

THE

# Freedom to Read

GUIDEBOOK







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Annie's Foundation is dedicated to protecting your freedom to read. Our mission is to ensure that members of our community have unhindered access to books and characters that reflect the diversity and complexity of the world around them.

We were founded on the heels of two attempted book bans within the Johnston, Iowa school district. The idea that these parents believed they had a right to keep a book from someone else's child made many of us within Johnston stand up and take notice. We started attending school board meetings. We spoke at school board meetings. We emailed the board and the school administrators. Eventually we formed a community of like-minded parents who are working together to advocate for equity and inclusion, push back against book bans, hold school boards accountable, and fight back against the well-funded and well-organized groups such as Moms For Liberty and No Left Turn In Education that are forcing their radically conservative agendas on communities across the nation.

Out of this community, something beautiful was created: a foundation in honor of a Johnston mother—Annie—who left us too soon, and who was a fierce advocate for the freedom to read. Annie's Foundation is run by five volunteer board members, all working moms with children of varying ages.

If you've encountered a book banner in the wild, you've probably heard them read a passage that is taken out of context. If the book in question is a graphic novel, you've seen the one or two pictures out of hundreds that might make some people uncomfortable. You're probably very familiar with the contested content of a few books because the complaints always feature the same handful of excerpts and/or pictures. This is by design. The book banners have pulled together a variety of resources that parents can use to challenge books. It saves them the work of actually having to read the books they are trying to ban. Groups like Laverna in the Library, based out of Utah, routinely give each other lists of books they want other people to challenge, recruit parents to challenge books, and sometimes even ask other parents what books they can or should challenge at their school. Most of the time these lists come with sheets that detail all of the offensive content found within the book, along with several excerpts taken out of context. Moms For Liberty has a "Book of Books" detailing what books are found in which public school libraries across the State of Iowa, along with quotes from the book and reasons it should be banned. If you ask one of these parents to justify their challenge, there's a good chance you'll be sent one of these sheets, or a link to the Moms For Liberty created Book Looks rating system.

There's a lot of misinformation floating around out there, being peddled by uninformed and ignorant people. If they bothered to open their minds and read these books, they'd find beautiful, moving stories of human experiences different from their own. Annie's Foundation recruited an army of volunteers to read these books and put together this Freedom To Read Guidebook. The books covered in this Guidebook have all been banned or challenged. What you see here is a living document; additional book reviews will be continuously added. These reviews were written by parents, teachers, librarians, community members, bibliophiles, and even some students.

This Guidebook also contains some personal stories and essays written by our volunteers. These deeply moving pieces serve to demonstrate the power of reading and the profound impact a single book can have upon a person.

We are very proud of our Freedom To Read Guidebook and are thrilled to share it with you. Please use it to educate yourself and others on the beauty and value of these books. Share these pages with your friends, your neighbors, your school board, your educators, your government officials. Share the joy of reading.



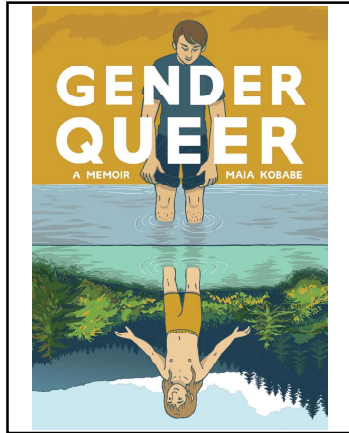
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### Gender Queer: A Memoir

**Maia Kobabe**



#### Summary

Genderqueer author and artist Maia Kobabe, who uses the non-binary e/em/eir pronouns, knew from childhood that e didn't fit traditional definitions of female, and was never completely comfortable thinking of emself as male either. E explores big themes like gender, sexuality, sex, relationships, and family side-by-side with specific individual experiences of bullying, clothing, haircuts, coming out and finding community.

Summary from Young Adult Library Services Association

**Publisher Recommended Age: 15+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 16+**

#### Awards Received

2020 Stonewall Honor - Israel Fishman Non-fiction Award Honor Book  
ALA Alex Award Winner

#### Diverse Representations

The author and main character is nonbinary and queer. Eir sister is a lesbian in a relationship with a transgender person. Illustrations represent people of other skin colors, hair types, body sizes, sexual orientations and gender identities.

#### Why Is It Banned?

Contains mature themes around author's journey toward understanding eir nonconforming gender and sexuality and explicit but not erotic illustrations of sexual activity.

#### Yes, But....

Non-binary and LGBTQ+ people deserve to have nonfiction resources where they can see themselves reflected and seek to understand their sexuality, gender and changing bodies. From the author statement released by the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund:

“Public schools and libraries have an obligation to support intellectual freedom and to meet the needs and interests of their entire community, including those who would like to read Gender Queer.”



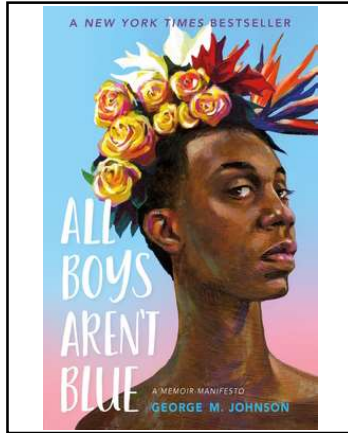
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### All Boys Aren't Blue

**George M. Johnson**



#### Summary

From the memories of getting his teeth kicked out by bullies at age five, to flea marketing with his loving grandmother, to his first sexual relationships, this young-adult memoir weaves together the trials and triumphs faced by Black queer boys. *All Boys Aren't Blue* covers topics such as gender identity, toxic masculinity, brotherhood, family, structural marginalization, consent, and Black joy. Johnson's emotionally frank style of writing will appeal directly to young adults. Summary from Amazon.

**Publisher Recommended Age:** 15+ **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** 16+

#### Awards Received

Kirkus starred review; 2019: Outstanding Books for the College Bound; 2020: Goodreads Choice Award for Memoir and Autobiography; 2021: ALA's Rainbow List Top 10, YALSA's Teens' Top 10

#### Diverse Representations

The author and main character is Black and queer. A family member transitions from male to female. Family and friends are mostly Black.

#### Why Is It Banned?

This memoir details the author's experience with sexual abuse and molestation. Briefly describes his first consensual sexual encounters.

#### Yes, But....

The author provided these stories as a resource for other queer Black kids to show them they are not alone. The book is meant to be a message of love and self-acceptance.

Personal testimony: I was incredibly moved by this book and the portrayal of George's loving family, who loved him even more precisely because he was different.



## ***Those Books***

I have quietly watched this growing movement to restrict access to *those* books that have been deemed “obscene” by parents, legislators, and other political activists. I can no longer keep my silence.

I can’t help but feel angry and frustrated by the misinformation being spread about my profession. I am tired of seeing people with a sudden “expertise” in collection management who have never worked a day in my field. It is devastating to see your education and expert skill sets be reduced to mere political talking points so that your profession can be attacked. It is even more devastating to see people who know nothing of the work you do, challenge your integrity and professionalism.

As a librarian for over 20 years, I have helped thousands of people find books, information, and resources that they needed at some of the most desperate and difficult moments in their lives.

I helped a mother find age appropriate books about consent and body anatomy for her 6-year-old who was a victim of sexual abuse. This mother needed to find the words to be able to communicate with her child about what had happened and why it should never happen again. She came to the library to find that information, those books, that would give her a voice for her child. *Those* books that now so many want to have removed from schools and libraries across our state.

I helped a single father find age appropriate books about body changes and menstruation for his 12-year-old daughter who was realizing that her body was changing. A father who didn’t have a close female friend or relative who could help him explain these changes to his daughter. Again, he came to the library to find that information, those books, that would help his daughter understand her changing body, but would also help reduce the awkward embarrassment that many parents feel when discussing sensitive subjects with their children. *Those* books that now so many want to have removed from schools and libraries across our state.

I helped a teenage boy locate information on LGBTQIA+ topics because he was too scared to ask his parents about the different feelings he was having. He came to the library because he felt safe there. He came for well-vetted books and information from the library instead of looking online. He came for *those* books that now so many want to have removed from schools and libraries across our state.

I helped a mother find books about miscarriages and infant loss after her 19-year-old daughter tragically miscarried in her second semester of pregnancy. She came to the library to find those books to not only help her daughter, but help herself support her daughter through this heartbreaking moment. Yes, *those* books that now so many want to have removed from schools and libraries across our state.

I helped two siblings find age appropriate books about alcoholism after their mother was sent away to rehab. Two siblings who were confused and lost without their mother, and who needed to understand exactly why their mom “was sick.” Two siblings who were told to come to the library for help in finding information and books about an illness that affects so many in our communities. *Those* books that now so many want to have removed from schools and libraries across our state.



I helped people who came to the library after our country was rocked to its core by the senseless and horrific death of a black man in Minneapolis. I helped them find books about racism and its impacts on our society. I helped them to find compassion and empathy for not only that man in Minneapolis, but for every person out there who has had to suffer at the hands of racism and bigotry. They came to the library for *those* books to help them understand their role in this complex and changing society of ours. *Those* books that now so many want to have removed from schools and libraries across our state.

Looking back at the stories I have shared, what would have happened to those people had I not had those books available? Where would they have gone for help? They came to the library because they knew that someone there could help them. They came to the library for answers and accurate information that I provided them with. *Those* books are important. *Those* books serve a purpose. *Those* books save lives.

I am not alone in this. Everyone in my profession has stories like mine. Stories of real people, with real lives, and real needs, who come to us seeking help and clarity.

Just like the books that mirror lives around us. Just like the books that provide accurate information on difficult subjects. Just like the books that help us to better grasp humanity and all of its complexities. Just like the books that we curate and select for our collections. Just like *those* books.



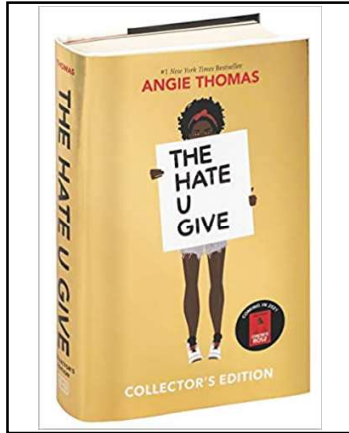
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### The Hate U Give

#### Angie Thomas



#### Summary

Starr Williams is a 16 year old black girl living in a poor and predominantly black community while attending a predominately white prep school. The novel starts with Starr attending a party in her neighborhood. While driving her home, her unarmed, black, male friend is killed by police in a traffic stop.

In the aftermath, she struggles with trauma and grief as well as the subsequent media attention. She becomes a key witness and has to make difficult decisions about who she can trust and who her real friends are.

**Publisher Recommended Age:** 14+ **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** 13+

#### Awards Received

Edgar Award Nominee for Best Young Adult, Goodreads Choice Award, Audie Award for Best Female Narrator, Audie Award for Young Adult, Deutscher Jugendliteraturpreis, Best of the Best, Indies Choice Award for Young Adult Book of the Year, Michael L. Printz Award, William C. Morris Award

#### Diverse Representations

Starr's father tells her about the importance of standing up for LGBTQIA+ people but the representation is otherwise about class, ethnic, and racial diversity. Primarily, the focus is on black and white race relations.

#### Why Is It Banned?

Conservative groups argue the novel promotes an anti-police message and object to the use of profanity and sexual content. There is also some reference to drug use.

#### Yes, But....

This book tackles complex issues with sensitivity and nuance. It offers a frank and contemporary exploration of race relations and the role of systemic racism in police brutality and inequity and highlights the importance of community, family, and allyship.

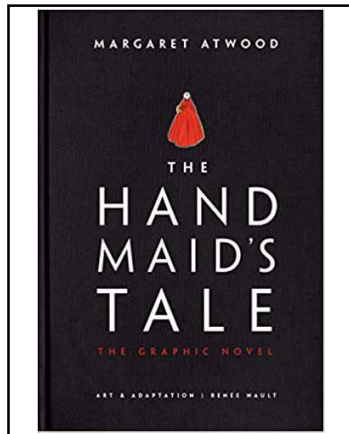
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## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### The Handmaid's Tale: The Graphic Novel

**Margaret Atwood with illustrations by Renee Nault**



#### Summary

The story takes place in the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian society that was formerly part of the United States. The book follows Offred, a handmaid whose only purpose is to bear children for the wealthy ruling class. Offred narrates her current experiences and eludes to the environmental issues and low birth rates which lead to a second American Civil War and the loss of her job, her husband, her child, and her freedom.

**Publisher Recommended Age:** N/A **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** 16+

#### Awards Received

Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy Association (CSFFA)

The original novel won the inaugural Arthur C. Clarke award for science fiction.

#### Diverse Representations

Aside from the female perspective there is not a lot of diverse representation.

#### Why Is It Banned?

The core of the story is the depiction of complete lack of sexual and reproductive rights in a patriarchal society that denies women any agency. It includes graphic illustrated depictions of sexual violence as well as the resulting trauma.

#### Yes, But....

The novel is increasingly prophetic. It viscerally and accessibly depicts how the current events were used to lay blame and eliminate of Civil Rights. Speculative fiction like this can draw parallels to our own world and help us stay vigilant to these threats.



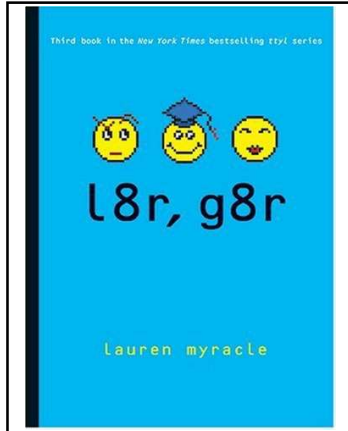
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### l8r, g8r

**Lauren Myracle**



#### Summary

Zoe, Maddie, and Angie are in their second semester of their senior year. Zoe feels she is ready have sex with her boyfriend, Doug. Her friends are concerned she is becoming too codependent on him. Angie is unsure if she should keep dating Logan and feels she is falling out of love with him. Maddie has to deal with a topless photo of her that got out to everyone. All three girls deal with life, high school, friends, enemies, graduation, and the upcoming day when they say goodbye to one another and leave for different colleges.

**Publisher Recommended Age:** 13+ **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** 14+

#### Awards Received

None

#### Diverse Representations

None

#### Why Is It Banned?

Offensive language, religious viewpoint, sexually explicit, unsuited to age group.

#### Yes, But....

The discussions of sex are done in a positive way - including using birth control and condoms, having the character waiting until the right time, and how sex can be awkward unlike the ease and perfection portrayed in movies.

This book is written how teenagers talk and text, including the topics brought up and the language used, both with words and texting shorthand. Some teens are having sex in high school and this gives a good depiction of how to do it safely.

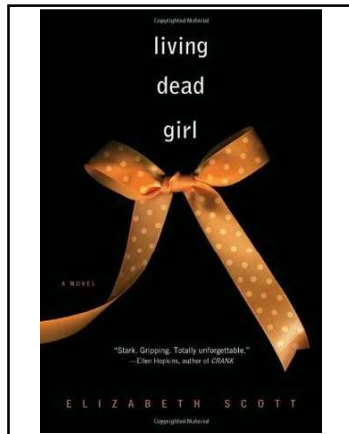
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### Living Dead Girl

**Elizabeth Scott**



#### Summary

She became "Alice" five years ago when Ray kidnapped her during a school field trip. She was 10 then. Now she's 15 and becoming too much of a woman for Ray's liking. Alice knows her time will soon be up just like the Alice before her and Ray is wanting Alice to find a new little girl for him to love and care for.

This is a short, but powerful book told from the perspective of a teen girl who feels dead inside because of what she must endure while imprisoned with her captor.

**Publisher Recommended Age: 16+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 17+**

#### Awards Received

ALA Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults

#### Diverse Representations

None

#### Why Is It Banned?

Physical and sexual abuse is too graphic for teens; Graphic content; Unsatisfactory ending

#### Yes, But....

There are many students who have been sexually abused or assaulted like the girl in this book. Glossing over these details would make them seem unimportant and not as serious. We hear about situations like these on the news and in true crime shows.

This book is chilling and will stay with you. The ending is shocking and sad, but not every situation ends happily.



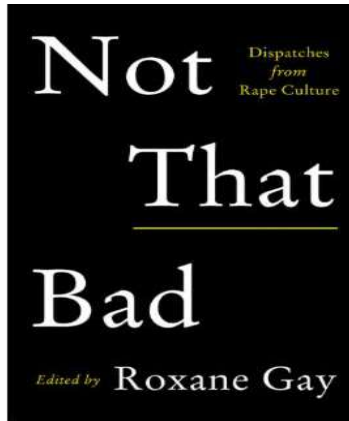
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### Not That Bad Dispatches from Rape Culture

Edited by Roxane Gay



#### Summary

Roxane Gay collects original and previously published pieces that address what it means to live in a world where women have to measure the harassment, violence and aggression they face, and where sexual-abuse survivors are 'routinely second-guessed, blown off, discredited, denigrated, besmirched, belittled, patronized, mocked, shamed, gaslit, insulted, bullied' for speaking out.

Highlighting the stories of well-known actors, writers and experts, as well as new voices being published for the first time, covers a wide range of topics and experiences, from an exploration of the rape epidemic embedded in the refugee crisis to first-person accounts of child molestation and street harassment.

Amazon

**Publisher Recommended Age:**      **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** NA

#### Awards Received

Goodreads Choice  
Nominee for Best Nonfiction (2018)

#### Diverse Representations

The editor is black and bisexual.  
Women, refugees, black, transgender.

#### Why Is It Banned?

The book is a collection of essays that discusses the following topics: rape, sexual assault, violence, drug use.

#### Yes, But....

We live in a rape culture, which is perpetuated by secrecy, victim shaming, as well as a male dominated society. Many survivors never come forward and live in shame and with the belief that they are alone in their shame. This book sheds light on the rape culture, which will help survivors to come forward sooner so that they do not live in shame. The topics covered in the book will be familiar to almost all readers.

It's nevertheless critical reading, especially for anyone prepared to engage with the roots of the #MeToo movement. Not That Bad succeeds in illustrating exactly what is meant by the term rape culture: horror everywhere, even in moments that ought to be beautiful, even in moments so mundane they ought to mean nothing at all.

-Alexis Gunderson, Paste Magazine's The 16 Best Nonfiction Books of 2018

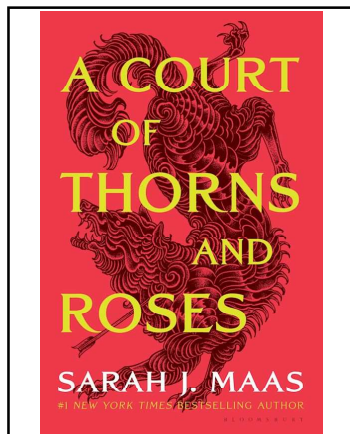
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## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### A Court of Thorns and Roses

by Sarah J. Maas



#### Summary

When nineteen-year-old huntress Feyre kills a wolf in the woods, a terrifying creature arrives to demand retribution. Dragged to a treacherous magical land she knows about only from legends, Feyre discovers that her captor is not truly a beast, but one of the lethal, immortal faeries who once ruled her world.

--Bloombury Publishing

**Publisher Recommended Age: 17    CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 16**

#### Awards Received

2016 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults; #1 New York Times Bestselling Series; Booklist Starred Review; 2016 Booklist Best Fiction for Young Adults;

#### Diverse Representations

As a fantasy novel, there are a lot of comparisons between "mortals," "High Fae," and "Lower Fae," and what it means to be a representative of those groups. A lot of the characters reflect on their own biases and misunderstandings within these groups.

#### Why Is It Banned?

Depictions of violence, inappropriate language, sex, and alcohol use.

#### Yes, But....

Despite some of the dark themes and violence, the storyline also portrays important qualities like loyalty, trust, and friendship. Yes, there is content that would be considered mature for younger audiences, but should be okay for older teens.

Personally, I really liked this fantasy read. As someone who is not fond of violence, I found the depictions in this book to be tolerable for the storyline. As for the sex scenes, it was not overly graphic, no more than what you would see on a TV show.



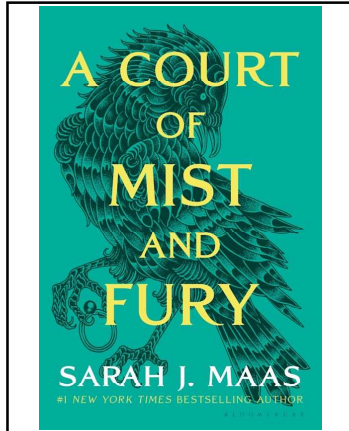
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### A Court of Mist and Fury

by Sarah J. Maas



#### Summary

As her marriage to Tamlin approaches, Feyre's hollowness and nightmares consume her. She finds herself split into two different people: one who upholds her bargain with Rhysand, High Lord of the Night Court, and one who lives out her life in the Spring Court with Tamlin. While Feyre navigates a dark web of politics, passion, and dazzling power, a greater evil looms. She might just be the key to stopping it, but only if she can harness her harrowing gifts, heal her fractured soul, and decide how she wishes to shape her future. --From Bloomsbury Publishing

**Publisher Recommended Age: 17+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 17+**

#### Awards Received

Booklist Starred Review; 2016 Goodreads Choice Awards: Best YA Fantasy; Audiofile Earphones Award Winner; 2017 Children's Book Council Teen Book of the Year Finalist; #1 New York Times Bestselling Series

#### Diverse Representations

As with the first book in this series, there are a lot of comparisons drawn between the different Fae classes. However, one of the main characters in this book hopes to bring about change by equal representation of the different classes.

#### Why Is It Banned?

Depictions of violence, inappropriate language, sex, and alcohol use.

#### Yes, But....

There are some dark scenes with violence, as well as a few more sex scenes than the previous book in the series. However, the overall themes of this book were about the sacrifices we make for loyalty, friendship, family, and community.

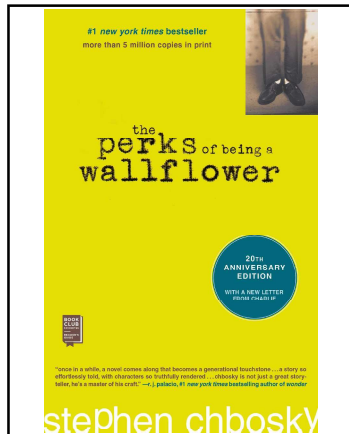
I really enjoyed this sequel to a Court of Thorns and Roses. The characters are becoming more developed, and the overall storyline continued to keep interested. I understand why this was such a popular series for both YA and adults.

# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook

### the perks of being a wallflower

**Stephen Chbosky**



#### Summary

Modern classic that captures the aching confusing, and glorious experience of being a teenager - all through the eyes, ears, and letters of the book's narrator, Charlie. We don't know where Charlie lives and we don't know to whom he is writing. But Charlie's haunting letters, addressed only to "Dear Friend," bring readers straight to the heart of his struggles to fit in, to find the will to "participate" in life, and to cope with the realities of the larger world as he learns how to grow up.

Summary from book publisher, Simon & Shuster

**Publisher Recommended Age: 12+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 16+**

#### Awards Received

ALA Best Book for Young Adults (2000)

ALA Best Book for Reluctant Readers (2000)

#### Diverse Representations

Two of the male characters are gay

#### Why Is It Banned?

Depicts sexual activity, drinking, drug use, profanity and nudity. Some of the topics of sexual abuse and violence may be triggering to some readers.

#### Yes, But....

Has been compared coming of age classic, "Catcher in the Rye". Explores themes relatable to teenagers: importance of having community & friends, accepting people for who they are, & navigating through internal conflict, childhood trauma, mental health

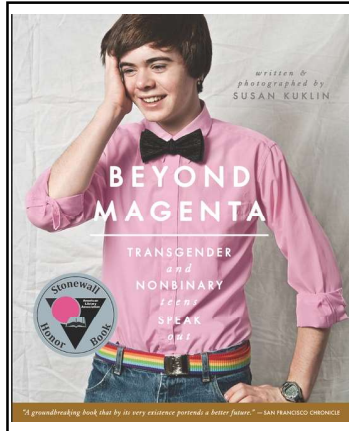
"The entire book is a blueprint for survival. It's for people who have been through terrible things and need hope and support" - Stephen Chbosky, Author

# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook

## Beyond Magenta

Susan Kuklin



### Summary

Author and photographer Susan Kuklin met and interviewed six transgender or gender-neutral young adults and used her considerable skills to represent them thoughtfully and respectfully before, during, and after their personal acknowledgement of gender identity. Portraits, family photographs, and candid images grace the pages, augmenting the emotional and physical journey each youth has taken. - Summary by Candlewick Press (publisher)

**Publisher Recommended Age:** 14+ **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** NR

### Awards Received

Stonewall Book Award Honor Book  
YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction  
Kirkus Reviews Best Children's Book of the Year  
Lambda Literary Award

### Diverse Representations

True stories of six individuals who are members of the trans/nonbinary community  
One individual is Asian, One individual is Hispanic, one individual is Black and Indigenous American

### Why Is It Banned?

LGBTQIA+ content, for "its effect on any young people who would read it", Sexually explicit & biased, Anti-family, unsuited to age group, offensive language, homosexuality, sex education, political & religious viewpoint. Pulled to avoid complaints

### Yes, But....

These are real stories of real people told in a thoughtful and honest way. Banning this book is like saying they are unfit and offensive as people and their lives should be banned. This book gives hope. Author Susan Kuklin wrote in an essay for NPR:

"Six people sent me emails that they were on the verge of suicide. One high school student in a rural, conservative town wrote that they were so lonely and desperate they had been planning their death for that very day. But passing a bookstore on the way home, they saw the person on the cover of Beyond Magenta who looked exactly like them. Flipping through the pages of the book, they found a first name in it that was their name too. It was a sign - they were not alone, I still get goosebumps thinking of that teen and hope they live a long, happy life."



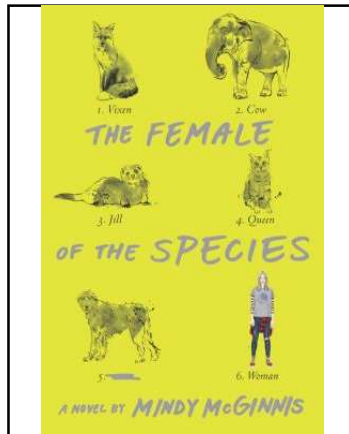
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### The Female of the Species

#### Mindy McGinnis



#### Summary

Alex Craft is damaged by her father leaving, her sister's violent rape/murder and depression of her mother. When the alleged attacker goes free, Alex releases her inner demon and achieves vengeance. But, the path started by violence at home continues down a dark road. Even though Alex has positive sides only seen by her friend PK (Claire) when caring for friends and shelter animals - the darker side comes out when Alex is exposed to rape and pedophilia impacting her friend group. As Officer Nolan warns, if it isn't reported, he can't do anything about it.

**Publisher Recommended Age: 14+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 15+**

#### Awards Received

2016 Edgar Award for Young Adult Fiction  
GoodReads Nominee for Best Young Adult Fiction (2016)

#### Diverse Representations

LGBT+

#### Why Is It Banned?

Violence, Sex, Language, Drug Use

#### Yes, But....

As much as I might wish violence against women did not exist, it is ingrained in our culture. To quote Officer Nolan from the book "girls, one in three of you will be a victim of sexual assault" and "90% of rapes are acquaintance rape".

And its not just rape, but violence against women in general - abuse, murder, harrasment are all discussed in this book. All young adults need to read and think about what is said.

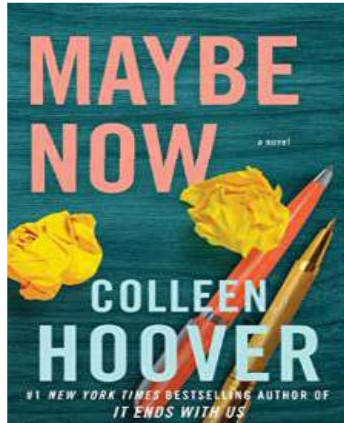
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### Maybe Now

Colleen Hoover



#### Summary

Ridge and Sydney are thrilled to finally be together guilt-free. But as the two of them navigate this freedom, Warren and Bridgette's relationship is as tumultuous as ever, and Maggie grapples with her illness. When she comes across an old list of things she wanted to do "maybe one of these days," Maggie decides to live life to the fullest and accomplish these dreams. Maggie keeps Ridge updated on her adventures, but he can't help but worry, even as Sydney grows more and more suspicious about their friendship. But if she's going to move past this jealousy, she'll need to reconcile how she and Ridge came together with the fact that Maggie will always be in their lives somehow...or end up walking away from the man she loves so much. Summary from Amazon

**Publisher Recommended Age:** 17+ **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** NA

#### Awards Received

NA

#### Diverse Representations

#### Why Is It Banned?

Sexual content  
Language  
Character with terminal illness

#### Yes, But....

The overall themes of this include the importance of friendship (even in difficult and/or awkward situations), building a support system, and living without fear. "We shouldn't revolve our lives around their possible endings. We should revolve our lives around the experiences that lead to the endings." Colleen Hoover

This was an entertaining book to read. While there are important themes of friendship weaved throughout the book, the fact that it is entertaining is important in encouraging students to read outside of school. This is a perfect book to read while on vacation and demonstrates that reading can be fun!

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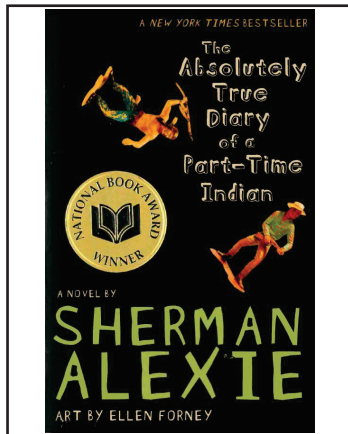
## Freedom to Read Guidebook



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WE READ BANNED BOOKS

## The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian

**Sherman Alexie**



### Summary

Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings by Ellen Forney that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he was destined to live.

Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

**Publisher Recommended Age: 12+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 14+**

### Awards Received

2007 National Book Award for Young People's Literature

### Diverse Representations

Native American life on a reservation, poverty, education equity

### Why Is It Banned?

Profanity and sexual references. In addition, allegations of sexual misconduct were made against the author.

### Yes, But....

The profanity and sexual references are typical for a teenage boy and do not detract from the overall message of the book. Junior has close, loving relationships with his family, notably his grandmother. He is able to create new friendships at his new school.

As someone who grew up poor with little stability, I related to the author's use of humor when dealing with difficult realizations about his life on the reservation. The book challenges class, inequity, and shows the effects of US policies.



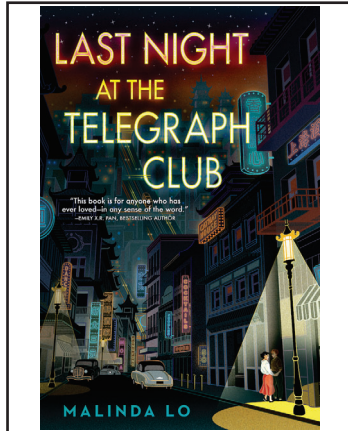
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## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### Last Night at the Telegraph Club

**Malinda Lo**



#### Summary

1954, San Francisco. Seventeen year old Lily is a "good little" Chinese-American and living in Chinatown during the "Red Scare" of trying to out communists sympathizers. Lily and a friend sneak into the Telegraph Club, a local hangout for lesbians in the city, to see a male impersonator perform. Lily finally feels like she has found her place to be herself and accept who she is and her feelings towards her friend Kath...until the police raid it and she must tell her family he was there, and why she was there. Her parents are angry, and refuse to accept that she is gay.

**Publisher Recommended Age: 14+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 12+**

#### Awards Received

National Book Award Winner ; ALA Printz Award ; ALA Asian/Pacific American Youth Literature Award ; ALA Stonewall Book Award

#### Diverse Representations

Homosexuals, Lesbians, Chinese immigrants, Chinese Americans, Survivors of war and political conflict, Interracial romantic relationship

#### Why Is It Banned?

Materials contain pornography, Materials are not appropriate for the age of student. This book contains explicit sexual nudity and sexual activities

#### Yes, But....

There was one short make-out scene where Lily and Kath are kissing and exploring each other by touching. No actual sex between any characters.

This is a really good book about coming out, being true to yourself, your friends, and your family instead of saying being who you are is a mistake or a lying about it. It is about standing up for yourself instead of being who people think you are or should be.

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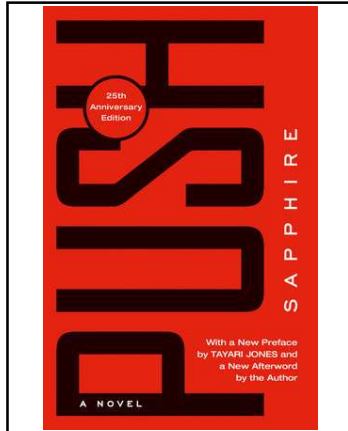
## Freedom to Read Guidebook



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### Push

#### Sapphire



#### Summary

Precious Jones, an illiterate sixteen-year-old, has up until now been invisible to the father who rapes her and the mother who batters her and to the authorities who dismiss her as just one more of Harlem's casualties. But when Precious, pregnant with a second child by her father, meets a determined and radical teacher, we follow her on a journey of education and enlightenment as she learns not only how to write about her life, but how to make it truly her own for the first time.

—Amazon Summary

**Publisher Recommended Age:** N/A **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** N/A

#### Awards Received

Nominated for NAACP Image Award; Black Caucus of the American Library Association's First Novelist Award; British "Mind Book of the Year Award"; "Best Books by African American Writers" -Amazon book review; myriad film adaptation awards.

#### Diverse Representations

Author is Black, bisexual. The main character and her parents are Black. She is reported as attending school and living in a majority black/hispanic community. Most of the characters in the book are Black or Latina. Some characters are LGBTQ.

#### Why Is It Banned?

This book is written in the perspective of a young girl who has been raped by her father and repeatedly failed by adults around her. Her (and other characters') experiences are described in blunt/explicit first person language.

#### Yes, But....

The author uses this story to illustrate that not all children/young adults have the luxury of remaining sheltered. Many have had real life experiences that have forced them to grow up too quickly. This is ultimately a story of a young woman overcoming trauma.

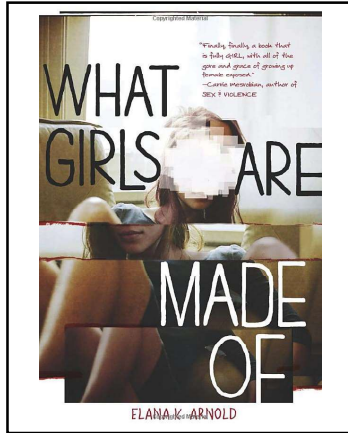
I agree with one description as a "horrific, hope-filled story." While at times it is difficult to contemplate the trauma described, this book is ultimately an inspiring story highlighting the potential of education to help one reach full potential against all odds.

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## Freedom to Read Guidebook

### What Girls Are Made Of

Elena K. Arnold



#### Summary

When she was fourteen, Nina's mother told her there was no such thing as unconditional love. "I could stop loving you at any time," her mother said. At sixteen, Nina lives in an environment where this notion is validated: beauty, sex, wealth being conditions of love. Through her complicated toxic relationship with an old crush, she discovers the power of lust, regret, abandonment, and revenge. Her story offers an honest portrayal of relationships (between teens as well as adults), a journey of self-discovery and being a girl/woman.

**Publisher Recommended Age:** 14+ **CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age:** N/A

#### Awards Received

A 2017 National Book Award for Young People's Literature Finalist  
The Amelia Bloomer Book List (2018)

#### Diverse Representations

Feminist viewpoints

#### Why Is It Banned?

Challenged in Texas for its mentions of abortion and "multiple descriptions of sex." Controversial representations of Christian beliefs, including stories about young women with strong faith and a passion for the Lord and being virginal martyrs.

#### Yes, But....

The book inspires the reader to think about their own worth in the larger context of society. It teaches young adults to define their own worth, to view themselves as individuals with goals and aspirations, and to fight the notion of objectification.

"Finally, finally, a book that is fully girl, with all of the gore and grace of growing up female exposed." —Carrie Mesrobian, author of the William C. Morris finalist, *Sex & Violence*



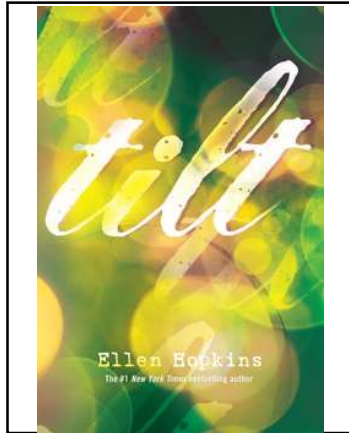
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### Tilt

#### Ellen Hopkins



#### Summary

Mikayla, almost eighteen, is over-the-top in love with Dylan, who loves her back. But what happens to that love when Mikayla gets pregnant the summer before their senior year—and decides to keep the baby?

Shane turns sixteen that same summer and falls hard in love with his first boyfriend, Alex, who happens to be HIV positive. Shane has lived for four years with his little sister's impending death. Can he accept Alex's love, knowing that his life, too, will be shortened?

Harley is fourteen—a good girl searching for new experiences, especially love from an older boy. She never expects to hurdle toward self-destructive extremes in order to define who she is and who she wants to be. (Amazon)

**Publisher Recommended Age: 14+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: NA**

#### Awards Received

NA

#### Diverse Representations

LGBTBQ

#### Why Is It Banned?

Drug and alcohol use  
Sexual content  
HIV  
Teen pregnancy  
Suicide

#### Yes, But....

This book also includes a pro-life character as well as religious characters. It does not glorify the topics, but rather approaches them from a realistic perspective and shows that choices can result in negative consequences. Most teenagers will be able to relate to the teenage characters in this book.

This book was a quick and entertaining read. It is a great option for students; especially in terms of demonstrating consequences for poor life choices.

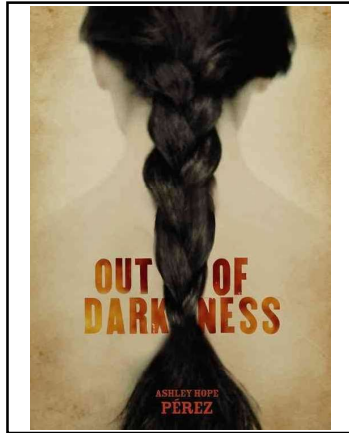
# Annie's Foundation

## Freedom to Read Guidebook



### Out of Darkness

**Ashley Hope Perez**



#### Summary

This historical fiction novel is based around the 1937 school explosion in New London, Texas. Naomi is a Mexican-American whose mother died giving birth to her twin siblings. Many years later, as a senior in high school, they go to live with the twins' white father. Naomi falls in love with Wash, a boy from the nearby negro side of town. When Wash is accused of being the cause of the school explosion, a group of white men beat up and lynch Wash and his family. During this, the secret relationship between him and Naomi is discovered, making things even worse.

**Publisher Recommended Age: 14+ CommonSenseMedia.org Recommended Age: 15+**

#### Awards Received

School library journal starred review; Kirkus book award; Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award finalist; Américas Award Winner; Tomás Rivera Mexican-American Children's Book Award Winner; Michael L. Printz Award Honor; YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults

#### Diverse Representations

African American characters; LatinX characters; grandparents as caregivers; single father household; abuse survivors

#### Why Is It Banned?

Depicts a graphic sexual experience between minors  
Depictions of abuse

#### Yes, But....

The two responsible, older teen characters are deeply in love with each other, and the sex scenes are short and few. The racially charged language and violence is a part of our past that should not be ignored.

This is a beautiful book of love between two older teens that society says shouldn't be together. It's a story of family - responsibility, safety, and memories. And this is a story of our history of segregation and hate that we should not forget.