

An unexpected hit turned LGBTQ classic, *Weetzie Bat* made waves as a quirky, lyrical love letter to the city of Los Angeles, full of memorable characters with even more unforgettable names, whose misadventures in modern romance were buffered by unbreakable friendships. Since it was very much a cultural snapshot of new-wave Southern California culture, it would have been easy to ignore the substance under all its style. But *Weetzie Bat* continues to impress for much the same reason that Roger Sutton originally noted: that for all its strangeness, “the author makes it all work.” Novel in its time for its casual references to underage drinking, sex, homosexuality, and out of wedlock pregnancies, alongside HIV scares and drug-overdoses, *Weetzie Bat* was also notable for giving teen readers a story of a happy gay couple a more than a decade before Levithan’s *Boy Meets Boy*. Whimsical without ignoring dark realities, the novel offers “happily” without promising “ever after,” touched by a sadness that only briefly becomes tragedy and sweetened by its portrait of the love and acceptance to be found with the-family-you-make. And what an utterly lovely, wish-fulfilling, if imperfect family it is: with its confident yet damaged center (Weetzie), her fallible yet adoring lover (My Secret Agent Lover Man), two devoted gay boys (Dirk and Duck), a child with three fathers (Cherokee), a Witch Baby, and two dogs (Slinkster and Go-Go Girl). Other elements don’t age nearly as well, though, and what the original review read as innocent now reads more like privilege, a charmed fairy-tale life protected by whiteness, wealth, and wishes, with mere nods to racial diversity (odd for a city like Los Angeles) and Weetzie’s problematic appropriation of Native culture. Still, the novel maintains a distinctly nostalgic feel, rather than feeling dated, which really works since the story itself celebrates nostalgia. More than 30 years later, there’s still no other book like it, and that may be its most remarkable achievement.

- *Alaine Martaus, Reviewer*