



***Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews**

Amulet Books, an imprint of ABRAMS, 2012

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ISBN: 9781613123065 (Ebook)

\*Age Range: 14 & Up (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 9 & Up (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

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### **The *New York Times* bestselling novel that inspired the hit film!**

This is the funniest book you'll ever read about death.

It is a universally acknowledged truth that high school sucks. But on the first day of his senior year, Greg Gaines thinks he's figured it out. The answer to the basic existential question: How is it possible to exist in a place that sucks so bad? His strategy: remain at the periphery at all times. Keep an insanely low profile. Make mediocre films with the one person who is even sort of his friend, Earl.

This plan works for exactly eight hours. Then Greg's mom forces him to become friends with a girl who has cancer. This brings about the destruction of Greg's entire life.

Fiercely funny, honest, heart-breaking—this is an unforgettable novel from a bright talent, now also a film that critics are calling "a touchstone for its generation" and "an instant classic."

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

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★ "A frequently hysterical confessional...Debut novelist Andrews succeeds brilliantly in painting a portrait of a kid whose responses to emotional duress are entirely believable and sympathetic, however fiercely he professes his essential crappiness as a human being. Though this novel begs inevitable thematic comparisons to John Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* (2011), it stands on its own in inventiveness, humor and heart."—[Kirkus Reviews](#), **starred review**

★ "One need only look at the chapter titles ('Let's Just Get This Embarrassing Chapter Out of the Way') to know that this is one funny book."—[Booklist](#), **starred review**

"Swept up in making a movie about Rachel's life, Greg panics at his inability to fully empathize or produce something worthy of her and the ordeal she is facing. The outcome is a captivating disaster that is both funny and gut wrenching."—[School Library Journal](#)

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"Self-deprecating and cynical in the extreme, high school senior Greg says he's writing the opposite of a 'sappy tear-jerking' cancer story and offers up a funny, profane, and, despite his supposed best efforts, poignant narrative." —[Horn Book](#)

"Mr. Andrews' often hilarious teen dialogue is utterly convincing, and his characters are compelling. Greg's random sense of humor, terrible self-esteem and general lack of self-awareness all ring true. Like many YA authors, Mr. Andrews blends humor and pathos with true skill, but he steers clear of tricky resolutions and overt life lessons, favoring incremental understanding and growth."—*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"It is sure to be popular with many boys, including reluctant readers, and will not require much selling on the part of the librarian."—*VOYA*

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

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- ALA/YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults, Top Ten
- ALA/YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers
- Bank Street's Children's Book Committee's Best Children's Books of the Year, 2012-2013
- Kirkus Reviews Best Books
- Tayshas High School Reading List
- Westchester Fiction Award
- ALA/YALSA Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults, Humor Me: Funny, Fantastic and Witty Reads
- Capitol Choice's Noteworthy Titles for Children and Teens
- Cooperative Children's Book Center Choices, Fiction for Young Adults
- Time Magazine's 100 Best YA Books of All Time
- Children's and Young Adult Bloggers' (CYBIL) Award for Young Adult Fiction

## MEDIA AND RESOURCES

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[Me and Earl and the Dying Girl](#) was adapted into a major motion picture by Searchlight Pictures in 2015. It won the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival. Peter Debruge of *Variety* wrote that the film "is destined not only to connect with young audiences in a big way, but also to endure as a touchstone for its generation."

### ["Jesse Andrews On 'Me And Earl' And The Book-Banning Girls In Tallahassee, Florida" \(\*Deadline\*\)](#)

**Deadline article excerpt by Jesse Andrews:**

"It's important to point out that most of the targeted books are about what it is to be not white or straight or cisgender in America, and I want to be really clear that I worry a lot more about the smearing and censoring of those viewpoints than I do my own. Those books provide kids (and grownups) with windows onto parts of the landscape of human experience that exist whether conservatives want them to or not. Shutting those windows, to me, is tragic. . .

But my book is sort of a different case. It seems to have been banned mainly because there's a lot of swearing and a two-page passage where the main character and his only friend do a long jokey riff about eating pussy. (They're both straight cisgender boys, one white, one Black.) The riff makes it pretty clear they've never eaten pussy, nor are they going to in the foreseeable future. I can't stress this enough: these boys have never had sex. They're just trying to make each other laugh by being gross and over-the-top. If you have ever known or been a teenager, you are probably familiar with this phenomenon. . .

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If you read my book from front to back, I promise you, you will not find it pornographic. Just to define our terms: the function of pornography is to stimulate erotic arousal. No one, and I find it wild that I have to spell this out, has ever been erotically aroused by reading *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*. I encourage Moms For Liberty to think really hard about what they're saying, the next time they claim otherwise.

In earnest, I find it heartbreaking that the book-banning crowd is using poor reading comprehension as a tool to deny kids access to the very books that might make them better readers. And this might be where you say: 'Jesse, how would your weird book, with its gross-out riffs and many swear words, help a kid read better?' I think this is a totally fair question to ask. My answer is: that profane language reflects the way real-life teenagers actually talk, and that kind of realism makes kids enjoy reading. Not all kids! Maybe not most kids. But some. Who might not otherwise realize that reading can be fun. And that to me is really important. . .

The notion that books harm kids is utterly perverse. The harm is done by not teaching them to read."

## RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

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### Central Bucks School District

- **Reconsideration Outcome:** The literary work will remain on the library shelves and no change to its inclusion in any library will be made.

### Readington Township Public Schools

- **Findings and Recommendation:** The committee recommends that *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews remain in the RMS library as a text for self-selection and continue to be identified as a teenage selection for our 8th grade students or those students demonstrating advanced maturity levels. Parents have the option of contacting the library and asking for their child's access to this book to be limited.
- **Findings and Rationale: See document linked above for full rationale**  
It is the committee's position that when books are self-selected by students for leisure reading or independent reading assignments, it is the right and responsibility of a student and their family to make determinations regarding what is or is not appropriate for the student to read. It is the school district's responsibility to provide reading material suited to the students' varied interests, reading levels, and maturation levels.

### Eanes Westlake Innovative School District

- **Decision:**  
The committee decided to keep this book at the middle school libraries. This decision will also be enacted at the high school level.
- **Discussion: See document linked above for full rationale**  
This book is currently available in the library for voluntary check-out and is not used as an instructional material in a class.

The book addresses different learning styles for students. It is written in a unique multi-modal format switching between paragraphs and script-like dialogue. The book infuses humor, often in the form of a teenage stream of consciousness, around social situations and the difficult

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concept of death. The literary style and physical format can engage students and add accessibility for reluctant readers.

Different family structures, ethnicities, religions and socio-economic backgrounds are reflected in the characters. This allows students to see a diversity in characters and highlights that people from very different backgrounds can support and learn from each other.

The book shows teenagers struggling with fitting into social groups and navigating relationships with friends and family. The main teenage character demonstrates times of low confidence, awkwardness in social situations, and disappointment in not living up to societal expectations of behavior. These are common feelings for students and make the characters relatable. The book allows students to examine their own attitudes, behaviors, duties, and responsibilities around friendships, parental expectations, and societal norms.

The book provides an authentic voice for teenagers coping with death and demonstrates that people may have varied responses to grief. Many students have been faced with the death of a family member or friend, and this provides an opportunity for them to have their feelings and emotions validated.

The book does contain passages with profanity and sexual language that some may find objectionable, especially if that is the only context in which the book is viewed. However, when taken as a literary text on the whole, there are redeeming qualities around engagement, literary elements, diversity, and self-reflection and acceptance.

#### **\*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES**

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A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

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