
The Disturbing Beauty Of Lolita

Many authors have acclaimed the 1955 novel, *Lolita*, written by Russian-American novelist Vladimir Nabokov as “the greatest work of the 20th century.” Undoubtedly, it has received challenges against whether it is appropriate. Banned in almost every country, it is one of the most controversial novels of the 20th century. The novel even received raised eyebrows in getting published! Nabokov initially showed an American publisher the novel and was denied many times because of controversial themes. After many failed attempts, Nabokov found a willing publisher in Paris, later finding out that Olympia Press was known for publishing pornographic pulp novels.

Lolita explores themes such as paedophilia by demonstrating the unsettling relationship between an intelligent literature professor and his young nymphette housemate. *Lolita* is one of many controversial novels that you feel the need to check your surroundings so no one sees what you are reading. The novel is mainly challenged in 2006 by the Marion County Public Library in Ocala, Florida, voting to have the county attorney review the novel to determine if it was unsuitable for minors (Banned or Challenged Book). Despite the novel not containing sexually explicit scenes, it does, however, have very suggestive sexual themes. Another issue with the novel is the possible inspiration. *Lolita*’s narrative depended more on a real-life crime, The 21-month long kidnapping of 11-year-old Sally Horner than Nabokov would ever admit (Weinman).

In light of these controversies, the novel is still something children should not be banned from reading. To strip the book down to nothing more than a relationship between a man and a child does the truth in the literature a disrespect. Nabokov is famous for his prose writing, The narrator and main character Humbert Humbert writes while in confinement awaiting trial for murder, claiming to be a poet “You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style” he says (Page 11). When I first read this book I saw it as a love story because I never read a book that played with such controversial themes. After reading it more times and discussing it with others I was able to establish the unreliable point of view from the narrator. To find sections where *Lolita*’s consent is ignored with someone else’s perspective, I was able to see what is going on in the subtext.

In my opinion, the most important lesson in the writing that has resonated with me the most is how it messes with its reader psychologically. We start rooting for Humbert, despite knowing it is wrong. Reading it for the first time, it is hard to not be able to see Humbert as something of a victim. We may even blame the book and claiming it as a glorification of paedophilia, but the novel does not praise paedophilia, the narrator is condemned for his actions and *Lolita* is the clear victim. She was robbed of her innocence and childhood. She is desensitized of what sex and love are, viewing sex as an exchange for movie tickets and nice clothes. Despite Humbert trying to please *Lolita*, it became increasingly obvious that he is driven by his predatory desires and has no idea of her as a real person. When I read his surprise upon learning he was never a great love for her as she has been for him, I began to wonder whether she was the great love of his life or if he created her from the memory of an aborted love affair in his youth.

In conclusion, this book should not be banned or restricted from reading. It is an amazing book

that challenges the reader's ability to empathize and possibly the glorification society has built into us about love being blind.