



***Flamer* by Mike Curato**

ISBN: 9781250756145 (Trade Paperback)

Godwin Books, an imprint of Macmillan Children's Publishing Group, 2020

\*Age Range: 14-18 (Suggested by Publisher)

Grade Range: 8+ (Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

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Award-winning author and artist Mike Curato draws on his own experiences in *Flamer*, his debut graphic novel, telling a difficult story with humor, compassion, and love.

*I know I'm not gay. Gay boys like other boys. I hate boys. They're mean, and scary, and they're always destroying something or saying something dumb or both.*

*I hate that word. Gay. It makes me feel . . . unsafe.*

It's the summer between middle school and high school, and Aiden Navarro is away at camp. Everyone's going through changes—but for Aiden, the stakes feel higher. As he navigates friendships, deals with bullies, and spends time with Elias (a boy he can't stop thinking about), he finds himself on a path of self-discovery and acceptance.

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

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"This book will save lives." —Jarrett J. Krosoczka, author of National Book Award Finalist *Hey, Kiddo*

"[Mike Curato] knows [boys] like Judy Blume knows a teenaged girl, and that's quite a bit." —[NPR](#)

★ "This is a story that will be read and reread, and for some, it will be the defining book of their adolescence." —[Kirkus Reviews](#), **starred review**

★ "Masterfully nuanced and stunningly told, this is visual storytelling at its finest." —[Booklist](#), **starred review**

★ "Curato has created a beautiful story of a teen who must decide if he will force himself into the mold of what he thinks a "normal" boy is, or if he can allow himself to live life on his own terms. An essential book that shows readers that they are never alone in their struggles." —[School Library Journal](#), **starred review**

★ "Cleverly inked and masterfully told . . . Both heartbreaking and joyous, *Flamer* acknowledges the brutal weight of hatred, yet inspires the courage to live." —[Shelf Awareness](#), **starred review**

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★ "I wish I had had this book fifty years ago." — [The Horn Book](#), **starred review**

"Emotional and raw." — [Publishers Weekly](#)

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

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- Lambda Literary Awards - Winner
- YALSA Great Graphic Novels for Teens List
- ALA Rainbow Reading List
- *Kirkus Reviews* Best Books of the Year
- *School Library Journal* Best Books of the Year
- *Horn Book* Fanfare List
- NPR Best Book of the Year
- New York Public Library Best Books of the Year
- Chicago Public Library Best Books of the Year
- New Jersey Library Association Teen Book Award List
- Milwaukee County Teen Book Award Honor Book
- Texas Library Association Maverick Graphic Novel Reading List
- Massachusetts Book Award Winner
- SCBWI Golden Kite Award Honor
- Project Lit Book Club Selection
- U Penn Graduate School of Education Best Books of the Year
- Cooperative Children's Book Center Reading List
- The Bank Street Center for Children's Literature Best Book of the Year
- The Nerdies Honoree
- Connecticut Nutmeg Honoree

## MEDIA AND RESOURCES

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- [Discussion Guide](#)
- [PEN America Author Interview](#)
- [WNYC Author Interview](#)
- [Kirkus Reviews Interview](#)
- [Boston Globe Interview](#)
- [Mike Curato Blog Post](#)

## RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

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[Wentzville School District](#): The book is relatable to many teenagers, the targeted audience, in that many and all go through many of the same struggles that the main character goes through in this book. From self-esteem, sexuality, peer pressure, bullying and issues and at home, we see the struggles he has and can put ourselves in their shoes and relate. Knowing there is a positive outcome in the end shows to others relating to these struggles that there is hope and we can get through it.

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[Comic Book Legal Defense Fund Statement of Support](#): Flamer is an award-winning graphic novel that tells the story of Aiden Navarro “as he navigates friendships, deals with bullies, and spends time with Elias (a boy he can’t stop thinking about), he finds himself on a path of self-discovery and acceptance.” This graphic novel is just one of many books currently being challenged for relaying a story from one of the LGBTQ+ perspectives.

As with many challenges targeting LGBTQ+ graphic novels, those surrounding Flamer falsely accuse the book of being pornography or containing explicit sexual images. In 2022, a parent from Katy ISD filed a criminal complaint that the district was providing material harmful to minors. Though the claim was found unsubstantiated, the book was removed from the shelves and relocated to the police department, where it could be processed. This challenge demonstrates the growing trend of citizens attempting to ignore the proper review process and intimidate educators, librarians, and administrators. Flamer has been challenged across the country and was included on the “Krause List” as a book to remove.

[Eanes Westlake School District \(Austin, TX\)](#): The decision was made to keep this book in the middle school libraries with a Young Adult (YA) label that will allow 8th grade parents to opt out of the book and 6th and 7th grade parents to opt into the book beginning in the 2023-24 school year. As early as elementary school, some of our students begin to question their sexual orientation. LGBTQ+ students deserve to have access to books about their fears, struggles and inner turmoil about life, friendship, love and identity just like any hetero normative child. Due to some of the content and themes and the fact that the book contains profanity, sexual references and suicidal ideation, it may not be suited or of interest for all middle school students, including younger middle school students.

[Westport Connecticut Rationale](#): Place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice; be appropriate to the varied interests, abilities, and levels of maturity of students in form, structure, and content; be based upon critical review in educational and professional journals, in current periodicals, or through professional analysis.

#### **\*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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