



***Occulted* by Ryan Estrada, Amy Rose, and Jeongmin Lee**

Iron Circus Comics, 2023

ISBN: 978-1638991090

Age Range: 13-17 (Recommended by Publisher)

Grade Range: 4-9 (Recommended by Publisher)

BOOK SYNOPSIS

It's 1997 and young Amy Rose has always known that something is off about her community. She's forbidden from going to school or even going outside; after all, their leader says there's no use knowing anything about a world that's about to end. When the Hale-Bopp comet soars across the sky for the first time in over 4,000 years, Amy thinks it's a good omen signaling the start of an amazing new future. Instead, it brings news of a horrible tragedy at a similar compound just down the road called Heaven's Gate. Televised news reports invade the temple walls and Amy hears a new word that suddenly explains everything: cult.

Now, she must risk everything to indulge in secret trips to an abandoned off-limits library to learn what she was never meant to know: that Gandhi was not a space alien, that Star Trek wasn't real, that her community was built on a lie, and most importantly, that banned books can give her everything she needs to escape.

***Occulted** is a shocking graphic memoir about the power of literary freedom. Survivor Amy Rose, **Banned Book Club** co-author Ryan Estrada, and artist Jeongmin Lee tell a haunting, inspiring tale of bravery and rebellion, about how to recognize those who try to control you, and how to fight back.*

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

"This inspiring tale of bravery and rebellion is just what readers need right now." *School Library Journal's Good Comics For Kids*

"With engaging, manga-influenced art that gives a child's-eye perspective to its events, the graphic memoir *Occulted* is a tense, thrilling account of escaping a cult." *Foreword Reviews*

"Insightful and riveting." *Kirkus Reviews*

"OCCULTED is a fascinating and very human look at what it's like to be raised inside a cult, showing the heartbreak and manipulation - and in the end, the determination Amy had to truly see the universe for herself."

Eisner-winning author Ryan North

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AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Award winner
- Excellence in Graphic Literature Award Finalist (Middle Grade Nonfiction)
- New York Public Library Staff Pick

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

[A Preview of the book at Graphic Policy](#)

[Interview with the authors at Women at Warp](#)

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

The book has been challenged numerous times across Texas, with most districts determining that the book is safe for schools. Only one school district automatically removed the book as part of a list of 676 books without reading any of them.

The Texas Freedom to Read Project stated that the book's themes of freedom were likely the reason book banners were targeting the book. The group posted "they don't want young people to experience those ideas and come to conclusions on their own."

The Florida Freedom to Read Project distributed 50 copies of *Occulted* to local schools and libraries.

AUTHOR STATEMENT

Occulted was not an easy book to write. The real life traumas that Amy experienced are not easy to discuss. But her story proves that there are kids who survive difficult and traumatic experiences. But learning about how to escape dangerous situations is how young people survive. Difficult books are what saved Amy's life, so we hope that our book will save the life of another kid.

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

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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