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Professor Warner

English 112B

3 December 2013

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: Turning to Censorship

**Rationale**

Serving as the centerpiece work to this unit of study, George Orwell's science fiction novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, depicts censorship as the best possible solution to a utopian society. Instead of allowing its citizens the rights to freely speak and act, the controlling political party of Oceania restricts any foreign ideas from entering their society. This extreme sense of control runs contrary our own country's highly-valued foundation, which is centered upon liberty and equality. By reading Orwell's haunting novel within the classroom setting, young students will be keener into witnessing the numerous moments of inequality and the complete lack of freedom within Oceania. In comparing the oppressive society to their own, the students will be able to fully determine the benefits, or side-effects, of having elevated levels of censorship.

Within Orwell's novel, students are introduced to Winston Smith, a middle-aged man working for the Ministry of Truth by heavily editing historical documents. The goal for Oceania is to integrate Newspeak, a language aimed at preventing any sort of rebellious activity. In destroying numerous documents on a daily basis, Winston Smith heavily manipulates the history of the political party in order to blind the population. Unlike the present-day community, the citizens are Oceania do not have the freedom to think and act freely. Under the constant surveillance of Thought Police, the citizens are again manipulated to follow the ideals set up by

the political party. In relation to Orwell's novel, censorship is viewed as a means to manipulate and weaken the common people.

Once censorship is established as a means of manipulation, students can then analyze the impact which censorship has on the community directly affected. Within this unit of study, students will be expected to approach censorship on various levels. To begin, it is pivotal for students to give their initial and unbiased opinions regarding censorship. Once the reading of the novel is underway, students will be more engaged with working closely with the text. By editing an article with similar principles as used within *Newspeak*, students will witness just how repressive these levels of censorship are throughout Oceania. Finally, as the students wrap up the novel, they will extend their discussion of censorship out to other novels. Although other young adult novels are merely mentioned, students will have the tools to fully apply their refined views of censorship unto the extra novels. By using the complexity of the novel to analyze censorship, students will gather a much more thorough response to censorship.

Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* does run the risk of easily being disregarded as a mere science fiction novel; however, the level of discussion which can be extracted from the novel places it into an elevated position. It is a terrifying novel due to its suggestion of an alternate reality. In reading this piece of science fiction, readers are asked to suspend any shred of disbelief. Readers must fully embrace the story, regardless of any troubling facts or clear limitations. Science fiction also contains the ability to evoke such strong emotional responses from its readers. Although it is not a conventional area of study for classrooms, the genre does provide rich and complex storylines. Orwell's novel is not an easy read. Students are being asked to consider the side-effects of a repressive society, and that can be extremely difficult for some students. The work is a highly effective piece that would benefit students if placed within the

curriculum. Not only are students contemplating censorship, but they are also analyzing the community's reaction and adaptation of a new language and overall mindset. Therefore, by rejecting this work, teachers are essentially depriving students of a potentially thorough and complex analysis. This unit of study is structured to challenge students and help them focus and hone in on their feelings regarding censorship, which will be a prevalent topic throughout their lives.

### **Launching the Unit**

Prior to reading George Orwell's haunting novel, students will be asked to engage in numerous activities which will help in developing their initial perception of censorship. They will give their honest opinions regarding censorship in relation to local communities. Since Orwell's novel displays censorship in an extremist view, I do not want their original opinions contaminated with Orwell's haunting prophecy.

#### **Activity Number One:**

The students will begin the unit by reacting to a visual representation of Big Brother. At this point in time, the students will not be knowledgeable as to the true symbolic figure behind Big Brother. The intent of this activity is not to focus primarily upon the figure of Big Brother. Instead, the activity is meant to capture the initial emotional reaction that students have to the overly intrusive poster.



Image taken from [www.reporternuovo.it](http://www.reporternuovo.it).

1. What details are included within this poster (images, colors, words)? Be as specific as possible. Can those details reveal any information about the intended audience?
2. Based on your response to the first question, what do you believe is the intended audience? Who is “Big Brother” watching?
3. What emotions is the poster meant to evoke? How do you know this?
4. Who is Big Brother? Is Big Brother a malevolent or benevolent entity?

### Activity Number Two:

<p><b>CENSORSHIP IS THE CHILD OF FEAR AND THE FATHER OF IGNORANCE.</b></p> <p>LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON AUTHOR OF <i>SPEAK AND CHAINS</i></p> <p><b>I HATE IT THAT AMERICANS ARE TAUGHT TO FEAR SOME BOOKS AND SOME IDEAS AS THOUGH THEY WERE DISEASES...</b></p> <p>KURT VONNEGUT AUTHOR OF <i>SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE</i></p>	<p><b>HAVING THE FREEDOM TO READ AND THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE IS ONE OF THE BEST GIFTS MY PARENTS EVER GAVE ME.</b></p> <p>JUDY BLUME AUTHOR OF <i>FOREVER</i></p> <p><b>YES, BOOKS ARE DANGEROUS. THEY SHOULD BE DANGEROUS—THEY CONTAIN IDEAS.</b></p> <p>PETE HAUTMAN AUTHOR OF <i>GODLESS</i></p>
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Next, the students will begin their discussion of censorship within literature. For years, countless efforts have been made in challenging and banning various children and young adult books from classrooms. However, not everyone is in agreement with this form of censorship. Not only does censorship restrict a student's potential to interact with texts, but censorship also silences the voices of those authors whose texts have been banned. Taken from a pop culture news forum, I have included four quotes from notable authors regarding censorship. These quotes express the authors' fears regarding the young populations' inability to freely interact with literature.

For this activity, students will be asked to participate in a short writing response. The student will be asked to respond to one quote, which they find compelling and insightful. If they feel inclined to do so, the student can draw connections between the various quotes. I am encouraging students to primarily focus their attention to the quote which they connect to the most.

**While reading *Nineteen Eighty-Four*:**

While reading George Orwell's novel, the students focus will be shifted towards understanding Orwell's developed community and defining his proposed dystopia.

**Activity Number Three:**

To accompany the reading of Orwell's novel and to help with visualizing the highly repressive society of Oceania, it will be effective to show students the trailer to the 1984 film. Using the link,

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbC0o7VMxtM&feature=share&list=FL0SoNNCA7Gv2Gn>

[PZLU\\_nFaw](#), students will witness a visual representation of the levels of censorship encountered throughout Winston's community. Since this is a work of science fiction, it is sometimes difficult to envision certain concepts. The video will allow students the opportunity to view, and later discuss, the gravity of oppression. Orwell's novel depicts censorship at its most extreme case; however, this does not dismiss censorship entirely. Censorship is still seen readily within our own community. Given your interaction with the text and with the trailer, have your feelings toward censorship changed from the first activity? If so, why?

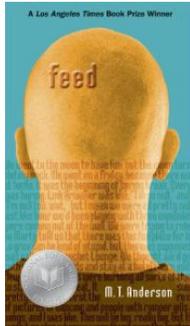
Not only is the concept of Big Brother highly emphasized within the trailer, but also Winston's attraction to freedom is showcased. Although he is conflicted between maintaining his job and succumbing to his desire for freedom, Winston is constantly placed in front of the image of censorship. He is never alone. In fact, the looming figure of Big Brother is highly emphasized within the trailer. Therefore, students may become threatened by the image of Big Brother and their initial reactions may have changed.

#### **Activity Number Four: [see attached article]**

The fourth activity is intended to allow students to explore the gravity of censorship faced amongst the people of Oceania. The students will be asked to take and edit the article included in the banned books list according to the party's strict rules. All writing that insinuates a past history or a revolutionary uprising will be removed. Using either a highlighter or light pencil markings, each student will cross out the words impermissible by Oceania law. After the article has been edited, each student must then rewrite the article to fit the Party's guidelines. Students may have to adjust the meaning behind the article in order to rewrite it.

## Extending into YA literature:

*Feed* by M.T. Anderson



Anderson presents a novel in which an electronic feed is inserted into the consumer's brain. This feed will provide pre-determined thoughts and advertisements, and essentially suppresses any possibility for a free thought process. In this novel, Titus encounters Violet, who has decided to reject the feed and live freely. They then begin the struggle in understanding this repressive technology and what they can do to fight against it.

Summary and cover image taken from: <http://mt-anderson.com/blog/his-books/books-for-teens-and-adults/feed-2/>

*Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley



Huxley creates a utopian society in which science has taken over and now has total control. Upon even the conception of children, scientific advancements have been made in order to produce members of varying societal structures. Rather than have the children decide which class structure to belong to, the child's own DNA and conditioning will now determine his or her own placement. This novel follows Bernard Marx, who is beginning to feel unsatisfied within his utopian society. Feeling as if something is missing from his life, he becomes incredibly distant from his co-workers and his romantic relationships. Readers will soon begin to question whether Marx is contained in a utopian society or whether he belongs to a shocking dystopia.

Cover image taken from: <http://www.amazon.com/Brave-New-World-Aldous-Huxley/dp/0060850523>

### **Wrapping up the Unit:**

#### **Activity Number Five:**



Image taken from [www.reporternuovo.it](http://www.reporternuovo.it).

Now that students have finished reading the novel, I want them to revisit the image of Big Brother and re-evaluate their initial responses.

1. Have your opinions about the image changed in any way?
2. Do you consider the image of Big Brother as threatening or overpowering? How would the people of Oceania respond to this constant image looming over them?

**Activity Number Six: [see attached article]**

For the final activity, I would like the students to read the attached article of the banned and challenged books. They will then highlight the books which they are familiar with or have read. Afterwards, I would like the class to discuss the effectiveness of the list.

Censorship has played a prevalent role within the school system. Parents have challenged numerous books on the premise that certain books are not appropriate for children to read.

However, I would like the students to discuss whether they believe this level of censorship is actually beneficial to the children it affects. Using the material from Orwell's novel and the material from the attached list, each student should form his or her own educated opinion regarding censorship.

Works Cited

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Doyle, Robert P. "Books Challenged or Banned: 2012-2013." *Banned Books Week*:

*Celebrating the Freedom to Read*. (2013): 1-11. Web. 24 Nov. 2013.

Simon and Schuster. "11 Quotes From Authors on Censorship and Banned Books."

*BuzzFeed Community*. BuzzFeed, 2013. Web. 26 Nov. 2013.

*Youtube*. Youtube.com, 2005. Web. 29 Nov. 2013.

...of something. ... discover ...  
... of something people.  
... what ...  
... you're ...  
... as a ...  
... the ...  
... missing. ...  
... of ...

**BOOKS  
CHALLENGED  
OR BANNED**  
2012-2013

Robert P. Doyle

*Sponsored by:*

- American Booksellers Association
- American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
- American Library Association
- American Society of Journalists and Authors
- Association of American Publishers
- Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
- Freedom to Read Foundation
- National Association of College Stores
- National Coalition Against Censorship
- National Council of Teachers of English
- PEN American Center

*Endorsed by:*

- Center for the Book in the Library of Congress
- Project Censored

**BANNED BOOKS WEEK**  
CELEBRATING THE FREEDOM TO READ

## **Books Challenged or Banned in 2012-2013**

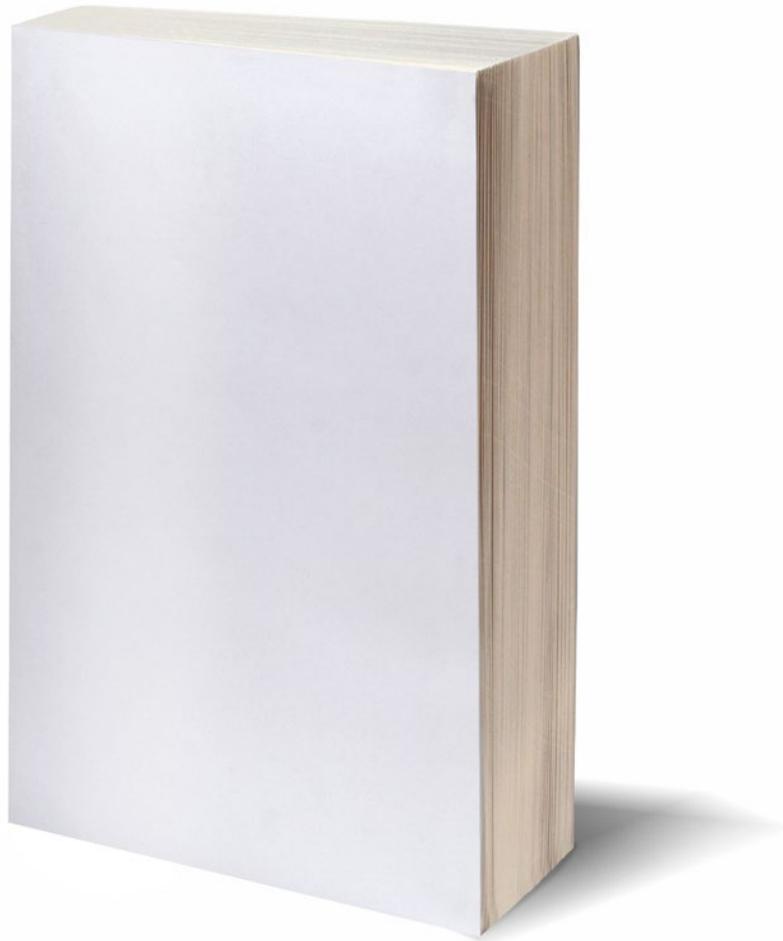
Banned Books Week 2013 is celebrating more than thirty years of the freedom to read. This freedom, not only to choose what we read, but also to select from a full array of possibilities, is firmly rooted in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Although we enjoy an increasing quantity and availability of information and reading material, we must remain vigilant to ensure that access to this material is preserved; would-be censors who continue to threaten the freedom to read come from all quarters and all political persuasions. Even if well intentioned, censors try to limit the freedom of others to choose what they read, see, or hear.

Sex, profanity, and racism remain the primary categories of objections, and most occur in schools and school libraries. Frequently, challenges are motivated by the desire to protect children. While the intent is commendable, this method of protection contains hazards far greater than exposure to the “evil” against which it is leveled. U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan, in *Texas v. Johnson*, said, “If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.” Individuals may restrict what they themselves or their children read, but they must not call on governmental or public agencies to prevent others from reading or viewing that material.

The challenges documented in this list are not brought by people merely expressing a point of view; rather, they represent requests to remove materials from schools or libraries, thus restricting access to them by others. Even when the eventual outcome allows the book to stay on the library shelves and even when the person is a lone protester, the censorship attempt is real. Someone has tried to restrict another person’s ability to choose. Challenges are as important to document as actual bannings, in which a book is removed from the shelves of a library or bookstore or from the curriculum at a school. Attempts to censor can lead to voluntary restriction of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy; in these cases, material may not be published at all or may not be purchased by a bookstore, library, or school district.

It should be noted that this bibliography is incomplete because many prohibitions against free speech and expression remain undocumented. Surveys indicate up to 85 percent of actual challenges to library materials receive no media attention and remain unreported. Moreover, this list is limited to books and does not include challenges to magazines, newspapers, films, broadcasts, plays, performances, electronic publications, or exhibits.





This **bibliography** represents books challenged, restricted, removed, or banned in 2012 and 2013 as reported in the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* from May 2012 to May 2013.

Dates prior to May 2012 indicate the controversy began earlier, but continues into 2012 or 2013.

**Alexie, Sherman**

**The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian**

THORNDIKE PRESS; LITTLE, BROWN

Challenged as required reading in at least three freshmen English classes at Westfield, N.J. High School (2012) because of “some very sensitive material in the book including excerpts on masturbation amongst other explicit sexual references, encouraging pornography, racism, religious irreverence, and strong language (including the f- and n-words).” Challenged at the West Valley School District in Yakima, Wash. (2013) because some parents found the sexual references and profanity in the novel inappropriate for high school students.

Source: May 2012, pp. 105-6; Mar. 2013, pp. 51-52.

**Anderson, M.T.**

**Feed**

CANDLEWICK PRESS

Challenged at the William Monroe High School in Greene County, Va. (2012) because the book is “trash” and “covered with the F-word.” A consent form was sent to the students’ homes, and a notice that the class would be reading a mature book was posted on the teacher’s webpage as well. Among its many awards, the book is a National Book Award Finalist and a Junior Library Guild selection.

Source: July 2012, p. 159.

**Atwood, Margaret**

**The Handmaid’s Tale**

MCCLELLAND AND STEWART

Challenged as required reading for a Page High School International Baccalaureate class and as optional reading for Advanced Placement reading courses at Grimsley High School in Guilford County, N.C. (2012) because the book is “sexually explicit, violently graphic and morally corrupt.”

Source: Jan. 2013, p. 11.

**Aylisli, Akram**

**Stone Dreams**

NOVELLA PUBLISHED IN DRUZHBA NARODOV (FRIENDSHIP OF THE PEOPLES)

Burned (2013) at various locations around Azerbaijan. The novella is sympathetic to Armenians and recounts Azeri atrocities in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia twenty years ago. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev stripped the author of his title

of “People’s Writer” and the pension that goes with it. A pro-government political party in Baku, Azerbaijan, announced that it will pay \$12,700 to anyone who cuts off the ear of the 75-year-old novelist for portraying Azerbaijanis as savages.

Source: May 2013, pp. 108-9.

**Brannen, Sarah S.**

**Uncle Bobby’s Wedding**

PUTNAM

Challenged, but retained at the Brentwood, Mo. Public Library (2012) despite a resident who did not like the book’s subject matter. The picture book involves a young guinea pig and her beloved uncle, who is going to marry his male partner.

Source: Jan. 2013, p. 33.

**Card, Orson Scott**

**Ender’s Game**

TOR SCIENCE FICTION

A teacher at Schofield Middle School in Aiken, S.C. (2012) will not face criminal charges for reading to his students from the science-fiction book. In addition to the Card novel — which has won several science-fiction awards and is listed on numerous children’s literature review websites as appropriate for readers twelve and older — the teacher read excerpts from an Agatha Christie novel and a young adult novel set in the Old West, officials said. The incident came to light after the materials were characterized by one student and one parent as pornographic, according to a press release issued by the school district.

Source: May 2012, p. 107.

**Chbosky, Stephen**

**The Perks of Being a Wallflower**

POCKET BOOKS

Challenged as an assigned reading at the Grandview Heights, Ohio High School (2012) because the book deals with drugs, alcohol, sex, homosexuality, and abuse.

Source: Jan. 2013, pp. 11-12.

**Colasanti, Susane**

**When It Happens**

SPEAK

Challenged, but retained in the teen section of the Helen Matthes Library in Effingham, Ill. (2013) despite concerns that the content is too explicit.

Source: Mar. 2013, p. 79.

**Connell, Richard**

**The Most Dangerous Game**

PERFECTION LEARNING; CREATIVE EDUCATION

Challenged at the Bromley East Charter School in Brighton, Colo. (2012) because the 1924 short story “only serves to encourage school violence.” English teachers have used it for decades to teach literary concepts like symbols and motifs.

Source: Jan. 2013, pp. 9-10.

**Crawford, Brent**

**Carter Finally Gets It**

DISNEY HYPERION BOOKS

Challenged, but retained in the Broken Arrow, Okla. middle school libraries (2012) despite a parent’s complaint that it is “vulgar, vulgar, vulgar.” The book was recognized by the Young Adult Library Services Association as one of 2010’s Amazing Audiobooks.

Source: July 2012, p. 179.

**Ehrenreich, Barbara**

**Nickel and Dimed:**

**On (Not) Getting By in America**

HOLT

Challenged, but retained on the Easton, Pa. Area High School’s Advanced Placement English reading list (2012) despite several residents and persons from outside the district calling the book “faddish,” of “no moral value,” and even “obscene.”

Source: May 2012, pp. 128-29; July 2012, pp. 179-80.

**Esquivel, Laura**

**Like Water for Chocolate:**

**A Novel in Monthly Installments, with Recipes, Romances, and Home Remedies**

DOUBLEDAY

Removed from the reading list at Nampa, Idaho High School (2012) because it was considered too racy for sophomores. The book has been considered a contemporary classic in Latin American literature.

Source: Nov. 2012, pp. 237-38.

**Green, John**

**Looking for Alaska**

SPEAK

Banned as required reading for Sumner County, Tenn. schools (2012) because of “inappropriate language.” The book won the 2006 Printz award for excellence in young adult literature.

Source: July 2012, pp. 158-59.

**Hergé [Georges Remi]**

**Tintin in the Congo**

FRENCH & EUROPEAN PUBLICATIONS

A Belgian court (2012) rejected a five-year-old bid by a Congolese student to have the 1946 edition of Hergé's book banned because of its racist depictions. "It is clear that neither the story, nor the fact that it has been put on sale, has a goal to ... create an intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating environment," the court said in its judgment. The student, who launched the campaign in 2007 to ban the book, plans to appeal.

Source: Jan. 2012, pp. 17-18; May 2012, p. 130.

**Hosseini, Khaled**

**The Kite Runner**

BLOOMSBURY

Challenged as optional reading in the tenth-grade honors class at Troy, Pa. area schools (2012) because the novel depicts a rape in graphic detail and uses vulgar language.

Source: May 2012, pp. 106-7.

**Howe, James**

**Totally Joe**

ATHENEUM BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

Marked for removal in the Davis, Utah School District (2012) because parents might find it objectionable. The title character, a thirteen-year-old boy, writes an alphabiography—his life from A to Z—and explores issues of friendship, family, school, and the challenges of being a gay teenager.

Source: July 2012, p. 156.

**Ignatow, Amy**

**The Popularity Papers**

AMULET

Challenged, but retained at two Prosser, Wash. elementary school libraries (2013). Only available to fifth graders, the book is about two girls who want to unlock the secrets to being popular in middle school. One of the girls has two fathers; the other has only a mother.

Source: May 2013, p. 124.

**James, E.L.**

**Fifty Shades of Grey**

VINTAGE

Pulled, but later returned to the Brevard County, Fla. public libraries' (2012) shelves "in response to public demand." The racy romance trilogy is particularly popular among middle-aged women. Despite overwhelming demand and long wait lists for library copies, some other libraries across the country are refusing to acquire the book.

Source: July 2012, pp. 145, 147-48.

**King, Stephen**

**Different Seasons**

VIKING

Challenged, but retained at the Rocklin, Calif. High School library (2012) despite a parent's complaint that the book contained a graphic rape scene.

Source: Jan. 2013, p. 33.

**Loux, Matthew**

**SideScrollers**

ONI PRESS

Removed as an option on the Enfield, Conn. school district's ninth-grade summer reading list (2012) after a parent complained of profanity and sexual references. The graphic novel was chosen as one of the Young Adult Library Services Association's Great Graphic Novels for Teens in 2008.

Source: Nov. 2012, p. 237.

**Manji, Irshad**

**Allah, Liberty, and Love**

FREE PRESS; ZI PUBLICATIONS

Banned (2012) because officials in Malaysia said it went against Islamic teachings and led to a raid on a bookstore in the country. Activists and others said they believe Manji's book was banned because she is a lesbian.

Source: July 2012, pp. 183-84; Sept. 2012, pp. 203-4.

**Martinez, Elizabeth**

**500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures**

SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Banned from the Tucson, Ariz. Unified School District (2012) along with *Critical Race Theory*, by Richard Delgado; *Message to Aztlan*, by Rodolfo Corky Gonzales; *Chicano! The History of the Mexican Civil Rights Movement*, by Arturo Rosales;

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire; *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years*, edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson; and *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, by Rodolfo Acuña. In a district with over 60 percent of the students coming from Mexican-American backgrounds, the school board "dismantled its Mexican-American Studies program, packed away its offending books, shuttled its students into other classes," according to a January 21, 2012, *New York Times* editorial because "it was blackmailed into doing so." The *Times* referred to measures taken by Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal, who threatened to withhold millions of dollars if the school district didn't terminate the nationally acclaimed program immediately. The superintendent has spent years crusading against ethnic studies programs that he claims are "brainwashing" children into thinking that Latinos have been victims of white oppression. On March 8, 2013, a federal court upheld most provisions of an Arizona state law used to prohibit the controversial Mexican-American Studies curriculum in Tucson. Activists plan to appeal the ruling to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Source: Mar. 2012, pp. 49, 51, 82-84; May 2012, pp. 102-3; May 2013, pp. 114-15.

**Moore, Alan**

**Neonomicon**

AVATAR PRESS

Banned at the Greenville County, S.C. Public Library (2012) after a patron's teenage daughter checked it out of the library's adult section. The teenage girl was given an adult library card, which allowed her to check out adult-themed books. The head of the library system overturned an internal review committee's decision to retain the graphic novel because the pictures gave her pause.

Source: Sept. 2012, p. 201; Mar. 2013, pp. 48-49.

**Morrison, Toni**

**Beloved**

KNOPF; NAL

Challenged, but retained as a text in Salem, Mich. High School Advanced Placement English courses (2012). The complainants cited the allegedly obscene nature of some passages in the book and asked

that it be removed from the curriculum. District officials determined the novel was appropriate for the age and maturity level of Advanced Placement students. In reviewing the novel, the committee also considered the accuracy of the material, the objectivity of the material, and the necessity of using the material in light of the curriculum. Challenged at the Fairfax County, Va. schools (2013) because a parent complained that the book “depicts scenes of bestiality, gang rape, and an infant’s gruesome murder.” The novel won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988.

Source: Mar. 2012, pp. 79–80; May 2012, pp. 127–28; Mar. 2013, pp. 50–51.

**Myers, Walter Dean**  
**Fallen Angels**

SCHOLASTIC

Challenged on the Danbury Middle School reading list in Toledo, Ohio (2013) because of inappropriate language. The book depicts the reality of the Vietnam War, with sometimes gruesome descriptions of combat and frequent foul language from soldiers.

Source: May 2013, p. 104.

**Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds**  
**Intensely Alice**

ATHENEUM BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS;  
SIMON PULSE

Challenged, but retained in the Buffalo, Mo. middle school (2013) despite the principal’s formal complaint against several “very questionable pages” featuring a safe sex scene.

Source: May 2013, pp. 123–24.

**Othman, Norani, ed.**  
**Muslim Women and the Challenges of Islamic Extremism**

SISTERS IN ISLAM

Banned by the Malaysian Ministry of Home Affairs (2008) on the grounds that it was “prejudicial to public order” and that it could confuse Muslims, particularly Muslim women. The Malaysian High Court overturned the ban on January 25, 2010, and on March 14, 2103, the Federal Court threw out the government’s appeal to reinstate the ban.

Source: May 2013, pp. 125–26.

**Palaniuk, Chuck**  
**Fight Club**

W.W. NORTON

Removed from the Katy, Tex. Independent School District required reading list (2012) following parental complaints about the book’s violent nature and explicit undertones.

Source: Mar. 2013, p. 50.

**Parr, Todd**  
**The Family Book**

LITTLE, BROWN

Banned from an Erie, Ill. elementary school’s shelves (2012) because of a line that reads, “some families have two moms or two dads.” The district also banned everything furnished by GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network), including learning materials and various programs aimed at preventing bullying.

Source: July 2012, p. 157; Sept. 2012, pp. 202–3.

**Pelzer, Dave**  
**A Child Called It**

HCI

Challenged at the Housel Middle School in Prosser, Wash. (2013) because the autobiography provides graphic depiction of child abuse. Middle-school students had to have parental permission to check out the book.

Source: Mar. 2013, p. 49.

**Plum-Ucci, Carol**  
**The Body of Christopher Creed**

HARCOURT

Challenged, but retained in the Appleton, Wis. Area School District (2012), despite the book’s references to suicide and sex. Other titles also considered inappropriate by the local parent group, Valley School Watch, include *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The House on Mango Street*. The reading list for the group’s ideal alternate class would contain books with no profanity, obscenity, or sexual material.

Source: July 2012, p. 180.

**Polacco, Patricia**  
**In Our Mothers’ House**

PHILOMEL BOOKS

Removed from the shelves of elementary school libraries in Davis County, Utah (2012) after a group of parents raised objections about the suitability of the story. It remained available only if a student presented a permission slip from a parent to check out the book. A parent then sued the Davis School District in November 2012 alleging her children’s First Amendment rights were violated by the book’s removal. On January 15, 2013, the book was reinstated without restrictions and the school district agreed to pay \$15,000 in attorneys’ fees for the lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Source: July 2012, pp. 155–57; Sept. 2012, pp. 201–2; Jan. 2013, pp. 7–8; Mar. 2013, p. 80.

**Richardson, Justin, and Peter Parnell**  
**And Tango Makes Three**

SIMON

Marked for removal in the Davis, Utah School District (2012) because parents might find it objectionable.

Source: July 2012, p. 156.

**Satrapi, Marjane**  
**Persepolis**

PANTHEON BOOKS

Removed, via a district directive, from all Chicago, Ill. public schools (2013) due to “graphic illustrations and language” and concerns about “developmental preparedness” and “student readiness.” Seventh- and eleventh-grade students study the graphic novel about the author’s experience growing up in Iran during the Iranian revolution as part of Chicago Public Schools’ Literacy Content Framework. As the news spread of the directive, students mobilized a media campaign in opposition to “banning a book that’s all about the freedom of speech.” Students took to their Facebook and Twitter accounts, checked out all library copies of the book, wrote blogs, sent e-mails, wrote investigative articles for the student newspaper, contacted the author, staged protests, and appeared on local radio and television programs. Eventually, the school issued a letter telling high school principals to disregard the earlier order to pull the book.

Source: May 2013, pp. 103–4.

**Shakespeare, William**  
**Romeo and Juliet**  
(No Fear Shakespeare)

SPARKNOTES

Some parents in Liberty, S.C. (2012) are furious about the book their kids are reading in middle school. They say it's too mature for their kids because of the sex. The book in question is an easy-to-read version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Source: May 2012, p. 107.

**Sittenfeld, Curtis**  
**Prep**

RANDOM HOUSE

Removed from the Emmaus, Pa. High School ninth-grade summer reading list (2012) because the story of a girl from Indiana who goes to a boarding school in New England was "too mature for ninth graders." Instead, it was added to the twelfth-grade Advanced Placement reading list.

Source: Jan. 2013, p. 12.

**Smiley, Jane**  
**A Thousand Acres**

ANCHOR

Removed from the Katy, Tex. Independent School District required reading list (2012) following parental complaints about references to sex and violence.

Source: Mar. 2013, p. 50.

**Swift, Graham**  
**Waterland**

VINTAGE

Challenged as a text in Salem, Mich. High School Advanced Placement English courses (2012) due to the book's sexual content. Superintendent Jeremy Hughes immediately pulled the book, but later decided to put the book through the district's review process. The book was reviewed and retained.

Source: Mar. 2012, pp. 59-60; May 2012, pp. 127-28.

**Tateno, Makoto**  
**Hero-Heel 2**

DIGITAL MANGA

Challenged at the King County, Wash. Library System (2012) due to yaoi manga's sexually explicit nature.

Source: Jan. 2013, pp. 8-9.

**Timberlake, Amy**  
**The Dirty Cowboy**

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

Removed from the Annville, Pa. elementary school library shelves (2012) because of its illustrations, involving a cartoon cowboy taking his annual bath. The supposedly true story is of a young cowboy who needs his annual bath and instructs his dog to watch his clothes while he bathes. When the cowboy emerges from his bath in the river, the dog does not recognize his familiar smell and refuses to give back his clothes. In the illustrations, the cowboy's private parts are always covered. The book has received numerous awards, including the International Reading Association award in 2004, the Parents Choice Gold Medal, and the Bulletin Blue Ribbon from *The Bulletin for the Center for Children's Books*.

Source: July 2012, pp. 153-54.

**Trueman, Terry**  
**Stuck in Neutral**

HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS.

Challenged at the Creekwood Middle School in Humble, Tex. (2012) because the book was an "inappropriate reading assignment." The fictional book is told in the first person by a teen with cerebral palsy and deals with such subjects as disabilities, quality of life, and euthanasia.

Source: July 2012, pp. 154-55.

**Walls, Jeannette**  
**The Glass Castle: A Memoir**

SCRIBNER

Removed, but later returned as an assigned reading for ninth-grade honors English in the Traverse City, Mich. West Senior High School (2012). The 2005 best-selling memoir recounts the author's experience growing up in a dysfunctional family with an alcoholic father and a mother who suffered from mental illness. It includes explicit language and references to child molestation, adolescent sexual exploits, and violence. Challenged at the McPherson, Kans. High School pre-AP English freshman class (2013). A school committee unanimously determined the book was appropriately placed in the curriculum noting the district's opt-out policy, which allows all families to opt their children out of any assignment, and ask for an alternate one. The committee made a series of recommendations to the superintendent, who sent a letter to the parents informing them of these recommendations and asking if they desired to appeal the committee's decision. No one appealed the decision.

Source: Jan. 2013, pp. 10-11; Mar. 2013, pp. 80-81.

**Wilson, David Howard**  
**Robopocalypse**

DOUBLEDAY; VINTAGE

Challenged, but retained as required reading at the Hardin Valley Academy in Knoxville, Tenn. (2012) despite objections to "inappropriate language." The national bestseller was awarded the 2011 Alex Award by the Young Adult Library Services Association.

Source: Nov. 2012, p. 238; Jan. 2013, pp. 33-34.

**Wolfe, Tom**  
**The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test**

FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX

Challenged on the Emmaus, Pa. High School tenth-grade summer reading list (2012) because the nonfiction account of the author's drug-induced bus journey across the country has "objectionable sexual content and that there is nothing good about it."

Source: Jan. 2013, p. 12.

# Take Action!

## Protect Your Right to Read

Each day, all across the country, one of our most basic freedoms—the right to read—is in danger. In communities large and small, censorship attempts threaten to undermine our freedom to read. Without our constant support, the First Amendment freedoms that we so often take for granted—the right to read, explore ideas, and express ourselves freely—are at risk.

The First Amendment guarantees that each of us has the right to express our views, including opinions about particular books. At the same time, the First Amendment also ensures that none of us has the right to control or limit another person's ability to read or access information. Yet, when individuals or groups file formal written requests demanding that libraries and schools remove specific books from the shelves, they are doing just that — attempting to restrict the rights of other individuals to access those books.

The rights and protections of the First Amendment extend to children and teens as well as adults. While parents have the right — and the responsibility — to guide their own children's reading, that right does not extend to other people's children. Similarly, each adult has the right to choose his or her own reading materials, along with the responsibility to acknowledge and respect the right of others to do the same.

When we speak up to protect the right to read, we not only defend our individual right to free expression, we demonstrate tolerance and respect for opposing points of view. And when we take action to preserve our precious freedoms, we become participants in the ongoing evolution of our democratic society.

**Act now** to protect your right to read.  
Here are three ways that you can get involved:

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## One: **Stay Informed**

### **Be aware of what's happening**

The best way to fight censorship is to be aware that it's happening. When you encounter it, be prepared to speak up or let others know.

Ask the people on the front lines—librarians, teachers, and school principals—if there are any current attempts to challenge or ban books or other materials. If they have support groups or information lists, ask to join them.

Legislators and public officials often introduce legislation to restrict access to books and other materials in libraries, schools, and bookstores. Let officials know that there are citizens actively opposed to demands to restrict or remove books in schools and libraries.

### **Attend school board, library board, and PTA meetings**

*You can speak up about the importance of free speech to education in a democratic society.* As a regular participant in gatherings, you have the opportunity to learn about policies governing access to books and materials. You can witness firsthand when someone demands that a school or library remove a book or restrict access to books.

### **Subscribe to print and online news publications**

*You can stay current on First Amendment rights and censorship issues.*

**The ALA Office for Intellectual Freedom** ([ala.org/oif](http://ala.org/oif)) publishes the *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom* and provides regular news updates via the OIF blog, Twitter ([twitter.com/oif](https://twitter.com/oif)) and the IFACTION mailing list ([lists.ala.org/sympa/info/ifaction](http://lists.ala.org/sympa/info/ifaction)).

**The First Amendment Center** ([firstamendmentcenter.org](http://firstamendmentcenter.org)) maintains an online First Amendment library ([firstamendmentcenter.org/research-articles](http://firstamendmentcenter.org/research-articles)) and provides breaking news about First Amendment issues via its RSS newsfeed.

### **Join groups committed to preserving the right to read**

*You can participate by joining these nonprofit organizations.*

**The Freedom to Read Foundation** ([ftrf.org](http://ftrf.org)) is the only organization in the United States whose primary goal is to protect and promote the First Amendment in libraries by participating in litigation dealing with free expression in libraries and other venues. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, *The FTRF News*.

**The American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression** ([abffe.org](http://abffe.org)) promotes and protects the free exchange of ideas, particularly those contained in books, by opposing restrictions on the freedom of speech.

**The National Coalition Against Censorship** ([ncac.org](http://ncac.org)) is an alliance of fifty national nonprofit organizations, including literary, artistic, religious, educational, professional, labor, and civil liberties groups, that work to educate both members and the public at large about the dangers of censorship and how to oppose it.

**The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund** ([cbldef.org](http://cbldef.org)) works to protect free speech in comics by supporting First Amendment rights for members of the comics community, fans, and professionals alike.

**The American Civil Liberties Union** ([aclu.org](http://aclu.org)) works daily to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution, including the freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Local chapters and affiliates ([aclu.org/affiliates](http://aclu.org/affiliates)) provide assistance to local communities.

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## Two: Challenge Censorship

### Report censorship to ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom

*You can help raise awareness of censorship in your local community.*

ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom tracks attempts to remove or restrict books across the country. By reporting censorship incidents, you can help to identify trends in censorship cases and document responses and solutions to censorship. All identifying information is kept strictly confidential. You can file reports online by going to [ala.org/challengereporting](http://ala.org/challengereporting).

### Attend and participate in public hearings

*You can inform public officials that censorship won't be tolerated in the community.*

By attending hearings, you can speak out in support of free expression and the right to read freely. You can let officials know that there are citizens actively opposed to demands to restrict or remove books in schools and libraries. Such attempts seldom succeed when concerned citizens speak out against censorship.

### Write letters to public officials

*You can write to public officials encouraging them to preserve the freedom to read.*

Let them know that your rights and your views are entitled to the same respect as those who seek to censor books. Write

to any public official that you believe can prevent the suppression of books in your community: your mayor, city council, other city officials, library board members, school board members, superintendent of schools, etc.

### Send a letter or an op-ed article to local news organizations

*You can update community news outlets with information and opinion.*

Make sure you let reporters and editors know that there are members of the community who oppose censorship and the official suppression of ideas. Letters to public officials, letters sent to local news outlets, and comments posted on websites and blogs are effective ways to raise awareness.

### Work with community groups

*You can network with local organizations for support.*

Inform professional associations, civic organizations, and religious groups about attempts to remove books from the community's library or school. You can ask to speak to their membership about the importance of preserving First Amendment freedoms. Or ask if you can contribute an article to the group's newsletter or website. You can speak with the group's leaders and ask them to lend public support to efforts to protect the right to read in the community.

### Form a coalition to oppose censorship in your community

*You can partner with others who support the right to read freely.*

Even a small number of persons can form an effective group to oppose censorship. Such groups allow members to share responsibility for attending meetings and conducting outreach efforts. By joining together you can become a resource for the community as a whole. To read the story of one exemplary community coalition, visit its website at [westbendparentsforreespeech.webs.com](http://westbendparentsforreespeech.webs.com).

### Seek assistance from national groups

*You can get guidance and support from experienced organizations.*

Get started by researching existing groups so that you can benefit from their expertise. Check out the national organizations listed on page 10 for assistance, resources, and referrals whenever you or your organization addresses demands to remove books from libraries or schools.

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## Three: Support Your Local Schools and Libraries

### Join Library Friends Groups and PTAs

*You can become an advocate for community education groups.*

Libraries and schools rely on volunteers and advocates to accomplish their mission of educating young people. These groups also provide information and lifelong learning opportunities to adults in the community. You can contribute by participating in Friends groups, PTAs, or volunteering directly where your help will strengthen these vital institutions.

### Participate in Banned Books Week

*You can promote the right to read by joining in the celebration.*

Each year, libraries, schools, and bookstores across the nation celebrate the freedom to read by observing Banned Books Week. This public event in September features author visits and readings from banned books. You can show your support for the freedom to read by attending these events. Please visit [ala.org/bbooks](http://ala.org/bbooks) for more resources and information, or connect on Facebook ([facebook.com/bannedbooksweek](http://facebook.com/bannedbooksweek)).

...or something. Without even that other...  
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**SUPPORT BANNED BOOKS WEEK**

Banned Books Week merchandise to help celebrate the freedom to read—such as posters, t-shirts, buttons, and bookmarks—is available for purchase at the ALA Store online at [alastore.ala.org](http://alastore.ala.org), or by calling toll-free at **1-866-SHOP ALA** (1-866-746-7252).

For more information on Banned Books Week, please visit [ala.org/bbooks](http://ala.org/bbooks)