

Book Rationale
Running with Scissors: A Memoir by Augusten Burroughs
Prepared by Kelley McDaniel
Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL) Intellectual Freedom Chair
May 2009

Title: *Running with Scissors: A Memoir*

Author: Augusten Burroughs

Publisher: St. Martin's Press

Copyright Date: 2002

Location: Material is located in the school library, which serves grade 6-12 and is available to be borrowed by any member of the school community

Objection: Parent thinks book is inappropriate for sixth graders.

Summary: "*Running With Scissors* is the true story of a boy whose mother (a poet with delusions of Anne Sexton) gave him away to be raised by her unorthodox psychiatrist who bore a striking resemblance to Santa Claus. So at the age of twelve, Burroughs found himself amidst Victorian squalor living with the doctor's bizarre family, and befriending a pedophile who resided in the backyard shed. The story of an outlaw childhood where rules were unheard of, and the Christmas tree stayed up all year-round, where Valium was consumed like candy, and if things got dull, an electroshock therapy machine could provide entertainment. The funny, harrowing, and bestselling account of an ordinary boy's survival under the most extraordinary circumstances..." - <http://us.macmillan.com/runningwithscissors>

Awards & Honors:

New York Times Best Seller List - 150 weeks

Publishers Weekly Paperback/Trade Best Seller List – 34 weeks as of 2/19/07

Reviews:

1. *Running with Scissors*. Burroughs, Augusten (author). *Booklist*. July 2002. 288p. St. Martin's, hardcover, \$23.95 (0-312-28370-9). 818. First published June 1, 2002.
2. "[Saturday Review: She is walking through the kitchen...: Ian Sansom is not wholly convinced by a tale of dysfunctional American family life.](#)" Ian Sansom. *The Guardian*. London (UK): Feb 15, 2003. p. 15
3. "Childhood in Wackiland, Painful but Outrageous" [Review] Janet Maslin. *New York Times*. (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: Jun 20, 2002. pg. E.9
RUNNING WITH SCISSORS: A Memoir by Augusten Burroughs 304 pages. St. Martin's Press. \$23.95.
4. "[Take my family, please: Two memoirs explore the mysteries of childhood in the 1970's](#)" Virginia Heffernan. *New York Times Book Review*. New York: Jul 14, 2002. p. 7 (1 page) -- attached
5. "A Childhood So Strange, He Had to Turn It Into Satire" [Book Review] Merle Rubin. *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Jul 22, 2002. pg. E.3 [HOME EDITION]
6. "Review: Books: Did Golda Meir deserve this?: Welcome to dysfunctional America, toothpaste sandwiches and all" *Running with Scissors* by Augusten Burroughs Atlantic Books pounds 14.99, pp320. Rachel Cooke. *The Observer*. London (UK): Feb 23, 2003. pg. 17
7. *RUNNING WITH SCISSORS (Book)*. Preview By: Zaleski, Jeff; Gold, Sarah F.; Rotella, Mark; Andriani, Lynn. *Publishers Weekly*, 6/3/2002, Vol. 249 Issue 22, p77, 2p.

8. “Book reviews: Running with scissors: Don't try this at home ... growing up in the psychiatrist's asylum” John McTernan. *Scotland on Sunday*. Edinburgh (UK): Feb 9, 2003. p. 6 [REVIEW Edition]

9. “When life gets too real, retire to the tub – privately” Craig Wilson. *USA Today*. McLean, Va.: Aug 14, 2002. p. D.01 [FINAL Edition]

See Also ...

- Augusten Burroughs – Home. [Author’s website] <http://www.augusten.com/site/index.php>
- Macmillan: Running with Scissors: A Memoir Augusten Burroughs: Books. [Publisher’s web page for the book] <http://us.macmillan.com/runningwithscissors>

Made into a feature length film released in 2006 ...

- Running with Scissors (2006). <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0439289/>

*"I write everything fully expecting to some day end up on Court TV, and I'm fully prepared to be challenged legally. Everything I write is the truth and I know that I would win. I've got journals--I mean, I was walking around with a tape recorder, basically, throughout my childhood. So... go ahead, challenge that one line, you know? Some things, you do have to creatively recreate, and that's fine, but I like to know the essence of it is true." --AUGUSTEN BURROUGHS'S RESPONSE WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE VERACITY OF *Running with Scissors*, WHICH IS UP TO A WHOPPING 2.4 MILLION COPIES IN PRINT. (PW, 2/19/07)*

The producers of the movie and the author were threatened with a lawsuit by the Turcotte family for defamation. Both suits were settled ...

“Family settles with Sony over ‘Scissors’; suit against author remains” [1 Edition] David Mehegan. *Boston Globe*. Boston, Mass.: Oct 18, 2006. pg. D.2

“Scissors Author Settles Suit” [Brief] Lawrence Van Gelder. *New York Times*. (Late Edition (East Coast)). New York, N.Y.: Aug 31, 2007. pg. E.2

Why this book may have value in a secondary school library ...

- Although the book was written for and marketed to an adult audience, it is a coming-of age story about a young adolescent--which is subject matter appropriate for and relevant to young adults.
- Books that have been made into movies often have special appeal, and the book (upon which the movie is based) is frequently requested after someone watches the movie.
- Studying and writing memoirs are often curricular activities in English Language Arts classes. *Running with Scissors* is a memoir that offers the unique perspective of growing up with a dysfunctional family.
- The fact that the author of this memoir was sued for defamation—and the resulting settlement—raise an important issue in memoir writing and provide a unique opportunity to discuss libel, slander and defamation.
- This memoir deals with some difficult issues (coming to terms with one’s sexuality, sexual abuse, growing up with a dysfunctional family) that are still relevant for young people today.