



Picture Us in the Light

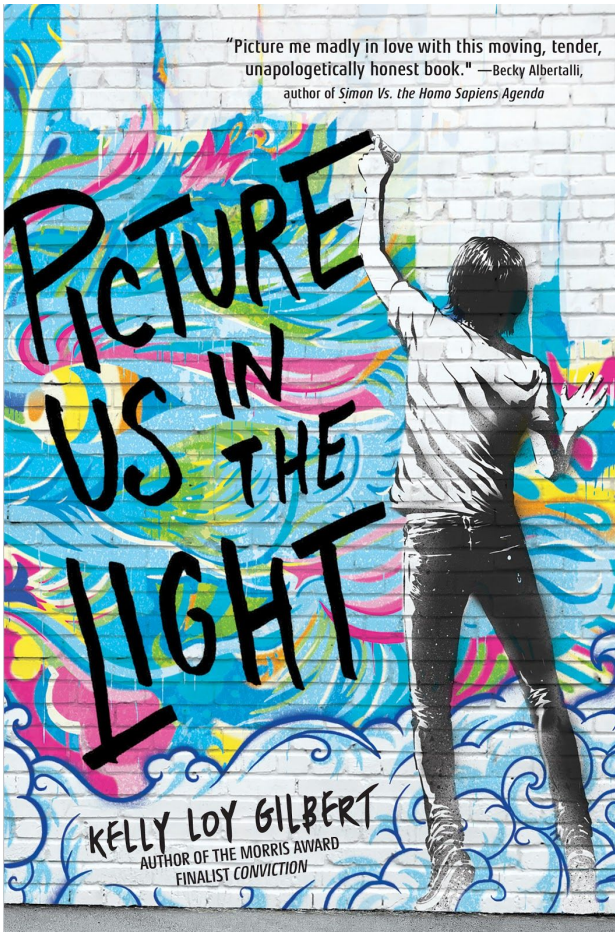
by Kelly Loy Gilbert

A discussion/reading guide

What You'll Find Here

- Information about [Picture Us in the Light](#) & author [Kelly Loy Gilbert](#)
- [Thinking](#) points while you're reading *Picture Us in the Light* or for discussing in a group
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Picture us in the Light



The critically acclaimed YA novel with five starred reviews that everyone is raving about!

"Picture me madly in love with this moving, tender, unapologetically honest book."

—Becky Albertalli, author of *Simon Vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*

Danny Cheng has always known his parents have secrets. But when he discovers a taped-up box in his father's closet filled with old letters and a file on a powerful Silicon Valley family, he realizes there's much more to his family's past than he ever imagined.

Danny has been an artist for as long as he can remember and it seems his path is set, with a scholarship to RISD and his family's blessing to pursue the career he's always dreamed of. Still, contemplating a future without his best friend, Harry Wong, by his side makes Danny feel a panic he can barely put into words. Harry and Danny's lives are deeply intertwined and as they approach the one-year anniversary of a tragedy that shook their friend group to its core, Danny can't stop asking himself if Harry is truly in love with his girlfriend, Regina Chan.

When Danny digs deeper into his parents' past, he uncovers a secret that disturbs the foundations of his family history and the carefully constructed façade his parents have maintained begins to crumble. With everything he loves in danger of being stripped away, Danny must face the ghosts of the past in order to build a future that belongs to him.

Published by [Disney-Hyperion](#) on April 10th, 2018

★ Reviews: [Publisher's Weekly](#) | [Kirkus](#) | [Booklist](#)

Excerpt

I was the last one to leave that night. I helped Harry straighten up, and lingered until I couldn't anymore. I would be okay as long as I was here with him, I thought, but as soon as I left it would all hit me. When all the pillows were back in place and all the uneaten pizza slices thrown away and I was at the door to go, my mom waiting outside the gate, I said, "Ahmed thinks—" and then I couldn't go any further with it, couldn't say it aloud.

Harry didn't make me. I have always loved him for that.

"No, I know you," he said. "He's wrong. I know you better than Ahmed. I know you better than anyone."

That saved me in that moment, I think, that absolution. I've never told him that. It wasn't enough to erase the rest of it—a part of me still shrivels whenever I'm around Ahmed, that same part that worries the universe chose wrongly in keeping me here—but in that moment it was enough to hold me. I said, "Okay." I turned to go.

"Wait." He reached for my hand, and then he put his arm around my waist and pulled me closer. "Promise me you won't ever do that. What happened to Sandra, I mean."

My mind had flashed blank for a second when he'd touched me like that, and it took me a second to recover and answer. "I won't."

"No, Danny, I mean—" He looked frantic. "Promise me."

"I meant it. I promise."

He scanned my face. There was a heat creeping into all those cold places I'd been sinking into all day, and a tingling that ran through me like a shock. I held myself still and let him look. I wanted, in that moment, to give him the entire world.

Kelly Loy Gilbert



Kelly Loy Gilbert believes deeply in the power of stories to illuminate a shared humanity and give voice to complex, broken people. She is the author of *Conviction*, a William C. Morris Award finalist, and lives in the SF Bay Area. She would be thrilled to hear from you on Twitter [@KellyLoyGilbert](https://twitter.com/KellyLoyGilbert) or at www.KellyLoyGilbert.com.

Themes

- Family & culture
- Immigration & being a child of immigrant parents
- Friendship
- Grief & suicide
- High school graduation & transition to adulthood
- Growing up in the Bay Area

Discussion Ideas + Thinking Points

- Quantum entanglement is a phenomenon Kelly Loy Gilbert explored during her research process for *Picture Us in the Light* as well as its potential human implications. Why do you think it was important for this story to open with a chapter on Danny's father's experiments on quantum entanglement? What other moments in the story did you notice quantum entanglement at work?

Quantum Entanglement

in quantum physics, entangled particles remain connected so that actions performed on one affect the other, even when separated by great distances. The phenomenon so riled Albert Einstein he called it "spooky action at a distance."

- Kelly connects Danny's story with Rosa Maria Hernandez's experience of ripped from her family while being rushed to the hospital. What news stories have made you curious or interested in learning more about the people behind them?
- In many YA books, parents are barriers to the youth and their story and therefore end up off-screen. In *Picture Us in the Light*, Danny's parents play an integral role in his story. Talk about the ways your family, community, and cultural upbringing shaped you as a person today.
- Secrets play an important role in this story. Danny's parents keep secrets from him about their past. Danny, Harry, and Regina keep secrets from each other about things that happened before Sandra's death. Danny and Harry keep their feelings secret from one another. What impact do those secrets have on the character's relationships with each other?
- The teens in this story are very driven, and they've tied so much of their identity as individuals and sense of self worth in their future goals. In what ways is that mindset detrimental to their mental and emotional wellbeing?
- Danny's parent's story illustrates the way in which our country's current immigration policies have the potential to tear families apart. How did you feel about Danny's parent's situation? Do you think you would make the same choices his parents did if you found yourself in similar circumstances?
- Throughout the novel, Danny's art is representative of the emotional challenges he's facing. What do you think his sketching of Mr. X represented? What do you think his struggle to draw Sandra represented?
- The moment when Danny meets his sister for the first time is a very emotionally charged moment in the story. Do you feel like you would react similarly to the way she did in that situation? What do you think the future holds for their relationship?
- The chapters told from Danny's sister's point of view really increase the tension and mystery around Danny's parent's secret. What was your reaction when you found out what happened to her? Do you think his parents ultimately made the right decision?
- From Danny's dad's experiments to the hidden file on the Ballard family, there are so many story threads in this book that the author has to tie together in the end. What did you think of the resolution of the story? Were you able to figure it out along the way, or was the big reveal a surprise?

Resources

Immigrant Families

- [Catapult](#): writers exploring interracial adoption
- [United We Dream](#): largest immigrant-led youth organization in the U.S.
- [Parents and Teens in Immigrant Families](#): cultural influences and material pressures
- [Niños](#): a guide to help you protect your US-born child in the event you are detained or deported
- [Immigo](#): a free mobile app developed by National Council of La Raza and the Immigration Advocates Network to share updates on immigration issues.
- [ACLU](#): know your rights
- [Family Preparedness Plan](#): a place to plan in case of emergency

Asian-Americans

- [Understanding Our Perceptions of Asian Americans](#): An overview essay on Asian Americans, including identity issues (perceptions and misperceptions, use of terminology, understanding demographics, and the extreme diversity contained within the term
- [Teaching Tolerance: I am Asian-American](#): resources for discussion and [teacher](#) reflection points

Grief & Suicide

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 in the US
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call 1-800-273-8255

- [#BeThe1To](#): help someone in crisis. You don't have to be a mental health professional to help someone in your life that may be struggling. Learn the Lifeline's 5 steps that you can use to help a loved one that may be in crisis
- [Teen Grief](#): this booklet and accompanying videos have been developed to help teens understand their grief and to let them know that they are not alone. Many teens are sharing the same journey, and help is available right now.

Things You or Your Book Club Can Do to Embody Picture Us in the Light

- Call your mom, dad, other family member, or a friend. Connect! This book is all about the connections we form.
- Ask a high school senior what they are doing this summer or next year, not where they are going to college. Teens are not defined by the college they attend.
- [Visit](#) a local art gallery and see what art reminds you of Danny's art.
- [Support](#) an immigration advocacy organization. People are not illegal or expendable.
- [Volunteer](#) at your local suicide prevention crisis center. Help is out there.

Future Reads

- [The Sun is Also a Star](#) by Nicola Yoon
- [The Serpent King](#) by Jeff Zentner
- [Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe](#) by Benjamin Alire Sáenz
- [We are Okay](#) by Nina LaCour
- [Finding Felicity](#) by Stacey Kade
- [The Astonishing Color of After](#) by Emily X.R. Pan
- [American Panda](#) by Gloria Chao
- [The First to Know](#) by Abigail Johnson
- [Enter Title Here](#) by Rahul Kanakia