

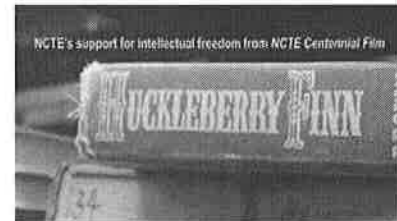


Banned Books Week

NCTE's Support for the Students' Right to Read

[\[http://archives.library.illinois.edu/ncte/about/february.php\]](http://archives.library.illinois.edu/ncte/about/february.php)
[\[http://archives.library.illinois.edu/ncte/about/february.php\]](http://archives.library.illinois.edu/ncte/about/february.php)
 NCTE Began Fighting Censorship in the 1950's
[\[http://archives.library.illinois.edu/ncte/about/february.php\]](http://archives.library.illinois.edu/ncte/about/february.php)
 McCarthyism spurred NCTE to take a more active stance against censorship and in 1953, NCTE's Committee on Censorship of Teaching Materials published Censorship and Controversy, condemning McCarthy's tactics and championing freedom of thought. In 1962 NCTE published its seminal intellectual freedom guideline: [The Students' Right to Read](http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline) [\[http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline\]](http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline), leading up to today's active Anti-Censorship program, which works with 60-100 educators and school districts a year on challenges to texts used in classrooms.

Over the years the Council has voiced its opposition to censorship and promoted intellectual freedom as portrayed in this video clip from the NCTE Centennial Film. For decades, NCTE has worked with schools and educators on challenges to literary works, films and videos, drama productions, and other texts. Since 2004, NCTE has given advice, shared helpful documents, written letters of support, and/or testified in over 250 challenges to texts. Check the [list of challenged books](#) [\[http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Involved/Action/censorship/TitlesChallenged2004-2014.pdf\]](http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Involved/Action/censorship/TitlesChallenged2004-2014.pdf) NCTE has handled over the last nine years. If you're undergoing a challenge, please consult the [NCTE Anti-Censorship Center](http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship) [\[http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship\]](http://www.ncte.org/action/anti-censorship) to contact NCTE.



NCTE's Support for Intellectual Freedom



Directed by Laura Lull, produced and written by John Golden

Advocate for Intellectual Freedom this Banned Books Week

Banned Books Week [\[http://bannedbooksweek.org/resources/teachers\]](http://bannedbooksweek.org/resources/teachers) is **September 27-October 3, 2015!** This year's celebration of the freedom to read defends **young adult literature**.

[\[http://bannedbooksweek.org/resources/teachers\]](http://bannedbooksweek.org/resources/teachers) "Young Adult books are challenged more frequently than any other type of book," said Judith Platt, chair of the [Banned Books Week National Committee](http://bannedbooksweek.org/) [\[http://bannedbooksweek.org/\]](http://bannedbooksweek.org/). "These are the books that speak most immediately to young people, dealing with many of the difficult issues that arise in their own lives, or in the lives of their friends. These are the books that give young readers the ability to safely explore the sometimes scary real world. This Banned Books Week is a call to action, to remind everyone that young people need to be allowed the freedom to read widely, to read books that are relevant for them, and to be able to make their own reading choices."



NCTE, a co-sponsor of this year's celebration, invites you to

- protect the [Students' Right to Read](http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline) [\[http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline\]](http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/righttoreadguideline).
- talk to students about how the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution protects everyone's right to read and how censorship denies that right. Check out these resources for teachers at [BannedBooksWeek.org](http://bannedbooksweek.org/resources/teachers) [\[http://bannedbooksweek.org/resources/teachers\]](http://bannedbooksweek.org/resources/teachers) and [ReadWriteThink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/ready-celebrate-banned-books-20295.html) [\[http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/ready-celebrate-banned-books-20295.html\]](http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/calendar-activities/ready-celebrate-banned-books-20295.html)

- celebrate your favorite banned books (and encourage your students to do so as well) by joining the [Virtual Read-Out](http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/virtualreadout) [<http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/virtualreadout>] ! Your videos will be featured on a [dedicated YouTube channel](http://www.youtube.com/bannedbooksweek) [<http://www.youtube.com/bannedbooksweek>]. Follow these [criteria](http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/criteria) [<http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/criteria>] and use [this form](http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/virtualreadoutsubmission) [<http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/virtualreadoutsubmission>] to submit your videos.

Experience Banned Books Week Advocacy from Years Past

- Listen to Jennifer Buehler and Jeffrey Kaplan talk about [2014 Banned Books Week & Graphic Novels](http://media.ncte.org/library/audio/6bccd511-c453-4849-82bb-b290386daf13.mp3) [<http://media.ncte.org/library/audio/6bccd511-c453-4849-82bb-b290386daf13.mp3>] on Education Talk Radio!
- [Watch](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuhp3VTQQ2Q&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PLC0A36E5C34C97552) [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fuhp3VTQQ2Q&feature=c4-overview-vl&list=PLC0A36E5C34C97552>] as 2013 NCTE Intellectual Freedom Award winner Judy Blume talks about the right to read.
- See the [archive of the Sept. 22, 2013, #nctechat Twitter chat](http://storify.com/NCTEStory/ncte-banned-books-week-twitter-chat) [<http://storify.com/NCTEStory/ncte-banned-books-week-twitter-chat>] on #Banned Books Week with Teri Lesesne and Laurie Halse Anderson.

Comments

Most Recent Comments (1 Total Posts)

Posted By: 354843 on 9/8/2013 8:23:28 AM

! I like the idea of collecting stories via video. They will be helpful for those of us who dare to use challenged books, some because they are great works of art, some for the purposes of critiquing and uncovering assumptions, some because they are the right book at the right time and fit our curriculum. and some because, by not using them, they challenge our freedom to question.

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Banned Books by Erinn Bentley

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In summer semester 2012, members of the course EDCI 6158 read the following books in Literature Circles. A description how we used the Literature Circle model as a pedagogical tool may be found in this document: [Literature Circle.doc](#). Information about Literature Circles and its creator, Harvey Daniels, may be found on [this site](#) .

Banned Books Overview:

For the purposes of our discussions on this site and in this class, the phrase "banned books" refers to the removal of materials from libraries or school curricula (see American Library Association's definition [here](#)). The topic of banned books is closely related to the topic of challenged books. The key distinction between banned and challenged books rests on the word "removal." Challenged books are texts that an individual or group finds objectionable. These books may remain within a library or curriculum. Banned books, on the other hand, are deemed objectionable by a person or group, and they are removed from classroom and/or library shelves.

Why are books banned?

Books are typically banned or challenged due to their content. These books often address the following themes or topics: negative portrayals of parents, non-Christian cultures or beliefs, unpatriotic sentiments, nontraditional families, ethnic/racial issue, and use of non-standard American English (Winkler, 2005, p. 49). Books may also be banned due to language usage or word choices. Examples of "unacceptable" words include derogatory comments regarding race, ethnic groups, gender preferences, or religious beliefs.

Who supports the banning of books?

Book-banning is most often supported by parents and/or religious organizations, with the intention of shielding and protecting young readers from inappropriate or harmful content. For instance, [The Censor The Book Organization](#) aims to rid schools, libraries, and bookstores of any texts the organization deems "indecent, immoral, racist, and unfit for society." According to this organization, such content should not be "masked" as works of art and/or literature. Labeling texts with "immoral" content as art or literature may be deceiving to children. In order to protect children from unwittingly exposing themselves to controversial content, the organization has created a website posting lists of authors and titles they deem inappropriate for young readers. While the Censor The Book Organization is privately funded and operated, it is not the only supporter of book banning. Recently, the Texas School Board also supported banning texts for religious purposes. In 2010, texts promoting "anti-Christian, pro-Islamic slants" were removed from the state's social studies curricula ([Walters](#)). These examples evidence that book banning is still a recent occurrence. Further, both privately and publicly funded organizations support the removal of books from school libraries and curricula as a means of protecting children from specific content. Undoubtedly, school-aged children are in a vulnerable

position; they do not play a role in creating curricula or stacking library shelves.

These questions remain: Who should be responsible for protecting children from harmful ideas? Who has the authority to deem an idea as harmful?

Who opposes the banning of books?

Conversely, teachers, librarians, and book publishers generally protest such bans. Teachers may feel these books bring valuable world views into the classroom and teachable moments are lost when such books are removed from the canon. Further, others (such as the [ALA](#)) believe that book-banning limits the public's democratic right to open and free access to a wide range of printed materials. Other protesters of book-banning include the American Booksellers Association, American Society of Journalists and Authors, Association of American Publishers, Freedom to Read Foundation, and the National Council of Teachers of English. These organizations view book banning as a form of censorship, in which readers' freedom of choice and writers' freedom of expression are both violated. Those individuals and organizations who oppose book banning often stage protests. For example, the American Library Association sponsors a [Banned Books Week](#) annually. Participants in this event often stage live or virtual "read-outs," in which authors, community members, and librarians read aloud excerpts from banned books. Such events are designed to bring public awareness to the issues of book-banning and censorship. Opposition to book-banning may also take place in a less public arena, such as within a single classroom. For example, in the article, "Celebrate Democracy! Teach about Censorship," English teacher Lisa Winkler describes a unit on censorship she teaches, which requires students to self-select one text from the banned book list to read (2005). For this teacher, book-banning is not a theoretical issue; she experienced the impact of this issue first-hand, and she brings that knowledge into her classroom.

These questions remain: How might students benefit from reading or studying banned books? What are the downsides to bringing banned books into classrooms and/or school libraries?

Is it a Trend or an Issue?

Central to the topic of book-banning is the issue of authority: Authority to choose curriculum; authority to decide what are "appropriate" or "inappropriate" texts for students to study; authority to create, publish, and distribute such texts. Perhaps the best way to analyze the issue of authority is to consider the viewpoints of those who share responsibility for creating texts and providing students access to texts.

- **The writer's authority.** For many writers, the novel, poem, or story they write is more than just a handful of words penned across a page. Writers typically believe their creative work conveys a message. As artists, they craft words to connect with other people. From their viewpoint, book-banning denies their artistic authority; banning silences their creative messages and their freedom of expression. To protect their artistic freedom, many authors openly protest the banning of books. For example, Sonya Sones, author of *One of Those Hideous Book Where the Mother Dies* and other novels, explains on her view of book-banning on her website: "I'm very proud of the fact that What My Mother Doesn't Know is #31 on the American Library Association's list of The 100 Most Banned Books of The Decade! It also was one of the Top Ten Most Banned Books of 2004, 2005, and 2010...I love it when my books are banned because it

gives me the chance to speak out about why I think books shouldn't be banned ([Sonya Sones](#)).

- Another young adult author, Chris Crutcher, keeps a running tally of the schools and libraries, which ban or challenge his books on his [website](#) . He tells his readers to contact him if they discover one of his books is being challenged within their schools or libraries; further, he promises to “circle the wagons” to help protest the banning of his books. Crutcher also supports other “freedom of speech” organizations, such as the [National Coalition Against Censorship](#) and [The First Amendment Center](#) . Authors, including Crutcher and Sones, believe all readers should be allowed access to their texts. While they acknowledge that some of the content of their works may not be suitable for all audiences, they believe teachers, parents, and librarians should help young readers make good reading choices. When books are banned, no choice is available to make.
- **The teacher's authority.** Book-banning is an issue, which not only impacts an author's ability to express his/her ideas as an artist. This issue also impacts the teacher's authority in choosing his/her curricula. Both individual teachers and national organizations (e.g., [NCTE](#) , [IRA](#)) recognize book-banning as a serious issue within the field of English education. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) is the nation's flagship organization for providing professional development, teaching resources, and research concerning English instruction at the P-12 and post-secondary levels. For the past 60 years, NCTE has protested the censoring of ELA curricula by creating guidelines and position statements related to this issue, publishing anti-censorship texts, and providing teachers with ideas and resources for handling censors or formal complaints regarding ELA curricula. In [Guideline on Censorship: Don't Let it Become an Issue in Your Schools](#) (NCTE, 1978), the organization views curriculum selection as a group process. That is, administrators, parents, community members, teachers, students, and media specialists all should have a say in which texts are appropriate for academic study. However, NCTE also asserts that teachers, as trained professionals, should be allowed the freedom to choose (and teach) texts without the fear of censorship, providing these teachers offer rationale for their reading materials. The Guideline on Censorship states, “Teachers who are prepared to justify their choices and who have shared their thinking in faculty meetings will not be threatened by an objecting parent or would-be censor. ... Besides that, they will have established a pattern of identifying possible censorship problems inherent in their choice of materials, building confidence in their own abilities to make curricular decisions.” (NCTE, 1978). Organizations such as NCTE, then, view book-banning as a means for discrediting teachers' knowledge regarding ELA content-area and knowledge of students' learning needs and interests.
- **The student's authority.** What role does the student play in this issue? Does a student have the “right to read” texts (even if those texts are considered inappropriate by others)? Professional organizations (e.g., NCTE) and student organizations (e.g. [The Harry Potter Alliance](#) , United States Against Book Banning) both believe young people possess the “freedom to read.” In fact, NCTE's [Guideline on The Students' Right to Read](#) (1981) states, “In many ways, education is an effort to improve the quality of choices open to all students. But to deny the freedom of choice in fear that it may be unwisely used is to destroy the freedom itself. For this reason, we respect the right of individuals to be selective in their own reading. But for the same reason, we oppose efforts of individuals or groups to limit the freedom of choice of others or to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large.” According to this viewpoint, book-banning denies students their basic right of choice. Just as students possess the freedom to watch various

television programs or movies and listen to different genres of music, they also should be allowed free access to a variety of texts in their school (or public) libraries. Further, proponents of student-choice also argue that by exposing students to “questionable” texts within the classroom, the students are able to learn from a professional (i.e., the teacher) how to interpret the text constructively and learn from its content (rather than simply feel offended or excited by controversy surrounding the text).

- **The parent's authority.** Book-banning is an issue that affects parents as well. As mentioned above, the majority of those who challenge books or support the banning of books are individual parents, parent-led organizations, or religious organizations. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), a non-profit research-based think tank, approximately 46% of Americans support the banning of books containing "dangerous ideas." Though the number of book-ban supporters has decreased in recent years, it does evidences that many adults nationwide still consider book-banning a viable issue. In fact, some organizations routinely organize events to support the banning of books. For example, the Christian organization, [Focus on the Family](#), asked community members to protest Banned Books events and donate "appropriate" reading materials to their local libraries. For many parents, the issue of book-banning relates to their authority as parents to protect their children from viewpoints, values, or belief systems, which oppose the views, values, and beliefs taught in the home.

Is There a Solution?

Book-banning is obviously a complex topic; this wiki only presents some of the issues associated with it. There may not be a "solution" to book-banning, which pleases all stakeholders invested in this topic. Perhaps one way to honor teachers' authority to create their own curricula, students' authority to self-select reading materials, and parents' authority to maintain family values, all three parties might work to find common reading topics and texts. Of course, this "solution" sounds theoretically simple to implement; in reality, such home-school communication can be difficult. Still, promoting open and honest communication between the two worlds students inhabit- school and home - is a good first step to addressing this, and other, issues in education.

Annotated Bibliography of Banned Books Sources:

[DeWitt, Peter](#). (2012) Is Book Banning a 21st Century Skill? *Education Week*. 7 May 2012.

This blog is an opinion piece, in which the author offers his reflections regarding the Tucson school board's decision to ban "ethnic" books. DeWitt, speaking from his perspective as a teacher, considers the notion of "banning," and factors contributing to its historical and current use. Finally, he reflects on the practice of "self selection," the curricular choices teachers and librarians make to avoid book-banning "incidents" within their districts. Though not "scholarly," this piece is a good read, if only because it is from the perspective of an in-service teacher, who wants all students' voices to be heard in the classroom and all ethnic groups represented in ELA curricula.

[Fuller, Ruth](#). (2009). Some parents seek to ban "The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian." *The Chicago Tribune*. 22 June 2009. This news article presents parents' views regarding the content of one YA novel, Alexie's *The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. One group of parents, after reading

the book themselves, believes it should be banned from their children's ELA curricula. The article offers their reasons explaining why this novel is inappropriate for 9th grade students.

Greenbaum, Vicky. (1994). Literature out of the Closet: Bringing Gay and Lesbian Texts and Subtexts out in High School. *The English Journal* 83 (5): 71-74.

This article, written by an in-service ELA teacher, provides an "insider's" perspective on the value of teaching about various forms of sexuality through literature. Both a teacher and a homosexual, the author explains her reasons for not "tip-toeing" around sensitive subjects, but facing them head-on; further, she offers classroom anecdotes describing students' reactions to literary works which explore sexual subtexts.

[The Library Bill of Rights](#) . (1997-2012). American Library Association Website.

Visit this website, created by ALA (American Library Association) to learn more information regarding banned books, challenged books, intellectual freedom, and censorship. This organization sponsors a "Banned Book Week" annually and provides resources for libraries, schools, and communities to support readers' intellectual freedom.

[The Freedom to Read Statement](#) (1997-2012). American Library Association Website.

This joint statement, crated by the American Library Association and Association of American Publishers, offers seven points explaining how the "freedom to read" is a civil right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. This statement may be helpful for teachers or librarians who need to provide rationale for including "banned" or "challenged" books in their libraries or course curricula. For me, the most compelling argument in this statement is found in the second point: "Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available." Here, the authors argue that the ideas we "sell" or "teach" may (at times) conflict with the librarian's, book seller's, or teacher's personal beliefs. However, in order to be a true democracy, in which all (even conflicting) ideas are presented, all books must be allowed to "voice" their writers' beliefs and thoughts.

[Siek, Stephanie](#). (2012). Congressional caucus wants investigation of Tucson Mexican-American studies ban. CNN News. 24 January 2012.

This is a news article published by CNN. This article investigates the decision of one district (in Tucson) to ban textbooks and to dismantle a Mexican-American studies program. High school students and teachers from several schools in the district are protesting this action.

Winkler, Lisa K. (2005). Celebrate Democracy! Teach about Censorship. *The English Journal*, 94 (5): 48-51.

In this article, Winkler provides her rationale and procedure for celebrating Banned Books Week. A practical piece, this article may be helpful to teachers interested in establishing their own Banned Book awareness activities.

Closer Consideration of 5 Banned Books

Please visit [this page](#), to read teachers' thoughts, opinions, and suggestions on five books from the ALA's Banned and/or Challenged Books list.