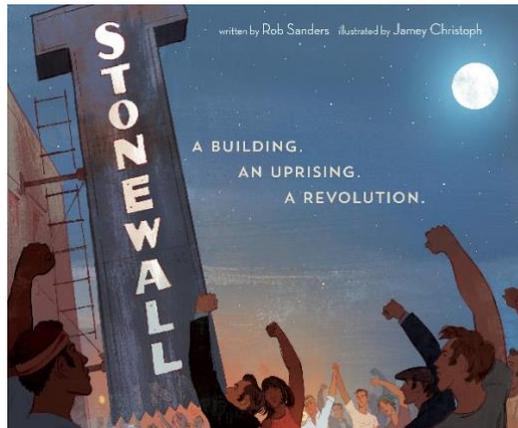


First Opinion: A Great Introduction to the LGBTQ+ Fight for Equality

Sanders, Rob. *Stonewall: A Building, An Uprising, A Revolution*. Illustrated by Jamey Christoph. Canada: Random House for Young Readers, 2019. Print.

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Rob Sanders' book, *Stonewall: A Building, An Uprising, A Revolution*, outlines the history and significance of Greenwich Village's Stonewall Inn in the LGBTQ+ rights movement. Sanders follows the multiple buildings that later make up the Stonewall Inn from humble stable houses in the 1840s, to a bakery, to a restaurant, and finally, to its historical climax as the Stonewall Inn, which is the location for a historical tipping point in the fight for LGBTQ+ rights.

The book opens introducing the readers to the buildings, or rather, the buildings introduce themselves. Sanders uses the point of view of the buildings as a way to carry the readers through time. Each page turn changes the scenery, time period, and inhabitants of the historical building. The building expresses appreciation for each step in its history, and notes its ability to change with the times and surrounding events. As Greenwich Village changed throughout history (and

the book), the building continued to accept all who entered. As The Village became a place where gays and lesbians felt a sense of belonging, the Stonewall Inn accepted them in as family.

In the book, the Stonewall narrator provides a child-friendly definition and explanation of the turmoil the newest inhabitants (the LGBTQ+ community) faced outside its walls. The Stonewall narrator also describes the importance of the Stonewall during that specific time in history, specifically serving as a place of freedom and belonging. At its climax, the book gives an age-appropriate overview of The Stonewall Uprising and brings readers to the present in regards to the status of the rights and freedoms of the LGBTQ+ community.

While a book on the topic of an uprising of any kind can sway toward an older child/student audience, the author and illustrator have created an accessible book for all ages, including younger readers, without sacrificing vocabulary or content. The illustrator, Jamey Christoph, does a remarkable job taking the story from light to dark and back again in order to display mood and feeling without being distracting. His characters represent the time periods in appealing ways, and his inclusion of racial and gender diversity is much appreciated. Additionally, the author, Sanders, includes a photo gallery of actual pictures, an interview with an attendee, a glossary of terms, and references for continued education as additional ways to connect with his readers.

As a mom of four, former special education teacher, and straight, married, White woman, I read *Stonewall: A Building, An Uprising, A Revolution* with no pre-existing information regarding this important historical event. I read as a mom who needs to help my kids learn and know the historical struggles of all peoples in our country and beyond. However, I learned that my older two, a high school freshman and senior, know more about the LGBTQ+ fight for equality through their own studies as compared to my level of knowledge.

While I was reading, prepping to write my review, my younger two read this book and had interesting takes. Corinne (8), missed that the building itself was the narrator, an aspect I found particularly endearing about the story. Although she liked the book itself, she was not as intrigued as my 12-year-old. Amelia (12), really enjoyed the book. I asked her where she felt it would fit in a school setting, or, in other words, “Where would you read this if it were not sitting on our kitchen counter?” Amelia felt, and I agree, that this book should be a part of a classroom or school library as a part of the nonfiction, reference materials. She felt she could see a teacher reading it aloud to a class, or a librarian to a group of students as part of an equality unit of study.

When I asked how she felt the topic was covered in the book, she said it was fascinating and well done. While she knows the LGBTQ+ population is not widely accepted, hearing an actual account of the struggles faced was a new and appreciated experience in her eyes.

Living in a fairly conservative city, I do wonder how a book covering this equality movement would be received. Amelia, with fresh eyes, thought it would be no problem and should be right next to the hundreds of books on WWII or civil rights already in existence in the school libraries she has experienced, because, “Why not? It’s important.”

It is important. And Rob Sanders does a great job telling the story of this historical event with character, feeling, and appreciation for all involved. While he, or rather, the Stonewall, acknowledges that, “Many things *are* different now. Some things *have* changed,” there is always more to be done. Reading and sharing Sanders’ book is a good way to start.

About the Author

Amanda Christian is a homemaker and mother of four in Central Illinois. She is a former special education teacher who enjoys spending time with her family.