

MEMORANDUM

TO: Amy Lannon, Library Director; Board of Library Trustees
FROM: Jamie Penney, Head of Collection Services
DATE: July 27, 2023
RE: Recommendation for RFR for “Assigned Male” by Sophie Labelle

On Wednesday, June 28, 2023, the Reading Public Library (RPL) received a Request for Reconsideration of Materials (RFR) with the requested action to remove the book “Assigned Male” by Sophie Labelle. RPL staff notified the Board. The Collection Services team assessed this title.

RECOMMENDATION

This title conforms to RPL’s Collection Development Policy. Upon review, the reading level of the text suggests this would be better located in the teen (young adult) collection.

BACKGROUND

As a reminder, the RPL [Collection Development Policy](#) states “[t]he Board recognizes its right and responsibility to provide worthwhile materials of interest to its readers, including those on all sides of controversial issues” and that “[t]he Library does not advocate particular beliefs or views. The selection of any given item is not an endorsement of the viewpoint expressed.” The RPL selection process includes the use of authoritative professional reviews, popular reviews, publishers’ catalogs, standard lists of basic works, firsthand examination, and patron requests. Additionally, print and non-print materials meet one or more of these criteria.

- Relevance to the library’s mission and core values
- Current usefulness, interest, and/or permanent value
- Popular demand
- Relevance to the existing collection
- Standards of quality in content and format
- Price

REVIEWS

Source: Marie, Tara. Dream of Brighter Tomorrows: Should You Be Reading ‘Assigned Male?’ in Comics Alliance, Sept 7, 2016.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210125114147/https://comicsalliance.com/assigned-male-reading-guide/>

Excerpt; “Imagine if the gang of Peanuts were queer-friendly and talked about the trials of being queer youth, while still maintaining the lightness and softness that are synonymous with those strips. That’s what this comic is. Most stories that deal with trans people have them, at youngest, in their teenage years. But trans youth --- who are out, living proud --- are real, and it’s wonderful that there’s a comic that can represent them.”

Source: At the Library: “The Best of Assigned Male,” by Sophie Labelle. In Waterloo Region Record, Jan 28, 2022. https://www.therecord.com/entertainment/books/at-the-library-the-best-of-assigned-male-by-sophie-labelle/article_19bc6b2b-7499-5449-87db-65935618926d.html

Excerpt: “Graphic novels provide a unique opportunity to explore topics in a way that can be highly engaging. Sophie Labelle’s “The Best of Assigned Male”, is also educational, and would be an excellent entry point for anyone over age 10 who wants to learn more about transgender experiences.”

Source: Alex Gino, Stonewall-Award winning author of Melissa's Story (a.k.a. GEORGE)
<https://us.jkp.com/products/the-best-of-assigned-male>

Excerpt: “Hurray for Stephie and her friends in The Best Of Assigned Male! Labelle's comics are wonderfully sharp, with all the wry humor and hearty indignation that transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming kids deserve, and her written narrative provides valuable context. Get all the lip gloss!”

RPL AND NOBLE COLLECTION HOLDINGS

- Print copy ordered June 16, 2021
- Circulation data

Copies RPL	1	Copies NOBLE	2
Current Year circ RPL	10	Current Year circ NOBLE	14
Total circ RPL	37	Total circ NOBLE	49

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

COMMUNIUTY	COPIES	LOCATION
Andover	0	
Lynnfield	0	
North Reading	0	
Peabody	0	
Stoneham	0	
Wakefield	1	Adult Graphic Novels
Wilmington	0	
Woburn	0	

LIBRARY SERVICES COMMENT FORM

Date: 6/28/23

Name: * _____

Street: * _____

City, State, Zip: * Reading PA 01867

Email: * _____

*Required if you wish to receive a response to you comment.

Book: Assigned Mate - children's section

COMMENT:

my daughter found a book in children's section
that has content that is
instructing kids to use "lube"
if sex hurts. It is also
encouraging and advocating (vs educating)
inappropriate topics for small children

REQUESTED OR SUGGESTED ACTION

- 1) remove book
- 2) provide me w/ the stated criteria
for accepting books in circulation
- 3) reach out to me to discuss

comment
and part
revision

Thank you for your feedback! Please return the completed form to a staff member at any service desk.

Received ___/___/___ Response ___/___/___

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

Role of Reading Public Library

As stated in the Collection Development Policy (which is attached) the "Board of Trustees of the Reading Public Library endorses the Library Bill of Rights. The Board recognizes its right and responsibility to provide worthwhile materials of interest to its readers, including those on all sides of controversial issues. The criteria used by the professional staff when selecting materials are listed in the policy.

The Library does not advocate particular beliefs or views. The selection of any given item is not an endorsement of the viewpoint expressed. Library materials will not be marked in such a way as to show approval or disapproval. Access to library materials shall be controlled only to the extent necessary to protect them from danger or theft.

It is deemed the responsibility of parents to determine what their children may read, watch or listen to, and selection of materials is not restricted by the possibility that young people may obtain material their parents consider inappropriate.

If materials meet the criteria of selection, they will not be removed from the collection because of pressure by any individual group.

The great diversity of the library's customers means that the library must do more than provide materials for the common denominator in order to be effective.

Patron Name _____ Date 6/28/23
Address _____

Title Assigned Male Author Sophia LeBelle
Format text: graphic novel

(over)

1. What brought this title to your attention?

title

2. What is it about this work that concerns you?

instructing children to use "lube" if sex hurts
references to "chick with a dick"

~~is~~ advocating sexual exploration

3. Did you read/listen/view it in its entirety? Yes No
If not, what parts?

4. What do you believe is the purpose or theme of this work?

~~advocacy~~

activism, advocacy of behavior, well beyond raising awareness

5. To what audience do you think it is aimed?

~~not for~~ it's clearly directed at kids
as many people as will buy it.

6. To whom would you recommend it?

mid teens @ best.

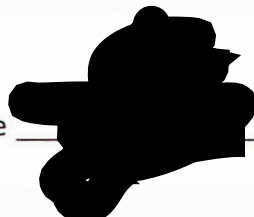
7. Are you aware of reviews of this work? Yes No

8. The library's collection development policy is attached. Do you think this work is in keeping with that policy?

Yes No

9. What resources would you suggest to provide additional information on this topic?

Signature _____



Date _____

6/28/23

Thank you.

The Director will review this complaint and respond.

Hey Frank!
I heard you're dating that freak?

When you kiss a
chick-with-a-dick, does it
taste like a boy?

Doesn't that make you gay, though?

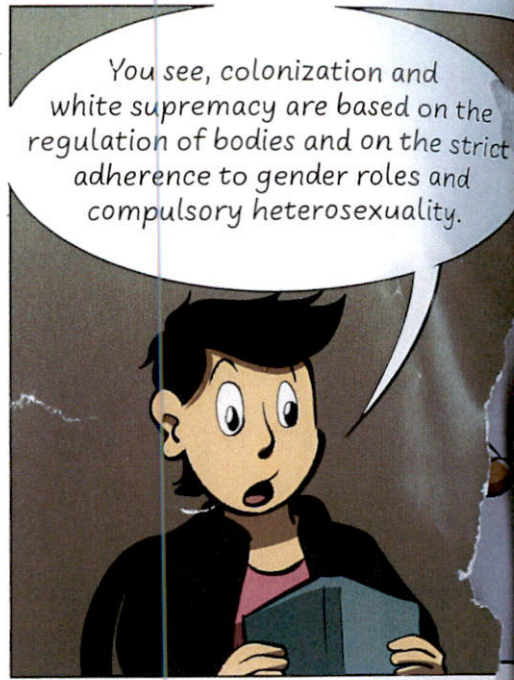
Did it let you
see its penis?

It's disgusting!

Frank...we've been
hugging for five minutes.

What's wrong?

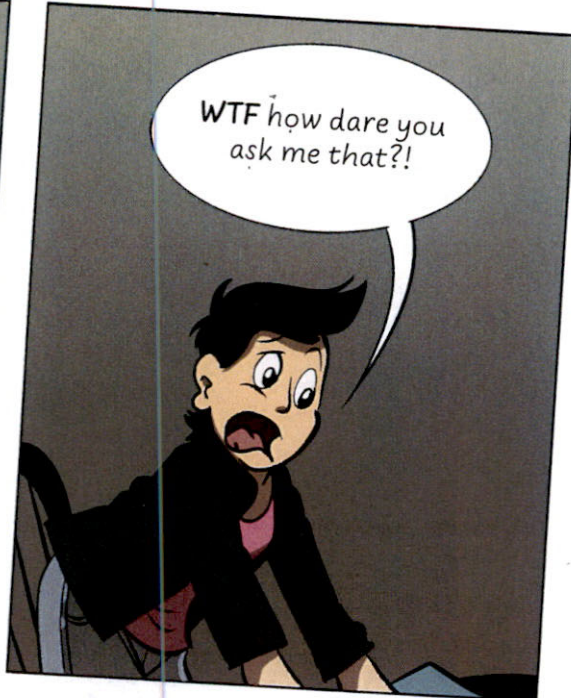
Nothing. I love you.



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are based on the
s and on the strict
ender roles and
eterosexuality.



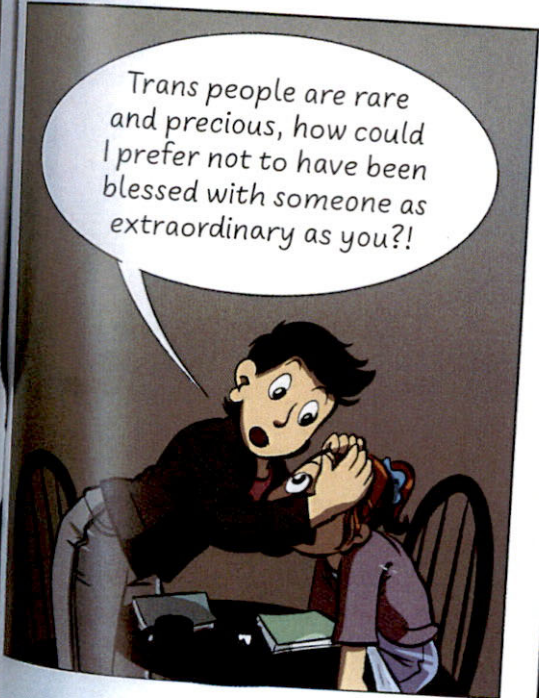
Mom, would you have preferred if I **wasn't** transgender?



WTF how dare you ask me that?!

t was really thanks Mom.

n sorry, weetie.

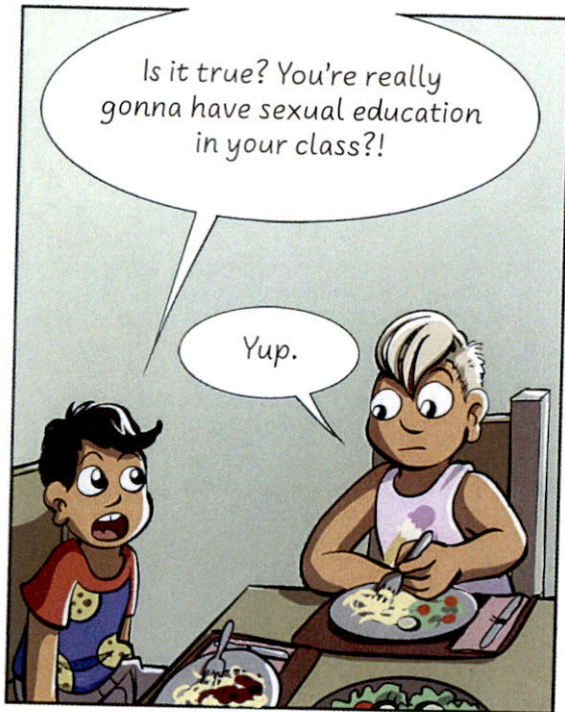


Trans people are rare and precious, how could I prefer not to have been blessed with someone as extraordinary as you?!



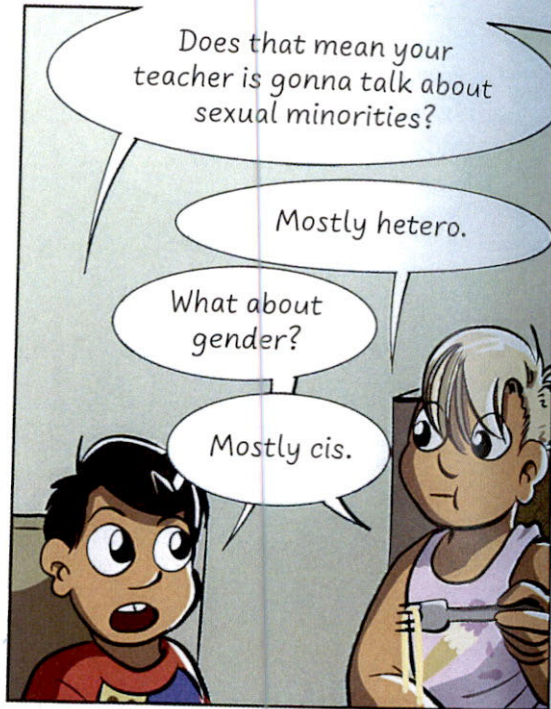
Aww thanks, Mom!

Don't **ever** ask me that again.



Is it true? You're really gonna have sexual education in your class?!

Yup.



Does that mean your teacher is gonna talk about sexual minorities?

Mostly hetero.

What about gender?

Mostly cis.



It's not fair t teaching sex ed but not in

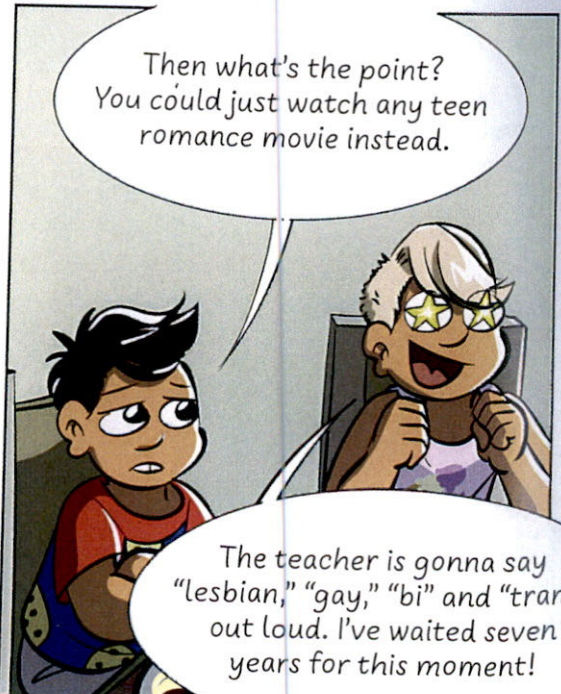


Anything on HIV and safer sex?

We'll learn how to put on a condom.

Vaginal condom?

Nope.



Then what's the point? You could just watch any teen romance movie instead.

The teacher is gonna say "lesbian," "gay," "bi" and "trans" out loud. I've waited seven years for this moment!



Oh, actual said that his p gender theory LGBT lobby in video games force them Is tho

ans youth,
stress that
igma as we do
alth problems
communities.
nment issues
ose sight of
for you.



communicating
and expectations
important thing
remember.



ctly!

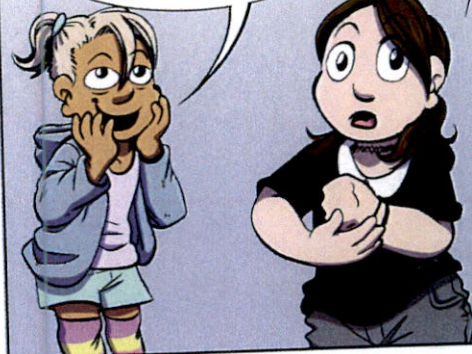
Consent means giving permission for something to happen or agreeing to do something.



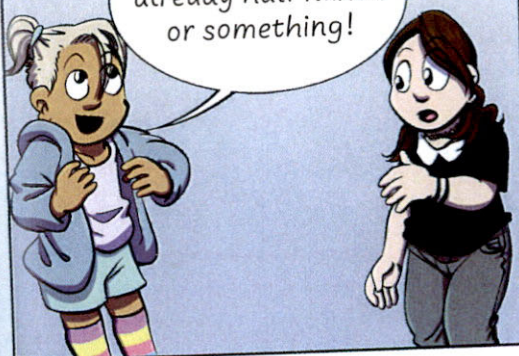
And it's super important!

Being in a couple with someone doesn't automatically give you or your partner consent about anything.

You still have to ask!



Also, you're totally allowed to change your mind and take back your consent at any time.



Even if you're already half naked or something!

It's not consent if someone feels forced to give it.

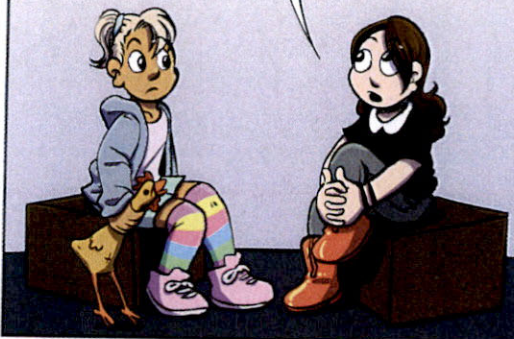


It has to be an enthusiastic yes!

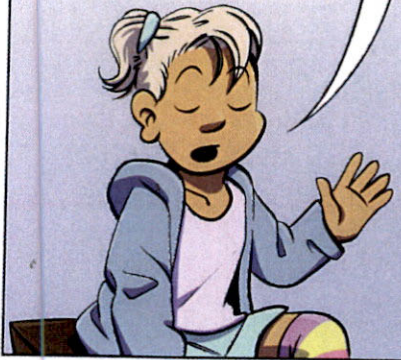
not fitting in,
g. I don't want
to **single me**
en more.



My friends often ask:
"Is sex supposed to
be painful?"



Well, I don't know what
they're doing, but if they
haven't agreed to some kind of
kinky pain, it's **not supposed**
to hurt and they probably
need **more lube.**



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nselves? That
ched the **pure**
f their being?
dreadful?



re me
mes.

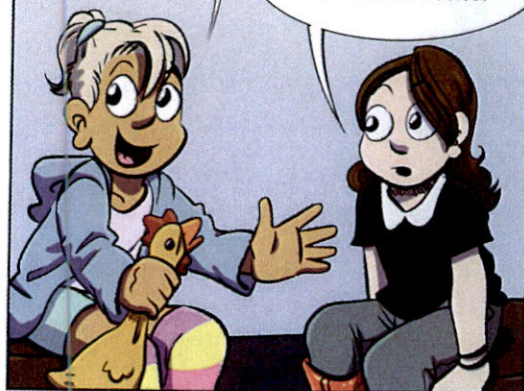
So...more lube.

Yup.



That's actually my advice
for so many things in life!

I wasn't prepared
to hear that.





Clemente, Meaghan <mclemente@noblenet.org>

Fwd: future Agenda item

Trustee, Reading <rpltrustee@noblenet.org>

Mon, Jul 10, 2023 at 9:12 AM

To: Michelle Filleul <filleul@noblenet.org>, Meaghan Clemente <mclemente@noblenet.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Nancy Docktor**

Date: Mon, Jul 10, 2023 at 7:24 AM

Subject: future Agenda item

To: <rpltrustee@noblenet.org>

RE: b. Request for Reconsideration: "Tricks" by Ellen Hopkins and "The Best of Assigned Male" by Sophie Labelle

Dear Library Board Members

I am writing in support of ALL the Reading Library books in circulation. It is upsetting that attempts to restrict and ban material that one individual has concerns with impinges on everyone else's right to education. The practice of book banning is a threat to education and democracy itself. Please do not cater to the whims of such extremism.

Might I suggest a Town wide reading and discussion of Fahrenheit 451?

Nancy Docktor
371 Pearl St

From: Geraldine Tolman
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 10:55 AM
To: rpltrustee@noblenet.org
Subject: Banning of Books

Please do not give in to any attempts to ban books.

Thank you,
Geri Tolman
547 Summer Ave
Reading, MA

From: Mary Rienzo
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 11:00 AM
To: rpltrustee@noblenet.org
Subject: Attempt to ban books in Reading

Book bans are censorship and all public library's should be free from such. Please do not succumb to the hate and fear of subjects that pervades some people to request books be banned.

I support all book access in our town.

Your work is hard. Please know you have my support.

Mary Rienzo
150 High St
Reading

From: Lynda Hersey
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 11:05 AM
To: rpltrustee@noblenet.org
Subject: Banning books

Stop the banning of all books. Let parents decide what's appropriate.

From: Eileen Collins
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 4:49 PM
To: rpltrustee@noblenet.org
Subject: Book Banning

Please do not let this happen here. I support the Library Trustees to uphold free speech in Reading and to refuse to ban books v

Eileen C. Collins

From:
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 6:25 PM
To: rpltrustee@noblenet.org
Subject: Banning books

Any effort to ban a particular book is allowing someone else to determine what is appropriate for everyone else. It cannot be allowed. Please once again reject any effort to remove a book from the library.

Kate Harrington
Reading resident

From: Steve Baker
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 7:02 PM
To: rpltrustee@noblenet.org
Subject: Please do not ban any books

To whom it may concern

I am not sure why we are again at this place of banning books. There is no place in our society for others to choose what we can and cannot write. Why can't there be a parents signature required section. Or must be accompanied by someone over 18? Banning is not a solution. It's enforcing your beliefs on others. I would think we are past this. Please stop the insanity.

Steve Baker

Sent from my iPhone

From: Martha Moore
Sent: Wednesday, August 9, 2023 10:44 PM
To: rpltrustee@noblenet.org
Subject: Banning books

Dear Board of Library Trustees:

I am concerned to hear that there is another attempt to ban a book from the library.

I am also concerned that the hearing on this is on August 14. I have requested a copy of the book to review, but there are none now available in the Noble network. Please do not vote to ban a book that is not available in time for the public to form an informed opinion on this matter. If the hearing about the last book banning attempt is any indication, people at that hearing were reading out loud descriptions of a book they had actually never read themselves and taking excerpts of the book out of context.

Though I would prefer that the Library Board of Trustees not be in the business of banning any books, I would at least ask that you move to continue the hearing to a month later to allow time for people to read the book in question before they speak at the hearing.

Thank you,
Martha Moore
102 Sanborn Ln, Reading, MA 01867