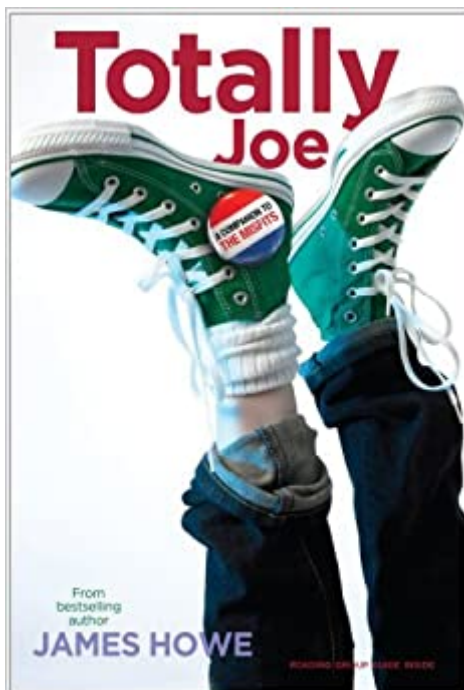


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# Totally Joe (The Misfits)



## Synopsis

"Everybody says you and Colin were kissing." "What? That's ridiculous!" "For heaven's sake, Joe, if you and Colin want to kiss, you have every right to." "We did not kiss," I told her. Addie shrugged. "Whatever." What was it with my friends? From the creator of *The Misfits*, the book that inspired NATIONAL NO NAME-CALLING WEEK, comes the story of Joe Bunch....

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 6-8 Joe's teacher asks his seventh-grade class to write an alphabiography throughout the year, presenting themselves and their lives in entries from A to Z. Joe's essays begin and end with friends, from Addie, a long-time pal and confidant, to Zachary, a new student who, like Joe, has a unique approach to life. Throughout, Joe demonstrates that he truly is a one-of-a-kind kid, mostly comfortable with himself but still struggling with common adolescent issues. It's difficult for him to relate to his athletic brother, and he misses his much-loved Aunt Pam, who moves to New York City. He also comes to grips with his sexuality, questioning gender expectations and traditional roles as he realizes he is gay. Because he is different, he is tormented by Kevin, who calls him a girl and faggot and falsely accuses him of kissing his friend Colin (a jock not yet ready to come out). Joe's narration always feels honest if not entirely credible. He and his family accept his emerging sexuality rather easily. While a range of responses is depicted, the characters seem to come around too quickly. For example, when the principal is informed of Kevin's actions, he, too, handles the

situation expeditiously, and the troublemaker conveniently transfers to another school. Though idealized and contrived, the approach is novel and the conclusion optimistic. — Maria B. Salvadore, formerly at Washington DC Public Library Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Gr. 6-9. Joe, one of the characters in *The Misfits* (2001), has his say, in a voice uniquely his own. Twelve-year-old Joe knows he is gay. He played with Barbies as a young child, prefers cooking to sports, and has a crush on a male classmate. Written in the form of an assignment--an "alphabiography"--the story takes readers through the school year, one letter at a time: G is for the Gang of Five, Joe's misfit friends, who are utterly loyal when he falls for Colin. But Colin is less secure about his sexuality than Joe is, and when the rumor goes around that the boys have been seen kissing, he quashes the relationship. Joe survives the crush, and the book has an upbeat ending. ?Actually, despite a few worries, the whole book is cheerful and optimistic. Joe's family is supportive, and the kids from the nasty (Christian) family that wants to stop the Gay-Straight Alliance are removed to a different school. In other words, there's nothing terribly realistic about the scenario; in many ways, the book is reminiscent of David Levithan's *Boy Meets Boy* (2003), which was for a slightly older audience. Obviously, the novel will be problematic for some--not only because of the gay theme and Joe's age but also the stereotypic portrayal of the bullying Christian family. Joe himself often comes off as a cross between Niles Crane and Harvey Fierstein. But he also reacts like a kid, and readers in his situation will wish for the love and support he receives from friends and family, as well as the happy life he so clearly envisions. Ilene Cooper Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book purchased for my grandson, because he likes to read

Needed something that my 12 year old would read. He enjoyed this one. Ordered the rest in the series for him.

Regardless of people's view on the matter of homosexuality, *Totally Joe* does a good job demonstrating that those who do not fit the common thread are not any less human because of it. *Totally Joe*, while centering on his experiences as a homosexual, seemed more about the fact that he wanted to be treated with respect. Joe did not demand others accept his sexual orientation so much as he demanded they treat him as they would everyone else. The alphabiography was a

fascinating concept that seemed like an excellent project for young adults. Not only does it require them to work on their writing skills, it also allows them a chance to discover who they are through self-expression. The No Name Calling Week, which was inspired by the companion novel *The Misfits*, is a fantastic idea and a great way for students to understand that agreement is not necessary, but respect is. If this is the type of books James Howe decides to write, audiences should decide to read them.

It's really refreshing that this is about a boy who knows he's gay even before he's interested in kissing anyone. That could really help against the misconception that a lot of young people have of being gay as only being about sex. I noticed that another reviewer mentioned that the speed with which Joe's parents accepted it when he told them was unrealistic, but I think that reflects more on the reviewer (or his parents!) than on the book. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and will definitely recommend to my pupils.

This gem is too short. You will love Joe. There are memorable insights in this very funny book. Finished it at 6:00 in the morning.

I enjoyed this book very much, for Being a 12 year old boy. I enjoyed it so much that I put down my controller for the time I was reading it. I really like how it illustrates the gay person's point of view. Although I am curious to see what this book would be like if it had an illustrator to do a few pictures.

This is an excellent book, giving an inside view of the experience of being a gay teenage boy & finding a relationship with someone who cares about you as you are. The protagonist, Joe, is a very likable character. I enjoyed the book very much & will likely share it with my granddaughter, whose older brother is gay.

As a companion to *Misfits*, *Totally Joe* falls a bit behind in the compelling-plot department but it is a great character piece and would be relieving to any middle grade kids struggling with sexuality. Joe is a completely loveable character and it's nice to see a gay character in middle school that has the kind of support everyone deserves.

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