

A young persons guide to sex and snogging

Young people review a controversial award-winning book.

A book written by a 48-year-old woman sparked huge controversy when it won a prize in the prestigious Smarties Childrens Literature Awards last month.

*Entitled **Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging**, it is written for children aged between 10 and 16 and, as the fictional diary of 14-year-old Georgia Nicholson, deals directly with such issues as teenage sex, homosexuality and even incest. Schools and churches want it banned but what do the readers think? **The Express** asked three Children's Express members for their opinions.*

Rachel Kellett, 15

The books strength is that it tackles tough issues around sex but can still be read by 10 and 11-year-olds.

This is one of the most perfect books Ive found for young people in fact, it has something for every age group. Ten-year-olds can say: This is what Im going to be like when Im older, and 16-year-olds would think: Oh, wasnt that a silly time? Wasnt it funny when I shaved my eyebrows off?

Generally, it is well written: the first page went straight into breasts and snogging. You didnt have to wait for it to warm up. It made you giggle straight away.

Some aspects irritated me, however. I didnt like the way Georgia and her friends were supposed to be average teenagers but didnt know anything about lesbianism and were afraid to talk about it. Im bisexual and some of my friends are, too, and we've all identified our sexuality at 15.

We talk about it openly so I thought it was weird that in a large group of girls none of them felt comfortable talking about being gay.

Georgia's character was accurate because I do know girls who think they must have a boyfriend because its the norm. But I also know people who are very open about their sexuality and like discussing different sexual acts. The author could have put a character like that in the book. Instead it represented a single-minded view of teenage sexuality.

Nonetheless, this book is a huge step forward. It's acknowledges that children grow up quicker these days. There are all these magazines telling girls that they should be wearing make-up and should have a boyfriend but the book sets their mind at rest. It says: In the future, your life might be like this and its not terrible. Its good fun. Its a book everyone can relate to - boys and girls - so it should definitely get an award.

If I were a parent, Id rather my child was informed so that when things happened to them they could feel, What I'm doing isnt terrible.

It used to be that when girls started their periods they thought, Im gonna die because Im bleeding. This book shows Georgia has periods and everythings fine. It shows that if a girl kisses a boy, she's not a tart and if she doesn't want to kiss then she's not a complete loser.

Ben Feder, 13

I expected a scandalous, awful book but there was nothing really bad in it at all. It often made me laugh but there were some difficult issues in there too.

One of the characters was a lesbian teacher but this wasn't treated in a serious way. Incest was also mentioned but only twice, in passing.

It also gives an unfair impression of homosexuality. Georgia's friends are all ignorant and no one stands up for being gay. Younger people reading it wouldn't get all the various views on the subject from the way it was handled.

Georgia doesnt know what being a lesbian means. She just keeps saying, I dont like boys, I must be a lesbian, which doesnt make any sense and could be really misleading for younger girls. It's a negative attitude. TV often shows homosexuality and covers it much better. The books strength is that it tackles tough issues around sex but can still be read by 10 and 11-year-olds. In fact, all ages can get different things out of it and understand different levels of it.

Finally, I think that banning this book would be really stupid. Some adults try to ignore many of the problems that young girls have and I can see why a book touching on sex and homosexuality might not please the head of a Roman Catholic school but doing anything about it would be censorship.

Loretta Omari-Asor, 12

For me, this is a great guide for later life. You can read it, see what's happened to Georgia and learn from how she coped.

I like the way Georgia's emotions are expressed. The way her little sister, Libby, annoys her all the time reminds me of my life. I'm a younger sister so Im usually the annoying one in the family.

Other parts weren't so good. The bit about plucking her eyebrows was disgusting and unrealistic and I didn't like it when she had kissing lessons.

It does expose young girls to issues that they may not be ready for but I also think it deserved an award. My mum doesn't agree - she asked what the book was about and when I told her, homosexuality and incest she wasnt very happy. But these are things a teenager might go through.

The book shouldn't be banned: it would show that adults cant trust us.

About the team

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