

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

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL
REVIEW COMMITTEE

IN RE: A COURT OF WINGS AND
RUIN BY SARAH J. MAAS

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

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 Wings and Ruin
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.

Report and Recommendation
A Court of Wings and Ruin

“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 Wings and Ruin* 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 Wings & Ruin
Maas, Sarah J.

Summary

In this book, Freya must use lies and deceit to achieve her goal of saving both herself and Tamlin. She spies on Tamlin and King of Hybern who wants to conquer Prythian. But the tangled web of deceit makes it more difficult for her to figure out who can be trusted and who cannot. Available to students in several South Carolina high school-age libraries.

Availability

Available to students in South Carolina high school libraries.

Excerpts

pp.130ff: My eyes fluttered closed, and his hands coasted around my hips to cup my rear, squeezing as he bent to kiss the center of my throat. “The sounds you make when I’m inside you.” His tongue flicked over the spot where he’d kissed, and one of those sounds indeed escaped me. Rhys kissed the hollow of my collarbone, and my core went utterly molten. “My brave, bold, brilliant mate.” He lifted his head, and it was an effort to open my eyes. To meet his stare as his hands roved in lazy lines down my back, over my rear, then up again. “I love you,” he said. And if I hadn’t already believed him, felt it in my very bones, the light in his face as he said the words ...

“You have a choice,” he murmured against my cheekbone. “Either I lick every inch of you clean ...” His hand grazed the tip of my breast, circling lazily. As if we had days and days to do this. “Or you can get into the bath that should be ready by now.” I pulled away, lifting a brow. “Are you suggesting that I smell?” Rhys smirked, and I could have sworn my core pounded in answer. “Never. But ...” His eyes darkened, the desire and amusement fading as he took in my clothes. “There is blood on you. Yours, and others’. I thought I’d be a good mate and offer you a bath before I ravish you wholly.”

I smirked, daring a look at his own pants. At the evidence of what, exactly, this was doing to him, pressing against the black material with impressive demand. I simply crooned, “Too bad there isn’t room in the tub for two.” “A design flaw, and one I shall remedy tomorrow.” His voice was rough, quiet—and it slid invisible hands down my breasts, between my legs. Mother save me. I somehow managed to walk, to climb into the tub. Somehow managed to remember how to bathe myself.

Further and further onto the bed, until I was bare before him. Until I took in the considerable, proud length of him and my core tightened in answer. “Rhys,” I breathed, his name a plea on my tongue. His wings flared, chest heaving as stars sparked in his eyes. And it was the longing there—beneath the desire, beneath the need—it was the longing in those beautiful eyes that made me glance to the mountains tattooed on his knees. ...No playing, no delaying—I wanted him on me, in me. I needed to feel him, hold him, share breath with him. He heard the edge of desperation, felt it through the mating bond flowing between us. His eyes did not leave mine as he prowled over me,

every movement graceful as a stalking plains-cat. Interlacing our fingers, his breathing uneven, Rhys used a knee to nudge my legs apart and settle between them. Carefully, lovingly, he laid our joined hands beside my head as he guided himself into me and whispered in my ear, “You’re mine, too.”

pp. 218*ff: His hand slid down my thigh, then cupped my knee, his thumb brushing along its side. Even through my leathers, the heat of him seeped to my very bones. “Maybe I’ll haul you between the stacks and see how quiet you can be.” “Hmmm.” I flipped through the pages, not seeing any of the text. His hand began a lethal, taunting exploration up my thigh, his fingers grazing along the sensitive inside. Higher, higher. He leaned in to drag a book toward himself, but whispered in my ear, “Or maybe I’ll spread you out on this desk and lick you until you scream loud enough to wake whatever is at the bottom of the library.” I whipped my head toward him. His eyes were glazed—almost sleepy. “I was fully committed to that plan,” I said, even as his hand stopped very, very close to the apex of my thighs, “until you brought in that thing down below.” A feline smile. He held my stare as his tongue brushed his bottom lip. My breasts tightened beneath my shirt, and his gaze dropped—watching. “I would have thought,” he mused, “that our bout this morning would be enough to tide you over until tonight.” His hand slid between my legs, brazenly cupping me, his thumb pushing down on an aching spot. A low groan slipped from me, and my cheeks heated in its wake. “Apparently, I didn’t do a good enough job satiating you, if you’re so easily riled after a few hours.” “Prick,” I breathed, but the word was ragged. His thumb pressed down harder, circling roughly. Rhys leaned in again, kissing my neck—that place right under my ear—and said against my skin, “Let’s see what names you call me when my head is between your legs, Feyre darling.”

p. 418*: Tamlin only angled his head at Rhys. “When you fuck her, have you ever noticed that little noise she makes right before she climaxes?”

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) & (d).

** Paginations differ in different editions.*