

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe

Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2012

Reviews

- [Kirkus Reviews](#) (18 April 2012): “Ari, a loner who's good in a fight, is caught off guard by the self-assured, artistic Dante. The two develop an easy friendship, ribbing each other about who is more Mexican, discussing life's big questions, and wondering when they'll be old enough to take on the world. An accident near the end of summer complicates their friendship while bringing their families closer. Sáenz's interplay of poetic and ordinary speech beautifully captures this transitional time: " 'That's a very Dante question,' I said. 'That's a very Ari answer,' he said.... For a few minutes I wished that Dante and I lived in the universe of boys instead of the universe of almost-men." Plot elements come together at the midpoint as Ari, adding up the parts of his life, begins to define himself. Meticulous pacing and finely nuanced characters underpin the author's gift for affecting prose that illuminates the struggles within relationships .”
- [Publishers Weekly](#) (19 December 2011): “It’s a tender, honest exploration of identity and sexuality, and a passionate reminder that love—whether romantic or familial—should be open, free, and without shame.”
- [The Book Smugglers](#) (14 February 2013): “*Aristotle and Dante* is a smart, intelligent, engaging coming-of-age story and a deep, thoughtful exploration of identity and sexuality.”

Awards

- [Stonewall Book Award](#), 2013
- [Michael L. Printz Award Honor Book](#), 2013
- [Pura Belpré Author Award](#), 2013

Lists

- [The 100 Best YA Books of All Time](#) - Time (11 August 2021)
- [The 125 Best YA Books Everyone Should Read, Regardless of Their Age](#) - Cosmopolitan (15 April 2022)

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Response to challenges

- [Indian River County Schools, FL](#): “The vast majority of the challenged books, about 150, were allowed to remain in the libraries, some with grade level restrictions. ... The district’s Policy 9130 says ‘No challenged material may be removed from the curriculum or from a collection of resource materials except by action of the Board, and no challenged material may be removed solely because it presents ideas that may be unpopular or offensive to some.’”
- [Collierville Schools, TN](#): “Shamsuddin appeared before the Legislature to protest [Senate Bill 1944](#) and [House Bill 0800](#) that would prohibit what is deemed “obscene” materials on school premises. She was outraged to learn some 300 hundred books with LGBTQ+ topics or titles had been removed from Collierville school libraries and reviewed for content prior to the passage of the measures. Since the bills were not signed, the books were returned to their shelves.”
- [Granbury Independent School District, TX](#): “Kate Huddleston, an attorney for the ACLU, said the school district should apologize for the removals and release a statement explicitly affirming its commitment to LGBTQ and racial inclusivity as well as to teaching the history of racism and racial injustice. She said removing the books in the first place will have a chilling effect and could discourage children of color and LGBTQ youth in the district from seeking out those titles even when they’re available again.”
- [Klein Independent School District, TX](#): “Schools, and in particular school libraries, must be a place where students have broad access to a wide variety of ideas—both the popular and unpopular ones of the moment. Simply put, Klein ISD cannot remove or ban school library books selected for scrutiny—by Klein ISD or by a state legislator—due to their content or the views they express. The First Amendment prevents the district from suppressing the ideas that LGBTQ+ people belong, deserve acceptance and inclusion in American society, and have a wide array of life experiences. It likewise prevents the district from suppressing messages of racial inclusivity and belonging, or accounts of the United States’ long history of racial injustice. This is because the comfort of some cannot come at the expense of students’ constitutional rights.”

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