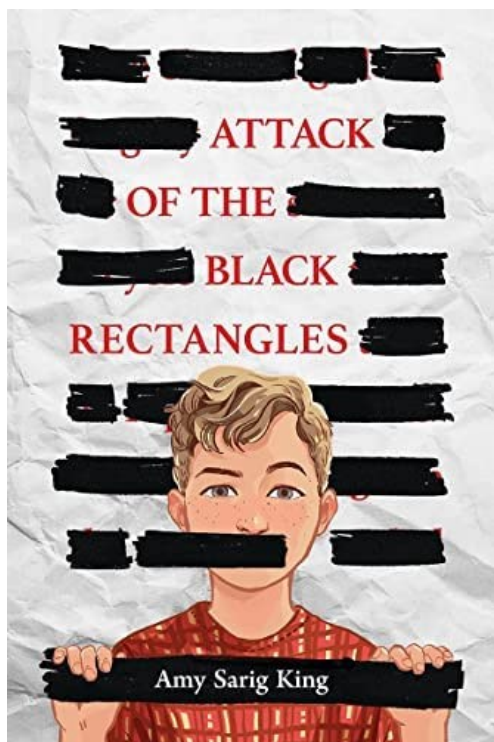


ATTACK OF THE BLACK RECTANGLES



Juvenile

By Amy Sarig King

ISBN: 978-1-338-68052-2

Book Summary:

A sixth-grade boy discovers the word "breast" is blacked-out in the school's copies of "The Devil's Arithmetic" and protests censorship of content in his school.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains controversial social and racial commentary; non-sexual nudity; and inflammatory historical commentary.

2/5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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6	<p>It's not that I don't respect the founding fathers, but I do have some problems with how they did stuff. Mostly how they bought and sold people. I definitely have a problem with that.</p> <p>So when it was question time at the end of the tour, and we were standing right in the room where the founding fathers had signed the Declaration of Independence, I raised my hand and asked, "How many of the guys who signed the Declaration of Independence owned slaves?"</p> <p>Ms. Sett moved quickly toward me with her hand out.</p> <p>The tour guide said, "Forty-one out of fifty-six signers owned slaves. That's a great question."</p> <p>"Thanks," I said.</p> <p>I'm white, so maybe this seems like a weird question. But just because I'm white doesn't mean I can't talk about what white people do wrong. We do a lot wrong. For starters, we don't talk about how 73 percent of the signers of the Declaration of Independence owned slaves.</p>
19	<p>And I'm sick of learning half-truths instead of history, so maybe I can do a project on something completely true for once- like why it's not a cool touristy thing that the pretzel house on Main Street highlights the musket slats in the building and the fact that they could shoot at Native Americans through them. Maybe I can write about how it wasn't okay to be shooting at the rightful caretakers of the land. For the record, that would be the Susequehannock and Lenni Lanape tribes.</p>
34	<p>Page 93 is really hard to read. It's a scene in the showers at a concentration camp. There are girls our age there and they're naked in the shower room. Surrounding them are Nazi soldiers. When the water turns off, the soldiers yell at the naked girls to move. When they move to the next room, they aren't given clothes to wear and are freezing.</p>
42	<p>Head down, hands over her breasts, Hannah walked through the line of soldiers...</p>
52	<p>I am just like her, which is why I ask questions on field trips about how many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence owned slaves. Because most of my school and this town is populated by white people- like 97 percent of it- we rarely talk about stuff like this. It's seen as too serious or too sensitive or even impolite, and some people think that it will make white kids feel bad, but if we want to change the world so it's good for everyone, it's important to talk about the truth.</p>
74	<p>"I'm sure it's nothing," Dr. McKenny says. "It's only a few words."</p> <p>"The word is breast," Marci says, "and it's not nothing. It's an insult to our intellectual freedom."</p> <p>..."As a taxpayer, my mom paid for those books," I say. "And this weekend we had to buy a replacement so I could read the book as it was meant to be read, not in a censored way that someone else thinks I should read."</p>
78	<p>She adds, "This is clearly sexism at work."</p> <p>The patriarchy is a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. Sexism is prejudice or discrimination [typically] against women.</p>
84	<p>"The patriarchy is so dumb!" Marci says.</p> <p>..."How can it be the patriarchy if Ms. Sett is the one who dress-coded you?" Denis</p>

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	<p>asks. I'm glad he does. "The patriarchy is everywhere! It's a system! We live inside of it. Adults, kids." Marci points to the blob of younger kids walking ahead of us. "They all live inside of it, too. It never ends!"</p>
85	<p>But most of me knows that both Denis and I feel weird talking about the patriarchy and sexism because we're guys.</p>
90	<p>The Day We Have Off Because of Lies ...She starts the video about Christopher Columbus. It's all the same stuff we learned in second grade. How he got here in 1492 and "discovered" America, how one of his three ships wrecked off the coast of Hispaniola, and how he was considered a hero in Spain. Nothing about how Columbus harmed the Indigenous population from the minute he landed. Nothing about how a person can't "discover" a place that was already there and populated by people who already knew about it. I keep hoping the video will say something more honest toward the end, but the narrator only closes with the rhyme we all learned when we were seven: In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue... The minute it's over, I put my hand up. Ms. Sett says, "Mac?" "I would like to talk about the truth about Christopher Columbus," I say. She nods. I continue, "He enslaved, tortured, and murdered Native people and I don't think we should consider him a hero anymore. I don't think we should have done that in the first place." ... "That's colonization, not discovery," Marci points out. ... "I like living here," I say, "but I also know that if someone showed up tomorrow the way Columbus did, and took you and your friends and made you slaves, sold your daughters, killed a bunch of your family, you probably wouldn't be okay with it."</p>
101	<p>"No one is keeping you from reading the book," Ms. Sett says. "You're reading the book." I think Marci might explode at that, but instead she remains calm and says, "You censored it. Which means you made a decision about what we can and can't read. It's unconstitutional."</p>
113	<p>He sighs. "This whole thing you were talking about over dinner- this feminism thing. It's a way to bring us down as men."</p>
115	<p>Not like it's a huge surprise to find out that my dad thinks feminism is dumb and that we can't talk about body parts like normal people.</p>
116	<p>LGBTQ+ Kids Need Our Help I watched a girl get bullied on her walk home from school yesterday. Kids walked behind her yelling gay slurs. I told them to stop it as they walked by my porch, but they laughed at me. It's time this town woke up in the twenty-first century. These kids need our help, not to be bullied, hidden, or canceled. Show your support by flying a Pride (rainbow) flag if your family is LGBTQ+ friendly! ...Re: LGBTQ+ Kids Need Our Help I'm sure I'm not the only one in this beautiful town who wants to keep the</p>

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	<p>bedroom out of our schools. Please, try the Bible club in the high school- see what they have to say about your rainbow ideas.</p> <p>...I am the president of the Bible Studies club at the high school and I just want to say that God loves everybody- no exceptions. Also, we fully support the school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance and some of us belong to it.</p>
118	<p>" Sure, sure. Gay rights or whatever," Aaron says, then runs off with his football.</p>
170	<p>I have this entire imaginary scene play out in my head where all the men in the room lecture me about how I shouldn't have any interest in sexism and how I will have a miserable life if I listen to what women have to say and one guy says, "You need a father around your house to show you the way," and then I think of Dad and how he showed me the way, all right, and I look back at Marci and she's looking right at me and I'm still thinking about-</p>
183	<p>Grandad knows the way to the square where the protest is, and I can hear a crowd of people and someone speaking through a microphone. Our kids are our future! I see two teenagers walking in our direction. They both have signs. One says TEACH TRUTH and the other says STOP LYING TO CHILDREN.</p>
206	<p>"People think weird stuff about feminists. It's so unnecessary. Like- my dad told me that if I'm a feminist, I won't get any doors opened for me or any flowers from my future husband or whatever. He said that boys won't kiss me because I'm a feminist."</p> <p>"Feminists want equal rights, fair pay, and stuff like that," I say. "Right? I mean- what does that have to do with opening doors?"</p> <p>"Exactly nothing. It makes no sense. People think that because I talk about equal rights, I want to be a man."</p>
213	<p>Aroace means: a person who doesn't experience romantic or sexual attraction.</p>
217	<p>Mom arrives in a T-shirt I've never seen before. It says, Don't be scared. I'm just a feminist.</p>
234	<p>I know it's not holiday time yet, but I'd like to remind people in the district that it's not right or legal for our school to put on a holiday show with religious music. If we're so strict as to not allow junk food or certain words in books, then why are we allowing this religious show and forcing children who do not believe in this religion to sing about it?</p>
246	<p>Our time finally comes and Marci's dad starts with a perfectly timed two-minute spiel about policy and intellectual freedom and how organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the American Library Association (ALA) have many resources for library and school boards. He also says they have lawyers who work in this field and the board wouldn't want to come up against them.</p>
256	<p>Okay, look. I don't want to offend anyone, so I'm not even going to talk about Thanksgiving.</p> <p>...But the whole idea and the story they gave us for Thanksgiving is just not something I want to talk about ever again. And the fact that we still all gather on this day and eat and celebrate family while the families whose land we live on are not celebrating Thanksgiving because all we gave them was...</p> <p>...But I also want you to think about the truth of the whole thing and at least try to</p>

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	figure out why some people don't really believe in celebrating Thanksgiving because it's not the real story.
259	Now, four years later, school districts all over the country are seeing a massive rise in book bans- where just a few citizens are removing many books from shelves in a call to "protect" you from the truth...when taking away stories of people different from you, or stories where you might be able to see yourself and your family, or, really, any stories, is the opposite of protection. I want you to care about intellectual freedom- which is the right to read.
260	If your school is facing book challenges and bans, you can find information on how to fight them at: PEN America (https://pen.org/how-to-fight-book-bans-a-tip-sheet-for-students/) and the National Coalition Against Censorship (http://ncac.org/resource/book-censorship-toolkit). I could talk about this all day, and during Banned Books Week (yep- that's a real thing!), I do!