Delve Deeper into *Memories of a Penitent Heart*  
A film by Cecilia Aldarondo

This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Rachael Harkness of Portland Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *Memories of a Penitent Heart*.

Filmmaker Cecilia Aldarondo suspected that there was something ugly in her family's past. *Memories of a Penitent Heart* excavates a buried conflict around her uncle Miguel, who died at a time when AIDS was synonymous with sin. As she searches for Miguel's partner decades later, the film—both a love story and a tribute—offers a cautionary tale of how faith can be used and abused in times of crisis. A co-presentation with Latino Public Broadcasting (LPB).

**ADULT NONFICTION**


France, David. *How To Survive a Plague: The Inside Story of How Citizens and Science Tamed AIDS*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016. A riveting, powerful telling of the story of the grassroots movement of activists, many of them in a life-or-death struggle, who seized upon scientific research to help develop the drugs that turned HIV from a mostly fatal infection to a manageable disease. Ignored by public officials, religious leaders, and the nation at large, and confronted with shame and hatred, this small group of men and women chose to fight for their right to live by educating themselves and demanding to become full partners in the race for effective treatments. Around the globe, 16 million people are alive today thanks to their efforts.

Monette, Paul. *Borrowed Time: San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Javanovich, 1988*. Paul Monette’s memoir is a heartbreaking account of love, loss and survival during the AIDS crisis. Years after Monette himself succumbed AIDS in 1995, his memoir is a vivid primary source that captures a painful chapter in LGBT history.

Strub, Sean. *Body Counts: A Memoir of Politics, Sex, AIDS, and Survival*. Scribner, 2014. Sean Strub was a politically engaged leader and witness to critical moments in the struggle for LGBT equality. He protested government neglect with ACT UP during the AIDS crisis, was the first openly HIV-positive man to run for Congress, and founded POZ, a trailblazing magazine for HIV-positive people. His memoir is a firsthand account of the events, setbacks and the victories of a decades-long grassroots fight against HIV/AIDS.

Tushnet, Eve. *Gay and Catholic: Accepting My Sexuality, Finding Community, Living My Faith*. Ave Maria Press, 2014. Eve Tushnet was born to two atheist academics, but converted to Catholicism as an undergraduate at Yale after stumbling into a theological debate with a group of Catholics. Rejecting the notion that devout Catholics cannot be openly gay, Tushnet's first book questions the boundaries of traditional Catholic attitudes towards sexuality.

**ADULT FICTION**

Kushner, Tony. *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1992. This surreal and sweeping play is one of the most celebrated works about gay identity, love, politics and New York City during the AIDS crisis. Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Kushner’s two-part epic follows the lives of several Americans surviving and thriving in the face of prejudice, disease, and personal tragedy.

Obejas, Achy. *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?* Cleis Press, 1994. Achy Obejas writes stories about uprooted people. Some, like herself, are Latino immigrants and lesbians; others are men (gay and straight), people with AIDS, addicts, people living marginally, just surviving. As omniscient narrator to her characters’ lives, Obejas generously delves into her own memories of exile and alienation to tell stories about women and men who struggle for wholeness and love.


Brown, Rebecca. *The Gifts of the Body*. New York: Harper, 1995. The premise of this novel is simple: a home health aid cares for a cast of HIV/AIDS patients and recounts their stories. But the intimacy of her narrative is arresting. The reader is given a glimpse into the bedrooms of her patients, from young gay men to an elderly woman infected through a blood transfusion. While caring for these individuals, the narrator relates the strength, courage, and dignity of individuals dying from an inexplicably cruel disease.

From that moment forward, within hours the bullying began. Her HIV positive since birth, but growing up, she never felt like her illness defined her. On an unremarkable day in middle school, she disclosed to a friend her HIV-positive status—and within hours the bullying began. From that moment forward, every day was like walking through a minefield. Paige was never sure when or from where the next taunt, taunt, or hateful message would come. There one night, desperate for escape, fifteen-year-old Paige found herself in her bathroom staring at a bottle of sleeping pills. That could have been the end of her story. Instead, it was only the beginning.


For LGBTQ people and their supporters, Pride events are an opportunity to honor the past, protest injustice, and celebrate a diverse and vibrant community. The high point of Pride, the Pride Parade, is spectacular and colorful. But there is a whole lot more to Pride than rainbow flags and amazing outfits. How did Pride come to be? And what does Pride mean to the people who celebrate it?

**NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS**


In a wildly whimsical, validating, and exuberant reflection of the LGBT community, *This Day In June* welcomes readers to experience a pride celebration and share in a day when we are all united. Also included is a Reading Guide chock-full of facts about LGBT history and culture, as well as a Note to Parents and Caregivers with information on how to talk to children about sexual orientation and gender identity in age-appropriate ways. *This Day In June* is an excellent tool for teaching respect, acceptance, and understanding of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.


Paige Rawl has been HIV positive since birth, but growing up, she never felt like her illness defined her. On an unremarkable day in middle school, she disclosed to a friend her HIV-positive status—and within hours the bullying began. From that moment forward, know-it-all who has an unusual way of looking at the world. When the two meet at the swimming pool, they seem to have nothing in common. But as the loners start spending time together, they discover that they share a special friendship—the kind that changes lives and lasts a lifetime. And it is through this friendship that Ari and Dante will learn the most important truths about themselves and the kind of people they want to be.


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**FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS**

**Winterson, Jeanette. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit. Grove Press, 1997.**

Jeanette is a bright and rebellious orphan who is adopted into an evangelical household in the dour, industrial North of England and finds herself embroidering grim religious mottoes and shaking her little tambourine for Jesus. But as this budding missionary comes of age, and comes to terms with her unorthodox sexuality, the peculiar balance of her God-fearing household dissolves. Jeanette’s insistence on listening to truths of her own heart and mind—and on reporting them with wit and passion—makes for an unforgettable chronicle of an eccentric, moving passage into adulthood.

**Saenz, Benjamin Alire. Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe. Simon & Schuster, 2014.**

Aristotle is an angry teen with a brother in prison. Dante is a...