

# Title: *The Pants Project*

(Published in 2017)

by Cat Clarke

## Approved for use in

### Summary of the Work:

The Pants Project written by Cat Clarke  
When Liv Spark finds out that his new school, Bankridge Middle School, has a uniform policy that says girls must wear skirts and boys can wear pants, Liv is infuriated. Although Liv may seem like a girl on the outside on the inside, he is a boy. He hates the itchy tights he has to wear with the skirt and thinks the policy is “Sexist. Dumb. Unfair,” in his own words. So Liv starts the Pants Project, his goal being to convince the principal of Bankridge, Mr. Lynch, to change the policy so that girls can also wear pants. Liv faces other problems as well, including two mean bullies, a dwindling friendship and family problems on his Mama’s side of the family. But Liv has a new friend at his side, Jacob and the two become strong advocates for the Pants Project.

### Rationale:

*This novel supports our book club themes of building tolerance, understanding, and compassion by exploring novels that either allow readers to see themselves in the protagonist, or else offers a window into the life of the protagonist, which is very different from our own. In addition, this recent title is relevant to current issues that students face and gives a voice to those who struggle to find their voice and their footing in middle school. This is a high interest novel that will engage middle school-aged readers.*

*Students will read this novel in a book club setting (5 book club meetings) with rotating designated roles (discussion leader, summarizer, vocabulary leader, text connector, and literary leader) designed to facilitate a well-prepared discussion and thoughtful analysis of the novel’s plot, characters, conflicts, and themes.*

### Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

“In a few months, Liv effects a major change in his new middle school’s antiquated dress code while simultaneously acquiring the courage to come out as transgender.

From the start, readers are drawn into the story by 11-year-old Liv’s believable, humor-tinged narration: “Little brothers can always be counted on to reach peak levels of annoying at exactly the wrong moment. It must be part of their job description.” Throughout, Liv’s voice is convincing and a pleasure to read. Readers learn that, over the years, Liv has become increasingly less tolerant of being assigned female pronouns and the name “Olivia.” Being required to wear a skirt daily at middle school is the last straw. He—still “she” to others—works to convince the school’s new principal that students should have some choice in clothing, moving from an unsuccessful conversation to an unpromising petition to a brilliantly orchestrated media event. Along the way, he contends

### Noted Distinction:

2020 YRCA nominee

### Readability

- Lexile Score: 700L
- Readability Level: Grades 5-8

### Learning Resources Guidelines

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

### Standard Alignment: [\(link\)](#)

RL.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story’s or drama’s plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the

# Title: *The Pants Project*

(Published in 2017)

by Cat Clarke

with a mean-spirited bully and the loss of a former friend even as he makes new, more loyal friends and wrestles with his own shortcomings. His coming-out to friend Jacob is realistically brief and an enormous relief. Liv's two moms add further dimension to a tale that unabashedly affirms the importance of accepting and celebrating differences. The book assumes a white default, with ethnicity cued by naming convention.

A fine addition to LGBTQ children's literature." (*Fiction. 9-12*) – **Kirkus Review**

" A wonderfully sweet middle grade story with a satisfying ending. Liv is starting middle school, and he is nervous. Liv is transgender, but he hasn't told anyone, so everyone assumes he is a girl. He will be attending a new school in the fall, and the dress code states that all girls must wear skirts. Liv takes matters into his own hands and decides to challenge the school's dress code, and along the way he finds allies in unexpected places. Peppered with a diverse cast of characters, including Liv, who is bullied at school because he has two moms, and his best friend, Jacob, who walks with a cane, this is an ultimately upbeat story that celebrates differences. Liv's family members are very supportive, and their Italian heritage shines through in their everyday lives. The hopeful tone makes it easier for readers to grapple with the serious issues discussed, and the happy-ever-after ending will not fail to satisfy.

A wonderfully sweet middle grade story with a satisfying ending. Liv is starting middle school, and he is nervous. Liv is transgender, but he hasn't told anyone, so everyone assumes he is a girl. He will be attending a new school in the fall, and the dress code states that all girls must wear skirts. Liv takes matters into his own hands and decides to challenge the school's dress code, and along the way he finds allies in unexpected places. Peppered with a diverse cast of characters, including Liv, who is bullied at school because he has two moms, and his best friend, Jacob, who walks with a cane, this is an ultimately upbeat story that celebrates differences. Liv's family members are very supportive, and their Italian heritage shines through in their everyday lives. The hopeful tone makes it easier for readers to grapple with the serious issues discussed, and the happy-ever-after ending will not fail to satisfy.

." - **School Library Journal**

"Strong-willed, introspective Liv is a likable and relatable protagonist; in many ways he's like most tweens, navigating friendships, his own identity, and his relationships at home. Supported by his two moms, Liv tries various methods of protest (wearing pants under the skirt, organizing a petition); he doesn't get any

characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution. Craft and Structure

RL.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

RL.6.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.

W.6.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL.6.1.a Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

SL.6.1.b Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed. SL.6.1.c Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

SL.6.1.d Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

SL.6.3 Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

SL.6.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

# Title: *The Pants Project*

by Cat Clarke

(Published in 2017)

traction, however, until he makes some new friends, and they join the cause... this is a touching novel on a timely subject." - *The Horn Book Magazine*

\* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

\* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

## Notes on the Text:

*The appeal of this novel is that the protagonist is feisty and brave, but human and therefore flawed. Liv will appeal to readers because he finds the gumption to take on the school while also struggling with his own identity and bullies- very relatable for adolescents.*

*(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)*

## Connection to the Curriculum:

The Pants Project is appropriate for the English curriculum ( [HSD ELA Curriculum](#) ) because it provides exposure to quality, high-interest literature as students independently read and comprehend grade-level literature (page 9, HSD ELA Curriculum). This novel also allows students to identify key ideas and details when they “*Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.*” (MCCS RL.1). In addition, The Pants Project gives students the opportunity to “*Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.*” (CCRA.R.1) and “*Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.*” (CCRA.R.2)

This novel fosters in-depth conversations and discussions around the themes of identity, adversity, and tolerance while providing students context to the reality of our times by making connections to our world through its plot, themes, and character development.

## Additional Connections:

*(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)*

# ***Title: The Pants Project***

**by Cat Clarke**

**(Published in 2017)**

---