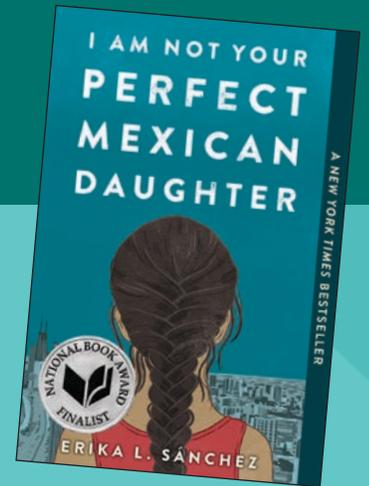


READING BANNED & CHALLENGED BOOKS

I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER BY ERIKA L. SÁNCHEZ



A stunning YA novel about a teenager coming to terms with losing her sister and finding herself amid the pressures, expectations, and stereotypes of growing up in a Mexican American home.

- Compare and contrast Julia and Olga. Describe perfect from Amá's point of view. How is Olga perfect in her eyes? Julia is in constant conflict with her mother. What is the source of this conflict? Julia discovers secrets about Olga. Why does Olga keep this part of her life from her parents? How do Olga's secrets affect Julia? Julia has the chance to tell Amá the secrets she discovered about Olga. Why does she decide to keep the information to herself?
- Throughout the novel, Amá makes Julia feel guilty because she isn't like Olga. How does Amá blame Julia for Olga's death? Explain why Julia starts sleeping in Olga's bed. Debate whether this helps her deal with grief.
- Julia's parents are undocumented immigrants. Discuss why coming to the United States was an opportunity for a better life. How is Julia in conflict with her Mexican heritage? Explain why she goes to Mexico. What does she find there that she doesn't have at home?
- Discuss Julia's dream of going to college and becoming a writer. What is her parents' reaction to her dream? Mr. Ingman offers to help Julia with her college application. At first, she rejects his help because she fears that her parents' immigration status will be discovered. Why does she eventually accept Mr. Ingman's help? Discuss why Julia thinks that realizing her dream may one day help her parents.
- Julia suffers from depression and tries to commit suicide. She reveals, "I've always had trouble being happy, but now it feels impossible." (p. 116) Trace Julia's unhappiness from the beginning of the novel to the end. How do her parents react to the knowledge that Julia suffers from mental illness? Debate whether their reaction is directly related to their culture. Explain how Julia's life might improve now that she has sought help for her depression.



- This novel, a National Book Award finalist, has been challenged, banned, and restricted in many school districts across the nation. In the Madison County School District in Mississippi, the book was restricted to students with parental permission because of “race and sexuality.” Debate whether a school administrator should have the right to withhold books from the school population. How is this a form of censorship?
- The book was also censored by administrators in the Indian River School District in Florida and the Central York School District in Pennsylvania because it is about people of color and undocumented immigrants. Explain how these reasons are politically charged. How does censorship interfere with education?
- An administrator in the Waukesha School District in Wisconsin called the novel “inappropriate” because some state legislators voiced concern about “ethnic identity, the burden of overcoming racial stereotypes, and systemic inequality.” How would you explain that reading about these themes broadens students’ perspectives on people of all cultures?
- The novel was banned from non-mandatory student-led book clubs in Leander, Texas, because of the “culture of the author.” Sánchez stated in the *New York Times*, “It was important for me, for young people of color, to feel seen by the book.” Discuss why censors are so afraid of people of various cultures and ethnicities feeling seen. How is this a form of racism and bigotry?

Guide written by Pat Scales, children’s literature consultant

