

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL
REVIEW COMMITTEE

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

IN RE: A COURT OF MIST AND FURY
BY SARAH J. MAAS

This is a matter in which Instructional Material is being addressed by the Instructional Material Review Committee (“IMRC”) of the S.C. State Board of Education (“State Board”) pursuant to S.C. Code Reg. 43-170. The hearing of this matter occurred via Webex on October 31, 2024 at 1:00 PM.

Title of Instructional Material:
Author:

A Court of Mist and Fury
Sarah J. Maas

The “Subject Material” listed above is reviewed by the IMRC “of its own volition and on its own initiative” in order to “make determinations regarding the educational suitability or the Age or Developmental Appropriateness of specific Instructional Materials pursuant to the criteria and requirements of” Reg. 43-170(VI)(B). As further described below, this Regulation authorizes the STATE BOARD to take certain actions related to Instructional Material. The South Carolina Department of Education (“Department”) recommended removing the Subject Material entirely from South Carolina’s public schools.

The Department notified the public of this matter via posting hearing information and the hearing agenda on its website on October 24, 2024. Consistent with governing requirements, the public was invited to sign up in advance of the hearing in order to provide comment regarding the Subject Material. The Hearing was conducted in accordance with Procedures for Review of Instructional Material, State Board Rule of Governance IFC, last revised October 1, 2024, and the South Carolina Administrative Procedures Act, S. C. Code Section 1-23-310 et. seq. The State Board’s Rule of Governance was designed and adopted to provide a full and fair process for Instructional Material reviews under Reg. 43-170.

APPEARANCES

Providing public comment in favor of retaining the Subject Material:

Laura Haverkamp

On Behalf of South Carolina Department of Education:

Robert D. Cathcart, III, Esq., Policy and Legal Advisor

Based on a review of all public comments (in person and written), the Subject Material and/or excerpts in question from the Subject Material, all documentation provided by the Department, and

all comments made by those appearing before the IMRC, we make the following findings of fact and conclusions of law.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Subject Material was questioned during the Public Comment period of the promulgation of Regulation 43-170 or otherwise brought to the State Board's attention.
2. The Subject Material has been listed in public school catalogs in South Carolina.
3. The Subject Material contains the content listed and described in Exhibit A¹.

APPLICABLE LAW

1. Regulation 43-170 authorizes the State Board to take certain actions related to Instructional Material. The State Board can (1) remove the Subject Material entirely, (2) discontinue use of the Subject Material for any grade level or age group for which such use is inappropriate or unsuitable, (3) limit the Subject Material's availability to a student where the school district has received the consent of the student's parent, or (4) permit the continued use of the Subject Material for all grade levels or age groups.
2. Regulation 43-170 defines "Instructional Material(s)":

"Instructional Material(s)" means materials used in a South Carolina K-12 public school classroom, made available in a public school library/media center, or included on a public school's reading list, whether adopted and/or purchased from the state-adopted instructional materials list, adopted and/or purchased through a district instructional materials program, or otherwise purchased, donated to the school, or made available to students through other means, including but not limited to digital platforms. See S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-19-10. The term "Instructional Materials" as used herein includes any collection of books or materials purchased, acquired, or kept on public school grounds by any teacher or other public-school employee and made available to students, regardless of how or by whom such materials are acquired or purchased.

Reg. 43-170(I)(A).

3. Regulation 43-170 defines "Age and Developmentally Appropriate":

"Age and Developmentally Appropriate" means topics, messages, materials, and teaching methods suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on developing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group. Instructional Material is not "Age and Developmentally Appropriate" for any age or age group of children if it includes descriptions or visual depictions of "sexual conduct," as that term is defined by Section 16-15-305(C)(1).

4. Regulation 43-170 authorizes the State Board to establish "a committee comprised of at least five of the State Board's members... [and to] conduct a public meeting" consistent with the Regulation's requirements. Reg. 43-170(IV)(E). Furthermore, it requires the committee to

¹ Exhibit A contains excerpts which are representative of questionable or violative material contained in the Subject Material. The IMRC's review, report, and recommendation is not limited to the excerpts listed on Exhibit A.

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“provide a report and recommendation to the full State Board to be considered and either adopted or rejected by the State Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting.” *Id.*

5. Regulation 43-170 authorizes the State Board to review material “of its own volition and on its own initiative” in order to “make determinations regarding the educational suitability or the Age or Developmental Appropriateness of specific Instructional Materials pursuant to the criteria and requirements of” Reg. 43-170(VI)(B).

RECOMMENDATION

Having carefully considered all public comments (in person and written), the Subject Material and/or excerpts in question from the Subject Material, all documentation provided by the Department, and all comments made by those appearing before the IMRC, we unanimously find that the Subject Material includes descriptions of “sexual conduct” as that term is defined by S.C. Code § 16-15-305(C)(1). While the IMRC’s review of the Subject Material is not limited to Exhibit A, the excerpts contained therein establish a clear violation of the regulation. Therefore, the Subject Material is not Age and Developmentally Appropriate as defined by S.C. Code Reg. 43-170 and must be removed entirely from all public schools in South Carolina.

The IMRC recommends that, considering all the circumstances, *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas be removed entirely from all public schools in South Carolina, beginning on the date of the signing of an Order by the South Carolina State Board of Education.

s/Christian T. Hanley, Jr.

Christian T. Hanley, Jr.

Chairman

Instructional Material Review Committee

November 1, 2024

EXHIBIT A

A Court of Mist and Fury
Maas, Sarah J.

Summary

This is the second book in the *Court of Thorns and Roses* Series. The series follows the vicissitudes of nineteen-year-old Feyre Acheron after she arrives in the fantasyland of Prythian. In this book Feyre must endure the tribulations of Amarantha. She does survive and becomes High Fae but has not yet become more than human and must endure more to save herself and Tamlin.

Availability

Available to students in South Carolina high school libraries.

Excerpts

Pp20-22 Tamlin let out a low snarl of approval, and I bit my bottom lip as he removed his pants, along with his undergarments, revealing the proud, thick length of him. My mouth went dry, and I dragged my gaze up his muscled torso, over the panes of his chest, and then --- Come here," he growled, so roughly the words were barely discernable. I pushed back the blankets, revealing my already naked body, and he hissed. His features turned ravenous while I crawled across the bed and rose up on my knees.

His tongue swept my mouth again, in time to the finger that he slipped inside of me. My hips undulated, demanding more, craving the fullness of him, and his growl reverberated in my chest as he added another finger. I moved on him. Lightning lashed through my veins, and my focus narrowed to his fingers, his mouth, his body on mine. His palm pushed against the bundle of nerves at the apex of my thighs, and I groaned his name as I shattered. My head thrown back, I gulped down night-cool air, and then I was being lowered to the bed, gently, delicately, lovingly. He stretched out above me, his head lowering to my breast, and all it took was one press of his teeth against my nipple before I was clawing at his back, before I hooked my legs around him and he settled between them. This—I needed this.

Pp185,190: He pressed a kiss to the hollow of my throat. "You're as much a monster as me." She curved the knife over my breast, angling it toward my peaked nipple, as if she could see the heart beating beneath. ...the sensitive flesh beneath my breast, her lips hovering a breath above mine as she pushed... They'll sell any bit of information for food, sex, maybe a breath of air."

470ff: I couldn't breathe hard enough, fast enough, as Rhys withdrew his fingers, pulling back so I could meet his stare. He said, "I wanted to do that when I felt how drenched you were at the Court of Nightmares. I wanted to have you right there in the middle of everyone. But mostly I just wanted to do this." His eyes held mine as he brought those fingers to his mouth and sucked on them. On the taste of me. I was going to eat him alive. I slid a hand up to his chest to pin him down, but he gripped my wrist. "When you lick me," he said roughly, I want to be alone—far away from everyone. Because when you lick me, Feyre," he said, pressing nipping kisses to my jaw, my neck, "I'm going to

let myself roar loud enough to bring down a mountain. I was instantly liquid again, and he laughed under his breath. “And when I lick you, he said, sliding his arms around me and tucking me in tight to him, “I want you splayed out on a table like my own personal feast.”

Staff Recommendation

Remove. The excerpts included are not “age and developmentally appropriate” due to descriptions of “sexual conduct,” as defined in S.C. Code Ann. Section 16-15-305 (C)(1)(a) and (d).

** Paginations differ in different editions.*