



OWWL LIBRARY SYSTEM

BOOK CHALLENGE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING: SOMETHING HAPPENED IN OUR TOWN BY MARIANNE CELANO

INTRODUCTION

Item Reviewed



Title: Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice

Author: Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard

Illustrator: Jennifer Zivoin

Publisher: American Psychological Association, Magination Press (March 1, 2018)

Copies Owned: 7 physical copies are available in the OWWL catalog at member libraries. One audiobook copy is available in the System's OverDrive collection.

Shelving Location(s): Physical copies available at member libraries are shelved under "Juvenile" and "Picture Book."

Book Description

"After discussing the police shooting of a local black man with their families, Emma and Josh know how to treat a new student who looks and speaks differently than his classmates¹."

Reason for Review

Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice by Marianne Celano appeared on ALA's Top 10 Most Challenged Books List in 2020 for "divisive language" and because it was thought to promote anti-police views².

¹ Something Happened in Our Town (Book), OWWL Library System Catalog, <https://search.owwl.org/Record/581586>

² American Library Association, Top 10 Most Challenged Books Lists, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10/archive>

COMMITTEE REVIEW

Committee Charge

A six-member committee comprised of Member Library Directors, a System Staff member, a System Trustee, and the System Executive Director met on September 28, 2023 to discuss the book's content and identify any actions to respond to challenges to this particular title.

Committee Discussion

Something Happened in Our Town by Marianne Celano is a book that gives parents a gentle way to discuss a difficult topic. The sentiments in the story about supporting friends and people who are left out are strong messages that every child should be exposed to. Also, when considering any topics related to being left out, bullying, or other difficult conversation points, this story teaches adults how to rise to the occasion to create anecdotes or metaphors to help children understand the inequity in the world. This is a helpful step in teaching children how to make the world a better place.

This story also shows two families, one black and one white, talking about the same situation with different messages and emotions. To further a child's understanding of the world around them, this is a great book to help them understand that families need to process situations differently. Understanding this is an incredible message to readers.

There is also a great deal of helpful information in the back of the book that provides resources for parents and caregivers to help discuss topics. The only criticism from the committee is that this information can be difficult to read because of the font and format. It may also be helpful for the parents and caregivers to read the information before reading the book.

PROFESSIONAL REVIEWS

At this time of this report, the typical professional reviews are unavailable in OWWL Library System's Syndetics Unbound database. This report will be updated should those reviews be added to the library record.

For now, readers may use the following citations to help review *Something Happened in Our Town* by Marianne Celano:

Grose, J. (2020, June 2). These Books Can Help You Explain Racism and Protest to Your Kids.

Retrieved from New York Times: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/parenting/kids-books-racism-protest.html>

Hart, M. (2020, July 16). Why Kids Of All Races Need To Know How To Talk About Race. Retrieved

from Forbes: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/unicefusa/2020/07/16/why-kids-of-all-races-need-to-know-how-to-talk-about-race/>

Magination Press Children's Books. (n.d.). American Psychological Association (Magination

Press). Retrieved from Magination Press Children's Books:
<https://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/441B228?tab=3>

APPROPRIATE AGE LEVEL

The publisher's recommended age for *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano is grades K-3³.

OWWL Library System does not offer a recommended age range or title restrictions. We encourage parents and guardians and their children to discuss their reading habits in the context of their goals to determine if this title is appropriate.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS

Item Copy Actions

Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice is available at seven member libraries, and the digital audiobook is available at <https://owwl.overdrive.com>.

At this time, OWWL Library System will purchase an eBook copy of the book to have available in the System's OverDrive collection.

Concerned Parent Actions

A minor's access to materials is the responsibility of that minor's parents or guardians. According to the American Library Association:

The mission, goals, and objectives of libraries cannot authorize libraries and their governing bodies to assume, abrogate, or overrule the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. As "Libraries: An American Value" states, "We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services." Libraries and their governing bodies cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parent and child. Libraries and their governing bodies shall ensure that only parents and guardians have the right and the responsibility to determine their children's—and only their children's—access to library resources. Parents and guardians who do not want their children to have access to specific library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their own children. Libraries and library governing bodies should not use rating systems to inhibit a minor's access to materials.⁴

³ Reading Level retrieved from Syndetics Unbound, OWWL Library System Catalog,
https://search.owwl.org/Record/581586#unbound_readinglevel

⁴ Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights,
<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>

To aid parents and guardians in addressing title access in OWWL Library System's OverDrive collection, the default collection can be changed under account settings.

To accomplish this, log in to an OverDrive account at <https://owwl.overdrive.com/> > click on My Account > Settings > Content Preferences > Audience(s). An account can be limited to All Audiences, Juvenile, Young Adult, General Adult, and Mature Adult.

Physical collections cannot be changed to restrict a minor's access to materials. Instead, please follow the American Library Association's recommendation noted above.

Additional Resources

The American Psychological Association has published several PDF resources related to this title for educators, children, and adults that are available for interested readers.

- Read Aloud Tips for Educators (<https://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/pdf/441B228-read-aloud-tips.pdf>)
- Educator Resource Guide (<https://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/pdf/441B228-educator-resource-guide.pdf>)
- Anti-Racism Resources for Children and Adults (<https://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/pdf/something-happened-our-town-anti-racism-resources.pdf>)

CONCLUSION

Future Reconsideration Requests

This report shall appropriately respond to any challenge or request for reconsideration of *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child's Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano until November 8, 2025. At that time, should a formal challenge or request for reconsideration be received by the OWWL Library System, the Executive Director shall once again form a committee to review the title and use this documentation and all other professional material as the foundation of that discussion.

System Policies and Resolutions

For additional information on the selection of System materials, please review the Selection and Reconsideration of Materials Policy and the Resolution on the Freedom to Read by visiting <https://owwl.org/freedomtoread>.

Report Approval

OWWL Library System's Board of Trustees reviewed and approved this report on November 8, 2023.

Approved: November 8, 2023