

Think Like the Banned

Title: *Little Black Sambo*
Author: Hellen Bannerman
Publication Date: 1899

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

Zahra V., 8th Grade: The title of this book is *Little black Sambo* by Hellen Bannerman, it was published in 1899. The plot of this story follows a little black boy named Sambo whose family members bought him nice clothes, but tigers steal his clothes in return for not eating Sambo.

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

Zahra V., 8th Grade: Prior to starting this project, I had never heard of this book.

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?*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book was targeted because it in general is very racist. It portrays black children in a negative way, and is racially derogatory. I understand that parents would be very upset, allowing children to read a book that distorts the view of black people, which can hurt the way children think of themselves.

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

Zahra V., 8th Grade: If I were to think like a Book Persecution Layer, I would have many arguments. My first reason would be that this book shows prejudice towards black people, and this can especially harm children who read this that may be black as well. My other reasons would be that this book is inappropriate, and suggesting that black people live in inhumane ways. This is highly offensive to many, and should not be put into the minds of children.

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

Zahra V., 8th Grade: If I were to think like a Book defense lawyer, I would have many arguments. My first argument would be that this book is not racially motivated, or derogatory in any way, and is instead a fun fiction book for children to read about. My second reason would be that the book teaches good lessons to children, to be smart in tough situations. For these reasons, this proves that the book is more educational rather than harmful.

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)?*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book is present in a biased way. I believe it is stereotyping black people and showing them that they are extremely skinny and in a worthless way. I also believe that the book portrays black people to be poor, and living inhumanely.

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?*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: While this book may be controversial, it has many positive messages in it. The overall main message from the book is to remain calm in dangerous situations, and be smart and patient rather than impulsive.

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?*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book is appropriate for ages 5-7. I say this because it is a very simple read, but has mature topics in it. It also has controversial topics that kids may be able to understand simply. Though I believe an adult should read it with children, and help them comprehend more about racial related topics and conversations.

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?*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book would not fit into the themes I read when I was younger. I believe the reason for this is because only in recent years has racial related topics come into the eye of the media. I believe now more people would find this book insensitive and derogatory towards the black race, and especially towards black children.

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.*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: If I was a parent, I would not pick this picture book for my child. The reason being is because I do not agree with the way black children are being presented in the story. I feel as if children may feel negative or immoral feelings toward black people, if they read something that presents them in a inhumane way.

BONUS QUESTION: *Can you think of another book that you have read (picture book or novel) that contains the same themes as this book?*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: Another book I have read that contains similar themes is *The story of Little Babaji* by hellen Bannerman. I believe this has related themes and topics because it portrays the life of a little boy in India that relates with tigers, such as little black Sambo who similarly does as well.