

Challenged Materials Committee Report

Material Being Challenged:

Library Book: *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins

Date of Challenge Committee Meeting: 12/8/21

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:

- Voice of Youth Advocates, 02/01/2005
- Publishers Weekly, 11/01/2004
- School Library Journal, 11/01/2004
- Missouri Gateway Award Winner, 2007
- Illinois Lincoln Award Winner, 2009
- Vermont Green Mountain Book Award Winner, 2009
- Delaware Diamonds Book Award, 2010.
- Wyoming Soaring Eagle Book Award, 2009.
- YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers, 2005

Professional Reviews:

- **Voice of Youth Advocates, 02/01/2005**

Various styles of free verse and shape poems tell the story of Kristina, a quiet high school junior who, as with many teens, often feels like a stranger to herself and wants to test her limits. While visiting her deadbeat dad in Albuquerque, Kristina meets Adam and feels something stir, like a breeze blowing up off the evening sea. She says, My wind had awakened. To deal with these new and alien feelings, Kristina calls herself Bree and begins to think of herself as two separate people: Kristina is perfect, smart, and in control, but Bree gives her the courage to be wild, spontaneous, and a risk-taker. Adam introduces Kristina to crank or crack for the first time, and of course, she falls under its addictive and dangerous spell. After returning home to Reno, she tries to hide Bree from her family, but late nights out partying and long days sleeping off the effects soon raise their suspicions. The story reaches its climax when Kristina becomes pregnant as a result of being date-raped under the influence. Deciding to keep the baby is a courageous choice, but readers understand that Kristina's eternal struggle will be against the temptation of using crack. Although novels in verse are not new anymore, this one still works. Hopkins delivers a gritty, fast-paced read while effectively portraying the dangers of substance abuse without sounding pedantic or preachy. Teens will relate to Kristina's desire to experiment as well as her difficulty balancing conflicting feelings. Similarities to *Go Ask Alice* (Simon & Schuster, 1971) are undeniable, but perhaps this more modern version will be more accessible to today's teens.-Valerie
- **Publishers Weekly, 11/01/2004**

Nonfiction author Hopkins pens her first novel, written in verse, introducing 15-year-old narrator Kristina, who reveals how she became addicted to crank, and how the stimulant turned her from straight-A student to drug dealer, and eventually a teen mom. On a court-ordered visit to see her slimy and long-absent dad, she meets-and is instantly attracted to-Adam, who sports a "tawny six pack,/ and a smile." Soon, Adam introduces her to "the monster" (there, she also unleashes a new personality, id-driven Bree). Her addiction grows, as does Bree's control. Readers get a vivid sense of the highs and lows involved with using crank ("I needed food, sleep,/ but the monster denied/ every bit of it"). Her life changes quickly: Soon she's dating two guys, both of whom use crank; says "Fuck you" to her mom, can't keep up with school, and loses her old friends. There are plenty of dramatic moments: The first time she does crank, for example, her dad joins her. That same night, she stumbles into a bad area and is almost raped, and Adam's girlfriend tries to kill herself. Later in the book, she does get raped and starts selling the drug for the Mexican Mafia. Readers will appreciate the creative use of form here (some poems, for instance, are written in two columns that can be read separately or together), and although the author is

definitely on a mission, she creates a world nearly as consuming and disturbing as the titular drug. Ages 14-up.

- **School Library Journal, 11/01/2004**

Gr 8 Up-Seventeen-year-old Kristina Snow is introduced to crank on a trip to visit her wayward father. Caught up in a fast-paced, frightening, and unfamiliar world, she morphs into "Bree" after she "shakes hands with the monster." Her fearless, risk-taking alter ego grows stronger, "convincing me to be someone I never dreamed I'd want to be." When Kristina goes home, things don't return to normal. Although she tries to reconnect with her mother and her former life as a good student, her drug use soon takes over, leaving her "starving for speed" and for boys who will soon leave her scarred and pregnant. Hopkins writes in free-verse poems that paint painfully sharp images of Kristina/Bree and those around her, detailing how powerful the "monster" can be. The poems are masterpieces of word, shape, and pacing, compelling readers on to the next chapter in Kristina's spiraling world. This is a topical page-turner and a stunning portrayal of a teen's loss of direction and realistically uncertain future.-Sharon Korbeck, Waupaca Area Public Library, WI

Concerns the Challenger Shared Regarding The Book *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins

- This story tells the story of a teenage girl who becomes addicted to crank and methamphetamine.
- We may want to reconsider the books we have in our library due to its connection to real life events.
- Multiple scenes of drug use are included in this book.
- The book contains underage drinking, smoking, using pot and multiple detailed descriptions about getting high ; the author seems to encourage these activities.
- Pages 308, 379 426-437: refers to drug culture and drug use.
- Page 427: "Ecstasy is hard to describe, it's like falling softly into a pool of crystal mountain water, floating on your back circular beneath vibrant sky, deciphering codes in the clouds spinning dizzy fast." This kind of makes it sound fun.
- Rockwood's Red Ribbon Week Proclamation states "...Rockwood School District values the health and safety of all our students and citizens..." It is confusing why we would have this book and recognize Red Ribbon Week.
- If it would save one child from using drugs, it would be worth removing this book from the shelves.
- Pages 341-343: Sex, makeout scenes, rape and torture: "Kisses sequed to bites. Bruises. Pain ripped through my body. 'Brendan, please stop.'"; "Off came my shorts. Down went his zipper. I realized I was in serious trouble. 'I'll scream.'"; "Still, as I opened my mouth, his hand slapped down over it. Those sublime muscles hardened."; "Had he done it a different way, I might have responded with excitement. Instead, I froze as he pushed inside."; "I laid there, sobbing, as he worked and sweated over me. Stoked by the monster, it took him a long time to finish." It goes on from there. He is torturing her and raping her. This would be rated R if it was a movie.
- This story can be upsetting and haunting for students for years to come.
- Page 437 includes a rave scene with people cutting each other and drinking each other's blood.
- On pages 475-476, the main character steals her mom's bank card to sustain her drug habits. "Mom wouldn't miss it for weeks. And then I would deny ever having laid eyes on the thing."
- Pages 165, 264, 274, 510 includes many crude references.
- Kids have access to drugs outside of school and they have phones, but there is no reason to have them advertised in school through books in the library.
- Rockwood should pull the book immediately without hesitation.
- Parents should decide what is appropriate for their kids to read.

Committee's Comments on the Value of This Material

- This book was published in 2004 and has been in our libraries since that time.
- I feel this book is a warning about drug abuse. It is definitely good for kids who recognize that not everything is black and white, but gray. In life, you will have contradicting desires and thoughts.
- It is better for teens to find out through a book what happens when you do drugs then find out by using.
- It's important for people who have not experienced drugs to see what drugs can do to them.
- The rape scene is important to let teens learn how quickly things can get out of control. The scene started willingly but went downhill from there. This scene did not look like it was fun, it was not glorified. It shows teens how quickly things can happen and get out of control.
- I thought it was important that she saw the perspective of her mom. Kids don't think about what mom is thinking.
- I thought it was amazing how it was formatted in prose.
- Kids should realize that books don't have to be written so formally, like Dickens. There are other ways authors can tell a story.
- The prose style of the writing was nice especially when it showed how she was fighting with the other part of herself, and it was an effective writing style.
- I read it as a parent of two sophomore boys and was horrified how quickly this main character went down that path. It is truly a cautionary tale. You make one bad choice and more bad choices follow.
- Page 226-227 rape scene: I was surprised as the author went on, but she handled other sex scenes with restraint as an entirety. The first scene was a lot for a reason, but the others were well-handled.
- The author's writing style in this book makes it appealing to struggling readers. They are not intimidated by it as it is written in prose format.
- Author's note on page one talks about how she's writing the book about her own daughter's experience. It's fictional, but she says "If this story speaks to you, I have accomplished what I set out to do. Crank is indeed a monster - one that is tough to leave behind once you invite it into your life. Think twice. Then think again." She follows everything with multiple negatives and how it is disastrous for your life. This book does not entice. The author does not want it to happen to anyone else.
- At the end of the book she talks about how her story continued and she had six children and went to prison. This is important to read because it backs the danger of doing drugs. It does not fantasize this world or crank in any way.
- This book is not enticing students to do drugs; if anything, it might deter them.

Questions the Committee Asked

Which high school libraries contain this book?	The book can be accessed in all four high school libraries.
How did you find out about this book?	Across the country, people have been hearing about it. I got online and kept digging to learn more. Their location in Rockwood libraries was found by searching Destiny.
Did you read the author's note at the end of the book how her life went on?	Yes and I feel she is trying to help other teenagers prevent what happened to her, but I don't think that's what the book is going to prove. I can respect that, but the parents should decide.
How often has this book been read since it has been in our libraries so long?	At Rockwood Summit, it was checked out 215 times. However, it is likely, the current books are replacement copies. When it came out, it was a popular book.
Did you ever have a student say I can't believe you have	No. They also read the sequels.

this book in the library?	
Is this book in the public library?	Yes, it is, and it is available to any age group. In Rockwood it is only available in high school libraries.
What does it mean to retain with restriction?	It means that the book is located behind the librarian's desk, and students must have permission to check it out.
What happens when the student is 18 and a book is restricted? Do they still need parent permission?	They would still need parent permission since they are still in high school. The exception to that would be when a student is an emancipated minor.

Committee's Rationale and the Decision	
Rationale and Discussion Points the Committee Shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenger commented that parents should have control over what kids read. I feel strongly about that, too, but feel these books should be in the library. ● Page 427, challenger pointed out the glorification, I did not find it glorifying at all. It is a cautionary tale. ● It was pretty clear that drugs were a horrible choice for her. There were so many lessons on what she should have done or should have avoided. ● Teenagers can smell a morality lesson from a mile away and are immediately turned off. The author's despair over this issue shines through and the realism is way more effective than any Red Ribbon Week. ● Kids usually don't discover drugs from a book they read. This book is important to keep students from going down this path. The problem is real in all our high schools, and this book highlights the warning signs.
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.