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PROPERTY

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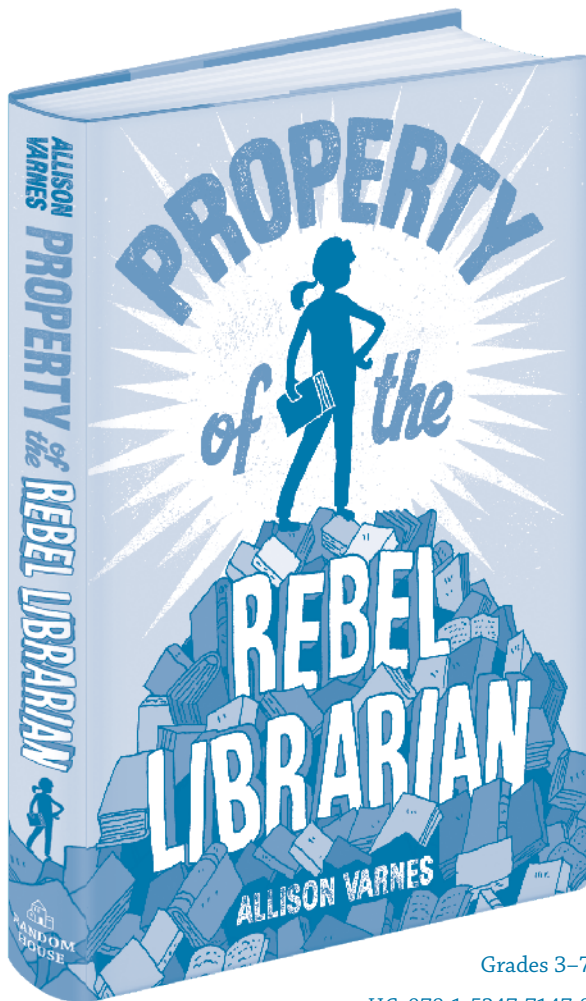
REBEL
LIBRARIAN

ALLISON VARNES

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PROPERTY *of the* REBEL LIBRARIAN

Educators' Guide



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Grades 3–7

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GLB: 978-1-5247-7148-5

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About the Book

Seventh grader June Harper is an excellent student who loves to read. She enjoys hanging out in the Dogwood Middle School library because Ms. Bradshaw, the librarian, always has a book recommendation. When her parents notice *The Makings of a Witch* in her book bag, they start a campaign to fire Ms. Bradshaw and purge the school library of what they consider inappropriate books. June is grounded and her parents remove all books from her bedroom until they can read them. Then June discovers a Little Free Library on her walk to school, and an idea is born. She sets up a library of banned books in an empty locker and circulates them to students. Suddenly reading is the coolest thing to do at Dogwood Middle School. When Principal Beeler discovers the library, June exercises her First Amendment rights and addresses the school board. The national news is there, and June, the rebel librarian, is presented as a hero.

About the Author

Like librarian Ms. Bradshaw in *Property of the Rebel Librarian*, Allison Varnes has fought for her students. She taught English in special education for eight years and once had to convince administrators that *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is not an endorsement of witchcraft. She's from a family of teachers and has a PhD in education from the University of Tennessee. And like heroine June, Allison is a former marching-band geek. When she's not writing, she howls along to the *Hamilton* soundtrack with a trio of Chihuahuas named after *Peanuts* characters. Find her on Twitter at @allisonvarnes or on Facebook at facebook.com/allisonvarnesauthor.



Pre-Reading Activity

Read the First Amendment of the United States Constitution to your students. Then have them write a one-page paper that discusses how the freedom to read is protected by the First Amendment.

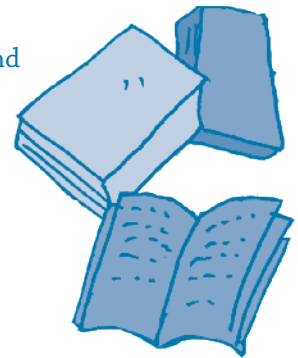
- Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1, 5-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

Read your school district's policy regarding controversial materials. Have students explain how the policy justifies a school library's right to circulate the following books: the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling, *Holes* by Louis Sachar, *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, *Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson, *Blubber* by Judy Blume, and *Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Gephart.

- Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.4, 5-7.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 5-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

Classroom Discussion

- The first chapter is titled "Ripple Effects." What is a ripple effect? How does the ripple effect in the novel begin? Discuss Principal Beeler's role in the matter.
 - Remind students that irony is the use of words to convey a meaning that is opposite of the literal meaning. Explain the irony in June's mother cross-stitching READERS ARE WINNERS on a pillow for her.
 - The Makings of a Witch* is the novel that June's parents want banned from the Dogwood Middle School library. Yet *The Crucible* is taught in Ms. Gibson's seventh-grade honors English class. What is the irony in this? How does the message in *The Crucible* mirror what is happening at Dogwood Middle School?
 - June's parents remove all books from her bedroom until they can determine if they are "quality reading material." How might they define "quality"? When they return the books, there are words covered up and pages ripped out. What message does this send?
 - Explain the prison metaphor (p. 28). How do June's parents and the Dogwood Middle community "jail" books? Debate how students are the real losers in this battle.
- A euphemism is a mild way of expressing a thought considered harsh or offensive. How is "book extraction" a euphemism for book banning?
 - Ms. Bradshaw, the librarian, is placed on administrative leave until her case comes before the school board. Why does being an advocate for students and reading cause her to lose her job? Debate whether it was necessary for security to escort her out of the school. How does Ms. Bradshaw continue to advocate for students' right to read after she is placed on leave?
 - Discuss the friendship between June and Emma. Contrast their feelings about the right to read. How does the book-banning incident end their friendship? At the end of the novel, Emma states that she wishes she had been a part of the banned books library in locker 319. Why does she change her mind? Discuss whether June and Emma can repair the damage to their relationship.
 - It's normal for middle school students to have crushes. At the beginning of the book, June has a crush on Graham, and Emma has a crush on Matt. What goes wrong with these relationships? Which of June's qualities cause Matt to notice her?
 - How does June make reading cool at Dogwood Middle School? June asks herself, "Is this what it feels like to be popular?" (p. 115) Discuss how courage makes her popular. June is a seventh grader when she creates the banned books library. Predict what June's eighth-grade year will be like.
 - The Student Club for Appropriate Reading places posters throughout the school. Which of the posters seem especially inappropriate? Explain why the school administration allows this group to display their blatant message but the other kids have to go underground with their rebellion.
 - What is the attitude of the teachers at Dogwood Middle toward the book banning? How do some engage in a silent protest?
 - Cite times that June experiences both anger and defeat. Explain how her anger and her passion for books give her the courage to face the school board.



Classroom Discussion (continued)

- June misses her sister, Kate, who is away at college. How does Kate lodge her own rebellion against her parents? What is Kate’s reaction to the ruckus that her parents have caused at Dogwood Middle? Explain Kate’s statement to June: “You won this round.” (p. 252)
- Why does June need to see Ms. Bradshaw one last time? At what point does June suspect that Ms. Bradshaw is the owner of the Little Free Library? How is Ms. Bradshaw triumphant by the end of the novel?
- The speech to the school board is a pivotal moment for June. Her parents wonder if she will ever forgive them. Debate whether this means that they have gained respect for their daughter and her views.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details RL. 5-7.1, 5-7.3; Craft & Structure RL. 5-7.4, 5-7.6; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 5-7.1, 5-7.3; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

Curriculum Connections

A student draws a cartoon of Principal Beeler. He’s holding a book titled *How to Ban Books*. Consider the events in the novel, and write an essay titled “Everything You Need to Know About Banning Books.”

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

Write a feature article for a *Freedom to Read* blog that Ms. Bradshaw might write titled “Dogwood Needs June Harper.”

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.3; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

June learns from Ms. Bradshaw that a “heart book” is one that touches your heart. Select an appropriate heart book that June might give to her parents at the end of the novel. Share the book in class and explain why you chose it.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.4, 5-7.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 5-7.1.

At the end of the novel there is a list of titles that are in June’s library, and an additional list of banned titles mentioned in the book. Divide the class into small groups and ask them to conduct a survey of twenty-five students across three grade levels to determine which of the banned books have been read by students in their school. Construct a bar or pie graph that shows the collected data. Which is the most popular banned book in your school? What percentage of the students surveyed have read each title?

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Mathematics: Statistics & Probability Content. 6. SP.A. 1, 6. SP.A. 2, 7. SP.A. 1, SP.A. 2.

Ask students to read about the Jefferson Muzzles on the following website: tjcenter.org/muzzles. What is the purpose of the award? Then have them think about which characters in *Property of the Rebel Librarian* are contenders for a Muzzle. Write a short essay that nominates one or more characters for this award.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

Stephen Chbosky, author of *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, said that “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.” Write an editorial for the *Dogwood Gazette* that interprets this quote. Consider how June gives students the right to see, hear, and speak.

Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.1; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.



Curriculum Connections (continued)

Read about the landmark Supreme Court case *Island Trees School District v. Pico* (1982) (www.firstamendmentschools.org/freedoms/case.aspx?id=41). Have a debate: some students should take the side of the users of locker 319, and others should argue for the Student Club for Appropriate Reading. Address whether the Dogwood school board violated students' First Amendment rights.

- Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-7.7, 5-7.9; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-7.4, 5-7.6; Language: Conventions of Standard English L. 5-7.1; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.

Write a letter that Steven Pico might write to June commending her for her courage and bravery in defending students' right to read.

- Correlates with Common Core State Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-7.3; Language: Convention of Standard English L. 5-7.1, 4-7.2; Knowledge of Language L. 5-7.3.



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Vocabulary/Use Of Language

The vocabulary in the novel isn't difficult, but students should be encouraged to jot down unfamiliar words and try to define them taking clues from context. Such words may include *impact* (p. 7), *wrath* (p. 19), *confiscate* (p. 63), *dilute* (p. 91), *cavernous* (p. 94), *accomplices* (p. 114), *nuanced* (p. 133), *imperceptible* (p. 151), *impales* (p. 162), *wistful* (p. 167), *insulates* (p. 173), *vengeance* (p. 180), *deviance* (p. 187), *adrenaline* (p. 188), *queue* (p. 199), *quadrant* (p. 213), *divisive* (p. 241), and *wry* (p. 252).

- Correlates to Common Core State Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 5-7.4.

Internet Resources

ala.org/aboutala/offices/oif/

Official website for the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom

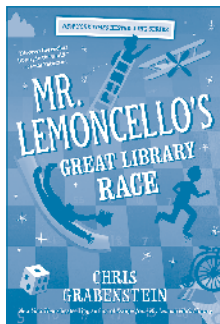
ncac.org/

Official website of the National Coalition Against Censorship

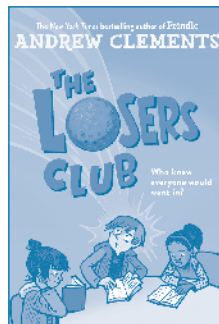
cblidf.org/

Official website for the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund

Rebel librarians need to keep reading! Recommendations for ravenous readers who love books



**Mr. Lemoncello's
Great Library Race**
TR: 978-0-553-53609-6



The Losers Club
TR: 978-0-399-55758-3



**The Last Fifth Grade
of Emerson Elementary**
TR: 978-0-553-52140-5