

Born With: Teacher's Guide

A novel study.

Introduction

Born With is a contemporary novel appropriate for grades seven and up. It is written in two voices so the reader can see how two teens think differently when confronted with the same situation. This guide is to encourage individual reading, literature circles or class novel discussion. The guide will help increase awareness about those who are born with Down syndrome, have ALS or different sexual orientations. It is also a novel that can promote discussion about ALS, hate crimes, family life, and adolescent friendships.

Novel Summary: Born With

Meet Erika and Gianni!

Erika is a fifteen-year-old girl born with Down syndrome. She loves to sing and dance and hang out with friends. Being in three dance numbers in the school production of *Grease* is a big job, but with the help of her Best Buddy, Gianni, Erika knows she can be a star.

Gianni is a sixteen-year-old boy with a secret. Like his Best Buddy, Erika, who was born with Down syndrome, Gianni loves to sing and dance. He also knows that he's different from the other boys in his school- but is he so different from that cool, attractive fellow actor in the school play? Or is he just imagining that the sparks between them are mutual?

Told in the alternating voices of Erika and Gianni, *Born With* is the story of two teens who help each other to find and accept their own best selves.

Discussion Questions: Prereading

1. What is Down syndrome? What are some of the distinguishing features of Down syndrome, both physically and intellectually?
2. Can a child born with Down syndrome go to school? Learn how to read? What are some jobs that people born with Down syndrome can do later on in life?
3. Are there organizations that help those who are born with Down syndrome?