

I'm Pro Book Banning. Here's why.

Jonah Hofmeyer— Section Editor in The Diamond Editor, on January 6th 2024 (adapted)

A topic of conversation that has been going on for the past several years is book banning. Many parents around the United States are pushing for books on certain topics to be banned in local schools and public libraries, though the main warzone is in school libraries.

This issue caught fire during COVID-19 due to online schooling. Parents started to see what type of education their children were receiving, and many began to look closer at what was being done within their school districts.

There is a huge difference between book banning in schools and public libraries. Public libraries, I think, should be allowed to hold any books that they think adults will want to read. That is an important distinction though. Adults.

Adults are mature enough to decide for themselves and decipher their political opinions. This is why I don't think we should ban adult books like *How to Be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi or *How to Destroy America in Three Easy Steps* by Ben Shapiro.

I also believe that it is wrong to ban books like *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Three Blind Mice* in school libraries. So how can I hold a pro-book banning view yet be against banning some books?

It's simple. Not all literature is equal. My problem, and I think the problem that many parents are having now, is with books that are sexual in nature. Books like "Gender Queer" by Maia Kobabe and "Flamer" by Mike Curato are perfect examples. Both books explicitly describe sexual acts, masturbation, and talk flippantly about sexual desire. Young children found and read "Gender Queer" book in their school libraries. While the author stated that the book was written for children ages 16 and up, this book was read by younger children.

The Diamond chose not to publish direct quotes from these books in this piece because of their sexual content. If these quotes are considered to be too sexual by adults, so much so that they can't be published in this newspaper, why should they be in school libraries?

Why are children exposed to this kind of content? Parents are absolutely entitled to be outraged because their children are exposed to books and ideas like these. There is no reason for young kids to be exposed to this type of content in schools. Zero. That is the job of the parent.

It is not the job of schools to signal this type of morality. Nor is it the school's duty to be virtue signaling their political views. If parents want to buy their children books like "Gender Queer" and "Flamer" to read at home, they have every right to do that. Parents also have the right not to have their kids exposed to that type of literature.

Some states have passed laws prohibiting sexual material in school libraries. Iowa recently passed a similar law, Senate File 496. Governor Reynolds signed it into law, in October of this year. It states that books with sexual depictions or descriptions are banned from schools in Iowa. Ron De Santis, a 2024 Republican presidential candidate, has also made laws outlawing sexual literature in schools.

Because of these laws, schools now have a grey area on what is considered "sexual content." Is a kissing scene in a book considered sexual content? In that case, books like *The Hunger Games* and *Harry Potter* are out of the mix. So where is that line? Here's a quote from a childhood favorite book series of mine, *Percy Jackson*. "Tyson blushed. The crowd cheered. Annabeth planted a kiss on my cheek. The roaring got a lot louder after that." Compare that to any quote from "Flamer" or "Gender Queer." It doesn't compare. It just doesn't.

Kissing is a concept that many kids are familiar with. How many viral videos are there online of kindergarteners coming home claiming that they kissed their crush at school? They have an innocent understanding of what kissing is. For this reason, mild kissing scenes like this in youth novels should be allowed in school libraries.

As Christians, it is our duty and responsibility to raise our children in the ways of the Lord. Exposing kids to sexual material before they understand what it really means is not acting in a Christian way.

A common conversation point in Christian circles is the temptations of porn. Books that describe sexual acts in detail are just that. Porn. Parents should control when their kids are exposed to hard subjects like "the sex talk," not schools. This is the basis for the whole idea of book banning. Schools are overstepping their bounds when they expose kids to this sexual material. I think it's worth discussing what type of content is appropriate in school libraries.