

Cinderella is Dead by Kalynn Bayron is another book challenged by the Texas State Legislature for inappropriate content.

The premise for ***Cinderella is Dead*** reads: *It's 200 years after Cinderella found her prince, but the fairy tale is over. Teen girls are now required to appear at the Annual Ball, where the men of the kingdom select wives based on a girl's display of finery. If a suitable match is not found, the girls not chosen are never heard from again.*

Sixteen-year-old Sophia would much rather marry Erin, her childhood best friend, than parade in front of suitors. At the ball, Sophia makes the desperate decision to flee, and finds herself hiding in Cinderella's mausoleum. There, she meets Constance, the last known descendant of Cinderella and her step sisters. Together they vow to bring down the king once and for all—and in the process, they learn that there's more to Cinderella's story than they ever knew . . .

This fresh take on a classic story will make readers question the tales they've been told, and root for girls to break down the constructs of the world around them.

The best thing about this story is the way it handles societal expectations placed on girls and how they can break free of those constraints. The classic princess stories did so much to reinforce those standards, and it's refreshing to see one that challenges it, while keeping the heart of the original.

The reason it is challenged comes down to the intersection of Sophia's identity. Not only is she a Black protagonist, she is also a lesbian and becomes romantically involved with the descendant of Cinderella. While there are moments of violence in the story, it doesn't exceed that of its genre peers.

While some have taken issue with the story, *Cinderella is Dead* offers readers a chance to subvert their own expectations of truth, and love.

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About the Book



The novel's main character and narrator is a 17 year-old loner named Greg Gaines. Greg spends most of his time with his best friend Earl, who shares his love for filmmaking. During his senior year, Greg's mother urges him to rekindle his friendship with a classmate named Rachel, who suffers from leukemia. Greg attempts to connect with her by showing her some of the movies he made with Earl. As her condition deteriorates, he begins making a movie about Rachel, which thrusts him into the spotlight he has tried to avoid for all of high school. Despite its serious content, the story is told through humor using Greg's distinctive teenage voice.

Critical Reception

Me and Earl and the Dying Girl received positive reviews upon its release and became a *New York Times* bestseller. VOYA called the novel "highly recommended reading material" and "a fascinating look into the mind of a teen" in February 2012, with the caveat that its use of crude language makes it best suited for older teen readers. *School Library Journal* recommends it for grades nine and up for the same

reason. *Kirkus* (February 2012) also praised it, noting that Andrews “succeeds brilliantly in painting a portrait of a kid whose responses to emotional duress are entirely believable and sympathetic, however fiercely he professes his essential crappiness as a human being.” The *Kirkus* review also notes that ***Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*** is very unique, despite comparisons to the similar subject matter in John Green’s 2011 bestseller *The Fault in Our Stars*. *Booklist* (March 2012) additionally called the work “profound” in its starred review. Saying “One need only look at the chapter titles (“Let’s Just Get This Embarrassing Chapter Out of the Way”) to know that this is one funny book.”

Several reviewers noted that the novel’s structure, which at times resembles a screenplay, makes it a good pick for reluctant readers. Greg narrates much of the story in a stream of consciousness style, making it relatable to teens.

“Mr. Andrews’ often hilarious teen dialogue is utterly convincing, and his characters are compelling. Greg’s random sense of humor, terrible self-esteem and general lack of self-awareness all ring true. Like many YA authors, Mr. Andrews blends humor and pathos with true skill, but he steers clear of tricky resolutions and overt life lessons, favoring incremental understanding and growth.”

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Challenges

One high profile challenge of ***Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*** took place in December 2021 before the [Greenville, Michigan](#) Board of Education. On December 13, parents complained to the school board about “vulgar” books appearing in school libraries. Andrews’ novel was explicitly named due to its language. This incident prompted a response from the author himself, who took to [Twitter](#) to express his feelings. Here, Andrews acknowledged the increasing prevalence of book challenges and linked to [resources](#) from PEN America about how students can fight for intellectual freedom.