

Yorktown Central School District

May 2, 2022

Book Title: <i>Gender Queer</i> Author: Maia Kobabe	Location: YHS Library
	Date of Committee Meeting: March 28, 2022
	Date of Committee Recommendation: April 18, 2022

In accordance with Board of Education policy, I am writing to notify you that I have received the book review committee's report regarding *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. Upon review of the educational value of the literature and the concerns that you raised, the committee has recommended that the book remain in the high school library. A copy of the committee's report, which notes the finding based on the concerns that you raised as well as the educational value of the book, is appended to this response.

After reviewing the book and the committee's report, alongside the concerns that you raised, I have accepted the committee's recommendation, and the book will continue to be available in the YHS library for students who choose to borrow the book; this title is not part of any high school course curriculum.

Yorktown Central School District
Instructional Material Review Committee
Report to the Superintendent

Building: Yorktown High School

Title: *Gender Queer*

Author: Maia Kobabe

Date of Committee Meeting: 3/28/22

- 1. Describe the availability of the book/material (library book, classroom material, etc.). If classroom material, please describe the number of classes/sections, grade level, etc.**

One hard copy of the title, *Gender Queer* in English, is available in the library for loan.

- 2. Summary of the objections to the material voiced by the complainant?**

This title was included in three complaints that were received via email. All of the complaints were in regard to several titles, which included *Gender Queer*. Some of the concerns listed in the complaints encompassed all of the titles in the complaint, so it was not always entirely clear which specific aspects of each complaint were directed at *Gender Queer*.

The first complaint shared concerns that the books in general were “geared toward incest, gender sexuality, and graphic pornography.” The specific concern raised regarding *Gender Queer* is that “it is a comic book that shows graphic content of a male with another male.”

The second complaint shared similar concerns, stating that the book *Gender Queer* “contains pornography and normalize(s) pedaphia” Additionally, the complaint goes on to say that *Gender Queer* “normalize(s) incest, pedophilia, pornography and deviant sex.” It goes on to state that the books are part of an “agenda which encourages the abolition of the nuclear family and christian [sic] values,” and that seeks to “infiltrate our education and indoctrinate our children.” It further indicates that educators, “should be teaching math, history, science and english [sic] not politicized ideologies,” and that Yorktown should not “be teaching subject matter that is political, ideological or controversial.”

The third complaint cited three books, including *Gender Queer*, and shared concerns that the books contained “vulgarity” and “explicit sexual situations.”

- 3. Has every member of the committee read the material entirely? If not, why?**

Yes, every member of the committee read the material in its entirety.

4. Indicate any resources consulted: (include articles, reviews, organizations etc.)

See this [link](#) for some specific reviews and awards.

5. After considering the objections and completing a comprehensive review of the material, the committee makes the following recommendation:

The committee unanimously recommends that *Gender Queer* remain available to students in the library at Yorktown High School.

6. Justification and comments including majority and minority positions, not including specific committee members by name:

The focus question for the committee was, “Does the benefit of the book being considered as a whole outweigh the parts that are related to the complaint?”

As a whole, the committee identified the following themes within the graphic novel: “There is great sadness in not knowing who you are, how you fit into society, and how to express yourself while still being accepted”; “All people are on a journey to discover who they are and how that fit into the world they live in”; “Not all people fit into the gender norms that are established by society”; “The search for identity is a journey that is different for each person.”

The following specific ideas and lessons were expressed by the author/characters in the text:

- The author identifies fear in losing eir’s job if e does not follow traditional pronouns for males and females at the workplace.
- The author is ready to share who e is, but is in constant struggle with societal expectations to be pushed back into who society wants em to be.
- The search for identity is confusing for the author, as e does not fit in with anyone and has different experiences from those who are gay and transgender.
- The various experiences in which e partakes allows em to eliminate certain identities and eventually conclude that e is asexual and nonbinary.
- Even though e realizes part of eis identity, the story concludes with em still struggling with how to make eir identity fit into the world.

The book is a memoir of the author’s quest to understand em gender and sexuality. The committee recognizes that some scenes and words may be jarring when taken out of context; however, the contextual experience of the author feeling out of place and struggling with where e fits in is necessary to understanding the overall themes of the text. The book as a whole allows for a student who is struggling with sexual identity to connect with someone who may have experienced something similar, and thus create a safe place for the student to feel seen and heard. While many of the situations may not be relatable to all students, the experiences that e goes through can enable a reader to

develop a sense of empathy for someone who does not feel as if he belongs in society. The journey for self-expression and belonging are appropriate topics for teenagers to discuss.

The committee found no evidence in the text of “incest” or “graphic pornography.” While there were a few “explicit sexual situations,” the sexual images depicted in the graphic novel were not detailed nor were they present to create sexual excitement, but rather to portray sexual and identity struggles.

The committee concludes that the themes in *Gender Queer* are appropriate for high school students, and the book as a whole has the possibility of helping a student struggling with similar issues. As the author discusses in the book, there are few public role models for people questioning their gender or who identify as asexual and/or nonbinary. This book offers a unique voice to students who may not know anybody in a similar situation. While all students may not hold this book up and see themselves, it certainly provides a window for students to look through to see what someone else may be experiencing.

The overall feeling from the committee is that if the book could help even one student, it is worth having in the library collection. It is the committee’s unanimous recommendation to keep *Gender Queer* in the YHS library.

Review Committee Members:

Supervisor of Humanities
YHS Principal
YHS Assistant Principal
Teacher Leader for the YHS English Department
Community member
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction
Library Media Specialist

Date Report Submitted: 4/18/22