

Think Like the Banned

Title: *I Am Jazz*

Author: Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings

Publication Date: 2014

1. *What is the title, author, publication date, and plot (in 1-2 sentences) of this picture book?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings (2014).

2. *Were you aware of the existence of this book prior to starting this project?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: Yes, but I'd forgotten about it.

3. *This book was challenged and/or banned in America frequently enough for it to be included in The Top 100 Challenged Books Lists (between 1990-2021) compiled by the American Library Association. Why do you think this book was targeted?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: It talks about being transgender. The book was released in 2014 when it was even more taboo to talk about than it is now. Especially then, it was not seen as something to be shown to kids.

4. *Think like a Book Prosecution Lawyer: If you were arguing in favor of banning this book, what would your argument be?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: "Being transgender goes against nature. What if this book turns kids trans? You're going against God's will!"

5. *Think like a Book Defense Lawyer: If you were arguing against banning this book, what would your argument be?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: "There is nothing proving that being trans harms children in any way. The reason trans people are more likely to struggle emotionally is because we live in a society that often demonizes them, and books like this will help trans kids to feel more accepted and will benefit their mental health."

6. *The contents of this book may be inflammatory to some people. Do you think the information/plot of the book is presented in an unbiased way, or do you feel like it is pushing an agenda (if so, is it a positive or negative agenda)?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: Jazz is trans and this is based on her true story, and obviously she wants to be accepted, so this can be considered a bias, but this is not a bad thing.

7. *This book presents information that may be useful and uplifting for some people. Can you cite any positive information or messages in the book?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: The book encourages acceptance of trans kids and also encourages kids to be themselves.

8. *Children's picture books are typically written for 2 to 8 year olds. One of the most frequent reasons children's picture books are challenged or banned in the United States is that they are considered to be "Unsuited for Age Group." What age group do you think this book is appropriate for?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: 5 and up.

9. *Think about the picture books you read as a child: Would this book fit into the themes of what you read back then, or would it stand out as an anomaly?*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: I was not aware of any books about trans people when I was young, but there should have been.

10. *Pretend you are a Parent: If you were in a library, would you pick out this book and read it to your child; why or why not? Explain your answer.*

Sarina P., 11th Grade: Yes. It's an easy way to explain what being trans is to young kids in a way they'll understand, and would encourage kids to be more accepting.