

Challenged Materials Committee Report

Material Being Challenged:

Library Book: *Heroine* by Mindy McGinnis

Date of Challenge Committee Meeting: 1/5/22

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, 10/01/2019**
- **School Library Journal Starred, 03/01/2019**
- **Booklist, 01/01/2019**
- **Kirkus Reviews Starred, 12/15/2018**
- **Missouri Gateway Readers' Award Nominee, 2021-22**
- **ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults Top Ten, 2020**

Professional Reviews:

- **Horn Book Guide, 10/01/2019**

McGinnis's frank and frightening novel helps redefine the narrative of opioid addiction. Mickey is a star softball player, but when injuries from a car crash threaten to derail her season, she needs help to power through the pain. Her need for opioids escalates until she's using heroin. Frank depictions of drug use and an all-too-plausible trajectory combine for an intense and vital read.

- **School Library Journal Starred, 03/01/2019**

Gr 9 Up—All it takes is one prescription to kick-start a student athlete's frightening descent into opioid addiction. After surgery following a car accident, Ohio softball phenom Mickey Catalan is prescribed OxyContin for pain. When she starts to run out of the Oxy she relies on to get through her physical therapy, she gets pills from a dealer, through whom she meets other young addicts. Mickey rationalizes what she's doing and sees herself as a good girl who's not like others who use drugs (like new friend Josie, who uses because she's "bored"). Mickey loves how the pills make her feel, how they take her out of herself and relieve the pressures in her life. Soon she's stealing, lying, and moving on to heroin. Her divorced parents, including her recovering addict stepmother, suspect something is going on, but Mickey is skilled at hiding her addiction. A trigger warning rightfully cautions graphic depictions of drug use. In brutally raw detail, readers see Mickey and friends snort powders, shoot up, and go through withdrawal. Intense pacing propels the gripping story toward the inevitable conclusion already revealed in the prologue. An author's note and resources for addiction recovery are appended. This powerful, harrowing, and compassionate story humanizes addiction and will challenge readers to rethink what they may believe about addicts. VERDICT From the horrific first line to the hopeful yet devastating conclusion, McGinnis knocks it out of the park. A first purchase for all libraries serving teens.—Amanda MacGregor, Parkview Elementary School, Rosemount, MN

- **Booklist, 01/01/2019**

Grades 9-12 - Senior Mickey Catalan is a talented softball catcher with a bright collegiate future ahead. She's a little socially awkward, but she's beginning to navigate romantic relationships while relying on the easy camaraderie with her teammates and her best friend, star pitcher Carolina. Then Mickey and Carolina are both injured in a car accident, and Mickey's broken hip seriously jeopardizes her athletic future. Determined to play again, Mickey falls into the trap of opiate addiction in a rapid and wholly believable descent. McGinnis begins with a shocking scenario: Mickey wakes to find her fellow-addict friends dead after shooting bad drugs. The rest of the story unfolds in flashback. There's nothing subtle here—from the double entendre title that sets the tone on—but McGinnis creates fully dimensional characters. Even the drug dealers have complex and interesting back stories. There's also no romanticized happy ending, just the realistic portrayal of how easy it is to develop an opiate addiction

and the very real consequences of addiction. A timely and important message for teens everywhere.

● **Kirkus Reviews Starred, 12/15/2018**

A compassionate, compelling, and terrifying story about a high school softball player's addiction to opioids. A promising life can be upended in a minute. One moment star catcher Mickey Catalan, who is assumed white, is living an ordinary life, talking about boys and anticipating a winning season with her best friend, pitcher Carolina Galarza. The next moment her car is upside down in a field, and their promising softball careers are in danger. Mickey's divorced parents and Carolina's tight knit Puerto Rican family are rooting for them to recover before the start of the season. After enduring surgeries, they are each given opioid painkillers, yet only Mickey spirals into addiction. From the novel's opening line, the reader awaits the tragic outcome. What matters are the details—the lying, the stealing, the fear about college scholarships, the pain confronted in the weight room, and the desperate desire to win—because they force the reader to empathize with Mickey's escalating need. Realistic depictions of heroin abuse abound, and the author includes a trigger warning. The writing is visceral, and following Mickey as she rationalizes about her addiction is educative and frightening. Even more frightening are the descriptive passages that reveal how pleasant the drugs make her feel. By the end, readers understand how heroin can infiltrate even the most promising lives. A cautionary tale that exposes the danger of prescription medications by humanizing one victim of America's current epidemic. (author's note, resources) (Fiction. 14-18)

Concerns the Challenger Shared Regarding The Book *Heroin* by Mindy McGinnis

- The challenger doesn't expect librarians to read all the books in the library.
- This book teaches kids how to abuse oxycontin and heroin.
- There is nothing mentioned in this book about staying away from drugs.
- The challenger shared statistics about drug use and overdose deaths.
- On page 1, the book contains impressionable things that students shouldn't be reading.
- This book shouldn't be given to kids to read.
- This book encourages drug use.
- The teenager in the book is an athlete which many kids can relate to.
- The main character was given oxycontin during therapy.
- Oxycontin doesn't just take the pain away; the book gives reasons and suggestions for using oxycontin.
- Page 91, the character states that she is taking the drug for other people, not herself.
- Page 164-167-the character states that snorting oxycontin "feels like silk to her brain and drifting peace."
- Page 133-the character mentions that it is "nice to feel not like herself" when she takes oxycontin.
- This book not only encourages drug use, it tells readers how to use drugs.
- The examples the author uses are not scary or frightening enough.
- This book is hypocritical. Rockwood has had students die and families have lost loved ones to drug abuse.
- This book shows students how to get drugs and steal to get them.
- It's too easy for kids to get their hands on these types of books.
- Rockwood wouldn't want a student reading this book.
- The challenger shared that her daughter read the book and made comments about the book that were concerning to her. Her daughter mentioned needles and injecting which floored her.
- The challenger's daughter didn't read the whole book, so she didn't get the message about the results of drug use.

Committee's Comments on the Value of This Material

- The book is anything but encouraging the use of drugs—the protagonist spiraled out of control.
- The arc of the protagonist is successful in showing what can happen when people become addicted to oxycontin..
- This book showed realistic depictions of what kids can face.
- The challenger mentioned that this book might promote drug use. The prologue starts with the main character waking up to her dead friends. A teen died in the street. What other than such a realistic portrayal is a successful way for getting kids to stay off drugs?
- The 1st line of the book is that she’s surrounded by 3 dead teenagers. That’s not encouraging drug use.
- The way the book ends would not encourage kids to use drugs.
- The stepmom in the book talked about how it impacted her life. It’s good for kids to see the impact on others.
- A former Rockwood student wrote a book about drug abuse. He said not talking about drug abuse made it easy for him not to ask for help. This book opens up the conversation with adults.
- There is power in storytelling to help people. It sticks with you more.
- There are great resources at the end of this book for those struggling with drug use.
- These were prescription meds that led this main character down this path. She was considered a “good girl,” and not likely to become a drug addict.
- I know a student who got injured and became addicted. It doesn’t always occur in dark corners and dark alleys.
- This book doesn’t read as encouragement. It says stay away from drugs. This kid had everything and lost it all.
- I didn’t get that it was encouraging. It didn’t glorify it.
- Anyone can fall down this path.
- This book is important to collection development as there are not many books about female athletes.
- Kids aren’t likely to listen to what they learn in DARE or what adults tell them about drug use. They are more likely to understand the character in the story and what happens to her.
- I don’t think we should judge a book by bits and pieces out of context.
- The author pulls reluctant readers into this book because it is action packed.
- The book mentions the stigma of drug abuse.
- The book shows that life goes on when terrible things happen.
- This book could help teens understand the opioid crisis. It shows that a med that a doctor gives you could lead you down this path.
- This book could be a wake up call for some kids.
- I would rather that my child learn about this experience through a book than to experience it in real life.
- The main character discusses how the drugs make her feel and the author illustrates that she only feels good for a minute.
- This book was very well written. I could see where kids could be captivated. Real life stories are what kids learn from.

Questions the Committee Asked

Did you see that this was a cautionary tale and not a “how to?”

I can see where you would think that, but if kids don’t finish the book, they don’t see the end result of what happened to the main character.

Committee’s Rationale and the Decision

Consensus of the committee

Retain without restriction

How does the decision impact the accessibility of the material moving forward?

The book will remain in Rockwood High School libraries without restriction.