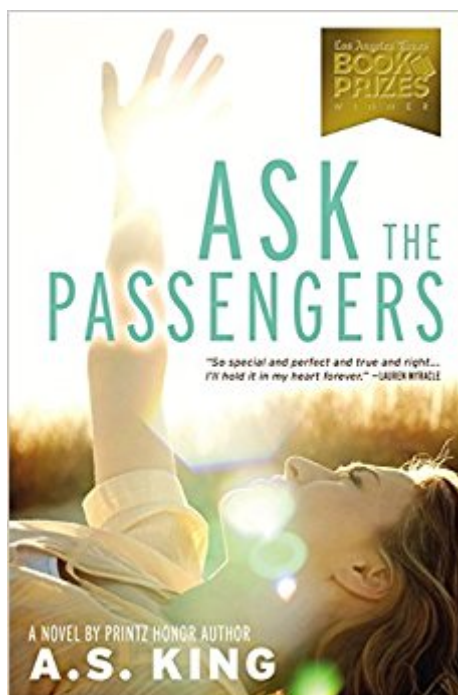


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# Ask The Passengers



## Synopsis

In this truly original portrayal of a girl struggling to break free of society's definitions, Printz Honor author A.S. King asks readers to question everything--and offers hope to those who will never stop seeking real love. Astrid Jones desperately wants to confide in someone, but her mother's pushiness and her father's lack of interest tell her they're the last people she can trust. Instead, Astrid spends hours lying on the backyard picnic table watching airplanes fly overhead. She doesn't know the passengers inside, but they're the only people who won't judge her when she asks them her most personal questions...like what it means that she's falling in love with a girl. As her secret relationship becomes more intense and her friends demand answers, Astrid has nowhere left to turn. She can't share the truth with anyone except the people she imagines flying over her at thirty thousand feet, and they don't even know she's there. But little does Astrid know just how much even the tiniest connection will affect these strangers' lives--and her own--for the better.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 10 Up-Astrid Jones is a high-school senior in a small, Pennsylvania town. She's a top student and loves philosophy. (She gives Socrates a first name-Frank.) Her favorite pastime is to lie on the picnic table she and her father built in the backyard and send her love to passengers in the airplanes as they pass overhead. The teen sends her love off to strangers, because she has no use for it at home. She has an agoraphobic, type-A mother who wears business suits and heels when she works from home. While emotionally unavailable to her first born, she regularly plans boozy

"Mommy and Me" nights with Astrid's younger sister. Her mother also has a texting relationship with Astrid's best friend. Astrid's father is underemployed and smokes pot all the time. Her sister just wants to fit in with small-town life. And Astrid herself is ambivalent about her sexuality and is being pressured by her lesbian work friend to come out. Her school friends, members of the homecoming court, are pretending to be a couple but are actually gay. The townspeople are small-minded and gossipy. Astrid's overwhelming need to send messages of love to anonymous passengers sometimes appears to touch those passengers, who are also leading lives of quiet desperation. And, sometimes, maybe they can send love to Astrid. King's thoughtful, sad, funny, and frank book is finally about paradox and will appeal to any mature teen resisting the pressure to conform or rebel; anyone who wants to define herself on her own terms; and anyone whose family life belies the 1950s sitcom myth.-Nina Sachs, Walker Memorial Library, Westbrook, ME (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** Astrid has a lot of love to give, and she gives it freely to schoolmates, friends, and even her dysfunctional family. But most of all, she sends her love to the passengers in the planes whizzing high above her small, gossipy, intolerant town: "Because if I give it all away, no one can control it." But she does love her coworker Dee and her best friend Christina, whose biggest secret she keeps. Printz Honor Book author King (Please Ignore Vera Dietz, 2010) continues to expertly plumb the lovely numbness of a young person struck by emotional paralysis. Afraid to come out, afraid to be boxed in, and afraid to fall under the scrutiny of her town, Astrid lives a rich inner life, which King depicts with deft magical realist conventions that recall *Everybody Sees the Ants* (2011). Astrid's consciousness is exemplified by Socrates, an agent of truth and logic who silently judges her for not owning up to her personal truths. King also incorporates the first-person narrations of the passengers in the planes, whose stories unknowingly parallel and carry Astrid's affections and desire for escape. Another thoughtful, and often breathtaking, achievement for King, whose star is ascending as quickly as one of Astrid's planes. Grades 9-12. --Courtney Jones --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is my first review, so bare with me. I'm going to keep it short but direct. Astrid is the main character of this novel and she is a character to fall in love with, to root for, and to appreciate. It's almost as if she becomes a dear friend whose struggles you witness. This book is an example of why most readers love to read. At the beginning of the book there are three quotes from three

different philosophers, those three quotes are the basis of Astrid's journey of self-discovery, and self-acceptance. At 17 or 18 (I don't remember if it says) Astrid is one of the most resilient characters I've ever had the privilege to get to know. She struggles with understanding her sexuality, but she also is struggling with finding her place in the world, and understanding who she is as a person. She goes through this brilliant journey with herself, her best-friends, her maybe girlfriend, and her family. This book puts a lot of things into perspective, even if Astrid wasn't gay, the message in the book is clear. We know nothing, except that. And people's opinions don't matter as long as you know who you are. There are memorable quotes throughout the entire book. It's funny, sad, and thought provoking. It's definitely the best book I've read this summer. I don't think this is happening, but I read the book so fast and was so happy I read it that I figured I should try and encourage others to read it too. I hope you read it. It'll make you think about yourself, your friends, and your family and in the end, isn't that why we read. To gain perspective? To understand others? This book is pretty cool in those ways, when I teach, I'll want to teach this book as much as I'd want to teach *13 reasons why?* Just greatness on paper. Astrid is a special character, and if you don't grow to love her, I'll be surprised. If you don't have one moment of deep thought about this book, I'll be surprised. Take the chance and read Astrid's story, you'll probably try to tell everyone else to read about her too once you're finished.

The happiest surprise of this book for me was discovering that I'm totally enamored with this author's writing style. If writing style factors heavily into your overall opinion of a book, I'd recommend downloading a sample of this one and seeing if you find it as engaging as I did. There's wit, insight and, for lack of a better way of putting it, an effortless 'flow' that's lacking in a sad number of stiffly or pretentiously written books these days. I also found the theme an interesting one, and thought the narrative was really well paced. Be forewarned that this isn't one of those young adult books where a string of Very Dramatic Events occur. In fact, there aren't even many surprises or twists along the way. I can totally understand how that might make this story feel flat and lackluster to some, and if you're up for a twisty and plot-driven read, this probably won't prove too satisfying. I actually found the lack of melodrama to be refreshing, though, and appreciated that the main character, Astrid, was so relatable. A couple of minor criticisms: As many reviewers mentioned, random anecdotes about various flight passengers who in no way factor into the overall story are tacked on to the end of certain chapters. The point here seems to be 'look, see, all over the country, different people are confused about love and identity just like our main character!' But, honestly, it's kind of a stretch, and rather than enriching the book's themes, it just feels like a distracting,

pointless gimmick to me. I also agree with those who felt that some of the minor characters and relationships, while interesting, ultimately failed to resonate as deeply as they could have. For example, I found Astrid's mom amusingly and very relatably flawed, and give the author credit for creating that character. Her relationship with Astrid, however, was underdeveloped and ultimately without much change or depth. And the sister remained sort of a nonentity to me despite ultimately playing a fairly important role. Overall, I'd recommend this book to teens and to those of us who enjoy young adult literature despite being past our own adolescence! And I want to stress that the fact that I'm straight in no way precluded me from relating to the book's themes and characters, so please don't feel that this book must appeal solely to the LGBT population. Anyone who's ever dealt with any confusion related to who we are and to the mysteries of love can relate to this book---in other words, pretty much everyone ;) Despite the minor, aforementioned flaws, I found it extremely well written, smart and compelling. Enjoy!

Because this is A.S. King, there's an interesting balance here between believably teen concerns and unrealistically elevated self-awareness and language. I hope, for teens reading this book, that comes across as aspirational. It's honestly one of the things I love about her books- her teen characters still teach me a thing or two about self-reflection and communication. It's a contemporary novel, and this author may be the only contemporary YA author I consistently like. But it does have relevance with the issues handled, and the way they're handled. This is an LGBTQIA novel in that the main character is figuring out her sexual orientation. But beyond that, this is a story about love-love between romantic partners, love within families, love between friends, and loving oneself. It's not about the redemptive power of love or anything sappy, though I think it's a very important lesson with multiple layers. It's more about...trusting love. And the work necessary to foster and keep it. And how much you need it, especially when you live among close-minded, fearful people. I really liked Astrid's voice, and her approach to figuring herself out felt authentic. A.S. King definitely makes quirky characters unlike ones you read anywhere else. I love that Claire wasn't just a type-A neurotic (the kind of flat powersuit businesswoman character you see a lot in movies set in NYC), but had her own depth that we (eventually) see created that fear-based mentality. I also loved Clay. And Socrates, although...where were philosophy classes when \*I\* was in high school?! In short, I loved it and I recommend it. If I had to rank A.S. King novels that I've read (so far), this is definitely in the top 2.

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