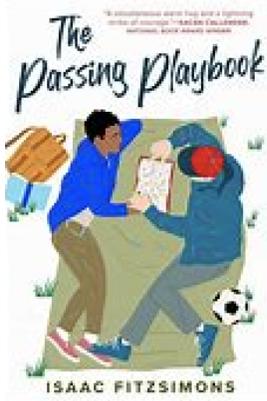


Young Adult Literature:

including books that have been banned or will probably be banned soon.

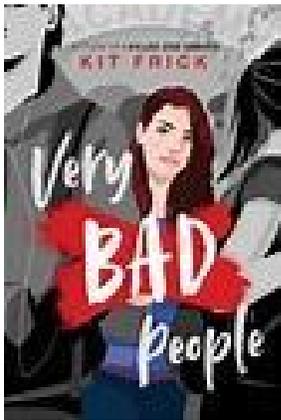
Karen Hartman, Colorado Writing Project



Fitzsimons, Isaac. *The Passing Playbook*. New York: Dial Books, 2021.

Spencer is starting 10th grade in a new high school, a liberal high school. He knows he can comfortably go to school as a gay young man, but he keeps the secret that he is trans. He loves his new school. He is accepted, makes new friends, and is invited to try out for the boys' soccer team. The coach sees Spencer kicking a soccer ball in P.E. Though small, Spencer is a brilliant scholar of soccer and is impressed. His parents won't give him permission to go out for soccer feeling he needs to take it slow. He joins the team, keeping it a secret from his mom and dad. His team is doing

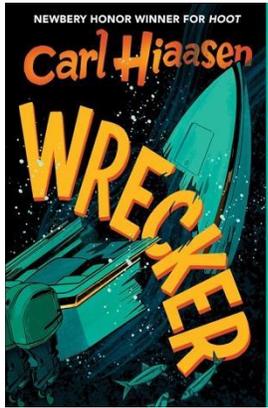
well, and Spencer is crushing on one of his teammates. Then life takes a turn Spencer has no control over; his birth certificate is needed before the playoffs. His coach tells him there is a mistake on his birth certificate. The certificate says he is a girl, and he is benched until they get the problem straightened out. Spencer knows he must tell his parents, and he must decide whether to out himself and fight the discriminatory law that is going to put him on the bench for the rest of his high school career.



Frick, Kit. *Very Bad People*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2022.

Calliope transfers from her very small-town high school to an elite boarding school, one her mother graduated from years ago. Calliope is glad to leave her small town behind where everyone knows her mother had driven the family van into a lake with all three of her daughters in the car. Her mother died; she and her sisters survived. Calliope is excited when she is asked to join a secret society, one her mother belonged to when she attended Tipton Academy. Haunt and Rail is a very exclusive club of 10 seniors and 10 juniors who believe they must fight for social

justice while remaining unknown to everyone else. Calliope is intrigued at first and enjoys their secretive meetings and their plans to seek justice for others. She is hoping to learn more about her mother through the Haunt and Rail and to find out why her mother drove the van into the lake. Things turn dark when Haunt and Rail decide to target a favorite English teacher. Calliope accidentally shows up when three of her fellow club members stand over the body of the teacher. She must decide what happens next.



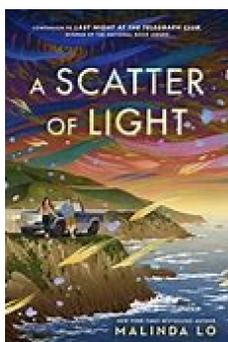
Hiaasen, Carl. *Wrecker*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2023.

Valdez Jones goes by Wrecker, a nickname in honor of the great grandfather x 5 who made a living salvaging shipwrecks. He loves living with his stepsister in Key West. He goes to school, takes care of a grave for an elderly man whose sister is buried in the local graveyard, and takes his boat out as often as he can to fish and enjoy the water. One day as he's going back to the docks, he sees a high-powered motorboat stuck on a sand flat. He stops to help but the boat is too heavy for him to pull off the sand. He tells the men they will have to wait for the tide to come back in. One of the men gives him \$500 and tells Wrecker to forget he ever saw them. The next night while Wrecker cleans the iguana poop off the grave he washes down every night, he hears a girl singing and praying. He can't find her but discovers a grave with candles and flowers near where he heard her. He does some researching and discovers it is the grave of a man who was beaten and hung by a group of men for loving a black woman a long time ago. When the men from the power boat have a vault built in the cemetery and bring in a coffin, Wrecker wants to know what they are hiding. Men with guns guard the coffin at night, but he found a time to break into the coffin. There wasn't a body in the coffin but instead he found a great deal of money. Wrecker gets pulled into the men's crimes when they threaten him. You will have to read this page turner to find out how these story lines come together.



Johnson, George M. *All Boys Aren't Blue*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux Books for Young Readers, 2020.

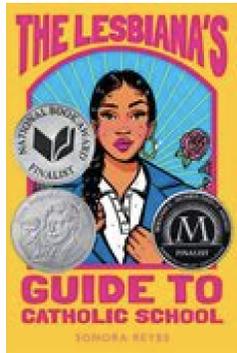
Johnson's memoir written for young adult readers is a realistic and touching story of growing up Black and gay. It is an honest telling of Johnson's life—the love and acceptance he feels from his family, his difficulties in coming out, his struggles with figuring out how he fits into a world that admires masculinity, and the bond he discovers he has with his college friends who are accepting of him and who he is. This is one of the books a U.S. senator read in the senate to support his short-sighted belief that we must protect young adults from books such as this. This book is an important read for gay high students who are trying to figure out their lives and for other teens who need to learn a little empathy and a lot of understanding.



Lo, Malinda. *A Scatter of Light*. New York: Dutton Books, 2022.

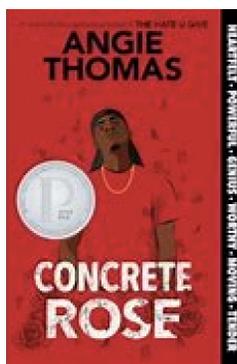
Lo's novel is a beautifully written story of a high school graduate who spends her summer with her grandmother in California before leaving for MIT. Aria becomes friends with Steph, a young woman who takes

care of her grandmother's garden. She is invited to come along with Steph and her girlfriend to a concert in San Francisco and finds herself right in the middle of a queer gathering. As Aria begins to spend more time with Steph and her friends; she begins to understand why she was never attracted to boys in high school--she's attracted to women—Steph in particular. They have a short flirtation, but when Aria's grandmother dies, Aria leaves for college without convincing Steph they can make a relationship work. Young lesbian girls will learn from Aria's story and others will come to learn their own problems growing up aren't much different than Aria's.



Reyes, Sonora, *The Lesbian's Guide to Catholic School*. New York: Harper-Collins, 2022.

Yamilet is 16 years old, and, when her best friend outs her, she and her brother transfer to a Catholic school. Yamilet is determined that no one in her new school finds out she is gay, that she will keep her brother out of trouble, and she will make her mother proud. Things get difficult when she falls for the only out lesbian in the school who speaks her mind to her Catholic teachers. Her brother ends up in detention almost every day. Things aren't working out like she wanted them to, but they only get worse when she outs herself to her father who was deported years ago. She thought he could help her tell her mother. Instead, he ghosts her. He won't answer her calls. Yamilet finds out her brother is gay which complicates her life even more. This novel is not only enlightening about coming out to parents, but whether it is best to hide who you are or let yourself be true to who you are.



Thomas, Angie. *Concrete Rose*. New York: Balzer + Bray, 2021.

Taking place 17 years before the events of *The Hate You Give*, this is the story of 17-year-old Maverick as he learns what it takes to be a man and a father. Maverick is barely squeaking through school while selling weed for the King Lords. He has a girlfriend who attends a private school; her mother and her brother don't approve of Maverick and things get worse when a girl he had a one-night fling with drops off a baby, his baby, and quickly disappears. Now Maverick is trying to go to school, take care of his son, and sell drugs. With a father in prison and a mother who is supportive but insists he take care of his son on his own; he's soon drowning in responsibility. A neighbor offers him a job at his grocery store, and the neighbor's wife offers to take care of the baby while he works. His girlfriend broke up with him after she learned about the baby, but, of course, their 17-year-old hormones go wild, and they have unprotected sex. A few months later she tells him he's about to become a father again. The plot thickens as he plots revenge against the man he thinks shot his cousin. Teenage boys will like this book—action and

a young protagonist who realizes he doesn't want to be his father all over again--an absent dad who spends his life in prison.

You might be interested in the information below.

This first week of October is the American Library Association's [Banned Books Week](#). According to a [recently released report](#) by the advocacy group PEN America, which tracks book bans, the past school year saw a record-high 3,362 bans, which restricted access to 1,557 different books. More broadly, a culture of censorship has beset American schools, affecting [students](#), [highly qualified teachers](#), and [librarians](#).

The huge spike in school censorship, along with the proliferation of state laws driving it, are alarming signs for our democracy. But another, less remarked-upon threat is the diminishment of literature itself in American schools.

BY [JONNA PERRILLO AND ANDREW NEWMAN / MADE BY HISTORY](#)

OCTOBER 6, 2023 8:00 AM EDT
TIME.COM

Of the 1,648 titles on the banned book list in the 2021-2022 school year:

- o 41 percent explicitly address LGBTQ+ themes or have protagonists or prominent secondary characters who are LGBTQ+ (this includes a specific subset of titles for transgender characters or stories— 145 titles, or 9 percent);
- o 40 percent contain protagonists or prominent secondary characters of color;
- o 21 percent directly address issues of race and racism;
- o 22 percent contain sexual content of varying kinds, including novels with some level of description of sexual experiences of teenagers, stories about teen pregnancy, sexual assault and abortion as well as informational books about puberty, sex, or relationships.

PEN America