

## An Academic Review of **Gender Queer: A Memoir** by Maia Kobabe

Timeline: On November 11<sup>th</sup> of 2021, pursuant to the parental challenge to the book listed above, a review committee (as instructed in Board Policy 605.05) was formed to evaluate said book and determine if it meets the selection criteria as delineated in Board Policy 605.04. At that meeting, the committee reviewed both policies and then distributed copies of the challenged book to each member.

On November 18<sup>th</sup> of 2021, the committee reconvened. A discussion occurred regarding both the book and the merits of the challenge. The members voted unanimously to keep the book available for check out in the Valley Southwoods Freshman High School library. The book is not a required reading for any academic class.

Discussion Summary: This book is nonfiction; it is a subset of biography referred to as a memoir. The author reports biographical events, presenting the information to the reader in pictures, commonly referred to as graphic novel form (a book in comic strip format), rather than strictly text form.

The committee found that the book is in line with the board selection policy as written: *Materials provided in each school will be appropriate for the age range of students attending the school. The materials will encompass a broad range of topics including topics that may be viewed as controversial. The materials will represent diverse religious, political and ideological views without any attempt to sway readers' opinions. The schools will provide a variety of materials addressing issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion. The material will reflect sensitivity to the needs, rights and aspirations of men and women without preference or bias* (Board Policy 605.04)." This book covers the same type of material as many other text-based books. Menstruation, body image, masturbation, oral and vaginal sex are all topics covered in both biographies and young adult (YA) books commonly found in high school libraries. After reading the book, the committee found the primary purpose of the book to be autobiographical, and *not* to be pornographic or obscene.

The selection policy also states that "*Material of a sensitive nature will be subjected to a test of literary merit by the individuals selecting the materials.*" The committee spent time discussing available reviews for this book. The book has won two literary awards:

- ALA Alex Award (The Alex Awards are given to ten books written for adults that have special appeal to young adults, ages 12 through 18)
- ALA Stonewall Book Awards - Israel Fishman Non-Fiction Award (The Stonewall Book Award of the American Library Association is given annually to English-language books of exceptional merit relating to the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender experience. The award has a specific subcategory for nonfiction books called the Israel Fishman Award)

The committee endorses that high school libraries should be a safe and inclusive place for students of any sexual orientation or gender identity. Books that deal with these topics are appropriate for the age range of Valley Southwoods Freshman High School and support WDMCS Board Policy 605.04.