

Think Like the Banned

Title: *Nasreen's Secret School*

Author: Jeanette Winter

Publication Date: 2009

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

Austin C., 8th Grade: *Nasreen's Secret School* by Jeanette Winter on October 6, 2009, and it's about a girl in Afghanistan (where females aren't allowed to partake in education) whose grandmother enrolls her into a secret school in hopes of cheering her up.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: The title of this book is *Nasreen's Secret School* by Jeanette Winter, and it was published on October 6, 2009. The story follows a little girl, whose mother found a secret school for girls in Afghanistan, during a war.

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

Austin C., 8th Grade: No, I was not aware of the existence of this book prior to starting this project.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: Prior to starting this project, I was unaware 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?*

Austin C., 8th Grade: This book talks about the situation in Afghanistan and the reign of the Taliban which is controversial and can be deemed inappropriate for children by some individuals.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book was targeted because it shows young children about violence and war, in different parts of the world. I believe parents do not want kids to be exposed to such serious issues.

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

Austin C., 8th Grade: The situation presented in this book is inappropriate because children shouldn't be presented with controversial topics such as Afghanistan because they are not mature enough to deal with them.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: If I were to think like a book persecution lawyer, I would have multiple arguments for banning this book. One reason would be that the book contains mature and very serious topics that childrens should not be exposed to at such ages. Another reason I would want to ban this book, follows how the book brings stereotypes to poor countries as being extremely dangerous and not allowing female education.

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

Austin C., 8th Grade: There is no graphic language or ideas, and the story can reveal the conditions that residents experience in Afghanistan to people, and the citizens defying the Taliban can strengthen them.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: If I were to think like a book defense lawyer, I would have multiple arguments for not banning this book. My first reason would be that children should realize that there are wars and danger to people happening around the globe. My 2nd argument would be that this book brings light to how important education is, especially to females which is very important in society today.

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)?*

Austin C., 8th Grade: I think it's presented in a negative agenda towards the ruling of the Taliban and the effects of it on the citizens in Afghanistan, but I think it's presented in a positive agenda towards the courage of the individuals who are defying the Taliban.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book is presented in an unbiased way. I believe that it only shares the real struggles that many face, in a simple way that children can understand, and comprehend.

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?

Austin C., 8th Grade: Yes, “and STILL, the girls, their families, and their teachers defy the tyranny by keeping the schools open. Their courage has never wavered” (Winter 8).

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book has many positive messages and information in it. One positive message includes how the mother went through risk and danger, just to ensure her daughter has an education. I believe this brings light to a serious issue, which is female education. This might inspire young children more grateful for school, especially since millions of children who are less fortunate do not have the opportunity to.

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?

Austin C., 8th Grade: I think this book is suitable for all ages because it teaches about how some people in the world are not living in the best conditions, but continue to be courageous and strong.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book is suitable for children from ages 6-8. I believe this because it is a very short and simple book to read. Though I believe it is better for older children of the category because the context is a bit mature, and those children may be able to comprehend and understand it with more depth.

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?

Austin C., 8th Grade: It would stand out as an anomaly since I usually did not read books such as this one that talked about real life situations.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe that this book would not have fit with themes I read when I was younger. I believe that the reason for this is that light is being brought to the topics of education in poor countries, especially those of females.

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.

Austin C., 8th Grade: Yes, because I would want them to learn that if a difficult situation is presented, they should be and remain strong, Intelligent, and courageous.

Zahra V., 8th Grade: If I were to be a parent choosing a book for my child, I would instantly pick this up. I would do this because I want my children to realize they are lucky and should be grateful for free and safe education. I want them to understand that many don’t have the opportunity, and war is very dangerous and scary for children.

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 picture book I can think of that has similar themes is *Exploring the journey together* by Fransesca Sanna. This book shows how a young girl and her family have to flee their home town and head towards the border during war. I believe this relates to the book, because it shows the struggles of children during wartimes.