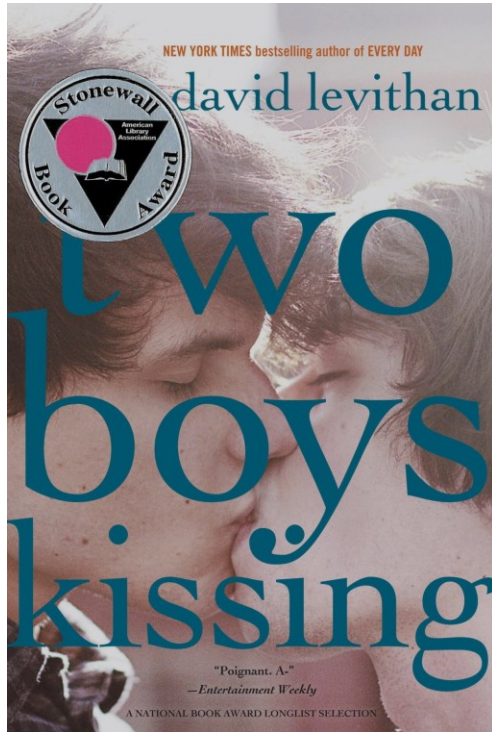


# TWO BOYS KISSING



## Book Summary:

As two high school boys attempt to break the world record for the longest kiss, other stories of homosexuals within the community are told.

## Summary of Concerns:

This book contains explicit sexual activities; sexual nudity; alternate sexualities; alternate gender ideologies; self-harm including suicide; profanity and derogatory terms; hate involving homophobia; violence; alcohol use by minors; and reference to drug use.

*Young Adult*

**By David Levithan**

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**3** /5

**Minor Restricted**  
BookLooks Review Rating

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1	It's hard to think of such things when you are busy dreaming or loving or screwing.
5	He's only seventeen, but online he can be twenty-two, fifteen, twenty-seven. Whatever the other person wants him to be. He has fake profiles, fake photos, fake stats, and fake histories.
7	There are few things that can make us as happy as a gay prom.
9	We think of the boys we kissed, the boys we screwed, the boys we loved, the boys who didn't love us back, the boys who were with us at the end, the boys who were with us beyond the end.
12	Pink-haired Avery was born a boy that the rest of the world saw as a girl. ...At a young age, his parents realized what was wrong. His mother thought that maybe she'd always known, which was why she'd chosen the name Avery—her father's name, which was going to be given to the baby whether it was a boy or a girl. With his parents' help and blessing, if not always comprehension, Avery charted a new life, was driven many miles—not to dance or drink, but to get the hormones that would set his body in the right direction. And it's worked. We look at Avery now and know it's worked, and appreciate the marvel of it. In our day he would have been trapped by an insurmountable body in an intractable world.
13	Yes, it's also the same place he ducked out of to have his first cigarette and, a couple of years later, his first joint, but it's never been somewhere he would have imagined finding a pink-haired boy to dance with.
17	Peter is in boxers and a T-shirt that reads LEGALIZE GAY.
19	There are boys screwing for the right reasons and boys screwing for the wrong ones.
24	He leans over his son and reads the remnants of last night's conversations. Some are merely conversational, a bored patois. What's up? Not much. U? Not much. But others are frank, sexual, explicit. Here's what I'd do to you. Is that the way you want it?
25	"Do you just go off and fuck men? Is that it? While we're asleep, you go out and fuck them?" "No," Cooper finally says. "No!" "Then what is this?" A disgusted gesture to the closed computer. "What kind of whore are you?"
34	He thought at first it was because he was black, but from all the variations of faggot they were throwing his way, he knew it wasn't only that. And some of them were black, too. He tried to walk past them, head back to the movie theater or even to the pizza place where his friends were, but they didn't like that. They boxed him in, and he felt the panic button being pressed. As they made fun of the color of his pants, as they taunted him some more, he tried to shove himself out. Threw his whole body into it, but there were too many of them, and they weren't caught by surprise. They shoved him back in and he tried to shove out again, and this time one guy hit him, a blow right to the chest, and as Tariq bent over, more guys joined in. Because once one guy starts, it's a game. Tariq fell to the ground, remembered someone telling him to curl up, to protect himself that way. They were laughing now, enjoying it, thrilled by it. He couldn't even yell for help, because the only sounds he could make were ones he'd never heard before, a wailing, guttural acknowledgment of the sudden, intense pain as they punched and they kicked, laughing their faggots at him as they broke his ribs. ...As he bled on the pavement, pebbles and gravel grinding into his wounds, we felt ourselves bleeding, too. As his ribs broke, we could feel our ribs breaking. And as the thoughts returned to his mind, the memories returned to ours. That dehumanizing loss of safety. It is

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	something all of us feared and many of us knew firsthand. We are not unfamiliar with what happens next with Tariq—the long healing, the surprising concern from some (including his parents) and the unsurprising lack of concern from others (like some, but not all, of the police). The assailants covered their tracks well, and were never caught. We know who they are, of course. Two of them are haunted by what they did. Three of them are not.
45	<p>They kiss.</p> <p>Harry has kissed Craig so many times, but this is different from all of the kisses that have come before. At first there were the excited dating kisses, the kisses used to punctuate their liking of each other, the kisses that were both proof and engine of their desire.</p> <p>...Kisses that led to making out and kisses that led to saying goodbye.</p>
55	<p>“I think it was obvious to everyone from the start. And my parents are very ... liberal, I guess. Practically hippies. So they actually tried to make it seem like I was normal. Or at least going through something normal. Now I can see the strain, and how much easier it would’ve been for all of us if I hadn’t been born a girl. But they never made me freak out. It was everyone else. Well, not everyone. There were some people who were cool. But there were a lot of people who weren’t cool. I was homeschooled a lot. We lived in a lot of towns, trying to find the right doctors. Eventually we found them, and I found other members of my tribe. Mostly online. But my parents and I go to conferences as well. They put me on hormones early, to sort of stop me from going through the wrong kind of puberty. Is this TMI? I’m sure you don’t want all the details.”</p> <p>...He’s talking about hormones and the surgeries that have happened and the surgeries that are going to happen, and all along pretty much the only thing that’s filling his head is the question of whether Ryan is seeing him as a girl or a boy. Now that Ryan knows, is Avery still a boy in his eyes?</p>
63	This guy is telling him all the things he wants to do with his mouth, and all Cooper has to do is type Yeah and Wow and Oh man for the guy to go on.
65	<p>Ryan asks Avery about the pink hair.</p> <p>“I know, strange color choice, right? For a boy born as a girl who wants to be seen as a boy. But think about it—it just shows how arbitrary gender is. Pink is female—but why? Are girls any more pink than boys? Are boys any more blue than girls? It’s something that has been sold to us, mostly so other things can be sold to us. My hair can be pink because I’m a boy. Yours can be blue because you’re a girl. If you free yourself from all the stupid arbitrary shit that society controls us with, you feel more free, and if you feel more free, you can be happier.”</p>
67	<p>Ryan came down with such a severe eating disorder when he was thirteen, about the time he was coming out, that the school nurse made him get help.</p> <p>...And Avery isn’t advertising the fact that he’s never been past second base, and the idea of sex petrifies him.</p> <p>...Avery will not detail the foolish lengths he went to get Freddy Dickson to like him, and how when it backfired spectacularly, he cut himself for the first and only time in his life.</p>
69	And he wouldn’t have lasted even forty-five minutes if he’d wanted to do anything more than kiss Craig, if Craig turned him on anymore. Maybe there was something at the start, but now it’s leveling off. He’s glad Craig can’t read his mind, because he knows it might be taken as harsh, but really it’s a compliment. There are moments where Harry is so revved up, is so horny, that he’d sleep with just about anything. It takes a lot of restraint to realize the damage this can do, and to not venture places where you shouldn’t go, even if you’re revved

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	up. He and Craig had fun, for sure, but it was never about sex. And now Harry needs to stop thinking about sex, because his body is starting to ... react.
70	Max is a marvel to us. He will never have to come out because he will have never been kept in. Even though he has a mom and a dad, they made sure from the beginning to tell him that it didn't have to be a mom and a dad. It could be a mom and a mom, a dad and a dad, just a mom, or just a dad.
75	Max is a marvel to us. He will never have to come out because he will have never been kept in. Even though he has a mom and a dad, they made sure from the beginning to tell him that it didn't have to be a mom and a dad. It could be a mom and a mom, a dad and a dad, just a mom, or just a dad.
76	He's flipping through three different hook-up apps, finding a lot of the same guys on each one. Forty-seven-year-olds who want him to come over. Eighteen-year-olds who want to flirt aimlessly. Twenty-nine-year-olds who want to know what he's into. He never starts the conversations. He never picks them out. It means more if they come to him, because that means he's desirable. And if he's desirable, he has the upper hand. We think he's too young to know this. But he knows this. You learn it now at a much younger age.
82	They are kissing to show the world that it's okay for two boys to kiss.
88	To up the ante, he sends a shirtless pic to Antimatter, and Antimatter responds in kind. He's got a great body. Cooper asks him if he wants to meet up.
92	Before Neil can protest, Peter kisses him ... and stays there. For the first minute or two, it feels totally normal—the tender pressure, tongues corresponding, hands tracing spines, gliding down hips. Then comes the moment in the rhythm when they would usually take a breath—smile or say something or pull back so fingers could trail down. They move through the pause, draw out their ardor. Peter lingers his hand down Neil's back, slips his fingers beneath his waistband, rests on the skin there, the heat. Neil moves in the opposite direction, his hand rising under the back of Peter's shirt, between his shoulder blades. Peter still tastes like coffee and milk; Neil tastes like winter mint. Peter's breath staggers a little in his lungs. Neil touches the nape of his neck, then slowly retreats back down, fingernails raking skin. They are hyperconscious of their bodies, hyperconscious of their breathing. Peter brings his hand around, lifts his palm to Neil's heartbeat. Minutes pass. Their bodies grow hotter. Their kiss is wetter. Peter's stubble presses prickly against Neil's chin. Peter feels the silence of the room, the lack of music. Their hips lock against each other. Neil's breath quickens. Peter's underwear grows tighter. Neither wants to be the one who pulls away.
99	"I'm being a bad host," he says. "I haven't even offered you a drink yet, Drake. What do you want?" Cooper almost trips up on that Drake—he's forgotten that's his name right now. But he recovers quickly, and asks for a Jack and Coke. He's never really had a drink with anyone else before, just in the company of his dad's liquor cabinet when his parents have been away. Jack and Coke is the first thing that comes to his mind.
100	Julian comes in with two glasses of the same drink. Cooper likes the taste of his—there's just the right balance, the Jack tasting like alcoholic caramel at the core of the chemical Diet Coke fizz
101	It's time to move in. He's seen so many scenes of guys doing this—gotten hard to them doing this, jerked off to them doing this. Now here it is. Julian's got a great body, a nice face.

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	<p>...He reaches out and puts his hand on the side of Julian's neck. Leans in. And here it is, them pressing their mouths together, pressing their bodies together. Cooper wants it so badly, wants something, and he doesn't want to stop for breath, he wants to keep going and going. ...Cooper wants to pull him down to the couch, wants to get him horizontal, but the couch is covered in paintings, so he lets it go on for a little bit longer, then surfaces and asks, "The bedroom?" And when Julian gives him a surprised look, he says, "I don't want to crush your paintings." Julian smiles at that, takes him by the hand, and they're in the tiny bedroom, still standing up and kissing, so Cooper topples them over onto the bed. Julian laughs, and Cooper kisses that laugh. It goes away, the laugh, and instead there are hands exploring—Cooper, not knowing any better, moves out of sequence, goes right for the groin, and Julian pulls away, directs him back above the waist, but Cooper's not satisfied, Cooper's not feeling what he wants to feel. He retreats for a few minutes, kissing with him on top, then rolling them over so they're kissing with him on the bottom, groins touching now, him feeling what's going on beneath Julian's jeans, then rolling over again so he can take off his shirt and then take off Julian's shirt. Now it's skin on skin, sweat on sweat, and it's hot, it's really hot, but Cooper's still not feeling what he wants to feel—it still feels empty to him—he's still feeling empty—so he kisses Julian harder, moves his hands down there, and Julian whispers, "Not yet," and Cooper feels he can't wait much longer, it's going too slow and he wants it to be fast enough that he doesn't feel anything else, doesn't think anything else, because isn't that what sex is supposed to be like, isn't it supposed to be a form of oblivion, and he's not there yet—not there—and Julian is slowing things down again, easing things down, and Cooper doesn't understand why they're not naked yet, so he moves to Julian's belt, but Julian moves them around so it's impossible to undo the buckle. Cooper goes for the buttons on his own jeans, only Julian takes his hand, forces his hands up so they're over his head, and Cooper likes the strong movement of that, likes the force, feels Julian's chest hair against his bare chest, gasps involuntarily when Julian kisses his neck, then the intersection of his neck and his shoulder blade, a spot he didn't even know he had. He wants more, even more, so he bends them so they're side by side, moves his hands down, disengages them from Julian's, starts innocently enough at his shoulders, but then thrusts them down, down, and Julian's hands are there again, blocking him. Julian says, "Let's go a little slower. It's just the first date." And Cooper wants to tell him they're only going to have a first date, so they might as well go all the way, might as well see what's going on under those jeans. If this were porn, they'd be naked by now, they'd be blowing each other. But of course he doesn't say that, doesn't say this is the only date they're going to have, doesn't want to end things entirely, wants to deny that maybe somewhere in his mind he was hoping he would find a boyfriend tonight, because everybody knows you don't go on a sex app to find a boyfriend, and Julian would never want to be with him, anyway, because Julian thinks that right now he's tonguing the nipple of a nineteen-year-old college student with two roommates back home, a nineteen-year-old college student who has his shit together, and Cooper's thinking, Where's the oblivion? because now even his body is starting to fall out of it, and that's ridiculous because he's a seventeen-year-old boy and a breeze can make him hard, and while he's still hard, he feels like it's not going to go anywhere, and now Julian realizes they've fallen out of step, and he curls away, lies back on a pillow, leans on his side and strokes Cooper's shoulder, touches Cooper's cheek, says, "You're so lovely," and Cooper doesn't want to be lovely, he doesn't want to be a painting, he wants to be screwing himself into oblivion, and he knows, completely knows, that Julian is not the guy for the job. In fact, the only guy for the job would probably be someone who didn't give a shit at all about him, and that would</p>

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	only be worse. So this is one path ended. This is one relief crossed out. Julian asks, "Are you okay?" And Cooper says he's great, because what's one more empty lie? Julian kisses him again, and then they exist like that, half entwined, Julian touching his hair, his chest. Breathing softly, trying to wrap them inside something softer than regular life.
106	After dinner, they hid in the basement and made out for a while—an intense interlude that came to a mutually pleasing conclusion.
111	Tariq is exchanging chat messages with someone from the site that's hosting the feed, making sure there's enough bandwidth, when he hears an engine gunning behind him, like a truck passing by. There's a shout: "FAAAA AAAAA AGGOT S! DIRTY FAAAA AGGOT S!" Then laughter and cheers coming from the car that's making the noise. Everyone turns, and the car rolls through the parking lot, turns around for another pass. "YOU'RE NOTHING BUT FAAAA AGGOT S!" Because of the spotlights, it's hard to see outside of their circle, hard to see anything besides headlights and a blurry head leaning out the passenger window. Tariq feels himself freezing. He knows these guys aren't going to get out of the car, aren't going to come over here with all the cameras going and the police officer and so many witnesses.
115	It hits Craig fully: He is, right now, kissing Harry right in front of his father.
117	Sick of everyone wanting so badly to be turned on that they become these one-track minds living from one one-track minute to the next. And where does that track lead? Men and boys all across America getting off, and not a single one cares about Cooper.
128	The gays of today, the gays of yesterday—we're all the same bother, all the same wrong. Not people, really. Just something to yell about. "If we let this go on, what's next? Men having sex with dogs in a church? Is that free speech?"
129	"I hope they're giving each other AIDS," the caller tells the radio host. "I hope that when they're dying of AIDS, they show that on the Internet, too, so children will know what happens if you kiss like that."
132	"No. If some asshole on the radio was saying that all immigrants should go back to the countries they're from, you'd pay attention. Even if you weren't listening, you'd hear it. If they were saying they hope that all Koreans die of AIDS, your blood would boil higher with every single word. But when it's gays they're talking about, you let it slide. You don't bother to hear it. It's acceptable to you. Even if you don't agree with it—and I am not saying you want me to get AIDS from kissing Peter—you accept it when someone else says it. You let it happen."
137	Some hold hastily scrawled posters: ADAM AND EVE NOT ADAM AND STEVE, HOMOSEXUALITY IS A SIN, YOU CAN'T KISS YOUR WAY OUT OF HELL.
140	There is power in saying, I am not wrong. Society is wrong. Because there is no reason that men and women should have separate bathrooms. There is no reason that we should ever be ashamed of our bodies or ashamed of our love. ...It is a bastardization of the concept of morality, this rule of shame.
142	It's just past noon on a Sunday, but the sex sites are full of people, full of come-ons. ...Twinkhunter's the one who pushes him over the edge. He's blocked this guy at least ten times. But the guy just creates a new profile and starts sending messages again. You're so



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	cute. You're so hot. I think we'd have a great time. The guy looks like he works in a bank. He's got a shirtless photo even though he's too old to have a shirtless photo. Before, Cooper's just hit the block key. This time, though, he types back. You're disgusting. Twinkhunter responds: You into that?
143	He tells the guys who say "whites only" that they're racist scum. He tells the sixty-year-olds who are looking for "under 18s" that they are pedophiles. He tells the younger guys with naked pics that they should stop prostituting themselves. You're pathetic, he writes. You're desperate. Are you afraid to show your face? Is that why you show your dick? ...There's one guy, thirty-four, who says he's long-term-relationship oriented. Cooper writes back, How long-term do you think these relationships are? Two hours? Three? If you want to find a husband, maybe you should stop looking for someone to fuck.
144	He's been frozen. Shut out for bad behavior. On a sex site. ...He posts links to gay porn on Justin Bieber's page. He posts links to Nazi groups on the page for a Republican congressman who compared rape to bad weather. For Taylor Swift's page, he finds a video of a sheep being decapitated.
161	Then Avery returns to him, comes closer again, and now they are kissing with nothing between them. Lips closed, then lips open.
164	It killed us, to be picked on, to be ridiculed for being something we weren't even allowed to be. So many of us first heard the word gay as an insult, an abomination. So many of us were called a faggot before we even knew what that meant.
180	There is no one else in the world that he wants to kiss or screw or talk to or share his life with.
184	Tonight, late-night talk-show hosts will talk about two boys kissing. Radio switchboards will light up. Fox News will ignore it, then decry it. Whatever he is, Craig's father will make sure the televisions and radios stay off, the computers unconnected from the wider world. He doesn't want his other sons to see.
189	We who did nothing more than dream and love and screw—why have we been banished here, why hasn't the world solved this by now? Why must we watch as Cooper steps up to the railing? Why must we watch as a twelve-year-old puts a gun to his head and pulls the trigger? Why must we watch as a fourteen-year-old hangs himself in the garage, to be found by his grandmother two hours later? Why must we watch as a nineteen-year-old is strung up on the side of an empty highway and left to die? Why must we watch as a thirteen-year-old takes a stomach full of pills, then places a plastic bag over his head? Why must we watch as he vomits and chokes? Why must we die over and over again?
190	It does not bring back the twelve-year-old who put a gun to his head. It does not bring back the fourteen-year-old who hung himself. It does not bring back the nineteen-year-old strung up on the side of an empty highway and left to die. It does not bring back the thirteen-year-old who took a stomach full of pills. It does not bring back any of us.
192	From all the camera crews, he knows the story is going to spread, and he hopes that maybe it'll make people a little less scared of two boys kissing than they were before, and a little

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	more welcoming to the idea that all people are, in fact, born equal, no matter who they kiss or screw, no matter what dreams they have or love they give.
195	There will come a time when the gospel will be rewritten.

Profanity/Derogatory Term	Count
Ass	9
Dick	3
Faggot/Fag	12
Fuck	11
Piss	2
Shit	18