

# *Think Like the Banned*

**Title:** *Something Happened In Our Town*

**Author:** Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard

**Publication Date:** 2018

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

**Zahra V., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** The title of the picture book I read was *Something Happened In Our Town* by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard. It was published on March 1, 2018. The main plot of the story follows 2 children of different ethnicities, and in their town a black man was wrongfully shot by a police officer. Both families teach their children how white people are generally treated more fairly, and taught the kids that they must stick up for others.

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

**Zahra V., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Before starting this project, I had heard of this book in the past. Though I had never picked it up, I was intrigued by such a serious topic in a children's 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., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** I think this book was targeted because of parents not wanting children to be exposed to such a serious topic at a young age. I believe that this book especially was banned, because in the past 2 years the issue of "Black Lives Matter" and "black rights" has become one of the major arguments on social media today. Alongside this, many people have different views on the situation, and might feel it is not right to let children gain an opinion at such an early age.

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

**Zahra V., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** If I was to think like a Book Persecution Lawyer and be in favor of banning this book, I would have multiple arguments. My first reason would be that children should not be exposed to such a topic at a young age. My 2nd reason to ban this book, would reside with the fact that children are not able to comprehend the issue with mature views on it. My final reason would be that children should not gain opinions about topics such as portrayed in this book because maybe black children will gain a sense of fear when reading this, and white children will feel a gain of superiority.

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

**Zahra V., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** If I was to think like a Book Defense Lawyer and be in favor of NOT banning these books, I would have multiple arguments. My first argument would be that children should know about topics that are popular in the media. I would also argue that children should know the realities of society and understand how people are treated differently because of their skin tone. My final reason would be that this book should not be banned because it teaches important morals and lessons. It shows how children should stick up for one another and not leave anyone out regardless of the way they look.

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., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** I believe that the information in this book is being presented in an unbiased way/. I believe this because the book shows that not all cops are bad or racist. Though it shows the reality of how racism

is real and people are treated differently. Therefore it has more of a positive agenda, to educate young children instead of negatively affecting them or their mindsets.

*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., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** This book has many uplifting quotes and lessons in it. One example of text states, "I'm mad that we're still treated poorly sometimes, but I can use my anger to make things better." This is positive because it shows that instead of using anger and turning it into violence, children should use either emotions to help others and make society stronger when it is unjust.

*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., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** I believe this book is suitable for ages 6-8. I believe this because this book is very simple, and easy to understand. Though it has more mature topics in it such as shootings and racism. I believe that kids from ages 6-8 will be able to comprehend what is being stated, and still have their own opinions on the topic.

*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., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** This book would not fit into what I read when I was younger. I believe the reason for this is because in the past couple years racism and "BLM", have been one of the most outspoken topics of the media. Therefore, authors believe it is more important to educate children at young ages.

*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., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** If I was a parent in the library, I would pick this book out for my child. The reason being is because as a person of color myself, I believe it is important to teach kids at young ages about the reality of society today. I also would want to teach my children about morals and including everyone, without judging them based on appearance.

*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., 8<sup>th</sup> Grade:** Recently I was in the library with my younger sister when a book caught my eye. It was called, "I can't believe you said that!" by Julia Cook. It contained the same themes and message as this book. It showed how people treat others differently, based only by their skin tone and appearances, and how it is important to stand up against that.