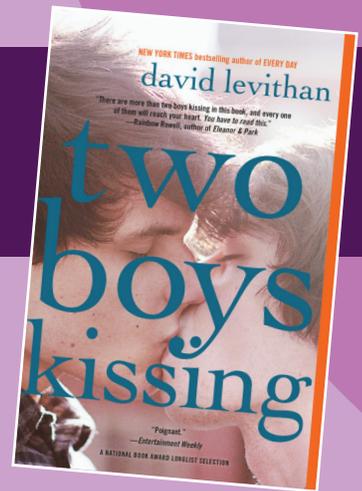


READING BANNED & CHALLENGED BOOKS

TWO BOYS KISSING BY DAVID LEVITHAN

Based on true events—and narrated by a Greek Chorus of the generation of gay men lost to AIDS—*Two Boys Kissing* follows Harry and Craig, two seventeen-year-olds who are about to take part in a 32-hour marathon of kissing to set a new Guinness World Record.



- A traditional Greek chorus serves as narrator in *Two Boys Kissing*. Who is in the chorus? Cite evidence that they are speaking directly to the reader. How is the chorus an effective tool to advance the themes of love, relationships, and sexual identity? Explain the role of the chorus as Cooper stands on the bridge and contemplates suicide.
- Craig and Harry are attempting to break the world record for the longest kiss. How is their kiss about more than a world record? What statement do the boys wish to make by holding the event at their high school?
- Craig Cole and Harry Ramirez are no longer a couple. Debate whether this makes their kiss more or less powerful. Explain why Peter and Neil's kisses are different from Craig and Harry's. Avery and Ryan have a new relationship, Cooper is gay, but not in a relationship, and Tariq is the victim of a hate crime. Trace the importance of each boy's role in the novel. How does each boy's story expand the message of acceptance and inclusiveness?
- Craig's mother doesn't know that he is gay until she sees him breaking the record and kissing Harry. Craig isn't sorry about being gay, but he is sorry his mother found out in this way. Why do you think Craig hadn't discussed his sexuality with his mom? How do the other parents in the book react to their children coming out? Why? Coming out is very personal. Discuss the different emotions experienced by each character as they come out. What could those around them do to make their lives easier during this time?
- Discuss how homophobia, hate, anger, depression, and desperation serve as the antagonists in the novel. Explain the last words of the chorus: "That's all we ask of you. Make more than dust."



- In 2019, a religious activist in Orange City, Iowa, built a bonfire and filmed himself burning *Two Boys Kissing* and two other books that he borrowed from the public library. After he posted the video on social media, he was convicted of criminal mischief and forced to pay a fine. Analyze his behavior. What part of his actions were criminal?
- Parents in Fauquier, Virginia, had an issue with the cover art and asked that the book be removed from the high school. They claimed that the art violated the school's rules about public display of affection. What would you say in response? Current students and alumni defended the book at the school board hearing. Why is it important for students to speak up for their First Amendment rights?
- In other school districts, the book has been challenged because it is deemed "pornographic." Why is *pornography* difficult to define. Do you think *Two Boys Kissing* is pornographic? Would there be a problem if the protagonists were not the same sex? Discuss how you would lodge a defense of this novel to parents who don't understand the book's themes and purpose.

Guide written by Pat Scales, children's literature consultant.

Check out bit.ly/3Jj5OPG
or scan the QR code for more
information about book bans
and how you can take action.

