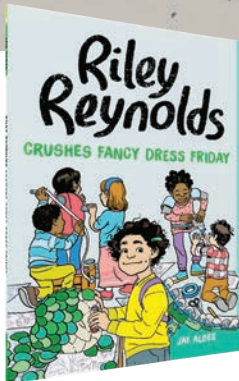


# Riley Reynolds

CRUSHES FANCY DRESS FRIDAY

## Educator's Guide



### Riley Reynolds Crushes Fancy Dress Friday Created by Jay Albee

It's book week at school, and nonbinary year 5 pupil Riley and their best friends craft hard for the Dress Like Your Favourite Character Day. Colourful fabric! Paint! Glitter! They are ready to make the biggest and best group costume ever! But most of the other kids are having trouble coming up with costumes. Riley is ready to use their creativity and vision to help as many kids as possible so dress up day will be a big success!

#### MEET THE CREATORS



Jen Breach

Jay Albee is the joint pen name for LGBTQ+ couple Jen Breach and J. Anthony. Between them, they've done lots of jobs: archaeologist, illustrator, ticket taker, and bagel baker, but now they write and draw all day long in their row house home in South Philadelphia, PA. Jen's best costume ever was a railway conductor. J. once dressed up as the sun.

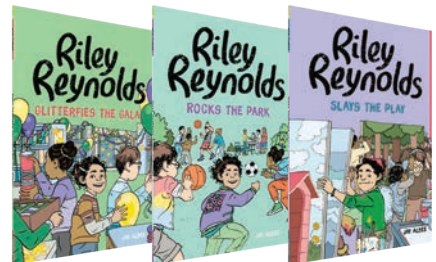


J. Anthony

#### ABOUT THE SERIES

Riley Reynolds loves crafting (and making messes), music (and playing it loud), and animals (from unicorns to dragons to fish and birds). They also love their family and friends. From making costumes to saving a park, Riley is always ready to help!

Riley is nonbinary and loves that too, proving that you don't have to identify as a boy or girl. You can just be yourself and be happy! Riley shows that being true to yourself is the most important thing you can do in this lively chapter book series by Jay Albee.



## Before Reading

Explain to pupils that gender is a way to group people together based on who they are, how they feel, and how they express themselves to the world. So while some people identify as women and girls and others identify as men and boys, there are people who identify as nonbinary. Nonbinary people are neither a girl nor a boy, but may identify as a combination of both.

Gender attribution describes how your gender is perceived by others. Misgendering refers to the experience of others labeling a person with a gender they do not identify with.

- From [GLSEN](#), an American education organisation working to create safe and inclusive schools: "The essential thing to do after learning someone's pronouns is remembering to use those pronouns when referring to that person. If you accidentally use the wrong pronoun when identifying someone, please correct yourself in front of that person and begin using the right pronoun. Everyone makes mistakes and making visible your work to respect and use someone's pronoun after a mistake is an important moment to take. It is not the responsibility of the transgender or gender non-conforming person to address your feelings after misgendering."

Cisgender people may rarely or never be misgendered. This can happen when, for example, you identify as a boy who was assigned male at birth, your gender expression stays in what is considered "masculine" in your culture, AND you stay around people who perceive and read your expression as masculine. You might even get to move through the world without thinking about gender, being misgendered, or feeling limited by gender stereotypes.

- Ask pupils if they have ever experienced this and acknowledge that it is a type of privilege called "cis-privilege."

Sometimes people who aren't cisgender or don't have a binary gender identity can feel safer if they "pass" for cisgender and binary (usually in regard to their gender attribution or how they are perceived by others).

- Ask your pupils for examples of when they have pretended to be something or someone they are not because it seemed easier—not necessarily about gender.

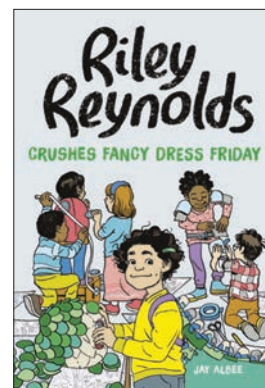
Discuss with pupils the stereotypes about their gender or the gender they were assigned at birth. Even though nonbinary people aren't boys or girls, they may still be teased for breaking stereotypes associated with their sex assigned at birth or the gender they are perceived as being (*Girls like pink, boys don't cry, etc.*).

- Ask your pupils about gender stereotypes they don't believe in. Can you think of a time when you may have broken a gender stereotype? Are gender stereotypes useful?

Explain to pupils that you're about to read a story about Riley Reynolds, whose gender is nonbinary. So when you talk about Riley, you will use the pronouns "they" and "them."

Show the pupils the cover of the book and read the title out loud.

- Who do pupils think the story is about? (*A kid named Riley.*) What do you think Riley will do in this story? (*Have the best costume.*) What do you see the pupils doing on the cover? (*Making costumes with each other.*) Do you think Riley and their friends are having a good time? Why or why not? Do you think Riley is a creative kid? Why or why not?



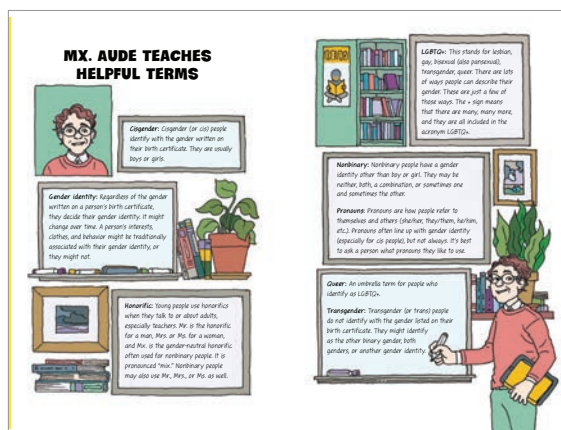
In this story, Riley uses their creativity to create their own amazing costume and also help all their schoolmates come up with awesome costume ideas.

- Why is creativity important? Ask pupils to share a time they were creative.



# Using the Introduction

Go through the “Mx. Aude Teaches Helpful Terms” section in the book (pages 6–7) and decide which terms you would like to draw your pupils’ attention to while reading the book. Read the terms you chose to your pupils, as well as the definition from the page. Use any of these follow-up questions.



- Read **cisgender** and **gender identity** together. Ask your pupils how someone’s gender identity might change over time. (*They might say from a boy to a girl. They might say nonbinary.*) Ask your pupils if everyone’s gender changes over time. (*No, there are cisgender people.*) Ask your pupils what is something they do or like to wear to express their gender. (*Might start by giving an example of something you do or like to wear.*) This also presents an opportunity to reflect on gender stereotypes.

- Draw a spectrum on the blackboard, or another relevant diagram, and discuss the ideas of “masculine,” “feminine,” and “gender neutral.” Ask pupils to think about gender stereotypes—the assumptions about what people should like and how they should dress or act based on their gender. Do only boys play video games or with Legos? Do only girls play with dolls or like nail polish? Does the colour blue always have to be on the “masculine” end of the spectrum, or the colour pink on the “feminine” end? Can you really know someone’s gender identity by the colours they wear? How does wearing blue or pink make you feel? Maybe no different than the way you feel when you wear yellow—or it makes you feel special and more like you. Do the colours you like change over time? Maybe sometimes they do.

- **Nonbinary:** Ask pupils what they think it means to identify as **neither** a boy or a girl and what it means to identify as **both** a boy and a girl. If you have already read the book, what does nonbinary mean to Riley?

- **Honorific:** Ask pupils what your honorific is. Who is someone at their school that uses the “Mr.” honorific? Who is someone at their school that uses the “Ms.” or “Mrs.” honorific? Ask your pupils who is someone at their school that uses the “Mx.” honorific. (*You can also use Mx. Aude from the book if there is no one at your school.*) Try to guide the discussion so that pupils understand why it is important to use the correct honorific. (*Because it is a word or title that expresses respect, and an individual gets to decide what their honorific is and how they want to be seen and acknowledged.*)

- **LGBTQ+:** Ask your pupils:
  - What does lesbian mean? (*A woman who falls in love with other women.*)
  - What does gay mean? (*A man who falls in love with other men.*)
  - What does bisexual/pansexual mean? (*Someone who falls in love with all genders.*)
  - What does transgender mean? (*People who do not identify with the gender listed on their birth certificate.*)
  - What does queer mean? (*An umbrella term for people who identify as LGBTQ+.*)
  - If they know anybody in the LGBTQ+ community? Have they ever celebrated Pride with their family or friends? If so, can they talk about what Pride is, and what it’s like?

- **Pronouns:** Ask pupils what pronouns they use when they talk about you. Ask them to share what pronouns others should use when talking about them. What pronouns are used in the book when talking about Riley? If you have already read the book, choose different characters and ask which pronouns they use.

- **Queer:** What is another term we learned that describes the queer community? (*LGBTQ+.*) Which term would you rather use and why?

- **Transgender:** Transgender people do not identify with the gender listed on their birth certificate. What does it mean to be a transgender man? (*Someone whose birth certificate says female but is actually a male.*) What does it mean to be a transgender woman? (*Someone whose birth certificate says male but is actually a female.*) What does it mean to be transgender and nonbinary? (*Someone who’s not actually the gender it says on their birth certificate—neither a male nor a female or both a male and female.*)

# While Reading

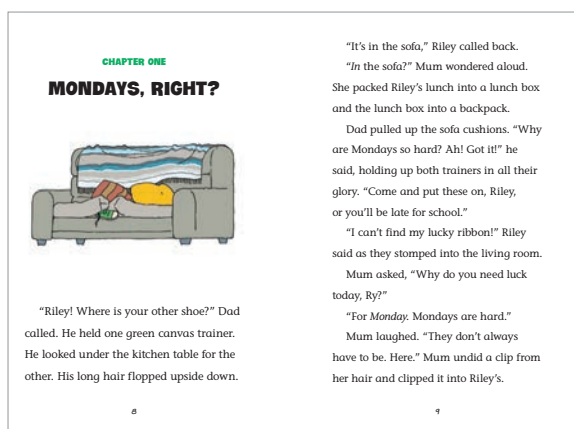
Read the **I'm Riley** introduction to the book (pages 4-5).

- What are some of the things that Riley loves? Who has something in common with Riley? What do you have in common with Riley? Why would you want to be Riley's friend?



Read the first three pages of **Chapter One: Mondays, Right?** (pages 8-10).

- Ask your pupils what Riley and their family think about Mondays. What in the story makes them think that? How does Riley's family support each other to get through this Monday?



At the end of the chapter, show your pupils the illustrations. Talk to them about how the art is in "panels," like a comic. Each piece of the story is in its own "frame," with the story moving from left to right and up to down, just like the rest of the story in the book.

- Why do they think the creators of this book put all the illustrations at the end of the chapter? How do they think having the illustrations at the end of the chapter helps tell the story?

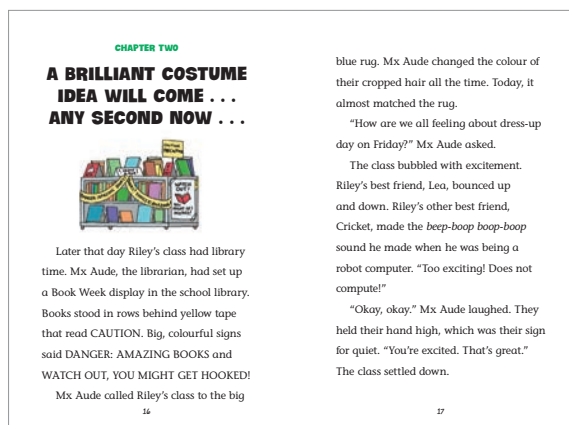


Read the part where Georgie comes up to talk to Riley about dress up day (pages 12-13). Draw your student's attention to the illustrations.

- What do the sketches inside the squiggly lines mean? (*The squiggly lines are thought bubbles, so the drawings inside the thought bubbles are different things Riley is imagining.*) What ideas does Riley have for their costume? (*You can point to each thought bubble and ask about just the one you are pointing to.*)

Read the first two pages of **Chapter Two: A Brilliant Costume Idea Will Come... Any Second Now...** (pages 16-17).

- Mx. Aude asks Riley's class how they're feeling about dress up day on Friday. What do Riley's classmates do to make Mx. Aude understand they're excited? (*Lea bounced up and down; Cricket said it was too exciting, etc.*)

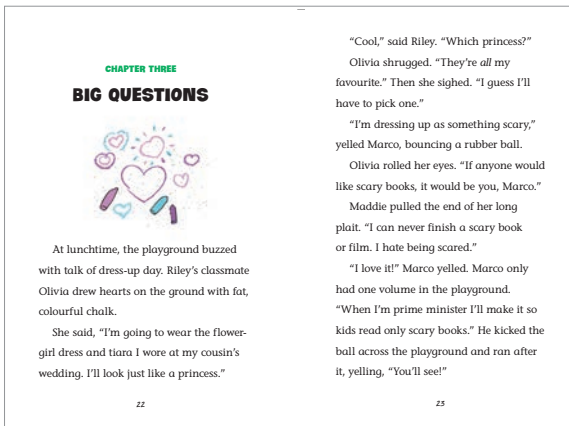


Mx. Aude assigns the class to draw or write a story about their favourite character from a book.

- How does Riley and their friends feel once they have their paper and pens in front of them? Ask pupils what words from the book make them think that. (*Riley is suddenly faced with a blank page; Lea's feet went tippy-tap; Cricket beep-booped, etc.*) What illustrations from the book make them think that? (*Lea and Cricket are smiling and have their pens on the page; Riley is frowning and holding their head, etc.*)
- What does Riley do when they cannot come up with a fictional character to write about? (*Draws a picture of themselves, Lea, and Cricket going on space adventures.*) What does that tell you about Riley? (*That they are creative by making up their own story. That they have good coping skills when frustrated, not dwelling on what they cannot do and instead doing what they can.*) Ask your pupils if there was a time they felt like they couldn't do something but figured it out.

Read **Chapter Three: Big Questions** (pages 22–31).

- Maddie and Tunde need help with their costumes. Do both Maddie and Tunde have the same problem with making their costumes? (*No. Maddie doesn't want to dress up, and Tunde doesn't know how to make his costume.*) How is Riley able to help both Maddie and Tunde? (*They were creative. They thought outside the box for solutions for both kids—Maddie dressing up her dog instead of herself, and Tunde dressing up as a rainbow instead of an elephant.*) Can your pupils think of a time they used creativity to solve a problem?



On pages 27–28, Olivia tells Lea that she cannot be a knight.

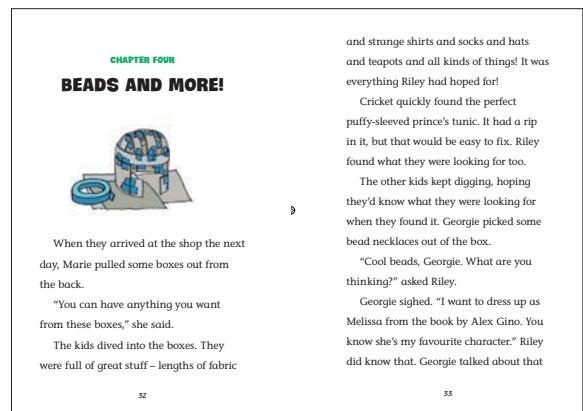
- Why does Olivia say this? (*Because Lea's a girl, and knights are boys.*) How does Riley convince them both that Lea can be a knight? (*By reminding them of The Princess in Black, who—while not a boy—is as tough as a knight.*) Ask your pupils if they think only boys can be knights.

Lea is worried that if she dresses up as a knight people will laugh at her.

- What does Riley's dad mean when he says that people laugh because they got the joke or because they didn't know what to think? When is it kind to laugh at someone else? When is it unkind to laugh at someone else?

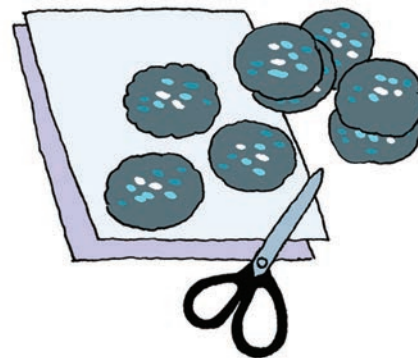
Read **Chapter Four: Poof, Floof, Beads, And More!** (pages 32–37) and **Chapter Five: Crafting Is Serious Business** (pages 38–43).

- On pages 32–40, how do Riley and their parents come up with a plan that will help Riley's classmates finish their costumes? (*Riley asks if Lea and Cricket can come over to work on costumes together. Riley's dad suggests taking the entire walking carpool to thrift and craft shops.*) Once they get to the shops, how does Riley continue to help their classmates? (*Riley helps Georgie make his costume more theatrical and helps Nelle figure out how to make her Grumpy Ladybug costume.*)



On page 41, Lea, Cricket, and Riley start working on their costumes.

- Ask pupils if they think Lea, Cricket, or Riley could make their costumes by themselves. When is it better to work as a team? Ask your pupils if there ever was a time they needed help from others to get something done.



Read the first three pages of **Chapter Six: Riley Reynolds, Costume Visionary** (pages 44-46).

- Riley wonders if they really are a costume visionary. What worked best when Riley helped classmates come up with costume ideas? (*When they listen carefully and help them come up with their own ideas.*) Ask your pupils about a time they listened carefully to help someone else or when they were helped because someone listened to them.

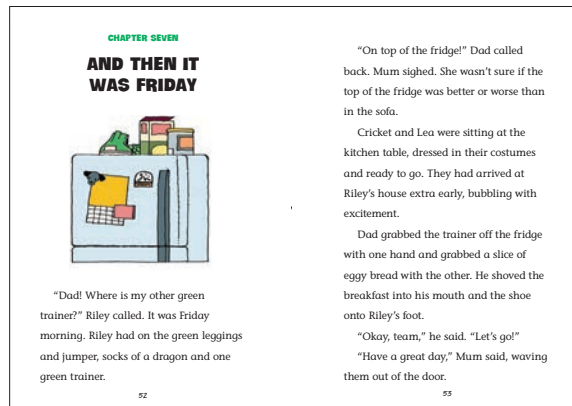


Continue on reading the rest of chapter six.

- After reading pages 49-50, ask your pupils why Riley was proud of himself even though the costume didn't turn out the way they first imagined it. (*Because Riley didn't have anything they needed to make what they imagined. Because Riley figured out how to make something really cool with what they did have.*)

**Read Chapter Seven: And Then It Was Friday** (pages 52-60).

- On page 59, when looking out at all their classmates, Riley "felt light as a feather." Ask your pupils why. (*Because Riley could feel how happy everyone was while wearing their costumes and because Riley helped so many of their classmates bring their ideas to life.*)



# After Reading

## Activity Idea:

Have your own dress up day! Invite pupils to make a mask or a prop inspired by their favourite book character with art supplies in your classroom. Do a show-and-tell at the end or throw a parade in your school with everyone wearing their character creations.

## Discussion Questions:

1. If your school had Dress Like Your Favourite Character Day, who would you choose? Why is that character or book meaningful to you?



2. Riley's classmate Maddie does not enjoy dressing up. What are some reasons someone might not enjoy dressing up? What are some reasons someone else might enjoy it?



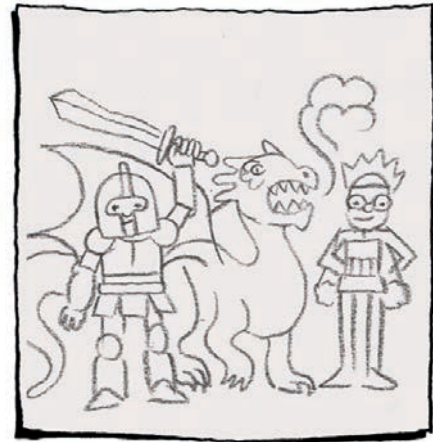
3. An important part of this story is collaboration and helping each other. Riley gets a lot of meaning out of helping others. In what ways did Riley help their friends? In what ways did everyone work together to make dress up day a success?



4. What are the circumstances in Riley's life that mean they do not have to hide their gender identity? (*Supportive family, having their pronouns known and respected, not being bullied at school, not being the only nonbinary person at school, e.g. Mx. Aude.*)

## Writing Prompts:

1. Write a story or article for the BBC about Dress Like Your Favourite Character Day. You can interview Riley, Lea, Cricket, and others for your story.
2. When Olivia wonders whether girls can be knights, Lea is worried. Has anyone ever told you that you couldn't do something because of your gender or gender identity?
3. Write a story or draw a picture of you and your favourite book character on a new adventure together.



## More Resources to Support LGBTQ+ Pupils and Families

Stonewall  
[stonewall.org.uk](http://stonewall.org.uk)

Diverse Educators  
[diverseeducators.co.uk](http://diverseeducators.co.uk)

MindOut  
[mindout.uk](http://mindout.uk)

The Proud Trust  
[theproudtrust.org](http://theproudtrust.org)

Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline  
[switchboard.lgbt](http://switchboard.lgbt)

Barnardo's, LGTQ+ Young People  
[barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-young-people/lgbt](http://barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-young-people/lgbt)

The Beaumont Society  
[beaumontsociety.org.uk](http://beaumontsociety.org.uk)

Gendered Intelligence  
[genderedintelligence.co.uk](http://genderedintelligence.co.uk)

Mind, LGBTQIA+ Mental Health  
[mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtqia-mental-health/lgbtqia-mental-health-support](http://mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/lgbtqia-mental-health/lgbtqia-mental-health-support)

Mermaids  
[mermaidsuk.org.uk](http://mermaidsuk.org.uk)

Mosaic Trust  
[mosaictrust.org.uk](http://mosaictrust.org.uk)