

Contest F :: News Writing

2018 KSPA State Contest



DIRECTIONS

Failure to follow these directions may result in disqualification from the contest without refund. **Please read, listen and follow carefully.**

1. Please complete the first page of the packet, including your school code and your name using the bubble chart provided.
2. Please take time to write your student code in the top right corner of each page you will use for your writing in this contest.
3. Please do not include your name or the name of your high school on the entry at all. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.
4. You are to write a news story of approximately 300 words:
 - a. Please use the information provided below. The writer should determine which information is relevant and important to the story. Students may write in pencil or pen. Students may use dictionary, thesaurus and/or the Associated Press style manual. The use of personal listening devices, recording devices, cell phones, computers or other electronics is prohibited.
5. When you are finished with the writing, please bring this entire packet to the proctors at the front of the room **and remain at the table until they have checked your entry.**
6. Please leave the room quietly. Congratulations on writing well done!

DESCRIPTION

You are a member of Sunflower High School's journalism staff. Your editor has asked you to write a news story using the information provided.

SCHOOL INFO

Name: Sunflower High School

Location: Clinton, Kansas

Mascot: Mighty Buffalo

Enrollment: 800 (grades 9-12)

School colors: yellow and brown

Yearbook: The Sunflower

Newspaper: Sunflower News

Contest Info

This is an on-site contest.

Do not put your name on the entry. If you do, your entry will be disqualified.

Students may not request help or advice from any person other than the KSPA Executive Director Eric Thomas at

staff@ksponline.org, and that advice must be requested before the start of the contest.

All work must be solely that of the contestant.

Facts about “Thirteen Reasons Why” and the controversy

- Thirteen Reasons Why is a young adult novel written in 2007 by Jay Asher. It tells the story of a young high school student as she descends into despair brought on by betrayal and bullying, culminating with her suicide. She details the thirteen reasons why in an audio diary which was mailed to a friend two weeks after her death.
- Thirteen Reasons Why has received recognition and awards from several young adult literary associations, and the paperback edition reached #1 on the New York Times Best Seller list in July 2011. A screenplay was written, based on the book, that became “13 Reasons Why” released through Netflix on March 31, 2017.
- There were complaints in the school district, causing the high school to ban the book as of April 9, 2018. The administration did not announce the banning. A junior, Elise Sinclair, noticed it was missing from both the shelves and the online book catalog in the school library. She filed a complaint with the school board. She has not heard back, but started protests against the school including silent sit-ins during lunch periods in the school cafeteria. She also launched the website www.SHSbannedbook.com.
- Before the book was banned, there were 4 copies in the school library. According to school librarian Linda Schwartz, the books were each checked out at least 20 times over the last 3 years. The previous softcover copies were discarded and replaced because they were so heavily used. Schwartz declined comment on the controversy.

Interview with Brett Jameson, Clinton County District Superintendent

- “It would be hard for anybody who has dealt with suicide to not have a heightened awareness of things. I think we were just being cautious until we had the opportunity to look at the book and see how closely related to the movie it was.”
- “The books that we censor include any story that makes people uncomfortable. Stories about sensitive issues like sex, drugs or, in the case of this book, sexual assault, suicide and teen drinking, are often censored because people just don’t want to talk about those things. It’s not that these things don’t happen, but when they’re shared in a fictional setting, for some reason they make some people uncomfortable. They make me uncomfortable. So, when a parent objects, we want to respect that each time.”
- In regard to suicide: “I don’t want to be the superintendent that says, ‘Oh, they’re just trying to get attention,’ and then they go home and do something. I would never be able to live with myself. That’s why I sent that email out — to inform parents. If you don’t care what your kids are watching and reading, you can open this email and delete it. But I made the attempt to inform them about it, and I can sleep better at night.”
- From the text of the email to parents: “We have heard from you. We listened. And we acted. The book Thirteen Reasons Why will no longer be part of our library offerings. While many students have remarked that banning the book from the school library is unacceptable, I am charged with creating a safe school atmosphere. I feel that restricting this book creates that kind of safe school environment.”

Martin Payne, Sunflower High School 11th Grade English teacher

- “Over and over, students have described to me that reading ‘Thirteen Reasons Why’ was first time they felt understood. Recognizing that people will understand is the first step toward asking for help. Sometimes the world is a dangerous place, but reading about it isn’t. I can’t speak against the administration. But this is not a decision I would have made. Plus, we -- as the English department and librarians -- we weren’t consulted. This was purely a decision by the administration. Not even the school board?”
- “As for the rise of social media, it’s one of the reasons books with stories like these need to be out there. Social media is a false reality, it’s only what we want people to see about us, but when teens read stories with heavy and personal issues they can see that they’re not the only ones struggling. These issues touch all teens in some way.”
- “I don’t really paint ‘13 Reasons Why’ in a good light or a bad light. I’ve had kids say they read it with their parents, and that led to some good discussions about how to help people who are feeling that way. I can see it being a lesson, if parents know the content of it and talk openly with their kids. I hope to parent like that when my kids grow up.”
- “There are obviously positive messages that come out of the Netflix show: Don’t be a bully. Reach out to those you feel are hurting. But there’s also an inadvertent, unintended message: the potential positive outcomes of your suicide. Your voice can be heard in death when it’s not heard in life. The positives are what is what is scaring our community more than ever before.”

Elise Sinclair, junior at Sunflower High School

- “I appreciate that ‘Thirteen Reasons Why’ is creating conversations about topics that can be challenging to talk about. Bringing this forward is exactly what we need to do.”
- “I think it all comes down to making those human connections and really seeing the person in front of you. Technology allows us not to do that. When you send a text, you don’t see the reaction of that person. You need to speak to someone face to face and ask them how they are doing.”
- “Don’t tell me there’s a book I’m not allowed to read. My friends and I will make that decision. We are not done fighting this banning decision. Not even close.”
- “I’ve read the book and enjoy talking about the issues with my friends in addition to the classroom setting. There are conversations that happen between friends that are even more personal than what you would share in class. Banning the book from our school will only make me want to go pick it up from another local library.”