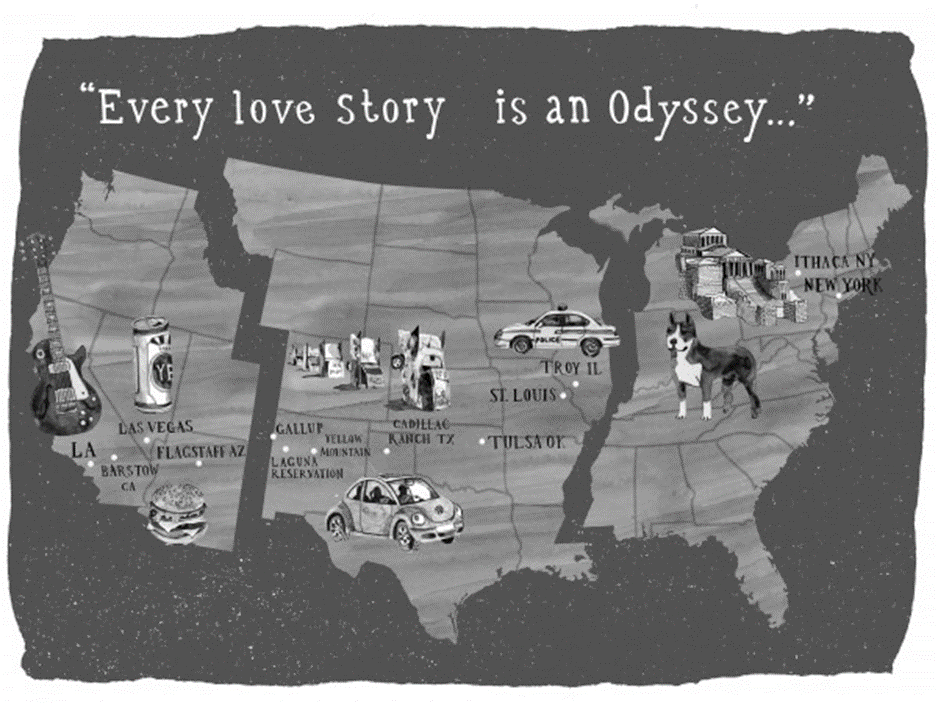
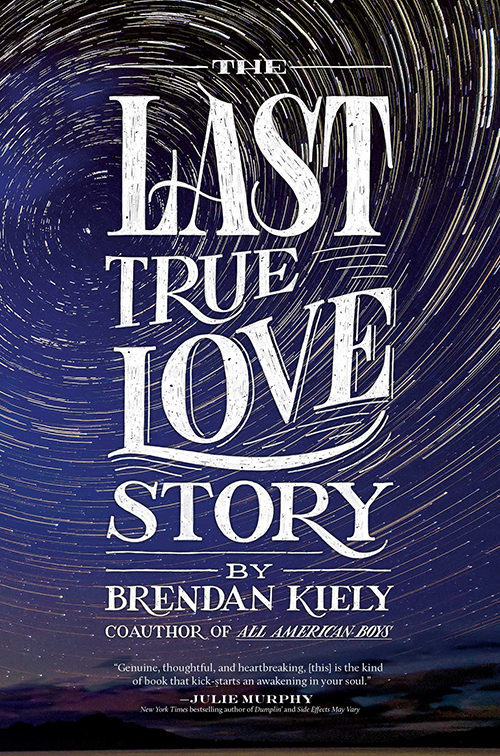
About the author

Brendan Kiely is The New York Times bestselling author of *All American Boys* (co-written with Jason Reynolds), *The Last True Love Story*, and *The Gospel of Winter*.  *The Gospel of Winter* has been published nine other countries. His work received a Coretta Scott King Author Honor Award, the Walter Dean Myers Award, the Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award, and was selected as one of the American Library Association’s Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults. Originally from the Boston area, he now lives with his wife in Greenwich Village.   
Cr. <http://www.brendankiely.com>

Book Illustration by Cate Evans

*The Last True Love Story* relays the emotional maturing of two teens, Teddy and Corrina, as they search for an identity they feel is missing. The main character Teddy Hendrix loses his father at a young age, his mother is a workaholic leaving Teddy under the care of his widowed paternal grandfather Charlie whom Teddy refers to as Gpa. Unfortunately for Teddy, Gpa is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and is beginning to lose grip on reality. Teddy then makes an impossible promise to take Gpa home. Corrina is a musician that is frustrated with her own life and accepts to help Teddy if it means leaving LA. What ensues is a crazy journey across the country to get grandpa to Ithaca, NY before his mind is forever lost or before the unsuspecting parents of the teens catch them. As they travel, they find more than just lost memories along the way. *Cr.* <http://www.brendankiely.com>

Passages

**“I wasn’t frigging twelve, either, even though he spoke to me like I was on a middle school field trip, not the seventeen-year-old who was basically trying to keep his family together, or what was left of it, while the rest of the world didn’t give a flying fart if the Hendrix family disappeared like one of Gpa’s memories: poof, as if we never existed (10).”** Teddy’s grandfather is at the brink of an episode so his caregivers are trying to help, but Teddy does not want their help. He feels more than capable of keeping his ill Gpa under control, because he cannot, who will? He is now the man of the house, and that brings great responsibility, something Teddy is not completely ready for as internally he still feels like a kid because he really does not know what to do sometimes and he is afraid to admit to that.

**“My house, the Great Empty Blue…was filled with the weight of Dead Dad’s absence, which plagued our home like and angry god or ghost. This is why I thought ghost were real…This ghost of Dead Dad hung about me everywhere, even in the spaces between words…and he scared me the most in those unanswered questions drifting in the silence of the Great Empty Blue (52).”** Teddy and Corrina just agreed to take his mom’s car and skip town towards New York. In a moment of self-reflection, he wonders about his father, the man he seldom knew and the person he is most interested in. Yet no one, not even Teddy’s grandfather will give him any information about. The trip to New York is not solely for Gpa to find his memories and in way say goodbye, it is also a trip for Teddy to find answers of his father that are torturing him.

**“‘…I’ve seen too many die to go looking for reasons why every time. Why cancer? Why war? Why car accident? Why do we die? That isn’t a question for an old man. I’d rather ask myself what I’m doing while I’m still here (249).’”** Teddy asks Gpa if he puts blame on anyone for the dead of his dad to which Gpa responds no. Gpa has come to terms with life and death, now he wants to preserve what is important in the present. That is spending time with his family before he does not recognize them any longer. This leaves Teddy deep in thought, “…out here I am reminded of how small and insignificant I am, and yet, in the face of that I want to make poetry. I want to make a life that could mean nothing, mean something instead (250).” This whole-time teddy has been recording the stories his grandfather tells him in order to preserve his life. But he is also doing this to find his own self-worth, a sense of purpose to his own life, a life that has been lonely and easily forgettable.

Kiely states: “… writing fiction is an act of social engagement. I write stories that try to honor the dignity and grace of people caught up in the complexities of our day. Ultimately, I write in search of hope.” Check his full statement [here.](http://www.brendankiely.com/educator-resources-1/)

This book has some Exeter qualities: it is written with a well-structured plot going beyond simple chronologies as we trace Teddy Hendrix’s family history through time jumps to the past and through the perceptive of people other than the main character. There is an excitement and tension of whether or not the teens will get Gpa to New York before the cops find them. We have characters that reflect the experiences of teen readers who are having a tough time placing themselves in the world especially Corrina as a very tough-shell female character who is determined to get a shot at music and does not see eye-to-eye with her adoptive parents whom want to put her in a bubble. The themes of loss, forgiveness, acceptance, and love all allow for the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth. The language itself is not over patronizing or simplistic but it does use many song titles throughout that may or may not familiar to the young teens of today. This story follows the archetype of the orphan, therefor it allows the main character Teddy for his own accomplishments even though there are instances where Gpa helps guide him out of a rut as when they get stranded with gas in the middle of nowhere, Teddy has become the caretaker for his grandfather, he wants to successfully bring Corrina and fulfil the promises he has made to his loved ones regardless of his own fears and insecurities. *The Last True Love Story* can either be placed in either chapter four or five in *Adolescents in the Search of Meaning.* Reasons it falls in chapter four*:* because grandparents or other relatives raise teens other than their actual parents, so teens can relate to Teddy’s need to find answers to the questions he has of his father. Or they might be adopted like Corrina, and even though they are loved, they feel like something is still missing. The teens in this book experience many of the things other teens experience, especially isolation and the challenge to “fit in.” Corinna looks like she has many friends but in reality, she is just as lonely as Teddy is. There is also the factor that parents are human, and they make mistakes and that idea is hard to grasp. Teddy reproaches his mother for always being away on business only to later find out the reasons why she became this way. As for chapter five *“*Books About Facing Death and Loss” of *Adolescents in the Search of Meaning*, the reasons to give this book to teens are: tees might have a loved one that has been diagnosed with Alzheimer disease and they are finding ways to cope with the situation, also because parents keep secret from their kids which could result in the teen to be disillusioned, because they might want to trace family history as Teddy does with his “Hendrix family book.”

Complexity

The text complexity is set for teaching levels 7-12th grade. [Lexile](https://fab.lexile.com/search/results?keyword=The+Last+True+Love+Story) has the book is rated 14-17-year-old (900L). There are no difficult vocabulary so younger tweens would not have challenge reading this book, but the content itself is more appropriate for older teens. There is little sexual content (some kissing and one instance of sex not described) and not much violence (there's a fight that lands a punch). Strong language such as "f--k," "s--t," "a--hole," and "goddamn" is used casually and often.