

## **Magic in Plain Sight: LGBTQ Reading Recommendations for Pride Month**

By Claire Rudy Foster

The queer liberation movement we celebrate every June shines a light on a community often forced into the margins. Growing up in Virginia, I knew many people who hid their lives in plain sight, from a closeted teacher to the neighbors who were “traveling companions.” I knew I wanted more for myself: I didn’t want to hide. The voices I discovered at my local library connected me to a world LGBTQ people were included, valued, and respected. Here are some of my recent favorites, all of which are available through MCPL.

### *Shine of the Ever*, Claire Rudy Foster

This polychromatic collection of short stories touches on the intimate lives of queer and trans girls in grunge-era Portland. The book explores what binds a community as they negotiate love, screwing up, and learning to forgive themselves for being young and, sometimes foolish. *Shine of the Ever* was named “an LGBTQ book that will change the literary landscape” by *O: The Oprah Magazine*.

### *Who is Vera Kelly?*, Rosalie Knecht

In Cold War-era Argentina, revolution is in the air. Vera Kelly, recruited by the CIA to spy in Buenos Aires, is technically skilled but personally struggling. She’s forced to remain closeted by her job and her culture; her few furtive attempts to connect with other women compromise her mission. Vera is quickly sucked into the student movement, but when it’s time to leave the city, she finds her road to safety collapsing before her eyes. This high-stakes, tense thriller is the first in a trilogy.

### *When Brooklyn Was Queer*, Hugh Ryan

This awesome history of Brooklyn is a groundbreaking exploration of the LGBTQ history of New York. *When Brooklyn Was Queer* describes the early days of Walt Whitman in the 1850s, the stories of the women who worked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard during World War II, and beyond. A road trip into the past, this wonderful book revives lost memories and explains the profound influence of queer people on contemporary culture.

### *The Chiffon Trenches*, Andre Leon Talley

A giant in the fashion world, Andre Leon Talley writes about his long, elegant career at *Vogue*. From humble beginnings as a young black man fascinated with fashion in a small, Southern town, he finds his calling in New York. With just the right amount of gossip, *The Chiffon Trenches* is a marvelous retrospective, written by a man who knows *everyone*. A moving introduction talks about the experience of being black in an ultra-white, rigid culture and how fashion is breaking free.

### *Music for Chameleons*, Truman Capote

Sassy, petty, and incandescent, Capote is an iconic queer author for a reason. His sharp observations explore the lives of unusual, fanciful characters. Both real and imagined, these stories include fiction and nonfiction: some standouts describe an afternoon with Marilyn

Monroe and “Handcarved Coffins,” an invented account of an unsolved true crime. This was one of Capote’s last works and is some of his finest writing.

*Becoming Dangerous*, ed. Katie West and Jasmine Elliott

The twenty-one authors who contributed to *Becoming Dangerous* are witchy and wise, “a coven of weird women playing and sharing with one another.” This anthology describes the many ways that women, femmes, and non-binary people find and create safe places as acts of resistance, beauty, and hope. The book provides a powerful look at how magic and intention can still turn the tide of self doubt and empower people.

*How To Write An Autobiographical Novel*, Alexander Chee

This striking collection shows impressive range. Alexander Chee writes about formative experiences, from the roses in his mother’s Maine garden, to growing up as a gay, Korean-American man, to ACT UP protests in 1980s San Francisco. His descriptions of enduring love are achingly good, and the book is sprinkled with insights about storytelling and literary craft. Chee’s comments on community and compassion are unforgettable.