

Challenged Materials Committee Report

Material Being Challenged:

Library Book: *The Haters* by Jesse Andrews

Date of Challenge Committee Meeting: 12/7/21

Regulation 6241 outlines that the Challenged Materials Committee shall:

- Examine and/or read the challenged resource
- Determine professional acceptance by reading critical review of the resource
- Weigh positives and negatives and form opinions based on the material as a whole rather than on passages or sections taken out of context
- Discuss the challenged resource in the context of the educational program
- Prepare a written report which states the decision, rationale for the decision, and the official vote (without identifying votes of individual members of the committee)
- Recommend that the questioned materials be retained without restriction, retained with restriction or not retained

Agenda:

1. Norms and meeting operation
2. Parent concerns over the material
3. Library policy and procedures
4. Committee Discussion of the Value of the material
5. Committee consensus

Library Media Information Shared with the Committee

Library Mission Statement from the Rockwood Library Handbook

- The Rockwood School District believes inclusive library media services and access for all students and staff will raise levels of student performance. Therefore, the Rockwood Library Media Program strives to provide welcoming library spaces, robust collections of materials, and dynamic library media instruction that will empower students to become critical thinkers, ethical users of information, responsible and engaged citizens, and lifelong learners and readers.

- page 3 of The RSD Library Media Handbook

Intellectual Freedom

- Intellectual freedom, as guaranteed by the First Amendment, is a core value of the library media profession and a basic right in our democratic society. The school library media program in the Rockwood School District will play a role in the promotion of intellectual freedom and serve as a point of voluntary access and offer opportunities for all students to learn in an atmosphere of free inquiry. Every student regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation shall be given equal access to library media resources.

-page 4 of The RSD Library Media Handbook

Collection Development

- In managing the library collection, the library media specialist shall be mindful of the objectives listed in Regulation 6310. In addition, the library media specialist shall also:
 - Consider the importance of diverse literary representation. The collection should provide literature that serves as both mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors so students are exposed to books and characters that reflect their own experiences as well as experiences of others.
 - Consider the degree of user appeal as measured by reviews in professional library journals and

inclusion on award lists, including but not limited to the Missouri Association of School Librarians Readers' Awards lists, the Young Adult Library Services Association Awards lists, and the Association for Library Services to Children Awards lists.

- page 6 of The RSD Library Media Handbook

Professional Reviews & Awards Regarding This Material

Awards:

- Horn Book Guide, 10/01/2016
- School Library Connection, 05/01/2016
- Voice of Youth Advocates Star, 04/01/2016
- School Library Journal, 04/01/2016
- Publishers Weekly, 01/18/2016

Professional Reviews:

- **Horn Book Guide, 10/01/2016**

At a jazz camp of "mostly dudes," bass player Wes and his drummer best friend Corey meet Ash, who has her own unique musical style and refuses to play with the condescending guys. Frustrated, she leaves--and Wes and Corey go with her. What follows is both a classic road-trip novel and an inventive teen adventure that subtly addresses race, family, and socioeconomics.
- **School Library Connection, 05/01/2016**

Wes and Corey are at a jazz band camp in New York. The musicians are divided into groups named after famous jazz musicians, and Wes and Corey find themselves in the Gene Krupa Band with Ash, the only girl at the camp. They soon realize the Krupa band is for musicians who are considered the worst ones there. When Ash suggests they go on the road to play gigs, they quickly agree. Along the way they sleep in the car, make new friends, pick up a new band mate, and con their way into performing at various dive bars. Relationships are complicated and all the characters have different attitudes about life and love, but for the most part they are all unlikeable. The swearing in the book is excessive and uncomfortable. I'm not sure there is enough to draw students to this book.. Harolyn Legg **ADDITIONAL SELECTION**
- **Voice of Youth Advocates Star, 04/01/2016**

Wes and Corey did not expect to make it into Bill Garabedian's prestigious jazz camp. They only tried out because their jazz teacher made them. But accepted they are, and they are the worst musicians in the group, stuck at camp with a bunch of dudes who try very hard to be "jazzy." Things look up for the two friends when they have a jam session with Ash, who also does not fit the mold of jazz camp. Ash wants to escape from camp, create a new band (with Wes and Corey), and go on tour until camp ends. She comes from a rich family and has unlimited resources to fund this excursion. And so begins their road trip, looking for gigs anywhere they can find them. What could possibly go wrong? Filled with adolescent boy angst and their preoccupation with male genitalia, rock and roll, and girls, this book is an adventure full of laughs. Andrews, author of *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (Abrams, 2012/VOYA February 2012), has another winner with his use of absurdity to draw readers in for a great ride filled with music, name-dropping, endless cash, and an epic road trip. Think of *The Haters* as John Green's *Looking for Alaska* (Penguin, 2005/VOYA April 2005) meets Libba Bray's *Going Bovine* (Random House, 2009/VOYA October 2009) kind of adventure. This is recommended for upper-middle to high school realistic fiction collections and will appeal to music buffs and readers who love to laugh.—Dianna Geers.
- **School Library Journal, 04/01/2016**

Gr 10 Up—The author demonstrates his unique voice in his follow-up to the popular *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*. Like that debut, this work features a similar trio: a narrator, his somewhat clueless friend,

and a girl who changes them both. Wes and Corey are "jazz-nerd chaff" at Bill Garabedian's Jazz Giants of Tomorrow Intensive Summer Workshop. They don't know that, of course, until they discover that this highly selective camp accepted more drummers and bassists to support other, better musicians. They're not hopeful about the next two weeks until they meet Ash, a guitarist in their ensemble who seems uninterested in playing jazz. Inevitably, the three misfits form a band and escape from camp to launch their world tour. As with most road trips, tensions rise, rivalries form, and jealousy blossoms. Ash is clearly the alpha in the group, making Wes a passive narrator. This works occasionally for the story, especially in the more surreal encounters; however, it also creates a meandering feeling that may wear out some readers. Although not every journey needs a purpose, the characters are not hugely different after what would be a life-altering event for most people. Wes learns to appreciate music rather than simply hating on it; he's a better listener. It's a subtle shift, but perhaps that's Andrews's point. VERDICT Teens who are music nerds or fans of *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* will appreciate this novel's sharp wit and playful style.—Joy Piedmont, LREI, New York Copyright 2016 Reed Business Information.

- **Publishers Weekly, 01/18/2016**

After meeting at jazz camp, what might be the world's worst musical trio decides to ditch the camp and go on a road trip, determined to play at any venue that will have them. Teenage best friends Wes (bass) and Corey (drums) join up with a mercurial, dynamic girl named Ash (guitar) and head out on the highway, aiming for adventure but finding wacky hijinks and weird people. There's yelling, bad decisions, marijuana-fueled interludes, impromptu jam sessions, and way too much caffeine and junk food, and it all comes to a head when they realize it's time to face the music. Andrews (*Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*) loads his gonzo road trip with offbeat humor, philosophical musings, and musical references and debate, augmenting the narrative with fake Wikipedia entries, flashbacks, and screenplay-format exchanges. Wes's narrative voice is casual and believable, and while not all of the stylistic quirks pay off (such as an extended "drug experience gone wrong," as Wes puts it), but as a love letter to music and following one's dreams, it's just right. Ages 13–up. Agent: Claudia Ballard, William Morris Endeavor. (Apr.)

Concerns the Challenger Shared Regarding The Book *The Haters* by Jesse Andrews

- Reads like a humorous book, but has sex acts, is drug -fueled and includes date rape.
- Has 536 curse words including "f" word said 199 times and "dick" 77 times. This is considered sexually explicit in the State of Missouri. Patently offensive with respect to minors.
- The book includes sex without consent.
- The author uses "gross" language.
- This book does not have any literary worth.
- Sex can be referenced so that the reader knows it happens without being referenced explicitly.
- One of the characters was too high on drugs to consent, and it was treated like it was not too big of a deal. A friend had to interrupt and tell the girl to stop. Talked about a friend saying no and the girl not stopping. Treated like it was no big deal. Sex without legal consent is too much.
- Page 425 (digital copy): "She reached behind herself and kind of carefully took my not hard dick into one hand....The moment she put me inside her I came. Fuck I said and I curled up around her like a snail and kept coming about a hundred times." This is sexually explicit and child porn according to Missouri Statute 573.010
- Underage drinking, drugs, masturbating and finding the contents in the sink. The book could be a humorous read without the sex and smut.
- This is not about banning books, but what is inappropriate at school. Students can get it elsewhere, but I'm questioning it because it is at school. We trust that these types of books are not available at school.
- We all agree that it is up to parents to decide what children do. The only way to assure that students don't access the book if a parent doesn't want them to is to remove the book from the library.
- Parents can restrict specific titles, but the parents would need to know the title to know what to restrict.

- There are 600 books on the choice book list. It is online under the language arts curriculum, but neither of these books are on that list. Just in the library. Parents don't have a way to know approximately 90% of what is available.
- How do these books get into the library in the first place? She emailed the high school librarians and nobody answered this question. However, it is not possible for the librarians to read all the books. If you read the summary of these books, there is no way to tell what is in the book. Online reviews help, but some other way is warranted.
- These books are not kept behind the counter to keep kids from looking through the pages. The suggestion was to remove the books from the shelves.

Legal Definition of Pornography as it Applies to Library Books

Section 573.030 (14) defines pornographic to minors as "any material or performance if the following apply: (a) The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the material or performance, taken as a whole, has a tendency to cater or appeal to a prurient interest of minors; and (b) The material or performance depicts or describes nudity, sexual conduct, the condition of human genitals when in a state of sexual stimulation or arousal, or sadomasochistic abuse in a way that is patently offensive to the average person applying contemporary adult community standards with respect to what is suitable for minors and (c) The material or performance, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value for minors."

This does not apply to library books because they, taken as a whole, contain literary value. Further, there is a strong argument that library books are protected by the First Amendment.

Committee's Comments on the Value of This Material

- If we want to engage readers, this is the perfect book. It was funny and I was sucked in immediately. I assume any other student would be as well. It was relatable. Maybe a little out there, but it was about coming of age. The main characters get to do crazy stuff, and you get to go on the journey with them. Good book to get someone into reading.
- The main character learns that it's not ok to do some of the things they did in the book. They made stupid choices, but it was not glorified. It is important to read books like this so you get to experience things second hand and you don't have to deal with the consequences of bad choices.
- The relationship between the three of them showed value in the kind of relationship they have. We all need straight talkers and this book did a great job of showing how this is done.
- Our language arts curriculum talks about windows, mirrors and sliding doors. The book appeals to different groups of students. This book is so accurate about a high school boy and identifying with them. A lot of the story about music and blues was a total window, and a mirror for the kids to identify with that. I really wasn't sure why this book was an issue.
- Living vicariously through those mistakes helps students learn from them.
- Identity as a black kid adopted by a white family is one that isn't often represented in books. Chapter 27 stuck out to me - drug experience went wrong. That chapter definitely reads about a trial done wrong. It was such a great moment and kids can relate to that. The author's portrayal of insecure feelings was really well done. I would love it if my kids could read this book. I laughed throughout most of the book.

Questions the Committee Asked

How did the challenger learn	The challenger heard about it from other parents.
------------------------------	---

about this book?	
Is there some type of database that parents have the rights to access and see what books are offered in the library?	Yes, the books are all available on our Destiny software. Parents have access to look up books in their child's library at any time.
How does it work when a parent puts a note in a child's Destiny account regarding things they cannot check out?	When the student's account is accessed, a note will pop up outlining what the parent has requested.

Committee's Rationale and the Decision	
Rationale and Discussion Points the Committee Shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenger shared that they didn't see any reason why this book would be valuable. They missed the point that the student was black and adopted by a white family—not often represented in books. I saw the alcohol fueled-date rape as a cautionary tale on what could happen if you drink too much. The friend stopped it when it went too far. ● I could hear a lot of my students reading this book, see their own lives in it, and elevate a voice that is sometimes not heard. This helps students live through and learn from somebody else's mistakes. They do see what was happening and that it was wrong. We made a lot of bad choices and are still here. I laughed a lot throughout the book. ● This book provides an opportunity to open up dialogue so you can talk to the student about why that wasn't right and why it was considered date rape. Opens up the opportunity so adults can have conversations with teenagers. ● This book gives kids encouragement to find what they are passionate about. Even though they made a lot of mistakes, they figured out who they were. The message is that you're not stuck in a track and can change who you are.
Consensus of the committee	The committee decided to retain the book as a library book without restriction.
How does the decision impact the accessibility of the material moving forward?	The book will remain in the school's library as a choice for students to check out. Parents may contact the librarian if they want to restrict access to this book for their child.