

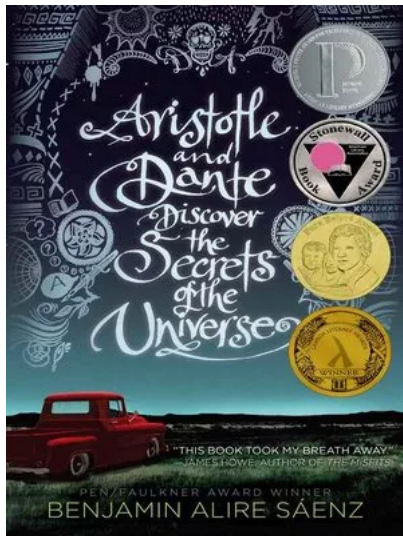
BOOK REVIEW:

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe

By Benjamin Alire Saenz

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONTENT AVAILABLE AT TEXAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICTS



“Yeah.” I pictured Legs lying at Dante’s feet, whimpering at the sound of the thunder. I pictured Dante kissing her, telling her everything was all right. Dante who loved kissing dogs, who loved kissing his parents, who loved kissing boys, who even loved kissing girls. Maybe kissing was part of the human condition. Maybe I wasn’t human. Maybe I wasn’t part of the natural order of things. But Dante enjoyed kissing. And I suspected he liked masturbating too. I thought masturbating was embarrassing. I didn’t even know why. It just was. It was like having sex with yourself. Having sex with yourself was really weird. Autoeroticism. I’d looked it up in a book in the library. God, I felt stupid just thinking about these things. Some guys talked about sex all the time. I heard them at school. Why were they so happy when they talked about sex? It made me feel miserable. Inadequate. There was that word again. And why was I thinking about these things in the middle of a rainstorm, sitting at the kitchen table with my mother and father? I tried to bring my thoughts back into the kitchen. Where I was. Where I lived. I hated the thing of living in my head.

AND I SAID: SWEET. YOU SAID SWEET. I THINK I’LL GET MY SWEET FROM CHOCOLATE.

And then he got mad and called me a *pinchi joto* and all sorts of other names and he said he was gonna kick my ass all the way to the border. And who the fuck did I think I was, thinking that I was too good to shoot up or even smoke cigarettes and didn’t I know that nobody liked me because I thought of myself as Mr. *Gabacho*.

Mr. *Gabacho*.

I hated that. I was as Mexican as he was. And I was bigger than he was too. I wasn’t exactly afraid of the little son of a bitch. And I said, “Why don’t you get someone else to do drugs with you, *vato*?” I figured the guy was lonely. But he didn’t have to be an asshole about it.

And he said, “You’re gay, *vato*, you know that?”

What the hell was the guy talking about? I was gay because I didn’t want to shoot up heroin?

And then I said: “Yeah, I’m gay and I want to kiss you.”

And then he got this really disgusted look on his face and said: “I ought to kick your ass.”

And I said: “Go ahead.”

Then he just flipped me off and, and well, he just took off—which was okay with me. I mean, I sort of liked the guy before he got into all this mood-altering substance abuse thing and to tell myself the truth, I was really curious about the heroin thing, but, you know, I just wasn’t ready.

A guy has to be ready for important things. That’s how I saw it.

I got to thinking about Dante and how he’d had a few beers and I thought about the couple of beers I’d had with Gina and Susie and I wondered what it would be like to get drunk. I mean really drunk. I wondered if it felt good. I mean, Dante had even tried pot. I got to thinking about my

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Seven to one. That's the ratio of Dante Letters to Ari Letters. Just so you know. When I get back this summer, I'm going to take you swimming and drown you. Almost drown you. Then I'll give you mouth-to-mouth and revive you. How does that sound? Sounds good to me. Am I freaking you out yet?

So on the business of kissing. This girl who've I've been experimenting with. I mean with the kisses. She's a good kisser. She's taught me a lot in that department. But she finally said to me, "Dante, I think that when you kiss me, you're kissing someone else."

"Yeab," I said. "Guess so."

"Are you kissing another girl? Or are you kissing a boy?"

I thought that was a very interesting and forward question.

PROFANITY COUNT (and other sensitive words)

Hell 43	B*stard 4
Screw or Screwing or Screwed 14	Breasts 2
Ass, asshole, wiseass 43	Sh*t, Sh*tty or bullsh*t 54
Transvestie 3	Kissing 40
Sex 10	Prostitute 3
Autoeroticism 1	D*ammit 2
God (in vain and otherwise) 24	D*mn 14
Masturbate 4	Pot 11
Gay 3	Beer 53
Heroin 2	Drunk 9
F*ck 14 (or f*cking)	Screw or Screwed or Screwing 14

RED FLAGS

Sexual Content

Extreme Violence

Language

Drugs, Drinking, Smoking

CONCLUSION

Not appropriate literary content for K-12 schools