

Some Kind of Hate

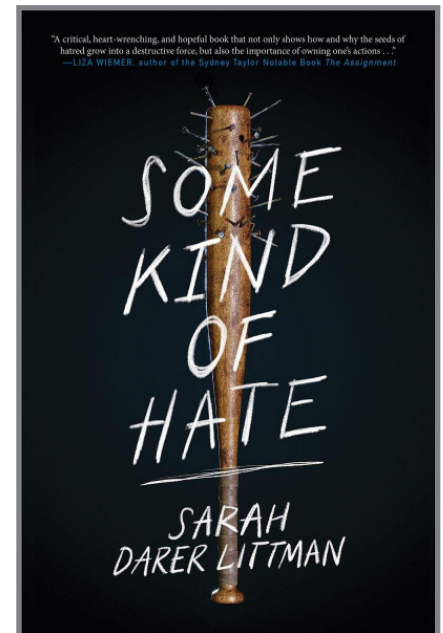
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RECOMMENDED FOR: Upper Secondary
(Violence, Language)



SYNOPSIS

Declan Taylor is furious at the world. After winning state as a freshman starting pitcher, he accidentally messes up his throwing arm. Despite painful surgery and brutal physical therapy, he might never pitch again. And instead of spending the summer with his friends, Declan is forced to get a job to help his family out. On top of that, it seems like his best friend, Jake Lehrer, is flirting with Declan's crush and always ditching him to hang out with the team or his friends from synagogue.

So Declan ends up playing a lot of *Imperialist Empires* online and making new friends. It's there he realizes he's been playing with Finn, a kid from his class. Finn is the first person who might be just as angry as Declan. As the two spend more time together, Finn also introduces Declan to others who understand what it's like when the world is working against you, no matter how much you try. How white kids like them are being denied opportunities because others are manipulating the system. And the more time Declan spends with Finn, the more he sees what they're saying as true. So when his new friends decide it's time to fight back, Declan is right there with them. Even if it means going after Jake and his family. And each new battle for the cause makes Declan feel in control of his rage, channeling it into saving his future. But when things turn deadly, Declan is going to have to decide just how far he'll go and what he's willing to sacrifice.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Darer Littman is the critically acclaimed author of *Some Kind of Hate*; *Deepfake*, *Backlash*; *Want to Go Private?*; *Anything But Okay*; *In Case You Missed It*; *Life, After*; and *Purge*. She is also an award-winning news columnist and teaches writing at Western Connecticut State University and with the Yale Writers' Workshop. Sarah lives in Connecticut with her family in a house that never seems to have enough bookshelves.

You can visit her online at sarhdarerlittman.com.

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, as a class, discuss the book cover and title. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What does the image on the cover show? Combined with the title of the book, what does the cover artwork tell us about the novel?
 - Are there different types of hate? If so what could they be; and if not, why do you think this?
 - What do you hypothesise might happen in this novel? Why do you think this?

- What genre do you expect this novel might be, and why do you think this?
- Read the introduction. As a class, discuss what you think the author means when she says ‘it’s important to recognise coded language and rhetoric used to promote hateful ideas when you encounter it in everyday life and online spaces.’ Can you think of any times in your own life when you have come across this type of coded language? What might be the consequences of someone not recognising it, and why would this be the case?
- At the beginning of the novel, Declan states he is ‘going to show Megan what a real man does instead of watching baking shows’. As a class, discuss the problematic nature of this statement. Some things to include in your discussion could be:
 - What does Declan mean when he says a ‘real man’?
 - Why does Declan see watching baking shows as not being a real man?
 - What are the implications of using this statement—what would a man who is not ‘real’ be considered to be according to this type of rhetoric?
 - What are some other words and phrases surrounding this topic that you have heard or read, and how were they used and in which contexts?
- When Declan has his accident, in spite of having health insurance, his parents are faced with sizeable bills for his hospital stay, surgery and post-operative recovery. In pairs, or small groups, present a short argument to the class on the topic ‘The modern United States does not have a healthcare system, instead they have a healthcare industry that costs both the individual and society more than a fully funded public healthcare system would.’ Research online or in the library to find sources to either confirm or discredit this statement. After your presentations, as a class synthesise the information shared, and create a brief synopsis of how and why a fully accessible healthcare system can be beneficial to both individuals and society, and in what ways.
- Declan says that ‘FenrirLupus doesn’t seem to like women a whole lot. But his memes make me laugh.’ What is so problematic about ‘funny’ memes that are disparaging to a minority group, being shared and laughed at?
- As a class, or in small groups, write a dot-point analysis breaking down Declan’s early steps in the journey from ordinary teen to hate-filled radical. Note the key points of what happened to him and when, and how the online hatemongers initially target and groom him for membership.
- Individually, write a brief response to the following statement:
 - Misogyny, often presented humorously, can be used by hate groups to gradually introduce new recruits to increasingly vicious levels of bigotry against a wide variety of minorities. Members will frequently engage in small acts that encapsulate sexist principles, and when called on this behaviour will likely respond with claims that they were simply joking.

In your response, relate this statement to the events that took place as part of Declan’s induction into a hate group, starting with the memes shared online by FenrirLupus. Include at least three pieces of evidence from the text that support your assertions.

- At the start of the novel, Declan was Jake’s best friend, and would have been appalled if someone had come out with a blatantly anti-semitic statement aimed at Jake. In small groups, discuss how his viewpoint could possibly change so much, that by the end of the novel he saw nothing wrong with graffitiing swastikas on a Jewish-owned business. Use this discussion to help you write a brief summary of how he was radicalised, and what factors led to this change. Include evidence from the text to support your assertions.
- Why do you think the author chose to write the story predominantly from the point of view of Declan? As a class, discuss the reasons behind the author’s choice of viewpoint throughout, why and when it changes, and the rationale behind it being told primarily using Declan’s words.
 - Write an assessment of the way Declan’s ‘voice’—as presented by the author—changes over the course of his radicalisation. Be sure to use evidence from the text to back up your assertions.
- The advice that Jarred Stonepen gives over his podcasts mixes supremacist thinking with sensible advice. As a class, discuss what in his podcasts is good advice, what is sexist or racist, and what is coded supremacist rhetoric that leads to a sense of entitled superiority and fosters hate.
 - In small groups, discuss why having clearly sensible advice in the mix makes the whole thing so dangerous.
- What is a Social Justice Warrior, why and how has the term come into being, and why is it being used as an insult

rather than as praise? In what ways can fighting for Social Justice be seen as a bad thing, and which groups are predisposed to seeing it that way?

- Finn tells Declan that Betheny spends her time writing comments online, and that she is a master troll. What is a master troll and why would someone want to start a flame war? Who benefits from this type of anger and disagreement in online spaces?
- What are some ways that you can prevent yourself from being exploited or radicalised online? As a class, discuss this topic, and create a list of safe practices in online spaces. You may want to combine small group research with class brainstorming sessions to help you create your list.
- Is there anything that Declan's friends or family could or should have done to help prevent his radicalisation? What are some of the problematic behaviours that we saw from him early on in the course of his recruitment, that might have allowed some of them to guess at what was happening?
- Mr Morrison gets his class to critically assess the different websites used to support students' arguments. As a class, practise assessing whether a website is a reliable and reputable source or not. Before starting, make a class list of specific criteria to look for, and what to look out for. Choose at least six websites from an online search result, that all talk about the same topic, and assess whether they would be a reliable source.
- Why is it important to have conversations about how and why hate-groups come into being, and how they recruit and radicalise people? How can knowledge of how hate-groups operate protect us?
- Declan is willing to believe that the Holocaust never happened—even after seeing primary evidence of old and clearly original photographs that his own great grandfather took. As a class, discuss how and why it can be so difficult to fight a rising tide of misinformation and even worse, deliberate disinformation disseminated by hate-groups and supremacists.
- Visit a holocaust museum or memorial. On returning to class, write a recount sharing how you felt before, during, and after the excursion.
- In the Hannukah service for children, the youthful congregation were asked how they can help to spread light in the world. In small groups, or as a class, think of different ways that you too can help to spread light.
- Anger is a sadly common human response to distressing events. How can we deal with our own anger when things go wrong, instead of doing what Declan did and looking for someone else to blame, or even just taking it out on others?
- Read the Author's note at the end of the novel, and discuss what you have learnt from the author sharing both her personal perspective, and from reading Declan's story.
- What do you think must have been the hardest part of the book to write, and why?
- As a class, discuss the statement 'genocides don't occur quickly', and its implications for what we can see happening in the world around us today.
- How did reading this novel make you feel? Write down a comprehensive list of all the different emotional responses that you felt over the course of reading the novel. If you wish, you can clarify what triggered each specific emotional response. Create an artwork inspired by your listed emotions.

AUTHOR OF NOTES

RAE CARLYLE