

Known for employing rom-com tropes for gay boys falling in love, Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy* offers it all: the meet-cute in the bookstore, the awkwardly sweet dates, the misunderstandings and break-ups, and of course the inevitable grand gestures that earn reconciliation and a happy ending. Yet this deceptively slim novel does so much more: placing Paul and Noah's relationship as part of typical of high school drama—with its everyday chaos of sports, clubs, dances, exes in the hallway, and friendships under strain—all with a normalizing inclusivity that marked it as both revolutionary and wonderfully on-trend for turn-of-the-millennium teen romantic comedies. A noted departure from the angst-ridden plots of LGBTQ novels gone before, the book racked up many a starred review, including one from the *Bulletin*, which also selected it for that issue's Big Picture (9/03). There, editor Deborah Stevenson succinctly described what made *Boy Meet Boy* so special: that "in a genre filled with darkness, torment, and anxiety, this is a shingly affirmative and hopeful book." Its success then opened doors for other affirmative, hopeful queer stories, and one could argue that we wouldn't have award-winning fare from Albertalli to Silvera to Sáenz without it. But it also maintains its own place on lists of best queer teen novels, despite the wealth of titles that have come after. Why? Because Paul and Noah still warm hearts as the adorable couple; because Infinite Darlene still shines unforgettably as a reader favorite; and because the other queer subplots ring as true and complex as ever, like Kyle's struggle with his bisexuality and Tony's heartbreaking conflict with his evangelical parents. And despite passing references to video rentals and hanging at the mall, and a lack of cell phones and social media, the story has a timeless quality that avoids obsolescence—partially due to the queer-friendly, firmly supportive town setting, which Stevenson noted as the novel's

“master stroke.” It may still be a reality that “doesn’t quite currently exist” but it allows the novel to maintain its “sparklingly romantic” idealism for new cohorts of readers who need it.

- *Alaine Martaus, Reviewer*