

Think Like the Banned

Title: *The Librarian of Basra*

Author: Jeanette Winter

Publication Date: 2005

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 *The Librarian of Basra*, by Jeanette Winter and it was published in 2005. The plot of this book follows a librarian from Iraq named Aliya. Aliya works in a bookstore and when war hits, she does everything in her power to save the books and protect them.

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 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?*

Zahra V., 8th Grade: I believe this book was targeted because of its graphics and content of war. I also believe parents do not want their children to be exposed to war, violence, and guns at 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., 8th Grade: If I were to think like a Book Persecution Lawyer, I would have many arguments. My first argument would be that children should not be exposed to war, violence and guns at such a young age. My second argument could be that children might become frightened that war will hit their home after reading this book. Alongside, my final argument would be that the idea of saving artificial objects in a situation of danger would be enforced in children's minds. Therefore they would believe it is more important to save materialistic objects when there is a hazard near them.

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 was to think like a Book Defense Lawyer, I would have many arguments. My first argument would be that children should not live in a bubble and believe everything is perfect all around the world. I believe that they should be exposed to poorer areas such as Iraq having war and violence. Another reason would be that children should understand the value of education and books, and realize that they should be grateful and attentive to books because some people risk their lives just to read or save books.

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 the plot of the book is pushing unbiased information that is happening in the real world today. The book shows young children the realities of society, and that not all places are safe and free like America. It brings realization in a positive way to readers, and allows children to recognize how truly lucky they are.

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: The book has many eye opening and positive messages. One example states, "The beast of the war moves on. Aliyah knows if the books are to be safe, they must be moved again." This shows how

women can be powerful too, and share passion for books and knowledge. It also represents how important books are to society and education.

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 6-8 years old. The reason I believe this is because children from those ages will be able to comprehend the information in the book, while still having questions and being curious. Therefore, they are learning and acknowledging the messages and information given to them.

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 fit the themes I read when I was younger. I believe this is because wars around the world have been a main topic of society today, and even years ago. I understand that authors wanted children to comprehend what was happening in different parts of earth, and be aware.

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 were to be a parent, I would definitely pick this book out of my child. I would do this because, even at young ages I do not want my kids to live in a perfect bubble. I want them to realize that they are very fortunate for education and books, unlike many in 3rd world countries who fight for their lives, and may not even have the opportunity to pick up a book.

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 that I read similar to this, is the book *Lost and Found Cat* by Amy Shrodes and Doug Kuntz. It follows the story of a family fleeing from Iraq, and they do not want to leave their most beloved thing, their family cat. I believe this was similar to the book because it shows how many people will go to far extents in order to save what they love.