



The Chocolate War

Robert Cormier

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Jerry Renault ponders the question on the poster in his locker: *Do I dare disturb the universe?* Refusing to sell chocolates in the annual Trinity school fund-raiser may not seem like a radical thing to do. But when Jerry challenges a secret school society called The Vigils, his defiant act turns into an all-out war. Now the only question is: Who will survive? First published in 1974, Robert Cormier's groundbreaking novel, an unflinching portrait of corruption and cruelty, has become a modern classic.

A New York Times Outstanding Book of the Year

An ALA Best Book for Young Adults

A School Library Journal Best Book of the Year

The Chocolate War Details

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Author : Robert Cormier

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From Reader Review The Chocolate War for online ebook

Maciek says

Do I dare disturb the universe?

The Chocolate War is probably Robert Cormier's best known novel - and certainly his most controversial one. First published in 1974, it has since been frequently challenged and banned in many schools and libraries in the US, and forty years after its publication remains very high on the most frequently censored books.

The novel is set at Trinity School, an all-male Catholic preparatory high school, and focuses on Jerry Renault - one of the freshmen. Jerry is a quiet, reserved boy, silently coping with the recent death of his mother. Her passing has also deeply affected Jerry's father, throwing him straight into depression which made him unable to help Jerry through time difficult for any boy. Jerry struggles with trying to understand who he is, copes with growing up without a mother and with an absent father, and experiences all the pains and tribulations of being a teenager. Everything seems to be going well - he's recruited by the school's football team, where he makes a new friend - until one day Jerry is approached by Archie Costello, a representative of The Vigils - Trinity's secret society. The Vigils specialize in creating "assignments" for new students, which range from simple jokes to cruel, elaborate pranks.

Although the faculty is aware of the existence of a school gang, it doesn't acknowledge it in the open - giving a clandestine consent for its actions, which new students have no choice but to accept. After his friend was chosen for a prank involving dismantling furniture in one of the classrooms, Jerry is selected for another - his assignment is to refuse to participate in selling chocolates for the school's annual fundraiser, and kept refusing for ten days. Archie crafted this assignment to annoy and humiliate Brother Leon, an ambitious acting headmaster for whom the sale reflects a private goal. Although participation in the sale is voluntary, Leon bullies and manipulates his students into taking part. He personally orders everyone to sell twice as many chocolates for twice the price of the last year's event - and who has met privately with Archie, and requested help of his influential friends in this very matter. Jerry is compliant with the vigils and refuses to sell chocolates, provoking Leon's anger but also sympathy from fellow classmates. However, after the tenth day Jerry surprises himself and once again refuses to sell his chocolates, defying both Brother Leon and The Vigils. Despite the growing pressure, Jerry consistently refuses to give in to their demands, and the situation quickly escalates as other students start to look up to him.

Unlike other Cormier novels that I've read, which are mostly narrated from the perspective of the main protagonist, *The Chocolate War* features several different viewpoints - it's particularly useful to illustrate the complex manipulation and psychological warfare carried on within Trinity. For most of the book there is little actual violence, and the pressure on Jerry and other students is inflicted purely through psychological tactics and scheming - traumatizing and humiliating experiences aimed at inducing paranoia and constant fear, which would result in obedience. Jerry's individual defiance and stoicism results in his ostracization as a result of a campaign against him carried on by The Vigils, but his resolve seems to only grow stronger, as he understand that ultimately this is the only thing that can't be taken away from him. He clings to one thing that he has control over, and which can't be taken away by a school gang or corrupted faculty. The main question that the novel asks is of course this: is it worth it? How much are we willing to fight and give to protect our beliefs? What are the consequences of disturbing the universe we don't agree with?

This is a very dark book which could be a good introduction to many topics: bullying, corruption, cronyism,

conformism and resistance, mob mentality and the abuse of authority. This is unsentimental and often painful reading and it's also heartbreaking, but necessarily so - I couldn't imagine it being any other way, because if it was then it'd be a betrayal of itself. Adults who tried to ban the book would do better by reading and talking about it with their children, as any teenager would instantly recognize the hierarchy and structure of the novel from their own experience. *The Chocolate War* succeeds in turning Trinity into a microcosm of social relations, all over a seemingly banal conflict - but the book is anything but banal, and that's why it continues to be read 40 years after its first publication.

Matthew says

What a interesting and strange little book! I read it because I remembered hearing about people reading it back when I was in middle school/high school. I think it may have been required reading for some English classes, but I am not sure. It definitely has the feel of some other books I had to read for school (specifically Lord of the Flies) and I could see it appealing to a teenager more than some of the other required reading we had.

This book was released in 1974 and has to be one of the earliest specifically Young Adult novels. The Author even mentions that when he wrote it the amount of books written to interest teenagers is small. So, if you are a Young Adult fan, this is your history and worth checking out!

I said in my first paragraph that this book was strange, but it is strange in a good way. While written in the realistic setting of an all boys school, most of the things that happen are very outlandish and unbelievable. In fact, it almost reads like a teenage boy's creative writing project. Very entertaining, but don't go into it looking for a believable story.

Want a quick, fun read that goes back to the origins of one of the most popular reading genres? Here it is!

Mary says

This is one of my favorite books. I never read it as a kid, but I've read it several times now as an adult and it's still so beautiful. The writing is stark and concise, and so is the story, which is one of the most difficult plots to describe. This is one of those where you talk about the theme more than the actual story: "It's the best book about good and evil that exists," you tell someone, after trying to outline a chocolate sale at a religious boy's school that ends in a sadistic boxing fight.

I read an interview in which Cormier was asked if he thought the lesson is too dark, and he said that it's just the truth. The world is evil and there's nothing you can do about it, but he thought that trying to fight against it is the most important thing you can do, even though you're going to fail anyway.

On a side note, I met him once before he passed away, and he was not what I expected. For someone who writes such dark stuff, it was shocking to meet someone who may have actually been Santa Claus! He was the sort of guy who must have been someone's favorite grandpa.

Greg says

Not to boast, but for almost the past 15 years I've read more than a hundred books a year. I only mention that fact to show the relatively late start that I got on serious reading. Sure I read quite a bit when I was younger, but I kind of went from reading *Encyclopedia Brown* and *The Hardy Boys* straight to reading god-awful books about commandos and then to a steady diet of Horror. I wanted to read better books, but I had no guidance in the matter and from my experiences with Literature in High School most every classic I encountered got mangled and ruined by incompetent teachers. So for a really long time I read crap, sprinkled every now and then with something good like Salinger or Orwell.

The point of this statement is that I felt deficient in the breadth of my reading for quite awhile. I made it up for it with a huge gusto of reading anything I could get my hands on when I was about 21, but I still felt like so much precious time had been missed when I could have gotten so much more reading done. Nowadays I don't feel so lacking in what I have or have not read but there is one area that I do no nothing about and that is Young Adult literature.

I never read Young Adult literature as a young adult, or I should say teenager, since I don't think I've reached adulthood yet, nevermind ever being a young adult. When I was the age for reading these books I was slogging through a Bourne novel, or reading semi-homoerotic vampire tales all centering around someone named Lestat. I did briefly dip my toe in the YA world with *The Outsiders* and those awful lies *Jay's Journal* and *Go Ask Alice*, but that was it.

I wish I had read this novel when I was about twelve or thirteen years old. I would have loved it. It's got the cool stuff that I liked about *Lord of the Flies* (before the teachers got their hands on it), but with more of a point that I could have related to. I know my teenage self would have loved this book, that is why I gave it five stars. My nearing middle-aged self is as blown away by it as I would have been, but I have to admit to thinking it's still a pretty great book.

There is a 'dirtiness' to the book that I think might be gratuitous, but maybe mentioned jacking off on the first page is a way to capture the reluctant teen readers attention. I can see why uptight parents and school boards would try to ban the book, not that I agree, but yeah there is some stuff that I was surprised at finding in a book that is being aimed to teenagers. Then again I might just be living in a fantasy world of what makes a novel a teen novel. I might be confusing them too much with children books.

At the novels best moments it reminds me a lot of the late 1960's movie starring Malcolm McDowell *If...*, an amazing movie that I recommend everyone see as soon as possible. Both being excellent depictions of the cruelty of adolescence.

My only real complaint is that a couple of themes are brought into the novel early on and then just kind of left hanging there. As a mature reader I picked up on where the author was heading with the themes, and didn't need for them to be returned to later on in the novel, but would a teen need to have them more explicitly brought out? I don't know, I appreciated that the author didn't really hit the reader hard with the Nazi stuff he mentions early on, but did he treat the theme too much in passing? I don't know, maybe I will learn this in the class this summer, or maybe I will just be contrarian to any discussion about the book and argue the side that seems most unpopular (will we even discuss themes? what do library classes talk about when they read novels?). My other complaint is about how the big reversal comes about in the book. I don't want to say much more, but it seems like the author didn't know how to make the school body change their outlook, so just kind of said that they did. It's ok that he did this, because he handled so many other things in

the book with quite a bit of sophistication for a book that reads really simply.

Jason Koivu says

I grew up in the next town over from where Robert Cormier lived. They were nothing towns. We went to the same college. It was a nothing college. But here was this writer with a famous book from my neighborhood! Sooner or later I had to read this.

The Chocolate War is about boys at an all-boys Catholic prep school forming cliques and getting their kicks by kicking the shit out of their fellow students mentally and physically. This could've been an English novel.

Cormier does an excellent job at capturing the hell and ridiculousness that is high school: the plot revolves around selling chocolates and yet, there will be blood. Honestly, Cormier did too good a job capturing the least favorite part of my life. Don't get me wrong, while I came in for my fair share of abuse in high school, I wasn't overtly targeted. And still, I loathed those days. The petty fights over the stupidest shit, the condescension of the ~~overlords~~ teachers, threats from all sides, being treated like a child because my fellow students were acting like children...*shudder*. I couldn't wait to leave. I'd be lying if I said my hatred of high school didn't taint my enjoyment of this book. I don't want to relive those memories!

The Chocolate War is not a bad book. My three-star rating might've been a four. It was see-sawing between the two. But I went with three, because the writing is mostly solid and great in spots. The plot is okay, but it lacks the grab-ya quality needed to sustain the tension and tease out the suspense through out. Teen angst only holds my interest for so long. When I sat back after finishing, I saw I'd read a competent book that had moved me a little, but one that I would soon move on from.

I can't see this being added to anyone's all-time favorites list, so why is it so popular? Well, this is one of those lucky books that was originally written for adults, but got picked up by a lot of kids, so it was moved from the regular fiction section to the young adults section....and then the "authorities" were alerted to the fact that naughty things happen in the book and so they banned it, thus ensuring its everlasting fame and that more kids would read it than probably would've otherwise. Good work, dumbass authority!

Carla says

The bleak viciousness that is this novel made me really really anxious and depressed. I couldn't wait until it was over. I skimmed the whole final chapter and I've been doing my breathing exercises for the past couple of hours to rid myself of the bad chemicals that are pumping through my body.

Ultimately this book is about:

How evil pervades

How pacifism is ultimately a violent act

Martyrdom gets you nowhere

How vicious children really are

Writing a vicious book about viciousness that assaults the reader doesn't make the world a better place

A neat little construct of macrocosm within the microcosm of a high school. Definitely a book that all teenagers should read, however this worn out, paranoid and depressed Gen-yer found it to reiterate stuff that she no longer wants to think about. That high school was an entirely traumatising experience for me that I'll never be keen to relive.

I can't disentangle my own feelings that were elicited from this book to give it a proper 'review'. Did I like reading it? No. Couldn't wait for it to be over? Yes. Would I read it again? Absolutely not. I guess a book that delivers such strong feelings can be seen as 'powerful' but for what end I don't know.

On a technical level it's very well written, nice tight scripted language. I couldn't help but see Dick Cheney's face whenever the lead bully "Archie" spoke though. I brings up the age old "all power corrupts" thing and plays it well. Most of the people were evil before they even had any power.

A sickening read. I think "Lord of the Flies" conveys the same message but in an immensely less suicidal way.

Heather says

Here's the deal people, yesterday I was heating up my lunch in the kitchenette at work and had this book with me (because I was planning to read during lunch) and another woman asks me what the book is about. I tell her it's the story of this kid who refuses to sell chocolates at his high school, and then I realize that this sounds like the stupidest book in the world--why would anyone care about reading about fund-raising? I'll tell you why ladies and gentlemen--because this book isn't about a chocolate sale, it's about peer pressure, conformity, and the difference that one individual can make in any given situation.

Cormier's novel is brilliant--the dialogue and writing regarding perceptions of others' motivations is sharp and incisive. Cormier writes in third person and allows us to glimpse into the minds and hearts of characters

with a myriad of motivations. Most remarkable is how nearly everyone who is an antagonist in this story (Archie and the school bully Emile Janza) use their manipulation and intimidation as a facade to hide their true personalities. The only antagonist we don't get to look inside is Brother Leon, but we're given some backstory on his motivations that is interesting.

What I appreciate about the antagonists in this story is that Cormier is unflinching in their evil--he doesn't "clean them up" in the end, they don't learn their lesson, they actually come out completely unscathed. That's a hard pill for someone like me, an eternal optimist who believes there must be something redeeming in everyone, to swallow. It makes me think about what Cormier's psychology of society must have been like, and how that affected his life. Which leads me to realize that there are people out there who have a different definition of the total depravity of man, and to consider how that influences them and their dealings with me. (I love a story that makes me think about life and interactions, which is why *The Chocolate War* is so much more than a story about a chocolate sale.)

There is one primary protagonist (Jerry Renault) in this story, but there are other characters who try to defy the corruption on their own level--two of the Vigils (Obie and Carter) try to impact the Universe as does Jerry's friend, the Goober, in his own way. Again, we're learning about psychology here, folks--you may not be leading the revolution, but we can all do our part to fight corruption and evil in the world. At the least, we can refuse to participate in mistreatment. I'm not talking high-and-lofty stuff like the situation in Darfur here (although that's necessary), I'm talking about the way you view others, how you judge the people you work/live/learn with and how your pre-conceived notions of their motivations and backstory influence the way you treat them. If anything, Cormier wants us to learn that we don't know why people do the things they do, what has happened in their past, and we need to develop connections with people before making unfounded assumptions about their value or worth as an individual. Pretty cool stuff for a story about candy, eh?

This story was deep and rich (kind of like the best-tasting chocolates coincidentally), and the characters were so well constructed. I wonder at the end what happens to Emile, Obie and Carter, but I don't get my answers and, surprisingly, that's okay with me.

I had to give an A rating, rather than A+, because I can't be a hypocrite... if you don't know what that's in reference to, check out my review of *Looking for Alaska*, and read paragraphs 4 and 5 about the language in this book. I hate to do it, but I have to for the sake of consistency.

Apokripos says

Disturbing My Universe (A Book Review of *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier)

I'm writing this review in anguish and in tears.

At first I couldn't imagine myself getting interested about this kid who refuses to sell chocolates during a school's annual fund-raising event. But as the pages were turned all too quickly, I find myself deeply engrossed, on the edge of my seat, clinging on to every word, anticipating each chapter with bated breath. I suppose *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier eludes description; as if to summarize it was a gross

disrespect to you who's reading this review in case you want to pick this book up because I want you to suffer the same anguish that I felt, to cry the same tears I shed after reading this brilliant masterpiece. It is a book that boldly challenges us about the folly of conformity and peer pressure. It dares us to courageously face the question: "How can we resist?"

For the life of me, I just can't imagine how I would've reacted to this book should I happen to read it during my teens. Now I know why this book has been constantly attacked by censors and one of the most banned and challenged books in America. But its protagonist's sexual musings is just the tipped of the ice burg. This is not your regular YA book for it does not concern itself on the banal matters adolescence grapple with but on the resonating psychological and moral issues of the larger human condition. The book's climax and its "uncompromising ending" will jolt you, shatter you, and break you. Like *The Lord of the Flies* it is a work of stunning impact about the monstrous and unfathomable power of evil; a book that will linger with you long after you close its pages, an unforgettable story in every measure.

Right now I'm still thinking of them. Archie, Emile and Brother Leon. It staggers the mind thinking how more are they capable of for I think the book has only given me a glimpse of what they can do. Their clutches far exceeds the prep school they inhabit for their very presence is palpable; if you would just give a pittance of attention in your surrounding you'll know what I'm saying.

Most of all I think of Jerry. How he profoundly affected me, how his story has become a part of me; the one who taught me that to resist is to assist; the one who dared me to disturb my universe. And right I now I'm still uncertain how will I do so, for the fear of the consequences of my action haunts me. What will I gain if do defy the status quo?

Only when we make choice and stood firm on our conviction do we gain hold of our humanity in spite of inexorable defeat. But if humans have the courage to stand together with the aid of self-transcending strength and love perhaps good can win.

As I wrap up this review my eyes wander at the bar of Hershey's chocolate at my side. I know eating it will bring a bitter sweet solace.

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Finished: June 6, 2010

My Rating: ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

“My name is Jerry Renault and I’m not going to sell the chocolates.”

The Chocolate War is probably one of those books that ends up getting a low rating since it gets crammed down the throats of high school kids in their literature classes. As the mother of a child who is currently being forced to read “a book about girls who do nothing but talk about cute guys” (Spoiler Alert: *Marie Antoinette Serial Killer*), I **WISH** his required reading was something this good. That’s probably why it’s on the Top Banned Books list, right? Can’t have those tiny minds actually used for **thinking** . . .

The Chocolate War is a story about life at an all boys high school. It deals with conforming and not conforming and hazing and trying to fit in and attempting to stand out and sticking it to the man and most of all teaches the lesson . . .

The cast of characters runs the spectrum from the bully to the bullied, from nerds to the jocks, Freshmen to Seniors, and most importantly, the one who decided to ask himself . . .

“Do I dare disturb the universe? Yes, I do. I do. I think.”

Highly recommend to middle-grade and up.

Darlyn says

MY BLOG: Your Move, Dickens

I absolutely loved this book, which isn’t surprising since it reminded me of John Green’s novels. John Green is ONE OF MY FAVORITE WRITERS. Now, Cormier and Green are two completely different writers, but Cormier’s use of the T.S. Eliot line ‘Do I dare disturb the universe?’ reminded me of John Green’s use of literary references in his novels. Cormier only used a single line from The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, but what a perfect line it is. It summed up the novel perfectly, how Jerry did indeed dare to disturb the clockwork-like universe of Trinity. Also, I’m a sucker for books that mention other books/poems.

And the characters! I can’t gush enough about them. Cormier didn’t describe them in great detail, but they came alive anyway through the dialogue. The dialogue was pitch-perfect. Every single sentence felt natural, and told me more about the characters than paragraphs of back story ever could. I have to say that Archie Costello, the Grand High Poobah, of the vigils is one of my favorite fictional characters. Ever. Talk about the devil in a teenage boy’s body. Mafia dons have nothing on him.

This book isn’t a feel-good novel that gives you hope. It was kind of depressing, actually, but the great thing about it is that it made me look within myself, wondering what I’m capable of. Like Jerry Renault, do I have the guts to disturb the universe?

Rating: 5/5

Rachel says

Oh god. You know? I honestly wish I could remember cool things from high school English, but whenever my roommate and I embark down memory lane, all I whine about is this book. What can I say about "The Chocolate War?" (Spoilers ahead, folks!)

It stinks. No seriously. Jerry's musings about "disturbing the universe" (poor T.S. Eliot) put me to sleep and I honestly couldn't wait for the school's secret society to knock the ever lovin' crap out of him. I may also be missing some grand message, but I honestly don't get why this book was published... I mean, there's this secret society that RULES the school and what does Jerry do? Refuses to sell their damn chocolate and gets into a boxing match as a result, where he's pulverized. I'm all for people standing up for their beliefs and everything, but it's not as if the Vigils wanted Jerry to go on a crusade to murder kitties and puppies. Whatever. Maybe I'm getting something wrong here, because I tried to block out as much as I could about "The Chocolate War."

I'm not a prude (have you SEEN some of the books I've read) but the sexual frustration present in this novel did nothing for me. I'll go with the shallow reason and say it was because I did not want to think about Jerry's or Archie's or this random boy's desire to bone someone into the next world. *shudders*

Also I think part of my seething hatred stems from the fact that I attended a private Catholic prep school much like the one in "The Chocolate War." Imagine that!

Apryl says

This book is one of the most censored books in the country for young adults. I read it for my censorship lesson for my lit class and I was honestly frightened of what I would find but it was easily one of the most haunting and well-written books I have ever read. Cormier is a genius of writing with layers. It's a deceptively easy read; easy in that I finished it in 2 days, deceptive in that I could read it again and come away reading something different.

Brother Leon is truly evil. His example with Bailey and comparing the class to Nazi Germany is ironic given that he is the most like Hitler and creates a mini Nazi Germany within the walls of his own high school. He is everything that a Catholic "Brother" is not.

There is so much involved with this novel that young adults could truly benefit from. It is stark and open and brutally honest and completely uncomfortable. Jerry's thoughts at the end are heartbreakingly, "They tell you to do your thing but they don't mean it. They don't want you to do your thing, not unless it happens to be their thing, too. It's a laugh, Goober, a fake. Don't disturb the universe, Goober, no matter what the posters say."

Ashley says

I know this is considered important juv. lit. and amazing, but I disliked it very much. I can recognize that the

whole point was to make you hate the fact that there is evil in the world and even you can become desensitized or mentally manipulated (the author is manipulating the reader, overall, and wants the reader to finally recognize it and question it at the end). However, this book portrays women as nothing but sex-objects (only briefly bringing women or girls into the picture for this purpose), and depicts self-pleasure as normal for teen-age boys, as if they couldn't possibly resist sexual urges. I would say that at least a contrast between those that have self-control and those that don't would have made it more realistic to me. If I had read this as a teenage girl, I probably would have felt very degraded and offended (I felt some of that as an adult female reading it actually).

Melki says

Do I dare disturb the universe?

from a poster that hangs in Jerry Renault's school locker

My youngest son started high school this year, and while that makes me feel old, **old, OLD**, I'm relieved that for the first time since kindergarten, he is not expected to sell stuff for his school. This year, I will not be forced to buy any crappy wrapping paper, or magazine subscriptions, or any overpriced chocolate for Easter. This is all voluntary, of course. Children don't *have* to participate. But they are certainly *encouraged* to do so. Much like in...

The Chocolate War. Each student is expected to sell **fifty** boxes of chocolate. And, as Brother Leon points out, "*the sale is strictly voluntary.*" But that turns out not to be true, and when Jerry Renault refuses to sell the candy, a whole new game of bullying and coercion begins.

School is all about learning lessons, and there are many to be learned in this book. Power corrupts. Disturbing the universe may bring painful consequences. And as one student learns, *...he had allowed Brother Leon to blackmail him. If teachers did this kind of thing, what kind of world could it be?*

As to why this made the American Library Association's Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books - <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/banned/fr...> - I assume it has something to do with the fact that the young men in this book occasionally masturbate, which we all **know** teenage boys would **NEVER DREAM OF DOING** without this filthy book putting that idea in their heads.

Ronyell says

When I started reading this book, I was wondering to myself about why this book was banned in so many schools. Now, I know why. "The Chocolate War" is a popular young adult book by Robert Cormier and it is about how a young teenage boy named Jerry Renault refuses to sell chocolates at his school, Trinity and how he faces some hardships from Brother Leon and the Vigils because of his defiance. "The Chocolate War" might be a bit too disturbing and dark from some people, but this book is clearly one of the most memorable banned books ever written!

Oh my goodness! When I first heard about this book, I thought it was simply going to be about a group of

kids fighting over who should eat the chocolates. But then, when I got around to reading this book, I realized that this book was all about the cruelties of the world such as manipulating various students into selling chocolates, even if you do not want to sell the chocolates and the consequences if you step out of line from the rest of the student body. Robert Cormier has certainly done an excellent job at making this book extremely disturbing and dark as he cleverly builds up tension around Jerry Renault's defiance against selling the chocolates at the chocolate sale. The true highlights of this book were the characters themselves as they are realistic in personalities that you would normally see at any high school. Jerry Renault plays the underdog hero in this book as he tries to defend his stance in not selling the chocolates since he believes everyone has the right to do what you think is right and as it happens to every hero, he goes through so much hardship and danger when he defies the rules of Trinity. I find myself liking Jerry so much in this book since he tries hard to defend his rights, even if the other students do not believe in him and I love the idea that people will try to defend themselves when they believe that the activities set for them are not right for them. Some other interesting characters in this book are Archie Costello, the leader of the Vigils and Brother Leon. You will never know a truly terrible villain in any book until you read about what Brother Leon and Archie Costello has done to so many people in this book. Both Brother Leon and Archie Costello are truly frightening characters as they use manipulation and cruelty to get what they want from the school, to the point of using violence to get what they want.

Some people might have a problem with this book as it is extremely dark and disturbing and there is also extreme violence in this book, especially towards the end of the book and that might not sit too well with people who do not like violence. Another problem that most people might have with this book is the language as this book has strong language and many people might be sensitive about such strong language being used. Probably, the reason why this book is dark and disturbing is because it was told from a villain's point of view, which is either Archie or Brother Leon and in most books or movies that are told from a villain's perspective of the world are usually dark and disturbing (well, except for certain movies or books where the villain is a bumbling fool and the story is more like a comedy or dark comedy rather than a horror story, like the cartoon series "Invader Zim" for example, where the story is told from a villain's point of view, but is still hilarious to watch).

Now for the reason why "The Chocolate War" was banned in so many schools. "The Chocolate War" was one of the most banned books in history because of its strong profanity, some sexual discussions, extreme violence, and the theme of bribery and manipulation being used in a negative way (that is a lot of reasons, is it not?) However, I did enjoy this book because of the original and exciting plot, even though it felt like the ending was a bit "incomplete" meaning that so much more could have been said about the event that concluded the book. Hopefully, the sequel, "Beyond the Chocolate War," might conclude this book more properly, so that is definitely one of the books that are worth checking out. I would recommend this book to anyone who loves reading books from the villain's point of view and love reading banned books.

Review is also on: Rabbit Ears Book Blog
