issues raised in said essays.

I quite liked the essays and learned a lot from them. However, the short stories were very hit-and-miss. The first one(s) were very flat, but definitely improved as the book proceeded. But another short story was so touching that I and others in the book club were moved to tears. I do think that the author is an ambitious writer and consequently, part of my criticism is that she could have embraced more. For example, when she talks about the '70's and women's movement, I think her stories could have conveyed some of the dilemmas - perhaps a female character who supported women's lib issues, but didn't want to include lesbians in her grassroots group. (or something similar).

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### **Westly VonShbubblebubble says**

Hear Us Out is a good book, but I wouldn't re-read it. Don't get me wrong, I do support the LGBT community, I might be part of it actually, but this book didn't really say "don't discriminate against us" and really was just regurgitating facts and telling stories.

Also, the stories were almost the same, but with a few changes. If there weren't any names, then you might have thought that this was the same story. A few that were different was the one about the two gay boys (the only male couple in the ENTIRE FRIGGIN BOOK), one about tuxedoes (no parents involved), and the last one when the main character does not either have a love interest/partner. The story was basically two lesbians fall in love, accidentally reveal the secret that they are gay to their parents/peers and gets rejected by everyone.

Good book, but will not read again.

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### **Heather Barton says**

Unique telling of the history of the GLBTQ movement. Each section is devoted to a different decade, beginning with the 1950s. At the beginning of each new decade explored, Nancy Garden gives historical accounts of events of the time and the effects on the GLBTQ community. Young adults of the decades and their own accounts of becoming aware of themselves and the pressure from society to change then follow the historical accounts. The book, told in many different voices gives the reader a great sense of feeling as if you are a part of the story, not merely an observer, and would be a wonderful tool to teach voice in a Language Arts classroom. The stories would also pair well when examining social issues of different eras. For instance, if discussing the 1960s and the age of protest, reading the section of the 1960s depicted through the eyes of a young man who witnessed the Stonewall Inn riots in New York, would see a protest not often discussed or

examined.

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### **Brooke Houck says**

This was a pretty good book and it was FULL of great facts regarding LGBT rights and achievements. It went decade by decade all the way for the 1950's to 2000's with letters in-between. I found it very informative and I especially enjoyed learning about all the progress the LGBT community has made.

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### **Virgowriter (Brad Windhauser) says**

Interesting premise but not executed well. The essay that sets up the history of each decade tends to be short and underdeveloped. The only in-depth one is for the 2000's (and other decades had their fair share of content, although you wouldn't know that based on this book). The stories themselves have useful moments; however, they often feel like a rough draft wherein the author did some research and needed to prove it by forcing it into the story--often, these characters feel forced into situations rather than rendered with honesty. Although it is refreshing to see largely positive takes on these situations, they felt too contrived.

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