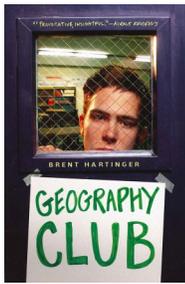


Books by the Stack



Geography Club by Brent Hartinger

Russel Middlebrook is convinced he's the only gay kid at Goodkind High School. Then his online gay chat buddy turns out to be none other than Kevin, the popular but closeted star of the school's baseball team. Soon Russel meets other gay students, too. There's his best friend Min, who reveals that she is bisexual, and her soccer-playing girlfriend Terese. Then there's Terese's politically active friend, Ike. But how can kids this diverse get together without drawing attention to themselves? "We just choose a club that's so boring, nobody in their right mind would ever in a million years join it. We could call it Geography Club!"

Why you'll like it: fast paced, funny, provocative

About the Author: Brent Hartinger was born in 1971 in Washington State and grew up in Tacoma, Washington. He earned a bachelor's degree from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington, and studied for a masters in psychology at Western Washington University.

Questions for Discussion

1. At the beginning of the book, Russel feels different from everyone else in his school. Is he really that different? In what ways is he the same? Some critics have called Russel an "everybody" and a "universal character"? How can a character who feels "different" also be called "universal"?
2. The *Geography Club* never discusses actual geography, but the members do learn about a geography of sorts. What do they learn? Why does Russel compare the locker room to a battle zone and why does he think of the school's various cliques and social groups as "countries"? Is that an accurate description of a high school campus?
3. Adults almost never appear in the book. Why do you think the author chose to do this? In what areas are an important part of your life? In what areas are adults not an important part?
4. In the book, bullying takes many forms. Give examples. Can a friend bully a friend? What about sexual partners? What is bullying anyway? Is a person who claims he or she is being harassed always right?
5. When Russel is trying to decide whether to forgive Gunnar, he remembers how Min had forgiven him, and he thinks, "It was funny how everything was fitting together like this." In what ways do the different characters in the book reverse roles? Was Min right to forgive Russel? Was Russel right to forgive Gunnar? Kevin?
6. Through the course of the book, Russel experiences life as a not-so-popular kid (in the "Borderlands of Respectability"); an extremely popular kid ("the Land of the Popular"); and a total loser ("Outcast Island"). Why do you think the author had Russel see life from all those points-of-view? Have you ever experienced a shift in popularity?
7. In the end, Russel and Min decide to break up with Kevin and Terese. Did they both make the right choice? Could their relationships have worked out if they'd stayed together? How were the two relationships the same, and how were they different? Is Kevin a bad person? Is Terese a bad person?

8. Several times in the book, Russel compares Brian Bund to Jesus Christ. What point is he trying to make? What roles does Brian play in the book, and in the school?

9. These days, some high schools are very accepting of openly gay students, others less so. What was/is your high school like in this respect? If a school is accepting of gay students, does that make the book less relevant?

(Questions provided by publisher)



www.grpl.org/TeenBookClub