

***That Librarian* by Amanda Jones: Reading Group Guide**

1. Jones refers to Arthur Miller's classic play, *The Crucible*, in the first chapter of *That Librarian*: "What was happening to me reminded me so much of the fear and hysteria in that play" (15). Consider (re)reading this text with your book club in tandem with *That Librarian*, and discussing any parallels you may find with Jones's case, as well as other contemporary events that feel reminiscent of the 1600s society the play depicts.
2. Chapter 2 begins with an epigraph by Martin Luther King Jr: "A man dies when he refuses to stand up for that which is right. A man dies when he refuses to stand up for justice. A man dies when he refuses to take a stand for that which is true." Discuss this quote in how it applies to both Jones's case, as well as to many others fighting on the frontlines of censorship wars. What does it mean to you?
3. In the first chapter of *That Librarian*, Jones tells her readers, "Sadly, my experience is by no means unique" (7), and points out that issues of book banning, defamation, and other such challenges are happening to librarians across the country, "in both rural and urban areas" (43). While some such other cases are touched upon in the book, consider researching additional American librarians' experiences with book banning, and discuss your findings with your book club. What are some commonalities between these cases? Are there any significant differences?
4. What is something new you may have learned about the role of libraries, librarians, and collection development policies while reading *That Librarian*?
5. In chapter 3, Jones references Deborah Caldwell-Stone saying, "Each attempt to ban a book . . . represents a direct attack on every person's constitutionally protected right to freely choose what books to read and what ideas to explore. The choice of what to read must be left to the reader, or, in the case of children, to parents. That choice does not belong to self-appointed book police" (48). Discuss these ideas further with your book club.
6. "Books provide comfort and libraries provide safe spaces. If anyone says otherwise, I'd ask them when they last visited a library or spoke to a librarian" (190). How might a public library have enriched you, with its collections, programs, or staff (or all of these!)? Reflect with your book club on your experiences.
7. Some effects of censorship and challenges on libraries and librarians are readily apparent, but some may be more insidious. Jones explains that "the rise in book challenges, outright book bans, legislation, and attacks on authors, librarians, and the LGBTQIA+ community have caused a rise in soft, or silent, censorship. Soft censorship is when librarians do not purchase books for fear of reprisal, whether that comes in the form of personal attacks on social media, book challenges, or even losing their jobs" (59–60). Consider doing some deeper research on this issue with your book club. What are some other less immediately apparent ways that attacks on books and libraries might manifest and negatively impact libraries and the communities they serve?

8. In chapter 4, Jones shares some books she loves, and the profound impact they've had on shaping her life and worldview, opening her up to greater empathy. What are some books that have had similar impacts on you? Have any of those books ever been banned or challenged? (You may be surprised if you do some research!) Discuss with your book club.
9. In chapter 5, Jones speaks about Marley Dias, founder of #1000BlackGirlBooks and author of *Marley Dias Gets It Done and So Can You*, and her appearance on *The View*: "Little did I know that her ten-minute interview would shake my entire mindset and begin to open my eyes to aspects of my and my students' experiences I'd never thought about" (79). Consider learning more about Dias and her mission with your book club, [watching the mentioned View appearance](#), and/or reading her book in tandem with *That Librarian*.
10. Jones refers to Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's sentiment that books should be "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors" (86). Discuss this idea further with your book club. What does it mean to you?
11. As Jones explains in chapter 12, one of the many roles of school librarians is to teach digital citizenship: "While school librarians are teaching these skills, [students'] parents and grandparents offer up real-world examples of how NOT to act online" (194). Discuss ethical digital citizenship with your book club, and what it means to you. What would you like to see changed about the way we as a society use the internet and social media? How can we work together to help create that change? Consider consulting PEN America's ["Online Harassment Field Manual"](#) (as mentioned by Jones in the book).
12. In chapter 15, Jones offers some ideas of how you can help in your own community, from attending a school board, library, or local governance meeting, emailing positive words of thanks to your local librarians, learning about your local legislature and their donors, to building an alliance of your own. Consider participating in some of these options with your book club after reading *That Librarian*.
13. Throughout *That Librarian*, Jones references the "Miller Test" for obscenity—research the test, its policies, and its history, and discussing with your book club.
14. Jones's full speech to the Livingston Parish Library Board of Control appears as the last section of the book. Consider the speech's placement at the end of the book rather than at the beginning. Why do you think it appears where it does? What impact does this placement have on your reading experience?
15. Jones references many organizations that have assisted her in her work such as PEN America, EveryLibrary, the American Library Association, and more. Consider looking into these organizations and their missions with your book club, and discussing your findings. What is something new you might have learned?