

Rogue Librarians, Episode 20

New Kid (Part 2: Close Reading)

Welcome to the 20th episode of Rogue Librarians, a podcast in which three librarians discuss banned books. We are your hosts, Marian, Dorothy, Alanna, and we are the Rogue Librarians. We would love to hear from you, for you to participate in our discussion. Please visit theroguelibrarians.com or follow us on Instagram or Facebook @roguelibrarianspod or on Twitter @Rlibrarians.

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Today, we are continuing our discussion of *New Kid* by Jerry Craft. If you haven't already listened to our interview with Jerry in the previous episode, please go back and listen to it. We learned so much from talking with him. It was so much fun. First published in 2019, *New Kid* is the only graphic novel to win the John Newbery Medal, and it is the only book in history to win the Newbery Medal, the Kirkus Prize for Young Readers' Literature, and the Coretta Scott King Author Award. Some school districts began challenging the book in 2020 for its discussions of race and racism. It has been accused of promoting critical race theory and has been challenged or banned in states like Texas, Pennsylvania, and Florida.

In Jerry Craft's most recent book, *School Trip*, there's a panel in which the students pass Ainaara's Banned Book Barn, which includes a sign to meet Jerry Craft. Jordan has a couple of drawings showing people banning books, and the librarian tells Jordan and Drew that she is finally buying positive books by authors of color, but most of them have been banned. And there's a funny moment where you see her and the principal trying to sneak copies of these books into the school.

In our discussion today, we are going to focus on *New Kid*, but we may bring up a few details from the companion books, *Class Act* and *School Trip*. So Dorothy, do you mind giving us a summary of *New Kid*?

All right, so *New Kid* is here about Jordan Banks, uh, a young African-American, uh, boy who has made it into a fairly prestigious, uh, private school for seventh grade and, uh, is, you know, heading there for his first day of school. That's where we began. Jordan goes to school and he meets some other children and and he is very much, it's a little bit of a fish out of water story where he has to figure out how to navigate a whole campus with different buildings and new teachers and being a minority in the school.

And we just get to see his journey and it's a joy. I think it's such a great topic of a book because we've all identified as being the quote unquote new kid whether it's in a

new school or a new sports team or a new club or a new job it's there they're just we can all identify with that discomfort of walking in for the first time and having everyone else know each other and you know no one and importantly if you you listen to the interview, you've probably heard this part, but Jerry talked about how he just wanted to write a book about African-American characters who are not experiencing trauma.

So it is not a book about the Black experience in a way that expresses a lot of trauma. It does go into microaggressions and just sort of daily, you know. but it's not about the trauma. It's just about a kid having a good time making friends, navigating his way through, you know, middle school.

That's a really great point, Dorothy. Because he mentioned, as he said, that a lot of books, you know, someone dies or something terrible happens. And in this book, all the characters you start with are still alive and well at the end of the books. So that is a really great thing for kids to see when they're, I mean, in this book, you see that the librarian gives them a book that is obviously full of trauma and depressing.

Straight out of South Uptown.

Yes, exactly. And, you know, the Black experience is presented in her mind as like, this is what all Black kids experience, but that is not true. And as Jerry said, he was shocked that it was unusual and new for him to do books like these where it is focusing on the kids' experiences and the kids' experiences, the family's experiences without a lot of trauma.

Right, and that's a really good point too, 'cause he mentioned in the interview as well that this is the kind of book that he was seeking and never found when he was a kid growing up.

Yep.

And we all need to see ourselves in books, but we need to see ourselves as normal and not as often. always a victim or always in trauma or, you know, all of the typical things that previous books with which centered around the African-American experience has largely revolved around slavery or gangs or, you know, trauma. So this is just a lovely pleasant little book and we all enjoyed it very much.

Yes. So should we get into our first segment on characterization?

Yes. Sounds great. And we're going to start with Jordan Banks, our lead. And I just wanna say that Jordan is just delightful.

He is, he's funny, he's observant, he's, you know, friendly. And he kind of gets into that in, I think, *School Trip* where people talk, you know, other characters are talking about Jordan and how. well, everybody loves Jordan, you know, Jordan's great, which is so

true. I mean, he's just, it brings to mind *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, you know, how everyone just really enjoys the narrator on that one. You know, he just, he has, so his issues that he's grappling with, you know, being a new kid. in a school wanting to be an artist, so he has to kind of decide if he wants, if he's going to want to stay at the school that he's now in, which is what his parents want, what his mother wants, or whether to go to the high school for art and mime, which cracked me up, the addition of mime. mime was kind of a hilarious send-up of the art schools, the schools for the arts. And I'm a drama mom so, you know, doubly hilarious. So, you know, he draws his little drawings and I love that. I think that's where we get to know the most about Jordan is when we see his thought process on paper, and so he had, every once in a while, we get a little notebook segment where he just sort of works through some thoughts about whatever it is that just happened, and those are really some of my favorite bits because it's where you really get to see the inner workings and the conflicts, and they're not big conflicts. conflicts, they're little conflicts. Like, why doesn't it, you know, what does it mean to Jordan when a teacher can't remember his name? You guys have any thoughts about Jordan?

I love Jordan too. I really appreciate the fact that he has a supportive, loving family, you know, with their quirks and his parents and grandfather are drawn so well. We get to find out quite a bit about them, and you see how much they love Jordan and support him. And I think one of the biggest things that Jordan is dealing with in this book is figuring out who his new friends are going to be, how he can still be friends with his old friends from the neighborhood, and how he can be friends with with different people at the same time. And we'll talk about that more a little bit later, but that is one of the things he's struggling with throughout this book.

And which, you know, that's middle school. That's exactly what middle school is. Most kids in a middle school are in a new school with some kids that they already know, but it's always a place where there's more new kids that you're still figuring out, you know, where you fit in and who your friends really are. That's absolutely true.

And I'm just thinking right now what pops into my head is how many books I've read that are set in middle school or at the beginning of a new high school, where friends that were just absolutely bosom buddies through elementary school or middle school. school, then go on to their first year of high school where the pond gets even larger and people who were their besties might not be their besties in high school even though they're still in the same school. So there's that kind of storyline that weaves its way in and through this story as well.

In addition to Jordan, the next character that we meet is Liam, and I believe, Marian, and that you were going to tell us a little bit about Liam.

Yeah, thanks. Liam is he's been at the school for quite a few years. Liam is a white kid who comes from a very well-to-do family. His father is extremely successful and and

a very hardworking man who is kind of always absent because he's always on a work trip or, you know, or schmoozing with other, you know, clients or whatever. So we never actually see Liam's father in any of the the graphics.

We see him at the very beginning.

Oh, that's true. Thanks.

Which I think is important because it establishes him and then you and then you feel his absence.

Yeah, as well, you know, that's a really good point. Yeah, 'cause you do and you meet his mother who is just a very lovely woman, but mom, you know is has a little bit of privilege one could say in that she doesn't have to hold a job. And at one point there's a discussion about, you know, what does your mom do? And Liam's like, well, she does a lot of things. And, you know, there are a lot of volunteer type things, but, you know, that's a whole different thing than what some of the other characters are experiencing with their moms working because they need the extra income. So Liam is obviously, you know, full by this family unit. But Liam and Jordan become really good friends very quickly and Liam invites Jordan over to his house and the first time Jordan goes he's kind of an awe because it's like a palatial house and they have their own pool and, you know, just they have everything. and according to Jordan, you know, everything from the eyes of a middle schooler. But, you know, and Liam's like, oh, yeah, yeah, he kind of takes it for granted a little bit. But also, you know, Liam, you see that Liam is kind of longing for more of maybe what he sees that Jordan has, which is this tight-knit, loving family, maybe they're according to Jordan a little a little bit too involved in his life and decisions, life decisions, but, but they are there all the time, they're always there for him. And so we, we start to see, you know, kind of that what we should always look at in a person, which is, you know, walk a mile in my shoes, you know, things are not always as they appear on the surface. Liam is just this completely lovely character who's very open, very welcoming, bright, you know, is able to look at different people and just accept them for who they are, you know, tries very hard not to look at somebody as their race or as their gender, but just as the person that they are. And I think that's what makes Liam a very, very strong character in this book. So, you know, like Jordan, he's, he's the kid in school that everybody likes because it's like what's, what's not to like. He's just a super cool, super nice guy.

And I think he's embarrassed by his family's wealth. I mean, he doesn't want to talk about the fact that the auditorium is named after his family, Landers. And he's embarrassed by his house. He says, you know, don't judge me. So he realizes how much more money his family has than someone like Jordan. And he doesn't want that to change Jordan's or Drew's opinion of him. And as you said, I think you especially see this in the later books, but his yearning for that tight-knit family-- I mean, he has

Mr. Pierre, who drives him around and Mr. Pierre taught him how to play soccer and is more of a father than his own father is, but Mr. Pierre has his own family back in Haiti. And so Liam's life, as you said, may seem perfect in some ways, but it's really not. There's a lot of holes in what he wishes he could have.

Yeah. Yeah, which really just shows how everyone is human and nobody's perfect and just why it's so important to look beyond the surface. Because another thing that jumps up in a later book, I think it's also in school trip is, I think it's in *School Trip* when we meet Liam's grandparents and they're very, very different than Jordan's grandfather who presented the book as this very wise, loving grandfather and Liam's grandparents, when we finally meet them, present as a stereotype of an older, well-to-do couple who's never had to consider anyone else's perspective.

And they immediately judged Jordan and Drew because of their skin color.

Exactly. I mean, oh, there's that horrible scene when they first see them in Liam's house and the grandmother pulls her purse closer to herself, just reflexively. And that just disturbed me so much. Well, should we move on to Drew?

Yeah, I love Drew. Yeah, Drew Ellis is Jordan's other best friend, and he is, I think, my favorite character, definitely one of my favorite characters. And you learn a lot more about him in *Class Act* than you do in *New Kid*. But he is one of the only other Black kids in Jordan's class. And at first, they don't really talk. You know, they stare at each other, and Jordan's not even sure why they don't really talk. But a little bit later in the year is when they become close and Drew grew up in the Bronx with his grandmother. We don't know other things about his past, and we know that he's very smart. He's also very athletic and he has more trouble in some ways than Jordan in how he's treated at school because Jordan is of a lighter complexion and Drew has darker skin and people seem to judge him differently for that reason and he's also called the wrong name all the time by their homeroom teacher, Ms. Rowle, she calls him DeAndre, who's an older student. And he is more willing to speak up when Ms. Rowle makes that mistake and he's more willing to bring up how people are judging him than Jordan is, at least initially.

Yeah, no, that's what I love about Drew, is that he will speak up.

Yep, and he'll speak up when other characters are being mistreated too. So we find out a lot more about his home life and his complicated feelings about Liam's life in *Class Act*, but in this first book, we see them eventually become a group of three. And they all have some similar interests and get along really well. So is there anything else you want to add about true before we move on?

Well, I just wanted to point out too, as you were discussing Alanna, about how Jordan is perceived slightly differently by it seems like everyone in the school because he's got

this very open, friendly personality, but, you know, at least immediately their introduction to him is that he has a lighter, he's lighter complexed. And I also wanted to bring up kind of his, his style of dress and the way he wears his hair is also lighter complexed. less stereotypically black, where Drew, the way he dresses and the way he wears his hair is a little bit more stereotypically African-American. And so there was a scene where they mentioned that, I think Jordan mentioned his hair. And so I think Jordan's hair just isn't as, isn't the same. as a lot of Black hair.

Right, too. Right. Right. And, you know, that shouldn't matter to anyone. You know, everyone can wear their hair however they want to, but it just seems like, still, in our society, the way you wear your hair is judged, yeah, so. Um, but without further ado, shall we move on to our second segment and discuss some themes of the books?

Sounds great. Yeah. All right, well, I'll get us started. So, one of the themes that just jumps out at us. is the theme of you should really get to know someone to understand them better and really getting to know someone obviously beyond first impressions and hairdos and what we were just discussing actually. And one really good example of this is a character that we haven't yet mentioned, but there's a young lady in the story named Alexandra. Alexandra, and which is funny, she becomes Alex Girl (Girl Alex) because they're also an Alex boy (Boy Alex), which is kind of a funny thing in the story. But Alexandra is, you know, she would be considered a quirky character. I think that's a pretty fair way to describe her. But she's, she is of Asian descent and she wears puppets on her hands and is constantly walking around making her hands the puppets talk for her and using these different voices, childlike high-pitched voices and different things like that. And, you know, obviously, it's a middle school, kids are mean. Everyone thinks she's a little odd and she kind of stays to herself. But one thing that's really awesome about Alexandra is she does not appear to be bothered by that. She's kind of used to it. She's kind of just decided that she doesn't really need anyone. She's got her puppets and she embraces her quirkiness and just, you know, kind of happily makes her way through the morass of middle school hormones and treatment of each other. But then, you know, and Jordan, you know, kind of reacts to her and sort of stays away from her a little bit because, you know, she kind of freaks everyone out a little. They don't quite know what to do with her. But then there's a day when we finally find out a little bit more about her. And we discover that the reason that she wears the puppets on her hands is because she's had an accident and she has some scars. on her hands that she's very self-conscious about. And she's dealing with anxiety and her way of dealing with her anxiety is to use the puppets and to kind of use that as her mask to hide behind that mask. And when Jordan learns that about her, he just has so much more respect and compassion for her and maybe even a little bit of awe in how she has just managed to be content with her puppets and herself and she knows who she is and she's taken care of her life and really doesn't need to be popular, she doesn't strive to be popular, she's not trying to fit in, she's just trying to be who she is, which is really admirable. And obviously every single person has their own backstory. But it just really, to me, pushes the theme of, you can't judge a book by its

cover. You can't judge a person by what you initially see. And if you really wanna know why someone is the way they are, are, you know, you got to reach out and actually have a conversation and get to know them better, which I mean, that's the whole point of diplomacy and dialogue and what's missing in my mind right now in the world is that we seem to have pushed back to stereotypical fears and, you know, aversion to differences rather than saying, Hey, let's have a dialogue. What's our commonality? What, you know, what is the beauty in each person? And how can we be better? So, so I think it's a really important theme. Do you all have any thoughts on that?

I agree, Marian, and I think it's one of the most important themes throughout the three books because we get to know the other characters much better as we continue through the books and understand people like Maury much better or even understand Andy better by the end of *School Trip*. So I think, as you said, you shouldn't judge a book by its cover is one of the biggest themes I take away.

And I like the way you've worded it. You should get to know someone to understand them better. That doesn't mean that you will like them better, or even necessarily judge them differently, but you will understand what's driving them and your own responses to that, I think, can change.

Mm -hmm. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. And I'm really glad you brought up that point, Dorothy, about, you know, it doesn't mean everybody's going to be friends, and we're not all going to have a kumbaya, "Oh, I love you so much," but we can still respect people even if we don't have the commonalities that make us want to hang out together. Exactly.

Mm -hmm. Well, one of the other themes that I noticed in this book was it's possible and even better to be friends with different types of people at the same time. And that is, as I mentioned, one of the things that Jordan is struggling with in this book is he has his friend Kirk from his neighborhood who he's grown up with. But once he starts at this new predominantly white school, he stops hanging out with him as much. He also has a lot of friends. He's friends with Liam initially, who's white. And simultaneously, he becomes friends with Drew, but the three of them don't really interact. And the three of them don't interact with Kirk at all. So it's not until Jordan has a conversation with his grandfather during Thanksgiving break that you see him really interact, that he actually can be friends with different people at the same time. And his grandfather tells him, "Jordan, when you were little, you used to love shrimp lo mein. You couldn't pronounce shrimp. Anyway, that's all you ever ordered. You ate the noodles one at a time. You used to pretend they were worms. Totally disgusting. Then one day you discovered pepper steak. And now it's General Tso's Chicken. But it still takes you nine hours to order. That's why today we lived dangerously and ordered all three." "I didn't know that was legal." "You don't always have to choose, kiddo. Sometimes let yourself be happy. Just know that whatever you do, I'll always be proud of you." And a little bit later, Jordan says that he realized that what his grandfather was telling him was a

metaphor. And so, so he decided to see if General Tso's Chicken could get along with pepper steak. So he plays with both Liam and Drew at the same time. And I think as you continue through the books, you also see him expand his friend circle. He becomes closer friends with Alexandra, who ends up being a really wise character and other people in their circle who are close to him. different from one another. And Jordan realizes that it is possible to be friends with multiple people and even better to have their different perspectives and to have their different backgrounds all together.

We had one more theme and so people need to educate themselves to avoid microaggressions is the theme which we see a lot of microaggressions happening throughout the book, not just to Jordan, but to different characters, both from other students, Andy in particular, and some of the older kids, and from teachers, and even from one teacher to another, which I just adore that scene where Jordan is complaining a little bit about people not knowing his name and to the black teacher and the Black teacher says, "Oh, well, you're new. They'll figure it out." And then another teacher says, "Hey, Coach." And Jordan's like, "What do you coach?" He's like, "I don't.

He's confused me with another teacher." So I just thought that's what I'm talking about. was, you know.

It's so sad.

Yeah, but that's the point. It's not only happening to kids. It's happening to the adults as well.

I'm just wondering, should we, Dorothy, for the sake of some of our listeners who might not understand exactly what microaggressions is, should we define that for them?

Absolutely. Microaggressions are, and jump in, 'cause I'm not a dictionary definition. kind of a person, but it is just seemingly innocuous statements that have, you know, racist overtones.

Well, one that comes to my mind right away is not even a verbal thing. It's, you know, if I, who am a white woman, you know, meet a person of color and say, "Oh my gosh, I love your hair, can I touch it?"

Right. That's a microaggression.

Right. Or just even presuming to know anything about them or their culture can come off as, it's called a microaggression because if you look at it on the surface, it's so much like what you see. middle schoolers do every day, which is what? We're friends. He doesn't care. He doesn't mind. It's like, well, maybe, maybe not. So on the surface, it doesn't sound aggressive, but the subtext is aggressive.

Right. And we see lots of examples of it in the book from some of the things we've talked about, like getting their names wrong all of the time. The fact that Maury is called an Oreo. The fact that, you know, they assume that Drew likes fried chicken.

And and they assume, oh, what is it they always call Ramon?

Andy makes comments about Ramon's being Latino all the time.

We'll talk to them about tacos and chalupas.

Oh Yeah, right they do. Oh and Scooby Doo Bee Woo for Ruby Wu.

Right, so you're you're making fun of something But you're supposedly doing it as a joke, you know, that's a lot of ways it's presented.

Or not even a joke like just the fact that you confuse two people who are entirely different. That's ignorance on that person's part. They're not trying to do it as a joke.

Right. Right. Yeah. And another one that I just happened to have found is, you know, assuming that a person of color plays a sport because they're a person of color, rather than, you know, maybe they're not at all interested in sports. Maybe they're interested in drama or, you know. any other thing, but just those kind of assumptions based on a person's race or their gender are microaggressions and they're hurtful to people.

And I just, I'm gonna jump ahead because this segues beautifully into our final segment, which is on Significance. This is where we have a question or a passage or a song or a TV show or another book that reminds us or connects us to the themes and the story that we've just read and that we're discussing. But the one that jumps to my mind, and it kind of goes along with that, is with all of the microaggressions that are either written in this book or represented through Jerry Craft's brilliant graphics. And they are brilliant. When we discussed with Jerry Craft the graphics, we all decided we need to go back and just pour over these pictures, because each picture-- I mean, you've heard the expression of pictures worth a thousand words. I think each of his pictures are worth two thousand words. I mean, they're just that detailed and tell a story. However, what I was getting at is the book that jumped into my head when we were discussing microaggressions is a previous book that we've discussed on the pod called *All Boys Aren't Blue*. And this is the memoir-manifesto by George Matthew Johnson. And in it, he talked about microaggressions in a way that was a cautionary sort of a description. But he talks a lot about, look, even if you intend no harm, even as Dorothy said, some of the middle schoolers are saying, oh, but he's my friend, or she's my friend. It's okay. It's not. It's never okay. Because these things are very hurtful and it is most definitely not the responsibility of the person of color or the person who is your transgender friend or the person who is, you know, whatever. It's not someone

else's job to explain to you why this is wrong. You need to get out there and educate yourself and read widely and have lots of conversations and perspectives to really become a better human to be just be a better human. And I mean, isn't that the reason why we have books is to educate ourselves throughout history. And just, you know, paying attention and talking to people. I think, are different. There are different ways to educate yourselves about these issues other than, you know, other than having to ask the people who are experiencing them about them.

Right. Right. And I think that's kind of the point here is that, you know, we don't need to beat ourselves up. No one needs to beat themselves up for having said the wrong thing or thought the wrong thing. No one's asking us to do that. What this is calling on us to do is to make ourselves more aware that we're not perfect, that everyone has stereotypical assumptions, and to check ourselves a little bit, you know, because the goal is for us all to be better humans. And, you know, this is not a manifesto. This is really just, you know, this is just a way of saying, Oh, wow, I never knew that I never, I never had that perspective before. And to recognize that maybe we didn't have that perspective, because we're in a place of privilege compared to someone else.

And maybe we should, you know, think about that and think about some of the norms that we have in our society that really are not, um, they're not so cool and, and we can do better.

Um, yeah. You know, that, that theme too of educating yourself to avoid microaggressions kind of leads into, uh, the question that I had about the text, which is another way that we try to get into the significance of it. And I love how everything seems so interconnected once we start talking. So the question that I had revolves around Ms. Rowle, who is someone who is participating in these microaggressions, I think without knowing it. And when Ms. Rowle saw Jordan jotting down his thoughts, she is upset. Um, and, and really the stuff in his notebook, I wouldn't even call it spending my days around middle schoolers. I would not call that complaining, you know, what he's done, um, which is to draw some cartoons illustrating some of the things that he has to deal with, uh, on a daily basis. But she reacts badly and calls it a polemic against everything the school stands for. And he has to look up polemic, which I would have to. And the definition is a strong verbal or written attack on someone or something. So the question then that I ask about this part of the book is you know, why does she believe that it's a polemic, you know, that he is attacking the school? And where in a school is there a place for an honest dialogue about these things?

I think to respond to your first question, Dorothy, why does she believe this? As you said, she doesn't realize, or maybe she does realize, that she's participating in these microaggressions, but it seems like she doesn't. And he points out to her, you call me Drew all of the time. You never get my name right. And he says, it's not always easy being so different. And she says, but Jordan, being different is a blessing. It's what makes you special. He says, I'm tired of being special, but being special stinks. And from her ignorant point of view, this is an attack, but it's just that she maybe feels

defensive that she's part of this because she had just looked at the drawing in which he complained about being called of the wrong name all the time. And so I imagine that, that I mean, she's, she's saying being different is a blessing, but she as a white woman has no conception, it seems, of how difficult it can be to be different, especially when you're in a school like this. And she's just not willing to, as he said, to question herself or to consider his own point of view. And she's one of the few characters who does not seem to grow or change by the end of the series.

Although she does pause. She pauses when he says, "Do you want to come over to my neighborhood so you can be different?" Like she does not respond to that. So you kind of hope that it's good again just a little bit. But maybe she also represents a certain mentality that teachers are often accused of having and I've seen it happen as well where they instead of listening to the text of what a student is saying they have a knee-jerk way of responding to everyone who complains for instance whether you know without really hearing what the complainants about or thinking about how to how to help that child it is often couched in language about respect you know they they're not speaking to me with respect and you know a for respect respect means different things over time and different things to different people. But to immediately start with the idea that they are, that it's all about you and whether or not they're respecting you, you know, that's a fairly rigid thing that you see a lot in authority figures.

Yeah. And your question about where is there a place in school for honest dialogue? dialogue? I think one of the places we see in *Class Act* when Mr. Roche is chosen to be in charge of the group of students who are diverse in some way. It seems like it's the first time the kids have an opportunity to be honest with one another about the microaggressions they've been experiencing and other issues they have being in a school like this. And Jordan also says to Ms. Rowle, you know, what I'm doing is just like an editorial cartoon. So I think there would be an opportunity for him to actually do editorial cartoons in the school newspaper to point out some of the things he and other students are dealing with. So I think there are places in the school where they could have an honest dialogue, but the school seems to be moving in that direction a little bit by establishing the small group and also forcing some teachers to go to this conference where they learn more about what they're doing to participate in that.

At the middle school level, the freedom of speech around school newspapers is just, it's highly dependent on the principal and how that person views the school newspaper. It's not the same as it is in high school. It can be if that's how, I mean, I just, I think that it needs to come from the top down. You know, someone needs to say, we need to listen to student voices. And, and I have seen that, you know, the school where I work, they, they have a group raising student voices group that, you know, they go out of their way the time and get a variety of voices that they have, they have lunch with one of the administrators, you know, once a month or so, and talk about, you know, what's what's bothering them. But I think you need to make make the space for it and make it a priority.

Well, like you said, Dorothy, in terms of the whole, the whole school view and whether or not there is an opportunity for dialogues, I think that's a bigger, deeper question.

Yeah, I mean, that's kind of the point of these questions, right?

Yeah, for sure.

Not to be able to answer them.

Oh, for sure, for sure. But I think it's something that every individual needs to think about. I don't think that, I don't think it's acceptable to not deal with it, and I can understand there are careful ways that an administrator might want to go about dealing with it, given that they're just yet another cog in the big wheel and there are always people over them. And we want to do this in a way that is truly respecting everyone. everyone. And that's a very, very difficult tightrope. But if we want to get better, I think that's kind of the whole point of our podcast and just why books are meant to be read. Because we need to educate ourselves on all different perspectives as we're trying to come to the best. best way to handle the diversity that is our world.

Amen. Let's maybe close things up with the lovely passage from the book. Alanna, do you have a passage?

Yes. It was so hard to choose one because there are so many great moments in this book. As we said, we love this book so much. I decided to go with a passage that Marian referred to earlier when she was talking about the theme with getting to know someone better. And this is the moment when Jordan talks to Alexandra, or Girl Alex, for the first time for real. And she shares her umbrella with him. And he asks her what's up with the puppets. And she explains that when she was younger, her brother was playing in the kitchen and her mom's pot of boiling water almost spilled on her brother and she pushed him out of the way and burned her hand and ankle a little bit. And so she's been trying to hide her hand since then. And she says to him, "I haven't shown this to anyone in years." And he says, "Well, why start now? You don't need to" And she says, "Yeah, I think I do. Besides, I trust you, Jordan. So I guess it's okay if I show you this." And he imagines that it's going to be a horrible looking hand. But then he says, "Oh, actually, it's not that bad. I really don't think anyone will tease you about it, Alex." "Really? Hey, it's our parents. Promise not to tell?" "But why? You saved your little brother. You're a hero." "Well, okay, you can tell one person. Bye, Jordan. Oops, I didn't mean to do the puppet voice." And so he decides to tell the biggest gossip in their class, Ashley, what really happened. And so, of course, she tells everyone else. And at first, Alexandra was mad, but then she says, "Oh my gosh, you did this for me. And now people don't think I'm weird anymore." And she gives him a hug to thank him or wants to give him a hug I guess. And so in this moment Jordan not only understands her better but also helps her to be understood by all of his

classmates and he becomes closer friends with her in the following books. So I thought that was such a sweet moment. And it shows you both of their characters and this understanding someone else's perspective much better.

I love that scene.

I do too. It is probably the sweetest scene in my mind in the book. But I also think that's a great way to kind of wrap up the discussion we were having throughout the other examples of significance, which is, you know, that's a great example of how to have a dialogue.

Yeah. You know, I mean, he, he's genuinely coming at the question with sincere interest and concern, and they're able to both make each other feel better.

And yeah, I mean, how lovely is that as a model? Definitely. Definitely. Yeah.

Great. Well, all right. We'll go ahead and close it up for the day. And in our next two episodes, we will be discussing *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson. If you would like to leave us a question or comment about *The New Kid* or Jerry Craft or any of the books we've discussed so far on the Rogue Librarians, please leave us a question or comment. You can visit us at theroguelibrarians.com or follow us on Instagram or Facebook @roguelibrarianspod or on Twitter @Rlibrarians. And certainly if you are enjoying this podcast, please subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you find us. your podcasts, and please leave us that all important rating and review, because your ratings and review are what help other people find us and help us to spread the important word that we need to have these dialogues. And we'd certainly appreciate having a dialogue about this conversation as well. So don't be shy, we're not.

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