

Hazel Edwards www.hazeledwards.com

Discussion Notes:

Young Adult Fiction: *F2m: the boy within*



Title: *F2m: the boy within*

ISBN: 9781876462901

Author: Hazel Edwards and Ryan Kennedy

Publisher: Ford Street Publishing

EBook Versions: Kindle edition on Amazon.com and Readings booki.sh ebooks

Awards & Recognitions: White Ravens 2011 at Bologna Book Fair. Nominated for Rainbow Award 2011 Recommended by SafeSchools Coalition

Educator Resources

1. About the book
2. Synopsis
3. Titles
4. Discussion Questions
5. Hypotheticals
6. Quotes from Reviews & Fan-art
7. Facts about Gender Transitioning
8. Activities
9. Links to Guest blogs & Podcasts etc
10. Webchat with co-authors ... internationally too



Co-authors Hazel Edwards & Ryan Kennedy

**1. About the book *F2m: the boy within*
by Hazel Edwards & Ryan Kennedy**

ISBN: 978-1-876462-90-1

Publisher (print) www.fordstreetpublishing.com

e-book on Amazon

International first YA Fiction by trans ftm (female to male) co-author

All adolescents face the quest for identity, but gender change complicates “coming of age”. Meet school-leaver Skye who is transitioning from female to male.

- Co-author New Zealand-based Ryan Kennedy lived as female until his transition to male at twenty-seven. Ryan works in IT and is a passionate environmentalist and musician. He is now happily married.
- Australian author Hazel Edwards has published 200 books and co-wrote via Skype and e-mail across a year with Ryan whom she’s known as a family friend since he was nine years old and presenting as a girl.

Co-author websites have additional resources & links

www.ryanscottkennedy.com

www.hazeledwards.com

Book trailer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WqD-E04PNc>
.....

Transitioning gender is one of those subjects, which starts alarm bells for teachers & librarians , so they tend to avoid it, even if gender is on the curriculum or a local youth issue.

- How do I tackle a subject, which used to be, (and still is) taboo?
- How will I handle the inappropriate jokes embarrassed students might make?
- What if parents complain?
- If transitioning gender is different from being gay, how do I clarify this for my students? I don’t completely understand myself.
- Will I offend some one with my use of gender specific language?
- Do I know the right terms to use?
- Do I say he or she? Which pronouns do I use?
- What is the medical situation?
- I have no personal experience in this area, what can I say?
- Should I just keep to the medical definitions and avoid the social and emotional implications?
- Should I censor some reading or am I being prejudiced because I fear visiting a subject, which is topical but which seems to be sensationalised rather than compassionately understood?
- A young person was bullied and suicided in our community, because their gender situation was not accepted nor understood. I must do something to prevent that happening again.

All these reactions are common.

But the reading fiction like *F2m: the boy within* enables broader discussion and can be given as a gift to families or communities or

workplaces who need to understand different viewpoints and not fear the unknown.

The subject matter is controversial but this novel's handling is not. Medical sequences are accurate.

Introductions: This is the beginning of the novel.

"Tick the box. M or F. Male or Female are the only options 'ordinary' people know about. M for Male. F for Female. You're one or the other. But what if you're not? Like me. As I'm finding out."

Discuss: What might make you want to read on?

- First person viewpoint?
- The gender situation?
- "Real" issues
- Unusual circumstance?

2. Synopsis of *F2m: the boy within*

This is a coming-of-age novel, with punk music and the medical issue of transitioning gender and others' reactions to this change of identity. Skye plays bass in the all-female "Chronic Cramps".

An 18-year-old school-leaver, Skye who transitions to Finn, faces the issues of identity, not just for a driver's licence but for the rest of his life. Skye is an ftm (female to male) who always felt male inside, but who presented as a girl.

Skye faces telling family and friends, and their reactions vary. There's bullying at a school reunion, but also unexpected support from Gran who had a sibling in the same situation.

Car-obsessed brother Victor feels threatened by another son in the family and Mum doesn't want to lose her daughter. But Dad slowly accepts. In between are the usual family hassles, lots of punk music and finding advice from online, new friends, job issues, counselling, "binding", clothes, and the expensive medical decisions about hormone injections and operations which have to be made. Plus daily issues of F or M on forms, others expectations and acceptance.

Hilarious scenes but with poignant sub-text about "fear" of the unknown and reactions to change.

3. Titles:

Choosing a title is always a challenge for an author.

We chose it because it is like texting, indicates the ftm content but the f2m also indicates the way we wrote the book online, together.

To what extent do you think *F2m: the boy within* is an effective title?

4 Discussion Questions:

1. What makes a book controversial? The subject matter? Or the way it is written?
2. What's the difference between propaganda and 'a good read'?
 - Alternative viewpoints also included?
 - Universal emotions?
 - Humour?
 - Could a novel be propaganda and also a good read?
3. What might you gain from living for a few hours, from the character's viewpoint, who may be someone in different circumstances to you?
4. Co-writing fiction could be MORE challenging than co-writing fact. Why?

5. Hypotheticals:

- You're a famous film-director and want to make a film of *F2m: the boy within* but your producer can't get the finances. Five arguments to persuade investors.
- You're a doco maker ... and want to film "reactions" to the F2m book. Thirty minutes for prime time television. What will you include? Why?
- You have a ten-minute web chat link up with the co-authors in Australia and NZ. You are allowed one question each. What will you ask?
- You've been commissioned to compose punk music for *F2m*, the film!
 - Use the *F2m* song lyrics in the novel but compose your own music.
 - Write song lyrics for "Mosaic" from punk musician Finn in the *F2m: the boy within* novel. Then perform it.
- Create, in any medium, a family tree based on the characters mentioned in this novel.
- Chronic Cramps is the name of the all female punk group. Design a poster for their next gig.
- ID is important. How do you prove who you are?

Google *F2m: the boy within* and you'll find many YA blogs and reviews.

Or check out:

http://www.hazeledwards.com/page/f2mthe_boy_within.html

6 Quotes from Reviews & Fan Art

Here are quotes from just a few of the many international reviews and fan-art by Rooster Tails



Book Reviews

- The Great Raven -- Book Review "It's well-written and answers a lot of questions".
- SafeSchools Coalition Victoria ...covers issues related to bullying, gender discrimination, gender power, intersex and the difficulties that arise from looking like a girl on the outside, but inside you're a boy. Recommended.
- The Reading Stack - Book Review: "Give it a try. *F2m* blew my mind".
- Read Plus - Book Review: "Recommended".
- Aussie Reviews -- Book Review: "A groundbreaking novel".
- Paper Tigers Blog - Book Review: "It's a fast-paced and compulsive read".
- The Gender Centre, Australia - Book Review: "F.T.M. the boy within is a valuable addition to teen literature and should be in every school and public library".
- Reader's Corner – Book Review: "superbly written and well researched".
- Mortal words - Book Review: "a great, easy read".
- Cheryl Morgan - Book Review: "very approachable and non-confrontational".
- Bookie Monster - Book Review: "should be mandatory reading".
- Rooster Tails ". . . going to recommend *f2m* to my mum".
- The Year in Review: "Delighted to see the YA market producing good books about trans characters". Cheryl Morgan
- <http://kidsbooksnz.blogspot.com/> features & reviews the best literature by NZ writers.
- Good Reads review of *f2m: the boy within*: 5 stars.
-

ACTIVITY: Write your own review to record on audio or video or put up online.

Here's an example by a doctor-reviewer

Reviewed by

Amazon Review

5.0 out of 5 stars Sensitive and Compelling, November 9, 2010

By **Dr Stuart Jeanne Bramhall** (New Plymouth, New Zealand) -

This review is from: *F2m: the boy within* (Paperback)

F2m: the boy within is a sensitive, compelling fictional account of an 18-year-old female-to-male transgender teenager and the emotional, social and physical challenges he faces in confronting transition. The writing style, which is extremely engaging, makes you inclined to keep reading once you start. I was especially impressed by the way it balances both the inner dialogue and lingo of turbulent late adolescence.

What I liked best about the novel was the authors' skill in portraying the subject as a multifaceted human being - a talented poet, composer and musician with clear political ideals and a distinct identity that is totally separate from social expectations that he identify with a specific gender role. In fact, it's almost as if he's caught in a time warp: he feels the normal drive of a late adolescent to pursue creative and career goals - yet owing to social stigma, he is unable to fully engage in either until he can physically conform to his self-identified gender. The main character is also quite unique in the closeness he feels towards his family and his extreme conscientiousness regarding family responsibilities.

I can see how this could be a very comforting guide for both teenagers and adults confronting a variety of gender identity issues - as well as their families. The authors cover all the bases involved in early transition - working through both positive and negative reactions of friends, family and employers; dealing with stigma and bullying; finding on-line and real-life support from other FTMs; making appropriate use of counselling; the medical and psychiatric assessments required to start hormone replacement and to get a surgery referral; and the physical and emotional side effects of starting hormones.

Most important of all, however, is the emphasis that there isn't just one acceptable way to transition from female to male. That the process involves a number of choice points, which is one reason why counseling is so helpful. Some FTMs opt not to take hormones. Some opt for breast removal surgery only and forgo genital reconstruction.

I sense the realistic, multifaceted characters - as well as the dramatic tension leading to the subject's decision to come out to various family members and their individual struggles to accept his decision - will also be quite appealing to mainstream readers. As a well-told story exploring one particular dimension of the human condition.

By Dr Stuart Jeanne Bramhall, author & child psychiatrist

7. Facts about Gender Transitioning.

Some medical researchers define Gender Dysphoria as a condition where one has a brain of one sex, and a body of the opposite sex.

In F2m; the boy within, the 18-year-old Skye, although designated female at birth, feels intrinsically male. F2m is the journey of Skye's emotional, physical, social decision and action to transition to a male, involving counselling, surgery, injections and coping with others' reactions.

Transitioning gender is the process

The person is not gay.

Ftm means female to male

Mtf means male to female.

Why write a book about Transitioning Gender?

Because the number of people in our community with this medical condition is higher than most would assume. It has been a taboo subject in the past, but recent sports media coverage of mtf athletes has publicized the issue.

Q. Why might sharing a YA novel (even as a class serial or on the latest electronic device) be a way of introducing the subject?

Because fiction can explore emotions such as prejudice and apprehension and can evoke sympathy for a transitioning character, and even provide humour and entertainment en route.

A novel offers the opportunity of seeing things from another's perspective, just for a few hours.

What is The Prevalence of Gender Dysphoria?

Between 1 in 250 and 1 in 500.

Compare with other conditions having profound impacts on people's lives.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is 1:1000, Blindness is 1:350, Deafness is 1:250.

Rachael Wallbank, a Sydney Family Court lawyer specialising in

representing people born with Gender Dysphoria, writes:

"Although debate exists as to the number of people with Gender Dysphoria in any cultural group, it is reasonable to assume that there are about 5,000 to 10,000 people with Gender Dysphoria in Australia (or about 2.5% of the population)".

Gender Dysphoria?

Experts use different definitions.

People born with Gender Dysphoria do not choose to be Gender Dysphoric. Gender Dysphoria ceases when the person undergoes surgery for the condition. They then become an ordinary woman or man.

What Gender Dysphoria is Not:

Gender Dysphoria is completely unrelated to transvestism (aka crossdressing).

It's unknown why a person is born with gender discontinuity, although there are theories including genetic influences, in utero hormonal influences, brain structure and brain chemical influences.

'f2m;the boy within ' accepts that transgender is a reality for some people. It documents the process of gender change in the context of a young adult life and family relationships, friendships and involvement in a band called Chronic Cramps.

.....



Launch Cake with the book cover:

Two book launches were held for *F2m: the boy within*. The first in Australia in a Melbourne library, the second in a New Zealand bookstore in Wellington, with the Australian co-author Hazel, present by web-cam.

The social media via Facebook, Twitter, Skype, YA bloggers and online reviews plus the e-book version have been important ways in which readers have learnt about this book, apart from the usual literary channels via the print publisher Ford Street. Then there's also the booktrailer on Youtube.

8. Activities:

Finn's quest to create and perform new music parallels his gender transitioning, Once the works social club knows he can play guitar, drums & bass, they invite Finn's band ftm to perform as a paid New Year gig with the lead song:.

Ftm female to male. Only been waiting, like, all my life for this.

1. Compose music in any medium for the state of mind of your chosen character from the novel.
2. Song lyrics/music for state of mind . . . Compose per chapter?

Because of the punk music setting in the novel:

- Compose punk music for the *F2m* lyrics in the book, and record.
- Lit Bits: Local actors to dramatise the *F2m: the boy within* scene about the school reunion, which also relates to bullying
- Utilise the list of YA blogs where *F2m: the boy within* is reviewed as a way of introducing international blog readers of YA fiction. The attached list of YA blogs & podcasts is a resource to link with youth fiction readers & reviewers using "cool" language for other books too.
- Skype "Meet the Author" availability as often a council wants to use technology with local youth. I'm willing to be a Skype author.
- Suggest musicians create punk music to go with the *f2m* lyrics in the book (which are performed on TV in one chapter)
- Review the book & put it up on your blog but also I'm willing to publish reviews on my website.
- Read the e-book on Amazon.
- Make your own book trailer for *F2m: the boy within* once you've read the novel.

All adolescents face the quest for identity, but it's complicated for Finn by transitioning across a couple of years when inside are male thoughts and outside still appears to be female. Gender change is not just about surgery. Breasts, facial hair and penis are outward signs of gender, but sometimes there's a mismatch. An absurdist humour in her online journal enables Skye to create a rebel Skye-Finn persona despite her body adjusting to hormones.

Write a 40-word blurb for this book, with appropriately-placed pronouns.

You might like to use some of these facts:

1. International first; female to male gender transition YA fiction by co-trans ftm writer
2. NOT autobiographical, but Ryan co-writer has experienced the medical sequence of gender reassignment.
3. ftm means female to male mtf means male to female
f2m is our title for creative collaboration. Hazel has known 34-year-old Ryan since he was presenting as an 11-year-old girl. His first book, Hazel's 200th.
4. Compassionate, candid and funny "coming of age" via punk music and family history genetic clues.

5. Character Skye plays guitar in all female Chronic Cramps punk band but now she's presenting as a male called Finn. Her family find it difficult to accept losing a daughter.
6. Him or her? Getting the pronouns right is hard for friends and family. Then there's photo ID, which toilets or changing rooms and all the legal stuff. And is Great Uncle Al also Alberta?
7. Finn gets online help and counsellor Greer even helps Finn sing fm lyrics on the TV Current Affairs program.
8. Aim: Understand more about gender identity, difficulty living in between, difficulties faced by transgender people.

Links to Guest Blogs & Podcasts etc:

Podcasts

- [ABC Life Matters, February 17, 2010 - Interview with Hazel Edwards and Ryan Kennedy](#)
- [720 ABC Perth - March 8, 2010 - Gillian O'Shaughnessy talks with Hazel Edwards](#)
 - [RTR FM, March 19th Radio F2m: the boy within Morning Program PODCAST](#)

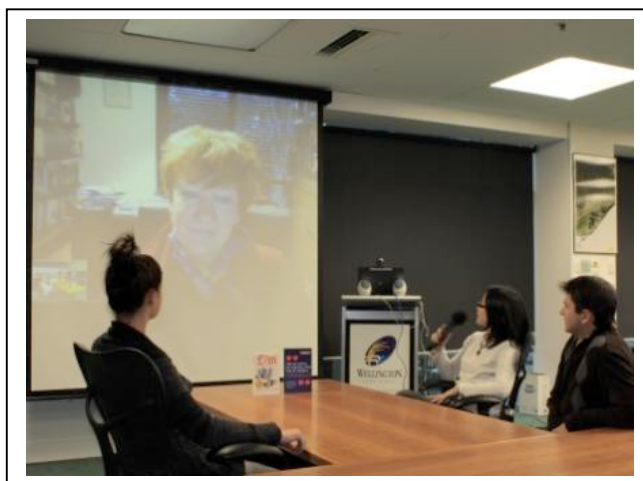
Guest Blogs

- [Hey Teenager](#)
- [Sally Murphy](#)
- [Opinionated Me](#)
- [Wired4Blog Mosman Library](#)
- [Literary Life](#)
- [Literary Clutter](#)

Articles

- [From Hippos to Transitioning Gender](#)
- [Need to Read This!](#) featured authors & books such as our *F2m: the boy within*
- 'Collaborating Internationally on Edgy YA fiction about Transitioning Gender' in Dec 2010 SCBWI international print magazine.
- [Significance of the White Ravens](#) listing.
- [GetAheadKids](#) Webchat with Rural Youth.

Web Chat With Co-Authors . . . internationally too



Web chatting via Skype is the norm for us. We co-wrote our F2m: the boy within novel this way.

But a three way, international chat with rural youth readers is different. Librarian Phong Truong initiated our webchat to use technology to attract youth & provide access to counselling resources on issues such as gender.

Across Skype, it was a three way Webinar between Wellington Shire Gippland Youth Council members (all under 20), co-author Ryan Kennedy in Wellington New Zealand and myself in Melbourne, Australia.

Both places were called Wellington!

Did it work? Yes. But a few technical hitches, Despite the trial , where audio problems were solved with a closer microphone relaying questions, getting the visuals working three ways on the "real" event was a challenge.

Was it worthwhile? YES!

Strengths of Webinar:

- Role modelling by Ryan as young novelist, writing first book from own gender experience.
- Demonstration of how “outside” authors could be accessed and how co-authors utilised electronic ways of collaborating (and how to cope when things go wrong).
- Good questions and candid answers.
- Encouraged rural youth to utilise Internet when seeking answers to problems: relationships, gender or literary.
- This area has a Youth Council and the Deputy Youth Mayor participated.

Learnt from the experience?:

- Network connection recommended over Wifi.
- Need to have a test session, especially for sound. Re-position seating.
- Prepared questions.
- Suggest audience identify themselves when asking questions.
- Intimate group enabled questions to be answered fully. “Casual feel” atmosphere conducive to a real exchange.
- Prior reading of book & e-books are more easily accessible.

Challenges:

- Several youth who were expected didn’t make it.
- Technical issues with getting the visuals to work three ways on Skype.
- Co-ordinating: Phong prepared books, handouts etc and invited reps from youth groupings, but 10 am Saturday a bad time for techie support and those who play football.
- Questions answered: Gender questions included getting support in a rural area, Ryan’s personal experiences transitioning and media and librarian reactions to *F2m: the boy within*.

Conclusions:

- Social media has publicised the event more widely than just those who participated.
- Importance of access to co-author website resources of YA bloggers, book trailer, reviews etc
- Has significant implications for cost-effective access to an international author in a rural area.

Our chat overcame geographical and a few other barriers.

The Wellington Shire Youth Council is made up of 18 youth between the ages of 12-25, who represent young people within Wellington Shire.

<http://ryanscottkennedy.com/>

www.hazeledwards.com

hazel@hazeledwards.com

Resources and links for *F2m: the boy within*

http://www.hazeledwards.com/page/f2mthe_boy_within.html



-
- Hazel at the Schloss Blutenburg home of “The White Ravens” collection at the International Youth Library in Munich, Germany.
- *F2m: the boy within* is in the 2011 White Ravens collection here,

The book is available everywhere online.