

Ashley Egan

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### Born A Crime

Last winter I found out that the high school I went to had one of the chop and blocks to get banned. *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah is a beloved book by many students and teaches the kids about how far love can go and that even if it comes from not the best home you can achieve great things. Blake Jorgenson of Osseo High School is the teacher of this book, and in my time looking into this book and why it was banned I got to know quite a bit about the situation. *Born a Crime* is a memoir about the comedian Trevor Noah and his life growing up in South Africa. In my time looking into Osseo Area Schools I watched a few of their school board meetings to understand where the parents and educators were coming from. I believe that no book should ever get banned or taken away from kids because reading is how kids learn. If parents think a book is “too emotional for a kid” then they have never had a real connection with a book because that's what they are all about. Real-life situations that you can relate to and feel what the characters feel.

On October 19th, 2021 the first board meeting where a parent challenged *Born a Crime* took place. At this meeting, Terry McNeill and his wife came to challenge this book. He stated that he went to the orientation night and he knew that *Born a Crime* was one of the assigned readings and said he “trusted” the school that they were teaching good literature. I talked with Blake Jorgenson to ask if it's true that he puts the book on the syllabus and he said yes. Although he said he doesn't put trigger warnings on the syllables, he tells the class before reading the book. Their main concerns were that the profanity and sexual talk in the book is too much for

their ninth graders to handle. Terry Presented a couple of quotes from the book to strengthen his argument and here are a few of them. “You’re having sex with a woman in her mind before you’re having sex with her in her vagina.”(Noah 128). Terry quoted this saying he didn’t think his daughter would be exposed to such sexual language and that he had trust in the school to not open his kid up to this. Another quote that follows the same ideals is this one which is later in the book. “With online porn today you just drop straight into the madness, but with dial-up, it took so long for the images to load. It was almost gentlemanly compared to now. You’d spend a good five minutes looking at her face, getting to know her as a person. Then a few minutes later you’d get some boobs. By the time you got to her vagina, you’d spent a lot of quality time together”. Both these quotes although have some topics that might be too much for some kids have a good meaning behind them. If you look beyond those words you can read that Noah is trying to show how love is supposed to be.

As we have looked into these banning book trials, I can confidently say that most of these bans come from people not looking at the whole picture. In this case, Terry did the exact thing, he found a few quotes and looked at the parts that concern him and made him a question but he never looked beyond. Terry states that the “F” word is used 32 times out of the 200 pages and the word shit is said about 100 times. But in my research of this book, I have learned that that's how Noah knew how to talk and get his point across. I understand that some parents want to keep their kids from profanity like this but in the December 14th, 2021 board meeting a teacher brings up the concern but rubles it with their kids hearing more than that in the hallway.

The board meeting of December 14th, 2021 was the effect of the first meeting and the aftermath. In this board meeting, many parents came to ridicule and challenge the book even more. One of many parts was a mom and she talked about how she wanted transparency and for

her to protect her child. She said, “Parents can make decisions for their children but can one parent make a decision for every student?” She stated that it was a problem that she can’t make decisions for her child. This shows that some parents are blind to how other students are affected. I got the chance to sit in on the class the last day they were reading *Born a Crime* and a handful of them were crying because of how emotional and in love they were with the book. I got to talk to a few of them and they all said it was one of their favorite books they have read. Books like this should never be taken away from the hands of kids who love them and feel real emotion from a book and that is what a book should do.

The first speaker of the December 14th meeting was Matt Leeson who is one of the directors at Osseo Area School district for secondary English education. In his speech, he said, “The Osseo area does not burn, burn or villainize books that are so beloved and valuable to students”. I would say this perfectly shows how a school district should respond to an allegation of banning a book. Another educator spoke about the book and she said: “books like the *Odyssey* and *Romeo and Juliet* never get banned but they have explicit content but books about race, sexuality, and other ethics always get banned”. She also goes on to say “Literature gives us a topic when we need speech, allows scholars to talk and teachers the space to facilitate tough conversations.” Both these quotes perfectly show how teachers should respond and what the importance of books does to our kids.

In conclusion, although parents can make decisions for their children, they can never make decisions for a whole classroom. In our talks about banning books, I’ve always had the same position that I’ll love your kid but there are 20 to 30 other kids that mean just as much as your kid. After the first board meeting, Osseo Area Schools held an impromptu meeting with 10 different English teachers from all around the school district to read through and vote on if *Born*

*a Crime* should be banned in the schools. The impromptu meeting voted 10-0 to keep *Born a crime* in the classroom. If that's not enough to keep the book and say it's beneficial I don't know what is. In my research, I found this quote and I think it perfectly sums up how important books are. "Banning books gives us silence when we need speech. It closes our ears when we need to listen. It makes us blind when we need sight-Stephen Chbosky."

## Work Cited

*Noah, Trevor Born a Crime*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvwvmvGhJj4>

[https://www.hometownsource.com/sun\\_post/news/education/osseo-school-board-votes-to-keep-born-a-crime-on-the-shelves/article\\_87a852ac-6735-11ec-9d75-27c723c83352.html](https://www.hometownsource.com/sun_post/news/education/osseo-school-board-votes-to-keep-born-a-crime-on-the-shelves/article_87a852ac-6735-11ec-9d75-27c723c83352.html)

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