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# Girl Mans Up

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## Book Review

### Girl Mans Up

#### Author

M-E Girard

#### Illustrator

#### Reviewer

Emma Patton

#### Rating

Dependable

#### Level

Young Adult

#### Pages

373

#### Year

2016

#### Publisher

HarperTeen

#### ISBN

9780062404176

Everyone seems confused about who Pen Oliveira is trying to be. She dresses like a boy, acts like a boy, and likes girls, so maybe she's trying to be a boy. But Pen Oliveira isn't trying to be anything. She's trying to figure out how to be her most authentic self. She's trying to figure out how to get her friends to quit taking advantage of her and start treating her like a person. She's trying to figure out how to navigate romantic relationships. She's trying to figure out to honor her immigrant parents when they seem set on disrespecting her choices. Amidst this all, Pen struggles with the concept of gender and where she fits in it. Pen realizes that her own lack of confidence prevents her from living her fullest life. She realizes that she needs to live with the knowledge that she is worthy of respect, even if she doesn't yet know who she is.

Girl Mans Up brings up crucial issues that may not be found in other young adult books. Not only does the book discuss gender expression and sexual orientation, but it also features immigrant parents who are culturally Portuguese while their children are culturally American, leading to parent-child cultural conflict. Author M-E Girard also writes Pen's family to show that parents are not always supportive and loving caretakers. By the end of the book, Pen must decide whether or not to leave home. But, rather than it being as a rebellion, Pen makes the decision with self-compassion and a knowledge that she is deserving of far more respect than she receives at home. Though Pen's parents are complex and defy the expectations of the archetypal parent, the author does not shy away from the contradictions and instead leans into the complexity, showing a maddening situation where Pen must fight for herself, even if the people who are supposed to care about her will not.

\*Contains severe language, moderate sexual content, and mild violence.