



Read Me Like a Book

By Liz Kessler

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In her first novel for young adults, *New York Times* best-selling author Liz Kessler tells a story about finding a kindred spirit and becoming your true self.

Ashleigh Walker is a mediocre student with an assortment of friends, a sort-of boyfriend, and no plans for the future. Then a straight-from-college English teacher, Miss Murray, takes over Ash's class and changes everything. Miss Murray smiles a lot. She shares poetry with curse words in it. She's, well, *cool*. And she seems to really care about her students. About Ashleigh. For the first time, Ash feels an urge to try harder. To give something — someone — her best. Before she knows it, Ashleigh is in love. Intense, heart-racing, all-consuming first love. It's strong enough to distract her from worrying about bad grades and her parents' marriage troubles. But what will happen if Miss Murray finds out Ashleigh is in love with her?

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Read Me Like a Book By Liz Kessler Bibliography

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- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 9 Up—Ashleigh is entering her sixth-form year, and her life is in chaos. There are fights at home, her best friend has grown distant, and there's a possibility that she might have a real boyfriend for the first time. The strangest thing of all is that she's beginning to care about school, and it's all thanks to her English teacher, Miss Murray. Kessler has written about how this, her first novel, sat in a drawer unpublished for 15 years due to UK government restrictions on publishing gay and lesbian content for children and young adults. And it shows. This book feels dated, despite a veneer of modern references and technology. The writing does not feel vital, even when Ashleigh is discovering her sexual identity and her obsession with her teacher. For young Anglophiles, this look into British teen life will be welcome, but for those not already versed in British culture, the differences are stark and difficult to parse, including the mechanics of secondary schooling, attitudes toward drinking, and important class signifiers. VERDICT An additional purchase.—L. Lee Butler, Hart Middle School, Washington, DC

Review

Taking risks both large and small—and growing from them—is a recurring theme of this story, from Ash's shoplifting on a dare with a rebellious friend to coming out to her parents on her 18th birthday. The English setting (including frequent pub visits and colorful slang) adds a rich dimension, as do the well-rounded characters whose flaws make them all the more sympathetic. With an absorbing plot and believable dialogue, this novel demonstrates respect for teens' fears and desires, ending on a hopeful note that steers clear of unconvincing platitudes.

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

...the idea that you have to know who you are in order to figure out where you want to go is a powerful one for readers examining their own identities.

—Publishers Weekly

It's refreshing to see depicted a student whose road ahead is so fuzzy...what makes this book compelling is its rich characterizations, particularly Ash's parents, who grapple with their own attempts at finding love again. Far from just a story about a teen crushing on her teacher, this is about a teen discovering her sexuality and her own strength in the process.

—Booklist

Luckily for the reading world, Kessler tucked [Read Me Like a Book] away safely for a future when readers would not only tolerate a funny, honest, bittersweet story of coming out, but clamor for it. Ash is authentic as a teen for whom light and love dawneth simultaneously. And Miss Murray is spectacular in her role as a teacher-guide who must walk the delicate line between support and inappropriateness.

—Shelf Awareness for Readers

About the Author

Liz Kessler is the author of the best-selling Emily Windsnap series, the Philippa Fisher series, and the middle-grade novels *North of Nowhere*, *A Year Without Autumn*, and *Has Anyone Seen Jessica Jenkins?* She lives in Cornwall, England.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Deck:

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