

Susan Patron's Response

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"I wrote *The Higher Power of Lucky* for the 10-year-old who lives inside me. That girl was curious about everything and sometimes went to great lengths to get information about the world and how it works.

In writing *The Higher Power of Lucky*, I was interested in creating authentic characters who would ring true for readers. I wanted readers to trust that I respect them and would not talk down to them. Like the child-version of myself, Lucky eavesdrops on adult conversations; she is searching for a form of spirituality, a higher power.

I was shocked and horrified to read that some school librarians, teachers, and media specialists are choosing not to include the 2007 Newbery Medal winner in their collections because they fear parental objections to the word scrotum, or because they are uncomfortable with the word themselves. If I were a parent of a middle-grade child, I would want to make decisions about my child's reading myself—I'd be appalled that my school librarian had decided to take on the role of censor and deny my child access to a major award-winning book. And if I were a 10-year-old and learned that adults were worried that the current Newbery book was not appropriate for me, I'd figure out a way to get my mitts on it anyway, its allure intensified by the exciting forbidden-ness—by the unexpressed but obvious fear on the part of these adults.

There's a direct correlation between fear of naming body parts and kids' interest in finding out about them. To figure out the world, children have to unscramble a mishmash of secrets, clues, overheard tidbits, half-truths, out-of-context information, and their own observations. The lucky ones discover the Robie Harris/Michael Emberley books, and/or they have access to parents or teachers or librarians who will answer their questions and define unknown words. The child who learns the definition of scrotum and other body parts in this way, through reading and talking with responsible adults, is armed with, for one thing, an alternative to finding answers through first-hand experience.

As regards 12-step programs, it seems there are also literature gatekeepers who are frightened that children may learn that these recovery programs exist. Do they think children are unaware that drug/alcohol/tobacco/gambling/overeating addictions are rampant in the U.S.? Many children, of course, know about addictions first-hand, through affected family members. Isn't it useful for them to know that some adults choose recovery through a 12-step program? Isn't it one of the truly heartening aspects of our culture that human beings can be this brave?"

Susan Patron